Website Maintenance Checklist

The recent leak of Google's Quality Rating Guidelines (version 5) has opened the SEO world's eyes to some of the lesser-known parameters by which Google determines a site's quality and ranking on its search results. If you want to make sure your website has the best chance at ranking high on Google's search results, learn how to update your website.

To help you revitalize and refresh your site to optimize it for the best search performance possible, we've developed a handy checklist for you to implement the next time you sit down to do some website maintenance.

Part 1 - Site Design

☐ **Use sub-headers -** Google seems to be using sub-headers in content as a method of identifying useful chunks of information to create knowledge graph entries.

☐ **Limit the use of ads on-page -** The guidelines are clear that an over- abundance of ads on your website may result in a lower quality rating. This is an additional rating parameter for ads, as previous versions of the guidelines also rated sites as low quality for deceptive or spammy ads.

☐ **Review the placement of ads -** Google frowns upon placing advertisements in the middle of your main content. While this may seem like an effective way of breaking up your content, opt for sub-headers instead; your rankings will thank you.

☐ **Remove inline advertising -** Those double-underlined links to ads related to the linked keyword are becoming a nuisance in Google's opinion and their rating guidelines now consider it a distraction and a sign of low quality.

Part 2 - Content Cleanup

☐ **Remove distracting content -** Anything that moves on your page and doesn't add to the page experience (we're looking at you dancing hamster GIFs of the 90s) is considered distracting, unnecessary, and grounds for a lower ranking.

☐ **Include About Us and Contact pages -** This is especially important for pages that contain information about "Your Money or Your Life" (YMYL). That is, pages related to advice or information on finances, health, or wellbeing. But now Google is looking for the information on all websites. Google wants to make sure the "experts" sharing this information are really experts and can be contacted to verify information and ensure accuracy if a discrepancy arises. Therefore, make sure you have a way for readers to learn more about your qualifications or how to contact you.

□ **Add supplementary content -** Google is using supplementary content as a way to reinforce a page's purpose and authority. For example, if you have a page on how to identify poisonous mushrooms in the forest, having images of the mushrooms you discuss on the page or videos of identifying different mushrooms will be considered supplementary content that reinforces the ideas and information presented in your text.

□ **eCommerce sites need to have return policies and customer service pages -** If you're selling any goods or services online, your site should have a clear statement of your return policy or satisfaction guarantee. You also need to include a customer service page to show customers exactly where to go with questions, concerns, or complaints.

□ **Make sure you E-A-T: expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness -** Google is placing emphasis on these three factors for ranking sites because it only wants the highest quality content ranking on the top of its results. We'll be publishing another blog later this week with an in-depth look at what makes content have E-A-T. For now, just understand that filler content or content lifted from other pages won't fly under Google's new standards.

Part 3 - Miscellaneous

□ **Keep your reputation clean -** Does your site have a reputation for including lots of broken links, missing images, and causing virus infections through malware-ridden ads? If so, Google quality rankers will view your site as having a negative reputation. Make sure your site is clean, functional, and not associated with any illegal, infectious, or bad sites to keep your reputation spotless.

□ **Make sure forums are active -** If your website has a forum that requires user and owner interaction, make sure that it is used regularly and actively maintained. Google's guidelines now look at forum activity as a metric for ranking how engaging and useful these sites are.

□ **Never leave a question without an answer -** Many websites have a Q&A or FAQ section that gives the site an extra layer of authority. That is, as long as all questions are answered on the pages. If your site allows users to submit and answer other's questions, design a purge system that automatically removes questions that have gone unanswered after a year. Also do not hide answers to questions behind a paywall (a registration fee to see more information) as Google finds this method deceptive and untrustworthy.