

EMPLOYER RESEARCH

Employer research is one of the most important steps in the job/internship search process, but is often given limited to no attention. In fact, one of the most frequent complaints employers have about interviewees is that they don't know anything about their organization. Doing your homework can help you stand out, since you'll be able to answer – and ask – questions more knowledgeably and convey the level of interest the employer is seeking.

Following are the basic questions you should be able to answer for your first interview. Questions about the area for which you are interviewing may be even more probing. Note that these are in addition to the [questions about the job, career field, and industry](#) you need to answer.

Resources for answering these questions are found on the back page. Make sure to connect with Career Services, faculty, reference library staff, and your network for assistance in your research. Call 315.684.6615 to schedule an appointment with Career Services.

Questions for employer research

- What is the mission of the organization?
- What are its leading products and services?
 - The most recent product launches, campaigns, cases, projects, etc.?
 - The signature products, campaigns, cases, projects, etc.?
- Who are its primary customers? Primary suppliers?
- Who are its primary competitors?
- What is the structure of the organization, and where is the location you are interviewing for within the structure (e.g.: is it the company headquarters, regional office, only location, etc.)?
- Is the organization a for-profit, non-profit, or government entity?
- If a for-profit company, is it publicly-held or privately-held?
 - If publicly-held, what is their stock price? What has its performance been over the past five years?
 - If privately-held, what information is available about the owners and company performance?
- If a non-profit organization or governmental organization, where does its funding come from?
- What are the strategic goals of the organization?
- What are the opportunities for growth of the organization?
- What are the potential threats to it?
- Has the organization been in the news recently? Its employees?
- Who are the executive managers? The senior managers for the position for which you are interviewing?
- Where does the organization advertise?
- What type of community organizations or events does it support, if applicable?
- What work/life balance does it promote?
- What type of people does it hire?
- What do current and former employees say about the organization?

Resources for employer research

You should use a number of different research sources to get a balanced and comprehensive picture of a potential employer, including:

- The employer's website. Here you can find its mission statement (about us or home page), information about products and services (who we are, what we do), general customer base, recent company developments (press releases, what's new), type of employees (work for us, career opportunities), and more. If the employer is a public company, it must publish an annual report which will address many of the questions you need answered. Most companies have a link for the annual report on their website; if you can't find one there, use [Yahoo! Finance](#) (it's accessible through the SEC Filings tab in the left-hand banner of the company page).
- Business websites such as [Yahoo! Finance](#), [Hoovers](#), and [Vault](#) have snapshots of operating and financial data for public companies. [Guidestar](#) and [The Foundation Center](#) are good resources for nonprofit employers. There's no need to buy a subscription for any of these sites; the general information you need is on the public pages (you may, however, be asked to create a free account to get to it). The on-line subscriptions available through Morrisville's library (see next item) provide you the same type of detailed information you'd get that the subscription sections of these sites.
- Through [MSC library databases](#) like Business and Company Resource Center, Business Source Complete and Lexis/Nexis Academic, you can access more financial and business data, as well as newspaper and magazine articles from thousands of publications. Articles from independent sources are especially important when looking at the business performance of an organization.
- Individuals working or who have worked at the organization can offer an insider's view; they can both confirm (or correct) what you've already found and provide you new information. Check with faculty or Career Services to determine if we have alumni at the organization; you can also reach out through your network, [LinkedIn](#), and industry or career field professional associations.
- Learn more about your interviewers through [Google](#) and [LinkedIn](#) searches. It is helpful to know the interviewer's career path – you never know what you may have in common!