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**So, what is being a lobbyist really like day-to-day? Public Affairs Links' Editor, Andrew Greenway, talks to James Ball about his experiences of the lobbying world.**

The conference room in Portcullis House is laid out, and business leaders, MPs and peers are due to arrive for the "Parliament and the Internet" conference within the hour. The catering team haven't delivered any supplies.

It's just one possible hazard of working in public affairs - better known as lobbying - and account executive Andrew Greenway, 24, was left to deal with it: "Catering had failed us miserably, but a bit of creative thinking did the trick. Four or five of us went down to the Portcullis House canteen to pick up every sandwich in sight."

Fortunately, working as a public affairs consultant is usually more challenging than sandwich delivery. Greenway worked with a London based consultancy for just over a year, and found himself dealing directly with clients and organising events from the beginning.

The lobbying industry has "grown exponentially in the last ten years", and is still on the up. Clients contact lobbying firms for anything from "vanity projects" aimed at raising a firm's profile among MPs to trying to influence legislation and policy.

Greenway insists that in lobbying it's what you know, not who you know, that counts. "For the day-to-day it's not a schmoozing industry. Most companies are essentially driven by an engine room of young graduates who have no real political connections, so it's really not all about smoky backrooms."

Instead, public affairs is a combination of media monitoring and thorough research. A typical day revolves around producing intelligence reports for clients based around monitoring Parliament, the Government and media reports on the sector. Equally important, there is the research in finding the right people to approach to deliver the right results.

Working in such a new industry offers excellent opportunities for new starters, according to Greenway. "Most consultancies have fewer than 30 staff, so from the start you have a lot of responsibility and you're not just doing routine things every day. It's a lot more involved than coming in on a 'Big 4' graduate scheme and just training for months."

Getting into the industry is often the difficult part. Greenway is unusual in that he came straight from university: though most employees have a 2:1 degree or better, "almost exclusively in politics, though that's not essential", most have worked in Westminster before moving into public affairs.

"The best thing to have is Westminster experience. It's a good signal that shows you genuinely care and know what's going on. That's the conventional path. Having worked in the EU is great - many people come from Brussels to work in the UK, and vice versa. It's very competitive and you need to be persistent - you could be looking at 40-50 applicants per position."

First positions are typically unpaid, certainly for recent graduates. Greenway was given a three-month internship, and offered a paid position after "about six weeks" on the job. Greenway says this unpaid work offers essential experience, and adds coyly: "more often than not if you're good they'll take you on as a permanent member of staff."

Ultimately, Greenway says: "Success in public affairs is based upon close attention to detail: to do your research thoroughly, know why MPs should care about what you're saying and then phrase your requests in such a way that they can't refuse, essentially. You need the ability to communicate very clearly and very well. Basically, it boils down to persistence and persuasion - but that's just politics."