

When it comes to getting your brand out there online, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is essential. At a recent event in New York City, the Media & Content Marketing Association presented an information session on SEO with:

- Ryan Coté, Director of Digital Services & Partner, Ballantine
- Gabrielle Korn, Editor-in-Chief, Nylon

Best practices are always evolving, so it's important to stay on top of trends and pay attention to how people find — and then interact with — your website.

PAY ATTENTION TO USER EXPERIENCE

Google's algorithm takes into account hundreds of factors when ranking websites for a search term. Many of these items are geared and weighted toward user experience. Some items to keep in mind as you build out your website and SEO strategy include:

“Search engine algorithms are always changing, but if you focus on user experience, and then tweak as you go, you're more likely to have long-term success, no matter the changes to the algorithm ”

- **Work on load time.** Faster sites get higher rankings. Check the images on your website and consider using compressed images to avoid bloat and slow load times.
- **Check for broken links.** Links get broken. Review pages to make sure the links you use are going to pages that are still there and that the information is still relevant.
- **Your site should be compatible with mobile.** Responsive design is important — especially considering that mobile search is rapidly overtaking desktop search.
- **Provide relevant content.** As search becomes more sophisticated, user intent is easier to decipher. Content should be highly relevant, so the user sticks around and so that the search engine recognizes that your content is a good fit for the search.

As you set keywords, think about what your ideal website visitor is looking for, and how you can help them. Also consider what action you want them to take next. You can plan keywords, topics, and content much better when you have the user in mind — and that will lead to better outcomes for your SEO.

ATTRACTING QUALITY TRAFFIC

Quantity isn't everything. It might not matter if you get a ton of traffic if no one sticks around or if they don't take the actions you hope they do.

With 50,000 Google searches per second it's important focus on traffic that actually matters. Your first step is to figure out what you hope to accomplish. Maybe your revenue comes from ads, so attracting a wide audience that stays on your website is important. On the other hand, you might have products and services to sell, so the goal is to encourage visitors to take a specific action or convert to a sale.

“Figuring out how to differentiate your link if you're in the top five is important. ... Meta-data writing is an art. People underestimate it. ... It determines whether people read”
— Gabriel Korn

When you understand your goal, it's easier to attract traffic that meets your needs. Consider using various tools like SEM Rush and Google Analytics to figure out what your target demographic is searching for and create content around that knowledge.

THE FUTURE OF SEARCH

Don't forget that things are changing constantly. Two trends that are picking up steam right now are voice search and video search.

With voice search, it's important to be specific and create content that matches spoken queries. Alexa is growing in popularity and even Google Home is gaining traction. As a result, when creating content, it's important to think about how people might pose questions to their home assistants.

Adding different types of content to your site can help you attract more (and better) traffic. Video is gaining in popularity, so consider what content makes sense for video, and also consider how to optimize videos with metadata so they appear in video search.

“Don't forget that Google owns YouTube and offers Google Home. Optimizing your site so that it can be found in voice and video searches is an important part of staying ahead of the trends.”

No matter what you're doing today, there's a good chance that it won't be best practice tomorrow. Stay up to date on the latest trends by attending events and workshops that improve your ability to remain relevant online.