

Q&A

Search for success

Scott Brown, digital services manager at Accesspoint, answers questions about making your website more visible to clients



Q How does Google work exactly?

A The web is continually evolving, with new content added daily. Every single second of the day, Google is crawling the web to organise all of this information to form and display its extensive search index listings. The index contains billions of webpages and is well over 100,000,000 gigabytes in size. That's great, but when a potential client wants to find something, such as a 'probate solicitor in London', they don't want billions of webpage options. They want to be provided with a list of relevant results that will help them. This is where Google's very clever ranking systems sort through these billions of web pages and provide the most relevant results in a fraction of a second.

Q And what are these ranking systems exactly?

A Google's ranking systems are made of algorithms that analyse what you're searching for and the most relevant information, which should be displayed to you. Every day, 15% of the searches that pass through Google are new searches that have never been seen before, so Google has to adapt its algorithms to deliver the most relevant results. An example of an algorithm is Google's synonym system, which took five years to develop and now boasts improved results in over 30% of searches.

Q Our firm's website has keywords, so is that job done for us?

A Not quite. Google does look for keywords. However, its algorithms are much more extensive, and they consider hundreds of other factors about your website before measuring

where it will be positioned on a results page, as we all want to be positioned in the top three places, right? In order to ascertain where your website will be positioned, when someone searches for, say, a 'conveyancing solicitor', Google doesn't just look for those keywords. It looks for many other things, such as relevant supporting content that will help fulfil the search intent, for example how the conveyancing process works, issues that may occur, testimonials/reviews of your services and whether other high authority websites are linking to you. It will also use your location to deliver relevant content - as you most likely don't want to use a conveyancing solicitor on the other side of the world. Therefore, it's important to ensure all your information is up to date and relevant. There are hundreds of other factors that all count toward making your website rank higher, such as making use of SSL security (the green padlock next to your web address), but we all already do that, right? As of 9 July, Google now also uses the speed of your website on mobile (as well as desktop) as a ranking factor, so something to check is whether your device is slow to load. A top priority is user experience. A user shouldn't have to hunt to find what they need. Your website should be easy to use, accessible and have a good flow to it.

Q Is there anything that we shouldn't do?

A There are lots of simple mistakes that can be made

with websites and associated bad SEO practices. An easy mistake and trap is 'keyword stuffing'. My advice would be to ensure the content on your website is written to be helpful for users, not search engines. If you go over the top with keywords it will qualify as a poor user experience and could be identified as a spam tactic - leading to a ranking penalty. Another nasty is buying low-quality backlinks to pass PageRank - again, expect a penalty. **LPM**

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ABOUT

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