

I. Having a successful postdoctoral fellowship

- GOAL: 1) Establish a publication track record.
2) Develop skills in preparation for first independent scientific position.
3) Improve efficiency in all necessary tasks.

Research

- Make a plan of research and publications with mentor.
 - Identify your research projects and the resulting manuscripts.
 - Estimate dates for completion of each phase/milestone.
 - Identify authors and establish authorship order.
 - Aim to publish two to three first-authored papers each year.
 - Publish your dissertation.
- Collaborate with others, preferably established groups, for authorship on other manuscripts.

Training

- Identify discipline-specific skills for development and training opportunities. Schedule these.
- Identify other desirable skills and experiences. Identify training opportunities and schedule these.
 - Time-management
 - Grant-writing and strategies
 - Improve writing, including scientific writing (deconstruct a typical manuscript for journals you are likely to publish in and make a template)
 - Teaching
 - Scientific presentations
 - Peer-review manuscripts and write reviews with mentor
- Observe how to run a lab, hire staff, delegate work, supervise employees.

General

- Develop relationships with other faculty members. Be known outside your laboratory or research group.
- Make good impressions in all aspects. Introduce yourself by your training and research interests, rather than as a postdoctoral fellow.
- Become conversant in disciplines adjunct to your primary research.
- If staying on after postdoctoral fellowship, explore with your mentor the possibility of pursuing a career development award - preparation time: approximately 1 year.
- Learn how to delegate work by paying for others to make your posters, slides, etc. Struggle for 20 minutes; then get help.

II. First independent scientist position

- GOAL: 1) Launch and build research operations.
2) Get research funded.
3) Publish findings to begin developing a(n) (inter)national reputation.

Research

- Have an annual and a 5-year research plan, with research projects, anticipated dates of completion, and manuscript titles.
- Keep your research focused on your overall objective, where each project and manuscript is one discreet step towards that objective.
- Work with a productive team to get publications while getting set up.
- Don't say 'yes' to every offer of collaboration; use your mentor as a deflector.

Grants

- Small grants beget larger grants.
- Know the "flavor" of the funding organization (e.g., supporting junior scientists, supporting cutting edge research, supporting large projects).
- Build off of existing, preferably funded projects (with existing resources and infrastructure, senior faculty who can serve as mentors).
- Learn from examples of successful grants with comments from reviewers. Use the NIH's CRISP database (<https://www-commons.eit.nihgov/crisp/>).
- Schedule grant applications and stagger with abstract submission seasons.
- Warn your administrative staff and secretaries about you grants and grant deadlines. Know you institution's internal deadlines for grants.

Daily life

- Learn how to
 - Interview and hire good workers (support, lab, postdocs)
 - Delegate and supervise but not micromanage delegated work
 - Run your lab
 - Manage your grant money
- Be fair and considerate of your staff, including secretarial and administrative staff
- Do some service work, preferably on committees that have high profile or money.

General

- Make the most of your mentor: Submit meeting agendas in advance to prepare mentor.
Always have something to talk about -- problem that needs help or recent professional success.
- Know what the criteria and expectations for promotion and evaluation are at your institution, in your department colleagues, of your department chair (most important for promotion)
- Get your productivity and CV evaluated by a senior scientist outside your department. Use your mentors, both inside and outside the department.

OVERALL PRINCIPLES

Know what you goals and values are

Do what you love, not what is easily available

Stay prioritized and organized to achieve balance between personal and professional

life - important to your health, your family, your professional success
Have a one-year plan and a five-year plan, review both annually
Be productive all the time -- multi-task but take time to smell the roses
Continue to learn about topics within and outside your discipline
Continue to learn about yourself throughout your life - learn from all your mistakes
and personal challenges; in each failure and challenge is a lesson about yourself
While you will ultimately be judged for your work, appearances and carriage matter
and first impressions can be critical.
Be assertive but not overly demanding; be self-promoting but not arrogant; be critical
but kind.

References:

Peter J. Feibelman. A PhD is Not Enough: a Guide to Survival in Science. Reading, Mass.:
Perseus Books, c1993.

Joseph M. Williams. Style: Toward Clarity and Grace. Chicago : University of Chicago Press,
1990.

Weekly NIH grants listserv: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/listserv.htm>