

BENCHMARK

SEARCH CONFERENCE

2017

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OMI SIDO

**RANKBRAIN IN 2017 -
FACING THE FUTURE OF SEO**

“I’m not a speaker; I’m a practitioner that loves talking about SEO...”

- Google has stated that RankBrain is the third most important ranking factor and regardless of what you hear, third most important is still important.
- Being very difficult to optimise for is definitely not the same as being impossible to optimise for.
- RankBrain is an automated algorithm making judgements about relevance; this form of machine learning is the beginning of an SEO equivalent to AdWords’ Quality Score.
- Click through rate (CTR) may not be a direct ranking factor now – but we should prepare for a future when it is – Google filed a patent for the process almost a decade ago.

Take home tips

- Understand the ranking factors for your industry.
- Research what RankBrain finds important for your keywords.
- RankBrain is the future of SEO – prepare to change your tactics or prepare to fail.



ALAN REEVES

ORGANIC BENCHMARKING - STRATEGY BASED ON COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

“ Your industry’s SERPs are unique to your industry – so too
should be your strategy for optimisation... ”

- Keyword lists should consist of a minimum of 300 keywords.
- Unless you are number one for all of your keywords (and even if you are), there are things to be learned from your competitors.
- Find your key competitors and research:
 - *Inbound link quality*
 - *Inbound link frequency*
 - *Inbound link anchor text*
 - *Inbound link destination*
- Refine your list of links by referring domain to make the list manageable.
- Plot links by DA (Moz) to determine your industry’s natural distribution curve.
- Monitor link acquisition rates to determine how fast you need to accrue links.
- Find out what distribution of brand/exact and long tail anchor text works best (a minimum of 40% brand as a rule of thumb).
- Link juice flows, but where it starts is down to tactics – again, this will be unique to each industry.



TOM CHEESEWRIGHT

LIFE AFTER SEARCH - TOMORROW'S DISCOVERY ENGINES

We outsource bits of our brain to machines already – soon they'll control our wallets, technology is lubrication and full automation is the final expression of this friction reduction.

- Currently eCommerce is a human process, but this is about to change.
- Voice interface is removing the human research element of a purchase.
- Soon machines will recognise need due to prior inputs.
- Augmented reality (AR) will eventually become a full time experience.
- We are increasingly monitored – our steps, sleep, heart rate etcetera – and this will lead to AI making informed decisions about what we want.
- While search is the main battle ground in digital now, in the future it may be a battle to compete for the attention of consumer owned (rather than branded) AIs.
- Brands need to start building their experience and knowledge of AIs to ensure they are relevant when the change comes.



ANU ADEGBOLA

EXCEL FORMULAS EVERY PPC PROFESSIONAL NEEDS

“We are always looking for an instant return from our paid search; Excel can help with this through several must use formulas.”

- The ‘concatenate’ and ‘substitute’ formulae are vital for keyword list creation.
- The ‘trim’ formula can resolve any potential problems with wasted space.
- Reporting takes time, creating a great reporting template takes longer – but crucially the latter needs to be done only once.
- The ‘SEO Tools’ extension for excel can be extremely useful.
- To maintain a lean file, save all formulas on one line in one tab and work your data around this to prevent excessive loading times.
- ASAP Utilities is a must to save time on various repetitive tasks (such as date representation conversion from US to UK).



BAS VAN DEN BELD

THE POWER OF STORYTELLING AND HOW TO CREAT A COMPELLING STORY

“ Attention is currency and marketers are going to increasingly
have to work hard to earn it. ”

- The right stories stick – and, for businesses, the right story can also build trust.
- Storytelling is not a means to an end – it’s a craft and a craft with existing strictures and expectations.
- Your audience should always come first – you want to be relevant or face losing attention.
- In order to be relevant, you need to know what makes your audience tick.
- Remember that you are not the hero of your story – “you are Yoda”, your consumer should be the hero.
- Take your consumers on a journey – specifically the hero’s journey.
- Follow the four key elements: situation, obstacle, approach, and plan.
- People don’t care how until they understand why – a story is the why.

A portrait of David Karelle, a man with curly hair and a beard, wearing a striped shirt, looking upwards and to the right. The background is a gradient of blue and teal.

DAVID KARELLEN

DATA AND CREATIVITY IN PAID SEARCH

“ Paid search is as much about creativity as data – and, for best results, needs creativity with data. ”

- The modern consumer uses multiple devices, and uses them at different points of the day, while different demographics favour different devices to greater and lesser degrees. What can seem like flat performance, with creative analysis, can show useable trends.
- By using day parting and demographic targeting, you can create campaigns that target the right demographic at the right time of day and at the right time.
- Use audience insights to create segments useful for remarketing lists for search ads (RLSA) campaigns.
- Brands can reduce the need for automation platforms by using bid adjustments to target segments with the best conversion rate.
- A/B testing is now useable for bids and strategies as well as for other ad specifications.
- Creative ad copy can give you an edge even if you aren't able to gain position one for your ad.
- Ad customiser in AdWords is a great and underutilised tool for personalisation.



AMANDA COLEMAN

COMMUNICATING IN A CRISIS - TRUST IN TURBULENT TIMES

“Digital media is vital for showing the human side of policing to build trust and confidence.”

- People should always be at the heart of what you do. Genuine interactions breed trust and can help diffuse a situation.
- Speed is important, but secondary to accuracy when responding to a crisis.
- Escalation through seniority is not always necessary if the situation demands a high level response straight away.
- While a disaster can never really be anticipated, proper planning can help people make the right decision even if the plan isn't followed to the letter.
- It is important to be receptive to information as well as to provide it.
- Visuals are useful when trying to disseminate large amounts of information.
- You should try never to allow process to interfere with communication after a crisis.
- It is important to restore confidence and normality as soon as possible.
- On or off line, communication is always between humans.
- Recovery doesn't stop at the end of a crisis; it should impact everything going forward.

A photograph of Zak Edwards, a man with a beard and short hair, wearing a light blue patterned polo shirt. He is speaking into a microphone at a podium, gesturing with his hands. The background is a soft blue gradient.

ZAK EDWARDS

DON'T BE AWESOME! JUST BE ALRIGHT AT EVERYTHING

“Learn quickly and be open to new knowledge, surround yourself with experts, but don't be afraid to know a little of everything.”

- The path to purchase involves so many touch points that too little top level knowledge across platforms can lead you to underestimate important aspects of your business model.
- A brand must market in many ways, it's impossible to attribute your success if you don't understand the various facets of your online presence.
- Silo mentality can be avoided if people know enough to overcome embarrassment of interdepartmental communication and can encourage knowledge sharing.
- Knowing a little about a lot can ensure you get the most from external relationships.
- People make mistakes, they're unavoidable – but if you know enough to spot them, you can limit the damage they do.
- Knowing what a job entails helps you to employ people that can fulfil the role well.



PAUL MORRIS

HOW TO ENGAGE CUSTOMERS VIA SEARCH IN LOW INTEREST CATEGORIES

“The death of search has been greatly exaggerated – in fact it’s only increasing in its importance.”

- Amazon Go could be the biggest innovation in FMCG for some time, strongly affecting in-store search.
- Search is vital (and becoming more so) to ensuring your brand is present for the ZMOT (zero moment of truth – the moment a purchase decision is made).
- Augmented reality, the internet of things (IOT) and SNATCH are going to be important players in the future of search.
- There are ways to make shareable content for even the lowest interest industries (survey and analysis can offer great opportunities).
- Unleash your data vaults – often brands have large amounts of data that does little for them but could be put to use.
- Fill content gaps – because it is difficult to produce content for low interest industries, quite often there are gaps that industry magazines and consumers need filling – and this offers great opportunity to be creative with filling niches.
- Repurpose content – low interest industries make it even more important that you get the most out of your content.



NIC WILSDON

HOW TO PREPARE FOR GOOGLE'S MOBILE FIRST INDEX

“Mobile growth is exceptional – it is the present and the future of search. Ignore it at your peril – you need to do better than okay.”

- In some markets, mobile traffic now equates to 65% of all traffic – with people spending around three hours a day on mobile devices.
- Google is likely to roll out its Mobile First index around the end of 2017, early 2018 (though responsive websites will be ‘okay’).
- Page speed is crucial to a mobile future – the quicker the better (and Google will be prioritising AMP), as speed is a ranking factor and leads to better rankings and lower abandon rates.
- Think Mobile First – for technical this means working on: site structure, https migration, sitemaps/shopping feeds and fixing crawling errors.
- Google is offering a lot of opportunity for early adopters – such as http2 (where https is a prerequisite), AMP will be the go to for featured snippets and the first pages indexed.
- JSON should be used – try to ensure all possible content is structured as easily portable data for accessibility by voice and other platforms.
- Utilise Tag Manager to reduce time from concept to deployment.



LUKASZ ZELEZNY

SEO GAP AND SNAPSHOT- WHAT ARE THEY?

“With enough research and data, you can evaluate opportunities and improve rankings by choosing your battles well.”

- Snapshot SEO is a method of evaluating keyword opportunities using multiple tools and calculating worth vs cost on improving keywords which already rank.
- Optimisation process – focus on:
 - *Title tag modification*
 - *Strong tags*
 - *Alt tags*
 - *IMG filenames (keyword)*
 - *Header modification <h1><h2><h3>*
 - *Internal links with keyword anchors*
- GAP is about analysing the non-brand keywords missing from your profile that your competitors all rank for but your brand does not and looking for opportunities.
- For pages with answer boxes, you have the opportunity, with paid and organic, to feature three times for a single query, so pursue it fully.
- Dirs may help when pursuing the answer box.

A photograph of David Edmundson-Bird, a man with glasses and a plaid shirt, speaking at a podium. He is wearing a green lanyard. The background is a blue screen with a white geometric shape.

DAVID EDMUNDSON-BIRD

WHY WE CAN'T TEACH SEO

“There is no way to teach SEO to students that will not be out of date by the time they finish – the future is apprenticeships.”

- What was a priority in 2014 is old hat at the end of a three year course, so educators must be attempting to make students work ready.
- Universities must concentrate on teaching students:
 - *WHEN to do SEO*
 - *WHY to do SEO*
 - *WHAT SEO is*
 - *WHERE SEO fits*
 - *WHO does the SEO*
- In order to ensure the industry has graduates that know HOW to do SEO is through placements and live projects.
- Agencies and brands need to take responsibility for nurturing talent.
- Degree apprenticeships are almost here and we need to make it work for the good of the industry.

A woman with dark, wavy hair and red lipstick, wearing a white button-down shirt and a green lanyard, is speaking and gesturing with her right hand. The background is a blurred stage setting.

SABRINA GARUFI

MEASURING COMPLEX CUSTOMER JOURNEYS

“ **Stop living in the Stone Age and abandon last click attribution before it starts to negatively impact your efforts.** ”

- Attribution is far more complex than Google have been able to reflect in the past, but that is changing.
- Just as we wouldn't give all the credit to a lift for getting us from home to a second floor conference, we shouldn't do the same for the last interaction a consumer makes with a brand.
- Attribution should be data-driven and bespoke to a brand's needs – something that can only be done by testing and measurement.
- 10'000 interactions or 400 conversions will be necessary to use data-driven interaction, but those who qualify should use it.
- Data-driven attribution uses AI to determine the best method of attribution for a consumer journey – allowing you to make more fully informed decisions and helping to add value.
- On average, data-driven attribution is resulting in a 5% increase in conversions, with much larger impact when paired with smart bidding.



GERRY WHITE

TIME TO MIGRATE TO HTTPS - THE SIMPLE WAY TO DO IT RIGHT

“HTTPS increases visibility, improves security and, with 0.1% of the web currently using it, it represents a competitive advantage.”

- There are plenty of reasons to implement HTTPS, but security should be enough for it to be vital.
- There's no need to block HTTPS, Google will not see it as duplicate content.
- Don't use SPDY, go straight to HTTP2.
- Migrate your site from HTTP to HTTPS slowly to avoid making unnecessary mistakes and test the certificate often.
- Dual run your HTTP and HTTPS sites while you ensure you have the right solutions in place.
- Fetch, render and repeat!
- Monitor for exceptions and set up site audits, try to break it or your consumers will!
- Only once all of this is done and everything is in place, change your canonical tags.
- Use 302 rather than 301 redirects for the eventual push over as these are faster to load through browsers.



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