

How to Beat Your Competitors Using Voice Search & Digital Assistants



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Is your website optimized for spoken queries? Speech recognition technology allows people to search the internet by saying terms aloud rather than typing them into a search field.

Called “voice search,” this method is so popular that half of all searches will be voice searches by next year. That trend line means there will be more voice searches than keyboard searches after 2020.

Smart phones and in-home digital assistants have spurred the use of voice search. And if you want to get a big jump-start on your competitors, then you should optimize your website for voice search. The most common devices people use for voice search are:

- Google Assistant — this smartphone app uses the Google search index to answer search queries. Google Actions is used in conjunction with Google Assistant. Google Actions allow you to handle tasks via a conversational interface, like turning off the lights.
- Google Home/Google Home Hub — is a standalone device that ships with Google Assistant already installed. Google Home is a small speaker whereas Google Home Hub includes a screen (to show videos). In general, this product pulls answers from Google properties.
- Amazon Alexa — is a digital assistant that answers queries using information from the Bing search engine. The Amazon echo is the smart in-home speaker used to access Alexa.
- Apple Siri — is the digital assistant embedded in the iPhone. Unlike other digital assistants, Siri doesn't provide audible answers.
- Microsoft Cortana — uses information to answer queries from Bing, the search engine owned by Microsoft. It's most commonly found on Windows 10 and Xbox.

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Now that you know the five most common digital assistants used for voice search, let's look at ways you can optimize your website, so it is used as a reference by digital assistants:

- Make sure your website loads quickly. Studies show site load times can affect your chances of showing your response to a voice query. Google uses page speed as a search-ranking factor. Use Google's free PageSpeed Insights tool to see how fast your site loads and to get tips to improve site speed.
- Follow best practices for local search. Digital assistants are used to find local businesses all the time. Make sure your website follows strong local search practices. Page meta title tags should include the city you do business in. Create a webpage for every product, service and location. Have your webmaster use structured data markup on every webpage to optimize your site for local search. Claim all your local business directory listings and get online reviews from your customers.
- Offer content on your website that provides answers to conversational questions. People will be concise and abbreviate when using a keyboard to search, such as "best security company." With voice search, users tend to ask full questions, such as, "What's the best home security company in New Orleans?" Optimize your content to answer full questions. Keep your responses brief; responses of 40 to 50 characters seem to be used the most in voice responses.
- Include frequently asked questions (FAQs) in your content. Devote a section of your product and services pages of your website to answering the five to seven most common questions asked by your prospects. Keep your answers brief.
- Optimize for featured snippets. Featured snippets provide users quick, concise answers to their questions right on the search results page. Make sure to insert whole questions as H2 subheaders. This will further help you get to the top of the search rankings.

Your customers are using voice search more than keyboard searches and that trend will continue. It's clear that voice search is important to your prospects. It should be to you, too. Get your website optimized properly for voice search. You'll see more website traffic and sales leads.