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BOOK REVIEW

NOTED WITH INTEREST

Increase your effectiveness

The Effective Scientist: A Handy Guide to a Successful Academic Career by Corey J. A. Bradshaw

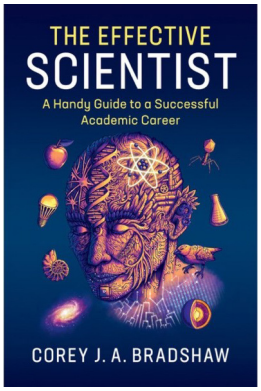
2018, Cambridge University Press, 288 pp., ISBN: 9781316620854, www.cambridge.org

Following the advice in this book, I have turned off my email, closed anything that can "ping" and sat down on a comfy sofa to write. The result? I feel liberated and am ready to spend 30 minutes being effective. I'm sure that reading this book has improved my potential to be effective, not only at writing, but at the many and varied aspects of the broader scientific endeavour, and I believe it can do the same for you.

For graduate students at the very beginning of a scientific career, the book offers a wealth of useful advice that will allow you to navigate more directly along the pathway to becoming an independent scientist than many of your predecessors, with fewer stumbles as you go. It is also empowering to realise that behaviours associated with being a good scientific citizen appear to also be a prerequisite to effectiveness. Bradshaw reinforces the importance of open science, a collaborative spirit, and thoughtfulness throughout the book and throughout one's scientific career.

For those just starting on the academic path, such as myself, I wager you will glean a few nuggets of gold from the more "basic" advice (e.g., 12-step programme for scientific paper writing), as well as valuable counsel about new tasks that are threatening to envelop you in a swamp of academic panic. For instance, how can you most effectively build your new lab group, stop a workshop from becoming a talking shop, and slice up your time between teaching and research? Academics at later stages would also benefit from dipping into the book, not only to improve their own skills, but also as a reminder of the challenges faced by their newest lab members.

As well as more classic advice on writing papers and grants, the importance of mathematical understanding, and making the most out of conferences, I was especially heartened to see explicit attention given to some of today's big issues. Lab group diversity (e.g., gender, culture, LGBTQ), managing stress and rejection, and the thorny issue of 'to advocate or not to advocate' are rarely discussed so openly and I applaud their inclusion here. Although I don't agree with all the advice offered (e.g., although longer hours might be required around tight deadlines, I think it is dangerous to perpetuate the idea that "if you entered the science arena expecting to work from 09:00 to 17:00, Monday to Friday, you will be profoundly disappointed"), the book initiates much-needed debate around these issues.



In conclusion, I recommend this book very highly. It is especially useful to the academics of the future and will resonate strongly with early career researchers, but it's messages will not be lost on the more experienced crowd. Buy it, read it, do it.

Sally A. Keith

Lancaster Environment Centre
Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK

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Edited by Joaquín Hortal

