



How To Hunt In Today's Jungle

Panel discussion

Sales Professionals of Ottawa

November 2010

The Internet. It has an estimated one trillion pages of information as of 2008 and it is growing every minute of every day as people add and update existing information. Most of that information is freely accessible and a small portion is available for a fee.

Why pay for information when so much is free? In two words: quality and currency.

Fee-based information is contained in databases available only by subscriptions which are very expensive. Access to a selection of these is free with a library card. You can access them online yourself from home or work or ask a librarian for assistance.

We all have access to the Internet whether on our PCs, laptops, netbooks or mobile devices. There is a ton of information out there, most of it free and odds are what you are looking for is out there in some form.

Take the example of researching niche markets. Marketing wisdom says that identifying and marketing to niche markets is an efficient use of time and money. Use the resources of the Internet to research demographics to define this type of market and to research your competitors. Search for people who express interest in anything remotely related to your product or service. Use your time to research sales leads that are already there and don't try to generate new ones out of thin air.

Find mailing lists with contact names, titles, email addresses and phone numbers.

Set up alerts for information that you search for on a consistent basis. Leverage your time by letting the information come to you.

The parts of any search are: define your search query, develop a list of keywords and, devise a strategy for using them.

Begin by using unique language. Every topic has its own language. Think like a customer, not a sales person. Think through the characteristics of your ideal sales lead and use their language to pick out keywords for your search of who they are and where they might be. Pick out the nouns from your query. They are often better for keywords than verbs or adjectives.

Second, use sufficient words. To a search engine, every word matters. A search using a word or two will return thousands to millions of results which is not good for your blood pressure. The more keywords you use, the fewer the results.

Third, ask yourself a variation of these questions: Who knows? Who cares? Who knows where these

people are? Who cares about them? What do they care about?

- The answer may lie in the associations or organizations they belong to. The member directory for the Sales Professionals of Ottawa is freely available online.
- The Canadian Marketing Association has information about mailing lists.
- Statistics Canada has demographic information about Canadian households.
- Read online newspaper and magazine articles for potential leads and for information about your competitors.
- Industry and trade journals have information about trends.
- Search for companies that may have an interest in your product or service and review their web sites.

And, fourth, use a variety of tools. Google is great but there is a 20% variation in the results returned by the major search engines which also include Bing, Yahoo!, Ask and Exalead. Explore and use the optional features offered by these search engines. Search news aggregators, blogs and social media.

And, remember to keep track of what you find. What you find today on the Internet, you might not be able to find tomorrow.