



Anthony Evans

When Anthony first joined the Prosper pilot, he'd been a Postdoctoral Research Associate with The University of Liverpool for just over four years. Working within the Institute of Integrative Systems, Molecular and Integrative Biology, Anthony specialised in investigating biomarkers for therapeutic response in pancreatic cancer.



The Challenge

At the start of his engagement with Prosper, Anthony had a hazy and uncertain view of his future career trajectory - one marked with doubt. Although he loved research and being a researcher, there were other elements of the academic lifestyle that made him start to wonder whether it was right for him in the long run.

“I was at the point in my academic career where the ‘traditional’ next step was to start pursuing a fellowship position. I had some doubts in the back of my mind about this, but my career up until then had been entirely research-focused, and I was fairly ignorant of what alternatives were out there, if any.”



Unfortunately the impact of the pandemic, combined with the demands of work and his new responsibilities as a father, had made it very difficult for Anthony to properly explore his options. The Prosper pilot represented a chance to rectify this.

“The timing of the Prosper pilot could not have been better for me. I still expected to commit to a future in academia, but I would at least have the opportunity to learn about other careers and know that I made an informed decision.”



“I had very little sense of what the world beyond traditional academia could offer to someone like me. I wasn't sure how non-academic employers viewed postdocs with our niche specialisms. I wanted to learn about the paths other ex-postdocs had taken, what skills employers look for, and what my academic experience-to-date could be translated into on this front.”





The Prosper Journey



Within only a few months of starting with Prosper, the ‘Reflect’ portion of the pilot – encompassing self-assessment tools, individual career coaching, sessions with ex-postdocs who had transitioned beyond academia, and more – had convinced Anthony that the traditional academic pathway was not for him.

“Prosper really helped bring my priorities into focus. I went from having niggling doubts to knowing I didn’t want to be a lecturer. The prospect of moving around a lot, while I can see the appeal to some, didn’t sit well with me as a new parent. And hearing from ex-postdocs who’d made the leap gave me much more cause for optimism about the prospect of making a change.”



Of course, this still left Anthony in an uncertain position – while he had decided the traditional academic pathway wasn’t for him, he still didn’t know what he wanted to do instead.

This is where the ‘Explore’ element of Prosper came into its own. Using the career cluster resources, including Q+A sessions with employers, Anthony was able to start narrowing down what initially felt like an overwhelming plethora of options. Thinking about what he enjoyed in his current role, and what he didn’t – and with a clearer sense of his own strengths and skillset – he was soon enough in a position to start making applications.

“I learned to be much more mindful of my long-term goals, and to make appropriate time and space for pursuing my own professional development. I started to be much more selective when pursuing new opportunities, with a particular eye for transferable skills. I became more mindful of both my own priorities as well as those of the employers I was considering.”



His first few applications failed to result in an interview. Far from getting disheartened or giving up, Anthony again engaged with Prosper – this time the ‘Act’ element – to find out where, if anywhere, he was going wrong and to improve his chances going forward. He attended CV and applications workshops, and went over previous applications with his career coach.

“I realised my first few applications were too subtle in demonstrating how I matched the job criteria – my advice to others would be to be a bit shameless in giving examples! Make it easy for the person to tick the boxes. Prosper support here was really invaluable in getting to grips with this quite practical – but crucial – aspect of it all.”





Feeling more confident, Anthony put what he'd learned from networking sessions into practice and reached out to enquire about future roles at an organisation he wanted to work for – asking if he'd be a good fit based on his experience. He was encouraged to apply. He got an interview. Then he got the job.

Next Steps

Anthony now works as a Data Scientist at the Computational Biology Facility at The University of Liverpool.

The binary at play in the discourse around non-academic vs academic jobs often occludes the existence of a large swathe of 'professional services' roles at Universities and other Higher Education Institutions – roles that often meld elements of researcher life with more traditionally non-academic job elements. For Anthony, this blend represented an ideal marriage of what he liked in academia and what he was attracted to in the world beyond the traditional academic career ladder. His position is mainly service-based – with a focus on collaboration and teaching with other research groups to help with their data analysis needs – but still retains a heavy research element.

“It felt like a hybrid of academic and non-academic work and my application reflected that. My CV was structured as though for a non-academic job – something Prosper was a great help in. I wasn't sure if I'd struck the right balance, but even though I wasn't a 'traditional' applicant, they saw my experience and enthusiasm, and here I am.”



“I feel very fortunate to have been part of the Prosper pilot. It's given me the push and direction I needed to help me manage my career now and in the future.”

