



# MASKED INTENTIONS

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## How to Search for Who Knows What

One of the biggest problems that most companies seem to have today is that they really don't know what they already know, and who inside their company actually knows it. And worse yet, they are not really sure who knows what subject areas best outside their company, so the network of consultants that orbits the company tends to evolve from personal relationships rather than best-in-class experts.

Social networks such as Linked In and Facebook are an attempt to develop expanded webs of personal relationships for business. But the fundamental assumption these social networks make is that the best-in-class experts you are looking for have actually agreed to participate on the network.

That's what makes new search engine specialty services such as **Spock.com** potentially pretty interesting. Basically, the folks at Spock have created a search engine that is tuned to finding people by indexing documents specifically relating to people. This service is still in beta, so it has a ways to go before getting everything about everybody right. For example, a search on my name brings up references to several old jobs but nothing related to what I currently do for a living. That may be the fault of how documents related to me are tagged, but either way it shows that the Spock search engine could use to some work to make it easier to find, for instance, this blog.

In any event, as the Spock search engine evolves it could develop into something truly useful alongside blunt search engine services such as Google and Yahoo. If you're specifically looking for somebody who knows something about a particular subject, this could be a much faster way to get to the end result without having to sort through thousands of results that could be about everything and nothing.

Perhaps more interestingly, large companies might want to think about private labeling the Spock service for their own internal use. **Enterprise search** may not be all it's cracked up to be these days, but at least finding the people in the company that know something about a particular subject would be a great start. The truth is that most companies don't know who knows what inside their organization. And more often than not, they are hiring third-party consultants to replicate a knowledge base they already have somewhere in the company.

Of course, knowledge management systems were going to solve this problem. But in truth, most of those systems are too difficult to implement and manage on an ongoing basis. So for now, most people would be content with an expanded directory service that not only told them who is employed in the company, but also what they actually know something about.

As the old saying goes, it's not what you know but who you know that matters. Of course, it would help a lot more if the people you know actually knew something useful.

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