Career Profile of Biotech Researcher, Derek Schorzman, PhD

What is your current title and how long have you worked in your current job?
Liquidia Technologies- Currently a Principal Process Engineer for 2 years, Senior Scientist for 2 years. Becton Dickinson- 6 months as a Principal Engineer; Bausch & Lomb- 3 years as a Senior Scientist

Where did you get your PhD and what discipline was it in?
Virginia Commonwealth University – 2002; Chemistry (Organic)

Did you do a postdoc? Where?
Yes, UNC- Chapel Hill (Department of Chemistry with Professor DeSimone)

What are your main daily responsibilities?
50% Laboratory research and development (process prototyping and product characterization); 30% Project and people management (technical reports, supervision, team coordination, etc.); 20% Consulting with other focus areas/projects within the company

What are the keys to success in your career field?
Adaptability- Particularly in the area of nanotechnology, which incorporates multiple disciplines such as chemistry, engineering, and physics, but also at a small company, where individuals are often required to fulfill various roles at various times. Willingness to learn new disciplines, formally or otherwise.

What were the most important factors in choosing your career path?
Chance! My career path has been shaped by taking on unexpected opportunities that have worked out for the best. Also by following opportunities where I could use and develop my skills at addressing technical challenges (vs. people management or other career directions), an area which I find extremely rewarding.

What 1 or 2 pieces of advice do you have for people who want to land a job like yours?
Utilize your professional network- Of my 3 industrial jobs, 2 were found through personal contacts. You never know when a connection with an old classmate/colleague will come in handy. Get to know your strengths and weaknesses and do your best to accentuate or minimize (respectively) their impact on your performance- they may be in areas that you didn’t expect.

Links to more information

Careers in Biotech and Pharma: The Right Fit
http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2007_04_27/science.opms.r0700031
Mythbusting for Academics: Considering a Job in Biotech/Pharma
http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2010_04_23/science.opms.r1000088