botify

The Executive's Guide to Enterprise SEO

How to unlock the revenue-driving potential of organic search

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The modern web is changing the way we think about SEO.

From changes in searcher behavior such as mobile and voice to advanced technologies like JavaScript and accelerated mobile pages, search engine optimization is more complex than ever before. Without an emphasis on keeping pace with these advancements, enterprise websites have suffered — Google now ignores ~50% of the content[1] on enterprise websites. Fortunately for enterprise organizations though, the reverse is also true. Those that invest in getting SEO right stand to gain the most in this new paradigm — in traffic and in revenue.

In this guide, we'll walk you through the most important pieces of building an SEO program, from having a holistic crawling-to-conversions methodology driving your efforts to how to set up your SEO team. By the end, you'll be poised to start leveraging SEO and profiting from organic search.

[1] https://www.botify.com/blog/fact-google-doesnt-know-half-your-website-what-can-you-do

What does SEO look like today?

While having the right organizational setup is important for enterprises that want to increase profits from organic search, there's something even more fundamental that can make or break an SEO program — buy-in.

In order to make organic search profitable, you have to be fully committed to making it a priority. The way to do that? Understand it.

In this section

SEO: A (jargon-free) refresher

Enterprises are investing big money into both their websites and driving traffic to their websites — paid advertising, social media, email marketing, influencer marketing... the list goes on. SEO provides a relatively low-cost way to win sustainable, long-term, qualified traffic that results in revenue.

When it comes to SEO, you're probably well acquainted with the basics:

- SEO ensures that Google and other search engines can find and understand your website, from code to content.
- SEO helps search engines find your website content and show it to searchers when they're looking for it, connecting you to more customers who need what your company offers.
- Once earned through SEO, you can enjoy the benefits of sustained organic traffic for months or even years to come.

Search engines like Google process upwards of five billion searches per day1 — a portion of those are people looking for what your organization offers — and some studies2 indicate that search engines contribute ~35% of all website traffic.
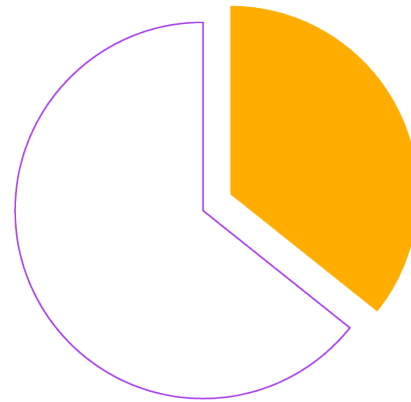
~35% of all website traffic comes from search engines

If SEO produces so much revenue-driving traffic, what's the problem? Why do so many enterprise organizations struggle to get Google to find and show their content to searchers?

The answer lies in the complexities of the modern web.

When we say the web is more complex than ever before, we mean on just about every level.
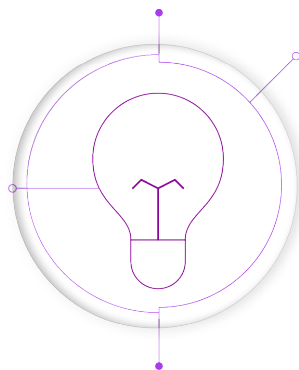
SEO provides a relatively low-cost way to win sustainable, long-term, qualified traffic that results in revenue.

Complexities presented by the modern web

JavaScript and how Google renders your pages

Larry Page and Sergey Brin developed Google's algorithm when web pages were primarily HTML (hypertext markup language). When new technology like JavaScript entered the scene, allowing pages to become more dynamic, Google knew it had to start treating pages more like a modern browser.
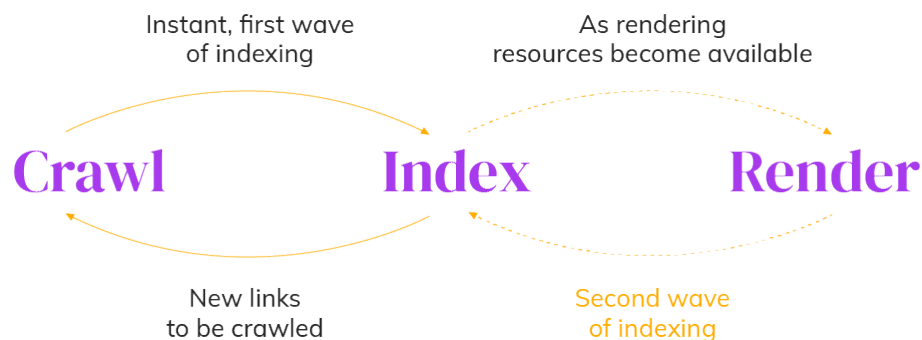
Essentially, JavaScript can change the way a page looks from the browser itself, rather than the server. In order for Google to see those modifications, it needs to render the pages just like a browser would. But rendering is time and resource-intensive, leaving Google little choice but to index web pages in two phases. At Botify, we're calling this "render budget,"3 and it can lead to Google missing some details about your pages on the first pass. When this happens, your organic performance can suffer.

Instant, first wave
of indexing

As rendering
resources become available

Crawl   Index   Render

New links
to be crawled

Second wave
of indexing

Many organizations' transition from HTML to JavaScript wasn't a smooth one. Due to incorrect deployment — factors such as bad development or canned/non-customized code — organic website traffic tanked, prompting many to revert back to the HTML versions of their websites. Since then, developers have advanced in this area, leading to a renewed emphasis on JavaScript. If an enterprise organization doesn't already have JavaScript deployed on their website, then they're likely in the planning stages to make it happen.

Because enterprise-level websites today often rely on JavaScript for some SEO-critical elements like text and links, it's critical they have a way to test and ensure that Google isn't missing their important content.

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**Mobile-first indexing and understanding mobile/desktop parity**

Google recently began moving websites over to mobile-first indexing. While Google used to crawl, index, and rank web pages based on their desktop version, Google now does this based on the website's mobile version.

Based on Botify's analysis4, smaller websites are more likely to be among the first to enter the mobile-first index compared to large websites. Google is giving the largest sites longer to prepare, is moving them over at a slower pace to ensure successful transitions, or both.

From a risk assessment point of view, this makes sense, because smaller websites should be easier to move for both Google and the site stakeholders than enterprise-grade websites.

Botify's research also indicates that responsive websites are much more likely to enter the mobile-first index first. Google appears to feel that it's less risky to transition responsive websites, since the same page is served regardless of device/user agent. By contrast, Mobile URL and Dynamic Serving websites serve different pages depending on the user agent, meaning content lacks parity when accessed on mobile versus desktop.

Mobile-first indexing makes it critical for enterprises to ensure that there's parity between the mobile and desktop versions of their websites. If the mobile version of a web page didn't contain all the elements the desktop version had, its organic performance could suffer upon being moved over to the mobile-first index.

Mobile website's type

|	Mobile URL & Dynamic Serving Website	Responsive Website (or no Mobile Website)
Mobile-First Index		
Desktop Index		
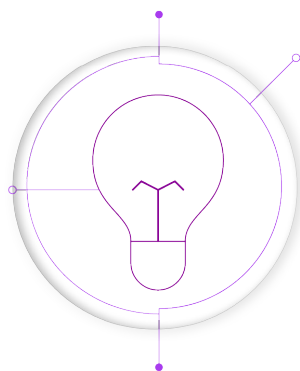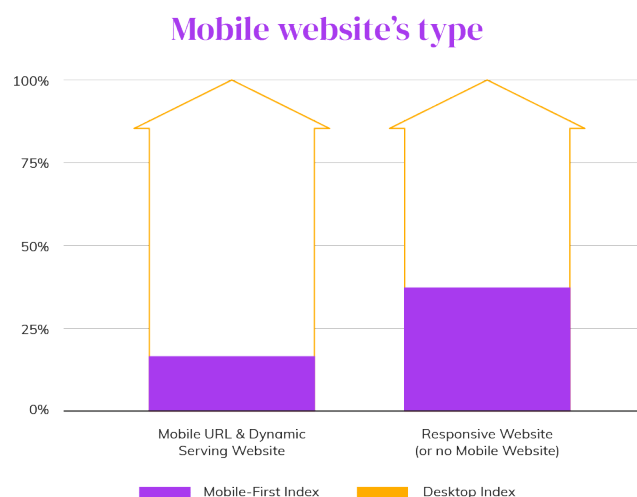
Small, responsive websites are more likely to enter the mobile-first index before larger, non-responsive sites.

For many enterprises, the move over to mobile-first indexing has been challenging. Due to the size of their websites, achieving parity has become a long project tackled in phases. Some have opted to fix parity issues on small sections of their site first, monitor the results, then take their learnings and apply them toward fixing larger sections of their site.

This type of start - small - and - test methodology is something Expedia uses on nearly all their SEO initiatives:

"Test-and-learn is a big thing for us. It lets us propose changes with confidence, knowing that we've proven the model on smaller websites and can expect similar results if rolled out to our larger sites."

- Brent Manning, Expedia
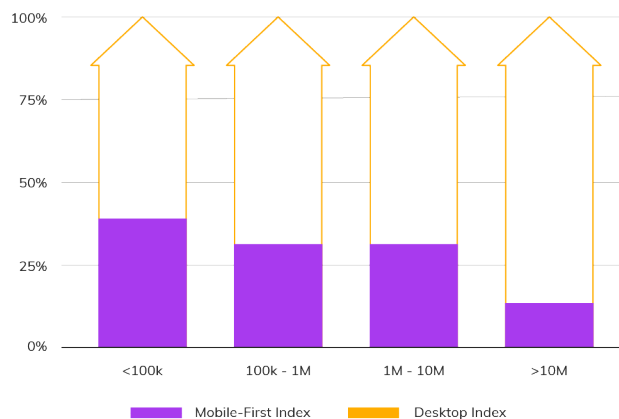
Google indexes trillions of pages, and more are being published every day

Both the web and Google's index of the web are growing daily. According to Google, "Search starts with the web. It's made up of over 130 trillion individual pages and it's constantly growing."

Google doesn't have time to visit every page on the web — are they missing your important content?

This places a heavy demand on Google, who has to crawl and render all this content. Google doesn't have the time and the resources to be able to crawl and render everything. Their answer to this is a budget, or limit of how many URLs Google's crawler will crawl before leaving your website.

Because of these budgets, Google may be missing some of a website's important content (about half, according to Botify's data). Google may also be spending time on "non-compliant" pages — pages that don't create any meaningful experiences for searchers such as duplicate content or pages responding with errors. When Google has limited time to explore your content, you can't afford to have them waste time on these types of pages.

If Google isn't crawling your important content, it won't be indexing your content either, and content that doesn't exist in the index has no chance of earning any traffic from Google organic search.

Adopting a new methodology

With statistics like Google ignoring half of enterprise website content, it might seem like search engines simply don't like large or technologically advanced websites. The reality is, search engines and enterprise websites don't have to be at odds.

In this section

Botify's Methodology

Crawl

Convert

Render

UNIFIED DATA

AUTOMATED TASKS

PRESCRIPTIVE INSIGHTS

Rank

Index

Google's stated goal is to "organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful." That includes the information on enterprise websites. If enterprise websites want to benefit from the traffic that search engines can send them though, they need to adopt a new methodology.

Large websites simply cannot start with rankings and keywords or they will miss enormous opportunity. They need to go deeper and focus on the entire search process, starting with its technical foundation and how search engines crawl it, to how its real audience engages with it.
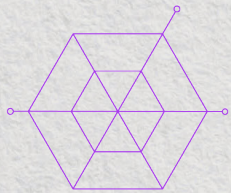
Let's take a look at Botify's 5-Step Methodology for Enterprise SEO.

Crawl, Render, Index: The technical foundation for enterprise SEO

If you were shocked to read that Google ignores about half of all content on enterprise websites, you're not alone. Many people assume an "if you build it, they will come" mentality, thinking all published pages automatically qualify to show up in Google search. Sadly, this isn't true. But why?

Before searchers can find your content, search engines need to be able to access and understand

it. In the earlier days of the web, when the landscape presented fewer complexities and was mostly HTML based, this step of the search process used to be taken for granted.

Today, ignoring your technical foundation is simply not an option. We need to be asking ourselves three important questions.

How are search engines crawling our website?

Enterprise websites are large, and Google's resources are limited. That's the likely culprit for half of your site being invisible in search engines.
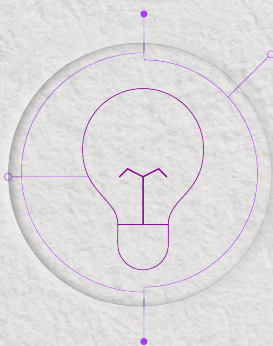
Enterprise organizations that want to start profiting from organic search need to be able to diagnose which pages Google is crawling and which pages Google is ignoring.

When Google misses a page, it doesn't get added to the index, which in turn means it doesn't have a chance to rank, get traffic, or generate revenue for your business.

If you only looked at your rankings or traffic to those pages, you might be stumped. All you'd know is that the page isn't ranking and isn't getting any organic search traffic, but you wouldn't know why. When you don't know the underlying "why," you don't know how to correct course.

Enterprise organizations that want to start profiting from organic search need to be able to diagnose which pages Google is crawling and which pages Google is ignoring.

How are search engines rendering our JavaScript?

Because websites that used to be static HTML have now been made more dynamic with the advent of JavaScript, Google realized that they had to start rendering web pages like a modern browser if they wanted to keep up.

This was a necessary step in keeping pace with the advancements of the web, but it was also resource-intensive. And remember, Google has finite resources — they simply cannot spend an unlimited amount of time crawling every page of a website and rendering all its resources. To cope with this, Google introduced a second wave of indexing.

Essentially, Google performs an initial crawl of a web page and indexes what they find. Later, as resources become available, they go back and render the JavaScript on those pages. That means links and content in JavaScript may be missed, which can potentially harm your organic performance.

Enterprise SEO today must focus on working with JavaScript and not fight against it, finding areas for improvement that could lead to Google finding and understanding more of your website content.

How can I get search engines to index my important content?

Once you have a better understanding of how search engines are crawling and rendering your content, you can execute optimizations that help Google index your important content and keep non-critical content out of the index.

To do this, enterprises need to be asking questions such as:

- Does Google have access to non-critical content?
- Is Google spending time on unimportant content?
- Is Google ignoring important content?

Knowing which of your pages Google is visiting (or missing) is the first step to ensuring that you're optimizing for Google's index.

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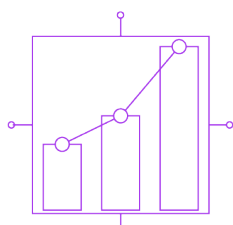
Rank: Content that ranks for real searcher queries

In order to use search engines to send organic traffic to your website, you'll need to adapt your strategy to match the way real people are searching for your brand.

Optimizing for crawling, rendering, and indexing may ensure that search engines find and understand your content, but if it doesn't provide the best answers to the real questions your audience is asking, it won't rank. If it doesn't rank, it has little chance of earning the traffic that can produce revenue for your business.

Enterprises need to optimize their site content to fit the ways their real audience is searching.

What words does your audience use to search?

Do you know how your ideal customers are searching for what you offer? In many cases, there's a gap between what we think we know about our customers and what is actually true about our customers.

Enterprise organizations need insight into the words and phrases their ideal customers are using to search for them, as well as which of their web pages Google is surfacing for each of those queries. This is difficult for enterprise websites that typically have millions of URLs and keywords to keep track of, but it's a necessary step in the methodology.

What devices does your audience search on?

Knowing what devices your audience uses to search for you is another critical step in ensuring your content meets searcher expectations. That's why the Botify platform allows you to segment your keywords by device.

It's one thing to understand that our audience has different behaviors on mobile than they do on desktop and tablet. It's another to be able to actually see those differences. Once you understand how your audience is searching for your brand, you can work toward making improvements that increase your visibility in search engines.

Where does your audience search from?

Not only is it critical for an enterprise to understand how their audience is searching. It's also important to understand where your audience is searching from.

Global enterprises need visibility into the entire search process, and that includes how their international audiences are finding and engaging with them. This allows you to ensure that you're serving up the most relevant content to international audiences.
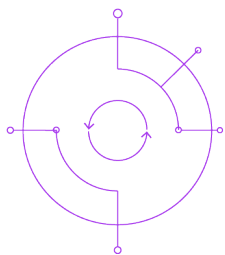
Convert: Using SEO to drive conversions and revenue

Every piece of this methodology is necessary for enterprises that want to move the needle and start boosting their revenue through SEO:

1. When Google can find and understand our content, it qualifies to get served up to searchers.

2. When our content provides helpful answers to real questions, it gets clicked on.

3. Once it gets clicked on, we can start seeing ROI from organic search.

E-commerce websites can use their organic search traffic to drive product purchases, lead generation websites can use their organic search traffic to drive interest forms, publisher websites can use their organic search traffic to drive affiliate link clicks or monetize the traffic directly via on-page ad placement — organic traffic is traffic you can monetize no matter what type of website you run. You just have to know where the biggest opportunities lie.

Enterprises need to be asking themselves questions such as "What keywords present the biggest opportunity for qualified traffic?" and "What keywords are driving the most revenue?" if they want to maximize profitability from organic search.

Organic traffic is traffic you can monetize no matter what type of website you run.

How to Structure an Enterprise SEO Team

In this section

SEO is its own discipline, but one that has ramifications for many other disciplines:

- Web developers need to follow SEO best practices to avoid issues that could prevent search engines from finding and understanding the website content as intended.

- UX and design teams need to follow SEO best practices to avoid eliminating or changing content that is driving organic website traffic.

- Content and editorial teams must be mindful of how their audience will find the content through search. What queries will they use to find this content?

Traditionally, this has made it difficult to know where SEO should live on your org chart.

Where does enterprise SEO belong?

Because SEO touches so many other digital disciplines, many global enterprise organizations have organized their SEO teams into cross-functional, interdisciplinary product teams (the product being the website), a new trend which Botify heavily encourages. This team is tasked with the organization's website as a whole, and comprises specialists ranging from developers and analysts to designers and SEO specialists.

Enterprise SEOs often report to a VP of Product, at many retail organizations they report to the VP of E-Commerce, and some enterprise SEO teams are large enough to have a VP of SEO. Whoever they report to, the most important thing to remember is that SEO specialists need to sit within an area of the organization where they can work closely with other members of the website team. Because SEO overlaps with so many areas of digital acquisition, from website development to content, SEO needs to be in a position where they can impact and be impacted by other members of this team.

Enterprise SEO job description

Whether you're hiring for an enterprise SEO position or need to more clearly define the responsibilities of existing members of your SEO team, it can be helpful to know what other enterprise SEOs are typically responsible for.

We work closely with many enterprise SEO teams, and their responsibilities typically include:

- Defining and evangelizing SEO best practices.

- Pinpointing opportunities for organic growth.

- Working with developers to implement technical optimizations such as AMP, structured data, and page speed — many critical SEO changes would not be possible without SEOs working closely with dev teams!

- Work closely with editorial and PR teams to leverage content for maximum SEO impact.

- Work with analytics teams to identify performance issues and track progress.

- Partner with other acquisition teams to ensure integration and consistency across channels.z

Enterprise SEO KPIs

How do you measure the success of an SEO within your team? Enterprises that integrate an SEO specialist into their digital acquisition team should consider using key performance indicators (KPIs) such as:

Crawling, Rendering & Indexing: An enterprise SEO can be measured by their ability to correct technical issues that help Google find more of their important content.

Real Ranking: An SEO will work to ensure the website is showing up prominently in search engines for the real ways the organization's audience is searching.

Traffic: An SEO will work to ensure that the website captures the searcher's clicks, producing organic traffic growth.

Conversions: The ultimate goal of technical optimizations, ranking, and traffic is to convert visitors into revenue/customers.

Increase traffic and revenue with the SEO platform built for enterprise sites
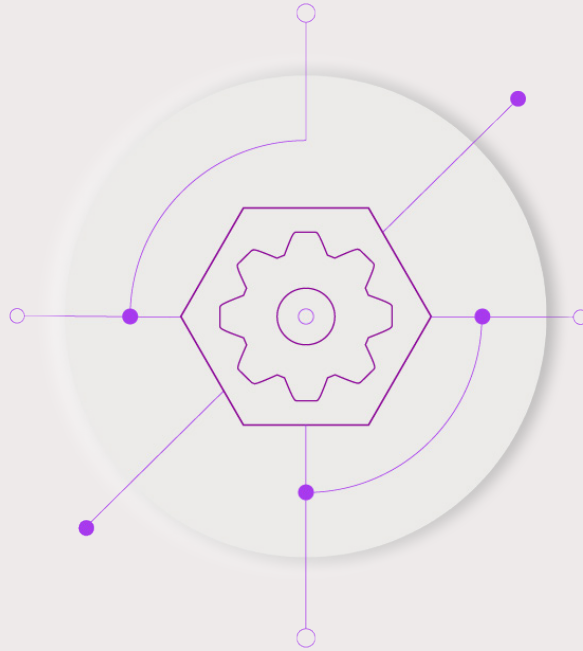
From the revenue that's at stake, to the volume of data, and the size of their sites, enterprises require a unique approach to SEO. They must start by focusing on their technical foundation or they'll be missing massive opportunity.

Combining Botify's 5-Step Methodology and Enterprise SEO Platform, large digital brands can:
Increase profitability from the organic search channel by quickly identifying and removing revenue barriers.
Drive long-term, sustainable growth through deep data insights that will improve the performance of your site in search engines.

Mitigate risk by having an early warning system in place to help you understand the impact of things like search engine algorithm changes.

Botify delivers the methodology and platform required for scalable enterprise SEO strategies that will drive greater outcomes for your business.

Let's chat: Request your demo today.

Botify.com/Demo

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