

# How does Google Hummingbird Impact Your Online Strategy?

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH WITH VIKAS VIJ

After a series of major search algorithm updates over the last few years, Google finally released an entirely new search algorithm called Hummingbird. Google's announcements surrounding the new algorithm made it quite clear that online search keywords are going to be more conversational in nature in the future, especially as voice search technology catches on.

At a fundamental level, Google assured online marketers that search engine optimization strategies would remain relevant as before. Innovative and compelling content would continue to find preference with search engines. High quality inbound links remain as important as ever. Keyword usage in moderation and its correct placement would still be as valuable as before.

However, at a subtle level, the new Hummingbird algorithm would interpret differently the way users search online. Prior to Hummingbird, the user would type a query into the search engine, and the search algorithm would select words from it. This approach had the potential to show up results that might not necessarily relate to the overall context of the search query. Hummingbird is here to change that scenario, and its goal is to make the search engine "smarter."

## RETURN OF THE LONG TAILED KEYWORDS

The Hummingbird is not an algorithmic update, but a completely new search algorithm. It is designed to approach the queries of search engine users in a more intelligent manner. It combines new search technology with previously established and proven features of the earlier algorithms. The name Hummingbird is aptly inspired from the little bird that is known for its speed, direction, and accuracy.

Google introduced the Hummingbird algorithm in the third quarter of 2013. The company believes it can improve the online search environment by encouraging users to

---

"Innovative and compelling content would continue to find preference with search engines. High quality inbound links remain as important as ever. Keyword usage in moderation and its correct placement would still be as valuable as before."

---

type in long tailed keywords, which are more descriptive of their exact information needs. Furthermore, as voice search gradually gains in popularity, the keywords are going to be more conversational and long-tailed in nature.

If the search engine is geared to comprehend the context of the query rather than going only after the absolute keywords, it would be able to produce more relevant and useful search results. This will provide more value to search users. Looking into crucial change that Hummingbird will bring to online search, dermatology marketers should be ready to adapt their SEO strategies to this new and improvised approach to Internet search.

## PUTTING THE KNOWLEDGE BASE TO WORK

As a pioneer of online search, Google has collected a mammoth knowledge database that some have called the largest database ever compiled. At any given moment, the search engine is gathering, categorizing, cross-referencing and storing vast amounts of knowledge. Google has been in business for more than 15 years, and it has constantly worked to improvise its online search abilities.

It was only logical that finally its search would look for the context within the readers' search queries. Its immense  
*(Continued on page 24)*

(Continued from page 22)

knowledge base is being put to test with this type of ‘intelligent’ search via Hummingbird. Keen analysts had foreseen the evolution of Hummingbird about two years ago when the company introduced ‘conversational search’ in Google Chrome.

Google Chrome has a tiny microphone icon in the right corner of its search box. This option allows the users to ‘talk’ to the search engine and ask their queries aloud. The users of this facility have experienced that if they make their search queries more conversational through this option, it tends to produce better search results.

### HOW IT WORKS

Before Hummingbird, Google’s search algorithms would only choose certain word from the user’s search query. Now the search engine evaluates every word in the query to better understand the overall intent. According to Amit Singhal, senior vice president at Google, Hummingbird got its name because it is “precise and fast.” The algorithm is designed to handle more complex searches more effectively.

Hummingbird makes use of Google’s ‘Knowledge Graph’ that was introduced the same year as the new algorithm. The Knowledge Graph enables Google to better understand the relationship between concepts rather than focusing on individual keywords. This ability helps Hummingbird to look at the meaning behind the keywords rather than the keywords themselves. The goal is to match the right web pages with the meaning and purpose of a search query and produce more logical search results for the user.

Singhal says that Hummingbird will provide Google the ability to answer queries that typically do not have simple answers. Furthermore, the Knowledge Graph empowers the search engine to better address follow-up queries. For instance, a user asks for the images of the bullet train in Japan, and follows it up with another search query that says, “What is its top speed?” the search engine will automatically understand the query refers to the Japanese bullet train. As the users continue to shift in favor of mobile device-induced ‘natural language’ search queries, Hummingbird’s ability to address complex queries will become increasingly necessary.

### HOW SHOULD WEBSITE MARKETERS RESPOND?

Dermatology website marketers can respond effectively to Hummingbird by making their websites mobile-compatible, to begin with. The website must be highly geared towards mobile device users. It must include larger fonts that are easier to read on a mobile phone as well as eye-catching pictures and videos that are adapted to smaller screen sizes.



Clarity and conciseness of the content ought to be much better in order to cater to the mobile audiences effectively.

It is possible to enhance certain websites from a mobile point of view by employing responsive web design. This allows the website layout to adapt itself automatically based on the screen size of the mobile device that the reader uses. User experience is improved when the website layout is optimized. Users can navigate the site smoothly, access content quickly, and eventually the conversion rates can improve.

Content for the website must be more value-driven. With Hummingbird’s improved ability to understand the meanings of search queries instead of isolated keywords, it will show up web pages in search results that address real queries adequately. Therefore, website marketers and developers can pack more real knowledge into the web pages and blogs to answer the questions of their target audience. Focusing on the specific areas of expertise and offering insightful analysis and facts should be a part of the content strategy. ■

*Naren Arulrajah is President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, a complete Internet marketing company which focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education and the online reputations of dermatologists. With a team of 130+ full time marketers, Ekwa.com helps one doctor in an area dominate their market and grow their business significantly year after year. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call Naren direct at 877-249-9666.*



#### SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

Please e-mail us at [editor@bmctoday.com](mailto:editor@bmctoday.com)

with any thoughts or questions you have regarding this publication.