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POV: GETTING THE MOST OUT OF VOICE SEARCH

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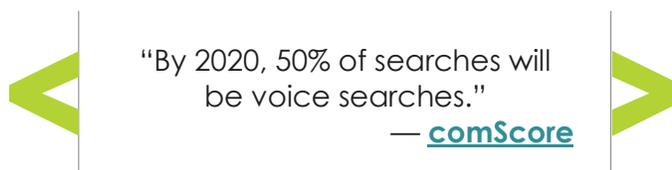


GETTING THE MOST OUT OF VOICE SEARCH

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

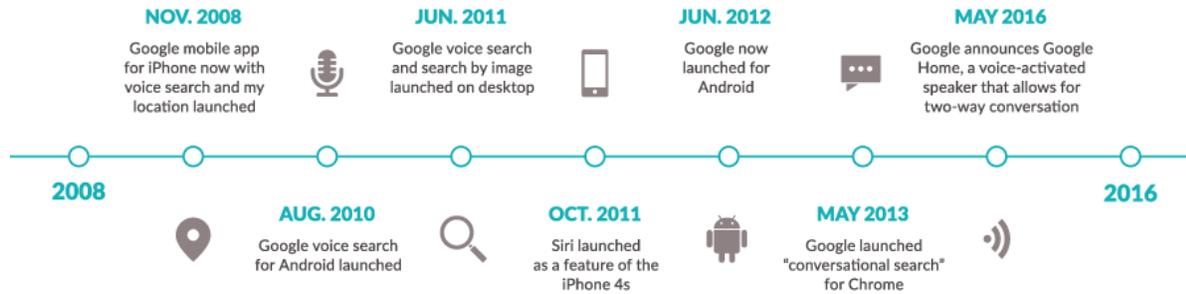
Voice search is everywhere — in our smartphones, on our computers, in our vehicles and in our homes, in products like Amazon Echo and Apple Home. As use of voice search continues to grow, we marketers must evaluate how our audiences' interactions and expectations are changing and optimize our websites for the best user search experience.

This POV reviews the evolution of user search behavior, its impact on pharmaceutical marketing today, and how to leverage voice search within existing websites.



VOICE SEARCH EXPLAINED

Voice search uses speech recognition to allow users to search by saying terms out loud instead of typing them into a traditional search bar. Google Voice Search uses a combination of natural language processing (NLP) and text-to-speech technology to understand a user's search request. This is then processed through their database, which aims to match the question with an answer for the user, rather than a search engine results page (SERP). The role of the NLP technology is to determine the intent behind the user's voice request, based on previous query histories and context behind the phrase. Apple's [Siri](#), Windows' [Cortana](#), Amazon's Alexa and other voice-activated search technologies follow a similar process, returning a direct result rather than a SERP.



THE GROWTH OF VOICE SEARCH

Two years ago, [Google reported](#) that the integration of natural language and an error rate of approximately 8% had led to an increase in the use of questions during the search process. Furthermore, Google's research at the time showed that 55% of teens and 41% of adults used voice search more than once a day.

In 2015, people conducted [more searches](#) on phones and tablets than on desktop. With the large shift to mobile device usage, conversational search queries have risen and reduced the opportunity to keyword stuff — a tactic that incorporates as many keywords as possible on a webpage in an attempt to dominate search results pages. Sites that focus on providing the best answers to questions will have an advantage over competition, as well as long-term success in the organic search space.

20% to 25% of all searches have voice intent.
— [Search Engine Land](#)

DIGITAL ASSISTANTS

Developers created digital assistants like Siri, Cortana, Google Now and Alexa to encourage user interaction with voice search. With these intelligent personal assistants, users are increasingly asking more conversational questions. For example:

- + "What are the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis?" vs. "rheumatoid arthritis symptoms"
- + "What are the ways you can get hepatitis C?" vs. "hep C transmission"



Most queries allow for follow-up questions without the need to restate the subject. For example, you might ask, “What is rheumatoid arthritis?” and then “What are the symptoms?” without having to restate the disease. These assistants are also able to answer complex questions, such as “Did it snow in Kansas City last New Year’s Eve?” and “Will it be warmer than 90 degrees near the Statue of Liberty tomorrow afternoon?”

Digital assistants are not just confined to smartphones anymore; they are now integrated into homes, cars and game consoles. The more we speak to and interact with digital assistants, the more sophisticated they become. In 2015 alone, searches on digital assistants ballooned from [“statistical zero to 10% of overall search volume globally,”](#) or 50 billion searches a month.

HOW DO WE LEVERAGE VOICE SEARCH?

The importance of understanding user preferences, their habits and how user intent evolves over time can’t be overstated. Search queries will continue to get longer, leading to more long-tail keywords and an increase in natural language queries. As marketers, we must integrate these evolving search behaviors into our content strategy:

1. Humanize content; use conversational phrases
2. Maximize schema markup opportunities
3. Prioritize FAQ content
4. Strike a balance: breadth vs. depth of content

HUMANIZE CONTENT; USE CONVERSATIONAL PHRASES

As NLP evolves, it will become better and better at understanding a searcher’s intent. Creating and optimizing content using natural phrases and sentence structures will help increase visibility in voice search results. First, consider incorporating adverbs into webpage content that answers the who, what, where, when, why and how. This will help humanize the tone of the content. Second, optimize landing pages and copy to account for high-value natural language searches. Look to use long-tail keywords where possible. An example of this would be “foods to avoid with Crohn’s disease.” Third, enhance metadata to incorporate natural language (e.g., What are possible side effects of X? When is the best time to take X?).



MAXIMIZE SCHEMA MARKUP OPPORTUNITIES

Schema is a markup language added to the code of a website that helps provide additional context for a search engine to help it understand what a particular webpage is about. The more context we can provide a search engine, the better it will understand the content of the page. In turn, this can have positive effects on organic search rankings.

With voice search, this markup will help a search engine match searcher intent with the content most relevant to their query. By marking up webpages and refreshing/updating the markup periodically, we should be in a great position to capture voice search queries about brands and disease.

PRIORITIZE FAQ CONTENT

Voice searchers are using trivia-style questions to get information. This makes FAQ content extremely important for helping search engines quickly identify answers for popular requests or questions. By marking up FAQ content with schema and using natural language to do so, brands can put themselves in a great position to provide go-to answers to searchers' questions and queries.

In addition, with unique coding structures, specific questions and answers indexed by search engines allow users to scroll through a single page while seamlessly changing URLs. It also allows search engines to index more specific content instead of a page watered down by a lot of different topics.

STRIKE A BALANCE: BREADTH VS. DEPTH OF CONTENT

Long-scrolling pages are good for people who want breadth of content over a broad topic; individual pages are ideal for people who want depth in a specific topic. To satisfy both needs, look to create long-scrolling content that briefly touches on multiple topics. Within these brief descriptions, incorporate links out to individual pages that contain more in-depth information for a particular topic. This helps strike a balance between breadth and depth by supplying content that satisfies a user's basic interest and need for thorough understanding.



RECOMMENDATION: GROW, EVOLVE, REACH OUT

Voice search will continue to grow and evolve as people continue to interact with the technology, and so must we as marketers. Reach out to your Intouch Solutions team with questions or for more information and guidance on how you can incorporate voice search to meet your marketing goals.

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