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Wiki – What SEOs can learn from it

By Rob Sullivan

I've been actively researching ways to quickly and effectively build content to websites. And while blogs tend to be near the top of the list, there are other opportunities out there.

One such opportunity is a Wiki. And while a Wiki won't suit all sites, there are those that can use a Wiki effectively. If you think you are one of those sites, take a look at this article.

What is a Wiki?

Wiki is a piece of server software that allows users to freely create and edit web page content using any Web browser. Wiki supports hyperlinks and has a simple text syntax for creating new pages and links between internal pages on the fly.

Wiki is unusual among group communication mechanisms in that it allows the organization of contributions to be edited in addition to the content itself.

Like many simple concepts, "open editing" has some profound and subtle effects on Wiki usage. Allowing everyday users to create and edit any page in a Web site is exciting in that it encourages democratic use of the Web and promotes content composition by nontechnical users.

A History of Wiki

The first ever Wiki site was created for the Portland Pattern Repository in 1995. That site now hosts tens of thousands of pages. Since then they have grown to become one of the most popular community and web based applications available.

One of the most well known and popular Wiki projects is the Wikipedia.

Why Use a Wiki?

Wikis are growing at a phenomenal pace. This is because, at their core, they are about as simple as can be. That simplicity means that people find them easy to use, just like e-mail and blogs and like e-mail and blogs, Wikis also perform a very useful service in a simple way. A Wiki allows a group of people to enter and communally add or edit entries. These entries can be viewed and edited by anyone who visits the Wiki.

What this means is that, when you come to a Wiki, you are able to read what the Wiki's community has written. By clicking an "edit" button on an article, you are able to edit the article's text. You can add or change anything you like in the article you are reading.

This simplicity and the utter openness of a Wiki cause many people to instantly reject the idea. They assume that because anyone can edit a Wiki at any time, the Wiki must be flawed. But Wiki supporters claim this is an incorrect assumption.

This is because users involved in Wikis tend to be self policing. They check and re-check facts entered by themselves and others. Much like bloggers who can spot a spam blog quickly, Wiki users also know when a Wiki looks fraudulent.

Also, while not many Wiki employ it, there is the ability to have editorial control over the Wiki. That means that the Wiki owner can hold approval rights to all entries. Plus many Wikis require a simple registration before allowing entry or editing of articles.

SEM Benefits of Wiki

The biggest benefit of a Wiki lies in its use of heavy interlinking between pages. As a Wiki grows to become a resource it refers to itself more and more often through these links. For example, look at this wikipedia page about Wikis:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>

One would think that such heavy interlinking would cause the search engine to review the site more closely, potentially marking the site as spam. However, provided the site is useful, and because of the fact that it is a Wiki, search engines tend to let this type of heavy interlinking pass their usually rigorous spam tests.

Also, because it is community based, the Wiki provides an almost endless supply of new and fresh content to the website.

Wiki Resources

If you are interested in Wiki projects and how you could perhaps use one on your site, take a look at these resources.

<http://phpwiki.org/>

<http://tikiwiki.org/>

<http://computer.howstuffworks.com/wiki.htm>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wiki_software

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Wiki Reek–y Havoc

By Val Halla

The Vandals are coming! And this time they're after your wallets.

It's a new form of insidious spam and like its inbred email cousin, it's staggeringly stupid.

People are vandalizing "Wikis" in an attempt to get free advertising for their business.

First, what's a wiki?

If you're not familiar with this little web phenomenon, you should immediately dig in and learn. "Wiki" (pronounced "wee kee") is Hawaiian for "quick." And quick it is. The word is used on the web for a page that **anyone** can edit.

When I first heard of this concept I immediately thought "there is no way it will work – it will be utter chaos" but the mass proliferation of wikis and their clear success have proven me wrong.

The medium lends itself to some amazing ideas. For example, the "wikipedia" project is an online encyclopedia that anyone can edit. It's surprisingly accurate and useful.

Alas, as with all great things on the Internet, there are forces out there ready and willing to muck it up for everyone.

A "wiki vandal" is someone who goes to a wiki and posts erroneous information. Sometimes this is for fun (like posting your boss's phone number and sexual habits under a wiki entry about "bondage" – hehe), sometimes it's for damage (like totally erasing an entry just because you are bitter about life), and sometimes it's for advertising (like editing an entry with links to your bazillion dollar business "op*ortunity").

Luckily, there are people out there watching the wikis who will change erroneous information quickly. However, sometimes the vandalism is hard to catch and it sticks.

Now, if the wiki vandals were smart, they'd create a relevant encyclopedia entry about themselves and link to it from other wiki entries.

Do it relevantly and intelligently enough and it may just stick and bring you some appropriate attention.

But, of course, we're talking about spammers here, and there is already an encyclopedia entry for "Down's Syndrome."

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Val Halla researches Internet Marketing Oddities. You can be alerted when she discovers something odd enough and important enough to merit your attention when you visit her site:

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Wiki Walks In – take note

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