



Search in 2020

Marketing
Predictions
From 10
Experts



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The day-to-day demands of any marketer's job often take up the lion's share of their time. From meetings to high-priority deadlines to "quick questions," it can be difficult to set aside time to pull back from your routine and think strategically about your approach to your work, and your company's approach to its marketing. But it's exactly this kind of big picture, forward-looking thinking and brainstorming that can put you ahead of your competition six months later. Now's the time to examine where search marketing is headed – and to strategize how most efficiently and effectively to get ahead of the pack.

To help you kickstart your planning for the coming year, we've gathered insights from 10 experts – from companies including Microsoft, Adobe, Yum! Brands, and more – about what they think will matter most in search in 2020. Here's what they had to say:



Search will become more conversational.

“The future of search is very exciting. It’s going to evolve from where we are now for three main reasons. **First**, the information that we’re working with will become much more rich and diverse. We’re building new knowledge graphs, and we’re understanding new relationships between things that are happening in our lives. **Second**, we have much more powerful machine learning to reason over those knowledge graphs, to understand them more deeply. And **third**, with rich graphs, and with powerful machine learning, we have the opportunity to start building a more conversational interaction with those systems. It’s not just ‘ask a question reactively, get an answer, and it’s over’ – it’s an ongoing engagement over time. The more you speak, the more you learn, the better the recommendations become. We’re entering this new phase. We’re interacting with AI more than ever, and it’s going to be great.”



Ed Doran

Director Product Management, Microsoft Research & AI
CoFounder, Cortana, Microsoft



Search will become more intuitive.



“When I think about how far search has come, and how prehistoric it now seems to not be able to get an answer at your fingertips, it feels almost inevitable to me that we’re going to be at a place where search becomes more and more intuitive – more and more seamless. Between AI, voice, and touch, all of those different sources are going to allow us to get an answer in any context or moment that we seek one. It’s what we’re all craving for now, as consumers. You walk around the street and you think, “What’s the name of that person I was thinking of,” and you want some format to be able to answer that for you. Perhaps that future is less far away than it might seem.”

Marisa Thalberg

Former Global Chief Brand Officer, Taco Bell
Strategic Advisor, Yum! Brands



What can brands do to become more intuitive, to be ready for this future?

You think about search as the hard-working part of marketing; you don’t think of it as where creative expression happens. I think that’s a bit of a shame.

You don’t think of search marketing as where creative expression happens. I think that’s a bit of a shame.

In its utilitarian nature, search has allowed a lot of amazing math and science to power results. It would be really interesting to figure out how more creative expression and individualization of a brand persona could be infused into that. It doesn’t feel like it should be one or the other, art or science, going forward – it feels like a fusion of both would be ideal.”

No-click searches will rise.

"I think the future of search as it relates to SEO is going to be the rise in what's called no-click search. This is a phenomenon where Google's getting a lot more organic traffic but people are not necessarily clicking on the organic results as much as they used to. This trend is growing because of the new features that Google's rolling out: different widgets, carousels, Knowledge Panels, and rich results that appear as part of the search results.

Brands are going to have to think about optimizing for all the different places that you can appear on Google.

So brands are going to have to think about optimizing for all the different places that you can appear on Google – such as through obtaining rich results, implementing Schema markup and optimizing for the Knowledge Panel – in order to get that visibility and continue to earn organic traffic from Google."

Lily Ray

SEO Director, Path Interactive

 Path Interactive



PREDICTION 4

Search will work in the voice of the customer.

Del Humenik

Chief Revenue Officer, SEMRush



"I think to anticipate how quickly change is going to happen, you have to take a look at what's happened over the past 20 years within search. In the very beginning, Google was trying to match a general query with a general response because content wasn't that good. As content got better, we started to try and match a more specific question with more specific content. Well, if you take a look at the proliferation of content over the last number of years, it has gotten

so robust that Google now is looking to be more exact. What exactly are you looking for? How closely can they match their response to the direct query that's being asked and the manner in which it's being asked? Before, it was very vague. If you had a general query, you got a general answer. Today, we have learned to be more specific and our expectations have changed. Our public has higher expectations about what information is served to their query.

Today, I think Google is trying to work in the voice of the customer. They're trying to anticipate exactly the way the customer asks a question – and brands are now responsible for providing our responses to that exact question. We need to not only answer the question that is asked, but begin to anticipate the follow-up question, and to provide answers for questions that have not yet been asked. A lot is going on right now with position zero and featured snippets. Google is spending a lot of time saying, 'What specifically did the person ask? And how quickly and succinctly can I answer that question?' The answer has to directly reflect what the customer is looking for – not necessarily what you, the brand, want to tell the customer."

PREDICTION 5

Search in 2020 will be about intent.

Christi Olson

Head of Evangelism for Search and Advertising,
Microsoft



"The future of search in 2020 is all about understanding intent. It's getting from intent to answers, and answers to actions. As a search engine, we've really been looking at how we can provide more intelligent answers for our customers, or the searchers on Bing, and more intelligent ad solutions through Microsoft Advertising. What that means for you as a marketer or an advertiser is really understanding your customer intent – what they're looking for as they go through their purchase journey – and making sure that you have relevant content and answers and information for every stage of the journey, so that as they're asking a question, they can find the most relevant information

to that product or service, and you take them along that journey. You can do that through organic search by creating in-depth content on your website and then supplement extending reach through your other marketing channels. In paid search, you can use audience targeting (in-market audience, remarketing lists for search ads, and custom audiences) to extend and customize the reach of your message and content to customers at each stage of the journey. It goes back to the basics of marketing: Reaching the right customer at the right time, where they're searching, regardless of how they're searching, so they can find answers and information."

How can brands do this in 2020?

"What brands need to do in 2020 is go back and really make sure they understand their customer journey. As a brand, if you don't understand that customer journey, and you're creating content, you're probably missing out on some core answers and core information that your customers are looking for. So start there. And start developing out a holistic plan and strategy, and then integrate that across your marketing – from organic search into paid search and into everything you're doing, from email to social campaigns – so that you're really taking those customers along the journey and not just bombarding them with the information that might not help them move from point A to point B."

Expectations will rise for direct answers.



"I think that people have become much more accustomed to asking their questions in search and expecting their answer to be right there in front of them. So whether it's coming from dictation, the devices that they're talking to, or even when they're typing, they're asking in a full question and not just a word. They're not shouting a single word into a device any longer. And now they expect that whatever question they ask can be answered. The more a brand can be there with that answer, the better they're going to show up in search."

Jeanna Corley

VP, Digital Strategy & Analytics, Massage Envy



How should brands get ready to meet these expectations?

"You have to really be prepared to have your data set up in a way that it can be found by these devices or even now the search engines, like Google, that are delivering the answers. So for Massage Envy, we're doing our website in more of a natural language protocol right now, so that the way we're wording our content is no longer like old-school, just match a keyword and we want to show up for a keyword – now it's really about, we want to show that we are actually answering the question that people are asking."

Privacy and personalization will play tug-of-war.

"Privacy is a huge trend. There are two big competing trends right now in search. In general, people want personalized results. They don't want to seek – and they want answers. They don't want to scroll through things; they want customized results based on their unique needs.

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At the same time, people are getting more and more leery of giving big companies all of their data. In Europe, GDPR is a huge topic, and it's becoming more and more of a topic in the U.S. and other markets as well. This pull of wanting personalized, great answers that satisfy my individual needs, with the desire to limit who has access to my personal data is something that the search companies and search products in general will have to grapple with in the next year and beyond."



Gerard Murphy

Senior Product Director, TripAdvisor



Customers will own their journeys.

The brand doesn't own the consumer journey anymore.

"The brand doesn't own the consumer journey anymore. The customer really owns the brand experience. Consumer behavior will dictate how they let brands into their journey. It's a brand's job to figure out which vehicles they're going to use to get in front of the customer at that point. It's all about creating awareness, and then it's about ensuring your product or service meets their needs. Brands should aim to create awareness wherever their customers want to find them."



David McCafferty
Chief Marketing Officer, Romeo's Pizza



Search will become predictive.

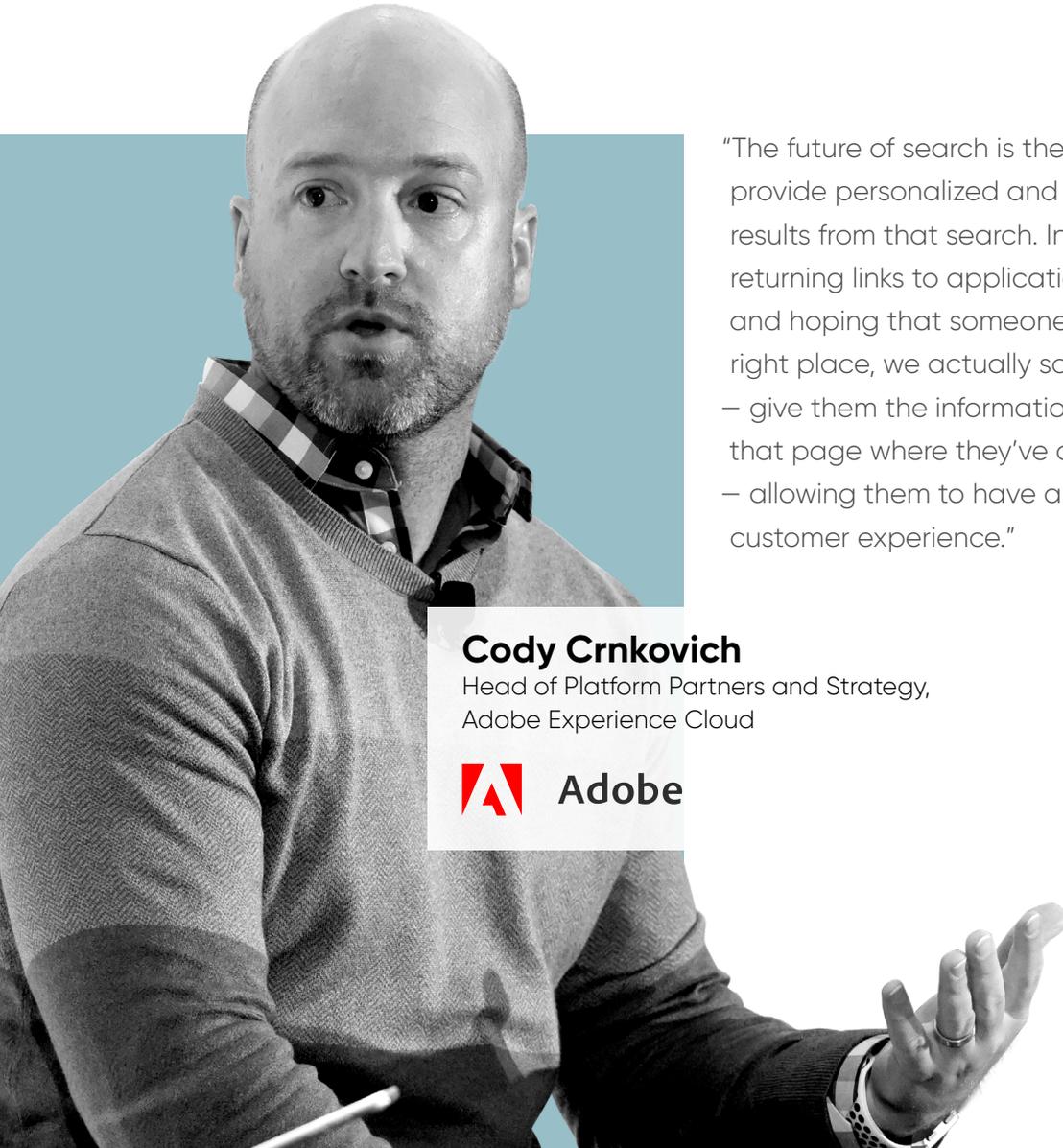
"I think the future of all of this is that when we're having a conversation with the tech around us and AI around us, it's going to get us. When I ask for something, if I say, "I'm hungry," it'll understand the fact that I grew up in Jersey and now I'm in New York, and because I don't often get to be back in New York, I want a great slice of pizza – but I didn't even have to say so. It knows that every time I've been in New York at this time, I've always gone to get pizza. Sometimes we don't even know exactly what we want ourselves. We figured that out when people – or in this case, brands – point things out. That's really why I think people look for things. You're either trying to find something out factually, or you're trying to learn something, and we haven't had the ability to intimately know a person as a person yet. I think that's the future of all this."

Dave Isbitski

Chief Evangelist, Alexa, Amazon

 amazon alexa

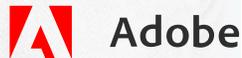
Personalized results will require clean data.



"The future of search is the ability to provide personalized and contextual results from that search. Instead of just returning links to applications to pages, and hoping that someone lands in the right place, we actually solve their problem – give them the information immediately in that page where they've done that search – allowing them to have a much better customer experience."

Cody Crnkovich

Head of Platform Partners and Strategy,
Adobe Experience Cloud



What can brands do to get there?

"They need to understand two things: From the personalization side of it is a need to understand their customer – really knowing from a profile perspective what their customers' expectations are, what segments their customers exist in, how their customers have behaved previously, and then taking that and providing a personalized result. Additionally, the data that's required to do that is a real challenge, and brands will have to make sure that there's hygiene around that data – that the data is accurate and that it gives a proper context is critical. You don't want to return a beautiful result in a page that's actually wrong and tells your customer one thing when it turns out to be something else. That data has to be timely, accurate, and that hygiene is critical."

Additional Resources

Looking for even more data and information to drive your strategy?

Check out these resources:



The infographic cover features a colorful abstract background with overlapping shapes in shades of blue, green, red, and orange. At the top left is the Yo XT logo. The main title 'Search Trends 2020' is in large white font, with the subtitle 'What Customers Are Looking for Throughout the Year' below it.

INFOGRAPHIC

**Search Trends 2020:
What Customers Are Looking
for Throughout the Year**

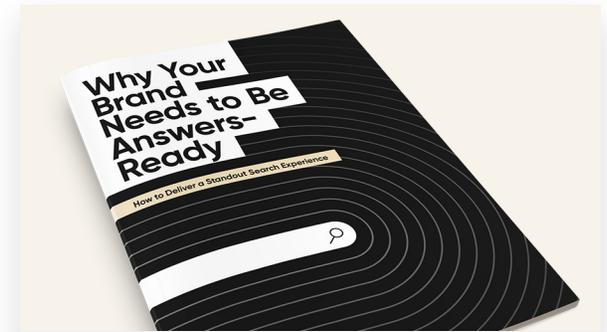


The webinar cover has a solid black background. At the top center is a small white box with the word 'WEBINAR' in purple. Below it, the title 'THE FUTURE IS NOW: SEO 2020 And Beyond' is written in green and white. At the bottom, the logos for 'conductor' and 'Yo XT' are displayed.

WEBINAR

**THE FUTURE IS NOW:
SEO 2020 And Beyond**

conductor + Yo XT



The whitepaper cover features a black background with white concentric circles and a search bar icon. The title 'Why Your Brand Needs to Be Answers-Ready' is in white, with the subtitle 'How to Deliver a Standout Search Experience' below it.

WHITEPAPER

**Why Your Brand Needs to
Be Answers-Ready**



The customer journey starts with a question, and every day consumers search for answers about brands. However, they are increasingly served false or misleading information from sources other than the brand. Yext, the Search Experience Cloud company, exists to help brands regain and maintain a direct relationship with their customers. With a mission to provide perfect answers everywhere, Yext puts businesses in control of their facts online by delivering brand verified answers straight from the source – wherever their customers are searching.

Companies like Taco Bell, Marriott, Jaguar–Land Rover, and thousands of businesses around the world use Yext to take back control of the customer journey, starting on their own website.

Yext has been named a Best Place to Work by Fortune and Great Place to Work®, as well as a Best Workplace for Women. Yext is headquartered in New York City with offices in Amsterdam, Berlin, Chicago, Dallas, Geneva, London, Miami, Milan, Paris, San Francisco, Shanghai, Tokyo, and the Washington, D.C. area.

Learn more at [yext.com](https://www.yext.com)