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Why Would Google “Sunset” Organic Search?

Tips to improve your website’s search results

By: Josie Johnson

You have probably seen the articles, including a recent one in [Inc. magazine](#), asserting that Google is killing organic search. There are some compelling arguments that the search giant is indeed placing revenue-generating AdWords ahead of free, organic search. After all, why would Google not want to drive more people to invest in AdWords when organic search is ineffective or hard to measure? This particular article and many others focus on the slow takeover that ads are staging on search page real estate. It is strong evidence, but there is another move by Google that is much subtler and even stronger.

Keyword	Visits	% Visits
1. (not provided)	30	44.12%

In October 2011, Google rolled out a new feature that changed the way search data is gathered under the auspices of privacy protection. When a user is logged into any Google product, including Gmail, the searches they conduct are done over SSL. This means that the data showing which specific keywords referred them to your site is hidden and put into a “not provided” keyword category. Google predicted that this category would represent a small fraction of search data, less than 10 percent, when it rolled out the new method. However, all evidence points to the contrary, with “not provided” making up a [whopping 56 percent of search traffic in analytics for tech websites](#).

So, does this prove that Google is working toward a sunset strategy for organic search? Surely not. But it does motivate some companies to turn to paid searches to gain greater certainty and understanding when it comes to the source of website traffic. One can assume that was the point all along, especially since there is a loophole in the policy for AdWords for retargeting ads. Like all change, things are not likely to ever go back to the good old days. So a shift in mind-set is needed when it comes to understanding website traffic sources without investing a small fortune in ads.

In addition to shifting the way you think about your website metrics, there are things you can do outside of keywords to help improve your rank. Google values content and credibility a lot more than keywords. Its algorithm heavily factors in how often your website’s content is refreshed, shared and recommended. Here are a few helpful tips to improve your website’s search results:

- Create a blog that is focused on a specific list of keywords and has a robust team of contributors to keep the website fresh and relevant.
- Create and share content – white papers, articles, surveys, etc. – through targeted social media efforts and point all posts back to the website.
- Place backlinks to the website in a variety of trusted sources, such as news and conference sites, through press releases, articles and sponsorships.
- Implement social sharing capabilities across all digital marketing and PR efforts.



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About the Author

Josie Johnson is a marketing consultant for Edge Legal Marketing with a passion for creative lead generation and nurturing programs and a belief that marketing can directly impact revenue! She is an avid nature lover and enjoys traveling and hiking with her husband and two young kids.



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