



Google's SEO Updates

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DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY

Session 5: Google's SEO Updates



Google Panda Update



Google Penguin Update



Google Hummingbird Update



Mobile First Indexing



Google's Algorithm Update

Every year, Google updates or adjusts its algorithm hundreds of times.

The vast majority of the time, the updates do not noticeably impact SERP and website owners do not even notice.

However, there have been a few significant times when Google has made updates that cause obvious changes in rankings and traffic rates.

The Panda Update - 2011



This update was first launched in 2011, but it has had several updates over the years. In the beginning of 2016, Panda was added to Google's core ranking algorithm. Panda targets spam and weak content that did not help the end-user. Thin content, duplicate content and content with too many ads are all penalized.

How Does Panda Update Work?



Google Panda penalties occur when websites manage to rank highly despite thin or poor content that does not serve the end user.

Penalties could occur for:

- ▶ Duplicate content
- ▶ Pages that have poor content to ad ratio
- ▶ Pages with excessively general information
- ▶ Content that offers little information



Major Sites Impacted by Panda

In the fall of 2014, the Panda update even impacted a number of well-known sites, such as:

- ▶ Independent.co.uk, likely for a poor content-to-ad ratio
- ▶ Answers.com, likely for generic content
- ▶ CheaperThanDirt.com, likely for thin, uninformative content

How to Recover from Panda Penalty?



- ▶ Review your site for duplicate pages or extra pages that offer little to the user. Look for duplicate Title Tags as a potential indicator of duplicate content.
- ▶ Eliminate or update these pages so they provide value for the reader
- ▶ Use robots.txt on pages that are duplicate but needed on your page
- ▶ Make sure your site offers a positive user experience, and does not contain excessive ads
- ▶ When Google refreshes the algorithm, you should start to see your site's rank improve.

The Penguin Update - 2012



About a year after the Panda update, the Penguin update was released, creating another push towards quality content. This update targeted spam by looking at backlinks. It rewarded those with quality, organic backlinks and penalized those with artificial backlink profiles.

How Does Penguin Update Work?



- ▶ You can generally tell if your page has been hit by a Penguin penalty by looking at Google Webmaster Tools and monitoring your traffic. Since Penguin is a page-specific update, you will notice a sharp drop for specific keywords. Google offered this traffic report as an example of a page hit by Penguin.





How To Avoid Penguin Penalty?

The Penguin penalty largely focuses on identifying poor-quality websites based upon backlinks. Google's algorithm works on the assumption that quality sites link to other quality sites while poor sites generally link to other poor sites. In other words, when you have websites that Google already trusts linking to you, it helps to boost your rankings.

On the other hand, if you are linking to spam sites, then there is a good chance that the algorithm will not trust you either.



How to Recover from Penguin Penalty?

- ▶ Get rid of any backlinks you have purchased or otherwise illicitly gained
- ▶ Focus on creating high-quality content and distributing it to attract the desired backlinks
- ▶ Regularly monitor your backlink profile to quickly find undesirable links
- ▶ Disavow any poor-quality links to protect your site's reputation

The Hummingbird Update - 2013



The Hummingbird update was a change to Google's algorithm to make it smarter at interpreting semantic search. It was designed to help Google better understand intent and context. This forced marketers to shift towards longtail keywords. It also encouraged marketers to develop pieces based more on user intent and needs rather than a single keyword.

How Does Hummingbird Update Work?



Google Hummingbird is a new search platform introduced in September 2013. This update revolutionized Google search because it helped to bring meaning to the words that people were typing in their queries. Instead of just matching vocabulary in the query to vocabulary in the search results, the new algorithm works to understand the meaning of the query and match it with relevant results. With Hummingbird, Google took the meaning technology that helped to power earlier advancements, such as the Knowledge Graph, and applied it to the billions of pages available online.



How Does Hummingbird Update Impact SEO?

The clearest impact of the Google Hummingbird update on SEO was a decreased focus on keywords. It is no longer as important that the words you use in your content directly match the words used in the person's query. While some argued that this meant keywords were obsolete, really it just means that their importance has shifted. Now, instead of writing content for specific keywords, you need to create content that addresses particular topics. Keyword research, like the capabilities you have through the BrightEdge Data Cube, remains important because it sheds light on the topics that people search for the most. Performing this research will help you align your content creation process with what your targeted customers want to see.

The Mobile First Update - 2015



The mobile update forced all sites to become mobile-friendly or risk being penalized in the SERPs. Rather than mobile-optimization being reserved for the brands at the forefront of the industry, every site needs to have a mobile version of their website.



Why Mobile First Update Is Important?

The mobile update was in response to the growing prevalence of mobile in the lives of users. The year 2015 actually also saw the number of searches on mobile pass the number of searches on desktop. Customers are also increasingly using mobile for everything from searches to shopping-- mobile is now an estimated 30 percent of all U.S. e-commerce.



How to Avoid Mobile Penalty?

- ▶ Have a mobile-friendly layout. This can be achieved with either a responsive design website, which will automatically configure itself to fit the size of the device it is on, or it can be done with designated mobile website.
- ▶ Make sure that all of the videos on your site are compatible with mobile devices.
- ▶ If you are using a designated mobile site, make sure that you do not have any faulty redirects and that every page on your desktop site corresponds with a mobile page.

How to Avoid Mobile Penalty?



- ▶ Make sure your pages do not appear as 404s for users on mobile
- ▶ Do not use interstitials or overlays that cover portions of the intended content, as they can be very challenging to get rid of on mobile devices.
- ▶ If you use a mobile version of your website, make sure that links on the pages link to other pages of the mobile site
- ▶ Make sure the content is readable and usable for mobile users. This means not using a small font size and making sure any touch buttons are spaced far apart and easy to use with fingers.
- ▶ Think about the purpose of your visitor on mobile and design the page for their use. If your visitors often use mobile to look up your phone number or address, make this information easy for people to find on the front page.

Thank You!

