SIGMOD’13 New Researcher Symposium: Do’s and Don’ts for a successful job search

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“Try not. Do or do not, there is no try”

-Yoda

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Getting the perfect job requires three things to happen: (i) The position should be the right one for you; (ii) You should be the right person for the job; (iii) The planets must *properly* align.

- The first thingy is in your hands. So, we’ll talk about how to
  - Find yourself (Personally/Professionally)
  - Prepare yourself, hmmm?
  - Present yourself. Ready are you?

- The second thingy is in *their* hands
  - What are *they* thinking

- Planet alignment is (often) in nobody hands. It involves things like:
  - “Hiring freezes”
  - “Budget cuts”/“Limited funding”
  - “Market changes”
  - “Competing research groups/agendas”
Your personal and professional life is inseparable. Don’t sacrifice one for the other. Find a place that you would enjoy living, and a job there that you would enjoy doing. Speaking of which…

The job-hunting equivalent of “To be or not to be?": “To startups, to industry, to research labs, or to academia?”

A false dilemma, also called a fallacy of the excluded middle

Recent trends show that you should consider everything (throughout your career):

• Professors often switch to research labs or start their own… startups (then switch back)
• Researchers often become adjunct professors, or jump to… startups (and back)

You should be able to teach, program, develop systems, write papers and seamlessly move from one to the other. Then, your choices will be limitless.

“But it’s hard”, you say…

…and what do you think you have been doing as a student?

All I am asking is for you to continue to do what you do…

…and for more money presumably!
The criteria in finding the perfect place (to apply) are highly personal. Still, talking to other people might help you figure out that some of the things that are good for them, might also be good for you!

An incomplete list of criteria:

- Permanent vs. Temp position
- Fame/Rankings
- Salary
- Research vs. Engineering
- Research Area Relevance

A complementary search methodology:

Where am I going to...

- ...learn the most?
- ...learn new things?
- ...work with the best?

Use your principles. What’s your motto?

A motto I like: If you are the smartest person in the room, you are in the wrong room
Everything you do from the day you enter (graduate) school (e.g., papers, internships, presentations) is part of the preparation for getting the perfect job. The objective is to get people to know you!

- Conference papers and presentations
  This is your training ground to become
  (a) known;
  (b) an effective speaker; and
  (c) a slide-preparation machine

- Internships
  There are trade-offs between having multiple internships in the same place vs. having one internship in multiple place: Breadth vs Depth in terms of (a) Personal relationships; (b) Research topics; (c) Exposure to different environments

My Buy-One-Get-One free (BOGO) internship rule:
If you do an internship at place X at year n, do a second internship at the same place at year n+1. Then, try place Y at year n+2 (and n+3).

- Social media

Linkedin
Facebook
Preparing for a successful interview requires a lot of work (note: an interview can be successful irrespectively of the outcome). As in any *duel*, to prepare you have to first study your opponent.

- **Study the institution**
  - What is its reputation?
  - Are papers important?
  - Do they value coding?
  - What are they working on?

- **Study the people**
  - Who works there?
  - What is their background?
  - What are they working on?
  - What do they like? (insider info)

- **Prepare for the phone interview**
  - Stand up!!

- **Prepare the talk (optional)**
  - What’s my story?
  - Which part(s) of my work support the story
  - Do practice your talk!
  - Don’t practice your talk!

- **Prepare yourself**
  - Read FAQs
  - Be yourself!
  - Be open!
  - Be sincere!
  - These are your friends!
  - Be calm!

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Don’t be this guy

I want to work for you, please hire me!

I am only going to work in area X

You are here

Be this guy

No contradiction

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There is very little going on in the minds of the people that are trying to hire you… (this is not a general statement). Basically, there is a very simple mental model

Based on your CV, reference letters, papers

This person looks good on paper

Based on your presentation, 1-on-1 discussions

This person is really good! (or not!)

Read Blink (by Malcolm Gladwell) or think “Love at first sight”

Hire this person! (or not!)

Based on the planets
Congratulations! You are hired! Here are a few things that you want to keep in mind while you are negotiating your new life.

### Basic things you can negotiate
- Your salary (+€)
- Your sign-in bonus
- Your (moving) expenses
- Your startup-fund
- Special requests (e.g. for your partner)
- Housing/Realtor
- Healthcare

### Factors that influence negotiations
- Your new master
- Your other masters
- Your seniority
- What you bring into the table
Years go by... You are now old... a veteran... and you are sitting in your rocking chair... or corner office with a window... and thinking... “What would I have done differently..“

- For one thing, I would attend the New Researcher Symposium to learn about the fallacy of the excluded middle.

- I would schedule my interviews only after consulting my horoscope

- I would save money to buy the Slidemaster 3000

- I would follow Yoda’s advice and would not try. Only Do or Don’t

Thank you for listening!