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Bing: The Promise Of The Next Act

by [Chris Copeland](#), 1 hour ago

At the end of "Casablanca," Humphrey Bogart's character, Rick, utters the famous line "I think this is the start of a beautiful friendship." And in those words, we find the current feelings from advertisers towards the newly credible Microsoft search entry, Bing. So far, the data is good. Query shares are up, and advertisers are reporting positive click and ROI trending. Overall, good news for a space lacking a viable forward-moving competitor for too long.

I recently spent a day being served up a weird mix of Kool-Aid by the individuals tasked with creating and selling the latest, and to date, greatest effort by Microsoft in the search space. The Kool-Aid was spiked with a heavy dose of caution. Every positive data point was met by a word of caution. I appreciate the actions speak louder than words mantra adopted lately, but guys, the goal isn't to kick Ask.com's tail, it's to pass Yahoo at the least and put a bit of competition back in the market.

That being said, the next phase of Microsoft's effort will shape the likelihood of being a real contender vs. the best of the rest. That is the evolution of search ad platforms. Due to a NDA, I can't get into the full discussion of what might be coming, but rather, I'll share a question that hit me as I discussed the options in the ad portion of the Bing results page. The question is a simple one: If everyone is adamant that 10 blue links is not the future of organic results, then is the top/side navigation advertising in text format really the best option for paid search?


We've seen Yahoo introduce with some fanfare, and less than stellar execution, the Rich Ads in Search format. We've started to see the emergence of search retargeting coming to both MSFT and Yahoo, but through it all, the core search advertising experience remains the same. Now, one could contend that on a flat, text-dominant page that flat, text ads are the right match. But what


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about inside Image and video searches? What alternatives might companies consider of value that would be more consistent with the format of result?

Google has always built behind the commitment to user experience. Advertiser value is rarely of consideration when developing a results page. Too often I find it be a convenient guise under which to operate. Just as Yahoo is now recommitting itself to something it thinks it can win, being the Internet's gateway. Never mind if anyone else actually sees that as a highly profitable proposition, but to the search experience, it means a superseding of the drive to invest in even long-standing search products, such as Paid Inclusion/Site Submit Pro, not to mention the advertising platforms.

And that brings us back around to Microsoft. The phrase nothing to lose and everything to gain has never been worn so well by a behemoth of industry. You can feel the enthusiasm to differentiate and stand out. A desire to say, "Screw it, we're not just better than Yandex and Naver globally" but we want to pick a fight and win on our terms against Google and Yahoo. And that, from an advertiser standpoint, is a good thing. We need more competition and choices. We also need partners who are willing to explore new formats, layouts and models for not only consumer gain, but advertiser value.

And if that is the next phase of the Bing plan, then we are truly headed toward a beautiful friendship.

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