

## Free resources for business research

We remember from last week that **we do business research to understand risk**. In assessing risk, we change sides and attack our ideas. We are trying to find flaws, red flags and results that tell us “No, do not move forward.”

Looking for “yes” can be dangerous, as looking for affirmation puts you at risk of confirmation bias. Confirmation bias leads you to only look for information that supports your ideas.

The internet can be a great resource, or it can be a confusing mess. Search engine results are filled with paid placements and deceptive offers. To help you sort out potential opportunities for useful information, Kevin offers some of his favorite links.

*NOTE: These were good resources as of Spring, 2023, but anything can happen between when this list was created and when you visit these links. In the interest of full transparency, the naked URL is listed. Always use caution when visiting links provided by others, use several sources and compare results and **avoid entering any personal information**.*

### Your Local Library

Your number one free research resource is your local public library. Libraries offer three things that make the library your best choice.

1. Access to licensed databases and limited circulation publications
2. Curated collections of information assembled by credentialed professionals
3. Personal, one-on-one assistance to define and answer your research questions

*It's a priceless resource you are already paying for, get some soon!*

### The language of business

When researching and analyzing business opportunities, unfamiliar terms and phrases are sure to present themselves. The following sites can help build business vocabulary and clear up confusion.

<https://www.fundera.com/blog/business-finance-terms-and-definitions>

<https://www.sba.gov/document/support--glossary-business-financial-terms>

<https://www.investopedia.com/financial-term-dictionary-4769738>

<https://www.scu.edu/mobi/resources--tools/business-terms-glossary>

<https://www.practicalbusinessskills.com/resources/glossary-of-terms>

<https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/finance-for-non-finance-professionals-finance-terms-to-know>

## Free resources for business research

### General information about small business

**SBA Business Guide.** Information about starting and growing your business.

<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide>

**Houston Chronicle small business information.** Wide ranging short reads.

<https://smallbusiness.chron.com>

### Commercial sites offering general business information

Many commercial sites offer general business information to attract visitors and to demonstrate expertise. As always, review content with that in mind and avoid those 'Buy Now' buttons until you are crystal-clear on the problem you are solving!

**Nerd Wallet.** Sells financial tools and products. look for specialized online calculators, financial and general business readings.

<https://www.nerdwallet.com/h/category/small-business>

**HubSpot.** Sells marketing automation software. Look for marketing and promotions guidance, along with general business readings.

<https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/how-to-run-a-business>

**Intuit.** Sells the 800 pound gorilla of bookkeeping automation, Quickbooks. Also sells TurboTax and recently bought the MailChimp email marketing application.

Start at the small business blog and go from there.

<https://www.intuit.com/blog/category/innovative-thinking/small-business>

### Regulatory information

Understanding your business risks includes reviewing potential regulatory requirements. Due to increases in regulatory and tax burdens, some startups are finding that their planned business model might no longer be viable. Learn before you get burned!

**Washington State.** Office for regulatory innovation & assistance. Links to the Washington Small Business Guide, online calculators, FAQs and the The Small Business Liaison Team (SBLT), representatives from 27 agencies.

[https://www.oria.wa.gov/site/alias\\_oria/344/Business.aspx](https://www.oria.wa.gov/site/alias_oria/344/Business.aspx)

## Free resources for business research

**IRS Small Business and Self-Employed Tax Center.**

<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed>

**United States Patent and Trademark Office.** Intellectual property regulations and protections.

<https://www.uspto.gov>

### Clear Thinking and Defensible Conclusions

**List of common logic fallacies.** Check yourself before you wreck yourself.

<https://englishcomposition.org/advanced-writing/logical-fallacies-examples>

**Catalog of research bias.** Avoid traps that lead to unsupported decisions.

<https://catalogofbias.org>

### Raw data sources

Once you know what you want to know, data is where you need to go. While valuable, these sites are notoriously challenging to navigate. Use patience, take your time and remember, you can't break it. Keep trying and your efforts will be rewarded. Watch out for rabbit holes!

**The US Census Bureau.** Serves as the nation's leading provider of quality data about its people and economy.

<https://www.census.gov>

**The Bureau of Labor Statistics.** Price indices, business dynamics and consumer behavior. The principal fact-finding agency for the Federal Government in the broad field of labor economics and statistics.

<https://www.bls.gov>

**Congressional Research Service.** Provides public access to research products produced by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) for the United States Congress.

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

## Free resources for business research

**Federal Reserve Economic Data.** An online database consisting of hundreds of thousands of economic data time series from scores of national, international, public, and private sources.

<https://fred.stlouisfed.org>

**GovInfo.** A service of the United States Government Publishing Office (GPO), which is a Federal agency in the legislative branch. Provides free public access to official publications from all three branches of the Federal Government.

<https://www.govinfo.gov>

**The Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (eCFR).** A web version of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), updated daily to better reflect its current status.

<https://www.ecfr.gov>

**The Right Site Census 2020 for the web.** Free registration required, a tolerable amount of offers will follow. Site offers more than 650 variables and dynamic reporting and analysis.

[https://www.easidemographics.com/cgi-bin/login\\_free.asp](https://www.easidemographics.com/cgi-bin/login_free.asp)

### **Business Analysis Tools**

Time was, you needed to be a spreadsheet wizard to perform business analysis. Now, there are quick and easy online solutions for most common inquiries. These links provide access to a wide range of free business analysis tools and calculators.

Some of these sites also offer a specific paid application in addition to the free options, others just get advertising revenue from your visits. You might need to scroll down the page to find the good stuff. Most offer similar tools, so use several and compare the results to assess accuracy.

**General business calculators and tools.** Projections for profit margins, break-even, lease payments, economic order quantity and many more.

<https://www.calculators.org/business>

<https://accuratecalculators.com/business-calculators>

<https://www.gigacalculator.com/calculators/business>

<https://www.fncalculator.com/financialcalculator>

## Free resources for business research

**Business valuation calculator.** Whether buying or selling, valuation tools help you set a baseline for further discussion. Use several, compare results, be conservative and consult a professional before moving forward. Always seek legal representation before signing on the dotted (or any other) line.

<https://www.bizex.net/business-valuation-tool>

<https://www.calcxml.com/do/business-valuation>

<https://www.equitynet.com/crowdfunding-tools/business-valuation-calculator.aspx>

<https://www.westernsouthern.com/life-insurance/business-valuation-calculator>

<https://www.nationwide.com/business/solutions-center/calculators/business-valuation-calculator>

**Market research resource lists.** Finding a market need and finding an attractive market are two mission-critical drivers of success. All of the previous cautions apply!

<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/plan-your-business/market-research-competitive-analysis>

<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/market-research-tools-resources>

<https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/10-market-research-tools-you-should-be-using>

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/market-research-tools>

<https://www.practicalecommerce.com/tools-and-resources-for-market-research>

<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/market-research-tools>

<https://libguides.umn.edu/c.php?g=844948>

### **Business resource links from others**

Others also offer business research resource lists, so that's a good way to finish off this reference work. All of the previous cautions apply!

<https://guides.loc.gov/company-research>

<https://www.capitalone.com/learn-grow/business-resources>

<https://www.inc.com/business-resources>

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/topic/small-business-resources>

<https://www.readyentrepreneur.com/start-here-old/resources-to-start-a-business>

<https://smallbusiness.com/guides>

<https://www.lib.washington.edu/business/foster-business-library-collections-and-research-guides>

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/business-operations-center/library/resources/labor>

### **Pro tips**

- Set up an alternate email account and protected contact information to use for registrations
- Use your favorite application to breadcrumb, you will need to list your sources if you use the information for persuasive purposes