



The 10 Actions SEOs Need to Take Following Google's Spot-Zero-Termination

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The date was January 22nd. The day SEO changed forever.

If you need a refresher, it was January 22nd when Google removed the URL of a featured snippet from serving a second time in the SERP, leaving it only visible in the featured snippet alone.

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While it may seem like a minor change, the fallout is affecting virtually every website.

Or in other words,

for the first time ever, spot 1 on a Google Search became a questionable goal. SEOs have known for years that when a featured snippet was shown in a SERP that the URL falling immediately below the snippet earned more clicks than the snippet itself. Which was usually the same URL as the snippet, but when Google removed "spot zero" from the SERP it meant that there was no second URL for the snippet holder to recapture lost clicks.

While it may seem like a minor change, the fallout is affecting virtually every website. 97th Floor conducted a study of nearly 3,000 high volume SERPs, each of which was affected by the January 22 spot-zero-termination from Google.

Read the entire write up here: moz.com/blog/spot-zero-is-gone

The write-up on the data can be found on Moz's blog, but we've saved our actionable recommendations just for you. Let's get to them.

10 Things SEOs Should Prioritize After Google's Spot-Zero-Termination

01 Annotate January 22nd in your analytics platform to indicate the change.

If you haven't already, you need to annotate your Google Analytics platform for January 22nd indicating that this was the day the spot-zero-termination took place. Additionally, if you have any keyword tracking software setup you will want to make sure you have that date annotated as well.

02 Re-run your keyword research filtering out SERPs that have snippets or "People Also Ask" boxes.

Our research showed conclusively that when a featured snippet or "People Also Ask" boxes are present in a SERP, clicks on the SERP drop significantly. Ensure that the keywords you choose to target will gain greater clicks by running keyword research that specifically excludes snippets or "People Also Ask" boxes to ensure your page ranks in highly clickable SERPs. In most cases, it is better to rank for a low-volume and static SERP, than a high-volume, but dynamic SERP.

03 Review traffic numbers on historically stubborn SERPs, and pivot as needed.

One of the positive outcomes of this update is that below-the-fold positions on page 1 of Google are seeing noticeable click-through rates. SEOs will want to document these upticks to explain small, page-level increases in traffic. If it's working for a few pages, it may be worth expanding that strategy to more keywords. After all, it's easier to get from spot 10 to spot 4 than it is to spot 1.



04 Optimize for snippets on striking distance keywords.

The data 97th Floor collected determined that it was easier for most any URL on the first page to qualify as a contender to snag the featured snippet. Historically we've seen spots 1, 2, or 3 be the snippet holders while now it's not uncommon to see URLs jump from spot 6 or 7 to spot 1 (AKA the featured snippet). So if you have URLs that are at the bottom of page 1, reoptimize them to capitalize on the featured snippet. You will likely see improved click-through rates if you capture the featured snippet.

05 Review traffic for longtime snippet holders.

You may be shocked to see that the once prolific keyword that has always held the featured snippet is now getting less clicks than it has historically. Even a single percentage point of less clicks is noticeable for high volume keywords. If you notice lower click-through rates via Google Search Console since January 22nd, you may want to consider opting out of the featured snippet altogether in the hopes that this URL will capture spot 2 and earn more clicks than it would in a featured snippet spot 1.

06 Deoptimize for the featured snippet the right way.

If you decide you want to deoptimize a URL featured snippet, don't make any changes to the copy as this could negatively affect your base rank. Instead, implement the "data-nosnippet" attribute into the HTTP of the given page you'd like to optimize. Simply put the following snippet of code into the <head> section of the page just as you would any other meta robots title.

```
<meta name="googlebot" content="nosnippet">
```

07 Reexamine your title tags.

Perhaps more than ever, a web page's user-facing clickability factors matter for its click-through rate. SEOs should double down on testing SEO-optimized title tags to ensure the user clicks the intended headline, in this case, yours. Historical SEO best practices have dictated using the brand's name at the end of the title tag after a dash or a pipe, but if the brand's name isn't lending any kind of credibility to the title tag, then it's best to discard the brand name in favor for more clickable text.

08 Create stronger meta descriptions.

Longtime SEOs have had a complicated relationship with meta descriptions since it's been years since they've actually directly influenced rankings. In fact, Google will often create their own meta description for pages, especially blog posts, even if you provided one for them. This has caused SEOs to marginalize the importance of creating unique, clickable meta descriptions. Despite the fact that meta descriptions don't improve rankings and Google may just pull their own anyways, they are the copy that serves with your title in the SERPs. An optimized meta description could increase clicks to your web page.

09 Enhance your structured data mark-up.

Going along with the previous two points, SEOs need to ensure that the structured data associated with the URL's appearance in the SERP is utilizing all of the features Google allows. The specific mark-ups will vary depending on the SERP and content on the page, but typical structure mark-ups that enhance clickability in a SERP include:



**customer
reviews**



**product
pricing**



**local
business
information**



**event
details**



**recipe
information**



**single images
or carousels**

10 Talk to your boss or client.

The cardinal sin for SEOs is under-communication. SEOs should be doing their part to ensure their boss or client understands the significance of the spot-zero-termination by Google, and more specifically how their site has fared. If there's an action plan that needs to take place, this documentation should give you a good rollout plan for site fixes. You can't go wrong with the STAR format; situation, task, action, result.

Your STAR format presentation could look something like this:

Situation:

On January 22nd, Google removed what SEOs have referred to as "spot zero" from search engine results that house a featured snippet. This matters because most featured snippet holders are reporting less clicks, while other web pages with lower position keywords are seeing small increases.

Task:

Our team will need to document how we have been affected by this update, and produce an action plan to compensate for this newest Google update. A fast action plan will allow us to outpace the competition, which is why we've already begun the following:

Action:

Our research thus far has led us to believe we were impacted in the following way... We'll continue analyzing this trend deeper through the SEO tools and platforms our business has access to. Additionally, we believe that improving our clickability will increase the traffic to our web pages. Specifically we are doubling down on user-focused title tags and meta descriptions along with a second look at our structured data that will help us improve our appearance in Google searches.

Results:

It may be too early to say for sure, but there's data to support that taking these actions will improve our organic traffic or at the very least, maintain it. While our competitors lose traffic. Please allow us two weeks to implement these action items and 60 days to verify our findings, which I will present to you upon completion.

Your marketing
is more than
just featured
snippets.

And we'd love to learn
about all of it! Let's set up
a time to talk.

97th Floor is a marketing agency with a simple credo; we make the internet a better place. Whether it's SEO, digital ads, creative content, or automation, we're here to help.

97thFloor.com/lets-connect