



# Researching Employers and Industries

## IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH:

During major and career exploration, employer and industry research provides an opportunity to learn more about your options as well as important information for your decision-making process. During the application and interview process, research allows you to target the employers most closely related to your career goals. Employer research provides information to assist in marketing yourself as a match for a job and company. You can use what you learn to [customize your resume and cover letter](#), help you prepare for an [interview](#), impress employers at a [career fair](#), and more!

## WHAT TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE COMPANY:

- The industry
- Public, private, or non-profit
- Its mission/purpose
- The size and structure of the company
- Location
- What services/products it makes or provides
- Any awards/recognition it has received
- Recent news about the company
- Who their competitors are and how are they different
- The overall reputation
- The earning and upward mobility potential
- Benefits package offered beyond salary

## RESEARCH STRATEGIES:

### Talk to People:

- Identify people who work for or know about the employer or industry. These could be people you meet at a career fair, family members, neighbors, or alumni contacts (see the “Identifying Your Network” section of the Internship/Job Search Guide for strategies on how to find professional contacts).
- Set-up informational interviews (see the “Informational Interviewing” section of the Major/Career Exploration Guide or the Internship/Job Search Guide to learn more). Ask contacts about the company culture, values and their overall experience.

### Assess Employer’s Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion:

- Read Villanova’s guide for students [How to Evaluate an Organization’s Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#).
- Review NACE’s [Questions Students May Ask to Assess Your Organization’s Commitment to DEI](#)

### Company Websites:

- Look at the company’s mission statement, the news section, information about the management team, locations, history, and organization structure. Visit their “Careers” or “Employment” page to see job postings they currently have open.

### LinkedIn:

- Many companies have profiles on LinkedIn, the world’s largest online professional networking site. Learn about the organization, find contacts to connect with, see jobs posted, stock data, and more through the company page. Select “Follow” on the company page, to stay in tune with the latest news and company information.
- Search for the [University of Minnesota school page](#) and click “Alumni” to see career-related data on UMN alumni.

### 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. Key information such as goals for growth, challenges and financial information is contained in the report. These may be found on a company website, [Annual Reports](#) (for-profit) or [Guide Star](#) (non-profit).

### Read the News:

- Use Google News search, the Wall Street Journal or local newspapers in the area you are searching to find out about new company developments and industry trends.
- Set up a [Google Alert](#) for interesting new content. By creating a Google Alert, you will get email notifications when Google finds new results on a company that interests you.

### Websites and Social Media:

- Look at websites with employee reviews, such as [Glassdoor](#). **Keep in mind the information may be biased.**
- Companies also use social media like Facebook and Twitter to share news and connect with followers.

### Databases:

- Check out [Researching Employers, Industries and Career Opportunities](#) and explore the “Company Information” and “Industries” pages to find searchable databases. [IBIS World](#) is the U.S.’s largest provider of industry-based research.
- Visit the “Employers” tab on [Handshake](#) to search companies by industry and location.
- City business publications, i.e. [Mpls/St. Paul Business Journal](#) have detailed company information.
- [The American Council of Engineering Companies of MN](#) provides a directory of engineering organizations.