

How to Conduct Essential Employer Research on LinkedIn

One of recruiters' biggest complaints about entry-level job candidates is their lack of knowledge about an employer's organization. Before attending a career fair, networking meeting, or job interview, you must do your homework. Here are some tips on how to use LinkedIn to research effectively and gain an advantage over your less-prepared peers.

❑ 1. Be open to new opportunities

While you may have some idea of the company you want to work for, there are lots of opportunities at organizations you've never even heard of. Keep an open mind as you conduct your research and remember that the wider you expand your search, the more likely you are to find a great job.

❑ 2. Just start searching

LinkedIn's Advanced Search is a powerful tool for job seekers like you. Simply type in any keyword -- "marketing," "accounting," "theater," "baseball," "Seattle," "India," anything -- and you'll see the LinkedIn profiles of people whose careers include that keyword. This is a great way to explore potential career paths and to learn about companies or job titles that might be a perfect fit for you. Save your searches to keep a record of careers and people that interest you.

❑ 3. Put yourself in good Company (Pages)

As you find employers you might want to work for, check out their LinkedIn Company Pages. Each page provides a wealth of information about an organization's operations, employees, locations, available jobs, and more. Plus, when you visit any of the 150,000 Company Pages on LinkedIn, you'll see how you are personally connected to people at that organization. Then you can reach out for advice or to request informational interviews and referrals to open positions. Not connected to anyone at your target company? Join a university alumni, industry, or interest group.

The screenshot displays a LinkedIn Company Page. At the top, it says 'LinkedIn Last visited by Account Director'. Below that is a navigation bar with 'Overview' and 'Careers'. The main text describes the company's professional network. The 'Specialties' section lists: Online Professional Network, Jobs, Events, Research, People Search, Company Search, Address Book, Online Advertising, Professional Identity. The 'Current Employees' section lists 433 employees, with a list of names and titles including Patrick Green, VP Marketing; Brian Tapp, Strategic Account Executive; Chris Koffler, Sales and Business Development; Sam Mendillo, Enterprise Account Executive; and Alan Varma, Business Development and Strategy. The 'Former Employees' section lists 10 former employees, including Stephen Serwan, MBA Candidate at Kellogg School of Management; Kelley Marie Bell, Journalist, Photographer at Spare Change News; Dan Rip, Board Member at Rocket Hub; Francesca Prodi, Communications (New Media) at webcast San Francisco; Narya Varmanachchi, Candidate, (Dnc, 2nd district at U.S. House of Representatives; and others. The 'New Hires' section lists 10 new hires, including Ethan Barlow, SDR Relationship Manager; Raymond Nagan, EA & Office Manager; Parker Barrios, Director of Product Management; and others. On the right side, there is a 'Work at LinkedIn' button, a 'Join LinkedIn' button, and a 'Top Locations' section with a map showing locations in San Francisco Bay Area, Greater Omaha Area, London, United Kingdom, and Greater New York City Area. Below that is a 'Headquarters Address' section and a 'Common Job' section with a bar chart showing the distribution of job titles: Senior Software Engineer (98%), Software Engineer (8%), Account Executive (6%), Product Manager (3%), and Web Developer (2%).

❑ 4. Know before you go

It's the night before a big career fair, informational interview, or job interview and you're feeling really nervous. Calm those jitters by using LinkedIn to research the person or people you'll be meeting. You can discover facts about someone's education, work experience, interests, group memberships, and connections you might have in common. This will make you feel more prepared and confident and provide you with some good conversation starters.

❑ 5. Follow the buzz

Want to keep up to the nanosecond with a particular company's news and image? Add the LinkedIn Company Buzz application and you'll be able to view a constant feed of everything people are saying about that organization on Twitter. This is an absolute must the night before a big job interview!