

Transpareensee Brings Broader Visibility to Search Results

Transpareensee has been under the radar. Since 2000, company founder and CEO Steven D. Lavine has been working to build search technology that would provide a better search experience for users and better visibility for advertisers. With the launch of Transpareensee's new Discovery Search Engine technology, he's certain he's done it.

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In essence, what Transpareensee's technology does is expose more of the database to users. Whether restaurants, dating or products, it seeks to improve the quality of the user experience by finding related or recommended results and close matches for user queries, eliminating the experience of "results not found" or few results in categories where there aren't enough listings. The technology delivers "fuzzy" search results to offer users a broader range of data that may not be exact matches, but may be useful or otherwise desirable. (This functionally is similar to Amazon's "recommendations.") Transpareensee's technology also allows users subsequently to refine or sort ("drill down") within results multiple times to arrive at a more exact result.

The Kelsey Group conducted a restaurant search on Digital City with and without the enhanced capabilities that Transpareensee offers.

The obvious difference between the two sets of results is the additional refinement capacity (more criteria can be added) of the Transpareensee search and a much longer list of corresponding results (4 vs. 54). Thus the Transpareensee technology can expose more listings (and advertisers) to users.

According to Lavine, different criteria (e.g., price, geography, cuisine) can be weighted to produce differently ordered results. That means that within a category or set of results, paying advertisers can appear at the top without violating the user's search criteria. This helps resolve the tension between "organic" listings and paid advertisers. In other words, the user specifies the criteria – moderately priced but well reviewed Chinese restaurants in Alexandria, Virginia – and the advertisers that match those criteria would appear at the top. (Restaurant/local search provider local-i is also taking this approach to advertising.)

The Bottom Line: Local search providers are increasingly seeking to enable users to search or browse according to multiple criteria, or refine and sort results after a general initial search. This kind of functionality will be required to remain competitive in the future. The compelling thing about Transpareensee's technology is that it provides related or close matches, while simultaneously enabling users to drill down more deeply within a particular category to find exact matches, if they exist. Finally, it appears to balance the needs of publishers nicely with those of users by enabling a boosting or weighting of advertiser listings within a set of results that matches the user's search criteria. **LMJ**