Career by Design: Project Managing Your Way from Grad School to Industry

A Structured, Strategic Approach to Job Hunting for PhD Students

Meet the Speakers – Two Paths, One Goal

	Olajompo Moloye-Olabisi	**Yung Chan**
Company	Large Company (Global, multi-division)	Small Company (10–25 people)
Role	Senior Manager- Site lead Supply Chain , Project Manager and Technical Ops lead	Lab Manager; Project Manager & Scientist
Background	Ph.D and Masters in Biomedical Engineering ; BSc in Chemical Engineering	MS Chemistry, MBS in Biochemical Engineering ; moved into startup R&D
Perspective	Follow structured path, deep functional specialization, matrix organization	Built from scratch, wore many hats, unified diverse functions
	Works with all level of business from Ph.D s (R&D and Supply Chain) to Manufacturing Operations	Works closely with PhDs and other departments; translates science to business
	➤ Featured in **Case Study 1**	➤ Featured in **Case Study 2**

Project Management Institute New Jersey

Life Sciences LCI


Interactive Session

Timing to find a job

What are some of the things you can do prior to looking for a job?

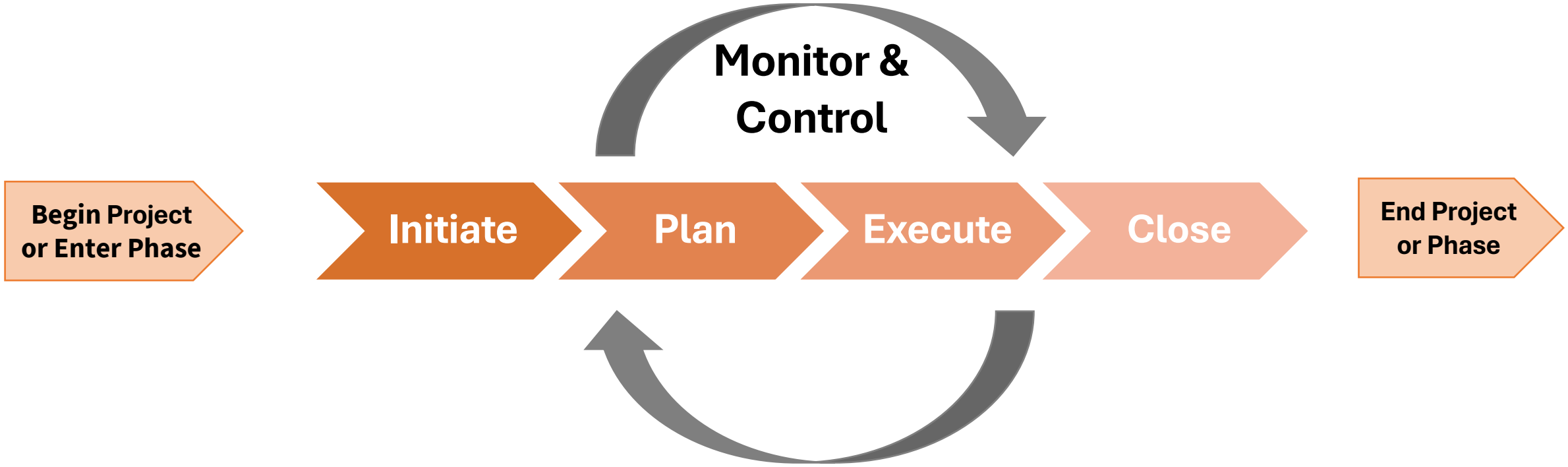
What are some resources that are easily accessible to you today?

My job search should focus on my research and not the skills acquired

If you’re applying for a job in academia, when is the best time to start looking and applying for a Job

If you’re applying for an industry position, when is the best time to start looking and applying for a Job

5 PM Process Groups



PMI® Definition – Model*: A thinking strategy to explain a process, framework or phenomenon.

Initiation

Define the Career Transition Scope

Objective:

- Secure an industry role aligned with your strengths and goals

Business Case:

- Transition from academia with a structured, scalable approach
- Informed decisions reduce anxiety and last-minute career pivots

📌 Your career is your most important project

📌 Move with purpose, not panic

Initiation

Current Landscape

Industries hiring most Ph.Ds..

- Technology (for roles in data science, artificial intelligence)
- Pharmaceutical and biotechnology – Medical development drug discovery, clinical research and regulatory affairs, Clinical Operations
- Healthcare (Medical Science Liaison), Medical writer, Grant writer
- Consulting –Strategic advisor , Business development ,
- Entrepreneurship and Venture Capital
- Government and Public Sector – research, policy and public service
- Academia- Rutgers health, Clinical – Educator/instructor (tenure track)

Project Management Institute New Jersey

Life Sciences LCI

Initiation

Career Search Triangle

📘 **Scope** → *Job type · Industry · Location · Flexibility*

- Broader scope → more customization work

⏰ **Time** → *Graduation countdown*

- Set project milestones to stay on track

💡 **Cost / Resources** → *Time · Energy · Network · Skills*

- Limited resources = focus on high-impact tasks

🤝 **Stakeholders** → *You · Advisor · Mentors · Career Coach · Industry Contacts*

- Check-ins realign the project compass

Project Management Institute New Jersey

Life Sciences LCI

Planning

Resources

AI Tools: Resume tailoring, Job Description matching, salary benchmarking

LinkedIn: Update linked profile , Networking, job alerts, alumni outreach

Career Center: Resume reviews, mock interviews, industry connections, Handshake

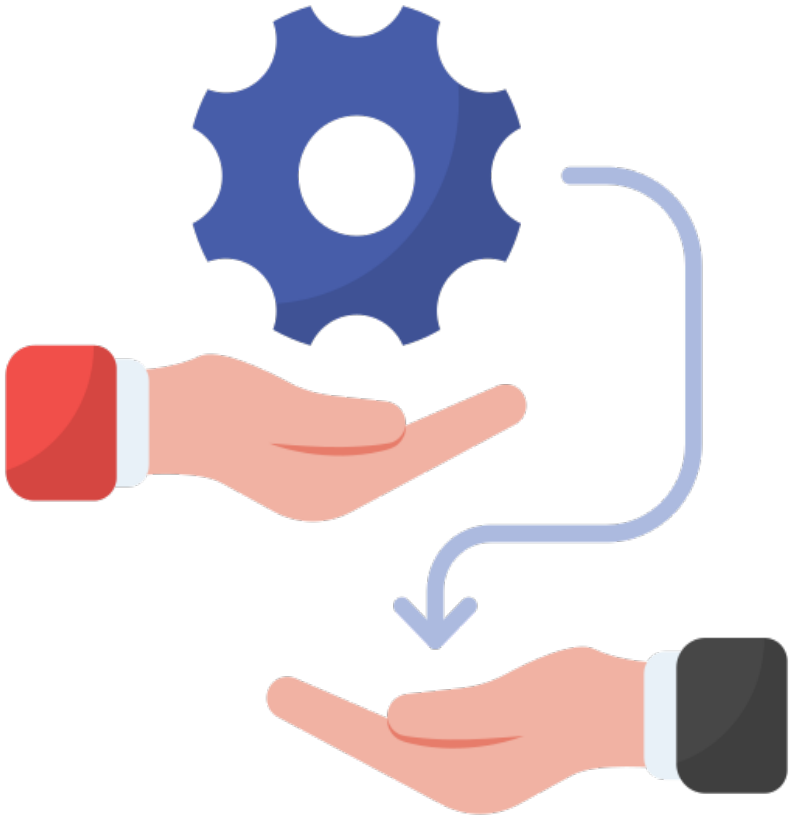
Online Platforms: Glassdoor, Linkedin, Indeed, ChatGPT

Project Management Platform: Microsoft project (Planner/ to-do), Trello, Asana , Monday, Notion, Airtable, Clickup

Company website: Industry Job platforms and recruitment agencies

Project Management Institute New Jersey

Life Sciences LCI



Planning

Resources

Transferable Skills –What You already have:

📊 Data analysis → R&D, product testing, programing or data analytics software usage (Python, Powerbi, statistics)

📚 Literature reviews → Regulatory, Strategy and Business planning

👩‍🔬 Lab management → Operations, Quality Control

🗣️ Teaching → Communication, Cross-team leadership

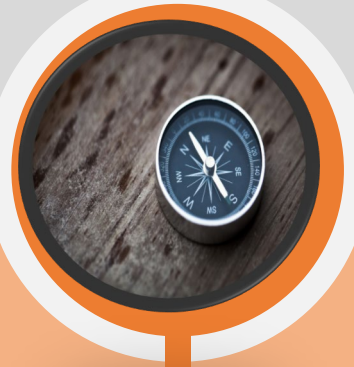
Action: Build a portfolio or story to show this off (an elevator pitch)

Project Management Institute New Jersey

Life Sciences LCI

Planning--- Project Schedule

Explore industry/academia



Narrowing down interest; Resume readiness

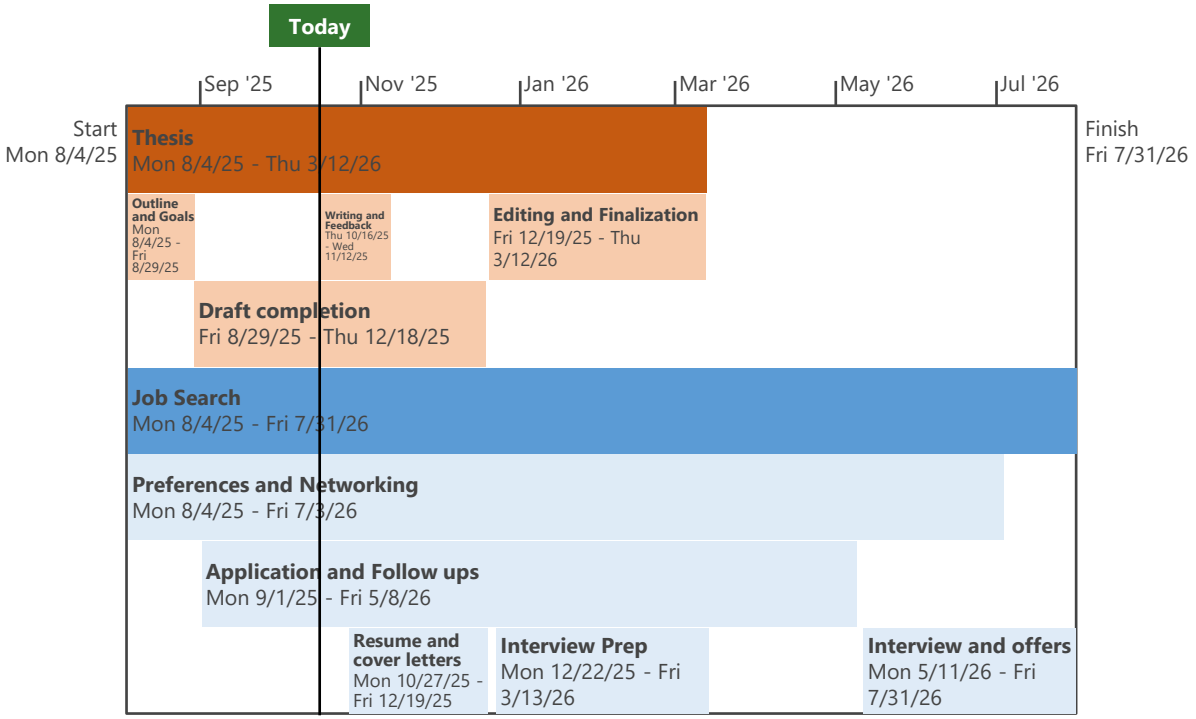
Job search

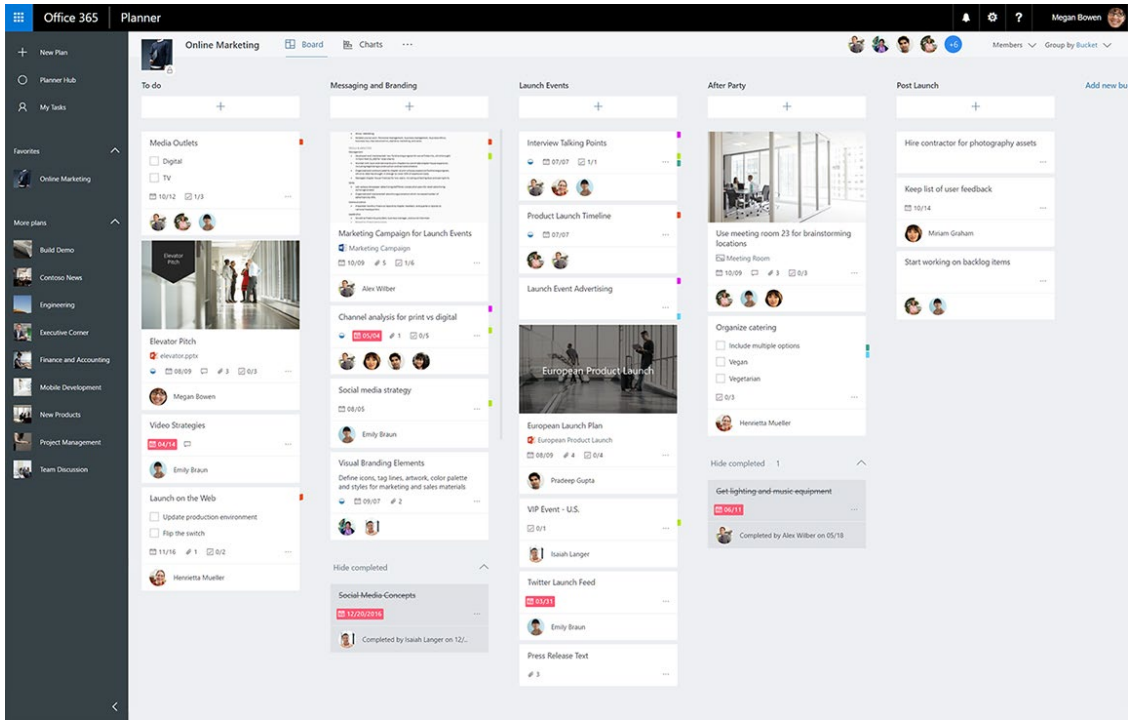
Interview

Job offer

📌 Plan buffers for research/thesis conflict

Planner examples – Gantt Chart and Kanban

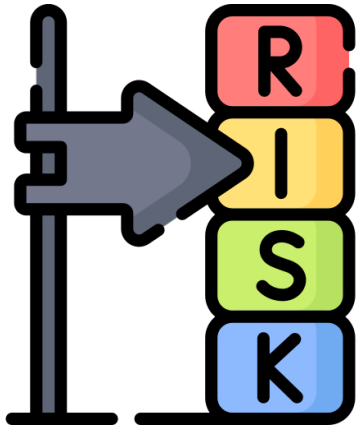




Execution

Risks & Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation Strategy
Time constraints	Schedule dedicated weekly sprints for job search
Thesis delay	Front-load networking and resume prep during thesis.
Burnout	Set weekly goals; include rest and celebrate wins
Rejection/ Application Silence	Treat feedback as fuel
Academic mismatch	Highlight transferable skills
Compensation uncertainty	Research & prepare ahead



Case Study 1: Working in a Large Company Mindset

Scenario:

- Joined a large company (Pharm, Med tech and Consumer) as a **Scientist** in Research development
- Matrix organization (structured)
- Work on new business focused -leading prototype to launch in 2-5 years; developing protocol, testing, conduct competitive testing
- Working with global team (opportunity to travel to multiple sites)
- Opportunity to work with functional team end to end (Early R&D to Customers (Doctors) to Marketing)
- Opportunity to move to other sectors (development program) and functional group
    - Technical → Technical → Business
- Taking risk to be **uncomfortable** and willing to **learn** new things (technical to business)

Project Management Institute New Jersey

Life Sciences LCI

Case Study 1: Working in a Large Company Mindset

Workstyle and Environment

Patients

Quality and cost

Fast pace

Focus on disease area or unmet need

Employees- learning , mental health etc

Case Study 1:
How to Thrive in a Large Company

Mindset & Habits

- ⚡ Willing to learn
- 🎯 Focus on the big picture
- 🗣️ Communicate clearly & often
- ⏳ Think Strategically

Pro Tips for Success

- 🌊 Take Risk
- 🎉 Celebrate
- 🤝 Network and Seek a Mentor

Case Study 2: Working in a Small Company

Scenario:

- Joined a 10–20-person startup as **Product Development Scientist**
- Built R&D from scratch in a fast-paced, ever-shifting environment
- Wore multiple hats: early/late-stage R&D, scale-up, supply chain, regulatory, QC, product strategy, marketing
- Agility and ownership crucial — company may just secured funding, resources limited

Case Study 2: What to Expect in a Small Company

Work Style & Environment

- 🚀 Fast-paced and constantly changing
- 🧢 Wear multiple hats
- 🧰 Hands-on execution over perfection
- 🧭 Minimal structure → self-direction required
- 💡 Limited resource → creative solutions
- 🔍 High visibility →your influence is direct

Case Study 2: How to Thrive in a Small Company

Mindset & Habits

- ⚡ Be proactive & adaptable
- 🎯 Focus on outcomes
- 🗣️ Communicate clearly & often
- ⏳ Prioritize & simplify process

Pro Tips for Success

- 🏆 Think like an owner & adapt fast
- 🌫️ Embrace ambiguity
- 🎉 Foster trust, celebrate wins

Execution

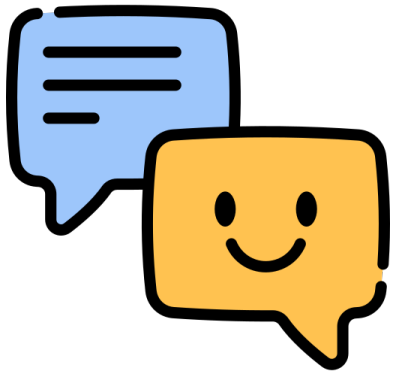
Soft Skills Are Critical

Technical Communication

- Explain to non-technical stakeholders
- Present to leadership & teams
- Summarize your work in 30 seconds
- Clear and concise emails & reports

Networking & Practice

- Find allies in your journey
- Ask for feedback, referral & opportunities
- Listen & frame for collaboration
- STAR for interviews
- Elevator pitches
- Advocate for your value



Monitoring

Weekly or
Monthly
Retrospective

📈 Track outreach, applications, responses

Closing

Key takeaways

Treat your job search like a **real project,** be your own **Project Manager**

Use your **Research Mindset** in a new arena

Network with intention and follow up

Observe, **Adapt**, and **Refine**—just like any great experiment.


You're not just job hunting —
you're career building!

Thank you!

Questions?