François joined the Group in 1997. Today, he is Vice President, Commercial Engine division at Safran Aircraft Engines. Given his background in academia, you could say that his career has taken some surprising turns. However, in his own words, Safran is “a company that sparks opportunities and timely meetings.”

**How did you come to work for Safran?**

I come from a highly academic background. My doctoral thesis on fluid mechanics was supported by Safran Aircraft Engines, then called Snecma. My post-doctoral studies took me to the United States, where I worked in the research lab of a joint venture between Stanford University and NASA. I could have stayed on at this lab, but I chose to work in industry. I wanted the tangible achievements of the business world rather than the pure knowledge of academia. On my return to France in 1997, I joined the Engineering division of Safran Aircraft Engines in Villaroche.

It was a smooth transition since the Engineering division works with a number of laboratories and is happy to welcome doctoral students. My job was to work on combustion instability in certain engines, and to gain a clearer understanding of the underlying physics. The objective was to apply my theoretical knowledge to a real-world problem. I also managed studies by external labs.

So that was the start of your career with Safran Aircraft Engines...  
Yes, but it wasn’t a natural progression! I didn’t have any clear idea of what I was going to do. I decided to leave Stanford after meeting a management team from the Engineering division. I was then offered a job in preliminary design projects, which is a fascinating field. Working alongside aircraft manufacturers gave me a clearer understanding of their expectations with respect to engines. After developing an interest in production, I was able to move to the Group’s legacy site in Gennevilliers where I led the continuous improvement plan before going on to manage a Production facility. I was then fortunate enough to be offered a position as program director when LEAP was launched in 2009. When I first started, I was part of a team of two...

I’ve always tried to tackle new challenges, inspired by the people I meet along the way. As a manager, I believe that the only true driver is the desire to help people do their best, to serve a community with a shared purpose, striving to achieve a result that is greater than the individual.

**What advice would you give to doctoral applicants?**

Safran offers a vast spectrum of possibilities. We conduct exciting projects with exciting people. We also place particular emphasis on people development, taking the time to discuss careers and mobility. Some of our employees come from the academic world. After spending many years in a laboratory, engaged in calculations or theoretical studies, they take up highly rewarding careers with Safran.

Opportunities arise when the interests of the company meet the capabilities and aspirations of the individual. My only advice would be: never try to be what you’re not and above all, never set yourselves limits or obey preconceived restrictions...

**Career path:**

**Background:** graduated from École Normale Supérieure, holds a PhD in Energetics from École Centrale Paris, and completed his post-doctoral studies at Stanford University in California.
1997: joined the Engineering division of Safran Aircraft Engines (Snefa). Worked on the design of engine combustors, nozzles and exhaust systems. Head of the department in charge of engine performance and preliminary design projects.

2004: joined the Production division of Safran Aircraft Engines. After leading the continuous improvement plan at the Gennevilliers plant, he became head of quality and then manager of the Forge unit, and subsequently director of Lean Manufacturing and Six Sigma projects for the Production division.

2009: LEAP program director at Safran Aircraft Engines

2015: Vice President, CFM Programs at Safran Aircraft Engines

2017: Vice President, Commercial Engine division, Safran Aircraft Engines