

# WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF SEO

100 Industry Influencers Share Their Predictions

An In-Depth Industry Report Created By



Over 75 Leading SEO Firm Contributors



## Quote Categories

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# What is the Future of SEO?

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Every now and then, some aspiring marketer out there, trying to sound witty and controversial, proclaims “SEO is dead!” What typically follows is a robust debate as to whether SEO still exists as a stand-alone practice, or whether its morphed over the years into something so different (like “content marketing”) that the old “SEO” term just isn’t relevant anymore.

So what’s the truth? Is SEO really dead?

This report aims to shed some light on the issue by asking 100 of today’s experts in the SEO field to share their insights. How do they see the convergence of SEO and Content Marketing? Where do they see SEO going from here?

Topics covered in this report:

- The shift towards focusing on creating quality content
- The impact that Social, Mobile and Local will have on marketers
- What to expect from Google as they continue to change and improve their algorithms
- How the new focus on the User Experience will have a tremendous impact on the content you create
- The overall evolution of SEO and what you need to learn to stay relevant in this new age

# QUALITY CONTENT

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In the past, marketers focused on churning out content – a lot of content.

This is not always a good thing, particularly as search engines started to change their algorithms.

According to our experts, one of the biggest changes coming in SEO will be that while the importance of content has not waned, the focus will shift to quality.

Want to succeed in SEO with your content? The key will be quality – not quantity.

## Quality is King

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In a study conducted by E-Marketer, 57% of respondents say that quality content was the most effective means of ranking well in search results.

According to DemandGen Report, 68% of B2B buyers strongly agree that B2B vendors should curb the sales messages to improve the quality of their content.

Marketing Sherpa reports that 50% of marketers state that content creation is the most effective SEO tactic, while 92% of all marketers agree it is at least somewhat effective



**Fred Caloggero**

Sr Search Marketing Manager



[Two Octobers](#)



“ As the focus on content marketing grows, so will the importance of truly understanding user intent. Focus has shifted from pure keyword strategies to semantically comprehensive wording and holistic content. Marketers will put this into practice by moving away from optimizing specific keywords and towards optimizing intent: creating pages with tailored messaging and a variety of media to address user intent and mindset during each stage of the sales funnel. This will allow marketers to analyze intent-specific data to gauge the effectiveness and influence of their digital efforts during each step of the user's journey. ”

“ More companies will realize that the most effective SEO practices will focus on quality content and less on keeping up with changing algorithms.

The most successful companies will prioritize SEO and understand its key role in lead generation, building awareness and overall reputation management. ”



**Holly Rollins**

CEO



[10-x Group](#)



@hrollins



“ As a content marketing strategist I have to believe that the future of attracting and engaging an audience (the thing that we as marketers do SEO for) is in quality, relevant content. We've used SEO as a way to try and cut through the noise and get noticed, but with Google fine tuning it's engine's ability to sniff out quality content, how we are able to use data to create relevant content, to target it and the options marketers have for engagement outside the search engine (like social), maybe the future of SEO is the end of SEO. It's just great content optimized, not for the search engine, but for the audience. ”



**Ian Truscott**

SVP, Content Strategy



[Tahzoo](#)



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**Kyle McKay**

SEO & SEM Specialist



[Zoudy](#)



@mckayinator



“ Consistently delivering value to your audience and promoting it through the best channels will be the key to success in the future of SEO. Search engines are becoming more agile in detecting shady SEO tactics, and people can see right through cheap content. Good SEO takes time and a lot of effort, but those that stick to delivering value and finding new ways to engage users will come out on top. ”



Joseph K. Hall, Jr.

VP Content Marketing



[EnVeritas Group](#)



“ I believe we will continue to see search engines become more and more linguistically sophisticated. I am not referring to artificial intelligence, but to a more complex and accurate iteration of semantic search. The impact on SEO? SEO, as we are already seeing, is evolving, and what we're going to find is that accuracy, quality and timeliness of content are going to going to become entrenched as the new "signals," as they always should have been. ”

“ SEO will focus on only providing search engines access to carefully crafted, best-in-class content. Short cuts to the top of the SERPs will become few and far between.

Understanding the needs and intent of the visitors landing on your content will become paramount. ”




Brandon Millard

Director of Search Strategy



[Ayima](#)

 @brandonmillard






“ I believe good content will continue to be rewarded by Google and Bing, with engagement and sharing of that content playing an even more important role in a successful SEO strategy. If you want first page search results for your company, product or services, you'll need to write content that others will find valuable and more importantly shareable. ”



Mike Cook  
CMO



[RevLocal Inc.](#)


 [@mcookrevlocal](#)



Daniel Taibleson  
Content Strategist



[iAcquire](#)

 [@dantaibleson](#)



“ Content marketing = "Classy SEO." Big Brands will adopt and spend more on Content Marketing strategies now than ever before.

Google's made it abundantly clear, the only way to rank #1 is to be the most relevant.

Whoever's telling the best stories and resonating with their audience at the right time/in the right context will win the organic search battle. ”





**Karen Webber**

Marketing Director



[Axonn Media](#)



“ SEO will become more fully integrated with content marketing. To be effective at content marketing, brands need to think wider than just the words and images they use to convey their message. It's about a content experience. Everything needs to work well together: from the technical SEO side through to design, UX, user journey and conversion. Nothing can exist in silos, and marketers need to focus on integrated content strategies, technology and creation if they want to be successful. ”

“ Best-in-class marketers have long understood—and agreed—that when it comes to content, quality trumps quantity every time. But now, the standards of excellence surrounding content will be redefined once again, particularly as the search engines look to prioritize content-rich, industry-leading content assets. Make no mistake: a marketer’s job is getting increasingly complex and nuanced, but this is a good thing for consumers. It means we will see some truly amazing, game-changing content in the years to come. ”



**Carrie Majewski**

Director of Content Marketing



[Content Boost](#)



@carrie\_majewski






**Crystal Ware**

Head of SEO



[Location3Media](#)

 @crystalware



“ I think we are going to start seeing less content. Less doesn't mean content isn't important - it just means the quality of content is going to supersede the number of content pieces that can be churned out for a business. We'll also see better marketing plans in place for content bring created. We'll move past the "blast it out everywhere we can phase," into a more strategic approach that finds the right users, at the right time, at the right place.

We're also going to be placing more and more emphasis on the user. Brands that were putting off developing mobile user experience, the time is yesterday. Leveraging testing tools and data insights to drive site design will become more of the norm. If people aren't happy with your site in a matter of seconds, you lose business. Getting the ranking, impressions and clicks just isn't going to cut it anymore for SEO. The people that have been focusing on conversion-driven SEO and enhancing the user experience are going to have it easy (well, easier). It's going to be a fun year. ”

“ I predict that the full rollout of Panda 4.1 will mark a drastic (r)evolution in the kind of sites we'll see rising in rank, and the nature of the content strategies and deliverables brands will be on deck to create to maintain competitive advantage. As a content marketer dedicated to the craft of rich, specialized content experiences designed to engage core niches in two-way conversations, this algorithmic shift towards quality means that my ideal era of smart, strategic, and differentiated content is here—and content mill approaches, automated campaigns, and SEO trickery are finally on their way out. ”




**Kacy Karlen**

Ass. Creative Director



[Captains of Industry](#)

 @captainsboston



Creative  
Content  
Marketing




**Anthony Gaenzle**

Director of Marketing



[EnVeritas Group](#)

 @anthonygaenzle



“ Content marketers and SEOs are starting to put down their boxing gloves and realize that one can't exist without the other any longer.

Smart companies will start to view these areas of expertise in the same light and will no longer approach the two in a silo-style manner. The companies that come to this realization will be the ones that you see having great success. ”

“ In the future, while it will remain important for SEO professionals to focus on their core structural and accessibility responsibilities, it will be increasingly more important for them to integrate with other core marketing areas. SEO departments will need to work closely with Content, PR, Media and Conversion/Analytics teams.

Regardless of what changes the search engines make it is clear that user experience and brand authority will continue to be primary rank signals.

Creating the right kind of content targeting the right audience; while also attracting the attention of social influencers and publishers in order to build links and authority, is going to be the key to future success in organic search.

Smaller companies will demand that their SEO team members become well-rounded marketers.

Larger companies will focus their efforts on building processes and using collaboration tools that insure that the content and promotion work they do across the entire organization is done in a way that also maximizes organic search benefits. ”



Jarrod Hunt

CMO



[Digital Current](#)






**Nick Stamoulis**

President & Founder



[Brick Marketing](#)

 @brickmarketing



“ SEO will continue to be all about the creation of well crafted and authoritative content! ”

“ For actual search engines, I think there will be a stronger push towards mobile-friendly content being ranked better - IF it actually tests better for users. So, if you're seeing poorer engagement with your site from mobile devices compared to desktop and tablets, I'd take action and start testing other options.

When it comes to businesses and specifically their content program, I think more companies will realize that investing more time and effort into lower quantity & higher quality content is what produces results for a company. Beyond that, I see more companies then realizing that they need to spend 50% of their budget on distribution and promotion - not 10% of it. ”




**Kane Jamison**

Founder



[Content Harmony](#)

 @kanejamison






**Adrienne Burns**

Director of Client Strategy and  
Implementation

◆◆◆  
[Axonn Media](#)

 @ageyb



“ I think that previously when discussing SEO, technology in some form was always at the forefront of how we understood what you needed to do to be successful online - if you follow the rules you will be fine.

In 2013 and 2014 I have seen a stronger focus develop around strategy and particularly the growth of clever, humanistic influences in what does well and what gets ignored online. Hummingbird to me was the start of this shift in understanding our intent online, versus just our words.

I think we will continue to see the rise of more creative, old school, 'Mad Men' like approaches to digital marketing, supported by deeper persona development.

Therefore I would imagine that as search engines like Google get closer to mimicking the human mind, it will also better analyze user's on-site behaviors.

Simply, I feel that if you know and adapt to your audience better, using more strategic and clever methods and then back up your findings with data analysis, search engines will see you and reward you for it. ”

“ The future of SEO will be about content. Actually SEO was about content from the start, but there were people who understood it differently :-). Well, Google updates are meant to fix that misunderstanding. In the years to come we will see new content and old content that is presented in a better way. For example, imagine Wikipedia's articles as BBC documentaries.

I think we will see more interactive widgets in content, more videos, as a whole, things that make content easily grasped by the majority of people. The better you are at sharing your visions and knowledge, the higher you will rank in the SERPs. ”




**Lou Pardi**

Creative Director



[Agency Marou](#)

 @loupardi



“ Aside from SEO swindlers finding work-arounds to attract traffic unethically and Google closing them down, as has been the dance since the beginning, I think social media sharing signals will remain important in the future of people finding content.

Search engines will become savvier in identifying and rewarding high-quality content. Blogs and media sites will be challenged to balance taking money to place content (and links) on their sites with retaining their readers' loyalty and complying with search engines' views on appropriate behavior. ”




**Kate Proykova**

Managing Director



[Hop Online](#)

 @hoponline





“ Semantic search will replace keyword-focused search. Increasingly, search engines are becoming more attuned to the user's intent -- they understand what the searcher is looking for and will deliver relevant information based on a query, whether the most common keyword phrases for that search are used in the query or not.

That means it's becoming more and more important for organizations to tap into their prospects' perspectives, create buyer personas, and genuinely consider the types of questions their users are likely to be asking, rather than focus exclusively on metrics around specific keyword usage.

Along these lines, committing to publishing well-researched and compelling content based on user needs is becoming a higher priority for businesses.

More organizations will invest in developing high-quality, long-form blog content that will receive large numbers of social shares, which will also help them gain traction in search engines. ”




Kathryn Hawkins

Principal



[Eucalypt Media](#)

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Nikki Paladino

SEO Supervisor



[L2TMedia](#)



“ Over the last few years, Google has made changes to its algorithms that emphasize higher search results, and because Google is the most popular search engine, SEO best practices have evolved to follow suit. Now SEO is all about creating quality content, quality meta data, quality links, and having a well-built website that’s easily navigated by search engines and visitors. I think quality will continue to be the central focus of SEO. Those who are still trying to manipulate the search engines by keyword stuffing in meta data and content, creating spammy links, or who aren't paying attention to the website health could, at best, see their time and effort wasted for little return and at worse be penalized by Google. I believe if marketers continue to keep the word “quality” in mind, they’ll be able to attract quality traffic back to their websites.

I think local SEO will be a priority as well. With Google’s Pigeon Update, local citations have become more prevalent in search results. So I think that every business should make sure they have listings on top local citation sites, and that their business information is consistent across these sites. Also, if a business wants a strong presence in search results for their name, they need to have a well-built-out Google My Business page that they post on regularly.

Another major area of focus will be mobile SEO. It’s imperative to have a website that works well in both desktop and mobile browsers. Increasing numbers of searches are performed on mobile devices and tables, so if you want to get traffic to your website you need to have a site that’s compatible. I think that more websites will upgrade to responsive design over a dynamic service site or separate mobile URL. ”

“ SEO has come a long way in the last few years. We've gone from using basic keyword research and strategic backlinks to writing high-quality, informative content pieces for company websites, and this is all thanks to Google and the evolution of its algorithms. I mean to say thanks in a good way, not in the sarcastic sense.

It's Google's job as a search engine to make sure users can find the most informative and up-to-date content on the web for any subject. If this type of content isn't ranking on the first pages, Google isn't doing its job.

That being said, the future of SEO is all about content, and the companies and organizations that have the highest-quality content are going to win. I believe that it's Google's goal to successfully balance education and commerce, and companies can participate in this as a shared goal and win, or fight against it and lose.

My predictions for the future of SEO are content moving to the center of the digital marketing sphere and the integration of public relations with SEO efforts. ”




**Natalie Parra-Novosad**

Director of Content Strategy



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**David Lewallen**

Director of Inbound



[Big Wave Digital](#)

 @bigwaveinbound



“ Marketers have realized that the foundation of inbound marketing relies on a robust content strategy, which includes SEO, Content Creation and Social Promotion. A content strategy is THE most important factor today if you want to win.

These three pillars SEO|Content|Social all work together and cannot be separated. Now marketers just need to figure out how to get it done. Marketers are too busy to become writers & manage social media and brands are not in the publishing business which makes it difficult to execute a content strategy.

There will be new and innovative ways that brands begin to execute on their content strategy; leasing content and Paying For Performance of content will blossom in the future. ”

# Social, Mobile, Local

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These days, three different segments dominate the attention of marketers – Social, Mobile and Local.

But how do these three play a role in your overall SEO strategy?

Take a look at what our experts have to say about embracing all three, and the benefits you can reap.

## Social Signals and SEO

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According to Bloomberg News, Twitter recently reached a deal with Google to start displaying real-time tweets in search results.

QuickSprout recently reported that after Smashing Magazine tweeted about Moz.com's Beginner's Guide to Social Media, the site quickly ranked #1 in results for the term "beginner's guide."

AdWeek reports that social signals are used to help search engines help indicate a reputation among a target audience.




**Danielle Bachini**

SEO Specialist



[Brick Marketing](#)

 @brickmarketing



“ The search engines are going to take the mobile usability of a website into account when determining rank. We're already seeing a "mobile-friendly" label in Google mobile search results, but that's just the beginning. If your website isn't mobile friendly, you'll start to see a dip in traffic from the search engines. ”

“ Organic search will continue to lead as one of the top channel acquisitions, however, those who do not focus on mobile website optimizations will begin to lose valuable website traffic.

When it comes to content, Google aims at providing instant answers for their customers and to satisfy their own needs. In order to maintain prominent on Google, page optimizations should answer questions and be more informative.

The future of SEO will depend less on keywords and more on relevance! ”



**Madison McMahon**

Co-Owner



[HMarketing](#)



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“ We should all make sure our sites are mobile responsive & focus on reducing site load time. These factors play a huge part in usability, particularly when it comes to holding a visitors interest.

The industry will also change its keyword research strategy to focus more on natural speech and having their content answer questions. ”




**Brian Provost**

VP, Digital Strategy



[Define Media Group, Inc.](#)

 @brianprovost



“ The engines seem focused on two primary initiatives: 1) The first is to deliver the best Mobile experience to their users. There are still a startling number of businesses that have not addressed even the most basic of Mobile SEO requirements. 2) The second major initiative at the search engines is to better understand context and relationships. You see this most often now with semantic analysis of entities, but the engines are growing that understanding to other relationship types.

Businesses should continue to inform the engines of these relationships via opportunities such as structured data, but also be careful that they alleviate the need to have the engines send that searcher to their site. The engines would rather answer that query with your data in their own environment. ”




**Joe Rega**

SEO & Social Media Strategist



[Path Interactive](#)

 @joerega








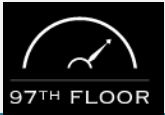
**Paxton Gray**

Director of Marketing Operations



[97th Floor](#)

 @paxtonmgray



“ In our research this year, we've seen social signals playing a greater role in rankings. I expect to see that role increase in importance. Hopefully wearables will shake up the industry in the next few years, given the fact that there are a few significant wearables coming out next year. I'm also hoping Bing picks up more market share in the future.

Finally, I think there will continue to be a ton of chatter about "mobile first", but we'll probably continue thinking that next year will be the big year for mobile.



“ With mobile approaching 40-50% of total traffic for many sites and Google increasingly pushing the importance of mobile usability, being well optimized for all devices will continue to be critical. And not just technical optimization; this also means making sure that your content (i.e. length, style, use of multimedia, etc.) is well suited to mobile and that engagement signals for mobile users are strong.

And in a search climate dominated by Panda, Penguin and whatever algorithm updates and filters come next, making sure you have a rock-solid foundation in place and taking preemptive measures against any potential triggers is key. This includes all technical, editorial and marketing considerations. None of these things are new but they are vital to continued success in the future.




**Adam Sherk**

VP SEO & Social Media



[Define Media Group](#)

 @adamsherk



“ There are two absolutes when it comes to digital marketing. The first is that a mobile/responsive website is a necessity - not a perk. The second absolute is the consumer comes first in the hierarchy of digital media communication. ”



Christopher Surovick

Director of Digital Marketing


◆◆◆  
[WebiMax](#)



Areej AbuAli

SEO Executive

◆◆◆  
[Verve Search](#)

 @areej\_abuali



“ With over 7 billion mobile devices, my top prediction for the future of SEO is that mobile search will soon overtake desktop search. Mobile site performance will deeply affect rankings, hence a dedicated mobile SEO strategy for your clients is of great importance. ”



**Rosa Salazar**

Social Media Marketing



[Altura Interactive](#)

@2ose



“ Mobile SEO can not be underestimated anymore. We have to understand that user experience via mobile will be a key point in the success of any site. ”

“ With mobile search on pace to surpass desktop, the need to adhere to Google's agenda of creating a good user experience for site visitors will become more important than ever.

Mobile responsive sites that add original content consistently each month and have a strategy to acquire social link signals will benefit greatly.

I believe social links will be the most valuable for SEO.



**JD Allen**

Digital Marketing Advisor



[Sweet Spot Marketing](#)



”



**Andrew Schneider**

Senior Digital Marketing Manager



[Online Amiga](#)



“ Content marketing, and all digital marketing in general, will become more even more localized and personalized.

This trend will affect every aspect of digital marketing, including social media, paid advertising, website design, link building, email and SEO.

Marketers will be pressed to create content that engages the increasingly localized consumers, which are driven by the skyrocketing use of mobile technology. SEO experts that are able to create both paid and organic content that speaks to specific audiences in localized environments will see increased results because both Google and consumers respond to and advocate for personalized results and content.

There is already ample evidence that localized paid ads illicit increased CTR and conversions, and from my perspective there is absolutely no reason why the trend won't continue to grow going forward.

On the same note, more generalized SEO techniques, including short-tail keyword research, unfocused link building, and generic paid ads will continue to fall by the wayside as the new mobile, local and personalized SEO takes over. ”

“ SEO "professionals" and companies will stop chasing algorithms and focus on creating the best content possible in the right and honest way (which is what Google wants and has wanted from the start). When that happens it, hopefully, gets the SEO snake oil salespeople under control. The other is the industry will start to focus on the local aspects of SEO before doing anything else.

As I always tell people: take away the Internet and how would you market your client's company? If it's located in Dallas, it makes no sense to market to people in Boston or New York. Drive home local aspects of SEO, get listed in all of the local directories (any directory) you can, rank for local keyword modifiers and then build out from there.

According to a study by BIA/Kelsey and ComSat, 97% of all consumers research their local options online before heading out to shop. That's all the proof you need that companies better have the local aspects of SEO taken care of.

Stop chasing algorithms. It's time to actually do a good job with your own site - create a great user experience and give customers what they want. If you want to rank for competitive keywords, focus on your own site. The best place to start is local. ”




**Ian St. Clair**

Senior SEO Specialist



[Clicks and Clients](#)

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Geoff Hoesch

Owner



[Dragonfly SEO](#)



@dragonflyseo



“ It looks like results based on searcher location are going to become increasingly more important, driven by the rise of mobile SEO. In the future, I think it will be more and more difficult for companies outside of specific cities to compete in those cities without a physical presence there, and simply creating geo-targeted landing pages will no longer be enough; businesses will have to better establish their presence by associating their company with those cities and other businesses and organizations within them.

There's a lot of talk about entities and brand-influenced rankings, and I think SEOs would be wise to look at how large brands are presenting themselves online (generating press releases, running active social campaigns and blogs, sponsoring local events, and joining organizations, to name a few) and mimic that behavior, even if it is on a smaller scale.

Trust will continue to be a major factor for Google, as it always has been. SSL may very well become a larger factor for ranking. Google has certainly given the notification that it is a current factor, and I suspect that future updates will continue to take it into consideration, giving it increasingly more weight. Right now, the effects of SSL on rankings seem marginal, but if a company wants to stay ahead of the curve, they should seriously consider it.

I believe social will continue to have very little direct effect on rankings, as social interaction is too easy to manipulate (Going back to trust. If a thing can be manipulated, it can't be trusted, and therefore will not be a large ranking factor); however, social will continue to be an important element to any online marketing campaign, albeit, in my mind, less important than SEO. ”

“ User experience will be the driving force. Search engines will become more complex and adept at recognizing the on-page and off-page signals that lead to a good user experience.

With an increased focus on the user experience, mobile page optimization will become an even more critical factor in ranking well on mobile searches.

Content engagement on-site will be a significant way that search engines gauge the value of the content and quality of user experience on your site.

Comments, social shares, and links back will be important indicators. However, with the rise of semantics in algorithms it will not be enough to just have a lot of comments or inbound links. They will need to be natural. So content will really have to be relevant, interesting, and invite engagement. Forget the shortcuts.

The key to future SEO success is by creating and implementing a robust vibrant content engagement strategy for your site. ”




**Ben Dean**

Director of Operations



[RevLocal](#)

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**Brian Provost**

VP Digital Strategy



[Define Media Group, Inc.](#)



@brianprovost



“ The engines seem focused on two primary initiatives:

- 1) The first is to deliver the best Mobile experience to their users. There are still a startling number of businesses that have not addressed even the most basic of Mobile SEO requirements.
- 2) The second major initiative at the search engines is to better understand context and relationships.

You see this most often now with semantic analysis of entities, but the engines are growing that understanding to other relationship types. Businesses should continue to inform the engines of these relationships via opportunities such as structured data, but also be careful that they alleviate the need to have the engines send that searcher to their site.

The engines would rather answer that query with your data in their own environment. ”

## Google Specific Changes

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If there is one certainty online, it is that you can expect Google to continue to upgrade, improve and change the way their algorithms work.

These updates have the power to change the future of sites – and it definitely pays to keep tabs on what is going on at Google.

Here's what our experts had to say about what you can expect from Google.

## Significant Changes

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Quite a bit has changed at Google over the past few months. Here are just a few highlights:

August 28, 2014: Google Authorship Removed

October 2014: Google debuts the “in the News Box” and news sites report a significant spike in traffic

December 2014: Penguin Everflux - Google announces that Penguin will receive constant updating, instead of infrequent updates




**Sara Downey Robinson**

Marketing Coordinator



[Inflow](#)

 @downey\_robinson



“ Collaborations are going to be key. Working with online community managers, PR experts, mobile experts, etc. are going to help drive engagement for sites, which we already know is going to continue to increase in importance. Surround yourself with the best from several different marketing channels and you'll have greater success. ”

“ SEO, PR and overall user experience are all starting to collide into one big marketing strategy. Developing content that helps or excites your customers feeds into both the SEO and PR nature of where digital marketing is heading. Creating content just for the sake of keywords has really fallen to the wayside.

Being creative and thinking outside of the box to first and foremost give your clientele what they want and need online is going to be most of the battle. Instead of thinking about your ranking or where your traffic is coming from, you have to think about what benefits your customer and how you can help them; the results will follow. ”



**Sherri Horton**

Search Marketing Specialist



[Volusion](#)



“ Google will release a major mobile algorithm update likely to have one of the larger shifts seen in SERP visibility since the releases of Penguin and Panda. ”



**Simon Dreyfuss**

SEO Strategist



[Acronym Media](#)



@simondreyfuss



acronym

keyword=customer.  
know yours.



**Brent Rovner**

SEO Project Manager



[WebiMax](#)



@webimax



“ 1. Link Duds v. Link Studs. I think Google will start ranking sites that have links with traffic (follow or no follow) and start noticing sites that build links with no traffic just for SEO. A link must be used for a real purpose!

2. Brand Mentions: I believe Google will start noticing brand mentions even without links.

For example, if a company is mentioned in an article without a link, it will still help their overall SEO. ”



**Benj Arriola**

SEO VP



[Internet Marketing Inc.](#)

@benjarriola



“ Even if Google keeps changing it's algorithm, my predictions have been consistent every year. On the technical side of things, Google will get better at looking at code, and CMS' will get better in having all SEO best practices by default. I see more use of microdata formats built into many CMS'.

On the link building side of things, it will still be driven by content marketing and the main players are the ones with the most creative ideas in capturing the attention of a relevant audience and being able to promote and reach out to where these people are. ”

“ With the announcement that Freebase will be closing and all data will be transferred over to Wikidata, marketers will have to determine how that affects queries that produce knowledge graph results. It is already known that information is scraped from the number one SERP result. Limited data since the December announcement has shown me that images in the smaller knowledge graph underneath the search bar can have an image from a completely different source that has no relation besides context to the original source.

With Google providing answers to more questions right in the SERPS, it will become ever important for marketers to create content that answers users queries and is picked up by the Knowledge Graph algorithm. ”



**Richard Ortiz**

SEO Strategist



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“ With updates like Google's Hummingbird algorithm, search algorithms are moving to take user intent into account. This means that creating pages and content for the purpose of matching stilted keywords will continue to go out of style. Offering a better user experience and becoming a trusted resource are going to continue to become the best ways to gain search engine visibility. ”



**Julianne Coyne**

SEO Team Lead




**Elisa Gabbert**

Content Marketing Manager



[WordStream](#)

 @egabbert



“ I think engagement metrics will become more and more important. On the paid search side, Google determines ad rank according to engagement metrics: Quality Score, which is primarily click-through rate (relative to expected CTR given your position on the page). This is how they're able to deliver meaningful ad rankings without a link graph like you see in organic search. With organic, they can measure the same thing, and potentially add in a lot of other interesting metrics as well -- not just clicks but shares, bounce rate, etc. In PPC, you pay a premium per click if your ads don't perform well and aren't interesting to people -- in other words, you have to spend a lot more to rank higher, and in competitive spaces, you're screwed. Similarly, SEO marketers will continue to see diminishing returns on low-value content. ”



**Mark Fillmore**

Sr Director of SEO & Earned Media



- “ 1. Knowledge graph will become (mostly) a pay for play feature. Given the changes that have occurred recently (dropping Authorship, Freebase) and the amount of real estate this feature takes up in the SERPs, they'll move it to (mostly) pay to play.
2. Building upon their security focus, Google will begin to offer their very own SSL product to the benefit of their SEM clients and organic visitors.
3. Google+ will finally be shuttered due to low participation.
4. Matt Cutts will leave Google (probably to work at a start up) after his long break in 2014. John Mueller will take his place as the head official/unofficial spokesperson to the SEO community.
5. Google Fiber for Enterprise will launch in major metros attracting website owners to make the switch from traditional hosting providers. ”



# The User Experience

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Today, creating content is so much more than putting words on a page and hoping to reach your readers.

Now, it's about creating a total experience for your readers and content is just one part of that experience.

Want to make sure you're taking the right steps to stay on top of this trend? Check out the advice shared by our experts!

## Does it Matter?

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Interactive content formats such as Brainshark and SlideShare increased in popularity during 2014, up from roughly 21% in 2013 to 28% in 2014

In a recent study 86% of buyers expressed some level of desire to access interactive/visual content on demand.

70% of marketers plan to increase their use of original visual assets.



**Stephen Pitts**

Associate Partner SEO



[Rosetta](#)



@pittfall

**ROSETTA**

“ The future looks a lot like the past. SEO is about ensuring search engines know what your content is about so they can present to people, actual people, in search results. The focus of SEO is, or should be, on the person on the other side of the screen. Search engines will continue to improve their understanding, but the focus should be on the person you are trying to reach. If you focus there, you will be ahead of the next algorithm update. ”

“ We've already seen the convergence of user experience, content marketing, social media, and SEO... but now branding will join the mix.

Branding is the ultimate tool for providing signals of quality and superior user experience - things the search engines are constantly measuring. And it's not just about the mega-brands anymore.

There is a very lucrative place in the market for SMB niche brands. In fact, SEO is the perfect strategy for a solid niche brand. ”



**Alison Garrison**

SEO & Social Media Services  
Manager



[Volusion](#)

**volusion®**

“ Ensuring a great UX [across all devices] and creating quality content that excites people [and adds value to their lives] is going to be more important than ever because when somebody is excited about something they will want to brag about it and share it with the world! ”



**Ryan Osman**  
SEM Strategist

◆◆◆  
[Iterate Marketing](#)



**Courtney Jones**

Director of Content  
Marketing Strategy

◆◆◆  
[Endurance Marketing](#)



“ We'll see the final death of keyword phrase targeting in favor of semantic/context based search engine results. Companies that can keep their customer at the heart of their digital marketing efforts - through a user-friendly website, engaging content and smart social media engagement - are going to see the best results in search engines.

User experience is king - so make sure you're giving your audience what it needs. Entertain, delight and educate them. ”

“ Search engines want to provide the best user experience possible by ranking authoritative and relevant brands, not websites. While there are many ways the engines distinguish brands from sites, content remains king.

However, producing weak content for the sake of content will get exposed by the engines and more importantly, your audience. Brands need to focus on content that's fresh, unique, informative, and engaging.

The content needs to answer questions, provide solutions and add true value. The use of visual content will become even more important as it creates an experience.

Visuals have a way of translating dry and abstract text or data into compelling information that resonates. Images get processed faster and shared more.

Marketers will need to get more creative in their content strategy and focus on creating an experience rather than regurgitating information. The good news is that social media will tell you very quickly whether or not you're "winning" the content game. ”



**Jason Coulam**

Partner and COO



[Avalaunch Media](#)






**Jeremy Sherman**

VP of Search Marketing



[Customer Magnetism](#)

 @Jeremy\_sherman



“ SEO will continue to become more about user experience and less about "forcing" rankings. This means that SEO must integrate deeper with the entire organization to ensure success. From brand to product to PR to UX, SEO must be a consideration at the start of all projects.

This also means that as SEO's we've got to become even more technical (site speed, architecture, mobile, etc) while spending more time thinking about the overall business objectives.

Content will also continue to be a huge focus for SEO - but in order to see results from our "content marketing" efforts, we'll have to be much more strategic than just writing keyword targeted copy.

Focus groups, user testing, customer and stakeholder interviews will all have to have bigger focus to be able to produce the type of user experience and engagement that Google is trying to reward and our customers expect. ”

# The Evolution of SEO

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The days of keyword stuffing are thankfully long gone. SEO has evolved and will continue to evolve.

The key for marketing success is to keep on top of all of these changes, and that is no easy task.

We asked our experts what they feel are the most important things you need to know to stay relevant and successful.

## The Power of SEO

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44% of online shoppers begin their purchasing process by using a search engine

SEO leads have a 14.6% close rate, while outbound leads (such as direct mail or print advertising) have a 1.7% close rate

86% of consumers stated that using a search engine allowed them to learn something new or important that helped him/her increase his/her knowledge



**Sean Bucher**

SEO & UX Account Manager



[Location3 Media](#)



@spbucher



LOCATION3

“ This is the year of UX. We already see this in the emphasis on the mobile experience from Google. This will continue to happen as we move from engines that rely heavily on antiquated link building metrics to social and design, architecture and functionality. ”

“ This year is going to bring an evolution for many people's organic strategies as they shift away from solely focusing on traditional tactical methods, and begin to place a larger emphasis on the “bigger picture” of what SEO has actually become.

We will see more people speaking about channel convergence, rather than disciplines as individual silos. SEO's will become bigger thinkers about how their sites work as a whole, rather than just where they rank. ”



**Patrick Reinhart**

Director Organic Search



[Prime Visibility](#)



@cheesycorplingo





“ I remember saying in the mid 1990s that whoever gets video right first, wins. I still believe this. Video is the next natural evolution in SEO. (Disclaimer: This statement is my personal belief and is not a statement from or on behalf of RevLocal.) ”



**Barbara Kaiser**

Business Development Manager



[RevLocal](#)



@barbaramkaiser



**Stefan Winkler**

VP Marketing & Strategy



[Earned Traffic](#)



@cstefanwinkler



**EARNED TRAFFIC**

“ Penguin pummeled over-optimized, link-profiles in 2014. This will continue. Sites that don't appear over-optimized will stall or drop. This will cause confusion and most SEOs will look to the usual metrics for clues (i.e. link portfolio, social signals). They won't find them here. The answer is user engagement metrics. If a site is optimized well but has low CTRs, no brand searches, poor UX (high bounce rates, low page views, etc.), Google will devalue the site. Another component related to UX is responsiveness and speed. Google sent a clear message last fall when it announced its “mobile-friendly” tag. This year, if your site is not “mobile-friendly,” expect less traffic. While you're at it, consider optimizing for voice search. VSO (voice search optimization) may not dominate this year. But, voice will soon dominate mobile search. Best to get a head start. ”





**Korey Kashmer**

Director of Marketing Services



[Straight North](#)



@straightnorth



**STRAIGHTNORTH**

*Make every click count.®*

“ While SEO is always changing, SEO will never go away. Look back at the last 10 years. How many times did SEO die according to many resources. Yet here we are delivering SEO services. I do predict that SEO will continue to change, getting better as agencies, businesses and the market shifts to a more encompassed approach. ”

“ I see fewer people running away from SEO and more people running towards SEO. Being an SEO or an SEO agency has always been difficult, but the last few years have been very hard on the industry and its image. Many SEOs re-branded themselves as digital marketers, content marketers and paid search marketers.

However, the fact remains that the vast majority of people find what they are looking for via search engines. So now that the Penguin, Panda, and Hummingbird dust has settled, the critical importance of optimization has once again come to the forefront and good SEOs will continue to be in demand. ”



**Arnie Kuenn**

CEO



[Vertical Measures](#)



@arniek



“ SEO's reputation will greatly improve as people begin to accept it as an effective way to quantify content marketing and PR success. ”



**Matt Vazquez**

Content Marketing Specialist



[Stone Temple Consulting](#)



@quezsays



**Holly Rollins**

CEO



[10-X Group](#)



@hollyrollins



“ Creating and propagating content will continue to be the dominant predictor of higher rankings versus trying to keep up with constant algorithm changes. More graduates will enter the SEO field. More professionals will be convinced of the power of SEO and be trained or train their staff in SEO best practices to include it in their marketing strategies. ”



**Kevin Rowe**

Founder



[Rowe Digital](#)



@\_kevinrowe



“ I predict that older SEO tactics will become popular again. Some tactics have fallen out of favor due to misconceptions about what works and what doesn't. This is a result of mass publication of the penalties that Google has been handing out. We will see tactics like micro site linking, directory linking, and possibly even buying links reemerge. ”

“ What the monarchy of SEO-land looks like:

- Fresh and unique content remains the King of SEO
- Mobile is the Queen who has plans to wield more power
- Social is the ambitious Prince with eyes on the crown
- Visual content is the Knight, beloved by the people
- Google authorship and Keyword targeting are in the dungeon being drawn and quartered. ”



**Scott Severson**

President



[Brandpoint](#)



@scottseverson



“ Given the ease in which sites can be penalized and the minefield companies must navigate to avoid penalization, the ROI has recently flipped making negative SEO more economically viable than standard SEO -- naturally, this is going to pose too big a temptation for some to resist. From that above information I see both ORM and site auditing becoming too areas of strong growth amongst agencies. ”



**Joe Sinkwitz**

Chief Revenue Officer



[CopyPress](#)



@cygnusseio



**Scott Pierson**

SEO & Google AdWords Consultant



[The Executive SEO](#)



@theexecutiveseo



“ 1. Social Media will become a Vertical Search category.

2. A new Social Media Authority metric will become an SEO ranking determinant, albeit a small one.

3. Someone will create an on-page optimization tool that takes current content and does keyword research to suggest better keywords based on all relevant factors, i.e. site age, domain authority, competition, etc. ”



**Rebekah Brown**

CEO



[The Marketing Square](#)



@TheMrktgSquare



“ SEO (Search Engine Optimization) will become a more familiar service with businesses when 3 things happen:

1. There's a willingness to invest time and budget for quality SEO from reputable companies
2. The SEO content provided ensures traffic while sharing the unique selling point of the business
3. Business owners carefully hire SEO companies with proven new business records in like categories vs. hiring random companies with the lowest rates.





“ In the short-term, we will continue to see "SEO" integrate and merge with other digital marketing channels. Those with both marketing talent and a strong technical background will continue to be the most sought-after talent for in-house and agency positions, while marketing-only and technical-only specialists either continue to double-down on their depth, or widen the breadth of their practical knowledge and experience.

Enterprise sites and large brands will continue to focus on highly scalable, low-maintenance, technology-based solutions like marketing automation software, social shopping, enhanced internal search, conversion optimization... which leaves the door open for more nimble competitors to edge their way into a market by building a brand and focusing on less-scalable - but more effective, due to their hands-on nature - tactics like content marketing and being early adopters of markup for enhanced search engine listings.

Link builders continue to evolve into content marketers / amplifiers and/or PR coordinators. Technical SEOs who wish to keep specializing will continually learn about various platforms (eCommerce, marketing automation, plugins, add-ons, SaaS solutions for user reviews, scripts, filtered navigation, CRO, etc.) and how they interact with each other, such as which technical problems arise and how to fix them. Marketing-centric SEOs will move toward digital marketing as a holistic discipline with multiple, frequently interacting channels - each of which needs its own strategy and tactics. ”



**Everett Sizemore**

Director R&D



[Inflow](#)



@balibones







**Catfish Comstock**

Director of SEO



[BusinessOnline](#)



@seocatfish



“ 1) Social amplification of content and the response to that amplification will become increasingly important for some query types, especially those queries that are time sensitive.

2) Google will continue to improve its ability to understand AJAX but other search engines will struggle to catch up and AJAX will still be problematic for international companies that use AJAX and are optimizing for engines like Baidu, Yandex or Naver (and even Bing).

3) Content Marketing as a concept will continue to gain traction as a central theme to SEO success and more companies, especially at the enterprise level, will increase budgets for those activities.

4) Schema Markup will become increasingly important as engines find new ways to incorporate the data into search results, especially voice initiated searches.

5) SEO basics will continue to be important, especially as it relates to ensuring a thematic site architecture, addressing technical issues, having well optimized, high quality content as well as an organic back link profile based on earned citations that validate the quality of that content. ”

“ SEO will be focused on by all internet savvy firms, in particular the Fortune 5000 firms will expand their scope of SEO work and take advantage of Google's algorithm favoring their sites with big pushes. Social Link Building will be the power-card of the SEO Industry as viral link building will explode at a higher-end marketing level.


Producing better quality content and marketing strategies will make SEO a more valuable tool when do right. SEO Specialists will understand high-end marketing strategies and how they produce traffic and effect search results. ”



**Alan Rabinowitz**

CEO

◆◆◆  
[SEO Image, Inc.](http://SEO Image, Inc.)

◆  
 @seoimage


**SEO IMAGE**



**Chris O'Leary**

VP Digital Media

◆◆◆  
[Everyday Media, LLC](http://Everyday Media, LLC)

◆  
 @coleary30

**everydaymedia**  
everydayclicks • everydaycalls • everydayresults

“ The purpose of SEO is the improvement of the quality and quantity of visitors to a site. The lead RESULT is improved visibility in search, but too often we focus on the result, not the purpose. As we do a better job educating our clients on this concept, KPI will begin to reflect more meaningful benefits, and as that happens the lines between organic SEO, local search, content, social, CRO, and even paid search, sponsored social and other paid media will blur and disappear in favor of a more overall strategic focus allowing better and more appropriate use of these individual tactics. This way each piece of the puzzle can be seen as a means to the real end rather than the end itself. ”

“ Use of the phrase "SEO" just hit a 5 year low (according to [Google Trends data](#)) and it will continue to decline.

For agencies to survive, they must re-brand (similar to Moz and Majestic) and re-purpose the phrase to accurately hone in on a unique value proposition or strategy focus (similar to the Vertical Measures 8-step approach)

Unintentional duplicate content will remain a problem across eCommerce and common CMS platforms and there will be continued opportunities for 3rd party developers to create useful plugins and cross-functional solutions to common issues (think Yoast, but automated)

International SEO opportunities will continue to expand rapidly. Google has recently invested in additional tracking and functionality related to international language annotation (hreflang implementation) and global expansion opportunities will present key opportunities for small to mid-sized businesses that can out-pace larger brands that don't adopt as quickly. ”



**Art Enke**

Director of SEO



[Vertical Measures](#)



@artenke





**Marcus Sheridan**

Founder



[The Sales Lion](#)



@thesaleslion



“ Much of what is relevant to SEO today will not be in the future. In fact, I see a day when search engines will be able to "judge" content better than humans themselves can. Furthermore, I believe the following elements will at some point be essentially eliminated or significantly reduced in terms of their impact on SEO:

1. Page Rank: More authoritative sites will not (automatically) dominate search engines in the future as they often do today. Why? Well, just because a website has a high page rank doesn't mean it should automatically be given more love by a search engine. Giving too much credit to high Page Ranking sites is the classic example of "The Rich Get Richer, the Poor Get Poorer."
2. Site Age: This goes along with Page Rank but it comes down to this: New and future websites should NOT be punished because they weren't around during the golden age of SEO and search engines. This "first mover advantage" shouldn't hold so much weight, but unfortunately, it does.
3. Social Shares: Many SEO pundits think social will play a bigger and bigger role on search rankings going forward. I do not share this belief. Sure, it may happen for a time, but eventually it will be eliminated because social shares can be too easily manipulated to make a piece of content "appear" worthy of a higher ranking. Furthermore, platforms like Facebook and Twitter come and go, which makes building metrics around said platforms problematic.
4. Inbound Links: Although I think the number of Inbound Links a webpage has will always be somewhat relevant to SEO, I foresee it becoming less and less of a factor. Why? Once again, it can be manipulated. ”

“ As mobile search surges passes desktop search, we will see more and more websites evaluate their performance, usability and accessibility for devices. To add a layer on top of that, content personalization will be a new marketing effort that is likely to create new SEO problems with what content to serve as default for search engines and if search engines access the right content.

Google will continue stealing traffic from publishers in lieu of displaying content within the SERPs. To make it worse, content doesn't end with text excerpts as they move more and more towards widget-type content such as the mortgage calculator they're testing <https://www.seroundtable.com/google-interest-calculator-19542.html>.

Keyword optimization will further morph towards intent optimization, and SEOs will get more savvy about usable content vs keyword manipulation. On this note, search engines will move further towards predictive and proactive content vs reactive keyword search results.

We see this occurring with Google Now pushing weather and traffic alerts and continue to understand your context and surroundings to deliver useful messaging. ”



**Jordan Kasteler**

Sr SEO Manager



[Red Door Interactive](#)



@jordankasteler





**Mike Belasco**

President & CEO



[Inflow](#)



@belasco



- “ 1. Google continues to find ways to define brands and ranks brands not web pages.
2. Google will start pushing back on paid content promotion.
3. Online brand strategies supersede content marketing strategies. ”

“ Google is going to continue to get smarter, returning better results for conversational phrases and searchers' intent. It will also continue to revamp search results and give users information faster; which in my guess will manifest as new features that make it less likely the user will click through to a website.

Thus, building a meaningful brand is going to be all the more important for websites to compete in organic as a channel.

I also think this shift will force SEOs to think about diversifying traffic sources, so the role will expand - maybe even get absorbed - into more into other areas of digital marketing. ”



**Adria Saracino**

Head of Content Strategy



[Distilled](#)



@adriasaracino





**Stephen Garbesi**

Sr SEM Analyst & CEO



[All In One Networking](http://www.allinonenetworking.com)



“ Parallax is going to come more popular. With creative color palettes and exceedingly more images, SEO experts are asking "What About Content"? Parallax was not designed for tons of content. So how do you make a Parallax website SEO friendly? Well there's really only two options, having a blog added to your Parallax site or using the power of the ALT tag.

The ALT tag has been around since the first image was placed on a website many years ago. An Alt tag is used on a website if a image doesn't load or if a blind person is using your website. Back then Alt tags weren't used as much because there was tons of content on websites. Those who did use the ALT tag back then, used short descriptions to explain what an image was. In today's market with millions of websites online, SEO couldn't be more important. The same goes for using Alt tags. A very famous quote "A picture speaks a million words" so why shouldn't your alt tag?

The biggest mistake experts make today is thinking they know it all. So let's make this simple. If a picture speaks a million words, so should your Alt tags. ”



“ The impact of Google + on search engine rankings will continue to diminish - earlier this year, Google Plus chief Vic Gundotra left the company. Following his departure, TechCrunch reported that the Google + team was to be carved up, with the Google Hangouts team moving to the Android team, and the photos team likely following.

In September, Google killed its mandatory Google + account creation when signing up for Gmail. Google + is phasing out, which could lead to a lesser degree of correlation between social signals and search results; think about it - why would the Search giant leave social signals as major ranking factor if their own social platform isn't part of the mix? Short answer - they won't.

Mobile engagement metrics will continue to rise as a ranking factor. Companies that have mobile sites with slow loading times, high bounce rates, low conversion rates & little time on site will take an even harder hit in the rankings, both on mobile devices and desktop platforms. It's been reported that mobile search results on Google vary as much as 43% from desktop searches.

This is due in part to Google returning mobile search results that include pages with fewer backlinks (since users don't link as frequently to mobile sites), smaller file sizes (since these types of pages don't take as long to load, and thus don't use as much of a users data plan) and more local results (since mobile users' locations are known). If companies don't optimize their mobile sites as well as their desktop versions, they'll start losing rankings & visibility on both platforms to companies that optimize across ALL devices really, really well. ”



**Jenni Ramminger**

Director of Marketing



[Fathom](#)



@jenniramminger



“ Technical SEO will continue to become less important and content strategy will continue to become more important as Google (who will still dominate) continues to increase its "spam" focus on content quality as opposed to technicalities. I also predict that Google will begin penalizing sites (in its own search engine results) who abuse social media platforms with spammy tactics as Google begins to use social signals more in its algorithm...however this may still be a few years off. ”



**Dan Kern**

Strategist



[Inflow](#)



@kernmedia



**Nathan Joynt**

Manager Content & Inbound Mktng



[Moza](#)



@nathanjoynt

**MOZU**

“ Strong domains and big brands will continue to increase their presence in organic real estate because their trust and authority signals overall are outpacing those of smaller brands and websites. It will become increasingly difficult to game organic rankings through traditional SEO tactics like link building. Smart brands will look inwards and focus on better product/service development, content strategy, user experience and customer success initiatives. The act of SEO will transition from something brands "do" to something brands "are". The function of SEO while still important, will continue to fold into larger non-paid growth initiatives, aka inbound marketing. Veteran "SEOs" will look to strip the SEO title from their name to avoid becoming marginalized. ”



**Tom Whittam**

SEO Consultant



[Ayima](#)



“ The future of SEO is a question constantly being asked as the landscape continues to change. 2014 has been a big year for SEO, with content becoming even more important. Whether that’s semantic content, or useful resources, quality content has come to the forefront of multiple marketing strategies.

Interestingly, Content Marketing has been spoken about for a long time, yet doesn’t always get executed properly. You can no longer silo your marketing disciplines and now, more than ever, you need a holistic marketing strategy. Data needs to be the first step of every strategy, from giving users the best possible answer to their searches to working out what can be improved, and how. Ayima have always been at the forefront of developing data driven strategies in order to continue improving our clients’ results and it’s more important now than ever that marketing strategies are successful.

Content Marketing should also be used to benefit the rest of your products and not just be treated as a short-term campaign. If created properly, your content can become a long-term asset for your business, and this can only be achieved by including Design, Social, Paid, PR and Brand teams to support your data. ”

“ Mobile will change everything and reshape our organic search strategy and the way we optimize.

1. Mobile usage will outperform desktop.
2. Video will be an integral part of SEO strategy and YouTube will become the largest search engine in the world!
3. High quality content will be more important than ever.
4. The SERPs will get a face lift to adapt to mobile, take up more real estate, show more paid search ads and keep you in the Google Ecosystem.
5. Voice Search will grow and how users search will also change.
6. Yahoo and Bing will be at war since Yahoo is taken up more marketshare since the Firefox deal and Google's market share fell. ”



**Winston Burton**

VP of SEO



[Acronym Media](#)





**Cody Jensen**

Director of Strategy



[180fusion](#)



@codycjensen



“ SEO will continue to become more and more technical. Those who do not understand how to read and write code, especially HTML, PHP, and CSS will be left in the dust. ”

“ SEO is another way of saying relevant, contextual, personalized content. Brands that can deliver this, will not only set themselves apart in a very competitive, always on marketplace, but by being relevant to their customers, they will be creating that lifetime value across the customer journey.

While the Google algorithm is always changing, what we do know is that the Google loves relevancy. So delivering relevant and tailored content - that is data driven- will help give you a win-win - give you an uptick in SEO and an increase in loyalty and evangelism from your customers. ”



**Lisa P. Bonanno**

VP Corporate Marketing



[Tahzoo](#)



@lisabonanno





**Crystal Ogram**

Associate Director SEO



[Reprise Media](#)



“ 2014 was a year that really taught the world about security. From the very basic definition of traditional physical security to data, financial, and even health and sustainability, searchers are more aware now of their security, or lack thereof.

Search Engines have made significant strides in data security for several years now but it's only been in the past couple of years that they've used their wealth of data to provide predictive results to help enhance a user's experience.

From a product/idea perspective, I think the biggest thing to come out of 2014 was the explosion of wearables and internet of everything. It only makes sense that Search Engines will use these extra data sources to provide searchers with a completely customized solution (not really options) that focuses on the evolving definition of security. As an example, with government incentivization driving pharmacies and medical offices to transition records to digital and with healthcare.gov distributing personal data to DoubleClick, consumers have a closer reach to accessing more personalized search results.

Companies that capitalize and master the true individualism and security needs of searchers on the digital front will stand ahead. ”

“ With digital delivery advances, personalized education is ramping up in a way that can forever change our education systems. We know now that people learn in very different ways at dissimilar rates, and the Internet offers many cost-effective, personalized options at all education levels. Additionally, distributive start-up costs for education are declining and direct-to-consumer courses allow education products to receive rapid mass adoption. Search will play a very large role in pressing this educational tipping point forward.

Wearable technologies are rendering health-oriented algorithms awash with data. The medical field has been using implants for decades. Searching for blood markers and vital cues from nanobots that trigger doses of individualized medications is becoming a working reality. Aggregating content created from the growth of wearable tech requires new search algorithms to help take us beyond treating existing illnesses into more predictive capabilities. Search will help interpret this data on a global scale.

Cloud computing will provide new opportunities for search and consequently, SEO. ”



**PJ Fusco**

Sr Director SEO Services



[Covario](#)



@pjhfusco

**COVARIO**



“ SEO and marketing should not be evaluated based upon the number of 'items' completed in a 'things to do list'. Real value to the business owner is created when their marketing team understands, communicates, and executes priorities over a course of time. ”



**Kevin F. Yeaman**

Local SEO Expert Specialist



[SEO in Colorado](#)



@seoincolorado



**Kurt Lambert**

Technology Director



[Silverback Strategies](#)



@kurtlambert



“ Mobile optimizations will an absolute 'must' if you want to have SEO success. With search engines continuing to want to provide the best user experience to their users, it's very apparent that making sure your website is mobile-friendly will be a key factor in organic exposure.

Co-citations and brand mentions will be as important as links themselves. With search engines becoming much smarter about weeding out low-quality/spammy links, they are equally realizing the importance of honoring any time your brand is mentioned, especially on authoritative websites. Having your business cited as a source in an article from the Wall Street Journal, even without a link back to your site, could (and should be) arguably be more beneficial for SEO than 10 links from 10 different smaller blogs. ”



**Everett Sizemore**

Director R&D



[Inflow](#)



@balibones



“ If you want to look into the future of SEO, just look into the past of traditional marketing. Link building becomes PR. Keyword research because topic modeling based on audience personas. Copywriting continues to be copywriting, but the audience is no longer a search engine, and the content is based on engaging with segments outlined in audience personas throughout the entire life-cycle of their purchasing or partnering decisions. The only thing that remains of traditional "search engine optimization" is the technical side, which is as important as ever. Everything else is online marketing, or internet marketing, or inbound marketing... it's just marketing.

Most of the best SEOs I know have always straddled the fence between being a developer and a marketer. We have the unique skill of being able to speak both of these languages, which is why I see former SEOs dominating the online marketing industry across all channels. We know how to build a solid technical foundation. We know how to do competitor and audience research. We have a high-level view of the online marketing landscape, from PPC and PLAs to crafting sticky, conversion-oriented landing pages. We know user experience, conversion optimization, copywriting... The SEO industry may not have the same name in five years, but you can bet the brightest among us will adapt and move into the gap left behind by traditional "Ad Men" whose strategies and tactics were based in a long history of print, radio and direct mail. Asking about the future of SEO is like asking about the future of cell phones in 1999. Yes, we still have cell phones. But they're also computers, GPS units, video phones, and much more. To call a modern mobile device a mere "cell phone" would be a misnomer. Likewise with SEO.



“ 1. I predict constant algorithmic updates occurring. The last Penguin refresh took over a year to update and many businesses suffered. These more frequent updates will give businesses negatively impacted by past Penguin updates a better chance to recover when taking the proper measures.

2. Search results are going to become much more difficult to optimize. Google wants you to see natural and accurate results and this will make it tougher for businesses and even agencies. Those working with a reputable agency that understands how to put the user first will flourish.

3. You can't go anywhere without seeing people glued to their cellphones. If your site isn't mobile responsive, you're missing out on business - period.

”



**Matt Haran**

Sr SEO Consultant



[WebiMax](#)



@thatdoodmatt





**Rob Bonham**

Sr Sales Consultant



[Ignite Visibility](#)



@rob\_bonham



“ Microformat/semantic markups are going to escalate from important to crucial for SEO success. Search engines are getting better all the time at understanding searcher intent and how that relates to the content on a given web page. It has been speculated that websites deploying semantic technologies will be rewarded by being given priority in search result rankings. I could definitely see that happening. ”

“ SEO will continue to move towards real human language/interactions and away from things done to please search crawlers.

In other words, it will be increasingly important to create content optimized for people--how they really speak, what questions they really ask, the pieces they really feel compelled to share--and much less important to optimize traditional search signals (keywords, descriptions, backlinks, etc.). ”



**Ayaz Nanji**

Co-Founder



[Inbound ContentWorks](#)



@ayaznanji



“ SEO will continue to evolve from a tactic to a channel that touches every marketing medium. This will require SEOs to evolve as well and become more well-rounded marketers who can speak holistically across channels. ”



**Jon Clark**

Director, SEO



[Razorfish, LLC](#)



@jonleeclark



**Ina Karadzhova**

Creative Director



[Hop Online](#)



@hop\_online



“ I'd replace Engine with Human, turning SEO into HSO -- Human Search Optimization. The gap between technological advancement and the human factor is getting wider with each passing year, and we should expect a turning point in the near future. ”

People are getting tired of screens, clicks, and taps, and will be attracted by human-optimized sites and applications, which show clear signs of having been created by a person for a person. Through great UX, these kinds of sites and apps will gain top rankings. ”



## Chris Raulf

Founder



[Boulder SEO Marketing](#)



@swisschris



“ SEO is dead! Well, not really but the way it used to work only a few short years ago.

I often teach digital marketing workshops and speak at industry conferences; a question I often get asked at these events is: "What's the one thing in SEO we should focus on?" I'll keep the answer to this question as short as possible: Google currently considers 200+ rankings signals as part of their algorithm.

So if you want to rank high on Google you should ideally address all of these rankings signals. However, it's nearly impossible and we all enjoy a few hours of free time once in a while! Here's a strategy that is working really well and that will continue to work well: Create campaign based content marketing, SEO, and social media programs. You could for example host a webinar.

Add a search engine-optimized description of the webinar to your site, announce the webinar in a press release, write one or two blog posts about the webinar, post a LinkedIn Long-form publishing post about the webinar topic to your LinkedIn account, promote the webinar on social media, etc. etc. You get it; right?

Google will take notice of your campaign based activities and ultimately you'll rank well for the target SEO keywords of your campaign. ”

“ 1 - SEO's role transitions to more niche/expert consultation and less direct implementation

2 - SEO as a skill becomes more ingrained across all departments of organizations (PR, Dev, etc.) through education, and is no longer a specific silo within the marketing arms of larger companies.

3 - Link Development maintains its significance or becomes more influential due to continued FUD campaigns by Google creating scarcity of quality in the link markets.

4 - Industry growth opportunities lie within developing SaaS tools for enterprise and SMB markets, providing education and training, and niche consulting such as link strategy development, local strategy development, and similar aspects of SEO which will become more technical and silo'd. ”



**Jake Bohall**

Vice President



[Angular](#)



@jakebohall







**Hemma Randhawa**

Sr Digital Marketing Manager



[Make It Rain](#)



@hemmarandhawa



“ SEO is moving towards cross channel integration causing an increase in the demand for effective analytics, content creativity and social media enhancement. ”

“ The future of SEO lies in between social Media and Content Marketing! The next step is what I call Data Driven Content Marketing.

Data mining is used everyday to take better business decisions, soon it will be utilized to create and deliver the right content, at the right time on the right channel.

This is the route SEO is taking I believe and this will have a very strong impact on how marketers creates and publish engaging content. ”



**Eric Ingrand**

VP Content Marketing EMEA



[EnVeritas Group, Inc](#)



@ericevgeurope



“ I think schema will be come more and more powerful helping us really control what is presented in the search results. Secured sites will also have a bigger affect on rankings, Google really wants the web to be as safe as possible.

I think google will continue to change their search results for specific industries. We have seen what they have done with flights, soon it will come to hotels and other industries. This will really put a dent in the traffic of sites like Kayak and Hipmonk. ”



**Ben Holland**

Senior SEO Analyst



[Zion & Zion](#)



@benmfholland



ZION & ZION



**Tripp Hamilton**

Director of Search Engine QA



[Angular](#)



@tripp\_hamilton



“ Marketing your website solely to search engines through 'colored-hat' SEO techniques will be a thing of the past. Responsive web design, worthwhile content, and intuitive website architecture are the primary ranking factors that Google and other search engines will use to determine the authority of a website. Back-links and the anchor text used in those links are still the primary ranking factors for websites, but has been too easily exploited over the past several years.

Google's goal is to provide users with the most relevant results and a great user experience, and smart webmasters should do the same. That being said, webmasters should keep their goals in-line with Google, primarily because user experience is the future of SEO. ”



**Tony Soares**

Director of Web & SEO



[White Shark Media](#)



@tsoares17



“ HTTPS/SSL referrals, Mobile search, and apps will make identifying traffic sources almost impossible.

Much like the "Not Provided" keyword problems SEOs have dealt with for the last few years I believe this year will be the year of traffic source problems.

Already I have noticed a 25% increase in direct traffic across our clients accounts while organic traffic seems to be taking hits left and right. As search becomes more and more mobile based our ability to accurately determine where traffic is coming from will diminish.

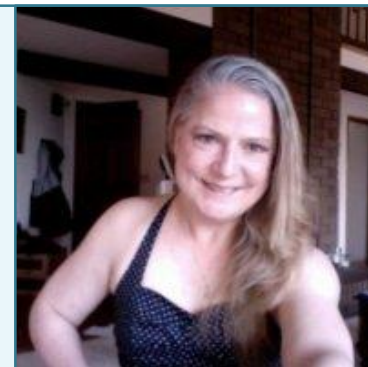
This is bad news for SEO companies as the demand for full transparency and full visitor tracking continues to grow.

The need for an accurate analytics tool with proper keyword tracking has never been higher and whatever company wins the analytics race is likely to take the SEO world by storm. ”

“ I think as Google's algorithm becomes more sophisticated, we are going to see fewer and fewer manual penalties and more and more instances of specific sections of sites or even specific pages being hit by various algorithm refreshes.

While in some ways more fair to businesses because Google isn't penalizing an entire site, it will become harder and harder for businesses to monitor, diagnose and fix pages that have been penalized because they won't have any interaction or feedback from Google directly. For example, in a scenario where a specific page is hit by a Penguin penalty, filing a reconsideration request will be moot because there was never a manual action in the first place.

All a site owner will be able to do is submit a disavow file that contains their best guesses as to what the suspect linking sites might be. I predict that anyone building and creating tools that make it possible to quickly and easily identify all of the inbound links to a page (right now there really isn't anything that compiles a complete backlink profile, particularly for large sites) and accurately evaluate those links for risk level, and finally, create and maintain an ongoing disavow file...those people are going to make a lot of money off of the rest of us. ”



**Dana Tan**

SEO Account Manager



[Seer Interactive](#)



@danatanseo

seer

## So, What *is* the Future of SEO?

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As you have seen from our experts, SEO is ever-changing and ever-evolving, but one thing remains constant: great SEO starts with great content.

Search engine algorithms will continue to change. Trends will have an impact on the content you create and how you create it.

But one thing will never change: if you create content that is ***interesting, useful and valuable***, you'll always win in the long run.

# What is Zerys?

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