

Desktop Search tools are like having a search engine on your personal computer. But don't worry, they do not share your computer's content with anyone - the search results are for your eyes only. The way it works is by indexing everything on your computer and creating a search engine for your own PC, pretty much like Google does on the Internet.

Once you have a Desktop Search application installed, it finds all of your Outlook emails, instant message logs, browser history, text files, Word and Excel documents, and PowerPoint presentations, and makes them searchable right from your own computer. If you are a Windows Vista user, you don't need extra software since desktop search is built into the operating system. For everyone else, there's Windows Desktop Search and it's free to download and install.

Other popular vendors of free desktop search tools include Google (<http://desktop.google.com/>), the even more robust Copernic (www.copernic.com/en/products/desktop-search/features.html) or leading fee-based ones such as X1 (<http://pro.x1.com>) – in fact, Yahoo gave up its free desktop search tool and now refers to X1. Copernic and X1 allow for more filetypes to be searched and create more compressed index files than Google or Windows, which may save you disc space.

Once installed, desktop search applications create an index of your files that allows you to search by filename and document contents, at a minimum. You will be surprised how much information you already have but have not been using!

This is a very powerful way to search through the countless folders of resumes and email messages most recruiters have stashed away in their PCs. When I first used desktop search, I tested it by trying to find a file I had created about six years ago and had been frustrated with being unable to locate it on my computer. Miraculously, it found that old file within seconds. The problem was I had somehow stashed it away in a folder buried deep within a bunch of other folders. Because I didn't remember the name of the file, and the keywords inside this document were fairly common, a search of my PC using the regular Windows search was just not able to locate it. I was impressed.

Another sweet feature is the ability to scan through all of my emails. Lately, I have been reconnecting with old friends and candidates, and in trying to recall where we last left off our conversation, I find it very useful to do a quick Desktop Search and find all the emails to or from them.

Throughout the years, I have created and collected a massive amount of spreadsheets from all the research I have done. Many of them include email addresses of company personnel, and other useful information. The spreadsheets are the raw data that I use to build an organization chart of a company I've been targeting. With desktop search, I can now very quickly locate scattered tidbits of information I already have, making it possible for me to use all these varied sources in a collected effort that allows me to paint a picture of a company I'm targeting.