

Advice for Career Transitions in Response to Webinar #2 Chat Questions

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Q1: What's our advice for people switching from one BGN (Business, Government, Nonprofit) setting to another?

Response A: Ask yourself the question: What are *all* the things I was good at and enjoyed in my previous work that I would hope to be able to do in my new work? For example, what kind of **job function** did you perform (e.g., research, customer interface, administration, program management, program evaluation)? What kind of **work role** did you have (e.g., supervisor, self-employed/independent, team director)? What was the day-to-day **content of your work** (e.g., analysis, communication, conflict resolution, training)? What kinds of **people** do you enjoy working with (e.g., other anthropologists, younger people, technical people, people with a specific mission, non-native-English speakers)? What proportion of **time** would I prefer working alone vs. with members of a team? Once you have answered questions like these, you will have a better sense of 1) what kind of work you enjoy and do well, 2) what areas of work matter to you and the kinds of people you would like to work with. In my work, for instance, I consult with organizations across business, government, and nonprofits to understand their culture and help them craft and implement a plan for change. While the cultures across sectors may vary, researching, analyzing, and implementing change processes are quite similar. So, you may discover that the sector differences aren't as great as you anticipated.

Response B: Approach each setting as a 'field site' and conduct an ethnography of the industry. Make contact with those who are or have worked in that industry and treat them as 'key informants' to gain insider information. Study the institutions, jargon, values, and behaviors of the industry of interest.

Response C: I would also focus on the language and specific jargon of the industry when attempting to land the job. It is important one demonstrates a shared understanding.

Response D: I would say to do web searches for key organizations in your state that contribute to that area. Look at their websites and mission statements. Begin taking notes if it is an area unfamiliar to you. Look for contacts in your region and on LinkedIn to begin identifying individuals with whom you may conduct an informational interview. Take notes and ask for additional contacts to build your professional network, while logging who you speak with and when. Reference Dr. Briody's Webinar #2 (5 Secrets for Building Networks that Lead to Jobs) slides on what to include in an informational interview. Sign up for the mentor match program on the NAPA (National Association for the Practice of Anthropology) website (<https://www.practicinganthropology.org/mentoring-career/mentor-program/>) in the area in which you would like to work. Meet with your mentor regularly (once a week if possible) until your questions get answered and you make some headway into your job hunt.

Response E: Find out more about the position and the organization you are moving to - their needs, their goals and objectives, and map your experience to their goals and needs. Write a script of what you will say to present yourself.

Q2: What's your advice for people on the job market without PhDs, including recent MA or even BA graduates without much work experience?

Response A: Let's start by taking a big picture view of this question. A person who was recently a student has a lot to offer a potential employer. From an **individual perspective**, that recent graduate has been exposed to the latest knowledge, techniques, and practices in his/her field. That recent graduate is typically young (or young at heart) with significant energy and ideas that are novel and refreshing. That recent graduate can get away with asking the unasked (e.g., "dumb") questions that the seasoned folks may be too afraid to ask. That recent graduate is often willing to devote more than the required number of work hours/week to learn, meet the challenge, to get ahead. From an **organizational perspective**, organizations have to replenish themselves due to turnover and attrition; recent graduates and some mid-career and senior people introduce new vitality into the workplace. A recent graduate also doesn't cost as much in terms of salary and benefits as an experienced, seasoned employee. Organizations typically want to retain good employees – including new hires – so they are often flexible in identifying rotational opportunities for exposure to different parts of the organization. Organizations want to see their employees excited about the work they do, innovating, and being proactive about their future career. So, completing a degree, learning from extra- or co-curricular experiences, or working part-time while enrolled in the university – all contribute to who you are as a new professional. *All of it* is relevant to who you are and to what organizations seek in new hires including your teamwork, leadership, communication, and cultural competency capabilities.

Response B: I think the advice we gave stays the same. The methods for approaching the job market should work for all different educational levels. The only difference I see is that the job searches should target jobs differently based on the requested minimal level of education and should focus on entry level jobs if the job seeker does not have other previous job experience.

Response C: Remember, any experience counts. If you don't have experience, look for non-profits opportunities to volunteer for research.

Response D: Do research about the field of your ideal job. Look on the NAPA and SfAA (Society for Applied Anthropology) websites to identify domains of work in which you can envision yourself working. Look at available online resources for organizations and on LinkedIn. Begin identifying people with whom you may conduct informational interviews. Include volunteer and research experiences on your resume if it is relevant to your chosen field. Frame your LinkedIn profile and resume in a way that would be appealing to potential employers. Make yourself searchable by recruiters on LinkedIn. Follow people on LinkedIn and Twitter that would be valuable sources of professional information. See if there is an LPO (Local Practitioner Organization) that is active in your part of the country and sign up; it can be a source of job and internship postings.

Response E: Network, Network, Network! If people get to know you and you build somewhat of a relationship with them, then that can trump any deficits in your Resume.

Q3: How might recent graduates with a BA in Anthropology communicate and/or translate our academic work to the job market? How might we communicate the expansiveness and value of anthropological training without coming across as intellectually inflexible or narrowly focused?

Response A: Let me talk about two kinds of interviews in response to your questions. In **informational interviews**, you have an extraordinary opportunity to ask questions and to learn from the conversation. Your goal in an informational interview is not to get a job. Instead, your goal is to discover what you liked and did not like about what you heard, how that information was conveyed, and whether you had a favorable view of the organization through that interaction. Remember, it is you that is requesting the informational interview, which means that you have a great deal of control over it through your questions you pose. In **job interviews** you also have some degree of control. Of course, you answer the questions you are asked, but in a good job interview, you also pose questions of the interviewer. Keep in mind that job interviews are a two-way street. You want to figure out if this job opportunity is what you are looking for. So, put on your “ethnographer hat” and get the interviewer talking about what he/she likes about the work and/or the organization, what that person finds frustrating, and the ways in which the organizational culture positively (or negatively) affects work. You really don’t need to talk extensively about anthropology. Instead, use your anthropology to ask insightful questions and analyze the responses to your questions and how those responses were delivered.

Q4: I am a recent Master’s grad and do not meet the 5+ years experience boxes. What are the best approaches to find entry positions without that experience?

Response A: Much of what I wrote in response to Q2 is pertinent to this question. While it may be the case that you do not have on-the-job experience as defined by a particular employer, you do have lots of experience. You probably had to manage one or more jobs while you were taking courses. (This feat demonstrates your ability to manage your time, complete your job duties in a responsible manner, and deal with many different kinds of people.) You probably had to work with classmates and others on various projects. (Teamwork and collaboration are *highly* valued by employers). You probably had to develop and give presentations to different audiences. (Employers are looking for strong oral and written communications skills.) You probably had to learn how to get along with and assist a diverse set of students – if you were a TA. (Teaching, advising, mentoring are skills that are valuable in any workplace.) So, I would focus less on the 5+ years of experience, and more on what you would bring to a particular work setting. Networking is a perfect strategy for you because it allows you to 1) find out what particular organizations are *really* looking for (independent of any job ad), and 2) emphasize what you might bring to that organization through your knowledge, skills, and experiences.

Response B: Don't let the **lack of a PhD** impact your level of confidence. In fact, a PhD can sometimes be a hindrance in the privacy sector, depending on the company's culture. More than likely, you will be working with people without advanced degrees - it

very likely that even your boss will not have a PhD. I have worked with many hiring managers, in healthcare and even at a space agency, who are intimidated by people with advanced degrees. Managers want to know you have the *practical* skills to do the job. Period. Unless the job specifically calls for a PhD, you should feel confident knowing your skills match the job. A note **to the PhDs**: it is true that some companies are hesitant to hire PhDs. I know this is sad news, we worked hard for those letters! But the harsh truth is that managers are looking for a) fit and b) practical skills. They want to know you will fit in with the team, working with co-workers, and potentially a boss who does not have an advanced degree. And they want to know you can do the work, the *practical* work. Very few, if any, hiring managers in private sector or government care if you can quote Bourdieu. Of course, you bring an extra level of credibility. But your task is to show them you are personable, pragmatic, and a team player.

Q5: What's your advice for mid-to-late-career folks who are trying to change jobs or change industries?

Response A: Much of what I wrote in response to Q1 is pertinent to this question. However, I would add that many people change careers multiple times during their lives. It is rare to find a person these days who has only worked for one firm or performed only one type of work. Typically, people grow and change as new opportunities come their way and as aspects of their lives change. Often during a transition from one job to another, people will rely on some set of knowledge and skills that is common in both. This pattern is particularly pronounced for **those who do not have PhDs**. For example, starting one's own consulting practice typically builds on knowledge of people, one's own education/training, and a willingness to take risks. In lieu of remaining in a high-paying private sector job, some may want to become part of an organization with a strong advocacy component, say for those who are cancer survivors, those who have been victims of spousal abuse or have been incarcerated, those who are disabled. In both the consulting practice, and mission-driven organization examples, your drive is a critical factor. However, you will need to be able to articulate how you will adapt your knowledge and skills to serve future customers/clients and contribute to successful organizational outcomes. I have seen work transitions occur in two distinct patterns for **those with PhDs** (though there may be many other patterns as well). People see a job advertised in the private sector, apply, and want to take it (and do) – despite having achieved tenured, full-time faculty positions. Alternately, I've known several people who have left the private sector to take jobs in academia in mid-career. It is not unusual to transition into a new job, a new industry, or a new role. It largely depends on whether you and the employer believe there is a good fit in the position for you.

Response B: These folks have experience that can translate into skills needed in a new industry. Don't write off past experience as not relevant.

Response C: Do research about the field of your ideal job. Look at available online resources for organizations and on LinkedIn. Begin identifying people with whom you may conduct informational interviews. Take notes and ask for additional contacts to

build your professional network, while logging who you speak with and when. Reference Dr. Briody's Webinar #2 (5 Secrets for Building Networks that Lead to Jobs) slides on what to include in an informational interview. Consider joining professional organizations to gain access to additional resources (courses, conferences). Frame your LinkedIn profile and resume in a way that would be appealing to potential employers. Make yourself searchable by recruiters on LinkedIn. Follow people on LinkedIn and Twitter that would be valuable sources of professional information. Sign up for the mentor match program on the NAPA (National Association for the Practice of Anthropology) website in the area in which you would like to work. Meet with your mentor regularly (once a week if possible) until your questions get answered and you make some headway into your job hunt. Consider hiring a career coach (I used Deviant Thinking, which you can find on LinkedIn) that can help with professional development goals, perfect your resume and LinkedIn profile, and prepare you for winning interviews.

Response D: Same answer as Q2 and Q1 combined.

Q6: Are there ideal spots or strategies for educating people on the value you can bring when the organization seems to prioritize quantitative research over qualitative??

Response A: I try to keep my points brief and pithy when trying to educate potential employers and clients. I will usually say make points such as:

- Ethnographic research can explain “why,” unlike quantitative research which relies largely on correlations. Ethnographers can explain why something is going on or why a particular cultural issue or pattern exists.
- Ethnographic research can help you develop robust survey questions. Without knowing the appropriate questions to ask, you can waste a lot of time and resources conducting a survey that doesn't yield robust and useful results.

This article has some useful points in it which you can build on:

<https://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2020/07/15/articulating-anthropologys-value-to-business/>

I also make a clear distinction between qualitative research and ethnographic research. By definition, ethnographic research involves a mix of methods (e.g., observation, interviewing, documents) while qualitative research is typically based on a single method. The advantage of ethnographic research is that you can triangulate among the various methods and then figure out if you need to resolve discontinuities across those methods.

Response B: Employers are often looking for solutions to problems and many are open to a variety of methods. Use concrete examples from your experiences to illustrate how qualitative research can and does solve problems. Use real life examples to demonstrate that qualitative research is an asset to the institution/project.

Response C: Employers want results. As you interview, listen for their pain points. Find a way to demonstrate how qualitative research address that pain point and add value to their bottom line.

Response D: Point out case studies in which qualitative research has been used effectively in that field (see Wasson, Butler, and Copeland-Carson, eds. *Applying Anthropology in the Global Village*, 2012, SAGE Publications, for example). Learn the language of that field and understand how it is interpreted by practitioners, e.g. deep empathy, 360-degree view of consumers/ users, ethnography in the business world. Do informational interviews with folks who have successfully used qualitative research in that domain and ask them what has worked in convincing skeptical colleagues of the value of qualitative research. In some cases, it may not be an either/or, but a “both” option to incorporate quantitative and qualitative insights in order to make conclusions more robust.

Response E: There are a variety of ways to do this. Post articles on LinkedIn, Write Articles on LinkedIn. Make a power point and post it on LinkedIn, make videos and post it on LinkedIn (though I will say this needs a more organized structure and targeted efforts by an organized group of anthropologists whose sole purpose is to educate companies on Anthropology and Qualitative Research).

Q7: How do you find recruiters in your area of interest (beyond selecting “Open to talking to recruiters” on your LinkedIn profile)? Where does one begin to identify recruiters?

Response A: Most recruiters are not working with people at entry level or in middle management positions, but rather with individuals who have been in senior leadership roles. (LinkedIn may have a different orientation to recruiters, so I defer to others.) The executive recruiter is not working for the individual who is looking for a job, but for the organization that is trying to fill a position. The executive recruiter knows the organization’s requirements for that position, will access various networks and platforms to find people whose qualifications are a reasonable match, interview those individuals, and report back to the requesting organization on the search until a good match is found. The executive recruiter is paid a commission by the organization when the organization hires someone that the executive recruiter identified.

Response B: Remember the importance of your contacts. Ask your contacts to connect you with recruiters.

Response C: Ask professionals from your informational interviews as well as trusted sources from LinkedIn if they have used any recruiters. If so, which ones would they recommend and why? Some agencies might want you to sign non-compete agreements. Try to avoid doing this, so that you can be a free agent and avail yourself of different opportunities. Contact recruiting firms in your region to find out how your skill set and interest in joining a particular domain dovetails with the regional demand. Recruiters often ask those they have recruited if they know of someone that would be good if an opening comes up, so networking with as many people as possible in a particular field can help and you should also gently suggest that you are on the job market and looking for a position in this field. Keep your LinkedIn profile and resume current and list skills that would be relevant to the jobs you want to secure.

Response D: Searching on LinkedIn is probably your best bet.

Q8: How do you balance the competing demands to, on the one hand, brand yourself clearly and present yourself as an expert in your specific area, but at the same time, avoid looking overspecialized, cast your net widely and not overlook promising opportunities that fall a little bit outside your expectations?

Response A: Perhaps the easiest way to do this is to 1) identify your key content areas, including your skills, but 2) indicate the robust education/training you have had as a generalist. In other words, highlight those aspects of your training and experience at which you excel, while arguing that your knowledge and experience base are quite broad. An alternate way to make the case to a prospective employer or client, say, in an interview situation, is to focus directly on a particular problem that the employer has introduced into the conversation. Use your knowledge to suggest how one might approach that particular situation and stress the value of that approach. This technique has the virtue of drawing you and the employer/client into a discussion that can be valuable for both.

Response B: Keep your public profiles like LinkedIn broad – use general terms like ‘anthropologist’ or ‘qualitative researcher’ or ‘user experience researcher’. Tailor resumes to each job application that emphasizes your experiences that address the specializations the position is looking for.

Response C: Focus on your transferable skills and your ideal job. Which areas of expertise would be most in demand for that ideal job? Network and do research to find out the answer to that question if you don’t already know. Figure out which kind of resume (chronological or functional skills) would be best suited to your chosen field. If you are not in academia, a CV is probably not the format you want. With your LinkedIn profile, identify skills that mesh with your chosen career areas/s. Ask colleagues, mentors, and supervisors from your past work and/or educational settings to endorse your skills and to consider writing a recommendation for you on LinkedIn. It is good to cast the net wide in the beginning, but some employers may look for you on social media sites (LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.) to see how active you are in this field. If you have no activity whatsoever, that may signal a lack of knowledge or commitment to a given field. Try to elevate your presence by making posts or writing articles on LinkedIn, following key organizations and individuals connected to that job domain, and continuing to network.

Response D: Write a script for yourself talking about the various skill sets you have in the various job areas.

Q9: How can you make yourself competitive when a lot of job postings ask for 5-10+ years of experience and you’re coming out of a Ph.D. program? I did dissertation research, but it seems like that doesn’t count for the jobs I’d like to apply for.

Response A: You have experience you are totally discounting. You have rapport-building skills, analytical skills, communication skills, project management skills, and perhaps supervisory skills, among many others. Think about all that you had to learn in

order to pull off finishing your coursework and conducting your dissertation. Did you have to learn a language? Did you have to learn GIS? How about programming? Did you apply for and secure funding? Did you train graduate students? How many different kinds of projects have you worked on? What new skills and experience did you acquire in each? I think your best bet is to figure out all the different types of knowledge and experiences you have had, the skills that you learned in this extended learning process, and the personal attributes that enabled you to stay attentive to your end goal (e.g., perseverance, confidence, quality-focused, advocacy). Once you compile that list, you will be amazed at who you are and should be able to craft an argument about why a prospective employer should consider you for a position.

Q10: Do you have any advice for students looking to find connections and begin networking?

Response A: Yes! Start with the people you know and build out from there. Consider your family and extended family – what they do for a living and find interesting about their work. Consider your friends (e.g., former and current classmates, team and club members) and their parents and siblings. Who is working in an organization that you would like to get to know better? Who is doing the kind of work that you think you would like to do? Consider former teachers and coaches, clergy, current professors or university staff. Tell them what your general interests are and/or your short and long-term goals. They can help guide and mentor you. You have an extraordinary number of options; you just have to figure out who to approach first!