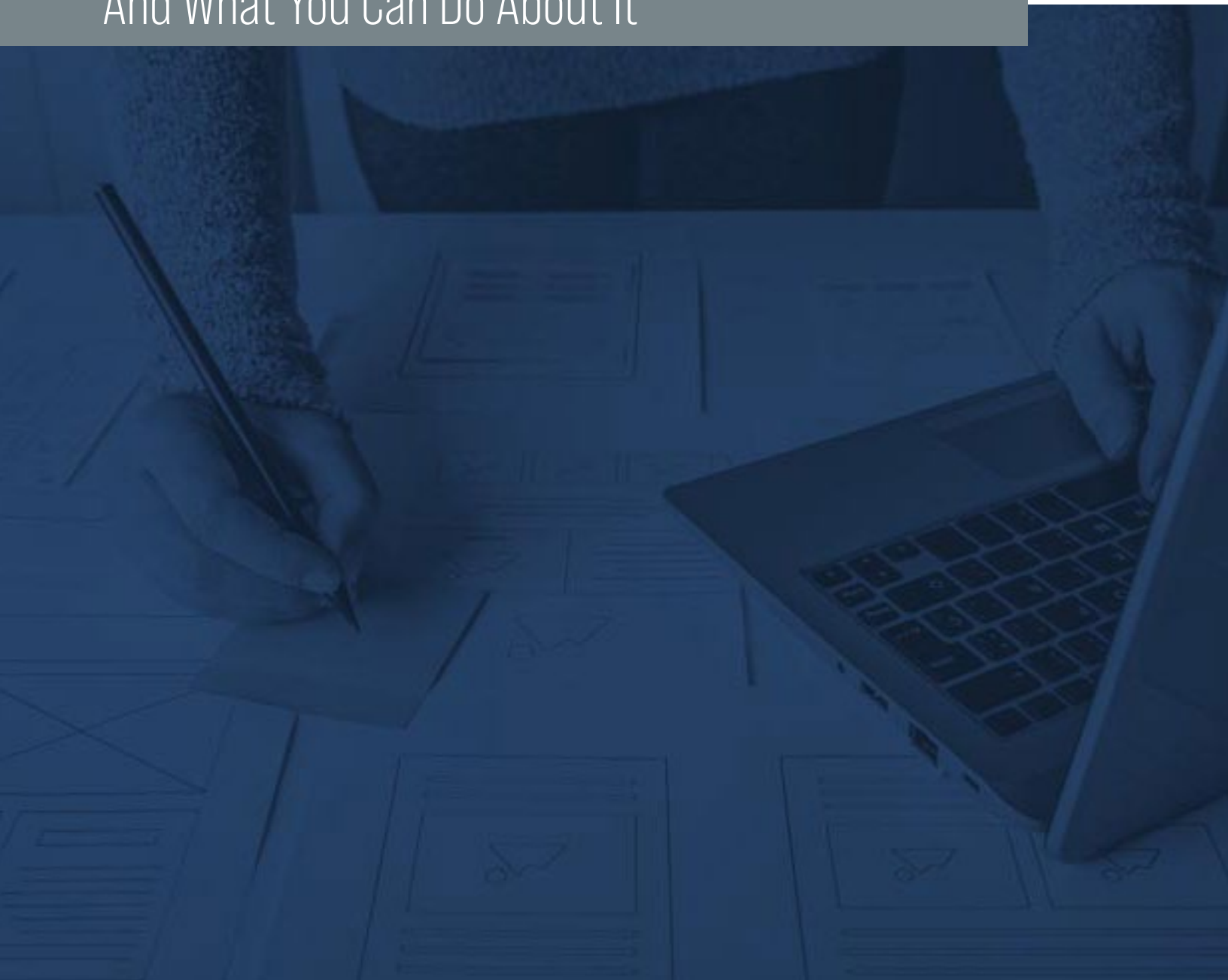![SyncShow B2B Online Marketing]

10 REASONS GOOGLE HATES YOUR MANUFACTURING WEBSITE

And What You Can Do About It

10 REASONS GOOGLE HATES YOUR WEBSITE

There's a good chance Google doesn't like your manufacturing website. With Google dominating the online world of search (more than 80% of all searches in the U.S. are done via Google) it pays—literally—to get on the good side of Google's organic algorithm.

Too many manufacturers launch a website and expect it to work wonders out of the box. While a well-thought-out website can do wonders for your bottom line, it isn't a magic wand. It's a sales and marketing tool that needs to be updated and upgraded on a regular basis.

Google—and other search engines—make their mark through innovation and constant improvement. In an average year, Google makes roughly 500 changes to its algorithm. Meaning what worked for ranking last year may not even register as a factor in your online success today. As your manufacturing and sales processes evolve to keep up with customer needs and market factors, so too does Google and so should your website to keep pace.

Here are 10 common issues we see within the manufacturing world that could be dramatically hurting your company in Google searches.

ONE: **YOUR WEBSITE IS TOO SLOW**

According to Google, the ideal load time for any website should be within 3 seconds. This is true across industries. In the manufacturing sector, Google appears to credit the top performers with a load time between 3.9 and 5 seconds.

So why is site speed so important to Google? To answer that look to your own search habits. When you conduct an online search and click a link to a website, do you get frustrated if the site takes too long to load? Chances are you're looking for that back button to find another option before the site finishes loading. Now imagine if the majority of sites you tried returned this experience. This slow-load experience doesn't just reflect on the website, it reflects on the search engine's ability to provide you with quality results that you'd find valuable.

Slow loads are only amplified when a user is on a mobile device, as 3G and 4G connections tend to be slower than desktop/laptop-enabled high-speed internet connections.

HOW TO SOLVE FOR SLOW SITE SPEED:

First, run a test on your site to get your total load time as gauged by Google. You can do this at: testmysite.thinkwithgoogle.com or developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/

This will give you the load speed of your website. If your site load nets out to be longer than 5 seconds, you have a serious problem. The most common culprits are unoptimized images, a slow server or too many HTTP (Hypertext Transfer Protocol) requests. Have the person or company that manages your website optimize images for faster load and reduce the number of HTTP requests whenever possible. Also be sure you're hosting your website on a robust and professional web host—you usually get what you pay for in hosting companies.

TWO: **YOUR WEBSITE ISN'T MOBILE OPTIMIZED**

In 2017, Google announced it would begin ranking websites in search results based on the quality of their mobile presence. This marks a big change for the search giant. Prior, the desktop version of your site was the version of record. If your site rendered and functioned well on a full desktop experience, you were ranked well for both desktop and mobile searches.

The dynamic is changing to a mobile-first index. Meaning, the quality of your mobile website is now going to substantially impact your ranking across all Google searches—regardless of your search device.G and 4G connections tend to be slower than desktop/laptop-enabled high-speed internet connections.

So why is your site's mobile presence more important to Google than its desktop presence? This is another example of Google changing its product functionality based on the changing market. 2014 marked the first year where more searches were done globally on a mobile device than on desktop—the United States hit that milestone as a country in 2015.

Google recognizes the future of search is mobile—and some may argue controlled by voice commands. To stay relevant to the expectations of its users, Google has begun to prioritize the preferred experience of mobile-optimized websites in results.

In the manufacturing space, the adoption of mobile over desktop searches is slower to reach the tipping point than in most other industries. However, we challenge you to look hard at your analytics by device and see where the growth curve is happening. Most likely, desktop-based searches are flat or have very narrow growth (assuming

no SEO efforts have been recently implemented). There's an equally likely chance that while smaller in volume, the growth rate of mobile visits to your site is growing at a much faster rate than desktop. What does the projection look like for these two lines to intersect? And how much will this increase when Google officially goes all-in on mobile-first indexing?

Occasionally, we'll see manufacturing websites with little to no mobile traffic, which often leads companies to draw incomplete conclusions. Often, a site with no or low mobile traffic is explained away as "our clients just aren't using mobile." The data we see on companies with mobile-friendly sites says otherwise. When a site is mobile optimized it sees growth in mobile traffic, plus Google will rank a company's site based on its mobile experience. These combined factors lead us to believe that, whether you can admit it or not, a mobile-responsive site is an absolute necessity for today's digital presence.

HOW TO SOLVE FOR A SITE THAT ISN'T MOBILE OPTIMIZED:

Unfortunately, there's rarely an easy fix. Mobile optimization takes more than making a few tweaks or flipping a switch. A website that functions well on mobile and desktop often necessitates a new site build. Old website templates are not built to handle drastic changes in screen size—a modern website needs to be responsive to screen size and adjust itself according to the user's screen. The best solution for this is the creation of a website built on a mobile-responsive template.

THREE: **NOBODY IS LINKING TO YOUR SITE**

Think of links from third-party sites back to your website as proof of popularity. Google looks at links pointing to your website as an important factor in deciding your site's worth and importance.

In essence, the more high-quality, related links your site receives, the more Google sees your site as important. Conversely, the fewer quality sites that link to you, the less search engines see you as important.

There's a more sinister side to links as well. If a number of spammy, poor-quality sites link to you, then their qualities become associated with your site. Be careful what company your site keeps in regards to links.

Google is fairly forthcoming on this point:

> *Links help our crawlers find your site and can give your site greater visibility in our search results. ...Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote by page A for page B. Votes cast by pages that are themselves 'important' weigh more heavily and help to make other pages 'important.'"*
> *– Google*

HOW TO SOLVE FOR A SITE WITH POOR INBOUND LINKS:

Regular link audits should be undertaken to assure your linkback profile is robust and trustworthy. You'll want to ensure the sites linking to yours pass the "smell test." It's fairly obvious when you come across a spam link. Relevancy should also be considered—are the sites linking to you relevant to your product or service in some way?

There's a tool provided by Google that allows you to disavow poor-quality links. Since you can't physically remove a link from someone else's site, you can use the disavow tool to tell Google you want nothing to do with the link from this site. Generally, this tool isn't needed unless the link is egregious in its spammy content. A better strategy than removing connections to bad links is to build connections with good links. Strategies abound on how to gather high-quality links, but, for the most part, they all center around one concept—have content relating to your product or service that people care about. Use high-quality content to make them want to link to you.

FOUR: **YOUR CONTENT IS "THIN"**

Let's start with a definition. "Thin" content refers to written content on a page that either has very little in the way of character count and/or provides little to no value to a reader.

Historically, it wasn't uncommon for websites to attempt to game the Google algorithm by posting a lot of pages filled with keywords that had no discernable value beyond attempting to rank on keyword density alone. Additionally, website managers would often focus on building a page to rank for a single and very specific keyword. The purpose of the page was not to provide valuable content to users, but instead to get Google to index the page for a specific search term.

At its core, Google wants to return content its users find valuable. Because of this, Google cracked down on the practice of "thin" content in 2011 with an update to its algorithm the online search community dubbed "Panda."

The Panda update penalized sites with thin content by de-indexing, or demoting the offending pages from search results. Unfortunately, some wellmeaning pages can get caught up in this dragnet of purging unhelpful content. A site or site pages that don't have well-crafted content can appear to have "thin" content according to Google. It's important to have well-written, purpose-driven content on a site, as opposed to filler copy meant to capture keywords or just fill space. At its core, every page on your website should serve a specific purpose for your users.

HOW TO SOLVE FOR THIN CONTENT:

Ensuring your site has quality content that serves a purpose can be tedious. A simple way to audit your site for thin content is to ask yourself: Would my users be upset if this page didn't exist? If the answer is "no," then remove the page.

If you answer "yes," then ask yourself a follow-up question: If the page covers a relevant topic, will your readers find value in its content? If the answer is "no," then rewrite it to fit the user's need.

If you have multiple pages covering the same topic in the same way for the same type of user, consider consolidating the content into fewer pages.

FIVE: **DUPLICATE CONTENT ISSUES**

Do you have the exact same piece of content pasted throughout your site or the sites of others? This issue—called "duplicate content"—could cause Google to devalue your site in search. Google likes unique, well-written content, and it wants to know who wrote it first—Google can't stand plagiarism, and neither should you. Don't plagiarize anyone, not even yourself, especially if your goal is to try to use duplicate content to rank pages higher in search.

Here's Google's warning to those who are thinking about gaming the system with duplicate content:

> " *…cases in which Google perceives that duplicate content may be shown with intent to manipulate our rankings and deceive our users, we'll also make appropriate adjustments in the indexing and ranking of the sites involved. As a result, the ranking of the site may suffer, or the site might be removed entirely from the Google index, in which case it will no longer appear in search results."*
> *– Google*

OK, not all of us are purposely going around copying and pasting content from throughout the web and within our own sites to game the algorithm. However, many sites may still run afoul of Google's duplicate content penalty without meaning to. So how does this happen?

Often, in a haste to build a site, site owners will take shortcuts and slice and dice existing content to be repurposed on many pages, resulting in multiple pages that have the same content. Now, there's no hard and fast rule that gives us a percentage of duplicated content on a page that will trigger Google's penalty, but in general, whenever possible, you should craft content that's specific to every page, and not simply duplicate content to save time—you may end up spending more time trying to fix the issues that shortcut caused.

HOW TO SOLVE FOR A SITE WITH DUPLICATE CONTENT ISSUES:

First and foremost, rewrite any content you can that doesn't need to be repeated throughout the site. If the content cannot be rewritten to be unique, then ask yourself if that duplicate content page serves a purpose—if it doesn't, then remove it. If you absolutely have to keep the content, then consider using a canonical tag to identify the original content source.

SIX: **YOUR CONTENT ISN'T KEYWORD OPTIMIZED**

Optimizing your content for search is what most of us consider when thinking about search engine optimization— and it's also the most common issue for sites not ranking well in Google results. The value of a high-quality page with well-written content and keyword optimization in the proper places can't be overstated.

A strong keyword strategy focused on the page level— as opposed to a sitewide level—is the starting point for a well-crafted, keyword-optimized webpage. Ideally, you should focus on no more than 3 to 5 semantically related keywords per page. You do not want to dilute the page's SEO value by focusing on dissociated keywords. Doing this will split the page's SEO value between unrelated keywords, instead of utilizing the related, focused keywords to leverage each other and boost relevancy around the keyword terms.

HOW TO SOLVE FOR POORLY OPTIMIZED CONTENT:

What specifically can you optimize on a webpage? Believe it or not, nearly every element on a page can be keyword optimized to allow Google to better index your site. Consider proper keyword placement in the following areas:

Title Tag: Arguably the most important element for keyword placement, the title tag provides Google its first look at your page's keyword focus.

Meta Description: While it's debatable whether the meta description has direct organic value, it does play a large part in impacting click-through rates from search results back to your page. And click through rates, when coupled with time on site, do impact SEO value.

Header Tag: Header tags range from H1–H6, with diminishing SEO value along the spectrum. The H1 should be treated like the header on a Word document— this is the main thrust of the content on the page, with subsequent header tags calling out related subsections of the overarching H1 keyword focus.

In-Content Keyword Placement: Within the body copy itself, it's important to place the target keywords in the proper places. Keywords that are found closer to the top of the page are considered more pertinent and important, while keywords may lose value the farther down the page they're placed.

Content Quality: A well-written piece of content, free of typos, grammatical errors and written at a grade level appropriate for your audience is important to Google finding value in your content.

Keyword Density: Be sure when adding keywords that you aren't "stuffing" keywords into the copy. It's important for your content to sound natural, and not forced in order to fit more keywords.

Internal Linking: Links, even within your site, are important to ranking pages. Relevant pages should be linked with keyword-rich anchor tags.

Alt Tags: Since Google can't yet perfectly identify the content of an image, it relies on items like the alt tag to identify the image content. This is why it's a good idea to use keywords when describing an image.

SEVEN: **USERS AREN'T ENGAGING WITH YOUR SITE**

Site engagement is the actions visitors take when on your website. A link click, button press, form fill and other like items are all considered actions a user can take on your site. Related is the concept of "dwell time," which refers to the amount of time a user spends on your page or site. A high site engagement coupled with a long dwell time tells Google that the content users are finding on your site is pertinent and compelling—indicating a high-quality experience.

In contrast, a site that sees a high bounce rate—the rate of visitors that come to your site, view one page and take no action other than closing their browser or clicking the back button—indicates a poor experience that can consequently result in a poor rank from Google.

HOW TO SOLVE FOR LOW SITE ENGAGEMENT:

The key here is to give users the content they expect to find based on their Google search, then provide them with outlets to interact with your content, be it a link to related content, a form to fill out or any other action that drives visitors to take an action.

Consider these options for improving site interactions and reducing bounce rate:

- Provide valuable content (get users excited about your product/service)
- Give a user something to do (make the page interactive)
- Interlink relevant content (not just via navigation)
- Use the right CTAs (learn more, sign up, buy now, download, etc.)

EIGHT: POOR SITE STRUCTURE

We define site structure as the way in which your website is organized—sometimes called a hierarchy. Think of it like a company org chart for your website. Instead of a linear representation of who reports to whom, it's an interconnected web of which pages link to each other via the navigation and folder structure.

So why does site structure matter to Google? It helps if we consider a website's hierarchy like a highway system, but instead of connecting drivers, it connects content. Like a highway system, a site structure that doesn't follow a preset path or plan can quickly get confusing and leave users and Google confused about site navigation and where to find related content within your system. A confused search engine and confused user will immediately take the same action—they'll both abandon your site and look for a better-organized structure that makes navigation easy and relatable.
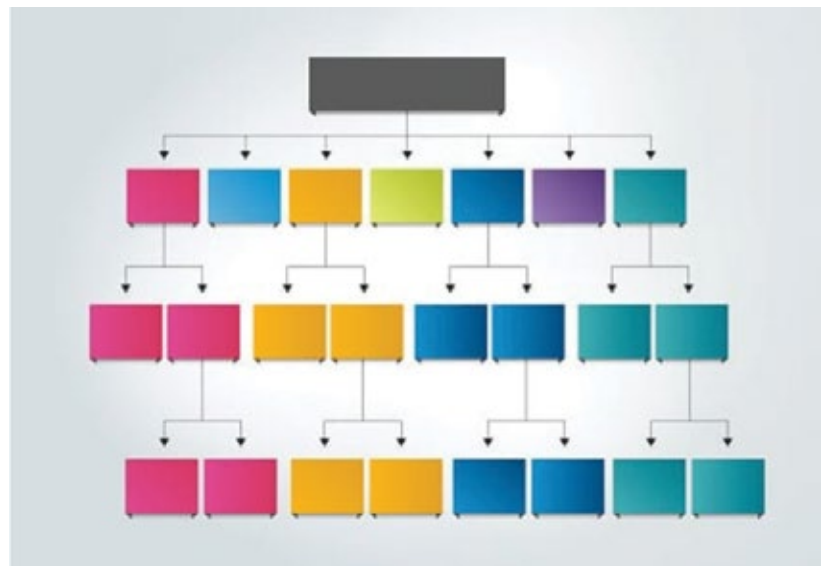
HOW TO SOLVE FOR POOR SITE STRUCTURE:

Planning is important to a well-structured site. Too often site managers begin with a wellbuilt site hierarchy, but as the site ages, new pages get added in a piecemeal fashion, and the site quickly becomes a hodgepodge of disconnected pages and sections. Be sure to start with a site structure and a plan for growth when building a site. Be sure to group topic-related pages into folder groups. Pages closer to the homepage should target a wider audience, with subpages diving deeper into specifics.

NINE: **ORPHANED PAGES**

An orphan page is a page or section of your site not linking to the rest of your website. So why is this important? Google finds pages within your site by following links. Its search bots land on your site and begin following the links you've built. If a page is completely cut off from the main site, there's no avenue built for Google to visit that page and identify that it exists. Because of this, no matter how optimized that page is, it'll never rank until Google knows it exists.

HOW TO SOLVE FOR ORPHANED PAGES:

Once you identify an orphan page, you have a few options:

- Build a link from the established pages on your website to the standalone page

- Include the page in your sitemap

- Submit the page to Google directly via Search Console

TEN: YOUR SITE ISN'T SECURE

Separate from Google's algorithm, online security is a big issue today. Site owners should take efforts to safeguard themselves and their site users from malicious attacks. Chief among these precautions is to purchase and install an SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) to encrypt the content on your site and provide a safer user experience.

Even if your site doesn't collect sensitive information, like email addresses, phone numbers or credit cards, having a secure website helps visitors feel safe during their visits. And a visitor who feels safe online will spend more time searching. Additionally, Google has been upfront about its stance on site security, explicitly stating it's using HTTPS (Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure) as a ranking signal. This means sites with a properly installed SSL certificate will be given preference in ranking over related, unsecured websites.

HOW TO SOLVE FOR AN UNSECURE WEBSITE:

Purchase and install an SSL. An SSL is what provides the encryption for your website. SSLs can be purchased through your domain provider or on the open market.

Ensure Google indexes the proper version of your site (HTTPS vs. HTTP). You can do this by properly generating and submitting a sitemap that references the secure version of your URLs, and installing 301 redirects on any nonsecure page to the secure version. Additionally, utilize Google Search Console to choose the preferred, secure version of your site when Google indexes your site for search.

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