



HANDOUT SERIES

CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

→ Life after Rensselaer Starts Here

RESEARCHING EMPLOYERS

Researching prospective employers is a vital step in the job search process. Research can help you to develop a list of employers to target in your job search campaign. Also, thorough research will help you to prepare for an interview with a prospective employer.

The most frequent negative feedback given by employers when interviewing Rensselaer students is that the students did not thoroughly research their organization.

What Information Are You Seeking?

The first step in the research process is to determine what information you are seeking. What specific questions are you trying to answer? When **creating a list of potential employers** to target, you should define your "ideal" employer. Then you need to investigate which organizations fit into this profile. You could use some of the following criteria:

- Geographic location
- Occupational field you want to work in or skills you want to use
- Typical starting salary
- Products or services of the company

For example, your question might be, "Who are the architectural firms in the Northeastern United States that specialize in commercial design?" or, "What companies manufacture prosthetic devices?" or, "What companies in the Albany area might hire someone who knows how to use Maple or ProEngineer?"

When **researching a specific organization** to write a targeted cover letter, or in preparation for an interview, the following is some basic information you should look for:

Product or services; Date founded, growth history; Parent company/subsidiaries; Current problems, opportunities; Major competitors; Future growth potential; Size; Minimum requirements for position; Research and development efforts; Major duties of position.

In addition to these basics, you may have additional questions such as:

- Who is in charge of the department you will be working in?
- What are the company's distinctions in the field?
- What would be the potential career paths for you within the organization?
- What is the atmosphere of the organization (e.g., casual, conservative, etc.)
- Has the organization had any noteworthy recent developments or media attention?

Sources of Information

Employer-Provided Information.

The majority of employers now have a web presence. Employers will typically include their web page address on their literature. This is the best place to start when you are researching an employer.

Rensselaer



Many employers who are interviewing at Rensselaer have an information session scheduled the evening before their interviews. This is a key component to your research of a potential employer. Make every effort to attend. If you cannot, try to get the information from someone who was able to attend.

Periodicals.

Magazines and newspapers often contain listings of current opportunities. These are also a good source for information on current events in a specific company or a field in general. Search for current articles written about any organization by using an index such as the *Business Periodicals Index*, or the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*. Also, check the indexes for the major papers (*Boston Globe*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*). All are available in the Folsom Library.

Professional Associations.

There is a professional association for virtually every field imaginable. Get involved yourself or find someone who is a member. These associations produce membership directories, and typically plan annual conferences. Both are rich with networking opportunities. Association journals and newsletters often list position openings in the field. To identify an association in your field, check the *Encyclopedia of Associations* in the CDC Cafe Libraries.

Directories.

There are many reference books available both in the CDC Cafe Libraries and in the Folsom library which can give you basic information about an organization. Depending on the directory, the information could include address, phone number, number of employees, product lines, location of branches or subsidiaries and/or a list of chief executives. Many directories are categorized by subject area (e.g., manufacturing organizations, consultants, etc).

Talk to a reference librarian in Folsom, or a career counselor in the CDC if you are having trouble identifying a directory that would help you find the answer to your specific question.

Computerized Databases/CD's.

Folsom Library has several computerized databases and compact discs. *Compact Disclosure* contains reports on publicly held companies. *ABI/Inform* contains company and industry information. *F & S Index* provides abstracts, excerpts and articles from over 1,000 business sources. *American Business Disk* gives you access to over 4,800 yellow page telephone directories in the U.S.

People Resources.

Don't forget that people provide a great wealth of information on careers and on specific organizations. Often, people can give you information that is not available in any written source. Conducting an informational interview is a great way to tap into someone's knowledge or expertise. See the [Informational Interviewing](#) Tip Sheet for more information.

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