

Top Business Research Tips

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The UKeIG Business Information on the Internet workshop was run on April 2nd and April 8th, 2008. At the end of each day the participants were asked to come up with a list of top sites and search tips. This is the combined list in alphabetical order:

1. **Advanced Search.** Click on the Advanced Search option for any of the tools that you encounter, be it Google et al or a web site's own search option. They offer great ways of focussing your search by date, file format, site, etc.
2. **Alacrasearch** <http://www.alacra.com/alacrasearch>. A Google custom search engine that focuses on business sites that have been selected by Alacra.
3. **Blogpulse** <http://www.blogpulse.com/>. One of several blog search engines, but this was singled out for its Trends graphs. These show how often your search terms are mentioned in posts over a selected period of time. In a business context the occurrences will usually match reports in the mainstream media. When they don't, click on the peaks in the graph to see what is going on behind the scenes. Superb for picking up on rumours and gossip
4. **Bureau van Dijk's (BvD) "A Taste of Mint"** <http://mintportal.bvdep.com/>. A free directory from BvD giving basic information on companies world-wide. One experienced researcher at the workshop commented: "It found the company I have been looking for when every other directory failed!"
5. **Chipwrapper** <http://www.chipwrapper.co.uk/>. A Custom Google Search Engine that searches across the UK's major national newspapers: The Daily Express, Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, Financial Times, The Guardian, The Independent, The Sun, The People, News of the World, The Scotsman, Daily Star, The Telegraph and The Times. It also searches the BBC News web site, ITN and Sky. There is a review of Chipwrapper on Karen Blakeman's blog at <http://www.rba.co.uk/wordpress/2007/12/29/chipwrapper-search-uk-newspapers/>
6. **CIA World Factbook - Country Profiles** <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>. Key statistics on every country. For those of you of a more adventurous disposition, when it comes to travel it even includes the number of airports with unpaved runways.
7. **Companies House** <http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk/>. The UK official companies registry. This is the closest you can get to the original company documents that a registered company has to file. Some information is provided free of charge (Use the Webcheck service). Documents are charged for on a pay as you go basis.
8. **FITA Import Export Business and International Trade Leeds** <http://www.fita.org/>. The "Really Useful Links" in the menu on the left hand side of the screen takes you to a range of international sources on business information. One participant of this workshop found the "Doing business in" section especially useful.

9. **Freepint Bar** <http://www.freepint.com/>. Head for the discussion area, labelled as the Bar, where you can post your query and tap into the knowledge of regular 'tipplers'.
10. **Google Finance** <http://www.google.co.uk/finance>, <http://www.google.com/finance>. This is a possible competitor to Yahoo Finance. It has been steadily improving over the last 18 months since its initial launch but still does not quite have the authoritative "feel" of Yahoo Finance. Also it does not appear to have the individual stock exchange coverage of Yahoo. It does, though, beat Yahoo when it comes to the share price graph and historical downloads options. The share price graphs are 'annotated' with labels at the appropriate time on the graph and these link to news articles that are listed to the right of the graph. Yahoo Finance's downloadable historical share price data in figures goes back 5 years: Google's goes back to 1996.
11. **Google News**. For the UK go to <http://news.google.co.uk/> but there are a plethora of country versions that give priority to local content. Good coverage of the last 30 days of free world-wide, national, local, and industry news. One workshop participant said that Google News found a breaking story that had not been picked up by the industry press and her subscription services.
12. **Hometrack**. <http://www.hometrack.co.uk/>. This site provides key statistics and data on the UK housing market and financing of that market. Especially relevant in the current economic climate.
13. **Intelways** <http://www.intelways.com/>. An interface to many search tools grouped by type e.g. news, video, image. Type your search terms in once and click on the different search tools one by one. A reminder of the different types of information that you should be looking at and of the wide range of search engines that are out there.
14. **Intute** <http://www.intute.ac.uk/>. This is an excellent starting point for anyone working in business and wanting to identify quality resources on a wide range of subjects and industries.
15. **Nationmaster** <http://www.nationmaster.com/>. An interface to a plethora of statistics on web sites world wide. Some of the statistics are 2-3 years old but there are links to the original site, enabling you to search for more up to date information. Several people mentioned that this is a good 'index' of where data is likely to be found.
16. **OFFSTATS** <http://www.offstats.auckland.ac.nz/>. The new set of web pages for the University of Auckland Library providing information on Official Statistics on the Web, and at a new address. An excellent starting point for official statistics by country and subject/industry. As well as the makeover, there have been many additions to the collection of resources.
17. **People!** Contact a relevant research, trade or professional body for help in locating experts, sources of information and reports. They may not have anything on their web site but there may be something 'on file' that they are willing to supply free of charge or for which they are prepared to negotiate a fee.
18. **Phil Bradley's web site and blog** <http://www.philb.com/> and <http://philbradley.typepad.com/>. Excellent sources of information on Web 2.0 'stuff' and search tools. In particular, his blog has no-nonsense reviews of new search tools that claim they will change the world of search.

19. **RBA Sources of Business Information** <http://www.rba.co.uk/sources/>. Selected sources of business information organised by type e.g. statistics, share prices, company registers.
20. **Research Wikis** <http://www.researchwikis.com/>. This is a wiki covering market and industry data that is in the public domain; several workshop delegates commented that it looks promising. The content is variable in quality. Some reports are highly structured and detailed while others are just a "stub. Many are US biased, and the sources of the data are not always cited. Nevertheless, the reports do give you an idea of the issues affecting the sector and the terminology that is used. One of the University based workshop participants thought that the site's recommended structure and headings for a report would be useful to students who are new to carrying out industry and market research.
21. **Silobreaker.com** <http://www.silobreaker.com/>. A relatively new service pulling together information from newspapers, journals, blogs, video and audio. In addition it offers geographical hotspots, trends, and a network visualisation tool that was singled out by several people as being particularly useful.
22. **UK National Statistics** <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/> We will not go into the confusion users suffered when the UK government official statistics web sites were re-organised on 1st April 2008 [No, it was not an April Fool's]. Work your way through the new menus and you will eventually end up on the on the old statistics.gov.uk pages. Even without the frequent design changes, the site can be difficult to navigate. Nevertheless, there is an incredible amount of good quality data here. For the web based 'stuff' and formatted documents (PDF, DOC, XLS, PPT) it is often easier to go to the Google Advanced Search page, type in your terms in the search box at the top of the page and in the 'Search within a site or domain' box type in statistics.gov.uk. If you want to look for specific file formats, select the file extension from the drop down menu under 'File type'. The 'Time Series' data have to be searched from within the statistics.gov.uk site itself.
23. **The Wayback Machine - The Internet Archive** <http://www.archive.org/>. The Wayback Machine takes periodic snapshots of the Internet. Ideal for seeing how a company portrayed itself on the Internet in the past and for tracking down sites, pages or documents that have disappeared.
24. **Yahoo Finance**. Go to any Yahoo site and click on the Finance link. For the UK version go to <http://uk.finance.yahoo.com/>. Yahoo Finance provides basic information on stock exchange quoted companies on the major stock exchanges around the world. Information includes current share price information (delayed by 15-30 minutes) provided by the stock exchanges; company profiles; charts in which you can compare the company share price with another company, the sector and an index such as the FTSE 100; current news on the company focussing on the regulatory news; and daily historical share prices as figures that can be downloaded to spreadsheets.