



## HOW TO RESEARCH A COMPANY

### Research Network Tip Sheet

The Research Network frequently gets requests from clients for background information on a company. While we have fee-based resources that we can use to search for background material, these free websites can help you gather information as well.

When researching a company, it is best to have **as much information as possible**. Sometimes there are a number of businesses with almost identical names. While a business name may be enough, an address (or at least city and state) and executive name can help refine the search results. **Don't** rely solely on just one resource. Use them together & see if a pattern emerges.

**Better Business Bureau** ([www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)) - Listings for local businesses by ZIP code, business name, or phone number. Note that members might get a more favorable rating than nonmembers.

**NYS Dept of State - Division of Corporations** ([www.dos.ny.gov/corps/bus\\_entity\\_search.html](http://www.dos.ny.gov/corps/bus_entity_search.html)) - Search corporate filings in NY. Tip: Search for a company, then search the executive name(s) to see whether they hold ownership stake in other, similar-sounding businesses (also can be done on the BBB website). For other states, go to [www.coordinatedlegal.com/SecretaryOfState.html](http://www.coordinatedlegal.com/SecretaryOfState.html).

**Federal Trade Commission** ([www.ftc.gov/bcp/menus/consumer/invest.shtm](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/menus/consumer/invest.shtm)) - Literature on how to avoid being defrauded by franchise & business opportunities, investment schemes, or work-at-home offers.

**SEC** ([www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml](http://www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml)) - All public companies are required to file registration statements, periodic reports, and other forms electronically through EDGAR. Anyone can access and download this information for free.

**NYS Attorney General** ([www.ag.ny.gov/investor-protection/franchisors-franchisees](http://www.ag.ny.gov/investor-protection/franchisors-franchisees)) - Provides a phone number that can be called to find out whether a complaint has been filed in connection with a specific franchise.

**Entrepreneur Magazine Franchise Buying Guide** ([www.entrepreneur.com/franzone/allabout/](http://www.entrepreneur.com/franzone/allabout/)) - Articles from the magazine that focus on researching franchise opportunities.

**News** - Use the Google News aggregator (<http://news.google.com>) to find stories. Make sure the "news" is not just a press release.

**TheFunded.com** - Research, rate, and review venture capital sources worldwide.

**Executives** - LinkedIn, Whois.com, etc. provide additional information on a company's executive. You can also create a Google alert for future information.

### Tips

- Certain websites (i.e. Ripoff Report) provide a forum for reporting complaints about companies. However, know that this site (and others like it) allows a company to pay to have complaints removed.
- Social media can be helpful too. Find industry forums, limit your Google search to blogs, search Twitter, or use a social media search aggregator like [Social Mention](#) to find out what people think about the company. You can also use [Social Mention](#) to create a social media alert for a company or executive.
- Search Google Maps to get a street view of the address provided to see what businesses the company shares a space with. Or, in some cases, you can see that there is no business at that physical location.