

Using the Internet for Market Research

The Internet has become a wonderful tool for learning more about your customers, your competition and what is happening in your marketplace. With more and more companies using the Internet as a primary communication channel, you have an almost unlimited amount of access to information that once was difficult to obtain. The keys are to find the right sources, identify what information is important and then assimilate what it means.

Customer Websites

A “cold call” can become a “warm call” if you know what your customer’s interests. Visiting a customer website can offer insights into their products, marketing programs and growth strategies. Be sure to take advantage of site maps to make sure you learn everything that is on the site. You may even be able to use information on the site to identify key decision makers.

Competitor Websites

Few things can make selling more effective than knowing your competition. Spend some time on the websites of your primary competitors. Looking at their product information can help you identify the product’s benefits so you can address or refute them when presenting your products. A competitor’s site may also have information on their main customers that could become your best prospects.

Trade Association Websites

Almost every trade association uses their website to provide tools, information and support to their members. If you belong to a trade association, be sure to visit their site often to learn what is going on in your market. Often there are special research publications available that can be thought provoking and insightful.

You can also visit the websites of the trade associations to which your customers may belong. Just like visiting a customer’s website, you can stay abreast of what your customers are doing.

Internet Newsletters

More and more organizations are using emailed newsletters to stay in touch with various groups. As you visit websites of customers, competitors and trade associations, stay alert for ways to get on their mailing lists. Usually it is easy to subscribe to electronic newsletters and what you may learn may be critical for your marketing efforts. The anonymity of an electronic newsletter subscription also provides some benefits.