Test 283: The Fastest Way to De-Index a Page

By Adam Truszkowski

Background Information: We came across an article on Search Engine Land stating that one of the fastest ways to de-index a page is to delete the page and submit a "temporary sitemap" file. This seemed like an overkill and we thought it might be interesting to see how different methods stack up against one another.

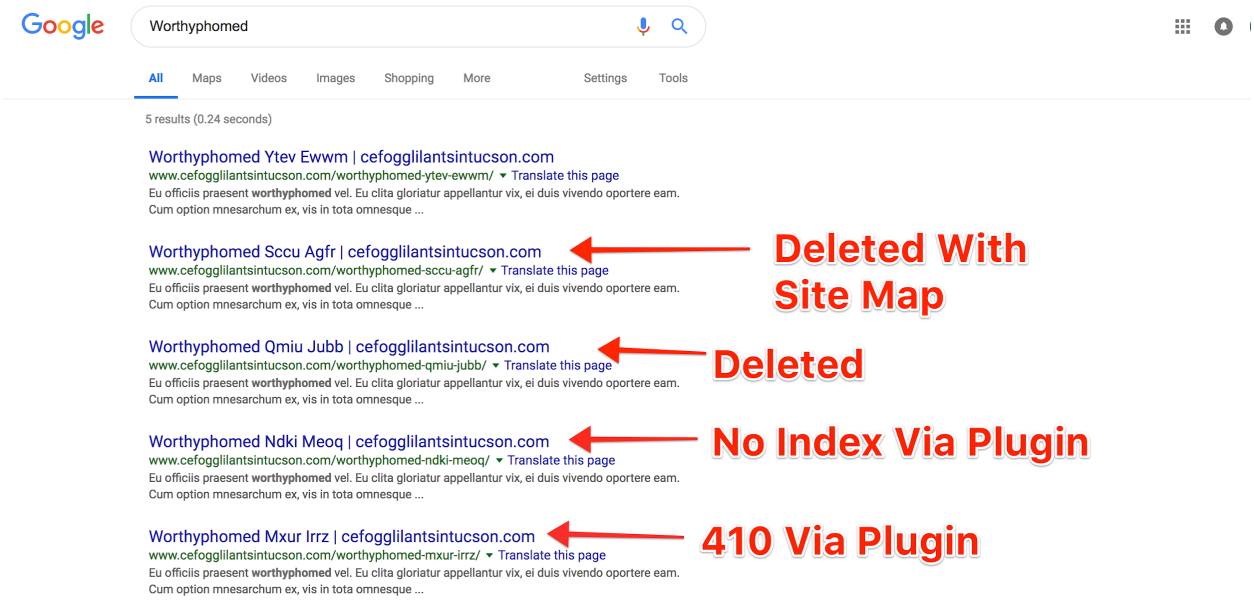
Test Setup: A set of 5 pages were created for a single keyword in the usual way and submitted to Google for indexing.

Once indexed, we began the process of removing the pages in different ways:

- Delete (404)
- 410 (with plugin)
- No-Index (with plugin)
- Delete (404) and submit a single page sitemap with the date of changes made

They were then re-indexed and let settle.

Initial indexing:



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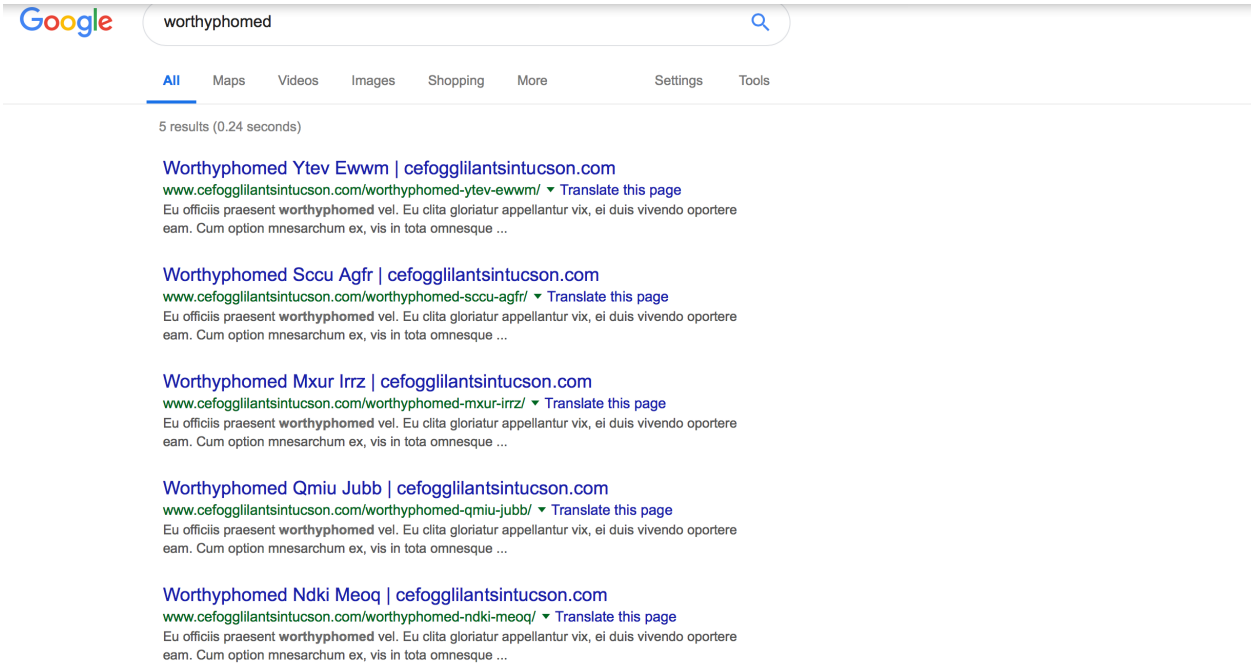
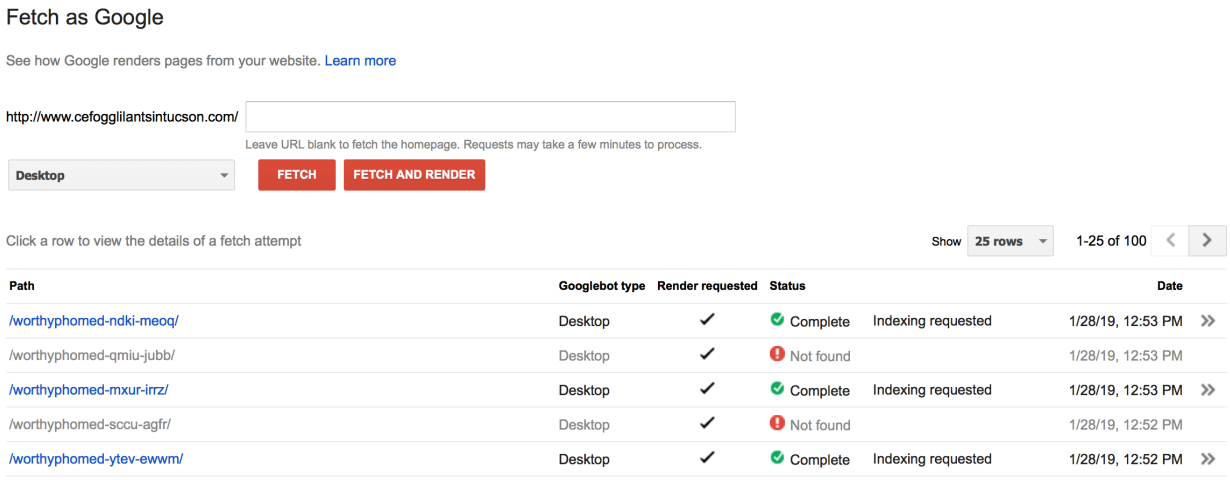
Results: After everything was resubmitted, the SERPs of the deleted pages danced around but still showed the non-existent pages even though Search Console failed to find them.

Screenshot taken 28 January 2019:





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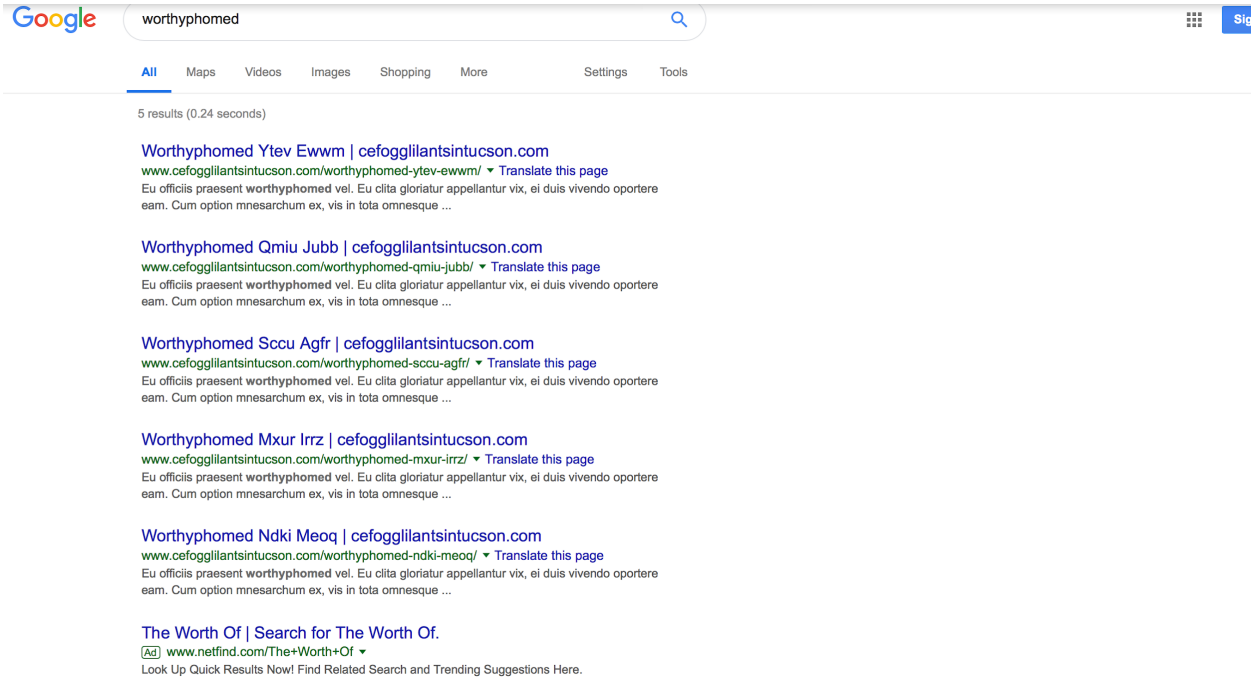
Interesting Observation: Although the pages no longer exist, they continue to show up in the SERPs, and the existing one remains in spot 1 while the rest continue to jostle for the position.



Analysis/Implications/Application: Shockingly and unlike what was laid out in the test inspiring article, deleting and submitting a temporary sitemap has not actually removed the page from the SERPs in an expedited manner, nor has any other method tested here after more than a weeks' time.

It would appear that even though Google knows that the pages no longer exist (especially the two "not found" in Google Search Console), it would appear there is no "fastest" way of de-indexing a page.

Retest Considerations: If we were to run this test again, letting the pages settle organically (i.e not submitting to Google Search Console) after deletion methods were performed might reveal another outcome.

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