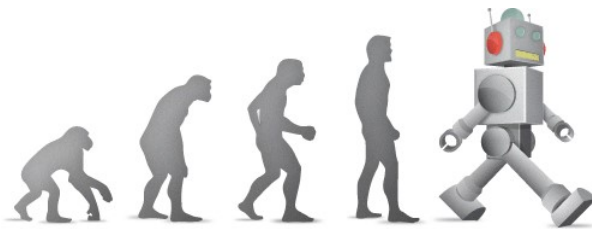## CHAPTER TWO — HOW PEOPLE INTERACT WITH SEARCH ENGINES

One of the most important elements to building an online marketing strategy around SEO is empathy for your audience. Once you grasp what your target market is looking for, you can more effectively reach and keep those users.

How people use search engines has evolved over the years, but the primary principles of conducting a search remain largely unchanged. Most search processes go something like this:

1. *Experience the need for an answer, solution, or piece of information.*

2. *Formulate that need in a string of words and phrases, also known as "the query."*

3. *Enter the query into a search engine.*

4. *Browse through the results for a match.*

5. *Click on a result.*

6. *Scan for a solution, or a link to that solution.*

7. *If unsatisfied, return to the search results and browse for another link or ...*

8. *Perform a new search with refinements to the query.*

We like to say, **"Build for users, not for search engines."** There are three types of search queries people generally make:

"Do" Transactional Queries: I want to do something, such as buy a plane ticket or listen to a song.

"Know" Informational Queries: I need information, such as the name of a band or the best restaurant in New York City.

"Go" Navigation Queries: I want to go to a particular place on the Internet, such as Facebook or the homepage of the NFL.

When visitors type a query into a search box and land on your site, will they be satisfied with what they find? This is the primary question that search engines try to answer billions of times each day. **The search engines' primary responsibility is to serve relevant results to their users.** So ask yourself what your target customers are looking for and make sure your site delivers it to them.

It all starts with words typed into a small box.

The True Power of Inbound Marketing with SEO

Why should you invest time, effort, and resources on SEO? When looking at the broad picture of search engine usage, fascinating data is available from several studies. We've extracted those that are recent, relevant, and valuable, not only for understanding how users search, but to help present a compelling argument about the power of SEO.
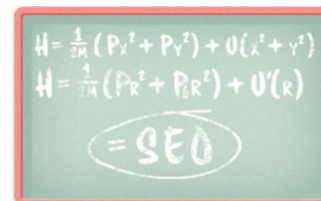
Google leads the way in an October 2011 study by comScore:

Google led the U.S. core search market in April with 65.4 percent of the searches conducted, followed by Yahoo! with 17.2 percent, and Microsoft with 13.4 percent. (Microsoft powers Yahoo Search. In the real world, most webmasters see a much higher percentage of their traffic from Google than these numbers suggest.)

Americans alone conducted a staggering 20.3 billion searches in one month. Google accounted for 13.4 billion searches, followed by Yahoo! (3.3 billion), Microsoft (2.7 billion), Ask Network (518 million), and AOL LLC (277 million).

Total search powered by Google properties equaled 67.7 percent of all search queries, followed by Bing which powered 26.7 percent of all search.

Billions spent on online marketing from an August 2011 Forrester report:

Online marketing costs will approach $77 billion in 2016.

This amount will represent 26% of all advertising budgets combined.

Search is the new Yellow Pages from a Burke 2011 report:

76% of respondents used search engines to find local business information vs. 24% who turned to print yellow pages.

67% had used search engines in the past 30 days to find local information, and 23% responded that they had used online social networks as a local media source.

An August 2011 Pew Internet study revealed:

The percentage of Internet users who use search engines on a typical day has been steadily rising from about one-third of all users in 2002, to a new high of 59% of all adult Internet users.

With this increase, the number of those using a search engine on a typical day is pulling ever closer to the 61 percent of Internet users who use e-mail, arguably the Internet's all-time killer app, on a typical day.

StatCounter Global Stats reports the top 5 search engines sending traffic worldwide:

Google sends 90.62% of traffic.

Yahoo! sends 3.78% of traffic.

Bing sends 3.72% of traffic.

Ask Jeeves sends .36% of traffic.

Baidu sends .35% of traffic.

A 2011 study by Slingshot SEO reveals click-through rates for top rankings:

A #1 position in Google's search results receives 18.2% of all click-through traffic.

The second position receives 10.1%, the third 7.2%, the fourth 4.8%, and all others under 2%.

A #1 position in Bing's search results averages a 9.66% click-through rate.

The total average click-through rate for first ten results was 52.32% for Google and 26.32% for Bing.

That's Some Spicy Data You Got There!

People's eyes are drawn to search results near the top of the page, and to organic search results over paid results, according to a 2011 study published on the blog User Centric.

All of this impressive research data leads us to important conclusions about web search and marketing through search engines. In particular, we're able to make the following statements:

Search is very, very popular. Growing strong at nearly 20% a year, it reaches nearly every online American, and billions of people around the world.

Search drives an incredible amount of both online and offline economic activity.

Higher rankings in the first few results are critical to visibility.

Being listed at the top of the results not only provides the greatest amount of traffic, but also instills trust in consumers as to the worthiness and relative importance of the company or website.

Learning the foundations of SEO is a vital step in achieving these goals.

"For marketers, the Internet as a whole, and search in particular, are among the most important ways to reach consumers and build a business."

Written by Rand Fishkin and Moz Staff

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