BrightEdge Point of View: Social Impact on Google and SEO—

6 Ways Social Supports Healthy SEO

Are Twitter and Facebook tweets and likes an SEO ranking signal? Do they matter for search?

Social content matters because it is crawlable web content on an authoritative domain that can appear alongside your site content in the SERPs, especially on branded queries. But the social web is a separate environment that Google has decided not to interpret for ranking traditional web content.

Matt Cutts of Google explained that social signals, like tweets and likes, are not a ranking signal in the Google algorithm in this video because "We are sampling an imperfect web. We have to worry a lot about identity [and relationships] when identity is already hard."

BrightEdge checked in with Eric Enge, author of The Art of SEO and GM at Perficient, who said, "All links on social sites are NoFollow. Reasons people share on social media and their popularity are not as related to authority, so are less relevant for deciding rank in the SERP."

Benu Aggarwal, President of Milestone Internet, says, "Social is top of the funnel and very critical for the engagement and awareness stage. It is not a ranking factor, but it helps in overall customer journey."

So should brands worry about social with regard to SEO? Yes. Here are 6 reasons why.
1. Share of SERP
2. Reputation management
3. Preempt competition
4. Build awareness and familiarity
5. Build backlinks by making your web content more discoverable
6. Improve engagement

1. Share of SERP

Because Google can allocate a large amount of above-the-fold space to the Twitter carousel, it creates exposure and distribution for your Twitter feed. The more coverage of the SERP your brand has the more dominant your brand will look.

2. Preempt Competition

Search is a zero-sum game. If you are not prominently placed, you leave the door open to your competition to claim that space. Competitive threat is often a better motivator for management and colleagues than an emerging opportunity.

3. Reputation Management

One objective for using Twitter is to displace non-brand content and proactively manage your brand's reputation. When doing a Google brand search of a major brand, you'll notice on the top of the search results the Twitter stream pops up, (i.e., a tweet carousel) below the site links. The tweet carousel takes up vertical space on the results page and pushes any potentially competitive information downward and thereby increasing brand visibility, share of voice, and content control. In addition, the tweet carousel allows customers to easily interact with the brand via Twitter, allowing for retweets, likes, and comments.

4. Build Awareness and Familiarity

Being in many communication channels allows you to interact with people in their preferred medium. People who get most of their information from Twitter will only find you if you are there. Once they engage there, they will be more likely to recognize and engage or click elsewhere, like in the SERPs.

5. Improve Engagement

Getting people to interact with you socially is likely to familiarize them with your voice and content and improve engagement with other content, and dwell time after click through from the SERPs is a ranking factor.

6. Build Backlinks

As mentioned, backlinks in social do not count as SEO backlinks, however the more people are exposed to and consume your content, the more chance they will add a backlink to that content in their site or blog, which will contribute to link equity, which is a ranking factor.

The Takeaway

Yes. Twitter and Facebook social content and signals are indirectly beneficial in driving traffic through the organic search channel.

About BrightEdge

BrightEdge, the global leader in enterprise organic search and content performance, empowers marketers to transform online content into business results such as traffic, conversions, and revenue. The BrightEdge S3 platform is powered by a sophisticated deep learning engine and is the only company capable of web-wide, real-time measurement of content engagement across all digital channels, including search, social, and mobile. BrightEdge's 1,700+ customers include global brands and 57 of the Fortune 100. The company has eight offices worldwide and is headquartered in Foster City, California.