

# Search Engine Intelligence



SEO stories of interest from the previous week

28th October 2011

**[Google in Talks to Potentially Fund Yahoo Acquisition](#)**- Google has reportedly held early discussions with two private equity firms to explore financing the acquisition of Yahoo's core products.

Yahoo attracts over 700 million unique monthly visitors and is still regarded as a trophy asset by many in the industry. In acquiring Yahoo, Google may look to leverage Yahoo to promote Google +, advertisements and other core products, but it is unlikely that the partnership would be approved by the Justice Department. Back in 2008, Google discussed a potential advertising partnership with Yahoo which fell through due to antitrust scrutiny.

As talks are still in the early stages, it remains to be seen if a bid will be made.

**[Google Removes the + Search Command](#)**- This week, Google removed the ability to use +s as a search operator within queries.

According to a forum thread by a Google employee, you can now use the quotation marks symbol instead of the + in a search. For example, searching for [magazine + female] should now be replaced with [magazine "female"]. It is suspected that in doing this, Google is looking to minimise confusion with its social network Google +. Typing + into Google+ will auto complete with your friends names. Any search term that now begins with + tells Google to find pages that have that exact term. For example, entering [+1] into the search engine generates results for just the number 1.

Google said they were streamlining the ways you can tell the engine to search for the exact keywords you type, by focusing on the functionality of the quotation marks symbol.

**[Google Answers the Question; 'Is SEO Spam?'](#)**- Matt Cutts, head of Google's Web spam team, has this week stated that Google does not regard content created for SEO purposes as spam.

Whilst some SEOs use dubious or 'Black Hat' techniques to manipulate search results, the majority of SEO professionals use content-led strategies that create value for websites, search engines and web users, or as Cutts put it in a video this week:

"SEO is not spam, SEO can be enormously useful." Continuing: "Search engine optimisation can be a valid way to help people find what they are looking for via search engines. There are many valid ways that people can make the world better with SEO."

**[Search Dominates Other Sources for Local Information](#)**- A recent study of 1,000 US adults has confirmed what many would deem as obvious- that online search is the most popular way people locate local business information.

Although the results state what many would deem as obvious- it showed some interesting results and supported SEO in context. Overall, 59% of all respondents said that search engines were the first place they went to when researching local business. This number however increased to 83% for participants less than 35 years old and only 8% admitted they visit the merchant's site first. When using mobile devices however, the study found that 17% of adults based their decision on a search engine when researching local merchants or restaurants. 15% relied on review sites in a mobile context and echoing the online results; 8% relied on the actual merchant's websites.

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