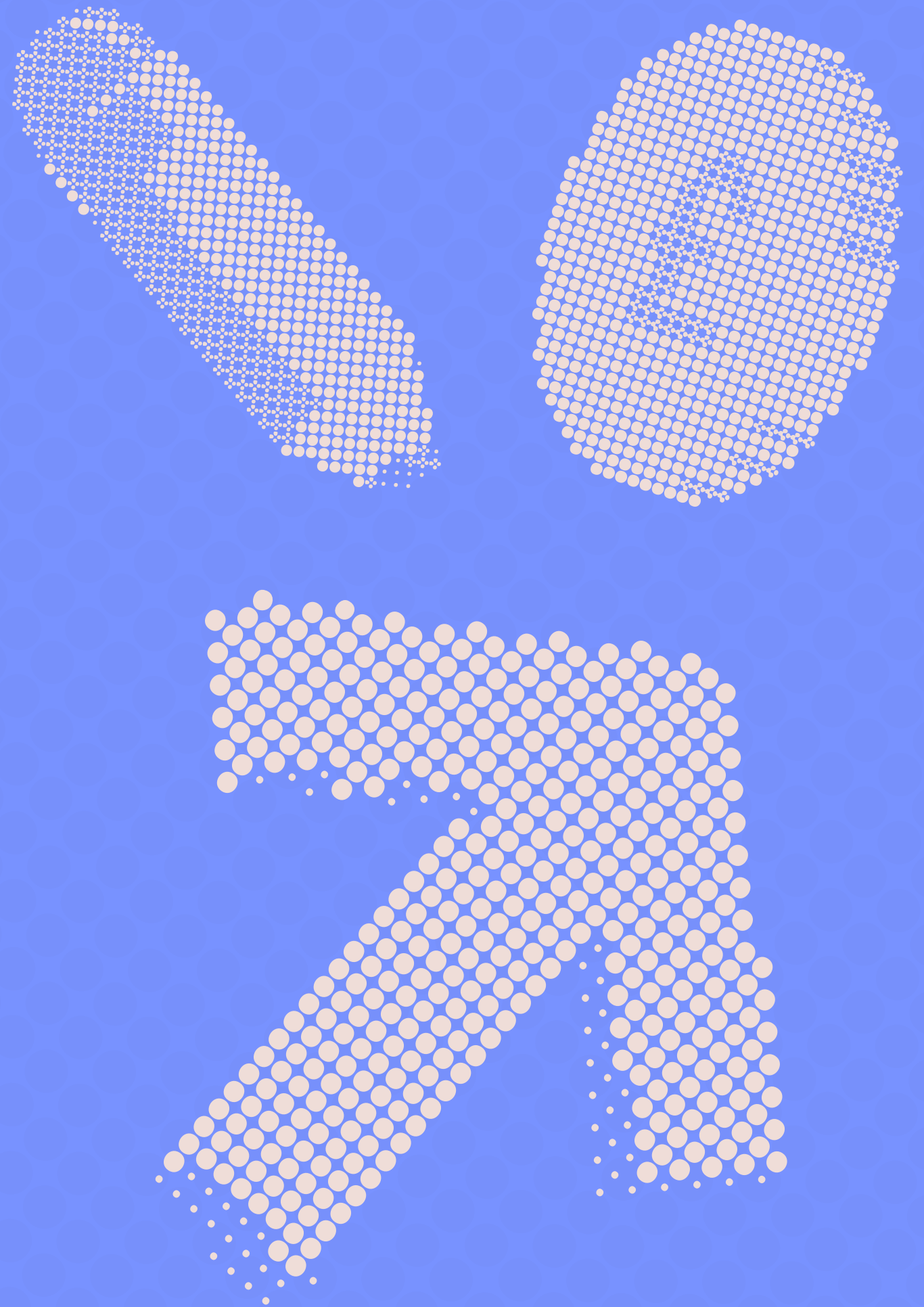# Job Seekers Toolkit

MAJOR PLAYERS

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Certified B Corporation

Introduction

The job market is constantly changing - and although that's no secret, it also means what it takes to stand out is evolving too.

Across creative and marketing roles, hiring decisions are shaped by real-time challenges, market shifts, and technological advancements. This all impacts the expectations of what "good" looks like. With that, you might find there is a lot of conflicting information out there about job hunting or popular presumptions about the processes surrounding it. The truth is, there is no one singular strategy anymore. Linear paths are rare and job titles are fluid.

This toolkit is designed to help you navigate that reality.

Rather than repeating the basics, it focuses on how to position yourself clearly, communicate your value with intent, search strategically, and partner with recruiters. Curated for people who want to be thoughtful about their next move. Filled with practical advice, this will help you feel empowered and confident in your next application.

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01

The
Positioning

Define your worth

1.1

CV & portfolio basics

You have mere seconds to make a first impression with a recruiter or hiring manager. That's hard to do, and you might not win their attention every time but here are some things to help your CV or portfolio get noticed more of the time.

Let your CV and portfolio be more than a record of employment; use them as commercial assets designed to help someone quickly understand:

What you're good at

Where you add value

Why you're relevant now

People are the secret to success

Many famous business leaders and entrepreneurs attribute the success of their companies to the people they hired. Yes, the skills and capabilities they brought to the table, but moreover, the attitude. You are selling you.

That's what your CV and portfolio should focus on - what makes you exceptional and exactly what they need. Templates and examples can help provide structure; just remember that your CV and portfolio should also be a reflection of who you are.

✔ Do these

- Use your CV to open a conversation
- Make it easy to read and skimmable
- At the top: highlight your areas of expertise
- Lead with impact: what changed because you were there
- Tailor for the role type you're targeting
- Highlight progression and range, not just execution
- Show work to reflect where you're going, not everything you've done
- Be truthful and sincere

✕ Avoid these

- Tell your whole story
- Overload with information and context
- Going straight into education or experience
- List responsibilities without outcomes
- Treat your CV and portfolio as static, only documenting your career
- Over-index on tools and platforms at the expense of thinking
- Include work that no longer represents your level
- Embellish your accomplishments

1.2 Standing out

More than what you did, potential employers want to understand why it mattered. Be bold enough to own the thinking and decisions that actually led to tangible results, because in crowded markets execution alone is no longer a differentiator.

Example

Instead of: "Led marketing and sales team."

Say: "Under my supervision, our team doubled annual growth against the previous year's target."

Be specific and define your niche

Not every good candidate is right for every available job; so, you want to focus on being the right candidate for the right job. It's okay to not be for everyone. Having a niche might feel limiting, but it can actually make it easier for someone to place you in a role you'll both enjoy and make a real impact.

Tailor it for the position you are applying for, but have the confidence to assert the problem you believe you'll be able to solve given your experience and capabilities.

1 Lead with impact
Show the value you delivered or enabled

2 The approach
How did you actually solve the problem?

3 The result
What happened because of your work?

What are you good at?

Passion

Function

Your Niche

What do you enjoy?

Mission

What is the market need?

> Early-stage SaaS product designer with experience shipping MVPs that improve activation by 25%

> Brand strategist scaling consumer tech to support market expansion

> Digital marketer focused on DTC performance to increase ROAS by 3x across paid and lifecycle channels

> Lifting sign-ups for big B2B brands through conversion-focused copy work

1.3

Market reality check

Hiring priorities shift with the market. In an industry known for rapid transformation influenced by economic pressures and tech evolution, hiring managers expect the same level of quick adaptation from candidates. Today, they are less interested in rigid career paths and more focused on how people think, adapt, and deliver.

Experience is still valued, but it's being assessed differently. Employers are looking for candidates who can apply their skills across changing contexts, to navigate ambiguity and contribute beyond rigid role descriptions. That means the strongest candidates apply commercial awareness to know when to expand outside their scope to adopt new tools and collaborate across disciplines and teams.

This shift has blurred traditional role boundaries and raised expectations. It's no longer just about what you do; it's also about how you apply it in a fast-moving environment.
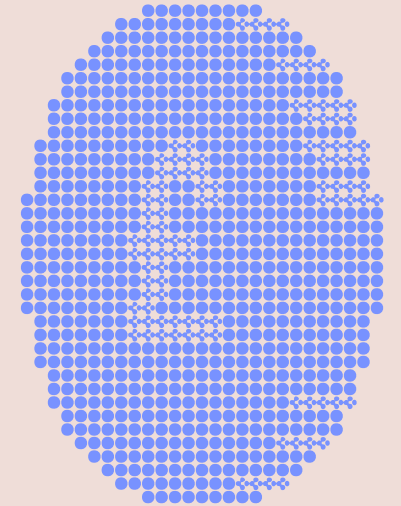
On the skills radar

As technology continues to evolve, the human qualities that matter most in creative work- judgement, curiosity, compassion, imagination - are becoming more valuable. This is why interpersonal skills are becoming increasingly essential to inject meaning and value into the work that new tools are producing. It's not either/or anymore; the candidates in highest demand are those who demonstrate a hybrid mix of technical fluency, interpersonal skills, human judgment - and the willingness to evolve.

Understanding your worth

A strong grasp of market reality allows you to position yourself confidently, avoiding both underselling and unrealistic expectations.

It can be hard to judge what's a fair rate. It starts with understanding how your skills are valued in the current market, where demand is rising or softening, and what trade-offs exist between current scope and possible progression. Being armed with the right data and insights can help you make informed decisions as opportunities arise.

✴ Technical skills   👁 Interpersonal skills

› Data literacy
Analysing numbers and data to understand current performance and inform decisions

› Tech fluency
Working comfortably with new tools and platforms

› Automation and workflows
Optimising processes to improve efficiency and streamline delivery

› Creativity
Developing fresh and original ideas that push creative boundaries

› Adaptability
Moving swiftly between different solutions without getting stuck on expectations

› Communication and storytelling
Clearly expressing ideas through imagination and captivating storytelling techniques

› Collaboration
Translating complexities across disciplines without losing context

› Critical thinking and judgement
Knowing how (and when) to question and validate information

Creative Industries Census

Our annual Census is the most comprehensive of its kind, leveraging 350,000+ data points across salaries, day rates, careers and workplace trends. This report enables candidates and job seekers to benchmark their careers versus industry averages, empowering them with knowledge and data.
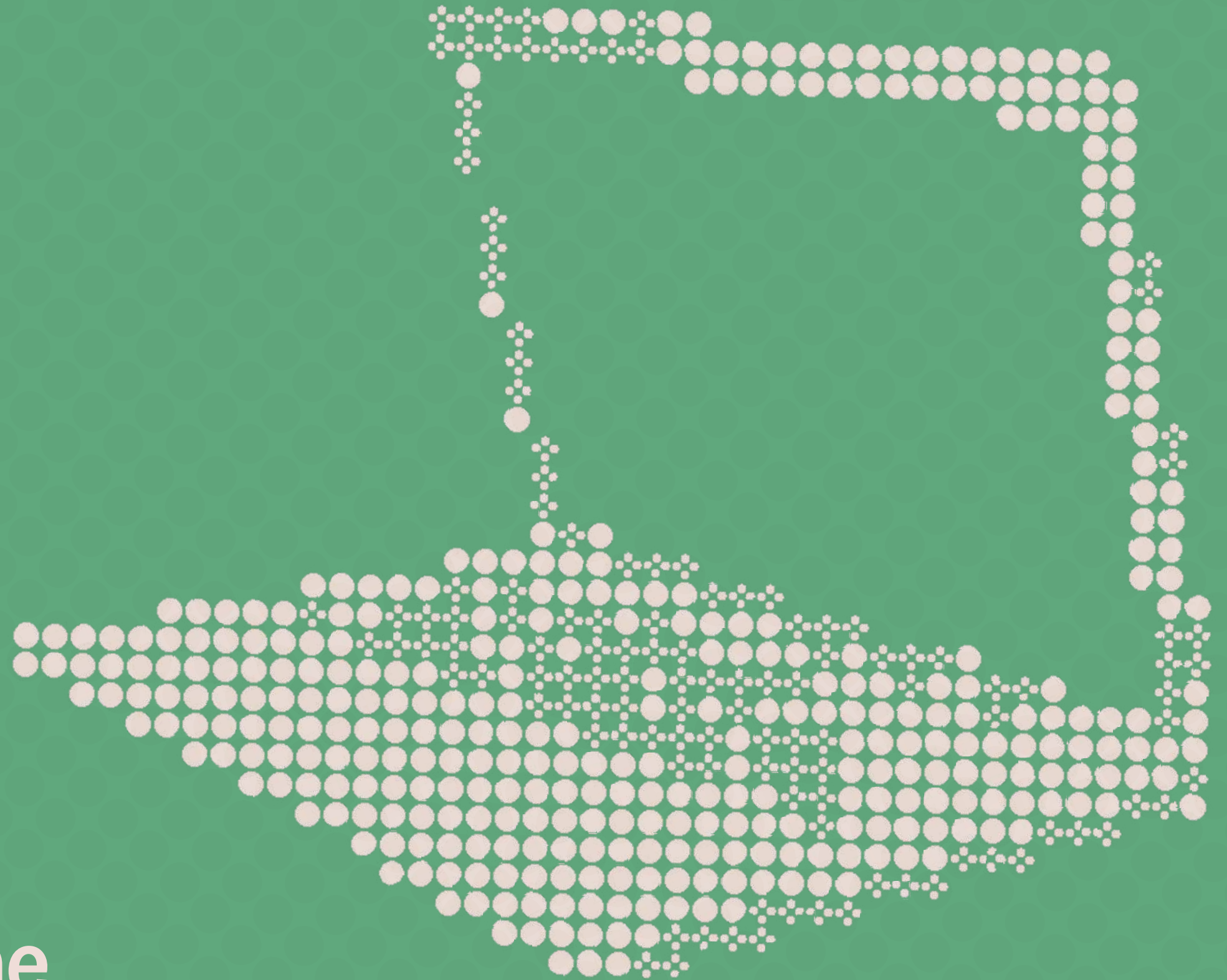
Earn Your Worth

In 2019, we launched our Earn Your Worth campaign, believing that talent should be paid fairly based on their skills, experience, and ability to do the job; not on their perceived worth or how well they negotiate. In a bid to cut pay gaps, we made a commitment to stop asking our candidates to divulge their current or previous salaries.

02

The Presentation

Communicate your value

2.1 Before you meet

Investing in your personal brand can make it easier for your dream job to find you first, plus it adds real purpose to what you do.

Alternatively, your online presence will be the second act following your CV or portfolio - signalling both your capability and suitability for the position you applied for.

You don't have to be loud. Just be intentional - telling your story, your way.

Your personal brand isn't something you only switch on when you're applying for roles - it's an extension of how you show up professionally over the course of your career. It can become a more authentic reflection of both who you are and the work you've done, building familiarity with potential employers and recruiters over time.

Differentiation comes from how you talk about your work: the language you choose and the visuals you either use or evoke. They all signal your unique taste and style - and in a creative marketplace, that's usually what matters. Consistency matters more than polish. Just make sure everything you publish is an accurate reflection of who you are, and with time, this will show others how you think without you having to explain it.

Focus on your passion

Let your interest direct your content. Genuine curiosity and a fresh perspective are more compelling than trend-chasing.

Articulate your niche

Make it easy for someone to understand what you're good at and how you can add value, so be consistent across LinkedIn, your CV and portfolio.

Don't add to the noise

You don't need to jump on every trend to be relevant. Earn the attention you're given with something original or unique to say.

Use social proof deliberately

Hiring managers want to avoid risk. So, if you have solid referrals or testimonials that you can publicly share, don't be afraid to shout about them.

Unsure how to get started?

Look to people whose work or voice you're drawn to. Ask yourself what resonates and why. Remember that Picasso said, "Good artists copy, great artists steal," and let yourself be inspired.

How to steal like an artist

Inspired by author Austin Kleon

Steal from many, not one
Pulling inspiration from a range of influences creates originality

Focus on what resonates
Pay attention to the ideas or approaches that stick with you - that's usually where your own perspective lives.

Break things down
What exactly are you drawn to: the structure, the language, the confidence, the restraint, the visuals? Be specific.

Adapt, don't replicate
Use inspiration as a starting point, then filter it through your own taste and style.

Let your influences evolve
As your career progresses, what you're drawn to should also change. That's growth, not inconsistency.

Make it recognisably yours
If someone could mistake your work or voice for someone else's, you haven't finished it yet.

2.2

Narrative-led experiences

Job searching is hard work. It's okay not to apply to every single listing; you'll only exhaust yourself before landing that dream role. Instead, apply strategically to the jobs that align with your expectations, experience, and what you want to do. Use your energy to source jobs you actually want and tailor your application for maximum impact.

Make a list of the jobs you're targeting and compare it against the businesses and sectors currently most interested in said roles. Map your experience to find a bridge between the problems you've solved and similar problems in those particular fields.

Articulate your transferable skills

Most careers (especially in the creative and marketing space) aren't linear. And it's actually a good thing, because sideways moves usually mean picking up more transferable skills - these are most effective when anchored in outcomes:

Audit your work and translate your contributions to something clearly Understood

Show how your skills travelled with you across roles, teams, or industries

Explain how it solved different problems in different contexts

Make parallels explicit - don't assume they'll connect the dots

When translating your experience into new fields, lead with your strategic thinking and problem-solving abilities. That's useful in any and every industry. Your career moves and pivots exposed you to a myriad of constraints and challenges - overcoming each prepared you for the next, so provide that context.
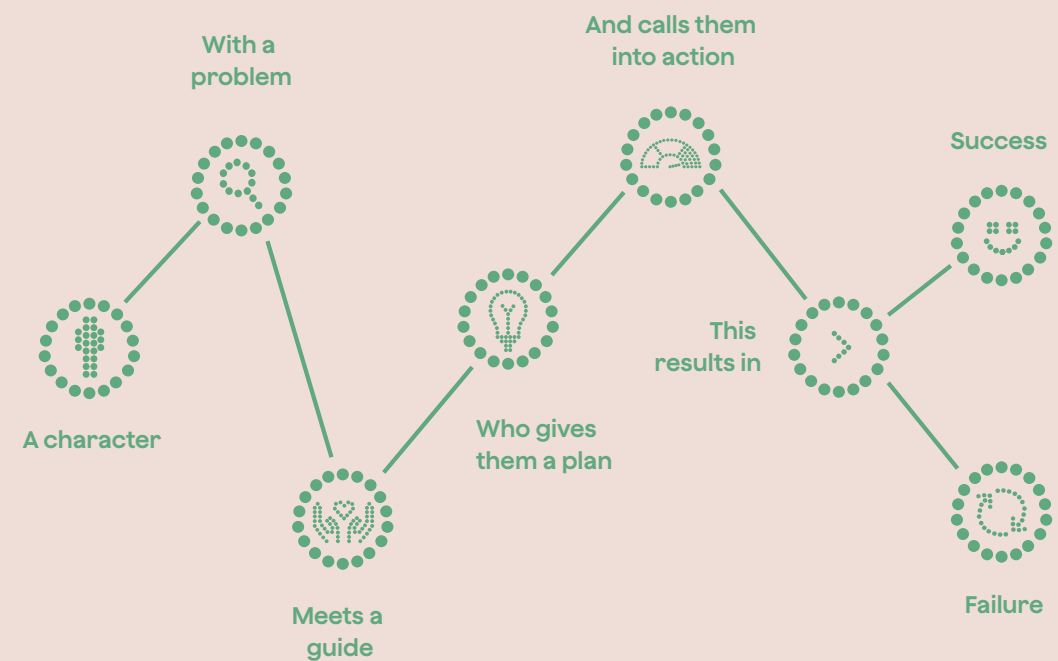
Make them the hero of the story

The StoryBrand Framework is a marketing system that clarifies brand messages by making the customer the hero and the brand the guide in their hero's story. It's based on the age-old Hero's Journey, or monomyth, coined by Joseph Campbell after he noticed that most shared stories, cultural tales, myths, and folk tales shared common narrative structures - because all humans are connected through story.

Although developed for brands, it can also be useful for job seekers looking to make their own stories more compelling to hiring managers and employers.

You are not the hero of the story - the business, the team, or the customer is. The hero has a problem, you call them to action with clarity and capability, and the outcome improves something meaningful.

It's subtle but effective. If you use a StoryBrand-style lens to communicate, we need to be invested in the success of the hero. That investment is genuine and can make people feel more connected to you and what you can do for them.

2.3

Communication craft

Considering a narrative-led approach means being specific and relevant. That requires time and effort you might not always have to spare, yet be wary of leaning too much on templates. Use templates to provide structure, but where possible be purposeful in who you're communicating with.

A more effective way to save time is to keep it concise; explain why you're relevant, not why you're enthusiastic.

Be clear, confident, and most importantly, human. How you communicate is often taken as a proxy for how you'll collaborate, so show that.

Using AI without losing your voice

Some people will vilify you for using AI, while others will call you a Luddite for not using it - either way, AI is now an industry standard. It can also help with refining your message. The trick is knowing when to use it and when to leave it. It's a tool, a very useful tool, but the thinking should still be your own.

Use AI to

- Accelerate research and preparation
- Identify which transferable skills and experiences to highlight
- Sense-check tone or framing
- Stress-test your examples against role requirements
- Reduce prep time with structured ideas

Be cautious of

- Mass-applying to roles without clear intent or relevance
- Over-polished language that removes your personality
- Generic phrasing that signals low effort
- Submitting applications without meaningful edits by you
- Trading volume for substance

03

The
Search

3.1 Identification & outreach

Forget mere volume; instead, focus on timing and relevance. The aim is to reduce noise, so you're able to concentrate your efforts when and where it counts.

Alert systems and filters

Set alerts based on role outcomes, seniority, and skill clusters, not just job titles. Refine it weekly. If you're seeing too much, narrow, and if you're seeing nothing, widen slightly. Alerts should support your intuitive judgment.

Positioning your interest

Before searching, be ready to apply quickly if you see something you like. Hiring often moves slowly, but sometimes it's in a rush - and you don't want to be too late to a good opportunity. Anchor your interest to the problem the role is solving and your relevant experience.

Judging roles

Not every role deserves an application. Before engaging, consider if the scope aligns with the seniority, pay and possible progression. Every potential position should move you towards where you want to be.

Using AI for searching

Use AI to scan multiple job descriptions and identify:

- Common responsibilities and expectations
- Repeated language around impact and success
- Gaps between your experience and the role's emphasis

AI is only as effective as the person using it; so don't have it replace your own effort.

It's important to realise that every role AI identifies won't necessarily be worth applying to. Be careful not to substitute good judgment for volume and speed without specificity. What makes you a good hire is still focused on the unique blend of your personality and your skills, so don't neglect showing who you are.

3.2 Application strategy

Even with focus and precision, job searching is draining. The silence or outright rejection can lead to serious fatigue, especially at mid-senior level, where decisions take longer, and the risk tolerance is lower.

While you're searching, build a rhythm that fits into your daily life. The goal is to keep showing up, consistently - and that doesn't require volume. Track your efforts so you can stop and pick up as you need to without losing progress.

Create a simple system to track:

Roles applied for

Outreach sent

Responses and follow-ups

Interview stages

Learnings from rejections or interviews

Do what works for you

There's no one right format. You can use a simple spreadsheet, a Notion board or project management software. What matters is that you are in control.

Why track your search?

Tracking gives you leverage over your own process. It shows you where you are, but also helps you to spot patterns and adjust your approach based on data instead of a hunch.

3.3 The art of the interview

Preparation is one of the most important factors that can determine your success at an interview, so don't skip it. That doesn't mean you have to know everything; strong prep focuses on relevance.

AI is especially useful here - it can summarise a big bulk of information and give you the bits that matter. When applying for multiple roles, this can save you time and effort on deep research. Leverage the time saved to sharpen your thinking by actually understanding what problems the role is likely to be under pressure to solve and how success will be defined in that position.

Demonstrate capability without overselling

Steer clear of exaggeration or embellishment; the person interviewing you has experience spotting it. Or worse, they might call it out. Be honest about your gaps in knowledge and limits, and express your desire to grow. This builds more trust than pretending to be the picture-perfect candidate, because confidence is only attractive when it can be backed up with proof.

Remember that interviews are a two-way street. You're allowed to clarify a question or ask any of your own.

Example Prompts

What problems is a [role] likely hired to solve in a [industry/company stage]?

Based on this job description, what competencies are most likely being assessed?"

Help me stress-test this example against the expectations of this role."

What follow-up questions might a hiring manager ask after this answer?

Ask thoughtful questions

An interview is also your chance to find out whether the employer is the right one for you. Make a list and take it with you; the nerves can make you forget an important question. If you get to the end of the interview and they seem to have covered everything, double-check your list. It will also show that you've prepared in advance.

Strong questions focus on clarity, expectations, and impact - for both parties.

Example Questions

What are the immediate expectations for this role, and what support will I receive to make sure I meet them?

What does success look like for the person in this role?

What challenges is the team currently under pressure to solve?

How does this role interact with other teams or departments?

How are decisions typically made within the team?

How is feedback given and performance reviewed?

What might make this role challenging for someone?

What changes have the businesses experienced in the past few years, and how was this navigated?

The STAR approach

The STAR approach is a communication technique designed to enable you to provide a meaningful and complete answer to questions asking for examples. It's most effective when it's concise.

1. (Prepare)
Listen to the question and think of an event

2. Situation
Describe the event or situation that you were in

3. Task
Explain the task you had to complete

4. Action
Describe the specific actions you took to complete the task

5. Result
Close with the results of your efforts
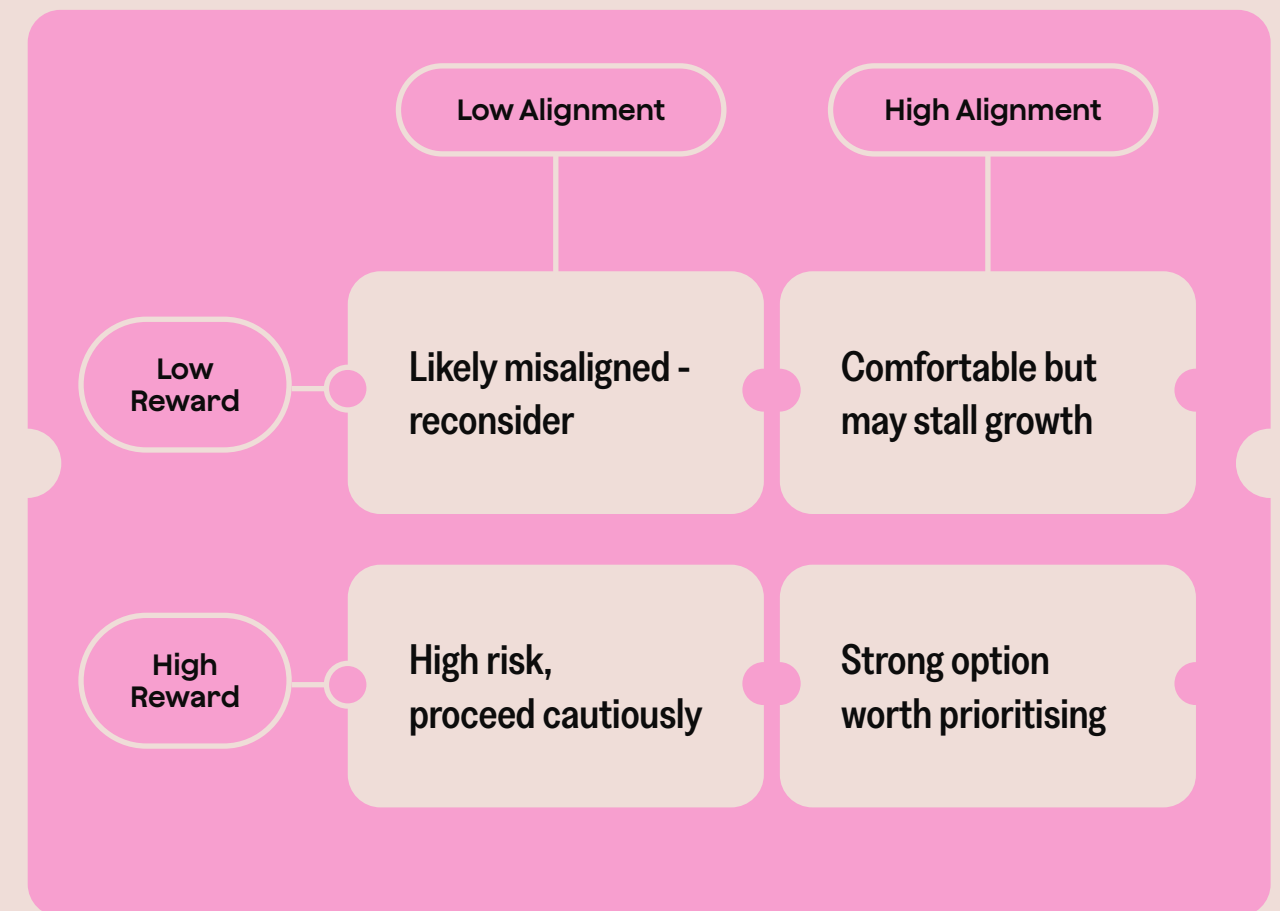
3.4 Negotiating for success

Communicating your expectations

Negotiation is less about leverage and more about clarity. Communicating expectations well means being able to articulate what you need to do your best work - grounded in your experience and your understanding of the reality of the role. This might include salary, scope, autonomy, progression, flexibility, or support. Be calm and professional. You're not making demands; you're allowed to explain why certain conditions matter to you.

At the same time, negotiation is where misalignment often becomes visible. If expectations remain vague, shift repeatedly, or require you to compromise your long-term direction, it's a signal worth paying attention to. Walking away from a promising opportunity can be hard, but trust yourself. It's important to protect your professional standards, even if that means waiting for something that fits who you are and what you do.

The offer evaluation matrix

	Low Alignment	High Alignment
Low Reward	Likely misaligned - reconsider	Comfortable but may stall growth
High Reward	High risk, proceed cautiously	Strong option worth prioritising

Plot the role based on:

- Scope and expectations
- Growth and learning
- Autonomy and trust
- Team, leadership and culture
- Compensation
- Benefits package
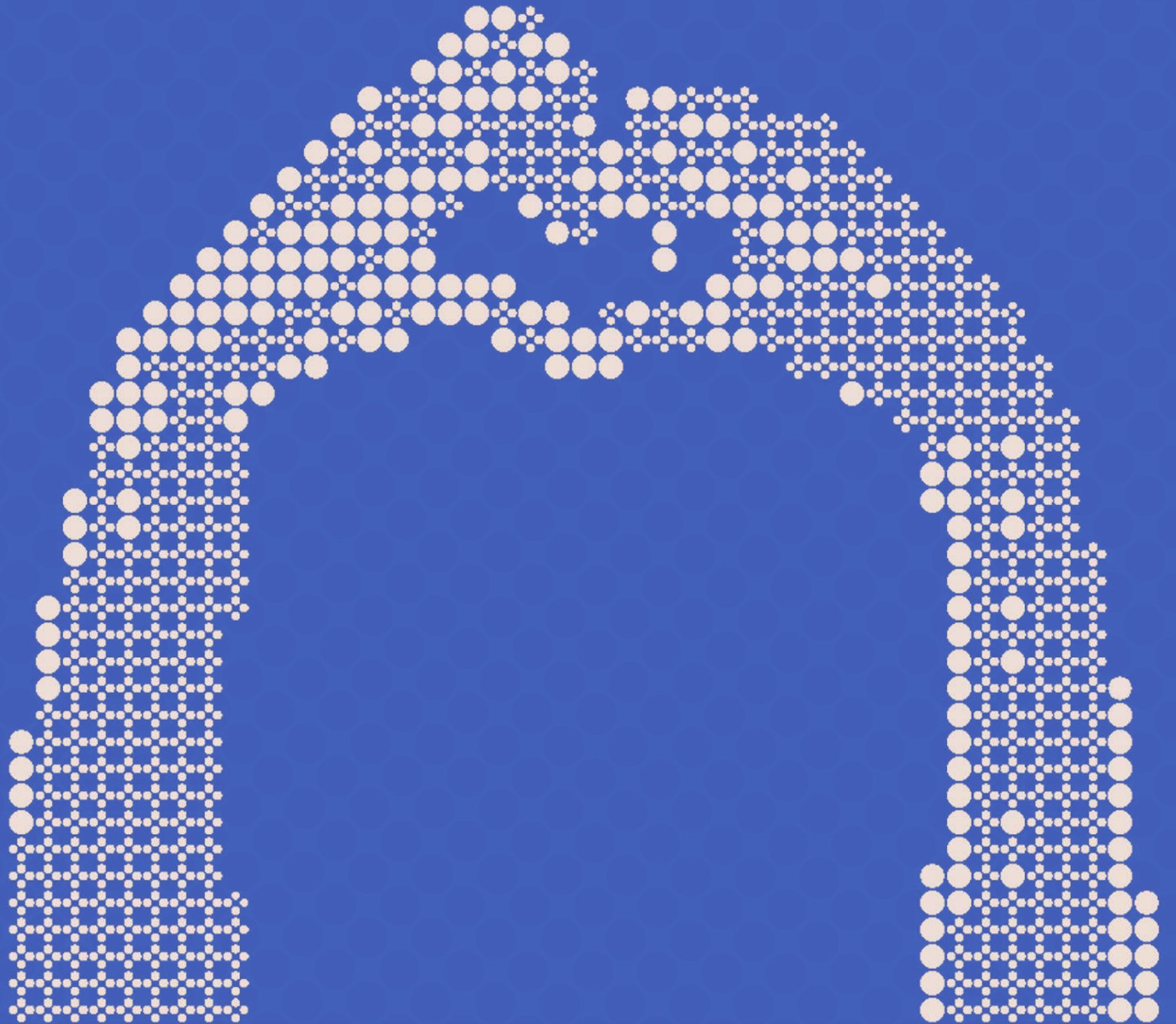
04

The Support

Working with recruiters

For us, this is more than just about recruitment. It's about building meaningful careers. Everything we do is about people.

Our talent partners sit close to the market. They see how roles and briefs evolve, and what influences hiring decisions. Our goal is to advocate for the conditions talent needs to thrive, but that requires participation. Here's how our specialist talent partners can come alongside you to help you take the next step in your career, whether you're looking for a permanent or freelance role.

Permanent

4.1

Looking for a permanent role is like looking for a new home. Whether that's a shorter stay or a forever place, permanent roles require precise intention. For both employers and candidates it's a big investment, so alignment on responsibilities, compensation, benefits, work model, organisational structure, and team setup is absolutely essential.

A recruiter's primary responsibility is to find the most suitable candidate to present. So if you spot your dream job represented by a recruiter, don't apply by telling them how awesome you are - show them how awesome you'll be at that very job.

Your story

Know how to talk through your career highlights and progression without a recruiter having to prompt it out of you.

Focus on the last 5 years.
More is not best. Instead, highlight the (recent) experience most related to the position and ensure it's understandable from the very first instance.

Experience

Relevance to role

Complying with job specs and must-haves is essential for recruiters - they cannot put forward a candidate who doesn't meet all the requirements.

Showing your achievements in each role is important - it serves as proof for your story. Recruiters need evidence (portfolio, project links) that you can do the job, and do it well.

Skills & ability

Motivations & passions

Recruiters also have to screen for culture fits. Include what interests you about the prospective company, your industry, and life outside work.

Be upfront about your preferences and where you're willing to compromise. Knowing all the details will make it easier to find roles that actually match you.

Dealbreakers

Current status

A recruiter can better advocate for you when they're in the loop. Call or text feedback on interviews, and let them know if you're progressing to a final interview.

Maintaining momentum

Unfortunately, depending on the role and company, the hiring process can often be arduous. At Major Players, we're committed to keeping our candidates informed and aware of any feedback from clients but your patience may still be tested.

In the meantime, stay active on LinkedIn and check out other job listings. If you find any good matches, apply, and should you not get an offer, you'll already be in a process for

another possible position. Don't take your foot off the pedal until you officially landed your job.

Also, don't underestimate the value attending of industry events in your space. Apart from maybe meeting exactly the right contact, you're also gaining the skills and knowledge that make you a more attractive candidate. Showing initiative to self-learn and up-skill in a saturated market might just be what gives you an edge.

Freelance

4.1

A freelancer is supposed to solve an immediate problem; in other words, you need to be ready to hit the ground running. Freelance hiring moves fast, but substance still matters. That means proven industry or sector experience carries a lot of weight since clients expect insider expertise from the get-go. Be specific about the clients, accounts and projects you've worked on since many freelance contracts can have precise requirements.

Our team will set up an introductory call with you to chat through the market, your experience, what you're looking for, suitability, and operational logistics (day rate, payment options, hybrid working, timesheets). Once you're on our books, we can match you to any relevant open gigs.

Your story

Know what is important to you and what you're looking for before applying.

Focus on the last 5 years. Job titles mean different things at different places, so demonstrate exactly what each role entailed.

Experience

Previous work

If you're sharing a portfolio, highlight what's specific to the role or market you're applying for. (E.g. "To see my work in the beauty market, check page 7.") Clients may want examples to see you've worked in their industry.

In freelance, recruiters primarily hire for skillset. Include project parameters, channels, and processes to prove your ability - and keep it current.

Skillset

Relevance to role

Only apply for roles that are actually in line with your existing capabilities. The expectation is that you'll come in as an expert to offer immediate support.

Be clear on your rate, flexibility, where you are based, and your willingness to travel. Recruiters can only recommend you if they understand what types of roles are actually suitable.

Dealbreakers

Availability

Use the team email address to stay top of mind, letting us know when you're booked until and when you will be available again.

Maintaining momentum

The best strategy for any freelancer is to spread their net as far and as wide as possible. As much as we want to place each of the wonderful candidates we have on our books, every gig only requires one freelancer. So make sure you're represented wherever possible - join networks and community groups. Our member community, RUVO, is a great choice for this - designed to fill that gap and offer freelancers meaningful support.

More than that, keep sharpening your skills; it's the best way stay on top of your game. Use the time between projects to take a course or upskill. With freelancing, you'll always be expected to have experience in the field or sector you want to work in. If you don't have that experience yet, build up your portfolio with example projects, take on pro bono work, or shadow someone working in that position. More than showing initiative, it will also pay off by preparing you for when you land that dream gig.

Get in touch!

For over 30 years, we've been powering the creative industries one career at a time.

We've always nurtured talent with energy and intent. Our approach is simple - we get to know you, and we match you with opportunities that will unleash your full potential. With offices in London, Miami, Amsterdam and Berlin, we can represent you to the world's most ambitious agencies and brands. We have a front-row view of how hiring is changing, what employers are really looking for, and where opportunities are emerging.
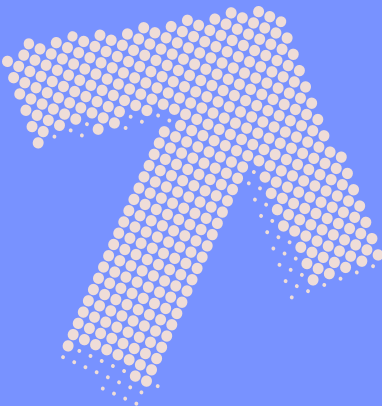
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Our freelance community, RUVO, connects and empowers the gig economy.
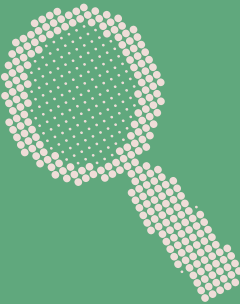
We're Skillset Specialists

Our talent partners have over 5+ years experience in their markets, specialising in their field solely.

Market Intelligence

Our annual Census provides extensive data and insights into how best to benchmark your salary or day rate.

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