

How to Research Companies

Basic Tips

- Do your homework. If you research the company, the industry, and the position, an employer will know you want the job. It shows enthusiasm, preparation and “smarts.”
- Research will help you decide if this company is the right place for you. Check out the company’s financial history, culture and work environment. What are the company values, and do they match with yours?
- Start at the company website. You will find all the basics: information on the company’s products and services, mission statement, history, press releases, locations, job openings and much more. Read the company’s annual report. Look through company personnel profiles and, if possible, find information on the person who you will interview with.
- Next, research the company through your university or college career center (if applicable). Career centers offer a multitude of resources to research companies and organizations on the web, in journals, books, directories and newsletters. Career centers also bring recruiters from many companies to campus.
- You can also do research through independent, outside sources. For example, see if the company is listed on www.vault.com , Investor Relations Information Network at www.irin.com, or Hoover’s, Inc., at www.hoovers.com. If the company is small, try searching local newspapers for information.
- Get an industry view of the company. Check out trade journals at a university or public library to see what other people are writing about the company. This gives you a broader sense of the industry as a whole and how that company fits into the larger picture. You can also find out who are the company’s top competitors.
- Run a general web search and see what comes up on search engines like Yahoo, Google and others. Try searching through newspapers for the latest business news about the company.
- Find an inside contact to gather information on the company and the position you are interested in (LinkedIn is a good source for this). Ask the recruiter or someone in the human resources department if you can speak to an employee who has a position similar to the one you want. Also use your network to connect with someone else working in the field.
- College alumni organizations are a great resource. Many career centers at universities offer alumni directories and networks to put you in touch with alum in your career field.
- Consider joining a professional association – then you can access its directory and find inside help. A local Chamber of Commerce is also a good source for networking and learning about local companies.

- If you make contact with an employee, ask about the work environment, department interaction, culture, and management style. You want to learn what your day will be like if you work there.
- Check out company blogs. Find employee or ex-employee blogs. Take what ex-employees say with “a grain of salt” since they may have been let go from the company.
- Try online career networking to get in touch with employees inside the company. Consider posting questions to online job boards and see what other people think of the company.
- If you are researching a company in a new region, look into area guides. Sperling’s Best Places (www.bestplaces.net) has comprehensive data on cities across the country.

