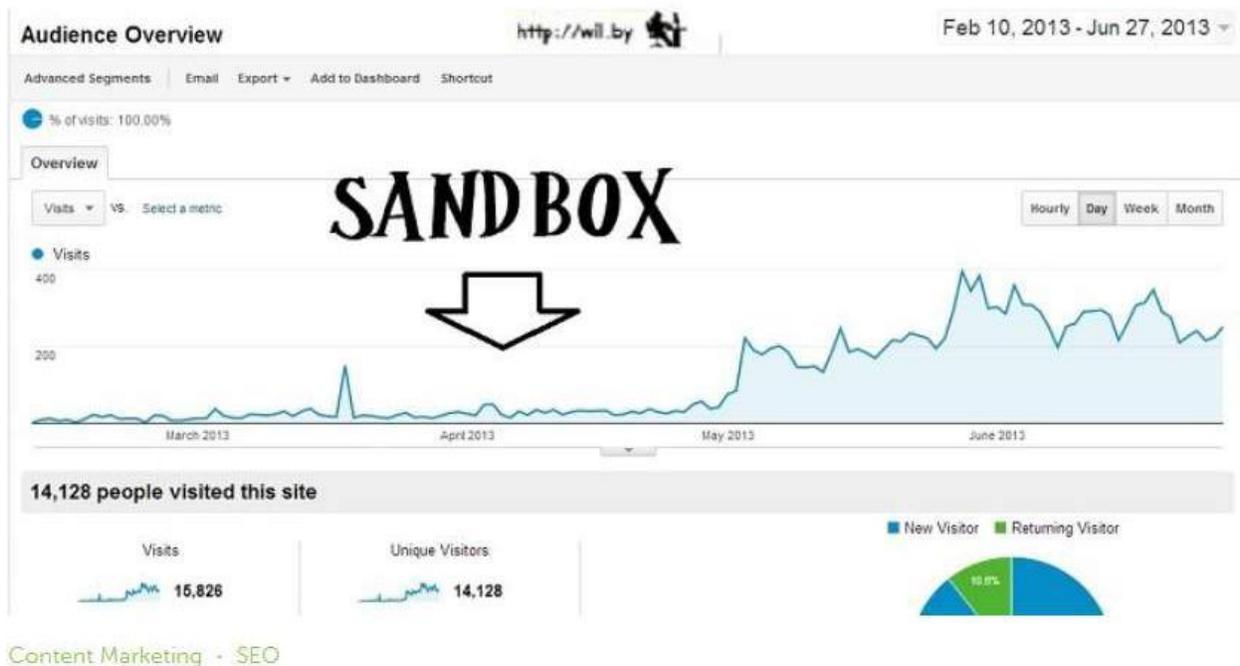


Chapter 10: The Search Engine Sandbox | Does it Really Exist?



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I admit that I didn't know this technical term existed till somewhat recently. The Sandbox.

That's what it's called. The sandbox. Really. The sandbox is the period of time that a new website owner blogs adds content, feeds their site but has nothing or almost nothing to show for it. The site is muddled, mired, bogged down in the sand.

Question: Is there a search engine sandbox?

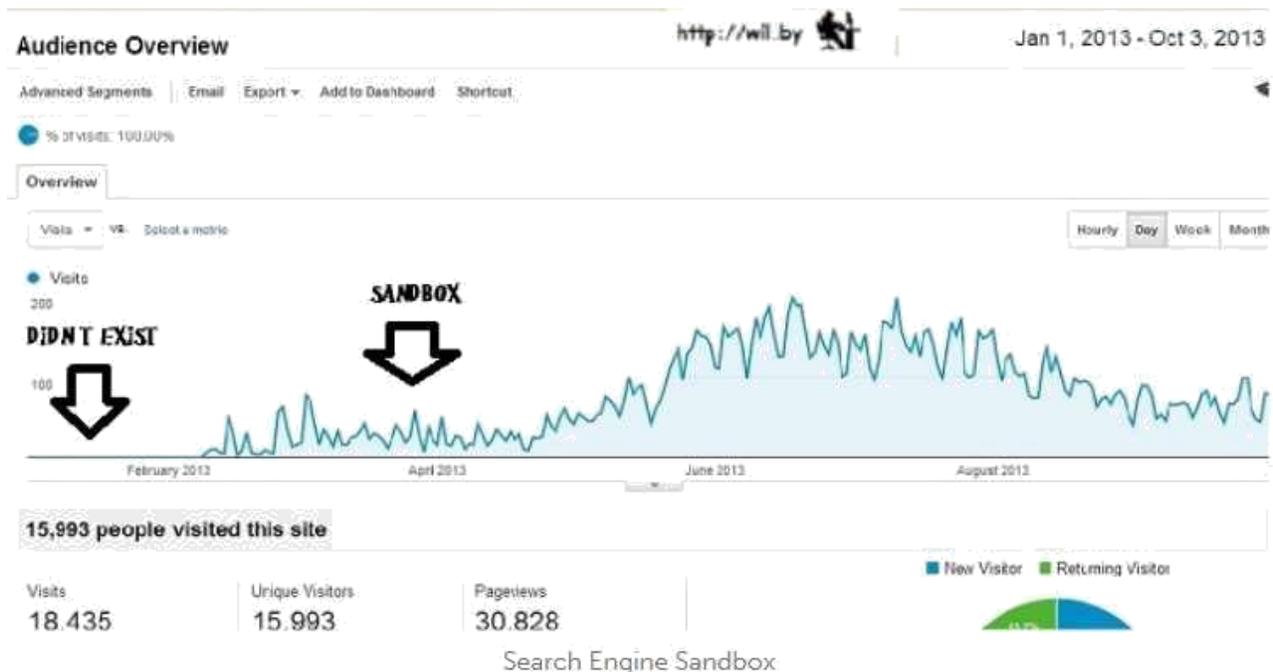
Answer: From my experience. Yes, there is.

Playing in the Sandbox

I have numerous examples from my own experience where I plodded along, faithfully adding relevant content to my web site and seeing so little to show for my effort. Read – minimal traffic. Then suddenly a jump. I wouldn't exactly call it playing. Perhaps to the search engines, I appeared to be playing around.

Case Study

I will share the experience of just one of my students who saw the sandbox phenomena with her own new site.



Notice the flat line at the beginning. The site did not exist. Starting from zero. Ready set go. That sort of thing. (This site is different from the image in the header.)

Day after day, regular updates (about three times each day) she updated her site and had very little to show for it. At one point I could almost hear her thinking, “My professor is an idiot. I am doing everything he tells me and it is not working.”

All of a sudden – something happens. A jump. A big jump. Then growth. Steady growth.

More Questions

Questions: What happened? Why?

Short of the search engines telling me the answers to those two questions can only be conjectured.

Answers: I’ll take a stab at answering them.

Most new sites, especially blogs are abandoned within the first 3-6 months. Why should a search engine give priority to a web site in the rankings if it (the search engine) isn’t even sure yet that the web site will be around in a couple of months?

Granted, there are one page wonders but they are not the norm.

Prove Your Presence

Web site owners need to prove with consistent high quality updates that their blog will be around for the long haul. When that happens the site gains respect/credibility from the search engine which translates into a higher ranking by virtue of just being around. That higher ranking results in findability = a jump in traffic.

Content Marketing Connection

What does this have to do with content marketing? The sandbox phenomena causes me problems.

One of my biggest problems, okay, my biggest problem is getting the client to make a commitment to stay the course till they (the client) get out of the sandbox. The client understands that it takes time because I explain it to them. Actually, I show them case studies to drive the point home. But they are afraid to make the commitment.

Related to the problem is the client who doesn’t want to invest in their site (read more content) until they are out of the sandbox but won’t get out of the sandbox until they invest more into it. A classic Catch 22 for the content marketer. Too many clients make a half-hearted attempt at content only to conclude that it doesn’t work. What happens is they don’t give the content marketing strategy the effort it deserves.

Related to those two problems is the client who gives up before their site catches on. Two, three, four or more months of effort with no visible results and the client often decides I am nuts. My conclusion is that they didn’t stay with it long enough. For sure, there may be other variables but giving up too soon is the biggest.

Why Businesses Fail

The number one reason why businesses fail is because the business owner gives up before his/her idea catches on. Divorce. Supplier goes belly up. Run out of money. Landlord raises the rent. Those are all reasons for giving up. Giving up is the end result.

Chapter Conclusion

- Content marketing will work if you don't give up.
- It takes time. It takes patience. It takes an investment. It takes know how for a content marketing strategy to work.
- Play long enough and before you know it, you'll be out of the sandbox. If you don't give up.

Write well, get read.