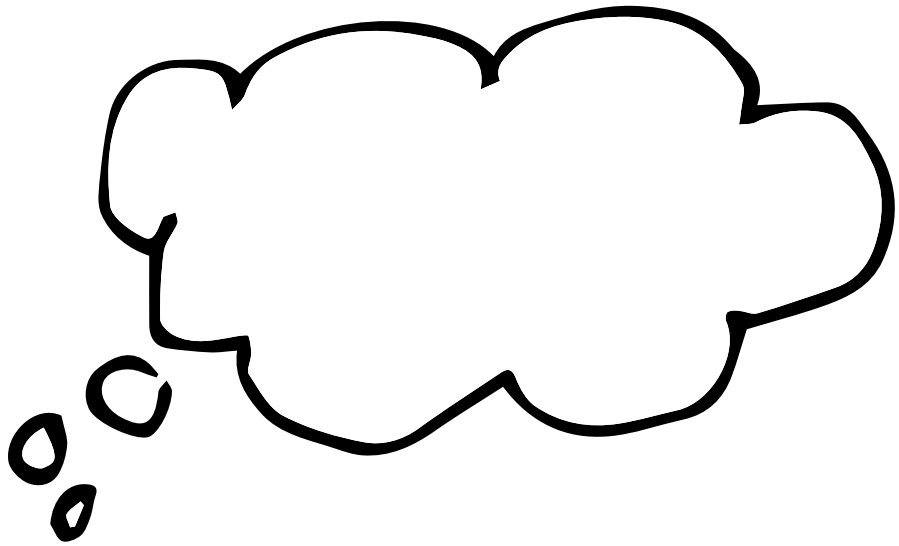
SPEAKING GOOGLE'S LANGUAGE

OPTIMIZING CONTENT FOR THE **SEMANTIC** WEB

BRAFTON
FUEL YOUR BRAND

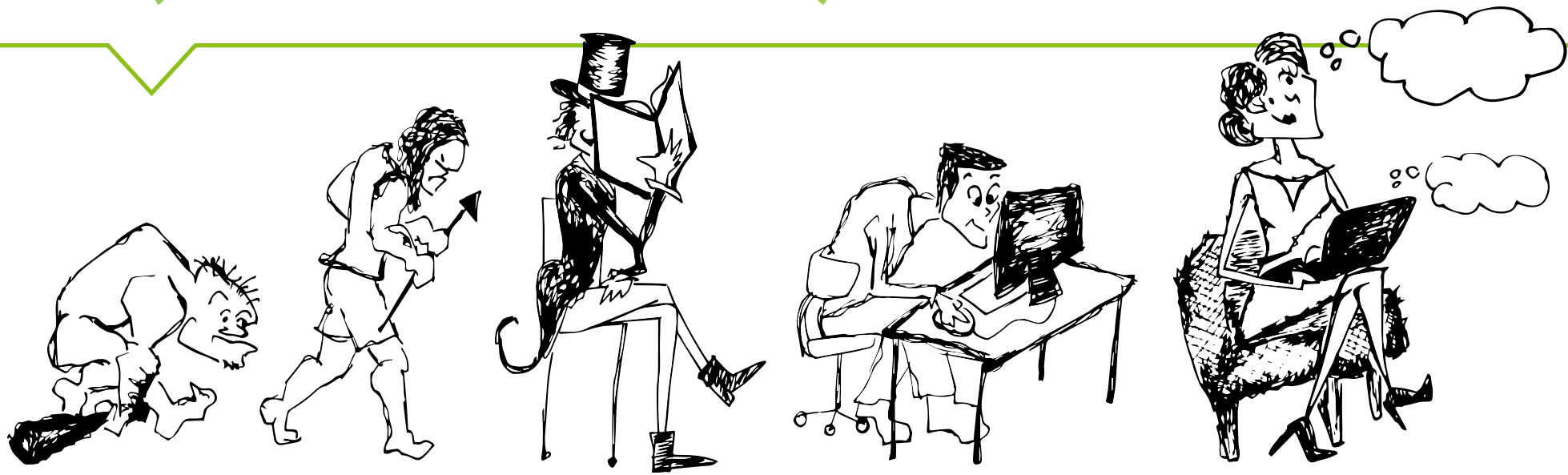


INTRODUCTION

SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET IS RADICALLY DIFFERENT than it was even five years ago, but that's part of Google's plan to construct a smarter web that provides users with better information through semantic search. You might think this is bad news for search marketing because it would seemingly make it harder to rank highly for keywords - and ultimately, reach prospects and clients.

HOWEVER, THE SYSTEM GOOGLE'S BUILDING IS ACTUALLY A NET POSITIVE FOR CONTENT MARKETERS AND THEIR WEB RESULTS. Producing content that answers users' questions, linking sites with social media profiles and taking part in active conversations across the internet is all part of the emerging semantic web. And it will ultimately help marketers reach new customers.

THE **HISTORY** OF SEARCH (ABRIDGED)



THE **HISTORY** OF SEARCH (ABRIDGED)

FOR MOST OF ITS SHORT HISTORY, the internet was organized around keywords and links. When people wanted information, search engines would find pages that contained the keywords they typed. The highest ranking pages were generally the ones that used those keywords and had enough inbound links to merit a positive PageRank.

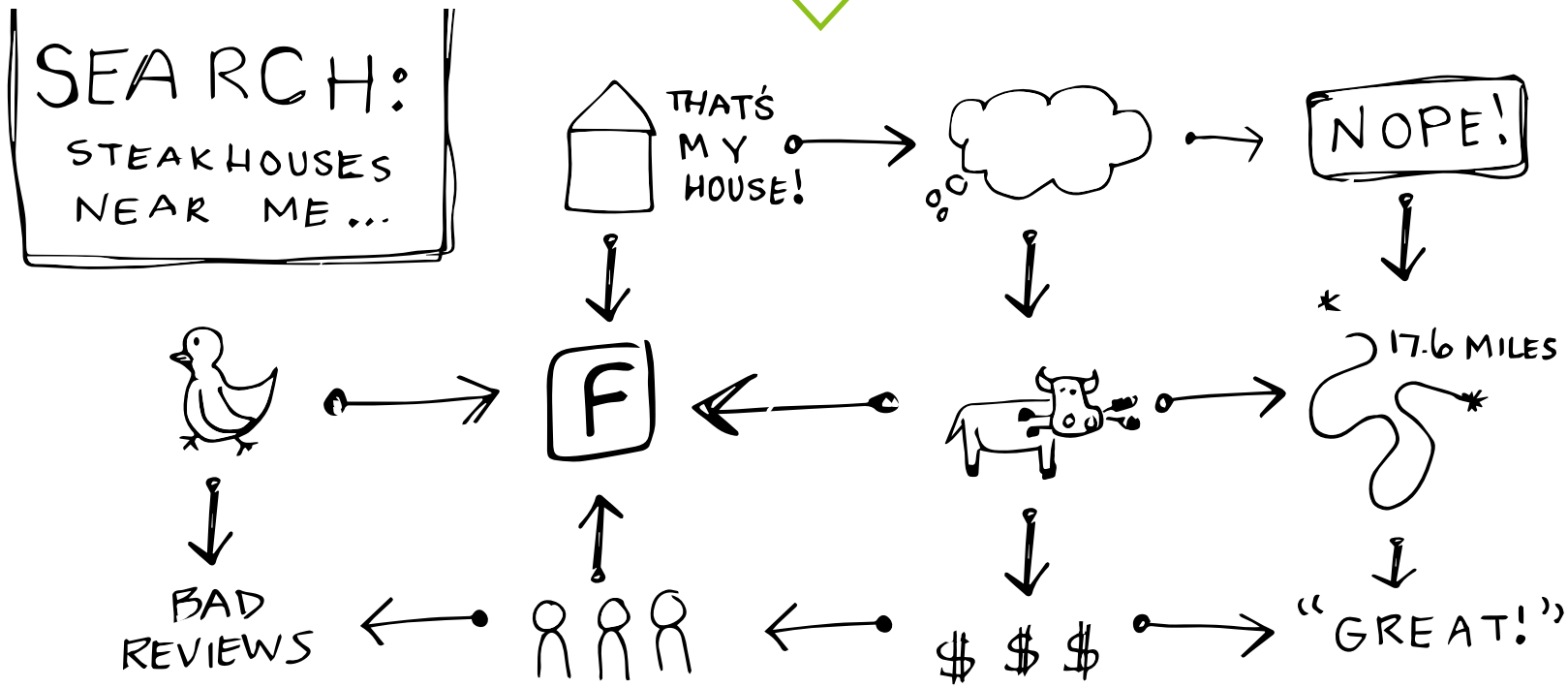
A good way to understand this period of internet history is to think of people speaking the same language as computers. A person who wanted to find information about "Chinese food in Somerville" online would receive pages that contained the words "Chinese," "food" and "Somerville" (or those words in combination), ranked according to how reputable they seemed based on links.

THE **HISTORY** OF SEARCH (ABRIDGED)

However, Google realized documents that contained the most keywords weren't always the most relevant. It looked to experimental search engines, like those developed at universities, which were refining this process by asking users to make multiple searches until they narrowed down their requests to the right results.

Google made tweaks to its search algorithms to guard against keyword stuffing and anchor text-driven link schemes. This still didn't solve the problem, which was that something was being lost in translation in web searches. People were searching for ideas, or answers to questions, or particular pieces of information, and using keywords for searches wasn't always the most accurate or efficient way to provide answers.

THE RISE OF THE **SEMANTIC WEB**



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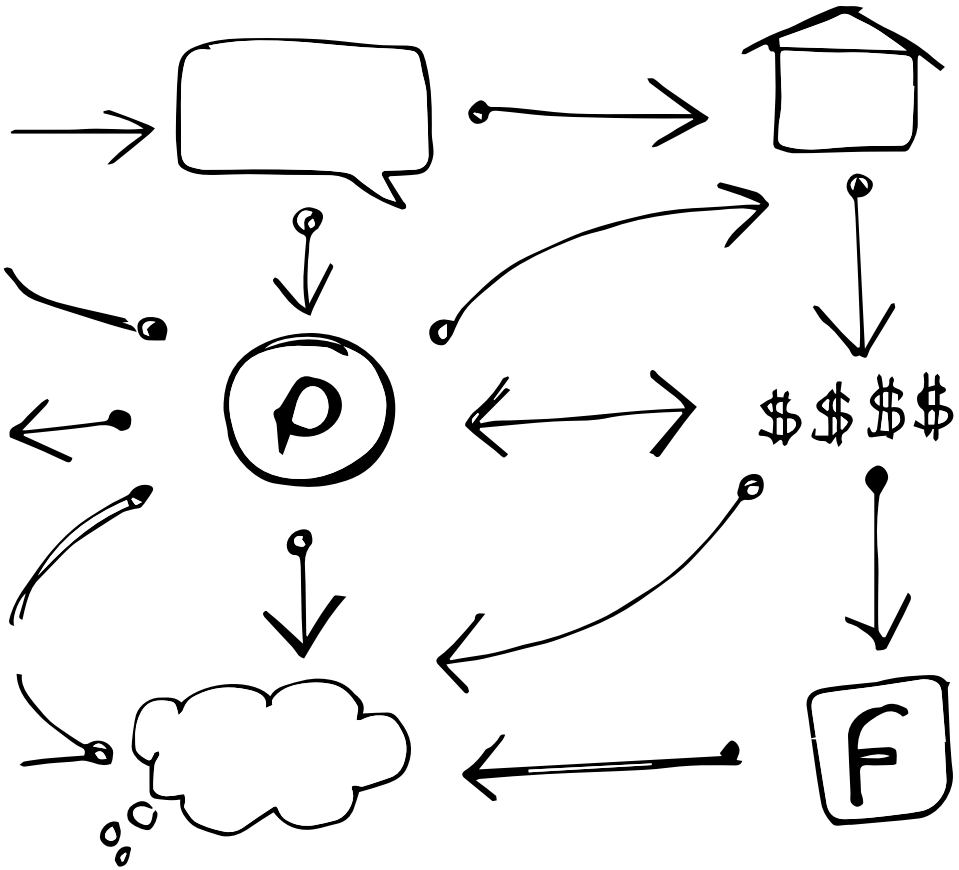


SEMANTICS, OR THE STUDY OF MEANING, CONTRIBUTED to Google's understanding of how information should be organized. Keywords are just tools people use to express concepts, so when users type them into search engines, they're just trying to express an idea to a machine. On the semantic web, Google has collected information about ideas and concepts - not just from keywords and links, but any relevant and available data.

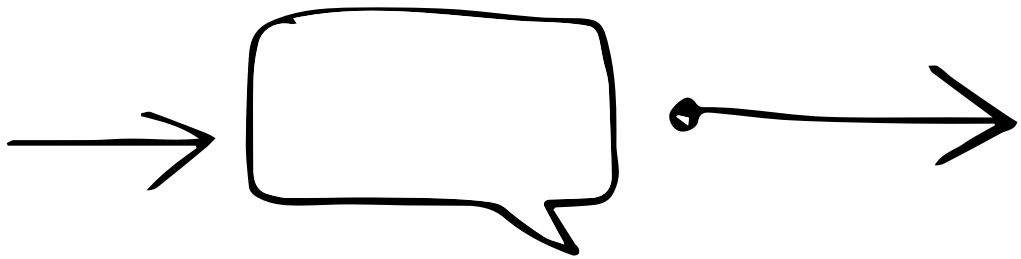
Remember the search for "Chinese food in Somerville"? A semantic search engine doesn't just look for these words on the internet. Instead, it understands that the user wants a restaurant in a certain geographic area and it takes into account the searcher's location, the time, the traceable social media imprint of Chinese food restaurants in Somerville, reviews of those restaurants, mentions on other websites and the credibility of websites that link to relevant restaurant web pages.

WHAT ARE THE **PARTS** OF SEMANTIC SEARCH?

THERE ARE FOUR MAJOR COMPONENTS
that account for a lot of the semantic web.

They include:

- SENTIMENT
- ENGAGEMENT
- CITATION
- INTERACTION



WHAT ARE THE **PARTS** OF SEMANTIC SEARCH?

SENTIMENT

Google attempts to figure out what people think of a concept (a business, an idea, a person) and uses that to flesh out its semantic meaning on the web.

ENGAGEMENT

If a page is affiliated with social media profiles, the activity of those profiles could affect the page's likelihood of showing up in search results.

CITATION

Links are still important to semantic search results, but they have to be from credible sources that also have high value according to Google's semantic algorithms.

INTERACTION

If other people are exhibiting activity around pages, like sharing content from a website on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn or other social platforms, it affects a site's performance.

MARKETING ON THE SEMANTIC WEB

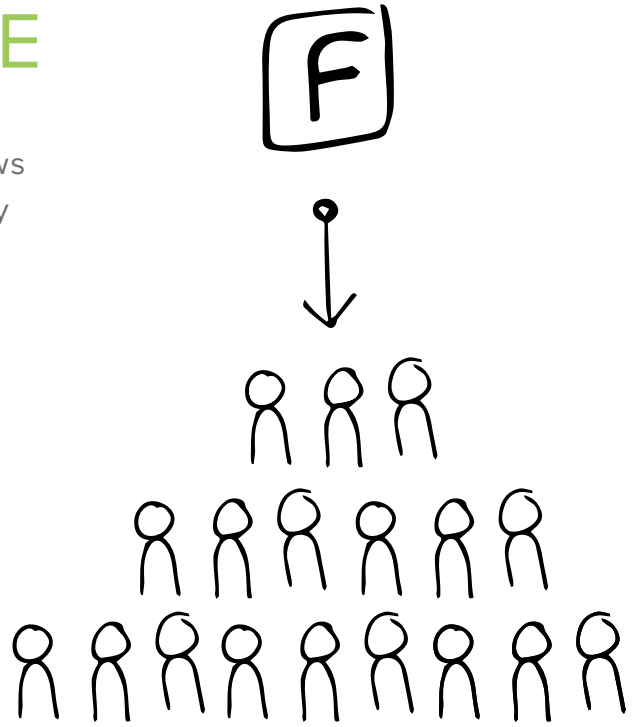
FOR MARKETERS, THIS MEANS THAT BRANDING IS BECOMING EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. Brands are entities, and the better defined they are online, the more likely they'll be found by searchers. This can be accomplished through a combination of: Social media presence, schema markup and, most importantly, value to users.

- SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE
- SCHEMA MARKUP
- VALUE TO USERS

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Actions taken on sites like Facebook, Twitter and Google+ help Google understand how much people actually value an article, news story or video. The more interesting and useful it is, the more likely actual human users will want to share it.

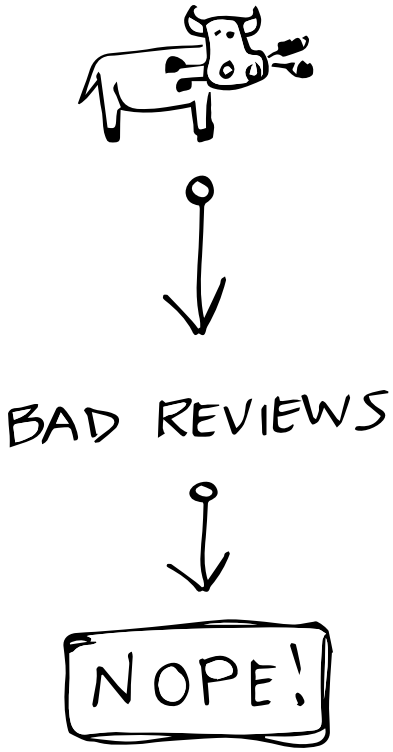
Don't underestimate the value of interactive social content. Go beyond sharing your web pages ad hoc to using your content assets or custom posts to answer individual questions from users.



SCHEMA MARKUP

This special HTML code can be added to web content to give search crawlers more information about what's on the page. This might include a company's location, what kind of business it is or whether a page contains a video, recipe or review. By fleshing out the Knowledge Graph, Google can provide immediate answers through Info Cards and carousels, which appear alongside standard search results.

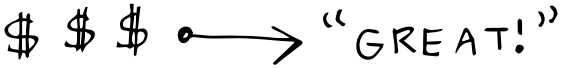
As you build out different content, be conscious of applying the organization of schemas wisely. You can look at the URL for any page in Google's Structured Data testing tool to see how it will appear in search results.



VALUE TO USERS

Google wants to stop any attempts to game the system, so value is its primary goal for semantic search. People increasingly expect search results to answer complex questions: "How do I do my taxes?" "What are the best natural supplements?" "Where can I buy ergonomic office supplies?" Content that answers questions like these will be rewarded, and those that contain keywords but no actionable information will suffer.

Gather FAQs across the buyer journey—from sales and marketing teams, to account or customer service reps. Map your content marketing topic areas to your audience needs throughout the customer lifecycle.



If you are still confused about the use of keywords within your content marketing, consider this:

Keywords are important because they happen to be the best way to identify a concept, not because Google is looking for those keywords in the first place.

THE **FUTURE** OF SEMANTIC SEARCH

THERE ARE SOME SEMANTIC SEARCH DEVELOPMENTS ON THE HORIZON that marketers should take note of, like mobile search or increased social impact. People logged into Google+ and Gmail provide Google with even more data to refine searches through location, time and other "browsing activity. This raises the bar for audience-focused content, but could also be a good thing for marketers because they can connect with customers who are more likely to need their particular services at that moment.

Marketers must pay attention to these changes, but more importantly, strive to put forth the best possible answers if they want to add value to the 'net and be prominent players on the semantic web.

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