

## How to Research a Business – A Graduate’s Guide

*Researching a business properly is one of the most important things you can do when applying for a job. Graduate recruitment specialist Laura Sparkes explains the best approach.*

So, you’re coming towards the end of your course and you’re starting to think about the dreaded “what next?” question.

You may by now have spoken to a careers adviser, a tutor or your nearest and dearest about how to approach job applications. You may even have started submitting applications. It’s almost guaranteed that at every turn, someone will remind you to “research the business” thoroughly but **what does that mean** and **how can you do it?**

The aim of research is to enable you to submit a strong and considered application followed by a confident interview where you are able to learn more about the business - because you already know the basics.



### Before you apply

Start by thoroughly researching the company you’re applying for, before you even apply, to understand if it is going to complement your interests and suit you as a person. If it is suitable for you then at this stage you can also tailor your CV to the specific role, team and business culture. You never know just how quickly the employer will respond to your application and conduct a telephone interview so it’s really important that you know what you’re talking about.

### The Website

Begin your research by going through a company’s [Hub](#) to learn more about the graduate opportunities, what training is in place and what the latest projects and company news are.

### Social Media

Social media is quite often where you find some of the wider bits of information surrounding business culture and some of the exciting initiatives that are in place. For instance, some of the Lego structures that our graduates at WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff have put together in our office have a home on [Instagram](#) but wouldn’t necessarily find a place on a website. It is also great to highlight in an application or at an interview that you’ve seen some specific points of interest on the company’s [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) accounts – you’ll certainly look prepared!

Furthermore, the fastest growing community on LinkedIn is the student and graduate community so I would encourage you to engage with blogs, company pages and employee profiles through this avenue – there’s an increasing amount of content specifically aimed at you.

### Graduate Employment Rankings

There are hundreds of employers on Graduate Employment Rankings out there and if you’re feeling overwhelmed by the choice of businesses to apply to or if you only have a broad knowledge of an

industry, these lists might help narrow the field and highlight some of the different players that you may not have known about. They can also give an insight in to the company's culture so you can see whether it feels right for you.

However, these lists shouldn't be the deciding factor because a lot of this information depends on whether the employers have subscribed to the specific ranking. On a more practical level too, they depend on whether the graduates took the time to provide the required information and what kind of mood they were in when they completed their surveys.

### **Industry Knowledge**

After applying, it's also worth scratching up on your industry-specific knowledge as this will put you in a strong position to ask useful questions in your interview and raise concerns you may have about the team or the job.

Read industry specific magazines and go on discussion forums. They can give you an understanding of where the business sits in relation to its competitors and also give you an insight into any challenges or trends that an industry faces. If you haven't already, look into a student membership of a professional body as these often come with access to some useful resources like newsletters and libraries.

Be aware of how **national and international affairs** impact an industry as certain events could have an impact on the role you could potentially secure. National news providers are useful but it is also worth looking at industry specific coverage including *Building* or *Infrastructure Intelligence* as these will give you the headlines from an angle that is more relevant to you.

### **How do I know when I've done enough research?**

The simplest test of whether you're ready is if you can provide a detailed answer to the following three questions:

- Why do you want to work for this business?
- What do you know about the business already?
- What made you apply to this role?

If you can, then congratulations you are ready for the application and interview process. If you can't, then it's back to the drawing board and I suggest you need to do more research.

Best of luck!