Google Shows Why Rankings Collapsed After Domain Migration via @sejournal, @martinibuster

Google's John Mueller used a clever technique to show the publisher of an educational site how to diagnose their search performance issues, which were apparently triggered by a domain migration but were actually caused by the content.

Site With Ranking Issues

Someone posted a plea for help on the Bluesky social network to help their site recover from a site migration gone wrong. The person associated with the website attributed the de-indexing directly to the site migration because there was a direct correlation between the two events.

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An interesting point to highlight is that the site migration preceded the de-indexing by Google but it's not the cause. The site migration is not the cause for the de-indexing. The migration is what set a chain of events into action that led to the real cause, which as you'll see later on is low quality content. A common error that SEOs and publishers make is to stop investigating upon discovering the most obvious reason for why something is happening. But the most obvious reason is not always the actual reason, as you'll see further on.

This is what was posted on social media:

> *"Hello SEO Community,*
>
> *Sudden Deindexing & Traffic Drop after Domain Migration (from javatpoint.com to tpointtech.com) – Need Help"*

Google’s John Mueller answered their plea and suggested they do a site search on Bing with their new domain, like this:

site:tpointtech.com sexy

And when you do that Bing shows “top ten list” articles about various Indian celebrities.

Google’s John Mueller also suggested doing a site search for “watch online” and “top ten list” which revealed that the site is host to scores of low quality web pages that are irrelevant to their topic.

A screenshot of one of the pages shows how abundant the off-topic web pages are on that website:

Where Did Irrelevant Pages Come From?

The irrelevant pages originated from the original domain, Javatpoint.com, from which they migrated. When they migrated to Tpointtech they also brought along all of that low quality irrelevant content as well.

Here’s a screenshot of the original domain, demonstrating that the off-topic content originated on the old domain:

Google’s John Mueller posted:

> *“One of the things I noticed is that there’s a lot of totally unrelated content on the site. Is that by design? If you go to Bing and use [site:tpointtech.com watch online], [site:tpointtech.com sexy], [site:tpointtech.com top 10] , similarly probably in your Search Console, it looks really weird.”*

Takeaways

Bing Is Useful For Site Searches

Google’s John Mueller showed that Bing can be useful for identifying pages that Google is not indexing which could then

indicate a content problem.

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The fact that Bing continues to index the off topic content may highlight a difference between Google and Bing. The domain migration might be showing one of the ways that Google identifies the motivation for content, whether the intent is to rank and monetize rather than create something useful to site visitors. An argument could be made that the wildly off-topic nature of the content betrays the "made-for-search-engines" motivation that Google cautions against.

Irrelevant Content
A site generally has a main topic, with branching related subtopics. But in general the main topic and subtopics relate to each other in a way that makes sense for the user. Adding wildly off-topic content low quality content betrays an intent to create content for traffic, something that Google explicitly prohibits.

Past Performance Doesn't Predict Future Performance
There's a tendency on the part of site publishers to shrug about their content quality because it seems to them that Google likes it just fine. But that doesn't mean the content is fine, it means that it hasn't become an issue yet. Some problems are dormant and when I see this in site reviews and generally say that this may not be a problem now but it could become a problem later so it's best to be proactive about it now.

Given that the search performance issues occurred after the site migration but the irrelevant content was pre-existing it appears that the effects of the irrelevant content were muted by the standing the original content had. Nevertheless the irrelevant content was still an issue, it just hadn't hatched into an issue yet. Migrating the site to a new domain forced Google to re-evaluate the entire site and that's when the low quality content became an issue.

Content Quality Versus Content Intent

It’s possible for someone to make a case that the content, although irrelevant, was high quality and shouldn’t have made a difference. What calls attention to me is that the topics appear to signal an intent to create content for ranking and monetization purposes. It’s hard to argue that the content is useful for site visitors to an educational site.

Expansion Of Content Topics

Lastly there’s the issue of whether it’s a good idea to expand the range of topics that a site is relevant for. A television review site can expand to include reviews of other electronics like headphones and keyboards and it’s especially smoother if the domain name doesn’t set up the wrong expectation. That’s why domains with the product types in them are so limiting because they presume the publisher will never achieve so much success that they’ll have to expand the range of topics.

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https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-shows-why-rankings-collapsed-after-domain-migration/548787/