

Know Your Data Broker

by Noah W - Friday, April 29, 2011

<https://www.searchbug.com/info/2011/04/know-your-data-broker-2/>

Much like the banking industry has procedure called "KYC" which stands for Know Your Customer - consumers, investigators and other users of data brokers should adopt a "KYDB" or Know Your Data Broker.

Tamara Thompson of PiBuzz.com really sums this up well. Her article includes a lot of information that has caused this industry to get a black eye. Just look at my blog about [reverse phone lookup scams](#) to see the details.

We all know when it's too good to be true it probably is however, when Tamara discusses criminal records I have to shed light on the fact that there really is no single repository for Criminal Records and not every county court reports the same criminal activity. We've also noticed that there are often disparities in what consumers think is in criminal records and what certain counties, states or federal criminal records include.

I also see a lot of disclaimers on instant criminal records and even we include a disclaimer, if only to manage consumer expectations since it's not possible to guarantee third party information (especially from the government). The only way to truly see what is included in a criminal record is know the county or the court where the conviction took place and to obtain copies of the actual case.

I want to also point out that some records are sealed, some counties and records only include convictions not arrests and if a case is still pending or the courts are behind at closing files it could take months or

longer before some records are included in online access. SearchBug offers [verified business users](#) access to the most comprehensive system of criminal records I've found and that is via RapSheets.

I agree with Tamara on most of this in her article, however, there is one thing I noticed about free information and even sometimes with paid information from the wrong source. Basically you get what you pay for. So if you are looking for free information or free public records be prepared to spend some time hunting down what's needed and then you may need to double check it. Published records are different from public records which can be different than "current" records.

It boils down to this: If you're just looking for an address or a phone number to conduct some marketing service or find a lost friend or family member the free searches may be fine. However, if you're trying to collect on a debt or conduct process service and you're sending a process server or sheriff to an address you found, you should make absolutely sure it's a verified current address.

There are only a few ways to make 100% sure an address or phone number you have is current for your subject. To verify correct current address, you can mail a certified letter with address service requested (about \$5 and change) and wait a month for the receipt or the correction service to come back, or you can hire a professional to conduct a real skip trace or a verified locate.

Obviously, I'm a bit partial to our [People Search USA](#) and we're upfront about what it includes in our effort to manage our customers expectations. We include all published records free and then we offer a premium service that shows what is available before customers have to make a decision to purchase. This is the key to knowing your data broker. When you conduct a search for an address or phone the web site should show you that some information was found.

Another way to test the service is to type in a phone number you know is invalid. If the service tells you that information is available even if the number is invalid, that's a sign to stay clear.

We include a sample report, tell you How to Search, what your Results will typically include, provide information sources and the cost of each search before you even get started. Our toll free phone number is clearly displayed on all our web pages and you can reach our customer service for help selecting the best search for your needs while keeping cost down and getting the right type of data.

See my next blog for a detailed report on how to spot a reverse phone lookup scam.

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