



Student Counseling and Career Services Know Before You Go...

Be prepared by researching organizations before you apply

Why should I research an organization before a career fair, informational interview or job interview?

- You will be able to confidently answer any questions you may be asked regarding the organization, its competitors, its main products or services, and why you are interested in that organization.
- You will also demonstrate that you took the time to find out about the organization, and that you are thorough and detail-oriented.
- You will be able to create better follow-up questions to ask at the end of your meeting or interview.

What information should I get about the organization?

- What products or services do they provide?
- Who are their customers or clients?
- Who are their main competitors, or what other challenges do they face?
- What's new and exciting at this organization?
- What do they seem especially proud of when looking at their website?

Where do I start?

Company Research Resources

The Organization's Website

Make this your first—but not only—stop. Use a search engine to locate the company's website and read it thoroughly. That means clicking through the entire website, especially the "mission statement" and the "about us" link. Check to see if the company has links for topics such as *environmental policy*, *media newsroom*, *social responsibility*, *sponsorship*, *events*, *corporate culture*, *corporate giving*, or *diversity*.

The Organization's LinkedIn Page

Go to your LinkedIn profile page, or create one now if you don't!

<http://learn.linkedin.com/students/step-1/>

You may enter a company name in the search box at the top of the page, making sure that the drop down list says "companies." (In LinkedIn, "company" means any organization.) Once you have some connections, you will be able to see people in your network who are connected to the company. They can also be a source of information.

Search Engines, e.g. Google

Search for the organization name + news and you may unearth press releases, local and national media stories, reviews of the organization's products or services, etc.

More Company Research Resources

Facebook Pages

Organizations are putting more effort into their Facebook pages, and they will expect younger job applicants in particular to be familiar with them.

General Interest Newspapers and Periodicals

Local papers will publish stories about organizations in their area, whether they are business-related news (mergers, expansions, layoffs, etc.) or “feel good” pieces. For instance, an organization may have had a food drive for the local homeless shelter recently. National papers will report on larger stories. Use the Ronald Williams Library to help in your search. For Chicago-area companies, start with the Chicago Tribune and the Chicago Sun-Times websites.

Business Journals

Business journals give information on local as well as national and international companies. You can track down information as varied as relocations, mergers, or new CEO bios. Try The Wall Street Journal and Crain’s Chicago Business to start.

Professional Journals

Search for journals in your field of work. These provide industry news articles, which will assist you in demonstrating that you are current in your field during your interview; advice articles for job seekers or those looking to advance; and company profiles.

SEC documents

For publicly-traded companies, you can learn a lot by reading the documents they are required to file with the Securities and Exchange Committee. A document called a 10-K or 10-Q will often have longer narrative sections that detail employees, locations, current challenges, and much more. See www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml to search.

Going Deeper on Google

Google has many areas to search. After reviewing the pages that pop up when you search, spend some time using the tabs at the side to also search: Images, Videos, News, Blogs, and Discussions.

YouTube.com

In addition to searching Google for blog postings, check out YouTube.com. Companies often post videos of advertising or other marketing communications that they want people to see.

Glassdoor.com

Billed as “an inside look at jobs and companies,” this website has inside information about what it’s like to work at many larger companies, and even interview questions you might be asked.

Pinterest.com

Pinterest users create pinboards of things that interest them, and on those pinboards may be many references to organizations you are interested in, some that you won’t find elsewhere.

Wikipedia.org

This old standby may have detailed articles on organizations, especially larger ones, with clickable references at the end of the article for you to dig deeper.