



SEO and Content
Marketing —
You Can't Have One
Without the Other



[content • strategy • social • marketing]

We Write. You Shine.

Introduction

SEO, or search engine optimization, is the art of structuring visual and textual content in a way that drives increased, unpaid website traffic. The resulting cost effectiveness of SEO makes the tool extremely valuable.

In order to understand the importance of the relationship between SEO and content marketing, one must first consider the way SEO used to work as opposed to the way it works today. SEO was once a simple matter of stuffing keywords into website text.

Content Marketing Institute explains, “While SEO has traditionally been able to drive online marketing performance on its own, search engine updates to address online content quality (Panda) and the more conversational nature of search behavior (Hummingbird) — along with the surging popularity of social networks — have changed the SEO landscape forever.”

SEO has become an in-depth process of identifying search intent, consumer concerns and industry trends, and is fully intertwined with content marketing. While the SEO process can extend beyond content structure, every aspect of SEO can still be traced back to the content. Without SEO, content marketing in its digital form is not as effective.

A common fault of small business marketing strategies is the inclusion of one or the other but not both SEO and content marketing. With an eye on reducing marketing costs, business owners believe focusing marketing dollars entirely on one of the tools will prove to be a more efficient use of their budget. However, the choice to use one as a standalone reduces its effectiveness, as well as the efficiency of the entire marketing investment.

What is the Difference Between Content Marketing and SEO

The mindset in which one approaches SEO vs. content marketing is the biggest difference between the two marketing tools. SEO is approached primarily from a technical standpoint, whereas content marketing is largely creative.

For the most part, SEO is invisible to consumers. It is the underlying structure that facilitates a seamless user experience by connecting the target audience with brands and ensuring easy access to and visibility of all website elements regardless of device.

The keywords, titles, links, alt tags, navigation and responsive design that SEO encompasses help search engine crawlers index a website accurately. Together, these SEO elements establish a framework on which content marketing can be built.

At its base, content marketing is the idea of using various content forms to market a business. Everything from blogging, to visuals, to social media, to video is content marketing. Content marketing is the substance and aesthetic appeal that both lures and nurtures consumers.

Not all leads enter the sales funnel with an exact product in mind or intent to purchase. Content marketing converts their curiosity into a sales opportunity with relevant facts and consistent reinforcement of a respective brand's value.

Content marketing is the tool businesses use to add value to the user experience. By blogging, tweeting and posting about trending industry news, helpful tips or consumer pain points, brands establish themselves as expert resources for decision-making information.



How SEO and Content Marketing Work Together


While SEO can be accomplished without content marketing and, in turn, content marketing accomplished without SEO, each is significantly more effective when used in tandem with the other. Both tools are necessary to successfully and efficiently move prospects through the sales funnel.

As a standalone, SEO drives traffic to a business' website and facilitates easy use and navigation of the site; however, there is no motivation for the consumer to move from page to page unless by sheer curiosity. Content marketing, on its own, offers consumers a wealth of information that can streamline and simplify the decision-making process, but there is no guarantee consumers will ever find the valuable content.

By pairing SEO and content marketing, businesses take advantage of the benefits of each and optimize their investment in each tool. SEO provides the framework that drives traffic to the valuable content, ensuring the content is not only read but reaches the specific members of the target audience in need of a particular answer. Meanwhile, content marketing encourages website visitors to move from one page to the next and nurtures leads through the buying process with meaningful answers to the questions preventing forward progress.

To truly capitalize on the benefits of the duo, marketers must strategize and execute each with intentionality. Quicksprout explains, "You shouldn't be blogging just for the sake of it. You should be blogging based on what your visitors want to read as well as what keywords you want to target." Rather than blogging for the sake of blogging, the process becomes an opportunity to address consumer concerns, write with search intent in mind, and incorporate researched keywords into quality content that will ultimately meet both the consumer's and business's needs."

An added advantage of this approach is the opportunities created for nurturing later conversions. Content that is focused on consumer concerns will often expand to topics beyond a brand's particular service area. This builds brand awareness with consumers in the target audience who aren't currently shopping for the that service. A relationship and trust are established, leading consumers to remember and return to the brand for their services later.

A photograph showing a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. The person is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt. The laptop is open on a desk. In the foreground, there are several sheets of paper with blue lines and a yellow sticky note. The background is slightly blurred, showing a window and a building exterior.

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What Happens if SEO is Left Out of Content Marketing?

Leaving SEO out of content marketing runs several risks because SEO is the very key to the visibility of content marketing in the 'eyes' of search engines. Content marketing must not only appeal to readers in its aesthetic and substantive makeup, but it must also appeal to search engines in its technical and structural makeup; therefore, without SEO, content may never gain the search engine visibility that yields consumer visibility.

Content marketing that hasn't been optimized for search engines also runs the risk of not being indexed properly. The result is low traffic volume because the search engine doesn't recognize the content as relevant to consumers' searches.

Researching searcher intent is a critical aspect of SEO that allows content marketers to tailor content to specific consumer concerns and enables the marketers to craft content in a way that ensures it is indexed accurately. Within this research, SEO experts also identify keywords with the greatest potential for yielding visibility. The

process is intricate, but the result produces words that, when included in content marketing, again increase visibility. Failure to pair these processes with content marketing leaves a brand open to being outranked by competitors in search engine results.

In addition to producing the most applicable results possible, search engines also strive to provide consumers with exceptional user experiences. To accomplish this, websites are penalized for failures to comply with the latest SEO rules. While website design isn't directly related to content marketing, it can carry weight with search engines and influence ranking, which correlates with content visibility. When website design and navigational elements aren't optimized, user experience can suffer, causing traffic and ranking to drop.

Excluding SEO from website content management also means descriptions, alt text and tags don't get the attention necessary to rank well with search engines, making it less likely that content will reach consumers.

Quality Content is Critical for Effective SEO

SiteProNews presents a persuasive argument for the necessity of SEO and content marketing as a pair saying, "The reason content is vital to successful SEO is because it is among the top factors considered by Google for ranking. Not only is good content conducive to link generation but it also helps Google's RankBrain to understand better what your site is all about and how it adds value to searchers."

Value. It's what marketers aim to provide consumers in every piece of content. It's also a predominate factor in elevating a brand's content in search engine results. Without quality content, a website is just a shell void of substance. It does nothing to nurture consumers through the buying process. It provides no answers to the questions that are delaying a purchase.

When quality content is added to a website, the website becomes a hub for consumer research.



Furthermore, quality content is a great way to consistently address search intent, giving web crawlers fresh content to index on a regular basis. Search intent can be researched and incorporated into website text, but the lack of continual content distribution lowers brand authority from the search engine's perspective.

According to SiteProNews, 2.4 million posts are going out daily on WordPress websites. Web crawlers are indexing a mass of new content every day giving each brand in the content distribution race the opportunity to outrank competitors in an instant. It is crucial for brands to utilize every avenue possible to increase visibility and expand their presence to rise above the competition.

One tactic for increasing visibility in search engines is to increase brand authority. The more frequently fresh, valuable content is distributed, the more times content gets shared by consumers, the more substantial a brand's web presence is, are all criteria search engines use to determine brand authority. Just as SEO enables content to reach more consumers, quality content is an avenue through which SEO can be accomplished.

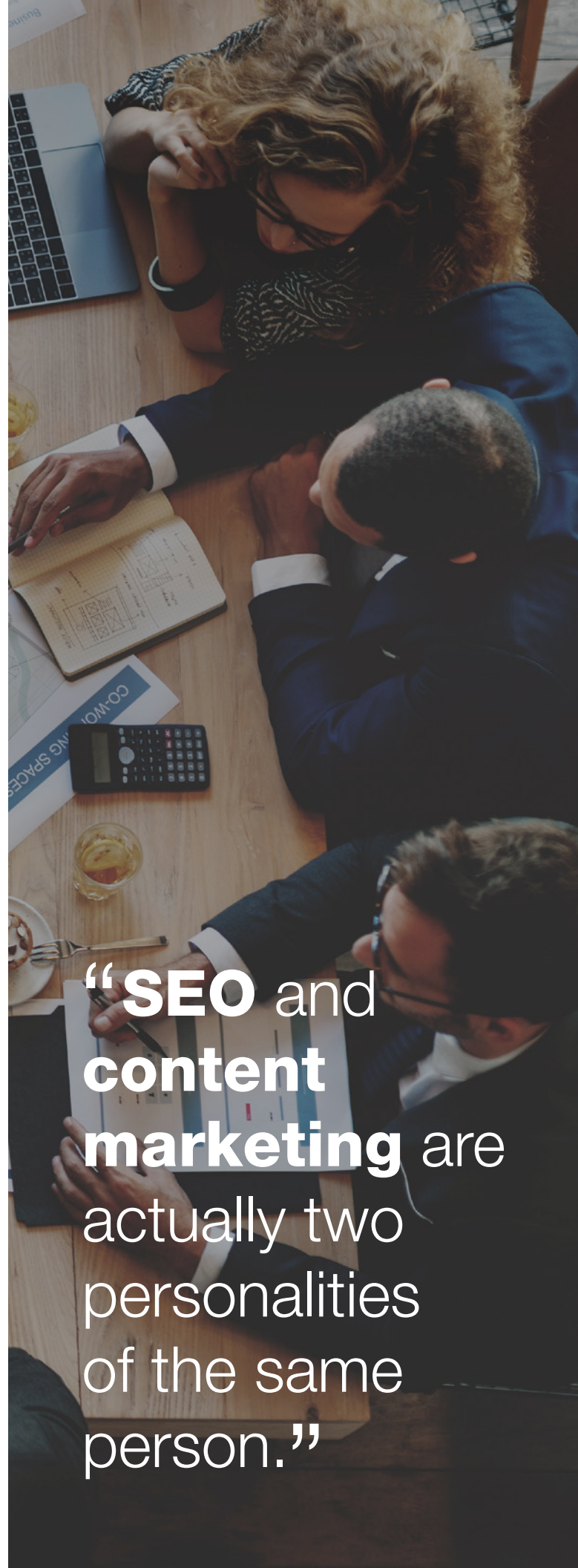
Kissmetrics describes the relationship between SEO and content marketing in this way, "SEO and content marketing are actually two personalities of the same person."

One tool is vital to the other's ability to function effectively and vice versa. To separate SEO from quality content would eliminate many SEO opportunities.

How Content Marketing and SEO Work Together for the Best Results

Linking SEO to content marketing builds relationships with consumers while building brand authority with search engines. The two together create a wheel where SEO drives organic search results, which in turn drives increased content views. Together it is also where quality content drives increased engagement, which heightens brand authority; and brand authority drives organic search results.

Sales have always been about establishing trust and authority with consumers. In the past, that was done face-to-face at a brick and mortar location. Now, it is primarily done online.



“SEO and content marketing are actually two personalities of the same person.”

Even consumers who still shop at a brick and mortar location are likely to have done some pre-purchase research online. The wealth of research at their fingertips gives them the knowledge and power to comparison shop every item they purchase from toilet paper to Friday night's dinner spot to a Toyota Camry.

The tandem of SEO and content marketing allows brands to expand the number of interactions with consumers in order to meet them at every stage of the buy cycle with relevant content marketing that ultimately moves consumers more swiftly toward a purchase. The trick to the process is serving the content as factual research rather than a sales pitch.

Search Engine Land offers this warning, "If your current content marketing strategy revolves around writing and distributing content 'advertorials,' then it's time for a rethink.

Creating a mashup of advertising and content will only result in a low-performing piece published under the alibi of 'content marketing.'"

Content marketing must address consumers' concerns, not the brand's concerns. When SEOs and content marketers work together, the facts discovered in SEO research lend direction to content marketing that ensures consumers' needs remain the central focus. Likewise, writers lend creativity to incorporate keywords in engaging, value-added content.

The power gained in utilizing both SEO and content marketing is undeniable. Each makes an investment in the other more profitable. Whether brands craft their marketing strategies in-house or outsource their marketing, both SEO and content marketing experts need to play pivotal roles in marketing strategy development and execution.



About SJC Marketing

SJC Marketing is a full-service marketing, communication and content creation company. They offer professional communication solutions for small to medium-sized businesses. With a team of writers, marketing professionals and social media experts, they offer targeted and highly-focused content and marketing plans. The focus of SJC is delivering high-value strategies and unique content that are backed with research and creativity.



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816.396.8575 | info@susanjcampbell.com | susanjcampbell.com