Google’s John Mueller: Core Updates Build On Long-Term Data via @sejournal, @MattGSouthern

Google Search Advocate John Mueller says core updates rely on longer-term patterns rather than recent site changes or link spam attacks.

The comment was made during a public discussion on Bluesky, where SEO professionals debated whether a recent wave of spammy backlinks could impact rankings during a core update.

Mueller’s comment offers timely clarification as Google rolls out its June core update.

Core Updates Aren’t Influenced By Recent Links

Asked directly whether recent link spam would be factored into core update evaluations, Mueller said:

> *“Off-hand, I can’t think of how these links would play a role with the core updates. It’s possible there’s some interaction that I’m not aware of, but it seems really unlikely to me.*
>
> *Also, core updates generally build on longer-term data, so something really recent wouldn’t play a role.”*

For those concerned about negative SEO tactics, Mueller’s statement suggests recent spam links are unlikely to affect

how Google evaluates a site during a core update.

Link Spam & Visibility Concerns

The conversation began with SEO consultant Martin McGarry, who shared traffic data suggesting spam attacks were impacting sites targeting high-value keywords.

In a post linking to a recent SEJ article, McGarry wrote:

> *"This is traffic up in a high value keyword and the blue line is spammers attacking it… as you can see traffic disappears as clear as day."*

Mark Williams-Cook responded by referencing earlier commentary from a Google representative at the SEOFOMO event, where it was suggested that in most cases, links were not the root cause of visibility loss, even when the timing seemed suspicious.

This aligns with a broader theme in recent SEO discussions: it's often difficult to prove that link-based attacks are directly responsible for ranking drops, especially during major algorithm updates.

Google's Position On The Disavow Tool

As the discussion turned to mitigation strategies, Mueller reminded the community that Google's disavow tool remains available, though it's not always necessary.

Mueller said:

> *"You can also use the domain: directive in the disavow file to cover a whole TLD, if you're +/- certain that there are no good links for your site there."*

He added that the tool is often misunderstood or overused:

> *“It’s a tool that does what it says; almost nobody needs it, but if you think your case is exceptional, feel free.*
>
> *Pushing it as a service to everyone says a bit about the SEO though.”*

That final remark drew pushback from McGarry, who clarified that he doesn’t sell cleanup services and only uses the disavow tool in carefully reviewed edge cases.

Community Calls For More Transparency

Alan Bleiweiss joined the conversation by calling for Google to share more data about how many domains are already ignored algorithmically:

> *“That would be the best way to put site owners at ease, I think. There’s a psychology to all this cat & mouse wording without backing it up with data.”*

His comment reflects a broader sentiment. Many professionals still feel in the dark about how Google handles potentially manipulative or low-quality links at scale.

What This Means

Mueller’s comments offer guidance for anyone evaluating ranking changes during a core update:

- Recent link spam is unlikely to influence a core update.
- Core updates are based on long-term patterns, not short-term changes.
- The disavow tool is still available but rarely needed in most cases.

- Google’s systems may already discount low-quality links automatically.

If your site has seen changes in visibility since the start of the June core update, these insights suggest looking beyond recent link activity. Instead, focus on broader, long-term signals, such as content quality, site structure, and overall trust.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/googles-john-mueller-core-updates-build-on-long-term-data/550241/