

It's not how big it is, it's how you use it

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Last week saw the resumption of the search engine size wars in which one major search engine claims to be larger than its rivals, prompting those rivals to rapidly upsize themselves. Yahoo fired the first round at Google, claiming to have over 20 billion objects accessible in their database. Google, which can only claim about 13 billion objects fired back with questions about measurements, basically stating Yahoo was mistaken or misleading in its claims.

Others got in on the act and the blog-o-sphere was full of stories about Yahoo's obsession with size. By the beginning of this week, the search marketing community was fed up with being fed tripe about the importance of size, as reflected August 16 th in Danny Sullivan's post to Search Engine Watch, " Screw Size! I dare Google and Yahoo to Report on Relevancy "

The frustration with the major search engines felt by serious search marketers is real. Our clients don't care about size and neither does their money. They care about being found when searchers are seeking information about products or services they sell. They care about potential clients and their ability to present information to them. They care about being relevant.

Search engine users don't really care about size either. Given the mind-boggling amount of data available via even the smallest of the major search engines, most users have no idea of the depth of search results, as they tend to look only at the Top10 or 20 listings. Even if Yahoo returns thousands more references than Google for any given keyword query, both know that only the first 20 links tend see any measurable traffic. Again, it isn't about being the biggest; it is about being the best. Being biggest does not necessarily mean being best.

There is no real scientific method of proving which search engine is the biggest, and no real way to gauge which one is best. That's not to say folks aren't trying though. The thing to remember is, "best" means something slightly different to every search engine user.

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