How search giants are helping spread COVID-19 awareness

30-second summary:

- Misinformation can be even more harmful that the danger itself, Michael McManus highlights the initiatives search and social giants have and are promoting COVID-19 awareness.
- Google has made some of the biggest changes, modifying the SERPS for COVID-19 related search queries to provide all the needful information people could need.
- Google also made changes to Google My Business to help companies navigate through this difficult time.
- Facebook created a coronavirus information centre that has been added to the top of everyone's Facebook feed.
- Bing has added a quick link below the search bar on the homepage which on clicking opens the COVID-19 tracker page that has all the information you could ask for about the Coronavirus.
- Pinterest is making sure they display pins with the right information from internationally-recognized health organizations.
- More details on the initiatives Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram have taken.

There's no doubt that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) has affected everyone in one way or another and that we all know that this virus that has shut down most of the world at one point or another isn't going to go away anytime soon.

As you can imagine, with such a huge worldwide pandemic happening, there's a large number of people that are searching for different kinds of information related to the coronavirus.

For all the searches that are being done on a daily basis and all the news and people talking about the virus, there’s the potential for lots of misinformation about COVID-19 to appear in SERPs and across social media.

To help combat the sharing of misinformation, some of the major players in both search and social have been able to provide us with the right information at the right time, so that we are not being led to believe the wrong information, that can cause us to panic and worry even more than we already are.

Search giants and COVID-19 awareness

1. Google

Google has made lots of changes to both their search results and their tools to help with getting people the right information about the coronavirus as well as to help make things easy for people working from home and for businesses to be able to update their clients on a company’s status during this unprecedented time.

One of the biggest changes that Google has made to help spread awareness about the COVID-19 situation is how they have changed the SERPS when you do a search related to the coronavirus, Google will display all the information you need about the virus, from the number of cases for your given country and the world as well maps, headlines and a very well labelled “ COVID-19 alert” in red on the left-hand side that has links that open up a “zero-click” search box with the relevant information from the CDC. This also changes the SERP to correspond with the link that was clicked.

Google also made changes to Google My Business to help companies navigate through this difficult time. You are now able to set your business to “temporarily closed” without it having an effect on your site’s local rankings. Google is also letting businesses know that they should update their business hours as well as to post your COVID-19 updates.

Just keep in mind that your Google My Business account may not be functioning as expected under the COVID-19 strain and that many of your updates might take considerably longer than normal.

Google has been working really hard at making sure that the right COVID-19 information is being found and to help with this, the Google Search team is helping official health organizations get more visibility in search with a new best practices guide as well as through a private support group.

As if that wasn’t enough, Google is also publishing coronavirus mobility reports that allow you to see how your community is moving around differently due to COVID-19 and how the pandemic has affected your area. These reports get their data from Google’s different products, such

as Youtube, as well as from users’ location history.

Google mentions the following – “These Community Mobility Reports aim to provide insights into what has changed in response to policies aimed at combating COVID-19. The reports chart movement trends over time by geography, across different categories of places such as retail and recreation, groceries and pharmacies, parks, transit stations, workplaces, and residential.”

So head on over to the site and download the coronavirus mobility reports to see insights on your city.

2. Facebook

Facebook is doing its part to help with providing COVID-19 information and awareness by launching its coronavirus information centre. The new information centre has been added to the top of everyone’s Facebook feed.

Along with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) information centre, Facebook has also created a Coronavirus (COVID-19) information hub for media that has a wealth of information.

Other initiatives that Facebook have done and are doing to help spread COVID-19 awareness:

3. Bing

With almost seven percent of the search engine market share, Bing has a big platform to help spread COVID-19 awareness and they have done exactly that. They have added a quick link below the search bar on the homepage.

When clicked, you are taken to their newly created COVID-19 tracker page that has all the information you could ask for about the Coronavirus.

This new page allows you to see the total confirmed cases globally and a breakdown of the active cases, recovered cases, and sadly fatal cases. You can then choose a country and you will be able to see how the virus is spreading in all the cities and or states of that respective country. You will also get up to date news related to that country as well.

The page is continuously being updated with data that is collected from CDC, WHO, ECDC, Wikipedia, 24/7 Wall St., and BNO News.

Other initiatives that Bing have done and are

doing to help spread COVID-19 awareness include:

- A hub dedicated to explaining the Bing Places features and attributes businesses can use during COVID-19.
- Partnered with GoFundMe to integrate it into Bing Places.
- Added a CDC coronavirus self-checker chatbot to search results pages.

4. Snapchat

Snapchat has worked with the World Health Organization to create filters that display facts on how to stay safe and social distance during the pandemic. Snapchat has also created new lenses in a bid to encourage social distancing during the coronavirus pandemic.

They have also created a COVID-19 business resource centre to share resources to help their partners navigate this uncertain time in light of COVID-19.

5. Twitter

Twitter has also created a COVID-19 hub with the goal of helping people find reliable information, connect with others, and follow what’s happening in real-time. You can head over to to the hub to get comprehensive information on how Twitter is helping spread COVID-19 awareness and how they are providing guidance to help businesses.

Along with their COVID-19 hub, they’ve also created a great resource on crisis communication for brands on Twitter.

6. Instagram

Instagram is doing its part to help spread COVID-19 awareness and have taken steps to help people access accurate information, stay safe, and stay connected. These new features were designed to help encourage users to stay home, stay

connected, and for people to be able to access accurate information during the Coronavirus pandemic. These new features are the “Stay Home” sticker to help promote social distancing and the new video feature “Co-Watching” that allows you to view Instagram posts together with your friends over video chat.

To help people get relevant and up-to-date information and resources, Instagram intends to show more information from @WHO and local health ministries at the top of Instagram’s Feed. You may have already noticed the message that says, “Help Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus: See the latest information from the World Health Organization so you can help prevent the spread of COVID-19. – Go to who.int”

Other initiatives that Instagram have done and are doing to help spread COVID-19 awareness:

- More educational resources in Instagram search results.
- Adding stickers to promote accurate information.
- Removing COVID-19 accounts from recommendations, unless posted by a credible health organization.
- Rolling out the donation sticker in more countries and helping people find relevant nonprofits to support.

7. Pinterest

Pinterest is also doing their part to help spread COIVD-19 awareness and making sure that they are displaying pins with the right information. In order to make sure that they are only showing pins with the right information, they are only displaying search results to Pins from internationally-recognized health organizations.

They have also created a one-pager guide for brands with suggestions for creating content that helps Pinners cope with this extraordinary time.

Other initiatives that Pinterest have done and are doing to help spread COVID-19 awareness:

- A custom search experience featuring results from experts
- Prohibiting ads that claim to offer cures or treatments or that are looking to exploit the crisis
- A banner across the site that directs to WHO facts
- An easy way to report health misinformation through the “health misinformation” option on Pins. We’re removing

any misinformation we find about COVID-19 because it violates our health misinformation policy (which has been in place since 2017)
- Stay safe, stay inspired board for even more ideas.
- Collection of emotional wellbeing activities to help relax and feel better with content from emotional health experts

Free tools

It’s great to see companies big and small come through in a big way to help businesses out during this difficult time. There are lots of companies that are offering a wide range of services, products, consulting services, charitable donations, etc.. We have put together a small list of companies in the search and marketing industry who are

Unbounce

When it comes to designing beautiful landing pages that convert more, Unbounce is the company to go to. Not only are they the giants in landing page conversions, but they have also really come through during this global pandemic, by offering their essential plan for free to anyone in healthcare, education, nonprofit, or government as well as offering free coaching and strategy sessions with their success managers and so much more.

Google

Along with all that they provide via GMB, Google is helping remote workers as well as students by providing their video conferencing service for free. Google Meet, is Google’s premium video conferencing product that you had access to if you had a paid G Suite account.

Google is opening up access to Meet to free users gradually, so keep on checking their site to see when it will be

available in your area.

In addition to all the efforts, products, and services that Google's doing, they are also providing $340 million in Google Ads credits to all SMBs. You do not have to do anything to get the credits, you just simply have to have an active account over the past year. The credits will then appear in your Ads account.

Facebook

Facebook has created a Small Business Grants program that offers $100 million in cash grants and advertising credits for up to 30,000 small businesses in over 30 countries.

Hubspot

HubSpot is a great company that provides a wide range of marketing, sales, and customer service tools and software as well as completely free CRM. HubSpot is doing its part in responding to COVID-19 and its economic impact by reducing the cost of its Starter Growth Suite from $112 USD to $50 USD per month.

They are also making their paid Meetings functionality, Quotes, E-Sign, and 1:1 Video tools available for free for 90 days from activation.

Moz

Moz is a great site that offers lots of insights from industry experts as well as providing great SEO tools. Moz is providing its Academy Courses for Free till May 31st. If you haven't done so already, you should head over to Moz and sign up for their academy courses. There's something there for everyone.

Mailchimp

Mailchimp is another great example of a company stepping up to help businesses in a time of need, by offering up to three months free service for businesses with 25 employees or less in the restaurant, travel, brick-and-mortar retail, healthcare, and more industries.

Mailchimp is also generously giving away custom domains free for five years along with their free website builder. This will help small businesses by giving them two fewer things to worry about during the COVID-19 crisis and help them get up and running online quickly.

You can find out all about theses offers and more that Mailchimp is doing to help out by heading over to Mailchimp's Statement on COVID-19.

As if that wasn't enough, Mailchimp is also providing free standard Mailchimp accounts for eligible public service organizations.

Hootsuite

Hootsuite is another great example of a company stepping up to help businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. They are giving away their Professional plan to small businesses and nonprofit organizations until July 1, 2020, to help them stay connected with their customers and communities.

Hootsuite is also launching a series of free online workshops designed to show how brands can build better processes for crisis management. They are also working on a brand new virtual conference.

Similarweb

Similarweb is well known for all the data that they have across all markets and industries, that allow you to gather

market intelligence to help you understand different trends, track and grow your digital market share. They have used their data and insights and have created a ‘Coronavirus Data and Insights Hub’ that offers great insights on how COVID-19 is impacting business as well as to help you understand how customers’ needs are changing due to the pandemic.

Conclusion

It’s great to see all these companies both big and small all come together during these unprecedented times, by creating COVID-19 awareness so that we can get the information that we are looking for right away and not have to search over and over only to give up and not find what we are looking for or to end up getting the wrong information, offering their services and their time for free to help those in need.

We are all in this together, stay healthy, and stay safe.

Michael McManus is Earned Media (SEO) Practice Lead at iProspect.

More about:

- *How search giants are helping spread COVID-19 awareness*