

A brief history of

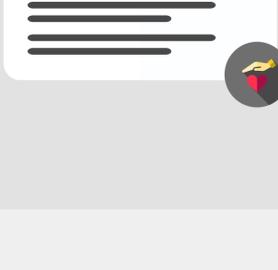
SEARCH ENGINE results pages

Google Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs) have changed dramatically over the past 20 years. What started as a project called Backrub in 1996 is now the driving force behind a \$37 billion advertising industry. Let's take a look at the most impactful Google developments throughout the years!

The 1990'S

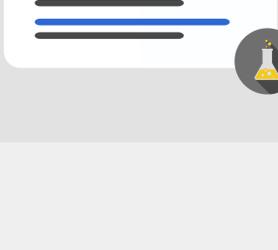
1996

Sergey Brin and Larry Page launched Backrub as a project while at Stanford.



1998

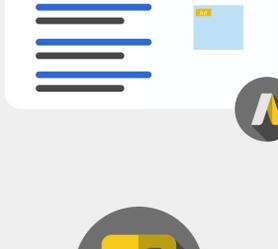
Google! Beta was launched, laying the foundations for SERPs as we have come to know them.



Early 2000'S

2000

Google launched AdWords, its pay-per-click advertising product. At first, these ads were only available to 350 consumers!



2001

Image Search arrived, providing access to over 100 million images.



2003

Mark Zuckerberg launches Facebook while studying at Harvard.

Although not initially seen as an existential threat to Google, the search giant has since taken many tentative steps into the social network arena.



2004

Google launched Local results, which originally appeared on the left hand side of SERPs



Late 2000'S

2005

Video sharing website YouTube launches in 2005.

It quickly becomes one of the fastest growing sites worldwide. Google moved swiftly to acquire the company in 2006 for \$1.65 billion, a price that looks like a steal with the benefit of hindsight.



2005

Google Universal Search goes live in SERPs. This development sees images, video and news integrated within the main results, fundamentally changing the way SEOs think about ranking positions.



2007

Google Universal Search goes live in main SERPs



2007

The first iPhone launched on June 29, 2007, heralding a new era of smartphone usage.

This poses another threat to Google, beginning an ongoing battle to have their search results included as default on iPhone devices.



2008

Google Suggest introduced to SERPs. Taking its cue from predecessors like Ask Jeeves, this also serves as an indication of future Google changes such as the 'People Also Ask' boxes.



2010

Google launches its mobile operating system, Android, in late 2008.

Although Google does not invest too heavily in taking on Apple as a hardware provider, this is a clear mark of their intent to profit from the growing smartphone market.



Early 2010'S

2011

Authorship lands on Google SERPs. Although it only stayed until 2014, authorship tags provided a great way for writers to promote their content and increase CTR.



2011

Google launches its direct Facebook rival, Google+.

Many in the industry wondered whether the Google product could differentiate itself enough from Facebook to encourage users to make the switch.



2012

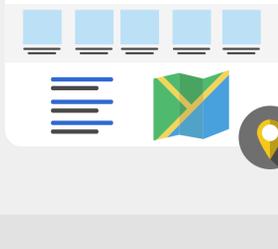
Google Now is released in 2012.

We can consider this a 'soft launch', as most of the features we have become familiar with only came into play in 2014. Google Now, along with Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa, continues to shape the industry, particularly in the form of voice searches.



2013

SERPs include an interactive Local Search Carousel



Late 2010'S

2013

Google releases its Hummingbird algorithm.

The most significant update to the functioning of its search engine in over a decade, Hummingbird brings with it significant enhancements in machine learning and conversational search. This is followed quickly by the launch of RankBrain.



2015

Google starts to confirm what many have suspected for a while: our industry is going mobile-first, in line with consumer usage trends.



2015

Facebook drastically improves its targeting capabilities with the launch of a new pixel.

The social network also makes aggressive moves into Google's territory with a slew of new advertising products and user tracking, powered by its Atlas platform.



2016

Google removes right-hand ad rail and launches Expanded Text Ads.



2017

Google updates its 'Ad' label, making it more difficult to distinguish from organic listings.



DEFINING TRENDS IN SERP'S TODAY

- Increased PPC presence
- Voice search
- Hyper local targeting
- Machine Learning

Google has come a long way since the launch of Backrub in 1996, but the pace of innovation is only increasing. In our next infographic, we'll explore some predictions for the future of search results!