



Saturday, January 11, 2003

ISSUE 22

HOME

## **Carpe Diem: slinging mud, spreading rumors and leaking like a sieve.**

**David Carpe, Principal, Clew - Boston, [david@clew.us](mailto:david@clew.us)**

The internet has opened up a sort of 'information-only' Mall of America, with a shingle hanging out for every industry and special interest in the known world. Every single one has its own gossip and rumor mill. In a continuation of his Internet column, David Carpe reviews five of his favorite sites in the less heavily trafficked areas, including law and science, and suggests ways to examine the credibility and reliability of the source.

\*\*\*\*\*

Oscar Wilde once said, "There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about."

It is quite likely that most of us detest gossip because we perhaps suspect the truth, just can't admit to a desire or interest in participation, or otherwise find it terribly distracting when it's not exuding juice.

There's a lot to be said for the ruminations of industry pundits, admired public figures and trusted friends. But what about text-only patrons of the Internet? What about the deluge of anonymous posters to message boards -- those emoticon-abusing, un-spell-checking poster children of all-we-can-eat Internet access? How much trust might we place on these questionable characters?

### **Credibility patterns**

When dealing with rumors, gossip, supposedly confidential internal memos and the like, one must examine the credibility and reliability of the source. Online, this is usually not an option. Rather, we might look for a pattern, examining such items as: consistency of message quality or insightfulness (that was vague, huh? just wanted to hear myself type it), site traffic, site shoddiness and fly-by-nightedness (made that up just for this column), and of course, the historical accuracy of the information at hand.

The Internet has opened up a sort of 'information-only' Mall of America, with a shingle hanging out for every industry or special interest in the known world. Every single one has its own gossip and rumor mill. You've heard about the big ones, like the one that starts with a swear, the big tech mecca site slashdot.org, and the countless gossipy barnacles hanging onto the pier at the entertainment industry. While I've personally used, viewed, and contributed to many of these sites, here are five of my favorites in the less heavily trafficked areas, including law and science.

### **dotcomscoop.com – Internet companies as well as major technology firms**

This used to be a 'friends' only service run by phone and pager. Now it actually covers more than just

dot.com internet companies, including major technology firms such as Microsoft and WorldCom.

As stated, they *used* to cover only the Internet players, but now just working only two hours per month writing about the same five or six survivors is a bit of a drag, and so the contributors to this site have broadened their horizons. As a seal of credibility, Ben Silverman (the chief scooper) is a regular contributor to the New York Post (but is that really such a positive?). Anyway, check out the great piece Ben did on WorldCom from within the site archives as a testament to the quality of his work.

The site is not regularly updated quite enough, and supposedly is not being updated again until February. However, the site master says that he has been keeping busy uncovering dirt.

### **<http://www.biofind.com/rumor/> - the biotech rumor mill**

From the site: "The Biotech Rumor Mill is an open discussion forum that attracts participants from the many biotech disciplines including Diagnostics, Pharmaceutical, Medical Devices, Veterinary, and of course Biotechnology."

This is a wonderful site, and I personally used it quite a bit while working for a consulting firm focused on the biotech industry. Back then it didn't look so pretty. Now it's very slick and easy to navigate. Kudos to the impact of popularity, eh?

It appears that everybody is contributing at this site, and every major player is touched by a rumor. However, beware of any anonymous posting (which covers just about all of them) because you never know when it's just a competitor slinging mud. A sample topic header, "Cellomics death spiral widens."

### **infirmation.com (now at Findlaw.com) The Greedy Associates Boards**

This site used to be located only at infirmation.com, which is now rolled up under findlaw.com. However, when you go to the very bottom of the main page, in 'Community,' you will see a link for 'Greedy Associates Boards.' This is where current, past and future employees of major law firms and corporate legal groups talk trash about their employers. This is a great way to learn about what's really going on inside some of these firms.

You might have to wander about a bit before finding the right area connected to these legal beings, but it's worth the scroll. A sample topic header, "Ropes Associates going skating instead of working?"

### **Vault.com - the Electronic Watercooler**

This site caters to students and young-future-employees of major corporations. The site's authors made their name writing thick custom booklets that profiled major hiring entities such as GE or Merrill Lynch. For the throngs of liberal arts majors disgorged upon the marketplace each year, this has always been a popular offering at the University Career Center.

Of course, since nobody is hiring right now, I'm not certain that their publishing business is doing so well (my own rumor). The founders were pounding the streets for money during the Internet boom, and during that period launched an online suite of offerings. This includes a still-standing online message board and community where (primarily disgruntled) employees trash their former or current employers.

Overall, you'll find a lot of corporate coverage and many interesting threads and rants. There is quite a bit of off-topic discussion, as there is on all of these sites, but it feels like more at this site in particular. A sample topic header, "Death of Advertising, rise of PR."

### **internalmemos.com – Yes, leaked out internal memos**

Founded by the guy who originally set up that other site, f\*\*kedcompany.com, this site claims to host the Internet's largest collection of internal memos and corporate communications.

Now, after having learned a little something about how not to lose one's shirt giving away the lemonade, this sassy entrepreneur is charging money for complete access to the site. He tried this at the other site, which now hosts personal ads (uh, does that tell you something folks?).

Don't worry about cost, you can still get a lot for free at [internalmemos.com](http://internalmemos.com) before committing to a purchase. My main gripe is of course related to the reliability. You'll have to be your own best judge. A sample memo header, "Atlantic Records: Restructuring."

### **My final warning**

If you find out something that just blows you away, consider verifying it independently before passing information on to a colleague or client. And remember the old proverb, "Whoever gossips to you will gossip about you."

As mentioned in earlier columns, please feel free to send me an email if you have some area of interest that you would appreciate seeing here in [scip.online](http://scip.online).

### **Background:**

David Carpe received his BFA from the George Washington University and his MBA, with a concentration in Finance and Entrepreneurship, from Babson College. He has authored a case on Valuation for the Division Chair and has also served as a Volunteer Teacher with the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship. Professionally, he has worked in research with Fidelity, served as a Management Consultant, acted as the founder and CEO of a venture backed software company, and most recently has been working with Clew serving some of the world's most formidable organizations through Clew's HRCI practice. David, his two sons, and their dog reside in Lexington. He is a member of SCIP and IRE along with several other groups and has spent the majority of his career involved, somehow, with research, analysis, consulting and planning. David can be reached at 781.674.CLEW (2539) [www.clew.us](http://www.clew.us)

Copyright 2003 Society of Competitive Intelligence Professionals

[scip.online](http://scip.online), issue 22, January 10, 2003

### **[PRINTER FRIENDLY VERSION]**

There are no letters available.

### **[POST]**

Powered by [iMakeNews.com](http://www.imakenews.com)™