



Ready Reference D-13

Researching a Company Online

Before starting your Internet research, determine whether the company is publicly held (traded on a stock exchange), privately owned, or a subsidiary of a publicly held organization. You will be much more successful in obtaining information on publicly held companies. Public companies must report certain financial information to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and their shareholders. Also, serious investors use the Internet to research potential stock purchases or monitor companies in their portfolios. As a result, the Internet provides much more information on public corporations than on private companies.

Ticker Symbol

A key first step in Internet business research is to identify the stock exchange ticker symbol for the company of interest. The following site will identify the ticker symbol for a public company. Be sure to make a note of each symbol, as you will be using this information throughout the research process.

- Yahoo Ticker Symbol Lookup (www.yahoo.com)

Company Overview

After you successfully identify the ticker symbol, you can collect some quick, useful summary information at the following sites. If you were unable to locate a ticker symbol for your company, you may be researching a private company or a subsidiary of a public company. Try typing the company name in the search box. If you determine that your company is a subsidiary of a public company, you will be more successful if you focus your research on the parent organization.

- Hoover's Online is a widely respected service that provides timely and detailed information on over 50,000 public and private companies (www.hoovers.com).
- CorpTech Database of High-Tech Companies provides profiles, competitor information, industry rankings, and other data on over 50,000 public and private high-tech organizations (www.corptech.com).
- Companies Online from Dun & Bradstreet and Lycos provides address, phone, annual sales, number of employees, and other information on over 900,000 public and private companies (www.dnb.com).
- Individual.com offers news, research, and contacts for 100,000 companies (www.individual.com).
- If you are looking for information on a private company, the Public Record Databases compiled by Pacific Information Resources, Inc. may reveal some information.

Addresses and Telephone Numbers

The Internet makes finding nationwide telephone numbers, and addresses easier than ever.

- InfoSpace provides a wide variety of resources for locating businesses, people, e-mail addresses, news, and travel information. InfoSpace also offers a Reverse Lookup search engine that returns a name and address from a phone or fax number (www.infospace.com).
- Big Yellow provides an extensive database of over 16 million U.S. business listings (www.bigyellow.com).

Company Home Pages

Most businesses use their home pages as a marketing or communication tool for generating and retaining business. As such, corporate sites may provide annual reports, news articles, business ventures, and information about products and services. You should spend a good portion of your research time reviewing the information available at your company's home page. First, if you have not yet located the home page for your company, try guessing the address. Many businesses have a website address that looks like this: <http://www.companyname.com>

- If that doesn't lead to immediate results, www.whois.net allows you to search a database of registered domain names
- AltaVista is a search engine that is particularly effective for locating company home pages (www.altavista.com).
- Dogpile is a meta-search engine that will search the major search engines and give you the top results from each (www.dogpile.com).

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Public companies must report certain financial information to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and their shareholders. You can review annual reports (10K), quarterly reports (10Q), or other reports such as 13Q ownership filings from The SEC EDGAR Database, 10K Wizard, or EDGAR Online. The company financial profile is another key business intelligence resource. These profiles are often filled with useful and timely information including financial data, product details, and marketing trends. Check out the following sites for this type of information.

- Yahoo! Finance pulls together such resources as Reuters, PR Newswire, Businesswire, and Market Guide to provide comprehensive information on public companies.
- Daily Stocks links to a wide variety of financial and news information on public companies (www.dailystocks.com).
- Wall Street Research Net provides access to a variety of data including an excellent assortment of graphs and charts on financial performance (www.internetnews.com/bus-news/).
- Moneynet Quotes allows searching for multiple stock quotes simultaneously and displays the results in charts providing a quick comparison of stock prices for a number of companies/competitors (www.money.net).

NEWS & PERIODICAL ARTICLES

The next step in the business research process is to review newspaper articles, press releases, and periodical articles on your company. The local or city newspaper for the company's corporate headquarters serves as a great starting point. This resource will likely have numerous articles on your company. A number of websites provide links to online newspapers throughout the world including NewsCentral, E&P MediaInfo Links, and NewsPaperLinks (U.S. only). Once you find the local newspaper for your company, scan the main page for the terms "Archives" or "Search" or "Back Issues" to research past articles. One excellent resource for news information is Yahoo! Finance. Listed below are other key sites for locating company news articles and press releases.

- At Hoover's Online, you'll find a number of news and periodical articles on public and private companies (www.hoovers.com).
- Northern Light searches a variety of newspapers, newswires, and magazines and provides abstracts and citations of all articles for free (www.northernlight.com). Full-text documents can be purchased for a nominal fee.
- Excite's Newstracker searches the Internet for recent news articles on your company (www.excite.com).
- In addition to newspapers and press releases, periodical articles provide valuable company information. For example, the 39 local "Business Journals" across the country are important business resources for many professionals. You can search all 39 journals simultaneously at the American City Business Journals website (<http://bizjournals.bcentral.com/>).
- At TIME.com, you can search Time Warner publications including Fortune, Time and Money (www.time.com).
- If you are looking for periodicals on a specific topic area, News Directory (www.newsdirectory.com) and AJR Newslink (www.newslink.org) provide links to a large number of online magazines. (Note: AJR Newslink does not allow frames. After clicking the link above, scroll down and click on a category under Business/professional.)
- After researching a company, you may want to stay current on news articles, analysts' reports, patents, trademarks and other business activities. Register (free) at Company Sleuth (www.companysleuth.com) to receive daily email reports on up to ten U.S. public companies.

BUSINESS META-SITES

Another company research tool that should not be overlooked is the business meta-site. These websites link to a very large number of online business resources from around the world. Corporate Information offers an extensive list of links to public, private, domestic, and international resources for company research.

- A Business Researcher's Interests provides access to thousands of resources on cutting-edge topics including business process engineering, knowledge management, intranet intellectual property, and MIS research.
- Loaded with categorized links, CEO Express is a wonderful site to consider as a start page for business research assignments (www.ceoexpress.com).
- The Financial Data Finder provides a directory of resources for financial information both on and off the Internet (<http://fisher.osu.edu/fin/osudata.htm>).
- Two other interesting sites for reviewing public discussions on stock performance are SiliconInvestor's Stock Talk (www.siliconinvestor.com/stocktalk/forum.gsp?forumid=34) and Raging Bull (www.ragingbull.com).
- The National Center for Charitable Statistics collects statistics on nonprofit organizations (<http://nccs.urban.org>).
- About.com provides links to a large number of nonprofit-related websites (www.about.com).

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

If you are interested in nonprofit organizations, you can find valuable information at a number of key websites.

- Guidestar provides a searchable directory of nonprofit organizations (www.guidestar.org).
- The Internet Nonprofit Center provides a library of information about nonprofit organizations, a searchable directory of organizations, discussion forums, and links to other websites of interest (www.nonprofit.org).
- The Literature of the Nonprofit Sector offers a searchable database of philanthropic literature (<http://inps.fdncenter.org>).
- The Better Business Bureau's Philanthropic Advisory Service reports on major charitable organizations. Reports include an overview of the organization, program information, financial data, ratings on compliance with CBBB Standards for Charitable Solicitation, and governance information (www.bbb.org).

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

The Internet provides a wealth of information for those concerned with international business and trade. For example, in the Business Meta-Sites section, we discussed Corporate Information and A Business Researcher's Interests. In addition to U.S. information, these sites also link to valuable international content. If you are looking for international newspapers and periodicals, NewsCentral and E&P MediaInfo Links offer links to many worldwide publications. Listed below are a number of additional international business resources.

- International Business Resources on the WWW provides an extensive index to international news, trade information, directories, mailing lists, and government resources.
- VIBES contains over 1,600 links to international business, trade, country-specific sites, and economic information (<http://libweb.uncc.edu/ref-bus/vibehome.htm>).
- The Wright Research Center offers profiles on over 18,000 companies worldwide (<http://www.wisi.com>).
- At Hoover's UK, find profiles for numerous U.K. and European companies (www.hoovers.co.uk).
- Foreign Government Resources contains links to embassies, chambers-of-commerce, international agencies, news, and demographic resources (www.lib.umich.edu/libhome/Documents.center/foreign.html).
- Tradeport provides a comprehensive database of country-specific guides and market research reports (www.tradeport.org).
- At Kompass, search an international database of 1.5 million manufacturing companies. An excellent site for finding sales prospects (www.kompass.com).
- InternationalAffairs.com offers a growing directory of international resources arranged by topic, region, and country (www.oxan.com).
- Like the SEC EDGAR database, SEDAR provides access to annual reports and other securities information for Canadian companies (www.sedar.com/).
- Locate phone numbers from around the world at the International Phone Directories website (www.whowhere.lycos.com/wwphone/world.html or www.infobel.com/en/world/)