



Manual Link Penalties are Temporary

If you received a manual action or unnatural links penalty on your website, it is not forever. The penalties, which may range from months to years, do have an intrinsic end date and are related, according to Distinguished Google Engineer Matt Cutts, to the “severity of the problem that Google sees.” There are no notifications sent when a penalty expires and if one has expired, the manual spam actions viewer changes and no penalty is shown.

It is important to note, that if the viewer shows no penalty when it is checked, then there is no penalty. Google employee John Mueller reinforces that observation by noting in Webmaster Central Help Hangouts that if there is no manual action showing, there is no penalty on the website. An unnatural links penalty is not to be confused with notifications of algorithmic issues. Those problems do not expire and a website must be changed and the algorithm refreshed to recognize changes to comply.

Just because the penalty has expired does not mean a site in compliance. It is best to not assume the issue has gone away and keep cleaning up the website diligently before resubmitting a site for a second manual review. Not cleaning up with serious intentions may cause a worse penalty the second time and if Google loses trust in a website, bringing it back into compliance is a complex job, with stricter rules to follow to the letter. Mueller goes on to write: “...if the reason for the original manual action is still relevant, it’s always possible that the manual action is returned later on. In my opinion, if you’re aware of issues that are negatively affecting your site’s performance in search, and if its performance there is important to you, then resolving those issues is often a good use of time.”

Take Manual Actions Seriously

The best approach to a manual action is to take it seriously and quickly address the problem then submit for review. In the April/May issue of the Bigger Law Firm magazine, Jason Bland talks about how a manual action can sometimes be a good thing.

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