

Google increasingly battles Facebook in search

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Google logo

(AP) -- Google has identified social networking sites like Facebook as growing competitors in search, a company spokesman said Monday.

Internet users are increasingly looking for answers to their search questions, not just a list of sites in response to a query.

They also expect something personal from the Internet - and they're increasingly turning to it to answer more personal questions, which daycare to choose and what restaurant to go to, said [Google](#) Group Product Manager Ken Tokusei.

[Social networking sites](#) have a big advantage in this shift because information gleaned from them comes from friends, acquaintances, or at least an individual, and Tokusei said users tend to trust that information

more.

"We haven't gotten to the point where results are seen as if they come from someone you know," said Tokusei.

The search giant has begun to offer tools for users to rate results and delete unrelated links, but it still has work to do, he said.

Google is also trying to better home in on the information requested in a search. Sites such as WolframAlpha, launched earlier this month, comb the Internet for data, analyze it and then provide specific answers to queries, rather than a list of sites.

Google can do something similar for some searches, providing price quotes for "Sony stock" or an answer to "Tunisia capital." But these are followed by the familiar list of sites on which to dig further.

"It's a matter of determining what kind of information the user is looking for. But we will always serve some links to pages with our results," said Tokusei.

He spoke to reporters at Google's Japanese headquarters in Tokyo, where he gave an overview of the company's basic search tools.

Google has developed a host of expanding tools and services, from a mobile [operating system](#) to an online word processor, but it devotes 70 percent of its employees and resources to search.

The company also still faces fresh competition from its traditional rivals, which are regrouping in an attempt to take back market share.

Microsoft has failed to make much headway in repeated Internet ventures. But the deep-pocketed company, which has poured hundreds

of millions of dollars into improving its search engine, continues to develop a new search technology, part of which is called "Kumo" internally.

Yahoo, which has seen much of its market share plummet in the face of Google's dominance, is tweaking its search results, cutting out some links altogether and adding more emphasis on images and video.

Microsoft Chief Executive Steve Ballmer has said he is still interested in buying part of Yahoo, after a proposed deal was turned down last year.

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