

# Researching employers: why and how

## Why research

**To effectively sell yourself as a job candidate**, you need to be able to persuade the employer that you are a fit for that employer's needs. Even when the job market is great for job seekers, employers aren't going to interview and hire candidates who are not a match for their needs.

You can't present yourself — **in cover letters or interviews** — as a match for the employer's needs if you don't know enough about the employer to do so.

By doing research, you get **information to decide which employers to contact**. Rather than sending fifty letters/e-mails and resumes to employers you know little to nothing about, send ten letters and resumes to employers you know something about and have a greater chance of securing an interview. Targeted letters, individualized to the recipient are more effective than "form" letters.

In **interviews**, employers expect you to arrive knowing background information about the organization. If you don't, you look like you're not really interested in the job. You have to be able to answer the critical question of why you would like to work for that employer — and not sound like you would take any job.

Research helps you formulate intelligent and appropriate **questions to ask in your interview**.

## How to research specific employers

**Talk to people:** Find people who work for or know about the organization. This could be people you meet at a career fair, family members, neighbors, parents of friends, students who graduated ahead of you.

**The employer's web site:** This is a no-brainer! Look for basic facts, information about mission, culture, values and more. If the web site posts jobs and/or the organization invites e-mail from job seekers and/or accepts resumes online, follow the instructions the employer provides.

**Internet research.** Note sources of information you find and gauge the credibility of those sources.

**Call or write the organization and ask for information AFTER you've searched for it elsewhere.** This is perfectly appropriate to do if you simply cannot find information about the organization through their web site, or if the information is not clear. If you have an interview scheduled with an employer, the employer should have already provided information (web site, brochures, etc.); if not, by all means, ask for this.

