workvine

FIELD GUIDE 02

How to write a job advert people actually *answer*

Plus what to do when nobody suitable does.

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TEN MINUTES

Most adverts don't fail because nobody's out there. They fail because the right person read it and couldn't tell whether it was worth the bother.

BEFORE WE START

The advert is the first thing they *judge* you on

Before anyone meets you, they've read a few lines on a phone, probably on the bus or at the end of a shift. In those few lines they decide whether you're worth a half day off work. Most adverts don't give them enough to decide.

This guide is for owners and managers who hire their own people. It covers four things: writing an advert the right person answers, putting the pay on it, what to change when nobody suitable applies, and how to find people who aren't looking at all.

01	**Write it for the person you want.** The title, the first three lines, and what to leave out.
02	**Put the pay on it.** Why it matters, and what to do if you really don't want to.
03	**Nobody suitable applied.** Which of three problems you've got, and the fix for each.
04	**Go and find them.** The channels that reach people who aren't looking.

Three pull-out pages are built to be printed and used: an advert worksheet, a re-advert checklist, and the message that gets a reply.

01

Write it for the person you *want*

> **THE PROBLEM**
>
> Most adverts are the job description with a logo on top. The job description says what you need. The advert has to answer what the right person is asking as they scroll past: what's the job, what's it pay, where is it, and why would I leave where I am for it?

THE JOB TITLE

Use the words people type into a job board. "Maintenance Engineer" gets found, and "Asset Care Hero" doesn't.

Keep the title field to the job title and nothing else. Job boards don't want shifts, pay, location, "urgent" or symbols in it. Indeed says so in its own guidance, and titles that break the rule can be rejected or buried. Anything that makes the role different (nights, multi-skilled, team leading, the pay) goes in the first line of the advert.

THE FIRST THREE LINES

Most people read these and decide. Put in the pay, the place, the hours and the one thing that makes this job better than the one they've got. That could be a four-day week, a short commute, training into a second trade, or a manager who's stayed 20 years.

01 THE ADVERT

WHAT THE WORK IS

Describe a normal week in plain terms: what they'll fix, build, sell or run, and who with. Five or six lines is plenty.

WHAT YOU NEED

Split it into what they must have and what would be nice. A long must-have list puts off good people who tick seven of eight boxes. Cut anything you'd happily train.

WHAT TO LEAVE OUT

- **"Competitive salary".** Say the number. Chapter 2 explains why.
- **"Fast-paced environment", "team player", "self-starter".** Everyone writes these, so nobody reads them.
- **A paragraph about your company's history before the job.** One line on who you are is enough.
- **Anything that rules people out for no good reason,** like age-coded words ("young, energetic team") or a degree for a job that doesn't need one.

THEN MAKE IT EASY TO APPLY

Ask for as little as you can at the first step. Every extra form field loses people, and the best candidates have the least patience. Reply to everyone, even if it's a no. People remember, and some of them are your customers.

> **Test it.** Show the draft to someone who does this job now. If they can't tell you the pay, the hours and why they'd move within 30 seconds, rewrite the top.

PULL-OUT 1

The advert worksheet

Fill it in before you write a word of the advert. If a box is empty, that's the gap a good candidate will notice.

Vacancy: _____ **Date:** _____

QUESTION	YOUR ANSWER
Job title, as someone would search for it	
Pay (range, plus bonus or overtime if real)	
Where, and how far it is from the nearest town	
Hours and shift pattern	
The one reason to move here	
A normal week in five lines	
Must-haves (no more than five)	
Nice-to-haves	
What you'll train	
How to apply, in one step	

02

Put the pay *on it*

THE PROBLEM

"Competitive salary" tells the reader nothing, so plenty of them don't apply. In an earlier Reed poll of 2,250 people, 78% of jobseekers said a missing salary put them off applying. Even so, only about 56% of UK job ads on Indeed showed pay in March 2026. So showing it still makes you stand out.

The salary also does a job for you. It filters. People who want £20,000 more than you're paying don't apply. That saves both of you a wasted interview, and a late "no thanks" after the offer.

It may stop being a choice. The government has consulted on making employers put pay in job adverts. Nothing's law yet, but it's worth getting used to now.

60%

more applications for adverts that showed a salary than for those that didn't.

SOURCE: REED.CO.UK SITE DATA, JANUARY TO MAY 2024

If you really don't want to *publish it*

There's usually a reason, and most have a fix.

YOUR REASON	WHAT TO DO INSTEAD
"My current team will see it."	That's worth knowing now. If the new person gets more, your team will find out anyway, usually at the Christmas do. Fix the pay gap first, or be ready to explain it.
"I want room to negotiate."	Publish a range, with the top end for the person who ticks every box. You keep room, and they can see it's worth applying.
"It depends on experience."	Then say what moves it: "£38,000 to £44,000, depending on your electrical experience". That's still honest, and still useful.
"Competitors will see what we pay."	They'll find out from the first person who interviews with both of you. Lead with the full package, including bonus, shifts, holiday, pension and training, because that's where you can beat them.
"The role's confidential."	Advertise without your company name, but keep the pay, the area and the hours on it. People will still apply to a good job from an unnamed employer.
"We're not sure what to pay."	Look at what similar adverts nearby offer for the same title before you write a word. If yours comes out below them, the advert isn't your problem (chapter 3).

Whatever you decide, give the pay in writing before anyone comes to an interview. Nobody should take a half day off work to find out the job doesn't pay their mortgage.

03

You advertised and nobody suitable *applied*

THE PROBLEM

The usual answer is to post the same advert again, or to decide there's nobody out there. Neither works. Work out which of three problems you've got first, because each one has a different fix.

WHAT HAPPENED	WHAT IT USUALLY MEANS	FIX IT FIRST BY
Hardly anyone applied	People can't find it, or they found it and didn't fancy it	Checking the title, the pay and where it was posted
Plenty applied, none were right	The advert's pulling the wrong crowd, or the right people aren't looking	Tightening the top three lines, then going out to find people (chapter 4)
Good people applied, then dropped out	The process lost them, not the advert	Speeding up the replies and cutting interview stages

The checklist overleaf works through all three, cheapest fixes first.

PULL-OUT 2

The re-advert checklist

Work through it in this order before the advert goes up again. The first few are the cheapest to fix.

01 **Pay.** Compare it with five live adverts for the same title within 20 miles. If you're at the bottom, no advert will fix that. Move the pay, or change the role so it fits the pay.

02 **Title.** Is it the title people search for? Type it into a job board yourself and see what else comes up.

03 **The first three lines.** Do they give pay, place, hours and a reason to move?

04 **Must-haves.** Cut any you'd train. Each one you drop widens the pool.

05 **Where it went.** One board isn't enough. Did it reach the main boards and Google for Jobs?

06 **How long it ran.** A week often isn't long enough. Some people only look at weekends or at the end of the month.

07 **The apply step.** Try applying yourself on your phone. If it takes more than a couple of minutes, fix that.

08 **Your reply speed.** Look through the inbox, including spam. A good applicant who waits a week has often taken another job.

09 **The interview process.** Count the stages. Two is usually enough for most roles. Each extra one loses someone.

10 **Is it the role or the seat?** If you've filled this job three times in two years, the problem might be what happens after day one. Ask the last person who left.

WHAT I'M CHANGING THIS TIME	WHAT HAPPENED

Worked through all ten and the pool still isn't there? The people you want are in work and not looking. That's chapter 4.

04

Go and *find them*

The best maintenance engineer, estimator or sales manager in your area probably isn't reading job adverts. They're busy, and they're fine where they are. To reach them you go to them, using the channel that suits the role.

CHANNEL	WORKS BEST FOR	COST	EFFORT
Your own team ("who do you know?")	Trades, shifts, any role where people know people	A referral thank-you, if you offer one	Low
People who used to work for you, and the near misses from last time	Any role	Free	Low
CV databases on the big job boards	Engineering, technical, office and sales	Paid access	Medium
LinkedIn search and messages	Office, sales, management, tech	Free to search; paid for more messages	Medium
Local Facebook groups and community pages	Local, shift, warehouse and hospitality roles	Free	Low
Ex-forces, through the Career Transition Partnership	Engineering, logistics, team leaders	Free (government funded)	Low
Jobcentre Plus: Find a Job, job fairs, sector-based work academies	Entry-level roles, and roles you'll train for	Free	Medium
Colleges, apprenticeships and trade bodies	Trainees and specialist trades	Mostly free to post	Medium
Suppliers, customers and trade contacts	Specialist and senior roles	Free	Low, but use it with care

PULL-OUT 3

The message that gets a reply

For someone who isn't looking. Be short, specific and honest. Say why them, what the job is and what it pays, and make it easy to say no. Never knock their current employer. Three good messages beat thirty copied ones.

COPY, FILL IN, SEND

Hi [name], I saw you've been [what they do] at [type of business] for [time]. We're hiring a [job title] in [town], [pay], [hours]. It's [the one reason to move]. Would you be open to a 10-minute chat this week? If not, no problem, and if you know someone it'd suit, I'd be grateful for the name.

Who you contacted

Keep a note of who, where you found them and what they said. A year from now, this list is your shortlist for the next role.

NAME	WHERE FOUND	DATE	WHAT THEY SAID

TO FINISH

Your next advert is the *test*

Search-friendly title, the pay on it, a reason to move in the first three lines, and only the must-haves you mean. If it still doesn't land, change one thing at a time and go and find the people who aren't looking.

Start with the worksheet.

SOURCES

Applications with a salary shown. Reed.co.uk, "Why you should always state salary in your job ads", site data for jobs posted 1 January to 29 May 2024.

Jobseekers put off by a missing salary. Reed poll of 2,250 people, reported by People Management, 11 March 2022.

Share of UK ads showing pay. Indeed Hiring Lab, "Full salary transparency in Europe is still a distant prospect", 7 May 2026 (March 2026 data).

Pay in adverts consultation. UK government equal pay consultation, closed 27 October 2026, as summarised by Irwin Mitchell, 21 July 2026.

Job titles. Indeed employer help, guidance on job titles.

Ex-forces and Jobcentre Plus. Career Transition Partnership, services for employers; NHS Employers, how Jobcentre Plus can support employers.

Sources checked November 2026.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Rather not do all this *yourself*?

Hand it over

Workvine runs the whole thing for one fixed fee. That covers the brief call, the advert under your name, the job boards, searching CV databases, a Teams video screen with everyone on your shortlist, and help with the offer. From £1,999, agreed up front, no percentage, no success fee, extras priced up front too.

Or do it yourself

DIY Recruitment puts one advert on around ten UK job boards, and you manage the applicants. From £399 a credit, no contract.

WORKVINE.CO.UK