Qweries is a Q&A site targeting a diverse audience. The Q&A space has spawned a series of successes both in the US (ask.com, Yahoo! Answers, and answers.com have all been top-20 web sites) and internationally (most notably in South Korea, where Naver combined Q&A with algorithmic search to get a dominant 80% search share). With Yahoo! fading, there's a lot of attention to this space; both Quora and Stack Exchange have gotten $10M-plus funding from top-tier venture firms.

Here's the competitive positioning:
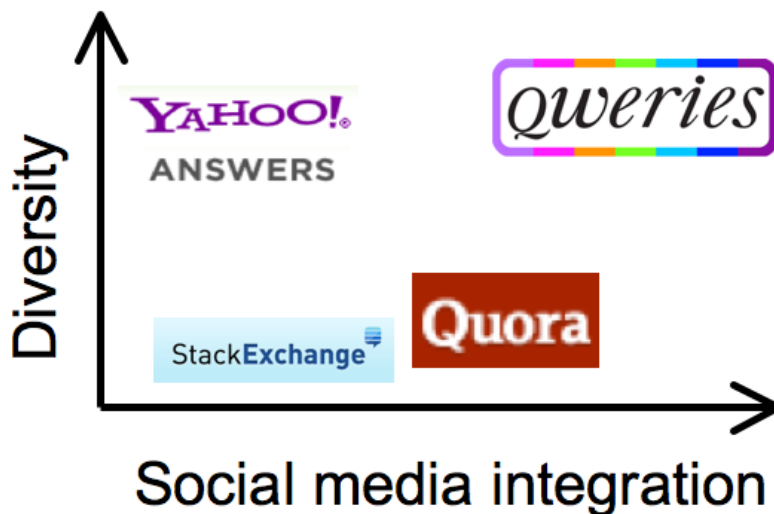
Why does diversity matter so much?

One straightforward reason is that women are the largest and most-valuable demographic online; the 75%-+ male demographics of Quora and StackExchange are leaving a huge and valuable audience underserved. Even more fundamentally, though, there's a lot of research that *diverse teams outperform*. A couple of key links:

- In Professor's Model, Diversity = Productivity, summarizing Scott Page's work. His book *The Difference* goes into a lot more detail; it's essentially the math behind where 'wisdom of the crowds' does and doesn't work
- MIT Unravels the Secrets Behind Collective Intelligence – Hint: IQ Not So Important, looking at work by Anita Woolsey et. al. showing that groups with a higher percentage of women were more effective at problem-solving

So a diverse Q&A community will give better results for everybody, not just for women.

Sustainable competitive advantage

The secret sauce to creating a diverse community comes from several areas. Most importantly:

- starting by reaching out to a diverse population. Because I've done so much work on diversity in technology, my personal network gives a huge advantage here. By contrast, once the population becomes skewed, it becomes harder and harder to rebalance it.
- the range of topics being discussed. If the topics are mostly stuff that's interest to men, guess who will stick around once they visit the site -- and guess what they'll talk about?
- technology, in particular
  - diversity-friendly voting, ranking, and reputation. [I'm working on a patent app related to this]
  - user experience, applying some of the insights from the new subdiscipline of "gender HCI" (which looks at differences in how men and women interact with computers). CV Harquail's If Women Had Designed Facebook and Designing for Feminists vs. Designing for Women: Different vs. Revolutionary are a good overview

Go-to-market plan

Qweries initial offering will be built on open-source or white-labeled commercial Q&A technology, with a focus on developing high-quality content in areas like privacy, diversity, activism, roller derby, etc that leverage the team's expertise and networks, are not well-addressed by existing Q&A or web sites, and appeal to a diverse audience. Islands of expertise, combined with effective SEO and social media marketing, will attract new users and provide revenue opportunities. In parallel, working with the community, we'll identify and fill key functionality gaps while developing the next-generation user experience and infrastructure

LInks

http://stackexchange.com   Note the hot questions and the list of "top sites" is on the right. And oh look, they just added a new one on firearms :)

http://quora.com - A pair of posts Life imitates art imitates life? and Prisms, Kool-Aid, and an Opportunity have some of my notes from earlier this year.

http://answers.yahoo.com/ - classic, although now very long in the tooth.

Naver and the Walled Garden, by Chang Won Kim (originally for the OECD Ministerial meeting), and Choe Sang-Hung's South Koreans Connect Through Search Engine (in the *New York Times*) describes how Naver's Q&A site catapulted them to dominance in the South Korean search market.

What should I read to find out more about the Q&A (question-and-answer) space? is a bibliography I put together earlier this year