



Guide To
FRESHNESS
UPDATE
From
Google Patent

Introduction

When it comes to search engine results, many people don't realize that there's more to it than just PageRankings. Google doesn't just sort its search results by perceived popularity - it also measures content by its freshness.

Freshness is all about time relevance. Say you do a search for "movie releases." You're not going to get what you want if Google's search results page is full of movie releases from 1985.

Google knows this, which is why it incorporated a method for tracking freshness in content in its algorithm. It's why when you do a search for "movie releases," you'll find search results that contain content about current or upcoming movie releases in theaters this month or current and upcoming DVD or Blu-ray releases. Google's algorithm understands that users want content that is relevant and current even if they don't specify it.

What exactly does this mean for marketers?

First of all, you can't just bank on your old content to draw web traffic, even if it's so-called evergreen content, (which is content that remains relevant over the years), because it's not dated by certain events or situations - evergreen content often includes tips or lists, such as how-to articles like recipes or DIY home improvements.

Sure, evergreen content is good to have, but your older content is going to end up in the back of the queue if you're not releasing new, relevant content on a regular basis. The freshness factor also encourages bloggers to write about current and upcoming events, topics that are more newsworthy, which Google understands is what the majority of users are looking for.

The Impact of the Freshness Update

When Google's Freshness update was implemented back in November of 2011, it had a pretty huge impact on search results. An estimated 35 percent of all search results were affected - some in a positive way, some in a negative way. In order to understand how Google Freshness will affect your content marketing, you need to know how it works.

The biggest challenge for Google in terms of ranking content on its search results pages was distinguishing whether users are looking for evergreen content or relevant, current content. For example, if you did a search for "Game of Thrones recap," then odds are you're looking for a recap of the last episode that aired and not an episode that aired three years ago.

However, if you do a search for "carrot cake recipe," then you want the best carrot cake recipes available, not necessarily the most recently published recipes.

Because of this, Google launched its Freshness update, which was meant to do the following two things:

- i. Identify if recent results should be prioritized over older but more historically authoritative content based on the search query.
- ii. Determine how to provide the most timely, but accurate results.

The queries that are affected by the Freshness update were given the term – "QDF (Query Deserves Freshness)."

Because the Freshness update allows Google to differentiate between the two, you will need to be able to do the same thing.

For example, if you wrote a blog piece about an annual event one year ago, then you need to realize that it probably isn't going to rank well anymore even if it should if Google took into account normal (PageRank)metrics. This is because Google will be ranking content written about this year's event higher due to its freshness.

However, your evergreen content won't be as affected since Google understands that it's not time sensitive (such as recipes) and it will use its normal ranking factors in order to rank it. Keeping all this in mind, it's important to realize what search results will be most affected by QDF. Most QDF search queries are going to relate to upcoming events, news items and celebrities.

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So now you have a pretty good idea of what the Google Freshness update did, what it's purpose is and how it can affect your content. But you still don't really know the specifics of how Google's algorithm scores freshness. And like almost all of Google's algorithm updates that it's rolled out throughout the years, Google wasn't exactly helpful about how it scored Freshness either when the update came out.

Nor has it revealed much about any of the updates concerning Freshness that it has implemented since. This is par for the course for a good reason - Google gave us the basic information - relevant and current content matters.

They want you to write high quality, relevant content that users want to read. They don't want you trying to skirt around the rules in an attempt to find some kind of loophole that allows you to take advantage of the Freshness update to rank poor content in which you put no effort into highly.

The thing is, we can learn a lot about online marketing by looking at a single Google patent, and there are a number of Google patents out there that provide some valuable information about the Freshness update - information that can help guide you into creating better content.

So let's take a look at some of Google's patents that explain what some of the factors that Google takes into account when determining a piece of content's Freshness score:

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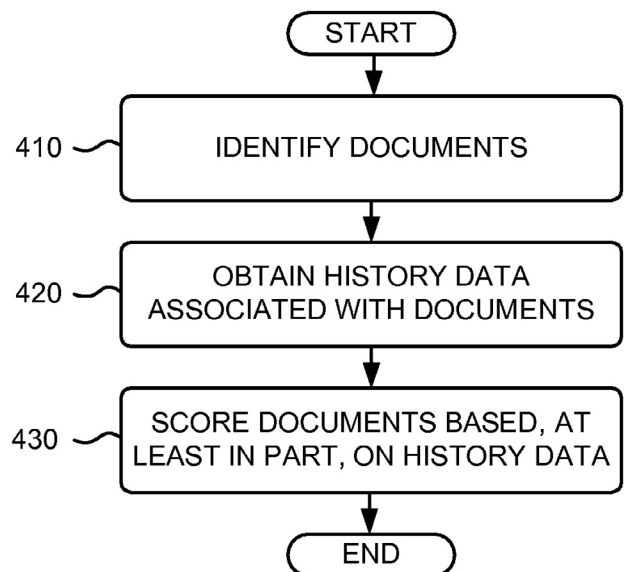
1. Freshness Score Based on Dwell Time Comparison

The Google patent entitled – [“Document ranking based on document classification,”](#) which was published on July 17th, 2012, explains the system that Google uses to rank pages based on comparing the time spent on that page by an average user.

For example, if someone were to visit the page more than once and spent more time on that page on their first visit than on their second visit, Google may determine that document to be stale, which results in a negative impact on its Freshness score.

If the average amount of time increases from the first to second visit, Google will consider it fresh instead of stale.

One of the ways that you can avoid being hit with a stale score is by creating an incentive for visitors to stay longer next time they visit, such as by suggesting related topics they can explore on your website.



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2. Freshness Score Based on Document Content Update

The Google patent entitled – [“Document scoring based on document content update,”](#) published on February 7th, 2012, pretty much explains one of Google’s determining freshness score factors in the title.

It basically factors in how often the content on your website is updated. If you haven’t updated your website in a while (by releasing new content or updating existing content) or do so rarely, it’s going to be deemed stale, whereas regularly releasing new content and updating old content will have a positive impact on your freshness score.

So really, when it comes down to it - make sure that you update your website regularly. This shouldn’t be too difficult if you are actively engaged with content marketing.

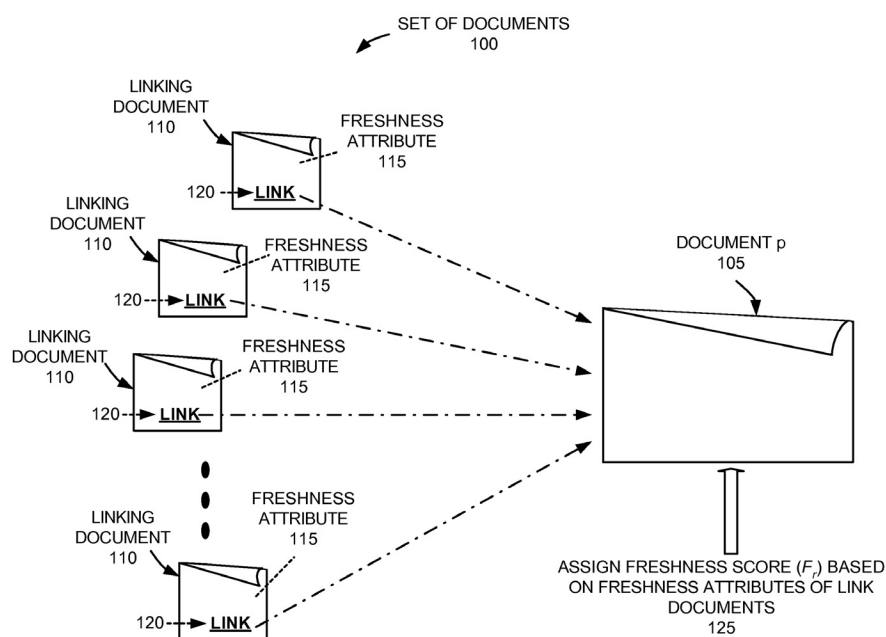
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3. Freshness Score Based on Website Score and External Links to Website

The Google patent entitled – [“Systems and Methods for Determining Document Freshness,”](#) which was published on December 20th, 2011, explains how Google factors in links to determine a freshness score of a website.

Google will check the websites that are linking to your content when factoring the freshness score. This means that if the websites that are linking to your content are stale (meaning they have low freshness scores due to the numerous other factors Google takes into account), it could negatively affect your freshness score.

That is why when you are attempting to earn more links as part of your link earning strategy, you should be looking for quality instead of quantity. If you earn high quality links, they will most likely be from websites that constantly produce fresh content.



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4. Freshness Score Based on Website's Rate of Received Backlinks Over Time

The Google patent entitled – [“Document scoring based on link-based criteria,”](#) which was published on January 27th, 2011, details another manner in which Google uses links to determine the freshness of your content.

Basically, it measures the amount of backlinks that the content is getting over time. If the number of new backlinks are decreasing over time, then this could lower your freshness score.

You can keep this from happening by not focusing on earning all of your backlinks at once in a short period of time; instead, work on earning backlinks steadily over time so that they don't dwindle as much.

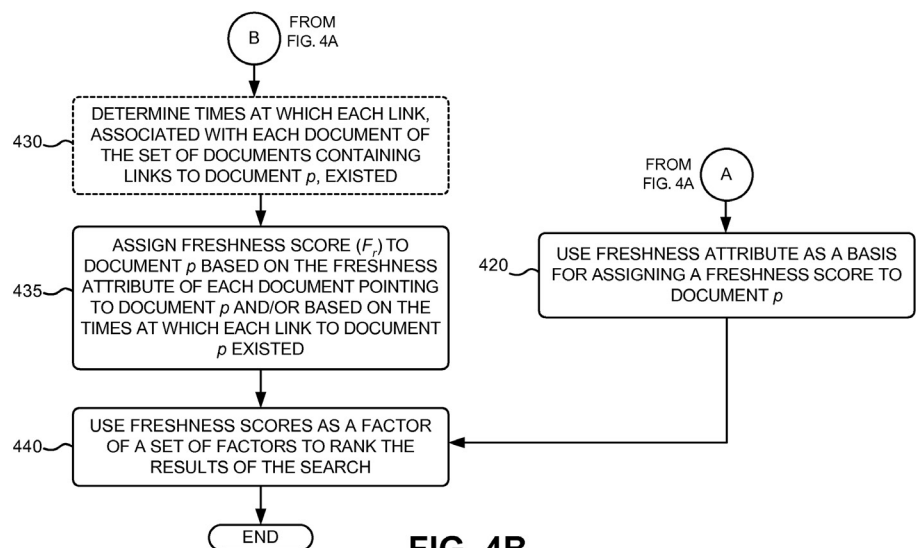
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5. Freshness Score Based on Freshness Attributes of a Set of Second Documents

This factor is very similar to the one in which Google factors in the freshness score of websites that are linking to your content. In the Google patent entitled – [“Systems and methods for determining documents freshness,”](#) which was published on December 30th, 2010, Google explains how it takes into account the freshness score of the page that contains the external link leading to your content.

It’s one of the ways that Google can determine that your content is old and stale - if it’s being linked to by other old and stale content.

The website that contains that content may have a decent freshness score in itself, but that doesn’t mean all of its content is fresh. The solution to not being affected by this factor is the same as it was for not being affected by low ranking websites - just make sure that you earn links from high quality websites that are regularly updated.



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6. Freshness Score Based on Traffic Associated with Documents

The Google patent entitled – [“Document scoring based on traffic associated with a document,”](#) which was published on May 16th, 2013, deals with how advertising affects your freshness score.

Google explains within the patent that its system factors in whether advertisements appear within a document or are updated in a document.

It also factors in the quality of the advertiser, the relevance of the advertisement and the amount of traffic being brought in due to the advertisement. Because of all of these factors, you need to make sure that you carefully choose what advertisements you allow on your content.

Advertisements can help your freshness score, but only if they are relevant to your content and if they will be helpful to your visitors. This means that random advertisements can actually hurt your freshness score.

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7. Freshness Score Based on Query Analysis

The Google patent entitled – [“Document scoring based on query analysis,”](#) which was published on November 1st, 2011, explains how Google will factor in how your pages perform on their search results pages.

This means that they will look at how often your page shows up in a set of search results and how often it is clicked on by the user. Pages that are clicked on often when they show up in search results are deemed more fresh than those that are largely ignored, which will be considered more stale.

To ensure that your pages are being visited when they show up in Google’s search results, make sure that you are crafting content that is based on your user intent. You also need to make sure that you are using high quality LSI keywords in order to make sure Google is picking up on the right context. Without LSI keywords, your pages may show up on search results where the keyword matches but the context doesn’t, which means users won’t visit your pages - which in turn will hurt your freshness score.

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8. Freshness Score Based on Inception Date

The Google patent entitled – [“Document scoring based on inception date,”](#) which was published on August 27th, 2013, explains how Google’s algorithm takes into account a document’s inception dates when determining its freshness. There are two inception dates that Google looks at - the date that the content was published and the date that the content first appeared on their search results, since these can be two different dates. There are various ways that Google can determine the inception date, but there is no clear method.

For example, they may set a threshold of three links in order to establish a link-based inception date. This means that Google’s algorithm won’t set an inception date the first two links that it spots to the content, but will assign an inception date when it identifies a third link leading to the content.

As far as the inception date goes, there obviously isn’t much you can do to change it - you’ll simply have to focus on all of the other factors previously mentioned.

Conclusion

The freshness update had a huge impact on websites and will continue to have a big impact on your webpages. While the basic gist of it is apparent - Google prioritizes newer and more time relevant content - the factors that Google takes into account when determining a freshness score are not really obvious - not until you go through Google's patents regarding the freshness update. Knowing what these factors are should help you to create content that will be ranked as fresh.

Other SEOPressor Google Patents Resources:

- [Deadliest SEO Mistakes Revealed By Google Patents](#)
- [New SEO Techniques That Can Be Learned From Google Patents](#)
- [Google Panda Secrets Revealed By Google Patents](#)
- [What We Can Learn About Link Scoring From Google Patents](#)
- [And more coming soon...](#)

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