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ISSUE 4
2020

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SEO

AN SEO MAGAZINE

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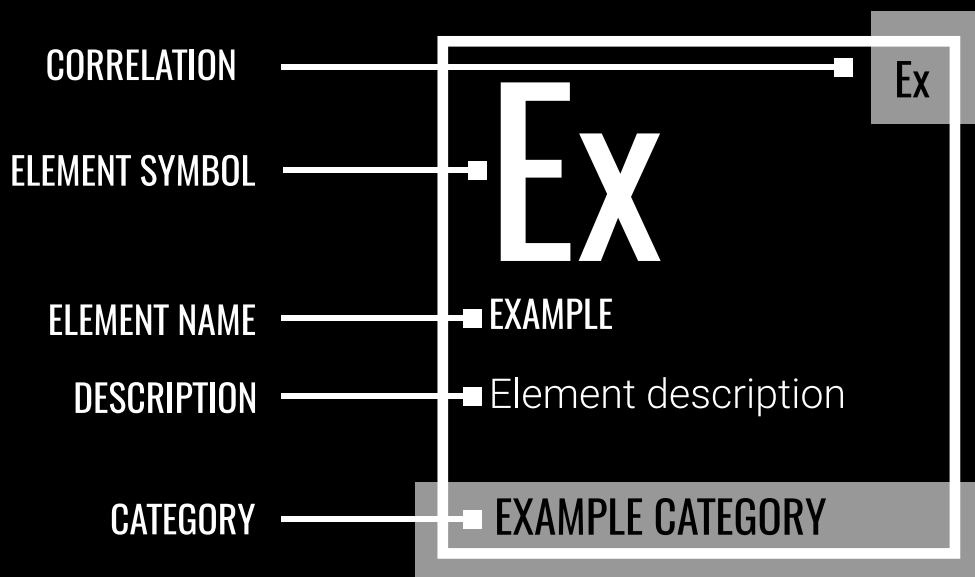
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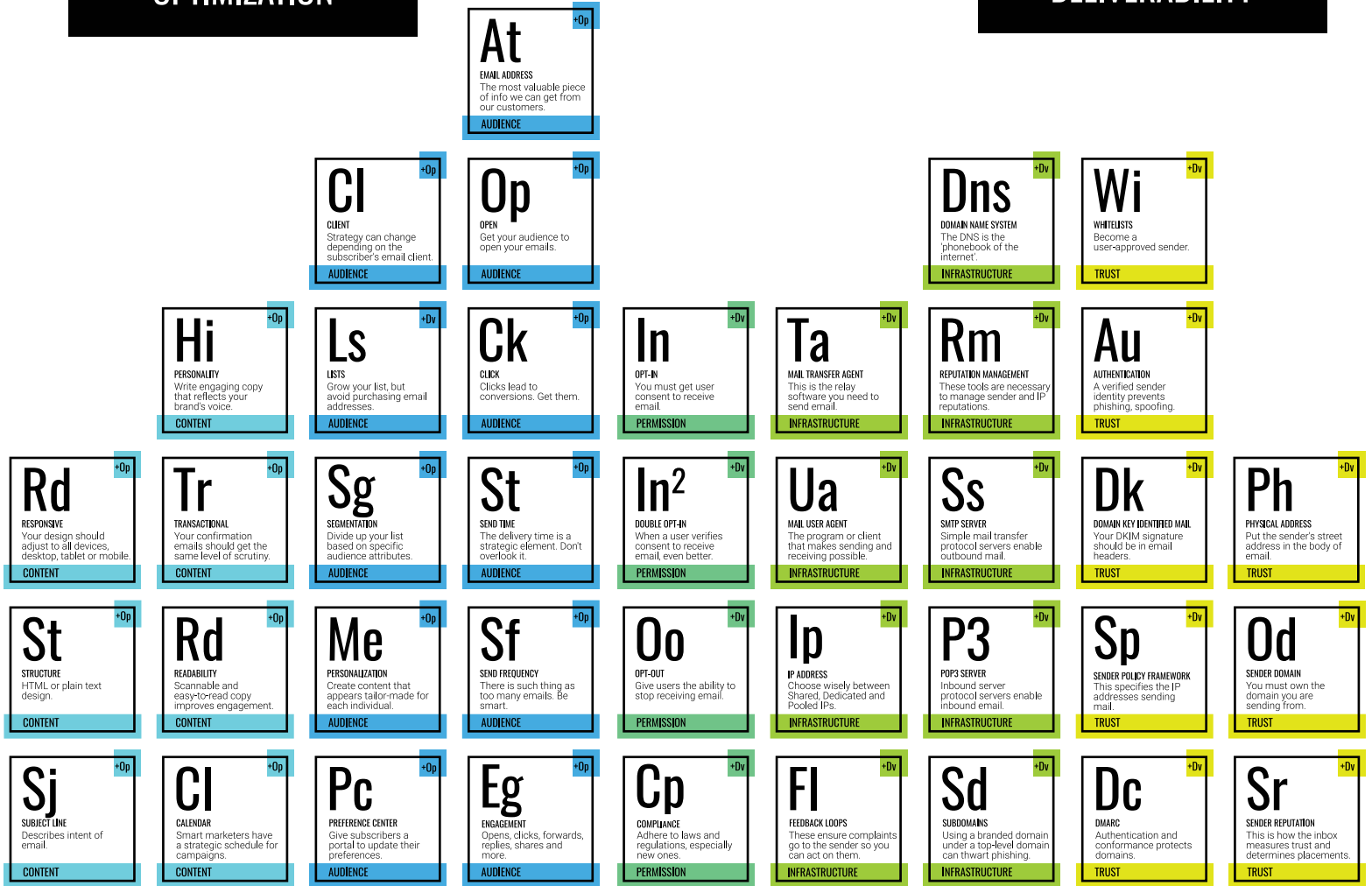


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OPTIMIZATION

DELIVERABILITY



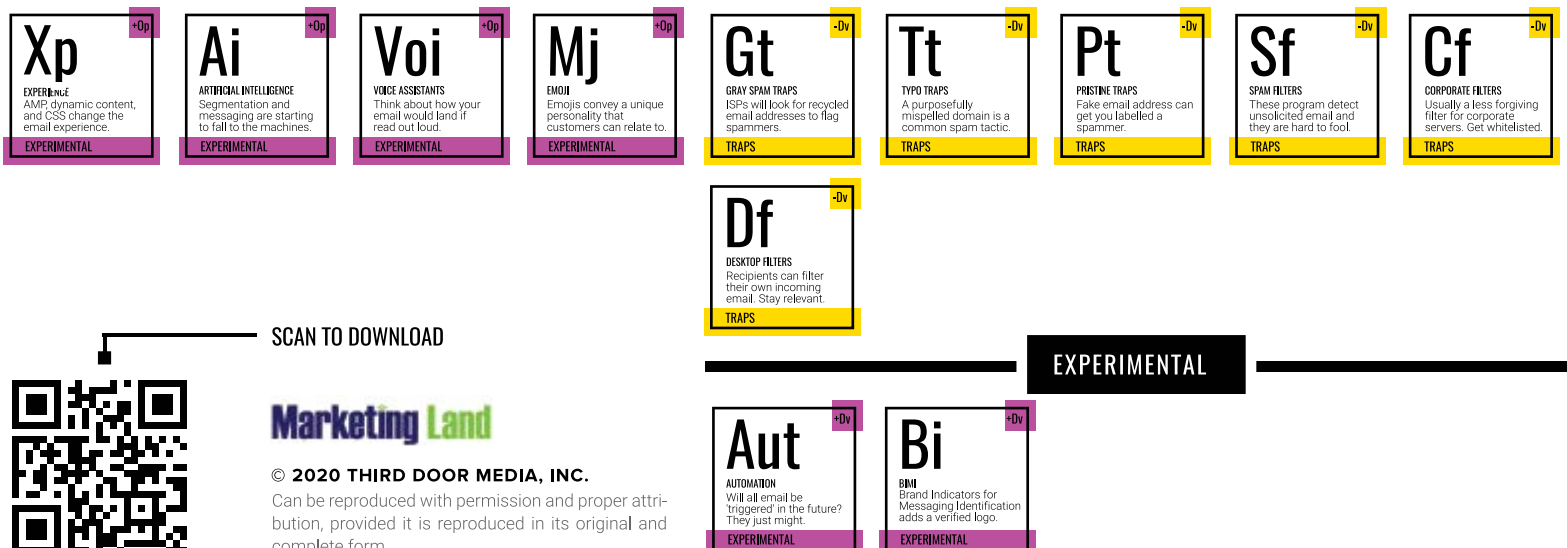
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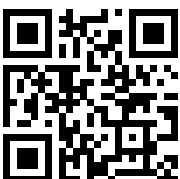


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info@pagesSEOMagazine.com

Thanks

TWEETS A MILLION!

#PAGESSEOMAGAZINE



Just got my first @pagesSEOMag issue! Excited to dive in! Woot woot. Hats off to @JoyanneHawkins for another awesome project!

Susan M. Staupe
[@SusanStaupe](#)



Been living @pagesSEOMag! I signed up for it at #Mozcon, but never expected to get a hard copy in my mailbox a week later. In the digital world, it's still nice to hold something tangible to read. Thx!

Nikki Stine
[@onpointresults](#)



Andy Simpson
[@andyjsimpson](#)

Getting the most from GMB in 2020 - @JoyanneHawkins lists out some of the practical things every small business should be doing in the latest edition of @pagesSEOMag 📖
[#localseo](#) [#SmallBiz](#) [@SterlingSkyInc](#)



12:21 PM · Aug 13, 2020 · Twitter for Android



3:16 PM · Jul 20, 2020 · Twitter for Android

Thank you all for reading!

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[THE PRELUDE]



In business, as it is in life, one of the biggest challenges with growth is the inevitable need for change. Oftentimes, we find comfort in doing things the same way, even to the detriment of our success. Will you shrink away from this necessary change — or will you embrace it? How you perceive and adapt to change will determine your ability to keep growing, as well as your success in that growth.

At **PAGES**, we encourage a proactive methodology. We track the current climate and SEO trends in order to predict the changes we must make in both our process and perspective. Creating an SEO tool chest (Dmitrii Kustov P. 96) will not only help you be proactive, but it will make the SEO job easier by improving workflow and production. Image optimization should also be added to your SEO strategy, enriching

both the customer experience and ROI. (Joelle Irvine P. 80) Learn about a powerful tool for understanding how to come alongside your client and move forward together. (Heather Physioc P. 36) And let's be sure to tackle the big question regarding SEO vs. PPC — Are they really in cahoots with each other, (Connor Bonam P.64) or can they actually work — together — to bring your business to an SEO all-time high? (Josh DeGrasse-Bauman P. 14)

Once it is understood that growth and change walk together hand in hand, your business will have the leverage and the opportunity to advance exponentially. Allow the need for change to encourage you and kickstart your excitement; perhaps it will serve as a reminder of what brought you to the always-evolving field of SEO in the first place.

The Pages Crew



<h1>

LEVERAGING MACHINE LEARNING FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS

Thomas Swisher is resident Web Analyst, SEO Strategist, and Data Scientist at Page One Power.

<P>

This year, I was lucky enough to be able to go to MozCon “virtually.” It was my first time attending a tradeshow, and it didn’t disappoint. I was very interested in presentations that involved coding to automate tasks.

I like being able to code programs myself, because it gives me the ability to customize and automate complicated tasks. This makes me more efficient by saving me time. The trade show is over, but you can still purchase the video bundle at Moz.com.

One of my favorites was “Accessible Machine Learning Workflows for SEOs” by Britney Muller. The workflow she used as her example was extracting entities from URLs using Google’s own Natural Language (NL) API.

This process is important because it can be used to see how Google is labeling your content and the content of your competition which, in turn, helps identify gaps in your content.

Let’s take a look at the output of this exercise.

<H2>

USING NATURAL LANGUAGE TO EXTRACT ENTITIES

This is a screenshot of the CSV that is generated at the end of this exercise. The workflow takes three URLs and extracts entities (from Google’s API) associated with those URLs and shows how prominent (related) it is to that entity. I added the first row to help clarify what we are looking at.

	A	URL #1	C	URL #2	E
1	Keywords	Prominence of URL	# Times Keyword Used	Prominence of URL	# Times Keyword Used
2	entity_name	entity_salience(https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/ketogenic-diet-101)	entity_number_of_mentions(https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/ketogenic-diet-101)	entity_salience(https://www.dietdoctor.com/low-carb/keto)	entity_number_of_mentions(https://www.dietdoctor.com/low-carb/keto)
3	diet	0.444176372	68	0.036116568	74
4	diets	0.068028709	9	0.058391755	54
5	keto diet	0.067420076	6	0.164137517	78

This example uses three posts about the keto diet. The entity_name (keyword) is on the left — column A, while Column B displays Entity_salience. According to Google, the salience score for an entity provides information about the importance or centrality of that entity to the entire document text. In Column C, you will see the Entity_number_of_mentions, or the number of times the word(s) are used in the document.

This workflow is based on an article by Sasha Dagayev, “Systematically Analyze Your Content vs. Competitor Content And Make Actionable Improvements.” The focus of this article is getting your own version of this up and running. Everything is already built, so all we have to do is create our Google API Credentials and apply them.

<H2>

COLAB NOTEBOOKS

The first thing we are going to need to get started is the Colab Notebook that contains the python script we will be running. Colab is a cloud-based Jupyter notebook environment that allows you to utilize machine learning and deep learning models, for free, using Google’s own resources.

What is Colaboratory?

Colaboratory, or “Colab” for short, allows you to write and execute Python in your browser, with

- Zero configuration required
- Free access to GPUs
- Easy sharing

Whether you’re a student, a data scientist or an AI researcher, Colab can make your work easier.

The notebook we want to use has already been created and can be accessed using this link:

https://colab.research.google.com/drive/1WE7aMV5WDw-GqXOdIT18-CqjwcPJAH_#scrollTo=qkSW-0qyYlcP

You will need to create your own version to make edits, so at the top navigation bar, go to file>save a copy in the drive. This will create an editable version of your own in your Google Drive.

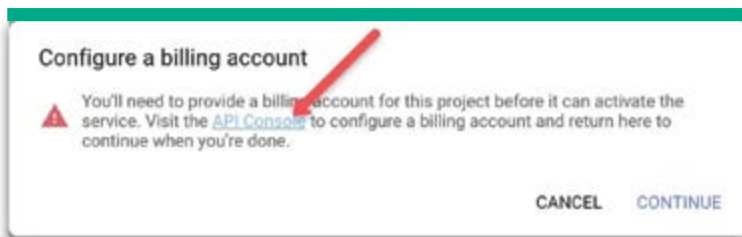
<H2>

GOOGLE’S NATURAL LANGUAGE API

Next, we are going to need to create a project to enable the Cloud Natural Language API. Follow this link:

<https://cloud.google.com/natural-language/docs/quickstart#create-a-project-and-name-it>

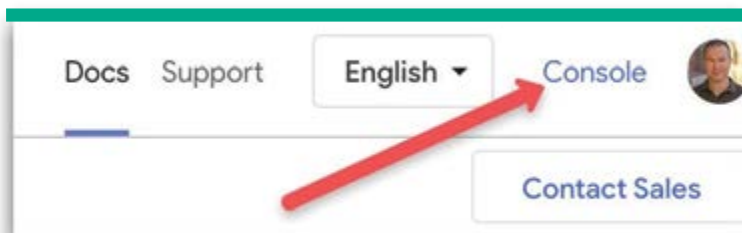
Before you can finish enabling the API, you will need to set up billing by clicking on the API Console link.



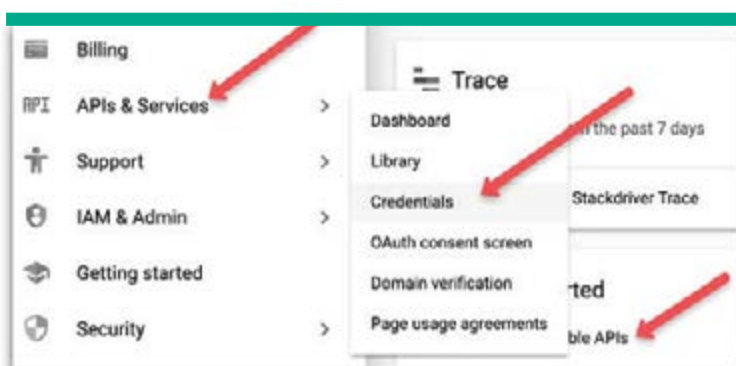
This will give you a free trial that lasts for one year or until you use up the \$300 credit. They will not auto charge you after the free trial; they just ask for a credit card to make sure you aren't a bot.

Now you can go back to the project and press continue. This will give you a JSON key that we will need to use to authenticate our service account. Download the key.

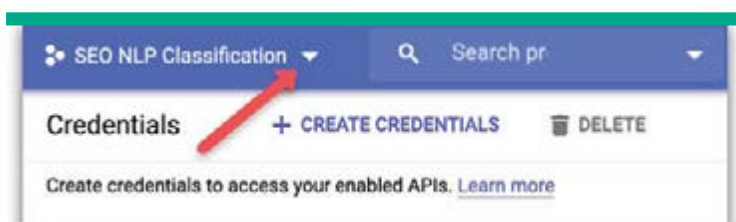
Now click console in the upper right-hand corner of the page where you set up the project.



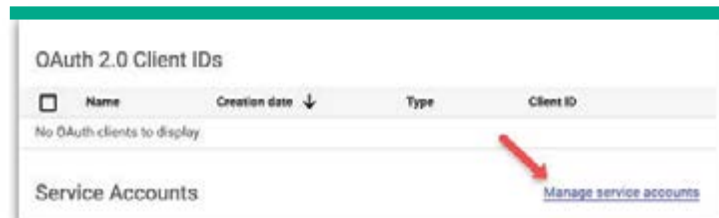
The console changes a lot but usually what you are looking for is on the left — APIs & Services>Credentials. If you don't see that, look for a box that says Getting Started.



Now make sure that you are in the new project you created.

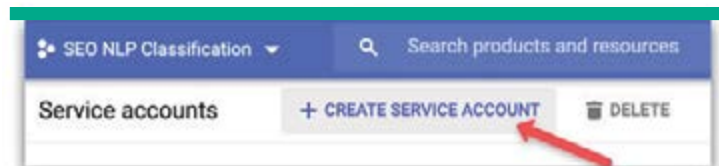


Then click **Manage service accounts** below.

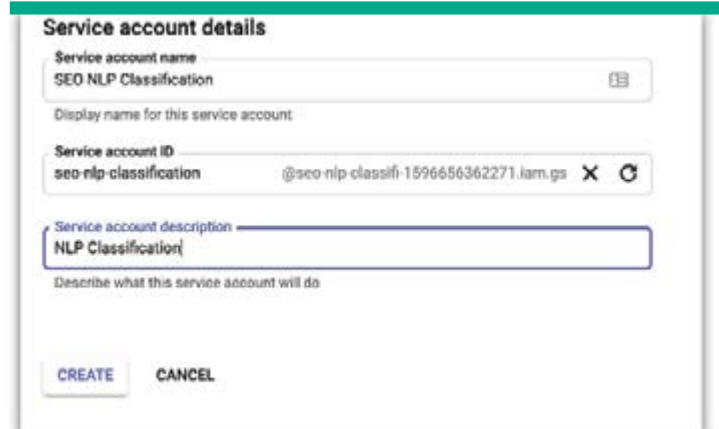


Follow the directions below to create a new one if you don't have one listed already.

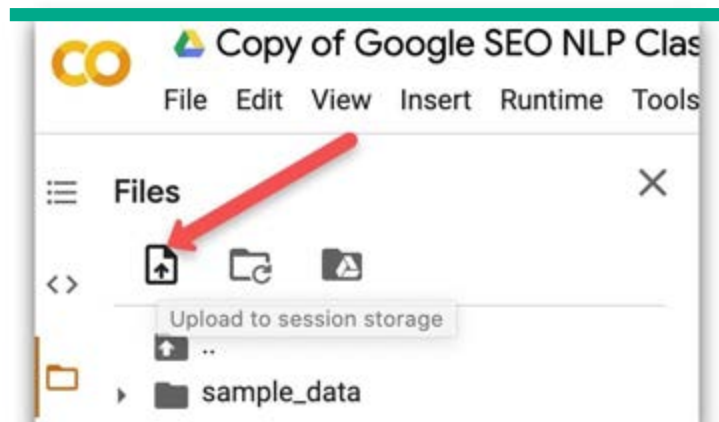
Click create service account at the top.



Give it a name and description and click create.



Now let's go back to our copy of the Colab Notebook and upload the authentication file.



<P>

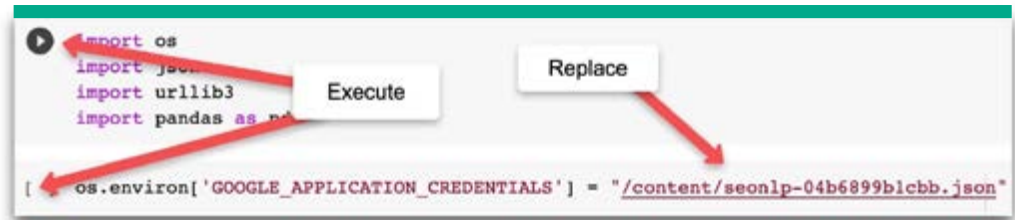
Next, replace line two to match the file name of your .json file. Now we are all set up and ready to start. Hit return on each section, waiting as they execute their functions. Keep going until you have executed them all.

Once you get to the last one, it will generate a CSV file. That will appear on the right side of your files. Right-click on it and choose Download.

<H2>

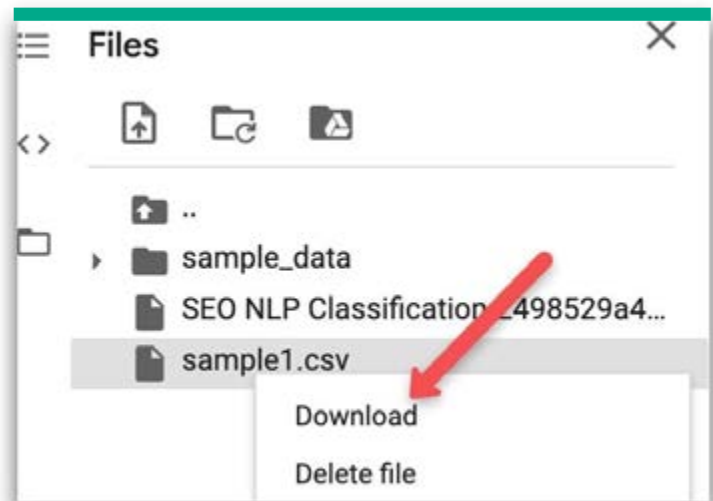
SUMMARY

So now that you have a working version of the Colab Notebook, you can start to customize it. For example, if you know Python, you can change the URLs or add more if necessary.



There are many different ways you can use this, but two really stand out: First, when you are getting ready to create a new page and second, when you are trying to improve an existing pages rank.

Sasha says, “a content producer should be able to look at this data and understand the following with data informing their decision instead of only gut feel.”



This is where the URLs are defined. You can switch this out to be the three URLs you would like for it to be.

```
[ ] http = urllib3.PoolManager()
    response1 = http.request('GET', 'https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/ketogenic-diet-101')
    response2 = http.request('GET', 'https://www.dietdoctor.com/low-carb/keto')
    response3 = http.request('GET', 'https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/should-you-try-the-keto-diet')
```

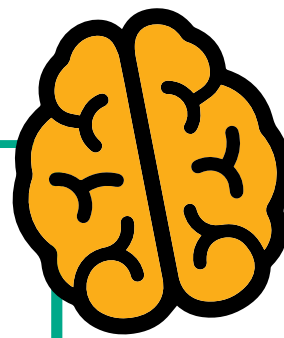
1. Are there any missed topics?
2. “What is the centrality of the topics that the others discussed?”
3. “How often are others mentioning certain topics in their content?”

Removing the guesswork out of content optimization is the most important part of all this. We can study the content on the first page. We can look at the link profiles and duplicate the on-page SEO, but we still can't be sure how Google is going to see our content. With tools like this, we can begin to get a picture of how Google is interpreting relationships in our content. 🎯

Thanks for
reading!

ENJOY
ISSUE 4.0

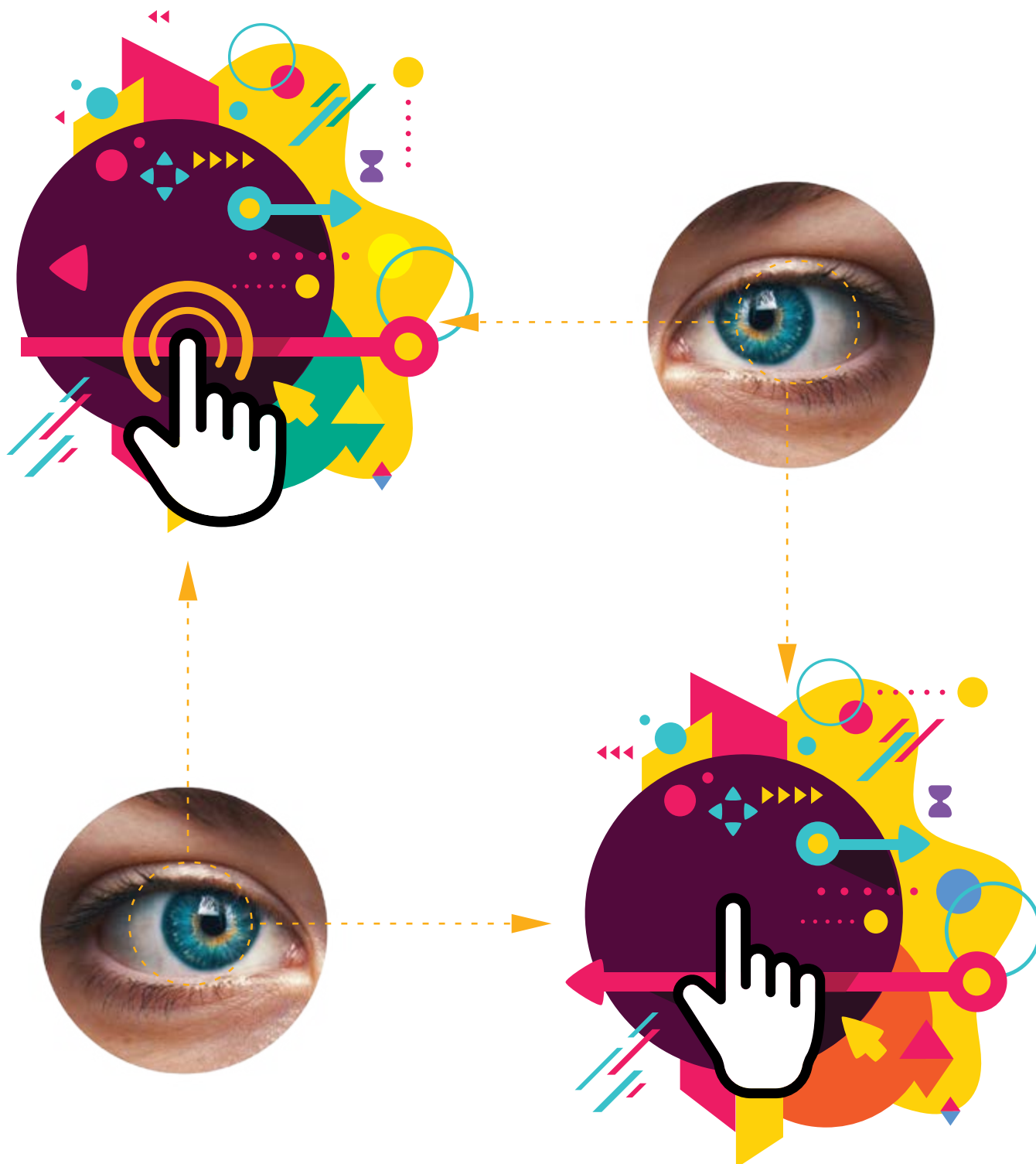
TIME KILLER



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

GOOD LUCK!
EAGLE EYE!

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OUT OF SEVEN





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Henry Powderly - Vice President, Content



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Ginny Marvin - Editor-In-Chief



I love the Search Shorts we provide, it provides little tidbits from official Googlers and the SEM community that we like to highlight during the day.

Barry Schwartz - SEO Editor



Every morning, the newsletter introduction tells you what you need to know to stay up-to-date with the industry, with way more elegance and detail than a tweet or headline preview, and in a way that's more accessible and easier than reading each and every article — although we'll always present you with that option.

George Nguyen - Editor



The market is very noisy and crowded with announcements and self-promotional spin. The newsletter zeroes in on the information and analysis that really matter to digital marketers.

Greg Sterling - Contributing Editor



I love how the introductory sentence will always whet my appetite for consuming the entire newsletter.

Detlef Johnson - SEO for Developers Editor

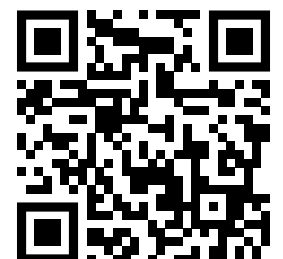
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SCAN TO SIGN UP



ARTICLE - No. 1

[JOSH BAUMANN]
SEARCH OPTIMIZATION MANAGER, ROCKET CLICKS

[MEAGAN GUSE]
DIGITAL ADVERTISING MANAGER, ROCKET CLICKS

HOW TO MAKE SEO SOLVE YOUR PAID SEARCH ADVERTISING PROBLEMS

Imagine you're getting ready in a hurry and accidentally put on two shoes from different pairs and don't notice until you're at the office. As long as both shoes are in good condition, you could probably make it through the day without needing to change, but it's going to be an uncomfortable day.

Unfortunately, many agencies and marketing departments treat their SEO and PPC efforts as if they're two shoes from different pairs rather than one complete pair. And the result? They can probably get by, but it's not nearly as optimal as it could be.

Don't get me wrong: Each service offers its own specialties — just like a right shoe and a left shoe — but when you combine them and start putting one foot in front of the other, that's when you'll really get somewhere.

With that in mind, let's look at a few ways you can use SEO and PPC together to maximize your digital marketing.

BETTER KEYWORD TARGETING



Improved Keyword Coverage

One of the most interesting things about SEO and PPC is that they're both competing for the same thing — a searcher's click — in significantly different ways. When teams use that to their advantage, they can dominate a search results page by securing listings in multiple high profile areas. After all, two listings are better than one, right?

The benefits don't stop at getting two results on one page, though. SEO and PPC teams can also work together by surfacing opportunities for each other.

For example, if the PPC team identifies a new keyword in a search query report, the SEO team might be interested in crafting copy to help improve rankings for it.

Likewise, if the SEO team is seeing success for certain pages, they can work with the paid search team to attract more traffic — ideally at relatively low costs.

Keyword-Level Data & Analysis

Anyone who's spent any time working with SEO knows the pain of not being able to get much keyword-level insight from Google Analytics, having to rely instead on third-party tools and educated intuition to determine which keywords are bringing traffic and conversions to a site. While PPC efforts can't solve this issue, they can provide a wealth of information about how customers are getting to the site via paid ads that can be applied to organic targeting, too.

Paid advertising tools can be especially helpful when looking for keywords that are getting high impressions or high conversion rates. These are keywords that SEO might want to target as well for blog post ideas or conversion rate optimization.



IMPROVED COPY + CONTENT



More Compelling Ad Copy and Metadata

One of the easiest opportunities that often gets overlooked is combining efforts for the copy for paid and organic listings. Now, this requires a certain degree of care, since there are different criteria for what makes good ad copy compared to what makes good metadata; however, the intents of the two are largely the same: grab a searcher's attention and get them to click.

In this sense, there's incredible value in leveraging data from both sides to identify areas for optimization.

Have a paid ad that's got a particularly high number of clicks? Try incorporating elements of the ad into the relevant page's title tag and meta description. Struggling for ad copy? Go the other way and borrow from the title and meta description of the relevant page.

In either case, you'll get plenty of data on what drives the best click-through rate.

The PPC and SEO teams can also use this tactic to "test" different meta descriptions — a task that would be significantly more difficult with just organic listings.

In addition, by both sides working together, you can ensure there is a consistent brand voice across all platforms and online media.

Content Ideation

In addition to having cohesive copy, when SEO needs ideas for content, PPC results can be a good place to look.

By conducting a Search Query Report, we can see which search terms were searched, clicked, and converted. With this information, we can see if a particular search term drives traffic but not conversions. If this term is relevant, then maybe the user didn't find the information they were looking for on the site and more content can be created.

Side note:

Both teams could also benefit greatly from thoroughly analyzing competitors' ad copy. After all, your competitor is most likely investing money to run their own A/B tests, so why not take advantage of the fruits of their labor?

IMPROVE CONVERSION RATES



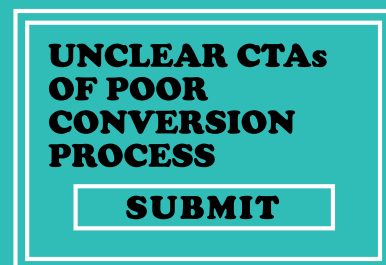
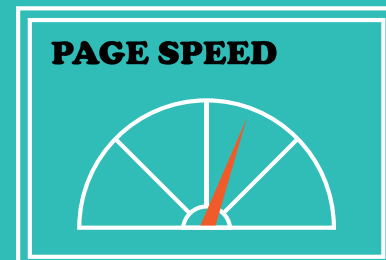
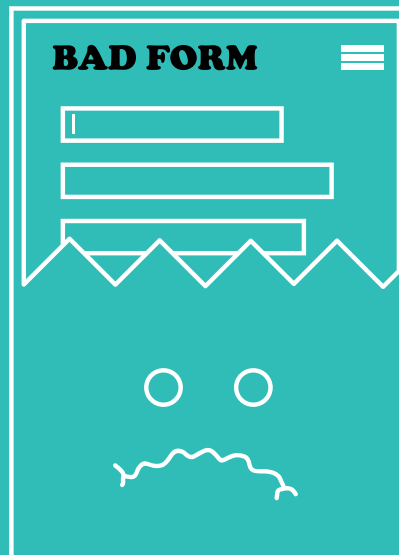
Landing Page Quality & User Experience Optimization

While not universally true, website optimization often falls to the SEO department, but that doesn't mean the PPC team can't get involved. Between the two sides, identification and prioritization of issues will likely happen more quickly.

While those issues will always be unique to each site, here are the opportunities we see most frequently impact both SEO and PPC efforts:

- POOR FORM CONFIGURATION
- PAGE SPEED
- UNCLEAR CALLS-TO-ACTION OF A POOR CONVERSION PROCESS

Putting multiple heads together to solve these issues will typically yield better results than if it was left to one person or department alone.



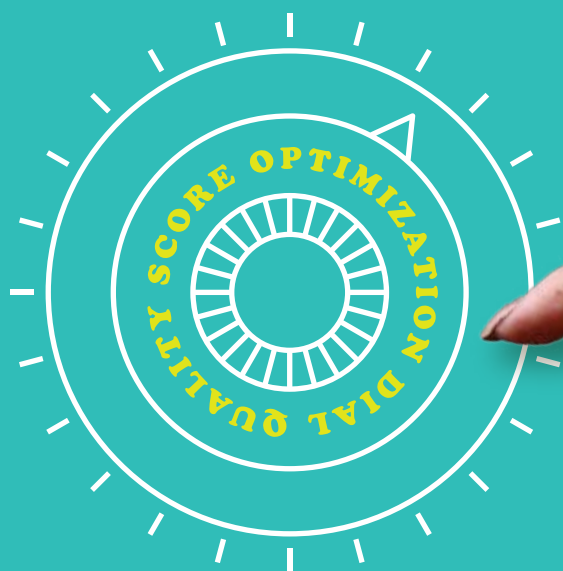
“WHILE NOT UNIVERSALLY TRUE, WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION OFTEN FALLS TO THE SEO DEPARTMENT.”



Quality Score Optimization

Though Google's algorithms are secret, paid advertisers do get some level of insight into how Google grades a landing page through quality score. While this is in no way linked directly to the algorithms responsible for organic rankings, it does give some barometer for how Google views a landing page.

The benefits of cross-team collaboration here are pretty obvious for the paid side — higher quality scores lead to lower costs per click — but there's benefits for the organic side, too. When landing pages are optimized to meet Google's requirements, pages will often rank better and have higher conversion rates.



Remarketing Opportunities

For many marketing teams, all efforts are focused on the bottom of the funnel. After all, it's a constant battle to justify budgets and agency fees. But if your SEO and PPC efforts are in lock step, higher funnel opportunities start to open up that can dramatically improve all of your marketing efforts.

The chief among these is remarketing.

Now, there's always the most basic form of remarketing — targeting users who have been on your site before — but strong cohesion between SEO and PPC campaigns can surface even more valuable opportunities.

For example, let's say your SEO team is writing a guide about how your product solves a major customer pain point. Your paid search team can leverage this new content in two ways: 1) strategically include it in paid ads (either directly or via sitelinks) and 2) create a remarketing audience of users who have specifically viewed that guide to further boost targeting and bidding opportunities for customers who have shown interest in specific aspects of your business.

CONCLUSION

Take A Good Look At Your Shoes.

Take a good look at your shoes and think about how they work together to get you from point A to point B as efficiently as possible. Now think about your SEO and PPC efforts — are they doing the same thing?

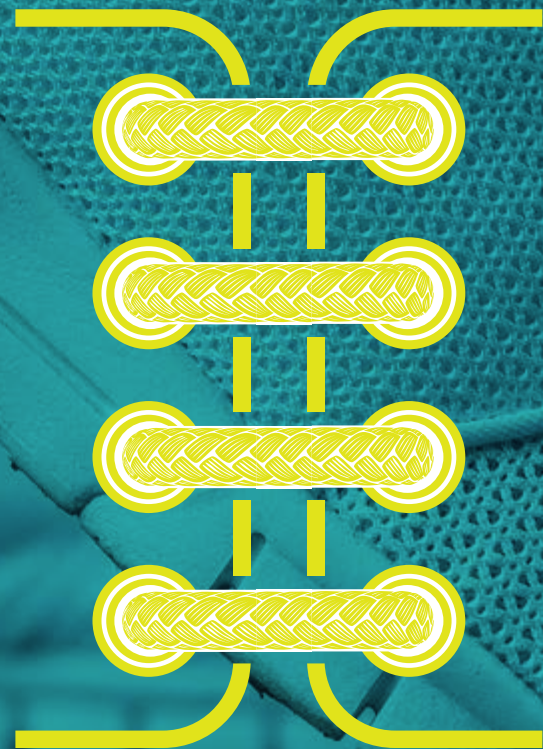
If those efforts feel like they are from two different pairs of shoes, hopefully this article has given you a few ideas about how to start blending the two disciplines together. Whether it's through sharing keyword data, identifying content and targeting opportunities, or prioritizing technical and conversion issues, a joint effort will yield better results than two independent teams. Now, it's time to lace up. 🌀



More sneakerhead knowledge and info on solving paid search problems with SEO, give Josh a follow on Twitter: [@jdegbau](https://twitter.com/jdegbau)



Let Meagan know how you're stepping your SEO and search advertising game to the next level in LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/meaganguse/>



VOLUME 1
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ARTICLE - No. 5
HOW YOUR ADVANCED PRACTICES SHOULD CHANGE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
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ARTICLE - No. 7
TURN EVERYDAY TASKS INTO SUSTAINABLE WEBSITE TRAFFIC
Dmitri K.

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SEO VS. PPC: TWO WILL ENTER - TWO WILL WIN
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Joelle Irvine | Executive Growth Marketer | P. 81



“Real links come from real people, and effective communication with people is how you secure quality links. No matter the type of links you’re looking to build, your outreach will play a major part in your success or failure to convert.”

DANICA BARNACK,
RESEARCH TEAM MANAGER, PAGE ONE POWER

Article No. 5



ARTICLE - No. 2

[CHARLES TAYLOR]
SEO MANAGER, VERIZON FIOS



4 PILLARS OF SEO

If you have watched any of my videos or webinars, you will have heard me speak about the four pillars of SEO that should be part of any website's SEO strategy: Bot Accessibility, Relevance, Authority, and Quality. For this article, I would like to hone in on the second pillar, relevance. Is the content on your page considered relevant for the search query for both the search engine AND the searcher?

All searches performed by users begin with a query, or search "string," – the words you type into the search bar. Once you enter those words into the search bar, Google will then evaluate all of the pages it has in its index to determine if it is relevant for the query the searcher entered. Google will then present the resulting pages to you on the SERP (Search Engine Result Page).

But how exactly do Google and other search engines determine what is and is not relevant?

It all begins with the content – mostly the copy – on your web page.



C O N T E N T + C O N T E X T

SINCE 2012

Google representatives have been telling webmasters to focus on “Things, not Strings.” What does this mean? Google is looking to better understand the context of the page, not just the content of the page. The search engine is attempting to understand our pages in the context of the entities that are already in its database. What Google is telling us is not to focus on the string (i.e. keyword) for which you are optimizing, for example: “DUI Attorney in New York City.” Instead, focus on understanding why a user is searching for that phrase and what they are really looking for, and then work towards providing them the answer or information they need.

RELEVANCE + ANSWERS

If you approach the process from that angle, you will begin to understand better the pronouncement Googlers often make of, “just make great content.” It is NOT about trying to write for search engines. It is about writing for users but with search engines in mind. It is all about giving your content a greater level of topical depth and breadth – no matter who reads it.

Relevance – What does “plant” mean?

I will illustrate this with an example. If I say the word “plant,” what do I mean? This word has many different meanings. Am I speaking about horticulture? A houseplant, tree, bush, or weed in my garden – or maybe it is a verb, and I am referring to the act of planting one of those things? Maybe I am referring to a factory. Perhaps, I am discussing a spy within an organization. You simply do not know without the proper context.

Now taking this same example, and I say the word “plant” followed by the words “Detroit Michigan” and “Ford Motor Company.” Immediately you understand that I am referring to a factory. Specifically you know I am referring to an auto manufacturing plant. Why? Simple. I used other relevant words. These words gave greater context to the first word, or in our case, the search string.

In the “old days of SEO,” you simply had to place the target keyword on the page as many times as possible. Whoever was able to stuff the keyword onto the page the most, without triggering an automatic or manual penalty, would win – i.e. rank at the top of page #1 on Google.

Example: attorney, attorney, attorney, attorney

Over the years, things got a little more sophisticated. You could not simply use the same keyword repeatedly – Google got wise to this trick. You had to include variations of the keyword: singular, plural, and phrases containing the keyword. If you really wanted to be clever, you might include a synonym or two.

Example: attorney, attorneys, attorney in NYC, lawyer

IT ALL BEGINS WITH CONTENT

What I am suggesting is that we need to go a lot deeper by building a deeper level of semantic meaning to your copy. That's just a fancy way of saying give your page more context. Understand the search intent of the searcher, and you can build your page around that intent. We need to build the page copy's topical depth and breath. Yes, Google is still looking for the search phrase within the page copy, but it wants to understand the context of this page as well. They are trying to match the page with the searcher's intent.



MORE CONTENT OFTEN EQUALS BETTER ORGANIC RANKINGS

Many of us have seen ranking correlation charts. These studies show how more or less of a specific factor correlates with greater rankings. SEMRush has a great correlation study that they have been producing almost every year. In addition, in the yearly study, it is always shown that more content correlates strongly with higher rankings.

What this has led to is folks building “mega-pages” thinking that if they simply place more content on the page, it will magically rank better. Companies have spent untold dollars to simply, “put more content on the page.” I am suggesting that Google has gotten much more sophisticated than simply counting words on a page. If we dug into these content heavy pages, I suspect the reason why these pages rank is that they typically contain (either knowingly or unknowingly) the important context on the page – greater topical depth and breadth.

The good news I am here to tell you is that you most often DO NOT need to write pages laden with over a thousand words. Most of your existing pages could rank very well if they simply had the depth and breadth that Google expects for the topic.

“ U N D E R S T A N D
T H E
C O N T E X T . . . ”



DEVELOPING YOUR PAGES CONTEXT

Do you remember the example from earlier? What does the word “plant” mean? Once I started using other words, in this case, “Detroit Michigan” and “Ford Motor Company,” you understood I was referring to an auto manufacturing plant and not a houseplant or spy. You understood my context because I used relevant words in conjunction with my target keyword. Google’s algorithm is likely doing the same thing. It is still looking for keywords, but it is not just simply looking for the target keyword. It is looking for other phrases that it knows should exist along with your main subject, in this case “Automotive Plant.”

HELPING GOOGLE UNDERSTAND YOUR CONTEXT

When optimizing content, I group the supporting words I need into one of three buckets:

Match Words – As the group name implies, these words are all synonyms or abbreviations of your target word. They essentially mean the same (i.e. match) as the main keyword and can be used interchangeably. To find what Google considers a match is simple. When you perform a search for your target keyword, you will see that Google places these words in bold on the Search Engine Result Page (SERP). In our example, we will see that Google highlights “Auto Factory,” “Automotive Manufacturing,” and “Car Plant,” as well as others.

Related Words – Whereas the first bucket contains interchangeable words, this group starts to give greater meaning to intent. These phrases sometimes contain synonyms, but not always. They can be found within Google’s Related Searches, AutoComplete, and the People Also Ask sections. This group tells you what to write. What searchers are trying to learn or discover. In our example, you would find “Assembly Line,” “Automotive plants near me,” and even “Automotive plant closures.”

Co-Occurring Words – Lastly, these are words, if used by themselves, that would be no more helpful than a single keyword, but these terms are what Google believes should naturally appear in a conversation about this subject. These can be found using tools like LSI Calculators, and personally, I like using Google’s own NLP (Natural Language Processing) tool. In our example, you would get terms like “Ford Motor Company” and “Detroit, Michigan.” Just these two phrases alone tell you exactly what I am referring to, and I didn’t even have to use any synonyms or related terms – that’s how powerful these words can be for Google.

I have found that this is the key to building highly-relevant content. It is not just stuffing the keyword on your page. You need to include synonyms, related phrases, and now even co-occurring words as well. However, always remember: it is NOT about trying to write for search engines. It is about writing for users but with search engines in mind. It is all about giving your content a greater level of topical depth and breadth – no matter who reads it.

TAKING ACTION

Here we are, at the end of the article. You may have learned something, but more importantly, will you put to use what you have learned? You now understand what Google likely means when they say “Strings, Not Things” and “Write Great Content.” Take this knowledge and put it to action today. There are many places you can use this new content optimization strategy: blog posts, product pages, service landing page, category pages, and even press releases. I suggest using the following outline to organize the process:

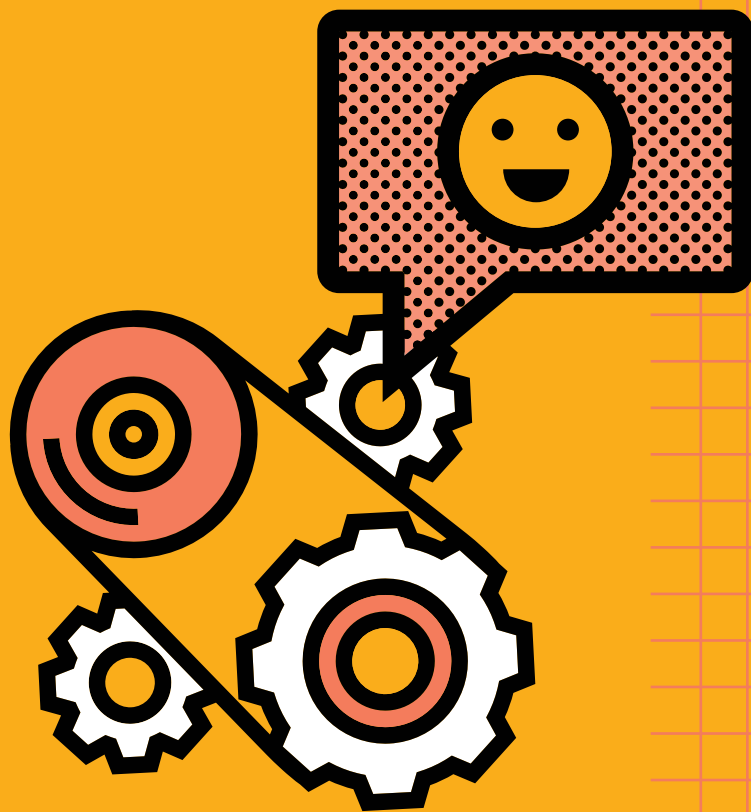
1. Break up your content into groups by priority.
2. Create an inventory list of pages for each group.
3. Identify the target keyword(s) for each page.
4. Research the “other words” for each, as we discussed.
5. Adjust your page copy and optimize as needed.
6. Repeat until you are complete.

Of course, this is not a quick and easy project, but few things worth doing are quick and easy. The goal is not to have a perfectly-optimized site. Quite honestly, as Google’s algorithm changes regularly, I am not sure it is possible to have a perfectly-optimized site. The goal is to be able to quantify what “great content” looks like to a search engine. This is how you satisfy the “relevance” pillar of your SEO site strategy.

As always, if you need help setting up or executing on this process, feel free to reach out to me for help: CharlesHarryTaylor@gmail.com



For more insight and SEO gold,
give Charles a follow
on Twitter: [@CharlesHTaylor](https://twitter.com/CharlesHTaylor)



THE BRAND SPANKIN' NEW! P1P BLOG

JOIN US ON THE
BRAND SPANKIN' NEW
PAGE ONE POWER BLOG!

It has all the helpful search content you love, it's just easier to find now! We are excited to now offer the ability to find the content you need by filtering by topic. Currently, we have 13 categories to sort by, including:

ADVANCED LINK BUILDING
ADVANCED SEO
BASIC SEO
COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS
CONTENT CREATION
CONTENT MARKETING
KEYWORD RESEARCH
LINK BUILDING
MEDIA
ON-PAGE SEO
SEO REPORTING
SEO STRATEGY
TECHNICAL SEO

“People often overlook phone conversations as a source of useful information. You might be articulating an idea or explaining a concept really well, so record it if you can.

Later, you can transcribe the call and use it for a blog post that covers the subject, or you might just want to insert the audio clips themselves into a podcast to save time and make the most out of your phone call.”

**DMITRII KUSTOV,
INTERNET MARKETING DIRECTOR & FOUNDER, REGEX SEO**

Article No. 7



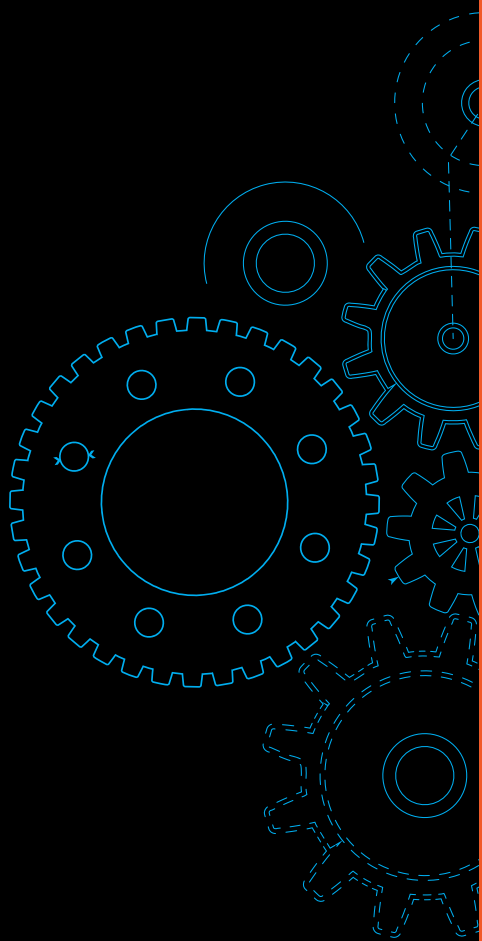
ARTICLE - No.3

[HEATHER PHYSIOC]
GROUP CONNECTIONS DIRECTOR, DISCOVERABILITY AT VMPLY&R

MODEL

A MATURITY

FOR THE SEARCH INDUSTRY



It is a mistake to assume a company is knowledgeable, bought in, and motivated to execute search work simply because they have an SEO department or have signed a contract to pay for search services. Yet search professionals try to race full speed ahead, dumping laundry lists of recommendations in their clients' laps, and we're surprised when the work doesn't get implemented.

Brands start at all different points of maturity and knowledge in relation to search. Even clients with advanced knowledge may have organizational challenges that create barriers to implementing the work. Identifying where your client falls on a maturity curve can help you tailor communication and recommendations to meet them where they are and increase the likelihood that search will be implemented successfully.

INTRODUCING A MATURITY MODEL FOR THE SEARCH INDUSTRY

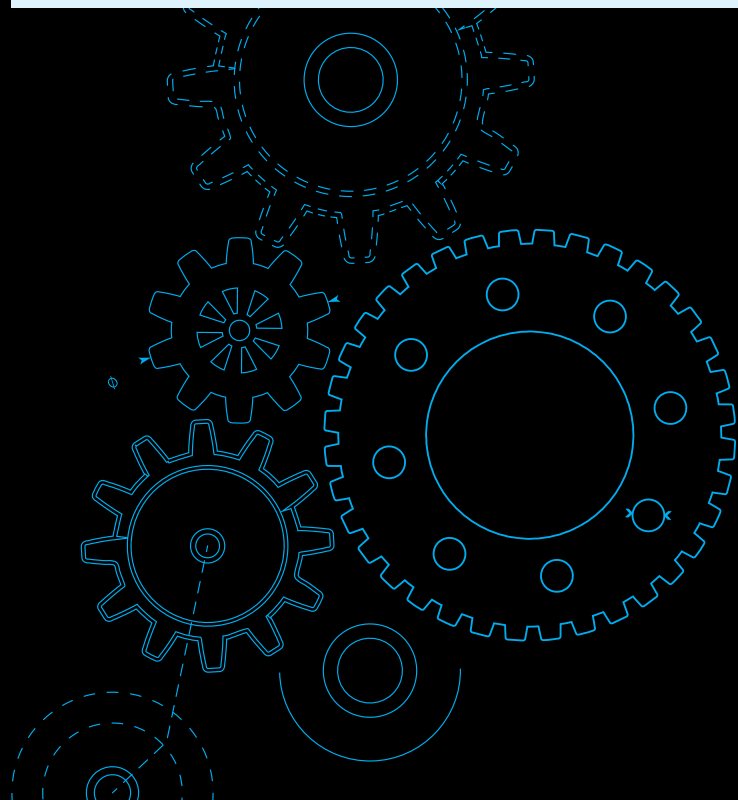
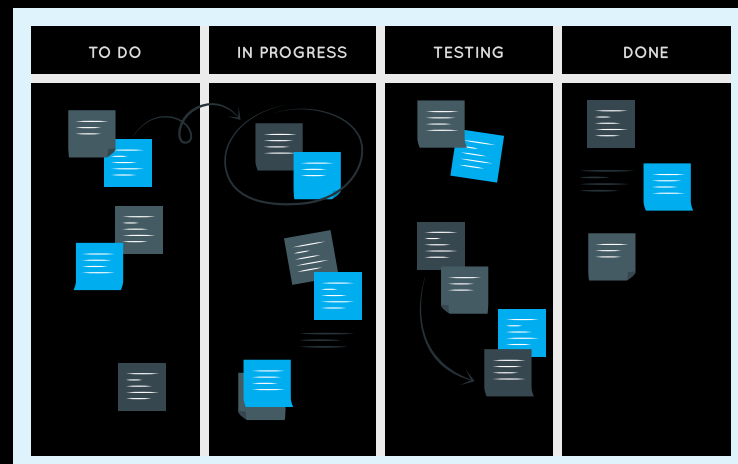
Maturity models were originally developed for the U.S. Department of Defense and later popularized by Six Sigma methodologies. Maturity models are designed to measure the ability of an organization to continuously improve in a practice. They help you diagnose the current maturity of the business in a certain area and help identify where to focus efforts in order to evolve to the next stage on the maturity curve. It's a powerful tool for meeting the client where they are and understanding how to come alongside them and move forward together.

There are a number of different maturity models that use different language, but most maturity models follow a pattern something like this:



For search, we can think about a maturity model two ways. One is the actual technical implementation of search best practices — How is the brand implementing SEO? Exceptional, advanced, just the basics, nothing at all, or even counterproductively? This can help you figure out what kinds of projects to activate.

The second way is the organizational maturity around search engine optimization as a marketing program. Is the brand aligned to the importance of organic search, allocating budget and personnel appropriately, and systematically integrating search into marketing efforts? This can help identify the most important institutional challenges needing to be solved that might otherwise block the implementation of your work.



MATURITY IN TECHNICAL SEARCH CAPABILITIES

STAGES OF SEARCH CAPABILITIES MATURITY

First, let's dive into a maturity model for search knowledge and capabilities. We measure an organization on several important criteria that contribute to the success of SEO:

COLLABORATION: How well relevant stakeholders integrate and collaborate to do the best work possible — including within the organization and between the organization and service providers.
MOBILITY: How mobile friendly and optimized the brand is.
TECHNICAL: How consistently foundational technical best practices are implemented and maintained.
CONTENT: How integrated is the organic search in relation to the digital content marketing practice and process.
ON-PAGE: How limited or extensive on-page optimization is for the brand's content.
OFF-PAGE: The breadth and depth of the brand's off-site optimization, including link building, local listings, social profiles, and other non-site assets.
NEW TECHNOLOGY: The appetite for and adoption of new technology that impacts search, such as voice search, AMP, even structured data.
ANALYTICS: How data-centric the organization is, ranging from not measured and managed at all, to rearview mirror performance reporting, to entirely data driven in search decision making.

We assign each of the aforementioned criteria to one of these stages:

Stage 0 (Counterproductive) -

The brand is engaging in harmful or damaging SEO practices.

Stage 1 (Nonexistent) -

There is no discernible SEO strategy or tactical implementation, and search is an all-new program for the brand.

Stage 2 (Tactical) -

The brand may be doing some basic SEO best practices, but it tends to be ad hoc with little structure or planning. The skills and the work meet minimum industry standards, but work is fairly basic and not cohesive.

Stage 3 (Strategic) -

The brand is aligned to the value of SEO and makes an effort to dedicate resources to implementing best practices and staying current as well as and bake it into key initiatives. Search implementation is more cohesive and strategic.

Stage 4 (Practice) -

Inclusion of SEO is an expectation for most of the brand's marketing initiatives, if not mandatory. Not only are they implementing basic best practices but also actively testing and iterating new techniques to improve their search presence. They use performance of past initiatives to drive next steps.

Stage 5 (Culture) -

At this stage, brands are operating as if SEO is part of their marketing DNA. They have resources and processes in place and are knowledgeable and committed to learning more, their processes are continually reviewed and optimized, and their SEO program is evolving as the industry evolves. They are seeking cutting-edge, new SEO opportunities to test.

STAGE 0	COUNTERPRODUCTIVE
STAGE 1	NONEXISTENT
STAGE 2	TACTICAL
STAGE 3	STRATEGIC
STAGE 4	PRACTICE
STAGE 5	CULTURE

SEARCH CAPABILITIES MATURITY MODEL

While this maturity model has been peer reviewed by a number of respected SEOs in the industry, it is a fluid, living document designed to evolve as our industry does. If necessary, evolve this to your own reality as well.

Capabilities Maturity

Outdated, spammy or
harmful behavior

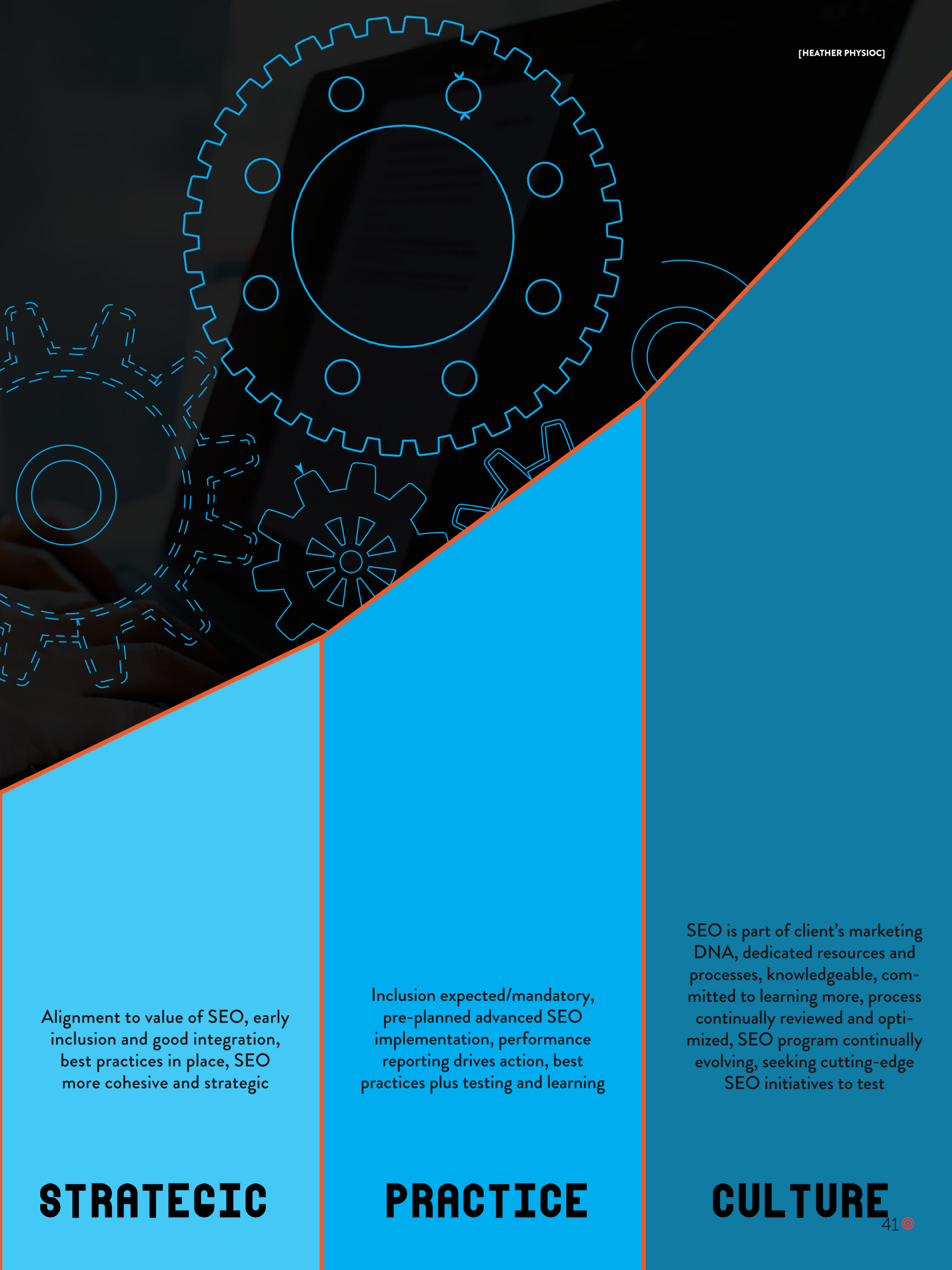
CHAOS

Nonexistent search efforts, no
knowledge; new program

ABSENT

SEO basic best practices, ad
hoc inclusion, work meets
industry standards but basic
and not cohesive

TACTICAL



Alignment to value of SEO, early inclusion and good integration, best practices in place, SEO more cohesive and strategic

STRATEGIC

Inclusion expected/mandatory, pre-planned advanced SEO implementation, performance reporting drives action, best practices plus testing and learning

PRACTICE

SEO is part of client's marketing DNA, dedicated resources and processes, knowledgeable, committed to learning more, process continually reviewed and optimized, SEO program continually evolving, seeking cutting-edge SEO initiatives to test

CULTURE

CHOOSING PROJECTS BASED ON A CLIENT'S MATURITY CAPABILITIES

For a brand starting on the lower end of the maturity scale, you may not recommend starting with advanced work like AMP and visual search technology, or even detailed schema markup or extensive targeted link building campaigns. You may have to start with the basics like securing the site, cleaning up information architecture, and fixing title tags and meta descriptions.

For a brand starting on the higher end of the maturity scale, you wouldn't want to waste their time recommending the basics — they've probably already done them. You're better off finding new and innovative opportunities to do great search work that they haven't already mastered.

Technical capabilities and knowledge helps decide what SEO projects you should implement, but it doesn't address why search work is frequently stalled instead of implemented. The real obstacles aren't so simple as checking "SEO best practices" boxes.

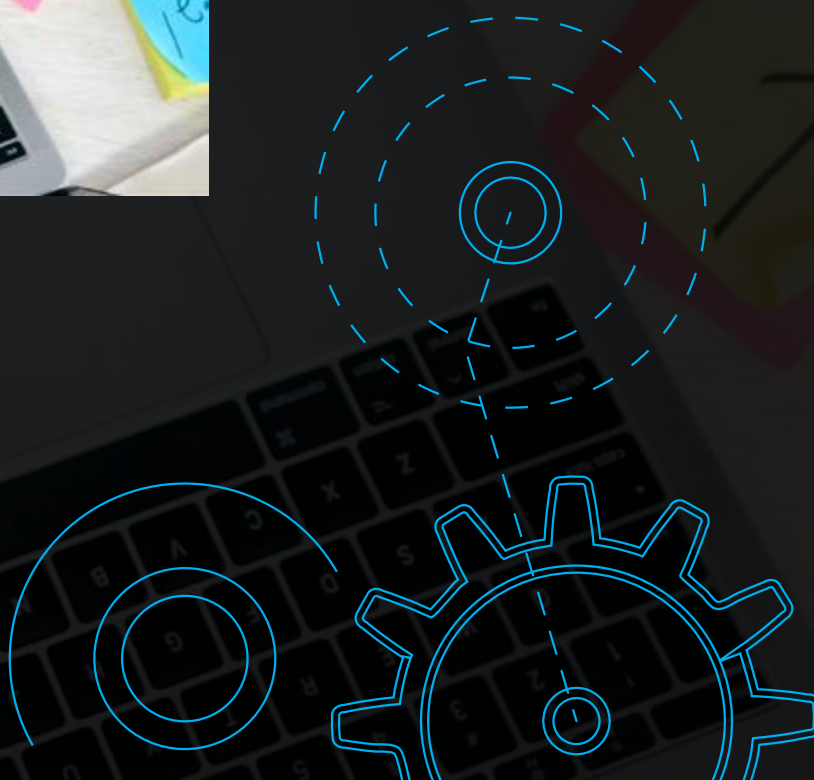


HOW MATURE IS YOUR SEARCH PROCESS?



The real challenges to implementation tend to be organizational — people, processes, and integration problems. Conducting a search maturity assessment helps identify what needs to be solved internally before great search work can be implemented. Pair this with the technical capabilities maturity model above, and you have a wealth of knowledge and tools to mature your search program.

While this maturity model focuses heavily on organizational adoption and process, the process and procedure alone are not substitutes for critical thinking and decision making. You still have to consider impacts and make hard choices when you execute a best-in-class search program, and often that requires solving all-new problems that didn't exist before and therefore don't have a formal process.



SEARCH PRACTICE MATURITY CRITERIA

We measure an organization on several important criteria that contribute to the success of SEO:

**PROCESS. POLICY.
PROCEDURE ▶**

**PERSONNEL. RESOURCES +
INTEGRATION ▶**

**KNOWLEDGE +
LEARNING ▶**

**MEANS. CAPACITY. +
CAPABILITIES ▶**

**PLANNING +
PREPARATION ▶**



Do documented, repeatable processes for inclusion of organic search exist, and are they continually improving? Is it an organizational policy to include organic search in marketing efforts? This can mean that the process of including organic search in marketing initiatives is defined as a clear series of actions or steps taken, including both developing organic search strategy and implementing SEO tactics.

Does the necessary talent exist at the organization or within the service provider's scope? Personnel resources may include SEO professionals, as well as support staff such as developers, data analysts, and copywriters necessary to implement organic search successfully. Active resources may work independently in a disjointed manner or collaboratively in an integrated manner.

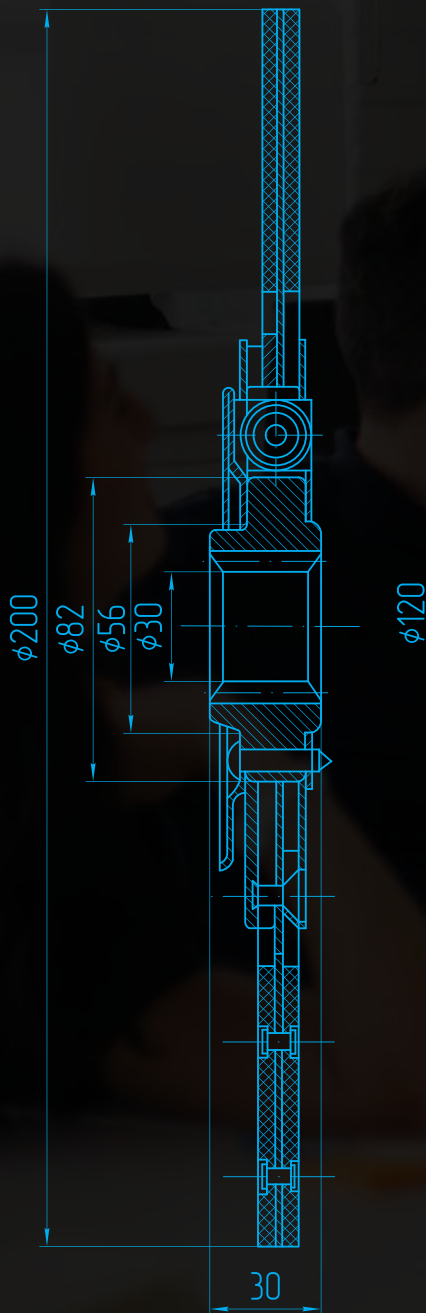
Because search evolves constantly, is the organization knowledgeable about search and committed to continuously learning? Information can include existing knowledge, past experience, or training in organic search strategy and tactics. It can also include a commitment to learning more, possibly through willingness to undertake training, attend conferences, research and learn, and stay current in industry news and trends.

Does the organization budget appropriately for and prioritize the organic search program? Means, capacity, and capabilities can include being scoped into a contract, adequate budget or human resources being allocated to the work, the capacity and prioritization of search among competing demands.

Is organic search aligned to business goals, brand goals, and/or campaign goals? Is organic search proactively planned, reactive, or not included at all? This measure evaluates how frequently organic search efforts are included in marketing efforts for a brand. It also measures how frequently the work is included as a policy, rather than as an afterthought. Work may be aligned to or disconnected from the "big picture."

ORGANIZATIONAL SEARCH MATURITY

Capabilities Maturity



STAGE 1

INITIAL + AD HOC

At this stage, the company's application of search may be nonexistent, unstable, or uncontrolled. There may be rare and small SEO efforts, but they are entirely ad hoc and inconsistent and retrofitted to the work after the fact, at best. They tend to lack any discernible goal orientation. If SEO exists, it is disconnected from larger goals and not integrated with any other practices across the organization. The brand may be just beginning the search practice for the first time.

STAGE 2

REPEATABLE BUT REACTIVE

These organizations are at least doing some search basics, though there is no rigorous use or enforcement of it. It is very reactive and in the moment while projects are being implemented; it is rarely planned, and often SEO is applied as an afterthought. They are executing only in the moment, or when it's too late to do the highest-caliber search work, but they are making an effort. SEO efforts may be loosely aimed at goals, but it is unlikely to be tied to larger business objectives. (Most of my client relationships have started here.)

STAGE 3

DEFINED



UNDERSTOOD

These organizations have begun documenting processes and are satisfactorily competent in search. They have minimum standards for search best practices and process is developing. Many people inside and outside the organization understand that search is important and are taking steps to integrate. There is a clear search strategy that aligns to organizational goals and processes. Search planning happens prior to activating projects.

STAGE 4

MANAGED



CAPABLE

These organizations have proactive, predictable implementation of search work. They have quality-focused rules for products and processes, and can quickly detect and correct missteps. They have clearly defined processes for integration, implementation, and oversight, but are flexible enough to adapt to a range of conditions without sacrificing quality. These organizations consider search part of their "way of life."

STAGE 5

EFFICIENT



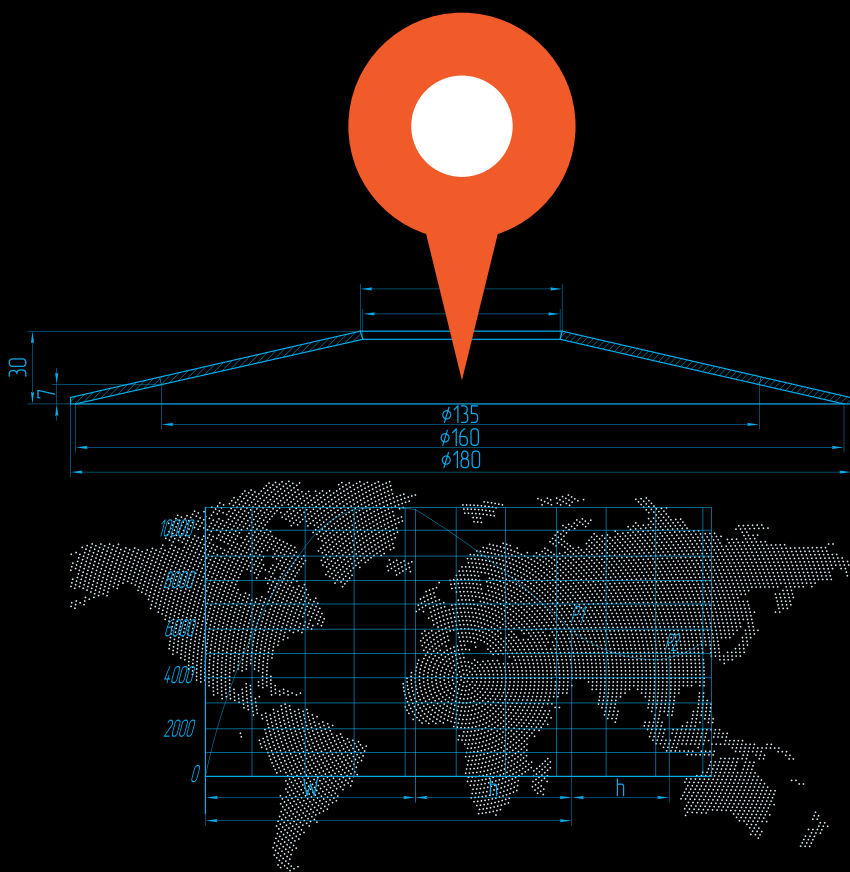
OPTIMIZING

Organizations at this stage have a strong mastery of search and efficiently implementing it as a matter of policy. They have cross-organizational integration and proactively work to strengthen their search performance. They are always improving the process through incremental or innovative change. They review and analyze their process and implementation to keep optimizing. These organizations could potentially be considered market leading or innovative.

SCORECARD EXERCISE

STAGE/ CRITERIA	INITIAL/ CHAOTIC	REPEATABLE	DEFINED	MANAGED/ CAPABLE	EFFICIENT/ OPTIMIZING
PROCESS Does a documented, repeatable process for inclusion of organic search exist, and is it continuously improving?	Undocumented, no search processes exist	Search processes exist, not documented, not enforced	Search processes documented, enforced, at times reactive inclusion	Search processes documented and enforced, proactive inclusion	Search processes documented and efficient, proactive inclusion, continual process optimization
PERSONNEL RESOURCES + INTECRATION Does the necessary talent exist at the organization or within the scoped personnel?	Staff does not exist, no search work being done	Staff exists, minimal search work being done	Staff works actively on search, but often independently in silos	Staff works actively to collaborate on search, partially integrated	Staff is fully integrated and collaborates across disciplines to execute organic search work
KNOWLEDGE + LEARNING Is the organization knowledge-able about search?	No knowledge of search, no training, no commitment to learn more	Low knowledge of search, no training, no commitment to learn more	Moderate knowledge and training in search, basic experience, commitment to learning	Advanced knowledge and training in search, high commitment to learning	Expert level knowledge and training in search, high commitment to learning and staying current or cutting edge
MEANS, CAPACITY + CAPABILITIES Does the organization budget for and prioritize organic search?	No means and capacity — never built in	Low means, ad hoc inclusion as available	Moderate means, frequent inclusion, sometimes prioritized	High means, consistent inclusion and prioritization	Always built in and prioritized
PLANNING + PREPARATION Is organic search aligned to brand goals and proactively planned?	Never included, never planned, no awareness of connection to brand goals	Occasionally included, rarely planned, largely disconnected from brand goals	Usually included, occasionally planned, loosely connected to brand or campaign goals	Always included, usually planned, closely connected to brand or campaign goals	Always included, always planned, search helps inform brand and campaign goals

TO KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING, YOU MUST KNOW WHERE YOU ARE.



Before you can know how to get where you want to go, you need to know where you are. It's important to understand where the organization stands and then where you need to be in the future. Going through the quantitative exercise of diagnosing their maturity can help everyone align on where to start.

You can use a survey to assess factors like leadership alignment to the value of search, employee availability and involvement, knowledge and training, process and standardization, their culture (or lack thereof) of data-driven problem-solving and continuous improvement, and even budget.

This should be a deeper exercise than simply punching numbers into a spreadsheet, and it should not be a one-sided assessment. Instead, ask several relevant people at multiple levels and disciplines across the organization to participate. Outcomes are richer when incorporating perspective from others at various points in the process.

HOW TO USE THE SURVEY + SCORECARD TO DIAGNOSE ORGANIZATIONAL SEARCH MATURITY

ONE

Distribute Surveys -

Distribute surveys to relevant stakeholders of the internal team. Ideally, these individuals serve at a variety of levels at the company and work in a variety of roles relevant to the organic search practice. These could include CEO, CMO, Marketing VPs and directors, digital marketing coordinators, and in-house SEOs. If the brand works with an agency, it may make sense to also distribute surveys to those partners. Again, these individuals should serve at a variety of levels at the agency and occupy a mix of roles relevant to the organic search practice. These could include digital marketing coordinators, client engagement specialists, analysts, digital copywriters, or SEO practitioners.

TWO

Collect and Score the Surveys -

Assign a point value of 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 to the responses from left to right in the scorecard. Average the points to get a final score for each. (For example, if five client stakeholders score their SEO process and procedure as 3, 4, 2, 3, 3 respectively, the average score is 3 for that criteria.) Assess the brand's organic search program maturity across all criteria in an aggregate sum, but also examine how the brand performs for each of the five key criteria. I also recommend sorting scores by question from highest to lowest and looking for patterns in the highest-rated and lowest-rated items.

THREE

Evaluate Open-ended Responses -

The richest learnings come from the open text responses within each category. These often provide context and insights the numbers alone cannot reveal. For example, we learned in one client's maturity assessment that there was great discontent at the practitioner level around the amount of resources and talent needed, but not provided, to support a search program. In another, we learned that there was territorialism and conflict around the development of content. Anonymous quotes have been eye opening when we present our findings to executives.

FOUR

Recommend Areas to Focus -

Do not simply throw an exhaustive list of potential activities over the fence. Instead, recommend the most impactful area the brand should focus on in the upcoming year. Should they hone their efforts on developing and implementing processes? Should they undergo an internal educational campaign? Then, recommend specific activities that will advance the organization in that area. If internal buy-in is their main challenge, perhaps they should focus on sending regular updates to the organization about their initiatives and progress, develop case studies regularly to prove out successes and learnings, and create a measurement framework to prove the value and impact of their efforts.

CHOOSING WHERE TO START

The goal of this maturity assessment is to determine where to aim and where to start. This means finding the brand's strengths to capitalize upon, areas of competence that can be strengthened, weaknesses to improve upon, agreeing on areas to focus, and finally, how to get started tackling change together.

For a brand that is starting on the low end of the maturity scale, it is unrealistic to expect that they have connected all the dots between important stakeholders, that they have a clearly defined and repeatable process, and that their search program is a well-oiled machine. You must work together to solve underlying problems — like a lack of knowledge or adequate personnel — first, or you will struggle to get buy-in for the work or the resources to get it done.

Imagine a brand that is advanced in some areas, like process, planning, and capacity, but weaker in others, like knowledge and capacity. This might suggest that you need to focus efforts on an educational campaign to help the client prioritize the work and fit it into a busy queue.

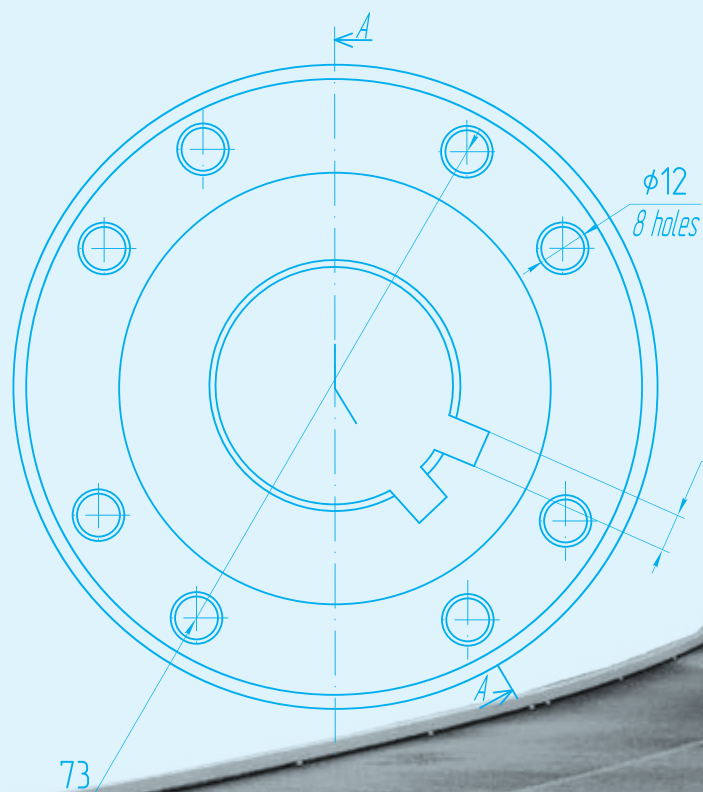
For a brand that is already advanced across the board, your role instead may be to keep the machine running while also helping them spot areas to optimize, so they can keep iterating and perfecting the process. This client might also be ready for more advanced search strategies and tactical recommendations, or perhaps more robust integrations across additional disciplines.

ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER

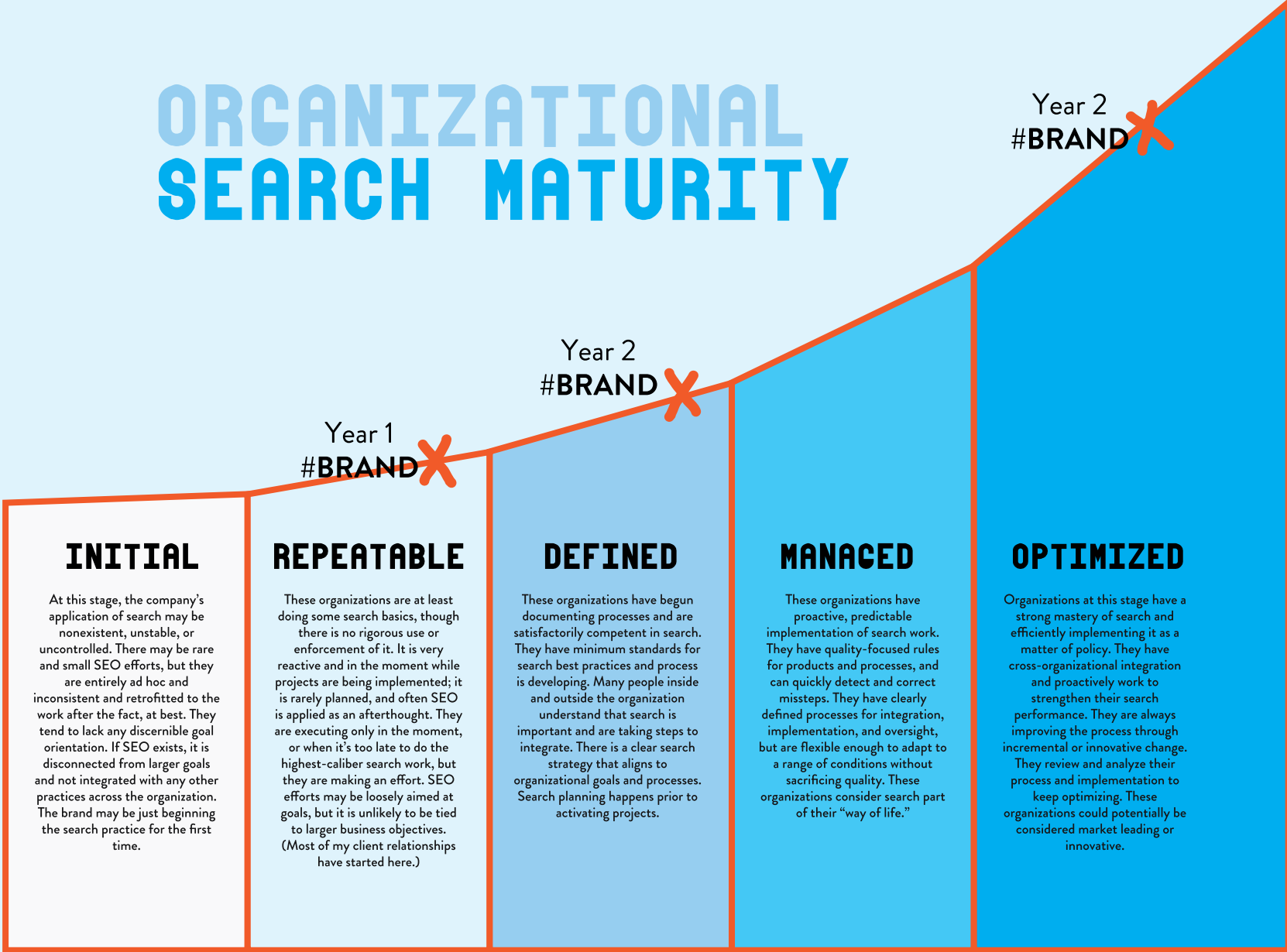
It's rare that we overhaul everything and see a 180-degree change overnight. We tweak, test, learn, and iterate. A maturity model is a continuum, and brands must evolve from one step to the next. Skipping levels is not an option. Some may also call this a crawl-walk-run approach.

Your goal as their trusted search advisor is not to help them leap from Stage 2 to Stage 5. Instead, focus your efforts on how the brand can grow to the next stage over the next 12 months. As they progress up the maturity model, the length of time it takes to unlock the next level may grow longer than the phase before it.

Even when an organization reaches Stage 5, your work is not done. Master-level organizations continue to refine and optimize their processes and capabilities.



ORGANIZATIONAL SEARCH MATURITY

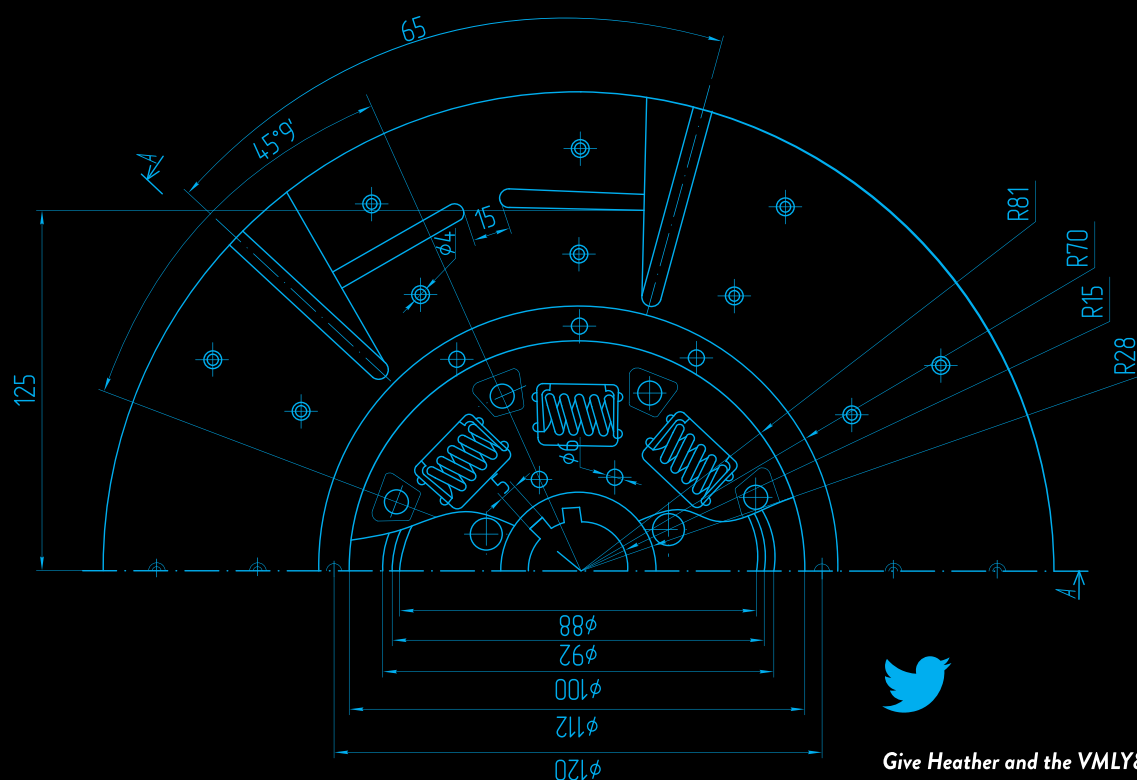


THERE IS NO FINISH LINE TO SEARCH MATURITY

There is a French culinary phrase, “mise en place,” that refers to having everything you need — ingredients, tools, a recipe — in place to cook most successfully. There are several key ingredients to any successful project implementation: buy-in, process, knowledge and skills, capacity, planning, and more.

As your brand evolves up the maturity curve, you will feel a transition from thinking about search only once a project is sliding off the rails, to including these recommendations real-time and reactively, to anticipating these before every project and doing your due diligence to come prepared. A brand can move from non-existent search to SEO becoming a part of their DNA.

It is important to revisit the maturity model discussion periodically — at least annually — to level set and realign with the organization. Conducting this exercise again can remind us to pause and reflect on all we have accomplished since the first scoring. It can also reenergize stakeholders to make even more progress in the upcoming year. 🎯



Give Heather and the VMLY&R crew a follow on Twitter for more on search maturity: @HeatherPhysioc and @VMLYR

ORGANIC SEA

ASSES

This survey aims to uncover the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of the brand's organic search program. The survey intentionally seeks the perspective of people at different levels in different disciplines across the organization to get a robust picture of the organization's search maturity. Answer each question honestly and to the best of your ability. Additional context, observations, questions, comments, and suggestions in the open-ended text field are welcome and encouraged.

RCH MATURITY

STATEMENT

PROCESS + DOCUMENTATION

RANGE 1-5

STATEMENTS

This section intends to uncover whether documented, repeatable processes for inclusion of organic search exist.

1 (Lowest/Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Highest/Strongly Agree)
with "I don't know" as a 6th option.

- ☐ I am aware of my organization's SEO policy and best practices.
- ☐ My organization's SEO policies and best practices are well documented.
- ☐ I know what types of projects I should engage an SEO resource for.
- ☐ I know when, on a project timeline, to bring in an SEO resource.
- ☐ We consistently optimize content for search engines before it is published.
- ☐ I know when major website updates are happening.
- ☐ I know where to find a log of changes that happened to the website.
- ☐ I hear about the outcomes, results, or performance of SEO projects.

PERSONNEL, RESOURCING + INTEGRATION

RANCE 1-5

STATEMENTS

This section aims to uncover whether the necessary talent, resources, and integration exist to implement organic search successfully.

1 (Lowest/Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Highest/Strongly Agree) with "I don't know" as a 6th option.

- ☐ We have a dedicated point person who owns and facilitates the SEO relationship.
- ☐ I know who to go to for SEO data, industry information, or project requests.
- ☐ I regularly reach out to my SEO expert for information and/or work closely with them.
- ☐ Our organization has dedicated resources to implement SEO recommendations.
- ☐ I know who to go to request a change to the website.
- ☐ I know who to go to when I need digital content written for the website, a social post, an email, etc.
- ☐ I know who to go to for a data request or a report on site performance and trends.
- ☐ I know where to find a content calendar to stay in the loop on content creation.
- ☐ I know our organization has a content calendar that includes campaign content, website content, and other digital content.

KNOWLEDGE + LEARNING

RANCE 1-5

STATEMENTS

Search is a constantly evolving field, so this section aims to assess the current state of your company's knowledge about search and aptitude for staying current in the field.

1 (Lowest/Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Highest/Strongly Agree) with "I don't know" as a 6th option.

- ☐ I feel confident in my personal level of knowledge about SEO.
- ☐ I want to know more about SEO and how it affects my role at the organization.
- ☐ Our organization has a strong understanding of SEO and its value.
- ☐ Our organization is interested and invested in staying on the cutting edge of marketing trends.
- ☐ Our organization is interested and invested in learning more about the evolving search industry.
- ☐ Our organization has adequate resources to stay flexible and adapt to a rapidly-changing digital environment.

ORGANIC SEARCH MATURITY

ASSESSMENT

MEANS, CAPACITY + CAPABILITIES

RANGE 1-5

STATEMENTS

This section aims to assess your company's current ability to prioritize organic search work against competing demands and allocate appropriate resources appropriately to complete the work.

1 (Lowest/Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Highest/Strongly Agree) with "I don't know" as a 6th option.

- ☐ Our organization is able to prioritize competing marketing demands.
- ☐ SEO is an important priority for our organization.
- ☐ SEO is an important priority for my division in the organization.
- ☐ We dedicate the right amount of attention and budget to marketing.
- ☐ We dedicate the right amount of attention and budget to search.
- ☐ We allocate the right amount of personnel to make search successful.
- ☐ When dealing with resource constraints, we weigh the impact of our options to prioritize which efforts come first.

PLANNING + PREPARATION

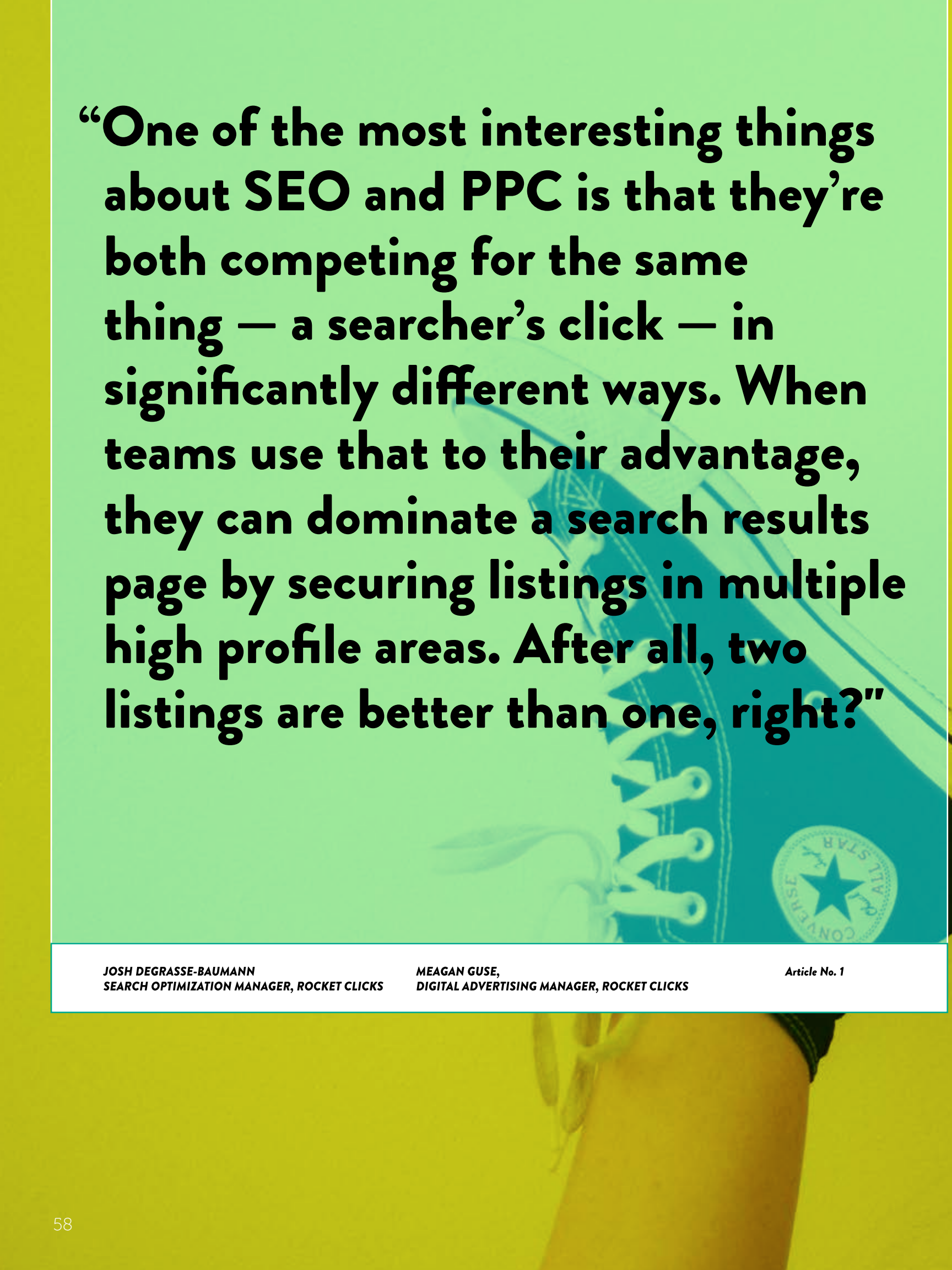
RANGE 1-5

STATEMENTS

This section aims to understand how well SEO is aligned to big-picture business goals and whether search efforts are proactively planned, reactive, or non-existent.

1 (Lowest/Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Highest/Strongly Agree) with "I don't know" as a 6th option.

- ☐ I am aware of my organization's SEO goals.
- ☐ SEO goals match our organization's larger business objectives.
- ☐ SEO goals match my business unit or discipline's business objectives.
- ☐ Our organization has a clear SEO measurement in place.
- ☐ SEO is consistently consulted when making website changes.
- ☐ SEO is consistently consulted when creating online content (written or multimedia).
- ☐ SEO is consistently included in marketing efforts and campaigns.
- ☐ SEO is consistently included in technical, website, and CMS decisions.
- ☐ We use search data to inform content creation.
- ☐ We use search data to inform marketing decisions.
- ☐ We regularly use search data to measure the success of website initiatives.
- ☐ We regularly use search data to measure the success of content creation.



“One of the most interesting things about SEO and PPC is that they’re both competing for the same thing — a searcher’s click — in significantly different ways. When teams use that to their advantage, they can dominate a search results page by securing listings in multiple high profile areas. After all, two listings are better than one, right?”

JOSH DEGRASSE-BAUMANN
SEARCH OPTIMIZATION MANAGER, ROCKET CLICKS

MEAGAN GUSE,
DIGITAL ADVERTISING MANAGER, ROCKET CLICKS

Article No. 1



MIKE

King

An artist and a technologist, all rolled into one, Michael King recently founded boutique digital marketing agency, iPullRank. Mike consults with companies all over the world, including brands ranging from SAP, American Express, HSBC, SanDisk, General Mills, and FTD, to a laundry list of promising startups and small businesses.

Mike has held previous roles as Marketing Director, Developer, and tactical SEO expert at multinational agencies such as Publicis Modem and Razorfish. Effortlessly leaning on his background as an independent hip-hop musician, Mike King is a dynamic speaker who is called upon to contribute to conferences and blogs all over the world.

HOW DID YOU GET YOUR START IN SEO?

I used to make music for a living. Then I got into a bicycle accident in 2006. This was pre-Obamacare, and as an independent rapper, you don't get health insurance. So I needed to get a job to pay my medical bills. The first place to hire me was an SEO agency because of my web-development background.

At that point, I just looked at SEO as a job. It wasn't until 4-5 years later, when I stopped making music as my primary thing in life, that I started to get more involved in the community and thought leadership. From there, I eventually landed on starting my own agency, iPullRank. As of August 11th, we're six years old!

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE FUTURE OF SEO? WHERE IS THE INDUSTRY HEADED?

As of late, I feel great about it. For a few years, I was a bit bored because it was the same stuff over and over, but in the past two years I have been continually impressed with the things that have come from technical SEO thought leaders.

It's awesome to see people embracing more technical possibilities these days. Software in the SEO space has more maturing to do to get closer to parity with Google. In the meantime, there have been some very smart and clever people in the SEO space that have filled the gap by writing and sharing scripts that help them do the things that our software should be able to do natively.

Google itself is looking at more ways to be predictive and account for implicit signals that users give through their behaviors and features. We're working toward a world where Google tells you, as you're walking by a store, whether an item that you put in your shopping cart is in stock or not. I appreciate that SEOs are beginning to catch up to performing detailed analysis that help us optimize towards those futuristic use cases as well.



WHAT IS ONE THING THAT MOST BUSINESSES CAN CHANGE WITH REGARDS TO THEIR APPROACH TO SEO THAT COULD MAKE THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON THEIR SUCCESS IN THE SEARCH CHANNEL?

There needs to be a shift in mindset about the organic search channel. Stop treating SEO as an isolated incident or something you do after you do everything else. It needs to be considered a business requirement.

If you bake the SEO considerations into your broader marketing mix and have your technical and content requirements reflect it from the outset, you won't have to "do SEO."

There is no such thing as "SEO content." There is only content that is written for people that also meets the expectations of search engines. There is no "SEO optimizing" the site. There's just building the site and its content to account for all the business requirements which includes the technical elements and content promotion efforts required to rank in organic search.

IF YOU COULD CLEAR UP ONE COMMON MISCONCEPTION ABOUT SEO, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

SEO doesn't take six months to see results. It takes six months for a business to do all the things it needs to do in order to see results. Unless you're doing something wrong from a technical perspective, Google can pick up changes you've made lightning fast.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST SHIFT OR CHANGE YOU'VE SEEN IN SEO OVER THE COURSE OF THIS YEAR AND WHAT SHOULD SEOs BE DOING TO PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE?

It's hard to say that I've observed significant shifts in SEO aside from more and more people leveraging machine learning and natural language processing techniques. This year has largely been about survival for everyone, so the innovations have not been so much a function of algorithm updates. It's been more that people have had more time to come up with new ideas of things that they can do, and there is more of a feedback loop because more people are actually doing technical things that are being talked about.

SEO's should be prepared for an onslaught of content at scale on the back of the dramatic improvement to natural language generation tools like GPT-3. When everyone can generate optimized copy for every single page on their website, what are going to be the things that help differentiate your site in the eyes of Google?

FOR SOMEONE BEGINNING THEIR CAREER IN SEO, WHERE SHOULD THEY START, AND WHAT ARE THE BEST WAYS TO CONTINUOUSLY LEARN?

Newcomers should create a website and make it rank for something. There's no better way to learn and continue to learn. No matter what level you're at in your career, you will learn more by starting a blog or building an e-commerce site and attempting to monetize it than you will from reading any blog or book. If that's not an option, look for the key people blogging about the parts of SEO that interests you most and look for opportunities to try those things out rather than just taking everything at face value.

YOU HAD A VERY UNIQUE APPROACH TO YOUR MOZCON PRESENTATION THIS YEAR – CREATING A MOVIE. HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE IDEA TO CREATE AN ANIMATED FILM AND WHAT WENT INTO THE CREATION PROCESS?

"Runtime" was definitely a team effort. MozCon is the Superbowl of SEO conferences, so I always try to bring something special. I was initially disappointed when they had to go virtual and prerecorded, but then I realized that it created an opportunity to do something different, fun, and potentially game changing. So I sat down with my team and said, "Let's maximize this medium and make a movie."

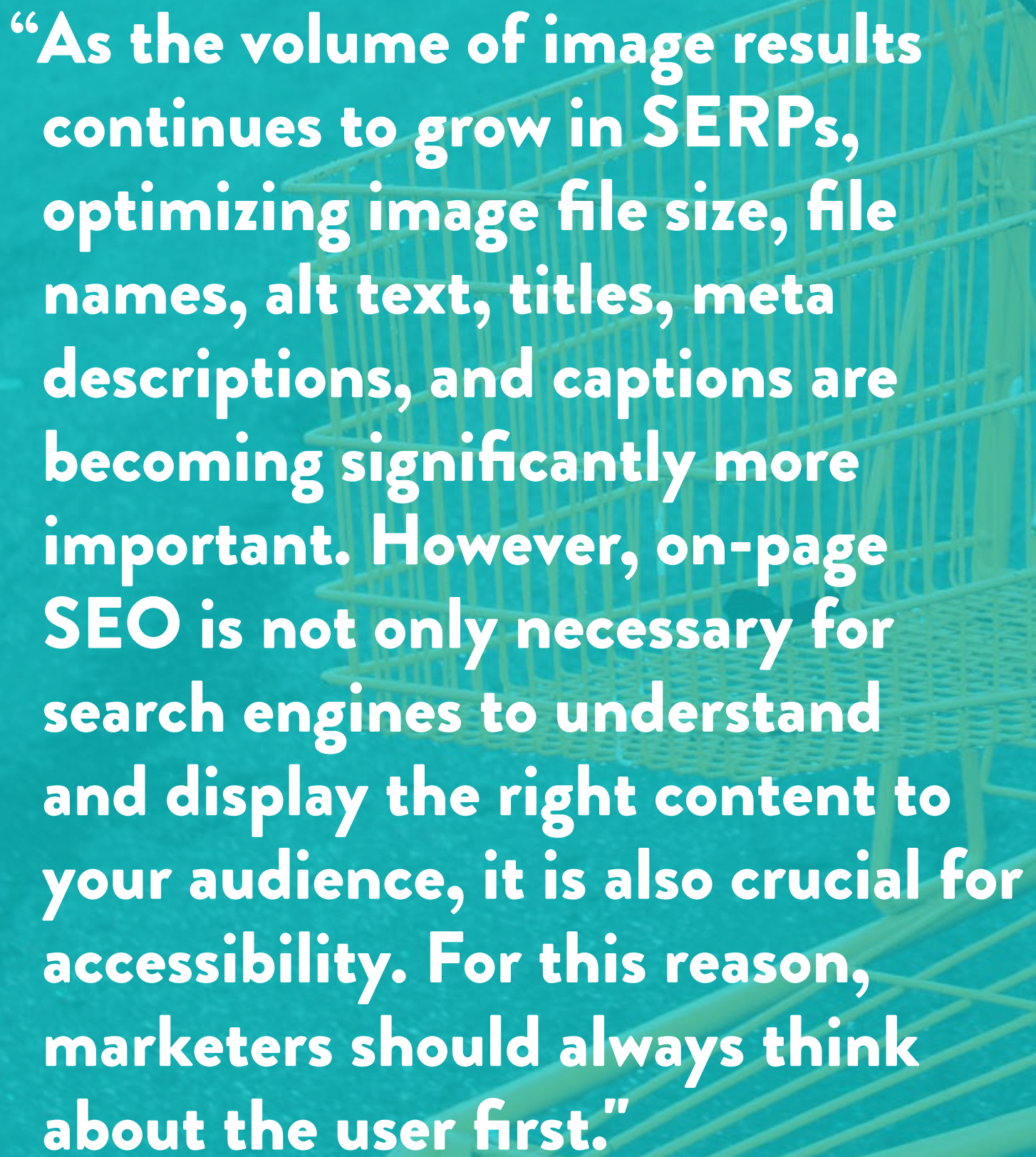
Originally, the MozCon team was going to do a circus/carnival theme for the conference. Ultimately, they didn't end up using that, probably because of the need to pivot the way they deployed the event. We'd keyed in on and wanted to use this three-ring-circus concept.

Design Lead Melissa Fernandez came up with three different visual concepts. We moved forward with the one that would take the most effort because it was the one that we were excited about. Then I wrote the script with some help from Content Strategy Lead Fajr Muhammad. Then, Office Manager Neferkara Aaron and I recorded the voice acting. Melissa did the storyboarding and the illustrations. I captured the screen recordings. Then Melvin Espinal did the core editing work. We also got some help from a few awesome freelance animators because we were in a time crunch. Also, Neferkara sang the intro song over a track from Kenta Insense. The rest of the film was scored by Anwar Sabreen, and all the sound design was done by Alex Minor.

We did the whole thing very fast; I think three to four weeks from end to end. That's pretty incredible considering that it's a 30+ minute film. We were incredibly proud of how it came out. I'd encourage everyone reading this to check it out at <https://ipullrank.com/runtime>. ☺



To keep up with Mike and the iPullRank Crew on all things SEO, give them a follow on Twitter: @iPullRank

A teal-tinted background image of a shopping cart, likely in a grocery store, with the cart's metal frame and wheels visible. The text is overlaid on this image.

“As the volume of image results continues to grow in SERPs, optimizing image file size, file names, alt text, titles, meta descriptions, and captions are becoming significantly more important. However, on-page SEO is not only necessary for search engines to understand and display the right content to your audience, it is also crucial for accessibility. For this reason, marketers should always think about the user first.”

**JOELLE IRVINE,
EXECUTIVE GROWTH MARKETER**

Article No. 6

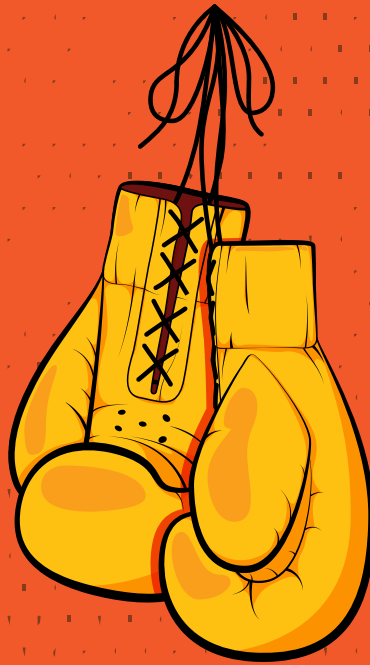


ARTICLE - No.4

[CONNOR BONAM]
SEO STRATEGIST, DEALER INSPIRE


[BERT BEROUSEK]
SEO STRATEGIST, DEALER INSPIRE

SEO VS. PPC



TWO WILL ENTER - TWO WILL WIN

(PROBABLY)



The biggest question from a digital marketing perspective has always been: SEO vs. PPC, which one is better? Can they work together? Are they always going to butt heads? Which one do I invest in? I NEED HELP!

Well, let's try to break this down together and find the answer to our question.

LET'S START WITH THE BASIS OF SEO VS. PPC

What is SEO? Search Engine Optimization is the practice of increasing and improving your organic — free — search engine rankings to increase traffic to your site.

What is PPC? Pay-Per-Click is the practice of bidding on and paying for rankings of competitive keywords to increase traffic to your site.

The key takeaway is that both are designed to increase traffic to your website, get you leads, and help sell products. Since both practices are shooting for similar goals, it would seem that there is plenty of potential for overlap. You might worry that your SEO and PPC teams are going to start stepping on each other's toes.

WHICH ONE IS BETTER? WHICH ONE DO I INVEST IN?

Now, my title being SEO Strategist, I would like to say that SEO is better than PPC. However, the truth is that the two practices are not the same thing. Although they're similar, each serves a unique function.

With PPC, you can start hitting your traffic goals almost instantly as long as you are willing to put good money behind it. SEO can take a bit longer to really get going, but with patience and solid SEO practices, you will see excellent results.

The other important distinction is that PPC is made to target higher-funnel shoppers ready to take action almost instantly after searching for competitive keywords. In contrast, SEO is made to complete the shopping journey, provide a superior user experience, and help build the brand via organic search.

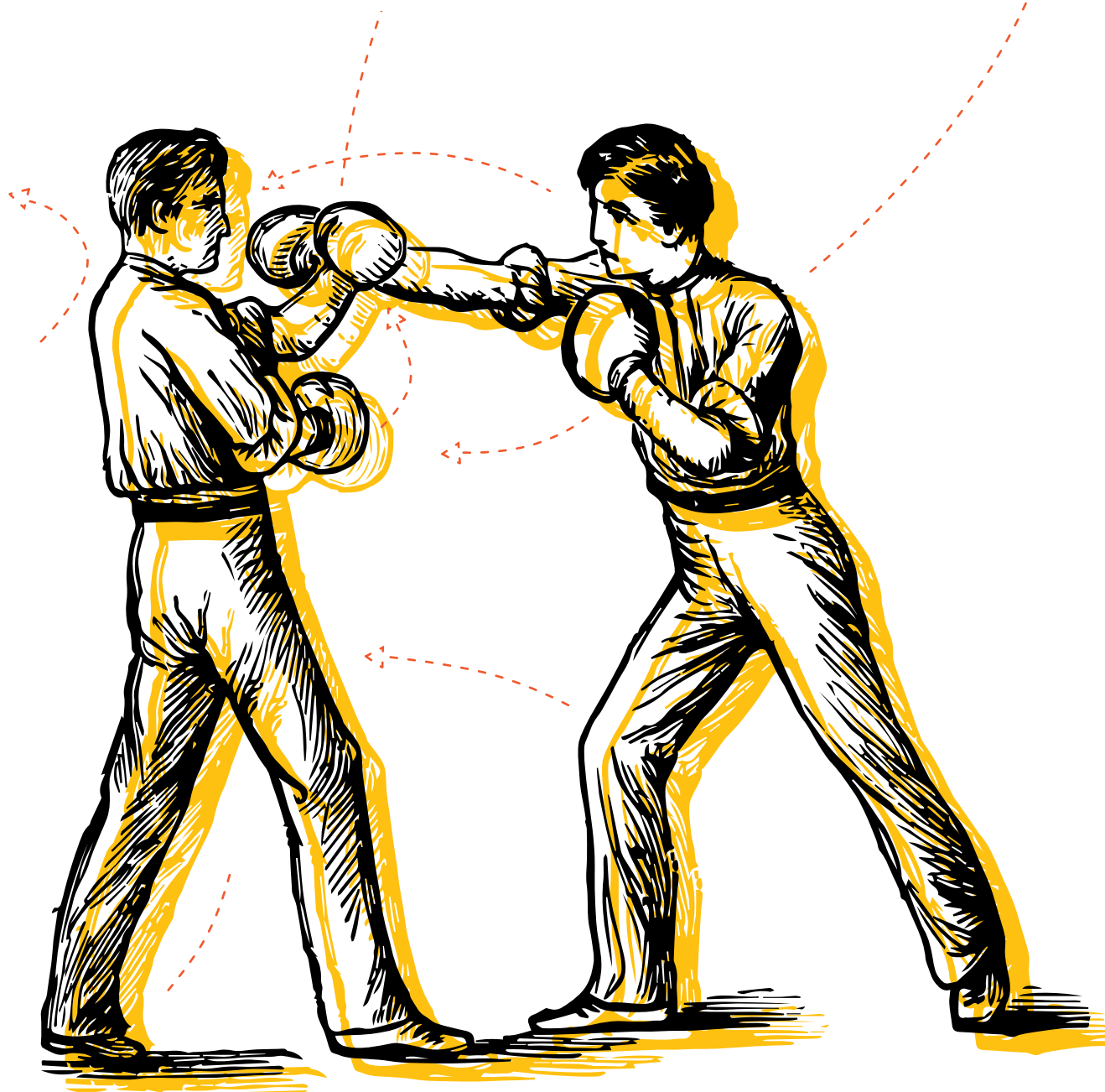
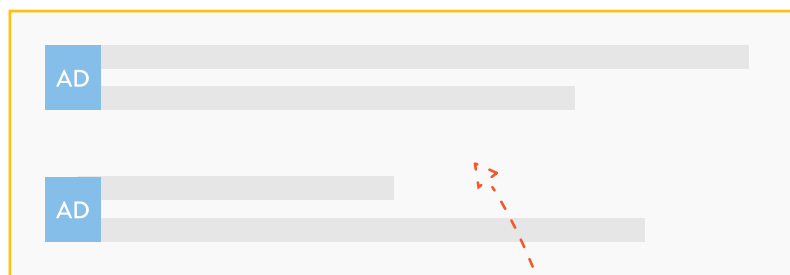
One is not inherently better than the other as they both serve unique purposes and target slightly different people. That all being said, SEO is better...

ARE THEY GOING TO BUTT HEADS?

So first, let's clear up a bit of misconception about SEO vs. PPC and them butting heads. (I know, I wrote this, so I'm actually clearing up my own words.) SEO and PPC can and do get in the way of each other, but this isn't necessarily a bad thing even if it looks that way at first.

Let's say you're ranking in organic position one for your brand name, but your competitor is bidding on that keyword and shows up first in the ads. With PPC, you can create a name campaign and bid on your name to start ranking number one in the ads for that keyword.

By owning the number one ad position and the number one organic position, you are setting your website up for success, and this is obviously the right thing to do. But, because the organic position is below the ad, you're going to see a lot less organic traffic to your homepage. This is not a bad thing at all, but it is going to look like a traffic drop to a page on your website, which can be scary. This is where SEO and PPC can butt heads and step on toes, but ultimately it is not a negative factor for your site.



CAN THEY WORK TOGETHER?

YES! Kind of...

THERE ARE A FEW POINTS I WANT TO BREAK DOWN HERE:

1.

SEO & PPC can work together by avoiding each other and targeting unique keywords. This is a bit indirect, but it is generally a solid way to get as much SERP authority as possible.

- A.** For example, we are targeting "Oil Change in Naperville" in our service campaign via PPC.
- B.** We are also trying to garner organic rankings, so we create some oil change content that targets various popular subtopics: "how much is an oil change," "how long does an oil change take," "how often do you really need to change your oil," etc.
- C.** Doing both of the strategies above allows us to target most of the oil change funnel via either SEO or PPC without stepping on each other's toes or duplicating efforts.

2.

There is also the more controversial route of "priming the pump," as some say. This is where you create a landing page, put some PPC money behind it, and hope that it results in an organic boom when you eventually direct that money elsewhere. We have run tests like this in the past and have found that when that money is turned off, page momentum does not continue. If that page does perform organically, it is often for a different set of keywords than the original paid keyword. This kind of proves the disconnect between the organic algorithm and the paid algorithm.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF HAVING BOTH?

I thought you'd never ask!

When pulling data, we found some interesting results:

Like we said above, PPC has more of an immediate impact. When partners turned on PPC in the first month, they saw an increase of 27 additional conversions. That is an example of the immediate impact PPC offers that SEO just can't really compete with.

However, after giving each service some time, we found that SEO Traffic, on average, converts at a higher percentage. By the 10th month of both services running concurrently, SEO traffic had a 40% higher conversion rate than PPC traffic. We also noted that SEO is a longer term investment that will pay off greatly in the end. We saw organic traffic garner, on average, 47 more conversions per month in the same time frame.

SO WHAT IS THE CONCLUSION?

If we break it down, there are clearly benefits to both practices, but leaving it at that is the easy way out. PPC has that immediate impact that SEO can't have. It also allows for a bit more direct competitiveness as you can target names and keywords your competitors are targeting.

SEO, in my opinion, has the potential to give you the long term prize that PPC can't unless you pay an extraordinary amount of money. SEO traffic tends to convert at a higher rate, since ads simply can't replicate the experience of a customer's natural discovery of your business. Users will become more savvy, and they'll be able to tell when an ad is an ad, meaning SEO traffic will have a higher natural value than PPC traffic.

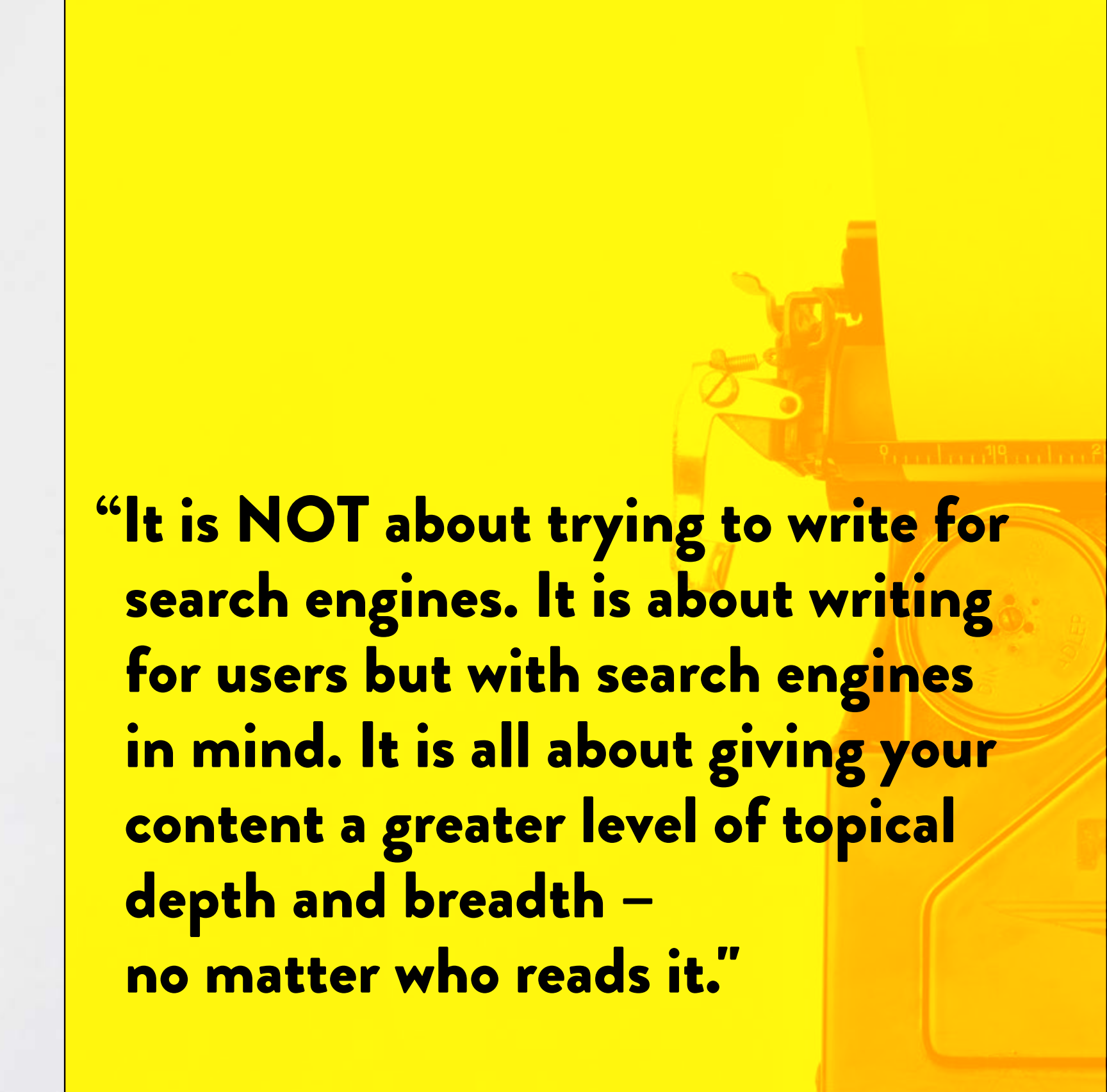
As we discussed above, these two channels are typically targeting different users at different stages of the buying funnel. So while companies tend to prioritize one over the other, there truly is a benefit to having both since companies can see drastic increases in both channels when running concurrently. But like we said, SEO just has the bigger ROI when done correctly over time. ☺



To see more of both Connor and Bert entering the ring of SEO, give them a follow on Twitter and LinkedIn:

Connor's Twitter: @BonamConnor

Bert's LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/robert-berousek-325a0154/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/robert-berousek-325a0154/)



“It is NOT about trying to write for search engines. It is about writing for users but with search engines in mind. It is all about giving your content a greater level of topical depth and breadth – no matter who reads it.”

CHARLES TAYLOR,
SEO MANAGER, VERIZON FIOS

Article No. 2



ARTICLE - No. 5

[DANICA BARNACK]
RESEARCH TEAM MANAGER, PAGE ONE POWER

HOW YOUR OUTREACH PRACTICES SHOULD CHANGE DURING AND AFTER A PANDEMIC



**THEY
SHOULDN'T**



Going into this year, who would have guessed what was to come. I don't think I need to list out why 2020 has been wild. People and businesses alike have felt their share of impact and have made huge strides to adapt to a new norm. If part of your SEO or online marketing strategy includes building worthwhile links — which requires good, manual outreach — you may find yourself asking, “What changes should I make to my outreach campaign?”

WELL, I'M HERE TO TELL YOU THAT YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO MAKE ANY CHANGES....

IF YOU'RE DOING IT RIGHT.

Google wants people to have the best-informed search possible. Real links are an important part of that process. Real links come from people, and effective communication with people is how you secure quality links. No matter the type of links you're looking to build, your outreach will play a major part in your success or failure to convert. Great email outreach is time consuming, thoughtful, and requires research, intentness, and perustration. It sometimes feels like drudge work. And let's not forget the social skills, influence, and salesmanship that can really push your outreach over the finish line.

2020 is hard enough. Don't let your outreach campaigns be challenging as well. I'm going to cover the essential outreach basics that can help you remain successful during and after a pandemic.



UNDERSTAND YOUR BUSINESS, PRODUCT, OR RESOURCE

First things first: This may seem obvious, but in my experience, if you can't summarize in one sentence what your business, the product you're selling, or the article/guide you are putting out there is about, your chances of having a successful email campaign will be pretty low. You must understand the unique value of what you are bringing to the table, since this will inherently help you persuade a person to add a link to your website. Remember, you are asking a person you don't know to do you a favor, seemingly for nothing tangible in return.

UNDERSTAND YOUR ONLINE AUDIENCE

Similarly to understanding your website, you should also keep your target audience/buyer personas in mind. Fully comprehending the traits of these groups can help you identify and speak to what they value. Successful outreach campaigns naturally pair up a business or product with a webpage/website that has similar values. If the asset my client is pushing is about resources for women in business, my online audience should inherently already find value in that topic.

ORGANIZATION

Obviously, you can't send emails if you don't have a list of websites/people to email. And organization is key. When you begin a campaign, you should know how you're going to centralize everything pertaining to your link building project (websites, contact information, email, etc.). While you can use Google Docs and Sheets to do this, I recommend only using it for a small campaign; a high-output campaign will be difficult to manage and requires an outreach tool (such as Buzzstream or Pitchbox).

LINK PROSPECTING

Once you know how you're going to manage everything, you can begin finding and identifying relevant, authoritative websites. There are many ways to find target websites, but two of the most common methods are to comb through a competitor's backlinks and find which ones are also relevant to you, or specify exactly what types of pages you are looking for using Boolean searches in Google.

Vetting websites for relevancy and authority are vital for ensuring you are building future-proof links to your website. A link you build today should be able to exist on that page and be relevant for the long term. It is important to spend the time, upfront, being thorough with your prospecting to make sure you are pursuing the best links. Given how time consuming outreach can be, you want to make sure you aren't wasting precious hours reaching out to less-than-desirable or unlikely-to-convert websites.

At Page One Power, we evaluate a wide variety of link metrics to help assess the quality of a potential link. Some questions we ask when evaluating prospective targets:

- Does it make sense for my link to exist on this page?
- Does this page include links that are spammy or irrelevant?
- Has this website been updated recently?
- Does this website have positive metrics from key SEO tools such as Majestic SEO, Moz, SEMRush, or others?

IDENTIFY TARGETS AND CONTACTS

As you find potential prospects, be sure to simultaneously document important information about those targets within your outreach list, because you'll need that information later. Not notating it now only means you'll have to waste precious time searching for that information again in the future, causing you to have to double up on your work. Information you should track includes contact name(s), their email(s), the company/website they represent, and any information pertaining to previous messages or contact that you've had with that website or individual.

During the craziness that is 2020, it is even more important to understand the situations of the people you are trying to contact. Have they changed business hours? Have they had to lay off employees? Are they receiving community help? Recognizing how they have been impacted — or are still being impacted — can help you decide how to approach them when you begin emailing.

OUTREACH PHILOSOPHY

One thing I try to impress upon my employees is the importance of sending outreach that they, themselves, would be alright receiving. Think about the spam emails you receive in your inbox. I get 10+ emails a day that include bad formatting, poor grammar, misspellings of my name, amongst other things that cause me to roll my eyes and immediately move on. Don't make the same mistakes.

Another motto that can seriously inform your outreach and give you a good gut check: "If you wouldn't say it in person, don't send it in an email."

At the end of the day, you should never send out an email that you also wouldn't be alright opening, reading, and responding to. This is especially true in a world where people's lives have been flipped upside down, stress levels are running high, and people are just trying to make it through their day healthily and happily.

EMAIL FUNDAMENTALS

Each industry is different, but across the board there are general practices that make for quality, successful outreach.

- Be direct and avoid including excessive information
- Be specific and include key details your contact shouldn't need to search for
- Highlight the benefits of your business, product, or resource
- Avoid being too pushy, too personal, or spammy
- Use intention with the URLs or wording you use
- Be personable and courteous towards the person you're reaching out to
- Think of this as building relationships instead of just building links
- Be editorial and avoid grammar and spelling mistakes

COMPONENTS OF AN INITIAL EMAIL

Proper Address and Addressee - This is the person you are mailing — a webmaster, an editor, a club owner, a secretary, the list goes on. Even though the content of your email may differ depending on who you are contacting, using the correct email address ensures your email will end up in the right hands, and addressing the contact (or website if there is no singular individual to contact) by name shows respect.

Clear Subject Line - This should be as specific and simple as possible. Not only is it the very first thing a person will see in their inbox, compelling them to either click to open or move it to the spam folder, but it should also inform them about what and why you are emailing.

Message Clarity and Brevity - The information and ask you include in your email should be succinct, easy to understand, and readable. You should be able to clearly explain why your service or resource should exist on the page or website your contact manages. You're asking someone to take time out of their day, so make it easy for them. Long paragraphs are unnecessary, and if you need a tl;dr, you aren't doing it right.

Call to Action (CTA) - There are a few different CTAs you should include in your outreach. First and foremost, you should start with the request you're emailing them for in the first place: a link. If you don't ask directly, they may miss what you want them to do. An additional CTA that can and should be included in your email is to prompt your contact to act, whether that's emailing you for more information, passing your request along to a more appropriate contact, etc.

Signature - To conclude your email, you should include a proper signature along with your contact information and role. Your email signature should list out the methods someone can contact you and demonstrate that you are a real person.

FOLLOW UP EMAILS

These are important. Most responses we receive are to our follow-up emails. A follow-up email should include the same information as your initial email, likely in a more concise manner. Instead of including a well-thought-out description, you might ask them if they received your previous email. Instead of a CTA prompting them to ask you any questions they may have, you might include your initial email and ask them to read through that.

Sending follow-up emails is an art. How quickly should you send a followup? And to who? Are you spamming them? Do you send a followup when they've read your email and have failed to respond?

Our team typically sends no more than 2 or 3 follow-up emails (One initial email plus the follow-ups: 3-4 emails in total.) and sends them between 3-7 business days after a previous email. An entire round of emailing (an initial email, followup email #1, and followup email #2) will likely take place over the course of 2-3 weeks.

Keep in mind, again, that people's lives have changed significantly, and you must show understanding if things take time. If someone responds and tells you they'll put your link up, don't message them the very next day because it hasn't gone live yet. Additionally, realize that people might not get back to you for weeks or months. We have had plenty of instances where people put a link up and let us know weeks after our final email. And that's okay.

Correct@email.address

Make sure you have the right email address for who you are trying to contact.

Subject: Make it specific and simple

Message:

Good evening Patrick, (Proper Addressee)

My name is Danica, and I work with Cat Memes & Things. When I saw that your [pet resources page](#) was linking to other resources that focus on pet safety, I wanted to share a piece we recently published called [A Guide to Keeping Outdoor Cats and Dogs Safe](#) as a possible addition to your page.

[Cat Memes & Things wants to support dog and cat owners who want to give their pets the benefits and freedom of the outdoors while also keeping their fur babies safe. This guide highlights some of the ways pet parents can let their animals go outside, best safety practices, and tips. It also offers information on products, state resources, and additional resources that can help pet owners create a positive and safe outdoor environment.] <<<Message Clarity

Cat Memes & Things shares [patricklovespets.com](#)'s common goals about encouraging people and pet owners to think about not just the physical well being of their cats and dogs, but also their mental health. For this reason, I believe this guide would be a useful resource to add to your page (CTA).

I appreciate your consideration and believe this could be of great value to your readers. If you think it meets the standard of the other excellent resources you provide, we'd be humbled to be included on your page.

If you have any questions, please reach out (CTA) and stay safe in these uncertain times.

Signature/Contact Information:

Danica Laurence
Outreach Coordinator
dlaurence@catmemesandthings.com
Cat Memes & Things

SEND

TRACKING RESULTS

So how do you know if you're successful? Obviously, if you're building links, that's a good measure of success. But there are plenty of other things you can check to determine the changes you may need to make to your outreach campaign. At PIP, we use Buzzstream which comes with its own handy tracking metrics, but there are plenty of other tools and apps that can help you manage and track success metrics. Some things to consider include:

Open rates of emails - Check to see if people are opening your emails. If people aren't opening your emails, you might consider changing your subject line.

Response rates - Know what percentage of people are responding to your emails. If people are opening your emails but not responding, you probably need to fine tune your CTAs or spend more time identifying the best person to contact.

Response types - Are people saying yes to your request? Are they saying no? Are they asking you to reach out in a few months or weeks? If you find yourself getting a high number of rejections, evaluate how you present and describe your business, service, or resource.

SUCCESSFUL OUTREACH CAMPAIGNS REQUIRE REALNESS

At the end of the day, quality outreach requires time and critical thinking. You'll never be effective in convincing someone it's worthwhile to link to your site if you can't communicate with them well. But fret not, because you can keep your outreach campaigns successful during and after a pandemic by practicing quality outreach practices all the time! Remember, you're emailing another human being. Most anyone can appreciate people who listen, offer relatable content, and show respect and empathy to those around them. Stay safe and MTFBWY during all your marketing endeavors! ☺



Let Danica know how your outreach is going on LinkedIn:
[linkedin.com/in/danicabarnack](https://www.linkedin.com/in/danicabarnack)

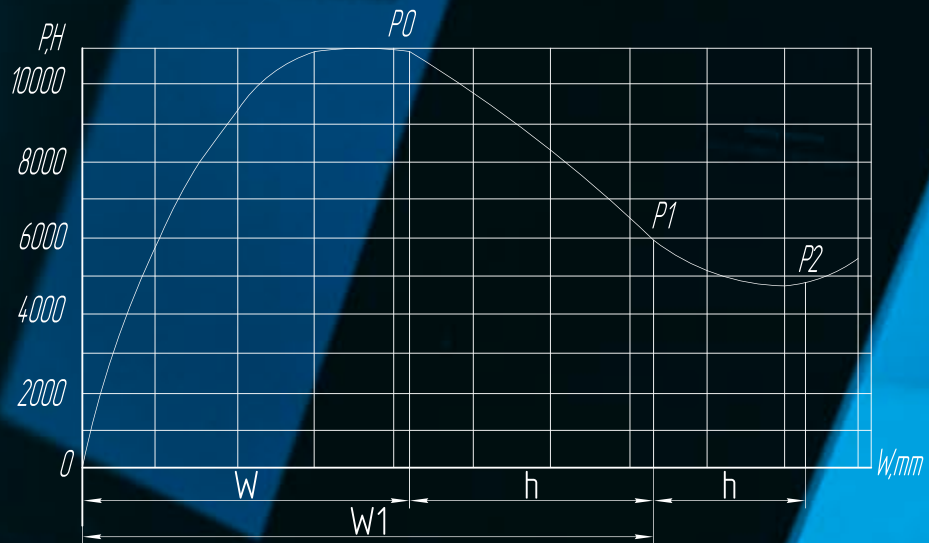
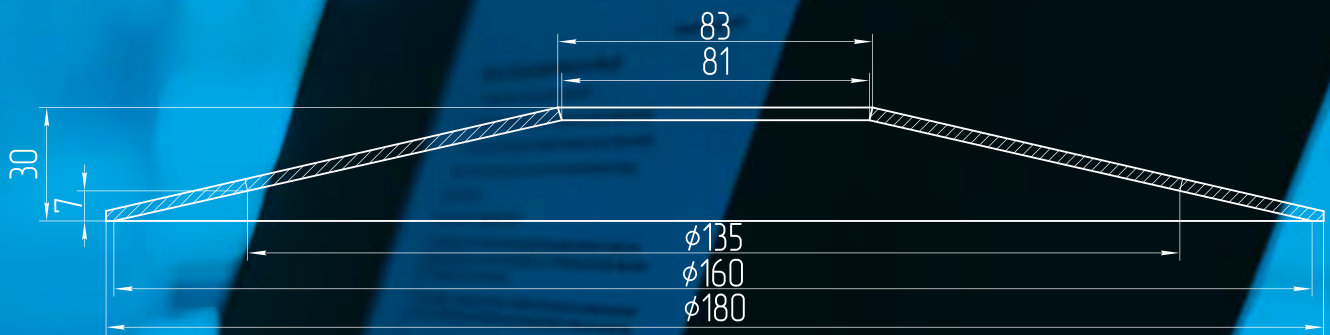
Scan the QR Code for an outreach template from Page One Power:>>>



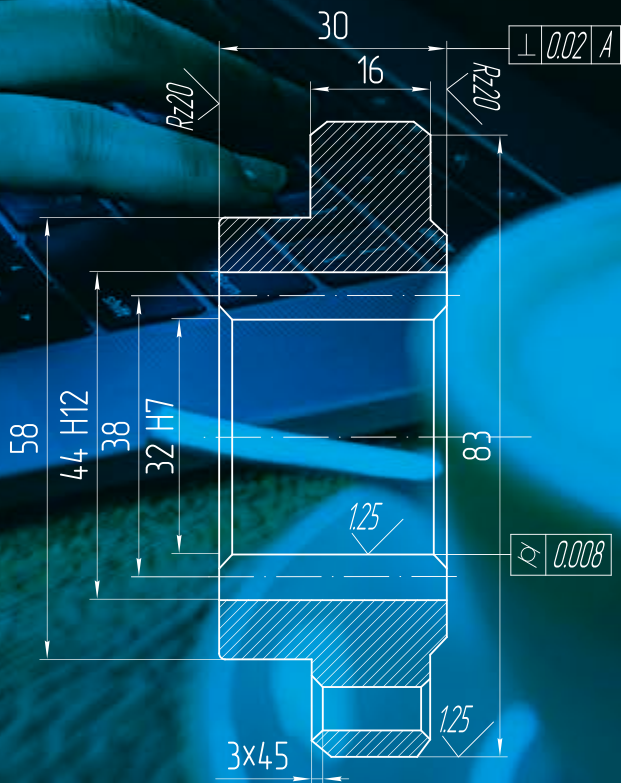
“Brands start at all different points of maturity and knowledge in relation to search. Even clients with advanced knowledge may have organizational challenges that create barriers to implementing the work. Identifying where your client falls on a maturity curve can help you tailor communication and recommendations to meet them where they are and increase the likelihood that search will be implemented successfully.”

**HEATHER PHYSIOC,
GROUP CONNECTIONS DIRECTOR, DISCOVERABILITY, VMLY&R**

Article No. 3



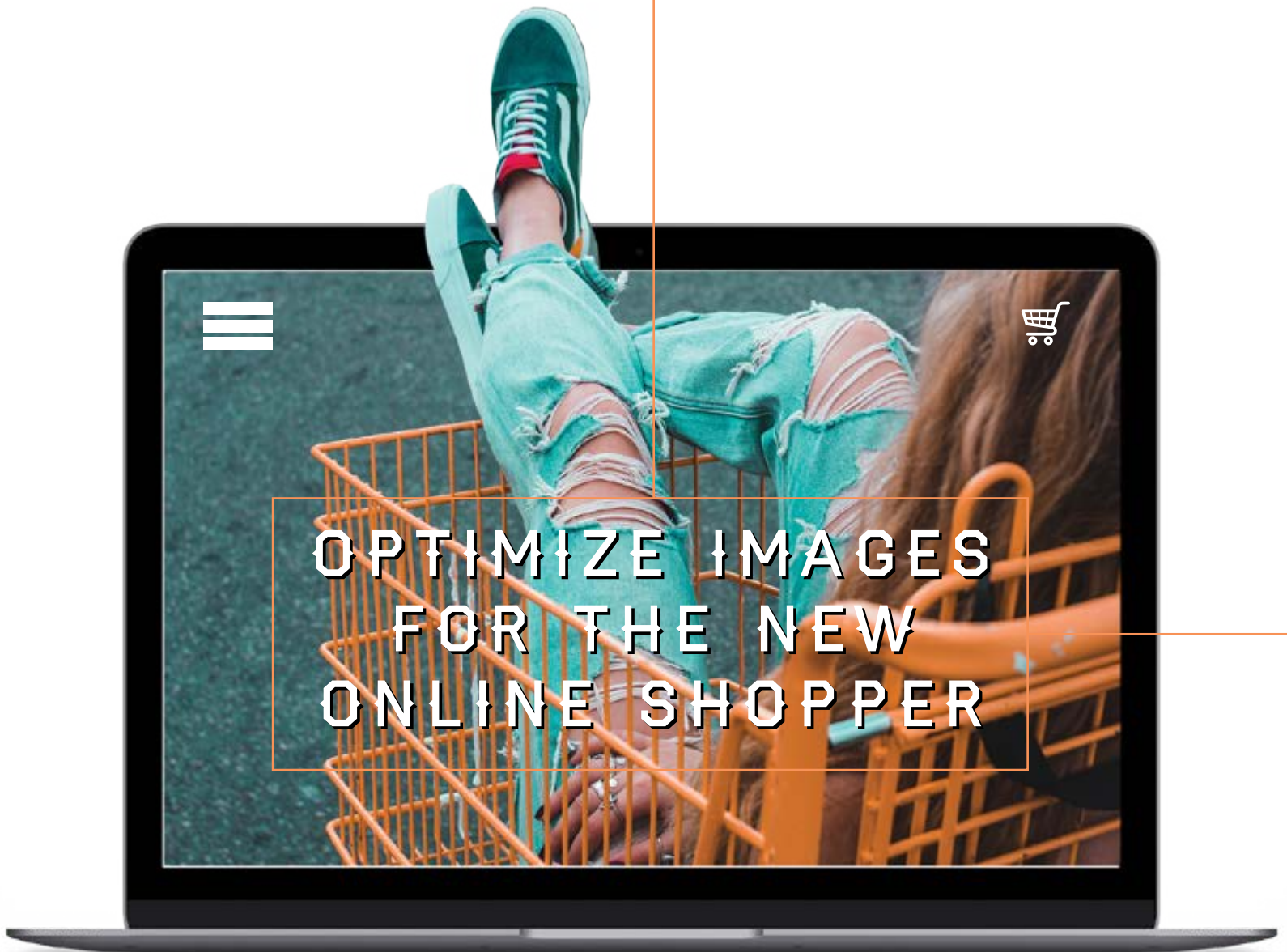
Schedule

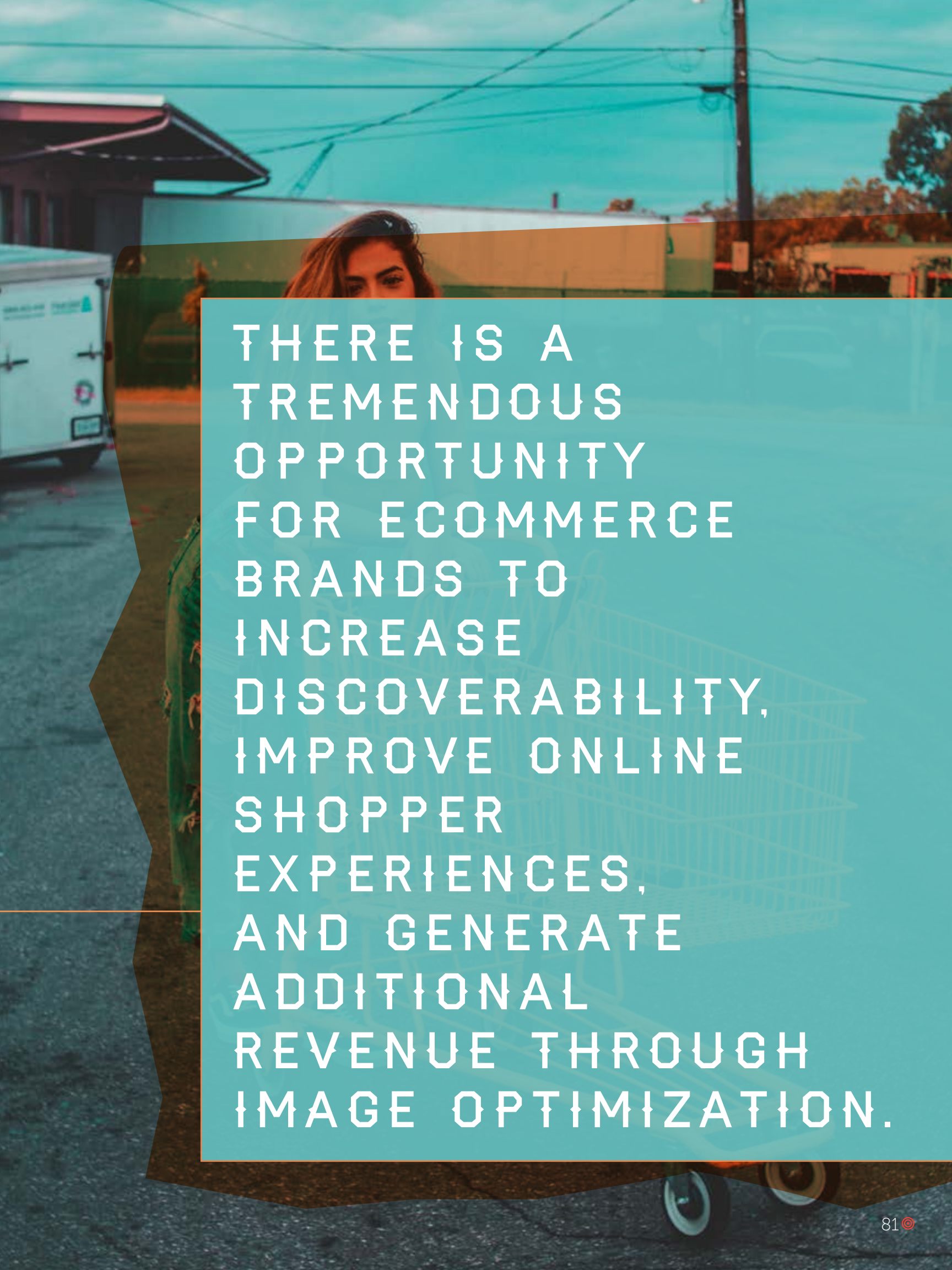


ARTICLE - No. 6

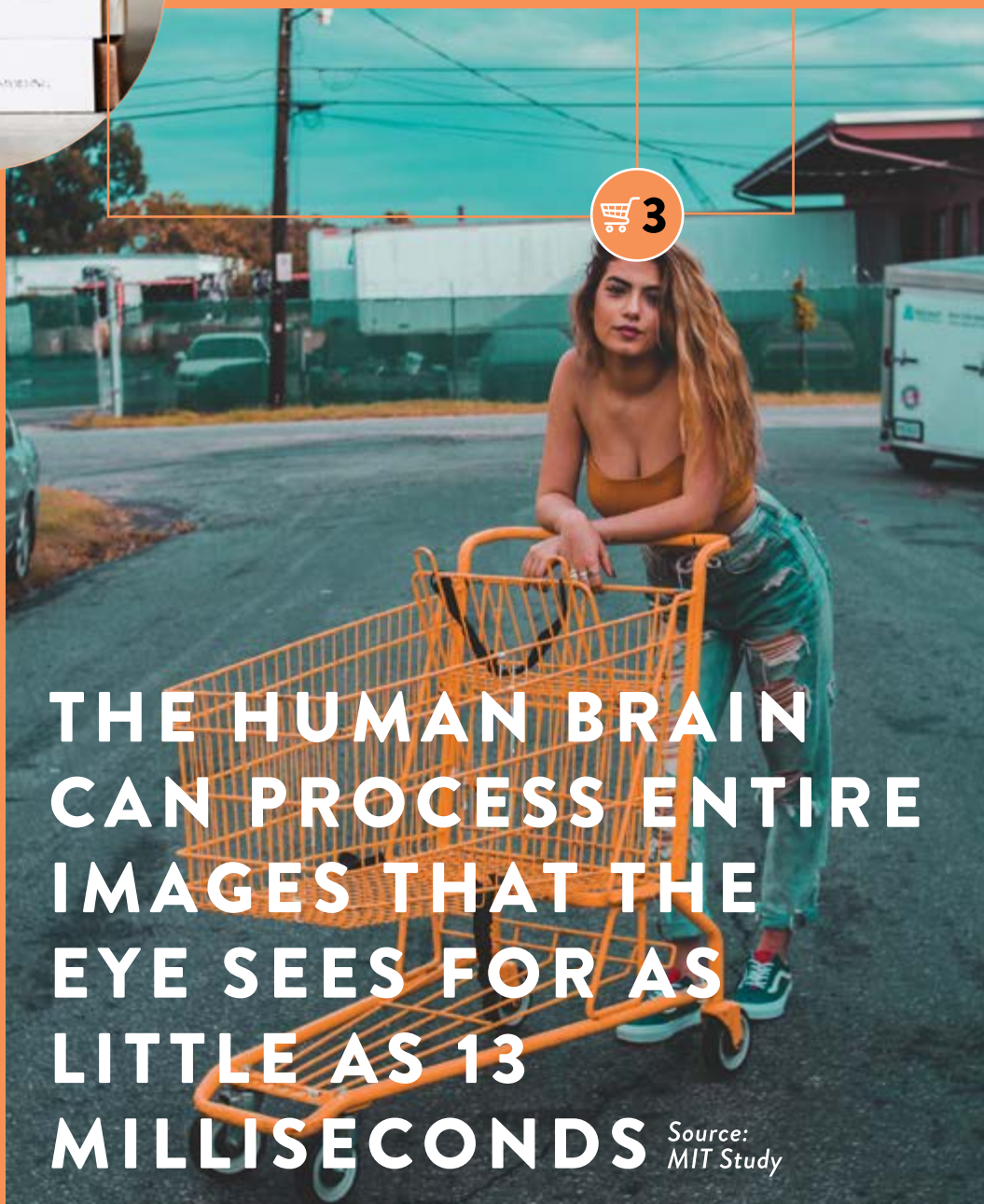
[JOELLE IRVINE]
EXECUTIVE GROWTH MARKETER

eCommerce #GOALS



A woman with long dark hair is looking over a metal shopping cart. The background shows a parking lot with a white delivery van and some buildings under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent teal rectangle.

THERE IS A
TREMENDOUS
OPPORTUNITY
FOR ECOMMERCE
BRANDS TO
INCREASE
DISCOVERABILITY,
IMPROVE ONLINE
SHOPPER
EXPERIENCES,
AND GENERATE
ADDITIONAL
REVENUE THROUGH
IMAGE OPTIMIZATION.



THE HUMAN BRAIN
CAN PROCESS ENTIRE
IMAGES THAT THE
EYE SEES FOR AS
LITTLE AS 13
MILLISECONDS

Source:
MIT Study

SEARCH ENGINES, SOCIAL NETWORKS, AND ECOMMERCE PLATFORMS HAVE BEEN PLACING MORE AND MORE IMPORTANCE ON PRODUCT VISUALS FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

Consumers want to see what they're getting before they buy

Improved and increased discovery

Potential for quick sales

Potential to increase the average order value

Reduction in returns

IMAGES ARE EVERYWHERE

Interestingly, the majority of SERP features now include an image, carousel, or video. Search engines also provide additional organic opportunities for product discovery, research, and quick sales with visuals at the core: image search, local, shopping, featured snippets, knowledge panel, visual search, and even voice assistants. At the same time, platforms like Shopify, Pinterest, Instagram, and Amazon provide data-syncing integrations to make it easier for brands of all sizes to sell online. How do you adapt your strategy to take advantage of all of these surfaces while improving the customer experience and generating ROI? Through image optimization, of course.

7 WAYS TO OPTIMIZE IMAGES FOR ECOMMERCE SUCCESS

ONE Create Visual Content Guidelines

Align images with objectives at each stage of your shopper journey. Where discovery calls for lifestyle images, those used for purchase decisions should be product focused. On the flip side, when engaging customers, educational, entertaining and cause-oriented content is more effective.

Discovery

Category pages should contain lifestyle images showing the product in the wild. When customers see a person using or wearing a product, it can help them imagine themselves using it. And including additional related products can potentially increase average order value (AOV).

Engagement

For blog posts, articles, and news pieces, it's best to utilize images that add value which helps the audience visualize the content and keeps them engaged. This content can be useful for customers in both the discovery and research phases. Sharing this content on social media with a compelling story or question is an excellent way to drive engagement.

Purchase Decisions

Customers rely heavily on product images before buying anything online. According to a Field Agent study, 83% of US smartphone users surveyed found product images to be very influential when making purchase decisions.

- Product images should be on-brand and clutter free with a clear focal point. Products should be in the foreground and unobstructed.
- Product pages should include multiple angles of each product so that customers can adequately evaluate before buying. Depending on the product, adding a 360° video or 3D model is a plus. If augmented reality is beyond your budget, size.link is a great alternative to help shoppers visualize the size of a product in their space.

Measuring Success

Keep an eye on referral traffic, new/returning users, and whether additional products on a page resulted in increased AOV. Including feedback forms at different stages of the shopper journey can also help you collect data at the customer level to improve your visual strategy.



TWO

Be Conscious Of Diversity & Inclusion

Many eCommerce brands do not recognize the value of diversity in their marketing. When customers are shopping online, they imagine themselves using (or wearing) products before making decisions. If every model is a young, slim, white woman or a fit, white man with a beard, does that accurately represent a brand's consumers? Chances are, not at all. In today's world, representation of BIPOC, BAME, LGBTQ, and different body types of varied ages and genders is paramount. And content should be accessible for all (more on that later).

"Only 9% of Americans say they feel represented in the advertising they see." - Global Web Index, USA Q2 2020

Smaller brands and entrepreneurs may rely extensively on stock photos and illustrations due to budget and resource constraints. But many image banks do not prioritize diversity. Although some have created dedicated image collections (hopefully as a starting point) while others are completely specialized, it would be ideal to see image banks with diversity portrayed throughout their entire catalogues. (I hope to see this in the not-so-distant future!)

Getting Started & Measuring Success

Choose images that are not overused and that tie in with your visual content guidelines whenever possible. Then, edit them to make them unique.

Selecting and adapting photos can seem labor intensive. At the outset, use channel data to determine your best-selling items, highest converting pages, and pages with high bounce rates. Use this data to prioritize which pages to rework. Then compare original data with results to measure success.

Image Banks with Diverse Photos and Illustrations

- [wocintechchat on Flickr](#)
- [nappy.co](#)
- [genderphotos.vice.com](#)
- [blackillustrations.com](#)
- [createherstock.com](#)
- [pexels.com](#)
- [unsplash.com](#)
- [ukblacktech.com/stockphotos/](#)
- [tetraimages.com](#) (blend collection)

THREE

Research Queries, Topics, & Trends

Think beyond keywords (and long-tail keywords!). Searchers use natural language in their queries. The copy should be conversational and relatable. Also, consider this when selecting images and writing supporting text. Think about the questions your customers would ask, as well as relevant topics and trends.

Questions to Consider

- What problem does the product solve?
- What questions do your customers ask about the product before deciding on the brand?
- Does the product come in different sizes, colors, etc.?
- What are your products' or brand's Unique Selling Propositions (USPs), and how can you showcase them to stand out? (i.e. free shipping, local, handmade, organic, cruelty free, sustainable, cause supporting)

What You See is What You Get: Matching Visuals with Queries

Think of images as answers to the above questions. If someone asked, "What are those curtains made of?" The text may say linen, but a close-up photo or video will help them make an informed decision. Other questions like "Will light shine through these curtains?" can have subjective answers. Visuals provide more accurate representations so that customers are satisfied when they receive their orders, which means fewer returns.

Queries, Topics, & Trends Tools

Stay informed on the latest topics and trends to make sure your visuals are relevant using the following tools:

- [Answer the Public](#)
- [BuzzSumo](#)
- [Rising Retail Categories](#) by Google
- [Google Trends](#)
- [Think With Google](#)
- [Google Search Console](#)
- [Pinterest Trend Reports](#)

HMMMM. THOSE CURTAINS LOOK NICE...



FOUR On-Page & Accessibility- First SEO

As the volume of image results continues to grow in SERPs, optimizing image file size, file names, alt text, titles, meta descriptions, and captions are becoming significantly more important. However, on-page SEO is not only necessary for search engines to understand and display the right content to your audience, it is also crucial for accessibility. For this reason, marketers should always think about the user first.

Getting Started

If you have an existing site, it's best to start with an audit to identify the priority and critical issues. Google has several tools that can help, including Lighthouse Extension, Mobile-Friendly Test, PageSpeed Insights, and Test My Site. Images are one of the key culprits for heavy pages that lead to slow load and poor performance.

Use Screaming Frog to crawl your site to identify duplicate and missing tags. Create a plan with your Product, SEO, Content, Design, Development, and Performance teams to ensure alignment and better results:

- Image file names should be lowercase, separated by hyphens, and should describe what's in the image, being as concise as possible (three to five words).
- Write Alt Text, Alt Titles, Meta Descriptions, and Captions for the user using natural language. And describe the content of the image in the context of the page.
- Image size vs. quality: Compress images without compromising quality using 'Save for web' in Photoshop or use a tool like Optimizilla. It may be worth exploring the enabling of caching and compression on your site and considering the use of a Content Delivery Network (CDN) if you have a lot of images, and if it makes sense for your site.
- Include all images in your Sitemap and submit to GSC so that they can be indexed by Google.
- There are several tools that can be used to QA test and audit sites for accessibility. Using a screen reader app to navigate through your site using sound can help you narrow down areas that need improvement.

Measuring Success

Heat maps are a useful way to see how users interact with the elements of each page on your website. This data can be used to determine the most effective and least effective images on a page. In Google Analytics, monitor high bounce rates regularly to reduce missed opportunities. If someone clicks on an image and leaves immediately, chances are their expectations were not met, and something needs to be adjusted either in the image or on the page.

FIVE Create Visual Content Guidelines

What would a potential customer be more inclined to click? An image with a product tag, verification that it is in stock and reasonably priced, has reliable reviews, and includes free shipping? Or one with no indication that it is even a product at all? Chances are the former. Unlike many rich results, rich product images are where eCommerce brands can benefit from traffic and potentially quick sales.

Getting Started

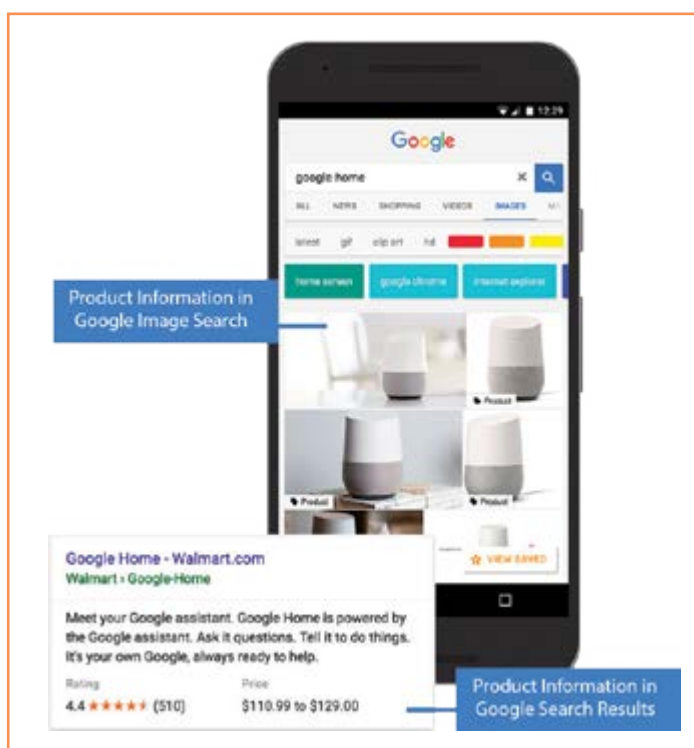
Google's Structured Data Gallery lists supported structured data categories. For eCommerce sites, several are worth exploring, depending on goals and the type of content to be marked up.

Double Check & Monitor

When implementing structured data, use the Rich Results Test to ensure there are no errors and minimization warnings on each page. Then, use the URL inspection tool in Google Search Console (GSC) to see how the page is displayed. And finally, check the rich result status report in GSC regularly to monitor potential errors over time.

Measuring Success

Test structured data on small subsets of products before rolling it out to a full catalogue. The Performance report in GSC shows how often a page appears as a rich result, how often users click on it, and the average position of the page in search.



Source:
Google Developers

SIX

Sync Product Data

Leverage marketplaces for added visibility, wider audiences, and opportunities to increase revenue. By providing searchers with the most up-to-date product information directly on these platforms, it can facilitate the discovery process, providing an enhanced user experience and generating quick sales.

Since April, Google has been offering free Shopping listings in the US (with the plan to expand globally by the end of the year) for brands that have synced their products with the Google Merchant Center (GMC). Reach wider audiences by connecting your databases with Instagram Shops, Pinterest Catalogues, Amazon, and eBay, to name a few.

Getting Started

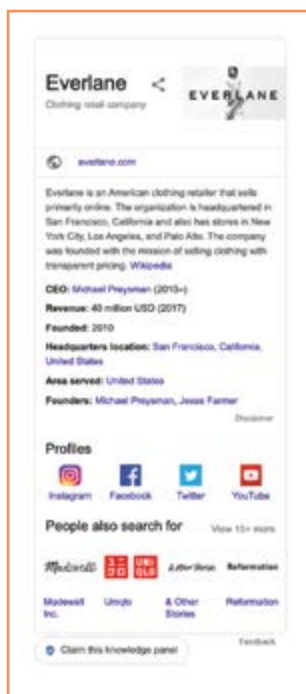
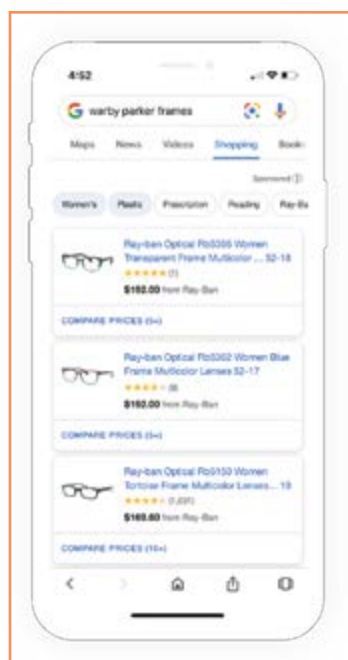
It's best to read the guidelines for each specific marketplace or platform to make sure it's a good fit. Include as many product categories as possible to help the algorithms understand the content and display the best results in search results.

Missed Opportunities

More brands should take advantage of Google's free Shopping listings. Currently, when customers do a branded search in the Shopping tab, if that brand did not sync their products with GMC, their competitors may benefit. See the example below, showing a Shopping search for 'Warby Parker Frames' and consequent 'Rayban' results.

Measuring Success

Google Analytics makes it quite easy to monitor traffic that comes from these marketplaces, clickthroughs to product pages, and conversions. With eCommerce goals setup, you can also track related sales revenue and ROI.



SEVEN

Get Verified

If your brand or entity has a knowledge panel, claim it. Verification helps search engines understand how your brand connects to everything else related to it in the broader Knowledge Graph, including images.

Images & The Knowledge Graph

In July, Google announced that image search would list related topics and entities under individual image results. Google uses deep learning to understand the image and text signals of the image, merges it with the content from the originating web page, and then matches it with entities from the Knowledge Graph. This combination allows users to explore related topics while demonstrating that Google is continuously expanding, innovating, and investing in their visual search capabilities.

Getting Started

Google provides verification instructions that are quite easy to follow. Once claimed, you can "make suggestions" to update your featured image and content. You may also submit feedback inaccuracies. For example, if there's an unrelated brand with a similar name, you can ask to dissociate it from your entity in the Knowledge Graph.

A well-known precursor for a Knowledge Panel is a Wikipedia page. Do not try to write your own Wiki. It goes against their guidelines, and it will most likely get taken down. If your brand does not have a panel, allocate some time to sharing news about your brand and products with reputable third-party sites. These citations will provide an unbiased Wikipedia editor with sufficient sources to write a Wiki page for your brand when the time comes.

Verification on Other Platforms

Most platforms have a verification badge to help users identify notable people and entities. Although the guidelines are varied, the verification process also relies on citations on reputable third-party sites. However, if you're interested in selling on Pinterest, their Verified Merchant Program is worth exploring. The discovery engine launched this to help shoppers discover and buy from vetted brands. It's free to join, makes your brand stand out, and provides you with access to cool stuff – like data, a shop tab, and inclusion in shopping experiences.

How to get verified

To verify that you're an authorized representative for the entity, follow the steps below.

1. Ensure that you have a Google account. If you don't, then [create a Google account](#).
2. Go to [Google Search](#).
3. Search for yourself or the entity you represent and find its knowledge panel.
4. Scroll to the bottom and click [Claim this knowledge panel](#).
5. Review the displayed information about features granted after verification.
6. Sign in to one of the official sites or profiles listed to verify that you're an authorized representative of an entity on Google. The list of options include:
 - YouTube
 - Search Console
 - Twitter
 - Facebook

After you sign in successfully, you can manage the entity on Google.

Source:
[Google Support](#)

TAKEAWAYS

WHEN DEVELOPING YOUR CONTENT AND SEO STRATEGY, REMEMBER THAT IMAGES PLAY A HUGE PART IN EVERYTHING YOUR CUSTOMERS DO ONLINE.

Visuals should be top of mind when planning content on every channel.

Create specific images for discovery, engagement, and purchase decisions to help consumers achieve their goals.

Images should be eye catching and add value to your audience.

Be intentional about infusing diversity.

Optimize image content for accessibility, search engines, and marketplaces.

Test, measure, and adapt your strategy for the best results. Data can only tell you so much about consumer behavior and intent. Ask your users for feedback to dig a little deeper. After all, the customer is always right. 🎯



**Let Joelle know how your online shopping sprees go on Twitter:
@joelleirvine**



LOOK HERE

- THAT'S ONE MORE PAIR OF EYES THAT COULD HAVE SEEN YOUR AD -

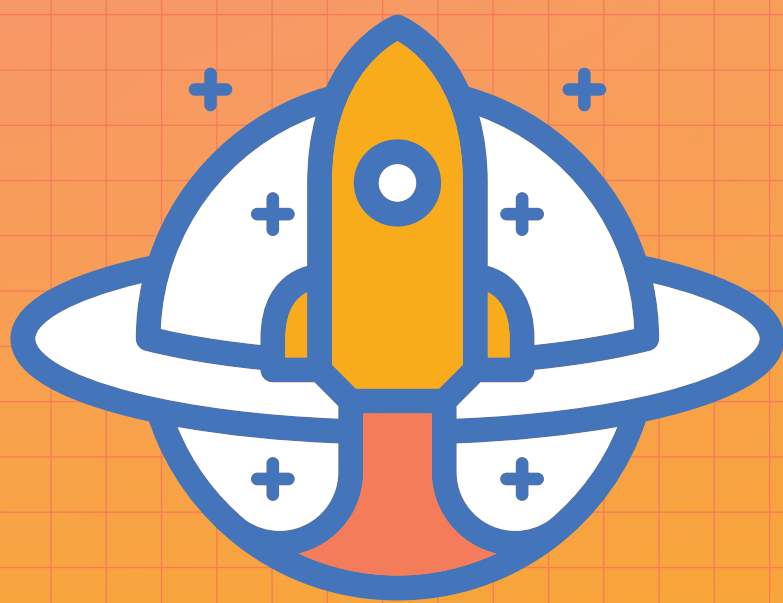
FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ADVERTISING WITH *PAGES*, CONTACT US AT:

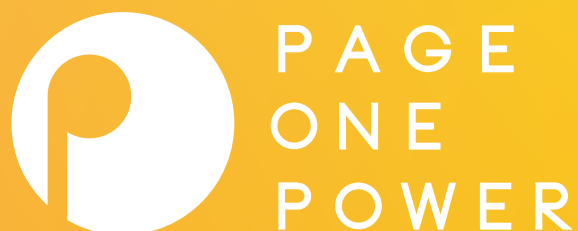
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**LINK BUILDING:
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2020 eBOOK

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TODAY

<https://rebrand.ly/P1P2020ebook>

“By owning the number one ad position and the number one organic position, you are setting your website up for success, and this is obviously the right thing to do. But, because the organic position is below the ad, you’re going to see a lot less organic traffic to your homepage. This is not a bad thing at all, but it is going to look like a traffic drop to a page on your website, which can be scary. This is where SEO and PPC can butt heads and step on toes, but ultimately it is not a negative factor for your site.”

**CONNOR BONAM,
SEO STRATEGIST, DEALER INSPIRE**

**BERT BEROUSEK,
SEO STRATEGIST, DEALER INSPIRE**

Article No. 4



ARTICLE - №. 7

[DMITRII KUSTOV]
INTERNET MARKETING DIRECTOR & FOUNDER , REGEX SEO

RECYCLE YOUR WORK TURN EVERYDAY TASKS INTO SUSTAINABLE WEBSITE TRAFFIC



With all the time and work that goes into good SEO, how do you find time for content creation? Content creation is a major component of successful SEO, so it's in your best interest to figure out how to fit it in between managing clients, SEO campaigns, and other tasks.



The good news is that you may already be doing most of the work. All you need to do is recycle your daily activities.

Quality content is all about producing intuitive and useful information, right? With some creative repurposing, you can boost your efforts by using your routine tasks as the basis for creating content people can't get enough of.

When I say routine tasks, I mean things like email updates and metrics explanations — anything you do on a regular basis — and turned into practical materials like guides, blogs, and other saucy goodness. Suddenly, your productivity has doubled — all without having to slow down or reinvent the wheel.

WAKE UP

& SMELL THE BACON

The first step is to organize your day to day and get a sense of exactly how you spend your time and what tasks take up the majority of your time. Not only is this a great general practice for time and task management, but it will also reveal your shortcomings.





ARE YOU AN SEO SPECIALIST?

If so, I bet you found you wrote a lot of monthly SEO reports, or spent hours upon hours on the phone or in meetings with clients, explaining all about the metrics, what they mean, and why you are so proud of them.

ARE YOU A DESIGNER?

Maybe you draw sketches, develop wireframes, turn ideas into layouts all day long. I have been there myself. In fact, I remember a time I spent at least six hours in a YouTube rabbit hole, watching timelapses of different builds — all to get the know-how to do the builds myself.

OR MAYBE YOU'RE IN MANAGEMENT?

You'd think that those who manage other people's time would be completely on top of their own time management. In reality, it's a struggle to successfully maintain both. Or maybe you do have the time to focus on your own management, but by the end of the day you are so burnt out you have nothing left in the tank, leaving you to push the work off until tomorrow — only to not get to it at all. Believe me, I know how this happens, because I am arguably the best (worst?) procrastinator, having 30 years experience under my belt. (I did, in fact, start training to be a procrastination master the day I was born.) But, in all seriousness, lack of time and/or procrastination shouldn't be a deal breaker. There is always something you already do that can be turned into awesome, shareable content.

THE ESPRESSO PROCESS

Write a list of every task you do on a routine basis. Include anything you do that takes any time at all, even if it seems like an insignificant part of your day. I'm talking about things like telephone calls, emails, presentations, graphics, notes.

The great part about this strategy is that you might find a gem in the tiniest activities — things you don't even consider tasks.

Once you've got a list, think about what each task represents. Why is each task important to your day, and how can that task translate into quality content? Basically, separate the tasks into buckets of "what it could become" — podcasts, blogs, videos, etc.

Do you see what I am getting at? Whether you know it or not, you're already spending a good deal of time creating content during your regular work day.

Think ahead before you start on your tasks.

Now that you have these buckets full of potential, recycled awesomeness, find out which ones are not getting recorded and make sure to set up some kind of recording process for each one. By recording yourself as you work, you'll be able to source reference material and copy your process without wasting time.

Long emails become blogs, long phone conversations grow into podcasts, presentations convert to videos. Use screenshot videos to record yourself fiddling around with a new tool. Your everyday work tasks can become recordings and used as a form of note taking. Recycle, recycle, recycle.

Make use of the content you're already creating!

This is the most important part. We all have different levels of experience and expertise. Remember that though your day-to-day experience may be routine for you, sharing it can be incredibly useful for helping others learn. So take advantage of this by turning work you had already planned to do into content.

You can get your daily work finished and produce content at the same time. Win-win!

WHY
ESPRESSO?

BECAUSE
I LOVE
COFFEE...



BUT WHY?

GENERATING
CONTENT COMES
WITH MANY
BENEFITS:

- **FREE WEBSITE TRAFFIC**
- **EFFICIENT TIME MANAGEMENT**
- **FAST IDEA GENERATION**
- **FREE COOKIES**



Well, maybe no cookies. It'd be nice though...

In the SEO world, we say, "Content is king!" I think it should be said, "Great, quality content is king!" But, well, that's just not as catchy.

What matters most in business? Sales. Where do sales come from in the internet marketing world? Online leads. Where do leads come from? Website visits. Without having any substance, there is no way your website will rank, and therefore, you'll have no website visits. In order to create content, you need content ideas which can take a lot of extra time — time which, debatably, none of us have. The "Espresso Process" takes care of that. No need to reinvent the wheel, just blueprint and sell it.

By the way, are you still thinking about free cookies? I know I am.

GREAT QUALITY
CONTENT IS KING

the ESSENCE.

Well, here we are at the end of the road. Full of “Espresso” and make-believe cookies. Let’s get to business.

“How, oh how, can I recycle my work?,” you ask. “Please, master, put me on the true path,” you fervently supplicate (my editor told me to use these words — I don’t even even know if they are real), presenting the gift of cookies.

No worries, Padawan, I will show you some activities we find very useful to do every day in order to help us recycle at the office.

eMail

If you’ve ever gotten carried away with an email — answering a client’s question or providing a detailed breakdown with screenshots and formatting and the whole ordeal — you might as well turn this into an article, a blog post, or a guide.

Even incredibly specific information, so long as it’s not proprietary for the client, can be valuable and fill a useful niche. You’ve already done the work, and people don’t typically return to emails once they’ve been sent and resolved.

It’s perfect for a written piece as you’ve already got the related screenshots and notes, and it’s most likely written in a business tone. If it’s a topic you speak about frequently, you can even file it away as a reference guide, something that will save you time in the future. Instead of repeating yourself and writing a whole new email every single time, just refer them to your website. Simple and efficient.

Frequently Asked Questions

If you find yourself answering the same questions again and again, turn the answers into an FAQ and make life easier for yourself. If you’ve already answered the question over email, on the phone or in person, just write it down already (or maybe make a little video), and there you have Johnny another traffic-generating material.

You’ll have a continuously-growing piece of content, and you can spend less time answering the same questions over and over. That’s a 2-in-1, my friend! That’s almost as good as creamer and sugar — all in the same packet.

Sales Presentations

When you give sales presentations, you are often presenting data that can be applied more universally. As long as you aren’t revealing confidential information, you should record your presentation to get more out of it. Put the video on your YouTube channel, blog, or website, and suddenly you have an excellent sales tool working for you 24 hours a day.

Phone Conversations

People often overlook phone conversations as a source of useful information. You might be articulating an idea or explaining a concept really well, so record it if you can.

Later, you can transcribe the call and use it for a blog post that covers the subject, or you might just want to insert the audio clips themselves into a podcast to save time and make the most out of your phone call.

Speaking Events

If you’re getting on stage, chances are you have something worthwhile to say. That information will most likely be useful for people even if they’re not at the same event, so whip that camera out, and put on the best show.

You can use the transcript for a blog or article snippets or you can upload the video directly to your media page and expand your audience from a hundred people at the event to millions of online viewers. Even niche information can be really valuable, and you’re already giving the speech, so why not get that extra bit of value from it?

Learning Something New

When you set out to learn a new process or figure out a new tool, you can use that opportunity to share your exploration with others. Before you start, set up a recording process and create a video of your experience.

Whether you edit the video to highlight successful discoveries, or leave it unedited to show people what works and what doesn't, it can serve as a useful guide or reference for others trying to learn the same thing. Make the successful attempts into a 'how to' series, while unsuccessful attempts can become the "how not to" vlog.

Time Lapse Recording

For some roles, like those held by designers and developers, it's natural to take advantage of the tools available. Share your typical work process as a form of content, and it will appeal to a wide range of people. All you have to do is hit 'record' on a screen recording software and work like you normally would.

Timelapse the video, and you've created something worth watching. This kind of content is incredibly popular with both specialized and general audiences for the behind-the-scenes view it offers.

Presentations with Slides

PowerPoint is incredibly common, particularly in the corporate world. In almost every meeting you attend, you'll see slides to go over this or that.

If you have a presentation with slides, that means you've already written and produced a solid piece of content that can be shared with a larger audience. Similar to other company-specific content, generalize the data, remove any private information, and you've got a ready-made slide show that breaks down some useful concept or idea in a visually appealing format. It would feel right at home on websites like SlideShare, and the like.

Repeatable Research

Research is one of the most time-consuming tasks across all professions, but the information it provides becomes a rich resource. Chances are, if you benefit from the work you've done, others will too. You can turn notes and research reports into detailed guides or downloadables that can be posted on your site for others to use. You've already done all the work, so why not get some extra traffic and conversions by turning it into a valuable resource for others?

Reports

All SEO specialists create monthly or regular progress reports, typically alongside explanations of any abnormalities found throughout the month. These reports often provide clarity for clients, drawing their attention to both standard and unusual SEO fluctuations or details.

These reports can shed light on interesting and valuable ways you've been doing SEO right, or explain why a test didn't perform as expected. These become evidence of what does and does not work for SEO in specific industries and is considered highly-seekable information.

They can easily be turned into a case study to show potential clients the value of SEO for their business, while also demonstrating your expertise and depth of knowledge. Again, it's prime material for content on your site, and you're already doing the work every single month.

IT SEEMS I'M OUT OF COOKIES.

With a little preparation and the right mindset, it's easy to convert almost any daily task into an incredibly valuable piece of ready-made content.

Simply record yourself and be mindful of your process for each task, and you can spin that out into any number of content pieces for use across your website. It doesn't always have to be perfectly straightforward either!

Straightforward tasks are great. Turning an SEO report into a case study is an excellent and efficient use of your time, but you can also use your process to explore other areas where content would be useful.

Say you run into a problem while learning a new tool. You Google "how to resolve this problem" and there's no information, or no really good articles or answers. That means there's space for a guide on how to fix whatever problem you're having.

Just be creative and flexible; you're creating content every day. Don't let it go to waste, recycle the work!

I'm off to get cookies.
We will see you next time. :) ☺



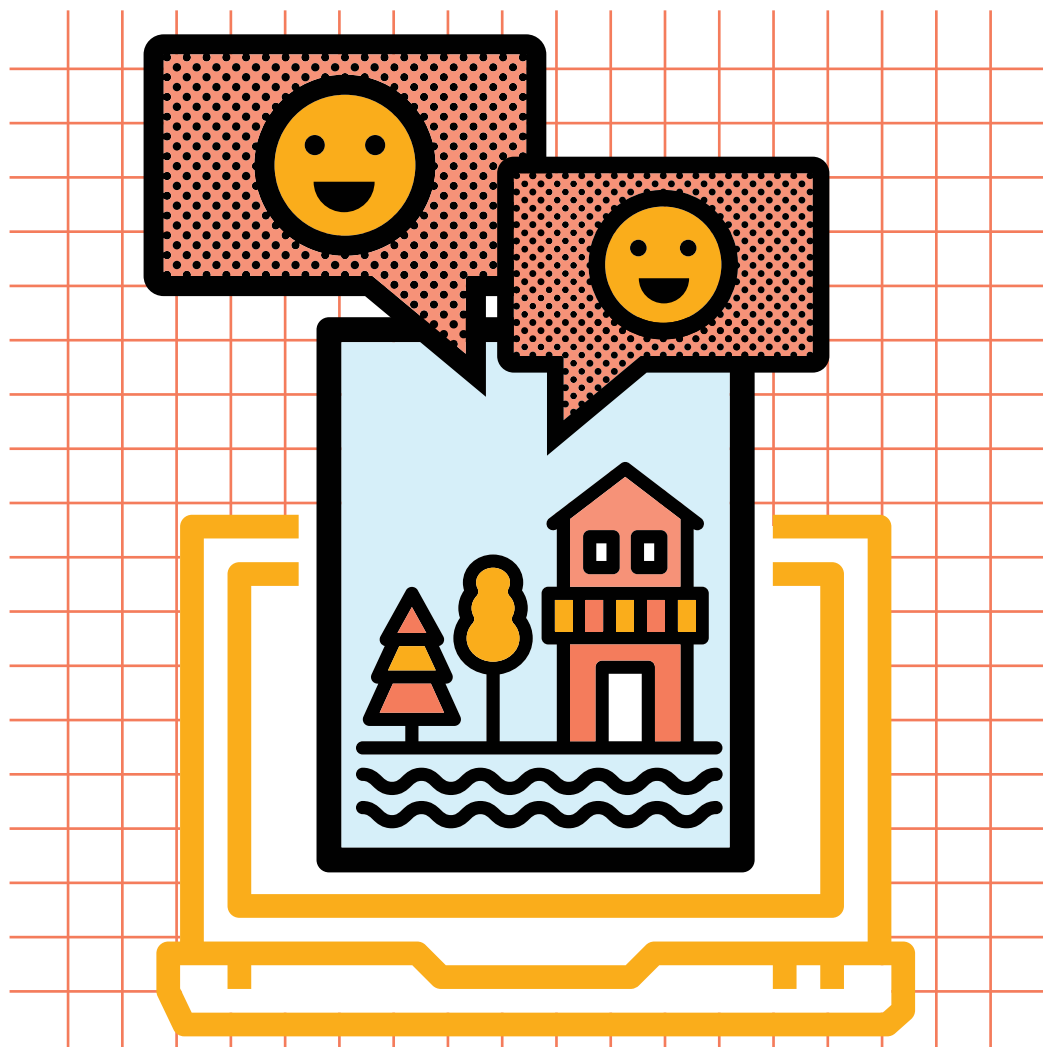
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SEO

FROM HOME:

AN EDUCATIONAL
SERIES



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PANEL DISCUSSIONS – OPEN Q&As AND AMAs
FULL SLIDE DECK PRESENTATIONS – AND MORE

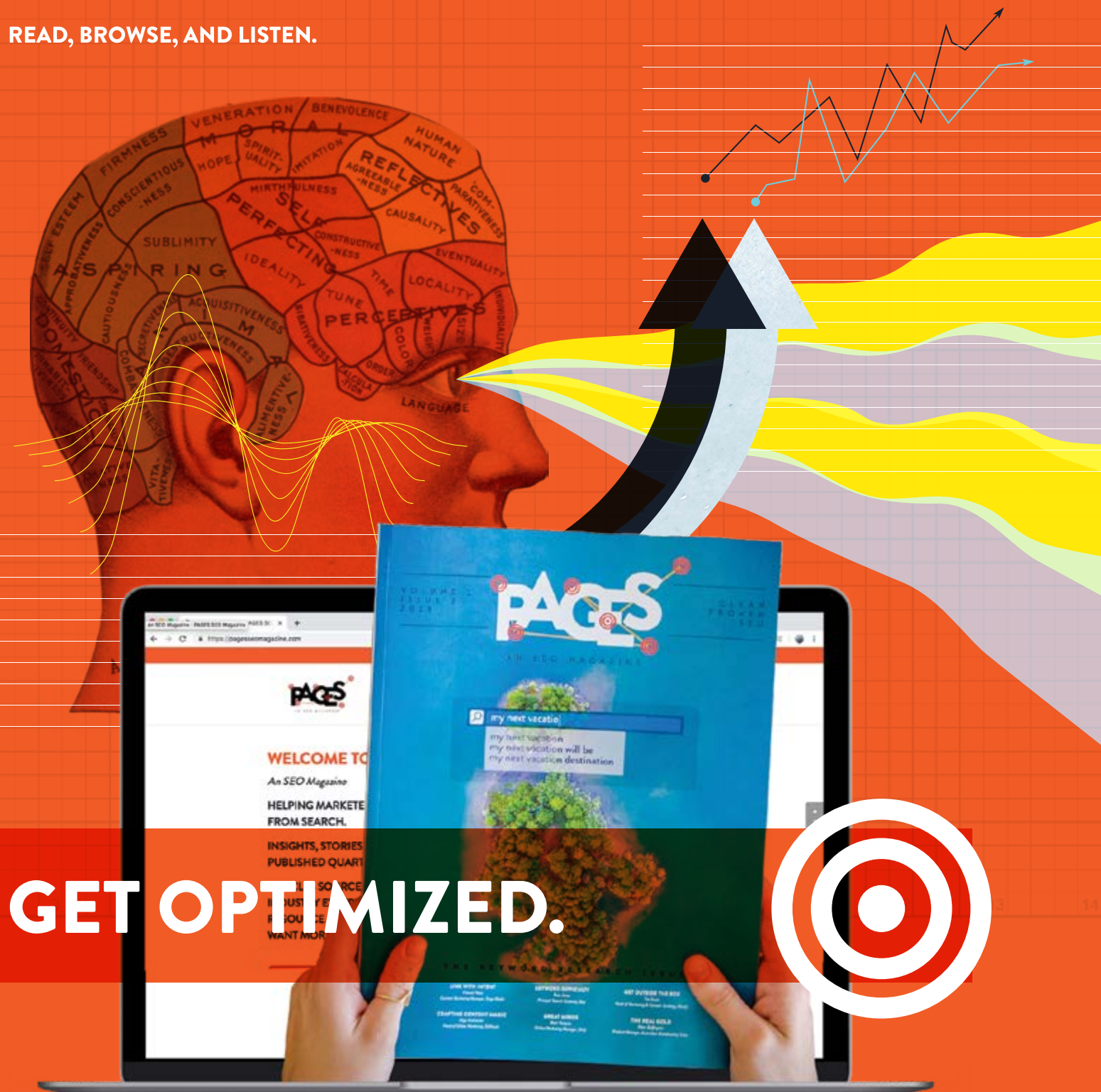
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ABOUT **SEO**.**

**GOT SOME KNOWLEDGE TO DROP ABOUT
SEARCH?**

LET'S HEAR IT.

PAGES is powered by contributions from those who are passionate about search. Each issue is focused on a different SEO topic, but always aims to explain how SEO can benefit a business. We're looking for insightful and accessible articles that explore the SEO tactics that help us achieve those benefits, aiding readers in developing a deeper understanding of how SEO fits into a marketing plan.

If you've got something you'd like to share about SEO with digital marketers, let us know!

Visit the *PAGES* website to view our contributor guidelines, and email us to pitch your ideas or get more details about upcoming themes:

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FEEL LIKE YOU'RE MISSING SOMETHING?

If your desk seems a little bare without years past issues of *PAGES*, don't worry. We've got other ways to satisfy your need for SEO knowledge.

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO STAY UP-TO-DATE ON EVERYTHING PAGES MAGAZINE AND SEO.

3 YEARS + COUNTING

Three years ago, *PAGES* magazine was born. Sometimes it feels like just yesterday; other times, oh so long ago. Since day one, we've strived to bring you SEO expertise from the industry's most knowledgeable thought leaders.

We are incredibly grateful for your readership and support. We have all enjoyed holding and flipping the pages of each issue to experience the great content. In 2021, we're asking our readers to please subscribe to an annual paid subscription to offset the actual costs of printing and mailing each issue. A digital version will remain available at no cost, but seriously, we've always known *PAGES* is best read in print.

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THANK YOU

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How To Make SEO Solve Your Paid Search Advertising Problems

Content Optimization: Things Not Strings

A Maturity Model For The Search Industry

Industry Boss

SEO VS. PPC: Two Will Enter - Two Will Win

Outreach Practices During & After A Pandemic

eCommerce #GOALS: Optimize Images For The New Online Shopper

Turn Everyday Tasks Into Sustainable Website Traffic

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 **K, bye**



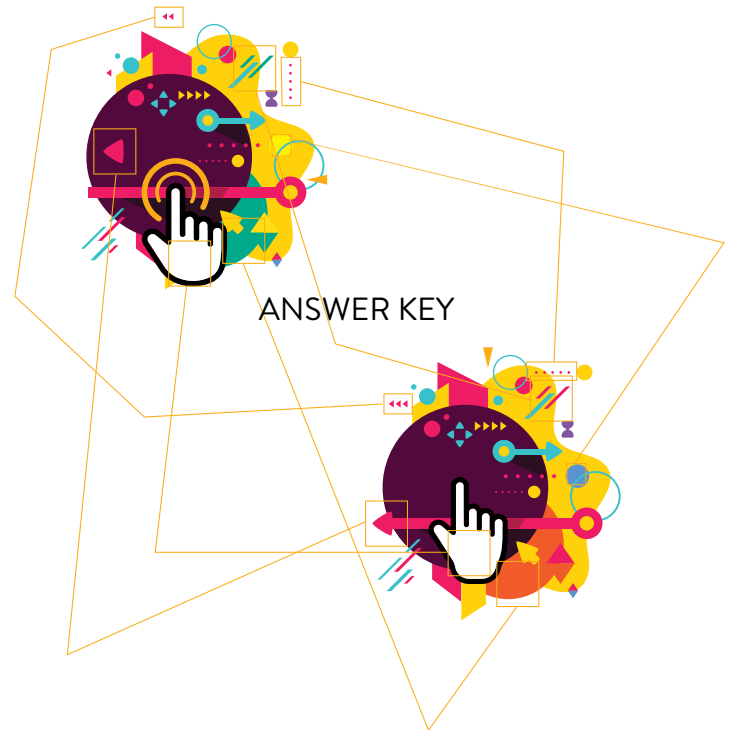
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