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Rule No. 1: Never rely on just one engine



DIGITAL SURVIVOR

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"The pace of technical change is so fast now that we must be prepared for a man to change not only his job, but his entire skills, three or four times in a lifetime."

That observation by Futurist magazine in 1996 is good to keep in mind as you tune up your career skills. You need to think about what you should do to ensure your digital survival.

If all of us regularly need new skills and capabilities, that implies we need to be able to learn about topics and issues rather quickly. That suggests many of us have to become experts at how to search for information on the Web.

Few people are actually good at doing on-line research. It's no wonder. They don't read the help screens and are generally impatient. They want instant search expertise, but don't take the time to learn how to perform an effective search.

To make matters worse, most people have adopted one or two search engines and don't realize their limitations, or aren't aware of many other useful resources.

The first rule when searching the Internet is not to rely on one basic engine or directory. None are entirely comprehensive. Given that the Web is believed to contain more than one billion pages of information, it may come as a surprise that most well-known search engines contain only a few hundred million pages.

To get an idea of the limitations on-line, take a look at a report on Search Engine Watch (**www.searchenginewatch.com/reports/sizes.html**). If you are a regular user of services such as Altavista, InfoSeek or Lycos, you may be shocked to discover that they are anything but comprehensive. That's why you should regularly try multiple engines when searching.

Be aware that there are many new, specialized or innovative sites around. The problem with many big search engines, such as Yahoo, is that they've become hugely cluttered.

You have to wade through advertising, news, directories and countless other bits of information simply to find the search box. That is why one of the most popular search engines is Google (**www.google.com**). A visit to the site shows why — it is simple, straightforward and to the point. Another innovative engine is Fast Search (**www.alltheweb.com**).

Specific engines allow you to narrow your search to a particular topic. Look at searchengines.com (**www.searchengines.com**). This site provides a good way to find country-specific or topic-specific engines, which can often be used to conduct a far more effective search.

Finally, keep up to date on innovations that regularly occur in search technology. Take a look at the Search Engine Watch site (**www.searchenginewatch.com**). It provides a very good, up-to-date summary of developments.

It also provides a tremendous amount of guidance on how you can become a better on-line searcher. You could spend literally hours at this site reading about new search engines, research tips and other useful information.

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