

Google Takes On Links Programs... and Wins!

By Dan Thies

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Dan Thies
dan@cannedhelp.com

Search Engine Optimization Fast Start <http://www.cannedbooks.com>

Google has arguably been the most important search engine since last year's deal with leading directory site Yahoo!. Recently, Google has made some changes to the way it ranks web pages.

These changes threaten to force many website operators to rethink their current search engine strategy, by taking away a trick webmasters have used to fool search engines. The trick involves increasing a site's "link popularity" by joining a links program.

About Links Programs

Links programs (such as the famous "Links To You") require members to keep pages on their website with links to the other members' sites. With few exceptions, all of these pages are identical. So, while members may have hundreds of incoming links from other members, it's very easy for a search engine to recognize that the links are part of a program.

Google Takes A Stand

What Google has done is to penalize websites that participate in links programs. In some cases, the site's ranking on searches is just reduced, but in many cases, the offending sites are being dropped from Google's index altogether.

Google's rationale for doing this is obvious. They're trying to give their users the most relevant results for any given search. A site that's "well-known" and has a lot of incoming links from similar sites is usually a top authority on the subject.

By preventing sites from gaining an inflated ranking, Google is able to provide better search results. This is critical for Google - their partnership with Yahoo! came about because Google delivers great results for their users. We should expect other search engines to follow their lead.

So, What Can You Do?

If your website is participating in any kind of links program, I recommend that you drop out immediately and remove all links pages from your site. If Google actually drops your site, an apologetic email may get your site back in. Several people have reported success with this approach.

The Ultimate In Link Popularity

Google, and several other search engines, place a much higher priority on incoming links from the 2 major directories (Yahoo! and Open Directory). This means that getting your site listed in these directories will help you more than anything else you do.

I wish you success...

Dan Thies is the editor of Website Promotion Central, one of the Internet's most popular site promotion resources. He has been helping his clients (and friends) promote their websites since 1996. His latest book, "Search Engine Fast Start," reveals the techniques he's used to consistently beat the experts at their own game, and is available now at <http://www.cannedbooks.com>

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