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Much ado about PageRank

By Rob Sullivan

There are those in our industry who will tell you that PageRank is dead. I've been reading a lot lately about how we are supposed to ignore the green bar in our browser but you know what? I disagree and I'm going to tell you why.

For those who don't know, PageRank is Google's way of determining a website's worth based on the number of incoming links it has. In other words, Google counts the number of links pointing to a site as votes, generally speaking the more votes a site has the more it is likely worth to Google.

While this is a simplistic view of PageRank and it has indeed gotten much more complex than this, in essence this is what PageRank is. So why would many think it's not worth anything?

Because at one time, Google's ranking algorithms were based in large part on the PageRank calculations. Too soon, however, webmasters realized that in order to get high rankings, all you needed was a bunch of links. Google caught on however, and adjusted the algorithms to ensure that only relevant links were counted.

But what makes up a relevant link? Well, look at a website from a searchers point of view. If I am the owner of a website and I'm going to link to other sites, do I want to link to a bunch of unrelated sites that provide no added value to my site's visitors? The answer should be no.

Therefore I want to provide links to relevant related sites which are a benefit to my site's visitors. This is the strategy Google is employing to attempt to determine the relevancy of links. The links should be related and/or relevant to the site they are linking to.

While there's a ton of programming and logic involved, this is essentially what the "new" PageRank does – it devalues those links that are unrelated or non-relevant to the site to which they link.

So, now that I've provided this brief introduction, lets get back to the original question - is PageRank dead? Should we ignore the green bar in our browser? The simple answer is no. (FYI, if you don't have the Google Toolbar, you can get it here.

Much ado about PageRank

While PageRank has been devalued somewhat by Google it is still the essential algorithm Google uses on their index.

While it is true that PageRank is not the ultimate ranking algorithm anymore, it still contributes to rank. Therefore you will see sites with a low PageRank value outranking other sites. But this is due more to the site itself than the number of links (Go figure – Google is trying to return relevant results regardless of how many links you have).

In any case, the results you see on Google are better than they once were and less susceptible to influence by aggressive search engine optimizers. But that's not to say that PageRank is dead. Far from it.

To really understand the effect of PageRank, one must understand how Google works.

Google has thousands of interlinked computers inside their data centers. Each computer has a job. Some calculate PageRank, some count links, some serve results when queries are performed.

When a site is indexed by Google, it goes into the database where the algorithms are applied and values assigned. When a query is performed, the database is checked and all the sites which match the query are shortlisted. Then each server is then told to return only the top results (it may be top 3, it may be top 10, we don't know). And guess which factor determines which top results are returned? You guessed it - PageRank. So if your site is on a cluster which has a bunch of higher PageRank sites, then there's a pretty good chance that it won't make it to that next level of processing.

It is at this next level where PageRank is devalued - and the pages are sorted based on other factors to ensure they better match the query. They are then returned to the searcher in the order Google deems more appropriate to the query. All this happens in a split second.

Another place where PageRank is extremely helpful is link building.

As any good search engine optimizer knows, links are still important. It should seem pretty obvious throughout this article that links are what drives your ranking. All engines use some form of link popularity to determine rankings, not just Google.

So when you do link building, PageRank can be a great indicator of the value of a link. Remember, if you are doing link building, you are first going to want to find useful links and ones that are of a value to your website's visitors. But you can consider PageRank when searching out these links. Because a site with a higher PageRank will contribute more to your link popularity than one with a lower PageRank.

This comes with a caveat, however, and that is that no one except Google knows how accurate the PageRank displayed in the Google Toolbar is. It is only updated occasionally, so the true PageRank can be different than what you see.

That's why I mentioned above to use the PageRank as an indicator of the links value, and not the sole

criteria when evaluating what sites you want links from. But as you can probably guess from the tone of this article - while the PageRank value you see may be flawed, it is most certainly in use by Google.

Rob Sullivan – SEO Specialist and Internet Marketing Consultant. Any reproduction of this article needs to have an html link pointing to

<http://www.textlinkbrokers.com>

Five FAQ About Google PageRank

By Patrick Carlow

Five FAQ about Google PageRank

1. What is PageRank and why should I care about it?

PageRank is a formula that assigns a value to every page in the Google index. Google displays search results based on an algorithm which includes the value of PageRank. So the higher your site's PageRank, the more likely it is that you will receive a top listing on the search result page when someone types in the keywords for your site.

2. How can I view the PageRank of my own or other websites?

It's very simple to see anyone's PageRank. Just download and install the Google toolbar. It's a very quick and easy install. Just be sure to choose the Advanced option during the install so the PageRank of each site you visit will be displayed on the toolbar.

3. How is PageRank calculated?

I've seen a formula for PageRank posted on Internet websites and forums but have failed to see anyone give a satisfactory explanation of the formula. The formula appears so complex you would probably have to be a mathematician to even have a chance to decipher it anyway. It looks something like this:

$$PR(A) = (1-d) + d(PR(t1)/C(t1) + \dots + PR(tn)/C(tn))$$

I will attempt to explain it for you in plain English. Basically it works like this. The more links that point to your website the higher your PageRank will be. The higher the PageRank of the referring page that has your link on it, the more PageRank you receive from Google. For every outgoing link that a page has, the value of those links drop. So for example, a link from a page with a PageRank of 4, and only 3 other links, is worth more than a page with a PageRank of 5 and 100 links. It is also believed that Google assigns more value to a link that comes from a site with similar content. So as you can see, there are many variables when calculating PageRank.

4. How do I increase my PageRank?

Much ado about PageRank

Again, PageRank can be increased by the number of incoming links to your website from other sites on the Internet. In addition, it requires anywhere from five to seven times more to get from one level of PageRank to the next.

So for example, (and this is not a true formula) if 100 PageRank 3 sites with a link to your page give you a PageRank of 4, then it would take around 500 more PageRank 3 sites to link to you before you became PageRank 5. However if you had 1 link from a PageRank 8 site, that might be enough to give

a higher PageRank all by its self. It's really all relative and trying to figure it out will simply drive you mad, so don't bother. :) The best thing you can do is obtain as many quality incoming links from other sites with similar content as you possibly can.

Another important factor is the number of pages on your site. The more pages on your site, the higher potential you have to gain in PageRank. More pages doesn't mean you will get a higher PageRank only that you won't hit a ceiling. Apparently Google has a cut off point somewhere on the highest PageRank it will give to sites with a low number of pages.

5. When will my PageRank be updated or change?

According to the Google website, they update the index about once a month. However if you spend any amount of time reading search engine forums, you will find that results vary for every webmaster. PageRank may not update or may change drastically for a long period of time which is often times unexplainable. Usually as long as you follow good web site optimization techniques and maintain enough quality incoming links, the index will eventually assign your website PageRank and adjust any changes which may have been made in error.

Most Relevant Links Directory

<http://www.most-relevant-links.com/>

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A Tip for Finding Willing, Quality Links

Increase Your PageRank on Google

Google PageRank: Not Worth The Worry

7 Ways to get Great Links to your Website

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