**Introduction**

[Linus Milinski]

Hello and welcome to our very first episode of Switching Hats, the careers podcast for those who are considering stepping off the academic track and into the wide world beyond. My name is Linus Milinski, I'm an editor for researchcareers.org, we will talk a little bit about this too, and your host for today's episodes. I'm joined by some of the team behind the podcast, Tom and Chiara, and we are excited to introduce you to the world of opportunities beyond the academic track in this podcast series.

So, to set off, Tom, who are you and what is your background?

[Thomas Nicol]

Hi, thanks Linus. I'm Thomas Nicol, I am a postdoc, I work in the metabolism of the heart, basically. I've been with researchcareers.org for five years now, started out as an editor and now I am the organising and lead editor and have been for a couple of years. Yeah, I think that's basically about me.

[Linus Milinski]

Yeah, we should probably talk a little bit about what researchcareers.org is in a little bit. But yeah, let's first go to Chiara.

[Chiara Toschi]

Hi Tom, I joined a lot more recently in research career. I'm also a postdoc in neuroscience, maybe neuroscience attracts people that want to do a podcast. And yeah, my research goes into the mechanisms of dopamine and learning.

So it's a lot of kind of behaviour, but also neural circuits underlying behaviour. And yeah, I guess I mean, and I'm an editor for research career. And yeah, I guess we've started this kind of podcast journey.

So yeah, let's see where it takes us.

[Linus Milinski]

The very beginning of our podcast journey. So I should maybe add, as I said, also neuroscience research, I've focused on sleep research. So yeah, we have kind of a bit biased into the STEM area.

But what we are about is really to talk about careers into every direction from the academic sector into different career paths. And this is also what our website is about, researchcareers.org, where kind of this whole story and venture started. So maybe Tom, can you talk a little bit about what researchcareers.org is and where we are coming from?

[Thomas Nicol]

Yes. So researchcareers.org started, to the best of my knowledge, about seven or eight years ago with a group of postdocs who wanted to investigate the opportunities beyond the academic track. They got together with the careers department and started putting together a, I believe at first it was a print magazine, and they put one edition together and realised how expensive it is to put together a print magazine.

So it became a website instead. And the aim of researchcareers.org is to understand what opportunities there are for researchers out there, basically people with PhDs, beyond the academic track. We're all very well versed in what the academic track looks like, PhD, postdoc, et cetera, et cetera.

But the opportunities beyond that to do so many other things with the skills that you accumulate during a PhD maybe aren't well understood. So the website itself focuses on interviewing people who have done exactly that, taken their PhD skills and gone on to do something, anything else. It might be teaching, it might be starting their own business, it might be going to work in finance, literally anything you can think of.

We've probably got someone who's tried to do it. So we interview these people, learn a little bit about their background, how long they spent in academia, why they left academia, what they miss about academia, and then start exploring what they do now, what the skills that they've transferred from academia into their current role are, where they figured out how these skills are applicable and what skills that they felt that they were lacking during their PhD.

So that's the aim of the website. And obviously we sort of collaborate with other similar projects and just trying to get the information out there. It's free for everyone.

It's not focused on Oxford. We have people who have done profiles for us from across the world. And we are just really trying to get some information out there for people to have a repository of understanding, basically.

[Chiara Toschi]

And I think it's partly because, I guess, I mean, it was everyone's sort of experience that you sort of want to, you know, branch out. I mean, after your PhD or sort of while you're finishing your PhD, you realize that, you know, maybe your path is somewhere else. But I guess the multitude of jobs that's out there is, I guess, hard for any one person to sort of know in detail.

So I guess that's kind of like where, I guess, this is going that to, you know, trying to give you that knowledge that you would get by just chatting to your friend, like, oh, what is your job about? You know, why are you doing this? How did you get to this job?

So I think one of the biggest kind of like hurdles, I guess, is to know actually what someone does that is not, I guess, what you know as your academic training.

[Linus Milinski]

Yeah, as you said, that's maybe not specific to academic researchers that they don't know what's out there in terms of other opportunities. But it's definitely very prominent in academia that we are very much focused on the academic path. And as you said, it's very typical for us.

And lots of our peers have the same problem. So yeah, as Tom said, then we do this website where we have written interviews. So we publish interviews that have been done in the past.

And then we write them up and then publish them on the website. So they're very personalized, but they're obviously not live. So we're not talking directly to the person and you can listen to the person.

So that's a bit more what the podcast is about, right?

[Thomas Nicol]

Yeah. So our interviews on the website, basically, typically, the way we run them is to send a list of questions to our interviewee and have them fill it in in their own time. So it's typed.

It's fairly short. We try to keep it accessible for them to minimize the amount of time commitment. But it also means that we can't delve deeper into their experiences and sort of play our questions off of their answers.

So the podcast is to do exactly that. Try and understand in more detail with a smaller group of people, more about their careers and their experiences and the troubles and hurdles they've had to overcome throughout their career path.

[Chiara Toschi]

Yeah, I guess that's something that you can kind of listen wherever you're going while commuting. It's something that as podcasts are enjoyable to listen to while also learning something cool that you didn't know. And yeah, it's an easy way to access the material.

[Linus Milinski]

And educative at the same time, hopefully. So Chiara, what do the episodes look like compared to our written interviews?

[Chiara Toschi]

Yeah, I mean, I guess, obviously, I mean, we sort of have a series of questions. I mean, we try to, first of all, we try to get people that are doing different things. We are trying to kind of have, yeah, different interviewees of people that have gone either into STEM or humanities that have, yeah, sort of had different paths that we can try to cover as broad of a space in the career universe as we can.

And then, yeah, I guess it's more of a dialogue. Like it starts with, you know, it has more or less fairly similar questions in terms of, you know, when did you realize that, you know, the academic path wasn't for you? What were the biggest hurdles?

You know, how did you go about finding the job that you're currently doing? What was your, you know, what was your CV like? You know, what kind of skills do you think were really, you know, really gave you an edge in terms of like, you know, during the application process?

So I guess it's like a lot of these kind of questions, sort of what is your, what was your way of getting to do what you're doing right now? And then sort of, I guess, obviously, as with dialogues, things take a certain flow from there. And so we sort of follow that without sort of very strong constraints.

But yeah, we can also accept questions at some point in the Q&A.

[Thomas Nicol]

I think it's worth adding that our podcasts are sort of focused on different areas as well. We've got someone from the careers department speaking about her experience of moving outside of the careers, sorry, the academic track, but also someone who now runs a business and what she's looking for in bringing people into that business. Both her experiences moving from a PhD and what she's looking for for people who are moving from a PhD.

So it's a bit more varied in terms of what we're actually focusing on.

[Linus Milinski]

Yeah. So we are having quite a diverse lineup of speakers already for the very first episodes that we're doing. But yeah, as Chiara touched on, we might even incorporate some viewer suggestions and listener suggestions and maybe questions in the future too.

Or what do you think? What are the plans in terms of audience input and how future episodes in the podcast as a whole might be shaped?

[Thomas Nicol]

Oh, it'd be great to have some feedback and have interaction from the audience. I guess I want to temper expectations right now and see how things go. But once we get season one done and out there, hopefully we'll build an audience and see what they actually want to hear rather than just assuming what they want to hear.

So yeah, we'd love to have some feedback.

[Chiara Toschi]

Word to the people.

[Linus Milinski]

Yeah, let's see how it goes, right? So the next episodes will be, as Tom said, about a business owner, then about some general careers advice. But really stay tuned and watch out in this space what comes up on our episode one, two and three of Switching Hats and then more to come in the future.

So thanks, everybody. And see you next time.