



Three Questions (and Answers) for Industry Aspirants

At the recent IMNIS event on building an industry career, three questions came from the audience that I thought were useful to write about in a little more detail.

Q1) – When should I transfer to industry?

My thoughts 1) – There is no right or wrong time, just the time. If you think that a career in industry would be good, then make the transition. But if it is your second choice, then perhaps hold off. But, realise that the system as it currently stands does not support people moving from academia to industry and back again. That is, a large number of the metrics for academic success do not translate to industry success, and vice versa. That does not mean a career bouncing between academia and industry is not possible, it just means you might expect to hold relatively junior positions in both systems as you bounce between the two. In terms of preparing to transfer to industry – or perhaps answering the question of “What should I do before I transfer to industry?” – you should get to know people in industry. You should get to know the kinds of companies you could work for, with and in. You should get to know the kinds of work these companies are doing. You should find out what skills people need to have in those companies and industries. Then build those skills within yourself.

Q2) – When do I start building my network?

My thoughts 2) – Now. Always build you network. This is not a card collecting exercise. It is an exercise in relationship building. So if you think you need to build you network – do it now. You could take a strategic approach – building out areas you think are lacking within your current network. Or you could take an ad hoc approach and develop meaningful relationships with people you meet (online or in person) who you find interesting.

Q3) – Is lack of advertising a problem when looking for work?

My thoughts 3) – Yes. But it’s the system we have. So build your network. I recently learnt it is a problem as the people in charge of finding suitable candidates are likely the usual suspects. People like me – white, middle-aged men. It is highly likely their networks are limited to people like them and thus the people who could reasonably expect to get an un-advertised job is limited. Thus, make sure you have middle-aged white men in your network. And once you get to the position of looking for new workers yourself, make sure you advertise. It is also worth considering why jobs are often not advertised. I believe it is expeditious. That is, it’s much quicker to search your network and appoint a person, than it is to go through the advertising process.

Dr Richard Huysmans is the author of [Connect the Docs: A Guide to getting industry partners for academics](#). He has helped more than 200 PhD students, early career researchers, and established academics build their careers. He has provided strategic advice on partnering with industry, growing a career building new centres and institutes as well as establishing new programs. Richard is driven by the challenge of helping researchers be commercially smart. His clients appreciate his cut-through approach. He knows the sector and how to turn ideas into reality.

To find out more, call 0412 606 178, email (Richard.huysmans@drrichardhuysmans.com) or [subscribe to the newsletter](#). He’s on LinkedIn ([Dr Richard Huysmans](#)), Twitter ([@richardhuysmans](#)), Instagram ([@drrichardhuysmans](#)), and Facebook ([Beyond Your PhD with Dr Richard Huysmans](#)).