

Positions Wanted

The following advertisements are from MRS members seeking employment in materials research and development.

PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYERS—

To correspond confidentially with the applicant,
REPLY TO THE APPROPRIATE
BOX NUMBER, AS FOLLOWS:

Box _____, No. _____,
c/o MRS Bulletin
Materials Research Society
9800 McKnight Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15237-6006

Senior postdoc in materials science and engineering seeks position in industrial/academic R&D, process engineering and manufacturing. PhD in solid state physics. Seven years experience in high permittivity oxide and ferroelectric materials. Background includes electric characterization (CV, IV, dielectric breakdown, etc.), electronic microscopy, elastic measurements, x-ray diffraction, thin-film processing, etc.
Employers—Please reply to **Box XIX, No. 101.**

PhD in materials research and solid-state physics seeks position in company or university. Familiar with preparation and investigation of the structure and electrical properties and phase transitions of complex oxides including ferroelectric, piezoelectric, and related materials. Conceived and developed a database "ACMAT" on these materials. Over 20 years experience in x-ray powder diffraction. Author of commercial software packages for powder diffraction. Directed and coordinated activity of my private company PhRRAM. **Employers**—Please reply to **Box XIX, No. 102.**

POSTERMINARIES

Transition Support

We humans are fragile creatures who by and large like the *status quo*. Nature, however, rarely leaves us be. There are friends and family and trained professionals out there to help us recover from natural disasters, job loss, adolescence, and other such serious life-changing experiences. There is, however, another arena, in professional life, where transition support is sorely lacking.

No doubt you have experienced this yourself. It is a vicious, largely self-inflicted cycle which, ultimately, one must deal with all by oneself. It starts innocently enough. The phone rings. It is a respected colleague inviting you to give a talk and write a paper. A letter arrives. It is another respected colleague inviting you to author a chapter in her book. There are so many reasons to accede to the request. You are flattered to be chosen from among the throngs of other experts in your field. Such a prestigious venue for your work will enhance your position professionally—more and better contacts, a more impressive list of publications, and the kind of external approbation that is rewarded by your employer. Besides, you want to be helpful to your colleague, too, by contributing to the quality and success of the project.

There is only one reason to decline. You are already somewhat busy with your daily routine and a few other prior commitments. But the due date for this new invitation is months and months away, so you say "Yes," having every good intention to follow through with the methodical and measured production of an opus any editor would give her eyeteeth to acquire. Sometime later a confirmation arrives, perhaps with some

guidelines about format and such and, as it is wont to do, *tempus fugit*.

As the deadline looms, you view your acquiescence to your colleague's invitation as the aberration of a weak moment. She knew how busy you are and should have known better than to take advantage of you. And now a reminder from her, a person you never suspected possessed such tyrannical tendencies, lands on your desk. Well, the preparation that you envisioned would have been done by now isn't. It's really too late to back out without leaving your colleague and the other contributors in the lurch. Even if they found a replacement, it couldn't be anyone who would do the topic justice, as you would.

So, motivated by the crisis of no time left to dawdle and an abundance of prospective guilt, you buckle down to work. And, after the predictable frustrating period of adjustment when all the references are not at your fingertips and when the writing hasn't quite homed in on the requested level and style, things begin to flow. Writing becomes a joy, although the approaching deadline is building stress by the day. The deadline becomes recent history, but you obtained a short reprieve from your understanding colleague and the finished product is pretty darn good.

You swear on a stack of unread mail that you will never, ever again be caught volunteering for a chore that eats so much energy and time. Your family, who haven't seen you in daylight for several weeks, applaud the pledge. Then the book is published and you get an advance specimen copy directly from the publisher. You see your chapter typeset and experience the swollen pride of

authorship which is later only exacerbated by a greater than expected number of reprint requests, even from countries where there is no shortage of photocopy machines. And the seeds of the next weak moment are sown.

If we were talking about chocolate cake, the diagnosis would be "classic compulsive, addictive, self-defeating behavior." Abstinence, or at least moderation, would be prescribed for the cake indulger, but what about the inveterate over-committer? True, actual over-commitment is also only cured as if it were cake. But was the above scenario over-commitment or bad time management? We submit that transition support, judiciously provided after the enthusiastic acceptance and well before the deadline-induced panic, would be most efficacious.

Trained professionals would not be fooled by the procrastinator's plea that "I only work well in a crisis." They would see through the more scientist-specific excuses as well: "I am an inertial creature only moved by an external force." "It is entropy that makes me disorganized without an outside agent's intervention." Great lines, but perhaps the best is one of anonymous authorship that appeared in my own in-basket in the midst of just such a weak moment/panic/pride cycle: "God put me on Earth to accomplish a certain number of things. Right now, I am so far behind, I will never die." Self-preservation is the strongest instinct we have. There is a *POSTERMINARIES* topic in here somewhere, but who's got the time to write it!

E.N. KAUFMANN