

How to Be an Online Spy (and Use It for Sales Success)

People do business with people they like and trust. But in a world where attention spans are short and making a great first impression is imperative, how do you build repartee with a new prospect or client?

You start to build relationships by understanding what's important to the other person, their likes and dislikes, and by sharing relevant stories, says Sam Richter, author of the top-selling book "[Take the Cold Out of Cold Calling](http://www.takethecold.com)" (<http://www.takethecold.com>). The good news is with the Internet, it's easy to find information about people you've never met, as long as you know where and how to look.

In a business world where information is power (or if you'd just like to learn a little more about your neighbor), these Web sites offer insights into people, their background, and their interests.

* ZoomInfo.com: Want an easy way to find an executive's biography? ZoomInfo scours the Web locating information on people, and then automatically creates an online biography using the information that it found.

To use, click the "people" tab and enter the first and last name of the person you're interested in finding. If the name is a common name (e.g. Pat Smith), use advanced search when on the people section, and enter in additional terms such as the company where the person works. "ZoomInfo is a site I use prior to meeting with people," Richter says. "In a matter of seconds, I can learn about a person's career and educational history, and even some personal information, which allows me to discuss something that I know will interest them."

* Google Search: Enter the name of a person in Google and you're likely to get thousands of results. However, use the following techniques and you're likely to find good information on the person you're going to meet.

In the Google search form, enter the person's name, but put it within quotation marks. Then add terms and phrases like the person's company, city or state, or even phrases like "annual report," "press release" etc., with each phrase separated by an OR (make sure the OR is in all capital letters and phrases are within quotation marks). For example, the Google search query "[Sam Richter](#)" [Minnesota](#) "press release" OR "annual report" will locate information about Richter, and specifically look for results that may be a press release or an annual report from a nonprofit organization.

"If a salesperson called me and told me that they had done a little homework on me, and referenced some of the places where I've made a donation or organization in which I'm involved, I'd be impressed" Richter says. "If the salesperson has a relevant connection, for example, if they've done business with someone else on a board where I serve, I'd be even more impressed."

* Zillow.com: If you're selling financial service products, or if you're a nonprofit organization that relies on individual donations for your revenue, it can be very beneficial to know the value of a person's home. Just enter an address into the Zillow search form.

On the result page, click the address link to find price information and in some markets, a “bird’s-eye” view of the home and area. Scroll down to locate detailed information including recent sales. Enter the security ID code and get property tax data.

“In a general sales presentation or a meeting with a new client, how would you use this information? I have no clue,” says Richter with a big smile. “But knowing it is a heck of a lot of fun.”

These are just three of the more than 80 people, company and industry information search tips and resources you’ll find in “[Take the Cold Out of Cold Calling](#).” Whether it’s someone’s golf handicap, where they donate money or where they volunteer their time, Richter’s book gives you step-by-step instructions on how to find information, and how to apply it for sales and business success.

It’s no wonder that Harvey Mackay, internationally renowned sales expert and author of the New York Times No. 1 bestseller “Swim with the Sharks,” calls “Take the Cold Out of Cold Calling” the “must-have resource for anyone involved in sales or business development.” To get your copy including a resource CD featuring a research guide, downloadable toolbar, and more, visit <http://www.takethecold.com>.