

# How to Get a Job With an Ad Agency

Securing a job in an ad agency is difficult but rewarding. The job market is tight and the people evaluating you are by their nature masters of the art of selling. Look at your application as your first pitch; sell the company on why you...

## Building a Resume



**Get a relevant undergraduate degree.** Advertising agencies hire people with a variety of majors, but your chances are better if you are applying with a degree that directly pertains to the job. Depending upon what sector of advertising you want to be employed in, that could be anything art, writing, business, or even sociology.

1. Consider majoring in advertising, journalism, or communications. Seek out classes in marketing, sales, communications, art history, and photography.<sup>[1]</sup>
2. Backgrounds in sociology or anthropology can also be useful for those interested in jobs as strategists.
3. 'Creatives,' who design ad campaigns, should have backgrounds in either literary or visual arts. This could translate to a major in design, creative writing, art, or art history.

2.



**Get certified.** Certifications are private programs that provide short courses on specialized subjects. Most advertising professionals do not have certifications. However, if you are struggling, a management training program or certification in advertising and social media can give you a leg up when applying.<sup>[2]</sup>

3.



**Intern.** Internships rarely pay. The hardship of working for free, however, will often be worth it. Successful interns generally get hired at the end of their internship and even if they do not, they have more experience to put on their resume. Doing an internship while in college, perhaps over the summer, will demonstrate dedication and ultimately be less burdensome than taking time off from working after graduation.

4.



**Freelance.** Many businesses now hire their own in-house advertisers, particularly for social media and online campaigns.<sup>[3]</sup> Contact business that seem to need help with their website or social media presence and offer them a vision of what you could contribute to their marketing program. This can be a good opportunity to expand your portfolio and resume.

5.



**Start at the bottom of the corporate ladder.** To sound competent you should always come to an employer with a vision of the job that you are best fitted for. You should also, however, be prepared to start in a more basic position. People often work their way up the ladder after demonstrating their abilities in more basic tasks.

## Understanding the Industry

1.



**Read.** Ultimately success in advertising means understanding the culture of the industry and all the components important to making it work. There are a few standard books that are useful reads:

1. John Steel's Truth & Advertising
2. Leslie Butterfield's Excellence in Advertising
3. Luke Sullivan's Hey Whipple, Squeeze This!

2.



**Find your job.** Employers typically do not hire people who just want a job in advertising. You should demonstrate an interest in a specific type of position and be able to explain why you are the person for that particularly type of job. To do that, you first need to understand what type of career trajectories exist in marketing.<sup>[4]</sup>

1. Account managers build and maintain a relationship with the client. They are responsible for acting as the intermediary between the ad agency and businesses that need advertisers.
2. Creatives design advertising campaigns. They are divided up between art teams and copywriters, the latter of which write the ads. Now there are also teams that focus on digital design. Many creatives do some work in all of these areas.

3. Account planners are responsible for doing statistical research to design the overall advertising strategy for clients.<sup>[5]</sup>
4. The media department is responsible for determining the best places to purchase advertising space and ultimately buying the ad spots.<sup>[6]</sup>



**Research your prospective employers.** When you can tell your interviewer about her own company, it demonstrates that you are capable and committed to the job. Research the job online and contact the company's recruiters, who should be happy to tell you about what the business is doing. Try to explain why you would be a good fit to work on campaigns for some of the companies' clients.

## Applying for the Job



**Maintain your advertising portfolio.** If you are a creative, you should build a book that includes some of your best art work or writing.<sup>[7]</sup> To demonstrate your versatility, include work from an array of

campaigns. Be prepared to explain in the interview why the advertising strategy was the best fit for the client.

1. If you don't have any experience, it is acceptable to write mock advertisements for prospective clients.
2. It can also be useful to maintain a website with your work to make it as accessible as possible. You can include a link to the website in your applications or use social media to help promote it and familiarize prospective clients your skills and accomplishments.<sup>[8]</sup>
3. Update your portfolio regularly to include new work.



**Network.** It is important to meet as many people in the business as possible. Even if they are not hiring now, they might remember you when they are. You should go to events to meet people in person, but you should also develop a social media presence to promote your work.

1. Attend seminars. Afterward, email speakers about their presentations and ask if you can meet them for coffee.<sup>[9]</sup>
2. See if your town has a local advertising club. If so, attend meetings and get to know people.
3. Create a blog and twitter account to advertise your work. Join professional social networks, like LinkedIn and Mediabuzz.<sup>[10]</sup>

3.



**Pitch yourself in the cover letter.** The cover letter should be relatively short, only about two paragraphs. You shouldn't include all of your experience—that is in your resume. Instead, take the opportunity to explain why your experience is particularly useful for this job.<sup>[11]</sup>

1. Each cover letter you write should be unique, because they should all be designed to explain why you are a good fit for that particularly job.<sup>[12]</sup>
2. Be extra careful to eliminate all typos and grammatical errors in the application. In sectors where writing ability is key, one or two mistakes can instantly disqualify you.

4.



**Write a resume of your accomplishments.** Your resume should emphasize specific accomplishments, using as many precise numbers as possible. Arrange it so that it is not too cluttered and someone scanning it will be able to pick up relevant information quickly.<sup>[13]</sup>

1. To make your resume readable, try to keep it to about two pages.<sup>[14]</sup>
2. Use active verbs to emphasize accomplishments rather than job duties.
3. Good examples, include: 'Wrote advertising campaign for local restaurant that increased sales by 10%' or 'Solicited clients, bringing in over a million dollars of new contracts in one year.'

5.



**Stay cool during the interview.** In the interview you want to be able to explain your accomplishments without exaggerating them. You also want to look comfortable and friendly. Remember, the interview is looking for someone who can do good work, but someone who they will enjoy working with. Make your enthusiasm for the job obvious.

6.



**Be persistent.** Companies respect people who keep on trying. Every interview, even a failed one, creates new connections and expands your experience. Remember, the odds are against you but every interview is one step closer to success.<sup>[15]</sup>

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