

Tips for Creating Profiles

When creating a company profile, you want to find information on the company in general, as well as on important executives and staff within the firm. Here is a step-by-step guide to creating a profile:

- **Company Website:** In this era of transparency, you'd be surprised at some of the information you can find here, both about the corporation and the individuals within it. If a company is public, you will find the most material, including yearly reports, earnings, leadership and board members. A company's news or press page often includes recent announcements, media coverage, and important announcements.
- **Social Media:** Researchers everywhere should be thankful for social media. It provides a different glance into companies and executives. Check Twitter and Facebook for corporate pages. Corporate pages will give you an insight into exciting promotions, partnerships, product launches, store openings, and the overall tone and personality of the company. You should also be able to gauge its level of customer service in the way it communicates with consumers who interact with it. Look into Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn pages for individuals. Again, you will be amazed at the type and depth of information people share on these sites. You may be able to find information such as employment history, education, family (marital status/kids), vacation history, books they've read, music they enjoy...all this can be gained from a quick search of social media.
- **Blogs:** Blogs are another great tool to really learn about the personality of a company. Some companies enlist specific staff members to maintain the corporate blogs, and other times, you may get lucky and find a personal blog of a staff member. Both are great for compiling profile content.
- **Google It:** Instead of paying for expensive news services and research tools, you have a wealth of free information at your fingertips with the Internet and specifically with Google. Conduct a news search on the company you are profiling, as well as the key executives and contacts you are meeting with. Search as you begin the profile, and then continue to search on an ongoing basis to keep up-to-date on all-important information. You can even set up a "Google Alert" that delivers relevant, timely news stories via email to your inbox. How easy is that? If and when you schedule a meeting with this company, you or your staff should check for recent news right up until that meeting. If you have a meeting at 3pm and at 10am that morning the company announced it had made an acquisition, you should know that fact before walking into your meeting. Just a regular Google search also turns up fantastic information. Corporate executives are often "out and about" in the community, serving on boards, speaking at events and seminars, and being profiled or quoted in articles. You will likely find all this type of information through a basic search. In your search, you are also likely to turn up any political contributions, which give you a little more detail to work with.
- **People:** Talk to people who know the company and its employees. Let's face it, it's a small world. There is likely a reason you are profiling a company, and you may even already know someone working there. Even someone who knows someone who is married to someone else's cousin. Great information comes from

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all sources, and as much data you can gather from the inside the better informed you'll be. When booking a meeting, you or your staff are often working with an assistant, and you should always be closely listening to the type of unsolicited information you get in these situations. Just beware, heresay should be treated as "unconfirmed" and noted as such in a profile.

After a meeting with the company occurs, there should always be a debriefing with those in attendance to find out even more information. While the meeting itself should solicit a wealth of information to add to the company profile, often times, sitting in a lobby or reception area prior to the meeting provides some very intriguing subject matter about the executives. You never know what a chatty receptionist or assistant may be talking about. Keep your ears open. Profiles should never be finished. They are always a work in progress.