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4 ways to optimize for Apple's Siri search

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Now more than a year old, Siri, Apple's voice-activated personal assistant, has become increasingly prevalent in mobile search, available on the iPhone 4S, iPhone 5 and the latest versions of the iPod touch and iPad.

According to a recent study by Onswipe, Apple's iOS has a more than 75 percent share of all mobile Web traffic. Apple's iOS 6 update in mid-September added more than 200 new features, with changes to Siri including more information about movies, restaurants and sports scores, turn-by-turn voice navigation and voice-only social sharing of content.

Searchers have been slow to fully use Siri, with only 11 percent choosing to use Siri for a search on their mobile device, instead turning to applications and mobile browsers. The growth of the mobile Web and the increased capabilities of mobile devices present new opportunities and challenges for marketers and suggest it may only be a matter of time before Siri usage really takes off, too.

Siri is set to impact local search – most notably, voice search will continue to increase local search volume and a voice search is three times more likely to be local, with other promising signs for local marketers.

As mobile search continues to mature and user behavior adapts to the enhanced search features on mobile devices, marketers should leverage the following best practice to bolster their presence in voice search locally and beyond.

Consolidate local business listings and ensure accuracy

Every detail about a business should be consistent and accurate across directories and search engines.

Mobile users often search on the go, ready to take action, so marketers must ensure the accuracy of their business information on Google+ Local, Yahoo, Facebook, Foursquare and Yellow Pages.

According to Alchemy Viral, Siri often bypasses traditional search results and compares a business' location with Yelp listings.

So, optimizing efforts for mobile search by claiming and verifying listings and ensuring the presence of proper location information within Apple Maps for accurate directions is essential. It also lets Siri know that it is a trusted, legitimate business.

Create a formal customer review program

Reviews have become critical to a brand and its locations.

Consumers and search engines alike favor reviews, and they give businesses the authenticity they need to survive and dominate locally.

Reviews remain essential to gaining trust among consumers, who are more likely to believe their peers than marketers promoting products.

Siri uses a ranking system based on business reviews when deciding what to serve to the consumer. So marketers should try to control content in owned channels, make sure the brand voice is always consistent for every location and, when possible, encourage happy customers to leave reviews.

Use rich snippets and schema tags

Using rich snippets and schema tags on a Web site add value to local searches, especially for businesses looking to capitalize on Siri search.

Rich snippet tags assist search engines in better understanding the content on a marketer's Web site by labeling content in a manner that makes it easier to index.

These tags communicate information such as a marketer's address, phone number, operating hours, rankings and reviews. Therefore, having rich snippets and schema tags with this information will make it easier for Siri to find a marketer's business.

Augment keyword optimization efforts

Keyword optimization continues to play a key role.

When using Siri for search, the queries end up being longer and more specific because the users use natural speech.

Marketers ought to use this to their advantage by optimizing long-tail keywords, highly targeted search queries and keywords and phrases that compensate for variations in the way people talk.

Building out long-tail keywords for voice search can help marketers get more relevant and efficient, just as it does with text search.

EMPLOYING THESE Siri search tactics will help marketers ensure they are in a good position to capture mobile traffic and drive customers in-store as users increasingly adapt to new capabilities in voice-activated search.

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