



Why Those Who Don't "Get" Google Are Getting Trampled by Those Who Do

By Susan Saldibar

"Google looked at thousands of user's clickstream data . . . and found that no two customer journeys are alike."

That's interesting. But it shouldn't surprise anyone. The more we learn about consumer behavior on the internet, the more we realize that the journey a prospect takes is not something you can cookie cut. It changes. Just like Google changes. Constantly.

I didn't realize how much things have changed until I read the latest G5 State of the Industry report. There is a whole section devoted to digital, and for a good reason. Everything Google does has a huge impact on SEO, which means you need to be constantly monitoring and adjusting in order to ride the Google wave, so to speak, and not get wiped out. Seriously, this stuff isn't trivial.

I spoke recently with Celena Canode, Marketing Campaign Manager for [G5](#) (G5 is a Senior Housing Forum partner) about the report, specifically the sections about local search. It has some interesting insights provided by their own team as well as from Moz, the company that basically wrote the book on SEO research and analysis. Moz gathered input from over 1,400 marketers last year, sharing their findings on the state of SEO, including investments, local and organic rankings, and the "Google factor". Here are some of the findings. (You can download the full report [here](#).)

A lot of emphasis is on search proximity. But is it too much?

We all know that when we search on something, local results pop up first. That's by Google design. But, as the report notes, you may not be seeing the best results, just the most local. That means you could have a business with a better rating, located a mile further away, yet the closer one will appear top of the list. Is that good or bad? Many SEO experts feel it harms the overall quality of results. There has been pressure on Google to adjust what is seen by some marketers as an overemphasis on proximity.

SEO is central to online presence.

Google updated its core search algorithm again last August (the Medic Update). That means more changes to keep up with. The report found that the more resources an organization dedicates to SEO, the more effectively they are able to navigate these changes. And it underscores the importance of having a strategy. 35% of marketers, according to the report, have no link-building strategy in place. Link building is important, as domain authority is related to the ability to rank in local search. That means you'll get the best ROI from content with solid link-building ability.

Know your "knowledge panel".

You may have noticed that Google's SERP (Search Engine Results Page) looks and acts more and more like a home page. There is a lot of information there -- reviews, photos, Q&As, and so on. That could mean fewer visits to your actual home page. The report urges marketers to be sure and optimize what shows up on your "knowledge panel". It will impact your local rankings as well.

Use Google My Business if you to want to build a higher ranking.

If you don't already, you need to create a listing on Google My Business (GMB). It will help build visibility for your brand. What it does is to populate the Knowledge Graph on a SERP. And that affects your ranking. By the way, as a ranking influencer, GMB has increased 6% from last year (the largest increased ranking factor of 2018).

How do you rank on "voice search"?

Voice searches are up and continuing to increase dramatically. Without getting too much into the weeds, when a page is "voice searched", it has to load really fast. That's because people conducting a voice search tend to be less patient than if searching by text. Any load 5 seconds or more runs the risk of being abandoned. And, since voice searches tend to come in the form of a question, the content also needs to be more conversational in style.

What does all this mean? Get smarter, ask questions and use experts who "get" Google.

This is just a small sample of the information contained in the report. Celena recommends that senior living community marketers check in regularly with the folks who are running your SEO. Don't just assume they are on top of things. Ask questions. Are they making your Google platform and knowledge panel top priority? What are they doing about voice search? The more you know the better you can keep your web experts on their toes. Because, given the importance of digital marketing, those communities using SEO professionals (especially those, like G5, who "get" Google) will be the ones who get ahead.

There is much more in the report, which you can download [here](#).



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