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## **A Look Back at Predictions for 2005**

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In early January last year, I went out on a Yule Tree limb to make a list of wild [predictions for 2005](#). The first Friday in December, two weeks before the beginning of the Yuletide holiday season, is a good time to look back at those predictions to see how accurate they were.

### **1. If you can't beat them, join them (correct)**

2005 saw mainstream traditional media outlets tripping over each other to make great migration towards the Internet. From the purchase of the About.Com network by the New York Times to the plethora of media blogs that have sprung up over the past eleven months, traditional media is finally reacting to the new medium. The only major group of traditional media types resisting integration into the search world is the book publishing industry, mostly out of reaction to the Google Print initiative.

### **2. Personalization of Search (almost correct)**

While I was obviously ahead of myself in predicting the advent of personalized search results, movement from Google, Yahoo and MSN indicate they are still extremely interested in providing results based on personal preferences. Personalization, or more appropriately, expectations of personalization have affected SEO techniques but more in response to local search than personalization.

### **2a. Doorway pages to make a comeback (incorrect, thankfully)**

Doorway pages or leader pages as an optimization tactic are bad news. With the advent of personalized search however, I expected some SEOs to begin to churn out pages designed for specific locations, sectors or interests. Thankfully, I was incorrect. Doorway pages appeared to take their final gasps last summer when a large California based SEO firm got in a spot of trouble for using them.

### **3. Increased powers of search spiders will lead to a series of algo shifts (correct)**

Admittedly, this one was an easy prediction. As search engine spiders have become more intelligent and search algorithms reference information about documents that link to a site when determining ranking, algorithm shifts were inevitable. Over the past year, Google introduced three unique algo shifts, the most recent being the Jagger Update. Yahoo has made alterations to its algorithms at least three times this year with one apparently happening as this piece is being typed.

### **4. Increased broadband access impacts entertainment industry causing mergers and conglomerations (incorrect)**

The entertainment industry limped through 2005 as it feels the impact of massive file trading but still has no coherent long-term strategy to deal with it. That might change over the coming year as many different facets of the entertainment industry are in talks with Google, Yahoo, MSN and AOL. Yahoo is seen to be quietly leading the way on the provision of search-based entertainment options with its moves into production and distribution of TV content.

### **5. Web Documents replaces Website as a reference for SEOs (partly correct)**

In internal conversations, most SEOs I speak with refer to files or documents over websites however when communicating with the public, the words website and webpage have not been replaced. The words "document" or "file" are far more accurate than "page" or "site" as search engine rankings are no longer centered on the documents found in a single URL based site but instead looks at the history (or footprint) of each document while determining rankings.

**6. A better term for "web documents" will emerge (incorrect)**

**7. I will be hung in various SEO related forums for the doorway page suggestion. (incorrect, surprisingly)**

I only got flamed in forums in regards to Open Directory articles. Otherwise I went through 2005 relatively unscathed.

**8. Several new types of vertical search engines will be introduced (half-correct)**

A number of new vertical types of search tools were established in 2005 however, the prediction that, "Most will be based on a user-pay model in which the user pays to find and download entertainment materials such as music files, streaming live events and television shows," was patently incorrect. Maybe next year...

**9. 2005 will be the beginning of the end for one of the Big3 (likely incorrect)**

It is hard to say whether this one is correct or incorrect at this time however, from all appearances, I was a bit off base on this one. Yahoo did not make as much ground this year as I expected but it is still the second most popular search engine. Both Google and MSN appear to be doing well though 2005 was a very bumpy year for MSN's search division.

**10. Smaller businesses will work to keep the Big3 honest by demanding stronger organic results. (correct)**

Witness Jagger and today's Yahoo updates.

**11. Google Backlash (correct)**

The public backlash against Google is in full swing.

**12. MSN will enter PPC market by end of first quarter (correct but...)**

If we were talking about Google or Yahoo, the prediction likely would have been correct but we were talking about Microsoft. Microsoft has a bad habit of talking early and shipping late. The MSN AdCenter PPC program was introduced to the marketing world in March 2005 however it is still in beta, available by invite only.

**13. Smaller search tools such as Ask Jeeves and Vivisimo (Clusty) will be recognized for their innovations in the field of search. (incorrect)**

The acquisition of Ask Jeeves by Barry Diller and IAC was the biggest reason Ask Jeeves made the news this year, not because of its search technologies. Teoma, which provided an excellent alternative to Google has not been marketed by Ask.

Similarly, Vivisimo (Clusty) did not receive nearly as much attention as their clustering search algorithm merits. Aside from the terrible name they settled on in 2004, the crowd over at Vivisimo simply hasn't found a way to articulate the talents of their search technology to the mainstream world.

**14. Video ads will appear in the SERPs (incorrect but brewing)**

Video has not appeared on search engine results pages as predicted though it is rumoured that Google is looking at allowing video in AdWords in the near future.

**15. The law of Karma will sneak up on Microsoft from two totally different directions. (half-correct).**

I predicted the rise in popularity of Firefox would impact on Microsoft. That part was correct. In 2005, Microsoft came around to the realization that the open-source community might be an ally as opposed to an enemy, largely due to the success of Firefox.

The second half of the prediction touched on the continuing rumours of a Google branded operating system that has not yet materialized. According to Google, there is no pending Google OS to look forward to or scare Microsoft with. For what it's worth though, Google has presented several nightmare scenarios for Microsoft over the past year so perhaps the prediction could be considered three-quarters correct.

**16. SEOs as superstars (correct)**

Public interest in search engine optimization has never been stronger. 2005 was the year SEO became an accepted acronym in mainstream marketing circles. SEOs are increasingly being contacted for consultation at the initial stages of site development and their services are now considered essential by web savvy mainstream advertising agencies.

As predicted, our head SEO Scott Van Achte did not become premier of the Province of British Columbia. I was 100% accurate on that one as well as being correct about Scott having a more intense job than our provincial leader.

So, at the end of the year, it turns out I was correct on seven predictions, half-correct on four and wildly off base with six of them. Not bad considering I bought my crystal ball used on eBay.