

Google has long been focused on speed, one of the factors that made its search engine so popular in the first place. Now it looks like Google is going to try to speed up the web by giving a higher ranking to those sites that load faster.

In an interview with Web Pro News, Google's Matt Cutts cited two newsworthy items. First, Google will be making its Caffeine update live before the holidays, but not getting it into the rest of Google's data centers until after the holiday. The reason for the post-holiday rollout is as not to upset webmasters who may well end up with lots to rethink and redo once the new algorithm shows up, since some sites' rankings may drastically change

The second item was site speed... speed has not been a factor in the past, but it looks like it's about to become one. A number of people within Google see it as very important, and it is being considered as a possible ranking factor. See this article for more detail: <http://videos.webprone.ws.com/2009/11/13/matt-cutts-interview/>

I have always tried to design sites for speed, in large part because so many people in Western North Carolina still have access to dial-up only. When those who are on broadband go to those sites, I hear from the site owners how much they appreciate a site that is tuned to run really fast. Now it looks like that may pay off in other ways as well. And as a user on the web, I know I get frustrated all the time by some of the big sites that take forever to load a page, only to find that that page doesn't have what I was looking for and now I have another wait for the next page to load.

I've seen plenty of sites that are not designed all that well, or the graphics aren't fine-tuned to a smaller file size, and the sites load a lot slower than they should. In some cases I am asked to take a look at them and try to speed them up, and sometimes that speeding up is considerable. Sites created by graphic designers who got into web design are often guilty of this, as are some Flash sites and sites that are graphics-heavy when they don't need to be--having a fancy background and design for the basic site is all fine and good, but if it loads slower than it should, it's about to become a liability in Search Engine Optimization.

# The Loading Speed of Your Website and Your Site's Ranking

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