



ADVISOR REVIEWS—STANDARD REVIEW

TechCrunch and CrunchBase

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Composite Score: ★★ 1/2

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Abstract

TechCrunch and CrunchBase provide free up-to-the-minute news and funding information on startup companies and their people and products. TechCrunch's content is written by writers, columnists, and contributors, while CrunchBase's is primarily crowd-sourced. Both provide a wealth of information difficult to find freely available. CrunchBase also provides downloadable data via a fee-based commercial or noncommercial license.

Pricing Options

Both TechCrunch and CrunchBase are free Web sites. CrunchBase also, however, provides free and fee-based licensed downloads of their data through several products; Excel Exports, Open Data Map (ODM), and Application Program Interface (API). Commercial and noncommercial licenses are available. CrunchBase reports that pricing is \$85,000 for a commercial license and Excel Exports and API are only available with a paid license. The ODM is free for commercial and noncommercial use (The CrunchBase Data Hub, 2015).

Product Description

TechCrunch and its accompanying site, CrunchBase, provide up-to-date startup company news, events, and data; a self-described "leading technology media property, dedicated to obsessively profiling startups, reviewing new Internet products, and breaking tech news" (About TechCrunch, 2015). TechCrunch, a Web site/blog on steroids was started in 2005 by Michael Arrington (in his garage) in order to share breaking news on startup companies in the United States and

around the world. In 2010 the company was acquired by AOL. Content includes news, video news stories, events, and job listings and are written by columnists and contributors.

Sister site CrunchBase, a crowd-sourced database started in 2007 also by Michael Arrington, provides news, events, and funding data on over 800,000 startup companies including on pre-IPOs (initial public offerings) and acquisitions. It can be accessed via the link at the top of the TechCrunch home page (see Figure 1) or at <www.crunchbase.com> (see Figure 2). CrunchBase provides downloadable access to their data (companies and people) through their Data Hub, but most of this information is fee-based. CrunchBase became an independently funded company in late September 2015, breaking away from AOL, although TechCrunch retains editorial oversight (Lunden 2015).

The intended audience of TechCrunch and CrunchBase is anyone interested and involved in the startup industry and those seeking information on innovative people, companies, and products. From a library standpoint, interested patrons may include investors, entrepreneurs, business students, and others who are looking for information on start-up companies, people involved in the industry, startup event information, and reviews of tech products, gadgets, and apps.

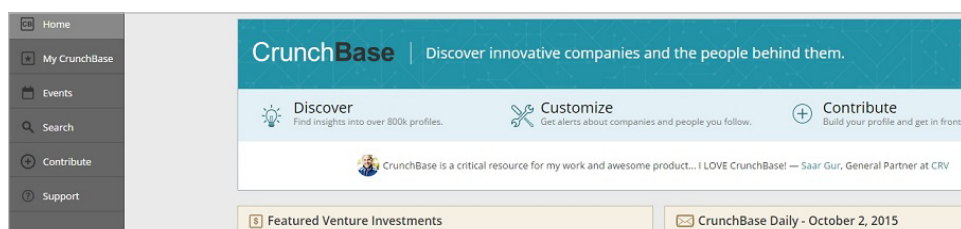
TechCrunch apps are available for Apple, Android, and Windows and can be followed on various social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flipboard, and StumbleUpon, amongst others. CrunchBase can be followed on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook.

No particular technology requirements are needed to view the Web site content, including the TechCrunch videos. The Web site works

FIGURE 1 Link to CrunchBase on TechCrunch Home Page



FIGURE 2 CrunchBase Home Page



equally well on IE, Firefox, and Chrome browsers. No particular version of these browsers appears to be required to view the content.

Critical Evaluation

TECHCRUNCH

Interface & Content

TechCrunch's initial page has a lot going on, but is well organized. Searchers can either scan the page, choose from several drop-down menus (News, Video, Events), or use the basic single search box at the top of the page to locate information. Under the News dropdown are topic channels that include the categories of Startups, Mobile, Gadgets, Enterprise, Social, Europe, Asia, Crunch Network, and Unicorn Leaderboard. Each of these pages has a similar format to the homepage with highlighted videos and recent articles. Under Video are shows called TC Cribs, Bullish, Crunch Report, CrunchWeek, Fly or Die (new tech products and gadgets), TC Gadgets (product reviews), TC Interviews, and TCTV News. These are short, running on average six minutes or less. Under Events are TechCrunch hosted events as well as news coverage on other high tech events such as Google I/O, CES, SXSW, and WWDC. TechCrunch hosted events include Disrupt (TechCrunch Disrupt), Startup Battlefield (startup competition), Crunchies (awards), TechCrunch Meetups, International City events, Hackathons, and Include. Include is a one-year program that allows social enterprises that apply and are accepted to the program, with assistance and connections.

The Unicorn Leaderboard mentioned above under News is worth special note. This is a list of companies that have reached a \$1 billion post-money valuation. This can be difficult information to find and great to find in one place. The board provides the opportunity to sort companies by post money value, valuation change, total equity funding, country, and market/industry.

The initial TechCrunch page also offers job listings and the ability to follow individual TechCrunch staff writers. Links to TechCrunch newsletters with free subscriptions are provided on the right side of page and include TechCrunch Daily, TC Week-in-Review, CrunchBase Daily, TC Startups, TC Mobile & Apps, TC Asia, and TC Europe. Articles, videos, and other information are written and provided by TechCrunch columnists and contributors. News is updated throughout the day. Near the top of the page, next to the TC logo, is a link to provide a news tip. At the bottom of this initial page is also a large section providing recent funding data, provided by CrunchBase.

TechCrunch's content is well organized and fills a need for up-to-the minute information on startups and their activities. It is easy to get mesmerized by the news and funding information on companies, apps, and Web sites that you might encounter and use every day or discover new companies and products. It would be great if they provided some educational or learning tools such as explanations of what "unicorns" are and how different types of funding work with startups, although this is a minor criticism. Additionally, the "crunchy" terminology is a bit jargon-y—all things are crunchy rather than descriptive and so it can be confusing to those out of the crunchy tech-speak loop. Nonetheless, this is incredibly useful information for entrepreneurs, high-tech startup patrons or those interested in the field, and business researchers and students.

Searching

The site's search function is fairly straightforward. There is a single search box that provides for a basic initial search by product, company, or person and the ability to refine results by date, content type,

author, category, and tag. The results page looks somewhat similar to a typical database, although with some advertising, and not all the bells and whistles found in a fee-based database. Relevant articles and reports appear first alongside a tab that provides the list ranked by latest articles. There is no ability to download results.

For example, a search on the company Uber Technologies resulted in 25,518 results, a hardy number. The results contained global information. Relevancy appears to be ranked higher than date and so the first result was from two years ago, but a quick scan of the page showed many recent articles and included such titles as "India Proposes Legal Guidelines for Ridesharing Apps Like Uber and Ola" and "Uber Expands Cash Payments to Indonesia As It Continues SE Asia Push," going back to at least 2008. For a free resource, the search features are quite good and allow for some refinement of results. There is the ability to narrow results by date range and other criteria such as content type (articles, videos). The results list also provides the number of results by author, category, and tag. While TechCrunch does not provide tools for articles to be saved, printed, or downloaded, the articles are shareable via various social media tools such as StumbleUpon and Twitter and e-mail.

CRUNCHBASE

Interface & Content

CrunchBase's content focuses on startup companies and includes funding details not usually easily found. CrunchBase's landing page has a basic search box at the top and a left navigation bar offering the ability to use an advanced search. An area called My CrunchBase allows a space for users with an account to follow companies. Other information on the initial page includes a list of featured venture investments, daily news, companies that are trending by page views, featured exits of companies (those recently acquired by others and amount), top startup news, and upcoming tech events.

CrunchBase company profiles include basic information such as headquarters, description, founders, timeline (for example, IPO or acquisition by another company), current management team, funding rounds, investments, company Twitter feed, board members and advisors, products, investors, locations, competitors, past management team, events, and news. News is from sources around the Web, such as The Verge, PC World, and Bloomberg. Additional information includes where the current management team previously worked, and where the past management team members now work.

Complementing the company profiles, CrunchBase also contains people profiles. These profiles include biography, current and past jobs, board and advisor roles, investments (e.g., seed, venture), Twitter feed, education, event appearances, and news from tech news sources around the Web such as Tech Republic, Tech.Co, The Verge, and the Wall Street Journal's Digits tech news.

A valuable additional resource of CrunchBase is their Investor Leaderboard which ranks investors by number of investments and exits. Ranking can be further refined by funding stage, investing region, and time range. A significant amount of information is provided on these investors and includes investor details, list of investments, team information, board members/advisors, competitors, and news.

CrunchBase's focus on the startup industry is unique and their content is quite good. Most information, except for the news and news feeds, is crowd-sourced, so this creates concerns of potentially inaccurate information, but there is editorial oversight from TechCrunch. A benefit of crowd-sourcing is that it can provide for very current information. The flipside is that some companies' information is sparse

due to a lack of contributors (although this was rarely found) and there may be a concern with inaccurate information. Overall, however, the content is great for a free resource and worth exploring by those interested in the startup arena.

Searching

A single search box exists at the top of the page, but the advanced search, provided on the left sidebar, allows for searching by key word and then filtering by type such as companies (with advanced filters), investment firm/group, school, group/association, person, and product. If the company filter is chosen, further filters provided include date founded, location, category, funding type (seed, angel, etc.), funding amount, and acquisition. Category acts as somewhat of a keyword industry search. It is a bit mysterious with no dropdown menu to choose from, but once a searcher begins to type in a term, such as “fashion,” suggested terms appear. It is unclear if this is a controlled vocabulary or just what contributors choose as a category. Search results are not downloadable.

For example, a search on Uber resulted in the Uber company profile as the first result (the actual company name is Uber Technologies and a search on that name resulted in no results) and then companies with similar names listed below. Clicking into the company result takes the searcher to the company profile page that provides an overview, timeline, followers, and contributors as well as the ability to contribute to the profile. The overview provides acquisitions information, funding received (\$8.21B in 13 rounds from 53 investors; rounds and investors are highlighted and link to more information), headquarters, number of employees, board members and advisors, products, competitors, and, surprisingly, worldwide news from a variety of sources including, the Press Telegram, The Atlantic, My San Antonio, and the Calgary Herald amongst others.

Searchers can also generate a list of companies by several criteria, a feature often useful to entrepreneurs and other business researchers. For example, a search on “fashion” as a category and “seed” as funding type provided a significant list of results (no results number is given). The first few results were Wantering, BaubleBar, Bitinstant, DSTLD, and the RealReal. These were not alphabetical and not by funding date, so it is unclear of their ranking criteria.

Like TechCrunch, CrunchBase’s searching is okay and the results are surprisingly robust given this is a free resource, however, there are some quirks. If you click into a search result and then try and go back, your original results list is no longer available and you have to re-run the search. Additionally, ranking criteria is not clear. However, these are minor concerns given the rich information provided and the relative ease of use.

Contact Information

TechCrunch

410 Townsend Street
San Francisco, CA 94107
<<http://www.techcrunch.com>>
<<http://www.crunchbase.com>>

Downloaded Data

CrunchBase provides data downloads, but unfortunately, it is not easily available due to restrictions and cost. CrunchBase’s Data Hub offers OPM (Open Data Map), Excel Data Exports, and REST API. The OPM is free and provides access to a spreadsheet with basic company and people information. The Excel Export consist of an updated monthly spreadsheet (downloadable) that includes venture-backed companies, funding round details, investor details, and acquisition details. The REST API is primarily for developers and programmers and was not reviewed. Information on how to access the datasets and some information on licensing is available at <data.crunchbase.com/v3/page/accessing-the-dataset>, although it is not entirely clear what is free based on information on this page. Through several e-mail interchanges with CrunchBase, it was discovered that a license is required for commercial and noncommercial use. Noncommercial use includes academic research, student class projects, journalist/writer research, government agency analysis, and nonprofit industry research and one would assume that this access would be free, although their support implied it was not. No access was provided to the Excel Exports for review even after several e-mail exchanges. Their support reported that a commercial license was an astounding \$85,000/year. Noncommercial use requires filling out a form indicating intended use of the dataset. This is required for all datasets including the free ODM. Usually, they respond via e-mail within a few days.

The free ODM CSV zip files reviewed contained organization and people information. The organization file contained basic information on over 300,000 companies, such as name, URL link in CrunchBase, homepage, twitter feed, address, and description. The people file contained over 48,000 names with Facebook, LinkedIn, and CrunchBase profile links. These files lacked dates, so it is unclear what time frame was being reported.

Customer service

The CrunchBase Support page is good and easily accessible via a link on the sidebar of the CrunchBase home page. This page discusses how to set up a user account, how to follow companies, and how to add content with very clear explanations and screen shots. Another useful resource for information and updates about CrunchBase is their info@CrunchBase blog. Unfortunately, attempts to contact CrunchBase and ask about licensing and data were very difficult and met with short replies requiring subsequent e-mails.

COMPARISON TO OTHER PRODUCTS

Similar sites to TechCrunch and CrunchBase exist but with slightly different focuses and content. VentureBeat <<http://venturebeat.com>> and market intelligence site, VB Profiles <<https://www.vbprofiles.com>>, are somewhat similar to TechCrunch and CrunchBase, but with focus on the tech industry and with less robust content. Geek Wire <<http://www.geekwire.com>> provides news with a focus on the Pacific Northwest. Gigaom <<https://gigaom.com>> has news but its main offering is fee-based market intelligence. Pando <<https://pando.com>> also provides news but is very sparse in content. Startup Xplore <<https://startupxplore.com>> focuses on helping startups with funding opportunities and gaining exposure.



TechCrunch and CrunchBase Review Scores Composite: ★★★★★ 1/2

The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.

Content: ★★★★★

Content is difficult to find elsewhere, particularly funding information on pre-IPO companies. Content is updated continuously.

User Interface/Searchability: ★★★

Easy to find and browse information, but searching could be more refined.

Pricing: N/A

This is predominately free, but if users want access to downloadable data it is quite expensive.

Contract Options: N/A

Contract Provisions

TechSource and CrunchBase are free and available to use without creating an account. It was not possible to see a license agreement from CrunchBase's Data Hub.

Authentication

No authentication is necessary for TechCrunch and CrunchBase, although to add content to CrunchBase or to follow companies, a user must set up an account. To do so, users must sign-up using Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter and must agree to the terms of service and privacy policy. The Terms of Service includes requirements for contributing to CrunchBase, such as providing accurate information and being fully responsible. Users also agree to grant CrunchBase nonexclusive, irrevocable, royalty free, perpetual, world-wide license to content provided and agree to requirements for attribution (CrunchBase Terms of Service, 2014).

Access to CrunchBase's Data Hub products requires filling out a form indicating the intended use of the product. CrunchBase will e-mail the free ODM CSV files to the user. For the Excel Exports and API a license agreement is required.

References

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About the Author

Louise Mort Feldmann is Coordinator of the College Liaison Unit and Business Librarian at Colorado State University where she has been since 2005. She has an A.B. degree in Economics from the University of California, Davis, and an M.L.I.S. from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. Currently, she is also serving as Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect of ALA-RUSA-BRASS (Business Reference and Services Section). ■