



## Vertical Search

By Bob Heyman  
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Vertical search is an area in considerable ferment. Much VC funding has flowed to the area, under the assumption that the big search players are so broad that there is opportunity for sites devoted to specific niches. A JupiterResearch study identifies four primary vertical categories that would be likely to account for the majority of spend: retail, financial services, travel and media and entertainment. But many other niches are getting funding.

Here are some recent developments in vertical search:

#### Travel

There are already many competitors in this vertical, including SideStep, Mobissimo, and FareChase. Kayak, which has been around for a while, is rolling the dice with a \$10 million TV ad campaign, including a user-generated TV ad promotion. Newcomer Farecast has sophisticated technology that looks at pricing, scheduling and availability (among 115 indicators) to predict prices on specific flights and thereby give travelers an idea of when to book in order to get the best price. Farecast predicts whether fares will rise or fall over the next seven days. It also provides a fare history chart so users can see fluctuations and the average lowest price over the last 45-90 days. The company claims to have made over 90 billion airfare observations to build the predictions. Like other vertical travel search sites, Farecast displays links to book directly at airline Web sites. Farecast launched with flights departing only from Boston and Seattle, but will roll out other departure cities over the course of the year.

Another new player in the travel vertical is FareCompare, which aims to empower consumers with flight pricing data but does not yet offer flight availability information. But it will tell you what month (or even what week within a month) would have the best price to specific destinations, based upon historical patterns.

#### Employment

SimplyHired, which raised \$13.5 million in April from MySpace's parent company, Fox Interactive Media, is powering the newly launched MySpace Jobs. The service is oriented to the My Space demographic and lists summer jobs like lifeguards and camp counselors, as well as internships and retail positions at Gap and Abercrombie and Fitch.

#### Real Estate

Vast already offers vertical search of jobs, personals and cars.

It has just added vacation rentals search, covering more than 600,000 vacation properties from over 12,000 sites. It has robust filtering capabilities, including bedrooms, bathrooms, rate, activities, and amenities. Vast claims a superior ability to uncover rentals like remote mountain cabins not likely to appear on other vacation rental sites. You can even click the "Pets OK" link to see only pet-friendly rentals.



## IT Search

Krugle has as its vision to "answer the need for a single place to find relevant code and critical technical information." The company claims that developers spend 20 to 25 percent of their time looking for code and technical information. Unlike Google or Yahoo, Krugle crawls source code, whether in open repositories or within source code control systems.

## Consumer Electronics

Retrevo helps buyers and owners of high-tech gadgets and gear find relevant answers to everyday questions. The Silicon Valley startup launches Aug. 21. The site uses two AI techniques called clustering and classification, commonly employed in pattern recognition applications.

## Shopping

Shopping Comparison sites like Shopping.com and Pricegrabber.com are essentially vertical search engines. Mpire.com is a newcomer to the space that allows users to view the most recent selling prices of millions of items (using data from eBay) and then compare those prices with similar items selling on Overstock.com, eBay, Craigslist and Amazon. Mpire can also show a graph of prices over a 30-day time period, and plans to add social networking features such as allowing users to submit product reviews or send items to friends.

## Music

Pandora describes itself as "a music discovery service designed to help you find and enjoy music that you will love." Its database includes 400,000 songs by 20,000 artists. Pandora is powered by the Music Genome Project, which has comprehensively analyzed the musical characteristics in its collection and serves up music that is similar to what you tell the service you already like. Once Pandora knows your favorite songs or artists, it launches a streaming station to "explore that part of the musical universe." But don't look for any classical music--the Music Genome Project doesn't include any yet.

## Real Estate

Trulia, a residential real estate search engine, has announced the release of TruliaMap, an Internet tool available free to real estate brokers and agents that allows them to showcase their listings through mapping technology that automatically maps up to 50 property listings on a Web site. Since rolling out the feature, Trulia reports that usage of online maps from click-through to listings has increased more than 400 percent.



#### About the Author

Bob Heyman, Chief Search Officer of Mediasmith, is a leading author and entrepreneur in the field of Internet Marketing. His books include *Net Results* and *Net Results.2* (MacMillan/New Riders Press) and *The Auction App* (McGraw Hill). He sits on the Search Marketing Committee of the 4As (American Association of Advertising Agencies) and on the Marketing Committee of SEMPO (the Search Engine Marketing Professional Association). He writes a monthly column for MediaPost's *Search Insider* entitled "Search Innovation Spotlight" and is a frequent contributor to *iMedia Connection*. In 1994 he founded Cybernautics, the first full service web marketing agency, and sold it to USWeb in 1997. At Cybernautics, Heyman is credited with coining the terms "Audience Development" for building traffic to websites, and "Search Engine Optimization" (SEO). When it was sold, Cybernautics clients included AOL, REI, SGI, Avon, Bristol Myers Squibb, Time-Warner, Netscape, Intel, US West, Sony, and Macromedia. From 1998 to 2001 Heyman was founder and CEO of eMarketing Partners, where his clients included IBM, NEC and ABC. The company was acquired in 2001 by the Catenas Corporation who then merged it into Prophet Brand Strategy, another of their holdings. He holds a Masters from Harvard and a law degree from the University of California. Golden Gate University awarded him an honorary doctorate in 2000 when he was the school's Commencement Speaker. Also in 2000, SF Mayor Willie Brown declared October 19th to be "Bob Heyman Day". In a prior life prior to the Internet, Heyman was an entertainment attorney, representing such stars as Maria Muldaur, Jefferson Starship and the New Riders of the Purple Sage. His rock opera "Rock Justice", co-written with Marty Balin of Jefferson Starship, is listed in the *Book of Rock Lists*. He lives with his Parrot, Sterling Zane, onboard his Sausalito houseboat, the "Bret Harte", that Jack London once won playing poker. The houseboat was on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine in 1971 when its occupant was Dan Hicks of Dan Hicks and His Hot Licks. The caption was "Dan Hicks on his houseboat in Marin County, where all San Francisco rockers move, whether they've made it, or not".

#### About Mediasmith

Mediasmith is a recognized leader in digital media planning and buying. We specialize in the integration of traditional and digital media, media consulting, search, and audience development with a rapidly growing practice in emerging technologies and their applications. We architect plans across all media, in all markets, in virtually all product categories utilizing the right combination of media options to help our clients grow in the increasingly fractured media environment; from planning and buying, to tracking, optimization, and reporting of ROI on all media efforts. Mediasmith remains dedicated to the evolution and standardization of digital media practices. As committed innovators, we test the latest in metrics and analytics, providing solutions that enable us to act as a catalyst for our clients' media innovations.