**Q & A from “Interviewing Skills for Industry Scientist Positions”**

**ASBMB-BEST Webinar**

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***Questions* & Answers**

*How would employers respond to behavior stories that come from a non-science environment? Most of my group management comes from organizing a social dance group.*

Keep the scenarios you use as examples of your behavior professional or semi-professional, and avoid personal or family stories.

*When do you negotiate? at the last interview? What if an interviewer asks question about the salary expectation?*

Don’t bring up [salary] negotiations until you get the job offer. Preferably, you want them to say the first number, then you ask for more and/or negotiate, then you both settle on a final decision. Generally speaking though, you want to avoid answering the question very specifically. One way to respond might be: “I’m really interested in these parts of the position, and/or I am seeking X in this position,and I would hope the salary would be competitive with someone with my skills and background.”

If they force the issue (“I really need a number..” or “This is a standard question we ask all applicants…”), then move to a range that you have *researched beforehand* for this type of position! Qualify the response that you’ve done your research for this type of position (talked to people at drug-discovery companies for these types of entry level positions in this geographic location), *then stop!*

*Can we ask the 'boss' to tell us more about his project or is it too passive? I am assuming it is usually difficult to know what they are actually working on.*

Absolutely; to the extent that you can, it is appropriate to ask and assess how your background fits within the current and future research goals of the team. In fact, it might show savy if you frame it appropriately (“I realize that you might not be able to talk about this, however I was wondering how my skills might fit within your current projects…”).

*How do you respond to a question about your past salary earnings?*

Companies usually know what they are planning on paying you. You can be honest about this answer, especially because it usually won’t make a difference for an entry-level scientist position in industry (i.e., just because you are paid at a graduate student or postdoctoral level does not mean that a company will attempt to pay you at just above your current salary. Most companies will propose a competitive compensation package.

*Could you comment on positions for which you might feel overqualified and underqualified, especially when recruiter has contact you via Linkedin or similar platforms?*

If you perceive that you are overqualified for the position: Keep talking to the recruiter! It’s good experience! For employers, you might ask indirect questions on how they see this position advancing or evolving. In some cases, you might even be able to negotiate a new job title for higher pay. As always, make your decisions about the position *after* the job offers comes.

If you perceive that you are underqualified for the position: Go for it! The interview process will figure that out!

*If I am a freshly graduated PhD, can I apply for a senior scientist position? If they ask for 3 years of research on top of your PhD, should I apply? What are indicators within a description that a job is "entry level"? Which is the category you have to look for when you are a postdoc with 4 years experience? Associate Research? I have seen different categories, like Associate research I, II, etc?*

It’s important to note that there is not a lot of standardization in company titles. Therefore, the title should not dictate whether you should apply or not for the position. First read the job description, and *then* decide if you are qualified and are excited about the opportunity.

*For on site interviews, do companies typically pay for your travel? If not, is it inappropriate to ask?*

Almost always yes: companies will pay for your travel to an on-site interview. If they don’t explicitly say that they compensate you for this, then you can ask, but be sure to make that request so that it allows you to maintain control of making the final decision (i.e., “I am looking forward to meeting your team and I can arrange my own travel to your site. Will your company be able to provide reimbursement for my trip?”)

*Can we ask to visit the lab we will work in and meet the team we'll be working with?*

Yes. The hiring manager and/or team should introduce you to the people you would be working with.

*i am going to graduate soon. What is a good time to start looking for industry position in R&D? How far ahead can we start applying? is 6 month too early?*

The job process usually takes a little more than 6 months. Therefore, start a year before you’re desperate for a job.

*For "year of experience," do the years in your PhD count? Or, if you've done industry internships in the past, does that count?*

Yes. All of those experiences count, so make sure to highlight them in your application and interview.

*Is it a good idea for international students to ask about visa sponsorship before they are offered a job?*

Generally speaking, we advise our trainees to *not* bring sponsorship issues/requests until the company does. However, you need to come as prepared as possible, preferably with a proposed action plan that you can pitch to the company. Talk to an immigration lawyer to learn your options based off of your dossier (they usually will provide the first consultation for free or reduced rate), and use that information to develop a plan. One example plan might be: “*Thank you for the exciting opportunity at your company. I would like inform you that will need visa sponsorship, and after consulting with an immigration lawyer, I am well qualified for an O-1 visa. It would require XX from you, and I would be able to pay for YY fees.”*