The hidden job market

Not every job vacancy is advertised; it is thought that around 70% of job vacancies are not advertised. Every day these hidden vacancies are being filled by people who have taken the initiative and applied directly to the company they want to work for hoping that they have a suitable vacancy. To be successful in this approach you must have a clear plan. We have put together an essential guide to accessing the hidden job market.

Research, research, research

Before you can begin sending off your CV you firstly need to identify the companies you wish to approach. Using industry magazines, journals and the internet can help you find the companies in your chosen career area. Find out what roles these companies have recruited for in the past and if there are any common skills or attributes they are looking for. This will allow you to tailor your CV and cover letter to the company and show them that you have done your research. Also check the local and national press to find news articles about a company that may be expanding and therefore looking for new employees. Please be aware that some companies will have a “no speculative application policy”, so always check for this on their website. Take a look at our guidance on creating a successful CV.

Contacts, contacts, contacts

Always get the name of a contact in the organization to send your application to. Ensure that the recipient is someone who has decision-making powers for recruitment within the business.

An application addressed to no particular person is likely to end up at the bottom of a pile of post before disappearing into the depths of the company waste paper bins unopened. To find a named contact consider checking the company website or contacting the company directly by telephone. Professional networking sites such as LinkedIn are also a good method of making contacts in the area of business where you want to work.
**Quality vs. quantity**

When applying speculatively to a company it is not just the number of companies you approach that is important, it is also the quality of each individual application. Steer clear of sending out 50 identical CVs and cover letters. An experienced member of HR will be able to tell instantly if your application has been sent to multiple companies. Instead tailor your CV and cover letter to each employer highlighting your key skills and experiences and why you are approaching them rather than their competitors.

**Email vs. post**

In a world where Lady Gaga gains 20 million followers on Twitter and Facebook is seen on advert after advert, employers are becoming consumed by the digital age. By sending a speculative application by email you can risk it becoming lost in the realms of the inbox. By posting your application it is more likely to stand out and be remembered. Ensure that your CV is printed on high quality paper and sent unfolded in an A4 envelope.

**Follow up**

No matter how many applications you have made you should always put aside time to follow up with the person you have written to. In doing so you are demonstrating to the employer the seriousness of your application and that you genuinely want to work for their company. You may also want to enquire about the possibility of job shadowing for a day or gaining work experience if a job opportunity is not available. This will demonstrate your passion to work within the industry and help you to build those important links for the future.

**Extra support**

**Ensure your CV is up to date and effective.** For feedback and support with your CV or a cover letter use your careers team. The Lancaster University careers team offer a CV and cover letter checking service that can be accessed either through TargetConnect or by attending a drop in appointment in The Base: 10.00-12.00 and 2.00-4.00 Monday-Friday.