



VOICE SEARCH

UNDERSTANDING VOICE SEARCH & ITS BUSINESS IMPACT

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WHAT HAS CHANGED?

The evolution of search continues to take place and it's taking shape in two very specific forms. The first being the Search Engine Results Page (SERP), where we've seen a shift from ten blue links to a page filled with robust amounts of information. That information ranges from paid search ads, organic search listings, local map packs and more, all aiming to provide utility to an on-the-go consumer.

The second shift is due to the continued advancements in technology. We've heard for years that "this would be the year of mobile." Mobile is here now and it's changing before our eyes. We are living in a search environment in which more searches now take place on a mobile device versus a desktop.

91% of mobile phone users in the US actively search on their device.¹

As search has shifted from desktop to mobile it continues to rapidly shift to a landscape controlled by artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, natural language processing, voice and digital assistants.² Andrew Ng, formerly of Baidu, estimates that 50% of all searches will be completed via voice or image search this year.² To put that 50% into context, eMarketer projects U.S. search ad spending to be \$60.41B in 2020.

But what does that mean? How do things like AI, machine learning, natural language processing, digital assistants and voice impact the way that our consumers search? Duane Forrester, VP of Industry Insights for Yext, said it best, "put into the simplest terms, voice search is the ability to talk to a device and get answers back."³

That word device is key in Duane's comments. Many people think of voice search as talking to Alexa or Google Home, but Alexa and Google Home do not define what voice search is, they are simply the devices used. Whether you are using your iPhone and talking to Siri, using your Echo Dot and talking to Alexa or in your car talking to your Google Assistant via Android Auto, it's your voice and that device's ability to interpret your voice that's the key. That's where AI, machine learning and natural language processing come into play. That intelligence powers the devices and gives them the ability to understand the consumer and provide them with the utility they desire.

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- Duane Forrester, Yext

1 <https://www.emarketer.com/content/search-in-2020>

2 <https://venturebeat.com/2014/09/20/ai-expert-predicts-half-of-web-searches-will-soon-be-speech-and-images/>

3 Yext, 2018 Publication – How Voice Search Changes Everything



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU, THE BUSINESS?

In 2019, Google reported that 90% of shoppers worldwide said they used online search prior to visiting a store.⁴ Business owners should know that in the very near future, they will have one chance, not ten, to get in front of a potential consumer.

90% of global shoppers who visited a store in the last week reported using online search prior to visiting the store.⁴

Unlike traditional web-based search, where many results are displayed as a list — encouraging exploration, engagement, and choice — voice search is all about the one best answer. This means the pressure has never been greater to get your house in order, to optimize correctly and to employ every option you can to secure an engine's trust.⁵

In the past two years, we've seen +200% growth in searches for "where to buy" + "near me" searches on mobile (ex. "where to buy gas near me"), +110% growth in searches containing "repair near me" on mobile (ex. "iPhone repair near me") and 90% growth in search interest for "best deals."⁶ Consumers are looking for answers and they are learning how to use their voice to get those answers. We all tend to type differently than we speak. "You can type 38-40 words per minute on a mobile device, but you can speak at least 150 words per minute."⁷ Voice queries are becoming more conversational in nature. Conversational search will continue to impact how your business appears when given that one chance to get in front of the consumer.

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WHAT IS OUR COX ONESEARCH POSITION?

While most search providers have similar capabilities, Cox OneSearch gives us a unique advantage because it is device agnostic. We can reach consumers anywhere they search whereas our competitors still position search engine marketing as website listings on Google/Bing.

Cox OneSearch ensures that a digital voice assistant will surface your content for searchers who are on-the-go due to its focus on the following: structured website data, conversational content, and local business listings.

Structured website data aka Schema Markups: Schema Markups gives search engine crawlers information about webpage content in a way that's easy to understand. We utilize these markups, so search engines can quickly and easily identify our clients' content and understand if it's relevant for a given search.

⁴ <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/data/global-shopper-online-search-data/>

⁵ Yext, 2018 Publication – How Voice Search Changes Everything

⁶ Think With Google, 2018-2019 Publication

⁷ Yext, 2018 Publication – How Voice Search Changes Everything



Conversational content: When creating content, we think about the questions consumers are asking and ensure that they're answered in website content. Content is written so that it's easy to understand and snippets can be easily pulled to address questions searchers ask. If you notice the featured answers box that appears when you search for something on Google, search engines pull snippets of helpful content from a site to directly answer a searcher's question. The same strategy applies to voice.

Local business listings: Ensuring that local business listings are consistent and correct across major third-party sites is key since Google, Facebook and Amazon all have their own tech stack and search algorithms. Controlling the knowledge graph that feeds into these publishers means we have direct control over the content that's surfaced. This is important when consumers are searching for businesses near them or hours of operation – search engines can go directly to the source: the business.

Our strategic partnerships with leaders in this space enable us to be at the forefront of voice search optimization for SMBs. We can power business information directly in Amazon's Alexa to take advantage of voice searches for local businesses. Through our Google and Bing partnerships, we have opportunities to beta test capabilities business listing features for SMBs. This information is being stored by search engines to power voice queries. These partnerships give us more direct control over the knowledge bases used in voice searches and allow us to more rapidly innovate our Cox OneSearch solution for SMBs.

HOW WILL YOU CHANGE YOUR BEHAVIOR?

“ **Voice is a revolution** because it's the thing that changes everything. **Voice will change how every human accesses, receives and discovers information.** ”

- Jared Belsky, CEO 360i

Voice will continue to shape consumer behavior. 72% of people who own voice-activated speakers say their device is often used as part of their daily routine.⁸ Meaning, as consumers increasingly rely on voice as part of their daily routine, new behaviors and habits are formed.

Voice search is here, and it's shaping the way that consumers will search and behave with businesses moving forward. Businesses, in addition to consumers, need to change the way that they think about this space. What happens when you ask Alexa about your business?

⁸ Google, 2018 Publication – Marketing in the Age of Assistance