

## Google Posts the Truth About Traffic Power

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Something interesting is happening at the Googleplex. Just a week after publicly slapping BMW for using cloaking and doorway techniques, Google has confirmed a much larger penalty it applied in 2004 against what was once one of the largest SEO firms in the world, Traffic Power. When an SEO firm gets its own site banned from Google it is somewhat interesting but not terribly newsworthy. It becomes an enormous story when that firm's client list is banned from the index.

About eighteen months ago, Google assigned a penalty against Las Vegas based Traffic Power setting off a chain of events that continue to affect the SEO community to this day. Sometime in the first weeks of June 2004, Google brought the boom down on [Traffic Power, banning](#) it and its client list from the Google index.

Having already made a bad reputation for itself by hiring a legion of [phone solicitors](#) to [cold-call](#) small businesses, Traffic Power had accumulated a fairly large client list. Traffic Power was huge, boasting over 10,000 clients at its peak. As a result, they fell hard. On the way down, they filed a [civil lawsuit](#) against popular blogger Aaron Wall and the owner of a consumer-rant site called [TrafficPowerSucks.com](#). They also sent Cease and Desist letters to a number of other web-publishers, effectively creating a climate of [liable-chill](#) to forcefully dissuade others from reporting on the saga.

Along with dozens of other bloggers, a search marketer named Aaron Wall covered the story on his blog, [SEOBook.com](#). What made Aaron different from everyone else is that Traffic Power chose to use him as an example, filing a lawsuit against him in the early summer of 2005. They chose the wrong target. Aaron is a popular and sometimes controversial figure in the SEO/SEM industry. He has a lot of friends and even more friendly acquaintances. Coverage of the suit propelled the story back to the front pages of the [industry](#) and [mainstream press](#).

This weekend, the story took another twist when Matt Cutts, Google's chief search engineer, posted definite [confirmation of the penalty](#) on his blog. In doing so, Cutts lifted the liable-chill by providing proof that everything Aaron posted to his blog was true in fact.

Cutts appears to have been moved to post confirmation of the ban in response to a post made by Aaron at [Threadwatch](#) on January 27, 2006 in which he outlines specific issues Traffic Power claims in its lawsuit.

The penalty was imposed over several techniques known to violate Google's posted [webmaster guidelines](#). From the use of java-script redirects across literally thousands of doorway pages to the linking of those doorway pages through an artificial link-density network, the SEO tactics (often automated) used by Traffic Power on hundreds of their client sites were pure spam. It seems highly improbable, by the summer of 2004 that no one at Traffic Power realized its techniques were in violation of Google's posted guidelines.

Reports about the ban started almost immediately after it was imposed in 2004. There were [a lot](#) of [frustrated business owners](#) out there looking for answers and assistance. There were also a number of

SEO firms who wanted to use the case as an example of the worst that can happen if your SEO uses spam-driven techniques. Articles appeared on [Blogs](#), in trade journals, in local (Las Vegas) magazines and, after Traffic Power tried to sue a couple small web-publishers, into the [Wall St. Journal](#). The [Southern Nevada Better Business Bureau](#) and the [Search Engine Consultants Directory](#) got into the fray, both publishing pages warning consumers about Traffic Power. A mysterious group known only as "[the consortium](#)" materialized to investigate Traffic Power, presumably with the intent of forming a class action lawsuit against them.

There was one other thing that caught Google's attention back in the summer of 2004 when Traffic Power got banned, which wasn't mentioned in Cutts' blog posting. They used an absurdly large network of doorway pages as an indescribably complex link-farm. This violation of Google's guidelines was based on a network of doorway pages creating an artificial link density for pages or documents within it that worked wonders against the link-dependant algo Google was running at the time. Though the Google engineers already knew about the exploit, the massive degree to which Traffic Power abused it was one of the major catalysts in the Jagger/Big Daddy updates playing through today.

Many in the industry hope Traffic Power, now operating as [First Place](#) will quietly drop the suit against Aaron.