

# Technology Corner

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*By Joseph G. Hodges, Jr.*

Every year or so the publishers of PC Magazine and PC World publish lists of what they feel are 100 incredibly useful Web sites. PC World published just such a list in its November 2008 issue. This occasioned me to take a look at their list to see if any of these sights might be of use to financial and estate planners. Below are the results of this effort. I hope you find this useful.

The article leads off with several Web sites in the categories of “Learn Stuff,” “Buy, Sell, Rent” and “Plan a Vacation.” While useful, there was not much there that is relevant to our fields of practice. However, when I got to the “Stay in Touch” category, I found a couple of helpful sites. One was the White Pages ([www.whitepages.com](http://www.whitepages.com)). This is a Web-based tool for use in tracking down people, addresses, phone numbers and even age. They are about to add voice and mobile capabilities too. I actually was first directed to this site by my wife, but I have since used it myself over 30 times in the last two months. Whereas similar sites will find the same information, they will not give it to you unless you pay a fee. The White Pages gives you enough information and for free that you can usually tell the hit you have is a good one and you can make use of it as is. A really fun exercise is to look yourself up using this tool.

The other Stay-in-Touch tool that interested me was Spock ([www.spock.com](http://www.spock.com)). This site looks for a person’s school, work and social affiliations, then displays photos, links to social network pages, Web sites, videos, and blogs about that person. They claim to cover over 500 million people on the Web. You type in a name, an e-mail address or a key word in order to find a person. I tried my own name and, sure enough, it found me and displayed my information in the first page of the search results. The depth of their search results left something to be desired, although



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I did find myself in the company of such luminaries as John Edwards, Hillary Clinton, Richard Nixon, Michelle Obama, Eliot Spitzer and Fred Thomas (with friends like that who needs enemies).

Moving on to the "Stay Healthy" category, I noticed one Web site of interest here. It is called iMedix ([www.imedix.com](http://www.imedix.com)). This site, which is free and in beta, is a social networking site with a different focus. It is designed to help people form communities of interest around their health issues, such as cancer and depression, so they can network with one another and share relevant news and research information about their illnesses. The communities are broken down into A to Z categories. In addition, on the front page, the most populous communities are listed, as are the featured questions. Given how people like to discuss their medical illnesses and cures with those of a similar vein, this site has the potential to take off big time. You may want to mention it to those of your clients with known illnesses as an alternative source for a sympathetic support group.

When it came to the "Take the Web with You" category, I came up with four winners. The first one was the New York Times ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)). Hit that URL and you will have access to today's issue. They call it TimesPeople that lets you share and discover the best of the New York Times. This is a perfect link for all of you who have Palms and Blackberrys.

The second one was Google News ([www.news.google.com](http://www.news.google.com)). This link takes you to what is considered by many to be the fastest and easiest way to organize and read news items, especially on hand held devices. This is due in large part to their extensive use of news story categories to organize their daily news items.

The third one is a relative of Google News called Google Maps ([www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com)). If you have not tried this one yet, you need to. To make things easy, just go searching for your own home. In spite of the full map of the United States that first comes up, just enter your home address. From here you can get traffic, satellite and terrain views. You can even pan right, left, up or down. There is even a little human like character on the top of the zoom bar that will let you bring up a street view from ground level. This tool can be extremely useful for scouting out and documenting various properties that your clients might be involved with. This little piece of news is too late for 2008 but note that you can even track Santa with Google Maps through Norad Tracks Santa on Christmas Eve.

The fourth one was MizPee ([www.mizpee.com](http://www.mizpee.com)). If you are ever in a strange city and need to find the cleanest facilities nearest to your present location, then this is the site for you. It not only finds the nearest locations but it can plot them out on a Yahoo map. It even rates each facility (four rolls seems to be the highest) and tells you if a purchase is required in order to use the facilities. You can even read the posted comments of previous users, if any, and rate each facility yourself once you have been there. While this has no direct bearing on the sort of work we all do, something like this is a valuable resource to have while we are traveling around trying to do the work of our clients in foreign cities.

In the "Find Local Stuff" category, there were a couple of good ones. The first one was Open Table ([www.opentable.com](http://www.opentable.com)). If you need restaurant reservations in a foreign city or country, this could be your best place to go to research and book them. This site is the biggest and best-connected site for making dining reservations online, and it now has a mobile application too. Basically you scout a restaurant, then a table at it if you can, then book your reservation. They confirm back with an e-mail confirmation. Recently I was offered the opportunity to order table flowers too, which I did and they arrived in fine shape. When you first select your city of choice, you are presented with a selection menu that asks for your chosen location, what neighborhoods, what cuisines, and the desired date and time. The site then searches for all available options and displays them for you to choose from. This tool can be quite handy if you are ever in need of making dining reservations for business contacts in a foreign city.

The second one was StubHub ([www.stubhub.com](http://www.stubhub.com)). When it comes to entertainment, this is the place to go. This site is an alternative to Ticketmaster for tickets to sports, concerts and theater. In effect StubHub has taken ticket scalping off the streets and put it on the Internet by providing a secure marketplace for fan-to-fan ticket sales. The pluses are the fees are very reasonable and this service provides a market for tickets for events that are officially sold out. When you are disparate for tickets to an event so you can entertain a client, this may be just the place to go to get them.

When it comes to searching out music, videos and books, there were a couple of sites that caught my eye. One was GoodSearch ([www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com)). If you or your donor clients like to donate to

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revocable trusts (including the possible use of one or more domestic asset protection trusts), and conservation easements. The use of these entities and techniques are to achieve the clients' often-stated objectives:

- probate avoidance,
- estate tax elimination or reduction,
- asset protection,

- keeping the operation of the farm or ranch in the family protecting the use of the land as a farm or ranch, and
- the transfer to the next generation with fair treatment of each child.

### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, *The Farm Index* (1979).
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Agriculture Land Values and Markets, Outlook and Situation Report* (1988).

## Money and Meaning

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business, or contributing part of one's income to charitable giving are both examples of direct participation in growing assets.

- Create opportunities to make decisions and to have some sense of control over the assets. Psychological ownership is probably best conveyed when people have an opportunity to make decisions and exercise real control. Decision making does not have to be all or nothing—having control over part of an asset, or over how earnings are reinvested, may be sufficient.
- Finally, ongoing dialogue with the eventual inheritors recognizing their ownership (or their impending ownership), can help secure the belief that ownership is genuine and real.

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charities by checking around the Internet, this site may merit a look. It is a novel concept whereby donors who search the Internet can thereby have money go to the charity of their choice without

having to donate anything themselves. GoodSearch donates 50 percent of all its ad revenues to the charities that are designated by the donors. The built in search engine is Yahoo.com. The second one was Powell's books ([www.powells.com](http://www.powells.com)). This is one of the best online bookstores in America because it focuses primarily on books and offers superior reviews of volumes that are done by both staff people and customers.

In the "Access Private Information" category there were several sites of note. One of them was Search System ([www.searchsystem.com](http://www.searchsystem.com)). This site sells access to 36,000 public records databases from around the country. They are one of the oldest companies in this business. Next is NETRonline ([www.netronline.com](http://www.netronline.com)). This is another public records access site, with direct links to the actual databases. The third is Criminal Searches ([www.criminalsearches.com](http://www.criminalsearches.com)). If you have someone who has a record, this site can find them and even display their mug shots and plot their addresses on a map, all for free.

In the "Survive the Recession" category there were two sites that you might find useful. The first one is Bankrate ([www.bankrate.com](http://www.bankrate.com)). This site is the largest and most complete aggregator of financial rate information. It constantly surveys 4,800 financial institutions in

all 50 states to provide real-time rates on around 300 financial instruments. This is a useful tool for borrowers and consumers who are shopping for the best rates. The second one is AnnualCreditReport ([www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)). Since 2003 federal law has made it possible for individuals to obtain one free annual credit report from each of the three major credit reporting agencies. This is the only site that provides these reports without any strings attached.

In the "Get the Right News, Fast" category, three sites stood out. The first is State ([www.state.com](http://www.state.com)). This site has a special section called "Today's Papers" that gives a clear and concise roundup of the news stories the major national newspapers are running on their front pages. You can have this sent to you daily as an e-mail with links to the full stories. The second is NPA ([www.npr.com](http://www.npr.com)). What is unique about this site is that it provides its news stories in the form of audio files. The third is the DrudgeReport ([www.drudgereport.com](http://www.drudgereport.com)). This site has found the key to success in delivering online news and is well worth a visit.

I didn't find anything of interest in the "Be Politically Aware" and "Publish Your Stuff" categories, but you may want to explore those further at your leisure. If you do, you can find a digital ver-

sion of the November 2008 issue of PC World at [www.zinio.com/gncissue?is=302907172&ns=usa](http://www.zinio.com/gncissue?is=302907172&ns=usa) for \$6.99. The Report itself has not yet been (and may not be) posted on the PC World Web site at [www.pcworld.com](http://www.pcworld.com).

That just about completes my report for this time, but rest assured that I am always keeping my eye open for similar lists they might appear and merit a future article. In the meantime, a lot of the new sites I discover are included in the Featured Web Sites summary that is always at the end of each of my articles.

## Featured Web Sites

**AltLaw**—A project dedicated to making federal case law available and searchable at no charge online. A joint-project between the Columbia Law School's Program on Law and Technology and the Silicon Flatirons Program at the University of Colorado Law School.

[www.altlaw.org](http://www.altlaw.org)

**Bluetooth**—Can You Hear Me Now?

[www.slate.com/id/2175268/pagenum/all/](http://www.slate.com/id/2175268/pagenum/all/)

**MAC PCs**—Lawyer's Small Business Web Site

[www.apple.com/business/solutions/legal.html](http://www.apple.com/business/solutions/legal.html)

**ABA LTRC Legal Technology Web Search** (bottom of the page)

[www.abanet.org/tech/ltrc](http://www.abanet.org/tech/ltrc)

## Elder Care

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me that after clients gets to know you and have done business with you for a period of time ... "they don't care so much about how much you know ... but rather

they want to know how much you care."

Some pundits would say that times are tough for the estate planning industry and keeping a low profile is the best way to survive these difficult times. I tend to think that now is an excellent time to be proactive, to reach out to your loyal clients, to ask them to refer you to their friends and colleagues who have not heard about the Loyalty Index and are looking for a better relationship with a planning professional.

## ENDNOTES

Stephen M.R. Covey, *THE SPEED OF TRUST* (2006).

## Editor's Choice

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is an individual decision, but a good guideline is do not give your children enough to live on. Leave some incentive in the mix. Here's the bottom line for your clients: Do not rob your children of opportunities to make their way in life. Do not rob them of the very opportunities that made you who you are today. Gather the discipline to use the words "no" and "later."

## The Role of Advisors

Advisors work with many families in which some family members handle their good fortune and themselves poorly. Sometimes entire families are lost on the dark side. Advisors have approached me with questions about how can they help, how can they intervene? The role of the advisor is based on trust: the more trust, the more influence. Even with substantial trust, it takes a leap of faith to bring up the unique psychological challenges of handing wealth well. The best start for bringing up these challenges is

to advise the family to schedule a meeting, preferably in a retreat setting, for "family wealth education." To make sure your clients manage their family psychology well, map out for them the family education steps they need to take. Design an annual retreat program with them, and find facilitators for them. Readiness reduces risk. Based on your knowledge of the family, choose a relevant topic as the place to start. Popular opening topics are: the psychology of wealth; vision, values and mission statement; parenting children in successful, wealthy families; intergenerational communication. This family wealth education will build the foundation for the family's real understanding of the bright side of their wealth.

## The Bright Side: How to Help Your Clients Handle Their Good Fortune and Themselves Well

For wealthy individuals, temptations are bigger and opportunities to sacrifice and serve others are bigger too. People who do not have financial wealth often fantasize that if they did have it, their lives would be easier. It seems like an automatic equation. But the twist is that happiness comes from within. Once the basics of food, shelter and a few niceties are covered, happiness is not dependent on how much money you have. It is dependent on how you live your life.

Handling one's good fortune and oneself well begins with one's values and one's beliefs. Once these are identified and clarified, the individual can decide on priorities and actions. Since actions have