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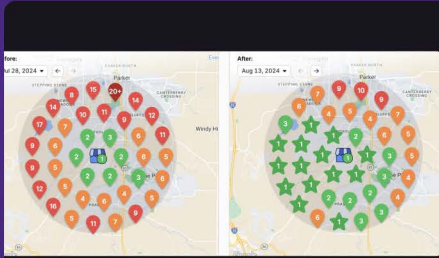
SEO TRENDS 2025



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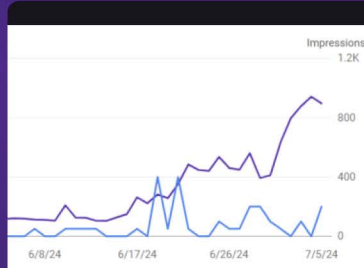
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SEO TRENDS 2025

Published by Search Engine Journal
160 W. Camino Real, Unit #606
Boca Raton, FL 33432
SearchEngineJournal.com

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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

KATIE MORTON

Editor-In-Chief,
Search Engine Journal

MORDY OBERSTEIN

Head Of SEO Brand, Wix

HELEN POLLITT

Head Of SEO, Getty Images

MATT SOUTHERN

Senior News Writer,
Search Engine Journal

DAN TAYLOR

Partner, SALT.agency

ANDREA VOLPINI

CEO, WordLift

EDITORIAL

KATIE MORTON

Editor-In-Chief

BEN STEELE

Managing Editor

BEA PE BENITO

Editorial Assistant

ABBY VILLARICA

Ebooks Project Manager

DESIGN

PAULO BOBITA

Director Of Design

ROBIN JUN BIONG

Graphic Designer

ROCHELLE CARINO

Project Manager

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Introduction



BEN STEELE

Senior Editor, Search Engine Journal



SEO is, in a way, always in some kind of flux. But for several years, there was a lot of fundamental knowledge you could rely on. There were certain activities that, executed well, you could expect a reward from platforms and audiences.

Some foundations of SEO won't change, but disruption has come so quickly and frequently that we've had to reassess our approach to ebooks at SEJ. We ran the "Google Ranking Factors" ebook for years as a kind of coffee table guide to as many confirmed and mythical SEO ranking factors as we could find.

Then, everything started changing so fast that we had to work quickly, and sometimes delay, to address industry changes, algorithm updates, leaks, or product releases before an ebook was published.

So much more feels up in the air than it used to be, and our collective faith in the good intentions of the platforms we work with has been shaken. As cool as the promises of AI are, it's being leveraged as a traffic siphon by some and a spam-generating machine by others. [Leaks](#) and [court cases](#) have made it difficult to trust Google and its direction.

But the size of your potential audience hasn't changed. Their appetite for information hasn't changed. The avenues along which information flows are changing, and this

can cause your reachable audience to contract. In some cases, it seems that users are sick of the old ways of doing things because, given the opportunity to engage differently, they do.

This could be down to natural generational shifts in social media usage. Facebook is for old people now, I guess. It could be down to the dominant forces mishandling their control over the flow of information. The problem with monopolies or organizations that exert so much control as to seem to be monopolies is that they kill competitive business practices and do not benefit users.

In my opinion, it creates an unstable environment and can't help but damage trust, no matter the intentions.

In hindsight (I would never claim to have predicted any of this), it looks like all this disruption was inevitable, not due to the specifics of the disruptive technology, but due to the contexts in which information discovery has functioned.

A stale environment begs for disruption – for new life. If we're honest with ourselves, I think we all know how stagnant Google Search has been, not in terms of its actual functions (which are more volatile than ever), but in terms of the service it provides.

The result is what we see before us. Google's hold on search platforms isn't broken, but the cracks are showing. It has plenty of opportunities to repair them, but on the other hand, there are plenty of up-and-comers looking for ways to provide new and exciting services and an appetite among audiences for new ways to interact with the web, with platforms, and with businesses.

This year, the contributors to this ebook focused on the big picture – not just AI, but how you can build new strategies that include developing technologies. Not just new platforms, but what they say about the appetites of users and where your audience can be found.

For as much disruption as there has been, I think you'll find hope and excitement in many of the responses.

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Creating New SEO Strategies



BEN STEELE

Senior Editor, Search Engine Journal



The longer traffic disruption goes on, the more SEO professionals and businesses come to terms with the fact that lower overall traffic is the new normal.

Developments in the SERPs and plenty of shenanigans from Google, plus changing user behavior, have forced many in SEO to reevaluate their strategies. This is especially true when it comes to the idea of funnel-based SEO. Many top-funnel queries that websites relied on to draw traffic can now be answered with [zero-click searches](#), which, unfortunately, are often driven by search platforms scraping content and regurgitating it, removing the incentive for users to click through. Some argue this constitutes content theft.

In addition, issues of search results quality, the [prevalence of user-generated content](#), and the controversial implementations of [AI Overviews](#) have shaken trust in Google and its systems.

This presents a challenge that disrupts long-held strategies and assumptions about Search. Users still need information and products – that demand isn't going away.

However, the fact that search platforms like Google and Bing provide more convenient avenues to achieve their goals that don't involve clicking on websites has changed the way users search. You could use this fact to defend zero-click practices, or you could note that stealing things has always made them easier to access.

I wonder if arguments like “[We’re always experimenting with different ways to connect our users with high-quality and helpful information](#)” would have worked for Napster in 2001.

On the other hand, dissatisfaction with the quality of Google Search results leads users to seek direct and curated sources of information in customized social media feeds, UGC platforms, and even email newsletters.

In light of all of this, the first question I asked the contributors was about SEO strategy and how it could change:

“The desire for information isn’t going away, but users are changing how they seek information. In the past, SEO pros answered questions in order to lure in users. That might still be the case, but people are finding answers outside of the SERP (or staying in the SERP) for answers rather than going to websites.

Is that model broken completely, or is there still something to gain from it? Alternatively, is there a more direct way for SEO professionals to find users that doesn’t involve pumping information onto the internet? Is there a completely new way of doing things in SEO, or do we need to work within the wreckage that we have?

Are there other channels that you recommend for user acquisition strategy? How can SEO pros effectively integrate these new channels into their overall approach?”

KATIE MORTON

Editor-In-Chief, Search Engine Journal



SEO isn't dead, but it's shook.

Up until a few years ago, anyone could launch a blog, write about a niche, and have their content served fairly in the SERP. Google did its job of connecting searchers with creators.

The open web allowed for a true public square. Google was great at sending users off the SERP to consume high-quality content that met search intent.

Boy, have things changed.

At the time of this writing, it appears Google search will continue to devolve into a circus of ads, AI rubbish, and [content stolen from creators](#).

Google found itself in hot water in France for the unauthorized use of copyrighted content from publishers without remuneration to train AI models. In other words, content theft.

[Google was fined](#) a total of 750 million euros for subsequently breaching its commitment to cooperate and negotiate fairly with publishers.

Despite [that precedent](#), Google continues to [scrape content from creator websites](#) and republish that stolen content in the SERPs in an ever-increasing variety of zero-click search result types.

Here's an example.

People also ask :

Is it illegal to steal content?

When someone takes your content without permission, it's considered stealing. This includes copying someone's caption, taking the content of a graphic and repurposing it as your own, stealing a photo, and plagiarizing sales page copy, website copy, or any other material. Mar 27, 2023



Sam Vander Wielen

<https://www.samvanderwielen.com> › stealing-content-vs-...

105. Stealing Content vs. Inspiration: When Does It Become Illegal?

An example of Google stealing content by publishing it on the SERP. October 2024

Other times, Google says it stole the republished content from “sources across the web.” It takes several hidden clicks to get to a website listed as one of these sources.

The few “organic” results left in the SERPs are controlled based on mystery criteria Google is still calling an “algorithm.” These results are mostly buried beneath AIO, People Also Ask, a list of videos, and user-generated content.

As a user, don't count on Google to fix the SERP. Use [alternative search engines](#) that preserve the open web by serving up URLs to good content where it lives.

As an SEO pro, don't give up on content strategy, but don't count on Google as your main source of traffic forever. It's never been more important to focus on diversifying your traffic sources.

You can still rank on Google, of course. Google remains one of the largest sources of traffic to tap into, for now anyway. It may take a year or more before we see any kind of remedy to [Google's monopolistic practices](#) via the U.S. antitrust trials.

So, I recommend you still make a good effort to get traffic from Google. There are some basic SEO truths that remain.

Depending on the query and the search intent, there are plenty of instances when visitors will get the best information by coming to websites for in-depth, expert content.

Use structured data in your content when appropriate to help with rankings.

Personal, first-hand, and unique human experiences, perspectives, and expertise should help your content rank while being theft-proof, at least in theory.

MORDY OBERSTEIN

Head Of SEO Brand, Wix



I don't think the model per se is broken, but rather, our view of it is. We expect that a click from an informational query will suddenly (and to an extent magically) result in the user being placed in "the funnel."

But the truth is, more than likely, nothing will happen. And I'm not saying that nothing could happen in the future. The best thing that can happen when you pull someone from the SERP onto an informational page (say a blog post) is that the content really resonates with them.

And therein lies the issue. Resonance. We need to be far more concerned with resonance than we currently are (which I very scientifically estimate to be at about 0 level of concern).

So, if you can create content that resonates with your audience, there's huge value in that. And yes, the ecosystem as a whole might be changing, but that doesn't take away from the value of creating written content that resonates.

The ecosystem disruption would speak to more tactical issues, like how we spread this content around. Do we package it for social purposes now? Do we want to distribute it in podcast form with a spin that nudges the user back to the original piece? Whatever it is.

But to get to the heart of your question, the user acquisition process will only become increasingly less direct. There's no new way to get that sort of "direct" action. The entire thing is less direct.

If you're talking about alternative channels and strategies, I would advocate for going "association first." Run activities where the net result will be people associating you with your offering.

That can be anything from being present in a real way at conferences or other live events; it can mean partnering with known quantities in your industry, etc. The possibilities are really endless.

This, in combination with various other prerequisites, will help get you out there in a way that can pull users in while being far less beholden to any specific algorithm.

HELEN POLLITT

Head Of SEO, Getty Images



It's finally time that we start doing what we've been claiming to do all these years and break down the silos between the marketing channels.

SEO is changing, but it isn't going away. In the past, we could get away with being a completely independent acquisition channel – from discovery through to conversion – but that is definitely not the case now.

With large language models (LLMs) and social media channels becoming more popular sources of seeking out information and brands, SEO professionals need to link up with brand and social media managers to become part of their customer journeys. Brand is increasingly important to acquisition, not just conversion. We'll see it more over the next few years.

As LLMs take on the role of answer-engines, serving up limited information, products, and solutions straight to users, we can't rely on them conducting their research and analysis on the SERPs anymore.

Instead, we need to make sure it is our brands that are being served as **the** answer on LLMs. Work on becoming the brand that is synonymous with your market, so when the AI-powered search engines give one or two companies or products as an answer to a question, yours is in that coveted position.

MATT G. SOUTHERN

Senior News Writer,
Search Engine Journal



The traditional SEO approach of answering questions to drive website traffic isn't obsolete, but it's changing.

Publishers must adapt to changing user behaviors and the increasing prevalence of AI in search.

While people can now find basic answers directly in SERPs or through AI assistants, there's still significant value in providing high-quality, in-depth content that showcases genuine expertise.

The key to success lies in diversifying strategies and building direct audience connections.

Brand marketing has become increasingly important. Websites should be creating loyal communities that seek out their content directly.

How? Prioritize building topical authority rather than just answering individual questions.

This approach helps establish your site as a go-to resource, encouraging users to seek out your content directly.

Complement this approach with an omnichannel strategy that reaches your audience across social media, email marketing, and video platforms.

Understanding and catering to user intent is more important than ever in an AI-driven search environment.

Focus on creating content that addresses the context and potential follow-up questions users might have. Remember, E-E-A-T (experience, expertise, authoritativeness, trustworthiness) remains a fundamental principle in standing out in search results.

While SEO is changing, there are still opportunities to attract an audience. The key is adapting your strategies, diversifying, and building relationships across multiple channels.

SEO isn't just about SERPs anymore – it's about meeting people where they are in their journey.

DAN TAYLOR

Partner, SALT.agency



Google has gotten better at understanding the beneficial purpose of webpages, and I think this has been the downfall of a lot of websites.

If a webpage, or site, has the beneficial purpose of ranking for a query with the objective of pushing users to click on links, that's a different proposition from a website that has the beneficial purpose of educating or providing value to the user.

This is also part of the reason I feel a lot of heavy AI-generated content websites see short-lived success.

In my opinion, these websites rank initially, but as the freshness decays, the sites don't cultivate enough authority and justification to maintain the resource allocation from Google.

Given how Meta and Amazon (Rufus) are becoming interrupters in the user journey, understanding your user profiles and the platforms they spend time on is becoming more important.

Then, understanding which channels are over-indexed by user spread can help you invest in other channels smartly, and retain brand exposure at the funnel stages and points that the new AI interrupters are creating threat.

ANDREA VOLPINI

CEO, WordLift



While the traditional method of attracting users by simply answering questions is losing effectiveness, the model isn't completely broken.

Humans and AI constantly seek core information to enhance and scale decision-making processes. Google's SERP features – featured snippets, AI summaries, and conversational search engines – provide answers directly, reducing the need for users to visit websites.

However, by focusing on adding value beyond the snippet – through deeper expertise, specialized tools, or unique insights unavailable from SERPs alone – there's still much to gain.

SEO is evolving beyond just answering questions. It now involves understanding user intent at a granular level, aligning content with complex needs, and ensuring its availability across all platforms – traditional search, AI agents, voice interactions, and digital assistants.

SEO professionals should focus not just on ranking but on creating a rich semantic network of information that spans multiple channels and contexts.

Ontologies and knowledge graphs are central to this transformation, as they provide the structural framework that enables machines to interpret and connect complex data points effectively.

Ontologies define the relationships between concepts within a particular domain, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of user queries and content. By creating detailed structured data graphs, SEO professionals can map out how different pieces of information relate to each other, facilitating more accurate information retrieval by AI systems.

Knowledge graphs take this a step further by organizing these relationships into a network of interconnected nodes and edges, representing entities and their associations. This interconnected structure enables AI agents to traverse and extract relevant information more efficiently, enhancing the user's discovery experience.

Large language models (LLMs) rely on structured data either during training or in context – through methods like Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG), Retrieval-Interleaved Generation (RIG), or other techniques to steer the model.

By integrating ontologies and knowledge graphs into their strategies, SEO pros can provide the structured data that LLMs need to generate more accurate and contextually relevant responses.

I call the next generation of SEO “AI Discovery.” This approach leverages ontologies and knowledge graphs to connect data points from various sources, allowing SEO pros to structure information more effectively.

Making data machine-readable enables AI systems to understand, recommend, and repurpose content across platforms.

AI Discovery moves beyond webpage-centric strategies, emphasizing semantic enrichment for better findability across voice assistants, AI search engines, and physical interactions, bridging physical and digital spaces with tools like GS1 Digital Links.

Rather than simply optimizing for SERPs, SEO professionals should focus on creating a semantic backbone that feeds AI systems, digital assistants, and discovery layers directly.

AI agents thrive on interconnected, structured data; initiatives like AI-powered internal search, AI-generated introductory text, and advanced ontologies can redefine how users find and interact with content.

Data marketing is what helps SEO professionals and marketers make content contextually relevant across various AI platforms. This semantic infrastructure allows for more personalized and efficient information retrieval, enhancing user experience and engagement. It empowers AI systems to make more informed decisions, provide better recommendations, and facilitate deeper user interactions with content.

AI is accelerating information discovery. The “messy middle” is now partially automated by tools like Bing Deep Search and Google’s recently introduced AI-organized search results pages.

User Experience Metrics Will Continue To Evolve

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MATT ZEUNERT

Founder, DebugBear



How someone experiences a website is a fundamentally human question.

At the same time, search engines need technical measures to assess user experience. So it's only natural that these metrics evolve over time as Google explores new approaches to turn human experiences into numbers.

Interaction To Next Paint

In March of 2024, Interaction to Next Paint (INP) replaced First Input Delay as one of the three Core Web Vitals metrics. It's a better metric in many ways, and much more closely matches what real users care about.

The introduction of INP caused many SEOs to focus on their website speed and again pass the web vitals assessment. According to the HTTP Archive, currently 24% of mobile websites fail the overall INP assessment, with many more having issues on specific pages.

There were also many [misconceptions around how INP is measured and how to optimize it](#). Many people saw slow interactions reported for non-interactive elements like simple paragraphs, or delays introduced by unrelated background tasks or Chrome extensions.

Metrics Drift Even Without Major Announcements

Each of the Core Web Vitals has not just an intuitive description, but also a detailed technical definition. (And the definition doesn't always 100% match what browsers actually implement).

What is an interaction? What is a paint? What does "next" mean? These things change over time as new browser versions are released, causing score changes for some websites. Chrome maintains a [changelog](#) tracking these updates.

Releasing a new metric also draws a lot of attention to edge cases where the slowness isn't really caused by the website, but by the browser itself. As Google gradually addresses these issues, metrics improve across the board.

What Does The Future Look Like?

No major changes to the Core Web Vitals are announced for 2025, giving businesses time to catch up and for the INP definition to stabilize.

One important ongoing effort is finding a way to measure soft navigations. While traditional websites load a completely new page with each navigation, many websites today are actually applications that stay open for a long time and update parts of the page as the URL changes.

That means that currently, many of these user experiences are not measured or attributed incorrectly to the original page URL.

In 2025 we may finally see this long-standing issue addressed.

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Keeping On Top Of Developing Trends & Technologies



BEN STEELE

Senior Editor, Search Engine Journal



When everything is moving at a breakneck pace, from [LLMs](#) to [Google updates](#), prioritization is critical to your effectiveness and, let's be honest, to your mental health.

It's also easy to get overwhelmed by the breathless hype or even the counter-narratives to emerging technology.

In the meantime, you have a business or clients to create results for. Everyone wants to offer a panacea for disruption or the next big thing that will push your business into the future. It's more difficult than many realize to discern noise from good strategy.

You must have a set of guiding principles to keep your focus and prioritize. This helps you decide what to keep up with, what to learn, and what not to spend your precious time and energy on.

For the second question, I was interested in finding out what guiding lights the experts use when evaluating developing trends and new technology.

This question came in three general parts:

- What are the trends and technologies that SEO professionals should be aware of and/or using?

- What skills and knowledge do SEO professionals need to develop to thrive in the current search and marketing environment?
- Any predictions you would like to make?

I found the answers fascinating. Many SEO professionals are exploring the deeper meanings and contexts of [AI in search](#) and marketing, thinking beyond individual promises and functionalities. The experts are thinking about how AI impacts the broader industry and their work within it.

You'll notice that the conversation has become about how AI poses a challenge as an adversary to SEO pros, websites, and platforms. At the same time, both businesses and platforms use and integrate AI.

So the rub is less about building an AI-focused strategy, but understanding where AI fits into all your existing challenges and workflows and making an informed decision at each point.

The fact that AI Overviews in Google Search reduces clicks for certain queries isn't just about AI. It's about the audience's choices to take the easier route. It's about the choice Google made to use its access to content on the web to tighten its stranglehold on ad revenue.

There's much more to learn there and apply to how you think about SEO and digital marketing.

In the advice of this section, I see themes of keeping your options open, expanding your definition of what SEO is and what it can accomplish, and integrating with other marketing teams and functions.

KATIE MORTON

Editor-In-Chief, Search Engine Journal



Due to the end-stage enshittification of Google Search, we are at an inflection point in SEO, tech, marketing, and all internet-based businesses.

Until an open-web search engine takes over massive market share from Google, the open web is at risk. Users look for information between GPTs and large platforms like social media, while many brands struggle to be seen and heard.

Organic search is likely to continue to decline as paid and zero-click results (a.k.a content theft) dominate Google SERPs.

All is not lost. Go where your users are. Stay on top of user behavior so you can cater to it and win conversions.

Keep your ear to the ground for news from your favorite platforms and how you can use them to reach your audience.

As always, keep studying the algorithm. Keep an eye on [changes to the SERP](#).

Today's SEO professionals must learn as much as they can about business models and marketing. Plan to expand your presence on platforms beyond Google to increase your brand's reach.

Collaborate with other departments and your marketing peers to help integrate content and user acquisition strategy changes company-wide.

Stay informed, stay agile, and adjust your strategy accordingly.

MORDY OBERSTEIN

Head Of SEO Brand, Wix



There's been an absolute ton of talk about building a brand and what that means for SEO. I agree with the sentiment that there is a huge amount of overlap. I'm more suspect of just how "new" that overlap is.

Regardless, I feel the SEO industry has done a good job putting "brand" on the radar but hasn't done much to discuss what building a brand looks like.

To be good at building a brand means a few things, and they're skills I think SEO pros should invest in. But there is one fundamental I want to hit on for right now: identity building. The building block of all brand activity is brand identity. Think of it like the sun – everything should revolve around it in some way.

Stay away from surface-level branding or going with a vibe or culture. Instead, tap who you are as a brand with a little (more than a little) depth. Find that concept that almost goes beyond the psychological and hits the existential. I call this the "depth concept."

An example I often refer to is email marketing platforms. They can define themselves by their utility: "We help you grow audiences and revenue" (and they usually do), or they could add a layer of depth: "We help you share x,y,z with your audience."

While this is merely illustrative and needs to be refined, the idea of “sharing” is existential in nature as it inherently means the sharing of oneself on some level.

Lean into concepts like that and explore them to help hone your identity and add a layer of depth to it.

HELEN POLLITT

Head Of SEO, Getty Images



As we are seeing the Google monopoly become more precarious and new LLMs and search engines grow stronger in the market, keep an eye on what bots are visiting your site.

Log file analysis is going to be key. Don't just look out for how the traditional search bots traverse your site.

Find out which bots the LLMs and newer search engines are using and make sure they are not struggling to access your site.

Link up with the team involved in hosting. Start having discussions now about their treatment of AI bots coming to your site. If there are plans to block them, you need to know that now.

There will be pros and cons to allowing the bots of AI companies to access your data, but it should be a discussion, not a blanket ban. Otherwise, your organic search traffic could be severely impacted.

SEO professionals need to be open to adapting their understanding of what SEO actually is. We are not just Google wranglers. We cannot limit ourselves to Bing, Yandex, and Baidu. We need to understand how all the search platforms our audiences use, whether LLMs, TikTok, or industry-specific aggregators, work.

How do our customers interact with them? Who in our company currently owns the data feed and content on those platforms? How can we partner with them to use our existing understanding of algorithms to help promote our content to those audiences?

As search engine experts, we need to branch out from the handful of search engines our industry has been focused on for years.

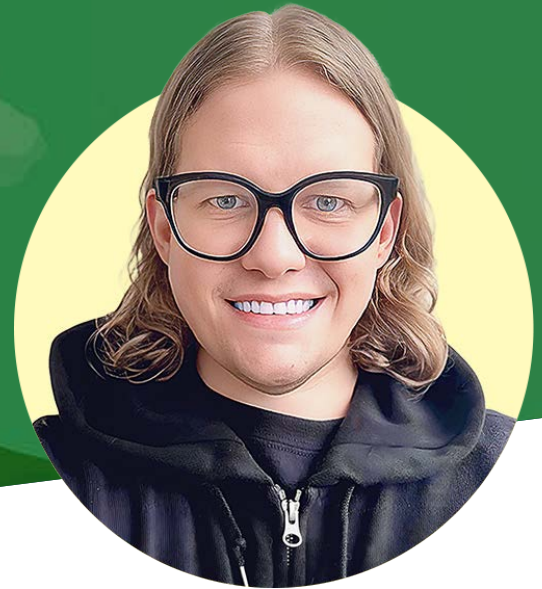
I predict that the remit of SEO pros will change drastically over the next year.

However, we need to be the ones who lead that charge. If we don't, and our companies still see SEO as only Google-focused, then we will be judged on the performance of a declining traffic source.

Instead, widen the net and bring LLMs, social media searches, and aggregators under the SEO banner. That is where the growth will be, and we can have an increasing impact.

MATT G. SOUTHERN

Senior News Writer,
Search Engine Journal



SEO professionals should stay current with AI-powered search features and become comfortable using generative AI tools for routine tasks.

To thrive, develop a solid understanding of AI's impact on search algorithms and learn to create content that stands out from AI-generated material.

Building brand authority and mastering AI tools for SEO tasks are key skills to develop. It's also important to grasp user intent and create multimodal content.

As far as predictions go, if AI integration in search further reduces organic traffic, it could push SEO pros to adapt their strategies.

What will that look like? As search evolves, I believe brand marketing and direct traffic will become a greater focus.

As a result, there'll be a growing emphasis on unique, experience-based content.

Why? Because experience-based content taps into real-world knowledge that AI can't fake.

You can create it by sharing your first-hand perspective – whether through how-to guides, hot takes on industry trends, or sharing what a day in your professional life looks like.

Enhance your content with insider knowledge acquired through years of experience to set it apart from the AI-generated noise.

The future of SEO lies in balancing AI with human creativity and expertise. Those who can find the right balance will be well-positioned to succeed.

DAN TAYLOR

Partner, SALT.agency



AI is the obvious answer, but the biggest challenge right now is communicating the changes and importance of SEO in the current marketing mix. SEO has been built on the foundations of being a user acquisition channel.

The rapid implementation of AI by Google, Amazon, and Meta will cause disruption to the established marketing funnels.

As an industry, we need to work on developing a better understanding of the wider marketing mix and leverage the data and insights we have into the user journey. This helps us go from being an acquisition channel to an integral part of the overall growth and acquisition strategies.

I'd like to think over the coming months, as SEO professionals, we can use the tools at our disposal and form stronger relationships with product, brand, and sales teams to reposition what SEO is and the role it has within organizations.

ANDREA VOLPINI

CEO, WordLift



SEO is moving beyond traditional ranking factors, with AI and advanced conversational search reshaping the landscape. Key technologies and trends include:

Ontologies And Knowledge Graphs

These are critical for structuring data and enabling AI to understand the relationships between entities.

Knowledge graphs, in particular, help AI agents like Google's AIO or Bing's search capabilities provide more contextually relevant answers by linking entities and concepts across the web. This structured approach to content helps websites stand out in an increasingly AI-driven environment.

AI SEO Agents

Autonomous AI agents are becoming pivotal for automating SEO tasks such as content generation, internal linking, and structured data management.

These agents use technologies like Graph RAG (Graph Retrieval-Augmented Generation) and knowledge graphs to enable conversational and intuitive interactions with users.

Neural Search And Schema Markup

Neural or semantic search is becoming more prominent as it focuses on meaning rather than keywords.

Structured data, including schema markup, is essential for helping search engines better understand content and context, particularly as AI-generated content and rich results continue to evolve.

We can make information accessible to our users by creating generative AI content experiences. Our websites shall be as dynamic as Google's search results pages organized with AI.

Skills And Knowledge SEO Professionals Need

Data Structuring And Semantic SEO

SEO professionals need to master structuring data using schema markup, ontologies, and knowledge graphs to optimize content for AI-driven search engines. This includes understanding how to create relationships between entities to improve discoverability across different platforms.

AI And Automation

SEO professionals should be familiar with the use of AI for content generation, task automation, and advanced SEO analysis.

Knowing how to integrate and manage AI agents for tasks like internal linking, content optimization, and semantic enrichment will be crucial. This is why we are also investing on SEOntologies, a reference frame for SEO know-how to guide the next generation of SEO AI Agents.

Content Strategy Beyond Keywords

The focus is shifting from keyword-driven SEO to entity-driven optimization. Professionals should develop skills in entity discovery and management, as well as investigating LLMs follow-up questions.

SEO used to be an acquisition channel but now it is greatly helping with conversion.

SEO Professionals Should Become Super-Users Of AI Tools

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MANICK BHAN

CTO & Founder, Search Atlas



It's no secret that AI has completely rocked the digital marketing landscape. AI is dramatically transforming SEO practices, making them more efficient and effective.

AI-powered tools can now analyze vast amounts of SERP data faster than ever before, reducing the time SEO professionals need to spend on keyword research, competitor analysis, and content optimization. With automation tools like Search Atlas, technical SEO tasks that took weeks of page-by-page optimizations can now be accomplished in mere minutes.

Staying on top of these developing technologies can be overwhelming for SEO professionals. To succeed in our increasingly AI-powered marketplace, you'll need to automate as many of your SEO tasks as possible. You've got to keep pace with competitors who are already doing the same, while driving maximum results for their clients.

At my company, Search Atlas, we work with hundreds of agencies that are incorporating our automation tools into their workflows. And [case study after case study](#) shows that automating SEO is helping them enhance efficiency, ensure accuracy, and improve client outcomes across all of their SEO KPIs. Not to mention the revenue benefits of adding more deliverables to their service offering and freeing up time and resources to focus on other areas of their businesses like client relationships and retention.

So, SEO automation is the most important trend to pay attention to in your business. The SEO professionals who don't know where to start should narrow in on the tasks that currently place the most demands on their time.

Whatever your biggest pain point – there is likely already an automation tool to alleviate the manual labor of SEO that's costing you time, clients, and money. Of all the skills that SEO professionals should focus on developing, the most important is becoming super-users of AI-powered software and automation tools.

Test out the tools that claim to solve your problem, stick with the ones that take a holistic approach to SEO and actually deliver results. Mark my words: The SEO professionals who embrace automation tools as a part of their SEO skill set are going to be the revenue and results leaders of our industry going forward.

Search Engine **Journal**[®]

Preparing For The New Normal Of SEO



BEN STEELE

Senior Editor, Search Engine Journal



I like to give the experts space to talk about whatever they want – whatever happens to be at the front of their thoughts – without a prompt.

The vibe I got from these answers is that we really don't know where the specifics of Google Search and other platforms are going.

Will Google lose market dominance to competition, a forced breakup by the courts, or both?

If so, how much?

Will platforms continue to become insular, disincentivizing clicks outside of their ecosystems?

Will AI-based products and platforms cause lasting changes in user behavior?

There's a lot of gloomy reporting going on, and with good reason. The choices made by big tech platforms like Google have had bad outcomes for many users and businesses.

But there's reason to be hopeful that further disruption will create a new environment in which savvy SEO professionals can thrive. An environment that's better for users and small to medium businesses. Maybe that's a pipe dream. Or maybe the tech world is gearing up for a cycle of true innovation.

Will enshittification get worse before things get better? Probably. But interesting things might happen sooner than we think.

The cool part about this is that we could be about to witness a brand new age of experimentation and expansion in SEO. But we might have to be receptive to a change in what our jobs look like and what kinds of activities we engage in.

KATIE MORTON

Editor-In-Chief, Search Engine Journal



It's time to diversify how you create content and where you put it.

Depending on your company set-up and size, this may require close collaboration between SEO pros and other marketers on a content strategy that lives on the website, in email, and on other platforms.

To gain users and increase brand affinity, content quality and relevance to your audience remain crucial. When users love you, your brand, and your content, they are more likely to head directly to your website or seek you out on social media, bypassing Google's tomfoolery.

Renew your [content repurposing strategy](#) to branch out onto different platforms without too much extra effort.

Concentrate on ways you can capture users on social media. For example, learn how to convert users into leads from LinkedIn, Instagram, X, TikTok, or other platforms where your users hang out.

Incentivize users to go from social media to your website for a deeper dive and encourage email sign-ups. Ecommerce brands can entice users from social media to a website with coupons or other special promotions or rewards.

You can gain conversions, buyers, or subscribers to your website, app, or your email list by having links or a [Linktree](#) in your social media bios.

You might decide to put some energy into nurturing communities using Discord, Reddit, Slack, or others.

In short, find new avenues to nurture users, win over new ones, and create brand recognition and loyalty.

MORDY OBERSTEIN

Head Of SEO Brand, Wix



Honestly, I just think there is a lack of maturity out there in the marketing world.

Let me rephrase that. There is a ton of maturity. It's just not very vocal.

A lot of what I see being shared across social media is surface-depth at best. It tries to come off as substantive, but it fundamentally just isn't.

There are a lot of immature takes on very complex and nuanced topics. There isn't a lot of actual thought being put in.

I don't see marketers on social media as having strong conceptual knowledge of their fields.

HELEN POLLITT

Head Of SEO, Getty Images



There is a nervousness in the SEO industry at the moment.

The next year feels very uncertain. We know that Google seems to be slipping in its position as “the” search engine, but we don’t know to what extent.

Searchers’ behavior is definitely changing, and we don’t want to risk getting left behind.

But really, this is exciting.

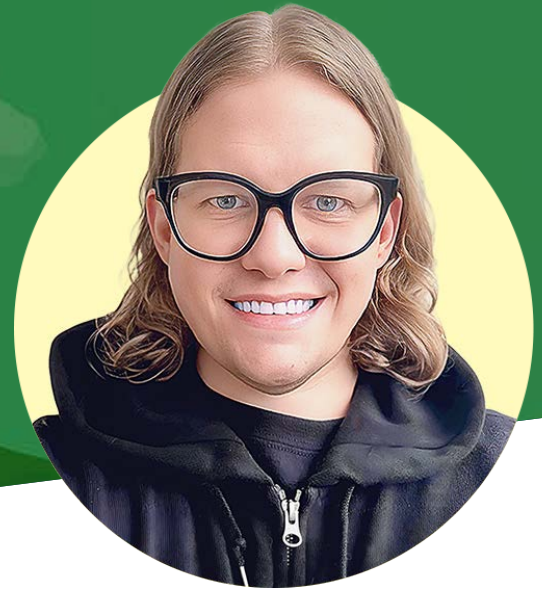
We’ve been resting on our laurels over the last few years.

What worked for Google was fairly known. Now, we get to go back to the beginning. What works for Perplexity.ai might not work for ChatGPT. What works for visibility in TikTok searches will not be the same as what works in TripAdvisor.

We get to experiment, learn, and become experts in something new again. Enjoy it!

MATT G. SOUTHERN

Senior News Writer,
Search Engine Journal



With AI everywhere in search, the need to stand out as authentically human is most pressing in my mind. It's not just about beating algorithms anymore; it's about connecting with people in a way that AI can't match.

When everyone's using AI to pump out content, the stuff that'll really grab attention is the content that screams, "There's a real person behind this!"

Brands need to get personal. Show the faces behind the logo. Share the stories of your team, customers, failures, and wins. It's about being relatable, flaws and all.

User-generated content is gold here. Encourage customers to share their stories.

Engage in real conversations on social media. Host live Q&As. Show that you're listening and responding, not just broadcasting.

And let's not forget about tone. In a sea of AI-generated content, a distinct brand voice that feels human can be a real differentiator. Humor, empathy, and even a bit of sass are things AI struggles to replicate authentically.

In short, the human element becomes our secret weapon as search gets more AI-driven.

DAN TAYLOR

Partner, SALT.agency



What I'm focusing on right now is that we're shifting from just targeting keywords to targeting the entire experience.

This approach, I've called experience forecasting, is about understanding how a user might imagine their future use of a product or service. The key is understanding what the user wants and expects, and then providing the right information to help them imagine that future more clearly.

It's important to note that some parts of this experience are within our control, while others aren't.

Take travel, for example. When you see a hotel listing, everyone imagines something slightly different based on their past experiences, even if the hotel has common features like balconies and a pool. This happens because our personal experiences and the marketing we've been exposed to shape how we picture things.

Another thing to consider is how people search. Users might not know the exact words needed to find what they need early on, so they'll perform multiple searches with the same goal in mind. This is called "query stacking," where each search refines the last one to figure out the right solution.

Your Consumers' Needs Aren't Changing: The Way They Meet Needs Is

BROUGHT TO YOU BY **botify**



A.J. GHERGICH

VP Consulting Services, Botify



Consumers haven't changed – the search interface has.

Search evolved from directory listings to ranked, query-based results, and now to AI-driven, conversational responses. Previously, consumers had to find content or interpret ranked links. Now, via LLMs trained on massive datasets like Google's, AI search evaluates and summarizes content for fast, easy, and highly personalized results.

Across every interface, consumers have the same needs and ask the same questions. The technology changes, but your customer stays the same. By analyzing the questions your consumers ask Google, you can already control how your brand participates in their conversations across GenAI engines.

Search Is Becoming Fragmented

While Google is still the biggest player in search, AI engines like ChatGPT, Perplexity AI, and others are growing the competitive search landscape.

Recently, OpenAI released ChatGPT Search, clearly targeting Google's well-kept jewel. Gartner's prediction that traditional search engine volume will drop by [25%](#) doesn't mean people are searching 25% less – it means they're searching elsewhere.

By paying attention to how search is decentralizing now, you'll be well-positioned to lead in the future.

Optimize For Both Traditional And AI-Powered Search

Optimizing for Google remains table stakes, but [can't be your only strategy anymore](#). The Bing API powers citations in many non-Google AI search platforms; appearing in Bing is essential to be referenced in ChatGPT, Perplexity AI, Siri, and more. Plus, companies like OpenAI and Meta are building their own web indexes, broadening the field even more.

Make sure your content is accessible to every search platform by analyzing your log data. Maximize reach by not only applying solid SEO methods but also using automation to proactively submit sitemaps, request new crawls with IndexNow, and when possible, push pages directly to Bing's API.

SEO Pros Are The Most Qualified AI Search Experts

SEO professionals have been demystifying how search works from day one, teaching brands how to control visibility and search outcomes. AI-powered search is just another puzzle to solve, and it demands the same creativity, commitment to quality, and technical prowess traditional SEO does – it's just expanding to more interfaces.

The great news?

This can amplify your impact and broaden the reach of your efforts across your organization. You already have the data to succeed; tools like Botify can drive insight and action.

By focusing on consumer needs, ensuring your site is crawled, indexed, and ranked, and maintaining the fundamentals of SEO, you'll be ready for the future of AI-driven search.

Search Engine **Journal**[®]

Building New Approaches To SEO



It seems like we're in for a continued wild ride. Disruption is the new normal, at least for a while. Whether it comes in the form of technology, legal action, or competition, we will have to keep rolling with the punches.

But this year's contributors paint a hopeful view of the future for SEO as a discipline and industry, as long as we're all willing to bend old definitions and expand ideas about what the job covers.

The meaning of searching is expanding, and the way audiences discover things is becoming much more push-oriented – served directly to them via curation vs. as a response to a query.

Even email is coming back because many users prefer an email newsletter from a trusted source vs. seeking the information on their own.

We don't need to be able to predict what will happen with certainty to build a place in current and new dynamics between users, platforms, and brands.

But it is critical to look beneath the hype and discern what trends indicate about the preferences of our audiences and to be open to new definitions of what SEO is and where it happens.

Speaking of curated email newsletters (nice one, right?), you should sign up for [Search Engine Journal's newsletter](#) to keep up with everything going on in the world of Search, whether you're interested in the [judgment against Google](#) or keeping up with [Reddit's growing role in the search space](#).