

Research 2

The **BIG** Idea

- What do I need to know about a company and where can I find this information?

AGENDA

- I. Warm Up (10 minutes)
- II. Why Research? (10 minutes)
- III. Company Research (20 minutes)
- IV. Wrap Up: Sharing Findings (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:**
 - Student Handbook pages 49-51, Research Questionnaire (from previous lesson)
 - Student Handbook page 54, Why Cold Calls Give Me Cold Feet
- FACILITATOR PAGES:**
 - Facilitator Resource 1, Cold Call Concerns and Strategies
 - Facilitator Resource 2, “How Not To Impress Your Interviewer” Script
 - Facilitator Resource 3, Research Questionnaire MODEL
- Overhead projector
- Laptop to project Web site for whole-class use
- Computers with Internet access
- Chart paper

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Identify ways in which company research is a valuable job-hunting tool.
- Use the company website and other resources to research at least one company where they hope to work.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students identify possible obstacles to making cold calls and brainstorm solutions. Then, they move on to more in-depth company research, watching a role-play about an “interview gone bad” that helps them recognize the value of researching as part of the job search process. Finally, students conduct the online company research needed for a successful job interview.

PREPARATION

- Make arrangements to use the computer lab.
- List the day’s **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Make the following handout into an overhead transparency or copy onto chart paper:
 - **Facilitator Resource 3, Research Questionnaire MODEL**
- Make copies of **Student Handbook pages 49-51, Research Questionnaire** (from previous lesson), at least 2 per student, to distribute as homework.
- For **Activity II**, select two or three students to participate in the role-play. If you feel your students would benefit from a more accessible example of an “interview gone bad,” create a different scenario with an entry-level job and an under-prepared high school student.
- For **Activity II**, make three copies of **Facilitator Resource 2, “How Not to Impress Your Interviewer” Script** for student volunteers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A key step in the job search process is researching companies in preparation for interviews. Finding out what a company does or makes, who its customers or clients are, and its history, is helpful preparation for an interview. More often than not, an interviewer will ask why the potential employee is interested in working at their company. An inability to articulate an answer will not bode well for the candidate. Conducting research enables you to speak knowledgeably and feel confident when meeting with an employer.

Research is important for all of the following reasons:

- Helps you figure out if the company is a place you would feel comfortable working.
- Enables you to intelligently answer interview questions and ask relevant questions that show your interest and knowledge.
- Improves confidence.
- Provides information needed to tailor your resume to specific jobs.

The Web is a good place to conduct research. Not all companies post information for job seekers specifically, but most company sites do provide information useful in preparing for interviews.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

For **Activity I**, if students are not able to come up with their own cold call concerns and strategies, see **Facilitator Resource 1, Cold Call Concerns and Strategies**, for suggestions.

For **Activity II**, if you have a personal example of an interview gone bad due to lack of preparation, you may use it instead of the provided script.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up (10 minutes)

1. [As students enter, ask them to complete **Student Handbook page 54, Why Cold Calls Give Me Cold Feet**. Give them three minutes to complete the activity.]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Last week, we talked about research as a way to identify companies that might be hiring in your field. We also discussed what you should find out about a company to help you determine if it is a place you would want to work. As a result of this research, you made (or will make) cold calls to companies to find out if they are hiring. How'd it go?
3. [Prompt students who were able to make the cold call before today's class to discuss their experiences. For example, if a student had a good call, encourage him or her to say why it was good. Alternatively, if a student had a negative experience, have him or her explain what made it that way. If no one made a cold call, it's time to explore why.]
4. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** It is not unusual to have cold feet when it comes to making cold calls.

Even if you've identified a company that appeals to you and where you think you'd be an asset, making this cold call can still be scary. What are some of your concerns, worries, or fears? [Have students share what they listed on **Student Handbook page 54, Why Cold Calls Give Me Cold Feet**. Create a t-chart on chart paper with "Concerns" on one side and "Strategies" on the other. Jot their ideas in the "Concerns" column.]

5. [Review the list of concerns, one at time. Have students suggest how they could handle each concern and list their ideas for addressing them in the "Strategies" column on the chart paper.]
6. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Keep in mind that cold calls are worth the effort, even when you hear "no" a lot. Cold calling is one of the most effective ways of job-hunting.

II. Why Research? (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Imagine a cold call you make results in someone at the company wanting to meet you. You set up a date and time and mark it on your Job Lead Form and your calendar. Now what do you do? What is the next step? [Give students

a chance to respond.] The answer is research. Your job now is to find out everything you can about the company: what it does or makes, its history, challenges, accomplishments, etc. Why do you need to know all of this information? Let's find out.

2. [Invite the volunteers you selected during **PREPARATION** to come to the front of the classroom. One student will read the part of narrator, the other the interviewer, and you will read the part of the potential employee (or, if you'd like, a third volunteer can play this part). Tell students that this role-play is based on a real experience. Perform the role-play for the class.]
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** What kind of impression did Lisa make on the cable channel executive? [Give students a chance to respond. Lisa's lack of preparation may have made the interviewer wonder if she was really interested in the job. It's also possible that the interviewer was really busy, and would have preferred not to have to spend her time explaining something Lisa could have investigated on her own.]

How could Lisa prepare for future interviews? [Give students a chance to respond. Make sure they understand that in the future she should find out all she can about a company, including what they do or make.]

4. [After students respond to the questions above, summarize the different reasons for researching a company.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: As you can tell from Lisa's experience, research is a vital step in the job search process. If Lisa had done her research, she would have been able to answer the question intelligently. Knowing about the company and its programming also would have enabled Lisa to ask questions that would have shown the interviewer her interest in the company. So, research helps you:

- Gain confidence you need going into an interview.
- Intelligently answer interview questions and ask relevant questions that show your interest and knowledge.
- Make sure your resume reflects skills important to your employer.
- Determine whether the company is a place you'd like to work and where your skills will be valued.

The job candidate who has researched the company has an edge over someone who is less prepared.

III. Company Research (20 minutes)

1. [Project **Facilitator Resource 3, Research Questionnaire MODEL** on the overhead. Use the laptop and the overhead to project the Madison Square Boys & Girls Club home page: <http://www.madisonsquare.org>.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Last week, our job-hunter Chris made a cold call to the Madison Square Boys and Girls Club about the counselor position. Let's assume that the call was successful because Chris learned that the camp is still hiring counselors, and he was invited in for an interview. Let's see what additional info Chris might want before he meets his potential employer face-to-face.

2. [Direct students' attention to the projected questionnaire].

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Now that he has scheduled an interview, Chris will dig deeper to learn more about the camp and the organization that runs the camp. This research will help Chris answer questions during the interview, it will give him confidence, and it will enable him to ask intelligent questions.

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** To guide his research, Chris will answer the questions listed in Part II of **Student Handbook page 50, Research Questionnaire** from last week. [Point to Part II on the overhead]. He will find most of the answers on the organization's web site. Let's research the first few questions together.

[Invite a volunteer to read aloud the first question: *What is the company's mission?*]

The company in this case is an organization, the Madison Square Boys & Girls Club. Camp Madison is a program offered through the Boys & Girls Club. A mission is a goal or purpose. You can see that the mission is right on the home page. [Have a volunteer read it aloud. Write the mission on the projected questionnaire in answer to question 1 for Part II.]

4. [Read aloud the next research question: *What products does the company make or what services does it offer?* Point to the "About Us" button at the top left corner. As you click it, tell students they can find an answer to this question on most company websites by clicking the "About Us" button. Read the first paragraph in the About Us page. Explain to the class that the Boys & Girls Club provides a service, not a product. Ask them what it is. Then write the answer on the questionnaire: "Provides after school and summer programs for thousands of New York City's most vulnerable kids."]

5. [Depending on time and student need, you may continue to model answering questions or prepare them to do work independently on researching their companies of interest.]
6. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** As you research, you will find lots of information on company web sites, but you may want to use other research tools as well. For example, to learn more about a company's CEO (the person in charge), search the internet for his or her name. Do the same for the person interviewing you. You may also take your research offline, and talk to a person who works in the same general career field about the job and the company.
7. [Have students open to **Student Handbook pages 49-51, Research Questionnaire** and send them to work individually at computers. Using Part II of the questionnaire, students are to conduct research for the company they identified in the previous week's lesson, and for which they answered the questions in Part I.]

IV. Wrap Up: Sharing Findings (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** What is one thing you learned today about the company or organization that will help you when you meet with the employer? For example, if Chris finds out the Madison Square Boys and Girls Club camp serves city youth, he'd want to point out any experience he'd had with this population – both in his resume and during an in-person interview.

What did you learn today that you could share in an interview or include in your resume?

2. [Spend the last couple of minutes assigning the homework for next week. Instruct students to research at least two more companies on their list. Remind them to complete parts I and II on the **Student Handbook pages 49-51, Research Questionnaire.**]
3. [Let students know that they'll be working on updating their resumes next week.]

Cold Call Concerns and Strategies

CONCERNS	STRATEGIES
Employer too busy to talk to me.	Ask employer when would be a good time to call back.
Employer yells at me.	Simply say, "thank you".
Employer doesn't have any jobs.	Thank the employer and ask when might be a good time to check back. Ask if you can send a resume for them to keep on file should opportunities arise.

How Not to Impress Your Interviewer

Narrator: This is the true story of Lisa, an adult who has been working for many years producing television shows for children. Lisa arranges an informational interview with an executive at a very popular cable channel. Lisa writes and revises her resume until it's perfect. She wears her best business suit, and arrives on time.

Cable Channel Exec: Good morning, Lisa. Welcome to the Best Cable Channel in the World. [Cable exec and interviewer shake hands.] Come on in to my office so we can talk.

Lisa: Nice to meet you.

Cable Channel Exec: So, Lisa, what do you think of our programming here at the Best Cable Channel in the World?

Narrator: Lisa opens her mouth to answer, but does not know what to say. The Best Cable Channel in the World is a premium channel – it costs extra money – and Lisa does not get it at home.

Lisa: Well, I don't actually get your cable channel. I was hoping you'd tell me something about your programs.

Research Questionnaire Model

Choose a company to research. Use the company's website to answer the following questions.

Name of company: Camp Madison

PART 1 (GET THIS INFO BEFORE A COLD CALL.)

1. What is the website address?

http://www.madisonsquare.org

2. Why are you interested in working here?

I want to work outdoors and with children.

3. What skills or experiences do you have to offer this company?

I know a lot about nature and I worked as an assistant in an after-school basketball program in the Bronx.

4. What kind of job would you like to do at this company?

I'd like to be a nature counselor.

5. What more do you want to know that is not on the site?

The responsibilities of a counselor at Camp Madison

PART 2 (GET THIS INFO BEFORE YOU WRITE A COVER LETTER OR GO ON AN INTERVIEW.)

6. What is the company's mission?

7. What products does the company make or what services does it offer?

8. Who are the company's customers or clients?

9. What is the company's history? (Include recent news.)

10. What is the company's environment or culture like?

11. Who is the company's CEO, President, or Executive Director?

Extra for Experts

12. Who are the company's biggest competitors?

13. List two facts about the department you would like to work for.

Why Cold Calls Give Me Cold Feet

A cold call is a call to a company where you do not know anyone. It is an important step in the job search process, but not always an easy one to do. List three reasons why people might avoid making cold calls.

1.

2.

3.
