

"So... What Does Google Really Want? "

Like it or not, search engine optimization plays an important part for any online business, and more so for new and small businesses. On **cash-strapped budgets**, we don't have the deep pockets to buy expensive links on high-traffic websites, and extensive PPC spending (I'm talking about over \$100 a day) is beyond us, at least at the start.

So the rest of us are, in the end, left with getting traffic the (free) **cheap** way – building links, regularly adding content, optimizing our pages and trawling through SEO forums for that next big breakthrough in SEO strategies that will give us the edge over our competition.

In other words, we are all caught up in the SEO rat race. And there seems to be no end in sight.

At times like these, it's a good idea to step back and look at the situation from a more “**detached**” perspective. Forget about your website, **forget about your online business**, forget about making money from the Internet while sitting at home and sleeping in on Mondays.

Instead, I want you to have only one thought, just four words in your mind:

“What does Google want?”

Why Google, you ask? What a stupid question, you might also ask. Well, let me explain myself. However, while I do so, **keep this question in mind** and try to answer it alongside me.

Now...when you reduce search engine marketing to its basics, it is all about doing what is necessary (and acceptable by the search engines) in order to get a high ranking in search engine results (SERPs). So our SEO strategies depend **directly** on what works best in the search engines.

Now, let's take that thought a bit further – how do you know what works best? Well, the search engines keep their ranking algorithm secret, and **no one** really understands how rankings “really” work. Sure, we can all approximate, and some of us have made (and will continue to make) millions by getting it “right”. But in the absence of cold and hard facts from the people running the search engine traffic, there's no way to know for sure.

What the search engines **do** tell us is pretty vague – your website content must be unique, useful, and should be fresh. Targeting your website to a particular industry helps as well. Links? Search engines sure like them. In fact, search engines like them quite a lot. But hey, that's not all to search engines, is it? What about quality content?

The truth is that in the age of super-instant gratification (ever met a cliché you **liked?**), links are your “easy” ticket into search engine rankings. In face of the “simplicity” of getting other websites to link to yours (made even easier by [SEO tools](#)), good content takes a VERY distant second place.

The search engines can be blamed for placing **too much** emphasis on links, although in the last year or so, led by Google, the search engines have gradually moved away from giving links too much importance and have started looking at relevance and user feedback (read personalized search) Even then, SEO campaigns takes a familiar shape:

- Do some **keyword research** and build a master list of keywords.
- **Write** “keyword optimized” articles **for the search engines**.
- **Build links** to your website using keywords in the anchor text (and choosing link partners in the same niche (to win on the relevance factor).
Tip: Use a tool like [SEO Elite](#) to build links quickly. See demo video by [clicking here](#).
- Rinse. Lather. Repeat.

In that formula, somehow, somewhere, people started taking **shortcuts**. First, there was **link spamming** to trick search engines into ranking their websites higher. Then, there were “**content-generating**” scripts – the poor man's version of obscene levels of keyword stuffing carried out only for manipulating search engines.

Maybe it's unfair to call this tactics trickery or manipulation. After all, there is a system, there's a way of cracking it and getting to the top of it without much effort, so why not take the quick and dirty shortcut and move on?

On the surface, the debate seems to be between “ethical” and “unethical” methods (or, as they like to say, between white hats and black hats) of SEO. In reality, your morality, or the color of your headgear, does not matter. At all.

What DOES matter is the question I asked you earlier. What does Google want?

In fact, replace Google with the search engine of your choice. Take Yahoo. Msn. IceRocket if fancy strikes you, but the point remains the same.

What are the search engines looking for?

Search engines, believe it or not, are looking to **keep their visitors**.

Surprised? Shoot, why not, it makes sense, doesn't it? Search is as much a business as selling widgets or owning a roadside café, and in a business, getting and keeping your customers (searchers) is your top priority. **No searchers = no money**, and that's the bottom line.

So how do the search engines get, and keep, their visitors? Once you start thinking of search engines as being businesses, everything falls into place. Building customer loyalty is a crucial factor for any successful business.

Be The Best At What You Do!

For search engines, this means **being the best at what they do**, and to offer the most complimentary services. Leaving SE accessories (like Yahoo's portal or Google's various services) aside, the only way search engines can get and bring back searchers is by giving them what they want.

Searchers (much like you and me) **want information**. They want it to get to it fast. They want it to be right. Most importantly, they want it be right *the first time* around. That's a difficult ask for the search engines (isn't **that** an understatement), and they are bound to screw things up along the way.

Now, it suddenly becomes clear (it will to you as well, just hang on). It doesn't matter what “algorithm” a search engine is using, or what particular SEO tactic seems to be working best this month (or week). In the end, search engines will always be working towards providing users **“better” results** – where better invariably translates into useful and updated information for the searcher. You can go through ten thousand search engine updates, but the end goal remains the same.

This is certainly no revelation. Search engines (and many SEO gurus) have been saying this all this time. **Quality content** is the best way to build search engine rankings – it is the only guarantee towards an organic linking campaign, and along with user feedback (personalized search) it has fast become the focus of search engine “updates”.

That's not to say that **link building** does not work – in fact, link building still remains the easiest way to get search engine rankings. However, quality content (and the \$5 an article that most webmasters pay on RentACoder is **not quality**, no matter what your standards) serves your business in so many different ways that it seems almost foolish, and certainly short-sighted, of webmasters to not invest in it.

FACT:

- Quality content helps with **conversions** – people will buy more from you if you help them in their quest for knowledge, and they will come back for more if they like what you are telling them.
- Quality content does wonders in **search engines** – despite the fact that search engine rankings are automated, good writing is written for the readers and thus not over-optimised – over-optimization is a big problem for webmasters and it's something that search engines have been penalizing for a while now.
- Quality content is your surest guarantee for **building links organically**, or naturally – someone comes to your website and likes your website so much that they link to it on their blog, resources page or anywhere else on their website (it happens all the time).
- Quality content is also the best bet to **get one-way links** in your link building campaigns without having to pay for them – webmasters are more likely to link to a website that is actually useful than just for the sake of building their links page.

Finally, and most importantly, quality content is what **searchers are looking for**. It's what search engines are trying to provide (to their users). In short, that's what the search engines are looking for: quality content.

Makes sense to do what the search engines are looking for, and THEN **build your SEO strategy around that**, doesn't it?

So the next time you're stuck in a rut, and are despairing about your search engine rankings, stop what you are doing, take a step back and ask yourself this simple question:

“What DOES Google want?”

All the best,



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