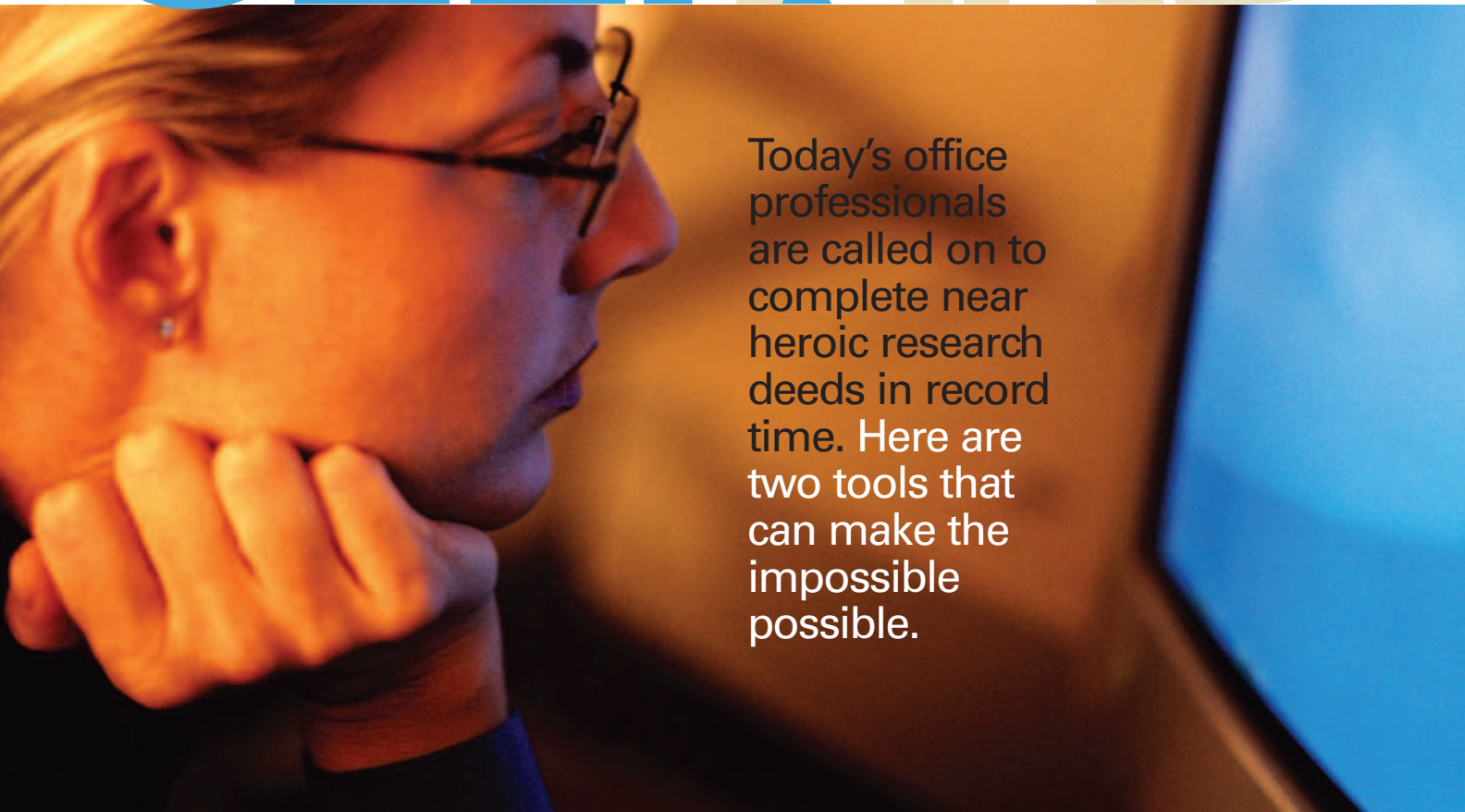


SEEK AND



Today's office professionals are called on to complete near heroic research deeds in record time. Here are two tools that can make the impossible possible.

FIND

BY ANNETTE MARQUIS AND GINI COURTER

It's one hour before the big board meeting when the request comes in. Your exec just found out that a rival company may be interested in selling off a strategically valuable part of its business. The board would have to act quickly to seize this opportunity or see it slip through their fingers. She needs you to find out everything you can about the company—its products, financials, principals, news reports, whatever you

can discover and find quickly. Not only does your exec need it right away, but she needs a report that looks good enough to pass out at the meeting. And if that's not enough, she's in a panic because she can't find an important document about this company that was e-mailed to her some time ago. She has no idea what it's called or even who sent it. She just knows that someone sent her something about some concerns regarding this company and she had better

look at it before the meeting. Adrenaline immediately starts racing through your body. The pressure is on. Can you do it? Can you get her what she needs or will you fail the test?

The answer may just reside in having the right software tools at your disposal. Finding an e-mail attachment when you don't know who sent it, when it arrived, or even what it was called is a tall order using Microsoft Outlook's Find feature. Chances are you would have to spend

precious time browsing through message after message and when you found a likely candidate, you would have to open the e-mail attachment to see if it contained the information you were looking for. By the time you found the document—if you found the document—little time would be left for the Web research about the company. And even if your Web research skills are finely tuned and you can find the information quickly, creating a presentable report for the board is no easy task. Copying and pasting from Web sites into Word results in a hodgepodge of styles and formats. And it's even more time consuming to include the sources of the various pieces of information you gathered. The clock is ticking—every second counts.

Two innovative software products can come to the rescue. *X1* from *X1 Technologies Inc.* (www.X1.com) and *Net-Snippets* from a company by the same name (www.netsnippets.com) are exciting tools that could make the difference between being a hero and a disappointment. Assuming that we all prefer to be heroes, let's look at how each of the products could simplify your response to these unreasonable, but not unusual, requests.

Searching Simplified

Simply put, *X1* is an indexing tool that makes searching the contents of your network and desktop files a breeze. Not only can you search e-mail messages, you can search the entire contents of e-mail attachments and documents on local and network drives. Even better, you can see the contents in the *X1* viewer, so you're not wasting time opening the wrong documents.

The left side of the *X1* window lists e-mail messages and the right side shows the contents of the selected message. When you launch *X1* for the first time, it prompts you to index your data. *X1* indexes mail in Outlook, Outlook Express, Eudora, and Netscape Mail. The bottom right corner of the window always shows you the last time *X1* indexed your mail.

In Options, you can set the frequency of the indexing and select which mail folders you want to index, including Microsoft Exchange Public Folders. The more fre-

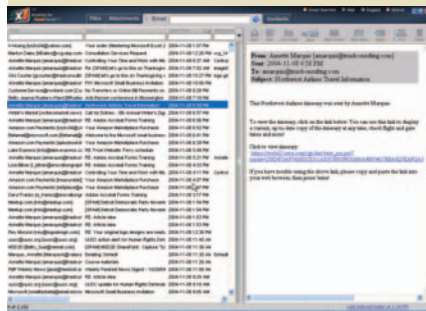


Figure 1: X1Window

Last indexed today at 1:34 PM

Figure 2: Last Index

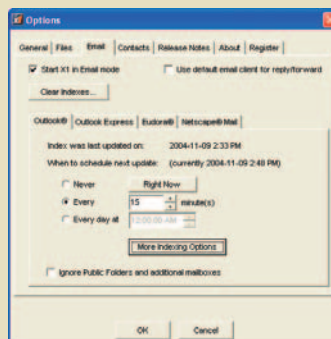


Figure 3: E-mail Indexing Options

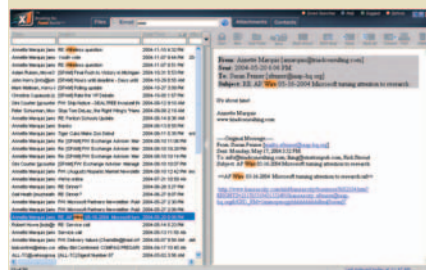


Figure 4: Searching E-mail

Annette Marquis [att]	PW: Backup and other	2004-02-21 10:09 AM
Annette Marquis [att]	RE: Backup and other	2004-02-20 1:03 PM
Diri Courier [courier]	PW: Office setup	2003-12-22 12:44 PM

Figure 5: Filtering Unrelated Words

quently you ask *X1* to index, the more accurate your searches are. You probably won't even notice when the indexing is happening, so the default of every 15 minutes probably works well for most people.

After you've indexed your data, you can start searching by typing in the e-mail text box. As soon as you enter a character, *X1* begins filtering the list of e-mail. And the best part is, it's looking in the entire message, including Subject, To, From, Date, and Message Body fields. As *X1* filters the list, it highlights the matching words in both the displayed fields and the message body.

Not only do you instantly see the results of your search, but *X1* displays the contents of the selected e-mail message in the right-side View pane. You can enter a word, a phrase, or a series of unrelated words. *X1* displays each word it finds in a different color, making it easy to see what you are looking for.

You can reply to, forward, and even reorganize mail into different Outlook (or other mail software) folders right from *X1*. You have the option to launch your default mail client when replying or forwarding or working within *X1*. Either way works fine.

With most other search tools, including Google's new Desktop Search, you have to enter your search terms, click a search button, review a list of search results, and then open each item individually to see if it's the one message or document you are looking for. With *X1*, you begin seeing the results before you even finish entering your first search term. You can instantly see if you're heading in the right direction or if you need to modify your search.

Results Displayed

Whether you are looking for an Adobe Acrobat file, a Word document, a PowerPoint presentation, or an Excel worksheet, *X1* does a great job of displaying the document for you. You can save the document on a local or network drive or as an Outlook e-mail attachment. If *X1* indexed it, it can display it for you.

X1 will even play media (audio and video) files. When you set up the File options, you can specify what file locations you want it to index, what file extensions

you want to see, and whether you want to play media files in the View pane.

Return on Investment

X1 is not free like Google's Desktop Search. Nevertheless, it's a great value for the price. Single copies are \$74.95 each and multiple license discounts are available. If X1 saves you even a couple of minutes a day, it won't take long to make a return on your investment. You won't find a faster desktop search tool anywhere.

Managable Web Research

So X1 helped you find the e-mail your exec needed, and now you're on to the research task. You've found lots of information about the rival company, but how do you quickly and painlessly capture the information from the Web and create a report that's both attractive and well-documented? Just printing Web pages is out of the question, and copying and pasting into Word yields unpredictable and unappealing results. NetSnippets may be the answer you're

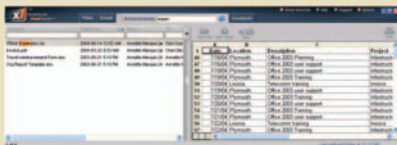


Figure 6: Viewing E-mail Attachments

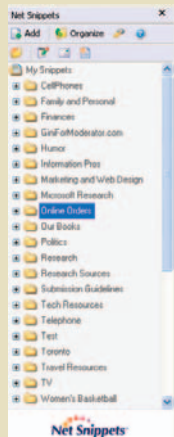


Figure 7: NetSnippets Window

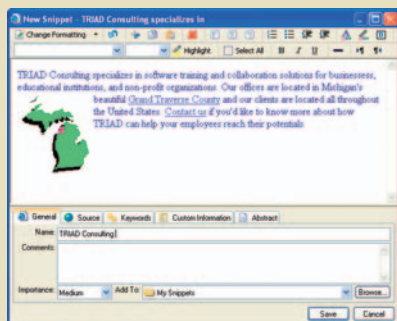


Figure 8: Edit Dialog Box



Figure 9: Net Snippets Report

looking for; it is one of several post-search tools in a fast-growing market.

Never in our history has so much information been available to anyone who wants it. The Web is a research library beyond comprehension. Yet capturing the information in a format that can be used in decision-making is a mind-boggling task. One of the biggest challenges is documenting the assorted information sources, especially when the answers you're searching for come in a paragraph here and a table there. NetSnippets not only captures information but automatically and accurately captures the information source.

Many office professionals find themselves in airports where Internet access is spotty at best. With NetSnippets, you can access your captured information even when you're not online. With this software, you can save the link to a page, entire Web pages, just the text from a page, all the hyperlinks or a Web page's images, a selection from a page, an Adobe Acrobat document, and if that's not enough, you can use the screen capture utility to capture whatever content you choose. But wait, there's more. The NetSnippets Drop Spot sits as a toolbar on the Windows task bar. Using the Drop Spot, you can capture content not just from your Web browser but from any application where you can copy. How's that for convenient?

NetSnippets comes in two versions, NetSnippets Standard (\$79.95) and NetSnippets Professional (\$129.95). You'll definitely need Professional if you want to generate reports and integrate snippets into Word, so it's worth the extra \$50 to get the high-end functionality.

Capturing the Web

When you launch NetSnippets, the NetSnippets window, shown at left, appears alongside your browser. With Internet Explorer, it appears on the left side; with Mozilla and Netscape, it appears on the right. When you first launch NetSnippets, you might choose to import all of your current favorites into NetSnippets. To keep them straight, you can organize your links and clips into folders within NetSnippets.

To capture content, decide what you want to capture and click the Add but-

Q: How do I format a scannable résumé?

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ton. All the choices for capturing content appear here. For example, if you want the entire page, select Entire Page from the menu. If you want to take a screen capture, select Screen Capture and then select the type of shape you would like to use for the capture: Rectangle, Rounded Rectangle, Ellipse, Triangle, Parallelogram, or Irregular Shape. To capture only the hyperlink, choose Link to Page. Or, if you want just a portion of the page, do it the easy way—just select and drag it to the desired NetSnippets folder. The best part of this is you can combine clips from multiple sources into one NetSnippets file by dragging the next piece of information to the same snippet. It tracks the multiple sources but collects it all in a single document.

After you complete any type of capture, the NetSnippets Edit dialog box opens. Here you can edit the snippet by adding and removing content, change the formatting, and add notes, keywords, custom information, and an abstract. NetSnippets gives you control over what data about the snippet you want to capture; you can even create custom fields to record any relevant data you need. You can come back to this dialog box at any time by just clicking the Edit button on the toolbar.

The newest version of NetSnippets

Professional (3.2.06) gives you several ways to use the content after you capture it. You can insert snippets into Word and build your report there or you can use the powerful NetSnippets reporting tool. The latter creates great-looking reports with very little effort. You can convert all the snippets from a folder into a well-formatted and well-documented, hyperlinked report complete with an automatically-generated table of contents and bibliography.

After you generate the report, you can, of course, print it, but you can also package it in a number of different interesting formats for e-mailing or storing electronically. These include:

- NetSnippets Package File for other NetSnippets users.
- Zipped Executable File (.ZIP) for Windows users to unzip and open in a Web browser.
- Zip file with Snippet files (.ZIP) for Windows and non-Windows users who want all the research data. This file contains the actual snippets and folders.
- Executable File (.EXE) for Windows users to be able to unpack and view the research data in a Web browser.
- Unpackaged snippets to make a backup of your research files.

You should be able to find a method that works for just about anybody.

Did I Hear Raise?

The clock keeps right on clicking while you scrambled to meet the one-hour deadline. After only 45 minutes, you run to the printer and hand your exec a copy of the missing e-mail and a beautiful 10-page report on the company in question. She, of course, is flabbergasted, and has to find something that needs to be changed, and asks “Can you move the company information so it appears first?” “Sure, no problem,” you reply, “I’ll be right back.” You regenerate the NetSnippets report, and in the report dialog box, you drag the Company Information snippet to the top of the list and click Create Report. The new report looks great so you send it off to the printer. This time, your exec has nothing to say but, “Wow, thank you. If this deal goes through, let’s get together and talk about your career path.”

Take a bow. You’ve done it and made every second count. ■

Annette Marquis and Gini Courter write the Electronic Office Suite column, which appears in alternating issues of *OfficePRO*. They also are the authors of *Mastering Microsoft Office 2000*, *Mastering Microsoft Outlook 2000*, and *Microsoft User Specialist Study Guide*, published by Sybex Inc. They own TRIAD Consulting LLC, a software training and consulting firm based in Michigan (www.triadconsulting.com).

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