Knowing your employer

COMMUNICATION

LEVEL	NUMBER	LANGUAGE
Upper-intermediate	EN_BE_3A07X	English

Goals

- Can understand the importance of researching a potential employer before an interview in order to understand the company's culture

- Can use new knowledge and terminology to discuss fitting in within a company's culture

Getting to know your **employer** should not begin after you start **working** somewhere.

Research can begin before you even **apply for a job** at the company.

Preview and warm-up

■ In this lesson you are going to learn about the **importance** of doing **research** before a **job interview**.

The company website has a huge amount of useful information.

Knowing your employer

When applying for a job and preparing for an interview, candidates are expected to polish their CV, write a stellar cover letter and arrive on time if invited to interview. However, before doing any of this, it is useful to **research** the company.

There are two main reasons to do some research. Firstly, by **browsing** the website and looking at brochures produced by the company, you can **predict** the questions you will be asked and prepare answers that the interviewers want to hear. Secondly, research can also give an applicant a good idea about whether the company is a place they actually want to work.

Knowing your employer

Looking at the company's website is probably the easiest and most **accessible** way to do research. You can find out what the **company values** are and what their **mission** is. Are they a company focused on supporting environmental causes? Or do they place more **emphasis** on achieving **outcomes**? It is important to know this so you can **tailor** your answers when you explain why you want to work in the company and why you would be suitable.

Knowing your employer

A website can also tell you the story of how and when the company was **founded** and by whom. A company which started as a family business in the 1950s will likely be run very differently to a **startup** which came into being just a few years ago. And, while a startup might have a rather **flat hierarchy**, the organisational structure of a **corporate company** is usually more **hierarchical**, with a clear **division** between management and their staff.

What are the pros and cons of being able to predict interview questions?

Do you know about the mission and values of the company you currently work at?

Are there any other ways in which you can research companies?

Do you know anything about the founding of the company you currently work at?

Is it something which is important to know?

Which **organisations** would you expect to be more **hierarchical** and which do you think have **flat hierarchies**?

What effects might the **organisational structure** have on the **working environment**?

Discuss the questions below with your teacher or classmates.

Do you think it is important to fit in with a company's culture?

What does fitting in with the culture mean to you?

Startups vs large corporations

■ There are a lot of **differences** between the **culture** of **startups** and of large **corporations**.

■ Look at some of the differences below.

startup culture	corporate culture
Startups are high risk – there is a high rate of failure.	Large corporations are usually financially stable.
There is the potential of huge growth and rewards.	Rewards are guaranteed and predictable but unlikely to be spectacular.
You can have a variety of experiences and improve many different skills.	You will specialise in one area and be an expert.
More responsibility – the team is likely to be small and failures are your fault, as are successes.	Your role is defined and you are a small part of a large machine with less stress.

Startups vs large corporations

■ Here are some more **differences** between **startup** and **corporate culture**.

startup culture	corporate culture
You will have more lifestyle perks like free coffee and flexible working hours.	You will have cash rewards like training programmes, travel and reimbursement for education.
You will work odd hours and you might not have a good work-life balance.	You will work defined hours and are more likely to have a good work-life balance.
You are focused on growing the company and expanding the customer base.	You have an established customer base and are focused on keeping those customers happy.

Speaking

Discuss the differences between startup and corporate culture on the previous pages.
Which culture do you think would suit you better?
Does it depend on your age or any other factors?

Knowing your employer

Through research you can also find out who the **key players** in the company are. This is not just the CEO – you should also look at **department managers** to see who might be in charge of you if you were to get the job. You can often read the **bio** of any senior employees and you may be able to see large projects they have managed to get an idea of what you would be working on.

Websites also usually have a **blog** and publish **press releases** with recent news about the company. You can see if they just announced a new client or product, or have recently won an award.

Knowing your employer

Aside from a website, most companies use **social media** as a **promotional tool**. Through this, you can get an idea of how the company wants to be seen. You can also use it to check out current employees to get an idea of the **dress code** and to find out about the **employment history** of other employees.

Dress codes

Does a workplace **dress code** affect what you wear to an **interview**?

Explain your answer.

Reading a bio

What kind of information can you find out by reading the bio of a senior manager?
How might this information be useful in an interview?

Reading a bio

Read through this example bio.

Kevin Elhart, CEO

Kevin joined the firm as CEO in 2015 after working in Vega LLC for 10 years as a COO. He is a qualified chartered accountant and specialises in crisis management. He is also a graduate of Columbia Business School in New York.

Write your bio

Now write a short bio of yourself as though it were on a company website.
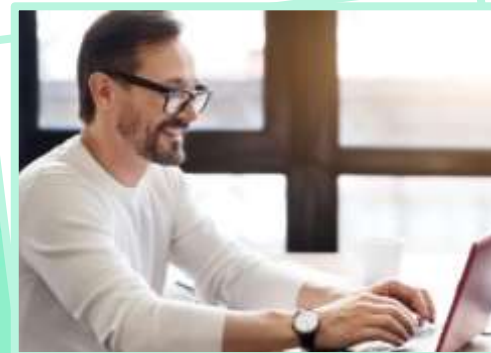
Blogs and press releases

Do you ever read the blog or press releases of the company where you work?

With your classmates or teacher, make a list of what sort of information you might be able to find on a blog or in a press release.
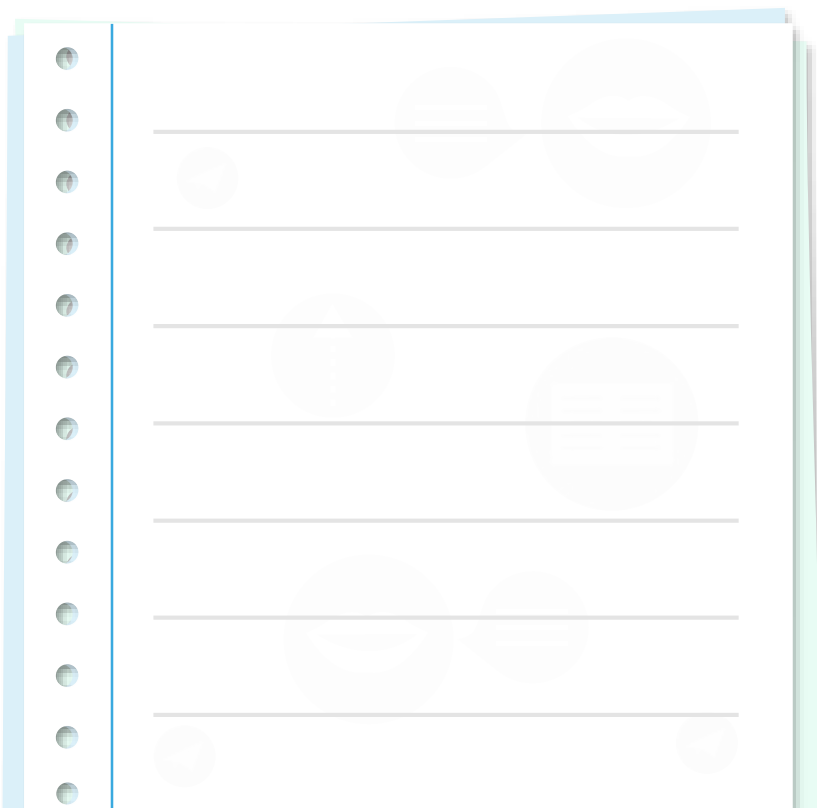
Knowing your employer

Read through the final part about researching your employer.

There are also **review websites** that you can check to see what people have written about the company. You can often find someone who has written about the **interview process**, sometimes including the questions they were asked, meaning you can get a better idea of what to expect. You can also see reviews from current and former employees who comment on what it was like to work for the company, giving you a truer picture of the **atmosphere** and culture in the company. You are also able to research salaries, which is useful if the interviewer asks what **remuneration** you expect to receive.

Speaking

Answer these questions about using review websites.

1 Do you know of any review websites you can use to find out information about a company?

2 What kind of information can you find out?

3 Do you think the information is reliable?

Speaking

Are there any tips you can share with your teacher or classmates for getting to know your employer?

Reflect on the goals

**Go back to the second slide of the lesson and check
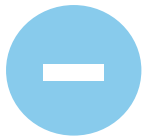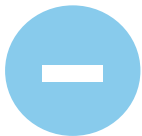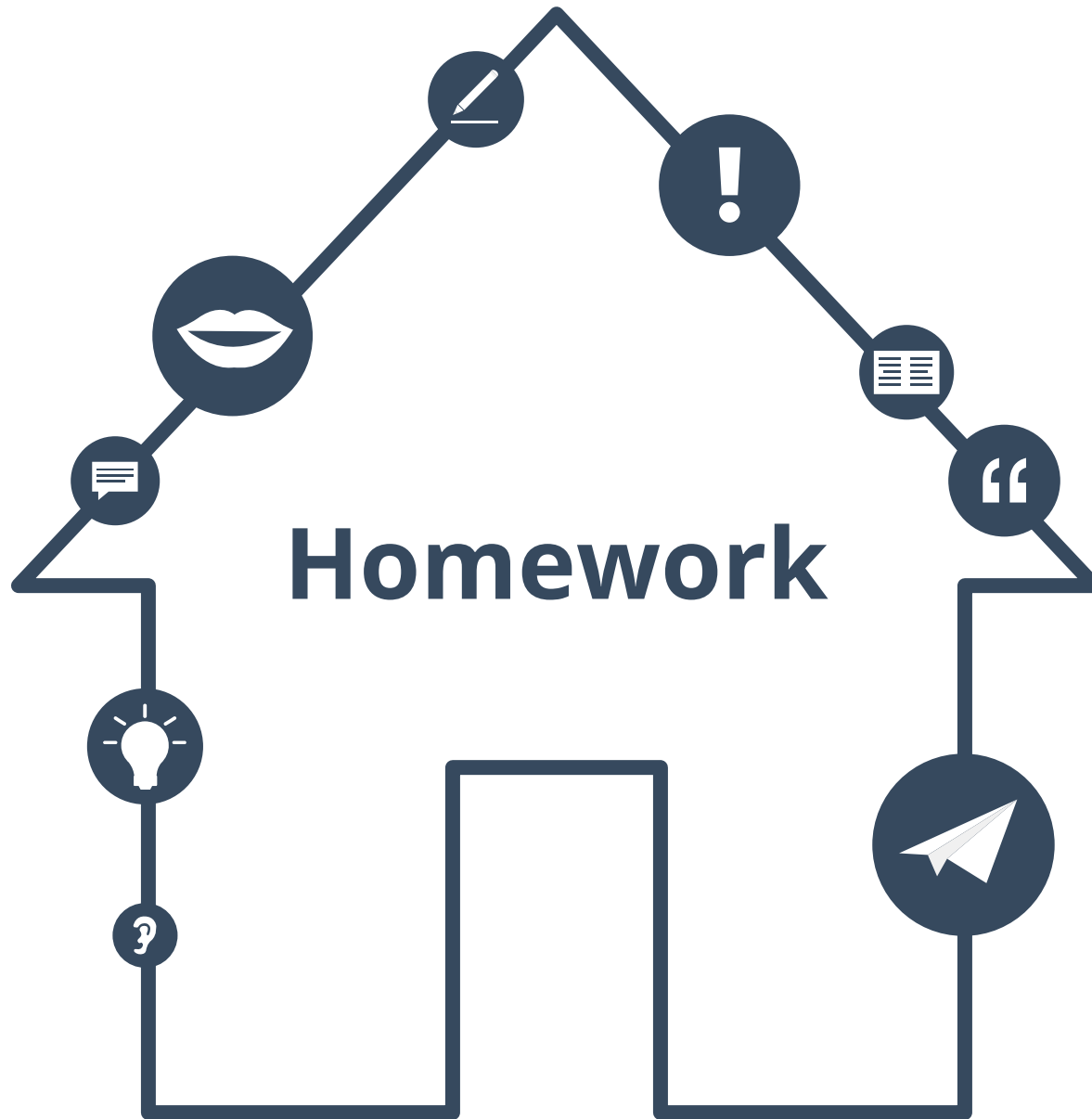if you have achieved all the goals of the lesson.**

yes

no

Reflect on this lesson

**Think about everything you have seen in this lesson.
What were the most difficult activities or words? The easiest?**

+ _____

_____

+ _____

_____

− _____

_____

− _____

_____

If you have time, go over
the most difficult slides again

Homework

1. You can read the bios of _____ in the company on the website.
2. _____ is a good way to find out what the dress code is.
3. Doing research can help a candidate to _____ interview questions.
4. Startups usually have more of a _____ than traditional corporations.
5. A company's website can tell us its _____ and mission.

predict

values

key players

flat hierarchy

social media

Writing

Note down five of the most important things to research before going to a job interview.

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