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# THE FORUM WEEK

## MONDAY OCTOBER 3 2022

09:00-17:00	CV Photo Workshop, CV Correction and Elevator pitch
12:00-13:00	Conference 1 year after with EPFL Alumni
13:00-17:00	Workshop Slow your career "Atelier découverte"
13:00-17:00	Sophrology workshop with TCS
15:00-17:00	Workshop "CV and cover letter checks" with TCS

## TUESDAY OCTOBER 4 2022

09:00-17:00	Start-Up Day
09:00-18:00	Company presentations
18:00 - 20:00	Eloquence contest

## WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 2022

09:00-17:00	NGO & IGO Day
09:00 - 18:30	Company presentations

## THURSDAY OCTOBER 2022

09:00	Opening of stands, beginning of workshops and interviews
12:00 - 13:30	Contact lunches
17:00	End of workshops and interviews, closing of stands

## FRIDAY OCTOBER 2022

09:00	Opening of stands, beginning of workshops and interviews
12:00 - 13:30	Contact lunches
17:00	End of workshops and interviews, closing of stands

## SATURDAY OCTOBER 2022

22:00 - 04:00	Gala at the Lausanne Palace
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# 01/introduction

The Forum EPFL is a student association at EPFL. Every year, it organizes the largest recruitment fair in Europe, and its 40th edition will take place from the **3rd to the 7th of October 2022** in the **SwissTech Convention Center**.

This year again, the Forum EPFL's committee has dedicated itself to helping other students, and to prepare them as best as possible to fully take advantage of the opportunities of the fair and to hopefully leave it with a job or an internship!

This guide provides all the information needed to succeed in your visit to the Forum EPFL 2022. You will find several different articles written by experts that will help you be prepared for the world of employment. Additionally, all the elements related to the services given during the Forum week are explained, including the details about the Skills Week which will take place just one week before. Lastly, you will find some tips on how to maximize your chances at the fair.



## SIGNING UP ON THE FORUM EPFL WEBSITE

Here are the steps to follow to register for our Skills Week services as well as those for the Forum EPFL week :

#1

Go on the website:  
[www.forum-epfl.ch](http://www.forum-epfl.ch).

You must create a new profile even if you already had one last year.  
*Careful, you must be at least in BA6.*

#2

Create a profile by clicking on “**Login**” at the top right of the home page. In the “**Student Connection**” tab you can use your Gaspar account to log in.

#3

Register to the 2022 Edition

#4

Upload your CV to your profile (maximum two pages).

#5

Wait until your profile is verified by our committee. You will then receive a confirmation email.

#6

Go to the “**Services of the EPFL Forum**” or “**Skills Week 2**” section. You will find the various services offered during the week of the EPFL Forum and during the Fall Skills Week and you can simply register.



## 02/ Getting Ready for the Forum EPFL

### Forum Skills Week

We have arranged the Forum Skills Week, one week before the Forum, to offer you an ideal preparation for the fair.

From the **26th until the 30th of September 2022**, you will have the opportunity to benefit from plenty of our services, which will take place in the Rolex Learning Center.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of the services offered during this week:

- CV & Cover Letter Corrections
- Professional Career Counseling
- Job Interview Counseling
- Professional Photoshoot

### Forum Get Ready !

On **Monday October 3rd**, the first day of the official Forum week, you will have the last opportunity to get ready for the Forum EPFL.

All of the following services will be provided during that day at the SwissTech Convention Center.

#### CV Correction

You will have a last minute opportunity to have your CV corrected by professionals. Please note that this correction will not be as detailed and personalized as the one during the Skills Week.

#### Workshops

You can participate in interview simulations, sophrology sessions and even more. All of these will be run by professionals and are here for you to make the most out of the fair.

## Professional Photoshoot

The last session of professional photos will be organized to provide you with a picture you can use for your CV and other official documents.

Please note these services are reserved for EPFL students and with compulsory registration within the limit of places available on: [www.forum-epfl.ch](http://www.forum-epfl.ch)

## Organizing your day at the Forum EPFL

What really counts when first coming to the Forum is having a precise idea of what you are looking for.

In order to make the most of your day, identify the companies you are interested in advance. To do that, you can rely on our publications such as the Companies Book and the Start-Up Book. You can also visit our website [www.forum-epfl.ch](http://www.forum-epfl.ch).

This year, you will also find all the important information about the Forum EPFL week on your **Pocket Campus** application!



FIND ALL THE INFORMATION ON OUR APPLICATION **EPFL CAMPUS!**

- DESCRIPTIONS OF THE COMPANIES AND START-UPS
- PROGRAM OF THE WEEK
- PLANNING OF THE STANDS

... AND MORE!

**EPFL**





## 03/ Organizing your Day at the FORUM EPFL week

### THE FORUM EPFL WEEK

#### Useful Details

The Forum EPFL, which has welcomed more than 15'300 visitors in 2021, will once again open its doors from the **3rd to 7th of October 2022** at the **SwissTech Convention Center**.

More than 200 companies and NGOs from various fields such as watchmaking, computer science, finance or energy will be present. During this week there will be plenty of conferences given by the companies in order to present themselves to the students. Even more direct contact will be possible at their stands which they will host on the **6th and 7th of October**. Furthermore, Interviews and contact-luncheons will be suggested to all students in order to find a job or an internship.

Additionally, you will have the opportunity to meet the dynamic world of innovation and start-ups during the **Start-Up Day on Tuesday 4th October**, directly at their booths or during their conferences.

The week will end on a high note at the **Closing Gala**, a unique event open to every EPFL student which will take place at the **Lausanne Palace on Saturday, October 8th**.

#### Services

##### Presentations

Within the framework of small conferences, representatives will have the possibility to introduce you to their company on the **3rd, 4th and 5th of October**. They will expose their activities, work methods and their objectives but also their expectations towards their future collaborators. Access is free for everyone; no further registration is required.

##### Workshops \*

Within the framework of small conferences, representatives will

have the possibility to introduce you to their company on the 3rd, 4th and 5th of October. They will expose their activities, work methods and their objectives but also their expectations towards their future collaborators. Access is free for everyone; no further registration is required.

## Stands

The stand days on the 6th and 7th of October are an ideal moment to establish direct contact with company representatives and to inquire about their activities as well as internship and job opportunities. Access is free for everyone; no further registration is required.

## Interview Rooms \*

On the 6th and 7th of October, those of you that have been chosen by companies will have the chance to pass an individual interview with the companies' representatives directly at the Forum EPFL.

Furthermore, you can directly apply for an interview via your account on our website. The company can then decide whether they would like to meet you. Therefore, perfect your CV if you want to take advantage of this opportunity!

## Contact-Luncheons \*

If you have convinced a company with your CV, you will get the chance to meet its representatives in a less formal environment (instead of traditional interviews) during the stand days on the 6th and 7th of October. These contact luncheons will take place at the SwissTech Convention Center.

*\* Please note these services are reserved for EPFL students and with compulsory registration on [www.forum-epfl.ch](http://www.forum-epfl.ch).*

## Start-Up Day

On the 4th of October, Innovation will be put in the spotlight during the Start-Up Day. Entrepreneurs from more than 100 start-ups will present their projects from multiple fields of activity.

## Opening conference

Each year, a keynote lecture will be held on Monday, October 3rd at 6:00 pm. This is an opportunity to listen to renowned speakers on current issues. This event has limited seating and registration is available on our website: [www.forum-epfl.ch](http://www.forum-epfl.ch)

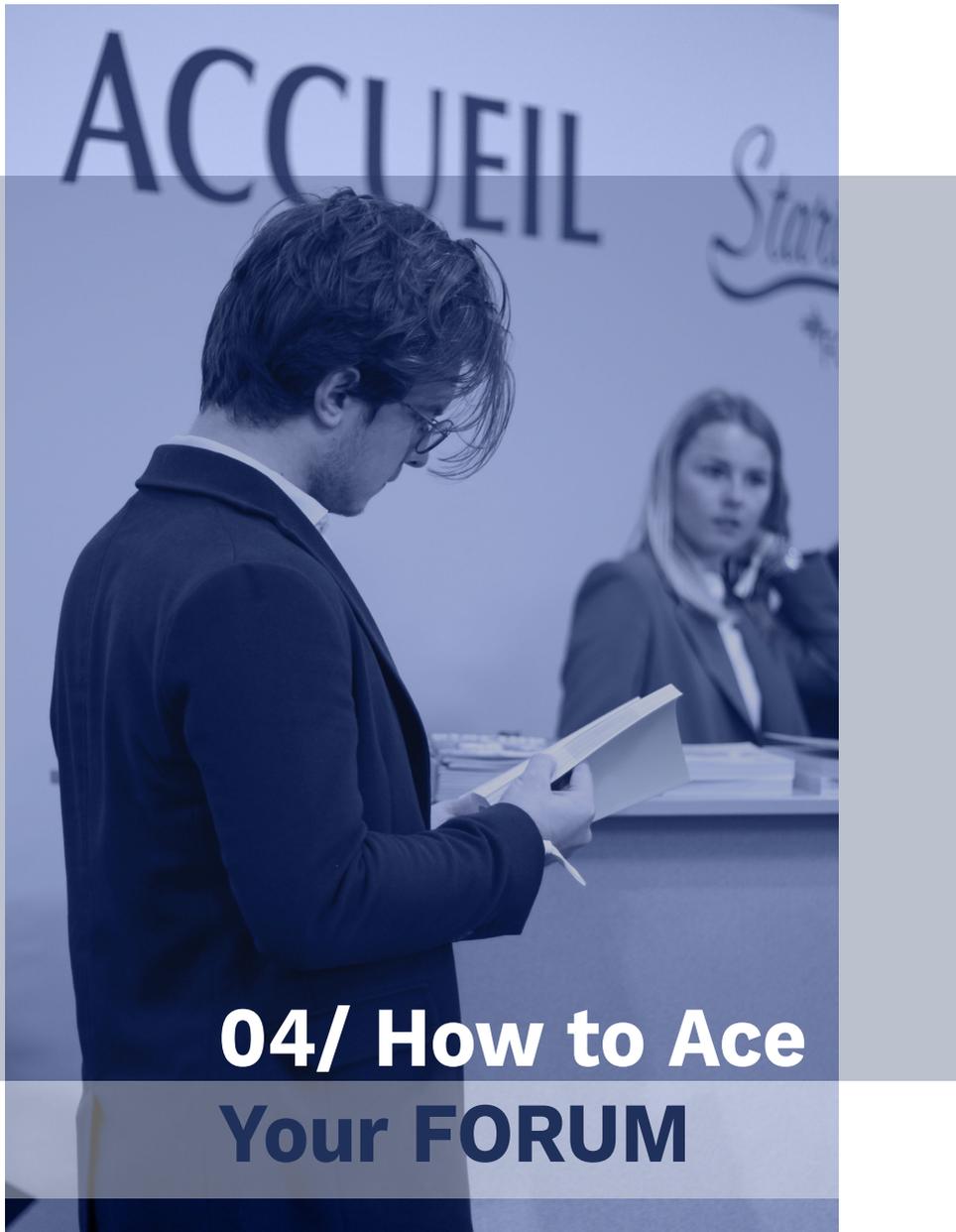
## Speech Contest

Want to show your eloquence skills with a personal speech on the SwissTech Convention Center stage? This is the challenge that MUN & Forum EPFL offer to EPFL students!

On Tuesday, October 4th, a speech contest will take place with plenty of awards for the winners. The competition is open to all spectators and overseen by a distinguished jury; this initiative marks a step towards raising awareness of the importance of communication skills and public speaking for engineers and scientists on campus.

## Gala

Just like all good events, the Forum EPFL week would be incomplete without a worthy closing party. That is why the Forum EPFL Closing Gala will be back this year on Saturday, the 8th of October. This festive and elegant evening will take place at the prestigious Lausanne Palace. Do not miss this unique event!



## 04/ How to Ace Your FORUM

By Stephen Fischer, Career Counselor, EPFL Career Center

The Forum at EPFL, the oldest and largest job fair in the country. The good news is, you won't have to compete for a job.

Why are you attending? Are you trying to confirm certain ideas about your career options while eliminating others? Or are you already in active job search mode, and plan to network with potential employers?

How you prepare will inform your experience and give a sense of where you are to everyone you meet.

### Prepare, prepare, prepare

Create a three-tier selection, with the "A List" being your preferred employers, the second group acceptably attractive ones, and the third those that are of some professional interest, but not employment targets.

Adapt your research to each tier :

**For the C list** : know their location(s) and specializations;

**For the B list** : know at least one competitor, and have one question ready;

**For the A list** : all of the above, plus formulate three specific questions and identify at least two jobs/roles where you could contribute positively.

Go beyond the homepage to learn about productlines, R&D, locations and values. Try to get an in-depth understanding of the economic environment, the sector, current trends and challenges in any given field.

**Media** : The Economist, Financial Times, Science, Bilan, Forbes, Hydro Review, Oil & Gas Journal, etc.

**Background** : use Glassdoor ([www.glassdoor.com](http://www.glassdoor.com)), Kompass (<http://ca.kompass.com/>), or similar sites to compare and contrast your target company with their peers. Know why this company is the most attractive to you and cite at least two advantages it has over its rivals.

## Plan your visit(s)

Some companies are only present for one of the two days of the Forum, so plan accordingly. Which ones will host a lunch, a business presentation? The size of the stand can be a good predictor of the number of staff likely to be assigned, too...

## First impressions

Each company has its own culture, dress code, and sense of importance, and it is better to err towards the formal to reinforce your status as a young professional. This will also help you make the mental shift from student to potential future colleague. Avoid wearing a backpack and bring your papers in a small satchel or briefcase instead.

Take notes when you speak with company reps and do ask for their cards—they are here to meet you, so don't be shy!

## Follow-up & follow through

Remember to send a short and meaningful thank you message within 48 hours of the Forum; email will do just fine. Mention at least one topic you discussed to emphasize your interest. During the application process, you will also be able to refer to specific people you met at the Forum in your motivation letters.



## Writing an effective CV

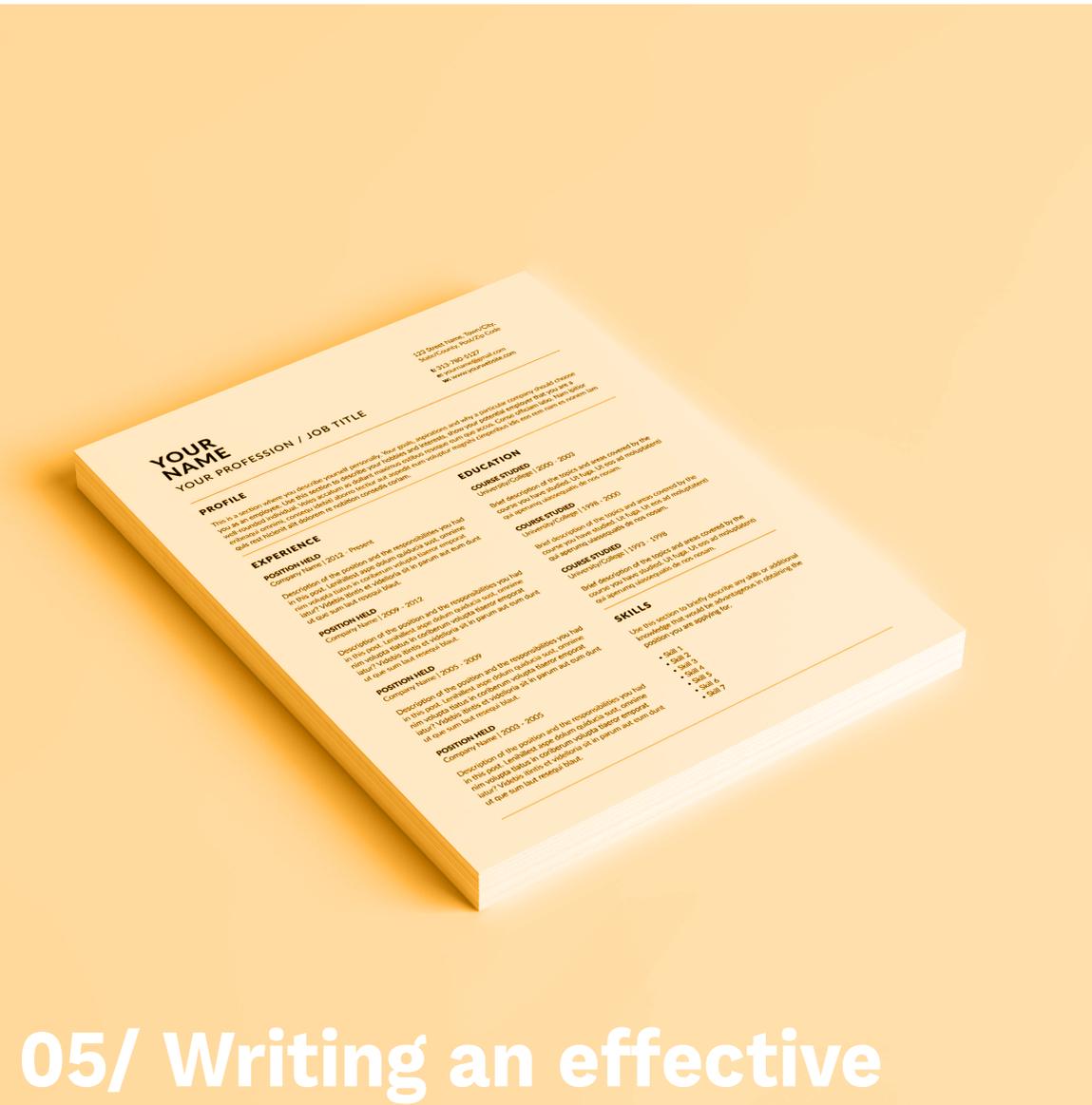
You need to give concise, incremental and relevant details about your technical skills and your pedigree as a student, intern, volunteer and employee. This latter section for young graduates is usually as thin as the paper you are writing on, so the other sections need to be robust and comprehensive.

No holding back: false modesty or, worse, ignorance about who your different readers will be, puts your application at a complete disadvantage.

We estimate that even at MSc level, an EPFL graduate should have nearly half a page of technical skills—don't limit these to a list of software or programming languages, though. Include key marketable skills like process engineering, AutoCAD, spectroscopy, clean room and wet lab techniques. Be as specific as you can: “Protein analysis,” instead of “Biology,” and “Stochastic analysis,” not just “Statistics.”

If, like many of your peers, you have also led groups, even informally, and taken responsibility for all or part of at least one project, here is a place to add additional skills like logistics, intercultural communication and project management. This section should closely emulate the “Skills & Endorsements” section of your LinkedIn profile.

Let's debunk two myths right away: for almost the entire world, with certain exceptions in North America for mega-corporations, you do not need to limit yourself to one page. Bachelor's students may not need the extra space, but anyone can use two, and PhD's may even add a third page, perhaps as an optional addendum with conferences and publications. If a CV doesn't grab someone's attention in less than a minute, it won't matter how long it is, and vice versa, once you have the “fish on the line,” so to speak, they'll be more than willing to roll past a page break. The second received idea is that your CV must be identical to your LinkedIn profile—the opposite is in fact the case. You need to consider your online version as a kind of home base, broad and accurate enough so that it won't contradict your many CV's, each version of which must be



# 05/ Writing an effective CV for young adults

By Stephen Fischer, Career Counselor, EPFL Career Center

adapted to the company, the role and the types of skills needed. Recruiters now fully expect you to have selected the most relevant skills and experience to highlight on your CV, and as long as there is no factual contradiction (dates of degrees, different majors, etc.), the two-step process will consist of them going to your online profile after being motivated by what they saw on your CV.

You need to write for both a generalist, often someone even younger than yourself, who will work off a “wish list” or “ticky-box” chart provided by the future boss of the person to be hired. The chances of her being an engineer or a researcher, even for a pharmaceutical or manufacturing company, are almost nil. If your CV demands attention, it will then be read by a more senior person, though also someone likely to have a different specialization than you do.

Spelling, grammar and layout are given inordinately high importance by most recruiters, and silly-sounding email addresses are reason for some not to look further at your CV—fair or not, they go by their first impressions, so if you claim to be “very good at making very small things” as a Swiss optical engineer once said to me on a plane, but have several typos or misspellings on your documents, this will give the opposite impression.

“Show, don’t tell” is the golden rule, which is why we suggest that you list the main technical skills which relate to the role you are applying for at the top of your CV, but generally refrain from putting soft skills or character traits (“good team worker” and “energetic, motivated researcher” are not only generic, anyone can claim these). Describing your Master’s Thesis work in terms of project management, from concept to outcomes, and mentioning that you had to work with two more senior engineers and another department based in Zurich will give the reader much more about your interpersonal skills than simply listing them, no matter how accurate they are.

Finally, be concise, clear and comprehensive throughout your CV: this will give you the best chance to unlock the interview room door and give you a chance to share your compelling motivation and aptitude for the job.

## CV Template

### Heading

First and last name, address, phone number and e-mail.

### Strengths in bullet points

Key strengths that will make you remarkable and memorable.

### Formation et diplômes

Unless necessary, stop after the secondary school studies.

*i.e. “Formation and diplomas  
2007 Master EPFL in computer science  
2002-2007 Engineering studies at EPFL  
1998-2002 Gymnase, maturité scientifique”*

### Professional experience

Mention the most relevant experiences: omit the irrelevant ones

*i.e. “Expérience professionnelle et stages  
2005 Entreprise A: Projet X (stage de 6 mois)  
2004 Entreprise B: projet Y (stage d’été)  
2003-2005 Entreprise C: remplacements”*

### Competency and projects

### Languages

Specify the levels of your fluency in different languages

### Extra-professional experiences

Careful with the relevancy and interests to the job!

### Personal information

Age, nationality (permit), civil status, and kids.



## 06/ Job interviews : be better than CBI

### JOB INTERVIEWS: BE BETTER THAN CBI

By Stephen Fischer, Career Counselor, EPFL Career Center

*“Students should be able to think on their feet and relate the answers they provide in... job interviews to their skills and experience which can be beneficial to a prospective employer.” — Selene Siregar, recruiter at Michael Page in Jakarta <sup>1</sup>*

Let’s not kid ourselves: for most of you, the interview will be the most stressful part of the entire job search process, even when you feel you’ve prepared for it properly. You’re not alone: according to a 2013 survey of 1000 employed adults in Canada by Harris Interactive and Everest College, as many as 92 percent stress over one or more aspects of a job interview.

So, let’s address taking care of the human part of your resource, first. You need to choose your clothing carefully: comfortable but not sloppy, appropriate without restricting your movement. The worst thing you can do is not to eat, drink and sleep properly beforehand in order to spend even more time reading about the company. That deep-digging for key factual and company culture insights is essential but needs to be mastered well before the evening prior to your interview. You need to be hydrated, because thirst increases anxiety and can raise your body temperature, possibly enhancing a tendency to sweat when you are nervous. You need to find a balance, similar to that when you are preparing for an exam.

When it comes to the mental state necessary for a successful candidate, a few simple pointers can help enormously. Remember that you are already part of the top 15% of all candidates who applied, which means that the first of the famous four questions employers need to answer, “can you do the job,” has already been answered. This may be in part due to perceptions of the value of your diploma, your school in general and your individual profile but more likely for graduate recruitment, it’s all about the skills you have acquired and your proven capacity to continue to learn complex things from statistical analysis to process engineering, and your potential to continue learning new things. This is why they

are recruiting a young professional over a more experienced one, and your profile stood out.

Whether you are a bit rustier in Python than C++ or feel better using AutoCAD than Ansys, you will be able to adapt, grow and contribute rapidly in any new role. This means money to your employer, and that makes you a valuable potential asset: you need to focus on this, not the things you aren't yet able to do. Don't underestimate the added value of your project and team skills, your (human) languages and your maturity—think where you were just three years ago, compared to now. Aren't you impressed? Be confident, then, and emphasize your capacity to learn new and complex processes, acquire new tools and ways of working, throughout the interview. While many recruiters seem to take it as a point of pride to offer you less than you are worth, they also know that you will bring value to the company or they wouldn't be talking to you in the first place.

## Preparation: three levels, one purpose

Preparation for the interview needs to be on three levels, but strangely, often the most personal of these is neglected by candidates, even those who have prepared the other two thoroughly.

Start with the job itself, and make sure you understand all aspects of the responsibilities and prepare your concrete examples (see below) which best illustrate technical and soft skills related to these. Research the importance of the role in the overall scheme of the department and the company, too. Then look more closely at the organization you are about to join: are they based only in one place, do they claim to be international, but this is actually in four countries, with five sites, or are they in 30 places around the globe? How many employees are there in total, and how many working in a location where you will be if hired, say in Rapperswil or Geneva? How big is the team you would join? For the other questions, you should get beyond their home page, reading about them on media sites and/or by contacting acquaintances who work(ed) there, to get at least approximative answers which you can then complete during the interview. You need to identify at least two competitors and be able to compare and contrast them with your target

employer. This will lead you to understanding the current “hot topics,” burning issues and breakthroughs in the sector. Finally, you have to be ready to speak about the one thing you are an absolute expert on: you!

Many recruiters, however, remark on the inability of students to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. If you take the time to prepare, you won't feel stymied when asked at the beginning to “tell me about yourself,” or later during the interview what your main successes and challenges have been to date.

### On a practical basis, prepare (and bring your notes for) the following:

1. 90-120 second “**Elevator Speech**” this is an elegant pitch about you as a professional and should highlight aspects of your experience and skills which relate to the role you are applying for.
2. **Two “strengths,” and two “weaknesses”** this is a favorite area for recruiters, since it makes most candidates uncomfortable as many scientists and engineers have particular trouble talking about their strengths. We suggest choosing one that is technical and one that is a character trait or a soft skill. The most important thing to remember is that “weaknesses” are human, and what they want to hear is how you are dealing with these—did you sign up for Toastmasters to help you get over being afraid to speak in public, for example.
3. Two project stories, with one being a “**success**”, where you met your goals, and the other a “**failure**” where you did not reach them. As our director, Philippe Ory, says, this second one can be exaggerated, almost to the point of being a B-movie disaster script. Again, the main point isn't what the results were per se, but what you did exactly, and what you learned. So in the latter case, they also want to hear how you did (or would do) things differently next time.
4. All of these come from the **Competency-Based Interview approach** to recruitment, the most commonly used especially for entry-level positions. See the text box for an explanation of the STAR method of answering which they expect and adapt numbers

1-3 accordingly. Bring a copy of all your documents and your notes, as well as an extra pen and plenty of paper to take notes during the interview. Arrive about 10 minutes early and leave any extra bags and coats in the reception area. Turn off your phone entirely.

## One last point about confidence and preparation

Now, one last point about confidence and preparation: as a technical professional, you continue to learn new techniques, acquire soft and hard skills regularly, and learn to challenge any method which is touted to be uniquely valid and sufficient for all purposes. Unfortunately for you and for the recruiters, this is generally not the case for HR trainees or even experienced recruiters. Many are trained only to the CBI approach, and use the same basic structure, even identical questions and exercises, regardless of the area of activity, so a mechanical engineer, a technical sales advisor and a quality assurance engineer may all get the same STAR questions like those mentioned above.

Now that you know this and can prepare accordingly, you can help your interviewer be less stressed, too. By adapting to her discourse community, you show a generosity of spirit but also should be more relaxed, having taken to heart their ways and means, and both of you will benefit. This doesn't mean you can't add your own style and the length and level of detail for each of your prepared responses can be varied depending upon the interest s/he shows in the topic. Most recruiters will help you by asking follow-up questions when they want further explanation. Oddly enough, the stories you prepare can usually be adapted on the spot to illustrate virtually any of the main skills and competencies they are looking for, too. The session will generally end with a trick question that doesn't seem so: "do you have questions for me," your interviewer will ask. The worst answer is, "no," as it shows lack of interest rather than complete understanding of the role, the company, sector and your future career development—virtually impossible to cover in less than an hour! The second worst response is a "life-style" question about flexi-time, tele-commuting, or starting date being put off because you have a holiday planned soon. Make sure you do ask when and how the follow-up to your present discussion will occur. Within 24 hours after your interview, write a short

thank-you message to everyone you met, and try to mention one specific topic that you discussed with each, underlining your keen motivation for the job.

While the old saying has it that practice makes perfect, and it's certainly the case that you can learn to be a more confident interviewee by dint of in-depth preparation and hands-on experience, in fact you only need to be better than the other candidates, who will also be dealing with the same issues—and sometimes with fewer tools and less confidence.

Sources:

<sup>1</sup>*CareerChats: Managing Expectations, Moving towards Solutions | LinkedIn.*  
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/careerchats-managing-expectations-moving-towards-nannette-ripmeester/>.

<sup>2</sup>*Why Anxiety During A Job Interview Is So Common... | News | Nexxt.*  
<https://www.nexxt.com/articles/why-anxiety-during-a-job-interview-is-so-common-and-what-you-can-do-to-prevent-it-18522-article.html>.

<sup>3</sup>*Competency-Based Interviews In 2021: Best Tips & Answers.*  
<https://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/interview-advice/interview-types/competency-based-interview>.

## JOB INTERVIEWS: ACT AS IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE A WORRY IN THE WORLD

By Stephen Fischer, Career Counselor, EPFL Career Center

*“The job interview is like a theatre play where you are the only one who has not practiced the lines” – blog post on [www.Kforum.dk](http://www.Kforum.dk)*

Often job interviews are daunting, but a bit of conscious “play-acting” can help you gain confidence while protecting yourself from any unpleasant moments, such as feeling you answered a question poorly. We all change perspectives, ways of expressing ourselves and clothing often, so why not for the job search, too? Create the role of job-seeker in your mind, just as you did for “EPFL applicant,” then “Master’s student,” or “Doctoral candidate.” It’s still you, but in a specific mode, smiling yet nervous, projecting potential.

“You might compare the interview process to a three act play- complete with dress rehearsal,” says an article on Employment Crossing.<sup>1</sup> I have said for years that a job interview is “half oral exam, and half theater.” It’s always nice to find other professionals who agree with you! The article continues the simile by saying that the pre-selection process by a recruitment agency or a pre-screening interview (often with a junior HR person via Skype even pre-COVID), is the dress rehearsal. Acts One to Three represent the typical interview cycle for young graduates in STEM professions. The more technical the position, the more steps you are likely to go through before the company makes a final selection. During the screening step(s) try to get constructive criticism while you figure out what the company prioritizes. Assuming you ace this step, the next act will be a one-on-one interview with an HR rep from the company. This is when preparing with the STAR method (see my other article in this magazine) will really pay off. You may be surprised that so many questions focus more on interpersonal rather than technical skills. By now, HR has already agreed you can do the job, but want to see if you want to, and if you’d be a good fit..

Convince them, and you will be invited to the second act of

the play: sometimes starting with online psychometric or analytical reasoning tests, followed by a technical panel interview. There, you may be hosted by HR, but the real players will be your future teammates, manager and possibly a more senior person from R&D, IT or quality assurance, depending upon the type of job.

Be aware that it may take half a day, however, including giving a short presentation of your own work before being “grilled” by a number of current employees, either in a group setting, or in a series of one-on-one discussions. If you have lunch or a coffee break, don’t make the mistake of checking your WhatsApp messages—this is still 100% “live” and part of your carefully observed performance. For the majority of new graduates, this will be the final phase before the employer makes their choice of candidates. Take notes and get name cards whenever possible: you’ll want to send thank-you’s to everyone you met. You may feel you’ve run a marathon by the end!

For some more senior posts, however, a very different type of Act Three will now open: first, you will be asked to provide references, then you may be scheduled to speak with one or more much more senior managers. One PhD graduate spent another ten days after his successful panel interview in Basel in a series of discussions with two different vice-presidents in a chemical company. The selection process had been narrowed down to just himself and one other, and the position was absolutely key to the company’s operations, and they needed to get it right.

One of the VP’s even went so far as to read his thesis, then proceeded to challenge him on some of his conclusions. While extremely unusual, I explained how seriously they were taking this, and that he could use this to his advantage during the closing act: salary negotiations and signing the contract. He did get the job, by the way, and the remuneration he requested. Oh—and no one even brought up the fact that he was non-European at any point. Dress formally for any job interview in Switzerland, whether it’s with Google or UBS, online or in person, since good grooming shows respect for the recruiter and her company. Even if everyone else is in jeans and button down shirts, your “costume” will remind

you of your status as a job-seeker (and would-be colleague), while protecting you with an extra layer of both fiber and attitude. Your hair is perfect and your fingernails super clean, and your body language will reflect both nerves and motivation. So, act the part, but remember, it's still authentically you.

Stay positive, even when you know you could have done better—we all have good and bad performances, but the show must go on (at least until you sign a contract). Of course, Shakespeare said it best (and first): “All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances; and one [person in a lifetime] plays many parts, [the] acts being seven ages.”<sup>2</sup>

#### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> *Comparing a Job Interview Process to the Theater*. EmploymentCrossing.com <https://www.employmentcrossing.com/article/900012095/Comparing-a-Job-Interview-Process-to-the-Theater/> (2013).

<sup>2</sup> *Rendu légèrement plus moderne (c.-à-d. « politiquement correct ») par moi-même.*





**“ In business, you don’t get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate.”**

— Dr. Chester L. Karrass

## 07/ Negotiating Your First Salary

By Stephen Fischer, Career Counselor, EPFL Career Center

### Negotiating your first salary

Congratulations: your first personal branding effort has paid off, and you have received an actual job offer. You took our advice to diplomatically avoid discussing salary expectations during the first interview, emphasizing instead the technical competencies you would bring to the job, and how motivated you were to join their enterprise.

Now it’s the moment of truth, you are in a strong place vis-à-vis your future employer, but in many young professionals’ minds, not strong enough to negotiate a first salary. Studies across many different economic sectors show that salary negotiation for young graduates is worth it. An impressive 80% of those candidates who did negotiate with their employers at this critical stage were at least partially successful.

Interestingly, other surveys indicate that even when recruiters were unable (or unwilling) to come towards the candidate in terms of money, those who negotiated were considered more confident and therefore gained respect in the eyes of their future colleagues. The only certainty is: if you don’t negotiate, you will end up with whatever the employer wants to give you.

### Don’t undersell your degree

If you’ve attended our conference on this subject, you’ll remember that for some strange reason, in spite of the fact that our graduates are more numerate, have the only required internship at engineer level (not secondary) in Switzerland, generally are bilingual at least and have increasingly incorporated digital fluency and computational thinking, they are still paid less than graduates from other schools with lesser reputations or with less difficult or less time-consuming tracks. Shocking as this is, the situation will not change unless you and future generations of EPFL graduates work hard to obtain proper salary levels. This is even more important for women, since on average they are paid between 10-15% less than men for the same positions, virtually everywhere in the world, alas.

Successful negotiation happens during the hiring process; don't count on future pay increases to make up for being paid an initial salary that is too low. In fact, "start low, stay low" is real, and can haunt you for years.

The most important aspect of any negotiation is understanding what the parameters are; in this case, you need to know what other recent graduates are receiving. The best place to get the average salary figures based on statistical analysis is from the annual Graduate Employment Survey (in French only), administered by the Career Center and available on our website (see footnote for link).

In order to create a salary range for your discussion with the employer, you can then consult Salarium.ch where you can quickly calculate an estimated salary level for the type of job you are applying for. Note that they use a mathematical model, not statistics, and do not take into account differences between Master's and PhD levels of qualification. Still, their system often projects a higher salary than ours, so can be useful for your negotiations.

Unfortunately, international platforms like Glassdoor and PayScale are not sufficiently populated with data for the Swiss market to be of much use, with the possible exception of entry-level jobs for big pharma. If you are starting your career in the UK or North America, however, clearly the Swiss sites will not be of use, whereas these two will provide you with the necessary info to prepare to negotiate.

Giving the numbers based on research will strengthen your arguments. You will still need to take into account which region you will be living in (i.e. Zurich is 15-20% more expensive than Morges, Valais is about 20% cheaper than Vaud, etc.) as well as the size of the company and the relative importance of the job. If you will be doing other tasks besides the technical ones you are qualified for, like managing projects directly, dealing with clients or supervising more junior staff, you should add an additional ten to fifteen percent to your expected salary range, and be able to justify this accordingly.

## Slow things down: turn-taking towards agreement

In Switzerland, Salary levels are negotiated on an annual gross level. The fixed part and the variable part, if any, are usually discussed separately. If there are bonuses based on performance, or so-called "in-step" salary raises discussed orally, make sure they are also included in the final contract that you sign. Non-salary advantages such as free meals or parking, fitness center or travel are generally available to all employees, so cannot properly be considered "personal benefits" and of course, they can be canceled at any moment.

When it comes down to numbers, keep in mind the psychological thresholds: a salary of 79,500 has a better chance of being accepted than a salary of 80,000...

If the employer offers a salary that is too low, stay quiet for a few seconds at first. Your interlocutor will perceive your disappointment and may already improve the offer (a good chance, normally). Underline the fact that you are very motivated to do the job well—in fact, you are a "110-percent worker," and want to concentrate only on that, not having to worry about making ends meet, or traveling an hour to work, because apartment costs are too high next door.

Say you had hoped for something "a little better" (even when there's a big difference from what you expected)...

Then, only if the other person doesn't break the silence, ask, "What would it take for me to be able to get what I expected?" and/or, "How long do you think it would take to reach my expected salary level? If your interlocutor makes an effort, make one on your side, too. But think carefully, there may not be another "round." Making a concession allows you to protect the quality of the relationship with what may be your future employer!

Both internal and external recruiters will often justify their salary offer because of your lack of experience, which is ironic when hiring recent graduates for entry-level positions in the first place.

Remember that “inexperienced” does not mean “without skills;” your proven competencies are not easy for employers to find, much less to acquire. Highlight your company internship experience, which only EPFL (not ETHZ or HES) requires for all MSc students. Emphasize that the post entails numerous responsibilities, so logically this should be reflected in the remuneration. (It’s pretty tough for them to tell you at this point that the position is not very important since they have been stressing its attractiveness, and often, the high number of other candidates which it has attracted.)

They may also take refuge behind company practices (inflexible salary scale, equity between collaborators. In fact, these are usually guidelines, not rules, even if they try to persuade you of the opposite, so they can be negotiated. Or they may put undue emphasis on their brand (“you will be working for the most famous company...”) or on other advantages such as the retirement fund, mobile phone and travel allowances, or training programs. None of these have much relative economic value and are generally available to all employees, whatever their salary. Most importantly, they can disappear at any time, as mentioned above.

When your interlocutor has reached the limits of what s/he can (or is willing to) negotiate, but still has not met your expectations: you may decide to reject the offer, or to accept it on condition that they add a clause outlining a raise (or at least a review) schedule emphasizing that this would give you time to prove your value.<sup>1</sup>

You can still choose to negotiate another aspect of the agreement: offer to work 90% for the salary proposed, for example (though beware of generational bias), or obtain the right to work one day a week from home (“telecommuting”). Further, you could ask that they delete the non-competitive clause from the contract (these are often inappropriate, sometimes even illegal, and should merit financial compensation in any case).

On the other hand, it is not customary in Switzerland to negotiate the length of vacations.

While not the summum for everyone, salary is a measure of the value your contributions have been assigned, and also a facilitator of your new life as a young professional, not a student. How much is that worth to you?

<sup>1</sup> NB: employers do not run any real risks, given Swiss labor laws, so this is a gamble



# 08/ LinkedIn

## How to Use LinkedIn to Boost Your Application

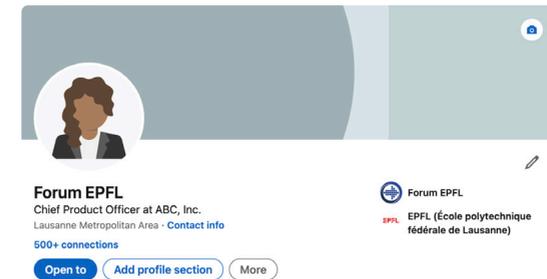
By Marine Conte, Marketing Coordinator, Academic Work  
marine.conte@academicwork.ch

### How to use LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the world's first professional social network and had, in February 2022, about 280 million active accounts. Interacting on this network is a major advantage in your job search and could lead you to your next professional adventure. Tips & Tricks to optimize your profile and help you stand out from other applications.

### Photo & intro: your business card

On LinkedIn, having a profile picture multiplies by 7 your chances of having your profile consulted by users of the network. So let's get started: depending on the industry for which you wish to work, dress appropriately, put on your best smile and upload your picture.



Under your picture sits the caption, or if you prefer the title of your profile. By default, LinkedIn will choose the name of your latest occupied position. However, we suggest that you change it and insert keywords related to the industry or the position you are looking for. This way, a search engine will find you faster and with ease.

#### About

An experienced professional with management acumen and a wide breadth of business skills, I excel at building things from scratch. Be it by developing sales in yet unexplored territories, promoting a new technology in an unusual way or creating a new services business to increase sales to existing customers, I thrive on situations that usually make others block.

Strengths: Management, Team leading, Intrapreneurship, Product Marketing, Direct and Indirect Sales

Next, as an introduction to your profile, comes a presentation paragraph, which you must not neglect: this is where you briefly

describe what you are and what you look for. This paragraph must be precise, concise, and we suggest that you add to it the easiest way to contact you, such as a phone number or an email address.

## Experiences before formation

If you have already completed internships, immersion tasks in corporations, or your first contracts, do not hesitate to position them ahead of your formation, as this is what interests companies. As you detail the tasks and missions you have accomplished, strive to give as much tangible data as possible, this to allow a recruitment agent to get an idea of your achievements.

With this in mind, we suggest you keep a journal during your internships or missions, and to record in it all the data you may need when you will be looking for a new professional adventure.

### Recommendations

Received Given

**Jeff Judy** · 3rd  
VP Product Management at Web.com  
October 7, 2020, Jeff reported directly to Gijo

I was on Forum's EPFL team for three years when she was the CPO at web.com. She was an inspirational product leader who taught me a tremendous amount about the product management discipline as well as how to be a better people leader. The openness and transparency she led by was refreshing, I always felt I was in the loop with what she knew and that she wanted what was best for me and the team. I'd work on her team again in a heartbeat.

**Corey Malone** · 3rd  
Director, UX Design at Affinity Solutions  
December 29, 2016, Corey reported directly to Gijo

Forum EPFL has a genuine concern for people and it shows in her management style and her passion for creating products that truly solve a problem.

Her management style is laser focused on supporting her team as much as she can. She always starts one on one meetings with "What can I do for you?"

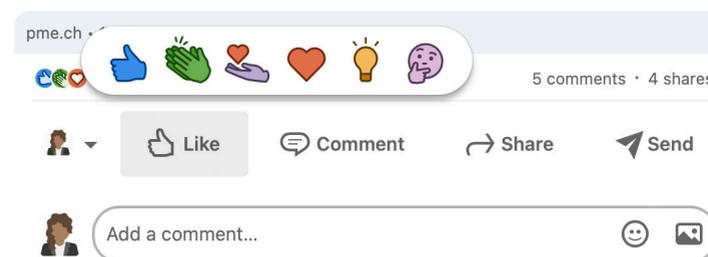
Furthermore, do not hesitate to contact your previous employers or teachers for recommendations directly from LinkedIn: thus, they will appear on your profile in a form more visible than a scanned letter. Finally, your associative experiences count for a lot, and this even more in certain countries (such as the United States for example) as it shows your interests and your willpower. When it comes to your formation, it isn't relevant to add any distinctions you could have received as well as the subjects of memoirs or thesis papers on which you may have worked. These could prove interesting subjects of conversation to start an interview.

## Be social

LinkedIn is a social network, and it should be used as such! Just as Facebook or Instagram, the algorithm will make you appear much higher in the search results if you interact more than your namesake:

- add contacts,
- ask to join groups,
- share content related to your formations and your interests.

In the long term, this active vigil (we do it every day!) will allow you to truly stand out and will support your application in a positive manner.



**Are you in search of your first job?**

**Do you need help writing your CV, motivation letter, or preparing a job interview?**

**Do you wish to learn more about network building?**



**This Podcast is for you!**

Take advantage of the expert advice and experiences from the EPFL Alumni that have already gone through this path.