

00:00:03:07 - 00:00:24:07

Clare

Hello and welcome. I'm Clare, and you're listening to Microbe Talk, a podcast from the Microbiology Society. This month is a special industry episode, so I spoke to Dr. Oliver Severn at our Annual Conference in Birmingham to discuss all things industry; including his experiences working in industry as a microbiologist and his advice to any listeners who want to make the move from academia.

00:00:26:03 - 00:00:42:07

Clare

Just a quick note to the listener. We recorded this episode while at annual conference, so apologies for any background noise.... And so thank you very much for coming to talk to me at Annual Conference 2023. We're in Birmingham. How have you found it so far?

00:00:42:14 - 00:00:49:20

Dr Ollie Severn

Oh, it's been excellent. Yeah, it's been really, really good. Already leaving inspired, which is. Oh, nice. And taking a lot home with me. So it's.

00:00:49:20 - 00:00:50:06

Clare

Lovely to.

00:00:50:06 - 00:00:58:04

Dr Ollie Severn

Yeah, pretty much. Every time I come to annual conference, I hear something new that I just hadn't thought of before. Oh, meet somebody who I didn't think I was going to meet. So, yeah, really?

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Clare

It's all about conferences. All about, isn't it? Yeah. So before we jump in, it's very important to, of course, get introductions so that everybody who's listening, I hope, would introduce yourself.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Yeah. I'm Dr. Ollie seven. I'm one of the industry members of the society. I'm an R&D manager for a company called Singer Instruments.

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Clare

So what we're kind of ideally speak about today is kind of this movement from academia and industry. But I suppose what is an R&D manager is it's a good it's a good start, I think.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Yeah, it's a really good question. I think if you'd asked me three or four years ago, I wouldn't even know a job like this exists. So it's one of the reasons I like to come to annual conferences to talk to microbiologists about kind of the roles that exist within industry. So R&D manager I work for a company that is an SMEs of small medium enterprise, and if you're working for an SME, you normally do about three jobs at once.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Yes, the usual thing. Yes. So I manage well. I have three managers that report directly to me. So they are a software manager, hardware manager and a research manager. Probably most interesting from a microbiology site point of view is that research team is a group of scientists that look at effectively high throughput techniques on robotics. Okay, in in-house, our hardware and software team design and build robotics to speed up microbiology.

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Clare

That sounds cool ok I love that. There's a certain level of hierarchy that is very clear and it's very similar across almost all institutions around the world of within kind of academia. You start as what, like a research assistant and then move your way up. Those roles don't necessarily translate directly into industry. And I think sometimes what happens with people who want to move from academia, they look for research versus roles and they don't necessarily exist.

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Clare

Yeah, so I suppose from your experiences, what would be your advice on how to find what roles exist? Like you said, you didn't know, So how did you find that out?

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Dr Ollie Severn

Yeah, it's a really good, really good point. The I found out most of what I knew about industry in the early days. Bye by accident. And a lot of that was through talking to people. It was actually eight years ago in this conference center that I met a guy called Jack Boyles, who worked for Singer Instruments. Okay, introduce me to the company.

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Dr Ollie Severn

I stayed in contact. The company actually did an internship with them for three months. At that point in my life, I was completely convinced I was going to be an academic where I wanted to be. Towards the end of my Ph.D., I realized getting a postdoc is really hard. I was looking at all kinds, different options and just out of luck, Jack contacted me and said, Hey, have you thought about coming back and working with Singer Instruments?

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Dr Ollie Severn

So I kind of fell into industry by accident. That being said, if you're brand new to it and you want to know what kind of roles are out there, the truth is, is if you look at microbiology in particular, molecular and microbiology and the investment in places like North America into it as a field is huge. So in all the kind of deep tech fields, synthetic biology, which is a kind of fancy business way, really saying molecular biology has more investment than any of the deep time combined.

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Dr Ollie Severn

And the reason I'm saying that is the skills at this conference are globally applicable to the world's problems, which means that actually your skill set is hugely valuable in all kinds of different fields, and it includes all kinds of different things. Yes. Okay. There are research scientist roles, if that's really where

you want to be. Actually, a lot of people look at industry because they really love answering this question.

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Dr Ollie Severn

And one, of course, scientists and the whole group.

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Clare

are kind of done with research.

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Dr Ollie Severn

we want to do something else and it can be a bit of a minefield. So for example, there's roles like an application scientist, so an application scientist looks at what somebody is trying to achieve normally with... in our case a robot

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Clare

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Dr Ollie Severn

Like another device and works with an individual to try and achieve what they're gonna do normally loads of international travel. On the up now we have a lot of roles that you would call a product manager comes with a kind of experience, but a product manager actually is interacting with customers, interacting with a business and finding out, okay, when we launch something new, how do we be absolutely sure that that thing is going to be successful and it needs all the skill sets that people already have?

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Clare

Yeah.

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Dr Ollie Severn

So there's a couple of key roles that you see around. Yeah, maybe I'm talking too generally.

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Clare

I know that makes a lot of sense. So I suppose from that perspective, do you have any advice or perhaps from your hiring perspective or different areas, what would your what are the things you look out for? How do you market those transferable skills - sorry this is lots of questions leveled into one - from that from academia into industry.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Yeah, it's a really good question. So we look at lots of things. I mentioned before that we're relatively small company, about 60 of us. It is based in the UK, but we've also got offices in California and Singapore twice in Germany. For us, culture's really

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Clare

Important for.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Teamwork and how we work together is really important.

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Clare

So yeah.

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Dr Ollie Severn

While we desperately need a microbiological skill set, equally important to us is how somebody interacts with a team. What reputation I have for working with.

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Clare

People like.

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Dr Ollie Severn

My team is really close knit and small, and that doesn't mean you have to be really extrovert. It's not all I'm a power nerd and I'm very proud of that.

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Clare

a lot of people are!

00:06:56:13 - 00:07:22:03

Dr Ollie Severn

Absolutely. But it does mean that actually the way you interact with people is often more important than you think. Yeah. So for us, during the interview process, we often tease out some of the soft skills that scientists aren't necessarily good at selling. You know, we had a really good example of somebody we interviewed recently who gave me a huge list of all the technical ability through that CV, what they're going to apply in there, covering lots of how this market is fit for industry.

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Dr Ollie Severn

But during the interview it came out that during.

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Clare

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Dr Ollie Severn

they'd bought a load of 3D printers and sort of 3D printing face masks for work within the NHS and they built this team of people remotely to help them achieve that. Having no knowledge of it previously. Wow. And that for me was a real kind of enlightening story of how they can build a team of instructors. Really stressful time.

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Clare

Yeah.

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Dr Ollie Severn

And get positive results. And it wasn't even written down anywhere.

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Clare

They didn't pop it on their CV?

00:07:51:18 - 00:08:16:23

Dr Ollie Severn

CV No, wow. It's those kind of things that we look for. But of course, if you're interested in your technical skill set, you easily find that the stuff that you do in the lab day to day because you work with other experts, they're also really good at it. You kind of don't think that's a differentiator or that it's interesting or is actually it's only when you start applying to a different field like industry, you realize actually the skills are really valuable.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Yeah. So what I would say is gave you the skills that you have and also try and get some of that flavor of who you are as a person and what you can add to a culture. Hiring practices are very big on that at the moment, particularly as the business world wakes up to kind of equality, diversity and inclusion.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Definitely there's a lot of kind of scope that kind of selling yourself as a as a human as well. Yes, that scientist.

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Clare

And that is important. Yeah. I think it's really interesting you mentioned about this selling yourself and that's potentially something he's not quite seen in people who come from his academic background. Yeah, I'm coming from for myself. It's a really difficult thing to do. It feels weird and but it's so needed in the recruitment process. Do you have any tips, any suggestions, anything that could potentially help people?

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Dr Ollie Severn

Yeah, it's a really hard balance, right? Because I think I could be completely wrong on this and maybe people will chuckle, but I find often microbiologists and often people just general are fairly humble people. Yeah, we don't really like talking about ourselves very often. We often play down some of our achievements that's not universally true in the tech industry.

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Dr Ollie Severn

I'm not naming any particular field, but yeah, it's not something that's universally true. And there is a fine balance right, between selling yourself and being arrogant. Yes, I think that's what people are fearful of. Yes, they're going to come across as arrogant. Hiring managers probably heard it all. And, you know, when we when we recruit for a role, you get a whole host of people who are very technically capable.

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Dr Ollie Severn

So I wouldn't fear that kind of strange arrogance. Normally a way this led to frameworks out there, but when you kind of constructing a CV, constructing a covering letter, focusing on this is an achievement that I had and this is an output that came from it. So actually giving an example, yes, this is an output that came from it.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Yeah, it's really than obvious to somebody who's recruiting you. Hey look, they did something this young. They're not being arrogant. They're giving me giving me the.

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Clare

Evidence.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Not to give the evidence. With scientists, we get evidence and things. Yes. Equally, when you are applying for a role and this is really easy to say, but when you're in kind of the match recruitment phase and application phase and you're trying to get as many applications as you can really look at the job description you've been given.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Oh, yes. And if you can peg all of these kind of examples and evidence as to things within the job advert, yeah, it's going to signal to the person hiring you. Not only do they want to get a job, they want to work for us.

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Clare

Yes.

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Dr Ollie Severn

And they're willing to prove that. And that is normally will get you an interview. And bearing in mind people often forget this, your CV, you're covering that all that stuff is all about getting an interview.

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Clare

Yeah.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Everything else is irrelevant if you get an interview another way, if you can network, if you can contact somebody and say, I'm really interested in that job, anything that gets kind of that communication started, that's really the tool that you use, right? It's just about getting an interview.

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Clare

Yeah, Yeah. That's some really pretty good advice, actually. How have events like these helped you to excel in your career?

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Dr Ollie Severn

Absolutely, yeah. So the microbiology side in general has been vital to my career.

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Clare

That's great. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

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Dr Ollie Severn

There's multiple reasons. And I talk about it all the time at careers talks and how much experience is valuable. So I did a research piece as an undergraduate that was funded by the microbiology side to work with a group in Nottingham that later led on to me get my Ph.D. I mentioned previously eight years ago this conference center, I met Jack Boyles and through that interaction got an internship working in singer Instruments that later got me my job at Singer Instruments.

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Dr Ollie Severn

It and all of those interactions through the microbiology side.

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Clare

That's fabulous to hear because I think sometimes I definitely events like this you almost don't get this direct feedback. Yeah, it's all behind the scenes. It might take a few years to come to fruition, right? But that is the slow burn and I always say to my friends, for example, who perhaps are in jobs that they don't like, you will never know where those skills will take you, where those connections will take you.

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Clare

And that's really important across all different disciplines of any kind of job market.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Just to pick up what you said there. Yeah, you don't know how important those interactions are. We have a habit when we're talking about careers. You go to a conference like this and you're either in career hunting mode or, well, I'm just enjoying the conference mode. Yeah. What I encourage people to do is actually see things one and the same, because unless you can be who you actually want to be at work, you never really going to be happy, right?

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Dr Ollie Severn

Yeah. So actually whoever you are networking with, whoever you're talking to, we call it networking. Like it's this arcane skill we have to gain, right? It's just talking to people. Yeah. And you know what? Talking to people can be really hard, especially if you're on your own and you don't know where to start, but you don't know which interaction is going to be important and actually don't feel you have to prepare know, actually just go in with a conversation.

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Dr Ollie Severn

You'll find people who have an interest in helping others and that you key contacts, really. And you'll also find people who don't have an interest in helping others. And that's fine, you know, but unless you meet lots of people and unless you come chatting with lots of people in lots of different industries, you're never going to find those people.

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Dr Ollie Severn

It might just be that person who maybe doesn't even offer you a place in their company, but know somebody who might help you out.

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Clare

Yeah, yeah. And just being a face that someone knows on a CV or name, that's exactly for example. That's right. And just is that extra the extra little kind of kick you might need I suppose as well. The one thing that I've noticed is being here shows that you really care and shows that you're involved and shows that you're interested in your career.

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Clare

That speaks volumes to any kind of like recruitment. Yeah.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Said Yeah. And I should say that from annual conference last year I met two individuals who now we've offered contracts to come work with us. Through that interaction at this conference, we've kind of made

contacts with people, roles have come up, they've come to apply and that conversation's really started because we've already met. So that's almost a direct consequence of just the conference and meeting people.

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Clare

Yeah. How useful do you find things like LinkedIn for? Because it's almost like the virtual representation of your networking. Have you used it? Is it a useful tool to you? What's your opinion there?

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Dr Ollie Severn

So I do use LinkedIn just to be completely candid. I'm terrible at social media, something that I actively checked out of a little while ago, so I don't really do Facebook kind of stocks. Twitter, not huge on Instagram. So kind of step back from a lot of social media. But I did stay on LinkedIn and there's a couple of reasons for that.

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Dr Ollie Severn

I'm terrible at keeping track. If you have had a conversation to say, Yeah, LinkedIn's a little bit easier because you can kind of it's, it's like the old days of having kind of a, a black folder filled with business cards. You some somewhere where you can get people's names down, you can create that and connect people. So I find it fairly useful for that reason.

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Dr Ollie Severn

And but it is simply it. All right. I've had other people give me advice that they found great opportunities and new networking opportunities and met people purely through using LinkedIn. But for me, it's almost like a backup to how you do meet people at conferences. It's not huge in academic circles, but definitely in industry. It's very common. Yeah, LinkedIn profile.

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Dr Ollie Severn

It's very common for that LinkedIn profile to be curated.

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Clare

Yes.

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Dr Ollie Severn

So it's a valuable tool, what I would say, and it makes it a little bit easier when you meet particularly industry types, if you have a conversation with somebody really easy to follow up violent in, and if that person goes back to the hotel room and goes back to their office and they've got an invitation, I think to inform somebody, they can easily add that face.

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Dr Ollie Severn

The name is then very common for them. Sound well their backgrounds in right. You can take a look at that and before you know it they might say actually they've got a lot of skills that either I might be interested in or I've got a colleague who's somebody and the amount of times I've had a conversation with somebody I work with either at Singer or another company and they've said, Oh, we're really struggling to recruit for this role.

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Dr Ollie Severn

And I kind of go, Ha met somebody at a conference not long ago and I can't quite remember the name. My first thought would be, Well, check LinkedIn.

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Clare

Yeah, it's like, it's like almost like a passive way of just putting yourself out there. It doesn't take too much work. Yeah, I tend to agree and also say relevance needs to. It's also relevant to mention that quite a lot of external recruitment agencies rely quite heavily on that in and if you if you're not in their database they may then go on LinkedIn and search by skills.

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Clare

So it is important to have that up to date just to put the feelers out. I know recruiters can be annoying, but it is very useful to have that online presence and a virtual CV that anyone can look at.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Yeah, that's exactly right. And you know, it's people are struggling to recruit for tech roles right now in the industry in general. So recruiters are having a field day really because they normally have all of that databases and all that stuff created. A lot of that, as you say, comes from LinkedIn.

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Clare

Yeah.

00:18:03:10 - 00:18:38:02

Dr Ollie Severn

A slight side point on LinkedIn, there is an etiquette to it and it's worthwhile reminding that it's very common to kind of think that LinkedIn, similar to other social media platforms. So you just kind of add as many people as you can in the generally speaking, a really good introduction to get somebody on your LinkedIn profile. And so you can have a conversation with is, you know, if you've been to a talk that or you've had a conversation, send them an environment in, but then also drop a note in that say, look, you probably don't remember, but we had a conversation at such and such a conference.

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Dr Ollie Severn

They will remember, but it's just that little bit of etiquette that shows that there's a personal contact that.

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Clare

Yeah, yeah.

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Dr Ollie Severn

The reason I say that is because a lot of people do use as a recruitment platform these as a sales platform is when you get a whole load of invites. It's quite common to come through it. But actually I don't know. These people say.

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Clare

That's really good advice.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Yeah, it's worthwhile just putting that note in. Nice of you actually. Yeah, you're right. We did have that conversation.

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Clare

Yeah. Yeah. It's interesting you say that. I think LinkedIn is its own Wild West of social media because it's professional entity. it's a professional social media. I would probably probably advise as well There can sometimes be quite a be aware that potential employer employees are looking at your LinkedIn and sometimes that kind of showboating works quite well in some areas, but in other areas I think it's a real let tunnel for a lot of people.

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Clare

Yeah. Do you like post updates and things like that or.

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Dr Ollie Severn

I try to. As I mentioned before, I'm not particularly good at social media. I normally post updates that are more work focused. Yeah. So for example, if somebody in my team sets an incredible I try to make a big deal out of it and link to it helps them, right? Yeah. Gets that kind of visibility up, which is a good thing.

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Dr Ollie Severn

So I'm still learning. Yeah, it's, it's a constant learning process. Yeah. What you're trying to do. But I do agree with you, depending on the industry you're in kind of showboating and being arrogant on social media. It can be again, it comes back to our culture base. A lot of people's hiring practices now are becoming more culture focused.

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Clare

Yeah.

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Dr Ollie Severn

So things like social media are a double edged sword. Well, it's really good to have a social media presence. Also, it shows a lot about you. Now, personally, I'm a big believer in bringing your whole self to work, so if that's who you are, that's great. But actually we have the strange habit as human beings of not showing who we truly are on social media.

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Clare

Yeah, yeah.

00:20:43:15 - 00:21:09:11

Dr Ollie Severn

So don't use it as a platform to kind of massage the ego is a platform for. Yeah. Showing who you really are and what you're really trying to achieve. And equally there I've seen really positive examples of that, of people campaigning for causes and really making a huge impression on something like LinkedIn that is almost synonymous and really, really helpful to that career, even in a parallel path.

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Clare

Yeah, yeah. Again, circles back to the you don't know where those skills can be used elsewhere and yeah, definitely. Oh, that's where you I'm glad I asked those questions. And so I suppose circling back I guess to just kind of quizzing you a little bit more about industry and your experiences, Do you miss anything about academia?

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Dr Ollie Severn

Yes, I do. And I think I think that's a really, really good question because as we go and see this strange thing called life, right, you view your career path as linear. Actually, it's not right. You make decisions all the time, you change your mind and that's good thing, even though that's what you should be doing. Yeah. And if you're ever in a job where you think, actually everything's perfect, this is my dream role and I know I would never change anything.

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Dr Ollie Severn

It's probably a red flag in some respects, right? We naturally crave the grass is greener on the other side. And I think you will have people in academia who really want to move into industry, but equally you have people in trees. I know I really want to move back into academia.

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Clare

Yeah.

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Dr Ollie Severn

So what was your question? Do I miss things from academia? Yeah, I do. I miss a there's a kind of camaraderie in academia that you can't really get anywhere else. And it's kind of that mixture of having to make things work with not a lot. And I really like that. There's a lot of ingenuity, but just to communicate, really strange thing that I observed when I was working in academia, there was this view that if you go to industry, you don't have any control on what you can be working on.

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Dr Ollie Severn

And equally everyone's going to be really secretive all the time. While it's true in some extreme cases, I've often found that industry scientists are far more likely to be open and collaborative than I found in academia is interesting. And the reason is, is because you don't you've you value something different, right? And that value is often something industrial.

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Dr Ollie Severn

So you value something getting into the hands of an end user. Yeah. For that reason you're less worried about your own ideas and kind of public actions or anything like that because it's all value driven, actually far more likely to share ideas and collaborate. And something which I found of really strange juxtaposition that I just wasn't expecting. So I'm very lucky in the fact that we have open collaborations with Manchester University and I see amazing scientist and Daniela Donati.

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Dr Ollie Severn

We've got collaborations with Exeter University and we can freely share loads and loads of information because it's mutually beneficial.

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Clare

That's fabulous. That is really interesting because I definitely think that I had that sort of that your more monetary focus as might would be my initial thought because what the end goal is something different is that it's about selling something, it's about producing something and that your, your experiences is not that or.

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Dr Ollie Severn

Yeah, my experience is not at all. And I do work for an SMB, right?

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Clare

Yes, of course.

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Dr Ollie Severn

It's very different to big industry. And I think that's a really good point in itself. When you go we kind of view industry as this one thing. Yes. And actually there are many, many avenues within industry itself.

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Clare

Yeah.

00:24:20:17 - 00:24:31:01

Dr Ollie Severn

If you are an academic and you really like the high pace excitement of the lab, perhaps a startup's more kind of where you want to be. Right. And there's a huge amount of biotech startups.

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Clare

And yeah.

00:24:31:13 - 00:24:38:19

Dr Ollie Severn

The money heading into that field is incredible. So it could be that and it's not something you have to do forever. It can be something you do for two years.

00:24:39:07 - 00:24:41:17

Clare

Yeah, they can be quite high pressure, can't name exactly.

00:24:41:22 - 00:24:50:07

Dr Ollie Severn

And particularly in North America. And it's very, very common for people to leave academia due to years in a startup where they learn pretty much everything about this crash.

00:24:50:07 - 00:24:50:20

Clare

Course.

00:24:50:20 - 00:25:18:24

Dr Ollie Severn

Crash course move into either another industry role or another academic role. And regardless of what happens, that company success or failure is a good experience for you, and it's seen as good experience. Equally, there's some people who say, well, actually now I'm ready to go straight to big industry to work for the big players biotechnology and I of the people I know who've taken that route, they're often long serving in those roles will do, you know, 5 to 10 years.

00:25:19:08 - 00:25:34:16

Dr Ollie Severn

Now in the tech industry, it's very common to change roles that which is very, very common. It's not even viewed as what people churn if you leave within two years. So actually to have a 5 to 10 year tenure is a really good indication that actually they feel established.

00:25:34:16 - 00:25:35:04

Clare

And yeah.

00:25:36:21 - 00:25:45:18

Dr Ollie Severn

And they get promoted in that time and they move around within the company. But the fact that they stay almost loyalty to the company in that time is a really good indication.

00:25:45:24 - 00:26:09:02

Clare

Yeah. Yeah. I think what is important so I suppose the difference between working in kind of the big industries versus the startup is the big industry or perhaps a little bit more pigeonholed in specifically what your job role is to day to day. But conversely, to that, it means that there's other places you can move internally. Whereas I feel please correct me if I'm wrong, where's the startup?

00:26:09:02 - 00:26:29:03

Clare

You're kind of, like you said, learning everything. You're doing lots of different things and you mentioned about enjoying your time at singer and that you're more values driven. And that's great to hear as an academic microbiologist, he wants to move into industry. What are the green flags to look for in a company?

00:26:29:19 - 00:26:50:24

Dr Ollie Severn

It's a really good question, and the reason for that is I mentioned previously that companies are kind of wising up to equality, diversity, inclusion. They're realizing that they should be more values driven and higher based on kind of culture and values. For that reason, internal marketing is a thing, so some companies will deliberately market themselves as a certain culture.

00:26:51:17 - 00:27:16:10

Dr Ollie Severn

So it's really easy then to get one view of a company through kind of their careers website that hiring website and have a totally different view. When you actually saw the company. So that initial conversation is really important. So how do you know that you're going to work for a company that actually lives out values? It's really easy for company like as saying it is for small, which means that it's very easy to see it.

00:27:16:10 - 00:27:29:20

Dr Ollie Severn

You have conversations with people, you talk to people, you see the kind of work that we do and you have conversations with people via robots. Yeah, they'll tell you what they're like, right? And so it's really easy for bigger companies. It's a lot.

00:27:29:20 - 00:27:31:05

Clare

Harder. Yeah.

00:27:31:05 - 00:27:34:20

Dr Ollie Severn

The key thing to remember is an interview is a two way process.

00:27:35:03 - 00:27:36:08

Clare

100%. Yeah.

00:27:36:09 - 00:27:47:19

Dr Ollie Severn

So we, we have this idea, particularly fear in the what is actually a fairly soul destroying process of looking for a job. When you get to the interview, you kind of just desperate for somebody to tell you you're quite good.

00:27:47:20 - 00:27:48:06

Clare

Yeah.

00:27:48:17 - 00:28:07:24

Dr Ollie Severn

So it can be really easy to just try and get into full whatever you want me to do, I'll do it. That was actually really good to actually have that two way conversation. So what I'd recommend is beginning to interview. You have some questions you want to ask, particularly about culture. Yeah. And what actually do you value as a as a human being?

00:28:07:24 - 00:28:19:12

Dr Ollie Severn

What values is that your progression, actually learning new things and your curiosity? Is that your your family and actually having time to do things that you enjoy? Yeah.

00:28:19:21 - 00:28:20:22

Clare

And it's okay to say.

00:28:21:05 - 00:28:45:12

Dr Ollie Severn

Wow, it's okay. And most companies will reciprocate that. You know, throughout the interview process. They're talking about being very driven, having really lots of exciting work and breaking down barriers and being the head of their field. Another way of interpreting that is you're going to be very long hours. It's going to be sole focus, and that might be what you want.

00:28:45:24 - 00:29:06:24

Dr Ollie Severn

But equally, if you are leaving academia because you want stability and you actually want to start living your life more generally, that might not be the role for you. Yeah, it could be the role for you at some point in your career, but maybe not now. So I'd recommend going into an interview with with a list of your own questions, trying to test those questions actually to what's quarter you.

00:29:07:08 - 00:29:09:09

Clare

Yeah. Do you have a favorite question you ask.

00:29:09:19 - 00:29:10:10

Dr Ollie Severn

Absolutely.

00:29:10:14 - 00:29:11:10

Clare

Good. What's yours?

00:29:11:12 - 00:29:24:05

Dr Ollie Severn

Well, I'll give people an unfair advantage, but we'll go. When we're talking about coaching, we ask a question that means very little. But it's just really funny. And we ask if you were going to be an animal. Yeah, what animal would you be and why?

00:29:24:08 - 00:29:25:08

Clare

Oh, that's a good one.

00:29:25:11 - 00:29:30:06

Dr Ollie Severn

What we often find is when you first get somebody to an interview, they're going in an interview mode. And then.

00:29:30:12 - 00:29:31:11

Clare

There's that. The first question you.

00:29:31:11 - 00:29:32:09

Dr Ollie Severn

Ask one of the first.

00:29:33:01 - 00:29:33:23

Clare

That's great.

00:29:34:08 - 00:29:48:14

Dr Ollie Severn

And it just it's a bit of an icebreaker. Yeah. And gets people open up a little bit. Yeah. Building on that, a really good question to ask the interviewer is how do you know I'm doing a good job?

00:29:48:14 - 00:29:51:09

Clare

Oh I love that one very easily.

00:29:51:09 - 00:30:16:15

Dr Ollie Severn

Then you get into this idea of there's lots and lots of lingo and industry lingo trying to understand the call to KPI, KPIs, key performance indicators. Yeah, it's a weird term that means so much to use all the time. It means loads different things, but effectively it's a way of measuring something. Some roles have a lot of key performance indicators and you're measured through data in R&D.

00:30:16:15 - 00:30:18:18

Dr Ollie Severn

That's possible or fairly rare.

00:30:18:20 - 00:30:19:05

Clare

Yeah.

00:30:19:12 - 00:30:22:20

Dr Ollie Severn

Well, we're often doing exploratory work. Things are different.

00:30:24:00 - 00:30:26:10

Clare

But particularly time in R&D is research and development.

00:30:26:10 - 00:30:26:20

Dr Ollie Severn

Sorry.

00:30:26:22 - 00:30:28:22

Clare

Yes, yes.

00:30:29:11 - 00:31:01:16

Dr Ollie Severn

You should have said that at the start. But how you are measured, if you like, how somebody knows you're doing a good job, which tells you two things. One, it tells you how much pressure that's going to be in the role, but equally whether you are trusted just to do your job. Yeah, if immediately there's lots of measures being put in place and there's lots of data being used, there's an element of not being in mutual trust there, and that would be a bit of a flag for me too.

00:31:02:01 - 00:31:02:12

Clare

Yeah.

00:31:03:00 - 00:31:19:06

Dr Ollie Severn

Equally, if they kind of say, look, we have a way of doing project management, this is how we do that. Project management. You'll have regular meetings with your line manager and discuss how things are going. That's much more flexible when it comes to actually what you're being measured on and would probably play these strengths a bit more.

00:31:19:17 - 00:31:38:16

Clare

Yeah, that's a that is such a valid point. I think sometimes as well. KPIs can just be there for the sake of being that. Yes. Yeah, that's such a valid point. Amazing. Well I'm is I always ask at the end of podcasts, is there anything that you really wanted to get across, anything you wanted to add to this?

00:31:39:15 - 00:31:46:08

Dr Ollie Severn

Not really. I think just having the opportunity to be here, being on a podcast is a bucket list time for me. Say thank you very much.

00:31:46:08 - 00:31:49:08

Clare

I hope I do a good job of it. So.

00:31:50:12 - 00:31:53:11

Dr Ollie Severn

So yeah, it's just been an amazing opportunity to talk to you. So thank you very.

00:31:53:11 - 00:31:55:00

Clare

Much for and.

00:31:55:04 - 00:32:13:18

Dr Ollie Severn

If anyone does want to reach out on LinkedIn, please do another note in saying, Hey, listen to the podcast. I do a lot of kind of careers, talks, talks on project management to do with biology. So do you want any point? Is that do you let me know? I'm more than happy to have a conversation, hopefully point you in the right direction.

00:32:13:18 - 00:32:16:19

Clare

Fabulous. And just to reiterate all of the seven on LinkedIn.

00:32:16:24 - 00:32:17:08

Dr Ollie Severn

That's right.

00:32:17:08 - 00:32:31:07

Clare

Yes, that's it. Instruments. It's fantastic. You get loads of notifications of people looking at your profile now because I'm you would have seen that I did the same this morning and have a little looks. Ray So yeah, that's fantastic. Thank you so much for taking the time to do this. It's been an absolute pleasure.

00:32:31:16 - 00:32:35:13

Dr Ollie Severn

No, thank you. Thank you for the opportunity.

00:32:35:13 - 00:32:42:11

Clare

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