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Google EMD Update

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Google EMD Update

Google's newest algrorithm update is commonly known as the EMD update; as it is designed to affect the ranking of "Exact-Match Domains". Although other types of domains were affected as well, Matt Cutts has repeatedly stated that Google launches over 500 algos a year (1-2 per day). Therefore, we can not rule out other updates occurring at the same time. This EMD update had been announced a long time ago, and was rolled out a day after the updated Panda 20 algorithm.

Exact match domains are, in general, domain names that exactly match the keyword a website wants to compete for. For example, if a website wants to rank for the term 'minor weather report', an exact match domain would be 'MinorWeatherReport.com'.

On Sept 28th Matt Cutts, the head of Google **webspam** team, tweeted again about a 'minor weather report. But as always, the forecast predicted less than we fully received.

Matt Cutts @mattcutts

Minor weather report: small upcoming Google algo change will reduce low-quality "exact-match" domains in search results.

Matt Cutts @mattcutts

New exact-match domain (EMD) algo affects 0.6% of English-US queries to a noticeable degree. Unrelated to Panda/Penguin.

Google announced years ago that it was going to devalue the advantage that EMDs got by default. But this doesn't seem to be the case. Many webmasters are reporting that their entire domains are not ranking at all. This doesn't look like a minor devaluation, it looks more like a penalty with a fail/pass switch. To make matters even more confusing, there are also reports about EMD's being pushed down the SERPs without being completely lost.

What are low quality keyword domains anyways?

We went through the weekly winners and losers list from SEOLytics to look for EMDs that had dropped sharply from rather stable rankings from the week before the update. We also did the opposite and found EMDs who actually gained in rankings after the update.

These are the winners and losers.

Winners	Change to Previous week
newfreescreensavers.com	220%
biggerbras.com	157%
dmvflorida.org	156%
freecarads.com	130%
howthemarketworks.com	129%
asbestosresource.com	128%
bachelordegrees.net	124%
motorcycleshippers.com	98%
medtranscriptioncourse.com	89%
suzukipartshouse.com	79%
bestbizschools.com	78%
funnyquotes4u.net	71%
consumeraffairs.com	71%
youthedesigner.com	62%
funnewjersey.com	62%
loveme.com	60%
lawyermarketing.com	60%
nursingschool.org	58%
windowanddoor.com	58%
bestmastersincounseling.com	56%
medicalbillingandcoding.org	54%
mybeautifulbody.com	50%
computertrainingschools.com	50%
learnalanguage.com	48%
whatispublichealth.org	47%
totalbankruptcy.com	45%
italyvacations.com	43%
guitarlessons.com	35%
address.com	33%
foreclosureattorneynow.org	33%
educationnews.org	30%
webpagesthatsuck.com	30%
ordermychecks.com	28%
shakespeare-online.com	24%

Losers	Change to Previous week
businessliabilityinsurance.org	**-99%**
sellgold.com	**-99%**
dvdduplication.net	**-98%**
ideamanagementsystems.com	**-97%**
vinyl-replacement-windows.com	**-96%**
friendship-bracelets.net	**-96%**
geteasyreach.com	**-96%**
christiansinglesdating.com	**-95%**
cheaplifeinsurance.org	**-93%**
medicalassistantcertification.com	**-92%**
dubaitourism.ae	**-92%**
mustangclassifieds.com	**-92%**
affordableweb-hosting.com	**-91%**
onlyconvertiblecars.com	**-91%**
photographyschoolsonline.net	**-91%**
breastfeeding.com	**-90%**
scrabblehelper.net	**-90%**
privatejets.com	**-90%**
master-degree-online.com	**-90%**
onlinemarketingdegree.net	**-88%**
monologuearchive.com	**-88%**
teachingdegree.org	**-87%**
retailsoftware.com	**-85%**
mastersdegreeonline.org	**-85%**
buykgiftcard.com	**-76%**
wpsecuritychecklist.com	**-76%**
best-inexpensive-web-hosting.com	**-76%**
cfa-practiceexam.com	**-76%**
sugarloafmaine.com	**-76%**
rangeley-maine.com	**-76%**
exercisesteppermachine.com	**-76%**
etravelmaine.com	**-76%**
businessloan.org	**-51%**
swing-trading-options.com	**-50%**
shorttraveltips.com	**-50%**

The next pages are dedicated to understand what is different between those two groups.

Now, let's compare the winners and the losers.

Domains compared by Power * Trust™

Since Google is always mentioning the overall quality of a site, I could think of no better metric to start with than the CEMPER Power * Trust™ metric. This is the most accurate metric for trust and quality on the market today. Power means the strength based on the number and power of links (better than PageRank™). Trust indicates the implied Trust of the page in Google, according to a system similar to the Trust Rank patent. By combining both metrics, you can easily rate the overall quality of a domain.
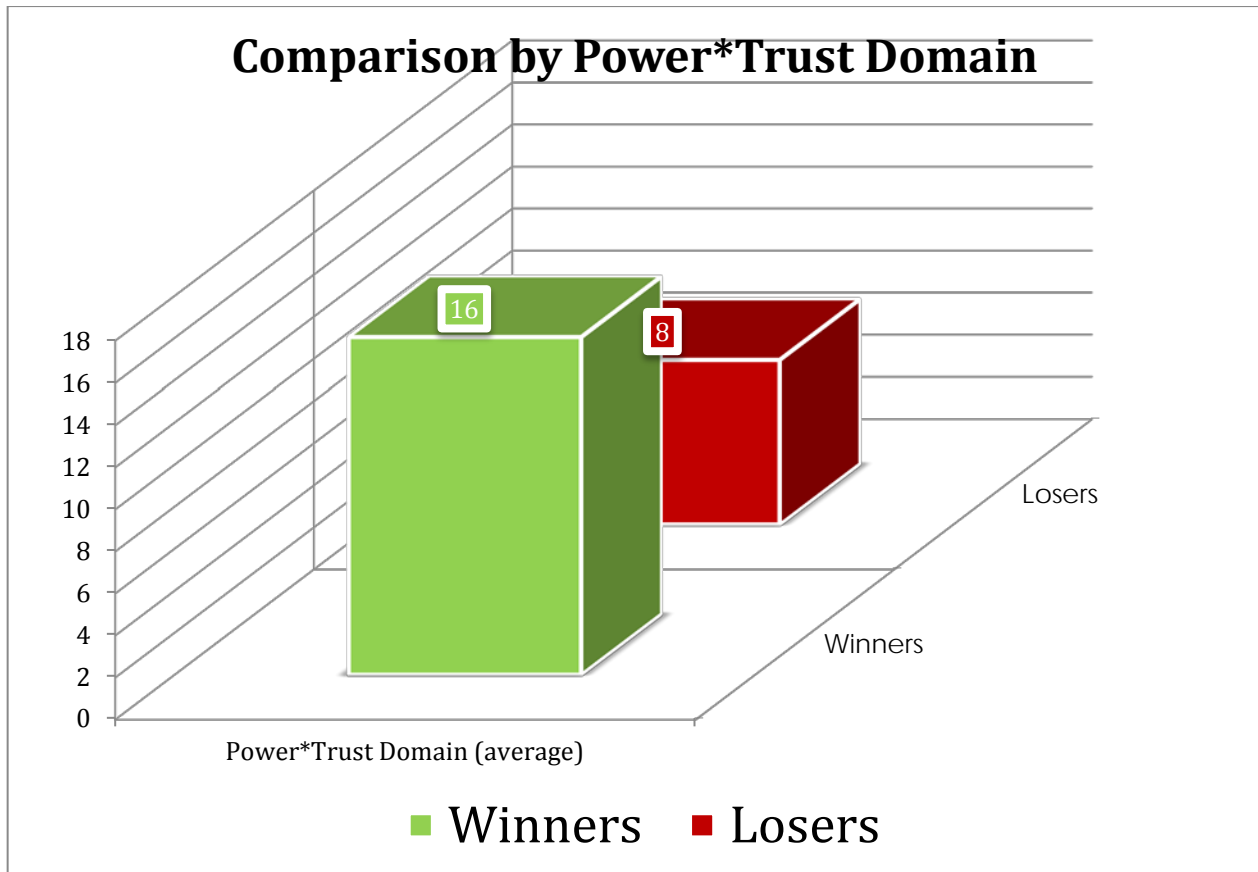
These charts are very clear; the average winner has almost doubled the amount of the Power*Trust compared to the losers. That results from a huge number of highly trusted and very strong backlinks. While most of the losers' backlinks are potentially low quality, it's pretty clear that the winners have way more links with high Power * Trust.

Domains compared by Domain Age

To measure the quality of a site, the domain age factor has been a clear signal of trust for years. The domain registration info is helpful for some SEOs. The domain creation date is especially said to be better if further in the past.
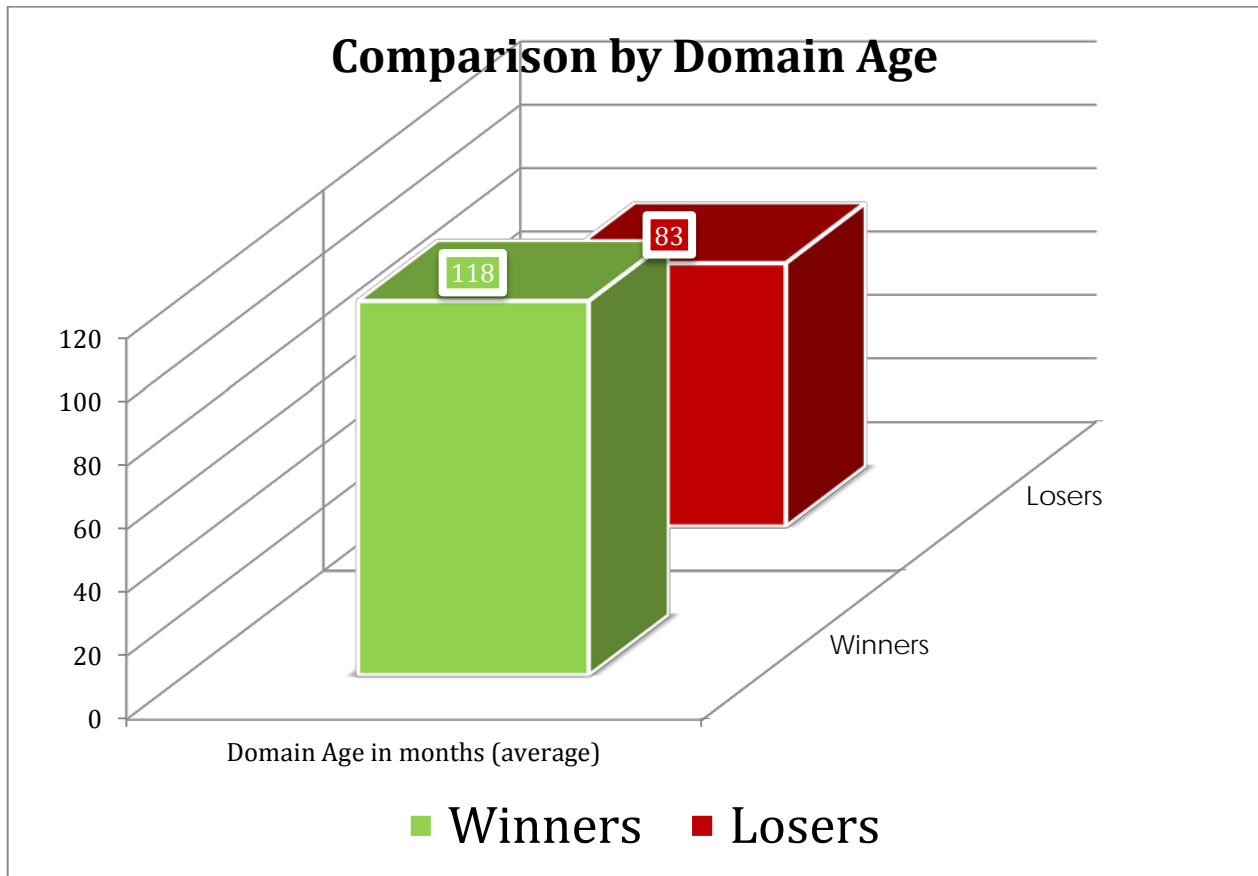
It is pretty interesting what we found here. Among all 69 compared domains, nearly every domain has a very high average age. When we look at the overall data, it looks like ESPECIALLY old domains were affected in the EMD update, and that is also a pattern we notice in the recent Penguin update. That means that even a very old and "in general" trusted domain could be punished by Google after years of bad practices.

Domains compared by TitleRank™

To measure the quality of a site in Google, we've created the TitleRank™ metric to describe how far up a domain ranks in Google. By extracting the title out of a website and seeing how well it ranks, we can directly derive its quality according to Google. If it ranks on a very high page number, or does not rank at all, it's probably penalized.
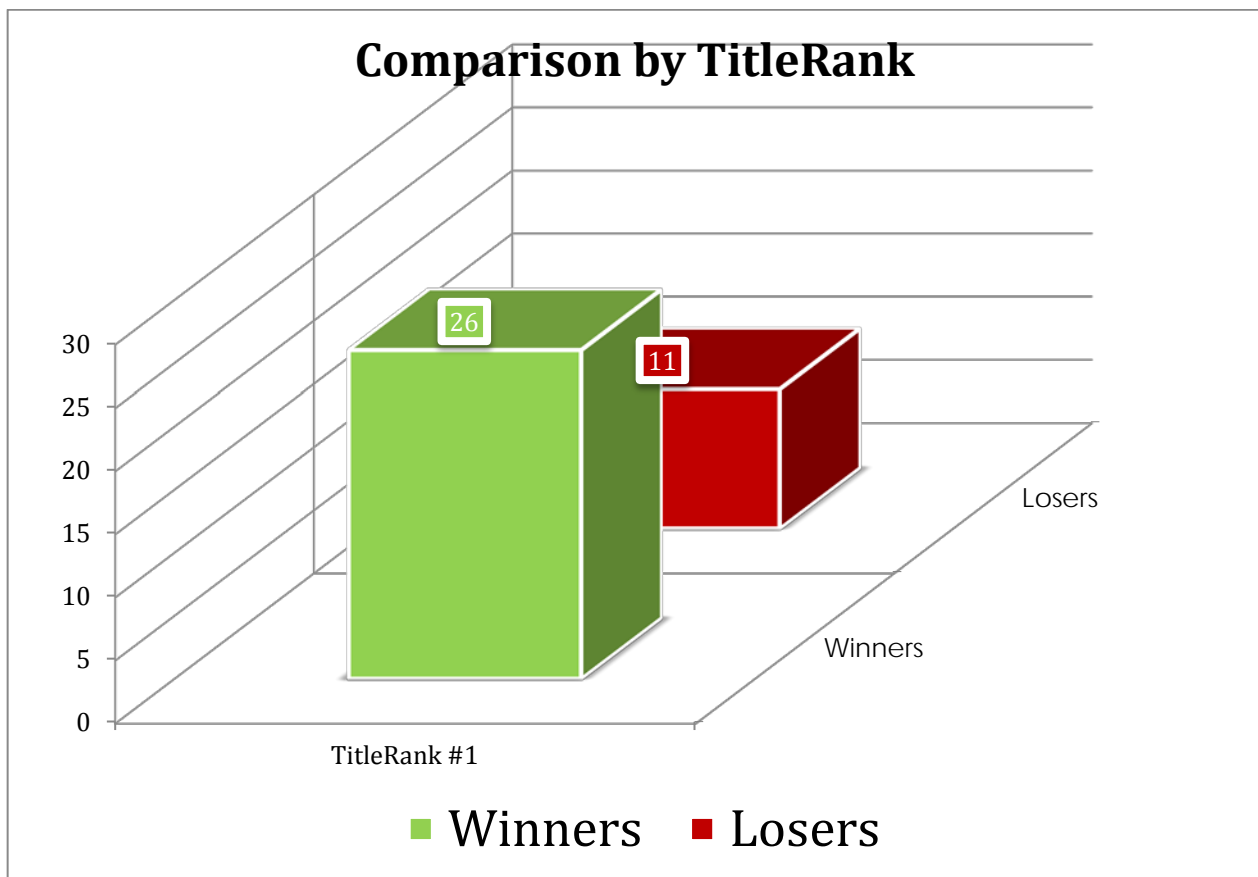
This chart shows impressively that almost every winner (26 out of 34) ranks in the first place for its own title. Compare this to the losers that have only 11 out of 35 with TitleRank #1. More than half of the losers than have a TitleRank of 30+, or don't rank at all. A non-ranking title is definitely a clear sign for a low quality site.

Domains compared by Facebook Shares

Social media activity is (and should be) an ever increasing factor in rating the quality of a website. It's a pretty clear factor to figure out if the audience likes the content and wants to share it with other people. In general, a very popular website or brand automatically grows in social networks as soon as they reach higher rankings in Google.
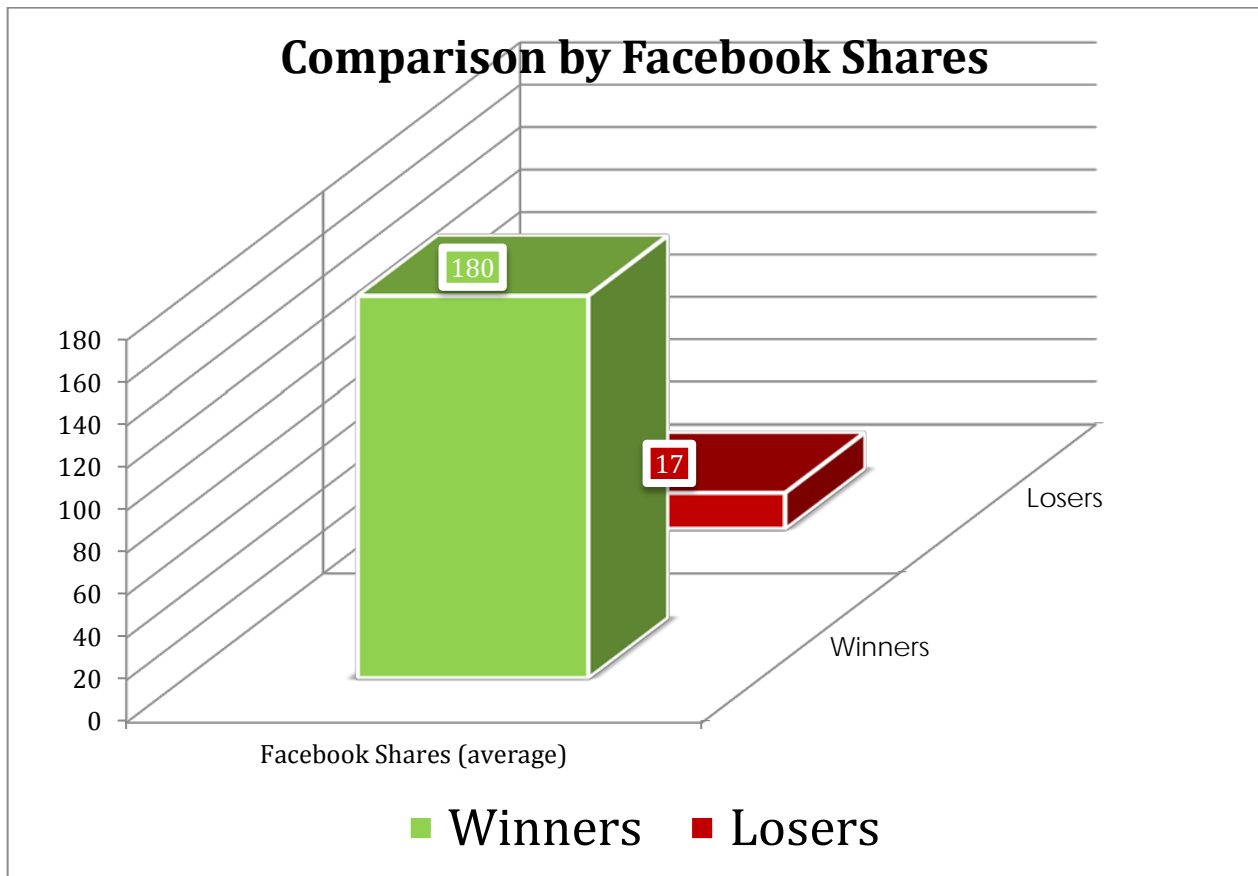
This chart shows the huge gap between an average winner's site with up to 180 shares, whereas the loosers have only 17. That might result from the growing priority of a social network, as well as high quality websites in many verticals simply tend to attract more shares than low quality websites.

Domains compared by Domain Popularity Growth

The Domain Popularity Growth is one of the most important factors for a common **natural link profile**. A healthy website automatically grows over time because more and more webmasters tend to place a link to a higher quality site.
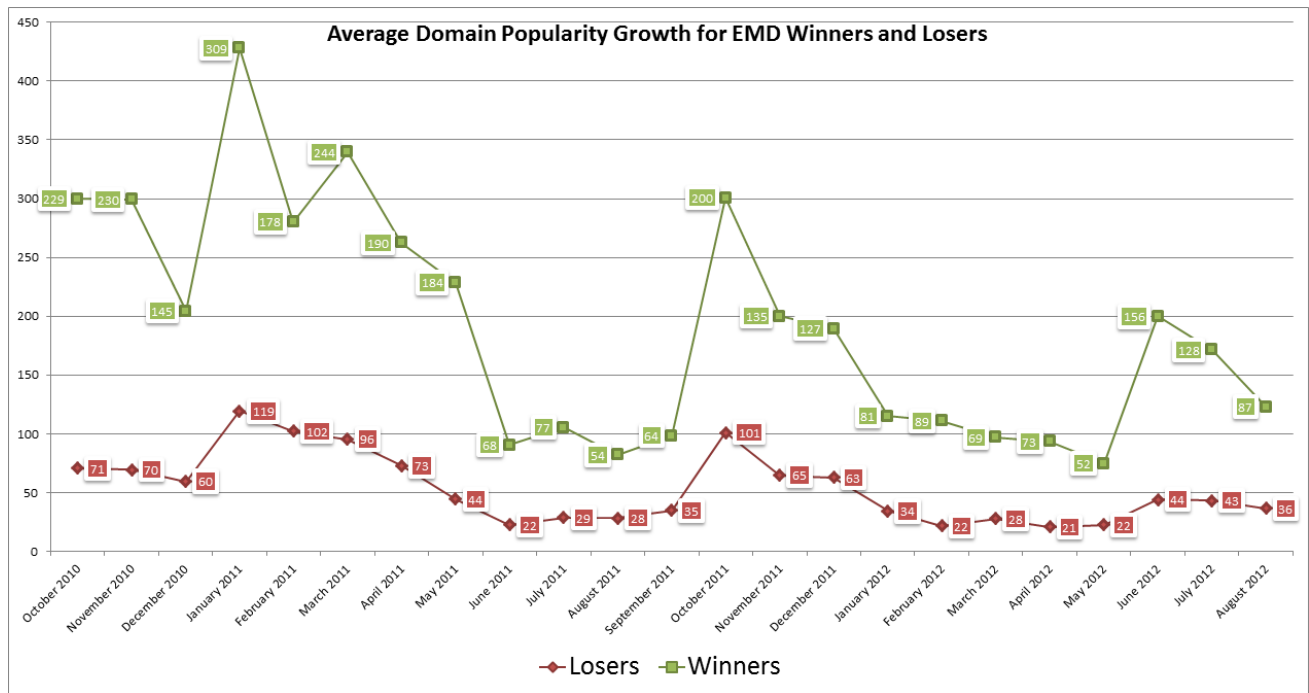
What we see here is that the Winners have constantly more than double the linking domain growth per month than then losers. While the losers have built an average of 1239 new linking domains over the last 2 years (51 per month), the winners have built an average of 3193 new linking domains over the last 2 years (133 per month).
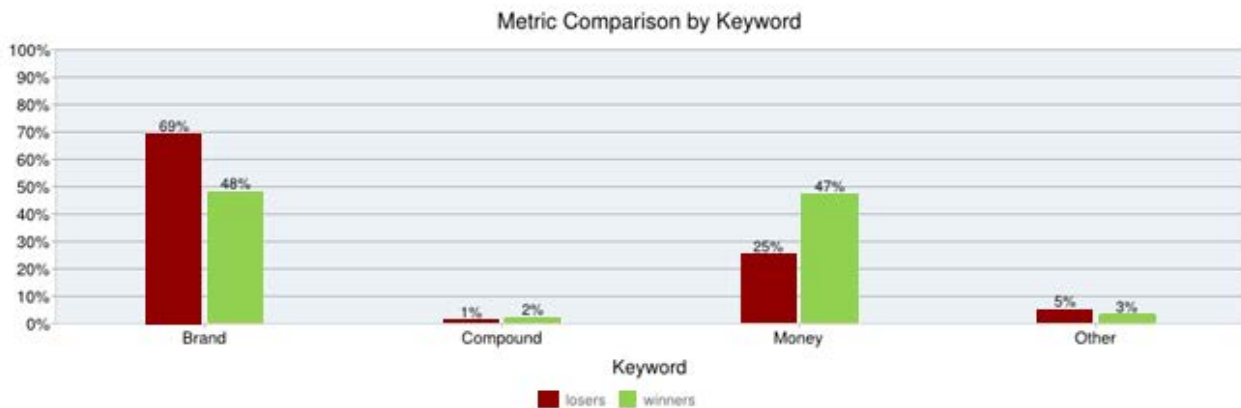
Domains compared by Link Growth
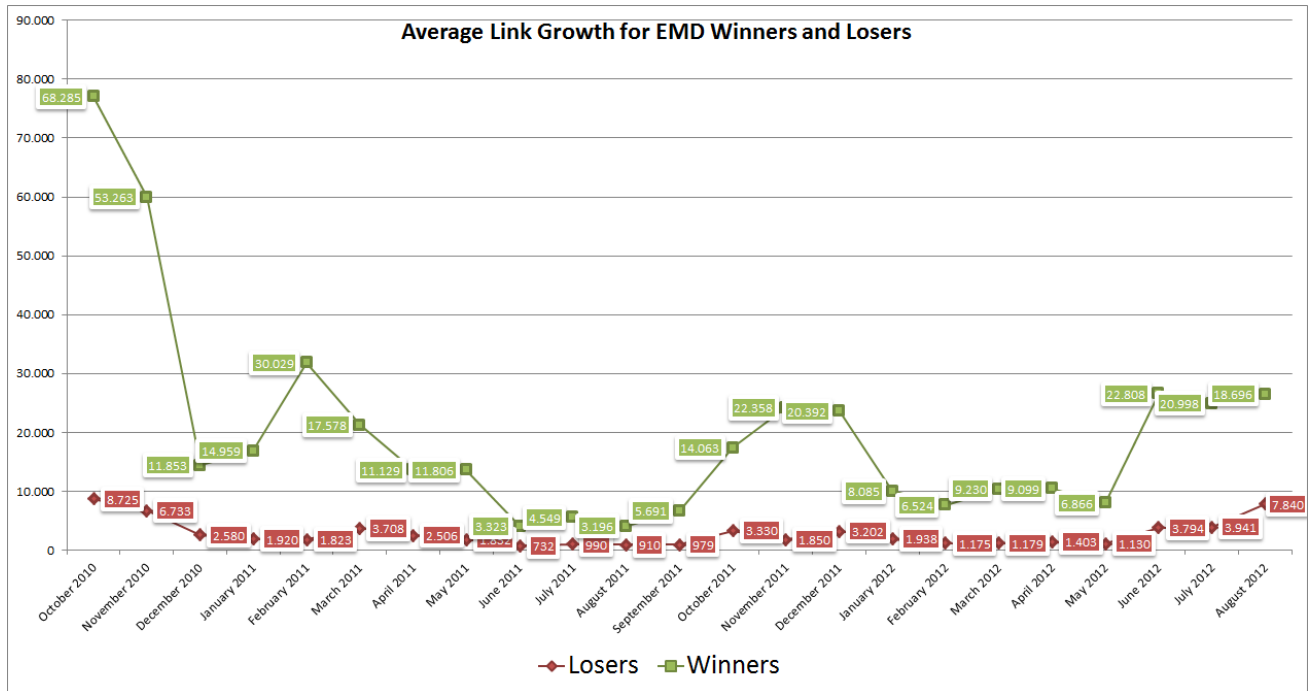
The overall link growth draws the same picture a healthy winners' website has a way higher link growth volume than a losers site

Link Profile by Keyword

(This section was added on October 9, 2012 thanks to feedback from Richard Hearne)

The winners have almost twice the amount of "money" type keywords as compared to the losing websites. The term money keyword is used here to describe any keyword that isn't a brand, compound keyword (brand+keyword) or other (like "click here").

The losing websites have an average of 69% of the link profile based on "brand" links while the winners have only 48% in that category.

It looks like the the losing websites are more "SEO orientated" as they were mainly targeting the EMD keyword in the anchor texts. It's more "normal" for a human to use their own words (at least sometimes) when linking to a website rather than the just the EMD keyword.

I'm sure that by itself, this is not enough to get a penalty but when combined with weak links + other signals, you will get noticed by Google.

Conclusion

- Especially old domains are focused in this update.

- The overall domain strength is still a very important factor, which means the winners simply got higher quality links.

- The domain growth of the winners is so much higher and reflects the overall link quality.

- This update is in many ways similar to the recent Penguin updates and could be labeled as a Penguin update as well.

- It's not enough to just build links, more links AND a better quality leads to a better site, even if its an EMD

- Winners use diverse anchor texts.

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http://cemper.co/emdmwrtrial

Or let us know what you think here about the case-study in the comments of the post where you got this http://cemper.co/emd