

Google Says AI Visibility Hinges On Content People Actually Want To Read via @sejournal, @martinibuster

Google's VP of Search, Liz Reid, sat down for an interview where she talked about the relationship between Google and publishers. When asked what the new rules are for showing up in AI search, she said that publishers need to publish content that people actually want to read.

Google Says Publisher Traffic Loss Is Not Just AI

One of the points that Reid stressed is that publisher traffic loss is not just about AI. She put part of the blame on people seeking out non-textual content. Her answer was in the context of what she would "say to publishers about the reality of this new time."

Reid answered:

"I think to start with, there are, first of all, multiple things going on besides AI, right? One of the things that we see is that people are often going for new formats, right? They want to see videos, not just text. They're often going to social media for content.

There was a recent study from Reuters around this, really just talking about how people are shifting, and so one of the things I would generally tell publishers is make sure you're

innovating with what users want and how they want, right?"

Google Says Publishers Must Make Content People Want To Read

The next part of her answer to the question of what publishers need to know about the “reality of this new time” is that if publishers want to be seen on AI search, they need to not make the kind of slop content that is the “1,000th copy” of everything else. She put the burden on publishers to step up and make better content that people actually want to read.

She explained:

“I think the second thing that is really important is that people, to the extent that you produce really interesting expertise content, we still see that people are interested in that, right?”

...And so the more that publishers produce content that is really where they shine, what they bring to the table, that it's unique, it's not the 1000th copy of the same story, but it's something that has an interesting take on it. The more I think we'll see that people will continue to click through and read that.”

What Publishers Can Do To Be More Visible In AI

The interview hosts circled back to what publishers can do to make content more visible in AI. They tried to elicit an answer that addressed the “new direction” that AI search is headed in, noting that publishers are concerned.

They asked:

“What can, what can publishers do or creators do to make their content more visible to AI? If this is something, if this is kind of the new direction that all of this is headed, which it clearly is, and publishers are concerned about getting the right eyeballs on their content.

How can they work with the system to ensure that they’re kind of playing by the new set of rules and getting their content maximized in front of the right places at the right time?”

Liz Reid answered that the way to be seen is to make content that people want to read.

She explained:

“Yeah, I mean, I think I would probably put it in two buckets. The first is make sure we can access your content. Like if you block the content, that will not work. If it makes it hard to discover, then that’s difficult. We have various tools in webmaster console that give you controls so that publishers can choose. But making it easier for us to access is certainly the first step.

But we’ve also published an updated set of guidelines around for website owners and publishers to think about how they make great content in this day. At the heart of it is really this continuation of, if you want people to click through, then implicit in there is you want people to read your content.

That means you need to make content that people want to read, right? So the more you build the content that your audience will love, the more it will work. The more you build content that you think is just designed for the search engine, but not for the audience, then people will learn that over time.

So the more it brings in your expertise, that is sort of fresh and relevant content of what people are curious about,

that it brings in that sort of experience, that detail and richness, that's really great."

Takeaways

Liz Reid's comments show that Google is increasingly viewing publisher success in AI Search as dependent on two conditions:

1. Let Google crawl everything.
2. Create content that people actually want to read.

That kind of approach ignores the Google Zero fears that haunt even big-brand sites that are experiencing declines in search referrals. If the big-brand sites are having a freakout about declining search referrals, where does that leave small-brand publishers who write recipe blogs, product reviews, travel guides, advice, and news?

Watch the interview at about the 18 minute mark:

[embedded content]

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