

10 Ways To Effortlessly Research A Topic

By Naseem Mariam

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10 ways to effortlessly research a topic using free information from the Internet ... And enjoy it all the while by Naseem Mariam

In a fast-paced industry like the communications and information technology, a manager needs to keep himself updated about the latest happenings in the world around him. When you publish an ebook, an ezine or contribute articles, you face 'writer's block'. Innovative and creative solutions are required to gather material for your next article.

1. First select the domain area in which you would wish to work.
 - a. Think about your subscriber's profile, your own expertise, of some topic which you love.
 - b. Visit the web sites of famous magazines in this domain. See the hot topics that everyone is debating about.
 - c. What collaborations are taking place ... What are the topics being discussed in international conferences and seminars?
2. Get the set of key words for the sub-area that you have chosen.
 - a. First start with one key word. Use a search engine like Google & get the first page of hits.
 - b. Read in detail the ones which relate to famous companies. When you read the whole article you will notice a few more new words, which will help you, narrow down the search to the sub-category in the area in which you want to get updated.
 - c. The main point here is NOT to go beyond the first page of Google till you get the set of key-words which narrows down your search to the sub-category in which you are interested. d. Gather the URLs into a MS-Word document. This is especially helpful if you are hard-pressed for time at the moment -as every manager and writer is!

3. Use Google (www.google.com) extensively. Search for

- a. KWx Newsletters ... subscribe to them
- b. KWx conferences seminars ... read the relevant abstracts
- c. KWx standards

If you prefer to read printed material, then use the phrases

- d. KWx magazines
- e. KWx Brochures

You should search one by one for each word in the key word set in this manner.

4. Multiple un-related domain /areas of interest? Like Finance, sales and VoIP?

- a. Subscribe to the Newsletters and email updates at different free mailing addresses.
- b. Allocate a fixed day of the week for each topic. You can give more days to domains that u are more interested in eg VoIP on Mon, Tues, Fri; Finance on Wed; Sales on Thursday
- c. Visit the respective mailbox and read the material.

5. Find out the list of top 5 or 10 products in that domain. Study the total offering made by these customers. Get the pressroom updates of these companies.

6. Track the market trends of these products and issues faced; inter-op test results help.

7. Keep your notes and synopsis of the material that you read.

- a. Record the information into MS-Word documents.
- b. The trick here is to read some 6 or 7 URLs information and combine it into one Word document. If you do this in a focused way and create good sub-categories, then it is a very helpful database for your future reference.
- c. E.g. VoIP deployments; VoIP Issues; VoIP applications; VoIP products; VoIP terminals; VoIP inter-op could be a few Word files which get created. You can even narrow it down by replacing VoIP by SIP in the above list of sub-categories.
- d. Remember that you should record the URLs whenever you take a small paragraph out of the whole web page for your synopsis. This will help you to go back & reference the total article when you need to do so.

e. From day one, start creating the presentation material which you will use to share your learnings

with others esp. cut & paste the diagrams - really good ones straight into PowerPoint.

8. Involve some peers and friends in this learning exercise.

a. Discussions and a few 'domain-related' chat sessions will go a long way in reinforcing what you have read.
b. Internal mailing lists made available thru the company intranet would be of great help.

9. Convince your supervisor that you can run a small learning, exploring project in that technology.

a. The best way to learn is thru doing.

b. Moreover when a team of 2 people gets together, synergy comes into play.

c. Remember to state a clear Return On Investment (ROI) verifiable objective for the project and concrete end criteria. In case you want to swallow an elephant, do define the small chunks that allow you to define phases for the project. Doing R&D is good but directed and results-showing R&D is better!

10. Share your findings and learnings with others in your organization.

a. You get known as an expert and by answering the queries and doubts of others you DO become an expert!

b. Your project case study will embolden others to repeat your success and the learning organization starts to breathe from the grass roots!

About the author: Naseem Mariam is author of "Project Serenity ... How to diffuse Trust". She has 17 years expertise helping engineers and managers Achieve Success, Have Fun, Enjoy Stress-free lives on communication software projects. For her 'Management that SOARS!' Newsletter <mailto:projectdioxide@sendfree.com> . Visit Effervescent Project Management at <http://www.projectdioxide.com>

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