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## The MSN Search Interface

By Rob Sullivan

Now, instead of wide blue bars there are sleek silver-grey bars.

Also, the top bar where the search box is became narrower. To me this makes the page seem less "closed in" and more visually appealing. I now feel as if I can trust the results more because they have more room.

I've also noticed that MSN has been playing with the display of the titles. Before this change, they seemed to bold the entire title, as well as bolding terms which matched the search query in the snippet.

Now, they still bold terms matching the query in the snippet but they also only bold the search term matches in the title. Additionally, the font used for both the title and snippet are smaller.

These help to create a more visually appealing search result making it easier to spot the best match to what you are looking for.

You see as humans, we like to take the easy way out. Most of us are "scan and click" search engine users. We scan the results hoping something will "jump out" at us. This is how Google became so popular - because they realized early on that we like visual cues to help guide us on the web.

MSN tried this for a while - I found examples of it dating back to 2004, but most recently - even as recent as a few days ago - there was no bolding on matched terms.

When you look at the sponsored results you will see even more differences.

While looking at searches performed in Firefox, I thought I'd perform those same searches in Internet Explorer. Here's where things got interesting.

While the organic results were the same, some things caught my eye. First, the sponsored ads appear much smaller in Firefox than IE. The font size used to display the top and side sponsored ads is

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smaller than the organic results. In IE they are the same.

Also, in Firefox I was seeing Yahoo! sponsored results, however in IE I was seeing Microsoft Sponsored results.

That's right, I was seeing different sponsored results providers depending on the browser I was using.

Even the layout of the sponsored ads was different. With Firefox and the Yahoo! ads, the top sponsored stretched across the page and the side sponsored started at the same line as the organic result, creating a fairly large blank spot in the upper right hand corner of the page.

However on the IE browser with MSN ads, that blank space disappeared and the side sponsored ads moved up to be in line with the top sponsored results. It made the page look much more organized.

I looked into the CSS and JavaScripts being executed on the page to see if perhaps they were doing some kind of browser detection before rendering the page but I didn't see anything other than some style modifications for IE on Mac.

Of course, this is still early in the game for the new MSN look. I expect they will continue to tweak and refine it until it's just right. As a result, if you do try the same tests I did (with a side by side browser test) you may not see the same results.

In the end I do have to say, results aside, the new look is more visually appealing and at least for me makes it easier to accept the results. I don't feel overwhelmed because of the previously small space available.

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### **MSN Beta Search Phenomenon**

**By mark white**

#### **MSN Beta Search Phenomenon by mark white**

I don't fully understand the algorithm's involved with the new

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Beta search from MSN but I have to say as a site owner I love it.

After releasing my new site to the World Wide Web I am already

Really impressed with the speed that I got indexed and even more

Impressed with the ranking I have been given.

I let my newest site (

[www.buy-dvds-online.com](http://www.buy-dvds-online.com)

) out of its box

Less than 2 weeks ago and I have already attained a position of

3 out of 1,589,310 for the keyword search "buy dvd's online".

How is this happening?

Well I have looked at all sorts of forums relating to MSN Beta

and it seems that it genuinely searches for the most keyword

relevant site it can find.

The name of the site in relation to the keyword or words searched

for has proved as important as ever, when I searched for the

keywords "free traffic tips" on msn I got

[www.freetraffictip.com](http://www.freetraffictip.com)

as

number 1 result.

When I searched for the same keywords on google the same

site came in at number 41.

Further searching for some more obscure phrases seem to show that

MSN beta places a high priority on the keyword density, this will

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reward all of us who have keywords relevant to our sites and do not rely on heavy backlinks (although I believe this is vital to get a decent rank with other engines).

The fact that I am ranked at all means that I have escaped the Google "sandbox", I don't expect to receive a PR for at least 2 months and a decent listing for the same period from google.

Lets hope that MSN Beta search is used quickly as a replacement for MSN search, My opinion is that we should all be allowed to get a placement we deserve rather than one we have effectively bought or traded, it kind of gives us little guys a chance.

I still love google, it provides us with a challenge and is still the number one search engine but I still want the traffic I get from The smaller engines.

Mark white has built and run 3 sites for the last 4 years, has worked in I.T. for 15 years and isactively involved in traffic/search engine related sites.His sites are \$10 dollar downloads.com sunspeks.com and Buy-dvds-online.com



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