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## ***Fusionbox :: Denver Internet Marketing Agency***

### **How To SEO for Universal & Blended Search Success**

Search is experiencing a fundamental change in the way results are presented and acted upon. Whether you call it “Universal Search” or “Blended Search,” it has officially arrived, and it will no doubt change the way search engine and [Internet marketing strategies](#) are created, developed, and implemented. As Internet marketers, we all know that search (and the web itself) is essentially a continuous revolution in progress. The most recent and useful stage in this revolution is the introduction of blended and universal search, in which the search engine results pages (SERPs) display a range of content in addition to text links. So far, this expanded search interface has grown to include videos, maps, photos, blogs, news, local, and even audio results.

But what can we do to keep up with these changes, and how can we leverage blended search in our online marketing efforts? Read on for some background information about the development and capabilities of blended search, and after that you'll find some strategic ideas that will allow you to prepare yourself for this next step in search.

Several months ago, the two search engines pioneering this revolution announced the advent of expanded blended search. The more well known of the two, Google, created the "Universal Search" interface, and its lesser known counterpart, Ask, launched "Ask3d" at its original address Ask.com. Google's Universal Search subtly altered the appearance of the Google homepage.

Of course, Google isn't the only search engine to change its interface. Ask3D has a fresh look too since it launched more than a month ago. Like Google, users on Ask can now search the web for text, images, local, news, blogs, videos, maps, even shopping results.

The difference between Ask and Google, however, is that Ask presents all these results on one page, while users need to drill into Google as contextual results are on different pages. So as far as the usability of blended search is concerned, Ask3D seems to have the edge. In fact, Ask's results pages are far more "universal" than those of Google. While its doubtful that Google will ever be pushed out as the dominant search engine, watch out for Ask as it grows in popularity thanks to this new interface. This dynamic duo of search will no doubt be copied by other engines. MSN and Yahoo! have already added some blended search functionality, but neither presents as well-rounded or comprehensive results as Google or Ask.

So what can you do to adapt your SEO strategies for the advent of blended search? How will this affect the way customers perceive your brand or online presence?

First and foremost, blended search will make [search engine marketing](#) (SEM) infinitely more complicated, as now marketing plans will have to cover a range of online mediums in addition to text, such as videos, images, even online press releases.

Studies have even shown that videos, podcasts, and other forms of rich content are growing more popular among Internet users. As they continue to utilize these types of content, it's important that we as marketers first develop these other types in order to keep up with the rising demand for more interactive forms of content. Users are now dictating the terms of engagement. Instead of web surfers simply reading about a product, they can not only see what it looks like, but watch videos of it in action or listen to a podcast describing it.

At the same time, it's critical that we present a consistent message across these platforms to take advantage of the brand-building capabilities of blended search. There is no doubt that blended search will increase the level of customer engagement as they interact with companies through various forms of content, whatever that may be.

Also, when combined with [social media marketing](#) strategies, blended search creates an even more powerful tool to build brand recognition, loyalty, and online presence. This evolution in the search engine interface facilitates the Cardinal Rule of social media marketing and Web 2.0: **Connect through content.**

The most important thing to remember is that we as Internet marketers must begin to optimize *all* of our content, not just text, in order to achieve high *blended* search rankings. I'll take this chance to coin the term [universal search engine optimization](#) (SEO).

Don't try to fight it. Accept change for what it is, and instead of getting angry over the fact that you've got to develop and optimize a diverse range of content forms, start thinking about how you can integrate blended search marketing strategies into your Internet marketing efforts to capitalize on your head start.

Start thinking beyond text. In the coming years, it's certain that interactive content forms will continue to grow ever more popular among Internet users. If you don't have them, you'll be the digital equivalent of an elephant trying to catch a cheetah in a foot race.

Yet simply having these multiple content forms won't be enough. All your content, no matter what form, needs to be optimized in order for it to be visible. **Visibility equals interaction.** So stop hiding and let your blended content present your brand across the digital universe.