

GOOGLE'S CORE JUNE/JULY UPDATES: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

By Liz Fernandez

Google is constantly making changes, but it updates its core algorithm typically twice or three times a year. These core updates are when it makes more substantial improvements to the overall ranking processes and can produce noticeable changes for website operators. The latest core update was divided into two parts—the June update and the July update. As each of the updates rolled out, you may have seen changes to your Google search ranking.

DATES TO NOTE IN YOUR ANALYTICS

As you are looking at your site analytics, you may (or may not) see changes due to the core updates. The June update began rolling out on June 2 and took about 10 days. The July update rolled out on July 1 and took around two weeks to complete. If you spot any volatility in your numbers during this time, it could be due to the core updates. Some sites may see a dip; others may see an increase; and yet many sites may not be affected at all.

HOW TO FIX A DIP IN RANKINGS

Google knows that sites that experience drops will be looking for a fix. However, a site that drops after a core update doesn't necessarily have anything wrong that needs attention. Google wants us to think of it as a Top 100 music list—when a song drops down the list, it doesn't mean it is bad; there are just new songs on top.

Nonetheless, if you have not done well after a core update, it is natural to want to work on your site. Remember, updating and improving your website and content is a long-term game. At

times, if your website is affected by a core update, it may take until the next core update for it to recover. Remain calm and stay the course. Continue offering the best content that you can. Keeping your website fresh and relevant is like cleaning a bathroom—the more often you do it, the better it is overall.

FOCUS ON YOUR CONTENT

A starting point is to self-assess if you're offering quality content. Ask yourself questions such as the following:

- Does your content provide a substantial, complete or comprehensive description of the topic?
- Is this the sort of page you would want to share with a friend or recommend?
- Is your content presented in a way that makes you want to trust it (e.g., clear sourcing, evidence of expertise or background about the author/site through links)?

- Is the content free from spelling and grammar errors?
- Is your content mass produced and spread across a large network of sites?
- Does your content display well for mobile devices?
- Does your content provide substantial value when compared to other pages in search results?
- Does your content seem to be serving the genuine interests of visitors to the site?

After a self-assessment of your site, consider seeking feedback from others you trust, but who are unaffiliated with your site. Sometimes we get too close to our own sites and miss what others may see.

SITES WON'T RANK THEMSELVES

While you may be an expert in your area, and you may have quality content on your site, you still might not rank in a Google search. Make sure you are taking the time to work on optimizing keywords, back-linking within your site and continuing your search engine optimization (SEO) work. While the core algorithm updates can change your rankings, you will see long-term rankings growth through dedicated SEO work on your site.

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