Google’s CTR answer just what you’d expect, and this is why SEOs go bananas

After the debate around CTR rekindled last week, we asked Google for a statement from their PR team we can share around click-through rate. In short, various Googlers have told us over the years that CTR data is not used within Google’s ranking algorithm.

Google’s statement. “As we’ve commented on before, we use interactions in a variety of ways, such as for personalization, evaluation purposes and training data. We have nothing new or further to share here other than what we’ve long said: having great, engaging content is the right path for success. We’d encourage site owners to focus on that big picture,” a spokesperson said.

Background. Googlers over the years, dating back to over 10 years ago have told us they don’t use CTR for ranking signals. Just a month or so ago, Google’s Gary Illyes said CTR for ranking is made up. Googlers have said time and time again, the data is noisy and easily spammable and thus it doesn’t make sense for them to use it.

But SEO’s have released studies that say CTR is a ranking signal and others have studies that show that it is not a ranking factor. Data is data, right?

The statement confuses things more. We were hoping Google would give us a clear statement that outright says it does not currently use CTR directly in their core search ranking algorithm. But Google instead said what it said above. They could have said that “interactions” are not factored in their ranking algorithm – but they did not. It could have also said it currently do not use it but reserve the right to use it in

the future if it becomes a useful signal. Again, Google did not.

Does it matter? If you think about it, it really doesn't. If they do use it you can bet they would have systems in place to detect manipulation of clicks in their search results. Either way, you still need to build a great site that people want to visit and that Google wants to rank well for relevant queries. But this is also a reminder that our industry is based on trying to open a black box that will never open. So we debate on Twitter, we look for gotcha moments, and we run with any morsel of info we do get from Google.

But that's why we love it, right?

About The Author

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