Page Experience – New Google Ranking Factor

utahseopros.com/page-experience-new-google-ranking-factor

Google implements multitudes of changes to its algorithm throughout the course of a typical year. Much less often, Google announces upcoming changes. That can only be expected to happen when the changes are significant enough that Google decides to notify site owners of the need to make updates in preparation for forthcoming modifications. In May of 2020, Google publicly advised it would be releasing an update for its ranking system, to add metrics for Page Experience signals. This was a cause for warning, indeed. Then, just a few months ago, in June 2021, the mega search engine started rolling out those important changes.

The new Google page layout algorithm is designed to evaluate users' levels of enjoyment of web pages in sites by applying an array of quality signal metrics. It further draws from both it's existing and new ranking factors and combines them into a composite index to formulate a proxy for the users' experience. The objective is to foster an improved general web environment that will generate increased online business.

The Page Experience metrics that have now been integrated into the Google ranking system have a separate role from those the search engine uses to assess the text on webpages. The new experience metrics are designed to measure the value of user experience quality factors in a page, such as page layout shifting, mobile-friendliness, HTTPS functionality, the presence of intrusive interstitials (pop-ups), and others.

These user experience metrics measure factors like page load speed, interactive speed, the page elements' stability at given speed levels, etc. The point is to evaluate a site visitor's experience using a webpage, for example, on a mobile device, and the experience quality is scored based on the above and several other new classes of metrics.

So, the new Google ranking metrics are not like measures of the traditional search engine ranking signals indicating the level of text quality on a webpage. These are aimed at assessing the quality of a site visitor's overall experience based on how pleasant the measures indicate that it is to use the pages.

What Will Be the Effect of These Algorithm Changes?

Google explains that the Page Experience signal measure reflects users' perceptions of their interactions with web pages. The search engine will favor sites that have optimized for page experience factors that make their sites more enjoyable for users on all types of devices. The company predicts that upgrading page experience will promote businesses' success online as users are encouraged to become more engaged and can execute transactions more smoothly.

Google recognizes that keyword matches and authority backlinks alone do not tell the full story of a website's effectiveness for its users and that a broader range of its experiential influences defines its quality. The new Google page experience metrics set of Core Web Vitals is the search engine's natural next evolution in quality ranking. It's a sharp turn away from basic rankings of text relevance and its existing site usability metrics, toward a more in-depth evaluation of sites' ease of UI use and general appeal to web users.

What are Google's Core Web Vitals?

The Core Web Vitals, along with other factors discussed, are coalesced in Google's new more comprehensive evaluation of sites usefulness, according to the Google Webmaster Central Blog. Core Web Vitals are the metrics Google employs to capture users' experience on the web. These measurements are aimed at informing the site ranking algorithm by quantifying the qualitative experience of using web pages.

Google categorizes its Core Web Vitals into page load speed, interactive functionality, and visual stability. Here's a brief look at application examples of each:

Correct Interactivity Delays by shrinking First Input Delay (FID)	FID indicates the amount of delay time between the moment the user interacts with the webpage and the moment the browser responds. Sites are expected to respond instantly when users click on buttons and text links, but vast numbers of sites do not. Google categorizes FID below 100ms as good, 100 to 300ms as needing improvement, and over 300ms as poor.
Improve Page Loading Performance by reducing Largest Contentful Paint (LCP) Time.	The LCP metric reflects the amount of time used for images and other large data-consuming items to load onto webpages. Google wants LCPs to be below 2.5 seconds. The assessment for populating the metric for the algorithm is based on particularized criteria. This requirement will impact *all* regular search results for desktop and mobile users.The Core Web Vitals are now criteria appearing in Google Top Stories (the news results that appear above the search results).Sites must still meet the requirements for inclusion in regular Google News, but accelerated mobile pages (AMP) will no longer be a requirement to appear in the Top Stories. But, sites will have to meet the minimum threshold of Google Core Web Vitals.
Correct Visual Instability by eliminating Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS)	CLS is aimed at measuring the extent to which the elements of a webpage unexpectedly shift from one area of the viewer's screen to another while pages are loading. Layout shifts can severely damage user experience if they cause the site visitor to click the wrong element. Worse, random shifts can cause mobile UIs to become unusable.The CLS metric is calculated in the search engine by multiplying the distance fraction by the impact fraction. That means the bigger the page element that is shifting around and the farther it shifts, the more it negatively affects the Page Experience score.

Additional Page Experience Improvements Google Is Requiring

Stop Using Intrusive Interstitials	Google is discouraging web hosts from utilizing intrusive interstitials (pop-ups) that impede quick and seamless access to sites and damage the user experience. Google will penalize sites that use such interstitials requiring users to close them to gain access to the site's primary content.
Optimize Mobile User Experience	For the past six years (since 2015) Google has been penalizing websites that are not optimized for tablets and other mobile devices. Over these years, more and more website programmers have come to prioritize mobile user experience over desktop applications.
Improve HTTPS Security	Of course, HTTPS security is a high priority for Google, so they're emphasizing the application of updated technology for improving web users' safety, especially in purchase transactions, and thereby improving their online experience overall.

When Did the Google Page Experience Algorithm Go Live?

Google has announced that the rollout of its new Page Experience algorithm was completed in early September 2021. The changes in the search engine's quality metrics apply to Google News app as well as Top Stories.

Google provides website designers with testing tools and other aids to help them make the necessary adaptations to improve their page experience for their users. Making these important updates will also allow sites to avoid ranking penalties from Google that can severely impact their site's traffic going forward.

How Broad Is This Update?

The Page Experience algorithm update will affect all websites, in terms of results from regular web searches, Top Stories, and Google News. Google's Webmaster Central Blog advised that the company will implement additional measurements of page experience signals, to further improve its ranking functionality.

The Google project leader for the Page Experience algorithm development has reportedly declined to discuss the weighting of each Page Experience signal. However, he did reportedly confirm that content quality will remain Google's overarching priority in site rankings. Original, information-rich content will continue to rank high, even where a site's page experience is inferior to others.

Six Page Experience Improvement Tips

Business website owners who have not yet responded to Google's warning about the need for upgrades to make their Page Experience quality competitive need to catch up promptly. In the meantime, it is not possible to avoid ongoing hits and sinking rankings due to insufficiencies that are quantifiable by the search engine's metrics capture. Here are the six places Google indicates you should start updating in order to help attract its Page Experience algorithm, per its six new quality metrics and to help increase your first-visit conversion rates:

- *Optimize Your Site's Responsiveness:* Add HTML meta tags, and provide media queries. Design your site for ideal display quality across all networked device types. Make sure that images are behaving properly, fonts are clear, and embedded videos are responsive. To identify mobile responsiveness issues, use Google's Mobile-Friendly Test site.
- *Make Headings Clear:* HTML heading tags are prioritized H1 through H6. Google uses those header code labels to measure the level of relevance of the text under the headers to a user's given search criteria. That's why changing just one word in an H1 heading can multiply traffic coming to your site.
- *Use High-Quality CTAs:* Well-designed and -placed Call To Action buttons entice site visitors to take the next step toward conversion. The best CTAs feature a combination of strong visual and text attractors, which possibly should vary between your mobile and desktop users.

- *Maximize Page Speed:* Use Google's Page Speed Insights tool to help evaluate your page quality and measure your page speed. To upgrade your site's page experience, correct file formatting, for example using .png for vector graphics. Use content distribution network servers to minimize server lag time, use browser caching to enable faster loading of images and other large data-consuming elements for returning visitors to your site. Also, minify JavaScript, HTML and CSS. For example, use the JavaScript minifier to remove whitespace, superfluous characters, combine files, etc.
- *Update HTTPS Security:* Integrate updated security software and protocols to protect your site users' confidential information and your customers' safety during online sales transactions. This is a critical improvement for web users' overall online experience as well as an essential for preserving your brand reputation and protecting your company from other potential consequences of security breaches.
- *Eliminate 404 Error Code Pages:* Google does not react favorably to sites containing these errors and may penalize them. A tool called Google Search Console helps you locate 404 errors and eliminate them. Once you know the pages at the source of the errors, you can follow the process provided to edit the programming manually to eliminate the coding debris.

Conclusion

Page experience is naturally directly connected to outcomes from organic traffic driven to your website. Those results are measured in session duration, conversions, bounce rates, click-through rates, pages per session, and so on. All business sites should already be updated to perform well within the new evaluatory paradigm of Google.

To the question of how much the Google SERPs will actually be impacted, for perspective, Google applies multitudes of ranking signals. Therefore, the impact of a single signal is typically not very impactful on its own. On the other hand, if a site is performing especially poorly in various key SEO metrics, it's probably necessary to get the site in a more competitive condition.

Adding Google's Core Web Vitals to its existing page quality and content quality metrics is meant to correct some of the most common major sources of aggravation and frustration for users. The problems that these algorithm updates target for solutions are rampant across the World Wide Web. Eliminating this virtual plague of issues for web patrons is expected to deliver significantly greater levels of enjoyment to users during their time on the internet.

For many businesses relying on their web presence in highly competitive markets, the fundamental improvements Google now requires can increase customer satisfaction and conversion rates. For other online sellers, the effects may not be as significant, but the updates need to be made to ensure optimum competitiveness of their sites. After all, Google's data indicates that where metrics like Page Speed indicate signals meet Core Web Vitals thresholds, the likelihood of visitors rapidly bouncing from a site drops by 24%!

In the bigger picture, making the online experience more enjoyable for web users helps improve the general quality of user experience in the virtual environment. The more appealing it is for the world of consumers to spend more time on the internet, the more beneficial it is for all businesses to continue and expand their online operations.

To Update Your Website's Page Experience

Making all the adaptations required to elevate a business website to meet the new Page Experience quality threshold of Google's transformed ranking system requires advanced web design expertise. Utah SEO Pros webmasters specialize in the kinds of commercial site programming and protocol enhancements that business sites need to reach the new Google ranking benchmarks.

Call the Utah SEO Pros, Salt Lake City, UT, at (801) 413-7734, or contact us online for help attracting Google to your site.