Deloitte.
Digital

The Role of Agility in SEO: Strategies for Navigating the AI Era

This article explores the significance of SEO strategies in the competitive digital arena. It underscores the importance of staying up to date with search engines algorithm changes, the need for comprehensive SEO audits and competitor research. Finally, it concludes by highlighting the importance of crafting adaptable SEO strategies to ensure sustained brand visibility and digital marketing success.

April, 2024

How to create a winning SEO Strategy in a rapidly evolving digital environment

Modern consumers rely heavily on search engines to discover products, services and information. Whether it's doing research about a product before purchase, finding a local service provider, or making a decision regarding the right supplier, search engines are the go-to source. Without a strong online presence, your enterprise may already miss out on that significant share of consumers who prefer connecting via digital channels. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is one of the foundational elements in establishing a strong brand visibility. With the growing popularity of Generative AI tools, strong SEO performance also means being considered in AI chatbot answers, which implies the need for even better brand visibility and an optimized digital footprint.

As more and more companies understand the pivotal role of digital marketing & SEO in today's business success, competition in the digital landscape is becoming fiercer across virtually every industry. Consequently, an effective SEO strategy for businesses is essential to stand out and remain competitive. If you are a digital marketeer or SEO specialist, this article will help you understand the current SEO trends and provide you with helpful insights and recommendations on how to craft a winning SEO strategy.

Search Engine Algorithm Updates as a Launchpad for Crafting Your SEO Strategy
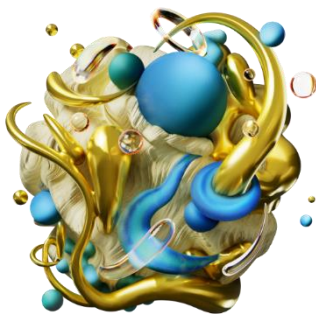
A good place to start working on your SEO strategy is researching the most recent search engines updates. Despite the challenges and high competition, Google still remains the dominant search engine worldwide. Given that Google holds 90.8% of the market share, it is reasonable to focus this trend analysis on the internet giant. However, it is important to keep an eye on major updates from other search engines, such as Bing. Our recommendation is to follow major updates that are most relevant to your industry. Overall, the key updates usually have similar foundations and can be categorized into patterns:

BROAD CORE UPDATES

Google has placed even greater importance on content as one of the key ranking factors, by tackling low-quality content across all content types, regions and languages. Content must be user-focused and genuinely useful. Google does not tolerate ranking manipulations. To succeed, make sure to consistently create high-quality, informative content that answers users' questions and meets their needs, provides a good user experience and demonstrates strong E-E-A-T signals (experience, expertise, authority, and trustworthiness).

REVIEW UPDATES

These updates focus on reviews about products, services, games, movies, and more, with the primary goal to help users make informed decisions. Encourage your customers to write useful and comprehensive reviews. Google will continue to improve its algorithms and processes to detect patterns indicative of fake reviews. The aim is to minimize the impact of fake reviews and maintain the trustworthiness of its review ecosystem.

SPAM UPDATES

The purpose of spam updates is to counteract the presence of spam in SERPs (Search Engine Results Page) and the influence of artificial links. Google strictly opposes any kind of malicious activity in link building or content distribution. Building strong partnerships, creating great content that users want to share, engaging PR and brand awareness campaigns are the best strategies for link building. It is definitely not worth considering purchasing links from suspicious or expired domains.

CORE WEB VITALS (PAGE EXPERIENCE) UPDATES

User experience is one of the key ranking factors. It includes metrics such as page speed, page performance, mobile-friendliness, and safe browsing. Ensure your website meets page performance and accessibility.

Key takeaways for your SEO strategy:

Researching the latest Google algorithm updates will help you build an SEO strategy that is aligned with the latest guidelines and ranking signals. Develop a high-level action plan to anticipate ranking variations and implement preventive measures to maintain your website's performance impact and avoid penalties. Keep in mind that it is crucial to monitor changes on a regular basis.

SEO Audit Essentials: A Step-by-Step Guide

Staying informed about the latest trends and updates is important, but it is merely the starting point for crafting a complete SEO strategy. The next recommended step is to conduct a comprehensive SEO audit.

Some marketers believe running tools like Ahrefs, Semrush, ScreamingFrog is sufficient. However, gaining meaningful insights requires a more complex and thorough approach. Based on our extensive SEO and digital marketing experience built over the years, we have developed a framework for performing a comprehensive SEO audit. The main components are the three well-known SEO categories: On-page, Off-page, and Technical, along with User Experience and On-SERP SEO:

These topics provide an in-depth understanding of your website's SEO benchmark. After collecting all the data, proceed with a comprehensive assessment by asking the following questions:

- What strengths can you scale or leverage?
- What errors and issues can you fix?
- What should you stop doing entirely or reduce?

Key takeaways for your SEO strategy:

The answers to the above questions, based on your SEO audit, will form a key part of your SEO strategy. Be sure to set priorities, identify quick wins, and plan your SEO activities to meet the specific goals and needs of your business. Additionally, remember to perform regular SEO audits and adjust your strategy accordingly.

The Power of SEO Competitor Analysis

While Google updates research and SEO audit will provide you with a very multifaceted analysis, there remains one important aspect that cannot be overlooked: a competitor analysis. Comparing your website's performance against industry standards through a competitor analysis can uncover new opportunities for your SEO strategy.

By analyzing your competitors' successes and mistakes, you can adopt effective strategies and avoid pitfalls they have encountered. Additionally, competitor research provides useful insights into market trends and customer preferences.

Using the SEO audit framework for your competitor analysis can help streamline the process. If your capacity for competitor research is limited, ensure you focus on:

01 KEYWORD ANALYSIS	**02 CONTENT ANALYSIS**
03 BACKLINK ANALYSIS	**04 TECHNICAL ANALYSIS**
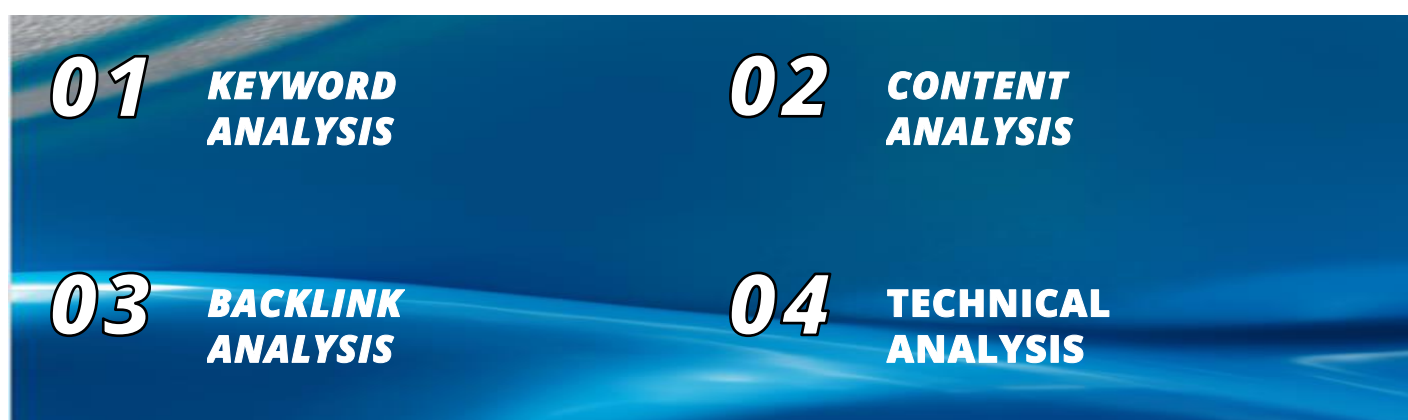
We recommend conducting a detailed competitor analysis annually, leveraging the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) framework. This will enable you to refine your SEO strategy and outpace your competition.

Key takeaways for your SEO strategy:

Insights from competitor research, such as industry trends, strategies worth adopting from your competitors, as well as learnings from their mistakes, will be a crucial component of your SEO strategy.

Finalizing your SEO Strategy

Combining all the collected data from the analysis and organizing insights into clusters is the final step where it all comes together. Set priorities based on impact and effort, considering short and long-term processes you need to follow to maximize organic traffic from search engines. Identify quick wins: what is easy to implement and would have a high impact on your SEO performance in the short term? Next, define long-term initiatives: what will take time to execute but is essential for sustained results in the future? Once you have everything combined, structured and analyzed, your detailed and practical SEO strategy is ready.

Crafting an SEO strategy is more than just a checkbox; it's your compass in the overall digital and content journey. Rather than relying on assumptions, it ensures focused efforts on attracting targeted traffic and delivering business value with a high return on investment.

As an additional bonus, a quality SEO strategy enhances your business visibility within AI chatbot answers, reaching more potential customers. Research has shown that ChatGPT and other Gen AI tools utilize SEO ranking factors to recommend products, services, or brands to users. As engagement with chatbots (like ChatGPT) and integrated generative AI tools in search (like SGE) increases, it's essential to be prepared for the future.

At Deloitte, we support clients from various industries in performing comprehensive SEO audits, crafting empowering SEO and digital strategies, and implementing robust marketing operations processes. Our expertise empowers your marketing teams across multiple areas, ensuring your brand appears in search results today and will be found by AI tomorrow. Get in touch with us today to get more insights!

Contact us

KATHLEEN PEETERS

Partner

kpeeters@deloitte.com

NIELS VAN SCHOORISSE

Director

nvanschoorisse@deloitte.com

MARYNA OZHOHANYCH

Senior Consultant

mozhohanych@deloitte.com

[1] Input Delay (INP): Input Delay measures the time from when a user first interacts with a page (for example, by clicking on a button or a link) to the time when the browser is able to respond to that interaction. It quantifies the responsiveness of a web page to user input.

[2] First Input Delay (FID): First Input Delay specifically measures the delay in response to the first user interaction with the page. It's an important metric because it reflects the user experience in terms of responsiveness. FID is particularly relevant for pages with interactive elements, such as buttons, forms, or navigation menus.

References:

https://gs.statcounter.com/search-engine-market-share

https://developers.google.com/search/updates/core-updates

https://neilpatel.com/blog/how-to-rank-your-website-on-chatgpt/