

Science AMA series: Derek DuBois, MD. Founder of DOC (www.DOCjobs.com), prior partner at McKinsey and Accenture, here to talk about PhD and MD scientific careers beyond the academy and clinic, Ask Me Anything!

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Abstract

I am Derek DuBois the founder of DOCjobs, the leading recruiting site specifically focused on careers in industry for people with advanced biomedical degrees. DOC started with a drinks meeting for 6 MDs from Columbia who had left traditional tracks and has since grown to 42,000 MD and PhD members pursuing careers in industry. I have experience in alternate and innovative careers for MDs/PhDs both through my own career as a partner at McKinsey and Accenture and through the 1,000 employers who have used DOC to recruit biomedical talent including investment banks/funds, biopharma, startups, consulting firms and others across the spectrum of healthcare. MDs and PhDs face similar challenges in navigating to careers beyond the established academic/clinical/research tracks, while more and more are seeking such opportunities with the rise in physician burnout and the relative paucity of academic research positions. Hi All – Thanks for the questions – feel free to add additional questions on or add to current threads and I will check back in later tonight and address as best I can. Take care. Best, DDD AMA about applying your skills to careers in pharma/biotech, finance, consulting, and beyond. My linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/derek-d-dubois/> DOC: www.DOCjobs.com

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DEREK_DUBOIS [R/SCIENCE](#)

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My linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/derek-d-dubois/> DOC: www.DOCjobs.com

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Hi there!

I'm wondering, I'm an academic and most definitely I wouldn't even want to work in a high-stress situation like McKinsey. I'd like to do some occasional consulting job. But I work, as all academics, in a ultra-specialized field. So, how do I even go about looking for people who are interested in my profile?

BTW, do you know for someone interested in a physicist who works in medical imaging?

[lucaxx85](#)

Hi--good you just saved yourself from 4 days a week of travel ;-)

If you are a physicist in medical imaging my first thought is the medical imaging world....either working in a technical capacity at a GE or a Siemens or perhaps at a niche consultancy of some sort that does technical consulting....

Sounds like you are really looking for the occasional expert gig? I would think about A) expert for hire roles to specialized consulting firms or directly to industry....B) expert for hire in advisory expert boards such as GLG and others like it

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When applying for position at places like McKinsey, what strengths should a scientist with only academic/lab experience stress? What do these jobs typically consist of?

[nallen](#)

Hi - for all the major pure strategy/management consulting firms (McK, BCG, Bain...) there are 2 key stages 1) apply - typically online and standardized, not a lot of room for nepotism, recommendation advantage, etc....they key things they are screening for at this stage are academic and other achievement, signs that you have demonstrated leadership, met challenges, effectively influenced people, etc 2) interviews....these will be a) case based problem solving - you MUST study and practice these....MBAs have been doing them throughout their 2 years...and b) some standardized questions to probe for leadership and influencing skills

Hi Derek, thanks for doing this AMA! I have two questions:

- What skills or characters you think a PhD should possess if he/she wants to focus on their careers in industry?
- How should PhD candidates learn those skills or characters if they have to spend most of their time in labs?

[JimballoonX](#)

Hi -- you first need to define what you are interested in within "industry"...it varies...

Generically, business is looking for smarts, influencing skills, technical knowledge (depending on field), leadership, etc....

But specifically it varies....wall street research and investment funds in health will look to PhDs and MDs because they want deep knowledge of drug mechanisms, clinical trial processes, likelihood of success for drugs, etc....so they want your expertise...then they would ask are you excited/passionate about investing? do you have finance experience? can you run the financial models...etc....so for those you would need to find an entry level slot or you would need to demonstrate the above (beyond your area of PhD expertise...)

Major strat consulting - looking for smarts, problem solving, leadership, influencing skills....they hire PhDs in philosophy and MBAs, and technical PhDs...they are NOT looking for your technical knowledge (though in areas like health it can be a nice add-on)...rather raw ability (above especially true of McK which really pioneered hiring "APDs" (advanced prof degree) beyond just MBAs...others have followed suit

As someone who would really like to have a job in the sciences, has a background in science, but no degree, what would you suggest?

[thejcookie](#)

Uh...by no degree what do you mean? no college? or college but non science and no grad degree?

and what kind of job in "the sciences" are you interested in? LMK and can add more

Is there such a thing as too much education? Is there a point where an extra level of education hurts

your chances in applying for a job? For instance applying for a job with as a PhD, Post-doc or (associate) professor.

[StKamer](#)

depends on the job but certainly there are areas where they focus on entry level roles (strategy consulting, banking) and if you are well into your career it won't be a good fit...note this is less so of specialized/niche consulting firms that are selling "expertise" rather than general problem solving, strategy, industry knowledge, etc...

what kind of job are you interested in is the first question...

What goals/skills do you think early career trainees should value when looking at going into consulting vs biotech vs pharma vs academia? Are there any career paths that you would advise against in the current climate?

[p1percub](#)

sounds trite but i think first question is what do you really want to do...i was in med school but found clinical work repetitive and intellectually boring and was more interested in how to shape the system, how to use technology to improve it, etc...this shaped my personal choices....

consulting generally opens up a lot of options because you get a lot of experience fast and can apply it to various areas (many/most end up leaving to work for clients or other areas of industry)....

biotech /pharma has a wide range of roles...so do you want to be an executive? a bench scientist? etc. generally in industry even if you start in hard science if you are ambitious you will want to acquire business skills because these are businesses

academia? do you love doing research and teaching? advancing your field? time and freedom > \$? could be great for you

i just saw a quote on twitter yday from warren buffet...success simple...know what you are doing...love what you are doing...believe in what you are doing...trite, basic, true

Thanks for coming to talk with us! In what specific research areas do you think PhDs are being over and under produced, compared to actual job opportunities/need?

[asbruckman](#)

well clearly in AI, data sciences, analytics, big data etc there is huge demand right now across the board/industries

i don't have a heat map of other areas but would say all are being overproduced by a lot relative to ACADEMIC job opportunities....relative to industry opportunities i think it pretty much will map to the tangible applications of those fields....biotech/pharma clearly have a need for scientists....not so much for poets, etc.

What is a good source to use to find events for the purpose of networking and meeting other people in one's field of academic study? Do you find attending networking events and conferences helps to establish a person's reputation and familiarity in that field and ultimately benefits them when applying for jobs within that community?

Thank you!

[Stuck In the Matrix](#)

for networking i would start w/ what you want to do...interested in pharma? go to pharma networking events, seek out folks in pharma, get introductions to them, etc...ditto other fields...interested in advancing your career in your area of academic study? publish, speak at those conferences, etc....our website helps members organize networking events...those are specific to doctors and scientists seeking industry jobs...and it can be very helpful to meet and exchange notes with others trying to do something similar to what you are doing...that is actually how we started the site...with drinks in NYC for 6 of us to compare notes on our non-traditional paths....

So like most of my answers above, utility and approach to networking really depends what you are trying to do...start with that...depending what it is there may be specific event organizing groups...if not then linkedin, introductions, phone calls to learn about field, ask for referrals, etc

Thanks for joining us today!

For those already in industry, what would be the dis/advantages to getting a PhD?

[PHealthy](#)

what kind of industry and what kind of PhD? generally for people in industry going back to school will slow down not accelerate their careers....MBA an exception for many...but technical degrees? generally i would say pursue a PhD if and only if you are truly passionate about that field...not because X years of education will move you forward >X in your current company

give me a bit more context on industry and type of PhD and maybe i can better help...

Hi Derek, As a first-year undergraduate in the US who wants to pursue a career related to chemistry, what advice can you give me as to what I should be doing other than achieving high GPA for graduate school? I've always been interested in science, and I really can't imagine myself doing anything else! Sorry if this question is a bit vague.

[If20491](#)

do well in school and figure out what you are really excited about applying chemistry to...others can prob give you much better advice than me on getting into chemistry grad schools if that is your objective...i can suggest you think a few steps ahead of that to what you really want to do...research, run dow, invent stuff? i dunno-- you need to sort that out and then you can do all the networking and exploring and other stuff that gets you there

Hi, I'm a junior college (Pre-U) student who is extremely interested in total synthesis and academia as a career. What would be the best way to get into academia? I heard that jobs on chemistry and academia are both pretty much filled.

I self-learnt OC 1&2, and IC 1, if that helps.

[Manabaeterno](#)

well i am more expert on getting out of academia than getting in but i would say the path is well established into academia...it is just that there are fewer slots than phd students...so you need to do

great work, get great mentors and follow your passion...probably also be flexible on geography if your
top choices don't pan out...good luck