Researching Employers and Industries

IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH:
During major and career exploration, employer and industry research provides an opportunity to learn more about your options as well as important information for your decision-making process. During the application and interview process, research allows you to target the employers most closely related to your career goals. Employer research provides information to assist in marketing yourself as a match for a job and company. You can use what you learn to customize your resume and cover letter, help you prepare for an interview, impress employers at a career fair, and more!

WHAT TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE COMPANY:
- Its mission/purpose
- The size and structure of the company
- What services/products it provides
- Any awards/recognition it has received
- Recent news about the company

RESEARCH STRATEGIES:
Talk to People:
- Identify people who work for or know about the employer or industry. These could be people you meet at a career fair, family members, neighbors, or alumni contacts (see the “Identifying Your Network” section of the Internship/Job Search Guide for strategies on how to find professional contacts).
- Set-up informational interviews (see the “Informational Interviewing” section of the Major/Career Exploration Guide or the Internship/Job Search Guide to learn more). Ask contacts about the company culture, values and their overall experience.

Company Websites:
- Look at the company’s mission statement, the news section, information about the management team, locations, history, and organization structure. Visit their “Careers” or “Employment” page to see job postings they currently have open.
- Many companies have profiles on LinkedIn, the world’s largest online professional networking site.
- To check out company profiles to learn about the organization and find contacts to connect with, click on “Companies” and then “Search Companies.” You can select your search criteria, such as location, size, keyword, and industry type.
- Use the Career Insights information on the “Alumni” tool (linkedin.com/alumni) to see career-related data on U of M alumni.
- Use the “Follow” tool to stay in tune with the latest news and company information.

WetFeet, wetfeet.com:
- WetFeet provides state and city guides that give local company directories for specific industries, as well as detailed information about employers, careers, and industries.

Read the News:
- Use Google News search or look in the Wall Street Journal, Minneapolis St. Paul Business Journal, Pioneer Press, Star Tribune or newspapers in the local area that you are searching to find out about new company developments and industry trends.

Databases and Directories:
- Use library resources. Check out busref.lib.umn.edu and explore the “Company Research” and “Industry Research” pages to find searchable databases. IBIS World is the world’s largest provider of industry-based research.
- Visit the “Find Employers” tab on GoldPASS, goldpass.umn.edu, to search companies by industry and location.
- City business publications, including the Mpls/St. Paul Business Journal (twincities.bizjournals.com) have detailed current information about companies.
- The American Council of Engineering Companies of MN, acecmn.org provides a directory of engineering organizations.

Websites and Blogs:
- Look at websites that allow employees to post information about their experience with a particular company, such as Glassdoor.com. Also, some companies host blogs to keep the public up-to-date about their organization. These types of websites and blogs may be useful to you for research purposes, but keep in mind that information may be incorrect or biased.
- Companies also use social media like Facebook and Twitter to share news and connect with followers.