

Starting Points: The hidden job market

What is the 'hidden job market'?

Advertised vacancies are only a percentage of what is available in the job market. A significant number of opportunities are never advertised publicly.

Why is there a hidden job market?

Advertising vacancies can be both expensive and time-consuming. Therefore employers may choose to fill jobs in other ways; with internal staff, personal recommendation or by following up potential candidates who have contacted them previously.

Why should you try to access the hidden job market?

Vacancies in the 'hidden job market' outnumber those advertised. If you do not proactively search, you may miss out. In popular sectors, employers are approached by so many job seekers, they may not find it necessary to advertise.

Accessing the hidden job market: Networking

You can access the 'hidden job market' by networking. Here are a few steps to help you get started:

- Careful preparation: identify what is important to you and how you would like to develop your career. If you thoroughly research the sector, the roles that interest you and the employers you would like to work for, you can be more specific and effective in your job search.
- Stay up-to-date: follow potential employers on their preferred social media which may include Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Snapchat. Commercial awareness is highly valued. Databases such as Keynote and Mintel can be really useful. You could also set up a "Google alerts page" to keep up-to-date with news related to specific employers.
- Look after your contacts: maintain current contacts and look for new ones. Network continuously, even when you are not seeking work. Be proactive, send articles and offer help whenever you can. If you help others first, your contacts may reciprocate. When you are networking, show enthusiasm and curiosity. Try not to just ask your contacts for a job, ask for information, demonstrate your potential.
- Be organised: keep track of who you have spoken to and when. Employers are busy people. You need to take a proactive attitude and be persistent in networking without making a nuisance of yourself.

- Attend careers fairs: Take advantage of careers fairs; meet employers, make yourself known to them and build your confidence. The Careers and Employability Service offer workshops to help you prepare for our careers fairs. Learn how to approach and talk to key employers.
- Meet the employers: Careers Focus sessions include employer presentations and are usually held in the Careers and Employability Centre. You can meet employers informally and practise asking questions.
- Mentoring schemes: your mentor can be an invaluable source of information. You can apply to SHU mentoring early in semester 1. Mentors can help you gain more understanding of the sector and job you want to work in. They will also be a key contact in your networking strategy, possibly even a future potential employer. Make sure you thank your mentor for their help during and after the scheme and above all, keep in touch.

Attract employers' attention - increase your employability skills

To be successful in reaching those hidden vacancies you need to impress potential employers. Here are a few things you can do to boost your employability:

- Attend your University employability workshops and develop your soft skills (LinkedIn workshop, CV workshop, interview workshop, application form workshop etc...)
- Have your CV and covering letter checked by your employability adviser.
- Do some volunteering work and gain additional experience and skills (team work, critical thinking, social skills etc).
- Update your LinkedIn account regularly.

Useful resources

- [Target jobs - making speculative applications](#)
- [Hallam Students Union - volunteering](#)

Checklist

- Be well prepared: do some research about the sector, the jobs and employers you want to work for
- Update your social media accounts regularly (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest)
- Keep in touch with your contacts regularly
- Meet potential employers at careers fairs, employer presentations, career mentoring schemes, etc

Want to talk it through?

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