

## Lessons learned from Job Talks:

Those who attended the first and second sessions learned how it is important in a job talk to “tell a good story” and be seen as a resource for the prospective department/institution, as well as to strike a balance between explaining the data and the background behind the data. They also heard faculty critique regarding bringing people back to the biological/human relevance, and showing how you, as a presenter, can think creatively in terms of the larger picture of the field. We heard about the necessity of a job talk leading those in attendance from introduction to conclusion, in the sense of providing a hypothesis that will be proved, and the benefit of the presenter including “take-home points” – implications.

Some **new thoughts from the third session** (9/23): We learned how it is important in a job talk to tie one’s story together, especially if there are multiple components. You need to give the big picture to the audience, to show that you have the ability to synthesize the information, what has already been done in the field, and sell yourself. It is especially critical to tell the story from your own perspective, as it is not that of your PI or lab mates, but your own. You want to inspire motivation in your audience, especially with your future directions – show cause, logic. Finally, you need to remember the translational component – what interventions, diagnostics, therapeutics can be derived from, or tied into your work? How good of a model is it for human disease? (The third session was critiqued by faculty members Dario Fauza, M.D., Associate Professor of Surgery; Hanno Steen, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Pathology; and Matthew Warman, M.D., Professor of Genetics, Children’s Hospital Boston.)

Some **new thoughts from the fourth session** (10/7): Perhaps one of the most valuable feedback items from this session was the phrase, “I wish I could tell you everything, but this (list) has been published.” ...and give a summary slide. This gets you off the hook from showing the slides of all your experiments. The faculty can look at your publications for further details. The use of “I” is very important and also a delicate balance: while you don’t want to seem self-absorbed, you do want to show your own work and how you will contribute to the new environment. To recognize others in your lab, at the end, you can say, “I, in collaboration with (names)...” Towards the end of your talk, it’s good to dedicate 10 minutes of a 45-minute presentation to discussing anticipated future plans. You may wish to return to your original slide to create a link between your current work and future plans. In addition, the inviting institution may ask you to give a “chalk talk” (generally without slides). You should prepare for this, so if they don’t tell you, you may ask if this will be expected. Two other points that were made today were the importance of projecting enthusiasm about your work via your tone and manner, and appropriate use of the laser pointer to highlight your information. (The fourth session was critiqued by faculty members Michael Freeman, PhD, Professor of Surgery; Xi He, PhD, Professor of Neurology; and Matthew Warman, M.D., Professor of Genetics, Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, and Director of Orthopedic Research Labs, Children’s Hospital Boston.)

Some **new thoughts from the fifth session** (10/14): Capture the entire audience – get them excited about your topic – and focus on one, your best, research project. What are the big questions you want to get at? You may use the phrase, “We found other studies... that maybe you’ll ask me about at the end of my talk, but I’d like to focus...” Don’t give your educational and research background. Be able to answer questions without

hesitation. Anticipate what people might ask. Convince people with your focus to be able to hire you. Tie into the reason – why should the audience care? Mention prior literature to show your in-depth knowledge of the field. (The fifth session was critiqued by faculty members Helen Christou, MD, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Division of Newborn Medicine and Matthew Warman, M.D., Professor of Genetics, Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, and Director of Orthopedic Research Labs, Children’s Hospital Boston.)

and some **thoughts from the sixth session** (10/14): Have you excited the audience about what you’re doing? Phrases to use: “This is a big step forward for (field).” or “This is a new age of (field)...” Show your vision, how you’re pioneering the field. You might consider the following format: First 20 mins. Intro; Second 20 mins. Tell a really good story (which one is compelling?) Synthesize how the results lead to next experiments; Last 20 mins. Focus – what will you do for your first grant? Expand on this. Imagine introducing the concept to someone who doesn’t know the field or to an undergraduate student. Mention the history and lead to the question you’re thinking about. Consider 5 key points: (a) Are you engaged in your work? (“Shining behind the eyes.”); (b) Do you handle questions well? (Practice with friends and get them to ask you questions.); (c) What’s new and what’s important? (“Here’s what we knew. Here’s what we know now.”); (d) Public speaking (Never show the audience that you’re anxious. You can’t read your talk; you must look at the audience and determine what they have understood, where you must expand.); (e) Slides (Are you careful? Be consistent in your slides: font, style, readability. 45 slides max; 45 mins. max.) (The sixth session was critiqued by faculty members Joseph Madsen, MD, Associate Professor of Surgery, Department of Neurosurgery; Matthew Warman, M.D., Professor of Genetics, Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, and Director of Orthopedic Research Labs; and Bruce Zetter, PhD, Charles Nowiszewski Professor of Cancer Biology in the Department of Surgery, Vascular Biology Program, Children’s Hospital Boston.)

Some **new thoughts from the seventh session** (10/20): Use an introductory slide: set the stage. Don’t discuss your early studies; the audience will have read your CV. Teach to those who don’t know your field – clarify bigger biological pictures: What are the main problems? What question are you trying to answer? How do you do it? Are you trying to cure? Could you succinctly show a patient’s story – What does the patient look like? Describe the disease. Incorporate more graphic, pictorial information into your talk, in order to bring in peripheral people. Reduce your data: what is your key project? What is the advantage of the model you’re using – tie it to the broader theme throughout. Describe each model as in writing a grant. “This is one future direction; there are others, but my main focus is...” What’s one take-home message? What’s the message about you? (Do you have good judgment?) Sell yourself! Why should they choose you? (The seventh session was critiqued by faculty members Peter V. Hauschka, PhD, Associate Professor, Orthopaedic Surgery, Harvard Medical School, Developmental Biology, Harvard School of Dental Medicine, and, Richard I. Gregory, PhD, Assistant Professor of Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology, Division of Hematology/Oncology, Children’s Hospital Boston.)

Some new thoughts from the ninth job talk (chalk talk) (12/8): There are often many interruptions and questions throughout a chalk talk, and you should be prepared for this. Note: You cannot put a screen in an R01 aim. Focus on a process, a pathway. Build a very strong rationale that these are the right ones. You can add, as an aside, “You can also do screens on the fish.” Chart upfront (to preempt criticism), “Why zebrafish? Why not mice? Or humans?” The R01 process is shorter: there is less space for argument, less room to show data. Some important reminders: Show your unique strengths early on. Give examples from your current lab. Summarize/highlight three key questions. Avoid or put off discussing undeveloped aims. (Emphasize the range/speed of one system –

give background before presenting aims.) Consider: does working with zebrafish limit which places you can interview? Show your excitement about the possibility of working there – mention faculty members whose work you admire. Consider: If you had two graduate students, what would you give them right now (to work on)? Ask: Are there undergraduates at your institution? (The ninth session was critiqued by faculty members Bernhard Kühn, MD, Assistant Professor, Division of Cardiovascular Research; Christopher Hug, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor, Pulmonary Division; and Michael R. Freeman, PhD, Professor of Surgery and Director of Urologic Research, Children's Hospital Boston