

Critical Analysis: Trends in Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) with Daniel Bannick (from AUGUST)

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Introduction

The magical myth of gaining top spot in google search simply by populating metadata tags in html code is a thing of the past, according to Daniel Bannick. Google uses over 200 classification points indexed for analysis before your search phrase/s return a result - new & smarter algorithms find relations or synonyms and even search variations of adjacent words on pages. Gone are the days when you simply input keywords into meta-tags at the beginning of the html code, index your site with Google Web Master and hey presto - your link is on the first page in Google search. In fact, today's Google search is much more intelligent than the internet's bygone years (circa 1990's), and Web Designers today need to train themselves more in SEO to keep up with the technology and improve page ranking for their clientele.

Google Engineer Matt Cutts is referred to by Daniel when talking about Page Ranking - which actually involves a complex mathematical algorithm - and alludes to Matt's simple truth "It's really just the number of people who link to you and how important those links are" in *Understanding SEO(Search Engine Optimisation) [by Google Engineer MATT CUTTS] (2012)*.

Page Rank is elaborated further by Matt in *Matt Cutts from Google on WordPress & SEO (2013)*.

Daniel emphasises 5 factors that influence Page Rank –

1. Infrastructure – Referring to the structure of html code and website design.
2. Popularity – Page popularity i.e. the number of page loads, number of pages linked to this page etc.
3. Relevance – Relevance of keywords to the page you are looking for.
4. Authority – High traffic sites that are trustworthy such as government and university sites.
5. User Experience – Harder to determine but is a combination of time user spends on sites (dwell time), page load times, resistance of ads etc.

Daniel adds that this will change again in future as more factors involving user experience are used in the equation to accurately find the information you are searching for - again Matt Cutts mentions the importance of user experience in *Matt Cutts (@mattcutts) Google's SEO Report Card (2010)*.

How can I get a better page rank?

Daniel references Matt Cutts when talking about adverts and if paid adverts take a higher priority in terms of page ranking, but Matt affirms in his video that Google will not assume preference for paid ads, in fact relegating ads to a low priority and even cutting them out altogether if they don't help (positioned to the right column of the search page and above the search list). Essentially ads that *are* displayed are supposed to help you find the information that you are looking for.

Mark Purtell of Search Engine Journal online has made an interesting observation on the importance of H1 tag keywords, especially after Google's introduction of the Hummingbird algorithm (Purtell 2014). He states that after the release of the Hummingbird update (Google's update to the page-ranking algorithm used to order sites by ranking), correct formatting of the H1 tag could result in a

better page rank. By formatting the H1 with a question, then follow up by answering that question within the body of the page - this should be targeted by Google as a correct interpretation of a query's intent. Mark goes on to explain "try to understand what a user may be asking when they are searching for a keyword the page is targeting and format that question on the page with H1 tags". Google announced Hummingbird on September 26th 2013, but it was already in place a month earlier. Jim Yu explains that Hummingbird allows Google's search engine to perform better by improving semantic search, and understands more contextual meaning in terms used in conversational queries (Yu 2013). Conversational search support was added by Google in May 2013, to cater for those longer search-term queries across all devices. Moving away from a strictly keywords-based search technique, Hummingbird improves on queries by including information gathered from social network pages, links to higher ranking or ascendant pages, optimization of mobile content, and lastly carefully crafted content creation. Some level of keyword optimization is essential, although now Google demands more emphasis on intent rather than random adjectives. Jayson DeMers contributes to Forbes Magazine online on SEO and Marketing for Entrepreneurs, and he has a similar idea on optimizing SEO (DeMers 2014). Jayson sees demand for SEO experts and in-house designers as paramount to success, especially since carefully crafted content will bring more attention to company brand and intent. New job positions cropping up are evidence of this – typically Content Marketing Officer (CMO), Content Manager and Director of Content. He'd like to see Content Marketing replace SEO emphasising the importance of this umbrella term as it encompasses more than just keyword optimization, and associates more with terms like user experience, brand awareness and content management.

Conclusion

Daniel Bannick touched on about half of what the magic formula should be in crafting a full package for any company that demands online presence. Trends definitely show movement towards conversational searches and a general deepening of searchable content. It's certainly requiring more knowledge and expertise to develop solutions where page ranking is improved with careful observation, research and following Google's movements after developing and releasing fresh search algorithms or improving old ones. On top of all that, there's guest blogging, link enhancing, and author ranking to add the cherry on the SEO cake. Chrome is already offering an interesting conversational search function where the browser speaks to you. It won't be long when we'll be asking intelligent questions in Google, and expecting - even demanding - intelligent answers without exception.

References

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