

THE CHANGES IN SEO PROCESS IN LAST 10 YEARS



By Randy Rowe, Hureka Technologies, Inc.

The ever-changing SEO landscape has put many well-known SEO experts out of business; making the space only for real marketers who understand customers and combine their SEO knowledge with effective marketing techniques.

But it was a gradual change. For a while, everybody thought Google would never be able to stop the spammy websites from manipulating search engine rankings. Black hat and grey hat techniques were rampant. One by one, algorithm updates were rolled out, changing the entire SEO process over the last decade.

Hurekatek has been in business for more than a decade, witnessing these SEO changes first-hand.

But, what is SEO? It's a practice of optimizing websites for search engines; so that Google would rank them higher, preferably on first page for the related search queries. Doing SEO makes sense because it gives you organic traffic, and much needed visibility. Today, I am discussing how changes in the last decade changed the SEO process. First came a filter called Panda. Released in 2011, it demoted the websites that had low-quality material and keyword stuffing. A user would see such a website full of spam and useless content.

By 2016, Google had made Panda a part of their core search algorithm, proving many marketers, including the HurekaTek team, who advocated for quality long-form content, rights. It also means there would never be another nudge to work on content quality. The update has made quality content & content marketing a must-have

for proper SEO. SEO services providers that fail to create quality content also inevitably fail to deliver results.

In 2012, Google introduced Penguin, changing how companies did link building. Link building is basically a practice of having your neighbor refer you to Google. If a website links back to you, it sends signals to Google that you're trusted by the website. Soon, people learned to manipulate this by creating links on a mass scale, even on unrelated websites with thin content. Penguin is a part of Google's core algorithm, which means it works in real-time and punishes websites that don't adhere to best link building practices. Google acts like the internet judge.

In 2013, Hummingbird killed the traditional SEO activities, changing the very basis of SEO — keywords. Earlier, SEO was all about picking the right keywords and focusing on each of them one by one. With Hummingbird, intent-based keywords achieved great importance. Hummingbird also supports Panda by hunting down websites with keyword stuffing and low-quality content, but it mainly makes it possible for websites to rank for keywords they didn't even optimize for, as long as the intent is established. The update worked in huge favor of HurekaTek clients, as we often focused on keyword variations anyway.

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Our clients were suddenly ranking for many more keywords than they had asked for.

By 2014, Google had begun to focus on local SEO. The Pigeon update made it necessary to focus on both on-page and off-page SEO — two types of optimization techniques important to rank your website. Before this, the core Google algorithm worked differently than the local algorithm but this update tied them together, making local SEO more important than ever.

In 2018, we know the importance of mobile SEO. We know 80 percent of internet users are on mobile. Google saw this trend coming in 2015 when it started de-ranking websites that weren't responsive and easy to use on mobile.

In 2015, another algorithm update that would completely change the SEO landscape came up. RankBrain ensured that people who don't fully understand SEO, are thrown out of the game. A part of hummingbird update, it's the most powerful feature for it utilizes machine learning to decide search engine rankings. Use of machine learning means it was soon going to be impossible to fool Google and get your way up to the search engine results with shallow SEO practices. It's the

third most important SEO factor, according to Google and yet, nobody knows the ins and outs of RankBrain, or so it's said.

In 2016 and 2017, Possum and Fred updates targeted location-based search results and affiliate-heavy content, the latter mainly hitting blogs written just to sell products. Apart from these algorithm updates, Google is constantly rolling out new features like knowledge graph, posing even more challenges for businesses that rely on search engine traffic.

What does this all mean? How do these things impact your business? Earlier, anybody could do SEO and it was considered an easy, get-ranked-quick scheme. With time, Google has ensured it is everything but that. The only people who succeed today are the ones who understand the vision of the company and what they're striving towards — delivering the best to the internet searcher. Good quality authority content — informational & educational, natural link building, optimization for knowledge graph, intent based keywords, focus on on-page, off-page, local and mobile SEO and consistently doing that without resorting to any malpractice that may get



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under the Google's policing radar and harm you in the long run — these all are important in 2018.

As a business, you may think why can't I focus on some other search engine? Or why SEO at all? Google dominates over the top 10 search engines, combined. It has 93 percent of mobile search engine market share and about 74 percent of internet searches are powered by Google (as of 2018). Moreover, Google is often making the right business decisions for itself, ensuring the searchers get the best experience. Other search engines just follow suit, sooner or later. Clearly, it makes sense to focus on Google. As a business that needs leads and sales, you need the relevant people to notice you. Other marketing

tactics — PPC ads, email marketing, social media marketing etc. are limited and often, dependent on pay and reap basis. As long as you pay for it, it will work for you and the moment you stop, your growth goes nil. It's not the same with SEO, for if you hire a good company, it'll ensure you don't lose the rankings the day you stop working with them.

With that being said, it's important to understand SEO is no get-rich-quick scheme. It takes time and requires consistency in effort to hold your place at the top; for you may stop working but your competitors won't.

Hureka Technologies is here to help any business with SEO. Contact randy@hurek or call 215.816.8300.

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