



Chapter 5 Resource

Become an Expert on the Employer

There are two very good reasons to learn as much as you can about the employer with whom you are interviewing:

- To make a favorable impression with your interviewer
- To ensure the employer is a good fit for you

Below is a checklist of items, the answers to which, will help you become an expert on the employer. Some of these items come from Yale Law School's Career Development Office's publication, Introduction to Career Development found at this website:

https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/area/departments/cdo/document/cdo_introduction_to_career_development_public.pdf. Check out chapter 5, pages 34-36 for some helpful information.

First, an important caveat before you read this list of 50+ questions and think “how the heck will I be able to uncover all of the information without having to hire a private investigator?” or “this list is so overwhelming that I don't even know how to get started, nor do I want to.” This list leaves no stone unturned, but the objective is not for you to get the answer to every one of these questions. And, in fact, some bullets seek the same information using a different question. The list is here to serve as a resource for you and contains most if not all of the kinds of questions one might possibly need to ask about a particular employer. So, don't feel pressure to complete the list by any means. Instead, pick one or two questions from categories you care about and get the answers to those.

The answers can be obtained in advance through research and talking with people familiar with the employer, including current and former employees, or during the interview.

- **Employer personality and culture**
 - What does the employer value?
 - What is the employer's mission statement?
 - What is the employer's reputation?
 - What attracted the current employees to the employer and their particular practice?
- **Employer structure**
 - Who runs the employer?
 - What does the organizational chart look like?
 - To whom would you report?
 - And to whom would that person report?
 - If a national law firm or company, how independent are each of the firm's or company's offices?
 - If you could change anything about the structure/organization, what would you change?
- **Employer uniqueness**
 - Who does the employer perceive as its direct competitors?
 - What sets the employer apart from these competitors?
 - What is being said about the employer in the news and through social networks (i.e., blog, online newsletter, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.)?
- **Employer work environment**
 - What kinds of clients does the employer typically help and what are their challenges?
 - Describe a “typical” day at work.

- Where does most of the employer's business come from? For example, if a law firm, does the litigation group primarily service clients of corporate partners, or vice versa?
- Are new employees assigned to one department or rotated through several?
- How is the employees work determined, assigned, and evaluated?
- What are the most important qualities in new hires?
- When does an employee have contact with clients?
- When does an employee take on major responsibility for cases or matters?
- **Employer training**
 - To what extent are new hires involved in training programs?
 - Is there a mentoring program?
 - Is there a writing program?
 - Is there training to assist employees how to generate business?
 - Does the employer require its employees to participate in continuing legal education events?
 - How do you evaluate and provide feedback to attorneys?
- **Associate partnership track (if law firm)**
 - What is the partnership structure?
 - How is performance judged and by whom?
 - What are the criteria for advancement and partnership?
 - How long is the partnership track?
 - What factors are considered in electing partners?
 - How many partners have been elected in the last two years?
- **Employer's economics**
 - What are the employer's main business challenges?
 - How are they dealing with these challenges?
 - Is the employer's success tied to many clients or to a few?
 - How has the employer (and, in the case of a firm, its various practice areas) been affected by the economic and political climate?
 - What changes are on the horizon for the employer?
 - If a law firm, do you anticipate changes in billing structures, partnership choices, practices, etc.?
- **Employer growth**
 - Has the employer grown in the past 10 years?
 - How many new employees have been hired annually over the past several years?
 - What is the rate of new hire turnover?
 - Where do people go when they leave?
 - What are the plans for the employer's future?
 - What practice areas have expanded in recent years?
 - What areas will expand in the future?
- **Employer policies**
 - If a law firm, what are the compensation systems for associates and partners?
 - If a law firm, what emphasis is placed on obtaining new business?
 - If a law firm, what are the annual billable hour requirements?
 - What types of required activities are included in billable hours?
 - Is pro bono work included?