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Word Association And Clarity of Focus In The Search Space

by [Chris Copeland](#), 1 hour ago

The elevator speech.

It's one of the prerequisites of business development. In the time you can spend with someone on a 30-second ride, how do you describe your business? For established brands, the elevator speech is not so much a speech but a word. For brands like Google, Microsoft, and Apple, you can quickly get from brand name to association in a word.

Let's play the game together, in your head or on paper.

Google? Microsoft? Apple?

Got your word?

For me it goes like this:

Google = *Search*

Microsoft = *Technology*

Apple = *Innovation*

Google has defined the search space. One could argue Google equals relevance, and I am sure the folks in Mt. View aspire for a much broader definition. But as we sit today, even the monetization of YouTube comes back to the search/discovery business.

Microsoft has and remains the definition of technology. From the OS to the devices and online product suite, their greatest strength and sometimes biggest limitation is that at their core they are technology personified. It guides their investments and, in some ways, stunts their aspirations and ability to succeed where others in this game have gone.

Apple is innovation. From the first Mac to the iPod, iPhone and now the reported tablet developments, Apple has been cool, hip,

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edgy and about innovative products.

Now we come to the one that makes for a great debate, in my opinion. Yahoo.

Yahoo for many years was the starting point for the Web, the alpha, if not the omega. But whither Yahoo now? Along the way Google, Microsoft and Apple all have taken considerable bites out of what Yahoo means and has meant. So what's my word? Well, my word is a bit different for Yahoo. It's the word I think Yahoo *can* stand for, not so much the word it does entirely embody today. It's why, as screwball as the "Yahoo repping Microsoft" search deal may seem, it may be the right move to align Yahoo with its single greatest success from an advertising standpoint.

To me, Yahoo should equal *Brand*. When you think of Yahoo and get past the troubles of the past two years and the missteps, what Yahoo still provides is the potential for a thread between properties and sections that are unparalleled on the Web. When you see Yahoo's offerings in mobile, search, sports, finance, mail and messenger, not to mention the reach of the home page, they all put towards the power of *brand*. On their own, some are more impressive (home page) than others (search), but as a collective thread that can run with brands throughout, Yahoo is quite the package.

Yet, ask 10 people how to define Yahoo and I'm sure not many would think of it in such an optimistic, potential state of mind as I do. So, while others may dismiss the UI evolution currently being led inside search as too little too late, I think you can contend it's a step forward both as necessitated by the terms of the Yahoo/MSFT arrangement, but also as a commitment to making sure the thread is strong throughout the Yahoo offering.

If Yahoo could commit and deliver on this, I think the legacy of the Bartz era would end with a better epitaph than that of the 2nd Yang regime.

So, what do Google, Microsoft, Apple and Yahoo mean to you? Comment below with your one-word answers or tweet to @SearchBoss.

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