

# Yahoo searching for ways to show fewer Web links

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(AP) -- Yahoo Inc. is pruning Web links from its Internet search results as it strives to provide more immediate gratification and lure traffic away from the market leader, Google Inc.

The Sunnyvale-based company previewed some of the upcoming improvements Tuesday as it updated reporters and bloggers on its two-year effort to gain a better understanding of what users really want when they make certain requests.

It's a challenging mission because the same search request can mean different things for different people. For instance, one person entering "Paris Hilton" may be looking for the latest dirt about the rollicking socialite, while another may simply want to make hotel reservations for an upcoming trip to France.

Yahoo thinks it is doing a better job, largely because it is able to track the search patterns and interests derived from requests made on the same computer.

The same kind of surveillance is helping to improve the results at Yahoo's primary competition in the lucrative search market, Google and Microsoft Corp.

Yahoo is hoping it can differentiate itself from its rivals by packaging its results so just about everything users want is on the first page of listings.

As part of that process, Yahoo has been phasing out the blue links that have traditionally filled up search result pages. In their place, Yahoo is showing more capsules of vital information that include images, video and even sound bites.

"We need to move away from a Web of pages to a Web of objects," said Prabhakar Ragahavan, who oversees Yahoo's search strategy.

Some of Yahoo's upgrades were made months ago and are probably already familiar to the search engine's millions of loyal users.

For instance, searches for restaurants already include the address, phone number and maps on the main search page while requests about baseball players return their current statistics. Searches of singers often feature videos and snippets of their latest songs.

With the help of the popular online hangout Facebook Inc. and a specialty [search engine](#) called Pipl.com, Yahoo also believes it has developed more complete personal dossiers to present when people are looking up information about other people.

In its next stage, Yahoo may start showing nothing but images of

landmarks or other pertinent pictures to some requests made through its general search engine (Yahoo, Google and Microsoft already have a special search section devoted to images).

The technology for emphasizing more photos and video in response to general search requests is still being tested. It could become a staple of the search engine within the next few months and when it does, Yahoo also may start showing more graphical ads next to its search results instead of text-based links, executives said.

Yahoo has been trying to catch up to Google for years, with little success. Its share of the U.S. market has fallen from more than 30 percent five years ago to about 20 percent in April, according to comScore Inc. Google now holds 64 percent of the U.S. market.

Microsoft also has been losing ground to [Google](#), despite spending hundreds of millions of dollars to improve its search engine. With its U.S. market share at just 8 percent, [Microsoft](#) is expected to unveil the latest renovations to its search engine in the next month or two.

Google's domination of the search market has established it as one of the world's most powerful companies, with revenue last year of nearly \$22 billion - about three times more than Yahoo.

Unable to snap out of a financial slump that began in 2006, [Yahoo](#) has had three chief executives in less than two years. Its latest leader, Carol Bartz, was hired in early January.

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