



The Chaffey Column - March 2009

Digital Asset Optimization – is it worth it?

In February I attended and presented at Search Engine Strategies London, it was useful to hear what's hot and what's not in the world of search engine marketing.

What is digital asset optimization?

Universal search was one topic that I noticed was hot – with many presenters stressing the value of this for businesses and one panel session focusing on optimizing for Blended or universal search results.

With Google Universal Search, Google (and other search engines) goes beyond the standard "10 blue links" from sites to return other relevant results from vertical searches about a query. Currently video, books, scholar, news, blog postings and images are blended within its results.

I'm sure you've seen universal results, a search for Darth Vader, which was the example used by Google when they first introduced Universal search, still has plenty of results (<http://www.google.co.uk/search?&q=darth+vader>). Other universal results often occur for news or local areas on maps.

Digital Asset Optimization (DAO) involves trying to gain visibility in the search engine results pages for different types of non-text context.

How important is universal search to business audiences?

But before rushing off to optimize your assets, it's worth remembering that it's not a panacea and I think it has been overhyped.

For example, I disagree with the assertion in the Forrester blog stating that [Video is The Easiest Way to a First-Page Ranking on Google](#). That may be true for someone searching for videos on a topic or a celebrity, but that's not a common business searcher behaviour.

So, before getting too excited about the potential of universal try searching for the the top 5 or 10 keyphrases you are targeting in your industry. For example, if you search for SEO, email marketing or online advertising you won't see any video results. But what you may see, in Google UK, are some news and blog postings at the end of the listings. Hardly dramatic.

However, data from Hitwise of [US web users visits to different Google properties](#) gives an indication of the popularity of non-text assets to Google. Over a third of visits to Google sites were to other sites such as YouTube and Image Search.

Comscore has also showed the [potential of presence in the Universal results](#), this shows that in a single week 17% of all results included a universal search result, and 58% of those who searched Google in that week saw a universal result at least one time. The Comscore data is also helpful in that it shows the types of universal result present in the listing:

- 38% Video
- 34% News (may also contain blog postings)
- 19% Images
- 15% Multiple
- 10% Map/stock/weather

So, these are the 5 main types of Universal results to think about targeting within your SEO. But I hope I have shown that it it's unlikely to make a tremendous increase to the number of visits from search engines. Instead, I would argue that the main benefit of creating assets like videos and blog postings is to engage existing visitors and customers with your brand and to encourage them to return.

In next months column I will explain the best practice approaches and resources which explain how to gain a better presence in the blended search results.

About the author

Dr. Dave Chaffey, is the Director and lead consultant for [Marketing Insights Limited](#), an independent digital marketing consultancy. He is the best selling author of several <http://www.davechaffey.com/blog/my-books>>Internet Marketing books used by digital marketing professionals and on many University and College Courses globally. His latest book, Internet Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practice, now in its 4th edition, was published in January 2009.