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OF THE INNOVATION EXPEDITION,
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7 TIPS FOR AN INNOVATIVE WEB SEARCH

What is the fastest way you can find ideas, inspiration and innovation opportunities on the web? Stop searching and start using these seven tips to directly find the most unique and relevant sites during your discovery.

1. Proper off line preparation

You shouldn't blindly start a Google search. It's better to start by meticulously writing down your conditions for a query:

- What are the five to seven essential terms in your query?
- Search sites in languages other than English and translate the key words in three other languages (via Google Translate).
- Imagine the ideal page answering your queries. What do these ideal answers look like? Use this exact same wording as a search query.

2. Use all of Google's possibilities.

Hundreds of extra search options are hidden behind Google's 'minimal' homepage.

- Always use 'Google advanced' and select, when needed, language, country, file format, date, et cetera.
- Always use at least three query terms and use parenthesis when these words have to be searched together.
- There are a number of specific channels on Google. Explore your query also in Google images, scholar, video, news, blogs, directory, et cetera.



3. Solo brainstorming

By now, you have settled into your query. Take time to gain some perspective. After all, you're looking for something still unknown to you. So, you can't realistically expect to find an answer via Google. Therefore, it is best to imagine possible cases that you hope to find on the net. Come up with a list around your query of over fifty new product or service ideas. The weirder, the better. Consequently, do a search on the net for these imaginary products. You'll automatically end up on sites you wouldn't usually find.

4. There's more out there than Google

It's time to leave Google, as Google only offers us a small fraction of the Internet. An ideal starting point is <http://www.browsys.com/finder/>. You'll find numerous search engines that are well categorized (general, images, video, news, social, files, reference, academic). You'll also notice right away that you can query in very diverse formats. It is also highly recommended to search through social media such as Twitter, LinkedIn Groups, et cetera.

5. Search in different languages

Install the Google Toolbar, it will immediately translate foreign language sites to English. The translations are far from perfect, but good enough to give you the general idea. For example, if you need to find information on innovations related to food or gadgets, just query some Japanese sites. First imagine which countries have a lot of expertise in the domain you're researching, then go and explore them.

6. Deep web search

A lot of information is not directly accessible via Google. A lot of diverse sources (large databases, libraries and archives) have to be queried directly. That's why you need to scout (via Google) your main sources and then, one-by-one, research these sources with your query. You can also perform a deep search by smart multiplication. Imagine you've found one well-hidden super source around your query. Then use Google to find out who else talks about this site. Most likely you'll discover another valuable source. Consequently, combine both sources in Google and you will most likely discover a third and a fourth. Combine all four and you will end up on a site belonging to someone who already collected the information related to your original query.

7. Find ideas from other sectors

Three tips to combine ideas from other worlds with your query:

- RSS Feeds: Don't just subscribe to sites around your domain, but also subscribe to at least ten other sectors and areas of interest each month.
- Search for a sector that is somewhat related, where the level of innovation is higher than in your sector. Consequently check if these innovations can be translated to your query. Take this query for example: how can I avoid lines at the cash register? Then try a search for innovations concerning traffic congestion on the road.
- Make a list of the most innovative companies that are currently out there. Then imagine how they would innovate in your domain. Some examples: How would Nike innovate public transportation? How would Virgin design a new cell phone? How would Cirque du Soleil innovate hotels and restaurants?

Source: Marc Heleven, web search professional, www.7ideas.be.

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