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## Navigating the transition: Insights for PhDs moving beyond academia

By [Swedha Sidharthan](#)

Leaving the familiar environment of academia to pursue a career in industry, healthcare or non-profits can be both exciting and daunting. The skills and priorities that drive success in academia are often very different from these fast-paced environments. This article draws from the experiences of professionals who have made this leap, offering insights from their work environments.

One of the major challenges PhD graduates face is the shift from a curiosity-driven scientific research to projects that are driven by market needs, deadlines and collaborations. Communication, time management, and accountability structured to focusing on stakeholders and investor priorities are crucial outside academia.

Throughout this article, we will highlight the major shift in mindset, the transferable skills that have been most valuable, and the cultural differences our contributors have encountered in their transition. Their advice can offer a structured roadmap to PhD students aspiring to make this transition, helping focus on key skills and navigate this journey with confidence.



**Patrícia Valério**, with a background in neuroscience, transitioned to a **scientific communications specialist** role at MaxWell Biosystems. Patrícia explains that while academia values technical skills and publications, in her current role, soft skills like project management, collaboration, leadership, and communication are crucial. A key cultural shift she experienced was communication style. In academia, scientific communications are directed to other scientists, but now, her messages need to be tailored to various stakeholders with different expertise. Patrícia highlights the importance of

understanding the audience and adapting communication strategies to ensure messages are clear and accessible. Effectively communicating with patients, caregivers, and business stakeholders involves framing the message in a way that resonates with their interests. Patrícia states handling multiple projects, meeting deadlines, and solving problems during her PhD prepared her for the collaborative, fast-paced environment of industry.

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In her new role, teamwork is essential, and she's learned to delegate tasks and align her work with the broader goals of the organization. Patrícia finds joy in simplifying complex scientific topics and delivering it to diverse audiences, allowing her to bridge the gap between scientific research and practical application. Her advice to PhD students is to speak with professionals in similar roles to understand the requirements and expectations.

**Aswathi Chakrapani**, a **senior scientist** at AstraZeneca with a background in oligonucleotide chemistry, highlights the collaborative nature of industrial research compared to academia. Every project in industry involves multiple experts working together toward a common goal, adhering to strict timelines and fast-paced environments. Adapting to this pace while continuing to deepen scientific understanding is a key challenge.



Networking is another essential element of working in industry. Aswathi emphasizes the importance of being proactive in learning; relying solely on reading articles is not enough in this environment. Regularly interacting with colleagues across departments helps keep her informed about the latest developments in the field. While academia sharpened her problem-solving and technical skills, she emphasizes the need for broader scientific knowledge in industry. Her advice to PhD students is to focus on expanding their skill set and knowledge beyond their specific research area. Widening your scope and being open to collaboration will help you thrive in interdisciplinary industry research.



**Marta Lovera**, with a background in biomedicine and genetics, **manages Horizon Europe Projects** at IDIBELL. She highlights a key difference between academia and her current role: the level of detailed, long-term planning required. The Horizon Europe projects are planned years in advance, requiring careful coordination, sometimes internationally across different time zones, including non-profit and non-academic partners.

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One of the challenges she mentions is managing international collaborations, which demands adapting to diverse cultural norms and communication styles, making diplomacy essential. EU-funded projects also involve larger budgets and multiple countries, adding layers of bureaucracy and meticulous organization. Reporting is another essential element, requiring detailed documentation, multiple revisions, and a focus on risk mitigation and communication strategies alongside delivering results. Martha's PhD experience prepared her for this by sharpening her organizational and time management skills. Her background in research helps her understand the critical, non-negotiable aspects of a grant, especially when budget cuts arise. Martha emphasizes the importance of problem-solving, stress management, and being open to continuous learning in this role.

**Mathew Tata**, transitioned from academia to a **policy role** at the Cancer Research UK, observed a significant cultural shift. Instead of focusing on detail-oriented, evidence-based conclusions, he now simplifies complex ideas for senior stakeholders, addressing broader issues and simplify the complex ideas. Skills like clear communication cultivated through delivering conference presentations and public engagement during his PhD, helped ease this transition.



However, he also had to develop new skills in policy development, including drafting briefs and position papers. CRUK's mission driven by donors affected by cancer aligns with academia's goal of advancing research. This focus on tangible outcomes for patients and the public sometimes conflicts with researchers priorities. Balancing these expectations is a core challenge here. For PhDs moving into policy, Mathew advises understanding the broader socio-political context of their work and the barriers to applying scientific research for translating science into actionable policies.

**Nivedya Valappol**, a **product owner** at ASML, discusses the shift from academia to a fast-paced corporate environment, where she quickly learned the importance of balancing the "triple constraint" for cost, scope and time while maintaining quality.

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Unlike academia, where projects can be more flexible, corporate work involves strict stakeholder reviews at every stage. Customer requirements are to be catered to. Risk management is another major difference. In academia, failed experiments are common, but in industry, failures come at a higher cost. Nivedya points out that each project in industry includes detailed risk assessment and mitigation strategies to avoid financial loss. Teamwork and stakeholder collaboration were new challenges for Nivedya. While her PhD work was largely independent, her current role requires aligning team priorities and managing people.

She emphasizes that strong relationships and teamwork are essential, as building partnerships early helps ensure smooth project delivery. Nivedya finds the collaborative nature of her corporate environment particularly fulfilling. Unlike academia, where she often had to design her own project framework, the corporate structure already provides the necessary tools and a clear roadmap. She enjoys the sense of belonging and the visibility of her work, which motivates her to grow and contribute to larger goals. Demonstrating leadership and effective communication have been key to her success in this role.

In my discussion with these professionals working outside academia, several common themes emerged. The need to focus on the “Big Picture” rather than getting lost in the details was a necessity. Cross-functional collaborations are central to projects, making teamwork an essential skill. Clear communication is crucial for simplifying complex concepts, managing stakeholders, and coordinating collaborations across diverse teams. Most industries and organizations operate on strict deadlines, requiring adaptability and efficiency in a fast paced setting. Stakeholder management is critical for project success across all roles discussed above. Another key shift is moving from a curiosity-driven mindset to a results-oriented approach. Skills like leadership, collaboration, communication, and problem solving eased the transition. Additionally, networking and pro-active learning were highlighted as crucial for gaining a broad perspective and adapting successfully to new environments.

# emerit<sup>science</sup>

Le Futur de la Science, aujourd'hui

Conception d'assistants **conversationnels scientifiques**

This month, we are shedding light on Emerit who is launching a program to participate in the Beta Testing Phase of **Charlie, the Scientific Conversational Assistant**. Let discover more with them:

We are a young and ambitious French company founded in 2024 with the goal of harnessing the best of artificial intelligence to serve scientists and innovators worldwide.

Our expert team, coming from both scientific and digital industries, has come together to create Charlie, your future everyday research companion. Convinced that human-AI collaboration will be at the core of tomorrow's most disruptive advancements, we are steadily working to make Charlie a true scientific artificial intelligence capable of assisting innovators in every aspect of their work, from theory to experimentation.

Researchers, engineers, doctors, students...

We are excited to invite you to [TEST CHARLIE](#), our scientific conversational assistant designed so that **YOU can also take full advantage** of the incredible potential of generative AI, while ensuring that it meets your standards for **traceability, quality and confidentiality**.

Our beta testing phase will be open from **October to November 2024**.

At present, Charlie draws on a database of over **35 million scientific references** in **the life sciences**, answering your questions with precision while systematically citing its sources.

Whether you are in the middle of an R&D project, a healthcare professional seeking reliable and up-to-date information, or a student, Charlie is here to help accelerate your investigations and **boost your inventive capabilities!**

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Le Futur de la Science, aujourd'hui

Conception d'assistants **conversationnels scientifiques**

## Why should you participate?

- **Exclusive access** to an innovative tool before its official launch.
- **Enhanced productivity**: receive relevant, data-driven scientific answers.
- **Contribute to improving** Charlie with your feedback and suggestions and enjoy exclusive discounts on your first subscription.

## How does it work?

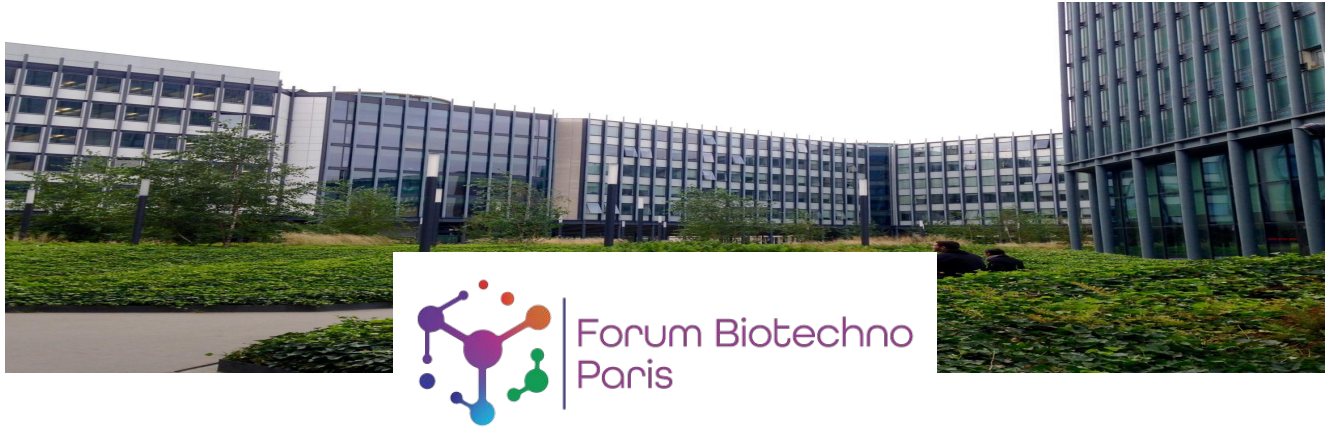
Click the link below to access the application and start interacting with Charlie! It's as simple as chatting with your colleagues. During the testing phase, **your feedback** will be crucial in perfecting the user experience and refining Charlie's features. Your opinion matters a lot to us!

👉 [Access our site to join the beta](#) 👈



If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at [contact@emeritscience.com](mailto:contact@emeritscience.com) — we'd be happy to assist you.

Join us on this adventure and help shape a solution that could transform your research and practice!

## BIOTechno Paris Forum 2024 is Coming Soon!







BIOTechno Forum Paris is coming back for its **27th edition!**

 **Monday, 25 November 2024** -  **Sorbonne University, Paris**

 **Register now: >> [REGISTRATION HERE](#) <<**

Don't miss the **27th edition** of the BIOTechno Paris Forum, the **must-attend event** for young researchers and professionals in life sciences! Organized by the Réseau Biotechno, this forum offers you the **perfect opportunity** to connect with industry experts, discover career paths, and expand your network.

### **What's in Store?**

-  **Inspiring Keynotes:** Amanda Silva Brun and Julien Ettersperger on **Health Innovation** & Marc Chevalier on **Entrepreneurship**
-  **Networking Sessions:** Meet top companies and industry leaders
-  **Career Workshops:** Get practical tips on job interviews, salary negotiation, & more
-  **Special Guest:** Gilles Trystram, CEO of Genopole

Last year, the Forum gathered...



**+180 students**



**+30 speakers**



**+20 partners**

Don't miss this chance to boost your career! 



# PROGRAM



**NOVEMBER 25, 2024**

8:30 AM	<i>Welcoming Breakfast of the participants</i>
9:00 AM	<b>OPENING SPEECH – Gilles Trystam</b>
9:30 AM	<b>PLENARY CONFERENCE 1</b> <b>Shaping the Future of Healthcare Innovation</b> Dr. Amanda Silva Brun & Dr. Julien Ettersperger
10:15 AM	Flash presentations of our partners
10:30 AM	<b>NETWORKING COFFEE BREAK – Visit our Partners Stands</b>
11:00 AM	<b>PLENARY CONFERENCE 2</b> <b>From Lab Bench to Market: Unleashing Biotech Entrepreneurship</b> Dr. Marc Chevalier
11:45 AM	Flash presentations of our partners
12:00 AM	<b>LUNCH BREAK &amp; NETWORKING: Visit our Partners Stands</b>

## ROUND TABLES & WORKSHOPS

	<i>Amphitheater</i>	<i>Room 1</i>	<i>Room 2</i>	<i>Room 3</i>	<i>Room 4</i>
2:00 PM	Round Table From Scientist to Startup Leader	Round Table Sales & Marketing for Biotechnologies	Networking Strategies: Connect to Succeed -ADOC-	Valorisation of skills for PhDs -ABG-	
3:15 PM					
3:30 PM	Round Table Careers in Pharma Industry	Round Table Communication in Sciences	Inside the Hiring Process: What You Need to Know -ADOC-	Preparation for Professional Interview -ANTENOR-	CV & Cover Letter correction -Science Me Up-
4:45 PM					
5:15 PM	Round Table Joining Industry R&D	Round Table The Back Office of Innovation	Presentation of the Health Innovation Ecosystem -Medicen-	How to Negotiate Your Salary? -APEC-	

## NETWORKING COFFEE BREAK - Partners Stands

6:30 PM	<b>CLOSING SPEECH</b>
7:00 PM	








**The Stands Village: Meet our partners**





## Our partnership with La Gazette du LABORATOIRE

Réseau Biotechno partners with La Gazette du LABORATOIRE. The newspaper will be present at the Forums BiotechnoSUD and BiotechnoParis. The two events will be covered by a journalist.


The La Gazette du LABO provides a monthly newsletter for their subscribers. Do you want to stay up to date with the latest scientific and lab news ? Then subscribe to the newsletter and discover each month:

-  Exclusive articles
-  Companies news from the life science sector
-  Job advertisements that fit to your skills
-  Special offers for your projects
-  Equipment, material and reagents for your research
-  Events not to miss throughout all over France
-  Trainings and webinars to stay up to date in your field

30 years of expertise to accompany you in

 Research, Development and Innovation. Whether you need equipment, trainings, advices, La Gazette du LABO is here for you! 

Join the community and boost your projects towards new height!

 [Subscribe now!](#) (*french newspaper*)



The **REAL** section (for **Read** – Analyze – Listen) highlights our recommendations of the month.



### What you can **READ** this month ?

- ***Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future*, by Peter Thiel and Blake Masters**

Published in September 2014, this book became an instant classic in the startup community. It offers insights into innovation, competition, and creating a successful business from scratch. Analyzing this book can provide valuable lessons on entrepreneurship and disruptive thinking. Click [here](#) for more.



### What you can **ANALYZE** this month ?

- ***Navigating the life sciences job market: Five job boards making your life easier* by Labiotech**

Labiotech presents five job boards/lists to maximize your search for career opportunities. Find them [here](#)!

- ***The top-performing countries in biotechnology (according to the OECD)* by Labiotech**

Discover top-performing countries in biotech and the latest industry evolutions [here](#)!



### What you can **LISTEN** to this month ?

- ***How we slashed our lab's carbon footprint*, by Nature Careers podcast**

Discover how Jane Kilcoyne and colleagues tackled their carbon footprint and 4000 kg of waste from their biotoxin chemistry lab [here](#)!



## SPECIAL EVENTS

### Thursday, 17th of October: Forum BiotechnoSUD in Marseille

Forum BiotechnoSUD organized by Bio'M association is in a few days time!


For this edition, there will be a special **job dating event**. Indeed, recruiters will pitch job offers and candidates will be able to pitch their CVs. If you are interested do not hesitate to contact Bio'M at [contact@biotechnosud.com](mailto:contact@biotechnosud.com).

Register on [www.biotechnosud.com](http://www.biotechnosud.com) and discover the program below (full program available on [biotechnosud.com](http://biotechnosud.com)):



**PROGRAM**  
**"FRANCE 2030"**



8h30	Opening
9h15	<b>OPENING SPEECHES - Charlie BARLA (CISAM director)</b> <b>Emilie ROYERE (EUROBIOMED general manager)</b>
9h45	<b>CONFERENCE Les Horizons du Plan France 2030</b> <b>Laura FABRE</b> 
10h30	SPEECH by Ville de Marseille
10h40	COFFEE / NETWORKING : meet our partners!
11h15	<b>ROUND TABLE</b> <b>Welcoming innovation</b>
12h10	<b>FLASH Presentations: Multihealth - Nucleate - Beckman Coulter -</b> <b>La Gazette du LABORATOIRE</b>
12h30	LUNCH BREAK / NETWORKING: meet our partners!
13h35	<i>WORKSHOP SESSION 1</i>
14h35	<i>WORKSHOP SESSION 2</i>
15h25	COFFEE / NETWORKING : meet our partners!
16h05	<i>WORKSHOP SESSION 3</i>
17h05	<b>CONFERENCE</b> <b>JOB DATING</b>
17h50	CLOSING SPEECH
18h05	Closing Cocktail Reception

Professional photographer, CV & cover letter correction



## SPECIAL EVENTS

### 3rd & 4th of December: BioFIT, MedFIT and MEDigIT events in Lille

Réseau Biotechno is partnering with Eurasanté again this year!

Each year, Eurasanté organizes several international business convention as BioFIT, MedFIT and MEDigIT. All three will be held on the same date in Lille. Come and join us on the 3rd & 4th of December and online on December 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> 2024 for two extra days of digital meetings. Benefit from an exclusive discount thanks to our partnership.



**Biofit** FOSTERING INNOVATION & TRANSFER  
 The leading European partnering event for early-stage deals and investment rounds in the Life Sciences field  
 13<sup>TH</sup> EDITION

**MedFIT** Fostering Innovation in MedTech  
 A unique event in Europe for innovation partnerships and investment rounds in the MedTech, Diagnostic and Digital Health sectors  
 8<sup>TH</sup> EDITION

**medigIT** Inspiring Digital Health Innovation  
 THE EUROPEAN PARTNERING EVENT FOSTERING INNOVATION IN DIGITAL HEALTH  
 1<sup>ST</sup> EDITION

**December 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024**  
 Lille, France

**Digital Meetings Days:**  
**December 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024**



Oct

4-14<sup>th</sup>

**Visites insolites du CNRS**

**When:** 4th-14th of October

**Where:** throughout France

Visit and discover CNRS research, laboratories, inaccessible sites, and meet researchers all over France as part of this unique festival! Check out the map to sign up for free visits in your area [here](#).



Oct

16-17<sup>th</sup>

**Cosmetic 360**

**When:** 16-17th October

**Where:** Carrousel du Louvre, Paris

Cosmetic 360 is a global event for innovation in the fragrance and cosmetics industry. Discover the latest research and innovations in the industry. Find information, participants and tickets [here](#).



Oct

19<sup>th</sup>

***et maintenant ? Le festival international des idées de demain***

**When:** 19th of October from 14h-00h

**Where:** la Gaîté Lyrique, Paris

The Agence Nationale de la Recherche and ARTE offer this free event (in French language), where you will find debates, films, conferences, workshops, shows and more. The festival celebrates “tomorrow’s ideas” for a better future. Find out more and register for free events [here](#).





Oct

8-18<sup>th</sup>

***iGEM 2024 Grand Jamboree “The world expo of Synthetic Biology”***

**When:** 23-26th of October

**Where:** Paris Convention Center, Porte de Versailles

iGEM unites the world’s largest community of synthetic biology researchers, industry, investors, startups and more. You will also discover the iGEM 2024 competition! Find more information and tickets [here](#).



Oct

24-28<sup>th</sup>

***Festival Pariscience***

**When:** 24-28th of October

**Where:** National museum of natural history in Paris, Institut de physique du globale de Paris **and online** on Twitch

This international scientific film festival is organized by the Science & Television association. Come and watch films, documentaries and participate in events with scientists. There is something for everyone, full program [here](#).



Nov

26<sup>th</sup>

***PhD Talent Career Fair***

**When:** 26th of November

**Where:** Centquatre Paris

Join the largest forum dedicated to the employment of PhDs at PhD Talent’s 2024 Career Fair! Check out the website for hiring companies who will be part of the event, and register to meet them! Find more information and free registration [here](#).

