## I Spy: How to Scope Out a Company Before the Interview

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It’s the day before your interview, and your mind starts racing. What is the company going to be like? What types of people will you meet? Will you fit in?

Stay calm, dear interviewee. To ease your pre-interview jitters—and to give yourself a leg up—throw on your Angela Lansbury hat and do some spying on the company. The more information you have ahead of time, the better you can [plot your strategy](http://www.thedailymuse.com/job-search/interview-translation-what-4-common-questions-really-mean/), go in feeling confident, and rock your interview. Believe me, most interviewees don’t do much of this research—but you can, and it’ll give you an extra edge.

**Step 1: Ask the Right Questions**

Before your interview, get a list of the people you’re meeting with from the company. Hopefully, they’ll give you this information without asking, but if not, don’t be shy—it’s completely normal to request it.

On top of that, if you’ve built a good relationship with the recruiter or the person scheduling your interview, use that relationship to your advantage. Ask her if there’s anything you should know about each of your interviewers, or “what is (insert interviewer’s name here) looking for in the perfect candidate?” She may not share all, but it doesn’t hurt to ask!

**Step 2: Spy—er, Do Your Research**

Now that you have some details, it’s research time. The week before the interview, spend a few hours learning everything you can about the company and its people—from as many sources as you can.

**Company Website (and Blog)**

This is a no-brainer, but the trick is to look beyond the “About” section. Troll the entire website (especially the blog) to educate yourself on a company’s branding as a whole. The way a company presents itself online—to its employees, customers, and the public—is often a telltale sign about the overall culture you’ll experience as soon as you walk in the front door.

So, use this to your advantage as you prepare for the interview. For example, if the content is all business and no play, expect that you may have a serious interview where the people you meet with have checklists to evaluate you. In this case, rise to the challenge and be as professional as possible. On the other hand, if the site has a modern and fun tone, the probability of your interview being less rigid and more personal is high.

**LinkedIn**

This is an obvious one, too—but believe me, not everyone uses it to its full potential! Read through the profiles of all the people you’re interviewing with, and [see if you have anything in common](http://www.thedailymuse.com/job-search/stalking-on-linkedin/). Do you share any professional groups or past experience? Do these individuals have recommendations that speak to their characteristics as a manager or colleague? Also see whether you have shared connections. Is there anyone who can recommend you for the position, or even just give you insight into your interviewers? (If so, call them—stat.)

**Glassdoor**

This site is like a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow for any interviewee: It provides telling reviews about companies from current and past employees. Consider it a, well, clear glass door that lets you check out the inner workings of a workplace (including [the information they don’t really want you to see](http://www.thedailymuse.com/career/4-ways-to-stay-sane/)!).

That said, I always advise people to take the information here as a guide, not fact. As we all know, negative news spreads faster than positive. But reading enough reviews can reveal some common themes, which can help you come up with [insightful questions to ask](http://www.thedailymuse.com/job-search/any-questions-what-to-ask-in-an-interview/) (and get a sense for whether the answers you get are legit).

**YouTube**

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a video is worth—a million? Log onto YouTube and check out any videos the company has put out, either [official ones](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wU6epAkC9wg), or videos made by employees. Watch and learn how people act and what kind of lingo they use. Then, when you go into the interview, be yourself, but use what you’ve seen in the video as a guide to how you carry yourself.

**Social Media**

Go ahead, follow them on Twitter. Actually, take it a step further and *talk* to them on Twitter. Start a conversation—something simple like: “@companynamehere excited to talk to you today! Looking forward to learning more about your company.” (Though, don’t worry if you don’t get a response, especially if the company is overly active on Twitter.) Then, definitely read the content the company has pushed out to get any additional relevant information or news you may not already have.

Also log on to the company’s Facebook page and dig around the comments, the “who’s talking about this” section, tags, pictures, and content to get a read on the company tone. Many of the larger brands, like [Hyundai](https://www.facebook.com/myhyundaicareers) and [Microsoft](https://www.facebook.com/MicrosoftCareers), have dedicated employee or Career Pages, in addition to their main page—so do a quick search for this sort of page to make sure you’re not missing out.

**Google**

Yes, I said Google. Google both the company and your interviewers and review *all* of the latest news—not just the news from last week or on Page 1. Often, candidates just look at the information a company is pushing out via the website and social media, but fail to look more in depth at what others are saying. By doing so, you’ll get the larger picture about the company (along with any negative press). And when you really spend the time doing a Google search, you may be surprised at what you find out.

Being a cultural fit is the [#1 reason companies hire someone](http://www.thedailymuse.com/entrepreneurship/7-keys-to-hiring-your-start-ups-first-employee/). So, at the end of the day, the more information you have about your interviewers and the company, the more you can speak their language and fit in during your interview. Do your spying, increase your confidence, and then go rock your interview!