Internal Silos Are An Overlooked Problem That Can Hurt Search Performance via @sejournal, @coreydmorris

Sometimes, SEO success isn’t about technical factors, content, or backlinks – or even about adapting to the changes prompted by AI.

Many times, companies unknowingly have their SEO investments or efforts sabotaged by internal silos.

At best, silos can cause slow implementation and, at worst, missed opportunities and budget that is wasted on the effort overall.

I admit: There were times, two decades ago, when I was doing SEO for over a dozen clients, that I enjoyed the level of control that I had over content, technical factors, website updates, and more. Clients were fine handing off these tasks, which gave me more direct influence on rankings, traffic, and conversions.

Today, though, I’m good with the fact that SEO requires multiple disciplines and a much bigger focus on the end user rather than the search engine itself.

One of the biggest barriers to SEO success today is internal silos which can impact strategy, integration, speed, and focus that can negatively impact the return on investment (ROI).

I’m going to unpack five specific silos that I see often within organizations of varying sizes and focus on helping you

improve SEO collaboration to see your efforts and investments through to success.

1. Compartmentalization Of Strategy

For a number of reasons, SEO can be put into a silo or looked at as a tactic and not a channel within the broader mix of digital marketing, or marketing overall for a company or organization.

It can be an extra “hat” that someone wears. Or, you can have a habit of looking at it as if you’re going to apply SEO to something.

When SEO is something you ‘apply’ to something, a tactic, or a split focus, it isn’t going to work well or often.

To be effective, it requires a strategic and goal-driven approach. There is too much complexity to it for it to be applied to something at the end or sprinkled into things.

SEO strategy development is critical and should be directly linked to broader digital marketing and overall marketing strategy so it is efficient, results-focused, and given a proper level of investment with an expectation of return on that investment.

2. Lack Of Channel Integration

In larger teams with larger agency partners, and even with a single person wearing multiple hats, digital marketing channels can find their ways into silos.

Whether it is a lack of integration of paid search with SEO or broader issues of not connecting other digital channels with similar goals, customer journeys, or funnels, we can find more hidden silos.

Paid search is a good example here, as both SEO and PPC focus on attracting the same audience – searchers who land on a search engine results page.

The real estate is a little different on that page, and the targeting might be as well. Still, if we're not sharing research, analytics, content, and insights, then we're likely duplicating efforts somewhere and creating strategies and tactics in parallel that could be done more effectively in an integrated way.

More broadly, other digital marketing channels like email marketing and social media which are pointing prospects and customers to the website have overlapping needs and efficiency opportunities as well when we blow up the silos and walls between them.

3. Content Strategy Disconnect

I tell someone weekly that content is fuel for the digital marketing channels and platforms we engage with.

A content strategy that is siloed is one of the biggest challenges in an organization.

Back in the day, I would make content decisions and work with SEO copywriters to create content just for SEO needs and purposes.

Social media emerged and did the same. Email marketing was already doing it, too.

I learned quickly how we could all work together from a higher level strategy not to just find new levels of efficiency and cost effectiveness, but also to make sure we were consistent and on-brand in messaging so we weren't wasting our efforts with inconsistent voice, tone, offers, and value propositions in front of our target audiences.

A unified content strategy is crucial for creating content once, on brand, and aligned with the overall marketing goals.

It then provides the specific formats and needs for various channels, such as SEO, to ensure proper prioritization and maximize effectiveness.

4. Data Isolation

When living daily life “in the weeds,” or deep in the details of subject matter, it is easy to look at the specific metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) that matter at that level.

Organic traffic performance might be what you’re evaluating or are graded on if you’re an SEO. On the other side, if you’re a CMO, you might be handed a report or linked to a dashboard showing very detailed SEO results.

Does your organization have integrated data? Can you see top-level digital marketing metrics and drill all the way down to SEO results? Can you ladder up from SEO to the ultimate impact it is having on digital marketing ROI?

One of the biggest frustrations I hear from executives and business owners is that they struggle to connect the dots between the SEO reporting they’re seeing and the company’s bottom line. That’s a problem.

If a CFO or someone unfamiliar with SEO is trying to make the connection, then you have a data isolation problem and need to better integrate your data across channels, teams, and functions to map digital marketing performance to business outcomes.

5. Web Development Bottleneck

If those responsible for SEO aren’t also responsible for

website development and updates, then this can be a very real silo for you and maybe not one that is all that hidden.

Early in my career, working with a national restaurant chain, I had a set of recommendations and needs to move the brand forward in each local market.

I had the unique content for each location ready, along with a dynamic system for implementing it from a database (before open-source CMS platforms were a thing).

It was estimated to take three days for the development team to complete the update. After a few months of pulling it all together, we encountered a roadblock.

The client's IT team wasn't able to get to it for six months! They were in the middle of a core system update for their restaurants and couldn't spare a minute to address it, as they didn't have the budget or infrastructure to allow an outside entity into their environment.

I can tell you countless stories of in-house resources and third-party resources that are similarly booked up, aren't read into the impact, or aren't prioritized around the needs of SEO strategies and goals. This is an important silo to break down.

Wrapping Up

Maybe you feel like your SEO efforts are hitting on all cylinders. I hope that's the case.

The insights I unpacked in this article are simply a set of important reminders or things to be mindful of and make sure don't become silos and roadblocks in your organization.

Maybe something here struck a nerve or hit directly on what you're experiencing. If that's you, then please don't give up.

I have talked with many CMOs, marketing directors, business owners, and others over the years who were convinced that SEO doesn’t work and that it isn’t for them.

While in some edge cases that’s true, I often dig a level or two deeper to find hidden silos or barriers that were challenges from the start that weren’t addressed and were the root cause holding them back.

More Resources:

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