

# Google's Vince Update (AKA Brand Update) - Further Factors to Consider

Tue, Oct 20, 2009 | Posted by [Chris Suarez](#)

[Patrick Altoft](#) from [BlogStorm](#) wrote a great post about how user data may be used in the brand update and he summarised the [Google's patented 'document scoring based on link based criteria'](#) document. Some of the information here will not be news to those who are keen readers, some of the information may need to be thoroughly tested before some of the theories are widely accepted. Here are those summarised points with my opinion on how we can improve web pages in light of additional user data which may also be affecting the search results.

## Natural Link Growth

- If search engines detect a large increase in the number of links to a domain or web page which is disproportionate to the site's current link count Google may come to the conclusion that the link growth is a result of a calculated link buying campaign (link spam) and the links will be devalued
- If spiky link growth is in relation to the growing trend then Google will allow the links to pass full value as the link growth is valid and not part of a link buying campaign
- Sites which have many inbound links from unrelated sites may be classed as part of a link building campaign and the links will be devalued
- Websites with a disproportionate number of inbound optimised links this may also be classed as part of a tactical link building campaign and the links will be devalued
- Natural links will typically use a URL or brand mention in the anchor text of a link worthy page
- Frequently changing anchor text in links may be interpreted as a result of link manipulation

For brands to benefit from an expected spike in link growth to their site it is advised to create a 'buzz' within your brand's industry so the sudden increase in links from the media, press releases, blogs are counted and not devalued as the spike in links will relate to the topical release of a new product or service. A majority of the natural links which a brand will attract during this period of timely link growth will not be optimised, however links will be coming from relevant pages which will enable Google to associate the right amount of [SEO](#) value to the link. This is another step forwards for Google being less reliant on anchor text to assign link value as Google will be looking to see where the link is coming from and to what page the link is pointing to assign link value.

It is also advised to leave the natural links un-modified. Some SEO's will use the tactic reconfiguring existing links to add search terms into the anchor text. Once links are updated Google will treat the link differently as it has been modified and will 'throttle' the link juice until the amended link has been live for a period of time (I estimate this period to be 12 weeks). This could result in a drop in rankings if many links are changed within a short period of time. As long as the link is coming from a relevant page pointing to the right page I would advise against reconfiguring links en masse

- When the overall link count from a webpage/domain starts to drop off this can be seen as a website losing credibility. It is most likely that 'bought' links were not renewed. In both cases Google will see this site as no longer link worthy and 'stale'. This will result in a site/webpage

losing search value.

This is a classic reason iCrossing does not condone link buying as it is a very expensive exercise with reoccurring costs which need to be paid, otherwise links are not renewed and the website will be seen as being 'stale' and will result in their rankings being affected. There is a much smaller chance of losing links when you have attracted naturally them.

### **Google Can Hold You Back**

- Sites gaining rankings too quickly will have pages being held back unless there are pages which relate to topical subjects

This is a common issue for large ecommerce sites which are opened up to search engines or are have migrated to a new domain. When migrating a website to a new domain you will need a rock solid redirect strategy so the impact on rankings are minimised. If you are starting out on a new domain with small number of links you will need to create a 'buzz' around the site so rankings can grow faster as Google will see the number of searches for your band increase and will allow the increase in links to pass more value as the links are topical.

### **Signals of a Fresh Site**

- Google will look at link growth over time and use this measurement to determine if a page is still 'fresh' as it is still attracting links
- When a steady flow of inbound links start to slow down over time it appears that the page is not as useful as it once was and has become 'stale'
- Depending on whether a page/site is still fresh or not Google will decide whether to increase or decrease search weighting to that page/site
- Older web pages/resources which regularly attract links are going to rank better than old pages which do not.

If you have an old webpage which has accumulated many links over the years it is because the information has served many users as a valuable resource of information. Please make sure that you keep the information up to date otherwise users will find other web pages more up to date information from somewhere else and will start to link to that page instead.

### **Click Through Rates (CTR's)**

- Pages which receive a higher than expected click through rate will be given a boost in rankings.

Synergising with your PPC provider can help you create attractive snippet text which has a proven track record in PPC to drive high click through rates from the search results pages.

### **Exit Rates to the SERPS**

- Pages with high exit rates or bounce rates with users going back to Google may get devalued as those pages are not providing the user with information they were looking for, hence the visit back to Google

Website analytics packages will help you identify pages with high exit/bounce rates. There are a elements which can be looked at to resolve the high exit rate figures:

1. Analyse entry search terms - Does the page have enough information about the entry phrase?
2. AB testing - provide clearer navigational options for users to navigate deeper in to your website.

## Topical Content

- Google knows if a query requires fresh information to satisfy a user's search query. In this case Google will prioritise pages which are regularly updated.
- New (fresh) content may be given a boost if the content is topical to growing trends.
- [Query Deserves Freshness](#) is part of Google's algorithm which keeps certain search results pages up to date with frequently updated topics.

If your brand is in sector where there are frequent events which are news worthy it is advised that a news article is created and published on your domain. Topical news articles frequently appear within search results while there is still a 'buzz' around the topical subject.

The screenshot shows a Google search for 'primary school'. The search bar is at the top with the text 'primary school' and a search button. Below the search bar, the results are displayed. The first result is a news article titled 'News results for primary school' from the Times Online, dated 9 hours ago. The article snippet reads: 'Leading article: A better way to educate primary school children - 9 hours ago But ending all national testing at primary school level would be an excessive response to the present stifling examination regime...'. This result is highlighted with a red box. Below the news article, there are other results including a Wikipedia entry for 'Primary school' and a BBC article titled 'Schools - Ages 4-11'. On the right side of the search results, there are sponsored links for 'Primary Schools Support' and 'Primary-schools! Ask.com'.

This is a great example of how a topical news result will out rank authority sites such as Wikipedia and the BBC.

There you have it, this post did not cover every single point covered in patented document or in Pat's post, but I hope has challenged some of your assumptions of what Google may be introducing into their ranking factors.