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Easing the Transition of Physicists into Industry

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All physicists are told that physics is the foundation of subjects such as engineering. One might be led to believe that thus, finding a job as a physicist would be as easy, if not easier, than as an engineer. Sadly, this is far from the truth in the real world. Graduating with a degree in theoretical physics makes it even more difficult to get an industrial job - though, one may question why anyone in a theoretical stream would want a job in industry. The fact is that, things change. A student may one day find that though their efforts have been focussed on physics, theoretical or experimental, that life choices, or even changes of interest, can cause a rethinking of one's career.

While it should be an easy transition from physics to an engineering job, or to a related technical field, the reality is that the outside world really does not know what physicists do, or what they are capable of doing. Human Resources departments are staffed with individuals looking for key words in resumes, with little or no understanding of how to match skills to job requirements. Many individual's resumes never make it to the hiring manager.

This paper presents some thoughts on the subject of moving physicists from academia to industry, presented by someone with a degree in theoretical particle physics who has spent almost 25 years doing hardware design for the space industry. Recently, I've come to see a problem identical to my own career path where quantum physicists across Canada and particularly at the University of Waterloo's Institute for Quantum Computing have begun to tackle this very problem.

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