

“Banned For Life” from Advertising on Google

Earlier this year Google banned me *for life* from advertising via their Adwords program. A lifetime ban sounds pretty serious, right? You may be wondering what horrible sites I advertised! Did I attempt to profit from human trafficking? Did I try to pass off sugar pills as Viagra? Perhaps I attempted to advertise illegally obtained weapons of mass destruction?

No, my violation against humanity was that my sites attempted to make money from affiliate programs, and were deemed not to have enough original content to make them “valuable.” One of these sites had been up for several years prior to advertising it on Google, a directory utilized by many with members who liked it enough to put a banner to it on their home page. Google directly approved it early in 2011, then banned it several months later. Of course, there are different individuals making these subjective judgments, which is why they gave contradictory responses regarding my sites’ “worth.” They couldn’t explain why the aforementioned site was fine in January but violating their rules in April, though the site had not changed. So they eventually just used the old “In the agreement you signed it states we can remove your site for any reason.” And so they did. Power trip 1, Small businessperson 0.

I am still advertising on Microsoft adCenter which has never had a problem with my sites (so my ads appear on Yahoo and Bing), but they have a very small market share compared to Google, so my income has dropped significantly. Google is the “gatekeeper” to the web for small businesses, and they have far too much power over who gets to promote themselves.

I can understand that they wouldn’t allow certain types of businesses to advertise if they are illegal or unethical, but their judgments against my sites were so subjective it’s ridiculous. Additionally, I was able to advertise with them for 8 years before they “found a problem.” I’ve never heard of any advertising company in print, radio, TV or any other medium refuse business based on arbitrary judgments. Google is interfering with the free market by not simply allowing advertisers to promote their sites then let consumers choose what they want.

If Google didn’t have such a dominant percentage of the search market, it wouldn’t matter so much. However, my perfectly legal and ethical sites are unable to compete on the web without being able to be promoted on Google.

I am hoping that Google becomes less "micromanaging" about allowing sites that make money from affiliate programs to advertise, or that Bing and Yahoo capture a larger share of the search market over time.