

# Doing your Homework

In this lesson, we'll learn why researching an organization before an interview is important and some concrete steps you can take to do that.

## We'll cover the following ^

- Why research an organization?
- Researching the organization
  - Reviewing the website
  - Reviewing the job description

## Why research an organization? #

You must always remember that interviews are **biologically stressful situations**. I mean, who wouldn't get stressed? You are given x amount of minutes to prove to someone, who you do not know, that you are exactly the type of person they need. Terrifying, but that's why you do your homework. You wouldn't expect to pass the technical portion of an interview without having studied in advance, so why would you think that you could pass the behavioral part without studying? No matter how personable you are, it is crucial that you **research** the organization, **study** the values that the organization rests their laurels on, and **practice** how you're going to respond.

“During aversive situations in which an active coping response is not available, mammals may engage in a vigilance response that involves sympathetic nervous system (SNS) arousal accompanied by an active inhibition of movement and shunting of blood away from the periphery.”- [Schneiderman, Ironson, Siegle](#)

## Researching the organization #

Most of the research you need for an interview can be done by reviewing the

organization's website. This is the bare minimum for interviews; however, if you want to go further, it can be helpful to look at an organization's social media accounts, the organization or interviewers' LinkedIn profiles, and any recent org activity in the news. While researching, look for information on the industry, competitors, market share, products and services, and brand. But why is it important to do this kind of research?

*If this organization is a non-profit, some of these aspects will not be relevant.*

## Reviewing the website #

It is extremely important to look at the organization's website before walking into an interview. Information like the organization's mission statement, history, products, services, management, and culture will all be present on their website. Make sure that you pay special attention to the tone of what is present on the website as well as the word choice; it will give you a good idea of how the organization communicates and how productive you would be in such a setting.



## Reviewing social media

The easiest way to make sure that your personality would fit within an organization is to look at their social media. How their social media (Twitter, facebook, Instagram, etc.) is managed will tell you a lot about how the organization is managed. Does their social media voice mimic the voice present on their website? Do they post a lot or is the whole thing very sparse and dry? Keep these questions in mind as you search; remember, it is not just about them liking you, it is also about you liking the organization!

## Reviewing LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the easiest way to find a basis for rapport with your interviewer. Before being interviewed, check the organization's and the interviewers' LinkedIn. While on their pages, look for shared connections and interests. These can become great points of conversation and it can be a lot easier to relax after you have engaged in easy conversation. If you don't find anything in common, you can still comment on what they've shared or ask a question about their career path.



## Reviewing the news



The more you know about an organization, the better you will be able to tailor your responses to them. When you are up to date on organization activity, you will stand out as an **invested** potential employee.

No matter how much research you do beforehand, every little bit will help your responses to be applicable. It will also help you as you begin to plan which experiences and past successes or failures you want to highlight at the time of the interview. Don't know what to look for? Try:

- Product announcements
- Changes in senior leadership
- Shifts from private to public
- Research breakthroughs

## Reviewing the job description #

Understanding the job description will help you to prepare for the interview and practice what you are going to say. Does the role require you to be self-directed and work autonomously? Does the role require teamwork? Is it a

leadership position? If so, you will want to be ready to discuss your experience holding peers accountable and motivating a team. If the role does not require any of these aspects, be ready to discuss relevant experiences that will highlight you as someone who works hard and learns from their mistakes.

**Pro tip:** Keep in mind that the job description may or may not accurately represent the role. Sometimes, the interviewers may not be familiar with the details of the posted job description, or the actual role may differ in meaningful ways. This being said, as the interviewee, you **must** be familiar with the job posting.

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Try your hand at researching an organization with the interactive exercise in the next lesson!