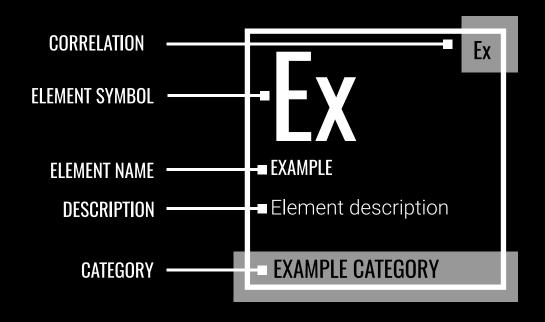


## 2020 PERIODIC TABLE OF EMAIL OPTIMIZATION AND DELIVERY MANAGED INBOX EDITION

Successful email marketing is about more than clicks and opens. An email address is the most valuable piece of information we can collect from our customers. This guide to success factors, toxins and traps will help you build relationships built on trust and reach the managed inbox.







CI ategy can change sending on the sscriber's email client **O**p OPEN
Get your audience to open your emails.



Ck CLICK Clicks lead to conversions. Get them.

Ta ln

MAIL TRANSFER AGENT This is the relay software you need to send email.

Rm REPUTATION MANAGEMENT
These tools are necessar to manage sender and IP reputations.

Dns

DOMAIN NAME SYSTEM The DNS is the 'phonebook of the internet'.

Au

Dk

DOMAIN KEY IDENTIFIED MAIL Your DKIM signature should be in email

Wi

WHITELISTS

Rd

Tr TRANSACTIONAL

Rd

READABILITY
Scannable and

CONTENT

Hi

Sg SEGMENTATION Divide UD VO

St SEND TIME The delivery time is a strategic element. Don't overlook it.

Sf

SEND FREQUENCY

In<sup>2</sup> DOUBLE OPT-IN

00 OPT-OUT
Give users the ability to stop receiving email Ua MAIL USER AGENT The program or client that makes sending and

lp

IP ADDRESS Choose wisely between Shared, Dedicated and Pooled IPs. INFRASTRUCTURF

SMTP SERVER
Simple mail transfer protocol servers enable outbound mail.

INFRASTRUCTURE **P3** 

Ss

Sp POP3 SERVER SENDER POLICY FRAMEWORK This specifies the IP addresses sending mail. INFRASTRUCTUR

**0**d SENDER DOMAIN

Ph

PHYSICAL ADDRESS

St STRUCTURE HTML or plain text design.

Sj

CI CALENDAR PERSONALIZATION Pc PREFERENCE CENTER

Me

Eg ENGAGEMENT Opens, clicks, forwards replies, shares and more

Cp

FI FEEDBACK LOOPS These ensure complaint go to the sender so you can act on them. Sd

Sr Dc DMARC SENDER REPUTATION Authentication and conformance protects domains.

TOXINS

S URL SHORTENERS Kw Floreto
Foo many common
Reywords can send
Your email to spam Nr NO-REPLY Use a reply-to address or you'll end up in the junk box.

lr IRRELEVANCE Audiences won't care about unrelated content. Use your data.

lh IMAGE HEAVY Excess images will slow loading, and customers may not wait. Hb HARD BOUNCE
This permanent delivery failure me the email is bad.

Sb SOFT BOUNCE Full mailboxes and vacation responders cause these failures

Cm COMPLAINTS

TOXINS

B BLACKLISTED If you land on these lists of unreputable senders, it's over.

**EXPERIMENTAL** 

Хp

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE Segmentation messaging are to fall to the m EXPERIMENTAL

Voi VOICE ASSISTANTS Think about how your email would land if read out loud. Mj

Gt GRAY SPAM TRAPS ISPs will look for recycle email addresses to flag

> Df DESKTOP FILTERS Recipients can filter their own incoming email. Stay relevant.

Tt TYPO TRAPS
A purposefully mispelled domain is a common spam tactic.
TRAPS PRISTINE TRAPS ke email address ca t you labelled a ammer.

**EXPERIMENTAL** 

**TRAPS** 

Sf SPAM FILTERS These program detect unsolicited email and they are hard to fool. TRAPS

Cf CORPORATE FILTERS Usually a less forgiving filter for corporate servers. Get whitelisted.

TRAPS

SCAN TO DOWNLOAD



**Marketing Land** 

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### WELCOME.



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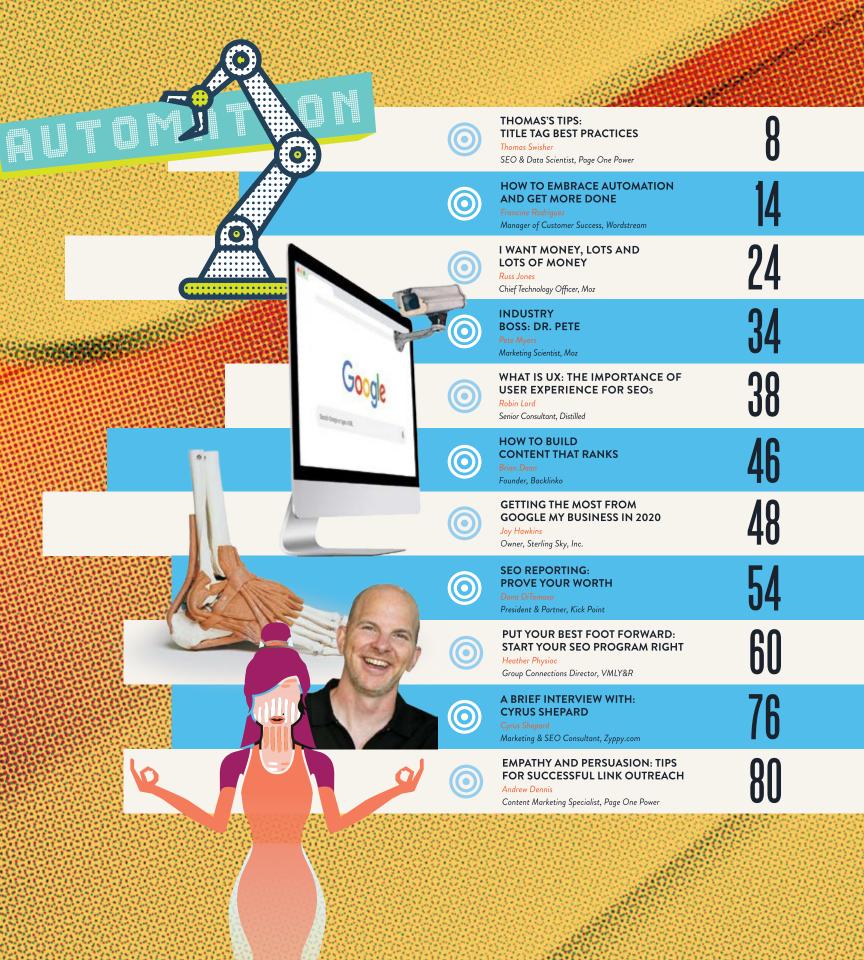
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ON PAGES MAGAZINE

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### **#PAGESSEOMAGAZINE**



Just received the newest issue of @pagesSEOmag. #Stoked, #luvthis #SEO magazine! Bitcoin Billionaire @aboutarcher



Continuing tradition with @pagesSEOmag. Relax in the pool or dive into an article? #mozcon @jaredbroussard



#### Jan!!

We received your magazine thank you so much, the magazine is a beautiful magazine. It was a pleasure to read it and was really impressed as I've never seen an SEO magazine like this. The funny thing is my wife was sitting in the backyard and she picked up the magazine and read it cover-to-cover she's not even in SEO and she turns to me later in the day and says that magazine that was on the chair was beautifully done she's never seen a magazine like this and she said I was very impressed and I read the whole magazine who is that she asked me. Anyways I thought I would send you this note really impressed and I look forward to receiving more magazines like

My very best,

Co-Founder, Markati Group



### VOL. 3 ISSUE 3

### [THE PRELUDE]



Online business success is heavily dependent upon establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships. Part of that relationship can be managed by machine automation. The other part, much like any interpersonal relationship, requires us to apply a human, emotional element that keeps us relatable and relevant. Every interaction someone has with our brand affects the relationship that is forming, either in a positive or negative way. This issue of *PAGES* magazine discusses ways to advance our businesses by intersecting machines and processes with the brilliance of the human mind, and heart.

Speaking of brilliant minds, this issue of *PAGES* boasts a wealth of knowledge from some of the SEO industry's finest, designed to help you advance in your business relationships.

Take the initiative to set up automation and, in doing so, embrace an easier and more successful life. All this, while working less (p. 14). Use empathy and persuasion when employing your link outreach—both are crucial components that cultivate meaningful relationships across the web (p. 80). Google My Business exists to make engagement happen. Optimize the benefits of this ever-changing directory with Joy Hawkins (p. 48).

Also, as we continue to assess the quality of our relationships, it is essential to stop every now and then to answer the succinct but looming question: "Do people like using this thing?" Quality Rater Guidelines exist to help you rank well (p. 38).

Put your best foot forward with a search roadmap that will leave your industry's

greatest obstacles in the dust (p. 60) and overcome universal barriers to financial success—stated plainly, there's more to your job than being good at SEO (p. 24). Be, also, a good communicator. It's time to prove your value. Be so concise, so clear, and so on top of your reports that people don't feel the need to hire new in-house marketers (p. 54).

We welcome you to come grow along with us as we learn how to improve the way we use the machines and tools we all have at our fingertips and the emotional experience we have accumulated over a lifetime to become more efficient, to improve our processes, and to deepen the countless relationships we manage.

The Plages Crew



### IN THIS ISSUE, THOMAS QUEUES US INTO TITLE TAG BEST PRACTICES

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



#### <h2>

#### WHAT IS A TITLE TAG?

A title tag is bits of HTML code located in the header of the page. The title tag is meant to describe what the webpage is about. When it comes to on-page optimization factors, it is one of the first things I consider.

#### <h2>

### WHY ARE TITLE TAGS IMPORTANT?

Title tags are important because they help search engines and users understand what a page is about. The most important way title tags are used is on the search engine results pages (SERPs). They let users know what information to expect if they click through to the page, and it tells search engines what the web page is about.

#### <h2:

### HOW TO WRITE A GOOD TITLE TAG.

Because title tags affect search engine results and user experience, it is good practice to follow some simple guidelines.

#### <h3>

#### LENGTH.

The recommended length for your title tag is 55-60 characters so that it doesn't get cut off in the SERPs. It varies because some letters take up more space.

#### <h3:

#### MAKE EACH TITLE TAG UNIQUE.

It is very important to create unique title tags because they provide a good user experience. If your tags aren't unique, it's not likely that search engines will think so either, and it can drag down your click-through rate which can then impact your rankings. Give users a reason to click on your result.

#### <h3>

#### ADD YOUR BRAND

As you build your brand, it can really help your click-through rate. When users see a web page associated with a brand they are familiar with, the click-through is higher. Always make sure to add your brand to the end of your title tag, not the beginning.

#### <h3>

### PUT YOUR IMPORTANT KEYWORDS FIRST.

Keep in mind that many users scan the SERPs looking for the most relevant content to click on. That is why it is very important that the first couple of words be relevant to what they are looking for. This can best be demonstrated by using an eCommerce site as an example.

#### Product | Your Brand

A large eCommerce site is going to have these broken down by categories such as brand, type, and gender of potential buyers.

[Product][Cat][Cat] | Your Brand

Example: Nike Men's Running Shoes | Foot Locker

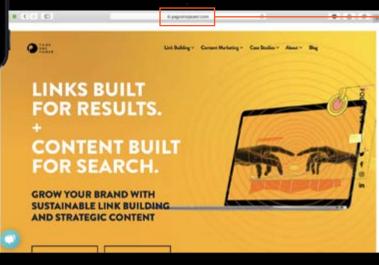
#### <h2>

#### CONCLUSION

Creating great title tags isn't hard if you just follow the few guidelines above. Most importantly, remember that you are creating title tags to engage users and encourage them to click on your link.











### WHERE'S ROGER?

GOOD LUCK! SEARCHERS!





Let us know if you were able to find Roger for a quick hangout on Twitter: @pagesSEOmag

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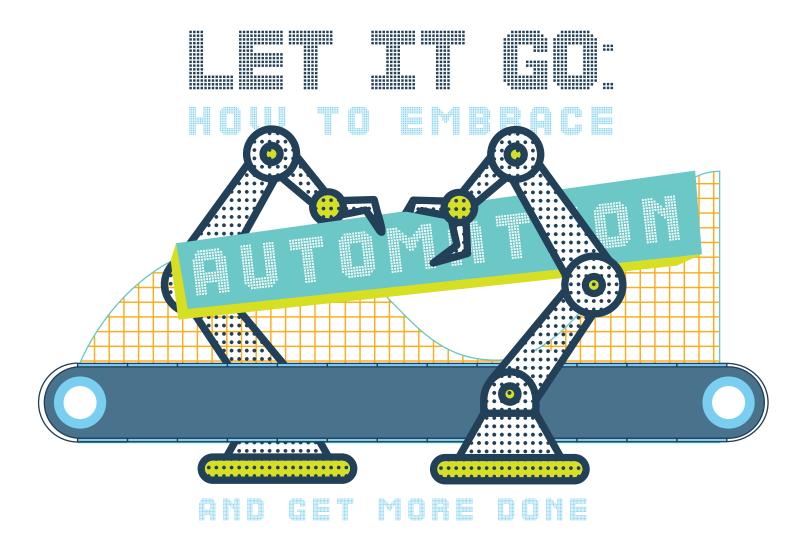
"SEOs today don't need to be told their job is changing; Al has automated many tasks already and Google's changes to SERPs such as the "People Also Ask" boxes, Featured Snippets, or their attempts to acquire more accurate, real-world information about a local business, have fundamentally changed how consumers search and how SEOs today make an impact.

Rather than worry about the state of the industry, I see professionals today thinking about outcomes instead of tasks. With this pivot, we as an industry are better able to prioritize customer experiences and storytelling rather than day-by-day tasks. This will be such an important lesson for all agencies, in-house and freelance professionals, because the ways in which we've done business before may not be relevant in the next year, but the goals and outcomes we want to happen will still remain the same."



#### ARTICLE - No. 1

### [FRANCINE RODRIGUEZ]





This year, so far, has been the absolute worst. My 2020 started with a 6.4 earth-quake, a countrywide blackout, and then this little thing called COVID-19. I am overwhelmed and exhausted. As a customer success manager in these times, I have had to bury all my anxiety and step it up for those around me. Most of my customers are SMBs that have been greatly impacted and look to me and my team to help save their businesses.



Quickly realizing that now is not the time for us to do things the same way we have done before, I asked myself, "What can we let go of?" I needed to help my customers be lean, save time, and make metrics happen. These are folks running businesses with reduced staff, forced to move everything online for the first time. They don't have time to do it all perfectly.

I decided to take a look at the most essential, yet time-consuming tasks we do in PPC in order to run a successful PPC campaign. I recognized that instead of letting things go

completely, we could use the automation tools provided in these networks without compromising metrics. My goal was to make bids, campaign creation, ad copy, and keywords less daunting for my customers.

Yes, I am talking about working less while still being successful. I have five suggestions on how you can use automation to make life easier. Let's dive in!



01.STRATEGY 02.TESTING 03.CAMPAIGN 04.KEYWORDS 05.MICROSOFT

### INCORPORATE SMART BIDDING STATEGIES



The most basic of concepts in Google Ads is that this all starts with an auction. How you want to handle yourself in that auction has been almost a marker of pride among advertisers. Using Manual bidding has long been the gold standard, and with the advent of new types of bidding strategies, it still has this sense of superiority to all others. If you even look at how we describe who Manual bidding is best suited for, it says "sophisticated advertisers." Obviously this turns advertisers off from trying the other strategies, because no one wants to be called unsophisticated.

What we love about Manual bidding is the level of control — you get to control EVERYTHING. These are delicious words for us power-hungry advertisers, but do we really need all that control?

Let's put it this way, there are 3.5 billion searches that occur using Google in a single day. There is no way that one person could effectively keep up with changing bids at the pace that people search online. By moving to one of the automated strategies, we do lose the control of individual keyword bids, however we let the machine learning build specifically to allow for the best results. This is a win for us as we let go of a giant time suck of a task and, in the process, improve performance. Even Google itself has placed a warning box in the bidding section that indicates setting bids manually may result in lower performance.

Here is my simple breakdown of each automated strategy I recommend and the ideal uses for each case:

Maximize Clicks - Control the budget and place a bid cap to keep Max CPC under control. This strategy is best suited for brand new accounts, those who don't have conversion tracking ready, or if your marketing goal is to get the most amount of clicks on a landing page.

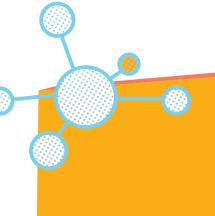
Maximize Conversions - Should be used only when you have accurate conversion data and when you have reached ideally 30 conversions per month. You only need to control the budget allocated for the campaign, and this auto-optimized strategy will get you the most conversions within the allocated budget.

Target CPA - Only should be used by advertisers with very accurate conversion data, realistic CPA goals, and at least hundreds of conversions a month in the campaign. Warning - If you put a goal that is too aggressive, you are not allowing the optimization to work as it should. My tip would be to set a CPA goal based off the last 30 days and gradually lower it as it hits the target.

Target ROAS - Ideal for eCommerce businesses with accurate conversion and conversion value reporting. Same as target CPA, you need to have a realistic ROAS goal set, and if you want to move the needle, you should slowly increment. If you are struggling to hit ROAS, you can try setting the target to 100%, which is breakeven, and then raise it from there to help trigger a restart.



### TEST RESPONSIVE SEARCH ADS



UP TO 15 DIFFERENT HEADLINES UP TO 4 DESCRIPTIONS 43,680 AD VARIATIONS IN ONE SITTING.

GET STARTED WITH RESPONSIVE SEARCH ADS TODAY

AD COPY TEST A

GET UP TO 43,680 AD VARIATIONS
IN ONE SITTING. CET CEAUTED WITH

GET STARTED WITH Designative search ads today

TODAY

AD COPY TEST B





The ad creative is the only part of all the work you put into paid advertising that your end user will see. This is one of the most crucial pieces of the puzzle and testing different ad copy, images, or videos is a huge undertaking. Here come responsive ads to the rescue!

Responsive Search Ads allow the advertiser to create, in one sitting, up to 15 different headlines and 4 descriptions. Combined, that will generate a total of 43,680 ad variations! Then Google's machine learning technology will kick in using all the options available to create the right ad for the right customer. Testing is automatically done for you, and there is a report you can generate which will show the top performing combinations.

It also includes a feature for folks who aren't quite ready to let it completely go. You can pin a desired headline or description to a specific position in the ad,. though it's important to not go crazy pinning things because it will significantly cut down the variations Google can test.

Best practice for Responsive search ads would be to have one ad per ad group with a combination for expanded text ads as well. There is a maximum of three Responsive search ads per ad group allowed. Fun fact: because it's providing the searcher the best combination of information at the right moment, we see an uplift in clicks of about 5-15%.

There is also a counterpart for Google Display that has been around many years and is actually the default ad selection for that campaign type. If you are struggling with starting a Display campaign because you don't have access to or a budget for a graphic designer, then put this worry away. Responsive display ads were built to remove that barrier to entry and allow anyone to make simple visuals. You have the ability to scan your website, social media, or upload images/videos to make ads in all the size formats you need. It even includes automatic testing, just like the Responsive search ads.

### E-COMMERCE MUST TRY SMART CAMPAIGNS



Smart Campaigns have a bad rap for being labeled as the default for brand new advertisers who have no clue what is going on. Experienced PPCers stay away because almost everything is automated, with no control regarding keywords, bidding, ad copy, or strategy. Ghastly, no?

But within the Smart Campaign family, I do think they have a shining star: Smart Shopping.

This campaign type is something everyone in the Ecommerce industry should try if their products are not performing great on standard Shopping Campaigns.

Smart Shopping is best suited for those in competitive markets where ROAS goals are not being met or when you have very large, hard to manage inventories (think thousands of individual SKUs).

A word of warning: do not run products in Smart Shopping that live in regular shopping campaigns. Smart campaigns will always take the highest priority and steal impressions from existing products. And if you already have products that are meeting their goals on standard campaigns, don't fix what is not broken!

SMART CAMPAIGNS PROS AND CONS:

### 

AUTOMATICALLY SHOWS UP IN SHOPPING, DISPLAY, YOUTUBE, AND GMAIL

AUTOMATIC DYNAMIC REMARKETING

FULLY-AUTOMATED BIDDING WITH A TARGET ROAS GOAL

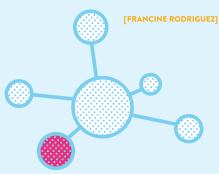
YOU CAN AND SHOULD SUBDIVIDE AND EXCLUDE PRODUCT GROUPS

### 

CANNOT MANAGE NEGATIVES OR VIEW SEARCH TERMS

CHANGING BUDGETS FREQUENTLY RESETS THE LEARNING PERIOD





### DON'T GET MITPICKY ON KEYWORD MATCH TYPES



Keywords are arguably the most important aspect of Search Campaigns. I think that in this world, the practice we waste the most time on is match type strategy. I understand this is quite controversial to say, but I think you need to dial your time here wayyyy down — like, almost to zero.

In the last few years, match types have changed from being dramatically strict to allowing close variants, which can mean anything from singular/plurals, misspelled words, abbreviations, stemmings, and accents (for things like español). Then, Google changed again, allowing function words, similar intent, and even the word order to be different. Google stated that the reason for all these changes was because they estimated advertisers would see 3% more clicks with the addition in traffic.

At this point, the rules have been thrown out the window and the most basic match type principles don't exist anymore. The lines between the match types are so blurred, it's about time to simplify our lives and declare them dead.

Now, what you do is very simple — you are going to add keywords in the match type of your preference — and that's it. After studying all the new improvements concerning match types, there was one in particular that stuck out because it already followed most of the rules — Modified Broad. This match type is the one in which I usually start new keywords, while still retaining some control over the lawless broad match.

### **OUT OF SERVICE**:

Since I have declared match types dead, it's time to let go of some other time-consuming practices:

SINGLE KEYWORD AD GROUPS (SKAGS) SEPARATING AD Groups/Campaign

BY MATCH TYPE

YOU ARE GOING TO ADD KEYWORDS IN THE MATCH TYPE OF YOUR PREFERENCE...

...AND THAT'S IT.



### GIVE MICROSOFT ADS A CHANCE



Though many associate the art of letting go with an ice princess, I'd argue that the title should go instead to the artist formerly known as Bing. Microsoft Ads is very aware of the position they have in our PPC hearts, and they are pretty cool about being #2. In fact, they have the ultimate tools for letting go:

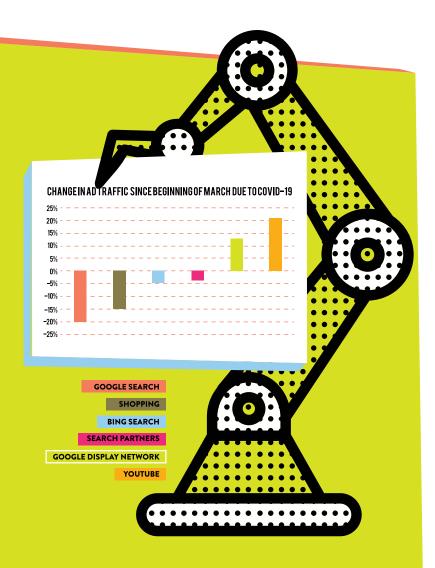
1.

The ability to import your account directly from Google Ads and into Microsoft's interface means you never have to create an account from scratch.

2

The ability to set up a recurring ad schedule ensures you don't ever forget to update Bing. In other words, whatever you do in Google automatically goes into Bing, keeping your accounts identical.

Now, these tools are not really new or revolutionary but the important thing to note is that in times of uncertainty, Bing Search has been a surprising star. In an article by Mark Irvine, published in the WordStream Blog, he shared that since the COVID-19 pandemic started, Google Search lost 20% in Ad Traffic, Google Shopping 15%, and Bing Search only 5%. Bing's stability, especially in comparison to the tidal wave of change in Google, is something advertisers should consider when deciding where to safely allocate their marketing budgets.

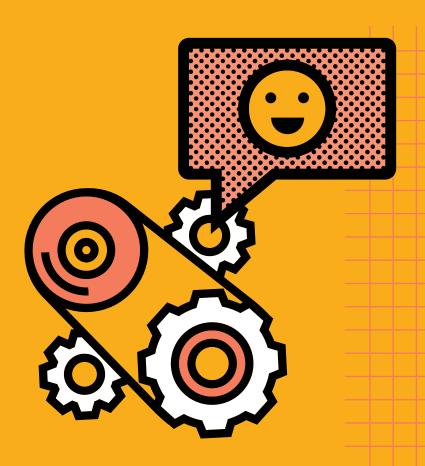


### NOW WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH ALL THAT FREE TIME? DEDICATE IT TOWARDS PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT? BINGE WATCH? GET REALLY INTO BAKING?

### THAT'S FOR YOU TO DECIDE.

To keep up with Francine and her efforts to help fellow small businesses weather the storm of Covid-19, give her a follow on Twitter: @chanchin18





# 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



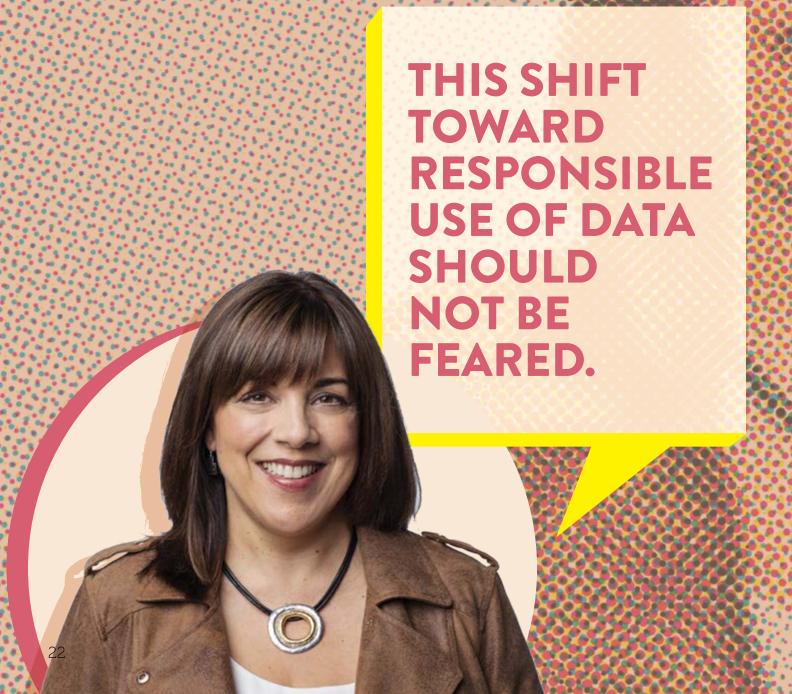
WWW.PAGEONEPOWER.COM

### CHRISTINA MAUTZ

CMO, Moz

linkedin.com/in/christinamautz

Geographic and the second seco



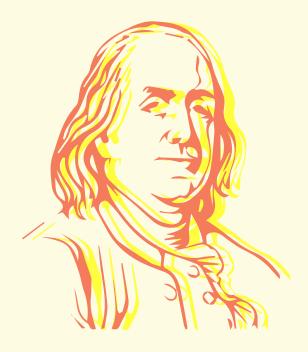
"Data drives many decisions, and I believe marketers today will double down on their commitment to the highest levels of integrity and responsibility in using high-quality, secure, and relevant data for a strong foundation for critical decision-making. In a world where privacy concerns are paramount, this shift toward responsible use of data should not be feared — it has the potential to have a tremendously positive impact on the digital marketing community and the people we serve.

I've often told my teams that great marketing can change the world for good. And I mean it.

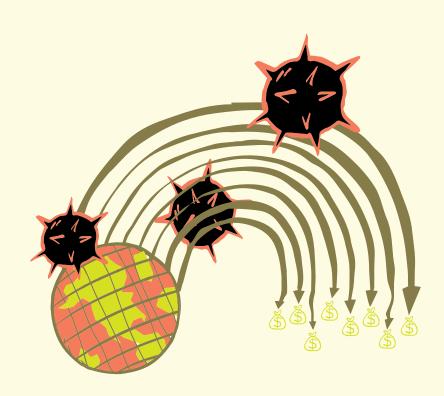
If I had a marketing genie in a bottle, I'd ask for just one wish: let marketers do good! Let us only collect data from those who offer it freely, and let us use that data so responsibly that consumers come to love and trust marketing again! Let us only reach out to those prospects who truly can benefit from what we have to offer, and for everyone else? Let us not bug you until you're ready to welcome us with open arms."

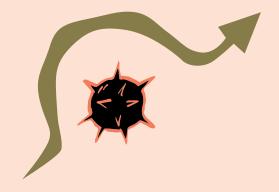






When I first began practicing SEO some 15 years ago, I thought the formula was pretty simple. Step one: Be good at SEO. Step two: Profit! Seems obvious, right? Unfortunately, it turns out that for agencies and consultancies there's a big difference between skill set and profitability. In this brief article, I want to discuss a handful of universal problems facing agencies and consultancies and ways to overcome those barriers to financial success.





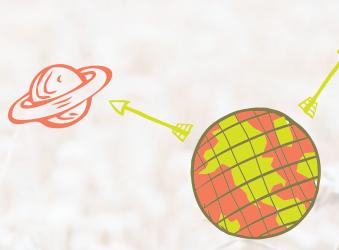


### BARRIER No. 1

### SEPARATING THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF

One of the toughest barriers to entry for SEO firms to overcome is simply proving one's competency to a larger audience — most specifically, potential customers. In an industry without any real formal education or standardization (for better or worse), anyone can claim competency in SEO. This has resulted in the long-lamented problem of charlatans and self-professed gurus with questionable-at-best claims about their proficiency. So, how does one go about establishing credibility among competitors and for customers? Here are a number of successful techniques my former coworkers and I at Hive Digital used in order to raise awareness about our company and provide evidence of our competency.



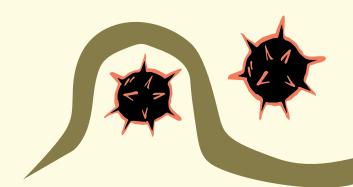


### #<u>1</u> PUBLISH RESEARCH

I cannot stress this particular method enough. One of the many barriers you'll encounter in establishing your credibility is the willingness of other SEOs to vouch for your ability. When you perform experimentation and publish research regarding SEO, you admittedly help out all of your competitors by providing them with institutional knowledge that you could have kept to yourself and your team. However, more often than not, sharing that knowledge will lead to links and citations which can serve your company well. Nothing says your business can be trusted more than your potential competitors citing you as an authority.



As agencies grow, they tend to lose competencies at the granular, tactical level and gain competencies at the strategic level. How many times have you heard an industry talking head at a large agency talk about "brand" and "strategy" when your clients are begging you to "optimize title tags"? It's just the nature of the beast. We found out that many sought-after consultants needed to outsource their "dirty work" (the manual work that no one wants to do). I remember a specific relationship our company had with Todd Malicoat (Stuntdubl), a legend among search engine optimizers and, at the time, one of the most prominent consultants. This was back in the days of Digg, when a viral post would earn hundreds of unique, linking domains. We had contracted with Todd to do promotional work; we made sure power users submitted the content and so on, while Todd did much of the higher-level thought work, like create good viral concepts. Interestingly, we had never met in person before, and at Pubcon that year, I lined up to meet Todd after his talk. When I finally got to shake his hand, he called back the person to whom he had just spoken with and said, "Hey, these are the guys I use to handle promotion." It was an amazing, unsolicited validation from a grateful business partner. Over the years, I have found that taking work off the hands of successful agencies reinforces our competency and bolsters our own client list.



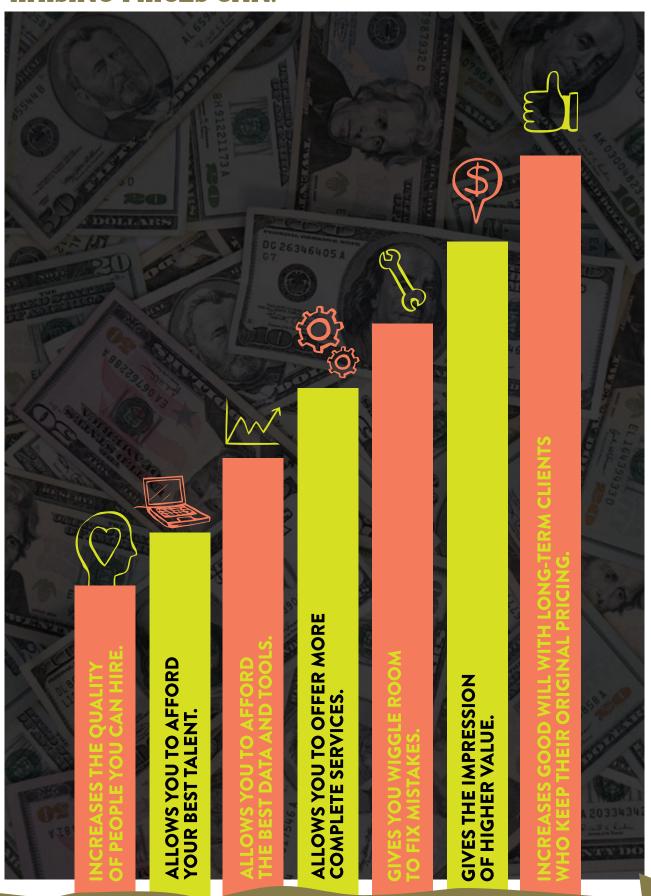
### BARRIER No. 2

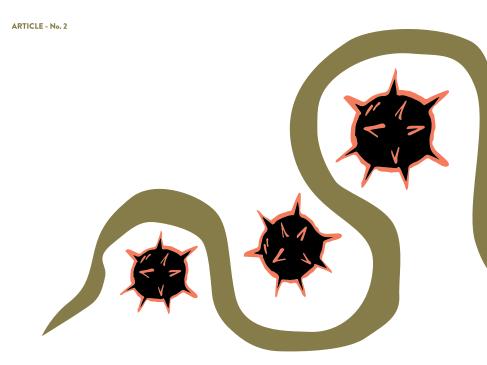
### PRICING (GETTING OVER THE FIXED PRICE HUMP)

Raise your prices and provide your existing customers legacy accounts for the remainder of the year. Do it. Sometimes it seems hard to justify raising your prices, but not doing so can very well end up being a penny wise and a pound foolish.



### RAISING PRICES CAN:





### BARRIER No. 3

### WEATHERING THE SEASONS

One of the last lessons I learned before leaving the consulting world was the importance of continuity. Every fourth quarter we would face a dilemma where our customers had run out of marketing dollars, yet our employees and resources were built out to handle the highest levels of need throughout the year. There are a number of ways to address this, such as using contract workers, setting retainers, and practicing fiscal discipline in saving profits throughout the year. However, I'd like to stress one area that often gets overlooked. Consultants, wherever possible, should have a default calendar. This calendar includes annual keyword discovery reports, annual competitive reports, monthly analytics and ranking reports, regular site audits, and so on that guarantee income throughout the year once a contract is signed. Customers seem to prefer this to standard retainers because the monthly cost varies with the work accomplished. Intentionally load long-term planning reports for slower months so that your income evens out.

Intentionally load long-term planning reports for slower months so that your income evens out.



### CLOSING THOUGHTS



HAVING
A ROBUST
ONLINE
PRESENCE
AND STRONG
INVESTMENT
IN SEO
WILL BE
THE NEW
NORMAL.



The world has changed immensely in 2020, and marketers coday are applient creative creatings to handle the new environment. Naccessity is the mother of invention and aspects of 2020 special distancing requirements will reshape the way we interest forces. Businesses and consumers have been broad to also massive leap forward in digital encouranment, services, and commerce for many businesses and industries that were lagging behind, this transition is painful. District marketers must be influencing strategy, because the customer journey is reatly putely digital. These stremendous innovation and apparenting in these models. Having a rebust on line presence and arong investment in SEO will be the new normal.





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

As long as people need to find things, there will be search engines, and as long as people and businesses want to be found, there will be demand for search engine optimization. If we narrowly define SEO as a bundle of tactics, then it's absolutely going to change over and over in the coming decades, but the core idea of SEO goes hand in hand with search.

The big shifts we're seeing now and for the foreseeable future are coming from search engines trying to adapt to natural language, including new capabilities driven by machine learning. While this is a highly technical subject, it also frees SEOs up to be more creative, able to focus on better content, and think more like humans and less like machines.

### 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?

Instead of obsessing over a narrow set of keywords (especially vanity keywords), I think businesses should think more about what questions their customers are asking. Questions are not only rich with keywords, but they put you in the mindset of producing value and writing for people. As natural language search evolves, this approach will yield more and more rewards.

### WHAT IS YOUR MOST PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THE DIGITAL MARKETING FIELD?

For me, it's not one project but all of those times an individual person told me that they put something I spoke or wrote about into practice and it produced real benefit. Having an impact in the real world and helping people do their jobs better is what excites me, much more than traffic and tweets.

### IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT SEO, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I honestly wish spam didn't work. It's hard to move people forward when they see 10-year-old, low-value tactics still succeeding in some industries and for some keywords. Better search results are good for all of us.

#### AS SEARCH RESULTS CONTINUE TO CHANGE AND EVOLVE, HOW SHOULD SEOS TRACK RANKINGS AND WHAT METRICS ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR MEASURING SEO

I think we have to consider the whole picture. We still need rankings to drive traffic and traffic to drive clicks and clicks to drive conversions, so we have to understand the whole chain. Ranking has grown beyond ten blue links, and for any given topic or industry we need to understand what formats and SERP features Google believes match the intent of the searcher.

#### WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO MARKETERS OR OTHER INDIVIDUALS JUST GETTING STARTED IN SEO?

Be curious and never stop learning. There are a lot of technical aspects to our trade (especially with the advent of machine learning) and a lot of social science and human elements as well. I think the best SEOs, even if they specialize in one area, have a broad knowledge of marketing.

PEOPLE DON'T SWITCH AGENCIES OR HIRE NEW IN-HOUSE MARKETERS BECAUSE THEY WANT MORE OF THE SAME. PEOPLE MAKE CHANGES WHEN THEY DON'T **UNDERSTAND HOW** WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS MEANT TO HELP THEM GET TO WHERE THEY NEED TO GO.

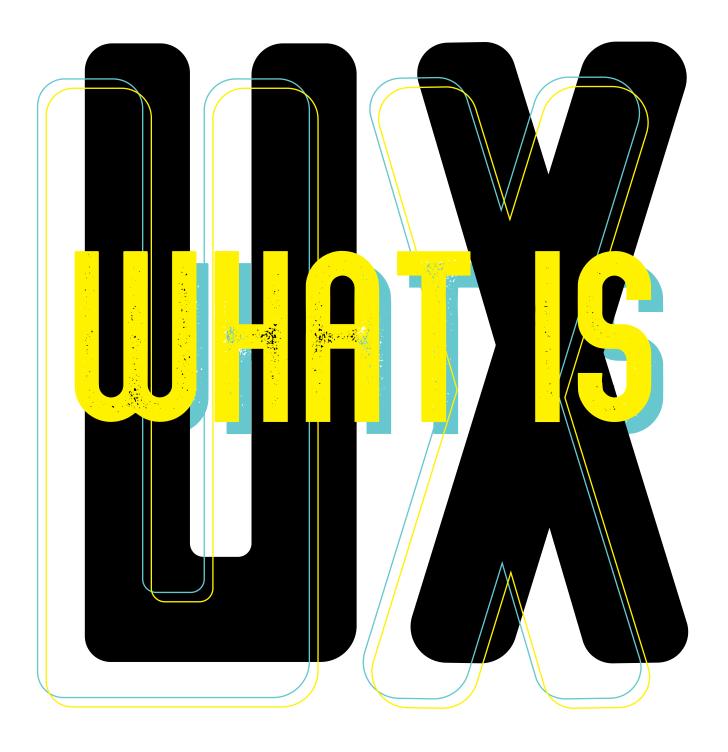


# PG. 54 [ DANA DITOMASO] PRESIDENT & PARTNER, KICK POINT



#### ARTICLE - No. 3

#### [ROBIN LORD]



THE IMPORTANCE OF USER EXPERIENCE FOR SEOS

UX is short for User Experience which really just means, "Do people like using this thing?"

Everything from your shoelaces, to your keyboard, to your fridge, to your laptop, to your website, has a kind of UX. If people don't like using the thing, most of the time they won't use it. And if that thing is our website, then we're probably going to lose money.



#### If we're responsible for Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), our relationship with UX is probably one of the following:

We're in a small organisation - we have to do all the SEO and UX work. We're judged on organic traffic, organic conversions, and total conversions. This means we have to prioritise the things which will make the biggest impact and the best use of our (and our development/engineering team's) time.

We're in a larger organisation - and while we're hands-on with SEO, a different team is responsible for UX. We're judged on organic traffic and organic conversions. Other channels don't feature in our KPIs, neither does UX.

We are senior enough to manage both teams responsible for SEO and UX. Funnily enough, this puts us back in the same position as in number 1. We're judged on organic traffic and overall conversions. We have to prioritise what's going to make the biggest difference based on a finite amount of developer time.

Let's imagine we're purely focused on those SEO KPIs and need to increase organic traffic more than anything else. If we're wearing our SEO hats, why should we care about UX? First, I'm going to talk about the evidence that proves good UX will help search rankings, and in turn, also help those KPIs, then I'm going to argue that even if good UX doesn't directly help our rankings, it'll help us get more traffic and more conversions anyway.





SEO HATS, WHY SH

#### **GOOGLE CARES ABOUT UX**

Google is trying to give their users the best internet experience. Google doesn't want users to think, "Yea, when I Google something, the sites that come up get me what I want eventually, but they are always really horrible to use."

In a weird way, if our UX is bad, it becomes a reflection on Google, so they consider user experience when evaluating sites.

<del>in a wierd</del> <del>-IF-OUR-UX-IS-BAD</del> <del>COOGLE.</del>

WE CAN ASSUME THAT IF WE TRY TO MEET THE QUALITY RATER GUIDELINES.

# THE GOOGLE QUALITY RATER GUIDELINES

Unless something has gone terribly wrong, most of the time Google rankings are decided on by machines.

However, if we just tell a computer program to find the best result to a question, it might not care whether the page it chooses is covered in flashing pop-up ads or if the text is purple on a pink background. Google needs a way to check that the latest algorithm is coming up with the answers its users want.

Google does have people manually check some of the results. These people are known as Google Quality Raters. They're asked to do a search, look at the top results, and report on how trustworthy, effective, and easy-to-use those results are. To make sure the evaluation is consistent, Google uses a set of guidelines you can find quite easily. Just search for "Google Quality Rater Guidelines."

When CNBC interviewed Ben Gomes, Google's Vice President of Search in 2018, he said that "You can view the rater guidelines as where we want the search algorithm to go [...] They don't tell you how the algorithm is ranking results, but they fundamentally show what the algorithm should do."

These guidelines tell us what Google considers to be a good result, what they want the algorithm to show. We can assume that if we try to meet the Quality Rater Guidelines, we should rank well now or in the future.

# WHAT DO THE QUALITY RATER GUIDELINES SAY ABOUT USER EXPERIENCE?

First off, the guidelines ask quality raters to avoid having any browser settings that could interfere with user experience on the page. That's some hint that they care about getting an accurate picture.

The guidelines also recommend the lowest score for sites which have a poor user experience, such as:

- Unexpected downloads.
- Anything that is difficult to read, watch, or use.
- Broken functionality of the page due to lack of skill in construction, poor design, or poor maintenance.
- Misleading titles that leave users feeling surprised or confused.
- Deceptive design.
- Anything that feels like a scam.



It's important to note that Google explicitly mentions that ads aren't just bad in and of themselves. They say that sometimes ads can be a positive part of the user experience, so they should be measured on the impact they actually have on the page.

There are also examples of otherwise good pages scoring lower because of distracting content, which makes the page harder to use.

On the other end of the scale, sites can get higher ratings by having additional content which helps the user experience (even a particularly helpful 404 page, for example).

Webpage/Type of Content	Highest Quality Characteristics	PQ Rating and Explanation
Highest: Page with Error Message: "Custom 404" page	A satisfying amount of high quality MC for its purpose (enor page)     Very positive reputation (website)     Very high level of E-A-T for the purpose of the page	Lowest Medium Highest  This is an example of a "custom 404" page. These pages are designed to alert users that the URL they are bying to visit no longer exists. The MC of this page is the carbon, the caption, and the search functionality, which is specific to the content of the website. It is clear that time, effort, and talent were involved in its creation.  This publication has a very positive regulation and is specifically known for its carbons.  Keep in mind that for any type of page, including pages with emor messages, there may be a range of highest quality to lowest quality. Therefore, it's important to evaluate the page using the same criteria as all other pages, regardless of what type of page it is.

Interestingly, poor user experience is marked even more harshly on mobile. It's harder to click around on mobile devices, so if you don't find what you're looking for, it's harder to get back to the search results, and Google cares about that. They care because, again, it's a user experience which reflects poorly on Google.

#### WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT IT?

One way to find areas of improvement is to put together a questionnaire of your own, based on the Quality Rater Guidelines, and send it out using a survey platform. My colleagues and I have done this a lot in the past — it can really show just how much UX is a consideration for the SEO team.

#### **SOUND A BIT INDIRECT?**

Even though the Quality Rater Guidelines are a very clear sign that Google is paying close attention to UX, you could be forgiven for thinking that the link isn't very direct. If you're looking for something more immediate, let's look at the Chrome Usage Data.

#### CHROME USAGE DATA

If you weren't aware, Google Chrome is watching you. In fact, unless you've opted out, every time you load a web page on Google Chrome it records how long that page takes to load and sends that information straight to Google.

Back in 2018, Tom Anthony (then part of the Distilled R&D team) caught up with John Mueller (of Google). Mueller confirmed that Google uses this aggregated Chrome data as part of site speed evaluations, which are one way that Google decides how to rank sites.

I think we can all agree that site speed is an important part of UX. Most obviously, a site is a complete pain if it takes ages to load or if the page loads but then the text keeps jumping around while other things pop in. What's more, things that make a page hard to use often slow pages down. For example, if a page is packed with ad spaces, it's going to have to decide which ads to show, get the images, load them in. This all takes extra time.

It's not new information that Google thinks site speed is important. In 2018, they were putting out articles telling people that we could be making more money on our sites (regardless of organic search) if we improved our site speed.

Google also released tools to help. The "Impact Calculator" tool — which can be filled out with your current speed, conversion rate, and the value of your conversions — will tell you how much more money you could be making with a faster site (a convenient way to catch the eye of senior decision makers).

The Chrome User Experience (CRUX) report is another attempt by Google to help us focus more on site speed. It's a public data set based on the same aggregated data that Google gets from Google Chrome. It doesn't have every site yet, but it has a lot! The CRUX report lets you compare your site speed with that of

your competitors to see how much better they are doing than you are for your actual users. Google has put together a Chrome User Experience Data Studio Connector (which you can find by Googling just that). It's nice and easy to set up but won't give you all of the information. To really dig in, you can access the CRUX report in BigQuery. It has a couple of quirks, so you'll need someone who can write SQL, but it's definitely worth using.

I'd pay particular attention to Time to First Byte (TTFB), First Contentful Paint, and DOM ContentLoaded. Those milestones can help you identify where you are slower.

Both of those tools can help you find out if you're slower than your competitors and how much Google thinks you stand to gain in conversions alone if you improve your site speed. Then, it's just about convincing the powers that be in your organisation and spending some of that hard-earned developer time reducing your load speed.



FOOGLE CHROME IS WATCHING YOU.

# MORE CONTROVERSIAL THEORIES ABOUT GOOGLE AND UX

As well as the above, (which are fairly clear and direct signs that Google takes the UX of your site into consideration) we have some other hints that UX is a direct factor.

When Google is evaluating PPC ads to decide which ones to show, Google considers how much advertisers are paying and the Quality Score of the ad. The higher an advert's Quality Score, the less you usually have to pay for your ad to show up.

In 2016, PPC agency Adalysis used bulk-downloaded PPC data to find that landing page experience ends up being around 40% of Google's Quality Score rating. Surprise, surprise —Google's documentation on what makes for a good landing page experience is very similar to the UX-focused Quality Rater Guidelines.

This tells us that the Google PPC team has a way to measure landing page experience, and that they value it enough to actively rely on it. Based on that, it's not wild to think that landing page experience could be a factor in search rankings in the future.

Another part of Quality Score is clickthrough rate (CTR), which is interesting because CTR as a ranking factor is a pretty highly-contested topic in SEO.

# I'M CONFIDENT COOCLE DOESN'T USE COOCLE ANALYTICS DATA IN RANKINGS.

# CLICKTHROUGH RATE AS A RANKING FACTOR

In 2014, Rand Fishkin, founder and former CEO of Moz, had an article ranking in position 7 for the search "imec lab." He asked a bunch of people to do that search, scroll down to his page, and click on it. During that experiment, he found that his article jumped up to position 1. He also reported having some contacts who found that the rankings changed if lots of people were clicking on them.

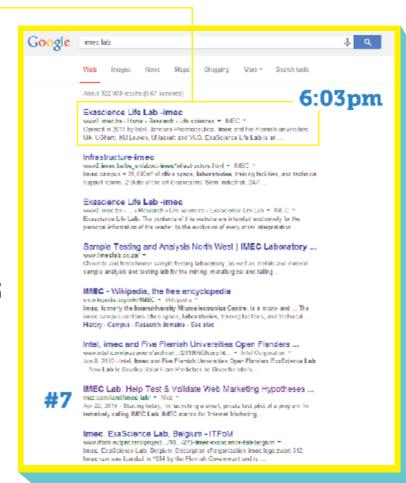
However, Google frequently denies that clickthrough rate is any part of ranking decisions. Gary Illyes (of Google) mentioned Rand specifically in a Reddit AMA in February 2019; "Dwell time, CTR, whatever Fishkin's new theory is, those are generally made up crap."

# DOES GOOGLE USE GOOGLE ANALYTICS DATA, LIKE BOUNCE RATE?

I'm confident Google doesn't use Google Analytics data in rankings. I know some people worry that Google is going to look at their GA data, see something it doesn't like (like a high bounce rate, for example) and drop their rankings. The problem is, GA data is far too noisy for Google to make decisions on.

What if a site implements their Google Analytics badly so it looks as if people are leaving when they're actually staying? Would Google want an otherwise good result to disappear because of that?

What about something like Wikipedia? If people are landing on a Wikipedia page, reading it, and then immediately leaving the site it — depending on your analytics setup — could look like they're all bouncing. Would Google want Wikipedia to stop ranking because of that?



### DOES GOOGLE USE POGO-STICK RATE?

Pogo-sticking is a jargony term for when someone searches for something, clicks on a result, then goes back to the search results and clicks on something else. Google knows how this data is working, they don't have to worry about other people's screwed up analytics, and it is some signal that the person was unsatisfied with what they got on the first page.

In 2018, CNBC sat in on a Google meeting where a team was reviewing a proposed algorithm change. In that meeting, Google said it was a bad sign if an algorithm change resulted in more users clicking on a search result and then quickly clicking back to the results page. So we know that Google uses pogo-stick rate as a way to assess individual algorithm changes. We just don't know whether they use it to rate individual results.

UX would definitely be a part of that. If your page takes forever to load or is hard to use, it's very possible that someone would go back to search results and click on one of the other 1.6 million results Google is offering to see if it's better.

#### WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT IT?

As you can probably tell, nothing in this section results in clear, specific actions. Fortunately, that only causes problems for the people who are trying to game the system.

If your strategy is to pay a bunch of people to search for things and click on your site, then yes, maybe it's an issue if Google doesn't pay attention to that. If, on the other hand, you just want to make a good site that users will visit and buy from, this is all just supporting your position, which leads nicely to my final point.

# IMPROVING UX WILL HELP US ANYWAY

Let's take the (extreme) position that meeting the Google Quality Rater Guidelines won't help us rank better, that Google doesn't pay much attention to site speed, and doesn't look at any user behaviour. A good user experience is still likely to help us in all sorts of ways.

If we're being measured on organic sales, having a site which is clear and simple to use is going to help our organic visitors convert. That's a core principle of Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO), which is a whole industry on its own. Likewise, as Google points out, having a site which loads faster is more likely to help us get sales which improve our numbers.

If we're measured purely on traffic, rankings aren't the only things that cause people to click on results. Google doesn't just automatically send traffic to whichever site ranks first. So if your users find your site really hard to use, you're going to lose traffic because people will avoid clicking on you even if you rank first. On the other hand, if you're in position two but your users see your site as an easy, enjoyable way to get what they're looking for, then they're more likely to click on you. So even if UX doesn't help you rank better, it could help you get more traffic for the same queries.

Let's go a step further. Imagine someone visits your site for the first time, has a lovely experience, and the next time they're looking for something similar (or want to find the same information again) they search for your site specifically. If you're not being explicitly measured on non-branded search, that's more organic traffic you're getting.

#### SHOULD SEOS CARE ABOUT UX?

Yes. There's evidence that good UX will help you rank better, but even if we ignore all of that, our job as SEOs is not really to rank. Our job is to get traffic and sales. How users actually experience our site can either be a big help or a weight around our necks.

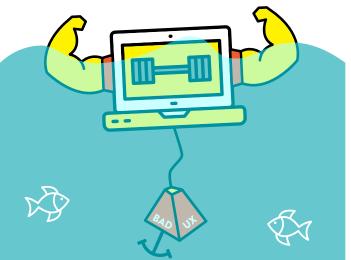
#### WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT IT?

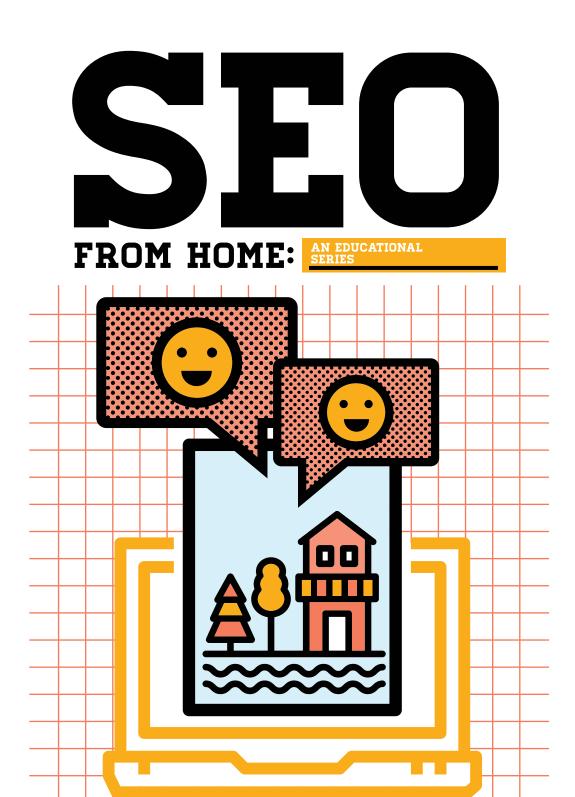
- Run surveys use the Google Quality Rater Guidelines if you need a starting point.
- If you have a CRO team talk to them.
- Check your site speed you can use tools like Lighthouse, but I really vouch for the Chrome User Experience Report.
- Care about user experience.



Give Robin a follow on Twitter for more tips and insight on how UX can help your search rankings and presence: @RobinLord8







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PANEL DISCUSSIONS - OPEN Q&As AND AMAS FULL SLIDE DECK PRESENTATIONS - AND MORE



### CONN

# HOWTO BUILD CONTENT THAT RANKS.

No. 7

#### **BRIAN DEAN**

Founder, Backlinko



To hear more SEO stories and examples of why content ranks, give Brian a follow on Twitter: @Backlinko



Search intent is key for creating content that ranks in Google over the long term. In other words: your content needs to give Google searchers exactly what they want, or they're going to bounce back to the search results. And if Google sees searchers bouncing back away from your site, they're very likely to downrank you.

For example, a few years ago, a page from my site titled "How to get high-quality backlinks," ended up ranking on page one for the term "how to get high." Needless to say, my page was a bad fit for that keyword's search intent. So after a few days, Google pushed my page to the second page for that keyword (my rankings for my actual keyword stayed the same.)

So if your content isn't ranking, it could be because of a million different things, from backlinks to on-page SEO. But it could be as simple as the other nine results on Google's first page are satisfying search intent better than your page is right now.

#### ARTICLE - No. 4

#### [JOY HAWKINS]

# GETTING THE COME OF THE PROM GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

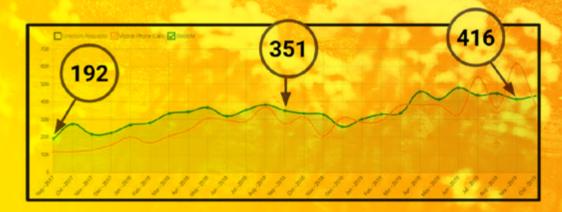
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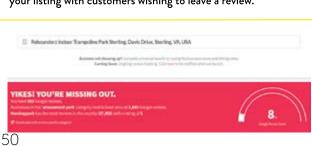
Local search is bigger than ever before. With the increasing number of "near me" searches on Google, we are still seeing continued growth in traffic from Google My Business. In this example below, the number of visits to the business website from their Google My Business listing has more than doubled over the last two years. Businesses often ask what they should be focusing on to maximize their exposure on Google, so I'm going to list out some of the practical things every small business should be doing.

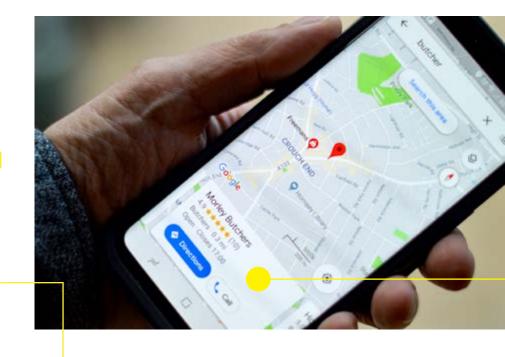






According to a Local Consumer Review Survey conducted by BrightLocal, consumers read an average of 10 online reviews before giving their trust to a local business. Additionally, 91% of 18-34-year-olds trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations. By and large, we have seen tremendous growth in the average number of reviews acquired by businesses. According to a study by Nifty Marketing, the average number of reviews for a law firm on Google My Business jumped 65% between 2016 and 2018. If you're wondering how many reviews you should aim for, Whitespark has an awesome tool (https://whitespark.ca/review-checker/) that will tell you the target number of reviews a business in your industry should have, as well as the number of reviews acquired by your biggest competitor near you. We use a tool called GatherUp to automate our review soliciting process. Google also has a free tool called Short Name for Google My Business that will give you a shorter URL to use when sharing your listing with customers wishing to leave a review.

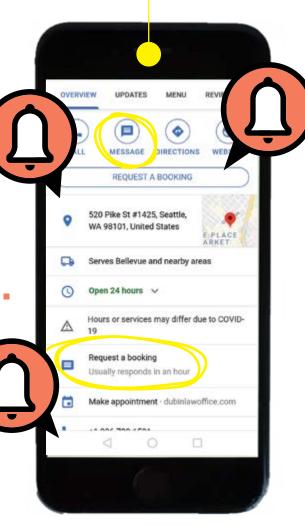




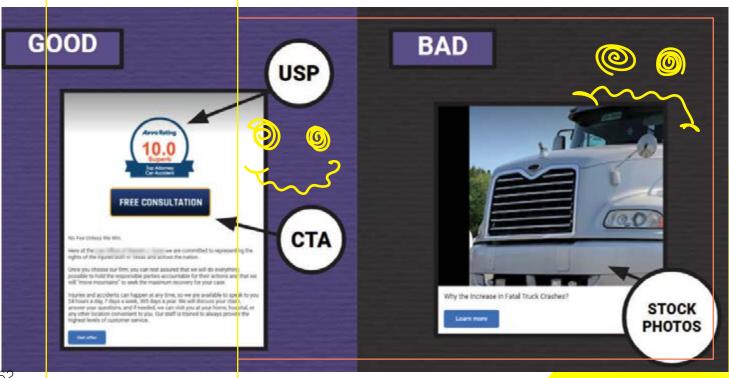
# OTILIZE GMB MESSAGING

Google My Business has a feature called Messaging that works similarly to Facebook Messages. Activating the feature causes a "Message" button to appear on your listing on mobile devices. When a user clicks it, they are taken to a direct message screen that you can use to chat in real time. These messages are delivered to the business owner through the Google My Business app. In order to utilize the feature, the app needs to be installed on your phone and push notifications enabled so you get the messages in real time. Your response time to the messages is published on the listing.

YOUR RESP<mark>onse time is published on the listing</mark>

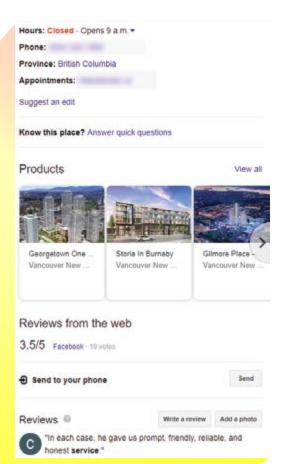


Google Posts is a feature that allows a business to push an update live in the search results. By default, posts stay live for seven days before disappearing, but you can get around this by utilizing the Event post feature to specify the number of days you want it to stay active. To get the best results from Google Posts, you should make them highlight your business's Unique Selling Proposition (USP). We find that posts perform much better when they list photos of, say, company-earned awards instead of generic stock photos.





Google My Business has a section that business owners can use to list images and descriptions of their products—and not just for tangible products, either. We suggest that even service-based businesses list what they have to offer. In this example, we utilized the Products section for a real estate agent to highlight some of the properties they were selling. The Products feature is highlighted prominently in the Knowledge Panel and even shows up above the section for Posts.



### GOOGLE MY BUSINESS IS AN EVER-EVOLVING PRODUCT AND IS CONSTANTLY RELEASING NEW FEATURES AND UPDATES.



For more ideas and insight on how to improve your online footprint as a small business, give Joy a follow on Twitter: @JoyanneHawkins

Keep track of recent Google My Business changes with Joy's list, updated weekly, here: https://www.sterlingsky.ca/google-local-changes

#### ARTICLE - No. 5

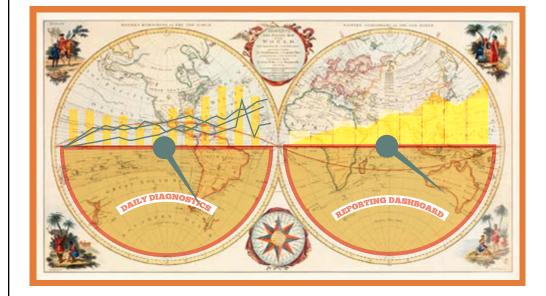
#### [DANA DITOMASO]

# SIEO RIEPORTURE

#### PROVE YOUR VALUE

#### "WHY DO WE CREATE REPORTS THAT ARE SO INCREDIBLY LONG?"

common lamentation in the SEO world is that our stakeholders just "don't get it." They don't understand what you do and why it's valuable. They think that SEO is a bunch of snake oil and you just sit around all day spamming websites asking for links. Of course, it would be great if your stakeholders just inherently knew that the reason their phone keeps ringing, or that the sales continue to roll in, is because of your brilliant SEO work. But if you do a good job of communicating results from the very beginning of your project, you won't need to convince them (as much) — they'll know.



#### MEASURE WHAT MATTERS

Before we dive into the data, let's first take a step back and consider what we actually need to measure. A common mistake we see in marketing reporting is overlong reports. Remember the last time you spent six hours putting together 28 pages of sizzling commentary? Even after all that work, no one was really interested in going through it, page by page or slide by slide. Not even you.

Why is that? Why do we create reports that are so incredibly long, crammed full of charts and data and three letter acronyms? Perhaps it's insecurity — the more information, the better, right? Unfortunately we are not paid by the number of pounds of paper we can use up each month. Instead, we're paid for our marketing know-how. Reporting is very important, but taking screenshots for hours every month isn't exactly a great use of anyone's time. What to do?

#### MONITORING VS. REPORTING

What is likely happening here is that you may be mistaking monitoring with reporting. Monitoring is the data, the day to day, the checking that the graph is indeed going up and to the right as you expected. Reporting is the result, the proof that you're going in the right direction. Or, if you aren't going in the right direction, the knowledge of what needs to be done to correct your course.

Instead of one report, you should actually have two — a diagnostics dashboard for your own use, and a report for your stakeholders.

The diagnostics dashboard is very much focused on the here and now. Are there errors in Google Search Console that you need to check out? What about that spammy new competitor in the map pack? Rankings have dropped. Why? These are the kinds of in-the-moment, actionable concerns that your dashboard should be bringing to your attention.

Here is a perfect, real-world example of why you need this dashboard. We had a client whose developers were a little heavy handed on the code updates. Knowing this, we were watching the site using Little Warden, making sure that their Google Tag Manager code was still present. Then on the 6th of the month, right after a major site migration, we got a notification that the Google Tag Manager code was gone. We alerted the client and the developers and the code was back on in a few hours. Imagine if we'd waited until the end of the month to pull a report, only to realize that the code had been gone for most of the month — ever since the site migration!

Monitoring for these types of issues is very important, and if you solve the issue in a timely fashion, it doesn't even need to be added to a report. Plus, the presence or absence of your GTM code isn't going to tell you if you're going where you need to go. It's like the difference between strategy and tactics — posting on Instagram three times a day is a tactic, but without knowing the why, you won't ever see the results you want from all this hard

Now that you have your diagnostic dashboard complete, what's left to go into your report to your stakeholders? Results. Specifically, results tied to goals. It's time to sit down and have an honest conversation with your stakeholders and find out what matters most to them.

Increase qualified leads to 200/month.



2. Have a qualified lead breakdown of 50% parts & service, 25% new equipment sales, and 25% used equipment sales.

New Equipment Sales Parts& Service

#### **BUSINESS GOALS TO KPIS TO METRICS**

First, you need to agree on business goals for your organization. Don't just focus on so-called "marketing" goals. Instead, lay out all the goals. What are the major milestones that your organization needs to hit this year? Here is a recent example from one of our clients: (bottom left).

These are great, measurable goals. You may have goals that are slightly less measurable. For example, "increase awareness" or "improve stakeholder engagement." Though these can be turned into measurable goals, they're going to need some work. Your job will be to shape these goals from formless nothings into goals that you can actually point to and say, "Yes, we got there!"

Now, back to your stakeholder's goals. Let's start with the first one: Increase qualified leads to 200/month. You might be tempted to track form fills in Google Analytics and call it a day. You can do better.

Note that our client specifically mentions qualified leads, not just any lead. And of course you want to be sure that leads via SEO are just as good as leads that come from other channels. There are several ways to accomplish this but a good way to start is to record the source of every lead and then see how leads via organic search are performing. See if there is a consistent percentage of unqualified to qualified leads each month, then see if you can improve that percentage.

For example, if 75% of unqualified leads become qualified, then you're going to need 267 form fills every month across all channels. If 60% of leads come from organic, that's 160 leads that you're responsible for. Now you know that you need an ongoing form fill counter in your dashboard - essentially a burndown chart for qualified leads. This way, you'll be able to see halfway through the month that you're going to hit (or miss!)

your goal and can adjust your time and effort accordingly. This math also assumes that you don't have leads visiting the site multiple times before they

convert, but covering multi-touch attribution is a topic for another article!

Let's turn to that second goal: Have a qualified lead breakdown of 50% parts & service, 25% new equipment sales, 25% used equipment sales. Again, you'll have to rely on your stakeholders to categorize those qualified leads appropriately. You might be able to get this information another way if your website has separate forms for different services or some way to differentiate the type of lead, otherwise you'll have to rely on feedback from the CRM to get this mix. Since you already have the source saved to the lead, you can then map the lead mix by channel.

Working from our previous math, we now know that SEO needs to be responsible for 80% parts and service leads, 40% new equipment sales leads, and 40% used equipment sales leads. With this data, you can break down your burndown chart even further. You'll not only know if you're going to hit your total lead targets, but whether or not you're going to hit your division

By tracking leads by division, we can also see if one division in particular is struggling. Maybe that mix is starting to skew 60/20/20 instead of the goal 50/25/25. Are there more parts and service leads because overall there are more leads for that sector, or are you struggling to bring in qualified traffic to your new and used equipment pages? Having this information in hand will make a huge difference in how you approach your day-to-day SEO work. Instead of focusing on more traffic, you can laser point your efforts on where you need to be.

#### BUILDING YOUR REPORT

Now it's time to make that report. In this situation we're covering, you only need one page to cover everything you need to report on — leads and lead mix by channel, based against your goal figures. That's it.

It might be a shock to go from that 26-page report to a singlepage report, and if you're worried about that, start dialing things back slowly. Start with this one page, and then slowly chop away pages you no longer need off the end. Before you know it, you'll have a single-page report. No one will miss that one page showing how many visitors you received from Luxembourg for your one location business in Chicago.

#### **Use Their Words**

In addition to making the report as short as possible, try to use the same language that the people you're reporting to use in their day-to-day speech. When you're having that conversation with your leadership team about goals, try to write down exactly how they phrase things. For example, do they say, "We want phone call conversions." or do they say, "We want to keep the phone ringing."? This will help guide the microcopy in your report and make the report more approachable.

#### You Shouldn't Need To Be There

Additionally, assume that you won't be there to explain the report. Would it make sense without you there to explain it? If not, you need to add in microcopy — little pieces of explanation to accompany your charts and graphs. Not only should the report be understandable by everyone, it should be understandable for years to come.

#### **Avoid Tables**

SEOs are big Excel nerds, present company included. This means that we often turn to tables first when a nice graph would actually be a better choice. Not everyone is comfortable with tables and numbers, plus tables take longer to review and understand compared to looking at a line or bar chart. If you must present in table form, try to include bar charts or heatmaps inside each table to highlight your most important information.

#### PROVE YOUR

Reporting might seem like something you can put off — something that you can focus on when you have more time to do it right, and that your everything-and-the-kitchen-sink-style reports are passable for now. Based on our experience, the best time to start working on a report is when you first start that job or that working relationship with a client. The second best time? Right now.

Why? Marketers are good at marketing. Everyone's been sold a bill of goods from a slick-talking marketer who didn't deliver, and while you may be committed to doing things right and getting the job done, you're dealing with years of unmet expectations from others in your industry. A clear report, without any bafflegab or useless metrics, can mean a world of difference in separating you from the rest of the pack.

People don't switch agencies or hire new in-house marketers because they want more of the same. People make changes when they don't understand how what you're doing is meant to help them get to where they need to go. Clearly stated goals and clear, short, and easy to understand reports will get you where you want to go.



#### the time is now.



Dana is president and partner at Kick Point, where she helps people and teams do better marketing. Give her a follow on twitter for more updates and fancy beer choices: @danaditomaso

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# LINKS BUILT FOR RESULTS +

### **CONTENT BUILT FOR SEARCH**



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ARTICLE - No. 6

#### [HEATHER PHYSIOC]

# START YOUR INTERNAL OR CLIENT SEO PROCRAM ON THE RICHT FOOT.



LACK OF BUY-IN. FAILURE TO PRIORITIZE. LIMITED BUDGET AND RESOURCES. LOW UNDERSTANDING OF SEARCH. CORPORATE SILOS. ALL THESE AND MORE ARE OBSTACLES STANDING IN THE WAY OF CETTING YOUR TEAM'S BEST SEARCH WORK IMPLEMENTED --MUCH OF IT CAN BE PREVENTED BY STARTING THE SEARCH PROCRAM ON RICHT FOOT, WHETHER IT'S YOUR INTERNAL PROCRAM OR WITH AN EXTERNAL CLIENT.

#### WHAT COULD CO WRONC?

Let's say you won a new client or got a new opportunity to start a search program at your job. You are probably feeling antsy and excited to get started, your boss or client is feeling hopeful, and the honeymoon phase begins. What could go wrong?

Then, a few months in, you notice things that don't seem to be what you signed on for. Perhaps the client is constantly challenging you, priorities seem to be changing almost hourly, stakeholders are obsessing over unimportant metrics, or the client is expecting immediate results when you can't seem to push the work through. Or worse, they might be asking, "What am I paying for again?" Before you know it, you're desperately racing around to manage crisis after crisis instead of focusing on the future.

The team might be frustrated and showing signs of burnout, even feeling gaslighted. Meanwhile, you have an unhappy client and your new account is at risk or your boss is questioning whether search is really important at your company.

To quote my colleague, Charles Gooch, "Everything feels like it's on fire, and no one knows where it's coming from."

When situations like this arise, it turns out there are several common causes that are often preventable. Wouldn't it have been nice to have known to look for these pitfalls before you started your project to prevent the stress and swirl?

#### THE 4 BICCEST MISTAKES WE MAKE

After one too many painful experiences, I decided to get to the heart of the issue. I reflected on my own past failures with clients and surveyed our search industry peers to look for patterns. From that research emerged four common mistakes we tend to make.

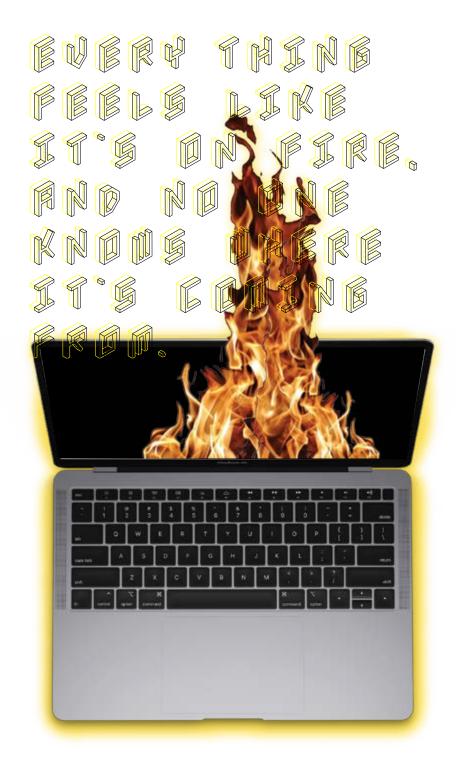
Not Gauging Client Understanding - This can mean your client's understanding of the value and limitations of search, but it can also mean assessing the maturity of their search program and not assuming it's more advanced than it is.

Not Communicating Early, Often, and Clearly - The success of your search program is only partially about how good your actual SEO is. A huge amount of your success is how effectively you communicate with your bosses or clients about search.

Being Reactive Instead of Proactive - This comes from a good place - we're all trying to be a good partner or subject matter expert, so we try to do whatever our boss or client wants, especially early in the program. But instead of steering the ship, we find ourselves meandering and the program becomes ineffective.

Failing to Align On Expectations & Outcomes - This is a chronic issue in search. The gap between a client's expectations and reality is proportionate to the failure your search program could face.

But this isn't our clients' or bosses' fault. All four of these mistakes boil down to one core problem — a failure to communicate. And often that failure stems from an innate fear of — or discomfort with — having hard conversations with our clients and bosses.



RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO DIVE STRAIGHT INTO TACTICAL EXECUTION.

#### TOP 4 COMMUNICATION MISTAKES SEARCH MARKETERS MAKE

01

NOT GAUGING CLIENT UNDERSTANDING ACCURATELY

02

NOT COMMUNICATING EARLY, OFTEN, AND CLEARLY

03

BEING REACTIVE, INSTEAD OF PROACTIVE 04

FAILING TO ALIGN EXPECTATIONS AND OUTCOMES

#### A CREAT DOCTOR CURES THE CAUSE

You can scramble to treat the symptoms, or you can prevent the problem to begin with. A little leg work up front can help to avoid great pain and suffering in the long term. Proper immersion into a brand can start your search program on the right foot and uncover problems that would otherwise catch you off guard later. Whether your search client is an external partner or an internal executive at your company, an immersion workshop can have a huge impact on the understanding of, support for, and success of your search program long term.

According to an informal survey I conducted, search professionals generally agree that onboarding new clients is important. But onboarding tends to be inconsistent from one client to the next, if proper onboarding happens at all. In order to combat this uneven experience and set search programs up for success, try this robust, standardized immersion process.

This onboarding workshop is an immersive crash course on the brand, the organization, and how search can best serve the business. It helps search experts become knowledgeable fast, develops communication channels, builds relationships with important stakeholders. It organizes people around a common purpose, the strategic roadmap, and what success looks like. Ideally the workshop should be conducted in person, as the knowledge sharing and organic dialogue are important — but digital works just fine too!

#### Resist the temptation to dive straight into tactical execution.

It's common for a client to want "quick wins" and "low-hanging fruit," and it can be tempting to dive straight into SEO tactics without pausing to immerse and understand.

If you absolutely must start work immediately, negotiate a parallel path. While doing the strategic immersion process, perhaps work on a low-hanging fruit tactical win that will earn their trust early. But never minimize the importance of attaining deep knowledge through immersion, and aligning on a strategic, focused direction for the search program. This sets the tone for the rest of the partnership.

#### Survey says we need to care about more than keywords.

The success of your search program is only partially about how good your actual SEO is. A huge amount of your success is how effectively you communicate with your bosses or clients about search.

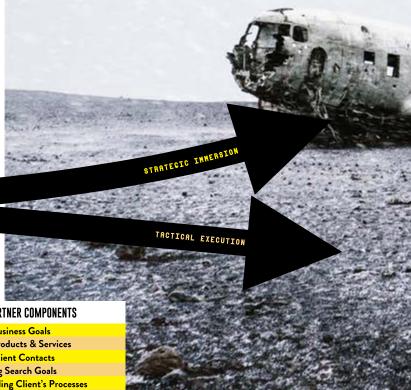


#### DON'T BUILD THE PLANE WHILE YOU'RE FLYING IT.

Without doing the legwork to get the knowledge you need, you're building a plane while you're flying it. But good news — you can realistically establish strong footing in all 13 of these criteria in just 2 days through a well-designed search immersion workshop.

You may encounter objections like perceiving the kickoff workshop as being a speed bump to getting results, or perhaps you think your client isn't big enough to warrant immersion, or maybe the client thinks it's too expensive.

We have found that it helps to level set with your clients or bosses on the importance of this efficient onboarding and education to the success of the search program. They have been receptive to the concept of slowing down briefly to speed up over the course of the program. They recognize that this is an essential step in order to make the most effective use of their marketing dollars. It earns their confidence that we hear them, we understand their needs, and we are prepared to help them win in search.



IF YOU MUST START WORK IMMEDIATELY, NECOTIATE A PARALLEL PATH.

### SURVEY SAYS

Search experts prioritized these elements of starting a successful search partnership.

#### PRIORITY | SEARCH PARTNER COMPONENTS

11

12

1 Knowing Business Goals
2 Knowing Products & Services
3 Knowing Client Contacts
4 Establishing Search Goals
5 Understanding Client's Processes
6 Learning Search Work History
7 Establishing KPIs & Reporting
8 Gauging Client Maturity
9 Gauging Client Knowledge
10 Securing Technical Resources

Securing Technical Resources

Learning Legal/Approval Processes

Identifying Current Tools & Platforms

Securing Copywriting Resources



# SEARCH IMMERSION



BECIN THE PROCESS WITH
A SAMPLE SEARCH IMMERSION
WORKSHOP ACENDA TO LET
THE CLIENT OR BOSS REACT
AND START THE CONVERSATION.
WORK CLOSELY WITH THEM
TO COMPLETELY CUSTOMIZE
THE ACENDA TO BE AS
RELEVANT AS POSSIBLE TO
THEIR BUSINESS AND
OBJECTIVES. INCLUDINC
THEM IN THE PLANNINC
PROCESS ENSURES THEY
HAVE SKIN IN THE CAME
TO MAKE THE WORKSHOP

SUCCESSFUL

There are three types of sessions in a standard workshop — mission, stakeholder, and practitioner. They break down as follows:

Mission - The objective of this session is to understand the brand's DNA, objectives, pain points, stakeholders, roles, and responsibilities. The client or internal marketing lead typically prepares the content for this session. They share about the brand and its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. They share their objectives and priorities for the year, the things that keep them up at night. They know the brand better than anyone, so this session sets the tone for the immersion workshop.

Stakeholders - This is a high-level, strategic set of sessions with the marketing team you'll be working with day to day. You will meet other stakeholders in the organization who will be impacted by SEO outcomes. It includes things like business unit or department deep dives. In large organizations, perhaps one or two business units' objectives can be prioritized in a typical year, and we want to know everything about them. These sessions are highly conversational, and often the best insights come out of the unplanned dialogue. Use discussion guides here to steer your conversations.

Practitioners - This block of sessions is intended for practitioners — like the developers, content creators, or analytics experts — to educate the search team. (Not the other way around.) For technical developers and content writers, it's important to understand their workflows, when and how to include them in the process, how to submit requests, and how they allocate resources and prioritize their projects. For content teams, we want to understand who owns content and how they make editorial decisions. We work with analytics teams to understand goals and KPls, how they measure things, and the best approach for search reporting dashboards to ensure our search work is always aligned.

Then, we close with a summary session, where we highlight the big themes and takeaways, and agree on next steps across the group. Attendees should leave the search immersion workshop with clear actions and ownership.

This is a rigorous, two-day boot camp when executed in full. This base model greatly increases the speed of ramping up the search program and the likelihood of its success. It can be modified to be digital, have different sessions customized to your brand, as well as a number of other ways.



# SEARCH IMMERSION

**GENERAL QUESTIONS** 

WE USE SEVERAL TOOLS TO MAKE SPINNING UP A SEARCH IMMERSION WORKSHOP A BREEZE AND ENSURE A THOUROUGH AND COMPLETE ONBOARDING OF OUR CLIENTS EVERY TIME.

#### STANDARD ONBOARDING CHECKLIST

We always need things from our clients like access to their analytics account, or keys to the website so we can implement changes. This is a completely repeatable process, so there's no excuse for reinventing the wheel every time. This standardized onboarding checklist helps you and your clients get organized early, reducing downtime while you're waiting. Send it to your client as soon as possible and start gathering what you need. It sends the message that this isn't your first rodeo and you came ready to work.

HERE IS VITAL UE GENEBVI UNESTIUNG THAT

Ε.

What are the brand's most important goals and objectives?

What are the desired outcomes, actions or conversions you would like customers to complete online?

Is target audience and persona information available? Who are your ideal customers?

What are your highest selling and/or most profitable product or services lines?

If there are multiple brands or product lines, please elaborate on hierarchy or prioritization for the upcoming year.

Who do you consider your closest competitors? Any additional information about your competitive landscape?

Are there style guides, brand manifestos or tone guidelines to follow?

Who are the client stakeholders responsible for requesting and approving projects?

Is there a legal approval process? Is there language or terminology that should be avoided, or mandatory legal language inclusions?

Inventory of links owned assets, including: website(s) domains and subdomains, social media profiles, video channels, etc.

What are your expectations for continuous support, including communication, check-ins, meetings and follow-ups?

HERE IS A LIST OF GENERAL QUESTIONS THAT WILL HELP US GAUGE ALL EFFORTS AND NEEDED SUPPORT MOVING FORWARD. NOT ALL TOPICS ARE APPLICABLE, AND FUTURE MEETING/CALLS MAY BE SCHEDULED TO GATHER ADDITIONAL DATA.





USE A NICE PEN HERE....

# NOTES **COMPLETE?**

#### IMMERSION WORKSHOP DISCUSSION CUIDES

We don't just need access from clients, we need knowledge. When we skip this step up front, it results in backtracking and delays. We create discussion guides to kick off the conversation in the various immersion sessions and ensure we get the most possible value out of them.

Customize these discussion guides to your brand, then send them as prework so attendees can come prepared. But don't just toss these over the fence. Use these to seed a few (not all) of the questions in real-time discussions to get the conversation rolling.

Then, follow the conversation organically. This is an important time to listen more than you talk. Pay attention to the answers, and ask open-ended, follow-up, and clarification questions. These open discussions reveal far more insights than simply sending this list via email.

#### [Business Unit] Discussion Guide

#### Description

Many of these questions allow for pre-work so the in-person conversation can be dedicated to er topics. Our goal is to understand your business model, customers and goals so we can best serve your needs through organic search.

#### Questions

- Who are the stakeholders in this business unit? What is your role? (BU org chart? How does it intersect with brand level?)
- What are your division's most significant accomplishments? Do you have a favorite case
- What are your division's most significant pain points?
  Which products are [Business Unit] responsible for? Which are the most profitable or prolific? (Any priority hierarchy of products? Features/benefits/reasons to believe? How do you talk about your products?)
- What is your sales process and customer lifecycle? Are there bundling options?
- Who do you consider to be your business unit's most relevant competitors? What are your business unit's goals and objectives?

- How do you measure your business unit's success?

  Who do you consider your primary target audience or personas for your business unit? Who is your ideal client?



SEARCH IMMERSION

#### EXPLAIN THE NEED FOR ACCESS AND INFORMATION

Some clients are sensitive to sharing the access and information you need to be successful. Some items are more important than others. For the truly critical items, be sure to articulate the consequences of not getting what you need. A few examples:

"If we don't get development resources allocated, these changes won't get implemented, and you won't get results from SEO."

"If you can't grant us access to your web analytics, our decision-making will be pure guesswork, plus we can't measure the impact of these search efforts so we can't prove to you it's working.

"We've seen with other clients that when there is no clear focus area defined for the program in year one, the effort tends to be less effective. It's important that we decide what your most significant priorities are this year."

#### MEET STAKEHOLDERS AND CREATE ADVOCATES

The immersion workshops are an important opportunity to meet with people in the organization, beyond your day-to-day client contact or immediate boss — a chance to seek perspective from people in other parts of the business who may have different goals or incentives. You can better understand broader concerns beyond the rankings and traffic SEOs love, to make you a better search decision maker who considers how search impacts all parts of the business. By knowing who has a stake in the work and bringing them to the table, you create a "discoverability taskforce" of advocates inside the client organization across different roles and business units.

# TASK FORCE

CREATE A DISCOVERABILITY

Business Unit
Leads
Local, Global, or
Regional Leads

Content
Creators
Developers

HORIZONTAL ALIGNMENT

Data & Analytics

VERTICAL ALIGNMENT



#### CREATE A "DISCOVERABILITY TASK-FORCE"

A Discoverability Taskforce consists of advocates, allies, and stakeholders who are important in the pursuit of implementing your work as seamlessly as possible. The mix of people may vary. They may be all or partly client side or agency side. Consider the diagram below.

The orange box is the SEO program owner if it's your client, or if you are in-house, that person may be you. This individual is the cornerstone of this search work. Working closely with the search lead are fellow practitioners relevant to search, like content creators, technical developers, or analytics experts. Above that individual may be vertical stakeholders, like the person in charge of all digital marketing efforts, or perhaps the head of marketing like a CMO. Then, parallel to the head of digital might be other department heads in the organization. These are horizontal stakeholders; they may be business unit leads like heads of product or service lines, heads of certain regions or global markets, or other departments like sales and accounting.

All stakeholders have different responsibilities, and SEO outcomes impact them differently. Listen deeply and understand how they fit, any preconceived notions they have about search, obstacles they face, and what success looks like to them. It's important to give them a seat at the table and proactively seek their input and opinions. This dialogue helps you identify the advocates and the skeptics. Getting into the same room at the same time with a common purpose breaks down search program-killing silos. You can leave the search immersion workshop with allies and advocates who ensure your success — these are the people who will break up log jams and fight for your work inside the organization. Empower them to do that through communication, education, and alignment.

#### ROOT OUT POTENTIAL OBSTACLES TO THE SEARCH PROCRAM

The search immersion workshop is also a pivotal moment to root out potential stumbling blocks. This may include internal politics, resource constraints, or other business challenges. Ask the hard questions and put the onus on everyone to make search successful. Read the room and read between the lines. If you detect any skepticism or tension or discomfort, don't shy away from it. Dig deeper.

One way to do that is a simple sticky note exercise. Include the stakeholders, advocates, and skeptics — we want to hear from them all. We ask two questions:

- 1. What will it take for this program to succeed?
- 2. What obstacles might cause it to fail?

Allow about 10 minutes for people to brainstorm as much as possible on their sticky notes, throw them up on a wall, and then sort and group them. We pull out common themes and discuss as a group. They will reveal the internal actions they need to take, things they have seen work or fail in the past, and political, prioritization, or budget obstacles that put the program at risk. This simple exercise creates ownership beyond the lone SEO expert for the success or failure of search at the company.

#### DIACNOSE YOUR CLIENT'S SEARCH MATURITY

We regularly kick off partnerships with a structured maturity assessment, then conduct it annually to show how they are progressing on a search maturity curve over time. Here's a quick crash course.

The most difficult blockers any SEO program encounters often have nothing to do with search engines. Instead, they are organizational problems like people, processes, and integration. This maturity assessment exercise can open your eyes to problems a business needs to solve internally before meaningful search work can get done.

This isn't just punching numbers into a spreadsheet or a one-sided assessment. Ask as many stakeholders as possible across many departments and at many levels in the organization to participate in the maturity assessment survey.

We ask questions that help us assess the health of the organization when it comes to having defined processes, necessary staffing, adequate knowledge, enough capacity, and advance planning of important search work.

We collect the survey responses, then score the brand in each category and overall.

We use the scores to help the client visualize where they fall on the maturity curve. The scores are helpful, but we also share eye-opening quotes from the anonymous, open-ended answers to help the truth hit home. Those answers are especially insightful to uncovering pain points and missing links in their search program.



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#### <mark>ORGANIZ</mark>ATIONAL <mark>SEARCH</mark> MATURITY<mark> MODEL</mark>

# 5 KEY COMPONENTS

O1 PROCESS

Does a documented, repeatable process for inclusion of organic search exist and is it continuously improving?

02 PERSONNEL

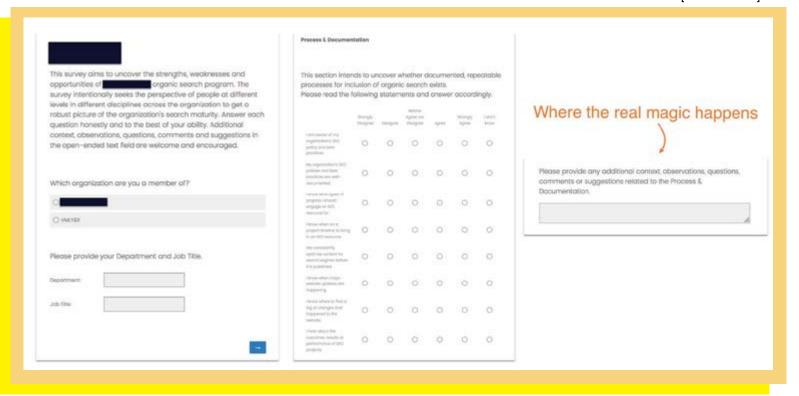
Does the necessary talent exist at the organization or within the scoped personnel? Is there clear ownership? 03 KNOWLEDCE

Is the organization knowledgeable about search? Is it prepared to learn more and evolve with the industry? O4 CAPACITY

Does the organization budget for organic search appropriately? Are search tasks prioritized against competing demands?

OS PLANNING

Is organic search aligned to brand goals? Is search engine optimization proactively included in marketing?



#### PRIORITIZE KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

Based on the survey outcomes, scores, and open-ended answers, identify no more than three top priority areas for the client to focus on in year one to improve their search program. Too many, and you lose focus. It's unrealistic to tackle three major program challenges for most brands in a year. Some examples may include:

- Developing a clear, aligned strategy for the search program that was missing before
- Breaking down silos and achieving alignment with stakeholders across departments and levels that impact the ability to implement a successful search program
- Increase education and knowledge sharing about search and success stories across the organization
- Developing clear, refinable process and documenting that process for democratization and scale
- · Improving technical or content governance that impacts search

#### PROPOSE SOLUTIONS AND ASSICN CLEAR OWNERSHIP

Based on the key areas of focus, identify how to take action and who will own that action. It's essential that you achieve absolute clarity about what, specifically, the client must be responsible for, and what you as their search partner will own. Specific action items based on those priorities may be things like:

- •Identifying and creating case studies to market SEO successes to the organization
- Unifying editorial content calendars to align disparate content workflows
- •Allocating more points in each dev sprint to dedicate to SEO improvements

### MATURITY SCORES

CRITERIASCOREKNOWLEDGE & LEARNING3.9PERSONNEL, RESOURCING & INTEGRATION3.6MEANS, CAPACITY & CAPABILITIES3.4PROCESS & DOCUMENTATION2.9PLANNING & PREPARATION2.7





SELL THE SEARCH

FINALLY, THE SEARCH
IMMERSION WORKSHOP IS
THE IDEAL PLACE TO ALICN
ON THE PROMISE AND
POSSIBILITIES OF
ORCANIC SEARCH.

### CLEARLY ARTICULATE SHARED PURPOSE

This meeting of the minds to kick off a search program is a chance to get everything out in the open, articulate a shared purpose to a full audience of stakeholders, and build momentum from day one. Be sure to verbalize the goals and ask for verbal agreement like you're in an emergency exit aisle on a plane. It's important to leave the immersion workshop agreeing on what to accomplish and how to get there.

### PAINT THE PICTURE, SELL THE DREAM

This is the beginning of the relationship (or perhaps a fresh start on a soured relationship). People are fresh with optimism and hope, and great opportunity lies ahead. Use the immersion workshop to capitalize on this energy and help the stakeholders envision their brand (and themselves) in this new world of search success. Organic search has a ton of great selling points — reaching the hand-raisers, inherently high-ROI, lasting effects, builds on itself over time, integrates seamlessly with other marketing efforts, doesn't stop when the media dollars stop. There's a lot to get excited about; get everyone to buy into the shared mission.

### SHOW THE HORIZON TO RESULTS

Don't let your infinite optimism cause you to make grand promises you can't keep. Don't assume everything will go smoothly with zero problems. The consequences are very real. Be realistic and transparent about what's attainable. Acknowledge the obstacles you're likely to face. Be clear about how ambitious or conservative goals are based on projects that get prioritized and how resources are allocated. It's notoriously difficult to forecast ROI and timing to outcomes with SEO, but even a wide range with lots of caveats can help ground the client in what's possible.

### ALICN EXPECTATIONS

A chronically recurring theme in my research is that the gap between expectations and outcomes is directly proportionate to the client frustration when we get it wrong. Misaligned expectations are a huge problem in search partnerships. It happens most often when a client has unrealistic expectations of what search can and cannot do, when they expect ROI to happen faster than is realistically possible, or they expect a larger impact than what they get in return.

If a client doesn't understand the capabilities, drawbacks, and benefits of search, you may have overpromised and underdelivered. If a client thinks they know the right KPIs, but you didn't align in the beginning, success looks different to both of you. If the client thinks they don't have to participate, it's because you weren't clear and didn't hold them accountable. If the client expects every SEO change to have immediate impact, you didn't explain it well, or at best, you were complicit in allowing them to believe it.

It's our responsibility to close the gap between expectations and reality. Attain absolute clarity to reduce misunderstanding. Eliminate the space for them to create their own personal narratives. Let them know what to expect from you, and what's expected of them for this to work. Repeat it, get verbal agreement, and level-set at every opportunity.

IN THE CAP

**EXPECTATIONS** 

DOUBT - UNCERTAINTY - FRUSTRATION - ANXIETY - STRESS

REALITY

# RAISE RED FLACS EARLY AND CET THE PROCRAM BACK ON TRACK QUICKLY

Your clients and bosses are very smart and capable, too. They want search to work just as much as you do. Search practitioners can't shy away from hard conversations. Be clear about what stands in the way, what you need from them, and the processes in place for bottlenecks and conflict resolution. Have hard conversations. This step is essential, but many search experts never do it.

Raise red flags early and get the program back on track quickly. Prevention is much easier than solving a crisis. Trust your gut. If it feels off, it probably is. Flag it with your boss or client as quickly and directly as possible. Inventory the situation and clearly articulate that, "If we are to accomplish X, then we need to do Y." This might be things like:

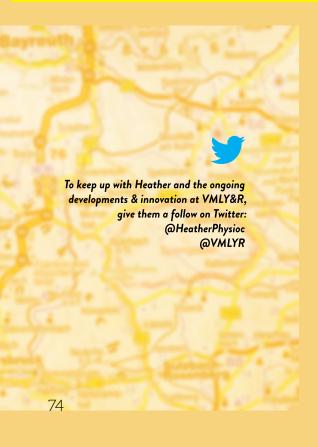
- "In order to implement SEO recommendations and get results, we need to increase development resources by X points per agile sprint."
- "In order to ensure we can quickly publish content without bottlenecks, we need to establish a content calendar and regular cadence for content to come our way for optimization."
- "In order to make sure we meet your expectations, we need to align on measurable KPIs before deploying SEO projects."

Initiate this conversation before your boss or client has to ask for it. If your boss is calling for the retrospective, you're too late. Not being honest about challenges the search program faces costs critical time, money, and results.

# CLOSE THE CAP BETWEEN EXPECTATIONS AND REALITY

Whether you are starting search for the first time or if you are realigning a program that went off track, try this search immersion workshop to align (or realign) on expectations, outcomes. Even if the route changes, having a roadmap can reduce anxiety and obstacles to successful search efforts for all. Now is your chance to close the gap between expectations and reality, and ensure the success of your organic search program.





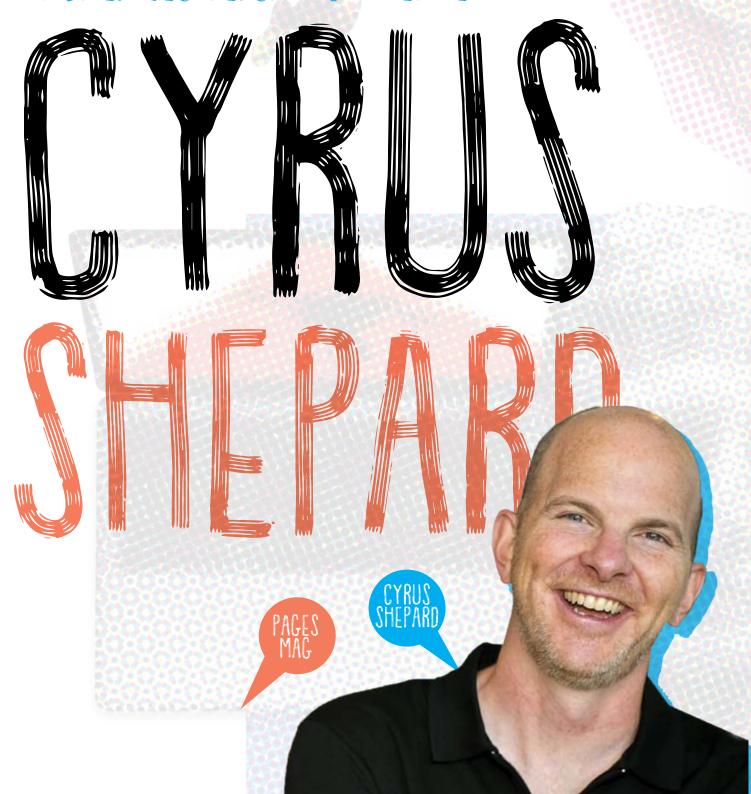
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ARTICLE - No. 7

# [CYRUS SHEPARD + PAGES MAGAZINE]

# A BRIEF SEO REPORTING INTERVIEW WITH:





# QUESTION No. 1

In a Whiteboard Friday earlier this year, you discussed SEO reporting and KPIs for SEO, such as "assisted conversions." Could you share some more KPIs to include in SEO reports and explain how to tie KPIs directly to business objectives?





## ANSWER No. 1

The most important thing about setting business KPIs in SEO is that they should originate from the business side of things, rather than the SEO side of things.

That said, common KPIs in SEO reports include:

- Sales
- Account signups
- Downloads
- Leads
- Important pageviews
- Referral traffic
- Ad revenue

In the end, the business structure should define what a good KPI looks like based on the individual funnel.





# QUESTION No. 2

You discussed reporting on content performance in that same Whiteboard Friday, could you explain in a bit more depth how to measure content performance and which tools are available to help with this process?



# TRAFFIC SOCIAL SHARES NEW LINKS

# ANSWER No. 2

At Moz, we built our own custom dashboards because tools in the industry to measure content performance are so lacking. There's a huge opportunity here!

Basically, whenever we publish new content, we measure traffic, social shares, and new links. Over time, we slice and dice this data to see who our top-performing authors are, what topics perform best, and which headlines performed better than others.

If you want to track your own content performance metrics, some great tools are Google Analytics, Moz's Link Explorer, and BuzzSumo (for social metrics).



# QUESTION No. 3

You also mentioned the importance of highlighting and prioritizing SEO opportunities within your reporting. Could you provide some further recommendations on how to get your changes implemented in a timely manner?



# ANSWER No. 3

So many bad SEO reports simply include long lists of things that are wrong without considering the business impact. Is fixing this element really going to move the needle? How can the business best prioritize our limited developer resources?

When delivering SEO reports, it's best to focus on 2-3 top priority items at a time and give very clear instructions on how to address each issue. Any more than this and the client/boss is forced to pick and choose and may do so without first understanding how each priority fits into the larger picture. It also helps to lay out the business case for each recommendation and clearly define what the business may expect by implementing the changes, as well as include a timeline of expected results. 

Output

Description:



Cyrus is an SEO and online marketing specialist in understanding Google's ranking algorithms. For more insight, Give him and the Moz family a follow on Twitter: @CyrusShepard @Moz

Find the original Whiteboard Friday here:

https://moz.com/blog/10x-seo-reports

ARTICLE - No. 8

# [ANDREW DENNIS]

# TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL LINK OUTREACH



# **FACT:**

LINK OUTREACH IS ABOUT TWO THINGS

EMPATHY + PERSUASIO

If you remember this simple fact, your outreach will be better than probably 80% of the outreach emails I receive daily. As the manager of our blog at Page One Power, I see A LOT of bad outreach and link requests, and the reason for this is because people don't consider these two fundamental principles of link outreach.

But just because others are doing a bad job doesn't mean you should settle for being average — in this article I want to explain the mindset you need (and a few helpful tips) to send quality outreach and give yourself the best chance to earn links and build meaningful relationships across the web.



# YOU'RE EMAILING HUMANS AND ASKING FOR A FAVOR

First and foremost, when sending outreach, keep the notion that you're emailing other human beings at the forefront of your mind. This simple fact is the reason empathy is such a big part of successful link outreach.

Thinking about the human on the other side of your link request will force you to be human yourself. Ask yourself questions about that person...what is this person's primary job or responsibility? Is this the right person to ask about a link? Why would they care about my page? Why would they link?

If you can't answer these questions, you're either contacting the wrong person or you have larger issues (as in: your page isn't link-worthy). Finding the appropriate person for your link

request is a crucial step to successfully securing your link, and it's worth going the extra mile in terms of link prospecting to make sure you've found the absolute best way to connect. Don't simply grab the first email you find on a website — really dig to find the person who is most likely to be responsible for adding links to the site. Sometimes this is a webmaster...editor...or even the person who owns the site — the point is that you need to review the site and research who you should be contacting.

The reason finding the right person is essential is because capturing someone's attention and getting them to respond without your being passed off by multiple people is hard enough already. Furthermore, finding the most relevant person immediately demonstrates that you've taken the time to familiarize yourself with the prospective site, making your link outreach more compelling.

To:

CC:

Subject: For Example, a decent structure for your message would be:

Short introduction with some personalization

• Hey you, it's your friend (your name)

Context for what you're asking

• Wanted to hit you up to see if you're available Saturday?

Make the ask

• I'm moving and need your help...and your truck.

Provide specific next steps/CTA

• Pizza and beer on me, hit me up xxx-xxx-xxx.

Thank them for their time • No worries if you're busy but thanks for the time and talk soon.

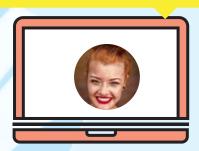
Send

Along with being empathetic to the fact that you're contacting a real, live (and busy) human, you also need to be cognizant of the fact that you're essentially asking for a favor. Approach your outreach in the same way you would approach texting a friend to help you move.

In ideal situations, linking to your page benefits their audience, and thusly, their website. However, even in these circumstances, they are still doing you a favor, and you need to be gracious and polite if you expect to earn a link.

If you simply remember that there is another person receiving your outreach email, and treat them like a person, you're already halfway to sending better outreach than most. However, you still need to be persuasive if you want to elevate your link outreach and give yourself the best chance for success.

Hi there, hope you are having an excellent day. I wanted to say hello and ask a favor if that's alright?



HOW POLITE OF YOU TO ASK, GO AHEAD.

"Approach your outreach in the same way you would approach texting a friend to help you move."



# DECENT OUTREACH GETS RESPONSES, COMPELLING OUTREACH GETS LINKS

The difference between good outreach and great outreach is persuasion. And to be persuasive, you need to understand your reader and what compels them to act.

To understand the site owner you're contacting, start by getting to know their audience and what interests them. What topics are most important to them? What types of content formats do they prefer? What other websites do they follow? What common challenges do they face? What types of sources do they trust?

Once you know the answers to these questions, leverage this information during your link pitch. Highlight the portion of your page that talks about the topic they care about most (or even go the extra mile and create an anchor link to that specific section). If their audience prefers video content, emphasize the video on your page. Identify how your page solves a problem for the target site's audience and pitch your link within this context (this is the most powerful option).

To be persuasive, you need context, and to have context you need understanding. Research prospective websites thoroughly and you will have the knowledge necessary to make your outreach compelling.

Beyond audience research, there are some general best practices that you should follow. For example, clarity is key — you can't persuade someone if they don't know what you're asking. Don't beat around the bush or try to mask what your goal is. Be upfront and clear about the fact that you want them to link to your site. In fact, I've found it most effective to explain you're submitting a resource for a link right within the subject line — just be sure to add some personalization, as well (the person's name, the name of their site, how the resource appeals to their audience, etc.) so you don't blend in with generic, low-grade link outreach.

On top of that, explicitly state where you think the link should point to and which page it should live on (with your supporting reasons from above). You want adding your link to be as easy as possible for this person. They shouldn't have to hunt down a specific section of their page that might be relevant — all for your benefit.



Another aspect of message clarity is keeping your outreach email concise. Again, you're emailing another human being with a job and responsibilities and, they don't have much time to spend reading your link pitch. Avoid muddying the waters by keeping your email short and to the point.

Link outreach represents the majority of link building work, and if you can't outreach effectively, you're not going to earn all the links you deserve. Fortunately, sending good outreach isn't complicated as it requires only two things: empathy and persuasion. Be empathetic to the fact you're contacting another person (typically a stranger) and asking them for a favor, and do your research to understand them and their audience so you can persuasively explain why they should link.

Now go out, send great outreach emails, and get the links your site needs.



Give Andrew and the Page One Power Team a follow on Twitter for a solid meme game and bottomless knowledge on content creation: @AndrewDennis33 @pageonepower

# FEELLIKE YOU'RE MISSING SOMETHING?

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

Check out these resources online:

- Access the archive of back issues
- Visit our blog to view past-published articles and exclusive original content
- Stay up-to-date with PAGES news
- Learn more about the PAGES mission, and find out how to get involved

www.pagesSEOmagazine.com

# OUR MISSION: HELP MARKETERS GET MORE FROM SEARCH.







**EVERYTHING FROM** YOUR SHOELACES, TO YOUR KEYBOARD, TO YOUR FRIDGE, TO YOUR LAPTOP, TO YOUR WEBSITE, HAS A KIND OF UX. IF PEOPLE DON'T LIKE USING THE THING, MOST OF THE TIME THEY WON'T USE IT. AND IF THAT THING IS YOUR WEBSITE, THEN WE'RE PROBABLY GOING



PG. 38

[ROBIN LORD]

SENIOR CONSULTANT, DISTILLED



# TO LOSE MONEY.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY ABOUT SEARCH?

# CONTRIBUTE

TO PAGES

# PAGES IS A RESOURCE FOR DIGITAL MARKETERS WHO WANT TO LEARN 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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# MEET

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IG: @tomatobabylifestyle

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Proud graduate of the University of Idaho and a (less) proud Detroit Lions fan. Fresh member to the Rad Dad Club.

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SWISHER

Thomas loves the trail, whether he's on wheels or foot. When he's not outside, he's at his desk studying SÉO. He keeps the company of one dog, one plant, one fish, and several very grateful coworkers on the PAGES crew.

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BEN JACOBSEN

Photographer, marketer, and tinkerer. If he's not at a keyboard, he's traveling in the mountains looking for the next amazing camping trip.

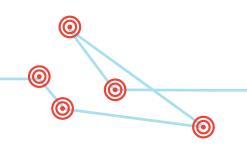
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Powered by Jiu-Jitsu and the great outdoors with a propensity towards correcting grammar and teaching her kids that clean socks are not the enemy. Coach. Teacher. IBJJF World Champion. Wife and Mom. Believes strongly in celebrating the mundane.

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# THANK YOU

To This Issue's Contributors

Empathy and Persuasion: Tips For Successful Link Outreach

A Brief Intercview With Cyrus Shepard

SEO Reporting: Prove Your Value

Let It Go: How To Embrace Automation And Get More Done

Put Your Best Foot Forward: Start Your SEO Program Off Right

Getting The Most From Google My Business In 2020

What Is UX? The Importance Of User Experience For SEOs

I Want Money, Lots And Lots Of Money

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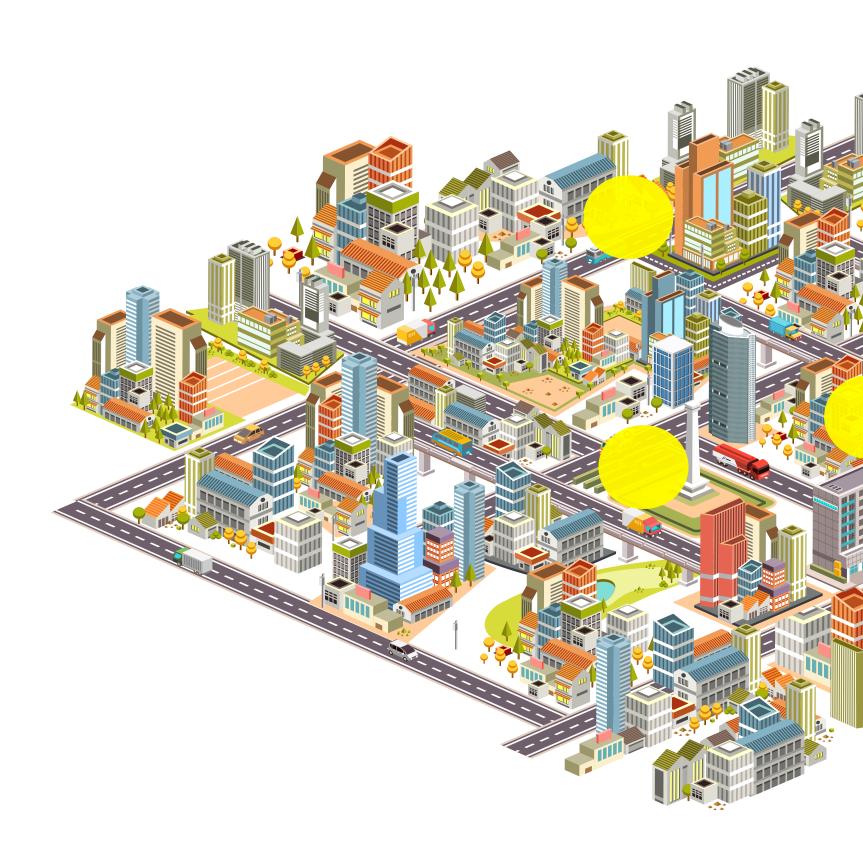
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# THANKS FOR READING! HERE'S TO YOU!

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To the left are the areas where Roger was hanging out in this issue's TIME KILLER Game.

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