

Three Steps to Work Experience

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1 Introduction

Here are three steps you can try towards finding work or work experience. Give yourself a timescale, say 12 weeks, and split each step into chunks – say four weeks. Don't skip a stage, each is important.

An estimated 90% of jobs in the media are found through word of mouth: so hone your communication skills, they are central to every job, and you'll need to be assertive to succeed.

2 Research

2.1 Self Assess Yourself

Carry out a “self-assessment” – there are books **which can help you find out about your preferred communication style and the sorts of** environments in which you will thrive: look in bookshops under the Careers section and also on the internet. The media is primarily a freelance sector, so be honest with yourself; if freelancing is not for you, maybe you should look for a related sector where there is more job security, e.g. PR, events organising, venue management, and it's worth noting that interactive companies rely less on the skills of short-term freelancers.

2.2 The sector in the region, and in the UK

Read industry/trade magazines. If you can, talk to people who already work in the sector. Search websites. See our fact sheet Building a Career in the Media Industry.

2.3 The job

Look at the job profiles on sector websites; carry out internet searches, typing in job titles. If you are inexperienced, do you know what a professional with this job role actually does? Think about the skills and knowledge you will need to succeed. Consider the sort of productions which excite & stimulate you. Create a vision of what you want to achieve, be as detailed as possible; picture yourself in the job role.

3 Network

Don't be a shrinking violet. Communication skills are the key to your success, now and in your future work. Join sector membership organisations, or try to attend their events as a visitor. At whatever event you attend, ask people about themselves and tell them about what you are trying to achieve. Even if they are not in the part of the sector that interests you, they may know someone who is and be willing to pass on a name.

3.1 Contacts

Make a list of everyone you know & ask them who they know. Make a list of everyone you should know. Every day make calls to those who know you & those who don't. Send emails, seek meetings and say you are researching your chosen job area and wonder if they have 20 minutes to spare to talk about what they do. Do not over-reach yourself by stating that you want to be a director if in reality you have little or no experience of production.

Set up appointments throughout each week, don't sit on your laurels once you have secured one meeting; keep going, if you are not working, make this your full time job. If you are working, use every spare minute and plan for a day of meetings or telephone calls as often as you can.

4 Review

4.1 After three weeks review your progress

Are you getting leads and opportunities? If not, scrutinise how you are making approaches;

- 4.1.1 Who are you approaching and
- 4.1.2 Where are you pitching?
- 4.1.3 If your experience is on low budget or college and university productions, think about how that knowledge and skill may be transferable to higher budget or more commercial environments (which you researched at step two).
- 4.1.4 Do some people prefer to read a CV or email, rather than take a call? Have you asked them?
- 4.1.5 Should your geographical area be wider?

4.2 Listen to yourself

If you can, record your own telephone calls

- 4.2.1 Are you being clear and polite?
- 4.2.2 Has your voice got a smile?
- 4.2.3 Are you taking too long to state your purpose?
- 4.2.4 Can you accurately describe the role in which you are interested, and explain why you believe you have the aptitude or experience?

This should produce results; but remember the North East is not a major centre of production, so you may have to travel for work or work experience.

Be prepared to fund yourself for short placements (say, less than two weeks – any more and you should expect some pay or at least to have your expenses covered); determination is the name of the game.

Good Luck!