



VOL. #6

SEO TRENDS 2024





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SEO TRENDS 2024

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Samuel M., CallRail customer



This Book Is “About” AI ... But It’s Really About People

Every year, SEJ reaches out to various industry experts to ask them what they think the most significant SEO trends will be in the coming months.

Last year, AI was one of the significant trends, but a few others came up.

This year, I had to make the whole dang book about AI. [AI is developing at a breakneck pace](#) and carries the potential to [reshape the SEO industry](#).



Raise your hand if you’re sick of talking about AI.

But bear with us here. AI is the topic framing all of the responses the expert contributors gave. But if you look closely, you’ll notice that the common theme is actually “people”: your audience, your teams, and you.

AI is a potent tool, a platform, and a user interaction environment. We haven’t yet discovered the limits of its potential. But it’s not what we’re here for.

You’ll notice that on the cover of [PPC Trends](#) and this book, we went with a “superhero” theme and depicted AI as the sidekick. You’re the superhero.

You’ll find this book has none of the mindless AI hype you’re used to seeing on social media. Instead, many contributors guide you in navigating your relationship with AI as a powerful tool, an environment to work in, and an adversary.

A few contributors expand beyond the specific realm of AI. Still, with the changes on the horizon, the entire industry is (perhaps unwillingly) framed by developments in AI technology.

It's a watchful time to work in SEO and rely on organic search, whether you are an agency, a brand, or a publisher. And while we can't make any promises about the coming year, it's going to get tough. That's when superheroes shine.

Rise to the challenge.

Let's dig into what this year's league of SEO superheroes says about the coming trends.

"HELPFUL"
IS A BIGGER WORD
THAN YOU THINK

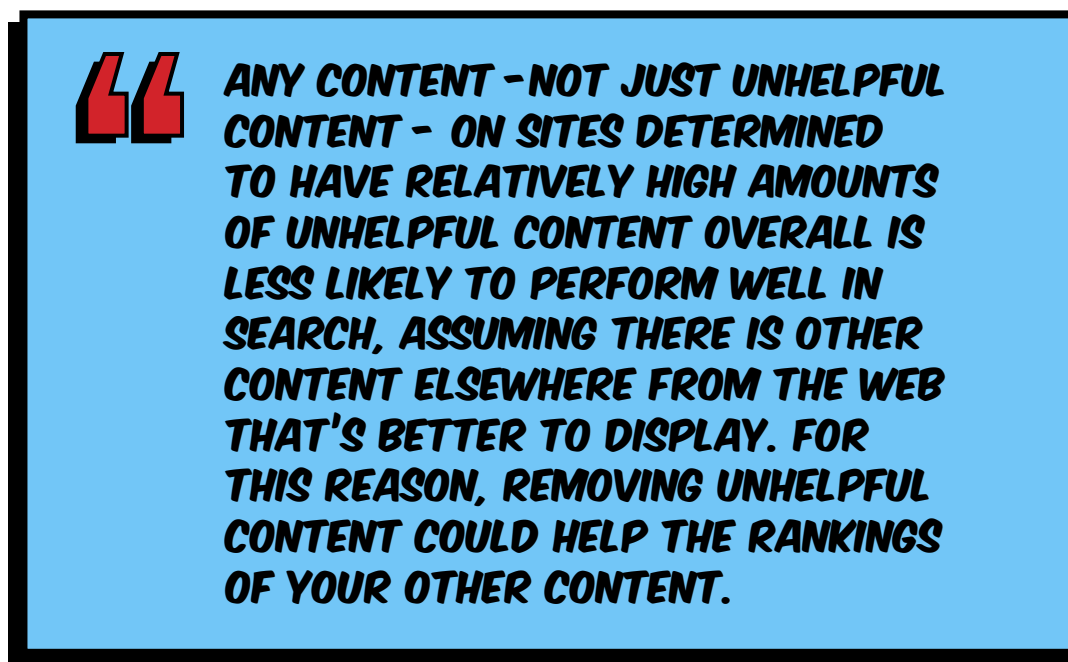
BEN STEELE
SENIOR EDITOR



One of the most impactful developments this year has been in the meaning of the word “helpful” from Google’s point of view.

Google employees were previously coy about whether and how the algorithms consider site-wide signals. This year’s [helpful content updates](#) were explicit: Google’s algorithms generate site-wide signals considered in ranking. It bases these signals on the helpfulness of your site.

Google’s documentation says:



Google has struggled to find a way to communicate a precise meaning of [helpful content](#) but has answered [questions about the helpful content system](#), and more guidance may be coming. In the meantime, remember that “helpful” depends on many different circumstances, so intent is becoming a critical part of keyword research.

As you’ll hear, it also seems that the scope of “helpful” goes beyond the immediate impact and quality of the words on a page.

Assessing the unique value of your site as a whole and how authoritatively you speak to broad topics may be necessary to succeed as helpful content continues to expand.

If I had to summarize this section's insights in three sentences, they would be:

- ★ Google evaluates the value and helpfulness of your entire site, so make sure your website has clear and unique value.
- ★ Engage with generative AI and understand how it works before you try to fight it.
- ★ "Expertise" will be a key differentiating factor – insights and original data attributed to authors with names.

Insights In This Section

Your Whole Site Must Be Helpful

– Adam Riemer, President, Adam Riemer Marketing, LLC

Prove Your Alternate Site Versions Have Unique Value

– Dan Taylor, Partner & Head of Technical SEO, SALT.agency

Effective Content Comes From Actual People Demonstrating Real Insight

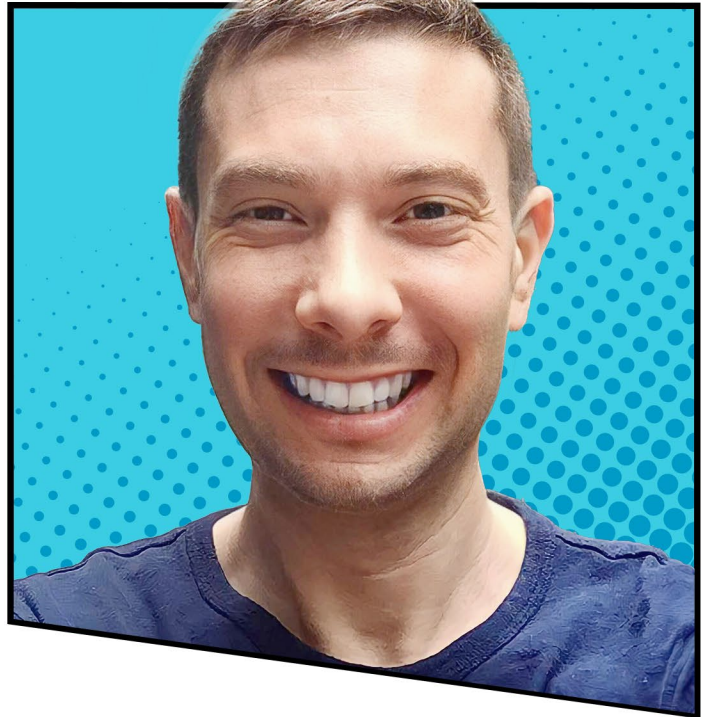
– Mordy Oberstein, Head of SEO Brand, Wix

Generative AI Sets The Bar Your Content Must Beat

– Patrick Stox, Product Advisor & Technical SEO, Ahrefs

Generative AI Will Be An Essential SEO Skill, But Not A Replacement For Expertise

– Shelley Walsh, SEO Content Strategist, Search Engine Journal



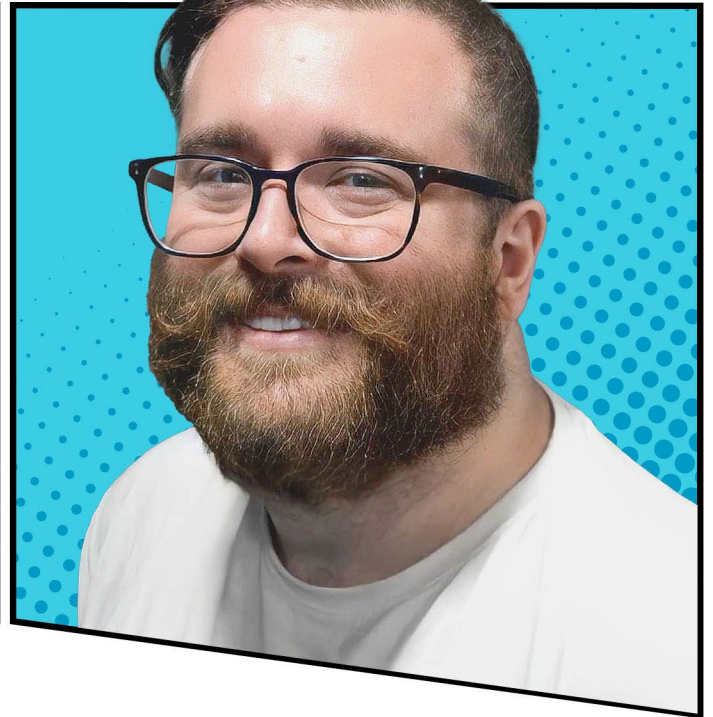
The helpful content update is more than your content; you must ensure **your entire site is helpful** to the user, not just each piece of content you publish.

That is something many marketers are getting wrong as we move into 2024.

Unlike past systems and algorithms, helpful content looks at your site as a whole. One great piece of helpful content might not cut it. Are all of your other pages helpful and user-friendly?

Or, do you have many legacy pages with poor experience and thin content: giant hero images, irrelevant shopping lists, and broken links?

Instead of taking the word “content” literally, think about making your entire site helpful. This should benefit all channels, not just SEO.



I believe Google’s focus on “helpful quality content” will begin to extend further and impact websites with alternate versions.

International websites with the same value proposition across multiple alternate site versions (e.g., English language for the U.S., Canada, and the UK, but only changing currency and regional spelling differences) will see hreflang and canonical tags ignored.

Many international website structures have been set up to reflect offline business hierarchies or to “channel leads” to the correct SDR teams.

The internet and hreflang don’t always neatly reflect the offline business, and the synergy achieved is frequently clunky and challenging to manage.

Provide value propositions to give Google a reason to invest resources into the alternate versions of your site. Improve the unique value offered by each. You may also need to discuss how you structure the international alternates of the website and how lead handling is performed so the right teams get suitable leads.



We often need to pay more attention to the impact of broader content trends on SEO. Our gospel is the algorithm, which sometimes means we don't consider what's outside of it.

However, we well should. In hindsight, it's not an accident that Google added an extra "E" for experience to E-E-A-T. It didn't pull it out of a hat; it saw the broader content trends where folks are looking to **actual people** for content versus static brands.

Google's machine learning properties, such as RankBrain, make it possible for Google to look at its quite large dataset to observe content consumption trends and act on them.

Situational Content

One trend I would get ahead of that aligns with Google's focus on expertise and experience is what I'm coining "situational content."

Situational content attempts to predict the various outcomes of any advice or the like offered within the content to present the next logical steps. If, for example, a piece of content provides advice about how to get a baby to sleep through the night, it would then offer the next steps if that advice didn't work.

This is “situational” – if X doesn’t work, you might want to try Y.

Situational content creates a compelling form of content I see more frequently. It does a few things for the reader:

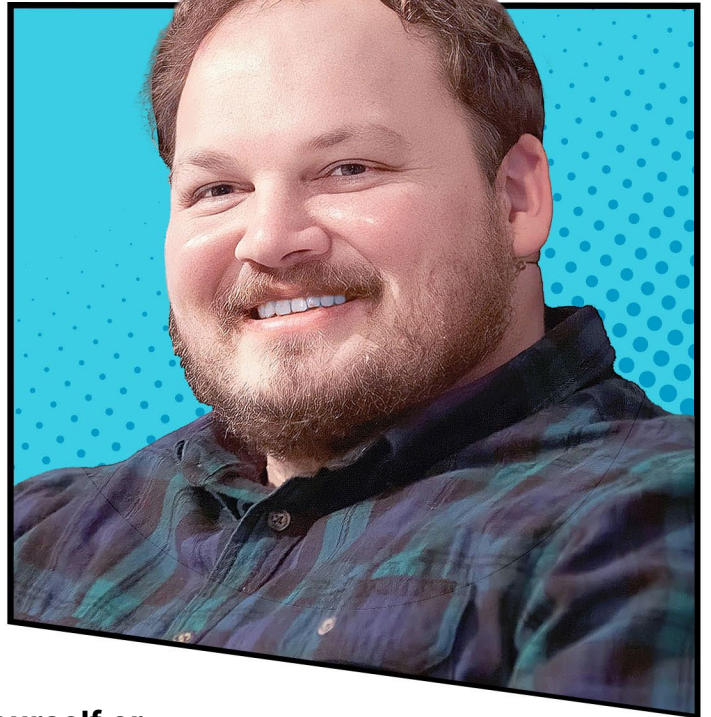
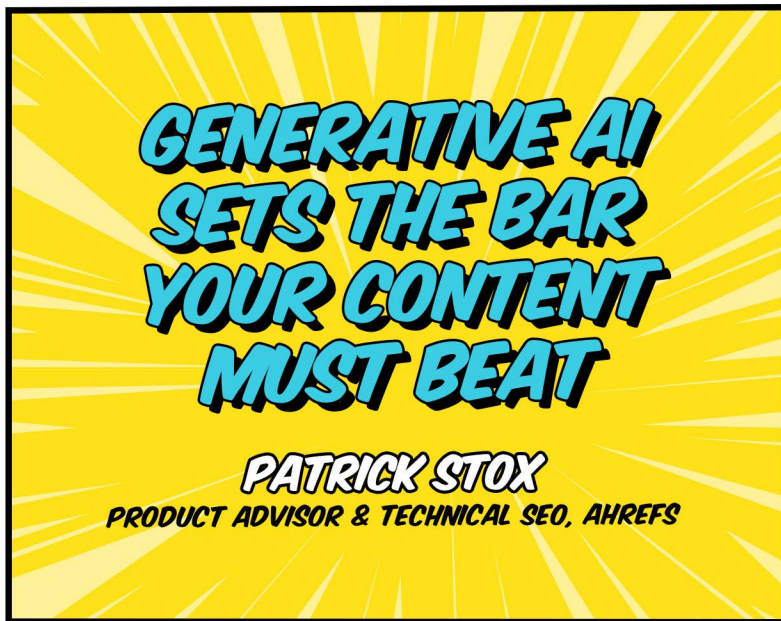
1. It addresses them and their needs directly.
2. It’s more conversational than standard content (an emerging content trend itself).
3. To predict various outcomes and situations, you have to actually know what you’re talking about.

That latter point directly addresses E-E-A-T. You can only predict and address secondary situations with expertise and experience.

Most of all, situational content indicates to the user that a real person, not a large language model (LLM), wrote it.

It’s the kind of content that simply can’t be created by AI for various reasons. Not the least of which is the ability to offer detailed advice, all while keeping the tone that situational-based content intrinsically lends itself towards – conversational, authoritative, and expert.

Because of all this, I would be on the lookout for Google rewarding “situational content” to a far greater degree as time passes.



Don't fake experience. Add genuine value yourself or ask others for input.

The bar for content creation will be even higher.

For years, just rewriting content was likely enough to rank a page, and many SEO professionals and writers did just that. But with generative AI making it easier than ever to create content, you will have to do more than you've been doing.

Find ways to add additional value.

I like to think of content the same way I would a product and take an iterative approach. I can add a specific section, expand on a section with more details, add a key point, summarize something better, tell a personal story, or add additional insights from my own knowledge. For a product comparison page, I might add pricing, reviews, pros and cons, personal experiences with each product, unique photos, or breakdowns by different categories.

You also need to inject your experience and expertise.

Your ability to add new knowledge to a topic will become more important as it becomes easier to create generic content. If you don't have that knowledge, find and interview someone who does. Ask them to review the content and check for any mistakes or add their insights and stories.



The areas to watch in early 2024 are generative AI and Search Generative Experience (SGE). Instead of focusing on what SGE could take away (clicks), we need to focus on what Google is trying to achieve and remember they need content and clicks as much as we do.

Right now, Google is experimenting with the SGE search engine results page (SERP) panel, like a featured snippet on steroids. And like featured snippets, as SEO professionals, we can adapt and work with how the information is displayed in the SERP. We survived featured snippets and can evolve to work with generative AI and not against it.

Firstly, understand that SGE is not an entirely AI-generated information panel. SGE collects the best results in the SERP and then uses AI to create a combined summary of those results.

For SEO, it is more important than ever to be in those top results so that you will be included in SGE. It also means being the source of data and information and providing unique and valuable concepts and content. This is the challenge in a post-generative AI world.

Google is still experimenting with how SGE will integrate into the SERP. SGE's function and appearance will likely keep changing as Google finds the right balance between intent and clicks. It's important to remember that Google doesn't want to destroy its own business model!

The clues to show us the way are already there. Consider the helpful content update. Google is driving towards content demonstrating first-hand experience – an author must show exceptional knowledge, expertise, and authority. I'm sure that sounds familiar. (E-E-A-T, anyone?)

The demand for thought leaders and skilled experts is increasing – your ability to demonstrate thorough research and provide unique data is essential for good content.

How Generative AI Tools Will Impact Content Production

Getting the best out of tools like ChatGPT and Bard requires sophisticated prompting. Out of the box, generative AI is not user-friendly for a novice. It's like trying to make a cup of tea with a firehose. It's too intelligent right now for us to handle and grasp.

To get the best results from an AI tool, train it to be self-aware of its mistakes and knowledge gaps. Use a two-way dialogue feedback loop – layer and chain prompts by feeding the results back into the AI to continue refining.

AI is a fantastic assistant. Use it to support your day-to-day productivity. The creative possibilities of ChatGPT are exponential, and we are still far from fully harnessing the potential.

For example, creating infographics, sorting data into tables, summarizing thoughts, creating transcripts, finding inconsistencies in reports, scanning vast tracts of data, and so on.

AI perfectly complements your knowledge and creativity, so treat it as such. Don't fall into the trap of thinking AI can do the role of SEO for you. Expertise and experience are still needed to operate the machine to get the best results.

The essential skill to develop in SEO is integrating generative AI across your workflow's layers for maximum efficiency. AI development is not unlike the early days of computers in industry. At first, people tried to use it like a typewriter until they pushed the edges to realize the capacity, such as spreadsheets and graphical representations. AI is the same process of development, so keep pushing the boundaries.

Don't forget that AI cannot replace ideas and creativity. As humans, driving the machine is where we can still add value.

BEYOND THE BOTS: CONTENT STRATEGIES THAT BEAT AI EVERY TIME

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CHIMA MMEJE
SENIOR CONTENT
MARKETING
MANAGER, MOZ



In 2024, standing out from AI-generated content means creating content people will value, share, and act upon. Here are some tips to get it right:

Satisfy Search Intent On A Granular Level

I like to think of each subheading as a mini-article that can stand on its merit. Before writing a line of text, I try to answer these questions:

- ★ What is the intent of this subheading?
- ★ What does the user know, and what follow-up questions will they have?
- ★ What examples can I include to help them visualize the solution?
- ★ Are there case studies or stats that validate the approach?

Then, I include a list of questions I want to answer under the subheading based on the framework above. It ensures that I'm not rambling but focused on solving a specific problem the user faces. It also helps me stand out from regurgitated content that often doesn't provide the depth required to satisfy the user's query.

For example, I helped Guru, a knowledge management platform and former client, to rank for highly competitive keywords like "intranet" (2.4 million searches) and "employee onboarding" (5,400 searches).

Our strategy involved creating content briefs where each subheading was treated like a mini-article, focusing on the audience's current understanding, filling content gaps, and providing practical examples. This approach ensured our content was more in-depth and comprehensive than any existing material.

Write About Personal Experiences To Showcase Expertise

Authenticity is one of the fastest ways to connect with your audience. Use your first-hand experience with the problem to show the reader that you understand what they're going through and you've got a solution that works.

Consider Griffin Roer's Moz article, '[A Non-Technical Guide to Diagnosing JavaScript SEO Issues](#).' In it, Griffin tackles a common problem that plagues SEO professionals: fixing JavaScript SEO issues when you don't have a coding background. Griffin draws from his own experience in navigating these challenges to make the article personal and relatable while offering clear, practical solutions.

Engage Your Audience With Original Formats

With AI churning out articles by the second, set yourself apart by creating content formats that require a human touch.

Some content formats to invest in 2024 include:

- ★ Educational webinars with practical insights.
- ★ In-depth research reports that provide a deeper understanding of a problem and help your audience make better decisions.
- ★ Roundup posts featuring insights from industry experts.
- ★ Podcast interviews with industry experts solving a myriad of problems.
- ★ Data-led case studies.

Conclusion: Elevate Your Brand's Authority To Be Seen As A Source Of Truth

Ultimately, as more AI content is published, users will turn to brands and individuals they trust for helpful content. Brands that share real stories and solve real problems resonate with audiences, reflecting trust and loyalty. Moz's Brand Authority metric quantifies this trust, providing a roadmap for you to amplify your brand voice and engage more authentically with your audience.

**PREPARE FOR
SEARCH GENERATIVE
EXPERIENCE WITH
"SEARCH EXPERIENCE
OPTIMIZATION"**

BY BEN STEELE, SENIOR EDITOR

As of the writing of this ebook, Google's "[Search Generative Experience \(SGE\)](#)" is still experimental. There's much anxiety about what the in-platform chatbot will mean for SEO results, traffic, and revenue if [SGE becomes part of the default Google experience](#).

Only time will tell the (SEO) impact of user-facing AI features in search engines. Many platforms are introducing new features that keep users on the platform – by giving the information they're seeking right there (remember when the featured snippet first became a thing?) – rather than redirecting them to websites.

On the other hand, users will always take journeys off-platform when needed. Identifying when to serve the user an ideal in-platform experience and when to coax them off will be crucial to success for both the platforms and you.

Don't work at cross-purposes with user intent. If they want a quick answer, you won't get them away from the path of least resistance.

But if the user wants original data, original thoughts, products, or complex solutions, you have opportunities to set yourself apart.

Your ability to choose when to be an ally to generative AI and when to be its enemy could be the key to surfacing your brand for multiple search intents and types.

If I had to summarize this section's insight in three sentences, they would be:

- ★ AI in search **will** upset performance for entire groups of queries, data gathering, and potentially the balance between the platforms.
- ★ Search success may come down to being discoverable by generative AI and finding as many opportunities as possible to surface your brand to users.
- ★ Humans are irreplaceable for setting SEO strategies in a new AI landscape and will be for some time.

Insights In This Section

[Optimize For In-Platform Experiences](#)

– Andrew Chadwick, Founder, Keyword Insights

[The “10 Blue Links” SERP Is A Thing Of The Past](#)

– Eli Schwartz, Growth Advisor, Product Led SEO

[The Human Element Of SEO May Be Irreplaceable, But We Must Prepare For AI In Search](#)

– Olga Zarr, SEO Consultant, SEOSLY

[Search Generative Experience Could Create A Data Gap](#)

– Patrick Stox, Product Advisor & Technical SEO, Ahrefs



As the digital landscape evolves, SEO professionals should take note of the growing shift from traditional search engine optimization (SEO) to search experience optimization (SXO).

Optimizing In-Platform Experience

While, historically, SXO revolved around enhancing website user experience, it now includes optimizing content for the precise platforms where your audience resides. This evolution underscores the importance of grasping user behaviors on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Pinterest while fine-tuning the overall user experience.

As Google strives to retain user engagement within its ecosystem, businesses and SEO professionals must focus on creating content meticulously designed for these platforms. This is especially pertinent as Google (and SGE) increasingly integrates a diverse and dynamic content blend into search results, evident by the prominence of TikTok entries.

AI-Powered Content Generation

AI for content generation will become more prevalent in 2024. While AI can assist in creating content efficiently, SEO professionals and businesses should use it judiciously. To maintain authenticity, they should balance AI-generated outputs with personal experiences, original thoughts, and unique insights. Leveraging AI tools can help save time at specific points during the content process.

Building A Strong Brand Presence

Building a strong brand presence is crucial in a landscape where Google's SERPs evolve rapidly.

Recognizable brands could be more likely to attract clicks, and they can fare better in being surfaced by generative AI.

SEO professionals and businesses should invest in brand-building initiatives, collaborate with influencers, provide exceptional customer experiences, and consistently deliver valuable content. A strong brand can help mitigate the impact of algorithm changes and promote sustained visibility and growth.

These trends reflect the evolving nature of SEO, where the focus is shifting from merely optimizing for search engines to optimizing for the holistic search experience and user preferences. Businesses that adapt to these trends will likely achieve greater success in their SEO efforts in 2024 and beyond.



Search Generative Experience (SGE) may change the whole medium of search.

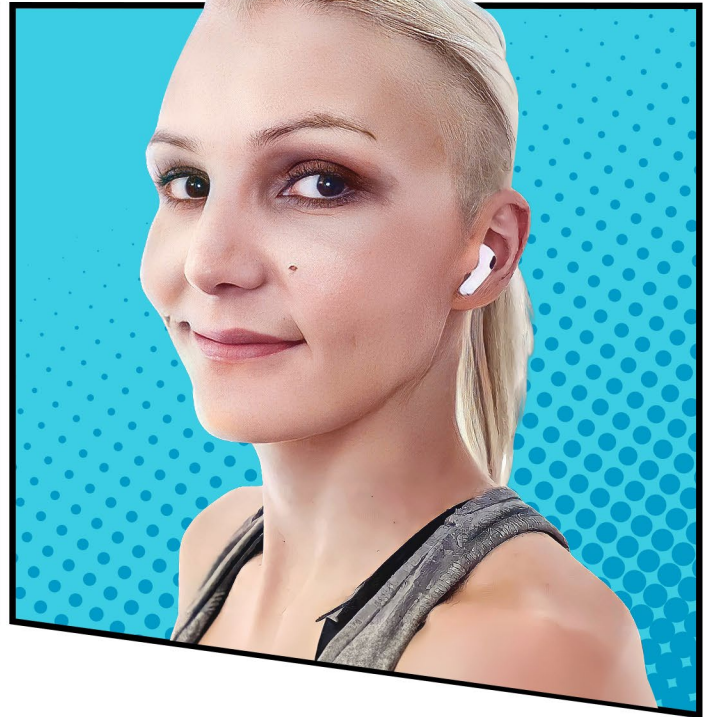
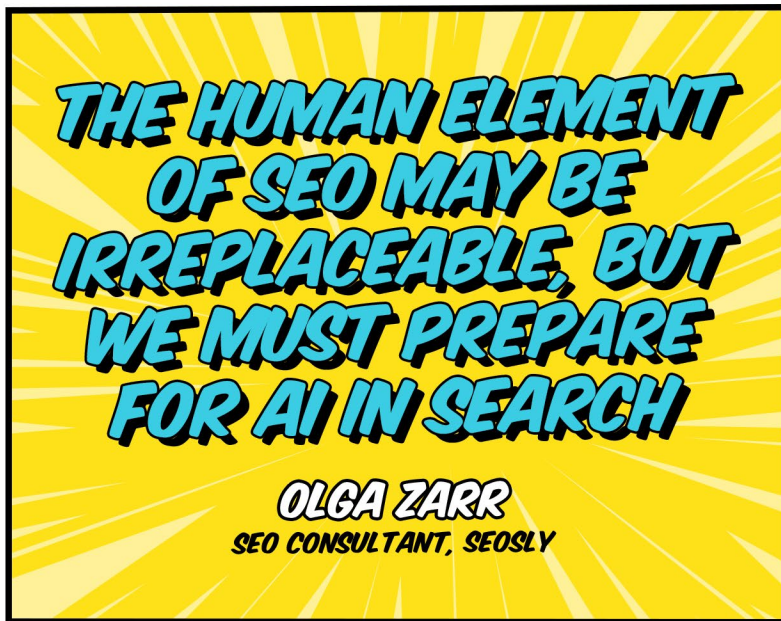
No longer will SEO be about 10 blue links or a map result. Developing “search experiences” could overturn the entire process of how people use search to discover information on the internet. Whether users will like this is unclear, but that won’t matter because everything about search is changing.

These developments will be good for some, bad for others, but certainly different for everyone.

On a related note, a shifting search experience might also cause a change in market share dynamics. Could users migrate to ChatGPT? Will they go to Bing? Things can always evolve.

These are the things we need to consider in 2024. Unlike past years, where you could clearly see the direction search was heading, it’s different this time.

Once this Pandora’s box opens, anything can happen.



The most significant trend for SEO in 2024 will be the continuation of the rapid growth and influence of AI technologies, such as ChatGPT, Bing Chat, and Bard. With developments like GPT-4, DALL•E-3, and PaLM 2, it's clear that this trend will accelerate for a while.

A Significant Shift In Search

These advanced tools are significantly transforming the SEO landscape, and – whether we like it or not – they are pushing us toward a more automated approach.

These changes raise an essential question: Is the SEO as we know it today on the brink of becoming obsolete? It's unlikely to disappear overnight, but we can't ignore the current substantial shifts.

Major search engines like Google (through Search Generative Experience) and Bing (through Bing Chat) are increasingly integrating AI-generated content into their search results. This is one of the most significant transformations we've seen in decades.

As SEO professionals, it's crucial that we stay on top of these changes and continuously update our strategies and tools to leverage the power of AI. We must find the perfect balance between utilizing AI for efficiency and relying on our human expertise for nuanced, strategic decision-making.

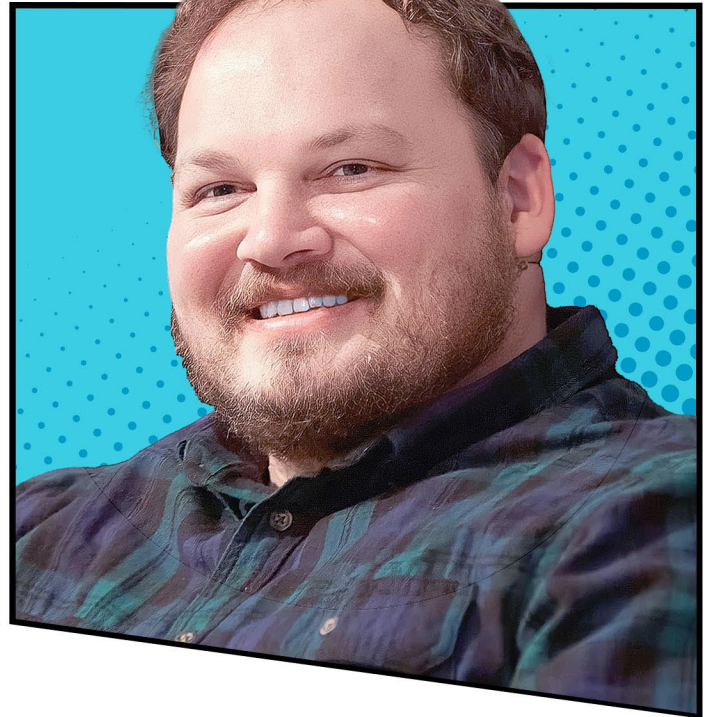
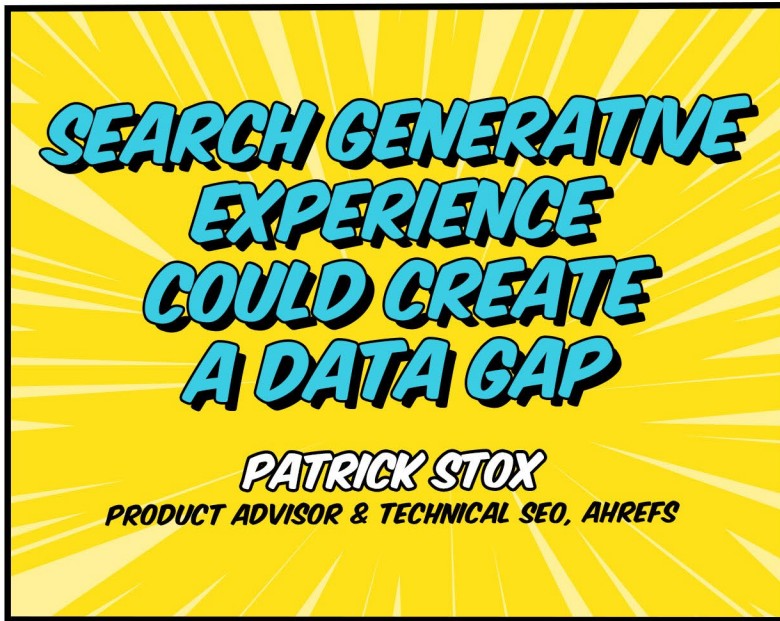
The Human Element In SEO Is Irreplaceable

Humans bring a level of understanding and analysis that AI cannot replicate – at least for now.

But the SEO field is evolving, and we may not even recognize it in the next five to 10 years. Despite this, the core of our job remains the same: helping businesses connect with their customers. The tools and platforms might change, but the necessity for skilled AIOs (Artificial Intelligence Optimizers), SEO professionals, or whatever we will be called in the future, will remain the same.

We must be prepared to adapt to new methods of SEO and find innovative ways to measure our impact and help our clients gain visibility. This could mean learning how to showcase our clients' content in AI-generated search results so that they still stand out in this new landscape.

The rise of AI in SEO is a trend you cannot ignore. It presents challenges and opportunities, and it's up to us to navigate these waters. The SEO landscape is changing rapidly, and our methods in 2024 and beyond will need to evolve – or we and our services will become obsolete.



Challenges With Click Attribution

We will see fewer clicks and less data on clicks and rankings. At least it's looking that way with Search Generative Experience (SGE). People are likely going to click through to sites less on many queries.

I don't think search engines will even give us ranking data [any time soon] for these clicks. Even if they do, it will be muddled, with multiple websites listed for each section.

Challenges With Rank Tracking In SGE

This experience also works only with JavaScript enabled. Rank trackers traditionally have not rendered or had to wait for results like they will with SGE. The cost of rank tracking for SGE is likely to be much higher.

On the other hand, with more attention on machine learning than ever, 2024 will be when more SEO automation goes mainstream. It will make SEO professionals' lives easier and free them from many menial and time-consuming tasks.

USING CHATGPT TO ANALYZE INTENT & TONE IN SEO

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JÚLIA ARAÚJO
SEO SPECIALIST,
ROCK CONTENT



Large language models (LLMs) use advanced algorithms and statistical models to emulate the semantic intricacies of natural language expression. This can help SEO analysts because the models can quickly parse tone and respond to implicit expectations.

Leveraging this technology can help you understand the search intent behind queries and how to craft content that resonates with diverse audiences at a faster pace.

Here are some key ways to leverage ChatGPT for SEO tone and intent analysis:

1. Dissect The Search Intent Of A Specific Keyword

ChatGPT can help you understand the context and motivations driving users to conduct searches, and what types of content they expect to find for each query. Understanding what you expect and responding in an appropriate way is, after all, the entire point of the tool.

Beyond knowing the type of keyword (informational, commercial, etc.), the tool can give you a granular understanding of creating the best content to address users' needs.

Try This Prompt

"What are the possible search intents of the keyword [insert keyword]?"

2. Identify Keywords Tailored To A Predetermined Search Intent

If you have a specific search intent in mind, ChatGPT can help you identify keywords that are likely to be used by users with that intent.

For example, if you want to create content that targets users who are looking for affordable content creation services, ChatGPT can provide you with keywords such as:

- ★ Cost-effective content marketing solutions.
- ★ Affordable content creation packages.
- ★ Budget-friendly writing services.
- ★ Cheap content creation options.
- ★ Economical content marketing strategies.

While the tool may not conduct a real-time SERP analysis, it can offer relevant ideas and jumping-off points based on the intent you supply.

You can then take these ideas to your keyword tool of choice and evaluate which you want to pursue.

Try This Prompt

“Create a list of X keywords that target users searching for [search intent].”

3. Analyze The Tone Of Content To Resonate With Audiences

If you are writing a blog post for small business owners, you may want to use a more informal tone than if you were writing a white paper for enterprise businesses.

To use ChatGPT for tone analysis, simply provide a sample of your content and ask it to identify the tone.

You can then ask for feedback on the tone of your writing, as well as suggestions for how to improve it.

Try This Prompt

“Consider the content I am about to give you.

First, identify the tone of the writing.

Next, I am writing for an audience of [insert audience details]. Does the tone fit?

Here is the content: [insert content].”

In follow-up, you could ask:

“Please make the writing sound more like the tone I intended: [insert tone notes].”

4. Transform The Tone Of Existing Content

If you have existing content that you want to change the tone of, ChatGPT can help you do that as well.

Simply provide ChatGPT with the content and specify the desired tone. ChatGPT will then generate a new version of the content with the updated tone.

Try This Prompt

“Please tell me how I can adapt the tone of this text to resonate better with [insert target audience description].

[insert text].”

You could follow up with:

“Please make changes to the above text to better align with [target audience or tone notes.]”

You may want to provide limitations or style guide notes to help the model.

**PREPARE FOR
DISRUPTION:
KEEP CALM,
EDUCATE, &
MOVE QUICKLY**

BY BEN STEELE, SENIOR EDITOR

Seeing troubled waters ahead comes with apprehension, but it's also a gift.

As much as disruption is inevitable in 2024, calls to the death of SEO are premature. People still need to find things, and in this editor's opinion, the momentum behind how people have searched for information since search engines first appeared isn't easily redirected.

The models you currently use to drive business goals with SEO may change.

As Ryan Jones says in this section, some queries never needed a click-through in the first place. This is where in-platform search experiences will hit hardest. Many low-hanging fruit queries will turn rotten, and basic informational queries will stop performing. But if you weren't serving the true user intent in the first place, this would happen eventually anyway.

You need to pivot, but you have time to do it.

The key will be educating your clients or in-house stakeholders and preparing them for disruption. You will likely see unusual performance interruptions as you turn toward new strategies. You may need to reassess which metrics are important to you and what outcomes you expect from SEO.

Just remember: It isn't the hype where you'll find a sound strategy. It's your understanding of your audience and how their journeys manifest.

If I had to summarize the insights of this section in three sentences, they would be:

- ★ Understanding a user's true intent must guide you – spam and thin results are dying.
- ★ Don't forget about technical SEO – keeping a tidy site can also help insulate you from ruthless core updates.
- ★ Use AI strategically to give yourself more time for big-picture thinking.

Insights In This Section

SEO Pros Must Be Insightful & Flexible To Adapt To Groundbreaking AI Innovation

– Vahan Petrosyan, Director of Technology, Search Engine Journal

AI Will Change The Types Of Content We Invest In

– Aleyda Solis, Founder & International SEO Consultant, Orainti

Don't Overlook Update Impacts On Technical SEO

– Dan Taylor, Partner & Head of Technical SEO, SALT.agency

Specialized AI Tools Can Free Significant Time For Strategy

– Kevin Indig, Growth Advisor to Fast-Growing Startups

SEO Isn't Dead – SEO Got Better

– Ryan Jones, SVP, SEO, Razorfish

Don't Get Lost In Panic Or Hype, Stay Focused On What Matters

– Motoko Hunt, President/International SEO, AJPR

Trends To Watch From The SEJ Newsroom

– Matt G. Southern, Senior News Writer, Search Engine Journal

SEO Will Become More Expensive, Increasing The Risk Of Low-Quality Activities

– Roger Montti, News Writer, Search Engine Journal



Use AI Where It's Strong And Defeat It Where It's Weak

2023 was groundbreaking with innovations in the field of AI, and it is evident that the role of AI in SEO is becoming more central than ever before.

AI's growing influence in personalized search experiences is set to enhance the understanding of user intent, context, and the ability to analyze previous search histories. This advancement will enable search engines to interpret the nuances in search queries and user behavior more accurately.

Consequently, SEO strategies will need to become more targeted, leveraging AI tools (such as [Copilot](#) in Clarity) to analyze and understand these behaviors effectively.

However, balancing this efficiency with a commitment to accuracy and ethical standards is crucial. All content generated through AI must be fact-checked to mitigate the risks of misinformation and AI biases, which is also a part of search engines' guidelines regarding AI-generated content.

That is why – by focusing on E-E-A-T, introducing “perspectives” filters, [altering rankings](#) to prioritize content that demonstrates first-hand knowledge, and user notes in search – Google is trying to balance AI advancements with real-life experience and human touch.

Machines can't replicate the personal insights and feelings gained from real-life experiences like product reviews. For users searching for [the best laptops for graphic designers], the real working experiences of design professionals with specific products are crucial, rather than just a generic list of potential laptop options.

But we should also admit that AI chatbots are reshaping how users interact with the web and consume content. Publishers and SEO professionals must innovate to stay competitive. One advantage that websites still have over large language model chatbots is users still need to go the extra mile to get high-quality outputs. They have to think of a decent prompt and fact-check the response, which increases the time (i.e., "cost") of getting information.

Given that fact, thinking about how to surpass chatbots is essential when crafting content and optimizing UI/UX. Content that is easy to consume, has a human touch, and earns trust with users, will win. These are just a few examples of content that achieves those goals:

- ★ Provide expert opinions and well-researched content. Reduce the user's need to cross-check information.
- ★ Integrate multimedia elements, data visualizations, interactive modules, quizzes, and real-time problem-solving exercises.
- ★ Incorporate human elements into a content strategy where AI chatbots may fall short, such as live Q&A sessions or webinars where experts respond to user queries in real time.

User Experience & Speed

Google is good at understanding user intent because it accesses extensive information about users, allowing it to produce exceptionally fast and relevant search results.

However, quick SERP generation becomes less effective if the websites are slow, as users will likely abandon slow-loading pages.

Therefore, technical SEO will be even more important for ranking and retaining users. Google's introduction of the new Core Web Vitals (CWV) metric – Interaction to Next Paint (INP), which will replace First Input Delay (FID) in March 2024 – confirms that.

SEO Isn't Going Anywhere

While there are claims that SEO and technical SEO are dead, this is far from the truth, and SEO will remain a vital aspect of digital marketing.

The rise of AI doesn't signal the end of SEO but a shift in its strategies and practices. This happened several times when Google introduced SERP features like featured snippets, People Also Ask (PAA) boxes, etc.

This shift requires a deeper, more nuanced understanding of user intent and how search engines work.



I expect the following to be key SEO trends in 2024:

Trend 1: Time-Consuming SEO Tasks Get Easier

There will be further automation of key SEO tasks thanks to AI/chatbots/generative search. From internal linking to structured data implementation, some otherwise resource-consuming SEO execution will be facilitated further thanks to more powerful automation.

Trend 2: Investment In Expert-Lead Content

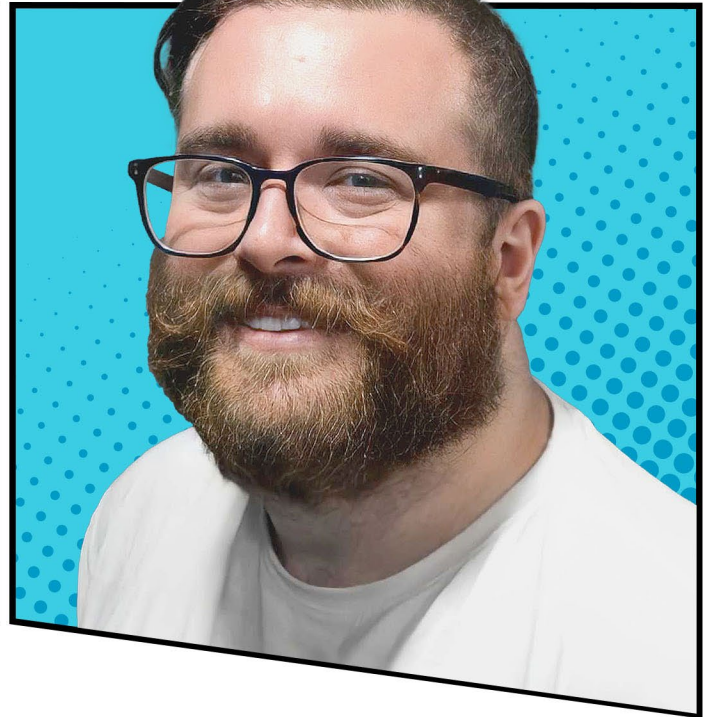
After the disruption of AI content generation, online businesses should invest in expert-led content to differentiate themselves, increase their trustworthiness, and establish their authority. An expert-based strategy can also minimize the chances of getting hit by Google quality updates.

Trend 3: Changing Click Behavior Will Necessitate Different Content

The release of Google's Search Generative Experience (SGE) could shift users' click behavior in search results.

For example, rather than clicking on reviews, articles, or product landing pages, they might go directly to product description pages through SGE snapshots.

We may need to start diversifying and changing the type of content we invest in to maximize our visibility and improve user experience across the search journey.



Crawling & Indexing Disruption

With all the focus on AI and the most recent fallout from the sequential Google updates (namely the helpful content update), a big focus has been on the impact on ranking.

We know that the idea of quality affects all of Google's "SEO" processes. Google reaffirmed this at Search Central Live in Zurich in October 2023. Right now, the SEO community focuses on "quality content," but you should also focus on quality in terms of maintaining desired crawling and indexing rates. I think trends will shift more in this direction in 2024.

Many of Google's systems use URL patterns to make judgments of all the URLs that follow this pattern. This way, it can preserve resources and make judgments without crawling hundreds or thousands of URLs on a single large website. It does this for both judging quality and SafeSearch.

Crawling and indexing are expensive components of Google's organic search. I feel these more "ruthless" updates in recent months indicate things to come, as Google doesn't need or want to crawl and store every piece of content on the internet. We also saw some indication of "index pruning" in 2022 in the August core update.

Effective log file analysis and understanding the Google Search Console (GSC) crawl stats report will be vital. Prepare your clients for this, and educate your team members about it. Otherwise, brands will be blindsided by performance and ranking drops, with possible signs of crawl and indexing slowdown happening in advance.

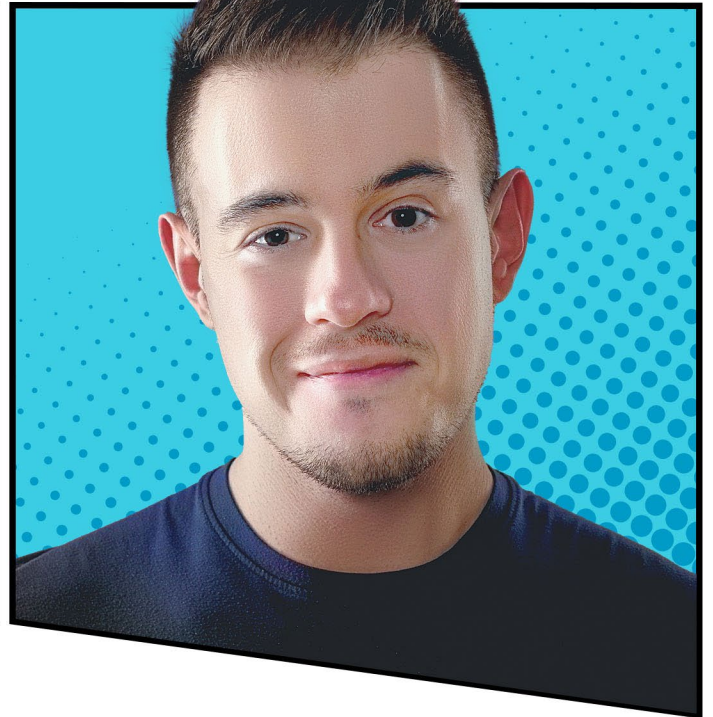
Chrome's Third-Party Cookie Breakages

As well as considering the impact on reporting (for showing the value of SEO) to the broader business, with Chrome moving towards the “deprecation” of third-party cookies, we also need to be activists and stewards for our clients in helping them understand the impact and potential site breakages for Chrome users.

While this isn't strictly SEO, there's no point driving users from organic search to a website if it doesn't work or function as expected, and the users don't convert.

From Q1 2024, this will be tested on 1% of Chrome users, with rollout fully anticipated before the end of the year. Test websites and highlight issues for clients now, and keep it on your radar in 2024.

In addition, help your clients set up analytics to report (and show value) to their stakeholders.

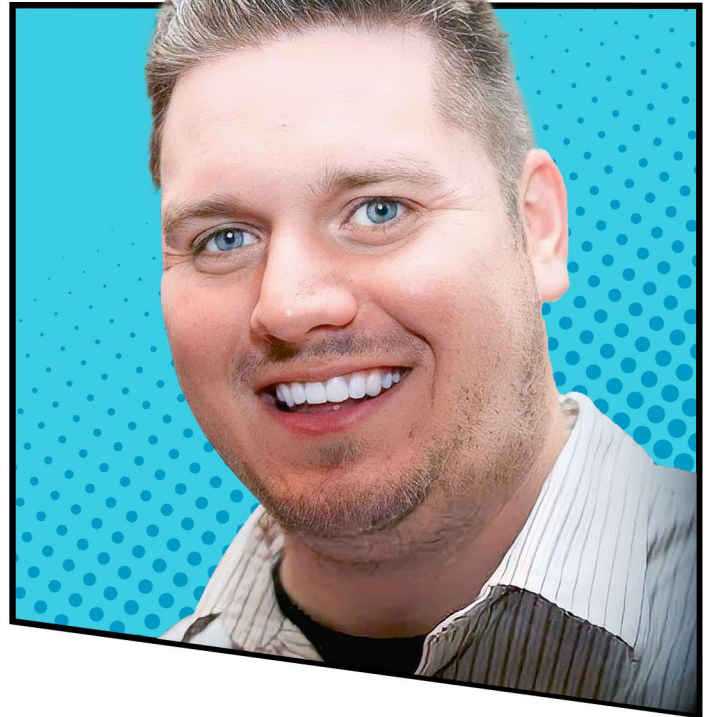


The most significant trend I see for 2024 is using AI to make workflows like data analysis, keyword research, content creation, and communication magnitudes faster.

We're facing more AI in search (even more than before), but we also get more powerful tools to strike back.

General large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT, Bard, or Claude are one part of the toolset, but we'll also see a lot more specialized tools for specific workflows.

The second trend is the launch of Search Generative Experience (SGE) out of beta, which I expect at the end of 2023. At the time of writing (October 2023), we don't yet know the implications of SGE, but understanding and reverse engineering it is the second big trend of 2024.



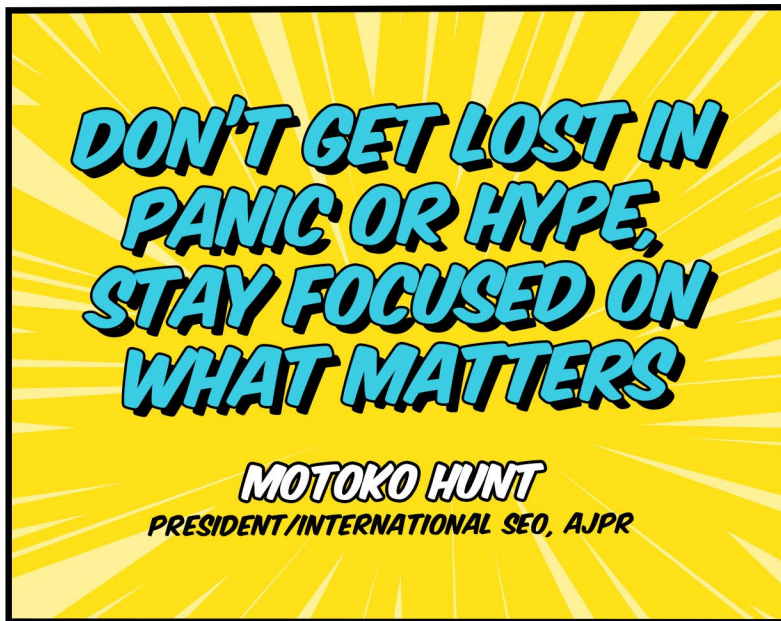
Be prepared for SEO to be declared dead multiple times, only to be replaced with something that looks a lot like SEO.

As generative AI develops, search engines will pivot more toward something that behaves like a Star Trek computer than providing a list of websites, giving answers on demand. Many will struggle to accept that the user never wanted a website for some searches – they just wanted an answer.

On-demand answers may harm affiliate or niche sites, but plenty of people will still be searching to solve problems, find products, get advice, or generally “do something.”

Marketers will still work to influence the new “search experiences,” just as we work to influence search results. We may try to call it something other than SEO, but it will still be SEO at its core.

We will continue growing away from some of our old metrics and treat SEO more like traditional marketing. 2024 will be the year the entire industry takes another step forward. SEO professionals familiar with coding, AI, Information Retrieval, and traditional marketing will continue evolving, and I’m excited to see what awesome new ideas and tools we come up with.



Is it just me, or have the updates and changes with the search engines become more frequent and drastic?

In addition to the search engine side of AI adoptions, AI tools such as ChatGPT became available to the general public. You see mixed information about the future impact on search; it can get confusing and frustrating no matter the size of your company.

These fast-paced changes will create a massive divide among competing websites depending on how well teams can stay on top of the changes and use them to benefit.

In 2024, I recommend you keep the following three points in mind to grow your business:

Know The Facts

You must stay on top of what's happening, but changes can come quickly. What you don't want to do is to overreact, especially based on misinformation or one person's opinions. Read what the search engines and trusted industry news sources say, and don't focus on every comment and rumor on social media.

Allocate sufficient budget for the SEO team's education through seminars/webinars, conferences, and certification courses. Sharing knowledge with internal training programs for in-house teams or clients is also great practice.

It's essential to know how the search results look to your target audiences, especially now that the search engines are changing the results page layout and content more frequently and drastically.

Check the search results with highly relevant queries to your business to see how the changes impact the results. Analytics data informs the site performance, but looking at the search results also tells you much about why people do or don't click links.

Understanding how these systems gather and present information will enable you to pivot activities to respond to these changes as they go live.

Benefit From New Technology

Do an internal audit on tasks that take a long time and could benefit from automation.

For example, you can use AI tools, including AI-powered software services and ChatGPT, to help you check for any irregularities in your ecommerce database that feeds into the website. Or, you could audit your site for duplicate and similar content.

These tools can also help cut down some of your coding and tagging work and immediately reduce your manual workload.

It is nice to see that some agencies are already creating tools with AI technology and offering them to clients. It doesn't need to be a tool suite. Sometimes, a tool that helps a niche area could make a big difference. Often, many websites simply need that niche challenge to be solved.

Stay Focused

If you are an in-house SEO, you know about your business and the target audience very well.

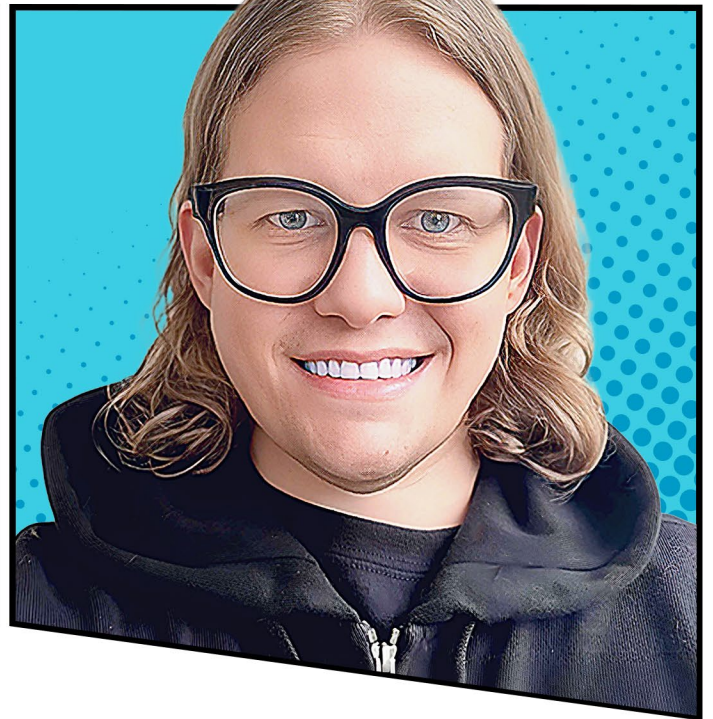
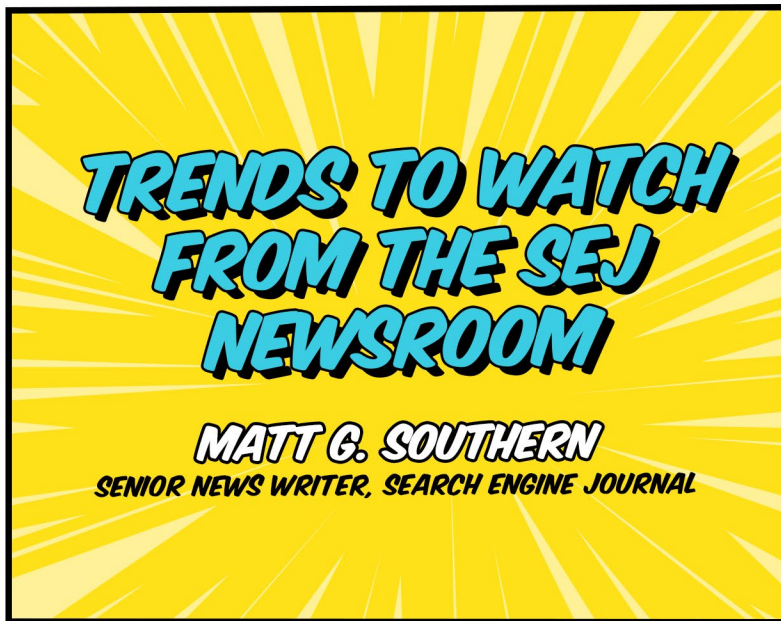
This knowledge and your existing relationships are your best tools.

Improve your content by highlighting your products and services. The key is keeping sight of your business goals and not panicking with every Google update.

Agencies have two priorities: your clients and your bottom line. Incorporate the AI tools to make the SEO work and related processes more efficient. Leveraging AI should reduce your operational costs while helping to bring more success for the clients.

The best way to get buy-in from clients is to work closely with them by educating them.

Gaining their trust and confidence that you understand and have adapted to these changes will be the key to winning and retaining the businesses.



SEO is constantly evolving, and 2024 will likely change how we think about it even more. Based on my experience covering the SEO industry, I wanted to share some critical insights to get ahead.

Focus On Improving Existing Rankings

First, I want to emphasize the importance of improving existing ranking keywords rather than chasing new ones.

Often, websites already have a goldmine of opportunity in keywords ranking on page two or three. Even if you rank on page one, moving up just one spot can skyrocket your traffic since the click-through rate is much higher in the top spots.

Conduct Intent-Focused Keyword Research

Intent and relevance are key when researching new keywords.

It can help to prioritize transactional, commercial keywords over generic informational ones. And ensure the keywords genuinely relate to your core products, services, and solutions.

Sometimes, we get distracted by high-volume keywords that don't convert or drive revenue.

Create Link-Worthy Assets

Creating linkable assets is crucial for long-term SEO success. Look for ways to make your content more worthy of links by doing unique research, testing products, compiling data studies, etc.

Authoritative, quality backlinks remain among the most decisive ranking factors, so build content that people naturally want to reference and link to.

Leverage Trends Strategically

Stay on top of trends and leverage timely opportunities when they make sense. For example, publishing evergreen content about a hot topic can allow you to rank before the competition catches on. Don't go overboard with trend-jacking – keep it to less than 20% of your content mix.

Build Content You're Passionate About

Create content you're genuinely passionate about. This makes the process so much easier over the long haul. And take a long-term view – build your website as a brand, not just a quick income source.

SEO success requires expertise, experience, and establishing trust – and that takes time to build.

Focus On Quality

As Google's algorithms advance, they will better detect genuinely helpful, expert-level content vs. content created to target keywords. Produce content that provides real value for users.

Leverage Structured Data

Structured data like schema markup helps search engines understand your content better, especially for reviews, FAQs, recipes, events, etc. This can enhance your indexing and rich snippet potential.

Build An Authoritative Brand

Become a trusted resource that users keep returning to as their go-to source for information. Provide consistent value, engage with your audience, and establish thought leadership.

Leverage Video & Live Streaming

Video content and live streaming will be more influential in 2024. YouTube continues dominating search, and live video platforms like TikTok are changing discovery. Create engaging video content that connects with audiences.

Pay Attention To AI

As chatbots like ChatGPT evolve, they may disrupt search behaviors and content creation. Understand how users interact with AI to serve their needs.

Doubling down on high-quality, user-focused content and branding will serve you well from an SEO perspective in the next few years. Stay nimble and open-minded as search trends evolve!

In Summary

Here are my key takeaways for SEO success in 2024:

- ★ Leverage the low-hanging fruit on pages two and three.
- ★ Conduct intent-driven keyword research.
- ★ Create authoritative, link-worthy assets.

- ★ Monitor search trends but stay focused on evergreen, high-quality content.
- ★ Provide genuine user value over keyword targeting.
- ★ Build brand authority and thought leadership.
- ★ Stay agile to align with emerging technologies like AI.
- ★ Leverage structured data to help search engines understand your content better.
- ★ Lean into video.



Rising Cost Of SEO And SAAS Tools

I expect the cost of tools to increase, and we may see additional users on shared plans lose access in greater numbers.

- ★ Ahrefs recently announced it is [cutting 15% of legacy users](#) due to overuse.
- ★ Resource usage for AI is high, which might cause providers to raise prices. For example, comparing 2021 to 2022, [Microsoft used 34% more water](#), and Google's water use is up 20%, both attributed to AI.
- ★ [Data center demand](#) is at an all-time high, with some geographic areas experiencing as much as 300% data center growth.
- ★ Google's investment in [tensor processing units](#) (chips for AI) is estimated to cost \$3 billion in 2023.

Sequoia Capital, the venture capital firm that backed companies like Apple, Airbnb, and more, recently published an article stating that [2024 is when AI will go into what it calls Act Two](#).

Act Two of AI expands monetization opportunities beyond content and image generation into more high-stakes businesses like medicine. Act Two goes beyond the simple text and image generation for which people currently use it.

[OpenAI recently promised lower-priced plans](#) for developers, but these plans are for technologies related to medicine and entertainment. Those new planned offerings are a part of OpenAI's goal to expand its footprint beyond ChatGPT users.

There are estimates that [OpenAI spends at least \\$700,000 per day](#), and those costs are likely higher since the original estimates were based on GPT-3.

OpenAI may raise prices for its paid ChatGPT tiers. Its costs are increasing, and it currently has no real competitors.

I believe this is inevitable, but whether it will happen in 2024 is debatable. It could be further out by another two years.

The squeeze in SEO tool pricing is already happening and will likely become more intense.

Problems With Link Building

Natural language processing, neural networks, and AI mean that Google doesn't need to rely as much on links to identify content relevance.

In 2024, it will start sinking in that links matter less. The mainstream is mostly already on board with this reality.

People who are relatively new to SEO may not be aware that spammy link tactics like buying expired domains have existed for 20 years, and Google has had a handle on it for a long time.

But some people tend to have faith in what they think they see and wave away evidence that doesn't conform to those beliefs. The reality will become apparent as their peers discuss how links matter less.

Link building isn't dead. But I think many people will realize certain tactics don't work anymore.

Google Becomes More Precise

Google has spent many years improving its precision.

That was the whole point of the Hummingbird update from 2013. It was a rewrite to make the core algorithm fast and accurate.

That emphasis on precision has never gone away. The Medic Update was also about being precise about what sites qualify for the different query topics.

BERT helped Google have a more precise understanding of language. SpamBrain and the Helpful Content System help Google increase precision in weeding out low-quality content and promoting higher-quality ones.

If Google uses TW-Bert, it provides a more precise understanding of search queries. And this will be increasingly problematic for publishers with low-quality content.

Google's algorithms aren't perfect, but in 2024, we will see this trend of increasing precision continue.

Precision is the word to keep in mind.

USING AI TO ENHANCE HUMAN INSIGHTS & RELATIONSHIPS

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AI is transforming how marketers gather and interpret feedback to inform content strategies.

AI isn't a replacement for human interaction; it amplifies and clarifies the voice of the customer, providing a data-driven foundation for human decision-making.

It begins with a conversation and continues with AI processing the given information. Then, marketers complete the loop by applying insights in a human-centric way.

Using AI in this way creates a symbiotic relationship between data analysis and human insight.

Thus, AI becomes an enabler of more personalized, effective, and human marketing efforts and empowers marketers to build data-informed and human strategies for addressing customers' real concerns, questions, and preferences.

Calls Are The Most Human Source Of Data

Call "recordings" are gold mines for understanding customer concerns, questions, and the language they use to describe their needs – AI steps in as a tool to comb through these calls.

By transcribing and analyzing these conversations, AI identifies customers' most frequent concerns and the specific phrases they use.

These insights reveal the words and terms customers associate with their pain points and desires – information that is gold for SEO and PPC strategies.

This process turns hours of recordings into actionable insights without exhaustive human listening, allowing marketers to act on feedback more efficiently, and ensure content resonates with their target audience.

AI can categorize these insights – such as feedback, service inquiries, or general questions – to help prioritize content updates and guide creating new content to answer the most pressing customer questions.

Optimizing SEO With AI Insights

AI learns and evolves as new calls are recorded and analyzed, constantly refining the data it provides.

By detecting the keywords and topics from customer conversations, AI informs SEO strategies, helping shape content that addresses real questions and concerns.

In addition, AI analysis can reveal the most urgent customer pain points and popular product features, information that can improve ad targeting and messaging.

By bidding on keywords proven to align with customer interests and concerns, marketers can increase the relevance and performance of their ads.

Final Thoughts

Using AI to analyze recorded customer phone calls bridges the gap between conversations and actionable insights. It enables marketers to craft strategies aligned with customer insights and further enhance the human-to-human connection at the core of marketing.



BUILD NEW INFORMATION MODELS: ENTITIES & ONTOLOGIES

BY BEN STEELE, SENIOR EDITOR

If one takeaway will keep you on the cutting edge of SEO, it's understanding Andrea Volpini's quote about "ontologies." But I haven't seen anyone else present SEO this way, and there are key things to understand first, which are themselves complex:

- ★ Entities.
- ★ Schema.
- ★ Algorithm machine learning advancements.
- ★ What "helpful content" *really* means.
- ★ How large language models (LLMs) work.

Luckily, the contributors in this book are some of the best minds in the industry, and they provided plenty of insight on all of these topics.

Earlier sections already covered the expanding definition of "helpful"; this section will expand on the foundations you need to understand how websites must change to organize information effectively.

Then Andrea Volpini will finish the section by diving into "ontologies," which will propel you into the future of SEO:

- ★ Standing out from AI outputs to build trust and nurture audiences.
- ★ Being discoverable within in-platform "search experiences" driven by AI.
- ★ Aligning your content organization and topical authority with how people and search engines understand concepts and entities.

If I had to summarize this section in three sentences, they would be:

- ★ Understanding the "entity" is critical to future SEO success because it's both a human and a data model of understanding.
- ★ Lean into exploration and knowledge by making meaningful connections.
- ★ Developing well-organized ontologies (maps of entities and their connections) will prepare you for success in AI platforms and Google Search, and improve user experiences.

Insights In This Section

[Search Is Becoming A Human-Centered Exploration Tool](#)

– Angie Nikoleychuk, Content Marketing Manager, Search Engine Journal

[Entity Discovery & Followership](#)

– Jes Scholz, Marketing Consultant, JesScholz.com

[Standardize & Organize Information Based On Meaningful Connections](#)

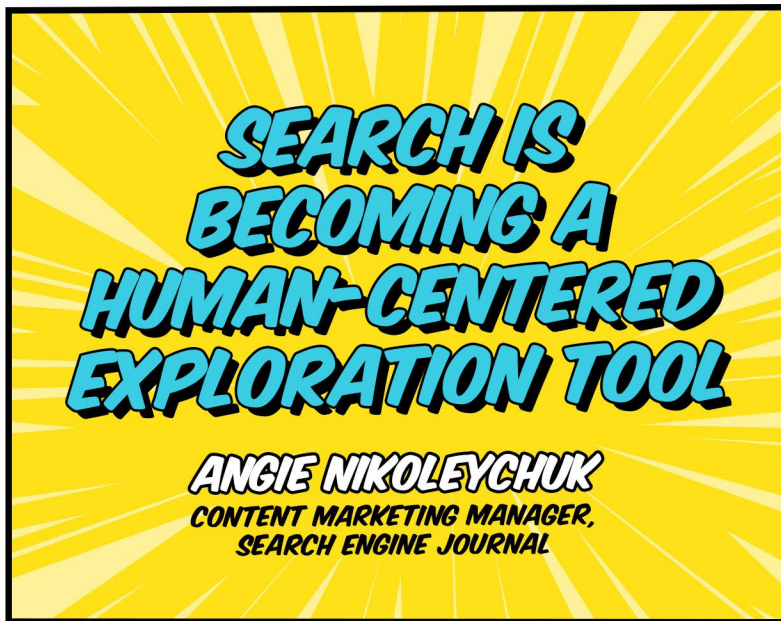
– Martha van Berkel, CEO, Schema App

[Entities Are The New Links](#)

– Ulrika Viberg, CEO and Senior SEO, Unikorn

[Autonomous AI Agents And Ontologies In SEO](#)

– Andrea Volpini, Co-Founder and CEO, WordLift



Over the next year, I don't think the big trend will be a tool or a ranking factor. It will be a question: How do we meet the needs of AI while setting us apart from it?

The answer? Human-centered SEO for human-centered search – moving beyond ranking factors, RankBrain, and reviews to customer journeys and holistic strategies.

If the industry learned anything in the early days of article spinners and directories, it's that optimizing for the technology of today is an expensive and temporary proposition.

In 2024, we will see the SEO industry move toward optimizing where search engines and users are going. What's driving this trend?

AI.

But not in the way you might think.

Standing Apart From AI: Human-Centered SEO

None of us are strangers to content written for search engines. In particular, AI-written content has increased the capacity for people to fill the web with low-effort, low-value content.

In response, I predict that search engines will release more and more spam and useful content updates to try and weed out low-value content.

Some argue that Search Generative Experience-like search features will be the solution. Some SEO pros will attempt to optimize for SGE in its current form, but I expect changes to it before full integration with search.

Instead, I see the smart move being the trend toward human-centered search.

Of course, search engines are just one side of this digital coin.

Encountering more AI content that fails to meet the needs of end users will inevitably feed the steadily declining trust. As a result, users might shy away from more generic and AI-written content.

So, while this type of content might generate traffic, we will see this content genre start to generate fewer clicks and conversions – at least for YMYL and products and services that require more of a user's time or money.

What are the best SEO strategies we'll see appearing in 2024 in response to this? Human-centered ones.

They will consider where the user has been, where they're going, and their motivations and interests – aspects that AI and search engine-focused content can't touch. Here are a few examples:

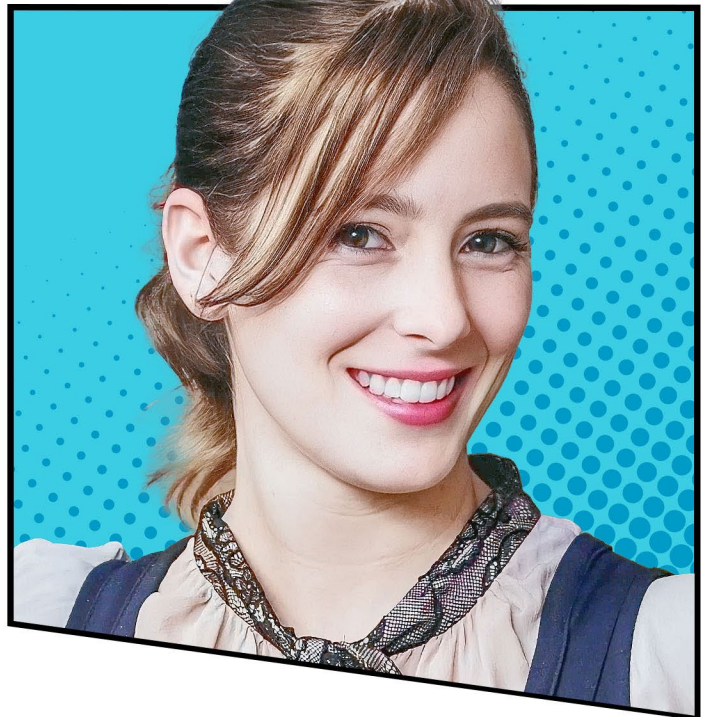
- ★ **Time and Type Segmentation:** Where a particular target audience is. It's a short window, but much like a roulette wheel, it is a gamble that will pay off. (If your keyword research includes the phrase "traffic funnels" or "AIDA," you're behind.)

- ★ **Experiences:** Not just meeting a need or solving a problem but sharing unique stories and views that turn pages from an online destination into an experience and journey. It's thinking beyond the click and traffic.
- ★ **Connections:** The concept of “strings to things” is evolving into how and in what way those things and entities are connected. Partnerships, collaborations, and connections between entities that go beyond a simple link will be the things that matter.

Evidence for this trend can already be seen in Information Architecture, User Experience, Human-AI Interaction, Information Retrieval, and other related research area trends.

For example, patents and research around systems like the Knowledge Graph have been looking to classify and label relationships to capture the “how” and “why” things are connected for some time. And those tiny details will turn search from a generic search tool into a human-centered exploration tool in the future.

The nuance of this shift cannot be overstated. The distinction between the SEO of the last few years and tomorrow's human-centered search is small, but it's important. For years, keywords and links have defined what a page is about. In 2024, SEO and search will be about the “how.”



One trend that often slips under the radar is the growing significance of building a followership on Google surfaces.

This functionality has long been part of Google News. Its influence on visibility is undeniable, offering visibility in the “Sources panel,” the “Following tab,” and the “From publishers you follow” SERP feature.

It is also now present in Google Shopping. By “favoriting” specific brands, users set a preference filter on their shopping results, providing additional exposure.

Entities In Google Discover

The real game-changer is that this trend extends its reach into Google Discover. Users can click the bell icon in a Knowledge Panel to follow an entity as a topic of interest within Discover.

Content related to the followed entity then gains prime placement, often appearing at or near the top of Discover in a dedicated “following” feature box.

Discover is already a dominant force on mobile, boasting a dedicated following tab.

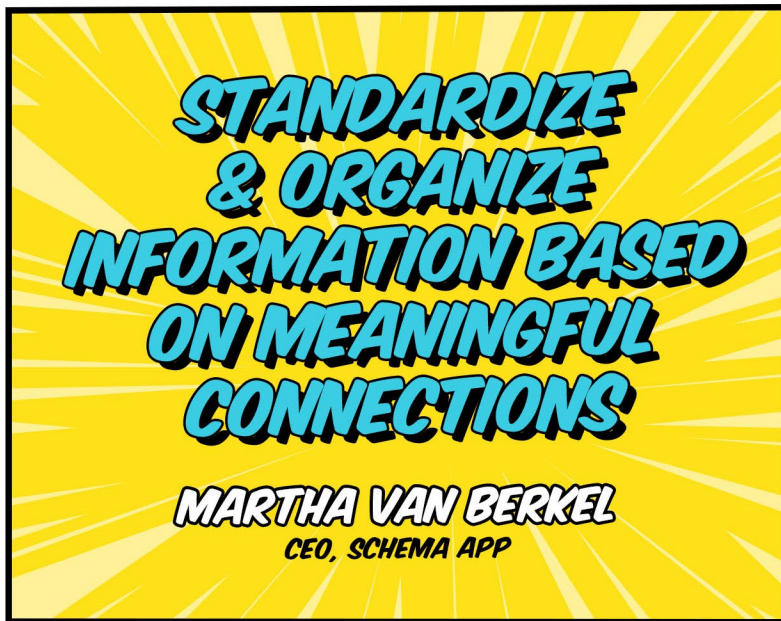
Moreover, it's currently undergoing [trials on the Google desktop homepage](#).

A single placement in Discover could outperform a month's worth of traditional blue link traffic due to users' inherent buy-in and interest.

This underscores the critical importance of entity optimization, which is how you can establish your brand in the Google Knowledge Graph and become eligible for entity followership.

To explore the future of followership, get a sneak peek by going into Google Chrome flags and enabling the upcoming follow features and changes to the New Tab Page (NTP).

I predict entity followership will emerge as a brand-level E-E-A-T signal in 2024.



Since 2011, Google has urged organizations to adopt Schema Markup (a.k.a., structured data) to help search engines better understand website content. This also allows you to qualify for rich results to stand out in search.

Over the years, organizations have successfully leveraged schema markup to achieve rich results for products, reviews, FAQs, how-to, videos, and more, resulting in higher click-through rates (CTRs) and more engaged, qualified traffic to their website.

However, the Google search landscape has evolved further in the past two years.

Schema Is More Than Rich Results: It's Understanding

In 2022, we saw the performance of video, FAQ, and other rich results change throughout the year. In 2023, Google changed the eligibility for video-rich results, deprecated how-to rich results from the SERP, and reduced the frequency that the well-loved FAQ rich results were awarded.

It also released the new AI-powered Search Generative Experience (SGE) in experimental environments.

Other rich results still exist and continue to perform on Google. But with AI-powered search engines, marketers need to rethink their strategy to stand out in search, thinking beyond rich results due to their volatility.

Instead, marketers should leverage the semantic nature of schema markup and implement it across their sites to help search engines understand how their content relates to searchers' queries.

In October 2023, John Mueller, Search Advocate at Google, released a [search update video](#) sharing how rich results will continue to be added and removed. He reiterated that schema markup is a "machine-readable code that search engines use to understand content." He suggested using a schema markup solution to update your structured data easily.

Good news! Schema markup – the same SEO strategy that helps machines understand and achieve rich results – can help you be understood and perform well in the new world of AI search.

Why? Because search engines are shifting from lexical (matching keywords) to semantic search (matching meaning). Schema markup helps define content explicitly, enabling search engines to understand your content's meaning.

How does this work? By implementing schema markup on your site, you translate your content using the standardized Schema.org vocabulary and define the relationship between things on your site.

This provides specified context about your concepts and how they relate to other things on your site and the web. As a result, machines can better understand your content, make factual inferences about your organization, and provide searchers with accurate results.

How Structured Data Can Improve CTR

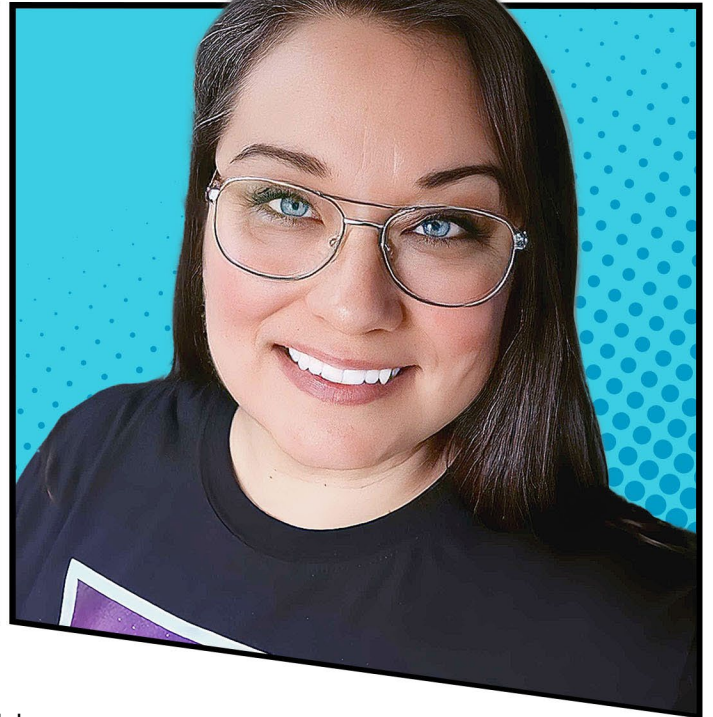
At Schema App, we've recently seen a general decline in impressions and clicks across our customers due to rich result changes from Google. However, we've also seen an increase in CTR after applying robust, connected schema markup.

Bing's Principal Program Manager, Fabrice Canel, [spoke at this year's Pubcon](#). I infer from his presentation that he also expects new search experiences to improve user experiences as they are introduced. If markup is managed correctly, users get contextual information in the search engine results page (SERP) before clicking through to your site.

That said, the world of AI search is still riddled with unknowns. We don't know how it will change top results on the SERP, we don't have any specific metrics from Google (we do from Bing), and we don't know how quickly things will change.

So, focus on what you can control, like developing unique content and adding schema markup to be understood by machines.

Let's capture those clicks, take control, and get more leads by speaking the language of search engines.



We will see growth in AI, but not only in search!

We will see more AI as enriched data for products, such as more creative product categories based on specific situations.

A category for books to read in the winter can list horror stories, romance, short novels, and classics.

These lists are traditionally curated manually; with AI, they can be generated on the fly efficiently, and SEO pros will love it.

Things will get technical again; On-page will expand to not only H1s and alt-tags, but also, to nested structured data and entity linking, building structured data, and entity link graphs.

With AI, my gut says [links will be less important](#).

Entities are the new links.

The Google team has already mentioned that [links are no longer as important as they used to be](#), and I believe AI will solve the “trusted websites” situation without links.

BEYOND ENTITIES: BUILDING MAPS OF MEANING WITH ONTOLOGIES

BY ANDREA VOLPINI,
CO-FOUNDER & CEO, WORDLIFT

INTRODUCTION BY BEN STEELE,
SENIOR EDITOR

Introduction

We've built the foundation, so it's time to dig into ontologies. Andrea Volpini provides exceptional insight, but let's get through a few definitions first.

Ontologies aren't just a trend; they're an advanced way of understanding:

- ★ Your website site and content.
- ★ How **people** make meaningful connections.
- ★ How **algorithms** make meaningful connections.

Before we discuss how ontologies relate to search, it helps to understand the various meanings of the word ontology.

Ontology is a discipline of both philosophy and information science.

- ★ As a branch of metaphysics, [ontology](#) is most concerned with being, existence, and how beings and events relate to one another on their most basic level.
- ★ In information science and data management, [ontologies are](#) "explicit formal specifications of the terms in the domain and relations among them."

In plain language and for our purposes, "ontology" studies **entities**. It categorizes types of entities and seeks to understand how they relate to each other.

The critical point I want you to see here is that the data management version of ontology owes its existence to the philosophy of ontology. Both are about **how humans experience and categorize entities**.

An ontology for SEO is detailed and explicit, both of each individual entity and the categorization system it falls under. Of course, defining a narrow category isn't always easy. The lines get blurry, and different systems overlap, merge, or split into new categories.

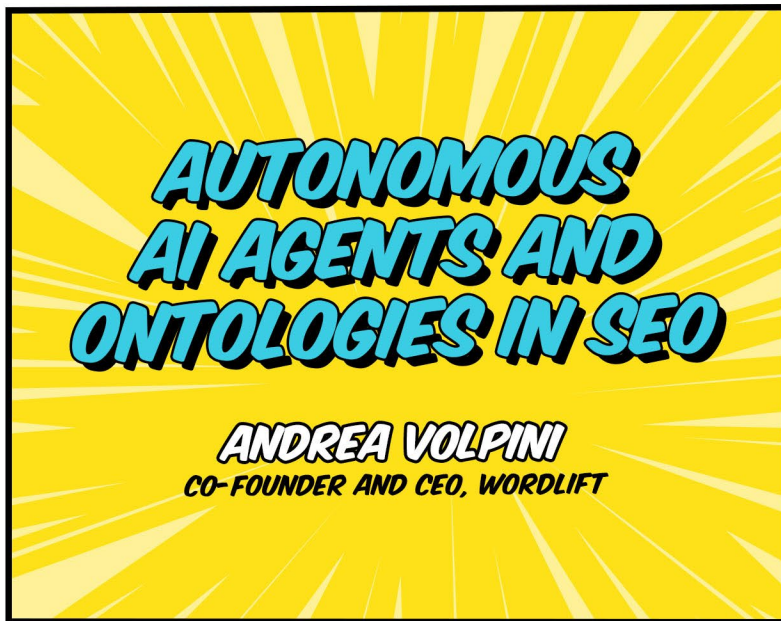
Ontologies aren't pillars; they're critical to information architecture and semantic technology.

Creating deep maps of connection and meaning is beyond the current capability of large language models (LLMs). But they do **use** them. Modern AI-driven algorithms use **human philosophical concepts** to make connections.

More than standing out from LLMs, constructing ontologies will also help the models return accurate information about your website, as Volpini explains. Understand them now to prepare for Search Generative Experience (SGE).

These are my best tips for functionally applying what you learn from Volpini's insightful essay:

- ★ It can help to think of an ontology as a **map of meaning**.
 - Create content with an understanding of its place within an ontology and all of the important entities within the content itself and the wider meaning map.
 - Then, build those connections using the SEO tools available to you, such as linking, schema, category organization, and site hierarchy.
- ★ Fully understanding entities and applying ontologies to all levels of your website, from your top menu navigation to every piece of content you create, is the path forward. Building websites for ontologies allows you to:
 - Ensure your whole website is helpful and easy to navigate for users.
 - Speak the language of search engines and encourage more robust and accurate indexing of your pages.
 - Help LLMs in “search experience” features return accurate information about your website, surfacing your brand in generative results.



In an era where artificial intelligence becomes increasingly intrinsic to SEO strategies, entities and Google's Knowledge (and Shopping) Graph have emerged as pivotal elements. They bridge the nexus between Search Generative Experience (SGE) and Google's enhanced ecommerce initiative.

With a surge in AI-generated content and the dawn of AI authorship, you need to develop intricate ontologies if you want to stand out.

Schema markup gives search engines a better understanding of the content on a webpage. Ontologies take this a step further.

With ontologies, marketers and SEO professionals can define more complex relationships and hierarchies within their domain of knowledge.

This leads to better content organization, more relevant search results, and improved quality when the brands interact with large language models and the generative AI stack.

These ontologies transcend the mere facilitation of seamless interactions with LLMs; they will expand schema markup and, crucially, preserve and amplify a brand's unique voice amidst the vast sea of AI-generated content.

Ontologies Will Act As The Discernible Differentiator In The Digital Realm

Prompting techniques are evolving. Entities – both named entities and concepts – are having a profound influence on transferring knowledge to language models.

This paves the way for the automation of prompt creation and the models' autonomous learning of optimal prompting strategies.

Furthermore, integrating autonomous AI agents will be strategic for exhaustive SEO automation, where multiple SEO tasks can be conducted with limited human intervention – from dynamic internal links to crawling optimization strategies, from on-page SEO to schema markup.

As these trends will shape SEO, the centrality of entities and ontologies is not merely advantageous but indispensable.

The Rise Of Comprehensive And Interactive Search Experiences

Navigating through the Generative AI epoch, search has witnessed a transformative evolution, particularly in rendering a more comprehensive and interactive user experience. Bing notably paved the way in 2017, introducing chatbot integration into search and enhancing user interactions through innovative conversational interfaces.

Bing Chat and Google SGE are not swift adaptations but a culmination of decades of technological evolution and strategic adaptations in voice search and interactive result exploration.

The transition from “Hey Google” to “Hey Bard” could make search directly accessible to millions of users, creating new opportunities to build personalized digital experiences. Anyone with a Google Assistant device will be able to access generative AI and search through voice.

A noticeable shift in search traffic and the increase of zero-click searches, which reached about half of Google searches in 2022, spotlights a transition towards providing immediate answers on search engine result pages.

We're heading for seamless, interactive, and enriched search experiences, shaping the future trajectory of online user engagement and content discoverability.

I do expect new opportunities with voice search, but overall, a way more competitive environment and a potential drop of up to 15-20% of search traffic on informational queries.

SEO could become more about activating user experiences tied to your brand inside search platforms than driving clicks. This will require a significant adjustment in how you think about and track SEO performance.

I will leave you with the following, that I wrote for an internal presentation:



SEO IS BECOMING A NEW FRONTIER IN AN AI-DRIVEN SOCIETY. IT IS THE BRIDGE BETWEEN HUMAN KNOWLEDGE AND MACHINES. AS WE DEVELOP MORE AND MORE AI-POWERED TECHNOLOGIES, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT WE ALL SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CREATING AN AI THAT FOLLOWS WELL-DEFINED ETHICAL GUIDELINES AND RESPECTS FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN VALUES. THIS INCLUDES INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS, PRIVACY PROTECTION, NON-DISCRIMINATION, FAIRNESS, AND NON-MANIPULATION.

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