So - you want to get a job in wargaming?

Major Tom Mouat MBE MSc PGCE psc act sim,
Officer Commanding the Defence Wargaming, Simulation and Modelling School
at the Defence Academy of the UK.

This is a personal opinion – **NOT** the MOD view. Other methods and organisations are available!

Please note that I did not do this – I had an average Army career, until I was told I needed to do some jobs I didn't want to do (and would have been terrible at) if I was going to be promoted. I declined and did jobs that were fun and that I was good at (mainly in simulation and modelling) and only ended up as a "wargaming expert" after 40 years thanks to learning "in the margins" from some amazing people.

A career in professional wargaming is not something to be taken lightly. There are jobs available, especially recently thanks to the increased number of threats around the world, but there are a lot of people who apply because they think it would be cool to play ASL, Campaign for North Africa, or Twilight Imperium all day (if you don't know what those are, and why you wouldn't want to play them in a professional setting, you are off to a bad start).

It's a profession that needs you to demonstrate imagination, versatility, initiative, and the *ability to work with people* (and help design games with a specific purpose, to played in a strict time limit).

I get a lot of requests from people for advice, so I have put some thoughts on what I wish I had done, below.

Build Facilitation Experience Early

Skills at facilitation are essential for professional wargaming. Being able to stand up in front of a bunch of strangers (some of whom might be actively hostile), explain how the game works, the players' roles in it, how to deal with anything that "isn't in the rules" but is a valid choice in the real world, how to adjudicate results, and spot if someone is getting pissed off or disengaged (and how to manage that) *is crucial*.

A good way to develop facilitation skills is by *running* role-playing games (RPGs). They allow you observe, guide, adjudicate and manage players in an open world environment. D&D is probably too much of a trope to be helpful – something more based in the real world, or hard science fiction is probably better. The Commandant General of the USMC said that there was nothing like a Zombie scenario to get people thinking properly about logistics…

To go to the next level, I would recommend acting as a *Control* in Megagames. These are large-scale, multi-player games with a *team* of facilitators to manage gameplay, adjudicate rules, and keep players engaged. Serving as Control will give you hands-on experience in interpreting player actions, managing chaos, and ensuring the game meets its aims. It also connects you with a vibrant community of designers and players who often overlap (more than you might think) with the professional wargaming world. SWMegagames. Megagame Assembly.

Invest in Formal Education

While practical experience is essential, formal training will boost your credibility. The UK offers several respected courses (there are others if you look for them):

- **Wargaming and Strategy at King's College London** is a self-paced online course that explores how wargaming informs strategic decision-making across sectors.

- **Stone, Paper Scissors** is a game design consultancy that does a lot of work for defence, but also offers several excellent training courses.

- **MA in Wargaming and Resilience Planning at Brunel University** is the UK's first full master's programme dedicated to wargaming. It combines game design, strategic thought, and resilience planning, with opportunities to showcase your work to industry professionals.

- **Bath Spa University** offers a part-time PhD in Wargaming by research, supervised by Dr John Curry.

- **Defence Wargaming Courses** at the Defence Academy introduce participants to the principles and practice of wargaming, with lectures and practical sessions. It's essential for those entering defence-related roles and is available to non-MOD (but places are limited!).

These programmes can not only deepen your theoretical understanding but also *connect you with mentors and peers* who can open doors to future opportunities.

Attend the Connections UK Conference

The annual Connections UK Conference is the heart of the UK's professional wargaming community. Currently at Brunel University, it has talks, workshops, and gameplay sessions designed to advance and preserve the art and science of wargaming. It's a rare chance to meet practitioners from defence, academia, and industry, and learn from leading voices in the field.

Newcomers are especially welcome, with dedicated sessions like "Wargaming 101" and pathways to help you navigate the event. Volunteering, presenting, or even running a game demo at the conference can dramatically raise your profile.

Showcase Your Work Online

In a field where much of the work is project-based and often classified, having a public portfolio is essential. Create a website or blog that showcases:

- Game designs (even fictional or speculative ones), preferably as PnP.
- Written analyses or post-game reports.
- Reflections on facilitation experiences.
- Reviews of wargaming books or conferences.
- Show you understand dice, probability distributions, and when they are useful.
- Links to published work or academic papers.

This acts as both your CV and calling card. It shows potential collaborators and employers what you're capable of and how you think. It also helps you build a personal brand in a field where visibility can be limited. A good example is Evan D'Alessandro.

Final Thoughts

Professional wargaming is a growing field with applications in defence, policy, education, and resilience planning. To thrive, you'll need to blend creativity, *people skills* and theory with practice. If you design games (and you should) they must be for a *specific purpose*, and you will need to be able to analyse the outputs from the game to show that it meets that purpose. So - facilitate games, take courses, attend conferences, analyse outputs, and build a portfolio that reflects your unique approach to using games for a purpose.

The community is welcoming, *but the path is self-driven* – so *you* must take the initiative to make your mark.