

Overview of Search Optimization

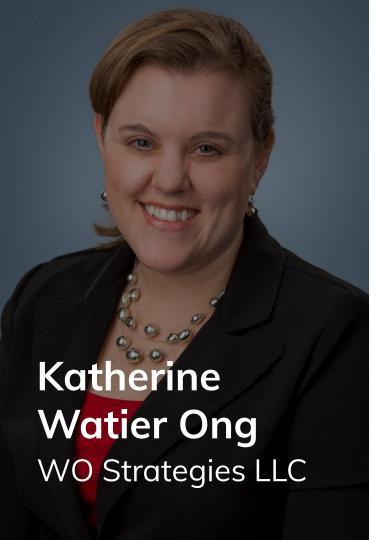
May 2022

What you're going to learn today

- How search engines find + present your brand to searchers
- Why creating personas, following the 4 "rules" and measuring is critical to online marketing success
- How human engagement with your brand impacts your brand's search visibility
- How Google personalized to you and what it knows about you.
- What organic discovery will look like in the future.







- Built first website in 1994.
- I've lost sites due to too much traffic (to EWG.org for 4 days, but still 1.2 million visits up from 300K)
- Helped NYer's get registered on the NY Health Exchange
- Pivoted search query volume toward electronic health records for HealthIT.gov, and
- Helped Cancer.gov grow from 1.5 million to nearly 5 million searches/mo.

Brands Katherine Watier Ong

has worked with



















































What is SEO?

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to your online assets through organic search engine results.



Setting an SEO Strategy

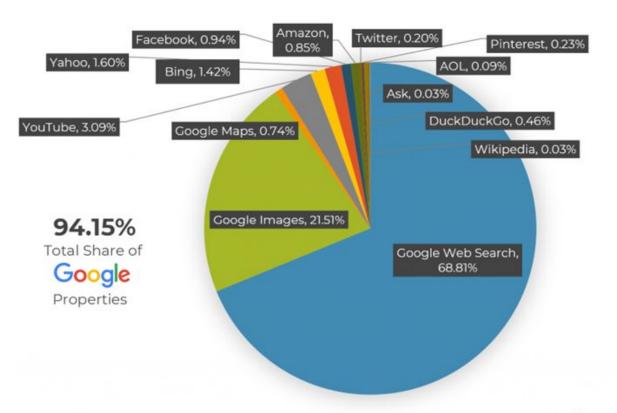
- 1. Understand your target audience, your business goals.
 - Create data driven personas, search intent research, and customer journeys.
- 2. Check to see if you follow the "Rules." Do an audit and fix issues.
- 3. Implement changes based on user data:
 - Adjust all content and promotions based on personas, journeys, and data.
 - Improve search engine result page (SERP) click through rate (CTR) & on site engagement. Test.
 - o Check/measure on site usability. Fix.
- 4. Keep reading search updates and adjust based on search engine changes.



Search Engine Market Share | Q1 2019

(based on 230B+ browser-based queries across 10M+ mobile & desktop devices, January-March, 2019)

All online activity leads to Google



FACT:

91% of content earns no Google traffic



The Elements of SEO Success

- 1. Understand the marketing platforms
- 2. Follow the "rules"
- 3. Be user focused
- 4. Stay up to date

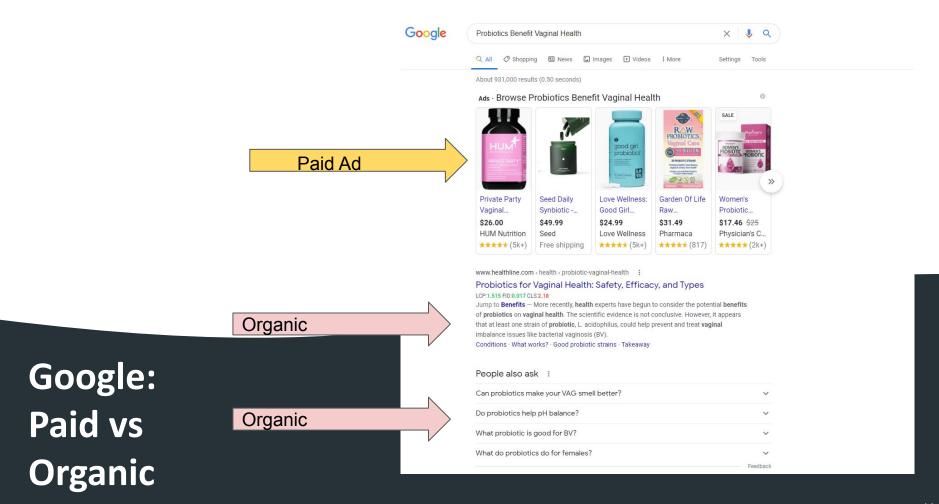


SEO Success #1:

Understand the Platforms

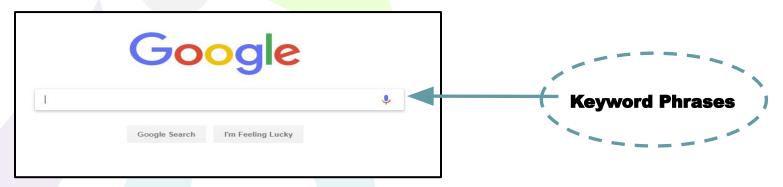
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Search Engines 101:

Google and Bing create their listings automatically. They use "spiders" or "bots" to "crawl" links to web pages and other files. They extract entities. They then add it to their index.



The search engine is focused on serving <u>relevant</u>, <u>fresh, high quality</u>, content that Google thinks matches the <u>searcher's intent</u>, <u>journey</u> & <u>is personalized to the user</u>.







Q: How many ranking factors?

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Possibly 5 million ranking factors

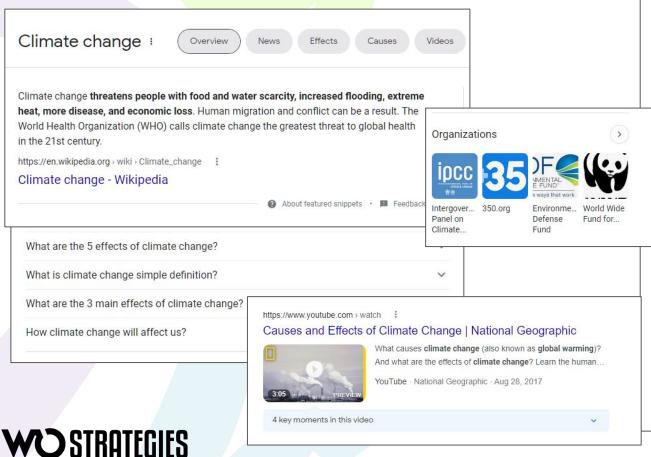
Some weighted more than others. We know only a portion.

Factors change per keyword.





More Than 10 Blue Links





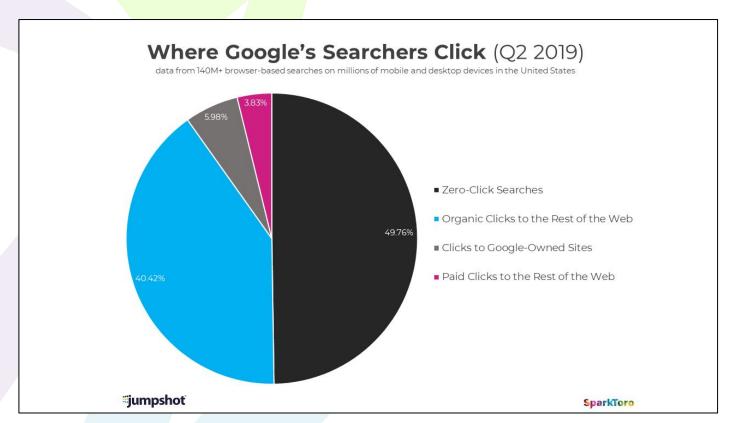


60% of Google searches are mobile



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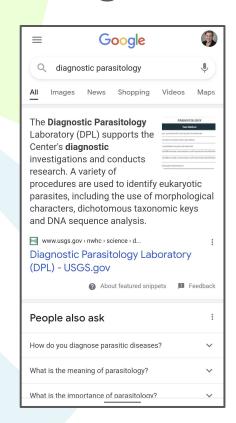
Only 40% of Searchers Now Click on Organic





Mobile = Decrease in Organic Clicks











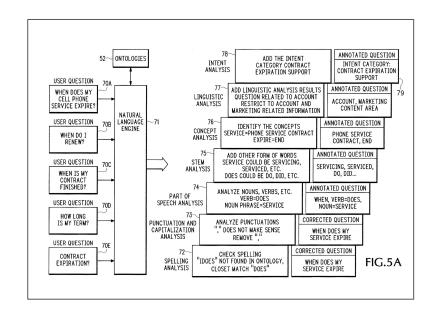
FACT:

Google delivers content based on the searcher's journey



Google: An Intent Engine

From the Google patent: An intent based search engine classifies multiple different unique queries into common "useful" intent categories.



"Intent beats identity. Immediacy trumps loyalty." - Google's VP of Marketing,

Lisa Gevelber





It takes 10 minutes to understand your intent

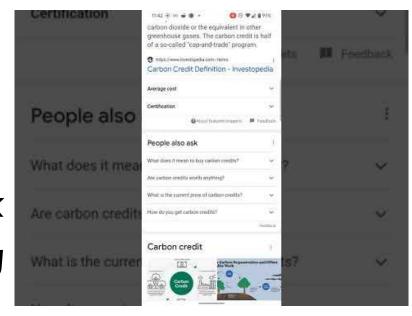
- rentals
- gorgeous locations
- flowers
- vow ideas
- officiant
- tuxedos





Intent is Everything

This is why it's critical to look at the SERPs before selecting + writing to topics

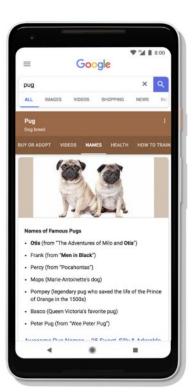


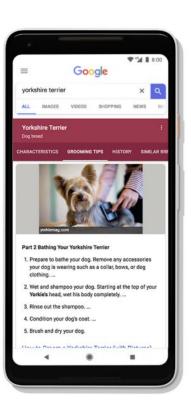


Google Also Understands Topics

"We've taken our existing Knowledge Graph—and added a new layer, called the Topic Layer

...to deeply understand ... how interests can develop over time as familiarity and expertise grow."





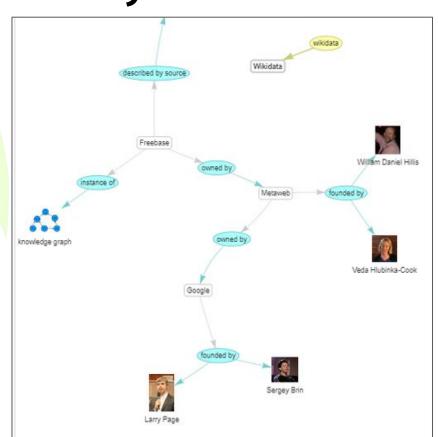


Their Knowledge Graph is Key

Google's Knowledge Graph:

- Entities are placed in relation to one another
- Each entity has attributes
- The entities are set in a thematic context or an ontology.
- Was build off existing databases (and schema) and is now improved with ongoing search queries.



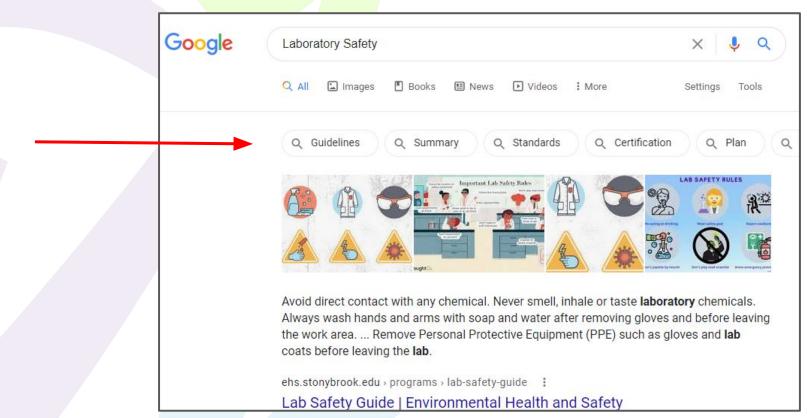


How does this impact Organic Discovery?



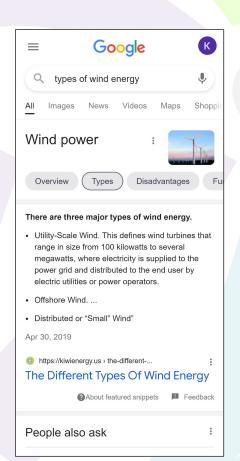
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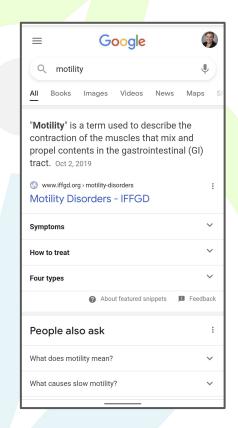
Topics in Search





Filtering in Search Results









Takeaways

- Google uses Knowledge graph and SERP behavior to form topics and subtopics
- Sites need to feed the Knowledge Graphs
- Sites that create content based on user journeys, entities, and markup will increase exposure



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Bing in 2022

- 3.04% of search volume globally (6.58% in the US).
- BUT powers <u>41%</u> of voice answers
- Relies on formatting, annotates your content prior to indexing.
- Uses social signals and CTR in its ranking.
- Using ML and topical understanding
- Other <u>SEO tips here.</u>



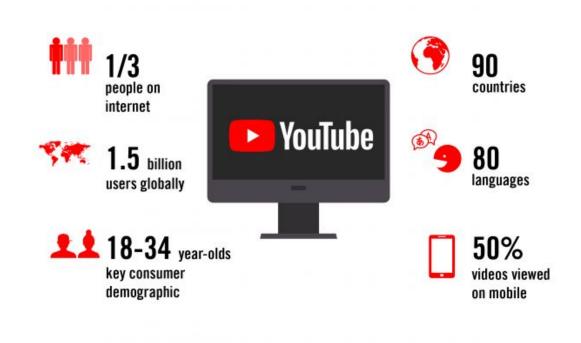




2nd largest search engine

3rd most visited site globally

YouTube Users

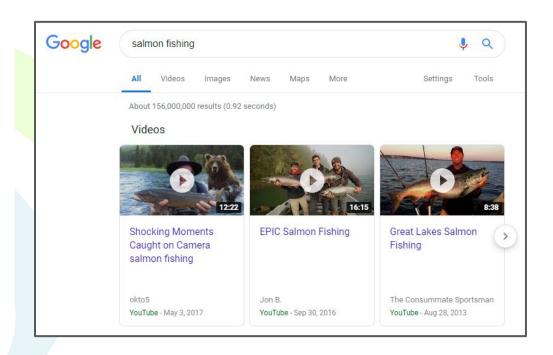




Video Discovery = YouTube Optimization

How are videos discovered?

- Google universal search tab (94% are YouTube videos)
- Google "video" tab (YT videos, but can be video from a website)
- Direct YouTube discovery







SEO Success #2:

Follow the "Rules"

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Generaly how do you rank #1 in Google? **WO**STRATEGIES **@KWATIER**

Ranking in Google

- 1. Discover
- 2. Crawl
- 3. Index
- 4. Render
- 5. Rank (Intent Match + Engagement)

These are technical SEO



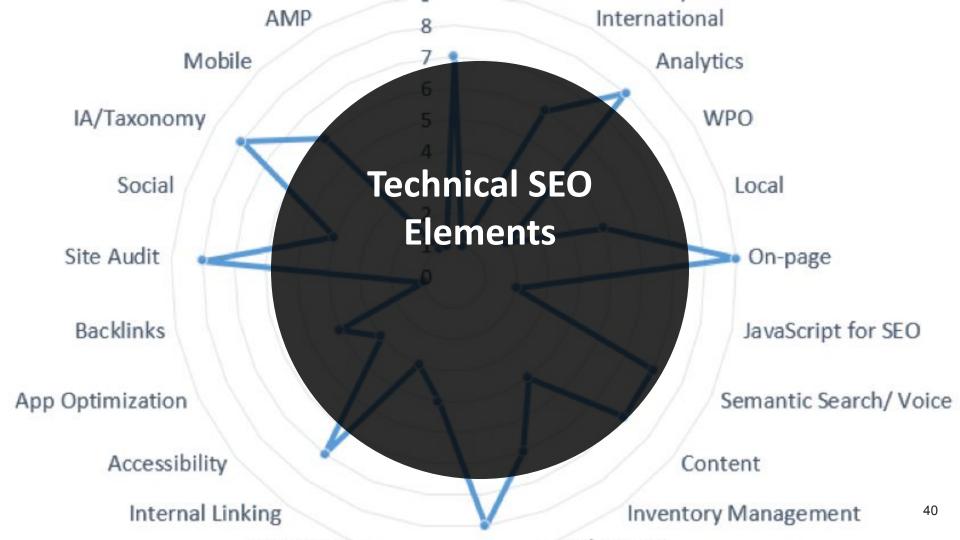




Technical Rules

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Takeaways

- Technical issues can limit the ability for the brand to be IN the search engine index - the first step of ranking.
- Page load speed is a ranking factor
- UX issues are now a ranking factor in both desktop and mobile.



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Content Rules





Google: Know What your Readers Want

Consider creating a service that no other site offers.

"I would recommend trying to figure out what your users are actually thinking and doing things like user studies." - John Mueller, Google

Know what your readers want (and give it to them)

Think about the words that a user might search for to find a piece of your content. Users who know a lot about the topic might use different keywords in their search queries than someone who is new to the topic. For example, a long-time football fan might search for [fifa], an acronym for the Fédération Internationale de Football Association, while a new fan might use a more general query like [football playoffs]. Anticipating these differences in search behavior and accounting for them while writing your content (using a good mix of keyword phrases) could produce positive results. Google Ads provides a handy Keyword Planner³⁴ that helps you discover new keyword variations and see the approximate search volume for each keyword. Also, Google Search Console provides you with the top search queries your site appears for and the ones that led the most users to your site in the Performance Report³⁵.

Consider creating a new, useful service that no other site offers. You could also write an original piece of research, break an exciting news story, or leverage your unique user base. Other sites may lack the resources or expertise to do these things.





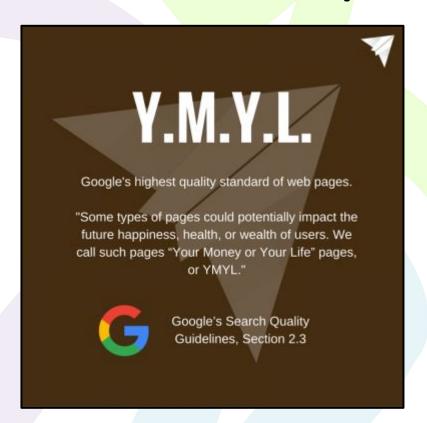
Google: Write Quality Content

- Would you trust the information presented in this article?
- Is this article written by an expert or enthusiast who knows the topic well?
- Does the page provide substantial value when compared to other pages in search results?
- Is this the sort of page you'd want to bookmark, share with a friend, or recommend?





Climate is a YMYL Topic - Needs High EAT







Human Rater Guidelines

Don't directly impact rankings. A sign of where Google wants the rankings to go.

- What is the "beneficial purpose" of this page?
- What is reputation/expertise of the content creator
- Low quality for unmaintained websites

<u>For YMYL queries, Google gives more weight in their ranking algorithm to factors around expertise, authoritativeness, or trustworthiness</u>





Google: Let me discover the answer INSIDE your content



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SEOs were calling them Fraggles.

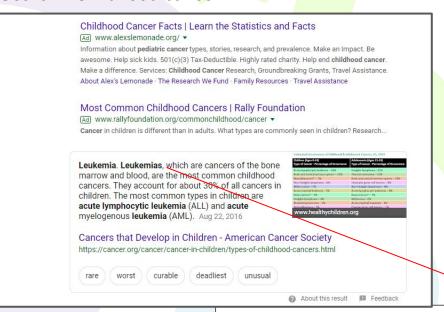
- Combination of "Fragments" and "Handles"
- Multiple answer fragments on a page are being indexed and ranked separately in Google,
- Featured Snippets can pull from fraggles - video, audio, text, .pdfs

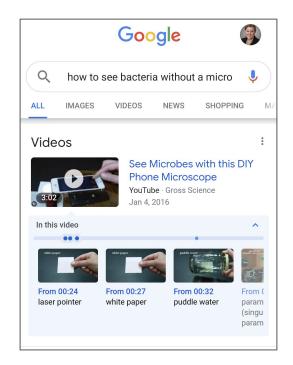




Formatting ->Fraggle

Search: "Childhood cancer"





Leukemia

Leukemias, which are cancers of the bone marrow and blood, are the most common childhood cancers. They account for about 30% of all cancers in children. The most common types in children are acute lymphocytic leukemia (ALL) and acute myelogenous leukemia (AML). These leukemias can cause bone and joint pain, fatigue, weakness, pale skin, bleeding or bruising, fever, weight loss, and other symptoms. Acute leukemias can grow quickly, so they need to be treated (typically with chemotherapy) as soon as they are found.

For more information see Leukemia in Children.





Google's Passage Ranking Change

"We've recently made a breakthrough in ranking and are now able to ...index (**rank**)individual passages from the pages.

By better understanding the relevancy of specific passages, not just the overall page, we can find that needle-in-a-haystack information you're looking for." - Google



Takeaway

- Google is surfacing content from WITHIN a digital file
- Optimization of HTML, video, audio and images is critical to organic discovery
- Content needs to be optimized for Fraggles



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Promotion Rules



Inbound Links:

- This one of the top ranking factors.
- How many links/what type you need will depend on your keyword, industry, competition, and country.
- Need to be built to look natural.
- Can't be bought.
- PR is great.
- Link building "maintenance" is still great (broken links, unlinked mentions, competitor links, local, directory, resource lists).





Google's Penguin Penalty

- Looks at links IN to your site and from your site OUT.
- Less severe.
- Don't link to sites that have paid you or given you free stuff for a link.
- Don't pay for links.
- Don't link to low quality sites.
- Don't create too many links on one page (link farm).





Engagement Rules

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UX Driven Algorithm updates

- Page Experience Update August 2021
- Mobile Speed Update July 9, 2018
- "Fred" (Unconfirmed) March 8, 2017
- Intrusive Interstitial Penalty January 10, 2017
- Page Layout #3 February 6, 2014
- Page Layout #2 October 9, 2012
- Ads Above The Fold January 19, 2012



Rank Brain: 3rd Most Important Ranking Factor

- Live user tests -the engine learn the meaning of new queries based on how people respond.
 - Matching search intent to your copy will matter.
 - Structured content matters.
- Powered by AI and Hummingbird Algorithm





Takeaways

- On page UX matters
- Engagement with your site from search is used in ranking
- Bad UX can negatively impact your site.



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SEO Success #3:

Be User Focused

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Google Watching SERP Clicks

"Google is now integrating machine learning into (ranking)... When someone clicks on a page and stays on that page, (or) when they go back..."

Nick Frost, Head Google Brain Toronto/Canada





CTR also used by Bing + Apple...

Most Important UX Factors

- 1. Page matches the searcher's intent
- 2. Search engine results clickstream data:
 - measuring the search results users <u>actually click</u>, or <u>pogo-sticking effect</u>.
- 3. Task completion





Takeaways

- Know your user's needs!
- Measure CTR from search
- Get ready for Page Experience Update (May 2021)



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Why? Queriless Searches

Voice, image, and predictive mobile discovery





Information Discovery without Queries

- A shift from answers to journeys
 -"query-less" ways of getting
 information, more visual
- "...Make it easier than ever to explore your interests, even if you don't have your next search in mind" - Google









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Google Discover

NO searches. Higher CTR than search: 7-15%

Based off a user's browsing history, interests and ML.

If the user has previously used engaged with your content, you have more of a chance of ranking... Image and video driven.

"Using the <u>Topic Layer in the Knowledge</u>
<u>Graph</u>, Discover can predict your level of expertise on a topic and help you further develop those interests."

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What % of Americans use voice search daily?

A: 44%

Voice Search Optimization

- Search engines pull from their Knowledge Graph 1st, then
 sometimes the web
- Bing powers 42% of the answers





Takeaways

- Sites need a Google Discover strategy
- Leverage images and video
- SEO plans need to include feeding the Knowledge Graph.

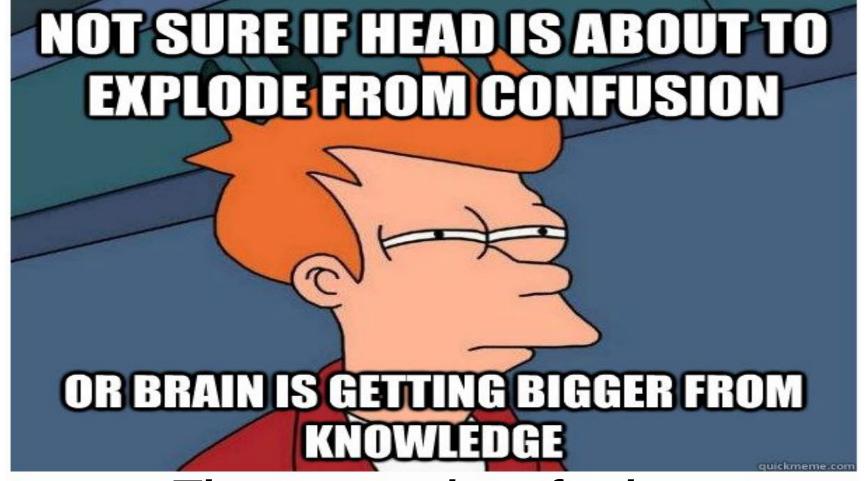


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Updated Personas =
persona + journey +
searcher's intent +
emotional state +
touchpoints + outcome



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There are a lot of rules...



Online Personalization.

We each have our own bubble.

Implicit Search Signals = Personalization

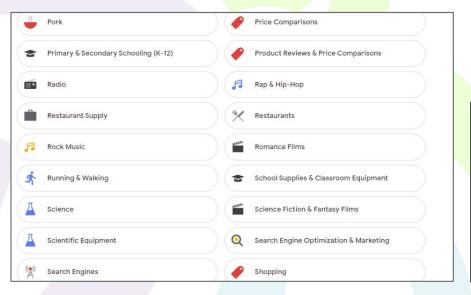
Search Results are influenced by:

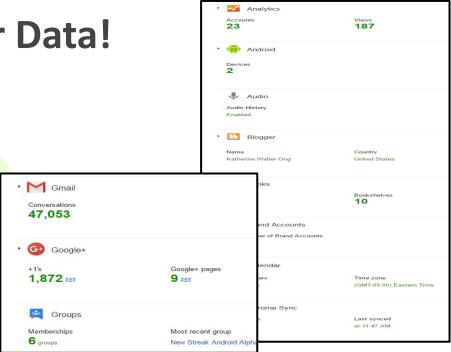
- Location desktop or mobile
- Previous searches and behavioral search
- Trending topics
- Desktop and voice search history





Google: Powered by Your Data!





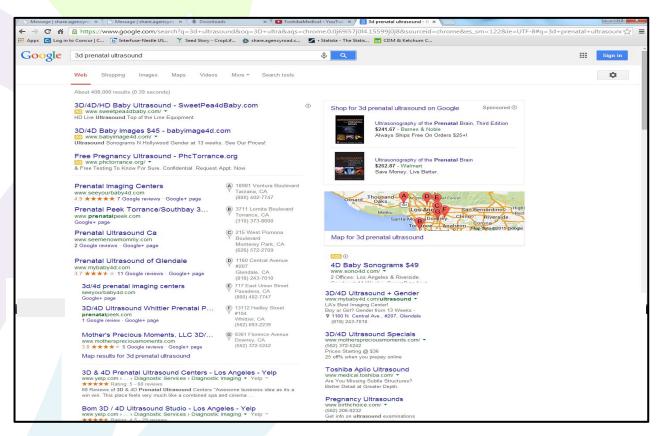
https://adssettings.google.com/

https://myaccount.google.com/dashboard



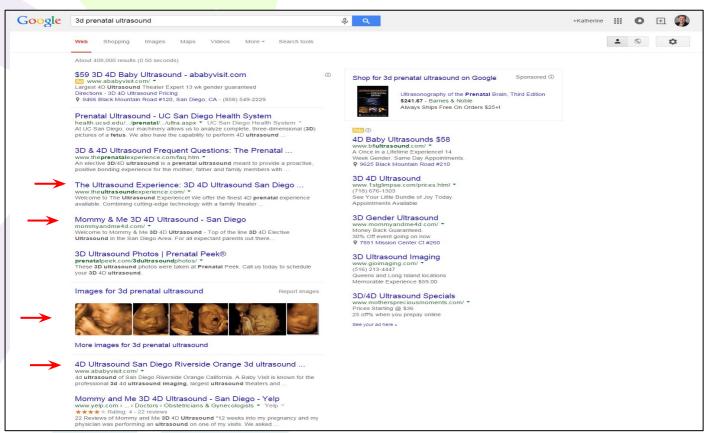


Personalized Search:





Personalized Search:





Removing Search Personalization:

When you non-personalized the search results, are you going to see what your target audience sees?

Rankings are dead.

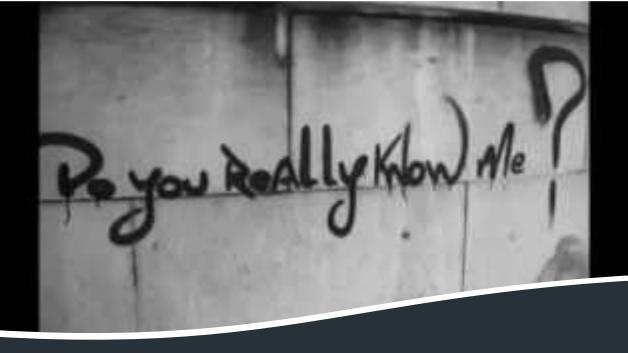




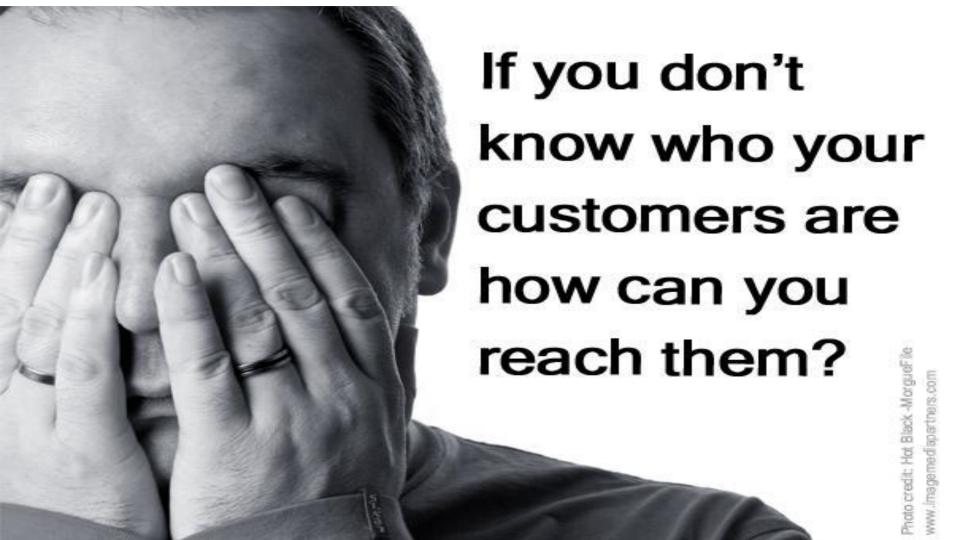


So, here's the real question...

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How well do you know your audience?



SEO Success #4:

Stay up to Date

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How often does Google update its algorithm?





Google changes the secret sauce over 9 times a day.



Google's Future

"We will know..what you're interested in, not just the topic...[but] the specific questions and concerns you have."

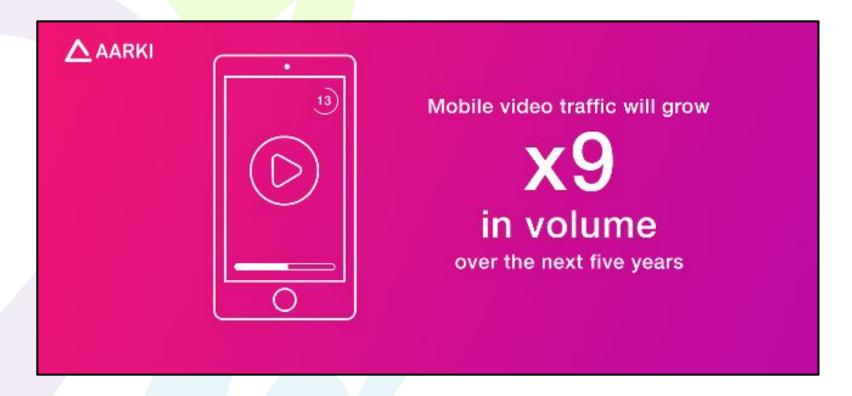
I envision some years from now that the majority of search queries will be answered without you actually asking."

2013, Ray Kurzweil, <u>Director of Google engineering</u>





94% of Videos in Search Are YouTube





Google's Podcasting Goals

- 1. Double the amount of podcast listening in the world
- 2. Transcribe and understand the podcast, including when they are discussing different topics in the episode.

Google Podcasts Product Manager Zack Reneau-Wedeen

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Organic CITC Diversity **WO**STRATEGIES

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Bing's Future

The future of Bing is going beyond the search box to a personal, pervasive and predictive experience... it might not be obvious users are even interacting with the search engine. "

Gurpeet Singh Pall, partner director of PM for Bing and Cortana

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Apple Search Engine?

- iOS 14 shows Apple's own search results
- Applebot identified
- Hiring AI experts Google's former head of search, John Giannandrea





Wrap Up



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Setting an SEO Strategy

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 - a. Create data driven personas, search intent research, and customer journeys.
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 - c. Check/measure on site usability. Fix.
- 4. Keep reading search updates and adjust based on search engine changes.



What Did We Learn Today?

- The latest "rules" related to SEO
- Search is personalized
- Knowing your user is critical for SEO
- UX impacts SEO
- A hint of search's future





Google Resources:

- www.google.com/search/howsearchworks/
- <u>developers.google.com/search/docs/advanced/guidelines/webmaster-guidelines</u>
- <u>developers.google.com/search/blog</u>

Bing Resources:

- <u>bing.com/webmaster/help/webmaster-quidelines-30fba23a</u>
- blogs.bing.com/webmaster/

SEO Industry Learning Resources

moz.com/learn/seo and semrush.com/academy/

Staying up to date with online marketing:

<u>SearchEngineLand.com</u> and <u>Search Engine Roundtable</u>







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Daily SEO tips via Alexa