Evidence of Google Valentine’s Day Algorithm Update by @martinibuster

There are indications that Google may be updating it’s algorithm.

Last week, WebmasterWorld forum members in the UK reported SERP movements. U.S. members started chiming in this week, particularly today.

The search engine results volatility is being noticed in various countries.

WebmasterWorld reports of updates can be unreliable, which is why I wait to see it confirmed by the black hat community.

Today, there is a lively discussion going on confirming that yes, there is dramatic ranking changes going on. I think it’s safe to say a Google Valentine’s Day algorithm update is in progress.

Canaries in the Google Coal Mine

The most reliable indicator of a Google Update has consistently come from a closed black hat Facebook group that I check in on to have a feel for what’s going on in the industry. This group has accurately noticed every update throughout 2018, sometimes within days of a public announcement from Google.

I suspect because the group deals in aggressive link strategies their sites may tend to be more sensitive to fluctuations in the rankings.

I can’t quote directly from the group because it’s closed.

However I will say that members from the U.S. to the Netherlands are reporting generally favorable changes in rankings. In the UK it’s being reported as a huge spike.

SEMrush Indicates an Update

The Mobile/U.S. SERP volatility graph February 13th shows a high level of activity.

The UK/Mobile SERP Volatility graph for February 13th shows a

very high level of activity.

SEMrush’s UK and U.S. graphs are an exact match for what has been reported in the public and private forums.

What Factors are Affected?

The WebmasterWorld discussions are all over the place. One member reported success updating their page titles then followed up days later to report the changes reverted.

Changing things on a web page during a Google Update can lead to unreliable conclusions. Were the ranking changes due to the updating the website or due to Google updating the algorithm? It's hard to know when there is so much instability.

> *broccoli – Feb 11, 2019*
> *Page title seems to have become very important, and I think in particular the keyword density of the page title.*

> *broccoli – Feb 12, 2019*
> *Looks like the serps reverted me to the wrong page again.*

A member from the USA reported on February 12th that after a week of chatter he too is seeing changes:

> *jmorgan – Feb 12, 2019*
> *My traffic looks pretty good today.*

There is little consensus in the web community at this time.

How Should You Respond to the Update?

It's important to understand that an update can last several weeks as it presumably rolls out throughout the data centers. Should your pages lose rankings, you may wish to wait ten to fifteen days before making any changes.

Almost all updates are followed by a correction within ten to fifteen days. This is probably to fine tune whatever changes were made in response to data received after the update is released.

What Is the Valentine's Day Update?

Throughout the past year Google has been rolling out changes designed to improve Google's ability to understand a search

query and the content on a web page. These kinds of algorithms are focused on identifying the best pages to solve a user's problem.

Focus May be On Relevance, Not Quality

SEOs have traditionally thought that Google was targeting niches (like the ill-named Medic Update that Google denied was targeting medical sites) and a host of "quality" factors like poor links, thin content and so on.

While those kinds of factors will tend to trend downwards in Google search, Google has revealed that targeting negative signals of low quality has not been what they've been up to.

If this update is confirmed, it is reasonable to suspect that Google is making updates designed to return relevant search results that please Google's users.

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