

FINDING AND USING GOVERNMENT DATA

A. Todd Muhleman

Manager, Strategic Planning/D&R Analysis

The ChemQuest Group, Inc.
Cincinnati, Ohio

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There has traditionally been an enormous amount of information disseminated throughout the Federal Government that is of great value to members of the adhesives industry. The difference today is that instead of having to order CD-ROMs or hardcopies with dated material, the Internet has made quickly getting “real time” government data a reality.

As was the case before the Internet, knowing what is available and where to look is still the key to a successful search. Although there has been some improvement over the years in centralizing searches across all government agencies with sites such as fedstats.gov and firstgov.gov, it is generally better to target searches to an agency’s website directly.

Valuable data for the adhesives industry are contained in numerous government agencies including three that are highlighted in this article:

- Census Bureau
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)

The Census Bureau is the place to look for adhesives production as well as analogous data for other end use or competing industries (mechanical fasteners). The Census Bureau maintains two reports containing adhesives data. One report is from the “1997 Economic Census - Manufacturing Sector” (<http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/97ecmani.html>). The Economic Census is taken every five years so the next one will be the 2002 Economic Census scheduled to be published in 2004. The second report is the “Annual Survey of Manufacturers” (<http://www.census.gov/mcd/asmhome.html>) that has annual data for the value of product shipments including a breakdown by product classification.

Reports are listed according to the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) which has supplanted the older U.S. Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system you may be more familiar with. The old SIC number for adhesives is 2891, while the NAICS number is 325520. The Census Bureau also includes the government data on construction including building permits, housing starts, characteristics of new housing, and much, much more.



The Bureau of Labor Statistics maintains the Consumer and Producer Price Indexes, the CPI and PPI respectfully (<http://www.bls.gov/data/sa.htm>). When using the CPI or PPI it is important to understand what each of them measures. “The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers” (CPI-U) is the index widely reported in the press. It is supposed represent the change in prices for all goods and services purchased for consumption by urban wage earners. As with all indexes the value is not in the number of the index (all of the indexes base years are set to 100), but the percentage change of the index.

The PPI, unlike the CPI-U, is a measure of the prices producers sell their goods for, not the cost of the goods to purchaser, as it is in the CPI. In other words, the CPI has the perspective of the buyer, while the PPI takes the perspective of the seller.

While there is some value in the overall CPI and PPI numbers, the real value is that the Bureau of Labor Statistics site allows one to pick an item that makes up the index and track the changes in price for that one item. Here is an example showing the relative change in price for structural adhesives since 1997.

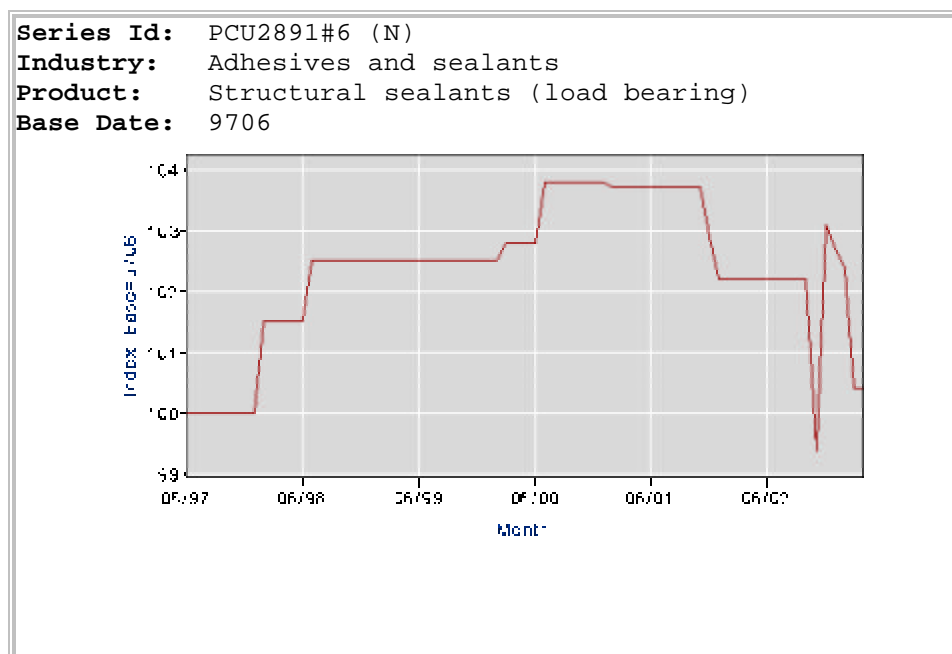


TABLE 1: Price Index Structural Adhesives 1997-2003

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
1997	100	100	100	100	100	100	100						
1998	100	101.5	101.5	101.5	101.5	101.5	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5	101.9
1999	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5	102.5
2000	102.5	102.5	102.8	102.8	102.8	102.8	103.8	103.8	103.8	103.8	103.8	103.8	103.2
2001	103.8	103.7	103.7	103.7	103.7	103.7	103.7	103.7	103.7	103.7	103.7	102.9	103.6
2002	102.2	102.2	102.2	102.2	102.2	102.2	102.2	102.2	102.2	102.2	99.4	103.1	102.1
2003	102.7	102.4	100.4	100.4									

Finally, when doing competitive intelligence the SEC is the place to find documents from firms that must file with the Securities and Exchange Commission. The interface (<http://www.sec.gov/edgar/searchedgar/companysearch.html>) on the SEC's EDGAR (Electronic Data Gathering, Analysis and Retrieval) now makes it much more user friendly. In the past, searches were difficult unless one knew how to structure them properly. The output was also difficult to decipher with form names such as 20F, 8K, 10Q. Each search now has an interface allowing a search by company name, state, SIC, and other criteria. The output of the search now gives a description of the document, such as a 10-K as an annual report.

There are additional government sites that are of great value not highlighted here. These include the Patent and Trademark Office, the Environmental Protection Agency and each of the branches of the Federal Reserve Bank. Take the time to understand what each government site has and its place in relation to the information sought; this will help properly target searches.

Hopefully the information provided here will make searching for government data easier and, consequently, more useful in strategic planning and/or competitive intelligence. Don't take this as a definitive guide, but rather a base to grow your skills for searching for government data.



About the Author



A. Todd Muhleman

**Manager, Strategic Planning/
D&R Analysis**
The ChemQuest Group, Inc.,
an international strategic management
consulting firm specializing in the
Adhesives, Sealants and Coatings industries,
headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Todd joined The ChemQuest Group, Inc. in 1998 after receiving his MBA from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. As Manager of Strategic Planning, he maintains up-to-date profiles on major industry participants as well as targeted value chains in the Coatings, Adhesives, and Sealants industries. He also holds a B.B.A. degree in Finance and Management from the University of Cincinnati. Contact Todd at tmuhleman@chemquest.com

Questions or request for additional copies of this paper may be directed to the author at:

**The ChemQuest Group, Inc.
8150 Corporate Park Drive
Suite 250
Cincinnati, OH 45242**

**(513) 469-7555
(513) 469-7779 – FAX**

www.chemquest.com

