

Unadvertised jobs and internships

Sometimes the job you want may not be advertised as frequently as you would like. In fact you may have never seen an advert for that perfect role. You can increase your chances by approaching organisations directly.

the
CareersGroup
University of London

Why you should consider this speculative approach

Many employers don't invest resources in advertising entry-level jobs and recruit for these through less formal methods.

- > A number of employers take on students and graduates for work experience and internships but again don't have the resources to actively recruit. A well targeted CV and letter arriving at the right time might get you through the door.
- > Advertised jobs can generate hundreds of applicants. A speculative approach may reduce your competition.
- > Some experts estimate that up to 70% of jobs are never advertised – this can be higher in certain sectors.
- > Short-term positions are often filled by this method. Don't overlook these as they can lead to further opportunities.
- > You won't necessarily need to follow the normal recruitment process. Sometimes finding an unadvertised job starts with a face to face meeting and is followed up with a CV.
- > For some sectors this approach is the norm - for example the arts, media and not-for-profit.

CHECKLIST

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> Have you spent time researching the best places to target?

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> Have you tried to build a network of contacts in your chosen field?

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> Is your letter addressed to a named contact?

☐

> Have you used formatting tools (e.g. bold, italics, capitals and spacing) consistently?

☐

> Have you captured the reader's interest?

☐

> Have you mentioned something specific about the company?

☐

> Is it clear why you are writing to them?

Six steps to an effective approach

1

Research employers

First put together a list of employers you want to work for; you can find these in a number of ways. Our online careers library www.careerstagged.co.uk allows you to search for specialist websites related to a job sector. These might be professional associations which list members or have articles and features about member organisations. Scan advertised vacancies online and in the press to find out who is recruiting; even if the job doesn't fit, the organisation might have other opportunities. Do further research by reading the websites, blogs, Twitter and social media pages of the organisations you want to target. Industry press and business pages will also provide insights. Try to get a sense of areas of growth – have they recently won a big bid or expanded into a new area? You might mention this in your application if it is relevant.

2

Warm up your contacts

Most of us don't have a ready-made list of contacts willing to give us a job but don't let that deter you. The most successful hunters of unadvertised jobs take any opportunity to build their network (see our networking leaflet for more details on how to do this). A chance meeting where you mention that you are job hunting could lead to the suggestion of a name or a company to approach. To achieve this you need to be active and do all that you can to meet new people. Attending careers fairs and events is one way of doing this but also think about your social circle; could it do with a shake up?

3

Target your CV and cover letter

The job profiles on www.prospects.ac.uk are a useful guide to the relevant skills needed for a particular role. Try to show evidence of these skills to demonstrate that you have a sense of what you will be doing and how your experience fits the job. Even when you are applying for an unadvertised job it helps to be as specific as you can. If you have a couple of roles in mind (for example web designer/ programmer) it is acceptable to mention both, provided they are not completely unrelated! You should have a flexible approach to how you see yourself fitting into the organisation, but at the same time you should be reasonably clear about the range of roles you could do and the types of work you are looking for.



**Alison
Hoskins**

"After I came to the careers centre I read about them and sent them a speculative letter. It wasn't straightforward. They said they might have something; they were seeing a few people and had the possibility of some short term work coming up. I went along for what seemed like an informal interview but in the end they offered me some paid work with the possibility of continuing work if they secured more contracts."

Comment

Alison completed a Masters in International Relations. She used a speculative approach with success and is now employed as a consultant in the London office of a strategic communications consultancy that works with governments and corporate clients in Africa.

4

Always write to a named contact

Often your research will reveal the best person to write to. Failing that, call the organisation and get the name of a relevant person. If you really can't track down the name then use 'Dear Sir' or 'Madam' – avoid 'To whom it may concern' as it sounds a bit too impersonal. Previous contact with the organisation or individual can make a response to your application more likely. Attending careers fairs and events is one way of doing this.

5

Match your style to the sector

For example, an advertising agency might like you to show creativity. A business consultancy may expect you to be more formal. Think about the language you are using and the examples you are providing. Remember, someone at your university careers centre can check your speculative applications as well as applications for advertised jobs.

6

Persevere

It is normal not to receive a reply from a number of the places you approach, so a lack of responses may not be anything to do with you or your application. Get some feedback from the careers service or people working in the sector on your approach; there may be things you can improve. You can follow up your letter with a telephone call a couple of weeks later; at this point you can check if they have received your application and the likelihood of any relevant opportunities.

PERSEVERE

WARM UP YOUR CONTACTS **RESEARCH EMPLOYERS**
ALWAYS WRITE TO A NAMED CONTACT

TARGET YOUR CV AND COVER LETTER **MATCH STYLE TO YOUR SECTOR**



**Arif
Memon**

Arif wanted an internship, but was not accepted by any of the large companies he applied to. He called 21 small engineering firms. He asked questions about their company and explained his background and interests. Because they were small firms, most of the time he managed to speak to the Managing Director. Not everyone was helpful, but many were pleased to have someone interested in their company. Some wanted to offer a paid internship, but could not afford to. He persisted, and was offered a paid internship by the 21st company he called.

Comment

Arif did well to just keep going. It is very easy to lose heart when you are getting no feedback from your efforts. One way to overcome despondency is to set yourself a target for the number of organisations to approach and not give up until you have met your target. You only need one organisation to say yes.

Example letter

32 Ivanhoe Crescent
London
SW19 0NY
DD/MM/YY

Ms Simone Morgan
London Cinema Museum
Ridley's Walk
London
W1 LV6

Dear Ms Morgan,

I am contacting you about the possibility of working in your events and marketing team. I have visited the museum a number of times and really enjoyed your recent exhibition 'Stars of the Silent Screen', which I thought was innovative in its interdisciplinary approach to viewing cinema through a variety of media. I thought your Twitter campaign in the month leading up to the opening was really effective, particularly the use of live quotes from everyone from primary schoolchildren to prominent historians. I am very keen on using social media for arts marketing as the sector is leading the industry in adopting new social media marketing platforms.

She mentions something specific about the employer which helps to personalise the letter.

Highlights a relevant issue with the aim of inspiring the employer to read more.

My relevant work experience includes six months with a local theatre company. Here I took responsibility for all aspects of marketing. I developed my visual presentation skills by designing leaflets and posters using Adobe InDesign. I used Facebook and Twitter to promote the theatre, significantly growing the number of followers by 60% in three months. I also initiated a project to explore the use of new social media platforms, and summarised my recommendations in a strategy report. As a result the Director authorised our corporate use of Google Hangouts.

A good summary of experience related to the job. The CV can complement this and provide more detail.

I also worked for an events management company in an administrative role. Here I supported the team booking venues, arranging catering, putting together conference packs and marketing materials. This gave me a good grounding in the logistics of events organisation.

Illustrates that she can be a supportive team member and is willing to do administrative tasks.

I hope my experience illustrates my flexibility to carry out a range of tasks. I am passionate about the arts and film and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you should there be the possibility of a role within the London Cinema Museum.

Good succinct ending. Hopefully her CV will provide more evidence for her interest in art and film.

Yours sincerely

Meredith Downey