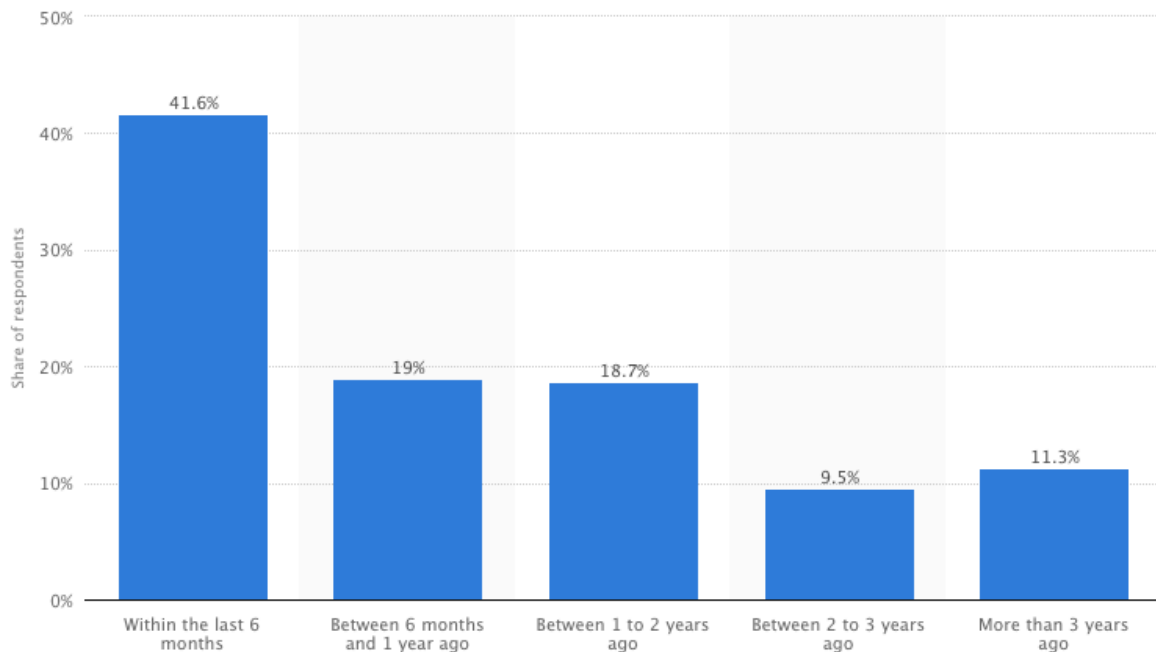


“Ok Google, How Do I Optimize for Voice Search?”

Voice search is not necessarily a new concept... in fact, the Google Mobile app had a “search by voice” feature for Blackberry and iPhone back in 2008. What is new, is the increased usage of voice search features as well as how sophisticated voice search has become in the past few years.

According to a study by [MindMeld in 2015](#), voice search grew dramatically just in the past year, with 41% of participants saying they started using voice commands on their smartphone within the six months before the survey was done.

Start of voice search and voice command use among smartphone users in the United States, as of October 2015*



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Additional Information:

United States; MindMeld; October 2015; 1,800 Respondents;
18 years and older; Smartphone users

Sources:

MindMeld; Local Search Association (LSA Insider)

The growth of voice search isn't surprising. It's easier and faster than text input, and everyone is looking for a way to become more efficient. The voice search market is growing rapidly, and much of that growth can be attributed to the improvements to the voice search programs, apps, and tools entering the market every day. Google's voice command app, Apple's Siri, and Amazon's Alexa are some of the most popular, but as more competition enters the

market, the more these brands will have to improve their programs to keep up. Some major improvements that have recently entered the voice search market are:

Compound Queries – if you ask a question, you can now follow up that question with another about the same subject. If you ask “Where was Madonna born?” you can follow that up with “What year was she born?” and voice search tools will understand that you’re still referring to Madonna. On the other side of things, you can narrow down questions through context.

Context Based on Location – if you are in a certain location and ask “Where is City Hall”, the voice search will assume you mean based on your current location.

Context Based on You – You can ask voice search “What’s my address?” or “What’s my IP?” and the search will understand that “my” refers to you.

Context Based on Your Search – So you are currently reading about Axl Rose, and you ask your voice search “Show me pictures of Axl”, your search will bring up photos of the Axl Rose vs. a car axle.

One caveat, is that most of these contextual voice searches are currently restricted within the same program. So if your searching on Google, use the Google Voice search tool or Google Now. Google is also taking things one step further, and is working on what’s called “conversational shopping”. So in the future, you may be able to hit the button and say “Order me a large wonton soup from the Chinese restaurant” and it will be as easy as that. All that being said, voice search is moving fast, and businesses need to make sure that they’ve adjusted their SEO and SEM strategies to align with voice search. Here are some tips for incorporating voice search into your strategies:

Research How Your Brand Shows Up in Searches

It’s important for your brand to know how people are pronouncing the name of your product and how they are searching for it. Anticipating these issues and including solutions within your SEO can help when customers mispronounce or misspell your brand name. This is especially significant for foreign brand names. For example, did you know that the high-end French fashion brand [Hermes](#) is pronounced “AIR-mez” not “her-MEEZ”? It’s not just the high fashion brands that might have trouble, the grocery store has some mispronunciations as well. Greek yogurt brand [Fage](#) is pronounced “FA-Hey”, not “FAYGE” to rhyme with page. The point is that you just don’t know

how people are pronouncing your brand name until you research. Once you do that, you can add different pronunciations as a test to your optimization strategy.

Add Natural Language to Your Long-Tail Keywords

While short-tail keywords will still be relevant for those researching a product, focus within mobile and voice search is turning more towards conversational, long-tail keywords. For example, when searching on a computer, you may type “European vacation deals”, but if you voice search, you will probably ask something like “What’s the best vacation spot in Europe?”. The first step for adjusting your SEO is to research what phrases are bringing people to your page through search engine results. You want to keep the broad keywords and topics within your SEO, but it will also serve you well to add in some natural-language and long-tail keywords within your SEO as well as within your SEM campaigns. For SEM specifically, bid on keywords based on what action you want people to take. So for awareness, you may want to bid on phrases like “What is Europe’s best vacation spot” but further down the funnel you may want to bid on something like “Cheap European vacation deals”.

Website Content is Becoming Just as Important as SEO

Search engines are becoming smarter in how they turn up results because they are looking for the context of the content in addition to SEO. You can increase your search engine rankings by making sure the content on your website is aligned with your SEO. You can also include your natural language keyword phrases throughout your website content and on landing pages to improve your rankings.

Don’t Forget About the Top of the Funnel

Voice searchers are often looking to fulfill some kind of immediate need and they will value the companies that are there to answer those needs. It’s one thing if people are directly looking for your product, but much more likely, voice searchers are looking to solve an issue that your product or service may solve for them. This is where content marketing comes into play again – your company should have an extensive section of your website that answers questions and gives information about your product or service so that search engines will add your name to the list when people ask those questions. In addition to getting ranked within the search engine results for that question, you will have the added benefit of answering a person’s question and building loyalty and authority on whatever subject they are researching.

Get Acquainted with Schema Markup

Schema markup is a code that you put on the back end of your website pages and content that help search engines understand the context of your content and return better results to users. Essentially, it tells search engines what your data means, not just what it says. By adding this to your SEO, you will not only rank better in normal searches, but you will be more relevant in voice searches since the search engines will understand what your website content is about.

Get Your Microdata in Order

Businesses, especially small local businesses and online retailers, should make sure to optimize their microdata to give context to the information on your website. At the very least, location information should be up to date and optimized since many mobile voice searches involve “near me” queries. Microdata tags not only help your page get ranked more accurately, but have the added benefit of creating “rich snippets” that display additional information on search engine results than traditional results so the people searching for you know without a doubt that your business is what they’re looking for from the get go.

Long gone are the days where people look at you funny when asking your phone questions – voice search is not only on the rise, but continuously evolving. Marketers need to stop thinking only about text-based SEO, and add conversational language into their content. Short- and long- tail keywords are shifting into sentences, phrases, and topics, and soon it’ll be a necessity for marketers to get more conversational in their SEO.