

How are people behaving on the web?

From 2002-2005 internet use grew by'

- 50% in the number who said the internet played a major role as they pursued more training for their careers
- 45% in the numbers who said the internet played a major role as they made major investment or financial decisions
- 43% in the number who said the internet played a major role when they looked for a new place to live
- 23% who said the internet played a major role when they bought a car

The internet is the most important information source for many facing an important decision. Online information appears to work well for those who said the internet played a major role in their buying decision. The internet aids decision making by connecting people to information.

Online communities often function as information clearing houses that let people compare options, find experts, or share information among people who have recently encountered circumstances. The internet's largest impact comes in connecting people to other people for advice or sharing valuable experiences.

Ten most likely activities over next 6 months

- Use an email account 47%
- Use a search engine 37%
- Read news online 18%
- Use a mapping service (location or route finder) 15%
- Use an online directory to find a service 14%
- Download music (paid or unpaid) 14%
- Use an online bank 12%
- Use Instant Messenger 12%
- Book a holiday 11%
- Buy online 11%

So why is Search Engine Optimisation important?

Well, from the 1st report above you can see that there is a growing number of people looking for information online and that growing percentage is finding what they are looking for through online communities and search engines. So, how do the search engines filter out the really good sites, with quality content and updated news and information, from the huge amounts of clutter in cyberspace?

Well, the major search engines, Google, Yahoo, and MSN use a very systematic approach to keeping abreast of the rapidly changing digital landscape. They send out their spiders to crawl the web and bring back information on each website. The information collected (crawled) is then subject to analysis by automated algorithms.

There may be some human involvement, but the majority of the analysis is automated and the results are collated into the Search Engine Results Page that a visitor sees when they type in a search query. Depending on whether your website is search engine (spider) friendly or not will determine to a large extent how well you rank.

If you employ no SEO strategy on your website, then you are relying almost exclusively on word of mouth to get your message across. The search engine will not return results from your site if you do not help them classify what product/service/information you have to offer.

Will SEO continue to be important in the future?

Yes, most definitely. As more people go online and the penetration of broadband continues, more transactions will be executed on the web. The nature of these transactions will probably not differ too much from the Nielsen report above.

Who makes SEO what it is?

SEO exists because at its most fundamental people want to find what they are looking for on the web. Making this happen has proved incredibly difficult, not because of the technological challenges but because of the sales and marketing challenges.

When search engines started appearing around the early to mid nineties, they went from being just lists of websites to using techniques as listed below.

- statistical analysis of word relationships
- description of webpage in addition to url
- entire text of web pages indexed
- relevance retrieval, prefix matching, and word proximity
- natural language inquires and advanced searching techniques
- concept induction
- inbound links to rank sites

What changes are currently happening with SEO?

As time moves on, and both the people using and people developing the web become more sophisticated, many changes are likely. These changes will happen at different times in different at the various search engines.

The current major issues facing Google are:

- Canonical Issues
- The Sandbox
- Duplicate Content Issues
- Supplemental Page Issues

The battle to sort out these issues is as a direct result of Black Hat webmasters and SEO's trying to manipulate the Google index in order to deceive the search engine and profit from this fraud.

As Google attempts to eliminate these fraudsters it is unwittingly also penalising legitimate websites.

What changes are happening over at Yahoo?

On the [Yahoo Search Blog](#) there is a thread talking about the future of Search at Yahoo. The blog talks about Yahoo's pillars being Search, Community, Content and Personalisation. Incorporated into this mix will be a new mindset. Those who use RSS aggregators and news alert services are involved in the beginnings of this new mindset. It talks about people getting information when they need it, without having to ask.



Also mentioned was that the days of Keyword focused search are limited with the new techniques of:

- Concept Searching
- Latent Semantic Indexing

While looking at this post I was drawn to a site del.icio.us I had a look at this site and was really impressed by what I saw.

It is a new concept of rating sites based on what other 'real' people have rated. So you are not getting an interpretation of what might be good, you are getting sites rated by actual real world relevance.

To wrap up...

It is the people who use the web that will ultimately decide what is important and relevant and not the current algorithms of the search engines.

['The Internet's Growing Role in Life's Major Moments](#)

John Horrigan and Lee Rainie April 2006

Drive your online business upwards – [Educate yourself](#)