

APPLICATION GUIDE

for ETH students and doctoral students

ETH

Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich

www.careercenter.ethz.ch

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Introduction

The transition from university to professional life — a milestone!

Your imminent graduation and the search for your first “real” job mark the beginning of a new and significant stage in your life. The goal of a job search is to find an occupation that will be both challenging and enjoyable in an environment in which you feel appreciated and comfortable — in short, a job that you find satisfying in all respects.

But what does “a satisfying job” mean, and how do you find one? Before you can answer these crucial questions, you need to take a close look at yourself and also at the job market. This is true regardless of whether or not there are currently a lot of job openings. Despite the state of the job market, the important point is that you are clear about what you want and which skills you can contribute to your future job.

This practical application guide is intended to help you to make the best out of every market situation and achieve a good start in your career. It is one of the Career Center’s many offerings for students at all stages of their studies at ETH. At ETH Career Center we offer you individual advice during this process and at special events we give you relevant information and offer you valuable contacts.

The application guide provides advice and encouragement on how to assess your current situation and your professional opportunities and offers numerous tips on the application process. Conceived as a manual, it offers you space to put your thoughts and ideas on paper.

It is structured around the four phases of the application process:

- *Analysis*: Who am I? What can I do? What do I want?
- *Exploration*: Which are the industries and companies in my field?
- *Focusing*: Which companies would suit me?
- *Application*: How do I present myself to my best advantage — in my application material and in interviews?

The Career Center offers comprehensive services in these four areas of the career entry process and collaborates closely with other ETH organisations. For more information please visit www.careercenter.ethz.ch.

Please note: Wherever in this document the masculine pronoun (he) is used for the sake of convenience, the feminine pronoun should, of course, be understood to be included.



ANALYSIS

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Positioning

The three crucial questions

Careful positioning is the first step in the application process. It is the basis for exploring your professional possibilities and opportunities, for focusing on specific sectors and companies, and for the application itself. An intensive self-analysis will help you to focus on the organizations and career opportunities that match your goals. This will help you to create an impression of competence and self-confidence when meeting potential employers.

The purpose of positioning is to form a clear idea in your own mind of your interests, skills and values:

- *Who am I?* — What are my interests?
- *What can I do?* — What are my skills and strengths?
- *What do I want?* — Which values are important to me and what do I expect from my future employer?

The following pages offer a number of questions and exercises on positioning. They are intended to motivate you to think about yourself and to identify your interests, skills and values. To make the most of this self-analysis, find a quiet spot where you will not be interrupted and take as much time to complete it as you need.

Who am I?

Your interests

The first step is to define where your interests lie. Interest is a crucial motivational factor and directly influences work satisfaction. The more we enjoy what we do, the more willing we are to raise our commitment and improve our performance.

Our interests play a role in all aspects of our life, i.e., not only in our leisure time, but also at work. What are your main interests and what motivates you?

Take your time answering the following questions and take many different aspects of your life into account:

1. What are your main interests? — Note three topics that occur to you spontaneously.

2. What were you doing the last time you felt: “this is really interesting”?

3. What do you like doing in your leisure time?

4. What do you like to read and talk about?

5. What are/were your favorite subjects at university/school?

6. Which social topics and problems concern you?

7. Which tasks/activities do you become so absorbed in that you completely forget about time?

8. Which successes make you particularly proud?

9. With whom do you like working/spending time?

10. Of all the people in the world, whose job would you most like to have?

How did you feel answering these questions? Was it easy for you to provide information about yourself? Did you discover things about yourself that you were previously unaware of? If possible, discuss your answers with your family or friends and ask them for their opinions. It is important that you keep this list and your answers in mind throughout the application process. It will be a constant reminder of what you want, of what inspires you, and in which private and professional contexts you feel comfortable.



What can I do?

Your strengths and skills

The second step of the analysis is to clarify where your abilities and skills lie. We all tend to take our abilities for granted. Usually we are capable of a lot more than we realize. In submitting an application it is important to know what you can do. In every application and every job interview you must be able to highlight your technical and social strengths, and also to know what your weaknesses are.

Skills are usually classified into two groups:

- Technical skills
- Soft skills

Technical skills

Technical skills refer to technical or applied knowledge. This includes the knowledge that you have acquired at the ETH, at school or in further education, and can easily be confirmed with grades and certificates. However, owing to the rapid progress of technology and science, this technical knowledge can very quickly become dated. Hence, it is important to continually refresh and expand this expertise in accordance with the principle of life-long learning.

Soft skills

Soft skills are important and desirable in both professional and private life. You make constant use of them and continually improve them on a daily basis. They are more difficult than technical skills to assess because we lack authoritative instruments to measure them.

Your technical skills

You have acquired your technical skills during your studies at the ETH, at school or in advanced education or further training courses, and you have the degrees, diplomas and school-leaving and course certificates to prove it. Technical skills acquired at the ETH include, for example, your knowledge in mathematics, physics or chemistry. Other examples of technical skills include a knowledge of processes, methods, finishing techniques, materials, business management and norms and a command of computational tools, databases and simulation software.

Making use of all your employment references, school and university certificates and language qualifications, list all of your technical skills in the following table. Confirmations of traineeships and internships, vacation jobs and voluntary activities may also be evidence of special qualifications. Drawing up a list of your skills is not only an essential component in positioning yourself, but also helps you to analyse job offers and write your CV (see chapter “Focusing: Job adverts”).

Analysis of my technical skills acquired at ETH and other schools:

My strongest subjects:	Subjects I was weaker in:
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Technical skills acquired through internships, part-time jobs and other engagements:

Technical knowledge that I have successfully applied and expanded:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Technical knowledge that I have had difficulty applying:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Notes

Your soft skills

Soft skills are expressed in your behavior, lifestyle and attitude to life. They determine how you tackle tasks (methodical skills), how you react in interpersonal situations (social skills), and how you organize your life and behave (personal skills). They are apparent in your decision-making behavior (decision-making skills), in your ability to motivate yourself (motivational skills), and your ability to monitor yourself (self-assessment skills).

The following list of selected key competences is intended to help you make a self-assessment of your soft skills. Read each item on the list and mark whether you think the skill applies to you or not. In addition, with each item try to work out in which situation, from which person, in which job or through which experience you acquired, have applied or enhanced the skill in question. (Single competences can be enclosed in several competence groups)

Methodical skills	--	-	/	+	++
Ability to take decisions					
Analytical thinking					
Conceptual planning					
Creativity					
Combinational thinking					
Efficient work planning					
Presentation technique					
Project management					
Systematic approach					
Willingness to learn					

Social skills	--	-	/	+	++
Adaptability					
Ability to cooperate					
Ability to listen					
Ability to motivate					
Articulateness					
Enthusiasm					
Flexibility					
Integrative ability					
Negotiating skills					
Open-mindedness					
Readiness to compromise					
Sensitivity					
Preference for teamwork					
Power of persuasion					
Sociability					
Tact					
Team player					

Assess your soft skills using the following scale:

- does not apply at all
- generally does not apply
- / applies in some situations
- + generally applies
- ++ completely applies

Personal skills	--	-	/	+	++
Ability to accept criticism					
Ability to solve problems					
Flexibility					
Risk taking readiness					
Leadership ability					
Self-control					
Self-confidence					
Single-mindedness					
Sense of responsibility					
Tolerance					
Willingness to take charge					

Decision-making skills	--	-	/	+	++
Ability to delegate					
Ability to make decisions					
Ability to represent others					
Ability to work under pressure					
Concern about safety					
Flexibility					
Joie de vivre					
Risk tolerance					
Stress tolerance					
Willingness to delegate					

Motivational skills	--	-	/	+	++
Achievement-orientated					
Ambition					
Assertiveness					
Drive					
Frustration tolerance					
Idealism					
Initiative					
Perseverance					
Readiness to identify with something					
Success-orientated					
Single-mindedness					
Work motivation					

Self-assessment skills	--	-	/	+	++
Ability to be self-motivated					
Ability to work under pressure					
Conscientiousness					
Endurance					
Independence					
Leadership motivation					
Patience					
Self-discipline					
Self-reliance					
Sense of responsibility					

Global soft skills	--	-	/	+	++
Ability to define goals					
Cost-benefit awareness					
Entrepreneurial thinking					
Healthy materialism					
Labor efficiency					
Physical fitness					
Psychological health					
Systematic organization					

This self-assessment gives you an initial overview of your non-technical skills. We recommend that you ask third parties for their opinions and compare how you see yourself with how others see you. Suitable people for testing your self-perception include your family and friends. Employment references and testimonials should also offer some indication of how former employers appraised your soft skills.

Take the lists of soft skills ascribed to you by your family and friends and enter them in the following table:

Soft skill	Confirmed by				
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					

This compilation of your soft skills will prepare you well for a later phase of this application process: in job advertisement analysis it will help you to compare your skills with the job requirements described (see chapter “Focusing: Job Adverts”).

Practical examples of your soft skills

Citing specific examples of your soft skills in your own life will make your CV — a later step in this application process — more compelling. In interviews potential employers also pay attention to applicants' soft skills and are interested in learning about the activities in which you acquired, applied and enhanced your skills. Thus, during your studies it is advantageous to have a diverse range of interests and to steadily improve your soft skills.

You can acquire soft skills in numerous academic and extracurricular activities:

- Studies/doctoral studies
- Further and advanced training
- Vacation jobs/internships
- Sport/hobbies
- Work experience abroad/travel
- Voluntary and community service
- Military service

Particularly useful soft skills such as budgeting, organizational ability and leadership are often learned through extracurricular activities.

Take the lists of skills and try to find specific examples of each in your life. Enter them in the following tables. Pay particular attention to the following:

- What have you done well? What do you regard as your personal achievements, successes, results?
- What did these teach you? How did they equip you for subsequent stages in your life? Which skills do you think will be important for you in the future?
- Which skills would you like to develop further?

Example: President of a student association

Functions	Used soft skills
Lead the student association	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Team player- Willingness to take charge- Ability to regulate conflict
Planned and organized events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Time and project management- Self-discipline- Stress tolerance
Aquisition of sponsorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Presentation techniques- Communication skills

Activity 1:

Functions	Used soft skills

Activity 2:

Functions	Used soft skills

Activity 3:

Functions	Used soft skills

How employers see soft skills

Employers have clear ideas of the soft skills they expect of ETH mechanical engineering or physics graduates. Below we list some examples of interdisciplinary skills that might be expected of you.

Employers expect, among others, the ability¹:

- to develop problem-solving strategies
- to communicate with interlocutors — superiors, colleagues and customers — in Switzerland and abroad
- to approach projects methodically and coordinate process flows
- to develop creative ideas methodically and argue points with self-confidence
- to discuss the quality of one's ideas and accept criticism
- to network at intellectual and practical levels
- to recognize and quantitatively assess risks and take responsibility for further courses of action
- project management skills
- to independently familiarize themselves with new areas of work
- to work in interdisciplinary teams

¹ From the presentation “ETH-Ingenieurprofil 2030” on the occasion of the 150 years anniversary of ETH Zurich, published by Ingch.ch Engineers Shape our Future

After you have analysed your soft skills in detail and know what employers expect of you, it is time to take stock.

The following questions are intended to help you to identify the skills you already possess and those you feel need more attention:

1. Where are your soft skill strengths and weaknesses?

2. Where are your strengths and where are there noticeable gaps?

3. Which skills would you like to use in your future work?

4. Which skills do you need to develop further for your future work?



What do I want?

Your values

The third and final step in the analysis is concerned with identifying your values. The relevant question is: “what do I want?” or “which values are important to me and what do I expect from my future employer?”

Your values embody your ideals and ideas. The closer the correspondence between your professional life and your values, the greater the likelihood that your job will bring you success and satisfaction. Work situations that clash with our values can lead to internal conflicts.

Use the following questions to work out which values guide you in everyday life and which are particularly important for you. Then decide which values your job must be compatible with and which you want to realize in your leisure time. When answering these questions, think of as many aspects of your life as possible:

1. What is particularly important for you in life, what gives you satisfaction?

2. Which people do you admire and why?

3. Which values were you taught by your family and which of these do you want to maintain?

4. What does success mean to you?

5. How important is your private life for you (family, friends, leisure time) and how important is it in relation to your work?

6. How do you see your future career?

7. Which corporate values are important to you?

The following is intended to help you to assess the values that are important for your professional career. At the end, mark the five values that are most important to you. Add your own personal values to the list as needed.

Assess your soft skills using the following scale:

- does not apply at all
- generally does not apply
- / applies in some situations
- + generally applies
- ++ completely applies

Values	--	-	/	+	++
Achieving concrete results					
Appreciation					
Career prospects					
Challenge					
Compatibility with family life, part-time work					
Competitiveness					
Creativity					
Financial security					

Values (continuation)	--	-	/	+	++
Good working atmosphere					
Income and prosperity					
Influence, power					
Innovation					
Meaningful tasks					
Pioneering work					
Prestige, esteem					
Risk-taking					
Scientific work					
Scope for own decision-making					
Self-reliance and independence					
Self-fulfillment / self-realization					
Specialization					
Success					
Travel					
Variety of tasks					
Variety of demands					

Is it possible to work out your ideal job from this summary of your values?

What do you expect from your job and from your employer?

Summary

Basis for the next stage in the application process

The list you have drawn up of your interests, skills and values in this chapter forms the basis for the next steps in the application process. Your values will influence your choice of potential employers and, like your interests and your skills, will be part of your application material and your job interviews.

Tips: Analysis

- Compare the results of the analysis with your personal development. Study the relevance of the weak spots you identified and decide how you can improve them. Pay special attention to your strengths; you need to maintain and if possible enhance these.
- Grasp every opportunity you can to define, test and apply your interests, skills and values, such as conversations with colleagues and active involvement in organizations.
- Keep the results of your analysis in mind throughout the application process. Remind yourself before every application of who you are, what you can do, and what you want.

ETH Career Center Service: Analysis

- Career Events
- Individual sessions on positioning to determine your interests, skills and values
- Resource center with manuals, magazines and brochures

Information: www.careercenter.ethz.ch — for students and doctoral students



EXPLORATION

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Sectors

Survey

The purpose of this exploration is to provide an overview of your job opportunities. Many ETH graduates are unaware of just how broad a spectrum of potential areas of activity they have to choose from.

This chapter provides an overview of the different sectors, areas of activity and entry-level positions and provides you with concrete job descriptions.

Before you can apply to a company or an institution, you must be clear about the business environment and the type of activity you want to work in. Your interests (see chapter “Analysis”), your major fields of study and the topic of your bachelors or masters thesis should give you some idea of your preferences.

The following tables provide an overview of private sector industries and public institutions looking for ETH graduates. Mark the industries that you find particularly interesting. Please note that the following table provides a broad but not complete overview.

Raffael Bühler, 26

MSc ETH ETIT

Entwicklungsingenieur gasisolierte Schaltanlagen bei ABB Schweiz AG

Wieso haben Sie sich für einen Direkteinstieg bei ABB Schweiz entschieden?

Meine Masterarbeit habe ich in Neuseeland geschrieben. Aus diesem Grund bevorzugte ich nun einen Arbeitsort in der Nähe meiner Wohnung. ABB Hochspannungsprodukte in Oerlikon ist aus diesem Grund perfekt für mich. Zudem passten die Anforderungen im Stellenbeschrieb sehr gut zu meinem Profil. Wenn man noch keine Erfahrungen im Ausland gemacht hat und örtlich nicht allzu sehr gebunden ist, würde ich statt eines Direkteinstiegs jedoch ein Trainee-Programm empfehlen. Dieses bietet die Möglichkeit, verschiedene Stationen kennenzulernen und Erfahrungen im Ausland zu sammeln.

Was beinhaltet Ihre Tätigkeit?

Ich arbeite in der Studiengruppe. Wir sind ein kleiner Kreis von sechs Personen, der sich mit Typenprüfungen, diversen Rechnungen, der Betreuung von Praktikanten und dem technischen Support für andere Abteilungen beschäftigt. Konkret habe ich mich in den letzten sechs Monaten mit Typenprüfungen zur Aufstockung unseres Durchführungsportfolios, thermischen Simulationen, Erdbebenberechnungen und Leistungstests beschäftigt. Ein grosser Teil meiner Arbeit bestand aus dem Aneignen von Kenntnissen der internationalen Normen sowie Testdurchführungen in Labors in Deutschland, Baden und Oerlikon. Zudem durchlief ich ein ausführliches Einführungsprogramm, um mein internes Netzwerk aufzubauen und in sämtliche Abteilungen des Standorts Oerlikon Einblick zu erhalten.

Was schätzen Sie besonders am Unternehmen?

Bei ABB hilft jeder jedem – die Hilfsbereitschaft der Mitarbeitenden ist sehr gross und ermöglicht einem dadurch, Probleme effizient zu lösen. Es ist ein immenses Wissen vorhanden. Manchmal ist es aber schwierig herauszufinden, an wen man sich wenden könnte. Ausserdem schätze ich es, dass ich bisher sehr abwechslungsreiche Aufgaben hatte und früh Verantwortung übernehmen durfte.

Was empfehlen Sie den Studierenden für den Berufseinstieg?

Die wichtigsten Voraussetzungen für ein erfolgreiches Arbeiten als Entwicklungsingenieur sind Motivation und Interesse. Man muss sich mit Problemen auseinandersetzen wollen, die die Themenbereiche Elektrotechnik und Maschinenbau verknüpfen. Eine hohe Selbständigkeit, Teamarbeit und effektives Arbeiten wird zusätzlich gefordert. Ausserdem sind gute Englischkenntnisse von Vorteil.

Interessiert an einer Karriere bei ABB?

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ALPIQ

Private-sector industries (examples)	1. priority	2. priority	3. priority
Aerospace industry			
Architect offices			
Automotive industry			
Banking / Finance / Insurance			
Biomechanics / Biotechnology			
Biomedical industry			
Building industry			
Chemical and process engineering			
Consulting			
Consumer goods industry			
Drive and control technology			
Electronics and consumer electronics			
Engineering and planning agency			
Extractive industry			
Food industry			
Health care industry			
Information and communications industry			
Media			
Metal processing			
Packing industry			
Pharmaceutical industry			
Plant engineering			

Power generation, transmission and distribution			
Production and automation engineering			
Semiconductor, micro and nanotechnology			
Sports- / Fitness- / Wellness industry			
Textile industry			
Watchmaking industry			

Public institutions and non-profit companies (examples)	1. priority	2. priority	3. priority
Agricultural service			
Development aid / NGOs			
Energy companies			
High schools, technical colleges and universities			
Public administration			
Research institutes			
Trade associations			
Transport companies			



Alstom is a global leader in the world of power generation, power transmission, and rail infrastructure and sets the benchmark for innovative and environmentally friendly technologies. This implies a multicultural work environment with an interesting and inspiring community, advanced technologies, and challenging tasks. When I met my future colleagues during the job interview, choosing Alstom was an easy decision to make. The people of the department are international and the working atmosphere is family-like and friendly. The combination of this working atmosphere with the challenge of developing world-class steam turbines in the environment of a location like Baden is in several ways unique and rewarding. Now, more than six years after this decision, I know it was the right choice.

www.careers.alstom.com

We are shaping the future

ALSTOM

R&D Group Leader within ALSTOM (Switzerland) Ltd.
Simon Segat, 32
MSc ETH ME

What does your job at Alstom involve?

Within the Steam Turbine R&D department of Last Stage & Special Blades, I am leading the Mechanical Design Group. For the development of new rear stages, my team generates blade models and manufacturing documentation in cooperation with the Aerodynamics, Thermodynamics, and Mechanical Integrity teams, supports blade production qualifications at the different manufacturing sites all over the world, and assists the blade assembly process.

What do you particularly like about your work at Alstom?

The work in an R&D department is challenging every day. We have the opportunity to experience and influence each phase of a new development project, from the first concept to the manufacturing implementation. I also enjoy working and communicating with people. In our international environment I need to coordinate the work between different locations all over the world. This also involves traveling to manufacturing sites, power plants, or suppliers.

What advice do you have for students starting their professional lives?

Being open for anything new is generally important. Changing from student life to work life is an essential step, but nothing to be afraid of. Just be yourself, know your strengths and weaknesses, and get a rough idea where you want to go in your personal career. Have fun in what you are doing because you will be doing it every day. In this spirit, good luck!

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UNTERWEGS MIT IHNEN?

Wollen Sie auf den Strassen dieser Welt Ihre Spuren hinterlassen?
Nehmen Sie mit uns Kontakt auf!

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Fields of activity

Examples

You now have an overview of the sectors and institutions that interest you and can turn your attention to the kind of job you would like to have within this environment. The decision in favor of a specific activity sets the course for your future career. This does not mean that you cannot change your mind later, but for the moment the decision must be the right one.

The following list contains examples of working fields and job profiles. Please be aware that with the technical development new working fields continuously develop.

Field of activity / jobprofile (examples)

Actuary

Agronomist

Architect

Astronomer

Basic research

Biochemist

Biologist

Biophysicist

Biotechnologist

Business process engineering

CAE engineer

Chemical engineer

Chemist

Civil engineer

Climatologist

Clinical Trial specialist

Construction

Consultant

Database specialist

Development engineer

Electrical engineer

Environmental engineer

Environmental protection

Food chemist

Food engineer

Food scientist

Forest engineer

Geologist

Geomatics engineer

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Marketing

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Mathematician

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Medical advisor

Meteorologist

Micro engineer

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Pharmacist

Physicist

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Production engineer

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Public service

Quality Management

Research and Development

Risk engineer

Scientific writer

Software engineer

Statistician

Supply Chain Manager

Teaching

Technical purchase

Technical sales

Telecommunications engineer

Trading / Sales

Traffic engineer

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1963 in Boston, USA

Industry:
Strategy consulting

Employees:
Switzerland: 165 consultants
Worldwide: 4,800 consultants

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Zurich and Geneva

International offices:
74 offices in 42 countries, from Abu Dhabi to Zurich

Form of application:
Online tool: <http://apply.bcg.com>

WORKING AS AN ASSOCIATE AT BCG

Last name: Kullmann

First name: Carmen

Degree: MSc ETH in mechanical engineering; degree in business administration and marketing communication

Current position: Associate



My job and my responsibilities: As a consultant, I am part of a BCG project team and work with clients to develop solutions for diverse issues in various areas, such as strategic decision making or operational implementation options. I am responsible for one or more modules which I supervise independently, always in close coordination with the client. As a result of BCG's very flat hierarchies, I was fully involved in projects and on-site at the client from day one of my career.

In consulting, nothing is by the book—every project is different. The specific challenges often require a tailored, client-specific solution approach. This innovative process—which takes place in close collaboration with the client and the BCG team—is very interesting and a lot of fun. I learn new things every day, not least from my colleagues, who studied in a wide range of different fields at the ETH and other universities and have diverse backgrounds and nationalities.

My background: After earning my degree in business administration and marketing communication, I studied mechanical engineering at ETH Zurich with a focus on micro- and nanotechnology. After completing my master's thesis at UC Berkeley, I joined BCG in early 2011.

My advice for career entry: Broaden your horizons and get to know the business world in the course of an internship. Take part in workshops, visit trade fairs, and find out what you expect from your job and your employer. Also, get to know as many employees in your future employer's company as possible before making your decision, because they will also play a role in shaping your life for the next few years.

BCG

THE BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP

Bühler is the specialist and technology partner for plant, equipment, and services for processing basic foods and manufacturing advanced materials. The company, which operates in over 140 countries, holds leading market positions worldwide in the supply of industrial plants for making flour, processing animal feeds, producing pasta and chocolate, and manufacturing die cast aluminum components.

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Entry-level positions

Survey

It is not always clear at first sight whether a job offer targets university graduates or people with experience. However, many companies and institutions also have internships, trainee programs and career-entry positions specifically designed for students and recent graduates.

Terms that help identify career-entry positions include “junior”, “starting position” or “young professional”. Positions include:

- Junior product manager
- Career-entry mechanical services
- Mechanical engineering graduate

Career-entry as an assistant of a senior manager:

Assistant positions are a particularly suitable means of gaining an overview of a company. As an assistant you will be your superior’s right-hand, supporting him in any daily business matters by collecting and evaluating information, elaborating decision basis and take on project tasks. This type of position requires strategic and business thinking skills, problem solving orientation, resilience, flexibility, as well as analytical and structured working behavior.

Career-entry trainee programs:

Large companies often offer special career-entry internships or traineeships. Usually lasting 12–18 months, they provide an opportunity to learn about all aspects of the company. They include involvement in the day-to-day business of each department and responsibility for small tasks, often as part of a larger project. At the end of the program, successful trainees in project management and other managerial functions are often able to move into full-time jobs with the company. Traineeships are usually available for bachelor and masters graduates. Ask companies for full details of their programs and age limits, if any.

Starting salaries

They depend on the industry, the company and the starting position

We cannot give you exact details about career-entry salaries, as these vary from industry to industry, company to company and starting position to starting position. Moreover, there are also pronounced regional differences.

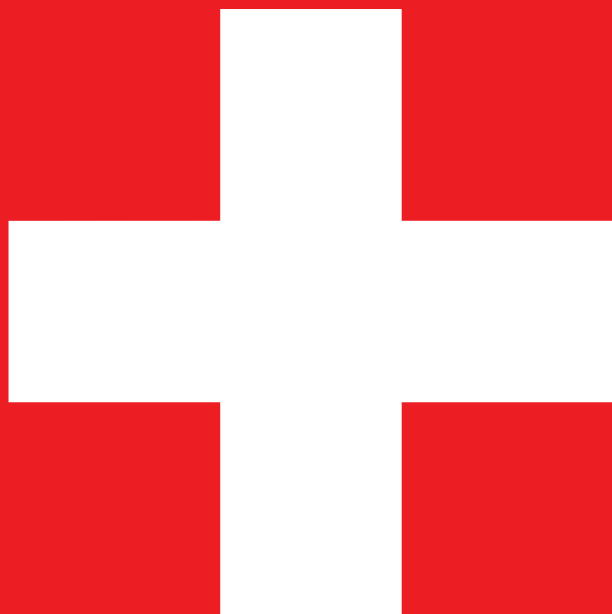
When looking at the salary it is essential to contemplate the total compensation. The total compensation can roughly be divided into the following component:

- Basis salary (Annual salary incl. 13th month salary)
- Performance bonus
- Fringe benefits (exemplary)
 - Pension fund contributions
 - Number vacation days
 - Contribution towards public transportation (e.g. 1/2 Tax)
 - discount on company products
 - etc.

Example A	<p>Annual Salary 70 000 + 25 vacation days + special rates for company products + discounts at personnel restaurant + Employer contribution / Pension fund above legal minimum + overtime compensation + further education ≈ 95 000</p>	Example B	<p>Annual Salary 82 000 + 20 vacation days + Employer contribution and pension fund at legal minimum + special rates for company products + no overtime compensation ≈ 85 000</p>
-----------	---	-----------	--

When evaluating the salary, all compensation components have to be considered. There are a number of statistics regarding entry salaries, which shall only be used as indicators. E.g. employment statistics of ETH, Swissengineering, Swiss ICT etc. The compensation is only one of many criteria when choosing your future employer. The job content, team, company culture, development opportunities and further education are further important aspects, which are crucial for the decision. The focus on each aspect is also very individual.

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Summary

Basis for focusing

Your evaluation has now given you an important overview of possible branches, areas of work and job descriptions. You can, as a result, move forward with your job search in a more goal-oriented way. Making a compilation of the branches and areas of work that interest you provides the basis to enable you to focus on individual companies and job advertisements. This will save you a lot of time and energy in the search for a job. You should now be able to decide much more quickly between job offers which would suit you and those which would not.

Tips: Exploration

- Gather knowledge from as many specialists as possible (your professors, former ETH students via Industry Contacts of ETH Alumni, working friends and professionals) so as to obtain a range of information about different sectors and professional career-entry points.
- Take the time for regular detailed research of web sites and of specialist and trade journals in the fields in which you would like to work.
- Compare the information from this research with the insights you gained in the “Analysis” chapter to make sure that the sectors, fields and occupational descriptions you favor really do match your personality, your strengths and your values.
- Always remain flexible in your choice of industries and employers so that you have alternatives, regardless of the state of the economy.

ETH Career Center offer: Exploration

- Individual sessions to determine branches and fields of activity
- Company on Campus or Career Sandwich events with companies to obtain an insight into different activity fields as well as to establish contact with company representatives
- During our Panel discussions company representatives discuss specific topics and talk about experiences within their company

Information: www.careercenter.ethz.ch — for students and doctoral students

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FOCUSING

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A CAREER AT FRANKE: ALEXANDER WUETHRICH

“Within five years at Franke I had the opportunity to work on three different continents. I experienced the fast paced Eastern markets, had to adapt to the action driven US economy and learned to respect the social European culture - these are lessons which cannot be taught in a classroom.

My smooth start into the business world at Franke was supported by a high level of trust and increasing responsibility combined with guidance from Franke Senior Executives.

My Recommendation:

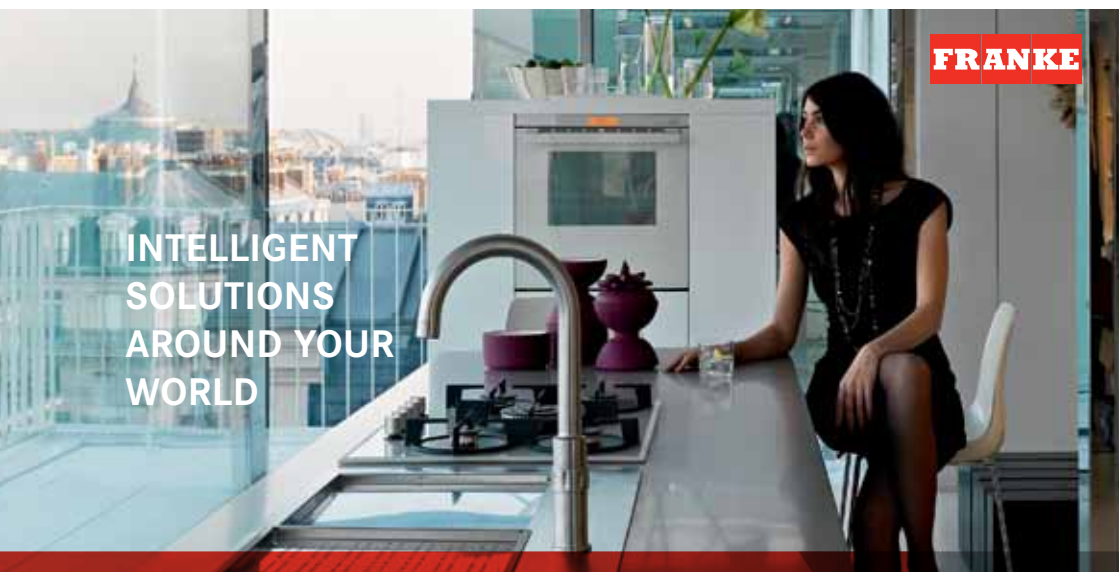
If someone in your team raises challenging questions, which you don't have the answer for, be thankful. These are the questions which you can benefit most from.”



Alexander Wuethrich

studied Management, Technology and Economics at ETH Zurich and graduated in 2007.

In 2007 he started his career at Franke as a Project Manager for China and Switzerland. From 2008 on he worked in the USA as Director Operations and since 2012 he operates as Director Sales and Service in Asia.



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Potential employers

Your employer and job preferences

In this chapter we show you how to transfer the industries and areas of work that interest you to specific employers and job profiles.

Criteria for employer and place of work

The following table contains all the important criteria that you should take into account when choosing a job. For each point, think about what is important for you concerning your future employer and your work.

1. Type and size (national or international company, SME, start-up, ETH spin-off⁵):

2. Business offering (products, services):

3. Stability (financial situation, competition):

4. Organizational structure (flat, hierarchical):

5. Corporate culture (dynamic, traditional, conservative):

⁵ ETH start-ups and spin-offs also offer graduates an attractive career entry. The tips in this Application Guide also apply to such emergent companies.



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6. People development (entry-level positions, training programs, career prospects):

7. Job content (function, duties/responsibilities):

8. Other job attributes (salary, travel, etc.):

Tips for your research

- Company web sites (annual reports, organizational charts, media releases, career information)
- Swiss chambers of commerce and industry other professional associations
- Business section of daily and weekly newspapers and trade magazines (information about companies and their management)
- Networking (see “Focusing: job search initiative”)

This list of your requirements will be useful later as a criteria template when considering specific job offers. In addition, it will be useful for advance planning for job interviews (see chapter: “Application: Interview”).

Job search

Different types of job search

There are different ways to find a job. The most successful strategy is the multichannel approach.

The following section, presents different approaches to looking for a job. The addresses and hyperlinks are intended only as a first step in your research and are by no means exhaustive.

Jobs on online platforms

Companies post job offers on a huge number of internet platforms. Always check that internet job offers are current. Use the auxiliary services on offer, such as setting up a search assistant or placing your CV online. Remember some companies use the internet to search for young talent in order to save the cost of expensive print or online advertisements. If you keep your CV online, make sure that it is always complete and up to date.

General job portals:

- www.alumni.ethz.ch
- www.jobs.ch
- www.jobscout24.ch
- www.jobwinner.ch
- www.jobsuchmaschine.ch
- www.monster.ch
- www.science-jobs.ch
- www.students.ch
- www.telejob.ch

Branch / Sector specific job platforms:

- Architecture/Construction: www.baujob.ch
- Banking: www.bankingjobs.ch
- Geology: www.geologieportal.ch
- Geomatics/Planning: www.geomatik.ch
- IT: www.edvjobs.ch, www.job-box.ch
- Engineering: www.ingjobs.ch
- Life Sciences/Chemistry: www.nobel-jobs.com, www.stellen-basel.ch

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- Physics: www.tesla-jobs.com
- Pharma/Healthcare: www.pharmastellen.ch
- Environmental/Nature conservation: www.naturschutz.ch
- Non-Profit Organisations www.kampagnenforum.ch

Job offers in newspapers

Employers looking for new employees in a specific region generally advertise the positions in regional newspapers. Hence, it pays to regularly review the newspapers of the region where you would prefer to work. If you see a job offer in a newspaper that interests you, you must apply within 2–4 working days. Therefore, always send your application by A-Post or e-mail.

Job offers on company web sites

Most companies publish job vacancies on their own corporate web sites. To avoid a rush of applications, these vacancies are often not published on other job web sites. Review the web sites of companies you would like to work for and look for jobs that fit your profile. If you do not find any suitable listings, you can always apply on the off-chance that something is available (see chapter “Focusing”: “Job search initiative”).

Job searches through recruitment agencies

Recruitment agencies have mostly special contracts with companies and recruit people for management positions or expert roles which are normally difficult to find on the employment market. Entry level or doctoral graduates are seldomly being recruited via recruitment agencies. Therefore you should not only rely on this type of recruiters.



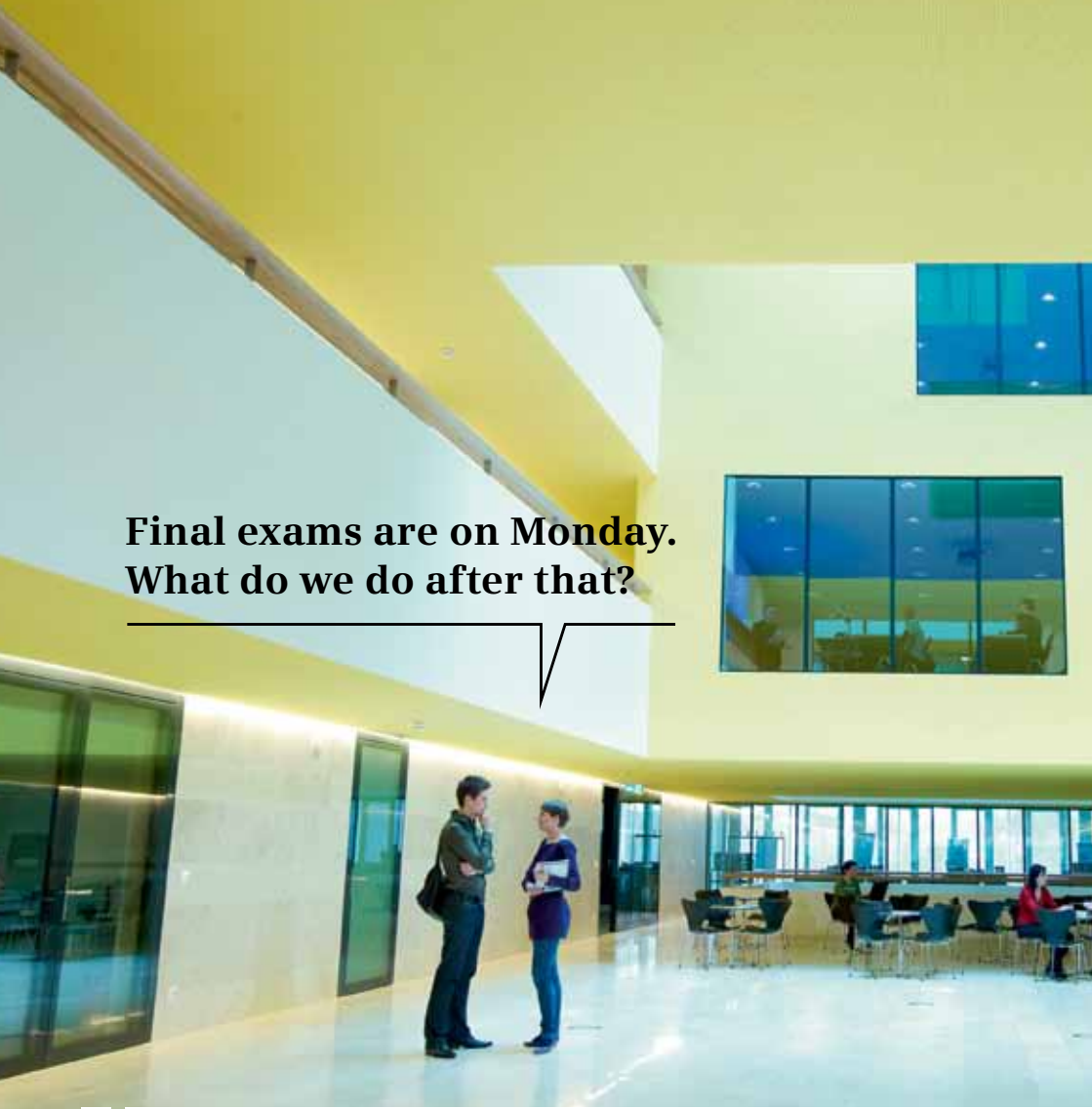
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Self-reliant job search

Networking

According to the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, only 25% of vacant posts are publicly advertised. The other 75% are either filled by people in the company or through personal networks. For this reason, you are advised to take the initiative and apply to possible employers on the off-chance that they may have suitable positions.

As the name “self-reliant job search” indicates, this type of job search requires commitment and a degree of creativity. The self-reliant job search may not be as easy as a classical job search, but it may be the more effective route to your goal. An essential element in this approach is activating and expanding your personal network.

Networking at conferences and campus themed events

One way to establish new contacts with the business world is to attend (scientific) conferences, company on campus, career sandwich or panel discussion events. Over a drink it is possible to get into conversation with interesting representatives from the business world.

Networking with students in higher semesters / Alumni

Another approach is to cultivate contacts with more senior students. One way is to maintain contact with the students in charge of your tutorial groups or practical courses after the semester ends. Another possibility is active involvement in student organizations, which attract students from all semesters. You can learn who is in the process of applying for positions or starting entry-level jobs; these contacts may become important sources of information for you in the future.

Online networking

Professionally operated web sites such as www.xing.com and www.linkedin.com, on which you can post your own profile and search for others, offer the opportunity to establish new and interesting contacts. As these platforms were specially developed to exchange job and interest-related information, as a rule the

registered members are prepared to answer questions. Use these platforms actively, don't publish your profile only to be part of the game.

Student society networking

If you would prefer not to leave networking to chance, you can also join the existing networks of ETH students. Most of them also cultivate a range of contacts with companies and political organizations. In addition, playing an active role in them can help to broaden your soft skills for your application.

Here is a selection of societies that you may find interesting:

- *VSETH*: Student Association of the ETH Zurich
- Student association per department
- *AVETH*: Association of doctoral students at ETH Zurich
- *ETH Juniors*: Consulting company run by students of ETH Zurich
- *Polycareer*: Student organization which organizes Polymesse, Polycocktail and Polyinterview
- *IAESTE*: The International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience organizes practical training exchanges for students in technical fields
- *Femtec*: Cooperative network of international companies and leading technical universities (ETH Zurich, RWTH Aachen, TU Berlin, among others) that promotes the interests of women in engineering and the natural sciences

Societies, associations and organizations

Interest groups are also useful points of contact for information about job possibilities, contact addresses, industry information, etc. Following some examples:

- www.ingch.ch: Information for engineers about careers, extension courses and advanced training and job platforms
- www.bbt.admin.ch: Directory of all Swiss professional associations.
- www.sia.ch: Association for professionals in Civil and Environmental Engineering
- www.stv.ch: Swiss Society of Engineers and Architects
- www.sgci.ch: Swiss association for Chemistry, Pharma and Biotechnology

Trade fairs and conferences

Job fairs, such as the Polymesse at the ETH and trade fairs and conferences offer ideal opportunities of approaching interesting employers. Companies present themselves at stands or in talks and most have a number of representatives from their range of activities.

To create a professional impression it is important that you prepare yourself well for your visit to a job fair or conference. Inform yourself in advance about the companies that you would like to visit and draw up a list of competent questions.

The most important jobfairs are published on the event calender of ETH Career Center website.

Interesting and relevant trade fairs and conferences for you:

Tips: Fairs and conferences

- Research in advance which employers are sending representatives to the fair.
- Select the employers that especially interest you and visit their web sites, in particular the jobs and careers pages.
- Print out job ads that you find interesting and take them with you to the fair.
- Think about the questions you would like to ask the human resources officer or the company representatives at the fair stand. This will enable you to start a discussion.
- Prepare your CV and take several copies with you in neat folders that you can hand to people if required (see chapter: “Application: Application documents”).
- Dress accordingly
- Be enthusiastic about engaging people in discussion. Because of the crowd of visitors at fairs, you usually have just a few minutes to present yourself and your case. Introduce yourself politely and use well-prepared questions to show enthusiasm and genuine interest.

Job advertisements

Analysing job advertisements

Correctly analyzing a job listing can influence the success of your application. It is important to distinguish between mandatory (must have) and optional (can have) requirements. The greater the agreement between your skills and the required technical and social skills, the greater the likelihood that you will be invited for an interview.

Mandatory requirements

Mandatory requirements are skills that the employer would definitely like to have fulfilled. Candidates who fulfil fewer than 80% of these requirements are very likely to be immediately rejected by the personnel officer on the assumption that such applicants will probably be out of their depth in the advertised job.

The following formulations indicate mandatory criteria in job advertisements:

- Candidates are expected to have fluent business French and English.
- You have at least five years of practical experience in project management.
- The applicant must be willing to travel.
- You have no difficulty using the newest IT applications.
- We expect a knowledge of object oriented programming with UML

Job offers may also be published as a list of key criteria. The mandatory requirements are then listed under headings, e.g.:

- This position requires
- Job specifications
- Conditions

Optional requirements

In reality, companies generally look for candidates who also meet all the optional requirements. As it is often the case that candidates do not meet all the criteria specified, less important criteria are sometimes given as optional requirements. In other words, you do not have to have these skills, but it is an advantage if you do.

The following formulations are typical of optional requirements:

- Experience in the industry is an advantage.
- Experience in sales is desirable.
- You already have experience in dealing with customers in this field.
- You should have a solid knowledge of CAD.

From newspapers, online job portals or corporate career web sites choose 2–3 job listings that appeal to you and for which you could imagine applying. Carefully read each advertisement a few times and then draw up a table of notes on the mandatory and optional requirements and the skills that you can offer.

Example: Job advertisement

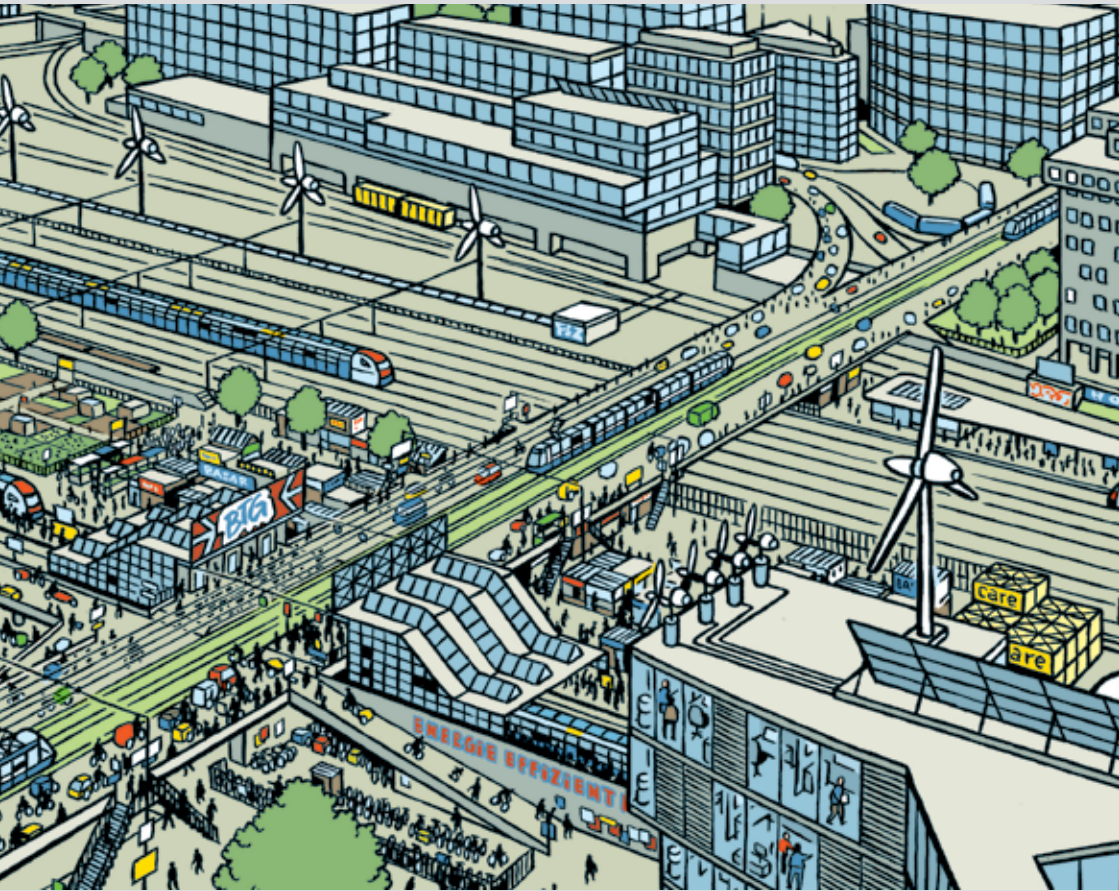
«Trainee Program

In the next few months you will graduate (from the ETH, a university or technical institute) with a good first degree in mechanical engineering and a second degree in business management or a similar field, or you are already working on your doctorate. Through a number of demanding business internships you have already gained experience working in the private sector. At least one foreign assignment lasting several months attests to your intercultural skills. In addition, you have played a leading role in a number of extracurricular activities and are open to new experiences. You get great satisfaction from working on projects as part of a goal-oriented team. A good command of English and interest in travel rounds off your well-balanced profile.»



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Example: Analysis of the job advertisement

Mandatory requirements	Your skills
University degree in mechanical engineering Additional studies in business management	MSc ETH in Mechanical Engineering Two semesters of courses in business management for engineers
Herausragender Abschluss	Final degree mark: 4.9
Business traineeships with responsibility	Three-month traineeship in sales at Bühler AG in charge of own projects Two years working in controlling at Huber&Suhner AG parallel to studies
Intercultural skills	Semester abroad in Australia
Optional requirements	Your skills
Doctoral degree	None

Job advertisement 1

Mandatory	Your skills
Optional	Your skills

Job advertisement 2

Mandatory	Your skills
Optional	Your skills

Mandatory	Your skills
Optional	Your skills

The importance of soft skills

Many job offers explicitly demand soft skills. This chapter deals with formulations and possible interpretations. Take care to deal with all required soft skills in your letter of motivation and provide an example to support each (see chapter “Application: Application documents”).

Required soft skills and possible interpretations:

- *Employee able to work under pressure:* The pressure of work may be considerably greater than normally expected in the sector.
- *Committed employee:* The working hours may be irregular and overtime may be the rule.
- *Reliable employee:* The firm has no interest in a job hopper. The applicant should be prepared to stick with this job for several years.
- *Autonomy/Self-reliance:* Experience in the described field of activity is absolutely essential. You cannot expect any technical or specialist support.
- *Flexibility:* Indicates a vaguely defined assignment or function.

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- *Independence*: The applicant must expect to work in different places. Travel or changes of location are taken for granted. Children and family obligations are not viewed favorably.
- *Good business sense*: Business pressures play an important role. A knowledge of business management is an advantage. The interests of several stakeholders will have to be balanced.
- *Self-reliance*: Performance requirements should be exceeded. The candidate must be self-motivated and develop his own working targets; he cannot expect praise or directives from his superiors.
- *Loyalty*: May indicate difficult working conditions and a moody boss.
- *Part of a young, dynamic team*: Older applicants (perhaps even over 30) have no chance; nor do applicants with excessive salary expectations.
- *Available immediately*: Predecessor was possibly given or gave notice. Leaves open the question of why the predecessor left?

Think there's a world of *opportunities* out there? We think you're right.

Whatever you're studying, there's a world of opportunities to be a part of our success – so start exploring them now at ubs.com/graduates or read about Martina's experience.

My program

The UBS Graduate Training Program (GTP) gives me valuable insight into different IT roles because it includes at least one job rotation where I work in another area. There are also regular events held as part of the GTP where you can meet new, friendly people and build a network of contacts across the bank.

My job

As a business analyst / IT security specialist I am responsible for the documentation framework of the Security Operations Center. I analyze the documents and ensure that they are up to date. In doing so, I learn a lot about the firm's technologies and processes.

My team

My team and manager contribute to my personal development by supporting me to take courses (E-Learning for example) and work on virus

analysis in the lab. The flexible working hours allow me to structure my days according to my needs. The working atmosphere in the team is very positive and everyone has been approachable and friendly from my first working day.

My employer

UBS is an excellent employer. It addresses the needs of its staff and promotes personal and professional development by offering a wide range of training opportunities.

My tip to you

There are many exciting opportunities that await you. While you are a student you should do internships, attend information events and visit companies to get an accurate picture of what your options are and find the right employer. And, most importantly: talk to people! Find out what they do and learn from their experiences.



Martina Kolly
Master ETH Computer Science (2011)
IT GTP Business Analyst
IT Security Specialist



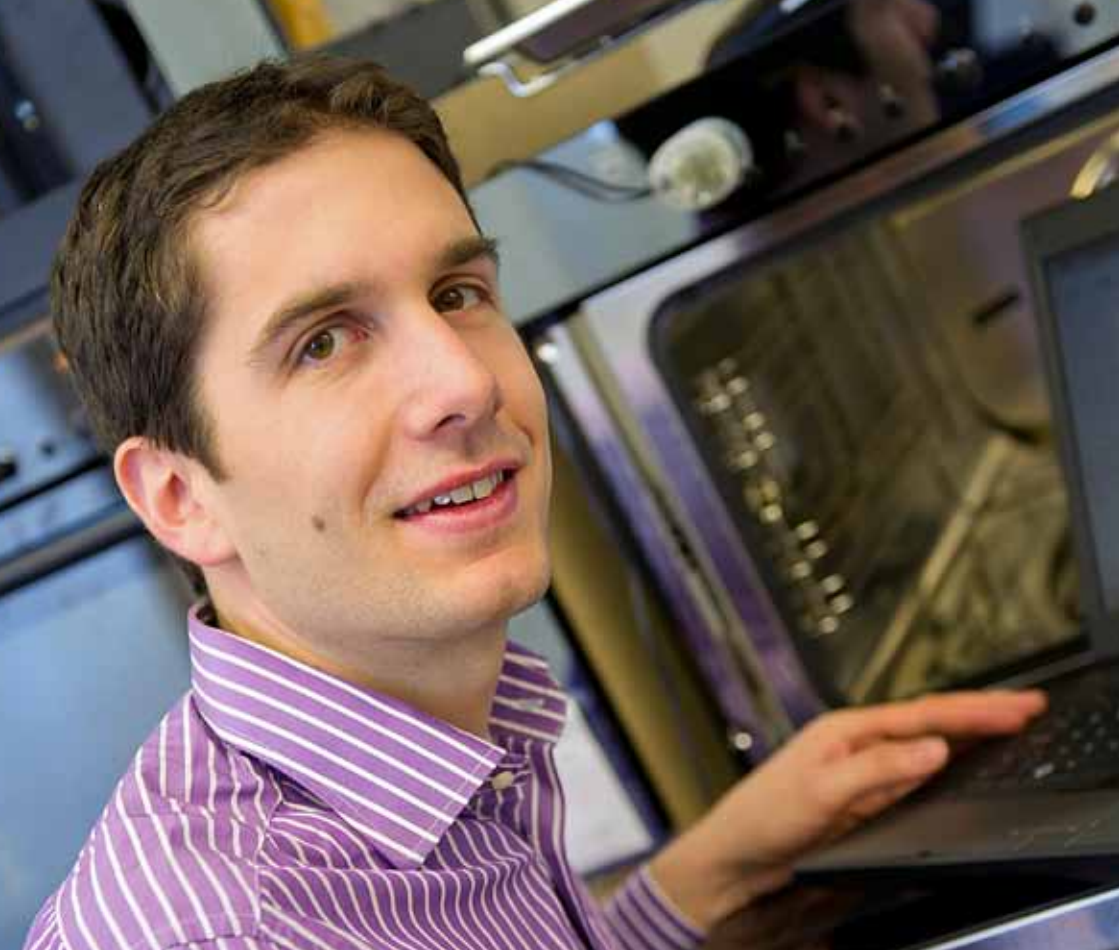
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Unternehmen	1. Kontakt	Inserat	Telefonat	Bewerbung	Nachhaken	1. Interview	2. Interview	Zu-/Absage
Management AG Viktoriastrasse 17 Postfach 3013 Bern	Polymesse Herr Felix Müller 08.05.2007	NZZ 22./23.03.2008	Herr Urs Meier Senior Consultant 031 259 48 78 24.03.2008	Frau Sabine Huber Human Resources 031 259 47 95 25.03.2008	Frau Sabine Huber Human Resources 031 259 47 95 15.04.2008	Frau Sabine Huber Herr Urs Meier 08.05.2008	Herr Urs Meier 27.05.2008	
			Bemerkungen: Fokus auf Prozessen, wenig Strategie		Bemerkungen: Verzögerung aufgrund zahlreicher Bewerbungen			Begründung:
Industrietechnik AG Werkstrasse 37 Postfach 4587 8047 Zürich	Polycocctail Frau Irene Gut 17.11.2007	monsters.ch 02.05.2008		Herr Fritz Müller Leiter Personal 044 578 02 45 06.05.2008			12.06.2008	



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www.vzug.ch



Führend in Küche und Waschraum

Summary

Basis for your application

The analysis, exploration as well as the focusing are indispensable elements for your job search. A thorough research about the future position, the analysis of mandatory and optional criteria as well as a clear application strategy are the basis for the actual application.

Tips: Focusing

- Prepare a folder in which you collect all the material that you print out in the course of your job research (annual reports, job listings, media releases).
- Simultaneously use as many different job-search strategies as possible. In other words, combine traditional methods with the self-reliant job search approach.
- Before writing an application, take the time to analyze job advertisement and to write out the mandatory and optional criteria.
- Draw up a record of contacts in the form of an Excel spreadsheet in which you record and regularly update all details about job advertisement, contact persons, dates, and appointments.
- Save all interesting and suitable job advertisements on your computer to remind you of which profiles to look for.

ETH Career Center offer: Focusing

- Individual counselling, workshops and trainings on application
- Company on Campus or Career Sandwich events with companies to obtain an insight into different activity fields as well as to establish contact with company representatives

Information: www.careercenter.ethz.ch — for students and doctoral students



APPLICATION

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Application documents

Your business card!

It is extremely important that you know the value of your application material. Your written application is the first impression that potential employers have of you. This impression decides whether you proceed to the next step in the application process or are rejected immediately!

Human resource managers often have to deal with 100 or more replies to a job advertisement, from which they select between five and ten applicants for a first interview. Obviously, no one is going to take the time to study each application in detail. In the pre-selection stage, each dossier will be allocated only two or three minutes.

Persuasive application material

Your application documents are your personal business card. Both content and form have to⁶:

- Draw attention to your application
- Arouse interest in you as a person
- Generate a desire to meet you in a personal interview

Employers' selection criteria

The goal of human resource persons is to fill open positions with suitable candidates who not only fulfil the technical requirements, but also have the personality and the motivation to fit into the company and the respective team. In the course of the selection process the question of technical qualifications will gradually recede into the background as the focus shifts to personality and motivation. In the end, the decisive factor will be the personal chemistry between the future superior and the applicant.

⁶ Source: Hesse J., Schrader H. C.: Neue Bewerbungsstrategien für Hochschulabsolventen. Startklar für die Karriere. Frankfurt a. M.: Eichborn AG, 2005, p. 116

Application material

Your complete job application must consist of the following documents:

- A cover letter (letter of motivation)
- A curriculum vitae (CV)
- References are not being listed within the CV initially, they are being handed out upon request
- Copies of certificates from educational institutions (school-leaving onward)
- Copies of all employment certificates and/or letters of recommendation
- Copies of all further education, traineeships and qualifications (if relevant for the position in question).

Your material must be sorted into the appropriate section in reverse chronological order, i.e. with the most recent document on top.

Criteria for assessing application documents

In the first round of the selection process the most important assessment criterion for human resource persons is the applicant's CV. Unless this is persuasive, the other documents will be ignored! The applicant's CV must make it immediately clear that their qualifications meet the employer's requirements.

CV

As was made clear in the introduction to this chapter, in most cases human resources decides whether to invite the applicant for an interview on the basis of the CV. Therefore, it is important that the information in your CV is properly and clearly arranged.

The information in each section of a CV is usually structured in a tabulated format. The information in each section is compiled in reverse chronological order, i.e. with the most recent event at the top. A CV consists of the following:

- Contact details
- Personal details
- Education and training
- Work experience
- Language skills
- Computer skills

Your CV may contain the following points, if applicable:

- Military service
- Further education, traineeships
- Other activities (interests, hobbies)
- Scholarships and awards
- Relevant publications

Do not enclose references with your application documents unless specifically requested. Either you will be asked to bring them with you to the interview or the referee will be approached directly.

Contact details

Your contact details consist of your first name, last name, complete address (with country if applying abroad), telephone number(s), and e-mail address.

- It is not necessary to list your middle names; as a rule, it is enough to give the name you are known by (exception: first names that are not unambiguously gender-specific).
- As a telephone number give your mobile number to ensure that no one answers the telephone without your knowledge. For your answering machine, use a professional answering service or record a professional message.

- Your e-mail address should make a serious impression and include your first and last names: e.g. adrian.meier@ethz.ch, not: adi@ethz.ch

Ideally, group your contact details in the form of a letterhead that you can use on all documents that you present to the company.

Personal details

Personal details in a Swiss CV include nationality, date of birth and marital status.

- Mention all citizenships held (e.g. Nationality: Swiss/French).
- If applicable, include your residence permit (e.g. Nationality: Chinese; Residence permit: B).
- Use an official term for marital status (single, married, divorced, or widowed).
- List children only if you really want to (e.g. Marital status: married, 2 children)

Education

Under education list all graduation certificates, diplomas and degrees obtained from and including the secondary school. In general final grades are only being listed if they are above average. For consistency, you will then have to list all grades of graduation.

- Give the dates (months and years) you attended each institution.
- For each stage of your education or training give the name and location of the institution and certificate, diploma or degree received or for which you are studying.
- If relevant for the job being applied for, mention extension courses, specializations, major subjects and/or titles of theses or papers.
- Mention your high school orientation, if any, e.g. mathematics and science, your major subjects and any relevant achievements.
- Cite foreign grades in relation to the highest possible grade (e.g. “Final grade: 3.8 out of 4.0” or “3.8/4.0”; for Swiss final grades “Final grade: 5.8” is sufficient).

Example:

Since 10.2008	ETH Zurich, Masters Degree in Environmental Engineering Specialization: Hydro Power Expected graduation: April 2011
10.2005-09.2008	ETH Zurich, Bachelors Degree in Environmental Engineering (Final grade: 4.9) Specialization: Water Systems
09.2005	Secondary school: Alte Kantonsschule Aarau, School leaving examination Major subjects: Mathematics and physics School leaving project: Developed a robot that picks up nails and goes around obstacles

Work experience

As a rule, work experience includes completed practical courses, internships, teaching assistantships, part-time jobs and doctoral research.

- In each case, state the period of the work experience (months, years).
- For each period of work experience give the name of the employer, the location and your function.
- Describe your responsibilities or at least two tasks that you accomplished in your position.
- Write in the active mode using verbs (“Successfully developed new methods for ...”) or substantive verbs (“Successful development of a new method to ...”) and, where suitable, adjectives and adverbs.
- Mention special accomplishments and successes.

Example:

Since 10.2009	ETH Zurich, Tutorial Assistant in the Thermodynamics Department <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Head of tutorials in the Thermodynamics Department– Responsible for organizing tutorials and examination sessions– Responsible for student advice and examinations
05.2008-11.2008	EADS, Astrium (Space Division), Germany, Internship <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Structural and fluid calculations for the “Space Station Crew“ project– Refrigerator Freezer Rack (RFR)“ Project of the International Space Station (ISS)

Language skills

Language skills are usually described in terms of proficiency; include certificates where applicable. Common categorizations include: mother tongue, business fluent, fluent, basic knowledge or self-rated as per the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages CEFR⁷.

Example:

German	Mother tongue
English	Effective operational efficiency (12.2009: Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English)
French	Good knowledge (Level B2 of the CEFR)

Computer skills

It is useful to group computer skills by topic (program languages, operating systems, graphic design programs, application software, etc.) and/or categorize them.

Example:

Operating systems:	Windows, Linux, OSX
Engineering programs:	Fortran C, MatLab

Or:

- Extensive programming experience in Fortran, C, JAVA, MatLab
- Solid knowledge of Windows, UNIX and LINUX

Military service

For the purposes of chronological completeness, include your military service under a separate heading. Details should include the length of service and the rank attained.

⁷ Europarat Portal (www.coe.int) – Education, culture and heritage, youth and sport
– Language Policies – European Language Portfolio – Levels or at de.wikipedia.org under CEFR

Further education / training

Further education/training includes extracurricular training, such as participation in symposiums and conferences, trade fairs, language courses and personal development seminars (e.g. public-speaking courses) — with month and year, if possible.

Example:

02.10-04.10

Basic Management Skills, Zurich
Certificate: Seminar in Soft and Management Skills

Other activities

The heading “other activities” includes interests, hobbies and volunteer work. The object of this section is to offer the reader personal, non-professional details that round out your image and can also serve as interview openers. Suitable activities normally include:

- Specific professional or non-professional service
- Volunteer or community work
- Long periods with an organization abroad
- Special accomplishments (e.g. playing a musical instrument, unusual sports, etc.)

Example:

Since 07.2004

Trainer of the junior team of the Greifensee Football Club

Since 04.1999

Active member of the Zurich Chess Club

02.2007–10.2007

Developed a business plan for the reorientation of the family business

Scholarships

Notable scholarships or awards should be listed under a separate heading.

Publications

For non-scientific posts it is quite enough to include a selection of publications and the following statement: “A full list of publications will be provided upon request.” For scientific positions, always include a complete list of publications as a separate page in your CV. In addition, if applying for a research post you may include one or two relevant articles as samples of your work. Theses and semester papers are also regarded as publications.

Photograph

Although you are not required to include a photograph with your application, many companies prefer (or some even explicitly request) it. However, only submit a photograph if you have a recent portrait photograph taken by a professional photographer or can have one taken. A 4.5 cm / 6 cm format is recommended for application photographs. The photo can be added to your CV either in digital form (ask the photographer) or glued on as a print.

A good application photograph is no guarantee that you will receive an invitation for an interview, but an unflattering photograph will put an end to the application process for you before your application has even gotten off the ground!

Tips: Photograph

- Have a professional photographer take your application photograph.
- Practice smiling and posing in the mirror before your photo session.
- Make sure you look well-groomed (men: clean shaven!) and go to a good hairdresser before the photo session.
- Dress as you would for a job interview.



Tips: CV

- Divide your CV into thematic blocks (modules) with a clean, pleasing layout on max. 2 pages (excluding complete publication list and reference letters)
- Formulate factually and concisely.
- Especially in the section of practical experience you can differentiate yourself from your competitors. Therefore describe your tasks precisely and significantly.
- Check your spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Use the same font for all modules and at most two different font sizes (never smaller than 10 pt). Use bold type for headings.
- Submit only a recent photograph taken by a professional photographer that creates a pleasing impression.



Example CV

Giorgio Buonarico
Zürcherstrasse 37
8610 Uster
Telefon: +41 79 598 41 88
E-Mail: giorgio.buonarico@ethz.ch



02.05.1986
Ledig
Schweizer

Studium

- Seit 10.2010 **ETH Zürich, Masterstudium Maschineningenieurwissenschaften**
Vertiefung: Energietechnik, Strömungsmaschinen
Masterarbeit: *"Aero-Thermo-Mechanical System Integration and Design of an Axial Compressor in a High Altitude Airship"*
Geplanter Abschluss: April 2012
- 10.2007–09.2010 **ETH Zürich, Bachelorstudium Maschineningenieurwissenschaften**
Vertiefung: Robotik und intelligente Systeme
Bachelorarbeit: *"Numerical Simulation of Unsteady Separated Two-Dimensional Flow around a Circular Cylinder"*
- 09.2007 **Alte Kantonsschule Aarau, Matura**
Schwerpunktfächer Mathematik und Physik

Praktische Erfahrung

- Seit 11.2011 **ETH Zürich, Hilfsassistent am Labor für Strömungsmaschinen**
– Design Studie und Planung der System Integration neuer Komponenten für das Freistrahllabor
– Installationsarbeiten am Freistrahllabor
– FRAP-Sonden Kalibrierung
- 06.2011–10.2011 **Limmat Scientific AG, Zürich, Industriepraktikum**
– Weiterentwicklung des Messsystems zur Lochsonden-Freistrahllaborkalibriervorrichtung und Aufrüstung der Datenerfassungshardware
– LabView 8.0 Programmierung und Testen der Kalibration
– Messungen und aerodynamische Kalibration von Lochsonden
– Erstellung einer technischen Bedienungsanleitung
- Seit 10.2008 **Media Markt, Spreitenbach, Multimedia Verkäufer**
Kundenberatung und Verkauf (20%)
- 05.2007–09.2007 **Mettler Toledo AG, Greifensee**
Werkstattpraktikum (3 Monate)
Montagemitarbeiter (2 Monate)
- Seit 07.2004 **Seit 07.2000 Good News Productions AG, Glattbrugg, Stagehand und Security**
Auf- und Abbau von Konzerten sowie deren Bewachung (auf Anfrage)

Sprachkenntnisse

Deutsch	Muttersprache
Italienisch	Muttersprache
Englisch	Sehr gute Kenntnisse
Französisch	Gute Kenntnisse
Spanisch	Grundkenntnisse

Informatikkenntnisse

Betriebssysteme	Windows, LINUX, OSX
Ingenieurtools	Matlab, ANSYS CFX/ICEM CFD/Workbench (Solidmechanics), Axcad, Unigraphics NX4, Labview 8.0, C++
Anwendersoftware	MS Office
Internet / Design	HTML, Flash, Photoshop

Interessen / Hobbys

Aktive Mitgliedschaft im Fussballclub Greifensee als Spieler und freiwilliger Mitarbeiter an Turnieren in der Gemeinde

Referenzen

Auf Anfrage verfügbar

Example CV

Daniel Kaufmann, PhD

Aubrigstrasse 47
CH - 8810 Horgen
Phone: +41 79 410 86 79
d.kaufmann@ethz.ch

Swiss citizen, single, 02.05.1984

OBJECTIVE

To develop and improve innovative products by applying my skills in control systems engineering for a dynamic company.

EDUCATION:

07.2007–06.2011

Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETHZ), Zurich, Switzerland
Computational Laboratory
PhD thesis: «Investigations of Numerical Aberrations: Origins and Implications»

10.2002–03.2007

Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL), Lausanne, Switzerland
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, GPA: 5.24/6

10.2006–2007

University of Florida (UF), Gainesville FL, USA
Process Control Engineering, Diploma Thesis, Grade 5.5/6

Diploma Thesis, University of Texas, USA
«Robust control design for an industrial robot», Grade 5.5/6
– Did modeling and model validation for a small articulated robot
– Developed a modern predictive control algorithm using Matlab/LabVIEW
– Successfully implemented algorithm on real vehicle

08.2004–05.2005

Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), Pittsburgh PA, USA
Electrical Engineering, Exchange program
Grade Point Average 3.9/4.0, on Dean's List for both semesters

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES:

07.2007–06.2007

ETH Zurich, Computational Laboratory, Switzerland: Research Assistant
– Responsible for control systems engineering in an interdisciplinary collaboration with GreatCorp., Basel, Switzerland
– Modeled and controlled Diesel injectors using Matlab/dSpace
– Developed advanced control algorithms (H ∞ and genetic approaches)
– Teaching assistant for robust control and control experiments
– Supervised students writing semester theses
– Published research results, did presentations to management, attended conferences

05.2005–08.2005

Ford Motor Company, Kansas City, USA: Summer Intern
– Assisted the Ford Customer Service in the launch of the Ford Mustang vehicle
– Data-mining and Report generation for management using large data bases
– Served as a link between the customer and Ford engineering

02.2004–03.2004

GreatMachines Ltd., Stans, Switzerland: Winter Intern
– Completed design projects using Unigraphics Software
– Served as apprentice in the area of milling, turning, drilling, welding

LANGUAGES:

German: Mother Tongue
English: Proficient (level C2 on European Language Scale)
French: Proficient (level C2)
Italian: Advanced knowledge (level B1)
Spanish: Basic knowledge (level A2)

COMPUTER**SKILLS:**

Matlab/Simulink, dSpace Control Desk, LabVIEW, Pascal, C,
I-DEAS, Unigraphics, ANSYS, LaTeX, MS-Office

SELECTED**PUBLICATIONS**

- Lorem I., Lorem B., Lorem F., (2011): „Dolor sit amet, egestas fusce amet ornare feugiat vehicula ante, nulla ante pede et morbi. Et sed nam.“, 17, 1-2, 163–198
- Lorem I., Lorem B., Lorem F., (2011): „Dolor sit amet, egestas fusce amet ornare feugiat vehicula ante, nulla ante pede et morbi. Et sed nam.“, 17, 1-2, 163–198

HOBBYS:

Mountaineering, Sailing, Scuba Diving, Reading

References

available upon request

Cover letter

Although a cover letter does not usually play a crucial role in the preselection of applicants, it plays an important role in subsequent stages of the selection process. A well-written letter that succinctly lists your accomplishments and motivation increases your chances of being invited for an interview.

It is crucially important to formulate your cover letter to the company's requirements. No two advertised positions are identical. Each job demands a unique combination of technical qualifications and soft skills, so approach it accordingly (see chapter "Focusing: Job offers").

Your letter must address the following questions:

- *Section 1:* Why are you applying for the advertised position? What interests you about this company?
- *Section 2:* What is your current job? What accomplishments can you offer with regard to the required skills?
- *Section 3:* How strong is your motivation and drive? What are your goals?
- *Section 4:* Where do you want to go from here?

The example on the next page presents the formal structure of a cover letter and the approximate importance of each section.

Example

Stefan Leibundgut
Nelkenstrasse 198
8245 Feuerthalen
Telephone: 052 367 83 47
Email: leibundgut@ethz.ch

Management Consulting AG
Mrs Felicitas Huber
Viktoriastrasse 17
Postfach
3013 Bern

Zurich, 25 March 2012

Application for the position Consultant „Change Management“ – NZZ, 22/23 March 2012

Dear Mrs. Huber

Section 1: Lorem ipsum ut quod ferri definiebas quo, ius graeci laboramus honestatis ut, id ius nullam soluta partiendo. Duo te corpora prodesset posidonium, velit doctus an quo, id vim inani clita. No usu saperet appareat probatus, usu ipsum intellegebat ex.

Section 2: Dico graecis copiosae per cu, ex eros intellegebat nec, ad mea debet oporteat repudiandae. Id vim graeci molestie takimata, quo nostrum conceptam an. Mei sale dicam eu. Sit porro concludaturque ex. Summo mundi mei ad. Soluta facilis eam no, facilisis pertinacia eu vim. Graece suscipit quo at, nominavi salutatus cu mel. Qui ut illum partem. Cu prima idque aperiri mel, sed modo interpretaris ut. Sea dicta eloquentiam id, ea cum.

Section 3: Cu possit fierent intellegebat qui. Mei in vocent definiebas, cu assum convenire necessitatibus has. Vis verear quaestio accommodate no, id vis repudiare splendide. Et quo vidit dicam dolore, in sed velit eripuit pertinax. Eam ea dicat zzril, quo aeterno comprehensam cu, his in enim vocent definiebas. Vivendo intellegat sea ut, et liber docendi.

Section 4: Unum liber mandamus ne est, omittam percipitur his ad. Nec ne quaeque denique persequeris. Sit in partem nonummy disputationi perfectio.

Sincerely

Stefan Leibundgut

Application Documents

Contents

Your cover letter must consist of a few sentences that briefly and concisely explain your accomplishments and motivation. As a rule of thumb, it should have just ten sentences, each containing at most 15 words and one statement — in other words: one page maximum. This is not a simple task! It is estimated that you will need a full day to write your first, good cover letter. It is sensible to spread the time spent working on the letter over several days. Ask others for their opinions. This is a useful way to get going again if you hit a wall.

Style

The style rule for cover letters is “describe, don’t evaluate”.

- Describe your skills and your accomplishments objectively without praising yourself.
- Be careful not to include lists of qualities without mentioning where or how you were able to demonstrate them.
- Use the active mode and, where possible, verbs and adjectives rather than nouns.

Formal structure of the cover letter:

Return address

The return address is the same as in your CV: Your first name, last name, complete private address (including country in applications abroad), telephone number and e-mail address (see “Contact details” under “CV”). It is useful to design your contact details as a header, which you can use both for the cover letter and the CV.

Address

The address consists of the full form of the company name (e.g. Inc., Ltd., etc.), the complete address as it appears in the job advertisement or on the company’s web site, and, if possible, a contact person. Leave out obsolete forms such as “c/o”, etc.

Example:

Management Consulting AG
Ms Felicitas Huber
Viktoriastrasse 17
P.O. Box
3013 Bern

Place and date

Every communication must include the place and date in the simple form: Zurich, 25 March 2012).

Subject heading

The subject heading consists of the advertised position or the heading of the advertisement, details of the place of publication (name of the newspaper, URL of the job platform, etc.), and, if applicable, date of publication, reference number, and reference to a personal conversation. Today it is usual to omit the word “Re:” at the beginning of the line.

(Examples please turn over)

Example:

- Your advertisement in the NZZ of 22/23 March 2012 — Our telephone conversation of 24 March 2012
- Consultant “Change Management” — Your advertisement in the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”, 22/23 March 2012
- Application as Consultant “Change Management” — Your advertisement in Die Zeit, 19 March 2012
- Advertisement on your homepage — Consultant “Change Management”

Form of address

An application should, if possible, be addressed to a specific person: “Dear Ms Müller”, “Dear Mr Schulze”. Only if no contact person is mentioned and you have not been able to ascertain one use: “Dear Sir or Madam”.

Section One — Introduction

It is very helpful, of course, if you can refer in your cover letter to a personal telephone conversation with the contact person or another company representative. However, this does not imply that you should make unnecessary efforts to establish telephone contact with the company. It is better not to ask questions if you do not have any sensible ones — awkward questions can easily make an unfortunate impression.

To ensure that the reader of your application documents continues reading you must open your cover letter with a captivating sentence. Avoid superficial, conventional openings such as “I herewith respond to your advertisement in the NZZ of 22/23 March 2012.”

Example:

- Thank you for the interesting telephone conversation yesterday. Your information has increased my interest in the advertised position.
- The career opportunity described in your advertisement in the NZZ of 22/23 March 2012 really interests me.
- My qualifications and skills very closely match the job profile described in your advertisement.
- In the NZZ of 22/23 March 2012 I read that you are looking for a mechanical engineer. Your advertisement really interests me and I would like to present myself to you.
- Management Consulting AG has a reputation for innovative strategy projects. I am very interested in putting my conceptual and analytical skills in this field at your service.

Section Two — Technical qualifications

In the second section of your cover letter you should describe your current work and provide information about the criteria stated in the advertisement. Describe your qualifications for the advertised position and mention positions in which you have used your skills.

Examples:

- In February 2012 I graduated in physics at the ETH Zurich. I am looking for an entry-level job in management consulting.
- After completing my doctoral studies in applied physics at the ETH Zurich, I am looking for a challenging position in management consulting that will make full use of my skills.
- During my studies I gathered experience in energy management and power and automation engineering in training programs and internships in Switzerland and abroad.
- My functions and responsibilities were primarily in concept development and execution.
- At the ETH Zurich I was also in charge of the semester tutorials.

Section Three — Motivation and suitability

In this section you should tell the reader how your work experience can benefit the company. Present your qualifications and emphasize your motivation and suitability.

Examples:

- Through my traineeships in Switzerland and abroad I have experience of this type of work in an international environment.
- One of my strengths is my ability to grasp new concepts and assignments quickly.
- I am used to working independently and assuming responsibility for projects.
- Finally, I have an excellent knowledge of English.

Section Four — Close

As a rule, the conclusion of the cover letter is brief and includes a request for an interview.

Examples:

- I am looking forward to hearing from you.
- Thank you for taking the time to consider my application. Perhaps you and Management Consulting AG would be interested in discussing it further in an interview. I look forward to hearing from you.
- Thank you for taking the time to consider my application. Perhaps we could discuss it further in an interview.

Ending

“Sincerely yours,” “Yours sincerely,” or the more modern “Sincerely”.

Signature

If you are sending the application electronically you may either scan your handwritten signature or just type your name.

Enclosures

The indication of the term “Enclosed” is out-dated and can be left out.

Example:

Application documents

Or:

- Resume
- References

Tips: Cover letter

- Your cover letter should take the same form as your CV.
- Include your full contact details and use the same letterhead as in your CV.
- Develop your own style and avoid preformulated sentences in application writing guides (including this one)!
- Give a brief, precise account of your qualifications, motivations and suitability.
- Describe your accomplishments without evaluating them.
- Use verbs and adjectives rather than just nouns.
- Use the correct full form of address (including titles).
- Check your letter for spelling and grammatical errors; ask a third person to read it.

The different forms of application

More and more companies accept job applications online through the company's own job platform. Compared to the traditional form of application by mail or even e-mail, this form of information transfer is, as a rule, predefined.

Therefore, whenever you have the possibility, send your own preformatted CV and cover letter as an attachment with the online forms. In this way, you can influence the formatting and layout of your message and stand out positively from the predefined pattern! In this case, in the "Remarks/Message" box you need only to politely draw attention to your attached cover letter and other documents.

The following checklist is intended to remind you of the most important points of the different ways of applying for jobs.

Tips: Application documents in general

- Stick to company guidelines regarding form (mail, e-mail or online) and required documents.
- Keep a record of all your job applications (e.g. in an Excel file — see example).
- Keep a copy of each job application so that, if invited, you can prepare for an interview.

Tips: Applications by mail

- Sort and place your application material in an application folder.
- Use a fresh set of documents for each application (well-thumbed documents do not make a good impression).
- Check that no pages have been accidentally marked or dog-eared.
- Check that the documents are complete. Check the spelling and grammar of each document.
- Mail the documents in a white window envelope or in a neatly and legibly hand-addressed C4 envelope.
- Check that the company's name and address and the name of the contact person are correct.
- Make sure that you have the right postage and that the stamps are lined up neatly.
- Send your documents by A-Post (first-class mail). Do not send them by registered mail.

Tips: Applications by e-mail

- Scan all documents that are not already in electronic form and divide your documents into three pdf files:
 1. Cover letter and CV
 2. School and university certificates, diplomas and degrees, language diplomas, etc.
 3. Work experience references
- Check that the attached files are no larger than 2 MB.
- Check that the files are complete.
- Check the grammar and spelling of your cover letter and CV.
- Write a short, formal e-mail drawing attention to the attached files.
- Check that the details of the contact person and the company are correct.
- Include an electronic signature and your contact details in the e-mail.
- To help you archive e-mail applications, add yourself as a bcc recipient.
- If you notice a mistake after sending off the e-mail, correct it immediately with a friendly follow-up e-mail.

Tips: Online applications

- First read through the online form. Collect all information you are missing before you start filling in the form (you do not always have the possibility of saving data before completing the form).
- Prepare the documents that you can or have to attach in the desired format and size before you start filling in the form.
- Check that all documents to be attached are complete; check their grammar and spelling (in particular the company's name and address and the name of the contact person).
- Before sending the form check all grammar and spelling.
- If possible, print out the completed form and file it with your application records.

Active verbs in German

Führung	Kommunikation	Forschung
analysieren	abstimmen	abhandeln
ausführen	ansprechen	abklären
betreuen	beeinflussen	beaufsichtigen
delegieren	beteiligen	befragen
empfehlen	entwerfen	diagnostizieren
entwickeln	formulieren	erforschen
erwirtschaften	führen	erläutern
evaluieren	interpretieren	evaluieren
führen	mitarbeiten	identifizieren
konsolidieren	mitverfassen	organisieren
koordinieren	moderieren	recherchieren
leiten	publizieren	sammeln
organisieren	überzeugen	systematisieren
planen	verfassen	überprüfen
Prioritäten setzen	verhandeln	überwachen
reorganisieren	vermitteln	untersuchen
überprüfen	vorschlagen	zusammenfassen
Technik	Lehre / Betreuung	Leistungsausweis
anpassen	anleiten	ableiten
aufbauen	ausbilden	abschliessen
aufzeigen	bekräftigen	beheben
berechnen	beraten	beschleunigen
durchführen	bereitstellen	bewirken
entwerfen	betreuen	einführen
entwickeln	darlegen	entdecken
herstellen	einführen	erfinden
instand halten	ermöglichen	erreichen
instand setzen	inspirieren	erweitern
kalkulieren	klären	erzielen
konstruieren	lehren	gründen
lösen	motivieren	konzipieren
montieren	repräsentieren	lösen
neu gestalten	teilnehmen	überzeugen
programmieren	überprüfen	verdoppeln
zusammenstellen	unterstützen	vermehren

Active verbs in English

Management	Communication	Research
to administer	to address	to clarify
to analyze	to author	to collect
to assign	to co-author	to critique
to consolidate	to collaborate	to diagnose
to coordinate	to correspond	to evaluate
to delegate	to develop	to examine
to develop	to direct	to extract
to direct	to influence	to identify
to evaluate	to interpret	to inspect
to execute	to lecture	to interpret
to organize	to mediate	to inspire
to plan	to moderate	to investigate
to prioritize	to negotiate	to organize
to recommend	to persuade	to review
to reorganize	to promote	to summarize
to review	to propose	to survey
to supervise	to publicize	to systemize
Technics	Teaching / Support	Accomplishments
to assemble	to assist	to achieve
to build	to clarify	to complete
to calculate	to coach	to convince
to compute	to counsel	to discover
to conceptualize	to demonstrate	to double
to design	to educate	to effect
to devise	to facilitate	to eliminate
to engineer	to familiarize	to expand
to fabricate	to guide	to found
to maintain	to inspire	to improve
to operate	to motivate	to increase
to perform	to participate	to initiate
to pinpoint	to provide	to introduce
to program	to reinforce	to invent
to remodel	to support	to launch
to repair	to teach	to reduce
to solve	to verify	to resolve

Applying abroad

Europa

In content, there is little difference between applications in different European countries. As in Switzerland, the focus elsewhere is also on a brief, precise overview of accomplishments and the motivation for the application. However, the formal details of applications differ from country to country and need to be taken into account in each case. You will find support and more details on the webpages of the local university career services.

Applying in the USA

There is no fundamental difference between the content of American resumes and cover letters and European applications. However, you should be aware that there is a difference in emphasis:

Application documents for non-academic jobs

As a rule, for a non-academic job⁸ you submit only your resume and a cover letter. The resume is a concise summary of your education, work experience and other relevant qualifications for the job being applied for. In the cover letter you specify your reasons for wanting to work for the company and why you are suitable for the position.

Resume

As for a European CV, the resume is divided into sections by topic, and the contents listed in reverse chronological order. An American resume contains the following sections and elements, all on one page:

- Contact details
- Short profile
- Education
- Work experience
- Skills
- Other activities (hobbies, voluntary/community work)
- Scholarships and awards

⁸ <http://web.mit.edu/career> – Tip Guides

Applications in the USA do not include a photograph, nationality, civil status, sex or date of birth.

– Contact details:

Contact details consist solely of first name, last name, address, telephone number and e-mail address.

– Short profile — summary:

This section is not essential; however, it helps the employer to ascertain at a glance what type of job you are looking for. Formulate your career objective in one short, precise sentence.

– Education

This should include only your college and university education:

- Give the dates of each period of education in months and years.
- Give the educational institution, place and the accreditation achieved or aimed for.
- List extension courses and lectures relevant to the job
- Mention exceptional achievements and provide your final grades in relationship to the highest possible grade (e.g. “Final grade: 4.0 out of 4.0” or “5.8/6.0”) or categorize your result, e.g. “Top 5% of class”.

– Work experience:

- Give the dates of each period of work in months and years.
- For each job give the job title, employer and location (including the country).
- Write in the active mode.
- For each relevant activity, describe your function and the results project, activity, results (e.g. “Assessed profitability of expansion strategy in the biotech industry; the results were used by the client to make market entry decisions”⁹).

⁹ MIT Career Development Workbook 2011-2012

– Skills:

Skills also include language and computer skills.

– Other activities:

These include hobbies and interests, voluntary or community work and non-professional leadership experience.

– Scholarships and awards:

These also include performance-related grants.

– Publications and References:

As a rule, publications are not mentioned in a resume. If a list of publications is requested, write it on a separate page. References are provided only on request.

Cover Letter

As in Switzerland, the American cover letter is a short communication that explains your motivation and qualifications clearly and concisely. It should be structured as follows:

– Sender: Only address without nationality, date of birth and marital status.

– Date: e.g. “March 25, 2012”.

– Address: Contact person, title, company, address.

– Form of address e.g. “Dear Mr. Miller:”.

– Section One: Introduce yourself briefly and describe the type of job you are looking for and why you are applying for this one.

– Section Two: Mention your qualifications and experience that you think is relevant for the job and explain what you particularly like about the company/position.

– Section Three: Express your desire for an interview and give your contact details (telephone no., e-mail address).

– Ending: “Sincerely,”

– Signature

– Enclosures: “Enc.”

For further tips and example, visit the MIT and Stanford University web sites.

Exemplary CV USA *

Mech Eng Masters Student

XXX Memorial Dr.
Cambridge, MA 02139
XXX-XXX-XXXX xresume2@mit.edu

Education

Massachusetts Institute of Technology *Cambridge, MA*
Candidate for Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering, June 2007.
Relevant coursework: Entrepreneurship Lab, Product Design, Preliminary Venture Analysis, Applied Math for Engineers. GPA: 4.8/5.0

South Dakota State University (SDSU) *Brookings, SD*
Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering, June 2004.
GPA: 3.97/4.0.

People's Friendship University *Moscow, Russia*
One year course in Russian Language (92-93) in preparation for an MD in Medicine.

Experience

Edelman Lab, MIT *Cambridge, MA*
2005-current
Examined implantation of a medical device (stents) in human arteries. Identified the contribution of the geometry as well as material properties of the arterial walls. Drew interpretations by assessing the response of arteries to these devices using numerical techniques (finite element methods).

Gas Turbine Lab, MIT *Cambridge, MA*
2004-2005
Analyzed a propeller connector (hub) for a vertical test stand to be used in the study and control of flow patterns around propellers. Calculated design parameters, and strength evaluation using software such as Patran. Created models using computer aided design tools (Pro-Engineer).

Skills

Computer: Fortran, Matlab, HTML, UNIX, some JAVA and Visual Basic; Computer aided design: Pro-Engineer, Ideas; Numerical analysis: ADINA, Patran;
Language: Proficient: English, Hindi; Conversational: Russian; Basic French, Korean, Arabic.

Leadership/Extracurricular

Managed 150 students as a Resident Assistant at SDSU. Columnist at South Dakota State Univ; Wrote articles in the MIT campus newspaper. Published poem in anthology of new artists.

Honors/Awards

Pi Tau Sigma, Tau Beta Pi engineering Honor societies; Sigma Pi Sigma outstanding Physics student of the year 2000-2001; Perry W. Williams Prize 2002-2003; Wilton McCown Scholarship 2001-2002.



Interview

How you present yourself

Congratulation! Your application material has made a convincing impression and the employer would like to meet you. This probably puts you among the 5-10 best of the 100 or more applications usually received for a job. You can be proud of this achievement, as you are now a great deal closer to your goal. But the most important part still lies ahead of you: the interview.

Your goal in the interview is to confirm the good impression that your application materials have made. In this section we focus on how best to prepare yourself for your interview, which questions to expect and what to do after the interview. In the days before the interview go over the following checklists and questions.

Preparing for the interview

- Gather as much information about the company as you can: read press releases and annual reports on the company homepage and research the trade press.
- On the basis of your research think of questions you would like to ask the company. Jot these down on a notepad that you take into the interview with you.
- Find out who will interview you and try to find background information about the person(s) in question (function, CV, responsibilities).
- Read the job ad thoroughly. Make a list of the requirements for the job and the skills that you can offer for each of these functions, with concrete examples if possible (see chapter “Skills: What can I do?”).
- A few days before the interview ask friends or family members to conduct a mock interview with you. Go through each of the interview phases and the corresponding questions and answer them as though it were the real thing.

Tips: The day before the interview

- Prepare the material that you are taking to the interview: CV, references, copy of the job ad, notepad with your questions, pen, possibly copies of technical articles and company information.
- Ensure that you have an attractive carrier for your materials (e.g. leather briefcase, black folder).
- Lay out your clothes; they should be appropriate dress for the industry and you should feel comfortable in them.
- Study the map and directions or train and bus timetables once again carefully, so that you will arrive punctually.
- Have the contact and telephone number of the company or interviewer in case of emergency

Tips: The day of the interview

- Make sure that you are well rested and freshly shaven or decently made up; use a long-lasting deodorant and an unobtrusive perfume.
- Eat a balanced meal; avoid carbonated beverages and coffee, which can cause stomach problems and bad breath. Carry some mints in your pocket just in case.
- Switch off your mobile phone.
- Allow yourself enough time before the interview to take a few deep breaths and relax. The more relaxed you are on entering the interview, the more poised you will seem. If necessary, repeat reassuring statements to yourself, such as: “just keep calm” or “everything will be all right”.

Etiquette

Although there is no clear rule about how you should dress for an interview, it is crucial that you make a well-groomed and respectable impression. It signals that you respect the company and its personnel and that you are serious about your application. It is generally better to be slightly overdressed than underdressed.

If you are not used to wearing a suit, trouser suit or jacket and skirt, it is advisable that you wear your “business dress” once or twice before the interview. During the interview it is important that you feel at ease.

Tips: Interview outfit for women

- Well-fitting trouser suit or jacket and skirt in black, grey, dark blue or brown.
- Properly ironed blouse for a formal interview, otherwise an elegant turtleneck or shirt with stand-up collar is also permissible (no tops with spaghetti straps!).
- Well-polished black or brown closed pumps or shoes (flat or low heels, no high-heels).
- Dark, fairly opaque stockings, without pattern.
- Belt to match trouser suit or coat and skirt.
- Only restrained, elegant jewelery (no large earrings or rocks around the throat or on fingers!).
- Freshly washed, neat hair.
- Discrete make-up.

Tips: Interview outfit for men

- A single-color, well-fitting suit in black (particularly suitable for banks, insurance companies and consultants), grey or dark blue.
- Properly ironed shirt, in white or pale blue for a formal interview, with a tie. In industry and manufacturing, shirts may have a restrained stripe or check and be worn without a tie.
- Business ties: no bright colors or figurative motifs.
- Well-polished leather shoes, either black or brown to match the suit.
- Well groomed appearance

Interview procedure

There are no fixed procedural rules for interviews. However, most human resources managers prefer a structured or semi-structured discussion. The individual phases and questions will, of course, vary from interview partner to interview partner.

In general, an interview is divided into the following phases:

- Warming up
- The company presents itself and the position to be filled
- The applicant introduces himself
- More details about the job
- Applicant's questions
- Discussion of the conditions of the contract
- End of the interview

Warming up

In the first phase of the interview the company representatives seek to break the ice and gain an initial impression of you. Take care to greet all interviewers in an open and friendly manner and with a firm handshake. As a rule, the individual parties will introduce themselves and one will explain the order of the interview. Follow closely and be aware of your body language.

The company presents itself and the position to be filled

Before you are asked any questions, it is customary for one of your interviewers to say something about the company and the position to be filled. Listen attentively and with interest. If you have any questions, make a note of them for the end of the interview, or ask politely if you may raise them immediately.

The applicant introduces himself

This is the crux of the interview, when you must persuade your interviewers of your skills and strengths. In this phase, too, it is important to appear at ease and to answer the questions of the company's representatives briefly and to the point. Speak in a clear and friendly voice and do not speak too quickly.

The following examples should help you to prepare yourself optimally for the interview phase. Prepare a good answer for each question and, if possible, hold a practice question-and-answer



session with friends or family members in a mock interview format. The better prepared you are for the actual interview questions, the less inhibited you will be and the more pleasant you will find the exchange with your interviewers.

Questions about your background:

- Talk about your CV, emphasizing what you feel are the important points.
- What motivated you to choose your particular field of study?
Why did you choose that particular university?
- How would you describe your attitude to academic life?
- What aspects of your field did you specialize in, and why?
- Mention something about your bachelors or masters thesis.
- How do you see your future career, and why?
- Do you think that your studies have prepared you well for your professional future, and in what way?

Questions concerning the motives for your application:

- Why did you apply for a job with us? What do you know about our company?
- Do you have any special connection with our company or products?
- What interests you particularly about this job?

Questions about your achievements and motivation:

- Why should we employ you rather than someone else?
- Which achievements are you particularly proud of?
- What has priority for you at work?
- Have you ever been dissatisfied with your performance and how did you deal with it?
- If you got the job, what would you do in the first 30 days?
- Where do you want to be in five year's time?

Questions about your personal and social background:

- Do you prefer to spend your leisure time with others or alone, and why?
- In a nutshell, how would you describe yourself?
- What do you think your last boss would say about you?
- Have you ever had difficulties getting along with people, and what consequences did you draw from that?
- What three positive character traits do you lack?

Questions about your professional skills and inclinations:

- How well do you know our profession?
- Which technical books and articles have you read recently?
- In which fields do you still have gaps and what do you intend to do about them?

Questions meant to challenge you:

- Why is there a gap in your CV?
- Why is the grade for your bachelors degree so poor?
- You realize that it is impossible to meet the deadline for a job because members of your team are not reliable. What do you do?
- If I were your boss and I asked you to do something you had reservations about, what would you do?
- Do you have other applications currently under consideration?

More details about the job

After the employer has asked his questions he will probably describe the primary and secondary tasks of the vacant job in greater detail. This may include targets, requirements, development possibilities and the training period. Listen attentively and with interest, and ask questions if you can.

Applicant's questions

In this part of the interview you will be given the chance to ask any questions you still have. This is the time to take out the notepad with the questions you prepared at home — which demonstrates to your interviewers that you have prepared yourself carefully for the interview. You may ask any product-related, job-related or technical questions that were not answered in the preceding discussion. What you may not raise at the first interview are questions about salary. In many cases, salary is discussed only at the second interview, when the applicant may broach the subject if the employer does not.

Examples of the applicant's questions:

- How does the department fit into the overall organization?
- With which departments will I work?
- What is the average age and educational background of the people I will work with?
- How will my training period be structured?

- What other projects are planned?
- May I ask you how long you have been with the company and how you would describe your experiences?
- Can you tell me something about your corporate and management culture?
- Is it possible to see the future work place and meet future co-workers?
- What further training programs do you offer?
- What salary may I expect? (Not in the first interview).
- What are the next steps? Will there be further interviews?
- By when can I expect to hear from you?

Conditions of employment

It is possible that after your questions, the human resources manager will say something about the normal conditions of an employment contract with the company. This is also possible even if nothing has been said about salary. Pay particular attention, as you are being given important information about your possible employment contract, such as:

- A description of your functions
- Earliest starting date
- Probation period
- Period of notice
- Leave policy
- Salary policy
- Employer protection

However, these points, especially those concerning salary, are often dealt with in detail only after you have been chosen for the job. If these points are not raised, it is better that you do not ask any questions about them.

Closing the interview

First impressions are decisive, but final impressions are lasting. Therefore, pay as much attention to your behavior at the end of the interview as you did to your behavior at the beginning. It is important that the next steps are defined: who will contact whom until when. If this is not clear, ask. Thank your interviewers for the interesting discussion and for their time.

Tips: Successful interview

- Remain yourself in every situation and in each answer. Once or twice you can also admit to not having thought about, known or done something.
- Watch your body language, facial expressions and gestures.
- Pay close attention to your interviewers' remarks. Look them in the eye and signal by nodding your head or comments such as "I understand" that you are listening to what is being said.
- Think before you reply, and if you have not understood a question properly ask the speaker to repeat it.
- Answer in short sentences and remain specific.
- Also quote examples to show what you can do and what you want. Refer to your CV, including your extracurricular activities.
- Leave out personal details. Your problems, worries and reservations are no one else's concern.
- Let your interviewer set the course of a conversation and do not interrupt him.
- Reply using active verbs and positive and optimistic formulations.

Tips: Going over the interview

- Go over the interview in your mind: how did the interview go? Which questions were unexpected? What did you do well and what could you do better next time?
- Use your intelligence and intuition to make an overall assessment. On the whole, did you feel comfortable? Did you like your potential superiors and co-workers? Did the description of the function match what you had expected on the basis of the job ad? Do you think you are up to their standards? What is your gut feeling: would you accept an offer?
- On the following day send your contact person a short feedback by e-mail. Thank him once again for the interview, repeat your interest in the position and say that you look forward to hearing from him again soon.
- If you do not hear anything about the interview by the agreed date, get in touch with your contact person.
- If you are offered the job, ask for one or two days to think it over. Use this time to discuss and clear up any doubts with a company representative before definitely accepting the offer.



Company assessment criteria

As an applicant you never see behind the scenes of the selection process. One is often left in the dark about the reasons why an interview was a success or failure. All that can be said is that you can only do your best and that the final result is the sum of the impressions you created.

To give you an idea of the criteria that play a role, we list the most important assessment criteria once again.

- What motivated you to apply for this job?
- What are your professional and soft skills?
- Are your appearance, manner and manners pleasing?
- What are your characteristic traits?
- How open are you to cooperation and team work?
- Are your ideas about the job realistic?
- Do your statements sound genuine and truthful?
- Have you given serious consideration to the question of why you are suitable for the position?
- How developed are your intellectual powers?
- How good are your powers of expression and communication?
- In a nutshell, what attitude can the company expect from you?
- Would you fit into the company or institution or team?

Alternative selection procedure *Assessment Center*

Some firms use assessment centers to find potential employees. Companies that use this route to select employees are particularly interested in an overall picture of the applicants. In other words, they are interested not only in technical qualifications, but also, in particular, in the personality of the individual candidates.

Large firms sometimes hire assessment centers to recruit young talent. If you are applying for entry-level managerial positions in international companies it is impossible for you to avoid this type of selection process. One advantage of this intensive recruiting method is that several candidates can be assessed simultaneously as they interact with one another. A team consisting of human resource officers and line officers monitor the candidates for a day or two, observing how they present themselves, communicate, behave in teams, and tackle problems. However, this situation, where applicants are under time pressure and constant observation is also intended to test endurance and ability to withstand stress and cope with frustration.

Companies' evaluation criteria

The focal point for assessment centers is candidate evaluation.

Key qualifications include the following:

- Social skills
- Systematic, goal-oriented approach
- Activity potential
- Verbal and writing skills

A detailed description of the individual qualifications will be found in the chapter “Analysis: Skills — What can I do?”

If you have to deal with an assessment center it is important that you make a pleasing, open and committed impression on the evaluator. All your competitors will also have the requisite technical qualifications. Therefore, try to sell yourself well without exaggerating, and be as natural as possible.

Structure of assessment centers

Core components of assessment centers are the following:

- Group discussion
- Presentation
- Case study
- Conversation with a client
- In-tray exercise
- Interview

Assessment center structure varies from company to company and may be expanded to include other elements such as personality, intelligence and concentration tests.

Group discussion

The subject of the group discussion will either be a global topic (e.g. “Smoking ban in the workplace”, “Pros and cons of phasing out nuclear energy”) or a specific problem in the normal course of company business that needs to be solved. The participants will often be assigned specific roles.

In a group discussion behave as follows:

- Look at the person who is speaking.
- Pay attention all the time.
- Be calm and level-headed in your reactions.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Argue rationally; do not become emotional.
- Demonstrate your interest in promoting harmony in the discussion group.
- Do not take the center stage.
- Take arguments seriously and expand on them constructively.
- Keep your arguments balanced.
- Show that you understand others’ contributions before expressing your own opinion.
- Admit mistakes in your own thinking: “that’s right; I didn’t think of that.”
- Be careful not to create the impression that you are a smart alec who always knows best.
- Throw your opinions into the ring for discussion: “I’d be interested to know what you think of this.”

Role playing

In role playing you have to put yourself in the position of a human resource manager, a CEO, your superior or a team leader. You will be given between 5 and 15 minutes to prepare and then you will play out a typical conflict situation with one of the company representatives (e.g. firing, motivation deficit, other criticism). In role play you can use the pointers for group discussions in the previous section.

Case study

Case studies test your intellectual, logical and organizational skills. Case studies are often interactive, but may also be an individual assignment. They usually deal with a complex problem involving one of the company's fields of activity. The object is to analyze the problem and develop potential solutions within a predefined period that can range from an hour to a day. It is not the object of a case study to find the "right solution" in a given scenario, but to develop approaches to solving problems that demonstrate your ability to employ various skills in completing the assignment. The evaluation also monitors your concentration, your ability to familiarize yourself with complex situations, how quickly you grasp situations and your ability to work under pressure. In group assignments the main aim is to observe you as a team player.

In case studies it is important to analyze the task systematically, to carefully read and understand the assignment, to order the information and take all aspects into account. In case studies in which direct interaction is part of the process always share your train of thought with your interview partners. In group exercises it is advisable to document the route by which you arrived at your solution as this makes it more transparent for the evaluators.

Presentation

With this exercise the company tests your rhetorical skills. You are given a topic and a certain amount of time to prepare it, and then you must talk on this subject. Often you have to support a certain standpoint and argue convincingly in favor of it:

The best way to prepare for the presentation is as follows:

- Take a differentiated approach to your topic and structure your arguments logically.

- Attempt to present your thoughts in a lively, entertaining manner, and smile while speaking.
- Maintain eye contact with your audience.
- If your mind suddenly goes blank, take a short break to think of something to say; on no account start to “um” and “er”.
- good time-management.

In-tray exercise

The point of this exercise is to allow the assessment center observers to assess your ability to work under time pressure, to organize work and set priorities. You receive a pile of documents that you need to review and make decisions about. Your task is to determine the order in which you would process the documents and to explain your prioritization.

The following decision matrix is a useful aid for this exercise:

Important and urgent	Not important, but urgent
Important, but not urgent	Neither important nor urgent

Interview

The assessment center interview is usually similar to a “normal” interview (see chapter “Interview”). However, it can also be structured as a stress interview, i.e. a specific theme, generally some weakness, is chosen as topic or you are asked provocative questions:

- What is there to be said against our hiring you?
- Despite your resolutions, what have you not yet achieved in your (professional) life?
- What is your biggest failure or disappointment, and what have you learned from this?
- How do you define the concepts “leadership”, “responsibility”, and “performance”?
- There is no red thread running through your CV!

Do not let questions in stress interviews disconcert you; just try to argue matter-of-factly. Remind yourself that your interview partner is not interested in making a fool of you, but in testing how you react under pressure.

Tips: Assessment Center

- Before your appointment with the assessment center get a good night’s rest, and put on comfortable clothes (see chapter “Interview: Etiquette”).
- Be always authentic, do not try to convince the assessors of something which is not compliant with your characteristic traits
- Before the exercises start try to introduce yourself to the other participants.
- Be open, friendly and alert at all times.
- Tackle all assignments with complete concentration and commitment.
- Do not let yourself be provoked, and respond in a businesslike, matter-of-fact way at all times.
- You won’t receive any feedback during the assessment, don’t let that disconcert you
- In team assignments always let other participants finish speaking before saying anything and maintain eye contact.
- Do not forget that you are also being observed during breaks and meals. Therefore, stick to small talk, steer clear of politics and involved, controversial or embarrassing subjects.

Tips: Case Studies

- Take notes
- Do not forejudge
- Ask questions
- Listen carefully to the answers
- Maintain eye contact
- Take your time
- Illustrate your approach
- Think aloud
- Illustrate a logical and clear approach. If necessary and reasonable use frameworks and concepts to structure your solution
- Summarize your results briefly





Summary

Closing of the application process

The application itself is the last step in your application process. It is the culmination of all your efforts in the analysis, exploration and focusing phases. Before you can assemble your application material and prepare yourself for an interview, you need to have a thorough knowledge of your strengths and weaknesses, be clear about your professional and private interests and what you want, and have done what you can to establish contact with possible employers. In this phase it is important not be discouraged by negative replies or a lack of resonance. Each application is a learning process, and with patience and proper preparation the desired success will soon follow.

Tips: Application

- Know the value of your application material: it decides whether you are regarded as interesting enough to be invited for an interview.
- Invest sufficient time and money in putting your documents together; particularly in the case of your photograph, the expense is worth it.
- Attend your interview well prepared, properly dressed and in a relaxed frame of mind.
- Take enough time to go over the interview and use the result to improve your preparation for other imminent interviews.
- Carefully document all the steps of your application process: file copies of job ads and set up an Excel file to record all contacts, applications and the state of applications in process.

ETH Career Center offer: Application

- Workshops on CV and motivation letters
- Interview training

Infos: www.careercenter.ethz.ch — for students and doctoral students



Vipluv
ETH Alumnus

Carmen
ETH Alumna

Georg
ETH Alumnus

Daniel
ETH Alumnus

CLOSING REMARKS

Closing remarks

The basis of a successful application is an application strategy customized to your unique requirements. We hope that the wealth of tips and pointers in this application guide will help you to successfully pursue your transition to professional life.

In addition to this practical application guide, we offer:

- Trainings
- Workshops
- Company events
- Library including books on application
- Individual counseling
- Calender of events on www.careercenter.ethz.ch with an overview of career related evets at ETH

In particular, we should like to draw your attention to the Company on Campus, Career Sandwich, Recruiting Days and Panel Discussion event with company representatives. The objective of these events is to gain a deeper insight into the professional world, meet company representatives and prepare your career entry in an optimal way.

For further information about our offers at ETH as well as about our partner companies or other ETH organizations, please visit our www.careercenter.ethz.ch

We wish you lots of success for your career start and are happy to support you for these important steps.

Your Career Center Team

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