



Where are the jobs? A UK perspective

Unemployment is rampant. One million youths out of work. Where will the new jobs come from? The answer to this question comes in two parts: the Good News and the Bad News.

First the bad:

The world, not just the UK, is undergoing a structural change akin to moving to cars from horse-driven carriages. In the same way that we moved to an age of electronics after the second world war, we are moving into a new age where all business is driven by networks, and the remote control to your life is your mobile phone. That means that the job you will eventually get may not be like the job you had. We – you – are not waiting for the economy to come roaring back, and just get hired by the same type of firm, doing the same type of thing, but you are looking for a new type of job.

Secondly, a job is not a job is not a job. Government in its entirety is a cost-center to society, so we desperately need to create not just jobs, but private sector jobs. Each job in government that gets created just is a further weight around the neck of the country.

Thirdly, with the globalisation, you may be based in Devon, Leeds or Glasgow, but your employer might be on the opposite side of the world. You must be open to that reality, and not shut yourself off from those employers in your quest for a local job.

Fourthly, the men from the government can do nothing to help you. The unemployment that we are experiencing now is not like the unemployment of the 1981, 82 recession. They cannot fix the problem by throwing money at the situation. The country doesn't have the money, and government and politicians aren't leading indicators of where the world is going. Businesspeople and entrepreneurs are. Don't ask what the government is going to do. Follow the entrepreneurs to find out what they are spending their time on.

Now the good news:

More than ever before, the tools exist to make yourself more attractive to employers, to create your own job, and to connect and communicate with people who share the same passions and interests as you do wherever they are.

Many of those who are unemployed will end up

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working for themselves. We used to call this freelancing, but it's become rather fashionable, and many find that the flexibility and freedom outweigh the unpredictability of personal income. In fact many people who were laid off will say that it was the best thing that happened to them as they needed the kick to set up their own kitchen table business, or become a consultant of this or that, and that "having to" set up their own firm got them to a better place.

The web enables individual empowerment as never before. You can blog about your interests. You can learn about new things and become an expert more easily through online education and free digital information. You can create a personal webpage to house all of your professional information, update your LinkedIn Network, and do research on companies very easily.

By extending your networks online through Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, you can build professional contacts and learn of business opportunities and connect with people in other countries, and find ways of providing services for them locally. Increasingly, your "natural market" is not defined by geography, but your customers are simply people who want what you sell. Thinking more broadly helps you to spot the opportunities.

There are other steps that we can take to create more employment as well. These fall into 3 categories:

1. Be Patriotic

The UK has a brand as a nation which attracts people to it because of its business people (Branson, Dyson, Beckham), musicians (Beatles, Stones, ColdPlay), unique cultural interactions and sporting events and the way that it has organised society.

British Polo Day – <http://www.britishpoloday.com/> – is a perfect example of a new company which takes an old British sport and cultural phenomenon, and is using the web to build a new global community around an element of British culture.

But equally, our healthcare and education services

are unborn multi-billion pound industries, capable of delivering GDP to and for the UK. If you have patriotism in you, be proud that British entrepreneurs such as the founders of PatientsKnowBest, Circle Partnership, Trial Reach, IHP Clinics, and nGage are taking the best of British medicine and service cultures to the world, and trampling the competition. The much-loved healthcare industry is opening up – regardless of your ideology or what the government tries to do or not, and it is a good thing. None of this touches what should be the sacrosanct position of universal coverage. However, private businesses – fast-growing, entrepreneurial firms – not private equity or bankers can frequently deliver these services best for more people. The purifying flame of profitability ensures greater sustainability of our health services, and surely sustainability is a positive thing.

2. Leverage the digital native skills of the UK's young people

What young people have in spades is an understanding of the new digital frontier. They live their lives differently than those of us in our 40's. They have a more porous border between public and private, between business and personal. They understand individual, consumer behaviour on mobile phones; this can be worth millions in focus group research. So, for big UK enterprises, don't hire the consultants; hire the digital natives – employ hundreds of young graduates, and ask them to use your products and services, make reports about the industry in which you operate in, and listen to their recommendations in earnest.

3. Seek out your Natural Allies

It is easy to be frustrated with the lack of jobs, and not want to engage in any of the above. Looking for a job can be soul-destroying, and feel like you are looking for a needle in a haystack. But where there is change, there can be tremendous opportunity.

Think of your skillset in terms of how you can be useful to your “natural allies”.

If you are an accountant, can you provide interim FD work to the neighbourhoods' small businesses?

If you are a banker, why not use your transactional expertise to structure industries like the creative industries which would benefit from people who know how to turn creativity and ideas into transactions and money?

If you are a naturally organised person, good at detail and strong on sales with some digital expertise to boot, why not offer to set up a second bedroom for hire exchange in your neighbourhood,

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and help your community leverage an asset that they have but can't monetise?

If you are really good at digital things, why not offer to give people training courses to get them into the digital world in your neighbourhood?

If you think of yourself as providing a service, and reach out to the people in whose interest it is for you to be successful, you can't help but find opportunities and jobs.

The world of 2012 will force you as a job seeker or employer to be more creative, more sales and marketing-focused, more curious about the world, and more of a business person than ever before. The network-orientation to this new world means that you must be connected – be online, or you slip further out of the center of things. However, there is a great deal of empowerment to be had, and sometimes, out of great change, comes great opportunity. Embrace it with optimism, and you may find your dream job.

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