

SearchINSIDER

THE INSIDE LINE ON SEARCH MARKETING

Home > Search Insider

Spock: The People Search Wiki

by [David Berkowitz](#), Tuesday, January 8, 2008, 9:46 AM

The most common reaction I hear when I invite a friend to Spock is, "Not another!" That's understandable; 2007 was the year that accepting online invites went from exciting to burdensome.

Yet [Spock](#) brings new approaches to search engine optimization that I anticipate will become a model for other sites, and it offers its own benefits for users to manage their online reputations, so it's one invite worth accepting, if just to see how it stands out.

Spock's core is a people search engine. Search for Guy Kawasaki, for instance, and the [first listing that comes up](#) provides information and links about him culled from various sources like his blog and LinkedIn profile. There are three hooks for what makes Spock different, even if the elements themselves aren't unique on their own: tags, profile aggregation, and reputation ranking. We'll explore how they work together to make Spock one of the more exciting sites to watch early this year.

Tags

The top of every profile entry includes tags. Tags on [my profile](#) include current and past job titles and companies, some basic biographical information ("from Mamaroneck, NY"), general professional categories ("search engine marketing," "emerging media"), and a few of my favorite TV shows ("likes 'Arrested Development'"). When I claim my profile, I can choose which tags are relevant to me, and those that aren't disappear.

Meet David Berkowitz at [OMMA Global New York NYC!](#)

David Berkowitz will be there moderating a panel on "Can Real-Time Results Be Found in Real-Time Search?" on September 22 at 11:15 AM. Top executives will be there. Will you?
[Register today and save.](#)

Other Spock users can contribute and vote on tags too. If most of my Spock contacts know me for my search engine marketing work, they can vote on that tag and it will rise to the top of the profile. Considering the value tags have in search engine optimization, Spock is empowering its users to take care of a lot of the SEO for them. To balance that, the [Spock Robot](#) also votes. It even has its own profile, and its tags show how people have mixed reactions; some contributed the tags "hates privacy" and "finds way too much information," while others call it a "cute search engine spider."

Profile Aggregation

There's no shortage of profile aggregators that aim to help people consolidate their online identities, and this field should explode this year. What makes Spock a bit different is that its robot scours the Web and tries to group the profiles together, generally based on one's email

SHARE

TOOLS

PRINT SUBSCRIBE
COMMENT RSS

RELATED ARTICLES

- [Battelle And Sullivan Grill One Another, Probing Search And Social Data](#)
- [Rohan: Social Media A Central Park Of The Mind](#)
- [The Continuing Big Brother Debate](#)
- [Nielsen Trades Pocket Pieces For Facebook, Will Conduct Research Via Online Social Network](#)
- [Periodic Agency Evaluation Promotes Integrated Marketing Strategies](#)

TAGS: [Search](#)

MOST READ

- [Panel: Social Media Should Be Weaved Into All Marketing](#)
- [TV Still Relevant, But Social Media Takes Center Stage: Marketers](#)
- [Nielsen Trades Pocket Pieces For Facebook, Will Conduct Research Via Online Social Network](#)
- [Q+A: Omniture CEO Josh James After Adobe](#)
- [Forecast: Internet Ad Spend To Hit 15%, Mobile 19% In '10](#)
- [A Quarter Of People On Twitter Don't Use It, But What's Its Home Page Worth, Anyway?](#)
- [Ford's Scott Monty Talks Social Media at OMMA](#)
- [Coke Promo: Scan Soda Can, Get Mobile Content](#)
- [How Much Do Green Issues Influence QSR Patronage?](#)
- [The Death Of Auto-Play](#)

ADVANCED SEARCH



David Berkowitz
Emerging
Marketing

- » Gord Hotchkiss
- » Kaila Colbin
- » Aaron Goldman
- » Rob Garner
- » Steve Baldwin
- » Rob Griffin
- » Matt Greitzer
- » Chris Copeland
- » Derek Gordon
- » Janel Landis

- » September 2009
- » August 2009
- » July 2009
- » June 2009
- » May 2009
- » April 2009
- » All Archives

RE

address. Once you claim your listing (or multiple listings if needed), you can then select which profiles to add or hide.

Reputation Ranking

Whose opinion matters more, that of a Spock user or the robot? If the user has done anything on Spock, the human wins. That's because of the importance of Spock Power; the most active, trusted users have a greater say than anyone else. The robot's Spock Power score is a lowly 1, while heavy users have scores upwards of 1,000 (Spock co-founder Jay Bhatti has the ridiculously high authority of about 270,000, but I'm guessing he spends a little more time on the site than the average user).

It's rare to see a site adopt reputation into its algorithms and technological backbone. With Google Adwords, for instance, a click from one user is just as meaningful as a click from another. With digg, the number of votes and the rate at which they're entered determines what climbs the rankings, though a regular digg contributor who is active within the community will find his own submissions dugg more than others. With Wikipedia, anyone can contribute to or edit articles, though active contributors implicitly wield more authority (a select few have added authority for policing the site). With eBay, reputations matter, but among the larger community of buyers, the highest bidder wins an auction, not the person with the best reputation.

Spock takes a completely different approach, where it decides on the person's reputation, and the community then validates it. If Spock's robots are right, then why not expand the model? It can serve as a heuristic, a time-saving rule so people don't have to spend much time judging each other.


Then again, it does fly in the face of some of the democratization of media. It's not one person, one vote, but rather an aristocracy of sorts. The reason it can work on Spock is that with people's profiles, it's expected that the profile subject has the final say, while those with higher reputation scores will presumably want to only engage in actions that will increase their reputations.

Spock will still have the challenge of overcoming the "not another" reaction to its invites, but regardless of how well it does that, its model will likely spread. Maybe then the robot can earn a higher Spock Power rating



This commentary is insightful. I recommend it to others.

5 comments on "Spock: The People Search Wiki "

 **Andrey Golub** from **Business Club Milan-IN**

commented on: January 08, 2008 at 7:19 PM

David,

I think this your article is one of the best Spock story I met till today, and I read tons of good or bad feed-back about it recently. It's absolutely logical and explains it detail by detail. I'll bookmark it now to use as an example in in my further conversations 2.0 about Spock with another bloggers.


have just checked your profile on Spock- should look even better now! That bad guy, the killer from wikipedia- I've cut the useless links to there from your Web Reference section- I hope it's good idea :)

Good Luck, Andrey Golub- a Spock Community Evangelist for Italy <http://www.spock.com/Andrey-Golub>

 **Amadou M. Sall** from **Amsall Communications**

commented on: January 08, 2008 at 6:14 PM


Well, David, you've convinced me. I think I'll try it (even though I'm already on about... 50 Social Networking sites!)

 **Mary Pace** from **EMBARQ**

commented on: January 08, 2008 at 3:18 PM

If Spock is true and it really works, it would be ideal for me. I'm spending a lot of time managing all my profiles and social networks and have been wishing for an aggregator. Between LinkedIn, Facebook, My Space, Plaxo, SocialVibe I'm having trouble keeping up!


I'll check it out -- when I have time. :)

 **Hugh Simpson** from **Earth Solutions**
commented on: January 08, 2008 at 2:38 PM

Yeah, I signed up this morning after reading this story. I finally got my confirmation email about 30 minutes later. Then when I was asked to sign in they kept sending this "Doh, I Could not log you in" message when I was using the proper sign in info! Then when I went to FAQ to leave a message they made me sign in and - you guessed it - they said there was NO such account!

Well I'm a well known Internet Marketer and reporter with over 300,000 readers of my columns and this system of Spock sucks and there is no way I can let them know since they can't get my response!

They need to do some ELEMENTARY repair work!

 **Anne Zieger** from **Pubsal Productions**
commented on: January 08, 2008 at 12:54 PM

Seems to me that this approach gets around many of the problems faced by LinkedIn (promiscuous linking and therefore less meaningful recommendations). As you note, it also avoids some of Digg's pitfalls (<http://whatmattersonline.wordpress.com/2007/12/30/what-the-digg-clique-means-for-social-media-based-marketing/>).

To some extent, it looks like another start-up (Naymz) is trying something similar. Have you explored it?

Leave a Comment

You must be signed in to comment. [Sign In](#)

Do you have strong opinions and inside knowledge about the topic of this article -- and do you want to share your insights, observations and points of view regularly with the readers of MediaPost? To be considered as a MediaPost contributing writer, please send pertinent info about your credentials, plus several column ideas and one example of your writing on the topic, to pfine@mediapost.com. Please see our [editorial guidelines](#) here first.

Recent Search Insider Articles

The Continuing Big Brother Debate Sep 22, 12:30 PM

Two recent developments once again raise the debate about the degree to which individual privacy on...

The G Spot Sep 21, 10:31 AM

I'm the first to be critical of Google and I stand by my earlier statements that...

Do We Need A Different Kind Of Search Conference? Sep 17, 11:46 AM

Something's been bothering me for the last few years. In that time, I've probably spoken at...

Real-Time Search Is Much Bigger Than Just Twitter Sep 16, 1:00 PM

I'm not sure why, but the phrase "real-time search" has somehow largely become associated with the...

Are You Paying Attention? Sep 15, 11:00 AM

Within moments of shouting "You lie" at President Barack Obama during his speech last week to...

In SEM, Little Things Add Up Sep 14, 2:01 PM

One of the things that makes paid search a challenge is the degree to which minor...

Yes, Display Ads Can Work -- And Benefit Search As Well Sep 11, 1:45 PM

There's a new frontier opening in the display advertising landscape, in which small and medium-sized businesses...

The Pressure's On, And Cracks Are Beginning To Show Sep 10, 10:15 AM

Some time ago, I wrote a column saying the fallout of the economic crisis would be...

More On: Everything I Need to Know About Marketing I Learned From Google Sep 9, 10:15 AM

In my last column I laid out 10 lessons I learned about marketing from Google. The...

Mourning The State Of Content Sep 8, 10:30 AM

The degree to which SEO efforts can succeed directly correlates to the quality, power and impact...



©2009 MediaPost Communications. All rights reserved.
1140 Broadway, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10001
tel. 212-204-2000, fax 212-204-2038, feedback@mediapost.com

ads power