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THE CHAZIN GROUP



Career Learning Series | Research Potential Employers

Researching Potential Employers in the Information Age

The days of combing through bookshelves at your local library to find relevant information on companies and industries are long gone. The Dewey Decimal system and card catalog have been replaced by the ubiquitous Internet and 24x7x365 access to the information you need, to conduct an effective job search.

How do you comb through this galaxy of available information in an efficient manner, and find out what you need to know about the industries and companies that you are interested in pursuing?

The answer lies in three words: research...research...research.

How to Research Yourself

In order to match your values, needs, personality, and preferred working environment with your ideal employer, you need to complete a self-assessment tool. You can complete one by working with an outplacement firm or career coach. You must conduct an assessment of the product called YOU, in order to learn what environments you would thrive in.

Following are a few notable assessment personality typing tools that are available online. These will help you have a better understanding of yourself include:

- **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator – MBTI** (www.myersbriggs.org)
- The **Birkman Method** (www.birkman.com)
- The **Keirsey Temperament Sorter** (www.keirsey.com)

How to Research Companies and Industries

There are countless resources available to you for conducting company and industry research. First, you need to realize that there are two types of information that you can gather about a specific company; its **formal** culture and its **informal** culture. You need to have a CRYSTAL clear understanding of both, in order to target companies effectively.

The **formal** culture of an organization is their “spin.” It is what they aspire to be, and attempt to convey about themselves. That is the information that they disseminate to the market through their public relations efforts, what their Senior Management says about themselves, and what their website says...

IT IS WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT THEMSELVES AND THUS THEIR ATTEMPTS TO DIRECTLY INFLUENCE WHAT THEIR INDUSTRY THINKS THEY ARE.

It is also known as “**SPIN**”.

The information they publish about their company is useful, only to the extent that it emphasizes those organizational values and culture that it aspires to.

It all starts with their mission statement and vision, and their policies towards hiring, employee retention, professional development, benefits, pay, philanthropic (goodwill) efforts they make in their local communities, Green policies, level of influence they attempt to exert in public policy, etc. It is the collective sets of values and emphasis that they are making to the markets they compete to and the business community at large. Therefore, there is significant value for you in understanding the FORMAL culture of the organization.

There is also something called the **informal** culture. The informal culture of an organization is the actual environment that they have created. It is comprised of their systems, processes, how they treat their employees, and office politics. It is how they actually operate - what it “feels like” to work there.

For company press releases, check out **www.prnewswire.com**

To obtain background information on the company, start out with the Securities & Exchange Commission Electronic Data Gathering and Retrieval (**EDGAR**) Database of company annual 10K and quarterly 10Q Filings (www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml) of their financial situation and key short/long-term challenges and opportunities.

For general information on companies and industries you should first turn to the following resources for background:

1. Business.com (www.Business.com)
2. Dun & Bradstreet (www.DnBreports.com)
3. Hooves Research (www.hoovers.com/research)
4. Vault (www.vault.com)
5. www.About.com
6. Monster (<http://career-advice.monster.com>)
7. Zacks (www.zacks.com)

A few great online tutorials for you to obtain research on companies:

- Learn Web Skills: www.learnwebskills.com/company
- QuintCareers: www.quintcareers.com/researching_companies.html
- The Riley Guide: www.rileyguide.com/jobsrch.html

For information on Manufacturing and Engineering industries start with:

ThomasNet for manufacturing and industrial organizations

For privately held companies an excellent resource is the **[MacMillan Directory of Leading Private Companies](#)**.

To obtain research on professional Associations refer to the **[Encyclopedia of Associations](#)**.

Armed with these resources, the question you need to answer is: “What information do I need to obtain about these companies and industries.” You need to know as much as you can possibly can, in order to decide if you would be interested in working for these organizations.

Begin with the biographies of the management team. Next, find out anything you can about the person you would be reporting to.

Find out about their products and services, their research and development efforts, and the markets they compete in. Discover how they have been performing financially. If they are a publicly traded company, go to the Securities and Exchange Commission website (6). Search on the company, and download their quarterly financial statements (10Qs), and annual statements (10Ks). What are their short and long-term prospects? For example, if they are a pharmaceutical company, have they had problems getting a key new drug through Stage 2 testing?

Do they lack expertise in certain Research & Development areas? What is their position in the markets they compete in (ex. Are they a top 3 player in the market, or a “Me To” follower?) Who are their primary competitors? Have they had difficulty obtaining loans for key new expansion efforts such as building a new manufacturing plant or warehouse?

It doesn’t matter if you are not in sales or marketing. This critical information will help you decide which companies you choose to pursue. Since this information is easily accessible AND the job market is in such a horrific state, other candidates are conducting this research. By NOT doing this research, you run the very real risk of not competing effectively.

You need to find out if they offer training and development programs, opportunities to obtain certifications related to your job, the chance to participate in job rotations, on-premises day care services, and other family-friendly benefits.

Research their policies with respect to job sharing, flexible work schedules, working from home on an as-needed basis, and other things that impact your desire to work there.

Additional aspects of an organization that you should research include: the degree of corporate activism, their green, eco-friendly policies, the volunteer programs they support, employee-friendly programs, and any other goodwill initiatives they have implemented.

Once you complete your research, you can apply it a number of ways.

Your newly customized, unconventional cover letter will indicate EXACTLY how you will leverage your experience to solve their challenges. It will tell them how you will apply your background to break into markets they’ve struggled entering, launch products they’ve had difficulty bringing to market, improve processes, train their staff on best-of-breed applications, etc. Whatever key challenges they face, you need to tell them how you will help.

You are also going to apply the information you obtain about them during your interview. Ask VERY specific questions about the challenges they face. You are going to tell them exactly how your

experience, qualifications, and skills will enable you to resolve their challenges, meet their objectives, and remain competitive.

Walk them through how you will help them improve their processes to become more efficient, increase revenues, decrease costs, open markets, obtain new customers, sell more products to existing customers, etc.

The research you conduct will enable you to rise above your competition, and distinguish yourself as uniquely qualified for the job.

If you are unwilling to invest the significant effort required to conduct this research, you will be passed over. Rest assured many of the candidates that are also applying for the jobs you are interested in are conducting this research.