

from intern to hire: how aelo swiss academy internships convert into job offers

The first day of an internship is quieter than anyone expects. You get a locker that sticks, a name tag with your name spelled slightly wrong, and a sense that everyone around you knows exactly what they are doing while you are still learning where the staff entrance is. There is a particular loneliness in being the newest person in a building, and a particular fear that comes with knowing your time there has an end date printed on it. If that is where you are right now, I want you to know something I have learned from years of watching students walk through that door: the end date is not a wall. Handled well, it is a doorway.

I have spent much of my working life around hospitality and business education in Switzerland. I have mentored interns, read their placement reports, and sat on the employer side of the table when the question came up of who to keep and who to let go. What follows is what I have actually seen move an internship from a line on a CV to a signed contract. Some of it is strategy. A lot of it is simply how you carry yourself while you are tired, underpaid, and far from home.

the internship is an interview that lasts months

Switzerland has a long tradition of learning by doing. The dual education model that the country is famous for, where classroom study and workplace practice are treated as two halves of the same education, shapes how employers here think about interns. A hiring manager in Zurich or Montreux is not evaluating you the way a stranger would. They are watching you the way a coach watches a trial player, because in their experience, the trial period tells them more than any interview ever could.

This is worth sitting with, because it changes what the internship is. Hiring the wrong person is expensive. It costs recruitment fees, training time, team morale, and sometimes a season's worth of guest goodwill. An internship lets a company watch a candidate for months, under real pressure, before committing a permanent budget line. From the employer's side, this is the most rational hiring tool available. From your side, it means every shift is information, and information is influence.

If that thought makes you anxious, try to reframe it. Being watched closely is uncomfortable, but being watched closely means being considered. The intern nobody observes is the intern nobody is thinking about for next year.

what the AELO Swiss Academy model is built to do

The reason internships connected to AELO Swiss Academy convert at a healthy rate is not magic, and it is not luck. It is structure. From what I have seen in students coming through the academy, the internship is treated as part of the curriculum rather than a break from it. That changes the psychology of the whole experience. You are not a student who happens to be working for a while. You are a professional in training whose workplace is an extension of the classroom, with reflection and reporting built around it.

That structure matters more than students realize. When your program expects you to analyze what you did at work, connect it to theory, and write about what you would do differently, you start to behave differently on the floor. You notice patterns. You ask better questions of your supervisors. You arrive at your placement already half-formed as a professional, and managers notice that within the first two weeks, often before you have done anything remarkable at all.

Placements from the academy tend to run across hotels, tourism operators, event companies, and service businesses, in both the French and German speaking parts of the country. The variety is a gift, though it can feel like a burden at first. Where you land shapes which doors open later, and I will be honest about that trade-off later in this piece.

what a manager is quietly tracking

After enough placement reviews, you start to see that managers evaluate roughly the same handful of things, regardless of property or department. When I ask supervisors what made an intern stand out, their answers cluster around a few signals:

- whether you show up the same way on a slow tuesday as on inspection day
- how you take correction, especially when the correction is not entirely fair
- whether problems reach your manager before they reach the guest
- how you treat the people who cannot advance your career
- whether you finish what you start, including the boring things

The second item deserves special attention, because it is where most internships are quietly won or lost. Somewhere in your placement, someone will correct you in a way that stings, in front of others, or about something that was not really your fault. I have watched interns argue, sulk, and shut down. I have also watched interns absorb it, fix the issue, and mention it once, calmly, in private an hour later. Guess which ones get remembered in the spring staffing meeting.

The fourth item is the one nobody tells you about. Managers ask housekeeping, they ask the night porter, they ask the kitchen. How you speak to people with no power over your future is treated as data about your character, and in Swiss workplaces, that data carries real weight.

two interns, two endings

Let me tell you about two students. The details are changed and the names are invented, but the pattern is one I have seen more than once.

Marisa did her internship in a lakeside hotel, in front office. She was competent but not dazzling, and she knew it, so she compensated with something nobody can fake: consistency. She learned the names of the regular guests. She volunteered for the early shift when the roster was short. Around week ten, she asked the duty manager for fifteen minutes and asked a direct question about whether permanent roles ever came up. The answer was honest and disappointing: no budget line this year. She thanked him, asked him to keep her in mind, and finished her internship the way she had run it, steadily. Four months later someone resigned and she got the call. The job existed because of timing, but the call happened because of her.

Daniel was, on paper, stronger. Charismatic, multilingual, quick. He did his internship in food and beverage and treated half his tasks as beneath his eventual ambitions. I heard him say, more than once, that in his real career he would be doing strategy, not carrying trays. No offer came. Here is the empathetic truth I want to offer about Daniel: he was not lazy and he was not arrogant at heart. He was miscast and misinformed. Nobody had told him that in hospitality, the people who eventually hold the strategy roles are almost always the ones who carried the trays well first, because the industry promotes from demonstrated character, not from potential.

There are also endings that have nothing to do with the intern at all. A manager who leaves mid-internship and takes your champion with them. A budget freeze announced in a language you do not yet speak. A

reorganization that eliminates the very role you were being groomed for. I have seen excellent interns lose offers to all three. If it happens to you, it is not a verdict on your worth, and I will come back to what to do about it.



the conversation most interns never have

The single biggest difference between converted and unconverted interns, in my observation, is not talent. It is whether they asked. Around the midpoint of your placement, when you have proven you can do the job but before the goodbye momentum builds up, request fifteen minutes with your direct supervisor and be direct about your intentions.

People avoid this conversation out of a very human fear: that asking will seem presumptuous, and the refusal will poison the remaining weeks. In practice, I have almost never seen that happen. Managers respect the question. Many are relieved by it, because identifying a keeper early makes their own planning easier. The questions worth asking look something like this:

- has this team taken interns into permanent roles before, and how did that work?
- what would a successful internship look like from your side, specifically?
- if a role opened, what would make you hesitate to offer it to me?
- who else should know my name before this placement ends?

Then listen carefully to the answers, because hedged answers carry information. "We love having you, but there is no headcount" is a real constraint and may still turn into an offer later. "We will see how things go" said with flat affect is usually a polite no. Learn to hear the difference without letting either one wound you. Your job in that room is to collect information, not to secure a promise.

when the offer does not come

Sometimes you do everything right and the answer is still no. When that happens, the disappointment is real and you should let yourself feel it, briefly, because pretending it does not hurt just buries the feeling somewhere it will leak out later. Then get practical.

Leave clean. Finish your last two weeks as well as your first two. Write thank-you emails that reference specific moments, because generic gratitude reads as mass-produced and specific gratitude reads as memory. Keep a written record of your achievements while they are fresh, with numbers where you have them: covers served

during the festival weekend, occupancy during your shifts, the process you improved. Stay reachable, and stay in touch lightly, a few times a year, not weekly.

Here is why that matters in Switzerland specifically. The hospitality and service sector here is small and highly networked. The assistant manager who supervised you will be a department head somewhere else within two years. Your reputation travels faster than you do, and offers that failed to materialize in June have a way of appearing in the following February, when turnover does its quiet work. I know interns who received contracts nine months after their placement ended, from properties they never applied to, because someone remembered them.

the quiet work that raises your odds

Beyond the big conversation, there are small habits that compound. Keep a work journal, one line a day, of what you did and what confused you. It becomes raw material for reviews, for your reflective assignments back at the academy, and eventually for interviews. Learn thirty words of the local language and use them badly and often. The effort buys you more goodwill than fluency ever could. Be easy to schedule, once or twice, when it genuinely helps the team. Do not be easy to schedule always, because an intern with no boundaries reads as an employee with no judgment, and burnout helps nobody.

Volunteer for the unglamorous shift occasionally. Inventory at six in the morning. The filing backlog. The function nobody wants. Once, it signals character. Weekly, it signals a doormat. The judgment is in the frequency, and judgment is precisely what they are hiring.

visas, timing, and the part nobody tells you about

For students from outside the European Union, there is an administrative layer that deserves early attention. Switzerland operates quotas for non-EU workers, and employers sometimes hesitate to sponsor a permit, not because they do not want you, but because the process looks unfamiliar to them. Graduates of Swiss institutions generally have a limited window, often around six months, to remain in the country and search for work, but the rules shift and vary by canton, so confirm your exact situation with the career office and the relevant cantonal authority rather than relying on hallway advice.

The practical move is to raise the administrative side with HR yourself, early, and frame it as reducing their burden. A sentence like "I have looked into the process and can prepare the documents, I just need a manager to sign" turns you from a complication into a solution. Also mind the calendar. A property that wants you for the summer season may not be able to hold a position until your visa paperwork clears in autumn, so timing conversations belong in the same room as salary ones.

the offer is a beginning

When the contract arrives, read it as a professional, not just as a relieved person. Probation periods in Swiss contracts commonly run between one and three months, so the evaluation does not https://www.reddit.com/r/flyingeurope/comments/1nnhrnv/anyone_from_aelo_swiss_any_advice/ stop at the signature. Ask about internal mobility, about the review schedule, about what the first year typically looks like for someone in your role. The questions that got you the offer are the same questions that will shape your first promotion.

And take a moment, before you sign, to think about the person you were on day one. The one who could not find the staff entrance and got a locker that stuck. The distance between that person and the one being offered a

contract was not crossed in one heroic leap. It was crossed in small, seen choices, repeated daily, by someone who treated a temporary position as if it were permanent proof of who they are. That is the real mechanism behind every intern-to-hire story, including yours.