Google is aware of sites hosted on another's subdomain

Google has stated that hosting content in a subdomain or subfolder of another entity's site is not against its guidelines, but that it is improving its systems to recognize that content and treat it accordingly. The statement was delivered via the Google Webmasters Twitter account on August 14.

The tweet. "We've been asked if third-parties can host content in subdomains or subfolders of another's domain. It's not against our guidelines. But as the practice has grown, our systems are being improved to better know when such content is independent of the main site & treat accordingly. Overall, we'd recommend against letting others use subdomains or subfolders with content presented as if it is part of the main site, without close supervision or the involvement of the primary site. Our guidance is if you want the best success with Search, provide value-added content from your own efforts that reflect your own brand." Google stated in a three-part tweet.

Why would anyone do that? Third parties are interested in renting out another brand's subdomain to get a leg up on the competition in terms of search rankings, which may help them get more traffic and conversions.

Google's figuring out how to handle it. Webmaster Trends Analyst John Mueller touched on this subject during a Google Webmaster Central office hours session on June 28. During the session, Mueller said, "I know the search leads at Google have been talking about this exact topic for a while now to try to find ways to handle these appropriately. By 'handling them appropriately,' I don't mean we should treat them as spam and just delete all of these subdomains, because they're not

really spam. They're just kind of sales pages, affiliate pages that are hosted within another website. Maybe the right approach is to find a way to figure out what is the primary topic of this website and focus more on that, and then kind of leave these other things on the side."

Mueller then went on to say, "When it comes to quality, we try to look at the quality of a website overall. So, if there are particular parts of a website that are really low quality …. then overall, that could be degrading the quality of that site a little bit."

Why we should care. For brands that are considering using another entity's subdomain to host their content, Google is aware of such tactics. Although this strategy does not currently violate its guidelines, the company might as well have said "proceed at your own risk."

For brands that are looking to rent out their subdomains to third parties, Mueller's statement suggests that, if the third party is hosting low quality content on your domain, then your entire domain's search rankings may be affected.

About The Author

George Nguyen is an Associate Editor at Third Door Media. His background is in content marketing, journalism, and storytelling.
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