

# Embracing Change

Supporting NHS Staff in the West Midlands through Transition

## 1. Supporting Yourself

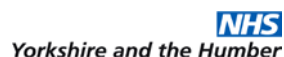
Preparing for a new job – practical advice

Part 4 – Self-employment

Developed by:



Using information and materials provided by:



## Self Employment

*(Source: Transitions - An evolving guide to working through organisational change. ©NHS Yorkshire and Humber)*

Another significant opportunity is in self employment. Here is a questionnaire that might help you to decide whether this is a useful route or you.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help identify the major considerations that should be taken into account when contemplating setting up one's own business, or self-employment as a consultant (or possibly as an Interim Manager).

This questionnaire is not based on a numerical score with the objective of coming up with a "go or no-go" result. It is instead designed to help you identify areas that you will wish to discuss with your career coach before taking a decision on some form of self-employment. These 'areas' may include: defining your market, researching the market, promoting your business, financing your business, business structure and managing your business.

### Background

There are two big differences between going back into employment and starting your own business. The first is that, for a job, there will usually be a job description and person profile: i.e. something that is identified and set up by the employing organisation. In self-employment, you write your own job description and re-write it frequently!

The second big difference is that, when applying for a salaried position, someone else will make the decision whether to hire you or not based on interviews, tests, presentations etc. For self-employment, you have to interview yourself – as thoroughly and objectively as possible.

Essentially, anyone thinking of setting up on their own is strongly advised to address the following aspects:

- How compatible with your personal goals is your business idea?
- Does the business idea play to your strengths and weaknesses?
- How will you manage to negotiate the areas of weakness?
- How closely will your working conditions and relationships match your preferences?
- Have you taken into account the true value of your current/former employment benefit package?

The questionnaire below will act as a means of starting to look at these issues in more detail.

**(A) Comfort zones:**

How important to you are the following?	Not important	Of some importance	Very important
Job security			
A stable level of income			
Predictable future			
Kudos of working for a (well) known employer			
Regular work patterns			
Set hours for work and leisure activities			
A full social life			
Time to relax with partner and family			
Scheduled, uninterrupted and paid holidays			
Pension accumulation and other employment benefits			
Day to day contact at work, with individuals and in teams			
Organised personal development			
Supportive work environment, with back-up departments when needed			
Being accountable to a manager, who has ultimate responsibility			
Someone else to organise and direct you			

**(B) Skills and characteristics:**

How good are you at the following?	Not at all good	Fairly good	Very good at this
Networking and developing business			

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relationships			
Being constantly creative			
Having an entrepreneurial flair			
Self motivation			
Organising your own time and effort efficiently			
Being convinced in your own mind about the significance and purpose of the product or service			
Having a strong desire, whatever else, to run a profitable business			
Financially astute			
Being prepared to take risks in uncertain situations			
Effective communication at all levels			
Enthusiastic for what has to be sold			
Able to cope with rejection			
Astutely aware of the market and the competition			
Remaining in good health, with stamina and patience			
Managing change and the unknown, without clear rules			
Continuously seeking new skills and knowledge			
<b>C) Motivation:</b>			
<b>How strongly motivated are you by the following?</b>	<b>Not really motivated</b>	<b>Fairly motivated</b>	<b>Very motivated</b>

Independence			
Being your own boss			
Having authority			
Gaining personal satisfaction			
The opportunity to earn a substantial amount of money			
Complete conviction in your business idea			
Having a marketable and viable product or service			
Creating something for yourself			
Starting something new			
The thrill of taking calculated risks			
Managing when, where and how to work			
Freedom from a corporate environment and company politics			
Having control of your working future			
Fun and enjoyment			

### Support of family and friends

In addition to personal preferences, skills and motivation, a supportive – and possibly directly involved - family is often critical to future business success and the new way of working.

Considerations that you may wish to take into account are:

- Family members' views on your business idea
- Are they able and willing to help and if so, how?
- If the use of your home or other assets are involved, does the family understand and support the implications?
- Do you need to set out a long-term budget with your family?
- Have you discussed their views and possible concerns on subjects such as security, pension accumulation, insurances, status, and impact on family life (including household routines)?

### **Personal developmental needs**

Most common amongst these, for people going into self employment, are selling, business planning and basic management accounting. Although the first of the three is arguably as much about personal make-up as skill enhancement, it may be possible for you to access specialist support going forward on any of these topics.

### **Final thoughts**

There is no doubt that 'going it alone' can mean constant psychological pressure - for some people, almost like being in permanent job search mode, with its attendant knock-backs. Having said that, self-employment for many people has proved richly rewarding, and their only question is why they did not go that route earlier in their lives!

### **RESOURCES**

**Business Link have an excellent website with lots of free downloadable resources on**

**<http://online.businesslink.gov.uk>**

### **Routes to the market**

There are two sides to the job market, each offering different benefits and opportunities and requiring different approaches. This section looks at what they are and how to use them effectively in your campaign.

- 1 Understanding your job market
- 2 Advertised vacancies
- 3 Recruiters
- 4 Personal contacts
- 5 The direct approach
- 6 Balancing your campaign

### **Understanding the job market**

The job market is vast, involving millions of people every year. It's also fast-changing with some companies downsizing and restructuring, others are creating new opportunities. So, remember that, whatever the state of the economy, the opportunities are out there. Your task is to find out where they are:

**The job market splits into two categories and you need to approach it accordingly:**

## THE VISIBLE MARKET

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These are the jobs that are publicly advertised in papers, journals, the internet and with recruitment consultants.

## THE HIDDEN MARKET

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These jobs are not advertised but they do exist. People find them through networking with personal contacts and by making direct approaches to organisations.

Whether a job is in the hidden or visible market usually depends on the type of job and the industry. Some types of roles – such as IT or the public sector – will probably be advertised, while managerial and specialist roles or jobs in smaller companies are often secured through personal contact or direct approach.

There are pros and cons to each approach, so you should aim for a spread in both the visible and hidden markets.

### What are the pros and cons?

<b>ROUTE</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>	<b>ADVANTAGES</b>
ADVERTISED VACANCIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easy to access</li> <li>Gives you a feel for salaries and roles in different sectors</li> <li>Source of general information about organisations and market changes</li> <li>Often a source of contact names or recruitment consultants in the sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competitive</li> <li>Reactive rather than proactive</li> <li>Adverts are often more of an employer's 'shopping list' and may not be totally realistic</li> <li>Poorly written adverts may not describe the role accurately or give salary or location</li> </ul>
RECRUITERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good market coverage, especially in IT, finance and pharmaceutical sectors</li> <li>Companies and roles are usually well-researched and defined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidates are seen as commodities</li> <li>Recruiters can appear dismissive or disinterested</li> <li>They can be unresponsive to calls, e-mails and letters</li> <li>They need managing</li> </ul>

	Recruiters have good market knowledge	Advertised vacancies may no longer be current
	A good way of getting interview experience	
	Can be an effective way of promoting you direct to customers	
PERSONAL CONTACTS	A proactive approach that can be very successful in leading to jobs	Can be hard to get started
	Good way of gathering advice, help and information	Can be difficult to see an outcome, so you need to be persistent
	Gets your name and details around in relevant circles	Can be frustrating and a bit daunting to start with
	Can help with your development	Needs to be nurtured and takes time and effort
DIRECT APPROACH	Useful when you know that a vacancy has not been advertised	Need to spend time researching people and organisations
	Worthwhile if you have a unique selling point	All approaches have to be followed up and this can be time-consuming
	Puts you in control	
	It's an easy route and can be very effective if you've done good research	Needs good telephone skills - can be risky if yours are a little weak.

## 2 . Advertised vacancies

Why do employers advertise?

- It's the traditional method
- It saves time because applicants come to them
- It's a 'just-in-time' approach because they only recruit when they need to
- It can be a good PR exercise – if a company is recruiting, it shows that it's doing well
- It is good equal opportunities practice – particularly important for public sector and some voluntary sector employers



## Where to look

Jobs are advertised in national and local papers, journals and publications, on recruitment sites via the Internet and on organisations' own websites. They may also be advertised internally and occasionally in other public places.

Identify where the jobs you are interested in are advertised and establish a regular routine to scan all the relevant sources for jobs in your field or chosen option.

## What to look for

Adverts are a source of information about the job market as well as for finding specific job roles.

Read adverts carefully and highlight the skills, qualifications and qualities employers are looking for. You can use them to assess how well you match the requirements.

Read between the lines. Look for information about the type of organisation and its culture, problems and needs.

## Is it worth applying?

A useful rule of thumb is to apply for any vacancy where there is at least an 80% match between the job requirements and what you've got to offer

## THESE ARE THE KEY THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

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QUALIFICATIONS	Usually the qualifications quoted indicate the sort of person they are looking for. Sometimes they are a definite requirement, but exceptions can be made. If you feel you are the right person and can offer the relevant level of experience, apply anyway.
JOB TITLE	This can be misleading, with responsibilities varying widely from one organisation to another. Look carefully at the other information and if you think you can do the job, apply.
EXPERIENCE	Even if your experience doesn't match up exactly, it could still be relevant and so worth applying.
SALARY	This is normally negotiable. Judge whether the salary matches up to the advertised responsibilities.

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ESSENTIAL AND DESIRABLE	You'll often see these in job ads. 'Essential' characteristics are not negotiable – they really are essential.  'Desirable' ones are a bonus, but the employer is often flexible. Words like 'ideally', 'preferably', and 'an advantage' are clues that the employer might be open to compromise.
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**FOR MORE  
INFORMATION....**

The chance to make a good first impression and to get extra information that could give your application the edge. There is a danger you might be screened out over the phone though, so do prepare first. Have your CV to hand and work on what you'll say if they ask you to tell them a little bit about yourself.

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**Look before you leap – analyse job adverts carefully**

Don't respond to an ad, until you've established what they are looking for and how you measure up to it.

Look for the key elements you need to highlight in your application and what kind of language and style to use.

**THINK ABOUT THE ROLE AND THE ORGANISATION AND TRY TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS FROM THE INFORMATION IN THE ADVERT:**

What problems do they want to solve?

What opportunities are on offer?

What are the challenges or drawbacks?

What extra information do you need?

**Is it the right role for you?**

Assess how well it fits your goals and needs.

If there is a good match, assess the key requirements of the role and the qualities they are looking for.

Write them down and look at how well your skills, experience and qualities match each of those requirements. If you can meet at least 80% of their needs, it's worth applying.

Here's an example of how one candidate analysed a job ad that looked promising:

VIKINGAR

Vikingar is an innovative and unique combination of a visitor attraction based on the saga of the Vikings in Scotland, with audio/visual display, exhibition, gifts and craft shop, a theatre and cinema, a swimming pool, health and fitness suites, soft play area and Winter gardens, theatre bar, catering and functional facilities. Vikingar is situated in Largs on the beautiful and scenic west coast of Scotland.

CENTRE MANAGER

SALARY £24,543 - £26,358

An experienced and highly motivated professional, you should have at least 5 years' relevant experience in facility or attractions management gained within either the public or private sector. You may come from a leisure environment, sport and recreation, arts, tourism or attractions background, but must have a relevant degree or management qualification. Most importantly you will need vision, energy, flexibility, and highly developed management skills and also hold a current driving licence.

In addition, to your Centre Manager's role, you will assist in the development of new tourist/visitor opportunities within North Ayrshire. A generous relocation package and free life assurance are available.

Ref: 08/43

Applications forms and further details from:

The Personnel Services Department, North Ayrshire Council,

Cunningham House, Irvine

KA12 8EE

Telephone 01294 324 650

Malcolm decided that he had the interest, experience and skills to make it worth applying so he listed the job ad's requirements and itemised how to meet them:

Vikingar's requirement	How to meet them
5 year's experience	2 years as leisure centre manager 4 years at Sport Council
Degree level qualification	HND in Business Administration
Managing Staff	3 full-time and 4 part-time staff at leisure centre

Commercial experience	Increased membership numbers
Marketing skills/experience	Gained over past 15 months

Writing your thoughts down like this will help you when drafting your response.

### **If you apply, what happens next?**

You might get a letter, e-mail or phone call. You might get a phone interview, a follow-up or an invitation to an induction day or screening interview.

You may also hear nothing. If so, follow up with a phone call or e-mail to make sure your application arrived and to check on its progress.

### **3. Recruiters**

Recruiters, or recruitment consultants, are part of the visible job market. They work on behalf of employers to find the right person to fit a particular job. There are three types and they all work slightly differently:

#### **Headhunters or search consultants**

Headhunters work with senior candidates. Clients brief them to search the market for candidates to fit a particular specification. Headhunters often use specialist researchers to find a number of potential candidates from which they make a selection to present to clients. They generally find people through networking or by approaching people in similar jobs to ask if they are interested or know of any other suitable candidates.

#### **Selection consultants**

They take a brief from an employer from which they produce a person specification and an advertisement. They place this in appropriate publications or websites and handle the responses, selecting and interviewing 8-10 candidates who broadly match the specification. They then create a shortlist of about three people who they present to the employer to make a final selection. Sometimes selection firms are simply asked to sift the responses to an advertisement placed by the client or act as a post box, sending all the responses on the client.

Search and selection consultants fall between the two as they use both methods, depending on how easy it is to target candidates.

#### **Recruitment agencies**

They interview candidates on a speculative basis and may introduce them direct to employers who they think might be interested in the skills the candidate has to offer. They usually place people in junior or technical roles.

#### **File searches**

Employers also ask recruiters to search potential candidates in their files of past candidates. But while recruiters do keep files on past candidates, candidate information dates quickly. Selection consultants tend not to keep candidate files anyway as they prefer to find people through advertising.

## Working with recruiters

- Recruiters are paid by employers to find and place candidates in particular jobs. Time means money, so recruiters are only likely to spend time with you if you are a good match for a current or potential vacancy.
- Choose recruiters with care. Find out which ones are in your market and cover your discipline. Ask people you know for recommendations and look at job advertisements placed by recruiters. You can look in Yellow Pages and other local directories or use the Executive Grapevine, which you'll find at most libraries. Most recruitment companies have websites, which are an excellent source of information. There are some contacts at the end of this section.
- Before contacting the recruiters, be clear about what you are looking for. Be ready to answer questions about the type of role, location and salary range you are looking for and about your skills and experience.
- Register with a manageable number? It's easier to stay in touch and avoids situations where employers are sent your CV by several different sources.
- Recruiters will want your CV, but most of them won't want to meet you
- Make sure you communicate in the way that suits them. If they use e-mail, do the same or use the phone if they always call you.
- Manage and build your relationships with your recruiters. Make clear that you will be in touch regularly to check on progress. Some recruiters may ask you to do this.
- If you respond to a recruitment company's advert, don't be surprised if they interview you by phone. A lot of recruiters do their initial screening this way as it's more cost effective. Always keep copies of your cv handy to enable you to respond effectively.
- Find out if they modify or re-write CVs into a standard format. If they have re-written your CV, ask them for a copy so you know what the employer has read about you when they interview you.
- If the recruiter puts you forward for a role, ask them for information about the employer. Recruiters usually know their clients well and their input will be valuable when you're preparing for interview.
- Request feedback from the recruiter after every interview. It will help you to identify how you come across at interviews and identify your strong points and any areas you need to brush up on.
- Recruiters are a good source of permanent, temporary, contract or interim work. Make sure you talk about the type of employment you are looking for and what else you would consider. Temporary or contract work can often be a useful way of learning about potential employers and can sometimes lead to permanent positions.
- Many recruiters also offer other services to support candidates, including advice on interview techniques, workshops, skills advice and training. Their websites usually detail the services on offer.

**Include recruiters in your campaign but don't rely on them totally. Combine them with the other ways of tapping into the visible market.**

### **Possible Resources - Recruitment websites**

These sites carry jobs from a large number of different sectors, including the public sector. Some are what are known as 'job boards' and they bring together jobs that are advertised on recruitment company websites and sometimes, jobs that are being advertised on company specific sites.

Many of these sites also have career resources including sample CV's, covering letters etc.

#### **Newspaper sites**

[Jobs.dailymail.co.uk](http://Jobs.dailymail.co.uk)

[Jobs.guardian.co.uk](http://Jobs.guardian.co.uk)

[Jobs.independent.co.uk](http://Jobs.independent.co.uk)

[Jobs.telegraph.co.uk](http://Jobs.telegraph.co.uk)

[Jobs.thetimes.co.uk](http://Jobs.thetimes.co.uk)

[www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/jobs](http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/jobs)

#### **Charity sites**

[www.charitycareers.co.uk](http://www.charitycareers.co.uk) – for charity jobs, fundraising jobs

[www.charitypeople.com](http://www.charitypeople.com) – charity and not-for-profit jobs and staff with the UK's leading charity recruitment consultancy

[www.charitysectorjobs.com](http://www.charitysectorjobs.com) - the place for you to find the best jobs in charities and other non-profit organisations. Many voluntary positions also.

[www.jobsincharities.co.uk](http://www.jobsincharities.co.uk) –jobs in charities and the not for profit sector. The site includes opportunities for Fundraisers, Administrators etc

[jobs.thirdsector.co.uk](http://jobs.thirdsector.co.uk) - Find and apply to hundreds of the latest Charity Jobs with Third sector Jobs

#### **Generalist recruitment sites**

[www.allthetopbananas.co.uk](http://www.allthetopbananas.co.uk) - Jobs from the UK's most helpful job search engine. With allthetopbananas, you can search for UK jobs direct from employers, from agencies and job boards.

[www.bkcornerstone.co.uk](http://www.bkcornerstone.co.uk) - A UK and International Search and Selection consultancy providing board and executive recruitment, executive interim management

[www.brookstreet.co.uk](http://www.brookstreet.co.uk) - one of the UK's leading recruitment specialists - Number one for office and light industrial positions on both a temporary and permanent basis.

[www.exec-appointments.com](http://www.exec-appointments.com) - Offers permanent, interim and contract positions

[www.executivesontheweb.com](http://www.executivesontheweb.com) - the UK's largest database of executive jobs

[www.fish4jobs.co.uk](http://www.fish4jobs.co.uk) - fish4jobs is the UK's most popular recruitment website with over 2.5 million unique visitors per month

[www.hays.co.uk](http://www.hays.co.uk) - Hays is a global leader in specialist recruitment, placing professional candidates in permanent, temporary and interim jobs

[www.hoggett-bowers.com](http://www.hoggett-bowers.com) - A leading UK executive search organisation assisting with a broad range of senior executive search, interim management and non-executive appointments.

[www.jobseekers.direct.gov.uk](http://www.jobseekers.direct.gov.uk) – government's own site

[www.jobserve.com](http://www.jobserve.com) - Jobs in IT, Accountancy, Engineering and Sales plus other functions, both permanent and interim

[www.jobsite.co.uk](http://www.jobsite.co.uk) - The award winning UK job search and jobs by email service. Send your CV to top recruitment agencies & employers

[www.kornferry.com/WHMann](http://www.kornferry.com/WHMann) - board level and senior appointments

[www.manpower.co.uk](http://www.manpower.co.uk) - Manpower Inc. is a world leader in the employment services industry, offering employers permanent, temporary and contract recruitment;

[www.monster.co.uk](http://www.monster.co.uk) - Use Monster's resources to create a CV, search for jobs, prepare for interviews etc

[www.reed.co.uk](http://www.reed.co.uk) - Search jobs from over 9000 direct employers and recruitment companies covering 38 industries

[www.robertwalters.com](http://www.robertwalters.com) - one of the worlds's leading specialist professional recruitment consultancies and focuses on placing high calibre professionals

[www.tekpersonnel.co.uk](http://www.tekpersonnel.co.uk) - Recruitment for jobs across the UK in a number of sectors from offices in Sheffield, Derby and Wolverhampton

[www.totaljobs.co.uk](http://www.totaljobs.co.uk) - Find jobs from top UK employers in Secretarial, PA and Administration roles on Totaljobs.com

[www.michaelpage.co.uk](http://www.michaelpage.co.uk) - The leading UK recruitment agency for both candidates and employers - across the UK and worldwide

[uk.hudson.com](http://uk.hudson.com) - Hudson provides professional staffing, outsourcing and human capital solutions on a global basis. We operate across the permanent, contracting and interim markets

[www.warrenpartners.com](http://www.warrenpartners.com) - Search and selection of high calibre candidates for high profile executive roles

[www.webrecruit.com](http://www.webrecruit.com) - Recruitment service for job seekers and employers throughout the UK, utilising leading job boards, job alert and CV writing services.

[www.wickland-westcott.com](http://www.wickland-westcott.com) - Wickland Westcott is a search and selection firm handling vacancies across all sectors and disciplines

### **Health and Social Care**

<http://www.gs-health.com> - health website for executive recruitment.

[www.nhs.jobs.uk](http://www.nhs.jobs.uk) – specialist NHS jobs

[www.randstad.co.uk](http://www.randstad.co.uk) - Randstad is a global leader in staffing and recruitment consultancy, placing true talent in permanent and temporary job positions across all job levels, ...

[www.euromedica.com](http://www.euromedica.com) - Ranked Number One For The Third Year Running. Executive Grapevine's No.1 Executive Search Consultancy in Healthcare, Life Sciences

### **Interim Management**

Many of the generalist and other specialist recruitment firms also operate interim divisions. Here are some interim only firms.

[www.aliumpartners.com](http://www.aliumpartners.com) - provider of high level interim management executives

[www.ashtonpenney.com](http://www.ashtonpenney.com) - one of the UK's leading interim management solutions specialists, principally providing interim executives at or near board level

[www.executivesonline.co.uk](http://www.executivesonline.co.uk) – online interim provider

[www.impactexecutives.com](http://www.impactexecutives.com) - provides interim managers to global organisations

[www.interimpartners.com](http://www.interimpartners.com) - provide experienced and talented interim managers in the UK and Worldwide to the public and private sectors

[www.russam-gms.co.uk](http://www.russam-gms.co.uk) - longest established mainstream interim management provider in the UK.

### **Public Sector**

[www.edenbrown.com](http://www.edenbrown.com) – public sector specialist (plus recruit for other sectors including housing)

[www.gatenbysanderson.com](http://www.gatenbysanderson.com) – leading recruiter in public sector



[www.jobsinpublicsector.co.uk](http://www.jobsinpublicsector.co.uk) - Search and apply online of thousands of job vacancies throughout the UK.

[www.jobsonoracle.com](http://www.jobsonoracle.com) – jobs in government departments, police etc

[www.lgjobs.com](http://www.lgjobs.com) - the UK's official site for Local Government Careers - carries more Local Government jobs than any other site in the UK

[www.odgersberndtson.co.uk](http://www.odgersberndtson.co.uk) - Board and divisional board level executive recruitment solutions for UK and International clients

[www.publicjobsdirect.com](http://www.publicjobsdirect.com) - recruit both permanent and temporary staff within the Public sector

[www.publicsectorcareers.org](http://www.publicsectorcareers.org) - UK job board focusing on public sector jobs in local and central government.

[www.rockpools.co.uk](http://www.rockpools.co.uk) – recruit both permanent and temporary staff within the Public sector

[www.synergygroup.co.uk](http://www.synergygroup.co.uk) – The Synergy Group is one of the UK's leading providers of public and private sector specialist staff

[www.veredus.com](http://www.veredus.com) - leading providers of executive recruitment, interim management and business psychology to the public and private sectors

[www.workthing.com](http://www.workthing.com) – offers tools for career development, career management & job vacancies from top UK recruiters

#### 4. Personal Contacts

Jobs in the hidden market are usually found through networking – by talking to personal contacts and gathering information that will help you to identify opportunities and new contacts. It's a very proactive approach where you take the lead and make things happen.

A large percentage of roles are secured this way, so it's worth including it as a part of your campaign. You may find you are the only person that an organisation is talking to about the role and if that role is then advertised, it puts you in a strong position.

#### **Talking to your contacts can help you to:**

- Identify organisations that may need your skills and experience
- Broaden your knowledge about the fields that interest you
- Practice talking about your ideas for the future and your relevant skills and experience
- Gain information that is not readily in the public domain

## Rules about personal contacts

- Make it clear you are not asking for a job
- While your contacts may help you to identify a job opportunity, you are not asking them for a job – so never out them on the spot by asking for one. It's unlikely they have one anyway and it would make it an embarrassing and difficult meeting.
- Instead, make it clear right at the start that your aim is to get information or advice about:
  - Your present ideas and plans
  - The direction you might take
  - The types of role and opportunities that may exist
  - Suggestions about organisations you should contact or research
  - Suggestions about other people to contact

- **Canvassing**

Some organisations, most of them being in the public sector, forbid the practice of canvassing for jobs. If you are in doubt about whether talking to contacts counts as canvassing, get advice from the relevant recruiting department.

- **Do not hide job loss**

There's no stigma in losing your job: many organisations see another company's loss as their gain. Meetings can get very awkward if you hide the truth or forget your 'story'.

- **Don't approach too many contacts at once**

One of your aims of talking to people is to get referrals – about two new names per contact. You need to follow these up quickly – within a week or so – so just start with a few contacts and introduce more if numbers start to drop.

Think of your discussions with personal contacts as business meetings

They're also a two-way process – you're seeking information or advice but you may be able to give them information back

Thinking about it in this way can help you feel more comfortable and confident about making contact with people you know

Remember, most people actually like to help others. They're flattered when asked for advice and enjoy talking about things they know.

## How to identify personal contacts

Write down all your potential contacts, even if some of them look unlikely at this stage. Start with your address book and include everyone who you can think of, from colleagues and

professional contacts to friends, family, neighbours and social contacts.

- Compile an initial contacts list
- From your list, select 6-12 people who you could contact early on
- Keep your contact list up-to-date and growing

As you get into your campaign, you will think of and be given other contacts

Add them to your list and get into the habit of making contact with people regularly.  
That's what networking is all about!

### **Making initial contact**

Decide how each contact would like to hear from you. People you know well might prefer a phone call or e-mail. With new contacts, it's probably safer to write first as it gives them time to think about your request.

### **Put your call or e-mail in context**

- If they don't know you personally, explain how you know of them and who your mutual contact is
- Explain why you are approaching them, for example:  
'I would value your advice on...' or  
'I would welcome your comments because...' or  
'I immediately thought of you because....'

### **Communicate your needs clearly**

Explain that you are looking for another job and would like some information or advice. Outline the kind of help you're after, for example:

'With your experience in marketing and your knowledge of me, I hope you could guide me on the type of work I might be best suited for...'

Or

'Knowing that you have moved around yourself, I would appreciate some advice on the sort of organisations that might need someone with my sort of skills....'

### **Reassure them about your aims**

To avoid embarrassment, make it quite clear you are not asking for a job. Contacts will be far more receptive if they are reassured that they are not under pressure.

### **Be proactive**

Ask if they could set aside half an hour for a meeting and suggest a couple of dates and times. Make the agenda for the meeting crystal clear. If you are writing, say that you'll make the next move. 'I will ring you next Tuesday morning to see when we can arrange a meeting'

## **Preparing for meetings**

Sort out what you want from the meeting before you go. You need:

- To get across your key skills, knowledge and experience and the sectors you have worked in and are now considering.
- The names of further contacts to expand your network
- Specific information that could, ultimately, develop into a lead for a new role.

## **Prepare an agenda**

Contact meetings are short, so prepare your questions in advance. And have some answers ready for their questions. Contacts are likely to ask why you left your last job/are leaving your current job, what sort of organisation you would like to work for and perhaps the salary range you have in mind.

## **Handling meetings effectively**

Half an hour will go quickly, so you can't afford to waste your or your contact's time. Keep things on track by sticking to your agenda. Make sure your contact gets a clear picture of your key skills, knowledge and experience and the sectors you are interested in – but don't go on about yourself too much.

## **Set the scene**

Explain what you have been doing in your recent career, the skills you believe you have to offer and the challenges you enjoy. Outline the type of role you have in mind. Having a concise summary prepared will help you to keep it short and informative. You can use your CV as a briefing document but take care that it doesn't conflict with your claims to be seeking advice rather than a job.

## **Get the information you need**

Ask the questions you prepared in advance to get the advice, information or feedback you need. Ask for suggestions about other organisations with problems that you may be able to solve or which could use your skills. Discuss trends and issues relevant to their work – changes, expansion, personal contacts.

Leave a copy of your CV if they ask for one, but suggest that you pass it on to other people so you can do the necessary follow-up. If appropriate, consider asking suitable contacts if they would consider being one of your referees.

## **Keep the initiative**

Ask for other contacts. Hopefully your contact will suggest some new leads. But don't let them suggest that their lead gets in touch with you. If you do, you'll lose momentum and control while you wait for them to ring you. Instead, suggest that they tell their lead that you will phone or write – and make sure that you follow it up.

### **Keep notes after each meeting**

Write up your notes as you would in any professional meeting. Detailed notes will give you something to refer back to and help you to do your follow-ups more easily.

### **Thank your contact**

Send an e-mail or letter thanking them for their time. Leave it a few days as they may remember something new in the meantime. You can also tell them how your referrals are progressing and say when you'll next be in touch.

### **Stay in touch**

Contacts are often more helpful on the second contact, so give them progress reports (this is just to let you know how I'm getting on') to keep up their interest. This in turn could lead to more referrals.

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### **Getting the most out of your contacts**

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Asking if they know of any positions can be useful but they can also give you:

- Information (on organisations, trends, gossip, leads)
  - Advice (on your CV, how to approach people and companies, on career change)
  - Contacts (people you don't yet know, ,recruitment consultants)
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Assume your contacts knowsomeone useful so ask them

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Extend beyond people you know

You need to get to talk to people you have never met before

Name dropping opens doors

Be clear that you want to get information, advice and more contacts

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Don't ever ask contacts for work - asking people for work is cold calling

Asking for information, advice and more contacts is legitimate

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Be positive about asking for help

People really want to help, but often don't know how

Your agenda helps them to offer genuine help and feel good about it

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Remember to thank new contacts

They gave up their time to help you

If you do contact them and thank them, they'll remember you

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Pace yourself and your contacts and aim for a steady flow with time to follow all your leads up

Always keep faith with your contacts down. It's a small world and your reputation may suffer if you let them down

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## 5. The direct approach

Approaching organisations directly is a route into the hidden market that takes time and effort, but it can work very well. Many jobs are filled by people who approach organisations at just the right time – when employers have identified a need but before they have advertised for help.

Direct approaches are also the best options if you want to work for a particular organisation but haven't got any personal contacts there.

### **Market research is the key – where do you start?**

To help narrow down your research you should first decide what your criteria is:

- What type of organisation is relevant to your career goal
- What locations you want to search in
- What size of organisation you are looking for
- What sector or industries you are interested in

You may already know some organisations in those categories, but you can find others through:

- Professional and industry journals and publications
- Company websites
- Local business directories and local Chamber of Commerce
- National trade and industry directories
- Subscriptions-based internet research services offering company and market news and information such as Lexis Nexis News and Lexis Nexis Company

### **Try to identify an issue or problem faced by your target organisation**

.... One where your particular blend of experience, skills and expertise is likely to be at a premium. Then you can present yourself as part of the solution to the problem. Use your personal contacts and research to spot potential openings like these:

- You have heard through a contact that someone has resigned and there is now a vacancy
- You have discovered that a new branch or site is opening
- You have found that they are re-locating, developing a new product range or diversifying.

The key to success lies in the quality of your direct approaches rather than the quantity.

### **Find as much as you can about them**

Use every available source like press articles, their website, financial reports, the internet and other contacts to look for changes or challenges that could turn into opportunities for you:

<b>Changes like these</b>	<b>Can mean opportunities in</b>
New services or products	development, marketing, selling, managing
New facilities	servicing, organising, managing
Expansion into new activities	extra or specialist staff

And look out for problems where you could provide a solution:

- Departments that are performing badly and needs staff with fresh ideas
- A lack of skills such as computer literacy in work teams
- Delays in filling a position while they hope ‘something will turn up’ from within
- Market changes that need a reaction

### **Who should you approach**

Try to contact the person who will be making the selection decision or the one who has the problems or need. This is probably a functional manager – the accountant, engineering manager or head of marketing

Don't write to personnel or human resources unless this is your chosen field. They might not know about the potential need and only get involved once the job is about to be advertised.

### **Get your facts right**

Make sure you know:

- The address, phone number and e-mail address of the target organisation
- Ownership – is it part of a larger organisation?
- The name of the right person to approach
- The source of your information
- A problem or opportunity that you can help with
- The unique skills and attributes you can offer them

### **Possible Resources for Research**

[www.business-timesonline.co.uk](http://www.business-timesonline.co.uk) – up to date information and articles plus a full list of the Top 100 companies to work for in the UK

[www.charitiesdirect.com](http://www.charitiesdirect.com) - to Z lists provide links to thousands of UK charities and non-profit organisations who can provide information on all aspects of this sector

[www.euromonitor.com](http://www.euromonitor.com) - Market Research Monitor is an online database offering over 2200 top line research reports on international consumer, industrial and service market

[www.europages.co.uk](http://www.europages.co.uk) - the directory of European companies is a professional portal that encourages business-to-business exchanges

[www.hoovers.com](http://www.hoovers.com) – some parts of the site are only available to subscribers

[www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com) – useful overview of different sectors and for help in research

[www.ima-institute.com](http://www.ima-institute.com) - The aim of the IMA Institute is the promotion and development of interim management as a powerful and leading management resource

[www.interimmanagement.uk.com](http://www.interimmanagement.uk.com) - IMA members help clients to lead business change, drive core business objectives and relieve pressured management teams by carefully selecting interim managers

[www.mckinseyquarterly.com](http://www.mckinseyquarterly.com) – a management journal published by McKinsey and Company with articles on latest thinking on organisational and business strategy

[www.topconsultant.com](http://www.topconsultant.com) – dedicated to providing information and opportunities for careers in management consulting.

[www.vault.com](http://www.vault.com) - Career information web site, providing employee surveys of top employers, career advice, job listings, and career guides to individual industries.

### **6. Balancing your campaign**

Taking a range of approaches to the job market is likely to bring success more quickly

At the start of your campaign, evaluate the types of approach and identify which ones are most relevant to the career option you are looking at. Doing this early on means you can plan your time and activities effectively and make the most of your opportunities.

In practice, you'll find the four routes often work best in combination. For example, a personal contact may lead to a direct approach or a job advert, which may lead you to a recruitment company. So it's important to make all the routes work for you.

It's also important to keep reviewing this as your campaign progresses. Look at how you are doing and which routes are working best for you. You may find that you need to rethink your approach and plan new activities.