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Web Search Secrets All Entrepreneurs Should Know

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While we can't all be the Sherlock Holmes of the Internet, the ability to dive deep into online search is an important skill all entrepreneurs should cultivate. While Google's search engine accounts for 68 percent of all online searches, most people only know how to access a small fraction of what Google has to offer. To help you get the most out of Google, I asked my friend and longtime entrepreneur Sam Richter, author of the top-selling book [Take the Cold Out of Cold Calling](#) to share some of his search secrets.

Richter explains that you can glean a lot of inside information on companies, industries, and people just from using three simple search methods. Almost all of us at one point have been overwhelmed by the seemingly zillions of results we get from a search query. Richter explains why: "Google is nothing more than a virtual vacuum cleaner, looking for Web pages with words that it can vacuum up and put in the Google database. When you type words into the Google search form, all it is doing is returning Web page results where your words have appeared most often."

Richter's solution is to use [Google Advanced Search](#). The link is right next to the search button on Google's home page. The trick is to put better information into Google so you can get better information out. Once you're in Google Advanced Search, you can enter the exact words or phrases you're looking for, search within a specific domain, and even exclude certain words from your search. If you take the time to think about exactly what you want and use the given fields accordingly, you'll

immediately notice how much better and more precise your results are.

Using Richter's next secret (Google Filetype Search) gives you a look at what most would consider "inside information." You could possibly find a competitor's sales proposal, an association's membership list, or a high-end research report online. "It's amazing what people post to the Web," says Richter. "From company budgets to vendor and client lists, companies think that the files they post online for colleagues or clients to download are secure, but if not properly protected, Google can index the data and make it available to people who know how to look."

Here's how to start your search:

- Enter the information you want and/or the company name (use quotations around phrases).
- Enter "filetype:" (filetype colon) and then choose a filetype extension. Here's a key to some of the more common filetype abbreviations: pdf = adobe acrobat; xls = Excel spreadsheets; ppt = PowerPoint document; doc = Word document.
- For example, "**paper industry**" + "**membership list**" **filetype:xls** will search for a paper industry membership list in Excel format. "**Widget corporation**" **filetype:ppt** will search for a Widget Corporation
- PowerPoint presentation. "**Apparel industry**" + **trends OR issues filetype:pdf** will locate research reports and/or articles related to trends or issues in the apparel industry.

How often have you met people and promptly lost their business cards?

It happens to me all the time. Or I want to find the e-mail address of someone I've never met. Richter's final Google search secret will help you easily locate e-mail addresses by trying to find Web pages where an e-mail address is listed:

- First you need to know where the person works and find their company's Web address.
- In Google, enter an asterisk, followed by the @ sign, and then the company's Web address. For example, ***@bankofamerica.com** will locate Web pages featuring an e-mail address of someone who works at Bank of America.

- Once you find the e-mail naming convention, you can back into the e-mail address of the person you want to meet. For example, if your Google search returns **John_Doe@bankofamerica.com**, and you want to track down Sally Smith, her e-mail address is probably "first name" underscore "last name," or **Sally_Smith@bankofamerica.com**.

I learned a lot talking to Sam. Did you know there was an "Invisible Web"? I didn't, but apparently there is and he tells you how to access it. I don't ordinarily do book reviews in this space, but I have to say that *Take the Cold Out of Cold Calling* is filled with useful hints, tips, and secrets that any entrepreneur will find very useful.