



POINT OF VIEW

Is your website performing? An introduction to Google's AMP initiative



**James
Tsuyuki**
SVP,
Technology

August 29, 2019

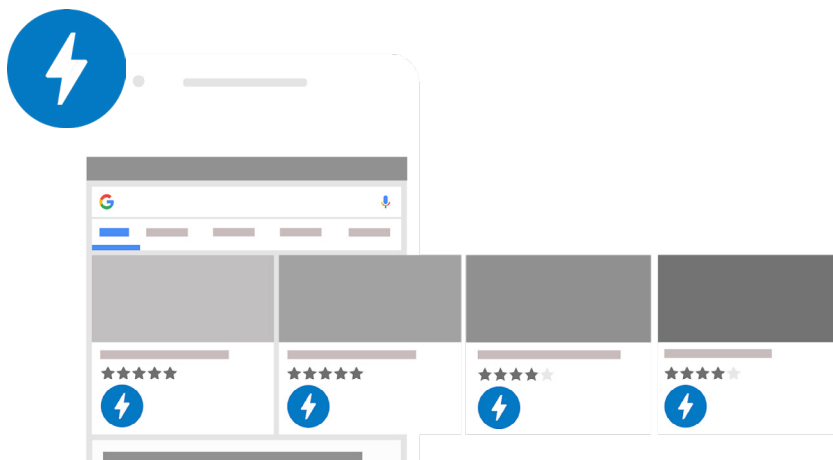
Google's AMP initiative strives to improve website performance across the board.

What is AMP?

The AMP (Accelerated Mobile Page) initiative is a Google-led “open-source initiative aiming to make the web better for all. The project enables the creation of websites and ads that are **consistently fast**, beautiful and **high-performing across devices and distribution platforms.**”¹

Simply put, the AMP initiative strives to distill the usage of the common tools to develop websites that **perform well across the gamut of devices and connection**

speeds. Google claims your website will perform better and offer a superior user experience for all visitors, as well as allow for deeper search integration. However, we caution that this can restrict brands from building unique experiences and affect how one would specifically go about building Web pages.



How does it work?

With Google's strength in search, analytics, and ad serving, the search engine is already in a unique position to influence the Internet. In fact, the tech giant has been pushing Web masters to make more mobile-friendly and faster-loading sites for years by **adjusting its search algorithm** to factor this into its search rankings, thus giving prominence to sites that do the things Google specifically wants (and lowering visibility to those that don't).

From this perspective, AMP is simply the logical progression of this evolution; however, AMP goes a step further by not only offering suggestions, but also creating a new definition and strict validation of what is acceptable.

The main benefit of implementing AMP is a **better user experience through faster-rendering pages.** This is achieved partially through the limits built into the specification, but mostly through a crucial piece of the AMP ecosystem—caching.

When Google search recognizes a valid AMP, **it will make a copy in its own caching server,** and when a relevant search is performed in Google search, mobile pages are preloaded and prerendered behind the scenes, so that when a user clicks on an AMP search result, the page is rendered **almost instantaneously.**



Is your website performing? An introduction to Google's AMP initiative

This combination of the AMP specification facilitates the caching, preloading, and prerendering that creates the delivery speed of a webpage. If you notice the first click off a Google search result is still showing a Google URL, then you are actually seeing Google's cached version of the page. Generally speaking, the deeper you click into a site, the more likely you are to be transported to the actual site. Google and Bing currently maintain their own AMP caches.

By utilizing AMP and adding structured metadata, your pages can be included in Google search results in other ways, such as through the carousel, which **may help increase search engine prominence**.

What's the Catch?



Level of effort: Unless you keep it exceptionally simple, it will take some level of effort to create a valid AMP version of your website. Plug-ins and add-ons for popular content management systems exist to create AMP versions of content, but out of the box, these often lead to highly simplified versions of content. To match the branding of your standard template, you will likely need to modify the AMP template. And beyond the initial work required, you will need to keep an eye out for updates since the need to modify content in multiple places may arise; in the pharma space, legal review is a large portion of update costs, and the additional views provided by the AMP versions of the site will likely also increase review time.



Limited customization: While Google is constantly improving and adding to the AMP JavaScript library (which will continue to improve over time), there is currently no way to add your own JavaScript, which limits customization. Most common interactions and design patterns have AMP components, but even where they exist, only certain options are available. In general, many have a more stripped down or simplified feel compared to non-AMP versions. If you are looking for a highly polished Web experience, the constraints with AMP could be frustrating.

To AMP or not to AMP?

As the Internet continues to be consumed increasingly on mobile devices, **the importance of a superior mobile experience will only grow**. If your target market is in a part of the world where people are largely connected by 3G (or less!) connection speeds, particularly in developing or third-world regions, the advantages provided by AMP will likely outweigh the downsides. If there is information that lends itself to being delivered with expediency over style (news releases, articles, etc), Web pages could also be developed with AMP in mind to help with SEO and reduce bounce rates. However, if you have an existing website that already has been optimized for mobile and performs well, it might not be worth the effort to add a new AMP version, especially if your target market is somewhere where mobile connectivity isn't so constrained.

These are only a few of the aspects you should take into consideration when deciding if AMP-ifying your website makes sense strategically or creatively to achieve desired outcomes. Reach out today if you would like to assess whether AMP could fit into your digital strategy.

