

5 massive SEO and content shifts you need to master right now

Google's focus on optimizing for the user never goes away, which is why its continual updates are always targeted at both SEO and content best practices.

These can range from core algorithmic changes and new features and products. For example, this can include SERP format changes and new ranking signals to avoid low-quality content to understand consumer behavior better. With Google's focus on user experience, it is no surprise that they have been rolling out updates to improve search and site experiences.

Some of the most recent changes were aimed at improving page speed and Core Web Vitals, as well as product reviews which shows how much importance Google places upon providing quality content. The helpful content update (HCU) focuses on content for human users, rather than just for ranking (over-optimizing) and not really giving people anything useful when looking for information!

Some marketers have struggled to keep up with and adapt to these changes. Meanwhile, other brands are thriving.

Why?

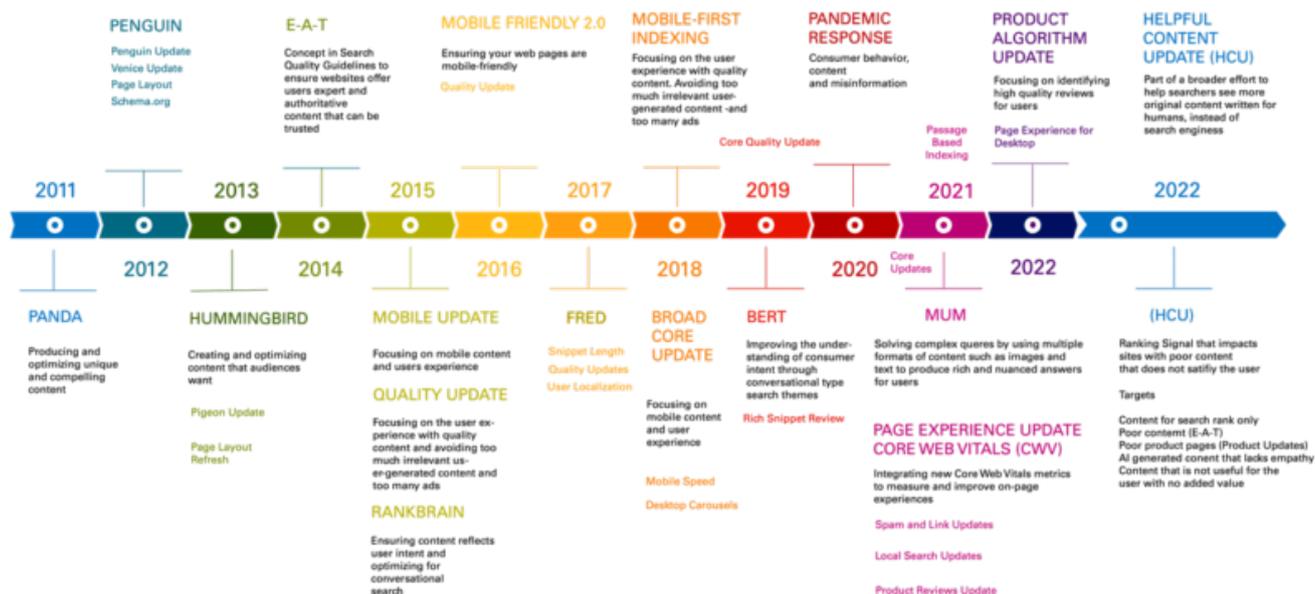
Because they have learned to stay ahead of Google's ever-evolving algorithms by focusing on quality content.

Savvy marketers know that they must have similar goals to Google. That means providing content that resonates, engages and converts – wherever, whenever and however consumers discover it.

It's essential to not just look at where Google is today but

where Google is heading over the next six months, next year and beyond. If you can keep pace with these momentous shifts, you can stay ahead of Google and your competition to dominate online in your industry.

GOOGLE'S FOCUS ON THE USER (HUMAN) EXPERIENCE UPDATES, ALGORITHMS AND RANKING SIGNALS



The best way to stay ahead is to focus your efforts on content and optimization for the user, not the algorithm.

It's time to start thinking forward – and fast! Below are five SEO shifts you need to master as we head into the latter part of this year.

1. From SEO just to rank to 'SEO for content convergence and performance'

Just as content alone isn't enough to guarantee SEO success, SEO alone isn't enough to ensure that people will find and engage with your content.

As Danny Goodwin highlights in a recent article, content needs to:

- Be created for a specific audience.
- Feature expertise.
- Be trustworthy and credible.
- Meet the searcher's want(s) or need(s).

The old days of irrelevant content and over-optimizing just for rank means that good SEO and content marketers have a unique opportunity. Those who use good SEO practices and align better with their content partners and writers stand to win in the long term.

Now, more than ever, data can help marketers understand consumer intent to create quality content that aligns with the customer journey and satisfy the human user.

Here's how marketers can master this shift.

Ensure your content creation is based on intent-led data

Content marketing without data lacks purpose. Data is becoming a key source of business and content intelligence.

Utilize SEO data to understand user intent, define correct audiences, and provide relevant topics people want to read and engage with.

Track and measure these to gain the insights you need to create meaningful content that people want to consume and improve future content marketing efforts.

Foster search, social and content synergy

In combination, organic search, social and content help brands achieve their goals and objectives. Creating high-quality content with SEO in mind from the beginning boosts search visibility.

That great content can then be further amplified via social

media, creating demand you can harvest later via search.

Maximize your search engine results page (SERP) footprint

Create and optimize high-ROI content like articles and videos to help people (by answering important or popular questions or providing practical information) or capitalize on trendy topics.

Then help your brand further stand out in the SERPs by winning real estate with featured snippets, site links, related questions, images, videos and tweets.

2. From mobile-first to ‘the need for mobile speed’

For years, Google told marketers about the coming shift to mobile-first – and it finally arrived. Today, optimizing for mobile search, devices, and usability is no longer optional. It’s mandatory.

This is especially true with Core Web Vitals, where the initial focus was on mobile rather than desktop.

While many brands have become mobile-ready, many forget that mobile speed matters the most. Google has begun to factor mobile loading times into its ranking algorithm, which means increasing site speed can help your website gain in the SERPs.

Here’s how marketers can master this shift.

Make your mobile SEO fast and furious

In addition to being attractive and easy to navigate, mobile websites must be fast. About 53% of mobile users leave sites that take more than three seconds to load, according to Google research.

Therefore, following technical mobile SEO best practices (e.g., image optimization, redirects, JavaScript, and CSS) is a necessary barrier to entry in today's digital world.

Consider contextual mobile content

Focus on creating content that mobile users want and will find valuable. Typically, mobile users are in research mode – searching for information they need or need some inspiration.

Make sure your brand is there and influences that decision when they're ready to convert, which is more likely to be on a desktop or in-store than on a smartphone.

Design for mobile

CDNs can be a great way to make your media load faster.

One way of doing this is by consulting Google's latest developer documentation on image optimization and adhering to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Working with front-end developers ensures that lightweight crafted HTML5/CSS will help you stay within industry standards while focusing primarily on "is the user getting what they came for." Ensure your design works well enough so as not to hinder their experience.

Get the daily newsletter search marketers rely on.

The hyperlocal opportunity has never been greater for marketers. Hyperlocal targeting lets you reach people based on their location. This is an excellent way for brands to capitalize on "near me" searches and "I-want-to-go" micro-

moments and become hyper-relevant and valuable.

It's worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic caused many shoppers to choose between online shopping vs. in-store. There's been a steady increase of people buying from websites on their phones with just one click, according to a Digital Commerce 360 ecommerce study.

Here's how marketers can master this shift.

Own local search

Make sure critical contact information that people search for is prominent or easy to find. This includes name, address, phone, hours and directions.

Hyperlocal optimization = hyper important

Google's personalized hyperlocal results give more visibility to smaller geographic locations.

Optimize your Google Business Profile, create localized content and landing pages, use local business Schema markup and monitor the performance of your local keyword rankings.

Build on the intersection of local and mobile

People who do local searches on smartphones have higher intent.

Optimizing for local also means optimizing for users who are on the go. These people have different needs and expectations than those doing local searches on other devices.

Understand and adapt

Some people still prefer visiting brick-and-mortar stores when they need something.

However, most consumers now search for products first through Google or other platforms before making purchases at physical locations as well. Monitor how these trends change over time by tracking ranking fluctuations across industries.

4. From text to voice to 'multiple search entry points'

To be successful in today's competitive market, marketers need to build comprehensive strategies that drive interactions at every search entry point. This includes TV sets and smartphones and extends to IoT devices like smart plugs or lightbulbs.

As marketers collect this data, we become a virtual user group, gathering information and understanding where what and why people search.

Here's how marketers can master this shift.

Understand the customer experience

From product development, customer acquisition, and sales through to service, post-sales support, and loyalty, consumers are searching at every stage to find just what they need at any particular moment.

Search is a window into the user experience every step of the way, so utilize it.

Ensure consumers have an enjoyable experience from start to finish

You must provide them with what they desire: seamless experiences across all channels without any unnecessary hassle or hindrance.

Get smart about intelligent agents

Many voice searches happen at home, in the car, or on the go, resulting in a more connected world. These intelligent agents use semantics, search history, and user interests and behaviors to provide the best results.

So, make sure content is aligned with the intent and interests of customers at the right moment of the decision journey. Be the best answer.

5. From data to machine learning to 'intelligent automation'

Google relies on machine learning, in the form of RankBrain, MUM, and its core technologies, to make sense of the massive amounts of data and deliver the best possible search results for users.

We know that the pandemic helped accelerate every organization's journey to digital transformation. The next step in that process is evolution and who can progress with ease, speed and efficiency.

As marketers, we, too, must turn to data science and machine learning to understand our audience's intent, interests, and behavior so we can deliver and personalize the content they want.

Here's how marketers can master this shift.

View data as a source of truth

Martech stacks are being built around data integrations and performance because we simply have too much data and not enough analysts or hours in the day to make sense of it all.

To capitalize on demand, spot patterns, and stay ahead of the

competition, marketers need to go beyond the “what” of data to understand the “when” and “why” of analytics.

Utilize AI and machine learning

Machine learning helps marketers spend less time analyzing data and more time creating content that will engage and influence prospects and customers.

Let AI and machine learning deliver actionable insights about your audience and content performance. Do not let it write content for you.

Define metrics and measurement

Data allows marketers to make better and more accurate decisions more quickly. Define the metrics that matter to your brand, and monitor your search and content data.

This will allow you to track your progress, iterate and improve your content production and organic search optimization for greater visibility and a greater share of voice.

Conclusion

SEO and data are essential for a successful integrated digital strategy with tangible ROI.

By understanding the five points above and consistently measuring your results, you will demonstrate that creating compelling, engaging, thoughtful content is the path to revenue and genuinely worth the investment.

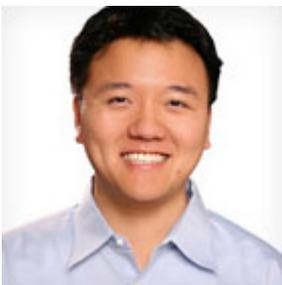
SEO plays a vital role in providing insights, optimizing and measuring content – content has become the cornerstone of any good SEO campaign.

Opinions expressed in this article are those of the guest author and not necessarily Search Engine Land. Staff authors are listed here.

Related Stories

New on Search Engine Land

About The Author



Jim Yu is the founder and CEO of BrightEdge, the leading enterprise content performance platform. He combines in-depth expertise in developing and marketing large on-demand software platforms with hands-on experience in advanced search, content and digital marketing practices.

<https://searchengineland.com/5-massive-seo-content-shifts-need-master-right-now-274647>