

# FEAR GRIPS GOOGLE

SOURCES: SERGEY ORDERS BING STUDY

**The searchers**

Google is still the king of search, but co-founder Sergey Brin is concerned enough about losing market share to Bing, the new Microsoft search engine, that he has ordered a team of engineers to uncover any possible advantages Bing's algorithm might have over Google.

	bing	Google
Started	6/2009	1998
Ad campaign	\$100M	None
Home page	Cool photos	Plain white
Market share	11%	60%
Calls itself	Decision engine	Search engine

Steve Ballmer

Larry Page

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You'd think nothing would get under the skin of search giant Google.

But co-founder Sergey Brin is so rattled by the launch of Microsoft's rival search engine that he has assembled a team of top engineers to work on urgent upgrades to his Web service, The Post has learned.

Brin, according to sources inside the tech behemoth, is himself leading the team of search-engine specialists in an effort to determine how Bing's crucial search algorithm differs from that used by the company he founded in 1998 with Stanford University classmate Larry Page.

"New search engines have come and gone in the past 10 years, but Bing seems to be of particular interest to Sergey," said one insider, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The move by Brin is unusual, as it is rare these days for the Google founders to have such hands-on involvement in day-to-day operations at the company, the source added.

A spokesman for Google declined to comment about Brin's interest in Bing but said: "We always have a team working on improving search." He added: "We dedicate more time and energy to search than anything else in our company. Our algorithm is constantly evolving."

Microsoft launched Bing two weeks ago with a massive marketing budget that sources say ranged between \$80 million and \$100 million.

The software company has struggled to survive in the Internet-search business, with its former MSN search engine managing to grab only 8 percent of the lucrative search market share -- far behind Google's 60 percent and Yahoo!'s 20 percent share.

In fact, Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer, in an effort to close the gap on Google, last year made an offer to buy Yahoo! That offer was rejected. More recently, pre-Bing, there had been talk of Microsoft being interested in some sort of deal or partnership with Yahoo! search.

Those efforts have cooled.

Bing has been warmly greeted by analysts, critics and users alike who seem to largely welcome Microsoft's new approach to the everyday business of searching the Internet. Early statistics show Bing increasing Microsoft's market share by two percentage points, to about 11 percent -- but that the gains largely didn't come from Google or Yahoo!

Microsoft prefers not to use the term "search engine," however, choosing instead to describe Bing as a "decision engine."

While Bing is presented differently from Google -- with a colorful home page and easy-to-navigate search categories compared with Google's stark white page and search box -- there is little difference between the two when it comes to searching for simple terms.

A spokeswoman for Microsoft said, however, that Bing is currently focused on improving search results in four main categories: shopping, travel, health and local searches.

Scott Kessler, senior equity research analyst at Standard & Poor's, and a Google specialist, said that Bing has a lot going for it but he does not expect it to knock Google from its No. 1 perch.

"In a recent survey we found that the predominant features that dictate how people search the Internet are ease of use and force of habit. Google has been so dominant for so long that it will be tough for anyone to take significant market share away from them."