

“Ten Cool (and Free!) Prospect Research Web Sites”

by Melissa J. Trotter

With assets scattered over a wide geographic area (second or third residences, investment properties, stock holdings), a growing sophistication about fundraising by volunteers, and development offices required to raise larger and larger sums each year, there is an increased need for prospect research throughout the non-profit community.

Comprehensive and accurate prospect research helps staff and volunteer solicitors identify, qualify and confirm the correct “ask amount” for annual, capital or endowment campaigns.

Here are ten websites to assist your prospect research efforts:

Real Estate

- **National Association of Counties** – When researching property holdings, you almost always need to know the county in which the property is located in order to locate the tax assessor’s office. Once you access the NACO website, click on the appropriate state, then city to determine the county. Some counties have automatic links, while others do not.
<http://www.naco.org/counties/counties/index.cfm>
- **Research Ventures** – Quite possibly the best property prospect research web site, Research Ventures offers direct links to all county assessors with online searching capabilities. The key to this site is that you must know the county in which the property is located
<http://homepage.mac.com/researchventures/>

Biographical Information & Salaries

- **Landings** – You can search this database for pilots and airplane owners.
<http://www.landings.com> (Databases, U.S. Registrations by Owner)
- **American Medical Association Directory** – Offers biographical information about physicians.
<http://www.ama-assn.org>
- **Physicians Search** – Part of this site lists the lowest, highest and average salaries for many medical specialists. It’s a good estimate for a physician’s base salary.
<http://www.physicianssearch.com>
- **Martindale-Hubbell** – The premier directory of attorneys and law firms provides biographical information on lawyers. There are sometimes links to web sites of law firms, which provide significant biographical information.
www.martindale.com/locator/home.html

Company Information

- **Yahoo! Finance** – This is a great site for information on public companies. It offers company profiles and histories; statistics; and historical and current stock quotes. Yahoo! Finance is particularly helpful if you need to track stock values over a period of years.
<http://finance.yahoo.com>

Foundations

- **Guidestar** – This service provides the opportunity to download recent foundation I-990 forms for free.
<http://www.guidestar.org>

Search Engines

- **Google** – In my opinion, Google is the best search engine for research on individuals. Just be certain to put quotation marks around the person’s name and to search both with the middle initial and without it.
<http://www.google.com>
- **Infospace** – Great for reverse lookups of addresses and telephone numbers.
<http://www.infospace.com>

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