

## **SEO Newsletter for April , 2012**

While search engine optimization is obviously a critical component of getting traffic for your online business(es) (sometimes the ONLY component), it is perhaps the most difficult task we face. In general, the strategy is pretty simple. Build links! However, the way we build these links and where we find the places to build them are huge factors in the success we'll see in the rankings.

Every company, including our own, struggles with staying on top of all the latest strategies and thoughts as Google constantly changes their algorithm to make the search results more "natural". Each year, when we plan out our goals and objectives, we revisit the resources that we've allocated to making sure our link building plan is the best we can make it. This year, we decided that the task was bigger than any one person and perhaps even bigger than 2-3 people. We also decided that it would be very difficult to find these experts to focus solely on SEO for our company. After all, if they were that good, they'd be running their own businesses (like we do!). So, we came up with a plan.

We will apply two enormously valuable resources to making sure we are operating at the top of the SEO game at all times: A mastermind group, and a very detailed SEO report card that tracks our success with all the sites that Pragmites (our company that does all our link building and is an outsourcer for others) is link building for.

Our mastermind group has been built with 10 people (myself (Steve) and Gaurav from Pragmites are members) who have experience and opinions we trust. This group is tasked with breaking down the effort of staying on top of all the information out there into manageable chunks. It's also tasked with deciding on our link building plan (that we apply to all sites and to all sites that are being managed by Pragmites) by constantly evaluating our current plan's success (with our report card), and by proposing experiments to do that we will use to determine if changes are needed.

So, what does all of this mean to you? Each month, I'm going to be sharing 2 things. Our current link building plan and any important updates that our group has found in the last month re: SEO.

This is the EXACT link building plan that we use for every single site we own. In this way, your membership in IMA will allow you to be at the absolute TOP of the SEO game. That, along with the tools you have access to, should ensure your success with climbing the search engine results!

Now...on with the updates.

### **Single biggest change we've ever made!**

As a baseline, We are tracking our success rate with hundreds of sites. And we've been doing it for a long time now. Our typical pattern looked like this:

Each month:

About 20% of the keywords stayed the same

About 6% of the keywords dropped rankings

About 74% of the keywords increased their rankings

Also:

About 10-12% were in the first position

About 40% were in the top 3

About 50% were on the first page

Remember sites are coming into and out of this group...but, the stats were pretty consistent for the last 6 months or so.

We were pretty happy with these statistics. But, of course, we are ALWAYS trying to get better.

On January 1, 2012, we began incorporating social signals into our link building plan. You'll see them in the current plan we're publishing today. We took away some of the lower value link building we were doing and replaced that with Facebook likes, Facebook shares, Tweets, and Google +1's.

The results are absolutely astounding.

Metrics increased each month, but the most telling statistic of all? EVERY SINGLE KEYWORD WE ARE DOING THIS PLAN FOR IS NOW ON THE FIRST PAGE.

I'll let that sink in.

EVERY SINGLE ONE

It's so amazing, that when we were talking about marketing Pragmites services and we were saying that we may have to make our stats appear "worse"!! We're afraid no one will believe us.

BTW...if you want to outsource your link building to Pragmites...go here

<http://www.pragmites.com/social-seo/>

So, the conclusion is obvious. This link building plan ROCKS...and you need to use it. Whether you do it yourself, or outsource it to Pragmites (and we've held nothing back here...this is EXACTLY what Pragmites is doing)...just follow it and you'll get GREAT results.

## **Quick tip for outside US**

If you want to rank your site outside the US. We've always preached 2 big things. Get a country domain (like co.uk for the UK) and make certain that your contact us page has an address that's in the country you wish to rank for.

That has served us well. However, I came across a case where this was not working. The site was all set up properly but was only ranking in the US.

The site owner made one change. He installed Webmaster tools and set the targeting to the country he wanted to rank for. In days, he was up in the SERPS for that country.

Simple.

## **YouTube Views**

There are absolute signs that user engagement (views, shares, likes, +1's etc) are driving youtube video rankings in the SERPS.

If you are trying to rank YouTube videos, it's not just about the links to that video now. You must get user engagement stats.

## **Webmaster tools and Analytics**

For years now, we've recommended that people put webmaster tools and analytics onto sites (other than affiliate sites anyway). At this point, we're changing our recommendation (except when you are having trouble ranking in the proper country, then leave webmaster tools on there until ranked there).

There is some evidence that Google may be targeting those sites that have these installed. I'm really not sure if I believe it yet, BUT...there is quite a bit of anecdotal evidence at this point. Since, having these things doesn't do a whole lot for you...it's better safe than sorry. Don't put it on, and take them off if you have them on already.

Use something like PiWik for analytics instead (<http://piwik.org/>)

## **The great Blog Network Panic of '12**

There has been much gnashing of teeth and panic in the streets regarding blog networks over the last month or so.

Google has "attacked" 2 large networks and at least one has gone out of business. People are getting emails from Google (those with analytics or webmaster tool accounts), the sky is falling, and life as we know it is about to end. Or...not.

Here is our take on the "facts" going around:

1. There is still ABSOLUTELY NO EVIDENCE that getting links from anywhere at anytime will actually PENALIZE your site. PLEASE PLEASE...think this through from a common sense perspective. If this were really the case, SEO would become one thing...and one thing only. Let's get the worst, most dangerous, most evil links to our competition. Easy and simple...I just get Google to "penalize" them for me. Job done. This is NOT happening at all, and Google realizes that they really can't do this as it will be a nightmare of sites trying to stab each other in the back and sites being penalized for doing nothing of their own accord. Believe me, you will know if this ever changes. How? Because, every single new SEO course will become about getting these bad links to your competition...and every single post on every single SEO forum will be all about that as well. What's happening here is very simple and we've seen it before. Google wants to leave you with the "illusion" that they're doing this. They are not. Plain and simple...because it is just not practical. ALL that is happening is Google is discounting the links it doesn't like, your site may possibly be affected (and usually that's temporary), they yell at you...and you assume you've been penalized. all that's really happened, is that they've ignored the links they think are suspicious...they have not penalized your site.

2. Blog networks are being de-indexed. This is certainly true. But, really...this is just the age old arms race of SEO. We come up with stuff, Google tries to foil it...we adjust... they adjust. On and on. If you think this is new...or if you think this will ever change... you're in the wrong business. And, further...when this happens...you're not being "penalized", no matter what Google says. What's happening is that the links you had on those sites/networks are simply being ignored. Will that result in lower rankings? Sure, sometimes...and what do you need to get the rankings back. BACKLINKS...plain and simple. Getting rid of these "offensive" links that have been de-indexed will not help you at all. Google is already ignoring them and your site is not being hurt or blacklisted because of them.

3. Blog blueprint has been totally de-indexed. It's been attacked and destroyed by Google. Uhhh...no, it has not. Have some of the sites been de-indexed ? Of course. This happens with some regularity. PR changes, sites get de-indexed, sh\$t happens :-). That's why we pay very close attention to BB and REGULARLY change out domains. The best thing you can do is just to keep using a tool like this , where people actually monitor and upgrade the network. Here's what's great about BB

A. It's a small, private network...we're not out there pushing it and selling it all the time. We hide under the radar

B. We constantly swap out domains, but leave the old ones

C. The old domains that have lost PR or been de-indexed...they COME BACK... REALLY...THEY DO...so, the links you build just keep accruing and looking more and more natural as they're found, discounted, recounted etc.

D. We're constantly experimenting and implementing new ideas to "hide" our sites. We've had MUCH success with some new ways we're doing this with our link juice product and we're implementing that with BB starting right now as we replace any of the sites that have been de-indexed.

4. Our link juice network has been unscathed by this...showing us that our new methods of protecting the network are very effective. As I said previously, we'll be implementing this right away with BB, and continuing to NOT grow the network and only add new members when existing ones leave.

In summary...if you panic and start yelling and screaming about removing your links etc. and stop using link building tools, you're doing exactly what Google wants you to do. You're responding to the fear, uncertainty, and doubt that they've created. They DO NOT want you to use things like blog networks. Why? Because they work.

### **Quick HITS**

We generally give on page stuff a very small amount of "air time", but it's a necessary evil. Here's a post that we've come across that really spells it all out VERY well.

<http://www.searchenginejournal.com/on-page-seo-factors-which-ones-have-the-most-impact-on-rankings/40926/>

All of us struggle with ways to get those unique links from the valuable sites. We're always on the lookout to find new ways to get them. Here's an article we came across that spells out some good stuff

<http://www.searchenginejournal.com/17-more-unconventional-link-building-strategies/41210/>

Rich snippets are something VERY VERY cool and something that will become extremely important in the future. We're planning a few things using this now. Essentially it allows images to start to show up in the SERPS. The idea being , that people's eyes will be drawn to the images and click on the entry even if it's not #1. It will become powerful with images of the "author" and, in the near future, images of the product (for eCommerce). If you want to get a quick jump on it, go here

<http://yoast.com/wordpress-rel-author-rel-me/>

That's it for April!!

I hope you see how incredibly valuable this is going to be for all of you. I consider it one of the biggest values of being in IMA.

Thanks and speak soon....Steve.