

Building a Career in the Media Industry

Advice and resources to help you start your career in the media sector.

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1 General tips

Whether you are looking for work experience or your first job, breaking into the media industry can be tough. Many people want to work in the media, but the number of opportunities is small and positions are rarely advertised. Even at entry level the competition is fierce and employers are looking for people who demonstrate a genuine commitment to a career in the media industry. They are also looking for people with excellent communication skills, as most jobs involve working as a team. 90% of jobs in this industry are filled through word of mouth, so good people skills are essential from every point of view.

The key to success is to research and prepare thoroughly before you approach any employer for work or work experience. You will need to:

- Research the media industry and get a good understanding of the job roles you are interested in.
- Find out about possible career paths and check if you need any specific qualifications



- Be passionate about the kind of programmes you want to work on
- Demonstrate your commitment through the activities and projects you do in your spare time
- Find out as much as you can about potential local and national employers
- Target companies where there is a genuine match between their needs and the skills you can offer
- Tailor your CV to suit the companies you are interested in and think carefully about what to include in your covering letter

The resources listed below will help you find out the information you need.

2 Training

Media industry practitioners come from a wide range of educational backgrounds, but they all share a passion for the programmes they make and the jobs they do. Whatever your qualifications, you can expect to begin your career in a very junior role (for example as a runner) and work your way up in your particular discipline.

Some areas require very specific skills or qualifications even at entry level – for example, lighting electrician, art department, journalism - but many do not. If you are thinking about taking a general media production course, you should bear in mind that no course or qualification can guarantee you a successful career in the media industry. It always is a good idea to find out as much as you can about the reputation of the course you are interested in.

Skillset has launched two accredited network of colleges: Screen Academies (Centres of Excellence in Film) and Media Academies (Centres of Excellence in Television and Computer Games). It also publishes a list of accredited film courses in specific areas such as writing, animation and computer games.

The BFI's database of media and multi-media courses in the UK includes short courses, as well as courses at further education, undergraduate and postgraduate level.

From time to time Northern Film & Media runs industry specific events in the North East region. Sign up for our monthly newsletter Feedback to keep you up date with local opportunities.

3 Pre-entry work experience

The work experience and projects you do in your own time often tells an employer more about your commitment to working in the media industry than a qualification. Useful pre-entry work experience includes working on community film-making projects; working in theatre groups as an Assistant Stage Manager - useful for getting a floor runner position in film and TV drama; working for a hospital radio station; assisting a local photographer; working in an IT Department at school or college; working as an usher on studio recordings of entertainment shows or helping out with regional film festivals.

4 Events and festivals aimed at young people

The industry is keen to attract the brightest talent and provides occasional opportunities for talented young people to network with professionals in the industry. These include:

4.1 The Network previously Television and Young People (TVYP)

is the educational arm of the Media Guardian Edinburgh International Television Festival and is the UK's leading forum for young people aspiring to work in television. If you are 18-21 and are passionate about working in television, you can apply to take part in a week of masterclasses, workshops, career surgeries and social events in Edinburgh in August. (If you are selected, The Network will cover all your expenses except for your travel to and from Edinburgh). The Network also runs one-day events around the country for 16-18 year olds, to give a taste of the different jobs available in the television industry.

4.2 Cinemagic

is a festival specifically for young people aged 18-25 who want to learn more about a career in film or television. The Festival takes place in Belfast the beginning of December. It provides advice and hands-on experience in various cinematic disciplines such as presenting, directing, production, acting and scriptwriting. Masterclasses are hosted by respected professionals from the world of film and television.

4.3 Job roles in the media industry

The Skillset Careers website provides a gateway to information about job roles in different areas at entry level and above. The site also provides of hints and tips for people beginning their careers in the industry.

There are also books, industry magazines and directories that can help you in your research.

5 Getting work as a runner

Many people begin their media careers as runners. It is an entry-level position, so you don't usually need any specific training - just lots of energy, enthusiasm and a willingness to muck in and do whatever you are asked (within reason of course). The job is often a combination of waiter, cleaner, handyman and messenger. If you want to be a production runner you will usually need to be able to drive - you are likely to miss out on work opportunities if you can't.

Being a runner gives you a chance to see how the business operates, observe the different job roles firsthand and learn from experienced people in the industry. However, it is very easy to get stuck in an area that doesn't really interest you – so make sure you start off working somewhere that is relevant to your longer-term career goals.

The Skillset Careers website offers useful tips for runners plus general advice on getting into the industry.

Once you have thought about how to “sell” your skills, you can register on our online Northern Exposure crew and facilities database as a newcomer/runner.

6 Researching National Employers and Opportunities

6.1 National Employers

Skillset Careers lists useful weblinks that will help you find information about potential employers in the media.

[BBC Jobs](#) provides a comprehensive guide to opportunities at the BBC as well as information on BBC work experience placements and getting into the BBC.

[BBC New Talent](#) is about finding/inspiring new talent and runs schemes providing opportunities in all areas of broadcasting.

[ITV jobs](#) pages lists job opportunities for companies in the ITV/Granada group throughout the country, plus some advice on getting into independent television.

[Channel 4's jobs and careers website](#) includes current vacancies and an inside picture of what it's like to work at Channel 4.

[Broadcast Freelancer](#) is a subscription-based on-line database which aims to help UK freelancers and employers find jobs/talent. You have to be a subscriber to upload your won profile, but you can currently browse the job vacancies for free.

6.2 Opportunities

Shooting People is a low cost subscription-based online community of independent film-makers, providing daily bulletins about opportunities for cast and crew.

Talent Circle is a free network providing information for emerging talent (film-makers, cast and crew) in film and TV.

PACT (Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television) is the UK trade association representing independent television, feature film, animation and new media production companies.

BECTU (Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union) is the UK trade union for those working in broadcasting, film, theatre, entertainment, leisure, interactive media and allied areas.

The UK Film Council is the national body set up to foster a sustainable and vibrant film culture in the UK. The website includes information about UK Film Council funding for training and short film production.

The Radio Academy is the professional body for those working in or with an interest in radio. The website includes tips on getting in to radio.

The Radio Centre formed in July 2006 from the merger of the Radio Advertising Bureau (RAB) and the Commercial Radio Companies Association (CRCA). Its members consist of the overwhelming majority of UK Commercial Radio stations who fund the organisation.

New Media Knowledge is a business resource for individuals/companies working in the new digital media. London-based, but useful for information and reports on new developments.

6.3 Researching potential regional employers

Media production facilities & resources in the North East of England advertise their services in local and national directories. Please be aware that companies are listed in order to promote their own services and many do not have the staff to deal with enquiries about work opportunities. Research companies thoroughly and only approach those you genuinely feel you have something to offer.

You can search our on-line crew and facilities database Northern Exposure, check Yell.com under TV, Film and Video Production Services or visit Codeworks Connect, which lists digital media facilities & resources in the region.

7 Presenting your skills

Whether you are looking for work or work experience, the competition is fierce. You'll need more than the right qualification, work experience or attitude. You'll need to demonstrate how your unique combination of knowledge, skills, experience, training and personal qualities makes you more employable than the next person. Companies, broadcasters and individuals receive hundreds of CV's every week, so getting yours noticed isn't easy. You should always aim to ensure



a good “fit” between the skills and attributes you can offer and the particular needs of any employer that you target.

Our Fact Sheet – CV Toolkit will help you present your skills successfully on paper, and our Fact Sheet - [3 Steps to Work and Work Experience](#) will help you plan your job search strategy.

Skillset Careers also offer useful [hints and tips](#) on writing a CV and marketing yourself.

8 Industry Directories and Publications

8.1 Industry Magazines

The Skillset website provides a list of [useful sites and publications](#) which will keep you up-to-date with the latest developments in different areas of the media industry

8.2 Books

[Focal Press](#) books produce a range of text books targeted at professionals in the sector

The Guerilla Film Makers Handbook and Film Producers Toolkit by Chris Jones & Genevieve Jolliffe - An unorthodox guide to low budget film-making for first time film-makers in the UK. Written in a question and answer format, this is a lively, informative book, though some of the advice given is controversial.

8.3 Directories

[Kemps](#) is a free to search online production directory for the TV, film and video industries. Separate volumes for UK and international listings.

[The Knowledge](#) is a free to search online directory for the TV, film and video industries. Predominantly London-based, although now expanding to include some international listings.

[The PACT Directory of Independent Producers](#) provides an on-line guide listing UK independent producers who are PACT members. Free to search for PACT members and their staff, subscription charges apply to others. Includes company profiles plus details of credits and projects in development.

Animation UK is a UK based directory published periodically in association with [BECTU](#) It contains listings for animation and digital media industries.

The Writers' Handbook. Published annually by Macmillan. Comprehensive directory of markets (mainly UK) for creative writers.

Writers' and Artists' Yearbook. Published annually by A&C Black.

Comprehensive directory of UK markets in all areas of the media for writers, artists & photographers.

Good Luck!