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## Alternative roads to success

An analyst, an editor and a business-development professional. Three different professions, one striking similarity — they all got their current jobs without doing a postdoc. They revealed this to an alternative-career roundtable at a recent career fair co-sponsored by *Naturejobs* and the New York Biotechnology Association.

Eric Schmidt, managing director of SG Cowan, a financial analysis company in New York, realized midway through his PhD at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that he didn't want a career in "bench science". His avid interest in the stock market led him to some business courses and his job at Cowan.

Meeghan Sinclair, an associate editor on *Nature Biotechnology*, wasn't sure she was ready to focus narrowly on one problem. "I wanted to be involved in learning about science but have a broader experience of science," she says. Her present position allows her to do just that, and also to be involved in technologies that have direct applications.

Catharine Johnson, manager of business development for Regeneron, a biotech company in New York, knew even before she entered university that an academic career probably wasn't for her — she had enjoyed a high-school internship with a biotech firm. Her extracurricular activities as a graduate student, including organizing panels on alternative careers, further piqued her interest.

All three rate their jobs as satisfying, but that doesn't mean that advancing their careers has been easy. Analysts' jobs are tied to a volatile stock market, editors' to a relentless cycle of deadlines, and business-development experts' to bridging the equally uncertain worlds of science and commerce. But for all three, such obstacles were better than the alternative — a series of postdocs and the anticipation of tenure track.

**Paul Smaglik**  
*Naturejobs* editor



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