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Dispelling the Myths – Will WebPosition Get My Site Banned from Google?

By Matt Paolini

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In mid November of 2003, Google seriously revamped their ranking algorithm. As a result, many sites were dropped from their index, or fell dramatically in rank. This infuriated many Web site owners at the height of the holiday buying season.

Since that time, many accusations have been thrown at Google as to the reasons why this happened. Some say it's a plot to encourage people to buy Adwords listings. Others have even theorized WebPosition is somehow to blame. Still others cite more traditional causes.

As soon as Google changed their algorithm, many WebPosition Gold customers whose sites had dropped contacted me demanding an explanation. They wanted to make sure their sites were not dropped because they had used WebPosition Gold. I reassured them that this was not the case. I went on to explain that many thousands of sites were dropped that don't even use WebPosition Gold.

Many of our customers even saw their rank increase. In addition, most of the time the site had not actually been banned from the index. It had simply dropped in rank.

In this article, I will attempt to dispel many of the pervasive myths regarding WebPosition Gold and Google. I've used WebPosition for years on my own site and for clients. I've also helped provide technical support to others using the product. Therefore, I've been on both sides of the fence, and thereby feel uniquely qualified to address the most common questions that tend to come up:

1. Will running automated Reporter Missions on Google get my site banned?

No. Despite repeated rumors, when running a Reporter Mission, WebPosition Gold does not pass personal information, such as your name, address, email, Web site URL or domain name to Google. Instead, it conducts queries as a normal browser would, and then examines the results offline. With

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that in mind, Google cannot determine if you're running a query relating to a specific domain. The only information that is passed to Google is your "IP" address. In most cases, your Web site's IP address is different than the IP address of your ISP (Internet Service Provider). So, how can Google connect the two? Simply put, it can't.

Google states on their FAQ page that they do not recommend automated queries to be run on their service because it utilizes server resources. Yet, most businesses find it impractical not to measure their search engine rankings at least occasionally. It's also hardly reasonable to check ranking by hand in Internet Explorer, which for the same keyword list, would yield the same number of queries on Google anyway. Therefore, most businesses optimizing their Web sites find it impractical not to use some kind of automated tool to monitor their progress and to measure their visibility.

Working as a search engine marketer myself for many years, I've found that the best policy is to simply

be sensitive to the needs of the search engines. Avoid being "abusive" in your practices, whether it is your optimization strategies, your submissions, or your rank management.

Therefore, when using WebPosition, I often recommend the following strategies:

1. Avoid excessive numbers of queries if you choose to check your rankings on Google. Most people do not have time to improve their rankings on hundreds of keywords. Therefore, there's no need to rank check on hundreds of keywords if you don't have the time to do anything about that many different rankings anyway. While your site won't be banned from excessive queries, Google could block your IP address that you use to connect to Google, if it found your query volume to be excessive. This is true regardless of what tool you may use, even if it's a browser.

It has been my experience that a blocked IP is extremely rare even among consultants conducting rank checks for dozens of clients. Presumably, Google would not want to accidentally block an IP that does a large volume of queries simply because its shared by many different users. Even so, it's always a good idea to practice a little common sense.

2. If you choose to run queries, try to run most of your queries at night and during off-peak periods, which is something Google has suggested in the past. This is when many of their servers are presumably standing idle, waiting to handle the increased volume during peak periods. The WebPosition Scheduler makes this easy to do.

3. Do not run your queries more often than is really necessary. Since Google normally doesn't update their entire index more than once a month, there's limited benefit to checking your rankings more often than that.

4. As an alternative to Google, consider checking your Google rankings using Yahoo Web Matches or another Google "clone" engine in the Reporter. Although these rankings can vary slightly from Google.com, they're normally close enough to give you a very good idea of your actual Google rankings without checking Google directly.

5. With WebPosition Gold 2, you can also use the "Be courteous to the search engines" feature on the Options tab of the Reporter so you don't query their service so quickly. This gives you added peace of mind not found in many other automated tools, assuming you don't mind your missions taking longer to

Dispelling the Myths – Will WebPosition Get My Site Banned from Google?

run. The Submitter has a similar feature to submit randomly at various time intervals.

2. Can I use WebPosition Gold to get my competitors' banned from Google?

No. If running automated queries on Google with WebPosition Gold would result in your site being banned, you could use it to get your competitors' banned from Google. However this is not the case.

Google even verifies this on their web site. They don't specifically name WebPosition Gold in this section; however, they do mention that there is nothing you can do to get your competitors' banned from Google. For more information on this, please see the "Google Facts and Fiction" document at Google's site. <http://www.google.com/webmasters/facts.html>

3. Will over submitting my site get me banned?

No. Many people think that Google will ban your site if your submissions exceed the recommended daily limits. If this were the case, we could over submit our competitors' sites and easily get them banned from Google.

Google is very clear on this and even states that over submitting will not get you banned. Even though

over submitting will not get you banned, some of your submissions might still be ignored or discarded if they break the rules. Therefore, I recommend using the "Slow Submit" option in WebPosition Gold's Submitter and staying within WebPosition's recommended daily limits. Some people argue that manual submissions are best. However, manual submissions can't warn you if you inadvertently over-submit, make a typo in your submission, or forget what you submitted and when.

For achieving top rankings, and staying indexed long-term, the best submission technique may be to not submit at all. Instead, try to establish third party links to your Web site and wait for Google's spider to find you on its own. WebPosition's Page Critic offers numerous strategies for doing this.

4. Will Doorway or Entrance pages get me banned from Google?

That depends on whether these pages contain spam. If your definition of a doorway page is a page full of irrelevant or duplicate content, and excessive keyword use, then yes, you could find your site banned. That's how Google often defines a doorway page. Consequently, the term doorway has developed a negative connotation over the years.

If your optimized page is nothing more than an extension of your main web site that happens to contain search engine friendly content, then you'll be fine. In fact, you'll be rewarded for the effort through top rankings. The key is not whether you label a page a doorway, entrance, optimized, informational, or "whatever" page. The key is whether the page contains quality, relevant content that provides the search engine with what it wants to see.

Google mentions that they discourage the use of "doorway" pages because they fear that webmasters will optimize for keywords that are not relevant to the page's content. This is a legitimate fear as they are in the business to provide relevant results to their visitors. However, if you create pages that contain what Google is looking for, then obviously Google will not penalize this page, or view it

differently from any other page on your site.

With this in mind, here are a few of my tips on creating Google–friendly pages:

1. Always Include Relevant Content – Make sure that the content on each of your pages is relevant to your site. Many sites have various resources on a number of different topics. This is fine, as long as the overall theme for your Web site is solid. I would also suggest that you organize your related content into individual directories. Some businesses find it beneficial to organize each sub–theme of their site into a separate domain so they can cross–link the domains. If you do this, make sure you have links from other sites as well.

2. Avoid Duplicate Content – Create each page with unique content. If you are targeting different search engines for the same keyword, then you may find that you have some very similar content between certain pages. If this is the case, you can always create a robot.txt file to tell each search engine crawler not to index a page or directory that was created for another search engine. See the October 2000 issue (<http://www.marketposition.com/mp-1000.htm#THREE>) of MarketPosition for more information on creating a robot.txt file.

3. Avoid Keyword Stuffing – Creating pages that excessively repeat your keyword phrase is definitely not a good idea. This almost always will throw up a red flag to the search engine and is one of the most common forms of "spamming." How many keywords is too many? See WebPosition's Page Critic for up to date, specific recommendations regarding how many words and keywords are recommended in

each area of your page.

4. Design Good Looking Pages – Although Google cannot tell if your page is aesthetically pleasing, it is recommended that you create pages that look good and fit the theme of your Web site. This will definitely increase the click through rate from the arrival page to the rest of your Web site.

5. Avoid Using Hidden Image Links – Many site owners think they can fool Google by including transparent 1x1 pixel image links on their home page that point to their optimized pages. These are very small images contained in a hyperlink that are not visible to the naked eye. This can get your page dropped from Google's index.

6. Avoid using links that have the same color as the background on your page – Many site owners try to hide the links on their home page by making the text color the same as the background color of the page. As with the scenario above, this can also get your page banned from Google.

7. Avoiding using Javascript Redirection Techniques – Many Web site owners have implemented the use of Javascript to redirect a user to another page while allowing Google to crawl the page that includes the Javascript code. This did work for a while, but Google eventually caught on. Other forms of redirection, like IP cloaking are also frowned upon by Google.

In Summary:

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The rules regarding each search engine change routinely. That's why WebPosition's Page Critic is updated monthly to keep pace. As a search engine marketer, it's critical that you keep informed as to the latest search engine rules and strategies.

It's also important to understand that WebPosition Gold is only a tool. When used properly, it will not get you banned or blocked, and will in fact improve your rankings dramatically. However, as with any tool, you can choose to ignore its recommendations and to go your own way. For example, you can use a hammer to build a fine house, or you can take that same hammer to knock a bunch of holes in someone's wall. Ultimately, this call is up to you, the user of the tool.

This article is copyrighted and has been reprinted with permission from Matt Paolini. Matt Paolini is a Webmaster and support specialist for FirstPlace Software, the makers of WebPosition Gold (<http://www.webposition.com>). He's also an experienced freelance Search Engine Optimization Specialist and Cold Fusion/ASP.NET/SQL Server Developer/Designer. For more information on his services, please visit <http://www.webtemplatestore.net/> or send him an email at webmaster@webtemplatestore.net

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Matt Paolini is a Webmaster and support specialist for FirstPlace Software, the makers of WebPosition Gold. He's also an experienced freelance Search Engine Optimization Specialist and Cold Fusion/ASP.NET/SQL Server Developer/Designer.

Why links count – The power of links part two

By Brian Hart

Do not get penalized or even banned from the search engines find out how not to get banned by your links.

In my last article we talked about why we needed links to your website, in this article we will cover

Dispelling the Myths – Will WebPosition Get My Site Banned from Google?

some dos and don'ts.

Thanks to Google and now most of the other search engines there is now a new kind of spam, these are link farms.

Because the search engines now look at link popularity every website designer and promoter went out to get links to their sites, the easy way to do this is to join a linking site, this looked an easy task, but Google then said you will get penalized or even banned if you are found to have a link farm.

Website designers and promoters jumped and panicked at this and some stopped all links that pointed out, this was a bit drastic.

The big question is what is a link farm? Or what is now known as Stuffing?

Lets pretend your website sales gold, go with me here I'm on a role. You join a linking service and get 1000s of links on your links page and so you have 1000s of links pointing to your website, cool your shore to get to number one now.

If Google now comes to your site and sees 1000s of links, they now will look to see if they are relevant to your site, which sales gold. If your links are for dog food and windows you have a link farm or stuffing.

Only have links like Gold Cleaning, Gold rings, things relevant to your website else you could be penalized or even banned.

You can still have 1000s of links but all must be relevant. Remember to have a link from your main site to the links page.

I hope you found this article of some help. Have fun and play nice.

Brian Hart

Brian Hart also known as Lazerbri has been working on the net for over 15 years, he is a Programmer in HTML and PHP and also flash.



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