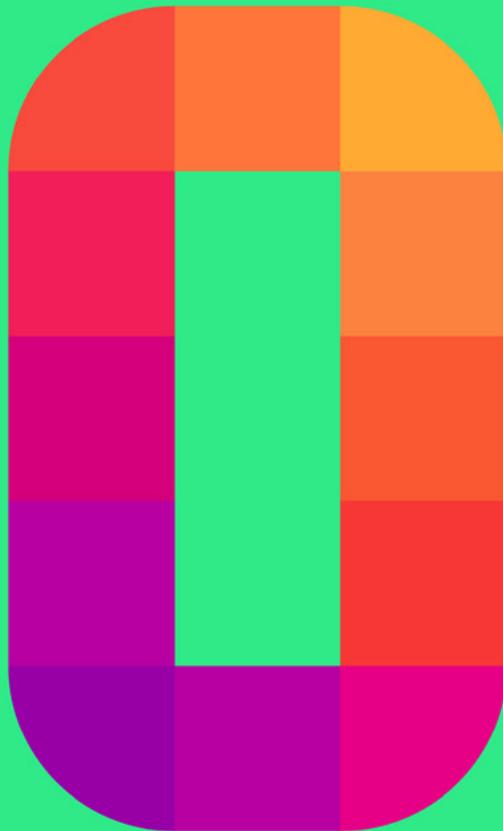




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UNDERSTANDING POSITION ZERO



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UNDERSTANDING POSITION ZERO.

Ever since search engine optimisation (SEO) became a 'thing', those working in the industry have been telling businesses that the most important item on their 'to-do' list is to get their websites displaying on page one of the search engine results pages (SERPs).

This is important because the positions on this page are those that offer the best answer according to Google to solve a particular user query. If you are visible here then it is fair to assume that your site is optimised well enough to fulfil the search and offer the best possible user experience (UX).

It therefore makes sense, when those professionals working in the industry inform you that you not only need to be on page one but in position one. We know that there are plenty of theories surrounding the impact of your position on page one, and that there is a direct correlation between occupying one of the top three positions and being the market leader for your keywords.

Indeed it goes without saying that you are more likely to see the user click on your link and ultimately convert.

Should the result which has been displayed by your website be relevant, and there is no reason why it shouldn't be because of its positioning, then you are highly likely to satisfy the user need and therefore build trust. This is done, in part, as you are seen as an expert and are providing a solution for the search query.

This all sounds very simple - get on page one (P1), get into position one and increase the transactions and conversions that go with being in such a lofty position.

Once you are here you may feel that you've cracked the magical SEO code and that you have perfected your search marketing strategy and, up until very recently, this was the case and businesses that found themselves in the premium positions within SERPs were seeing great success, but now - as with all things Google - change is on the horizon.

The latest buzzword surrounding the industry and indeed the latest update that those working in technical SEO are looking towards is position zero, a result shown even higher than the ads and the top organic results.

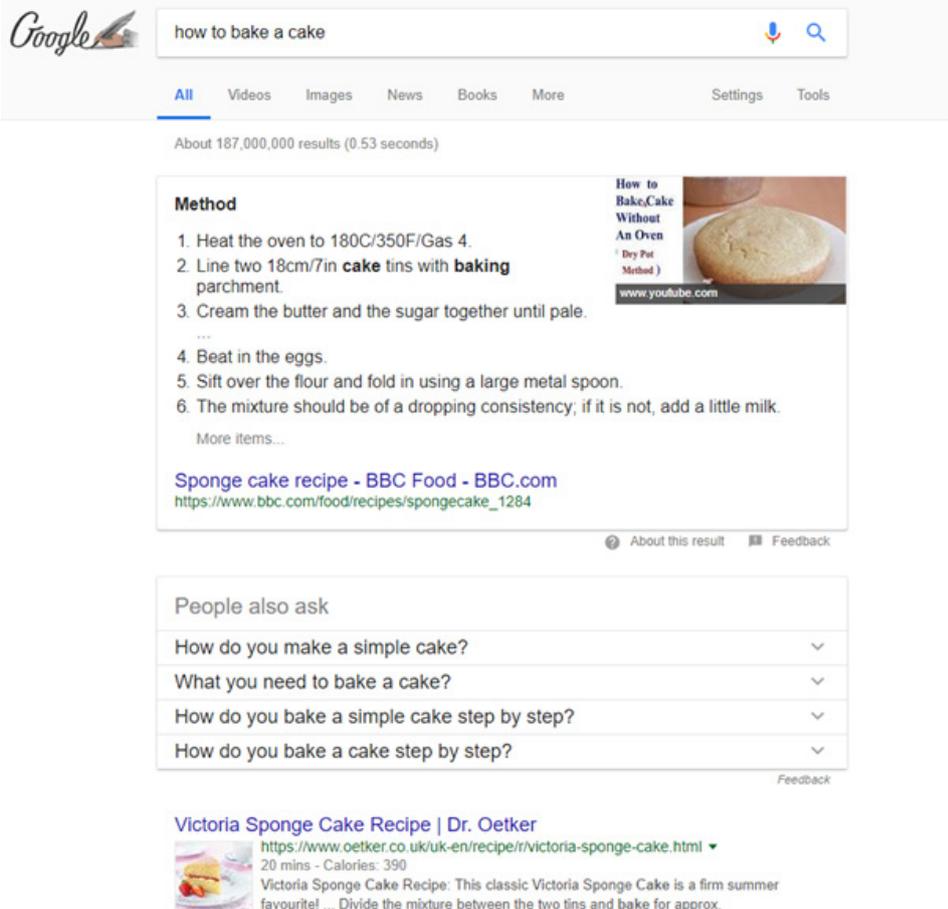
WHAT IS POSITION ZERO?

Position zero (P0) which is also at times known as a rich result/ featured snippet, it is a piece of information that is displayed on the SERPs above the first ranked URL. In the three years, since Google launched rich results, many search marketers have still not fully understood or used this as a ranking opportunity.

In its short form, P0, or rich results, are promoted organic search results which appears above the traditional position of number one and contains some if not all of the following:

- an extracted answer
- a display title
- a URL
- images
- bulleted lists
- simple tables

If we are to conduct a simple search for the term 'how to bake a cake' we are delivered the following results.



The screenshot shows a Google search for "how to bake a cake". The search bar is at the top with the Google logo on the left and search icons on the right. Below the search bar are tabs for "All", "Videos", "Images", "News", "Books", "More", "Settings", and "Tools". The search results show "About 187,000,000 results (0.53 seconds)".

The featured snippet is titled "Method" and contains a list of six steps:

1. Heat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4.
2. Line two 18cm/7in **cake** tins with **baking** parchment.
3. Cream the butter and the sugar together until pale.
...
4. Beat in the eggs.
5. Sift over the flour and fold in using a large metal spoon.
6. The mixture should be of a dropping consistency; if it is not, add a little milk.

Below the list is a link to "Sponge cake recipe - BBC Food - BBC.com" with the URL https://www.bbc.com/food/recipes/spongecake_1284. To the right of the list is a video thumbnail titled "How to Bake Cake Without An Oven (Dry Pat Method)" from www.youtube.com, showing a round cake on a plate.

Below the featured snippet is a "People also ask" section with four questions:

- How do you make a simple cake?
- What you need to bake a cake?
- How do you bake a simple cake step by step?
- How do you bake a cake step by step?

At the bottom of the search results is another result for "Victoria Sponge Cake Recipe | Dr. Oetker" with a link to <https://www.oetker.co.uk/uk-en/recipe/r/victoria-sponge-cake.html>, a 20-minute recipe with 390 calories, and a small image of the cake.

You can see from the previous image that P1 in the results is from www.oetker.co.uk, yet above this is the rich result for BBC.com. This result occupies P0 and displays the link for making the perfect sponge cake. The result also shows an image of the finished product and a methodology. In relation to the query it is safe to say that it meets the brief and is highly likely to resolve the users question and therefore reinforce a positive experience.

Something vital to remember here is that the rich result that appears at the top of the page does not always come from the number one organic results (as per our example) meaning that if you do have the rich result you are almost guaranteed to appear twice on the first page.

Another important consideration is the boost to click through rates (CTRs) that you get from a rich result. Several studies have been conducted including one which found that, when a client lost a rich result they also lost nearly 40,000 clicks per month. A much larger survey found a 114% increase in CTR even on a brand that already held the number one organic position.

One of the hardest things to do is understand where exactly the information that forms these results comes from and in truth it can be dated back to the early days of the knowledge graph. If you were to ask the question – ‘who is the founder of Microsoft?’ you could expect to see an answer box containing a picture, name and some general information relating to Bill Gates. When you correlate this with the actual knowledge graph for the company Microsoft, halfway down you will notice that under CEO/founder you will see the name Bill Gates and a link to his Wiki. Without therefore knowing about Bill Gates you find yourself at the correct page as the rich result has done its job.

THE PERFORMANCE OF RICH RESULTS COMPARED TO P1 IN ORGANIC RESULTS

In a study conducted by Hubspot there is a significant difference in the performance of those results that are displayed as rich results and those that are organically in P1. The headline figures relating to the importance of appearing in P0 and the regularity of doing so are:

- 12.29 % of search queries have rich results in the search results.
- Only 30.9 % of rich results rank at the very top placement in the organic results.
- 99.58 % of the rich results are already in the top 10 positions in Google for the specific search.
- The vast majority of rich results are triggered by long-tail keywords.
- Wikipedia has by far the most rich results in Google.
- Rich results often change sources.

If ever you needed proof that optimisation is key then the second figure on this list is it. Nearly 70% of all businesses that are picking up the rich results are doing so without being P1.

WHICH TYPES OF CONTENT APPEARS IN POSITION ZERO?

There are several types of content that appears in the rich results within SERPs and by making sure that your website contains information that ticks one of the following boxes then you will be giving yourself the best possible chance of obtaining the 'Holy Grail' of SEO. The types of content that reach P0 are:

- Answers to the 5 Ws (Who, What, Where, When and Why)

The most common function of P0 or a rich result is to answer one of the aforementioned Ws. If Google determines that the answer to a particular question is part of the public domain then they will supply an answer in the form of a rich result.

The only consideration here is that, if the query is too complex, Google will revert to the traditional method of search, not showing P0, and you will have to rely on your site being higher in the SERPs.

In order to give your website the best chance, make sure your subject matter is both:

- Simple enough that you can define it in a short paragraph or a list.
- Complex enough that it warrants a whole web page to unpack.

Also factor in that the average length of a keyword phrase is about six words so you need to consider this in your long tail SEO strategy.

INSTRUCTIONS / HOW-TO

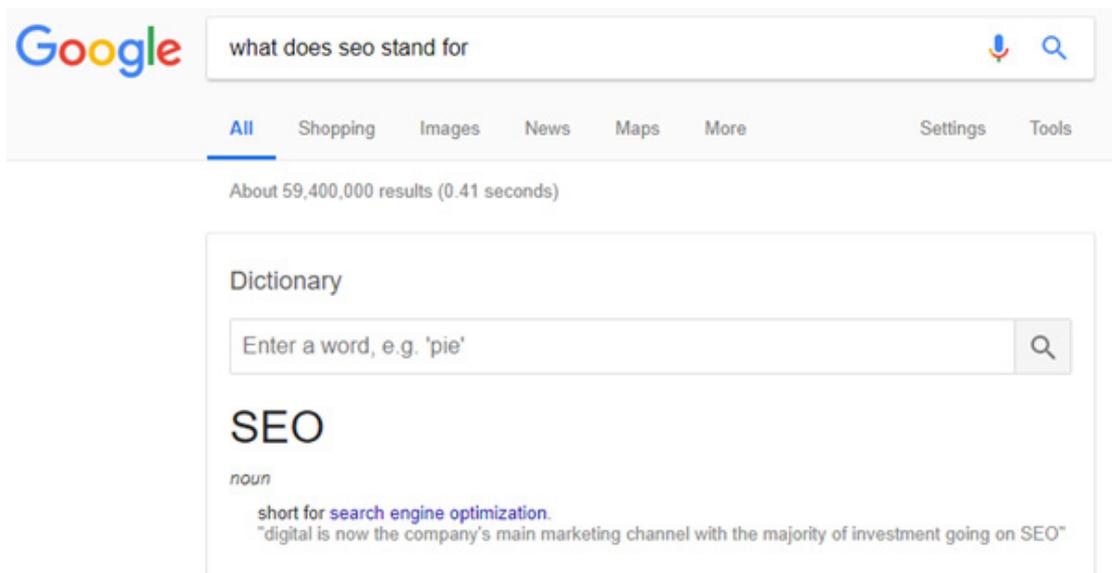
The vast majority of all queries that display rich results fall into this category. The types of result returned here are often things such as recipes or manual instructions. The reason that these are so popular is because they offer a step-by-step answer and this results in a higher CTR and also more time on page. It is also a good way to ensure that the user is given more content and a variety of it. Users can be shown their answer to these queries as a list, image or increasingly as a video tutorial.

Something to consider when it comes to this type of content, however, is that there has to be a balance. If the snippet gives the full answer and doesn't allude to even more information being available, then the user might just follow the step-by-step and not click through to your URL.

The idea behind rich results is that they are like 'teasers' for your answers and encourage users to learn more by clicking the link. The better optimised your content the higher the chance you have of ranking or being chosen for a rich result.

IMPLIED QUESTIONS

This is one of the most easily digestible forms of a rich result as it gives the user a definition. If you were to type in ‘What does SEO stand for?’ you would be greeted by the following:



These types of dictionary answers, whilst not strictly a rich result (as there is no link) are often suited to voice search (more on that later) but that shouldn't put you off. The more 'rich' content that you put on the page, the more relevant information you have and the more engaging it is the more likely you are to gain P0 further down the line.

'TOP/BEST' LISTS

'Top' lists such as a 'top 10 most visited tourist attractions' search will often use an official reference page such as a government website to list things based on number of visitors or users. It may also show the results based on revenue.

One of the most frequently used keywords when it comes to these types of search is 'best', this is often something that relates directly to location or value. Searches that rank in P0 here are things like 'best restaurant near me' or 'best energy supplier'.

COMPARISONS

In a piece by Search Engine Journal, lists, tables, and text that compare and contrast two or more items are highlighted as great, snippable content.

Finding topics to compare is easy, whether you're breaking down the pros and cons of link building tools, researching the differences between different dog breeds, or considering which phone to buy the information presented here is highly useful.

PRICE BREAKDOWN

Much like comparisons this is part of search where the user is able to make a quick discovery as to how their item purchase breaks down.

THE POWER OF POSITION ZERO FOR VOICE SEARCH

We all know that voice search is a big deal and that brands are fighting it out to ensure that they are in the best possible positions for these types of search.

The difference here is that if you aren't in P1 then you really are nowhere.

This is because when a user decides to conduct a voice search the search engine will relay the information that they deem to be the best fit. In truth they are taking away the element of choice from the user who is either happy with the result they have been given or they must conduct another search.

With this in mind, the addition of another result in the SERPs is obviously going to have a knock on impact. The very nature of the type of result that is displayed in P0 means that it is the most logical answer to be delivered to suit the need of the user. Businesses know this and with more and more searches being done through voice search they are rightly optimising for this space.

Voice search users will often ask full sentences, but mobile and desktop users are more likely to search for single words and stilted phrases. This is why the language used in these phrases and keywords like the 5 Ws are so important.

As of early 2018, 58% of US consumers used voice search to find local business information and 20% of mobile searches on Google were made via voice. Brands that optimise for P0 are sure to benefit from the first delivered result on both SERPs and in screenless search.

EXAMPLE OF A RICH RESULT PROFILE

When it comes creating the perfect piece of content in order to gain a rich result there is much more to it than simply having correct, informative, relevant content, although this is obvious. There are other considerations for how the search engines choose which piece of content and which URL to display. Whilst doing some research for this piece I stumbled across a piece from SEMrush which provided a nice little case study.

They looked at the following [URL](#) and found that it held 96 separate P0 rankings.

Aside from great content that fits the brief the URL for this specific post links to a page that has the following features:

- High user engagement: 750 social shares
- Mobile friendly: 99/100
- HTTPS adoption: Yes
- Media usage: 12 health-related images
- Word count: 2,100 words
- Clear headers: 12 h1-h6 tags
- Succinct content: Average paragraph length is 42 words
- Uses lists: Seven ordered or unordered lists
- Cite facts: 48 external fact citations

FINAL THOUGHTS

Making sure that your content appears in P0 can be very difficult but you have to give yourself the best chance through optimisation. The below points, if implemented correctly should give you the best possible chance at success.

- Provide simple, consistent HTML code that makes it easy for users to add content optimised for rich results to any blog post or website
- Limit paragraph snippets to 50 words or less and keep the sentences in list snippets short
- Ensure any headers (specifically H2s and H3s) used in posts (and especially list posts) contain clean formatting
- If possible, use formatting for the items in a list post as opposed to headers
- Include the keyword you are optimising for within the answer part of the rich result code



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ABOUT US

Located in North West England, Click Consult is a multi award-winning search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC), with over 70 professionals employed and with a portfolio of over 60 clients from across the UK, Europe, Americas and Australia.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year 2018, adding to its long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within both RAR's and Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Click Consult regularly posts actionable insights on its blog – dealing with all aspects of search marketing. From technical SEO to PPC, content marketing and Analytics advice, the Click Consult blog has something for everyone of any ability.

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Sometimes what you need is a quick point of reference about complex subjects. Thanks to its team of highly talented designers, Click Consult is also able to distil its vast experience into easy to understand visual content.

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