



5 MUST-HAVE SEO STRATEGIES FOR 2016

YEP, IT HAPPENED.

Smartphones and tablets have officially taken over desktops as the #1 way people search the Web. For marketers, this evolves SEO into a completely new animal. There's more content to crawl. More clutter and less user patience for lame content. Servers are taking a harder hit, while new technologies such as voice search enter the scene, completely changing the game.

Don't get us wrong; SEO is not dead. But mastering your brand's online presence in 2016 and beyond will require SEO as part of a much broader inbound marketing strategy – where paid, owned and earned media are working together to land conversions that SEO alone never could.

Here you will learn five SEO and inbound marketing strategies you absolutely must have to evolve your online brand for the new digital age. These strategies cover every part of your inbound marketing – from technical SEO of your site to what content you write, who you write it for, and how you deliver it. There's even some stuff you probably didn't know about video and social media – plus some good nuggets on how to accurately track your marketing ROI.

Ready to learn? Let's go!

Sitewide Technical Optimization

Better for Humans & Non-Humans Alike

People are using more human elements to search on mobiles (voice-based, image-based search), and that's a language search engines can't easily understand. The answer is **Structured Data** – or standardized labels in rich snippets of HTML code applied to your site to translate your content into 'bot-anese.' This isn't Sponsored Links. This is FREE organic search. Structured Data labels your content so search engines can better organize and index it, present it more prominently in search results – with featured eye candy to grab attention and clicks – and surface it in new experiences like Voice Answers, Maps, Cortana for Bing, and Now for Google.

Another must-have is Meta tags. Even though search engine algorithms ignore meta tags, by no means should you forget them! A **Meta tag** is the first touchpoint people have with you. It's what appears within search results in blue and black text, and talks to your users about the content. Make them rich in keywords, but don't force it – as over-optimization is alive and can kill! Shape your Meta tags for a seamless user experience (UX) by describing what the user should expect and how it relates to the intent of their search.

Bottom line, you must optimize your site to be highly **accessible, responsive and fast** for both humans and non-humans:

- No server-side issues
- Proper coding for all browsers, mobile devices, tablets & desktops
- Crawlability: JavaScript & CSS style sheets, **YES**; Flash and text that is all images, **NO!**
- Responsive design: this one's not negotiable... post-April 2015, any site NOT accessible by mobile devices earn an automatic dropkick in ranking
- No timing out; users will typically give you no more than **two seconds** load-time

Search engines are being increasingly built to understand the content they retrieve:

Approximately 19% of queries now provide direct answers or rich snippets.

Content That's Worth It

Who, What, How & Why?

There's too much clutter on the web for people to tolerate irrelevant content. Solve this by **defining your personas** and **creating dedicated content** for each one:

According to LinkedIn

48%

of marketers support 3-5 buying stages with dedicated content

&

52%

support 2-4 roles and buyer personas with dedicated content

Good content:

- Answers questions & leads thoughts
- Relates to your persona's needs at each buying stage
- Is at least 80% educational (20% or less sales pitch)
- Is driven by research on an external consumer need, not an internal sales need

You could run a survey on your site or interview ideal customers to drive content strategy: What keeps them up at night? What are their core responsibilities? What action(s) could make them a real superhero in their boss' eyes? Then create content that solves those problems specific to their role and their stage in the buyer's journey.

When creating dedicated content, use **keywords that drive conversions**, not just traffic! If you've done your homework and keywords are snagging traffic but conversions are down, you are likely going after keywords that don't drive sales, and send you unqualified traffic. Or, something might be up with your site. For example, you could be [unknowingly] using what HubSpot calls "nuke buttons," or tactics that instantly cannibalize conversion rates on good content, such as the deadly 'Empty Cart' or 'Reset Form' buttons.

Finally, **repurpose your best content across content** types. Turn blog posts into eBooks, whitepapers, case studies, infographics, podcasts, SlideShares, etc. Invest in a few kick-butt assets, then slice and dice them in a number of interesting ways. Grab stats from a high-performing whitepaper and tweet them often. Embed a small clip from a video on your site as a teaser to request the whole enchilada. Just make sure each one links back to your site. Not only does this save time and show Google that you have a steady stream of fresh content flowing from your site, but it also reinforces a consistent message about your brand to the online world. And don't forget about adding all that Structured Data! The real need for this markup comes into the rich media assets which bots can't decode (what they are and how they are consumed).

What Makes a Good One?

Videos that stand out from the crowd are relevant, short and digestible, sharable and optimized for both search engines and users. Here's a checklist for making yours awesome:

- **Address a need for a specific persona.** The explainer video is an awesome technique for this. You can easily optimize explainer videos with Ad Words (a Google property) to deliver the content users are searching for, exactly when they need it. [See explainer video examples](#)
- **Keep it brief.** Users have an attention span of **30-90 seconds max**, total length per video. Of course, webinars are the exception here. Even then, we recommend chopping those into chapters and featuring sections as individual links on the page with descriptions. This bodes well for both SEO and UX.
- **Make it shareable.** Consider this: Social media produces **two times the marketing leads** of tradeshows, telemarketing, direct mail or PPC – and have conversion rates that are **13% higher than average** conversion rates. So what are our favorite social media sharing tools for video? We like the free version of ShareThis or AddThis.
- **Include transcripts & structured data.** Always wrap video embeds with transcript information and add a “sameAs” attribute to show that it also lives on YouTube. This ties in any redundancy while helping Google consolidate data, find sources, and organize your video above many other search results. On the UX side, you can create a jQuery-based dropdown so when users see the button for a transcript, the text is not in their way but is meaningful so they can read it. And BONUS! This becomes indexed text!
- **Upload to a CDN as well as YouTube.** A CDN (Content Delivery Network) is a large distributed system of proxy servers that allows you to upload videos and put other critical files on a separate server, enabling plug-ins on the fly and a much faster web experience. We love [Wistia](#) because it's a video hosting solution that also includes valuable marketing analytics, and they are on the Structured Data bandwagon! So you can see parts of your video that were watched, skipped and rewatched – plus view the performance of your entire library over time.
- **Use SEO-friendly embedding techniques.** *Don't* use iframes; these tell search engines that your video is external content, and you run the risk of your website not getting credit for it. *Do* leverage the engagement and social signals of YouTube and other social sites by embedding public and popular videos on your site. This is “the new link building.” Also, consider the type of content when deciding where to put it; product/feature videos belong on YouTube, whereas deeper training-type or password-protected videos should be on a private server (CDN or video hosting solution). Finally, brand all embeds. Add your logo to every frame of every video, even blank or still frames.

Did You Know ...

YouTube is the #2 search engine after Google, and is a Google property?

Marketers who use video are growing company revenue 49% faster than those who don't?

And by 2017, online video will make up nearly 70% of consumer Internet traffic?

Customized Content Delivery

You Have Great Content. Now What?

What good are 200 different PDFs if they never make it to the right people at the right time? The key to a high-converting inbound marketing strategy is customized content:

- 90% of consumers find custom content useful
- 82% feel more positive about a company after reading custom content
- 61% are more likely to buy from a company that delivers custom content

First step: organize and assign each asset by persona and buyer's journey into a **Content Inventory**. Do you have enough customized content for each stage? If not, find the gaps and fill them.

Next... Remember those **keywords**? Go through your inventory and assign keywords to each asset. These keywords may be very different for each persona. If you're not sure you have the right ones, The Creative Momentum has a proprietary [SEO keyword discovery](#) process that can help you trend and mine the right variation(s) of keywords to drive qualified traffic and conversions.

Now, start building a customized content campaign for each persona/buying stage. Some considerations as you plan your campaign:

- Make sure assets are "Hummingbird-friendly" – are you using proper structured data integration practices set in motion by Google's latest major algorithm change? [We can help.]
- Supplement your campaign with curated content from other sites, especially those with a high domain authority
- Leverage various types of media: SEO, SEM, AdWords (these are your keywords), PPC, blogs & social media
- Relate everything back to a conversion page



Cohesive Inbound Marketing Strategy

The Real Litmus Test: Analytics Tools

As we mentioned earlier, SEO is no longer a standalone strategy. This last “Must-Have” SEO strategy is to evolve SEO tactics into a much more **powerful, intentional** and **measured** synergy of paid, earned and owned media. Forrester Analyst Sean Corcoran calls this [interactive marketing](#):

“Ultimately these types of media work best together, but making the hard choices of what to include and what not to include is crucial – especially when budgets are tight. But if you simply start by categorizing your media and identifying the right roles based on your objectives, then you’re on the right path,” Corcoran says.

Once your cohesive inbound marketing strategy and objectives are in place, carve out time for the most important part: **Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)**. Rigorous UX and user testing are crucial here. Conduct UX and user testing on a regular basis, making tweaks to things like forms, layout and CTA buttons. Then look at the big picture. Are all your media efforts working together in a way that optimizes UX for your defined personas? Are you creating conversions out of mere “scanners”?

The Creative Momentum can help you tie together your inbound marketing strategy and put solid [marketing analytics tools and processes](#) in place to help you determine:

- **Are you using the best analytics tools?** Marketing automation tools like HubSpot, in concert with Google Analytics or other premium tools, are a MUST for success.
- **Are you tracking the right conversions?** Analytics packages tie traffic to value, linking users, personas, sales and ecommerce through lead scoring. They also help identify valuable content and specifically define effort required to get a sale. Don’t you want to make accurate business decisions, based on your goals and your data?!
- **Is your data accurate?** Do you have what you need to make good business decisions? Are you passing the right data between different tools, with no redundancy or technical issues, such as making a sale appear twice in analytics?
- **Do your marketing analytics tools work all the time?** Is code falling off pages? We offer data quality [marketing and strategic planning](#) services to audit your process and ensure that data is firing properly. With all of your inbound marketing activities in a single system such as HubSpot, you can see the whole ROI story from entry through sale. And improve CRO over time.

17% of marketers have no content effectiveness measurements in place, and 49% are using only basic metrics such as clicks or downloads.

Learn more at:

TheCreativeMomentum.com

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