

SEO

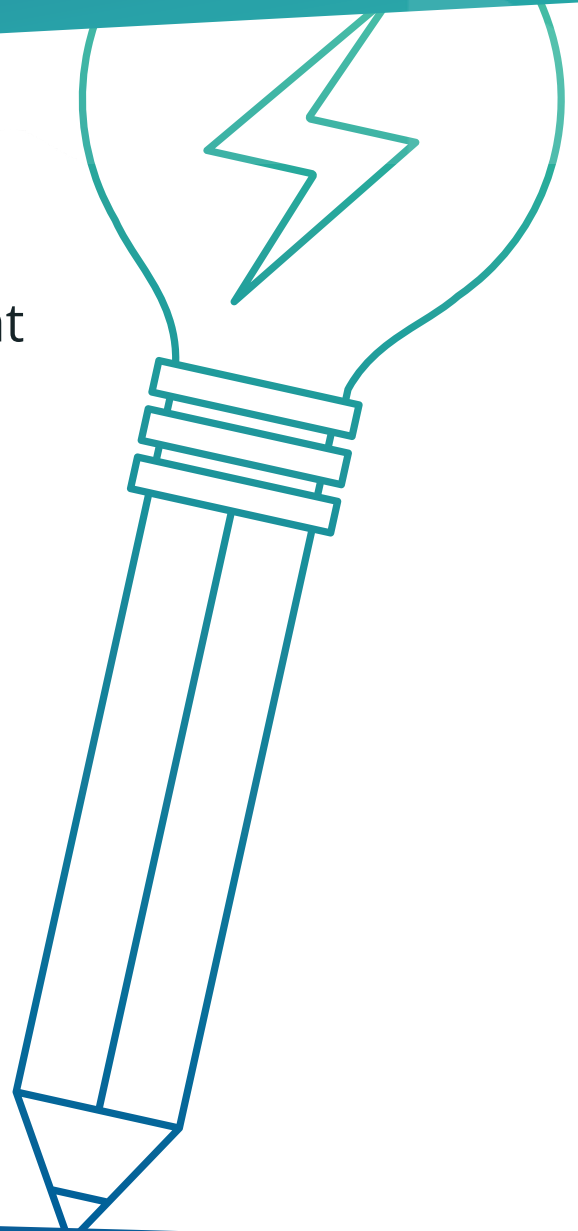
What's In, What's Out for 2018 and Beyond

Are you crafting your content
to keep up with the times?

Contributing Editors

Stacy Jackson

Gregg Rosenzweig



What's Inside

3 Introduction

5 What's IN for 2018

All Our Eyes and Thumbs Will Be on Mobile-First Design

Where Things Are Headed: Featured Snippets

Let It Be Said: Voice Search Is Here

The Power of Personalization

The Art of Link Building

Infinite "People Also Ask"/Related Questions Boxes

34 What's OUT for 2018

Poor User Experience

Misplaced Keyword Focus

Lazy Link Building

Beware of Duplicate Content

50 The Future of SEO — Beyond 2018

The End of (Some) Search Queries

Embracing New Search and Commerce Channels

56 In Conclusion

57 More on ClearVoice



Introduction

To quickly define it, search engine optimization (SEO) is the practice of boosting traffic to a website by way of organic search results from search engines such as Google, Bing, Yahoo! and others. Truth be told, SEO is anything but an exact science. Rather, it's a constantly evolving practice leaving marketers in steady pursuit of the *next big thing* to give their brands the competitive edge in search. Over the past decade, search engines, Google in particular, have made the job of SEO professionals a bit trickier. That is, tactics that once worked — keyword stuffing and mass-quantity link building with no regard for relevance — are considered poisonous practices today.

Some SEO pros may argue that Google has changed the game — and that the rules are no longer the same. **Google and other search engine companies would counter that their end goal hasn't changed: They simply want to provide a quality user experience with fully relevant results, those worthy of page-one placements.** To meet that goal, search engines have closed the loopholes that once allowed site owners to score top search results without putting in the work to earn those spots.

Smart marketers now understand that SEO is about more than taking specific actions to please Google or Bing. The simple answer to doing SEO better in 2018 is to focus on the customer and deliver the right content in a variety of formats that people can access on their chosen device. However, execution against that truth is a bit more difficult to navigate.



Introduction

Going forward, SEO will require much more consideration and planning around the human experience — while still giving consideration to how search engines determine your site's ability to meet users' expectations. As with anything, you'll reap benefits if you're able to strike a balance between the two.

You and your team need to start thinking like...

- » Psychologists: What do your customers want and why?
- » Sociologists: What societal changes and cultural situations drive behavior?
- » Technology experts: What devices do people use and how do they expect technology to serve them?
- » Storytellers: How do you tell a story that conveys what people want while meeting societal or cultural trends?

And of course...

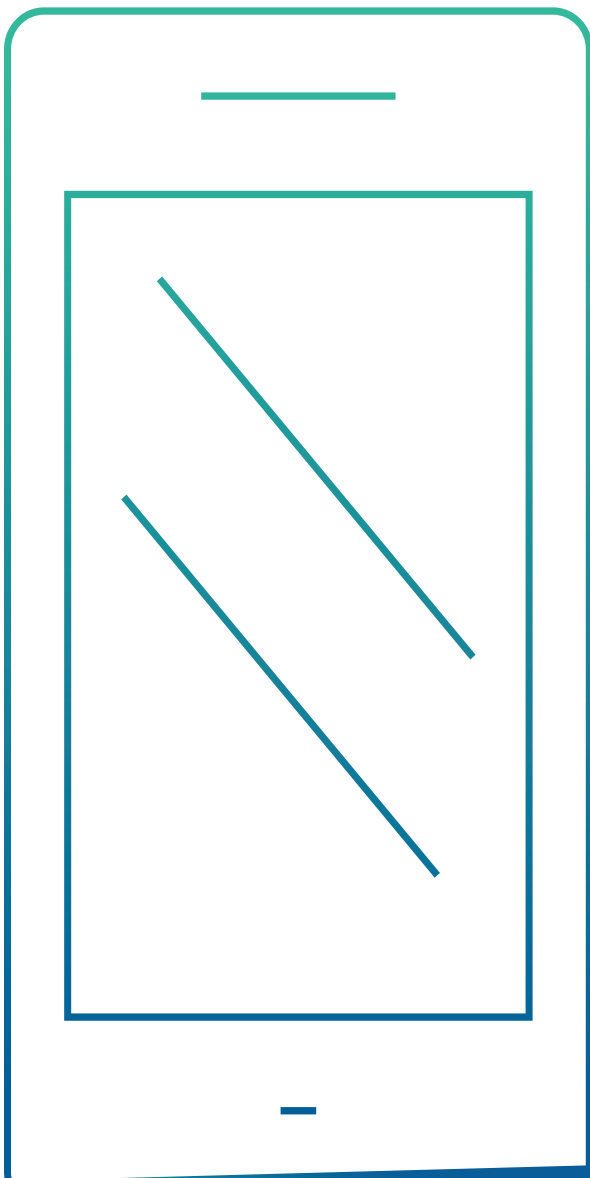
- » SEO experts: How do search engines deliver answers to your target customers?

In this ebook, we'll help you define what's in, what's out, and what's ahead for SEO, calling on experts in the industry to share their perspectives. Use these insights to kick your SEO strategy into gear, for 2018 and beyond.



What's *In* For 2018?

In 2018, digital marketers will need to brush up on some classic search engine optimization skills while also capitalizing on new ones. In this section, you will get a head start on critical new SEO strategy considerations, starting with that smart device we seemingly can't take our eyes off:



The smartphone.

In this section:

- » All Our Eyes and Thumbs Will Be on Mobile-First Design
- » Where Things Are Headed: Featured Snippets
- » Let It Be Said: Voice Search Is Here
- » The Power of Personalization
- » The Art of Link Building
- » Infinite "People Also Ask"/Related Questions Boxes

What's *In* For 2018?

All Our Eyes and Thumbs Will Be on Mobile-First Design

In 2017, SEO and content platform company [BrightEdge](#) reported that 57% of all search traffic on Google occurred on a mobile device. This data alone should light a fire under any site owner who hasn't yet delivered a mobile-optimized user experience. If that stat isn't incentive enough, consider what Robert Bellovin, SEO expert and director of marketing at Gartner, shared with ClearVoice on the topic:

With Google's ever-looming Mobile First Index, not only do digital marketers need to be thinking of UX [user experience] and CRO [conversion rate optimization], but they need to be thinking of how to get the same SEO performance from often abridged mobile content and internal linking.

What does mobile-first design entail? The most obvious consideration is how the site's design is optimized for a smartphone or tablet. However, mobile-first thinking doesn't stop there. Website owners must also consider:

- » Search intent of mobile users
- » Site speed on mobile devices
- » Mobile-friendly navigation
- » Easy-to-interact-with calls to action



What's *In* For 2018?

All Our Eyes and Thumbs Will Be on Mobile-First Design Continued...

You don't have to be a behavioral psychologist to understand the impact of the mobile phone on your buyer's day-to-day behavior. People use their smartphones for everything now – texting and emailing, watching TV and movies, looking up directions, making purchases, getting a ride from Uber or Lyft, taking pictures for Instagram, listening to podcasts and music, and more. Mobile devices are a fundamental part of your target audience's lifestyle. If your site doesn't fit into their lifestyle, you have created an obstacle for them to connect with you.

Even in the business-to-business (B2B) segment, mobile-first design can make an incredible difference. According to [The Boston Consulting Group](#) (BCG), 80% of B2B buyers use their smartphones and other mobile devices on the job. BCG also found 60% of B2B buyers report that mobile played a significant role in purchasing and that around 50% of B2B search queries happen on mobile devices. Suffice to say, smartphones are here to stay – whether you're B2B, B2C or B2-whatever is coming next – so you better start designing for it, writing for it, and optimizing for it.



What's *In* For 2018?

Expert Advice On: **Mobile-First Design**

Talia Wolf, founder and chief optimizer at [GetUplift](#), specializes in “emotional targeting and persuasive design to generate more revenues, leads, engagements and sales” for her clients. Wolf took a few minutes to share her insights with ClearVoice regarding how to optimize your site for mobile:

The key to generating higher ROI from your mobile audience is understanding their emotional intent and designing a customer journey that addresses those needs. We don't use our mobile device as a replacement for the desktop. We use it in a whole different way, for different intents and tasks. Psychologically, on mobile, we have a different intent, different emotional drivers, concerns and needs.

On desktop I may take the time to read through your “About” page, all the features you have and an article. On mobile, I may need your contact details or address; I might want to see some testimonials or reviews to get a sense if you're trustworthy or not; or I might just want to browse your gallery of photos.

Ask yourself: What led mobile prospects to your site? What search terms did they use? Was it brand-oriented or pain-oriented? For example, are they searching for “Slack” or “how to work well in a distributed team?” The prospect's state of awareness, her intent and place in the customer journey is completely different in both searches.

As for how the mobile user experience differs from desktop, Wolf goes on to elaborate on the difference in behaviors.



What's *In* For 2018?

Expert Advice On: Mobile-First Design Continued...

But just don't make assumptions. Wolf implores people to get in touch with their audience to better understand user intent.

Take the time to speak to your mobile visitors and survey and interview them. Track their behavior separately from desktop and map out their distinct behavior. Most importantly, don't treat your mobile visitors as mini-desktop users, but as a different type of customer that requires a unique experience.

In a similar realm, search industry veteran **Scott Litvack**, director of organic search for [Wpromote](#), has spent the last 15-plus years generating SEO and digital marketing experience while developing “performance-driven, organic optimization strategies” for B2B and B2C companies.

Litvack reinforces the importance of ranking on mobile in the era of smartphones.

Mobile-first is coming. With mobile traffic outweighing desktop, making sure your site is better optimized is critical for success. More and more people are consuming content on their mobile devices. If you don't make sure your content is ranking on mobile, you will likely miss out on relevant traffic.



What's *In* For 2018?

Expert Advice On: Mobile-First Design Continued...

If you think the spikes in mobile search and traffic are confined to entertainment and retail, think again. Litvack reveals that his firm has observed changes in mobile traffic in many non-traditional areas – areas once thought previously reserved exclusively for its desktop counterpart.

We've seen one of our financial services clients experience a nearly 7% increase in mobile traffic while seeing a 13% decline in desktop and a 9% decline in tablet traffic over the past year. Currently 73% of their traffic and 65% of their new business leads derive from mobile traffic to their website.

As user behavior changes every day, spikes in mobile search are happening in industry sectors where you might least expect them. Be ready to capitalize as it's only going to get more so as we look ahead.



What's *In* For 2018?

What to Watch Out for With: **Mobile-First Design**

Slapping a responsive theme or design on your website isn't enough by itself, but it's a start — and way more user-friendly than an approach that requires your visitors to pinch and zoom (which is so yesterday). As Talia Wolf mentioned, your mobile customers require a unique experience that is native to the platform. When designing your mobile site, be sure to avoid the following pitfalls that can damage user experience, thus compromising your SEO.

- » Hard-to-read or small-size fonts
- » Fixed-width elements that don't fit a small screen
- » Design that takes too long to load
- » Content that isn't easy to interact with on a phone or tablet
- » Poor mobile navigation
- » Pop-up elements that overlay the majority of the page content

Use Google Analytics, or your preferred analytics platform, to measure mobile device traffic. As you make changes to your mobile site, monitor changes in traffic (especially organic traffic) to understand if your site meets the criteria Google has set for mobile-optimized web experiences.

This will set you well on your way to getting the mobile site you need — and one that mobile users have come to expect.



What's *In* For 2018?

Where Things Are Headed: Featured Snippets

Google's featured snippets (known to some as "answer boxes") have been around for a few years now, and while they are nothing new, featured snippets do represent a growing force in SEO.

Eric Enge, founder and CEO of Stone Temple Consulting Corporation, [wrote in spring 2017](#), "Nearly 30% of 1.4 million Google queries tested now show featured snippets." As Google continues to increase its use of featured snippets, smart brands will optimize content for use as a snippet to win what Moz resident marketing scientist, **Dr. Peter J. Meyers**, [calls "Position Zero."](#)

What is the highly coveted position known as Position Zero? It's the new spot that featured snippets hold on the Google search results page. Ads are still up top, followed by a featured snippet, then maybe a "People also ask" box, and finally the organic search results. Depending on a user's monitor size and settings, "Position One" may be below the fold. On a mobile device, you can almost guarantee organic results will be below the fold when all these other elements are present.

As you can see in the following screen shot graphic, Position Zero is higher up on the page than a traditional search result — and hence, more likely to be seen and interacted with. Highly desirable.



What's *In* For 2018?

Where Things Are Headed: Featured Snippets Continued...

The image shows a Google search interface for the query "how do i get a featured snippet?". The search results page features a prominent featured snippet at the top, which is highlighted with a blue callout bubble labeled "Position #0". This snippet contains a list of five steps for creating content that ranks in snippets. Below the featured snippet is a "People also ask" section, which is highlighted with a purple callout bubble labeled "Position #1". This section lists four related questions, each with a dropdown arrow. The first question is "What is a featured snippet?". The second is "What is a snippet in Google?". The third is "What is the Google answer box?". The fourth is "What is the rank of data?". Below the "People also ask" section is a search result for "How to rank for 'position 0' in 3 simple steps: A featured snippets primer" from searchengineland.com, dated Jun 2, 2017. The search engine logo and navigation links are visible at the top of the page.

Position #0

Google
how do i get a featured snippet?

Videos News Shopping Maps More Settings Tools

About 470,000 results (0.53 seconds)

Here are a few simple steps I've used to create content that ranks in the snippets.

1. Create content specifically to answer questions. Provide in-depth answers. ...
2. Know the questions your readers are asking. ...
3. Create truly high-quality content. ...
4. Work to provide the best answer. ...
5. Use question-and-answer pages.

[Google's Featured Snippets: How to Get Your Content to Appear](https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2017/03/google-featured-snippets/)
contentmarketinginstitute.com/2017/03/google-featured-snippets/

About this result Feedback

Position #1

People also ask

- What is a featured snippet?
- What is a snippet in Google?
- What is the Google answer box?
- What is the rank of data?

Feedback

[How to rank for 'position 0' in 3 simple steps: A featured snippets primer](https://searchengineland.com/rank-position-0-3-simple-steps-featured-snippets-primer...)
https://searchengineland.com/rank-position-0-3-simple-steps-featured-snippets-primer...
Jun 2, 2017 - To get started, head over to "Positions" in "Organic Research." You can then either filter the list of keywords under Advanced Filters by: Include > SERP Features > Featured Snippets, or you can simply select the "Featured snippet" link under the "SERP features" list on the right-hand side of the page.

When Google first launched featured snippets, many in the SEO community feared that snippets would cause click-through rates to drop. However, many sites have seen the opposite effect. [HubSpot](#), for example, has seen a 114% increase in click-through rates for 5,000 high volume keywords thanks to featured snippets.



What's In For 2018?

Where Things Are Headed: Featured Snippets Continued...

The challenge many marketers now have is how to get their content to show up in a featured snippet spot. Even searching the question itself, "How do I get a featured snippet?" displays a featured snippet on Google. Although it is a bit like going down an Inception-like rabbit hole of SEO, it does give you a hint as to the types of content Google wants to promote in Position Zero. And that is...

Content that answers users questions.

Here are a few recommended actions to help you land a featured snippet that answers questions or outlines a process:

1. Focus on a question that you can answer with strong, useful content.
2. Prepare your page so that the search query (*how do you...*, *what is...*, etc.) appears in a header (h2, h3, etc.).
3. Craft a brief answer to the question that is roughly 320 characters including spaces (or 50-55 words), which matches the new maximum length for meta descriptions that Google implemented in December 2017. Also ensure the copy of your answer is captured in a <p> tag directly after the header that features the search query. Don't put an image or other embedded asset between the header and the answer copy.
4. Consider adding an ordered list or the word "step" to subheadings to outline a sequence of actions for a chronological list of steps to appear (Step 1, Step 2, and so forth) in the snippet.
5. Work on SEO basics to get your target page to show up on Google's page one. The majority of featured snippets already hold one of the top five positions in search.



What's *In* For 2018?

Expert Advice On: **Featured Snippets**

As SEO content editor at Ranker.com, **Justin Hussong** spends his days trying to uncover the smartest ways to get crowdsourced content seen — and engaged with — across all genres. He shared the following advice with ClearVoice given the ever-changing world of SEO.

In 2018, quick answers are most definitely in. Time is the ultimate asset, and this is especially true when it comes to search. This means optimizing your content for featured snippets and voice search, i.e., long-tail keywords that relate more to a conversational tone and solve very specific questions. One of every five searches now come from voice, and this will only continue to grow.

Do a little digging. It's likely you'll find an available opportunity that is relevant to your website or business. I had a client in the organic food industry, and we found a featured snippet opportunity for a specific ingredient and then decided to create a long-form, comprehensive blog post containing recipes made with said ingredient. We were able to push it up to the featured snippet within a week!

To fine-tune your approach on this front, Hussong suggests using [SEMRush's Keyword Magic Tool](#) to search for featured snippet opportunities. He also suggests you get creative on how to identify the best way to mine — and ultimately capitalize on — these unique opportunities.



What's In For 2018?

Expert Advice On: Featured Snippets Continued...

Here's an example of how a keyword search can lead to the most common phrasing when it comes to solving a very specific question. Notice the ever-so-slight variation between the search terms.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Keyword		Volume	KD%
<input type="checkbox"/>	why do dogs chase their tails	+	9,900	80.31
<input type="checkbox"/>	why do dogs chase their tail	+	5,400	79.34
<input type="checkbox"/>	dog chasing tail	+	2,900	81.17
<input type="checkbox"/>	dog chasing his tail	+	880	80.02
<input type="checkbox"/>	dog chasing its tail	+	720	80.03
<input type="checkbox"/>	why does my dog chase his tail	+	480	80.42
<input type="checkbox"/>	why does my dog chase her tail	+	320	76.56
<input type="checkbox"/>	why dogs chase their tails	+	260	79.41

Data credit: [How to Do Keyword Research with SEMrush Keyword Magic Tool by Maria Raybould](#)



What's *In* For 2018?

What to Watch Out for With: **Featured Snippets**

Before you start editing or creating pages to improve your featured snippet chances, note that not every site enjoys an increase in click-through rates (CTR). Why? The answer is simple. **Because the purpose of featured snippets is to deliver answers on the spot, right on the search results page.**

Does that mean you shouldn't try to improve your content to capture a snippet? No, of course not. After all, Position Zero can give your brand more visibility and awareness – it just may not result in better click-through.

On the topic of whether or not featured snippets increase the number of clicks, **Tim Soulo**, head of marketing and product strategy at [Ahrefs](#), shared details [on a recent study](#) his firm conducted on featured snippets. Soulo says that Ahrefs' findings might surprise you.

When a featured snippet appears on the search engine results page (or SERP), it gets around 8.6% of clicks. However, a page ranking at organic "Position One" — further down the page, revealing less information about the finding — gets a superior 19.6%. Additionally, when there's no featured snippet on the search results page, Soulo cites that the Position One result gets 26% of all clicks.

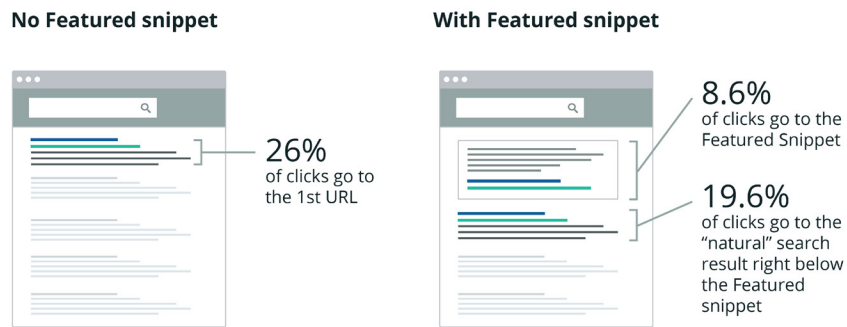
Bottom line: If users get what they need via featured snippet, there may be no need to click-through – not necessarily a bad thing.



What's In For 2018?

What to Watch Out for With: Featured Snippets Continued...

Average CTR of Featured Snippets



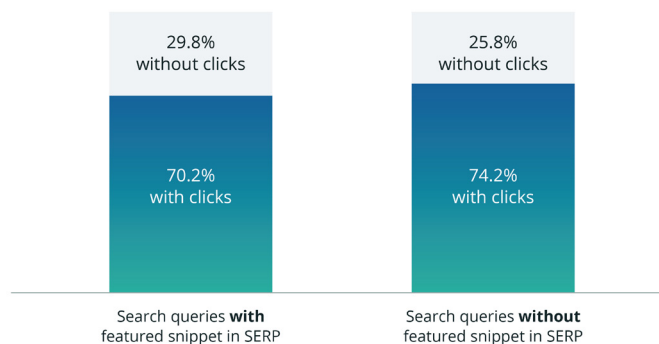
Based on clickstream data from 100k random search queries with monthly search volume of >100 searches per month.

Data credit: [Ahrefs' Study of 2 Million Featured Snippets: 10 Important Takeaways by Tim Soulo](#)

Remember the goal of featured snippets is to provide instant information and answers to searchers. Obviously, instant information reduces the need for a user to even click. With that said, featured snippets are not to be feared. Just approach your pursuit of featured snippets understanding the type of results you may see when you get one. In some cases, you will see an increase in clicks. In other cases, you may only get an increase in awareness, harder to measure but still valuable.

Featured snippets reduce clicks on the search results

(based on clickstream data from 100k random search queries)



Data credit: [Ahrefs' Study of 2 Million Featured Snippets: 10 Important Takeaways by Tim Soulo](#)



What's *In* For 2018?

Let It Be Said: Voice Search Is Here

If you listen closely, the chatter over voice search and digital assistants is getting louder and louder thanks to Amazon Alexa, Apple's Siri and others. The power of the human voice and these digital repartees may be the future of search. That's why the first two points we covered in What's In for 2018 will figure heavily into your potential success... or failure... with voice search.

As mentioned in the previous section on mobile-first design, mobile devices have taken the lead when it comes to web searches. Many smartphone users don't type their search queries; they ask Siri or Google to look up information for them. If your site isn't mobile optimized, you won't show up for search queries – typed or spoken.

Furthermore, Gartner reports that [consumer demand for voice-enabled devices](#) — think Amazon Echo and Google Home — may generate around \$3.5 billion by 2021. In cases where the device only provides a vocal response, you have one shot to get your message heard — featured snippets. [As Stone Temple Consulting's Eric Enge](#) wrote, "The importance of featured snippets can't be overstated. In a world where voice queries and voice responses become more common, what Pete Meyers coined as 'Position Zero' will become 'Position Only.' In other words, you will get only ONE result (initially, at least). Knowing how to become that result will be critical to thriving in a voice-centric world."



What's *In* For 2018?

Let It Be Said: Voice Search Is Here Continued...

Voice-enabled search is happening now and will continue to evolve and change how people search and how marketers develop content. Renowned SEO expert **Danny Sullivan** live-blogged at the 2016 Google I/O (Google's annual developer's conference) about Google's announcement that [20% of mobile queries in the U.S. are voice searches](#). Google's 2017 announcement that it has added [30 new languages to its voice-typing technology](#) allows one to safely assume that voice search will continue to increase. You can even voice type emojis now. Whether that makes you want to say "happy face" or "poop emoji"... only time will tell.



What's *In* For 2018?

Expert Advice On: **Voice Search**

As a voice in the SEO and organic search community, **Scott Litvack** of Wpromote encourages marketers to strongly consider the role of mobile design and acquisition of featured snippets when it comes to voice search in 2018. Here's his advice:

Pay attention to voice search and digital assistants. While it is still early, two studies from Gartner and comScore suggest that between 30% and [50% of searches](#) will be done either without a screen or via voice search by 2020. Creating content that is more natural language based and that answers consumer questions is going to be critical. While voice search queries were initially more focused on trivia (such as what is the capital of Spain), I envision that soon searchers will be asking more product and service related queries like, "Does that shirt come in green in a size six?" Or find a plumber who is available on Saturday.

As voice search becomes more common, here are two additional considerations that go along with user behavior and intent:

1. Voice search queries are more natural and conversational. Think about your conversations with customers and how they ask you questions during those conversations. Mine those discussions for long-tail keyword ideas and phrasing that may match a spoken search query.
2. In the case of mobile digital assistants, many user queries focus on local search intent. This is true whether the query is spoken or typed on a mobile device. As [Search Engine Watch](#) points out, a company's Google My Business profile may be read to the searcher. Incorporating Google My Business and other local-intent queues into your SEO strategy is critical if you depend on local customers.



What's *In* For 2018?

What to Watch Out for With: **Voice Search**

In voice-enabled search, there will be few winners and lots of losers depending on how the searcher conducts his or her voice search. Those users who depend on mobile phone digital assistants when speaking a search query will see a list of search results. These users will have multiple click-through options (at least for now). Users of Google Home and Amazon Echo, on the other hand, will likely hear just a single answer to their inquiries. So, if you're in charge of guiding what that search result is, you'll want to keep reading to make sure you get it right.

Another thing to consider is how voice-enabled devices will change commerce. In fact, it's already happening. An [annual report](#) from PR and B2B digital media agency Walker Sands speaks to the rise of the connected consumer behaviors and how shopper's expectations have changed. "Nearly one in five consumers (19%) have made a voice purchase through an Amazon Echo or other voice-controlled device in the past year, and another 33% plan to do so in the next year." With Amazon Echo, you can guess where most of those purchases are happening, right? Spoiler alert: it's Amazon.

To benefit from these radical changes in the consumer mindset, it would behoove you to take note of three top takeaways for your voice-search strategy:

1. Optimize your mobile site experience.
2. Focus on winning featured snippets and using natural language and long-tail keywords in your content.
3. Think about your overarching business strategy and how to incorporate voice-enabled devices that can impact your sales. For example, [creating an Alexa skill](#) to capitalize on voice sales or voice-enhanced lead generation.



What's *In* For 2018?

The Power of Personalization

Google rolled out [personalized search](#) for everyone way back in 2009. Before that, you saw the same search results for a query as anyone else who searched for the same keyword. With personalized search in play for almost ten years, you'd think people would notice and that companies would incorporate personalization into their SEO strategies. Right? Not so much. Incredibly, [Digital Examiner](#) found that 43.5% of people surveyed didn't realize their search results were personalized.

Does this mean users are so happy with their Google experience they never thought about the fact that the results are personalized? Or are site owners simply not delivering the right personalized experiences to make a real difference? Good questions.

If you are one of those who didn't realize Google personalizes your SERP results (so does Bing, by the way), here are some criteria that determine your personalized results on the search engine of your choice:

- » Your location
- » Device used
- » Your search and browsing history
- » Your interactions on SERP pages (clicks)



What's *In* For 2018?

The Power of Personalization Continued...

Some experts have also speculated on how [online reviews you write](#) may impact your personalized search results. Others have written about how [your social media usage](#) may also play into what you see on your SERP. Unfortunately, the major search engine providers keep their algorithms a closely guarded secret, so experts are left to their own devices when it comes to deciphering between the two aforementioned points and any other user-behavior inspired rationale.

Expert Advice On: Personalization

As marketing manager at Chicago's [Marcel Digital](#), **Patrick Delehanty** spends his days immersed in strategic content creation and targeted link acquisition for agency clients. He is also one of the [most-endorsed members of the Moz Community](#) and received the coveted Moz Oracle status in 2015. He took a few minutes to share his insights with ClearVoice on the topic of personalization and SEO strategy:

SEO in 2018 is going to come down to a personalized experience. If you take a look at Google's initiatives to provide a more personalized search experience (such as location, search history, social networks, web history, and more), you'll see that users are becoming more and more acclimated to that experience. For marketers, this means that we have to consider our audiences, their intentions for being on our website, and content that is relevant to their searches.



What's *In* For 2018?

Expert Advice On: Personalization Continued...

But how can companies rise to meet the challenge of a more personalized user experience? According to Delehanty, by doing this:

We need to focus more on targeting more long-tail keywords, keeping our websites mobile optimized, and also focus on local SEO efforts to appear for searches happening in our service areas.

Keep in mind, in any marketing campaign you're trying to increase conversions, but also create brand evangelists. So even after search, it's important that you tailor your website's user experience to fit the persona of previous searchers or clients. This means show them products they previously viewed and didn't purchase, or show them content that reinforces their decision in visiting your website or purchasing from you. Doing this will create a sense of comfort and confidence in the user that will ensure they continue to engage with your brand even beyond search. Focus on personalizing your brand experience... and your organic visibility will be rewarded.

Delehanty reveals that the path to a greater ROI resides in the path where the marketer creates content that matches the target audience's intent.

Companies that follow this mindset are [26% more profitable](#) and have 12% greater market capitalization. Why? Because these companies understand their user's intentions and their path to purchase, which informs their ongoing content strategy and allows them to [break through the noise](#). They create high-quality content that aligns their business goals along with client goals. This not only helps build organic visibility but it also builds trust in brands, because it's content that target audiences are actually looking for.



What's *In* For 2018?

What to Watch Out for With: Personalization

Remember that personalization means making the searcher's experience, well... personal. Simply adding some marketing automation magic to your website that welcomes a person by name isn't enough. So, what does all this mean for site owners, SEO professionals, and content creators? After all, you can't control what a searcher does. True, but there are elements you can control to affect user behavior:

- 1. Develop your brand and improve customer loyalty.** When your customers and potential customers search for your brand, personalized search algorithms take into account when a person clicks your result even if your result wasn't number one. If a person sought out your brand's result in the results list, chances are your brand will be on page one — perhaps number one — in the user's next similar search.
- 2. Create content for local-intent searches.** Ensure you indicate your location on your site if you rely on foot traffic and local customers, and don't forget to implement [structured data](#) to help potentially enhance your search engine page result.
- 3. Deliver personalized experiences on your site that engage your visitors.** Increase your site's user dwell time, reduce bounce rate, and improve conversions.



What's *In* For 2018?

The Art of Link Building

Few SEO topics cause the fear and anxiety that link building does.

Once upon a time, all a site needed was a lot of inbound links from other domains – the more links, the better. Then Google and other search engines got wise to sneaky search engine optimizers who were gaming the system and hampering search engine user experience. Sites with a massive quantity of links with no regard to the quality of the sites they linked to got a big, disheartening surprise in 2012 when [Google rolled out the Penguin Algorithm](#) to penalize sites that played fast and loose with their link building strategies.

Then in 2014, the next link-building drama unfolded around guest blogging. **Matt Cutts**, former head of Google's web spam team, gave content creators a [warning on his personal blog](#), "Okay, I'm calling it: if you're using guest blogging as a way to gain links in 2014, you should probably stop. Why? Because over time it's become a more and more spammy practice..." Then in March, [Google dropped this bomb on publishers](#) participating on a guest blog network site.

Fast forward to today, and the idea of building links still strikes fear into the heart of some digital marketers. Even when a blogger shares a link in his or her post, a site owner may ask for the removal of the link if the blog's domain authority is low. However, it's time for SEO pros and marketers to take a deep breath and get back into the link building game — but responsibly, of course.



What's In For 2018?

Expert Advice On: **Link Building**

Rob Mead is head of marketing for [Gnatta](#), a software platform that uses automated and AI features to bring customers, operators and systems together. Here's what he told ClearVoice on the topic of link building.

Don't listen to those who say links are dead. At the end of the day, just think: How do you get from the SERPs to a website? By clicking a link, Google still doesn't have an alternative way of managing its index beyond the power of links. Authentic, white-hat link authority work should still be a key part of your strategy. Whether you do it via digital PR, traditional outreach, or any other method; relevant, genuine links are still key to improving your standing with Google.

But what about the ever-changing complexities of Google's algorithm, the pervasiveness of RankBrain and emerging voice-search technologies?

As for what the future holds, Mead sums it all up with a morsel that's as relevant now as ever before.

Google's algorithm may be getting ever more complex, and with the increased pervasiveness of RankBrain, new voice search challenges, and more, it might seem tempting to forget the basics and chase new theories. These could all deliver value for your business, but don't forget to keep your house in order. So long as you're delivering relevant content, on a quick site, which people engage with, you're on the right track.

2018 will deliver a host of new SEO challenges and opportunities, but as with every year before it, there will be no cheat wins. Get your fundamentals right, smash the basics, and you'll continue to see search success.

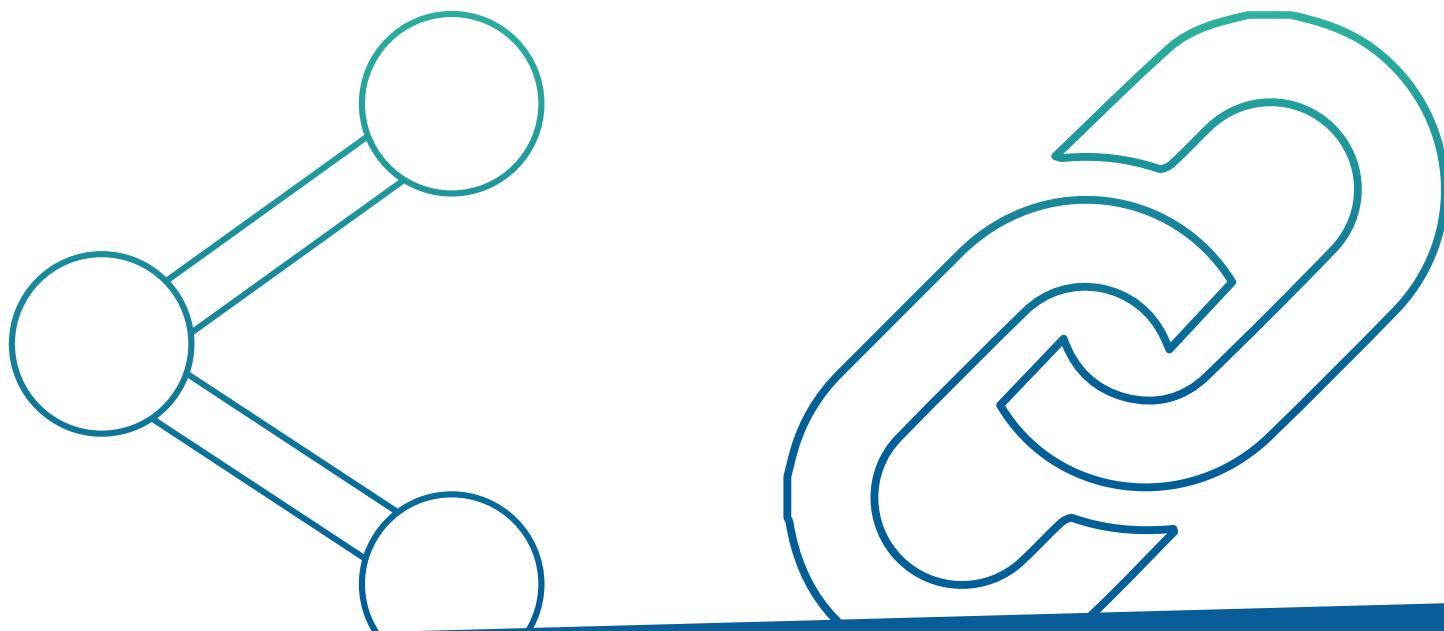


What's *In* For 2018?

Things to Think About: **Your Link Building Strategy**

Search engines no longer reward spammy link building or over-optimized anchor text, but they do still recognize and reward relevant links. If you stick to these tips, you will put your efforts on the right track. Here are a few other things you can do:

1. Familiarize yourself with Google's quality guidelines as outlined in its [Link schemes](#) documentation. Look for the recap of these guidelines in the *What's Out* section of this ebook.
2. Consider your audience's interests and buyer's journey when you build links and guest blog. Is your content relevant to the site where you want to place a link? If not, then don't build that link or write that guest post. Google has gotten very smart in understanding relevance.
3. Create content that influencers, advocates, and customers will want to share and link to on their own sites. This takes time, research, preparation, resources, and budget. Don't skimp on your content creation.



What's In For 2018?

Infinite “People Also Ask”/ Related Questions Boxes

Google constantly takes steps to improve the user experience for searchers. In addition to featured snippets, covered earlier in this ebook, Google has provided the “People also ask” (PAA) box that serves up other users’ questions related to the current query. Handy for searchers, maybe not so great for your SEO strategy. Imagine your target customers heading down an infinite PAA rabbit hole instead of seeing your hard-earned, number one organic result. Maybe not your ideal scenario.

People also ask

- How much does a ghostwriter charge? ▾
- How much do you pay a ghostwriter? ▾
- How do you hire a ghostwriter? ▾
- How does a ghost writer work? ▲

A **ghostwriter** is a writer who is hired to write speeches or other texts that are official. **ghostwriter** writes lyrics and a melody i

[Ghostwriter - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghostwriter)
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghostwriter>

Search for: [How does a ghost writer work?](#)

Feedback

What's *In* For 2018?

Infinite “ People Also Ask ”/Related Questions Boxes Continued...

Why has Google done this? As with most other SEO-related issues, you can surmise that the answer is all about user experience. Through machine learning, Google now provides searchers with related questions to help clarify their search intent and provide the most relevant answer.

Expert Advice On: “People Also Ask” Optimization

Britney Muller, SEO and content architect at Moz, has the daily challenge of how to increase qualified organic leads for Moz clients. In her blog entry, “[Infinite ‘People Also Ask Boxes: Research and SEO Opportunities](#),” Muller writes about how to increase your site’s odds of ending up in a “People also ask” box (infinite or otherwise). According to Muller, “Topical connections can always be made within your content, and by adding additional high-quality, topically related content, you can strengthen your content’s edges (and expand your SERP real estate).”

Muller goes on to share the following suggestions with content creators to help them identify new topical connections and questions to explore on their sites.

1. Use tools, like the [free MozBar](#), to analyze web pages and SERPs to find topics and keywords related to your page that you can easily and naturally incorporate into your site content.
2. Discover keyword and topic opportunities by reviewing keyword density of a related Wikipedia page by using SEOBook’s Keyword Density Checker. Here again, use the information you find to develop and strengthen your site’s content.



What's In For 2018?

Expert Advice On: "People Also Ask" Optimization Continued...

3. Find out what related questions people ask by using [Answer the Public](#), a free research tool, and use these questions to develop content that could be featured in a "People also ask" result.

For example, here are the extensions that appeared when the question, "Why is SEO important?" is typed into Answer the Public. The answers indicate the top search results on Google and Bing.



What's In For 2018?

Expert Advice On: "People Also Ask" Optimization Continued...

4. Discover questions related to your target keywords by using the [Moz Keyword Explorer](#) with the only questions filter.

The screenshot shows the Moz Keyword Explorer interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the keyword 'seo best practices' and a location dropdown set to 'United States - en-US'. Below the search bar, it indicates '19 of 20 free queries available per month'. On the left sidebar, there are navigation options: 'Keyword Overview', 'Keyword Suggestions' (selected), 'SERP Analysis', and 'Keyword Lists' (with a 'PREVIEW' button). The main content area is titled 'Keyword Suggestions: seo best practices'. It features three filters: 'Display keyword suggestions that' (set to 'include a mix of sources'), 'Group Keywords' (set to 'no'), and 'Volume' (set to 'any'). Below these filters is a table titled 'All Keyword Suggestions' with columns for 'Keyword', 'Relevancy', 'Monthly Volume', and 'Search'. The table lists three suggestions: 'seo best practices' (Relevancy: 5/5, Volume: 101-200), 'seo best practices google' (Relevancy: 5/5, Volume: 0-10), and 'seo best practices checklist' (Relevancy: 5/5, Volume: 0-10). There are also 'Export CSV' and 'Add to...' buttons at the top right of the table.

Things to Think About With "People Also Ask"

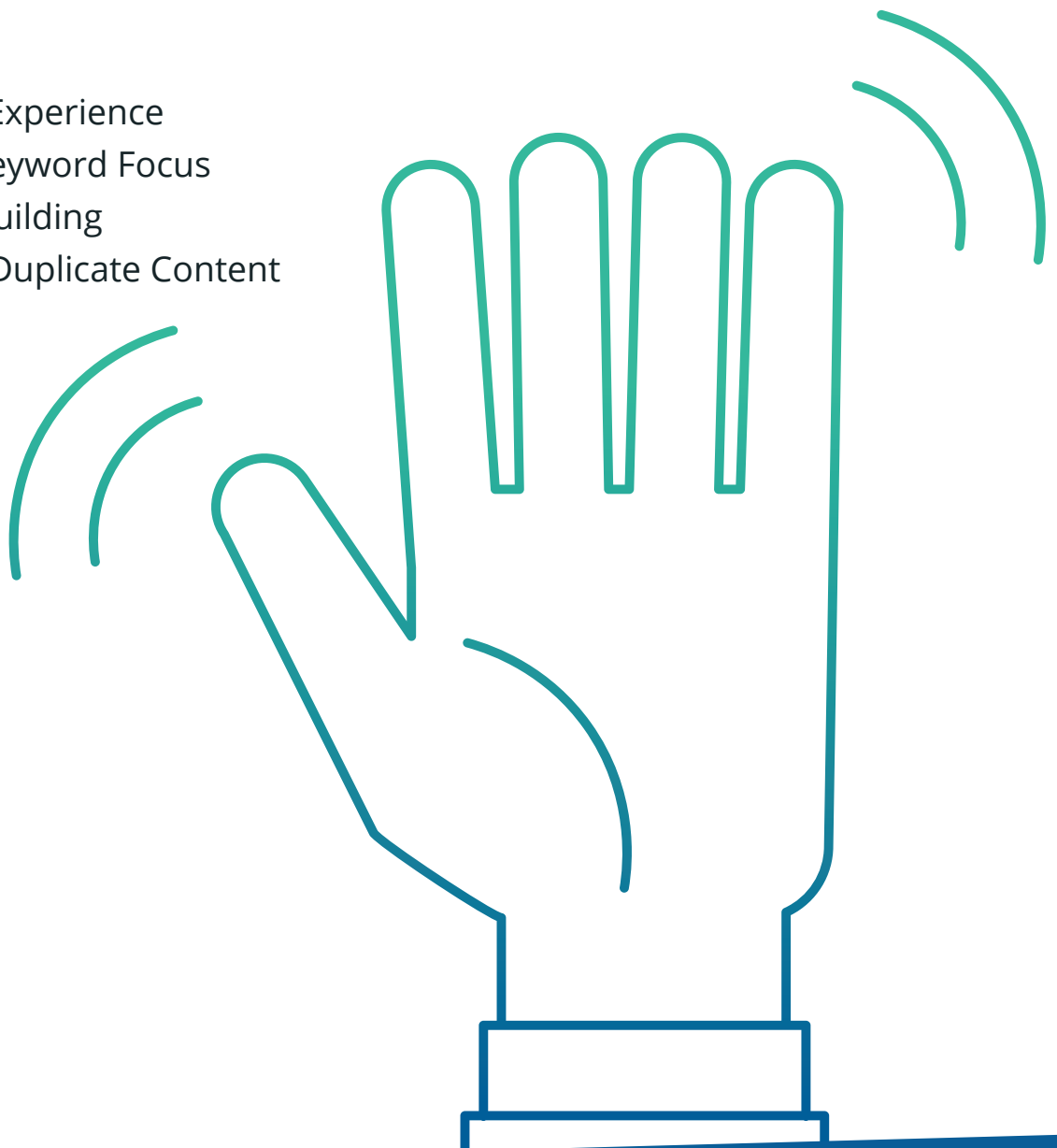
While you may not be able to control how Google's machine learning algorithms treat your content, you can improve your site's chances of showing up in a PAA through thoughtful research of the questions people ask related to your topic. Also, refer back to the section on featured snippets and how to develop question-based content. While there is no known correlation between having a featured snippet and getting featured in a PAA, the approach to crafting content for either scenario is similar.

What's Out For 2018?

While SEO basics will remain important in 2018, there are several practices that simply must go. In this section, you will discover the practices that you can say goodbye to in 2018.

In this section:

- » Poor User Experience
- » Misplace Keyword Focus
- » Lazy Link Building
- » Beware of Duplicate Content



What's Out For 2018?

Poor User Experience

There is no one thing when it comes to poor user experience (UX). A plethora of problems faces your visitors if you haven't listened to their complaints or kept pace with technology trends. And yes, UX does have an impact on your SEO results — that is, a bad user experience leads to behaviors that impact your rank. What are the key indicators of a bad user experience? These include:

- » High bounce rates
- » Low dwell times
- » Fewer inbound links
- » Less social shares of content compared to your competitors

Other factors that could negatively affect your rank include:

- » Poor navigation
- » Slow site/page speed
- » Popups, modals, overlays and interstitials that interfere with a visitor's ability to interact with the content
- » Low-quality content
- » Lack of mobile optimization



What's Out For 2018?

Poor User Experience Continued...

In the past, companies may have had two teams when it comes to their websites – one focused on design/UX-related issues and another focused on search engine optimization. It's not uncommon for these two teams to be at odds. A gorgeous design may harm technical SEO – and a well-optimized page may not be as “cool” as the gorgeous design. But times are changing, and UX and SEO must come together.



What's Out For 2018?

Expert Advice On: **User Experience**

Based in the United Kingdom, **Dan McCarthy** is the co-founder Zeno Assessment Software and CEO of [Verax Consulting](#). McCarthy has almost 20 years of experience building, merging, and improving the processes behind IT organizations and has a firm understanding of what's behind the curtain. He spoke to ClearVoice regarding the importance of seamless, quality content – and the need to place a premium on the visitor's experience.

The search engines — and particularly Google — have been telling us for years that quality of reader experience is paramount. So an obvious tactic in SEO is to listen out for what readers are actually saying about their experiences. I am hearing a groundswell of complaints about opt-in and other types of pop-ups on websites. People don't like to be interrupted – they want to read a well-written piece of content without distraction.

When asked what we should expect from search engines in the near term, McCarthy put on his predictive hat to do some forecasting.

One of two things will increasingly happen in 2018: people will immediately abandon any site that interrupts them, or the search engines will actively penalize opt-in pop-ups or other technology that 'takes over' control of the experience from the reader. Content marketers could do worse than follow the [BBC's example](#) in providing an immersive experience that is focused on the content, like their article on the secret lives of young IS fighters. Yes, that is 'pure' journalism — but it contains so many lessons about what search engines will be looking for in 2018.

Bottom Line: provide great content in a variety of formats, and stop interrupting the reader.



What's Out For 2018?

Expert Advice On: User Experience Continued...

It seems that storytelling, an uninterrupted experience and quality content are all mandates moving into the future. But, as Gartner's **Robert Bellovin** warns, rich content should never be at the expense of page speed.

As a higher percentage of users access their web content via mobile devices, page speed will continue to be a crucial factor. Users do not want to wait 5-10 seconds for their content to load – they want instant access. If you're unable to deliver that, it's fairly likely they will just click back to Google to find a website that can. This means if your site is not running quickly, your user engagement and trust metrics will reflect it, and eventually that will impact your organic performance.

Other than page speed, Bellovin also cites how mission critical user experience is — and will be — moving forward when it comes to ranking algorithms.

Many believe that user experience has become a significant part of the ranking algorithm. This aligns with Google's long-term mission to ensure that their search engines are only surfacing high-value content that best answers a searcher's query. If your website's content, navigation, internal linking, and page speed aren't in a good place, it is going to be hard to remain at the top of a competitive SERP. These days you need to be executing on the full package if you expect to play in a competitive SERP!



What's Out For 2018?

A Few Final Thoughts Regarding User Experience

As a marketer, you may be tempted to interrupt the user while he or she is on your site. After all, you want to get those leads in the funnel! However, you should resist the temptation to add pop-ups and other interrupters to every page. Entice users to stay awhile and they will come back often, but don't annoy them or else they might have the final word... and it could be 'goodbye.'

Take time to ensure your site has an easy-to-use, logical navigation system. For example, if you had never visited your site before, would you know how to reach the 'contact us' page? Could you find important product information? Is movement down the webpage intuitive... or just irritating?

Then ask yourself key questions about performance such as: *How well does your site perform? Do pages load in a reasonable amount of time on both desktop, and mobile? Is it optimized for the small screen, big screen and everything in between?*

And finally, do an honest review of the quality of the content on your site. *Is your written content worth reading? Are your visuals and videos captivating or boring? Is the content something they'd take time to share with a friend?*

Candid self-assessments such as these will help save you grief when it comes to problematic page rankings — and will ultimately boost the traffic numbers you desperately want and need.



What's Out For 2018?

Misplaced Keyword Focus

Keywords have long been the focus for many digital marketers. Many marketers have obsessed over keyword rankings and spent countless hours researching and optimizing pages for a high-value keyword or long-tail keyword phrase. Starting now... maybe even yesterday... you need to stop.

Over the past several years, [Google has rolled out several algorithms](#) and updates that have already thrown the practice of single keyword focused pages and optimization out the window. Google's Hummingbird and RankBrain algorithms have taken search to the next level by connecting the semantic dots to better understanding a user's intent rather than simply looking for a page that is best optimized for the keyword or phrase. This ever-evolving, machine-learning artificial intelligence has changed the keyword game from what it was — and will continue to revolutionize it moving forward.



What's Out For 2018?

Expert Advice On: **Keyword Focus**

There are several different areas to consider when it comes to keywords in 2018. In fact, here are a few key words from various SEO experts on the topic.

Avoid keyword stuffing. According to entrepreneur and online marketing expert **Neil Patel**, "Instead of stuffing it [a keyword] repeatedly into the content, you should focus on sub-topics and related ideas. That means pulling in all of the semantically related information and context around a topic." Why does Patel recommend this approach? [Google's Quality Guidelines](#) make it pretty clear:

*"Keyword stuffing" refers to the practice of loading a webpage with keywords or numbers in an attempt to manipulate a site's ranking in Google search results. Often these keywords appear in a list or group, or out of context (not as natural prose). **Filling pages with keywords or numbers results in a negative user experience, and can harm your site's ranking.** Focus on creating useful, information-rich content that uses keywords appropriately and in context.*

Prioritize intent over keywords. Moz co-founder **Rand Fishkin** seems to be in full agreement with Patel's comments above regarding authentic usage versus unnatural keyword stuffing. [Fishkin's advice to marketers and SEOs](#) is to: "Serve the goals of the searcher. Deliver the experience they need and the answers they want. This is vastly more important than any simplistic keyword use rule."



What's Out For 2018?

Expert Advice On: Keyword Focus Continued...

Focus on related topics. Fishkin also writes that:

Google wants to see documents that intelligently use words and phrases that connect — semantically, lexically, and logically — to the queries searchers are using. Those topics help tell Google's on-page quality analysis systems that your content is: A) on-topic and relevant; B) includes critical answers to searchers' questions; and C) has credible, accurate information.

Google's algorithms can understand searcher intent better than ever and evaluate content that meets the user's needs. Write your content with the user in mind, and you will improve your SEO in 2018.



What's Out For 2018?

Things to Remember With **Keywords**

While keywords remain important — they provide the starting point for your overall research — they are no longer the most important thing to focus on when creating content in 2018. Google doesn't want you to write for search engines; it wants you to write for their end users who also happen to be your likely readers and customers. Here are the big three takeaways:

1. Understand what your potential customers want and search for, and form content around that intent. Include your prized target keywords, but also include related and synonymous terms.
2. Refer back to the earlier sections on featured snippets. The same things you do to gain those placements on Google will serve you well overall.
3. Write like a human being. Be conversational in your content and keyword usage. You are writing for other human beings, after all, and Google's RankBrain along with other AI and machine learning initiatives are getting smart enough to understand natural language patterns.



What's Out For 2018?

Lazy Link Building

Earlier in this ebook, we said link building is in, but only if you implement smart linking strategies. Lazy link building is out. In fact, it has been out for a while now. Still, some people continue to risk their site's traffic and conversions by relying on less-than-reputable link building strategies.

As we mentioned earlier, Google doesn't like it when you build unnatural or spammy links. Google's [Link schemes](#) documentation tells you everything you need to know, but here's a quick snapshot:

- » Don't buy or sell links that pass PageRank.
- » Take it easy on excessive link exchanging and cross-linking (like on partner pages).
- » Stop over-optimizing anchor text links on guest posts and offsite articles.
- » Avoid unnatural link creation:
 - › Text ads that pass PageRank
 - › Hidden links
 - › Low-quality bookmark sites or directory links
 - › Links in templates that are widely distributed
 - › Forum posts that contain links in the signature
- » Use rel="nofollow" on links when you don't want to pass PageRank.



What's Out For 2018?

Expert Advice On: **Lazy Link Building**

Monitor your backlinks to get rid of bad links. The **Ninja Outreach** blog talks about the [importance of monitoring your backlinks](#). If you've had someone build links for you in the past, this is very important. You need to know what sites are linking to your site, and you need to clean up the bad and potentially harmful stuff. The answer? Use a tool to identify the links you need removed and perform a link removal outreach campaign.

On that point, Ninja Outreach instructs, "Make sure your outreach email is personalized. Never threaten a webmaster and be nice when you ask them to remove your link. With the backlinks you can't remove, you have to create a disavow report and then submit it to the [Google Disavow Tool](#)."

Bottom line: Don't expect mass quantities of links to beat great on-page SEO. It won't work.

Once again, we consult Rand Fishkin as to why our thinking needs to change with regards to link strategies.

We need to change our biased thinking about links and content from the days of 2012. Back then, it was still the case that a few more links with anchor text would move even an irrelevant, low-quality page of content above better and more valuable pages. Today, it's vastly more likely that very-well-linked-to pages (as in the example above) are getting their butts handed to them by marketers who go above and beyond with their on-page SEO efforts, winning despite a link deficit because they deliver the content and the experience Google (and searchers) want.



What's Out For 2018?

Expert Advice On: Lazy Link Building Continued...

Suffice to say, quality over quantity wins again.

As for the perception that leaving comments on forums containing backlinks (also known as spam) works, turns out, according to Neil Patel, not so much. Patel writes about the [futility of commenting for the sake of getting a backlink](#):

Many commenting platforms... try to police this [spam commenting] by blocking certain accounts. Unfortunately, if your site gets big enough, you'll always have to battle spam comments. That's why many commenting platforms, even on WordPress, will automatically nofollow these links.

All that time spent leaving comments with links and you get a nofollow? That's a lot of wasted time to get nowhere. As for the strategy around dropping the exact match anchor text, Patel shares that, "Search engines will take a look at all of the anchor text being used to link back to your site to spot bad patterns."

If you are writing posts in a way that forces the use of a keyword just so you can get an exact match anchor text link, you're doing it wrong. Google wants to see a natural link profile and [warns against exact match anchor text links](#) in the Link schemes document referenced earlier.



What's Out For 2018?

Things to Remember With **Links**

The key here, yet again, is to focus on the user when you earn your links. Do the sites you attempt to gain links from have relevance to your product and your audience? Does your content add value to the audience of the website where you hope to gain a link?

It's time to change your mindset from *building links* to the idea of *earning links* instead.

You can easily build links on a lot of low-quality sites. But earning links from high authority sites takes time, great content, talented resources, budget, and effort. Though it may take more time on the front-end, it'll ultimately be a worthwhile endeavor that could pay off when it comes to SEO ranking.



What's Out For 2018?

Beware of Duplicate Content

You most likely don't approach content and site development with the aim of creating duplicate content. Sometimes duplicate content just happens by accident or ignorance. For example, you may have multiple pages that feature products with their descriptions. If you use the same descriptions on all pages, that's duplicate content. Similarly, if you use the first few sentences of your blog posts as teasers/summaries on your blog homepage, search engines may consider that duplicate content as well.

Why Is Duplicate Content Bad?

When you've copied content from another website and placed it on your own without permission, it's plagiarism. Not only is this unethical, but it could have ramifications in the realm of duplicate content.

But what about the guest posts you've written and want to re-post on your own blog? That can cause problems for you or the host site if you forget to follow procedures to [implement a rel=canonical link](#). Without the rel=canonical link, you leave it up to Google to guess which site deserves to rank for the post.



What's Out For 2018?

Why Is Duplicate Content Bad Continued...

Then there are the cases of duplicate content on the same site. In Neil Patel's aforementioned blog entry, he writes, "...many times, you will cause your own duplicate content problems. And you might not even realize it. For example, the same exact content might show up at multiple points throughout your site. This is detrimental because Google might not know which page to pass authority to. Your 'credit' gets split and distributed to several different pages."

This begs the question: Would you rather have one strong page or three weak ones? Guessing your answer is the former and a resounding 'yes' for that matter.

How to Avoid Duplicate Content

In theory, avoiding duplicate content is very easy: don't post the same content on multiple pages. In practice, avoiding duplicate content can be very hard. Do I have to rewrite these descriptions/blog summaries/whatever for each new page?

Take time to conduct a site audit to find instances of duplicate content — including duplicate page titles. There are multiple free tools to help you do this, or you may prefer to use a subscription service like Moz or SEMRush. After you've identified instances of repeat messaging, get to work revising it.

For all future content creation, set up guidelines for yourself and any content creators you hire. Make sure everyone understands that duplicate content isn't just lazy, it can also hamper your SEO progress.



The Future of SEO – Beyond 2018

With the incredible rate at which technology changes, it's a fool's errand to try and predict what will happen beyond 2018. However, that's never stopped anyone from trying to expound on the future. So in the name of forecasting, here are a few likely scenarios for what the future may hold for SEO in 2018 and beyond.



In this section:

- » The End of (Some) Search Queries
- » Embracing New Search and Commerce Channels

The Future of SEO — Beyond 2018

The End of (Some) Search Queries

The Internet of Things (IoT), wearable technology and the data they generate provide tons of valuable, potentially actionable insights. As machine learning and artificial intelligence advance, this data could be used to anticipate what you may need to search for next.

For example, your Apple Watch or FitBit *may* be able to transform biometric data into a set of recommended pages to read online regarding running, heart rate, sleeping problems, and more. Your smart refrigerator may be able to one day look up products, find the best price, and prompt you for reordering approval before you even realize you are almost out of milk. Amazon's Alexa may one day select the next book you need to read based on your past reading history and the reading history of people like you.



The Future of SEO — Beyond 2018

The End of (Some) Search Queries Continued...

While this may sound very much like science fiction, it's probably not far off. As one of the most cited scientists in the world, **Professor Alex "Sandy" Pentland** directs the MIT Connection Science and Human Dynamics labs. Here's what the man declared by Forbes to be one of "The World's 7 Most Powerful Data Scientists" had to say during a [Talk at Google](#).

I think one of the most important things that's happened in the last decade... is this era of big data, which is not about big at all. It's about personal data, detailed data about the behavior of every person on earth -- where they go, what they buy, what they say online... Suddenly, we can watch people the way you could watch an anthill... or Jane Goodall would watch apes.

That has profound impact that is hard to appreciate.

What does this hyper-focused level of data reveal about us? According to Pentland, a lot. More specifically:

What you find from the big data and, of course, modern machine learning sorts of things, is that you can build quantitative predictive models of human behavior... because it turns out much of our behavior is very habitual.



The Future of SEO — Beyond 2018

The End of (Some) Search Queries Continued...

“Quantitative predictive models of human behavior” dovetails nicely with the infinite PAAs discussed earlier. As AI improves and better understands our behavior, some search queries will cease to be made. There will still be a need for human-initiated, manual search queries when people want to learn something new, but the future of search may be more about AI anticipating your needs before you ever trigger a search or purchase.

Optimizing your content to meet predictive models of human behavior sounds difficult. However, with new machine learning and AI solutions available to businesses, you may have help developing the content that search engine AI will automatically serve to users. That may sound a bit scary, but if it ultimately helps deliver the right information to the right audience, think of it as a logical next step on the way to devising smarter solutions for search.



The Future of SEO — Beyond 2018

Embracing New Search and Commerce Channels

As Google and other search engines deliver more information directly on the SERP, marketers may begin to see a decline in organic traffic from traditional search engine sources. While you should continue to place importance on these search engines as long as they still deliver, you need to think about the future of commerce and how people will want to find you and interact with your brand.

This puts more onus on companies to control their own external messaging and tell their “story.” Companies have long had control of their brand and messaging, and they educated consumers about the products they sold themselves on more predictable channels within their control. Those days are long gone, and in the future, it will be even harder for marketers to control messaging and be found if they cling too tightly to the old ways of doing business.

Get on board with voice-enabled search as it continues to grow. To survive, companies need to think beyond a voice search on Google or Bing. Begin thinking about ways to more fully integrate into the voice-enabled device’s experience. Development of skills for Alexa, voice-controlled apps that work with digital assistants, and more can create a new way for your brand to be found in a search.



The Future of SEO — Beyond 2018

Embracing New Search and Commerce Channels Continued...

Another consideration is to study the evolving shopping habits of your target audience. Where do they search for and buy other products and services online? Foodservice brand [Custom Culinary](#), who sells to professional chefs, has already begun thinking about the future of search for its B2B audience. They are leveraging Amazon's self-contained search engine by setting up shop on Amazon.

Go where your customers are. While not strictly an SEO consideration, having a presence where your customers spend time online can help you get found. Consider LinkedIn's advanced search capabilities. Look into how people search YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. Optimize your social profiles to ensure your company or brand can be easily found, and consider review sites (B2C and B2B). Finally, encourage your customers to share their reviews online so people with similar pain points or needs can find their reviews about your business.



In Conclusion...

As you've read through this ebook, one common theme probably resonated for you — the future of SEO is all about the user. That future requires that you take time to understand their needs, their technology choices, and their typical search behaviors.

Here are the key takeaways for SEO in 2018 and beyond:

- » Understand and serve the needs of your customers by providing well-written content that helps them answer questions and discover new, relevant ideas.
- » Research how search engine providers likely want to serve their users' needs. Make your SEO strategy dovetail with their user experience approach.
- » Realize that the technology preferences — smartphone, tablet, desktop, voice-enabled device — of your target audience also impact your content creation and search optimization strategy.
- » Don't fight AI and machine learning in SEO and digital marketing. While these technologies may change the way we do our jobs, you can better future-proof your job and your business by learning more about how to leverage them for your own success.



MORE ON CLEARVOICE

GETTING AHEAD OF MARTECH DISRUPTIONS IN 2018: VOICE SEARCH AND AUTONOMOUS CARS

Have you dedicated a portion of your resources for experimental content, to prepare for future martech shifts? Take a look at two of the technology trends that you should account for when making your marketing plans for 2018: voice-enabled content platforms and autonomous vehicles.



7 WAYS TO SEIZE YOUR SHARE OF VOICE SEARCH WEB TRAFFIC

Are you prepared for the growing boom of voice search? Get several tips that will help you leverage martech and voice search marketing best practices to optimize your site.



THE ULTIMATE LIST OF 2018 MARKETING CONFERENCES

Whether you lean more toward the sales or content side of marketing, make your own go-to list of marketing conferences and events to attend in 2018.



MORE ON CLEARVOICE



WE ASKED 1,000 MARKETERS: “WHAT’S YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE WITH CONTENT?”

Survey results: We asked 1,000 marketers about their biggest challenges with content, and here’s what we found. Discover the top 35 challenges broken down by category and other key insights.

SURVEY RESULTS: FACTORS IN DETERMINING FREELANCE RATES FOR DIFFERENT ASSIGNMENTS

Get survey results and a full-time freelancer’s breakdown on how time, tasks and experience can affect the rates freelance writers charge for different assignments.



WHAT KIND OF FREELANCE EDITOR DO I NEED?

Developmental editor or managing editor? Copyeditor or proofreader? Just like writers, not all editors are the same. Read a pro’s savvy rundown on the types of editing and find the best kind of editor for your particular content.



Make Great Content Again and Again

With Our Easy-to-Use, Collaborative Platform and Integrated Talent Network

Find writers, editors, strategists and a growing roster of vetted freelance talent. Any industry, niche, budget or scale.

Create articles, blogs, campaigns, case studies, ebooks, infographics and creative assets to tell your story and drive your brand.

Three easy options to get started!

- 1** Contact us via email: sales@clearvoice.com
- 2** [Schedule a demo with us](#)
- 3** Or, you can call us: (480) 999-5199

clearvoice.com

