

Accelerate > Your Career

Find a big opportunity in a small business

Small or Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) are organisations that employ fewer than 250 people with an annual turnover of less than £39m. SMEs are the engine of the UK economy, and an essential source of entrepreneurial skills and innovation. SMEs are also an important growth area for graduate recruitment, contributing 47% to private sector employment.

New and upcoming businesses tend to be SMEs and they span almost all industries. The sectors traditionally taking advantage of graduate employment are the financial, manufacturing, media and IT sectors, although with the right approach, you can find opportunities in many industries.

WHY WORK FOR A SMALLER BUSINESS?

- Your input is valued - as part of a smaller business, your contribution is important and will be recognised.
- Lots of variety - you'll be exposed to the day-to-day running of the business, allowing you to gain experience in lots of business functions.
- Contact with senior leaders - you can build a good relationship with senior colleagues and establish a good reputation for yourself as a member of the team.
- Quick progression - for those who show their potential.

SOME MISCONCEPTIONS

- Lack of formal training - some SMEs may recruit only a small number of graduates each year and may not have the structures in place to offer formal training. This does not mean you cannot progress though you will need to be proactive in your attitude to personal development.
- Stability - Roles in SMEs are typically viewed as less secure than their large corporation counterparts. That said, the opportunities to gain experience and skills in an SME mean that often the rewards outweigh the challenges.

“CP+R is a rapidly expanding company and I think there are some fantastic opportunities for progression and development. My ambition for the moment is to help CP+R grow and reach its true potential.”

- Matthew Thompson, Clinical Exercise Specialist at CP+R.
(2014 Loughborough University graduate)

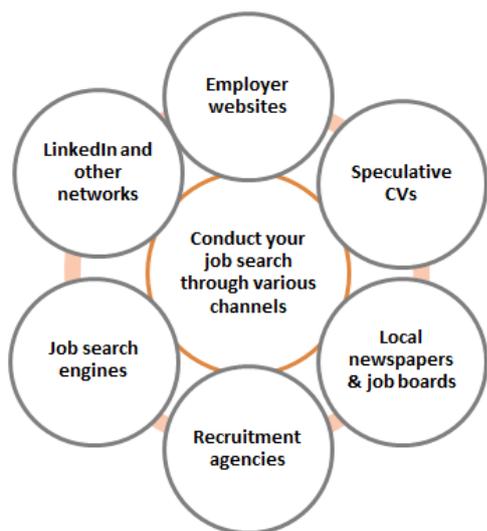


SMEs are operating within much tighter budget constraints than big corporates, so try to minimise risk with recruitment and selection. They advertise 'as and when' and don't align with the graduate recruitment cycle. Don't expect a lengthy recruitment process: typically you would apply with a CV and covering letter and may be offered an interview (and job!) within a week or so.

Finding your Opportunity > Top Tips

What's the best way to find SME positions?

Unlike graduate schemes that have formalised start dates every year; positions with SMEs can come up at any time. With this in mind you're going to need to keep your finger on the pulse with a varied job search strategy. Most will advertise on the usual job boards and some will use recruiters to find their ideal candidates. However, many SMEs are increasingly advertising on their own websites and actively using their own networks and social media channels to find employees at no cost. Being active on [LinkedIn](#) is a great way to gain access to positions that may not already be advertised. Optimise your LinkedIn profile and show that you are looking for work and you never know, employers may even find you! You should also consider applying on a speculative basis with a cover letter and CV to any companies that you'd particularly like to work for.



- [Use Careers Online](#) (Loughborough University's jobs portal for students and graduates)
- Use [myAdvantage vacancy tool](#) – search by location, sector and start date.
- Check the local and national press – keep your search area as broad as possible.
- Search [UK Small Business Directory](#) – search by county, then category e.g. *Bristol > Accountants in Bristol*
- Use your networks – face to face and online (see this: [social media core medium for SME recruitment](#)).
- Check this – [Guardian Jobs: SME jobs](#).
- Keep up to date with business/industry/press – who's expanding, diversifying? Any new start-ups?

Consider [Step](#) if you're looking for a shorter placement – this could be your stepping-stone to success!

Are you near any science or business parks? Why not send some [speculative applications](#)?

Networking



LinkedIn



Be active on campus
 Direct Your Career Workshops <http://bit.ly/DYCevent>
 Employer Events <http://bit.ly/CareersOnlineLogin>

Being active on LinkedIn and capitalising on parental and friendship networks can open the doors to many job opportunities.

First impressions are important and if an SME meets you, likes you and can see that you are keen, they may even offer you a position.

Job Sites

[guardianjobs](#)



[UJ Universal Jobmatch](#)