Governors State
U N I V E R S I T Y

Employer Research Guide

Anyone who has conducted a successful job search will tell you that it is quite time consuming, and researching employers is yet another component that will add to the time it takes. However, most employers generally claim that the worst candidates for jobs are those who have not done their "homework." In other words, most employers are seeking candidates who have at least learned the basics about their organization. Why should you conduct employer research?

1. Because it demonstrates an interest in the employer and their organization.
2. It shows motivation and ingenuity.
3. Doing so helps you to decide if you want to work for the organization.
4. It helps you to learn about the culture and basic facts related to the employer's mission and goals.
5. You will be confident in interviews when speaking about your own fit within the organization.

How do I research potential employers?

The first step in researching employers is to locate people who have worked there or who know someone who has worked there. In addition, you can find people who have interacted with the organization in some capacity (as a supplier or granting agency, for just two examples). In doing so, you are also building your social network that will assist you in your search. (See the guide on networking and informational interviewing to learn more about this essential process.)

The second step is to study the materials provided by the organization, whether it is their web site or some other promotional materials. You want to learn how the organization thinks of itself and how it presents itself to the public. Do NOT rely solely on an organization's web site for information since of course, they are biased.

Another important step is to seek out directories in the library. The GSU library maintains a number of valuable directories as do many other local libraries. The Harold Washington Library in downtown Chicago has a significant collection of career seeking resources, including directories on organizational information.

And finally, seek out additional information from the web. A number of sites have unbiased reports and insider's guides to different organizations. Of course, corporate organizations will have a broader array of information depending on their size, but you can also find information on government agencies and other non-profit employers.

How do I use the information once I have it?

The goals in obtaining information on potential employers are stated at the outset of this guide. As such, you want to impress interviewers and demonstrate a keen understanding of what their organization offers clients and other constituents. It can also be helpful to do some basic research before you even apply for a job since you will know up front if you might make a good candidate. Memorizing basic facts will not help you much. You need to be able to use the information in a letter or interview so that the employer sees that you have a grasp of how they fit into the field and that you are a strong candidate for the job. To that end, you must condense your knowledge and be able to speak in an articulate way about what you've learned. Sometimes the best strategy is to turn your newfound knowledge into a question at the end of the interview.

Resources for Researching Corporations

The GSU Library maintains a number of indexes and directories in hard copy, and you can also explore many on-line resources through the following link from the library's website:

http://libguides.govst.edu/content.php?pid=658723&sid=5456144

From this link, you should be able to access LexisNexis Academic, MergentFIS, and InfoTrac, all of which provide more detailed information on companies. These are all easy to navigate and will provide you with a decent summary of the various companies.

The following resources provide company profiles on-line, though some of them charge for detailed information:

- Vault: www.vault.com
- Hoover's: www.hoovers.com

In addition to summaries and other more detailed information, rankings and lists provide valuable information on a firm. You can find rankings based on size, sales, market position, or based on other factors such as the best companies for minorities or LGBT-friendly employers for two examples.

The following are useful sites for conducting such research:

- Crain's Chicago Business: www.chicagobusiness.com/lists
- Forbes: www.forbes.com
- Fortune: www.fortune.com
- Inc. Magazine: https://www.inc.com/inc5000

Researching Non-Profit Organizations

The **American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees** has an excellent site on *Researching the Exempt Employe*r. Tells you what you need to know and how to find it: http://www.afscme.org/wrkplace/990ind.htm

Deb Flanagan has an excellent site devoted to online employer research with an entire section on *Researching Nonprofit Organization*s. The sites she recommends are below. However, if you go to **http://home.sprintmail.com/~debflanagan/nonprofit.html** you can see and take the complete tutorial.

Guidestar (http://www.guidestar.org) provides a searchable directory of nonprofit organizations. Searches may be done by name, keyword, focus and location. The database provides information on address, contact information, number of employees and volunteers, revenue and program areas.

The **Internet Nonprofit Center** (http://www.nonprofits.org) provides a library of information about nonprofits a searchable directory, discussion forums, and links to other websites of interest. Locator reports include contact info, IRS employer identification number, income, and assets.

The Better Business Bureau's Philanthropic Advisory Service reports on major U.S. charitable organizations. Reports include an overview of the organization, program information, financial data, ratings on compliance with CBBB Standards for Charitable Solicitation, and governance information: http://www.give.org/reports/index.asp

The **National Center for Charitable Statistics** (http://nccs.urban.org) collects statistics on nonprofit organizations.

Find out about the organization's stand on domestic partnerships and protecting GLBT employees by checking with the **Human Rights Campaign:** http://www.hrc.org/worknet.

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