

## The Best Talking Points

*Learning about the interests of prospects and clients through online searches can help you build stronger relationships.*

By Sam Richter

People do business with people they like and trust. At a time when attention spans are short and making a great first impression is imperative, how do you build rapport with a new prospect or an existing client?

An excellent place to start is knowing what's important to the other person by learning his or her likes and dislikes, and by sharing relevant stories. An easy way to impress your prospects and clients-and increase your own comfort level-is by asking questions about topics that you know interest them. People like to talk about themselves: Make it easy by asking questions that are relevant to their lives or businesses.

### GETTING STARTED

The good news is that the Internet is a fount of information about people, as long as you know where and how to look. People searching can also be fun and, once you get used to it, easy as well.

Clearly [Google](#) and [LinkedIn](#) are the first places most people turn to find out about other people. With Google, you need to narrow your search so you aren't weeding through thousands of results. One way to do this is by combining different phrases with a filetype search.

Make sure to enter the person's name within quotation marks, so Google will treat the words as a single phrase. Then, add additional terms and phrases. So, for example, the search "john smith" Minnesota "press release" OR "annual report" with filetype:pdf added to the end will locate annual reports or press releases that have been posted

online and that contain John's name. You may find information about awards John has won, or learn that he's on the board of directors of a local company or nonprofit organization. You will probably find John's name listed in nonprofit annual reports where he has donated money.

If you don't know about LinkedIn.com, this social networking site that grows exponentially as people-generally, professional contacts-accept your invitations and you accept theirs; everyone's network is shared. To build your network, search for people by name. If you find a prospect or client in your search results, read their profile, which typically includes their work history. Often people will also list their hobbies and interests, which can be especially helpful in forging closer connections when you talk with people.

When a person is in your network, you can click on their "connections" link and view all of the people they know. This allows you to connect on a personal level (e.g., "I see that you know Suzy Jones...I went to college with..."), it's also an exceptional way to identify potential referral sources.

## DIGGING DEEPER

In addition to these websites, there are some less obvious ones that will help you become a supersleuth. They include:

- **ZoomInfo.com:** ZoomInfo scours the web locating information on people, and then automatically creates an online biography. To use it, click the "people" tab and enter a name. Use Advanced Search for additional terms or for common names. In seconds, you'll learn about a person's career, education and even some personal information. Click the "online sources" link on the right side of the person's profile page, and read a copy of the original web page where the information was found.
- **Pipl.com:** This is one of the most comprehensive free people search sites. It searches hundreds of sources, many of which are not covered by popular search engines. Enter a person's name, city or state, and in a few seconds, Pipl will aggregate information it found from social networks, web pages, blogs, court records and even PDF files, such as articles, annual reports and white papers featuring your prospect's or client's name. Pipl.com provides a Quick Fact result section on the person's career, education and more. Pipl sometimes provides business and even home contact information, including email addresses and phone numbers.
- **Whoozy.com:** This is one of the newer players in the people search market. Whoozy's specialty is aggregating information in easy-to-access tabs. Enter a person's name and then click through the various search tabs to view your result options. Click on the plus sign next to a search option to view the results.

The Social Networks tab delivers results featuring individual Twitter accounts, Facebook listings, LinkedIn accounts, MySpace accounts and more. The Search Engine tab delivers results from Google, Yahoo, Bing, news sources and blog postings. Photos/Video/Audio delivers pictures, YouTube videos and/or audio files featuring your selected person. Click on the Personal tab to find related people, quick facts, email addresses, documents where the person's name appears, and even tags or hyperlinked words that are relevant to the individual.

Another nice feature is that you can set up a Whoozy alert. Enter a person's name and whenever Whoozy finds new information about that person, you'll receive an email. This is a superb way to stay on top of news related to your clients and prospects, without having to proactively search for information. You can also set up a Google Alert at [google.com/alerts](http://google.com/alerts) whereby any time Google finds new information, it will send you an email. If you really need instant information, you can set up a Twitter Alert at [TweetBeep.com](http://TweetBeep.com), and anytime the person you're interested in has their name included in someone's Tweet, you'll get an email.

- **Yasni.com:** This is another new people search site that aggregates contact information, social networking sites, including LinkedIn, Google results, Amazon listings, pictures, blog postings and more. Click on the Personal, Business, News, and Other Web Pages tabs in the main search results area. To further refine your results, click on any of the Tags associated with your person, and the new result set will only contain sites that are related to the chosen tag.

- **WarmCallCenter.com:** Visit the Warm Call Center and access the Invisible Web People Info section. There you'll find the best people search sites on the web, including the resources highlighted above. You'll also find sources for news, biographies, political donations, criminal searches, home values—even golf handicaps. Better still, you can download the Warm Call Toolbar and access these people search sites directly from your web browser... you'll literally be two clicks away from information on just about anybody.

Of course these sites work better if your prospect or client's name is "Joe Bufutnick" instead of "Joe Smith." The less common the person's name, the more likely you are to find accurate information. If your prospect or client has a common name, you'll want to use a site like LinkedIn first, so you know facts about the person that you can use when sifting through information on the less popular people search engines.

To ensure your prospects or existing clients don't think that you're a stalker, it's critical to use the information

you find about them very carefully. For example, if you find information about the success of a prospect's children, don't walk into a first meeting and congratulate them on their daughter winning the sixth-grade talent show. Besides freaking out your prospect, you could end up with a restraining order.

Above all, use tact. Don't blurt out what you found online. Instead, use the information that you gathered to ask *better questions* and have better conversations. Remember the goal is to get people to talk, not to impress them with your investigative skills.

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