

SES13-2013-000258

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the SES13 Meeting of
the American Physical Society

Life is not a straight line: Why physicists can follow its curves!

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The changes in modern working careers –multiple jobs during one’s working lifetime, high probability of changing one’s profession once or twice, and almost certainty that new technology will change everyone’s approach to work – will affect working physicists just as those changes will affect virtually everyone in the 21st work environment. Unlike many professionals, however, newly-trained physicists start with some powerful tools to be well prepared for coping with this new reality. Specifically new physicists have been taught how to define problems, how to analyze complex situations, and how to identify and ask the right questions. What they have to do now is to understand the environment in which they will likely work: industrial, application-oriented, international in scope, and often only indirectly using “physics” as they have been taught. I will discuss how to start planning your career, including how to think about the future, how to investigate possible long-term careers and specific job opportunities, how to prepare yourself for non-academic work environments, and how to match your skills and interests to the needs of employers. In short, your working career will not be linear: Be prepared to have fun while you ride this roller coaster!