

# the garden

finding advertising and communications talent



## Garden Tips for Graduates

Here at The Garden we are often approached by graduates for advice on how to get a job in advertising. And why not? It's a fantastic way to spend your career- creative, intellectually stimulating and good fun. It's also a very difficult industry to break into, highly competitive and bloody hard work. If you still want to do it, then here are our top tips.....

### Cover the basics

Know why you want to work in advertising and be able to articulate it clearly. What skills would you bring to the agency?

Have examples of creative campaigns you like, know why you like them and who made them. What was the strategy? Who is the target audience? Why does it work well? What would you have done differently? 'I like the Cadbury Gorilla' just won't cut it.

Know the agency gossip. Who's pitching for what? Who's moving where? What are the latest campaigns? Read Campaign magazine obsessively. Sign up to the bulletins from Brand Republic [www.brandrepublic.com](http://www.brandrepublic.com)

If you want to really show off, pick a few classic advertising blogs to read. Have a look at Rory Sutherland's or Dave Trott.

The IPA is the industry body so it's worth a look at their website too <http://www.ipa.co.uk/>

Mad Men- watch and learn.

### Show you mean it

If you have never worked in an agency, then you will need to try to get some work experience. This is a good way for you to try out agency life and get a better idea of the different roles within the agency. It's a way for agencies to spot future talent and one route into your first proper job. You'll have to apply for these positions as you would a job. Some agencies have formal work placement schemes or summer schools, some don't. Keep an eye on who's got a big pitch on and approach them to see if they need an extra pair of hands. Similarly, if an agency has just won a big piece of business, they may be looking for junior hands on deck. Be creative.

In some agencies a placement can be invaluable experience, in others you'll be photocopying. Persevere. Be a bit pushy about getting involved but not too pushy. Talk to as many people as you can whilst you're there and find out what they do, how they got there, get their advice. Always be willing to make the tea.

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Most agencies pay your expenses for work experience placements, a few will pay a small salary if you're very lucky.

Work placements will build your CV and will show prospective employers that you are serious about advertising as a career.

### Getting a job

The big agency graduate recruitment schemes are excellent *if* you can get a place. It is a very long, difficult and seriously competitive process. Think carefully before you embark upon it and do so only with a thick skin and a steely determination. Someone has to get the jobs, but it won't be anyone who did it half heartedly.

There are other routes in....the direct approach could work as agencies will recruit at various times during the year depending on their workload. A classic case of being in the right place at the right time. Keep an eye on agency websites, Twitter accounts and Facebook pages as any use these media to recruit for junior roles.

Headhunters/recruitment agencies. We will sometimes get a brief for a junior position, but not very often. Agencies have no need to pay us to find graduates when they have them banging down the door. We will help if we can and will keep your details on our database.

### Get the pitch right

Agencies are pretty much continually bombarded with CVs from graduates, so something needs to make your job/work placement application stand out. This doesn't necessarily mean trying to be too clever and wearing fancy dress or similar gimmicks. A well written and personalised covering email which shows you are passionate about the industry and that you write well may be enough to get them curious enough to meet you.

Always try to get the name of the relevant person and send your application to them. Head of Account Management / Head of Planning etc. Sending your CV to HR, unless there is a specified vacancy, may not serve you as well.

A hefty dose of tenacity is required....Many agencies will not reply to you. They are not deliberately rude, just very busy and sometimes disorganised. You may have to write 10 letters to get one response.

### Look beyond the Top 10

Be creative about the agencies you target. There are plenty of perfectly good agencies which do not feature in Campaign every week and who are not in the Top 10. One of them could be the perfect place for you.

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There are new agencies popping up all the time. There are agencies which only do digital, or only do healthcare, or only do direct marketing. There are agencies which- shock horror- do not make TV ads but are still very creative and work with big brands.

Look beyond the first page of Google. Ask around. Delve into websites and blogs and try the road less travelled.

### It's about personality

You will hear the term 'cultural fit' again and again. Advertising is a people business. Agencies, like people, have distinct personalities. Agencies hire people who they think will get along with their teammates and their clients. Similarly, there will be agencies you would love to work in and others which you'd hate. You have to meet a few until you know.

### Business and brands

Advertising is not just about being creative and making cool ads or websites. Advertising is there to sell stuff so let's not forget that. Advertising helps to build brands. Brands are about business. Businesses need to make money.

The IPA holds the IPA Effectiveness awards every 2 years. These are the awards that show that advertising actually works. If you can get hold of a case study it's worth reading, especially if you are interested in planning.

Showing that you understand business and how advertising fits into the bigger picture is a good thing to throw in at interview or in an application.

### Be passionate

If you are not passionate about advertising, if you do not love it and are not 100% dedicated, that will become clear pretty quickly and rest assured there will be 10 people behind you in the queue who are all of those things. It doesn't matter how clever you are or what a great degree you have if the interviewer doesn't feel your passion for the industry and for the agency.

Remember; you are not expected to know everything about advertising. You are, however, expected to enthuse about it, to have an opinion and to love it.

### Good luck!