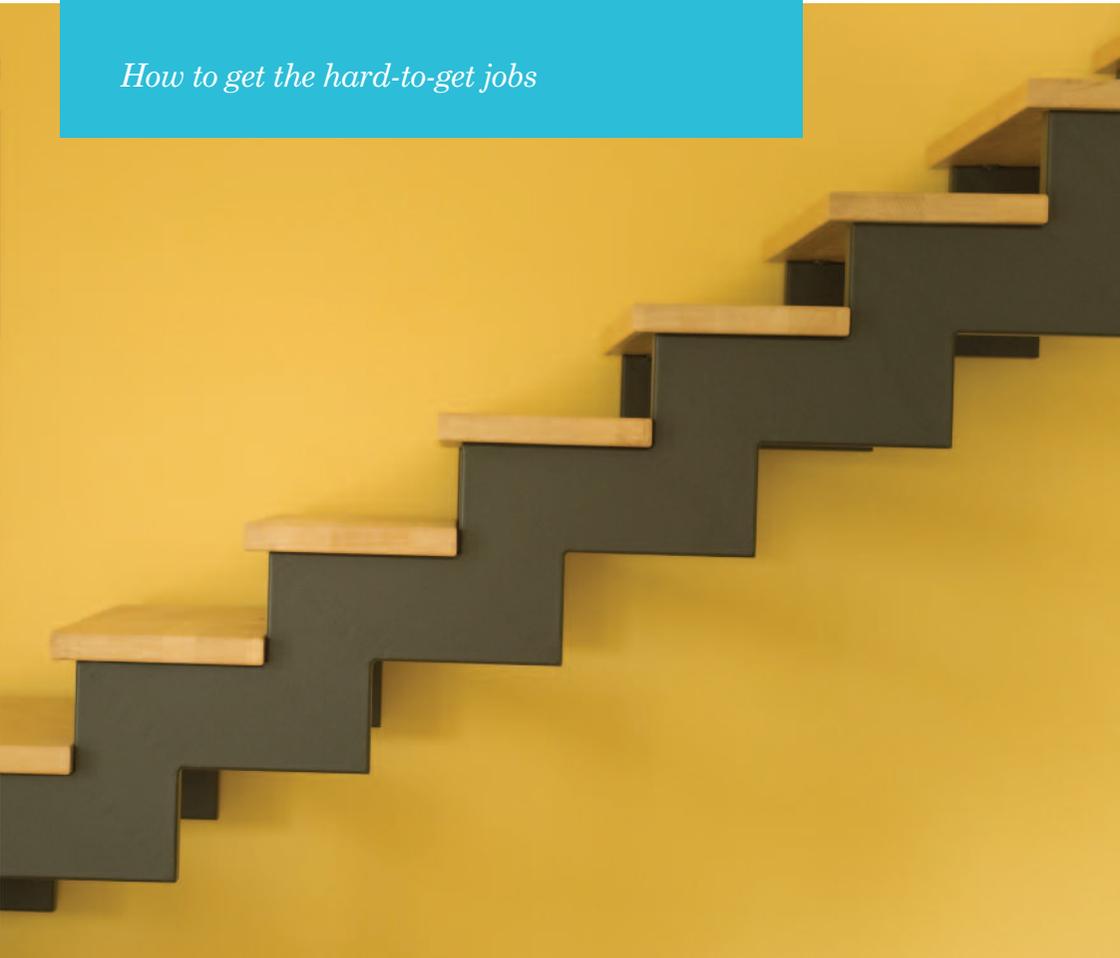


THE CREATIVE CAREER SEARCH

How to get the hard-to-get jobs



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THE CREATIVE CAREER SEARCH: WHAT IS IT?

The Creative 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 creative career search. It can involve:

- Finding out about careers by talking to people;
- Developing a network of contacts who can help 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 creative 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 creative 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
- Further networking and research
- 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 creative career searching techniques: these come at a later stage of the career process. Pick up our booklet on Choosing a Career, or see www.kent.ac.uk/careers/Choosing/ChoosingCareer.htm to get you started and return to this booklet later.

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: the web resources at www.kent.ac.uk/careers/workin.htm and job profiles at www.prospects.ac.uk/types_of_jobs.htm are good places to start.

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, and 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 campus branch would be willing to answer a few questions? Are there any Kent graduates in KEW-NET you could get in touch with – or perhaps a professional body such as the Institute of Financial Services?



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
- Kent graduates (see page 7 for details of KEW-NET, which offers online advice and mentoring from Kent graduates)



- People you find on social media (see page 8)
- If you belong to a particular 'minority' group, you may find specific support and advice available. See www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/targetinformation.html for links to some groups that can provide this.
- 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/how_to_find_a_job.htm

KEW-NET

What is KEW-NET?

KEW-NET is the University's online mentoring/networking tool for Kent students and graduates to meet, support one another and help each other get ahead.

Why should I use KEW-NET?

Reading careers information still often leaves the question, "Yes, but what is this job *really* like?". The best way to find the answer to this is to talk to somebody actually doing the work that you are interested in – and, if that person has studied at Kent, so much the better.

Who is in KEW-NET?

A variety of Kent graduates, in all kinds of subjects and working in a whole range of career areas, in the UK and overseas.

How can alumni help me through KEW-NET?

Alumni may be able to help you by:

- reviewing your CV
- offering advice on getting into certain industries, based on their own experience
- offering work experience or work shadowing

This help is principally offered through the online system, but it may also be possible to get advice by phone or in person.

When should I use KEW-NET?

Not too early in your career planning! Alumni do not want you to spend their time with them asking simple questions that could have been answered by careers advisers or through careers websites. Do some preliminary research first: you will then be able to make much more productive use of your contacts.

How do I use KEW-NET?

Find out more and register at www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/kew-net.html



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

LinkedIn is a business-oriented social networking site with over 300 million 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.

There is a good example LinkedIn profile, provided by the University of Manchester, at www.linkedin.com/in/samuelroutledge. Keep your profile up to date by adding in any new achievements or experience and changing your profile description as appropriate (eg from “student seeking internship in ...”

to “finalist seeking entry-level graduate position in ...”)

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 around 2 million 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

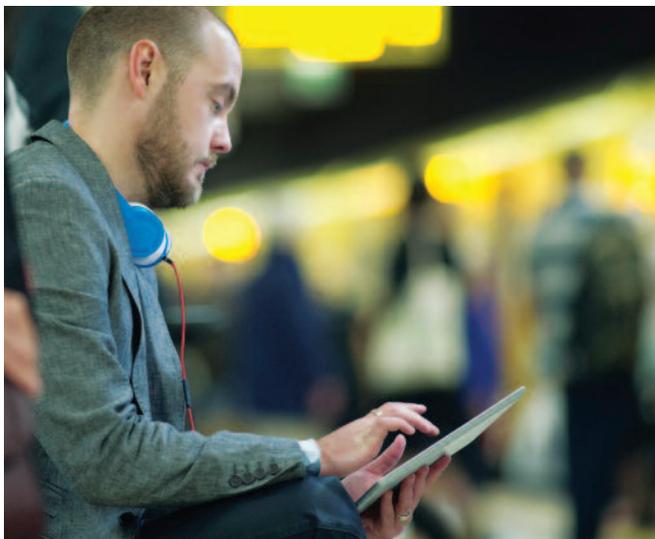
way to develop your industry knowledge as well as your contacts and network and to keep up with developments. Discussion threads allow you to comment and read comments of people established in your industry. Use groups to share any relevant articles and insights. Once people start to see you commenting they may add you as a connection if they are impressed by your knowledge. 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

First of all, consider whether LinkedIn is the best way to contact a person. If they have a Twitter profile, this may be a better way to make an initial contact (see below).

- 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 12
- 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 12). LinkedIn has a word limit for messages to anyone who is not a direct contact

<http://students.linkedin.com/uk>



Twitter

While LinkedIn is a great resource for finding out about people and their career paths, Twitter is often recommended as a better way to actually contact them.

Twitter allows you 140 characters to “tweet” setting out your thoughts, comments and opinions. 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 @damianaspinall (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

SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING (CONT)

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

Facebook

Yes, you almost certainly 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.
- Find smaller employers by searching on a place name (e.g. Canterbury). If this brings up a large number of results, you can narrow them down by various categories, including 'Employer'. This search may also bring up local media organisations, recruitment agencies and their job-related sites: finding people who 'like' these sites may also give you some useful connections.

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.

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 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 (such as a Kent graduate who you are contacting through KEW-NET, or someone who has agreed to help via a friend or a family member) 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 letter. If you are making this contact through a third party it is a good idea to mention their name, as in the example below:

The email above 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@geemail.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.
- Try calling very early or very late – outside normal working hours – when the gatekeepers may not even be there!
- Prepare a message to leave on voicemails or answering machines – 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. 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, you may ask for a meeting or you may try and get into conversation with reception staff or people in the waiting area. 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

METHODS OF APPROACH (CONT)

Making contacts outside the workplace

Anywhere you go – sitting on a train, at a concert or sporting event, in the pub – you could bump into somebody who can help you in your career search. Here are a few ideas for maximising the chances of this happening, although truly creative career searchers will be able to come up with their own:

- Where do people in your chosen company or work area go for after-work drinks? Some large graduate recruiters are keen to emphasise the social aspect of working for them and the graduate profiles on their web pages may drop the names of favourite watering holes – try going along on a Friday evening.
- Find out about trade fairs in your chosen area at www.exhibitions.co.uk
- Hotels which provide conference facilities.

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!

See our web page on **Lateral Thinking Skills**
www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/lateral.htm

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 (see page 12).

The ideal information interview is a face-to-face meeting but you can

also talk by phone or by Skype 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 his/her 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.

CREATIVE 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: £400 for a standard advertisement on Milkround.com
- 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 creative 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 creative 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 creative 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. See www.kent.ac.uk/careers/applcn.htm
- 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 so if you haven't heard anything.

For help with CVs, pick up our booklet, Making Applications, or see www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/cvs.htm



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)*

FURTHER INFORMATION

Careers Employability Award

This is open to all students at Kent at any stage of your studies. You gain the award by completing quizzes and assignments on Moodle, the University's Virtual Learning Environment. It will not only help you to make the right career choices and improve your career planning and job hunting skills: it can transform your chances of getting a graduate job. On completion of the award, you will receive a certificate and 60 Employability Points.

The Careers Employability Award includes modules on "Researching Careers" and "Social Networking"

Find out more at
www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/careersmoodle.html



Other useful resources

This section brings together some of the most useful resources referred to in this booklet:

- **Creative Job Hunting web pages**
www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/creativejobhunt.html
- **KEW-NET**
www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/kew-net.html
- **Choosing a Career**
www.kent.ac.uk/careers/Choosing/ChoosingCareer.htm

- **I Want to Work In**
www.kent.ac.uk/careers/workin.htm
- **Media Careers**
www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sitesmedia.htm
- **Using Social Media in Job hunting**
www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/findajob.html?tab=using-social-media

Information in this booklet was current as at September 2014. Although every attempt has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information, the Careers and Employability Service cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of the contents or for any errors or omissions.

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