Dear Mr..,

I attended with a big interest to the presentation you gave at EPFL on December 2014. Today, it is with a great enthusiasm that I refer to Ectalent for the first step of my career. As a multicultural student belonging to the top 10% of my university, I know that my strong and diverse skills in data analysis, my winning spirit and my communicative temperament will make me a good recruit to place in one of your partners in the Silicon Valley.

I am Khalil Hajji, a nearly graduated engineer in Communication Systems (September 2015) from the university of EPFL (Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne). I’m currently doing my master thesis in the European Sony Technology Center.

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During my stay at EPFL, I’ve participated to a various types of team works. I usually assumed not only the programmer hat, but also the coordinator hat, the important decisions maker hat and the motivator hat. This was not because those roles were initially assigned to me, but because it was how our team organization naturally evolved.

(During my stay at EPFL, I’ve participated to a various types of team works. I usually assumed various roles; I was a programmer, but also the coordinator, the important decisions maker and the motivator. This was not because those roles were initially assigned to me, but because it was the position I naturally occupied inside the team.)

As you will see from the attached resume, I worked a lot in data analysis and machine learning projects;

My team and I earned the best project price of the Big Data course 2014 and our faculty asked us to present our work during the open doors day of EPFL. The DATA lab also asked us to present it during the annual Consumer Electronics Show at EPFL of 2015 and the press wrote about our work. We developed a pure content based TV-shows recommender based on the analysis of subtitles. I naturally took the responsibility of the analysis part.

As another work, I had the best prediction score of the Internet Analytics course in a model that predicts the next collaborations between actors using the IMDB database.

During my research internship and my semester project in the LCA lab, I developed a mobility prediction model (predict user characteristics based on the location they visits) that outperformed all the existing ones (as SVM and Naïve-Bayes). I am currently preparing the paper for submission with my advisor.

At Sony, I have available a large dataset of users’ logs collected from their smartphones. It contains for example the notifications they received, the applications they launched and the networks they used. The goal of the project is to explore this dataset and see how far we can go in extracting helpful and valuable analysis from this dataset.

A turning point in my studies was doing the Internet Analytics course. It was the first touch with machine learning and the data analysis world. When I was trying to improve my scores during the link-prediction project, the pleasure I was feeling was so big that I did not want to stop trying to improve until my teammate forced me to close the PC and leave. I was thinking “This is the perfect work for me. I’m using the two things I like the most: mathematics and programming”. But, in reality what was keeping me in front of my computer during hours was the eager to see if I can improve my previous score. It was the challenge that exited me. Once, one of our professors said “No matter how good is your model, there is one evidence: you can always do better”. This is exactly why this field attracts me. (Child, I remember that my mother forbade my schoolmistress to give me the mathematical exercises of the upper level because I was staying in my room for hours until I succeeded in solving them, refusing any hint from my parents. I was staying there for the same reason; it was a challenge for me and I wanted to overcome it). I always loved to be confronted to challenges and difficulties, and it is on those situations where I succeed to output the best of mine. That’s why I’m enjoying playing tennis at a competitive level since 17 years; I was ranked in the top 5-10 in Tunisia for 8 years. Today, I’m representing my university since 3 years during which we won the Swiss university championship in 2014.

My tennis trainer used to say “until the last ball of the last point did not hit two times the court, the match is not over yet”. The fact that I learnt how to apply this in all my life is one of my major strengths. I learnt to never give up when I face problems and to always believe that I will overcome the difficulties. Let me share with you one recent anecdote that happened during the TV-shows recommender project;

At some point, we were stuck during 10 days because of a strange bug in the algorithm that was supposed to infer topics from the subtitles (LDA), which was the heart of our project. Less than one week before the deadline, we still hadn’t any clue about the issue and thus any result to present. Then, I proposed to the rest of the team to focus on implementing another algorithm less accurate but much simpler while I took the task to focus on debugging the current one. I spent 72 hours between drafts, code, eating and sleeping until I realize that the bug was coming from one of the equations of the scientific paper we were relying on. Two days after sending an error report to the writers, I received a thank-you and acknowledgement e-mail and the results we have were amazing.

After my journey at EPFL, I acquired the assurance that any kind of challenge can be overcome, no matter how complicated or unusual it seems to be. To my mind, this is the most important assets I acquired there.

Now, I am getting ready to close the EPFL student chapter of my life and to open a new one. As in every story, the first lines are very important and I want to write mines in the best way. Doing a one year internship in the Silicon Valley would be the best start for me; In fact, I plan to have a valuable short experience before extending my technical knowledge with some entrepreneurial skills by doing a one year entrepreneurship master in the United States. The world is full of good ideas, but only the well-executed succeeds. Ectalent is one of these examples and I wish to have mine in the future. Before giving life to Ectalent, you worked during years in Sun microsystems and in Cisco. So, you certainly also believe that having a previous valuable experience gives several moves ahead in creating its own idea. For this reason, I would like to have an experience in the most dynamical area in our field. I believe that the innovation is the key of success. I want to experience and see from inside how the most competitive companies lead their success and how they maintain their innovational thinking. I would like to share an experience with the most talented people because I know that I will learn a lot from them.

In closing, I would love the opportunity to discuss with you the value I can bring in a project. I would also love knowing from you the opportunities available and have your valuable opinion on the possibilities you think are the most valuable according to my career plan.

Warmest regards,

Khalil Hajji