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**SEO Copywriting – In the Wake of the "Florida" Update**

**By Karon Thackston**

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After Google's most recent update, those in the search engine optimization (SEO) field seem to be standing at attention. As sites that have held long–standing positions in the top 10 flounder and bob around in the search results like a fishing cork in a pond, many are scrambling for answers about what to do next. I've been asked for my opinions about changes in search engine copywriting, so I thought I'd share some of my insights.

Just like the SEOs whose editorials and interviews you've recently read, I too am expressing opinions here. Nobody knows for sure what has happened or what Google plans to do in the future. However, based on what I've seen so far, I do have some observations to share in response to a few commonly asked questions.

"Many are saying that `over–optimized' sites are being penalized. Should I reduce the keyword saturation on my pages?"

The changes at Google this go `round have nothing to do with a penalty; it's simply an algorithm change. No penalties, no punishments, etc. Over saturation of keywords has always been bad, however, many were getting away with it pre–Florida. I have never been a fan of "shoving" keywords into your copy wherever you have an extra syllable. Keeping an acceptable level of keyword saturation is still important. Just don't overdo it. Remember, your ultimate goal should be to write for your human visitors... not the search engine spiders.

Case in point: Do a Google search for the term "website design." At the time of this article, I clicked through to many of the sites returned in the top 10. As I read through the home pages of these sites, I noticed how often they repeated the keyphrase "website design." These pages had a good level of saturation. Not too heavy, not too light.

Unless yours is one of those sites where every third word is a keyword/phrase, I would not recommend changing the level of keyword saturation at this point.

"There have been reports of Google moving to a semantic-based system. Does this mean keywords will no longer be used?"

In my opinion, the reports are true... Google is moving to a semantic-type system. But that doesn't mean keywords are on their way out at all. After the changes are made, Google will be going beyond \*just\* looking for keywords on your page. They'll want well-written copy... actual language that speaks to your site visitors. That means your copy will take on a more important role than ever before. And that's great news!

For those of us who have been focusing on search engine copywriting that appeals to both the engines and the site visitors, Google's upcoming changes should be very exciting.

I have a couple of other common-sense thoughts on this topic as well.

Searchers will continue to type in search strings that bring up what they are looking for. While I have noticed the keyphrases getting longer over time, I have not read any research that states searchers have begun typing "wood, nails and glass" when they are actually hoping to find mirrors.

Common sense tells me that keyphrases will always be a determining factor in generating accurate search results.

The other common-sense aspect that comes to mind is that when Google moves to semantic search results, keyword saturation will become even more important. How will the spiders know what to gauge their semantic results by if there are no keywords included in your copy? Yes, semantics means that other types of verbiage need to be included, too... but — as I said earlier — hasn't that always been the case?

"Some people have said that Google is now favoring information sites and information pages. Should I write more information-based copy for my site?"

While \*some\* search results for \*some\* keyphrases do seem to be filled primarily with information-based directory sites (those that do not attempt to sell), it is not the norm. Google understands that over 85% of people looking to make a purchase turn to search engines. While information-filled pages definitely satisfy a need for the first part of the buying process, they don't replace retail sites.

People will continue to research and make purchases online. This means they'll want to see retail and other business sites returned in their search results. If they don't get what they're looking for, they'll simply use another search engine.

So, to answer the question, I've always thought (and so has Google) you should include information pages on your site. Gathering information was, is and will always be a part of the buying process. If

you currently don't have information pages on your site, yes, add some. But not because you think Google might approve... because your visitors will.

Just like the demise of most META tags, and just like Google practically ignoring ALT/image tags, "tricks" come and go. Write your copy primarily to impress your site visitors. Making drastic changes – unless they are based on a need by your target audience – is not a move I recommend.

Overall, it will take some time for any definite/solid information to filter down about the true effects of the "Florida" update. Theories will continue to swirl around the `Net. So will rankings! But the fact remains that "common-sense" SEO copywriting wins out in the long run.

Copy not getting results? Learn to write SEO copy that impresses both the engines and your visitors at <http://www.copywritingcourse.com>. Be sure to check out Karon's latest e-report "How To Increase

Keyword Saturation (Without Destroying the Flow of Your Copy) at <http://www.copywritingcourse.com/keyword>

### **Jagger Algo Update– Part 1**

#### **By Redalkemi Syndicate**

If there is one thing Search Engine Marketers and website owners fear – it is a major algorithm update, especially by Google. Well, much as we may like it not to happen, its here. Google has recently done a major algorithm update, nick named "Jagger" update series.

Google does minor algorithm updates almost on a monthly basis and once in a while, it implements a major algorithm update. The last major Google algorithm update happened in November 2003 called the Florida update, which created quite a stir with website rankings. To know more, read our article on Google Florida Algo Update.

Like the Florida update, the Jagger update has done the much feared "blender" act. It has churned the top-ranking websites and turned it into a list of unrecognizable pulp.

Google has been a hot-favorite amongst the web community searching for information. Most feel that the search results have always been highly relevant. It would be therefore safe to assume that whatever algorithm Google has, works just fine. So why does Google need to re-engineer its perfect-looking algo so drastically? Has it not heard the saying don't fix what aint broke"? From Google's standpoint, the reason is simple and valid. Well, for starters, web is ever-evolving and the algo always need to be adjusted in order to provide the best of results. Google engineered an algo, which it believes will reward good sites and rank them well for its viewers.

Google, like most other search engines, keeps this algo a closely guarded secret to prevent it from being exploited. However, the SEO community is constantly at work trying to rank their sites well. Using calculated guesswork, logical thinking, special tests and extensive trial-and-error methods, they

gradually figure out what the algorithm likes and dislikes. Armed with this knowledge, it is not difficult to work on websites to rank them high in SERP (Search Engine Result Pages), irrespective of whether the site deserves to rank at the top or not. This kind of algorithm abuse results in 'less than desirable' websites displacing good sites from the top ranks, contaminating the Google index. Consequently, following the Kaizen philosophy, Google needs to re-engineer its algorithms to keep, what it believes are bad sites, out of its top ranks. Naturally, major algorithm updates upset the current high-ranking websites & sends a lot of SEO professionals back to their work-bench in order to start all over again.

What is interesting to note is the timing of the algorithm update. When Google updated its algorithm in November 2003, there were large scale allegations by website owners that Google intentionally upset the rankings of popular websites just before the Christmas shopping season to force them into buying Google AdWords paid advertising in order to sustain the visitor traffic. While Google claims that the algo update decisions are not influenced by the AdWords team, it is difficult to understand why they would once again choose a critical timing just before Christmas shopping season to update their algorithm. The stakes are very high and its business after all. Google earned \$1.57 Billion in Q3 of 2005. If 2003 pre-Christmas algorithm update effect is any indication, I estimate that Google would record revenues of over \$2.05 Billion in Q4 of 2005.

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