

A GUIDE TO Google SEARCH ENGINE ALGORITHMS

An easy explanation of the most recent Google algorithms



“What causes my Google search engine rankings to fluctuate?” This is a question asked by many of our SEO clients. The answer to this is Google's numerous algorithm changes; algorithms are the computer processes and formulas that look at your search query and then return the most relevant results. Google algorithms rely on over 200 signals to work out what results to show; these signals include keywords used on websites, your location, the freshness of content and the amount of links coming to your site. Google will frequently update these algorithms to improve the quality and relevance of search results, sometimes these will incur big differences in ranking positions and sometimes you won't even notice. This guide will break down Google's major algorithms that have taken effect in the most recent years and explain what signals they look for and why.

PANDA

What does it do?

Panda was released at the beginning of 2011. Its job is to target and penalise sites with thin content, sites with too many ads, too many affiliate links and sites with duplicated content.

Why?

Panda's purpose is to ensure websites appearing on search result pages offer quality content so that the answer to your search query is as comprehensive as possible.

What signals does it look for?

Panda looks for engaging, fresh, unique and shareable content. Make sure your web pages have sharing mechanisms such as 'share this on Facebook' or 'email to a friend'. Video and Infographics are great ways to engage an audience and encourage sharing. Sites that have these signals will be favoured by Google and will rank more highly.



VENICE

What does it do?

Have you noticed local results even when you haven't specified a location in your search query? This is down to the Venice algorithm that was released in early 2012. When a location has not been specified it looks at your IP address and returns local results. More recently search results are being influenced by Venice and more often than not you will see a mixture of local and national page 1 results.



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Why?

The purpose of this algorithm is to return increasingly relevant and personalised results to the user.

What signals does it look for?

Venice will look for a location specified on your website, often websites have a company postal address on the contact page and Venice will use this. If a company has different locations that it serves or sells in, a way to get Venice to take these into account is to create individual town pages with quality content that are linked to by local directories. This is a local SEO tactic that we practice and have found to be very effective.

PENGUIN

What does it do?

Penguin was released in 2012 to tackle spammy websites that manipulate Google's search results. A key ranking factor is the amount of links coming to your website which act as popularity points. People misuse and manipulate this by carrying out black hat link tactics such as paying for links or obtaining links through link farms.

Why?

Much like Panda, the purpose of Penguin is to improve the quality of websites appearing on Google's search results pages.

What signals does it look for?

Penguin looks for and favours sites with natural links from high quality sites. If you have links which you think could put your site at risk of being penalised by Google, you can disavow these links through Google Webmaster Tools. There are also link research tools available to help identify unnatural links coming to your site.



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HUMMINGBIRD

What does it do?

[Hummingbird is the newest search engine algorithm](#) that was introduced in late 2013. Hummingbird helps Google to understand webpages in the same way that it understands data in the Knowledge Graph. By understanding a webpage topic instead of looking at particular keywords it can bring back more accurate webpages in its search results when given a complex query.

Why?

The main purpose of Hummingbird is to provide better results for complex long tail keyword queries as users expect more conversational interactions with a search engine.

What signals does it look for?

When writing content for your webpages you should ensure that your page is focused on one topic with a variety of keywords used to describe that topic; this should happen naturally as you write. It has been rumoured that there is a switch within this algorithm that will take into account social signals, it is therefore important to be posting your quality content regularly on social media with particular attention to G+; Google +1's were found to be one of the most [influential ranking factors last year](#).

All of these algorithms are updated frequently to improve what you see when you Google your search query. This is why Google remain the undisputed global search engine leaders.

If you want some further advice about Search Engine Optimisation, or want to find out more about what our Digital Marketing Agency in Surrey can do for you, then please get in touch by emailing us on enquiries@redantsolutions.com or call us on 01483 863 338.



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