

HubSpot

22

SEO
MYTHS



You Should Leave Behind in

2019



Introduction

To say SEO has “changed a lot” would be the understatement of the decade. We’ll often see multiple updates per year from Google - including the Chrome security warnings rolled out to non-HTTPS sites in July and the core “Medic Update” in August.

As a result, marketers are faced with the challenge of educating themselves about each update, adapting their SEO strategy accordingly, and solving for any reduction in organic traffic.

Sounds like a lot of work? Well, truthfully, maintaining an effective SEO strategy does require a close eye and a commitment to quality. And because SEO has changed so much in the past several years, many marketers aren’t sure what’s outdated, what’s important, what will actually move the needle, and what’s simply wasted effort.

This guide is going to point out all of the most common myths and assumptions about how SEO works and debunk them for you, so you’re not wasting a single moment on things that simply don’t matter for SEO in 2019. Let’s get started.

Myth #1:

"I must submit my site to Google."

“When you do a Google search, you aren't actually searching the web. You're searching Google's index of the web, or at least as much of it as we can find.

We do this with software programs called spiders. Spiders start by fetching a few web pages, then they follow the links on those pages and fetch the pages they point to; and follow all the links on those pages, and fetch the pages they link to, and so on, until we've indexed a pretty big chunk of the web; many billions of pages stored on thousands of machines.”

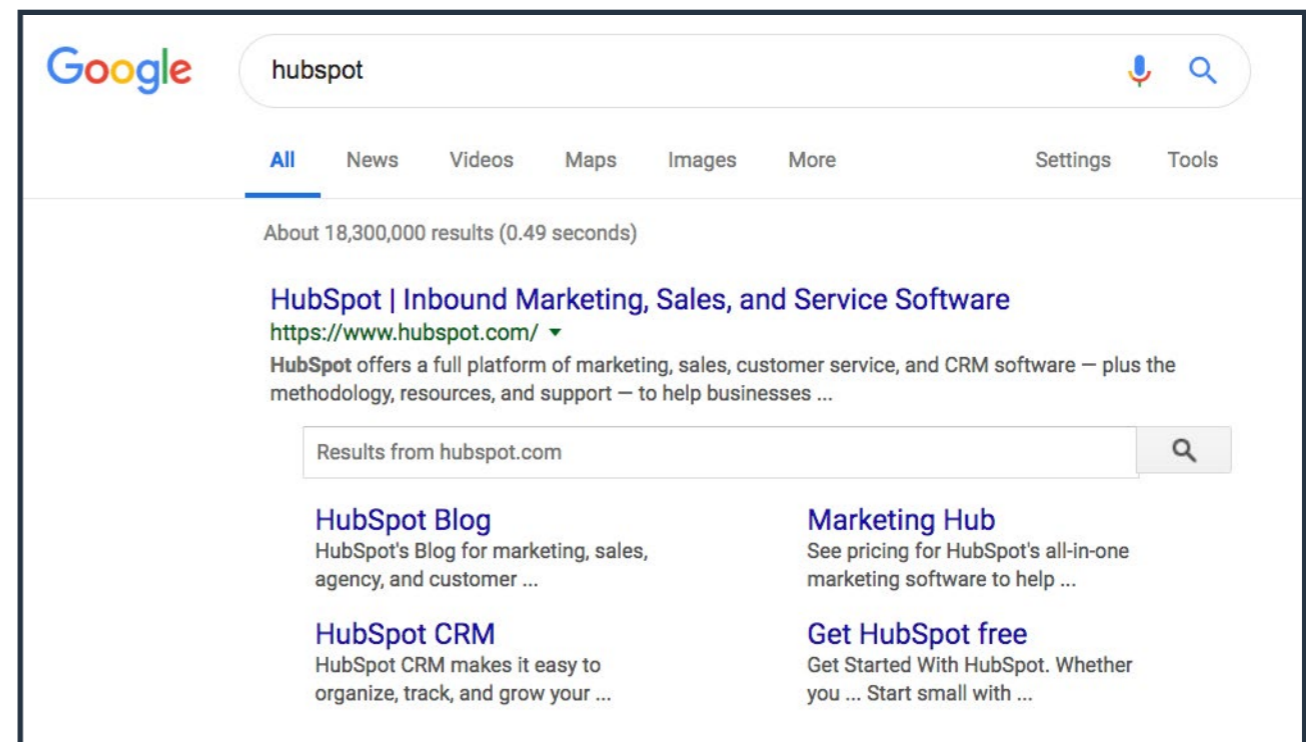
- Matt Cutts in Lesson 1.3 of How Search Works

The idea that you need to submit your website to Google in order to appear in search results (or rank) is nonsense.

While a brand new site can submit its URL to Google directly, a search engine like Google can still find your site without you submitting it. Matt Cutts' quote over there on the left explains exactly how this works.

Even if you do submit your site to Google, a submission does not guarantee anything. Crawlers will find your site and index it in due time, so don't worry about this idea of needing to "tell" Google about your site.

If you'd like to hear more from Matt Cutts about "How Google Works," [check out this video](#).



The screenshot shows a Google search for "hubspot". The search bar contains "hubspot" and the Google logo is visible. Below the search bar, there are tabs for "All", "News", "Videos", "Maps", "Images", "More", "Settings", and "Tools". The search results show "About 18,300,000 results (0.49 seconds)". The top result is "HubSpot | Inbound Marketing, Sales, and Service Software" with the URL "https://www.hubspot.com/". Below this, there is a search bar for "Results from hubspot.com" and four search results: "HubSpot Blog", "Marketing Hub", "HubSpot CRM", and "Get HubSpot free".

Myth #2:

"More links are better than more content."

In the past, building as many links as possible without analyzing the linking domain was how SEO typically worked. By doing this, your website was sure to rank higher. Building links is still a very important part of ranking factors. It is among the top five most important ranking factors, according to a correlational study on ranking factors by Searchmetrics, which is a company that provides SEO analytics and reporting tools for large enterprises. But you must build links in a much different manner than you used to.

When Penguin 2.0 was released in May 2013, all of this changed. Nowadays, it is important to focus on the quality of links you are obtaining, rather than the quantity. Sometimes less can be more if you know how exactly to build links the proper way.

This is something that often comes along with the question, "Which should I invest in, link building or content generation?" Links are an important part of your website's authority (even with the changing link landscape). However, if you have budget to invest in your website, I would say, "Hire someone to write for you."

Too often, when businesses hire someone to do link building, they focus on the quantity of links rather than their quality. But linking is not a numbers game anymore. Far from it, actually. You should focus on having relevant and diverse sources that link to relevant pages.

When you invest in content, that content can be used for webpages, blog posts, lead generation offers, and guest posts on other sites - all content types that will bring more links with them over time.

Myth #3:

“Having a secure (HTTPS encrypted) site isn’t important for SEO.”

“SSL is the standard security technology for establishing an encrypted link between a web server and a browser. This link ensures that all data passed between the web server and browser remain private.”

- [SSL.com](https://www.ssl.com)

Have you ever noticed that some URLs start with “http://” while others start with “https://”? Perhaps you noticed that extra “s” when you were browsing websites that require giving over sensitive information, like when you were paying bills online.

To put it simply, the extra “s” means your connection to that website is encrypted so hackers can’t intercept any of your data. The technology that powers that little “s” is called SSL, which stands for Secure Sockets Layer.

In August of 2014, Google announced that it had started using HTTPS as a signal in their ranking algorithms. At the time, this meant that if your website still relied on standard HTTP, your rankings could suffer as a result.

Then, in October of 2017, Google release a new version of their popular Chrome browser, version 62. At this time, it warned users that if their page contained a form but did not have SSL-enabled, visitors would see a “not secure” label alongside the URL. This label began to roll out in July of 2018.

From an SEO perspective, Google has publicly stated that two websites which are otherwise equal in search results, if one has SSL enabled it may receive a slightly rank boost to outweigh the other. Not to mention, up to 85% of people stated that they will not continue browsing if a site is not secure, according to a recent survey from HubSpot Research.

As a result, there is a clear SEO benefit to enabling-SSL on your website, and across all your content.

Want to know if your website has SSL? Visit out our free SSL checker to find out.

(HubSpot Customers: Depending on your subscription and security needs, you can enable SSL across all of your HubSpot-hosted content – such as website, landing pages, and blog. To find out more, contact your Customer Success Manager, or visit our SSL page. Not hosting your content on HubSpot? Request a time to speak with a HubSpot Website Specialist to get started.)

Myth #4:

"SEO is all about ranking."

“Ranking for what? I’m sure we all remember those ‘Guaranteed to get you to #1 on Google!’ ads. But they never said what for. Rather than obsessing about ranking, be useful - then your readers will bring about more consumers because they’ll share your stuff.”

- [Alisa Meredith](#)

While there’s a strong correlation between search results placement and clickthrough rates, ranking is not the supreme end goal that it used to be.

Studies of clickthrough rates and user behavior have shown that searchers favor the top search results - particularly the top-three listings. However, it’s also been shown that on subsequent pages, being listed toward the top of the page shows similar click behavior.

Even before all of that was applied, rankings did not guarantee success. Theoretically, you could rank quite well for a term, get tons of traffic, and not make a dime from it. Is that what you really want? I don’t think so.

This is a big misconception: that higher rankings mean more search traffic. It is true that people will see your listing, but it does not mean you will get more clickthroughs. There are a couple of reasons for this:

1. You’re trying to rank for keywords that are unrelated to your field. To address this, make sure you pick and choose your keywords carefully by conducting keyword research for SEO.
2. Your meta descriptions are not appealing and inviting for the user. To solve this, be sure to think about what language will compel people to click through to your page.
3. The top result isn’t always an organic listing. This is especially true when product listing ads steal away clicks from organic search results). To combat this, consider paid search on queries that are mobile-oriented with four ads on top.
4. The top result could be a Featured Snippet, which can garner more clicks than a #1 listing. To address this problem, make sure your content is ranking on Page 1 and is well structured.

Myth #5:

“Meta descriptions have a huge impact on search rankings.”

Meta descriptions are HTML attributes that concisely explain the contents of webpages. You’ve seen them before on Google’s search engine results pages (SERPs), where they’re commonly used as preview snippets. So, it’d make sense that Google’s algorithm would take these meta descriptions into account when determining search rankings ... right? Well, not so much.

All the way back in 2009, Google announced that meta descriptions (and meta keywords) have no bearing on search rankings. That’s not to say that these descriptions aren’t important for SEO, though. On the contrary, in fact: Meta descriptions present a major opportunity to separate yourself from the riff-raff and convince searchers that your page is worth navigating to. And in December of 2017, Google announced that it would be increasing the length of meta descriptions to allow for more descriptive snippets.

Although meta descriptions may not affect rankings, they do affect clickthrough rates, which are important. Having a relevant, compelling meta description can be the difference between a searcher who clicks through to your page and one who clicks elsewhere. And guess what: Bing and other search engines evaluate clickthrough rate as a ranking factor. Unfortunately, Google has been avoiding giving a straight answer to the question of whether their algorithm rewards sites with higher clickthrough rates. In his well known presentation “How Google Works,” long-time Google software engineer Paul Haahr explained that his team at Google conducts live experiments of SERP ranking where they look for changes in click patterns, but it’s unclear whether their algorithm actually rewards search results that get more clicks based on these tests.

Myth #6:

"Pop-ups will always hurt my ranking in search."

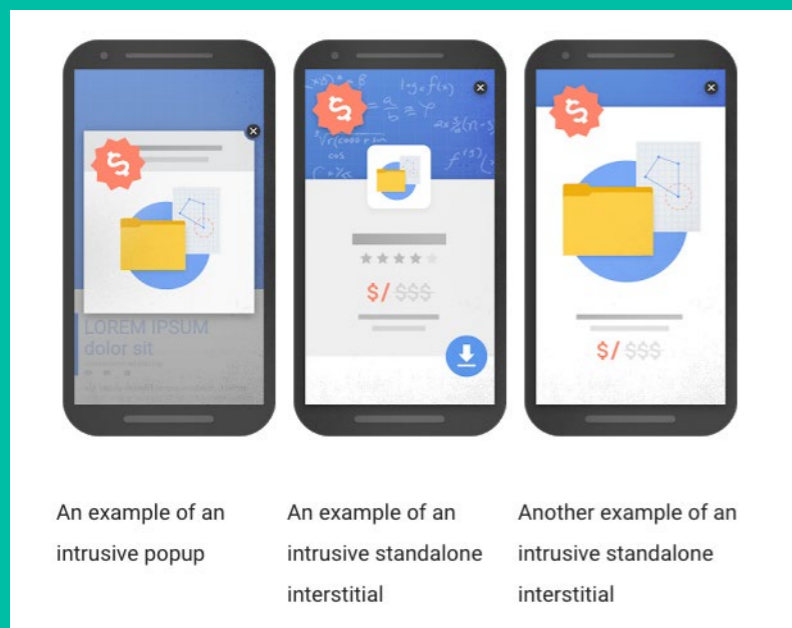


Image source: [Google Webmasters](#)

As inbound marketers, we care about creating lovable experiences for our website visitors – and, at the same time, we also want to generate leads for our sales teams. To help generate these leads, many marketers have put pop-up forms on their website pages. (After all, pop-ups work.) But the misuse of pop-ups has led to a lot of controversy over whether marketers really should use them.

Even Google had to weigh in on it all by announcing in August 2016 that they would begin to penalize websites that use what they call “intrusive interstitials.” (We call these “crappy pop-ups.”) This penalty eventually rolled out in January of 2017.

For marketers, the key word here is “intrusive.” Google doesn’t penalize all pop-ups -- just the ones that get in the way of a user’s ability to easily access the content on the page when they search on mobile.

For example, pop-ups that a mobile user has to dismiss before being able to access the main content of the page will get you in trouble with Google. On the other hand, pop-ups (including banners and slide-ins) that use a reasonable amount of screen space and don’t disrupt the mobile user experience are just fine.

When they’re used in a way that’s helpful instead of disruptive, pop-ups can be a healthy part of your inbound strategy. Be sure yours offer something valuable and relevant to the people visiting that particular site page, and fit them seamlessly into the context of what your users are doing already so as not to sacrifice user experience.

Myth #7:

"Keyword optimization is THE key to SEO."

It used to be important that you write your content with exact matches of your keyword. But now, [Google uses RankBrain](#), which is its machine-learning algorithm. RankBrain most likely uses a variation of [Word2vec](#) to find keyword topics that are related to one another.

RankBrain uses artificial intelligence to embed vast amounts of written language into mathematical entities, called vectors, that the computer can understand. If RankBrain sees a word or phrase it isn't familiar with, the machine can make a guess as to what words or phrases might have a similar meaning and filter the result accordingly, making it more effective at handling never-before-seen search queries.

And RankBrain represents just one way that search practices are changing and shifting away from exact match keyword optimization. Amplified by the rise of mobile and voice search, queries have become more and more conversational. A few years ago many people entered fragmented terms into search engines. Now, it's more common for people to ask complex questions using full sentences.

Google's updates over the past 2-3 years have focused on understanding these types of queries better through natural language processing, most notably with the [rollout of Hummingbird in 2013](#).

The introduction of this new search algorithm, which began analyzing phrases instead of solely relying on keywords, marked a major switch for the search giant from keyword to topic-focused SEO. In 2016, [Google CEO Sundar Pichai announced](#) that one out of five queries on its mobile app and on Android devices were voice searches. Based on these new developments, the increasing importance of search topics shows no signs of slowing.

The takeaway here for marketers? The traditional view of "keywords" in search has changed. Where a few years ago there were maybe 10-20 "big keywords" that would be sought after for ranking within a topic, there are now hundreds or thousands of long-tail variations that are regularly searched within a topic and change based on location.

Simply dominating a few words is no longer enough to produce successful results, and while search engines of the future aren't going to punish folks for under using keywords or failing to have an expertly crafted, keyword-optimized page title ... they will continue to punish folks for overusing keywords.

Myth #8:

“Keywords need to be an exact match.”

“Google’s increasing mastery of semantic search enables them, in their own words, to understand “real-world entities and their relationships to one another.” Hummingbird’s focus on matching query context to results relies on the intelligence of Google’s technology – the ability to parse intent.”

- Moz

Keywords do not need to be repeated verbatim throughout a piece of content. In a headline, in particular, you want to use a keyword (or keywords) in a way that makes the most sense to your audience. The goal should be to write a stellar headline (somewhere between 4-9 words) that clearly explains what the piece of content is about.

Nothing is more of a buzzkill than having a headline that’s awkwardly framed around one keyword phrase; or worse, one that forcibly repeats a keyword phrase.

This rule applies not only to headlines, but also the content on the page. The goal should be to inform the reader, not to inform the search engines.

Keyword-stuffing is the act of shoving as many keywords onto the page as possible. Google’s own Matt Cutts warned us in 2007 against stuffing your page with keywords to rank higher in the search results. Some webmasters did not take this to heart; that is, until Google continuously came out with new algorithm updates like Panda every year that were meant to target bad content.

Keyword-stuffing is 100% against Google’s Webmaster Guidelines and is a dangerous game. Because of Google’s algorithm getting more advanced each year, you are likely to get your website penalized.

Myth #9:

"The H1 is the most important on-page element."

Domain-Level Link Features

Page-Level Link Features

Page-Level Keyword & Content-Based Features

Page-Level Keyword-Agnostic Features

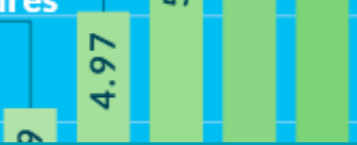
Engagement & Traffic/Query Data

Domain-Level Brand Metrics

Domain-Level Keyword Usage

Domain-Level Keyword-Agnostic Features

Page-Level Social Metrics



Moz's Search Engine
Ranking Factors 2015

Your H1 is still important, but it's not the most important element on your pages. Think of the content structure on your webpage as an outline. It's a tiered approach to presenting information to users and search engines. Which header tag your headline is wrapped in has little to no influence on your overall SEO. That header tag (whether it is an H1, H2, H3, and so on) is only used for styling purposes.

The H1 is part of your CSS (Custom Style Sheet) that a designer puts together to reference what font styling and size will be applied to a particular piece of content. This used to be more important, but search engines are smarter these days and realized that web designers are more likely to use header tags to define style. (And, unfortunately, people also spammed this to death.)

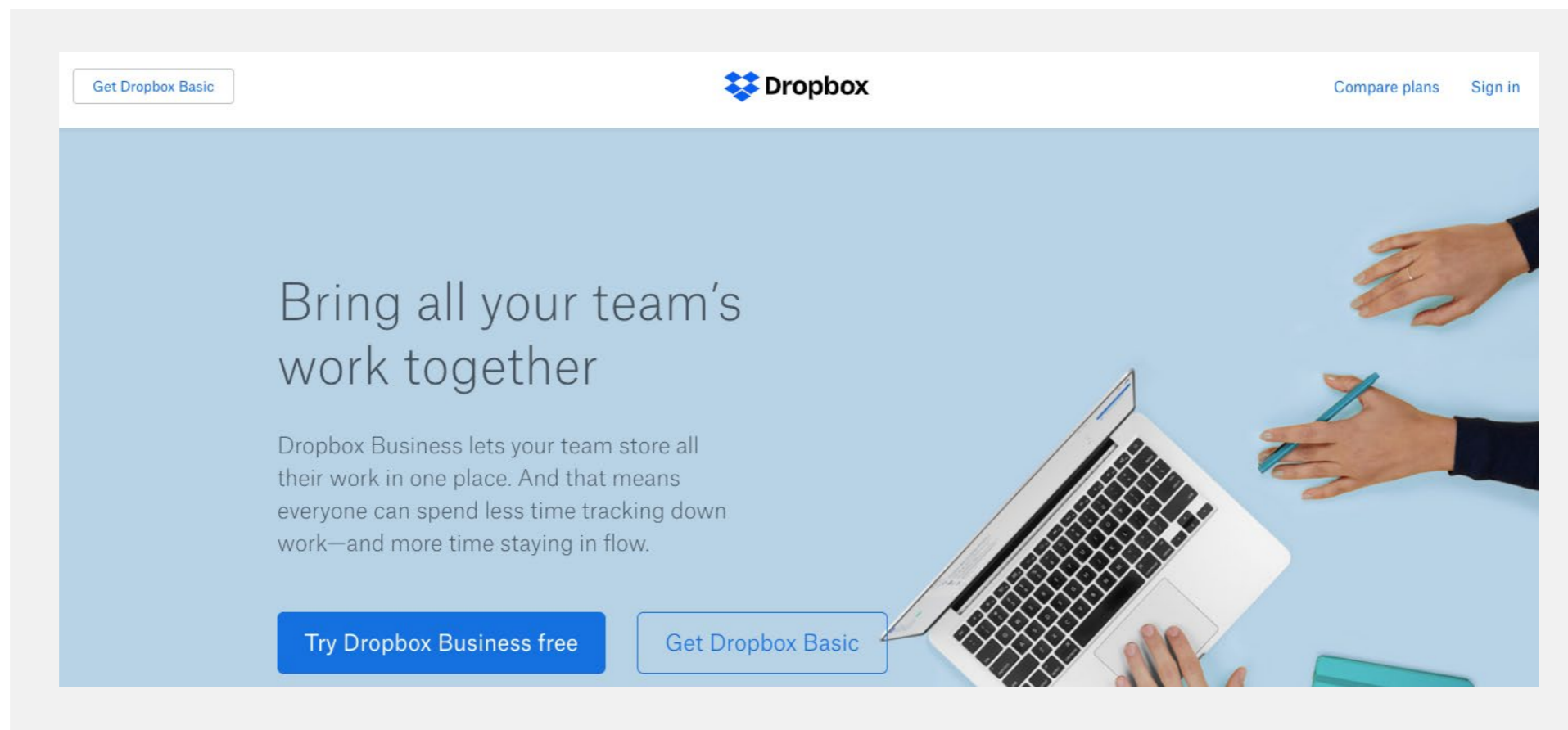
So it really doesn't matter what header tag you use, so long as you present your most important concepts upfront and closer to the top of the page. Remember: You're optimizing your page for users first and foremost, which means that you want to tell them ASAP what your page is about through a clear headline. From a purely SEO perspective, though, it now matters much less to have your target keyword as the first word in an H1 tag.

Myth #10:

"My homepage needs a lot of content."

Have you ever come across a homepage littered with copy? Or, on the opposite spectrum, a homepage with barely any content at all? Think of your homepage as the gateway to your business. Visualize it! This is your chance to make a first impression and convey what you're all about. Maybe your value proposition is simplicity - in that case, just a single login makes sense (especially if your name is Dropbox).

For most marketers, however, there is a need for a bit more content and context than that. Your homepage content should be long enough to clarify who you are, what you do, where you're located (if you're local), your value proposition, and what visitors should do next. These visitors should leave satisfied, not overwhelmed or underwhelmed - and certainly not confused.



Myth #11:

"The more pages I have, the better."

“ In the past, SEO was all about manipulating data and keywords to gain search engine rankings. However with the leak of Google’s Quality Rating Guide back in August, it has become crystal clear that modern SEO is all about adding quality rather than quantity. We shifted our entire content marketing strategy to be about the user, creating engaging content that compels our audience to take action.

- Phil Laboon, [Eyeflow Internet Marketing](#)

Some people have the notion that if you have more pages, you will get more traffic to your website. Just like link-building, creating content just to have more pages isn’t enough. Make sure you are focusing not just on quantity, but on quality, too. If you don’t have good content, you will not rank well and all those pages you created won’t help your cause.

Logically, you would think that the larger the footprint of your website, the better you would rank - but that’s simply not true.

First, not everything you publish gets indexed (and rightfully so). Second, sometimes, pages get indexed, but they don’t remain in the index. For example, search engines may omit your page to users because it is too similar to content already indexed. And third, just because you have pages indexed doesn’t mean they will drive qualified traffic and leads.

Unfortunately, those who strive to have lots of pages on their website also tend to overlook the quality of that content -- and this can be damaging.

First introduced in [February 2011](#), Google’s Panda algorithm has been getting better and better at detecting content that does not help users. And in March 2018, Google confirmed ([via Twitter](#)) that its still comitted to policing quality through the release of a broad core algorithm update that rewarded sites with informative search results.

The lesson? To avoid any drops, never let quantity overtake quality.

Myth #12:

“Good user experience is an added bonus, not a requirement.”

“Where do take your SEO strategy when you’ve got links, titles, and content covered? Recently we’ve revamped our site to offer a better user experience. Within three months of rolling out the changes, time on site is up 30% and our bounce rate is down 9%, all while our search traffic is up almost 110%. Google is looking for quality indicators. Make sure your user experience isn’t sending the wrong ones.

- Nick Reese, [BroadbandNow](#)

As Google began to provide better results to its users, they were able to invest more in their search algorithm. Through this investment, they were able to qualitatively assess the effectiveness of their algorithm, and then make quantitative adjustments to the weights of ranking signals for particular query intents. As a result, a good user experience is more important than ever.

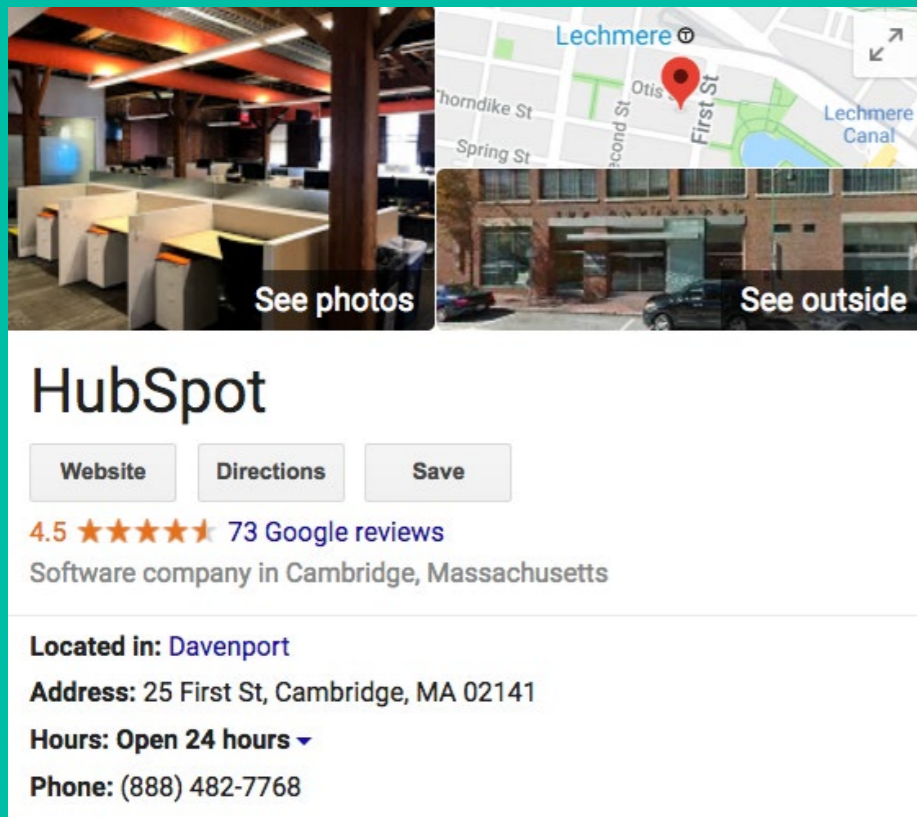
It makes sense. If Google sends you to a webpage, they want to make sure you have a good experience on that page. They are after all a business too, and thus they want to delight their users. Think about it from the search engine’s point of view: they didn’t create the webpage themselves, but they are endorsing it. They need to ensure that users have a good experience on that page to keep people coming back to Google.

To improve your website’s user experience, you’ll want to focus on things like page load time, bounce rate, time on page, page views per visit, and how far a person scrolls down the page.

As long as you satisfy the number one goal of creating quality content that people can easily digest and enjoy, your content will naturally satisfy a search engine’s ranking algorithms, helping your content to organically rise to the top.

Myth #13:

"Local SEO doesn't matter anymore."



The screenshot shows a Google My Business listing for HubSpot. At the top, there are two photo thumbnails: one showing the interior of a modern office with desks and computers, and another showing the exterior of a brick building. Below the photos is the business name 'HubSpot' in a large, bold font. Underneath the name are three buttons: 'Website', 'Directions', and 'Save'. Below these buttons, there is a rating of 4.5 stars with 73 Google reviews, and the text 'Software company in Cambridge, Massachusetts'. Further down, the listing provides the following information: 'Located in: Davenport', 'Address: 25 First St, Cambridge, MA 02141', 'Hours: Open 24 hours', and 'Phone: (888) 482-7768'.

This myth couldn't be further from the truth. If you're a local business, optimizing for local search won't only help you get found, but it will help you get found by people who are nearby and more likely to buy from you. And if you're a national or global business trying to rank for a local term, you might as well give up. Local SEO is that important now.

Looking forward, Google will continue to take steps to bubble the best local content to the surface of search results. Need some proof? In July of 2014, Google took a major step in this direction with the release of its Pigeon algorithm. The algorithm treats local search rankings more like traditional search rankings, taking hundreds of ranking signals into account. Pigeon also improved the way Google evaluates distance when determining rankings.

According to Moz's 2019 "State of Local SEO Industry Report," 64% of surveyed marketers agree that Google is becoming the new local business "homepage," displaying more information about a business directly within the SERP than ever before. This means that local businesses need to have a plan in place for managing this information to ensure it's both accurate and descriptive.

Need help editing your info here? Sign in to Google My Business and refer to the Info menu to make updates to elements such as your hours, address, photos, and more.

Myth #14:

“Google will never know if I have bad sites linking to me.”

“With penalty algorithms, negative SEO can now impact businesses that are not carefully watching their backlinks and other metrics. There have even been studies of sites hit by negative SEOs that sent bogus traffic and negatively impacted bounce rate and CTR from Google SERPs. Watch your link profile, analytics, and be on the lookout for misuse.

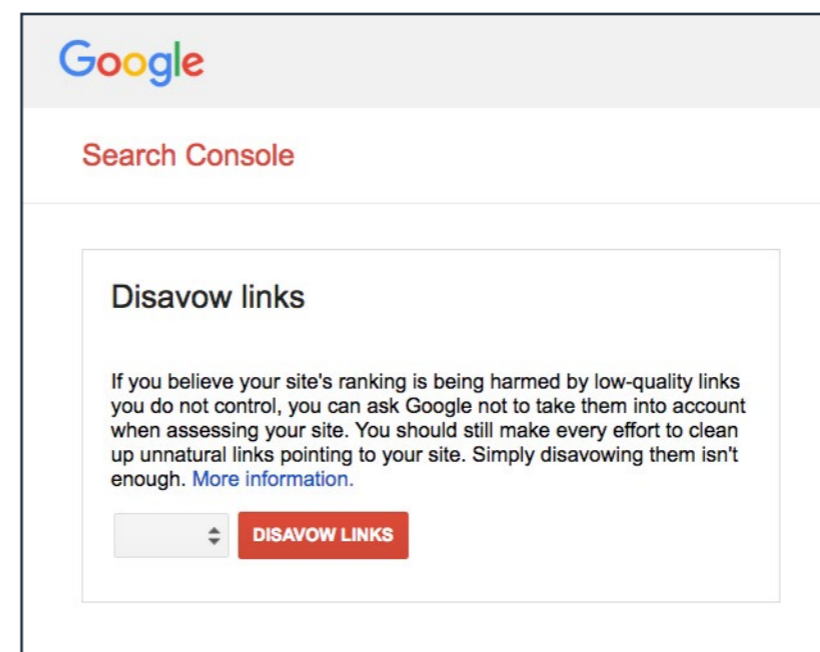
- Marcela DeVivo, [Gryffin Media](#)

Yes, they will!

Just like Santa Claus knows if you've been good or bad. Just like the Tooth Fairy knows when you've lost a tooth. Just like your parents can sense when you've missed your curfew.

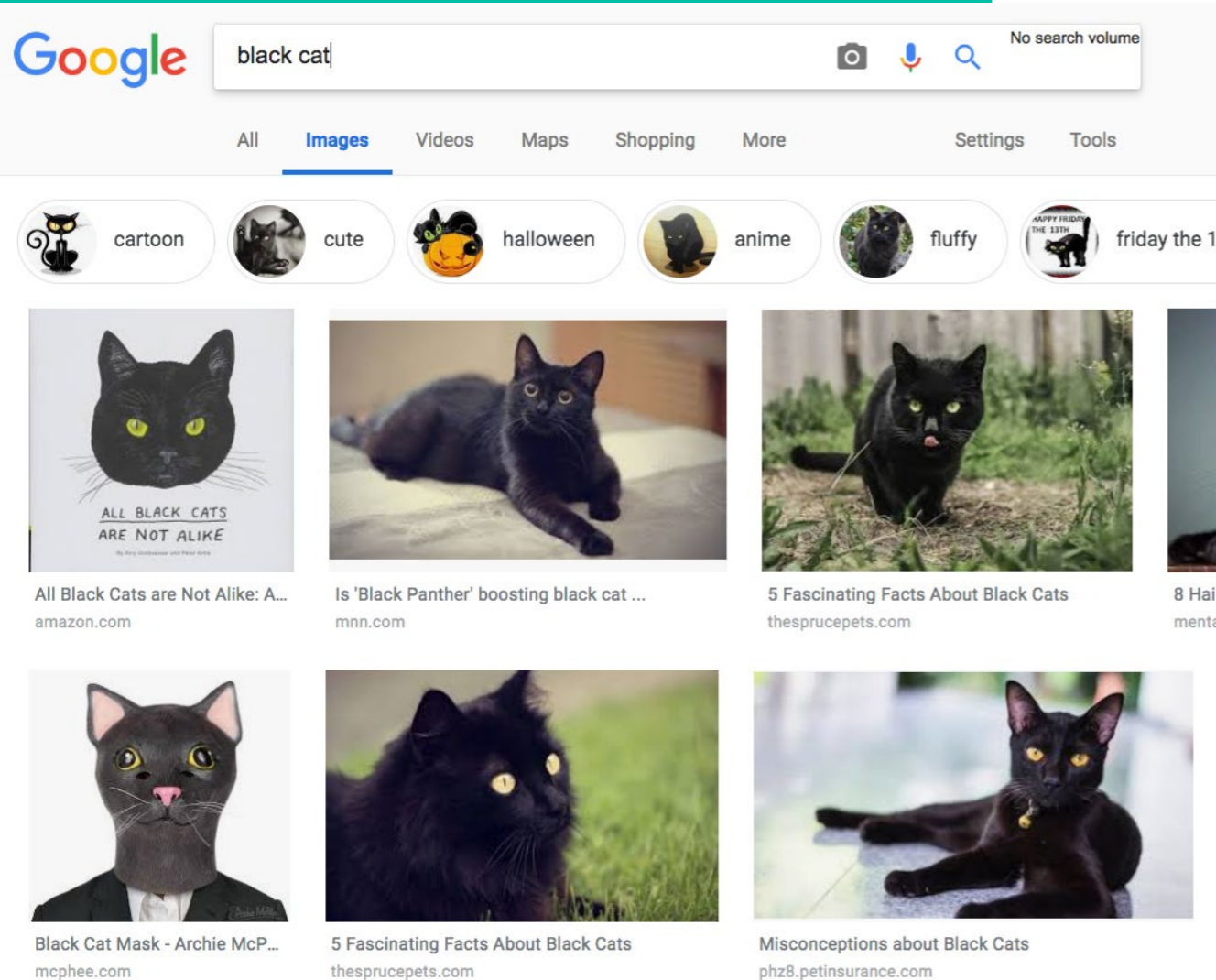
The point is Google knows (everything). Don't try to fool them - especially following Google's Penguin algorithm update - or you will be sent to your room (well, in this case, penalized).

If you know you have bad sites linking to you, that's okay. It's not too late. Just make sure you [disavow them](#)!



Myth #15:

"Images don't require any optimization."



For a long time, it was okay to neglect the images on your site and still rank without using alt text and image file names to boost your page relevance. On-page SEO is more important than ever, so excluding images will prevent your website's SEO from being the best it can be.

Search engines cannot see images on websites, so it is important to give the image an alt text and relevant file name to ensure Google knows what the image is about. By not creating this text, you lose a huge opportunity to be as visible as possible online.

It helps Google if the text on the page where the image is located mentions the image, too, so always try to reference your images in your text, close to where it lives on the page, using keywords similar to the alt text/filename of the image. Google also recommends providing descriptive titles and captions for your images, so consider adding those when relevant.

The image types Google can index include BMP, GIF, JPEG, PNG, WebP, and SVG, so be sure to only use these image file types on your website to make it possible for Google to index them.

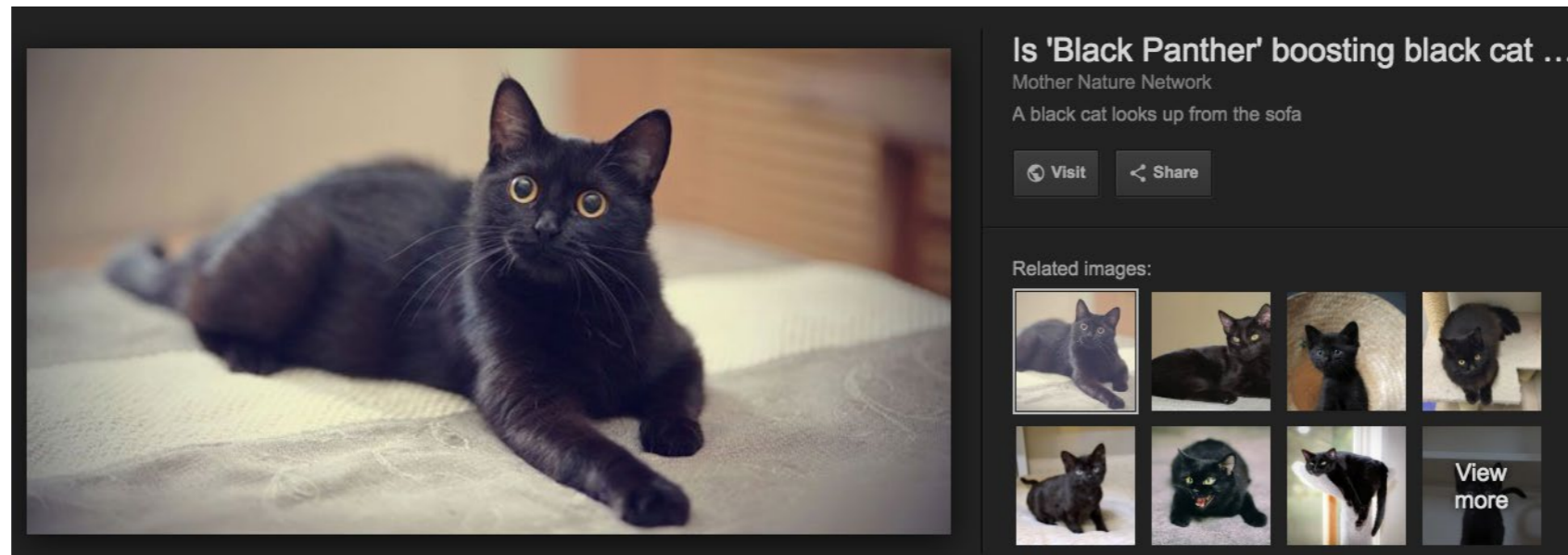
Name your image files something that is indicative of what the image is itself, rather than something like IMG2394870.jpg. Yes, keywords matter here!

Myth #15 (Cont.):

"Images don't require any optimization."

Need more convincing?

It seems Google is placing a renewed emphasis on images as of late. Back in February 2018, Google announced that it made a small (yet impactful) change to the search results display for images: removing the "view image" button. By removing this option, users are now prompted to visit the actual webpage to view the full-size image within the context of the content.



According to ZenSEM's data, collected 90 days after the image button changes, 58% of sites analyzed saw an average of 37% click increases in image searches, with one site in particular generating 600K+ more monthly visits from an image search.

Myth #16:

"Featured Snippets only matter if you're Wikipedia."

In the past few years Google has been refining the way that it displays results to users. In particular, Google has been increasing the number of Featured Snippets that it displays for queries: today, 11.34% of all search results now include a Featured Snippet, [according to SEMrush](#).

A featured snippet is shown in some search engine results pages (SERPs), usually when a question-based query is being searched for. The snippet displays content from within one of the pages ranking on page one that directly answers the question searched for without the user having to visit the actual page.

If you fail to optimize your content for the snippet ([check out this post for tips on how to do just that](#)), your content is at risk of losing a lot of clicks in the SERP -- even if you're ranking #1 in the natural search results.

[Research from Ahrefs](#), a data-driven marketing toolset, revealed that while a regular #1 ranking page with no snippet above it receives ~26% of all clicks, introducing a snippet reduces that number to ~19.6%.

In other words, the featured snippet is stealing clicks from the #1 search result.

Below you'll see what happened to one of the HubSpot Marketing Blog's top organic blog posts (featured left) after we failed to capture the featured snippet on a page where we'd remained in position #1 for a while:

Query: "how to make a graph in excel"

Monthly search volume: over 8,000

How we appeared in the SERP: Position #1 -- but didn't capture the featured snippet

The result: 38% decrease in visits from 2016 to 2017

Myth #17:

"I don't need a mobile optimization strategy."

In the spring of 2015, Google had a algorithm update called "Mobilegeddon," which expanded Google's use of mobile-friendliness as a ranking signal. The update rewards mobile-friendly websites and penalizes those that aren't fully optimized for mobile in mobile search results.

Fast forward to 2019, and mobile will continue to be a priority for both Google and the end user. With nearly 60% of all searches coming from a mobile device, Google is now placing a greater emphasis on mobile indexing:

"Since the majority of users now access Google via a mobile device, the index will primarily use the mobile version of a page's content going forward. We aren't creating a separate mobile-first index. We continue to use only one index," Google explains.

"With mobile-first indexing, Googlebot primarily crawls and indexes pages with the smartphone agent. We will continue to show the URL that is the most appropriate to users (whether it's a desktop or mobile URL) in Search results."

Note: For customers hosting your website with HubSpot, you automatically get responsive design included with your COS Website. Your website should be mobile-friendly by default and look beautiful for visitors from any device.

Myth #18:

"SEO is something I can hand off to IT."

“ SEO is one of those acronyms that sounds like a flavor of rocket fuel - something that belongs in the hands of technoids with HTML street cred. With every new iteration of Google algorithms though, we are learning that SEO should really stand for being Simply Excellent Online. In other words, create remarkable content first, THEN work with the IT folks to make sure that what reads well also scores well technically.

- [Paul Furiga](#)

There seems to be a perception that SEO requires some technical expertise, and since it is technical, IT can just do the work. While there is a technical component to SEO, it requires way more than just technical chops, so I'd think long and hard before handing an entire project to IT or a web designer.

Though you may need some of those individuals to assist you during the course of optimizing your website, it's far from ideal to just give SEO duties to IT and expect best practices to be adhered to.

While many IT professionals are adept in many technical areas - for instance, making sure your website is crawlable and setting up redirects and XML sitemap files - just remember that many IT personnel also work on things like setting up printers, which is ... well ... a different skill set than what's needed to effectively run an SEO strategy.

Myth #19:

"The age of my domain will help me rank."

“ Does Google care if you registered your site in 1998 or 2008 or 2016? No, they don't care at all. They only care the degree to which your content actually helps people and that you have links and authority signals and those kinds of things.

- [Rand Fishkin](#)

Many people believe that older domains perform better in search results or are given praise by Google simply because of their age. However, [according to Matt Cutts](#), domain age is a pretty insignificant factor, especially after a site has been around for two or three months.

For new sites, domain age matters a little bit more, as most new sites contain little content and it takes time for them to build up a valuable resource base to be indexed.

If you're worried about a lag, Cutts encourages you to buy the domain you're after and launch it as a "coming soon" page while you develop it out. In most cases, this will take a couple of months, and provide you with that initial foundation you need to start showing up in Google's index.

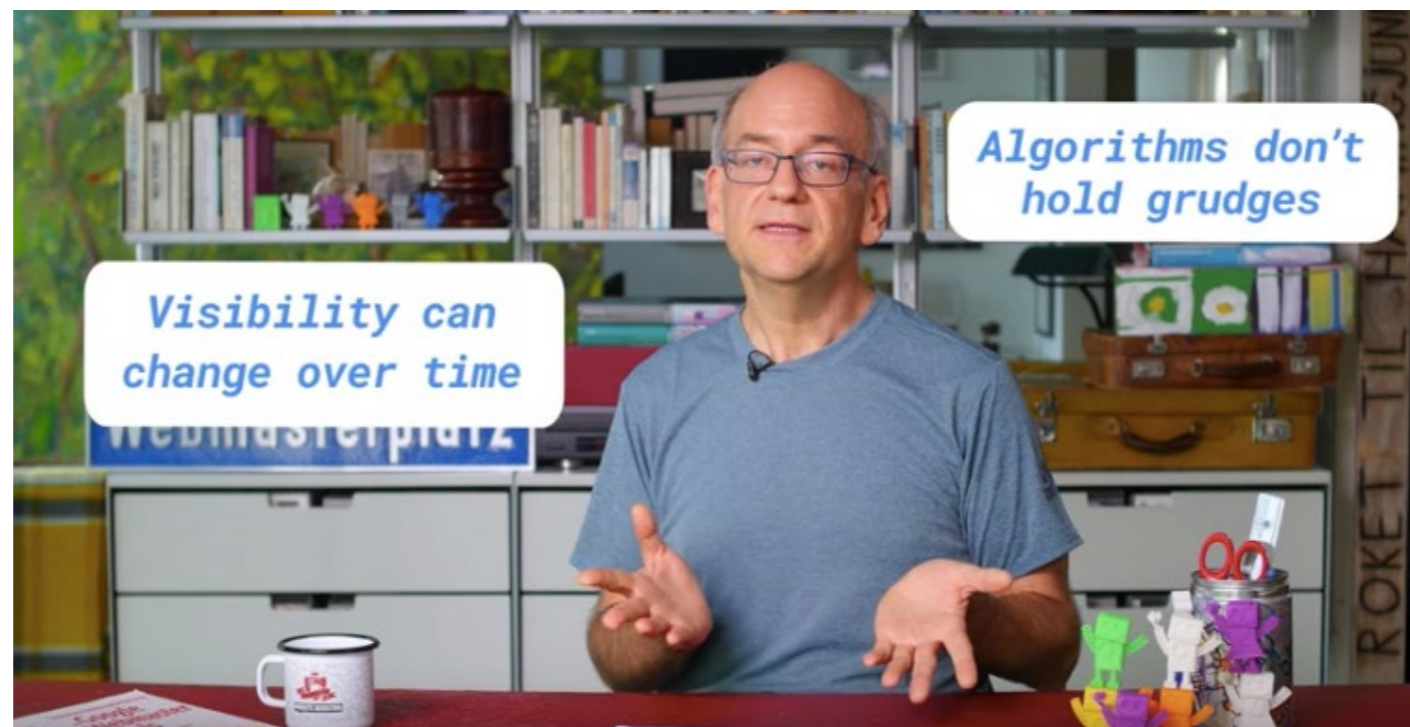
Overall, Cutts urges marketers and SEOs to focus less on domain age and more on the factors that carry some weight, including: unique, high quality content, the quantity of content, and external back-links to your content.

Myth #20:

"Google holds grudges."

So you got slapped with a Google penalty -- or a "manual action," as Googlers refer to it. As long as you fix the problem as soon as possible, Google isn't going to disown you. In fact, resolving a manual action is actually quite simple. If you notice a manual action has been placed on your website in Search Console, you have the ability to resolve the action, and then submit a reconsideration request. If Google can confirm that you've fixed the issue, the action will be lifted.

Does that mean you'll return right back to your previous position in SERPs? Maybe -- or maybe not. The key thing to remember here is that your search visibility is constantly changing, regardless of manual actions. So if you don't end up in the exact spot you were before the penalty, it's totally natural.



Check out the full Google Webmasters video on this topic [here](#).



Myth #21:

"Video doesn't have any SEO benefits."

Considering YouTube is the second largest search engine in the world, we think it's safe to say that this one is most certainly a myth.

So what's there to know about video as it pertains to SEO?

Well, YouTube's robust search and discovery system has two main goals: 1) make it easy for viewers to find relevant video content based on their queries and 2) promote long-term engagement with the platform. And with over 400 hours of video being uploaded to the platform a minute, YouTube's engines are working around the clock to analyze, sort, and rank these videos based on a number of factors -- that are constantly subject to change.

If you know a thing or two about traditional SEO best practices for ranking content in Google, this level of constant change and ambiguity around ranking signals should come as no surprise. And much like on-page SEO, there are a number of elements you can optimize on YouTube to help the search engine better understand and index your videos.

In its own words, [YouTube explains](#): "Videos are ranked based on a variety of factors including how well the title, description, and video content match the viewer's query. Beyond that, we look at which videos have driven the most engagement for a query, and make sure it's easy for viewers to find those. Search results are not a list of the most-viewed videos for a given query."

Here's a short list of elements to consider optimizing when getting started:

- Video titles & descriptions
- Categories & tags
- SRT Files
- Video Thumbnails

Myth #22:

“Voice search will never stick.”

“By 2020, 50% of all searches will be voice searches.”

- ComScore

Think voice search is just a trend? Think again.

Over the past year, Amazon, Facebook, and Google have all announced the release of either new or new versions of their own video smart speakers: voice-assistant-enabled devices that are also equipped with video capabilities.

And before video smart speakers came about, there were the original voice assistants -- the Siris, Alexas, and Google Assistants -- on call to answer our questions, schedule our reminders, and queue up our phone calls.

As a result of this convenience, [at least 20%](#) of all mobile search queries on Google are done by voice: a number that many predict will continue to rise.

Of course, it's clear that this technology is still a work in progress -- we've all had a frustrating Siri experience before -- but that doesn't make it any less important for marketers to begin exploring the space.

If you're looking for a place to start, [check out this post with expert advice on how to optimize for voice search](#). (What are you waiting for? Read it before your competitors do!)



Conclusion

Now that you know what the common SEO myths are, what are you doing that isn't moving the needle? Or worse, what are you doing that's making your SEO efforts worse? Understanding these SEO truths will make you both more effective and more efficient with your organic search strategy.

If you can take one thing away from this guide, it's this: More than anything else, SEO is about the overall experience for a searcher, and that experience starts the moment they enter a search query. The better their experience with you - from your SERP listing, to the quality and relevancy of the content on your site, to the ease with which they can move through your site - the better your SEO will be, too.