



Next Level Career Development using AI Assistants

Transforming Science in the Era of AI

Navigating today's research and career landscape requires more than scientific excellence. Early-career scientists face complex challenges: defining career goals, building visibility, establishing networks, communicating unique strengths, negotiating effectively, and securing opportunities. The **Scientists Need More! Career Management Workshop Series** provides a structured, interactive training that equips participants with the tools, strategies, and confidence to manage their careers proactively.

Through **five interconnected modules**, participants will learn how to:

- Assess and plan their career path with clarity.
- Build visibility and effective professional networks.
- Identify and communicate their unique selling point.
- Excel in interviews and negotiations.
- Secure funding and position themselves for long-term success.

The Role of AI in Career Development

Large language models (LLMs) will be integrated into every module to enhance learning impact. By processing vast amounts of career research, application data, and professional development practices, LLMs provide:

- **Objective insights** into personal assessments, free from bias or social politeness.
- **Creative alternatives** to expand participants' thinking beyond their own experience.
- **Practical simulations**, such as interview roleplays, negotiation dialogues, and funding applications.
- **Personalized support**, helping participants adapt strategies to their unique career challenges.

This ensures that traditional, human-centered career development is not replaced but **augmented with data-driven, high-quality feedback and training**.

Workshop Modules

Module 1 – Self-Assessment and Career Foundations

Participants begin by exploring their personal “why” — the underlying motivations that drive their scientific and professional choices. They engage in reflective exercises to recognize and manage impostor feelings, transforming self-doubt into confidence. Visual methods such as the Maker Board and Impact Sheet support deeper reflection on values, interests, and the types of roles where they thrive. Here, LLMs act as mirrors: by analyzing self-assessment inputs, they surface overlooked strengths or recurring patterns, providing a perspective often invisible to peers or mentors. With the Individual Development Plan (IDP), participants move from abstract reflection to concrete planning, supported by AI-driven suggestions of potential career directions that align with their skillsets and values.

Module 2 – Strategic Career Planning

This module focuses on translating reflection into action. Participants practice setting SMART goals and prioritizing with the Eisenhower Matrix, while also learning to navigate complex decision-making using frameworks such as the “Paradox of Choice” and “Hard Choices.” Here, LLMs are used less as evaluators and more as creative sparring partners: participants test their plans against AI-generated alternative pathways, exploring “what if” scenarios they might not have considered. For example, an AI-generated scenario could highlight hidden opportunity costs or suggest transitional roles common in adjacent disciplines. Through paired “career mates” and AI-supported simulations, participants sharpen both their own judgment and their ability to adjust strategies when circumstances shift.

Module 3 – Visibility and Networking

Career success requires not only expertise but also the ability to be recognized and connected. Participants learn to define and communicate a personal brand, craft pitches, and approach networking as a skill rather than a matter of luck. LLMs enrich this process by helping participants test their visibility strategies: they can analyze the clarity of a personal statement, simulate how different audiences might perceive it, or even roleplay as potential mentors, collaborators, or funders. When designing networking strategies, AI-driven brainstorming introduces unconventional approaches and novel entry points into professional communities, ensuring that participants are not limited to the most obvious routes. This blend of reflection, practice, and external perspective allows scientists to refine how they are seen by others.

Module 4 – Positioning and Your Unique Value

This module guides participants in articulating their unique selling point (USP). They learn to analyze job adverts, identify transferable skills, and receive structured peer feedback through tools such as the Johari Window. To counter hidden biases and sunk-cost thinking, participants engage in guided discussions supported by LLMs, which can reframe assumptions and challenge default reasoning. For example, when a participant struggles to articulate their “thing,” the AI can rephrase it in several professional contexts, helping them recognize potential value beyond their immediate field. During interview practice, LLMs act as mock panelists, generating challenging yet constructive questions that push participants to refine their responses. By combining peer interaction with AI-powered external feedback, participants leave with a sharper, more confident articulation of their professional identity.

Module 5 – Negotiation and Opportunity Capture

The final module prepares participants to actively shape opportunities rather than passively wait for them. They practice negotiation fundamentals, roleplay Harvard Principled Negotiation scenarios, and apply advanced listening and questioning techniques from experts like Chris Voss. LLMs add realism by generating negotiation dialogues that are emotionally nuanced, giving participants a safe environment to rehearse responses under pressure. Beyond negotiation, participants gain practical funding literacy: they learn to identify fitting grant schemes, apply frameworks such as the ABT model, and design project plans with milestones and Gantt charts. Here, AI supports by evaluating draft funding pitches for clarity and persuasiveness, or by generating alternative stakeholder perspectives that help participants anticipate objections. The combination of traditional training and AI-enabled foresight equips participants to capture resources and opportunities with strategic confidence.

What Participants Will Gain

After completing the workshop series, participants will be equipped with a **comprehensive career management toolkit** that combines evidence-based strategies with modern AI support. They will:

- Have a clear career vision and actionable plan.
- Be able to present themselves with confidence and credibility.
- Master networking, interviewing, and negotiation skills.
- Gain practical experience in applying funding and project management tools.
- Develop the critical AI literacy needed for future-proof career navigation.

By integrating human expertise with the power of AI, this program ensures participants leave with the **skills, confidence, and resources** to thrive in their careers.



About the Instructor

Prof. Dr. Daniel Mertens heads research groups at both the German Cancer Research Centre (DKFZ) in Heidelberg and the University Hospital Ulm. As a scientist, he has published 101 peer-reviewed papers (6106 citations) and secured €6.77 million in external funding. Since 2023, he has conducted 173 AI workshops, empowering 8140 participants to effectively implement artificial intelligence tools in their professional practice, with 80.4% of participants making AI implementation a top priority after attending.

