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# After Microsoft-Yahoo Deal, SEO Isn't Just About Google Anymore

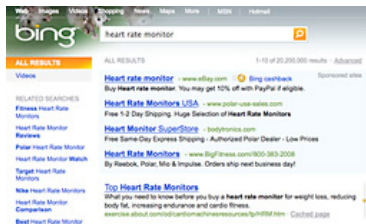
[Windfall in Store for Digital Agencies as Marketers Aim for Top Spots in Bing Search Results](#)

by [Michael Learmonth](#)

Published: [August 31, 2009](#)



NEW YORK (AdAge.com) -- It will be at least nine months -- and probably closer to a year -- before Microsoft takes over Yahoo's search infrastructure, theoretically consolidating 28% of the U.S. search market and mounting the first credible challenge on Google in a decade.



The biggest challenge for marketers will be to figure out how to land among the top five spots on both Bing and Google.

But it's not too early for marketers to wonder if they need to ask: Do we, uh, speak Bing?

One thing is certain: figuring that out is going to amount to a mini stimulus package for digital agencies and search-engine-

optimization consultants in the first half of 2010.

Turning up on the first page of organic search results when someone types your product or brand into a keyword box is pretty much the cost of entry for any substantial e-commerce entity or marketer. And for the past decade or so that's meant pretty much one thing: optimize your site for Google, maybe a tweak or two for Yahoo, and everything else, well, didn't matter all that much.

"If you were well-optimized for Google, you were pretty much set, because it means you were well-optimized for everyone else out there," said John Ragals, chief operating officer of digital agency 360i. "The gap wasn't significant enough to warrant the extra investment."

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But Bing is quite a bit different from Google and Yahoo, both in the way it ranks pages and the way it presents results on the page. And if search becomes more of a two-player market, it could mean a return to the late '90s, when it was common for marketers to create separate pages optimized for Yahoo, Google, Lycos and AltaVista, and as they do now for the iPhone or other mobile devices.

"You'd effectively have two pages, one for Google and one for Bing," said Danny Sullivan, editor of SearchEngineLand.com. If all goes according to plan, Yahoo will make the switch to Bing's organic search results in the third quarter of next year, and then fold in Bing's paid search results soon after.

"We've been getting a lot of questions from clients about the differences," said Craig McDonald, chief marketing officer of digital agency Covario. "This will have an impact in the first half of next year."

### Shooting for the top five

The big challenge for marketers will be to figure out how to land among the top five spots on both search engines. That is particularly true for Bing, which often shows only five organic results on its first page -- after which it groups results into categories. Position six on Google may mean users have to scroll down to see the result; on Bing users have to click to the second page.

"If you are not coming up in the top five [search results] for the very generic terms, you are not getting page-one exposure, which means you are losing out on 70% to 80% of searchers," said Collin Cornwell, VP of natural search at iCrossing.

That's a tough challenge for marketers, given that one of the top spots is generally dominated by Wikipedia, leaving really only four slots to make an impression. Or consider the plight of a movie marketer optimizing a film's lead actor: the top three results are dominated by IMDb, Wikipedia and the actor's "official" site -- leaving only two available.

The upside of having results categorized is there's an opportunity for aggressive marketers to have more than one listing on a page for non-branded queries -- not including whatever paid keyword listings the marketer may or may not be buying. For example, a search for "heart rate monitor" might pull up the website of manufacturer Polar USA in the first five organic search results and it might also pull up, under the video category, a Polar demo of how to use a heart rate monitor.

Bing also offers different placements for photos and video, which means opportunities for marketers that produce both.

### Still tweaking algorithm

Fundamentally, Google's algorithms give more weight to inbound links, while Bing focuses more on the content or the keywords contained on pages. That said, Microsoft is still tweaking Bing, so any strategy formed today might have to change when the integration with Yahoo takes place. And all of this will get shaken up if and when both engines make real-time search of, say, Twitter or Facebook updates part of their strategies.

How much to invest in Bing is a calculation marketers will make this fall as they plan website development and put together budgets for 2010. While each has its own goals and search strategies, if Bing/Yahoo can retain 25% share, it will be too big for most marketers to ignore. And with apologies to Ask.com and

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others, it will be the first time in years that marketers will be able to optimize for two players and get virtually 100% of the search market.

"You gauge the amount of effort and investment based on its potential return," said Gregory Markel, CEO of digital-marketing firm Infuse Creative. "If you are killing it on Google and there is room to grow, or if Twitter is delivering traffic to you, you would maximize them first. But if you wake up one morning and Bing has 30% market share, then that's a different conversation."

## 8 Comments



By Kevin | New York, NY [August 31, 2009 08:08:45 am](#):

"You'd effectively have two pages, one for Google and one for Bing," said Danny Sullivan, editor of SearchEngineLand.com.

That quote sort of hides the reality, no? Who has a one-page site? If a company has a 1000-page site, you'd "effectively have TWO THOUSAND pages" eh?

Sounds like a bit more work than redoing your home page.

[Permalink](#)

By SingularityDesign | Philadelphia, PA [August 31, 2009 08:28:26 am](#):

There are a lot of "ifs" to this theory. "If" Bing manages to continue to gain market share as people become more familiar with it. "If" it algorithm continues to be distinctly different from Google's (i.e. "If" it doesn't follow suit on some of Google's approaches after its results get gamed by the SEOs out there).

I'm not debating that Bing will be an important source of traffic, and I'm also not debating that SEOs will benefit in the short term from brands not wanting to "miss the boat" on Bing-imization (think Second Life and the landrush that happened there). I'm just saying it will be interesting to see the long-term ROI for serious Bing investment.

Jeff Greenhouse

President, Singularity Design

<http://www.SingularityDesign.com>

<http://Twitter.com/SingularityDsgn>

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By Rodney33 | FRISCO, TX [August 31, 2009 09:44:46 am](#):

We do a lot of SEO work for clients and emphasize the importance of Organic SEO, because it is more relevant and natural for consumers who are searching for information.

Organic SEO relies on a site to be optimized, but it's much more. It's about relevancy and being in the right places to assure a search leads to your product at the most appropriate moments.

We have an important study we're about to release entitled "XL Marketing Trends" the "10 Trends Changing the Marketing Landscape" now and over the next 10 years.

Organic Search is #4 due in part to the ever growing importance of search to consumer purchasing decisions. It's also more important because of Bing and the growth of mobile search.

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It's now more important than ever to assure your brand's mobile links and sites function properly on mobile devices. That's because by the end of next year, smart phone devices that are already equal in number to 60% of all computers in the US, will outnumber computers.

Some thoughts for optimizing Bing;

1) Focus on categories presented for your most key search terms. Use Bing's categories in your key words and in your site navigation.

2) Domain Age is very important. Building micro-sites off your main site vs. independent new sites is key for Bing. Additional findings for Bing thus far.

3) Text Rules  
Bing favors pages with at least 300 words of text.

4) Linking Out  
Bing favors linking out more than other engines as long as the links are relevant to the overall context of the site and keywords.

5) News Sites vs. Blogs  
Bing favors news source sites over blogs especially for breaking news, although major blogs are recognized by Bing as major news sources. Blogs with less significant traffic are not.

6) Page Titles  
As with any white hat SEO strategy, page titles should correlate well with the primary subject and keywords on page. Bing seems to follow this more stringently than other web sites.

7) Heavy Flash sites rank better with Bing than Google. A good strategy for a site with a lot of Flash is to emphasize SEO for Bing and continue your Google efforts. Bing and Google draft off one another indirectly as they are both continuously crawling off the web. That means Bing can help heavy Flash sites do better on Google over time as well.

8) Don't overuse keywords in your content and also don't use irrelevant keywords to increase a page's keyword density.

9) Place average keywords in your meta tags and content.

10) Don't use hidden text or links else your website can be blacklisted and ignored.

11) Avoid overused link schemes to avoid being banned.

12) Enable MSNBot onto your site and submit URLs for all sub-pages as it doesn't automatically crawl all pages.

13) Keep fresh relevant content on your site and update it regularly.

Rodney Mason, CMO  
Moosylvania  
The Great State Of Design  
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By pjadv | Miami, FL [August 31, 2009 10:26:10 am](#):

"Or consider the plight of a movie marketer optimizing a film's lead actor: the top three results are dominated by IMDb, Wikipedia and the actor's "official" site -- leaving only two available."

This is not a "plight" or even much of a challenge... I would make sure the new film is listed prominently on Wikipedia, IMDB and the actor's official site. Done. Next?

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By ron | Great Neck, NY [August 31, 2009 11:42:13 am](#):

I tend to agree with Jeff Greenhouse's, there are a lot of "ifs" built into the above article.

There was an interesting discussion of Bing going on over at CIOZone.com "Do you Bing..." from the IT Senior Execs who tend to know the trends in IT before they happen...

[http://www.ciozone.com/index.php?option=com\\_fireboard&Itemid=431&func=view&id=1118&catid=118&limit=6&limitstart=0](http://www.ciozone.com/index.php?option=com_fireboard&Itemid=431&func=view&id=1118&catid=118&limit=6&limitstart=0)

It is very difficult to break users internet habits. Still, I do think that Microsoft will be in it for the long run; which means, MS will not just invest and walk away. MS decides what is worth going after and they eventually win, think Wordperfect, think Borland and object programming tools, think Lotus 123 spreadsheets etc.

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By mattforman | Brisbane, QL [August 31, 2009 07:01:32 pm](#):

Rodney33 some great tips for Bing. Thanks for sharing

[Permalink](#)

By bluecorona | GAITHERSBURG, MD [September 1, 2009 10:51:03 am](#):

Really ML?? You really think SEO's are or should alter their strategy once the Micro-Hoo deal goes through??

Come on! Our clients that rank well on Google rank equally well on Bing and Yahoo - without making any special exceptions to our process.

While "fundamentally" Google may give extra weight to links, we have sites that rank #1 in decent size categories with zero links. Zero.

Content is king in all castles...

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By HyperDogMedia | Thronton, CO [September 1, 2009 05:10:48 pm](#):

We are an organic SEO company, and we still see sites with very little indexed in MSN/LIVE/KUMO/BING. Bing's crawler is improved, but many pages of your site may not be getting crawled. Want to help the bing bot? Be sure to check out Bing webmaster tools:

<http://www.bing.com/webmaster>

Bing will keep increasing in importance, especially with all of the google ads they are currently placing. ;)

Jim Kreinbrink  
Hyper Dog Media  
Denver SEO Agency  
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