

How to Research a Potential Employer

Whether you are preparing for an interview, networking event, or even just sending in an application, successfully researching the company of interest will be a valuable first step. You can learn a lot of important information in the process including:

- Whether the company is a good cultural fit for you
- Details about the company that can help answer “why do you want to work for us?”
- The organizational opportunities or challenges faced and how you might contribute to the company's success
- Relevant questions and conversational points to use during the interview

You can make a great first impression on the representatives you meet in the company by having done thorough research. A lack of information will speak poorly of you as a candidate, so make sure you take the time to do it right.

Decide which companies to research.

First, compile a list of the organizations you are interested in researching. Consider the following sources of information while putting your list together.

- Industry leaders
- Organizations that are in your geographic area or an area where you would like to relocate
- Frequently listed companies on an online job board keyword search
- Recommendations from mentors, friends and family members

Ask questions.

Create a list of what you hope to learn from your research. Develop a set of questions you can use to guide you in your research. Here are some sample questions to get you started.

- What does the company do?
- What are the mission, vision, objectives of the company?
- How large is the company?
- Where is the company located? Is it local? Are there national or international branches?
- Who are the key competitors? What are similar companies?
- Where does the company rank in their market?
- Who are the potential hiring managers? Who are the top executives?
- What is the history of the company?
- What is the job outlook for my chosen profession at this company?

Find answers.

You will likely find the answers to the questions above from multiple sources. Validated web sources, as well as information gathered first-hand from people working in your field or at your company of interest, are great starting points.

- **Official site:** Start with the company’s website. Check out their “About Us” or company history pages to get a solid background about its beginnings and directions for the future. Take note of the company’s mission statement, major accomplishments, key clients, contact information and more.
- **Social media:** Check out the company’s footprint on social media starting with their accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Be sure to follow your company of interest on any platforms you belong to in order to stay up to date on issues affecting their business, future opportunities, etc.
- **LinkedIn:** This robust resource has information about organizations, career paths, open positions, discussion groups and forums, knowledge communities, connections with recruiters and professional development resources. Here are some tips for making the most of your LinkedIn search:
 - Use the “search box” at the top-center of the page to look up key words, company names, positions and titles, university majors and programs etc. Any words you enter in the box will result in matching profiles of people, companies, positions etc.
 - Take note of profiles with people who are in your chosen career field. Notice what other companies they have worked at, what some of their previous roles were, what skills or accomplishments are important to that company/position/industry? Use these keywords to find similar positions and companies in your area.
 - Find the company’s profile page and follow them. You will be updated with positions, news, accomplishments, challenges and more.
- **Other sites:** You may find great information about company culture, pay, and stability through sites like Glassdoor.com. Starting your search on engines like Google, Bing or Yahoo can also provide valuable information including the company’s contact information and address, relevant and recent news articles, and how the company ranks against its competitors.