

BING’s Application to B2B

This paper provides information for business-to-business marketers who want to know how they should consider Bing in their search engine optimization (SEO) strategies. It is based on the white paper, “Bing: New Features Relevant to Webmasters,” by Microsoft’s Bing Webmaster Center Team (June 1, 2009).

We tested the Bing search engine using terms and products typical of our technical B2B client base. This paper presents our findings and interpretations for B2B marketers. The features and functionality of the Bing search engine will evolve during its introduction, so this initial analysis will be revisited on a regular basis.

Key Takeaway

Bing requires no special SEO techniques that are not already included in a thorough, traditional SEO program. It does *not* require completely new pages or a new site, as implied in some articles and blogs. A specific excerpt from the Bing white paper summarizes this key takeaway:

“All of the benefits [of Bing] are available to websites that invest in SEO. Webmasters can help their websites get more visitor traffic by helping Bing best represent their content to searchers in our SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages). Webmasters can easily do this by adding unique titles and meta descriptions to each page. If webmasters don’t provide search engines with good, keyword-oriented, well-written caption source data, the resulting captions created by algorithm, no matter how hard we try, won’t represent your website as well as those websites whose webmasters did provide this unique and important data.” (“Bing: New Features Relevant to Webmasters,” p. 23)

Key Features

As do other search engines, Bing relies on a proprietary algorithm to determine SERP placement. Bing relies upon the page title and the meta description to support most of the “caption” information it supplies.

Bing includes a variety of features that sets it apart from Google and other search engines. Many of these are helpful to a B2C audience, especially novice searchers. The relevance of these features to B2B remains to be seen, since some of them are not available at the lower volumes characteristic of B2B searches.

Feature	Description	Godfrey’s Review of B2B Applications
Five Results Provided	Bing shows only the top 5 results because the development team found the click-through rate (CTR) of categorized results was higher than the CTR for SERP results 6–10.	This feature may not be beneficial to B2B audiences since technical users review more results and go deeper than average consumers. Categorized results may help offset that preference, if the Bing team is right. But it may slow adoption curve.
Explore Pane	Categorized Results pages: Groupings of search results related to search topic. Includes Quick Tabs, Related Searches.	Generally B2C centric.

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Quick Tabs	Bing attempts to “proactively anticipate the searcher’s intent,” providing the most frequent ending point for past, similar searches.	Seems to require the high search volumes associated with B2C.
Related Searches	A list of common searches related to the search query.	Related searches were provided for AFM, an abbreviation for “atomic force microscope,” though none were the product. But product came up at Nos. 3 and 5 results listings.
Search History	Since many searchers try multiple approaches, Bing allows them to access them all quickly.	This feature may be helpful to B2B searchers.
Results Improvements	Attempts to provide better results by offering secondary tasks, like checking flight info, checking shipping, etc.	B2B volumes do not seem to be high enough to give Bing enough data to generate Best Match, etc.
Standard Results	Regular level of confidence.	Standard results occurred for all searches attempted.
Best Match	Top-ranking results at a very high level of confidence.	No “Best Matches” were provided on the B2B searches attempted.
Instant Answers	More info and richer results than with a traditional result—could be rich media.	For geothermal heat pump, a search offered videos. Other searches offered dealers.
Caption Improvements	Bing uses “captions” to describe the descriptions under the links.	By adding even more information, Caption Improvements may add value for B2B searchers.
Document Preview	On rollover, a document box pulls additional text.	Document Preview worked for geothermal heat pump, boom lifts.
Data Extraction	Bing draws caption info from body copy, not just meta data.	Bing can extract data from Flash, which is used by many B2B marketers.
Page Translation	Translates from content in other languages.	May be useful for a global B2B company.
Local Listings Center	Local business searches.	This feature may enable B2B companies to link to local distribution. It could be a useful part of promoting local dealers or a co-marketing program.
Enhanced Wikipedia	Wikipedia content added in directly.	This feature may help users grasp technical information.

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