

Company Research

Knowledge is power. Corporations as we know them today may not have existed in Francis Bacon's time, but his words still hold the same basic truths that they did in the seventeenth century. Job-hunting doesn't mean just applying for jobs. It also means striving to know everything you possibly can about the industry and the companies you are trying to get into. Having this knowledge will give you considerably more power than blindly applying for jobs without any kind of established context.

Research helps you grasp economy and industry trends and gives you an idea of how easy (or difficult) it will be to carry out the job search. If you're an accounting major currently looking for a job, it helps to know that businesses are scrambling to expand their accounting departments to deal with new pressures from the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and global expansion.

Researching the company or organization itself will help you understand what they are doing, how well they are doing it, and whether that matches up with your career goals. After weighing all of these things, then you can decide whether it makes sense to send them your resume.

Learning about the company also gives you power during the interview. Appearing well informed and goal-directed gives the employer a positive impression and leads to a more successful interview. If you are given a job offer, knowledge you have gained through research will help you make a good decision.

Suggested Areas of Information to Have Prior to The Interview

- Size of company relative to the industry
- Annual sales growth for past five years
- Array of product lines or services
- Major competitors
- Organization structure
- Short-term profit picture
- Relocation policies
- Promotional path
- Formal versus on-the-job training
- Name of recruiter/hiring manager
- Average time in assignments
- Potential growth for the company/industry
- Age/backgrounds of top management
- Potential new markets, products, services
- Number of years in business
- Geographical locations
- History of organization
- Location of home office/headquarters
- Number of plants, stores, offices
- Type of training programs
- Recent items in the news
- Typical career path in your field

Identifying Potential Companies

The Co-op and Career Services Office is an ideal starting place for gathering information. After all, that's exactly what we're here for. If you are wondering about relationships that a particular company may have with RIT, ask your program coordinator. He/she will be able to provide employment history, contact names, and more. You can also access a database of employer information through our Web site.

CareerSearch and WetFeet publications are two excellent sources of company information – access them from main student or alumni page of our site. Also available on our site are links to recommended sites with company information, job leads and much more. Your program coordinator's has pulled together online resources specific to your major that will help you identify job sources and association information. RIT Job Zone is the primary source for co-op opportunities and for full-time opportunities.

Wallace Memorial Library is a high-technology, multimedia resource center where you will find materials to help you identify potential employers. Wallace Library provides handouts (available in racks across from the Reference Librarian's main desk or at their website: <http://wally.rit.edu/pubs/guides>) to help you

identify and locate companies. Some of the titles include *How to Find Information on Your Career* (by major), *Where to Find Company Information*, and *Industry Analysis*. Each college is assigned a reference librarian so if you need assistance or resource suggestions, make an appointment to meet with him/her.

Directories offer information on companies including goods and services provided, financial information, key people in the company, addresses and sometimes even future hiring projections.

The resume section of Wallace Library has state and regional industrial and/or manufacturers' directories such as *The New York State Industrial Directory* provide addresses and product/service information for employers in a particular geographic area. National and international directories such as *Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations* are general in nature and are helpful in finding companies located in a specific geographic area or a specific field. Other directories are dedicated to specific industries or populations such as the *National Restaurant Association Directory* and *Peterson's Engineering, Science, and Computer Jobs*. There are several CD-ROM research tools in the library such as Dow Jones Interactive and Disclosure Corporate Snapshots, a database available through FirstSearch.

Job Choices is one directory we recommend. It is free and available in the Office of Co-op and Career Services and Wallace Library. Ask your program coordinator to recommend additional directories and other resources that they think may be especially helpful for your job search.

Online presence – virtually all businesses and organizations have sites. Companies are finding it easy and inexpensive to post job opportunities and recruit new employees via job databases and company Web sites. These services offer job seekers one way to get their resume seen by recruiters and employers.

Telephone directories are a sometimes-overlooked way of identifying companies or organizations. They are also available on the Internet to research companies. Companies are categorized according to type of business/product/service and often by geographic area.

Employment agencies may offer short-term/temporary positions (contract) that may fit the recommended co-op work periods or lead to a full-time position. If you have any questions about how these agencies work, talk with your program coordinator.

Corporate annual reports provide an excellent overview of publicly held companies. Wallace Library has annual report information for the Fortune 500 and additional companies, and many companies put their annual report online.

Professional journals pertinent to your field can be found at the Wallace Library and the Office of Co-op and Career Services Resource Library. These journals offer articles about companies and new products and provide potential networking opportunities. Some may even have employment ads.

Chamber of Commerce or similar organizations in the area in which you are seeking employment may be able to provide you with a list of local companies or suggest other valuable local directories or resources.

Networking is an organized method of making links from the people *you* know to the people *they* know — to exchange information, advice, contacts or support. Networking is a process of building relationships, which will continue throughout your career. Faculty members, relatives and friends may have some ideas about employers in a particular industry or contacts in geographic areas in which you have interest.

Informational interviews *are not* job interviews. They are intended to help you gather information and meet people in your field of interest. They can sharpen your perception of a career or job in which you have interest. You can explore a career field, gather information about a particular organization or investigate a specific position. The people you meet can become your contacts and help you meet other contacts for sources of job opportunities.

Using Employer Information During The Interview

Most of the questions you will be asked will not relate directly to the information in the literature. There are ways, however, to show how your skills and background meet the employer's needs using the information you gain. Some examples:

1. "Why do you think you might want to work for this company?"

Response: "As I understand the job, there's plenty of opportunity to be involved in both the planning of marketing strategies and the actual selling. Besides using my communications skills and knowledge of chemicals in direct selling, I believe I'm creative when it comes to marketing."

2. "I see you're involved with the Spanish Club. What were some of the benefits from that experience?"

Response: "As secretary, I was responsible for organizing a display on Spanish literature for the Cultural Fair we sponsored. Most of my correspondence with publishing houses was done in Spanish and I feel this experience added a whole new business angle to my fluency. I would feel very confident communicating with your subsidiary in Mexico."

Asking questions is to your advantage. This requires the interviewer to expand on information you have learned from the employer's literature. Below is an excerpt from employer literature (in bold print), paired with a question that could be formulated.

1. "Today's large store manager usually has gained experience in district or regional staff work."

Question Formulated: "In viewing some of the backgrounds that your large store managers have, regional staff work is mentioned. Could you describe some of the responsibilities of staff work?"

2. "From the start, ABC Company has had a goal-oriented vision of being a leader in communications. That's why we are into education, publishing and software, among other things."

Question Formulated: "When the company looks to the future, it appears from the brochure that education, publishing and software are some key areas. Are there some product areas that might become less important and be cut back?"

You only get one chance to leave a first impression. Take the time to do your homework, research the organization, and you will increase your chances of leaving a positive impression.

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