

Spock.com Pacts With Google, Plays With Ad Networks

By [Rebecca Lieb](#), ClickZ, Apr 7, 2008

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People search engine Spock.com, launched last autumn, just became the newest member of [Google's Search Network](#), joining portals and search engines such as Ask.com, AOL and Lycos in displaying Google's AdWords ads.

"We just finalized the paperwork and are working on the technical end," Spock co-founder Jay Bhatti told ClickZ News.

Spock is also in talks with virtually all the major ad networks including the Yahoo Publisher Network, Glam, Tribal Fusion, Pubmatic, Advertising.com, and DoubleClick, as it experiments with contextual and display advertising on the site. Bhatti expects a formal launch of display ads in "two to three months."

Spock (the name alludes not to "Star Trek," but instead is an acronym for "single point of contact by keyword") claims to currently serve some 6 million search queries per month, with query volume growing at a 30 percent monthly rate. According to comScore, Spock.com had 275,000 unique U.S. visitors and 601,000 worldwide in February 2008.



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Its spiders crawl people data from disparate sources on the Web including social networks, directories, and sites, to create profiles of people that are searchable by multiple attributes, e.g. tags, location, name, and e-mail address.

Users contribute greatly to these profiles, creating new profiles and content on existing profiles, and "voting" on content already posted.

"We're not a social network," insists Bhatti, an important differentiator for a property intent on competing with MySpace and Facebook for advertiser dollars. "Intent and relationships are hard to capture on social networks." Spock also screens its entries for the potentially offensive content that raises adjacency flags with brand advertisers on social networks.

Spock claims 30 percent of search volume is people related, and queries are more or less evenly split between queries for the famous and ordinary Joes. Currently, Spock is testing various ads on the voting pages for celebrity photos. Google's ads are in the right column, display ads at the top and bottom of the page.

Bhatti hopes to sell advertisers on reaching women, who conduct over 60 percent of celebrity searches, per company data. "We may not have a lot of women who are signed up and are contributors," he said, "but they're a large portion of the searchers on Spock."

Down the road, plans are to target ads to more descriptors in profiles, such as local information. The company has also had preliminary talks with major brand advertisers -- Bhatti named Nike and Target -- regarding potential awareness campaigns.

"When someone's looking at Tiger Woods and are coming from Germany, wouldn't it be great if they can see a Nike ad? " he asks, not so rhetorically.

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