

# SOFTWARE ENGINEER TURNED BUSINESS MANAGER

**After having worked as a software engineer for several years, Arnold Schutter picked up the role of business manager at Alten. His workweek reveals a diversity of activities, such as business development, people management and technology.**

**Arnold Schutter**

**M**onday  
After checking my mailbox, my workweek traditionally starts with a team meeting of our unit. During this meeting, we discuss all activities of the past and coming week. We go through client appointments, the status of current projects but also the candidates who'll be interviewed later this week. We discuss the outstanding requests from our clients and how we can offer the best solution. This meeting takes up the entire Monday morning.

I take my lunch at the office, after which I leave to meet a department manager at my client TNO. This department is working on a setup to test the effects of ammunition on vehicles and materials. During this meeting, we try to find the overlap in our expertise. With my background both in the army and as a software engineer, I understand the customer's challenge and we can exchange interesting ideas about how we can support each other.

After this interview at TNO, I return to our office, where I have a coaching interview with one of the consultants from my team. The project she's working on is going well, but she notices that she has too little experience with Qt. After discussing the option of a training course, we decide that it's best to link her to a more experienced software engineer for coaching. Because we have more than

500 software consultants at Alten in the Netherlands, there's always somebody with the required expertise.

## Tuesday

Today, I'm going to Shell for a qualification interview with a consultant from my team. This qualification interview is a 'job interview' for the role of a scientific software engineer on one of the projects at the customer. The consultant from my team holds a master's degree in physics from Delft University of Technology and has recently completed our Software Engineering Masterclass. During an intensive program of three months, his software engineering skills have developed to a good level. The project manager at Shell conducts the interview and I'm mainly listening. After the conversation, we drive to the office together and do a debriefing. Later in the week, I hear my consultant can start on the new project in a month.

After answering several phone calls and emails, I leave for an introductory meeting with a potential new client, a robot builder. I came in touch with this company during a college fair. They build robots for entire process chains (from supply to handling and packing). The purpose of my visit is to explore the possibilities for collaboration. I have a conversation with the project leader and we exchange experiences to explore each other's competencies. To get a good impression

of their challenges, I'm also taken on a tour of the factory. Impressive to see how the entire chain of robots is assembled and tested, in no less than 1,000 movements. We notice a lot of overlap in our skills and we agree to stay in touch so we can easily provide support when needed.

## Wednesday

Today, I'm mainly working at the office. First, I visit our Delivery Center, where we work on various projects. I talk to the project leader about one of our machine learning projects, in which we train an algorithm that can recognize weeds. Next, I have a progress meeting with a consultant from my team, who's working on this algorithm. We discuss the progress of the project and the technical challenges.

Subsequently, I have an interview with an applicant. In this interview, I need to form an opinion about her skills and suitability for Alten. With a software test and discussion, I first get a good idea of her technical skills. During the rest of the interview, I investigate whether she could be a good consultant. She turns out to be a suitable candidate and shortly after, I make her an offer.

In the afternoon, I visit a customer active in product automation. This company faces several challenges in its software development processes. I have a detailed conversation with the manager about his issues. We



### Arnold Schutter

Arnold Schutter studied computer science at Delft University of Technology and graduated in a project at Alten, where he subsequently started his career as a software engineer. After having worked for several years on various software projects, he felt the need to be in touch more extensively with high-tech companies. Therefore, after following a traineeship at Alten, he picked up the role of business manager in 2018.

discuss ways he could deal with them and I suggest he talks with one of our engineers experienced in software processes. In addition to coaching, we discuss ideas for improvement.

### Thursday

This morning, I visit a company that develops a very innovative way of transport. It's a first meeting in which I also get to see the factory hall, where the prototype is being assembled. It's nice to be at the cradle of the latest developments. For the next phase of the project, they could use our specific expertise and I'm looking forward to a collaboration. At the end of the morning, I leave for our office through the beautiful countryside.

In the afternoon, I visit one of my clients, where we are working on the control of a very advanced heavy-lift crane that's custom-built for one ship. We discuss the progress of the project and find out that they could benefit from user experience (UX) knowledge to improve their front-end design and development. He asks me if I have a solution and we discuss some details. While returning to the office, I immediately start thinking who would be able to help out with this problem – knowledge of specific tools and software are required. After consulting some colleagues, I think I have a nice solution and send my proposal to the client.

I'm staying at the office tonight to attend an event. Together with about 25 colleagues, we have a dinner buffet, followed by a presentation of two consultants about front-end development and utilizing micro-services. After a very interesting presentation, we end the evening with a drink.

### Friday

Together with the Royal Netherlands Aerospace Centre (NLR), we're organizing a symposium on the use of the cloud and the related security aspects. We came up with this idea during an earlier meeting. This morning, together with my colleague Nicolle, I go to NLR to discuss the details. Part of the symposium are presentations and a panel discussion. We, together with the Dutch Air Force and Fox-IT, compose a program to dive deeper into the safety and risks of the cloud.

The afternoon I spend on administrative tasks, answering emails and various phone calls. We traditionally end the week with a drink and this time, we do that a bit more extensively, with a French-fries table. We decide to go out with some colleagues in the center of Rotterdam. Just before we leave, I get a call from the candidate I spoke to on Wednesday – she's accepting the offer. Another reason to celebrate.

**Edited by Nieke Roos**