

# Refocus Your Job Hunt

**Are you** finding you're not getting the jobs you want? Are your applications not getting you to interview? Below, we list some of the common reasons people don't make it into the jobs they first thought of, and provide some suggestions of things you could do to improve your chances.

## ***Application form poorly presented***

If you've made lots of applications to jobs you are interested in, but not yet secured any interviews, it is probably time to take a good look at how you're presenting yourself on paper. Employers can be very picky about choosing candidates whose applications contain spelling and grammatical errors. Get a friend to look through your form, particularly checking for:

- spelling or poor English
- incorrect dates
- untidy handwriting
- poor quality printing
- not following instructions
- using the wrong colour ink
- not responding to each requirement of the job advert or person specification.

Ask a careers adviser for help once you're confident your application is as good as it can be.

## ***Applying at the wrong time***

It may be that you have applied to an organisation outside its usual recruitment method. Often, employers don't mind receiving speculative applications that they may keep on file for a little while. Some organisations, though, have very strict routines for how they recruit staff and you need to abide by the general guidelines for the industry and employer you're interested in.

## ***Not meeting the job requirements***

Employers spend a lot of time deciding what their jobs are and the qualities required to fill them effectively. Documents such as the job description or the person specification provide this information. It is up to you to demonstrate that you already have the skills the employer is looking for, in as clear and effective a way as possible.

If you haven't got the precise experience required, make the most of what you do have by writing about your transferable skills. For example, the job may require good communication skills. Think hard about exactly what they're looking for: do they mean talking? Listening? Persuading? Writing? Using the web as a communications tool? Perhaps you could write about any voluntary work you've done that shows the range of communication skills you already possess.

It could be the case that you don't yet have the required level of experience for the job. In this situation, perhaps think about taking a lower level job to build up the experience it is felt you are lacking and reapply after a year or two.

## ***Not choosing a good starting point***

Perhaps you've chosen a suitable industry but just the wrong firm within it. Be very clear about why you've chosen the specific company. If it's a law firm, for example, why are you interested in their kind of work? If it's a medical school, why is this the right one for you? If you're not able to answer these questions successfully for yourself, it will be difficult to convince an employer.

You will want to focus your energies on doing a few applications really well rather than adopting a more scatter-gun approach; employers know when people are just copying-and-pasting standard, non-tailored answers into their application forms.

Alternatively, perhaps you've chosen entirely the wrong career for you! Ask yourself these questions:

- How much do I know about what I really want to do?
- How much thought did I put into this career choice?
- How extensively did I research the job area and the skills required?
- How much did I know about the organisation, its competitors, the kind of work it does?
- How many people in the industry did I talk to in order to get a feel for what would be the best approach to applying?

You could talk these questions through with a careers adviser, or look at other leaflets in this series such as *Job Applications*, *Generating Ideas*, *Job Hunting*, or *Job Hunting on the Internet*.

If you are still a student and have so far had no luck with your applications, don't worry. You will still have time to add to your pool of experiences, meet new people and find out more about yourself and your interests. Use your college careers service as much as you can to help you find focus and make the most of the opportunities available to you as a student.

If you've just graduated or have been out of work for a bit, try to create a structure about your job search. Try to keep up the energy and confidence it takes to complete job applications and go to interviews. Think about taking on voluntary work, part-time roles or go on courses to keep your skills up. Join networks of other people in similar circumstances who can keep you positive.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

- [www.careers.lon.ac.uk/sortit](http://www.careers.lon.ac.uk/sortit) a collection of online modules containing advice, information and exercises to help you think more clearly about what you want from your future and how to get it
- [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) explore different occupational areas in the jobs and work section and generate new suggestions with the Prospects Planner
- [www.jobhuntersbible.com](http://www.jobhuntersbible.com) a companion site to the bestseller *What Colour is Your Parachute?* This site will assist you with networking, job hunting research, internet research, career guidance, skills testing, and using job boards.
- *Build your Own Rainbow*, (3rd Edition), Barrie Hopson and Mike Scally, Management Books, 2004 (ISBN-10: 185252300X)
- [www.gradclub.co.uk](http://www.gradclub.co.uk) students graduating from any of the Careers Group, University of London consortium colleges can join GradClub for careers help after graduation
- [www.c2careers.com](http://www.c2careers.com) careers advice for graduates from any institution
- <http://tomcat4.prospects.ac.uk:8080/forum/index.php> an online community of graduates talking about their experiences of job-hunting
- [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk) choose Careers Advice > Careers Fairs and Jobs and Work > Virtual Fair - good places to make direct contact with employers
- [www.wikijob.co.uk](http://www.wikijob.co.uk) the first candidate focused graduate recruitment website, WikiJob is an online community designed to let students and graduates find out what careers, employers and interviews are really like

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