

VOLUME 2  
ISSUE 1  
2019

# PAGES

CLEAN  
PROVEN  
SEO

AN SEO MAGAZINE



## CLIMBING THE RANKS TO BETTER RESULTS

### EXTENDING YOUR REACH

Vince Nero  
Content Marketing Manager,  
Siege Media

### AUDIENCE & ALGORITHMS

Joelle Irvine  
Director of Marketing and Growth,  
Bookmark Content and Communications

### SEO MYTHBUSTING PT. II

Charles Taylor  
SEO Manager,  
Verizon Fios

### THE ULTIMATE SEO COMMODITY

Greg Jacobs  
Senior SEO Strategist,  
Found

### SITE AUDITING ODDITIES

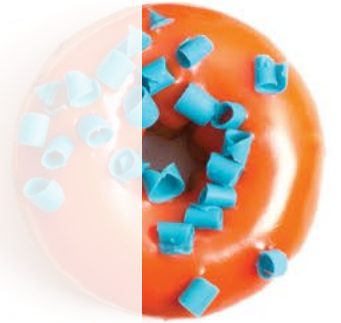
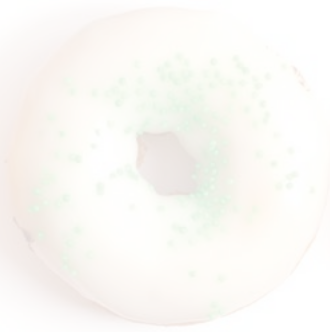
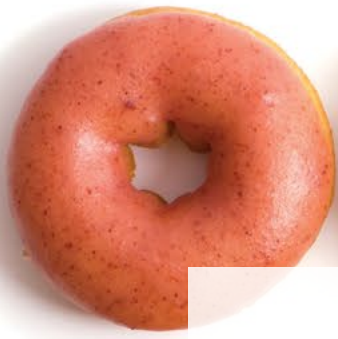
Mary Wilson  
Technical SEO Specialist,  
Page One Power

### GOOGLE MY BUSINESS 101

Ryan Joos  
Senior Marketing Strategist,  
Nifty Marketing

### INTEGRATE SOCIAL & SEO

Kristen Vaughn  
Associate Director of Online Marketing,  
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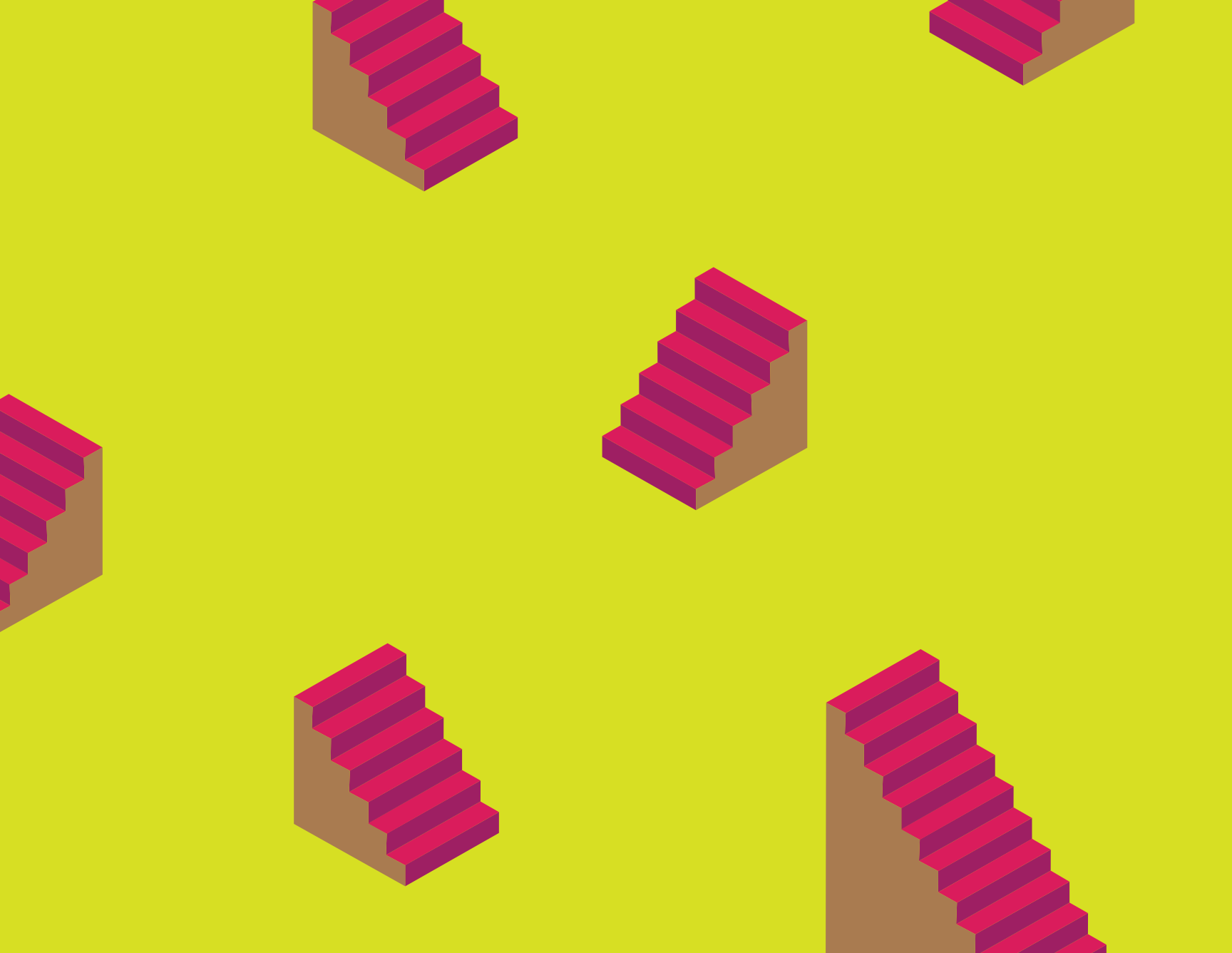


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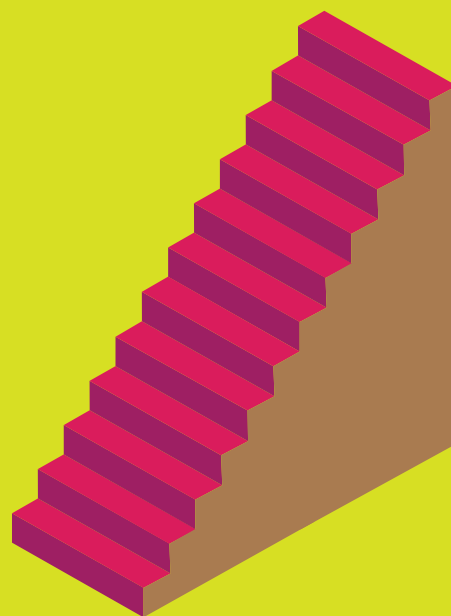
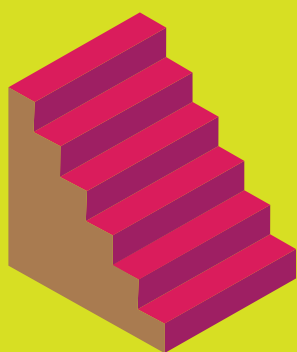
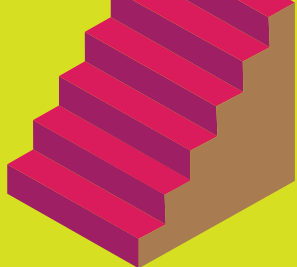
# PAGES

AN SEO MAGAZINE



**FOUNDER & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:** JOE OLIVER  
**ART AND DESIGN:** A.J. OGDEN  
**MANAGING EDITOR:** SLOAN ROSEBERRY  
**MARKETING AND ADVERTISING:** JAN SCHMIDT  
**PHOTOGRAPHY:** UNSPLASH.COM  
**ADVERTISING DESIGN:** MOLLY SCHMIDT  
**PRODUCTION:** PAGE ONE POWER  
**PUBLISHING & PRINTING:** EVERMORE PRINTS LLC  
**MAIN OFFICES:** 3050 N LAKEHARBOR LN STE 100 BOISE, ID 83703 208.229.7046  
**FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES AND PLACEMENT:** [JAN@pagesSEOmagazine.com](mailto:JAN@pagesSEOmagazine.com)  
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Siege Media

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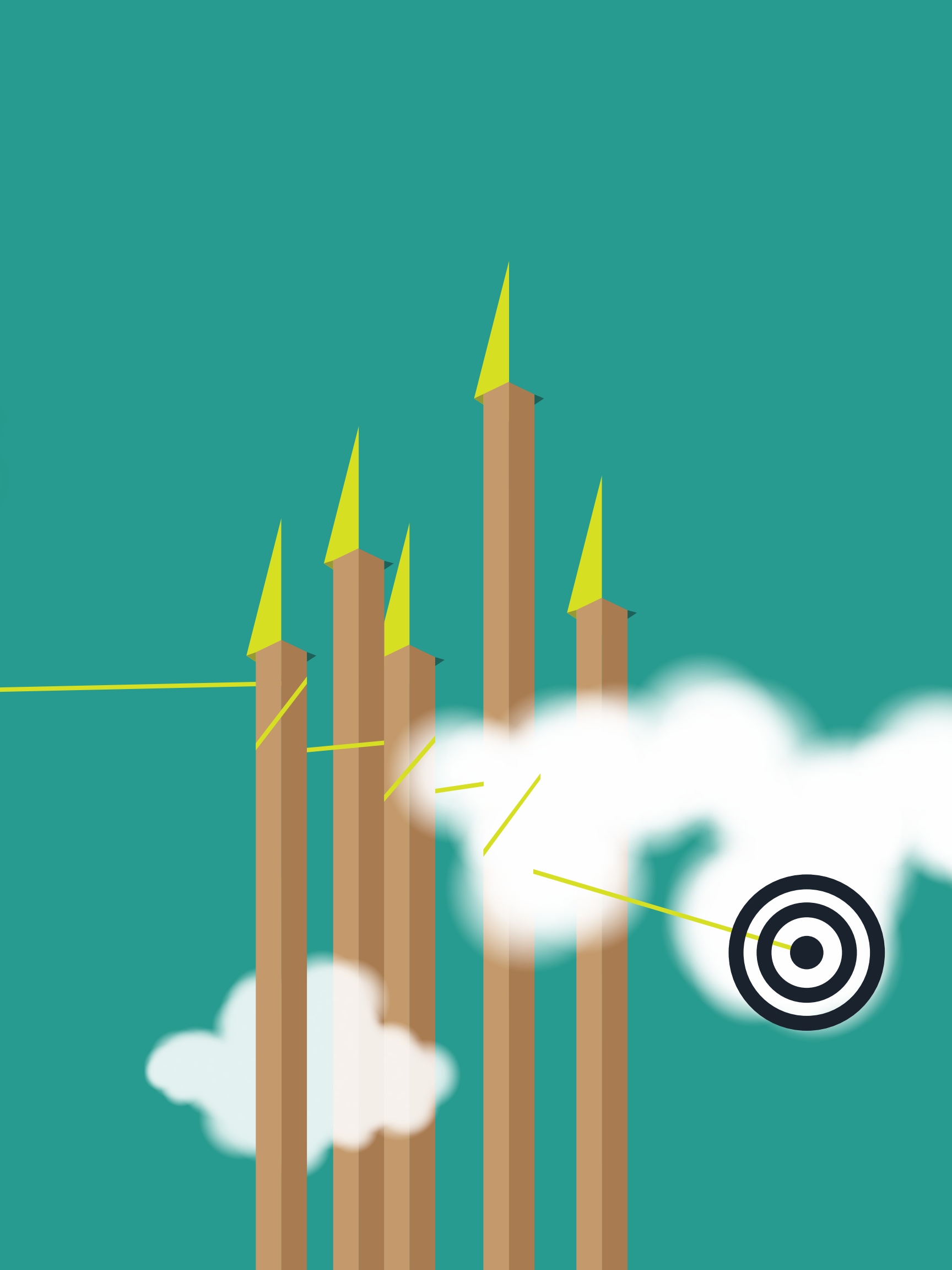
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# READER VOICES

ON PAGES MAGAZINE



Got something to say about PAGES? Let your voice be heard.

We love hearing from you! Share your thoughts about PAGES on social media using the hashtag below, or send us an email at: [info@pagesSEOMagazine.com](mailto:info@pagesSEOMagazine.com)

## #PAGESSEOMAGAZINE



About to tuck into some paper-based learning over lunch with this lovely looking thing: @pagesSEOMag. @optimisey ANDREW OPTIMISEY



Our first edition of the @pagesSEOMag has just arrived in my post box in the UK all the way from America @chris\_at\_b449 CHRIS HAINES



When at #smx there's nothing more relaxing as flicking through the latest copy of @pagesSEOMag @ndyjsimpson ANDY SIMPSON



Just received the 4th issue - time to get busy. It's all about #ROI this time. You guys just rock! @gpapatheodorou GEORGE PAPATHEODOROU

## GOT THE LATEST ISSUE OF @PAGESSEOMAG TODAY. CAN'T WAIT TO READ IT.

*Thanks*

AXEL JUEL @SEOHOLICC

## TWEETS A MILLION!



# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



VOL. 2 ISSUE 1

I've been working in SEO since 2010, and during that time, I've made an observation about our SEO community.

Consider this: the modern field of accounting was established in 1492. In contrast, search — as the tool we know it as today, a marketing channel, and a part of business strategy — is only a couple of decades old. We've had a lot of time to figure out how to best become accountants, how to demonstrate the value of the field, and how accountants fit into the rest of a business. Search? Not quite as much.

In the early days of the field, only a handful of professionals identified themselves as search marketers. Today, there are thousands of professionals calling themselves "search marketers." According to a report by Conductor.com regarding the growth of SEO as a profession, we've seen a 43 percent increase in SEO position openings from 2017 to 2018.

What we are seeing is explosive growth for a field that is still very young. It's no wonder there's so much information out there about how to do the job.

Some very brilliant minds are sharing their experiences of working in SEO every day. Most of the articles shared on social media are how-to's and case studies of work we do. For anyone who wants to dip their toe into the field or start a career in SEO, there's a mountain of information to help guide you as you figure out how to do this profession which is a relatively new part of business strategy.

The observation I've made is that we do an excellent job talking to each other in the SEO community, but still sometimes struggle to navigate conversations with those that make the big decisions about SEO. The CEO's, executives, and directors that approve budgets, hire staff, and provide the space to do SEO in the organizations we work with.

The idea of PAGES came from a group of us observing that SEO is seeing explosive growth, and yet is still struggling to find its place at the table with other marketing channels. We believed we could help with that. The idea was to elevate our conversations, from talking about SEO with each other, to speaking to those that make the decisions that impact SEO.

We wanted to help introduce SEO to decision-makers and stakeholders by providing a resource that would speak to them. Instead of another blog or newsletter, we wanted to place something in the hands of everyday marketers that would help validate our industry to them. So we went the unconventional route and made a magazine.

The beautiful thing about this idea is that it will take many of us coming together, sharing our insights, experiences, and stories, to help elevate the conversation about SEO to the broader marketplace.

Last October, I had the pleasure of representing PAGES at SMX East in New York City. This was the first time we made ourselves known in a live setting, and the response was overwhelming. We gave away every magazine we'd brought within an hour on the first day of the show. People thanked us as they shared stories of challenges they experienced as SEOs.

They shared stories of the difficulties of obtaining buy-in from peers or bosses. They explained how they were responsible for their website, but were not given the authority or permission to act upon the changes they needed to make. I was humbled at the acceptance of what we were doing, and excited about the possibility to help.

This coming year, we will continue to gather insights, stories, ideas from voices within our industry, and craft them in such a way that can be shared creatively with anyone in your organization. We will work to make SEO accessible and helpful to anyone looking to learn more about this young and amazing industry.

## THANK YOU ALWAYS FOR READING.

JOE OLIVER  
Editor-In-Chief

# IN THIS ISSUE, THOMAS HAS SOME TIPS FOR AVOIDING A BRANDING BLUNDER IN FEATURED SNIPPETS.

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

## Saving Your Snippets

Does your website rank for any featured snippets?

Featured snippets are the coveted “position zero” ranking; they appear above organic search results in a search engine result page. As snippets have begun to appear on more and more result pages, understanding how to optimize the content on your site so that it appears in a snippet has become increasingly important.

The Page One Power team has invested in creating plenty of content relevant to link building on our website. One of our goals is to send clear signals to Google — and people — that we’re experts on link building, and we generally rank well for many link building related queries.

A routine search for an important keyword for our site became the source of some confusion for our team a few months ago.

We were checking out the SERP for the query “link building service.” The featured snippet for this keyword tends to bounce around a bit: sometimes, it’s a snippet pulled from our link building service page, and other times the snippet is pulled from a blog post that aggregates reviews for several popular link building service providers.

However, this time, the search pulled a strange result: (see fig. 1).

While the text within the snippet was being pulled from the Page One Power site, the image was pulled from The Hoth’s website — one of our competitors. The image featured The competitor’s logo and mascot, effectively “branding” the text content within the snippet so it appeared to be coming from their website. Obviously, this wasn’t ideal.

Fixing started with a search: we wanted to find out how Google determines which images to show along with featured snippets. We found out that it’s not uncommon for Google to pull images and text snippets from different pages, and include them in the same featured snippet. However, we also determined that the image being shown wasn’t necessarily more useful than the images on our site, so there was likely an opportunity to optimize images on our link building services page.

We were able to pin down a recent update to our link building services page as the likely cause of the blunder: as a CRO decision, we’d added an image linked to our agency services page at the top of the link building services page; its purpose was to direct users interested in our white label services to the appropriate page.

The image link was doing a great job at getting folks to the right page, but the image wasn’t relevant to the link building services page. As a result, the image in the snippet was eventually replaced by the image from The Hoth’s website.

### To work towards a fix:

- We switched the linked image to HTML text.
- We then submitted a comment about the snippet via the feedback feature below the snippet box.

We’ve monitored the SERP to check for progress; so far, it appears that the snippet displayed is now pulled from the review aggregate post most of the time. We hope that with proper optimization, we’ll be able to regain the snippet with content from our site, and with an image that accurately reflects the result.

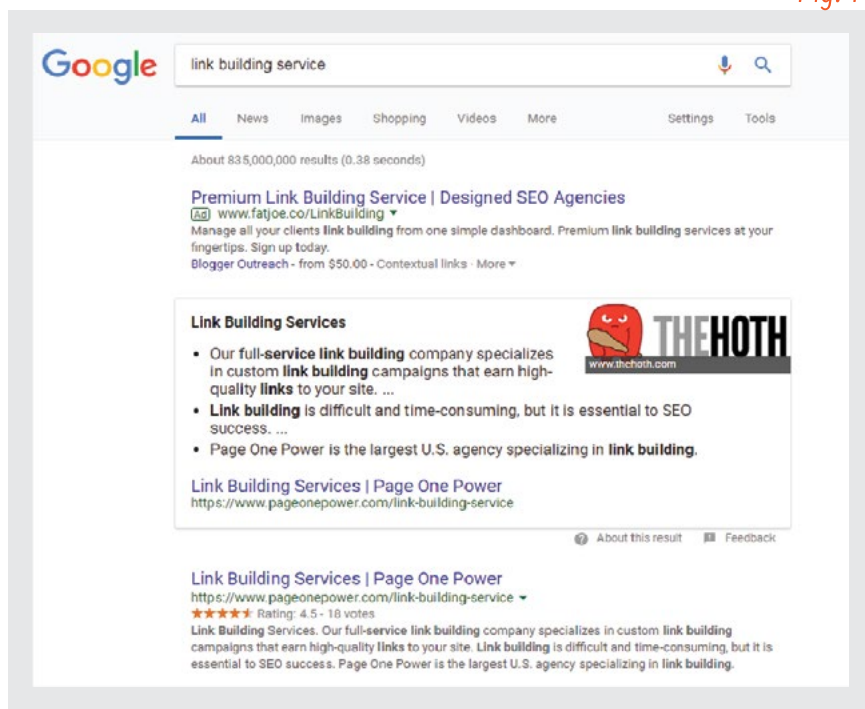
### To avoid this issue occurring, we recommend:

- Making sure the first image on your page is relevant to the page topic and content.
- Optimizing alt text on images, and
- Appropriately naming your image files (URLs).

None of these steps will guarantee that this issue won’t occur, but they’re great steps to help safeguard your snippets from an error like this. They’re also good SEO practices in general. Remember: SEO is all about incremental improvements and practices that come together to create a well-optimized site.

We’ll follow up in a while to share what’s happened, but we hope this story helps you get ahead of any issues like this that might occur on your site. 🍷

Fig. 1



# TIME KILLER



## REBUS



A puzzle in which words are represented by combinations of pictures and individual letters; for instance, *REBUS* might be represented by a picture of a bus preceded by the letters *RE*.

**GOOD LUCK!**

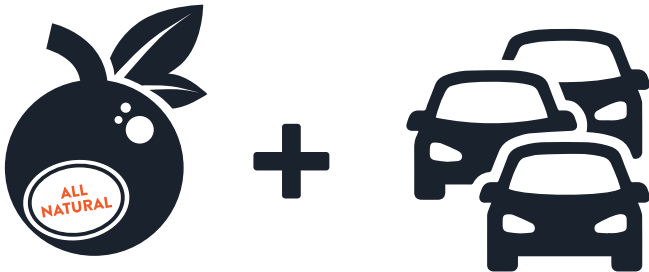


Write answer here: \_\_\_\_\_

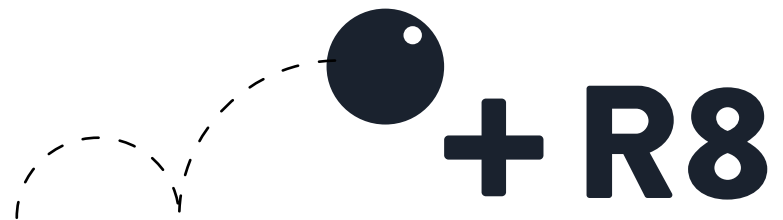
PAST TENSE



Write answer here: \_\_\_\_\_



Write answer here: \_\_\_\_\_



Write answer here: \_\_\_\_\_



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**DO NOT MIX MESSAGING OR PROMOTE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS AT THE SAME TIME. HAVE YOUR SEO TEAMS, PR TEAMS, AND ANY OTHER TEAMS WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CREATING CONTENT ON THE SAME PAGE.**

**ALIGN ON THE BROADER  
MESSAGING AND TIMING TO  
ENSURE YOUR BRAND  
IS PUTTING OUT  
THE SAME THEME  
OF CONTENT.**

**ERIN EVERHART,  
THE HOME DEPOT**



# Extending Your Reach:

CREATING CONTENT FOR MULTIPLE OUTREACH MARKETS

- VINCE NERO -

*Content Marketing Manager, Siege Media*







# Finding a topic that hasn't been overdone is tough.

**W**e've all been there: the more content you create, the harder it can feel to come up with a unique idea in a crowded market. And when you are trying to build links to your content, there is nothing more important than a unique idea.

Sometimes, even with a fresh idea in a tough or crowded market, building links is a struggle.

So, what then? You could try to pivot your content into different industries once it's published. But then you run the risk of forcing a connection, something that bloggers, journalists, and any other link building prospects hate.

One of the best strategies you can use to combat an oversaturated industry — and get more links overall — is creating content with more than one outreach market from the start.

For this to work well, you need to create content like a chef adds ingredients to a dish. You need to be aware of the proper balance so that one flavor doesn't overtake the rest. Some ingredients might not belong, regardless of your culinary skills.

When creating content with outreach markets in mind, you need to strike a balance so that your piece is relevant and your brand is credible for the audience you are reaching.

There are three main steps to creating a piece that achieves this: identifying outreach markets that work for you, choosing your main content topic, and identifying tangential markets that you can cross over into. Put your aprons on, and let's get cooking.

## WHAT IS A LINKABLE AUDIENCE OR OUTREACH MARKET?

To use this strategy effectively, you must first understand what makes a linkable audience or outreach market.

The idea of linkable audiences is not new, nor incredibly difficult to grasp. If you've done any amount of link building, you'll know that certain industries are more receptive to outreach than others. Some types of industries have a lot more resource pages where they list links, giving you more opportunities to secure links. Others are really receptive to visual content pitches. To go back to the cooking analogy, there are just certain dishes that people like. So, you use them as a base before you start fusing them with other dishes.

This post from [Citation Labs \(pagesseo-mag.com/citlab\\_findaudience\)](https://pagesseo-mag.com/citlab_findaudience) that has been around for a bit provides a solid list of "linkable" audiences or outreach markets. These are industries that typically have more opportunities for providing links back to your asset. Some of the industries from the post include:

- Teachers
- Parents
- Veterans
- Caregivers
- Senior citizens
- Job seekers

Typically, you'll find these industries feature a lot of resource pages for people looking for guides or information about a specific topic. There are a few other industries out there that I've found are receptive to outreach for visuals. These industries include:

- Pets
- Productivity
- Small business/entrepreneur

Understanding where the best opportunities lie will help you determine how this technique applies to your niche and offerings.

## IDENTIFY YOUR CORE LINABLE OUTREACH MARKETS

The first step in this strategy is identifying your core market and topic. One of the easiest ways to start is to identify what works best in your industry. To begin, look at your competition.

Take a competitor's blog and, using a tool like Ahrefs, look at their "Best by Links." Sort by "Referring Domains" and you'll have a good idea of their most linkable assets. The titles of the assets should give you a solid idea of the piece's topic and the outreach market related to it.

Next, look at the backlinks to those top pieces. This will help you determine the outreach market related to these pieces. For example, if you see a lot of backlinks from military sites, you can assume that active military members or veterans are the main topic of the content, and so are the target outreach market.

(You should also take this time to determine if the backlinks are spammy or duplicative. If spam links make up most of the backlinks, try to find another piece for reference.)

Once you identify the main audiences and topics your competitors are using, you can work backwards to create a topic that works for you, improving on your competitor's existing content.



## CHOOSING A TOPIC THAT FITS.

The second step is mapping content to fit your target audience. The main thing to remember is that you don't want to write about something that isn't related to your industry.

The biggest reason for this is simply that your audience won't think you are a credible source. You're not going to serve Korean BBQ chicken if you are an Italian brick oven pizza joint. Just because a linkable market exists doesn't mean it will work for you. If there is a disconnect between your content and your site, it will be harder to build links to that topic; you won't be seen as a credible source in that industry.

Another key reason not to create content that isn't related to your industry? Links that aren't related to your industry are less valuable than links from industry-specific sites, and in extreme cases may even hurt your site.

So, if you run a dog food blog, you shouldn't be trying to create "A Child's Guide to Online Safety" or "A Veteran's Guide to Getting a Job Out of the Military."

Your topic should be clearly related to both your site and your identified outreach audience. Then, to really extend the reach and potential value of this piece, start thinking about topics you can cross over into.



## A QUICK GUIDE TO SPAMMY LINKS

What makes a link "spammy"? Here are the most common types of links you want to avoid to keep your backlink profile clean.

### Private Blog Network (PBN) Links

Seeking links from blog networks is a great way to get on Google's bad side. Blog networks are fake blogs set up for the sole purpose of building links. Avoid unless you like penalties.

### Comment and Forum Spam Links

Leaving a comment just to drop a link? This is the reason why lots of blogs have removed comment sections altogether, and forums need good mods.

### Link Wheels & Exchanges

A link for a link sure sounds like a good trade. But it's also a great way to build a footprint that makes it easy for Google to discover a network of low-value links.

### Low-Quality Press Releases

A quality press release from a reputable syndication service can be a great way to share your news, but if the syndication service will take anything you throw at it, think again.

### Directory Links

Legitimate directories still exist, but it's easy to spot directories that aren't valuable. Google has worked to de-index bad directories in recent years, so these link lists are now less common than in the past.

### Paid Footer Links

More common in years past, paid footer links don't have the value they once did. The Penguin update laid down the law on footer links of all kinds, paid or not, to reduce the commonality of this spammy practice.

For more on avoiding spammy links, check out Google's guide on link schemes here: [pageseomag.com/link\\_schemes](https://pageseomag.com/link_schemes)

## TANGENTIAL OUTREACH MARKETS

After you've identified your main linkable audience for your piece and decided on the topic, step three is to start thinking about tangential markets. Again, just like in the previous step, you'll need to consider the credibility factor here. Just because you know these other markets exist doesn't mean you can map your piece to all of them.

A chef will choose ingredients that blend well together. Since I'm a terrible cook, I think about this like an equation: you take your topic and linkable outreach market, and then add a third market.

In my last article, I used an example of a fictional coffee blog and how they could find content keyword ideas that had link intent, so let's keep that example going here. Let's say that looking at backlinks and your competition, you've seen that some other coffee blogs were successful writing about how coffee can make you more productive. So, the equation would look like this:

The equation:

COFFEE  
+ PRODUCTIVITY  
X WAYS COFFEE WILL MAKE YOU  
MORE PRODUCTIVE

Let's try to add a third angle:

COFFEE  
+ PRODUCTIVITY  
+ ENTREPRENEURS  
COFFEE DRINKING HABITS  
OF FAMOUS CEOs

Or:

COFFEE  
+ PRODUCTIVITY  
+ TEACHERS  
DOES COFFEE  
HELP STUDYING?

## A QUICK NOTE ON PITCHING YOUR IDEAS

I could write an entire piece about how to properly pitch emails for link building, but there's one main point you should know if you're building links for these types of pieces with crossover markets: always adjust your strategy based on the audience. If you are pitching your content to publishers or bloggers to get links, be sure to change the focus of your pitch so that it directly fits that market.

## WHEN THIS DOESN'T WORK

At the end of the day, this isn't rocket science, but this strategy definitely takes some finesse. Shifting your mindset to focus on creating content with outreach markets in mind can be hard to get used to at first, but the trickiest part is making sure the balance is all there so that you remain credible.

As I mentioned, getting too far away from your main industry will not only make you seem less credible, making the content harder to build links to, it will also end up cultivating backlinks from sites that don't make sense for your industry. The clearest signal that an idea doesn't work is when you have to force a connection. What ingredients don't belong? You can usually tell, if you are being honest with yourself, but if you need a few checks along the way, some signals to look for include:

1. Your backlinks are becoming too one-sided.
2. If you weren't building links to the content, it wouldn't fit in on your blog.
3. Your content tastes terrible.

It is also probably worth mentioning that this technique is best applied as part of a larger link building strategy. This is great for figuring out ways to outdo your competition in crowded markets, but don't rely on it alone to earn links. If everything has already been covered, this will help you figure out a new angle to approach an overdone topic.

Once you have this down, it is a powerful strategy that will help spread your content into various markets, extending your audience and backlink profile. ☺

*Thirsty for more ways to create better content? Give Vince a follow on Twitter:*

@VincetheNero



# Always adjust your strategy based on the audience.



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# PAGES

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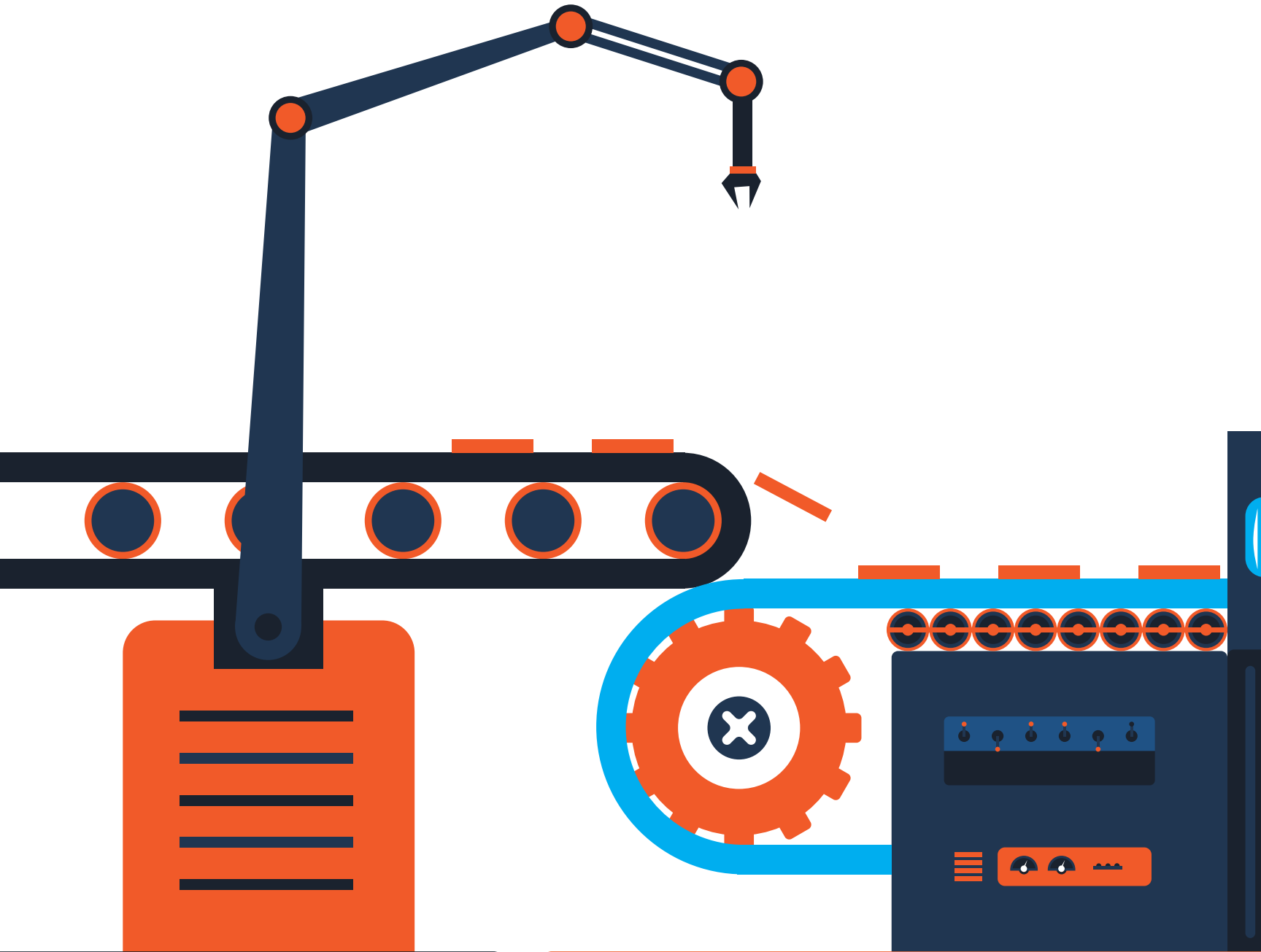




SEO has evolved into a machine with a lot of moving parts, and it takes time to learn. But whether you take on the strategies yourself or work with an expert, SEO should be a key factor in your annual growth plan because, like you and me,

**WE ARE USING  
GOOGLE IN OUR LIVES —  
EVERY  
SINGLE  
DAY.**

**CHARLES KIM,  
EXECUTIVE DIGITAL**



**TIME:**

**THE ULTIMATE**

**- GREG JACOBS -**

*Senior SEO Strategist, Found*



# SEO COMMODITY

# WHAT IS HARMLESS BUT CAN KILL?

## And what do Henry Ford and Thomas Saint have in common?

In case you're not aware of who Thomas Saint is, he is generally considered the inventor of the sewing machine.

Well, as the title might suggest, the answer to the riddle, "What is harmless but can kill?" is **time**. As to the connection between Henry Ford and Thomas Saint, time is also something which binds them.

More than a century ago, Henry Ford's assembly line production brought automation to car manufacturing, and with it, the car became a vehicle for the masses thanks to massive increases in time efficiencies and productivity. Now with the dawn of 3D printing, the assembly line is about to be transformed once again.

However, not to be outdone, it could be argued that the sewing machine has had an even bigger impact on the world and society.

Before sewing machines were invented, many middle-class women spent much of their time maintaining their family's clothing. Housewives, even with the aid of a hired seamstress, would devote several days of each month to this task.

It took an experienced seamstress at least 14 hours to make a dress shirt for a man, and a woman's dress took 10 hours. Sewing machines reduced the time for making a dress shirt down to one hour and 15 minutes, and the time to make a dress to an hour. This reduced labor resulted in women having a reduced role in household management, and allowed more hours for their own leisure and the ability to seek further employment, both of which were crucial in the process of gaining equal rights with men.

You're probably wondering: "What does this all have to do with SEO?"

Well, as an SEO provider, we work with businesses and the exchange we have is between our client's budget and our time, with the objective of improving performance. In SEO, time really is money, so how we use our time is critical. Therefore, the more efficient we can be, the more productive we can be. Furthermore, getting the strategy right, which is crucial to any success, can require the luxury of time.

Applying the logic of automation to SEO has huge potential impacts; you can find a range of areas where the potential for further automation lies.



## REPORTING

Firstly, from a reporting perspective, automation can free up a lot of time and ensure flexibility. Rather than monthly reporting taking a day or two to complete, what if that could be done in a matter of minutes? And what if the person who typically creates that monthly report is on holiday and has to hand over that task to someone who doesn't have the experience of creating it, taking even longer?

Throughout my career, Google Analytics has been ever-present. And, for a long time, so was exporting all kinds of data to CSV files and then formatting it before importing it into a custom PowerPoint deck and eventually, after several hours, sending it off to the client. This is not an efficient process. Thankfully, there are tools such as Google Data Studio which have made the task of monthly reporting much more efficient.

Keyword ranking data is another vital piece of data which clients regularly want to see. There are plenty of different reporting options for this metric available to an SEO agency. Whether it's Advanced Web Rankings, Search Metrics, Bright Edge, or SEMrush, keyword ranking reports can be automated.

Outside of just reporting, there are a range of ways certain SEO tactics can be automated.

## SCHEMA MARKUP

Schema markup is an increasingly important element of SEO. It offers a great way for a website to further communicate with Google, and the better a site can communicate with Google, the better it can be understood and properly rewarded. Schema markup provides context about webpages to both users and search engines, and enables rich snippets, which are a valuable SEO asset for sites that can rank with them.

Writing JSON-LD code isn't something that comes naturally to most people, but thanks to the great folks over at TechnicalSeo.com this task has become much easier, more scalable, and more efficient.

So, if you want to create schema markup for a website, breadcrumbs, person, organization, local business, article, product, event, recipe, or job posting, there is a tool out there for you to make this an easier task.

## KEYWORD RESEARCH

Keyword research is a task synonymous with SEO. I would love to know how many days of my life I have spent over the last ten years looking at average monthly search volume, competition, and CPC data.

On second thought, maybe it's better I never know.

Taking large keyword data sets and then organizing the data can be an inefficient process. It often requires significant manual input to ensure relevance and accuracy. However, this task is becoming more automated as artificial intelligence gets better. Currently, there isn't really a stand out tool you can dump thousands of keywords into and have it organize them, create tags, and concatenates them.

Undeterred, some agencies, such as the one where I work — Found — are taking matters into their own hands. More marketers are looking to utilize supercomputers, like IBM's Watson, which have APIs that allow us to leverage their capabilities. As machine learning grows and supercomputers become more accessible, this task is likely to become increasingly automated in the coming years.

## CONTENT GAP ANALYSIS

The term "content is king" has been thrown around for as long as I can remember in SEO, which makes sense. Content is what users consume on the web, and we can't get enough of it. It gets better, richer, and more diverse every year. It really is a true pillar of SEO.

Therefore, conducting a content gap analysis will often be delivered as part of an SEO project, and for good reason. Whatever your goal may be — finding those nuggets of opportunity to drive more traffic, increase engagement, build awareness — content will form part of that equation.

The goals of a content gap analysis are to create an inventory of your existing content, discover gaps, and review your

competitor's content to determine opportunities. To discover opportunities, you'll want to determine where there are overlaps in your content and your competitors', and which content is outperforming yours'. You'll also want to discover any effective content topics you haven't yet covered that your competitors are successful with.

So, is a content gap analysis something that we can automate? The short answer is yes. The following tools all have this feature:

- Ahrefs
- SEMrush
- Searchmetrics
- BrightEdge

As to which is the best tool for the job? That is a whole other debate which is quite subjective. The point is, there are tools out there to help automate and make this an efficient task. But be prepared for a bit of human tinkering.

## TECHNICAL SITE AUDITS

Site SEO audits are perhaps the holy grail of SEO automation. Imagine being able to enter a domain into some sort of tool, and out of it is spat all the technical issues and the recommended fixes.

Trouble is, websites are pretty unique. Each has its own fingerprint. However, what we can do, thanks to the amazing folks over at Screaming Frog, is use their software to crawl a site and identify a huge variety of issues. So at least half the challenge is kind of automated!

The other half I'm afraid may not ever be automated, and that is a good thing. Thanks to the incredible abilities of the human brain, or better yet — a team of human brains with the right experience, tools, and determination — it is unlikely the remaining half will ever be fully-automated.

# APPLYING THE LOGIC OF AUTOMATION TO SEO HAS HUGE POTENTIAL IMPACTS.



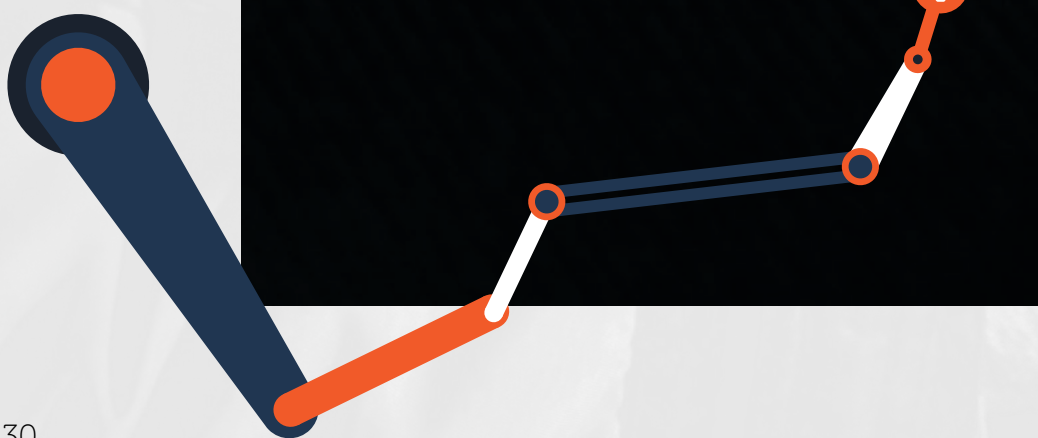
## CLOSING TIME

A day in SEO is a long time. Getting some of that time back allows us to use the human species' strongest assets: our brains, our curiosity, our intellect, our thirst for knowledge, our teamwork, our creativity. These are the things that will enlighten and uncover new tactics, new strategies, and new actions that will drive performance.

So, where possible, try to automate without risking quality or accuracy. Find effective tools that are right for your organization. Wherever possible, ensure your team is getting the right experience. Always work together and most importantly, remember: time only goes forwards, so use it wisely. ☺

*Follow Found on Twitter for more advice about how to make better use of your time spent on SEO:*

@Found\_Online





# MAE

# PROPERLY EXECUTED SEO TAKES TIME, BUT IT'S WORTH IT.

When a company ranks organically, it can expect to see exponential increases in traffic to its website, with long-lived outcomes, often outperforming the PPC campaigns that came before them.

**DENNIS KIRWAN,**  
**DYMIC DIGITAL**





*Simple is beautiful*



# SEO MYTHBUSTING

## PART II

### TESTING TITLE TAG LENGTHS

- CHARLES TAYLOR -

*SEO Manager, Verizon Fios*

**SEO is a field where testing assumptions can reveal truths about optimizing your website. Busting SEO myths helps us make better business decisions and get more from investments in SEO.**

In the last issue of *PAGES*, I busted a myth about phone number formats and their impact on search rankings. We determined that the format used for a phone number does impact the way Google recognizes the phone number.

### **This Issue's Test: Title Tag Length**

How deep does Google read into the title tag? After a certain number of characters, will Google stop utilizing the words for optimization purposes?

Title tags are an interesting HTML element: while the title tag was originally used to give a title to a webpage, it's now used for many functions. It's used by the search engines as an on-page optimization factor. It appears at the top of the web browser, and it is often displayed in the SERP for your page. More recently, it is the default title used when the page is shared on social media. In the SERPs, Google now displays the first 600 pixels of your title tag, depending on the characters — typically 60 – 70 characters.

From this, many myths have begun to appear. The most common is that if your keyword is beyond a certain number of characters, it will not be taken into account by Google; or at least given much less weight. From this belief, entire hosts of tools have appeared that tell you if your title tag is “too long.” Even Google has an alert for this in the legacy version of their Google Search Console.

Google is obviously secretive about how its algorithm works and from that, we end up with hearsay, assumptions, and myths. The perfect fodder for SEO testing.

# THE HYPOTHESIS

**GOOGLE ONLY “COUNTS” KEYWORDS THAT RESIDE IN THE FIRST 75 CHARACTERS OF A TITLE TAG FOR ON-PAGE OPTIMIZATION PURPOSES.**

The test I set up was straightforward.

First, my hypothesis: Google only “counts” keywords that reside in the first 75 characters of a title tag for on-page optimization purposes.

To test this, I created a fake keyword; one for which no results appear in a Google search. I then developed 14 HTML pages and used the same content on all of them to eliminate variables.

The first page was my control, and it had only the keyword in the title tag. For the second page, the title tag contained 25 characters and then the keyword. On the third page, I placed the keyword after 50 characters, fourth after 75 characters and fifth after 100 characters. I increased the number of leading characters by 25 up to 300 characters on the 13th page. I decided I should have a page without the keyword in the title tag so that was page #14. To my surprise, all the pages (except #14) ranked for the keyword.

In true myth-busting fashion, I decided to take it to the ridiculous extreme. I created a new test, with 12 pages and the same hypothesis. Even though I saw that Google reads well past 75 characters, I kept the hypothesis the same because I wanted to replicate my first test. And to be honest, I wasn't sure what limit to use.

The first two pages contained no keyword, and only the keyword in the title tag, respectively. After that, I created 10 pages and incremented the number of leading characters in the title tag by 100. By the time I got to my 12th page, I had a title tag with 1,000 characters in front of the keyword. (As a quick aside, a 1,000-character title tag is huge. Looking at it in the code gave me a good chuckle.)

I was amazed: Google ranked all the pages for the keyword! I have two separate tests that reveal that Google will not only read the entire title tag, but attempts to utilize all of the content for optimization purposes.

What I love about running tests is learning things that you wouldn't expect. In both tests, I observed that the page with only the keyword in the title tag always ranked the best. I had assumed that the order of the ranking results would roughly mirror the length of the title tag. Meaning, the title tags with the fewest characters would (in general) outrank the longest ones. What I found, in both cases, was that this was not what happened.

To illustrate, here is the ranking order from the first test set (character count incremented by 25):

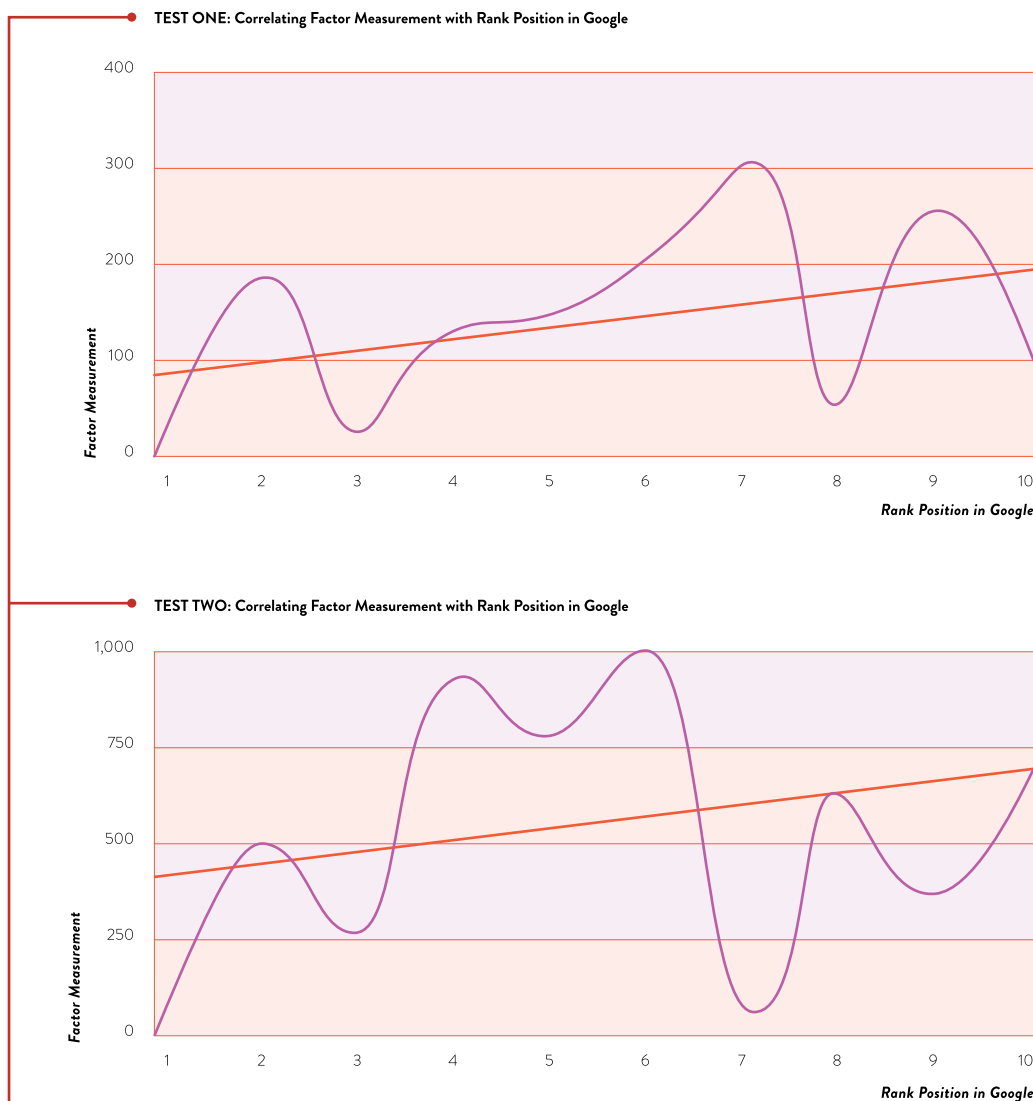
**Page #1 (only KW)**  
**Page #8 (150 + KW)**  
**Page #2 (25 + KW)**  
**Page #6 (125 + KW)**  
**Page #7 (150 + KW)**  
**Page #9 (200 + KW)**  
**Page #13 (300 + KW)**  
**Page #3 (50 + KW)**  
**Page #11 (250 + KW)**  
**Page #5 (100 + KW)**

Here is the ranking order from the second test (character count incremented by 100):

- Page #2 (only KW)
- Page #7 (500 + KW)
- Page #5 (300 + KW)
- Page #11 (900 + KW)
- Page #10 (800 + KW)
- Page #12 (1,000 + KW)
- Page #3 (100 + KW)
- Page #8 (600 + KW)
- Page #6 (400 + KW)
- Page #9 (700 + KW)

Looking at these lists, the rankings seems relatively random to me, but we're not guessing here — we're striving for precision science. I put this data into Excel and created a scatter chart, but it still appeared random. I added a trend line, and it did slope up to the right, which means there appeared to be a slight correlation between shorter title tags and better rankings. Not trusting my "sad naked caveman eyeball," (as Rick Sanchez would say) I took the numbers and ran a correlation coefficient in Excel. For test #1 the result was .4, and for test #2 the result was .26 — a weak correlation in both cases.

So where does all this leave us? I think it is safe to say that there is no practical limit to the size of the title tag, and you certainly do not need to worry about arbitrary character limits. I have no doubt the appearance of the page title will affect click-through rates from the SERPs or social media, so you'll still need to optimize for both SEO and human eyes. If you have secondary, or even tertiary keywords you want to include, you can safely place them beyond the 60 character limit, and they will still be factored into your page's optimization.



Personally, I am still going to plan to place the important keyword near the beginning of the title tag, but I will also be sure to include additional keywords near the end. For local clients, I would test adding additional geographic areas. This could also be useful for keywords with multiple spellings (i.e.: donut vs. doughnut) or even a word with common misspellings. I suspect there are many other cool ways these findings could be used — please let me know if you can think of others.

What I like about testing is while it usually answers your questions, it often raises more for future testing. I've come up with several more title tag tests, I look forward to sharing them with you all in the future. ☺

# THE RESULT:

**GOOGLE ONLY "COUNTS" KEYWORDS THAT RESIDE IN THE FIRST 75 CHARACTERS OF A TITLE TAG FOR ON-PAGE OPTIMIZATION PURPOSES.**

**BUSTED**

Check out Charles's follow-up to his phone number formats test on the PAGES blog:

[pagesmag.com/click2call](http://pagesmag.com/click2call)

Chat with Charles about his tests on Twitter:

@CharlesHTaylor






# FIND YOUR SEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

**PAGE ONE POWER**  
**SEO CONSULTING**  
**SERVICES**

Get insights on how business decisions impact the success of your website, and how decisions about your site can impact your business.



I like to think of SEO as a layer. The SEO layer applies particularly well to content because good content marketing is designed for your customer.

**SEO DOESN'T  
MAKE  
THINGS —  
IT MAKES THINGS  
VISIBLE.**

**JOHN J. CURTIS,**  
*Walgreens*





**AUDIENCE**

**+**

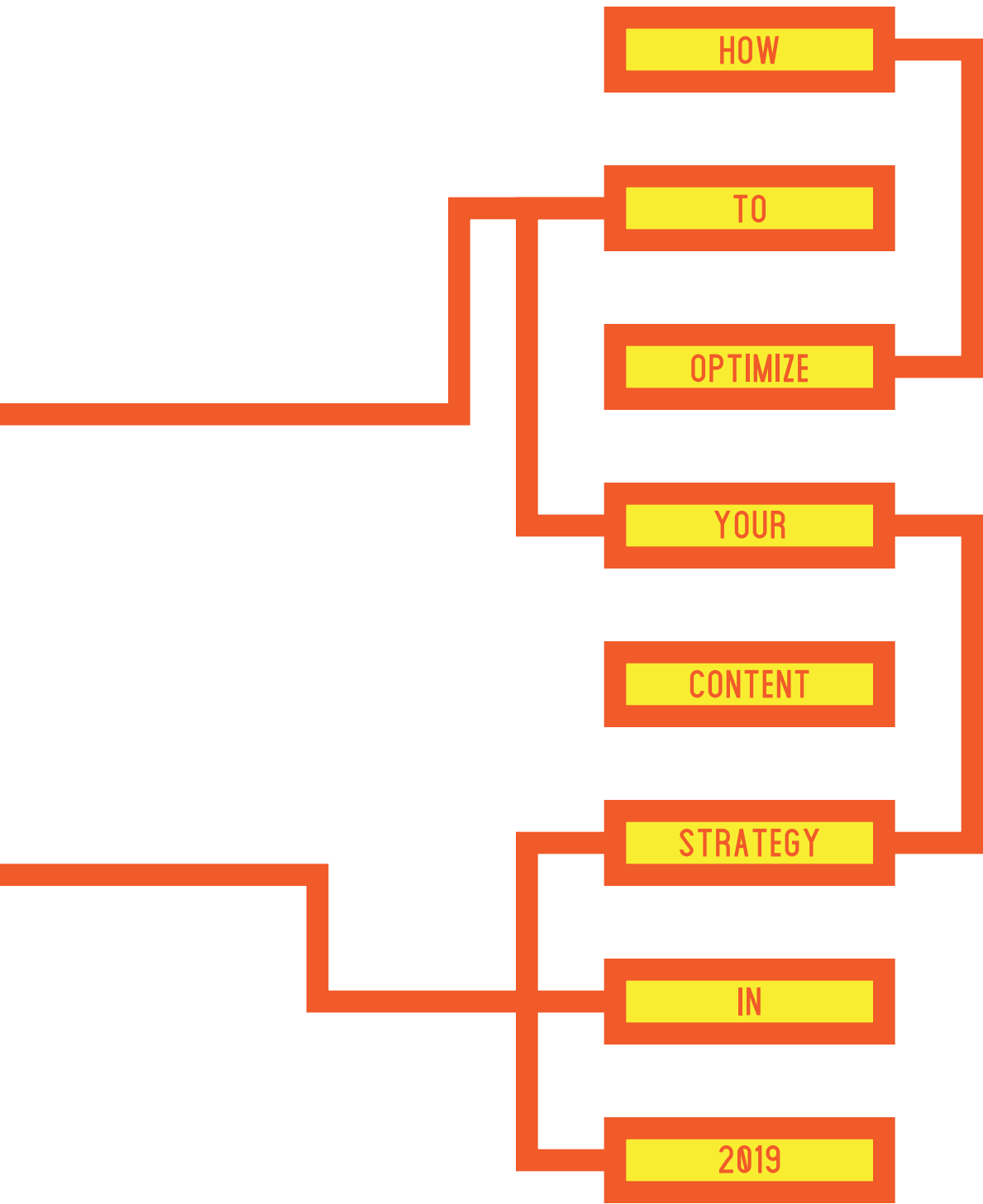


**ALGORITHMS**

**- JOELLE IRVINE -**

*Director of Marketing and Growth, Bookmark Content and Communications*





# ACCORDING TO A RECENT STUDY BY THE CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE, 91% OF B2B BRANDS AND 86% OF B2C BRANDS USE CONTENT MARKETING.



## That's a lot of content being produced — and not all of it is good.

As marketers, we get bombarded with cold sales emails, follow-ups on those emails, sponsored LinkedIn messages, invitations to events, and newsletters — tons of newsletters (especially on Thursdays).

Realistically, we aren't reading all of the content we're seeing. And chances are, our prospective clients or customers are also missing out on relevant content we're producing. There's a vast sea of content on the web, now well over 100,000,000 gigabytes in size<sup>1</sup>, and it grows by the minute.

Just as content marketers work to produce relevant content for their audiences, Google faces the challenge of determining which pieces of content are worthy of coveted top rankings.

Google has been making strides to improve their algorithm to filter the noise and present the most relevant and useful content for each query. In 2015, Google introduced E-A-T quality guidelines and has now stated that it is one of their top signals for page quality.

**E-A-T** stands for **Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness**.

## E-A-T is especially important for sites and pages that are considered related to **Your Money or Your Life (YMYL)**.

These pages include:

- Financial, medical, or legal information pages. Also articles providing advice.
- Shopping or financial transaction pages where users make purchases or pay bills.
- News articles or public/informational pages (e.g.: disaster response services, government programs, social services, news about important topics relating to international events, science, technology, etc.)
- Other topics, such as car safety and child adoption information, that the public relies on as being accurate and true.



## EXPERTISE:

Content should be written by an expert in your industry, be useful, and add value to the reader.

## AUTHORITATIVENESS:

Your audience should be able to trust that your content is accurate, reliable, and true. Authority can also come from your writers' credentials and the quality of the comments or reviews on your site.

## TRUSTWORTHINESS:

At a very basic level, your site needs to be secure, with an SSL certificate, and abide by an easy-to-read privacy policy. Your audience needs to be able to trust the content and company information on your site.

SO HOW DO YOU ADAPT YOUR CONTENT STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THIS? HERE ARE **FIVE TACTICS** YOU CAN USE TO ENSURE YOU ARE PRODUCING **HIGH-QUALITY CONTENT** FOR **GOOGLE'S QUALITY GUIDELINES**, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY FOR **YOUR AUDIENCE.**

# 1. WRITE FOR HUMANS

## If you're creating content to educate your audience and build trust, write with them in mind.

Start a conversation, keep your content straightforward, and provide takeaways. Content should be written in natural language, as if someone was speaking rather than writing, with minimal jargon. And if you must include buzzwords, explain them. Don't make assumptions about what your reader does or doesn't know.

Search engine algorithms are becoming smarter. At the same time, users expect more of technology. People are searching on-the-go, using voice assistants and mobile devices, and using natural language when making queries.

As of 2018, 52 percent of global online traffic was generated on mobile devices<sup>2</sup>. It is also expected that 50 percent of search queries will be voice-based by 2020<sup>3</sup>.

Keep in mind that queries also exist beyond the search bar. Your audience may be using social media, image search, YouTube, and even eCommerce platforms to do their research. So, make sure you're creating and customizing content suitable to different audiences and platforms.

Either way, advancements in machine learning — combined with access to big data — impact user experience (UX) twofold: changing the way content is served up, and increasing user expectations.

This means we need to adapt the way we approach keyword research, and adjust the way we write our content accordingly. Think of keywords as topics, rather than long-tail keywords. Page titles should reflect what someone would ask out loud rather than a typed query.

It's always best to commission actual writers, instead of companies that use AI to mass-produce content. Hundreds of badly-written articles will not appeal to readers, or to Google, and will definitely not help your brand. Think about it: writers can provide perspective, expertise, and relate to your audience in a way that cannot be matched by a machine, even if it's a smart one.



### TIPS & TOOLS:

*Google Keyword Planner is useful for identifying search volume and determining topics, but here are other useful tools to optimize your content for mobile and voice search:*

- **Google Trends** to see search trends over time.
- **Answer The Public** for examples of questions using natural language.
- **KeywordShitter** mines Google autocomplete, providing infinite results.
- **People also search for... & Related searches** in Google search results.
- **Search Console** to see search queries that people use to come to your site.
- **Q&As from Google My Business** will show you what your customers are asking.
- **Twinword Ideas** is a visual latent semantic indexing (LSI) tool, to help you find related words for your content (and potentially replace your thesaurus).

# 2. OPTIMIZE FOR MACHINES

**In 2018, Google rolled out several algorithm updates. Most notably, mobile-first indexing, the mobile speed update, Chrome security warnings, and the Medic core update in August. The commonality here is the user.**

These are user-first updates, improving the mobile experience, user safety, and the quality of content in the search results.

Balancing your high-quality content with technical SEO best practices is key for an optimal UX. At a very high level, site speed, security, responsive design, and implementation of structured data are key for top performance. Here are the elements you'll want to prioritize and address:

### Speed

You need a fast site if you hope to rank. This could involve upgrading your server, as well as enabling caching and compression on your site. Defer render-blocking JavaScript and CSS. Create a canonical AMP version of your site. Each of these tactics will help your site load faster on mobile.

### Security

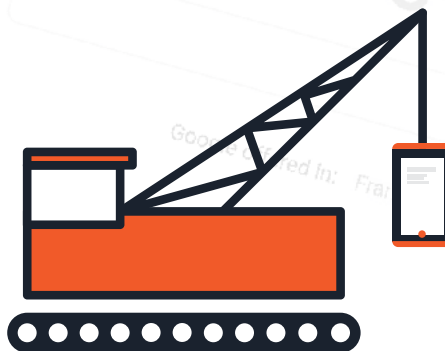
Site security is more salient than ever in 2019. Add an SSL certificate to make your site secure (HTTPS) and validate that there are no security issues in Google Search Console.

### Responsiveness

Your site should be designed with a fluid grid that adapts based on screen size. Design mobile-first, and then adapt the design for desktop. Include larger fonts, scalable images, and a mobile menu.

### Structured Data

Add structured data on your site to help Google (and other search engines) categorize and index the content on your site properly, so that it serves up the best results for each query. If implemented correctly, your page(s) could qualify for rich results. A few examples include the knowledge panel, rich cards, videos, ratings, and most importantly, featured snippets, where voice assistants usually pull their results from.



### TIPS & TOOLS:

*Check out the [Google Search Gallery](#) to see how structured data can produce rich results. To avoid penalties, always make sure to use the [Structured Data Testing tool](#) to test that structured data has been applied correctly.*

# 3. THINK ABOUT FORMATS

## Quality content is all about UX.

If your customer has even one bad experience with your brand, they may not come back. Your site design and overall experience needs to be on point. All visual assets should be on brand so that your audience recognizes them as your content. Assets should also be created for mobile-first and optimized using alt attributes and metadata to ensure they can be found using image and video search.

Here are a few examples:

### Images

Images should have the right balance of resolution and file size. Aim to make them as light as possible without losing quality. Images should be formatted to adapt to different screen sizes, device types, and for rich results (snippets). Always remember to include alt images and image titles — image search is going to be huge this year!

### Videos

Spend a little more time and budget to plan for multiple formats including horizontal, vertical, and square (for specific social media platforms and website requirements). Add music, but make sure that the video can be watched without sound. Include subtitles and title screens. When deciding on the length, think about your audience and the purpose of the video. Add meta descriptions to help people find your videos on YouTube and Vimeo.

### Infographics

Interactive or animated infographics have the best UX, especially on mobile. However, sometimes you may be up against budget constraints, or requests to repurpose content that was originally designed for print. When this happens, create a mobile version that's long and skinny, with increased font size (18 to 20 pts) that can easily be viewed on mobile.

# MORE THAN HALF OF PEOPLE SAY THEY LOOK POORLY ON BRANDS WITH MOBILE SITES THAT ARE NOT DESIGNED FOR USE ON A SMARTPHONE.

*4 Insights Into How Shoppers Use Apps and Mobile Sites | Google, 2017*



## TIPS & TOOLS:

*Have you heard of Adobe Spark? It's a great tool to help marketers create visual assets in a plug-and-play interface. It's useful for creating social media posts and videos without a designer. [Editor's note: But you should hire a designer whenever possible!]*

## ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS:

*Include closed-captioning for the hearing impaired. Educate yourself on color combinations to keep your content accessible for people with colorblindness.*



# 4 CONSENT & COMMUNICATION

**Last year, the EU rolled out General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), requiring everyone who communicates with Europeans to adopt new privacy policies.**

Canada has similar laws, and I wouldn't be surprised if the rest of the world soon followed.

As the Director of Marketing and Growth at a global content marketing and communications company, I understand how much impact this can have on your business. We took the opportunity last spring to reevaluate our privacy policy and fine print. And although our newsletter subscribers had consented previously, we did a major cleanup to remove contacts with low engagement. We made sure to reach out to them by email before unsubscribing them.

By reducing our newsletter distribution list by 23 percent, the open rate increased by 22 percent and click rate increased by 27 percent.

Even though our list shrunk significantly, the silver lining is that our engagement stats increased, as our list now consists of people who are interested in reading our content. This may be a hard sell for brands that care mostly about reach and the optics of a large distribution list. But it could be a selling point to companies that are more interested in connecting with their niche audience.

It is in every brand's best interest to introduce stronger privacy and data protection protocols for their business and for their customers. It is imperative to create clear opportunities for customers to opt-in or provide consent to receive communications, as well as easy ways of opting-out. This is part of building strong trust relationships with your audience.



## TIPS & TOOLS:

*Your fine print and privacy policy should be clear and concise. It shouldn't be excessively long, and it should be written so that anyone can understand it. Aim to use the same tone of voice as your main content, and whenever possible, use examples.*

# FREQUENCY: LESS IS MORE

## If you're struggling to meet your social media schedule, it could be time to rethink your content strategy.

If that means only posting once or twice a week, do that. Use your data to find the best day and time of day to post, and then align it to create a content calendar that makes sense for your business and resources.

The cadence of your content is also important. The ratio of curated, promotional, and original content you publish will help establish trust with your audience. Original and curated content lets you showcase your brand's expertise and authority, while the promotional pieces will give your prospects clear and relevant calls-to-action relating to your recent campaigns.

There are several different ratios that brands use. Generally, it is a best practice to share more of the curated and original pieces, and less of the promotional posts. The best approach for your brand can be found through testing.

Newsletters are an easy way to share your best work. However, if you are currently sharing all of your content by email, you're doing something wrong. Depending on your business, reducing the distribution frequency of your newsletter can provide several benefits, including:

- Reduction of clutter in your readers' inboxes.
- Providing you with time to check your stats and share only the best performing posts.
- Providing you with time to segment your list and share targeted content based on your readers' interests.
- Impress your readers with really amazing content that they will love and be inspired to share.



### TIPS & TOOLS:

*Spend less time creating content and more time distributing it, analyzing results, and fine-tuning your strategy. Don't post anything and everything, just post your best stuff. Take a look at your stats to see what your audience likes, shares, and engages with. Use that data to refine your content for future campaigns.*



# RECAP

**Not only will 2019 be the year of high-quality content, it will also be the year where content is created for the way people search, whether it be on mobile devices, voice assistants, image search, communities, reviews, social media platforms, or YouTube.**

By using data to better understand your consumer, what interests them, and where they live online, you can create content specific to their needs and customize it for the channels they visit most often. These tactics will not only extend reach and increase visibility, but also lead to credibility, engagement, and loyalty.

The gap between what appeals to readers and what pleases search engines is quickly narrowing. Google's E-A-T is a perfect example of that.

It may seem that following these guidelines will be time-consuming, but it doesn't have to be. Remember, less is more. Save time and resources by creating content that is of a higher caliber at a reduced frequency. And, spend those extra hours on your strategy, analysis, adapting your content to various formats and distributing your content on the right channels. ©

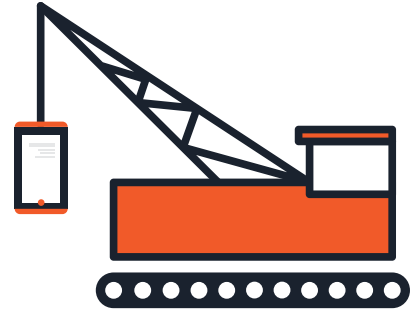
*Have you got your audience tuned in and algorithms trusting your site? Let Joelle know on Twitter:*

@joelleirvine  
@BookmarkContent



## CITATIONS:

1. Google Data, 2018
2. Statista, 2018
3. ComScore, 2017





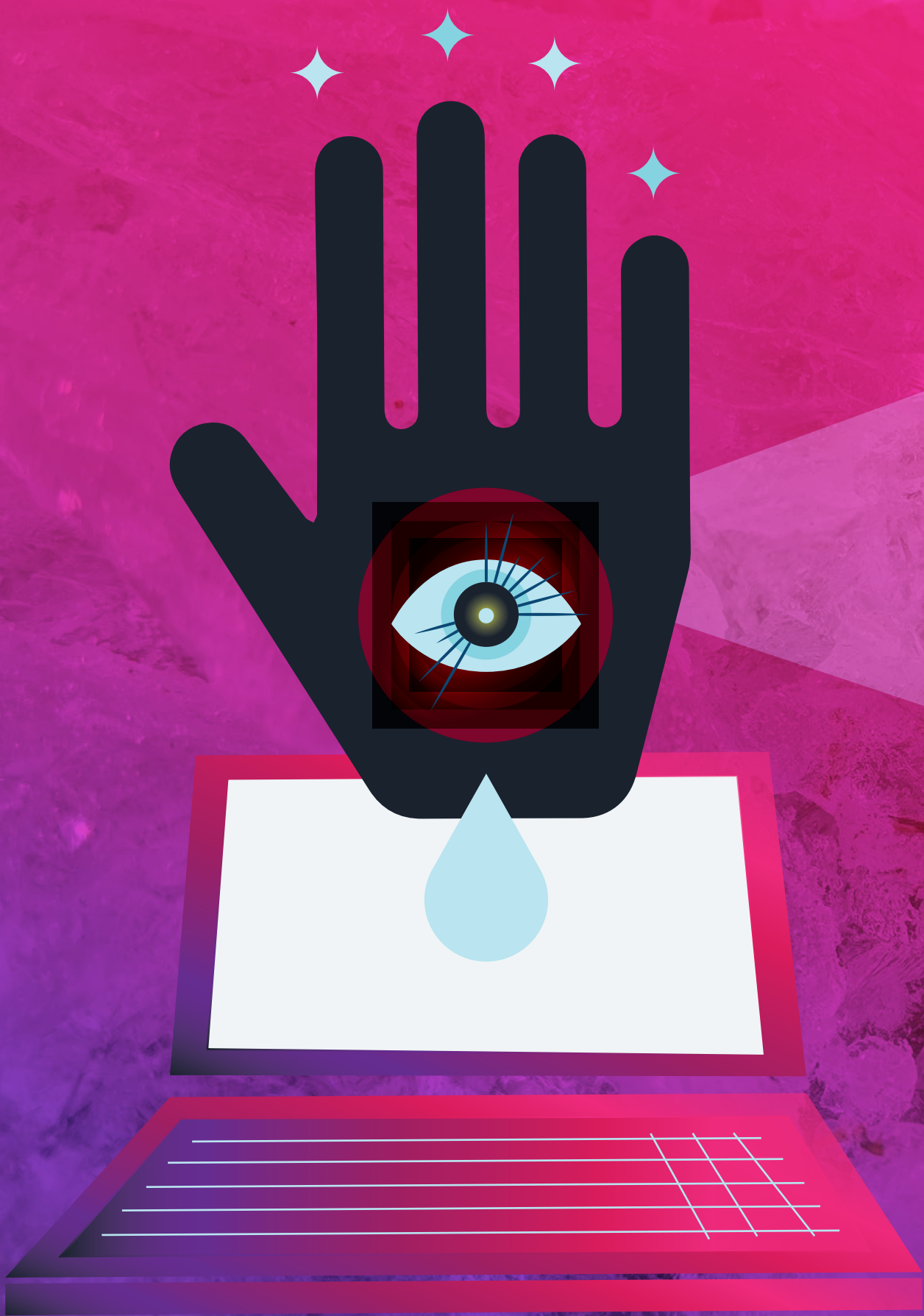
Google has an actual entity database in which it saves which concepts and which identities belong together. This database is ever growing, and

# GOOGLE LEARNS MORE AND MORE ABOUT HOW THINGS ARE RELATED TO ONE ANOTHER.

MARIEKE VAN DE RAKT,  
YOAST\*

*\* in reference to an article by Dave Davies of Beanstalk Internet Marketing, Inc.*





~ STORIES OF THE STRANGE ~

# SITE AUDITING ODDITIES

- MARY WILSON -

*Technical SEO Specialist, Page One Power*

# A TECHNICALLY SOUND WEBSITE IS THE BASIS FOR DIGITAL MARKETING SUCCESS.

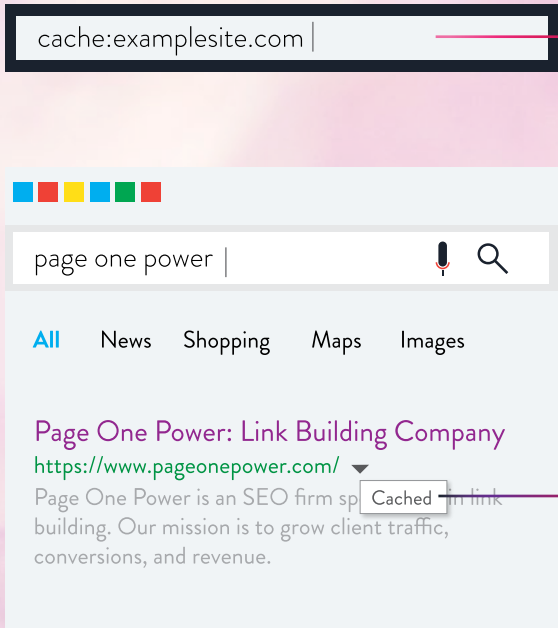
Consider your website as if it were a storefront; just as a brick-and-mortar needs investment to stay ready for customers, your site does as well.

As a technical SEO team within an SEO agency, we review lots of websites. Our goal is to uncover issues that could hold our clients back from getting the most from their investment in SEO. While we specialize in off-page SEO — specifically, link building — the definition of “optimization” applies to the entire process of improving the performance of a site in search. That includes an optimized strategy, and strategically, it typically makes sense to address the issues occurring on-site before looking for ways to optimize performance beyond the domain.

When auditing a site, there is no one-size-fits-all check. Every site is different. Each has been touched by different developers, hosted on different platforms, and as it’s grown, has had its own journey. And so, each audit goes through a process unique to the site.

There are issues that are common to encounter: unsecured sites, improper indexing, no XML sitemap or robots.txt. Other times, we’ll have suggestions for optimization that wouldn’t necessarily be considered technical, but could improve performance: keyword targeting opportunities, content the site may need, or internal linking optimization.

But sometimes, we discover things that make us scratch our heads. These are a few of the odd site issues we’ve encountered over the last year.



## CACHING CONUNDRUMS

While this mysterious error has since been resolved, the great caching conundrum threw me for a loop when I first ran into it.

Viewing Google's cached version of a webpage allows you to access previous versions of recently-updated pages, or view pages that are not currently responding.

Doing so is typically a simple process; to look at a cached version of a page you can either:

- Put the word "cache:" (with a colon) into the address bar:
  - `cache:examplesite.com`
- Find the site in the SERPs, and click on the drop-down "cache" option within the result.

However, slowly throughout the summer of 2018, both of these options started showing a **404: Not Found** code. We saw 404 codes on big sites like Moz, but not on informational authority sites like Wikipedia. We began tracking organic traffic, indexation, and keywords in a state of anticipation and fear of what might come.

While exploring the issue internally, a fix appeared!

If you reached your 404'd cache page from the SERP drop-down, you could manually adjust the URL, and it was very likely a cache would appear.

It was as simple as adding or deleting a "www."

### Example:

From the SERP drop-down, Page One Power's 404-cache is:

```
https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:zSgWJuQ6SiAJ:https://www.pageonepower.com/+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us
```

However, if you removed the "www." like so:

```
https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:zSgWJuQ6SiAJ:https://pageonepower.com/+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us
```

You'd see a live cache.



The test worked both ways.

In the previous example, we removed the “www.” and found the live cache. Conversely, adding a “www.” could work too. The SERP drop-down 404-cache for Moz’s website is:

```
https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:0mHt2cKI_FIJ:https://moz.com/+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us
```

But, when you added a “www.” like so:

```
https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:0mHt2cKI_FIJ:https://www.moz.com/+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us
```

You’d see a live cached version! How strange is that?!

And perhaps the most mystifying thing about it? Google never mentioned it. This peculiarity was never addressed or acknowledged as an issue, despite much conversation surrounding the issue between SEO professionals. And one day, it was all fixed again.

Later, it was determined that the most likely cause of the issue was the recent switch to mobile-first indexing. This had likely triggered an unexpected chain reaction which happened to impact caching on desktop.

The lesson learned? Sometimes we just really don’t know what’s going on behind the SERPs, but SEOs will do their best to figure it out — and often, they’ll find a solution to hang-ups.

## EXPLORING HIDDEN ELEMENTS

We love Google Search Console’s Fetch and Render tool. It’s a great way to look at what Googlebot picks up on your site and what it thinks users are seeing. But looking at this tool can turn into an adventure when content is unexpectedly hidden!

Pleasing webpage design and UX can sometimes seem to be at odds with SEO best practices. A well-designed site that utilizes JavaScript might look great to users, but hiding content can have an impact on your rankings. The verdict is out on exactly how hiding your content affects the way Google assesses those pages, but from what we’ve been told by Google representatives, there is good reason to believe that hidden content has less weight in rankings. Considering this, it’s important to ensure any content that is considered essential is highly-visible on your site.

Sometimes, however, content on your site may be hidden unexpectedly and unintentionally. There are common reasons content might be hidden: whether served via JavaScript or iframe, or blocked in a robots directive, an SEO expert can often spot the symptoms of hidden content before seeing it laid bare by the tools.

Luckily, the Fetch and Render tool will give you a couple hints about what content it can’t see.

Exploring Fetch and Render is the “gold standard” of what the Googlebot sees; taking a peek can send you down a rabbit hole of hidden options.

## DISOBEYED DIRECTIVES

There are a few ways you can tell Googlebot how to treat your site. The most common ways are in a \*/robots.txt or in the <head> of your page. If you have one, you can find these pretty easily.

### Example:

yoursiteurl.com/robots.txt is where crawlers go first, and where you can tell those robots what to do on your site.

There are also page-specific directions like:

```
<meta name="robots" content="index, follow">
```

If put in the header, this is a request for the robots going through the page to index that page and follow the links on it.

But every once in a while, we see the Googlebot ignoring the directions given to it.

While it’s definitely a mystery, and initially causes alarm, after a deep dive we sometimes find that the blocked page is incredibly useful to users — and perhaps the roadblocks in front of Google should be changed.

Evaluating user information can be a great way to watch for pages that are especially useful that should be highlighted in your internal link structure, and that should be evaluated again to make sure they aren’t being hidden by your directions to Google.

## CLOSING REFLECTION

When we do website audits, there are always areas that send us down a whirlwind of discovery.

Every audit is an adventure, and each website is as unique as the organization it represents. Getting to the bottom of a technical issue can have a huge impact on the success of a site, so while our hope is that we’ll discover our client’s sites are already technically optimized, it’s always exciting to discover ways to help them improve as well. Sometimes, we discover oddities like these along the way.

These three are just a few that have taken us by surprise in 2018. Hopefully, there are many more interesting times to come! ☺

*Want to hear more of what Mary’s got to share on technical SEO and its oddities?*

*Connect with her here:*

[pagesseomag.com/mary\\_wilson](https://pagesseomag.com/mary_wilson)



EVERY AUDIT  
IS AN ADVENTURE





# WHAT DO WE REALLY WANT IN A WEBSITE'S USER JOURNEY?

In the age of high-speed internet and one-click checkouts, the simple answer is less time and more convenience — to be able to digest interesting information or complete an action that will take as little time as possible and is ultra convenient for the user.

**STEPHEN DAVIES,  
PJ SOLOMON**



# 3 EASY WAYS TO INTEGRATE YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA & SEO CAMPAIGNS

**KRISTEN VAUGHN**

*Associate Director of Online Marketing, KoMarketing*

**It's not uncommon these days to come across content aimed at digital marketing professionals that attempts to pit channels against each other in an attempt to determine which is "best": PR vs. SEO, social media marketing vs. content marketing.**

In reality, most informed marketers know that this isn't quite the way things really work. While it's true that every business must determine which channels are most effective for them, often the optimal strategy will include multiple channels, each supporting the others.

An important aspect of successful digital marketing is avoiding silos within your organization and having a good understanding of how all the parts of your strategy fit together. Integrating the many channels of your digital marketing strategy will not only improve the customer experience, it will also boost results.

As a digital marketer, it's easy to get overwhelmed with everything that needs to happen in order to meet your goals. And SEO and social media are two contributing areas where there seem to be endless possibilities of tactics that can be pursued.

With that said, there are ways you can integrate strategies to maximize results with limited time and resources. Social media and SEO present an immediate opportunity to do this.

**Here, I'll be addressing some simple ways to combine social media and SEO strategies. These tactics will help you improve results and efficiency, while driving visibility to your content and supporting link building efforts. By implementing them, you'll reach your targets and strengthen thought leadership.**

# ONE

## ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCES



Social media can be used to support your link building efforts by engaging with key contacts associated with each of your target sites. I've often seen a higher success and acceptance rate when establishing relationships and creating familiarity with a brand before reaching out about a link building opportunity.

For example, if you are looking to contribute a guest article on an industry-related publication, identify some of the editors at the publication and start engaging with them on social media before actually reaching out.

In addition to this, advertising across social media platforms can be a great way to take your strategy to the next level. Compile lists of existing clients, prospects, partners, affiliates, sponsors, media targets, influencers, and thought leaders. Then, import these lists on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn for more advanced targeting.

# TWO

## INCREASE VISIBILITY



Initial content distribution and promotion is an essential part of every successful online marketing campaign. This is something most marketers recognize; however, where we often fall short is continuing to drive visibility to existing content over time.

In order to get the most out of the content that you've worked hard to create, it's important to distribute it beyond just the week of publishing. This will help increase traffic to your site and reach people you may have missed the first time around.

On the most basic level, don't forget your top assets. As long as the content is still relevant and valuable, there is no reason why you shouldn't reshare it with your audience. If some of your top assets have become less relevant or outdated, maybe it's time to refresh them with updated information.

# THREE

## LISTEN UP



Striking a balance between technical optimization and the experience visitors have on your site can sometimes be difficult. These days, most marketers are savvy enough to recognize that spun or keyword-stuffed content isn't doing them any favors. However, it's not terribly uncommon to find content on websites where it's not quite relevant, or is too high-level and general to make an impact for readers.

While creating keyword-focused content is essential, it also needs to be aligned with your audiences' wants and needs. This can often be challenging; however, by monitoring conversations happening across social media around core keyword themes, SEOs can come up with some really valuable content opportunities.

Identify the questions people are asking on social media, and use this information to come up with new content ideas. Taking this a step further, you'll now have several opportunities to distribute this content after it has been created and published.

To make this easier on yourself, consider leveraging one of the many social listening tools available. This will not only benefit marketing campaigns from an SEO perspective, but it will also help build and strengthen thought leadership.

## MAKE EFFORTS TO GET YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING & SEO TEAMS ON THE SAME PAGE.



*Are you leveraging social media to support your SEO goals — and vice versa? I'd love to hear your thoughts on other important tactics I may have missed — reach out to me directly via Twitter: @kristen\_vaughn*

A well-rounded digital marketing strategy accounts for the ways each tactic supports the others. Having a good understanding of how all the parts fit together typically leads to optimal results from each individual initiative.

While there are many ways to integrate your digital marketing tactics, these are a few immediate opportunities to better align your social media and SEO campaigns.

One final tip? Make organizational efforts to get your social media marketing and SEO teams on the same page. Take the necessary steps so both teams understand the role they have in supporting the other, whether it's how keyword research can inform social media marketing strategies, applying SEO best practices to content developed for social media, or ensuring both teams are aligned in messaging. Understand how the KPIs between these two teams are aligned, and you'll likely see improved performance working towards your objectives. 📍

# CASIE Gillette

Casie Gillette is the Senior Director of Digital Marketing at KoMarketing. Casie leads digital marketing strategy for KoMarketing's clients, and is an integral part of the leadership team, guiding company initiatives, service offerings, and the organization's online presence. Casie began her career as an SEO analyst and has been a part of digital marketing teams both in-house and agency-side.

Casie has over 10 years of industry experience and regularly speaks about search, social, and branding at top marketing conferences, including SMX, SearchLove, Pubcon, and others. She's been a columnist at Search Engine Land since 2013, and is a proud Bostonian.



To keep up with Casie and her insights into the SEO world, give her a follow on Twitter: @Casieg



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

I for one am very hopeful about the future of SEO. This year specifically, I've heard more people talking about their shifting strategy, their focus on customers, and the need to stop listening to Google's every word. The future is the customer, and making sure we are doing what it takes to reach them. That content may change depending on what SERPs do, or it may mean a larger focus on off-site tactics, but either way, that's where we are going.

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

Move faster. SEO may be a long-term play but the faster things are implemented, the faster you'll see results. My clients with the highest growth rates are the ones who either allowed us to implement changes, or made the changes immediately. Internal bureaucracy can kill a program.

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

I'm really proud of the team we've built at KoMarketing, but I'm more proud of the fact there are now KoMarketing alums out there running their own SEO teams. It's really amazing to watch people grow and know that I was a small part of it. On top of that, a few of them have become really great friends and nothing makes me happier than when they teach me new things.

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

Ha! Plenty. The biggest thing is the education and understanding of what SEO is. It can be really trying to constantly have to explain and defend what it is we do. That being said, it has come a long way and is getting better. As search marketers, it's our job to help push it along and make sure the right information is out there.

**YOU'VE WORKED AS AN IN-HOUSE SEO AND ON THE AGENCY SIDE: WHAT CAN YOU SHARE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE THAT MIGHT HELP FOLKS ON EITHER SIDE DO MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE WORK.**

Working in-house really helped me understand why I couldn't get things done when I was working on the agency side! Joking aside, it gave me empathy and helped me see the bigger picture. When you're on the agency side, you can't understand why SEO isn't the top priority. However, when you're in-house, you see everything else that is happening and why things sometimes take longer than they should. It showed me that as SEOs, we can't try and make everything a top priority. Focus on the things that will have the greatest impact.

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

Set up a testing ground. I tell this to everyone coming up, but there's no better experience than building something you can break. Set up a Wordpress site or something simple you can play around with. We don't get the opportunity to take risks on our company sites or client sites, and that can make the learning process slower. Plus, unless you work for a company that offers web development, you won't get a ton of technical experience. By building and running your own site, you can start to learn the tech side of SEO.

A black and white photograph of a hand holding a waffle cone ice cream. The hand is positioned in the lower left quadrant, with the fingers gently gripping the cone. The person is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, jacket with a visible zipper on the right side. A silver-toned bracelet with rectangular links is visible on the wrist. The background is a light-colored, textured wall, possibly concrete or plaster, with some subtle shadows and highlights. The overall composition is clean and modern.

# BE THE LOCAL AUTHORITY FOR YOUR INDUSTRY

by promoting local industry gatherings, news, employees, and other educational content on your blog. Think of top-of-the-funnel content that goes beyond what your business sells.

**KELSEY SMITH,  
HUBSPOT**





# GOOGLE MY BUSINESS



LOCAL PACKS, € GYM CLASS HEROES

- RYAN JOOS -

*Senior Marketing Strategist, Nifty Marketing*



**PICTURE THIS:**

It's 8th grade gym class, and you've been selected as dodgeball team captain. You're up first to choose your teammates. You're the new kid in school, and you don't personally know your potential battle companions yet.



**PLOT TWIST:**  
**IMAGINE SOME OF**  
**YOUR CLASSMATES**  
**HAVE REVIEWS FROM**  
**FORMER TEAMMATES.**

**WHO ARE YOU**  
**GOING TO CHOOSE?**

---

- **Student A:** ★★★★★ Rating: 5.0

“Unparalleled athletic ability and always willing to sacrifice for the team! She is our MVP!”

- **Student B:** ★☆☆☆☆ Rating: 1.0

“I’m not sure they understand the rules. They threw the ball at me and we were on the same team.”

**F**or local businesses, not claiming, verifying, or optimizing your Google My Business (GMB) listing is a great way to ensure you’re chosen last.

More frequently than ever, local searchers are selecting service providers without ever even visiting the company’s website. Google has made this possible by providing services such as Google My Business listings and Local Packs in the search engine results. These features have fueled potential customers’ ability to make an educated choice about the businesses or services they are looking for.

PERCENT  
**19**

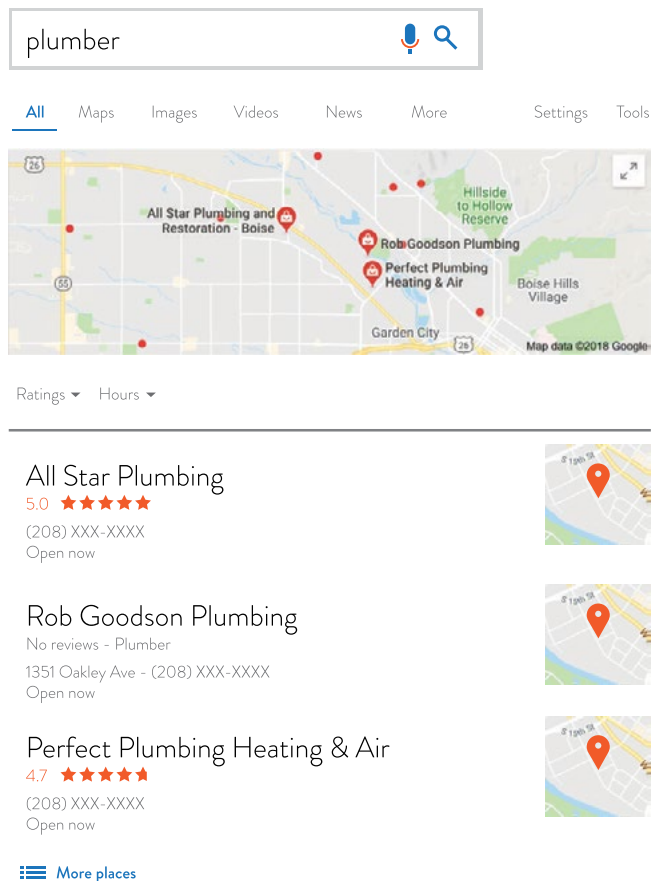
ACCORDING TO MOZ’S IN-DEPTH STUDY ON LOCAL RANKING FACTORS, GOOGLE MY BUSINESS SIGNALS MADE UP 19 PERCENT OF THE LOCAL PACK RANKING FACTORS OVERALL. REVIEW SIGNALS, WHICH ARE CLOSELY RELATED TO GMB SIGNALS, MADE UP 13 PERCENT.



## WHAT IS A LOCAL PACK?

A Local Pack is a selection of, generally, three organic Google My Business listings and, depending on the competitiveness of the industry and market, one or two paid listings that appear at the very top of certain search results.

These listings provide searchers easy access to your business info, images, and reviews — all without ever clicking through your website. Local Packs are generally located beneath paid results and above organic results, but this isn't always the case.



## WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO RANK IN A LOCAL PACK?

### GMB-Related Factors

To earn a ranking in the local pack, you'll first need to invest in your Google My Business listing.

What does this mean? You need to claim, verify, and optimize your GMB listing! Just verifying your listing is a ranking factor in and of itself, but there are a variety of other elements in GMB listings that will influence how you rank in the Local Pack.

### Proper Business Category

This may seem simple, but it shouldn't be overlooked, especially in industries where the specific businesses are closely related.

For example, Navy Federal Credit Union should be categorized as a "Federal Credit Union," rather than the less specific "Bank."

A pizza takeout and delivery business should use "Pizza Delivery" as the primary business category and "Pizza Takeout" as the additional category. Simply putting "Delivery Restaurant" or "Takeout Restaurant" would be too vague.

A law firm's primary business category should represent their primary practice area, such as "Personal Injury" or "Divorce" instead of just "Law Firm" or "Attorney." Failing to optimize could hinder their ability to perform in local searches for more specific searches.

### Reviews

How many reviews your business has, the overall sentiment of those reviews, the content of those reviews, and how quickly you gain reviews, both on Google and on other platforms, all serve as factors that will determine how well a business will rank in Google's Local Packs.

Reviews are a big deal for reasons other than just rankings. Being a business at the top of the Local Pack is like being the 8th-grade basketball MVP during dodgeball picks in gym class. You can get by showing off your past performances, but score rosters aren't everything. Some users will simply select the highest listed result, but others will do more research before making their choice.

Would you still choose the students who *appear* to be the most athletic as your teammates if their reviews were terrible?

Positive reviews can be the reinforcing factor that drives consumer behavior and helps potential clients and customers make their ultimate selection. If you haven't incorporated asking for reviews into your workflow with clients and customers, now is the time.

### Non-GMB Rankings Factors

#### Links

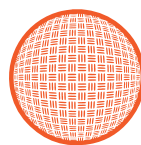
According to the study by Moz, link signals were the second largest ranking factor for Local Pack performance. Links continue to be an important part of performing in Google searches. For rankings, the quality, quantity, diversity, relevance, and locality of links all play a factor.

#### Your Website's Content

On-page signals from your website may not be as influential as they have been in years past, but they are still meaningful. Having an authoritative website, geographically specific content on your landing pages, and a mobile-friendly website are all factors for ranking in Local Packs.

#### Citations

Much like on-page signals, citations may be less influential as they were years ago. Most industry experts agree that they are important, and investing time to clean up and improve citations can prove valuable. However, the same experts would also likely agree that there is a relatively short list of citations that provide much value.



# LET YOUR

## GMB Features & Best Practices

### Images

Even Google values the old aphorism “a picture is worth a 1000 words.”

Via Google My Business, you can add photos of your facility, service vehicles, and staff members. Adding images, video, and other media content to your Google My Business listing provides searchers multiple options to engage with your brand.

This is a valuable practice in almost any industry, but it is particularly valuable for businesses like law firms and medical professions, where prospects will be selecting you as a practitioner.

### Messaging

Live chat is becoming more and more prevalent on websites, and GMB has jumped on the trend. GMB Messaging is a relatively new feature that allows users to contact you straight from your listing.

You'll have to set up Messaging in the backend of Google My Business. Using this feature gives potential clients yet another opportunity to get ahold of you in a way that your competitors may not be using.

### Posts

Google Posts are short snippets of information viewed when your listing is selected. Posts give your business listings more content for your users to interact with.

Businesses use posts to talk about company news, upcoming events, new offerings, sales, or even posts about specific products. Some have reported 11 percent increases in appointment bookings simply by regularly creating Google posts.

### Questions & Answers

Do you find yourself answering the same questions about your business on a regular basis? Google's Questions & Answers feature offers you an opportunity to post and answer those common questions. This is also open to the public to ask, so you'll want to be sure to answer any questions as they pop up.

## DON'T GET PICKED LAST

Want your business to be first pick in our metaphorical game of dodgeball?

Claim and verify your listing. Take advantage of the resources Google My Business offers, invest in good link building, provide killer customer service, and always ask for reviews. Develop a pattern of consistency with your Google My Business listing, and you'll get discovered by more local searches than ever before.

Google My Business is just another way to make the world a better place — and let your company's inner 8th grade gym class hero emerge! 🏆



Lifting weights in preparation for sporting events and physical activity isn't only a smart thing to do, but it can reduce the chance of injury in combination with stretching as well as improving performance. The fitness industry has seen significant growth in the last decade or more with its influence hitting the mainstream with the rise of athleisure fashion trends and popular dietary lifestyle choices.

[Learn more](#)

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### Groth & Associates

416 N Erie St. #100, Toledo, OH

Groth & Associates is known in the Toledo area for their work in criminal defense, do you handle personal injury cases as well?

👍 Helpful?

💬 Answer



**Steve Johnson**

a week ago

Yes we do! We have very experienced attorneys who take on all types of injury cases.

👍 Helpful?



*Are you optimizing for local searches and dodgeball matches? Follow Ryan and Nifty Marketing on Twitter to get more great content on local SEO:*

@RyanJoos

@niftymarketing



# GYM CLASS HERO EMERGE

# 2019 TRADE SHOW & CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Looking for opportunities to build partnerships, boost your marketing knowledge, and grow your network in 2019?

These trade shows and conferences are our top picks for the year.







## AFFILIATE SUMMIT WEST

Viva! Affiliate Summit is the best show around for affiliate marketers, but it's also a great stop for agencies and solution providers. #ASW19

January 6 - 8, 2019 | Las Vegas, NV

## TRAFFIC & CONVERSION SUMMIT

Executives, digital retailers, and digital marketers of all stripes will feel at home at this show in sunny California.

February 25 - 27, 2019 | San Diego, CA

## LEADSCON

Hang out at The Mirage while you get insights on lead gen. This show is a great stop for folks in insurance, education, finance, auto, healthcare, and home services verticals.

March 4 - 6, 2019 | Las Vegas, NV

## ENGAGE CONFERENCE

Formerly known as SearchFest, Engage is put on by SEMpdx and features two tracks focused on social media, content, UX, advertising, SEO, and paid media.

March 7 - 8, 2019 | Portland, OR

## contentTECH SUMMIT

This show is focused on optimizing processes through technology for improved enterprise content management and better experiences for customers.

April 8 - 10, 2019 | San Diego, CA

## SMX ADVANCED

Search nerds like us love this show. June is a great time to visit the Emerald City for three days of advanced SEO insights.

June 3 - 5, 2019 | Seattle, WA

## DIGITAL GROWTH UNLEASHED

#DGU19 will equip you to get more from your digital marketing through better alignment of your traffic sources and visitor intent.

June 17 - 19, 2019 | Las Vegas, NV

## CONTENT MARKETING WORLD

SEO and content marketing go together like peanut butter and jelly. Get a holistic view at this big show for digital marketers and PR pros.

September 3 - 6, 2019 | Cleveland, OH

## PUBCON LAS VEGAS

This search-focused show is a favorite in the industry. Thought-leading speakers, insightful trainings and courses, and roots that go back to the 80's make this one a must-attend.

October 7 - 10, 2019 | Las Vegas, NV

## SMX EAST

This SMX series show is a little less advanced when it comes to search content, and covers a more diverse range of topics than the Advanced version in Seattle.

Fall 2019 | New York, New York



# FEEL LIKE YOU'RE MISSING SOMETHING?

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

Check out these resources online:

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

STAY TUNED: WE'VE GOT SOME FRESH, NEW WAYS TO DELIVER SEO INSIGHTS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU.

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WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY ABOUT SEARCH?

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RESOURCE  
FOR DIGITAL  
MARKETERS  
WHO WANT  
TO LEARN  
ABOUT **SEO**.**

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

**LET'S HEAR IT.**

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

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

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

[info@pagesseomagazine.com](mailto:info@pagesseomagazine.com)

[www.pagesseomagazine.com](http://www.pagesseomagazine.com)



# MEET THE *PAGES* CREW

An Apple fanboy, camping enthusiast, and developer of leaders. Joe believes great marketing lives at the crossroads of compelling design and interesting stories. When Joe's not helping the *PAGES* crew live at that crossroad, you'll find him in the mountains with his family or throwing quads in his local corn hole tournaments.

Twitter: @JoeOliver

Web nerd and writer who decided to make that skill marketable with a marketing degree. She's been attached to a computer since 1996, when her dad would let her watch him play Diablo on Windows 95, and loves to explore the ways we change and are changed by the web.

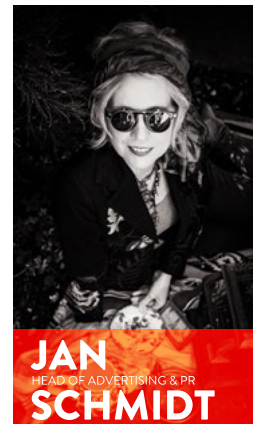
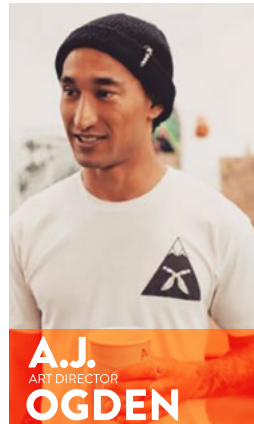
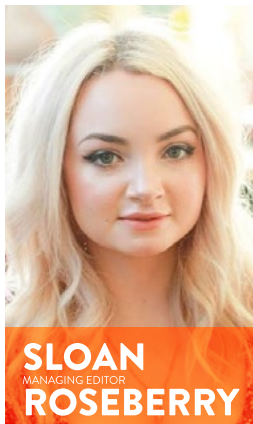
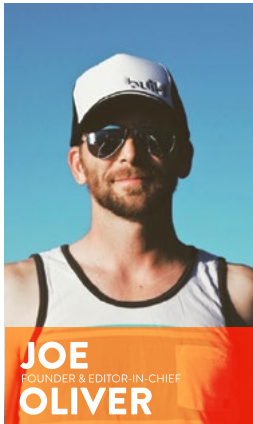
linkedin.com/in/vsloanroseberry

All-weather winter enthusiast, fair-weather golfer, summer-weather kook. Prefers standing sideways on boards and playing with dogs. Enjoys trying to find Neverland and tracking coordinates with a pencil and notebook in hand. Pleasantly surprised to be pushing analog treasures in a digital industry.

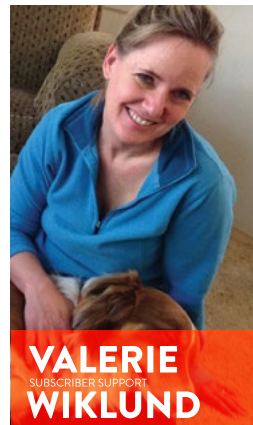
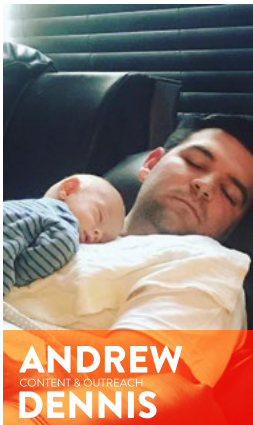
IG: @juicemachinedesign

Wrangler of tasks, keeper of peace, and organizer extraordinaire. Social media master and knick-knack emporium curator. Knows good marketing comes from collaboration, a warm office, and a few cups of strong coffee.

IG: @tomatobabylifestyle



Hello



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

Twitter: @AndrewDennis33

Lover of sunshine, warm temperatures, and all animals. Proud to be owned by an Australian Shepherd. When not helping with anything that needs doing at work, she can be found reading about science, baking bread, or practicing her speechcraft at Toastmasters.

Jiu-jitsu crazed poet with a propensity towards correcting grammar and teaching her kids that clean socks are not the enemy. Coach. Teacher. IBJJF National Champion. Wife and mom. Believes strongly in celebrating the mundane.

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



# THANK YOU

To This Issue's Contributors



Extending Your Reach

Audience & Algorithms

SEO Mythbusting Pt. II

The Ultimate SEO Commodity

Site Auditing Oddities

Google My Business 101

3 Ways to Integrate Social Media & SEO

Vince Nero - Content Marketing Manager | Siege Media

Joelle Irvine - Director of Marketing and Growth | Bookmark Content and Communications

Charles Taylor - SEO Manager | Verizon Fios

Greg Jacobs - Senior SEO Strategist | Found

Mary Wilson - Technical SEO Specialist | Page One Power

Ryan Joos - Senior Marketing Strategist | Nifty Marketing

Kristen Vaughn - Associate Director of Online Marketing | KoMarketing



K, bye





# THE CREDIT

**PUBLISHED BY PAGE ONE POWER**

**FOUNDER & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: JOE OLIVER**

**MANAGING EDITOR: SLOAN ROSEBERRY**

**ART DIRECTOR: A.J. OGDEN**

**ADVERTISING: JAN SCHMIDT**

## **REBUS GAME ANSWERS:**

**- PAID TRAFFIC**

**- ORGANIC TRAFFIC**

**- RANKING**

**- BOUNCE RATE**

*COVER SHOUTOUT: We had a really fun time putting this issue's cover illustration together. We have to give props to @ustwogames, the creators of "Monument Valley" for the inspiration behind it. Check them out on the app store and flex those brain muscles.*

## **THANKS FOR READING! HERE'S TO YOU!**

PAGES is published each quarter by Page One Power LLC, for a total of 4 yearly issues.

For reprints and advertising inquiries, please contact Jan Schmidt at [jan@pagesSEOMagazine.com](mailto:jan@pagesSEOMagazine.com)

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Write to us at:

Page One Power  
ATTN: PAGES Magazine  
3050 N Lakeharbor Ln, Suite. 100  
Boise, ID 83703

[www.pagesSEOMagazine.com](http://www.pagesSEOMagazine.com)

PRINTED IN THE USA

Photography courtesy of UNSPLASH.com





**\$14.99 USD**



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