

Search Off the Record - 63rd episode

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[00:00:10] **Martin Splitt:** [00:00:10] Hello, and welcome to another episode of Search Off the Record, a podcast coming to you from the Google Search team, discussing all things Search and having some fun along the way. My name is Martin and I'm joined today by John, from the Search Relations team, of which I'm also part of.

[00:00:26] And we do have a special guest, Danny Sullivan. Danny, would you like to introduce yourself to our audience?

[00:00:33] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:00:33] Yes. Oh my God, you sound so great coming in there. I'm so excited. My name is Danny Sullivan. I am the Public Liaison for Google Search.

[00:00:42] **Martin Splitt:** [00:00:42] So cool. And I think Search Liaison is also your Twitter handle, right?

[00:00:47] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:00:47] It is.

[00:00:47] **Martin Splitt:** [00:00:47] Yeah, it's very, very nice.

[00:00:49] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:00:49] Didn't have enough room to put in the little public part there, but it's already a public Twitter account, so it's probably inherently understood.

[00:00:57] **Martin Splitt:** [00:00:56] Pretty much, pretty much. And John, How about you? What's your name on Twitter these days? I know John Mu is your handle, but you keep changing your name, no?

[00:01:05] **John Mueller:** [00:01:05] Oh my gosh. I don't know.

[00:01:09] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:01:09] Wow!

[00:01:10] **John Mueller:** [00:01:10] It's...Yeah!

[00:01:11] **Martin Splitt:** [00:01:10] So it finally happened. You have to catch up to your Twitter name at this point.

[00:01:16] **John Mueller:** [00:01:16] Oh my gosh. Yeah, I change it from time to time just for fun, I guess. It's also interesting, I find it, to see when people take screenshots of tweets, because then it's like, oh, this has the name I used, I don't know, a couple of months ago.

[00:01:36] **Martin Splitt:** [00:01:36] Oh, wait, do you have a spreadsheet that lists when you changed to what?

[00:01:40] **John Mueller:** [00:01:40] No, but usually, I remember it, like, unlike now.

[00:01:44] **Martin Splitt:** [00:01:44] Okay, excellent. So while John is updating his Twitter profile name, we are used to people asking us about ranking updates. And I know that you, Danny, has written a fantastic piece of documentation for our ranking updates. So we now list important updates on ranking systems, signals and factors, no?

[00:02:12] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:02:12] Yes, every single ranking system we have is not listed. But a lot of really interesting ones are. [laughs]

[00:02:21] **Martin Splitt:** [00:02:21] Yeah, I've seen there's also like legacy ones in there no?

[00:02:24] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:02:24] Yeah.

[00:02:25] **Martin Splitt:** [00:02:25] That's pretty cool. So what brought you to create this piece of documentation? Is it kind of just showing what we used to use and what we're using now as a timeline of the evolution of the ranking systems, or?

[00:02:39] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:02:39] It's primarily to help anyone, including SEOs, but really anyone, just

understand the various systems that we have, that we use within ranking. A lot of people think, "Oh, there's the Google algorithm," and that's it. It's this big giant thing. And of course, as we all know, there's multiple systems actually that all come into play.

[00:03:00] And so, it seemed like it would be useful to list a lot of these so that people understood them. And especially, I think, for SEOs and creators, for them to understand some of the ones that get involved with ranking on a recurring basis, stuff that they're familiar with, like the core-system ranking systems, or the helpful content system, and so on from there.

[00:03:22] **Martin Splitt:** [00:03:22] That's quite cool. I really like the documentation and I'm pretty happy. I was really, really happy when that landed, when that was finally public. So that's pretty cool. It does help a little bit to explain how we look at ranking, I think. And it helps with pointing people in the right direction and reshaping how they think about ranking. Because as you say, there's no one huge Google algorithm that does the thing.

[00:03:48] One thing that we do keep getting asked for is, "Oh, there's a new ranking update. What does that mean for me and my site? What do I need to change? How do I respond to that?" Is there something that you would say to people who are worried about this kind of stuff?

[00:04:06] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:04:06] Yeah, I mean, clearly, whenever we have a new ranking update, you should redo every single thing you've ever done from the beginning. And it's always incredibly new work. And, you know, just whatever you did before is completely obsolete. So, I don't really think that's a problem, no.

[00:04:24] For the most part, the things, let me step back a little bit. So one of the changes we did last year is we started talking about our ranking systems as opposed to ranking updates, and that was trying to clean up some legacy stuff that we had inherited.

[00:04:41] People may recall things like, you know, the "Panda" update, when it would happen. And what it was, is, this was a system designed to provide more relevant results. But it was called an update because people were used to the time that, any time Google Search results would maybe shift because of a ranking shift or whatever, we called that an update.

[00:05:01] So then, like roughly every month the Panda system would get an update. So the Panda update 2.1, Panda update 2.2., and we just kind of continued along this. Anytime something came out that was actually more like a ranking system, we would call it an update. By the time we got to something like the helpful content update, as we called it when we launched it, it was going to get really confusing to say, "Well, now we've done the 'helpful content update update'."

[00:05:31] Right? So it was really this reset to say, "Look, we have these ranking systems, for example, the helpful content system, and periodically some of these systems get updated."

[00:05:42] So when we talk about an update, it means that this particular system has been reworked or improved in a way that we think will provide for better results. Then that comes back to, so what do you do when you hear one of these systems has had an update made to it? Or maybe we introduce a new system.

[00:06:01] And the good news is, as part of what we've been doing over the past year, two years, three years really, is we've created these standalone pages that explain what some of these key systems are, what you should think about in terms of them if you are a creator with, we hope, helpful guidance.

[00:06:21] What should you do with, say, the products, the product reviews, or the review systems now, because it's all covering all reviews? We have a page about it, and it'll say things like, "Are you writing authentic reviews?", "Are you showing that you actually used a product and that's demonstrated and it's self-evident to people in various ways.

[00:06:44] As a creator, none of this really should cause you to do anything different. Like, when we had the helpful content system introduced, the guidance has always been creating helpful stuff for users, so it really shouldn't cause you to have to do anything different.

[00:07:01] But, of course, if you've seen a change after one of these systems has been launched or an updated system has been launched, then that's probably a sign that maybe you're not as aligned as you should be with what these things have been looking for, what Google's generally trying to look for. So re-review that advice, and maybe it'll help you get aligned with those systems better.

[00:07:23] **Martin Splitt:** [00:07:23] Nice, cool.

[00:07:24] **John Mueller:** [00:07:24] So it's a lot, I guess, more about, if you see some changes and you see that something on Google's side has changed, then you can look up to see what kind of change and, based on that, you could review your content and say, "Oh, well, I have reviews and I was being a bit lazy and I pulled in a lot of specs from websites instead of actually reviewing the content." And now you're like, "Well, maybe I should spend some time fixing these things up."

[00:07:57] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:07:57] Exactly. A lot of things have actually come together, so all this stuff works together to help. Gary had especially got our Search Status Dashboard up and running. That's Gary from our Search Relations team. That links back into these, to the overall systems page, into the individual pages we have for some of these ranking systems.

[00:08:20] And the whole goal is to be able to say, "Hello, web community, Google has made a update to one of its ranking systems. This is the ranking system, and this is how you can learn more about it. And as you say, John, if you suddenly noticed a change that's happening, then you understand it's probably related to that particular system, and you understand that, "Well, all my traffic went up, so I don't have to do anything." Good for you, Google. I love it.

[00:08:49] Or if maybe you're performing less well, then you want to review some of that guidance. That also leads to, you know, the thing that comes up is, "You're pushing all these updates, too many updates! Stop it! And they're all overlapping and it's too many! And my head's going to explode, stop it!" And none of that's true.

[00:09:11] So, you know, a couple of things there. First of all, it's not that we're doing more updates to our ranking systems than ever before, but we're hopefully communicating more about it, which is what everybody had said they wanted. So it's like, before, it'd be like, "Did something happen?" It's like, "Maybe." And now it's like, "Yes, we are telling you there was this change to our ranking systems. This is what it was, so you know."

[00:09:39] That also leads back to all the mystery updates that happen. It's like, we do do updates all the time.

But when we talk about them, those are the ones where really, like, you probably should pay attention to. We think they're notable in some way.

[00:09:51] Sometimes, as we all know, everybody starts talking about a ranking update and we're like, we don't even know. Like we're all running around behind the scenes going, "Did we do anything?" And they're like, "No, we didn't do anything. We don't know what's going on."

[00:10:04] **John Mueller:** [00:10:04] Those are always weird. Yeah. [laughing]

[00:10:07] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:10:07] But so it's designed to kind of help people understand what's going on.

[00:10:11] **John Mueller:** [00:10:11] Do you see this becoming more granular over time? Or do you think the granularity of what we document there is at the right level?

[00:10:21] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:10:21] I hope that it grows a lot more. The News team just shared about topic authority. And so now we have a new system that we will formally add into that page, and we will create a probably standalone page to explain it a bit more.

[00:10:37] And part of what I hope is that more and more teams, as they are developing ranking systems, are improving them, understand, "Hey, this would actually be useful for us to share with the world generally." Because both it's helpful for people who create content to know about some of these things, but it's also just helpful for people who use Google to understand that we do certain things.

[00:11:00] I'll give you another example. There are other things that are also on the page that aren't necessarily ranking changes, but it's just nice to have things documented. We talk about the site diversity system. That's where, as many people are familiar now, we generally try not to show more than two web page listings from the same site. So there's a lot of diversity in the top results.

[00:11:20] "But what do you mean? I just searched for this company and you gave me 20 listings from them." I know, because you searched for the company. So that's one of those exceptions. But generally, "But you

lie!" No, but it's just how we didn't say it always.

[00:11:36] But previously, we made that change. It was like, we tweeted it, and if you saw the tweet, great. If you remember the tweet from years from there, it wasn't there. Now, it's part of our formal documentation.

[00:11:48] It's not that that system is going to get updates all the time. We're not going to constantly go out and say, "Here's new update to the site diversity system." But at least you understand a bit more of, "Oh, this is something Google thinks about. Google has a whole system designed to do that type of thing and deal with it. Or we've talked about things like what we were doing with freshness generally.

[00:12:10] Sometimes we try to show fresher content, and we talk to it periodically. And maybe it's mentioned in the blog post here and there. But now there's a whole thing that explains. This is one of the things we do with ranking. So yeah, I'd like to see it get a lot more granular over time.

[00:12:26] **John Mueller:** [00:12:26] Do you think SEOs will take advantage and tweak their sites to make them, I don't know, match what we document our algorithms to be doing?

[00:12:36] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:12:36] No, they would never, ever possibly try to reverse engineer a ranking system. That would be insane. They're going to focus on building the best content that they can, helpful, people-first content. They're going to know that it's the long-term way to success. As many of the older SEOs who've been through the ropes will constantly tell them.

[00:12:59] I mean, yeah. If you want to read the page, and it says this is what we look for and you can create content that matches the things that we look for, go for it. Because if it's fresh, helpful, people-first content, great, that's why we did it. So there's nothing, I think, that we're publishing that we're afraid to be sharing. We think it will help people do a better job.

[00:13:25] **Martin Splitt:** [00:13:25] I'm just imagining someone making the website better for their users and then going like, "Ha ha, that'll show Google."

[00:13:32] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:13:32] Can you imagine? That's it. I just wrote a really authentic review in detail about this project. That'll teach Google. [laughing]

[00:13:42] **Martin Splitt:** [00:13:42] No, but I think it's really interesting what you're saying. Like, it shows where Google is looking at, in terms of how to identify good pages on the web for specific queries. And it also shows, as you said, updates keep happening. And it shows when things are changing.

[00:14:02] I remember HTTPS becoming a thing that was important. We would value that in ranking. As more and more sites have switched to HTTPS, this became, obviously, less of an indication of care and quality and user trust, as more websites were doing it by default now. And we have accordingly changed that in the ranking or reflected that evolution in the ranking systems.

[00:14:32] So I think we're going to see more of that in the future as well. Things are, like, new things coming, old things being adjusted. With that, it becomes a little trickier for SEOs, maybe, to figure out what to prioritize on.

[00:14:47] Is there something that we can do to help people out there identify the thing that is important for their site specifically, besides the usual, make it as fast as possible, make it as useful as possible, as helpful as possible, as trustworthy as possible? Are there specific things to look out for?

[00:15:06] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:15:05] Yeah, it's interesting. I feel like more of our shift these days is less about "these are the specific things" and more of "these are the mindsets you should be following". So if you look at the page experience, and we made some changes there. In the past, we had talked about the system. Oh, gosh, now I'm going to channel Barry Schwartz. I said, I wouldn't do this. I had to go into it.

[00:15:30] So that's Barry Schwartz, of course, from Search Engine Roundtable. Hey, Barry. We had a page experience system that really wasn't so much a system as much as we were making use of individual signals. And understanding these particular signals are things that we'll use within ranking generally.

[00:15:47] We'd look at things like Core Web Vitals, and we'd be looking at HTTPS usage. And I think one of the advantages to talking about specific signals like that is that it can cause people to think, "Great, I'm going to work on these things, and those are good things to work on."

[00:16:04] But then the disadvantage is, "But my Core Web Vitals are 8,000 percent, how come I'm not ranking at 8,000 percent?" Okay, because that's one of many signals we use in ranking, it doesn't guarantee. "But they're still there, 8,000 percent, and I don't understand."

[00:16:21] So, one of the shifts that we made was really to say, "Look, page experience. We don't want you to be thinking about these in terms of individual signals, and I've got to do this one and I have to do that one. And if I get all those dialed up to 8,000 percent, then I'm going to finally rank," as much as saying, "Look, page experience is this concept you need to keep in mind."

[00:16:45] That you want to provide a good overall page experience to people, because that will correlate with people generally being happy and often correlates with good, helpful content.

[00:16:57] To achieve that, there are certainly things you should be looking at. Core Web Vitals is an excellent guide to understanding some aspects of your providing a good page experience. But it's also possible you have great Core Web Vitals, and yet you're still providing a bad page experience in other ways. You may want to be looking at what you're doing with interstitials, or what you're doing with pop-ups on a page, or what you're doing with how you've formatted the page overall.

[00:17:26] And it's really more like, here are some things for you to ask yourself and think about it in terms of what a user might encounter, a person, a human being coming to this page, might encounter and use some of these metrics as you can. But are you achieving the overall goal of having a good page experience?

[00:17:44] I think it's similar with what we do when we talk about advice for core updates. We have that growing page, helpful, people-first content. It has all these self-assessment questions, a lot of them that originated way back from when we had the Panda update, system update, system update signal.

[00:18:07] But back to there, I think especially as we've been doing more of this documentation, it's the same thing of trying to get people into that mindset that instead of chasing one particular thing, if you understand whether or not, from a human point of view, you're aligned with these broad things overall, then you're probably doing the right thing.

[00:18:29] But I don't have a doctor listed on the byline, and it says in the E-E-A-T guidelines you should have doctors. I was like, no, it's not about that you had a doctor necessarily. It's about whether or not you are demonstrating expertise generally across content. Because if you do that, then you're probably aligning with these other signals that we have that help us measure whether or not content seemed to be useful.

[00:18:56] **John Mueller:** [00:18:56] So I guess one of the things that a lot of SEOs do, or that I see them doing, is trying to create some site audits. Like, they have a new client, and they don't really know their business, their website. And they would love to run their website through some tool that says, like, "Oh, it's missing this. It's missing that."

[00:19:16] What way could they take these things? Should they just make a checklist and go through all of the questions that we have? Or what would you suggest?

[00:19:29] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:19:29]

I mean, I think, first of all, we have a lot of actual technical guidelines. Right? So those things are pretty straightforward. And we've got the Search Essentials, which Lizzie especially had got us going with. Lizzie Sassman, of course, a technical writer with us on our Search Relations team that talks about these technical guidelines. The technical guidelines generally are pretty straightforward. Yes, no, yes, no, right?

[00:19:56] And you can do that and that's helpful, because if you have great technical SEO, you'll rank number one. No, you should have good technical SEO. It's not going to make you number one just because of that, but you want to be thinking about that thing. So yes, shout out to all the technical SEOs out there.

[00:20:13] **Martin Splitt:** [00:20:13] Woo-woo.

[00:20:14] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:20:14] Anyway, so, those sorts of things. And then I think, in terms of the content, sure. I mean, they're self-assessment questions. And I think it could be useful if somebody went through and said, "Okay, you have created this content that you're hoping ranks well, but for this topic, because you're selling this product, so you thought it'd be good to create some content about that product."

[00:20:39] But as it turns out, going down the list of things that they say you should think about, it looks like

you don't do this, or maybe this, or maybe that. And it's not that you have to do every single one of those things, but it feels like this is not as helpful overall. So maybe we want to do some work to kind of improve this sort of thing.

[00:21:02] And that can be tricky, because some of the guidelines will be like, "Do you have authorship?", for example. "Do you show an author?" type of thing. And you could come away with that saying, "Every single one of our pages must now have an author listed. It's like, "No!"

[00:21:17] I mean, if it makes sense to a reader or visitor to know who authored content, great. But if it's your product page that explains how this USB microphone works, that it's authored by a person, no one would typically expect it there, that sort of thing there. They would expect other things that explain it.

[00:21:39] **Martin Splitt:** [00:21:39] Nice.

[00:21:40] **John Mueller:** [00:21:40] Cool, okay.

[00:21:41] **Martin Splitt:** [00:21:41] And I mean, if we look at the guidance and you're saying, like, the idea is to align with the mindset and with the general broader picture. The broader picture has pretty much been, I mean, roughly the same: create helpful, useful, fresh content for the users' needs. Then if that's the case, why are there even updates anymore? Like, shouldn't we be done by now?

[00:22:08] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:22:08] Yes.

[00:22:10] **John Mueller:** [00:22:10] We are perfect.

[00:22:11] **Martin Splitt:** [00:22:11] It's finished!

[00:22:12] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:22:12] It is perfect, it is finished.

[00:22:14] **Martin Splitt:** [00:22:14] Final level.

[00:22:15] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:22:15] We have reached the singularity, and so we're done. Well, because nothing's perfect, and content always changes. The way people are producing content changes. People will continue to make content that has the appearance of being helpful without necessarily being there.

[00:22:35] I think one of the things that's a real struggle, getting real, getting heart to heart now, talking to all you SEOs out there working in the trenches. But I think one of the things that has been interesting is, you've seen, especially over the past year or two, generally people saying, "I don't like all this SEO content that I'm encountering." Right?

[00:22:59] Now, having been an SEO and being familiar with SEO, I always think about that scene in "The Matrix," where the guy's looking at the code and he just sees people, right? I just see people, you know? And it's like, whenever I look at a page, I just see SEO, right? Because you're like, "Oh, oh, oh." But you're really seeing the SEO. Like, you're really understanding some of the stuff that might have been going on.

[00:23:24] For an ordinary person to say that they see the SEO, I don't think they are necessarily seeing the SEO as much as they're using that for a euphemism of, "This content really wasn't designed for me, it was designed just to rank in a search engine." And then, and of course, that's not what we want people to do.

[00:23:42] And I think to be successful as an SEO, you want to make sure that, if you're producing content, that no one's going to have that reaction, which aligns with what we say. And that's a hard thing, because you're like, "But we have this product, so we thought, 'Should we have a blog post about it?'" And it's like, "Yeah, that maybe is helpful to have a blog post explaining the types of products that are out there."

[00:24:05] But, if it feels too much like you're pushing your own product, and the main reason you did it that way, I think people become much more savvy and they understand, "Well, the only reason you did this was because you're trying to pull me in. You're not really trying to be helpful with it or whatever."

[00:24:23] Or at least if you were going to do it, I didn't need you to do the blog post listing the five different products out there and "Oh, surprise, my product is number one," as much as maybe I needed you to just do a post explaining more in depth about how your own product works, because maybe that's more authentic.

[00:24:41] And I understand that, "Okay, you're writing about your product you're even addressing some of

the limitations it has and how to work around it and putting that in mind." And that might be useful, and that might not feel like you just sort of SEO the content in a way that kind of turns some people off now.

[00:24:59] **Martin Splitt:** [00:24:59] Mm, interesting.

[00:25:01] **John Mueller:** [00:25:01] I think that's a good way to look at it. I mean, what I notice is SEOs try to pick everything apart into individual factors and look at it like that. But I think for a lot of the guidance that we have, it's a lot more now about the bigger picture, because it feels like from a technical point of view, things are often pretty reasonable.

[00:25:23] And now you really need to get that bigger picture into the right shape, so that when users come, they're like, "Oh, this is actually a helpful site."

[00:25:32] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:25:32] And that bigger picture really is, more than anything else, just put yourself in the shoes of someone who arrives at that content and what they're going to be thinking about.

[00:25:43] Last year, we did this trip to Iceland. So we drove around the island, which was amazing and I highly recommend it to anybody. And so, renting a car in Iceland is great too, because like, "Do you want the volcanic mud and ash insurance?" [laughter]

[00:25:58] **John Mueller:** [00:25:58] I remember that. Yeah.

[00:25:59] **Martin Splitt:** [00:25:59] You're like, "Uh, I guess." [laughter]

[00:26:04] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:26:04] But I read so many travel blogs to the degree that I want to write my own now, just to explain it, because I was getting exhausted, because they'd all start off the same way. And this is, I'm going to have the travel bloggers come after me. So I read so many travel blogs and they're always like, "Oh my gosh, I'm going on an amazing world trip."

[00:26:20] And, before I got started on this trip to this one particular place in Iceland, I packed my sunscreen, I packed my jacket, affiliate link, I did this, I packed that. And so I get, you want to, and I had my GPS compass, like, "I've just got to park and then walk in to watch the waterfall, I don't need all that stuff." I know why it's all there, because that's part of the business model of producing this content.

[00:26:42] And then it's like, "Whenever you go, the sun is shining and..." It's like, I just wanted to know, like, where do I park? How do I get to the place? How long do I need to be there? And that you've actually been there.

[00:27:02] You would get so much of this other stuff. And people know this, right? This is the other complaint you tend to hear. Like, well, you have to have all this stuff and people write it long because Google says you have to have a gazillion words. And actually, we don't say that at all. Not one place, do we think, anywhere saying, "Your character count need to be...", this sort of thing. I think it's becoming a real turnoff to a lot of people.

[00:27:24] And I know it's a struggle because you also need to, if you're producing content, understand how the content is going to generate revenue for you. We want you to produce good content and that you're going to be successful with it.

[00:27:37] But I think more of just sitting back and thinking, "If I were a person coming into this, would I actually be satisfied?" "Did I really write this for an actual person, that I'm thinking about my audience?"

[00:27:50] And if you're doing that, you really feel like the way you do it works and you're getting the feedback from your audience that it's all great. Do it. Just do it. Keep going that way, right? But maybe there's some reflection there. And that's what I would say, to kind of think about it a bit more.

[00:28:07] **Martin Splitt:** [00:28:07] Yeah, I mean, recipes have become kind of a meme. Like you want a recipe for cupcakes and then you get an essay about someone's grandmother and how they made these cupcakes 25 years ago and how that gives them a flashback like in Ratatouille, and I'm like, "Oh gosh, what's happening here?"

[00:28:29] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:28:29] And I will say, like, and I remember one person saying, look, some people who write recipes, like, "We don't want to be told, 'Shut up and go into the kitchen, just give me the

recipe'." I would say to people who are looking at recipes, sometimes people want to tell you a little story because they do want to tell you a little story. It means a lot to them.

[00:28:45] **Martin Splitt:** [00:28:45] That's fine. Yeah. That's fine.

[00:28:46] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:28:46] But you might also want to be aware that not everybody is in that way, and they may want to just know the recipe. And you might be more successful if you make it more accessible to them in that way as well. Just think to kind of experiment with.

[00:29:01] **Martin Splitt:** [00:29:01] Yeah, and I think it all boils down to, "Are you doing SEO as a kind of dressing up pages, so that a hypothetical search engine system might pick it up and love it and hold it dearly and put it in the first position on the result page?"

[00:29:22] "Or are you trying to make something for your users and make it better, so that even a search engine, which is hopefully a less intelligent being than the people using the website can actually understand the goodness of the page?"

[00:29:40] **John Mueller:** [00:29:40] And I know it's exhausting to hear, because people at Google have been saying it, I mean, really decades, certainly over a decade now, like, "Focus on the content, focus on that."

[00:29:52] But I think now more than ever, having that authentic content that you created because you have an actual audience in mind that you know would come to it directly, that is your way forward as you try to navigate this world of how ranking systems are evolving with Google.

[00:30:13] And I think also generally, as we go into this world of AI content and so on, that it will have places and it'd be useful, but I think the bedrock will be to continue to point people towards authentic information. There's a big craving for that, and that's going to be your key to success.

[00:30:32] **Martin Splitt:** [00:30:32] Yeah, they're very, very nice. Anything else you want to let people out there know about ranking updates and ranking systems? Anything that you think people are missing?

[00:30:46] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:30:46] No, just, as we talked about before, continue to focus on the big picture and know that we'll just try to share more information, so that you can understand more about the systems that are out there and, you know, hopefully be successful with them.

[00:31:00] **Martin Splitt:** [00:31:00] All right. I see that we are still on a quest to make things even more transparent and that's going to be fun. But then to all of you out there, stop complaining that we are sharing more of what's happening behind the curtains. Because... [laughter]

[00:31:15] No, it's true. It's quite interesting. I was, when you said, like, "Yeah, people wanted this", and now they're like, "Oh, there's too many updates." I think that comes from the fact that still there are a lot of people out there that think they need to respond...

[00:31:28] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:31:28] Yes!

[00:31:29] **Martin Splitt:** [00:31:29] ...and react to every single change.

[00:31:31] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:31:31] Look we enjoy the animated gifs or jifs, if you don't know how to say it properly.

[00:31:37] **Martin Splitt:** [00:31:37] [laughter] Oh, shot to a dark, woo...

[00:31:41] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:31:41] Anyway, we enjoy animations after there's a tweet. But most people, this is not going to be an issue. Most people, it's like these updates happen. It's like, "Okay, I didn't even know, you know, whatever." It's like, it's not, it's really not something you necessarily need to react to.

[00:32:02] I was thinking about some tweets someone said was daylight savings time and the time change had happened. It is like everything in my house is going, every all my electronic devices have shifted over, like time shifted. I'm perfectly good. And then my stove is screaming, this minute's changed in the space-time continuum. "Help me, help me. I don't understand." [laughter]

[00:32:24] And it's like, "Yeah, you don't need to be the stove that's freaking out, because we just went through an ordinary time change type of thing. You're aware that there was a time change and it's probably going to be perfectly fine for you. So it's okay."

[00:32:40] It doesn't have to be the roller coaster and we're going down, but you can still do the animations because they are funny.

[00:32:45] **Martin Splitt:** [00:32:45] [laughter] That is true.

[00:32:49] Excellent. Well, in that case, if we don't have anything else to say about ranking updates, I do hope that the people out there listening to us have taken away, "Look at the big picture. Don't worry about every single update. It might not be as important to your specific situation as you'd think, especially if you have the bigger picture in mind."

[00:33:12] "And I think the guidance in general hasn't changed too much. Just make things that are fantastic for your users." I think that's it in a nutshell then, huh?

[00:33:21] **John Mueller:** [00:33:21] Yeah!

[00:33:22] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:33:22] Yeah!

[00:33:22] **Martin Splitt:** [00:33:22] Cool!

[00:33:23] ♪ [music] ♪

[00:33:27] **Martin Splitt:** [00:33:27] In the next episode, we will be discussing the effect of quality on Search.

[00:33:32] We've been having fun with these podcast episodes, and we hope that you, the listener, have found them both entertaining and insightful, too. Feel free to drop us a note on Twitter, @googlesearchc, or chat with us at one of the next upcoming events that we go to, if you have any thoughts. And of course, don't forget to like and subscribe. Thank you so much and goodbye.

[00:33:56] **John Mueller:** [00:33:56] Bye-bye!

[00:33:57] **Danny Sullivan:** [00:33:57] Bye-bye, everybody.

[00:33:58] ♪ [music] ♪