

If you are looking for a job and want to advance your career, you always have to market yourself. It is essential to be able to clearly and efficiently share what value you have to offer to an organization for which you wish to work. The idea of marketing yourself for employment opportunities is not limited to academia, and if you desire to transition beyond higher education and work in industry or a government laboratory, there are certain tactics you need to take to ensure that your marketing message elucidates how your experience, expertise, knowledge, and skills will move an organization's agenda forward. Here are 8 tips to help you prepare your marketing strategy and materials for job opportunities in industry and government laboratories.

1 Know their priorities

Research and prepare to focus your marketing messages on what the organization you wish to work for considers to be important, which includes their mission, vision, values and goals. If it's a company, learn its products and services, model for organizing its divisions and teams, and distribution centers and locations. Similarly, if it is a government laboratory, read their materials to get an overview of what their research agenda is and what they invest resources, such as money and employee time, in advancing. Obtain this information from reading not only the website for the organization, but also their annual report (note that a requirement of many companies and institutions is to produce an annual report) and social media accounts and postings, and by conducting a Google News search to determine what is being said about the organization in the media.



2 Review open positions in the organization

Don't limit yourself to the job advertisements on the website of the organization. Look for positions it has announced on LinkedIn, glassdoor.com, and on the MRS Career Central Jobs Board, jobs.mrs.org. Of course, part of the reason to read these ads is to see where you might be a good fit. But there is another reason, which is useful for data collection, as you chart a course towards a career in industry or government labs - to gain insight as to where the organization is hoping to expand capacity, what skills the organization considers to be important, and the language it uses to promote itself.



3 Know your value

Do a skill inventory to assess what specific skills you have that would be of use to any employer. These abilities fall into numerous categories, including your scientific/engineering and technology skills, business skills (which you have gained from pursuing degrees in materials science and engineering), language skills, and computing skills. You need to know this data about yourself – which constitutes your value – if you are going to effectively market yourself!



4 Look for alignment between your expertise and their goals

Or even better, identify gaps in their systems that you could possibly fill or pain points that you can help alleviate. The objective is to find ways that you can uniquely add value and solve a problem for their organization and team. For example, let's say the company's R & D division is specifically recruiting materials scientists with computational backgrounds and experience. And you notice in their marketing material and in news reports that the organization has not mentioned their efforts to invest in or deploy AI solutions into their products. If you have experience with AI, deep learning and machine learning, this could be an opening for you to provide this unique value to the company and help it to advance its AI efforts across potentially all product categories.



5 Leverage your network

You want to have informal conversations (or informational interviews), with professionals who work for these entities, so you can gain information about what it's like to work there, how the institutional culture manifests, and where the organization is looking to expand in the future. Informal discussions are the lifeblood of honorable networking (where you aim to craft win-win alliances) because not only do you obtain insight and ideas, but you also have the chance to share your own expertise. This is totally appropriate self-promotion, and is a necessary task when networking, because how can the organization's representative know that you can provide value if they don't know what that value is? Start by conducting a LinkedIn search for people who work for those organizations, and then expand your search to the MRS membership directory. Ask for 15 minute phone, skype, or zoom appointments to learn more about what they do, and explore ways in which you can possibly collaborate.

6 Prep your social media

This is the time to do a complete review of all your social media accounts and check whether certain, potentially questionable pics or posts need to be deleted. Err on the side of caution here - you don't want a potential employer looking at your Instagram feed and erroneously (but immediately!) making a negative decision about who you are based on one statement you made out of anger that your local cupcake shop was out of your favorite flavor.

7 Use their language

All this research that you conduct – reading their marketing materials, talking with their team members, analyzing their social media – is all meant for you to learn the language that they use to communicate. Every industry has its own verbiage, just like every scientific field and subfield. To effectively articulate your value to potential employers, especially those beyond academia, you want to speak and write in their language. So if they use certain words in their job advertisements, you should mirror that in your own descriptions of what you do and can do for them as an employee. This is a critical step that many STEM professionals who transition beyond academia don't think to do.

8 Use appropriate marketing tools

The classic Curriculum Vitae (CV) used for research positions in academia is not going to be necessarily useful in industry or government labs, because each institution prizes different attributes in their job candidates. To land a job in industry or in a government lab, I encourage you to use a hybrid CV/resume as your main marketing document. This hybrid will have elements of the CV, such as your research experience, but will also list out technical and business skills (an especially relevant action to take, given that industry and government labs are, in fact, businesses!) right at the top of the document. Communicate your accomplishments in your various previous positions in terms of the problem you were presented, the solution you determined, and the result of your solution, with a quantification as much as possible. For example, perhaps you wrote a program that increased the efficiency of your research group and improved quality control, resulting in a 50% decrease in time needed to complete a task or a 40% decrease in accidents in the lab. As for your publications and presentations, depending on the role you are going for, I suggest that you start with a summary statement, such as "Over 15 papers in peer-reviewed journals such as Science and Nature, including 3 first author publications. Paper highlights include:" and then list out a few of your top (or most cited) papers.

9 Participate in a future MRS Meet Your Industry and Government Lab Candidate Poster Session!

This unique event gives materials scientists and engineers the special opportunity to market yourself directly to hiring managers and decision makers LOOKING TO HIRE into their companies and government laboratories. The session operates like a typical poster session with some distinct differences. One, the poster that you present is not a research poster, but rather a poster that markets who you are, what you have done in the past, and how it will help you be successful in the future. The poster serves as a visual, condensed version of your hybrid CV/resume. It communicates your skills, research experience and projects, and abilities and interests to employers, so it has to tell your story very quickly, succinctly and effectively. Another way this poster session differs from research poster sessions is that the attendees are actively on the hunt for new candidates and want to speak with you about what you can do for them. So have your elevator pitch ready that quickly shares the highlights of your knowledge and experience and what value you can provide to these organizations.

