

Where is Google going?

We all know how ubiquitous Google seems to be. It's certainly the most used search engine and to [go from nowhere to c. \\$23 billion in revenue for 2009 in 10 years or so](#) is impressive.



About 97% of that revenue comes from advertising – the sponsored links on Google itself and on many more sites too. And now that it has nearly 80% of the American search market and provides its services, except the advertising, free it's going to be difficult to dislodge as competitors have to build something better that's also free but they don't have the revenue stream.

So whilst Google has many things that it does – [You Tube](#), [Google docs](#), [Google mail](#), [Talk](#), [Orkut](#), [Knol](#), [Google mobile](#) – so far it's pretty much a 'one trick pony' as a business, albeit some pony.

Clearly that business is search. So what we really have to ask is what is Google going to do next in search and where will this take it?

Clearly a lot of the direction will still be set by the founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page. However there are two other people out there who have given a lot of clues. Eric Schmidt, Google's CEO and Marissa Mayer, Vice President of Search Product and User Experience.

Eric Schmidt



In a [45 minute video on You Tube Eric Schmidt is interviewed](#) at the Gartner Symposium ITxpo in Orlando.

This interview indicates that Google will depend on advertising revenue for a long time but that they see 'enterprise applications' as the next \$ billion business.

They see "expensive and inflexible" PC desktop applications being replaced by free or low cost, flexible, high quality web based solutions that work for companies with email, documents and mobile devices core to this. Schmidt says they 'invent the future along the way' and that they are building elegant and simple solutions that will work for at least 100 million users – that is "cloud based services that everybody uses".

In their blog about Chrome OS they describe the vision: "We hear a lot from our users and their message is clear — computers need to get better. People want to get to their email instantly, without wasting time waiting for their computers to boot and browsers to start up. They want their computers to always run as fast as when they first bought them. They want their data to be accessible to them wherever they are and not have to worry about losing their computer or forgetting to back up files. Even more importantly, they don't want to spend hours configuring their computers to work with every new piece of hardware, or have to worry about constant software updates. And any time our users have a better computing experience, Google benefits as well by having happier users who are more likely to spend time on the Internet".

There are three things they have developed that are crucial to all of this. An (open source) browser [Chrome](#) supported by an (open source) operating system – [Chrome OS](#) – that will work with netbooks and [Google Wave](#).

Wave is a communication and collaboration tool. It is a web-based service, designed to merge e-mail, instant messaging, wikis and social networking and can also provide, for example, spelling / grammar checking and automated translation among 40 languages.

Instead of sending a message, document, picture or video along with its entire thread of previous messages or requiring all responses to be stored in each user's inbox, waves that contain complete threads of multimedia messages (blips) are perpetually stored on a central server. Waves can then be shared with collaborators who can be added to or removed from the wave at any point.

He also talks about real time search and user generated content [UGC] e.g. Facebook and Twitter. Because of UGC the rate of growth of information is probably the fastest growth of anything, anywhere but Schmidt says that Google is confident they are solving how to index it, rank it and allow it to be searched. He says that in future most people's information will come from other people they know and trust (like it did in an 'old fashioned' small town) rather than 'traditional sources' and that Google's challenge is how to rank UGC so that Google maintains its search position and revenues.

Marissa Mayer

[In an article in Techradar](#) Marissa Mayer takes all this further:

"We think it's really important to move beyond just keywords and allow people to ask questions, and maybe access things more easily from their mobile phone. We're also looking at how to weave new media into it and how we can bring books, videos and news right into the search experience. And then there are various pieces of personalisation. What can we understand about the user and how can we tailor the results to them?"



Maybe the search engine of the future will know where you're located. Maybe they'll know what you know already, or what you learned earlier today. Or maybe they'll fully understand your preferences because you've chosen to share that information with us. We aren't sure which personal signals will be most valuable, but we're investing in research and experimentation on personalised search now because we think this will be very important later. We really need to harness people's friends better to understand which news to direct them to, which local events to direct them to... these are all things that we think are intriguing."

Mayer describes the concept of the ideal search engine as "Your best friend with instant access to all the world's facts and a photographic memory you've seen and know."

There's [a great deal more on the Official Google blog](#), it's a little bit out of date but still very relevant.



So what is Google doing about all of this right now?

Well it supports [Open Social](#). [OpenSocial](#) defines a common interface for social applications across multiple websites. With standard JavaScript and HTML, developers can create apps that access a social network's friends and update feeds.

It has developed [Friend Connect](#) which is described as a means to "quickly turn your website or blog into a place where people meet and get to know each other". [Here is an example site.](#)

They also have in development Google Social Search – an experimental feature that helps you find relevant public web content from people in your social circle, when you're signed in to your Google Account. For example, search for restaurants, and restaurant reviews by your friends and other contacts may appear more prominently in your results at the bottom of the search results page, in a section labelled "Results from people in your social circle." [You can see a video about it on You Tube](#). Matt Cutts from the search quality team [also explains how Google Social Search works](#) in another video.

Google clearly sees search as its core business for a long time to come and it believes that it will make our searches more useful and relevant by understanding who we are, who our family, friends, colleagues and contacts are, what we search for and more (have a look at my Google account dashboard). By doing this it believes that it will gain more advertising revenue. But it also wants to tie individuals and companies into its "cloud" providing us all with "elegant and simple cloud based services".

So, simply put Google sees the web as its domain and that it will not only be 'the search engine' but also the 'Microsoft of the web'.