**Title: How Did You Get That Job? A Q&A with Rebekah Layton  
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**Hello, I’m Garth A. Fowler,** Senior Director for Education Psychology at the American Psychological Association. I'm your host for the latest installment of *How Did You Get That Job?* the APA's webinar series where we interview individuals with psychology degrees to learn more about what skills they use on a daily basis in their jobs and how they got to their current position.

If you're new with us, you're going to learn that our webinar is short and focused. It's going to last 30 minutes. In the beginning, we're going to have our guests tell us briefly about their jobs and they tell us what the day in life is like, specifically focusing on the skills, abilities, and competencies they would use. But then we're going to switch and we're going to learn more about how our guests are this one, in particular, a guest, got to her job and what the path might look like for you if you were interested in breaking into this type of career.

During the webinar, you can submit questions by using the Questions Box located in the webinar control panel. As time permits at the very end, I'll also select some of those questions and ask them of our guests. Let's get started. Our guest today is the Director of Professional Development Programs at the University of North Carolina, her name is Dr. Rebekah Layton. She uses her training to develop and direct innovative professional development programs for well over a thousand biomedical graduate and postdoctoral trainees on her campus. Before we start asking her tons of questions, I just want to stop and say, Dr. Layton, thanks for joining us on *How Did You Get That Job?*

**Rebekah Layton:** Good morning, Garth. I'm so happy to be here and, please feel free to call me Bekah. Lovely to be joining you today.

**Garth:** Oh, no problem. I was going to say very comfortable and just so people know, you and I have met before. We run in common circles and some of the, I think the webinar or in some of the conferences that you're going to mention so, I'm somewhat familiar with your work. All right. Perfect. Well, let's move on. Your official title is Director of Professional Development Programs. Unpack that for us. What does that really mean specifically and what do you do on a day to day basis?

**Rebekah:** That's a great question. Thank you so much. When I first started my job, I didn't really know exactly what it meant, but I liked all of the things that were in the job description and I found those to be very much true to what I thought. The first thing I would say about my job is there aren't two days that are ever the same and that's something I really love about it.

One day I might be helping to run a workshop or teaching, another day I might be doing one-on-one training or one-on-one meeting with students or postdocs. Another day I might be helping to grade poster sessions or run a full-day program, a symposium or poster session, or anything else going on campus. It's really nice to have that variety. Other days I might be spending time doing writing, working on grants, or other types of program evaluation and dissemination, and so I really like that variety.

One of the things most important to me is that I really enjoy autonomy, and I can talk more about this in some of the other sections about learning what I like and don't like in my own career progression. One of the things I love about higher ed is that particularly in a director type of role, a program director role, you have a vision that you get to bring to it to take it where you will.

One other thing I wanted to add was that the two most important things skill-wise is being a people person because there are lots of meetings, as I mentioned, whether that's program development, planning, strategic networking, or workshops and teaching, or one on one meetings, you're going to spend a lot of time with people. The second thing is the willingness to learn and do it all.

As you start off, you might be doing event planning, you might be doing budgeting, you might be doing again, strategic planning, stuff like that. You may also be doing **[inaudible 00:04:05]** evaluation, you may be meeting students. There's a really wide breadth of what type of skills that you get to utilize.

**Garth:** Perfect. Well, let's talk a little bit about the career field in general. We mentioned before that your title is Director of Professional Development Programs. Do you find that everyone in your field has the same title? Like would you go hang out with a hundred other Director of Professional Development Programs, or do you find that across the different institutions and environments where people work, they might have very different job titles, but you're all doing a lot of the same things?

**Rebekah:** Yes, that's a great question. The type of role that I have a program director within career and professional development, I find typically exists within a couple of different places. I'm on a biomedical corner of campus if you will. Schools of medicine have a lot of targeted programming around this. It also commonly exists within the grad school. How's it for all of graduate training, and sometimes in career services. Occasionally departments will have their own career professional development representative who actually focuses just on trainees for that department and particularly if it's a big department at that institution.

Then the other place that it's really common is Offices of Postdoctoral Affairs that focus only on people who have completed their doctoral work, who are doing training in follow on training in a particular specific area. Then beyond that, there's also program directors in higher ed who are not in career and professional development. I do want to just give a nod to that and say that there's lots of other ways that you can do these types of things around a particular topic you may be interested in. There's a lot of really great work going on in diversity equity and inclusion.

Working within higher ed in those roles as a program director is another way to interface with this type of work. There's also student affairs, advising, and like I said, the career center with career counseling that have different flavors of this stuff. Our learning center also has positions similar to this that would be around helping support undergraduate student learning in the writing center.

Each campus is going to have slightly different versions and teaching and learning centers will have slightly different versions. Program director in general, these types of skills will be very broadly applicable for it. Then I'm going to focus a bit on my particular niche area, which is current professional development for graduate and postdoctoral trainees.

**Garth:** All right, perfect. Well then let's get down to some of the really nitty-gritty. Let's talk about the skills, abilities, and competencies that you really need for your particular job and what you do. On a day-to-day basis, what are those skills, what are those competencies? What do you find your bag of tricks that you go to just to get your job done?

**Rebekah:** I alluded to a few of these before, but obviously programming is a bread and butter part of it. Deciding strategically what skills do you want to focus on providing for your trainees? Are you going to have workshops series? Are you going to bring in outside speakers? Are you going to try to collaborate with internal offices to have joint programming? Thinking about what you want to be able to provide and how you want to do that.

For me, one of the answers to that, that I learned from my own training was that having students help with the planning really allows your office to broaden what it can offer and as well as giving the trainees the opportunity for leadership and experience. When I say trainees, I'm referring to typically graduate students and postdocs, but this could be very much applicable at the undergraduate level as well. As I mentioned my career programming focuses primarily on graduate and above, but I do want to mention that there are lots of opportunities to do this at other levels as well.

Training and mentoring and leadership skills are something else that I found really useful. Given that we use what we call career cohorts, which are these trainee-led professional development groups, this is how a lot of our programming happens. A large part of my job has evolved into supporting student groups with teaching administration opportunities, for instance, software they could use, as well as leadership opportunities for how can they structure their clubs, what officers they like to have, how do they want to disseminate and plan their programs? How do they want to budget? Things like that. That's been really enjoyable for me as it's something that I wanted to do coming into this role and so it was something I was able to expand while I was here.

Program evaluation and dissemination, I alluded to before as well. I personally had a lot of experience in my graduate training in psychology, working with surveys, data, writing grants. Those were things that I thought I could bring those skills to the table in my new role. That was not a required role, but it's something we've been able to expand to do a lot more of because that was something that there was a need for and we were able to recognize that and use those skills towards that. That's been very gratifying as well.

Teaching is something else that I really enjoy doing a lot that I wanted to do more. Again, when I first started this role, teaching workshops was certainly a large part of it. I think if you put a bug in the ear of people around you and tell them what you're good at, you may find you have other opportunities to continue to use those skills and I recommend that. Over the years, I've gone from doing workshops as well as guest lectures and graduate courses around some of my professional areas of expertise, to actually being a co-instructor of a bio-statistics course a couple of years later into my job and so I really love that. It gives me a chance to teach in the classroom as well.

Event planning administration, I already mentioned. There's lots of aspects to that, but any chance that you can get to do that at the undergraduate, graduate, or postdoctoral level is a great way to experience it and decide if you like it and have it on your CV or resume. Then the last part I really pivoted to doing a lot more of, which is one on one meetings with students.

When we first started in my role, what we did do one time CV resume cover letter reviews and we do still continue to offer that. But I really felt the need to be able to do more than that, to be able to delve in with students on their journey and help them figure out where they wanted to go and what they want it to do and that's really meaningful to me. Again, I could talk more about this when I talk about my career pivot, but I felt that it was very challenging to know what's even out there, where do you start when I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do with my own career. It's really gratifying to be able to provide those tools through conversations with students.

I've done a lot of work in coaching and learning more about that myself and becoming certified in that so that I can support students in that way as well and so I do a lot more of that now than when I first started that and I really love that.

**Garth:** Before we move on to the next thing I wanted to circle back to a little bit I think you said before about your skills with surveying and data, and I think particularly assessment. I think within this particular area the career and professional development and undergraduate and graduate career advising, I think the idea of program assessment and bringing evidence back to whoever you report to, the Dean or the provost or the chair that your efforts and programs have impact. I think that's becoming more and more important in this field. Do you agree with that?

**Rebekah:** Yes, I certainly do. I think that first of all, coming from a psychology degree, you are armed with the basics. Whether you decide to go on to do graduate training or postdoctoral work, you get even more, right. Even making it through undergraduate, you're going to have some statistical training and competency and understanding data, collecting data, knowing what questions you can answer, and running some basic statistical analysis.

Again, this doesn't have to be running logistic regressions or multilevel analysis. You can simply be able to do a T-test or an ANOVA and know that, hey, if I ask a question with a Likert scale, for instance, I know that I can now look at these two groups and how they're going to compare on that outcome. That's something that most people don't know so that's actually really valuable.

**Garth:** Let's move. I think that's a great segue then into the next question about how one, how you got the skills that you need. Let's talk a little bit about the skill development and we're going to break it down into two questions. I think first is let's talk about those skills that you use that you got in your training. Like how specifically did your undergraduate graduate, your postdoctoral training give you skills that you use today still?

**Rebekah:** Yes. Great. I'll start with my psych specific training. Social science research methods is something that, as you mentioned, in many of the rest of the sciences has not been applied to our own actual work. It's really nice that that can form the basis of actually doing inquiry about what's working and what's not working with that program evaluation and program assessment.

Similarly, survey design and administration, running statistical analysis, and even just how do you go about doing human subjects research? Getting Citi training, knowing what an IRB is, knowing how to apply for one, doing informed consent. Those are things that most people outside of psychology or social sciences more broadly have not been exposed to, and those are things that are really crucial if you do want to do that evidence-based data gathering that our field is moving more and more closely to.

Then for career and professional development job-specific experience, I alluded to this earlier but organizing panels, workshops. I actually didn't know that I want to do this as a career, but I was in a future faculty leadership counsel role while I was a graduate student, and we ran panels, workshops, and series, including cover letter reviews and CV reviews as well as job search workshops that I helped organize and ask people questions very similar to this right now, which prepared me really well, unbeknownst to me, for a career that I love, but didn't even know that that was where I was heading at that time. Getting opportunities to do that during your training is great.

Pedagogical training, similarly, I thought that I wanted to do a lot of teaching and so I did a lot of training with pedagogy. For those of you who aren't doing that yet, that's just training on how to teach, and so because of that, I could use that for both workshops as well as classroom teaching later on.

Generically, teaching, speaking, and presenting whether that's at conferences at lab meetings anything like that will be really useful for you and then management. If you do end up going to pursue an advanced degree, you're going to probably have the opportunity to manage and train research assistants. A lot of my management and training experience with how to mentor and coach students, including helping them with their careers and doing recommendation letters and things like that, I was able to get during my graduate training.

Then of course writing and communication skills are always useful and valuable both in the Academy as well as outside of, and experimental design. If you are going to do some of those broader questions as a career and professional development program evaluation, you can bring that experimental design experience over to more of the program evaluation side. One thing that I-- Oh, yes, go ahead.

**Garth:** I was going to say, let's move on because I want to make sure we get the time. I would like now to switch, we're about halfway through, and talk a little bit about your career progression and a little bit about how you got to be here as a segue later to trying to give advice to our listeners about where they might go to find some of the other jobs. Give me a very brief history of how you got to where you are now.

**Rebekah:** Yes, sure. The route that I took was through going through doctoral training. I'll talk a bit about that in a second, but I do want to pause to just say if you are an undergraduate right now, and you're not sure, there are also opportunities to try out higher ed admin without having to go through that yet. There's program assistance and program associates that would allow you to do some of these implementation type of things at the lower level, without having to necessarily know exactly how to run an entire program. If you might be interested, that's the way you could try it out before deciding if you want to go on for a graduate degree.

I will say that for the director programs, in my experience having a master's or a PhD is pretty advantageous on the job market for director-level positions. Typically an entry-level position is often an assistant director position, which is what I started with. I'll get back to that now, but did just want to throw that in there.

My personal route was to do during my undergraduate I majored in history and sociology of science, which is the philosophy of science in a way, which actually has been very interesting to apply in my current role, thinking about how our program evaluation and career and professional development has evolved, but that's a segue, so I'll leave it at that. My psychology degree, I thought I might want to go back for a graduate degree for it, but I wasn't sure yet. I did a senior honors thesis in both areas so that I would be able to go back for graduate education if I wanted to.

Then I moved on to my military career. I was trained to be in the military all four years I was an undergraduate and knew I was going to graduate and go into the army to do four years of active duty. Then I could either stay for the second four years or choose to move on at that point. After my four years of active duty, I decided I did in fact, want to go back to higher education. During my last year of service as a military police officer and paratrooper, I applied to graduate programs.

Once I got in, I knew I wanted to do social and personality psychology because I was really excited about the research around the mind being a muscle that Roy Baumeister and Mark Murray even worked on. After that, I was able to specialize in that in my doctoral training. During my doctoral training, I felt very sure that I wanted to teach at a small liberal arts college as my next career progression. So tenure track or bust, which is quite common in PhD world to think that must be what I must do.

While I think that that would have been a very fun career, after my graduate training was complete I moved on to postdoctoral training to get more research experience before going back on the tenure track job market. During that period, I found that my postdoc was not going to be as long as I thought it was, which created some urgency for me to find a job since I had just moved my family to a new state. I had to do some really deep digging and personal questioning to figure out well, what do I actually like about what are the things that I thought I wanted to do and how can I do those in a different job title?

While I was looking around, I actually looked outside and inside of academia and found different positions around career and professional development and around teaching that one could do both in companies and in higher ed. When I came across this job description, which again, I didn't even know existed before. I said, Oh my gosh, I get to do the mentoring and coaching that I wanted to do with students. I get to do teaching in a workshop format. I can be working on data and program evaluation as part of my role, and I get to do all of this, it just has a different title. That sounds pretty cool.

After a couple of informational interviews with people in similar roles that even in the office that I ended up applying to, I found that it was exactly what I thought it was. It sounded great and I didn't know for sure, but I figured I could try it out for a couple of years and if it didn't feel like a good fit, I could always pivot into something else. The transition between deciding whether or not to do tenure track and do something else was really difficult. One thing that's super meaningful for me is helping people to have what I call plan A's and plan A primes so that they have a couple of things they're super excited about and they don't have to feel like they can only do one thing to be successful. That's a personal plug I like to make

**Garth:** Sure, well, so I want to move on to the next part where we can actually ask, where do people go to connect with your colleagues, your professional development, and more importantly, you mentioned already that they could break into doing program assistant jobs and looking for entry-level positions that do this. I'd like to focus more on, what's the community? What other places job boards or some of those other groups that you and I belong to like the Graduate Career Consortium, talk a little bit more about those so our listeners can learn about them?

**Rebekah:** There's a number of really phenomenal national level communities that focus exactly on these type of things. The Graduate Career Consortium, as Garth mentioned, is a really fantastic community that also offers trainee memberships, so if you're currently a doctoral or postdoctoral trainee and interested, you can actually dip your toes in, learn more, come to conferences, participate in lots of Zoom and online sessions right now given everything that's going on.

The National Postdoctoral Association is another great one that focuses on after graduate doctoral training is complete during that postdoctoral period. Then there's a couple of great websites as well, Chronicle of Higher Education, Higher Ed Jobs. Then, of course, societies like APA that can connect you with discipline-specific opportunities that may be in this type of field.

**Garth:** Excellent. We're getting some questions in I have some pre-selected ones, but before we do that, I wanted to say, is there one last piece of advice that you'd like to distill upon all our listeners out there, before we roll into questions?

**Rebekah:** Yes, I wanted to just mention, don't be afraid to look outside your field directly. You may find that your skills are actually even more highly valued in other fields because other people don't just take them for granted there. That's something I just wanted to throw out there, and I work in biomedical sciences on biomedical workforce issues, particularly right now in addition to postgraduate and postdoctoral professional development more broadly, and because I work with a lot of scientists who are focused on Biological Sciences, they aren't familiar with a lot of the- some of them are, but many are not familiar with the tactics and analyses that we use in social sciences.

They're really excited that we can bring that to the table. That's just one example, but I think there's lots of examples in other fields as well, where your knowledge and advice and things that you do day to day in psychology, they may not be as familiar with and you can actually bring that to the table to provide value for them.

**Garth:** Excellent. One of the questions that came in earlier that I would want to hear the answer to myself, is you have a number of certificates and it looks like continued education beyond just your doctoral degrees. Tell a little bit more about that training and some of that other certified experiences you have, and how that plays into your current job if at all.

**Rebekah:** It's very crucial in my current job, but I will start with I did not have it going into my role, my job actually helped me acquire this training as part of my professional development in the role. When I came into this particular job as an assistant director, there was a little bit of one on one but not a whole lot, and as I mentioned before, it was something I was really passionate about.

I felt like I didn't really have the tool-set to necessarily provide as much value as I wanted around that. I felt very competent in helping with basic questions or directing them to the right resources, but I wanted to be able to do more than that and helping them uncover and ask really good questions, help them figure out for themselves, what did they need and what did they want to do, which to me is a really valuable philosophy rather than telling people in a directive format, actually just helping people figure it out for themselves by providing resources, questions, impressions, ideas, but really centered around their needs.

The coaching model is one that really resonated a lot for me, and the International Coach Federation ICF offers training that you can get certifications in working with people broadly across all different domains, but my focus, of course, is career and professional development. There are other certifications out there as well, but this one really spoke to me because the particular program, I went through, Mentor Coach, also involves positive psychology and again, just evidence-based disciplinary knowledge that you can use for practice.

Things like gratitude, the research around gratitude, and how powerful that is, or things like writing and journaling exercises. There's some phenomenal work in social and personality psychology about that. All of that stuff was actually baked into the curriculum that I went through, and so I really appreciated that coming from that with some of my disciplinary background.

**Garth:** Perfect.

**Rebekah:** Some of that was not required for the first level position and I did not have it, but I do I find it really useful as a toolkit.

**Garth:** Sure. I think there's, maybe one or two more questions that we have time to close out here, but someone had asked a little bit about the pedagogy experience. It's very meta to me, right? Learning to teach how to teach. Talk a little bit about that, and how that was helpful to you. Again, I think in some post-doctoral, and even graduate trainings, you get a little bit of that, but not as much as I think people need or think they're getting.

**Rebekah:** Yes. All right, let me start with I wanted to learn how to teach because I wanted to teach better. I think that's always a good motivation. If you're just, "I just want to learn this." I think that pedagogy and teaching opportunities are phenomenal. Some people get them as early as undergraduate. Take them wherever you can get them. Speaking and teaching is going to only do positive dividends for your future right, no matter what you go into.

Because I was really involved in the Teaching and Learning Center at my graduate institution. When I went on to this role, we founded a college science teaching program, which is actually a certificate program at the university, which didn't exist before and I was able to do that because of some of that background. CIRTL the Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning is another organization that I'm involved with that UNC is a member of as well. Again, it's a nationally certified way to be recognized for your teaching, as well as to get training and experience.

It's only one of many, but it's a great example that's as many campuses. Whatever your teaching and learning center is or whatever pedagogical training may be offered, I definitely encourage you to take advantage of that.

**Garth:** Excellent. Well, unfortunately, we are running out of time. We're going to have to close up. There's been a lot of questions that come in, but lots of interest, but we're, nearing the end of our time. Well, first of all, before I do that, I just want to say, Bekah, thanks for then taking your time to be with us today. It was great to speak with you.

**Rebekah:** Thank you so much, really appreciate it.

**Garth:** No problem. APA offers many resources that can actually help you with your career. One of the places that I do a lot of my work and collegial work with is from the Center of Workforce Studies. They produce a large number of data tools that present information on the psychology workforce, the education pipeline, how people get their degrees. You can use these data tools to really answer great questions about specific occupations, the types of employment characteristics that people are looking for, for all types of psychology degrees; bachelor's, Master's doctorate, or even those continued professional degrees. I encourage you to really check out those tools.

Another resource is the APA's Individual Development Plan or IDP for short. This can help you map out your career pathway. There is a five-step series that guides you through the Central IDP process, which includes self-assessment, career exploration, and then goal-setting that can allow you to customize your own plan of actions so that you can find the best job for you.

If you check out our IDP tool, I really think you should go to the Explore Careers Module because in there, we have some resources to help you do an informational interview, and actually, this entire webinar series is a modification of informational interviews. Things that you can do on your own by finding people who have jobs that you like, and do your own little interview like this to learn more about what they do how they got there.

The webinar series is only one of many resources that we offer to members and if you're currently a graduate student or even undergraduate, postdoc, or early career psychologist, then you might be interested in our APA Staying on Track During a Pandemic series. This series is designed to provide expert advice on how to help you pivot your training, your work, your professional development, all these things that were impacted due to the COVID-19, specifically on having schools close, and how it impacts your research and your work life.

There's been a number of webinars already, you can go to the website, you can download past slides and you can sign up for more and you can also actually listen to on-demand the past webinars.

As soon as we are done here, we're going to have a webinar or excuse me, sorry not the webinar we're going to have a survey. It's a very short survey, it will appear immediately on your screen. We really, really hope you take a few minutes to fill that out. Give us feedback on how we did. We use that information to really improve this series.

Before we say goodbye, I just need to put in a plug for two big events that are happening as part of the APA 2020 Virtual Convention. One is the actual convention itself and one is the Job Fair. The Job Fair is on August 5th and we will have career management sessions, one-on-one speed career coaching, live chats with employers, lots of opportunities for you to learn more about jobs and opportunities.

Our annual convention is August 6th to 8th and will feature inspiring mainstage events, keynote speakers, updates on the latest research, and more. You can always find more about that on our convention web page and I really hope that you can join us. Until then, I want to say thank you for joining us. I want to thank our guest for being here and I want to thank the-- There's a lot of people in the background who spend time making this all happen, I want to thank them. Have a great day and thank you all.

**[00:31:03] [END OF AUDIO]**