

## Strategies for job hunting

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Job hunting is often described as being a job in itself! Many people see searching and applying for jobs as a frustrating and prolonged procedure, but planning and preparation can make your job search more effective. Understanding your current job needs, motivations and aspirations will help you decide the role you are aiming for - the next step is to think about *where* you are going to find it.

We have listed some of the many job hunting strategies on offer. Some options have better rates of success than others and relying on only one method of search, or one application at a time, will restrict your options and prolong the search. Not all of the methods below will be equally effective and appropriate for you.

### **Advertised vacancies – online**

Most job seekers will go straight to the internet, but without targeted searching the sheer volume of results can be overwhelming. Many employers, especially the well known ones, now advertise solely on their own websites, through LinkedIn, or through specialist sites like [jobs.ac.uk](http://jobs.ac.uk): the most well-known site for academic and education jobs and related institutions. There are also hundreds of job sites such as [monster.co.uk](http://monster.co.uk) or [indeed.co.uk](http://indeed.co.uk) where you can browse posted job adverts or upload a CV for prospective employers. If you are uploading a CV, be aware that it may be subjected to a 'key word search' – make sure that the key skills you want to get across can be easily found. Many of these sites also offer advice on writing CV's and making applications. With these sites it is advisable to stick to the better-known, more reputable ones and always try and follow up! Often the prospective employers are actually recruitment agencies.

### **Advertised vacancies – printed press**

Searching advertised vacancies in the printed press is another common job hunting technique. There are a wide range of publications, from free papers like the Metro to the large national papers, like the Guardian. Looking at local papers can also be useful, particularly if you want your workplace to be close to home. If you have a particular profession or industry in mind then you should regularly check the professional or specialised papers and magazines, for really targeted jobs ads.

In fields such as Higher Education, searching for and responding to advertised vacancies, in any media, should give you a good result but it is important to remember how many people the advert may reach. For a post in the Times Higher Education or on [jobs.ac.uk](http://jobs.ac.uk) the number of applicants – and the competition – will be high. Success rates will be improved by making sure you can meet the majority of the criteria for the role, and demonstrating this in an application of the highest standard.

### **Personal contacts / networking**

This is a useful method of hearing about potential jobs of interest to you and networking in fields of interest can help you target related organisations/companies. This will also help you access the 'hidden' job market. There are many employers who do not widely advertise their vacancies, especially smaller ones, and employers who actively recruit people who have been recommended to them, rather than risk applications from hundreds of 'unknowns'. Unfortunately, this method is limited by the extent of your existing network and how well you use it.

Make the most of the contacts you have and ensure that people know that you are looking for a job and, importantly, what sort of role you require – give them a clear 'brief' and they're more likely to spot the opportunities that are right for you. Take advantage of having as many 'eyes' and 'ears' out there as possible! Do some research and work on your networking skills to be more effective.

### **Social Networking**

Don't forget your online presence and contacts! Social media is an increasingly important platform for networking, and sites such as LinkedIn are full of recent, relevant jobs in your close and wider network.

Think of creative ways of using social media: target people who are where you want to be in 3-5 years – how did they get there; are there things they did that you can 'copy'; what skills do they have that you could improve? If there's a particular firm you want to work for, do you know anyone with links to them?

As with all forms of networking, make sure you give a clear reflection of who you are and what you're looking for – make it easy for your contacts to remember and act on it!

### **Contacting Employers via CV / Cover Letter (Speculative Application)**

The success rate of this method varies greatly. Many employers do not accept speculative applications and it will be a waste of time and effort. For those that do accept such approaches you may want to bear in mind a few pointers. It is advisable to call the organisation first and - at the very least - find an appropriate person to send your application to. If you can actually talk to people with vacancies to fill, or arrange face-to-face meetings, then your rate of success should greatly improve. The advantage of this method is that you may access 'hidden jobs' and therefore, there will tend to be reduced competition. Before you spend time on this method it is well worth brushing up on techniques to support your application including your networking and communication skills.

### **The Job Centre Plus**

The Job Centre has offices where you can look for jobs and talk to people face-to-face, or you can use their website:

<https://www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus/how-to-contact> The Job Centre Plus also offers advice on applying for jobs and can let you know if you are eligible for any benefits while you are looking for new employment. You may also find the new National Careers Service web page useful: [nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](http://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk).

### **Recruitment Agencies**

Recruitment agencies can be useful as many jobs are advertised through this method and some organisations use agencies to screen their candidates. They can even provide you with access to otherwise unadvertised jobs and specialist posts. However, the quality of service you receive will vary from one agency to another so try and get some recommendations from colleagues and friends. Look for the smaller agencies where you might get a more personal service, and target agencies which specialise in your field, you can look these up on [www.agencycentral.co.uk](http://www.agencycentral.co.uk).

Some agencies focus on just permanent or temporary roles and some offer both so be prepared to discuss the type of role and employment you are looking for. Many recruitment agencies will require an up-to-date copy of your CV and, depending on the role, you may have to take a test e.g. to demonstrate IT skills. Agencies generally work to fill positions for employers and will deal with hundreds of applicants. Make sure you prepare in advance and are clear and specific about your preferences for roles/sectors, and stick to these! Some agencies may encourage you to consider roles which are less preferable because they need to fill the vacancy. Make sure you are proactive: find someone to talk to when you register and telephone a named contact regularly to ensure your name is at the forefront of their mind when jobs come in. You can register with more than one agency - usually three to four is a viable number. However, make sure that each agency is right for you and the type of vacancies you're after; a scattergun approach isn't always best – sometimes agencies will work harder to 'sell' a talented individual (you!) if you're 'exclusive' to them.

*What strategies were you not aware of before?*

*What will work well for you?*

### **Finally, be creative and keep records!**

The more you research the more leads you will come across, and the easier it will become to define the places where you find jobs that suit you. However, do try and be creative during the process - you may find a role that isn't for you but in an organisation which could be, and vice versa. Keeping up with business news will also give you an idea of the companies that may be expanding and therefore, doing a large amount of hiring as well as giving you a sense of the variety of roles that are out there. Jobs get updated daily but many internet sites have the facility to email you directly with new roles that fit your criteria. Keep a good record of where and when you find the best roles for you. For example, is the Guardian on a Wednesday the best for Education jobs? Make a record of organisations/companies that interest you so that you can check their websites directly. Any information you gather will be useful now, in future job searches and when others in your network come to you for help!