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## Panda, Penguin… How to Insulate Your Website from Google's Zoo

Pandas and penguins - so cute, so nonthreatening. Well, until now.

As the nicknames of Google's new algorithms, Panda and Penguin have become powerful predators of the Internet, targeting websites for specific infractions. The purpose of these functions is to protect users from lower-quality; keyword-stuffed, ad-jammed, spammy search results.

- Panda targets specific section or an entire site, rather than individual web pages.
- Penguin focuses on the date of a web page as criteria for its quality control.

When Panda or Penguin identifies content that it considers keyword-stuffed, auto-generated, or linking to pay-per-click sites that add no value, Google takes action by flagging that site's account.

And it isn't just the fly-by-night or the fringe dwellers under the gun; according to Search Engine Watch, "Google penalized JC Penney, Forbes and Overstock.com for 'shady' linking practices."

However, for all the benefits Google's new algorithms purport to bring to the average user, nearly any content creator – you, for instance – may be caught in their grips. If either Panda or Penguin identifies your site as lower quality, it could jeopardize your ranking in the results.

**Avoid Becoming Panda's Prey**
Fortunately, you can take steps to produce content that even a Panda or Penguin will love. First, follow a "don't" list that includes three key tactics:

1. Don't overdo the keywords. If you've ever been subjected to a blog with several instances of an awkward phrase like, "print shop services Bakersfield CA," you know you're looking at SEO-stuffed content. Some bloggers stuff keywords deliberately; others inadvertently; but to Panda, the outcome is the same. Keep the text geared toward the reader, not the search engine.

2. Don't write similar articles on the same topic. Panda hates this, and is quick to identify lookalike pages as inauthentic. Avoid the copy/paste and the repetitive phrasing. You can work a theme from page to page, of course – but strive to give every web page, every blog and every other piece of content a sense of uniqueness.

3. Don't load up on ads and links. When Panda made its debut in 2011, one of the first things site owners noticed was that organic-oriented news sites and social networks climbed in the rankings, while ad- and link-heavy sites dropped. Included among the offenders are "doorway pages" that use keyword-stuffing to direct users to a single destination with no additional value;

reciprocal links that arbitrarily connect one site to another with no value-added purpose; and sneaky hidden text of keywords that the eye can't see but that search engines can.

**Play Nice with the Google Zoo**

As Google itself puts it, "One of the most important steps in improving your site's ranking in Google search results is to ensure that it contains plenty of rich information that includes relevant keywords, used appropriately, that indicate the subject matter of your content."

So to keep Panda and Penguin at bay, your "to do" list is at least as long as your "to don't" list. It includes:

1. Offering transparency. A user should know immediately what your business is all about. Keep everything accessible, from your About Us, to your Terms of Service, to your copyright. By practicing such due diligence, you maintain a credible, authoritative image – one that could help distinguish you from competitors as well as satisfy Panda and Penguin.

2. Building content consistently. Blogs, e-newsletters, video, blog posts – you have plenty of quality choices when it comes to posting content. When you create a well-themed set of content that uses SEO wisely, you increase your online presence and provide your visitors with a valid reason to proceed to your landing page.

3. Providing meaningful content that's pertinent to your clients. Remember that today's consumers search the Internet for answers, not ads. Clients and prospects are not interested in blogs about your new location, or links to coupons. They're more likely to respond to industry-specific information that offers real value: a blog on how free shipping affects holiday purchases, for instance; or a report on the risks and advantages of using social media as test-marketing strategy.

**Set Up Your Site for Success**

Google's new algorithms have thrown many marketers for a loop – but you don't have to be one of them. By practicing basic SEO etiquette, you need not fear Panda or Penguin. And at that same time, you may notice enhanced web traffic and more qualified leads resulting from your credible content.

## About the Author

Jan Stewart writes exclusively for Medallion Fulfillment & Logistics, a family owned fulfillment service business located in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. When you need simple or comprehensive assistance with warehousing, order processing, and shipping for your store or e-commerce business, consider Medallion first. Visit them at www.MedallionEnterprises.com.