

Twenty Years, Countless Careers: BCF Career Event's Impact on Life Sciences



Celebrating a milestone, BCF Career Event, the premier life sciences career fair in the Benelux, marks its 20th anniversary this year. For two decades, it has been a launchpad for countless life sciences professionals and students, many of whom have advanced their careers forward through this event.

In honor of this anniversary, we reflect on the beginning with the founder, Haifeng Hu of Hyphen Projects, and interviewed two companies, CLS Services and CheckMark, companies who have participated in all 20 editions since the start.



When and where did the idea come from to start BCF Career Event?

Haifeng Hu: "The first seeds trace back to late nineties when I, as a Biotechnology student, organized a university-broad career week for all students at Wageningen University. Post graduation, I found it quite difficult to explore my career options in life sciences industry. After my first job for BioPartner in early 2000's, I decided to start my own company Hyphen Projects in 2004 and address this unmet need by organizing a national career event specifically for the Life sciences sector: BCF Career Event. Originally the acronym "BCF" stood for Bio, Chemistry & Food, but nowadays we say that it stands for "Biotech Careers Forwards".

"Two decades of helping jobseekers: Celebrating BCF Career Event's anniversary with CLS Services and CheckMark Labrecruitment"



CLS Services has been a proud main sponsor of all BCF Career Event editions in the past twenty years: a career event you obviously don't want to miss. Why is that?

Jan Paul Favier: "Since the very first edition we participated in the BCF Career Event. For almost 20 years now, we aim to be market leader in Life Sciences and Chemistry recruitment in The Netherlands. At this event we present ourselves and we can meet and connect with talents directly. We prefer long term partnerships that align with

our promise: Dedicated to Excellence. Our presence at BCF Career Event for such a long time meets how we roll: do something extremely well or don't even start. We always make sure people recognise us and remember us afterwards."

How has the event and the sector evolved over the past two decades?

René Kemps: "Over the years BCF has grown in size, with more participating companies and visitors. This is in line with sector developments as we saw a growing number of companies and people employed in the Life Sciences sector. Twenty years ago, large companies had a (corporate) R&D department in the Netherlands, like DSM and Astellas. Nowadays it is a challenging time. Yes, we see many start-ups in Life Sciences but this growth has unfortunately not translated into more grown-up companies, exceptions are e.g. Crucell/J&J, Galapagos, Genmab and Pharming. If Dutch government stimulates the investment climate and businesses in Life Sciences, we are confident that the Netherlands can stand out again on innovation and development in this sector. It will provide necessary stability for companies to grow and acquire even more talented specialists."

Based on the decades of experience you both have in Life Sciences, which advice would you give to professionals working in Life Sciences?

Jan Paul: "At CLS Services we all have a professional background in Chemistry or Life Sciences. That is why we know exactly what talents and clients are going through. We always advise people to find a job they are enthusiastic about and enjoy but be realistic at the same time. Let's be honest, every job will have aspects you enjoy less. If you are happy in your job for about 90%, we think you are doing really well. About career planning make sure to have a short term and a long-term goal. Think always one or two job steps ahead to also allow for serendipity. If a job, even temporary, can bring you closer to your goal, just take that opportunity and make sure to make the most of it. Learn as much as possible and broaden your horizons."

René continues: "How to find a great job? We strongly advise to focus on building and using your network and avoid using boilerplate application letters. A short, interesting and tailored letter is much more appealing than a long generic one. Show us the real you. We see more and more candidates using ChatGPT for writing letters. Stay away from generic. I mean, ChatGPT is a great

inspiration, but make sure we can recognize your personality in that letter. Your application is about you."



CheckMark has exhibited in all 20 editions of BCF Career Event: why is this a career event you do not want to miss and what makes it different from others?

BCF Career Event is unique as it's the only career fair specifically tailored for the chemistry and life sciences sectors—our industry's niche. Prior to BCF, career fairs were too broad, seldom connecting us with relevant talents. Unlike general or product-focused trade fairs, BCF uniquely combines recruiters, companies and candidates, fulfilling a vital need from the outset. It has grown into a serious, thriving event, outlasting other lab career initiatives. Being the sole in-person career fair in this field, it attracts all relevant parties, making it essential for us to be present.

How have you seen the labour market in the life sciences field change over the past 20 years?

Over the past 20 years, the life sciences field has dramatically expanded and evolved. Two decades ago, the number of jobs and the size of biotech companies were considerably smaller. The sector has since witnessed a surge in demand for professionals, transitioning from a predominantly scientific focus to encompass broader roles in development, production, and quality control. This maturation is reflected, for example, in educational trends, with the number of students majoring in the life sciences surpassing those in chemistry for many years now. The industry has become more tangible and offers wider career perspectives, changes that are highlighted and facilitated by specialized events like the BCF Career Event.

Can you share a memorable success story of a connection made or opportunity realized through BCF Career Event?

At BCF Career Event, we've encountered numerous individuals whom we've successfully guided into fulfilling roles within their field. The internet, vast as it is, doesn't always facilitate such serendipitous connections. Our participation in the event has catalyzed a multitude of opportunities, such as for PhDs struggling to make the shift from academia to the corporate world. A memorable highlight was assisting a postdoctoral candidate, who was uncertain about his prospects in the industry, by leveraging our company's network to secure a position that aligned perfectly with his skills and aspirations. It's these transformative encounters that underscore the value and impact of BCF Career Event.

What emerging trends in life sciences are you most excited about, and how can those be addressed in future editions of the BCF Career Event?

One exciting emerging trend in the life sciences is the increasing integration of automation within laboratories. Advancements in robotics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning are revolutionizing how routine tasks, like pipetting, are performed. These technologies enhance efficiency and accuracy. They open new avenues for research and development. At future BCF Career Events, addressing this trend could involve dedicated sessions or workshops on laboratory automation, showcasing cutting-edge technologies, and connecting attendees with companies at the forefront of these innovations. Emphasizing automation could also guide job seekers toward the necessary skills and education paths to thrive in this evolving landscape.

Interested in recruiting life sciences talents for your company? See www.bcfcareer.nl for more information.