Sheffield Hallam University Careers and Employment

Starting Points: Researching employers

Why research employers?

Researching employers is important not only for graduate job hunting success but also for identifying employers to approach with a speculative application. You need to know as much as you can about the company or organisation when applying/approaching them to make a quality application and to enable you to perform well at interview. The research you do will not only demonstrate your enthusiasm for a position but will also help you demonstrate your match to the company's culture and values and help you to deal with the almost inevitable interview question "Tell us what you know about the company?" or "Why are you interested in working with us?"

Graduate recruiters will **expect** you to have some understanding and awareness of their organisation and the business sector in which it works.

What is the best way to research companies?

Break down your research into these main areas:

- **background information** - what the company does, where it is located, its history and defining moments, its clients and its competitors
- **understand the "big picture"** - what are the issues and trends in this profession or industry? What skills are likely to be needed now and in the future? What impact will economic and technological changes have? How does your role fit into the organisation?
- **company culture and general feelings** - core values and aims, how the company sees itself, how you see the company, personnel policies, why working for the company appeals

Where can I find information?

1. The first and most obvious place to look is an **employer's website** where often you will see a company's corporate values written in their mission or vision statement. Some of the bigger employers may have a "Working with us" page which will give you an idea of what they look for in employees in terms of technical skills or attributes.

2. To gain more detailed information on a company (financial accounts/market research information etc.) current students can use this guide from the Learning Centre to help them access **subscription databases** such as Key Note and FAME: http://libguides.shu.ac.uk/business/companies. Don't forget to log into shuspace before entering the databases.

3. Your **local library** reference section will have a lot of information on local and national companies - Sheffield Library Service has a licence for the Mint database which provides information on al UK based companies (you will need to use a library computer to access this information).

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4. **Internet sources** - this is not an exhaustive list but you will find a lot of useful information on these sites - some of it written by graduate employees:

- TARGETjobs Employer Hubs - independent reviews about top graduate employers
  http://targetjobs.co.uk/employer-hubs
- The Times 100 Graduate Employers
  www.top100graduateemployers.com/login#
- Guardian UK 300 - the UK's best employers as ranked by students/graduates
  http://targetjobs.co.uk/uk300
- Prospects - search for company profiles by sector
  www.prospects.ac.uk/graduate_employers.htm
- The Job Crowd - reviews of specific employers written by graduates
  www.thejobcrowd.com
- Glassdoor - provides you with an inside look at company review/interview questions and salary information (make sure you choose UK as your location for employers).
  www.glassdoor.co.uk

5. **Social networks** - you can use LinkedIn to help develop contacts who can share information and enable you to build relationships with other industry professionals. You can also use Twitter to follow people within companies you're interested in and the company pages on Facebook to find out more about their working culture.

In your own words

Remember to use the results of your research by summarising it in your own words. Pasting phrases from an employer's website into your application or learning them off by heart to recite at interviews may seem quicker but it's a false economy. Bring your own understanding to the information you glean.

You won't be able to pin down everything but even a small amount of focused research will boost your chances of getting a job and will give you the confidence to make informed decisions.

Want to talk it through?

Contact Careers and Employment for further advice and support:
Phone: 0114 225 3752
Email: careers@shu.ac.uk

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