

# Creative Job Search: Finding Work with Smaller Companies

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To many university leavers, the big graduate schemes seem like the holy grail and it can be easy to think that there are only 100 companies in the world if you are an undergraduate student. But don't dismiss SMEs as that's where the bulk of graduate vacancies really lie, particularly in this region.

Small to medium sized enterprises, with less than 250 employees (SMEs) are vital to the UK economy and the job-hunting graduate. In fact, new graduates are more likely to get their first job in an SME than in a large corporation.

SMEs can offer really interesting opportunities for graduates. Although roles may not be described as formal graduate schemes, SMEs can offer the chance to immerse yourself in several roles and gain greater autonomy and responsibility than with some of the major graduate schemes promoted on graduate employment websites.

## Finding out about these opportunities

How does the average graduate look for work? They might scan the jobs pages and sites, applying for jobs which seem interesting. They might also go to job centres, recruitment agencies and university careers services. Finally they may resort to sending in a CV to some companies, having a look on LinkedIn, or talking to relatives or friends to ask for ideas. Their job hunting approach would look a bit like this:



## The Employer's approach

Now imagine you are a small employer, with a position to fill in the marketing department. You want someone interested, ambitious and capable.

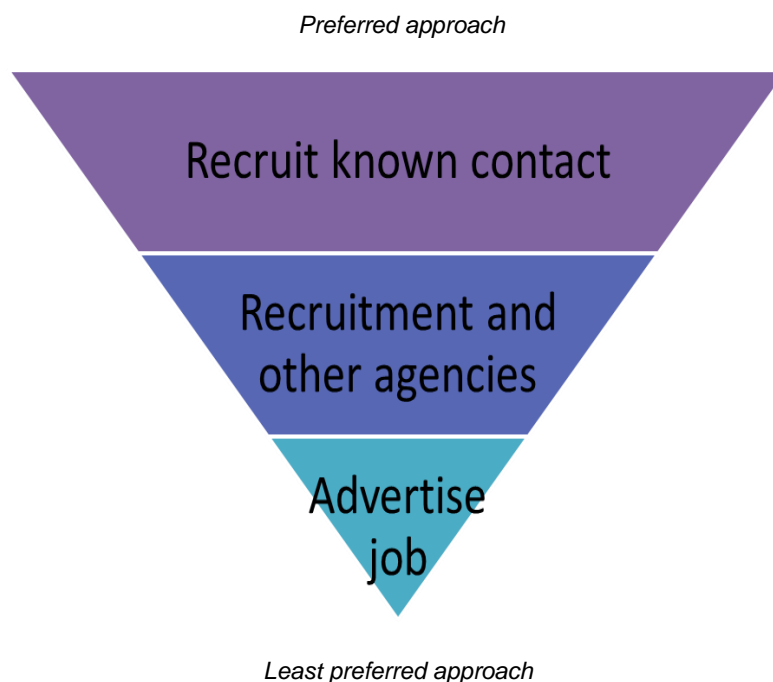
### How an employer recruits

You could place an advert in the paper or online, but this will cost you money and you may have too many applications which you really don't have the time to sort through.

You might go to a recruitment agency, who could send along someone suitable. It will save you time but it will certainly cost you money, and you are not sure whether the applicant will be suitable.

You might first of all look around to see if anyone could fit into the role quickly – can you use or promote someone internally? You might know of someone who is good, perhaps they come on the recommendation of a trusted colleague, or even better they may work for a rival organisation! It might be that you know of people who have sent in their CV, or who you've heard of and maybe even talked to online through LinkedIn, and it occurs to you that they certainly seem interested and enthusiastic, so worth having them in for a chat.

The smaller employer's model for recruitment might look like this:

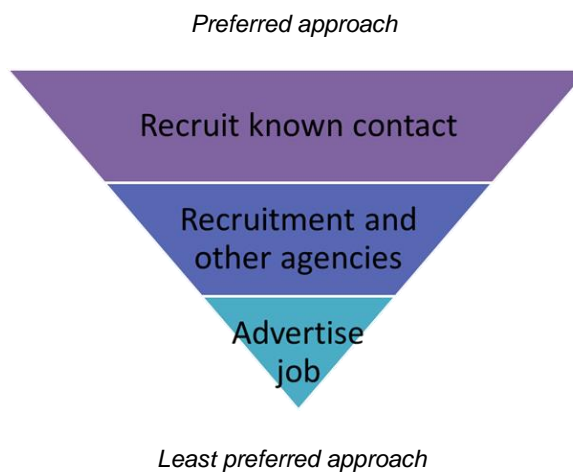


Now compare the two – do you see the issue?

### Job seekers approach



### SME recruiters approach



## Uncovering the hidden Jobs Market

The savvy job hunter will play it the employer's way. You could approach an employer, even when there's no advertised vacancy, to express your interest in working for them. You will make it easy for the recruiter to find you and convince them that you can meet their needs by doing the following:

- Identify potential recruiters by researching the industry, looking online, LinkedIn groups, local news stories, personal contacts.
- Networking: you can meet employers at the University, and in the local area, by attending careers fairs, conferences, business networks, professional societies, training events and lectures given by visiting speakers. Ask for a business card and follow up with a polite message through LinkedIn.
- When networking ask for information rather than directly for a job. Establish the relationship first by asking generally about the organisation in general or training routes. If your contact can't give you the information you need, thank them but ask if they can signpost you towards someone else.
- Join professional associations: some offer student membership and may hold events that enable you to meet employers. See the below if you are not sure which professional association to join.

<http://www.totalprofessions.com/profession-finder>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_British\\_professional\\_bodies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_British_professional_bodies)

- Gain work experience or work shadow via a placement and/or through part-time work or volunteering:
- Persuade the employer that you can meet their needs by preparing a targeted CV and covering letter/email.
- Get a copy of 'CVs, Letters and Application Forms - A Quick Guide', available from firstpoint, for more information on how you can make a speculative application.

## Using social media to network

Many employers are now advertising their vacancies on social media: an increasing number of jobseekers are finding work via this route. Use social media as part of your job-seeking campaign: network with people, search for jobs, and connect with/follow employers:



Follow employers that you are interested in, and check their Facebook page for vacancies and other interesting information.



If you haven't got one already, make it a priority to create a LinkedIn profile. LinkedIn has written some advice specifically for University students: <https://students.linkedin.com/uk>

You can also search for jobs that are being advertised on LinkedIn by visiting: <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/>

Remember that any employers you meet either face to face or online could one day recruiting to your dream job! Keep all communications positive and professional, keep contact details and a copy of any correspondence, and always thank people for any help they have given you.

Happy job hunting!

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