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The 2024 SEO Outlook

In 2024, Google's paradigm shift is set to dramatically alter SEO forever. Only those ready to deliver high-quality content and exceptional experience design to users will win the race to the top of search engine result pages.

Want to be included as a reputable source in featured snippets? Ditch the mass publication of spammy, inaccurate articles. This year, brands that rushed to take advantage of generative artificial intelligence (AI) have faced consequences when it comes to their reputations and bottom lines. And it's only going to get worse if they don't change course.

The fourth industrial revolution is here. Already, AI is being used to streamline operations, personalise user interactions, and automate tasks like keyword research, backlink analysis, and content optimisation. Brands can take advantage of AI's significant data-processing capabilities, and use tools to discern intricate patterns and trends.

While AI provides brands with increased capacities to scale content creation and dissemination across mediums and channels, without a human touch, emphasis on top-notch quality, and the delivery of exceptional experience design, this can all be for naught. Google is penalising those who don't take things seriously.

In 2024, to rank high in search engine results pages (SERPs), brands need to attend to the diverse interests of their sophisticated audiences. This means going the extra mile to serve up individualised, high-quality content and experience design at every touchpoint. To do so, brands must keep an ear to the ground, listen closely to the perspectives of consumers, and offer them original data and insights.

It's time to assume that your audience is knowledgeable and well-researched. People are looking for something fresh and innovative, instead of the same old, same old. Brands need to prove they have the expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness to turn heads and capture the attention of search engines.

We spoke with more than a dozen experts in the SEO game, who shared their insights about the state of SEO in 2024 and beyond. So, without further ado, let's jump right in and explore the first of three major trends: Google's Paradigm Shift.

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Trend #1
Google's paradigm shift

Overview

Over the past 20 years, Google has governed how the world searches for and accesses information online. With the rise of AI, the brand has embarked on a paradigm shift, updating its digital infrastructure to change how data is generated and presented. Not only this, but how people interact with content is being revolutionised.

Google has consistently worked to better the search experience for users with algorithm updates, the last of which, Broad Core, came on August 23, 2023 and focused on how content is assessed. Penguin, a 2012 update, targeted link spam and manipulative link-building practices while RankBain, a 2015 update, worked to help Google better understand the user intent behind a search query.

Overall, search engine optimisation (SEO) has been the means through which brands push their websites as close to the top of search results as possible to become more visible and easily discoverable. To effectively drive traffic to their websites and increase revenue, they've had to make a concerted effort to ensure relevant keywords are embedded into content.

However, long gone are the days when brands could game the system and push out large volumes of low-quality, keyword-stuffed content that would rank high in search engine results pages (SERPS). Nowadays, the publication of spammy, inaccurate, or misleading content can have disastrous consequences for a brand's reputation and bottom line.

Without human oversight, brands producing massive amounts of AI-generated content face the risk of hallucinations, deepfakes, data privacy, cybersecurity and copyright issues. As a result, not only are the stakes different, but it's an entirely different ballgame. And if you hope to stand a chance, you need to play by the new rules.

E-E-A-T

Google isn't entirely opposed to AI-generated content. Rather, it isn't a fan of low-quality content, no matter its origin. To evaluate the quality of content, the technology giant uses E-E-A-T (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness) as part of its Search Quality Rater Guidelines.

The first "E" is a recent addition to the acronym, which was added on December 15, 2022. It encompasses Google's paradigm shift, namely the firsthand, individual, and subjective experience a given user has when searching for information. When someone is able to access high-quality content from a reputable source related to their specific query, this is a positive experience, while the inverse is true.

"There will be more room and opportunities for small, niche players and individuals to compete against large, established brands that dominate much of the search space," says Olya Ianovskaia, Technical and Product SEO at Shutterstock. "This change signals the emergence of a more diverse search ecosystem, enriched by fresh perspectives and new content."

For SEO, this embodies a push towards a more ethical, credible, and value-driven approach to content creation and promotion. Moving forward, for content to rank higher in SERPs, it must have intrinsic value and be authored by someone with expertise.

"Merely churning out articles won't cut it; they need to be grounded in factual accuracy, supported by authoritative references, and be transparent in their intent to build trust with readers," says Paul DeMott, Chief Technology Officer at Helium SEO. "While algorithms and AI can optimise search results and even generate content, the human touch of expertise and genuine trustworthiness can't be easily replicated."

With this in mind, let's take a closer look at each of the four letters in E-E-A-T:

Experience

As previously described, Experience is an E-E-A-T newcomer, one that exemplifies the modern consumer's perspective. Before purchasing a product or investing in a service, the majority of people want to read reviews from those with firsthand experiences.

"If someone writes about the best lipstick for chapped lips, it's expected they've tried it," says Veruska Anconitano, a multilingual SEO and globalisation consultant based in Portugal. "Readers are more inclined to trust a review from someone who has personally used the product rather than from someone who hasn't."

Similarly, if people are seeking out advice before making an important life decision, they want insight from someone with demonstrated expertise. "A website about financial planning would be more likely to rank high if it was created by financial experts," says Luca Tagliaferro, a London-based SEO consultant.

In each of these scenarios, the human element reigns supreme. Given this, SEO strategies must

Expertise

A brand's creators or contributors must have demonstrated knowledge and skills in their field. As a result, your website needs to provide evidence that authors have a deep understanding of their niche and are able to provide accurate and up-to-date information.

"Google places a premium on content created by subject matter experts," says Ron Lieback, Founder at ContentMender. "If your website covers topics that require expertise, it's crucial to demonstrate your knowledge and authority in those areas. This can be done through author bios, qualifications, certifications, and the publication of authoritative content."

prioritise customer insights and subject matter expertise. A copy-and-paste AI content production method simply won't work.

"The brands that do put in the effort to include things like original data, quotes from industry experts, and brand-specific examples will have the best chance of success, both with search engines and customers," says Adriana Stein, CEO and Founder at AS Marketing.

To keep up with the changing search experience, brands must ensure expertise is at the forefront of their SEO strategies.

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If you want to build trust in your authors, have them write for trustworthy, industry-leading publications. Or, hire people that have already done so, and link to these publications in their bios on your website. Ultimately, an author bio that highlights their exceptional experience, expertise, and qualifications will bode well for your brand's reputation.

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Authoritativeness

In a given niche or industry, authoritativeness evidences how reputable and credible your website is. To demonstrate this, brands should produce well-researched, comprehensive, and factually accurate content. As well, backlinks from other authoritative sources can boost your own authority.

Trustworthiness

In order for your website to be trustworthy, it must be free of bias and should not make any false or misleading claims. This is essential for user safety, as those browsing your website can do so without worrying about security threats, privacy risks, and engaging with harmful or illegal content.

"Ensure your website provides accurate information, avoids deceptive practices, and protects user data," says Ron Liebick. "Elements like privacy policies, secure connections (HTTPS), and transparent business information contribute to trustworthiness." All of these measures can be taken to protect both yourself and your users against harm.

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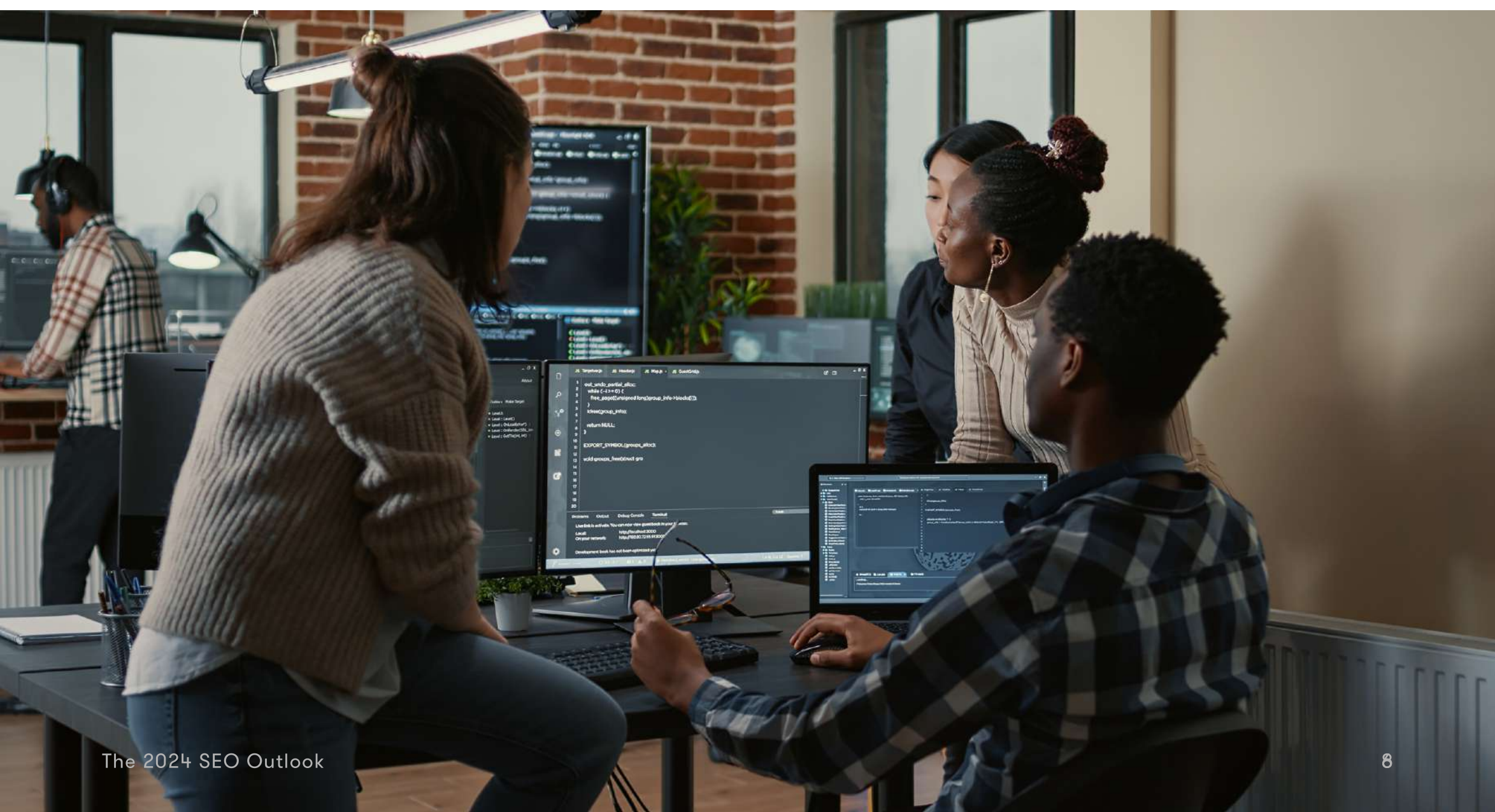
Google Analytics 4

Google Analytics 4 (GA4) was introduced with the intention of helping brands navigate the complex, multi-platform journeys of their customers. As well, it was developed with user privacy in mind. More than its predecessor, Universal Analytics, GA4 allows you to harness machine learning and advanced tracking mechanisms, providing insights into user behaviour and engagement.

"There is a shift from quantity to quality, from counting sessions to understanding engagement and measuring the value provided back to the user," says Olya Ianovskaia. "As AI models begin to replace traditional search algorithms, brands will need to find new ways of "influencing" them with ideas, concepts, and content by building up and emphasising authority and trust."

With a seamless integration spanning platforms and devices, GA4 provides you with an all-encompassing picture of how users engage with all of your digital assets. However, this new analytics interface is imperfect and can come with a steep learning curve.

"Pages with a low engagement rate are a signal that you need to improve UX. When you improve UX, SEO performance usually follows,"

Nathan Gotch,
Founder at Gotch SEO Academy

GA4's default settings provide you with less upfront. But its functionality is far more flexible and allows you to track engagement in much greater detail.

"I'm using "Engagement Rate" right now to improve SEO-driven pages," says Nathan Gotch, Founder at Gotch SEO Academy. "For example, pages with a low engagement rate are a signal that you need to improve UX. When you improve UX, SEO performance usually follows."
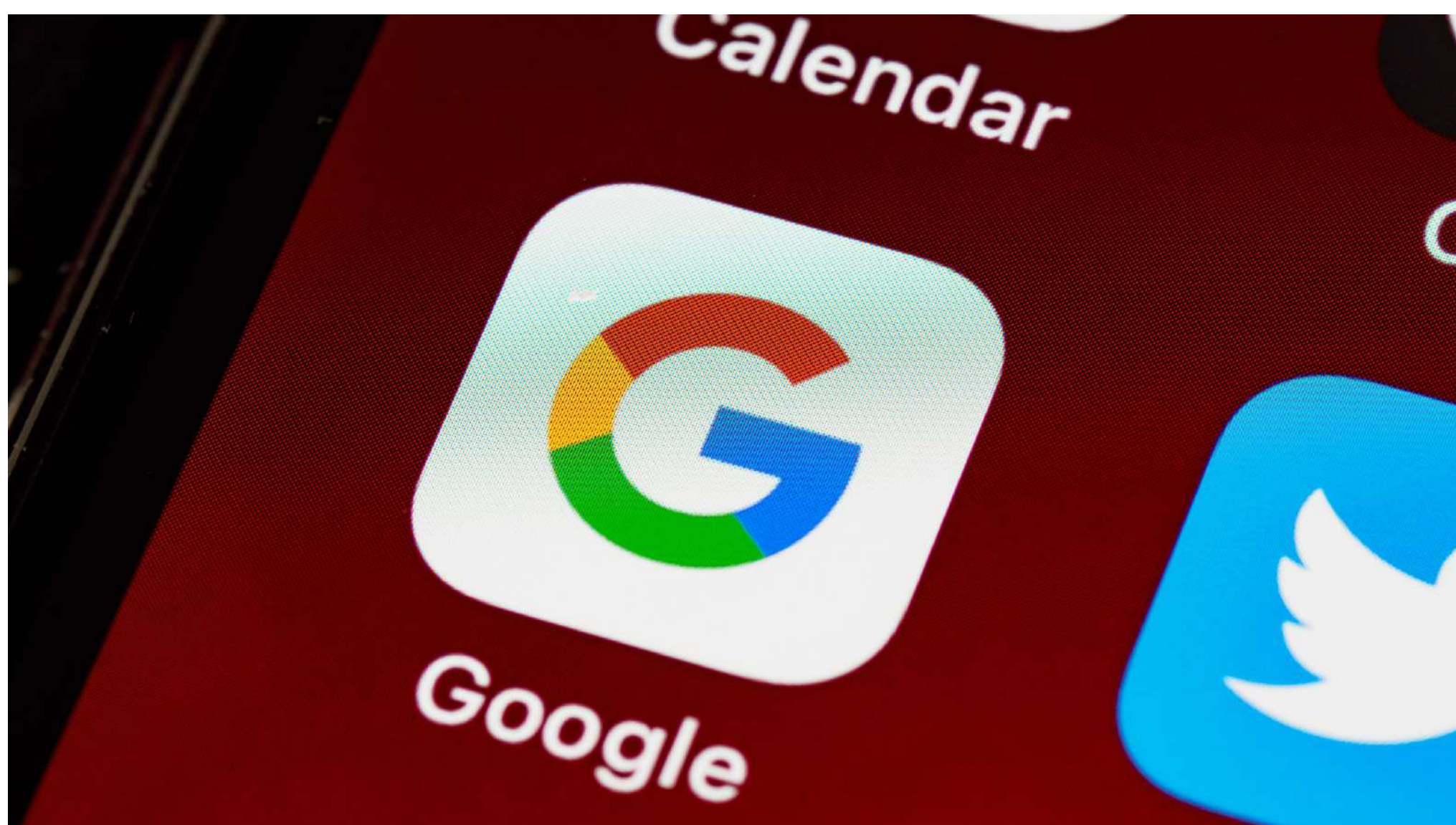
GA4 takes some getting used to but once you've figured it out, you can unlock its countless benefits. "As we have spent more time with GA4, it is a better tool than the version it replaces, and we have found it useful for ourselves and our clients," says Marcus Miller, Marketing Strategist at Bowler Hat. "The trick with GA4 is to build out custom reports for whatever you want to look at."

You can monitor and analyse key performance metrics, user behaviour, and the effectiveness of your content. In turn, this allows you to identify top-performing pages, understand user engagement, and identify opportunities to improve your website's organic visibility.

"I don't believe GA4 will affect SEO best practices, rather only how it's tracked will change," says Adrian Stein. "We migrated all of our clients to GA4 early on and have actually found it to have a better structure, especially with the new focus on events."

With a better understanding of GA4, let's delve deeper into the advantages that brands are leveraging for SEO.

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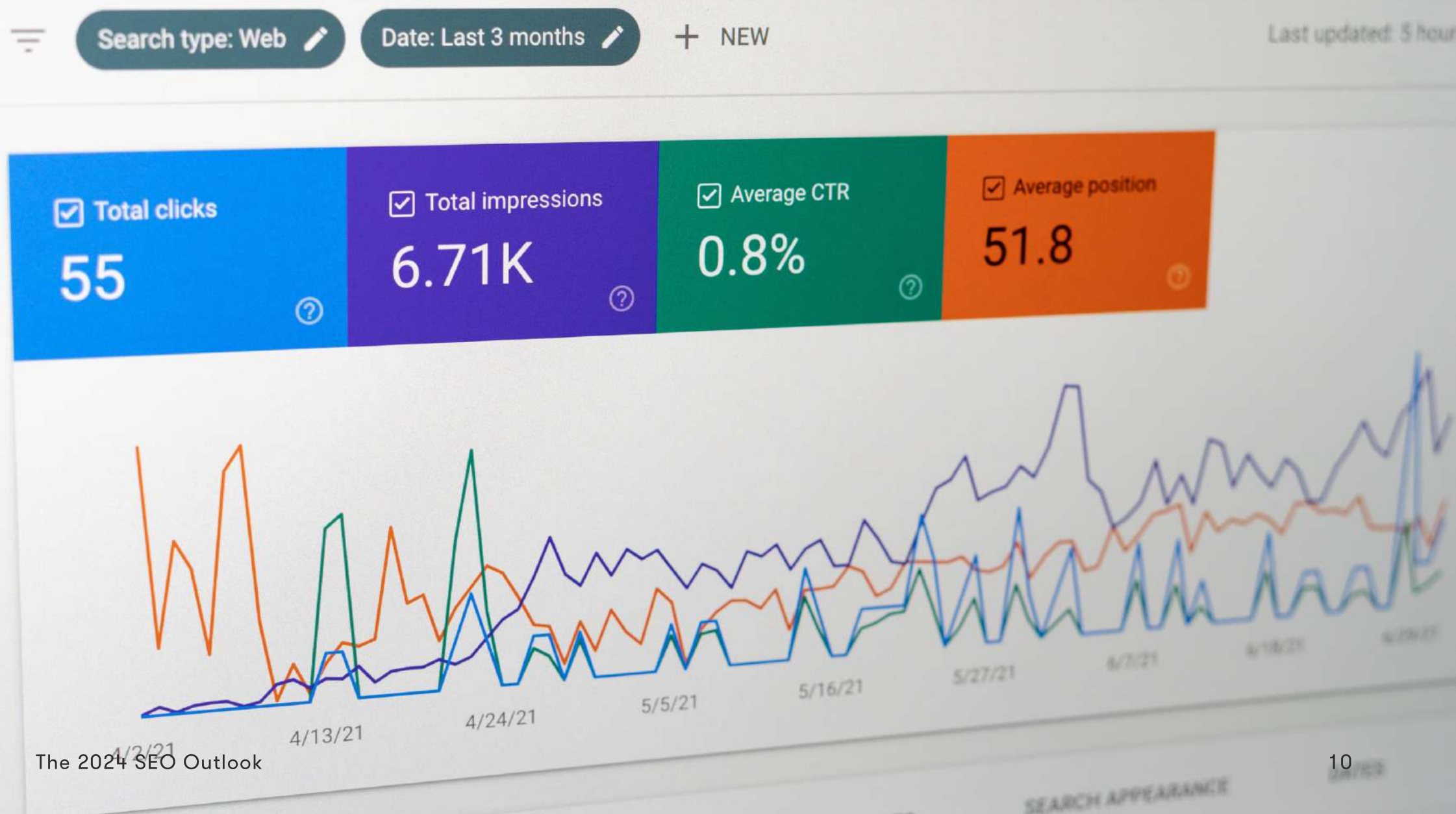
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Enhanced user-centric learning

The new interface focuses on individual user journeys across devices and platforms, taking a more user-centric approach. It's important to note that tracking and attribution models may need to be adjusted to provide a deeper understanding of user behavior.

Event-based tracking

While UA focused on traditional session-based tracking, GA4 is all about event-based tracking, which allows for more granular data collection. As a result, brands can gain more nuanced insights into how users interact with their websites. To be effective, they must identify crucial events and set up tracking accordingly.

Life cycle reports

With a shift from the traditional acquisition-behaviour-conversion funnel to more holistic reports, brands can better understand the user's life cycle.

Now that you have more insight into GA4, let's take a closer look at how AI is affecting the way people search for information online.

Enhanced machine learning

GA4 uses machine learning for predictive metrics, such as churn probability. These insights can be used by brands to optimise user experiences and content and improve organic rankings.

Cross-platform tracking

With cross-platform tracking, brands have a clearer picture of the multi-device journey and are able to optimise content accordingly.

Search Generative Experience

Google's Search Generative Experience (SGE) is an AI-powered search feature that organises web results in a new layout, allowing users to get more from a single search. SGE is currently available only to American users and works in English. It expands the traditional Google search experience with rich features, including the ability to ask more complex questions and receive personalised answers.

Each SERP will include an interactive summary called a "snapshot," replacing Google's "featured snippet" ranking. SGE also allows users to ask conversational-style follow-up questions and generate texts, similar to AI chatbots like ChatGPT.

"The conversational nature of SGE might spur users to delve deeper with follow-up questions, facilitating better retention and longer search interactions," says Veruska Anconitano. "Companies should recognize SGE as an opportunity to craft content primed for summarisation.

As SGE is still in its infancy, it's difficult to predict how exactly it will affect SEO. Google has reassured brands that Search Ads will function the same as before with relevant Ads appearing in a separate area of the user interface. Still, they are worried their content won't rank or be findable.

Given the manner in which SGE curates information, it's possible that interactivity with sponsored links and organic search results will be reduced. It appears that SGE will prioritise content based on its relevance and authoritativeness. However, it's still unclear how SGE will establish which sites are most relevant and authoritative.

Regardless, domain authority and high-quality content will have a major impact on findability. Brands will need to move away from keyword-driven content to producing authoritative, user-focused content that caters to searchers from many different perspectives.

"SGE transforms Google from a traditional librarian to an author crafting a personalised story with all the books available," says Ludwig Makhyan, Cofounder at Mazzeless Enterprise SEO. "It pushes the boundary beyond keyword targeting, urging brands to focus on the overarching narrative."

Some online search journeys, especially those at the top of the funnel/awareness stage will take place entirely within SGE. As a result, brands will need to focus more on findability at later stages of the buyer journey, such as consideration/decision.

"Now, more than ever, it's essential to distinguish between types of search queries," says Paul DeMott. "By grasping the purpose (end goal) behind various keyword searches, we can better anticipate where SGE might have its greatest influence."

With these changes, it will necessary for brands to revamp their SEO strategies. "If you are looking for a quick fix, this is bad news," says Jason Barnard, CEO of Kalicube. "If you are looking to cement your place as the industry leader across every digital platform, then this is the best news you have had in 25 years."

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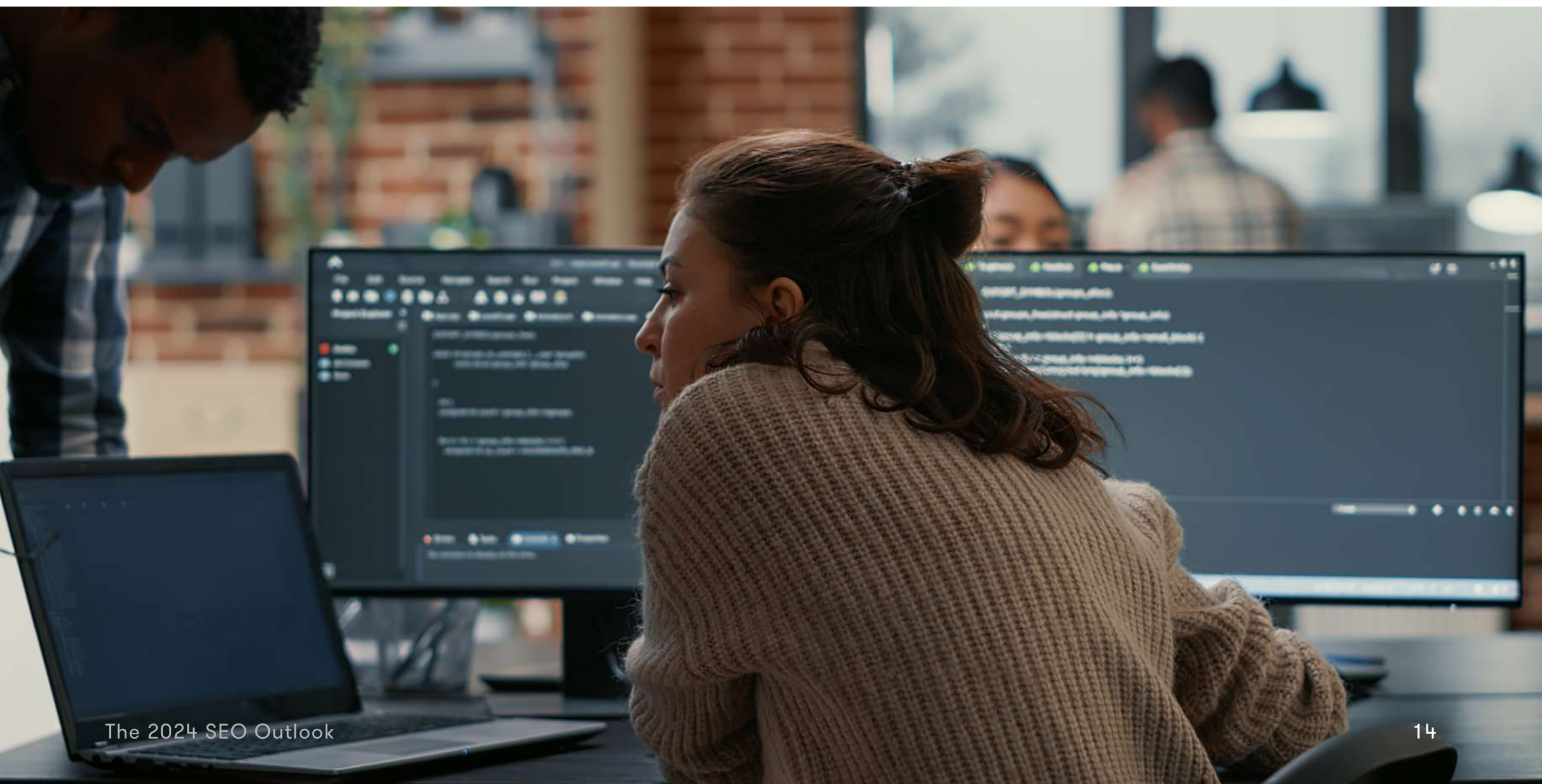
So, without further ado, here are four recommendations for how brands can effectively leverage SGE for SEO success:

1 Focus on quality and building domain authority.

The SGE snapshot will decrease click-through rates, making domain authority crucial for citation within the snapshot. Focus on earning backlinks and creating high-quality, value-added content. Avoid snippet-style answers and provide comprehensive information, rather than a single answer, to increase the chances of your content getting cited.

2 Cluster your content to cater to many different search journeys.

To provide comprehensive answers for SGE, break content into smaller units and subunits, grouping them into interlinked clusters. As well, ensure your content covers multiple possible questions as specifically as possible, making it more meaningful.

3 Optimise for long-tail, conversational speech.

SGE's search results will rely on authentic, interactive exchanges, making content crafting around search intent crucial. Targeting richer, long-tail keywords and understanding user questions is essential. Structure content to feel like a dialogue with target audiences, including examples that resonate with their experiences and questions.

4 Optimise for engagement and UX.

SEO experts predict engagement metrics like time on page and pages viewed will influence content featured in SGE snapshots. To enhance engagement, present information in multiple formats, including infographics and videos, and effectively interlink content for click-through. Focus on core web vitals, reducing load speed, and optimising for mobile for a successful cluster content strategy.

Next, let's take a look at how brands can use their Google Business Profile to connect with customers.

People have higher standards when it comes to what they consume. And if you aren't serving it up, they'll find it elsewhere.

Google Business Profile

With the shift towards SGE, brands must go above and beyond. "It's no longer enough to have a great site," says Ryan Lingenfelser, an independent SEO consultant based in Salt Lake City, United States. "You must appeal to your customers and clients through your Google Business Profile and other major third-party sites like Yelp."

The Google Business Profile is a free tool that allows you to connect with customers, post updates, list products and services, share menus, and more while Yelp is a third-party, crowdsourced review website.

By claiming and opitimising your Google Business Profile, you can control your online presence, rank higher in SERPs, get found on Google Maps, and encourage reviews. It's integral that, if your brand has a physical presence, your location information is accurate and up to date. In turn, you can be found in "near me" searches, which boosts discoverability.

In turn, you can leverage local SEO, which helps you show up in local search results. Make sure to invest in local citations and content to improve your ability to be found online.

"You do not want to get your Google Business Profile suspended or disabled because you didn't follow the rules," says Sherry Bonelli, owner of early bird digital marketing. So, keep Google's guidelines in mind as you plan your next steps.

In addition to your Google Business Profile, you'll want to take ownership of your Knowledge Panel, which we will explore next.

Google Knowledge Panel

When people search for an entity, whether a person, place, organisation, or thing, a Google Knowledge Panel will often appear in the results. This box, which appears to the right side of SERPs, provides users with a quick snapshot of information cited from various sources across the web.

In essence, the Google Knowledge Panel exists to provide people with authoritative data, including text and images, about their search query. For brands, it is possible to become a verified representative of an entity, allowing you to provide direct feedback, suggest edits, and control your online presence.

As SGE expands, it will become even more important for brands to ensure their Google Knowledge Panel is comprehensive. If you don't have one yet, you can work on ranking in SERPs, so that one is eventually generated. As well, you can design your website to make it easier for Google to extract the information it desires.

"Just really nail the heck out of the HTML," says Peter Rota, Senior Technical SEO Manager at HUB International. "Make sure it's semantically friendly and provides really in-depth schema."

With GA4, it can be challenging for brands to determine where clicks are coming from. Therefore, it's helpful to mark up your website with solid schema, ensuring HTML is semantic. This, coupled with a comprehensive Google Knowledge Panel, will positively impact your SEO efforts.

With greater insight into how to develop, manage, and maintain an authoritative presence online, let's delve deeper into cookieless browsers, a recent advent with major ramifications for SEO.

Cookieless browsers

The "cookieless future" is now on the horizon, which will see browsers shift away from third-party cookies. This major change comes amidst the increasing emphasis on data privacy and security, necessitating that brands adopt a more transparent and user-centric SEO strategy.

Historically, third-party cookies have been used for online advertising, allowing brands to present personalised ads to internet users based on their browsing history and activities. If someone searched for a particular item, they would be targeted with similar products. Unlike Google Chrome, Apple Safari and Mozilla Firefox block third-party cookies by default.

Originally, Google slated the launch of its cookieless Chrome browser for 2023. However, this change has been pushed into 2024, giving the technology giant more time to account for user, advertiser, and publisher needs. Such a scenario has caused concern for brands, worried their products and services will no longer reach target audiences.

"As cookieless browsers become more prevalent, personalising user experiences will rely more on first-party data and contextual targeting," says Ludwig Makhyan. Brands must respect copyrights and combat deceptive content, thoroughly verifying sources to maintain their reputation with consumers and search engines.

"There is a real opportunity for brands to focus their content efforts on driving first-party data collection through email and mobile phone signups," says Jon Clark, Managing Partner at Moving Traffic Media. "This will certainly have an impact on content production and keyword targeting."

Not only this, but soon search engines may be able to identify copyrighted image assets more effectively, underlining the need to create unique or properly license visual material. Brands will have to rigorously make sure all assets are up to par.

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"I think an interesting area that isn't being talked about enough is the impact for those managing international SEO programs," says John Clark. "Different regions or countries might have varying data privacy regulations. Those brands operating internationally may need to develop individual region-specific SEO strategies that comply with local regulations."

Overall, moving forward, brands should adopt tools and practices for verifying content originality and sources across mediums, channels, and platforms.

After our deep dive into Google's paradigm shift, it's clear that high-quality content will reign supreme in 2024 for SEO. So, let's explore exactly which factors play into determining whether or not a given piece fits the bill.

Trend #2
High-quality content

Overview

In 2024, high-quality content will reign supreme. The digital world is oversaturated with mediocre content, marred by misinformation and factual errors. People have higher standards when it comes to what they consume. And if you aren't serving it up, they'll find it elsewhere.

We know all about the basics that make up a decent piece of content: length, grammar, spelling, voice, and readability, among other aspects. But search engines are evolving to champion top-tier content, and this is no longer enough.

"The more a website can demonstrate their expertise, put a personal, unique twist on their content, whether it be landing pages, product pages or articles, the more they're going to stand out," says Phuwit Limviphuwat, SEO Director and Cofounder at Criclabs.

Now, it's time to invest resources into making sure your content portfolio not only has depth, accuracy, and relevance, but is also niche, and multimodal. Let's explore exactly what this means for SEO.

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Accuracy

Your content is in-depth, but is it accurate? If readers come across factual errors or misleading claims, they will be sure to jump ship immediately. There's no point in taking the time to write a comprehensive blog post if the information therein isn't credible.

You'll want to fact-check the data and information in your content, especially if all or part of it was written by AI, which is prone to hallucinatons. "Where it makes sense, be sure to cite reputable sources to back up any claims," says John Clark.

"Share success stories, motivational content, or case studies to inspire action. Showcase genuine testimonials, case studies, or reviews to build trust along with third-party endorsements from reputable third-party sites or industry experts to boost credibility."

All of these efforts will build trust with your audience and keep eyes on the page long term.

Relevance

Okay, your content is in-depth and accurate. What next? Well, if it isn't relevant, it might not gain traction online. No one wants to read old news, so creating content that explores outdated, inconsequential ideas and trends isn't worth the effort.

Stay informed of what's going on in your niche and build content that speaks to it. This demonstrates that you are an industry leader, ahead of the crowd and competition.

Plus, search engines are getting better at understanding context. As a result, you're more likely to rank higher in SERPs if you are sharing content that is tied to the latest topics, issues, needs, and interests.

Depth

Brands need to genuinely understand and address the user intent behind a search query. This requires regular monitoring of search trends and adapting content to ensure consistent alignment with user intent.

When users seek in-depth information or a detailed answer, they may be less satisfied with AI-generated summaries, so providing comprehensive content is advantageous.

Offer additional value to your audience with informative, educational content that helps solve problems or answers questions. For example, you can incorporate FAQs into a given blog post.

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Niche

In 2024, it's time to niche down. Generic content will get lost in the thick of it. Create thought leadership around your specific topic or area of focus. With a distinct perspective, brands can cut through the noise and serve up content that moves the needle.

"If you are a poodle parlour in Paris, the most valuable resource you can emphasise for both your audience and for Google is the 'Association of Poodle Parlours in Paris," says Jason Barnard. "The Association of Poodle Parlours in Paris ticks all the boxes: relevant, authoritative, geo-relevant. Wikipedia, Wikidata and Crunchbase tick only one box: authoritative."

Set your brand apart with a unique selling point. The modern consumer meticulously explores choices before making a decision. By differentiating yourself, you'll gain a competitive edge, appealing to discerning buyers who extensively research options.

Multimodality

The way people search for information online is becoming more multimodal. As a result, it is important to diversify your content to engage with the full range of modes: text, image, video, audio, and voice search.

Brands can create content types beyond traditional articles and blog posts, such as videos, infographics, podcasts, and interactive content that may be less susceptible to AI summarisation. In expanding your content portfolio, you can help maintain visibility in evolving SERP layouts.

You can always improve your content strategy to incorporate the latest SEO trends. In 2024, in the face of Google's paradigm shift, this means

ensuring content has depth, accuracy, and relevance, and is also niche, and multimodal.

Next, let's take a closer look at how you design your website so people can better engage with your diverse, high-quality content portfolio.

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Trend #3
Experience design

Overview

We've said it before and we'll say it again. In 2024, brands that prioritise experiences will be at the forefront of the SEO game. So, what do we mean by experience? This means designing content, websites, and processes that speak to users' intent, needs, feelings, contexts and mindsets.

Everything, from transactions to customer support, should be developed with users in mind, delivering an exceptional experience from the top to the bottom of the conversion funnel. You want to illicit positive emotions from every individual who interacts with your brand.

This isn't a one-and-done operation. You want to leave a great taste in the mouths of users, so memorable they keep coming back for more. This requires not only really getting to know who your customers are, but actively listening to them.

In doing so, you can learn more about your users' problems and brainstorm ways to solve them. Speaking to this intimate knowledge makes people feel heard. Altogether, a user-centric approach allows you to offer innovative solutions, create better products and services, convert more customers, increase customer retention, and generate more revenue.

With SGE, Google will further rank websites that provider users with top-notch experiences. So, let's take a closer look at what it takes to deliver high-calibre design that boosts SEO in 2024.

User experience

First and foremost, user experience (UX) design is paramount. It's been predicted that engagement metrics, such as time on page and pages viewed, will impact which content ends up in the featured snippet.

And while it's too soon to tell exactly which metrics will be the most important for AI-driven search, it's never a bad idea to enhance your content's engagement performance.

As far as content goes, information can be presented in multiple formats to engage with different audience preferences. Instead of just presenting content in text form, include appealing infographics and videos. As well, interlink your content effectively to encourage click-through, which is crucial for any successful cluster content strategy.

You can also focus on your Core Web Vitals and make sure you're offering the most engaging user experience from a technical standpoint. This especially means reducing load speed and optimising for mobile.

In fact, you can use AI to your advantage, enhancing user experiences by personalising content recommendations, improving site navigation, and optimising layouts based on behaviour. As time progresses, tailoring websites to individual user preferences can help you improve conversions.

"Brands can implement AI-driven chatbots and virtual assistants on their websites to provide real-time support and enhance the user experience," says Ron Lieback. When used effectively, AI can be a valuable tool towards different ends.

With all of these tips in mind, let's explore customer experience design.

Customer experience

Let's say you stop by your local cafe for a cup of joe. The barista greets you with a warm welcome and big smile, and remembers your name and order. This feel-good interaction is a positive customer experience (CX), one that encourages you to keep coming back.

With SGE, brands should make sure to prioritise CX, as people are more likely to share beaming feedback and reviews online. When you connect with folks on an emotional level, this helps them feel inspired and connected. Nowadays, this needs to happen at every touch point along the customer journey.

"Focus on the full-funnel experience, rather than just the bottom," says Amanda King, SEO Consultant at FLOQ. "Customers are doing more and more research online, and purchase touchpoints are many and convoluted."

This means listening attentively to your customers and providing answers to their questions or solutions to their queries via content. "In relation to content touchpoints, it means that we have to provide high-quality content that has to be distributed along the customer journey at the right time, with the right topic and in the right place," says Olaf Kopp, Cofounder, CBDO, and Head of SEO at Aufgesang GmbH.

With deeper insight into common questions, you can design your website and create content catered to their needs. "Engage with your audience on social media, forums, or through surveys to understand your customer's queries and concerns," says Jon Clark. "Participate and engage users on platforms like Quora, Reddit, or industry-specific forums for your niche to help identify trends, recurring questions, or topics, that can inform your content strategy."

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Jon Clark,
Managing Partner at Moving Traffic Media

With these insights, brands can add FAQ sections to product pages or have standalone, comprehensive guides that address long-tail queries. As well, they can refresh outdated content to include conversational keywords.

"Start with the customer and your own first-party data rather than the SERP," says Amanda King. "Just because a webpage is ranking number one doesn't mean it's actually the best answer to the query; it's the best of what currently exists."

Take a bold, novel approach to content creation. When you answer questions, be specific and link to relevant products, case studies, and other lead-generation pages.

50%

More than 50% of American consumers use
voice search on a daily basis.

Core Web Vitals

Google uses a set of metrics called Core Web Vitals to measure a given website's performance and user experience, and rank them accordingly. Brands that build fast, responsive, and user-friendly websites tend to rank better in SERPs. The shift towards SGE is likely to make these metrics even more important in the year ahead.

"By 2024, while algorithms and ranking factors might change, the essence of ensuring a smooth, responsive, and visually stable website experience for users will always be paramount," says Ludwig Makhyan. "In essence, a focus on Core Web Vitals isn't just about search rankings; it's about delivering an optimal experience to every website visitor."

Core Web Vitals provide brands with insight into how effective their UX design is. As Google increases its emphasis on user-centric experiences, it will become increasingly important to ensure websites and content fit the bill.

"However, they shouldn't be considered the exclusive barometer for a site's rank-worthiness," says Veruska Anconitano. "Moving into 2024, as has been the case in 2023 and prior years, I perceive Core Web Vitals as an essential technical component to address but not the singular fixation some people in SEO make it out to be."

So, it is best for brands to make sure they hit all the marks and not just focus on a single trend. Instead, take a comprehensive, robust approach to website building and content creation. Hit Core Web Vitals benchmarks while simultaneously ensuring that your UX and CX are excellent.

Mobile optimisation

As mobile devices dominate internet usage, it is important to optimise for them, ensuring a seamless, user-friendly experience. If a brand's website doesn't fit the bill, they will lose potential customers and damage their relationship with a loyal audience. As well, search engines prioritise mobile-friendly websites, which, combined with other SEO factors, boosts search engine rankings.

Since 2018, Google has pursued mobile-first indexing, which means that your website's mobile version is the primary basis for how Google indexes and ranks your content. More and more people are using their smartphones to browse the internet, carry out buyer research, shop for new products and services, and so forth.

Given this, brands should design and optimise their websites and content for mobile. "It means ensuring intuitive user interfaces and speedy loading times for mobile users," says Paul DeMott. "Desktop optimisation, though still relevant, takes a backseat unless targeting a niche that's less tech-savvy."

If your mobile site has less content or lacks essential features compared to the desktop version, it can negatively impact your search rankings.

To ward this off, ensure that your mobile version contains the same high-quality content as your desktop version.

"Desktop optimisation, though still relevant, takes a backseat unless targeting a niche that's less tech-savvy,"

Paul DeMott,
Chief Technology Officer at Helium SEO

Use the same meta tags (titles and descriptions) for both mobile and desktop versions of your pages. Verify that your mobile site is accessible to Googlebot and that it's not blocked by robots.txt.

This, combined with dedication to Core Web Vitals and exceptional UX and CX design, will set you up for success in 2024. Finally, let's dive deeper into voice search optimisation.

Voice search optimisation

More than 50% of American consumers use voice search on a daily basis. According to recent data from Google, 27% of the global population currently uses this on their mobile device. While this is the case, our experts are divided when it comes to how important voice search optimisation will be in 2024.

Some feel that, despite its buzz over the years, it hasn't lived up to its projected impact. Others believe the growing popularity of voice-activated devices will make AI-driven voice search optimisation essential.

Regardless, to optimise for voice search, brands can craft responses to natural language queries. Unlike text searches, where users might input concise phrases, voice queries tend to be conversational and longer. This shift necessitates a significant adjustment in content strategy – one that encompasses long-tail keywords, natural language, and answers that are tailored to user intent.

Voice search also presents opportunities for winning featured snippets, those succinct answers that appear above search results. For SEO, this means the focus shifts from mere rankings to securing the coveted position zero.

Incorporating voice search optimisation into SEO strategies is a proactive step toward meeting evolving user behaviours head-on. It's about staying aligned with the way your audience interacts with technology, capturing the essence of their spoken inquiries and delivering answers that are useful and relevant.

Not only are voice-activated devices on the rise, but also voice assistants. As people can use Siri and Google Assistant to help with user queries, brands that focus on conversational content, integrated FAQ sections, and tools that capture voice-driven searches could be ahead of the rest.

Keep in mind that tools like Answer the Public can help brands harness the power of voice search analytics, allowing them to discern the necessary conversational and long-tail keyword trends.

With a focus on these subtrends, brands can build websites, content, and processes with best-in-class experience design that boosts their SEO efforts in 2024.

Google's paradigm shift is a sign of the times: an era in which the modern consumer is searching for a personalised user experience with top-notch content delivered to them at every touchpoint of their journey across a given brand's website.

For those who achieve this, Google will not only reward them with the esteemed position at the top of SERPs, but as a credible source in featured snippets. If you want to be the brand that people come to as a source of knowledge and inspiration, you'll have to put in the work.

While AI has made many tasks, previously challenging, a walk in the park, it has introduced new challenges. People searching for original insights and data have to walk through a land mine of spammy, factually incorrect information. If you remove these unnecessary obstacles and bring your audience exactly what they're looking for, you'll stay ahead of the rest.

With a robust SEO strategy that draws on three major trends — an intricate understanding of Google's next frontier, high-quality content with original insights that works across devices and mediums, and experience design that caters to individuals' preferences and viewpoints — brands will be at the forefront of the revolution.
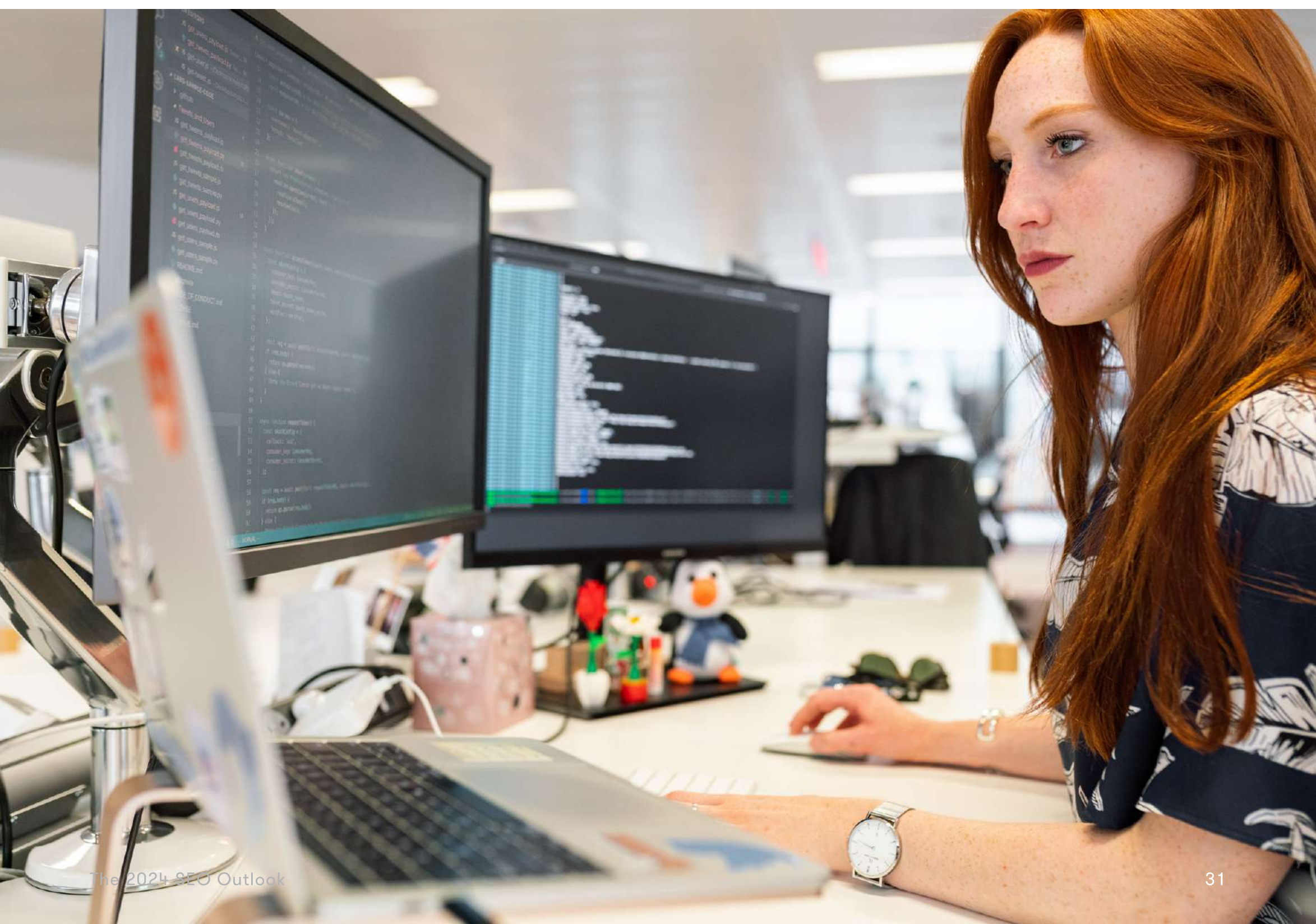
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