

Page Rank Study Findings

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What is page rank?

Page rank is simply a number ranking that is assigned by Google to represent the relative “importance” of a web page. It’s a number between Null and 10. The higher the number, the more important that page is (at least as far as Google is concerned).

How do I see page rank?

There are a few tools that will show you Google’s page rank very easily. The one I use is SEO Tools for Firefox.

You can get that here: <http://tools.seobook.com/firefox/seo-for-firefox.html>

Why do I care about page rank?

There are several reasons why Internet marketers care so much about the page rank of their sites (or actually the pages within their sites...remember that page rank is assigned to each and every page on a site).

- Search Engine Rankings – All other things being equal (over simplification ahead!), the higher the page rank the higher the search engine rankings will be for a particular page. Obviously, this means more traffic!
- Pay Per Click advertising – Although Google will deny this, our studies have shown that the higher the page rank, the lower your costs will be for adwords pay per click advertising.
- “Link Juice” – This is perhaps the most important. The higher the page rank of a page that you own and control, the more “link juice” you can pass on to your other sites. We all know that search engine rankings are mostly influenced by links. The more links you have, the higher you’ll rank (a bit of an oversimplification again, but generally true). In addition, the “quality” of the links plays a major part. The higher the page rank of the linking page, the higher the quality of the link. So that, for example, one link from a Page Rank 4 page could be worth 500 links from a Page Rank 1 site.

Our study

We all know that links are the main driver behind Google's page rank algorithms, but are they the only factor?

There are many rumors floating around about content and what variables may impact page rank. Because it's so critical to our marketing efforts, we wanted to ensure that we were doing all we could to take advantage of the factors that have an impact. For example, one common thought is that updated or fresh content has an impact on page rank. Google likes to see content that is attempting to remain "current". The theory says that sites with content that's routinely updated will be rewarded with a higher page rank. It's a lot of work to keep a site fresh, so the question is...is it worth the effort? Google, of course, won't answer that. So, the only way to figure it out is to test.

This study included approximately 200 domains and has been going on for 1 year (although a couple domains have been evaluated over the past 3 years!). We have had 2 employees working full time on this, and we're going to share the results with you for free!

One word of caution...we are going to make statements of fact such as "Google doesn't care about..." etc. These statements are based on the VAST majority of the domains that we tested, NOT 100% of them. So, PLEASE...do not email me or write comments saying that your one domain acted differently. In drawing our conclusions, we saw that 80-90% of the domains followed the pattern, not 100%. There will be exceptions to the rules, but these statements will hold true for most domains.

Our conclusions

There were MANY things that people have theorized that Google actually cared about when evaluating page rank, all of which we found out were completely irrelevant.

- **Google doesn't care about the "freshness" of your content** – Updating the content every day, once a week, once a month, or not at all had NO impact on Page Rank. The extreme example of this are three home pages (PR3-4) where the content hasn't changed at ALL in 3 years, and the PR has not gone lower. It has gone up down over time, but never statistically lower than where it started. We also saw this in our test group over 9-12 months.
- **Google doesn't care about the "quality" of your content** – The content amount, and quality of the content has no impact on Page Rank. The extreme example of this, is comparing a squeeze page opt in with a content rich home page of a blog. We looked at examples all along the continuum of quality and amount of content, and it didn't make a bit of difference. A crumbly, poorly designed squeeze page with zero content had just as much PR potential as a content rich blog home page.
- **Google doesn't care if you change the contents of a page** – For example, let's say we have a page with a PR of 3. We can go in and COMPLETELY wipe out and change out the content, and it will have no lasting impact on that page rank. Typically, we saw a drop in 1-2 levels of PR and then saw it come right back up to the old rank within 60-90 days or so.
- **Google doesn't care about duplicate content** - At least when evaluating page rank, Google doesn't care if the content on the page is unique.
- **Google doesn't care if you change registrars and or owners of a domain** – This has some interesting implications that you can probably figure out! In these examples, PR dropped and was then regained just as it was when the content was completely changed.
- **Google doesn't care if you change hosting providers and/or servers** – Similar to changing registrars, PR dropped and was then regained.

What does Google care about then? Simple...links and ONLY links

Absolutely the only thing that had an impact on page rank in our study for the majority of domains was back links. The more back links and the higher the quality of those back links, the higher the page rank of the page that was being linked to.