

You have a better chance of catching a unicorn than ranking #1 on Google (Part 1)

By Dee Stephens

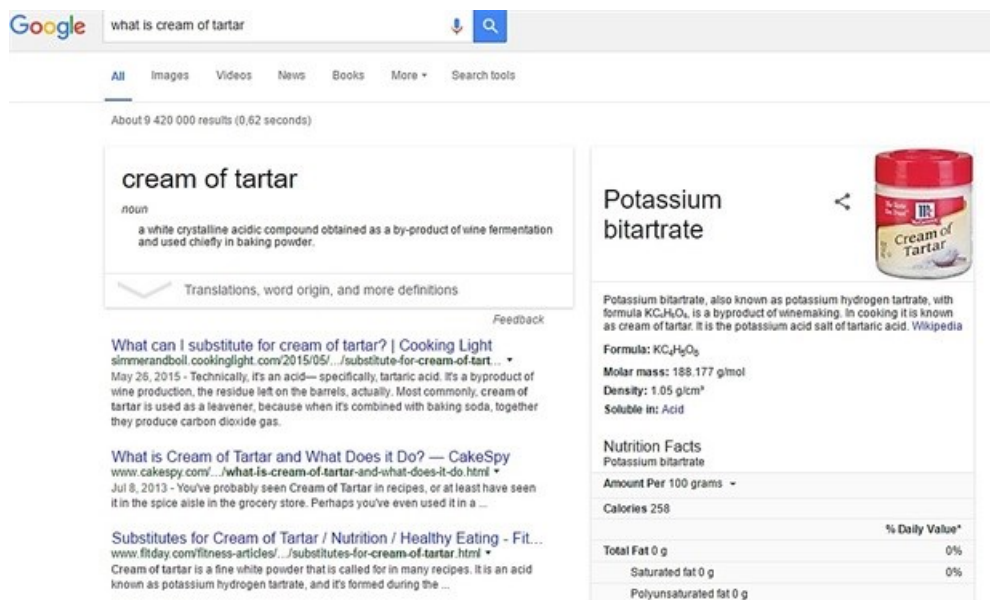
17 May 2016

The blatant audacity that this article suggests, probably doesn't sit well with those of you still chasing that elusive position of organically ranking at #1 in Google, or those of you who have paid an agency or SEO to rank you at #1.

Firstly, this practice directly contravenes the [SEO code of ethics](#), and in my book, utterly unethical. So if that is what you have been sold or are selling, the truth is, the game has changed and the opponent is now a Google AI algorithm.

Instant answers:

Let's examine the Google "snippet review" or more accurately "instant answer" the new artificial intelligence algorithm that answers what appears to be fairly simple questions:



Google search results for "what is cream of tartar". The search bar shows the query and the Google logo. Below the search bar, there are tabs for All, Images, Videos, News, Books, and More. The search results show "About 9 420 000 results (0.62 seconds)".

The instant answer snippet for "cream of tartar" is displayed, showing the word "cream of tartar" in bold, followed by the word "noun" and a definition: "a white crystalline acidic compound obtained as a by-product of wine fermentation and used chiefly in baking powder." Below this, there is a link to "Translations, word origin, and more definitions" and a "Feedback" link.

The knowledge panel for "Potassium bitartrate" is also visible, showing a picture of a jar of cream of tartar. The panel includes the following information:

- Potassium bitartrate**, also known as potassium hydrogen tartrate, with formula $KC_4H_5O_6$, is a byproduct of winemaking. In cooking it is known as cream of tartar. It is the potassium acid salt of tartaric acid. Wikipedia
- Formula:** $KC_4H_5O_6$
- Molar mass:** 188.177 g/mol
- Density:** 1.05 g/cm³
- Soluble in:** Acid
- Nutrition Facts**
- Potassium bitartrate**
- Amount Per 100 grams**
- Calories 258**
- % Daily Value***
- Total Fat 0 g** 0%
- Saturated fat 0 g** 0%
- Polyunsaturated fat 0 g**

Nifty isn't it? Especially for the consumer experience on Google right? And what about those mobile searches for the answer you don't need to search for, fabulous for the consumer... But this means something totally different for us who operate in this market.

The anatomy of the helpful yet equally damaging instant answer is broken down like this:

1. The “intent/preposition” of the person (asking for information)
2. The best answer for the query is determined by Google bots, and unbelievably they are not even closely related to previous metrics like DA, organic rank or SEO
3. Wikipedia is the unintended “provider” of the most information due to the structure of their content and the mass of content they have

Why is this bad for us? The causation here is that although Wikipedia denied it at first, it has subsequently lost considerable direct traffic due to knowledge graph, almost as much traffic as the links that rank in position two, three under the instant answer, will have no doubt lost.

Why so? The searcher not only gets an instant answer, but instant gratification too! Google answers the question, quantifies that answer down the right hand column, so great for the mobile user looking for an instant answer.

But what about marketers? While it's clearly a move to support mobile first, for Google, and I'm not saying I'm against it, it was bound to happen, the reality is that this presents an issue for marketers online, as most websites don't lift their “skirts” and bear all, the strategy is generally designed to get the user to their site before the user is rewarded with the answer / solution / product.

This new algorithm kind of throws that ranking first thing on its head now doesn't it. Although this seems fatalistic there is a key learning here, instant answers are not available for all queries, not by a long shot. But it won't be that way for long, that much you can be assured of.

You would be best advised to create key content pieces that provided useful information and “structured” information, and if done correctly your content could be selected by “Instant answers” and while no data exists yet for the CTR on instant articles, or the digital brand lift if any on the source sites, what I can tell you with certainty is that all things being equal if your social and site was optimised correctly, you had this valuable content I'm talking about, you optimised “everything” you posted, had a solid strategy, then ranking for number #1 would be obsolete as featuring in the instant answer box essentially means that you are the new #1.

In conclusion, and this is not a declaration, rather it's a thought I can't help pondering, let's assume that Google Knowledge Graph and Instant Answers do have a devastating impact on Wikipedia traffic and manage to unintentionally squash the giant that is Wikipedia, what does that then imply about the power that Google has.... Or the ability for us to compete in an environment that is now clearly biased and of course Google answering the questions for us.

Content is the only answer, content is the very lifeblood of the internet, without that we have nothing but a newspaper insert section of useless advertising online.

In my next article I'll be discussing the next reason why you won't be ranking in position number 1 in a hurry.

ABOUT DEE STEPHENS

I am a dedicated individual, an analyst at heart, SEO professional, ORM professional, accomplished Content Marketer, SMO expert, and digital media award winner. Starting out as a content producer I have evolved this business to be the cornerstone of success in all things SEO and Content Marketing for my clients. My ability to identify and recognise the requirement, and craft the perfect online solution for my clients is un-paralleled.

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