

I want to start by congratulating those of you – and you know who you are – for whom it took a bit of courage to come to a session like this today. I personally would probably have been too scared to come to this session when I was in graduate school: scared that it would make me look like I wasn't committed to my research, that I wanted to “jump ship,” that I was nervous that I couldn't cut it in academia, that I didn't like researching, writing, or teaching, or, worst, that it might look like I was ungrateful for all of the time and attention that my advisors were giving me.

But the reality is that the academic job market is a nightmare, and that there is a great big world outside of academia that can use people with the skills that PhDs have. (If this weren't true, this session would not exist, and it really is to the credit of the very wonderful folks who run the AJS that they are willing to acknowledge these facts quite publicly by organizing a session on this topic.) In fact, it seems apparent to me that the world outside of academia needs more PhDs, and thus that taking a job outside of academia should not be considered a stop-gap measure til the academic job comes along – and not a cop-out because you don't want to move to Idaho for a one-year non-tenure-track position that pays \$23,000 a year – but, rather, that jobs outside of academia are an excellent way to put your skills and training to use, a way to broaden your impact beyond the academy, and even – the path to a very fulfilling career.

How's that for a sermon.

Even though I've just made some very broad statements, the truth is that I really only understand one small part of the world outside of academia well enough to speak about it, and that's the world of foundations – and even more narrowly, Jewish foundations.

For the past six years, I have worked at two different Jewish foundations, first as research & program officer at Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation, which is one of the few very large Jewish foundations, which has given out about \$100 million over the past decade, and then, for the past year, as the executive director of Natan, a much smaller operation, where I am the only full-time staff person, overseeing grants of about \$800,000 a year and a membership of about 50 young philanthropists.

Let me give you a few facts about foundations in general, because I know that I didn't know a thing about foundations when I got my first job at one.

There are two kinds of foundations, at least if you slice the field according to how the foundation's money is given out: operating foundations and grantmaking foundations. The Steinhardt Foundation is an operating foundation: most of its money goes toward researching, developing, and implementing its own programs. Though those programs may spin off and become independent organizations, they are still in some ways "in-house" and are not external grants. The foundation (theoretically) does not give grants to external organizations. So, for example, a program like birthright israel got its start in the Steinhardt foundation's offices, with the foundation's staff developing the idea and figuring out how to implement it.

Then there are grantmaking foundations, like Natan. This is the model that you are probably more familiar with, since you have probably applied to foundations for grants for your own research. At Natan we send out Requests for Proposals once a year, then wade through the applications that come in, meet with many of the applicants, and then choose certain organizations to fund. Like all foundations, we have specific funding areas, in our case, Jewish Identity in North America, Economic Development in Israel, and Israel-Diaspora relations. Foundations all have guidelines about what kinds of projects they fund – so, in our case, we only fund small organizations, with annual budgets of \$1.5 million or less, and we don't fund individuals, or research, or Holocaust-related projects, etc.

These are all things you should think about before applying to a foundation for a job. You should be interested in the funding areas of the foundation, on board with the mission statement, in general agreement with the preferred methods of accomplishing this mission, and, as much as is possible, you should find out what kinds of explicit or unstated biases the foundation has. This last point is actually extremely relevant for Jewish foundations. There are some with very conservative approaches to Judaism and Jewish life – and there are others that are quite liberal, even radical. There are some that support only the large, mainstay institutions of Jewish life, like day schools or synagogues or JCCs – and there are others, like Natan, for example, that support only small organizations that tend to appeal to those on the fringes of Jewish life.

Quite logically, a foundation's funding areas, mission, methods, and biases are generally determined by the person or people whose money the foundation is spending.

So you can also slice the foundation field according to where the money comes from: for example, most Jewish foundations are private family foundations (and generally, I should note, with very small staffs): the money comes from a single donor, living or dead, or from a single family, and the board of the foundation has at least one family member on it. The foundation may even be run by a family member rather than by an unrelated professional. About 2/3 of all foundations in the US are family foundations, and they're generally very recognizable, because they're usually called something like "the Samuel Bronfman Foundation" or "the Samberg Family Foundation."

A few other examples: there are community foundations, which receive donations from members of the public, and which make their grants in a specific geographic region; and there are also corporate foundations, which are the giving arms of for-profit companies.

Then there are a few giving circles, which is actually what Natan is: when people join Natan and make their contribution, their money goes into a combined pool, and our members then sit on the grantmaking committees and make the grants out of that combined pool.

I tell you all of this just to show that the foundation world is not a monolith, and thus that you need to figure out where your strengths lie and what kind of work you're willing to do, and then start scouting about for the kind of foundation that meets your interests.

Operating foundations, for example, like to hire people with experience working in or running an organization, because the foundation is creating and even perhaps administering its own

programs. On the other hand, if the operating foundation is very research-focused, it may be looking for people simply to conduct research in its areas of funding.

I would guess, in general, that PhDs – especially whose fields of study are somewhat esoteric – are more likely to land jobs in grantmaking foundations – because we tend not to have too much experience running organizations, but we have been trained to be critical readers and thinkers, which comes in handy when you’re assessing applications. And, also, because we have *sitzfleisch*: we don’t look at a stack of application this high and cringe. In grad school you have to read that each week, right? So it’s no big deal.

This actually brings me to my one real piece of advice for job-searching, whether you’re looking for a job in a foundation or elsewhere. *You need to think very generally about your skills, to think about what you know how to do, not what you know.*

If you’re applying for an academic job, you are (usually) being judged on what you know, and on the quality of your ideas. Did you transform the field with your dissertation. Does your research have great promise. Is your particular body of knowledge needed by a specific department.

But, to be honest, for most jobs outside of academia, no one will care what your dissertation was about. Honestly, since graduate school, I have had many people ask me what my degree is in, fewer ask me what my dissertation was on, and way, way fewer who asked any questions beyond that. And my topic was *accessible*.

So what you need to do for applying for jobs outside of academia is to think about the *skills* you acquired from graduate school or from teaching.

Here are a few examples:

- 1) You have public speaking skills – you’ve taught classes, lead seminars, given conference papers, maybe given public lectures. So you are probably comfortable in front of a crowd, and hopefully you know how to adapt yourself to different kinds of audiences.
- 2) You know how to write – and maybe, how to write quickly.
- 3) You know how to edit, and you know how to analyze other people’s work and ideas.
- 4) You know how to read – to read critically, to read a lot, or to read very little but sound like you’ve read a lot.
- 5) You have *sitzfleisch* – you can sit for hours, reading, and distilling large amounts of information into important points or arguments.
- 6) Maybe you speak a few languages – this is always in high demand – at least if you speak actual living languages.
- 7) And – if you’ve gotten the PhD – you have a credential that signals to the outside world, that you’re smart. You’re a professional smart person, and don’t underestimate the power of the letters “P H D” or “M A” in any job market, no matter what your field of study actually was.

But there are also skills that you probably don’t have – and which you can either decide to gain on the job – or try to acquire by taking a few courses in non-profit management, or philanthropy,

grantmaking, or fundraising. I'll give you a few examples, all taken from my personal list of things I wish I had been trained for when I became executive director of a foundation:

- 1) how to make a budget
- 2) how to work with live donors – and make them feel good about giving away their money
- 3) how to read non-profit financial statements
- 4) how to build an effective board
- 5) and how to figure out best practices for ethic in grantmaking -- how to wisely and thoughtfully wield the enormous power and privilege that comes with giving away with someone else's money.

As this last comment implies, working at a foundation can be quite wonderful. You do get to give out money to projects you think are excellent – what could be better? You get to work with incredibly creative people on the frontlines of issues you're interested in, and you often get to feel like you're actually making a real difference in the world.

Finally, because I really believe that getting a job is all about who you know – I want to encourage you to come up to me after this if you're interested at all in this field. I'm more than happy to tell you in more detail about what I do, to help you figure out how to market yourself, and to hook you up with people who might be able to help you further.

And just as a plug – if you're interested, I brought a few Chanukah presents with me – this is a sampler CD put out by one of our most impressive, cutting-edge grantees, JDub Records, which is the label that discovered Matisyahu, the Hasidic reggae singer. The CD is a great sampling of

some of the best and funkiest new Jewish music, so please feel free to take one with you, and I wish you all the best as you try to figure out what you want to do with your life.