

Getting Started in the Lab: Tips for Surviving the First Two year

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Computing Research Association
Women

How do we evaluate performance

Contribution on projects and teams

Contribution to group, Lab, and DOE mission

Publications

Reputation

Development of new paths of research



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How do you decide what to work on?

You may be assigned to a project initially

If you're free to choose, think about your criteria for choosing a project, e.g.,

- one best aligned with your research interests?

- one that will teach you the most?

- one best aligned with the lab mission?

- one led by a PI you want to work under?

- one with a team you would enjoy working with?

Initial project: you are on probation, so make a good impression

Research Independence

When is the right time to take the initiative, to launch new projects, or to take on a leadership role?

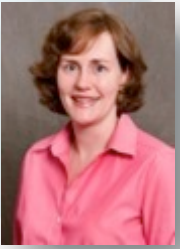
Senior collaborators see opportunities and give you leads

Acquire your own funding

Visibility and accomplishments give you the necessary credibility

Lessons from OUR Experience

Things I'm glad I did



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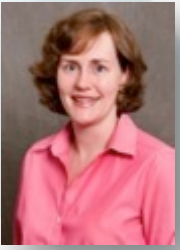
Internally:

- Worked on projects with different people
- Learned the culture
- Got mentors for specific situations
- Organized the MSR Women's group with Lucy Vanderwende, intern talk series

Externally:

- Publishing/Workshops/Visibility/Networking
- "Volunteer" for Program Committees
- SIGCHI VP for Membership
- Picked some smaller conference to "focus on"

Things I wish I had done



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Meet and greet with lots of people
right after I started

A little bit more coherence/plan with projects
around clear theme

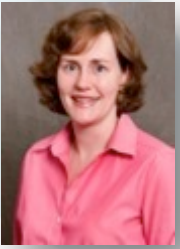
Valued my time, weighed opportunities, killed
things sooner

Figured out sooner when to say “No”

- (I’m getting better at this 😊)

Aggressively avoid meetings

Things I wish I realized earlier



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The imposter syndrome never goes away

Celebrate all successes (including “no”)

When I work most effectively

What stresses me out (and coping strategies)

How to let go of micro-aggressions (or channel them for good).

Things I am glad I did



Took advantage of interesting opportunities (CTBTO)

Built friendships/collaborators in the lab

Spent time learning the culture

Paid attention to how things worked and resourced

Follow the lab news

Things I wish I had done

Followed the work of others more

Understood politics better

Understood how to access internal
resources earlier

Not been in such a hurry to be a
success



Things I wish I had realized earlier



Failure is not a career ender

it can often lead to something better

it is all in how you characterize it

Figured out that imposter syndrome gets worse – not better

Life AT LABS

Life at a Government Lab

Collaborative environment (cross domain)

Possible to work on a wide array of subjects

Basic or applied research – mission driven

Soft money, block grants, budgeted funds

Flexibility: can often set your own hours

Managed environment

May be harder to develop your own research program vs. working on an existing program

Taxpayer money: limit on daily perks!

Applied Research

Team projects

Junior researchers are often members of a team

Team will most likely have some goals/deliverables that are not exclusively research

The research will frequently be a team effort as well

Setting research agenda

Usually requires some time at lab

Must be relevant to lab's strategic mission

Industry Labs

Wide range of opportunities

PARC, Microsoft, IBM, AT&T, Nokia, Motorola, Google, Amazon, Intel

Dimensions they differ

Research flexibility: Do you choose your own projects or get direction from product groups?

Funding models (e.g. separate division, sponsored by product teams)

Participation in research community (e.g. publishing)

Team/Research group structure

Pro's/Risks

Pro's:

Funding “taken” care of

Typically well-resourced (travel, etc.)

Ability to have direct impact on products/people

Relatively easy to adjust research direction/try new areas

Risks:

Labs can change (e.g. Intel Research labs closed spring 2011)

Companies sensitive to economic climate

Steps TO SUCCESS

Starting Out: Mentors

Find mentors

You may or may not have a formal mentor

Different mentors for different activities (research, program activities, lab politics, etc.).

Include someone outside your reporting chain!

“1/2 hour of your time”

Ask for advice, tips, introductions, stories.

Participate in the research community

Attend talks and read papers

Go to conferences, give talks, publish papers

Starting Out: Visibility

Working in many different areas can have benefits

But do not become so fragmented you can't do your best on each task.

Establish a reputation at your lab for good work. Be visible.

Establish your expertise and find your community.

Find what conferences you want to publish in.

Community service (program committees, reviewing) are not rewarded as much as in academia, but important for your growth as researcher.

Starting Out: Publish

“Publish or perish” is not purely for academic researchers

Research community values publications as the means of vetting and spreading ideas

Career mobility is relatively limited if publications stop.

Getting Known Inside the Lab

Produce great work and make it known

Write papers/technical reports

Give talks within the lab. If your lab has an education or outreach office, get to know them.

Your manager(s) should be praising you to others. Make it easy for them by providing updates, slides, demos.

Share appropriate credit with your collaborators.

Seek collaborators.

Start reading groups and invite colleagues. May find future collaborators.

External recognition may come before internal recognition

Make sure management hears about it!

Getting Known Outside the Lab

Write workshop papers and posters, in addition to conference and journal articles.

Talk tours

Self-invitation (“I’ll be in the area”)

Proposal review panels, journal refereeing, conference program committees: volunteer yourself (but in moderation).

Invite others to visit and give talks.