



## The Ultimate Guide to Google Personalized Search

In early 2007 Google re-launched their personalized search program and that combined with other moves at Google this year have led me to believe there is much to be understood in this area as we move into 2008. These issues are extremely important for consideration in your marketing efforts so get strapped in for the ride.

This guide was originally a **4 part series** on the subject recently that covers *WHY* it is important as well as *HOW* it works and *WHAT* the SEO enthusiast should do to compensate for such changes.

We have put them together with some minor edits in this document as well there is a link at the end to a TON of resources and further reading

We hope you enjoy the journey and find it useful in your future SEO endeavours.

*It's all about YOU!*



**Discuss this topic on our forums;** <http://forums.site-reference.com/topic/7215/The-Ultimate-Guide-to-Google-Personalized-Search/>

**More below;** Part I

## Part I - Why Google Personalized Search is Important to You

I know we've been down the road of fear and loathing with personalized search before. I know that most folks **never felt the need to worry about it** – all smoke and no fire it would seem. I know that once a year or so there are new concerns about what personalized search might someday mean to the average SEO practitioner, (back to 2003?). So why would I hammer the head of this well beaten nail yet again?

I believe **some events last week** have brought new light onto this topic.

For the uninitiated, Google's Personalized Search is a service that attempts to get to know you and your searching habits better, in hopes that it will be more relevant in the future from culling your ongoing activities.

Or as **Google likes to put it**; *"search algorithms that are designed to **take your personal preferences into account**, including **the things you search for** and **the sites you visit**," which they believe ultimately will, "have better odds of delivering useful results".*

I find the use of the term '*better odds*' interesting, if by design or not, since much of the underlying technologies incorporate a probabilistic model for delivering results.

You could call it '*educated guessing*'.

Getting signed up for a Google account is pretty easy as it is automatic across **Gmail, AdSense, Orkut, Group Alerts, Google Analytics** and many other services. Personalized Search is turned on by default and as Danny Sullivan put it, *"I completely missed that this was added as a default choice to the **new account sign-up page**. In fact, I missed it twice, as I tested the system by making two different accounts."*

So what has changed you asked? Well, let's add to that mix the **Google Computer** and **Google-Phone** (OS and partners) to also consider.

**More below**; the not so distant future

How a Computer and a Cell phone  
could change SEO...



## The not-so-distant Future

Envision for a moment if you will, a time far, far away... 2 years from today (*a long time in technology land*), where we see this type of savvy consumer;

1. Talking on their Google Phone
  - Searches via Google
  - Use G-mail
  - Jacked up to Google Earth
  - Other Google services
2. Using their Google Computer
  - Google Desktop installed
  - Uses Google toolbar enabled FireFox for surfing
  - Searches Google via multiple access points
  - Uses G-mail
  - Social activities (including Google properties and partners)
  - Other Google services
3. Logged into account at work (because it will be easy to synchronize)
  - Searches Google
  - Checks G-mail
  - Social activities (*even at work? Never*)
4. Has a Small Website (maybe a Baby Boomer AdSense Retirement Plan)
  - Uses Google Analytics
  - Uses G-Checkout
  - Networks via Orkut/LinkedIn

Can you see this person? Or even a partial match? I can - and it has me thinking a lot more about personalized search and **how it affects the process of optimizing a site**. With these developments more and more people, if they realize it or not, will be logged into Google services than ever before. This in turn means targeting a given term becomes more **elusive and fluid an undertaking**.

That is nothing new to those that have followed Personalized Search, what is new, is the delivery system or more appropriately, the collection system. With Google now mobilizing into more devices, users being able to track themselves across multiple platforms will be at a premium. I see a great deal of '*personalized searching*' going on in the near future.

**More below;** the not so distant future cont'd

the not so distant future cont'd

Further to that, these same methods can also be applied to which Paid Ads that the end user clicks on in order to adjust them according to perceived conversion preferences – *behavioural targeting* if you will. That means these issues apply **not only to SEO folks**, but the PPC crowd as well, and there is much to consider.

I believe understanding aspects related to personalized search and user performance metrics will be important for the successful SEO/SEM consultant in the years ahead.



**More below;** time to get personal

## It's time to get personal

The main thing to understand is that a given document in a set of search results can be valued or de-valued depending on;

1. the number of times it is selected from a set of results
2. the number of times it *wasn't* selected
3. sites with similar characteristics of a selected document
4. amount of time and depth on spent a given selection
5. bounce rates for selected items
6. historical behaviour on the above (seasonal fluxuations?)
7. location of result relative to searcher (especially important for Mobile)

No longer can the SEO practitioner think simply in terms of **ranking for a main index query result** since there are so many other potential rankings for documents that aren't as readily available in the traditional sense. Theoretically rankings could seemingly drop a few places but traffic actually increase due to a niche crowd following that is assisting your rankings via personalized search activities and being popular among a given sub-set of users.

We may have to gauge the efficacy of a SEO campaign by actual conversions (traffic) instead of merely achieving rankings in the main targeted index (.com , .ca , .co.uk). I would have to think that **keyword research would be more important than ever.**

Considering it is largely driven my **user performance metrics**, you can also assume that those able to write better Titles and Meta-Descriptions would have an advantage as getting the user to engage with the SERP listing upon initial presentation would be at a premium. Quality content as well would begin to take on a **more meaningful role** than it has in the past, as bounce rates and user satisfaction now starts to play into actual search results rankings.

Many SEO professionals haven't given much thought to the ramifications of personalized search as it hasn't developed much reach in the general public – until now. With the proliferation of Google services across multiple platforms and devices, **more and more people will be using personalized search**, if they realize it fully or not.

**More below;** the Future

## The Future

As one **Googler** put it;

*"In the future users will have a much greater choice of service with better, more targeted results. For example, a search engine should be able to recommend books or news articles that are particularly relevant - or jobs that an individual user would be especially well suited to."* -

A sort of '*Universal – Personalized Search*' if you will; At least this job won't get dull anytime soon, huh?

I would like to take you a ½ step further. What if all of this data was also added to user performance data from the fortunate souls that managed to get away from the grasp of Google? You know, those of use without a Google Computer/Phone or Desktop rolling? No problems, they can be tracked via cookies, Google ToolBar, IP address and even cell tower triangulation (or so **I heard Bill muse**).

Sure, the signal one would get from this data isn't the greatest, but it does speak soft whispers in the search engineer's ear I would have to imagine. By combining the known data and the unassigned user data we could certainly come up with some type of signal that would affect even the core organic rankings.

This is not a wild stretch of the imagination either. There are a few recent Google patents that support such a system; but more on that another day. The main point is that recent activity in the form of the Google Computer and the upcoming Google Phone applications, will undoubtedly raise the number of Google Personalized searchers which is something to ponder.

If you haven't started to wrap your head around the concepts of **personalized search and user performance metrics**, it may be time to consider it. The more avenues Google finds to acquire and track consumers, the more prominent a position personalized search aspects will play in the world of search engine optimization.

**More below;** Part II – I have seen the future and it is VERY personal

## Part II - I have seen the future and it is VERY personal

### Personalized Search and User Metric SEO

So have you been listening? You know, when I was saying that **understanding Google's 'Personalized Search'** would be very important moving forward in the world of SEO? Sure you did, but you simply blew me off 'cause we have **all heard this before** and no one in the industry seems to be making much of a fuss, right? Why listen to this whacked out wandering web Gypsy? He's cute and kinda funny... but he doesn't really live on the cutting edge right?

Well straighten up and listen here my apathetic apostles lest you flounder in **SEO purgatory** in the years to come. There is a new wind a blowin' and the Good Ship Google has set a course that most certainly has ramifications for all of those seeking SERP nirvana.

### We are the Google – Resistance is futile

When we left off I was talking about the pervasive nature of **Google accounts over a variety of offerings**, all of which automatically assign you a Google account and have personalized search turned on by default. Even the venerable GreyWolf ranted earlier this week about the **Borg and his Google desktop** and how he struggled to turn off the Personalized Search aspects buried within it's deepest bowels. We will be haunted by the ghost of personalized search (PS) for years to come my friends, **heed these warnings well**.

The **Google computer** is just loaded with data grabbers from the obvious Google Toolbar, right down to the operating system, Google Desktop and more. I think it is safe to surmise that the G-puter will be around for a while since **it sold out** as fast as a bottle of *Chivas Regal* during dollar days at the local hooch shop. We can also assume with its minimum specs (and bargain price), that these **aren't exactly the power users** that will be able to unlock the mystery to exorcising the personalized search demons, if they even know that it is there at all.

Now let's add to that the other new born babe in the Google kingdom, the **G-mobile; or 'Android'** as it has aptly been dubbed (that name still makes me feel all warm and fuzzy). This little fella is most certainly no small fry and with a **\$10 Million dollar prize** for the best new applications for it, he is patrolling the streets with a pretty big carrot on that stick. Should your voyeuristic nature leave you pining for a peek; check out the **Demo Video for Android**, (link in resources). Do you really think anyone is going to wrestle with those little buttons to try and disable personalized search? Think again.

**More below;** Google the social butterfly

## Google the Social Butterfly

If that hasn't begun to bend your beliefs to that of which I speak, then **let's get social**. Google is pressing forward in the Social Space as well. Remember, that when you sign up for many of the Google properties, you get a Google account with the ubiquitous, ever-present, personalized search turned on by default. The more properties, services and devices, the more ways there will be to end up using PS without even knowing it.

Among Google's strategy in the Social space is the recently announced '**Open Social**' an open platform for developers to create applications geared at the Social web-space and they have **a pretty impressive starting cast** right out of the gate.

Among other partners, one heavy weight of note is **MySpace**, which is actually still **the # 1 social networking** site that there is (sorry FaceBook, maybe next year). They top out with more than 100 million unique visitors per month, as of September. Then we also have little known Google networking site, Orkut, introduced in January 2004, is in sixth place in worldwide page views, with about 25 million unique visitors in the month September - no small potatoes there farmer boy!

## Welcome to SEO 2.0 – A brave new world

And why stop there? Why not start getting into some other markets by adding **Google TV** and the **Google Magazine** while we're at it right? I am going to crawl way out on a limb here and venture a guess that, **should these plans come to fruition**, the happy end users will also get a nifty little Google account set up with.... Oh come on... let me hear you say it... with personalized search; snuggled deeply under the blanket.

It will make perfect sense for people to be logged into their Google account at all times to access information and preferences across multiple platforms, properties (websites) and devices. The potential **reach and implications for personalized search** is truly staggering and cannot, and I do repeat... CANNOT, be overlooked by the conscientious Search Engine Optimizer.

**More below;** User Performance Metrics and You

## User Performance Metrics and You

Much of what is under the hood is what is called '*user performance metrics*' (UPM); in simplest terms, the actions that a user takes have a bearing on future search results. This can be bounce rates, search query refinements and even calculating probable matches based on co-current searches.

Now if that hasn't gotten your attention, there is every reason to believe that UPMs could also find their way into the ranking of documents (websites et al) **in the core regular index** in one manner or another. There are a few patents that Brother Bill sent me a while back that discuss just such concepts that can be used for PS or even the regular index.

Certainly it would be what is considered to be **a weak signal**, but one cannot disregard such concepts. I do believe it is entirely possible for user performance metrics to be used in some aspect, in the regular index, though likely not as heavily weighted as it would be in a PS application. I will write about those aspects (regular search and UPM) more in the weeks to come. For now I am simply looking at the Personalized Search implications.

In the end analysis, you cannot ignore Personalized Search in your SEO toolbox; it simply must be understood. And just exactly what should you be learning about it? What steps can be made to combat this boundless behemoth and seemingly user controlled rankings?

Move onto Part III for some thoughts on the technical aspects involved and how you can leverage them.

**More below;** Part III – How Personalized Search Works

## Part III - Google and Personalized Search: How Personalized Search Works

### What every SEO should know about personalized search

Up to this point I have explained some compelling reasons to give personalized search concepts a second look in your SEO efforts. Most of the reasons related to the increasing pervasiveness of **Google Accounts**, **Personalization** and **User Performance Metrics**.

#### We established;

Google Search is **King**

Google accounts are **pervasive**

Google Computers **are hot**

G-Mobile gives **another avenue**

**Open-Social** brings reach

Google **TV** and **Magazines**? O come..on...

So Google Battles Microsoft....**for world domination**.

And of course.... Google accounts and ultimately, Personalized Search are even more pervasive than ever - Right? Ya follow? Do ya? Good me mateys...moving along.



### What is this Personalized Search and Why Should I Care?

Personalization is simply **an attempt to deliver more relevant and useful results** to the end user (searcher/surfer) and minimize less useful or potentially unlikely results. In a personalized search world, one important element exists that makes it desirable to the end user; **the ability to customize**, through their actions, or passively, the results that are returned to them in future sessions. Be it of a more useful set of results, or a set of results with less irrelevant, or Spammy entries, it has some attractive features.

Now, let us now begin to imagine how over time this system would also begin to augment the results with related content to selections which you preferred (historically) by trying to **understand your surfing, reading and clicking and even scrolling patterns**. What now begins to emerge are search engine rankings that are based upon a variety of **User Performance Metrics** (UPMs) as well as the more traditional ranking mechanisms.

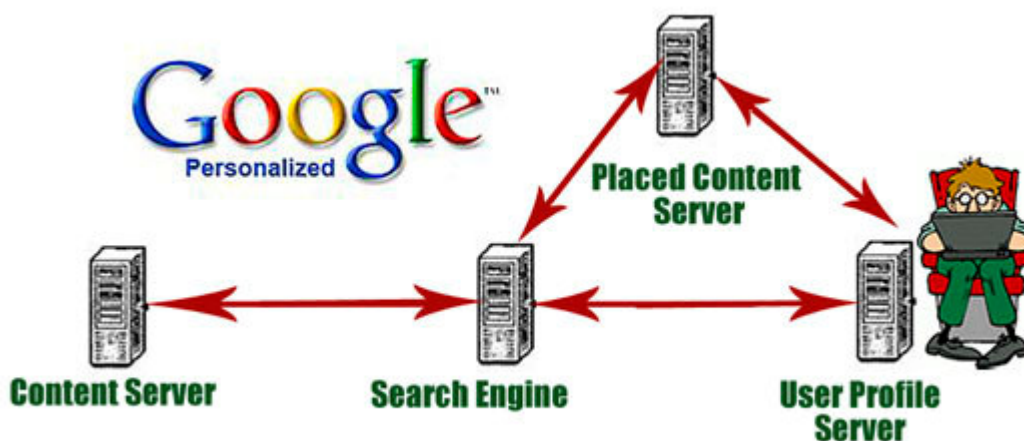
**More below;** How personalized search works cont'd

How personalized search works cont'd

A world that is more in the end users control, and less in the hands of marketers or those seeking to manipulate traditional ranking systems.

Maybe someday the **Google Toolbar** or **Firefox Browser** (whom Google funds quite well) on your logged in, *cross-device/platform Google account*, will have something similar to a **StumbleUpon** 'thumbs up/down' type of application. The below cited patent also describes as; "a *remove feature selectable object within a web browser application window*". So via web interface or ultimately the toolbar, options avail;

*"Sometimes the search results include a web page that the user deems undesirable. This web page may be deemed undesirable by the user because the web page is spam, the web page relates to content unrelated to the user's interests, the web page contains content that the user dislikes or finds offensive, or for some other reason."* -- From the Google Patent; **Removing Documents**



Potentially, the end user may choose to remove an entire site, not merely a single document by; "providing a first option for removing the document; providing a second option for removing a site associated with the document.". Is that a resonable assumption? Certainly not. I just want to expand your ability to imagine the possibilities moving forward towards a better understanding.

Regardless of what some search optimizer shaking his fist at the almighty Google overlords may delude themselves into believing, it is **not an altogether un-attractive prospect** for the searcher on the go. Once again, assuming they realize it is happening at all in their cross device, multiple platform Google Web-world.

**More below;** how personalized search works cont'd

How personalized search works cont'd

One does have to consider that **a web spammer could only manipulate himself** (excuse me sir?) with query spam to rank in such a system where individual users or themed groups of users had some editorial control. It would make a great selling point... added to the previously assumed prevalence from the last time out.

Not only do you have the convenience of your multi-platform Google account, but it fights Spam too!! Once again, not un-attractive prospect to the end user or the marketing department.

### So what does it mean to the Search Optimizer?

I thought we'd look at some of **the inner workings and concepts** first before devising a battle plan for attack. To begin with, there are a myriad of ways the end users could potentially affect the search results which we can break down to a certain respect at this point. The easiest place to start is by looking at the potential components of a '*personalized query strategy*'. In creating system the following metrics could be used in creating '*personalized ranks*';

**Previous search queries** (probabilistic query refinement); As an example; if the searcher has been recently searching the term '*diabetes*' and submits a query for '*organic food*' the system attempts to learn and presents additional results relating to organic foods that are helpful in fighting diabetes.

**Previously presented results** (may be omitted in subsequent queries); results that have been presented to the end user can be omitted in future results for a given period of time in exchange for other potentially viable results.

**User query selection** (and flagging of similar content); Past selected or preferred documents can be analyzed and similar documents or linking documents can be used to refine subsequent results. Furthermore, certain documents types can be seen as preferred, in what would be a combination of Universal Search concepts. Common websites that accessed can also be tagged as 'preferred locations' for further weighting.

**Selection and Bounce rates** (and user activity on document/site); an editorial scoring can be devised from the amount of time a user spends on a page, the amount of scrolling activity, what has been printed, or even what has been saved or bookmarked. All can be used to further refine the 'intent' and 'satisfaction' with a given result that has been accessed.

**Advertising Activity** (performance metrics); the advertisements clicked on can also begin to add to a clearer understanding of the end users preferences and interests.

**More below**; secondary considerations

Some **secondary considerations** could also involve;

**User Preferences** (DemoGraphic and Geographic); the end user can also provide specific information as to personal interests or location specific ranking prominence. It could also include favourite types of music or sports, inclusive of geo-geographic preferences such as a favourite sport in a given city.

**Historical User Patterns** (re-introduction of past removed or further augmentation); a persons surfing habits over a given period of time (eg; 6 months) can also play a role in defining what is more likely to be of interest to them in a given query result. More recent information ( on above factors) is likely to be weighted more than older historical performance metrics within a set of results.

**Past visited sites** (non SERP activity via account, tool bar or cookie based); many of the above metrics, such as time spent and scrolling on a given web page or historical patterns and preferred locations can also be collected in a variety of ways (invasive or non-invasive). Cookies actually save resources for the Search Engine, an added benefit.

**User editorial control** (tool based voting system); the end user via toolbar or customized search results, could have the ability to 'rate' search results and sites/pages they visit. This can then be factored into future results in creating probabilistic matches.

### Now we have a Blue Print

A few of the key elements surrounding all of this are the **historical and probabilistic aspects**. By that I mean it is not only sites you have shown an interest in previously, but a virtual '*educated guessing*' as to other items that may be of interest based upon the user profile and performance metrics. It is not strictly based upon the end users actions, it seeks to learn. We now have a pretty good idea of what can be involved for delivering the results, we can move onto **identifying ways we can account for such issues** in the daily grind of optimizing sites and documents for best possible success within these concepts.

I do not see this as a major leap for the SEO enthusiast to deal with. I dare say there are opportunities to leverage personalized search for those that can find the way through these not-so-murky waters. All we need is a little (social) reverse engineering which isn't exactly a foreign term to marketers I am sure.

**More below;** Part IV – the Art of personalized Search

## Part IV - Making Personalized Search Work for You

### The Art of Personalized Search

Welcome to the final leg of this journey into what Personalized Search *is* and why webmasters and SEO professionals should take the time to understand it better. This time around we will look at what you can do from an SEO perspective to best leverage **Personalized Search Optimization**. So far we looked at;

**Part I; Why Google's Personalized Search is important** – examining the pervasive nature of Google accounts and Personalized Search now and in the future

**Part II; I have seen the future and it is VERY personal** – Looks at recent business moves by Google and touches on User Performance Metrics

**Part III; What every SEO should know about Personalized Search** – takes apart the various methods under the hood.



Sure, this has been a long winded diatribe, but I wanted to make sure that this was not taken lightly. Besides, I started writing and it simply kept growing and growing, the concept was more important than brevity in the end. If you hadn't come across it, there was some interesting speculation about a recent **Google Labs experiment** that is worth also reading.

It sheds yet more light upon **concepts relating to User Performance Metrics** (UPMs) in the Google Search kingdom.

Let's get underway....

**More below;** user performance metrics are personal

## User Performance Metrics are Personal

A term we have bandied about a few times during this qudra-post is *User Performance Metrics*. Whhaaaaatt the...?? Ok, In simplest terms UPMs are **data sets a search engine measures** from prior information retrieval processes and activities (searches) including query data, user information, and document information. The search engine seeks to get to know you and your preferences better by actively or passively **collecting information on what you do**.

Not only what you select/interact with from a given set of search results (or the Ads served with them), but what you do not select or have minimal interactions with (bounce rates) can have an effect. These metrics can be used to create a greater probability model for future search result sets. Ultimately the search results could have **active user interaction collection** in addition to more passive collection methods (Google desktop, toolbar, IP, cookies, Google account et al).

You can think of it in terms of conversions in many ways. The better a given item performs becomes another factor in deciding what it is and its **relative value**. So when you think of 'ranking' in a world of UPMs you start to move into how best insight interest in a target page beyond merely throwing links at it with heavy duty keyword densities and targeted title tag.

There are a new set of challenges that need to be addressed and added to the play book.

## How to Leverage Personalized Search

What is important to conceptualize is that is a land of true ever-flux where not only the actions of a single user, but many (inclusive of user '*types or groups*'), can effect how you rank ultimately. We cannot as readily engage such a system as we would traditionally in the world of SEO. It is also worth mentioning that the usual suspects such as **PageRank still apply**.

The Personalized Search (PS) aspects (or any UPM method) are merely further ranking methods in addition to traditional systems that exist. This is simply one more consideration to be had. The level of concern depends on the weight given such metrics and the prevalence of personalized search overall. What we'll be looking at is what areas of existing SEO/Site Development need to be looked at to leverage the challenges that dealing with PSO presents.

**More below;** Areas for Consideration

## Areas for Consideration;

**Demographics** – you should also be sure to leverage any obvious demographics that may apply to your site. If it is geo-graphic, topical (sports, politics) or even a given age group, ensuring that this is targeted effectively is important in that **the ‘topical’ nature of personalized search** can group results prior to even ranking them. If your site is not clear in each of these areas, it risks less weighting to tighter demographic starting document sets. Even your off site activities (link building, Social Media Marketing etc..) should be as tightly targeted as possible.

**Relevance Profile** – of particular interest is potential categorization in terms of topical relevance. Ensuring that your site provides a strong relevance train would be particularly valuable. Much like phrase based indexing and retrieval concepts, probabilities play a large role. When refining results the search engine looks at related probable matches. Through a concerted effort with on-site and off-site relevance strengthening, you increase the odds of making it to a given set of results in a world of ‘flux’. It never hurts to review the concepts surrounding **Phrase Based Indexing and Retrieval** as many of the related patents addressed deriving concepts/topics from word groupings (ie; phrases).

One would also have to imagine that tightening up the relevance profile in your **Social Media Marketing efforts** would also be beneficial to a tighter topical link profile. Furthermore, many topically targeted visitors that enter a site may bookmark (or passive collection) your site which adds to the organic search profile without ever being included in a search result. As such, there are many exterior opportunities to be had beyond the traditional off-site SEO.

**Keyword Targeting/Phrase Strategies** – building on the above concepts of a *relevance train*, building out from your core terms will be important as far as understanding search behaviour. The long tail as we know it would be targeted towards potential query refinements in a given subset of searcher types. Building out logical phrase extensions and potential query refinements would be something to look at. Furthermore, with fluxuating ‘personalized ranks’ we would measure SEO success in actual traffic and conversions which puts term targeting into a new light as far as nailing money terms and having a cohesive plan that targets **query refinement long-tail opportunities**.

**Quality Content** – this has always been the mantra of many and it continues to carry weight. In considering the value of a web page or a site, **user interaction becomes a consideration** as far as bounce rates, time spent on page and scrolling activities are concerned. Producing compelling and resourceful content would be at a premium to best leverage these tendencies of the system. If a searcher has selected and interacted with your site on multiple occasions your site would be given weight in their personal rankings as well as related topical and searcher types. The more effective a resource the greater the ranking weight increase.

**More below;** Areas for Consideration

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**Search Result Conversion** – Those skilled in the art of crafting compelling TITLES and Snippets will have a leg up as they would likely have **higher conversion rates** when appearing in a set of results. A search result listing that *‘converts’* better than others in a topical/user space would be given greater importance. Working with the page *‘TITLE’*, *‘Meta-Description’* and snippets takes on a more important role in your SEO efforts when adjusting for personalized search. I dare say using analytics and a form of split testing would be a great advantage as far as satisfying what not only ranks, but converts.



**Look deeply into my pixels... deeply...**

**Freshness** – another area I feel may be important is document freshness in that people could be able to set default date ranges or the system could passively begin to see a pattern of a user accessing more current content. You may have had a *‘money page’* that has been ranking for a year that may no longer be getting all the traffic that it has been used to. I would look at updating such pages with fresh information, or creating new related pages and pass the flow via internal links. Depending on the nature of the content (searcher group profile) more current content may be more popular over the larger data set and thus newer content would be weighted more over-all.

**Print Page/bookmark me** – some aspects of the system can also consider **user activity with a page** as far as book marking or printing it out. The easiest way to deal with that is making it easier for the end user to do so. Take care though as *‘print pages’* can also lead to duplicate content, be sure to ensure they are not to be indexed. Make it especially easy for peeps to use the Google Bookmark feature :0)

**Site Usability** – from a search spider or the end user perspective, having logical architecture and a quality end user experience is also at a premium. The actions within the site begin to form the *‘theme’* that becomes its **topical benchmark**. If similar searcher types embark on similar pathways and related actions (bookmark, print, navigate, and subscribe to RSS) then this will give greater value to those target pages within that community of search types. This also furthers the relevance profile.

**Analytics** – I see a strong need for the use of analytics in understanding traffic flows both organic and paid, understanding common pathways, bottlenecks, the paths to conversion, and much more. This data will be of immeasurable use in dealing with many of the factors that can affect SEO in a UPM world. I dare say some more reading on behavioural targeting is even in my future :0)

**More below;** Areas for Consideration

## What's Next?

We are increasingly faced with the challenges presented by a **seemingly instable world of search** optimization, which in many ways is true. There never were guarantees in the first place though; this is simply another adaptation that is part of the gig. Many of the aspirations of SEO revolve around targeted traffic. The ramifications implied here mean little more than affecting a **more targeted campaign** that is measured in traffic and conversions in as much as it is by merely ranking for a term. Rankings will be more fluid and attaining value in SEO will be measured by the ability to bring in targeted traffic more than it is today.

And for now we gently coast back, drop anchor and this leg of the journey has ended. We are back in port and the crew has opted for ale over sea water. Beyond this point we'll be starting to look closer at **User Performance Metrics** and their potential role in the future of search in general. I know Bill (Slawski) touched on this area once more with analysis of; ***Method and apparatus for learning a probabilistic generative model for text***, which deals with trying to understand words in the context of phrases and concepts much like the phrase based indexing patents.

It also leads into probabilistic models for a given search query to define concepts, topics and user groups. At some point I am going to dig into that one as well as a few others that relate to these concepts.

While we're on **User Performance Metrics**; Bill also recently discussed some other passive and active methods of UPM collection with **Desktop Search and Personal Information Management** which is based upon ***Systems and methods for ranking implicit search results*** and ***Systems and methods for constructing and using a user profile***. These are also worth looking into as far as conceptualizing what factors can affect search rankings outside of traditional thinking. There will be more to come on this topic to be certain :0)

**Conversations** – there is an ongoing thread on this topic in our forums at; <http://forums.site-reference.com/topic/7215/The-Ultimate-Guide-to-Google-Personalized-Search/>

**Resources**; you can find a HUGE list of resources including other articles around the web and the bulk of the Google patents and other posts that were used during the researching of this series. You can find them at the end of Part IV in the series here; <http://www.huomah.com/search-engines/search-engine-optimization/the-art-of-personalized-search-optimization.html>

**About the Author**: David Harry is a Search Marketing consultant, industry blogger and author of the **SEO Handbook**. He has been writing for **Site Reference** for more than a year and a half and is an active member of our forums.

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