

## **Google Secure Search POV**

*Google to Begin Encrypting Searches & Outbound Clicks by Default with Secure Search*

**October, 2011**

---

### **Background:**

Google has been getting personal with search results since 2009 customizing and suggesting results based on your web history.

Now Google is getting personal with marketers – stripping the search keyword from the Google organic referred traffic for signed-in Google account users. There is no impact to paid search as this time. Google will continue to provide insight to queries generating traffic via paid search allowing advertisers to optimize to relevant behavior. Google describes this latest announcement as an enhancement to protect privacy of users.

### **Situation:**

On Tuesday October 18, 2011, Google announced on their blog that users logged into Google would see their organic queries default to HTTPS (Secure HTTP) <https://www.google.com> instead of HTTP.

Official Blog Post

<http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2011/10/making-search-more-secure.html>

This change will reduce visibility into why visitors are coming to web properties for signed-in Google searchers. In other words we won't be able to determine the type of keyword used to arrive to the site from Google organic search. We also won't be able to track the content viewed or actions taken from that particular organic keyword visit.

This referring information will be missing from all the solutions that track usage on web sites, including Google analytics and all the web analytics vendors (Omniure, Webtrends, Coremetrics). However, according to Google, we will still be able to get to some of this in depth keyword information in Google Webmaster Tools.

## **Implications:**

### **Immediate Impact:**

At this time it is estimated that this change is currently impacting just fewer than 10% of the referrals originating from Google.

### **Here is why:**

- Queries are only encrypted and noted as “not provided” when users are signed-in to Google accounts, perform a search on Google.com (not a partner site or Google toolbar)
- Google has not fully enabled this change to all Google signed-in users

### **Why this Will Likely Change:**

The adoption of the new social network Google+ (see appendix) got off to a quick start, reaching more than ten million users in its first few weeks of field trial. However Google+ has struggled to reach the “mainstream” audience and is currently only 10% of Facebook’s audience reach. Google+ also has .01% the level of level of engagement with the total online population compared to Facebook<sup>1</sup>.

The Google+ adoption rate is a key consideration, as users flock to the network it is likely more users will remain “signed-in” to Google accounts throughout the day.

### **Strategy**

- The best practices for optimizing your site – on-page, backlinks, social, internal linking - are unchanged

### **Measurement**

- To quantify impact, Razorfish recommends benchmarking “not provided” visitors as % of total visits referred by Google Organic to gauge scale of signed-in users

---

<sup>1</sup> ComScore September, 2011

- *Available Through Omniture*

What performance indicators/views are at risk for secure search signed in Google traffic?

- organic keyword performance (traffic, ROI, bounce rate, engagement, page views etc.)
- landing page keyword targeting and benchmarking growth
- paid/organic keyword click/revenue share
- competitive footprint

## **Technology**

- Ensure Webmaster Tools Account with Google is verified
  - Webmaster Tools account will provide top organic queries
  - Available referring queries will exclude site interaction such as page views and on-site activities (bookings)

## **Conclusion:**

While the immediate impact is limited to less than 10% of traffic this has the potential to scale with stickiness of Google products requiring sign-in such as Gmail and Google+. With scale, blocking this data from site analytics reporting also impacts ad networks that rely on this data to monetize content based on search/user on-site behavior.

An important next step is benchmarking impact and creating proxies for potential loss of insight over time.

Typically Google does not release a lot of details around these types of changes. Razorfish plans to trend data over the next few weeks and develop a formal Point Of View detailing impact.

## **Appendix:**

### **About Google+**

In July, Google launched Google+, a new social network poised to offer a more custom experience compared to social network giant Facebook. Google+ is seamlessly integrated with all Google products (Gmail, Google.com, Maps, etc) and virtually any experience you have on the web. With the Google+ Button (similar to Facebook “Like”) you signal to Google what you “like” couple that with what you are searching for, the sites you visited and “like,” Google has the capacity to aggregate these data points to create an experience just for you. This personalized experience is well positioned to be monetized via “interest based” advertising categories.

### **Google+ POV**

<http://razorfishsearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Google+-POV.pdf>