Google algorithm ‘change types’

Boston
More emphasis on quality back-links

Cassandra
Cracking down on link-quality issues, such as linking from co-owned domains, hidden text & hidden links.

Dominic
Improving on counting and reporting backlinks

Esmeralda
Improvements on the index infra-structure

Fritz
Improvements on the index infra-structure

Supplemental Index
Update splitting off results of lesser quality into the "supplemental" index.

Florida
Crack-down on low-value late 90s SEO tactics, like keyword stuffing.

Allegra
Crack-down on suspicious-looking links.

Bourbon
Improvements in how duplicate content and non-canonical (www vs. non-www) URLs were treated.

Personalized Search
Results take user's search histories into account

Jagger
Crack-down on low-quality links, including reciprocal links, link farms, and paid links.

Austin
Crack-down on SEO-tactics, inc. deceptive on-page tactics, including invisible text and META-tag stuffing

Brandy
Latent Semantic Indexing (LSI), anchor text relevance, synonyms and keywords, intro idea of link "neighborhoods".

Google Local/Maps
Maps data is integrated into the Local Business Center.

Big Daddy
Infrastructure update changing the way URL canonicalization, redirects ao technical issues are handled.

Supplemental Update
Changes to the supplemental index and how filtered pages were treated.

Universal Search
Integrating traditional search results with News, Video, Images, Local, and other verticals.

Buffy
Update to single-word search results and other small changes.

Dewey
Unspecified update to the index, reportedly pushing Google's own internal properties, including Google Books.

Google Suggest
Update displaying suggested searches in a dropdown below the search box and later powering Instant.

Vince
Big brands get a boost in the results.

Real-time Search
Twitter feeds, Google News, newly indexed content, ao were integrated into a real-time feed on some SERPs.

Social Signals
Social signals are included in determining ranking, including data from Twitter and Facebook.

Negative Reviews
Update to ranking based on negative reviews.

Google Places
"Places" originally only a part of Google Maps was now integrated more closely with local search results.

May Day
Crack-down on low-quality pages ranking highly for long-tail searches.

Caffeine
Launch of new web indexing infrastructure resulting in a 50% fresher index.

Brand Update
Same domains are allowed to appear multiple times on a SERP.

Google Instant
Displaying search results as a query was being typed.

Panda
Crack-down on thin content, content farms, sites with high ad-to-content ratios, and a number of other quality issues.

Freshness Update
Update primarly affecting time-sensitive results signalling a much stronger focus on recent content.

Search + Your World
Update pushing Google+ social data and user profiles into SERPs.

Venice
More localized organic results and more tightly integrate local search data.

Penguin
Crack-down on spam factors, including keyword stuffing and link schemes.

Knowledge Graph
Rolling out a SERP-integrated display providing supplemental object about certain people, places, and things.

Exact-Match Domain (EMD) Update
Crack-down on low quality websites that have search terms in their domain names.

DMCA Penalty ("Pirate")
Crack-down on software and digital media piracy.

Payday Loan
Crack-down on spammy queries.

Pigeon
Altering local results and modifying how location cues are handled, creating closer ties between the local and core algorithm(s).

HTTPS/SSL Update
Giving preference to secure sites.

Authorship Removed
Authorship by-lines disappearing from all SERPs.

In-depth Articles
New type of result, dedicated to more evergreen, long-form content.

Hummingbird
Core algorithm update that powers changes to semantic search and the Knowledge Graph.

"In The News" Box
Change to News-box results expanding news links to a much larger set of potential sites.

Pirate 2.0
Crack-down on software and digital media piracy.

Mobile Update/ "Mobilegeddon"
Mobile-friendlyness becomes a stronger ranking factor for mobile searches.

The Quality Update
Core algorithm change impacting "quality signals".

2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015

LEGEND

- Local
- Personalization / social
- Real-time / Freshness
- Semantic / Query
- Universal
- Infrastructure
- Anti-manipulation / Quality
- Anti-piracy
- Trust
- Mobile

A timeline of key Google algorithm change types from the first named and confirmed update Boston in 2002 until June 2015. The timeline is by no means exhaustive. Google changes its algorithm 500-600 times per year. While most of these changes are minor, others are ‘major’ in that they have the biggest impact on search. A selection is made from the work by SEO consultancy company MOZ keeps track of these major algorithm changes by tracking changes in results for a set of queries with their ‘Rank Tracker’ tool, community submissions and updates reported by Google.

Analysis and visualization by Esther Weltevrede
Source: https://moz.com/google-algorithm-change

© 2015 DMI

digital methods initiative