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Coming soon, a refreshed
newsletter format!

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Meet [Hélène Lemenager](#), Head of the Dermo-cosmetics R&D at [AXOL Bioscience](#) / Phenocell SAS

By [Alice Le Fric](#)



Dermo-cosmetics and R&D enthusiasts, meet Hélène! Discover the day-to-day life of R&D roles and what it takes to succeed in the industry, as Hélène shares her career journey with us.

1) Can you tell us a little about your studies and academic career?

I completed the classical bachelor – masters – PhD path. It wasn't the plan initially, but one experience lead into another, and with hard work, I managed it. I was never a top student, but my motivation enabled me to create opportunities and make the most of them. Never give up, because hard work ultimately pays off! I eventually chose to **specialize in tissue and cell physiopathology**, exploring the wonderful world of stem cells and their remarkable potential. My PhD went well. Some say that there is a wide gap between a master's degree and a PhD, but that was not my experience. I was already used to working harder than most to be able to succeed in my masters, so the transition didn't feel overwhelming. Like all PhD candidates, I experienced both highs and lows. Whether one receives too much supervision or too little, we all encounter similar challenges, and each year brings new growth and development.

2) How did you decide what to do next, and how did you join the industry?

After completing my thesis, I was offered a nine-month fixed-term contract (CDD) to continue my project, which I pursued with significantly more independence and responsibility than during my PhD. By the end of this period, the situation in my laboratory had changed considerably. Neither the lab nor I discussed a renewal, and my contract simply concluded as scheduled.



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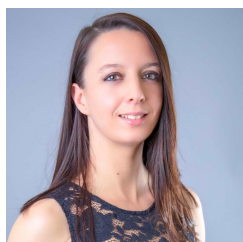


I could see the challenges and personal sacrifices faced by colleagues who left for postdoctoral positions abroad. I also saw others return and undergo highly competitive, often elitist selection processes, while coping with professional uncertainty and relatively low salaries in their mid- to late thirties. Although I have never been one to give up easily, I realized that this was not the path I envisioned for my future. Gradually, I decided to transition to industry. I dedicated six months to **preparing for this new professional environment through MOOCs, APEC training programs, and networking**. I focused on learning the appropriate professional language and understanding industry practices. I revised my CV, LinkedIn profile, and cover letters, and identified companies aligned with my scientific interest in tissue and cell physiopathology.

I applied, was rejected, and applied again. **Through my persistence, the company understood my motivation and gave my application a chance**. The hiring process involved several stages and took six more months, but finally there I was, 500 km from home. A new chapter began!

3) So what is it like to be an R&D scientist?

My first position at Phenocell was as an **R&D Scientist, a role very comparable to a postdoctoral position**, involving the management of a scientific project. I then progressed to **Project Manager, overseeing multiple projects** in response to our clients' needs. I currently serve as **Head of a Scientific Department, where I manage a team, a client portfolio, and several ongoing projects**. I was fortunate to join the company at the right time. Over the years, as previous team members moved on, I gradually took on greater responsibilities.



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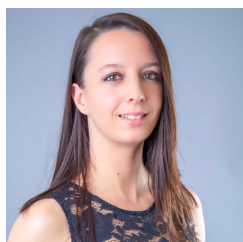
The company (Phenocell SAS) was subsequently acquired by AXOL Biosciences, and I was actively involved in that transition. The size and organization of the company have evolved considerably, and **I'm happy to continue to grow in the 4,5 years and counting that I've been part of it!**

We are a Contract Research Organization (CRO), which means **we provide R&D services to our clients.** We design and develop models which are used for tests required by our clients, and we deliver the resulting data and analyses. While the majority of our activity focuses on R&D services, **we also commercialize some of our proprietary models.** When I joined 4,5 years ago, the company consisted of six team members—one CEO*, one CSO,* three engineers, and myself—covering two sectors of activity. Today, we have grown to a team of 45, organized into five departments (Leadership, Finance, Sales & Business Development, Logistics, and Scientific), and we now operate across five scientific sectors.

In my current role, **I lead one of these five scientific sectors (Dermocosmetics), overseeing its strategic direction, team coordination, and project portfolio.** My team includes a technician (who joined after a professional Bachelors degree* and is now completing an in-service degree to qualify as an engineer) and an apprentice who is completing a professional Bachelors degree*. Depending on the project, an engineer or project manager may also collaborate with us on specific R&D activities. I am in close interaction with various professionals across the organization (CEO, CSO, department heads, project managers, technicians...). **Team spirit is a core value in our company culture!**

**Chief Executive Officer, *Chief Scientific Officer*

**Licence professionnelle de technicien supérieur de laboratoire*



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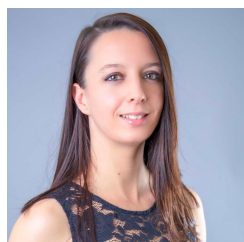


A typical week for me is shared between the following:

- Organisational and operational meetings (I organize the agenda and **plan my team's activities** so we stay within our project deadlines)
- Checking in with the laboratory to supervise the methods and results, **occasionally some lab work** when a colleague is absent or if we are trying something innovative that we don't already know how to do. A big part of my work is **problem-solving**.
- **Taking care of the lab**, since we don't have a full-time lab manager. We share the cleaning, ordering of equipment and consumables, selling of our products, maintenance of equipment etc
- Written **communication and emails**, to clients to maintain a strong relationship, to colleagues to coordinate, or to our suppliers for all our needs
- **Preparing and setting up projects, analyzing and interpreting data, reporting our results, marketing**
- Collaboration with our sales team, **promoting our services and products by making documentation, presenting in scientific symposia or in commercial trade shows** (several times a year in different countries)

4) **How have your responsibilities evolved with experience?**

When I started, I just had to set up, perform, analyse and then present experiments. **Nowadays, I'm responsible for my team's success and the activity of my department** within the company. I am always in interaction with many different colleagues that have various roles. I also ensure that my department is aligned with the company values and the strategic business decisions set by our leadership team.



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While I still maintain a connection to laboratory work, my responsibilities have shifted more toward leadership and management.

5) What do you enjoy the most about your work?

I love that no day resembles another. It's a dynamic environment, I'm never bored, and there are always new challenges. My job is always evolving, especially since the company's acquisition, which has brought renewed energy and momentum. I **particularly enjoy project management**, which means suggesting an experiment that answers a clients needs, budgeting it, setting it up, supervising its completion, analyzing and interpreting the results, writing the project report, presenting it to the client, ensuring the clients satisfaction and maintaining the relationship until the next project.

I like when everything goes smoothly, though that's not always the case. We need to be ready for the unexpected (control experiments that fail, stock issues...) and **find solutions in short timeframes**. I love that **each project is unique** and we use a variety of cell types. I especially enjoy seeing the **progress of my team, my department, and and the models we develop**. Equally important, I enjoy the **positive working atmosphere** we maintain together.

6) How do you see the next steps in your career?

My next professional objective is to become a Chief Scientific Officer (CSO). I plan to take the necessary time to develop and refine the skills required to succeed in this role.



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6) Any final words of advice for those considering an R&D career?

Prepare your transition carefully and take the time to understand the new professional environment - its different roles, how things work, what the language is, the goals, and the mindset. You are effectively giving up an academic career, as the reverse transition is often very difficult. Improve your CV and LinkedIn profile, and **make time to network as much as you can and build good professional relationships.**

Be professional in all interactions; be trustworthy, reliable, transparent, rigorous, and above all proactive and solution-oriented. **Don't be afraid to contribute ideas.**

Hard work and motivation pay off, don't give up!

Additional information

- About the Dermo-Cosmetics science at AXOL Bioscience : [find webinar here](#)
- LinkedIn Guide "LE GUIDE POUR UN PROFIL COMPLET ET PLUS VISIBLE SUR LINKEDIN" 13 page pdf [available online](#)

FORUM LABO LYON

Réseau Biotechno brings you [Cap'Biotech](#) 2026

A special collaboration with [Forum Labo](#) to build your biotech career!


Inspired by our Biotechno Forums, join us for a **day of career advice and practical workshops**, while enjoying the scientific discussions, dynamic atmosphere and **networking opportunities** offered by **Forum Labo**!

- Explore biotech career opportunities, including entrepreneurship
- Decipher the job market, biotech ecosystem and recruiter expectations
- Benefit from personalized advice
- Develop your network and your transversal skills



The poster features the logos of Réseau Biotechno and Forum Labo Lyon at the top. The main title is 'Cap'Biotech' with a compass icon, and the subtitle is 'Transformer son PhD en Carrière'. The date '10 Mars 2026 - Lyon' is prominently displayed. A list of activities includes 'CONFÉRENCE', 'TABLES RONDES', 'ATELIERS', and 'NETWORKING'. The text 'INSCRIPTIONS OUVERTES!' is written in large, bold letters. A QR code is provided for registration, along with the website 'www.forumlabo.fr'. The location is 'Centre de Congrès de Lyon, 50 Quai Charles de Gaulle, 69006 Lyon'. At the bottom, there are social media links for 'www.reseau-biotechno.com' and 'Suivez-nous' on LinkedIn.

 Tuesday 10 March 2026

 **Centre de Congrès de Lyon**, 50 Quai Charles de Gaulle, Lyon

 Free to attend

 [Click the link](#) to SIGN UP

 Event held in French

Réseau Biotechno brings you Cap'Biotech 2026
A special collaboration with Forum Labo – discover the day's program!



PROGRAMME

10 Mars 2026

Accueil & Networking

9H30

9H45

CONFÉRENCE D'OUVERTURE

Biotech en 2026 : Opportunités & Défis pour les docteurs

10H30

10H35

TABLE RONDE

Décoder les attentes des recruteurs : Soft vs. Hard skills

11H20

Pause Networking 

11H50

TABLE RONDE

Horizons de carrière : de la Paillasse au Management, au Marketing et au-Delà

12H35

PAUSE DÉJEUNER & NETWORKING

Manger, Rencontrer, Connecter 

Salle Bellecour 2

ATELIER

Optimiser son Recrutement dans l'industrie : du CV à l'entretien

Salle Bellecour 2

ATELIER

Développer son Réseau Professionnel & son Personal Branding

Salle Bellecour 3

ATELIER

De la recherche à la start-up : Construire son Aventure Entrepreneuriale

+ Fireside chat

ATELIER

Sessions 1 : 1

Correction de **CV**

15H30

16H30

NETWORKING 

NETWORKING

17H00

* Déjeuner non compris

REGISTER HERE

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



What you can **READ** this month ?

- ***Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: Four women whose pioneering contributions to science have been largely overlooked*** by [Lisa M Thomann](#) and [Julie Batut](#) for eLife Magazine

Ethel Browne Harvey and Hilde Pröschooldt Mangold did pioneering research in embryology, Ida Henrietta Hyde helped develop the first microelectrodes for the stimulation of single cells, and Marthe Gautier had a vital role in discovering that Down syndrome is caused by an extra copy of chromosome 21. So why are their names so little known by the scientific community at large? Read their fascinating stories [here!](#)



What you can **ANALYZE** this month ?

- ***Les avancées scientifiques 2025***, by Inserm

Check out cool discoveries and important biomedical advances in 2025, selected by France's National Institute of Health and Medical Research! From retinal implants to malaria kits, discover a wealth of topics [here](#).



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

- ***PhDCast*** by [Assia Asrir](#)

The PhDCast is for **all** scientists and students, not just PhDs! Wrapped in a fun and light-hearted short 10 minute format, Assia tackles serious topics such as discrimination, job insecurity and career transition. This podcast is in French, find it [here!](#)


Feb

 23rd-16th
PhD Job Day
When: February 23rd to March 16th

Where: Online and at LILLIAD Villeneuve d'Ascq

Are you a master student or PhD student? This free event is for you! Don't worry if you're not based in Lille or it's region, you are still welcome to follow the online sessions. Meet with different institutes and companies to discover different careers, and benefit from practical workshops and personalized advice. All information and full programme [here](#).


Feb

 26th
Réseau Biotechno x PhD Talent Afterwork
When: Thursday 26th of February

Where: Paris, Bar Le Piano Vache

Join our monthly PhD Talent and Réseau Biotechno afterwork and meet like-minded people in a friendly atmosphere. For more information and to sign up, click [here](#).


X

March

 9-10th
MedInTechs
When: Monday 9th and Tuesday 10th of March

Where: Paris

Born in 2022, MedInTechs is an annual trade show dedicated to innovation in healthcare, uniting the ecosystem (public institutions, major companies, startups, citizens...) to transform practices and improve healthcare for all. More information [here](#).




March
Forum Labo Lyon

 10-11th
When: Tuesday 10th and Wednesday 11th of March

Where: Lyon

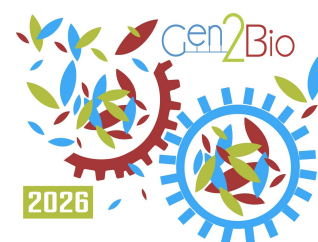
Forum LABO is the major event for professionals in the laboratory sector, dedicated to research, production and control. Discover the latest innovations, share best practices and establish partnerships. Forum Labo is free to attend, register online. Don't forget to sign up for [Cap'Biotech](#), Réseau Biotechno's career advice sessions! More information [here!](#)


March
Gen 2 Bio

 12-13th
When: Thursday 12th and Friday 13th of March

Where: Angers

Organized by Biogenouest, Gen2Bio unites stakeholders in life and environmental sciences (researchers, engineers and doctoral students in life and environmental sciences, companies, technology parks etc). The 2026 program will include conferences on "Innovations for Sustainable Agriculture" and technology workshops led by Biogenouest network core facilities. More information [here!](#)


March
Brain week

 16-22nd
When: Monday 16th to Sunday 22nd of March

Where: several cities all across France (most events in French language)

A week dedicated to all things brain, organized every year by La Société des Neurosciences. Choose from a great variety of free events (most in French) throughout the country, and meet your local scientists and associations. Find the full programme [here!](#)





March

23-26th

Cap Docteurs webinar series by Apec

When: Monday 23rd to Thursday 26th of March

Where: online webinars

Are you a PhD student or graduate preparing your professional future, or a University, engineering school or company? Join this specially crafted event, fully online (in French). Discover how to market your skills, build a network, find opportunities abroad, as well as specific topics such as working with a disability, climate change and use of AI. Full programme and free registration [here!](#)



RÉSEAU BIOTECHNO NEWSLETTER

Answer our 3 minute survey!

Via the link above or via QR code

Coming soon, a new and improved newsletter format!

Share your thoughts by answering **5 quick questions** [HERE](#)

