

Title:

In The Recommendation Age Sophisticated Filtering Engines Are Our Beacons

Word Count:

729

Summary:

It wasn't too long ago we were embracing the information age. Most of us still think we are in it. But the consequence of the information age is the overwhelming volume of information on any given subject, product or service. We are forced to spend a great deal of time sifting through sites, bits and bytes to [hopefully] discover what we are looking for.

Be it music, film, books or other products the sheer volume of choice makes it more difficult to find what we want; but ...

Keywords:

the long tail, web 2.0, filtering, internet marketing, seo, future, advise

Article Body:

It wasn't too long ago we were embracing the information age. Most of us still think we are in it. But the consequence of the information age is the overwhelming volume of information on any given subject, product or service. We are forced to spend a great deal of time sifting through sites, bits and bytes to [hopefully] discover what we are looking for.

Be it music, film, books or other products the sheer volume of choice makes it more difficult to find what we want; but we are also offered an abundant picking list: This immense list has emerged because a) production has been democratized: Never before has any single human being anywhere been able to operate independently to bring something of value to the world stage; be it a sound track, desktop wallpaper image, Flash cartoon, computer programming service, or indeed, more and more, a paid commentator, and b) distribution now takes the form of bits and bytes, meaning zero goods stock holding so companies like Amazon can print books on demand and iTunes can deliver music in bytes.

These two forces create abundance in choice and transform information into saleable products and services.

But sifting through tons of information to get to what we want is a bit like weeding the garden. We have to look at almost every blade of grass to get all

the weeds out before we see the right result. And usually we miss a few patches.

What if we had someone helping us weed? Like a tennis umpire overlooking the landscape and directing our attention to important areas within our focal length. Moving from Information age to Recommendation age the collective wisdom of the crowd is the new connoisseur. More and more people spend time writing reviews and recommendations, creating Blogs about everything, posting comments, writing forum topics and replies and so on and these serve as beacons for us searchers by highlighting areas of interest through a process called filtering.

Today filters are king! They help us find what we are looking for within the overwhelming abundance of choice. Sites like Google filter pages to bring us the most relevant to our search term. Amazon provides recommendations and reviews along with every book on the planet. Netflix tracks our search patterns to filter and offer movies that closely match our needs for titles we haven't even heard of. Ten years ago my local music store offered me 4000 titles. Today iTunes offers me over 4 million. I may have spent an hour browsing my local music store. How many would that be online?

Filtering transcends search and browse behavior. It is amplified through word of mouth. Sites like MySpace are huge filtering engines for new music bringing us informed democratic choice through collective sharing. 'Linkers' build online bookmarks and the numbers of clicks to those web sites are like endorsements, showing us where to click next.

With monstrous data crunching technology more and more sites are able to measure consumption patterns in real time and make changes just as quickly. This is a grand shift entering the Recommendation age.

Google AdSense filters immense volumes of keywords to bring quality ad content to any web site. Amazon Associates are easily able to place recommendations and reviews on their own web sites. These targeted ads and recommendations act as beacons or short cuts to what seek in a landscape filled with abundance. With good filters diamonds can be found anywhere.

Sites like Rhapsody, MySpace, Netflix, and Commission Junction are the modern day factories. The workforce has been democratized so that any individual anywhere can produce hard or soft products and services for anyone to consume. All of these sites offer sophisticated filtering through recommendations, reviews and statistics. Still other sites like Digg, Reddit, Folkd, Shoutwire and Care2 are aggregators of opinion on any given topic and filter information based on democratic consensus and democratic publishing.

Bloggers filter niche market information providing direct access to relevant

data. Blog comments are like fine tuners and direction finders helping us home in without reviewing every option ourselves.

The age of information is over. We have entered the age of Recommendations. Successful entrepreneurs would be wise to consider the new way to wow the crowd is to automate filtering through sophisticated engines and to engage users with interactive features like commenting, recommendations, reviews, Blogs and articles.