



Search Engines Must Incorporate Private Information in Result Rankings

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Web site owners have valuable private information about the importance of their various pages as they relate to specific key words. Yet this valuable information for all parties—users, webmasters, and search engines—is completely ignored by current search engine ranking algorithms. Thus, you need to actively convey this message to the various search engines.

The private information would be only part of the complex set of inputs determining result rank. Nonetheless, unlike key word spamming by webmasters—loading Web pages with key words to receive higher rankings in search engine results—revealing such private information aligns their interest with that of search engines. Moreover, the better the relevance of a page to a key word, the better off the searchers are. The result is a win-win scenario.

Google, for example, is more ready to receive this information through its [Webmaster Tools](#). Google may yet be distracted by other focus areas or lulled by a false sense of security, but its advantage from Webmaster Tools is powerful and competitors should act fast to neutralize it.

When they do act, they will still face an uphill battle. It takes more than moderate quality improvements to get users to visit a competitor's Web site. In general, a new product has to be three times as good as the established brand before it can convert a critical mass of users. Microsoft's [Bing](#) is a step in the right direction. Going beyond simple improvements in search quality, it incorporates private information before Google. Such preemption gives webmasters something they otherwise wouldn't have: a strong reason to use Bing (that is, to check their rankings). The more webmasters join, the more likely they will be to use Bing for their other searches. Improvements in search quality will also induce some users to switch, leading to increased ad revenue.

Webmasters and search engine users should alert search engines to the benefits of private information inclusion, both by blogging and by submitting online suggestions to the various search engines. ■