Researching employers with Career Services’ online resources

Researching potential employers is a critical element of every job search. It is extremely important at the beginning when you need to identify your options, and necessary during the application and interview stage, to help you communicate the match between a prospective employer’s needs and your relevant skills and experience. Before you are called to interview, do your best to find out the following about the organization:

- Mission; product/service (i.e., what is the purpose of this company/organization?)
- Sector: non-profit, private (for-profit), public (government agency)
- Structure and management
- Financial health
- “Clients” and competitors (i.e., who receives the services of this company, and who else is targeting this group with their services)
- Company/organization culture
- The hiring process

Career Services offers several online resources through our library subscriptions pages to help you research potential employers. You must log in with your PennKey and password to access the subscriptions, which are listed alphabetically. For those interested in exploring industries such as consulting, healthcare, and investment banking, Wetfeet.com and Vault.com are particularly useful. These reference resources allow you to read overviews of various major industries, discover the “major players” (i.e., biggest, influential companies), and learn more about typical position types within each industry.

We also subscribe to ReferenceUSA, which provides contact information as well as specific company data for United States businesses in particular (as well as some Canadian and other international businesses). If you use the advanced search option, you can get information on credit ratings, company histories, executives’ names, and even the company’s local “competitors”.

Finally, for international scholars, GoinGlobal and H1VisaJobs offer
databases which can help you identify the companies who have applied to the federal government in 2010 for H1Visas (this gives you a head start if you know a company is willing to hire international candidates, or is familiar with H1 Visa hiring procedures.)

Use networking as a tool to find out employer or industry information you can’t get through your online research. If you are a current Penn student or alumnus/a, be sure to use PACNet (our online networking database) to identify alumni who can give you the “inside scoop” on a particular organization or field.

Once you use these resources to research an employer, you will be better able to:

- Connect your accomplishments to the performance criteria that the organization is looking for.
- Identify the most important skills, qualifications and experiences that are in demand in a given industry.
- Assess an organization’s potential workplace needs and how you can contribute given your work style.
- Show how your goals match those of the company (given its mission, size, structure, and market specialization).