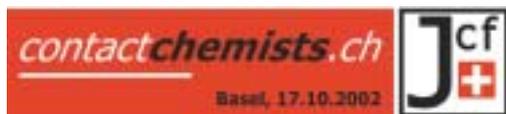


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## The First Careers Fair Specifically for Chemists in Switzerland

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**Abstract:** Here we report on the first careers fair for chemists in Switzerland, *contactchemists.ch*. This event was organized by the Swiss Young Chemists' Committee Basel under the auspices of the SCS. Twelve companies accepted our invitation to take part and present their activities in both poster booths and oral presentations. This was complemented by a workshop that aided applicants in forming a suitable job-finding strategy. An informal exchange of information was possible and made *contactchemists.ch* a success not only for the participating companies but also for the numerous visitors. Synopses of the oral company presentations are included in this report.

**Keywords:** Careers fair · Company presentations · *contactchemists.ch* · Job fair · Swiss Young Chemists' Committee

The Swiss Young Chemists' Committee (SYCC) has organized the first careers fair specifically designed for chemists in Switzerland. This took place under the auspices of the Swiss Chemical Society during their Fall Meeting in Basel on October 17th, 2002. Our goal in organizing *contactchemists.ch* was to give undergraduates, Ph.D. students, and post-docs the opportunity to learn more about Swiss companies employing chemists. We were very pleased that a broad range of companies, from multinationals to young start-ups, graciously accepted our invitation. Notably participants included high impact firms such as; Actelion, Bachem, Baer Management Consulting, Chemspeed, Ciba SC, F. Hoffmann-La Roche, Lonzagroup, Nestlé, Novabiochem, Novartis, Serono,

and Syngenta. As we could not build upon prior experience or success, we would like to express our gratitude to the numerous participants who trusted us to organize such an important event.

The company poster booths were visited by many interested young chemists facilitating enquiry into opportunities available in Swiss chemical industry. Graduates could inform themselves in a brochure with company profiles before contacting the representatives, chemists as well as human resources personnel. Some companies were able to virtually pile up applications and CVs, and enthusiastic remarks on the specific fit of applicants' qualifications to the companies' needs were expressed. In fact, the only critique was that more space for the booths would have been desirable in order to avoid queues and permit more representatives from each company to take part.

An important aim of our careers fair was to aid applicants in forming a suitable job-finding strategy. We asked *Baer Management Consulting* to tell interested participants about 'How to Apply'. Mrs. Baer, the founder of the company, gave this presentation and provided a handout with all transparencies to a capacity crowd. Not only was every seat taken but many spectators



Visitors of the SCS Fall Meeting and *contactchemists.ch* in the Foyer of the Convention Center of Messe Basel.

were also willing to stand in the back rows to hear the lecture. The presentation was highly interesting and made clear to everyone that an application has to be well pre-

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pared and structured. After the talk, a lot of participants held a vivid discussion with Mrs. Baer during which she gave clear answers to an often difficult topic. A selected number of companies had the opportunity to present their interests in oral presentations. Many of them were visited by such a large number of young chemists that we had to ask the speakers to repeat their talks later the same day. A brief report from each of these lectures follows below.

Dr. Raphaël Badoud from *Nestlé Research Center* in Lausanne told us about working in a leading worldwide food company. According to a recent survey of graduates on different topics, Nestlé is the most attractive prospective employer in Switzerland. Their central research facility is located in Lausanne, complemented by a range of regional locations in other countries. Increasingly, value-added products like water with a comparable calcium content to milk for lactose-intolerant individuals are marketed by Nestlé. Even the bottles for carbonated water have been improved by the company. There is a need for truly interdisciplinary research in the food industry, and Dr. Badoud gave interesting insight into how this is done in the laboratories of the market leader.

*Chemspeed*, one of the leading companies in the field of parallel semi- and fully automated synthesizers for reactions, work-up, purification, and analysis, was represented by their Vice President for Chemistry & Support, Dr. Josef Schröer. He presented, in a stimulating talk, some of their techniques which showed in an impressive

way the advantages of using their technique in comparison to classical methodology.

The *Ciba company* presentation was given by Dr. Niklaus Bühler, Senior Technology Officer at Ciba and an invited lecturer at the University of Neuchâtel and ETH Zürich. Dr. Bühler gave an overview of Ciba's dynamic economic portfolio, and the company's core competences, including the development of protective additives for plastics and coatings (UV protectives, antimicrobials, antistatics), hair and skincare, or the coloring of plastics, coatings, fibers, wool, and paper among other things. The second speaker, Dr. Roger Prétôt presented career opportunities for young scientists at Ciba SC. Coming directly from university, chemists are often employed as laboratory heads, but there are numerous other career paths available; production, human resources, patents.

The research activities of *Syngenta Crop Protection*, the world leader in agribusiness, were presented by Dr. Ramos Tombo. After a short summary of Syngenta's history he explained the main activities of a truly multinational company that has major research sites in Switzerland, the US and the UK. He emphasized Syngenta's need for chemists with broad synthetic knowledge. At the end he remarked that due to the seasonal nature of agribusiness the best period of the year for submitting an application is in spring or summer.

*Serono* is a leading global biotech company, active especially in the development of recombinant protein therapeutics. In the past few years, Serono has focused its ef-

forts towards the discovery of new small molecules to be developed as medicines. This required not only the construction of new chemistry research centers, but also hiring of new chemists. Dr. Anna Quattropiani, who took part in the creation of the research center in Geneva, showed us with enthusiasm the importance of this new approach. It was fascinating to see the contributions an inorganic chemist can bring to a domain usually reserved to genomic specialists, pharmacologists, and biologists.

The organization of this meeting would not have been possible without the constant support and encouragement of the Swiss Chemical Society, most notably from Vice-President Professor Reinhard Neier. He also kindly provided welcoming remarks during the opening ceremony of the careers fair. We would also like to acknowledge the financial support from the Basler Chemische Gesellschaft that made it possible to advertise *contactchemists.ch* with color flyers and company profile brochures.

After this year's meeting, the Swiss Young Chemists' Committee received a lot of encouragement from participating companies as well as from young chemists for the organization of future careers fairs. We hope that we can repeat *contactchemists.ch* annually from now on and are looking forward to our next event in autumn 2003. To stay up-to-date with our plans, please visit our web pages at <http://www.contactchemists.ch> and <http://www.swiss-chem-soc.ch/young> or send us an e-mail to [jcf\\_basel@gmx.ch](mailto:jcf_basel@gmx.ch).



Dr. Raphaël Badoud, Nestlé, during his presentation.



The poster booth of the organizing committee, here staffed by Stefan Kaiser and Sebastian P. Smidt.

**Feedback by companies that participated at *contactchemists.ch* in 2002:**

“Das Personalmarketing sowie die Linienvertreter von Roche haben den Anlass *contactchemists.ch* als durchweg spannend empfunden. Wir konnten sehr interessante Kontakte zu Diplom-Chemikern, Doktoranden und Postdoktoranden herstellen und hatten ebenso die Gelegenheit, Roche als attraktiven Arbeitgeber zu präsentieren. Die Organisation des Anlasses liess auch von Ihrer Seite nichts zu wünschen übrig – wir freuen uns auf eine Wiederholung und bedanken uns recht herzlich.”

*Susanne Albiez, Personalmarketing Roche Schweiz, F. Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd.*

“I would like to congratulate the organizers of the *contactchemists.ch* forum for the idea to ask companies, large ones or small ones, dealing with chemistry in various areas to present themselves on behalf of the fall assembly of the Swiss Chemical Society. For young talents educated in chemistry it is very encouraging to see, in a focused way, the different companies where they might find a challenging position in the future. Personally, I enjoyed the lively discussions with many highly motivated young colleagues who did not know Actelion before. Overall, such an event deserves to be repeated!”

*Dr. Thomas Weller, Head of Chemistry, Actelion Pharmaceuticals Ltd.*

“Es hat uns sehr gefreut, an der *contactchemists.ch* teilzunehmen. Die Organisation hat hervorragend geklappt und die Betreuung war erstklassig.”

*Sibylle Wälchli, Ciba SC, Praktikantin Personalmarketing*

“Merci d’avoir associé Nestlé à la première bourse d’échange organisée par *contactchemists.ch*. Le succès rencontré lors de cette première bourse d’échange organisée par *contactchemists.ch* a montré la nécessité d’établir et de renforcer les liens entre les jeunes universitaires et les représentants de l’industrie. Grâce à l’excellente organisation du comité de *contactchemists.ch*, le forum qui s’est déroulé à Bâle à l’occasion de l’Assemblée d’automne de la Société Suisse de Chimie dans le cadre de ‘r+d in life science’ a donné lieu à un fructueux échange d’information sur les possibilités d’emploi, en particulier dans le secteur R&D de l’industrie alimentaire, et sur les besoins en scientifiques de haut niveau dans les disciplines telles que physique, chimie, biochimie, physiologie, bio-informatique, modélisation, etc.

Cette bourse d’échange a également permis à Nestlé de présenter ‘Nestlé, the worldwide leading food company’ au travers de sa longue histoire et de ses nombreux produits et marques, et de décrire les activités scientifiques du Centre de Recherche de Lausanne et l’organisation de son réseau R&D au niveau mondial. [...] En mon nom et au nom du Centre de Recherche Nestlé, je voudrais vous remercier une fois encore pour votre invitation, pour l’excellence de votre organisation et l’amabilité de votre accueil.”

*Dr. Raphaël Badoud, Nestlé Research Center Lausanne*