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Dr. Ronja Driller

Career Perspectives

with a PhD in Natural & Life Sciences

Doctorate:

Biochemistry, FU Berlin, 2018

Current Position:

Research Scientist, Novo Nordisk

What was the biggest challenge in starting a new job after your PhD studies?

I started a PostDoc position abroad after my PhD, which wasn't such a big challenge from a work perspective, but more challenging from a personal perspective. Relocating to another country without speaking the language is quite an adventure – especially when you have children. However, the decision to leave academia and enter industry was much more difficult for me.

What role do skills gained in your PhD studies play in your current job?

I changed scientific fields when transitioning from academia to industry, but soft skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and presenting scientific data can be used in any scientific job, regardless of the area.

What skills do you need now that you did not learn during your PhD studies?

Learning to say "no". During my time in academia, I've always said "yes" to everything. This enabled me to be very creative and try things out, even when the chances of success were slim — a mindset that's important in academia. Working for a big corporate, I had to learn to evaluate the feasibility of projects and therefore say "no" to some projects/tasks.

What motivates you most about your current job?

I find it incredibly rewarding to know that my work has a positive, direct impact on the lives/health of so many people worldwide. I have family members with diabetes and knowing that I'm actively developing medications to treat diabetes makes my everyday work very purposeful to me.

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