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Information for Intelligent Decisions  
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## From Your First Job To Your Final Career Destination

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When you are looking for a new job – whether it's your first one or one to move you closer to your goals – you need to find and learn about those organizations that need your skills. Here is a list of resources you can use to investigate any organization, once it is on your radar.

**PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC COMPANIES:** There are more than 16 million companies in the U.S. Out of that, approximately 15,000 are public companies (meaning that the company's stock is publicly held). There are specific reporting requirements for public companies that will allow you to find much more information on them. In contrast, there are very few reporting requirements for private companies, so it can be difficult to locate information on them. When researching a private company, you will need to be persistent and creative. However, remember that there is no oversight commission that ensures that a private company's disclosures are 100% accurate; therefore, be sure to understand the source of the information as well as maintain a bit of skepticism.

**COMPANY WEB SITES:** If the company you are interested in has a web site, be sure to look through the web site for information.

- Follow links that look to contain useful information.
- Check the site map (if it exists) to see if pages appear there that could be useful to you.
- Use the Advanced Search page on Google to search for specific words on the company's web site (domain). This can find pages/files that are on the web site, but that are not linked to any of the visible pages. These files can contain information that was stored there for specific purposes or people, e.g., reports or presentations.

**INTERNET SEARCH ENGINES:** There are many Internet search engines, including specialty search engines (subject or area specific). No search engine indexes the entire Internet. Therefore, it is beneficial to use more than one search engine, since each may find something that the other did not. These search engines are currently regarded at those that have indexed more of the Internet than any other:

- Google, <http://www.google.com>
- Yahoo!, <http://search.yahoo.com>
- Ask, <http://www.ask.com>
- MSN, <http://search.msn.com>

**SPECIALTY SEARCH ENGINES:** You may want to search specialty search engines such as (all free):

- Google News, <http://news.google.com> – News from more than 4,500 sources.
- Topix (“Local News for the World”), <http://www.topix.net> – News from more than 27,000 sources.
- SEC Filings (EDGAR), <http://www.sec.gov> – Most U.S. companies, whose stock is publicly traded, must file detailed documents with the U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC). Documents that you might want to review include the annual report, proxy statement and quarterly financial statements.
- U.S. Patent Office, <http://www.uspto.gov> – Useful if you are interested in knowing what technology the company may have patented.
- ThomasNet, <http://www.ThomasNet.com> – Information on industrial companies.
- Maps and satellite photos – <http://maps.live.com> and <http://maps.google.com> – These are useful if you need to know what the physical surroundings of a business are like, without visiting it.

Companies issue press releases frequently, especially mid-sized and large companies. News search engines may find press releases and you can also find many of them through:

- Businesswire, <http://www.businesswire.com>
- PR Newswire, <http://www.prnewswire.com>

**NEW YORK ONLINE VIRTUAL ELECTRONIC LIBRARY (NOVEL): NOVEL<sup>1</sup>**

(<http://www.novelnewyork.org/>) is “New York's first statewide online virtual library. NOVEL is a collection of electronic databases that provide access from library, home, school, or office to thousands of full-text national and international newspapers and magazines, health and medical resources, business collections...” Access to NOVEL is free for all New York State residents. You can access NOVEL through your local library, using your library card, or by using your New York State Driver License ID (or DMV Non-Driver Photo ID) Number at the NOVEL web site.

One very useful NOVEL database is the *Business & Company Resources Center*. This database contains information on approx. 300,000 U.S. businesses. It includes financial overviews, articles and more. However, be aware that many companies are not included and some of the information may be dated. Still this is a source worth checking.

Also check the newspaper databases in NOVEL, since newspaper articles can contain valuable information that will appear no place else on a company.

**FEE-BASED SERVICES:** There are many fee-based services, with some meant for specific audiences. Here are three that you may find useful (check their web sites for pricing and details on their content):

- Northern Light, <http://www.northernlight.com>
- Hoover's, <http://www.hoovers.com>
- Factiva, <http://www.factiva.com>

**PEOPLE:** Keep in mind that the best information often is not in databases or articles, but comes from a knowledgeable person. Remember to reach out through your network – colleagues, friends and family – for useful information. It has been said that rumors are 80% accurate, so listen to the rumors as well as the facts. However, as the saying goes, “consider the source” (or your source's source) and use other sources (e.g., company web site, newspaper articles) to try to verify what you have heard.

**TIPS:**

- When you use an Internet search engine, review more than just the first 10 search results. What you are looking for may be lower in the list, so review the first 100 research results if not more.
- When you use any search engine, think about the words you are using to describe what you want. Are there other terms that are used (alternate words)? Should you be using broader or narrower terms?
- Learn the advanced features, logical search operators and short-cuts that your search engine or database service uses. All of these features are there to make your searches more efficient and more targeted.
- Know your sources. Some sources are more accurate and more up-to-date than others.
- If a piece of information needs to be correct, double-check it in another reputable source.
- Keep track of where you find the information. This will help you go back to the information, if necessary. It will also teach you which sources yield better information for you.
- People can be the best source for information. However, when obtaining information from people, be sure to understand who the person is and how s/he got the information. Remember that even “inside” sources may not have the correct story.
- Statistically, many rumors are true. However, be careful since some rumors are totally or partially false. If you cannot verify a rumor, use the information cautiously.
- Finally, the sources listed here are the “tip of the iceberg.” As you come across others, keep track of those that you like as well as those that prove useful.

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<sup>1</sup> Pronounced like the book (nov-uhl), not the computer company.