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The Google Sandbox and How To Get Out

Author: Doug Williams

The Google Sandbox is a filter that was put in place in about March of 2004. New websites with new domain names can take 6 to 12 months to get decent rankings on Google. Some are reporting stays of up to 18 months. The Sandbox seems to affect nearly all-new websites placing them on probation. Similarly, websites that have made comprehensive redesigns have been caught up in this Sandbox.

Does this Sandbox Really Exist, or is it just part of the Google algorithm? This has been a big controversy with many different opinions. Most now believe that this is an algorithm. In either case, the Sandbox functions to keep new sites from shooting to the top of Google in just a few weeks and overtaking quality sites that have been around for many years. This appears to be an initiation period for new websites.

Yahoo and MSN do not seem to have anything similar to the Sandbox. Many websites rank on the first page for their targeted phrases on these two search engines, yet are nowhere to be found on Google.

The more competitive the keywords used, the stronger and longer the website's stay in the Sandbox. If your website focuses on very competitive keywords, you are likely to remain in the Sandbox for a longer period of time than if you use on keywords that are relatively low traffic. It doesn't seem to matter how much original, well optimized content and regardless of how many quality inbound links the site may have.

Which sites go in? All sites are likely given a term in the Sandbox, but those websites seeking rankings in highly competitive searches, are probably in for a much longer duration.

Sites can avoid the Sandbox for several reasons.

Sites which were launched before the March 2004

Sites targeting non-competitive keywords and phrases

Sites targeting less competitive search terms have a much shorter stay.

Domains owned prior to the Sandbox implementation would likely be spared.

Many believe that Google is performing analysis with an eye towards "Sandboxing" non-natural text. Low quality text could pre-dispose a site to penalties or make it more difficult to "escape" the Sandbox. Sites with unnatural linking that may indicate purchased links and other spam methods that Google deems unnatural manipulation may be Sandboxed.

How can I tell if my website is in the Sandbox or is banned? A Sandboxed site many times will have a good PageRank and a high amount of incoming links. There may be good results for secondary phrases but cannot be found on the primary, more competitive phrases. Sandboxed sites will be visited regularly by Google. Sandboxed sites will frequently have good rankings on MSN and Yahoo.

Banned websites typically do not see the Googlebot visit their websites, regardless of who is linking to them or how good their content is.

How do you get your website out of the Sandbox? The only real escape is time but there are some folks reporting success by publishing articles. They are writing articles on their site topic and either placing the full article on their home page, or placing a summary on their home page with a link to the article page. Then they are then submitting the article to as many free article directories as they can find. These articles provide valuable links back and some are reporting that their sites are being released in as little as one month.

It might also help if your web site has its own IP address and it also seems to help if you have a link from the Yahoo directory. However, these theories haven't been confirmed yet.

Use your time in the Sandbox wisely. You have an excellent opportunity to build all the elements that cause websites to perform well in the search engines. Build traffic by writing articles, building a strong community of visitors, and partnering with websites that offer some service to your visitors. Establish a low-intensity, long-term link building plan and follow it religiously. Start promoting your website the moment you create your website, not when your website is fully ready.

Add content and make improvements to your web site regularly.

There appears to be penalties for re-designing sites. Websites undergoing major renovation in content and layout appear to also be caught up in the Sandbox. This appears to be aimed at spammers who are buying older websites and converting them for their use.

It's important to avoid over-analysis of the Sandbox and to be aware of the filter's qualities to make recognition easier. If you are caught up in the Sandbox, it is best to push forward and continuously make improvements and updating your website. This is best for your visitors and moves you out of the Sandbox sooner.

About the author:

Doug Williams is the founder and president of Doug Williams and Associates, LLC. DWA is an Internet marketing and search engine optimization firm. DWA also operates a managed linking service "Don't Worry About Links" at www.dwalink.com. Visit www.dougwilliams.com