

4 steps to find a job in a startup

Ecosystem, introspection, applications & interviews



Guide created by Ignition Coaches





In the jungle of startups, it's not always easy to find THE job that fits you. How to search? What do you need to know before you start searching? What are the criteria startups evaluate when doing a recruitment? How can you make an impact in an interview? And once you get an offer, how do you make an informed choice? These are questions the talents we coach at Ignition Program face every day.

With this guide, we want to share with you our best practices, from the very first discussions to the signing of your contract!

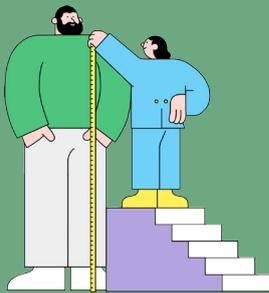
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In 4 steps, find and get the job in a startup that suits you!



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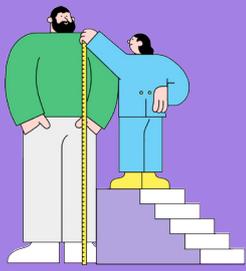
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Shine during interviews





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Choose the right startup ecosystem according to your profile

Positioning is the key to a good job search. And this requires, above all, a good understanding of the market and the value of your profile.

To avoid wasting time and to allow you to put your energy in the right place, our guide brings you a useful focus on :

- What type of startup is right for you?
- How to make sure you match the concrete expectations of startups?
- What are the most sought-after jobs on the market?

What size of startup is made for me?

Depending on the size of the startup, you will have a radically different work experience. Some are more suited to your profile. It's up to you to see which one is the best for you and the position and responsibilities you are considering:

Early stage

0-15



By joining an early stage startup, you will have a very entrepreneurial experience. As the workforce is small, you will have a direct impact, and will have to demonstrate real versatility. The Early stage is a phase of ideation and creation for the startup. You will be a Swiss Army knife, constantly touching all the aspects of the startup and assuming many responsibilities. With a development that is often chaotic but very stimulating and exhilarating, these startups are often highly prized and formative opportunities for juniors who participate from scratch in the construction of a sustainable business. Ideal for profiles that do not like routine or a position that is too limited with little room for flexibility.

This size is for me if:

- I don't like routine
- I like very versatile missions, I am a jack of all trades
- I am very independent, owner of my subjects
- I need to see the direct impact of my actions





Middle stage

15-50



Middle stage startups are often an ideal opportunity to grow in an expertise and potentially manage a team. At this stage of development, the product is well established, processes are becoming more and more detailed, without the individual impact being too diluted.

The positions still have a lot of room for initiative. If you like more structured assignments while retaining a certain amount of freedom in your day-to-day initiatives, you're in the right place! You will focus your efforts on generating revenue and ensuring strong growth.

This size is for me if:

- I like to have freedom and room to create within a frame
- I want to manage on a medium to long term basis
- I like to have cross-functional projects and inter-team interactions



Scale up

50+



The bigger a company gets, the more it will need to structure and segment positions. Are you an expert or even senior in your field of expertise and a reference in your sector? This is the place to be! You are refining and optimizing processes and new products/services to gain market share and continue to grow. Your daily life will be further away from the field, and the impact of your actions less immediate. But with your specialized skills and your management, you will participate in a better structuring and segmentation of jobs, and you will be a key element to boost the growth of the startup. Ideal if you still want to specialize in a field, thanks to very focused missions and a strong vision.

This size is for me if:

- I like positions where I can quickly increase my skills and specialize
- I like that my company has the means to provide resources available to employees
- I like to be more structured and supervised



To go further, especially on the type of positions and salaries, quickly devour our great article

[Joining the right startup](#)



What are the expectations of startups when hiring?

Have you found the perfect type of startup for you? Now, it is important to understand the needs and expectations of entrepreneurs, so that you know what will be expected of you when you'll meet them. Here we share with you the qualities that all entrepreneurs are looking for in a candidate, and some tips to show that you have them.



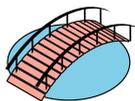
Maturity and business perspective

Why is it important?

Understanding your missions and executing them is one thing. But being able to understand the stakes of a startup, its market, its growth possibilities... In short, being able to take a step back and understand the big picture rather than just being an executor, is essential in a startup! Indeed, an entrepreneur needs to surround himself with collaborators who will help him build a vision.

How to highlight it?

- By showing that you understand the challenges of the startup and your future position
- By emphasizing an experience where you had this strategy/vision side (right-hand man of the CEO, lead on an important project)
- By reminding the impact your mission has had on your past experiences.



Evidence of adaptability

Why is it important?

In a startup, things change all the time: process changes, team reorganization, strategic pivot, change of scale... Entrepreneurs are above all looking for profiles capable of adapting, who are not afraid to see their job description evolve, and who know how to get involved in their project.



How to highlight it?

- If you already have startup experience, it can be to your advantage
- Think back to the times when you had to deal with big changes in your previous experiences (a reorganization, a change of strategy)
- If you've changed jobs, or had experiences in different sectors / environments, talk about it in a way that shows you have always been able to adapt!



A self-starter

Why is it important?

In a startup, we are looking for profiles that are able to take initiatives. This is a key point of entrepreneurship: think outside the box, create, innovate! An entrepreneur will therefore look for employees who will go beyond the role of executor and who will be able to propose things.

How to highlight it?

- Reflect on experiences where you have been behind a significant initiative that has had a concrete impact on your company or your team
- If you have started a company / association, talk about it!



A hands-on profile

Why is it important?

This is where we notice a real difference between startups and other types of companies. In a startup, we are rarely only on strategic subjects: each employee will get its hands dirty and be the owner of his or her subjects. You have to be resourceful and ready to get your hands dirty! Note to perfectionists: in a startup, we often prefer the "quick & dirty" to beautiful and neat presentations on which we have to spend hours. The watchword: "get shit done!"

How to highlight it?

- If you've ever had a job where you were on the field, or if you've had a few daunting assignments where you had to show resilience
- By showing your effectiveness on operational matters
- By showing you have been in a situation in which you had to stand out and take initiative



What are the most sought-after positions in demand in the market?

The number one challenge for an entrepreneur is to make his or her business profitable. Even before structuring, improving their product or setting up an HR team, the objective is to sell! We present here the two professions in strong tension in the market of the startups, that is to say the professions for which entrepreneurs are most in need of candidates.

Sales

Today, Sales positions (Business Developer, Account Executive, Account Manager) represent 33% of the opportunities in our ecosystem. The most sought-after profiles among salespeople are those with 0 to 5 years of professional experience. And that makes sense! In the context of the startup and scale-up boom after the Covid crisis, entrepreneurs have a vital need for Sales to feed their profitability!

Digital marketing

The time is ripe for digital transformation: our entrepreneurs in the marketplace, e-commerce platform and SaaS sectors are at a strategic turning point in their growth and need to take their business to the next level through acquisition levers! That's why all profiles with skills in the digital sector, in particular with Growth skills and a good knowledge of acquisition tools, are highly sought after on the market.

Of course, this does not exclude all other positions for which our startups are recruiting! Product, Operations, HR, Finance, Data, Communication... There's something for everyone.

To get a better idea of all the jobs you can find in startups, you can read our [job guidebook](#)



2

Get to know yourself to be more relevant

In the same way that we don't go to the hairdresser without knowing what we are going to ask for as a haircut, we don't go for an interview as a tourist, "just to see", without any idea of what we really want to do.

Introspection, the quest for oneself - whether professional or personal - requires a real and intimate knowledge of ourselves.

To achieve this, there are no easy ways: you must dare to ask yourself the right questions, to know how to make decisions based on an enlightened reflection, and finally not to be influenced by "others" (society, dad, mom, cousin Julia, best friend Greg, and all those who will tell you that "Banker would suit you because you like math and ties" 😊).

At Ignition Program, one of our core purposes is to encourage our candidates so that they feel aligned with their deepest desires throughout their career trajectory.

Ready to dig in? Come on, a little practical exercise...

PS: Arm yourself with a notebook and a pen (we avoid the computer for meta reflections), isolate yourself in a quiet and bright room, and if possible with a nice view to "project" yourself in your future.





Questions

Feel free to write ANYTHING, don't censor yourself for any reason.

There are no right or wrong answers, only answers that concern you (and therefore necessarily good ones).

Me, myself, and I

What do I like to do? In life, in the professional world, for myself or for others. It can be anything from playing the saxophone to finding solutions to all kinds of problems, or organizing events.

What can I do?

Concretely, "what I am good at", what others say I am good at, what I do naturally. This can range from managing my finances to speaking in public with ease.

The Future

How do I see my job tomorrow? What is important? What can't be missing? When I think about tomorrow and try to imagine the outline of my job, what do I find there?

Missions

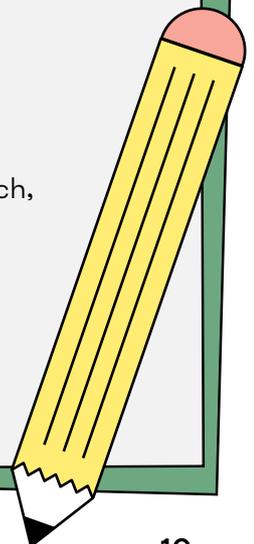
What kind of assignments do I want to do? An assignment can range from "automating processes" to "closing new clients".

The sector

Is there a sector of activity that interests me?

To help you out, a quick recap of the sectors that exist (many are in tech): PropTech, Fintech, Medtech, Edtech, Energy, Blockchain, Sport, Mobility, Transport, Social, Impact, Leisure, Culture, Beauty, Fashion, Insurance...

Or an impact sector: ecology, environment, responsible finance, agriculture, sustainability...





Where?

Location of what I want to do? (Remote, hybrid, at the office?)

Start-up size?

You've read about the different maturities of startups in the ecosystem, in our "Which startup is right for me?" chapter. If you're still unsure, consider [reading this article](#) to identify which one you recognize yourself in.

Availability

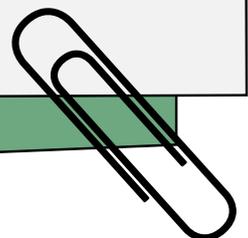
When am I available? Taking into account the notice period and my availability, this allows me to estimate my starting date and to start my research in detail.

Values

Which values are the most important to me? This may seem anecdotal, but it is what will make you get up cheerfully every morning to go to work. What are the drivers that carry you, that give you energy? Examples: high salary, nice colleagues, remote flexibility, freedom and autonomy in projects, absence of hierarchy... Why is this significant to me?

The dream job

What's my dream job like? Come on, it's time to dream! And since "the sky is the limit", if you were given access to all the startups on earth with all types of jobs, where would you go? It could be an existing startup, a product that speaks to you, or something from your imagination.



Time to review

Write a summary of "Who I am" here and practice it in front of a mirror several times until your speech is clear and coherent. Repeat this various times.



3

Stand out from the crowd with a rockstar resume

The 3 tips from the coaches

Have you found the right type of startup for you? Now it's important to understand the needs and expectations of entrepreneurs, so that you have in mind what will be expected of you and how to meet them. Here we share with you the qualities that all entrepreneurs are looking for in a candidate, and some tips to show that you have them.

Focus on clarity in your structure

Whether you have one internship or 15 years of experience, a CV should always have one page and not more! The more information you put in, the more it will be diluted in the mass. On average, a recruiter spends no more than 30 seconds evaluating a CV! You must therefore focus on the most important information that will successfully capture their attention.

The objective of a CV is not to retrace in detail each of your professional experiences. It is rather a marketing tool that aims to trigger a single action: the desire to meet you in an interview. To stand out from the crowd, keep it simple, concise and above all, impactful. Your bullet points should always tell the recruiter what you have accomplished, not what you do every day. Your individual impact should be clear to the recruiter in the experiences you choose to mention.

To identify where you have had the most impact, answer these questions:

- What am I most proud of in this experience at X?
- What actions/projects have been created due to my initiative at X?
- What did this project bring to X?



Now that you've got your impactful actions out of the way, you need to manage to fit everything into your resume in a concise and clear way. Yes, it's hard... 😊 Help yourself to the bullet points. And this suggested structure:

JOB TITLE

Company - type of company (startup, SME, consulting...) - sector (Fintech, SAAS...) - target (B2B, B2C...)



HEAD OF GROWTH & ACQUISITION

LoneScale - SaaS sales acceleration platform - B2B | 8 employees

May 2020 to May 2021 (1 year)

BULLET POINTS

Action verb - Mission/action - Result

- Recruited and coached a team of 4 SDRs from scratch to develop the SEMEA region
- Turnover of 50K€ in 2021 (110% of the objective reached over the year) on sales cycles of 1 month with an average basket of 5K€.

Provide analytical results

The numbers are concrete, factual, and unstoppable. The more they speak, the more convincing they make you!

This is a key element of context to allow a recruiter to understand the scope of your work and give credibility to your impact. On the other hand, the total absence of figures (especially on a Sales job) can create doubts. Note: no figure should be accurate to the decimal point. If you ever lose track of the information, percentages are your friends!

To make a point, replace all the "many" and "numerous" with exact numbers:

Example:

Establishment of several partnerships => Development of 5 partnerships that have allowed...



Questions to find impactful numbers?

- What were my numerical goals (KPIs)? Did I reach or even exceed them?
- Did my work save my team time? Increase turnover?

**To highlight the form,
structure the background**

Once again, adapt your message to your target: startups. Choose an adapted, clear, structured and concise wording.

Make it as easy to understand as possible: the recruiter is not necessarily a specialist in your field. It is essential that you always make your speech as clear as possible, using simple vocabulary that everyone can understand. What is clear is clearly stated.

Adapt the wording of your CV to startups: this advice applies mainly to job titles. To help you, don't hesitate to consult our [startup job guidebook](#) where you can find the names and descriptions of all the startups that might interest you.

Checklist for a good CV

- 
- ✓ Have a clear job title adapted to the startup environment
 - ✓ Put your professional experience first, if you have 1+ years of experience
 - ✓ Follow the structure Title-Company-Type of Company-Sector-Target
 - ✓ Use structured bullet points with impactful numbers
 - ✓ Use "I" and not "we"
 - ✓ Put a pleasant, smiling and dynamic photo - if you choose to have one



4

Shine during the interview

Your CV has caught the eye of an entrepreneur! Great, you're starting a recruitment process!

The objective of the different interviews is to:

1. Convince your interviewers that you are the right person for them,
2. and also to make sure that you will flourish in this company and on this job!

Why is it important to prepare for your interviews?

Whether you applied or the startup contacted you first, it is essential to never arrive at an interview empty-handed! It gives a bad impression... it looks careless, lazy, or worse, arrogant.

To meet an entrepreneur without knowing anything about his company is to put yourself in an immediately passive posture ("why do my own research, the employer will talk about it better than anything I'll find on the Internet"), unmotivated (when you're excited about a position or a company, you want to know more, without waiting for the interview), and disrespectful (a bit like if a recruiter received you, but without having read your CV beforehand, without taking any interest in you during the interview... yes, it's unpleasant!).

On the other hand, being well-prepared when you arrive at the interview means less stress right away. It's the best way to stand out from the others, and the best way to bounce back with relevant questions, to begin to project yourself into the job!

Here are some tips to help you succeed in this exercise, and to ask yourself the right questions throughout your recruitment process!

 **The Tips: Get a pen and paper, and take notes!**



Before the interview



Learn about the startup and its environment

Find out about the startup's activity by reading some articles to be aware of their latest news. Do they have new partnerships? Raised funds recently? Launched new products? Have strong competitors or alternatives to their product/service? What is the stage of maturity of the project (market fit, growth, structuring, etc.)? - Find as much as you can about them!



Learn more about your potential future colleagues

Check out the LinkedIn of your contact person, his/her background as well as that of the other people working in this startup (to get an idea of their "typical recruit"). This will allow you to better understand your future work environment and who you will be working with on a daily basis!



Check your understanding of your future missions

Make sure you understand the real issues of the job and the tasks you will be given: are you able to rephrase them? What will be expected of you in the field? What will you do on a daily basis? What skills are essential for this position?



Ask yourself: "Am I a good fit for the job?"

Based on the above information, what makes it a good match for you and them? What desires / needs do you have in common? What are the improvements / innovations you would like to bring to this project? In what way are you valuable to them (personality, customer knowledge, sector, profession, values, passion, desire?). What will you bring to them? How can they help you grow professionally? In a startup, the magic word is: I WANT to. 🇧🇪



During the interview



Keep smiling

For that, our advice is to stretch well just before starting the interview, raise your arms and take loooooong breaths at least 3 times! We promise, it helps!



Shine with the STAR method

Do you know about the STAR method? It's what will make you shine in an interview!

When you talk about your past experiences, keep in mind that you have a limited amount of time with your interviewer: the objective is to make an impact. The trap that many candidates fall into is to remain solely in their career path explanation.

The objective of the STAR method is to be in a demonstration mindset. You have to show that you fully understand the context of your work, but also what you did (why, how) and the impact it had in the end. This way, you highlight your analysis, your hindsight and your high-level vision!

STAR

- Situation:** What was the situation you were in? What was the context, what was at stake?
- Task:** What were your roles and tasks in this context? What were your objectives?
- Action:** What did you put in place? How did you do it?
- Result:** What results did you achieve? This is the time to put forward quantified results to show the impact you have had! If you don't have any figures, the important thing is to highlight your impact: what was the use of your work? What initiatives did you carry out? What skills did you develop? Always remember to illustrate your point with concrete examples.

Tip from our coaches: presenting your past experiences is a step that cannot be improvised, so it is essential to prepare your speech well beforehand!



Be a good listener

Be careful, the listening posture is as crucial as the actual listening. If the person you are talking to has the impression that you are not paying attention (even if you are), then their first impression will be negative and it will be very difficult to reverse this.

Remember to take notes! You will make a good impression on your interviewer, and this will be invaluable for the rest of the process. You will be able to prepare yourself better for the following interviews, to bring out other questions...



Show your strength and your desire

Little secret: in a startup, energy and motivation count as much, if not more, than initial skills in taking a job. So give it your all!

If you are stressed, if a question makes you uncomfortable, if you don't have the answer... don't panic! Take a moment to think, don't be afraid of blanks, rephrase the question if necessary to make sure you have understood it correctly. Most of the time, there is no single right answer: the main thing is to remain authentic, to understand the recruiter's expectations as well as possible, and to listen to his / her feedback!

We put you all the pitfalls you should avoid in an interview [HERE](#)

Ask questions that will help you confirm that this is the right company for you!

After the interview



Send a follow-up email the same day

This is a must, it allows you to summarize what you have retained from the position, their challenges, your common desires and your availability for the next step. Someone who rocks in an organization is someone who has internalized their manager's goals very well (and it shows / is communicated). 🙌

No need to write a novel though, personalize your email as much as possible, it can make you stand out in comparison to other candidates!



Make an assessment

After you've done everything you can to convince the entrepreneur that you're the right person for him / her, and you've gotten answers to all your questions, it's time to make an assessment!

To do this, go back to the questions you asked yourself before your search (Part 2: Get to know yourself). What makes you want to join this startup and this position? What would be your doubts? It's best to ask yourself these questions DURING the recruitment process, not just when you receive an offer! The recruitment process is a good time to answer all your questions and allow you to confirm or dispel your doubts, so it is important to know them!



The entrepreneurial ecosystem is an ever-changing environment: that's what makes it exciting, but that's also what can make it intimidating. That's why it's so important to take the time to get to know it well and to better understand your desires in order to better grasp it.

However, a job search is time and energy consuming, and it is sometimes difficult to take a step back and ask yourself the right questions.

Don't panic, our Recruitment Coaches are here to help you! By joining our program, you will benefit from the support of a dedicated coach. He/she will be there to challenge you on your professional project and your desires, to advise you on your CV, to share with you the most suitable jobs, to pitch your profile to the startups that best match you, to coach you in your preparation for the different interviews and in your salary negotiation, and to follow your integration after your hiring. 😊

With this, you're bound to make the best choice! And because we want everyone to flourish at work, it's obviously free!

Our Goal

**find the job and the startup
that really fits you!**

Apply now

The Recruiting Coach Team at Ignition Program:



Bruna



Cécile



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María