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- Industry
- SEO
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- Social
- Local
- Mobile
- Video
- Content
- Development
- Reports

Home > Industry > Q&A: ESPforMe's Scott Rummler on how the future of search may all be in your mind

## Q&A: ESPforMe's Scott Rummler on how the future of search may all be in your mind

Industry SEO 16 Aug 16 | Christopher Ratcliff

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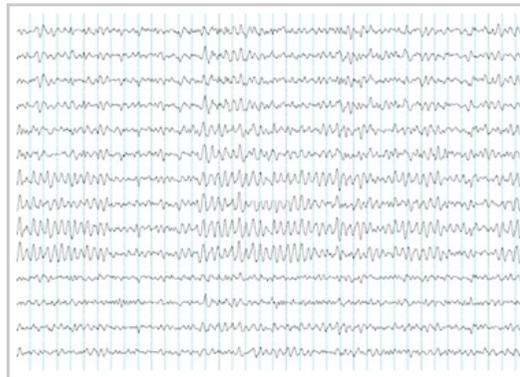
### What do you imagine is the future of search?

Voice... for sure. [Machine learning algorithms](#)... certainly. Super-intelligent [personal assistants](#) that know your next move before you make it... probably.

But what about search powered by your own brainwaves?

Surprisingly, that may not be as far-fetched as it sounds.

I recently caught up with Scott Rummler the creator of the world's first web-based brainwave application, [ESPforMe](#). It allows a user with an EEG headset to perform basic search functions remotely over the web, which he claims is a "major milestone, offering a completely unique mode of interaction that uses thoughts alone."



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Understandably, I had a few questions for Scott around the practical implications of ESPforMe and its place in the future of search...

### Can you please describe what ESPforMe does?

ESPforMe plugs your brain into the web. It's a new way of interacting with the web that uses brainwaves instead of typing and clicking. You can use it to explore the web using thoughts alone.

When you visit the site, and put on an EEG/brainwave headset, you will see search results change and update depending on what you are thinking, your mood, level of focus, and other factors. The product is in an early stage but has basic functionality allowing you to browse web content.



**Geeta Singh** Very nice list...MozBar extension is very useful.

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**Robert de Clercq** You missed SEO PEEK. Best plugin for sure

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**Qur'an 18:86** Yes you are missing my own tricks. I don't use a mobile, only a proper desktop with a mouse. These signup windows are easy to zap with the mouse. So a non-issue for me, along with the lack of risk of dropping my non-existent mobile down a drain.

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**Qur'an 18:86** thanks. I also think

## What was your inspiration?

I've always thought the web was for exploration and discovery. My library science professor used to bring in things to show that search was about surprise- declassified documents, pornography, and banned books. It seemed like search engines were censoring the web by recycling the most popular content. So a new way to do search seemed like a good moonshot challenge for my startup incubator, The Brooklyn Tech Loft.

## Is this just an experiment to see if you *can* achieve such a thing, or does it solve a genuine problem?

It is an attempt to do something new – the first Web-based EEG app, the first brainwave search engine. Hopefully that research will lead to more practical things.

It already has some practical uses:

- Explore the web in a new, customized way using brainwaves.
- Brainwave market research [through our sister company cerepath.com].
- You can browse the web with search results unfettered by advertising.
- You can easily browse related and also surprising content without entering a new search, by dragging the adjustable widget on the site.
- Integration of social networking content into search results.

## What do you hope to achieve with ESPforMe? Is there a commercial goal?

We hope to increase our user base and monetization over time as the product becomes more robust. We can increase the amount of content, and show readable content not just search results.

CerePath is rolling out as a paid service, using ESPforMe for focus groups. ESPforMe.com gives paid users the ability to embed comments in the search results themselves. We have found a way to show ads in a more engaging way. Currently this is free. When you sign up you can promote any site and it will appear in the 'related' section.

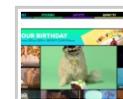
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### Where would you like to be in one, three and five years' time?

In one year, we'd like to make the technology more robust so it can solve more problems. Also we'd like to get into EEG headset/wearables manufacturing.

In one to three years we'd like to expand into related products. EEG applications for music listening and Internet of Things are already in the concept stage.

In five years, maybe some new thing will be incorporated. I don't know what it will be. Biological computing?

### Explain to me how the technology works like I'm a layman...

Go to [espforme.com](http://espforme.com), download the plugin, plug in the USB 'Dongle', and don your EEG/Brainwave headset. Current setup is for Mac only, and you have to contact us for a license, but that is changing.

There are training buttons on the site that you use to associate thoughts with words and actions. When you press a button, 'visualize' the results you want, and save the session, the application will remember the associations and use them as the foundation of your future interactions with the Web.

You are then able to dynamically update the site based on your thoughts, mood, etc. This is done by a complex series of mappings between the headset, training engine, plugin, dongle, custom coding, user interface, and underlying search engine. And the whole thing learns and improves with more usage. And your ability to focus and impact the EEG output does too!

### What have been the biggest challenges you've faced?

The main challenge is conveying that the 'hard' part – adding features to make the product more useful – is eminently doable, easier than what we've done so far. We just need an infusion of cash as

this is going through my incubator, The Brooklyn Tech Loft. We are the little guy with the audacity to disrupt Google on a shoestring.

Also, people think I'm kidding or am an ESP nut. I view E4M as a fun, interesting, innovative, useful technology. Not mystical or weird, not as invasive as typing all your [personal information into Facebook](#).

We are so far ahead of the curve that we are trying to convert a research technology license into a public facing product, which is an issue with the headset manufacturer Emotiv. The headsets are expensive but a cheaper version is in the works.

### **What do think the state of search will be like in the near future? Is there a place for ESPforMe?**

Traditional search will trend downward and EEG tools will trend up. Today's search engines will be like paper telephone books. ESPforMe will present customized mind blowing information without any effort on the user's part. Whether that happens in one year or 10 will depend on whether there is some major event, a tech crash, or maybe widespread [advertising blockers](#).

*Christopher Ratcliff is the editor of Methods Unsound and former editor of SEW*

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