



Graduate College Career Services Office

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RESEARCHING ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS

Organizational Research

Organizational research is an essential component of your job search. Depending upon where you are within your job search process, you will need to know different information about a company or organization. This document subdivides organizational research into three levels of knowledge:

- **Level one.** This is basic data gathering, in which you identify lists of organizations to approach for possible employment opportunities.
- **Level two.** After you have identified potential employers, it is necessary to acquire greater knowledge about specific organizations. This permits you to eliminate the organizations that do not interest you and to write more persuasive, customized résumés and cover letters to the organizations you will pursue.
- **Level three.** In order to succeed in an interview, you must assimilate additional information about the organization.

Level One: Generating your List of Organizations

Once you have determined the type of position and organization you are seeking, compile a list of organizations that are of potential interest to you. One of the best tools for organizational research is **CareerSearch**. This extremely powerful tool, available from The Career Center, is a database cataloging 1.5 million organizations in the United States and searchable by industry and geographic location. CareerSearch provides basic information about each organization, including contact information, Web site, basic descriptive information, size, and competitors. Information about logging into CareerSearch can be found on the GCCSO Web site.

Other ways to generate lists of organizations by location or industry include searching for companies online by location, industry, or keywords and by contacting the Chamber of Commerce in cities of interest to you.

Level Two: Eliminating Organizations that do not Interest You and Gathering Basic Information for Résumé/Cover Letter Writing

Once you have generated a list of organizations, the next step is to gather basic information about these employers. Your first priority is to determine if you are even interested in the organization; your second priority is to learn more about the organizations that remain on your list to make your résumés/cover letters more powerful. In general, you should determine the logistical, cultural, historical, and financial information about the organization, as well as any current news affecting the

organization. Where is the organization located? How many employees does it have? What industry is it in? What contributions does it make to the industry or field? What types of positions are available in this organization? What types of people work for this organization? Incorporating some of this information into your correspondence with the organization will increase your credibility as a job candidate.

Level Three: Acquiring In-depth Organizational Information for an Interview

In order to successfully interview, you must know still more information about an employer. When you are invited to interview with an organization, research further and determine the organization's values, culture, and mission. It is important to also be knowledgeable about the products or services the organization produces, and to use this information to understand how YOU could be valuable to the organization. Try to incorporate this information into your interview.

Resources

The easiest way to conduct level two and three research is by using the Internet. Most companies have a Web site that provides general information about the organization, such as location, industry, departments, and contact information. You will also learn about the history, philosophy, products, services, goals, objectives, structure, achievements, and contributions.

You should look beyond the organization's Web site, however, since this can be a biased source of information. Look to other sources for additional information and fresh perspectives. Some suggested resources include:

- Business Week: bwnt.businessweek.com/company/search.asp
- Hoover's: www.hoovers.com
- Vault: www.vault.com
- Employment Spot: www.employmentspot.com
- Not-for-profit organizations: www.guidestar.com
- Commerce Library: door.library.uiuc.edu/crx/company.htm

A great deal of information may also be found within the University libraries. In the Commerce Library (Main Library, first floor) you can find companies' annual reports, business indices, and business magazines. Numerous other materials are available through the Commerce Library's Web site: door.library.uiuc.edu/crx/.