

How to Research a Recruiter

Researching a recruiter is useful.....

- **To help with a covering letter.** A covering letter should include two or three reasons as to why you are interested in the organisation to which you are applying. Typical reasons you might want to consider are an appreciation of its products and services, its client contact, the training and support or career development it provides, its culture/ working environment, its corporate social responsibility projects or its travel opportunities.
- **To suggest which questions you might like to ask at interview.** There are several questions you might like to ask to help you to gauge your level of interest in a recruiter. These questions might eventually help you to decide whether or not to accept a particular job offer, or help you in choosing between job offers with two different recruiters. Asking questions can also demonstrate your interest in a recruiter by showing that you have given some thought as to your concerns.

Typical issues you might like to raise are: the training and support or career development it provides, its culture and working environment, its corporate social responsibility projects or its travel opportunities, and questions about your potential colleagues. It is usual to be asked 'do you have any questions?' at the end of an interview, and to respond with no more than two or three questions.

NB: Pay and benefits are usually questions to ask when you receive a job offer, if they have not already been explained to you. You wouldn't normally raise this subject at the interview itself. You could also clear up any issues with regard to how much the job might affect your lifestyle at this stage (see 'lifestyle implications').

What to find out

Type of organisation - is it a large firm or a SME (small or medium-sized employer with up to 250 employees)? When was the organisation established? How many sites does it have across the UK / worldwide? What is the organisation's turnover? What are its profits? How many staff does it have in the UK / worldwide?

Products and services - what are its main products/ services/ areas of practice? Has it changed or added to its products or services? What deals has the organisation been involved in recently?

Client contact - what kind of clients/ customers can you expect to be dealing with? How much client / customer contact is there? Is it face-to-face, over the phone, online or on a client's premises?

Reputation - has the firm won any awards or prizes? Is it listed in any guides such as 'The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers', The Guardian's 'Britain's Top Employers', The Vault's 'Graduate Atlas', 'The GET Directory' or in 'Prospects Directory'? Has the organisation had an entry in such guides for the first time or has it jumped up a number of places compared to last year? How well have they treated you during the selection process? What do other organisations say about it in the press? What do its customers / clients think?

Issues affecting the organisation - are there any issues affecting the organisation or the industry / sector of which it is a part e.g. is the market changing, is it in a state of growth or decline? Who are

its competitors, and how is the firm responding? How does the organisation hope to develop in the future? What are the challenges involved in working for the organisation?

The people you would be working with - who would be your team leader / manager and how much training/supervision would you receive? Who else would you be working with - is there an opportunity to meet anyone from the team, if you have not already done so? What is the approximate male: female ratio of the staff? What is their average age? What would be the balance between working alone and working in a team?

Training and support - what type of induction will you be given? What type of other training ((initial or ongoing) will you receive? Will there be any other trainees in the workplace at the same time as you? Is there a mentoring or buddy system? How will you know whether you are doing a good job e.g. do staff have performance/ personal development reviews or appraisals?

Career development - would you feel challenged by the job i.e. would it make use of your skills, specialist knowledge or experience? Is there an opportunity to pick up new skills or take on additional responsibilities within the job, as you become more experienced? Is there an opportunity to be promoted within the organisation and how long would this typically take? Is there any support given to study towards a professional qualification or a Masters (e.g. help with the cost of a course or time off to study or to take exams)? Are there opportunities for job-shadowing/secondment in other departments or with partner organisations?

Culture and working environment of the organisation - what are the organisation's core values i.e. what are the principles that affect the way that they behave as an organisation and the way that they treat their customers / clients? How does the organisation seek to understand what its clients need, and how does it ensure that these needs are met? How does the organisation seek the views of its employees, and take account of its suggestions and ideas e.g. through team meetings? What is the scope for individuals to work autonomously i.e. to work independently and have the power to make their own decisions or organise their own day-to-day workload? Does the organisation appear to encourage competition between staff or is there evidence of team spirit? How approachable are the managers - e.g. who would you normally go to if a problem arose? How friendly does the workplace appear to be? Is it a more traditional organisation or does it seem more informal? How proud would you be to work in the organisation and why? Do you feel you could make a difference there, and in what way? How does the organisation measure its own success? How will you know whether or not you are doing a good job i.e. whom can you approach for honest feedback?

Opportunity to travel - is there any opportunity to travel to a variety of locations within the UK or to travel abroad?

Corporate social responsibility – do the ethical principles of the organisation match your own? Does the firm have any corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects? Such projects allow employees to become involved in voluntary work from environmental projects to after school reading clubs.

Lifestyle implications - what hours would you be expected to work per week? Does the organisation have a flexi-time scheme? How much time would it take to travel to work from where you live, and how much would it cost? Does the organisation have a car park, and what is the cost of parking? Where will you be based? How much driving, if any, would you need to do within your working day? Would you be expected to be mobile? Within the region, the UK or worldwide? Are there opportunities to re-locate to another site within the organisation at a later stage in your career? How much paid holiday could you expect (a lot of organisations offer 20 days' paid holiday as a starting point)? Does the organisation have an on-site GP or counselling service, or offer an annual health check? How family-friendly is the firm e.g. are there opportunities to job-share, is there a crèche? What is the organisation's attitude towards diversity? Does the organisation have a social or events committee?

Pay and benefits – what is the starting salary, and would this be projected to rise with a certain amount of experience / or on gaining a particular qualification? Is it a target-driven culture, perhaps attracting a basic salary plus commission? Are there any other benefits such as a 'golden hello', pension plan, medical life or disability

insurance? Or perhaps there are benefits such as free or discounted gym membership, or even free meals, cinema trips or other social activities? Is there a bonus scheme, share options or a rewards system?

How to find out this information

- The website of the organisation (NB the firm/ organisation may have a separate careers website, or the careers section may be within the main site)
- Competitor websites
- The recruitment brochure. Look out for 'case studies' from current employees, either here or on the website)
- The annual report
- The professional magazine or professional body (see the 'addresses' section for your particular career on www.prospects.ac.uk/links/occupations - these magazines or bodies may have information or be able to sign-post you to information about the firm / organisation)
- Any Open Days the organisation might hold
- Any careers fairs the organisation might attend
- Contact the organisation directly to ask if you can speak to trainees about any aspect of the firm / organisation you are not clear about.
- Use 'Career Networking' (published by 'How To' Books) for further suggestions of how to improve your approach to organisations
- Use the interview itself, or a phone-call post-interview, as an opportunity to ask further questions

The Careers & Employability Service

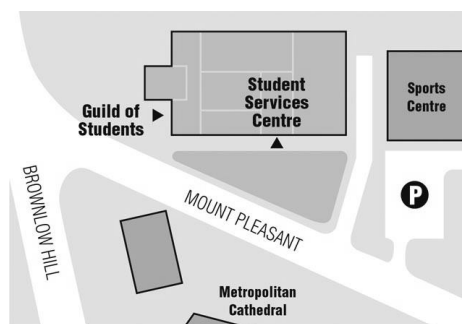
Get in touch; ask questions, we're here to help. We're located on the first floor of the Student Services Centre, next to the Guild of Students.

You can also find us in Careers Express in the courtyard of the Guild of Students. Use Careers Express to find out about job vacancies, book for events, meet recruiters on campus and get your CV checked.

Call in, give us a call, drop us an email or visit our website if there's anything else you need to know.

Careers & Employability Service
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Opening hours: Visit our website for our latest opening hours



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