

The New Search Engine Optimization {Putting Searchers First}

Search Has Changed

Technology changes everything. We can all agree on that statement right? Technology changes our experiences, and our expectations.

Think about your car. If your car is relatively new it probably has all kinds of technology in it that wasn't there 20 years ago. Your car probably has a navigation system, satellite radio, a WiFi hotspot, back up cameras, parallel park assistance and more. Ultimately your car is still a car. You still get into it and drive from point A to point B. Your user experience has changed drastically.

This has happened with search. 20 years ago you would go to a search engine (probably Lycos, Alta Vista, or Ask Jeeves) and type in some keywords. The search engine would try to match those keywords to a page on the web, and you would have to sift through the results to find the best one.

Google changed everything when they introduced PageRank in 1998. PageRank (named after Larry Page) was created to try and deliver a better user experience. To go back to the car analogy, PageRank was like the first car to have cup holders.

PageRank was created by Google to go beyond just simply matching keywords. Google started looking for other factors to determine where web pages should rank in search results. The idea was that giving users higher quality search results would provide a better user experience.

Like automobile manufacturers, Google couldn't stop at simply providing cup holders. They had to continue to adapt and change. Since 1998 Google has announced many changes to how they rank sites. Currently their ranking system (algorithm) delivers personalized search results that are different for every user. One update, called Hummingbird, was rolled out to understand the meaning behind searches.

Bing (the smaller of the two Gorillas in the search jungle) has recently made some aggressive user focused changes. As Windows 10 rolls out, search will be a central piece of the operating system. When you are looking for something, you won't even have to open your browser. Just search and Windows will search your machine, and then search the web.



You Are Competing With Everyone

As we look to the future of search, some have speculated that pages will be ranked on how factual they are. That means all those boring cliché marketing messages about how companies have best in class, cutting edge, industry leading technology are in big trouble.

Search Isn't All That Has Changed

When we look at all of the ways that search has changed in the last 20 years, it's even more staggering to see how much the Internet has changed. The Internet has gone from something you access through an annoying dial up tone to something that can automate your entire life.

The Internet is now the Internet of things. I can access the Internet through a computer, tablet, laptop, glasses, watch, car, and more. The Internet can open garage doors and unlock my house when I come home from work. The Internet can predict what I want before I want it. The Internet is quickly making the world of the Jetson's a reality.

In addition to that, the Internet itself has changed. 20 years ago most people who were "surfing the net" did not create content for the web. Now **everyone creates content... on many different platforms**. Thanks to social media, everyone is a publisher. Most of us create about as much content as we consume. When you think about that as a marketer, you have to understand that you are no longer competing with other companies for space and attention.

You are competing with everyone!



Aim Higher.

We Need To Keep Up...We Need To Do Better {We Need to Change}

Here's the problem with SEO as it stands today. We know that search is advancing at an alarming rate. We know that the Internet and technology is capable of predicting what we want before we want it, and **we are still concerned with SEO tactics that were used back when we had to get an AOL disc to get online.**

We need to keep up, and we need to do better as marketers. We can do this by changing with the times. We need to understand that the user experience online is so very different than it was 5 years ago and even more different than it was 10 years ago. What drives all of that change? User experience.

The reason Google developed PageRank? User experience. The reason Microsoft is adding search to the core of Windows 10? User experience. The reason smartphones are trying to predict what we need before we need it? User experience. The reason USB chargers have replaced cigarette lighters in cars? User experience.

The user is on the web to do the same things they have always done, but now the web is offering a better experience. As marketers we need to offer a better user experience or we will lose to the competitor that does.



Rethink SEO

How To Create a Better User Experience.

We've heard a new buzz phrase in the SEO world. SEO is going through a bit of a rebrand. In the past it has always stood for Search Engine Optimization. The problem with that term is that all of the focus is on the search engine. This is very misleading. The buzz phrase we are hearing lately is **Search Experience Optimization**. We find this to be a much more accurate description of what we do every day.

Let's use that as step one. We need to acknowledge that the search engine is not the audience, the user is the audience. We need to optimize for an experience, not for an algorithm.

The Good News and The Bad News

There is good news and there is bad news. The good news is that the new SEO formula is easier than ever before. The bad news is that it is more complicated than ever before.

SEO is easier now because the user experience comes first (which isn't anything new but there is a reinvigorated emphasis on the user). Everything you will do can come back to the question of **"is this good for the user?"**

SEO is also more complicated because there are so many more moving pieces that factor into your performance. Here are some of the big moving pieces.

- Users are in many different places
 - » Social
 - » Search
 - » RSS readers
 - » Email
- Search engines are presenting information to users in different ways
 - » Knowledge Graph
 - » Google Now
 - » One Box Answers
- Technology has changed the game
 - » Mobile Devices
 - » Apps
 - » Etc...

The New SEO Formula



{Step 1} Set Your Goals

Before you start think about what success looks like to you, remember that SEO is **NOT** about ranking number 1 for a bunch of keywords.

SEO is about getting **well qualified traffic** to your site.



With that in mind, set goals for what you think **well-qualified traffic** looks like. For example do they...

- » Download resources?
- » Fill out contact forms?
- » Buy your products?
- » View key pages on your site?
- » Sign up for newsletters?

You'll want to be able to measure all of this by channel. Because we are talking about search traffic specifically, you will want to be able to measure how often visitors come from search engines and do the things that you want them to do. (**PRO TIP:** It is important to keep this in mind as you work on all other on and offline marketing.)

Know Your Process

You need to know how you are going to turn a website visitor into a customer. If you don't have this process in place you will be wasting valuable traffic that is visiting your website.

Start Your SEO Change Now

1. Set your goals - Clearly describe your Goal and outcomes you hope to achieve.

(Example: More leads for a specific service, more sales for a specific location, etc.)

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. Who is the ideal customer/prospect for achieving that goal?

(Get as specific as possible.)

3. How do you plan on converting that ideal customer from a website visitor to a customer?



The New SEO Formula

{Step 2}

Create Something Truly Great

This is not new advice. For years we have heard many clichés about content. “Content is king.” “Create new and original content.” “Write a blog.” This is all fine and good, but it misses the big point.

Wil Reynolds from SEER Interactive nails it when he asks this question:

“If you took all of your content off the web today, would anyone miss it?”

That is the question you need to ask yourself. When you answer “yes” truthfully, you have made something truly great.

→ With that in mind, set goals for what you think **well-qualified traffic** looks like.



Worksheet {Step 2}



Make Something Great

1. Who is my audience?

2. What is the one thing my audience needs to know?

What are they coming to your site to find?

3. What do they need to know about that one thing that they don't even know they need to know yet?

4. How do they like to receive information?

Video, Text, Audio, All of the above?

5. Where is your audience when they need to know this?

Are they searching search engines? Are they asking social networks?

6. How will you create this information in a way that search engines can access it and present it?

The New SEO Formula

{Step 3}

Promote Your Truly Great Pieces Of Work

You've created some great content and posted it to Facebook. Sit back relax and watch the leads flood in. Then it happens, nothing. You start to feel that pit in your stomach. You spent all that time creating great content and now you sit with no results to show for it.

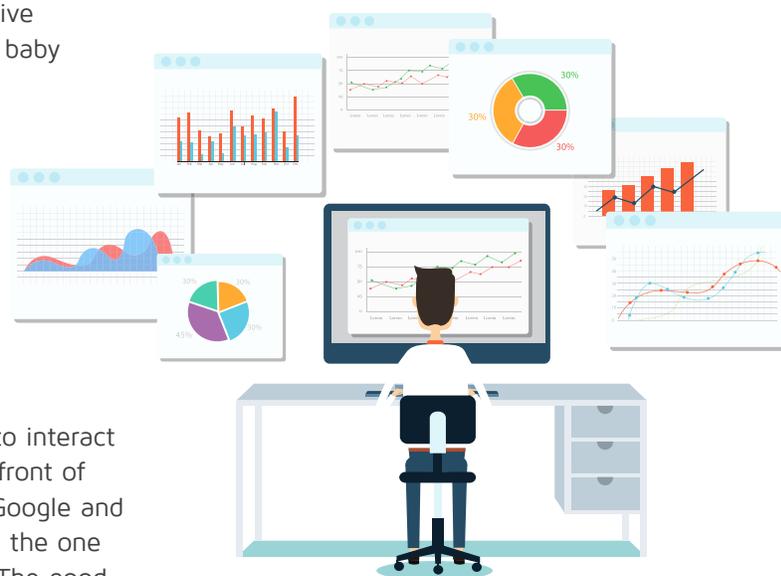
Here's what we need to realize. SEO, as we've already said, needs to focus on the user. Search engines and social media channels are doing just that. Search engines want to show searchers the best answer to their question. Social media outlets want to show users what they are most interested in.

That means, when it comes to search, you are competing with every other business, consumer group, journalist and everyone else who is writing a blog. In social you are competing with your audience's friends, family members, and their favorite band/actor/sports team.

On Facebook alone you have to 2.23 billion monthly active users. Your content has to be better than a whole lot of baby pictures... and that is hard to do.

So what does this have to do with Search Engine Optimization? Remember that search engines are using user signals as one way to rank search results. That means if you create something that many people link to, or share on social media, or even interact with on social media, that piece of content is more likely to perform well in search results.

Promoting your content gives your audience more time to interact with it. Promoting your content will put your content in front of your audience. Without promotion you are hoping that Google and Facebook are going to do this work for you. I hate to be the one to break it to you, but it is not going to work that way. The good news is that you know your audience so well (because you created content for them) that it will be very easy to target them and you won't need to rely on Facebook and Google.



Measure, Measure, Measure

This is the biggest struggle for online marketers. Remember in step 1 we talked about setting your goals? Many marketers forget about this when they start promoting content through any paid channel. It would be like if you decided to lose 20 pounds. Then you go out and spend a ton of money on a diet plan and some books and exercise equipment. Then after spending all that money you forget to weigh yourself to see if it actually works. See Step 4 to find out what works and how to do more of that.

Worksheet {Step 3}

How To Measure Success

1. Did you reach your goal?

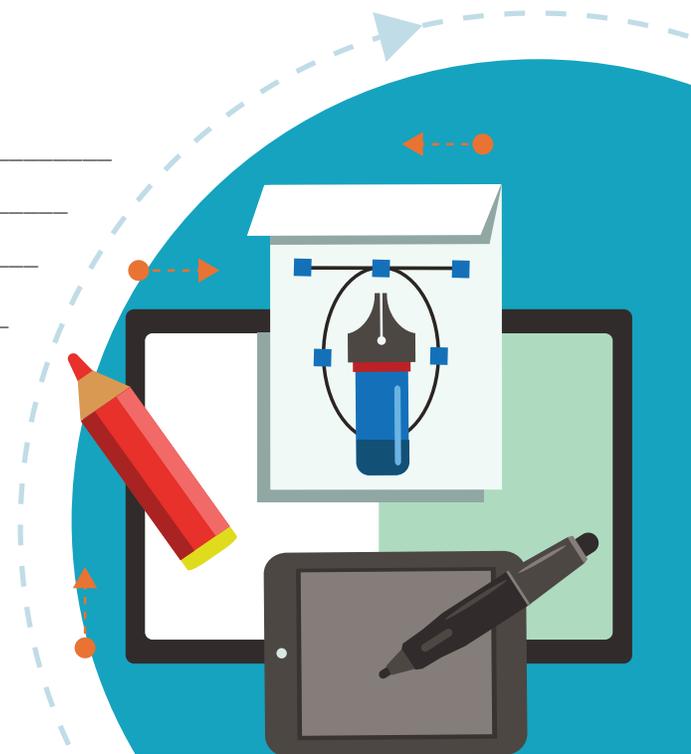
YES NO

If YES – What part of the process allowed you to be most successful?

If YES – How can you apply what worked to other areas of your marketing?

If NO – What part of the process didn't work?

If NO – How will you try to fix what didn't work?



The New SEO Formula

{Step 4}

Find Out What Works...Make It Better...Do More Of That

By now you've set your goals, created great content, promoted it, and placed it in front of your ideal target audience. This is when things start to get easier. Remember when you learned how to ride a bike? It was scary right? You were nervous and probably took some spills that led to stinging scrapes, bumps, and bruises. After a while you learned how to ride. You learned what works, and you got better at it.

We are going to take the same approach to your content. You're going to love it too. How often do you sit in front of your keyboard and think, "what am I going to write about today?" When you find out what works, then make it better, and then do more of that, you no longer have to answer that question.

If you don't have any content, follow this process from step 1 a few times. After that look at all of your goals and see what content is working and what content is not working. You'll start to see trends.

Make What Works Better

Trends will help you identify what your audience wants and where you can improve for your audience. For example, you sell breakfast food. When you write about pancakes you get an amazing response, but when you write about waffles nothing. **This tells me you have two jobs to do.**



1

Review your pancake content and make it better. Could the pictures be better? Could you tweak the title? Could you reach out to a new audience? What can you do to keep improving that single page on your site? What else can you say about pancakes.

2

If waffles are an important part of your business, go back to step one and keep trying.

Worksheet {Step 4}

Work Better!

1. Review your work. Did you reach your ideal customer or prospect?

YES NO

2. Do an eye test. Does your content still look up-to-date? Does it still work?
What works about it?

3. How can you make your content and process better?

(Example: Better presentations, better promotion, stronger Call-to-Action)

4. Make your changes and repeat the process. Is it working better?

5. Start the process again with a different audience or goal in mind.

Think of a different goal you want to accomplish and repeat this process.





New Search Experience Optimization

When it's all said and done we have to remember that for the future of SEO success you have to focus on the user first. We covered a lot, so let's take a look at the important pieces.

- » SEO is all about the user experience.
- » Ranking success is influenced by user experience.
- » Set your goals and know what success looks like to you.
- » Create the best content that you can possibly create.
- » Promote that content and don't expect social media and search engines to do the work.
- » Measure everything.
- » Make things that work, work better.
- » **REPEAT!**

Stop focusing on ranking and start focusing on being GREAT!

Resources

Find out more information from these reliable resources:

- » [Jeffalytics Measuring Content](#)
- » [Finding Most Viewed Blog Post](#)
- » [Find what works in your industry with Buzzsumo](#)

