sample.com

SEO Update May 2022

https://peterwm.com

peter@peterwm.com

Overview

This document contains the May 2022 update for your SEO, including metric reports for keywords, site description etc., as well as information on updates.

In the interest of making this document readable, all the updates information is given at the beginning, and any data and supporting information afterwards.

Welcome

Welcome to the first "monthly update" for your SEO.

This details some updates on our current SEO statistics, as well as more information on the work I have done for you.

In this report:

- Statistical results
- Regular data processing and SEO configuration changes
- Software updates
- Google core update
- Google's Page Experience update
- Passage Ranking rolling out worldwide
- Structured code improvements for Wordpress
- Sitemaps
- 404 errors
- Mass data analysis
- Voice search information
- and more!

Results

Since I first did my work we have seen a positive improvement in your SEO statistics.

Over the past month:

- The number of times your site was seen in search results is up **57%!**
- Your clicks from results to your site are up **61%!**

So we're tracking **well** above our usual target which is 5% per month (which is considered a *very* good level of monthly growth within the industry).

One question I'm often asked by new clients who use Adwords is "what portion of that stats come from paid search?" The answer is *none.* **That growth is entirely from SEO.**

Usual processes

Using all the collected data for your site to date I was able to find a few tiny changes to make to your current SEO settings and configurations - of course this work (albeit a small section in this report) is the most significant - and time consuming - thing I do for your SEO.

This work is what keeps improving your statistics and rankings month-on-month.

Over time we can gather more and more data about your SEO performance, and then use that to continually hone and improve your SEO configurations, moving you further and further up the rankings.

Software updates

Your main SEO plugin had an update this month that added two new configuration options - I've configured these for you.

One of the other plugins had an update too - but it only impacted the way the plugin looks in your Dashboard - so I performed the update but didn't need to do anything further with it.

Google updates and changes

Google have started 2022 with some pretty big changes to their algorithm. Last month saw a shake up to how they prioritise various industries and business sectors. This month: it's reviews.

Online reviews

A lot of us rely on reviews online to help encourage visitors, and to build their trust. Reviews can be on your website, a Google business page, even extra ones like Trust Pilot or other sites that contain reviews that relate to your business.

Up until now Google treated all those reviews based on the 'rating'. (That just refers to what is usually shown online as a five-star system. Four out of five stars, etc.)

While any score Google maintains for you will still be worked out based on that - not all reviews count as much. And some count a lot more.

Any review just consisting of a star rating won't count for a lot anymore. Those with a few words of text as the actual review a bit more, but not a lot.

What to do

What you need to encourage your customers to do is leave LONG reviews, ideally with photographs if that's an option. Google says:
"Provide evidence such as visuals, audio, or other links of your own experience with the product, to support your expertise and reinforce the authenticity of your review."

As you can imagine that sort of review might take a while to write. But for that very reason, and because this is a recent change - not a lot of people have caught up with it yet so it represents a good opportunity to get a few decent reviews in place and get that extra SEO juice before your competitors.

Why are they doing this?

On the one hand this is designed to make the web more information and reviews more helpful - but at the same time it's to try to fight the 'review spam' where people buy them and fake accounts flood the system.

Google's Page Experience Update

Bear with me, this is a hard one to explain.

We all know Google has for years taken the loading time of a website into account when working out the site's SEO authority.

I shared with my clients a few months ago that Google was also interested in making sure the various elements on a page (like text areas, spaces that would hold photos etc.) loaded quickly too - essentially meaning a page's content wouldn't appear to move around as things like images loaded.

They've added two new things to that same check.

One is looking at how long it takes a page to load before users can do something on it. How long before a text link they can click loads? Or how long before a contact form can be submitted?

And the other is how long does the page take before the user can see enough content that it's meaningful for them to pay attention too?

Of course these are all permutations of 'speed'. But it shows us a lot about Google's intent and the sort of things they'll be taking into account in the future; they've been focusing on quality content for years - but they're also increasingly interested in how quickly users can get to and use that information.

There's nothing for you to do on this *yet.*

Rest assured as soon as there *is*, I'll let you know.

Passage Ranking rolling out worldwide

We're used to algorithm changes that affect rankings - some are big, others small, but this is one of the ones that starts to apply an entirely new technology to how they scan and rank pages.

What is Passage Rank?

In essence, it's looking more closely at every sentence in your site. Now, of course Google has always scanned every single word you have. But previously they've been seeing how the text on a page relates to a page's main topic: they attempt to work out what a page is about and then return that page in search results based on that over-arching subject.

They're still doing that, but also looking at each passage, or sentence, in your site as it's own potential topic.

That means even if you have a paragraph on a page that's not specifically about the same things as the page generally, you can now be more easily found for it.

The goal is to help people find helpful results for very specific queries.

To give an example, perhaps someone searches for "how do I know if my windows are safety glass?". There are a number of websites about safety glass; from what it is to manufacture, purchasing and installation. But there are very few pages out there dedicated to telling if you already have it or not - it's much more likely to be a paragraph or section on a page than an entire page itself.

Google has always been about trying to make finding the most useful and relevant information as convenient as possible - and that's exactly what this helps with.

Google and SEO analysts are very clear on this though - there is nothing for website owners to do as a result. This affects HOW Google understands your content, rather than anything structural or code-related to the site itself. Having said that I'll be looking for any advantage we can gain, no matter how small that may be.

It's estimated to effect 7% of all searches when it's completed.

Yet another Google change!

This is just a change to the display people see in search results: whereas it used to be that a "top story" related to a search was shown along the top, that section has been split into two columns. So there's double the number of top news stories now.

This doesn't have a specific effect on your campaign as yet. But this is the latest of a few places where Google has started experimenting with splitting information in search results into 50% columns - I'm keeping an ear out for any suggestion it might affect general search results soon too. Because that would have a big impact on all kinds of things.

Structured code improvements for Wordpress

We've seen more changes and improvements to how Wordpress handles 'Structured Data'. This seems to improve every several months, but it's always something I effect immediately because the benefits can be really strong.

What is 'Structured Data'?

It's a series of code tags that Google, Bing and Yahoo all use to work out what content on your site matches specific, common types of information. It goes by a variety of names, including schema, microdata, and a few others besides.
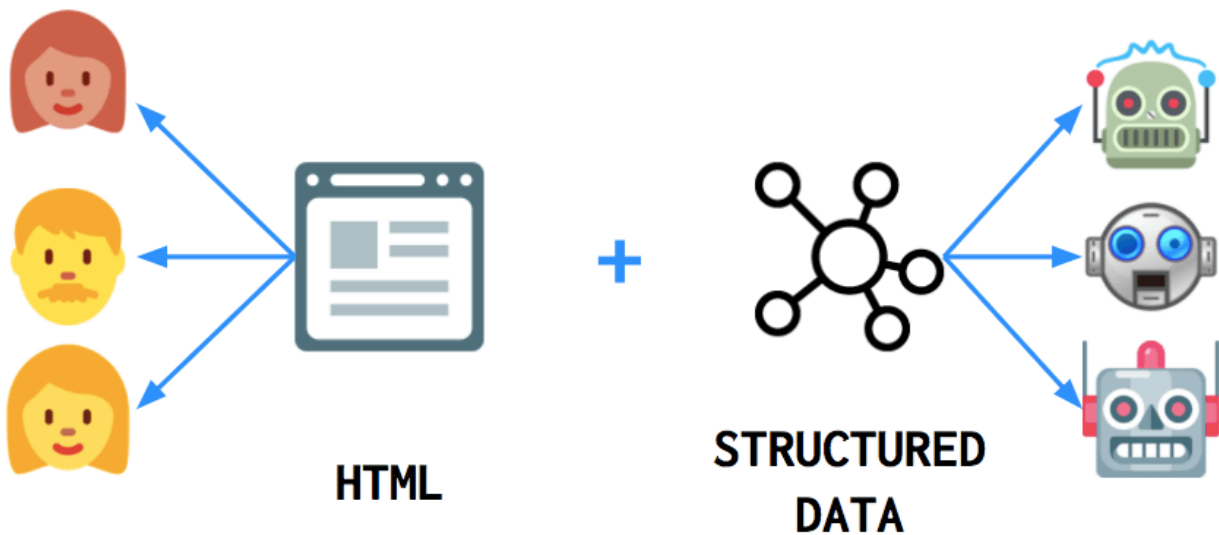
For example a phone number or address can be used as structured data, and the search engines can then pull that out and use it elsewhere. So if a phone number is used - and someone searches on their phone - Google might pull the phone number out into search results and make it a link.

In essence while the front-end of a website (HTML) shows information people, this data feeds it to robots.

I write about this quite a lot because it's these integrations between website data and other systems that are really the future of so much of the web.

What's changed?

Our primary SEO plugin does fairly regularly (every few months on average) add new data types we can use in this way. Which is excellent because it's important to have it be as widely implemented as possible.

HTML + STRUCTURED DATA

Sitemaps

Your sitemap is a small file that search engines use to find all the pages within your site. It's not a page on the site that people can see and use to navigate, rather it's a special type of file known as an XML file - essentially a way of structuring data in a single file that can be read a bit like a database.

This month we saw a change to the ideal way they're set up for Google and Bing. I adjusted your's accordingly.

It was a small change, but considering how important this file is for SEO (ensuring search engines know all the pages to scan on your site, which are the most important pages, when they were last updated, etc.) it's well worth having this entirely in line with the latest best practice.

404 errors

I have checked your site thoroughly for "404 errors". A 404 is a special web server code that simply means someone looked for a URL that doesn't exist. These are also called "page not found" errors. No doubt you've seen 404 pages yourself while browsing the web.

The trouble with these errors is that if you have them regularly (or if Google notices them) it

makes your site look like it has had content removed, or is simply not set up as well as can be.

It pays to check for these every few months to be sure none have crept in while other changes have been made to the content of the site.

I've taken a two pronged approach to this issue:

1.
    I checked your site to see if there are any internal 404 errors. This refers to links you may have within the sites themselves to other pages or content that doesn't exist.

    Across all the pages there were a couple of broken links, which I was able to remap just fine.

2.
    I have added a simple system that records every time someone tries to visit your site from somewhere else (e.g. Google, or even just typing in a URL manually) that resulted in a "Page not found". Each month I can check these, and fix them as necessary.

    The fix involves mapping broken links to proper content. For example, if someone tries to visit:
    /about-our-service

    when they should be going to:
    /about-us

    I can redirect it so the next time they're taken to the correct page.

Mobile speed is very important

Google have increased the importance of your website's mobile speed when working out where to rank it.

It's been true for a while that there's been some small impact on your ranking based on mobile speed (desktop speed has been important for years) but now that's been ramped up.

The most important metrics they use remain the sort of work I do in the code and the quality

of your content - but when those things are being looked after mobile speed is where you should turn your attention.

Unfortunately the automated tests out there tend to be a bit alarmist (I blogged about that recently, which you can read here: https://peterwm.com/problems-with-google-pagespeed-insights/ if you wish) but they can still serve as a reminder that there's nearly always room for improvement.

Wordpress certainly has its issues with speed. And most themes are still being built for desktop-first (meaning how it looks on a desktop computer is the primary concern, and then it's cut down and limited for mobile) when in fact current standards are clear that mobile-first should be the designers focus.

For my part, I continue to monitor your site speed and keep the caching work I've done up-to-date.

But do be aware that although the testing systems are imperfect, and Wordpress is very hard to score upwards of 80% with on most systems - the faster your site is the better.

In fact, mobile speed is now more important than desktop speed as a ranking metric for Google.

As a general piece of advice, my favourite tool for testing a site's overall speed (not mobile specific) is Pingdom:
https://tools.pingdom.com

They give you a list of different servers to choose from; so it's easier to get a real-world figure for your loading time in seconds - just like your target market will see it. Choose the nearest server to your primary audience, et voila.

Pingdom Website Speed Test

Enter a URL to test the page load time, analyze it, and find bottlenecks.

URL
https://google.co.uk/

Test from
Europe - United Kingdom - London

START TEST

The internet is fragile. Be the first to know when your site is in danger.

START YOUR FREE 14-DAY TRIAL

Your Results:

DOWNLOAD HAR   SHARE RESULT

Performance grade
A 93

Page size
383.2 KB

Load time
359 ms

Requests
19

Although none of the online speed testing tools are perfect, Pingdom has a lot of useful features.

Blogging

Blogging really is one of the best things you can do for SEO. Writing regular 300 word posts shows search engines that your website is current, updated often, and has original content.

This shows search engines that your site is "active", and you get a great deal more search kudos as a result. Not to mention that every on topic post you write helps reinforce your search terms.

The perfect schedule would be two posts a week, on regular days (for example, every Monday and Thursday). I appreciate blogging can be time consuming, and even though I believe the pay-off is worth it, at the very least I would ask you post something every fortnight.

Google index results

From next month I will suggest some search queries for us to track and follow your success on.

As I've only been collecting this data for short space of time, doing this reporting this month would be statistically problematic.

In my experience at this stage the data can often be misleading and start us tracking terms that aren't going to be the best going forward.

Given at least 45 days (which therefore covers well over a monthly cycle) I'll be in a much better position to say what search queries we do well for and which we should reinforce more to improve.

Mass data analysis

Obviously each month I look at a wealth of data for your site's performance in search results and run several processes on that to determine tweaks and updates I can make to your configuration to help move you further up the rankings. (As mentioned above.)

But there's another extremely useful set of data behind the scenes too.

Lots of professional SEOers like myself anonymise data from their clients and merge it to create giant pools of site-data to help determine the settings, configurations and schemas that are most effective.

Google has a lot of information they share within their guidelines but there's still some very small and important gaps in that information.

For example, Google do say to not have "too many commas or punctuation 'stop' characters" in your page descriptions, but just how many is too many is something we learn about from this bulk analysis.

So this mass-data analysis is incredibly helpful.

This month a very large pool of data was analysed and returned to help direct SEO in very specific ways.

However just like most times I run this process very little of my work needed changing as a result - as you know I follow not just Google's guidelines but their overall ethos, which helps inform the direction they're going to move with SEO before they even roll out updates and changes.

Google Suite of Tools

As Google continues to push out more and more updates to their various standards (AMP, their preferred schema markup, even shopping for sites that use that) they're bringing out a wealth of extra testing tools for sites.

As those come out I am running your pages through them, but please bear in mind as they troubleshoot those new tools (several of which have already been problematic!) and bring extra functionalities on board it's entirely likely there will be a few weeks of teething issues.

All these standards are something of a moveable feast. The plugins that operate them on Wordpress don't get information on any changes to the standards until Google has made those live - they then need to rush out changes to their software to keep them up to date.

Which is also why one of the considerations when deciding which SEO plugins to use is definitely:
"How quickly have they historically adjusted to standards updates?"

(One example of a recent version of a new testing tool. Note the disclaimer in the yellow box, "This is a beta version. Not all rich results and error types are supported yet.")

Voice Search

Voice searching is the big discussion in SEO circles at the moment. 41% of adults search for something using voice at least once a day, and for young adults it's over half!

This applies to Google voice search, Alexa home devices, Siri...anything you can ask a question and expect a result.

The good news is the way we approach SEO for voice search hasn't drastically differed. Yes, voice searches tend to be longer and more conversational. And direct too.

Here's an example, let's say I want to know what the highest mountain is in the UK. Previously I might have entered:

highest mountain uk

into a search engine.

But when asking a voice assistant, I'm more likely to say something along the lines of:
tell me what is the highest mountain in the uk

So longer and more conversational. But despite its length it **is** more direct, I'm being clearer about what I want to know, which is what the highest one is.

That text search could bring up a page of results that list several high mountains, or articles that talk about a recent event or news story that took place on the highest mountain.

At this point in time search engines are taking these voice questions and dumbing them down for their own purposes. So when a voice search tool is actually working out what results to return, the example above could well be turned into that more 3-word version behind the scenes.

What's really going to have an impact (and this is a long way off, Google for example have said it's something they want to have implemented by 2022) is when that directness starts to be factored in a lot more intuitively.

Because at that point in time search will become less like looking up relevant information based on a subject and more to do with answering really specific questions.

It's very early days to think about how the approach we take to SEO might change when that happens. But the key will be in line with the major engines' existing ethos - your website should have a clear purpose, and be written in a natural human readable way so that visitors can easily find the information they're looking for.

And in that regard voice search is really just a continuation of the direction the search engines have been heading toward for over a decade.

SPOTLIGHT ON: Backlinks

Backlinks are great for SEO but only if they're legitimate. All off-site SEO basically comes down to is creating backlinks.

Directory listings, local citations, they're all much the same when it comes to it.

Backlinks help if they're legitimate - which means someone likes your site and has a proper reason to link to it. Any attempt to manipulate your own link profile goes against Google's guidelines - and they're adept at catching people and penalising them for it.

My approach to SEO is entirely Google friendly; I very much believe the best approach is to match the search engines' approach and fulfill their guidelines and recommendations.

This is sort of a catch-22, because while you shouldn't fake links you do want them. My usual advice is to make use of your real life contacts to get some - ask suppliers or related sites to link to you, that sort of thing.

I should add too when people **do** get links without properly asking people they really know for them - they tend to get extremely low quality ones. Too many low quality links hurts rather than helps. For example, every single person I've ever seen selling a BBC, Apple or Huffington Post link are actually just creating user profiles on those systems and sticking URLs in the bio section of those profiles.

That's not really a proper link on the BBC! People think they're going to get something in a news article, but more often than not they're on pages Google doesn't even index. The effect is people buy a back link on a 'high quality domain' but don't get any SEO authority for it at all.

The people selling these links aren't even doing it manually. There are automated tools they use to create hundreds of links in a few minutes. Google is smarter than this.

Because Google says explicitly that trying to manipulate your own link profile is against their terms there is no such thing as paying for Google safe links. It's an oxymoron.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	Linking page										
2	https://www.yell.com/s/print services-ellesmere port.html										
3	http://www.ybw.com/forums/showthread.php?63932-Oily-film-on-350-Statesman										
4	https://www.thomsonlocal.com/search/promotional-items/wistaston-cheshire?sorting=distance										
5	https://www.yell.com/s/colour printing-new brighton-mold.html										
6	http://www.ybw.com/forums/showthread.php?87427-High-Oil-Pressure										
7	http://www.thomsonlocal.com/Promotional-Items/in/Blacon-Cheshire/										
8	https://www.yell.com/s/t shirt printing-stamford bridge-great barrow.html										
9	https://www.yell.com/ucs/UcsSearchAction.do?find=Y&location=Kings Road, CH66, Little Sutton, Ellesmere Port&keywords=print services										
10	https://www.yell.com/s/business printing-bowmere road cw6 tarporley.html										
11	https://www.yell.com/s/t shirt printing-estuary boulevard l24 speke liverpool.html										
12	http://www.ybw.com/forums/showthread.php?179361-Mooring-places-in-South-of-France										
13	http://www.ic-xa.com/Fork-Lift-Trucks-Parts										
14	http://www.ybw.com/forums/showthread.php?63716-SPARE-ANCHOR										
15	http://www.ybw.com/forums/showthread.php?62021-Fridges										
16	http://www.ybw.com/forums/showthread.php?87541-Running-Volvo-290-Outdrives-out-of-the-water										
17	http://www.ybw.com/forums/showthread.php?65118-quick-question-volvo-431-205										
18	https://www.yell.com/s/print shops-bromborough.html										
19	http://www.ybw.com/forums/showthread.php?56922-New-Azimut-116-on-the-rocks-(pics-for-broadband)/page3										
20	https://www.thomsonlocal.com/search/promotional-items/bradley-clwyd?sorting=reviews										
21	http://chester-chw.openinghours24uk.com/contract-furniture-specialists										
22	https://www.yell.com/s/digital printing-deeside.html										
23	https://mvlc.info/explore/fondamento-font-free/										
24	http://www.ybw.com/forums/showthread.php?63792-Looking-for-the-converted-MFV-Travessa										

It's incredibly easy to accidentally end up with a bad link profile, filled with junk links.

Additional work to be carried out in coming months

- Further speed optimisation
- Extra location work
- Check external 404 errors and remap as needed
- Check updated position of successful search queries in Google--this is important; from month two we start to chart our success with a variety of search queries

https://peterwm.com

peter@peterwm.com