

BUSINESS & FINANCE

A job? I can't even get an internship

Finding work after uni has never been harder. To make matters worse, even landing unpaid work experience is a struggle, as Candice Krieger finds out

► GRADUATES HAVE BEEN faced with unrelenting gloomy news of late with unemployment doubling to its highest level for more than a decade.

One in five who graduated in the past year is unable to find work within six months. Britain's jobless now totals 2.5 million – a 7.9 per cent unemployment rate, rising to 20.3 per cent among those aged 16 to 24 – with many now questioning the value of a degree in light of rising tuition fees.

University leavers are being steered towards voluntary work experience but even that is hard to come by in today's competitive marketplace. There are around six per cent fewer graduate jobs than four years ago, according to The High Fliers' graduate jobs survey.

Businessman Shruga Zaltzman has made it his mission to help university-leavers find work placements. Mr Zaltzman, a former

manager at a successful telecommunications company, is the managing director of TrainE-Traide, a Jewish non-profit organisation. Founded in 2007, it helps individuals make the most of business opportunities. And Mr Zaltzman, 34, believes there are plenty such opportunities around. He says: "It is not that placements are unavailable.

"It's all about who you know. Some large companies may have reduced the placements being offered and small-to-medium-sized firms do not have the time or resources to train or recruit interns, but we can get through to all these companies using our network of contacts and relationships."

This week, Microsoft announced plans for 1,000 apprenticeships in London over the next three years and Asda and Centrica have promised to create jobs in the UK this year as part of plans

Shruga Zaltzman

to drive economic growth. PwC still has around 50 vacancies in the firm's assurance practice for this year. "Placements are still possible if you have a relationship with the company."

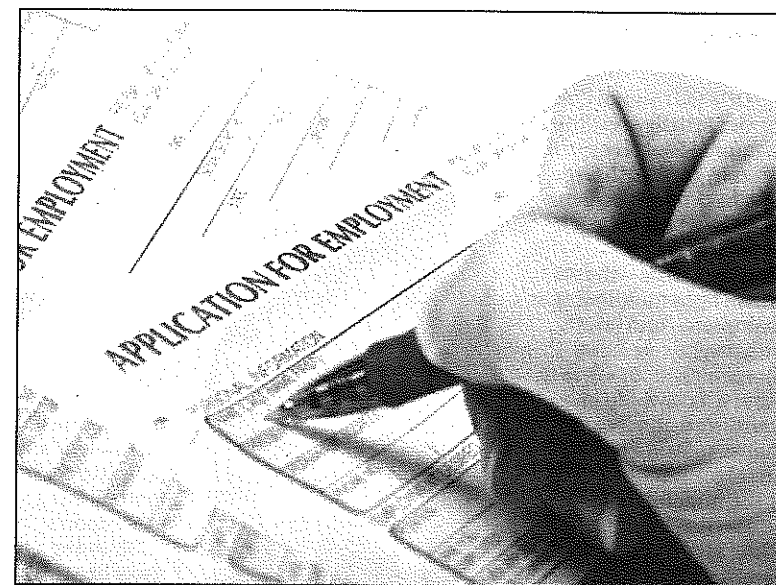
Last year, Mr Zaltzman helped place more than 55 candidates with companies including Investec, Swiss Re, GE Capital Withers and Eversheds. Thirty per-cent of placements turn into permanent positions. Around 40 companies have signed up for this year and Mr Zaltzman is confident they can place 100 candidates.

TrainE-Traide has also teamed up with the Union of Jewish Students and Gerald Ronson's daughter Lisa, the commercial director of property giant Heron International, which will be a host company. "There are fantastic opportunities in the Jewish community that maybe aren't available in the wider community. It's the 'Big Jewish Society'.

"We are pulling together all our resources to match people up."

He continues: "Employers are receiving up to 200 applications per job. More than 640,000 students applied for UK university places to start last autumn – an increase of nearly 14 per cent on 2009 – and in three years time, they will be graduating into a saturated market. Even with qualifications and capability, those lacking the relevant experience won't even get an interview."

The government has expressed its commitment to boosting employ-



Competition: Employers are receiving up to 200 applications per job

ment. It has announced plans to offer unpaid training to jobless youngsters and is intending to extend the New Enterprise Allowance, a £2,000 grant for unemployed people who want to start their own business. But Mr Zaltzman is wary. "I would encourage people not to take the grant and rush straight into business until you have been in employment. There is no substitute for experience.

"Interns can be expensive to train, which is where the need for a middleman comes in. We can put students in companies, which can try them out to see if they benefit them.

"There are agencies out there but their focus is to make money," says Mr Zaltzman, who holds an MBA from Bar-Ilan University in Israel.

Last year, TrainE-Traide received a £135,000 grant from Hackney Council to develop an employment programme for Charedi men in Stamford Hill. It also provides courses, careers guidance and new-business incubations. Selected start-ups

use the organisation's office space and are provided with a high-profile mentors. They include Leo Noé, the executive chairman of F&C REIT. "We are looking for more start-ups. We don't give them money. We hold their hand and get them on the road."

FOR THOSE WHO DO GET A PLACEMENT:

- Network and make contacts
- Join in social activities
- Take on all different tasks
- Use your IT skills to make someone else's job easier
- Set up a LinkedIn profile and include anyone you meet – quickly.
- People forget
- Remember to say thank you – a note after initial interview or placement will help the company remember you