

Researching Industries and Employers

WHY RESEARCH A COMPANY?

Company and industry research will lead you to information about many different employers and will allow you to make an informed decision about a particular industry or company. It will help you decide on the right industry for you. In addition, it also allows you to identify the needs of the company and market yourself appropriately. Finally, it is important to know information about a company during an interview. Employers perceive “researching the company” as a critical factor in the evaluation of applicants because it reflects their interest and savvy. Company research helps you show initiative and enthusiasm, and gives you confidence in answering questions during an interview.

HOW DO I CONDUCT COMPANY / INDUSTRY RESEARCH?

Approach your research in the same manner as you would for a research paper or project. You will use a variety of sources such as the internet, magazines, periodicals, and newspaper articles.

One effective way to research a company is to break the process down into 3 parts:

1. Research one particular company in depth
2. Research the target industry
3. Compare and contrast a small group of companies within that industry

For example, if you have an upcoming interview with a bank, research not only the firm and what it does, but also the specific job opportunities. You would also want to learn more about the banking/financial field and what role that specific plays in the marketplace. Finally, you should find out if the company has been in the news lately.

WHERE DO I FIND THE INFORMATION?

Industry Research

The purpose of industry research is to get a “big picture” of the business environment. Pay particular attention to industry needs, research and development projects, and future outlook.

- Standard and Poor's *Industry Surveys* identify economic conditions, future outlooks, recent developments and major industry players. Available through the Stevens library website (<http://www.stevens.edu/library/research/azlist.html>).
- *US Industry and Trade Outlook* provides basic statistics for over 300 manufacturing and service industries, along with a prospectus for the next 5 years. Available in the library.
- *Trade/Professional Associations* provide information about industry trends, recent happenings and development, and allow networking opportunities (often at a discount for students).
- *The Wall Street Journal* is an excellent tool for learning about industry news and trends. Available through the library.

INFORMATION TO OBTAIN

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|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| ▪ General industry information | ▪ Regulatory issues |
| ▪ Industry trends | ▪ Geography |
| ▪ Patent/trademark situation | ▪ History |
| ▪ Legal issues | ▪ Market Leaders |

External Resources for Researching a Specific Company

There are numerous publications that profile companies. They range from general to specific, covering particular companies in particular regions of the country. Most of these publications can be found in any bookstore; but some will only be found in libraries. Most company profiles are written to assist investors, but they can still be a valuable source of information.

- *Bloomberg* - Online Magazine <http://www.bloomberg.com>
- *Business Week* - Online Magazine <http://www.businessweek.com>
- *Crain's Detroit* - Business Newspaper Online <http://www.crainsdetroit.com>
- *Fortune* - Online Magazine <http://www.fortune.com>
- *Google or other search engines* - type in the company name and see what comes up
- *Hoover's Online* - The Business Network <http://www.hoovers.com/free/>

- *Value Line* - Online Investment Magazine <http://www.valueline.com>
- *Vault.com* - The Insider Career Network <http://www.vault.com>
- *Wall Street Journal* - available through the library

Internal Resources for Researching a Specific Company

Internal company information can be helpful for both large and small companies. This information often can be found on the company website, or through publications distributed at information sessions and career fairs.

- *Company websites*
- *Company Newsletters*
- *Job postings/employment brochures*
- *Annual or Quarterly reports* - <http://www.annualreportservice.com/>
- *Proxy statements* - lists the compensation of upper level executives, directors, and CEOs
- *10K Reports* - reports of publicly traded companies given to the SEC; provides financial information, affiliations with other companies, competitors, outstanding litigation, and biographies of officers and directors. <http://www.tenkwizard.com/>
- *The Company Itself* - ASK! Use information sessions, career fairs, alumni, and informational interviews

Small, Local, or Privately Owned Companies

Small, local, or privately-owned companies may have limited published materials and may not be listed on investment websites. It may take additional legwork to gather information.

- *Local/National Chamber of Commerce*
- *Local/State Industrial Boards*
- *State and Government publications* - each state publishes a directory of manufacturers found in the state

INFORMATION TO OBTAIN

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| ▪ Company mission/philosophy | ▪ Financial health |
| ▪ Products/services | ▪ Company outlook and growth prospects |
| ▪ Customers | ▪ New management |
| ▪ Competitors | ▪ Recent newsworthy items |

RESEARCH TIPS

- Remember that a company's website reflects what the company wants you to see – use several sources to get a more complete picture
- Research competitor companies and draw comparisons/contrasts
- Research takes time and detailed record keeping is essential – use chart below as a guideline
- Remember to compare the information gathered to your own likes/dislikes and values

HOW TO INCORPORATE YOUR RESEARCH INTO AN INTERVIEW

- At minimum, you should go into an interview knowing what the company does (products and/or services), where the company is located, who the company's customers are, and a basic job description
- Incorporate your research into your questions to be asked at the end of your interview. However, be careful how you address negative or sensitive issues, such as a recent SEC investigation or a management shakeup
- Incorporate your research into your answers. Your research has likely led you to discover a particular company's values and management philosophy. Be sure to emphasize this information when formulating your answers, and demonstrate how your values and goals are aligned with those of the company
- Use your research to develop enthusiasm and excitement about a particular industry or company. For example, why do you find the financial field exciting? What is it about the pharmaceutical industry that excites you? Why do you like design engineering as opposed to manufacturing or construction?

Company Research Table

Company Name	
Location(s)	
Subsidiaries/Divisions	
Size of the firm by employees and assets	
Names of key personnel	
Gross sales/net profit from last year	
Potential Growth of Industry/Field	
Company plans for expansion	
Products/Services	
Customers	
Company Goals	
Competitors	
Relevant recent events in the news	
Employee turnover rate	
Organizational structure	
Company values	
Training/career path	