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HOME

## On 'experts' and why the Greeks liked Ulysses.

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**Summary:** The Internet provides an unprecedented opportunity to identify experts in every imaginable area of knowledge. David Carpe provides a brief examination of some of his favorite popular (as well as some lesser known) Internet-based resources for uncovering expert resources.

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General MacArthur once said, "the Greeks liked Ulysses because he had been to the wars and he knew what they were, not because he held a Ph.D. from the Ivy Leagues." I'm certain that we'd all like to believe that our clients feel the same way, right? Like it or not, today's Ted-Kennedy-sized market for consulting services is so full of pedigrees that any potential client need look no further than their own junk mail to uncover the guru-du-jour.

So what's a BFA to do when confronted by a bid against, say, a JD/MD/MBA for a healthcare account? Point to relevant projects? Absolutely. Talk about your own excellent health? Why not! Change your bid? No. Find your own JD/MD/MBA to consult on the project? Yeah, that sounds good...but be sure to get that bio in the proposal before it goes out!

### The value of experts

We really need look no further than our own legal system to understand the actionable value of experts (think expert witness). Players from all walks of the service industry regularly confer with such individuals as a way to establish solid footing on a slippery trail lined with jagged service bills. What better way to substantiate your claim that 'paper is an industry in decline' than to quote the noted 'history of pulp and paper' expert in your presentation?

The Internet provides an unprecedented opportunity to identify experts in every imaginable area of knowledge – from abacus construction to zoo management. Of course, we've all been confronted with that eerie sensation that 'the expert being consulted' is probably not an expert at all. Rather that person is some outspoken author-cum-industry sensation who might not be worth more than the free bookmark that came along with his last 'concept' book. Unfortunately, that's the risk that we must all assume when managing expert resources.

Beyond the references and the metrics (as in, "Mom! It sold 2 dozen copies!"), there are obvious guidelines that we might follow when assessing experts, such as examining the individual's track record for 'prescience' and similar market savvy. For the purposes of this column, I leave it to you to determine the best route to take, as dictated by your own firm or client requirements. Here is just a

brief examination of some popular (as well as some lesser known) Internet based resources for uncovering your expert resource.

This is *not* an examination of all-you-can-eat-'cause-maybe-I'm-an-expert resources that can be found all over the Internet (e.g. conference speakers from anyconferenceyoucantthinkof.com, book author bios via sites like Amazon and BN.com, or worse still, sites like Yahoo! Experts that are populated by just normal brains with lots of free time). Rather, this is once again a summary of a few of my favorite expert repositories.

#### **American Society of Association Executives [www.ASAENet.org](http://www.ASAENet.org)**

Aside from Groucho Marx, everybody loves to be part of a club or an industry association. The ASAE serves to support the thousands of executives who oversee the thousands of associations catering to all pockets of industry. From this one site, you'll be able to search across roughly 6,500 associations, all with a web presence.

Once you've identified the association supporting your industry or discipline of interest, simply contact member services to submit your request for an expert resource. This resource might be the President, a Board Member, a regular Member or some other party involved with the association, such as a critical vendor (though it is likely that vendors will also act as members).

I mention this resource because I have always found it of value to specifically quote an Association President, not a member, when delivering subjective data that is supported by such a party. Generally speaking, I do not spend a lot of time trolling the ASAE member sites for other directories, just a management/board/leadership overview. Often, the acting President is a credible figure within the community already (e.g. SCIP).

#### **Directory of Investigative Journalists <http://bolles.ire.org/dij/>**

Okay, for me this is sort of a two step approach. Not sure where to go for your expert? Try calling an investigative journalist with already established contacts. It is likely that you will be able to quote a journalist as an expert as well, depending upon the published/reported knowledge of such an individual, coupled with an examination of credibility/reliability. In fact, many clients consider journalists to be subject matter authorities or experts. Personally, I do not. I want to know their sources.

The point of this web site is that you can look country by country at journalists affiliated with different private and public organizations (e.g. colleges, newspapers) and seek expert advice within your territory or area of interest. For example, your current domestic insurance expert might not be fluent in regulatory issues in a recently deregulated Indian marketplace.

Please keep in mind that this is a cursory glance at a resource such as this. There are many journalism databases all over the world, just not enough space here to list them all. For example, if you are only focused on UK/Ireland, you might visit [www.nuj.org.uk](http://www.nuj.org.uk) for their listing of Island-area journalists.

#### **The Yearbook of Experts website [www.ExpertClick.com](http://www.ExpertClick.com)**

This is the website for the 'Yearbook of Experts' publication. You will be able to search for experts by keyword, topic, and geography (or member profile number). This also includes access to journalists (again, considered by many to be valuable resources). They include all sorts of information for each expert, from press releases to audio clips.

There are fees for some areas of usage, and I'm not quite certain that there are any quality control measures set up to evaluate experts, since it appears that anybody can simply pay to join the expert database. You should be careful before you take stock in any of this site's resources (or the others for that matter). It's better than the Yahoo style free-for-all (where anybody with free time can become an expert), but it's not quite what a law firm might turn to for reliability. Also, I noticed that there were no experts in the "Raccoon Problems" category...how come? And why create that category? Just to keep me awake wondering?

**Where journalists and sources meet [www.ProfNet.com](http://www.ProfNet.com)**

This is a site run by PRNewswire, and so it is quite well done. The free version allows a visitor to submit a request for expert services to myriad parties, by geography, and with other restrictions. According to the team at ProfNet, "ProfNet is the oldest and most comprehensive of the Internet-based expert-networks available to journalists." They offer three ways to connect with experts and information sources - all at no charge to reporters:

- ProfNet Search, which queries approximately 10 thousand potential sources and 'cloaks' your query so that nobody knows what you're up to.
- ProfNet Database, which allows you to search about 7,500 expert profiles.
- 'Leads and Round-Up' which basically sends out email tip-sheets in a newsletter format, sorted by subject, on a regularly scheduled basis (e.g. Crime on Fridays, Health on Thursdays and so on).

Loosely grouped, all 'sources' supporting these services fall into these resource based categories:

- Colleges and universities
- Corporations
- Elected officials
- Government agencies
- Hospitals and medical centers
- National labs, think tanks and scientific associations
- Non-profit organizations
- Public relations agencies

If you're willing to spend money, you will be able to access more information, more raw data (PRNewswire core services) and generally go deeper into the site. However, if all you need to do is put out a quick request for an expert resource in some specific category or geography, you'll be able to get it done for free via the ProfNet Search interface (described briefly above).

**The largest experts directory [www.HGExperts.com](http://www.HGExperts.com)**

Hieros Gamos (the 'HG') caters to the legal industry, and so this free resource site is fairly well put together and particularly comprehensive. The database has something like 5 thousand experts, with notes, bios, contact information and other related data where available.

This includes access to expert witnesses, medical experts, consultants, mediators, legal personnel and so forth. All in all, it's a nice version of what ProfNet (above) offers via their ProfNet Search product - but it does not require that one be a current journalist to access such profile data.

Also of interest, this site is quite well organized. For example, the insurance category is broken up into specific areas of interest (title insurance, property, recovery, bad faith, etc.). This is very useful when you need to hit that red double bulls-eye and not just land inside the circle.

Well, that wraps up this column. 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 SCIPOnline.

**Background:**

David R. Carpe, is principal of Clew in Boston. He received his BFA with a concentration in Stone

Sculpture from the George Washington University. Later, David received his MBA with a concentration in Finance and Entrepreneurship from Babson College, where he authored a case on Valuation for the Division Chair. He has worked in research with Fidelity, served 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. He has also served as a Volunteer Teacher with the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship. David, his two sons, and their dog reside in Lexington. He is a member of SCIP and IRE along with several other associations and has spent the majority of his career involved, somehow, with research, analysis, consulting and planning. Direct: 781.674.CLEW (2539) [www.clew.us](http://www.clew.us)

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