

BREAKING INTO THE BUSINESS WORLD WITH AN ADVANCED ENGINEERING DEGREE

Summary: If you're an engineer with an advanced degree but would like to break into the business world, there are options that you should consider.



Question: I have a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering and strong technical skills. My first job was as an assistant professor at an engineering school, and I'm now in a research lab at a major teaching hospital. I'd like to move into the business world, but I have no industrial experience. I'm worried that my advanced degree, combined with a lack of industry experience, will be seen as a negative. How should I approach this issue? Particularly, what should I say in my cover letters?

— Fred, Boston

Fred: You need to show potential employers that you can translate your technical training and academic experience to the corporate world. When writing a cover letter, explain concisely why you're eager to make the change, and specifically how you can contribute to their bottom line. Academics, especially those working in research, often bear the stereotype that they're good at spending money with no regard to the potential profitability of their efforts. Research your target company's business and offer key points about your background that mesh with their hiring needs.