

# **Do Your Homework Before the Big Interview**

By John Rossheim, Monster Senior Contributing Writer

Once upon a time, a job seeker landed an interview, skimmed the prospective employer's annual report, wowed the hiring manager with a few company facts and strolled into his dream job.

That late, 1990s fairy tale rarely comes true these days!

With employers in more control of the labor market, candidates feel compelled to give it their all in their interview preparation. And that includes mounting a broad, deep search for relevant information about the position, the company, the industry and even the interviewer.

Luckily for you, diverse resources, many of them free or cheap and available on the Internet, enable you to achieve that competitive edge if you're willing to put your nose to the grindstone, or computer monitor.

## **Employers' Web Sites**

Your prospective employer's corporate Web site is the best place to see the company as it wants to be seen. Do check out that annual report, but also look for a "Press Room" or "Press Releases" or "Company News" page that links to recent news releases. As you mull all this information, consider how the open position, as detailed in the job posting, relates to the company's mission.

But don't stop there. Use the company site's search facility to query the names of the hiring manager and any others on your interview dance card. You may retrieve executive biography pages or press releases that give you insight into their most visible activities at the company.

"Learning about the interviewer is probably the most valuable thing you can do," says Ron Fry, author of "101 Great Answers to the Toughest Interview Questions".

## **Research Employers**

Next, get some vital statistics and independent perspectives on your prospective employer.

- Hoover's Online ( see: [www.hoovers.com](http://www.hoovers.com) ), provides capsule descriptions, financial data and a list of competitors for thousands of large corporations.
- Business Week magazine also has a useful website, Company Insight Center at:

- <http://investing.businessweek.com/research/company/overview/overview.asp>

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Your 401k or mutual fund account with a major broker likely provides more detailed research on publicly traded companies and industries, free of charge.

"You may be able to go to competitors for the prospective employer's financials," says Joyce Lain Kennedy, Los Angeles Times career columnist and author of "Job Interviews for Dummies".

### **News Sources**

Now broaden your perspective and see what general-interest and business publications and Web sites are writing about the employer and its industry. You can find a wide range of media outlets at NewsLink ( see: [www.newslink.org](http://www.newslink.org) ), notes Kennedy.

Search national publications for news on major corporations. You can use hometown newspapers to learn about small businesses and how big businesses interact with their local communities:

- See Refdesk at [www.refdesk.com](http://www.refdesk.com)
- See bizjournals at [www.bizjournals.com](http://www.bizjournals.com)

....that also offer gateways to journalism on companies and industries.

### **Trade Journals**

Taking cues from your research so far, drill down into your target company and its place in the industry by looking at trade journals and other specialized publications.

"Get a few months of the relevant trade journal," advises Fry. "You're going to find out about new products and what the trade is saying about the company."

You may find hard copies of trade journals at university or local public libraries. Some journals are available for free or by subscription through their own Web sites.

The full text of thousands more is available through periodical databases like:

- ProQuest at [www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com)
- InfoTrac at [www.infotrac.com](http://www.infotrac.com)

You may even be able to access InfoTrac for free via the Web, using just the membership number on your public library card. Contact your local library for details.

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### **Industry Directories**

By now, you've probably got some very specific questions regarding the employer and your potential role there. Go directly to the grapevine by making contact with other workers at your target company or elsewhere in the industry.

"If you belong to a professional organization, go to its directory," says Marilyn Pincus, author of Interview Strategies that Lead to Job Offers.

If you don't belong, consider joining; check out the American Society of Association Executives' Gateway to Associations Directory at:

- [www.asaecenter.org/directories/associationsearch.cfm](http://www.asaecenter.org/directories/associationsearch.cfm)

### **Google**

Finally, if you hope to have a company ogling you, try Googling them first. You just might come up with a nugget you would have missed otherwise.

While you're at it, Google yourself to make sure you and the interviewer are on the same page.

Because if he's savvy, he's doing unto you as you've just done unto him and his company!

**(End)**