Researching Employers

Researching potential employers will be helpful to you in all phases of the job search. Researching will allow you to target the employers that most closely align with your career goals. It's important to be well-informed about organizations so you can better market yourself through tailoring your cover letter and resume, when interviewing, or when speaking with employers at a networking event or career fair.

Things to consider when conducting your research

- What is the industry?
- Is it a public, private, non-profit organization?
- Where is it located?
- What is the size of the organization?
- What is the mission/vision?
- What products or services does the organization make, sell or provide?
- Who are their competitors and how are they different?
- What is their overall reputation?
- What is the earning potential at this organization and is there room for upward mobility?
- Beyond salary, what is included in the benefits package offered by the company?
- Have they received any awards or recognition?

Sources of information for researching employers

1. **Network** Identify and contact people who work for or know about the employer or industry. These could be people you meet a career fair, family members, or neighbors. Search LinkedIn to find alumni contacts. Set up an informational interview and ask your contacts about their experience.

2. **Company Websites** Look at the company's mission statement, the news section, information about the management team, locations, history, and organization structure.

3. **Annual Reports** All publicly held companies (traded on a stock exchange) and non-profit organizations with $100k in annual contributions must publish an annual report. Reports are federally mandated and include information that must be reported to organization stakeholders. Key information such as goals for growth, challenges and financial information is contained in the report. If annual reports are not posted to company websites, try searching here:

   - For-profit organizations: www.annualreports.com
   - Non-profit organizations: www.guidestar.org

4. **Social Media** Learning about the culture of an organization can be easy to do through social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram. One of the best sites is www.Linkedin.com. Many companies have profiles on LinkedIn, the world's largest online professional networking site. Search "Companies" by organization name or select your search criteria, such as location, size, keyword, and industry type. "Follow" the organization to stay up to date with the latest news and company information.

5. **Additional Websites**

   Wetfeet.com: provides state and city guides that give local company directories for specific industries, as well as detailed information about employers, careers, and industries.

   Glassdoor.com: holds a database of more than 8 million company reviews, CEO approval ratings, salary reports, interview reviews and questions, benefits reviews, and more. This information is unique in that is shared by employees.

   Vault.com: known for its rankings, ratings, and reviews on thousands of top employers and hundreds of internship programs. The data is collected and verified through directed surveys of active employees and enrolled students.

   Hoover's: provides company rankings, top competitors, company profiles and additional information. Preliminary content is free, but more detailed reports require purchase.

6. **Read the News**

   Use Google News search or look in the Wall Street Journal, Minneapolis St. Paul Business Journal, Pioneer Press, Star Tribune or newspapers in the local area that you are searching to find out about new company developments and industry trends.

   Set up a Google Alert (www.google.com/alerts) to monitor the web for interesting new content. By creating a Google Alert, you will get email notifications any time Google finds new results on an employer or organization that interests you.