

# A Look at Ask Jeeves and Teoma

By Robin Nobles

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Robin Nobles  
RobinN@acws.com

Academy of Web Specialists <http://www.academywebspecialists.com>

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Recently, Jim Lanzone, Vice President of Product Management with Ask Jeeves, attended a chat session with students from the Academy, and he answered a lot of very interesting questions about Ask Jeeves' Web properties.

So, let's look at this interview with Jim, and learn more about Ask Jeeves and their relatively new search engine on the block, Teoma.

As Vice President of Product Management, Jim oversees the strategy, features, Web design, and product development for all of Ask Jeeves' properties, including Ask.com, Teoma, and Ask Jeeves for Kids at AJKids.com. Ask Jeeves is a top twenty Web property and is among the most recognized Internet brands worldwide.

Jim began by giving some background information about Ask Jeeves and Teoma.

"Ask Jeeves is one of the leading search engines on the Web, with more than 16 million unique users per month. We also recently launched a new search engine called Teoma (Gaelic for "expert," in case you were wondering).

"Both Ask.com and Teoma.com are powered by Teoma's search technology. The difference between the two sites lies in the design and the features.

"Here's an easy way to think about it: Ask is for `Passengers' (people who want help searching) and Teoma.com is for `Drivers' (people who don't).

"Our company makes money by serving advertisements that are triggered by the searches people conduct on our sites. There are three main types of advertisements: Graphical (e.g., banner ads), Paid Placement (Sponsored Links), and a new program called "Paid Inclusion" (pay to be entered into our search index)."

Is free submission still an option?

Question: Can you still submit to Ask Jeeves if you have a site that answers questions, like we have

been able to do in the past for free, or do you have to go through pay inclusion to get into either index?

Jim: "Well, yes, if you want to submit, you need to pay. It takes special attention, and therefore resources, for us to take a site rather than simply crawl the Web as usual. But there are special benefits to paying!

"Our editorial staff is much smaller than the old days, and the `questions' for Jeeves (what we call the `Knowledge Base' internally) are not emphasized as much as they used to be, so the exposure will be more limited...and it may take our editors quite a while to get to your site."

So, you can still submit your site to Ask Jeeves for free, but it will probably take a while for your site to make it into the index.

Jim: "For the search index, there is no free submit (for Teoma)."

Question: Compared to, for example, the free add URL in Google, the one for Ask Jeeves makes you jump through hoops.

Jim: "That's because it's quite an old program that was developed for our editors to review."

Remember that Ask Jeeves was established to answer questions, so you have to "prove" that your site does, in fact, very effectively answer the question you're going after - which is a lot more detailed than a simple submission at Google.

What about pay inclusion?

If you submit to Ask Jeeves' and Teoma's pay inclusion program, your site will get visibility at both sites. The pay inclusion program is now out of beta, so the subscription period is 12 months.

Benefits of their pay inclusion program include:

\* Your page will be indexed within 7 days. \* Your page will be refreshed every 7 days. \* Your page remains in the index for 12 months.

Cost?

\$30 for the first URL, and \$18 each for 2 through 1000 URL's. For larger numbers of pages, you can use their batch processing facility.

Visit <http://ask.ineedhits.com/> for more information.

Question: The Direct Hit site has been taken down, and traffic is being redirected to Teoma. What about the Direct Hit results that were being shown in engines like HotBot? Are those now Teoma results?

Jim: "Yes, we still have Direct Hit on HotBot, as well as BellSouth and InfoSpace. DirectHit.com is redirected to Teoma. But some partners still have the old DH "pop" (popularity) results. MSN still has the Direct Hit results.

"We will be merging pop into the Teoma technology sometime in the near future, but some partners still want it as a "one-off," and we are open to providing it."

Question: Teoma does crawl sites on its own? Is that correct?

Jim: "Yes, that's correct. Its index is currently featured on both Ask.com and Teoma.com."

Question: A Web site with good link popularity then would not need the Ask Jeeves/Teoma paid inclusion program?

Jim: "For a major site, that is probably true. However, for smaller sites, or sites that refresh their content frequently (or have many dynamic pages that are difficult for search engines to crawl), paid inclusion is still a great option if you really want the traffic. Paid inclusion sites are spidered weekly. Other sites are spidered monthly, currently."

Question: When paying for inclusion for Ask Jeeves and Teoma, are the results shared with other partners? If so who?

Jim: "Currently, no. However, we're aggressively pursuing partnerships that will extend our reach considerably. Not able to say who just yet, but the usual suspects."

Question: In your FAQ's for Ask Jeeves/Teoma's pay inclusion program (<http://ask.ineedhits.com/faq.asp>), it states that you can't change URL's. Why?

Jim: "Because it's considered a new submission. We're not able to put enough resources against it yet."

Question: So in the future, we'll have the ability to swap out URLs?

Jim: "We'll see, but I hear you. We are aware of Inktomi's program."

Question: What's the difference in traffic between the premium listings and the "regular" search results?

Jim: "Do you mean between Premier Listings (Featured Sponsor) and Paid Inclusion? There are two differences: 1) You are guaranteed that your listing will show up; 2) You are guaranteed that it will show up in a specific location on our page."

Question: Are Premier Listings twice as likely to be clicked on, for example?

Jim: "Premier Listing is really just an ad. With Paid Inclusion, you aren't paying for anything other than being included in the index and then being subjected to the same relevance algorithms that give us our other results, but with the other benefits that I mentioned earlier."

"In terms of click ratio, I suppose it depends on how relevant your site is to a given query. The match rate of a site that buys ad space on our site is much more significant than one that purchases via paid inclusion for now."

For more information about Premier Listings, visit:  
<http://static.wc.ask.com/docs/advertise/premier.html> .

Question: Let's say that I have a Web site: <http://myownwebsite.com> , and let's say that my goal is for it to become an "authoritative" site in Teoma. Could you give us some tips on what we can do to try to be considered by Teoma as an authoritative or expert site on a particular subject?

Jim: "Our recommendations are as follows: 1) you allow people to link to you; 2) you offer quality

content so that you become popular among other sites of the same subject (i.e., experts). Basically, that's it. None of our expert sites or authorities are manually decided. It's based on our algorithms."

Question: On Teoma, are Teoma and Ask Jeeves results combined?

Jim: "Well, there really is no such thing as an Ask Jeeves result. There are pre-fab, editorially selected `answers' to certain queries that may appear at the top of the page if we have a high level of confidence that we have the right answer. But as far as the actual search results go, it's all Teoma...and we'll layer in the Direct Hit click-pop at some point soon."

Question: But Teoma results ARE being shown at Ask Jeeves?

Jim: "That's exactly right. The part of the AJ page that says, `You may find these search results helpful' has the Teoma results. They were launched in January (and by no coincidence, we immediately saw a 30% increase in picks to those results.)"

Question: The "Featured Sponsor" section of Ask Jeeves, is that the Premier Listings?

Jim: "Yes it is."

(End of interview/chat session)

Let's take a longer look at Teoma

If you haven't visited Teoma yet and performed a few searches, you need to do so (<http://www.teoma.com/>). It's a really cool engine with some very interesting and helpful features.

For example, it's a no-nonsense engine like Google with one purpose only: search.

When you search at Teoma, you're given three sets of results:

- \* Results, which are relevant Web pages from the Teoma index;
- \* Refine, which are suggestions for narrowing your search;
- \* Resources, which are link collections from experts and enthusiasts.

So with Teoma, if your search results are too broad, you can immediately narrow them down by choosing one of the suggestions in the Refine section.

And, in the Resources area, you'll find "experts" in that particular focus area. This is an excellent place to find related and important sites that might be good candidates to contact about swapping links.

More on Ask Jeeves

Ask Jeeves is the "question answering" search engine, which puts it into a class of its own. (<http://www.askjeeves.com>)

At the top of the search results, you'll see a "featured sponsor" section, which is their Premier Listing advertisement that we've discussed previously.

With some searches, you'll see a "sponsored links" section, which are results currently being

provided by Overture. However, on September 3, Ask Jeeves will be switching to Google for their paid listings.

Then, you'll find search results from Teoma, followed by a section called, "Other people with your search have also asked:" In that section, you'll see additional questions that may help answer your initial question, with results coming from Ask.com.

Like at Teoma, you can narrow your search down by choosing one of the search terms on the right-hand side of the page.

Ask Jeeves recently entered into an agreement with Google to display their Google AdWords in Ask Jeeves results effective September 3, 2002. Those results will be shown at both Ask Jeeves and Teoma as "sponsored links." For more information, visit:

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/technology/AP-Ask-Jeeves-Google.html>

## In Conclusion

Teoma has taken over the old Direct Hit site, and I believe we'll see some big things out of this fascinating engine in the future.

Ask Jeeves is as it's always been: unique - a place where you can go and ask a question and be presented with several possible answers.

If you haven't submitted your site to Ask Jeeves/Teoma, and if your site isn't found in the Teoma index, I strongly suggest that you consider their pay inclusion program and become a part of their index.

Robin Nobles, Director of Training, Academy of Web Specialists, (<http://www.academywebspecialists.com>) has trained several thousand people in her online search engine marketing courses (<http://www.onlinewebtraining.com>) and is the content provider for (GRSeo) Search Engine Optimizer software (<http://www.se-optimizer.com>). She also teaches 4-day hands on search engine marketing workshops in locations across the globe with Search Engine Workshops (<http://www.searchengineworkshops.com>).

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