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## PubCon 2011: Matt Cutts & Amit Singhal

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Male Speaker 1: Matt's also brought along his friend that I'm gonna let Matt introduce. I didn't know whether Matt was bird dogging Amit, or Amit was bird dogging Matt. But, we'll let Matt talk about that in a minute. So, Matt's got about 15 minutes of slides and then we're gonna do a whole bunch of Q & A, so get your questions ready for Matt and Amit and without further adieu Mr. Matt Cutts.

Matt Cutts: All right, can people hear me okay? Should I be louder? No, this is okay? All right, cool, so somebody asked me, "What was the favorite Tweet that you saw yesterday from Pubcon?" And, I was thinking about it and there was a really good one that kinda caught my eye. Basically, somebody said, [Leo Laporte](#) says, "Search engines are gonna be irrelevant in six months," right? And somewhere Matt Cutts just spit out his coffee.

So, in fact, I did a 30 day challenge where I gave up coffee, so you know, I only drink water now. And, I was in my hotel room working on my slides when I read that Tweet, so nobody got to see my reaction. So, I'll do a dramatic reenactment right now. What?! Did you guys know this? Brett, did you know this? We're all gonna be irrelevant in six months? Like, has Pubcon in Hawaii shut down now because that's more than six months from now? So, yikes.

Okay so, you know, the claim is SEOs might be out of a job in six months. And, I have to say, if you took all the times that people said SEO was dead, you'd have like a zombie character from the Walking Dead, right? Like, it's everybody's favorite **mean** to say that SEO's dead. And, the fact is [SEO](#) is not dead and here's the very simple reason:

SEO is a type of marketing and marketing appeals to human nature. And, that's never going to go away, right? So, there's really useful stuff that you guys provide. Now, I don't know if you wanna think of yourselves as marketers. Personally, I prefer to think of SEO as coaching, right? There's people who have like the equivalent of an online resume and they wanna get hired. And, what an SEO does is tries to make sure that they put their best face forward, that they present themselves in the best possible light. There's nothing wrong with that.

So, we made a video that said, SEO is not spam. There are tons of white hat SEOs out there and a very small number of black hats, right? They might encourage you to lie on your resume, but for the most part, it's almost like you're a coach. You're teaching somebody how to interview better. And, it's the exact same problem where it's like, if somebody doesn't have a good resume, and they don't have the skills, your job as an SEO is much harder. But, there will always be a role for people who wanna present themselves better.

And so, if you look back a few years ago, SEO might've been more mechanical, right, do you have the right key words, do you have the right titles? More and more, SEOs about human nature and trying to appeal to human nature. The other constant in SEO, is that search is about change. If you look back maybe ten years, think about what things were like back then, you had GoTo, which became Overture, Yahoo, Bing, AltaVista, Ask Jeeves, Google.

SEO was a little simpler then. We didn't have **real economic**, we didn't have to follow, we didn't have a lot of the tools, like Webmaster Tools. It was basically try to get as many keywords on the page and if you were smart back in 2001, try to get some links. And, these days, SEO and search is a completely different kind of challenge, there's Google, there's Bing, there's all those traditional search engines, but there's also mobile, apps, that entire trend; things like social, local. And then, as Leo Laporte even mentioned there's voice. So, things like Siri, Android Voice Actions.

So, SEO, the way that you present yourself, the way that you help companies present yourself, the only constant is change. And, the very best SEOs understand that. They understand that you don't wanna go where search engines are, you wanna go where search engines are going to be. And search engines are going to try to return the best possible user experience. So, as long as your moving in the same directions, you're working with the search engines and you don't need to worry about change. Change is going to help you. Change is going to benefit you.

So, I wanted to just talk very briefly about some of the stuff that's happened in the recent past, and then a few things to expect from the future. And then, we wanna leave lots and lots of time for Q&A.

Back in 2010, a few people were like, "Where is the Web Spam team? I haven't seen them. I don't know what they're working on. It's like they're a black hole." And, I just wanted to give you a little bit of perspective about what was going on in 2010. The answer is hacked sites were going on.

So, we had this whole side model going on with black hat SEOs that was a pretty pitched battle. And, in order to be able to make sure the hack sites didn't just overwhelm our rankings, we had to take a lot of people to work on it. So, all the people who were doing conventional SEO, white hat SEO, even grey hat SEO, you might not have seen all the resources that we were trying to put into trying to work on hack sites.

In 2011, people have seen as we've come back and started to work on things that are not like hack sites, that are sort of hidden away in dark

corners. And, we've started to collaborate a lot more with the search engine quality team, which is, really one reason why I'm glad we Amit today, so he can also answer questions from the search quality side.

So, there's not a ton to say about Panda, we've said a lot about Panda. I'll just reiterate the high order points, which is this was a change that was initiated from the search quality group, the Web Spam group absolutely helped. It was a joint effort. It's an algorithmic change, so we haven't made any manual exceptions. If people feel like they've been hurt by Panda and don't think that that's deserving, we're happy to hear about that because we understand no algorithm is perfect. You're always going to have false positives.

And so, when we evaluate a change, we try to make sure that it makes things better most of the time, even if it makes things a little bit worse some of the time. So, we're always happy to hear about sites that you believe are high quality, that are affected by our algorithms. And then, we take that back to the engineers and we try to figure out, is there some signal? Is there some way that we could've made things a little bit better so that we could've known this was a higher quality site. And, sort of put a little bit of daylight between the higher quality site and something that might've been lower quality?

The other big effort that we've had in 2011 is communication. So, at this point, we're giving many, many more heads ups to Webmaster's if they're violating our Webmaster guidelines. So, if my team, which does take manual action, and there's some people in the room here who have been spam fighters before and who have taken manual action. If we have taken manual action, you can go to the Webmaster council and you can file a reconsideration request.

And, you will now get a very good idea about 1., whether we've taken manual action. 2., when you here back from us, you'll be able to know whether we think your site has gotten better, whether your site doesn't have any manual action at all, which is the vast majority of the time, or whether we still think you're in violation of our guidelines.

So, that's something that a year ago, whenever we talked at the last Pubcon, just did not exist. It's radically better communication. If you think that the manual web spam team has taken some action, you now have a way to know about it. And, you can of course, file appeals using the reconsideration request. So, that's something that is totally new in the last year and I think one of the most important things that we've done.

I also wanted to talk a little bit about the future, right because, you know, you guys know a little bit about the past. Let's talk about what's coming

up. And, I wanna give you a 10,000 foot view, the 1,000 foot view, and then the 1 foot view.

So, the 10,000 foot view is, is some of these very long term SEO trends. The first one is mobile. What is a cell phone? A cell phone is a computer that you carry with you everywhere. That's gonna change things enormously. There's a huge number of people, whether they be in Tanzania or rural Tennessee, who will have a cell phone with them and who might not even have computers.

So, you need to be thinking about how your website, or how your property, is affected by mobile searches. And, do you look okay? Do you present yourself well? They're selling \$35 tablets in India now. So, the days of just thinking of yourself as a desktop browser, how do I look Opera, how do I look in Firefox, how do I look in Chrome? You need to be thinking about mobile as well. It's a really big trend.

Another 10,000 foot trend is social. I think there's been a lot of discussion about social here, in fact, it might be the case that a few people are getting a little ahead of themselves. Just as a reminder, if you're working on something like Twitter or Facebook, that's essentially a private webform. We can only use any signals that we see that we can crawl on the open web. So, if you're doing something on pages that are blocked from Googlebot, that signals that we don't have. So, most of what we do is based on the open web.

Now, longer term, it's definitely the case that we think about social because if we can move from an anonymous web to a web in which everybody has at least some idea of the reputation of an author, that's gonna make the whole web better. If you don't have to worry about anonymous blog spam and spend time pruning out those comments because you know exactly, "Oh, that person actually left this?" That's gonna leave more accountability and that's gonna mean you've got a better web.

So, social is really interesting. It's one of the areas where you don't have to necessarily optimize for search engines, right? There's been a lot of people in the various sessions who have been talking about how you can drive traffic, and conversions, and money without even involving search engines.

So, if Google disappeared tomorrow, heaven forbid, people would be okay. It might be a little annoying, but between other search engines and things like social, you would find ways to fill in the gap. And, that's kind of new, that's kind of interesting, that's the trend towards change that you see in SEO.

One last one is local, of course, because that's where the vast majority of concrete purchases takes place. So, mobile, social, local, I think are some of the trends that are going to be affecting things for the next several years and you probably want to have a strategy for each one of those.

Okay, so that's a 10,000 foot view, let's move down to a 1,000 foot view. We're definitely gonna be thinking a lot more about better page understanding. In the old days, if you had Googlebot, it was kind of an idiot browser. It was like a browser that had the intelligence of a five year old. And, Googlebot is getting smarter. So, we now have the ability to index dynamic comments, things like Facebook, **Live Fire**, Discuss. So, if we have the ability to crawl those pages, we can often process the job descript, and then interpret that.

We're also looking at better page understanding in terms of actually understanding what's on the page? What are the things that really matter? So, I talked about this in a live Q&A that we did a few weeks ago. But, we're looking at algorithms that try to figure out how much content is above the fold?

So, if you have so much stuff obscuring, whether it's ads or whatever, that people can't even see to the content above the fold, you might wanna think about that. That's an algorithm that we have currently in evaluation. It looks like a pretty nice win in terms of improving page quality.

So, I just wanted to give people a little bit of a preview so you can think about, what is the layout of your site look like? When someone lands on that page, in the first 50 milliseconds when they're forming a conception, do they see content or do they see something else that's distracting, or annoying, or whatever?

Another 1,000 foot trend, search is becoming more personal. I'll save the discussion of SSL for the inevitable question that will happen, you know, as soon as we open it up for Q&A. But, it's definitely the case that if you start to open up things like Android Voice Actions, where you can say, "Sending a note to self, do something." If somehow that voice recognition doesn't work, that falls through to Google. And, the exact same thing happens with Siri.

If you're trying to send yourself a text and that falls through because the voice recognition doesn't work, that's a query that's sent to Google. So, the trend is absolutely towards people feeling more comfortable sending more personal searches to Google. Now, they're not personally identifiable, but they're definitely the sorts of things that you wouldn't

have done five or ten years ago from just a regular desktop browser. So, I would expect that search will keep becoming more personal.

We're gonna keep rolling out better tools for searchers. So, for example, you guys noticed that we launched Plus Pages for business, just earlier in Pubcon, so on Monday. That allows you to say something like, "Plus Toyota" and you can see Toyota's page directly in the search results, it'll take you right there. Now, the problem with that is how many people use the Plus Operator from time to time? Okay so, what's okay, the hands are a little mousey today. We're kind of like, okay, how many people use the Plus Operator? A few, but not everybody and you guys are among the most savvy searchers in the world.

So, on one hand, we've changed the sense of the Plus Operator, which was kind of a disappointment. What we're looking at is whether there's some way to give you back the ability to do that power search? To say, "This is exactly what I wanted. I actually did want to spell it carousel without the 'u'" or something like that.

So, I wouldn't be surprised if we offered something like a verbatim mode or a little mode, literal mode that said, "This is exactly what I want to search for." Turn off the stemming. Turn off the synonyms, just give me exactly what I wanted because that will give you a better tool as a searcher to find information.

We're also gonna be working on communication of transparency. I've got a couple specific things in mind. This is always where we're trying to be more transparent, communicate more. But, if you run a website, anybody run WordPress? Yeah, more people run a WordPress than use the Plus Operator, in case you were wondering. Anybody ever been hacked using WordPress? Oh, quite a few, it's okay, like it's a common occurrence, right, because you have to update the software yourself. It's not based on the Cloud so you have to remember to run the updates.

So, one thing that we've started to do is to tell people if they're WordPress is out of date, and so that they know they can get an email alert and say, "Oh, I need to update my WordPress." So, we're gonna keep doing that, but we're looking at doing that for more and more software packages. So, if there's some piece of software that's vulnerable or is out of date, then we could send you an alert via the Webmaster Tools account. So, that's something that we're looking at.

In terms of transparency, we wanna turn as much of our decision making inside out as we can. And so, we're thinking about all kinds of radical transparency. You know, could we announce some of the algorithm changes that we do, like bum, bum, bum, bum, bum, go down the line and

do a blog post or something like that. I think that would be fantastic because we do over 500 changes a year. And, if people could know just exactly what they were, they wouldn't worry quite as much about Google being a black box. They'd understand more about how it works.

One last trend that I wanted to mention is the idea of sending information to Google. So, certainly with Panda, a few people were worried about scraper sites. And, we don't want scraper sites ever outrank the original or the author content as well. So, one thing that we've been discussing and that we're talking about, is what if, whenever you do your blog post in WordPress, or you publish something on Blogger, or wherever you do it in your content management system.

What if you could send that ping to Google and send that content to Google and say, "Okay, I just published this." And then, Google can say, "Okay, now we know where this content came from." I think that would be a really big improvement for search quality. It's something that we've heard as a request, so we're exploring that. It's still early days, so we'll see how it turns out.

But, to move to a 1 foot view of the future, and this is my last slide, one thing that you can do is first, sign up for Webmaster Tools, everybody signed up for Webmaster Tools, please everybody raise their hand, please, okay? If you're not, there's a lot of great information there, specifically make sure that you turn on email alerts. Email alerts is the way where, when you get hacked, we will send you an email, which is incredibly useful.

The next thing that you might wanna think about is setting up these so-called fact pings. A ping is when you do a blog post and you ping like, [blogsearch.google.com](http://blogsearch.google.com), or [pubsubhubbub.apps.com](http://pubsubhubbub.apps.com). You can also do a fat ping, which actually sends the content of the post to Google so that we can learn a little bit more about possibly who wrote it and possibly improve our ranking.

And then, if you guys haven't noticed, I've been doing a little more personal blogging on my blog, more Halloween contests and, you know, the mustache. Anybody doing Movember? A few people, yeah, Movo's right on. So, you know, it's not just the light. I look a little bit silly right now, but we've managed to raise several thousand dollars from Intel phishings, which is fantastic.

So, I've been talking more on my blog about those kinds of personal things because we have much better blogs where we can talk about the official stuff, so the Webmaster blog, we have an inside search blog, which is just about search quality, and the sort of launches coming up.

Or, the things that we're doing in the search quality group, and then the Webmaster Channel where we'll continue to spool out more and more videos about how Google works. We've done over 400 at this point. We've had over 6 million views. I love that. It's a really good way to do it. We'll also keep working on live Q&As.

We had to take a short break for awhile because, did anybody see the Dalai Lama did a Google hangout with Desmond Tutu? So, they actually came and they said, "So the Dalai Lama, his Visa to go to South Africa was denied." And, "Hey Matt, can we borrow your computer and send it to the Dalai Lama so they can do a video conference with Desmond Tutu?" And, I was like, "Well, that's good karma so, you go ahead and take the computer and when I get it back it'll be like a much nicer, you know, good for the world kind of computer." So, that's why we haven't done the live hangouts for a little while, but we're looking forward to getting those going back because we have the computer again.

So, with that, that's a little bit about why I don't think SEOs going to die and I think search engines will be around for a little more than six months, to remind people that there will always be change in SEO. And, the best SEOs adapt for that and look at where search engines are gonna be by trying to guess what the best user experience is. A little bit of the past, what's been going on, and then thinking about what are the things coming up in the future?

And, with that, we still have plenty of time for questions. So, I think if we can bring up Amit Singhal. Ait Singhal is actually my boss. He's the guy who has the entire ranking algorithm in his head. I'm not joking okay? Yeah, give him a round of applause.

Amit Singhal: Thank you, thank you.

Matt Cutts: Please don't look at him or anything like that, but so I have all the web spam stuff in my head, he has everything in his head. So, it's really great to get him to a Webmaster conference. This is, you know, this does not happen very often. So, if you wanna ask blue sky things about philosophy, like "Why do you do it this way? How do you evaluate changes?" Maybe a little more so than like, you know, "Why should I use rel="next" and "prev" instead of pagination" or something like that. Amit's really good at those, the high order things about why we think about search that way. And, I think with that we can open it up to Q&A.

Amit Singhal: Yes, thank you Matt. I just wanted to say – go ahead.

Matt Cutts: Go ahead [**crosstalk**]

Amit Singhal: I just wanted to say it's been my pleasure working with Matt, 11 years at Google. I have fond memories of the last 11 years. In the early times, we would **put** a monthly index. And, the March index would fall with **[inaudible]** you remember, we had the March madness every time. And, what would happen is that, you know, a new index would come out and you would have some bug in our page rank calculation.

And then, Bruce Mosley, my boss then, would walk up to me and say, "Dude, we've got a bug in the page rank calculation. Change your **ad** algorithms so it works with the bug." So, I tried **[inaudible]** work with the bug and then I'm giving the work to Matt and saying, "Hey, dude find all those scraper sites and take care of them." And, that relationship started 11 years back when I joined Google in 2000. And, it's stronger then we were. It's been my pleasure working with Matt these 11 years. I'm a better person because I know Matt.

Matt Cutts: Wow. All right, we're gonna get started here. Testing 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, okay.

Questioner 1: So, with all the **[inaudible]** you guys have had for Google analytics, why don't you guys provide like ranking data within analytics yet? Because a lot of **date** sites track more than 1,000 key words and that data is very useful for us to use for good, not for evil, to make the right decisions and also making that available through your API.

Matt Cutts: Yeah, great question so, I've been **digging into** the details on this as well, so I can talk a little bit about that. So, one of the important fact is that we dug into it, so if people don't know you can get the top 1,000 queries every day that caused your site to run anything Google.

And, we dug into exactly how many sites are able to get all of their queries, I that the queries that drove to their site, where less than 1,000 a day. In turns out, over 96 percent of all sites get all of their queries by getting those 1,000. And, we wouldn't have, what would be involved in ramping up more, so what if you could get 5,000 queries a day, what if you could get 10,000 queries a day?

It turns out the amount of storage space would be something like three to five times larger, just for those last two or three percent of websites. Because, you know, the Yahoo's of the world or the Facebook's of the world, there are a ton of different queries that drive to those **click-through** pages.

So, we are looking at whether we can ramp up the amount of data that's available? It's simply a matter of storage space, **[inaudible]** machines, trying to allocate more data centers. So, it could be a multi-month effort if

we really wanted to ramp up a lot. If you go to something like 10,000 queries a day, then you get like 99 percent of all websites. You're able to get all of their query data.

But, the fact that it was 96 percent was all ready pretty interesting to us because a lot of people said, like if you saw **Bill** Reynolds talk yesterday. Like, a lot of people all ready can get all of their queries and they don't realize that because they weren't downloading them before.

So, we're looking at things like whether we can ramp up the amount of data that's available? Whether we can provide an API so you don't have to get it through analytics or whether you can download it through Webmaster Tools specifically? And then, we're also open to suggestions after that, so we'll see how that goes.

Questioner 2:

Good morning Matt, Amit. Wow, this microphone sounds a little funny. It's fine **[inaudible]**. One of the questions that I have since they actual Panda uplink, is that I've noticed a sudden drop on one of my main websites. We're a publisher of anti-spyware product and a lot of the terms that we actually go after on our sites, since you've actually released the update, dropped significant down.

I filed a report with your reconciliation group because that was the only recourse that I had. And, I noticed that sites **lower** quality, which actually are just repeating content, ended up on the first page. So, I would like to get some guidance on that. I called Google many times. It's very difficult to make contact with you guys on issues like that and I would gladly show what's actually going on in that space. I could use any help that I can get.

Amit Singhal:

No, that's a genuine question. We have been noticing quite a bit of higher quality sites, **as here as Matt said**. And, our preference is always, always, always to do things **[inaudible]** because **[inaudible]** they're still across languages. They're still across query verticals, and so on, and so forth.

And Panda has been, **[inaudible] has been preaching** that they were high quality sites. And, we have **asserted** very deeply you guys have seen some of the videos on **how we does things**. We have talked about how we evaluate any change in **proving** backup in our ranking **[inaudible]**. And, it has been a very, very positive change across all known **elements**, who the search community, information retrieval community **[inaudible]**.

And, the best **end** academic measure or scientific measurement can measure, all our measurements are saying, "We have done a great thing not only for the users, also for the **[inaudible]** ecosystem." Because that's

very, very important to us. Google has been on a healthy **net**. If the **net** ecosystem remains healthy, Google will remain healthy.

So, our responsibility is indeed to Google users Plus, at the same time, fiscal publishers like yourself who are a critical part of building this **net**. And Matt all ready said, there are no algorithms perfect, right and we're always looking to do things **[inaudible]** and improving. But, all of our **measurements** are saying, "We have done a very good thing for both the users and the **net** ecosystem.

Matt Cutts:

Yeah, and I think one misconception is that Google isn't listening or that we don't hear what people are saying. In that, so we took a thread that was on the Webmaster forum and we actually have a spreadsheet with 500 plus sites that have complained. And so, we tasked people with looking at whether they consider those false positives or not, and then that can build a training set for the next round.

So, it's always that case that you might make mistakes, right? And so, I'd be really interested to hear about, you know, the specific case for antivirus stored stuff; but, in general, what we tend to see is that it's working relatively well in terms of the types of pages and the types of sites that are returned are higher quality. And then, we look at ways to say, "Okay, are there false positives?"

There's a guy on my team who's entire job is trying to reduce any false positives. So, he looks at reports, he tries to find different signals. So, it's still the case that it's under active development as well, right? We still have a lot of people working on it. So, if there are things that we're not getting right, we want to get them right, but sometimes it will also take time.

Questioner 3:

Two quick questions, thank you for all of the information, and the first one is, when we search for any kind of tens and thousands of home appliances, always we get Sears, Costco, the big guys, Amazon, Overstock. And, there're a lot of guys who have websites, niche websites on the specific products. There are people that just sell curtains, or there are people that just sell patio furniture. What is the reason for this?

And, the second question is, do you think that you're trying to make algorithms so perfect that it loses relevance because we're still seeing the search results not so perfect. And, you know, the domain names or key words start showing up a lot after **[inaudible]**. These are the two questions. Thank you.

Matt Cutts:

How about I try to take the first one, you take the second one about the tradeoffs of relevance and stuff. So, on the first one, the web is one of the

only places where, if you are a small business, you can move faster than the big guys, right? You can be the mammal instead of the dinosaur.

And so, I've done site reviews at Intel where they had 13 redirects in a row that ended in a 404, right? They had the exact same search page and they would return different search results depending on whether you were coming in from the small business site, or the home site, or whatever, right? Whereas, if you're a small business, you can often move faster than the big guys.

Now, the big guys are sometimes big for a reason and that they have real world reputation. And, you know, there are people Googling to them and so that's reflected in their rankings. But, at the same time, if you search for, you know, information about TiVo's, you'll often find PVRblog by Matt Haughey, which, you know, is like a very small one-man site and he can outrank anybody else.

You think about the Gizmodo's of the world, the engadget's of the world, the Zappos of the world, a lot of those sites started out really small. So, Tony Shay is a huge success story for Las Vegas because those guys did it right. You can have those small companies, you know, succeed. You search for running shoes, you might find runningshoes.com rather than just Nike, or Adidas, or something like that.

So, our philosophy is we do wanna actively think about small businesses and how to help them. Things like Webmaster Tools are kind of an equalizer because the big guys don't, they're not always the most clueless, right? They'll make some huge gob of binary blob flash that no one can read even if they have a flash interpreter, whereas, as the small guys are smart enough to do text and not to put text in their images, but to put text on the page, those kinds of things.

So, in my experience, it is the case that you do have to try and reflect the web. Often times what's on the web is what's also offline, so there are well known retailers like Costco, Amazon, you know, eBay, Wal-Mart, those kinds of things. So, those are big guys and they do tend to rank well. But, if you concentrate on a very specific topic, or a very specific area, you can often outrank the big guys. And, that's often the place where they're not paying attention. They're looking for a ton of different things and you can concentrate, you can focus, you can double down.

Amit, do you wanna talk a little bit about the tradeoff between precision and relevance and quality?

Amit Singhal:

Yeah so, as we have realized in the last year, returning high quality sites is what users really, really like. We have seen all of our metrics that we

measure internally go up into the right as we have released all these changes. And clearly, there is something about these brands, that these big brands that users also hit with relevance.

**Although rather than** the model always tries to optimize for the user experience and high relevance. And, we don't do things that cause irrelevance. We improve search quality all the time. And, the definition of improving search quality is to give more relevant, more high quality results.

And, I think we don't pay that much attention to what type of sites get ranked as Matt said, ranked you know, any individual site, expert site can rank ahead of the big guys. Our job always is to optimize for the large **squat** of queries and measure them as scientifically as possible and that's what we do all the time.

Matt Cutts: Good morning.

Questioner 4: Good morning, first off let me say I love Google. You've helped my team of five people make a living for the last few years, so thank you very much. During one of the sessions yesterday, you have to put this in the light that it was brought up in. But, the quote was, "Google doesn't care about quality." Now, before you get off your seats, one example was a Google Places page that had been erroneously closed out by somebody, competitors taking an action and they couldn't get that cleared up, okay?

Myself, I get calls and I've got a SEO SEM company, all the time from people saying, "Hello, this is so and so from Google. I'm here to do **this for you**." And, I **follow through** and I report this stuff. And, my point is, is this. I know you guys care about quality. I know you'd like to quash this stuff, algorithmically you're not gonna do it. You've got an army of qualified partners. Can there be a better process for us to help you prove the quality and the content, and we have people who are misusing Google's great name?

Matt Cutts: Great question. Thank you, this is, I agree with you in a lot of ways. So, Amit is a voice of purity in the algorithm, right? He knows that things don't scale if you use Google as well, and you can't handle it in his big languages. What's interesting is I come at it from a slight different perspective in that I have seen the ability of a small number of people to improve the search results while you're trying to find the next algorithm to solve things.

So, we actually do have spam fighters who can take action in 40 different languages. And, I've seen how, if you're very careful, that can be scaleable. So, what's interesting about Places and Maps is, you know, the

web has been, it was the Wild West for awhile. And, it's not quite the Wild West that it was a few years ago anymore. A lot of the people who use to be blackouts are now doing a lot of white hat consulting, right?

There's still a little element of the Wild West that's going on in local and places. And so, there was this article in the New York Times about people conspiring to close businesses, people conspiring to close Google. And, I think what that speaks to is our group helps the Maps team. We don't handle directly the spam on Maps, but we share some of the best practices. I think we still have a little ways to go, but that area is changing very fast.

And, I expect that we will sort of make a lot of progress on that to the point where, you know, even if you're closing things, we've made a lot of progress. Now, that has to be confirmed by someone who's a little bit more trusted. And now, we're just having the discussion about who do you trust more? Do you trust internal Google employees to confirm about it? Maybe you have an outside group, like you mentioned various partners or people who you've built up trust in some way? So, that's the logistics, but that's absolutely doable.

So, I think we're open to an idea about how to improve **[inaudible]** how to make sure that people can't maliciously delete other businesses. And, I think that's one of the areas where, you know, even in making our Maps, we've seen that it can be helpful to have, not just algorithms, but also people to check on the accuracy of that. And so, I think that's one of the areas where we're relatively open to try and improve that and we're also open to outside feedback.

I do see the work that those guys do and they've made a lot of progress. There's still a little bit of progress that needs to be made, but they're still, they're working on it very hard. And, I expect that they will keep working on it until they figure out a way to fix that. Because nobody wants to be able to close out your representation of business or to, you know, enter in keywords that are useless, or spamming on your business without your consent.

So, I think that's an area where it's still ongoing development. That's one of the reasons why I listed local as an area for future SEO development. But, I think that we are moving in the right direction and I do think that we'll get there.

Questioner 5: Well, you said the topic would come up sooner or later about SSL search so, allow me to bring it up.

Matt Cutts: Definitely.

Questioner 5:

So, you've got two sides of the coin, one which is a keyword data referral and the voices about SEO being dead come up quite a bit louder in the last month. On the other hand, the user privacy is very important. I've had SSL all along since it was first offered, totally agree with it so, **you were talking about it** but.

Matt Cutts:

Yeah, we can talk a little bit about SSL. So, you know, I too go to encryptit.google.com. I turned on Two-Factor Authentication on my Gmail because I don't wanna get hacked. Like, I care a lot about the privacy of my queries and I a lot of people do. It turns out a lot of people were opting into encryptit.google.com.

So, the trend that I'm trying to call out is that I do think search is becoming more personal with things like voice activation, things like Siri, how those queries can fall through. And, I suspect search will grow more personal in the coming months. And so, we're trying to get a head of that and trying to figure out how logistics work with SSL? How do we try to make that fast? It works better in Chrome because we can avoid some of the sort of blemishes that are in SSL.

So, some people are unhappy about losing their keyword data, so I'm glad to have a chance to clarify. Ninety-six percent of sites get all of their queries if you go and download your data from Webmaster Tools. And, we are exploring API, and we are exploring like a program you can run to download that data separately.

The other thing that some people get aggravated about is that advertisers are able to see the query in the **refer**, when you're not able to on the organic side. So, let me just address that a little bit. There's two basic points I wanna make, one is principled and one is pragmatic. The principled one is this, if you're an advertiser and you're trying to advertise for a Hilton, you don't wanna pay for Paris Hilton, right because that's really not useful. And so, if you don't see that the query was Paris Hilton, you don't know to do a negative match on Paris and you're paying for a lot of traffic that's not useful.

We absolutely need the ads to be as useful as the search results. And, people are actually paying for the ad. And so, if they're paying for something that doesn't reform, that's really bad for the user experience because they're not able to generate the best possible ads. So, that's the principled reason. If people are paying for it, they really need to be able to see what converts and what doesn't so that they can make better ads by removing the things that are really bad experiences.

But, there's also a really pragmatic reason. The pragmatic reason, which we haven't mentioned, but I'm surprised nobody's really come up with

before is if you're an advertiser and we tell you the referrer won't have the query, what's the very first thing you're gonna do?

No. 1, you're gonna be unhappy or you're gonna write **blog notes**. Okay, what the second thing that you're gonna do? The second thing you're gonna do is if you're one of those 96 percent of sites, you're gonna go download the top 1,000 queries that get all of your traffic and you're gonna buy an exact match for every single one of those phrases. Or, you're gonna take all of your broad matches and you're gonna convert them to exact matches.

So, you would often times, as an advertiser, with a lot of extra work on your part and by swelling the size of our database, quite a bit on our part. You'd be able to reverse engineer and figure out what the query was anyway. Because just by making all of those be exact matches, you would be able to figure out what a large amount of the queries were. So, from a pragmatic standpoint, and a principled standpoint, there are some good reasons why the advertising **[inaudible]** should be like that.

Now, we'll keep listening to feedback. I don't expect us to back off on having SSL because users really love that option. They really like the ability where they can be private. If anything, we might move forward, right, where advertisers don't get the query and the referred. But, for now, I think we're trying to find the best balance that we can.

Things are still more secure than they were before. Things have more privacy than they did the day before we launched it and users have been pretty happy with it, in terms of being able to have their privacy, to know that their neighborhood café, their boss, their ISP, maybe their government isn't snooping on those queries if they wanna do some private searches.

So, we're trying to figure out what the right balance is and that's the way that the balance is right now. We're always happy to hear feedback and we have listened to what people have said. And, some very trusted in the SEO community have been mad, but I hope that explains a little bit of the difference. You can get most of your queries, there are some reasons why advertisers need to be able to find out what to disable, and advertisers could've done exact matches anyway. So, I hope that that gives a little bit of some of the reasoning behind what we're doing there.

Questioner 6:

My question is, **we got a good question is**, you said that there have been some talk about present users being **able to** get content. My question is, if you have a release on your website that you want to sneak it out using sites like **PR Web**, or what not; what are some of the things that you can do to ensure that your release does not get back **[inaudible]** content? Thank you.

Matt Cutts:

So, my take on this is basically press releases are you're going up to someone and you're asking them to write about you, right? And, it's much better people coming to you and wanting to write about you. Like, one of the things that people were joking about during yesterday's session is it's much harder to fake natural than to just be natural. Like, there were a lot of people saying, "Just be exceptional and the people will wanna write about you any way."

In my experience, the links that come from press releases, sometimes they can be good. But, they only are good when you've convinced someone who editorial at a newspaper or a web really wants to write about it anyway. So, there was a little bit of a trend that a year or two ago where people would just say, "Oh, we'll just do a lot of press releases and we'll get a lot of links." And that might not be the longest term trend is my guess so.

Amit Singhal:

And, you know, as we focus on quality, we are focusing on authorship. **[inaudible]** that's what social's all about. And, from the data **[inaudible]**, right, press really is out of the kind of content that we usually associate **[inaudible]** giving us **[inaudible]**. And, you know, they are fine with content, but you have to think about the content from a legal **[inaudible]**. They want to know whether a high quality author wrote it and why is this person high quality?

And then, at the end of the day, high quality is going to win. And, you guys are working with **hard to get** high quality content. That's what makes me so proud working at Google that we are working with you to return that higher quality content. And, I think you guys will keep up that good work, where you keep working with for your users so that we collectively can keep working for the **[inaudible]**.

Questioner 7:

Hey Matt, **[inaudible]**. So, if a website has third party **[inaudible]** pages in a subfolder, I know it all ready **exists, I saw 99-7 I mean, I don't support your opinions, but as I said that's third party and a brave authority to make**, A., the page is rated in the first place because it's mandatory. B., the obviously way, the pages get penalized, mandatory penalty on the **[inaudible]** pages only, so the relations get separated. So, the penalty is not passed on to the **[inaudible]**. So, thanks to Google for doing that, that the **[inaudible]** is not affected, only the third party pages are affected. So, Google understands that those pages are third party.

My question is if we are forced by the third party or for some reasons, you know, those pages come back in a different folder, different **[inaudible]** structure, what happens? Does the penalty again happen on the subfolder only or does it **[crosstalk]**?

Matt Cutts: Are you asking me how most effectively to do Norway spam? I'm not sure I'm hearing your question correctly. It sounds like you're asking, "Will you throw out my whole site or will you throw out just my Norway pages?" Is that, that –

Questioner 7: Well first, I just asked third party, I don't want **[inaudible]** but –

Matt Cutts: So, someone held you at gunpoint, they kidnapped your family, and they said if you don't put these **Garmin** pages up, you are in big trouble?

Questioner 7: Something like that.

Matt Cutts: I sympathize, that's a delicate situation. Okay, that's really funny. So, there is an answer to that, the answer is in general, we do try to remove the part of the site that is doing the spamming. Like, if you're on Free Host, if you're on GeoCities, okay, GeoCities is dead, but imagine you were on GeoCities.

If someone else is spamming on a part of GeoCities, you don't wanna remove all the GeoCities. So, on Free Host we might be pretty **[inaudible]**. But, if you've seen, there are some Free Hosts that were so full of spam that we ended up taking action on the entire Free Host and that can happen as well. So, if we think that there's great content and maybe it looks like there's something weird going on in some small part of the site, we do reserve the right to prune or snip just that small part of that site.

But, my higher order to answer is that is very high risk, but I would not take the risk that whoever is looking at that particular spam report, really wants to go down to that level of granularity compared to your entire site. So, I'd say, whoever kidnapped your family, tell them, "Look, this is a really bad idea. I do not recommend the trying to compartmentalize my doorway pages to minimize the damage that will inevitably follow when Google tries to remove them." So, I'd take a step back from the premise of your question.

Amit Singhal: In short, Matt just said, "Don't do it man, don't do it."

Questioner 7: I'll try to **[inaudible]**

Matt Cutts: Yeah, that's a better way to say it much faster.

Questioner 8: Hi, I'm **[inaudible]** and we run an e-commerce site and we're looking to hire **a new CEO** and I interviewed quite a few. And, everybody ends up saying, "You need more links, you need more links. And, we're working

on the quality of your site, but you need more links.” And, I just don’t see how links are gonna improve the quality of my site. And, it seems like such a game system that everybody does and I have to play, and it’s really expensive, and I don’t wanna do it. Can you give me some guidance there?

Matt Cutts: You want me to take it?

Amit Singhal: Yeah, you can take that.

Matt Cutts: So, we had said from the beginning, what matters is not ranking on your high trophy phrases, what matters is not ranking on all of your phrases, what matters is not getting the traffic. What matters is maybe not even getting into conversions. What matters is that bottom line of how much money that generates for you.

So, links can be a part of search, right, because links in some way represent real world reputation. Absolutely links are a game, but if you just look at the tools that are out there, you think it’s worse than it is, right? So, I have no beef with any of the tools that want you to pay \$100 a month to see links.

But, what none of those tools will show you is which links Google actually trusts, right? So, somebody recently complained and said, “I’m looking at my back links and I see 300,000 **footer** back links that are paid and, you know, that’s not fair.” And, I wrote back to him on Twitter, I wrote back like yesterday, **when he was on** I said, “Look, we are **link cold command** and even with our Webmaster Tools, we show you all of the links, not the links that are not “no following,” not the links that are “flowing page rate,” not the links that are “flowing anchor tags.”

Guess what, the link structure on the web looks pretty rickety if you look at it from the outside. And, part of the reason for that is that people don’t see which links we trust and which links we don’t trust. And so, you can throw a million blogspan links out there and people might think that’s why a site is ranking, and yet our **[inaudible]** might be catching all of them.

So, the New York Times recently wrote to us about Mother’s Day. And they said, “Look at these guys. They have 10,000 links that are artificial.” And so, we took all 10,000 links and we looked at them. Not a single one was counted, none, right? So, if you look at what all the competition is, you might get the idea that it’s a volume game, it’s completely a game, that links are awful, right, that they’re not as helpful. The fact is, a really good editorial, organic link can go a long way.

And, it's not just that we're looking at links. We're looking at the content on the page, we look at over 200 different signals. I think a lot of people focus on links, maybe to the exclusion of other stuff that they should be looking at.

So, if you can think about something like Zappos, right, they have a fantastic experience. That's creating word of mouth and that creates more traffic. So, it doesn't have to be that narrow of focus. So, I would say look around at the CEO candidates who hopefully have the bigger picture who are looking at the number of conversions, how to get real world buzz, how to reach out to real editorial newspapers, how to do marketing in those ways, social. All those different things can be ways that you can find your website without just having to worry about links.

I know that it can be kind of frustrating if you open up your standard link tool, your link subscription that you're paying money for and you look at all this and it looks like complete junk. But, that doesn't count the links that Google is actually looking at. So, that's one reason is you can't just look at your competitive links and say, "Oh, this is what I need to do" because you don't know which of those links is working.

Questioner 9:

Hey Matt, real quick question. Let's go back to SSL. The, I've seen several clients with actually up to 30 percent "No listed." You guys said it was gonna be less than 10. I've seen one site that's less than 10. What, I know that you guys are saying privacy, privacy. I don't see it why that is. What are you guys going to do as far as, is there anything that you're going to be offering maybe in a paid version or something for where we can get that data, maybe, you know, **raised** premium? Or, is there some kind of plan for the future as far as that kind of data which I believe is actually essential for SEOs and SEMs.

Matt Cutts:

Yeah, good question. So, there are not plans to offer a paid version that would give you data that you couldn't get any other way. You know, I'm not the product manager who would say what would be offered. But, to the best of my knowledge, there's no plans in the future to do anything like that. The reason that we say privacy is because we believe in the privacy. We do believe that if users are logging into Google, if they're signed into Google, they're a little more likely to do a search which is personal. And so, there a little less likely to want that query to show up in the refer.

Now, you might not agree, but that's actually what we feel. We feel like search is becoming more personal and in the months ahead, you'll see more and more ways where search can become more personal. And then, I think people might look back and say, "Okay, SSL is the platform by which privacy happens." But, if people are choosing to do more personal

searches on Google, that's why because the SSL gives them that protection.

Now, let me go to the first part of your question, which is "I have one client who has, you know, a large percentage that are not provided" or something like that. So, what I said is, when this is fully rolled out, that is signed in users on google.com, a single digit percentage of Google searches will represent these queries not being passed in the refer and that's been the case.

So, you will absolutely find a few sites that will have more than single digit because they might be power searchers, they might be people who are signed into Google **Blog**. People in this room are a lot more likely to have a Google account. So, anything in the SEO, or the Techsphere's space, is a little more likely to have a higher percentage of people who are signed in. But, if you look at the aggregate across all of Google, it is a single digit percentage.

And, some people were worried about the ramp up and that's because we did a **stage fold down**. So, you don't wanna roll out SSL to everybody in one day because you'll find all sorts of bugs. So, we started out with a relatively small percentage and I think we're almost entirely rolled out for signed in users on google.com.

So, for example, there was awhile when it was rolled out for 50 percent of people, and then it was rolled out for a much larger fraction of people. So, if people look at their stuff you can usually see the Step functions where on specific days we're rolling it up to certain levels of traffic.

So, I do believe that if you were on a site about Google specific stuff, or a power user, or a tech savvy site, you might see a larger than 10 percent amount because you have more power users who are signed into Google. But, in aggregate, across all of Google's traffic, it is a single digit percentage of people who are signed into google.com and who are, who are signed in and who are going to google.com.

Now, the next question we might ask ourselves is, okay this is on google.com, what if you want to go to google.fr, **google.de**, something like that? Historically, SSL is hard to do on different host names because of something called **SLA**. You have to have a lot of different IP addresses. It's kind of a hassle. So, we're still looking at that.

That's where things might expand in the future, but for people who are in this room, you're probably running a lot of sites in English. And so, you've all ready seen whatever the roll out's gonna be because it's signed in for google.com. There might be people in other countries like France or

Germany who might see that ramp up over time if we decide to roll it out, not just for signedin.com but for signed in google.de, google.fr, that kind of thing.

So, you know, I understand that people are a little unhappy about it, right, not even a little, there are many people who are quite unhappy about it. I get that. At the same time, you still are getting the vast majority of all the queries and 96 percent of all sites can get all their queries if they wanna download it. They just lose that ability to say exactly what it was the query that converted.

Now, you can, if you're a power user, you can go to Webmaster Tools and you can look at your top landing pages. And so, you might be able to stitch some of that back together in the sense that you can say, "Here was my landing page and here was the query," and then, you could go back to your **logs**. So, there's even some of that there you could go even further.

But, the fact is, a lot of people if they realize that the query was passed on to the refer, they wouldn't even like that. And so, we're trying to bring ourselves inline with what we think an average user will want if they're educated on all these sorts of issues. People may disagree. We're trying to find ways to ameliorate or mitigate the concerns that people have, but we do feel like this is important and that's the state of the world right now.

Amit Singhal: And, I do want to add, that it is our desire that every signed in Google user has that privacy protection up only on google.com internationally as well. And, we are looking into how we can improve that.

Matt Cutts: I think at least for the foreseeable future, it's gonna take time because people have to chose to do it in other languages.

Male Speaker 1: All right, let's get out of here, so Danny?

Danny: If I have my doorway pages on blogger?

Matt Cutts: Doorway pages on blooger, huh?

Danny: Two questions, for Matt, and **I'd love for you to the audience also**, but we can't go back in time and get all that query data out now from **google.net.central**. So, what I'd like to know is, is Google gonna commit or give us some sense of are you going to extend it? And, what I'm curious from the audience is, would they rather be able to go back in time and get the historic data out or do they really need to get the extra four percent? And then, for Amit, I wouldn't want him to think that we weren't gonna respond to that, I'm wondering if you can just cap it off with-