Researching the Employer

Thoroughly researching an employer can make the difference between knowing enough to apply and knowing enough to actually secure the job or internship. Employer Research can usually be accomplished through highly-accessible, low-cost resources. The time you take to investigate your dream job will be time well invested.

WHY RESEARCH PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYERS?

1. Increase your marketability

Research exemplifies your interest and enthusiasm toward an organization by showing the employer that you are knowledgeable about their organization. One of the top complaints among employers is that recent graduates have not adequately prepared themselves for the job search. In addition to helping you make a good first impression, researching employers will allow you to create better cover letters and resumes to target specific positions within an organization, as well as better prepare you for the interview.

2. Make an informed decision

You may research employers to locate positions related to a particular type of work, industry, or geographic location that will aid you in the process of narrowing and selecting a future career.

INCORPORATING YOUR FINDINGS INTO THE INTERVIEW

Simply being informed about an employer does not guarantee a successful interview unless you use that information effectively. Spouting out facts or prefacing a question with a lot of memorized details will not convince the employer of your interest and/or knowledge. Relating your skills to the company's desired qualifications can be an effective way to show that you've done your homework. Before the interview, brainstorm how you can help the employer be competitive in specified markets found through your research.

Another way to incorporate information is through the questions that you ask the employer, usually towards the end of the interview. Request information only on topics you really want to know more about, and avoid being too detailed or projecting a "know-it-all" attitude. Ask questions that encourage the employer to expand on information from your research.

Adapted from http://smu.edu/career/careerprep/employerresearch/default.asp

Facts to Know Before the Interview

Company Overview

- What does the company do? What products and services do they provide?
- What is the size of the organization?
- How is the current financial health?
- What is the anticipated growth? Are there any expansion plans?

Employer Image

- What is the organization's national and local reputation?
- What awards or recognitions have they received?
- What is their relationship to competitors?
- What associations are they actively involved with?
- What is their sales growth over the last five years?

People

- Who are the of the top executives?
- How would you describe the organizational culture?

Locations

- Where is the corporate headquarters located?
- Where are branches, subsidiaries, stores, satellite offices, etc. located?

Professional Development Concerns

- What type of training programs are offered to employees?
- What is the typical promotional path?
- What is the typical career path in the field compared to that of the company?
- What benefits are offered?
- How are employees reviewed or evaluated?