

COLUMNS

What Google's Hummingbird update means for marketers

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By AN AMERICAN MARKETER COLUMNIST

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On the eve of Google's 15th birthday last week, the search engine giant unveiled an algorithm update that had marketers on their toes regarding the effect that it might have on their Google rankings, even leaving some panicking that "SEO is dead."

However, unbeknownst to most, Google had actually set what is being dubbed the Hummingbird update live a few months prior to the announcement and the results far from buried the impact of Internet marketing.

No more winging it

The Hummingbird update was named to reflect the speed and precision that Google believes its algorithm now shares with its feathered namesake.

The key part of the Google message for marketers is precision.

The search engine giant understood that its users are expecting more from their search results than ever before. This comes from expecting more of any and all technology in 2013 and the capabilities of the technology being used to search via Google.

Whether it is through Siri or other voice-activated software, longer and more complex phrases are being searched more often than ever before.

Hummingbird looks to replace the keyword matching tactics of the past with the ability to understand what it is a particular user is looking to gain from his or her searching experience.

The biggest reason companies did not see a seismic shift in the rankings as a result of the algorithm change is Google has not changed what it prioritizes in terms of rankings.

As the Panda, Penguin and even the Caffeine updates have shown, Google puts the most value in companies that have links from authoritative sources linking back to their site and produce unique and engaging content from which their audience can benefit.

Turning the page

All Google updates from the past and all updates moving forward will be put in place to better serve the needs of individual Google users.

While this may not impact the giants of the rankings, small businesses are now presented with a tremendous opportunity to capitalize on their Internet marketing initiatives.

Most small businesses will take considerable time to appear on the first page of the Google rankings for highly competitive and general keywords.

However, the Hummingbird update shows that the search engine giant will make it easier for companies to compete with the giants of their field in the localized space.

Strategies should be put in place to boost brand relevancy for phrases that users search on a daily basis.

Whether it is "best furniture store in Des Moines" or "cute dresses in Lexington," marketers that start to think smaller may actually see the biggest gains for their business.

In addition to geographical terms, companies should look over analytics and see what types of questions their client base is asking.

Understanding what potential customers want to know is the first step towards putting in strategies to answer these questions.

When all phases of a content marketing strategy are working towards meeting the demands of the public, rankings will be achieved and a strong brand reputation will be warranted.

THE RUMORS of the death of search engine marketing (SEO) have been around since the beginning of Internet marketing efforts.

The truth is old SEO tactics will die off, but the best practices will continue to evolve and help businesses who understand the true message of Google.

Provide the most relevant information in the space, inform or entertain your audience and give users a reason to come back for more.

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