Online career chat transcript
May 13, 2010

**Question 1**

I'm a marketing consultant who specializes in providing insights on my clients' customers' values/preferences that guide my clients' business growth plans. Insights are garnered from feedback I design and gather (internet a/o by telephone interview). My firm is 25 yrs old. Corporate client base has dried up. Current market segment most often worked w/is boarding schools.

My question...**How effective would a website be in drawing in new business?** (Up til now I've relied on referrals and a handsome capabilities brochure with inserts and targeted sales calls.) I have a feeling the website would serve only to "authenticate" me to prospects I meet other ways and not truly draw in new contacts. Past clients have included major fin'l inst'n's, large corporate industrials, specialty service firms, boarding schools and a community college.

Answer 1  I would consider using a website. The more exposure that you have for potential clients, the better the opportunity to secure a new assignment. Your website can market your services not only by highlighting what you can do, but also can highlight previous successful endeavors. Your past achievements go a long way in attracting future clients. Also using client testimonials can display your value in the marketplace. Finally, a website also brings you into the 21st century where we are must more electronic that we were 25 years ago.

**Question 2**

Question: Suggestions for transitioning back into a career after 12 plus years out of the field while raising a family? On the one hand prev. skills can make me look OVERqualified, but being away from the field so long may make me look UNDERqualified for anything except an entry level position. How to navigate this challenge?

Answer 2  First you need to evaluate what it is you want to do when you go back...are you looking for the same type of role, more/less responsibility, leadership/individual contributor, travel/work-life balance, etc. Determine your interest and do a gap analysis of your skill set and what is currently required in your desired roles. Then create a communication, verbal and written, (resume and cover letter) that highlights your skills and the value that you bring into the workplace. You might also need an answer to the following question; what have you done during your absence to maintain a proficiency level in your field? Finally, networking will help you navigate back into the workplace more effectively. Once you have your communication ready, begin networking through the Alumni Institute Career Assistance Network (ICAN).

Finally, consider using the Career Development Center job database (CareerBridge) to explore job opportunities. As of May 12th there were 1,388 jobs listed, both full-time and part-time. This job bank is populated by companies looking for the MIT brand and often the jobs are posted by MIT alums for the companies they work for. It is also a great way to look at job descriptions to see what companies are
looking for in their candidates. Knowing this helps you create a more on-point communication and helps you position yourself in the marketplace. If you are not registered, sign up today at https://www.myinterface.com/mit/student/

**Question 3.**

Currently at Pfizer. But my position is being eliminated due to company takeover. Please advise

**Answer 3**  Generally companies offer a severance package which includes an outplacement program. I highly recommend taking advantage of this program. They can run from 1 month to several months, based upon your company’s severance package. Outplacement programs link you with a career management firm that specializes in job and career transitions. They begin by helping you deal with job loss and then help you develop a strategy for transitioning to the next step. If no outplacement program is offered, locate a local Career Counselor in your area who can help you with the same process. In the Boston area the Career Counselors Consortium can help you find a counselor that is right for you. http://www.careercounselorsne.org/ Good luck

**Question 4.**

I always hear that networking is the best way to get a job (as opposed to submitting resumes online). Is this true? If so, what is the best way nowadays to network and work your friends-of-friends network to find a job?

**Answer 4**  Research shows that ~80% of all jobs are landed through networking. Networking is also referred to as the “hidden job market” because many jobs are not posted in the public domain. Networking doesn’t get you the job, but rather helps you get exposure to the decision makers of companies and connects you with people who can impact your agenda. The difficulty people face by submitting resumes online is that often you are one in a thousand, and you get lost in the crowd. You need to get face time and networking is very effective in helping you do so. Use the MIT Alumni network to begin this process. Currently there are over 3,000 alums who have offered their assistance to other alums that are looking for career guidance. http://alum.mit.edu/benefits/CareerGuidance/ICAN Also consider using LinkedIn within and outside of MIT to obtain additional contacts.

**Question 5.**

I am an MIT alum ’90 6-1, 6-3 and I am looking for work again after years founding and running startups. I took a year long break after my last company and I am now ready to get back into the market. Where can I find listings for someone that has 15 years of leadership experience in the technology space? I can even do small short term consulting project as an advisor or temporary-CEO/executive/sales type person. Can you please point me to the right place? Should I come to see you on May 13th?

**Answer 5**  I would first use the Alum ICAN database for opportunities in your area of interest. There are many alums with similar backgrounds that can help you. I would also use the Career Development Center job database (CareerBridge) to explore job opportunities. See answer #2. Many of the jobs in
this job bank are looking for experienced people, not just entry level. If you are not registered, sign up today at https://www.myinterface.com/mit/student/. Finally, research executive search firms in your area if you are looking for a “Chief” level role. You may call the Career Development Center 617-253-4733 for an appointment with Nancy Richmond because I am not currently available.

**Question 6.**

How does one get back into job search after having been out of work for a couple of years?

Answer 6  See answer #2

**Question 7.**

what's the best way to get good advice for what your market value is for salary negotiations and during the job hunt?

Answer 7  Networking and doing informational interviews can help you gather pertinent information about current trends in the marketplace, including salary. The Career Development Center gathers information from graduating students and has eight years of data, including salary data by degree and course number.  http://careers.mit.edu/. You can also try various salary websites, such as; www.salary.com, http://web.mit.edu/negotiation/www/, http://www.salaryvaluation.com/

**Question 8.**

What opportunities are there for 65+ year old retired folks who are looking for part-time management consulting, particularly in the financial services industries, but also general strategic decision consulting?

Answer 8  I’m not sure what specifically is out there for someone with your profile and interest, but there are always opportunities for people who can drive value and make a difference within an organization. I would use the Alum ICAN database to explore your areas of interest. http://alum.mit.edu/benefits/CareerGuidance/ICAN

**Question 9.**

Any suggestions for boomer trying to re-career in the area of web development???And/or general suggestions for boomers re-careering??

Answer 9  General suggestions are to evaluate your skills, interest and values and determine what your strongest transferrable skills are. Research what companies want in their web developers and create messaging that aligns you to them. See answer #2 for other tips.

**Question 10.**

I am 61 years old, downsized a year ago from a Marketing/Strategy company that served the auto industry. I have excellent references.
My last several positions have all been in senior management with small companies. I am currently consulting with a start-up but do not see a long-term future at this company.

How does someone my age, who wants and needs to continue working, go about marketing themselves? I am currently a member of a number of discussion groups on LinkedIn but these, so far, have just led to requests for free work.

Answer 10  First, don’t make age a factor by highlighting it. Companies want people who can drive value, as evidenced by your current role. Everyone has their predispositions to age and other attributes, which is out of our control. Identify what you would like to do, determine what skills are needed for the role(s), research your targeted industries and develop a communication that links your skills to their needs. Age often brings maturity and in-depth industry knowledge and experience that is critical to the success for any company. Create a communication that piques their interest to prompt a face to face discussion. I would use the Alum ICAN database to explore your areas of interest.


**Question 11.**

I've been studying leadership for a few years, and what I've found is that real leadership is a kind of interaction between people: it's not necessarily one's status in a given hierarchy. That said, people in companies are very protective of formal leadership positions, and because titles do matter as one's career progresses, is it better to stay at a staff level with a lot of influence or go to a new company and start fresh with formal authority and managerial status?

Are there any projects that alums can get involved with that involve innovation? I wonder if there are any people that are putting together new startups or research ventures that need experienced talent and how I can get involved with them.

Answer 11  You need to determine what level is right for you, based on your career aspirations and your interest/values. If you need the titles for future growth, or monetary gain, then you have to set your growth path. I agree that leadership exist at all levels of the organization. Leadership is the ability to create positive change. I’ve always believed that you lead people, but you manage tasks. Consider the entrepreneurship center for exploring ventures and new start-ups.


**Question 12.**

I am currently out of a job about 8 months. I worked in engineering about six years after MIT, then I went to Yale for PhD in Financial Economics, taught for six years, worked in industry about six years, now with the downsizing I am out of work.

I was a quantitative analyst in commodities for most of my time in the financial / trading industry. Now they are hiring traders but few quants it seems to me.
Also I think a large part of it is my age; I am 53. It seems that interview performances that would have been successful earlier are now not getting me jobs.

Recruiters lose interest after one or two unsuccessful interviews. They know there's something wrong, I guess it's that I'm too old. And/or, they just don't have many jobs available. One of my longtime recruiter acquaintances seems to have placed nobody for a long time either.

I am working on a new pricing model for forecasting house prices, hoping that a firm I know of that's looking for that will hire me.

I have no specific questions other than to ask generally for any advice you think would be useful.

Answer 12  See answer 10 for age related comments. Also, it seems that you may need a little brushing up on interviewing and the current job search methods. I would use the Career Development Center to talk with one of our counselors about your career/job search. We have Marilyn Wilson Ph.D. who works with the Ph.D. population and Amanda Peters who works with the business related degrees. Both are excellent career counselors. You can come in the office or conduct a session via telephone. Call the scheduling desk for an appointment at 617-253-4733. Additionally, sign up in CareerBridge to review the >1,300 jobs. https://www.myinterface.com/mit/student/ ...jobs

Question 13.

Advice for the over-55 set

Answer 13  See answer 10 for age related comments

Question 14

Having worked in an investment/quant firm for 10 years, I am looking for a job, though it is not the best time for such a job. The fact is, most of the jobs are in NYC and I am flexible to relocating. However, being in bay area, it is very hard to get an interview for NYC positions now. What do you recommend me to do? Do I really need to rent an apartment and search in NYC (which is hard to do with family and kids)?

I know MIT has an alumni job search site within the Infinite Corridor. Does Sloan have its own job site? If so, can I (a non-Sloan graduate) access it?

Answer 14  I would consider using the Alumni Club of New York for guidance. There are over 1,000 active members in the club, (admin@mitclub.org). They can help you network in and explore opportunities before moving to NYC. President – Gary Brackenridge ‘97 MG, Immediate Past President – Karen Ho ‘94 EE. Finally, the CareerBridge job bank has several opportunities in the NY area. https://www.myinterface.com/mit/student/...jobs I'm not sure what Sloan has as a job site. They are independent from the MIT Career Development Center and only work with the Sloan population.

Question 15.
Hi, I am looking for a career between from 50 to 60s. My profile is very simple. SMEE early 20s, 30 years of working as engineer and small business owner (about 50/50). My kids are grown and gone soon. Financially sufficient from rental assets (Boston) and unpredictable income from a small (owned) computer integration shop (Silicon Valley). Hope I could get some good ideas!

Answer 15  I wish I could give you some good ideas as well. From your profile, you have significant experience and expertise in many areas, both technical and leadership. Explore the ICAN database and speak with fellow alums for opportunities in your areas of interest, as well as exploring the CareerBridge job bank for full and part time openings.

**Question 16.**

I have spent nearly 25 years in the photovoltaics field, mainly doing R&D at a National Lab, and more recently, as a consultant to the PV industry. I thoroughly enjoy consulting and until recently, it was quite lucrative. However, the current recession has caused my consulting business to decrease dramatically. I have had several job offers from PV firms, but all require me to relocate to another state, something that I want to avoid. How can I convince businesses that I can do an excellent job for them as a consultant, or even a full-time employee, who is willing to travel up to 50% of the time, but is not willing to uproot my family and move cross-country?

Answer 16  First, I would research (networking and ICAN) your targeted companies to determine what their short-term and long-term strategies might be; although, not always an easy thing to do. Once you have a sense of what they require you to communicate how you might fit within their plans, and how you can help them meet their growth strategy. You need to have something that they want before a discussion about working remotely can take place. If they are progressive and open to a virtual workplace, then you have a better shot at landing a role. However, if they have a more structured organizational design; it may not work for them to have you working remotely when everyone else is in the office.

**Question 17.**

I’m interested in any advice you might have for an alum who is bound by family to a location in which there seem to be no jobs in his area of training. I’m a DUSPer ’08 (course 11) who has to stick around the Kansas city area for family / medical reasons and I haven’t found squat for a job here. of the few listings in the area since graduation, none of been concerned with quality of education, mostly requiring at least 5 years of experience. No one seems to reply even with a courtesy acknowledgement when I send my resume in, either. My peers make decent income on the coasts but I am stuck here in the middle of the country, drowning in debt from such an expensive grad school. What are your thoughts?

Answer 17  I would consider using the Alumni Club of Kansas City, plus ICAN. They can help you network in your area and explore opportunities. Explore the CareerBridge job bank for jobs in your area. [https://www.myinterface.com/mit/student/](https://www.myinterface.com/mit/student/) jobs. You might also consider a local career counselors organization to find a coach who can help you strengthen your job search methods and strategies.

**Question 18.**
I have graduated from MIT last year, and I am still in search of a job in my degree of material science engineering. I am still applying to 1-3 jobs a week. What makes my case rather interesting is that I had a brain injury during my senior year in school.

The injury damaged my language, forcing me to relearn how to read and write. To this day, it is difficult for me to read longer passages like books. For longer information I use software to read the text auditorially to me. Is it best to give my status on a resume or job application? If so, is there a way to show that I am able to complete tasks for the job?

Answer 18 I would not disclose any personal challenges on a resume, application, or cover letter. In many states it is unlawful for companies to reject a candidate for reasons other than ability to do the job. They can’t discriminate; however, people do have their biases. You will need to determine what value you bring to a company and highlight those attributes. I’m not sure where you are located but there are organizations that help people with various challenges seek employment. In Boston there is an organization called Operation A.B.L.E. that works with people facing challenges and they also maintain a job listing. Good luck.

Explore the CareerBridge job bank for jobs in your area. [https://www.myinterface.com/mit/student/](https://www.myinterface.com/mit/student/)...jobs

**Question 19.**

I am looking for advice on how best to change fields. My degrees (BS, MS) were in mechanical engineering, but other than a few initial years in mech eng, I've been mostly working on developing testing software (for mechanical devices) and in the last 5 years - software QA, product management and s/w development management in enterprise software (Oracle). I would like to get into the renewable energy field but do not have any domain-specific skills and have not been able to solicit interviews. I am open to the types of positions (R&D, manufacturing, project management, etc), but each of these often require previous renewable energy backgrounds. How can I best change fields? Go back to school? Get in the door however possible?

Answer 19 General suggestions are to evaluate your skills, interest and values and determine what your strongest transferrable skills are. Research what companies want in your areas of interest and create messaging that aligns you to them. Do a gap analysis to determine if more education or a strengthening of job skills is necessary. Like all job search strategies, emphasize what you have, not what you are lacking. Talk with other alums in this field and get their advice about your search. Often time the leap isn’t as big as you think.

**Question 20**

I am currently a SW development manager at a large (~$2B/year) SW company. I feel that my career path is somewhat limited by the nature of my industry: realistically, moving from front-line manager to director would take another 2 to 3 years, with another 5+ years to get to VP. At each level would come a step increase in responsibility, a step decrease in job security and an incremental increase in compensation. I am considering a move into the business side of the corporate world or perhaps a move into finance (e.g., venture capital, etc.). To facilitate this transition, I am considering going back to school to get an MBA. I suspect that at my age, currently 40, it might be tough to get into a top 5 program;
however, the Sloan school does have a one year MBA (i.e., the Sloan Fellows program). Alternatively, I might consider going out on my own. Any opinions? Any advice?

Answer 20 Moving to a more finance or business related role would require some expertise in those functions. If the opportunity did exist for you to land a finance role, it might be at a lower level because of your lack of experience in that discipline. Are you willing to take a cut in pay for a non-guaranteed future benefit? On the other hand, I’m not sure that age 40 closes the door on tier 1 MBA programs. Many of them are looking for industry and leadership knowledge that can be brought into the classroom experience. The Sloan Fellows program is a good one but expensive. Many companies sponsor their employees to obtain this degree and then bring them back into a management role. My general advice would be to pursue a career that allows you to use the skills that you really enjoy using, in a job/industry that interest you, in a role that aligns with your values, and allows you to work with people you enjoy working with.

Question 21

looking for a senior-level role at top technology company or VC...and wonder how to best position myself since my last 15+ years of experience has focused more on management consulting and startup.

Answer 21 You need to highlight the transferrable skills that are needed in your desired roles. Research your industry/companies of choice and target their needs. Senior level roles demand strong teaming, problem solving, communication, and leadership expertise. All of which you developed and used in management consulting. Technical gets you the interview…behavioral gets you the job. Position yourself to perspective employers much like you positioned solutions to perspective clients.

Question 22

I earned a PhD from MIT in 2000 (at the age of 42) in Biological Oceanography. My research focused on the development of several mathematical models aimed at answer various questions about population and community dynamics in benthic systems. I ended up leaving the research field in 2002 and now work as an investment advisor. The pay is good, but I find the work less than gratifying. Do you any suggestions for a new career path that would combine my research and financial skills?

Answer 22 If your technological skills are still current, then coupled with your finance and business knowledge they should create a powerful combination. It seems that you want to move back inline with your educational interest. I see that a lot with MIT. It will take some sorting out, but try to determine what field is best suited for you (interest, skills, and values) at this point in your career. Then begin talking with other alums in industry, specifically in your research field, and let them know your preference. Use ICAN to find your fellow alums and explore the CareerBridge job bank for opportunities that more closely align with your preferences.

Question 23

In 2009 I received my PhD in Neuroscience and am currently working at a science and engineering consulting company. I would like to transition into the banking sector but I don't quite know how to get
there without getting a degree in Finance. When I was job searching in 2008, I tried selling investment companies my analytical and communication skills companies (which I would think are crucial in the banking industry), but with no success. I am afraid that the longer I stay with my current company, the harder it will be to transition but since I have only been working for

14 months, I am also afraid that looking for another job at this point is too soon and potential employers will cautious.

This is along the same line as the first question. How do I convince a potential employer that I want to do something drastically different from my degree? Is it easier to just go back to school?

Answer 23  First, 14 months may be a little to short to make a move. I would be a little concerned as a hiring manager that there might be some ambiguity with your career aspirations. Although, you did have a preference towards financial services from the beginning, so creating the right message would not be too difficult. Also, 14 months ago was probably the most challenging time ever to land a role in the finance sector. Give it a shot. The industry has settled down and there are more opportunities today versus 2008. Explore the CareerBridge job bank for these roles...there’s a lot of them in there. https://www.myinterface.com/mit/student/...jobs. Finally, most financial firms who target the Ivy pluses (includes MIT) are looking for strong quant skills, regardless of your educational discipline. Develop a communication that highlights what they need (It’s about them, not you) and use the ICAN database for networking.

Question 24

are there any MIT alumni groups that are specifically for attorneys or that have resources for job referrals in the legal area?

Answer 24  There are currently nine job listings in CareerBridge for legal relation positions. https://www.myinterface.com/mit/student/...jobs

Question 25

Sometimes I ask myself in my job... "I got an MIT degree to do this?!?" How can I know whether there are other opportunities that will truly stretch me and use my skills in a way that is better than my current job or whether I am just thinking that the grass is always greener on the other side. (I think I know the answer to this question, but I would LOVE to hear Mr. Dolan's advice/suggestions based on what he has seen in other alumni career paths.)

Answer 25  Kristine...the answer is a little of both. You can always grow and stretch yourself to a higher level, so never stop trying. And the grass is always a little greener, so don’t worry about it. One never knows the real content of a job or the organizational nuances until you are living them. My questions to you are; Are you bored? Is your job challenging enough for you? Are you in the right job? I sense that you are not where you need to be yet. Do some self-reflection and uncover what motivates you, both as a person and professional. Try to determine what your strongest skills are, and why. Evaluate what type of organization is good for you, and why. If need be, pursue a job that more closely aligns with your answers. I don’t know anything about you, your degree, year of graduation or the position you currently hold, so my response is somewhat general. Hope it helped.
**Question 26**

How is the current economic climate affecting executive hiring and what are the implications for people interested in changing careers?

Answer 26  Some of the data that I have seen shows that executive hiring is lagging somewhat from lower level positions. For the last two years many companies only hired either entry or backfilled strategic positions. The end of 2009 leveling off from the worst recession ever has been with limited job growth, but for the last 2-3 months has been on the plus side. However, executive hiring is always unique. There are so few of those positions in a company that opportunities are limited, and generally filled through executive networks and executive search firms. Here is a link to find executive search firms in your area. [http://www.searchfirm.com/](http://www.searchfirm.com/)

See answer 19 for career transition tips.

**Question 27**

I am working in Boston, MA. I would like to know what i can do to find out what type of job that would most fit me. Is there any resources at the MIT career office that would be available to me for this purpose? Thank you.

Answer 27  Yes, the Career Development Center has several assessment tools that can help you navigate through career ambiguity...such as MBTI, Strong Interest Inventory, as well as several other tools that have proved successful for many students and alums. There is small cost for some of the assessments, but well worth the investment. Call the office at 617-253-4733 to set up an appointment with a counselor who works with people with your degree.

**Question 28**

I have several areas I need help with.

1. I have a PhD and have been teaching physics as an adjunct prof for 3 years, but see this as dead end career wise. However, I need to work part time due to demanding family issues. Any suggestions for potential career options?

2. Could you talk about how to do informational interviews?

Answer 28  1. We have counselors who work with alums that are looking to transition out of academia and into industry. Try to make an appointment (live or via telephone) to talk with a counselor who might be able to help. Explore CareerBridge for part-time openings. [https://www.myinterfase.com/mit/student/](https://www.myinterfase.com/mit/student/)…jobs

2. Informational interviewing (Networking) is the best way to learn about your industries, companies and positions in your area of interest. This process mirrors the actual interview process with similar questions and protocols (business attire, thank you notes, etc.) The ICAN database’s front page talks about how to network, how to approach fellow alums, and what questions you can ask during the informational interviews...check it out. Also, you can practice interviewing at the Career Development Center. Make an appointment to do a mock interview and you’ll be amazed how much it will help.
Question 29

In searching for a long term career I've found it's easy to rule out options based on current experience and it can be costly and difficult to switch fields for the sake of seeing if you would like it long term. What would you recommend is the best way to 'try on' a new career or variety of careers for someone who's still trying to figure out what they want to be when they grow up?

Answer 29 From my view, the best way to learn about other fields is to talk with fellow alums who currently reside in those fields. Use ICAN to find the right people. However, before you reach out to them, have some idea about what you might want to do. Assess what interest you and what motivates you as a person. Be intentional with your out reach. If possible, try to set up informational interviews and have face to face discussions at their office or over coffee. Stay active with the alum association and attend various events throughout the year…another great way to meet people and learn about other fields and opportunities.

Question 30

I have been a math instructor for a large part of my life. I have a doctorate in pure mathematics from what is considered a much lesser caliber school than MIT. I want to change into the actuarial profession. I have passed the first two examinations of the Society of Actuaries with scores of nine on each. I had a resume professionally done and have applied for some entry-level positions. I have also put my resume in with D.W. Simpson, an actuarial recruiting firm. Nothing so far. What advice do you have for a career changer in my situation?

Answer 30 Here are some things to think about…consider bringing your resume to the Career Development Center for review. Make an appointment with either Marilyn Wilson Ph.D. or Nancy Richmond. They can help you assess whether your resume is communicating the right message. When resumes are done professionally, they are not always effective. Resumes need to be your message, targeted specifically to your desired audience. Is your messaging on-point? Next, you need to be more intentional with your job search…more focused and active with networking. Read several of the answers from this chat on networking and job search. Furthermore, sending out resumes and posting them on job boards just doesn’t work as effective as it did 10-20 years ago. Use ICAN to meet fellow alums who can help you. Keep in mind that ICAN has also been developed specifically for those who find it difficult to cold call people. It’s a safe alum to alum environment that has had enormous success. Good luck.

Question 31

1. What are some of the best ways to take advantage of the alumni network (or related resources), to get career guidance on where to take my career next? I have met with a few alumni and they have been gracious with their time. I have been prepared for each meeting, treating it like an informational interview, but it is not always as productive as it could be.

2. In my current position, I don't feel that I'm able to take advantage of my MBA as much as I should. I'm in IT consulting and most of my responsibilities revolve around software development projects. This
is fine, except that's what I did before B-school. What advice would you give to someone in my situation?

Answer 31 Continue to use the ICAN database for networking. It seems from this limited exchange that you want to leave IT Consulting (or are not motivated by it) but unclear on where you want to go next. Ambiguity will bog down your job search. Explore the CareerBridge database (over 1,300 jobs listed) for jobs that are of interest to you. Review the content of the job descriptions and see if you are communicating effectively to your audience. Make an appointment with the Career Development Center (Amanda Peters) and review your strategy with her. Have her review your resume and cover letters and consider doing a mock interview for practice. Hopefully you will find the next path more satisfying.

Question 32

I've been working in Singapore for the past 7 years. My work experience includes government, VC (a short 1 yr stint), and healthcare. I've been in healthcare for the past 4 yrs+, and have just finished designing a new medical centre as well as completing a masterplan to remodel an existing 1000 bed hospital. This is part of my role in Strategic Planning, and working with CEO to conceptualize and implement any strategic projects to grow this new Academic Medical Centre. Question: For personal reasons, I am keen to relocate either to the US or Europe in the very near future. Could you advise the best way to seek job opportunities here, and how the job situation is like currently, particularly for someone in my position? I am open to multiple industries....

Answer 32 Using ICAN will open you up to Alums across the world. You can sort by industry, location, as well as many other values. I would also contact the Alumni Clubs in the locations of interest to you. Many of the clubs are active in the business community with well developed networks. Make an appointment with the Career Development Center (617-253-4733) and via email have your counselor review your resume and cover letters. Also, take a look at the CareerBridge (see link above) job bank which has jobs that can be sorted by location.

Question 33

My question is fairly simple but one that I cannot figure out the answer to. How do I get promoted? I have been a Sr. Mgr level for 2 yrs, and want to move to director. I asked my manager about it at my review, and he had no plans at all for making this happen. What is the next step? How aggressive should one be? Should I just go out and interview? With an MIT MBA, there are plenty of jobs, but I like the company I am with, so would prefer to stay...

Answer 33 Interesting dilemma. I wonder if your boss is either threatened by your desire to be promoted, or for selfish reasons, wants you to stay put because you help him be successful. Or, maybe the organizational structure has no additional positions for a Director. I would request the reason why he has no plans for your career progression. Good leaders develop their people and help them find ways to grow. I wouldn't go out and interview because you don't really want to go...and that will come out in the interview process. You need to have a good open conversation with him about what plans he
has for you and what you need to do to be successful. You can also speak with HR about career development opportunities within the company. In the end, you own your own career and its direction. If it gets to a point where you are stifled and your growth is restricted, you need to enact change.

**Question 34**

I will attempt to enter the work force in a year’s time, when I expect to obtain my Ph.D. in Mathematics. My strongest preference is to enter academia as a research mathematician (with, of course, an expected teaching load) or to receive a postdoc. However, the market is very tight right now. Additionally, I do not have many personal connections, so I will be relying mostly on my research and CV. I expect I will have a few papers in the pipeline and possibly accepted for publication by the time of my graduation. So, naturally, I would like to know how best to stand out in the academic hiring pool. However, I am more concerned about what happens if I get no position. The general consensus is that in academia, and especially in mathematics, any absence from academia quickly removes you from consideration in future hiring cycles. (This includes, to a lesser extent, teaching only positions.) Further, I am already a bit older (32) than your average new Ph.D. What can I do to keep myself desirable if I am unable to obtain a position immediately following my graduation?

Answer 34 Please consider making an appointment (617-253-4733) with Marilyn Wilson, Ph.D., who works with students on the academic track. She has a lot of experience in this area and can provide valuable guidance.

**Question 35**

How to break into the Life Sciences world if I haven't had much hands-on Life Sciences experience? Would Mr. Dolan have specific contacts that he can put me in touch.

Answer 35 I’m sorry to say that I do not have specific contacts in the discipline. I would suggest talking with alums currently in this field. The ICAN database has a large population in this field that can provide sound advice.

**Question 36**

Question: who are some great exec placement companies for VP software?

Answer 36 Here is a link to find executive search firms in your area. [http://www.searchfirm.com/](http://www.searchfirm.com/)

**Question 37**

I've spent 20 years in engineering in essentially the same position.

Does it pay to switch? What opportunities are available for a 50 year old?

Answer 37 That’s a personal question that only you can answer. It only pays to switch if it makes sense for you and you family. Why would you want to switch? Are you interested in what you do? Do you enjoy your work and the work environment around you? People independently stay and leave jobs
solely for personal reasons. Evaluate why you are pondering these questions and try to determine if it makes sense to make a change for the sake of change.

Are there opportunities for 50 year olds? More than 50% of the 1,300 jobs listed in the CareerBridge job bank https://www.myinterface.com/mit/student/...jobs, are engineering focused with many looking for experienced people.

**Question 38**

1) How to approach people you haven’t spoken in years (while looking for a job or leads)

2) How to handle people who never returned the favor (you helped them with a lead or with a job, and when you needed help they didn’t do the minimum to help you). How do you handle the relationship after that?

3) How often should you talk to people in the middle and outer layers of your network? 3 months, 6 months?

4) How do you keep people interested in their relationship with you? How do you add value? It is impossible to be sending personal emails to 100 people – you wouldn’t do anything else.

Answer 38 1. I would reach out to them and let them know that you are exploring opportunities in xyz and you would welcome the opportunity to meet with them to discuss opportunities and the lasted trends within your common areas of interest. The ICAN link offers a great strategy and tips for networking and how to reach out to others effectively. 2. I would let those relationships slowly diminish naturally. 3. I would connect a couple times a year...maybe a holiday card or a cup of coffee mid-year to discuss your professions. Also, maybe connecting at an industry or alumni event is a good way to stay connected. 4. I would not inundate my contacts with tons of emails. I would be intentional and reach out occasionally with information that can help them. Sometimes effective networking is providing content rather than obtaining it. LinkedIn is probably more effective than the 100 email distribution list.

**Question 39**

To be short, Currently I am a senior scientist in a start up company. I graduated with PhD degree in Chemistry from MIT in August 2007, and then I joined this company. It seems to be odd that I am now considering academia job After working here for 2.5 years. The research here is still very interesting, but the limited research sources and company strategies prevent me from working on a lot of scientific investigations. Although it is not unusual for a scientist to move from industry to academia, I think I am not ready for such a change yet, and I don’t expect this to happen shortly. However, I'd like to have your suggestions on how to prepare for such a change.

Answer 39  Zhihua, one of our counselors, Marilyn Wilson, Ph.D., works with students/alums that are facing your dilemma. She is far more competent in this area that I, so I don’t want to risk misleading you in any way. Please call for an appointment to meet with her at 617-253-4733.

**Question 40**
My question is how to address a time gap on a resume. I've been taking care of my twin boys for the past two years and will go back to work next year when they start pre-school. This means the last paid full-time job on my resume will be 2008.

Answer 40 I would list an item on the resume that indicates that you stayed home to raise your family. You do not have to go into a lot of detail, its personal. If they do not hire you because of this, I might re-evaluate whether the company aligns with your values. However, a hiring manager or HR recruiter might ask you what you have done to stay current in your field during this time. As such, consider a refresher course (at night, on-line) or an activity that has kept you active in your profession during this time.

**Question 41**

I’m currently Director, Special Projects, for Workforce Tulsa. As such, I spend a portion of my time working with local schools on career choice issues. Not surprisingly, the questions that come my way often center around science, technology and engineering careers. Question: Where are the technology based jobs in the mid/south west, particularly in middle sized urban areas (i.e. not Dallas)? How should recent grads attempt to access these markets if they don’t already live in those places?

Answer 41 I’m sorry to say that we don’t maintain that type of data. We provide job search strategies rather than job placement information, so our data is limited in this area. However, check out the graduating student surveys on the Career Development Center’s website [http://careers.mit.edu/](http://careers.mit.edu/). This survey does show the top employers who hired MIT students and what states our grads where employed in, but does not link company to location. Hope it helps a little.

**Question 42**

1. How appropriate is it for job-seekers to make cold calls to alumni?

Answer 42 I don’t think it is inappropriate to reach out to alums if it is done professionally and succinctly. Flip it around...how would you feel if you received a call from fellow alums? First try the ICAN database which has over 3,000 alums who have signed up to receive your out reach. They are expecting you to either call or connect via email. I’m confident that this population will be able to help before you move into the larger group.

**Question 43**

While I still need to work in industry for a few more years, what sort of things should I be doing to be able to eventually teach at a local college? I have an MS in Chemical Engineering, but my career has been more within the industrial, consumer packaged goods, and printing/converting mfg sector...in mfg or general management leadership roles.

Answer 43 You will need to know what credentials are needed to teach in your state. Do some research and begin obtaining the necessary qualifications/certifications. Talk with current professors who are doing what you plan to do and get advice from them. Find out if you need to be published, or
publish a paper in the area in which you plan to teach. Industry experience is very valuable in the classroom.

**Question 44**

How do I explain the career reset I did while reorganizing my private life?

**Answer 44**  I don’t think you have to get into a lot of detail about your personal matter. Consider explaining that you had a personal family matter that required your attention, and you chose a lesser demanding role to address the issue. Now that it is behind you, you are looking for more responsibility again (implies that you had greater responsibilities before).

You will also have to show that you deserve the additional responsibility and associated pay, so evaluate where you drive value in the organization. Link your key skills to their needs and show that your goals align with the strategic themes of the company. Furthermore, if you have had opportunities to lead initiatives to successful outcomes (leadership), highlight those as well.

**Question 45**

I’m currently in suburban DC. Been a city manager since my MCP in ’82. Even now I’ve applied for the Town Administrator position in Brookline. But I’m thinking I may want to change course. How do I go about it? Can I do it at this stage in my career? Do I have to give up my upper 100k salary to achieve it?

**Answer 45**  You can always retract your candidacy from the Brookline job, if I understand your situation correctly, and I assume that you are still in the DC job. Why are you considering a change at this time? Are you unhappy in the job, less motivated/satisfied? What’s good about your job…what do you enjoy doing the most? I’ve always believed that you should be drawn to an opportunity, and not run from where you are. Do you have another career in mind, one that will allow you to use your transferrable skills, the ones you enjoy using, and one that will place you in an environment that is right for you?. You should also consider other factors such as impact on your family and personal life if you make a change, including compensation. I’d suggest that you employ the services of a career counselor in your area. This is a common dilemma that people face in their careers and counselors work with these issues all the time.

See answer 19 for career transition comments.

**Question 46**

I am looking for a career in finance without much experience, and I wanted to know how I can use my 6 months in private wealth and my two years in publishing (plus my MIT Sloan degree) to make a case for recruiters.

**Answer 46**  From my experience working with MIT students targeting the finance industry, they all had one thing in common…quantitative skills. Depending upon the specific role in finance, most firms want the analytical, problem solving skills that MIT students possess. Highlight the more quant side of your private wealth role. Maybe emphasize specific courses you took at Sloan that will align you more closely
to the job you are seeking. Networking can sometimes get you further in the interviewing process so check out other Sloan alums for guidance. Also, there are several finance related jobs in the CareerBridge job bank... check it out.

**Question 47**

How do I find and approach a mentor? What should I look for in a mentor?

**Answer 47** I don’t know what you are looking for in your career and life so I can’t be specific, but here are some general guidelines. Use the ICAN database to seek out others in your areas of interest. Set up informational interviews and gather as much information as possible about your desired career path. Hopefully you can develop a relationship where you can ask one to be a mentor. Usually there is synergy between mentor and mentee, a give and take where both agendas are positively impacted. (An example might be: mentor provides career guidance and support and the mentee provides occasional research assistance). A mentor should be a person that you trust and one who respects your career aspirations. Sometimes a past professor or an old boss can be a good mentor. I’m not sure my answer helped you.

**Question 48**

- Any tips for crafting an elevator pitch that is focused enough to provide someone with a clear idea of what you’re looking for, but not so focused it rules out opportunities that could be attractive?
- Networking do’s, don’ts and tips?

**Answer 48** Elevator Pitch, 30 Second Commercial, or what I call your “Positioning Statement”. This statement will change with each communication based on the needs of the listener. Research the company, the job and know what skills are needed, then craft the following:

Consider the following 4-step process to deliver your response:

1. I am a ....
2. With expertise/interest in ....
3. I have had internships for... or... I have project work in....
4. My strengths include ....

An actual example of an M.Eng targeting and I.T. role at Google:

I am a candidate for a Masters in Engineering in Computer Science & Electrical Engineering and will graduate in June 2008.

My areas of interest are in software development and system design. My expertise is focused on understanding the user’s needs, and to provide solutions to solve problems, improve product quality or increase productivity in the workplace.
I interned with IBM and was a member of the research team that designed, prototyped, and implemented a successful multi-user enterprise web application to visualize and manage collaborative projects and work activities. Additionally, I was able to strengthen my skills in Java and JavaScript and work closely with highly experienced, world-class engineers.

I have additional strengths in natural language processing, artificial intelligence, distributed computing and proficient with Windows environments, C++, information retrieval and TCP/IP. I will also complete my BS in Mathematics upon graduation this June.

Note: Words underlined appeared in the actual job description

Strategy: Link your skills to their needs

1. Your areas of expertise/interest should fit with the company’s needs.
2. Your intern/project experience should describe an accomplishment that relates to a skill that is required by the company.
3. Your additional strengths should reflect other key skills or attributes that you possess, and match those listed on the job description.

Do’s & Don’ts of Networking (The Informational Interview)

Do’s

- Research the company and industry
- Research jobs in the company that match your skills
- Prepare to answer questions about your career interest and achievements
- Bring several questions to the interview
- Research the compensation structure of your role in the marketplace
- Dress appropriately – same as job interview
- Arrive 10 minutes early
- Send a thank you note within 12-24 hours

Don’ts

- DON’T ASK FOR A JOB – your sole purpose is to obtain information
- See Do’s above

Finally, review the ICAN networking tips and interviewing questions.

Question 49
How should a person who has spent about 15 years each working as an employee and as a sole practitioner (both in engineering) decide which way would be best for the next round?

Answer 49  First, decide whether there needs to be a next round? If so, you’ll need to evaluate which method worked the best for you, and how each one might align with the next phase of your life. Do you prefer to be an individual contributor, or work collaboratively with teammates? Do you prefer the freedom of a sole practitioner, or do you want the structure of a company. Is compensation a factor, salary and benefits? I would make a list of the pros and cons of both. Then assess which one would provide you with the opportunity to align more closely with your strongest skills, workplace interest, and personal values. Also, consider where you would like to be 5, 10, 15 years from now and evaluate which method will more effectively get you there.

**Question 50**

My questions would be related on transition from academia to industry. What are the challenges? Security in academia vs. profitability in the industry? How can this be measured?

Answer 50  I wish there was an algorithm that could calculate and then mitigate career risk, but it doesn’t exist. (Although I’m sure someone at MIT is working on it) There is risk on both sides. The business model in academia varies quite dramatically from industry business models, and therefore, the challenges vary greatly as well. Both are looking for ROI but achieving it in different ways. I can’t tell you how to measure it because risk can be subjective…it can be personal. You need to assess your own personal situation and determine what makes sense for you. I suggest that you talk with fellow alums who have made the transition and find out what challenges they faced making the move. After gathering this data, you should be in a better position to calculate your next move. Good luck.

**Question 51**

I am particularly interested to find out more about career advancement, and changing fields. One particular question is how do I decide what are the things I should consider before deciding to move job to advance my career or to change fields.

I have been on the current job for 8 years (since graduation in '02). The company I worked with has not been growing in term of revenue. Coupled with the fact that the organization structure is very flat, there has been very little chance of significant promotions. Mostly the company have been doing reshuffling of titles in trying to appease many of its more ambitious employee.

On the other hand, the company is paying pretty well in order to retain most of its key employees. I believe I am one of them. This makes it difficult to just interview with any opportunity that comes up and move job. Moreover, the recent economic situation ensure that many of the open positions out there look for a person with experience in the same exact position, with very little chance of moving into a higher position.

I have tried discussing this with my manager, my manager’s manager even. They always ensure me that the opportunity will come and that when the company grows, there will be more opportunity to move up (more like build under). But I have start bringing this up since year 5, and there has been very little in
terms of career advancement in the last 3 years - mostly again just tittle change and payment bump, but responsibility remain the same mostly, as well as the opportunity to learn remain scarce - especially valuable skill what would improve one’s worth inside and outside the company.

I consider the MBA route, but with family commitment and everything else, it seems to be impractical at least for now.

In any case, I would like to join the chat and find out what your thought is with regard to this matter. I would appreciate if in discussing my case you could keep my name confidential as there could be other MIT alum from my company that join the same discussion.

Answer 51  If you feel that your career growth is being stunted, you will need to assess the longer term affect of this. You certainly have been there long enough to establish expertise in your profession, and to create loyalty and stability, which future employers will look for. On the flip side, if outside opportunities look similar to your current situation with limited growth, that will also play a role in your future decisions. Things to consider: Are there product constraints or funding that is limiting your growth? What is the company’s strategic plan and how do your organization, and your role fit in those plans? Are there new products in the pipeline that will increase sales and market share? How long has revenue been flat, and most importantly, why has it been flat? If outside opportunities are similar, but with companies of greater growth potential, maybe a change would work. It is a difficult situation because there are pluses in your current situation (job proficiency, job security, good pay check). However one has to think about how long there will be security and a good paycheck if the company has future difficulties.

**Question 52**

Question: seeking practical advice for switching jobs, going back to school, making connections.

Answer 52  Switching jobs should only occur for the right reason, and only you can determine what is right for you. If you do consider a change, assess whether there will be an opportunity for growth, both technically and behaviorally (leadership). Also, assess whether the new opportunity is interesting, motivating, and places you in an environment that aligns with your values.

Go back to school if it makes sense. Do you need another or higher degree for your career to move in the direction that you want? Can you financially afford taking time off to pursue your education? How does your education at this juncture fit into your future career plan?

Connections...use the ICAN database for one of the largest networks in the world.

**Question 53**

I am interested in the roles recruiters can play in the job search process. I know there independent recruiters, company-retained recruiters, and in-house recruiters. Are all these worthwhile? How do I engage with recruiters / headhunters?
Answer 53  The recruiter’s responsibility is to find the right employee for the company. Independent recruiters only get paid if you get the job, so their motive is different from yours. Company-retained recruiters have similar contracts as independent recruiters so once again, they are incented by finding you a job, but not necessary the best job for you. In-house recruiters are employees of the company and are responsible for finding the right person for the job, based on their criteria. If you apply to a company, you’ll work with their in-house team. They will engage you. Keep in mind that they are part of the vetting process so treat them with the same respect you would treat the hiring manager. If you choose to use an independent firm, you should never pay them. The company that hires you will pay the fee. Also, don’t let them control your job search and change your resume. Research the recruiter to determine if they are reputable. Here is a link to find search firms in your area.
http://www.searchfirm.com/

Question 54

I am in the finance industry and I believe I should bring forth strong investment ideas to get hired. I have an illiquid transaction in Emerging Markets that I'm pitching to different funds/banks but I'm not yet where I want to be entertaining many conversations or remotely close to signing a deal, how do I make the full benefit of this approach or is it not valid?

Answer 54  That depends upon who you are targeting. A start-up might be interested in a new product, while a more established firm might already have a successful business model that they are comfortable with. They will also have an R&D department doing what you’re doing so it may be redundant. It is difficult to assess how effective your strategy will be. If you feel strongly about, work it in tandem with a more traditional job search strategy. I would also connect with Alums currently in the finance industry to get their perspective on your approach. I would think that they would offer better insight that I could.

Question 55

I don't have a good track record on paper. I haven't worked in my field in over twenty years. How can I get a decent job based on this?

Answer 55  I would say that you have a bit of an uphill climb. First, you’ll have to determine what a decent job is based on what you want to do in your career. What makes a job right for you? Consider what industries, companies, and jobs that are of interest to you. Research and determine the skills needed to land a job and be successful in these roles. Then assess your own skills and interest and do a gap analysis. Determine where you align and develop a plan to strengthen what is weak. Create a communication that highlights your skills with the needs of the position and put your best foot forward. I would suggest that you use career counselor to help you develop a work plan and job search strategy to assist you in this endeavor.

Question 56

I’ve worked in the US for my entire career. I’m very much interested in looking for and finding job opportunities overseas, specifically Asia. What are some strategies that I could employ in my job search? I’m interested in making a move later this year.
Answer 56: I would use the Alum ICAN data base to network overseas as well as connecting with alumni clubs across Asia. They are very active and should be able to provide some great networking and contacts.

**Question 57**

Career question(s): I am currently in the job market and deciding between offers. I may be over-qualified for the first offer and it seems to be more of a lateral move, compensation-wise; however, the company is growing rapidly, I am passionate about the industry and excited about taking on a new job function. Another company is offering me a significant (50-100%) compensation increase for a position that is very similar to roles I have had in the past; however, I am not too excited about the industry and the job's purpose, and the company is not positioned for rapid growth like the first one. Right now I am more attracted to the first offer, but I also cannot ignore the significant salary increase that the second offer entails. How do I know if it's the right time for me to make a "career change" (i.e. move into a new industry and new job function) vs. stick with what I do well (same industry, same job function) and continue to grow my career, and then possibly make a career change later but at a more senior level?

Answer 57: Nice problem to have. Please consider the following: For the last 5 years MIT graduating students listed these as their top criteria for accepting a job offer, in order of value. 1) Job Content. 2) Creative and Challenging Work, 3) Opportunity for Career Advancement, 4) Fit with Job Skills, 5) Fit with Culture/Environment. (Compensation was #13 in 2009) My advice would be to choose the job that will provide you with the best opportunity for future and continued growth. Also, consider the one that will motivate you and inspire you the most, based on what is important to you. During my time in industry as a member of management teams I developed an opinion on salary levels. I came to believe that salary is not a motivator for most people, but rather could be a de-motivator if it was not right. If companies want to attract and retain good employees, they need to be competitive in the marketplace. If the first company is offering a competitive wage, one that is commensurate with your education and experience, coupled with being in the right industry, and aligning with your passions...then that sounds like a pretty good job.

**Question 58**

Question #1: I’d like to ask about the general problem of being a software developer with years of experience in domains that are becoming deprecated. Basically I have 15 or so years of experience writing native windows applications in C++ but this skilled has become increasingly de-emphasized in today’s web-based world. I’ve have worked for a web-based company doing C++ backend stuff but it didn’t really appeal to me. I’m sure I could do rich internet applications but I’d have the skill set of an entry level candidate in that domain plus I actually like writing desktop applications. So not sure in which direction to go...

Answer 58 #1: If your role is diminishing, and will continue to erode in the future, then now may be the time to consider a change. It is my opinion that although you feel you have entry level skills in internet applications, you are probably undervaluing yourself. I have seen it before. You bring 15 years of industry experience and knowledge into the equation, along with maturity, stability and project management skills. People in entry level roles usually don’t possess these attributes. Consider
explore roles at least in mid-level or higher positions. Generally someone with your technical abilities and experience will come up to speed much faster than a junior person.

Question 58  #2: Any advice on breaking into the burgeoning casual games industry? Always wanted to do this, but the big companies in this field seem only interested in hiring people with previous game development experience.

Answer 58 #2 My advice would be to use the ICAN database to network into this industry. Again, you have transferrable skills that may be attractive to a perspective hiring manager. You have nothing to lose exploring these options. Talk with fellow alums in these fields to gain better insight, which hopefully helps you migrate to the next step.

Question 59

I have worked in my current company for 3 years. It is not easy to find out why I am not getting a promotion yet. It may be normal or it may mean something is not right. I have asked my supervisor and he was being vague on it. Do you have any suggestion?

Answer 59  Couple of thoughts here. Just because you have been there for three years doesn’t necessarily qualify you for a promotion. I don’t know how complex your role is, or how diverse and/or complex your company’s products are, but sometimes there is a longer path to promotions in different companies. However, a concern that I have is your supervisor being vague. He shouldn’t be vague, but rather open and honest about your contributions and development in the company. I would re-visit the conversation in a non-confrontational manner to find out exacting how you are viewed and whether there are opportunities for growth and advancement. How were your last three annual reviews? Were they favorable, or were they neutral with much room for improvement? This is your career and you need to be in a place that is right for you. You could also speak with HR about company-wide career development programs. In the end though, you own your career and its movement.

Question 60

I also would like to know how to create a ‘search engine’ with specific job requirements that will locate and identify job openings in my field of expertise.

Answer 60 You can create a search engine in CareerBridge by doing the following; sign into CareerBridge, select Job Search, enter any search criteria to display current listings, then click on the hyperlink “Create Job Agent”. This will allow you to receive emails when new jobs are posted with your job search results. For assistance with this process, contact Jordan Siegel, jordans@mit.edu in the Career Development Center.

Question 61

I’ve run my own business in Venezuela for almost nine years now. It's been successful and we've been able to negotiate what have been some very tumultuous years. Nonetheless, the Venezuelan prospects at this point (politically and economically) are worrisome. So worrisome in fact that one option being considered is to shut down operations even if the business is still profitable. I’m considering applying for
positions in the US (I am a US citizen) but I am concerned that my experience, although very good, is too broad and perhaps difficult to market in the US (I worked in my own business not for a well known corporation).

The questions:

(1) What is your appreciation of this? Is the concern described justified? (2) What is the best way to overcome this seeming weakness in my curriculum? (3) In your experience, what is the best strategy to re-enter the labor market after having run your own business for a number of years. Is it prudent to scale back salary and position aspirations initially or do you run the risk of "underselling" yourself?

Answer 61 There is always a concern when making significant career changes, not only because it affects your business, but it also affects your personal life. I don’t know enough about your business or background, but I would assume that you might be undervaluing your experience level as “too broad”. In addition to being the technical expert with your product(s) and customer base, you have also extensive experience in running a business. I assume you have been the decision maker (or been involved in decisions) with other functions, such as finance, production, vendor relations, R&D, marketing, etc. Many of these functions require detail knowledge of operations. As such, I sense that you are more detailed that you realize and have a broad understanding of many aspects of running a business. This knowledge is very valuable and can make you attractive to many companies. I would reach out to the Alum network within your discipline and explore future opportunities. Also, being multilingual add value as well.

**Question 62**

A question I would be interested in hearing about is any advice on getting a job oversees, perhaps in Germany or other central/eastern Europe locations. I’d be particularly interested in any advice on this for someone more mid-career than entry level. (I'm current in a sr. management position in software product development, managing a team of about 50 engineers). Most of the people I know who have done this have had more entry level/consulting type jobs.

Answer 62 The alumni clubs throughout Europe are very active and can provide excellent guidance when exploring this region. Also, with your background, only explore jobs at your desired level. You usually don’t have to drop a level to enter another market. As mentioned in several answers during this chat, identify your strengths and the value that you bring to a company/industry, and then pursue roles which align your skills to company needs. CareerBridge has many experienced level jobs listed for European locations...check it out.

**Question 63**

I've been in the same government agency for 10 years and now I'm interested in transitioning to management consulting. I don't have an MBA, but I have a great deal of experience dealing with implementing change and navigating challenging situations. How do you suggest I proceed?

Answer 63 You can transition into management consulting if you have what they are looking for. Generally this profession looks for several attributes; analytical skills, problem solving, influencing
others, achieving high standards, high energy, and building relationships, along with many other intangibles. Evaluate your skills and attributes and assess how well you do in each of these areas. Also, there are many consulting firms that work direct directly with government agencies, so maybe you have other knowledge that can add value as well. Network with alums in the field and find out exactly what you need to do to move in this direction.

**Question 64**

I graduated some time ago, BS in course 18, in 1983. I have been successfully employed as a software engineer for most of my career, working in data networking, telephony, and high-performance computing. I have a good job, and a good job title (Staff Engineer), and I am paid well for an engineer. However, there is a limit as to what a company will pay an engineer, no matter how good they are. I would like to earn more money, and I believe that this would require a change in title, such as to VP of engineering. How do you recommend making this change?

Answer 64 In order to move into the management ranks, you’ll need to possess many other attributes other than strong technical ability. Depending upon your function and its organizational structure, there also has to be positions up-line, and open in order to move. Leadership, influencing positive change, broad industry knowledge, ability to build and foster relationships, and a high level of achievement will be some of the attributes your management team will look for. I recommend that you speak with your boss and explore the possibility of expanding your role and to develop a plan to put you on the VP career track, if that is possible. Good luck.

**Question 65**

I’ve been out of work for over a year. I am trying to find temporary or permanent work while participating in two as yet unfunded startup companies. I have a broad range of engineering experience, but the appropriate job postings in my fields demand experience with current versions of specific tools and experience doing very specific tasks or graduate degrees I don’t have. I have tried applying for lower-level jobs at reduced pay for which I am over-qualified (which worked in 2005), but employers are not interested. I lack the social skills to do sales or management. The longer I am out of work, the less current I become. What am I doing wrong?

Answer 65 At first glance, I’m not sure that the appropriate job listings are that appropriate if they require skills and tools that you currently don’t have. Maybe your pursuits do not align well with your skills and expertise. Does your resume communicate the right message? Also, very few employers will hire an over-qualified people...its difficult to keep you motivated and you won’t stay very long. So, I would stay away from the lower-level jobs. I suggest that you evaluate your skills and compare them to what is needed in the marketplace. As mentioned during this chat, do a gap analysis and determine what your strengths are, and identify your areas of improvement. If need be, take a course or self-directed study to improve a deficit. You might want to use a career counselor to help you develop a job search strategy that would propel you forward. Continue networking and take advantage of the huge alum database, ICAN network, and CareerBridge job listings.

**Question 66**
What are your recommendations for finding a job. Specifically, I am interested in a marketing or technology management role in Atlanta or possibly Texas. Are there headhunters, job boards, etc. that are good places to start?

Answer 66 all of your questions have been addressed throughout the chat. Please review the content for guidance.

**Question 67**

I moved to Los Angeles last summer to pursue what might be an untraditional career path for a MIT graduate... I’m pursuing a career in screenwriting and film directing. Currently I’m interning at two production companies while completing a short film and writing. My affiliation as an alum of the Sloan School of Management has already garnered me respect from industry participants. How can MIT further help me make inroads into the film industry?

Answer 67 I would suggest that you explore the ICAN database for alums in your areas of interest. The database can be sorted by profession and industry so try that first. Talk with people that you are currently supporting and get their advice. Try to get a sense of what your interest specifically are and evaluate what you’ll need to do to become a screenwriter and film director. Sometimes ones entry into an industry/job is not traditional, so explore a path that will help you get closer to your goal.

**Question 68**

I am 48 years old. I have been at my current job almost 15 years and spent almost 10 years at my previous job. Is this a good or bad thing, particularly from the perspective of future employers? Also, having been here so long makes it difficult to start looking for other opportunities, even though I often am unhappy with my circumstances. Any advice on how to jumpstart this process?

Answer 68 Longevity can often be good and bad, depending upon your point of view. Having stayed with an employer for a long time shows loyalty, stability, it implies a strong knowledge base with their products, and assumes good inter-personal skills. The downside can be that your skills/knowledge is specific to that employer and not necessarily broad enough to be valuable to another employer. I don’t know where you are on the skills side. On the “unhappy” comment, try to assess why you are not satisfied with your current situation. Some questions to ponder...is your work stimulating and are you motivated, do you enjoy the people you work with, does your work environment support your work style (i.e.: team or individual, empowerment or micro-managing, recognition, etc) , is your compensation appropriate? Try to determine why you are not enjoying your work as much as you would like. Maybe meet with your boss to see if there are projects that would more closely align with your strengths and interest. Maybe working with a career counselor can help you sort things out and help you identify a more meaningful work environment. Good luck.

**Question 69**
My question is: I am currently an attorney (litigator) with a chemical engineering degree. How do I leave my current career to do something completely different and more artistic, like being a pastry chef or fashion designer?

Answer 69  Try to do it slowly. Unless you have the skills and financial support to make a dramatic change immediately, be intentional in your move. Find out exactly what you’ll need to do to be successful in the next career, and then build a foundation that will get you there the right way.

**Question 70**

I have been running my own business for the past 10 year, but now find it necessary to look for something more "traditional". How would you suggest that the 10 year, non corporate gap be addressed?

Answer 70 I’m not sure that the ten years is a gap. I don’t know what you have been doing, but I assume that by running your own business you have developed the skills necessary to be successful in the corporate world. What transferrable skills do you have and how do they fit within the next step in your career. Use ICAN to speak with alums who currently work in the field(s) that are of interest to you and discuss with them how best to create a new path. Sometimes the leap is not as large as you think.

**Question 71**

I have worked for P&G and Air Products and Chemicals in Mexico and the US, and took an almost 10 year break from working in the industry because we kept moving due to my husband job. My husband has decided to take a permanent job in Malmo, Sweden, so I'd like to go back to work. I already have a "job coach" here trying to get my CV into the proper Swedish way, and I've uploaded it into many work seeking engines here.

I've found that a lot of workers are looking for people with "SAP" and "World Class Manufacturing" experience, of which I really do not have any. Do you have any suggestions on how to go about it here? Do you have any contacts here?

Answer 71 In addition to your job coach working with you on your CV, also have them help you develop a strategy for entering that market. I would use the European alumni clubs to network into that region. Also, if you have no SAP/Manuf experience, have you worked with other tools (IE: Oracle) that would link you closer to the needs of the company? Evaluate the tools you used at your previous employers and see if there is some synergy. If not, you may have to take a role somewhat junior to work your way back, which isn't necessarily a bad thing.

**Question 72**

I am looking for advice about career changes. I recently graduated from law school and with the low hiring rates, I am looking for legal related career advice especially at the intersection of international arbitration and intellectual property.
Answer 72. There are many law firms that hire technical expertise for their IP practice. I know there are many, many alums in this industry. Use ICAN to speak with those who can help move your agenda.

**Question 73**

Bob - I have worked as an software engineer (individual contributor and technical lead) since graduating from MIT over 20 years ago. I have had a very successful career thus far in developing and delivering entrepreneurial products, and I enjoy my work and the people I work with. But, I feel that my career has reached a plateau in terms of the responsibility and value-add I can make to my employer and correspondingly - the compensation I can justify. I appear to face 2 key challenges: #1 - my expertise and experience is very specific to one particular industry and class of technology, and #2 - I am located in a smaller sized city which is not a "high tech center". Challenge #3 is self-imposed, I have never really felt a calling to move into "people management". My choices appear to be to refocus myself to a more generic / multi-industry skill set which better suits the employers which are located where I live (at the cost of a much lower salary in the short to medium term), or to relocate to a larger metro area with more employment possibilities for what I do now (at the cost of uprooting myself and family from a happy home life situation). Ideally, I like the kind of work I do now, and could imagine a BOBW approach - work remotely for an employer in a larger metro area 100-200 miles away - but it seems that unless one already has an established working relationship with an employer, most don't want to operate this type of employment relationship. Any thoughts?

Answer 73 Here are my thoughts. Why do you feel you have reached a plateau? Is it through self-assessment, or has your company communicated this to you? You’re at the age when many of us questions our worth and satisfaction in our current roles (I did as well). You are also at a point in your life where your personal family situation can play a larger role than it has in the past in your decision making process. If you enjoy your work, the people you work with, and the environment is one that supports your values, then that sounds like a pretty good place to be. Try to assess what is motivating you to think this way. Do you really have to make a change? You need to assess what is most important to you and your family and try to do what seems to be the right thing for all concerned. Good luck.

**Question 74**

I have a question that I have been struggling with for most of 2 years now, and I'll try to be as brief as possible in explaining it... Here goes:

I am looking for advice or keys to consider as I decide whether to make a big career change which would first involve going back to school.

I have a Master in City Planning and have worked in City Planning, Housing and Real Estate for the past 5.5 years. I have not been very excited with any of three jobs I've had in my field since graduating, and at each one, I realized I had no interest in doing what my bosses did. I believe that’s not a good sign. I really, really like the final product that my work produces, but my days working through the acts of getting to that point range from one or two days per week where I feel OK about my job, one where I am apathetic and two where I am upset doing what I do.
I am also diabetic and enjoy helping people in one-on-one counseling settings more than I enjoy presentations or the group meetings and negotiations that characterize the interactions in my current field.

So I have been considering a career change to clinical diabetes education for the last couple years. I believe I would probably enjoy the work. I've done a great deal of research on it, interviewed many in the field, shadowed other educators, etc. However, I'm not 100% sure that I would not enjoy a different job in my current field, especially in a city other than NYC where I have worked since graduating from MIT. The problem is, of course, I can't know for sure without getting a new job in my current field (which unlike my first four years in the field, has lately proven very difficult), or on the other hand, going back to school for two years to obtain another degree and the clinical license required to do diabetes education. So I feel like I'm doing a lot of legwork, but I'm struggling to answer my own questions even after doing a lot of research. So to get around to asking a question of sorts, I'm wondering if you can provide some keys or considerations that I should be sure to take into account when I'm soul searching about how to go about making this daunting decision.

Answer 74. From reading between the lines in your question, I believe you communicated some revealing information. First, you are not excited nor did you enjoy your 5.5 years of work as a City Planner. Conversely, you have enjoyed, or displayed some excitement towards clinical diabetes education. I am very much a person who is value based in my counseling. If you are not happy with your first choice and have strong interest elsewhere, you need to pursue it. You’re still young enough in your career that you can be more flexible. My advice would be to explore option #2 knowing that the odds of 100% surety is unrealistic. Sometimes our gut is the best director.

**Question 75**

I'm interested in finding out more about pursuing a PhD. Specifically, I'm interested in researching issues related to fatherlessness, especially with African-American males. I really don't know where to start. Any assistance you might be able to provide would be very helpful.

Answer 75 I’m not sure how to answer this question. Try speaking with some of your old professors and others on campus to gather input about this.

**Question 76**

Two years ago, I made a career change that was a large departure from my previous twenty years of experience developing medical devices. I am now trying to find another leadership position in the medical device industry and running into a lot of blank expressions when talking to recruiters and prospective employers regarding my past two years working in Singapore. What advice do you have for someone who’s career encompasses a broader but less-focused set of experiences?

1. Along the same train-of-thought as my previous question, one of my best current opportunities, from a financial perspective, is with a small software start-up in which I know the owner quite well. My role would be in sales, targeting the medical device and biotech sectors. My main concern is that the software sales position will make it even harder to return to medical device development at a later date. I have time to make the decision but, if I make the decision to join the company, I will have at least a 2 year commitment.
Answer 76 #1 With your vast experience in medical devices, I would focus my messaging on the significant value that you bring to that industry. I would down play the Singapore experience because it seems to be adding confusion to the equation. Uncover what the marketplace needs today and link your skills to those needs.

#2. If you are targeting the medical device industry, and it appears that that is your direction of choice, why consider another direction that would add even more years of separation from landing in your desired path. Think about what makes best sense and would position you better for the next 5-10+ years.

Question 77

Having been out of the technical side for quite a while (educated and worked as a nuclear engineer), are there any areas/technologies that you may recommend to start training for a "second technical career"? I’m looking to leave management and willing to start at the bottom of some emerging technical field -- money is not the issue, want to have a little fun.

Answer 77 Good place to be, however, I wouldn’t start at the bottom again. Trust me; once you have been in management, it’s hard to stay motivated at entry level positions. Evaluate what you really enjoy doing and create your top 3 potential next careers. Then use ICAN to speak with alums that are doing what is of interest to you. Find out how you can get involved and where you can add value to their ventures. You can join a small/medium firm or a start-up. Go have some fun, you’ve earned it.

Question 78

I have been out of my field for almost twenty years, and I don't look good on paper. How can I get interviewed for worthwhile positions?

Answer 78 I would say that you have a bit of an uphill climb. First, you’ll have to determine what a decent job is based on what you want to do in your career. What makes a job right for you? Consider what industries, companies, and jobs that are of interest to you. Research and determine the skills needed to land a job and be successful in these roles. Then assess your own skills and interest and do a gap analysis. Determine where you align and develop a plan to strengthen what is weak. Create a communication that highlights your skills with the needs of the position and put your best foot forward. I would suggest that you use career counselor to help you develop a work plan and job search strategy to assist you in this endeavor.

You may want to look into the MIT Professional Education Career Reengineering Program which is a 12 month part time program targeted at both men and women looking to reenter the workforce or retool themselves. .. http://career-reengineering.mit.edu or you can call Dawna Levenson at 617 258 5624. The program is currently wrapping up its 4th year with 37 participants to date. Since the beginning of the program, all but one fellow who pursued an internship got one. I phrase it this way because several people have decided to continue taking courses and delaying their internships. People have had internships at such diverse places as Dana Farber, Mass General, UMass Medical, Volpe Department of Transportation, The Naval Research Facility in Newport Rhode Island, The Canadian Consulate, The
Museum of Science, and in several different MIT labs. Several of the internships are 2 year appointments, others have evolved into full time employment.

**Question 79**

Ok, I'll go first. I am an unemployed business leader, but with the market slow down I am not seeing new leadership roles at small or mid-sized companies. I am connected to search people and some VC investors. However, the new opportunities are not surfacing. I'm open to suggestions on my search strategy.

Answer 79 I suggest that you also network within your field of interest. There are many alums in the finance field that are career advisors to other alums. Check out ICAN.

**Question 80**

Has the recession changed the way the current job market operates? Have automated HR systems changed the way companies recruit?

Answer 80 Yes. Many HR orgs will only process online applications. While others are starting to use social media to update the contacted applicant pool. Furthermore, many resumes are scanned and screened out base on keywords.

**Question 81**

When you contact someone for networking purposes, what are some rules of the road?

Answer 81 There are some great tips on the ICAN site that provides networking protocol, how to approach your contact, what questions to ask, and how to follow up.

**Question 82**

Do you think being on junior committee of not-for-profit is useful way to network?

Answer 82 Yes. Boards and committees provide a great opportunity to meet a wide variety of people who are generally committed to a similar cause or action. Make sure to carve out time before or after meetings to get to know people and also volunteer to serve on smaller working groups or subcommittees.

**Question 83**

As a manager I don't read cover letters as I find them formulaic. For this reason I don't write cover letters - just a short cover email attaching my resume. What do you think of this approach?

Answer 83 Everyone does something different with CL. Have questioned several recruiters on this, I have found that some read them, some don't, while others read them if the resume piques their interest. To be safe, always send one. A CL allows you to provide additional, more detailed information about your
skills that might not be clear on the resume. CL should be position specific, while the resume can be a little more general, but broader in content.

**Question 84**

How do I convince a recruiter that I can do the job, if I have almost no experience in it. I want to get into private equity, but my experience before an MIT Sloan degree was in publishing. My internship was in digital media. And now I am interning at a Private Wealth office. Still, when I go out to talk to people (the very few times that I've gotten people to call me back), I am competing against people that have done this before. What is my competitive edge??

Answer 84 From my experience working with MIT students targeting the finance industry, they all had one thing in common...quantitative skills. Depending upon the specific role in finance, most firms want the analytical, problem solving skills that MIT students possess. Highlight the more quant side of your private wealth role. Maybe emphasize specific courses you took at Sloan that will align you more closely to the job you are seeking. Networking can sometimes get you further in the interviewing process so check out other Sloan alums for guidance. Also, there are several finance related jobs in the CareerBridge job bank...check it out.

**Question 85**

If asked for desired salary, i don't give range. rather i give top number in range. is this best approach?

Answer 85 From my experience, a range is better. You don't always know the salary ranges so you run the risk of eliminating yourself. Also, as a hiring mgr, I never wanted to pay someone at the top end...there's no room for growth. If you actually qualify at the top, its time for the next step up. Also, giving a range allows you to negotiate later.

**Question 86**

Does anyone have advice on transitioning from industry to teaching at the college level?

Answer 86 Please contact Marilyn Wilson, Ph.D. at the Career Development Center 617-253-4733 who works with students/alums targeting the academic track. She is more experienced that I on this matter.

**Question 87**

For any other Sloanies: in addition to tapping into the resources which mit_jamie cited, go to the MIT Sloan alumni website http://mitsloan.mit.edu/alumni/career-resources.php. Among the resources available id FREE career consultation for all MIT Sloan alumni, actually delivered by me Ken White ’69 since 1994. I welcome just such issues as you cite.

**Question 88**

Is there a way to take the career assessments remotely and have a telephone appt. remotely for alumni who are not longer in the Boston area?
Answer 88 Yes. At the Career Center several of the assessments are online. If you choose to do this (a nominal fee) your counselor can review the results with you over the phone. They usually send you the results at the time of your meeting.

**Question 89**

What style of resume would you most recommend? I've been given mixed advice recently.

Answer 89 If you are staying in your field, the recommended format is reverse chronological. Start with your most recent job and work backwards. If you are changing careers, try the functional format which opens with a list of accomplishments, followed by the list of employers. I suggest that you always begin with a short profile at the top.

**Question 90**

I missed the reference to ICAN. What does this stand for? Is there a link to a web site?

Answer 90 It stands for Insitute Career Assistance Network. The link can be found on the Career Guidance page in the Alumni Association Web site. Also, make sure to sign up for the official MIT LINKed In group with almost 12,000 alumni.

**Question 91**

My resume shows a gap of three years (since 2007). My wife was diagnosed with cancer. I was the caregiver to my daughter and wife, who had cancer. She has passed away. How do I deal with the apparent gap on a resume?

Answer 91 I would list an item on the resume that indicates that you stayed home to manage a personal family matter. You do not have to go into a lot of detail, its personal. If they do not hire you because of this, I might re-evaluate whether the company aligns with your values. However, a hiring manager or HR recruiter might ask you what you have done to stay current in your field during this time. As such, consider a refresher course (at night, on-line) or an activity that has kept you active in your profession during this time.

**Question 92**

When you do not know what kind of job suits you, what are some of the ways that one can figure that out?

Answer 92 Do a little self-assessment. Review your accomplishments and identify what skills you used, indentify what interest you in the workplace, and identify the values most important to you. Once you have a sense of these attributes, write up what would be your ideal job. By doing these exercises you will uncover the types of roles you enjoy. Its a process that builds the more self relecting you do.

**Question 93**

How can we find the official MIT LINKed In group you referred to?

Answer 93 http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=69586
**Question 94**

Are employers cautious about someone who is looking for another job after only being at their current job for less than 2 years?

Answer 94 I would think they would be. Turnover is costly and employers try to retain their strong talent. I always hoped for a good three years with my new hires. It takes a little time to come up to speed and I wanted some time with them contributing to the organization.

**Question 95**

For young alumni just entering the work force, do you suggest working for larger well established companies or small startups? I have heard early in your career is a good time to take the risks of working with a small startup, but how do you juggle this with repaying student loans?

Answer 95 My advice to anyone entering the workforce is to take a role that will prepare you for the next step. Determine what skills and attributes you will need to grow and expand, and select the job that will place you in the best situation. Both environments have their pros and cons. It's personal and you need to figure out what makes sense for you.

**Question 96**

How do you suggest people use LinkedIn?

Answer 96 Mostly for networking. LinkedIn is the preferred media for business, as opposed to Facebook, Twitter, etc. LinkedIn has many features, including references, referrals, etc. The Alum Assoc has over 12,000 alums on LinkedIn.

**Question 97**

How do you say "I want to move on" without really speaking badly of your last job?? I want something more challenging and not what I am doing right now. But I don’t want to diminish where I've been and what I've done.

Answer 97 You can always find positive things to say. During your time there I’m confident that you learned something new, met some good people and expanded your skills in your field. These are types of things you can convey.

**Question 98**

I am a Minneapolis based executive in real estate development, who has just been laid off. I have excellent credentials, 20+ years of experience as developer, architect, and general contractor and am willing to relocate. There is generally no category in real estate development in Job Boards (though there is in the MIT Alumni Directory) so it is difficult to locate job openings in this field. 1) Is there an executive search firm that specialized in placing real estate development executives that I should contact? 2) I also would like to conduct my own direct search. Are there any references that will tell me
what part of the country is more active in real estate development, or who/where the busy developers are?

Answer 98 I would suggest you contact MIT's Center for Real Estate and see if they can be of any assistance. Contact information can be found on the MIT Web site.

Question 99

How much notice should someone give an employer before leaving their job/company?

Answer 99 I always wanted at least two weeks. They need time to begin the replacement process and make sure that you close out open items before you leave. The new employer would respect that because they would want the same consideration.

Question 100

Follow-up: I understand... But when they ask me "why do you want to change your current job?" Is saying "I'm looking for a new challenge? a good enough answer?? Won't they just think that I am going to leave them soon?

Answer 100 You will also be looking for growth and more responsibilities, in addition to broading your scope in your field.

Question 101

You've mentioned a 'gap analysis' a number of times. For someone who has never done this what tools are available to facilitate?

Answer 101 What I mean by a gap analysis is to look at the next role you want and determine what skills you will need to be successful in that role. Then evaluate what skills you have, and try to fill the gap. IE: If you need to know a certain s/w program, but are weak...take a class to strengthen your abilities with that tool.