

Researching Employers

Whether you are networking, informational interviewing, or heading for a job interview, you must conduct basic research before you make that first contact. This research will help you make an informed and thoughtful decision as to which employers you want to submit your resume. You can present the best impression in an interview by learning about the person, their practice, and their firm or organization. Preparation is crucial to a good interview. In addition, knowing more about an organization or interviewer can help you to plan your answers to questions, keeping the needs of your target audience in mind.

What am I looking for?

- **Attorneys within the firm or organization with whom you have something in common.** The most obvious is to look for Mitchell Hamline (William Mitchell or Hamline) alumni. Also look for people from your undergraduate institution, your hometown, whose careers you want to emulate, who you heard speak at a CLE, who published something you read and found interesting or who are involved in a group in which you are interested (Minnesota Defense Lawyers, Minnesota Matrimonial Lawyers, Bar Association sections, etc.).
- **"Hard" information:** concrete information such as the size of the firm/organization, areas of practice, biographies of the firm's members, including where they went to undergraduate and law school, cases the firm has been involved in, clients the firm has represented, and any current mentions of the employer in the news media.
- **"Soft" information:** the inside scoop that you probably won't find published anywhere. Things like: What is it like to work at this firm? Are there particular traits this firm prizes in law students? What are their hiring patterns and practices? Inside information about firm members to establish a common ground.

Where do I find this information?

- **Law Firm Websites:** Check law firm websites as your first resource for information on firm practice areas, clients, firm member biographies, recruiting policies and other information.
- **Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory:** This is available in print and also is on-line at: [Martindale](#). Firms are divided by state, and then alphabetically by city. It contains a listing of law firms, including search capabilities by practice area, law school and geographical area, in addition to information on individual firm members and representative clients.
- **Other on-line research resources:** Lexis and Westlaw have numerous databases that will help you not only identify potential employers, but find out more about them.
- **NALP Directory of Legal Employers:** This directory tends to include the larger firms with some smaller employers. Visit NALP (National Association for Law Placement) for an [on-line directory](#). Information such as the name of the hiring partner and recruiting coordinator, offers and acceptances from prior year's summer associate program, billable hour minimums, pro bono policies and more.
- **Internet Searches:** The general Internet search will provide additional valuable information about the firm and its members. Try online newspaper sites for recent headlines about firms "in the news."
- **Law & Business Directory of Corporate Counsel:** This resource profiles the members of corporate legal departments and nonprofit organizations. Indexes allow you to look for individual names, companies sorted by geographic location, organization type, and law school.

- **Corporate Report Fact Book:** This can be a good resource to learn about a firm's clients or about a corporation you are interested in. It contains information on Midwest companies.
- **Minnesota Attorney's/Paralegal's/Secretary's Handbook:** Look at this resource if you are interested in county or state government positions and/or the judiciary. It is a directory of every Minnesota judge, the Federal Court system, Federal Government offices, Minnesota District and Appellate Courts and much more.
- **Directories of attorneys arranged by practice areas, organization type, and geographic region**
- **Legal Publications:** Several trade publications have articles on substantive legal issues, as well as information on the local legal market, such as newly formed firms or attorneys who have been hired, promoted, elected, or appointed: *Hennepin Lawyer*; *Minnesota's Journal of Law & Politics*; *Finance and Commerce*; and *Bench & Bar* are several suggestions.

What about the "soft" information?

It is more difficult to uncover the "soft" information. You probably won't find a directory that lists all the firms that "provide ongoing training and mentoring." This kind of information is what will help you determine if you are a fit for a particular employer and if you will enjoy what you do and the people with whom you will work.

To find this information, you will need to use different resources. Some of these include: alumni who have worked at the firm, other students who have clerked or interviewed at the firm, attorneys you have contacted, lawyers you have met in the community through volunteer work, professional association members you know, adjunct/full-time law professors, and internet searches.

Some tips to remember

It may seem that many employers look the same on paper. Look for some of the following things to see how each organization stands out, and what qualities about the firm appeal to you:

- Learn about the expectations as well as the benefits. One of the first facts you will uncover about any potential employer is the salary. You also need to consider how many hours you will have to bill to earn that salary, as well as other expectations the employer has.
- Look at the breakdown of practice areas. Does the firm specialize in one or more areas? Many of the general practice firms have reputations for standing out in a specific practice area. What responsibilities are given to new hires?
- Look at information that can shed light on lifestyle issues that may be important to you. How many female partners are in the firm? How many minority attorneys are there? How progressive is the firm with family leave policies, etc.? What is the firm culture/environment like?
- Does the firm have a stated *pro bono* policy? Is *pro bono* work important to you?
- Look at the organization's clients. Are they in the same or similar industries? Where are they based geographically? What type(s) of issues does the firm handle for them?