

Google AI Shows A Site Is Offline Due To JS Content Delivery via @sejournal, @martinibuster

Google's John Mueller offered a simple solution to a Redditor who blamed Google's "AI" for a note in the SERPs saying that the website was down since early 2026.

The Redditor didn't create a post on Reddit, they just linked to their blog post that blamed Google and AI. This enabled Mueller to go straight to the site, identify the cause as having to do with JavaScript implementation, and then set them straight that it wasn't Google's fault.

Redditor Blames Google's AI

The blog post by the Redditor blames Google, headlining the article with a computer science buzzword salad that over-complicates and (unknowingly) misstates the actual problem.

The article title is:

*"Google Might Think Your Website Is Down
How Cross-page AI aggregation can introduce new liability
vectors."*

That part about "cross-page AI aggregation" and "liability vectors" is eyebrow raising because none of those terms are established terms of art in computer science.

The "cross-page" thing is likely a reference to Google's Query

Fan-Out, where a question on Google's AI Mode is turned into multiple queries that are then sent to Google's Classic Search.

Regarding "liability vectors," a vector is a real thing that's discussed in SEO and is a part of Natural Language Processing (NLP). But "Liability Vector" is not a part of it.

The Redditor's blog post admits that they don't know if Google is able to detect if a site is down or not:

"I'm not aware of Google having any special capability to detect whether websites are up or down. And even if my internal service went down, Google wouldn't be able to detect that since it's behind a login wall."

And they appear to maybe not be aware of how RAG or Query Fan-Out works, or maybe how Google's AI systems work. The author seems to regard it as a discovery that Google is referencing fresh information instead of Parametric Knowledge (information in the LLM that was gained from training).

They write that Google's AI answer says that the website indicated the site was offline since 2026.:

"...the phrasing says the website indicated rather than people indicated; though in the age of LLMs uncertainty, that distinction might not mean much anymore."

...it clearly mentions the timeframe as early 2026. Since the website didn't exist before mid-2025, this actually suggests Google has relatively fresh information; although again, LLMs!"

A little later in the blog post the Redditor admits that they don't know why Google is saying that the website is offline.

They explained that they implemented a shot in the dark

solution by removing a pop-up. They were incorrectly guessing that it was the pop-up that was causing the issue and this highlights the importance of being certain of what's causing issues before making changes in the hope that this will fix them.

The Redditor shared they didn't know how Google summarizes information about a site in response to a query about the site, and expressed their concern that they believe it's possible that Google can scrape irrelevant information then show it as an answer.

They write:

"...we don't know how exactly Google assembles the mix of pages it uses to generate LLM responses.

This is problematic because anything on your web pages might now influence unrelated answers.

...Google's AI might grab any of this and present it as the answer."

I don't fault the author for not knowing how Google AI search works, I'm fairly certain it's not widely known. It's easy to get the impression that it's an AI answering questions.

But what's basically going on is that AI search is based on Classic Search, with AI synthesizing the content it finds online into a natural language answer. It's like asking someone a question, they Google it, then they explain the answer from what they learned from reading the website pages.

Google's John Mueller Explains What's Going On

Mueller responded to the person's Reddit post in a neutral and polite manner, showing why the fault lies in the Redditor's

implementation.

Mueller explained:

“Is that your site? I’d recommend not using JS to change text on your page from “not available” to “available” and instead to just load that whole chunk from JS. That way, if a client doesn’t run your JS, it won’t get misleading information.

This is similar to how Google doesn’t recommend using JS to change a robots meta tag from “noindex” to “please consider my fine work of html markup for inclusion” (there is no “index” robots meta tag, so you can be creative).”

Mueller’s response explains that the site is relying on JavaScript to replace placeholder text that is served briefly before the page loads, which only works for visitors whose browsers actually run that script.

What happened here is that Google read that placeholder text that the web page showed as the indexed content. Google saw the original served content with the “not available” message and treated it as the content.

Mueller explained that the safer approach is to have the correct information present in the page’s base HTML from the start, so that both users and search engines receive the same content.

Takeaways

There are multiple takeaways here that go beyond the technical issue underlying the Redditor’s problem. Top of the list is how they tried to guess their way to an answer.

They really didn’t know how Google AI search works, which introduced a series of assumptions that complicated their ability to diagnose the issue. Then they implemented a “fix”

based on guessing what they thought was probably causing the issue.

Guessing is an approach to SEO problems that's justified on Google being opaque but sometimes it's not about Google, it's about a knowledge gap in SEO itself and a signal that further testing and diagnosis is necessary.

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