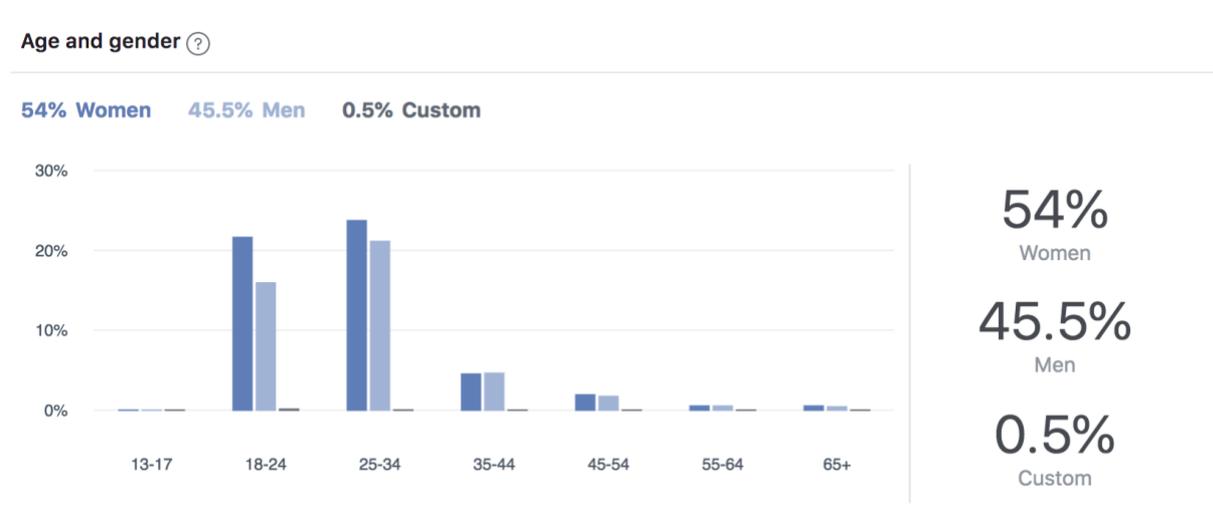




We're very proud of the FB TV Runners' group. When we founded it in 2012 we hoped we could make it a launch pad for new entrants to the television industry: we had great ambitions, but I'm not sure we ever really imagined how well it would do. We'd claim now that it's the most successful and supportive entry point for anyone, no matter what your background: important in an industry which is notoriously hard to get into if you don't have the right connections. If you're keen, talented and focused, this is the place to be. So a few weeks ago, we polled the group with a survey, to find out a bit more about you all. 500 of you replied, 38 of whom were recruiters.

Who are we?

First of all, here are some statistics. Currently there are over 55,000 members and the vast majority of you are in the age group 18-34.



It's difficult to be very accurate about how many of those 55,000 are still active; we'd expect the group to be most useful for people at the start of their careers in television, so many will have left the nursery slopes long ago and have no further need of us. Even so, the group has somewhere between 7,000 and 10,000 active users at the moment, according to the statistics Facebook provides.

Every year – as you can probably guess – we get a boost in the number of applicants in the spring, just as people are finishing their education and starting to think about finding work.

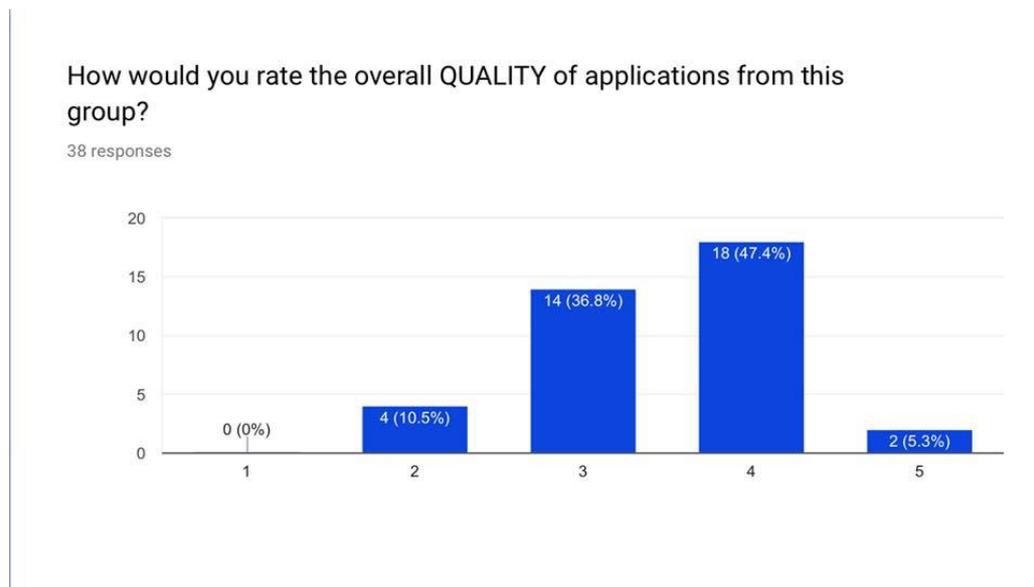
This year we added about 3,000 new members in the first couple of months: lots of people looking for that elusive first job! At a guess, I'd say that we add close to 10,000 every year.

One of the things which gives the admins huge satisfaction is to see those who found their feet through the group (or at least took some faltering first steps – let's not get too grandiose here!) coming back and recruiting runners themselves. That says an awful lot.

What works best for a recruiter?

A fair few of the membership are employers and recruiters: it's hard to know exactly how many, but – based on the number who responded to the survey – it's probably around 7-10%. As the great George Orwell said, all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others. We know that employers don't need to go far to find good, keen new entrants. We know that actually all they have to do is ask a couple of people in the office if they know anyone. We know, and they know, that for the general good of the industry we need to recruit from a wider group than our immediate circle of friends and colleagues: that's why this group is here, and that's why sometimes we are accused of being harsh: because for the group to work we have to make sure that employers using the group have a good experience. They can always go somewhere else if they don't.

So we were interested to know how well the group works for employers.

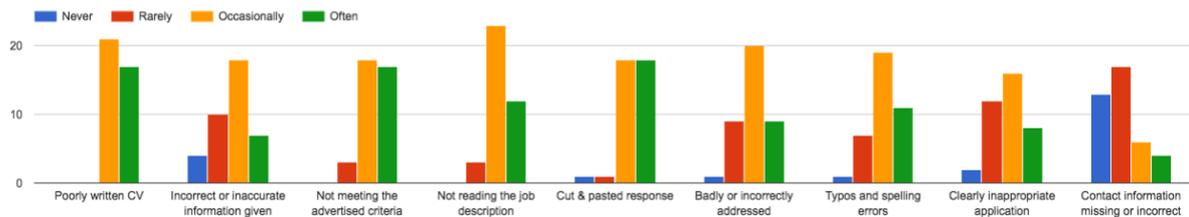


So, no-one thought it was awful. Some of them thought it was poor, but most thought it was average to good. Two people thought it was excellent! A big part of our role as admins in the group is to help you to hone your CVs and cover letters so that they hit the sweet spot for recruiters: easy to read, relevant information immediately to hand and succinct. It's what works best:

"Don't overload your cover email/CV with information - I'm usually hiring on a tight deadline and barely have time to glance at each email before deciding whether they might be appropriate for the role. Clearly highlight that you have the skills I've specified, and don't hide that info in a rambling email."

We also wanted to know which were the commonest problems employers found with the CVs they received – I suspect here they’re talking about the whole application, including the cover email.

Have you experienced any of the following in applications received?



None of this should come as news, because this is probably the subject which gets most attention here, and where we know we can help the most. The sad thing is that in pretty much every example listed those CVs will have gone straight into the “no thanks” pile. That’s because employers may well get hundreds of responses for some jobs, and most of the CVs they get will be “qualified”. So they will throw out every single one which has been carelessly put together, has typos or which doesn’t address the stipulated requirements.

“Short and sweet CVs with no waffle about uni projects, I generally want to know age and driving status and what genres they have worked in on professional projects or if not as a runner, how any previous experience will mean they are able to do the job without too much guidance.”

Also it can really pay off to do some basic research. Show that you can use your brains: google the production company, check their output, draw some intelligent conclusions!

“I recently advertised looking for a runner and I really didn't give much information just said for an awards ceremony in (area) on Tuesday, one guy applied stating exactly what the ceremony was and some other stuff about our company and guess what we employed him for the role ! “

Some roles can be done by anyone with the right attitude, while some call for specific skills and attributes. If a recruiter specifies a driver over 25, it’s almost certainly because the hire car company they’re using will not insure anyone under that age. We all know this is disappointing, particularly if you’re just weeks away from your 25th birthday, but it does mean that you won’t be considered and there is no point in applying.

“Only apply for jobs for which you meet the requirements. Don’t just cut and paste your covering note, tailor it for the job you’re applying for. Follow instructions e.g what you’re asked to put as the subject line.”

“Clearly highlight that you have the skills I've specified, and don't hide that info in a rambling email.”

“A generic CV is okay as long as it contains all the relevant information, take your time with a cover email”... to highlight how well you fit the criteria.

The other question which comes up time and again is what to include in a cover letter, and whether this should be attached as a separate document or included in the email. Our advice would always be to keep it simple: a good email will address the specific requirements cited in the job ad and encourage the recruiter to open the CV.

What should be included in the cover email? My advice would be to extract the required skills from the ad and address each in turn separately. Driver (how long, clean, can drive minivan), experience with children (DBS check, worked as au pair), some knowledge of French (au paired in France), good people skills (worked in rowdy pub as student) – you get the general idea. Keep it short, but show you understand what they need and why you qualify.

For the people who are looking for their first job in TV, please remember to highlight non-TV jobs. Working at a fast food retailer or pub for 3 years whilst at university or during the summer/weekends shows that you will often have good people skills and are experienced in the work environment. Quite often this information is hidden in 1 or 2 words at the bottom of a CV

It also underlines why the advice “to apply for everything” is so misguided: if you don’t tick every single box you are wasting the employer’s time. Do that often enough and your application won’t even get read, and that employer will stop advertising. We know that this is something many of you have been advised to do by college tutors: this is why that is a terrible idea.

The best advice for writing a good CV is to be found in the pinned post at the head of the group. Those of you with great CVs and the knack for writing a good cover letter to go with it are probably also the ones in the 55% who have successfully found work through the group. We know that a lot of people find most of their work through it, which is just great. Perhaps we can increase that percentage even more, and get an even higher proportion of you into regular work? And then you can come back in two or three years’ time and be the person doing the hiring!

It's a common observation that there aren't many “no experience needed” jobs advertised. That's true, but they do appear and you do need to keep an eagle eye and pounce immediately. One of the things I always emphasise is that there are some skills which may well mean you jump to the front of the queue. The most obvious are fluency in other languages: never hide that light under a bushel!

Why is the group successful?

When we founded this group six years ago, we hoped that it would become somewhere that new entrants could find advice and support and that employers would use to find junior staff. We were very sure that there was a big constituency of job-seekers; we weren't quite so confident that employers would come here to advertise work. That's because we know that for decades employers have recruited mainly by word of mouth, simply because of the number of inappropriate applications they would receive if they advertised. We had to find a way of connecting those two constituencies.

So we set ourselves a single simple criterion: anything posted in the group has to help newbies find work in the industry. Pretty much anything which pops up which doesn't meet that criterion will be deleted, and sometimes the poster will be muted or worse.

Applying that rule can appear a little draconian sometimes, and we know that some of you find it harsh.

I think (the admins) are too strict. I've seen posts about removing members for a small mistake like 'CV Sent' comment, which is tolerated on other groups. Considering how good of a source of work this is for some, it's very harsh to remove that source of income because of a little comment. Having said that, I'm not an employer, so obviously I've not been in their position.

Sometimes the admins are a bit too harsh on people that have simple questions. Other times I think it's fair to point out stupidity/laziness when people haven't bothered to read the rules/tips.

These are representative of the 20 or so comments you made about "the rules" and how the admins run the group.

The admins have a tricky balancing act. We have to make the group work both for jobseekers and for recruiters. Recruiters are almost always ridiculously busy doing something else, so it's important that responses to a job ad should be vital questions or tags to draw another person's attention to the job. The recruiter really doesn't need to know you've sent your CV or that you can't do those dates or don't quite fit the criteria, and they will be irritated if that's what they find when they click on a notification. That's why those rules exist. As for asking daft questions: employers want people who are self-starters, so if an ad is for an office based runner but doesn't specify the location, then it's reasonable to assume that the job will be based in the offices. A quick google will resolve the question; a comment saying "Location??" will really not endear you to them!

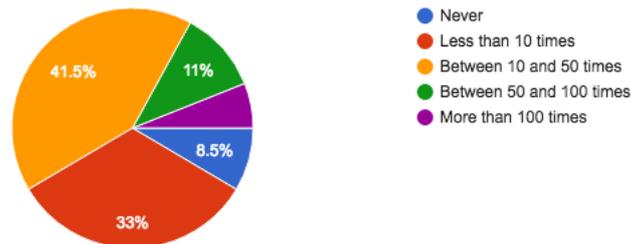
So I'd say that rather than regarding this as just another FB group, think of it instead as a recruitment space where jobseekers interface with employers. You want to appear smart, capable, eager, not entitled, argumentative or downright aggressive. So the admins will, sometimes, pull you up short, because this is your market place and you're really not helping yourself. Not just that, but if it doesn't work for recruiters they won't use it.

Applying for jobs

This is a group whose central purpose is to help new entrants establish a career in television. So obviously we're interested in how you use it – how often and with how much success.

How many times have you applied for jobs posted in the group?

446 responses



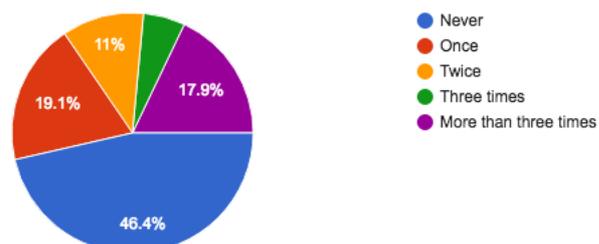
Most of you have taken the plunge. Our strong advice is only to apply for jobs for which you tick every single box, otherwise you're wasting both your time and the employer's. So either the 27 people who've applied more than 100 times are stunningly multiskilled or they're just having a go anyway. Please, if this sounds like you: don't do it! It's one of the biggest grumbles we get from employers, and there really isn't any point because you won't get the job.

Another grumble, from applicants this time, is that most of the time they get no response to their application. Most employers will receive hundreds of applications for every job, and it's simply not physically possible to respond to each one. It's disappointing, we know, but if it's any consolation it's something you'll just have to get used to. I guess I didn't get that job with Wild Pictures back in 2010, even if I did slog up from Sussex for the interview...

However, considerably more than half of our respondents have got at least one job directly through the group and many, we know, find the majority there. More than 80 in our sample say answered "more than three times", and actually that's the tip of the work iceberg. As we know, once you start to build a reputation for being reliable, smart and hard-working you won't need us at all....

How many times have you obtained a job after applying through the group?

446 responses

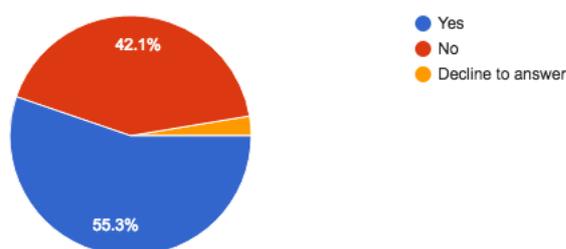


Respect other group users

This isn't a "normal" Facebook group (if there is such a thing!). Its primary purpose is to help people to find work in the television industry. The admins are, mostly, very seasoned freelancers whose responsibilities include hiring and firing and that does encourage other recruiters to try the group themselves. However, it is important to respect the privacy of the recruiters who use the group, and it's clear that many of you don't.

Have you ever been CONTACTED inappropriately after a job post?

38 responses



Over half of our employers have had random friend requests, inappropriate emails and private FB messages. Again, we ask you to think about what this achieves: it's not going to get you work and it's very likely to cause offence. It could (and does) discourage employers from using the group – and that really is the last thing any of us wants.

I've recently had applicants sending me unsolicited Facebook messenger messages which in my opinion crosses the line similar to Facebook friend requests which I've also had. This is definitely off putting.

We do ask employers who've been subject to inappropriate contact to let the group admins know; we can and do remove people who do this. So, please don't.

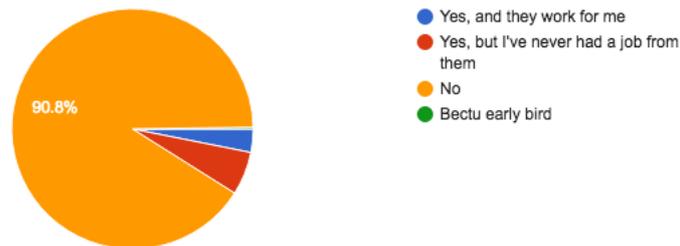
The rules are really clear and we ask everyone to read them. We know you don't - 5% of you admitted that you hadn't! - and it's frustrating when they're broken time and again.

And finally....

We asked which of you belong to subscription sites which promise to find you work. Most of these are free services, and we would encourage you to sign up to each of them. The question really is whether the paid-for sites deliver anything like value for money. Over 90% of you don't pay for access to jobs; of those that do a few (about 3%) have found work using them. 26 of you do pay but have never found work via this route.

Do you currently subscribe to any paid job services?

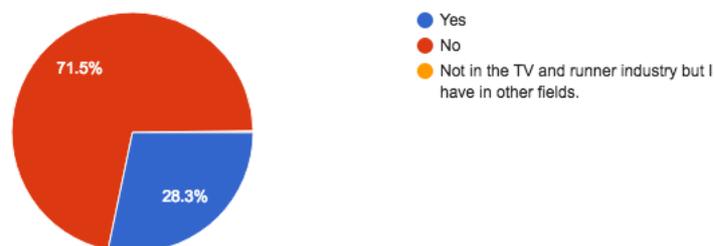
446 responses



The other big question is about unpaid work. Interestingly, the majority in the group haven't done "unpaid work".

Have you ever taken unpaid work in TV or Film (except work experience as part of your education)?

446 responses



Some – a few - of you will always insist that working unpaid got you your first paid work, but honestly the evidence just isn't there in our poll results. I'm really glad to say that most of the unpaid jobs you describe in your comments were not with mainstream production companies, and only one person said that an unpaid trial had turned into a paid job. One or two of you were still exploited by mainstream employers, and it sounds as if the value of the experience hasn't changed a bit:

I did 'work experience' at a certain big TV production house. Rather than being taught anything about the industry, I was just there to do the things the runners didn't want to do, i.e. Take the bins out, empty the dishwasher, all the while not being paid at all.

Some people feel that they've "boosted their CV" as a result, but that's pretty intangible. It's easier to find evidence that once you've found your niche in unpaid micro-budget movies it's really hard to move away:

I've worked in the industry since 2005 and it's very rare that I'm paid for my time. I don't think I've ever been paid for television or film work, apart from expenses.

The industry union BECTU believes that there are two parallel feature film paths, and they rarely cross over. After 15 years or so of campaigning in this area, our advice would be to avoid offers of work which is unpaid unless this is a true collaboration where a group of individuals come together to create something. If your labour is mainly going to support the advancement of someone else, steer clear.

One name comes up time and again in the comments about unpaid work: the BBC. This is difficult, because it seems to be completely random whether you end up being placed somewhere where people treat you with respect and allow you to follow them around into the most amazing experiences, or you get stuck clearing out the stationery cupboard for a week. We would love the BBC to monitor its work placements properly and make sure that they comply with the legislation (ie that placements are supernumerary and people are never expected to replace a paid worker), but they don't. So for some of you your BBC placements have been amazing and offered real opportunities and a phone full of contacts; others just feel they've been had.

Another thing comes up a lot, and that is that it's necessary to work unpaid "to build up your CV". We would sincerely beg to differ, at least in the television sector: there honestly aren't many shortcuts and most PMs can spot unpaid work a mile off. In some cases they'll actively avoid people with a lot of short-film and other similar jobs on their CV because a lot of people will pick up bad habits. This group does carry quite a lot of jobs suitable for brand new entrants, especially during the spring and summer months – that's because the longer days and better (?) weather make it better for shooting. No-one says it's easy, but then this is never going to be an easy career.

So I suppose my take-home message would be to subject your CV to the sternest of tests, using the links we give at the top of the group. Understand that employers don't expect you to be fully-fledged filmmakers: they're looking for bright, enterprising fast learners who often already have the key skills to be brilliant runners: the ability to think on your feet, deal with people from every walk of life (and every temper too) and who will quickly become vital members of their team. You might be a future Kubrick, but right now what matters is your ability to remember who wanted the latte and who wanted the decaff (and not to mix them up).

I'll let you sign off. Remember, this group is what YOU make it.

Really useful group even to just gain an understanding of the industry and what employers look for in a runner. I feel like many newbies are disillusioned by how hard you have to work to get into the industry but the admins combat this attitude by highlighting that networking, being persistent and working hard at everything will help you progress. I would not be in the position I am now without this group.