

APR08-2007-030076

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the APR08 Meeting of
the American Physical Society

What I've Learned and Unlearned as a Physical Scientist in the Life Science Industry

DAVID MORGENSTERN, Associate Fellow, Process Technology, Monsanto Co.

I joined Monsanto in 1996 with a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry and a background in photochemistry and supercritical fluids, just as the company was exiting the chemical business. Since then, I experienced a merger into a pharmaceutical company (Pharmacia) and a spinoff into a purely agricultural company, focused on Biotech and Crop Protection. Change of this kind is typical in industrial research. I have found it to be a continuing challenge to decide when to adapt and when to focus on marketing the expertise that I brought into the company. Viewed as a problem in career tactics in a constantly changing technical, business, and organizational landscape, it might seem overwhelmingly difficult. But, as I will discuss, life in industrial research is constantly offering opportunities to provide new answers to the question, “what should I do with my life?” Thus, particularly for those who believe that research should serve society, the satisfactions of an industrial research career are deep and varied.