



Job Sector Research Guide

Introduction

Developing an understanding of the industry or job sector that you are considering working within is a key tool at an early stage in any career planning activity. This becomes even more valuable and important when looking at career transition out of one sector and into another.

Starting with the basics, job sectors are just clusters of professions and organisations whose scope of work and core products or services are similar. There are many different categories covering job sectors including the Standard Industrial Classification or SIC codes.

Purpose

Being up-to-date on the current strategic issues and trends within your chosen industry or sector is a key part of getting yourself job ready. Ways of approaching this and strategies for finding this information are discussed in more detail below.

An interesting consideration is the extent to which 'cross sector' career experience is valued or not within any given sector. For example, cross sector experience is often considered valuable in careers, such as marketing or HR, where the opportunity to apply approaches and apply good practice learning can be seen to add value. However, in more technical or functional specialisms, such as engineering, more in-depth single sector experience is often valued.

Relevance

In many cases the first step may be getting greater understanding of the different job sectors and the potential job roles that might exist within them. There are various websites providing information and data about different job sectors including Prospect (<http://www.prospects.ac.uk/sectors.htm>), National Careers Service (<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>) and various academic institutes also offer in-depth sector analysis.

Moving on from this basic intelligence gathering, the next step is to focus in on gathering relevant and current information about the specific sector(s) you are interested in working. In some cases this may be a type of industry or in other instances a specific profession but similar approaches can be effective for both.

Three key suggested activities are:

- 1. Research and where applicable join industry associations or professional bodies relevant to your specific area of interest**

Nearly every industry or professional body will have at least one main association/representative body and their websites or external facing materials will be a source of key information about what the current challenges are for the industry, what changes might be coming down the line and what the key strategic issues are.

2. Review industry journals or magazines

Building on the information above, industry literature will provide further information on the same sorts of areas as well as offering a more personal view from those operating inside the sector. These might vary from a professional academic journal to a membership focussed trade union newsletter but all can provide useful insight and information. Although some may require subscriptions in many cases these, or at least versions of them, can be accessed for free.

3. Networking within the Sector

Networking is a specific skill in itself and the subject of a separate career transition guide [insert link] so this won't be covered in detail here. However, making some initial contacts within a job sector can help you identify key points and information. This doesn't have to mean 'cold-calling' specific individuals but could be as simple as looking for and joining sector specific groups on LinkedIn, attending free 'coffee mornings' put on by sector suppliers/organisations, or just following up on existing contacts.

Making Best Use of The Information

Having undertaken some key research the following section has been included to help you in making the most around the information you might have gathered. It is suggested that you work through the following questions and record your thoughts as part of your preparation for applying for roles within the specific job sector. Areas where you are unable to come up with an answer can indicate that further research is necessary.

Current and Future Strategic Trends

1. What are the THREE key strategic trends that are likely to impact on the organisations working within your specific job sector in the:
 - short term (next year),
 - medium term (2-3 years)
 - long term (4+ years).

Another approach that can be useful in informing this analysis is to think about these trends in the context of a PEST analysis (Political, Economic, Social and Technological). This can also be extended to include Environmental and Legal factors (or PESTEL).

2. What are THREE potential key developments or changes that are likely to occur within your specific job sector as a result of these strategic trends?
3. What knowledge, skills, and experience can you bring to an organisation in this sector which might be beneficial during these changes?

Review of key points

- Understand the sector you are applying into – ‘what is valued in one area doesn’t necessarily work everywhere’?
- Build up sources of information to be able to describe the key strategic trends.
- Develop a network to support your activity.

Next Steps

Having researched the different job sectors that you are considering, our next guide on Job Searching will take you through some useful tools and techniques in helping to find the right role.