Company Research
MBA Orientation
August 18, 2003

Select On-line Resources – Gast Library
(http://mba.bus.msu.edu, select “Current Students”, then “William C. Gast Business Library”)
ABIinform
Business and Industry
Lexis-Nexis
Tablebase

Select On-Line Resources

Company Profiles
Vault.com*
WetFeet.com*
Hoovers.com*
MBAjungle.com
* Password Services on MBA PCC website for Current Students

Networking Contacts
MSU MBA AlumniLink (available through eRecruiting)
Intern Network (through Password Services)
Classmates.com
Alumni.Net
Your alma mater’s alumni website

Other Resources
CareerSearch.net (in MonsterTrak)
MSNBC.com and other news services

Research Pyramid

How the industry is doing, where it is going, recent news items, economic projection
How the company is performing and positioned relative to the industry
Latest business news company-wide, strategy, culture
Where your function/dept. fits in structure
Recent developments in the function
How to get hired
Career paths
Locations
It is very important when interviewing that you know as much as you can about the companies you interview with. Knowing the company well will help you focus your energies in the interview on selling the idea that you are a good fit. Your preparation also helps the interviewer by allowing them more time to assess your qualifications/fit and less time answering questions or explaining the company. Here are sources of information and what you can expect to learn from each, as well as a list of questions you should try to answer before the interview.

**Sources of Information**
- Annual Report - organization structure, revenues by division, growth/decline, management structure.
- Alumni - information on the actual job itself - a "day in the life of" preview, corporate culture, reality of the career progression or rotational training program.
- Business Press (such as Wall Street Journal, Business Week or industry publications, like Automotive News) - insight into the trends in the industry that are affecting the company, information on the competitors. The business press is accessible on-line in two ways: through the publication's own home page, and through the Gast Business Library databases.
- Presentations - are provided by companies to answer many of the questions you would have about the qualifications the company is seeking, what the starting position is, how the rotations or career path is structured, and broad company information.
- Company Web Site - will cover much of that presented in the annual report or presentation, plus give you an opportunity to apply on-line (which you should always do!).

**Questions to Try to Answer BEFORE the Interview**

**Corporate Overview**
- What are the sales of the company the last two years? Are sales increasing? Why or why not?
- How many divisions / SBUs does the company have? What are the sales for each? Has this mix been changing? What does the company sell in each division/SBU?
- What is its share of the total market for different product/service groupings?
- Which division/SBU are you interviewing with? Where are its offices/plants located? For which of these are you likely interviewing?

**Corporate Strategy**
- Name five topics for which this company has been in the news lately? What does this tell you about its strategy? How do these topics affect the function you are interviewing for?
- Have there been any senior management changes, spin-offs, mergers, acquisitions, or downsizings in the past two years? Why did this happen? How does it affect strategy?
- What does the annual report and web page say about the strategy? What other strategy might the firm be following that is not published in their literature?

**Career - General Information**
- Are there other MSU MBA alumni working in the company department, division? What do they say about the culture of the unit? What do they say about the career path?
- Is it possible to get a foreign assignment? When in the career path will this happen? Are there other ways to gain international experience without a foreign assignment?
- What percentage of you time will be spent traveling? What is the company policy (i.e. fly out Sunday - fly back Friday; spend months away on assignment, etc.) Is travel local, interstate, or international?

**Career - Rotational Programs**
- How long are the rotations and how many are there? What happens after the last rotation? What are some common assignments during the rotations? What are some common career paths of people after the rotational program?
- What is the first assignment in the company? What is the typical career path in the company of someone coming into the role?

**Hiring Process**
- What types of candidates do they say they are looking for? Do you fit this profile? How does this alter your approach to the interviews?
- After the first interview, when do you expect to hear back from the recruiter?
- Is there a second interview? When? Will this be done at a corporate location? Will there be a third or more rounds of interviews, testing, presentations, or other steps? When?
- When does the company plan to make their offers?