

8 Essential Sites For Researching Your Next Employer

Landing a job interview feels great, but how much do you know about your potential employer? Job listings often illicit more questions than provide answers. Knowing where to find inside information can mean the difference between getting a job from a great company and heading down the wrong path.

It's tempting to jump on the first job offer you get, but the last thing you want to do is find yourself working for a company that doesn't align with your goals or values. But it's difficult to get a full picture of a company's culture and working environment in a few short interviews and one tour of the office building.

Whether you are at the beginning of your job search or preparing for an interview, being armed with as much knowledge as possible about the prospective company is in your best interest. Not only will it help you formulate more insightful questions, it will boost your confidence as well.

It does, however, require some legwork. To help you find the answers you need, CIO.com scoured the Web to bring you an essential list of company research and review sites. And to help set the stage for your search, career strategist and executive resume writer Stephen Van Vreede of ITTechExec.com highlights three of the most common scenarios where a little knowledge of the company could pay off.

Expectations: "Interviewers expect you'll know what the company does. If you don't, how can you say that you'd be interested in working there? I've interviewed countless candidates who asserted their desire to work for the company I represented. My very next question would be something like, 'That's great, tell me what you know about our company?' The interview usually ended very quickly afterward if they didn't have a clue."

Information: "Going into an interview armed with information can be a decided advantage, even if the information is available for public consumption. When you can talk about company activities like capital projects, market expansions and new product introductions, it helps you come across as a serious, intelligent and diligent candidate. More importantly, it adds a dimension that can often be lacking in an interview, which is to get the interviewer to see you as an advocate for the company instead of simply an advocate for yourself to get a job with that company."

Growth potential: "Researching the company, industry and market can give you some insight into the financial strength of the organization. Any publicly traded company must provide its financial results for investors to review. Check out whether the company on the upswing or appears to have dark days ahead."

What you should look for

Company research websites are often designed to provide insight into not only what a company does, but how past and present employees feel about the organization. Here are some questions that will aid you in your quest:

- What type of culture does the company foster?
- How many employees does it have?
- What is the company history?
- What is its mission statement?

- Does the core vision/mission align with your personal views?
- What are their services and products?
- What is their online reputation?
- Who are its clients?
- Who are its main competitors?
- Are they a public company, family-owned company, start-up firm or venture-capital-funded business?
- What do analysts project in terms of growth for the market the company serves?
- Does the company operate in an industry that's highly regulated with changes that could gravely affect the business?

Knowing the answer to questions such as these will help you craft a better cover letter, tailor your resume, perform better in the interview and give you some questions to ask your interviewers. When you're ready to start your research into prospective employers, these sites are a great place to start.

Glassdoor

Glassdoor bills itself as a "free jobs and career community that offers the world an inside look at jobs and companies." Unlike LinkedIn and Monster, Glassdoor is all about user-submitted feedback, or as they call it "employee-generated" content.

Glassdoor also offers information about salaries (provided anonymously) as well as potential interview questions. You can find information on benefits and culture and you can read reviews from current and past employees. While every employee's experience will be different, you should be able to get a strong sense for how the business operates. Companies will even advertise jobs on Glassdoor, so if you stumble on a company that looks like a good fit, you can instantly see what openings they have.

For greater credibility, we must recognize and develop 'soft' skills in 'professionalism', distinguishing ourselves from the robots that are coming to take our jobs.

Indeed

Indeed.com bills itself as "the #1 job site worldwide, with over 200 million unique visitors per month." Job data on the site comes from more than 60 countries and is available in 26 languages. Indeed offers job listings for prospective employees as well as resume listings from prospective employees (you can submit your own resume as well).

Like Glassdoor, Indeed has thousands of company reviews that are submitted from current and past employees. Most company listings have more than 20 reviews, while some — such as the listing for the U.S. Air Force — have over a thousand. Unlike some of the other sites featured here, Indeed is a job aggregator, with listings from practically every job site out there. Reviews, however, are hosted solely on Indeed.com.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is more than a networking site; it's a resource for job seekers to research companies and potential co-workers and a place where recruiters find talent. LinkedIn doesn't provide user-based

company reviews like Glassdoor or Indeed, but it's a great way to see whether you have any current connections working at the company who might be able to give you more insight on what it's like to work there, or to establish a new connection -- as long as you are upfront about your intentions.

It's also a great place to start your job search, since you can also search for companies based on various criteria, including company size, employment opportunities, location, industry and where it fits in the Fortune 500.

CareerBliss

CareerBliss features over 3.5 million job postings, 4 million salaries and 700,000 company reviews, according to its website. It's a one-stop shop to find open jobs, determine a fair salary and read employee reviews on the company. It's been around since 2008, with a focus on helping users "find happiness in the workplace" and in their careers.

CareerBliss also offers a unique feature that will allow you to compare jobs side by side, using a proprietary "Bliss Score." A company's Bliss Score is determined through several factors, including job satisfaction, pay scale and overall employee happiness. If you're looking for the right cultural fit, it's a great way to stack up the competition.

Twitter

You'd be hard pressed to find any business, small or large, without some type of social media presence, and Twitter is no exception. You can learn a lot about a business by looking at its Twitter page to see what they post and share, but you can also do a search to see how often the company is mentioned. Whether it's customers or employees tweeting about a business, those tweets can help you get a better sense for how the company handles its internal and external image.

Facebook

Nearly every business has a Facebook page, and it can be a treasure trove of valuable information for a job-seeker. As with Twitter, a business' Facebook page is typically open to the public, which gives you an opportunity to research what the public opinion of the company is. Be alert for negative reviews from clients or customers, which could indicate a toxic work environment. Or, alternatively, positive reviews can help show the company is responsible, ethical and well-managed; all good signs for any potential employer.

Google

One simple way to research your future employer is to perform a quick Google search on the business. This is especially useful if you're planning to work for a public company or larger business with a public image. You'll find any good or bad news about the company, and you'll be able to get more insight into the corporate values and overall performance of the business. You might find negative press that signals the company won't align with your values, or you might find positive press, like charitable work or interviews with the CEO that confirm the company is a strong fit for you.

Credit: <http://www.cio.com>