MAY 2021

Google Algorithm Update **The Guide.**

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The context.

Let's start from the beginning...

What's an algorithm update?

What's the story so far?

Google is always looking to improve the quality of its search results - after all, providing the most helpful and relevant results to people is their main aim.

Search results are dictated by algorithms, and so to ensure *they* improve they need to ensure the algorithm improves too - enter, the algorithm update.

They happen fairly regularly but vary in scale and effect. The upcoming update in May is a core update, so is more significant.

Over the past few years, Google has put a focus on page experience and ranked based on specific signals of this. Some key signals have been:

- HTTPS
- Mobile-friendly design
- Safe browsing
- Avoiding intrusive interstitials/pop-ups

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The details.

Looking ahead to May...
What's the core update
going to involve?

From May 2021, these existing forms of best practice will be joined by new ranking signals referred to as 'Core Web Vitals'.

The components of these are...

Largest Contentful Paint (LCP):
* Basically how long it takes the main content on a page to load. It's a separate metric from the overall page speed score you'd get from the PageSpeed Insights tool.
* LCP measures how long a user will see a blank screen before important page elements load in, rather than scoring the overall load speed of an entire page.

First Input Delay (FID):
* Essentially, how long do you have to wait until you can perform an action on the page e.g. click a link, login, etc...

Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS):
* A metric that focuses on stability - in particular, whether your page undergoes any unexpected layout/design shifts during the loading process. This can lead to users erroneously clicking on a link or important navigational elements being hidden.

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The response.

So we know what it will involve - but what can we do?

You can obtain and review scores for Core Web Vitals in Google Search Console and via Google Pagespeed Insights. Both of these tools are free and show detailed information about factors that are negatively impacting your score, helping you hone in on what needs to be investigated and/or resolved.

Google has provided some benchmark scores for these signals, but these should be taken with the requisite pinch of salt as results may vary depending on the industry you are operating in. As with page speed, chasing scores for scores' sake is probably a poor allocation of resources.

So, along with focusing on matching user intent with appropriate and high-quality content, SEOs will also need to factor in how users interact with a site, with particular emphasis on speed, responsiveness, and visual stability.

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Implementation.

How exactly do we do that?

The key starting point is to work out where your site stands currently in relation to the upcoming changes. Gauge an idea of how significantly the update will affect you, and which bits you're most behind on.

That will give you a good indication of which Vitals you need to be focusing on...
or if you need to work on all of them.

Core algorithm updates emphasise the need for businesses to have access to experienced and reliable SEOs - there's nothing worse than finding your site suddenly crashing down the rankings and having to recover it.

It's **always** better to be preemptive.

More technically-minded SEOs will feel comfortable making code improvements themselves.

For others, it's a chance to forge deeper bonds, improve working practices and work towards common goals with internal/external web developers.

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Get in touch.

*Our team of experts are here
to help you prepare.*

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