

Guidelines & Best Practices

- **Content is King** – the more unique content you have on your website the better.
- **Make your site niche-specific** rather than product focused. This makes you look less like you're sole purpose is to sell a product, and more like someone who is interested in helping solve a specific problem.
- **Add depth to your website.** The more indexed pages your website has, the more value Google will attribute to it. We suggest having a home page that focuses primarily on providing content, and putting your sales pitches in landing pages that are located on other areas of the site. In many cases Google considers the landing page itself to be less important than the website that's built around it.
- **Avoid being flagged as a 'bridge page'.** One of the biggest indicators of this is in the amount of time visitors spend on your site. The more time they spend the less likely your site will be flagged. Focus on the pre sell aspect of your page, encouraging users to spend time and gather information from your site before they make a download / purchase. While this may decrease your download rate, if done properly, it will be more than made up for with a higher download-to-sale conversion rate.
- **Don't mislead users.** If there's anything that will guarantee a Google slap, it's tricking your users into thinking your download is a Microsoft utility, or that the product is completely free forever. In many cases this violates the merchant's policies as well, so we highly recommend against it.
- **Provide transparency.** Be sure to include a contact page, preferably one with a physical address, a privacy policy and full disclaimer.
- **Avoid the improper use of trademarks,** endorsements and other misleading elements. This isn't an issue for many affiliates, but improperly using Microsoft logos, 'as seen on' and other trust elements that aren't true is strongly frowned upon in Google's eyes.
- **Link to other external websites.** This may seem like a very scary idea. When you pay for traffic, you don't want to lose anyone to another website. The fact of the matter is, however, that particularly in automated reviews, external links are something that Google pays close attention to. Nothing says affiliate 'bridge page' like zero external links. The links don't need to be particularly prominent, but linking to a few valuable external resources from your page can definitely help protect you.

- **Don't use dynamic keyword insertion excessively.** Dynamic keyword insertion is a great way to boost the relevance of your landing page and your quality score, but it should be used in moderation. A better strategy is to build out multiple landing pages, one for each group or specific type of keywords, and then leverage dynamic keyword insertion to further boost the relevancy. This also helps you grow the number of pages on your website.
- **Self host the .exe file and cloak your affiliate link.** Google has automated means to detect bridge pages, and sites that require the visitor to leave the site to make the purchase or download can be automatically flagged for review. Having a custom landing page with a cloaked link to the .exe download file hosted on your own server is an actionable and practical approach to avoid added attention by Google. If you are planning this approach, please inform your affiliate manager so they can help guide you through the process and notify you of any updates of the .exe file.

Additional Reading

SEOMoz.com

<http://www.seomoz.org/blog/whiteboard-friday-googles-may-day-update-what-it-means-for-you>

SE Round table

<http://www.seroundtable.com/archives/022289.html>

Search Engine Journal

<http://www.searchenginejournal.com/weekly-search-social-news-07202010/22775/>

searchengineland.com

<http://searchengineland.com/google-confirms-mayday-update-impacts-long-tail-traffic-43054>

Webmaster World

<http://www.webmasterworld.com/google/4125460.htm>

Metamend - Search Engine Optimization Experts

<http://www.metamend.com>