# White Hat vs. Black Hat vs. Gray Hat SEO: What's the Difference? via @HelenPollitt1

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# How writers can optimize content for a variety of search engines

## 30-second summary:

- If you think optimizing your content for Google is tough, then you're going to be amazed by how many factors you'll have to consider when optimizing your writing for multiple search engines.
- Two benefits of doing so can be seen in local SEO and voice search.
- UK Linkology's Content Marketing Manager, Hannah Stevenson walks you through the complex process to understand and implement how you can optimize content for search engines beyond Google – Bing, DuckDuckGo,

Ask.com, and more.

Optimizing your content for just one search engine can be a challenge, as we've still got no idea what Google expects.

There is a range of different tools out there designed to help, but they're all merely making educated guesses. To use them effectively, you need to be assessing what they tell you and, where possible, using more than one metric to evaluate your site's success and boost its rankings.

If you think optimizing your content for Google is tough, then you're going to be amazed by how many factors you'll have to consider when optimizing your writing for multiple search engines.

Read on to find out why it's important that you don't overlook alternative search engines and how you can include them in your optimization process.

# Why you need to optimize content for a range of search engines

Google has the largest market share of any search engine in the world, so, understandably, most writers and SEOs focus on optimizing for it.

However, there are a wide variety of alternative search engines out there. Bing, Microsoft's search engine offering, has 5.53% of this market. This might seem like a small percentage, but when you consider that the digital population around the world is in the billions, it is still a significant number of users that you're overlooking by only optimizing your content for Google.

A percentage of users of Bing will have it set as their prefered search tool due to the browser or device they are using. Microsoft favours its own tools, which is why Bing is

the default search engine on Windows phones, tablets and computers.

Some developers have deals to make certain search engines their default. Many of these deals involve Google, but in some cases, the titan of the search engine market is usurped.

For example, AOL chose Bing over Google in 2015, meaning that Bing is the default engine on AOL browsers. While this might not seem significant, many users will not bother to change their settings, and simply use the default search engine, meaning if this option is not Google, then other search engines will rise in popularity.

Additionally, some smaller search engines target specific demographics, such as Ecosia, which is marketed at environmentally-conscious users and donates money towards planting trees with every search that users make.

For users who are concerned about privacy and data storage, DuckDuckGo is a search engine that promises not to store information and block out hidden tracking software.

As such, if you are targeting these specific demographics, then you need to make sure that you optimize your content for these tools.

## Research the search engines on the market

Before you start optimizing your content, you need to check out the search engines on offer and work out which ones are the most relevant to your website.

Some of the key search engines on the market, not including Google, are:

- Bing: As mentioned earlier, Bing is Microsoft’s search

engine, which has a strong market share.

- Yahoo!: Powered by Bing, Yahoo! Uses the same technology, but is a different platform, meaning that you can optimize for this solution using the same techniques you use for Bing.
- Ecosia: An eco-friendly search engine that promotes itself by offering to donate money towards tree planting efforts for every search users make on its platform.
- DuckDuckGo: A privacy-focused search engine that does not track user data, making it harder to optimize for and less-informative than other tools.
- Qwant: Another search engine that's dedicated to privacy, Qwant has it's own indexing engine and doesn't track user activity.
- Ask.com: Using a question and answer format, Ask.com providers users with answers to any queries they may have by showing them relevant pages and content.

## Look beyond Google Analytics

The first step towards to optimize content for alternative search engines is to find new sources of traffic information.

Most webmasters use Google Analytics to review their traffic and site information, but this platform only shows clicks from Google searches.

If you want to find out where you're getting all of your page visits from, then you'll need to find alternative ways to review your traffic.

Analytics tools such as SEMrush, SimilarWeb and Ahrefs all show you where your traffic is coming from, as well as offering a wide range of additional tools such as keyword searches and top page analysis. As such, they're definitely worth investing in if you want to boost your site, both on Google and a range of other search engines.

## Follow them on social media to stay updated

One of the easiest ways you can learn about the latest developments in the way these alternative search engines operate, and how you can optimize content around them is to stay updated.

As such, you should follow them on social media and sign up to their newsletters to read the latest developments and advice that they‘re offering to users and content creators.

Keeping tabs on so many different search engines can be a challenge, particularly if you‘re trying to optimize your content around several different tools.

You‘ll be able to get all of the updates as and when they‘re released. You‘ll also receive expert commentary on what these developments mean for you and your content.

## Local SEO benefits some alternative search engines

Some search engines offer tailored local insight, meaning that you can use local SEO practices to target these platforms.

For example, Bing offers Bing Places, a directory of local companies, and is committed to offering users search results tailored around their location.

As Yahoo! is powered by Bing, boosting your reach on one platform will translate to growth on the other.

Bing‘s dedication to sharing local search results means that, if you use local search terms in your content, you will be more likely to rank on this platform.

## Flash is Bing‘s favourite

Bing also has technical preferences, with a focus on Flash and Silverlight based applications:

Rich Internet Applications (RIAs), such as Microsoft Silverlight and Adobe Flash Player, can improve the aesthetic appearance or the functional ability of a site for end-users. However, the way these technologies are typically implemented often causes problems with the ability of search engine bots to crawl and fetch any meaningful data from the site.

Sites extensively employing JavaScript and AJAX technologies can also cause the same problems for search. This is because search bots are primarily readers of the text. It is much more difficult to parse and derive indexable, relevant content from graphic and multimedia content. As a result, sites who implement these technologies without regard to search bot accessibility often unexpectedly see their search rankings drop off (from the search bot perspective, the site simply has little-to-no indexable content available, which adversely affects its relevance to the site’s main theme).

As such, you need to try to move your site onto RIAs where possible and optimize the meta tags and description tags to help you achieve strong results on Bing.

## Ask.com is optimized in a similar way to voice search

Voice search is one of the fastest-growing trends in the SEO market currently, with so many consumers now turning to their smart devices and virtual assistants to give them the information they need.

When optimizing content for voice search, the key is to answer questions, as the majority of verbal searches are questions.

This is because voice search queries use natural voice commands, as users are speaking rather than typing. Google has identified that almost 70% of searches on Google Assistant are performed in natural language, rather than the keywords that you often find in written searches.

It‘s more natural to ask a question than it is to yell keywords towards your device. As such, optimizing your content for voice search involves including questions and providing the answers.

Creating content with question and answers in it not only helps you to boost your voice search results, but also helps you to optimize your content for Ask.com.

As Ask.com focuses on providing users with the answers to questions, by also focusing on this format, you can kill two birds with one stone and optimize your writing for both Ask.com and voice search.

## Never sacrifice quality and relevance

The key to search engine visibility and increased traffic will always be quality and relevance. No matter what tools you use and what search engines you choose to target, you should always focus on creating readable content that grabs your reader‘s attention.

Always make sure that your content is thoroughly proofread and that you haven‘t stuffed too many keywords into obscure positions. If you start every sentence with your target keywords, then search engines will pick up on this and may penalize your site.

A Google penalty is a serious issue, but a penalty from any other search engine can also cause you major problems.

Tools such as Grammarly or Hemingway Editor can help with readability, while SEO Surfer can help you understand keyword density and content layout. It should be mentioned that SEO Surfer takes much of its data from Google, but the tool can be useful for spreading out your keywords to help boost your rankings in a variety of search engines.

## Conclusion

At the end of the day, content remains king in the SEO market. Creating quality content needs to remain your key focus, with optimizing it and getting it in front of your target audience your second priority.

As with any business decision, when you‘re optimizing your content, you should try to spread your risk. Aim to create content that is valuable not only for Google but a range of other search engines too.

*Hannah Stevenson is the Content Marketing Manager at UK Linkology.*

More about:

https://www.searchenginewatch.com/2020/05/04/how-writers-can-optimize-content-for-a-variety-of-search-engines/

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