

Finding Your First Instructional Systems Position in Business and Industry

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During the past fifteen years or so, I have counseled numerous students on career options in business and industry. Most of them seek my help because they are aware that I had a career in business before returning to academia. Both the faculty and the students have become aware that there has been a major shift in job opportunities during that period. Our graduates formerly went to academic positions, now they go predominantly to business and industry. We have modified the instructional systems curriculum at Florida State University to take advantage of these changes in the marketplace (Boutwell, 1977; Redfield & Dick, 1984; Reiser, Driscoll, & Briggs, 1984).

In this paper, I will set forth what I believe to be important personal and professional considerations for instructional systems graduates as they define, seek, and follow a career in business and industry.

What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?

When Peter Drucker, the dean of American management consultants and eminent author, asked himself that question, he was past his fifty-fifth birthday. So don't panic if you have yet to develop a quick and crisp answer to the question. The profession of instructional systems development (ISD) is new and not well differentiated either in academic programs or in the job market. We must survive that identity crisis whether we call ourselves "instructional designers" (a term that grossly understates the implications of "systems" thinking), "instructional psychologists," which is worse, or "systems analysts," a term that has been effectively pre-empted by

data processing managers. Because there is no good simple term (e.g. civil engineer) that everyone understands, I have chosen "instructional systems development specialists" and "instructional systems development professionals," where specialists are recent graduates and professionals are journeymen.

Is all right with the world? No? Do you want to help? How can you best help pull on the rope that improves the human condition? Do you aspire to provide *primary service*? That is, do you want to serve clients directly as trainers, teachers, counselors, and salespeople do? Do you wish to focus on individual problems, or would you prefer to provide *secondary service*, in the hope that you could improve services provided to all?

Maybe you would rather design programs to train teachers, trainers, and salespeople. This is a key decision for you to make. I have heard many students say that they just wanted to "help people," while others claim they want to make money. It is the behavior you deliver to the marketplace that will decide which of these overlapping options you will emphasize. Robert Half (1982) has an excellent book on finding jobs and managing your career.

Can you best serve your interests and those of the world at large by creating and investing capital (i.e., making money), thereby helping yourself and providing jobs for others? Remember that in any job, there are two kinds of income: monetary and psychological. While they are not mutually exclusive, some jobs provide more of one than the other. Those of us who pursue academic careers know that our cash compensation will never be equal to jobs of comparable worth in business and industry. We stay, either because we cannot find real work, or because we prefer the academic environment. Trying to decide these questions for yourself is probably worth a personal struggle through con-

versations with your role models, heroes/heroines, mentors, and significant others. I believe that creating capital, investing it, providing jobs for others, and offering a useful service to the world is worthy of our time and consideration. On the other hand, if you opt to help people, your responsibility is to provide *competent* primary care to pupils or to the needy. Anything less than that is not professionally commendable, no matter how lofty your aims, and worthy your motives.

Regardless of how you describe the situation, in terms of locus of control, field dependent-independent, or other terminology, you are responsible for your own life. That means clearly that you must accept the responsibility for your own self-actualization. Those who form short- and long-term goals are more likely to reach them than those who do not. Try to make a career plan of your own that will make it possible to reach your goals. Do not leave that necessity of life to your employer or professional society. It is your responsibility to make your daily life worth living. I can think of no greater personal agony than to hate to go to work in the morning, or, to hate to go home at night. When you find yourself in either situation, take action to modify it since each will affect the other.

Many recent graduates have immediate goals of working in a warm climate, or near a large city, or in the South, or in a specific industry. When they start their families, or as their children mature, they may be much more concerned with financial security. Later, they may be much more interested in jobs that provide greater independence, entrepreneurial opportunity, or challenge. Keep these changing life demands in mind as you make your career plan.

Many of the people and organizations that you will be able to help most as an instructional systems professional will not be thankful for your contribution. If

you require constant approval, positive feedback, and expressed appreciation from others, consider those needs seriously when you choose a job. Many jobs will not provide constant positive feedback. I believe that you must develop an inner sense of competent performance and be a critical judge of your own accomplishments. Then, you can pat yourself on the back for good work and kick yourself elsewhere for substandard performance. It is not your employer's responsibility to provide a warm, responsive, and supportive environment. Even though some will try, few will succeed (Feldman, 1986).

Where Do You Want To Be?

"Where" means both the type of organization and the geography. There have been numerous jobs available in Chicago, the Washington, D. C. area, Newport News, Orlando, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Antonio, and other interesting places. If you prefer work with third world countries, you may find a position on a project in Botswana, Nepal, or Peru. Make a critical assessment of your own true preferences and decide how much location and organizational type mean to you. If you are seeking the best available position, you will make one kind of decision. If you are location bound you may trade location off against position quality; but note that many employers will reject you if you are too concerned with location. You cannot imagine how many people take degrees in instructional systems, settle down right here in Tallahassee, Florida and then suffer profound disappointment because few jobs in the profession are available here.

Many of the more exciting jobs available are physically demanding. If you design military training systems, are you really willing to go to the swamp for the operational tests? All students in Florida are willing to go to the swamp, but what if the system was for arctic engagements and the tests were being conducted in Alaska? They have offered you the position at more money than you could have hoped for. Are you now really willing to go to the Moab, Utah plant for ninety days temporary duty to do the job analysis for your training program? Some of the more exciting and interesting jobs will require extensive travel and good physical conditioning. Also, most of those employers will not have met their equal opportunity goals, so the potential for women and minorities is great. They pay well.

When you have reached some kind of closure on the decisions affecting your life and preferences, you will be able to prepare your resume to reflect these choices and send it to targeted employers. Read position announcements, ask your professors and colleagues, and use the library to identify those organizations you seek to join. Call or write graduates of your institution to get leads. Attend local and national meetings of professional societies if you can. If you cannot, ask others to provide you with any information they have about available positions.

What About Internships?

During the past five years, our students have had a variety of highly rewarding internships. Even if they do not seek or receive a permanent employment offer, they find that the experience of working with a journeyman instructional systems professional is valuable. When you go to interview for an internship, try to find out whether the organization really has other *professionals* that you can work with. I consider the absence of *professionally trained* journeymen to be a large red flag. We have found that many organizations want to have our students intern with former school teachers and within-plant specialists who have had no formal training in the field. Beware of these. We do not send physicians or nurses to in-

we constantly receive applications for graduate research assistantships from students who have had no identifiable paid work experience. These are not ordinarily chosen first. A paid internship with a recognizable (or explainable) organization will be to your benefit.

How Do You Want To Be Paid?

There is a bewildering number of alternative compensation packages offered in commercial and industrial organizations. Exploring these can help you make a better decision about the kind of organization that you choose. I have described below several different ways that people are paid as instructional systems specialists.

Perhaps you have heard people describe salaries as based on "hard" or "soft" money. It is important that you know the difference. Hard money refers to salary lines or positions that are paid with either funds appropriated by legislative bodies or from the main revenue source of the business. Soft money refers to funds that are temporarily available, usually from one to three years. Salaries at universities can be hard or soft, and are usually paid with money from endowments, the legislature, or with contract and grant funds.

Corporate salaries paid from contract funds are usually less stable than those paid from sales of the normal products

In any job there are two kinds of income: monetary and psychological.

tern where there are no trained professionals to supervise their development.

On the other hand, if your internship was with a large organization that was really a household word, that will look good on your resume. Any work experience, whether it is a supervised internship or not, will provide you with some insights about working in organizations. At Florida State University's Center for Educational Technology,

of the organization. For example, if you work for a bank designing and producing training programs, that is a hard money position at the bank. If you work for a "Beltway Bandit" (a term used to describe the numerous contract research and service firms lining Interstate 495 that circles Washington, D.C.) on a contract to produce a systematic tactical training system for the infantry squad, that is a soft money position. Soft

money positions are usually dependent on single contracts; however, established contractors do retain a cadre of professionals between contracts. The advantage of hard money is that it is more stable and dependable. The typical advantage of soft money is that people are paid more for the same kind of work because of the risk of interrupted employment.

Employees of the federal government, state governments, and other similar agencies usually have the greatest employment stability. They are typically paid an annual salary that is divided up into equal time intervals, usually weekly, biweekly, or monthly. Many businesses pay in exactly the same way the governments do. Some businesses will pay a regular salary, plus some kind of bonus or profit sharing addition, depending on how successful the year was.

Many instructional systems professionals are self-employed and receive a fee for their services. Typically, they will establish an hourly rate that they charge clients to provide service. These fees are billed weekly, monthly, or at some other acceptable interval. One advantage of this arrangement is that your income security increases as your client base expands; no single organization can put you out of work. You can charge as much as you can reasonably negotiate with the client.

Other professionals receive lump-sum payment for jobs completed. These people usually submit bids on announced competitive procurements where the award will go to the bidder having the most favorable proposal on technical, cost, or other grounds. Most such contracts allow for progress billings so that all the financing of the work does not have to be provided by the consultant. The advantage to the consultant is that there is the opportunity to make profits in addition to the normal salary or hourly rate. Remember, though, the right to make profit is equalled by the right to sustain loss. Such is the beauty and risk of the capitalist economy.

How Much Will You Be Paid?

That is up to you to negotiate. Compensation packages in business and industry are negotiable. Negotiation is a learnable skill and may be the most important skill you will ever acquire. To illustrate that prices and conditions of work are negotiable, I want to tell of an experience that I had years ago. After a

TABLE 1

Annual salaries and total compensation for five years based on 5% and 10% annual increments at \$30,000 and \$35,000 respectively.

YEAR	SALARY: \$30,000		SALARY: \$35,000	
	A. 5%	B. 10%	C. 5%	D. 10%
0	30,000	30,000	35,000	35,000
1	31,500	33,000	36,750	38,500
2	33,075	36,300	38,588	42,350
3	34,729	39,930	40,517	46,585
4	36,465	43,923	42,543	51,244
TOTAL:	165,769	183,153	193,398	213,679

Differences: D-A=\$47,910
D-B=\$30,526
D-C=\$20,281

Saturday meeting, my business partner, a man of considerable personal wealth, invited me to lunch at a downtown restaurant.

We stopped first at the most fashionable jewelry store in town to buy his wife's birthday present. He saw a stunning diamond ring in the showcase and asked to see it. The price tag: \$9200. He admired the ring, and, as he handed it back, he said, "Right now, I will offer you \$6000 in cash." The owner said, in so many words, "How would you like it wrapped?" That was my first experience in learning just how much of what goes on in any business transaction is negotiable.

In the matter of salary negotiation, you have two choices: take the first offer, or, ask for more. In Table 1 are alternative incomes and total compensation based on assumptions of salary increases of five and ten percent respectively over a period of five years. Two salary assumptions are used: \$30,000 and \$35,000. To make the example vivid, we assume that \$30,000 is the salary offered and \$35,000 is the salary finally negotiated. We also assumed that you have a choice between two companies, one that has a history of five percent annual increases, and the second having ten percent increases annually. Keep in mind that you should evaluate the *total* compensation package, not just the salary. There are really large differences among companies in benefits packages, including retirement, health

insurance, family allowances, and many others.

You can see how much money is gained in only five years by negotiating a 17% increase between the offer and the finally accepted salary. For \$30,526, would you be willing to ask for more money? If not, at least take the advantage of selecting the company that has a history of ten percent increases rather than five percent. In that case, you earn an additional \$17,384, and you avoid the embarrassment of negotiating. Negotiations can also be conducted with government agencies, states, and other organizations offering "fixed" salary schedules. If you are not willing to do business on their terms, you may not do well in business and industry and your children may go without shoes.

Since we all have initial difficulty actually *talking* about money, there are some standard procedures that you can follow to get yourself started. The important issue is not just whether to talk about the price, but when. It is both logically and empirically true that timing of negotiations is an important contributor to success. Suppose that you have a job in mind and they have asked you in for an interview. You think you want the job. You do not have any other offers.

Bracket the position first. Most organizations of any size will have salary *ranges* for all positions. If the position is a "Grade 32," the salary might range from \$19,000 to \$26,000,

depending on qualifications and experience. Here, "qualifications and experience" means your ability to negotiate. Ordinarily, it will take a lot of effort on the part of your employer to pay you more than the midpoint of the range. Create the need for them to make that effort. Give them all the information about yourself that you can so that they can better present your case to the personnel department. Provide them with a way to say, "yes." Incidentally, some employers will say that if they pay you too much this year, you will not be in a position to get as large a raise next year. Take the money this year. Any time you can have next year's raise this year, you will earn more money.

When you go to an interview, *do not ever ask about salary* or even think about it once before you and your prospective boss or employer can hear the thundering beats of your mutual good vibrations. This is a courtship. There is a time and place for commercial intimacy, but never before you find that you cannot live without each other.

If your suitor starts to talk about money, try gently to change the subject to the more substantive issues. Do not tell them how much you expect to receive. Avoid answering questions about your "minimum salary requirements" until it becomes rude not to do so. Tell them that it will be possible to negotiate fair compensation if the two of you are destined for greatness. The time to discuss compensation is when they have decided that they must have your services.

One of our graduates had been promoted to a responsible position in a Fortune 25 corporation. At a professional meeting, another of our graduates, badly in need of work, was discussing the possibility of joining the firm. The first question he asked was, "How much will you pay me to work for you?" Suddenly, there was no position available, even on the "old boy network."

If they want you to move to East Dubuque, make them pay for it. They should not only pay for the move, they must also recognize that it is a hardship post and be willing to make it up to you in other ways. Maybe they can pay for memberships in professional societies that meet in Bermuda, New Orleans, or Phoenix.

Try to find out what else is negotiable and get it on the table with everything else. Each of the following issues has been successfully negotiated by some of my students.

Payroll date earlier than reporting date. It is possible in many organizations for you to be put on the payroll before you actually report for work. One recent graduate was on the payroll a month before reporting. This will enable you to clear up your delinquent library and parking fines, get copies of your transcripts, and pay your graduation fees with a smile. If you do win this one, make a small contribution to your school's development fund. It is only fair.

be compensatory time off. The new law requires compensatory time to be awarded at one and one-half times the time actually worked. Private business and industry will expect you to work more hours, but they will pay you more for it.

Suppose you find that you have two job offers of approximately equal appeal. One company gives ten days at Christmas to everyone and does not charge leave accounts for it. The other company allows only two days off. You

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Moving expense. Everyone knows that "moving expenses are paid." Do you know what moving expenses are? They will tell you about some of these and others they will not. How about travel to the company location for you and your significant other? They may not require it to be your spouse. Remember airport parking, baby sitting fees, and those little incidentals. Ask for a copy of their moving expense policy manual or handbook so that you can find out for yourself.

The big issues include how long they will pay for temporary housing at the location before you find suitable quarters. Some are very generous with these relocation fees. Some will actually buy your house, if you own one, and allow you time to find a place at your new site. Some will move your car. Some will move your boat. I own a box of eight-penny nails that has lived in New Mexico, California, Michigan, and Florida. On a cost basis, it may be the most valuable piece of property I own. Make sure you know how many pounds of personal effects they will move.

Vacation and compensatory time. There have been recent changes in the wages and hours laws that will affect those of you who work for state and local public institutions. While you may be in an *exempt* category, there still may

can then decide how important the extra time off is to you. Some organizations have more holidays than others. Spend some of your effort planning your time off and your recreational and social life. All the contemporary literature on "burn out," "stress," and occupational health suggest—no, *insist* that you take care of yourself. Start early. It is easier to form good habits. Company policies and amenities can make a big difference to you. You must develop good conversational skills appropriate to the organizational culture where you work. If they are sports mad, learn how to listen to sports talk and still fake being awake. Get in on the "old boy network" in your organization.

Travel. On some jobs you will travel a lot, particularly in the consulting business. Find out what the company policy is on taking a spouse or significant others along on some of your trips. Some companies permit one to three trips per year, even to international locations. Many companies require travel to occur principally after normal business hours. Find out what is expected of you. Ask if they provide expense advances or company credit cards. Some companies require that you make payments on your personal credit cards, then submit a claim for reimbursement. Financing your own travel

can be inconvenient, particularly during vacation and holiday times.

Placement assistance. If you have a spouse, you may well find that the placement assistance given by your company to your spouse is a valuable part of the total package. Modern corporations are aware of the necessity of the two-income, two-career family. They will often place your spouse or assist your spouse in finding work in a nearby organization. Personnel professionals are very social creatures and belong to lots of local groups. They know what the other companies are doing and can often help, even if the company does not have an official policy.

The Ball Is In Your Court

Do not place the burden of your financial success and life satisfaction on your employer; it is your responsibility. You take care of yourself, let Mr. Henry Ford take care of The Ford Motor Company. Mr. Iacocca will take care of himself and of Chrysler. If the significance of these remarks is not clear to you, you haven't read the book. If you are seeking employment in business, you must read business lore books. Read *Iacocca: An Autobiography* (1984). Peters and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence* is a very popular book in corporate circles. Read it, too.

Read the current issue of *The Wall Street Journal* on the way to the interview. Be able to mention an article in *Business Week* or *Nation's Business*.

In negotiations for total compensation (salary, benefits, bonuses, and other perks), it is your responsibility to obtain the maximum *before* you start. If the curves in Table 1 do not make that clear to you, remember that non-standard raises for individuals are highly visible and difficult to defend, even in corporations. In your negotiations, your strategy should be to find that point on the compensation curve where your employer will not go one dollar more. Do not take one dollar less. Business, after all, is business.

When you have accepted the position, do not ever complain about your compensation. In the first place, it calls attention to the fact that you have let yourself be taken advantage of. Look in the mirror and remind yourself that you are good and that you deserve every cent of your pay. When you complain, the reflection is on you, not on the employer. If you are dissatisfied, find work elsewhere, or talk to the people who can do something about it. The "no

complaint" rule applies to friends as well as business associates.

In that same vein, do not complain about your boss, your company, or your working conditions. It reflects only on you, not on the company. If you cannot make a position for yourself that you like, seek help, or find another position. Discuss your grievances first with the people who can do something about them. That is the only professionally acceptable response.

Interviews and Site Visits

The time has come. You have been invited to visit the location of the prospective employer. You are going into another culture. They speak a different language. For the most part, they will not like education. Avoid phrases like, "We formatively evaluated the first draft." When you're out of class, it is all right to say, "We tried out the materials on trainees." In other words, when in Rome . . .

Probably the most important single concept about business that you need to master is that the fundamental objective of any enterprise is to make a profit. It is not the purpose of General Motors to make cars, they are in business to make money. When you join them, you are not there to develop training programs, you are there to help them make money. If that is not a worthy objective to you, reconsider the options mentioned during the earlier parts of this paper.

ored suspenders or in a killer cocktail dress cut to the waist. Impeccable personal grooming is an absolute requirement, including clean nails, hands, shoes, clothes, and, above all, personal hygiene. A recruiter told me that he did not hire one of our students because of an offensive body odor. Strong perfumes and lotions may be just as offensive; save them for social events.

There are "dress for success" books that can help you pick the right clothes. Read them, but do not take each word as absolute truth. Beware of accepting the advice of inexperienced clothing salespeople. They are more likely to sell fashion than style (Malloy, 1975, 1977; Forsythe, Drake, & Cox, 1985).

Travel. Learn soon in life that it is all right to ask advice from those who have reason to know. If you do not know how to get from your residence to the Chicago Loop, ask your travel agent, or other associates. When your host asks you to come, find out what is the recommended way of getting to the location. There are at least three airports serving Los Angeles, New York, Washington, and other cities. Which one would be the best to use? That question alone can save you fifty miles of driving. It will reflect far worse on you to try to guess and be wrong than to ask and get good advice.

Keep a contemporary record of your expenses. Keep all receipts and be ready to submit them with your expense

Given a choice between a high salary this year and a lower raise next year, take the money this year. Any time you can have next year's money this year, you will earn more money.

Appearance. Regardless of whether you are considered attractive by yourself or your peers, you must learn to present yourself to your best advantage. You must learn to dress within the acceptable codes of the organization and in a way that flatters you the most. Do not go to an interview in brightly col-

report. Do not take your meals in fast food places. You must learn to eat reasonable business meals in restaurants. Do as your mother told you, use the right fork and the right spoon. If you don't know, try *Miss Manners* or other references. There is nothing more uncomfortable for clients

than to be taken to a nice business lunch and have the host unable to decipher the menu or recognize the layout of the cover. Do not present your host with a \$45 nightclub tab either, unless you were explicitly invited to do so.

Smoking. In the aviation field and in many military occupations, there are numerous rules like, "Do not stand within fifty feet of the jet blast." Remember that people paid with their lives to get that rule established. The rules I am presenting here are based on casualties of another kind. If you must violate them, understand the element of risk involved. There is no known business advantage to people who smoke in the presence of nonsmokers; you cannot offend anyone by not smoking. Some companies have rigid rules about smoking in the office or in the presence of clients or customers. No matter how tolerant your company's policy may be, smoking cannot advance your career.

Personal confidence. Do not invite attention to your shortcomings. If you do not know how to conduct yourself in an interview, get in front of the videotape recorder with others and watch yourself. If you are incoherent, talking too softly, failing to make eye contact, slouching in your chair, the tape will show it to you. The professional bearing you must acquire is learnable. Practice until you have it down pat. The payoff will be handsome. Learn how to shake hands, look others in the eye, and talk in a firm voice.

If your employer asks you if you know about some obscure computer authoring language and you know nothing about it, remember to phrase your answer positively by saying something you do know. This is not being evasive, it is providing information to the person who is asking. Maybe something like this: Employer: "Have you used SANSKRIT?" You: "SANSKRIT?" Employer: "Yes, SANSKRIT, the new authoring language for the Edsel." You: "I spent most of my time learning TUTOR, but I would like to learn more about SANSKRIT."

In that exchange, you have told the employer that you have learned another language and that you would look forward to learning a new one. That answer was much better than, "Gee, no, I don't think so."

Take a nice folder or notebook to the

interview. Something with a permanent look. Do not carry both a shoulder bag or briefcase and a purse to the interviews. Take notes on specific statements they make about the job you will have. Try to obtain written job descriptions, copies of departmental plans and organization charts, and get some sense of their hopes and dreams for taking over the corporation. Where and how will you fit in? Who are your clients? You will probably be interviewed by several people. Try to remember their names and give each of them your full attention, regardless of how unimportant you think they are. By the time they get around to making you an offer, your original host may have been promoted. If any questions were unresolved when you left, follow up with a letter setting forth your understanding about what was said or agreed to.

Find out for sure where the location will be. They really may want you to work in Moab or East Dubuque. They may want you to travel a lot. Listen to what they say. Write it down. It will help you avoid surprises. You may be outside wearing a hardhat this winter. All the world's important work simply cannot be done in San Francisco. If they say that you will travel "about one-third time," that means that on the average, you will spend one week in three on the road. Consider your significant other and children when you say "yes" or "no."

Some companies hire instructional systems graduates to be fashionable. If they really don't know what they want you to do, and you like the place, don't insist on constant feedback, make a place for yourself.

Read inspirational books and articles on job search, but don't be overimpressed with *What Color is your Parachute?* (Bolles, 1980). Balance advice with reason, preference and even limited experience. You will make mistakes. When you do, recognize them, fix them if you can, try to get reassigned, and if all else fails, abandon ship, preferably in a *golden* parachute. Try to learn from success and from failure.

Retain this document for your records. Review it from time to time. Add your own experience to it. I would appreciate receiving any additions you wish to make or any challenges to the eternal wisdom expressed here.

Yes, you knew it was coming: Write when you find work.

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