



FAST TAKE

Google announce
mobile first index

Google are moving their core search index from a desktop first to a mobile first index as a result of the growth in mobile search queries.

GOOGLE ANNOUNCE THE START OF A MOBILE FIRST INDEX

Following several weeks of rumors and speculation, Google have [officially announced](#) that they have begun experiments to start moving their core search index from a desktop first to a mobile first index.

This means that while the search index will continue to be a single index of websites and apps, they will slowly be updating parts of the search algorithm to primarily use the mobile version of a site's content to rank pages.

Google's index was previously desktop first

Historically, Google's ranking algorithms have always used a desktop first approach. This means that it used signals from the desktop version of a site to decide where it should rank based on whether you were searching on a mobile or desktop device.

When Google first started, this made perfect sense – mobile was such a small proportion of searches. However, over the years the amount of searches done on mobile devices has increased dramatically and in May 2015, it was announced by Google that more searches take place on mobile devices than on desktops in 10 countries including the US and Japan.

Google has continually focused on mobile search

The growth in mobile usage over the years has meant that Google has put a continued focus on mobile search. They have rolled out more mobile search features to ensure that the best possible search experience was delivered to users on mobile devices.

These features included the **mobile friendliness** ranking signal which down weighted the visibility of sites that did not fulfil certain criteria, such as sites using inappropriate software for mobile like Flash, and sites not sizing content to fit mobile screens.

Google also rolled out **app indexing** which focused on indexing content within mobile apps and showing this content within the search results. After several iterations of this, Google now uses information from indexed apps as a factor in rankings for signed-in users who have the app installed.

Google have also pushed for the adoption of **Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMPs)** and in October 2016 hinted that these should be a top consideration for brands in 2017.

Moving to a mobile first index is a logical step

All of the changes that Google have made to mobile search have been modifications of the core index. When a user searched on a mobile device, Google would take



the desktop ranking data then add extra filters to make the rankings relevant for mobile, these included mobile friendliness, app indexing, mobile page speed etc.

Now that mobile search accounts for a larger part of Google searches than desktop and mobile searches continue to grow, the next obvious step for Google was to move from an index that relies heavily on data from desktop sites to an index that used mobile sites as its core index and then add extra filters to make it relevant for desktop.

Implications for SEO strategies

At the moment Google are just starting to experiment with a mobile first index, but as with any announcement that Google makes, it is important to start planning for the change now.

Having a well optimised mobile site is going to become even more critical in the months ahead and it is important to embrace new technology like Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMPs).

For brands with a well optimised responsive or dynamic serving site where the content and mark-up are the same across mobile and desktop, there should not be any issues with the new index as it is rolled out. This is because as far as Google is concerned the mobile and desktop versions of the site are the same.

However, for brands using a site configuration where the content and mark-up is different across mobile and desktop, then a focus needs to be made on optimising and improving the mobile site to ensure it is consistent with the desktop site from Google's perspective.

Please reach out to us for support

If you have any questions around Google's move to a mobile first index, please get in contact with your MEC team.