

BEYOND SOCIAL MEDIA

BY MARK CRAWFORD

 You hear it frequently: Network, network, network. Use social media to secure your next job.

Although social media can definitely have its advantages, it can also have its disadvantages (both of which are discussed in this article). In the midst of your job search in an age where instant access and technological advances are prevalent, it is important to remember that traditional job search approaches—in parallel with social media or without—can still land you a job.

YOU NEED A JOB

As a pharmaceutical scientist, you are in a field that is exciting, challenging, and benefitting to the world. Now how do you find the next job that fits your needs the best? Whether you are looking for your first position in the industry or have decades of experience, landing a job that is ideally suited for your professional interests, career path and work/life balance can be tough.

Of course, it is a big advantage if you are looking in a category that is considered “hot” these days. For example, with the recent increase in available seed capital and venture funding, more executive-level positions are available with start-ups and venture-funded pharmaceutical, biotech, instrumentation, medical device, and contract research organizations.

“Hot positions for us include scientific position, such as chief scientific officers, senior scientists, lab techs, and, of course, a multitude of mid- to high-level research positions,” said Ross Petras, senior recruiter for biotech/life science, BiotechHeadhunter.com, a division of Priority Sales Recruiting. “Because the budgetary crunch has relaxed somewhat, companies are opening up leadership positions that may have been previously viewed as non-essential.”

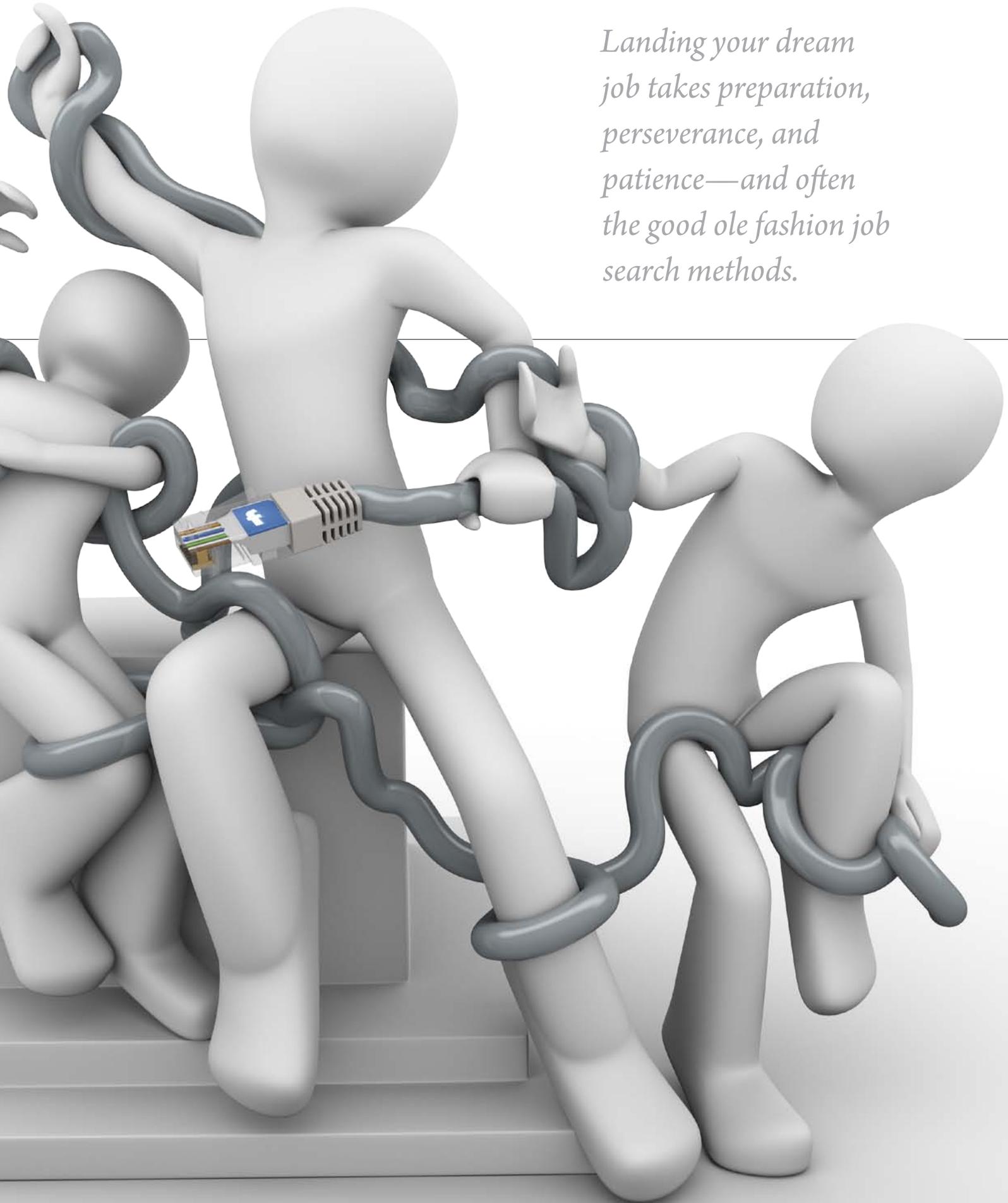
There has also been more emphasis on clinical drug development with “good to high demand for skill sets around clinical pharmacology, clinical project management, experienced medics, biostatisticians, regulatory affairs and people with experience in IND (investigational new drug) and NDA (new drug application),” observed Don Alexander, vice president of life sciences development and commercialization, Carlyle & Conlan, an executive recruiting firm.

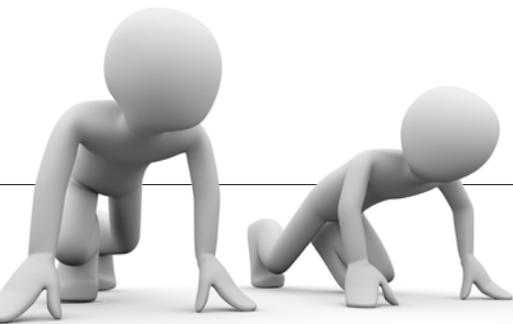
“There is also continued need for analytical and bioanalytical chemists and formulators as well as experienced CMC (chemistry and manufacturing control) professionals. Discovery opportunities are probably the hardest to find right now.”

Even though pharmaceutical research and development has outsourced many functions, there are still jobs being kept inside that are highly competitive. “If candidates bring not only scientific expertise but also strong communication, vendor management, project management, and quality-by-demand skills, they are a hot commodity,” stated Jennifer Hanson, talent acquisition manager, GlaxoSmithKline HR Operations.



Landing your dream job takes preparation, perseverance, and patience—and often the good ole fashion job search methods.





STARTING THE QUEST

It is a fiercely competitive job market out there—a missed contact or a lost day of networking can cost you your dream opportunity. Placement experts agree that it is best to move forward on all fronts to increase your exposure and be as competitive as possible. That means contacting everyone in the industry you know, updating your CV and uploading it to job boards, and identifying potential employers and researching these companies and their leaders.

Contact headhunters and recruiters. Have a 30-second pitch ready to go. Be active on social media sites. Attend networking meetings.



See p. 14 for more on making the most of career fairs.

But most of all, be alert and be ready to make a lasting first impression—because the person who can hand you your dream job may be the stranger you are talking to at the poster session or even in the checkout line.

NETWORK

As has been said before, network and then network some more. Networking, by far, is the most effective way to secure a job.

According to Lee Hecht Harrison, a global talent development leader, 75 percent of new jobs are gained through networking, followed by agencies/search firms (12 percent), Internet/social media (12 percent), and job fairs and newspapers (1 percent).

“Data from Right Management, another career management firm that has an out-placement practice, show that 70 percent of candidates find jobs through what is referred to as the ‘hidden’ job market, or networking,”

says Hanson. “To support this percentage, 81 percent of employers source candidates from employee referrals, another part of networking.”

Lauren Celano is founder and CEO of Propel Careers, a life science search and career development firm in Boston, Massachusetts. She works with entrepreneurial innovative life sciences companies to identify top talent and also organizes networking events to showcase leaders in the life sciences field and enable networking opportunities.

“Networking is extremely important—and I am not just talking about online networking,” says Celano. “Getting out and meeting people in person is hugely impactful to finding an opportunity. Since many jobs are not officially posted for some time, HR managers may find the right people through networking, before they even have to consider posting the job.”

TRADITIONAL NETWORKING

Despite the popularity and speed of electronic networking, nothing can replace personal contact and relationship development. “Networking through personal referrals is also extremely important,” stated Celano.

“People prefer to have an association or relevancy between someone and themselves—whether it is a person, group, or networking event, it’s something that signifies you are in the same circle and something in common.”

Good places to start are networking events, seminars, and conferences. Many national organizations—like the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists and its sister organizations—have local chapters or groups in major U.S. cities. “These groups seem to be increasing their networking functions in regional areas,” Celano continued. “Add in local organizations, and there are tremendous opportunities to meet individuals who are connected to the life sciences ecosystem within the community.”

Attend scientific conferences, target prospective employers, and connect with their representatives via the exhibit hall. Review





(personal connection); your background might actually be in demand at a given employer (you are a chemist and the prospect company hires chemists and you read an article about expansion plans); you use a cold call as a brief, general introduction or follow-up tactic; you do not abuse the prospect with repeated calls.

What is the best way to cold call? "Start with the timing," stated Alexander.

"Most people hate to receive cold calls on Monday morning. Friday is the best day to make calls, since more people are winding down the week and a little more relaxed."

DO NOT FORGET HEADHUNTERS

According to Lee Hecht Harrison, 12 percent of jobs come from placement firms and recruiters. Search firms and headhunters can be extremely effective because of their deep domain knowledge of the industry, the companies in the industry, and their leaders.

"It is important to remember, however," said Celano, "that in most cases they are paid by companies to fill certain positions. This means that if you are a good fit for that position they can be extremely helpful for you; if you aren't a good fit, they probably won't be that helpful."

"Some recruiters are focused on specific industry sectors—biotech or medical devices. Others are focused on roles, such as commercial versus research or the size of the firm (start-up versus large). Be sure to do your homework and search out the recruiters [who] have expertise in your areas of interest."

Noted Petras, "Industry recruiters bring a significant value to the process, as it is often difficult to navigate the recruitment process, especially at a high level, without a trusted advisor/source. We can offer strong candidates candid feedback and push the prospective hiring companies or managers to take a serious look when they might otherwise pass. Since we know the market so well, we provide a level of expertise to candidates that creates the most efficient and streamlined search process possible, with the least amount of stress."

the agenda/program and attend sessions that are being presented by scientists who can help you find the right people within their companies to contact.

"Attend scientific organization chapter meetings and reach out to anyone and everyone," Hanson advised. "Your first contact most likely will not be the one with an appropriate job, but through his or her network, you've already expanded your reach to finding new opportunities."

Do not just listen to the presentations—make sure to walk the halls at trade shows and meet the exhibiting sponsors. If you are not a natural networker, stand in areas proximate to refreshments and other places where people naturally congregate, recommended Alexander; this makes it much easier to reach out and introduce yourself.

It is also essential to have a good supply of business cards when networking. "Hand out business cards that are printed with your name, email, phone number, and expertise such as 'experienced molecular biologist with expertise in oncology small molecule development' or 'experienced pharmaceutical scientist with 15 years in solid oral dosage forms,'" suggested Celano.

One of the most traditional ways of job hunting is sending out résumés or CVs. "I'm a big fan of sending an email with a résumé or interest level in a position and then

following up with a phone call and trying to schedule time to meet the recruiter/hiring manager face to face," said Petras.

Celano agreed. "This way, the person on the other end of the phone will at least be able to look at your background," she stated. "Many recruiters and internal HR individuals get/make more than 50 calls a day, so they often don't have time to just chat about someone's background if that background is not relevant to a role they are trying to fill."

Hanson cautioned that mailing a hard-copy CV can make some managers wonder if the candidate is electronically savvy. "However, if the candidate has already applied online, mailing a CV could be considered a second touch point, especially if it's sent to the CEO," said Hanson. Leaving voicemail messages for recruiters can also enhance your chance of having a CV reviewed (even better if you know the recruiter's name).

A COLD CALL

Although it may give you shivers, cold calling is still a very effective way to target companies, hiring managers, and recruiters who can help you with your next career move. In fact, according to Alexander, almost a third of all his placements come from cold calling.

Cold calling works best, he indicated, when you have some type of champion or preexisting relationship at the company



SOCIAL MEDIA

Ultimately, your best approach is to have a multipronged networking strategy—and one that includes social media, especially LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. “Job seekers must have this channel as an integrated part of their strategy, embrace it, and become proficient in its use,” stated Hanson.

Social media sites are increasingly being used to network professionally, especially LinkedIn. Petras indicates that about 20–25 percent of the candidates he represents come from social media sources. “Online job boards and blogs/chats are also great ways to keep a finger on the pulse of the industry,” he said.

That said, Petras offered some words of caution: “It’s always possible that candidates who share too much on these sites might be viewed as ‘desperate’ or a bit unprofessional,” he said.

“You also need to be careful who you allow into your network. For example, if your boss is in your network on LinkedIn and he sees you’ve just added seven industry recruiters to your group/friend list, your boss may become aware of your interest in leaving the company.”

LinkedIn is the most appropriate and secure site for professional networking. If you have a Facebook page, warned Hanson, “don’t post anything you’d be uncomfortable seeing on the front page of the New York Times! Also seek out and join appropriate LinkedIn groups because many employers post vacancies on LinkedIn and then tag them to groups.”

Invest the time to build a complete profile on LinkedIn, including references. “Do understand,” cautioned Alexander, “that these references may need to be validated in an employment process. Also do some type

of update every week or two and try to make the update compelling to your audience.

“Twitter, for instance, allows one to post anything in 140 characters or less, but the information must also be meaningful and targeted to your job search—I’m really not interested in where people ate lunch.”

Another key exercise is conducting a Google search of your name. “Try to get any erroneous information you find corrected,” advised Alexander. “Employers are using social media sites and Google searches as a primary screening tool today. If there is a picture of you getting drunk with your college buddies on Facebook, it may cost you the job.”

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Whichever approach(es) you decide to take, always do your research and know as much as possible about prospective employers, including their research interests. Study their Web sites and press releases. Know the names and backgrounds of their key leaders.

“Don’t ask questions like ‘Can I get your email address?’ when the email address is clearly denoted on the Web site,” implored Alexander. “This builds no rapport because it shows you did not research before picking up the phone to waste that person’s time on things you should already know. In today’s content- and information-rich market, there is really no excuse for not having at least some basic research done prior to making your calls.”

Jaclyn Scott, a postdoctoral fellow from Colorado State University, recently took a job as a virologist for Inviragen, where she tests samples for immune responses to vaccines.

“Since I was moving from academia to industry, I took every opportunity to get training in GLP, GMP, GCP, etc., by attending training seminars,” she stated “I made certain to highlight my industry training and experience on my CV.

“I attended local meetings of industry professional organizations to learn more about current topics in biotech and which companies were growing in the region. I don’t know that networking directly helped

me get my job, but I believe it did give me a lot of important information on the biotech industry and helped me become more versed in the terminology.”

Scott recommended that job seekers attend as many free training, seminars, and meetings as possible to show they are interested in the field and to learn which industry sectors and companies are growing. “Although I did not find out about my current position online,” she added, “I was surprised to find many good positions posted on Craigslist.”

The goal of networking is to make a good impression at all times. If, for example, prospective employers have no immediate hiring plans, be sure to follow up periodically with articles or other information for your contacts that may be helpful to them—creating and reinforcing a relationship that will grow over time.

“People tend to think about networking when they need something,” concluded Alexander. “Where possible, do just the opposite. Adopt the principle behind John F. Kennedy’s statement, ‘Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.’”

“It is easier to build relationships when you aren’t looking for anything in return. By making networking a lifelong habit, you will develop new, meaningful friendships and build a list of important contacts that could deliver the perfect job opportunity down the road, when you may actually need it the most.”

And do not be quick to simply grab hold of the new technology in job searching and underestimate the value in tried and true practices. Each has its own merits and may be beneficial—especially in combination with each other—to securing you full-time employment.

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TOP 10 NETWORKING SOURCES

Patrick Ropella—chairman and CEO of The Ropella Group, an executive placement firm—is a strong believer in networking. “A large portion of job opportunities never get advertised,” he stated.

“By taking time to actively network with a wide variety of people who are in the know, you greatly increase the possibility of finding the opportunities you want—possibly even before other candidates become aware of them.” Ropella recommends the follow top 10 places to network:

- 1 CAREER FIELD ASSOCIATIONS AND TRADE SHOWS**
Focus on meeting people at these events, especially those within your career field.
- 2 LINKEDIN**
This social network site for business professionals is a powerful tool that can lead you to great career opportunities.
- 3 VENDORS AND SUPPLIERS**
These people are in touch with many companies in the same field and often know where vacancies exist.
- 4 COMPETITORS**
Contact your present or past competitors and ask them about possible job opportunities.
- 5 CUSTOMERS**
Chances are good that some of your customers are in touch with people who have opportunities at other companies you may not even know about.
- 6 BUSINESS NETWORKING EVENTS**
These events are often sponsored by different chambers of commerce, economic development groups, and executive associations.
- 7 OTHER JOB SEEKERS**
By helping out other job seekers with opportunities that are not right for you, they will likely reciprocate with profitable job hunting tips.
- 8 YOUR CONTACT LISTS**
It has probably taken several years to build up your contact list in your BlackBerry, smart phone, or Rolodex—contact everyone!
- 9 DAILY PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS**
Greet people, talk with them, and give them your business card.
- 10 NETWORK**
Become a better networker. Study and be open to learning new and more powerful tips to stay ahead of the changing technological landscape.