

Dominate Search Results Using 5 Forward-Thinking Trends

Every marketer – including you – wants to dominate Google’s search results and win the game.

But Google’s world is a complicated maze to navigate, full of hidden traps and shifting walls, so you might find yourself stuck at a dead end occasionally. And what was once the path to victory can suddenly become the path to complete and utter failure.

But by combining 5 forward-thinking trends, you can craft a successful SEO strategy for 2017 and beyond that will aid you in navigating through all the twists and turns until you reach the center: hard-earned, first-page success.

1. Mobile-First Index

With the advancement of technology, there’s been a dramatic shift towards the use of mobile devices to perform search queries – [up to 72%](#) of users depending on your industry. Google took notice and introduced the mobile-first index in 2016 as an experiment; however, a permanent switch is on the horizon.

So, what separates this index from the current one? It’s simple. Google will consider only the mobile view of a website to determine search results ranking. The goal is to better accommodate the growing number of smartphone users because what works for a computer doesn’t necessarily work for a smaller screen in terms of accessibility. Responsive sites yield a better user experience, thus mobile-friendly content can result in increased rankings.

Now that we’ve established a mobile-friendly site is a Google-friendly site, how does this affect the rest of your SEO strategy?

2. Voice Search

With the rise of smartphones comes the rise of voice search. Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google, revealed in 2016 that [20% of completed mobile searches are voice searches](#). That percentage is projected to grow to [50% by 2020](#). Along with the rise of voice search comes a new way of communicating with your target audience through adopting a [conversational tone](#). After all, users are speaking to an AI.

This shift introduces an emerging opportunity to capitalize on new keywords as these types of searches tend to yield longer queries. Optimizing for long-tail keywords allows you to target a specific group of users looking for exactly what you offer; it’s a quick and easy conversion. If a website fails to optimize for voice search, then a large chunk of their customer base could be lost.

3. Local Search

The use of smartphones has also introduced a rise in queries related to local search, more specifically, queries ending in [“near me”](#). It’s been speculated that [proximity](#) is the number one

ranking factor for mobile searches. By prioritizing location, Google will be giving the user exactly what they want: a quick, relevant answer to their question.

This trend won't be disappearing anytime soon. Google completed a study in 2015 about micro-moments and discovered the number of "near me" searches has [increased 34 times since 2011](#). Aiming for your website to appear in the local pack as well as first page results is a logical goal. With a growing number of users searching with their smartphones, modifying your SEO strategy to include local factors could result in improved performance.

4. Quality User Engagement

Quality user engagement has always been a priority of Google.

In 2017, several [updates](#) have already been implemented that affected rankings to ensure relevant, trusted results for users. It's been theorized that "[Fred](#)" precisely targeted sites with low-value and ad-heavy content: they were more concerned with making money than providing users with the appropriate information.

Satisfying the users' queries as well as ensuring a good user experience should be a website's top priority. An easily navigable site structure, clean design, and high-value content are necessary components for your site to rank well.

5. Page Speed

As a population that thrives on instant gratification, people won't wait if your website loads too slowly. [53% of people](#) are likely to click away if a page doesn't load fast enough. That means lost opportunities for conversions as well as a decrease in ranking due to negative signals sent to Google.

So, what needs to be changed in order to achieve optimized site speed? Well, Google has a nifty [page speed tool](#) to help you understand how your website currently performs and what issues should be fixed. From optimizing images to minifying JavaScript, all the steps are listed for you!

[Accelerated mobile pages](#), otherwise known as AMP, are also a current trend worth noting. They're specially designed with stripped-down HTML to allow for a ridiculously fast load time. And while this topic has been subject to (strongly worded) [controversy and speculation](#), it is something to at least be informed about.

Start Planning Your SEO Strategy

These trends go hand in hand and can contribute to a successful SEO campaign. If you're starting from scratch, it will be quite a bit of work. But you're in luck: the mobile-first index might not officially be rolling out until [2018](#). Wisely use the time you have now to prepare and get ahead of your competitors: you'll easily dominate the game and experience the sweet success of first-page rankings.