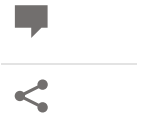




XURZON - FOTOLIA



Are we seeing the death of search engine optimisation?



Peter Ray Allison

As old-style SEO techniques head out to pasture, data analytics becomes a core capability for organisations' web strategies



THIS ARTICLE COVERS
Content management

The changing field of search engine optimisation (SEO) means IT professionals involved in website development increasingly need to take on the role of data analyst in order to fully understand a website's audience and consumer behaviour.

RELATED TOPICS

- Big data**
- Business intelligence and analytics**
- BPM**
- Quality/governance**
- Data warehousing**
- Database management**

Sections

- More balanced response
- Skillset has shifted
- Social media sharing
- Tagged for remarketing
- Read More



Related Content

Get Quotes: Find the best Search Engine Optimisation
 ...
 - ComputerWeekly

Google penalises Interflora and UK newspapers for ...
 - ComputerWeekly

SEO (search engine optimization)
 - WhatIs.com

Latest News

Spending review: Osborne gives NHS £1bn for technology boost

Emergency Services Network gets funding boost in Spending Review

Internet search engines rank websites based on internal algorithms that determine how relevant a website is for each user’s search request. Websites that have undergone **SEO** will naturally rank higher than others, as the search engine’s algorithm will determine that this is the more appropriate website.

As users rarely go beyond the first page of an internet search, typically the first 10 results, a high search engine ranking is crucial for a company to remain competitive in today’s digital markets.

Google has recently updated its algorithm that determines

how it ranks search engine results. Previously, these results were based on a website’s keyword descriptions and meta-tags. These were embedded within each page of the website by SEO specialists, so that the websites with the most appropriate keywords would appear higher in the results for relevant internet searches.

Following this update to its algorithm, Google now also take into account a website’s audience behaviour and each user’s online preferences when it comes to ranking search results. For example, Google will make a note of the different subjects written in Gmail and take this into account when relevant internet searches are conducted in the future.




Theoretically, this is good news for everyone. If someone is interested in what you do, and your content matches their search parameters, then they are more likely to see your page.

“If you want to see an unadulterated results page, look at something you Google a lot while logged in, then switch to incognito mode and try the same search,” says Dave Convery, content manager at Simple-talk.com. “You will almost certainly see some different pages, and probably a different order to your results.”

More balanced response

98% of the *Forbes* Global 100 **rely on Riverbed** for superior application performance.

Imagine what we could do for **you.**

[LEARN MORE](#)

Only a quarter of banking professionals think incumbents are main competition

+ More News

Download
Computer Weekly



IN THE CURRENT ISSUE:

- **How technology delivers aid to Syrian refugees in the Middle East**
- **Gravity forces the need for hardware efficiency at special effects studio**
- **Council IT chiefs outline plans to create 'London Supercloud' for local authorities**

Download Current
Issue

Google's new system does not supersede its previous ranking system, but works alongside existing techniques to create a more balanced response. Although this update may add a level of complexity to how internet search algorithms are designed, it was undertaken so that search engines can provide an increasingly accurate service for each user.

At the moment, these changes apply only to Google, but it would be reasonable to expect other search engine providers to adopt similar techniques in the near future. "Google's market penetration is so deep that other search engine providers, such as Bing or Yahoo, should absolutely be following in the trail Google is blazing," says freelance web designer Richie Janukowicz.

Google has not revealed how it determines audience behaviour, or how this affects search rankings. However, SEO consultants have determined that popular sharing across social media, and a positive user experience on the website, will improve its ranking within the appropriate Google search results.

Determining what was, or was not, a positive user experience on a website is based on how long users remain on a webpage and whether they follow links to other pages within the website. It has also been determined that if users quickly leave a website, this will have a detrimental effect on the site's search rankings.

This means that websites need to be well designed, with appropriate and engaging content, in order to provide a good user experience.

Sarah Arbuthnot, director of *World Archipelago*, says: "SEO needs to change to [match] the internet, in order to mature properly."

Skillset has shifted

No longer can SEO consultants rely on simply meta-tagging the appropriate keywords into the individual pages of a website and claim that the website has been optimised for search engines, she says. "The skillset has shifted a bit, and you are better off getting a data analyst to understand your audience."

CW+
Features**E-Handbook**[Healthcare Data Access Compliance](#)**E-Handbook**[A Computer Weekly Buyer's Guide to Big Data Appliances](#)**E-Handbook**[Secunia Vulnerability Review](#)

Enjoy the benefits of
CW+ membership, [learn
more and join.](#)

Because of the amount of data that websites can now harvest from their visitors, SEO consultants need to be able to analyse and interpret this data, using tools such as [SEOMoz.com](#) or [Google Analytics](#). These tools enable companies to identify user trends as well as how best to optimise their website to meet users' demands.

Another tool that SEO consultants can use is [WooRank](#), which analyses a website and highlights the different areas that need to be improved to ensure the site is suitably optimised. WooRank can also benchmark a website against its competitors, enabling companies to identify their website's relative strengths and weaknesses.

"[GTmetrix](#) is my go-to place for checking site loading speeds," says Janukowicz. "Even the free version gives you a detailed report into what is slowing your site down."

Rather than competing directly, smaller companies should consider studying what their competitors are doing and identify niche areas to specialise in, with the aim of becoming market leaders in that particular area.

Through targeting these niche areas, companies are better placed to establish their online presence more rapidly, providing a solid foundation for subsequent expansion.

[Simple-talk.com](#)'s Convery recommends companies to use SEO tools to "look for what people are searching and identifying gaps in their [competitors] coverage".

Read more about search engine optimisation and data analytics

- [Search engine optimisation](#) defined.
- [Web localisation efforts that overlook how regional factors can alter search engine optimisation ranking](#) run the risk of diminished returns.
- [Google is adding mobile performance to its SEO equation](#), and that has companies re-evaluating their web strategy to avoid losses in search rankings.

This highlights the fact that SEO is no longer a reactive process, but a proactive one. Companies need to monitor their websites' performance regularly to ensure they remain fully optimised and so rank highly within internet search results.

SEO tools can also identify trends in how and when users approach and interact with a website, as well as highlighting pages that are performing exceptionally well and those that are under-performing.

For example, if 90% of a company's web traffic is seen to come from people using mobile devices, this suggests the website needs to be optimised to be adequately displayed on these devices. Similarly, if there is an approximate time for when users visit the site each day, the website will need to have fresh content uploaded in time to maintain readers' interest.

“Using Google Analytics [when used in conjunction with a Google Webmaster Tools account], you can really pin down the demographics most associated with your site,” says Janukowicz. “You can see [in real time] how many users are visiting your site, where they are from, what they are looking at and how much time they are spending. This is invaluable data – not just for big corporations, but for small to

Websites need footfall, like high-street shops, so understanding who these people are walking past your shop, how to get them into your shop and mingling around there, is really important

medium businesses, too.”

Sarah Arbuthnot, World Archipelago

“Audience is king,” says World Archipelago’s Arbuthnot – but what drives an audience is content. For this to occur, websites require regular, well-written content, with website pages that adhere to best practices and load quickly.

“Websites need footfall, like high-street shops, so understanding who these people are walking past your shop, how to get them into your shop and mingling around there, is really important,” says Arbuthnot.

Social media sharing

Social media sharing improves a website’s ranking, so harnessing the power of social media will naturally improve a site’s position in search results. Not only do companies need to provide regular new content, but they also need to be able to share this content with their followers, who will, in turn, share it with their friends.

For this reason, companies need to harness their social media profiles to raise awareness of the new content and to encourage discussion. Due to the diversity of social media platforms, each of the company’s social media accounts must be moderated separately.

Although posts can be shared between [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), and this may save some time, such sharing does not allow the power of these social media platforms to be fully harnessed. For example, the employment of locative data and account-linking cannot be performed when posts are shared between them.

Static websites that sell products are unlikely to be updated with new items each day. In this case, companies need to publish new content about their products regularly. Such a company is [Argos](#), which invests significant effort in writing buyer’s guides for high-value products – guides that people want to read.

Tagged for remarketing

“Once someone is on the page, they are tagged for remarketing with a

tracking cookie, so Argos ads will pop up on Facebook and sites on the [Google Display Network](#), says Convery. “The cost of writing the content, if done well, is compensated for, or hopefully outstripped, by the extra traffic and sales.”

Google has already begun taking authorship into account when ranking websites. Therefore, writers whom Google recognises as having a track record of regularly producing popular articles will naturally boost the ranking of any page they have been identified as writing.

If companies fail to adapt to the changing world of SEO, it may be that they notice little impact in the short term, because many of the recent changes to Google’s search engine complement the existing algorithm. However, in time, such companies are likely to find their website becomes less and less relevant to search engines, leading to a gradually diminishing number of visitors, as their ranking within the search engine algorithms incrementally drops because of lack of up-to-date optimisation.

SEO, as a whole, is not dead. We still need websites to be properly optimised for search engine algorithms. However, the old SEO methods are becoming obsolete.

Internet search engines are slowly evolving into something designed to provide users with what they want, and with increasing accuracy, thus providing the optimal online experience.

This was first published in November 2015

Read more on Content management

ALL

NEWS

IN DEPTH

OPINION

Healthcare Data Access Compliance

Does Cambridge University Hospital’s Epic project indicate NHS lacks capacity?

How the Consumer Rights Act will affect the digital industry

NHS England to publish interoperability handbook

Load More

 **0 comments**

Oldest ▼

Share your comment

Send me notifications when other members comment.

Register or Login

E-Mail

email@techtarget.com

Username / Password

Username

Password

Comment

By submitting you agree to receive email from TechTarget and its partners. If you reside outside of the United States, you consent to having your personal data transferred to and processed in the United States. [Privacy](#)

-ADS BY GOOGLE

Search Death Records



ancestry.co.uk/Death_Records

1) Simply enter their name. 2) Find their death record online.

Latest TechTarget resources

CIO

SECURITY

NETWORKING

DATA CENTER

DATA MANAGEMENT

SearchCIO



Google fortifies search dominance with mobile app streaming

Google's new app streaming feature takes mobile deep linking to the next level. Is this good or bad news for developers? Also in ...



Data-driven decisions win in blackjack -- and in business

Still debating the merits of gut feel vs. data-driven decisions? Take a page from Jeff Ma's book, which tells how he used data to...

About Us

Contact Us

Privacy Policy

Our Use of Cookies

Videos

Photo Stories

Guides

Advertisers

Business Partners

Media Kit

Corporate Site

Experts

Reprints

Archive

Site Map

Events

E-Products

All Rights Reserved, Copyright 2012 - 2015, TechTarget