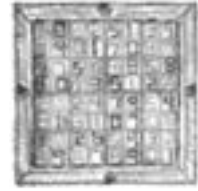


THE COST OF NEWS SUBSCRIPTIONS GOT YOU DOWN?

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The electronic news marketplace is booming: competition is fierce. The key players constantly strive to differentiate themselves through value-added offerings of premium content – sometimes the very content you need to get your job done.

Three major fee-based aggregators dominate the electronic news marketplace and they all have attractive offerings:

- Lexis-Nexis (Reed Elsevier Group)
- Factiva (Dow-Jones and Reuters)
- Dialog (Thomson Publishing group)

But be aware that their information can come at a high price if you are not careful.

These fee-based providers feature extensive, well organized archives of sources that range from trade journals, periodicals, and newswires to financial data, patents, scientific literature, and Wall Street analysis. They deliver up-to-the-minute news and provide various access options. In addition, they have tailored a full range of products that scale from individual worker to global enterprise solutions.

MORE INFORMATION, MORE MONEY

For many subscribers the pricing models of these fee-based major news aggregators are still very unclear. The average subscription cost offered by each provider continues to increase and can range anywhere from several thousand dollars a year for a single small business subscriber to hundreds of thousands of dollars for enterprise licensing.

As the content scope of the fee-based news aggregators expands, the cost of providing this additional information also goes up. Subscription costs can increase exponentially based on the number of people who directly access the information and their amount of usage. These factors, coupled with the normal cost of doing business, all contribute to higher subscription prices. Too often, competitive intelligence practitioners find their information budgets remaining flat or even decreasing.

What can be done to manage the rising cost of information? If you're faced with the need for news – news that only comes for a price – keep the following tips in mind. These suggestions will help you make the most of your fee-based subscription news sources and help you realize a better return on your investment in information sources.

UNDERSTAND CONTENT OVERLAP

Leading news aggregators often carry duplicate content. When negotiating a news subscription, ask your provider to give you an overlap analysis of their content, including the dates of coverage for each source vis-à-vis the content of other leading competitors. This will put you in a better position to negotiate a rate for the information you really need once you have a clear picture of their content overlap.

UNDERSTAND WHAT'S MISSING

Ask your news subscription provider about the completeness of its

coverage of your favorite news sources. Does the news provider only index selected articles from your favorite magazine, wire service, or newspaper?

How often have you not been able to find an article you were looking for in a web version of a source, yet you can find it when you look in the same source using one of the major fee-based news aggregators?

Knowing the answer to this question will help you make better choices when it comes down to selecting the best news aggregator for your organization.

ASSESS YOUR NEWS NEEDS

Examine your news needs, and ask yourself these questions:

- Do you primarily use news sources for current awareness monitoring and only need to access news sources that go back 3-4 months?
- Is it only on a rare occasion that you need to dig into content that is older?
- Do you need access to international news sources? Is it important to have access to news sources in their original language?
- Do you need news that comes from local or regional news sources or business journals?
- How often do you actually need access to premium content such as patents, market research, Wall Street Analyst reports?

How you answer these questions will help you determine whether you need access to the large, value-added news providers with their 20 to 30 year archives and premium content, or

whether you can narrow your focus to a sub-set of news content that is more limited in scope and perhaps offered by a smaller, less expensive news provider.

UNDERSTAND WHO OWNS WHAT

Many of the high-end news aggregators resell information that is owned by another publisher. What you are buying from them is ease of access. Understanding who owns what content might help you negotiate a better rate with some of the providers who do not

have exclusivity to the content they are distributing.

BE AWARE OF CROSS SELLING

Some electronic news providers have recently been promoting themselves as software integrators and are selling software services bundled with their electronic content. But the design and implementation of competitive intelligence software goes way beyond electronic news content integration and requires a unique set of skills and expertise. Don't let this

be a distraction nor a motive for your provider to increase the cost of their electronic content subscription.

DON'T DISCOUNT THE DISCOUNTERS

Although the high-end aggregators own a significant share of today's electronic news market, the recent development of XML technology coupled with the emergence of advanced search and text extraction engines are bringing new options to news subscribers. You may be able

News Source	Description	Search Capability	Free/Fee
All You Can Read.com	Contains about 26,500 magazines and newspapers from over 200 countries. Listings are categorized not only by their country of origin, but are also subcategorized by topic - be it art, business or travel.	Name, keyword, category or location.	Free: by registering can customize and build a news page of selected news sources
BizJournals	Provides business journals from 55 markets and provides access to regional news sources in major US markets. Can set-up topic alerts in specific regional news sources.	Basic searching. Can also track by industry category. Backfile to 1996.	Free: registration required.
Findory	Has a unique approach to the news -- learns your interests from the articles you read, searches thousands of worldwide news sources, and helps you find the essential news of the day.	Basic searches of news, blogs and web	Free
Moreover	Provides a variety of news solutions for companies and individuals. CI NewsDesk provides access to news articles from over 7,000 online news and information sources collected in real-time across 115 countries in 26 languages.	Broad search or drill down for more refined results. Build custom news feeds, save frequent searches, and set automatic alerts.	Fee
NewsNow	Monitors breaking news in 15+ languages in 84 countries from thousands of Internet online publications, including international, national and regional titles, newswires, magazines, press releases and exclusively online news sources.	Single word or multi-word searching. 30 day archive.	Free: single word searching. Fee: Multi-word searches Offers a 14 day free Trial
Yellowbrix	Provides access to real-time content from 3,000 global, national, regional and local sources covering 1,000 focused subject areas (Topic Categories). Receive content from a specific provider, select a Topic Category or create a Custom Category based on your own requirements.	Pre-select from 1000+ topics or do ad-hoc searches	Fee

to meet some of your information requirements with free web-based news aggregators or discounted online news services. Here we provide a quick sampler of some of those players and a brief description of the information they publish (see Table 1).

THE BOTTOM LINE

Subscription news sources and content aggregators play a major role in competitive intelligence and market research. Analysts' access to information is unprecedented. But as the cost of content continues to rise, it is more important than ever to be a smart news shopper. Understanding your own information needs, the various news subscription offerings and considering a patchwork approach to combining fee-based and free sources, will help you realize the most cost effective solution.

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secretive in advance of major changes or announcements.

Spectators, Rumor Mills and Grapevines

You can often uncover the most obscure and fascinating information tidbits about private organizations through niche listservs, personal pages and weblogs. Other resources, such as industry rumor mills, follow the activities of the target far more frequently than the rest of the world, such as an industry analyst's blog.

The value of such information will generally prove inconsistent. At best, it might be a direct pathway to a source versus a treasure trove of private company information. But where the information and insights come from a well respected analyst or industry spectator who has been correct before, consider the value of the information to be slightly improved.

LEARNING MORE

The mechanics of private company research has resulted in the production of countless texts and training materials. A visit to the SCIP site and store will lead interested readers to dozens of additional resources. In large baskets, these materials are specific to either the whole of private firm research as a discipline (such as a stand-alone book), or a more narrowly focused approach within private company research (such as learning how to build what is called a 'ghost balance sheet' to determine what a private company might look like financially).

When it comes to private company research, the best information tends to come from human sources. All of those avenues described above will take you only part of the way, though many will

lead directly to high quality sources for dialogue.

The onus is upon the researcher to determine when to pick up the phone where the public information valves shut off. If companies continue to dismantle their soap boxes and shut off communications functions, I anticipate a lot of researchers will be faced with such decisions.

David Carpe is the principal and founder of Clew, LLC, a competitive intelligence consulting firm serving several of the world's most formidable organizations. This column was based on an edited excerpt from David's upcoming book about research. He is also the founder of PassingNotes.com, a research community. Before selling out to pursue a career in business, raise venture to start a software company, earn an MBA, and create Clew, he earned a BFA in studio art. David resides in Boston with his two sons and their one-eyed dog. He may be reached at david@clew.us.