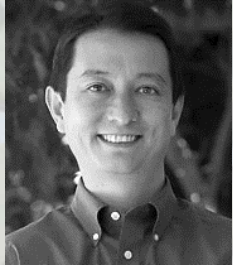


Hot Sauce! Secret Sauce for Entrepreneurs



About The Author

Akira Hirai is the founder and CEO of Cayenne Consulting, a firm that has helped hundreds of entrepreneurs prepare for the fund raising process by crafting strategies, business plans, financial forecasts, and pitch decks.

Akira started two technology companies in Silicon Valley during the dot com bubble. His previous experience has spanned investment banking, management consulting, software engineering, and sales management. He earned his A.B. in Engineering Sciences at Harvard University.

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Plug Yourself In

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It's vital to stay on top of developments in your marketplace: you need to know about new trends, new data, and new developments with customers and competitors. Here are four quick tips for staying plugged in:

1. **Google News Alerts:** You can have Google scour the web and e-mail you automatically whenever it spots new content of interest to you. Begin by visiting <http://news.google.com>. Click on the link for News Alerts along the left edge of the screen. This takes you to a screen where you can add a specific search term or phrase, specify what sources you want Google to watch (e.g., news sites, blogs, general websites, videos, or discussion groups), the frequency with which you want to receive alerts, and the email address where you want the alerts delivered. You can set up as many alerts as you wish: for example, you could set up one alert for "Microsoft," one for "Paul Allen," and one for "Silverlight." You can easily manage or edit your alerts: from <http://news.google.com>, just click on the [click here to manage your alerts](#) link.
2. **Google Reader:** Google also has a very customizable tool for aggregating the latest content from your favorite news sites and blogs. Begin by visiting <http://reader.google.com>. If you don't have an account, click on "Create an account" and follow the simple instructions. Once you have an account and log in, click on the "Add a subscription" button and enter a search term. The website will display a list of content feeds to choose from – just click on the Subscribe button to add the site to your personal Google Reader.
3. **Alltop:** Alltop calls itself an "online magazine rack" of popular topics. It's an aggregator of hand-selected resources organized by topic. For each topic, the site lists the five most recent headlines from each source. If you hover over a headline, a preview of the content pops up. The topics covered range from the mainstream ("music") to the niche ("ham radio"), and from serious ("venture capital") to fun ("fantasy football"). If Alltop covers an area that is of interest to you, it's worth a quick daily check to find out what's new. To get started, visit <http://www.alltop.com> and enter a term in the Search Topics bar. Alltop automatically remembers your favorite pages for quick access the next time you visit.

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4. **Firefox:** All browsers allow you to set a custom home page. Likewise, most modern browsers allow you to open multiple web pages in separate tabs. Some browsers like Firefox allow you to specify multiple home pages – each one opens up under its own tab. To do this, open up Firefox and load all of your favorite pages (like <http://reader.google.com> and <http://innovation.alltop.com>) under separate tabs. Then select Options from the Tools menu. Under the Main section, just below Home Page, click on the “Use Current Pages” button. The next time you start up Firefox, all of your favorite pages will be pre-loaded.

Here’s a bonus tip: Google has another fairly obscure but very useful tool called **Google Notebook**. The tool, available at <http://notebook.google.com>, allows you to create separate notebooks for different topics or projects, and you can share your online notebook with colleagues. You can search through your notes in a snap, and you can easily add labels and comments. Finally, you can download and install the Google Notebook extension for Firefox that makes it a snap to save and annotate clippings from various online sources. The Google Notebook is a fantastic way to save and organize your favorite finds from sources like Google Reader and Alltop.