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Why Google is doubling down on us

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The writing is on the wall...

Google really hates niche sites, or what they call "sites made to rank on Google."

What I'm seeing with Google de-indexing sites is nothing like I've ever seen in my 19 years of doing SEO.

What Google fails to remember is that its search engine was built on the backs of "sites made to rank on Google."

(Even if they do remember, they don't care. They've got big pockets and bigger problems to deal with).

Let me walk you through how we got here:

1) In the early to mid-2000s, Google gave us keywords people were searching for (via AdWords, Search Console, autocomplete, etc.)

2) Google then encouraged site owners to include these keywords in their title tag, h1, etc.. ([source](#)) thus encouraging us to create pages specifically to target keywords.

Key best practices

While there are many things you can do to [improve your site's SEO](#), there are a few core practices that can have the most impact on your web content's ranking and appearance on Google Search:

- [Create helpful, reliable, people-first content.](#)
- Use words that people would use to look for your content, and place those words in prominent locations on the page, such as the [title and main heading](#) of a page, and other descriptive locations such as [alt text](#) and link text.

3) People found that many of these keywords (mainly long tail) had no web pages addressing them, so they created content for them, which then turned many frustrated Google users into happy ones.

4) More and more people started creating web pages targeting all of these same long-tail keywords. Then, it became a race to the bottom for SEO (on-page optimization tools, backlinks, etc..)

5) Google's index gets flooded with SEO'd AI content targeting even more long-tail keywords.

6) Google launched the Helpful Content Update in the fall of 2023 to demote the rankings of niche sites that had created all this long-tail SEO'd content based on Google's recommendation.

7) On March 6th, Google decided to ban thousands of niche sites from its search engine for targeting too many long tail keywords with AI-automated content, human-edited AI content, and human-written content.

And now...

If we're one of the lucky ones who haven't been banned from Google yet, we're waiting for this "core update" to roll out to see if it will reverse our HCU declines or make things even worse.

If I had to guess...

Things will get worse.

Google has made it abundantly clear:

They no longer want pages on the web targeting long tail keywords aka content made to rank on Google.

They just want people to create good and helpful content for the sake of it - whatever that means.

If that's true, and if every platform (Facebook, Pinterest, etc..) just told everyone, "Hey, just create good content - we don't care what it's about or if people even want to see it or need it"...

Our sites wouldn't get any traffic.

And people would be dissatisfied with Google, Facebook, Pinterest, etc..

What these platforms need to remember is that the web needs people to create content that people are searching for and want to see because it solves a problem, inspires them, answers a question, provokes a thought, entertains them, etc.

(I'm not counting on them to remember this)

So, what's our strategy going forward?

How can we still operate our sites and make money without Google?

Well, since Google is doubling down on nuking niche sites, I'm doubling down on 3 other traffic sources:

1) Pinterest. I'll be creating more Pinterest accounts to scale out my pins that point to a single site. I'm also working on 2 additional made for Pinterest sites.

2) Facebook. I've gotten some great ideas for the type of content I should be publishing that attracts Facebook's audience (thanks to Anne Moss and Andy Skraga).

3) Newsletters. Scott DeLong had made millions from simple niche sites and sending newsletters - without relying on Google traffic. My friend Jon Dykstra isn't even worried or thinking much about this Google reckoning and core update because he's making most of his traffic and revenue from his newsletter.

3) Building a brand. This will tie everything together. To become a destination, people seek out because they know it, like it, and trust it. Which will make selling products that much easier. (I already have launched a digital and physical products store on one of my sites).

Watch - one day, I bet my rankings will go right up to #1 because I ignored Google and focused on building a brand, and they picked up on those brand signals and realize I actually had good, helpful content all along.

(If you want to focus more on building a brand for your site, [check out my other newsletter](#))

Even if my sites do well from this core update, I'm not banking on them doing well forever.

Google clearly has its own agenda regarding what it wants found on the web. For some reason, that agenda doesn't include most niche sites that create content to help target the 15%+ new search queries they see each day ([source](#)) and often don't have any content that addresses them.

Perhaps this is where they think SGE will win?

Time will tell.

For now, I encourage you to spend some time thinking about your site's future and how big a role Google should play in it.

For now, I wish you lots of luck with this core update 🙏

Perhaps instead of checking your GSC manual penalty page or stats every 5 minutes, I recommend going through those courses you may have bought on how to get more traffic from Facebook, email, Pinterest, etc..

Thanks for reading and let me know if you have any questions!



Tony Hill

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