



HOW TO RETHINK SEO WITH WSI'S AdaptiveSEO™

March 2014

WSI WORLD

Introduction

Over the last five years, there's one word that aptly describes the SEO (search engine optimization) experience of small businesses, large companies and even some marketers. That word is *confusion*. Depending on the year, the knowledge and morality of the SEO agency from which you bought services, and the most recent Google algorithm update, the resulting effects ranged from minor to catastrophic. Unfortunately for many companies, their torpedoed rankings, decreased site traffic and tumbling sales left them scrambling for help or completely in the dark about the state of their SEO efforts. Because of the presence of seedy agencies that deployed shady tactics, companies often bounced from provider to provider, which left them with nowhere to turn when Google finally unleashed its cleansing updates. Businesses didn't understand why they couldn't rank well on the search engine results pages (SERPs) or why they suddenly plummeted off page one. These were dark days for SEO - the industry and the tactic - and many companies remain completely jaded by the experience.

In the aftermath and chaos of Google's algorithm updates like Panda, Penguin and Hummingbird, there was a great divide, even amongst the SEO community itself. *SEO is dead*, they said. *Nobody wants to buy it and the acronym must nevermore be uttered*, they said. But they are wrong, at least partially. Sure, some companies are too scarred by their bad experience to ever buy 'SEO services' again but chances are they never understood SEO in the first place, so why do they get the final say? Journalists looking from the outside in have been [claiming SEO is dead since 2012](#), but again, what qualifications give them the right to make such a bold statement? The negativity is so rampant that industry software giant [SEOMoz changed their name to just Moz](#) because, among other reasons, "For many folks outside of our community, the acronym SEO has (unfair) associations with spam or manipulation."

There's absolutely no doubt that the term 'SEO' now comes with an unfairly negative stigma. Yet that still doesn't validate the notion that SEO is dead, it just presents a larger set of obstacles. But perhaps there's a silver lining for companies who can see beyond the pessimistic press and realize that [core SEO best practices still work](#). There's often a competitive edge to be gained for those who are able to think outside the box. Given the current state of its perception within the media and despite the fact that search engines still dominate the Internet user's experience, it's not a stretch to think that an effective, long term SEO strategy is something your competitors are ignoring.

Ultimately, the new version of SEO - what WSI likes to call AdaptiveSEO™ (ASEO) - involves cutting out-dated tactics and implementing a more natural approach to obtaining organic rankings and traffic, all the while adhering to Google's aggressive guidelines. Harder and more in-depth? Yes. Will you need to devote more time, energy and resources in order to sustain an effective long-term strategy? Yes. But you will see greater results over a longer period of time because no matter what you might read, AdaptiveSEO™ is alive and well.

1. Why You Should Embrace AdaptiveSEO™

Because Google search still dominates.

How's this for starters: there are over a billion Google searches conducted worldwide **every single day**. A billion. So I guess that pretty much establishes that people, you know, use Google (in case you were just going to pretend that it's okay to ignore that section of the Internet). More importantly (and harder to ignore than a billion searches, if you can believe it), [94% of searchers click on organic search results](#). Just to keep things simple, that's 940 million reasons you should forget what you heard about SEO being dead and welcome an effective, long-term AdaptiveSEO™ strategy back into your digital marketing fold.

So you can recover if you were penalized by Google.

Let's say that your company employed three different SEO providers over the last five years and each was given the directive, "We want to rank #1 on Google for the following keywords." Provider A didn't deliver the results quickly enough, so you moved on to Provider B, who only got you to #1 for half the terms. You then hired SEO Provider C and they promptly had you ranked #1 for all your terms, at which point the site traffic and sales were pouring in and your company reaped the benefits.

But then, with the advent of Google's aggressive crackdown on tactics that 'gamed the system', you lost 70% of your site's traffic and your sales went down the drain. Turns out that one, if not all, of your SEO providers were using unnatural methods to help you get those #1 rankings you so coveted. "But we didn't know!" you might plead. Google won't listen. The truth is that it's on you for not paying enough attention or getting involved with the process of somebody else doing your marketing.

The good news is that whether it's thin content, spammy links or over-optimization, your site can recover and get back into the good graces of Google. How? As hard as it might be to wrap your head around, since you think it's SEO's fault in the first place, you have to implement the new SEO. The kind that works: a lasting, natural and dedicated AdaptiveSEO™ strategy.

To keep pace with search engine algorithm updates.

In case you weren't aware of how often Google changes the formula that determines the rankings on SERPs, take a look at [a summary of Google's algorithm changes](#). That's essentially the big bad wolf that blew your house down without you even realizing he was outside your door, and he'll do it again in the future if you don't make a point to keep an eye on what Google is saying and doing. Luckily, a huge part of ASEO is not only keeping abreast with Google's algorithmic changes, but also predicting, adapting and implementing strategies that don't depend on the whims of a search engine to be effective.

Because you'll continue to get results beyond the initial investment.

Much like the Jelly of the Month Club membership from *Christmas Vacation*, AdaptiveSEO™ is the gift that keeps on giving. The strategy itself is intended to lay foundation that endures through algorithm changes and the shifting landscape of the Internet so that no matter what happens, you'll still get results. It requires a big dose of time and resources up front but once you start seeing the benefits - both in the SERPs and other areas, you'll be more than happy with your investment.

KEY POINTS - You Should Embrace AdaptiveSEO™ Because:

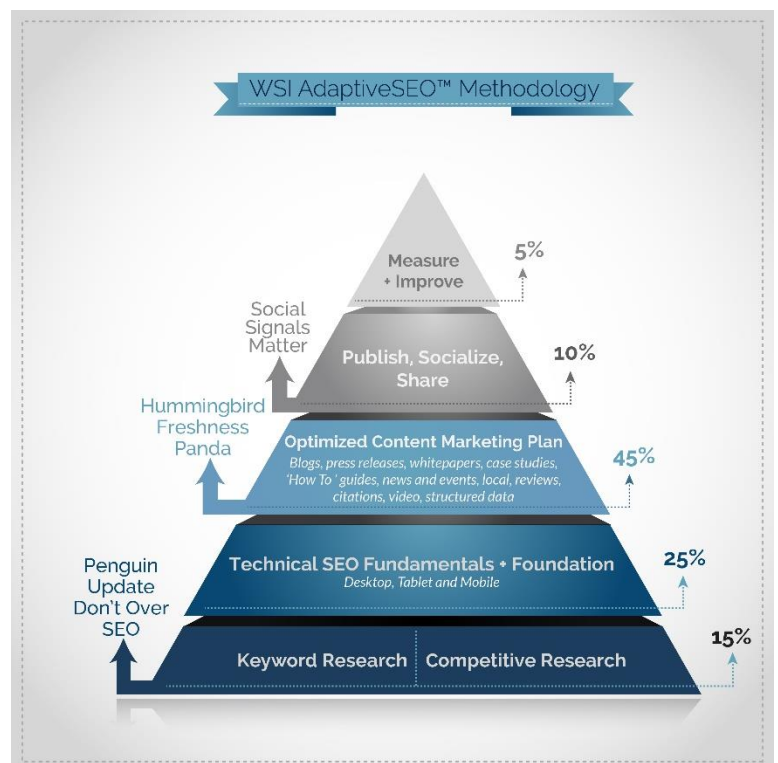
- Of the billion Google searches a day, 94% of searches click organic results
 - The only way to recover from a ranking penalty is to do better SEO
 - You need to keep pace with search engine algorithm updates
 - It will deliver results over a long period of time

2. The WSI AdaptiveSEO™ Methodology

If you've read any of WSI's marketing resources, you'll know that we preach a common theme, regardless of topic: to achieve success with any tactic or strategy, you must master the basic fundamentals. So of course, the WSI AdaptiveSEO™ Methodology is rooted in this belief that foundational SEO comes first. The above graphic is a visualization of how the planning and execution of a WSI AdaptiveSEO™ strategy will help you navigate Google's algorithm updates and maximize the return on your ASEO investment.

Keyword and competitive research.

The first task of any great AdaptiveSEO™ strategy is to conduct competitive research and devise a list of topics and keywords you believe your target audience will search for. Keywords are such a vital component of an ASEO strategy because they are the determining factor in how Google connects searchers to websites.



You want to create pages and content that Google sees as highly relevant to the keywords people are searching with.

Keyword and competitive research should make up roughly 15% of your SEO tasks and be a continuous process aimed at finding the keywords that drive the most traffic and convert the most visitors into customers. This level includes tasks like:

Spying on your competitors. If you type in a good keyword and your competitor comes up, check out their content and decide whether you can create something that would bring more value to visitors. Also audit competitors' sites for other keyword and topic ideas you may not have realized people were searching for.

Thinking outside the box. Getting into the minds of searchers is a great way to find keywords but it's easier said than done. There are other great ways to find new keywords, like using [Google's Keyword Planner to generate ideas based on landing pages and Wikipedia entries](#).

Using concepts and topics. Given the way Google's algorithm is changing and the rate at which (not provided) data is shrinking, it's a good idea to [start centering your content on concepts and topics rather than just keywords](#). Your content should be about concepts and ideas that answer the questions users are asking, not just matching the words they are typing.

Technical SEO fundamentals and foundation.

After you've got a researched list of keywords in mind, it's on to the next step. Getting found on Google, which is the main goal of SEO, begins and ends with a strong foundation. A stable, update-proof base layer will make it that much easier to enhance the tactics and strategies employed in the higher levels of the ASEO Methodology. Technical SEO Fundamentals and Foundation should account for 25% of your SEO efforts and consist of tasks like:

On-page basics. It might seem trivial, but many websites fail to properly implement Meta titles and descriptions, h1 tags and natural keyword usage. These somewhat tedious tasks are one of the most important (and easiest) components of great basic on-page SEO.

Content structure. The way you structure and organize your website's content is important not only for SEO purposes, but also to ensure optimal conversion rates. Users should be able to easily find and navigate to and from the content they're looking for as well as effortlessly complete the goals you've laid out for them.

User experience and responsive design. For a while now, Google has said it prefers sites that serve the same URL across all devices, which means you should implement responsive design if at all possible. The main reason for this is it improves user experience by providing consistency regardless of device, both things that are now considered basic best practices.

Google Authorship. Setting up Authorship is a simple, one-time task that connects you to all the content you've created and helps establish you as an authority in the eyes of Google. Authorship also adds your image to SERP results, which has been proven to increase click-through rates.

Optimized content marketing plan.

The creation and publication of content was the core area of focus for many of Google's algorithm updates over the last few years, which is why content marketing has been dominating headlines within the industry. It's not so much that content is new (because it's not) but Google is asking companies to try to deliver as much value as possible so the algorithm can better connect searchers with exactly what they're looking for. Planning, creating and optimizing content is a significant part of an ASEO strategy and should account for 45% of your SEO efforts with tasks such as:

Developing personas. You shouldn't just become an expert on any old topic, you should become an expert on topics that your potential customers are interested in. To do this, develop full personas for the different kinds of customers you have and create specific, targeted content that helps each group move along the purchase funnel at their own speed.

Applying the basics. Remember all that stuff about laying a great foundation and finding important keywords and topics? The content marketing level is where all that hard work starts to pay off. Create content around the topics and keywords you discovered during your competitive research and ensure you apply basic on-page SEO best practices.

Planning and creating content. The meat and potatoes of your content marketing - and your ASEO strategy if you've followed our methodology - planning and creating content that Google deems relevant and valuable to searchers as an integral part of being found online. Whether it's you, your team, outside collaborators or some combination of all three, creating high-quality content isn't an option it's a requirement.

Publish, socialize, share.

Creating great content is only half the battle. Just because you publish it doesn't mean it'll get read. Once you write your content you'll have to do just as much PR and outreach work to amplify and extend your content as far as you can. Publishing, socializing and sharing should make up 10% of your ASEO strategy and consist of duties like:

Publishing and distributing content. Tapping into existing groups, forums and industry hotspots around the Internet is a great way to extend the reach of your content after you publish it. In some cases, a bit of legwork in these areas *prior* to publishing can generate advanced interest in your forthcoming content.

Share your content. Push and share your content wherever you maintain a presence or profile: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Pinterest and any other platforms or forums you're involved with.

Socialize with experts and fans. Engage in casual conversations with experts and fans of the topics you're writing about. Be honest and truthful about what you know and sometimes, this group of people will find, read and share your content without you even mentioning it.

Measure and improve.

You can't just create content and hope for the best. In order to implement a truly optimized content marketing plan you must measure and then improve upon your efforts. This final level should make up the last 5% of your SEO efforts and includes measuring and subsequently trying to better metrics like:

- Impressions
- Bounce rate
- Percentage of new visitors
- Social signals
- Keyword rank
- Organic traffic
- Backlink profile

KEY POINTS - The WSI AdaptiveSEO™ Methodology Is:

- Keyword and competitive research
- Technical SEO fundamentals and foundation
 - Optimized content marketing plan
 - Publishing, sharing and socializing
 - Measuring and improving

3. Stay Committed To A Long-Term Strategy

It can be hard to wait for and see the benefits of a long-term ASEO strategy (especially if you believe you've been 'burned' by SEO in the past). But the fact remains that patience and unwavering commitment are necessary to ASEO success. Just like a diet or a lifestyle change, it's not going to happen overnight but you'll eventually be grateful that you remained committed to your long-term goals.

The WSI AdaptiveSEO™ Methodology was designed to run a minimum of six-months with ongoing content marketing and social media support. That's a *big* undertaking but with a solid fundamental foundation and fully executed levels of keyword research, content development, social sharing and constant iteration, the results will be worth the wait. Not only that, but they'll continue to deliver beyond the initial work and investment and ultimately stand the test of time against any algorithm update Google throws at the industry.

KEY POINTS:

- ASEO is a long run not a short sprint
- ASEO is about being found and engaging visitors with helpful content
- Your ASEO efforts now will be web presence assets in the future

Conclusion

It's hard to suggest forgetting about Google since we often discuss Google's updates and how they dominate the search world but ultimately, ASEO is about doing better marketing - with or without Google. Said another way, if Google disappeared or lost their dominant market share, ASEO would still be an effective marketing strategy because it isn't full of tips and tricks that exist only to game a singular system. At the end of the day, ASEO is about a company's relationship with its potential customers and that will forever be the core of great marketing.

About WSI (We Simplify the Internet)

WSI is a digital marketing company with a strong international presence. Our Digital Marketing Consultants use their knowledge and expertise to make a difference for businesses all around the world. Headquartered in Toronto, Canada, we also have offices in over 80 countries. We're a powerful network of marketers who strive to discover, analyze, build and implement digital solutions that win digital marketing awards and help businesses succeed online.

Over the last 20 years, WSI has won multiple digital marketing awards for our solutions by adapting to the constantly shifting landscape of the Internet. We take pride in helping businesses make the most of the dollars they spend on digital marketing.

Ready to move ahead and discuss a project with a local Digital Marketing Consultant? Get in touch with one of our experts at pooja@wsidigiservices.com