What’s going on with In-depth Articles on Google?

Last week there were numerous reports that Google has done away with highlighting In-depth Articles in its search results. We asked Google about it.

What Google said. “When relevant, we do and will continue to surface high-quality evergreen content as part of the overall search results,” a Google spokesperson told us.

Google said that the coding used in association with that kind of content changed, and that is likely the reason why the tracking tools show a drop in In-depth Articles.

What is In-depth Articles? In-depth Articles launched in 2013 as a way to highlight longer-form content from what appear to be recognized and higher quality sources. At launch, Google showed this content in a section labeled “In-depth articles” in the search results. In 2015, Google removed the label and accompanying thumbnail images from the interface.

What the tracking tools show. The folks at Moz reported that In-depth Articles stopped showing up in the search results completely:

> *So, after all the weekend craziness, we’re seeing 0% In-depth Articles this morning. No sign of 3-packs that inflate page-1 counts to 12 (as we’ve seen for 1+ years now). Either this is a test, too, or they’re fully blending those now.*
>
> *— Dr. Pete Meyers (@dr_pete) March 6, 2019*

FiveBlocks, another company that tracks these, also confirmed they went away:

Ari Roth from FiveBlocks showed me data from its IMPACT tool

that showed the drop off started March 6.

This wouldn’t be the first time Google had an issue showing in-depth articles. A couple of years ago they went missing for 17 days.

Did they go away? We don’t track in-depth articles carefully but when I search for topics like [Mercury] I do see some examples of detailed, long-form, evergreen content. Some that even show up from our example screenshot back in 2015.

But Roth sent a screenshot of a search for [Amazon] from a week ago. The organic results had been in-depth articles that are no longer showing in Google search results.

Here is that screenshot of the original results (click to enlarge) showing articles from The Verge, Wired and Gizmodo.

The current results instead include links to Amazon’s social media pages and own sites.

Why you should care. For publishers, this could of course mean a drop in organic traffic from Google if it is no longer showing your in-depth or evergreen content as often or as prominently as it once did for certain queries.

For others, such as big brands like Amazon that attract press coverage, it could mean more traffic to their own properties and their social networks.

And, depending on the coverage that ranked, it could help some in the brand reputation department.

Take those Amazon headlines that had been ranking, for example: “Dirty dealing in the $175 billion Amazon marketplace,” “Why it’s hard to escape Amazon’s long reach,” and “I Tried to Block Amazon From My Life. It Was Impossible.”

Or the Rolling Stone article that had been ranking for [Bank of America] headlined “Bank of America: Too Crooked to Fail.”

Have you seen and impact or any changes in In-depth Articles? Let us know on Twitter.

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