A Strategy for Creating Content that Ranks by @martinibuster

Sometimes quality content does not rank. Features such as depth, the authority of the author, how up to date the information is does not seem to matter. It’s not uncommon to see such high quality pages not rank in Google. The following is a strategy, a way of doing SEO, that in my experience ranking websites, has been useful to me for the past few years.

Reviewing the Definition of Quality Content

While quality factors are important to Google, in my experience, what is most important is how relevant that content is for answering the search intent that is latent within a search query.

There used to be a commercial for canned tuna featuring a tuna named Charlie. Charlie wanted to be selected by the picky and discriminating tuna company. So Charlie the tuna cultivates himself with fine clothes, a piano, and other signals of culture and good taste.

This is very much the position that publishers with high quality content can find themselves in. Focusing on traditional signals of “quality” is a good start. But there’s more.

Usually, what’s missing from a discussion about quality is the quality of how the content is useful to people who search on a particular search query.

Focusing on depth of content, how complete it is and so on can put a publisher in the same predicament as Charlie the tuna who was cultivating all the signals of good taste.

At the end of the commercial, a voice says, “Sorry Charlie. We don’t want tuna with good taste. We want tuna that tastes good.”

That is the position a web developer might find themself in. For all the wheel spinning about HTTPS and quality this and quality that, where was the focus on the person making the search query?

How to Write Relevant Content

In my opinion and experience, the better approach is to understand what those keywords mean to the people who are using them. This is what the meaning of relevance is today.

Relevance used to mean matching the keywords in a search query to content on a page. But for the past few years it has increasingly meant matching the content with the needs of the user who is typing in that search query.

Keyword research today means asking “What is Google ranking and why?”

Be Relevant to People

Firstly, I am not saying to abandon keywords. What I am saying is to expand on what you are currently doing by being relevant to people.

In 2016, almost three years ago, I wrote the following in an article about keyword research. The concepts here are important to understand:

> *“Algorithms are tuned to satisfying user queries by answering*

> *questions. They are no longer merely matching search queries to keywords on a web page.*
>
> *This does not mean that you should phrase your pages as questions and answers. It means understanding the user intent/search intent latent in the keywords and constructing your content so that it satisfies the user/search intent implicit in the keyword phrase."*

That first part is about being relevant to the people making the search queries, not to their keywords. **Be relevant to the people making the search queries.**

Now the second part is about how being relevant to people who can boost exposure of your web page with social sharing and boost rankings with links:

> *"Web pages rank because websites link to those pages. Websites link to those pages because those pages solved a problem, because it scratches an itch.*
>
> *Nobody ever linked to a web page because of its keyword relevance. Only an SEO walks into a bar, a dive, a speakeasy. Nobody links to that.*
>
> *…View your keyword list through the framework of user intent/search intent and then consider how the resulting content can be used to create a positive user experience."*

You see how being relevant to people works? It's a killer strategy that in my opinion is tuned to how search engines rank sites today. There are many different approaches to this, including providing a good user experience, making your content easy to read and so on.

But at the heart of all of those actions that creates a path from the user to your content, it all hinges on thinking in terms of being relevant to the user.

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