

**HOW TO
FIND A
GRADUATE
JOB**

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1. The Golden Rule

It is rare that jobs are 'won' on the basis of merit or even connections alone. The trick is in knowing how to play the game, and the basis of the game is very simple: someone wants a new employee because in some way or another, hiring that employee is going to make their life easier.

Now, in an ideal world their easier life is one where a cracking employee walks through the door and through ingenuity and tenacity manages to improve their employer organisation: boost their profits; please customers and motivate staff.

In the real world their easier life is more likely to mean offloading their tedious admin work, appeasing their or their boss' empire-building ego, or pulling in some cannonfodder to take the flak from irate customers or internal factions. In all probability offloading donkey work is top of their list.

Therefore the cardinal rule of job hunting is as follows: **you must make your potential employer *feel*/you will make their life easier.** A typical employer's paradise is being able to chuck stuff at you, forget about it, and then have you spit out better-than-great results as needed. They want a monkey on an automated organ grinder.

When choosing analysts for research projects, I knew very well what I was looking for: analytical and articulate people who would need the least possible management, who had initiative, integrity, good judgement and tight attention to detail. This decision wasn't made on the basis of trying to assess someone's intrinsic talent or brilliance; it was a pure utility thing. It is important not to think of job interviewers as taking an x-ray of your soul and worldly potential – they're simply working out whether you'll be easy to manage; perform; be fun to work with, and do a decent job of

workplace diplomacy. Included in this is getting a feel for how quickly you can get up to speed, and whether you're likely to hang around (rerecruiting and re-training is expensive, tedious, and a genuine setback to most employers – and a huge time sink for senior staff who could otherwise be adding the value they're paid to).

An apocryphal story abounds of a friend of a barrister – a form of British advocate – who was sat in his office the day the traineeship applications arrived: a stack of some 500 résumés for a mere position or two. The barrister took a look at the pile, then grabbed half of them and chucked them in the trash can. Upon seeing his friend's exasperated look, his reply was simple: "I don't employ unlucky people". From another angle, he knew he was going to find what he was looking for in the stack of 250, so why spend twice as much time as necessary? The story may or may not be true, but corporations the world over undoubtedly take a similar approach courtesy of recruitment processes and filtering technology. Therefore the goal isn't to be the best, as often the best don't get the job – the goal is to beat the competition. The system's clearly not fair, so let's learn how to hack it.

The take-home point is this: employers are looking for people to make their life easier, and further, **they're looking to do that as easily as possible**. This is where we come in.

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