

Hints on how to research a company

In order to impress an employer when you apply for an apprenticeship, job or go for an interview, you need to go out of your way to research the organisation – its purpose, its products, even its history. This sounds like a huge task, but fortunately there are lots of resources you can turn to that will help you in your search.

What is a 'resource'?

Anyone and anything can be a resource. Time and money, for example, are two very useful resources. A place that holds the information you need, such as a library, is also a resource, as are people with the skills and knowledge you are looking for. In your search for information the following places might be of help:

- Libraries – they are often staffed by people who are very skilled at helping you find information, they may also have a selection of trade or business magazines that might be useful
- The internet
- Friends and family, and their friends, and their friends...

Make a list of all the resources you can think of that are available to you (places and people).

How to research an organisation: a step-by-step guide

Imagine you find a job or apprenticeship advertised on the internet, or in the local newspaper. You are interested, but the advert doesn't tell you much about what the company does, or how long they've been in business, or who their customers are... so...

Step 1: Call or send an email to people in your 'network' you think may be able to help. Perhaps a relative or friend knows someone who works for the organisation – you never know so it's worth asking around.

Step 2: Search on the Internet – enter the company name into Google (or a search engine of your choice) to see whether they have a website or LinkedIn/Twitter page.

Step 3: Look for the relevant pages on their website: 'About us' 'Our people', 'Careers' or 'Working with us' sections might be particularly useful. The organisation might also have its Twitter feed or LinkedIn page – have a look to see if any information on there might be of use.

Step 4: You want to find out what the company *culture* is like – what is really important to them – so, if they have one, make sure you look at the 'Mission statement' or 'Values' page on their website. If they have a 'News' page this might also be helpful as it will give you an idea of the current issues that are relevant to the company.

Step 5: Make a note of useful words and phrases that you come across in relation to the organisation, and think about how you can link these to your knowledge, skills, and attitude within your application or interview.