

USING THE INTERNET FOR RESEARCH



Commercial, off-the-shelf (COTS) is a term for [software](#) or [hardware](#), generally technology or computer products, that are ready-made and available for sale, lease, or license to the general public. They are often used as alternatives to in-house developments.

The motivation for using COTS components is that they will reduce overall system development costs and involve less development time because the components can be bought instead of being developed from scratch. Many considered COTS to be the [Silver bullet](#) during the nineties, but COTS development came with many not-so-obvious tradeoffs - overall cost and development time can definitely be reduced, but often at the expense of an increase in software component integration work and a dependency on a third-party component vendor. The extra integration work and modifications often required have led to the joke that COTS really means *custom* off-the-shelf.

In Karl's article he said how I searched the Web for information on what applications are available to meet a specific business need. As everyone know, the internet contains just about everything, its how to get at it that sometime boggles the mind. I thought I might take this space this month to go over a few of the processes and tools I use to do research on the web.

First, search engines. Google (www.google.com) is the most common, Microsofts Live Search (www.live.com) is another good resource. And for some reason I still use Ask (www.ask.com), I started when it was Ask Jeeves and still continue to use it today. The thing with search engines is to know what to ask for. Lets say I was looking for applications that can help with keeping the books for a small business. If I enter "Book Keeping Software" it would return a vast number of resources to review but using "Small Business Book Keeping Software" will return a better set of items tailored more to my needs. Try and be a specific as possible at first and relax your search or reword your search as necessary.

Another type of tool out there is a "metasearch" engine, this type of tool allows you to search multiple search engines. I would recommend Copernic (www.copernic.com), they have a free agent you can download and install and I would highly recommend using it. The great part about it is that it saves your search and what it found so you can go back to it.

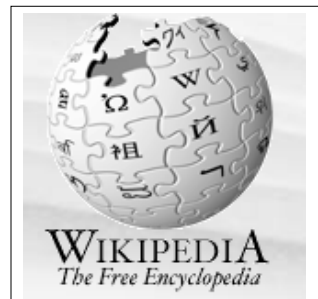
Trade magazines for your industry have multiple advertisements that can lead you to what you are looking for or what you could search for, leverage them. These are but a few of the tools that I use but these are the main ones. You do get better the more searches you perform. Have fun and try Copernic!

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Editors Note:

I have recently re-entered the regular business world as an Information Technology Director with a small organization. I have committed to Karl that I will continue to participate in this newsletter as the editor and as a contributor (largely because I really enjoy it). I have to apologize for not getting this out in January as I have been swamped learning my new position. I promise I will do better for our March 2008 issue.

Ted



Application service provider (ASP)

The need for ASPs has evolved from the increasing costs of specialized software that have far exceeded the price range of small to medium sized businesses. As well, the growing complexities of software have led to huge costs in distributing the software to end-users. Through ASPs, the complexities and costs of such software can be cut down. In addition, the issues of upgrading have been eliminated from the end-firm by placing the onus on the ASP to maintain up-to-date services, 24 x 7 technical support, physical and electronic security and in-built support for [business continuity](#) and [flexible working](#).

The importance of this marketplace is reflected by its size. [As of early 2003](#), estimates of the [United States](#) market range from 1.5 to 4 billion dollars. Clients for ASP services include businesses, government organizations, non-profits, and membership organizations.