How To Research A Company (H-07)

Most inexperienced interviewers do not understand the value of researching the company with whom they are interested in applying, interviewing and potentially working. By reading recruiting brochures and annual reports, you can become more familiar with a company's products or services, their particular history, and potential challenges they may be experiencing. Such information can also assist you in knowing whether you would be interested in working for that particular company, as well as how to answer potential questions asked of you in an interview. Aside from all of these benefits, however, you will be grateful for having researched the company when an interviewer asks, “What do you know about us?” Company literature may be found in the Career Center and/or public library. The company's personnel office or public relations department may also provide copies of their annual report and promotional brochures.

Researching companies can be somewhat intimidating and overwhelming, especially if you are unsure about the types of information for which you are searching. The following list is designed to assist you in gathering information that would be particularly helpful when learning more about certain companies and in preparation for upcoming interviews:

**Employer:** List the name, address, and other contact information of the specific organization.

**General information:** Briefly explain the nature of the business conducted by the organization. Note the approximate number of employees, and the locations of the greatest concentrations of employees and operations. Also mention any international operations.

**Products and services:** Discuss the method of business operations. Note all principle products and services, as well as the percentage of their market share and how they contribute to the firm's total sales. Discuss the marketing and distribution of the products and services, and the organization's perceived product and service quality reputation.

**Contacts:** List names and titles of important officers within the company. Attempt to learn the names of potential superiors. If you are applying for general programs or broad training positions, identify the key personnel person you should contact. If you know the title but not the specific person, try to contact a secretary within the organization for that information.

**Career path:** Briefly outline a typical career path that would be of interest to you in the organization. What is the function of the department in which you are interested?

**Available positions:** List the titles of those positions in which you are interested. Give a brief description of the job responsibilities, qualifications, and general role the positions serve within the organization.

**Locations:** Where is the home office located? How large is it? How important is the home office in relation to the other locations associated with the organization? Where are the branches and/or plants? How many are there? Is it important to work in several locations? Why or why not?

**Competition:** Identify specific competitors or employers in comparable operations. “Guesstimate” the relative ranking of size and quality within that grouping.

**Financial outlook:** Look at various reports from investment services on their forecasts of the business' sales and earnings growth. If the employer is not a business, try to obtain information on budgets, as well as current and future sources of funding.

**Recent news:** Read any articles that have been published in newspapers and magazines within the past 18 months. Among other things, such articles may give insight into future goals and changes of the organization.

**Internet:** The internet is a huge source of company information. Most companies have their own websites that can be easily found by using search engines such as Yahoo, Webcrawler, Google, Lycos, and others. These search engines can also help you find information published by other organizations on a particular company.