

“Blazing a Career Path in Plant Pathology” Workshop
July 30, 2005
APS National Meeting, Austin, Texas

Summary of small-group discussions on key competencies for career success

***International careers* (champion: John Bowman)**

Basic:

- Foreign language skills
- *Technical* experience early on in a foreign country (as opposed to study abroad or travel)
- Special expertise to set you apart (e.g., GPS, drip irrigation, microfinance)
- Remember never to burn bridges; international development is a small community
- Willingness to get outside your “comfort zone”; be a jack-of-all-trades professionally
- Resolve family and mobility issues

Advanced:

- Proof of cultural sensitivity, flexibility (demonstrated by your work experience)
- Understanding of development theory (role of agriculture in economic growth, poverty alleviation, gender sensitivity)
- Sense of “social responsibility” (development work is a privilege)

Government careers (champion: Chris Wozniak)

- Good basic training in plant pathology and general science
- Good balance of applied/basic experience and interests
- “Generalist” attitude
- Flexibility (openness to change)
- Networking skills
- Ability to work as a team member
- Negotiating and “people skills”
- Management skills (self and team)
- Oral and written communication skills; consider getting further training in speaking and/or writing
- Know your strengths and weaknesses
- Have patience

Industry careers (champion: Bill Dolezal)

- Look *actively* for opportunities
 - Contact companies to find out what they do
 - Commodity groups and trade organizations are good information sources

- Let others know you are looking—there’s always serendipity!
- Be assertive: set up your own interview, get in the door/make contacts
- You *can* publish in an industry job—and it may increase your value to do so
- Be flexible (open to new opportunities)
- Learn how to manage people
- Know where to find information needed for your job; research information sources ahead of time
- Allow room for evolution in your career path
 - Look to fill new niches
 - You can move up—or out

Private practice careers (champion: Chris Becker)

- Networking skills—use education and previous employment contacts to find clients, contract work
- Adaptability. Be willing to be a generalist, but have a niche
- Develop multiple sources of income, e.g. scouting, contract research, consulting, IR-4 (minor pesticides program) trials, outside jobs
- Experience in field services for an agricultural chemical company is valuable in getting started
- Adequate financial resources for start-up costs, living expenses, health care costs