HOW TO
PENALTY PROOF
YOUR WEBSITE

PENALTY PROOF YOUR WEBSITE
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INTRODUCTION

When it comes to doing business online, the first thing that comes to your mind is the ranking of your website. This is because your website won't be able to do much business if it does not appear on the first couple of pages on the search engine. In the online world, it is the search engines that decide what ranking you get in any search.

So, if you want to stay on top of the search results, you have to keep the search engines happy. A search engine has the ability to make your business slip into oblivion. The sheer thought of being in such an environment sends a chilling sensation down your spine. However, if you are prepared enough you can easily keep the fangs of the search engines at bay. There are rules that not only make you safe in the virtual world, but also give you the ability to capture the largest chunk of your market share. Before diving deep into those rules, it is good idea to understand the dynamics of the Internet and search engines.

There are a number of search engines in the online marketplace that decide where you stand with you business. Google being the most trusted search engine of Internet users around the world can influence your online business more than any other entity. To make the Internet a level playing field, Google changes its search algorithms more than 500 times a year. While most of these updates are minor in nature, some updates are geared more towards bringing a sea change in the virtual world. The main aim of these major changes is to keep malpractices in check and to enhance the search experience of an average user. Here Google plays the role of a market regulator that gives equal opportunities to both new and established businesses. So, if you understand Google and its updates well you can not only make your website penalty proof, but can also scale new heights in the online world.

GOOGLE PANDA

GOOGLE PENGUIN

HUMMINGBIRD

GOOGLE PIGEON

CHAPTER 1
Google Updates

1.2 About Google Updates

GOOGLE HAS COME UP WITH FIVE MAJOR UPDATES IN ITS ALGORITHMS SINCE 2011

THEREFORE, UNDERSTANDING THESE UPDATES IS THE KEY TO PENALTY PROOF YOUR WEBSITE

Google started updating its search algorithms way back in 2000 primarily to bring about better search results. However, by the end of 2010 the focus of the search engine shifted more towards curbing ill-practices like keyword stuffing, plagiarism and malpractices in link building etc. In this effort Google has come up with five major updates in its algorithms since 2011. These changes were aimed at giving equal opportunities to new online businesses, creating an equitable business environment in the virtual world. Google severely affected the search rankings of businesses that did not comply with the new algorithms. As a result of these updates online entrepreneurs had to bring about major changes in their content and digital marketing strategies. The Businesses that paid timely heed to Google updates managed to consolidate their market and those who did not eventually perished. Therefore, understanding these updates is the key to penalty proof your website.

GOOGLE PANDA

Google Panda is a change to Google's search results ranking algorithm that was first released in February 2011. The change aimed to lower the rank of *"low-quality sites" or "thin sites"* and return higher-quality sites near the top of the search results. CNET reported a surge in the rankings of news websites and social networking sites, and a drop in rankings for sites containing large amounts of advertising. This change reportedly affected the rankings of almost 12 percent of all search results. Google Panda is a filter that prevents low quality sites and/or pages from ranking well in the search engine results page. The filter's threshold is influenced by Google Quality Raters. Quality Raters answer questions such as *"Would I trust this site with my credit card?"* so that Google can distinguish the difference between high and low quality sites. Google Panda affects the ranking of an entire site or a specific section rather than just the individual pages on a site. Google says it only takes a few pages of poor quality or duplicated content to hold down traffic on an otherwise solid site, and recommends such pages be removed, blocked from being indexed by the search engine, or rewritten. However, Matt Cutts, head of Webspam at Google, warns that rewriting duplicate content so that it is original may not be enough to recover from Panda, the rewrites must be of sufficiently high quality as such content brings *"additional value"* to the web.

GOOGLE PENGUIN

Penguin is a codename for a Google algorithm update that was first announced on April 24, 2012. The update is aimed at decreasing search engine rankings of websites that violate Google's Webmaster Guidelines [by using now declared black-hat SEO techniques involved in increasing artificially the ranking of a webpage by manipulating the number of links pointing to the page. Such tactics are commonly described as link schemes According to Google's John Mueller, Google has announced all updates to the Penguin filter to the public. On October 21, 2014, Google's Pierre Farr confirmed that Penguin 3.0 was an algorithm "refresh" with no new signals added. individual pages on a site. On April 7, 2015, Google's John Mueller said in a Google+ hangout that both Penguin and Panda and that updates must be pushed out manually. This confirms that the algorithm is not updated continuously which was believed to be the case earlier on in the year. believed to be the case earlier on in the year. The strategic goal that Panda, Penguin, and the page layout update share is to display higher quality websites at the top of Google's search results. However, sites that were ranked down as the result of these updates have different sets of characteristics. The main target of Google Penguin is spamdexing (including link bombing).

"The strategic goal that Panda and Penguin update is to display higher quality websites"

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HUMMINGBIRD

Google started using Hummingbird about August 30, 2013, and announced the change on September 26 on the eve of the company's 15th anniversary. Danny Sullivan said of Hummingbird, "Google said that Hummingbird is paying more attention to each word in a query, ensuring that the whole query the whole sentence or conversation or meaning is taken into account." Michelle Hill said Hummingbird is about *"understanding intent".* Steve Masters wrote, "The Hummingbird approach should be inspirational to anyone managing and planning content if you aren't already thinking like Hummingbird, you shouldbeSearch engine optimization changed little with the addition of Hummingbird, though more top ranking results are ones that provide natural content that reads conversationally. While keywords within the query still continue to be important, Hummingbird adds more strength to long-tailed keywords — effectively catering to the optimization of content rather than just keywords. Webmasters will now have to cater towards queries that are asked naturally; with the growing number of conversational

queries — namely those using voice search, targeting phrases that start with *"Who, Why, Where, and How"* will prove beneficial towards SEO. The use of keyword synonyms have also been optimized with Hummingbird; instead of listing results with exact phrases or keywords, Google shows more theme-related results.

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GOOGLE PIGEON

The purpose of Pigeon is to provide preference to local search results. This is quite useful for the user and the local business. On the day of release, it received mixed responses from the webmasters. Some complained about the ranking being decreased whereas others reported improvement in the search rankings. As per webmasters understandings, this update has location and distance as key part of the search strategy. The local directory listings are getting preferences in web results.Integrated deeper into its previous algorithm, the Pigeon ties into Google's search capabilities hundreds of ranking signals the company uses, including other *"features such as Knowledge Graph, spelling correction, synonyms and more. "*

To improve the quality of local searches Google is relying on the factors such as location and distance to provide better search results to the user. This update alters the local listings in the search results, along with this; the local directory sites are given preference more theme-related results, along with this; the local directory sites are given preference.

MOBILEGEDDON

Mobilegeddon is a name given by webmasters and web-developers to Google's algorithm update of April 21, 2015. The main effect of this update is to give priority to web sites that display well on smartphones and other mobile devices. The change does not affect searches made from a desktop computer or a laptop. Search engine results pages on smartphones now show URLs in *"breadcrumb"* format, as opposed to the previous explicit format.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Google Panda is a filter that prevents low quality sites and/or pages from ranking well in the search engine results page.

- Penguin is an update aimed at decreasing search engine rankings of websites that violate Google's Webmaster Guidelines.

- Search engine optimization changed little with the addition of Hummingbird, though more top ranking results are ones that provide natural content that reads conversationally.

- The purpose of Pigeon is to provide preference to local search results. This is quite useful for the user and the local business.

- The main effect of Mobilegeddon is to give priority to web sites that display well on smartphones and other mobile devices.

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CHAPTER 2
GOOGLE PENALTIES

Google Penalties

Why Google Penalizes Websites

Google penalizes sites for engaging in practices that are against its webmaster guidelines. These penalties can be the result of a manual review or algorithm updates such as Google Penguin.Google penalties can result in the drop of rankings for every page of a site, for a specific keyword, or for a specific page. Any drop in rankings brings with it a major drop in traffic for the site. To find out if a website has been affected by a Google penalty, website owners can use Google Webmaster Tools as well as analyze the timing of their traffic drop with the timing of known Google updates. Google has been updating its algorithm for as long as it has been fighting the manipulation of organic search results. However, up until May 10, 2012, when Google launched the Google Penguin update, many people wrongly believed that low-quality backlinks would not negatively affect ranks. While this viewpoint was common, it was not correct, as Google had been applying such link-based penalties for many years,
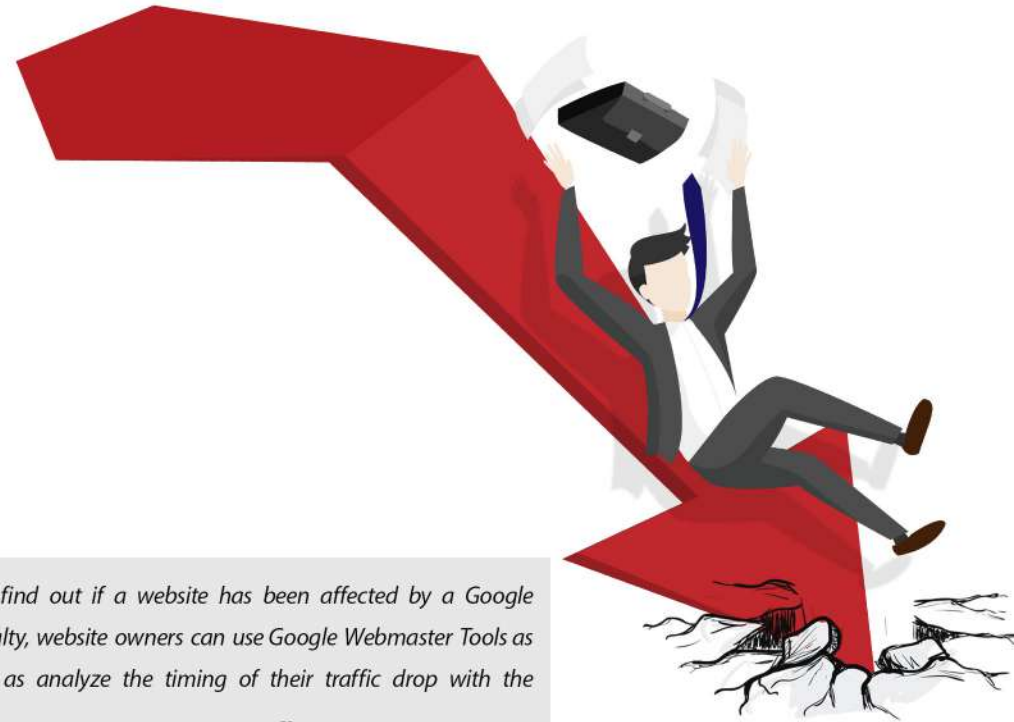
> "To find out if a website has been affected by a Google penalty, website owners can use Google Webmaster Tools as well as analyze the timing of their traffic drop with the timing of known Google updates."

but not made public how the company approached and dealt with what they called "link spam". Since this time there has been a much wider acknowledgement about the dangers of bad SEO and a forensic analysis of backlinks to ensure there are no harmful links.

2.2 Types of Google Penalties

Link-Based Penalties

Penalties are generally caused by manipulative backlinks that are intended to favor particular companies in the search results; by adding such links companies broke Google's terms and conditions. When Google discovers such links, it imposes penalties to discourage other companies from following this practice and to remove any gains that may have been enjoyed from such links. Google also penalizes those who took part in the manipulation and helped other companies by linking to them.These types of companies are often low-quality directories which simply listed a link to a company website with manipulative anchor text for a fee. Google argues that such pages offer no value to the Internet and are often deindexed as a result. Such links are often referred to as paid links.

"*Google also penalizes those who took part in the manipulation and helped other companies by linking to them.*"

Types of Google Penalties

Paid Links

Paid links are simply links that people place on their site for a fee as they believe this will have a positive impact on the search results. The practice of paid links was very popular prior to the Penguin update when companies believed they could add any types of links with impunity since Google claimed prior that time that they simply ignored such links they detected instead of penalizing websites. To comply with Google's recent TOS it is imperative to apply the nofollow attribute to paid advertisement links.

> *"To comply with Google's recent TOS it is imperative to apply the nofollow attribute to paid advertisement links."*

2.2 Types of Google Penalties

SPAM

Comment Spam

These are links left in the comments of articles that are impossible to have removed, as this practice became so widespread Google launched something called the NOFOLLOW tag which blog platforms quickly incorporated to help curb such practices. The NOFOLLOW tag simply tells search engines not to trust such links.

*"The NOFOLLOW tag simply tells search engines not to trust such links."*

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2.2 Types of Google Penalties

Blog Networks

Blog networks are a collection of sometimes thousands of blogs that aim to appear unconnected which then link out to those prepared to pay for such links. Google have typically targeted blog networks and once detecting them have penalized thousands of sites that gained benefits.

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Types of Google Penalties
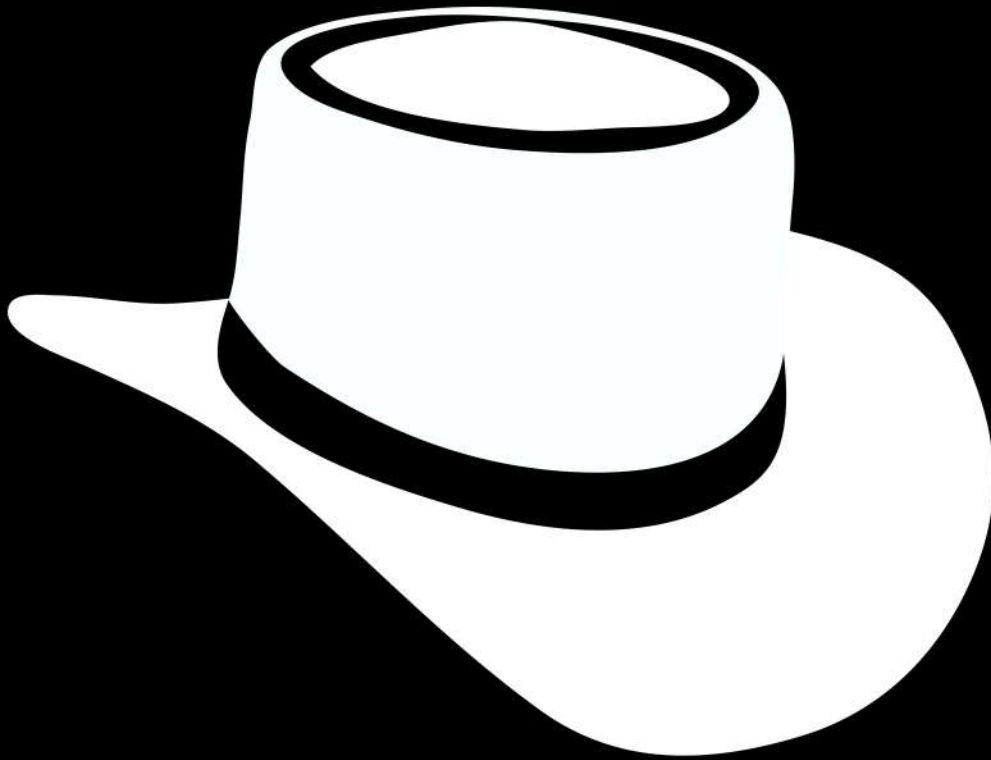
Guest Blog Posts

Guest blog posts became popular as a practice following penguin as these were considered 'white hat' techniques for a while. However, Google has since stated that they consider these links to be spam.

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2.3 Panda penalty

The Panda algorithm might be the most well-known algorithm. It was one of the first updates that specifically penalized websites. The first Panda algorithm was run in 2011 and decimated the traffic of a lot of low-quality websites.

In the three years following its release, Panda was run about once per month. Now that the algorithm is more established, it only seems to be run a few times per year.However, Panda is an algorithmic penalty.

This means that if you get hit, once you fix the underlying issue(s) that caused the penalty, you have to wait for the algorithm to be run again to get your rankings back. That means you could be waiting several months to get the penalty lifted. And if you're unsuccessful fixing the issues, you'll have to try again and wait for another iteration of the algorithm.

"The first Panda algorithm was run in 2011 and decimated the traffic of a lot of low-quality websites."

Panda penalty

How do Panda penalties work?

Google often patents its algorithms, and it did so for Panda. It was granted its Panda patent in 2014. The essence of the patent is that Google creates a site-wide modification factor based on the quality of all the pieces of content on the site. If it falls below a certain threshold, the factor is applied to the site (lowering rankings of all the pages on the site).

In plain English, this means that if a site has a certain amount of low quality content on it, the entire site will be penalized.

How do you know if you were hit by Panda?

You don't get any messages about algorithmic penalties. The only way to spot them is by observation. If you get hit by a penalty that wipes out most of your traffic, chances are you're not alone. Monitor SEO news sites such as Search Engine Land to get more information. If it's a Panda update, it'll likely get spotted quickly.

"You don't get any messages about algorithmic penalties. The only way to spot them is by observation."

2.4 Penguin penalty

Only in SEO would a panda and a penguin be so closely related. Both have had a huge impact on the way SEOs approach their work. While Panda focused mainly on on-page factors, Penguin was a huge step forward for identifying unnatural link profiles.

Google will never release the full details of the algorithm but we do know that there are three main backlink factors that can be used to identify unnatural link patterns:

Link Quality - A site that has obtained all of its links naturally will have links of both low and high quality. Sites made by blackhat SEOs often have a ton of just low quality links or only high authority links (like from a private blog network).
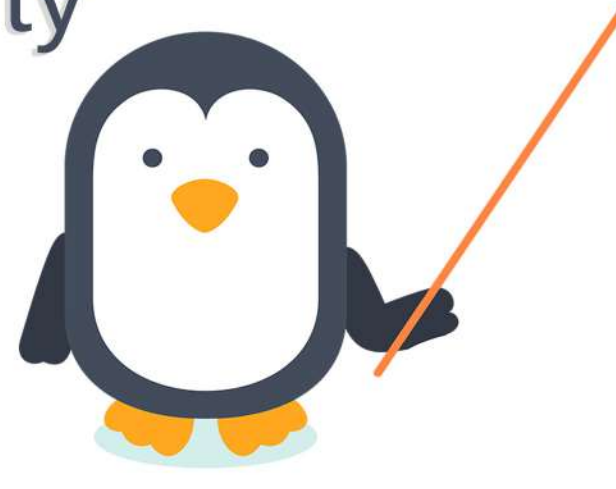
Link Velocity - Look at the backlink growth of any large site, and you will see that it gains links at an increased rate over time. Unnatural sites often get a lot of links in a short period, followed by a sudden decrease.

Link Diversity - Legitimate sites get links from all sources (*contextual, blog comments, forums, etc.*). However, bad SEOs often create a large portion of a site's links from one source (like blog comments). In addition, links should have varied anchor text. Too many links with the same anchor text could trigger a Penguin penalty.

" *While Panda focused mainly on on-page factors, Penguin was a huge step forward for identifying unnatural link profiles.* "
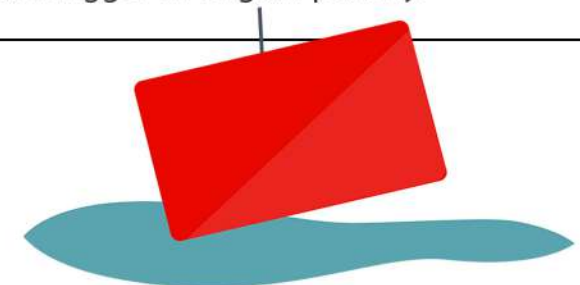
Penguin penalty

How Penguin Penalizes Sites

Penguin is not a site-wide penalty—it affects specific pages. However, since it affects those pages that typically have the most backlinks pointing to them, you can still lose 80%+ of your traffic if those pages are responsible for most of your traffic. If your site is flagged by Penguin, you'll typically be penalized. In some rare cases, Penguin will discount the value of the unnatural links instead of penalizing you.

A tool such as Penguin can confirm that your traffic drop was caused by a Penguin algorithm update. If your traffic drop was relatively small, you were probably one of the lucky few who didn't get penalized.

The drop was most likely caused by those now-discounted links.When you're checking to see if you were hit by Penguin, you should know that it is an even bigger algorithm than Panda. It can take more than a few weeks to fully run. Recovering from a Penguin penalty is possible but difficult. Not only will you have to try to fix the issue (which could be a number of different things), but you'll also need to wait for the next algorithm refresh to see if it worked or not.

" *If your site is flagged by Penguin, you'll typically be penalized. In some rare cases, Penguin will discount the value of the unnatural links instead of penalizing you.* "

2.5 Mobilegeddon

In early 2015, Google announced that it would start trying to help mobile users find useful results on mobile-friendly websites. This announcement caused a lot of stir in the SEO community. A mobile-friendly update was soon to come, and it sounded like it was something big.

The update finally came a few months later on April 20th. Although it was called "Mobilegeddon" and "Mobilepocalypse," it turned out to be much less significant than originally predicted. Though Moiblegeddon is not harming any of the websites at present, online business that do not pay any heed to it now are likely to suffer in the longer run. This is because the number of searches made on mobile devices is rising by the day. To give the most accurate results to mobile users, Google will definitely give greater leeway to dynamic sites. So, the sooner you make your site compatible to mobile devices the better it is.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Penalties are caused by manipulative backlinks that favor particular companies in the search results.

- If a site has a certain amount of low quality content on it, Panda will penalize the entire site.

- As Penguin affects those pages that typically have the most backlinks pointing to them, it can bring down traffic by up to 80%.

- Moiblegeddon is a penalty that will affect sites that are not mobile friendly.

"*A mobile-friendly update was soon to come, and it sounded like it was something big. Site owners scrambled to make their websites mobile-friendly—something that Google would be happy to see (better experience for mobile searchers)*."

CHAPTER 3
Making Your Website Penalty Proof

Prepare Content That Your Users Will Love

As always, the focus will be on high-value content. With the introduction of Panda updates, now is the right time to pay attention to quality content that is written with the audience in mind. And keep in mind that, it's important to update your site with fresh content regularly. The bottom line is, create content primarily for users, NOT for search engines.

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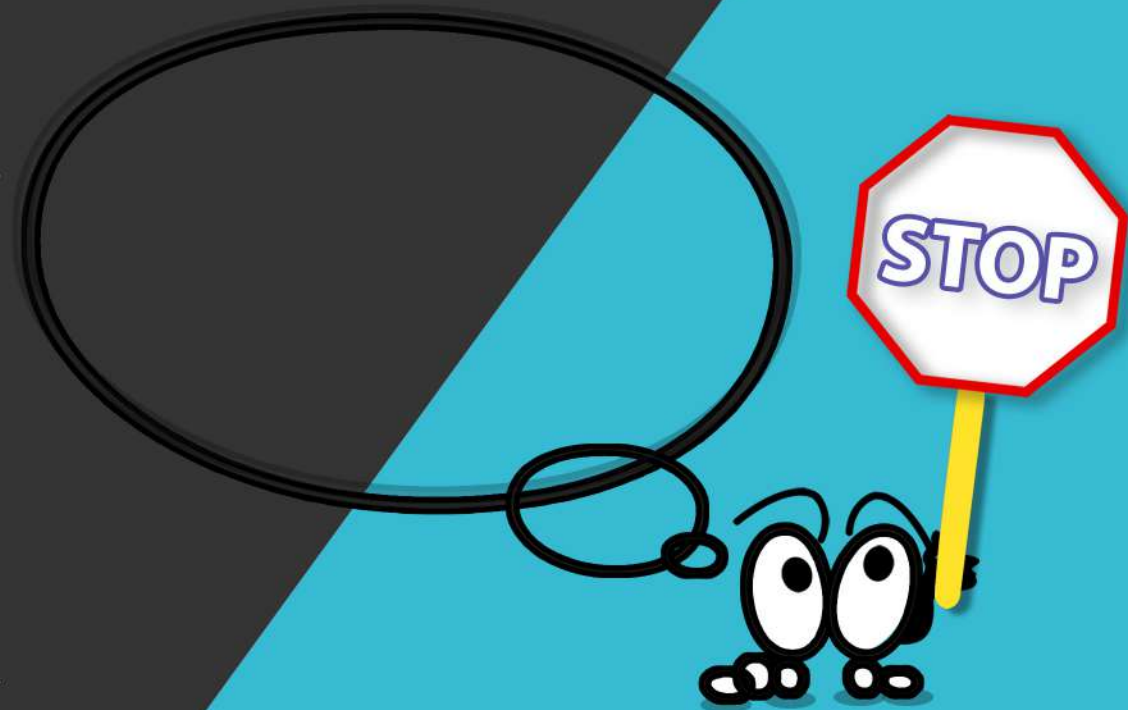• 1st Online Employee Supermarket •

Improve Or Remove Bad Content

The mighty search engine once said, "low-quality content on some parts of a website can impact the whole site's rankings…

Google has already mentioned that it frowns on people that manipulate their search engine results. So if you've been promoting your site nonstop to the point of using questionable SEO tactics, then consider yourself in the menu of Panda.The mighty search engine once said, "low-quality content on some parts of a website can impact the whole site's rankings…"

So therefore, you must: Delete or improve low-quality content. Here's how: Remove content that you're not proud of or turn thin pages into more useful ones or maybe / move low quality pages (irrelevant) to a different domain / edit and combine multiple thin content that looks similar and turn them into a single compelling page. Remove unnecessary pages from Google search. Implement noindex tags on pages that don't add value to users. This will prevent Google from indexing unnecessary pages. You should also apply noindex tags on the following pages: category pages, tag, archives, contact, privacy policy, and disclaimer page.

STOP

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How to avoid Panda penalty

Fix Duplicate Content

Google dislikes having the same content listed multiple times in its search results. They only want one and the original version of the page to rank in search.

Here's how to combat this issue:

Redirect duplicate pages or broken URLs to the correct pages by setting up 301 redirect. For example, you applied a new URL for a particular page. Therefore, you should redirect the old URL to the new URL since Google has already indexed the old link. In other words, you want the outdated URLs to be redirected to the correct pages. You can use Simple 301 redirects plugin for Wordpress or you can even set this up through the Settings of your hosting account.

Google dislikes having the same content listed multiple times in itssearch results. They only want one and the original version of the page to rank in search.

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3.1 How to avoid Panda penalty

Tidy Up Your Site

Another important factor is the architecture of your website. You are now required to improve your website's navigation system. Invest in topnotch design. Content alone doesn't make your website. The design matters as well.
So make sure you do the following steps:

> *Avoid excessive ads. It will annoy your visitors.*
> *Use no more than 100 links per page. Use this tool to count your page links.*
> *Keep your site well-organized and easy to navigate. Make sure your website doesn't contain much clutter.*

• Validate your site. Tools you can use: CSS Validator / HTML Validator.

• Make your content readable.

• Create a custom helpful 404 page.

Fix broken links. Redirect old pages to new ones. If you delete a page that has been crawled by Google, you need to either 301 redirect that page to another one or make sure you use a custom helpful 404 page.
Consider it this way. Let's say your website is number one in search results. However, it has too many ads and flash content, and it's difficult to browse through its sections. The result: visitors will click out of your site right away.
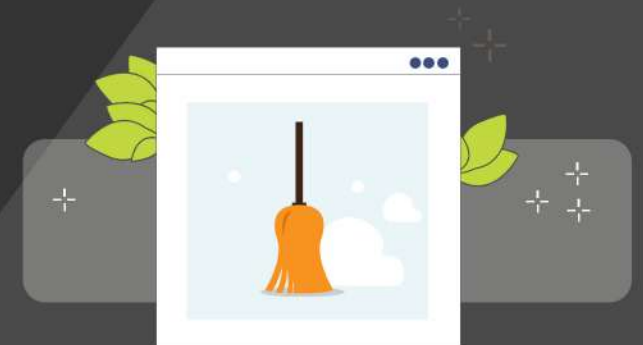
3.1 How to avoid Panda penalty

Make Your Website Faster

No one likes slow websites, and so is Google. Basically, the Panda update wants you to assess the quality of your websites. So tidy up your site and make sure you:

- Use responsive design to make it easy for mobile or tablet users to easily access your site.

- Creating a cache version of your pages will help your website to load faster.

- If you're on Wordpress, use WP Smushit to auto minimize the size of your images.

- If you're on Wordpress, use WP Smushit to auto minimize the size of your images.

- Minimize your files (CSS/HTML/Javascript).

- Implement CSS sprites to combine background images.

- Don't use flash. Learn HTML5 and CSS3 instead.

64% DOWNLOADING
PREMIUM PIXELS FREEBIES.

BOOM. ROASTED.
PREMIUM PIXELS PWND.

Fix broken links. Redirect old pages to new ones. If you delete a page that has been crawled by Google, you need to either 301 redirect that page to another one or make sure you use a custom helpful 404 page.

Consider it this way. Let's say your website is number one in search results. However, it has too many ads and flash content, and it's difficult to browse through its sections. The result: visitors will click out of your site right away.

3.2 How to avoid Penguin penalty

The Penguin algorithm is all about links pointing to your website from other websites. If the links are over optimised, from bad neighbourhoods, or just don't 'look' right, then you could find yourself with a Penguin penalty. To get out of a penalty you need to fix whatever's triggered it, then wait up to 6 months or more for the next update to see if your website is now 'Penguin free'. If not, then you have to try again and wait another 6 months, and so on and so on. But, if Gary Illyes is true to his word, there could be hope on the horizon to recover much quicker. Withreal-time updates there'll be no more waiting around for a refresh and we can see the results of fixes almost as soon as we apply them.

This is great news for website owners, but what can we do to avoid getting hit by a Penguin in the first place?

Here are some things you should do if you want to avoid a Penguin penalty.

3.2 How to avoid Penguin penalty

Watch Your Blog Comments

> The blogging system will then turn your name into 'anchor text' and use it as a link back to your website.

We all love to be sociable, and it's true if you want engagement on your blog you should frequently engage on other people's blogs. This is commendable and perfectly reasonable, but if you're a little too zealous with your commenting you could find a (not so cute) Penguin breathing down your neck.When you submit a comment, you're requested to add a name, email and web address. The blogging system will then turn your name into 'anchor text' and use it as a link back to your website.

If you add the same thing every time you post, you could find your anchor text ratio hitting dangerously high levels.The highest percentage of anchor text would ideally be your brand name, or if you're blog commenting you should use your actual name. But if you're commenting a lot then it's good to mix it up and use variations, so they aren't all exactly the same. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule and you'll find websites getting away with much higher anchor text ratios, but these type of websites usually have one thing in common: Trust.

3.2 How to avoid Penguin penalty

Build Your Trust

If your website is trusted by Google you can get away with a multitude of sins. Rand Fishkin from Moz once famously invited spammers to hurt his Google rankings, but they failed because Moz is such a trusted website. But how do you build on trust?

Trust is an ethereal kind of thing that comes over time, but you can be proactive. Tools like Majestic SEO have their own Trust Flow indicators which are built using complicated algorithms that analyse backlinks. Generally they're quite effective when it comes to sorting out the low from the high quality websites, and you can use these when assessing who to make 'friends' with.

For example if you're going to comment on someone's blog, give them a quick check on Majestic SEO first. If they have a low Trust Flow then you might not want them linking to your website. The more low quality links you have the less trusted you'll be, so be selective on where you get your links. On the flip side, you can seek out websites that are high in Trust Flow and comment/engage with those. The higher your Trust Flow, the higher chance you have of becoming a trusted website, and the better chance you have of avoiding the dreaded Penguin penalty.

Tools like Majestic SEO have their own Trust Flow indicators which are built using complicated algorithms that analyse backlinks.

3.2 How to avoid Penguin penalty

Avoid 'Active' Link Building

John Mueller is a Webmaster Trends Analyst at Google, so when he speaks we should generally listen. John came out recently and said we should avoid active link building completely. Now this is a bit extreme, but actually good advice, especially for people new to SEO. It's a known fact that your website needs links to improve its rankings on Google. So it's all too easy to run around begging, stealing, borrowing links from anywhere and everywhere you can find. But this opens the door to low quality links and can leave you vulnerable to a Penguin update.

You should look at your content first and concentrate on building a website that's the best, most resourceful and informative of its kind. People come first, not links, and as mentioned,

trust is more important than links. So if you spend more time delivering excellent content and engaging real relationships via social media, and less time 'actively building links' then you should have a much better chance of success and avoiding any penalties.

You should look at your content first and concentrate on building a website that's the best, most resourceful and informative of its kind.

Never, Ever Buy Links

They'll come at you with testimonials and charts and tell you that these links are proven to increase rankings.

This follows on from the last two points and should be a given, but it has to be said. Don't buy links. If you do a little digging into the world of SEO you'll soon find a multitude of link peddlers selling links in all shapes and sizes. They'll come at you with testimonials and charts and tell you that these links are proven to increase rankings. For a newcomer it's easy to get swayed by this kind of talk, but I can guarantee that the vast majority of websites hit by Penguin had paid for links at some point or other. The people that sell links aren't bothered who they sell them to. They just want the money, and what might seem like a shortcut at the time will only shorten the life of your website when you get hit by a Penguin update.
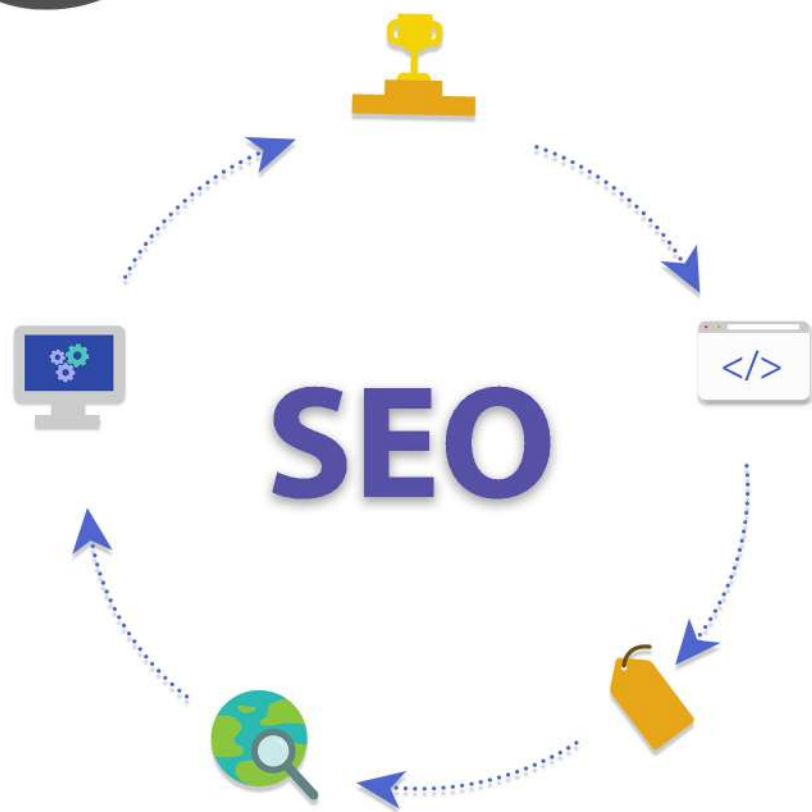
3.2 How to avoid Penguin penalty

SEO

> If you make enemies in the wrong places it could kill your website before it's even started. Tread very carefully when speaking to groups of SEOs, as they all have access to links that can damage your website.

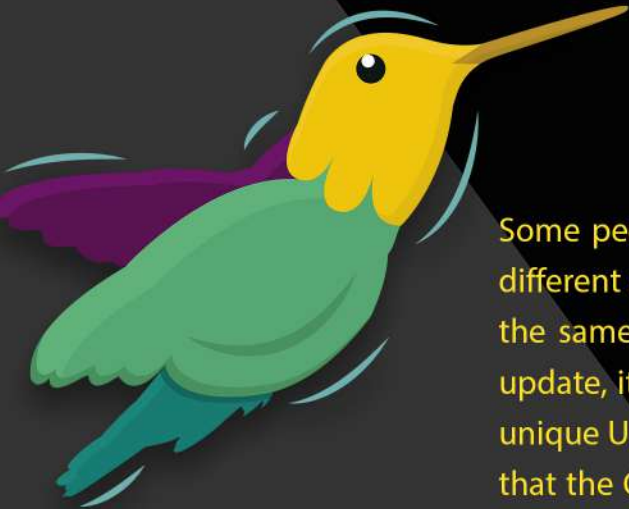## Be Polite and Don't Annoy SEOs

This may sound pedantic, but it could be the best advice you've ever been given. If like me you enjoy getting involved in forum discussions or groups on Facebook, it's quite reasonable you'll look for some SEO experts for advice. This is all well and good, until you find yourself in a flame war, arguing over some point about how links can't hurt your website, or how link building is dead etc.

It only takes one disgruntled keyboard warrior, sat at home in his/her dressing gown to make a point by throwing a barrage of bad links at your website.

If you make enemies in the wrong places it could kill your website before it's even started. Tread very carefully when speaking to groups of SEOs, as they all have access to links that can damage your website. If you see an argument brewing then run for the hills. Negative SEO is very real and in certain niches highly prevalent, so it's best to fly under the radar until you have enough trust to withstand an attack.

3.3 Keeping Hummingbird and Pigeon at bay
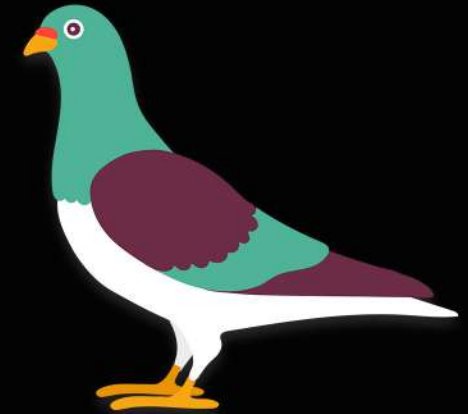
Some people think that the Hummingbird is just a minor change when in fact, Google has taken a completely different approach to how the search giant understands queries. According to Tober, in the past, two queries with the same meaning but were typed out differently would produce different results. But with the Hummingbird update, it seems that it wasn't the case anymore. Search metrics conducted a study showing that the number of unique URLs in search results have decreased by 6.5% since Google rolled out Hummingbird.Tober said this shows that the Google is now striving to provide the best search results possible instead of coming up with a variety of results. In short, today's search landscape is about quality over quantity. This means that even if your content is structured differently, it won't give you any value if it is too similar to what's already out there. In fact, it may not even get shown on Google Search.

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Keeping Hummingbird and Pigeon at bay

Creating Self-serving Content

If you want to rank on Google, don't make the mistake of creating content that focuses solely on your needs. Instead, you should think about how your content marketing strategies can answer searchers' questions. Tober said content creation today is about answering typical questions with as much supporting information as you can provide to back up your answers.

Keyword Stuffing

In the past, keyword density matters because keywords are what searchers are using to find specific information online. But with the Hummingbird update, the focus now is more on the content itself, how it answers users' queries, and how it provides value to them. Besides, stuffing content with keywords can get your website into trouble. You could be penalised by Google so it's best that you avoid making this crucial mistake.

Adapting to a post-pigeon search is going to be difficult for many businesses. Unlike the past, local keyword emphasis isn't very effective. This strips away one of the best sources of boosted rankings a small business has. Here are three things to avoid as a small business going forward.

What local businesses should avoid

Adapting to a post-pigeon search is going to be difficult for many businesses. Unlike the past, local keyword emphasis isn't very effective. This strips away one of the best sources of boosted rankings a small business has.

" Here are three things to avoid as a small business going forward.them and locate your business profile. Follow whatever process each site has to claim your profile."

Risk

3.4 What local businesses should avoid

Ignoring Directory Profiles

The first entry on the above list is Yelp and other similar directories. The reason these rank so well now is that Google reverted local search to rely more on traditional search metrics rather than local metrics. This means keywords, site size and link profiles are all important. Naturally, a large site like Yelp has a lot more leverage in these areas than a small site for a local business.

Rather than try to fight against Yelp and whatever other directories are relevant to your industry, it's better to try to work with them. Search for your industry and your business, and identify what directories are present in your location. Once you have a list, dig into each of them and locate your business profile. Follow whatever process each site has to claim your profile.

Once you have a claimed profile, you need to take a few steps to make sure it's pulling its weight for you.

"For one thing, make sure all of your address and contact information is up to date. Google has put less emphasis on local keywords – that is, where you say you service – and more on stated location. "

Don't put in the address of your corporate headquarters half a world away you won't show up in local searches at all.

Many of these sites have very basic algorithms for displaying businesses within their site. Typically, this sorts sites to appear first if they have more positive reviews, under the assumption that a better reviewed site is going to be better quality. Take advantage of this by picking the two or three most important directories in your industry and asking your users to write positive reviews.

By piggybacking on the search ranking of these sites, you can make your business show up as the top recommended business in your area and industry. Meanwhile, don't stop working on traditional SEO; there's always the chance that Pigeon is an experiment that Google
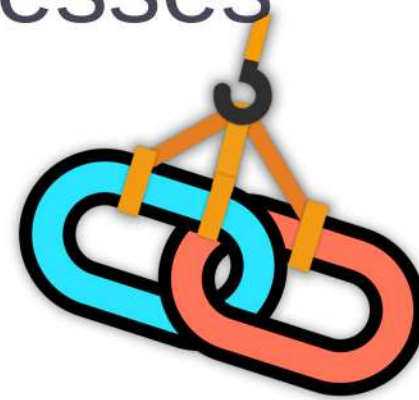
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Ignoring Backlinks

The second item on the list at the beginning of this article is local authorities. A link from one of these sites is going to be extremely beneficial to your site in two ways. First, it's a site in the top of the search rankings listing your business as a place to go. This funnels traffic and users your way. Second, a quality local backlink is a powerful post-pigeon ranking factor and can help boost your site to a level where it appears in the search results.These local links are powerful, but they're also limited by nature. There are only so many influential sites in your area covering stories about your niche. In addition to these sites, you should also pursue a diverse link profile. Building as many useful backlinks as possible is one way to boost your potential rankings.

All good sites building powerful link profiles do so by building from a base of useful content. You need to make sure you're investing the time and money in creating a blog and running it.

You don't necessarily need to post more than 2-3 times per week, or even once per week if your business is small. Just remember that more content means more opportunities for links, which in turn is more boost to your search ranking.

Remember, it's much harder for a given local business to rank. That means if you manage to pull it off, you're going to be sitting in a very nice position with very low competition.

Of course, you can't forget that local queries aren't the only queries that happen. Links help boost your SEO for non-local queries.

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3.4 What local businesses should avoid

Ignoring Google+

Local packs don't show up for all queries, but when they do, they're a short list of relevant businesses, alongside their star rating, location and review information. This information is pulled from Google+ Places.

You absolutely need to optimize Google+ to make sure your business appears in these two locations. That means filling out and keeping your profile active. It means posting compelling pictures of your products or business location publicly. It means making sure your address and contact information is accurate. Like Yelp and other directories, you also need to take the time to ask your users to review your business on Google+. In fact, given the preference, Google+ is likely the best option. As with authorship and other SEO factors before it, Google is giving preference to its own services, even over Yelp.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

• Focus on high-value content and adding fresh content is the best strategy to keep Panda at bay.

• Redirecting duplicate pages or broken URLs to the correct pages is a good strategy

• Use responsive design to make it easy for mobile or tablet users to easily access your site.

• The Penguin algorithm is all about links pointing to your website from other websites

• If you want to rank on Google, don't make the mistake of creating content that focuses solely on your needs.

CHAPTER 4

Best Practices to Avoid Google Penalties

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4.1 Quality Over Quantity

The best way to attract or "earn" high quality links is through content marketing. Creating useful content and sharing it across social media and industry related websites

The days of just mass spamming hundreds of thousands of links at a website are over, and you need to focus on building high quality natural links. The best way to attract or "earn" high quality links is through content marketing. Creating useful content and sharing it across social media and industry related websites is a great way to get quality links that are both highly relevant and 100% natural. These are two things that Google loves. When content marketing is done right you are naturally earning links to your website, and not asking for them or buying them. Creating amazing content will cause people to want to use it and link back to the source. This is exactly how natural link building occurs.

4.2 Clean Up Your Link Profile

There are many types of links that Google sees as spammy and existing solely to game the system. If you are using comment and forum spam links, paid exact match anchor text links, guest posts on "private" networks that feature high page rank sites that do not receive real traffic, or low quality directories then you need to take action to remove these links.

Google is constantly seeking out networks to penalize and once they discover them it is easy for them to penalize all of the websites linked to these networks.

The link sellers classify them as private, yet they will let any website purchase links from them, making it far from private. You are putting your website at a huge risk by using paid link networks. If you know that you have low quality and potentially dangerous links you will want to start reaching out to webmasters and request that your links are removed. This is a very time consuming and tedious process, but it can help prevent your website from getting slapped with a Google penalty if you act fast. If you are unable to reach some webmasters or if your request is ignored you can utilize the Google disavow tool to let them know what links you do not want them to include in your link profile. Remember to only disavow links that are toxic, leaving the good quality links in your link profile.

4.3 Clean Up Your Outbound Links

After you clean up your inbound links it is time to go through your website and address your outbound links. If you are linking out to some websites that are not trustworthy and considered an authority, you will want to either remove them entirely or at the very least you will want to add the "no-follow" tag to the links. If your website has a blog and it's littered with comment spam you might want to consider deleting all of the comments. Many link audits focus i̶ ̶ ̶ ̶bound links, but you need to address your outbound links a̶

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The best way to attract or "earn" high quality links is through content marketing

- Creating amazing content will cause people to want to use it and link back to the source

- Google is constantly seeking out networks to penalize and once they discover them it is easy for them to penalize all of the websites linked to these networks

- After you clean up your inbound links it is a good idea to go through your website and address your outbound links

Final Note

No doubt search engines will keep updating their algorithms to make the Internet as impartial as possible. They have already made the life of black hat SEO experts a lot together. Even a minor change will have a huge impact on online businesses. However, this brunt can be mitigated by those who keep a close eye on the emerging online technologies and tends. The one formula that will work without fail against any algorithm is that of creating and sharing unique, original content that adds value to the experience of your target audience. Another thing is that Google has incorporated the latest algorithms on the real-time basis. So the days of bag bang algorithmic updates are over. You commit a mistake, and your website will be penalized. However, strategies and tips discussed in the ebook are universal in nature and they will remain relevant in future as well.

Do You Want to Recover From Google Penalty?

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