

# Individual Career Orientation Program by Welcome Solutions



## Our philosophy

Developing a new career in industry is highly time-consuming and requires commitment. Thus, we believe early career researchers should have access to top-notch professional career guidance. By providing our services, we aim to reduce the time necessary for academics to find a new career path in the industry to a minimum.

We combine insightful information about the job market for PhDs with self-discovery exercise. Even though academics share many qualities, everyone has different needs and looks for a different set of values and opportunities at work. We take an individual approach to every job candidate: we combine information gained through an informational interview with aptitude tests and work out the individual job search plan based on this information.

## The starting point

The program starts with *the inaugural meeting*: the informational interview with the candidate. During this meeting, we discuss the following:

- The background and professional expertise of the candidate,
- The current professional situation and the available opportunities in the current working environment,
- Personal strengths and weaknesses as viewed by the candidate,
- The resume of the candidate in the current form,
- Personal priorities of the candidate,
- The scope of preferred versus available positions (browsing for job offers together on the spot),
- A preliminary job search plan (LinkedIn, Glassdoor, job boards, networking strategies).

We conclude the meeting by preparing the Individual Career Orientation Plan.

## The available modules

Depending on the informational interview and the needs of the candidate, we combine the Individual Career Orientation Plan from the following modules:

### 1. A battery of aptitude tests prepared by Welcome Solutions

These tests aim to examine which working environments the candidate fits best (academia / corporation / startup / freelancing / entrepreneurship). The tests were prepared by Welcome Solutions in consultation with professionals working in multiple branches of industry. The aim of the tests is to determine which working environments the candidate fits best given their natural working style, personality, mindset, and personal priorities.

## 2. A battery of self-observation exercise prepared by Welcome Solutions

In this set of exercises, the candidate needs to get insight into themselves to determine the full scope of his/her core competencies, strengths, and weaknesses. In this exercise, the candidate is given instructions and needs to observe themselves for a minimum of one week, to answer questions such as:

- “What is my professional ethic?”
- “What type of role towards other people do I prefer to play?”
- “What types of stress am I you susceptible to?”
- “What types of tasks are energizing / enjoyable / relaxing / inspiring to me?”

## 3. Working out the personal job search strategy

Given the candidate’s expertise, core competencies, and working style (including the knowledge gained through the aptitude tests and exercises), we determine which types of positions and which working environments are preferred targets for now. The first job after transferring to industry is a starting point for a new career, thus it should be a type of position that gives opportunities for growth and for further self-development.

Based on the set of preferred positions, we work on the best approach to perform job search, including the following options:

- Search through open job boards and job offers posted on LinkedIn,
- Answering open offers, also the offers posted directly on the websites from companies of interest,
- Active networking through LinkedIn and other social media,
- Activating personal networks.

## 4. Managing the online image of the candidate: the LinkedIn profile, personal website, social media accounts

Concerning the profile found through the previous exercise, it’s important to develop an online presence concordant with the core competencies and resonating with the scope of positions the candidate is interested in. In this module, we go through the online activity of the candidate and review the following:

- Are there any records in the Google search under the candidate’s name that should be removed/edited?
- If the candidate has a personal website, how can we make this website appealing to the industry recruiters? E.g., by rephrasing the bio and the description of the current position of the candidate and including more industry-related keywords and phrases,
- LinkedIn profile: reviewing the profile picture and bio, choosing the right profile settings, rephrasing the bio and the description of the current position of the candidate and including more industry-related keywords and phrases, underscoring the core competencies in the list of Skills and Endorsements, adding the Interests items in the scope of the target industry.

## 5. Guidance and hands-on editing of the resume and motivational letters

The well-drafted resume and motivational letter are 50% of the success. The important part of the application process is *adjusting* your documents to every job offer that the candidate is applying to.

Thus, we go through the application documents together and discuss which parts of the resume and motivational letters should be the invariant parts of the application versus which parts should rotate. If the applicant is planning to apply for a few different types of positions, we can also prepare a few versions of the resume dedicated to these positions. We also discuss how to convince the recruiter that the candidate has a strong motivation to work for and contribute to this particular team.

## 6. Mock-up job interview

In this session, we arrange a trial interview for one selected job offer. The interview involves common questions asked during job interviews, e.g.:

- “What is your motivation to apply for this position?”
- “Why did you choose this particular team?”
- “What role would you prefer to play in the team?”
- “What are your personal strengths and weaknesses?”
- “What types of stress are you susceptible to?”,
- “How do you see yourself in 5-10 years?”

We also discuss the principles of the salary negotiations: when to ask about the salary, and which tricks one can use while negotiating with the employer.

## 7. Adaptation to the new workplace

This session is arranged soon after the candidate lands their first job in industry. It aims to help the candidate to adjust to the rules of co-habitation in the new working environment. This session includes:

- Discussing the similarities and differences between the current and the previous working environment, including the written and unwritten rules in the new workplace,
- Working out adaptation strategies to solidify the position in the new workplace and to develop a new identity within the new working environment,
- Discussing the possibilities for further development in the current workplace, and possibly, setting the targets and personal strategy for the first promotion.

## 8\*. A group training organized by Welcome Solutions

Our intensive group trainings are organized in two versions: online (4 x 4 hours on Thursday evenings), and on-site (the last Friday of the month in Amsterdam, 10 hours). Within the individual career orientation plan, we offer one ticket to this training as a bonus.

\*The group training includes the following lecture modules:

**Module A: *How to find your true calling? Nature versus nurture***

What makes us happy in our jobs? How do we choose our next job?

Are we using the right criteria while making these choices?

In this workshop, we will take an insight into ourselves to answer the following fundamental questions:

- What types of jobs are we made for? CV, skills, experience and external circumstances versus dreams, hopes, personality, and intuition,
- What is the secret of long term success in professional life?
- What questions to ask yourself *before* looking for jobs in industry?

**Module B: *Where to go next? The landscape of post-PhD career tracks***

There is a growing disparity between the number of new PhD graduates and the available faculty positions. Effectively, most of the PhD graduates need to find jobs outside academia. But the good news is: you have a lot of skills unique to the academics, and very useful on the open job market. You also have a lot of options outside academia!

In this workshop, we will assume that you have no prior experience with the job market in industry. We will discuss the following:

- The demand for PhDs in various branches of industry,
- A pay-check or entrepreneurship? Which working environment best fits my personality and expectations towards the job?
- Which channels shall I use to look for jobs in different environments?

The workshop will be interactive: we will debunk certain myths related to the job market with the use of polls and quizzes. Sharing personal experience by participants will be highly encouraged. The goal of the workshop is to give the participants the information and confidence so they can further search for relevant information on their own, and take the first steps towards finding their dream job in industry.

**Module C: *How to land a dream job? Finding your transferrable skills & core competencies***  
**Applying for jobs / approaching job interviews**

Once we discussed the scope of opportunities for PhDs on the job market, we will give attention to the topic of how to land a dream job.

The outer world might not be interested in some of your specialistic knowledge acquired during your PhD—especially if you decide to leave academia at some point. In industry, your interpersonal and organizational skills will often matter more than your ability to analyze a particular problem.

It is hard to assess yourself objectively—this is why defining your core competences is not easy. In this workshop, we will discuss the following:

- The difference between transferrable skills and core competencies,
- We all have transferrable skills! Learning the language of business and management,
- Your core competencies make you stand out among other employees. How to determine your core competencies?
- Personal branding,

- Restructuring your CV and writing a competitive motivational letter,
- How to approach the job interview? How to speak to the recruiter? How to negotiate the salary?

### **Module D: *Entrepreneurship session: Personal finances & How to build a business as a scientist***

Personal finances is an important aspect of building a career as a financial cushion positively influences a sense of stability and self-confidence. This is particularly important in science where most contracts are short. In this part of the workshop, we will discuss a few strategies for building financial stability as a researcher, and how we can make sure that we are financially stable regardless of the circumstances.

Entrepreneurs and researchers have a lot in common: they need to find new solutions to complex problems daily, sell themselves to the international audience, work in teams, and adapt to the situation very quickly. Yet, a few scientists consider entrepreneurship as their career path after PhD. In this workshop, we will discuss the following:

- Are you entrepreneurial?
- Popular myths about entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship,
- What are the commonalities and differences between the working style and values of a researcher and an entrepreneur?
- What are the different types of companies, and choose right?
- How to start? Should you write down the business plan and go to the startup accelerator at your university? What are the alternatives?

### **Module E: *Survival guidebook: How to manage yourself in industry?***

Researchers transitioning into industry often need to adapt to a new working environment. It is often the case that this new environment in industry is fast-paced, and the amount of deadlines and deliverables is much higher than in academia. How to adapt to such an environment?

Regardless of the circumstances, there is a number of everyday self-management strategies you can take to adapt to the new environment faster, increase your overall work satisfaction, and positively influence your career opportunities in the long run.

In this workshop, we will discuss the following aspects:

- I am new in my workplace. Now what?
- Dealing with disagreements in the workplace,
- Goal setting and making your own opportunities,
- Managing your time optimally,
- Taking care of yourself and creating a positive spin around yourself,
- Networking and building personal impact,
- The evolution of the job market.

We will learn about many self-management techniques useful in industry, share experience, and discuss the probable scenarios for how the job market will develop in the next few years.