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a monthly
column devoted
to answering
questions relating
to Competitive
Intelligence

Dear CIC: Getting information on private companies can be very challenging. What online sources can you recommend to help? **Private Eye**

Dear Private Eye: I can certainly empathise with you. Helpful information sources, such as an annual report, are typically absent on private company websites. Nonetheless the following links can be very valuable in helping you get around this obstacle:

1. Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions (www.osfi-bsif.gc.ca) regulates and assesses federally chartered financial institutions (banks, insurers, pension plans). The financial data section provides national data for individual companies as well as aggregate totals on a quarterly basis.

2. Strategis (www.strategis.gc.ca) - Guide to chartered companies in Canada. A search can return any old names, address, registration date, directors, and parent/subsidiary information.

3. Canadian Intellectual Property Office (patents1.ic.gc.ca) - patent information.

4. Statistics Canada's Business Data (commerce.statcan.ca), Canada Business (canadabusiness.gc.ca), Canadian Economy (canadianeconomy.gc.ca) - Statistics and industry-specific information.

5. Government directory of links (www.canada.gc.ca/depts/major/de-pind_e.html) - Departments and agencies of the Canadian Government for industry-specific news, analyses and statistics.

6. A.M. Best (ambest.com) - insurance-ranking agency that provides information

on companies in the US, Canada and the U.K. Available with a free online subscription.

7. Canadian Business Resource (www.cbr.ca) - Detailed profiles on over 50 Canadian companies.

8. Canada Newswire (www.canadanewswire.com), Reuters (www.reuters.com), CCNMatthews (www.cdn-news.com) - Newswire services with articles about companies & principles, first hand knowledge about businesses and general business conditions in an area.

9. Decisions of Federal Court (decisions.fct-cf.gc.ca) & Canadian Bar Association (www.cba.org) - Legal research.

10. Canada Industrial Relations Board (www.cirb-ccri.gc.ca) - Labour research & individual provincial human rights tribunals (complaints and decisions related to labour conditions).

11. Canadian Trade Index (www.ctidirectory.com) - Database of Canadian manufacturers, searchable by product, company name or brand.

12. Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org) - Contains information such as nature and status of consumer complaints, additional operating names and company rating. Company profiles are searchable by company name, telephone number and URL.

13. Google (www.google.ca), Vivisimo (vivisimo.com) & Copernic (www.copernic.com) - General search engines as well as fee based search engines such as D&B (www.dnb.com), Hoovers (www.hoovers.com), Dialog (www.dialog.com), Lexis-

Nexis (www.lexisnexis.com), Infomart (www.fpinformart.ca) Look for news, industry reports, directories, technical papers.

14. Searchable database of associations (www.micromedia.ca/Directories/hotlinks.htm) - websites of industry associations of which the company may be a member.

Other sources that can help you in your search include:

- Chambers of Commerce;
- Provincial and state corporate registries;
- Regional papers and industry magazines, in particular, those that are not indexed electronically;
- Technical papers, patents, conference papers; and,
- Websites of the company's clients or strategic partners (press releases).

And you may want to check out the following for additional tips:

- "Investigating Private Companies" (www.virtualchase.com/articles/private_companies.html) - article on how to gather company information online; and,
- Company Research on the Web (www.virtualchase.com/coinfo) - step by step description on how to investigate a company.

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