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**HEADLINE:** Tracking software helps companies make contact;  
Services monitor executive moves; tedious, pricey task made easy, cheap

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**BODY:**

As head of an executive recruiting and staffing firm, Richard Smith depends on his wide network of contacts at Fortune 1,000 companies. Keeping those contacts current was always hard, however, and hugely labor-intensive.

That changed about a year ago, when Mr. Smith's Manhattan-based firm, BigMoneyJobs.com, turned to Jigsaw.com, which provides up-to-date information on myriad purchasing officers, lawyers and executives--and everyone in between.

The California-based Web site is one of several new operations specializing in tracking the comings and goings of highly paid staffers within companies of all sizes. Others include LinkedIn, Spoke and Plaxo--all in California. To an extent, these firms compete with more traditional electronic outlets like Hoover's Online, a division of Dun & Bradstreet, which offers data on high-level employees at 44,000 private and public companies.

"My whole business depends on tracking leads," Mr. Smith says. "I use Jigsaw as an online directory when I need to go to a company and speak with someone at an appropriate level."

Time is money

he calculates that using Jigsaw has cut his staff's lead-tracking time by about a third, or 15 hours a week. That represents a significant savings for his firm, which has seven employees and sales of about \$3 million a year.

In the past, most entrepreneurs gathered widely available data from sources like phone books and corporate sites. Some spent thousands of dollars to rent databases, though most such services guaranteed just 50% accuracy. The new Web-based providers promise to do much better, mainly by having users do the work.

For instance, Jigsaw's 90,000 users can pay a basic monthly fee of \$25 for 25 contacts. But because Jigsaw runs on open-source data software, generally referred to as a "wiki," that allows users to collaborate on material presented, they can also add contacts, earning two names for every one they enter.

Additionally, users can earn points to buy more contacts by clicking on a "challenge" button and submitting a correction to inaccurate or outdated data. Points are deducted from the user responsible for the erroneous information.

"Our mission in life is to map every business contact on the planet," says Jim Fowler, Jigsaw's chief executive. He says that its database of 3.3 million contacts is about 85% accurate and that 12,000 names are added daily.

Jigsaw has been a real boon to companies like Conversagent Inc., a Manhattan-based provider of telephone service software.

"It provides us with great details like e-mail addresses and direct phone numbers that let us get a hold of key decision-makers," says Ernie Prospero, a strategic accounts manager at Conversagent.

One of the largest services is Spoke.com, which has 15 million contacts at 650,000 companies worldwide. The site is something of a hybrid: Like Jigsaw, it uses a wiki, but it also relies on published databases like Hoover's and information culled from corporate sites.

"The more means you have to access information, the better quality and quantity of information you will have," says Spoke.com CEO Frank Vaculin.

Unlike Jigsaw users, though, Spoke.com subscribers pay \$50 a month for unlimited use of the database.

#### Keeping up

not to be outdone by its younger rivals, Hoover's formed a partnership with networking firm Visible Path in late 2005. Hoover's executives insist that calls made with the introductions provided by their enhanced product are much more effective than cold calls. Users first get contact and company information from Hoover's. They then connect to Visible Path, which automatically maps relationships between the salesperson's company and businesses he or she wants to pitch.

On one end of the spectrum, subscribers can pay \$600 a year for Hoover's basic plan (not including Visible Path). On the other end, they can pay \$10,000 a year for up to five users to get ProPremium service. That provides access to Hoover's entire database, including corporate intelligence, organizational charts, and Visible Path.

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**GRAPHIC:** Art Credit: proverbial haystack: New services let firms pinpoint the appropriate contact.

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