

Client: 247 Real Media
Publication: UPI
November 12, 2004

Web titans battle for market share

UPI - Friday, November 12, 2004

WASHINGTON, Nov. 11 (UPI) -- It's the battle of the search engines: Redmond, Wash.-based software titan Microsoft on Thursday released the final test version of its new search engine, designed to go head-to-head with Mountain View, Calif.-based search king Google. But there's a lot more branching out going on, as Web players look to capture pieces of each other's territory.

Some experts are calling the new Firefox browser -- recently put out by the Mountain View, Calif.-based, open-source-advocate Mozilla Foundation -- the first viable alternative to Microsoft's Internet Explorer. And, rumor has it that Google is working with Firefox to create its own browser -- rumors which Google has vehemently denied.

In only two days, an estimated 2.5 million people have downloaded the Firefox browser, CNET.com reported Thursday.

Anticipating Microsoft's move, Google launched a test version of its desktop search service, which can find information stored in several different file types, including AOL and Microsoft Word, Excel and Powerpoint formats.

"There really is not a lot of loyalty to search engines," said [David Moore, chairman and chief executive of New York-based Internet marketing firm 24/7 Real Media.](#)

Indeed, it's users' lack of loyalty to search engines that is driving the technology push, said Joshua Stylman, managing partner at Reprise Media, a New York based-search-engine marketing firm.

"They (search engines) really have to keep innovating to keep customers happy." But at the same time, the definition of what a search engine is is changing, he said. "It used to be about finding Web results, but now it's about finding information on your hard drive, finding music, products, jobs and all kinds of things."

By branching out, he said, companies can create a "data lock" on a visitor for not only one of their products, but several, by giving them more and more reasons to stay on a certain site. For instance, using a site's e-mail will make it more likely that someone will use that provider's search engine.

"As they roll out more and more services what they're really doing is tying the consumer to them for not only one of their products, but many of their products," he said.

Google has the lion's share of the search engine market right now, according to a breakdown on searchenginewatch.com of the percentage of searches performed at a particular web site or a network of web sites by U.S. Web surfers in May 2004.

Client: 247 Real Media
Publication: UPI
November 12, 2004

Nearly 40 percent (36.8) of Web searchers did their searching on Google. Yahoo got 26.6 percent of the pie, MSN 14.5 percent, AOL 12.8 percent, Excite 4.3 percent, Ask 1.8 percent, InfoSpace 1.3 percent, Lycos 0.8 percent, and the rest 1.1 percent.

Microsoft is still working the bugs out of their new search engine, but with vast resources at their disposal, Microsoft could possibly turn their new site into a Google contender.

It already has some attractive features, Stylman said, such as a "Near Me" search feature that allows searchers to find search results in their neighborhood, such as a wedding-dress boutique or a pizza restaurant, as well as a "direct answers" feature that interprets what results searchers want based on what they search for.

For instance, type in the name of a band, and the search engine will bring up a history of the band as well as sites that sell t-shirts and CDs. Or, type in the phrase "What is the capital of New York," and it might direct you to Microsoft's Encarta online encyclopedia.

"Search technology is smart enough to understand some of these common queries, and not necessarily present just a list of results when someone asks these questions," Stylman said. "The whole idea is to present the user with what they're asking for."

So what's all this dabbling between browsers and search engines boil down to? Better Web services for consumers, said Stylman.

After an innovation boom in the 1990s, innovation stagnated for a while, but it's seen a revival of late. "Especially during the past 12-18 months, there's been a remarkable amount of innovation from Google and Yahoo -- they've just been having an old-fashioned slugfest," Stylman said. "Everyone's really pushing each other to outdo one another."
