

Google mania

Google, the world's most popular search engine is to go public and will be floated on the stock market later this year.

- 1 Do you search the Web as part of your job? Which search engine(s) do you generally use?
- 2 Which do you think are the most used search engines in Europe? Put the following in order of popularity.

MSN	Yahoo!	AOL	Google
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- 3 Now scan paragraph three in the article to check your answer.

Search engine flotation Google, the world's most popular Internet search engine, is to go public in a stock flotation which could make its founders into billionaires.

"Google is not a conventional company" say Larry Page and Sergey Brin who started the company in 1998 when they were graduate students at Stanford University. Indeed, the initial public offering (IPO), which will involve an on-line auction, is not a conventional flotation. It will attempt to eliminate the near-certain first-day gains which enable speculators to sell out early for a quick profit. The auction approach will also minimise the role that investment bankers play in deciding who gets the shares.

For many, Google is a solid, profitable company based on performance and not on the hype which characterized some overvalued dot.com companies. Its profits have more than doubled from a year ago to \$63.9m in the first quarter of

2004, with profit margins of 59% before tax. Most revenue comes from the advertisements which pop up alongside the search results.

Google is used by more than 100m people each month and processes more than 3,000 searches every second. Its web index is huge, carrying more than six billion items. According to one market research company, Google has 55 million users in Europe. In size of an audience, it is followed by MSN, with 27 million users, Yahoo!, with 12 million and AOL, with 5 million users.

It is Google's strong branding which has helped it become so popular. We have now even got a new verb – "to google!" However, it is all too easy for people to switch search engines, if it makes their life easier. All eyes will be on the company as it prepares to go public

- 4 Read the whole article. What is different about the Google flotation? Are any of the statistics surprising?
- 5 Find words or expressions in the article which mean:

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| (a) to get rid of something which is not wanted | (paragraph 1) |
| (b) person investing in a company in the hope of making a big profit by selling shares | (paragraph 1) |
| (c) publicity which influences people | (paragraph 2) |
| (d) given a higher price than it should have | (paragraph 2) |
| (e) use of advertising, design etc. to help people recognise a particular product | (paragraph 4) |

Definitions based on *Macmillan English Dictionary*. Text © Bloomsbury Plc 2002

- 6 Discuss the following questions in small groups and report your ideas to the class.
 - (a) How does a search engine help you in your own job? Give specific examples.
 - (b) Would you consider changing the search engine you normally use? Why / why not?
 - (c) Would you buy shares in Google?