TIBBS Career Blitz Career Profile Questionnaire

Career Profile: Mehdi S. Hazari, M.Sc., Ph.D., MT-ASCP

What is your current title and how long have you worked in your current job?

Physiologist/Principal Investigator

>5yrs

Where did you get your PhD and what discipline was it in?

Johns Hopkins University (Bloomberg School of Public Health) - Physiology

Did you do a postdoc?

Yes

What are your main daily responsibilities?

Lab management, research planning, experimentation, preparing manuscripts/proposals, reviewing manuscripts/internal Agency documents, and mentoring students/postdocs. I also oversee/lead certain projects for the Air Climate and Energy (ACE) program.

What are the keys to success in your career field?

- Research productivity – anyone starting in the field should “hit the ground running” by writing a protocol and starting a study, even if it is a small one
- Learn (and become proficient in) as many laboratory techniques as possible; this will make your future science more robust and allow you to move in several directions
- Write-up and present your work as soon as the study finishes
- Network and collaborate
- Balance time between lab work and desk (i.e. computer) work – too much of either one can burn you out.

What were the most important factors in choosing your career path?

- A genuine interest in the science I was doing and the impact it would have (at the Agency we can see exactly where/how our work is being used)
- Lab-based research offers an opportunity to be creative and innovate
- At the Agency, being able to work and interact with scientists (and other professionals) who are applying science in ways other than basic research (e.g. risk assessment, modeling, public outreach, etc) – they also provide us with valuable insight to make our science stronger and we do the same in return
- Teaching and mentoring
What activities (if any) did you participate in that helped you be successful in obtaining your job?

- Teaching – I taught all four years (3 courses) of my graduate training
- attending national meetings and networking (small science meetings are excellent because it gives you a lot of face time.)

What 1 or 2 pieces of advice do you have for people who want to land a job like yours?

- Jobs like mine are not always easy to come by, particularly nowadays, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t available. It is sometimes the best option to start as a trainee, like a post-doctoral fellow, and then transition into a permanent spot. Although we function like a university P.I., our jobs are more multifaceted and beyond the research, publish, review grants and teach paradigm because we are here to support the Agency’s goals and mandates. As such, it’s best if you involve yourself in several different scientific activities (sit on committees, review documents, etc) as well as interacting with public health professionals (volunteer to educate high school students or seniors about a relevant science topic).

(The views expressed herein do not reflect EPA policy)