

## **What Are They Looking For? Some Thoughts For Graduate Students Or Postdocs Interviewing With a Large “Genomics” Company**

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Applying to and interviewing with a large genomics company will have more similarities than differences to other industry-based research positions, thus the comments below can be viewed as generic advice, with the few exceptions as noted below. These thoughts are not meant to be comprehensive, but rather reflect what I feel have been critical for me in identifying the right person to hire into positions in a large Genomics company.

### **• Your CV**

Remember that many people will be applying for the same position – which will be shortlisted to ~3-5 people to be interviewed. You must catch the application reviewer’s attention with your CV. In my experience, key factors are:

- Clear and clean organization of your CV. Those reviewing the applications will be going through stacks of CVs and will take to scanning them – because of this, key information should be easily discernable
- Providing a chronology of research experience with BRIEF descriptions of projects and in this context describing techniques that are in your repertoire. Tailor your CV to the position. One aspect of “Genomics” companies is that they may be orientated to technologies, platforms or information products. Use the information in the job specification to tailor your CV for the position.
- Providing information to show that you are active in the scientific community. In addition to peer-reviewed publications (if any), include poster presentations or other meeting presentations. Avoid comprehensive lists of every meeting attended, or courses that are not relevant to the position.

### **• Submitting your application**

- If the position advertised has someone listed as a contact for further information, it is a good idea to call and discuss the position with them. This will help you know better about the position going into the interview, and may help in your application being noticed in the application review stage.
- Get it in before the due date. A startling number of applications arrive late – sometimes too late. If your application is going to arrive late, contact them to explain that it is coming, and see if it is acceptable as late.

- **Before The Interview**

- Do your homework:
  - Although you may not be able to learn much detail about the position prior to interview, you should research the company, or division of the company to gain some understanding of their purpose. In interview, this is not always expected, but seeing that a person has done so makes a favorable impression. Know the company products or proprietary technologies, the latter of which, in Genomics companies are often the basis for the foundation of the company.
  - If possible, learn something about the scientific background of the person(s) who will be interviewing you. This may help in how you phrase your responses and could uncover areas of common interest that may be useful in interview.

- **The Interview**

- Skills versus Traits
  - Skills are techniques you have mastered; traits are a person's qualities that will make them successful. A smart interviewer will ask questions aimed at getting a good view of someone's traits as well as skills – and a good interviewee will be prepared to display them.

Examples of skills:

- Wet lab techniques such as cell culture, specific assays, etc.
- Bioinformatics, IT and programming experience.
- High throughput or automation experience.

These are often best explained in the context of their application – when asked about your experience, be prepared to describe a project or study that has employed the skills, as well as the outcomes of the experiments. Be able to concisely describe projects you have been involved in without being too expansive or going off on irrelevant tangents. There is a tendency for Genomics companies to be technology centered so be able to speak intelligently about the details of particular technologies used.

Examples of traits:

- Personal enthusiasm.
- Able to work independently.
- Able to work in teams.
- Initiative.

- Problem solving ability.
- Organization.
- Good communication skills.

It is likely that many individuals will have the skills necessary for a position, and it is the traits that will demonstrate your suitability for the role. For each trait, be prepared to demonstrate that you have these attributes by giving examples relating to yourself.

- Remember that you are also interviewing the company. Enquire about any aspect of the job that is not clear to you. Ask about the company culture. If you think the description is one you would feel comfortable working in, state this and explain why.
  
- Know why you want this position, and why you want to work for this company. If an opportunity does not arise during the formal interview to specify this, use the (usual) opportunity at the end to specify this. However, be sure that your reasons have real meaning and specificity.
  
- As much as possible, relax, enjoy the discussions and be yourself.