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THE FUTURE OF SEO: MARKETING TO PEOPLE, NOT PAGES 🔍

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INTRODUCTION

Ben Franklin once said, "We must, indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately." While this idea can be applied to many parts of life, it is certainly applicable to marketing. As a professional at a B2B tech firm, you are likely faced with the task of deciding which integrated marketing programs to put in place that will provide more sales opportunities, increase brand awareness, and ultimately maximize revenue growth for your company. While outbound marketing such as email marketing may be running smoothly and are critical components of demand generation, many firms fall short when it comes to inbound marketing—not having the expertise to put the right strategies in place to allow your future customers to find you online.

Not only is search engine use the number one way both consumers and business users leverage the Internet, but a recent study found that SEO leads have a 14.6% close rate, while outbound leads have shown to convert on average 1.7%. Now more than ever having an SEO strategy in place is crucial to maximizing demand generation for your business. While implementing a new marketing program may seem like an expensive undertaking, there are many cost-effective ways to get started.

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The New Wave of SEO: Applying User Experience

THE NEW WAVE OF SEO: APPLYING USER EXPERIENCE

In the beginning, SEO and UX were thought of as separate strategies for website optimization. While SEO focused on attracting visitors to your website in the first place, UX stepped in after a visitor was already on your site with the main goal of driving conversions. While on a very high level these roles still apply, today a successful inbound marketing program doesn't exist without the integration of SEO and UX.

With the evolution of the Internet comes the progression of how we engage with it. Think of the Internet as an ever-changing landscape, as search engines will continuously adapt to the needs of users and their behaviors. These days, the quality of your website's user experience is now a significant determining factor to your overall search ranking, with Google taking into account metrics such as bounce rate, time spent on page, and click through rate when deciding where to place your site in search results.

With Google's algorithms constantly changing and becoming more in tune with user experience over time, SEO has become much more than tactical keyword placements, cross-links and meta tags. SEO today must start from a strategic place, aligning with your business model, business goals and a solid understanding of the value you bring to your customers and prospects—and then telling that story through your online presence.

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SEO Myth-Busting

SEO MYTH-BUSTING

In spite of these monumental shifts in the Internet, a large amount of misinformation about SEO still exists today. SEO has changed so much in the past few years that many digital marketers don't know what is now outdated, what is still important, and what will actually move the needle. Here are a few SEO myths to consider for 2015:

- **Myth #1: Link placement is more important than creating content on a regular basis**
  Often inbound marketers choose between investing in link building or content creation. While links are an important attribute to your website's authority, having quality content with relevant information will increase your website's value to users, thus bringing more engagement with your site and repeat visitors.

- **Myth #2: Your only goal for SEO is ranking**
  While there is a strong correlation between search result placement and click through rates, ranking is by no means the be-all-end-all. A recent study of click through rates and user behavior found that searchers favor the top 3 listings both on the first page of Google, as well as subsequent pages.

  Additionally, ranking won't make much of a difference to the overall success of your inbound marketing program if once someone gets to your website, they leave without having a valuable interaction. Having a website that's tailored both in design and messaging to your target audience is equally (if not more) important.

Source: http://searchengineland.com/did-hummingbird-eat-link-building-173837
Source: http://searchenginewatch.com/sew/study/2276184/no-1-position-in-google-gets-33-of-search-traffic-study

SEO MYTH-BUSTING

- **Myth #3: Keyword volume is key for SEO**
  Today, Google is no longer trying to match the keywords a searcher types to the keywords of a webpage. Rather, Google's algorithms are trying to understand the intention behind keywords in order to connect the searcher to valuable, high-quality content. In the future, SEO won't punish marketers for under-using keywords on their website. They will, however, have consequences for over-using them.

These are just a few ways SEO has shifted in the last few years with the biggest underlying theme focusing now on creating valuable content and user experiences.

Getting Started with SEO: Short-Term Success

With a better understanding of where to de-prioritize your SEO efforts, it's time to start thinking about how to get started or re-prioritize. In optimizing your website for search, there are a number of best practices that can help boost your overall traffic and bring in short-term and more immediate results. For example:

- **Information Architecture**
  Offer a clear information architecture to your website with a designated main page for each area of interest and a clear navigation system that points to these pages. A structured website is not only good for Google but also your prospects as they explore your site.

- **Clean Design**
  The cleaner your webpages look, the easier it is for your website visitors to find what they're looking for. Instead of making visitors scroll through long paragraphs of dense text, use elements, such as bolded sub-headings, images, and fat footers to help your visitors assess where they are and where they need to go to find what they need.

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- **Clear Messaging**
  Make sure your page content, titles, and meta tags are speaking your customers' language. While Google no longer requires a one-to-one match on keywords, using clever, analogous titles or "made-up" words hurts your chances of being found in search.

Reviewing your website's overall user experience through the lens of structure, design, and messaging is a great first step to improving your inbound marketing results.

Getting Started with SEO: Long-Term Success

GETTING STARTED WITH SEO: LONG-TERM SUCCESS

While having the right UX elements in place on your website is crucial to the success of your inbound marketing efforts, developing an SEO strategy that aligns with your business goals is the key to lasting, long-term success. The first step in this process starts with your customers. Make sure you understand your customers inside and out. This means segmenting your target market into different personas, identifying their individual pain points, triggers, and decision-making processes.

Once you have a good sense of who you're targeting online as well as their behaviors, it's time to start doing keyword research. Start by combing through your website and messaging frameworks for words or phrases that accurately describe your business and expertise, segmenting them into the different stages of your sales funnel, from awareness through decision-making. Choosing the best keywords for your business is based on the following variables:

- **Relevancy –** your keywords must be relevant to your business to ensure that you attract the right types of customers
- **Traffic –** make sure the keywords that you choose are actually being searched for by users
- **Competition –** measure the level of difficulty it will be to rank using each keyword based on its level of competition. There are a number of tools you can use to measure the competitiveness during your keyword research.

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Lastly, apply what you've learned about your target market and what they're searching for to your overall inbound marketing efforts. One of the best ways to do this is through content marketing. No doubt content marketing is either a big part of your marketing already or it's a goal of yours in 2015. There are many benefits to content marketing, not the least of which is helping customers find you online.

Creating appealing and valuable content is critical to your SEO strategy. Every search performed by Google now includes intent –evaluating what the searcher wants to find, learn, buy, solve, or understand. Crafting highly relevant content across the different stages of your sales funnel that naturally includes some of the keywords you've identified increases your chances of ranking higher for your target audience. Additionally, a full library of regularly updated content that addresses your market's needs across the buying cycle creates a better user experience for your website visitors and increases the likelihood that they'll return.

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Measuring and Optimizing Your Efforts

MEASURING AND OPTIMIZING YOUR EFFORTS

Once your SEO strategy and tactics are in place, measuring your efforts to optimize your program is crucial to your success. While user experience is more challenging to measure than something concrete like keyword ranking, it can still be done, and there are a number of tools to help you do it. With the focus of SEO now being geared more toward the quality of content, there are a few key metrics to consider when deciding whether to make adjustments to the program:

- **Bounce Rate –** how often users leave your website from a particular page
- **Click through rate –** how often the user selects your page from the search results
- **Number of visitors –** unique vs. total
- **ATOP –** Average time spent on page
- **ATOS –** Average time spent on site
- **Popularity of pages –** top content read and top landing pages visited
- **Conversion rate –** number of leads generated from landing pages out of total visitors

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MEASURING AND OPTIMIZING YOUR EFFORTS

Make sure you start with baseline measurements of all of the pages you've optimized, and keep track of any new pages or content assets you've added since you started your inbound marketing program. Once you aggregate your results, you can start learning from them. Ask yourself questions like:

- *Which keywords are seeing the most traction?*
- *Do I have clear calls to action on my webpages?*
- *Is my web design clean and easy to navigate?*
- *How can I optimize current content or create new content based on my results?*

The more data you are able to collect and the longer your program runs, the more accurate of an idea you'll have as to the success of your program.

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CONCLUSION

SEO has shifted dramatically over the last decade and will likely continue to change in favor of a more human-centric approach to search. By combining a well-designed and easy to navigate website with new, relevant and valuable content for your target audience, your future customers are certain to find you and come back for more.

Ready to enhance your inbound marketing program to optimize your online presence and generate more leads for sales?

[Contact us](#) for a complimentary consultation to learn how to get started with SEO.

About Magnetude Consulting

Marketing for the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Magnetude supports client's marketing and sales efforts in a number of ways depending on your needs.

- Evolving or revamping websites and other online experiences to broaden our clients' imprint across the digital ecosystem—from SEO to content strategy to website user experience
- Managing demand generation programs—email marketing, inbound marketing, and more
- Developing marketing content and sales tools to drive online engagement and convert more leads into customers
- Consulting clients on strategies and tactics for enhancing marketing and sales collaboration and other process optimization

Interested in finding more qualified prospects through SEO? Contact us today for a preliminary discussion.

ABOUT MAGNETUDE
Magnetude was founded in early 2012 with a simple goal: to even the marketing playing field. We wanted to give B2B tech companies with small (or non-existent) marketing and sales teams the ability to reap the same benefits as the big guys. Learn more about our services >>

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