

Introduction

The type of Organisations available

- Central Government Departments (DfES, DTI, HM Treasury etc)
- Agencies (Highways Agency, DVLA, Court Service, Benefits Agency etc)
- NDPBs/quangos (OFT, OFGEM, SRA, English Heritage, the Arts Council, etc)
- Local Government, Housing and Education
- NHS
- Charities and Voluntary Organisations

The type of jobs available

- Chair
- Board member/Non Executive (including commissions etc)
- Chief Executive
- Directors (finance, HR, IT etc)

What are the attractions?

- Working at the heart of policy making
- Huge change and modernisation agenda
- Delivery on a massive scale
- Intellectual challenge
- Helping to improve things we all need
- Giving something back to society

Benefits:

- Working with some extremely bright people
- An environment with a strong commitment and social conscience
- Not always the long hours associated with commerce
- No shareholders to worry about!
- Some roles may put you in line for a 'gong' or award

Pitfalls!

- Far less money (often half you will get in the private sector)
- No share options or other attractive benefits
- Many jobs are very political
- Trade union involvement is common
- Roles are often high profile
- Freedom to act is more restricted

Is there a need for those from the commercial world?

- Certainly at Chair, Director and Board member level (non exec)
- Possibly at Chief Executive level (you may need to go in at a lower level before being able to take on a Chief Executive role)
- Certainly at Director level (finance, HR, IT etc) for those with relevant professional skills

However, take note:

- These are highly complex jobs – this is not an easy option

- You cannot expect the organisation to change – you will be the one expected to make most of the changes
- Huge learning curve ahead
- There is a danger of arrogance from those who feel that everything in the public sector is bad and everything in the private sector is good. Not true!

Finding these jobs:

- Most will be advertised (Sunday Times typically)
- Majority offer information packs
- Some will also be headhunted

Applying for these jobs:

- Application process is structured and quite formal
- For Central Government, the Office of Civil Service Commissioners or Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments are likely to oversee the recruitment
- Use the Internet to do research
- If in doubt, talk to the recruiter
- Don't merely use a functional CV – show your rank, awards and achievements
- Don't waste time applying if you don't fulfil most of the criteria

Your CV/Application:

- You must address the appointment criteria – they will be matched against all your skills
- Private sector focused CVs may not be sufficient
- Additional statements addressing the person specification are the norm – an extra page or two is perfectly acceptable
- Political affiliation statements and Equal Opportunities forms need filling out
- Get application in by closing date

Subsequent process:

- Formal sifting is usually done by a panel or board (even though recruitment consultants may do a preliminary sift)
- Preliminary interviews for mainstream jobs may be undertaken by the recruitment consultants (if used)
- Further sifting may take place to agree the final short list
- Psychological testing/interviews may be carried out on the short list
- Opportunities for visits/meetings may be available to the short list (i.e. visiting the premises of the organisation, or meeting the Chief Executive or Chair)
- Some jobs require security clearance

Final Panel:

- This is the norm for these appointments
- Membership of Panel differs depending on sector
- Panel interview will be quite short and very formal
- Presentation may be required (these differ)
- Little opportunity to ask questions
- Often a delay before outcome is known

What will make you stand out?

- An application that demonstrates research and understanding
- Avoiding too much private sector/military jargon – address your audience

- Not being seen as a risk - panels are often risk averse
- 'Play' the panel
- Be objective and not too passionate for the subject. While they want an interest, this has to be tempered so you will be seen as objective.

Is it worth applying?

NO if:

- It's because you can't find a job in the private sector and this is your last resort
- You feel your considerable experience is what they must want (this type of arrogance will be your downfall!)
- You want to change things overnight
- You expect this sector to change to your ways
- You think you will get the salary increased quickly to private sector levels
- You assume those around you are low paid – therefore poor in terms of quality

YES if:

- You have weighed up the pro's and con's and still want to do this
- You have the patience and tenacity to push change through
- You can handle the politics
- You can take the public criticism and press comment
- You have respect for the organisation you might join, coupled with a degree of humility
- You are really as good as you think you are!

Qualities - Civil Servants

- Integrity & Judgement
- Political sensitivity
- Track record in successful delivery of major services and /or change
- Able to work across organisational boundaries
- Impartiality
- Diplomacy
- Ability to influence
- Strong leadership skills
- A coaching, rather than directive, style

Qualities - Membership of Public Bodies

- Able to work as part of a team
- Able to think clearly and exercise sound judgement
- High degree of analytical ability
- Prepared to be accountable
- Ability to act impartially
- Understanding of, and commitment to, the highest standards in public life
- A commitment to consensual decision making
- Ability to command the confidence of Ministers, Parliament and the Public
- Willingness to undergo public, and sometimes press, scrutiny

Qualities – Local Government, Health Service etc

- Integrity, Judgement and commitment
- Track record in successful delivery of major services and /or change
- Able to work across organisational boundaries
- Resilience
- Ability to work effectively with professionals in other fields
- Ability to influence
- Strong leadership skills

And Finally.....

- These are some of the most interesting and challenging jobs around
- This is a real opportunity to influence
- You may not get the first one you go for – keep trying
- Try and get feedback if you fail and take note of what is said, so you can try and correct this on your next attempt.