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Semantic startup Primal builds Pages around your thoughts

June 22, 2010 | Anthony Ha


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We've seen a lot of startups using semantic technology, usually to improve Web search. Peter Sweeney, founder and co-president of a company called Primal, said he's taking a different approach from the rest of the semantic crowd: "We're focused less on annotating content, and more on expressing the thoughts and intentions of individual consumers."

If that sounds a little vague, things should get a little clearer with Primal's just-announced service, Primal Pages. Like other semantic companies, Primal tries to understand the actual meaning of a user's commands, and with Pages it tries to create a webpage that contains the exact information you're looking for. When you search for something on a service like Google, especially if you're doing serious research, you probably find what you want in bits and pieces — a paragraph from a Wikipedia article, another paragraph from a research paper, an image from Flickr, and so on.

Pages tries to bring all of that together in one place. It uses Primal's "knowledge model" to figure out which content from sites like Wikipedia, Flickr, and Amazon would give you the answers that you're looking for. Then you can tweak your results by looking at "related pages" or "deeper pages" about narrower topics. You can customize your pages by selecting the pieces of content that best match what you're looking for, and you can share those customized pages with friends.

I played with the Pages feature a bit, and it reminded me of Kosmix, a site that also builds pages of aggregated content related to any topic. But the underlying technology for building the pages is different, Sweeney said, and Primal's knowledge model of things like mathematics is better-suited for more academic or arcane "long tail" topics.

"Where they're more focused on the broad, front-of-the-curve sort of topics, we're focused on highly personalized, highly niche, one-off things," he said.

Primal launched some of its services at the DEMO conference co-produced by VentureBeat last year, and it now offers a number of tools including Primal Search to improve your Google search results and Primal Thought Networking for recording, connecting, and finding content related to what you're thinking about. All of the services are free, Sweeney said — they're a demonstration for potential business partners, for example publishers who could use Primal technology to automatically generate relevant content for their readers.

The Waterloo, Canada company has raised \$10 million from angel investors.

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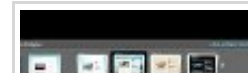
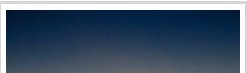
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Overview

LOCATION: Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

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I had read lots of about this technology and it is really very useful. Semantic technology is that technology which encodes meanings separately from data and content files which is really great. I had read this article and finds it very useful.

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K. Smith 1 week ago

I agree with r4. I am actually writing a few articles on semantic startups for my blog and I now will include Primal. I think they are actually more innovative and would like to see where this takes them.

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