Google may not display Web Stories that are teasers

Google announced that it will try not to show “teaser” based Web Stories in Google Search and Google Discover. The company said the publishing ecosystem has been experimenting with new ways of creating rich Web Stories, but based on what it has seen, users do not want teasers where they’re being asked to click through to get the full story.

What are Web Stories? Web Stories came to life under the name AMP Stories back in 2018. They are essentially the same as Instagram and Facebook Stories and Twitter Fleets but show in the Google Discover tab of the Google mobile app:

An example of Web Stories from Google

Google defines Web Stories as a way to “immerse your readers in fast-loading full-screen experiences.” One benefit of Web Stories is that “they can be shared and embedded across the web without being confined to a closed ecosystem or platform,” Google added.

Many bloggers, news media, and publishers use Web Stories to drive traffic from Discover to their sites.

What is changing? Paul Bakaus from Google said, “a one- or two-page teaser for your blog post doesn’t tell a satisfying story to a reader, so Google will do its very best to not show these to users.” That means that Google will soon stop showing “teaser” based Web Stories in Google Search and Google

Discover.

In the announcement, Google offers examples of “Dos and Don’ts:”

Dos:

- A shopping inspiration list that highlights products and links out to places where you can buy them.
- A short version of a recipe with complete ingredients listed that leaves more detailed instructions behind a click.

Don’ts:

- A one-page story that mentions a recipe in the headline, but is just a bunch of photos that redirect to the website.
- A list highlighting beautiful cities in Europe, but just listing a city and a photo and pointing to the blog link for any actual information.

Interestingly enough, Google’s own example of the recipe Web Story in the gif above is technically a “don’t” according to the release. It begs the question of who gets to determine the threshold of a teaser and how do publishers balance giving away content for free over Web Stories while encouraging engagement on their owned properties.

Why the change. Paul added “unfortunately, from what users are telling us, this isn’t what they want. Instead Web Stories are best when they tell a full story and aren’t used to “tease” other content.”

“Readers don’t like to feel forced to click through to a connected blog post to finish reading,” he added.

In short, Google does not want you to create a Web Story with the intent of taking advantage of its ranking placement in Google Search or Discover but with the aim of sending that

user to your own website, when the user wanted to see the content in the Web Stories format.

What about monetization. The announcement addresses the "elephant in the room," which is that many publishers use Web Story teasers to drive traffic to their own properties for monetization. The post implores publishers to "think about the users consuming [Web Stories] and how Google showcases them."

The announcement then reminds readers that Google offers Web Stories ads in the Google Display Network: "You can directly monetize Web Stories with in-between-page ads."

Paul did admit that it might not work as well as when you monetize your own site but advancements are being made in this area. He said, "A well-optimized blog post might still make you more money today, but ad networks are working on building out and expanding their Web Story integrations, so you should see both CPMs and fill rates improve over time."

It's interesting that Google is citing user experience in the change to Web Stories teasers while promoting their own ad products as the solution. Do Web Story users prefer ads to organic content on the platform?

Publishers are already suffering under the evolving search and social media ecosystem, and smaller bloggers and publications are likely better able to monetize on-site than through Web Story ads.

Paul posted this video explaining the change:

[embedded content]

Why we care. Many publishers have been experimenting with Web Stories and seeing a lot of positive user engagement and click-throughs. Keep in mind, if you are producing a "teaser" or short Web Stories that require users to click through to your site to read the full story, then Google soon might not show your Web Stories in Google Search and Google Discover.

It’s also worth noting that their alternative to teaser Web Stories is to buy in-between-page ads to make up for the removal of teaser content from their Search and Discover lineups. Many publishers may have to again adjust their strategies to accommodate this change or find an alternative to how they create Web Stories.

About The Author

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