



Internet Marketing

Part 1: Google updates their SEO algorithm—do you comply?

The Internet is changing at lightning speed, and staying on top of the latest updates is crucial to your Internet marketing success.

Google recently announced another major update to their SEO (search engine optimization) mathematical algorithm. This formula is used to determine page ranking of your website and blog. The **speed** of your website is now taken into consideration when Google determines page rank. Not only does SEO, longevity, visitor activity, and back links (just to name a few) comprise their formula, they are also looking at how fast your website loads.

The massive growth of the World Wide Web, the explosion in mobile marketing with cell phones, and the addition of the new iPad using mobile 3G technology, prompted Google to be more proactive in controlling massive site design. Google is encouraging Web owners to work with them for a more user-friendly Internet environment while attempting to address Web storage to expedite online search. What better way to grab the attention of website owners and encourage them to cooperate with online efficiency than to penalize them for slow download time in comparison to competitors, which in turn slows down searches. With over 200 million websites online, the timesavings add up.

In addition, the majority of websites today are not mobile ready on a cell phone or iPad. Flash websites or Flash headers found on many websites increase loading time and fail to integrate with mobile units. Most video is incompatible with mobile units or iPad unless in MPEG-4 or 3G compatible formats.

Does this mean you have to redesign your website? The answer is NO... in most cases. However, if you are currently redesigning your website or creating your first website, it is important to address these issues NOW while still in design stage rather than redesigning later.

by *Mary Kay Miller*

So, what do you need to know to remain on the "bleeding" edge of Internet marketing today?

Here are **five tips** on how to evaluate your website to meet SEO guidelines and ramp up your website design for mobile marketing and iPad consumers:

1. Check out how your website looks on a cell phone with Internet access. If your header of video is black or text is overlapping or illegible when zooming in, your website needs editing. In some cases, a site redesign or separate mobile website is indicated. If you find problems on a cell phone, the same is true on an iPad.
2. Remove Flash intros and music. Statistics report consumers don't like Flash intros or music. This is an easy inexpensive fix to speed up loading of your site.
3. Update your Flash header. Although Flash headers are more engaging than stationary headers, it increases load time using multiple photos and is not visible on most mobile units. Contact information embedded in your header disappears. There are different options available without going through site redesign... so don't panic. Feel free to contact me to discuss.
4. Store or embed your video on a separate hosting service. Upload your video to YouTube and embed their code in your website or ask your hosting service to store your video on a separate server. This will speed up download time when visitors enter. However, the video from your hosting service must be in MPEG-4 or compatible mobile video formats to view on mobile technology or iPad.

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- Streamline or reduce your written content. Remove all fluff, bullet point wherever you can, combine pages where possible, and delete pages consumers don't read. More is not better in the eyes of Google. The average size of an orthodontic website is 25–30 pages. Stay within this range to remain competitive in your local area.

It is too soon to tell how this update will affect the SEO of orthodontic websites. If you see your page rank slipping in your local area, the speed of your website may be the cause. Check your page ranking on a monthly basis yourself, even if you have services outsourced to track results. Since Internet Explorer stores your Web history, make sure you use Firefox or Safari as your Web browser for a more accurate test. ☺

Part 2: Google Local Maps updates offer new marketing opportunities

One of the most frustrating aspects of Internet marketing today is there are no road maps to help you navigate your way easily around the Internet terrain and keep up with the latest updates and trends.

Internet marketing gurus spend a good portion of their time keeping up with announcements from the major players such as Google, Yahoo, and social media sites. Since the Internet is moving a lightning speed, it is a monumental task sifting through all the information published online.

Like you, I rely upon the experts to keep me current. As updates become available, I in turn pass it on to the orthodontic community. However, since I am continuously working in the backend of the Google Local Business Center with my clients, I am able to stay on top of the latest updates myself, first hand.

As Google continues to overhaul its local search algorithms, new services are appearing to enhance local business marketing opportunities. Yahoo is also updating its local search algorithms. This restructuring is a result of the massive increase in local search queries over the past few years which is currently outpacing general queries by consumers.

Google Maps Updates—What's New?

- The Google Local Business Center is now called "Google Places" to keep up the with local search business theme. If you haven't noticed, when you enter the backend of your Google Local Maps verified listing, the local business center link disappeared and is now replaced with the "Google Places" link. The first day of the update, I spent hours trying to figure out what happened.
- Google Places is now sponsoring local ads. Initially the marketing program was in beta testing in San Jose and Houston at the beginning of the year, but has now rolled out across the country and is promoted in all local areas. For \$25 per month, you have the opportunity to highlight your maps listing with a direct link to your website, your videos on YouTube, or your business promotions. You can cancel the ads at any time and it is well worth the minimal cost of the program if you have a page one maps listing. It



is questionable if the program is of benefit for businesses not listed on page one of the maps, since few consumers will venture off page one of local search. Only time will tell.

I also determined a sponsored ad will not guarantee a page one maps listing if this is your reason for signing up. Positioning on the maps is usually based on demographic location within the area and possibly organic page ranking. No one is really sure. However, since the updates started in September 2009, I noticed practices with the most reviews seem to fare better on page one maps results than those that don't.

- QR codes or scan codes, similar to bar codes, are now available on the backend of your verified listing. All you have to do is print the code, scan the printed image, and upload the image to your website, blog, or Facebook page. The QR code offers mobile users with smart phones quick access to your information.

Free software is now available to create your own QR codes for special marketing promotions on your website. As mobile marketing continues to grow, QR codes will be a leading edge marketing tool to direct traffic your listing.
- Once signed into your Google Places backend, you now have the ability to respond to individual reviews written about your practice. This allows businesses the opportunity to refute a bad review if indicated or respond to positive comments.

Local Maps updates continue to offer more opportunities for local businesses to take advantage of the latest Internet marketing trends available with advanced digital technology. However, unless you verify your listing correctly and index your business with Google, you will not have the opportunity to take advantage of these services.

It's not the big that eat the small... but the fast that eat the slow. If you haven't already done so, take advantage of these new opportunities today. ☺

About the Author



Mary Kay Miller of Orthopreneur™ Marketing Solutions is an Internet marketing coach specializing in SEO and Web 2.0 Internet marketing solutions. She transforms orthodontic practices from ordinary to extraordinary with the latest in digital technology.