Mueller previews Google image search changes, old Search Console sunsetting at NYC meetup.

At a Google NYC meetup Thursday hosted by John Mueller, a Google webmaster trends analyst, and Martin Splitt of Google developer relations, Mueller gave the 25 attendees a preview of some changes coming down the pike. According to Mueller, changes are slated for image search, Google is working on switching remaining sites to mobile-first indexing, and the

company will be dropping the old version of Google Search Console soon.

Image search changes. Mueller said that image search will be a "bigger topic" this year for the webmaster and SEO community. He said instead of thinking about how image search works now, where maybe people can find images to include in their presentations for office meetings – instead think about searchers using image search in a different way. Searchers may start using image search to accomplish tasks, complete goals, buy online, learn something new and more. The change in searcher behavior will have SEOs and webmasters thinking differently about how they optimize for image search.

Mueller didn't go into more details, but we should learn more about what changes are happening and how it will impact search marketers in the upcoming months.

Old Google Search Console going away. Google is preparing to drop the old Google Search Console and replace it fully. Google has already dropped several reports and replaced them in the new console.

But Google will be dropping even more including the crawl errors report, the property sets feature, Android app features, HTML suggestions report and the blocked resources report. Google said they will have more details about these changes soon and hope to discontinue the old version sometime in March.

Google published a blog post shortly after this story went live documenting the upcoming changes. In addition to what is mentioned above, Google said there will be no replacement for the crawl errors API. Google also said the old sitemaps report will be turned off but the new sitemaps report has the most of functionality and Google will add the missing that is currently not there soon. Google also recommended that webmasters should use the Index Coverage report for tracking

these URLs, not just the sitemaps report.

The fetch as Google will be going away but URL inspection tool is the replacement for that tool. User management for access to Google Search Console has been replaced by the settings section in the new Search Console. Older structured data will not be reported in the new Google Search Console, to not distract webmasters from critical issues. Google said they are committed to providing reporting on structured data including Jobs, Recipes, Events, Q&A and others adding "When Google encounters a syntax error parsing Structured Data on a page, it will also be reported in aggregate to make sure you don't miss anything critical."

Mobile-first indexing still going. As you know, half of Google's search results are now processed through mobile-first indexing. But Mueller said Google is working to move the rest to mobile-first indexing soon.

The first 50 percent were relatively easier for Google because the sites that moved over didn't have so many issues in terms of the mobile site being so different than the desktop site. But the next half have more issues with parity between the mobile and desktop sites. Google plans on communicating more, via Google Search Console, to help webmasters get their sites ready for mobile-first indexing. Google will tell webmasters what issues they see so those webmasters can fix those issues before the switch.

Bottom line: Expect Google to work hard this year on moving even more sites to mobile-first indexing.

More Google in-person meetups. Mueller also said Google hopes to host more of these types of meetups, specifically aimed at webmasters and developers, in 2019. He said they will host them all around the world, not just at Google's NYC or Mountain View offices, but at global offices as well. Google already hosted smaller "Google Dance" events in 2018, but the

new events will just be webmaster meetups.

About The Author

Barry Schwartz is Search Engine Land’s News Editor and owns RustyBrick, a NY based web consulting firm. He also runs Search Engine Roundtable, a popular search blog on SEM topics.
http://feeds.searchengineland.com/~r/searchengineland/~3/SwZPq7n8-bI/mueller-previews-google-image-search-changes-old-search-console-sunsetting-at-nyc-meetup-311014