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Digital Marketing and E-commerce Careers Guide

For students and graduates

Digital Marketing and E-commerce Careers Guide

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1. Introduction

This guide aims to provide an insight into the dynamic and exciting industry that is digital marketing and e-commerce.

Digital technologies are becoming ever more important to how we manage our everyday lives. It was only in 1991 when the first commercial internet service provider started operating in the UK. Now, over 80% of households in the UK have internet access at home, almost 70% of the population order goods online¹ and, according to Ofcom, most teenagers would rather give up TV than using the web².

The figures above clearly speak for themselves. The opportunities presented by digital are significant and growing with no sign of slowing down. Furthermore, the measurement potential offered by digital along with the “instant feedback” of social media means that any marketing efforts can be tracked and optimised. Businesses are keen to capitalise on these opportunities and need people with passion, intelligence and drive to help them achieve their goals.

The constantly shifting nature of digital, whether in the form of new website practices, online content opportunities, or new consumer devices such as smartphones and tablets, can be seen as a double-edged sword. The potential is massive and growing, but so are the challenges.

With a shortage of available talent and significant growth opportunities for those who want to progress, the digital marketing and e-commerce industry will provide rewards for those who rise to its challenges.

1.1. Who this guide is for

This guide has been written for recent graduates and students to provide them with an idea of some of the opportunities open to them in the digital marketing industry. It also aims to provide some suggestions on how to find a job in the digital marketing industry for those who are interested.

This guide will tell you:

- What is digital marketing
- What digital marketers do and why you should consider joining them
- The different jobs available in digital marketing
- How to prepare for your job hunt and land your first job
- How to manage your career once you get started
- What further resources you can consult to find out more about digital marketing

In the practical sections, leaders in the digital industry from companies that recruit graduates have shared their advice on what graduates can do to best prepare themselves for a career in digital marketing and e-commerce.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/digital-agenda/scoreboard/countries/uk/index_en.htm

² <http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/2011/10/more-teenagers-say-they-would-miss-their-mobiles-and-the-internet-than-watch-tv/>

2. About Econsultancy

[Econsultancy](#) is a global independent community-based publisher, focused on best practice digital marketing and e-commerce, and used by over 300,000 internet professionals every month.

[Our hub has 105,000+ members worldwide](#) from clients, agencies and suppliers alike with over 90% member retention rate. We help our members build their internal capabilities via a combination of [research reports and how-to guides](#), [training and development](#), [consultancy](#), [face-to-face conferences](#), [forums](#) and [professional networking](#).

For the last ten years, our resources have helped members learn, make better decisions, build business cases, find the best suppliers, accelerate their careers and lead the way in best practice and innovation.

Econsultancy has offices in London, New York and Dubai and we are a leading provider of [digital marketing training](#) and [consultancy](#). We are providing [consultancy](#) and [custom training](#) in the UK, North America, Middle East, and extensively across Europe and Asia. We trained over 4,000 marketers and ran over 200 public training courses in 2011.

[Join Econsultancy today](#) to learn what's happening in digital marketing – and what works.

Call us to find out more on +44 (0)20 7269 1450 (London) or +1 212 699 3626 (New York). You can also [contact us online](#).



3. Acknowledgements

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4. About digital marketing and e-commerce

4.1. The definition of digital marketing and e-commerce

Marketing is the process by which companies connect with customers, offer products of value, and build relationships with those customers so that they continue to buy. Marketing has several components, from branding and advertising, through to after sales care and contact. Paul Kotler defines marketing as:

“The process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from customers in return”.³

Digital marketing is no different. However, some people might think that digital marketing only involves the internet, or that it’s just about paid adverts on Google. **Digital marketing does involve the internet, but it refers to marketing through the use of any electronic media.** This could be through a potential consumer using a computer, mobile phone, television, or a combination of these.

E-commerce refers to the process of buying and selling products and services online. E-commerce also refers to all the efforts involved in creating the most effective systems in this process, which include digital marketing and the logistics involved in delivering the product to the consumer.

Businesses employ digital marketing and e-commerce techniques in order to increase revenue, decrease costs, and improve customer satisfaction.

4.2. What do digital marketers do?

Lord Leverhulme, founder of the company which is now Unilever, once remarked:

“Half of what I spend on advertising is wasted. The trouble is I don’t know which half.”

One major attraction of digital marketing is that consumer actions can be measured as users conduct activity online. This means returns on investment can be more far more accurately calculated than ever before, and that different strategies can be constantly improved following measurement. Companies are therefore shifting their money to digital as this measurement can assist them in creating commercially successful campaigns.

Marketers can break down their efforts into two categories, namely brand awareness and direct response. Brand awareness is exactly that – increasing the awareness of a brand so that customers will eventually engage with and purchase products from that brand. Direct response marketing seeks to have customers act and purchase products as a direct response to a specific campaign or marketing impression.

While [this study by Bain and Company](#) found that brand marketers still spend more on traditional media than digital, there is a strong shift towards digital. **Brand marketers now have a huge number of ways to reach customers online, whether through videos on YouTube, pages on Facebook, or through paid search.** Increasingly, campaigns have become joined up, with traditional ad campaigns having extended content on the web which

3 Kotler, P. et al (2008). Principles of Marketing. 5th European Ed. Essex: Pearson Education Ltd

potential customers can interact with. The online components of a brand awareness campaign can be measured in terms of website traffic, Facebook fans, and comments on social media. Even if ad campaigns are totally offline, analysis of social media can provide measurable feedback to the marketer running the campaign.

With direct response marketing, a large proportion is often spent online as the aim of such a campaign is to generate revenue. **One concept in digital marketing that is particularly relevant to direct response marketing is that of the sales funnel.** The sales funnel represents the journey a potential customer takes in purchasing a product.

The sales funnel



Source: [Econsultancy Blog, 2009](#)

To begin with, the customer is made aware of the product. This could be done by a brand awareness campaign, or through a more targeted approach such as paid search. The customer then has to become interested in the product, and develop a desire to have it. Finally, this desire has got to translate into action, which usually is the act of the customer selecting an item and completing the sale (often referred to as a *conversion*). But this action could be as simple as collecting an email for further contact, or downloading information on a product or service.

However, through each stage of the funnel, the number of potential customers decreases. The shape of the funnel represents the reduction in the number of these potential customers at each stage of the process. For example, the amount of people aware of Amazon is greater than those who are thinking whether or not they want to buy their shopping there. The number of people casually browsing Amazon is larger than those who then go on to add items to their online shopping basket. Finally, the number of people who actually take the action and pay

for the goods in their basket is smaller still, because some people will have either changed their mind or not gone through and purchased the item. **The effectiveness of a website in getting people to complete a sale (or another required action) is referred to as the conversion rate**, and managing and improving this conversion rate is a key component of digital marketing.

The process of marketing could be seen as capturing people and putting them into this funnel, and then trying to increase the number of people who eventually go through to the end and buy the product. Collection of the data involved so that conversion rates can be calculated, along with the testing of different marketing strategies, is a key component of this process. There is then the need to work on the relationship between the customer and the company, so that they buy again and recommend to their friends that they should do so. In digital marketing, there are many methods used to pull people through the funnel, to reduce the numbers of people who fall out of the funnel, and to connect with customers on a continual basis to get them to continue buying and to tell others to do so.

There are other ways to conceptualise the digital marketing process. For example, Econsultancy has created a model based on the principles of acquiring, converting, and retaining customers through measurement and optimisation.

Acquire, convert, retain



Because of the sheer number of ways people can connect with brands digitally, and the technical complexity involved with many of these methods, this has led to a huge variety of roles within the digital marketing industry. These roles can be placed into categories of specialism which are commonly referred to as digital disciplines.

4.3. Reasons to consider a career in digital marketing and e-commerce

The future is digital

As previously stated, **digital media have increasingly become part of everyday life.** Content can be consumed from many different devices, mobiles can be used to purchase goods on the move, and social media provides real-time updates on almost anything. People have integrated digital products into their daily routine in both their work and personal lives, and the

businesses who have moved to cater for the digital consumer are in many cases the most successful companies in modern history.

As previously stated, the opportunities within digital can represent a double-edged sword, in that they also pose significant challenges for business. Just a few examples of the changes within digital which have affected marketers most are listed below:

- **The sheer amount of data** that can now be collected from consumers allows companies to target customers individually and provide content tailored for them, but processing this data and gaining insight requires skilled and well-resourced staff.
- **Social media** allow companies to connect personally with their customers, and to monitor what is being said about them. At the same time, customers are empowered to say what they like about brands, which requires brands to engage and respond appropriately.
- **The growth of channel and device choices** means companies can reach their customers in a number of new (and often more cost effective) ways. Mobile advertising, email, smartphone apps, and search engine marketing are just a few of the methods businesses can employ. However, many of these techniques require a skillset and knowledge that is significantly different from traditional marketing practice.

Being well-versed in digital technology as a marketer is going to become ever more essential, especially as the boundaries between digital marketing and traditional marketing have already started to break down. Ad campaigns have increasingly become joined up, with promotions on television and in print complementing those shown online. Print ads interact with mobile devices through QR codes or augmented reality, connected TV presents viewers with extended content and opportunities to buy.

The change in advertising spend illustrates the shift to digital profoundly. **In 2010, online advertising revenue in the US overtook that of print**⁴. By 2013, online ad spend will be greater than TV and print combined⁵. Almost 10% of all retail spend is now online⁶. These figures are even more significant when one considers that Google only started offering Adwords (pay-per-click advertising) in October 2000 and Amazon was founded in 1994.

Digital is already part of business, and will become more embedded

Digital technology has revolutionised the workplace. As a digital specialist, you may be called upon to help solve problems and tackle challenges outside of the marketing environment. Further on in your career, a depth of knowledge of digital marketing combined with a broad understanding of other business functions could help you move into a strategic role.

Growth rates within the digital industry are significantly higher than many other areas. For example, online advertising spend in the UK increased by 13.5% in 2011, compared to just 1.4% across traditional media⁷. Whilst the economic downturn has had a significant impact on other businesses, the growing importance of digital media has led to continued strong performance of the digital economy, despite ongoing economic uncertainty.

Traditional businesses are working fast to try to get up to speed with the changes that digital is having. The advertising conglomerate WPP has shifted its business so much that the digital share of its revenues accounts for 30% in 2011, and is predicted to grow this to around 40% of revenue over the next five years⁸, with the company's CEO Sir Martin Sorrell stating that marketers are still not spending enough on digital and mobile advertising⁹.

⁴ <http://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/insights/library/infographics/online-consumption-infographic/>

⁵ http://www.iab.net/insights_research/industry_data_and_landscape/1675/1707493

⁶ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rsi/retail-sales/september-2011/stb-september-2011.html>

⁷ <http://www.iabuk.net/en/1/onlineadspendsoars13point5percento51011.mxs>

⁸ <http://www.wpp.com/NR/rdonlyres/18DEBA6D-6C63-436D-9322-7B019229ACC7/o/1Introduction.pdf>

⁹ <http://econsultancy.com/blog/8723-digital-and-mobile-are-underspent-says-sir-martin-sorrell-at-ces-2012>

5. Where to work in digital marketing

Digital marketing is relevant to any business where their target market can be reached through digital media. E-commerce by definition uses the internet to sell products and services. With such a wide scope, the choice of where one can work is very broad. The companies that are involved with digital marketing and e-commerce can be broken into three broad types: companies or brands (often referred to as ‘client-side’); agencies; and vendors.

This guide will first address the differences between working for on the client side, for an agency, or for a vendor, and then discuss the different disciplines of digital marketing.

5.1. Client-side, Agency, or Vendor

Client-side

In the context above, **the client-side refers to companies which look to increase their profits through digital marketing and e-commerce.**

It is almost impossible to create an image of one kind of client company. However, one can separate them into varying categories. Companies can be broken down by industry (e.g. retail or travel), whether they sell B2C (business-to-consumer) or B2B (business-to-business), and whether they sell products or services. The exact nature of the company will dictate its strategy and therefore the manner in which digital tactics and techniques are employed.

Smaller companies or those without a strong digital focus might have only one person in charge of all digital efforts, whereas larger companies or those which are defined as “pureplay” (i.e. they only operate online) are likely to have staff who each have a specialist area of focus.

One potential benefit of looking to work in digital marketing on the client side is that you could potentially combine digital marketing nous with a passion for where you want to work. For example, if you have a particular interest or hobby, you might look to see if there are digital marketing positions at companies that work in those fields. This is not as unrealistic as it sounds, for having a knowledge and an affinity for the end product will put any applicant above the rest.

In addition to this, working on the client side offers different opportunities to broaden out beyond digital marketing and e-commerce and into other business areas.

Agencies

Agencies (and consultancies) work for clients in order to assist them with their business goals. In the digital marketing and e-commerce sphere, they often act as specialists across the digital disciplines. Companies will hire agencies to perform certain tasks, such as search engine optimisation (SEO), running paid online ad campaigns such as pay-per-click (PPC) or display advertising, or managing their social media presence. This is often particularly useful when the business goals are hard to achieve without specialist knowledge and expertise.

There are many forms of digital agency (including many forms of consultancy), and a spectrum operates from niche specialists who might focus on a specific part of a digital discipline, through to generalists who will seek to use a broad range of techniques in order to help businesses achieve their goals. Likewise some agencies might only provide advice, whereas others might be deeply involved in the execution of a particular digital strategy.

Working for an agency in a particular digital discipline will create a broad range of experience, as agencies typically work for many different companies at once.



Vendors

Vendors provide the technology that allows clients and agencies to execute their digital and e-commerce strategies. Within the vendor space there are a wide variety of roles, from direct sales and marketing, through to support and consultancy. Many large vendors offer support and consultancy packages alongside their product offerings, and by working in this field one can develop an expert knowledge in the use of such a platform which can then be applied elsewhere.

A benefit to building a career with a vendor is that one learns in depth about how technology can be used to solve business problems. There is also the potential to learn about the challenges involved with technological implementations and the trends towards cloud-based software.

The use of drawing such distinctions

Regardless of whether one wants to work for an agency, a client or a vendor, **there are many other factors to consider when searching for a suitable job**, such as location, salary, and workplace culture. Furthermore, many people do not follow linear career paths within a particular sector or specialty, which means that although one might start their career at an agency, they may end up working on the client-side (or vice versa).

The skillsets involved in working on the client and agency side within a particular digital discipline (for example, running a paid search campaign either for your employer, or for a client), are likely to have a large degree of overlap. **Choosing between client, agency or vendor is unlikely to be the limiting factor in how successful one is in their career.** Taking on responsibility, achieving results and continuing to learn are far more important issues than simple divisions between client and agency.

5.2. Digital disciplines

Digital disciplines are specialist areas which involve shared knowledge, skills, tools and practice in particular areas of digital business and e-commerce. Many of the disciplines overlap with each other, and many job roles will require one to be proficient across multiple disciplines. It is important to be aware of what each one involves, but as the industry moves very rapidly, the boundaries and definitions of each digital discipline are bound to change.

Each digital discipline can be looked as playing a certain role within the customer journey model. Put together, they help businesses and organisations **acquire, convert, and retain** customers, and improve their efforts through **measurement and optimisation**.

Before introducing the various digital disciplines, we asked graduate recruiters what tools and software they thought students and graduates should try out.

Tips from the top – “What tools and software should students and graduates try out?”

“Within digital marketing a lot of tools we use day-to-day are paid for, and some are very expensive, so I wouldn’t discard a graduate CV if they didn’t have specific experience on industry programs. However, **a lot of them offer a free trial version**, so even going through the trial so they can talk about what they’d like to use if they could is a bonus. We see a lot of people get into digital marketing after helping a friend or family member with a website of their own, and then they get interested in the wider subject.”

Ian Miller, Search Director, Crafted Media

“There are some additional tools that give insight into the market dynamics: **Ad Planner, Google Trends & Insights** for example.”

Claire St. Louis, HR Director, Essence

“There are hundreds of tools out there and the list gets longer every week.

“I’d stick to the basics. **Download the SEOMoz toolbar** (<http://www.seomoz.org/seo-toolbar>) to start getting a feel for how strong sites are and you can use that in combination with **Open Site Explorer** (www.opensiteexplorer.org) to start understanding a bit more about authority.

“Don’t forget keyword research tools like the **Google Adwords keyword tool** (<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>) and play around with **Google Suggest** - just start typing into Google and see what comes up for particular keywords.

“But it’s important not to get too fixated on tools. **It’s more important to understand the challenges facing agencies and clients and how these tools help them to overcome these challenges.** That’s the way for students and graduates to future proof their learning.”

Stefan Hull, Insight Director, Propellernet

Descriptions of the digital disciplines

Affiliate marketing

In the context of digital marketing, affiliate marketing is the practice of a company financially rewarding a publisher (an affiliate) for a sale, customer or lead which has been shown to derive from the affiliate’s website or email activity.

The term is also applied to this particular industry as a whole, encompassing merchants (i.e. advertisers), affiliate networks, specialist agencies and the various types of affiliate publisher who promote the products and services of their merchant partners.

The sector is also sometimes called the ‘performance marketing’ industry.



Copywriting	Copywriting is described by Copyblogger as such: “The art and science of direct-response copywriting involves strategically delivering words (whether written or spoken) that get people to take some form of action.”
Content marketing	<p>Joe Pulizzi describes content marketing as, “marketers becoming publishers; owning the media instead of renting it. Attracting and retaining customers by creating / curating valuable, compelling and relevant content to maintain or change behaviour.” Content creation is not all however, as the effective promotion of this content to draw in potential customers is often just as important.</p> <p>The discipline is closely tied to SEO as keyword-relevant content can assist in attracting traffic to a website.</p>
Customer service	<p>Customer service online is about helping customers and potential customers solve their problems and answer their questions. Customer service can play a pivotal role within e-commerce, as customers can often easily go elsewhere.</p> <p>Increasingly, social media tools are being used for customer service, as companies are keen to be seen to be addressing the needs of customers on these highly visible channels.</p>
Conversion rate optimisation	<p>Conversion rate optimisation is the process of refining and improving the experience for a website or landing page visitor with the goal of increasing the percentage of visitors that convert (i.e. perform a particular action, such as buying goods or downloading catalogue information). Econsultancy’s annual Conversion Rate Optimisation Report, produced in association with RedEye, provides valuable information on the latest methods used to improve conversion rates.</p> <p>People who work in this discipline will be required to test sites, collect data on conversion, and make or recommend improvements to a website to increase the conversion rate.</p>
Display advertising	Display advertising is a type of advertising that occurs on websites adjacent to the editorial content being viewed. It can consist of words, images or video. It can also occur on mobile devices, email applications, and within internet-enabled applications.
eCRM	<p>eCRM (Electronic Customer Relationship Management) is used to follow up on potential leads and manage existing customers. People working in sales and customer service will utilise eCRM tools in order to do their jobs effectively.</p> <p>With the amount of data and its potential for analysis, eCRM helps companies improve their profitability and reduce their customer service costs.</p>
E-commerce	E-commerce is concerned with the buying and selling of goods and services online. E-commerce applies a wide number of skills and tools in order to increase sales and profitability and effectively manage fulfilment and customer requests. In this, almost all other digital disciplines will play some role within e-commerce.
Email marketing	Email marketing is about increasing sales and long term customer value through email.



Marketing automation	Marketing automation is about using software and processes to replace repetitive tasks which can be done without direct input from people. Such tasks include sending email based on certain triggers such as on birthdays, product views, and basket abandonment.
Mobile marketing	Mobile marketing is about using mobile technology to reach consumers. Whilst SMS still has its role, the growth of smartphone technology opens up new avenues of revenue and the potential to connect with customers. Mobile is particularly exciting because of its potential for highly targeted campaigns based on individual users.
Multichannel marketing	Multichannel marketing is about reaching customers through a number of different channels, and joining those channels up to create a more effective and unified customer experience. Often the term is applied to retailers that sell both online and offline, but can also apply to other businesses and in some contexts refers to multiple online channels.
Online PR	Online PR is the same as PR (public relations), but is concerned with the use of digital media and technology in accomplishing PR goals. This could range from monitoring brand reputation, through to engaging with a range of stakeholders through digital channels. As such, it overlaps with many other digital disciplines such as SEO and social media .
Social media and community management	Social media and community management involve listening to and joining conversations happening about brands, products and services online, and working with the key influencers within the relevant industry. Much of the work will involve engaging with negative comments, but also encouraging positive ones. There are a large number of different social media platforms on the market, but also important are forums and review sites.
Search Marketing - Organic/Natural (SEO)	SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) is about enhancing search engine visibility by identifying how search engines work and how people search for products and services online. This can involve identification of keywords (i.e. words people use when searching the internet for relevant information) and developing or optimising content in order to gaining relevant links back to a website. (This is distinct from paid search marketing , which is focused on paid listings rather than 'natural' or 'organic' search results).
Search Marketing - Paid (PPC)	Paid search marketing is about reaching customers through paid advertisements on search engines, a discipline sometimes also described as 'pay-per-click' or PPC. Paid search specialists will need to identify keywords and balance the cost of paid ads against the potential returns from sales to ensure that clickthroughs offer a return on investment for their company of for their clients.
Strategy and Planning	Strategy and planning is about devising campaigns and tactics in order to improve digital marketing efforts within an organisation. People involved in this area will need a broad understanding of digital marketing so they can make the appropriate recommendations on going forward.

User Experience and Usability

User experience and usability are about improving the digital experience for end users, and making sure they can achieve their goals online. This often has a significant impact on the profitability of a website, as poor design can lead to decreased sales and conversions. By contrast, a high quality digital experience can lead to people spending longer on a site and converting at a higher rate.

Businesses increasingly need to think about the broader customer experience, which may involve touch points across a number of channels including online.

Web Analytics

Web analytics is about the measurement of on-site activity and collection of web usage data, analysing that data to deliver insights which can be used to optimise web performance. It is closely linked to **conversion rate optimisation**.

6. Preparing for a job in digital marketing or e-commerce

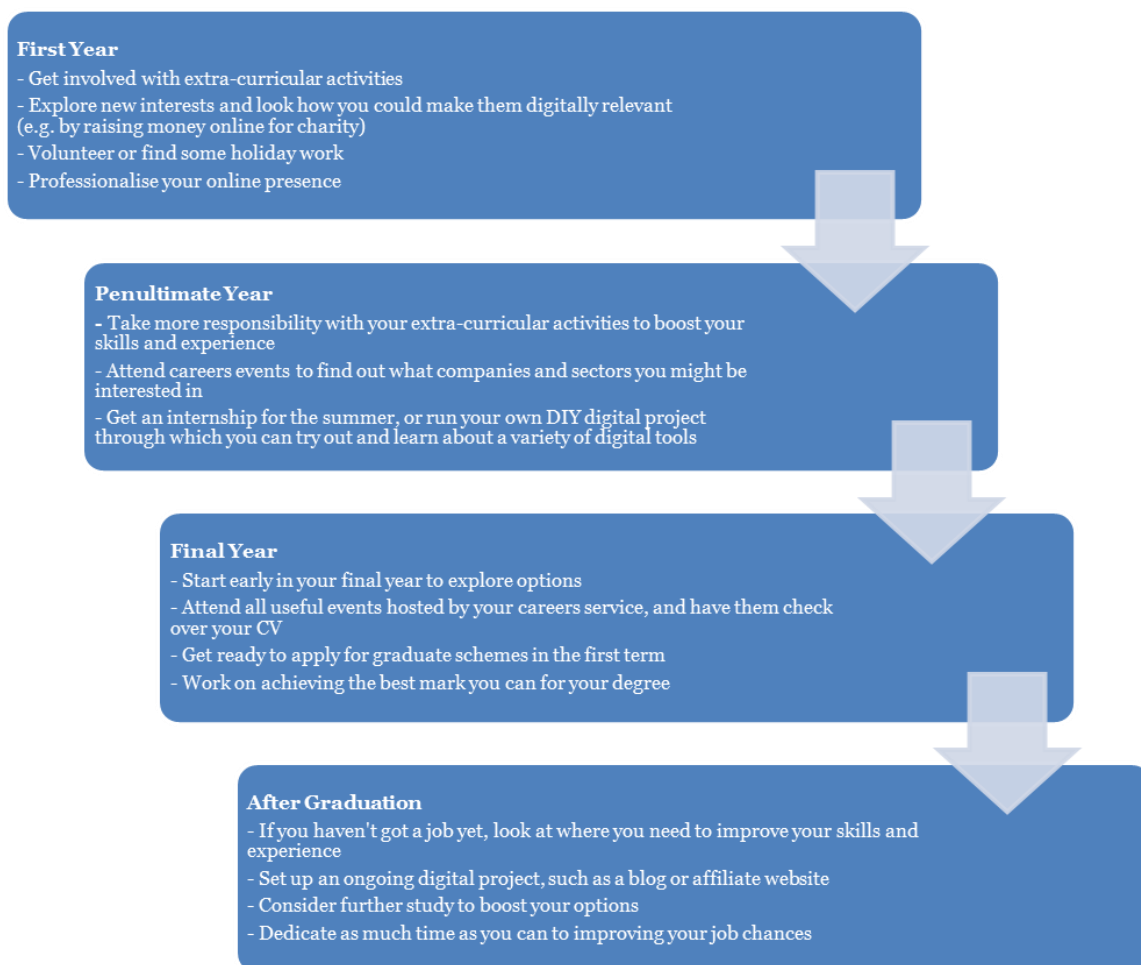
6.1. Organise your time effectively

Time is your most precious resource, particularly when it comes to graduate recruitment. Graduate recruitment schemes often work in tandem with the academic cycle, which means for many companies there are specific time windows when you can apply. Miss the window, and there is the risk that you will have to wait another year before having a chance to apply. These time windows are typically in September to January, although some companies recruit several times or throughout the year.

For this reason, **it is important to figure out what your timeline is so that you can effectively plan your job strategy.** If you have two years left of university, you obviously have more time to prepare than someone who is about to graduate and is still looking for a job.

A key point to note is that **the earlier you start, the greater your chance of success** in getting the job you want. With more time, you will be able to identify exactly what you want to do and what skills and experience you need to build in order to become highly employable.

Below is a chart with a suggested use of how to prepare for your career during university.



6.2. Find out what you want

An important part of finding the right job for you is figuring out what you want to do. **By knowing exactly what you want to do and where your passion lies, you can target jobs and employers in full confidence that this is right for you.** This confidence will then translate into energy and enthusiasm in your application, increasing your chances of securing any job you apply to.

In the famous career hunting book, *What Color is Your Parachute?* Richard Bolles lists factors to consider when looking for a job that will suit you:

- **Geography** – where do you want to be based? Larger cities such as London, Manchester and Leeds remain hubs for the digital industry and offer lots of opportunity, whereas rural areas might have limited numbers of companies involved in digital marketing or e-commerce. Whilst digital technology means people can theoretically work from anywhere, most work in the digital industry is still done from the office.
- **Your favourite interests** – what are you passionate about outside of digital? What are your hobbies and interests? What intellectually stimulates you and fascinates you? Think broadly, as you may be able to pursue your favourite interest within the digital sphere.
- **Level and salary** – where might you want to end up? How important is progression for you? What is the minimum salary you would be prepared to work for?
- **Work conditions** – do you like to work in a high pressured environment, or would you prefer somewhere relaxed? Do you like to have targets to work towards, or would you prefer to set and work towards your own?
- **Values** – what are your values? What values does an employer have to hold for you to work there? Many companies publish their own values for others to see. [Econsultancy has a presentation available](#) which describes its own values.
- **People you work with** – what kind of people do you want to work with? Do you prefer people who are very analytical and technically orientated, or do you prefer people who are very social?

Conducting this form of self-analysis is likely to be very useful in finding out where you really want to work.

As digital marketing and e-commerce spans almost every kind of industry imaginable, there is a wide variety of companies and environments you could work in. Have a think about where you would like to work, and what kind of job you would like to get involved in.

Once you have an idea of what you want and where you would like to work, start to explore some of the roles that you could be doing in the near future.

Practical tips

- With all the above points, **try and get all your thoughts down onto one piece of paper.** A suggested technique for this is [mindmapping](#).
- **Keep this paper handy** when assessing potential employers during your research. It will remind you of what to look out for when deciding which companies you should approach for a job.
- As you learn more about what kind of career would interest you, **update this document.** As you progress through your career research, what you originally wanted might change, which is a positive sign of being more aware of what will drive you in your career.



6.3. Assess your current skills and experience

Do I already have the skills and experience required?

Once you have a clearer idea of what you want, **look at some of the jobs advertised online**, such as those on the [Econsultancy Jobs Board](#). For any job advert, there will usually be a description of the role and what skills and experience they are looking for in a potential candidate. Many large companies may even have role profiles online which you can have a look at.

Assess the job description and role profile carefully, and look at similar jobs advertised in different companies. What are the common skills and experience levels they are looking for in candidates? What do they value most highly?

Where do you rate against the job descriptions? Be honest with yourself, and try to identify where you can really sell your strengths and where you might have to address your weaknesses.

Practical tips

- **Use a service like [Evernote](#) or [Instapaper](#)** to quickly select job profiles from across the web. You can then analyse these job profiles all in one place to identify the main skills and experience each job requires.
- **Set up automatic alerts** for jobs, so that you know when new opportunities are arising. This can be done through many job websites, but also by creating [Google Alerts](#) for specific key terms.
- **Social media is also an excellent source of job information.** Many companies have Twitter accounts or RSS feeds which you can follow. Consider using services such as [Tweetdeck](#) (for Twitter) and [Google Reader](#) (for RSS) to effectively manage the large amounts of information from these channels.
- You should also use these services to **build up information about companies** you are thinking of applying to.

Can I show my skills and experience as responsibilities and achievements on my CV?

The aim of a CV is to secure an interview with a recruiter. In doing this, they look for two things: what you have done, and how well you did it. These are often respectively referred to as responsibilities (i.e. what you have done) and achievements (i.e. how well you did it). Your responsibilities are your history of work experience roles. Your achievements show what results you created through your skills (best described using the form verb/result/method, such as “Raised £1,000 for charity by promoting sponsored event through Facebook and Twitter.”).

It is important to assess your own skills and experience to see how you can show the recruiter you have the potential to generate results.

If you already believe you have the skills and experience required for the jobs that you would like to do, you should be confident in submitting a CV and covering letter. However, many people might need to improve their skills and experience before being successful with landing the job they want.

A general rule of thumb is not to be too put off by the list of requirements for one particular job. If you have most of the skills and experience required, you should still consider applying for the job. There is rarely such a thing as an “ideal” candidate, and you might be the best person to apply.

Another point of note is that larger graduate recruiters sometimes do not accept CVs. Instead, an (often online) **competency-based application** asks for previous examples of when you have displayed qualities required for the job. Chances are you would use the same examples for such an application as are on a CV, although you would likely be asked to explain them in more detail.

Tips from the top – “What skills and experience do digital marketing and e-commerce employers look for in students and graduates?”

“People skills are incredibly important. We expect every member of staff to be client facing. We also look for commercial nous but we appreciate that often takes time to develop.”

Stefan Hull, Insight Director, Propellernet

“The most important thing Search Laboratory looks for in a potential candidate is good written and verbal communications skills. Other than that we want candidates who have:

- Great organisational skills / time management
- Enthusiasm about digital marketing / the internet
- Demonstrated that they take responsibility of their actions, workload and overall success
- Good up-to-date knowledge of the sector (not necessarily technical knowledge – but knowledge of trends and industry news)
- Some knowledge of the local competition

For PPC roles:

- Exceptional analytical skills
- Good grasp of maths and/or relevant degree (maths/science)

For SEO roles:

- Excellent written skills
- Creativity (for on-page roles)
- Knowledge of web technologies (for off-page roles)

Candidates who have undertaken paid or unpaid work experience/internships have an advantage over those with no work experience on their CV.”

Sasha Hanau, Marketing Executive, Search Laboratory

“We need grads looking for digital roles who have the ability to think analytically and creatively. Understanding numbers is critical. We look for the following:

- Can do attitude
- Team player
- Analytical mind – or at least basic maths
- Drive and ambition – how they’ve done at university, school, how passionately they come across about their course/future career, what they’ve done proactively outside of their course
- Good PPT and Excel
- Presentation skills – not essential but will make them stand out
- Go beyond standard job description
- Attention to detail
- Interest in media – use it, watch it, consume it, have an opinion on how consumers see it

Joanna Lyall, Joint Head of Client Leadership, Mindshare

“We run a series of assessment centre events, numeracy and literacy tests to decide on the best recruits. We also ask for a presentation, so it’s important for students to get plenty of public speaking practice in whilst at university”

Epiphany Solutions



6.4. Improve your skills and experience

Think both digital and non-digital

Whether you think the skills learnt from your degree will land you a job, or that your digital knowledge will keep you above the competition, the reality is both are likely to be important in looking for a graduate job.

Whilst many companies will take on keen intelligent graduates who lack the practical training, **candidates who really express a passion for digital are the ones that will stand out.** The way you can express this passion is by getting actively involved.

It's online – anyone can try it!

One of the great things about digital marketing is that nearly all the tools of the trade are available to anyone, regardless of their experience level. Anyone can set up a website, and with some careful planning, the right selection of keywords and excellent content, you can be on the search engine results front page for niche terms. Chances are that you already have a presence on Facebook or Twitter, and perhaps you even write a blog.

There are many places online where you can learn these skills for free, and likewise the amount of free open source software makes it easier and cheaper than ever to get started (see page 10 for tips from graduate recruiters). There is even a chance to earn money whilst learning the tools of the trade. Many affiliate networks are open to anybody, whilst in-page advertising programmes such as Google AdSense will pay to hold ads on your site.

From speaking with graduate recruiters in the digital space, **it is clear that students are expected to have demonstrated initiative in preparing for their job.** This means that those who demonstrate use of some of the many free tools online will have a significant advantage over those who have not done so.

Tips from the top – Taking Initiative

“It's a cliché but actions do speak louder than words and **we're impressed by people who take action.** Students and graduates that have built their own websites, written their own blog, are active on Twitter and/or Facebook etc. prove they are walking the walk and not just talking the talk. People that have shown some form of commercial enterprise similarly stand out.”

Stefan Hull, Insight Director, Propellernet

“**Graduates should show evidence of doing things themselves.** Whether that's seeking out internships to gain experience or setting up their own things online, if they've just gone out and done it I respect that greatly. So many people want to get into digital/online with the rise in profile it's had, but they don't demonstrate anything on a CV that shows they have started walking down that road on their own... I would certainly be inclined to hire someone if they had been active on relevant communities and I could see their input, even if it was to ask a lot of questions!”

Ian Miller, Search Director, Crafted Media

“**I always like people to have had some work experience.** It demonstrates their passion and helps them work out how interested they really are in the industry; the reality is very different to what they might think it would be like.”

Joanna Lyall, Joint Head of Client Leadership, Mindshare

“**We want to recruit graduates who have experience of life beyond their degree.** Volunteering, leading a society, self-starting projects are all great ways of learning new skills, gaining confidence and getting experience of working with people.”

Rob Shaw, Managing Director, Epiphany



Can you offer any skills to anyone for experience?

Whilst you can teach many of the skills required yourself, **proven results will give you a head start when it comes to landing a job**. Although you could generate these results by yourself (for example, by establishing a popular website, or becoming a source of authority online), being able to show examples of your work and how you won results for others will make your CV stand out. Internships are an obvious choice, but there are many other ways to gain experience.

Some people might believe that it is only people with “connections” that can gain this kind of experience. Whilst those with connections may find it easier, you can contact people directly to help solve their problems. In doing so you will not only demonstrate digital skills, but also some of the key attributes and soft skills so highly sought after in graduates, such as the ability to take initiative, work with others, and setting and achieving goals.

Practical tips

Some ideas for places to go to get some experience are:

- **Small businesses** – have you ever noticed a small business near you could do better online? Perhaps your favourite local restaurant doesn't have a website or Facebook page, or doesn't update it regularly. Perhaps they aren't even listed on Google Maps. Approach a few local businesses and offer to solve their problems.
- **Start-ups** – as well as established businesses, start-ups are a good place to look with offering help and support. With limited budgets and people trying to do many different things at once, many start-ups are keen to have a helping hand. The website enternships.com offers to match interns willing to learn with start-ups looking for help.
- **Societies and clubs** – being at university, it is likely you are a member of a few clubs and societies. Do all of them have their digital presence sorted? Even if they do, is the person managing it graduating soon or reducing their responsibilities to focus on exams? Volunteer yourself and get stuck in.
- **Charities** – with limited budgets, charities are keen to get volunteers helping out. Whilst some of the bigger charities might already have paid staff, smaller charities are often run by people with full time jobs and other responsibilities. Volunteer your services in return for experience.
- **Crowdsourcing websites** – gain work from anywhere in the world through crowdsourcing websites such as Elance.com. On crowdsourcing websites, clients post projects and jobs that need solving, and providers can make bids on these projects. Whilst the global nature of crowdsourcing websites means that competition is high and earnings relatively low, they can be a good place to get stuck in and start gaining practical experience online.
- **By trying it yourself** – even if you cannot find somewhere or somebody willing to provide you with an opportunity to use your digital skills, you can start off yourself. Consider setting up a website to showcase an interest, blog about the digital industry, or try to make some money through affiliate marketing.

6.5. Develop a passion and interest for digital

Passion and interest are key factors when it comes to engaging with potential employers. Taking on new employees, particularly graduates without a significant history of work experience, is a significant risk and investment to an employer. If you do not appear keen and interested during the application process, the employer will not be interested in hiring you.

Your passion and interest will be demonstrated by your skills and experience that you have listed on your CV. By showing how you have engaged with digital on multiple occasions (for example, by writing a blog or operating a website for a club at university), you will demonstrate your commitment to the digital industry. This commitment will put you ahead of candidates who do not demonstrate the utilisation of such skills.

From those we asked to contribute, many highlighted the importance of passion when it comes to applying for a job.



Tips from the top – demonstrating passion and interest

“We particularly look for graduates with a **genuine passion** for the subject they’re applying for. For example we had a work experience student in on the standard two-week placement – he had applied to us directly and when we spoke to him we found out he had his own YouTube channel with over a million views, so clearly knew digital!”

Ian Miller, Search Director, Crafted Media

“In terms of qualifications we like talking to graduates who have excelled in something they're **passionate** about. Hopefully, that's digital marketing and/or e-commerce but we've hired graduates in astrophysics, music technology, law etc.”

Stefan Hull, Insight Director, Propellernet

“We do expect graduates who apply for our Grad Scheme to love all things digital, we look out for students with a **passion** for the online world.”

Tom Salmon, Marketing Director, Epiphany

Another way to demonstrate your passion about something is to **increase your knowledge of the subject**. For this, blogs are possibly the easiest source of detailed information relevant to the industry. As previously mentioned, using a service like [Google Reader](#) can help you collate the information easily and effectively.

Below are some tips from graduate recruiters on what they believe you should read up on to increase your knowledge of the digital marketing and e-commerce industry.

Tips from the top – “For those looking to get into the industry, what blogs, books or other material would you recommend they read?”

“**The big ones we’d recommend would be Econsultancy** (naturally!), The Drum and NMA. We’d also suggest following key people in search marketing and reading blogs from leading agencies like Epiphany (www.epiphanyolutions.co.uk/blog/) and other interesting bloggers like Seth Godin. It’s also worth subscribing to less well known blogs by using tools like Google Reader and Alltop to help you find and sign up to the relevant and interesting things to read.”

Abi Liddle, Client Services Director, Epiphany

“This does change with time depending on where the focus is. Right now, mobile, social and exchanges are all topical so it is about keeping up with the latest industry trends as much as anything else. Mashable, Brandrepublic, Inside Facebook, Google updates¹⁰, Addictive Mobile, Business Insider, Mobile Today are all useful references, maybe set up Twitter to follow all of these publications. Also having a broader point of view on technology and how it is changing our world is really useful, Wired magazine is great for this. **They should also look for blogs written by companies they would like to work for.**”

Joanna Lyall, Joint Head of Client Leadership, Mindshare

“**Without a doubt candidates should be reading up on digital, social and search related topics from authoritative sources such as Econsultancy**, the SEOMoz blog and Search Engine Land. It would be useful if candidates had read some of the most influential industry blogs including those written by Matt Cutts, Brian Solis and David Naylor. Rand Fishkin has published some excellent titles about SEO; however, candidates should remember that SEO and best practice are constantly evolving.”

Sasha Hanau, Marketing Executive, Search Laboratory

¹⁰ Examples include the “Google Think Blog” www.thinkwithgoogle.blogspot.com and “What’s new at Google” www.google.com/talk/whatsnew.html



6.6. Nurture a suitable online presence

Having an online presence should be seen as presenting both opportunities and threats. After you apply for almost any role today, digital or not, the chances are you will be searched for online. Before you apply for any digital marketing or e-commerce role, make sure you have ensured you have searched yourself to see how you are presented to the outside world.

There are powerful opportunities in having a positive online presence. On your LinkedIn profile for example, you are able to include more detailed information than on your CV. Through Twitter, you could demonstrate an interest in digital marketing and e-commerce topics.

Likewise, the threats are significant. Most people have embarrassing photos of them taken at university doing something they may regret later. If your privacy settings on social networks are lax, chances are these will appear on search engines.

Search engines can take many weeks or even months to update their index (i.e. the results they show when a certain search term is used). For this reason, you cannot reasonably expect to set your Facebook status to “Private” and have everything disappear from Google, or put up a great blog and be instantly ranked for key search terms. In planning a suitable online presence, you should start as early as possible in order to have the most positive outcomes.

Finally, **remember you will need to update your content.** Search engines constantly spider the web and update search result pages. In this way, you should view your online presence as something to grow, develop and nurture over time. Focus on weeding out bad content and providing fresh, useful content; this can be as simple as keeping your LinkedIn and Twitter profiles up-to-date and relevant.

Practical tips

Some ideas for how to check and control your online presence are below:

- **Google yourself** – this is the ideal place to begin. What can be seen when someone searches for your name online? Make sure you search for a few variations of your name, and remember to do an exact phase search in quotation marks (e.g. “John Smith” as well as John Smith). Try this out on other search engines too, as some may find what Google did not.
- **Set your privacy settings on Facebook accordingly** – make sure your privacy settings on all social networks are appropriately set. If you do not want your Facebook profile to be displayed on search engines (recommended in many cases), change your *public search listing* on your Facebook settings.
- **Set your privacy settings on other social networks** – make sure you are sharing content only with who you want to.
- **Delete potentially negative content** – have a look through what appears on your social networks. Have you said anything that might be viewed negatively, even if you didn’t mean it in that way? Delete such comments, and make sure you do not do so again.
- **Set up a LinkedIn profile** – with LinkedIn, you will be able to go into more detail on your skills and achievements than on your CV. You can also search for jobs and join discussion groups on LinkedIn. Consider using Twitter for a similar purpose.
- **Remember to showcase your best work** – sites such as [Scribd](#) and [Slideshare](#) can be used to display some of your best work online. With a personal website or blog, you could also share your ideas and demonstrate your interest in digital marketing and e-commerce further.
- **Set up a Google Alert for your name** – this way you can promote any new, positive content, whilst taking appropriate action on negative content.

7. Finding and getting the job you want

7.1. The importance of research

Having drawn together your skills and experience, and figured out what you might want in a job, the time comes to start researching.

Identify the potential types of company who offer the kind of jobs you might be interested in so that you can start to look in the right places. What companies are seeing increased growth and success? Even if you end up looking for a job in a way where you do not approach the company directly (i.e. through recruiters or through your network), being aware of the main players in the industry and the opportunities available to you will put you at a significant advantage.

Draw together a list of companies, sectors and roles that you might be interested so you can narrow down your search appropriately when you begin the hunt.

Practical tips

Here are some ideas on how to go about your research:

- **Collate information from a wide variety of sources** – do not rely on a few sites for your information. Check out trade bodies, company reports, industry analysis, LinkedIn profiles of employees, company Facebook profiles and YouTube channels; the more diverse and broad your sources of information, the better. As mentioned, [Evernote](#) and [Instapaper](#) are some tools which can be highly useful in this respect.
- **Use more than the web** – whilst the internet is undoubtedly a good place to start when it comes to researching companies you might want to work for, you should use more than this when it comes to research. **Meeting companies in person** at events can be useful, particularly as company culture is often quite an intangible commodity which may differ in reality from what is in promotional material.
- **Create useful notes** – having a mass of disorganised information will not be extremely useful. Once you have identified companies you might be interested in working for, try to condense the information you have gathered into **one-page sheets** or **personal aide-memoires**. You can use these sheets later in preparation for interview and job application. Make sure you **highlight key deadlines** so you can structure your job application timetable accordingly.

7.2. Where to look for the job you want

During your career research process, **you should consider different avenues available in applying for a job**. These include graduate schemes, applying for jobs directly, working through recruitment agencies, using job boards, and networking.

An important point to note is that a successful job hunt will look at using all of these methods in finding and securing a job, and each avenue has its positive and negative points. By being aware of the advantages and disadvantages of each route, you will be able to tailor your application effectively to increase your likelihood of success.

7.2.1. Graduate schemes

Graduate schemes are a great opportunity for those who want to get stuck in to digital marketing and benefit from a structured programme of learning and development. However, **competition can be extremely fierce**, with many roles being highly oversubscribed. The highly competitive nature of such schemes naturally means that many talented applicants will be turned down.



For this reason, make sure you **don't limit yourself by applying exclusively to such schemes**. Many employers who do not have formal schemes still provide excellent support, training, and development opportunities, and to a large extent you will be in charge of your own development in any role throughout your career.

Also remember that regardless of how prestigious a particular scheme is, **you must enjoy working there**. Have a look at what you want from a job, and make sure any graduate scheme you join aligns with who you are and what you're looking for. If the company isn't a good match, chances are this will be identified during the recruitment process, which means that your time will not have been productively used.

Recently, Econsultancy put together a list of companies based in the UK that have career development programmes specifically for graduates. **Below is a list for you to explore and the links will take you to their website**. Our helpful contributors to this guide are marked with an asterisk.

Companies offering graduate schemes

General digital	Specialist agencies	PR	Other digital media
<u>Mindshare*</u>	<u>Crafted Media*</u>	<u>Diffusion PR</u>	<u>Incisive media</u>
<u>DAS (Omnicom)</u>	<u>Epiphany*</u>	<u>Chime Communications</u>	
<u>McCann London</u>	<u>Essence*</u>	<u>Edelman</u>	
<u>Leo Burnett</u>	<u>Propellernet*</u>	<u>Fast Track</u>	
<u>Publicis London</u>	<u>Search Laboratory*</u>	<u>Speed Communications</u>	
<u>BBC Media</u>	<u>iCrossing</u>	<u>Lexis PR</u>	
<u>Vizeum</u>	<u>4Ps</u>	<u>Hill & Knowlton</u>	
<u>Ogilvy</u>	<u>Quirk</u>	<u>Four Communications</u>	
<u>AMV DDBO</u>		<u>Fishburn Hedges</u>	
<u>M&C Saatchi</u>			
<u>JWT</u>			

Practical tips

- **Read all the information available** – companies running graduate schemes often offer a huge amount of information on the application process on their website. Read all of it as it is designed to help you, and companies will expect you to have incorporated their advice into your application.
- **Highlight key dates in your calendar** – many graduate schemes only run once a year. Make sure you plan your application in good time, and do not put in your application at the last minute, as many websites will crash under the load.
- **Make every effort to attend events** – this shows a level of commitment, and will provide you with further information on how to make a successful application.



7.2.2. Direct to companies

When assessing what you want from a job, you may have created a list of companies that match what you are looking for. If so, these companies are perhaps one of the best places to start in looking for your job.

Companies will often advertise their vacancies through their own website before they turn to other methods. If they aren't advertising any particular roles, consider getting in touch regardless. The worst that can happen is that you will be told that there are no vacancies, whilst the best that can happen is that you will have a job created for you!

There is plenty of advice both online and offline on how to write speculative applications, but before you send anything off to a generic email address, make an effort to identify a specific person to contact.

Practical tips

Some ideas on how to apply direct to companies:

- **See if there are any roles advertised** – check out their website first to see if they are recruiting. If they are, view the requirements for the job to see if you could apply. Although the vast majority of websites have a specific page for careers or vacancies, also use search engines to see if they have previously advertised.
- **Consider a speculative application** – if no role is advertised, consider getting in touch anyway.
- **Find a direct point of contact** – for your desired job, who would be the person that could potentially hire you? Who should any application be addressed to? Look on the website, and make a call to the office to check.
- **Use your research as the basis of a successful application** – your previous (and on-going) research will provide you with a foundation of knowledge in how to best target this company. What do they do that particularly appeals to you? Who are the key people? What makes them different from the competition? You will almost definitely be expected to demonstrate this knowledge during interview, but candidates who demonstrate knowledge of the business in their application will stand out more.

7.2.3. Recruitment agencies

Recruiters can be a good way of getting access to jobs that might not be openly advertised. Recruiters look to match the candidates available with the clients looking for work. Furthermore, building relationships with recruiters can pay dividends in your future career.

A benefit of using recruiters is that you are likely to get feedback and tips on how to perform at interview, leading to a greater chance of success in landing a job. It is in the recruiter's interest to get you employed, as this is where they earn their money from. Bear in mind, that unless you demonstrate yourself as potential candidate material, recruiters will not want to work with you. Make sure you put effort into your CV before you send it off to them.

Practical tips

- **Identify the key recruiters for your industry** – the [Econsultancy Digital Marketing and E-commerce Careers Guide for Senior Digital Professionals](#) contains a list of recruiters who specialise in this area. Many also work with graduates.
- **Put effort into your application** – recruiters will only work with candidates who they think have potential. Make sure your CV is of a good standard before sending it out.
- **Act on advice** – recruiters are experienced in this field and will provide constructive advice for your application. Make use of this valuable information, as it is in their interest to help you succeed.

7.2.4. Job boards

Job sites have the convenient ability to allow you to narrow down your search to the type of job you are after and present you with many different options at once. Furthermore, there is a growth in the amount of “intelligent” jobs boards that learn your preferences to provide you with opportunities you may not have considered. But they also mean that many other people may be looking at and applying for the same jobs, which increases the potential competition.

One reason why you should consider job sites in your job hunt is that **they make excellent places to research a potential role**. Salaries are often posted, along with job descriptions, candidate requirements, and other information that will help you in identifying what kind of job would suit you best.

Practical tips

- **Use job boards as a research tool** – job boards contain valuable information on what companies are looking for, and what the conditions of the job are like.
- **Check out the [Econsultancy jobs board](#)** – many of the UK’s best digital marketing and e-commerce roles are advertised here.
- **Make use of intelligent job boards** – LinkedIn is an excellent place to start, as it will use information on your profile to suggest roles suitable for you. However there are a growing number of “intelligent” job boards that aim to learn more about you over time and improve the selection of roles offered to you. Examples include [Dylan](#) and [PathMotion](#).

7.2.5. Networking

Getting a job through knowing people is one of the most effective ways to land a job. Many jobs are not advertised. People that are introduced with a personal recommendation are likely to have higher levels of success than people who approach a prospective employer cold.

Tell people about your career intentions and see if they can help out. Friends, family, and university staff all provide good places to start.

Even if networking does not lead directly to a job, it is likely to yield valuable information about working life that might be more candid than that offered on websites and through careers events.

Practical tips

- **Ask friends and family for leads** – there is a chance someone could provide you with information to help you identify or secure a job. Make your interest clear, and ask around.
- **Look for mentoring and career advice schemes** – many careers services at university have lists of alumni who are willing to act as mentors and contacts for students and recent graduates. Check with your university careers service to see if they offer this opportunity.

7.3. Applying for and securing the job

Once you have identified the companies and jobs you wish to go for, the next step will be to apply for them. Each company and job will be different, so a key piece of advice is **make sure you tailor each application for each company**.

This does not mean every application must be 100% unique, but as companies will look for different qualities in candidates, make sure you highlight the points relevant to that company.



7.3.1. Writing an effective CV and covering letter

There is a huge amount of advice on how to write an effective CV and covering letter online. Your university careers service is a good place to get advice, and you may be able to get individual feedback on your CV here.

Digital graduate recruiters have provided their advice on CVs and covering letters:

Tips from the top – CV advice

“It is imperative candidates supply a **bespoke covering letter and CV**. The covering letter is usually the most telling part of any application – candidates should explain why they want to work for us and why their experience is relevant to the role they have applied for.”

Sasha Hanau, Marketing Executive, Search Laboratory

“After going through a lot of recruitment over the last few years I would say that going that extra mile really makes you stand out. If you can **show you’ve got a true passion for the subject and have worked to that goal** you are above a sea of templated CVs and applications.”

Ian Miller, Search Director, Crafted Media

Don’t give them a reason to reject you

The key fact to remember is that **the main purpose of a CV and covering letter is to get an interview**. This also applies for competency based application forms. Unfortunately, a sad truth is that many recruiters are not looking for great candidates at this stage; rather, they are looking to brutally reduce the number of applications they have to consider, possibly from thousands down to the few they want to interview.

You should aim for two things: first, give no reason to be part of the majority of applications that are simply discarded; second, make sure your skills and experiences are sufficient to get called to interview.

There is a mountain of advice online and available through your careers service. The important point is to make sure you take your time with your application. It is far better (and usually more successful) to make a small number of excellent applications to companies you really want to work for than sending off many more generic applications that are not specifically tailored to the company and the role.

Practical tips

Some practical advice when preparing your CV and covering letter.

- **Keep your CV and covering letter simple and easy to read** – use a standard font with a standard size (i.e. between 10-12). Use section headings to break your CV down into manageable sections. Use bold, bullets, and horizontal lines to increase the clarity and make key points stand out. The main points should be identifiable with a few seconds of scanning by a recruiter.
- **Quantify and highlight your experience** – for each role, tell the recruiter what you did and how well you did it. For example, if one of your roles was as a charity fundraiser, tell them how much you raised and how you did it (e.g. “Increased amount raised from £100 to £1,000 by promoting the event through Facebook and email marketing”). Use your covering letter to expand on a role in more detail.
- **Make sure your application has not a single error and is edited to perfection** - check ruthlessly for tiny errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Ensure complete consistency in formatting. Tiny details may result in your application being rejected, so give it to other people to proof read it.
- **If your application is online, print it off to check it** – again, make sure everything is correct.
- **If asked to email your CV and covering letter, make it a standard format** – the best format to use is Microsoft Word 97-2003 (.doc extension). This is the most commonly used format and provides the best chance that the recruiter will be able to read it correctly. Do this unless otherwise specified.

7.3.2. Preparing for interview

If you have been invited to an interview, the first thing to remember is congratulations! For many vacancies, you will be already in the top percentage of applications welcomed to meet the company face to face.

Interviews are by their nature meant to be difficult. However, **the more prepared you are for interview, the more likely that you are to succeed.** If you are not offered a job, do not worry. Attending an interview is a valuable learning experience in itself, and many people have to attend many interviews in finding work. If you are unsuccessful, feel free to follow up and ask for feedback, and also let the company know that you would be available for other positions.

Below is the advice given by some recruiters in the digital marketing and e-commerce sector on how you can best prepare for your interview.

Tips from the top – Interview advice

“At interview we have to assess (as well as looking at relevant skills and experience) whether the candidate would **fit into the culture in the office.** We consider if the candidate would fit in with the team and we have to ask ourselves - would we feel comfortable on a long journey with this person for example? Showing personality at interview is just as important as having the relevant skills or experience.”

Sasha Hanau, Marketing Executive, Search Laboratory

“**When it comes to the interview, preparation is key.** My first question, before anything else, is always ‘What do you know about our company?’ and it’s one of the most telling. More often than not I hear “Just what’s on your website”, which I despair at. If you’re inquisitive and actually into digital you can so easily check our Facebook for photos of a social event, our Twitter for office goings on, see where we’ve been speaking or attending with a Google search or two. **If someone shows me they’ve put that little bit of extra effort in to find out more, I feel it tells me a lot about their personality against those that stop at the first hurdle.** It’s incredibly competitive out there so please do your homework on the companies you’re applying to!”

Ian Miller, Search Director, Crafted Media

Careers services also provide excellent guidance of how to prepare for an interview. Look at their calendar to see if any workshops are available that you can use for advice and support.

Practical tips

- **Consider the logistics** – get the basics taken care of to reduce stress on the day. Identify the time and location of the interview. Know how you are going to get there on the day, and take measures in case of delays (for example, have enough money and time to take a taxi if the train is delayed). Have your clothes cleaned and pressed before interview, ideally a few days before. Take a spare pair of tights/stockings if required. Switch your mobile phone off. Prepare in advance what you are going to bring with you, by printing off your CV and covering letter along with relevant correspondence. Take an umbrella. Get a good night’s sleep and arrive early near the site of the interview; ideally, find a coffee shop you can relax in so you can arrive early and calmly walk to interview instead of rushing from your car or public transport. **By having the basics taken care of, you can focus your mind exclusively on the interview itself.**
- **Research and prepare** – refer to your original research. What are the key facts about the company? Who’s who? What skills and experience have you highlighted in your application? What are the latest happenings in the industry? The more you can find out about the company in preparation, the greater your chance of success in the interview.
- **Anticipate questions** – write down a list of questions and topics that are likely to come up. Prepare answers for them so you are prepared. Remember, you are highly unlikely to guess every question that they will ask, but the more preparation you do, the better.
- **Mentally prepare** - try to relax before the interview, and have an early night beforehand.
- **Make a good impression and be yourself** – make sure you are attired smartly and present yourself well. Don’t try to adopt a persona or be someone different. Prepare well, so you can relax as much as you can.

8. Managing your career

Once you have secured your first job, be it within digital marketing, e-commerce or elsewhere, it is now expected that individuals are responsible for a large part of their own career management. Even if you are on a structured graduate scheme, the likelihood is that no one will be keeping records of your best work, or thinking of your progression after the scheme.

Career management will remain your responsibility throughout your working life, so the earlier you make efforts the sooner you will start to reap benefits.

8.1. Keep a record of your achievements

With today's uncertain economic climate, job security is something that few people can completely rely on. For this reason, along with the fact that people today change jobs more often than previously, it is important to have a record of your skills, experience, and achievements that you can draw on.

This is not only important for looking for jobs outside of your current employer. For internal moves, annual reviews, and justifying opportunities for promotion, it is important that you can refer to what you have achieved in your job.

To support any case you make, whether it is on an internal application or review form, or for a move to a new company, you will need evidence to strengthen your case. Some examples of data you should think about collecting on an ongoing basis are below:

Quantitative data

- Website traffic figures – has your work led to a boost in the number of visitors? If so, by how much?
- Conversion rates and sales figures – has your work led to increased sales? Are more people completing transactions online? Record how well you did.
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) – what KPIs were you responsible for managing, and how did you achieve and exceed your targets?

Qualitative data

- Positive online reviews – did anyone review your work done online? Did they write a blog article, tweet, or comment on Facebook about how great the website you worked on was? RSS feeds and Google Alerts can help you keep track of the good things people are saying online. Collect and keep such records, and don't forget to thank the authors!
- Customer satisfaction reports – did your work lead to positive reports from customers? Did the number of complaints go down?
- Letters of thanks – did you ever get praised for a job well done? Keep a record of this, perhaps by creating an email folder or a tag.
- Annual review forms – have you been praised by your line manager?

One approach recommended by management consultants and award-winning podcasters Mark Horstman and Michael Auzenne is that of [systematic career documentation](#). Horstman and Auzenne recommend reviewing achievements every quarter, and adding them to a single Career Management Document. This Career Management Document can then be used to quickly and effectively construct CVs as required.

8.2. Create a career development plan

At some stage, you will be looking to advance to the next level of your career. For this next step it is highly likely that you will be required to improve your skills, take on more responsibility, and provide examples of where you have demonstrated an ability to get things done.

In order for your progression to be effective and rapid, it is useful to create a career development plan so that you can identify goals and milestones to get you to where you want to be.

8.2.1. Identify what roles you might like to do in the future

Even if you are not sure exactly what you want to do in the future, it is a good idea to have a look around. What is the job title of your line manager? What job titles are used at companies you might want to work for?

These roles will act as milestones which you can aim towards. More importantly, these roles will often have job descriptions available online, so you will be able to find out what is typically required for a person in that position.

Practical tips

- **Look within your own company** – what person has a role that you would aspire to? What is their job title?
- **Look at competitors or at other companies** – have a look through the corporate websites of competitors or companies that you might consider working for. What job roles appeal to you there? What is the job title?
- **Use job boards for recommendations** – job boards provide an excellent source of information on what jobs are available out there. In addition, the “intelligent” job board services which can learn your preferences can suggest jobs which are relevant to you. LinkedIn also offers information on jobs, based on your inputted data, which can help you to identify roles which you may be interested in in the future.

8.2.2. Look at the requirements for those roles

Once you have identified roles that you would like to aim towards, you should now start to research the requirements for each role.

This is often quite simple. **Doing a search for the role title online can often pay dividends.** If you have identified the roles from job sites, then the requirements would have been listed with the job listing. Furthermore, if you find anyone employed in a role which you would like to aspire to, have a look online for their LinkedIn profile or see if they have a corporate biography online.

Once you have a collection of requirements, look for similarities. Which requirements are consistently sought after in the roles you have identified? What level of responsibility needs to be demonstrated?

The requirements that are most frequently mentioned should be the ones that you use as the basis for your career development plan.

8.2.3. Assess your current position

As you progress through your career and constantly keep updating an appropriate career management document (as recommended on page 28), you will have a better idea of what your skill and experience level is.



In the meantime, audit your own skills. If you had to create a CV for a job opening tomorrow, what would be listed on it? What skills and experience do you have? Where do you know you are lacking?

Identify what you have now so you can work towards improving your current levels of skills and experience. Think about your 'soft' and 'hard' skills, current levels of proven experience, and where you have demonstrated results.

8.2.4. Create a plan for gaining the skills and experience required

Your plan will be based on getting from where you are now in your levels of skill and experience, to where you need to be to get to the next level of your career. **By knowing the start and end points, you will be able to plot your path accurately.**

Your plan should result in you being closer to the levels of experience required for the role you aspire to.

Practical tips

An often used mnemonic when it comes to creating plans for achieving goals is SMART. SMART goals are based on the following criteria and should be:

- **Specific** – make sure your goal is specific. Give it boundaries to tightly define it. For example, “Improve my web analytics experience” would become “Get experience of using Google Analytics to provide insight for 10 client companies.”
- **Measurable** – without having a measurable goal, you will not know when you have achieved it. Set figures, timelines, and quantifiable data around your goal so you can see how close you are. For example, “Improve conversion rates” would become “Improve conversion rates at checkout by 10%”.
- **Attainable** – the best goals are those that you can actually achieve. Whilst much has been said regarding “[Big Hairy Audacious Goals \(BHAGs\)](#)”, these provide vision rather than actual milestones. Attainable goals mark out a finishing line.
- **Relevant** – does this goal mean anything for your career? Will it actually help you?
- **Timed** – give a deadline for achieving your goal. This will focus your attention on getting things done.

8.2.5. If required, get support for your plan

Chances are that it would be very difficult to achieve you career goals on your own. Getting experience requires being given responsibility over various projects and tasks, and whilst you can start your own, it is likely you will have to take projects on with the backing and support of your line manager.

Arrange a meeting with your line manager to discuss your goals and objectives. How can your career goals align with the objectives of the company? Where will you be able to take on further responsibility? What training can you undertake? What qualifications can you aim towards?

At this point, it would also be worthwhile **finding a mentor** to help you with your plans. Whilst your mentor may be your line manager, having somebody independent can help you gain a different perspective. You may also be able to discuss opportunities that you wouldn't discuss with your line manager (such as working for another company).

There are other sources of advice as well. Professional bodies and membership organisations such as Econsultancy offer training, support and advice and can help you in achieving your goals. **Econsultancy trained over 4,000 digital marketing and e-commerce specialists in 2011**, and now offer a wide selection of courses, events, and qualifications. [Contact us today](#) to find out more.



Econsultancy's Digital Marketing and E-commerce Training

In digital marketing, what you don't know can seriously hold you back. Econsultancy is without doubt the premier learning and development resource for digital marketing and e-commerce people like you. In 2011, we delivered training to over 4,000 professionals across the UK, Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Asia.

If you're keen to develop your career, you're in the right place. Choose from:

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Globally, we run over 100 events a year. Much as we all love the internet, we feel it is important to meet with our peers to learn, share best practice, network, do business and, yes, sometimes to celebrate.

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