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Secrets of early success

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The Write Company

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Expert opinion



Secrets of early success

MICHELLE PIROTTA

Getting an academic career off the ground can be a daunting challenge, involving a lot of hard work. We speak to six successful early-career researchers from the UK/US, Poland and India about their work ethic, and how they and others measure their performance.

UK and US

Using Scopus data, Research Trends identified the top-five prolific and cited Iranian universities and institutes in 2007 (see Tables 1 and 2 respectively).



Susanna Atwell, Post-Doctorate in plant genetics, University of Southern California

First-name author on a paper published in *Nature* (1)

What are the three most important methods you have employed to excel in your career?

I was lucky to get a large project that I knew would generate a lot of data that would be publishable in a good journal and would provide leads to other projects. As a Ph.D. student, this is an invaluable opportunity, as you benefit from support and experience. Collaboration and a good academic grounding are also essential.

How do you measure your own performance?

I don't really have a specific method beyond whether I can sleep at night. I realize I need to publish good papers in good journals, but I don't really watch what other people are doing. I'm only just getting to grips with how competitive this career is, but for now, my only measure of success is whether I think I'm doing good work and to continue to do the very best I can.

How does your institute measure your performance?

It really comes down to how many papers you have as first-name author. I aim to list around three-quarters of my publications where I'm first author, and a quarter where I'm not, as evidence of collaboration. It's also important to get publications in big-name journals, but I want a good spread in specialist, niche journals, too.

References

(1) Atwell, S. et al [2009] "Genome-wide association study of 107 phenotypes in a common set of Arabidopsis thaliana inbred lines", *Nature*.

INDIA



Dr Tanmay Basak, Professor, Department of Chemical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, India

Winner of the NASI-Scopus Young Scientist Award – National Academy of Science, India, and Elsevier India, 2009

What are the three most important methods you have employed to excel in your career?

Research into mathematical modeling and theoretical research, teaching post-graduates, which enriches my subject area, and exploring new possibilities within chemical engineering.

How do you measure your own performance?

Publishing in scientific journals with high IFs, checking my *h*-index (which is currently 12 in Scopus) and generally counting my citations and publications.

How does your institute measure your performance?

Quantitatively: by the quality of publications and the citations received.

How does winning awards help you in your career?

Awards help you to get into good publications, and at award events you have the opportunity to network with leading scientists in the field. Awards also help you to inspire others.

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POLAND



Aneta Kurzepa, Ph.D. candidate, Institute of Immunology and Experimental Therapy, Polish Academy of Sciences

Winner of the Elsevier-Perspektywy Young Researcher Award 2009

What are the three most important methods you have employed to excel in your career?

Diligence, obstinacy and passion. The only way to achieve success is by loving what you do and not losing heart when you meet difficulties. (Aneta Kurzepa)

How do you measure your own performance?

Through feedback from my tutors, publications, citations and awards. (Lukasz A. Malek)



Lukasz A. Malek MD Ph.D., resident in cardiology, Institute of Cardiology, Warsaw, Poland

Winner of the Elsevier-Perspektywy Young Researcher Award 2009

How does your institute measure your performance?

My institute mainly takes publications and participation at conferences into account. More points are awarded if you publish in journals that score well on the Ministry of Science and Higher Education's official list. (Maciej Misiorny)



Maciej Misiorny, Ph.D. student, Faculty of Physics, Adam Mickiewicz University

Winner of the Elsevier-Perspektywy Young Researcher Award 2009

How does winning awards help you in your career?

First of all, it convinces me that I am doing good research. It also helps support my career both within my own institute and in attracting financial assistance. (Krzysztof Cichy)



Dr Krzysztof Cichy, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Physics, Poznan University of Economics

Winner of the Elsevier-Perspektywy Young Researcher Award 2009