



TOOL 1: SETTING YOUR NEW JOB GOALS



MAIN OBJECTIVE TOOL 1

This tool is designed to help you prepare for your job search in the best possible way. This tool is part of a series of 5 tools especially designed for international and multicultural talent looking for a job in Belgium.

You'll learn:

- ✓ How to research the Belgian job market
- ✓ What the most wanted profiles and skills are
- ✓ Where to look for mentors
- ✓ How to define a clear job goal
- ✓ How to invest in your strengths



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1. RESEARCH



1.1. The Belgian job market

If you live in a (new) country, getting to know the local job market should be ranked high on your priority list. **Google** (or any other search engine) will probably become your best friend, **LinkedIn** your partner in crime and even **Facebook** could help you with some inside information on what our small country's job market looks like.

But don't fool yourself, because learning about the Belgian job market isn't something you can do by only sitting behind your computer screen or mobile phone. You will need to **reach out**, find **relevant networking events** and **mentors**. Tips and tricks on how to network can be found in "Tool 3: The importance of networking".

1.2. PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Depending on the region you're living in you may subscribe to one of Belgium's **4 public employment services** for free:

VDAB: responsible for anyone living in Flanders, official language: Dutch

Actiris: responsible for anyone living in the Brussels-Capital Region, official language: Dutch and French

Le FOREM: responsible for anyone living in the Walloon Region, official language: French

ADG: responsible for the German Community, official language: German

These public employment services can help you in many ways. They have a database of all different kinds of vacancies, you can **publish your CV** on their website so employers can reach you and you can ask for some personal assistance to help you in your search for a job. Another useful service is the possibility to

follow one of their **courses or trainings**. The overview of the courses will be in the official language the public employment service operates in, but you can always contact one of **their consultants** to ask for more information.



1.3. EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS



When looking for a job in Belgium it is important to know that you have **different options** when it comes to what kind of contract or type of work you will be doing. A common mistake is to apply only for those jobs that offer contracts for an indefinite period or fixed-term contracts. However there are a lot of other options that you should consider.

One of these options is **volunteering**. If you have a chance to do some work while searching for a paid job, don't hesitate to do so. It will help you keep that gap on your CV as small as possible and it can help you with meeting new people and extending your network.

Another option is **a paid internship** to get acquainted with a job like a BIS internship that is supported by VDAB/Actiris. Both organisations can also help you with more information on an IBO internship. This is a different formula for individual profession training.

Another way to kick-start your career could be by using one of the many **interim agencies** you can find in Belgium. They can help you find temporary work as a first start and experience.

The key message here is **to not limit yourself** when looking for a job in Belgium by only searching for a contract for an indefinite period. Know that there are many options out there waiting for you to explore them.

1.4. BOTTLENECK VACANCIES



Knowing the Belgian job market also means knowing which **profiles are most sought after**. That way, if you can't find a job in the field you're currently skilled in, you know what skills to acquire to have a bigger chance of being recruited. Below you can find 10 bottleneck vacancies in Belgium in 2018 as published by VDAB*. Each year VDAB, Actiris, le Forem and ADG make an overview of all bottleneck vacancies.

You have a lot of organisations that can help you with developing skills that fit these **bottleneck vacancies**. VDAB, for example, has a lot of courses that will not only help you develop these skills, but will also give you a chance to network with relevant businesses. Someone who took the opportunity to develop himself in a new skill, is Bilal. He decided that his previous experience as a Turkish Staff Officer **wasn't enough to help him find a job in Belgium**. You can read his full testimonial at the end of this tool.



IT jobs are bottleneck jobs, so this course will broaden my chances of getting employed. Actually, Intec promises an 80% success rate of finding a job, which motivates me a lot.



10 BOTTLENECK VACANCIES 2019:

- ✓ Nurse
- ✓ Technical client support
- ✓ Integration specialist ICT
- ✓ Hospital pharmacist
- ✓ Accountant
- ✓ Technical installations
- ✓ Production manager
- ✓ Secondary education teacher
- ✓ Analyst developer ICT
- ✓ Elektro mechanic engineer

Find the most recent and more bottleneck vacancies on VDAB, Actiris, Forem or ADG

* <https://www.vdab.be/trends/vacatureanalyse.shtml>

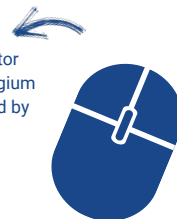
1.5. MENTORING PROGRAMS

FINDING A MENTOR



Could you use some help in discovering the Belgian job market? Then your research should include discovering all the **mentoring programmes** Belgium has to offer. These mentoring programmes will connect you with professionals experienced in the field you want to succeed in. They can guide you, give you advice and help you expand your Belgian business network.

These are all mentor organisations in Belgium ready to be explored by you.



Duo for a job
Team4Job
Mentor2Work
MentorYou
Motivation United
Net2Work
Connect2Work
Talent2Connect

Looking for a mentor is also something you could do by yourself. Here in Belgium **LinkedIn** is the way to go. Look for companies you're interested in, join groups and look for people that really inspire you. You have nothing to lose by sending them a message and asking them if they would be a up for a cup of coffee or answer a few of your questions. More on how to network and LinkedIn can be found in **Tool 3: The importance of networking**.

2. THE JOURNEY OF FINDING A JOB IN BELGIUM

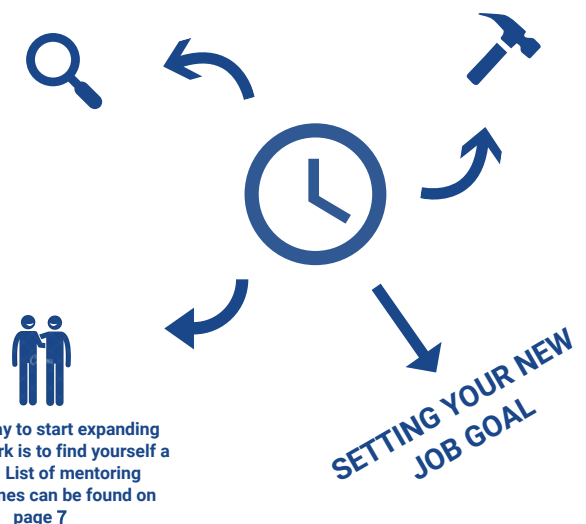


IT TAKES TIME

Finding a new job, redefining yourself and getting to know the local scene can take some time. A normal process for this kind of transformation can easily take up to 1 year. So don't feel demotivated if you haven't found your way after a couple of months. It's logical that setting your new job goals, building your network, perhaps gaining a new skill or two doesn't happen overnight.

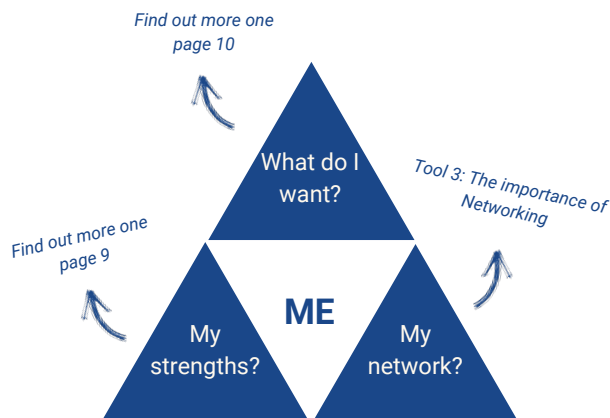
When you just begin your new job search, a lot of your time will go to research where you should not only learn more about the local job market, but also about yourself.

Once you know your strengths and possible weaknesses you can determine whether or not you need to gain some new skills. Maybe you even have to completely reskill yourself in order to find your way into the Belgian job market



2.1. DEFINING YOUR JOB GOAL

We all have different stories to tell. These stories, no matter how long, short, exciting or challenging they are, all have a **huge impact on our career**. It's important to take some time to acknowledge the fact that your life has changed and that your past goals might not be the same as the ones you want to achieve now. For example when moving to a new country you might have some expectations on how it will be. These expectations however will probably need to be checked with reality once you arrived and really start to get to know the country.



Career focus tool™ developed by the Centre for Excellence in Career Management (Vlerick Business School)

The first and most important step in defining a (new) job goal is getting everything in place. This applies to all administration that you'll need to go through, but also to **the psychological process** you'll find yourself in. Give yourself some time to figure out what you want, what your strengths are and who is already part of your network. Then **refocus** and get your story straight. What skills do you need to gain insight into where you want to be and who do you need to know to help you get there? To help you with your search Vlerick Business School created the **Career focus tool™** that, as the name of the tool kind of explains itself, helps you with finding the focus in your career needs.

Figuring out what you want can be a hard thing. But try to search for what drives you the most. Think of all the things you did in the past. Maybe they have something in common or maybe you can think of something that gave you energy or joy.



2.2. INVESTING IN YOUR STRENGTHS



STRENGTHS

Once you defined your strengths, there is one rule that you can always apply: **always invest in your strengths**. Make a list of all your skills and try to find which ones make you the happiest. Recruiters do not only listen to what you are telling them, but also take notice of how you are telling it. Basically, they will try to look for the passion in your eyes. Think of the things you're good at, where you can call yourself a talent.

This is how recruiters will screen: which job will make the best use of your talent apart from the effort you will do



WEAKNESSES

Be willing to pay the price of your weaknesses, if not get them at the Olympic minimum. A typical example of a "weakness" for those fairly new in a country is knowledge of the local language. The most important factor here is to show your willingness and effort by getting it at "an Olympic minimum". If, for example, you want to improve your Dutch, include it in your resume, even if you haven't started your course (and then start one right away).

Performance = talent + effort
Talent = performance - effort

2.3. SKILLS INVENTORY FRAMEWORK*



However these skills can help you get a first job and be your step stone to the next career move.

* This skills inventory framework is a part of the Career focus Tool™ developed by Vlerick Business School.



Use this list to find out which skills would apply for your potential future job, which ones you already possess and which ones you still need to develop.

2.4. SKILLS MOST SEARCHED FOR BY EMPLOYERS

- ▲ Communication skills (oral communication, presentation skills)
- ▲ Interpersonal skills (relating & inspiring, conflict handling, negotiation skills)
- ▲ Teamwork skills (group dynamics, group decision making)
- ▲ Adaptability and learnability (adjusting to change, managing tasks, setting priorities, learning fast)
- ▲ Analytical skills (assessing, gathering information, decision making)
- ▲ Technical proficiency (competence in your field of study)
- ▲ Leadership skills (taking charge, coaching, delegating)
- ▲ Organisational skills (designing, planning, implementing)
- ▲ Multicultural skills (awareness, handling diversity)



You can find interesting online courses to improve these skills in Tool 2: Preparing your CV and cover letter

YOUR TURN

MAKE AN INVENTORY OF YOUR SKILLS

	MY STRENGTHS	MY WEAKNESSES
WHAT I WANT	<i>"My selling proposition"</i>	<i>"My growth domain"</i>
WHAT I DON'T WANT	<i>"My pitfall"</i>	<i>"Others' opportunities"</i>

3. THE STORY OF BILAL

A REDEFINED CAREER JOURNEY

Country of origin: Turkey

Educational background: Master's in Political Science + PhD in Organisational Design

Years of professional experience: 17 years

Last job experience: Policy/Staff Officer

Job search length: 2+ years

Current field of study: IT

Currently: IT course at Intec Brussel

After years of working, Bilal found himself in a difficult situation here in Belgium. Application after application, he experienced disappointment from all the no's. Being active by nature and wanting to keep busy, Bilal began looking in different directions. When he saw the **IT course at Intec Brussel**, he was sure that this was a great way for him to **upskill and take a fresh start**. Joining the multicultural group with 12 classmates, Bilal is learning a lot of valuable things within the IT field. What's even better is that Intec Brussel also offers a 6 month **Dutch course** related to IT!

When asking Bilal what motivates him the most about his studies, he says:

"IT jobs are bottleneck jobs, so this course will broaden my chances of getting employed. Actually, Intec promises an 80% success rate of finding a job, which motivates me a lot."



Apart from his IT studies, Bilal is also doing his PhD in Organisational Design which boosts his confidence.

Challenges and strengths in the search process

Bilal's previous **experience in the public sector** worked against him in finding a job in the private sector. He would also receive feedback on his lack of local language skills. Bilal also tells us that his CV was not in accordance with Belgian standards, which also scared some recruiters off. This is something he now has acquired more knowledge about, and in his future job search, he will make his CV shine and leave the Belgian recruiters in awe.

Why choose vocational training instead of work?

"The job market in Belgium is very challenging and competitive, so I decided to do vocational training instead, which could be an entrance to the Belgian labour market, in my case in the IT-sector."

What's more is that this specific course at Intec Brussel offers Bilal **great working possibilities:**

"The course even has its own HR department. They help you in your job search that you need to initiate 6 months into the course. Specifically, you have to apply for at least 20 jobs within IT. This is a good beginning for obtaining experience with job interviews, preparing a good

CV and motivation letter etc. Of course, the main reason for this is to find a job with the experiences gained. If you happen to find a job before the course ends, you are free to stop the course. If you finish 80% of the course and you find a job, you get a certificate."

Apart from that, it is very important to **stay active and keep your confidence level up**. Not surprisingly, it can be very devastating if the job market keeps letting you down, so if you shift your focus you might regain some of that lost confidence. And as Bilal puts it:

"I have always been professionally active, so I wanted to keep busy!"

If you too find the Belgian job jungle to be tough, surely a few tips and tricks can benefit your journey. Bilal kindly shares his with you. **Bilal's four TIPS and TRICKS for international and multicultural talent out there:**

1

"Pay a lot of attention to your CV and motivation letter, because it is the first thing that HR recruiters see about you before a possible job interview. If your CV and motivation letter do not meet some minimum requirements, the HR recruiter won't even bother looking into them, despite you maybe being the best fit for the job. So, you lose the chance of getting a job interview which is your best shot to advertise yourself to the employer."

2

"Make use of **LinkedIn**. I see LinkedIn as an important tool to attract people to your profile and to meet new people. Other media and/or social media such as Facebook can also be helpful."

3

"Learn **the language**. I am certain that my current IT-related Dutch classes will help me in my future job search!"

4

"Seek **a vocational training or an internship** if you fail to find a job in your own field, and if you want to change and start **a new career path**. There are lots of free quality vocational trainings in Belgium – not only within IT – which provides a good starting point for you to land a new job."

4. THE STORY OF SARA

PERSEVERANCE AND FULL FOCUS

Country of origin: Iraq

Educational background: MSc in Infectious diseases, MSc in Molecular Biology and Bachelor in Veterinary Medicine

Years of professional experience: 18

Last job title: Senior Researcher / Assistant of Head of Health Department

Job search length: 13 months

Current job title: Lab Technician – molecular biology tests

Currently: job within molecular diagnostics

Sara started her new job as Lab Technician. Filling the gaps on her CV and a profound wish to work were some of the drivers behind her decision to join the team. In addition, the job is much in line with her former experience and field of expertise, allowing her not to lose touch with her capabilities:

“After going from unemployed to employed I feel alive again! Even working for free would be better than staying at home and losing touch with my professional field.”

She also adds that she feels “very happy” being part of an organisation, in which she works in a team that is diverse in terms of both age and profile. Exactly this openness towards diversity is something that further convinced Sara that she wanted to join the team.



Challenges and strengths in the search process

Sara has tried multiple times to apply in both Flanders and Wallonia. She was often told that her lack of Dutch or French was the main reason for an employer not to select her. In fact, this comment was also given to her when she initially applied for the organisation where she is currently working. This time, however, her skills, confidence and persuasion made them think twice and see beyond the language issue.

Sara experienced it as a clear strength that she obtained experience working for the European Commission in a high-level lab environment. Moreover, she mentions her

ambition as her biggest strength both in and outside the search process.

Cultural differences on the work floor

When asking Sara about her experiences with cultural differences on the work floor, she initiated her answer saying:

“Human nature is the same everywhere – there is competition in both Iraq and Belgium.”

With that being said, she mentioned freedom as a cultural difference she truly treasures here in Belgium. She always feels that she is treated with respect. Apart from these personal differences that she points out, she also turned our attention to the more technical implications of having kick-started her career in Belgium:

“In Belgium, I find that there are more rules, more computer systems to navigate and in general much more advanced systems than the ones I am used to from Iraq.”

Diversity as an asset

As previously mentioned, Sara enjoys working in a very diverse team in terms of colour, age and profile. It is safe to say that

diversity is viewed as an asset by her. When asking her what a diverse team brings to the table that a homogeneous team does not, she says:

“Every person has his or her own way of thinking especially coming from different places, and it is very valuable that we can learn new perspectives from each other.”

Finally, Sara shares three tips and tricks with us for getting a job in Belgium:

1

“Learn the language(s)! This was the main feedback why I was not selected. Language is very important here.”

2

“Customise your CV for every job you apply for. This shows interest in the specific company.”

3

“Make sure to adapt your CV to the Belgian market.”



5. TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Getting to know the local job market can not only be done by searching for information online, you also have to reach out, attend interesting events and find the right people to contact.
- ✓ When researching the local job market always take a look at the bottleneck vacancies. When you feel that the skills you have now, might not be enough to find you a job, then reskill into a field that will increase your chances of finding employment.
- ✓ When expanding your network make use of the many mentoring programmes Belgium has to offer. They will not only help you expand your network, but also give you great insider tips on the job market and your industry (find more on the importance of networking in Tool 3).
- ✓ Setting your new job goal also means getting to know yourself. Find out what your current strengths and weaknesses are and what gives you energy.
- ✓ Setting your (new) job goals, going through different steps and putting in place a strategy takes time. It's a process you need to go through so you can start applying with confidence and focus.

6. INSPIRED BY

The content in this toolkit is created for the **Newcomer Induction Management Acceleration Programme** (NiMAP), sponsored by **ESF** and **the Flemish Government**. Goal of the project is to fasten the job search and induction process on the work floor of newcomers entering the Belgian job market by supporting both talent and employers.

Belgian partners in this project are **Vlerick Business School** - a top-tier international business school - and **Talentree** - a new venture building international and entrepreneurial teams. This project is inspired by the Rapid Acceleration Programme from our transnational partner, Stockholm School of Economics, whom we are deeply grateful for a great partnership!

The project team:

- Prof Dr Dirk Buyens - Professor of Human Resources and Partner at Vlerick Business School
- Dr Emmy Defever - Senior Researcher Area People and Organisation at Vlerick Business School
- Merel Dutry - Intern People and Organisation at Vlerick Business School
- Hannelore Waterschoot - Managing Partner at Talentree
- Nancy Leys - Project Manager at Talentree
- Josefine Duvander - Intern Digital Communication at Talentree
- Myrthe Waterschoot - Marketing Manager at Talentree

We would like to thank:

- All international talents who were in the process of finding a job or already found one for sharing their challenges, learnings, tips and dreams. We wish them a great future career journey!
- All the companies and organisations sharing the employer's perspective via focus groups, interviews and coaching on the work floor
- All other organisations like the public employment services, mentoring and other great local and international projects, network organisations... for sharing their expertise
- All experts who shared their experiences and knowledge through blog posts and social media



OVERVIEW FIVE TOOLS:



Tool 1: Setting your new job goals

Tool 1 will help you research the Belgian job market, find more information about bottleneck vacancies and mentoring programmes. You'll discover how you can define your new job goal. It ends with a framework to help you define your strengths and weaknesses and two testimonials about reskilling and focusing on your passion.



Tool 2: Preparing your CV and cover letter

Tool 2 will help you create a good CV, cover letter and a LinkedIn profile. It contains information on life long learning and language training with names of possible organisations and courses. It ends with concrete examples of resumes and cover letters.



Tool 3: The importance of networking

Tool 3 will tell you why and how to network. You'll learn how to sell yourself, use LinkedIn as a network tool and how to follow up on any networking you did. It contains a testimonial of a newcomer who found a job in Belgium thanks to his network. It ends with a checklist you can use when preparing for a network meeting.



Tool 4: From first call to getting hired

Tool 4 will guide you through the application process. You'll learn about telephone screenings, preparation for any job interview, assessment centres and feedback. It will give you more insight on how to answer a question related to salary expectations and the STAR method (a method frequently used by recruiters). It ends with a testimonial from a newcomer who found a job by being confident and it contains cards that will help you practice difficult interview questions.



Tool 5: Kick-off in the company

Tool 5 will help you when you've found a job. It contains information on talent development, career moves, internal and external network, evaluation talks, work-life balance and a testimonial of a newcomer who found a job and made her personal life fit with her work life. In the end you'll find a checklist that will help you in your first three months on the job.



TOOL 2: PREPARING YOUR CV AND COVER LETTER



MAIN OBJECTIVE TOOL 2

This tool is designed to help you with the practical preparation in your job search. It is part of a series of 5 tools especially designed for international and multicultural talent looking for a job in Belgium.

You'll learn:

- ✓ How to make your CV and motivation letter Belgium proof
- ✓ How to let your LinkedIn profile shine
- ✓ The importance of lifelong learning
- ✓ What language course to take and why



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1. THE RESUME

OR CV

Along with a great cover letter, your CV is **your ticket to a job interview**. So take your time to make yours stand out.

You should definitely start with a clear structure. You don't want to waste the recruiter's time. So make your CV as easy to read as possible.

CLEAN, CLEAR & TAILORED

The main purpose of your CV is to give an **overview of your professional achievements**. Surely you should also mention other qualifications or certifications that can be of added value to the job. But always keep the main goal of why you are sending your CV in mind.

Always **tailor** your CV to a specific job vacancy. Some of your professional achievements might be more relevant than others. You can highlight certain tasks you did that show a wanted skill.



A STANDARD BELGIAN CV CONSISTS OF:

- ▲ 1-2 pages (max.)
- ▲ Content: personal data, work experience, education, additional skills (and sometimes personality traits)
- ▲ Special emphasis on professional work experience with function, time period and tasks and achievements
- ▲ Knowledge of English, French or Dutch. If you're not a native speaker, rate your Dutch/French skills via following categories: basic, able to talk with colleagues, able to talk with customers or fluent

GUIDELINES FOR YOUR CV

Putting your date of birth on your resume can, in some cases, feel like you're giving yourself a disadvantage. In Belgium 95% of the people will put their date of birth on their resume, so if you don't add it, it would be a bit strange. If you're, for example, applying for a junior position and you're a bit older than most juniors, clearly state in your motivation letter why you're the perfect candidate despite your seniority.



- ▲ Start with your **contact information** (name, address, date of birth, contact details such as email, phone number and social media profiles like LinkedIn). Also indicate the status of your Belgian work permit (if applicable).
- ▲ Proceed with listing your **work experience** with your **most recent experience first**. State your position and employer as well as your responsibilities and start/leave dates. Make sure to share achievements too (preferably achievements that are relevant for the job you're applying for).
- ▲ List your **education** (also beginning with the most recent diploma) including degree, location, start/finish dates, study focus and thesis topic if relevant to your further career.
- ▲ Definitely add **all your language skills** (very important in Belgium). If you have **no or little knowledge of Dutch/French**, but are planning to **take courses** for sure mention it.
- ▲ Name **IT skills and additional work-related courses** you may have completed.
- ▲ Also add **a personal touch**: not only leisure time activities, but volunteer work, etc.
- ▲ Always keep **the structure** of your CV in mind, use clear headings and subheadings.
- ▲ Most companies will screen you based on your competencies and skills. But in some cases you will need to **validate your degree** if it was obtained outside of Belgium. The organisation that can help you with validating your degree is different depending on your stay in the Flemish, French or German speaking part. More information can be found [here](#).



GAPS

Try to avoid **gaps** in your CV. If you served in the military after school, do not just leave it out. As military service is no longer obligatory in Belgium, you should mention your service or it might raise questions. The same accounts for work and travel, au-pair stays or voluntary services abroad. All those **experiences** can also be considered as assets, especially if you are still young and do not have much job experience. If you're new in a country or are trying to figure out what your new job goal should be, you probably got a gap between your previous working experience and the one you're looking for now. Don't leave this out of your CV. Explain the gap. You could write: move to Belgium, following language courses, any other course you are taking....

LAYOUT

The **layout of a CV** becomes increasingly important. You can make a fairly good CV in MS Word or similar text processing programmes, but it is best to catch the attention of a potential employer with a stunning layout. It's the first impression the employer gets of you, and you want it to be good. In times of the internet, you no longer need to be a design professional to make an impressive CV.

On the following websites you can sign up for free and create a modern, appealing CV and pimp your motivation letters.



piktochart.com
resume.io
easel.ly
canva.com

2. THE COVER LETTER

OR MOTIVATION LETTER



Motivation letters are a very important part of the written job application and they allow you to **illustrate your unique qualities**. In a motivation letter, you can elaborate on your personal strengths and emphasise your value to the company. The motivation letter often determines if you get invited to an interview or not. This short but personal letter should convince the company that you are both motivated and qualified, to help them see the match. Some Belgian recruiters will not even look at your application if a motivation letter is missing.

Make sure that you write a separate motivation letter for every job application! As the jobs you apply for may differ in tasks or requirements, always adapt the letter to the job.

Do not make your motivation letter longer than 250 words - **one page is more than enough**. You either react to a job vacancy or you apply spontaneously, but in either case, make sure to refer to the correct company and job.

Your letter should have a good **balance** between **professional relevance and personality**, and you should not be too modest, neither too self-assured. To structure your motivation letter, you preferably choose a chronological order. To really convince the recruiter of your match with their vacancy, try to use the same description of certain skills, points or demands that were made in the job offer. There are no specific rules about layout and style of your motivation letter in Belgium. See it as a complementary document to your CV, where you can distinguish your profile from other candidates for this job.

The letter is a chance to show them a **glimpse of your personality and your creativity**, so feel free to also take an unconventional approach - but of course this depends on the function you're applying for (e.g. marketing people are generally expected to be more creative than IT consultants). When you're finished writing your cover letter, make sure to proofread it and have others check it as well.

In the last section of this tool you will find a few examples of possible motivation letters. **But don't forget: always rewrite your motivation letter with every new application.**

GUIDELINES WHEN WRITING YOUR MOTIVATION LETTER

- ✓ Mention where and how you found the job offer
- ✓ Emphasise qualities required for the job to show that you examined the job offer
- ✓ With spontaneous applications, indicate that you know the company (include references to their values and company culture: check their website). Ideally you can make a reference to someone you've already talked to or know in the company [More info in Tool 3: The importance of networking]
- ✓ Give concrete examples of personality traits: if you state that you are a team player, mention a real-life situation where you successfully used your qualities as a team player
- ✓ Tell them that you look forward to hearing from them and also mention that you would be glad to get the opportunity to further explain your CV or to present yourself in a job interview -> make them curious and persuade them to answer

3. LINKEDIN

According to a Belgian newspaper 3 million Belgians have a LinkedIn profile. So not being active on this easy to use social business network is a missed opportunity. Here are some tips and tricks you can keep in mind to make your profile shine. Want to know how to expand your network using LinkedIn? Then take a look at tool 3: The importance of Networking.

1

Your headline: this headline is the first thing that is visible underneath your profile picture. A lot of people put their job title here but it's already in your work history – so why not go for something a bit more creative? Use it as a pitch that is short and interesting. Make employers want to check you out.



Don't add phrases like "looking for a job", "actively seeking.." in your headline. It might seem like a good idea, because you're letting recruiters and your network know you're looking for a job, but such statements will not really help you. As stated by **Forbes**: you will make yourself part of a mass looking for a job and you might across as a bit desperate. If you want recruiters to find you, you have to know that your headline has the most weight in the algorithm LinkedIn uses to filter on profiles. That means that the words you put in your headline will be the words through which others find you.

Profile picture: this is your first contact on LinkedIn. Adding a picture will help with memory recall and it can show a more personal side of yourself. Make sure to upload a professional picture in a good quality. The ideal picture would be one that is cropped from above your head to just below the shoulders. Also, make it visible to non-contacts. If your photo isn't visible, you will easily be overlooked.

2



David Akam

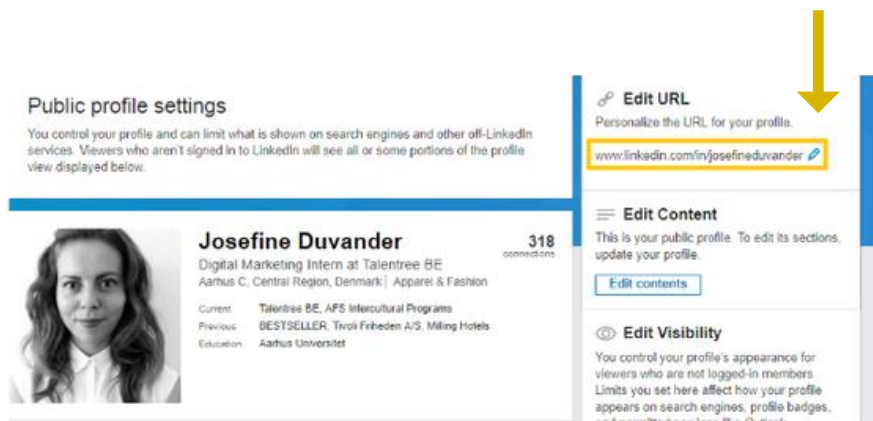
3

Location: recruiters are known to narrow down their search by location. Use this to your advantage by adding your location to your profile.



Change your profile URL: change the URL of your profile to something short and nice. By doing this, you make it much easier for people (and search engines) to find your profile. Figuring out if your name is an available solution can be a quick fix.

4



5

Use the “Open Candidates” function: in this way, you can privately signal to recruiters that you are up for a new challenge without your current employer finding out. You can segment the function based on location, company size, job title etc.



TIP: Take advantage and ask your friends to rate them already for you.



6

Skills: add at least 5 relevant skills to your LinkedIn. People with 5 skills or more get more messages from recruiters than those without. Other people can rate your skills if you list them. Don't forget that these skills need to be professional. And make sure not to forget that quality trumps quantity!



7

Recommend – and get recommended: recommendations boost the credibility of your profile and competences. Be generous and recommend the people in your professional network you enjoyed working with. Usually, what goes around comes around. Always remember the mantra though – quality over quantity!

Recommendations Ask to be recommended

Received (18) **Given (11)**

Louis Allport
Marketing and Technology Consultant Helping Small Businesses to Grow & Thrive
June 20, 2017, Louis was a client of Mandy's

Mandy has a fantastic understanding of how to use LinkedIn effectively to rapidly and consistently generate high-value leads that turn into clients.

I purchased some consulting time with Mandy, and that time was hugely valuable for mapping out an approach that grows your network, credibility, and lead-flow using LinkedIn in an organic way. And importantly, in a way that gives value to the community

8

Impress with your experience: because what is the value of a job title if you cannot explain what it entails? Make sure to add bullet points to your experiences so the recruiters understand your expertise better. You should list all relevant work experience, whether it is volunteering, a student job, a senior position, an apprenticeship or something completely different. Do not write full sentences and make sure to quantify whenever possible (% , € , budget...).

Intern Marketing Executive Education
Vlerick Business School
Sep 2015 – Nov 2015 – 3 mos
Gent en omgeving, België

During my internship at Vlerick Business school I had various tasks as an intern in their Marketing department for executive education:

- Benchmarking different kind of programmes
- Helping out with marketing of programmes, events, newsletters...
- Coordinating Omnichannel in retail programme
- Helping out at events

...
[See less](#)

9

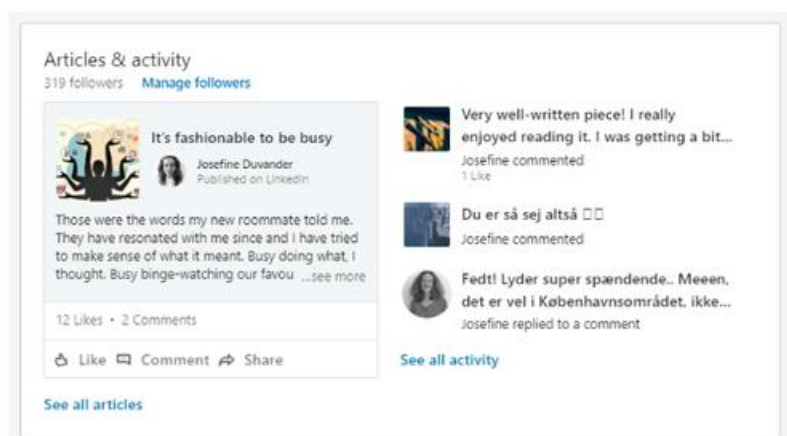
Summary: this part explains your unique talents and abilities. Google indexes LinkedIn quite high. If you Google yourself, your LinkedIn profile probably ends up in the top results. You can add some keywords to your summary to increase your opportunities. This means that you can add some words you think are relevant and for which you want to be found. For example: If you're an accountant, make sure you include some finance related words in your summary.



TIP: It's a good idea to Google yourself and make sure that what shows is professional

Be active: join groups, like posts, comment on videos – whatever you find relevant and interesting. The more you engage on LinkedIn in a professional way (ideally linked to your broader job goals), the better. And your activities will appear on top of your page and give the recruiter a nice idea about your personality and interests.

10



4. LIFELONG LEARNING

Online platforms

Whether you're looking for a job or currently found one you like, you should never stop learning and developing yourself. As seen in "Toolkit 1: How to set your new job goals", reskilling yourself could be the best next step for you. It's not even necessary to learn something completely new, investing in your strengths is always a wise thing to do. When you're new in a country, the local language is often a new skill to acquire. In the next few pages we made a list for you with online and offline courses or other options where you can combine learning a language with another skill. This list is only a selection of everything that's out there, you can use this as a basis for your search.

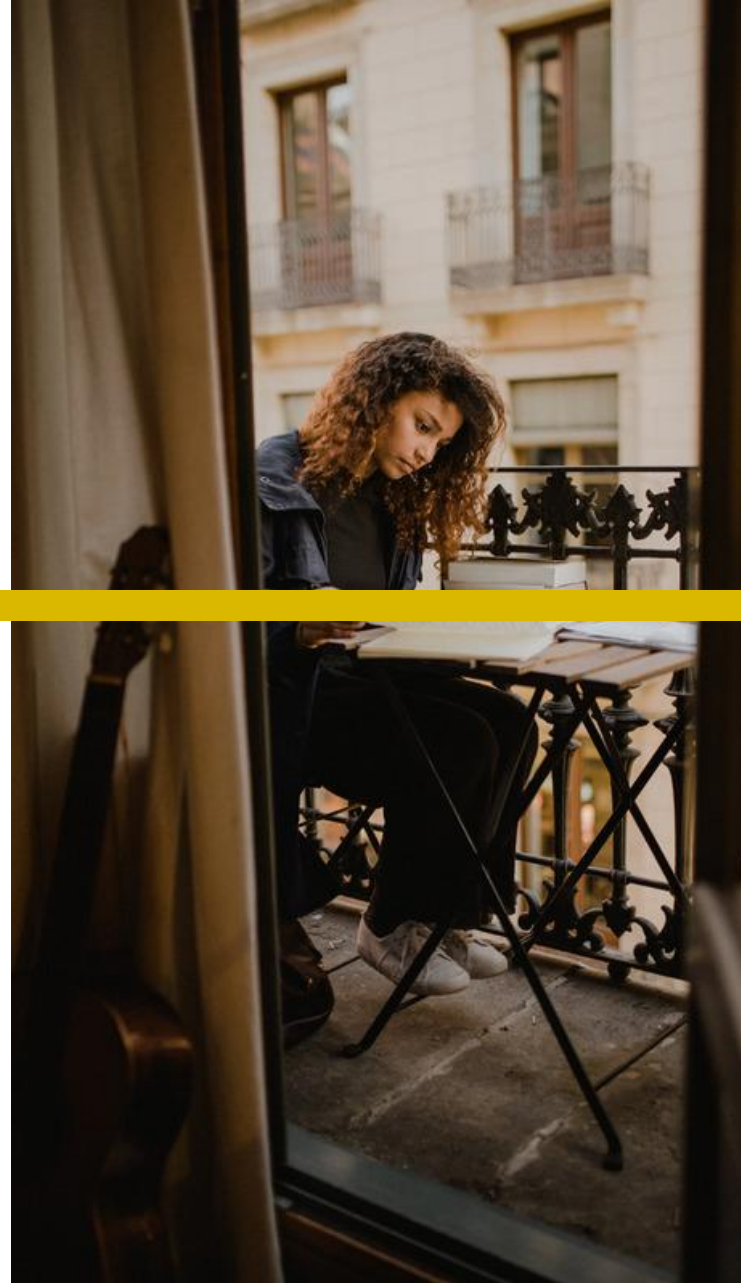
General online platforms

Coursera and **edX** are two really big online learning platforms that present a variety of courses from universities and other organisations.

Udemy offers some free courses, most cost around 11 euros. The principle is based on peer to peer learning, but you will find teaching stars on the platform.

Platforms for technical skills

Code academy offers a lot of free and useful courses for the most popular programming



languages. Not all courses are free, but the quality is good.

If you're looking for a more top-notch site for tech learning **Plural sight** is your way to go. They offer one or two free courses.

Udacity offers free courses, but also some that could cost you 1,000 euros. The free courses are quite useful as refreshers for topics like Algorithms, Math, etc. The paid courses are world-renowned.

Packtpub is the strange one in this list since it doesn't offer any courses, but offers some free books about tech topics. Perfect for polishing your app building skills and Python programming.

5. LANGUAGE TRAINING

Belgium has 3 official languages: Dutch, French and German. Depending on where you live and your target sector you'll soon notice that a lot of the vacancies require some knowledge of one of these three languages. Here are some examples of organisations and schools that offer language training:

1. Centrum voor Volwassenenonderwijs: CVO

These centres for adult education can be found in most major cities in Flanders as well as in the Brussels area. Courses are available during the day and in the evening. The courses are given in group depending on your level of Dutch/French.

2. University courses: eg UTC, Linguapolis

If you're looking for more high-paced classes, you should check out the courses at almost all universities in Belgium. You'll learn languages in group with part of the course consisting of independent study. We highly recommend this one for those who want to learn on a high level, perfect for future business life.

3. Centrum voor Basiseducatie: CBE

If you're not familiar with latin characters or you like to take your time, you can take a look at the classes this centre has to offer. The courses take place in small groups and are tailored to your learning speed. Classes take place during day time or evenings.

4. VDAB(Flanders), Actiris(Brussels)and Forem(Wallonia)

If you're looking for a combination of learning Dutch/French and another skill, the public employment services offer good combined courses. If you're just a beginner and don't know any Dutch/French, you'll first have to follow a beginner's course somewhere else.

5. Berlitz language school

The Berlitz language schools can be found in Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, Liège and Waterloo. You can follow a wide variety of courses individually or in group, no matter what your level of Dutch/French/German is. They also offer online courses.

6. Business Language and Communication Centre

If you want to take your Business Dutch/French/German to the next level you could contact the BLCC. They offer a wide range of language courses focused on the business world.

7. The Alliance française Bruxelles-Europe

This organisation only offers French courses and is based in Brussels. They are specialised in French for European and International Relations and will be able to teach you the business French you need.

8. Wallangue

Wallangue is an initiative of Wallonia where you can learn languages online. It's free to use for all residents of Wallonia. They offer online courses but also organise events to practice your new language in real life. The website is in French only, so you will need a basic knowledge of it to understand how to navigate the site (or you can use Google Translate or any other online translation service).

9. Duolingo

Duolingo is an online language-learning platform. It's free, has an app and supports you to learn a language by using it 5 minutes a day.



Practice your Dutch/French/German with others:

There are a lot of different kinds of initiatives that are focused on bringing people together to practice a language. There is a website called "Nederlands oefenen" where you can find initiatives in your neighbourhood. If you want to practice your French with others you could attend the meetings of The Brussels French Language Meetup Group.

Sometimes it can come in handy to know which language level you reached. If you're interested to find out, contact your public employment service. They have free online tests that can help you out.

Attending language courses is also a great way of **expanding your network**. It's an easy and informal way to meet new people. There are stories of people who found their job thanks to someone they met at a language course.

Don't underestimate the power of good knowledge of Business English. Almost all of the above mentioned organisations offer English courses as well. So if your English could use some extra attention, don't be afraid to take the step.

6. CV EXAMPLES

Professional picture

Clear overview of programmes he can work with

MARCELINE ANDERSON
SOFTWARE ENGINEER

PERSONAL PROFILE
A software engineer with hands-on experience in all levels of testing, including performance, functional, integration, system, and user acceptance.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Hands-on SQL experience
- Java, Ruby, PHP and Python experience
- Microsoft ASP.NET MVC, Web API experience
- Working knowledge of C#, C++ and C#

WORK EXPERIENCE

SOFTWARE ENGINEER
Healthcare Solutions | 2015 - Present

- Directs software design and development
- Evaluates interface between hardware and software
- Advises customers regarding maintenance of software system

JUNIOR ENGINEER
RealPro Software Inc. | 2014 - 2015

- Stored, retrieved, and manipulated data
- Modified existing software to correct errors and optimize efficiency
- Prepared detailed reports

PERSONAL INFO

Mobile: +32-465-7900
Email: marceline.anderson@gmail.com
Portfolio: www.reallygreatside.com
Day of Birth: 01-05-1988
Address: 112 Anywhere Street, Any City, Belgium

EDUCATION HISTORY

UNIVERSITY OF EL DORADO
Bachelor of Software Engineering, 2014

- President, Computer and Technology Organization
- Vice President, Programming Club
- Member: Video Game Society
- Member: Student IT Helpdesk

BEECHTOWN ACADEMY
Graduated Class of 2010
Honor Roll

- President and Founder, Computer Club
- Student Council President
- Debate Team Vice President
- Member of the Math Team
- Member of the Chess Team

LANGUAGE SKILLS

Spanish: mother tongue
English: Professional level
Dutch: able to talk with colleagues, currently taking classes at UCT

OTHER SKILLS

- The ability to analyze complex technical information
- Can analyze, design and implement database structures
- Detail oriented
- Excellent problem solver

Level of Dutch explained in a very practical way + mentioned he is following a course

Head title that immediately shows her expertise

Skills organised by usage

KRIZZA WATSONS
DIGITAL MARKETING

ABOUT

Extremely motivated to constantly develop my skills and grow professionally. I am confident in my ability to come up with interesting ways in storytelling.

CONTACT + INFO

Phone: +32 645 8498
Address: Street, City, Belgium
Date of birth:
Email: krizza.watson@gmail.com
LinkedIn:

SKILLS

SOCIAL MEDIA
Facebook business manager, LinkedIn Campaign Manager, Instagram

MARKETING AUTOMATION
HubSpot, Mailchimp, Zapier, Google Tag Manager

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH, 2019
Bachelor of Arts, Major in Photography

NEWTOWN UNIVERSITY, 2017
Bachelor of Arts, Major in Graphic Design

WORK EXPERIENCE

HEAD OF MARKETING | HEI STUDIO BE
2018 - PRESENT

- Managing a team of 7 marketers
- Increased overall conversion rate from 2% to 4%
- Implemented Marketing automation throughout the company

DIGITAL MARKETER | SHUTTERFEED UK
2022 - 2023

- Responsible for all social media campaigns
- SEA for Head office
- Content creator

INTERM | LA LA LAND STUDIO UK
2021 - 2022

- Worked on various local commercials
- Assisted in product shoots for the company
- Helped in the conceptualization of a viral internet advertisements

LANGUAGES

ENGLISH
Mother Tongue

DUTCH
Good enough to talk with colleagues + currently taking language classes at UCT

Clear overview of previous work experience + example of accomplishments

7. COVER LETTER EXAMPLES

Witteveen+Bos
Posthoflei 41
9990 Maldegem

Dear Mr Deruyck

8 April 2017

I am writing in response to your ad for the position as Environmental Engineer. As an experienced and motivated Master of Environmental Engineering, I would like to apply as a candidate for this position.

In 2011 I graduated as a Master of Environmental Engineering from Baghdad University. After pursuing my master studies, I worked as a advisor at Al-Yamama Engineering for two years applying my skills to a range of projects including sustainable technology assessments and management of multi-disciplinary project teams.

Subsequently I worked project engineer at Deme in Oman. I evaluated the carbon impact of proposed hydropower in Khasab, where i also conducted a cost analysis and carbon inventory for the design of a deep heat geothermal energy facility.

For another year I worked at Alpha Ventus, a sustainable energy project in the North Sea. I was responsible for delivering a sustainable technology assessment to complement a campus' low-carbon design strategy.

Due to my professional and educational experience, I think I am well suited to pursue a career in sustainability consulting. And I am very motivated to apply my experience while working at Witteveen+Bos, one of Belgian's finest environmental engineering companies.

If you have any further questions regarding my application please feel free to contact me via e-mail or the telephone. I am looking forward from hearing from you and for your call to discuss my application in great detail.

Thank you very much in advance for considering my application.

Yours sincerely

Ahmed Al-Fayari

Lange Boomstraat 9
9000 Gent
0032 4962 7302
al-fayari@gmail.com

Dreamworld Events
Zandbergstraat 21
2300 Turnhout

Dear Sir or Madam,

21 March 2017

I am writing in reference to the advertised position of Marketing Assistant, as published on your website. As a highly motivated marketing graduate with strong interpersonal skills, I think I suit the advertised profile, and therefore I would like to submit my application.

My interpersonal skills I have developed during my college, since I was involved in a student organization, where I organized activities and events. My position as event coordinator in the organization allowed me to work more closely with colleagues and various stakeholders inside and outside university.

Moreover, I developped time management skills and good organizational skills, which I would like to further improve within a professional business environment.

Even though I do not have professional work experience yet, I believe my personal attributes make me suitable for the position of Marketing Assistant. Since have been developing my customer service skills for the benefit of event management, I would like apply my competences by working at Dreamworld Events.

As requested I am enclosing my resume, where you can find details information on my education and skills. References are available on request, or you can contact the reference persons listed below on your own. If you need additional information or documents, I would gladly give you further explanation in an interview.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Aswasi

Montignystraat 31
2018 Antwerpen
0032 4187 0026
saswasi@gmail.com

8. TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Keep your resume as relevant as possible. If not all of your experiences fit on 1, max 2 pages, then only use the ones most relevant for the job you're applying for.
- ✓ Your motivation letter needs to be tailored to each application.
- ✓ Gaps in your resume should be explained.
- ✓ If your Dutch/French/German is non-existent or if you're in the process of learning, do not forget to write on your CV that you're willing to (further) work on it (or mention a course you're going to take). Of course only do this if it's true!
- ✓ Be creative when it comes to your LinkedIn profile: don't just write your current job title as headline but use this space to really stand out.
- ✓ Learning a new language for business purposes is most recommended with a course at university level. It will take you a bit more time to learn, but in the end it will pay off with a new language you can really use on business level. Don't forget to polish your business English too if necessary.



9. INSPIRED BY

The content in this toolkit is created for the **Newcomer Induction Management Acceleration Programme (NiMAP)**, sponsored by **ESF** and **the Flemish Government**. Goal of the project is to fasten the job search and induction process on the work floor of newcomers entering the Belgian job market by supporting both talent and employers.

Belgian partners in this project are **Vlerick Business School** - a top-tier international business school - and **Talentree** - a new venture building international and entrepreneurial teams. This project is inspired by the Rapid Acceleration Programme from our transnational partner, Stockholm School of Economics, whom we are deeply grateful for a great partnership!

The project team:

- Prof Dr Dirk Buyens - Professor of Human Resources and Partner at Vlerick Business School
- Dr Emmy Defever - Senior Researcher Area People and Organisation at Vlerick Business School
- Merel Dutry - Intern Area People and Organisation at Vlerick Business School
- Hannelore Waterschoot - Managing Partner at Talentree
- Nancy Leys - Project Manager at Talentree
- Josefine Duvander - Intern Digital Communication at Talentree
- Myrthe Waterschoot - Marketing Manager at Talentree

We would like to thank:

- All international talents who were in the process of finding a job or already found one for sharing their challenges, learnings, tips and dreams. We wish them a great future career journey!
- All the companies and organisations for sharing the employer's perspective via focus groups, interviews and coaching on the work floor
- All other organisations like the public employment services, mentoring and other great local and international projects, network organisations,... for sharing their expertise
- All experts who shared their experiences and knowledge through blog posts and social media



OVERVIEW FIVE TOOLS:



Tool 1: Setting your new job goals

Tool 1 will help you research the Belgian job market, find more information about bottleneck vacancies and mentoring programmes. You'll discover how you can define your new job goal. It ends with a framework to help you define your strengths and weaknesses and two testimonials about reskilling and focusing on your passion.



Tool 2: Preparing your CV and cover letter

Tool 2 will help you create a good CV, cover letter and a LinkedIn profile. It contains information on life long learning and language training with names of possible organisations and courses. It ends with concrete examples of resumes and cover letters.



Tool 3: The importance of networking

Tool 3 will tell you why and how to network. You'll learn how to sell yourself, use LinkedIn as a network tool and how to follow up on any networking you did. It contains a testimonial of a newcomer who found a job in Belgium thanks to his network. It contains a checklist you can use when preparing for a network meeting.



Tool 4: From first call to getting hired

Tool 4 will guide you through the application process. You'll learn about telephone screenings, preparation for any job interview, assessment centres and feedback. It will give you more insight on how to answer a question related to salary expectations and the STAR method (a method frequently used by recruiters). It ends with a testimonial from a newcomer who found a job by being confident and it contains cards that will help you practice difficult interview questions.



Tool 5: Kick-off in the company

Tool 5 will help you when you've found a job. It contains information on talent development, career moves, internal and external networks, evaluation talks, work-life balance and a testimonial of a newcomer who found a job and made her personal life fit with her work life. In the end you'll find a checklist that will help you in your first three months on the job.



TOOL 3: THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING



MAIN OBJECTIVE TOOL 3

This tool is designed to help you expand your network and improve your networking skills. This tool is part of a series of 5 tools especially designed for international and multicultural talent looking for a job in Belgium.

You'll learn:

- ✓ The do's and don'ts in networking in Belgium
- ✓ How to follow up on your networking efforts
- ✓ How to use LinkedIn to expand your network
- ✓ How to use a network preparation tool



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1. WHY NETWORK?



Reaching out

Reaching out might be one of **the most important things** to do when trying to find a job in Belgium. Attending job fairs, networking events, interesting lectures... could bring you in contact with that one person **who could possibly change your life**.

Reaching out will not only **broaden your network**, but will also help you gain some **extra insights in the Belgian job market**: what kind of companies are out there and which ones do you like.

We know that getting out there and start networking is easier said than done, but don't worry. This tool will help you gain some extra networking skills, so **you know where and how to start**.

30-70%

of companies' vacancies
are not advertised
publicly



That means you need to know the right people to even hear about these interesting opportunities. Reaching out can make you the lucky one who does know about the new vacancy.

2. WHO TO NETWORK WITH?

2.1. GETTING A 1-1 MEETING



The main goal of your networking activities shouldn't be to get a job, but **to get a 1-1 meeting**, or to get to **the next phase in your job search process**. You can approach people from a certain company you like or even introduce yourself to someone you might admire or follow on social media. No matter who you network with, just keep one question in mind:

What do you want to get out of it?

Maybe you just want to gain some feedback, advice or a deeper understanding of the sector this person works in or maybe you want to have a 1-1 meeting with them or maybe you just want them to introduce you to some people that could help you. **Having a goal in mind** when networking will help you react in a more efficient way. Having a goal really helps to make the best of your time spent at an event, meeting, interesting conference...

2.2. FOCUS AND MOTIVATION



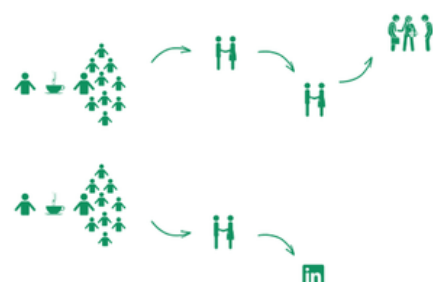
WHO TO TALK WITH

Be strategic about who you want to meet and why. You can do this by identifying people who may be able to support your job search or career advancement by:

- ✓ Providing advice, information & feedback
- ✓ Introducing you (via a 3-way CC email is the best method) to a person who may have an opportunity for you, be interested in your professional profile or may be able to introduce you to someone else who can help
- ✓ Providing you with a job opportunity straight away

IT TAKES TIME

As previously stated all your networking efforts should be focused on getting that 1-1 meeting which eventually may or may not lead to a job. Don't get demotivated by meetings that lead to nothing in particular. It is still nice to have spoken to someone and do not forget to add them to your LinkedIn network.



3. TIPS WHEN PREPARING FOR A NETWORK EVENT

Know the crowd

A lot of network events have a website or event page where you can find all the companies that will be present. Do some research and make a list of the ones you really want to get to know better. Or do some research on the people that will be there.

Research thoroughly and impress recruiters/ contacts with your knowledge of their company. Do not forget to take a look at their job openings.

Approach employers, not jobs

Even if companies you like do not have any vacancies that fit your profile, you can really benefit from introducing yourself to them. A little bit of networking never hurt nobody and they can often direct you to other people in the same sector. Or what if a vacancy does pop up in the future, imagine the benefit you will have if you already met the recruiter or head of department.

Business cards

If the event you're going to isn't a job fair, it might feel a bit strange to start handing out your CV. So just make your own business card! One of the free and easy to use tools that will help people remember you is Canva. They have templates available so even if you're not that creative, they've got you covered.



NETWORK MEETING PREPARATION TOOL

Place and date meeting

Who (name, function,
company)

What is the value of
meeting this person?

For example: director in company of interest

Connecting on LinkedIn,
Google search (projects
the person is working on,
news articles...)

Research everything you can about the
person you're going to meet, the company
he/she works at, the projects he/she is
doing...

Goals of the meeting

1. Offer me a job directly
2. Offer information/advice/feedback about
my job search strategy, goals and
professional profile
3. Offer to make an introduction to one of
their networking contacts regarding your job
search

Prepare intelligent
questions

What is your current situation, goal and plan?
Is there anything I can do to help you reach
your goals?
Do you have an opportunity/advice/other
contact?
How did you choose your career path?
What do you like about the company?

Prepare end of meeting

End the meeting with concrete next steps.
What is going to happen? Another meeting?
An email...? And thank them for their help
and time



TIP: Focus on your network contact, be curious and show
them that you're really interested in what they have to say: they
will open up and be more inclined to help



NETWORK MEETING PREPARATION TOOL

Place and date meeting

Who (name, function,
company)

What is the value of
meeting this person?

Connecting on LinkedIn,
Google search (projects
the person is working on,
news articles...)

Goals of the meeting

Prepare intelligent
questions

Prepare end of meeting

4. PREPARING YOURSELF

LEARN TO SELL YOURSELF



When attending an event you should always be ready to sell yourself, ready to pitch. Pitching is derived from the term "Elevator pitch", meaning you should be able to sell anything in a short elevator ride. Your pitch is something you can prepare and tailor to the situation when needed. Here are five steps that will help you create your own:

1. Who are you?

It sounds a bit silly to ask yourself this question, but when you try to formulate the answer in one relevant and compelling sentence it gets tricky. Only one sentence to describe your beautiful self? Yes, only one. A useful way to get to your **one sentence** is making a list of all the "things" you are.

Example of list of things you are



- Project manager for 8 years
- Brazilian roots
- Marketing passionate
- Mum
- Wife
- Volunteering as communication manager at Taalhuis

Use all the items of your list to create that perfect sentence by mixing them up and using different ones for different situations.

2. Your story

Your story is what truly **makes you unique**, so prepare this well and be as relevant as possible. Your story should be told in 2 to maximum 3 sentences, which isn't the easiest task to fulfill. To help you create this story ask yourself: **how did you get where you are today?** Are there any defining moments or experiences that made you want the job this pitch was made for? Maybe you came to Belgium to

study marketing and fell in love with not only the country but also the field? Or maybe you followed your partner for his/her work to Belgium (don't be afraid to drop the name of the company your partner is working for if it's relevant) leaving your passion of project management behind, but after volunteering in Belgium you discovered your passion again? Or maybe you had to flee your home country leaving behind your engineering career in which you have 12 years of experience?

Whatever your story might be, remember to keep it **short** and as **relevant** as possible.

3. Why?

Why do you want to work in that field? Why do you want that job? Why do you want to work for that company (one sentence)? If you have to do your pitch without having had the time to prepare it specifically for a company/person, then think of why you want to work in a certain sector or field. If you, for example are going to a job fair and know which companies will be present, you're super lucky and can start to prepare your "why" more thoroughly. It is typical for Belgian companies to check whether you identify with their **values** and **mission**. So use this to your advantage. If you have the benefit of knowing who you're going to talk to, take your time to really think **how you can be of value for the person you're pitching to**.



4. You rock!

Believe in yourself! Ask your family, friends, old colleagues, network, neighbours... to list 3 things they really like about you or things you are really good at. Make a list and pick the ones you like and that are relevant for your pitch. Why are you the perfect candidate?

! Don't make the same mistake that many people accidentally make: not tailoring your strengths to the specific job vacancy or position. You should always make everything as relevant as possible. For example: one of your strengths is planning, even your friends are amazed by how strong your planning skills are, which is great! But when you are applying for a creative kind of job it may not be the best quality to put forward, you surely have other strengths better fitting that position. But when you're applying for a project manager job, you should for sure highlight how great your planning skills are. If you have an international or multicultural background then, if relevant, this is the time to put that asset in the spotlight. Be aware of your unique views, experiences, network and languages and don't forget to, if relevant, include them in your pitch. (one sentence)

Not the most confident person out there? Don't worry: Belgians aren't too keen on overconfidence, as they are quite humble themselves. But don't be shy, you've got unique views, experiences and languages that make you anything but ordinary!

5. Practice

Did you successfully go through the previous 4 steps? Congratulations, because you are one step away from your perfect pitch! Combine the sentences by following the steps above and summarise them into a comprehensive pitch (max 6-7 sentences). Start practicing and repeating it as often as it takes to make it **sound natural** and **structured**. **TIP:** practice by recording your pitch on your mobile phone and learn from it.

5. NETWORKING ON LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is the most important online business network in Belgium. If you want 10 tips on how to let your LinkedIn profile shine, head over to Tool 2: Preparing your CV and cover letter. If you already have a profile you're proud of, it's time to start networking:

Where to start?

Finding the right people to connect with is easier than you think. Start by **following some groups** you're interested in, **follow some companies** you really like and you'll find the right people.

How to connect?

Before you send your connection request, make sure to thoroughly **check out the person's profile** to know if he/she prefers to be contacted through email, a phone call or does not have any preferences at all. In case nothing is stated, or he/she clearly states that you are welcome to contact him/her via LinkedIn - go ahead! Don't forget to include a message with your request.

What to write?

Your message should include:

- **Information about yourself**
- **Your reason** for reaching out
- **What you hope to get** out of the correspondence
- **A clear, well-formulated** message **without any typos** or grammatical errors

You definitely want to **avoid** coming across as **too desperate**. Don't ask if they have a job for you (or at least not straight away). Try to see it more as a jumping off point. It could be that you want him/her to explain some field-specific information to you or meet you for a cup of coffee in the future. Furthermore, asking for something reasonable will make people more inclined to accept your request.



6. MENTORING PROGRAMMES

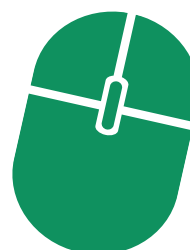


A FRIEND IN NEED

Another way of expanding your network is joining one of the many **mentoring programmes** Belgium has to offer. These initiatives offer you a buddy who's already an experienced worker in your field and helps you navigate around our Belgian job jungle. Your mentor will give you **tips and tricks**, will **introduce you to a whole new network** and will give you **insights in the Belgian job market**.

Find the mentor programme that's right for you by looking at the ones on the right. They all have different locations, requirements and some are even specialized in a specific field or sector.

You can also try to find your mentor by using **LinkedIn** and by contacting someone you admire. Maybe they are up for a cup of coffee?



These are all mentor organisations in Belgium ready to be explored by you.

Duo for a job
Team4Job
MentorYou
Mentor2Work
Motivation United
Net2Work
Talent2Connect

7. THE FOLLOW-UP

A good networking moment should always be followed by a message or another contact moment. Because that's basically what networking is about. But how do you write a **good follow-up email**, what information needs to be in there? Here are some tips and tricks to help you out:

Follow-up within 48 hours: don't let too much time pass before contacting your newest acquaintance. You want them to remember you, so following up within 48 hours is the way to go.

Make them remember you: mention the event where you met, what you were talking about, after which speaker your conversation took place... Just mention something that will make them remember you without you having to reintroduce yourself. For example you could write: "I really liked our discussion on the digitization of the marketing field at the Marketing event."

What do you want: in most cases a desirable outcome of a follow-up is a 1-1 meeting. Maybe you would like to further discuss what you were talking about on the event over a cup of coffee or maybe you have some other things worth discussing? Or maybe you just want them to introduce you to somebody. Always think about what the next interesting (small) step could be and don't be afraid to ask for it.

Make a connection on LinkedIn: no matter how you choose to send your follow-up message, always connect with the receiver on LinkedIn. You have nothing to lose, you will make your online network bigger and it will make your new connection even stronger. You can also choose to only use LinkedIn and send your message to them via this channel.

Take a second look: always double-check your follow-up message for typos, good construction of sentences, does it contain a good offer for the receiver, is everything clear... This follow-up message is your way of making a possible new acquaintance in your business network. So take the time to make a great (second) impression.

Dear ...

It was great meeting you at the Marketing event yesterday. Your insights on the digitization of our current marketing field were really interesting.

As discussed, it would be great if you could introduce me to your HR Manager.

*Thank you in advance,
Alex Example
0478479568
alex.example@gmail.com*

*Example of a
follow-up email*



8. THE STORY OF VICTOR

Country of origin: Brazil
Educational background: MBA in Finance
Number of years of professional experience: 24
Last job title: Financial adviser
Job search length: 10 months
Current job title: Finance & HR Manager
Company: A start-up in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, not named to preserve anonymity

Victor's October started off great. He joined an energetic and entrepreneurial company as the new **HR & Finance manager**, gearing up for a **CFO position** in the near future. That ended a prolonged period of frustrating freelancing and unemployment.

"Job hunting caused anxiety for me. I am happy that this anxiety is gone, now that I am employed and have growth prospects. Before, I did some freelance work, but I prefer belonging to a team instead of sitting alone at my home office all day."

Being part of a start-up suits Victor perfectly, and he says that he enjoys being close to the founders. This entrepreneurial spirit has deep roots in him, as he ran his own businesses before. He finds it easy to relate to his colleagues, which contributes to the good team spirit at the office:

"One of the things I like about my job is that I have the same way of thinking as the shareholders. What's more, we share the same work philosophy, the same



background being highly-educated, the same entrepreneurial spirit and the same passion for technology."

We think it is safe to say that this is a great match for both parties! What makes it even better is the balance between familiar and new, interesting challenges. The finance part, he says, is quite familiar to him and allows him to use much of his past learnings. The HR part, on the other hand, is a new domain for Victor giving him some interesting challenges and assuring that his work never becomes trivial.

Challenges and strengths in the search process

Asking Victor about the challenges he faced in his job search, two major ones came to his mind: not speaking the local language(s) and not having an ample network. In terms of language competences, Victor argues that this is essential

if you want to deal with clients, as he did in his previous jobs. From his point of view, it even appears to be more important than experience level and educational background of a candidate:

"During a Dutch class at VDAB, I mentioned that Belgian employers consider your Dutch language skills more important than your expertise and reputation. The VDAB recruiters bluntly agreed with me, and I found this perspective surprising".

The importance of a good network manifests itself in the importance of local schooling. Victor argues that it has little value if you have an excellent education from abroad – Belgian companies prefer that you are schooled in Belgium. As such, a local educational background makes for a great network when applying for jobs here – a network that Victor does not have. However, although Victor is not schooled in Belgium, he used to work for one of the most recognized schools here, namely Vlerick Business School. And this, he argues, has served as a great network for him multiple times. Victor concludes the importance of networking by saying:

"I find that growing and maintaining a network is easy enough. However, when you have to create one from scratch, like I did, it is much harder."

Victor was sometimes not withheld because he was too experienced, because he was not the perfect fit or because he hadn't worked at any of the 5 biggest consulting firms.

Cultural differences on the work floor

"Brazilians are more inclined to work long hours. In Brazil, there are no labour organisations, you do not get paid for sick leave, whereas in Belgium, people get paid when they have a burnout, and you have strong labour organisations looking after the workers here. VDAB even told me that I could only work 8 hours a day, which I was shocked to hear – 'What? Can't I stay overtime if I want to??"

In the US as well, it is all about who works the hardest to produce more results, to impress the boss, to get noticed and to get that promotion ahead of the colleagues."

Diversity as an asset

Victor finds diversity a definite asset, depending on the kind of company. If we are talking about innovative tech companies, there are no excuses not to hire diverse talents with different perspectives. If we are talking about small, Flemish construction companies, the benefit of diversity will probably not be as big:

"I wish that Belgian employers would be more open to other cultures and have less preferences for people with the same background. The way I see it, if you want the best talent, you need to look over the wall. With all the digital communication tools we have today, such as Skype, it gets even easier to select candidates from abroad to come to Belgium. I know that that is what we did with my Polish colleague, who is a great addition to the team."

Victor's three tips and tricks for international and multicultural talent out there:

1

"In the first two or three months, do not worry too much about looking for a job – focus on learning the local language instead."

2

"Focus on creating a network. It is easy to maintain and grow, but not easy to create one from scratch."

3

"Use LinkedIn – I used it as well, and it is a good tool for online networking and looking for job possibilities."

9. TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Getting out there is really important when searching for a job in Belgium
- ✓ Get the most out of any networking situation by preparing yourself and learning how to sell yourself
- ✓ The goal of a networking event, email or LinkedIn is to get a 1-1 meeting
- ✓ A good networking opportunity always ends with a follow-up. This message should make them remember you, so be clear and concise
- ✓ LinkedIn is the most popular online networking platform in Belgium. It's important to know how to make good connections
- ✓ Another great way to expand your network is to join one of the many mentoring programmes Belgium has to offer or find your own mentor



10. INSPIRED BY

The content in this toolkit is created for the **Newcomer Induction Management Acceleration Programme (NiMAP)**, sponsored by **the European Social Fund** and **the Flemish Government**. Goal of the project is to fasten the job search and induction process on the work floor of newcomers entering the Belgian job market by supporting both talent and employers.

Belgian partners in this project are **Vlerick Business School** - a top-tier international business school - and **Talentree** - a new venture building international and entrepreneurial teams. This project is inspired by the Rapid Acceleration Programme from our transnational partner, Stockholm School of Economics, whom we are deeply grateful for a great partnership!

The project team:

- Prof Dr Dirk Buyens - Professor of Human Resources and Partner at Vlerick Business School
- Dr Emmy Defever - Senior Researcher Area People and Organisation at Vlerick Business School
- Merel Dutry - Intern Area People and Organisation at Vlerick Business School
- Hannelore Waterschoot - Managing Partner at Talentree
- Nancy Leys - Project Manager at Talentree
- Josefine Duvander - Intern Digital Communication at Talentree
- Myrthe Waterschoot - Marketing Manager at Talentree

We would like to thank:

- All international talents who were in the process of finding a job or already found one for sharing their challenges, learnings, tips and dreams. We wish them a great future career journey!
- All the companies and organisations for sharing the employer's perspective via focus groups, interviews and coaching on the work floor
- All other organisations like the public employment services, mentoring and other great local and international projects, network organisations,... for sharing their expertise
- All experts who shared their experiences and knowledge through blog posts and social media



OVERVIEW FIVE TOOLS:



Tool 1: Setting your new job goals

Tool 1 will help you research the Belgian job market, find more information about bottleneck vacancies and mentoring programmes. You'll discover how you can define your new job goal. It ends with a framework to help you define your strengths and weaknesses and two testimonials about reskilling and focusing on your passion.



Tool 2: Preparing your CV and cover letter

Tool 2 will help you create a good CV, cover letter and a LinkedIn profile. It contains information on life long learning and language training with names of possible organisations and courses. It ends with concrete examples of resumes and cover letters.



Tool 3: The importance of networking

Tool 3 will tell you why and how to network. You'll learn how to sell yourself, use LinkedIn as a network tool and how to follow up on any networking you did. It contains a testimonial of a newcomer who found a job in Belgium thanks to his network. It contains a checklist you can use when preparing for a network meeting.



Tool 4: From first call to getting hired

Tool 4 will guide you through the application process. You'll learn about telephone screenings, preparation for any job interview, assessment centres and feedback. It will give you more insight on how to answer a question related to salary expectations and the STAR method (a method frequently used by recruiters). It ends with a testimonial from a newcomer who found a job by being confident and it contains cards that will help you practice difficult interview questions.



Tool 5: Kick-off in the company

Tool 5 will help you when you've found a job. It contains information on talent development, career moves, internal and external networks, evaluation talks, work-life balance and a testimonial of a newcomer who found a job and made her personal life fit with her work life. In the end you'll find a checklist that will help you in your first three months on the job.



TOOL 4: FROM FIRST CALL TO GETTING HIRED



MAIN OBJECTIVE TOOL 4

This tool is designed to help you during the application process from first call to getting hired. This tool is part of a series of 5 tools especially designed for international and multicultural talent looking for a job in Belgium.

You'll learn:

- ✓ The different steps you need to go through when applying for a job
- ✓ How to answer difficult questions, negotiate about your salary and use the STAR method
- ✓ How to get the feedback you deserve



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1. THE APPLICATION PROCESS



Step by step

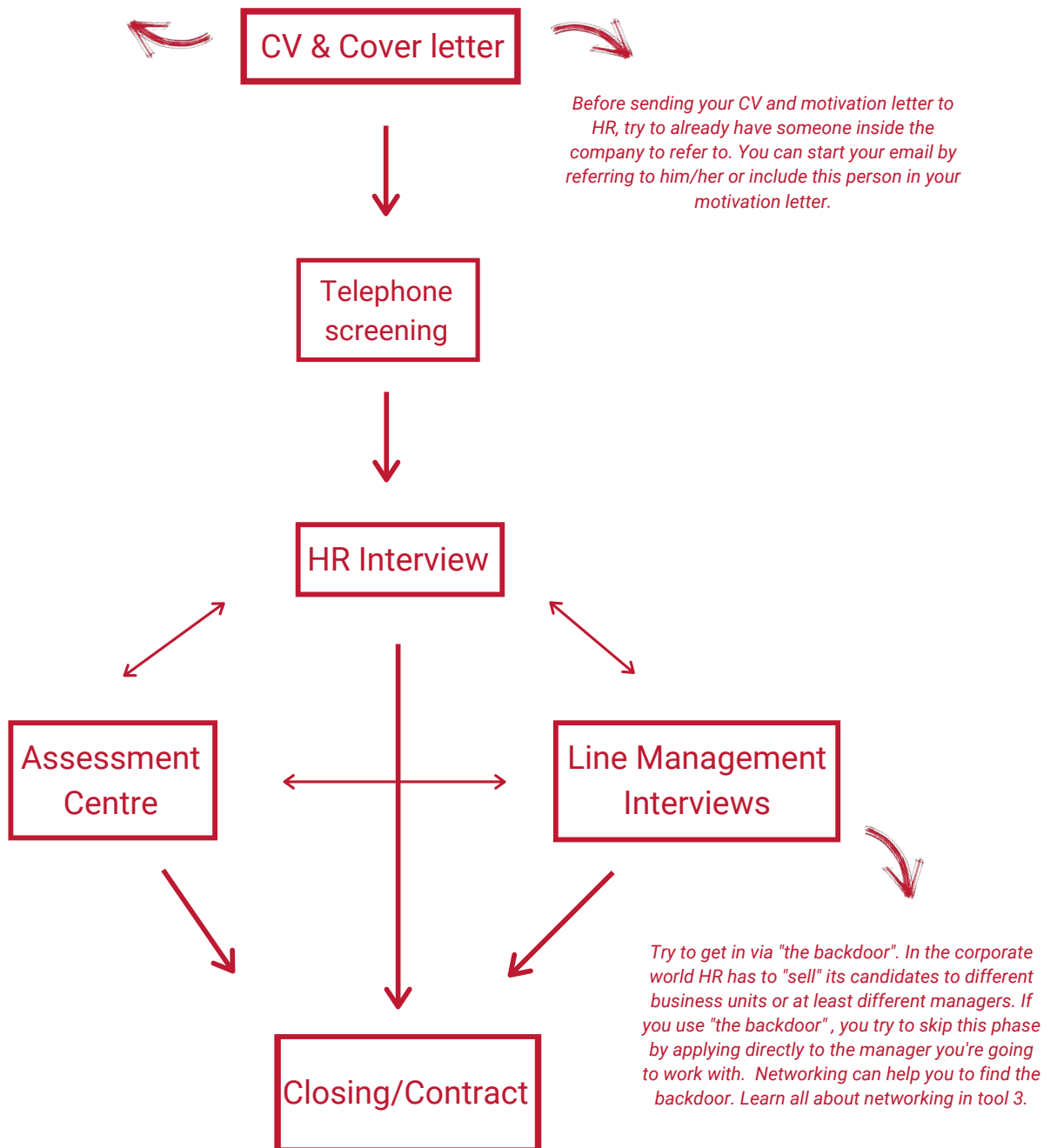
Applying for a job means the start of a (sometimes long) **application process**. Depending on the company you are applying at this process can take different shapes. There is however a basic structure that most Belgian companies will follow. You find a visual representation on the next page.

Your goal throughout this process should be to **get to the next step**. This might sound strange, since your end goal is to get that job, but changing your mindset to getting to the next step rather than getting the job will not only give you peace of mind, but also make you more effective. You will no longer be chasing a long term goal, but you'll be focused on short wins. Some application processes can take months, so set your goals at getting to the next step. You'll thank yourself later.

Focus

Focus is **one of the most important things** when going through an application process. You can achieve focus by setting your goal to getting to the next step, but you can also achieve focus by choosing wisely. Sending out your resume and cover letter to every single vacancy you see, might seem like a good idea, but actually will only lead you to lose focus and to get demotivated. If you for example send out 200 cover letters, you most likely will get a no from 199 of them, just to receive one yes. Imagine how demotivating this can work. So focus on the vacancies that fit your profile the most and put a lot of effort in preparation and follow-up.

Gain insights and tips on how to prepare these in the best way possible in Tool 2: Preparing your CV and cover letter.



2. TELEPHONE SCREENING

THE CALL BEFORE THE INTERVIEW



The moment your resume and cover letter are sent, is **the official start of your application process**. Sometimes part of this process will be a **short telephone screening** during which will be decided whether or not to invite you to an interview.

If you're not expecting a phone call and don't really know what the goal of the call is, you could lose your chance for an invitation. Here are **some tips** to help you when that phone starts ringing:

1. In most cases the main goal is to quickly **check your motivation**. Why do you want to work for this company? Make sure that you know the answer to this question before you even apply. If you're applying for multiple jobs at the same time it could come in handy to make a list of all the companies you've applied at, the positions you applied for and why. That way you know what to answer when you get called.

2. Another reason a company will give you a call before

inviting you to an interview is **to double check some requirements**. It could be that the job requires you to travel a lot or to work on Saturdays from time to time. If this is not possible for you, there is no need to proceed with the application process.

3. If you need some **time to prepare yourself** for this short telephone screening, just ask if you can call them back. You can say that they are calling at an inconvenient moment, but if it's okay for them you will call them back in ten minutes. During this time you can take a few minutes to focus or to check the list you made with all the companies and positions. It's also wise to not pick up the phone or to reschedule when you are not able to be focused or calm at that moment (due to kids or other circumstances). This telephone screening is their first impression of you. An impression you can only make once.

3. THE JOB INTERVIEW

When you get invited to a job interview, you know that you have done everything right up to that point in the application process. In order to make it through the interview and increase your chances of signing a contract, you need to know a lot about the company itself, but also about how job interviews are conducted in Belgium.



In **small** and **medium-sized companies**, they will invite you to an interview based on your written application (motivation letter and CV). On average you get notified within one or two weeks after the interview whether or not you are withheld for the position.



Bigger companies often have more elaborated sourcing needs for human resource management, so the selection process will generally be a bit longer, with at least two interviews. You will be invited to a first interview, often at an assessment center where you directly compete with other candidates for the job. If you complete the first round, you will usually get an invitation to a more personal interview with the HR manager. Another short interview with your direct superior will either take place on the same day or during a third interview. If you successfully completed the selection process, you will get notified whether you get the job within a few days or a few weeks, depending on the urgency of the vacancy.



3.1. PREPARING YOUR JOB INTERVIEW

4 THINGS YOU SHOULD GET TO KNOW

1

Get to know the company. It will maximize your chances of recruitment if you show that you are really interested in the company and the job. Just **check their website** or Facebook page and, when appropriate in the interview, give them a glimpse of your expertise by mentioning their slogan, mission statement or a new service or product they launched. If the company has a **specific expertise**, try to check the newest trends in their field of expertise. Checking the company's website will also help you to **dress according to the company culture**. It will give you an indication on the degree of formality and help you decide on whether to dress casually or more formally.

Get to know the interviewer. If you know who is going to interview you, look up their profile on **LinkedIn**. Take a look at what they are interested in, how they communicate... Maybe you've got some shared interests, know the same people or follow the same LinkedIn groups.

2

3

Get to know yourself. You should be able to name 3 strengths and weaknesses of yourself (with examples that really show how that strength or weakness translates itself into the work field). A usual first question in a Belgian interview is the question: please tell me something about yourself. So, be prepared to answer this question by giving a quick overview of your CV (not too many details please).

Get to know the location. Always look up the location for the job interview beforehand. If you are unsure about your appointment or where you will have to be exactly, just call their office. Always be punctual and if you're running late just give the company a quick call. Arriving late to a job interview is an absolute no go in Belgium. If you're taking public transportation, remember that Belgian public transportation can be delayed, so take this into account when planning the time needed to get to your interview.

4

3.2. CLASSIC BELGIAN JOB INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

The beginning of the interview is the perfect time to showcase **your language skills**. If other languages are required dare to speak them. You could for example start by saying "Aangename kennismaking" or "Enchanté" (Dutch/French for "Nice to meet you"). Since Belgium is very sensitive when it comes to languages this will for sure be appreciated.

A very important but often forgotten guideline is to always **keep your answers as relevant as possible**. Never give long and never-ending answers! Really listen to the question asked and answer to the point.

During your interview, **the company could ask certain questions that they normally should not ask**. For example, they might want to know if you are pregnant or have any family plans or raise the question of personal health. If you feel you would not like to answer a sensitive private question you can indicate you feel uncomfortable talking about this and/or ask how this relates to the job. It's then up to you to decide whether you want to work in a company that brings those issues into a discussion.

If you **have a gap in your resume**, which is quite normal when you just arrived in a new country, you can expect that the recruiter will ask you about this. The best thing to do is to be honest, explain the difficulties you may have encountered such as getting your diploma recognized, obtaining a work permit, learning a new language...



In case you also **applied for other jobs** at other companies, you can openly say that, as it's the truth and it indicates the type of jobs you are interested in. If this is the job you want and the only one you applied for, you can also say this, by doing so emphasizing your motivation once more.

Recruiters will usually end an interview by asking you whether you have any further questions. **Never hesitate to ask them**, as this Q&A passage is a unique opportunity to gather useful information about the company. It's an extra chance to show your interest in the company. You could ask what kind of projects the job will bring, how long the interviewer has been working for the company, what they, as an employer, really appreciate the most in their employees.... Prepare 4/5 questions beforehand, so you always have some to ask.



And keep in mind that job applications are a **two-way street** - you want the job but the company also wants an employee. So you also have the right to ask your questions. Even if you don't have any special requests, always ask when you can expect to hear from them again. (So you don't wait every day for the phone to ring!)

When saying goodbye the most common way is to end with a firm and friendly handshake and to thank them for their time.

Do not panic if they don't notify you about their decision within a week! You can call or email the company after the promised date has passed.

3.3. THE SALARY QUESTION

WHAT TO ANSWER

A fairly common question during or sometimes even before a Belgian job interview is: “What are your salary expectations?”. This is quite a hard one to answer. If you answer with a number way too low it might be seen as an indicator of you not believing in yourself. But if you answer with a number way too high you might not get the job because the company thinks they can never meet your expectations. So how to answer this question in a good way? Here are a few tips:

Bruto and netto

When talking about your salary you should know that in Belgium there is a big difference between your gross or before tax (bruto) and net or after tax (netto) income. The salary type that is discussed here and the one you’ll be talking about in your interview, at least most of the times, is the gross/before taxes one. If you want to calculate how this will translate into net income, you can find different online tools. **Partena** has a tool that can help you out.

Find out the average salary in your sector

Doing a bit of research is crucial when you



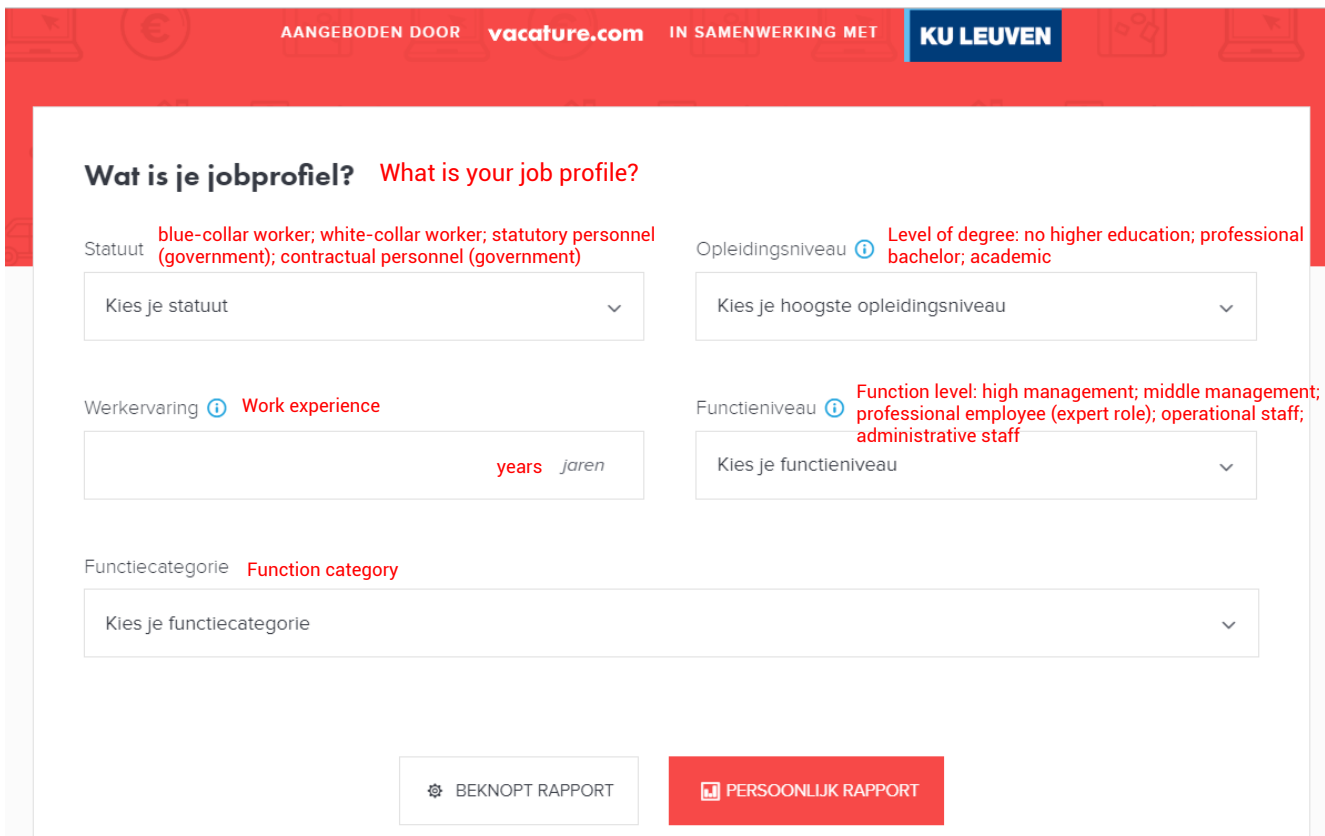
want to be successful at your job interview. As Ecrin tells in her interview:

“ *Confidence is key* ”

and no better way to get some confidence than by preparing well. You can read Ecrin's full testimonial at the end of this toolkit.

To help you prepare well there are websites that can give you an indication of what other people in your field are earning. **Salaris Kompas** is a tool that helps you get a better idea of what you may expect. It's in Dutch only, but don't worry we've got you covered:

Tool from Salaris
kompas with
English translation



AANGEBODEN DOOR **vacature.com** IN SAMENWERKING MET **KU LEUVEN**

Wat is je jobprofiel? What is your job profile?

Statuut **blue-collar worker; white-collar worker; statutory personnel (government); contractual personnel (government)**

Kies je statuut

Opleidingsniveau ⓘ **Level of degree: no higher education; professional bachelor; academic**

Kies je hoogste opleidingsniveau

Werkervaring ⓘ **Work experience**

years jaren

Functieniveau ⓘ **Function level: high management; middle management; professional employee (expert role); operational staff; administrative staff**

Kies je functieniveau

Functiecategorie **Function category**

Kies je functiecategorie

BEKNOPT RAPPORT PERSOONLIJK RAPPORT

We recommend clicking on the concise analysis button. This will give you a short overview of what you may expect. The red button will ask you some more questions and will give you a more detailed report.

An answer that always works

Because everybody's situation is different and because it is really hard sometimes to find something you can compare yourself to, there's an answer you can almost always use when being asked about your salary expectations. You can simply say (of course you need to tailor this to your personal situation) that you've done some research, but since you're quite new to the Belgian job market you had a bit of a hard time figuring out what to expect. You can say that you expect to receive a fair salary equal to the ones your colleagues have with more or less the same

experience and background as you. And if you feel confident just add the number you found when doing your research and tell them this is what you found online, but that you're for sure open to talk about it.

Your salary as part of a larger remuneration package

As explained before there is a heavy tax burden on your Belgian salary. That's why a lot of employers will offer extra-legal advantages such as a company car, mobile phone, meal vouchers, eco-cheques... In some companies the packages of extra-legal advantages are more or less the same for everybody, in others it could be that they ask you what you would

prefer or there will be some room for negotiation. There are a lot of different benefits that can be included in your package. Here is an overview of the most common ones today, but be careful, they evolve over time:

Don't hesitate to ask what kind of extra-legal benefits are possible within your remuneration package. In some companies it's possible to have your partner or children join your health insurance. So keep in mind when discussing your salary that it's more than just money.



1

Meal vouchers: one of the most common extra-legal advantages is the meal voucher. It is both beneficial for employer and employee. They can be used to buy food and drinks at almost all Belgian supermarkets for example.

2

Eco-cheques: to promote a green lifestyle the Belgian government makes adding eco-cheques to a remuneration package very beneficial. They expire after two years and can be used to buy low-energy electronics, plants and flowers, organic food...

3

Group insurance guarantees capital in case of death or injury or when you retire. It's normal if they ask you to partly fund this insurance. Another benefit can be a **health insurance** with or without contribution by the employee.

4

In Belgium the amount of **vacation days** or annual leave you get is calculated by the days you worked the year before. There is a legal minimum of vacation days: if you worked for 5 days a week in the previous year (full year), then you're entitled to 20 vacation days. In addition you're also entitled to 10 public holidays.

5

Belgian companies can offer a **company car** to their employees (fuel card included). The reason why they will offer you one will most likely be because of the tax privileges that come with it. The cost of buying and owning a car will be higher than the difference in your gross and net salary. *Some* companies will give you a choice whether to accept the car, others will not.



3.4. THE STAR METHOD

INSIGHTS IN A COMMONLY USED INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE



A method frequently used by recruiters is the STAR method. This method is used to **evaluate your answers in an easy and structured way**. Knowing how this method works will help you answer the questions in your next job interview better and in a more structured way.

STAR stands for Situation, Task, Action and Result, the **4 key points** recruiters try to discover when using this method. A typical question that requires a STAR method assessment is a question that asks for a specific example of a situation you encountered in the past. They will then **rate your answer on 2 different levels**. The first level is **the structure of your answer**. They will evaluate if you can answer their question in a structured way with a nice beginning, middle and end and if they can identify the 4 key points as stated above. The second level is **the content of your answer**. How well did you handle a certain situation, what was your role and what were the results.

S

What was **the situation** you found yourself in? You should set the scene and give a clear image of the context of your story.

T

What was **the task** or challenge you needed to solve? Be as concrete and relevant as possible.

A

What **actions** did you undertake to complete this challenge? Try to really mention what YOU did instead of a general team effort.

R

What was **the result** of your action? Try to be as specific as possible by mentioning tangible numbers and outcomes.

It's okay to take some time and think before you answer a question that requires a STAR answer. Here are **some tips** to come up with a great example:

1. Try to think of a situation in which you **really made the difference** instead of a challenge or task that was solved by group effort.

2. You should **practice** this method before your actual interview by thinking of examples from the past where you had to use your strengths. It's also a great way of preparing great examples to really prove what your strengths are.

3. Try to think of **examples that are as closely related** as possible to the job you're applying for. Recruiters use the STAR method since past performance can be a good prediction of future performance. For people with a lot of work experience this is easier than for those who just started working. If you don't have that much work experience, it's also okay to think of school projects or other big projects outside of school you worked on or helped with.

Example of a question + answer with the STAR method

Example Question: Can you give me an example of a time you had to complete a task under a tight deadline? What happened and how did you handle it?

Example Answer:

The first example that comes to mind is something that took place when I was Communication Manager at Company X. We had a really important event and two days before it took place our event manager left the company. I was asked to take over and had only these two days to learn what still needed to be done and bring this event to a good end. So at lunch I made my own "event" team with other colleagues that were willing to help, I delegated tasks and the event went great. We got a lot of new sales out of it and I received compliments on how well organized the whole event was. It's still an achievement I'm quite proud of and I think it shows that I can surely function under a really tight deadline.

4. ASSESSMENT CENTRES

WHAT YOU MAY EXPECT AND TIPS



At an assessment centre a (group of) participant(s) undertakes **a series of exercises under observation**, so that skills, competences, and character traits can be assessed. Trained assessors evaluate each participant against predetermined criteria.

An assessment comes in many forms with an **unlimited variety of tests**. You have individual or group assessments, some last up to 2 days, others only 1 hour, some even happen without you knowing it (for example when they are showing you around in the office). A list of **all the ingredients** an assessment could have:

- Case studies
- Creative tests (group behavior oriented tests)
- Group discussions
- Role plays
- Presentations
- Simulation tests: eg. Inbox tests
- Personality tests
- Numerical, verbal reasoning, analytical tests
- IQ tests
- Interviews

Since there are so many varieties of assessments **it's hard to fully prepare yourself**. Here are some things you should keep in mind:

1. If the assessment is in group **don't be aggressive**. Other participants might become future colleagues.
2. Some assessments **focus on speed**. It's important that you **stay calm** and realise that with a lot of these tests it's **impossible to finish in time**. So don't panic and just do the best you can.
3. During longer assessments, know that **every move you make can be assessed**.
4. Recruiters will be looking for **consistency**. They will take into account everything you said during previous interviews. So **stay true to yourself**, show them you know yourself.
5. **Get enough sleep** before an assessment. They can be very tiring.

5. FEEDBACK

HOW TO GET THE FEEDBACK YOU DESERVE



No matter in what stage of the application process you may find yourself, you are **always entitled to get some feedback**. It's really important that you **dare to contact the company** you've applied at and ask them to give you feedback on why you weren't selected. It can help you better understand what precisely went wrong or what skills you might want to improve. It can also help you to move on, close this application process mentally and focus on the next one.

At the end of your interview you should always ask **when you may expect to hear something back**. If you haven't heard anything after the promised moment in time, add 2 more business days and then reach out yourself. Reaching out to ask feedback shows your motivation and your will to improve yourself.

Here are some things you can **include in your follow-up** message or phone call:

1. You can **thank the recruiter** for giving you the opportunity to do the interview.
2. If you already know you didn't get the job, but just want to receive some feedback, feel free to **briefly mention that you are sorry** you were not selected.
3. When asking for feedback **explain that it will certainly help you** with developing your professional skills and potential areas of growth and that you would highly appreciate their feedback.
4. **Accept the feedback given** and learn from it. Even if you don't agree, don't try to respond by telling them you disagree, just thank them for their time.

6. THE STORY OF ECRIN

Country of origin: Turkey

Educational background: Master's in Textile Engineering and a Bachelor in Mechanical Engineering

Number of years of professional experience: 16

Last job title: Buyer Consultant

Job search length: 5 months

Current job title: Internal Logistics Coordinator (South America and Canada)

Company: Pharma industry

With Ecrin's impressive resume showing lots of experience with international contacts in both Europe and China, it is not surprising her current company was very enthusiastic about her joining their team. Since August 2018, Ecrin has been working in internal logistics coordination and used her past international work experience to engage with the stakeholders in South America and Canada. When asking Ecrin what she likes the most about her job, she says:

"The job content at my current job is very much in line with my own expertise. Also, I really enjoy the multicultural environment. Getting my first paid job here in Belgium is frankly quite exhausting when having 3 kids and a husband working in Germany, but I am really happy to be back on track."

Challenges and strengths in the search process

Ecrin's job search process took 5 months. During this time, she has sent between 50 and 60 applications. Applications that would often lead to interviews at multiple interim offices, but the answer was not always positive.



"The feedback I received the most was that I am overqualified. I found it difficult to convince employers that I just wanted to work, regardless of my level."

Note: being overqualified is actually one of the most common kinds of feedback that a lot of internationals get. As much as it is somewhat of a compliment with regard to your professional expertise, it can also be difficult to handle, because it is non-changeable. A tip to deal with this is to keep being confident like Ecrin and either apply for jobs at your level in multicultural organisations that will see your background as an asset or continue to convince employers that you just want experience regardless of your level, like Ecrin did.

Cultural differences on the work floor

When asking Ecrin about the cultural differences she experiences at her current job, she says that overall everyday life is different. Back in Turkey, a big part of Ecrin's professional life also revolved

around personal connections. She finds, here in Belgium, that people are not so open to share their personal time with her as they were in Turkey. However, she says:

"Luckily, we are 12 Turkish colleagues who are more social among each other."

That is just one of the great sides of working in a multicultural team.

Diversity as an asset

Apart from Ecrin's personal experience at her current job that allows her to connect with fellow Turks and feel the positive impacts that cultural diversity has on the organisation, we also wanted to know how she views diversity in the workforce in general.

"I see cultural diversity as a great asset. When you are part of a diverse team, you don't feel that you are a sole stranger. In fact, everybody is a stranger, which makes us all the same."

Ecrin's 3 tips and tricks for international and multicultural talent out there:

1

"Learn the local language(s)!"

2

"Be open to different formulas, not only a fixed contract."

3

"Stay confident and believe in your skills."



7. KILLER QUESTIONS

PRINTABLE CARDS WITH TIPS TO PRACTICE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Can you give me one example that proves that this is a strength of yours? Can you give me a second example? Can you give me a third example?

TIP: it's not that easy to find your strengths and weaknesses. Ask help from people that know you well. Once you know what your strengths and weaknesses are be sure you can illustrate them with an example from the past (using the STAR method).

What is your story; where do you come from and why did you end up here?

TIP: don't make your story too long, be open but not naive and tell it in a structured way.

What position would you like to have in your career in 5 years' time?

TIP: this question indirectly tries to figure out if you'll still be around five years from now. The focus of your answer shouldn't be on the desired position but should show what you are really passionate about.

In what kind of company culture do you thrive?

TIP: if you did your research well you know what kind of values the company you're applying at holds high. Try to pick those that you support the most and give examples of why you feel you would thrive under these circumstances.

What typifies people you don't like to work with?

TIP: as always answer this question honestly, everybody has someone they don't like to work with. The important part is that you can explain how you cope with working with them.

What do you expect from your supervisor?

TIP: again honesty is really important with this question. The person that's asking it can be your boss one day. Of course don't be blunt.

What makes you better than the other candidates I have seen so far for this position?

TIP: this question is about you so don't try to answer it by disqualifying others.

What is the achievement you realized in your life you are most proud of?

TIP: take your time to think of a good professional example for this question. Try to find one that shows your values and what gives you energy.

What situations cause you stress?

TIP: this is a perfect question you can answer using the STAR method. When you're giving an example, don't forget to include how you then cope with this stress.

Are you currently applying for other jobs?

TIP: as always you can tell the truth. You can always add that this job is at the top of your list and explain why. If they ask you what kind of jobs you are applying for, you can say that they are in line with this job, that way you have a consistent story.

How important is work-life balance to you?

TIP: try to prepare this question up front by making an estimation about how important flexibility is for this company. Will there be a lot of evening or weekend work? Know what is feasible for you, be honest to yourself as well.

8. TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ If you're applying at a corporate or big sized company, try to apply via "the backdoor" by directly contacting your potential future manager instead of HR. Use your network, even when sending your application letter try to add a referral. HR needs to "sell" its candidates to the managers in charge, so using "the backdoor" allows you to skip this step.
- ✓ Expect your phone to ring and be ready to answer the recruiter's questions. Know for each application why you want to work for that company and what motivates you.
- ✓ Prepare some questions to ask at the end of the interview. It shows you come prepared, that you're interested and you may actually gain some extra useful information.
- ✓ Assessments come in many sizes. It's hard to really prepare for them, but there are some general tips that can help you. Good to know is that recruiters will look for consistency in the answers you gave during a previous interview and the way you're presenting yourself during the assessment process.
- ✓ Get the feedback you deserve by sending a follow-up email or making a call. Learn from the feedback and move on.

9. INSPIRED BY

The content in this toolkit is created for the **Newcomer Induction Management Acceleration Programme** (NiMAP), sponsored by **the European Social Fund** and the **Flemish Government**. Goal of the project is to fasten the job search and induction process on the work floor of newcomers entering the Belgian job market by supporting both talent and employers.

Belgian partners in this project are **Vlerick Business School** - a top-tier international business school - and **Talentree** - a new venture building international and entrepreneurial teams. This project is inspired by the Rapid Acceleration Programme from our transnational partner, Stockholm School of Economics, whom we are deeply grateful for a great partnership!

The project team:

- Prof Dr Dirk Buyens - Professor of Human Resources and Partner at Vlerick Business School
- Dr Emmy Defever - Senior Researcher Area People and Organisation at Vlerick Business School
- Merel Dutry - Intern Area People and Organisation at Vlerick Business School
- Hannelore Waterschoot - Managing Partner at Talentree
- Nancy Leys - Project Manager at Talentree
- Josefine Duvander - Intern Digital Communication at Talentree
- Myrthe Waterschoot - Marketing Manager at Talentree

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- All other organisations like the public employment services, mentoring and other great local and international projects, network organisations,... for sharing their expertise
- All experts who shared their experiences and knowledge through blog posts and social media



OVERVIEW FIVE TOOLS:



Tool 1: Setting your new job goals

Tool 1 will help you research the Belgian job market, find more information about bottleneck vacancies and mentoring programmes. You'll discover how you can define your new job goal. It ends with a framework to help you define your strengths and weaknesses and two testimonials about reskilling and focusing on your passion.



Tool 2: Preparing your CV and cover letter

Tool 2 will help you create a good CV, cover letter and a LinkedIn profile. It contains information on life long learning and language training with names of possible organisations and courses. It ends with concrete examples of resumes and cover letters.



Tool 3: The importance of networking

Tool 3 will tell you why and how to network. You'll learn how to sell yourself, use LinkedIn as a network tool and how to follow up on any networking you did. It contains a testimonial of a newcomer who found a job in Belgium thanks to his network. It contains a checklist you can use when preparing for a network meeting.



Tool 4: From first call to getting hired

Tool 4 will guide you through the application process. You'll learn about telephone screenings, preparation for any job interview, assessment centres and feedback. It will give you more insight on how to answer a question related to salary expectations and the STAR method (a method frequently used by recruiters). It ends with a testimonial from a newcomer who found a job by being confident and it contains cards that will help you practice difficult interview questions.



Tool 5: Kick-off in the company

Tool 5 will help you when you've found a job. It contains information on talent development, career moves, internal and external networks, evaluation talks, work-life balance and a testimonial of a newcomer who found a job and made her personal life fit with her work life. In the end you'll find a checklist that will help you in your first three months on the job.



TOOL 5: KICK-OFF IN THE COMPANY



MAIN OBJECTIVE TOOL 5

This tool is designed to help you have a great kick-off in your company. This tool is part of a series of 5 tools especially designed for international and multicultural talent looking for a job in Belgium.

You'll learn:

- ✓ How to have a confident start
- ✓ About Belgian work ethics and cultural skills
- ✓ How to handle evaluation talks and give and receive feedback
- ✓ How to further develop your talent and career



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1. A CONFIDENT START



Being proactive and self-confident

Starting at a new job will always be a bit stressful and exciting. The important thing to keep in mind is that you **stay yourself, have confidence** and have a **proactive attitude**. You can do this by asking questions, knowing your objectives so you can work towards them and if they are not clearly formulated, formulate them yourself (of course don't forget to check them with others afterwards).

See your **strengths** as your starting point at your new job. Think about **what you can contribute** and **craft your job** in such a way that it fits your skills best. It's a common pitfall a lot of starters face: being really grateful for the fact that they got the job and therefore they put themselves in a submissive position. It's great to be thankful **but don't let it affect your work**. You're a professional and you have the knowhow needed for the job. That's why you were selected and not any of the other candidates that applied for the job.

2. ADMINISTRATION AND SALARY PACKAGE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

As discussed in Tool 4: From first call to getting hired, your salary will be more than cash money. It will come in a package with potentially extra-legal benefits such as a company car, meal vouchers, eco-cheques... So before or on your first day there will also be some administration you'll need to go through. Apart from figuring out the extra-legal benefits, you'll probably receive:

A copy of the work regulations: you'll have to sign the work regulations. This document contains your rights and obligations as an employee. It could contain certain procedures you need to follow when you're sick or it will tell you how working from home is defined. The theory can be stricter than the practice, so if you find yourself in a situation where you don't know what to do, just ask your colleagues.

The vacation bonus: each year you'll receive your vacation bonus in May or June.

The end of the year bonus or 13th month: in December you might receive one of these two depending on how it is defined in the collective agreement (CAO in Dutch), in which the terms and working conditions of employees within a specific sector/region are defined.

As day to day life gets more expensive each year, **your salary will also rise** yearly according to an index. The exact rate of this index can be found in the collective agreement. If you feel that you deserve a higher raise, because you've grown a lot or have taken on more responsibilities, you can ask for a salary evaluation talk after 1 year and/or when changing roles.



3. BELGIAN BUSINESS ETHICS

The culture of your company is something you will adapt to and become a part of. **The chances of you fitting in are quite high**, because one of the reasons you probably got the job in the first place is because you matched their culture well. Not all companies **prepare the onboarding** of a new employee in the best way, so don't get discouraged if **your first day wasn't what you hoped for** because sometimes the long and complicated processes some Belgian companies uphold, will fail and **they might not be fully prepared for your first day**. Don't take it personally, it's just a process.



Belgians are generally rather **conservative**, but they **always seek compromises**. You can use that to your advantage, for example in salary negotiations. However, you should be careful not to demand too much right after your recruitment, as the decision making process is rather slow and **modesty is highly valued** in Belgium.



The business lunch is something very important in Belgium. Since Belgians prefer personal contact over a phone call, small meetings during lunch hour are **the most popular way to keep your business contacts up to date**. At such a lunch meeting, it is not unusual that you might be asked questions about your personal life as well, e.g. about your husband or wife, children or preferred leisure activity. It's a way for Belgians to make small talk and to strengthen and personalize business relationships.



In **meetings and negotiations**, Belgians always strive for a **pragmatic and rational** solution. Due to their rational approach of business, **structure is considered very important**. Even though Belgian business people tend to thoroughly discuss all the matters on the agenda, the meeting schedule should be followed closely. Being late is not regarded as a nonchalant way to enter a meeting, it is considered impolite. If you are getting late for your appointment, contact your business partners and let them know that you won't make it on time.

BELGIAN BUSINESS ETHICS

Through the eyes of newcomers



"Brazilians are more inclined to work. In Brazil, there are no labour organisations, you do not get paid for sick leave, whereas in Belgium, people get paid when they have a burnout, and you have strong labour organisations looking after the workers here". - Victor from Brazil

"I do have an impression that in general, there is a Belgian mentality that supports independency of employees more than guiding them. In the Middle East, most employees are guided on what they have to do. In Belgium, there is a big space of independency and creativity. In other parts of the world, your employer decides how your skills should develop. In Belgium, you decide that yourself". - Anas from Syria, lived in many places in the Middle East



"I heard that Belgian people are usually more distant and cold. However, this is not the case at the company where I work. Here, everyone is friendly and gentle. However, I will say that I miss the more spontaneous get-togethers we used to have in Belarus. Here, you always have to make appointments with people because they are so busy". - Nina from Belarus

"In Belgium, I find that there are more rules, more computer systems to navigate and in general some much more advanced systems than the ones I am used to from Iraq." - Hadeel from Iraq



"Every two weeks, I have one-to-one feedback meetings with my leader and I have monthly meetings where VDAB is also there. Now, I am confident with the process, but it was difficult for me in the beginning to get used to the level of directness. The feedback here is much more direct than in Iraq! In Belgium, they are always looking for zero error performance. In Iraq, you can make 50% mistakes and more." - Omar from Iraq

"People in Belgium are friendly but more closed. As a newcomer, it is really hard to integrate on a more casual level because of the language, for example during the coffee breaks." - Soksreymon from Cambodia



4. WORK-LIFE BALANCE

INDIVIDUAL AND COMPANY CULTURE



Finding **the right balance** between work and personal life is a challenge for a lot of professionals nowadays. Finding yours should happen on two different levels:

On the individual level: no two people are alike and that's why for person A a 50 hour work week is the most normal thing in the world, for person B, on the other hand, 50 hours could be too much. The way your workload affects your personal life depends on many factors and one of them is your cultural background. Some cultures applaud those who work every hour of the day, in other cultures it's strange to work past five o'clock. Not only your culture but also your job position, children, family or friends...can have a big impact on the personal time you may need. It's important to openly discuss this with your employer and to find joint solutions. Eg. when you're new in a country and have no social network to take care of your children when unforeseen circumstance occur. In this case working 80% might be a solution to build in some flexibility.

On company (culture) level: if your working hours are from 8-5, but everybody stays until 7, you may find it hard to leave before they do. The other way around counts as well: if you are the only one working late this might give a strange impression to others in the team. So try to find a balance between the company culture and your own needs in term of balance.

And in all circumstances **an open talk** with a colleague you trust, HR and/or your manager will give new insights to **help you get the balance you need.**

At the very start of your assignment or entry in the company try to adapt as much as possible to the company culture. For example if your colleagues have lunch together join them, if they stay for a drink after work try to do the same. That way you show your interest and your willingness to become a part of their team.

5. THE STORY OF DENISE



Country of origin: Brazil

Educational background: Master Business of Administration (MBA)

Job search length: +6 months

Last job title: Business & Integration Architecture Manager

Company: Accenture

Denise used to work as a **project manager** in Brazil, but gave up her life to follow love of her life, as he was offered a job in Belgium. During 5 years, she stayed home and took care of her kids. Until, completely out of the blue, Talentree reached out to her on LinkedIn.

"They invited me for a Job Day for international talents at Accenture. I had never seen this concept in a company before, so I had to go. They were not asking me to come for an interview for a specific job, they just wanted to get to know me. It was super great, I met a lot of people and had some conversations with managers about my background in Brazil. The most important message I got that day, was that I could still find a job after all this time of home-staying. There was still hope for me. That was a very important message, because being in Belgium had not been easy for me."

After the Job Day, Denise had **several positive interviews** and the possibility of her landing an actual job in Belgium grew larger by the day.

"It really happened, within a few months, Accenture offered me a job! That was insane, I can't express how happy I felt. I could finally prove what I have to offer. Someone actually gave me a chance!"

Denise started to work as a **business analyst** for sometime, but actually wanted to work as a project manager. So after a while, she took **the bold step of contacting her boss.**

"I told him I was not happy here anymore and wanted to work in a different role. He was very understanding and helped me to look for a role as a project manager within the company. It's amazing how helpful everyone has been. It has been a challenging ride, but I did it. I had to prove to both Accenture and to myself that I am capable of doing this, and I did. They gave me a global program. Now I work as a program lead, I have 6 other project managers that report to me and have an offshore team in India. I even got promoted this month. It has been so great.

This journey has really been life-changing for me. I can't tell you how happy I am here. It is absolutely fantastic."

Denise's three tips and tricks for international and multicultural talent out there:

- 1 Believe in yourself:** no matter what other people say. You can do whatever you propose yourself to do if you really want to.
- 2 Be on top of your career path:** don't wait for someone to get you moving. Find what you do best and invest time to improve it. You own your career, the company you work for is only your bridge to the success.
- And last but not least, **stay connected.** This is the only way for people to find you. If you are not in a good time to work, try to get involved with something else, volunteer for something you believe and grow your network.

6. CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS

Learning to collaborate effectively with people from other cultures is a **vital skill** when you are working in a multicultural environment. People from diverse backgrounds often have different ways of thinking and communicating. Gaining insights into the differences between cultures helps team members to understand how culture shapes the way people behave and communicate and how misunderstandings might arise when we misinterpret different cultural behaviours. Cross-cultural awareness & communication training can provide employees with the knowledge, skills and expertise to collaborate effectively across cultures and promote acceptance and respect for diversity. **Three models** that are frequently taught are the model of Hofstede, Trompenaars & Lewis.

The Hofstede model of national culture

According to the model of Hofstede, culture is defined as 'the collective mental programming of the human mind which distinguishes one group of people from another'. The model consists of **six dimensions**, which represent **independent preferences for one state of affairs over another that distinguishes countries** (rather than individuals) from each other*:

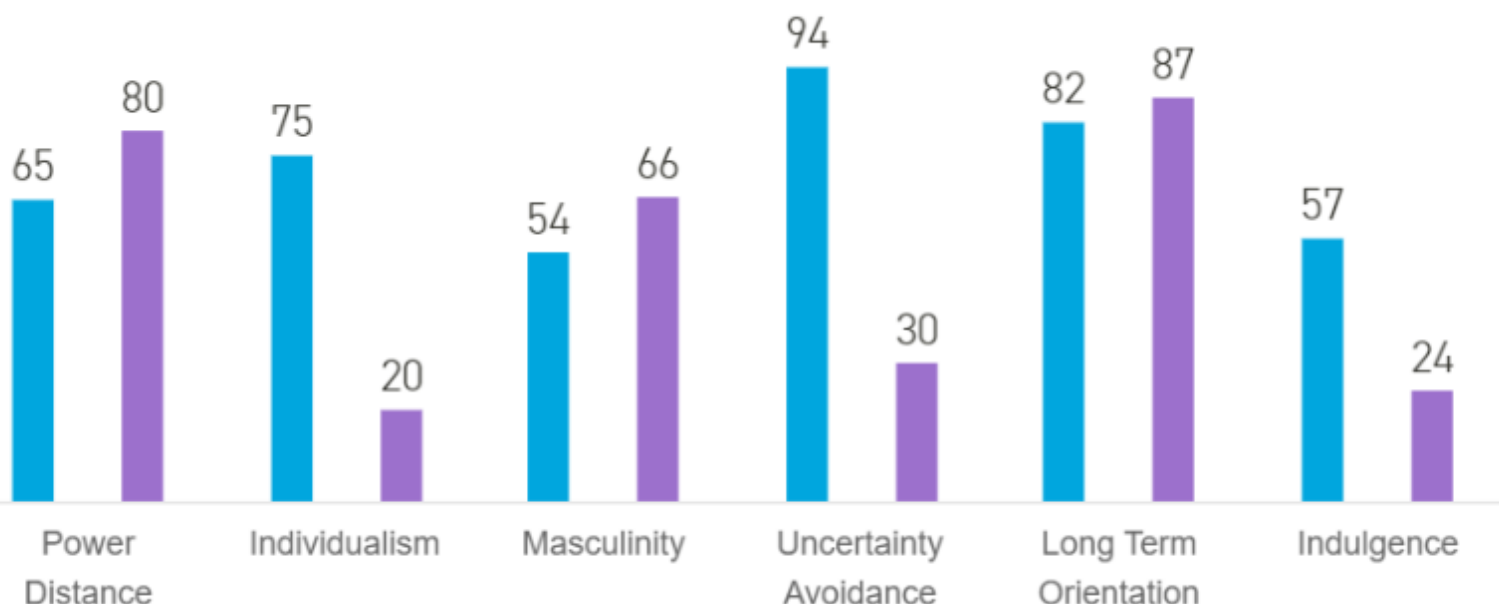
- **Power distance:** the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.
- **Collectivism vs. individualism:** the relative importance of individual versus group interests.

- **Femininity vs. masculinity:** the extent to which a society stresses achievement (masculinity) or nurture (femininity)".
- **Uncertainty avoidance:** the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity.
- **Long-term versus short-term orientation:** the extent to which a culture is focused on the future or rather on the past and present.
- **Indulgence versus restraint:** the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised.

Interested to learn more?

- Check the series of 10-minute videos with PowerPoint presentations created by Geert Hofstede. There is an introduction video and one video per dimension of the national culture.
- You can use the country comparison tool by Hofstede (<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/>) to compare how countries score on the 6 cultural dimensions. For instance, below you see a comparison of Belgium (blue) versus China (purple):

Source: *<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/models/national-culture/>



Trompenaars cultural dimensions: the 7 D model

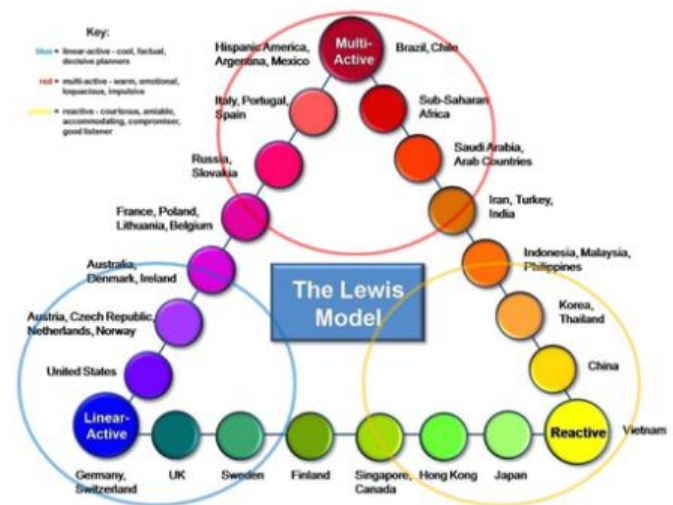
Trompenaars defines culture as **the way people solve problems**. Based on the solutions each culture chooses to certain problems, he defined **the following dimensions***:

- **Universalism vs. particularism:** the degree of importance of formal rules and procedures over circumstances and relationships.
- **Individualism vs. communitarianism:** this dimension is almost identical to Hofstede's individualism vs. collectivism dimension. Generally this dimension classifies countries according to the balance between the individual and group interests.
- **Specific vs. diffuse:** the extent to which the personal and professional life is integrated or separated.
- **Neutral vs. affective:** the extent to which emotions are displayed in the workplace. In neutral cultures emotions are usually displayed only at a minimum extent, while in affective cultures individuals feel comfortable to express their feelings and emotions in public.
- **Achievement vs. ascription:** this dimension is quite similar to power distance cultural dimension presented by Hofstede. It marks the level of tolerance of society towards the pattern of distribution of power and status amongst members of society.
- **Sequential time vs. synchronous time:** whether things get done one at a time or whether many things get done at once.
- **Internal direction vs. external direction:** the degree to which individuals believe they have control over external environment.

2. Multi-active. Multi-active cultures have people that are much more extrovert, rely on their eloquence and ability to persuade and use human force as an inspirational factor. They often complete human transactions emotionally. Such people are great networkers, working according to people-time rather than clock-time.

3. Reactive. People in reactive or listening cultures rarely initiate action or discussion. They prefer to first listen to and establish the other's position. Only at a later stage will they react to it and formulate their own position in the discussion***.

While the three types of cultures are distinctive, each possesses behavioural elements from the other two categories. It is a question of **which one is dominant**. Many individuals deviate from the national type in a work situation, for example engineers and accountants tend to be linear, sales people multi-active, lawyers and doctors reactive****.



Lewis Cultural Types Model

The Lewis model triangulates countries and their culture between **3 clear categories**. These categories are not based on nationality or religion but on behaviour:

1. Linear-active. People in linear-active cultures are people who carefully plan and manage their actions. They do things one at a time, according to schedule, and so are very accurate and efficient in their work. They like working with others who focus on the task and who appreciate structure and reason**.

Source: *International Business Door: Stuart Wall, Sonal Minocha, Bronwen Rees + <https://expertprogrammanagement.com/2017/10/trompenaars-cultural-dimensions/>; **<https://magnussonllc.wordpress.com/2011/01/19/the-lewis-model-cultural-dimensions/>; ***<https://www.crossculture.com/about-us/the-model/reactive/>; ****<https://www.crossculture.com/the-lewis-model-dimensions-of-behaviour/>

7. EVALUATION TALKS

WHEN, WHAT AND WHY



Most Belgian companies will organize an **evaluation talk once or twice** a year. The purpose of this talk is to have a look at your objectives, personal growth (ups and downs) and sometimes also to reevaluate your salary. Some companies will do this in a very formal way, others will choose to do it in a more informal way. If you feel you could use an evaluation talk after your first 3 months, don't hesitate to contact your supervisor and ask for some feedback in a formal or informal way (depending on the culture in your company).

If you haven't received an evaluation talk after your first year, **request one**. In some Belgian companies evaluation talks aren't on the top of the priority list. But these kind of talks are a great way to learn and grow in your job. So don't be afraid to approach your employer and **ask for an evaluation talk**.

During your evaluation talk you will receive and also give feedback. Especially when you're giving feedback it's really important that you know how to do it. Feedback given in a poor way will miss its effect. On the next page you can find tips on **how to give feedback in an effective way**.

8. GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Feedback on the work floor is important, both **positive** and **negative**. Positive feedback gives energy and reinforcement of good behaviour. Negative feedback helps to build your learning curve. To develop your own competences it is important you regularly ask for feedback and give feedback.

An interesting method to give feedback is **nonviolent communication** as defined by **Marshall Rosenberg**. Nonviolent communication helps you understand that feedback is a reflection of the other person's perception of your actions. Interpretation and perception are culturally biased so be very aware of this impact when giving or receiving feedback. A rule of thumb is to give feedback on a behavioural level (without interpretation) rather than on a personal level. Eg. "I notice you are often late for a meeting" rather than "I feel you are a colleague that has no respect" (in some cultures coming late means you show no respect, in others it is part of the working rhythm).

The basis of the **nonviolent communication strategy** is to focus on 4 components:

Observation: give the facts, state the behaviour someone showed that you want to address/give feedback on. Be as precise as possible.

Feelings: tell the person how their actions made you feel and why.

Needs: tell the person what you would need.

Request: request what kind of behaviour you would like the person to show in the future. Be as clear and concrete as possible. Also use a positive tone to phrase your request.

A concrete example, illustrating possible ways of giving feedback to someone who missed a deadline:

Last week you didn't meet your deadline on handing in the paperwork for project X (**Observation**). This made me feel really stressed because I was waiting for it to finish my own work (**Feelings**). It would help if I knew beforehand if you can't reach a deadline so I can adapt the scheme or we can set priorities (**Need**). So, next time can you communicate earlier so we can follow up closely on the deadline (**Request**).

In some cultures missing deadlines gives the perception that the person must have had other priorities, for other cultures missing a deadline could create the perception that you're a slow worker and you're an underperformer. When you are frustrated you might be inclined to give the following feedback: "You are not a trustworthy team member. Again you missed a deadline." Or "You're underperforming, I think you're a really slow worker. Next time you'll have to work faster." This type of feedback will trigger a negative response or feeling without learning impact or solution. So filter this interpretation bias from your communication. When receiving feedback you do not fully understand, try to analyse the situation and understand what triggered the reaction of the other. If relevant, open up the conversation again and find a joint solution linked to the needs of all people involved.

9. TALENT DEVELOPMENT

IT'S YOUR JOURNEY



More and more companies expect you to **take control over your own learning path**. As seen in the second tool there are a lot of ways to **develop yourself and have a life full of learning**. So don't be afraid to set your own goals of what you want to learn and proactively propose them to your employer. **The stronger your skills get**, the better you will be able to perform for the company.

Some companies offer their employees a yearly budget to further develop themselves. If this budget is available spend it on events, interesting books or a course. Don't let it go to waste.

Take control over your own learning path.

You can find possible organisations and interesting courses in Tool 2: Preparing your CV and cover letter. If you're interested in events or webinars then the website Eventbrite can help you find relevant ones.



10. CAREER MOVES

Where do you want your career to take you

Starting a new job also means beginning a new adventure that will further sculpt your career. When you know how you want your career to evolve, your development plan and networking can be aligned to that too. So take some time to think about how you want your career to evolve. The Centre for Excellence in Strategic Talent Management from Vlerick Business School puts forward 8 different career moves:

1

VERTICAL

You want to **ascend in the hierarchy**. You are convinced that you can handle the duties and responsibilities of your supervisor and you would be only too happy to prove this. Key drivers to take on this challenge are not just money, prestige and power but also the increased accountability and visibility within your organisation. To achieve all of this you are willing to invest a great deal of effort. You are prepared to work hard, commit yourself to high profile intensive projects that deliver a lot of added value to the organisation, participate in network activities... However, you need to realise that this vertical move is no obvious career step. For several reasons, such as changing skill requirements or the flattening of organisations and increased automation, there is a decline of the vertical advancement possibilities. Therefore, if your goal is a vertical move, you will have to align your own skills and knowledge with the needs of your organisation.

You want to **expand your responsibilities or change your role in the organisation**. You want to perform different functions, take on additional tasks or do your job in a different manner. By making this particular move you want to master important skills, develop competences and build more productive relationships with colleagues and customers. As an added benefit you can achieve all these advantages without leaving your current position or organisation. In addition to this, you focus on making your current job more challenging by increasing your decision-making power, the variety of skills you use, or the work itself. You are constantly on the lookout to do your job in a more creative and innovative way. This, in turn, increases your career satisfaction and your sense of personal accomplishment. While making your job more meaningful you also add more to your organisation.

2

Enrichment

3

Lateral

You want a change in your job that doesn't necessarily influence your pay, status or level of responsibility. The primary reason for moving sideways, rather than upwards is to diversify your skill and knowledge base. You might for example work with a different product or team. Another option is to shift to a new functional area, such as from marketing to sales. There are a lot of payoffs from a lateral move. Looking at the short term, a lateral move can increase your marketable skills and the network of personal contacts. These could give you a higher income or facilitate your move upwards in hierarchy. In fact, making this sideward move can sometimes be the only option when you're trying to make a major move upwards. It shows that you aren't afraid to be taken out of your comfort zone and it proves your versatility, which increases your opportunities.

You constantly **focus on innovation and creativity**. You are always on the lookout to transform an idea or a dream into a profitable venture, while working within your organisation. This enables you to use your passion and entrepreneurial skills without taking the risk or accountability associated with entrepreneurial activities. Your love for intrapreneurship has a lot of advantages, not only for you as an individual but also for your organisation. You can take risks, develop yourself, learn from failures, and be energised while the organisation becomes more dynamic and profitable.

4

Intrapreneurship

5

Managerial

You dream about reaching a management level within your organisation. You want to participate in shaping the major strategic lines of the organisation so that you have an impact on what and how things happen, both in the short as in the long term. Next to being involved with the vision, you also want to implement it to accomplish the set goals. During this implementation you want to continue in your role as manager by coordinating the process. You make sure that all deadlines are met, that everybody knows and sticks to the budget and you make changes when necessary. You get energized when you are able to implement the resources entrusted to you in an efficient way. These resources are not only material but also include the people you work with. You find it enjoyable to work with people and encourage them to implement the plan.

6

Expert

You continuously want to **grow and develop yourself** within a given field. You want to have a detailed hold on this field and you like knowing the ins and outs of it so you can easily translate your knowledge into practice. You are prepared to invest a lot of your time and energy in achieving this goal. You want to follow courses, approach your domain from different angles and grab every opportunity that could provide you with new knowledge, insights and experience. You want to excel in your field, not only for yourself but also for your colleagues and the organisation. You want to be considered as a source of knowledge for anyone who needs reliable information. To summarise: you want to be recognized as an expert and you do everything in your power to continue to refine and update your knowledge.

You prefer to remain in your current function. This preference can be motivated in different ways, mostly depending on the phase your life or career are in. Remaining where you are can be a way to further develop the skills and competences that you frequently use during the execution of your current job. In other words, you first want to master these tasks and corresponding responsibilities before thinking about taking on a new challenge. Additionally, staying put can also be motivated by the enjoyment you get from your present job. It is possible that you are so satisfied with your job that you don't see any reason to change the situation. Yet another possible reason for staying in place is having a balance between your work and life. You know exactly what your job entails and how you can play your work so it doesn't interfere with your personal life.

7

Stay put

8

Project

You are interested in **taking temporary steps** that don't entail any formal promotion. You are attracted mainly by short-term projects that may or may not fall within your current functional area. You like jobs with a relatively short duration so that you can finish them and proceed to the next challenge before you get bored. An additional advantage for you is that everything happens at a fast pace: you must decide and/or implement immediately. For you, the succession of short-term projects, instead of one fixed job, boosts your energy and creativity and enables you to stay focused. This preference for projects has advantages not only for you as an individual, such as increasing your network, expansion of skills and knowledge but also for the organisation. You become a multi-skilled, flexible and employable employee.



11. BUILDING YOUR NETWORK

INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY



INTERNALLY

Starting a new job means starting in a new team and in a **different working environment**. It's important that you don't do everything on your own but **keep in touch with your fellow colleagues**. Try to interact with as many stakeholders as you can in a formal but also informal way. **Your learning curve will accelerate** once you understand what drives the different people in your team. Questions such as what is most important to management, what is the position of your company in relation to the industry, will not answer themselves. You will need to **get to know the people that you work with**. A lot of companies offer some kind of **buddy system** in which they set up a new employee with a more senior one to show them around and get them integrated. If your company doesn't provide this kind of guidance, **try to search for a buddy on your own**. There will always be someone that wants to show you around.



When working in an international environment a common pitfall is to only network with people that are closest to your culture or have the same nationality. Don't make this mistake and try to network with both locals and internationals.

EXTERNALLY

It's also important to **not lose touch with the outside world**. What's happening in the industry, how is the competition doing, are there any other interesting projects out there? Or maybe you have an interesting idea and you would love to have somebody else's opinion on it? To find an answer to your questions you'll need to **attend networking events** or maybe even **join a professional employer organisation** (like Agoria, Ergon, VOKA, VKW, Unizo, Sirris and FEB).

12. YOU ARE NEVER ALONE



Don't see networking as something you do for your job, but see it as something you do for yourself. It's great to have people you can go to for some personal advice. It helps if not everything is going as planned, if you have a conflict you don't know how to handle or you have a problem you can't face on your own. Then it's good to know that **you're never alone**.

Everyone has to start somewhere and everyone knows what it's like to be the new kid on the block. So **don't hold back** and **approach someone** when you feel you could benefit from a chat. If you don't feel comfortable talking about it to one of your colleagues or you even feel your mentor/supervisor isn't the one to go to for this question, you can always contact the prevention advisor (most of the time this will be someone from the HR department). You can also ask your colleagues who else you can talk to, it's no exception that someone else in the company is great with this kind of situation (apart from the official prevention advisor).

The important message you should take away is that you know you're never alone. If you're struggling with something, don't keep it to yourself, but **dare to ask**.

FIRST 3 MONTHS CHECKLIST

After the first two weeks:

- All paperwork is signed and you understand what everything means
- Your objectives for your first period are clear
- You have met/planned a meeting with everybody in your team
- You have found somebody that shows you around and you can ask your questions to

After the first month:

- You have met everybody in your team and know what their main objectives for the coming time are
- You have received your first paycheck and you understand all the information you can find on your payslip (if not, you've asked help to better understand)
- You're getting to know the company culture

After the first two months:

- You know who the main stakeholders are and how to achieve their objectives and yours

FIRST 3 MONTHS CHECKLIST

- You're working on expanding your external network and will attend an interesting event or workshop soon
- You've tried to give someone feedback using nonviolent communication and to actively seek feedback yourself

After the first three months:

- Everything is clear, you know your objectives and are ready for the coming year, if you feel the need to have an evaluation talk with your supervisor you approached him/her and planned one
- You're comfortable with your work-life balance, if not you've approached your supervisor and talked about it
- You know you are in control of your own learning path, so you thought of how you want to grow in the next year
- Your internal network is getting bigger each day and you're investing time into getting to know different people
- Your external network is getting bigger each day and you've found an interesting external event that you'll attend

13. TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Stay yourself, have confidence and a proactive attitude
- ✓ Take control over your own learning path
- ✓ Know that your career can move in different ways
- ✓ Get to know your colleagues, different stakeholders, the company culture... but don't forget to also network externally by attending interesting events or happenings
- ✓ Try to find a good work-life balance
- ✓ Be aware of the cultural differences that colour your perceptions. Use nonviolent communication to give feedback
- ✓ Use the "first three months checklist" to help you during those first months

14. INSPIRED BY

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The project team:

- Prof Dr Dirk Buyens - Professor of Human Resources and Partner at Vlerick Business School
- Dr Emmy Defever - Senior Researcher Area People and Organisation at Vlerick Business School
- Merel Dutry - Intern Area People and Organisation at Vlerick Business School
- Hannelore Waterschoot - Managing Partner at Talentree
- Nancy Leys - Project Manager at Talentree
- Josefine Duvander - Intern Digital Communication at Talentree
- Myrthe Waterschoot - Marketing Manager at Talentree

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OVERVIEW FIVE TOOLS:



Tool 1: Setting your new job goals

Tool 1 will help you research the Belgian job market, find more information about bottleneck vacancies and mentoring programmes. You'll discover how you can define your new job goal. It ends with a framework to help you define your strengths and weaknesses and two testimonials about reskilling and focusing on your passion.



Tool 2: Preparing your CV and cover letter

Tool 2 will help you create a good CV, cover letter and a LinkedIn profile. It contains information on life long learning and language training with names of possible organisations and courses. It ends with concrete examples of resumes and cover letters.



Tool 3: The importance of networking

Tool 3 will tell you why and how to network. You'll learn how to sell yourself, use LinkedIn as a network tool and how to follow up on any networking you did. It contains a testimonial of a newcomer who found a job in Belgium thanks to his network. It ends with a checklist you can use when preparing for a network meeting.



Tool 4: From first call to getting hired

Tool 4 will guide you through the application process. You'll learn about telephone screenings, preparation for any job interview, assessment centres and feedback. It will give you more insight on how to answer a question related to salary expectations and the STAR method (a method frequently used by recruiters). It ends with a testimonial from a newcomer who found a job by being confident and it contains cards that will help you practice difficult interview questions.



Tool 5: Kick-off in the company

Tool 5 will help you when you've found a job. It contains information on talent development, career moves, internal and external networks, evaluation talks, work-life balance and a testimonial of a newcomer who found a job and made her personal life fit with her work life. In the end you'll find a checklist that will help you in your first three months on the job.