# Features - Competitive Intelligence (CI) Resources for the Legal Community

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**An Overview**

I will venture to say that many of us are asked, often daily, to "find out everything available on company ABC and its President/CEO," with whom a member of your firm has a meeting at 1 pm today.  Hopefully you have more than an hour to respond to such a request, but sometimes you do not.  As there are many avenues available to conduct competitive intelligence research, this [pdf presentation](http://www.llrx.com/features/CompetitiveIntelligence.pdf)will take you on a tour of recommended methods to conduct such research, and offer suggestions for reliable resources, free and subscription-based, that you can utilize to undertake such an assignment in an efficient, organized, comprehensive, and successful manner.  This is by no measure an exhaustive list of all relevant resources available, but rather a selective guide to website and print resources (with the caveat that some sites will invariably shift to fee-based subscriptions or may at some future date disappear altogether). I welcome suggestions for additions.

First, let me offer a metaphor for CI as it applies to the research process. It is the digital equivalent of a piece of yarn that you pull, and as it slowly unravels, more and more information is revealed about a company’s past, present and even future.  This includes information on its directors and officers, services and products, revenues, customers, financial health, past and present litigation, and more.

There is more information than at any other time in recent memory publicly available on the web (see the recently released study, [How Much Information? 2003](http://www.sims.berkeley.edu/research/projects/how-much-info-2003/)).  Data, especially on individuals and companies, proliferates.  A great deal of this information is available for free, but by no means all of it.  In many cases, the information you seek may be part of the [invisible web](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/InvisibleWeb.html), in databases that are not indexed or spidered by the major search engines.  In addition, vital corporate information that has been aggregated to include additional value added options to filter and analyze corporate finances, has increasingly migrated to fee based sites.   Consequently, it is strongly advisable to use a range of resources to conduct CI research.  Then take the additional step of comparing and contrasting the information you locate according to criteria such as timeliness, accuracy and relevance to your specific requirements.  It is critical to undertake an analysis of the reliability of the data you locate, as financial data can be slanted, out-of-date, or simply inaccurate, depending upon the source.

One of the logical places to begin research on a company is via their own website.  However, corporate websites vary widely in the depth and breath of critical information that they provide. There can also be lack of uniformity in how up-to-date content posted on the site is, in comparison to that which is available, for example, via news, commercial databases and financial sites.   Increasingly however, information on corporate websites includes current and often retrospective financial documents, press releases on products, and in many instances, using [Microsoft](http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/legalnews.asp)as just one good example, an area designated for the press on legal issues that includes a library of full-text court documents from ongoing litigation.

This [pdf presentation](http://www.llrx.com/features/CompetitiveIntelligence.pdf)comprises 38 slides (and may be slow to load absent a broadband connection), and I have included the outline below:

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* Search engines and indexes to locate corporate web sites, which are a direct and content rich source of CI data
* Selected business research web sites
* Selected news aggregators and RSS feeds
* Selected online people trackers
* E-Newsletters, online newspapers, journals & news sources
* Web directories
* Selected bibliographies, guides & journals
* Court Docketing Services
* Screen shots of selected online subscription databases and files