

# Careers Success Toolkit Job hunting

**Careers and Employment Support**  
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**Student Services**

# Job hunting

## Introduction

Finding a job requires time and effort, particularly in a competitive job market. To be successful, you will need to develop a number of job hunting skills – such as researching careers information, job hunting creatively and presenting yourself effectively in writing and in person.

*Careers Success Toolkit* has been written to help you develop these skills. These guides follow the selection process, with sections on job search strategy, putting together a persuasive CV and application form, and interview techniques. Within each guide there are references to other sources of useful information. Many of these resources are available in the Student Service Centre in Gateway House. However, you will need to check locally for the availability of specific information. If you are a graduate and are no longer living near the University, investigate the resources of your local public reference library, and/or the nearest university careers service.

Careers and Employment Support offers a number of services to help you with your job hunt. These include:

- Information on occupations and employers
- **DMUworks** – an online vacancy database linked to our website [dmu.ac.uk/careers](http://dmu.ac.uk/careers)
- Job vacancy bulletins such as Prospects Today
- Employer events such as our annual Leicestershire Student and Graduate Fair, FAME and employer presentations on campus.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of your job hunting strategy, there are Careers Advisers available at the Student Services Centre, Ground Floor, Gateway House between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

If you are no longer living near the university you may want to use our **E-guidance** service. Logon to [dmu.ac.uk/careers](http://dmu.ac.uk/careers) and follow the email link to a simple form for you to complete with your query. A member of the Careers Team will get back to you with advice and information.

## Your job search strategy

This section takes a brief look at job hunting strategy. This information may also be useful if you are looking for a placement, work experience or vacation work. For more information on this topic, and for tips on how to locate opportunities in the job market, you should refer to *Find Graduate Jobs*, one of our Career Success Guides.

To search effectively, you need to have a clear idea of the type of work you are seeking and a plan of action. If you are not yet at this point you will need to do some further thinking and research. As every job search is different, you have to work out your own strategy based on your interests and preferences and the job area.

Tools such as Prospects Planner, a computer guidance package, **DMUcareerchoices**, a web-based resource and Careers Success Guide 2: Plan Your Career, are available to get you started.

If you have got to the stage of knowing what you want to do and have identified the type of employer you are looking for then it is time to design your strategy. As part of your plan it is important to take account of:

- Your personal goals and objectives
- Your unique selling points in the field you have chosen
- The time you are planning to devote to the task.

## When to start looking for jobs

The ideal time to start considering jobs is in the penultimate year of your course. This is often easier said than done and many students are delaying serious job search activity until they have graduated. Some employers are adapting their recruitment policy in the light of this trend and are becoming more flexible when setting deadlines. Others continue to impose closing dates as early as the autumn term.

The best advice is to start when you are clear about your goals and can allocate quality time to the task. Employers expect a dynamic and professional approach from candidates and this requires energy, craft and tenacity in order to succeed.

## Identifying vacancies

A good starting point is to find out how and where employers advertise the jobs you are interested in. For example:

- Do they advertise through Careers and Employment Support or the national press
- Are there relevant trade/professional journals you should look at
- Are recruitment agencies used? If yes, which ones
- Would speculative applications be welcomed or even expected
- Where can you find information on employers?

The occupational booklets and reference files in the Student Services Resources Area are a good source for suggestions on job hunting in particular areas. Talking with a careers adviser or a tutor could also be helpful.

The following are key sources of employer information and vacancies:

- **Graduate recruitment campaigns**

Many large, private sector organisations run an annual recruitment campaign. These opportunities are normally listed in popular directories such as *Prospects* and *Hobsons GET Graduate Career Directory*. Some companies also visit universities to give presentations, attend recruitment fairs and to conduct selection interviews

- **Recruitment and information fairs**

Recruitment fairs consist of a gathering of employers and professional organisations and provide excellent networking opportunities. De Montfort University organises the Leicestershire Student and Graduate Fair in the autumn term that attracts over a 100 organisations

- **Job vacancies on the Internet**

The Internet is increasingly popular amongst employers for advertising job vacancies. It is a useful way to find out about prospective employers as well as to search for vacancies. Careers and Employment Support has an online vacancy facility called DMUworks, follow the link from our website at

[dmu.ac.uk/careers](http://dmu.ac.uk/careers)

- **Graduate vacancies bulletins**

Look out for the national vacancies published in *Prospects Finalist* (five times annually)

- **National, regional and local newspapers**

Most newspapers will have days when they publish vacancies. For an up-to-date list of national newspapers that advertise jobs in particular sectors please refer to *Career Success Guide 5: Find Graduate Jobs*. In addition there are several sites that link to most UK national and local classified job adverts at [fish4jobs.co.uk](http://fish4jobs.co.uk) You can also visit European and international newspapers on the web at:

[dailynewspaper.co.uk](http://dailynewspaper.co.uk)  
[worldnews.com](http://worldnews.com)

- **Professional and trade journals**

Many occupational areas have a journal or periodical usually produced by their own professional body or association. These normally include a vacancy section and, although most opportunities will demand experience, it is still worth taking a look and noting the names of organisations which are advertising on a regular basis

- **Job hunting agencies**

Recruitment agencies are used by companies to carry out part of the selection process. The service the agency offers can range from searching their database of job seekers, advertising the vacancy in the press, conducting interviews and, for senior positions, operating a head-hunting service. If you decide to use an agency, check how they match your job requirements to vacancies and enquire about any costs involved

The Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) provides a comprehensive list of agencies at [rec.uk.com](http://rec.uk.com)

## **Vacancies which are not advertised – or ‘the creative job search’**

Many jobs are never advertised. This is particularly the case with popular areas of employment, such as the media, law and design. Organisations in these industries and small organisations in general may not wish to advertise jobs for fear of being overwhelmed by applicants. In these circumstances jobs may go to people who are already known to the company either through personal contacts, or because they have approached the company speculatively in the recent past.

The competitiveness of the graduate job market makes it necessary to take a pro-active approach to your job hunt.

The creative job search is about actively and creatively searching for work and promoting your skills, qualities and experience in a targeted way. It has several components including:

- Researching your targeted occupation and industry
- Researching potential employers
- Networking
- Information interviewing
- Sending targeted speculative applications.

The last of these strategies, sending speculative applications, has been used for many years, often in a very hit or miss fashion. Combined with the other strategies, it has a much greater chance of success. We only have space here to briefly introduce these strategies but other publications (mentioned later) go into them in much more depth.

## **Knowing what you want**

To be successful at the creative job hunt you need to have a clear idea of:

- What you want to achieve, eg a work placement in a radio station; a position as a marketing trainee in the car industry; a post with a voluntary organisation in the Leicester area
- What you have to offer to potential employers – your relevant skills, qualities and experience.

Only by having clear aims and objectives can you develop an effective strategy.

## **Knowing what they want**

You need to be aware of the skills, experience and qualities employers are likely to be looking for. To do this you need to do some of the following:

- Research occupational information
- Study job adverts
- Gather information from professional bodies
- Visit careers or recruitment sections of company websites
- Conduct information interviews with practitioners (see below)
- Gain relevant experience through work shadowing or work experience.

## Knowing the market

Find out where jobs are advertised, read relevant journals or articles in the press, research potential employers. Websites of professional bodies and associations can be useful for finding out about developments within employment sectors or particular occupations.

## Making contacts Networking

This is about making contact with people who are working in the area you would like to get into, to find out more about the occupation, get yourself known and locate opportunities.

A starting point for getting contact names is to network. Tell everyone you know (eg your family, friends, work colleagues, acquaintances, tutors), what you are trying to achieve, and enlist their help. Ask them whether they know, or whether anyone they know may know, of someone in the industry. So, for example, if you want to get into human resource management, it could be that your friend's mother knows the Human Resource Manager of the local hospital; if you are interested in marketing, your boss from your evening job may live next door to a Marketing Manager.

Networking can thus provide you with the name of a contact for further investigation. If you cannot get a contact in this way, then identify organisations who may employ someone in your target area and ring them to get the name of a person doing the job you have in mind.

## Information interviewing

Having found a contact name, the next step is to write to them, requesting an opportunity to speak to them about what they do, mentioning where you got their name from (if appropriate). Your objective is to gain insight into their work, to get them to know you and to gain further contacts. Remember that you are not looking for a job at this stage – just advice and information.

Research the company before the interview so that you are well informed and be organised and structured in your approach. At the meeting ask about your contact's background and training, the work they do, the work place, what they find most and least satisfying about their job, how they got into the field and for any tips they have for success. Ask if they can give you the name of a colleague, possibly from another company, who you could also approach. You may wish to ask about the opportunity of work shadowing or work experience.

After the interview write to thank your contact for seeing you and write up your notes. The more people you can talk to, the better informed you will be about the occupation and the availability of jobs. You may even find that the field is not for you after all, but in the process, discover other areas of interest.

## Speculative applications

Having done all your research, you are in a position to make approaches to companies about potential vacancies. Applying 'on spec' involves sending your CV with a covering letter to organisations, enquiring about opportunities and demonstrating what you can offer the company. You need to be thorough and professional in your approach. For example, research the company beforehand and try and get the name of a relevant person within the organisation to whom you can send your application. Ensure that your CV and letter are of the highest quality (see the section on CVs), and be as specific as possible about the positions you are interested in and what you have to offer.

If you do not hear back within a week or so, follow up your letter with a phone call. You may then get some feedback on your application or suggestions for other companies to contact, even if you cannot talk yourself into an interview. Be prepared to talk your way around receptionists or secretaries and be assertive – but always polite and business-like.

Inevitably some of your letters or phone calls will go unanswered or you may receive a short, negative response. Other organisations may offer to keep you on file or send details of relevant positions. Every now and then a company may invite you for an interview. There is a large element of luck involved in the speculative application (being in the right place at the right time) but your preparation and research will go a long way to enhancing your chances of success. People do get jobs this way!

## More creative job searching

For more ideas on the creative job search consult the following:

- *Applications, CVs and Cover Letters and Job Seeking Strategies* – available to take away from the Student Services Resource Area
- *Career Success Guide No. 5: Find Graduate Jobs* available to take away from the Student Services Resource Area
- *What Colour Is Your Parachute?* by R N Bolles – available for reference from the Student Services Resource Area, and *The Complete Job Search Handbook* by H Figler (available from libraries or bookshops).  
They offer very good accounts of the creative job search, albeit written from the American job market perspective. Creative job seeking has been an accepted way of finding work in the US for many years
- *What Next? The Complete Guide to Taking Control of Your Working Life* by Dr. Barbara Moses – available from the Student Services Resource Area
- You may also like to look at the video *Can I Have a Few Minutes of Your Time?* available for viewing or loan from Student Services.

## Summary

So, there is a great deal more to a successful job hunt than just looking in the paper for vacancies. The effective job hunter:

- Has a clear idea of which jobs they are interested in, and what they hope to achieve
- Starts by researching career areas of interest to identify the best strategy and resources for their job hunt
- Researches occupations thoroughly so that they know what is involved and the structure of the profession or industry, including work experience or information interviewing
- Looks regularly and systematically at published vacancy sources, both in paper form and online
- Considers being pro-active in their job hunt and making speculative applications
- Researches potential employers carefully for their speculative job search and prior to making applications or going for interviews.

These strategies should enable you to locate suitable opportunities in your areas of interest. To find out how to market yourself best when applying for them, see other guides in this section.