

Researching companies and organisations

Researching employers is an important part of job hunting. It can help you find 'hidden' or unadvertised job opportunities to apply for, which may impress the employer at interview.

There are three main reasons why you might want to find out as much as you can about a potential employer, or employers. You might:

- be interested in working for a specific employer, and need to find out more about them before you make up your mind
- be applying for a job and need to do some research on the employer before you contact them, apply for the job or go for interview
- need to find potential employers in a particular industry or sector.

Where to start?

Looking for potential employers in a specific sector? Here are a few ideas.

- Use your network of personal contacts. Do people you know have information about local businesses or organisations they've come into contact with?
- Search for relevant businesses in your local area using business directories, most of these are now online. One of the largest is Yell.com, the Yellow Pages online.
- Visit your local library. They have copies of local and national trade and business directories.
- Some Chambers of Commerce list their members on their websites. You'll find a list of local Chambers of Commerce on the Scottish Chambers of Commerce website.
- Check out employers advertising their business, or posting vacancies, in local and national newspapers. Also look for news about companies that are opening new businesses in Scotland, or that plan to expand their business.
- Look at relevant trade, industry and business newsletters, magazines or journals. You'll find that most industries have one – from the Scottish Federation of Meat Traders to the Scottish Building Federation. Look for them online or visit your local library for help.
- Look at Sector Skills Councils (SSC) websites. Find the SSC for the type of work you are looking for on the Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards website. SSCs have great links with employers in their sector. They don't list employers but they do provide great background information that can help.
- Contact your local Skills Development Scotland centre for information.

Interested in working for a specific company? Here's where to start.

- The company or organisation website. Many of them have lots of information on the employers' purpose and values, as well as career or job information. A few may even have a separate mini-site about career opportunities.
- If they have social media links use them to keep an eye on their recruitment campaigns or vacancies.

What kind of information do you need to know about companies?

- What it does.
- Where it operates.
- Does it operate only in your local area, or does it have branches nationally?
- Who owns or runs it.
- Has long it's been operating.
- Who its customers, and competitors, are.
- Its size. How many people work there? Does it have plans to expand or restructure?
- How they recruit and select their employees.
- The different types of job they offer.
- The skills and qualities they are looking for in their employees.
- Does it invest in training its employees?
- Are there good opportunities to develop your skills and career?

Suggested activities

Getting some research practice really helps!

Find out as much as you can about the job opportunities offered by the following businesses and organisations. How many of them take on apprentices?

- Greggs
- Rockstar North (video game developer)
- Scottish Water
- British Gas
- Intercontinental Hotels Group
- Aviva Insurance
- Your local authority
- Arnold Clark
- Rolls Royce.