

Should Q&A go local? Google seems to think so...

By YouSaidIt

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Is Q&A better at National sites or local communities? Google thinks local is better. The Stranger and Yahoo Answers were both asked: "The best place to buy meat in Seattle". The Stranger ranked first outperforming Yahoo, Yelp and Urbanspoon.

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Seattle, WA, USA – June 11, 2009 - We've seen some high profile launches of Q&A sites recently: Hunch and Aardvark most notably. And then there are the old standbys like the dominant Yahoo Answers and the also-rans like Askville and Answerbag. They've all certainly got their fair share of national attention, but are these national destination sites really the way to go, or would Q&A be better applied to local sites and local communities? Google seems to think local is better.

The Stranger and Yahoo Answers both asked the question: Do you think the right person won American Idol? When that search was entered in Google, The Stranger held the coveted first position outranking Yahoo Answers and Entertainment Weekly! And this was on a general national question, imagine how it performed on: Can someone recommend a good optometrist in Seattle? or The best place to buy meat in Seattle. The Stranger ranked first and outperformed Yelp and Urbanspoon.

This is a David and Goliath story if ever there was one.

The Stranger is a local Seattle alternative weekly of the more salacious/humorous variety. They launched a site called Questionland mere weeks ago. The Stranger is a very popular local destination but must be considered a rounding error next to Yahoo's 1.3 billion monthly page views.

Although we are all entitled to our opinion about what the best approach to Q&A should be, it is hard to argue that Google must be the final arbiter since they are the ultimate popularity contest and reward the winners with traffic.

Questionland was designed by The Stranger staff based on a new Q&A application called YouSaidIt. YouSaidIt is Q&A that completely integrates with your local site, from skin to sign-in.

They integrate with Facebook Connect and Twitter providing your site with instant social connections. They cater to two markets: corporate sites that have visitors with questions about products (think FAQ 2.0) and media sites that want to convene their community without the downsides of the forum experience.

If Google juice were not enough, YouSaidIt has spent the last two years specializing in improving conversation on the web. They settled on Q&A because it provided structure and atomic memes that could travel through the social information ecosystem like Twitter and news feeds. They allow extensive comments, but make them a (collapsed) meta discussion, ensuring that the useful information doesn't get crowded out by noise as it typically does on forums.

It seems like local Q&A may have the big boys beat. You can try it out for free at www.YouSaidIt.com and their premium version is absurdly cheap at \$190/month. Compare that to alternative site-specific Q&A products like BazaarVoice that go for hundreds of thousands!

To get Questionland for your site contact Tim Keck, publisher of The Stranger.

YouSaidIt provides collaborative Q&A for websites that are integrated from skin to sign-in. YouSaidIt set out to change the nature of discussion on the web – to make community discussion navigable (anyone can use it), discoverable (great Google rank and easy path back to answers) and distributable (questions and answers are atomic memes that can travel through social networks). YouSaidIt also provides corporate solutions for Q&A around products, essentially creating FAQ 2.0: an FAQ that is not limited in size, that reflects actual customer questions, and is social.

The Stranger is decidedly independent. They offer an insider's point of view that the city trusts. Bright, sometimes bruising, and undeniably funny, they detail local music, arts, and news with passion and authority. The Stranger is all over Seattle; from restaurants to coffeehouses, bars to clubs, theaters to retailers, laptops to desktops, and on every campus and street corner - we've got the city covered. TheStranger.com get more than 750K unique visitors/month.

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