



THE ULTIMATE STUDENT GUIDE

The secret to employment success within the digital sector



SOLUTION PARTNER

How to become an eagerly sought-after digital so-and-so

Introduction

With the boom of smart phones, tablets and countless other devices, the digital sector is bigger than ever and one of the fastest-growing industries out there. The Internet is now a staple part of our day-to-day lives and it's an area that is constantly evolving with the introduction of new devices and platforms. The digital industry is fast, diverse and exciting and something anyone could potentially get in to. Whether you're studying Maths, Engineering, Business, Design or IT – all of these skills can be translated in to those of a Developer, Designer or Online Marketer.

So, you've decided you want to be part of the digital sector...what's next? As digital experts we know a thing or two about the industry so we've compiled this smashing little booklet outlining the key areas to focus on along with handy hints and tips.



What are the main qualities agencies look for?

There are many attributes which agencies look for in students aside from qualifications.

- 1. Someone who is **proactive**.** It's not all about grades and qualifications; it's about people who have done things, show a thirst for knowledge and make things happen!
- 2. Ambition.** Everyone at Space 48 is motivated and striving for excellence in their respective fields. Whether it's through training, out of work projects or just a head full of brilliant ideas – we love all that.
- 3. A team player.** Ok, we know it's a cliché but it's something that really matters to us. We are a small, close-knit team who get on great and actually care about each other. We make sure that anyone coming into the company has the right attitude and personality to fit in and become a valued part of the Space 48 family. We know if we get these fundamentals right, the rest will fall in to place and the results we produce will be awesome. It's simple but it works.
- 4. We love someone who shows **passion**.** You'll be obsessive about everything digital; about coding, websites, design, marketing – whatever your chosen field is. Someone who loves what they do is dedicated and keen to learn new things, which makes for a very attractive employee.



How can I make myself more employable?

Remember, things don't happen overnight. Similarly, you don't become immediately employable the minute you gain a degree. There are several ways you can help to improve your chances.

1. Practice, practice and drink lots of tea. Someone who has spent years honing their craft, teaching themselves, reading, doing, trying things out, making mistakes, solving them; all of this will eventually lead to success.

2. Create a website. A website is a great showcase of what someone can do. If you're a Developer, it's a great to see what HTML/Java/PHP skills you have. If you're a Designer, it's an ideal way to showcase your knowledge of fonts, colours and layout. Your website is your opportunity to shine and show off what you can do. If you're serious about getting in to the digital industry, you will have a good web presence.

3. Create your own projects or redo existing ones. You may see a website that you'd love to get your hands on, one you know you could do better. Creating your own projects shows resourcefulness and creativity so don't be afraid to experiment or break the rules.

4. Make the things outside of work or college count. It's not all about getting top class grades, it's equally about the events or clubs you're part of in your spare time. Working together in a team or organising an event show that you are proactive and a team player.

5. Get some funky spectacles*



6. Research who you'd like to work for and read up on what they've been doing. If you're on Twitter- follow your champions! A bit of banter on Twitter could potentially get you noticed and shows that you are interested in that company.

DO: make it relevant. **DON'T:** go off on a tangent talking about your pet lizard.

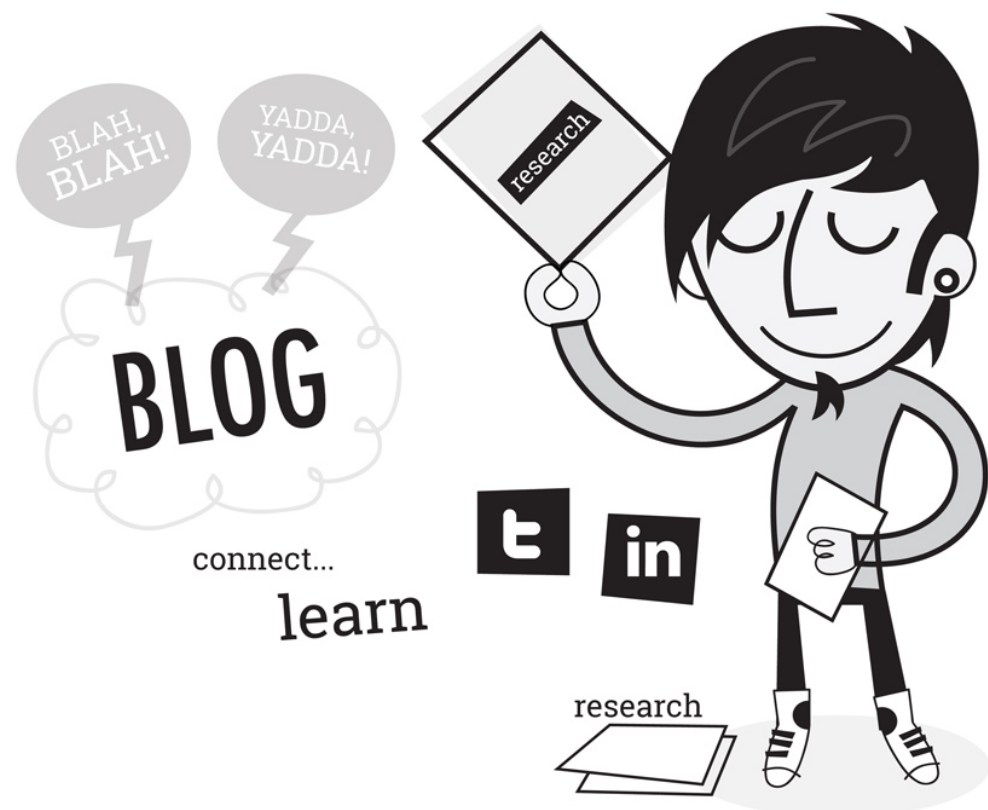
7. Do your homework. Someone who's done their homework prior to an interview shows initiative and will earn you brownie points. We are always impressed when a potential employee knows about our history or the projects we've been working on.

8. Connect with companies on LinkedIn or start blogging. This will help raise your online profile and get your name in front of potential employers.

9. Get an internship/placement at an agency. This will not only get your foot in the door, but will also provide you with invaluable skills and insights you won't find anywhere else.

10. Learn a new skill. This might be something specific to your job role that you haven't covered at college/uni. A good example of this is Magento. We are an Ecommerce agency who specialise in the Magento platform, therefore we look for students who at least have a knowledge and understanding of it. Even better if you've dabbled in it or created modules! The digital industry is constantly evolving so keeping up with the latest standards and trends is key. Online training videos are a great way of learning a new skill.

**Funky spectacles optional*



How to approach a company

Most students tend to want jobs or placements with the big companies. While this may look impressive on CVs or in conversation, the reality is you get very little hands-on experience. Employees are too busy to spend time with you and the chances of mixing with the key decision makers are slim. We've all heard the cliché stories of students/graduates being tasked with making brews all day long. While this may be a bit of an exaggeration in some cases, it's not uncommon for students to be lumbered with mundane jobs for lengthy periods of time at the larger companies.

In contrast, gaining work experience for a smaller, independent company can have huge benefits. You will get to be more hands-on, potentially working on real-life projects right away. Employees are able to dedicate time to training you up or allowing you to sit with them. In small offices, the Managing Director is likely to be within the same room as you meaning you get to connect with them on a more personal level.

How to go about it?

There are many ways in which to approach companies. Students shouldn't feel intimidated by this process. Agencies are always excited to talk to graduates as they are fresh, willing to learn and full of ideas. The industry hasn't shaped them yet and this can be a breath of fresh air, bringing something new to the table.

Email companies, Tweet them, phone them or even arrange a face-to-face meeting. Don't be disheartened if you don't hear back. Chances are they get oodles of emails a day and haven't had chance to read through them yet. Being creative or thinking outside the box will catch their eye so use your imagination to create eye-catching solutions. Be persistent.

Find out where the latest student fairs are taking place. This is a fantastic way of meeting companies face-to-face, personally handing your CV to them and chatting to them. Those 5 minutes could make a huge difference, plus businesses like to see students who are proactive. See our story of Joanna, our last graduate recruit.

When contacting companies:

Find out whether they offer placements or have any jobs available. These are typically found on their websites. If their website doesn't show anything, find out the best person to contact and send an email with a copy of your CV, link to your portfolio and a covering letter.

Mention work that they've produced that you admire. This shows initiative and that you've researched the company.

Demonstrate that you're passionate about digital and are willing to learn.

How to create a winning CV and cover letter

1. Be objective. Use bullet points where you can and get straight to the point. Being as objective as possible will appeal to the personality traits of a decision maker so avoid making it too subjective.

2. Highlight your work experience and extra-curricular activities. Decision makers are more likely to be interested in how much experience you have and what you've done outside of work rather than your qualifications. Anything that involves responsibility, teamwork or being pro-active will go down a treat.

3. Keep it short and sweet. Don't waffle. 1-2 pages is more than adequate for a CV.

4. Make it readable. A sans-serif font in size 11-12 is best. Myriad, Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma or Verdana are winning choices. Comic Sans would be a sin.

5. Get creative. To stand out, you need to create a memorable CV. Think outside the box. You don't have to be a designer to show creativity, you just need a sense of ingenuity!

6. Don't send out the same CV to all potential employers. Make it unique and tailor it to the specific company or job role. Employers will pick up on this attention to detail.

7. Check your spelling. Ok, that last word was a joke but to reiterate; there's nothing worse than receiving a CV that's laden with spelling mistakes or poor grammar.

8. Include a photo. If you've approached your potential employer at a student fair, the chances are they will have received vast numbers of CVs on the day and yours will be one of many. Including a photo not only reminds them who you are but also makes you stand out.

9. Back up statements with figures. If you helped to improve the number of page views or traffic to a site, say how much it increased by. Businesses love to see numbers and figures.

10. Don't lie. Don't make stuff up to look good, it will only come back to bite you on your bottom. Ouch.

11. Make it clear that you can start a position right away. Most graduates are able to start work immediately which is a huge advantage for companies. Make sure you include this in your CV. Similarly, if you're willing to relocate for a job – state this too.

12. Show your ambitions and plans for the future. Keep this bit brief and realistic. Say how you think you're suited to the position and where you intend to be in 5 years time.

A Graduate's story to success: Joanna Roberts

Joanna recently joined Space 48 after graduating from university in July. She attended a student fair organised by Manchester Digital in February at Manchester Town Hall at which we were exhibiting. Joanna impressed us that much she was offered a Marketing role with us a few weeks later. Here's her story to employment success and how she did it.

Q: Congrats on the new job Joanna! How's it going so far?

A: Thank you, I'm loving it so far! I thought I'd find the transition between uni and full-time work really difficult, but in reality it's been quite easy.

Q: How did you find out about the student fair?

A: I joined Manchester Digital as a student member in 2012 and received a couple of emails promoting MD Talent Day. I also saw a lot of people talking about it on Twitter, so I decided to go along and see what all the fuss was about.

Q: Is the job better/worse than you imagined?

A: I thought I'd enjoy this role and so far it has definitely lived up to my expectations. Gaining a lot of hands-on experience from the start was important to me, and this role has definitely given me that! Within the next few months I can expect to take ownership of a couple of accounts, which is an opportunity that probably wouldn't have arisen so soon with a larger agency.

Q: What's been the biggest surprise so far?

A: Although I really wanted to progress quickly, I was expecting my first couple of months to be quiet whilst I spent time adjusting to the role. I'm happy to say this wasn't the case at all, and I've been pleasantly surprised with how busy I've been since day one!

Q: What's the best thing about the job?

A: This is essentially my 'perfect job', so that's the best thing about it! I knew I wanted to find a digital marketing role after graduating, but I also wanted to find a job that offered variety. As a newcomer to the industry, the opportunity to gain a good foundation of experience in all aspects of digital marketing was really important to me. Since I joined Space 48 I've been introduced to SEO, PPC, content writing and social media, and I've still got a lot more to learn!

Q: What's the worst thing about the job?

A: So far, I haven't really come across any 'negatives'. After spending the last three years in a student bubble, the early mornings are taking some getting used to but it's worth it!

Q: Is it how you imagined agency life to be?

A: I'd taken part in a few work placements before joining Space 48, so I already had a good understanding of agency life. I love the relaxed, friendly atmosphere found in most agencies, and the Space 48 team have all been so helpful and welcoming which is a bonus!

Q: What did you find most daunting about the whole process?

A: Approaching Space 48 at MD Talent Day was nerve-wracking, whilst being invited for an interview was even more daunting (then again, if you don't feel scared before an interview you have to question how much you really want the job)! Luckily, I was interviewed by Jon and Ollie who were really friendly which made the whole process feel much less intimidating!

Q: If you could give one bit of advice to graduates, what would it be?

A: Perseverance and personality are both hugely important for graduates today. I emailed over 100 companies about work experience opportunities, and ended up being offered three placements. I felt like giving up after the first few rejections, but your efforts will pay off. It's also important to have a memorable personality. With huge numbers of graduates applying for each job, you need to make yourself stand out somehow. This can take many forms, such as a unique style of writing or a beautifully designed CV. Anything that makes you stand out amidst a sea of standard cover letters is worth doing.

Q: Finally, where do you see yourself in 5 years time?

A: I love travelling and I'm hoping to pursue opportunities abroad within the next few years, but who knows? This industry is changing rapidly, so I'd rather not have plans set in stone. Flexibility will be really important to me during the early stages of my career, so I honestly couldn't tell you where I hope to be in 5 years!

Thanks Joanna, best of luck in your new role!

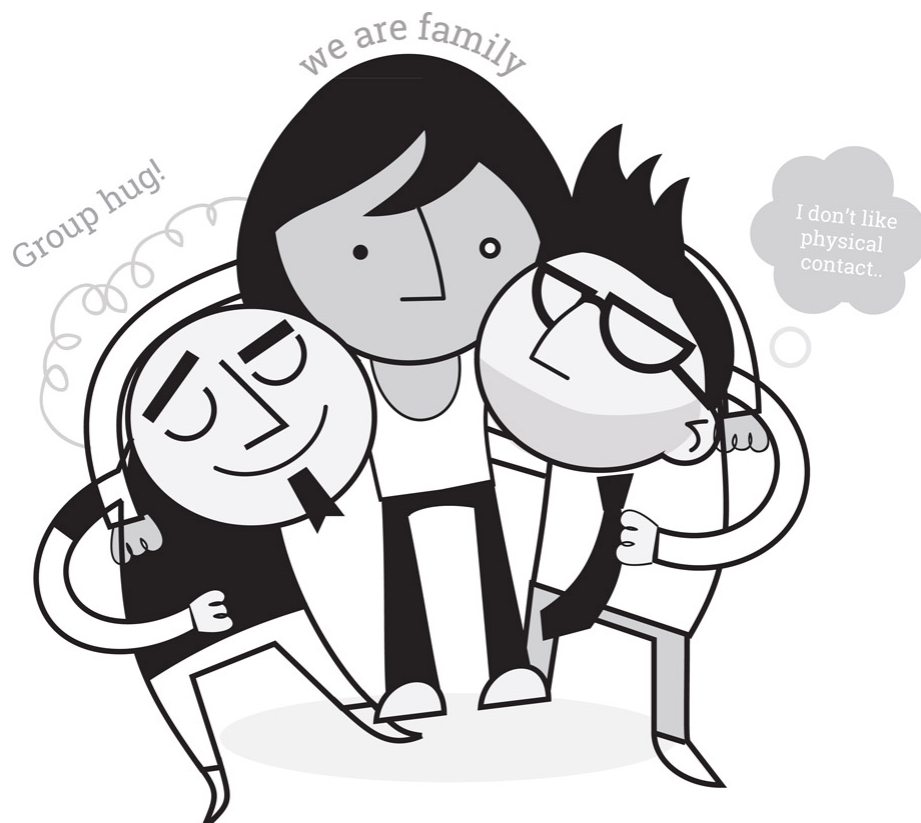
Agency life and what to expect

Making the transition from uni to working life can sometimes be a bit of a culture shock. No more 2pm lie-ins or all-night parties. At least not until the weekend anyway. Agency life is also somewhat different to a typical 9-5 job, so what can you expect?

Work hard, play hard. With tight deadlines to work to and big projects on the go, there will be days when your eyes won't leave the screen and your fingers become nothing but a blur. These are the days that can really determine the success of a project. On the same note, agencies like to play hard too. Expect lots of fun events, networking events and social shenanigans in equal measures.

Be prepared to work extra. Projects have deadlines; sometimes things overrun and require you to work late from time to time. There will also be events you might have to attend such as expos or conferences which require early starts and late finishes. Be flexible to this possibility

Your work mates become family. Working in a small office 7 hours a day, 5 days a week means you get to know your colleagues very well (good or bad) You are continually collaborating with them and solving problems together so it is inevitable that you become like family. During stressful times you will pull together and show true team spirit. At Space 48 we make it our priority to employ only people who we feel best fit the Space 48 family. If we disrupt this winning formula, we know it'll have an affect on the smooth running of the business.



Work in a fun, relaxed environment. Agencies, on the whole, are fun places to work. Generally, you get to wear what you want and listen to music while you work. Most agencies have the belief that if you work in a fun, relaxed environment then you are more productive. There is usually a light-hearted vibe with banter flying from all angles.

Clients will test your patience. Depending on your role within the company, you may or may not deal directly with the client. Either way, you can be sure that they will test your patience at some point. Not all clients are the same; some will be a dream to work with giving you creative freedom and the budget to explore solutions, others will throw a spanner in the works at every opportunity. Some will be pleasant and patient, others will be abrupt and want things done yesterday. Knowing how to deal with all of these clients come with time and experience. Learn from those who have been in the agency the longest as they will have the best grasp on how to deal with certain clients.

Tensions will sometimes run high. When there are deadlines to meet, conflicts will arise and opinions will clash. Clients often put pressure on the team or on certain members which can have a knock-on effect. Be prepared for these sort of occurrences but at the same time, know that they are usually resolved as quickly as they have begun. It will be water off a duck's back in no time :-)

Work with inspiring people. Agencies are full of digital-savvy types who live and breathe technology. Being around people who are equally as geeky and passionate as you can be hugely inspiring and mean that together, you produce some very exciting results.



Job roles within the digital industry

There are many jobs in the digital sector, each requiring different skill sets, qualifications or personal attributes. Below are some of the key jobs in the industry and what skills are needed for each.

Developer (Front/Back End, Web/App)

What it involves:

Building/testing websites, creating apps/modules, fixing bugs, helping to make sites run more efficiently, site maintenance, building tools, create scripts, integration of systems, elements of design and layout. Being a developer involves a lot of problem solving to bring sites up to speed, developing solutions, working alongside designers and marketing experts. You will also need to translate solutions and ideas to clients.

Software/languages/programmes used:

HTML, XHTML, MySQL, JavaScript, PHP, CSS and JQuery. API's, developer platforms, WordPress (CMS), authoring for mobile devices/responsive design, GIT Tower, Vagrant, Netbeans, Linux, Sublime (text editor), SourceTree, Firebug, Photoshop, AdWords. You may also use vector-based software such as Illustrator.

Attributes/skills/qualifications:

Sound knowledge of the latest technologies, standards and trends. Ability to translate problems and solutions to other team members or clients. Good at solving problems, ability to think logically and analytically. Someone who is disciplined, driven and passionate about coding. Fast-thinking, open to changes, ability to adapt, good Maths skills. Ideally, a qualification in Programming, Web Design, Multimedia or Maths are a good grounding for becoming a Dev.

Project/Account managers

What it involves:

Managing multiple client accounts, developing project plans and client strategies, managing teams, schedules, budgets and project risks. You will be involved heavily with clients, attending meetings, negotiating, monitoring, analysing and planning.

Software/languages/programmes used:

Excel, Word, PowerPoint and account management software such as Clarizon, Salesforce, Zoho or Traffic Live.

Attributes/skills/qualifications:

Excellent written and verbal communication skills, good commercial awareness, skilled in meeting KPIs, client-focused, personable, strong organisational and negotiation skills, self-motivated, excellent time management skills, trustworthy. Ideally, a Project Management qualification is sought after for this type of position although many people move on to project management after working/studying in another area.

Marketing (SEO/PPC/Social Media)

What it involves:

Includes promoting a brand through the use of social media, SEO, Pay Per Click, blogs etc. Creating marketing campaigns, collating analytical data, writing copy for websites, creating and running social media accounts, liaising with clients to deliver monthly traffic reports, providing advice/solutions on how best to market products, working together with developers to enable effective SEO.

Software/languages/programmes used:

Excel, Word, Google Analytics, Adwords, PowerPoint. A basic understanding of Photoshop is sometimes beneficial, especially when working with resizing/uploading images to social media sites.

Attributes/skills:

Good client-facing skills (remember: some clients will be more web-literate than others), specialist knowledge of the digital industry and standards, ability to use technical language effectively and to optimum effect. Someone who is organised, shows attention to detail and possesses good written skills. Ideally, with a qualification in Marketing, Business or Maths.

Design (UX/UI, web, print)

What it involves:

Being a digital designer can encompass a whole range of things, from creating graphics for web and various platforms to designing email campaigns, creative content,

copywriting and infographics. It may also cross over into print or video-based jobs from time to time, dealing with things such as branding and marketing collateral. Problem solving is an integral part of the role of a designer, devising ways to fit high quantities of information into a small space or creating complex vector graphics. This often requires a logical or mathematical mind. A basic or working knowledge of HTML/CSS is generally preferred too.

Software/languages/programmes used:

Designers typically work in Photoshop, Illustrator, Fireworks and InDesign to create graphics and create layouts. Working knowledge of PowerPoint, Word etc is also very useful. Other software you may use include Balsamiq and HotGloo for wireframing and UX. After Effects, Premiere and 3D Max may also be used for more animated/video-based areas.

Attributes/skills:

A passion for everything creative, a solid design background is always useful- you'd be surprised how much good old-fashioned drawing and painting skills translate into web design. Ideally you will have qualifications in design, graphics or marketing. Sound copywriting skills, good Maths and English skills and a sense of humour are also very useful in this field.



Useful links and contacts

Here are some handy links, tools, contacts and folk to follow on Twitter to help you on your way to digital superstardom. You're welcome.

<http://www.manchesterdigital.com/>

<http://www.meetup.com/northerndigitals/>

<http://www.smashingmagazine.com/>

<http://webdesignerwall.com/>

<http://hexcolortool.com/>

<http://www.netmagazine.com/>

<http://www.futureinsights.com/>

<http://www.dadiawards.com/>

<http://bigchipawards.com>

<http://css-tricks.com/>

<https://kuler.adobe.com/>

<http://www.magentocommerce.com/>


<http://www.vitamintalent.com/>

<http://teamtreehouse.com/>



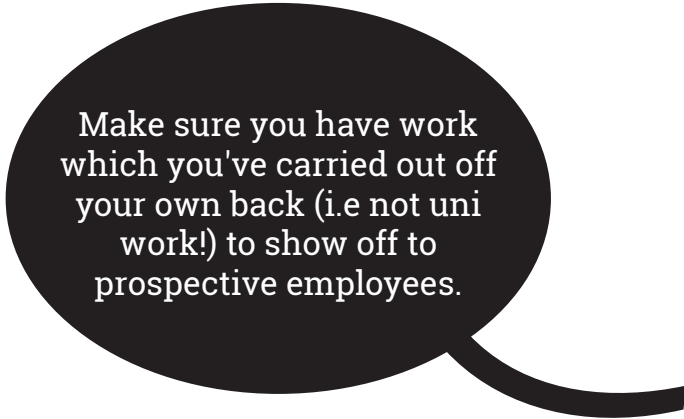
Advice from digital professionals

Nothing is more invaluable than advice straight from the horse's mouth. Those who work in the industry know what it's like to be in your position and have first-hand experience of agency life. Here are some gems of advice from our smashing team...



"Spend your spare time honing your skills, reading and getting up to speed on the latest trends. Be creative and break the rules."

“ Being in this industry means you need to be passionate about working with the latest technologies and techniques. ”



Make sure you have work which you've carried out off your own back (i.e not uni work!) to show off to prospective employees.

“ Don't limit yourself. Jobs often overlap in the digital world; you may start off as a designer but evolve into a coder. Being adaptive is good! ”

Whatever your chosen career path within the digital industry, **good luck!** Love us x



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