


Generating High Quality Traffic and Conversions with Bing

Transcript and 10 Point Checklist Duane Forrester

Want to gain as much knowledge as possible out of Marketing Speak? Read on below for a full transcript of this episode, as well as a **10 point checklist** that gives the next, real steps you can take to take your marketing to the next level.

MARKETING SPEAK 

HOSTED BY **STEPHAN SPENCER**



“There is a higher quality of searcher on Bing and they converted a higher rate and generally, convert for more money; so in theory, the Bing customer would seem to be a better customer. The problem is the volume and there’s no getting around that right now.”

DUANE FORRESTER

10 STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TODAY

**Want to step up your marketing game?
Here are 10 steps that can move you closer to your goals – today.**

- Use basic SEO, and then focus on user experience and quality content. The happiness of the customer will have a much bigger impact on your success.
- Set up two or three team members on your Webmaster Tools administrator account. This is important as a safety procedure, so if there was a malware flag, you'll both be pinged right away.
- Reach out to Duane on Twitter @DuaneForrester. He responds quickly and can answer any questions that you have.
- Try to avoid hyphenated domain names, as they can seem spammy and it may end up being a constant battle with search engines.
- While looking at where your traffic is coming from, keep in mind that many of Bing's partners may show up separately and your traffic from Bing may actually be higher than you thought.
- Use a service like Cortana to help keep you keep track of notes, respond to messages, and give you reminders.
- To see Stephan and Duane speak, check out Affiliate Summit East. They will be keynoting together.
- Use the SEO analyzer and keyword tool within your Webmaster Tools account-it's free data that will help you attract organic traffic.
- Connect your social accounts with your Bing account, that way the system knows they are legitimate and will trust them, and show them in the search results.
- Set up rules for Bingbot within your account so that you can control when it stays away, which can speed up your site for searchers.

Transcript

S: Hello, and welcome to another awesome episode of Marketing Speak. Today, our guest is Duane Forrester. He is a long-time friend of mine in the internet space. He's an author and an internet marketing and SEO expert. He used to head up the Webmaster Program at Bing at Microsoft. He has-how many

books do you have? One or two?

“He contributes to Search Engine Land, Duct Tape Marketing, and Entrepreneur Magazine. You’ve also been written up or you contributed to The New York Times and Inc.”

D: I've got two books out now and I'm halfway through the third one.

S: That's awesome! So, the two books that are out now are How to Make Money With Your Blog and Turn Clicks Into Customers. He was a moderator for

SearchEngineForums.com. He has a blog at TheOnlineMarketingGuy.com. He contributes to Search Engine Land, Duct Tape Marketing, and Entrepreneur Magazine. You've also been written up or you contributed to The New York Times and Inc. Is that right?

D: Yes.

S: Dang! That's amazing!

D: That's the pull, right? When you work at Microsoft and you're one of their noted experts, you get pulled into these things.

S: Yeah. Well, that's some serious credibility right there. Currently, Duane is the VP of Organic Search Operations with Bruce Clay Incorporated. That company has been around since the beginning of SEO.

D: Yup, 20 years now!

S: Amazing! I started my SEO firm back in '95 as well so about the same timeframe, I think.

D: Yup! Well, this is the thing, right? I mean, there are a few of us still kicking around from that era.

S: Yeah, that's right and we still look pretty young surprisingly!

D: Well, the internet hasn't done us in by now.

S: Yeah, right! Let's see, one last point that I'll make from doing Duane's bio here before we launch in the questions is that you are an advisor to startups and large corporations. You even spent time advising the staff who maintain the White House website-not the White House porn site but the WhiteHouse.gov.

D: Yes!

S: The legit website of the White House.

D: Yes!

S: That's impressive!

D: That was a lot of fun! Again, through the Microsoft side of things. It was incredibly insightful to spend time with those folks and see what the process looks like from their side. It gives you completely different appreciation for how they get work done and the considerations they have to make.

S: Yeah.

D: It actually makes big corporations look agile.

S: Great! Speaking of big corporations, with Microsoft, you were there prior to Bing even existing.

D: Yeah, Good Lord! Almost a year well over eight years ago now! I was running the SEO program for MSN and that's how I got started there. It was a very interesting time. There were only one or two other SEO's in the company and we managed to grow that company-wide with more talent and more skill. We had our own internal SEO conference so that anyone who was in that space worldwide from Microsoft could come to talk with us and talk with engineers from the engine. Of course, at the time, it was Live Search and then we went through Kumo and then I think, it morphed into Bing after that.

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S: Yeah, wow!

D: Yeah.

S: Ancient history, right?

D: Oh, yeah!

S: Prehistoric internet times!

D: Exactly!

S: So, let's start with the whole Microsoft's side of things because, I think, Bing doesn't get enough credit for what they've accomplished. I mean, they've created a pretty decent search engine...

D: Thank you!

S: I'm a Google user myself but of course, all the credit should go to you.

D: Yeah, exactly!

S: But most people are 100% focused on Google and Bing isn't even an afterthought so, let's address that for people. What's the reality? Because if you look at services like comScore and you look at the market share percentage-okay, it seems like it's not an insignificant percentage for Bing and especially because it powers also Yahoo-but then, when people give anecdotal evidence, Bing just doesn't do anything for their online businesses. These are huge e-commerce sites-big online businesses-and it's all Google all the time and that doesn't really jive with the stats that you hear from market share percentages. How important is Bing in the big picture not just, particularly from an SEO standpoint, but also from a paid search standpoint because we could be investing dollars in Google Adwords or we could be investing it in Bing? What do you think?

D: Wow, that's an awesome softball, Stephan! I really appreciate it. So, okay, let's dig into this though

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because it is kind of a fascinating area and obviously, Bing being near and dear to my heart for a lot of years. The reality is, you look at the statistics and they're going to tell you that-and I'm going to short-form this and paraphrase some things-31% of the search market belongs to Bing. When you actually dig into it, there's a lot of the partners that Bing powers so Yahoo, Ask, and all these different products that they power as well. Any kind of search that's coming through an area like, I don't know, Siri, Alexa, and these kinds of things, they all start to play a role in this and that's going to lead us to a point shortly that I'll get to and that is the importance of Bing to Microsoft and the role that it actually plays across those products. However, it's interesting to see comScore and how they report it. The reality is, some businesses will tell you that a reasonable percentage so, 25-27% of their traffic is flagged as coming from Bing, which would seem to back up what comScore is talking about. However, the reality is, most of the reporting platforms out there break it all out as separate items so unless you do the hard labor work to stitch it all back together again, it looks like Bing is a much smaller percentage for you. The fact is, it's probably larger than your analytics as leading you to believe immediately. However, that doesn't really tell the whole story. A big part of that conversation is around the quality of the traffic and the conversions that come from that and that's a real focus for Bing. It always has been a real focus for Bing where they're very clear about the quality of search results and that it matters more than anything else. The experience that the searcher is having matters more than anything else and that's whether it's desktop, mobile, it doesn't make a difference, right? That is an acute focus for the teams there. They actually do a pretty good job. By now, I use both services back and forth just to test. Every week or so, I switch back and forth to see what I'm seeing and to be honest, I actually still prefer the Bing results. I find them to be as accurate not just in terms of reporting the top expected results but also, in terms of finding the little gems-the kind of longer tail things-that I hadn't expected that are really worthwhile. In any conversation with search, things start to be a little bit skewed now. We see a lot of people who are using voice search and that gets reported slightly differently and then you see a lot of people who are using, especially for local search, the maps to actually initiate that search for local and that skews things in a different direction. I know Bing has made significant investments in the mapping area. I've been using what we currently have today for a long time as an internal preview thing when I was still there and it blew my mind. It was a dramatic step forward in usability and usefulness and now, everybody sees this. We see Google with similar functionality. The idea of being able to use the data from things like voice search to help understand intent-that's very important, which kind of brings me to that next point that I had alluded to earlier, which is the importance of the data to the company as a whole. The data that Bing collects, aggregates, and actually has access to is incredibly important to all of the services. People are perennially asking, "Is Bing going to go away? Is it going to be shut down?" No. There's no reason why the company would walk away from that and I agree with that. The data that they get from that is so useful across so many of the other products and services they have, it makes perfect sense to have this, which kind of brings up a bit of an elephant in the room, which is the whole idea of competition and the difficulty in what it takes to start a search engine today because, clearly, the space has been defined. We know who the 800-pound gorilla is and so, there are still businesses thinking, "Hey, you know what? We'll get this started. We'll take a slice of the pie. It'll be lucrative for us," because they see the PPC rates and they think, "If we

get a half a percentage of overall traffic come to us and then our click rates look like this, we'll be making money hand over fist here!" The truth of the matter is, it is an extraordinarily large amount of money to start a search engine today. It is not an easy task. These engines like Google's algorithm is what? 17 years old now or something and they've had to update it and I like to think of all of the updates that they do as kind of Band-Aids or patches for problems that have grown over the years and now, they're forced to look at it, forced to face it, and they fix it and that's why we get an update. Bing has had a slightly more direct approach because the algorithm had longer to bake before it was a public algorithm. A lot of those learning curve items were just built into it naturally so you see fewer updates and you see more things happening slowly in the background and having less of an impact just because of that. It's like maintaining an old car

“you see fewer updates and you see more things happening slowly in the background”

that's a classic versus buying a new car and just driving it. There's that type of comparison but it really is a fascinating space. I'm still, obviously, in love with this space.

S: Yeah, but you're kind of the Matt Cutts of Bing so...

D: Yeah, I was!

S: So you're a little bit...

D: Slightly biased?

S: Slightly biased.

D: Maybe. A little bit. I like to think that I can still be objective about it. I will say this: I know the teams that are there, they work very hard at solving the problems that they face. There is no getting around it, however, to give you an example: on my Webmaster team, at our largest, we had the eight people who applied to the product when we launched Webmaster Tools. Most of those were engineers and then there was me doing double duty as a product manager and a program manager. I only recently had a glimpse of what I was actually up against and there's like hundreds of people who applied to Webmaster Tools at Google. That imbalance exists across the entire thing. Google is focused on search, revenue from search, paid search, and mobile-Bing is focused on it but it has a much smaller footprint to have that focus. There are some economic realities. It costs money to run a search engine. You need to offset that with revenue from pay-per-click. The way you make the revenue is, you need to have enough volume, and that it's all there. I remember the early days when there were actually queries coming up and there were no paid ads to serve against it because nobody was buying it so you had blank areas. That's not the problem today.

They've crested that Rubicon and they're on the other side of that but there is still a volume issue. When you're looking your stats on your website-and I have people every day now whom I work with-and the fact of the matter is, when your analytics are telling you that 97% percent of your traffic yesterday came from organic search and its source was Google, why would you focus on other? It's a tough sell. The facts though are that, there is a higher quality of searcher on being and they converted a higher rate and generally, convert for more money so to your point about e-commerce, in theory on paper, the Bing customer would seem to be a better customer. The problem is the volume and there's no getting around that right now.

“the length of keywords of the average keyword that is typed in at Google and Bing, it is noticeably longer for users of Bing versus users of Google. Google's average keyword length, I want to say, is 1.2 or 1.7 and Bing is closer to 2.4, which means you get a much more descriptive query”

S: So, where do you get that data from that says that the better customer is on Bing instead of Google?

D: Oh, interestingly enough, there was actually a third-party study done on this. I want to say, a couple of years ago now or two to three years ago. It was just an independent agency who did this test with all of their clients and they actually found note that, the people on Bing clicked at a higher rate so they converted at a higher rate, came to the website, actually bought more products, and bought more expensive products. There is another,

again, third-party piece that kind of corroborates this a little bit. I'm going to grant you a slight bit of a stretch but if you understand the space, you may understand where I'm coming from here. The fact of the matter is, the keyword depth-the length of keywords of the average keyword that is typed in at Google and Bing, it is noticeably longer for users of Bing versus users of Google. Google's average keyword length, I want to say, is 1.2 or 1.7 and Bing is closer to 2.4, which means you get a much more descriptive query on Bing, which makes it easier to be very clear in your matching and easier to get a better quality result, resulting in that click-through rate. If we expand that logic a little bit, you could make the case that the people who are asking the better question may be a little better prepared or further down the funnel in their own mind toward the purchase decision. It's kind of anecdotal but you see these pieces here and there, thankfully for me, I've been able to make these arguments and these aren't my numbers. They are not numbers that we made up inside the company so I was grateful for that but, again, I'm going to come back to it-volume.

S: Yeah.

S: Yeah.

D: It would be great if all of those things were true and it was a 50% market share scenario then suddenly, you've literally got that world-beating issue right there and that is something that I know the teams are



working hard on. I mean, that's their goal. Their goal is not to be number two-their goal is to be number one. Slowly but surely, they're making it forward. I mean, the whole thing started and the industry looked at them and went, "Good luck with that!"

S: Yeah.

D: And here we are, what? Five years later? And it's a legitimate player.

S: Yeah.

D: And it has been for years! I will always remain proud of my days with the teams at Bing. I've seen them do amazing things and impressive things.

S: Right. And maybe the lack of competition and lack of volume with Bing is to your advantage if we're talking about paid search because the competition level isn't as high so you get better deals on Bing ads than you would on Google Adwords.

D: Oh, unquestionably! I'm not going to lie to you, right? I am dead certain that some of the really big, high-volume, high-value keywords, the cost-per-click numbers are probably every bit as high as they are on Google. However, the fact of the matter is, if you take a look at the average across Bing, the CPC's are much lower.

S: Mm-hmm.

D: And if you are getting that higher-quality person who converts more, depending on what you're selling, this could be a very lucrative position for you to be in.

S: Yeah. So, Bing Webmaster Tools-what's the reason for someone using that? I see so many of my clients, not even having a big...

D: Yeah.

S: Webmaster Tools account. I asked that they to set it up and give me access to it because they haven't, normally, set it up. They've got Google search console but nobody ever thought to set-up Bing. Give me a convincing argument why listeners need to set up a Bing Webmaster Tools account and use it.

D: Because if they set up a Bing Webmaster Tools account, it will put a smile on my face.

S: That's good enough reason right there!

D: Oh, no! There are some actual reasons you want to do it. First and foremost, anytime a search engine is willing to give you data, you want that data. It's free. It gives you a good eyeball into what's going on. Second, there is data shared inside the Webmaster Tools that Google doesn't share inside search console and if you have that data for you and you have the market share numbers, you can extrapolate and set up some trend analysis from that so we can give you some pointers and directions that normally wouldn't be seen through your search console in Google. You want to make sure that you control the robot. Now, as it is, if you don't have a Bing Webmaster Tools account, you are not in control of Bingbot. Inside the Tools is a very fine-tune control that Bingbot listens to that allows you to do things like telling it that when my customers are on my website, you stay away. Now, in the middle of the night, when there's nobody around, you can come take whatever you want, as much as you want, and consume all the bandwidth. You can set up and customize whatever you want that flow to be-it's all in there for you. There is a very rudimentary SEO analyzer built in there so a client could actually go look at this and get some basic pointers on, "Hey, you know what? There's a report here telling me that this is a bad thing or this is kind of middle of the road, and you might want to look at this at some point but it's not that big of a deal." There is a keyword analysis tool based on organic traffic built in there so rather than using the tools from Bing ads and from Adwords that pull from the paid search side of things, this pulls data from the organic search within Bing. There are differences in how those keywords stack up so that tool is kind of a nice

thing to have. There's a series of little things like this, right? Within this tool set, you can link all of your social media spaces and all the official areas for your business. You can link them all back so that Bing immediately knows to trust all of those spaces and that they're all interconnected. It's all about setting up those signals and building that trust with the engine within the index and the algorithm and then, they literally take their cues from these things. There's absolutely no question that there's value in the tools- especially at the low, low price of zero. It makes complete sense that people would take a few minutes and set this up and the data is there whenever you want it. The beauty of it is, you can just take the API if you want as well and have all the data commode via API, and then you don't have a log into the account anymore. So, set it up and get it up and running. One thing you do want to do- and this is a bit of a hack that I recommend to people- is, for your business, set up an email alias, have two or three people who are the administrator on the Webmaster Tools account, and have them receive that alias. If there's ever a malware flag on your website, the alias will get pinged right away and you'll know that Bing is flagging you for malware. Malware may not exist on your website but it might exist on the third-party's website so if you're pulling ads from a third-party and they are infected, we will see that and we will flag you because you are a direct link to malware so you definitely want to be getting those updates and you want to be able to take action on them. It won't come through the API but you will get an email from the system when those things happen so it's worth having that set up. The reason that you want two or three people as administrator in there is, if one of your staff leaves, then the control of your Webmaster Tools doesn't suddenly evaporate because you have other people who can go in and remove that person who doesn't have access anymore. That's a safety procedure for your business.

S: Mm-hmm. Absolutely!

D: Yup!

S: So, what are some of the different signals? How do they vary for Google versus Bing?

D: This is interesting because I spent a lot of time talking with Matt Cutts and presenting with Matt. Obviously, over my twenty years, I spent a lot of time learning about these things and let's face it, reverse engineering as much as I could. There's not a huge gap in the signals, okay? There are degrees within each signal that may matter more to Bing versus Google and vice versa. I know that both engines want to talk about quality of user experience being an important thing and they do but Bing is very picky on quality of content and authority of content. If you're not doing well in Bing, generally, that's a signal to you that your quality isn't where it needs to be. With Google, the quality tends to be a little more empirical, right? The depth of content- the number of words you have on the actual page whether it's deemed to be shallow and therefore out, or things like your page load speed. Both of those are still important to Bing but maybe, Bing is willing to send you to a page that loads a half second slower but they know that you're going to

have an excellent user experience when you get there because you will stay engaged. Therefore, they're looking for that more engaging scenario. We've seen the practical upshot of that is, the quality of the actual search results has gone up noticeably over the last few years and not just gone up but any time we talk about this, we have to talk about the head-end of queries on the internet and then, the long tail-end of queries on the internet. It takes an inordinate amount of work to be at the top end of the high quality on the head terms but that pales in comparison to the amount of work it takes to have excellent quality on the long tail because let's face it, you're putting resources into something that very few people want and that's a tougher ROI to measure and justify inside the search engine. Ultimately, the signals are generally the same but it's the degrees to which they're looking at these things and now, it gets even more confusing because

“Bing has a separate crawler for mobile just like Google does. The queries are handled differently. There are different algorithms looking at these things. I mean, a lot of this work parallels and there's only so many ways to get to the ultimate destination”

now, we get this whole split across like mobile so if you're a mobile-ready site, or a mobile-focused site, or is the intent of the query mobile, or is the source of the query mobile, is it local, and all of that starts to skew it as well, right? Bing has a separate crawler for mobile just like Google does. The queries are handled differently. There are different algorithms looking at these things. I mean, a lot of this work parallels and there's only so many ways to get to the ultimate destination in search and eventually, you start crossing lines a lot between the engines.

S: There are some signals though that are talked about as being part of the considerations for Google that are not really true signals. For example, likes, retweets, and different social signals are not an actual part of the Google ranking algorithm...

D: And yet!

S: Well, it's kind of a follow-on effect when you get a lot of social sharing, you end up getting in front of a lot of influencers, and you end up with more links

D: Exactly!

S: But as a signal itself, I mean, I love getting lots of social shares and buzz and so forth. I am all about telling my clients, “Hey, we've got to create remarkable content that's link-worthy and buzz-worthy,” and we

want to use social media as a platform to get the word out to spread and get a snowball effect happenings...

“Bing had a relationship with Facebook and Twitter that never existed with Google. Google only had access to the public data, they didn't have access to the back-end data that Bing had”

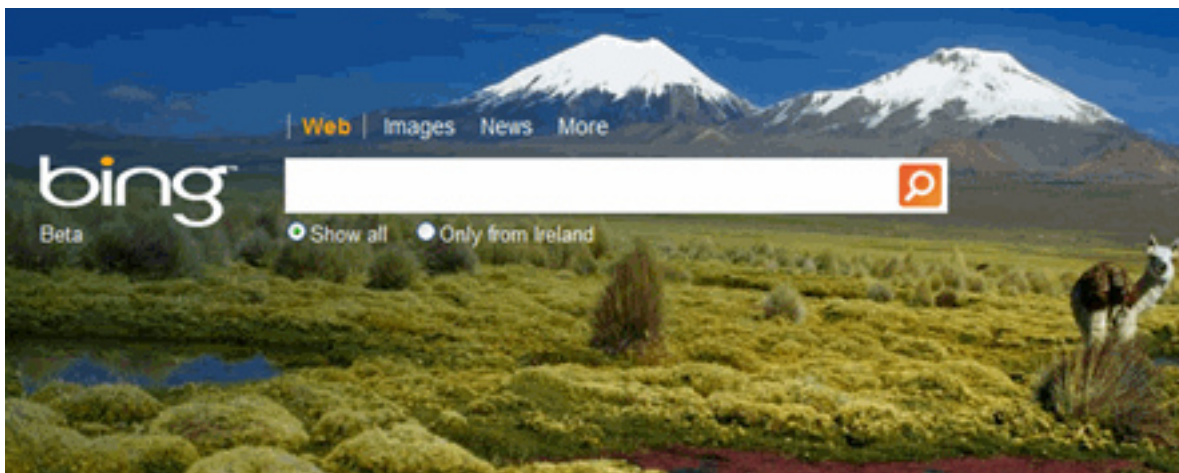
D: Right.

S: So you roll the snowball down the hill and it gets big really fast but you've got to start with something and social media is the best place to start. Now, that all said, Google has, many times, gone on record to say that they're not counting social signals in a ranking's algorithm-likes, retweets, plus one's even.

D: Yeah.

S: What about Bing though?

D: Yeah, this is interesting because for years, Bing had a relationship with Facebook and Twitter that never existed with Google. Google only had access to the public data, they didn't have access to the back-end data that Bing had, and that's why you saw different features like the right side bar within Bing that we



could bring in. If you were logged in, we could bring in things from Facebook and directly show the results. In the right-hand side bar, we would show the results that are related to what you're talking about so, if I called up a query on Stephan Spencer, it would literally bring up everything from Facebook related to Stephan and I would see all of that because you and I are connected, I'm logged in, and there's all my data. The actual effect on ranking, it's, again, I have to say, it's the follow-on effect, right? Where it's like,

look, this guy is gaining traction. A lot of people are listening to this voice. He doesn't listen to too many, more people listen to him, and he's in demand. There's something important about this. We should pay attention to it!" so there's a forcing effect to get the algorithm to look at you but for it to decide suddenly, "Stephan's a rock star!" Well, there needs to be a lot more than just the social signals, which goes right back to the ranking, and do you meet all of the rest of the criteria? Kind of the way I describe it to people is, when you walk into a shopping mall and you see a crowd of people standing around a window, you're kind of curious to know what's in the window and so, you walk on over and you see what's in the window and you find it fascinating so you stand there with everybody looking at it. Eventually, the crawler comes in and it looks over and says, "Hey, what's so popular?" and it comes over to look at what's in the window to determine, "Hey, you know what? Which boxes of mine does this check off? I better share this. I better put this out there in front of people because this looks like it could be a trend worth developing." They haven't made an explicit decision that it is worth ranking highly but they have made the decision that it is worth testing to see if it develops into something that is worth ranking highly.

S: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

D: That is only ever going to happen over time and time is measured in seconds for some things and in months for other things.

S: Well, Matt Cutts once said that-it's a famous statement-"If the fact that the webmaster owns a cat is going to help improve the search results, we'll use it in our algorithm, right?" so...

D: Yeah.

S: They'll test anything to see if it would improve the search results.

D: Absolutely! Oh, listen, when I was there, we were running tests every hour every day constantly. This is why you see people constantly reaching out and saying, "I saw this. Did anyone else see this today?" and they capture some random screenshot of something and you're like, "Nope, I haven't seen that." That was a test and the beauty of the search engine is they run a test. They can run a test in an hour and get millions of responses and then spend the next two weeks analyzing it all to determine, "Was it worth it?" and "What can we learn from it?" and apply to the next test. Those things run 24/7 constantly.

S: Yeah!

D: That's part of search.

S: So, what about user-engagement? I'm thinking like, bounce rate, for example.

D: Oh, yeah! So, there is a thing where I click on the search result, end up on your page, I know instantly you're not what I want, I come back, I click on the next result, and that pattern of behavior is watched so obviously, the search engine doesn't have a view of what happens if you stay on that web page or you just don't come back-they don't see that but they do see if you leave and then come back instantly. They can tell how much content was on that page and it's easy to tell the system roughly the reading speed of the average human being. With those parameters, it can get a good understanding of whether you actually consume the content on the page or if you abandon the page. The concept is known as D-SAT or dissatisfaction and you want the lowest D-SAT score you can have. Ultimately, you're testing to see whether you moved the D-SAT up or down. That's what a lot of these tests are about and not like, "Oh my God! If we test this, will it go viral?" That's not what the engine is looking for. They're looking for the subtle nuances of "Do we satisfy more people or do we dissatisfy more people when we do X?" Ultimately, when it comes to the decisions on, "Okay, we're going to run the test. We're going to see what this looks like," everybody's got a vote in the game at the back-end of that. Every group, every team, every product, they're all vying for their test to see if they can gather that data. It's a very complex thing.

S: Mm-hmm. Yup! So, if we group the things by unpaid signals and off-page signals-you have on-page signals like the title tags, headlines, keyword density, or...

D: Oh! You said keyword density?

S: Yes!

D: Oh!!!

S: But I'm going to qualify that because people talk about things like H1 tags like they make a difference and the reality is, they don't. You could test this for yourself and I'm a big fan of testing so you see that, "All right, if I have an H1 tag and I change it to a font tag, what's the impact on my rankings?" That's a valid test.

D: Right.

S: What's not a valid test and I debunked a whole bunch of myths on Search Engine Land a while back all 72 of them and then I got a bunch of haters after me talking about "Well, this actually is not true," because of course, he or she was going to lose his job because the boss saw my article. And so, they've got to defend themselves and then write, "No, it's not true. In fact, I just recently added a bunch of H1 tags onto my site and my site popped in the search results! Well, in reality, it was an invalid test because they didn't have keyword-rich headlines at all.

D: Exactly!

S: And then they added them so, you've got this thing of correlation versus causation. They see something happening, they're not teasing out the actual variables, and saying, "This variable caused this impact," so people talk about, still, keyword density but keyword density never was important-it was keyword proximity.

D: Yes.

S: People still talk about H1 tags. In fact, Google has an SEO best practices document that still mentions H1 tags so how do you suggest our listeners tease out the valid stuff from all of the misinformation and disinformation? Because there's so much talk about duplicate content and, "Oh, it's a penalty!" when it's not a penalty, to talk about things like getting your Meta tags and H1's right, your keyword-density, and so forth. How do you clarify things for somebody who's not an SEO expert, who's listening to this podcast, and wants to have a high-performing website in both search engines?

D: Right. I'm going to invent a metaphor for this one: You need to clean up your house before you invite people over for the party. It's very straightforward. The best practices around SEO, whether you know what they are or not, are very readily available. If people cover the basic best practices and then move on to focusing on the quality of their content, the quality of user-engagement, and the actual user-experience people are having, they will have a much bigger impact on their success than if they do a tremendously technical deep-dive on all of these little arcane things across SEO. I have always been a proponent of this approach. You know no searcher is looking for the best optimized website. That's not what they got online for this morning. They have a problem. They need to solve their problem. My problem this morning? I need to order parts for a three-year-old barbecue so when I went searching for those parts, I didn't give a crap who had the best optimized website or whether that web domain actually had a bunch of hyphens in it or not. No, I didn't care. What I cared about was, they were the actual brand name Hertz from the manufacturer. That's what I wanted. Next, give me the best price. After that, here's my credit card. I'm done with you. Be gone, internet! I've got some grilling to do. When it comes down to it, I kind of share

your mentality on this, Stephan, where there's a lot of different things people can do and I see these tests. Businesses that we work with do these tests wrong all the time, right? They're like, "Well, yeah, we added H1 tags and we saw a big lift!" and it's like, well, you had nothing before and then you added a keyword-rich statement that explains the content on the page. There's like, four reasons that could have impacted your search ranking positively and none of those four is the fact that you turned on an H1 tag. That's not it. The algorithm is not sitting there with a sucker in its mouth going, "Oooh! We got a fresh H1 tag! Let's reward them!" No, it's not that. The reality is, it comes down to wowing the user and being an authority. These statements are truer. They're harder to work too, they're harder to define, and they, generally, take a

“There’s like, four reasons that could have impacted your search ranking positively and none of those four is the fact that you turned on an H1 tag. That’s not it. The algorithm is not sitting there with a sucker in its mouth going, “Oooh! We got a fresh H1 tag! Let’s reward them!” No, it's not that.”

lot more effort to realize than going in and rewriting a Meta description tag. I mean, yeah, it's valuable but you can do these things-these basic elements. You can quantify them and say, "Look, here's the template on how we create content and we have to check these pieces off," but those things are not a hugely-deep list. Most people don't have to go that deep on it. If you're an established business, if you're a large business, if you're a multinational business, or if you're being an e-commerce business, you're going to have all kinds of technical stuff that we've got to go deep on. No question about it. That's why businesses like ours exist but for the average website that's out there,

their biggest problem is the fact that they think they produce quality and they do not. The quality of content is lacking and the quality of user-experience is lacking. If they can hit those two things and nail the sweet spot on them, the SEO won't matter a bit. The engine is still going to rank you highly because you're in demand.

S: Yeah. Well, you mentioned that you don't care, as a consumer, if there are a bunch of hyphens in the domain name but that's an indicator that it could be a spammy website.

D: Oh, I completely agree! For full disclosure here, I'm actually a domainer as well, among other things that I tend to do in my life, so I'm very aware of that. In my case, I'm usually pretty good at sussing out whether it's a spam website or not. In the example that I did use, in fact, this morning, the business is actually a hyphenated domain name and I know it's the legit location. But yeah, I know, it's a very good point and those are the types of signals that the spam teams are looking at. There's a whole other team within the

search engine and they're looking at all of those different things. They're looking at any signal they can get their hands on to understand if something is legitimate or illegitimate and if a trend is going to pop up, what's that going to look like. It's a constant battle for them.

S: Yeah. Is Bing more susceptible to spammers than Google?

D: I'm going to say no and I say that because-it was funny-I spent about two years going back and forth with the Spam Team just on random, whatever topic came up and what was amazing to me was, every time I asked the question, I was like, "Hey, what about this?" That had been on the radar for years so they're every bit as savvy as how I perceive their counterparts at Google to be having interacted with Matt and talked with him a bunch of times. I had full confidence in their ability to meet these challenges and to deal with them. The bigger challenge that they face is the challenge of not making mistakes. That's the constant demon in their world and I have to believe this is on Google's side as well, right? The not-throw-the-baby-out-with-the-bath-water scenarios where we've got this hyphenated domain and look, there's one legitimate one in a hundred spam and so, how do you tease out the legitimate one from everything else? How do you educate the algorithm that it's not all or nothing but it actually has to tease that out? That's where the updates happen at Google. They happen at Bing-they're just a little more subtle and in the background but they have to make those things happen or else, the algorithm is kind of dumb and that doesn't work long term.

S: Right. Well, where are we heading in terms of the Bing algorithm? Is it heavy into machine learning and then into artificial intelligence like Google is? They're betting a lot on RankBrain and it's going to just really massively increase over time. The domain of RankBrain versus what the more simplistic algorithms are calling.

D: Yeah! What's funny about this is, we're sitting here talking about "simplistic algorithms" and ten years ago, these things were like, the bleeding edge of the technology to do this stuff. Today, it is machine learning and baseline level 1 AI. I can't speak for Bing on exactly where they're at but I will say this: Microsoft is a technology company and I know Microsoft is heavily-involved in these areas so it makes total sense that, even when I was there, they were working with these things and they were using these services and these tools so I expect there to be growth in it. You will most likely see the manifestation of this through the services like Cortana. That's where you see these things manifest because as Cortana makes jumps forward and it's smarter, more intelligent, and seems to be more human-like in its abilities and responses, what you're actually seeing is the growth of machine-learning behind that. That's what enables that, right? That's not some group of people who just released some new database of responses that happens to be there and your question happened to match something in the look-up table and you got the crafted response. No, no, no. That's not that stuff. We're talking about the ability to say, how big is the

Eiffel Tower? Where is it? Where can I eat there? And that string of conversations that you and I, as humans, pick up intrinsically and we understand what it means, the machine behind Cortana now also intrinsically understands your flow of conversation and that “it” and “there” means Eiffel Tower. To me, it’s fascinating. I looked at things like Siri. I looked at things like, less so Alexa because Amazon’s very restricted with what they allow Alexa-her playground is very small compared to the Cortanas of the world. I will say, I switched, five or six months ago now, over to an iPhone from my Windows phone and I dearly miss having Cortana Native on my device because by far, Cortana, was the best thing out there. I could have conversations with it through my truck and it would read my text messages automatically for me and it would do auto-responses for me if I wanted it. I mean, it was really impressive with its usefulness so I’m kind of like, all right, get the phone out there, make it a world-beater, come on, guys, impress me, because I’ve got a phone burning a hole in my pocket here and I can’t talk to it as much.

S: Right. Did you see the movie Her?

D: Yes!

S: That was a great movie!

D: Yeah. And I’ll tell you, not to give away the plot for those who haven’t seen it but I think, if that was our reality, I think, we kind of deserve the ending.

S: Yeah, right!

D: Sad truth but it is what it is.

S: Yeah, I think we’re headed towards a brave new world, it’s going to be really interesting. Some folks who are listening, I’m sure, haven’t even really heard of Cortana so, let’s clarify that that’s, essentially, Microsoft’s version of Siri.

D: Yes!

S: And it’s getting more sophisticated and so is Apple’s Siri and the other competing language-recognition tools where you can speak to your phone or your computer and it will speak back to you and will understand you so, that’s the advent of the LUUI or the Linguistic Universe User Interface, which is as

important of a historical milestone in our evolution as the advent of the GUI was-the Graphical User Interface. When we switched from DOS to Windows and prior to Windows, the Mac-I'm not going to argue who was first there. I mean, you know who is first even though you work for the me-too company. It's going to be really fascinating looking back a few years from now and saying, "Wow! That was when everything shifted and we started talking to our computers more than we were typing on them," because it is not effective and efficient to be using your fingers and pounding on a keyboard. That's going to sound so antiquated ten years from now. It's going to seem ridiculous.

D: I remember, several years ago, I was at an all-employee meeting at Microsoft and when we have an all-employee meeting at Microsoft, they literally rented the baseball stadium in downtown Seattle because it's the only venue large enough to hold that many people. One of the guys came out. I think, it might have been Steve Ballmer or maybe one of the other EP's came out and then, he did a demonstration. This is just before Kinect was launched. They did a demonstration with Kinect in an office setting and the capabilities that it had. It was mind-boggling! I have yet to see this. I'm not aware that any product is coming out that will be released in this way but you want to talk about a paradigm shift in how you manage your workday? Having an artificial-okay, I'm not going to use artificial intelligence on this-having a digital assistant who is capable of executing things within its control at your command; having a laser-based scanning system that can understand the topography of the space you are in and your location within it, which then, means it understands gestures and; having things like "smart white boards," all of these things coming together mean that, in a very three-dimensional sense, you are active in your business day so that conversation that you were having with someone on the phone, where you are being emphatic with your hands to emphasize things, all of that can be captured so that people can understand not just "Stephan said this," but "Stephan said this and it has a priority of zero because it's clear that it was the most important thing that he was saying at that time in that meeting," and there's a lot of that nuance that's lost so I'm all in on voice control. I love the idea of being able to come home and tell my X-box to order me a pizza, and it will, literally, connect me through Skype on the X-box to the pizza shop, and then, I can just talk to the person to say what I want, they have my credit card information, and my food shows up.

S: Yeah.

D: We're there! I think for you and me, Stephan, and for our generation, for me, it still feels a little bit strange talking to my hardware but over time, you get used to it. The millennials who are coming up behind us got zero hang-ups. With the amount of wealth that those folks are coming into and will be controlling moving forward, this is the shift that's going to happen and businesses need to be ready for that. If they're not prepared for it, they will be left behind in the digital dust.

S: Yeah. Things are going to change so drastically and we don't see it because we think linearly.

D: Right.

S: And everything's happening on a logarithmic or exponential scale.

D: Yup! We wake up one day and suddenly the world's not what we thought it was anymore.

S: Yeah.

D: That happens to all of us all the time. The difference being, in the tech world, we've been exposed to it for so long with Moore's law and these kinds of things that you kind of get trained to predict that there's going to be the next big jump. It's going to happen or the reverse happens which is, memory is so cheap and bandwidth is so cheap. Now, we don't even think about bandwidth. We don't even think about storage capacity. It's just there and it's not a problem.

S: Yup. Fun times ahead!

D: Oh, yeah!

S: Mobile, video, digital assistants, linguistic user interfaces, and all this is just scratching the surface.

D: It really is.

S: There's a big iceberg that we don't really see under the surface and we need to prepare for it nonetheless even though we can't really see it. So, one last question here...

D: Sure!

S: This goes back to Bing again because I mean, who else am I going to ask about Bing? What are some query operators that are some of your favorites for Bing? I'm very familiar with all of the Google search operators because I live and breathe Google. I actually wrote a book all about the search operators that's called, Google Power Search, but I'm not familiar with the Bing operators. Frankly, I find that, a lot of times, the operators I would expect to find, don't exist in Bing.

D: What I was going to say is, a lot of them will exist. They'll transfer over. But there are a lot fewer of them that work within Bing. Here's the most important thing to take away from this though, the fact of the matter is, the bigger concern you have is the accuracy of the data being returned when you use the operator because the simple stuff like site colon, for example. It's not accurate, it hasn't been for years, it's not likely to ever be accurized. I'm always telling my staff here at the company to be careful when they pull those numbers and we're going to go talk to a client because those numbers aren't accurate and they're highly-changeable.

S: Right.

D: So, the result that you get today may be very different than what they see next week when they run it. It could be off by orders of magnitude.

S: Yup, so you're talking about the number of results returned.

D: Exactly!

S: It's an estimate. It's a very inaccurate number.

D: Yes.

S: And even if you're just looking individually at what the search results are that are being returned, you're getting a sample.

D: Yes.

S: So say, you have a 10,000-page website, you're going to get with Google, 700 and some results maximum and that's when you've added the admitted results back in by clicking that link at the bottom of the search results.

D: Yes.

S: With Bing, is it the same situation?

D: Generally, yes. It is a similar situation. I'll tell you why this happens: Every query that's run is a hard dollar cost of the search engine. I mean, there's a server spinning up somewhere, there's a hard drive, those things burn out, and a human being needs to walk down there to replace it-all of that stuff costs money at that scale and so, very few searchers ever use a query modifier. It's the weird, arcane people like us who use these and while we may use these to excess, they still don't even come up to a rounding error as a percentage against all queries that happen and so, the resource that is applied to them? None. There's no positive return on the investment for the resources being applied. That's in term of ram capacity, that's in term of storage capacity, and that's in terms of priority for pulling back data from the index. All of it is just an orphan, which is why you see that volatility in all of that stuff. It's also part of the reason why you hear people like me and, formerly, Matt but now, Gary and John and everybody else, saying use the data in Webmaster Tools and Search Console, because we actually know that the data in those areas is being maintained but the data you're pulling from the query operators, we know, is not being maintained. There is actually some helpfulness being tried for in those statements. I think what the engines want is for those things to kind of go away because they know it's a hard dollar cost to them that doesn't return anything because you're not clicking on search results and then going, "Oh, wow! Look at that! There's an ad! I better click on that and make somebody some money" or "I want that product!" No. Not happening!

S: Yeah, it's true. These different specialized query operators tend to get deprecated over time. The plus sign got deprecated. The link colon query got deprecated.

D: Yup!

S: Very cool! So, this has been a Bing-full of information. Thank you so much for sharing all your experience and wisdom with us on Bing, in particular, and SEO, in general, as well. So, we're going to be keynoting together at Affiliate Summit East!

D: Oh, yeah!

S: We were just on a panel at Affiliate Summit West a few months back and so, in July, we're going to be rocking the stage from one of the keynotes so that'll be fun. Any listeners who are going to be at Affiliate Summit coming up in, when is that? Late July?

D: Yeah, I think it's the third week of July or something like that.

S: So, definitely come up and say hi.

D: Absolutely!

S: If people want to reach out to you to continue the conversation, ask you questions, or whatever, what's the best way they can reach you?

D: Probably the easiest way is @DuaneForrester on Twitter. I'm there all the time. My pings ready to go so if people reach out to me, I can respond quickly.

S: Perfect! All right! Thanks, Duane, and thank you, listeners! Be sure to come to the MarketingSpeak.com website, grab the show notes, transcript, and checklist from this episode. We put a lot of time and effort into getting each episode transcribed and creating an action-based checklist for each episode so that you can not just passively learn this information but take away stuff that you can apply and get some benefit from in your marketing so be sure to go to MarketingSpeak.com. Thanks again and see you next episode! This is your host, Stephan Spencer, signing off!

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Stephan Spencer is an internationally recognized SEO expert and bestselling author. He is the co-author of [The Art of SEO](#) (3rd edition - August 2015), author of [Google Power Search](#) and co-author of [Social eCommerce](#), all published by O'Reilly. Stephan founded Netconcepts, an SEO and interactive agency in the 1990's, and sold it to Covario in 2010. He invented a pay-for-performance SEO technology called GravityStream that was also acquired and is now part of Rio SEO. Stephan's recent SEO clients have included such retail giants as Zappos, Sony Store, Quiksilver, Best Buy Canada, Bed Bath & Beyond, and Chanel. Stephan has spoken at countless hundreds of Internet marketing events, including all the major search & e-commerce conferences (SES, SMX, PubCon, Internet Retailer, Shop.org, eTail, etc.). He's been a contributor to the Huffington Post, Multichannel Merchant, Practical Ecommerce, Search Engine Land, DM News and MarketingProfs, to name a few.

CONTACT:

Email: stephan@stephanspencer.com

Address: 6516 Monona Drive # 114,

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