

SEO: What You Need To Know Now

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With so much going on in the search industry recently, I thought I should take a few minutes and break it all down for you.

Staying current on the news is important, but even more important is understanding what it means to YOU.

Let's take a look at:

- **Google Caffeine**
 - What is it?
 - What does it mean to you?
- **Bing**
 - What do you need to know about the new(ish) engine?
- **Yahoo and Bing (Microsoft) Deal**
 - What are the details?
 - What does it mean to you?

Google Caffeine

What: A new search infrastructure that is thought to eventually replace the current Google search infrastructure.

To read it straight from Google, check out their post at:

<http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2009/08/help-test-some-next-generation.html>

Where: <http://www2.sandbox.google.com/>

Quick summary of the key points:

- Most **users** won't see a big difference in the interface – it is an under the hood kind of change. Power searchers and developers may notice a difference.

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- If this pans out well, it is intended to replace Google as we know it today.
- It seems like Google's goal is to be more thorough and comprehensive in their crawling of the web. Vanessa Fox reported the following, over at SearchEngineLand:

“The newest infrastructure may include ways of crawling the web more comprehensively, determining reputation and authority (possibly beyond the link graph and what's typically thought of as PageRank), and returning more relevant results more quickly, although Google's Matt Cutts told me that the changes are “primarily in how we index”.

(<http://searchengineland.com/caffeine-googles-new-search-index-23823>)

- Google invites you to check out the preview and play around with it: <http://www2.sandbox.google.com/> [Note from Google: “Right now, we only want feedback on the differences between Google's current search results and our new system. We're also interested in higher-level feedback (“These types of sites seem to rank better or worse in the new system”) in addition to “This specific site should or shouldn't rank for this query.” Engineers will be reading the feedback, but we won't have the cycles to send replies.” And “look on the search results page for a link at the bottom of the page that says “Dissatisfied? Help us improve.” Click on that link, type your feedback in the text box and then include the word caffeine somewhere in the text box. Thanks in advance for your feedback!”]

Initial feedback:

Size: Initial tests by myself and various others that are sharing their testing results seem to indicate the Caffeine index is larger.

Speed: More often than not, Caffeine appears to be faster than the current Google engine.

Impact on keywords: “SEO professionals, your job just got a lot harder. The algorithm's definitely different. It has more reliance on keyword strings to produce better results.” Quote from Ben Parr over at mashable.com (<http://mashable.com/2009/08/10/google-caffeine/>)

Straight From Matt Cutts at Google: (<http://www.mattcutts.com/blog/caffeine-update/>)

Q: It doesn't look any different to me?

A: The Caffeine update isn't about making some UI changes here or there. Currently, even power users won't notice much of a difference at all. This update is primarily under the hood: we're rewriting the foundation of some of our infrastructure. But some of the search results do change, so we wanted to open up a preview so that power searchers and web developers could give us feedback.

Q: Is this Caffeine Update because of Company X or Y is doing Z?

A: Nope. I love competition in search and want lots of it, but this change has been in the works for months. I think the best way for Google to do well in search is to continue what we've done for the last decade or so: focus relentlessly on pushing our search quality forward. Nobody cares more about search than Google, and I don't think we'll ever stop trying to improve.

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Q: The url <http://www2.sandbox.google.com> doesn't seem to work for mobile phones? I can only test on google.com, not google.co.uk?

A: That's right. For now this is a only a preview, so we didn't hook up a mobile version or an international version at this point. You'll have to search on google.com to see the results right now.

What It Means To You:

Google will be crawling and indexing more pages – make sure your site is well optimized so you can benefit from this.

They are focusing on accuracy – which means the sites that get ranked on top will be the ones that best match the searchers query (which means you need to do comprehensive keyword research and make sure your site is well optimized for your important phrases that searchers will use).

Google indicates they will be looking at not only what sites people click on from the SERPs but also how they interact with the site after they land on it. Making sure your site has a lot of relevant content will be more important than ever.

Organization of your site and clean code structure will also become more crucial than ever.

Content appears to remain king and Google Caffeine seems to favor larger sites with more meaty content.

Quality continues to become more important, especially when it comes to links. Quality over quantity. So many people have lots of links that are just their URL hyperlinked – those are thought to be devalued. Getting a higher quality link from a Blog post, article or social media site that actually uses keywords from within body text to link to your site will be valued higher and fewer high quality links will likely win out over more lower quality links.

In Summary:

Make sure your site is content rich, with a good content addition plan. Make sure your code is clean and your site is well organized and make sure you have good optimization in place. Even if you have good rankings now, you'll want to focus on these areas to make sure you retain them in Caffeine.

Bing

What is Bing? Bing is a new search engine from Microsoft. Bing was rolled out in June 2009. In a recent Whitepaper released by Bing, they shared the following:

“ According to Pew Research, people are relying more and more on Internet search. In fact, approximately 50% of web users use search every day and search is second only to e-mail in daily tasks performed by web users.

As a result of this continuous user engagement with search, Microsoft is actively on the challenge of improving their web search scenarios. Bing brings a new way of thinking to using SERPs, which has

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shown to demonstrably improve the satisfaction of searchers in finding the answers to their questions, often far faster and more easily than in the past.”

Market Share

Bing got off to a good start by gaining about 3% market share in June (according to comScore). StatCounter's July numbers show Bing is still gaining ground. According to the report Bing has gained

Great tool to compare Google and Bing results side by side:

<http://www.bing-vs-google.com/>

1.24% market share, up to 9.41%. The market share wasn't taken from Yahoo! though, it came from Google, who lost nearly 1% of the search market during the month. StatCounter shared that Yahoo and Bing combined now control more than 20% of the search market (up from 19.27%). However, comScore says their combined market share in June was 29%.

Straight From Bing: “The Bing team discovered that the click through rates for items categorized in results groups were higher than results found in positions 6 through 10 of the initial, organic list. Because of this, and the fact that the new, multi-threaded SERP design surfaces many more pages that will be associated with the searchers’ primary keywords than would have surfaced in a single-threaded SERP list, webmasters and publishers will be *more* likely to have searchers discover their content with the Bing designed SERP than they would using the traditional search model SERP.

But to take advantage of this added exposure, webmasters will need to **focus their attention on solid SEO best practices** so their content bubbles up to the top in the new Quick Tabs/categorized results lists in Bing. To further enhance user satisfaction as well as surface even more publishers’ original content Bing removes duplicate results from categorized results lists, which allows other, lower ranked pages to be shown in the categorized results on its SERP.

All of the benefits from these enhancements are available to websites that invest in SEO.”

What does it mean to you?

While Google clearly still owns the market, Bing’s numbers show that it is worth being taken seriously and worth optimizing for. Because of Bing’s Quick Tabs and Best Match features it becomes even more important to have good content and be well optimized, not only for what you consider your core keyword phrases but also for relevant (and possibly longer tail) phrases that are related.

Microsoft and Yahoo!

Overview of the Deal:

Microsoft will reach more consumers with Bing, their new engine launched in June. Taking over the search on Yahoo’s site gives Microsoft a better chance to get to surfers that had been using Google by force of habit.

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“Microsoft and Yahoo know there’s so much more that search could be,” said Microsoft Chief Executive Steve Ballmer. “This agreement gives us the scale and resources to create the future of search.”

In exchange for giving Microsoft the power behind their search, Yahoo will get to keep 88 per cent of the revenue from all search ad sales on its site for the first five years of the deal, they will also have the right to sell ads on some Microsoft sites.

Yahoo! could use the extra revenue after just coming off a tough quarter, with its revenue falling 15 per cent in the April-June period.

A downside to the deal for Yahoo! is that they will have limited access to the data on users’ searches – which provides insight that can be used to pick out ads more likely to capture a person’s interest. There is high value in that data which is why Microsoft wants to process more search requests.

Microsoft has remained a distant third in market share, with its losses piling up. Their “Internet Services division” lost \$2.3 billion in the fiscal year ending in June (nearly double what they lost last year). They are counting on Bing to turn things around. Bing has had mostly positive reviews and has increased its traffic slightly lately (thanks in part to a big advertising push – that had a big cost attached to it).

Together Microsoft and Yahoo! have a 28 percent share of the Internet search market in the United States (compared to Google’s 65 per cent)

Globally Google dominates even more - with a global share of 67 per cent compared to a combined 11 per cent for Microsoft and Yahoo.

This partnership has to face antitrust scrutiny and be approved before it’s all finalized.

What Does It Mean To You?

There is a lot of speculation about what this partnership will mean. The truth is there is some time until this all goes live but the general advice out there is check it out now and take action so you are positioned to benefit.

Some important things to consider:

- With 15% of search market share, the numbers are still big enough to be worth your attention and optimizations efforts. That statement is not always well received, everyone cares first and foremost about Google and I’m not arguing the importance of Google but I’m saying that time and time again we see good traffic numbers driven from Microsoft and we see this increasing with Bing.
- Bing’s Webmaster Tools are important and going to become more important as it becomes more robust. Making sure you spend time setting up and analyzing the data in your Webmaster Tools accounts will become even more important.
- As Bing and Yahoo! get greater market share, they are likely going to have more spam issues. Bing will work to fix this situation and may tap into some of Yahoo’s expertise in this area but in

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the short term it will be an issue and legitimate sites may be battling spammers for positioning. It becomes more important than ever to keep your site well optimized and spam free so in the long run you show the engines your site isn't into playing games to manipulate the system.

- Yahoo! will maintain control of the user interface, which means that the layout and ordering of the page may continue to be different from Bing. This means attention still needs to be paid to both engines separately. Things are definitely getting more complex and far gone are the good old days.

The Bottom Line

If "cookie cutter" SEO ever worked (which is doubtful) then it's definitely not going to survive the current landscape in search. SEO should be specific to the site and its needs. Some sites need more content; some need more links, most need good SEO friendly structure and on-page optimization. There is no "one size fits all" quick submission solution (so if you come across one, run the other way. It won't work)

Search results are getting better – faster, more reliable. The engines have larger indexes and more complex algorithms – and all of that means optimization itself is more complex. Staying current, testing and tweaking are more important than ever.

If you aren't prepared for the future of search, your site and your business will suffer. If you want to succeed online, you need to make sure your site is front and center when people are searching.

If you would like a free consultation to **determine how you can benefit from search and find out the top 3 things that are wrong with your site**, contact Jennifer Horowitz at 562-592-5347 or Jennifer@ecombuffet.com.



Special Offer:

Be one of the first 5 people to schedule a consultation and get a free ranking report to see where you stand in the engines.

