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Microsoft's Search Efforts

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MSN launched yesterday a preview of its own Web search technology and also revamped the look of MSN Search to be more minimal á la Google. MSN Search, still powered by Yahoo!, no longer features Yahoo!'s paid inclusion program, a move which is reportedly distancing the company from Yahoo!.

CNET's News.com reports that Microsoft says its new technology will improve search results by 50%. The company has 1 billion pages indexed, though as Danny Sullivan of SearchEngineWatch warns, size is not the primary quality to review when evaluating the power of a search engine. Indeed Sullivan supports other views in the industry in that he notes Microsoft's search technology is raw. Sullivan states, "How does it [Microsoft's new search engine] measure up? Relevancy is an extremely difficult task to assess...To do it properly, you should run a battery of tests. In addition, measuring how this preview service operates is largely a waste of time. It lacks some key features that mature search engines offer that impact relevancy, which almost certainly will be added over the coming months."

The technology took a year to develop and has reportedly cost Microsoft \$100 million. The race is certainly on between Microsoft, Yahoo! and Google for portal dominance. As Google develops its Web-based e-mail application, and Microsoft works on its search engine, it will be interesting to see what new applications and developments are rolled out, and what other companies do to survive the advancements of the "big three."