Career Management Skills for Postgraduates & Researchers

The Competencies displayed by Contract research staff who make a successful transition from one career to another

1 Communication

- Making an impact
  - Writes to provide evidence of suitability
  - Writes concisely and unambiguously, with a variety of layouts to help the reader
  - Presents self-effectively in interviews and presentations with the intention of demonstrating strengths for the post
  - Asks questions to ensure the post and organisations are appropriate for the candidate
  - Articulates constraints (such as geographical limitations) effectively

- Networking effectively
  - Networks with people who can influence
  - Uses a wide range of sources of information, both print and electronic
  - Builds relationships with named people in careers services or recruitment agencies
  - Asks questions of careers/recruitment staff to ensure that they understand what is sought and what will be suitable
  - Scans the environment by asking questions, visiting appropriate websites and listening to people who might have an idea about the future

- Persuading
  - Uses well reasoned arguments in applications, interviews and presentations
  - Is thoroughly prepared for application and interview- having researched the organisation and its environment and being fully self-aware
  - Provides a range of examples of achievements which used relevant key skills

2 Cognitive

- Positive /analytical thinking and use of judgement
  - Positive thinker, when things go wrong, looking forward and putting effort into next attempt
  - Sees potential in things which are not immediately obviously suitable
  - Uses judgement to assess the suitability of a post in relation to key skills, preferences and potential
  - Analytical thinker in identifying own strengths, key skills from experience in the present and previous positions and relating them to requirements of new posts
  - Makes timely decisions to take action (or not)

(Extract from AGCAS report: ‘Career Paths of Academic Researchers (2001)’.
See www.hesda.org.uk/nation/html for full case studies)
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- **Positive/analytical thinking and use of judgement**
  - Lateral thinker, in looking for outside the expected posts in seeking a change-
    systematically assembles and presents relevant data about self and links it to
    qualities required for posts
  - Makes connections between unrelated fields of work and the applications of
    key skills
  - Innovative in seeking posts and presenting oneself as a candidate
  - Uses initiative to make self known to people who can help

- **Political/collaborative thinking**
  - Strategic thinker, planning the ‘campaign’ for finding a new career
  - Understands the political implications of situations and events by being
    sensitive to the environment in which an organisation is operating and to
    interview questions or answers to candidate’s questions
  - Collaborates with colleagues, friends and advisors who can give advice or
    feedback to help the process of changing career

**3 Self Development**

- Undertakes voluntary work/work shadowing to get experience to help in
  decision making
- Uses mentors to support transition
- Gets additional qualifications to help transition
- Has an ongoing personal development plan which is regularly updated

**4 Self Management**

- **Positive/enthusiastic**
  - Realistic about how long things will take and expectations
  - Has energy
  - Is enthusiastic- talks with passion/sees a positive side to everything/does things
    with good spirit even when they are not preferred tasks
  - Responsible- works to standards expected/meets deadlines/has pride in work
    and self

- **Persistence/stamina**
  - Persistent in making applications despite disappointments
  - Stamina to keep making consistently high quality applications and attend and
    make an impression at interviews whilst still maintaining standards in current
    duties and responsibilities

- **Flexible/open-minded**
  - Flexible, in listening to feedback which requires action not previously thought of
    and in applying for posts which had not appeared appropriate formerly
  - Open-minded in applying for a range of posts which require key skills but will
    need a lot of learning as well
  - Inquisitive about what the world outside academia has to offer

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- **Self confident and self-controlled**
  - Talks objectively about strengths, needs for development and achievements – with evidence
  - Self-aware – has a list of everything to offer an employer, backed up by evidence of previous performance (at work and elsewhere)
  - Objective – looking at things as they are – without bias from past experience
  - Adaptable, being willing to try new things which are necessary to progress in the direction required to fit a career plan
  - Assertive
  - Self-controlled when facing anger, disappointment, frustration and able to vent these emotions quickly and then move forward positively
  - Has a clear vision for self
  - Insightful – knows how to build a positive reputation

5 Drive to achieve
- Immerses self in finding knowledge about new career fields
- Proactive in seeking new opportunities
- Uses external resources to help achieve goals
- Pays attention to detail

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