Google Search Profile Badges Expose The Publisher Traffic Crisis via @sejournal, @martinibuster

Google published a brand new guide that explains how to add a Search Profile badge to websites in order to help audiences find the Search Profile. The Google Search profile badges themselves are a symptom of and a reaction to the decline in search traffic due to Google's AI Search.

What Would Be Better

What would be even better is if Google used the follower data to influence what other users see, thereby helping publishers gain a bigger audience while making users happier by showing them content that's relevant to them.

Not to "look a gift horse in the mouth" or anything but this feature seems to be a response to the fact that AI Search is driving far less traffic to publishers. Even though Google has yet to acknowledge this fact and continues to insist otherwise, Search profiles would not be necessary if AI Search was driving more, not less, traffic.

Google Search Profile

Google's Search Profile itself contains four main features:

- Enhanced Knowledge Panels
- Centralized Content Hub
- Google Discover Integration
- Multi-brand Management

The Search Profile feature is currently enabled for United States based publishers and creators. The new guide covers how to add a Search profile badge.

Four Search Profile Badge Topics

The new guide offers new information in one location covering the following topics:

- What Search profiles do
- How to add the badge
- How Google wants the badge presented
- Where to get help.

What Search Profiles Do

A Search profile acts as a central location on Google for a publisher or creator's content across their website and platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X. The guide also explains that when users follow a Search profile can make that connected content more likely to appear to them in Google Discover.

How To (Maybe) Get Help

The guide also explains that publishers who run into issues implementing the new feature can go to the Google Search Central Help Community where other users and volunteers (but not actual Googlers) *might* help. The Google Search Central Help Community

Honestly, the Google Search Central Help Community has one of the worst, if not the worst, navigational structures of any community I have ever seen, worse than Facebook. The forum paradigm is about as old as the Internet. Go to a community, drill down to the subject level category of the topic of interest. It should be easy with a thing called Topic

Taxonomy. Topic

Taxonomy is what makes huge multi-topic directories, forums, and Wikis navigable and useful.

If you need help with Google’s Search Profile Badges you can choose from the following four topics:

1. Crawling, Indexing, and Ranking
2. Security, Malware, and Hacked Sites
3. Structured Data
4. Search Console

Screenshot Of Google’s Four-Category Navigation

Drill Down: Crawling, Indexing, And Ranking

Arguably, the most relevant category is Crawling, Indexing and Ranking. Clicking the link to that category leads to a page that lists the latest posts, not a drill-down to more relevant sub-categories the way most communities might do it. As seen in the screenshot below, that community is just a list of the latest posts with a number of users posting links to their websites.

Yes, it’s a link fest.

Screenshot Of Crawling, Indexing, And Ranking Community

Is Google Serious?

Given how difficult it is to navigate through Google's help "community" either to research topics or to find help, it's weird that Google continues to point users to it to find help. Do they not know how utterly frustrating the user experience there is? Are they willfully ignoring it and pretending everything is fine?

It's like those people who willfully live in alternate realities, denying the actual facts that are right in front of them.

Why Publishers Actually Need Search Profile Badges

Not to segue too far off topic, but an analogy for what's happening here can be found in a children's television show called Avatar: The Last Airbender, where the heroes are in a kingdom called Ba Sing Se. The secret police are masking the war in world outside with a false reality of peace. The catch phrase that is repeated within the walls are: There is no war in Ba Sing Se.

And that brings us back to the Search Profile Badges.

- Should we all pretend that the Search Profile Badge feature is a sign that Google cares for publishers and creators?
- Should we pretend that everything is fine with the state of referrals from Google?

The reality and fact of the matter is that Google is starving the web ecosystem of traffic. The reality is that the Search Profile Badge is a break the glass measure on the part of Google to make up for all the traffic that AI Search has taken away.

If this is an evolution of Google's relationship to the web ecosystem then Search profile badges point to Google becoming a follower ecosystem.

But maybe we should admit that AI Search is a war against the very web ecosystem that enabled AI Search to exist in the first place. Let's start there.

Read more: Google Search Profiles Now Available At 10,000 Followers

Read Google's new documentation: Add a Search profile badge to your website

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