



Finding the Right Person on Social Media

An Industry eDiscovery White Paper from:

Social Evidence, LLC and Internet for Lawyers

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Introduction

The pervasive nature of social media has made it an extraordinary source of legal evidence today. As such, there is both a duty to preserve social media content and a need for lawyers to learn how to find relevant social media evidence to use in litigation. The five major social media sites today, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube, all have unique “flavors of information,” but are often used in varying ways. It’s important to understand the philosophy and the cultural differences between these sites, because this invaluable perspective will provide you the information you need to search and ***find the right person on social media.***

Unique Identifiers

When searching for people on social media, keep in mind that there are three primary “unique identifiers” for *most* social media accounts: **account name** (or nickname or pseudonym), **e-mail address**, and **mobile** (or land) **phone number**. In other words, in most cases an e-mail address and mobile phone number are associated with a unique person. Having one or all of these unique identifiers increases the probability of finding the right person. Account names are also unique; many people initially try their own name, such as *John Smith*, only to find it has already been assigned to someone else so they might adopt a variation of their name by adding their middle name or initial, for example.

To further confuse the issue, most social media sites will allow you to use your own name (*not* for your account name, but your “screen name”). That’s why you’ll see a lot of *John Doe* names when you search for John Doe. However, each John Doe also has a unique identifier, which will usually appear in the URL of the social media site page. For example:

- John Doe (Facebook): www.facebook.com/thejohndoe or www.facebook.com/johndoe419
- John Doe (Twitter): www.twitter.com/johndoefromtally or www.twitter.com/john_doe_123

Another potential unique identifier is the Facebook account holder’s *Facebook ID*. Facebook identifies account holders with a Facebook ID number, which is sequential: the first user to create a Facebook account has the number “1.”

It is not always easy to find, unless you know this simple trick: if you know your investigative target’s Facebook page, simply go to the target account’s Facebook page, right-click on their *Profile* image, click “Copy link address”, and paste it into a Word document. The long number at the end is the target account’s *Facebook ID* number.

https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10102454385528521&set=a.743613136151.2308566.4&type=3&source=11&referrer_profile_id=4 (Mark Zuckerberg’s Facebook ID number is “4”).

The *Facebook ID* number is useful if Facebook requires it when you subpoena them for “account information” (that is, who owns the account). This is important if the owner has used a pseudonym and you need to prove it’s their account. Facebook requires that you provide Facebook with your target’s email address *and* Facebook ID number; it is unclear if their vanity URL is enough, or if you need to include their actual Facebook ID number.

Major Social Media Sites

Each social media site provides an “advanced” search, where the user can enter specific search criteria and usually more than just a name. Included in this White Paper are the currently available search criteria for each of the above mentioned social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube). These change over time as the existing social media sites change their search criteria. Because not all of this information is documented on these social media sites, we used “creative research methods” to uncover many of these search criteria.

By and large, the information that is shared publicly via social media is all searchable, although the mechanics of creating that search may not be obvious. The amount of information you can see in your target’s profile depends on how your investigative target has set their *Privacy Settings*. If your target has set their *Privacy Settings* to be more restrictive or simply has not entered information, then you might only see little more than their account name and profile picture.

Regardless of the site, it is a good idea to view as much of the profile content as is available before you request it through discovery. Doing so, you may discover relevant content, which may improve your argument for social media discovery at a later time.

Facebook

Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>) is no doubt the most popular social media networking site, hands down. In June 2017¹, Facebook reported hitting more than two (2) billion monthly active users (MAUs). They also reported 1.32 billion daily active users (DAUs) on average. It is also reported that 75% of people with Facebook profiles use Facebook every day².

A few more interesting Facebook facts³: the average time spent on a Facebook visit is about 20 minutes. Every 60 seconds, 510,000 comments are posted, 293,000 statuses are updated, and 136,000 photos are uploaded. One more thing: it is reported that there are about 81 million *fake* Facebook accounts⁴.

With all the popularity of Facebook, privacy still boils down to the individual; users can configure their *Privacy Settings* so that even if your investigation target does have a profile, it may not turn up in search results.

One useful fact for investigative researchers is that most Facebook users create their profiles using their real names.

One useful fact for investigative researchers is that most Facebook users create their profiles using their real names. Another is that the information in their profiles might not be as “private” as they think, depending on the restrictions the user sets in their *Privacy Settings*. For more detailed information, see the *Facebook Privacy Settings* section later in this article.

¹ Facebook Newsroom: <https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>

² Zephoria Digital Marketing; July 6, 2017.

³ <https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>

⁴ Zephoria Digital Marketing; July 6, 2017.

Facebook Privacy Settings

Facebook changed its default Privacy settings from *Public* to *Friends* in May 2014; that is, for *new* accounts (*after* May 2014). Current users (*before* May 2014) would have to proactively change their own Facebook settings—not everyone did. Every Facebook user can edit their own Privacy Settings, accessible through **Settings / Privacy**. The following is a quick rundown of Facebook’s Privacy Settings:

Who can see my stuff?

- Who can see your future posts?
 - Public – anyone on or off Facebook
 - Friends – your friends on Facebook
 - Friends except – Don’t show to some friends
 - Specific friends – Show only to some friends
 - Only me
 - Custom
 - Cities you’ve lived in (and listed on Facebook)
 - Family (listed on Facebook and identified as family or relationship)
 - People with similar “status” (i.e., *Retired*)
 - Companies you’ve worked for (and listed on Facebook)
- Who can see your friends list?
 - Public
 - Friends
 - Only me
 - Custom
 - Cities you’ve lived in
 - Family
 - People with similar “status”
 - Companies you’ve worked for
- Limit the audience for posts you’ve shared (i.e., *Past Posts*) with *Friends of Friends* or *Public*? (Y/N)

Who can contact me?

- Who can send you friend requests?
 - Everyone
 - Friends of friends

Who can look me up?

- Who can look you up using the e-mail address you provided?
 - Everyone
 - Friends of friends
 - Friends
- Who can look you up using the phone number you provided?
 - Everyone
 - Friends of friends
 - Friends

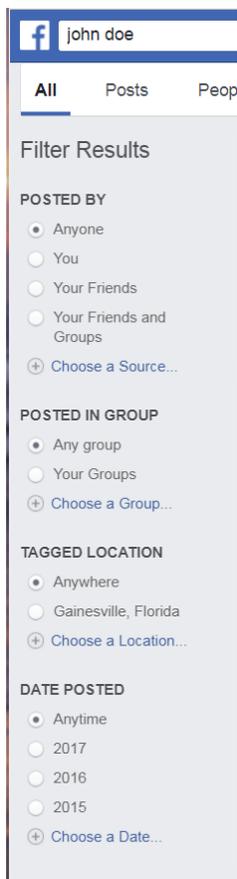
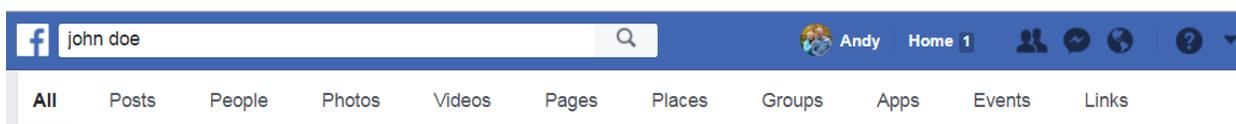
Do you want search engines outside of Facebook to link to your profile? (Y/N)

Search Facebook by Name, E-mail, or Phone Number

Conducting a simple name search, using the search box at the top of the Facebook screen will often turn up the profile of your target. This search box only appears if you are logged into a Facebook account of your own. It is no longer possible to search for users by name without being logged into your own account.

Unfortunately, relatively little documentation exists that explains the power of this search box. Most people think that they can only search by name. You can also use Facebook’s search box to enter the **e-mail address** or **phone number** of your target. There are also a number of other options available to search for a person’s account or to minimally verify that an account exists.

These searches can be very useful for finding your target, since e-mail addresses and mobile phone numbers are unique identifiers (while names often are not). However, Facebook users can use *Privacy Settings* to limit how their profiles can be searched. If your target has selected *Friends* or *Friends of Friends* for his or her *Who can look you up using the e-mail address you provided?* setting or *Who can look you up using the phone number you provided?* setting, and you are neither, your searches by e-mail address or phone number will not return any results. They will only work if your target has set the e-mail or phone look-up privacy settings to *Everyone*. It should be noted that even though Facebook explicitly asks for a mobile number, it is possible to use a landline phone when creating a Facebook account.



After you typed in your search, in the example above, “john doe,” Facebook Search displays two types of filters: the horizontal filter allows you to select what type of Facebook data to display (e.g., **All, Posts, People, Photos, Videos, Pages, Places, Groups, Apps, Events, and Links**); the vertical filter allows you to Filter by **Post**, by **Group**, by **Tagged Location**, or by **Date Posted**.

Search Facebook by Keyword

You can use Facebook’s search box to conduct **keyword searches** through *public posts*, but the results are hit or miss. Facebook appears to default to adding the AND Boolean connector between each keyword and in some of our test searches, retrieved results failed to contain all our keywords. The search box doesn’t appear to allow phrase searches (multiple keywords enclosed in quotation marks).

If you haven’t been able to find your target at Facebook by entering keywords about your target, you might have better luck entering keywords into **Google’s Advanced Search** page’s various search boxes (*all these words; this exact word or phrase; any of these words; or none of these words*) AND limiting your Google search results just to the Facebook.com domain.

Be aware that if the target account’s Facebook **Privacy Settings** “*want search engines outside of Facebook to link to [their] profile*” is set to “no,” these types of search engine searches will not return links to those profiles.

More Targeted Facebook Searching

Introduced in 2013, Facebook's *Graph Search* allows you to use the search box to create very targeted *conceptual* searches using natural language for information users posted to their timelines. It was originally meant for searches like *Friends who like to ski*, *Restaurants liked by my Friends*, or *Photos of [Friend's Name]*.

When searching Facebook for targeted accounts, you need to be logged into Facebook in order to use the Graph Search Tool, which will allow you to potentially find more information than if you are not logged in.

The Graph Search can also be used to create queries to locate background and investigative research information about any Facebook user – even those we are not Friends with or otherwise connected to.

When you begin typing in a phrase or a friend's name (or someone you're *not* friends with), Facebook displays prompts and suggestions that are automatically generated. These are personalized to you (based on your previous Facebook activities and searches). In other words, if you and your secretary each type in the same natural language search into your respective computers, s/he may see results different from yours.

No matter what you read or hear about this search capacity, there are always more types of conceptual searches available. In other words, experiment and just start typing in a natural language query, no matter how detailed or how absurd it may sound.

Facebook Graph Search Natural Language Queries (a Start)

Here's a starting list with examples of natural language queries for the Facebook *Graph Search*, based on the "type" of search.⁵

1. Find friends, groups, pages
 - a. Friends who live in Atlanta
 - b. Friends of John Doe who live in Atlanta
 - c. Friends who like Disney World in Orlando
 - d. Closed Groups joined by John Doe
 - e. Events attended by John Doe

2. Find interests, likes, photos
 - a. Photos of my friends
 - b. Photos of John Doe
 - c. Photos of John Doe's friends
 - d. Photos liked by John Doe
 - e. Photos of John Doe liked by Jane Doe
 - f. Photos of John Doe AND Jane Doe
 - g. Recent photos taken by John Doe's friends in Miami

⁵ <https://www.labnol.org/internet/facebook-graph-search-commands/28542/>

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3. Find hotels & restaurants
 - a. Restaurants in Denver liked by my friends
 - b. Hotels nearby liked by my friends
 - c. Bars visited by John Doe
4. Search for Facebook videos
 - a. Facebook videos liked by John Doe
 - b. Facebook videos posted in Atlanta
5. Find phone numbers
 - a. Type in the phone number to see results
6. Find people
 - a. People who work at Disney World in Orlando
 - b. People who are male AND live in Atlanta AND work at Delta Airlines
 - c. People who are accountants
 - d. People who are named Doe AND live in Atlanta

Examples

Here are a couple of example search queries for potential legal matters.

"Photos taken at Joe's Bar & Grille in Orlando during March 2016"

You may see a photo of a potential witness taken by someone else and posted on their public Facebook timeline. With luck, someone may have "tagged" them.

"People who checked into Yosemite National Park in July 2017."

You may spot a plaintiff who claims a workplace injury and cannot work, yet is climbing Half Dome at Yosemite.

After you enter one of these natural language queries, make sure you select the Category, such as **All** or **People** or **Places**. Otherwise, your search may come up empty. If there are a lot of search results, you can narrow your search by selecting one or more filters located on the left side of the screen.

You can also combine these natural language phrases together and add things like location, dates, times, interests which may provide a more targeted result. Note that the returned results are also dependent on the target account's *Privacy Settings*. If the target account is locked down, you may not find anything of value.

One thing to keep in mind is that the Facebook Graph Search is extremely powerful and may often return false positives. You have to dig a little deeper into the actual **Post** or **Photo** in order to determine if this really is the target Facebook account.

Another alternative to finding Facebook *People* information is **SearchIsBack.com**, which presents a series of search forms and drop-down options that help you formulate a targeted search, such as *All Males working at John Deere Named Kirby*. Note that you must be logged into your Facebook account to view these results.

Searching Facebook Live Video

In April 2016, Facebook introduced the *Facebook Live* video streaming capability that allows users to broadcast a live video to their *Friends/Followers* via Facebook mobile apps. The limit is 45 minutes and 1.75 GB of data. Unfortunately, you cannot create a *Graph Search* for past Facebook Live video streams.

If you are able to locate your target's Facebook Profile, you can browse through all of their posts and you might be able to view the old/completed *Facebook Live* videos they have produced depending on the target's overall *Privacy Settings*. Click on any that you can see to play the video and view the comments that viewers made during the live video. (Note that individual videos can carry different levels of sharing, e.g., *Public, Friends, Friends Except, Specific Friends.*)

Looking for potential video evidence? You can view all public Facebook Live videos currently streaming at <https://www.facebook.com/livemap/>. Clicking on any dot on the map allows you to view that video.

Alternative Method for Determining if a Facebook Account Exists

There is something of a work-around that allows you to determine whether someone has created a Facebook profile—or at least if there is a profile associated with (one of) their known e-mail addresses or phone numbers if they have hidden these from search. To do this, we exploit a feature of Facebook's own login page and its user verification process.

First, you need to be logged out of your own Facebook account. Once you are logged out, enter the known e-mail address or phone number of your target into the *E-mail* or *Phone* login box on the Facebook login page. (Note: Phone numbers are a login *option* because Facebook users are prompted for a phone number as part of the registration process.) You are not trying to gain access to, or hack into, the account (if one exists), so you will leave the *Password* box blank. Then click the *Log in* button.

By doing so, we're turning the login page into a *de facto* search page. If there is no Facebook profile associated with the e-mail address or phone number you entered, you will receive this message, "The e-mail [or phone number] you've entered doesn't match any account. Sign up for an account."

However, if there is a Facebook profile associated with the e-mail address, you will receive a different message: "The password you've entered is incorrect. Forgot Password?" The message will also include the name and primary photo associated with the account, so if you know what the target looks like, you will be able to verify that they probably have a Facebook profile. Then, through discovery, you can request their profile content with confidence.

This is also helpful in challenging individuals who claim not to have a profile. Oddly, if there is a Facebook profile associated with the *phone number* you've searched, you will get yet a different result. While the message will still read, "The password you've entered is incorrect. Forgot Password?", it will not include the name or primary profile photo associated with the account.

One caveat about this method however, is that Facebook has recently begun sending the owner of a profile you've searched this way an e-mail with the subject line "[Profile Owner's First Name], get back on Facebook with one click" and the message "It looks like you're having trouble logging into Facebook. Just click the button below and we'll log you in. If you weren't trying to log in, let us know."

How do you know you have the Right Person on Facebook?

How can you tell if you have found the right Facebook target account? After all, there is more than one Facebook user named *John Doe*.

First, you'll get more results if you are logged into Facebook using your own Facebook account. Here's where you need to do a little legwork and you need to know a few things about Facebook. Following the information provided in this White Paper, start your research with the three identifiers: *Name*, *mobile number*, and *e-mail*: you can enter these search criteria one at a time or all at the same time. The more information you have, the higher probability of finding the right person.

As you search and review the results, remember that while most people use their real names on Facebook, their Profile image may not be the best image to identify them. Many have their Profile image of kids, grandkids, pets, or of a life event. In other words, don't rely solely on the search result image.

If you don't have any of the *unique* identifiers (e-mail or mobile phone number), then the next "tier" search should contain location or experience information, such as where they may have worked. In our Facebook search experience, most people on Facebook enter information about themselves and their family in their Profile. If their Privacy Settings are not strict, then that data *may* be searchable and found.

If you are curious as to the type of data available, check your own Facebook account: look at your Profile ("About"), your Friends, Your Posts ("Timeline") and the "More" link.

Your **Profile** ("About You") information contains the following data (if you've entered all this information):

- Biograph Info
 - John Doe is a hard working engineer with the City of Atlanta
- Work and Education
 - John Doe works at City of Atlanta
 - John Doe graduated from Georgia Tech
 - John Doe attended Decatur High School
- Places You've Lived
 - John Doe currently lives in Atlanta, Georgia
 - John Doe's hometown is Decatur, Georgia
 - John Doe lived in Decatur, Georgia
- Family and Relationships
 - John Doe is married to Jane Smith Doe
 - Jennifer Doe is John Doe's daughter
- Life Events
 - John Doe started working at City of Atlanta in July 2004
 - John Doe graduated from Georgia Tech in May 2004

Your **Friends** information may contain the following data:

- All Friends
- Recently Added Friends
- New Posts (from your Friends)
- Birthdays (of your Friends who list that information)
- College (Friends who went to the same college(s) as you)
- High School (Friends who went to the same high school(s) as you)
- Current City (Friends who live in your Current City)
- Hometown (Friends who live in your Hometown)
- Following (Friends you are Following)

In addition, **More** information may be available from:

- Videos (Your Videos)
- Check-Ins (Places, Cities, Recent)
- Sports (Teams, Athletes)
- Music (Likes, Listen Later)
- Movies (Likes, Watched, Want to Watch)
- TV Shows (Likes, Watched, Want to Watch)
- Books (Likes, Read, Want to Read)
- Likes (Movies, TV Shows, Music, Books, Sports Teams, Athletes, People, Restaurants, Apps and Games)
 - Movies liked by John Doe
- Events (Past)
- Reviews
- Groups (Public)
 - Groups that John Doe belong
- Instagram (Recent Photos)
 - Instagram photos posted by John Doe
 - Instagram photos liked by John Doe

Additional Facebook Search Tips

- “Like” locations that you think your target may frequent, especially those locations that upload pictures from different events. You may see an image of someone you are looking for. And, there may be a chance that someone “tagged” them (with their Facebook name) or commented on the image—an added plus.
- Groups may be more of interest if your investigative target is a witness or potential juror—it may provide insightful information regarding their personality, beliefs, and interests.
- Besides the normal “Photo Albums” that Facebook users create and upload, Facebook also automatically creates several additional albums including: Videos, Instagram Photos (if you share your Instagram photos with Facebook), Timeline Photos, Profile Photos, and Mobile Uploads.
- Family members may also be a key to finding someone. If you know the target is married, has kids, or grandkids, perhaps you can use the Graph Search Tool to search for them, then look through their Facebook accounts to see if there’s a link relationship to your target.
- Ditto for friends; if you know the target’s friends’ names, try searching for those and look through their Facebook accounts to find information about your target.
- Facebook users that married after creating their Facebook account may still use their pre-marriage name; if you know that information, include it in your search.
- Whatever you do while searching target Facebook accounts, do NOT ever “like” an image or a post. You are using your own Facebook account and that little “uh-oh” moment may come back to haunt you.

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Facebook's Timeline Search Tool

Imagine if you will.... In a galaxy far, far away.... Somewhere you remember seeing a Post on your Facebook Timeline.... And, you think you remember the Year.... But, you don't want to take the time to scroll down through all those years looking for that one particular Post.

Now, imagine this.... if you could go directly to the Year and, *if you remember*, the Month of that Facebook Post, you wouldn't have to scroll through all those years of Posts. Believe it or not, Facebook has that ability to take you directly to the Year and the Month on your Timeline.

How do you get there? Simply login and go to your Facebook account and to your own Timeline (that's NOT the Facebook "Home" button, it's the "Name" button as shown below.



Scroll down a little to get past your Profile & Cover photos and you'll see the *Timeline Search Toolbar* magically appear. Two dropdowns: one gives you the ability to select your *Timeline* or your *About* page; the second provides you with the ability to select the *Year*.

Once you select the Year, Facebook scrolls directly to the last post of that year; note also that another drop down selection appears: All Posts, Activity Log, or the Month. Now, just scroll down until you find that particular Post.



And, if you're looking through your client's Facebook Timeline (with their permission and credentials, of course) for relevant information regarding their legal matter, you don't have to look through all their "stuff." Just select the Year and the Month, and scroll through that narrower memory lane. It's really that simple.

What if you're looking for specific information about a potential witness or juror, whom you are NOT friends with on Facebook? Does this apply to them, too? In a word, "YES," but only if their *Privacy Settings* are public.

Twitter

Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>) reportedly has more than one billion registered users, about 328 million MAUs, and about 100 million DAUs.⁶ More than 67 million Twitter users are based in the United States. It is also reported that about 15% of Twitter accounts are fake.⁷ About 500 million tweets are sent daily and 81% of millennials check Twitter at least once per day.⁸

Twitter limits posts (known as “tweets”) to just 140 characters. Twitter is referred to as a microblogging site. Twitter and other microblogging sites are even easier to update than the “traditional” social networking sites. Twitter posts often address the answer to the question “What’s happening?” and can include detailed information about the individual poster’s daily activities. To express themselves beyond the 140 character limit, users post links to longer, news stories and current events and commentary. Reviewing their posts, and other information in their profiles, can reveal important indicators of an individual’s interests, points of view, or even political leanings. This information can be very useful to attorneys conducting juror research when preparing for *voir dire*, for example.

If you’re not logged into an account, the link to Twitter’s simple search form has been banished from the site’s home page. However, you can still conduct searches without being logged in, but you will need to use this direct URL: <http://twitter.com/search-home>. There, you can keyword search through the millions of individual tweets.

Those *not* logged into an account can use Twitter’s Advanced Search page to create more sophisticated, specific searches by using this direct URL: <https://twitter.com/search-advanced>.

Twitter’s default Boolean connector for simple searches is AND, but the site also recognizes the OR connector, keyword phrases (by surrounding the phrase with quotation marks), and the ability to exclude a word or phrase by using the same syntax as when searching with Google (the minus sign). The Advanced Search page includes numerous Boolean search options, similar to Google’s Advanced Search page, to locate tweets with *All of these words*, *Any of these words*, *None of these words*, and *This exact phrase*. You can “mix and match” the search options on the *Advanced Search* page to create more targeted searches.

Those not logged into an account can also use Twitter’s Advanced Search page to create more sophisticated, specific searches by using this direct URL:

<https://twitter.com/search-advanced>.

Entering an individual’s name into the search box on the simple search page or the *All of these words* box on the *Advanced Search* page will yield a set of *Top People* results. These results can include accounts that utilize a pseudonym but do not make direct reference to the owner’s real name.

⁶ “Number of monthly active Twitter users worldwide from 1st quarter 2010 to 2nd quarter 2017 (in millions),” statista (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/>)

⁷ “Up To 15% Of Twitter Accounts Are Fake, Study Finds,” ZeroHedge, Tyler Durden, March 13, 2017, <http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2017-03-12/fake-friends-15-twitter-accounts-are-bots-not-humans-study-finds>

⁸ “100+ Social Media Statistics You’ll Want To See (2017),” Blue Corona, Betsy McLeod, April 25, 2017. <https://www.bluecorona.com/blog/social-media-statistics-2017>

For example, entering *Michael Ausiello* into the search box on the simple search page yields two accounts for TV critic Michael Ausiello: his own Twitter account (with the user name of *@MichaelAusiello*), as well as the official account for his Web site TVLine.com (with the user name of *@TVLine*). Even though Ausiello's name is not mentioned in the description of the *@TVLine* Twitter account, it appears that he must have used it when creating the *@TVLine* account.

Other results for our *Michael Ausiello* search include various inactive accounts and one (*@LaurenEHlems*) using "Michael Ausiello" as its Profile Name/Headline. As you sift through your results list, remember that many people may share the same name. So be sure to match other descriptive or identifying information about the person for whom you're searching with your search results (e.g., their photo, their location).

Farther down the *Advanced Search* page, in the *People* section, you can use search options to locate tweets: *From these accounts*, *To these accounts*, or *Mentioning these accounts*. The *People* heading for this section can be a bit misleading because you cannot search by a person's real name. Instead, to get good results in the *People* section, you need to search using the "user name" that an individual tweets under. Many people use a pseudonym as their screen/user name for their Twitter accounts.

It's often easy to uncover the pseudonyms under which your target tweets, by simply searching for your target by their real name in the *All of these words or This exact phrase* field boxes on the *Advanced Search* page because many will have used their real names to create their Twitter accounts. While these people were probably not trying to hide their true identities, it's not always this easy to uncover a pseudonym when someone is trying to hide their identity. Also, consider that a person may use the same screen name on multiple online services. Identifying a screen name at Twitter can be useful in tracking that person's activity across multiple social media sites (or vice versa—find their pseudonym at another online site they use and try using it at Twitter).

Some people might actively hide their identity by creating a Twitter account using a false name and e-mail address when they register and use a pseudonym for their Profile Name/Headline and user name. If someone creates their Twitter account using a false name and also uses

a pseudonym as their user name, it's probably impossible to identify this person's account without a court order to determine additional information about that user (e.g., connection location, IP address).

If someone creates their Twitter account using a false name and also uses a pseudonym as their user name, it's probably impossible to identify this person's account without a court order to determine additional information about that user (e.g., connection location, IP address).

Twitter's *Advanced Search* page also includes a *Dates* section. The *Dates* search can be used in conjunction with other search criteria on the *Advanced Search* page to create more targeted searches. For example, you could search for tweets *From these accounts* (searching by user name), with *Any of these [key]words*, and limit the *date range* during which the tweets were posted. Our test searches have been able to retrieve tweets back as far as 2009 from a specific account that included a specific keyword using this method.

Performing Precise Geographic Searches Using Twitter's Simple Search Box

All Tweets contain geographic location data embedded in them. While this location information is not displayed for a tweet unless the user opts-in to do so, the geolocation information is still stored by Twitter as part of the tweet.

Twitter's "secret" geographic search instruction is *geocode*:. To create a search using it, you must enter this instruction into Twitter's simple search box followed by the latitude and longitude of the location you want to use as your center point, like this:

```
geocode:latitude,longitude
```

Luckily latitude and longitude coordinates are easier to find than you might think. They can be located by doing a **Google Maps** (<http://maps.google.com>) search for the location you're interested in identifying.

For example, we can enter **Isotopes Park Albuquerque, New Mexico** into the search box on Google Maps' homepage to retrieve a map showing the venue's location.

```
place/Isotopes+Park/@35.0697244,-106.631294,17z/data=!3m1!
```

You can copy the **latitude** and **longitude** coordinates for the venue embedded in the URL of the results page (*35.0697244,-106.631294*), to create a geographical search in the search box on Twitter's simple search page, like this (note, no spaces):

```
geocode:35.0697244,-106.631294
```

The above search will retrieve results (tweets) only from that *specific* geographical location. You can expand the radius of the search by adding a proximity variable, like this:

```
geocode:35.0697244,-106.631294,1mi
```

This new search will return tweets sent within a one mile radius of the geographical point you defined in your search. This is especially useful for those who may be looking for public Tweets centered around a public event or even perhaps an automobile accident.

The default results list will display the Top tweets that match the location you've entered. You can also click to see the Latest *tweets*, as well as *Photos*, *Videos*, or *People* who also meet your location criteria.

You can further limit your search to a specific date range by including Twitter's date-limiting instruction, like this:

```
since:YYYY-MM-DD and until:YYYY-MM-DD
```

A combined location, radius, and date search would look like this:

```
geocode:35.0697244,-106.631294,1mi since:2017-02-01 until:2017-02-09
```

This new search will return tweets sent between February 1, 2017 and February 9, 2017, within a one-mile radius of the geographical point you defined in your search.

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You could also add specific keywords to your search, like this one looking for tweets within a one mile radius of Isotopes Park in Albuquerque, between February 1, 2017 and February 9, 2017, that include any (or all) of the keywords auto, car, truck, accident, or crash:

*auto OR car OR truck OR accident OR crash geocode:35.0697244,-106.631294,1mi since:2017-02-01
until:2017-02-09*

You could also search for tweets from a particular user at, or near, a specific location, but you must know their Twitter username. To retrieve all tweets sent by user *@MarkRosch* within a two-mile radius of Isotopes Park in Albuquerque, you would structure your search this way:

from:MarkRosch geocode:35.0697244,-106.631294,2mi

All Twitter search results lists are displayed in reverse chronological order.

Instagram

Instagram (<http://www.instagram.com>) is a social networking site focused on sharing images and video. Instagram has over 700 million MAUs, 50% of whom use Instagram daily and 35% of them reported they look at Instagram several times a day. Instagram users share an average of 95 million photos and videos every day and they “like” 4.2 billion posts daily.⁹

Users can also record and share fifteen-second videos. Because Instagram started out as a mobile app, the Web site actually feels a bit like an afterthought—with very limited functionality.

While Instagram has added more search capabilities over time, they are still not as robust as other social networking sites we’ve discussed. However, you must be logged into your own Instagram account to be able to search from their web site.

You can use the search box at the top of the Instagram site to search by *keyword, username, hashtag, or place of interest*. Displayed results are broken into two categories – *Top Posts* and *Most Recent*. There are currently no options to filter the results (e.g., by date, by user).

By default, all photos posted to Instagram are public. Users can also make their accounts private, so that only people who follow them on Instagram will be able to see their photos. If they have made their profiles private, their photos are not returned in search results.

Searching on a mobile device

Since Instagram is primarily a mobile application, you’ll find more powerful tools on your mobile device than on www.instagram.com.

For example, tapping on the Search bar will display:

- Top suggestions (i.e., all of the suggestions below)
- People suggestions (i.e., other users on Instagram)
- Tags (i.e., Hashtags)
- Places (i.e., Location Tags)

While you can search on the Instagram website, the major difference is that you can’t search for keywords by categories (like “people” or “tags” mentioned above). A simple workaround is to add “@” when searching for people or “#” when searching for hashtags.

Search results will be different for different Instagram users (remembers, you’re logged into *your* Instagram account when searching). Search results are based on a variety of factors, including those people you follow, who you’re connected to, and what photos and videos you have “liked” on Instagram.

⁹ “18 Instagram Stats Every Marketer Should Know for 2017,” SproutSocial, Maddy Osman, August 2, 2017

Additional Tips

If an Instagram user has their privacy settings turned on, they *may* share photos or videos to another social network (i.e., Twitter, Facebook, etc.). If that user shares an image from their “private” Instagram account to **Twitter** or **Facebook**, that image may be visible on that network and the link will be active. In other words, the photo will be publicly accessible by anyone who has access to that direct link.

Now that it is owned by Facebook, *mobile* Instagram users can also easily upload the same photos to Facebook, as well as Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr. However, not everyone who posts to Instagram chooses to post on these other social media sites—they may just want to keep it in the Instagram family, so to speak.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>) can also be used by attorneys in much the same way that they use other social networking sites to find missing people and obtain background information. Because LinkedIn is considered a “professional networking social media site,” those using LinkedIn want to be found—thus, people tend to use their real names. This makes the LinkedIn site an ideal tool for finding people.

In early 2017, it was reported that LinkedIn had 313 million users, of whom more than half (187 million) visit in a given month¹⁰.

Those using LinkedIn want to be found—they tend to use their real names. This makes the LinkedIn site an ideal tool for finding people.

LinkedIn also claims that executives at all of the Fortune 500 have profiles on the site and that more than two million companies have LinkedIn Company Pages. The average user spends 17 minutes on LinkedIn every month. LinkedIn also boasts more than 3 million active job listings.¹¹

You can search LinkedIn members without having a LinkedIn account of your own (or without being logged into your own profile), using the *Name* search boxes at the bottom of the home page. However, without being logged into your own LinkedIn account, you will only be able to view an abstract of the information included in an individual’s profile. Even when you are logged into your account, though, you might not see much more because individual profile owners can set their LinkedIn *Privacy Settings* to control the amount of information that people to whom they are not directly connected can see.

However, when you are logged into *your own* LinkedIn account, your search options expand beyond just a name search. Using the search box in the upper left-hand corner you can conduct keyword searches to search for *People*, *Posts*, and *Companies*, among other types of information.

The LinkedIn search box recognizes the OR and NOT Boolean connectors; the default Boolean connector is AND. Like Google, these Boolean connectors must be capitalized for LinkedIn to recognize them as connectors. If you are logged into your own LinkedIn account, you can access advanced search features by clicking into the search box and selecting the *Search for people with filters* option at the bottom of the drop-down list. You can use these advanced search features to create more sophisticated searches (e.g., for individuals who have worked [or perhaps still work] for a company you are researching).

Tabs across the top of the subsequent page allow you to filter the results list by type:

- People
- Jobs
- Posts
- Companies
- Groups
- Schools

¹⁰ Statistic Brain Research Institute, *LinkedIn Company Profile and Statistics*, February 2, 2017, available at <http://linkon.in/2l9dugx>

¹¹ “LinkedIn By The Numbers: 2017 Statistics,” Meenakshi Chaudhary, April 5, 2017.

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Each of these tabs brings up a different set of *Filters* on the right-hand side of the page that you can use to further narrow the results.

One important caveat: Of all the major social/professional networks, LinkedIn is the only one that, by default, alerts its users about who has viewed their profile.

When you are logged into your own account and view the profile of another user, LinkedIn will report your name, title, employer, and geographic location (from your profile) to that user as someone who has viewed his or her profile.

Luckily for searchers who do not want to leave a trail, LinkedIn gives you the ability to turn this option off. To do so, click the *Me* drop-down menu (under your profile picture in the upper right-hand corner of your profile) and click on *Settings & Privacy*.

On the subsequent screen, click the *Privacy* tab at the top of the screen, and then *Profile viewing options*. You can then choose from two levels of anonymity. You can opt to leave just private profile characteristics (e.g., Someone at Tulane University); or you can opt to be completely anonymous, leaving no trace of your identity when you visit the other user (e.g., Anonymous LinkedIn Member).

Note that when others view your LinkedIn profile, the highest level of information you get about their visit to your profile will be the same level of information you have opted to leave about yourself (even if visitors have selected to leave a higher level of information about themselves).

Of all the major social/professional networks, LinkedIn is the only one that, by default, does alert its users about who has viewed their profile. Luckily for searchers who do not want to leave a trail, LinkedIn gives you the ability to turn this option off.

YouTube

YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>) is a free video sharing web site where anyone can create and upload their own videos to share with others or view the videos created and shared by others. Because the site is meant to publicly display and share video, you can search it without having an account of your own.

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From its launch in 2005, YouTube has grown into one of the most popular sites on the Web, with an estimated 1.3 billion users. More than 300 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute and YouTube visitors watch approximately 3.25 billion hours of video every month.¹² Google acquired YouTube in 2006.

The search box at the top of the YouTube homepage allows you to search the site's billions of videos by keyword.

Just as with Google, there are a number of specific search operators and instructions you can use in the search box to narrow down your search results. For example, you can limit your search to:

- an exact phrase by enclosing your keywords in quotation marks (e.g., *"street racing"*)
- a specific time range by including the instructions *hour, today, month, week, year* along with your keywords

To search for videos involving *street racing* that were *posted within the last month* you would enter it into the YouTube search box this way:

"street racing", month

(note that you *cannot* define a specific time frame like 2 months or 5 years)

After you conduct a search, a *Filters* button also appears between the search box and your results list. Available filters include:

- Upload Date
- Type
- Duration
- Features
- Sort by

Note that there are no name or location-based search options offered in the filters.

You can, however, enter a target's name into the search box as a keyword (or phrase). In order to be displayed in search results, their name has to be included in the title or description of a video, or in the name of a YouTube channel. (Note that there can be some false positives for these types of searches)

¹² Statistic Brain Research Institute, *YouTube Company Statistics*, September 1, 2016, available at <http://linkon.in/2kT5fEZ>

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where videos are returned in the results even where the name you've searched does not appear in the title or description. This can occur when the name does appear in the title or description of an associated video (e.g., one that is next on a playlist or is recommended in the right-hand side bar). You can eliminate some of these false positives by instructing YouTube to limit your keyword to appear only in the title of returned search results by using the *allintitle* search instruction this way:

allintitle:"Mark Rosch"

You can also use the *allintitle* instruction with keywords and phrases that are not proper names, such as:

allintitle:"street racing"

The *allintitle* instruction must be all lowercase. There is no space between the colon and the keyword(s) that follow it.

You cannot search for a YouTube user by username or the e-mail address a user used to create their account.

Combining Results from Individual Social Media Sites

Finding the Right Person on social media is not always easy, but with the tools and suggestions offered in this White Paper, the task is not impossible. Keep in mind several key points, mentioned earlier:

Facebook

- Most Facebook users create their profiles using their real names. Many female Facebook users also include their maiden name in their user name, in order to be found by classmates.
- It is no longer possible to search for users by name without being logged into your own account.
- Facebook's *Graph Search* allows you to create very targeted *conceptual* searches of the information users post.

Twitter

- You can conduct searches without being logged into Twitter, but you will need to use this direct URL: <http://twitter.com/search-home> or <http://twitter.com/search-advanced>.
- Our test searches using people's real names have turned up many of the pseudonyms under which they tweet, when those people have used their real names to create their Twitter accounts.
- All Tweets contain geographic location data embedded in them. While this location information is not displayed for a tweet unless the user opts-in to do so, the information is still stored by Twitter as part of the tweet.

Instagram

- You must be logged into your own Instagram account to be able to search the Instagram web site.
- By default, all photos posted to Instagram are public. Users can also make their accounts private, so that only people who follow them on Instagram will be able to see their photos. If they have made their profiles private, their photos are not returned in search results.

LinkedIn

- Because LinkedIn is considered a "professional networking social media site," those using LinkedIn want to be found—thus, people tend to use their real names.
- You can search LinkedIn members without having a LinkedIn account of your own (or without being logged into your own profile), using the *Name* search boxes at the bottom of the home page. However, without being logged into your own LinkedIn account, you will only be able to view an abstract of the information included in an individual's profile.
- Of all the major social/professional networks, LinkedIn is the only one that, by default, does alert its users about who has viewed their profile. Luckily for searchers who do not want to leave a trail, LinkedIn gives you the ability to turn this option off.

YouTube

- Because YouTube is meant to publicly display and share video, you can search it without having an account of your own.
- Just as with Google, there are a number of specific search operators and instructions you can use in the search box to narrow down your search results.

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- There are no name or location-based search options offered in the filters.
- You cannot search for a YouTube user by username or the e-mail address the user used to create the account.

Learn to use some of the data you've uncovered in one social media site to search another and continue that search pattern until you've found the information you sought.

Conclusions

We hear it time and time again: "I can't find out if this person has a social media account. There's no information available to search." But, is that *really* the case, or do you have bits and pieces of information scattered throughout the file?

Most of the time, you have a name; whether it's a real name or not may not necessarily be a barrier. Sometimes, you have location or a phone number or an e-mail or a family member or any number of additional pieces of information. Independently, they may not be worth that much, but together, you may have the information you need to start finding the right person on social media.

In most cases, social media sites require three pieces of information in order to create an account: a Name, an e-mail address, and a mobile phone number. Not everyone uses their real names on social media, especially if they want to remain anonymous. However, most Facebook users create their profiles using their real names. Most LinkedIn users use their real name, primarily because LinkedIn is a professionals' social media network. Instagram & Twitter users are not as likely to use their real names.

E-mails and mobile phone numbers are like "digital social security numbers" on the Internet and social media networks tend to side with privacy—in other words, the default is to opt out of sharing this information; the user must "select" their privacy setting in order to allow others to see this information.

Facebook is currently the most widely used social network on the planet and also has the most data and functionality. That said, Facebook also provides the most extensive set of search tools, much of which is not documented or obvious. One thing we've learned in our research is to try working through a "tiered-down" search, starting with Contact information, then working our way through Education, Work Experience, Family, and Interests.

This is the kind of information you can use to create your searches or determine whether you have found the right profile and you sift through the posts. The more initial information you have about up front about the investigative target and by using the search methodologies presented in this White Paper, the greater the probability you have of *Finding the Right Person on Social Media*.

About Social Evidence®

Social Evidence® is a cloud-based application developed for the legal profession. It is designed to quickly and accurately collect, organize, analyze, and authenticate information from specific social media sites for named accounts and provide relevant information to courts in a repeatable, admissible, and legally-defensible format.

The primary purpose is to assist legal professionals with a more efficient method of collecting and evaluating social media information as part of a litigation matter. The analysis and advanced analytical tools assist the attorney to organize the data with searching and filtering functions to more easily pinpoint relevant information specific to the matter.

Social Evidence is built on the Microsoft Azure platform, providing a scalable, high performance solution that works for the solo practitioner equally as well as the large firm attorneys and their staff. The analytical tools provided with MS Azure as well as a unique licensing arrangement with the Institute of Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC) allows the attorney to take advantage of concept mapping, natural language processing, and machine intelligence. Using advanced, state-of-the-art Visual Analytics, Social Evidence provides legal professionals with a stunning representation of social media data in a variety of views.

Andy Adkins is the Chief Information Officer of Social Evidence. He was previously the CIO at a large law firm based in West Virginia and former IT Director of UFLaw. He has been actively involved as an *independent* legal technology consultant since 1989 and has personally consulted with more than 300 law firms. He previously established the Legal Technology Institute at UFLaw.

He is a former two-term Chair of the ABA TECHSHOW (2000, 2001) and former co-chair of LegalTech Conferences 2000-2008. He is a former Trustee with the College of Law Practice Management and has written several books on legal technology. He has written several books, including ***The Lawyer's Guide to Practice Management Systems Software*** (2009) and ***Computerized Case Management Systems*** (1998), both published by ABA Law Practice Management Division.

About Internet for Lawyers

Since 1999, Internet For Lawyers has provided law firms, corporations, and local and state Bar Associations around the country with professional and entertaining turn-key CLE programs. The company focuses on delivering information about free investigative and background research resources available on the Internet. Since 2015, its CLEseminars.com division has provided law schools, and local and state Bar Associations around the country with professional and entertaining turn-key distance CLE programs.

Our live continuing legal education programs focus on teaching legal professionals how to use the Internet and technology to practice law and research more efficiently and cost effectively. For these courses, we have also developed comprehensive custom-written materials.

Prior to founding Internet For Lawyers, company President Carole Levitt has more than 20 years of extensive and diversified experience in the legal field as an attorney, Internet trainer, law librarian, and as a law school faculty member. Since starting the company, she has presented hundreds of seminars teaching legal professionals the advantages of conducting investigative, legal, and business research via the Internet.

Internet For Lawyers clients also have the benefit of Vice President Mark Rosch's 20 years of traditional marketing experience. Prior to co-founding Internet For Lawyers, he was head of a major cable television network Public Relations department. In addition to co-presenting with Levitt, he manages Internet For Lawyers' web site.

Levitt and Rosch have been internationally recognized CLE seminar speakers—full-time since 1999 and best-selling ABA Law Practice Division authors. Their areas of expertise are: Internet investigative, legal, and social media research; social media ethics; Google search; and Google cloud Apps.

Together, Mark and Carole have authored hundreds of Internet research articles and co-authored six ABA Law Practice Division books, including *Google Gmail and Calendar in One Hour for Lawyers* (2013); *Find Info like a Pro*, Volumes 1 and 2 and *Google for Lawyers: Essential Search Tips and Productivity Tools* (2010). They have also co-authored fourteen editions of IFL Press's *The Cybersleuth's Guide to the Internet*. Carole recently authored *Internet Legal Research on a Budget*.

In 2013, they were both recipients of the "Fastcase Fifty" award, recognizing "50 of the smartest, most courageous innovators, techies, visionaries, and leaders in the law" and in 2014, they both became Fellows in the College of Law Practice Management, the international honor society that recognizes distinguished law practice management professionals.