

# HOW TO FIND A JOB



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# ADVERTISED VACANCIES



**Whether you are searching for an internship, year in industry placement or a graduate job, there are lots of vacancy websites that can help you. It is important to research employers and typical deadlines in advance. Large organisations will often have deadlines in autumn term for start dates the following summer or autumn.**

## **Student and graduate vacancy websites**

The vacancies on these websites are designed specifically for students and graduates. They may advertise roles that students can do around or as part of their courses eg vacation insight schemes, summer internships or year in industry placements. They also advertise graduate schemes and jobs. These roles will be suitable for new graduates who do not have years of experience as well as mature graduates with experience in other areas.

## **Target Connect**

<https://careers.kent.ac.uk>

This is the Careers and Employability Service portal for students and recent graduates to find volunteering, internship, placement and graduate vacancies. You can also use it to book appointments and events.

## **Target Jobs**

<https://targetjobs.co.uk>

## **Prospects**

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

## **Bright Network**

[www.brightnetwork.co.uk](http://www.brightnetwork.co.uk)



## ADVERTISED VACANCIES (CONT)

### Milkround

[www.milkround.com](http://www.milkround.com)

### The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers

[www.top100graduateemployers.com](http://www.top100graduateemployers.com)

### Rate My Placement

[www.ratemylacement.co.uk](http://www.ratemylacement.co.uk)

Placements, internships and insights.

### Student Circus

<https://kent.studentcircus.com>

A job search platform for international students looking for jobs in the UK.

### MyPlus Students' Club

<https://myplusstudentsclub.com>

Job listings plus advice for students with disabilities.

### SEO London

[www.seo-london.org](http://www.seo-london.org)

Job listings and support for students from ethnic minority or low socioeconomic backgrounds.

### Creative Access

<https://creativeaccess.org.uk>

Job listings and support for students that are under-represented in the creative economy.

This is not an exhaustive list and you can find more on our website.

[www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/findajob.html?tab=find-employers](http://www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/findajob.html?tab=find-employers)

## General vacancy websites

Rather than being targeted to students and graduates, these websites display all kinds of vacancies from entry level roles to roles that require significant experience. If you find a job you'd like to apply for, sometimes it can be beneficial to also look at the vacancy on the organisation's own website. This is so you can check the deadline, the full job details and application processes.

### LinkedIn

[www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)

### Glassdoor

[www.glassdoor.co.uk](http://www.glassdoor.co.uk)

### Indeed

<https://uk.indeed.com>

### Reed

[www.reed.co.uk](http://www.reed.co.uk)

### CV Library

[www.cv-library.co.uk](http://www.cv-library.co.uk)

### Total Jobs

[www.totaljobs.com](http://www.totaljobs.com)

### Monster

[www.monster.co.uk](http://www.monster.co.uk)

You can also try newspaper job websites like:

### Independent Jobs

<https://independentjobs.independent.co.uk>

### The Guardian Jobs

<https://jobs.theguardian.com>



# ADVERTISED VACANCIES (CONT)

## Local vacancy websites

Your local area is likely to have it's own specific job websites eg in Kent they include:

### Kent Jobs

[www.kentjobs.co.uk](http://www.kentjobs.co.uk)

### Jobs in Kent

[www.jobsinkent.com](http://www.jobsinkent.com)

## Sector vacancy websites

There are vacancy websites that are specific to certain sectors. You can find these using the job sector and job profiles sections on the Prospects website. Scroll down to the employers heading on each job profile.

### Job sectors

[www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors)

### Job profiles

[www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles)

## Careers fairs

The annual University of Kent Careers Fair welcomes a wide range of graduate employers from a variety of industries to meet one-to-one with University of Kent students to discuss placement, graduate and postgraduate opportunities.

[www.kent.ac.uk/ces/careersfair](http://www.kent.ac.uk/ces/careersfair)

You should also look out for other fairs as a range of organisations may organise physical or virtual fairs. They may be general or specific to a region or sector.



## Recruitment agencies

Recruitment agencies can be a useful part of your job search, whether for a permanent graduate job, a temporary stop-gap job or a casual, part-time or vacation job. They are used by large employers who wish to 'spread their net' as widely as possible when recruiting graduates or specialists, and by smaller ones which do not have the personnel resources to carry out their own recruitment. The service should be free to you as agencies charge recruiters for their services and not the applicants.

The Recruitment and Employment Confederation has a list of agencies on their website: [www.rec.uk.com](http://www.rec.uk.com)

There are also agencies that specialise in graduate recruitment such as the Graduate Recruitment Bureau: [www.grb.uk.com](http://www.grb.uk.com)

## Finding and applying for jobs outside of the UK

These resources can help you to search for vacancies outside the UK and also provide useful information such as CV tips for different countries.

### GoinGlobal

[www.kent.ac.uk/ces/protected/GoinGlobal.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/ces/protected/GoinGlobal.html)

Employment resources for over 120 worldwide locations.

### Prospects country profiles

[www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/working-abroad](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/working-abroad)

### GradLink

<https://www.gradlinkuk.com>

A resource for international students and graduates who want to apply for roles in China, South-East Asia, the Gulf, Canada, Central and Eastern Europe, Africa and India.

# THE PROACTIVE CAREER SEARCH: WHAT IS IT?

**The proactive career search involves adopting a proactive approach to researching careers and/or making job applications. Rather than being passive (reading information and browsing online) and reactive (waiting for a vacancy to be posted before making an application), you take the initiative in finding out what is involved in a career or about potential job opportunities.**

There are a number of different elements to the proactive career search. It can involve:

- Finding out about careers by talking to people;
- Developing a network of contacts who can give you advice and/or information;
- Using this information to make career decisions or to find employers to target;
- Approaching prospective employers to market yourself and to apply for jobs that may not be advertised.

These may be used separately or together. The proactive career search is particularly important where there is a lot of competition for the jobs for which you are applying, such as those in the media or environment, but everybody can use some aspects of the creative career search and these may powerfully boost the effectiveness of your job-hunting.

This booklet will work through the different stages outlined above and may be used to focus on any or all of these elements.

## Steps in the proactive career search

- Self-assessment (knowing your skills, interests and values)
- Researching careers
- Creating networks; identifying and approaching contacts; information interviewing
- Using what you have learned to make yourself more attractive to employers, eg by gaining appropriate skills or experience
- Marketing yourself – online, in print or in person
- Approaching employers.



# FINDING OUT ABOUT CAREERS

**If you have absolutely no idea what career you want to enter, then it is too early to start using proactive career searching techniques: these come at a later stage of the career process. Read our booklet on Choosing a Career available on the publication section of our website.**

Once you have thought about what you want from a career, and picked out some career areas that seem to fit with this, you should then find out as much as you can about these careers using the career research section of our website.

Doing your research is essential. No potential contact or employer will be interested in you unless you can show them that you have at least gone to the trouble of finding out the basics. You need to be well prepared before you move on to the networking stage.





# NETWORKING – WHAT IS IT?

**At its simplest, networking is just talking to people! Most people enjoy talking about their work and are usually happy to help others who are interested in that work. You can develop a network through existing contacts or create your own, using the ideas in this booklet.**

Networking can be used to gain a first-hand insight into jobs and careers that will help you to ensure that you have made the right choice. It can also be used for actual job hunting as the contacts that you make through networking to inform yourself about careers may be helpful later when you are actually seeking a job.

Suppose that you want to find out about careers in banking. Do you have any friends or family who work in, or know people who work in, that field? What about your own bank – perhaps the student adviser in the branch would be willing to answer a few questions?



Remember that your first contact does not need to be a person actually doing the job that you want to do. They might be able to put you in touch with the right person. Your interest may be in working at a bank's head office rather than in a local branch, for example, but perhaps your contact knows people working in that role. This is what networking is all about!

**“Networking is about relationship building. Let’s say for example you go to a networking event, and you meet someone there who is ideal for you, your dream employer – get chatting to them, make an impression on them, make a positive impression. There is no harm in saying to them at that time “I would really be interested in working for your company, would it be possible to come and see you and get some advice?”**

**Andy Lopata**  
Business networking strategist

# NETWORKING – MAKING CONTACTS



These are just some of the people and resources you could use to find contacts:

- Your friends
- Your family
- Your friends' relatives or your relatives' friends ...
- Your academic adviser, other lecturers, or former teachers
- Community contacts – for example, people you might meet through their work in healthcare, finance or law; staff on local newspapers; members of the congregation at your place of worship; Chambers of Commerce, Rotary or Lions Clubs; local councillors and MPs; local campaigning groups; arts and heritage organisations; sports clubs; twinning associations; voluntary bodies
- Local employers
- Careers fairs and careers events
- Professional bodies, institutes and associations
- Members of clubs and societies
- People mentioned in newspapers, magazines, journals, blogs and websites
- People you find on social media (see page 11)
- Anyone you meet!

*“My dad was talking to someone that he works with about my situation and that I wanted to get into PR but wasn’t having much luck with it. And this guy said “oh my wife works in PR and I’ll get her to get in contact” so I sent her my CV and then I got word back from a couple of PR companies.”*

[www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/getting-a-job](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/careers-advice/getting-a-job)

# SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING

**This is one of the best and most effective ways to find people working in the sectors that interest you, make connections, gather information and develop a network.**

Use the search facility on these sites to find:

- Employers that interest you
- People and companies in a specific career field
- Job sites
- Kent alumni groups
- University careers services
- Other specialised careers resources

## LinkedIn [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)

LinkedIn is a business-oriented social networking site with millions of members worldwide. It provides opportunities to network online with professionals from all kinds of different employment sectors. There are also groups for different regions and institutions such as universities (including one for Kent alumni). Google tends to list LinkedIn profiles towards the top of search results, making a LinkedIn page a valuable asset in your job search.

There are many things that you can use LinkedIn for, including:

- **Exploring job roles** – what job titles are there in a particular career sector and what organisations people in this sector work for
- **Researching career paths** to see how people get into career areas and job roles and how their careers develop
- **Identifying organisations** to target (for example, by sector or location)
- **Researching organisations** – eg who works for them, what type of jobs they offer, where they have offices
- **Identifying contacts** to target for 'informational meetings' or work experience
- **Investigating opportunities overseas**

Your LinkedIn page allows you to establish a professional online identity and to promote yourself effectively. It works a bit like an online CV, allowing you to mention your career goals, education, experience, posts of responsibility and skills. In fact, you can upload information from your CV directly into LinkedIn.

Once you have a comprehensive LinkedIn profile, the next step is to add connections in order to build your online professional network. LinkedIn recommends a minimum of 50 connections to maximise your chances of getting in touch with the right people and companies in your chosen career area.

Your connections could be from work experience, part-time work and volunteering as well as extra-curricular activities. You could also consider asking academics and other university staff, such as careers and employability advisers, to connect as they are likely to have connections to graduate recruiters.

It is important on LinkedIn to build relationships with your connections – not just to ask them if they have any jobs. In addition, you can gather 'endorsements' from your connections: recommendations from tutors, previous employers and co-workers that validate the skills you can offer. Recruiters will look for evidence of your skills so these endorsements and recommendations can be key. Endorse and recommend your contacts too: this is only fair!

LinkedIn also has millions of groups, which provide a place for members in the same industry or with similar interests to get in touch, join (or start!) discussions, share news and insights and post jobs. Joining groups of interest is a great way to develop your industry knowledge as well as your contacts and network and to keep up with developments. Discussion threads allow you to comment and read comments of people established in your industry. Use groups to share any relevant articles and insights. Once people start to see you commenting they may add you as a connection if they are impressed by your knowledge.

## SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING (CONT)

Networking events are also often advertised on LinkedIn groups and these give a chance to meet in person with the people that you are connecting with online.

### How students can contact people via LinkedIn

- Search for Kent alumni working in relevant roles on the University of Kent LinkedIn page (go to the alumni tab to the right of the page). Kent alumni are perhaps more likely to want to help you because of their affinity with the University and being in your position not so long ago.
- Join relevant groups and contact people that way
- It is best to approach more junior people first, not managing directors and senior executives
- Check their contact settings for 'expertise requests'
- The usual networking rules apply: see page 17
- Ask for advice initially; this could lead to an 'informational interview' and perhaps then to work experience and even a job
- Keep your message brief (similar to the example email request on page 17). LinkedIn has a word limit for messages to anyone who is not a direct contact



### Twitter

You can use Twitter to follow people or companies in order to hear what they are saying, keep up to date with their news and join in conversations. Twitter users to follow could include:

- Companies/employers you are interested in working for eg @barclaysgrads or @ERAC\_Jobs
- Industry experts/bloggers/commentators eg @markavery or @damianaspinal (conservation)
- Professional networks and publications eg @newscientist
- Jobs and careers sites eg @Prospects
- Recruitment agencies that specialise in the roles you're targeting eg @CharityPeople

- Academic staff and Schools eg @UniKentArts
- Professional service departments at Kent, eg @unikentemploy

Start by creating a Twitter profile specifically for career networking. Don't mix your personal and professional Twitter activities – employers do not want to read your tweets about nights out, essay deadlines or what you had for dinner. However, tweets about the sort of extra-curricular interests and activities that you might include on your CV will help to show something of your personality.

Before setting up this profile, search Twitter for people in the field that interests you. Do your research and find who the key players are in the industry you want to get into. Look at their profiles, note the points that they highlight and use this information to create a profile for yourself that is focused on that career area. Use your profile description to set out the key facts about yourself, your experience and your career ambitions. Include keywords that you have picked up from other profiles: this will help yours to appear in search results. You can also include a link to your LinkedIn page.

Once your profile is set up, follow the people and companies that you have already found in your field of interest. Keep an eye on what they are saying about their business and current issues in their industry and contribute to discussions when you can.

You can also start your own discussions. Tweeting about the industry you want to work in will show that you have an active interest in this area, and are keen to develop your knowledge. Use hashtags (for example, #internship or #brandmanager) to help relate your tweets to the jobs and career areas that you are targeting.

You can also mention other users in your tweets by including their Twitter username (@username). This will promote further interaction and encourage others to 'retweet' (share) your tweet.

**“I have employed Junior Copywriters ... whom I've found through Twitter. It helps to have a good profile as I'll look through their tweets to see how they're written and especially look out for blogs.”**

Recruiter at marketing communications agency

## Instagram

Like with Twitter start by creating an Instagram account specifically for career networking and make sure it is public. Try to keep your writing/photos/branding consistent across all your professional social media accounts.

Find relevant organisations and people to follow. In addition, because Instagram is built around photos it can be particularly useful for those in creative sectors to showcase their work. Use hashtags but not too many!

## Facebook

You may keep up with your friends and family on Facebook – but had you realised you can use it for career searching too?

Ways in which you can do this include:

- Job hunting pages such as University of Kent Student Employability and Milkround.com for featured jobs, events and additional career advice
- Most big graduate recruiters have Facebook pages (eg GoogleStudents or MarsGradsUK). 'Like' them and use them to keep up to date with job opportunities, ask questions and get the latest news – this will prove useful in applications and interviews
- 'Like' pages for professional bodies, such as PRWeek or RIBA. Seeing who else has liked them, and who is commenting on their posts, will help you expand your knowledge of that industry.

## Your own website

If you are interested in the creative sector, your website can act as a 'shop window' for your work and your talents. You can include your CV and a portfolio of your work and just give employers a link to this site. This can be particularly effective if you are going for multimedia, web design or computer games jobs where they can act as a demonstration of your technical skills.

An about.me page <https://about.me/> can act as an online business card, where you can gather links to all of the other places you feature online, and showcase these to an employer.



## SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING (CONT)

Blogging is another way to get yourself noticed – short professional blog posts on areas related to your chosen career will help to demonstrate your motivation, your business awareness and your writing skills.

“I didn’t apply for this job, I simply got a phone call telling me that one of the company’s directors and the general manager wanted to meet me for lunch as they’d taken an interest in my blog after reading my review of one of their products I’d previously received as a Christmas gift ... I then attended the very informal and friendly meeting and was given the opportunity to ask any questions I had about the company and brand and was also asked a little more about myself and if I had any ideas ... After lunch they simply asked when I could start.”

Digital Marketing Assistant,  
cosmetics company  
www.raspberryykiss.com

### Don’t let your online presence ruin your career search!

The personal material on any site that you use for career-related networking and job searching should be professional in appearance and content. You may want to consider setting up separate Instagram, Facebook and Twitter accounts for this purpose. This will avoid people who you want to network with you on a professional level seeing inappropriate messages from your friends and prevent your job search from getting in the way of your social life!

If your full name is distinctive, you may want to use a shortened version or nickname on your personal pages to prevent it being picked up by search engines.

“When reviewing potential candidates I always Google them and this can often be the deal breaker. Twitter profiles full of swearing and angst-ridden rants about boyfriends are fairly commonplace, as are drunken Facebook pictures. These are instant repellents. It is imperative to maintain a good online presence if you aspire to work in PR.”

www.mediaaargh.com

Even so, you should use high-level privacy settings and Google yourself regularly (or use alerts to notify you of any changes). Friends and family might have added new photos or information even if you haven’t.

Use a good photograph. Apparently, people are ten times more likely to connect to you if they can see your picture. This should be head-and-shoulders and show you smartly dressed and well groomed.

Keep safe: don’t give away any personal details such as address or phone number on your websites or online CVs – just your email address. This should be straightforward and professional. Avoid anything ‘funny’ as employers may not share your sense of humour.

# METHODS OF APPROACH

**If you are approaching somebody who you can confidently expect to be willing to help, then making contact will be fairly easy.**

However, keep in mind that the person you are approaching is doing you a favour, and may be busy, so keep your requests polite, reasonable and brief. Even if you are approaching a Kent alumnus or a family contact, it is normally better to be slightly formal in your approach.

Don't ask your contact to do too much for you and don't send a CV with your first message – this makes your approach look like a job application when, at this stage, you are simply requesting information.

Your first contact may be by email, phone or a LinkedIn message. If you are making this contact through a third party it is a good idea to mention their name, as in the example.

This email is an example of one that you could send to the editor of a local newspaper.

**To:** andy.hack@alocalnewspaper.co.uk

**From:** alisondent0903@gmail.com

**Subject:** Request for advice

Dear Mr Hack,

I have just completed the second year of my degree in English at the University of Kent. I am very interested in a career in journalism after I graduate and my aunt, Ann Brown, who works in your accounts department, suggested that I should contact you to find out about the work of journalists on a local newspaper and to obtain your advice.

I currently write for Inquire, the University newspaper, and have also done a little sub-editing, which has given me an insight into the nature of the work. I would now like to gain a further insight into this work at a professional level.

It would be really helpful to talk to you about your work and I hope that you will be able to spare me half-an-hour so that I can ask you a few questions about this career.

I will telephone your office next week to ask for an appointment at a time to suit you.

Yours sincerely,

*Alison Dent*

If the person you are approaching has no such connection with you, then making contact with them may be more difficult, whether you're making speculative applications for jobs or just want to contact somebody for advice.

Many people will respect the enthusiasm and initiative that it takes for you to contact them in this way, but don't be too pushy. If you are approaching somebody out of the blue they may see no reason to help you, or they may genuinely be too busy to do so. If somebody does not respond to your first contact, you may try following up with a second email or a phone call but pursuing them any further will not be appreciated.



## Email

Many people's emails are freely available through their company website. If you can't find the email for the exact person that you want to contact, you may be able to work it out through looking at the addresses of other people in the same company. Otherwise, try phoning and ask the switchboard for the email.

Once you have the address you need, your approach will be similar to the one above. In this case, Alison Dent might approach Mr Hack in the following way:

**To:** andy.hack@alocalnewspaper.co.uk

**From:** alisondent0903@gmail.com

**Subject:** Request for advice

Dear Mr Hack,

I have just completed the second year of my degree in English at the University of Kent. I am very interested in a career in journalism after I graduate and particularly admire Local Newspaper's thorough and balanced coverage of community issues such as the proposed closure of Local Hospital.

I hope that you do not mind my contacting you in this way, but I wonder if you would be willing to help me find out more about the work of journalists on a local newspaper and to give me some advice on getting in to this career.

I currently write for Inquire, the University newspaper, and have also done a little sub-editing, which has given me an insight into the nature of the work. I would now like to gain a further insight into this work at a professional level.

It would be really helpful to talk to you about your work and I hope that you will be able to spare me half-an-hour so that I can ask you a few questions about this career.

I will telephone your office next week to ask for an appointment at a time to suit you.

Yours sincerely,

*Alison Dent*

This shows that Alison has done her research and is not just sending out identical emails to every employer that she can think of.

# METHODS OF APPROACH (CONT)

## Telephoning

Telephone contact is great if you get through to the right person, but this is not always easy. The person you want to speak to may be surrounded by 'gatekeepers' – secretaries and receptionists who protect their bosses from unwanted intrusions.

For this reason, it is usually best to make the first approach to a potential contact via email or social media and to follow this up with a phone call if necessary.

Before calling, plan what you are going to say. Don't write a script, as this will make you sound unnatural, but note down the points you want to cover and some key phrases. Doing this will help you to sound clear and confident rather than nervous and hesitant. Keep your call brief: the person you want to speak to may be very busy.

You should also plan what you are going to say to the gatekeepers. Be pleasant and polite. They will be more willing to help you if you get on their right side and could even be able to help you themselves.

A few tips for getting past the gatekeepers:

- Introduce yourself by saying something like **'This is Sarah Jones calling to speak to David Smith'**. This is more effective than **'Is David Smith available?'** – it suggests he is expecting your call.
- **'He's in a meeting/not in the office right now'**. Ask when he will be back, or if there is anyone else in his department who you could speak to.
- **'May I ask what you're calling about?'** – if you have already made contact you can say **'it's regarding the email that I sent him last week'**. The gatekeeper may press you for more information. Don't be too evasive or they may assume that you are trying to sell them something. A reply such as **'I have a couple of questions for him about ...'** may work better.
- At some companies, the relief staff are not as efficient at gatekeeping, so try to call during lunch and coffee breaks.
- Prepare a message to leave on voicemails – keep it brief and sound calm and professional.

Once you do get to speak to the person that you are targeting, introduce yourself briefly and outline what you are looking for.

A phone call is always an interruption, so give your listener a few moments to adjust from what they were doing or thinking about to what you are saying. Your first two or three words may be missed so say something like, **"Good morning Mr Smith. My name is Sarah Jones and I'm calling you about..."**.

Because your call is an interruption it's good manners, and a sensible way to get the full attention of your listener, to ask, **"Have I called at a convenient moment or would you rather I called back?"**

Be prepared for your contact to ask questions, or even to react in a negative manner. Think quickly and try and gain something from even an unhelpful person. For example:

- **'This is nothing to do with me – I'm not the right person for you to talk to'**

Ask who is the right person and note down their contact details

- **'We don't have any jobs available right now'**

If you are trying to make contact for advice and/or information, explain that you aren't looking for a job at the moment and just want to speak to this person briefly. If you are actively job-seeking, ask if they may have anything in the future. When would be a good time for you to call again?

- **'You don't have the experience/qualifications that we need'**

Try and find out more – what are they looking for? Are their requirements standard for this business? Are there any postgraduate qualifications that would be valuable?

At the end of the day, though, some gatekeepers will be too experienced, or too protective, for you to have any chance of getting past them. Remember, too, that they are probably acting on instructions from their boss, who has given them for a reason: they are a busy person who does not want to be disturbed or to do favours for people they do not know. Often, you will just have to accept that this approach is not going to work, and it is best to reach this acceptance before you become regarded as a nuisance.

## Face-to-face contacts

### Doorstepping

This method involves walking in to the place where you want to work and trying to meet people who can help you. Don't undertake this casually: it requires planning, confidence and flexibility and may not be appropriate for every business. Dress smartly. Use the company website or social media to find names of people you hope to talk to. Asking for the 'head of the marketing department' will not get you very far. You may just leave a CV

at the reception desk or you may ask for a meeting. You may be able to target several employers in the same day as similar employers are often clustered in the same location: technology companies in business parks, film companies in Soho and financial institutions in Canary Wharf or the City of London. You may be lucky and get to meet the right people immediately, but may need to follow up your visit with emails or phone calls.

**“Having been inspired to pursue a career in finance, I began to search for a general assistant job. I walked into a financial adviser’s office and handed in a CV. The head adviser was impressed by my sheer confidence and I had a meeting with him which led to a job offer.”**

Kent Business School student

### Being extra creative

This involves finding another way of making contacts or job applications that no-one else has thought of. This could be by meeting an employer's need, demonstrating your skills or attracting their attention in an unusual way. Let's look at three examples:

- *A graduate wanted a trainee journalist post on a local paper. She did a careful analysis of the content of the paper and compared it with an analysis of similar papers in neighbouring towns. Next, she conducted a*

*survey of readers' opinions about the paper by standing in the town centre and interviewing passers-by. She drew up a list of possible changes to the paper and wrote a sample article to illustrate these, which she then sent to the editor who invited her in for a chat. They had a long conversation and the next vacancy that arose was offered to her without competition.*

- *A media graduate planned his job-hunting campaign around a video CV, billboard poster and website. His campaign went viral and the video got over 5000 viewings on YouTube with around 50 companies contacting him as a result.*
- *Two Leicester University graduates attracted the attention of finance employers by standing in Canary Wharf and Paternoster Square with placards reading 'Economics graduates – who will employ us?' and handing out copies of their CVs to City professionals on their way to and from work. Their placards led to several interviews and offers of jobs and internships.*

Please note that we are not suggesting that you copy any of these approaches. They have been done now and you will need to think of your own 'extra creative' and original approach!

# INFORMATION INTERVIEWING



**The meetings that you are trying to set up with your networking contacts can be thought of as ‘information interviews’. An information interview is a structured conversation, in this case focusing on the work that your contact does, how they got there and what advice they might give you. This will enable you to:**

- Gather information about various careers by speaking to professionals in those career fields.

- Learn what opportunities exist in a given field or organisation.
- Develop contacts with key people who either do the hiring or who know those who do.
- Enhance your confidence and improve your interview skills by speaking to professionals in a non-threatening situation.
- Visit people in a variety of work settings to gain insight into different work environments.
- Use this information to make career decisions and take your career planning and/or job search further.

Remember, you are not asking the person for a job, you are gathering information on which to base decisions. Make this clear when you first approach your contacts.

The ideal information interview is a face-to-face meeting but you can also talk by phone or by video link if you can't manage to visit in person.

- Prepare for the meeting by reading as much as you can about the job role, the company and the person you are meeting before the interview, so that you come across as a clued-up and interested person over whom it is worth taking time and trouble.
- Write down the questions you want to ask and take notes during the meeting.
- Be prepared to take the lead, if necessary. Remember, you are interviewing your contact and have questions that you want to have answered.

- Respect the person's time. Don't stay too long or ask too many questions.
- Recognise that everyone has their own attitudes, biases and feelings which must be evaluated. By talking to several people, you will gain a variety of opinions.
- Ask if there is anyone else that your contact can recommend you to see at the end of the interview: this will extend your network.
- Send a thank-you letter or email immediately following the interview. You can also use this if appropriate, to tactfully remind the person of anything they promised to do.

### Questions to ask at an information interview

- What do you do in your role?
- How did you get into this area of work?
- How do you spend a typical day/week?
- What kinds of problems do you deal with?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- What are your major responsibilities?
- What do you find most/least satisfying about your job?
- What is the competition for jobs like?
- Where are vacancies advertised?
- What are the typical entry level jobs?
- What would you look for in a new applicant?
- How is a graduate's career likely to develop?
- What is the 'work culture' here? eg is it very informal or formal? How much autonomy do people have in their work? Is a great deal of socialising with colleagues and/or clients expected? Are community projects and volunteering encouraged and supported?
- What are the main changes and/or challenges that your organisation is facing?
- What information resources would you recommend me to read or follow to keep up to date with this sector?
- Can you suggest anyone else to whom I might talk?
- Are there opportunities for workshadowing or voluntary work experience?



These are just ideas to help you get started. You will almost certainly have other questions to ask that are more relevant to your particular situation.

Don't just work through a list of questions but listen actively to the replies and build on these to help the conversation along.

# PROACTIVE JOB HUNTING

**Once you have used networking to gather information and make career decisions, you can use the same techniques to market yourself to employers and find a job. This has a number of advantages over 'conventional' job hunting, the main one being that it helps you to access jobs which are not advertised. This is, in fact, most jobs! One source put the figure of unadvertised jobs at 80%.**

## Why do employers not advertise?

- Advertising costs money
- Employers may get more applications than they need: adverts for media jobs may attract hundreds of applicants
- Employers may have already received CVs from applicants who have written in speculatively, so they just interview these

Other advantages of proactive job hunting are that it:

- Impresses employers by your initiative/motivation
- Bypasses application forms – this could be useful if your academic qualifications are weak
- Provides advice on other routes into the job

- Makes you feel that you are in control of your situation rather than feeling powerless
- Can be combined with traditional techniques
- Helps to develop and demonstrate a range of skills that increase your employability including, persuasiveness, negotiating, initiative, planning, organising and investigative skills

There are, of course, a couple of disadvantages:

- It takes at least as much time as normal job hunting
- Some methods may require more confidence and assertiveness

While proactive job hunting may demand more time and effort than traditional job hunting, it is essential in certain career sectors, in particular the media. It could also be more fun!



# SPECULATIVE APPLICATIONS

## One key part of proactive job hunting is making speculative applications: sending your CV to an employer even when they are not advertising a suitable vacancy.

You will be more likely to get a positive response to this approach if you:

- Make sure that your CV and covering letter are top-quality.
- Do your research. Make sure that the organisations you are contacting do actually offer opportunities for the type of work which interests you. If the website says clearly that speculative applications will not be accepted, then don't send one! Try to find out the name of the relevant contact from the company website or by phoning the switchboard.
- Tailor your covering letter – don't just send the same letter to different organisations. Say why you are applying to this particular organisation and tell them what you can offer.
- Follow up your CV with a phone call after a week or two if you haven't heard anything.



## Do speculative applications work?

Yes!

- *I sent out CVs to local printing firms, card manufacturers and the like, and got at least two jobs this way. Just be prepared to send out lots of speculative applications and make your covering letter good. (Graphic designer)*
- *We receive a substantial amount of speculative CVs and ... according to potential suitability some of the applications will be kept on file for 3 months (Channel 4)*
- *I recruited two people into newly created accounts jobs. Both had previously written in 'on spec' and their details had been held on file. When I decided to recruit, my first action was to have a look at the file. I interviewed two applicants who had relevant experience and gave the job to the one who seemed more experienced. A few months later when another person was needed, I just contacted the other one and offered her the job without even interviewing her again. Both turned out good workers and it saved us the cost/time/hassle of adverts, interviews, etc. (Finance director, manufacturing industry).*

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