

NEWSLETTER

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GOOGLE IMPLEMENTS CORE
AND SPAM UPDATES IN
MARCH 2024

**CRUSHING LOCAL
SEARCH IN 2024:**

6 EASY TACTICS FOR
LOCAL SEO DOMINATION

GOOGLE SUSPENDED
12.7 MILLION AD ACCOUNTS
AND BLOCKED **5.5 BILLION** ADS
IN 2023

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Google Implements Core and Spam Updates in March 2024

Last month, Google rolled out two significant updates ([core](#) and [spam](#)), both happening on March 5th, just one minute apart in the morning. These updates, focusing on core algorithms and spam detection, represent a departure from Google's [typical update routine](#). They're more intricate, involving tweaks across various core systems and reflecting a shift in how Google evaluates content usefulness. Alongside the updates' rollout, Google's Search Central shared detailed insights and guidance to help users navigate these changes. Check them out [here](#).

The post further explains that Google's revamped spam detection systems aim to prioritize the visibility of helpful content over spammy pages. This initiative addresses a longstanding issue that has subjected Google Search to significant criticism over time.

A Surge of 'Pure Spam' Manual Action Notices

If you found a 'Pure Spam' Manual Action Notice waiting for you in Search Console, you weren't alone. Starting from March 7th, a multitude of these manual actions were reported. The issue became so widespread that on March 11th, Google published a new help document titled: [Received a 'Pure Spam' Manual Action Notice? Learn What It Implies for Your Site and How to Tackle It](#).

In the March 2024 Spam Update, several website categories experienced significant repercussions:

- **Low-Quality Content Farms:** These websites churn out unoriginal, low-quality content in an attempt to manipulate search rankings.
- **Affiliate Marketing Sites:** Websites heavily reliant on thin content or keyword stuffing, primarily for affiliate links, faced a substantial impact from the update.
- **Doorway Pages:** Specifically targeted by the update, temporary pages designed to redirect users saw many of them removed from search results altogether.

If you find yourself among the unfortunate ones, make sure to thoroughly read through the 'Pure Spam' help document. Additionally, it's worth noting that, as of now, there haven't been any reports of individuals recovering their rankings after receiving one of those Manual Actions. Keep that in mind.

Furthermore, here's a compilation of other Google resources you should consider checking out:

- [Manual Actions report](#)
- [Spam policies for Google web search](#)
- [Google Search Essentials](#)

As of March 20, 2024, in the evening (U.S. Pacific Time), the spam update was successfully concluded. If your website wasn't affected, you're in the clear.

However, the core update is still in progress as of March 31st. According to Google's [Search Status Dashboard](#), the rollout may take "up to a month" to finalize. If Google maintains its schedule, the update should wrap up around April 5th.

The March 2024 core update zeroed in on websites featuring low-quality content and employing manipulative tactics such as keyword stuffing, thin content, and unnatural link schemes. Its goal was to enhance search results by eliminating unhelpful or irrelevant content.

This comprehensive update to Google's core search algorithm prioritizes various factors contributing to a webpage's overall quality and usefulness to users. It appears to focus on the following elements:

- **Expertise & Authoritativeness of Content:** Google seeks to acknowledge and elevate authors who exhibit expertise and credibility, while taking measures against those who don't meet these standards.
- **Value & Helpfulness of Content:** Content that delivers valuable information, meeting users' needs effectively, is given priority in ranking.
- **Readability & User Experience of Content:** Google emphasizes content that is well-crafted, easily understandable, and engaging for users.
- **Mobile-Friendliness:** Websites offering a smooth experience on mobile devices are favored over those lacking in mobile compatibility.

Website Categories Hit Hardest

To avoid redundancy while highlighting the obvious, here's a rundown of the general website categories facing significant challenges in the latest update:

- **Websites with Thin Content:** Sites featuring scant or shallow content are facing penalties, particularly if they fail to offer substantial value to users.
- **"Your Money or Your Life" (YMYL) Websites:** Platforms related to health, finance, and other crucial domains continue to undergo heightened scrutiny regarding content quality and factual accuracy.
- **Websites with Unnatural Backlink Profiles:** Platforms that utilized manipulative strategies to boost their rankings through unnatural backlinks are experiencing a decline in visibility.
- **Automatically Generated Content Sites:** Platforms generating content solely through AI, without human review or editing, are being flagged as low-quality.
- **Websites with Poor User Experience:** Sites plagued by slow loading times, lack of mobile-friendliness, or intrusive advertisements are also witnessing adverse effects from the update.

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Crushing Local Search in 2024: 6 Easy Tactics for Local SEO Domination

In the realm of local SEO, optimizing both your on-site and off-site strategies is crucial for attracting clients and customers searching for your local business.

With local competition heating up, securing top rankings is imperative; your competitors are certainly not sitting idly by.

Here are six local SEO tactics to elevate your business's ranking for local search terms.

1. Page Title and meta description tags remain crucial

Title and description tags are HTML elements you can tailor to reflect your webpage's content, visible in search results. Consider them "mini-ads" requiring careful crafting.

Your title and description offer a chance to grab searchers' attention and prompt clicks to your site. Missing or subpar tags may lead Google to improvise, potentially resulting in less enticing text.

Both should describe the page's content and feature keywords for visibility on search engine result pages. Aim for approximately 50-60 characters for titles and 160-200 for descriptions, using this space judiciously to engage your audience.

Ensure uniqueness, relevance, and conciseness to maximize click-through rates. Avoid unnecessary words or characters that could truncate text, affecting professionalism and user engagement.

To stand out locally, incorporate your business's city name or service area. Focus on one targeted keyword, positioning it prominently within the tag. Remember, your title and description are critical in convincing searchers to visit your site—make every character count.

2. Claim and optimize your Google Business Profile.

Google Business Profile (GBP) is a top local SEO strategy for businesses engaging with customers in person. To enhance your Google ranking, claim and optimize your GBP listing—it's free and offers significant exposure, especially in Google's local three-pack results.

To claim your GBP listing, visit google.com/business and complete the verification process. Optimize your profile by selecting categories, adding business hours, writing a compelling description, uploading media, creating posts, answering questions, and managing reviews. Populate every relevant section to maximize your GBP's effectiveness.

3. Online reviews are crucial.

Online reviews carry significant weight, with up to 84% of people trusting them as much as personal recommendations (BrightLocal, 2023). Aim for at least 10 5-star reviews on your Google Business Profile, but don't stop there—continuously encourage happy customers to leave reviews. High-quality reviews improve visibility and attract potential customers, making them a top priority for businesses.

Focus on accumulating reviews on platforms like Google Business Profile and Facebook, as they influence customer perceptions and can even appear on your GBP. Respond promptly to all reviews, demonstrating your commitment to customer satisfaction.

4. Create individual service pages.

For service-based businesses, prioritize creating separate pages for each service offered instead of consolidating them into one list. Individual service pages allow for targeted optimization based on location and relevant keywords, enhancing both user experience and SEO effectiveness. Allocate time to develop these pages gradually, as the investment pays off in improved visibility and engagement.

5. Online directories and citations play a vital role.

Ensure accurate and consistent listing on top online directories (citations) like Yelp, Facebook, Merchant Circle, and Citysearch. These directories often feature prominently in organic search results, making them crucial for visibility.

Explore high-quality local directories, such as those offered by local newspapers or Chambers of Commerce, and search for relevant keywords like "[your city] directory" to discover additional citation sites.

Additionally, prioritize listing your business's name, address, and phone number (NAP) on major citation data aggregators like Foursquare, which distribute information to numerous online directories. Consistency across these platforms is key for maximizing visibility.

6. Engage on social media.

Time to embrace social media! Google Business Profiles now support adding links to your social media accounts.

You can add profiles from platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and YouTube to your Business Profile.

Excitingly, Google has started displaying social media posts directly on Business Profiles, enhancing engagement and appealing to Google's preference for active profiles.

These six local SEO strategies are just the beginning. Putting them into action will give you a competitive edge in local search. Start today!

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Google suspended 12.7 million ad accounts and blocked 5.5 billion ads in 2023

Google's 2023 Ads Safety Report unveiled a significant increase in action taken against advertisers. It revealed that 12.7 million advertiser accounts were either blocked or removed, [nearly double](#) the figure from the previous year. Furthermore, Google blocked or removed 5.5 billion ads for policy violations, slightly exceeding the previous year's count.

Why it matters: Combatting fraudulent accounts is essential for brand safety and fosters a secure environment for consumers to engage in online transactions confidently. However, reliance on AI for enforcement poses a potential risk, as it could erroneously suspend legitimate advertisers and ads.

Key findings from the 2023 Google Ads Safety Report include:

- Blocking or removal of 206.5 million ads for misrepresentation, encompassing various scam tactics.
- Blocking or removal of 273.4 million ads for violating the financial services policy.
- Blocking or removal of over 1 billion ads for abusing the ad network, including malware promotion.
- Blocking or restricting ads from appearing on over 2.1 billion publisher pages.
- Broader site-level enforcement action on more than 395,000 publisher sites, showing a significant increase from 2022.

In 2023, Google observed a surge in scams and fraud across all platforms. To address these challenges, it implemented 31 updates to its Ads and Publisher policies, including:

- Enhancements to suitability controls for advertisers, facilitating quicker exclusion of undesired topics on YouTube and Display inventory.
- Updates to the misrepresentation policy for swift suspension of malicious accounts.
- Introduction of the Limited Ads Serving policy, limiting the reach of less familiar advertisers to protect users.
- Launch of the Ads Transparency Center, allowing users to easily search and access ads from verified advertisers across platforms like Search, YouTube, and Display.

AI: The report underscores AI's pivotal role in Google's efforts to combat malicious actors. Google asserts that AI enables the identification and suspension of fraudulent accounts before they access its platforms or swiftly removes them upon detection.

Future plans: While Google didn't disclose specific details regarding upcoming updates for 2024, it confirmed its ongoing investment in policy development, detection, and enforcement.

Appeals: Should you disagree with Google's decisions and believe your ad didn't violate its policies, you can appeal any enforcement action. Google will review your appeal, utilizing instances of incorrect decisions to improve its systems.

Google's Message: Duncan Lennox, VP & GM of Ads Privacy and Safety, emphasized:

- "Our aim is to intercept malicious ads and suspend fraudulent accounts before they infiltrate our platforms, or promptly remove them upon detection. AI is enhancing our enforcement efforts across the board."
- "To illustrate AI's impact: over 90% of our publisher page-level enforcement last year was initiated by machine learning models, including our latest LLMs."