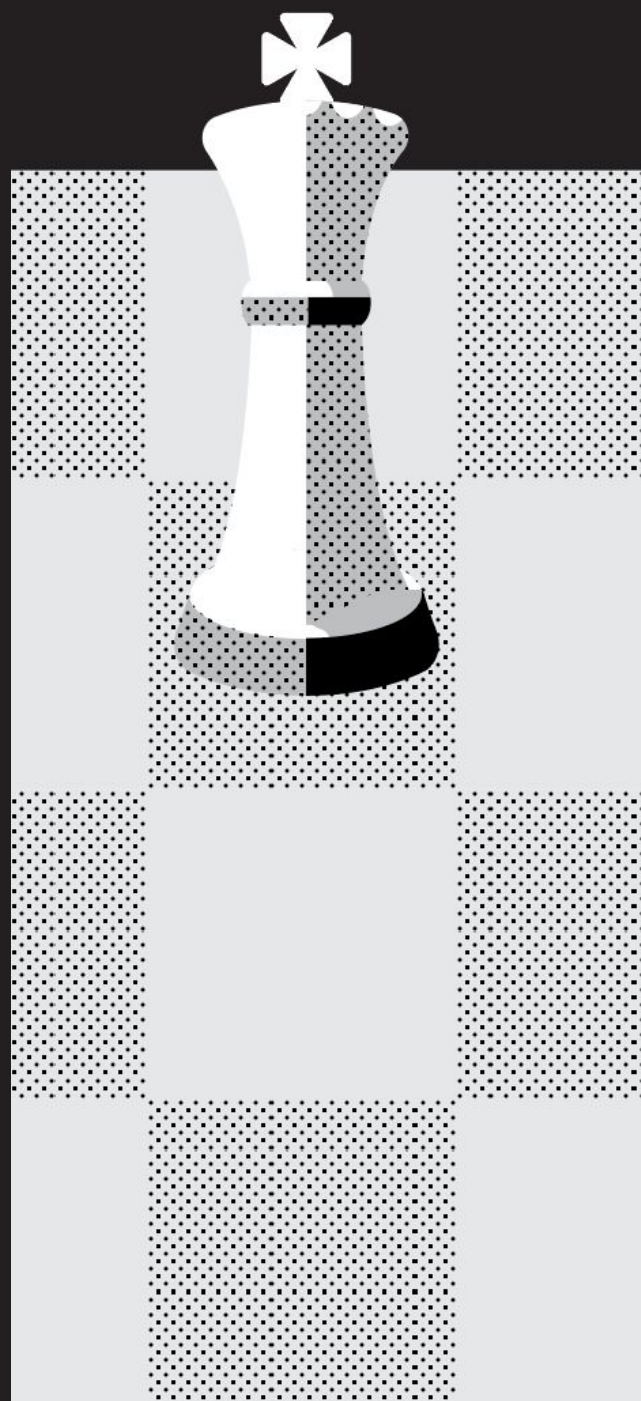


CallRail

Agency guide

Why you need to
re-think your SEO
approach in 2021



Introduction



At a time where the digital marketing playbook is being rewritten, making sure you're helping your clients edge out the competition online means doubling down on your SEO efforts. But SEO today doesn't look like it used to.

While keyword research is still a great way to uncover opportunities to drive organic traffic back to your clients' websites, you have to dig deeper to succeed with SEO today. More specifically, you have to get comfortable with behavioral analytics (the what, why, and when behind user's search intent). That's because Google is placing an increased emphasis on behavioral analytics over keywords alone.

It no longer promotes websites that reference a searcher's particular keyword or keyphrase. Instead, it goes one step further, promoting websites that help searchers achieve their specific goals. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity for marketers.

Identifying a searchers' intent isn't as easy as plugging keywords into a keyword research tool. And producing content that seeks to answer search intent is considerably more time- and energy-intensive than keyword stuffing.

However, this is the future of SEO — so it's time to get up to speed with the new rules of the game. This guide will spell out how agency marketers like you can win the SEO game for their clients in 2021 and beyond.

Let's take a closer look.



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Understanding the SEO shift



SEO has evolved significantly from the early days of Google's then revolutionary web crawler and PageRank. If we look back at where things started and where they are today, we see a continued move towards more personalization and understanding the intent behind a search.

Nowhere is this shift more evident than with two Google algorithm updates: [RankBrain](#) in 2015 and [BERT](#) in 2019. RankBrain was aimed at helping Google better understand search queries (keywords) and measuring how people interacted with the results they offered — in other words, how satisfied they were with the search results.

It then tweaks and changes SERPs relating to a particular keyword on an ongoing basis to increase searchers' satisfaction. And it's thanks to BERT that Google ensures that only the most relevant and valuable content rises to the top of SERPs.

BERT also plays a significant role in ensuring this is the case — marking the latest development in Google's natural language processing (NLP). It follows on from its successful predecessors, first Knowledge Graph, and then Hummingbird.

By analyzing both keywords and the words surrounding them, BERT can better understand searchers' intents and, therefore, provide users with more relevant content in return.

Following on the heels of the January 2020 core update, which placed additional emphasis on E.A.T. (expertise, authority, and trustworthiness) in determining search result ranking, the December release reaffirms Google's resolve on creating content that truly speaks to your user's search intent. That is if you want the websites you manage to rank.



And in the age of COVID, focusing on the user's search intent is more important than ever. We all know that the pandemic has uprooted everyday life as we know it. Unsurprisingly, these changes have also been reflected in consumer search behavior.

It's likely you saw a dip in your client's website traffic at the onset of the pandemic as people assembled critical information to understand how they should navigate their new reality. Add in the increased competition for consumer's attention from businesses moving online to better reach their customers and the latest Google algorithm updates, and you can easily see that keyword research alone is not enough to stand out.

"The shift in search behavior and online competition has also added pressure on SEO marketers to close the revenue gap with SEO."

This shift in search behavior and online competition has also added pressure on SEO marketers like you to close the revenue gap with SEO. Clients know that to compete online successfully, they need a solid SEO strategy to bring customers to their digital storefront.

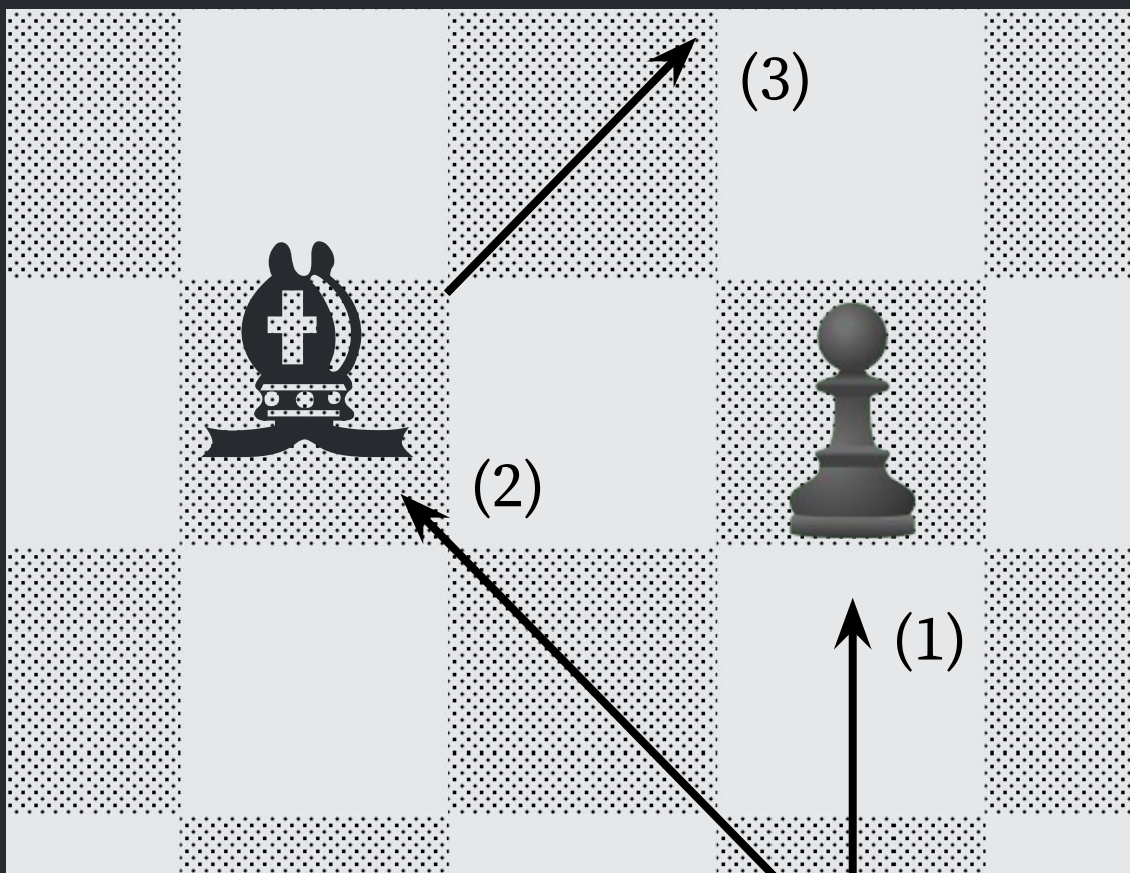
So how do you better equip your client's to deal with this new normal? How do you craft your SEO strategy to translate search results into revenue? And how do you tap into Google's push for behavioral analysis to pull it off? Read on to find out.



3 ways to maintain your client's competitive edge

It's one thing to be aware of SEO and search habit changes. But it's another thing entirely to use this knowledge to maintain a competitive advantage.

Here's how you can effectively devise your client's SEO strategy by tapping into behavioral analytics. The what, why, and when of every user's search intent.



Focus on ROI, not traffic



Great traffic alone doesn't make for a successful company. While traffic indicates how many people are interacting with your site, this counts for little if they don't convert. It's key that marketers focus on efforts that drive a tangible ROI – meaning data on behavioral analytics will become increasingly important.

The goal here is to identify high-value visitors, dig into what they're looking at on your site, the marketing that drove them to your business in the first place, and then reverse-engineering this back into the content you produce.

Imagine you have created a revolutionary payments processor.

A visitor searches 'best payments processors for dermatology clinics.' Your article, 'An introduction to payments processing for dermatologists,' is at the top of their SERPs – so they head to your website and check out the entire article.

Having read this article, they click on the case studies section of your website where they read all about the various healthcare-based businesses you have worked with. They even download a piece of gated content entitled: 'A complete guide to healthcare payments processing.'

A few visits later, this one customer ends up converting, and your client earns a cool \$5,000.

However, while all this has been happening, you've received a ton of traffic for one article: 'The top 10 payments processors in 2021.' The thing is, while this article has attracted a load of traffic, visitors usually end up clicking on links to other featured payments processors – leaving your client's site.

In fact, you haven't had one single visitor convert after having read this high-performing article. If you focused on traffic alone, the 'Top 10' article would be considered a big win. But it didn't result in any conversions.

Behavioral analytics (n.):
data that provides insights
into online consumer
behavior.

Once you have the behavioral data to drive quality leads to your website, you need to focus on assisted and last-click conversions. This will help you tie traffic to ROI, revealing the content visitors interacted with along their journey before they converted.

By focusing on ROI, you'd instead learn to prioritize high-value (although lower-traffic) SEO strategies. You'd move beyond impressive Google Analytics reports but low sales figures – instead, embracing the profitable SEO niches that you've found work for your client's particular business.



Replace keywords with first-party data

To be successful today means becoming increasingly confident in using first-party data (i.e., data that your client's company has collected on its visitors) rather than relying on generic keyword research alone.

Sure, keyword research can be a useful way to ensure that you're effectively building out your [topical authority](#). If your client wants to be known as an expert on payments processors, but the term 'merchant' is never mentioned, for example, then your client can hardly be classified as a subject matter expert.


But keyword research shouldn't be the be-all and end-all of your SEO strategy.

Stuffing your website full of the right keywords is an ineffective tactic. If people are searching 'how do payments processors work?' and your client's website instead lists off generic stats about the size of the payments processors industry, then you're hardly matching the searchers' intent.

The key is to go one step further than analyzing mere webpage visits. You need to look closer at your client's first-party data to discern whether these visits were successful.

In other words, whether you accurately helped searchers find what they're looking for.





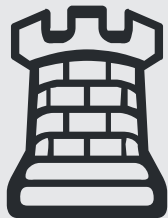
Taking the example from the previous section, keyword research would've shown that 'Top 10' guide drives consistently high traffic. However, visitors then bounce and don't end up converting — so this traffic amounts for nothing.

Conversely, by using first-party data, you see that a significant portion of visitors downloaded your 'A complete guide to healthcare payments processing' piece of content work in dermatology clinics.

“First-party data shows you who is interested in your product, the pain points they are looking to solve, and how they navigate to your client's site....”

You therefore decide to run an experiment, producing a series of articles and guides that specifically reference dermatological clinics. In time, you see that this niche draws in a fairly insignificant amount of traffic. That being said, the conversion rate from these visitors is far higher than with the 'Top 10' guide.

First-party data shows you who is interested in your product, the pain points they are looking to solve, and how they navigate to your client's site to answer their problems. Once you understand these factors, you can then purposefully craft an SEO strategy that seeks to attract, inform, and retain these customers.



But first-party data doesn't just come from gated content landing pages. **Phone calls are an invaluable source of first-party data.** When prospects or customers call you up, they explain exactly what they're looking for and what they're struggling with.

You don't have to second-guess their search intent or try to untangle a confusing — and seemingly illogical — customer journey. Instead, you can just sit back, listen, and find out what your prospects and customers actually want.

That said, collecting, synthesizing, and analyzing these insights at scale is a tricky task. One-off conversations might be interesting indicators, but unless they're backed up by other callers saying the same thing, there's little reason for your business to alter its SEO strategy.

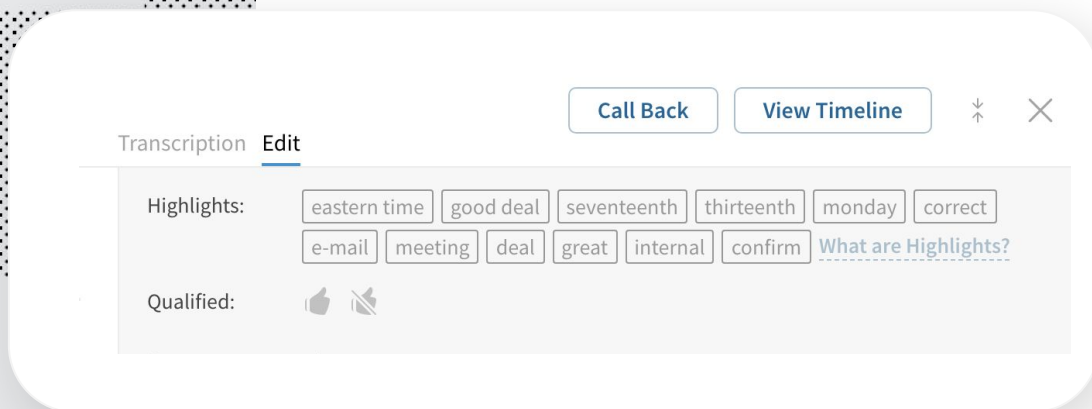
By implementing a [Call Tracking](#) strategy, you'll ensure that no key customer-led insights ever fly under the radar. With a tool like CallRail's [Conversation Intelligence](#), you can leverage AI to instantly analyze calls, revealing:

- The caller's intent
- Their specific pain points
- The language they use when referring to your products and services

Plus, with the [Call Highlights](#) report, you can seamlessly pull out all the most relevant topics and keywords/phrases from each specific conversation.

So what's next?

Well, you can then feed these insights back into the content you produce — and your SEO strategy more generally. Callers may highlight existing gaps in your content.

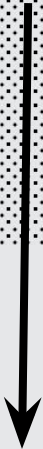


They might reveal they're suffering from pain points that your content doesn't address. Or, they may even use alternative language when discussing your clients' products/the industry in general.

Whatever they say, these are all invaluable pieces of information. By analyzing first-party data from your clients' inbound calls, you can identify high-value areas where you can improve your SEO strategy — driving the maximum possible impact.



Prioritize retention



The purpose of SEO is to attract visitors to your clients' site — that's obvious enough. But how is your SEO strategy ensuring long-term customer retention? Companies that will win the SEO game in 2021 and beyond will emphasize SEO aimed at retaining customers rather than simply attracting new ones.

For instance, a business might use [Call Tracking](#) to analyze thousands of calls they've received throughout the last quarter. When they dig into the results (using a tool like [Conversation Intelligence](#)), they see that a ton of existing customers call the customer service department because they have trouble integrating its payments processor with their existing systems.

The business suddenly realizes that their website contains no troubleshooting-related content — instead, it just guides customers to pick up the phone and speak to customer service.

Some customers, however, might be put off by the lack of self-service options and instead opt to do business with a more customer-friendly competitor. If this happens at scale, the business could suddenly face plummeting retention, customer lifetime value, and revenue.

Existing customers rarely call up your business to talk about how great a product is. If they do love it, you and your client might never even know.

The thing is, they definitely call up in droves to discuss the issues they're facing.

But this is no bad thing — it's actually a secret SEO goldmine.

The ultimate goal is to produce content that informs, educates, entertains, and answers your target audience throughout all stages of their lifecycle. If you do this, you will retain more customers, which will positively impact your client's bottom line.

“The ultimate goal is to produce content that informs, educates, entertains, and answers your target audience throughout all stages of their lifecycle.”

It's been suggested that [acquiring a new customer costs five times as much as retaining an existing one](#). By investing in post-acquisition SEO that answers your customers' ongoing pain points and needs, you will revolutionize your revenue and customer lifetime value from now on.



Bringing it all together

How can agency marketers win the SEO game in 2021? By working smart — not hard.

Forget about trying to rank for insanely popular keywords. Forget about trying to unearth hidden keyword gems that might bring in substantial levels of traffic. Forget about keyword stuffing and the like.

Instead, be smart in your approach. Figure out what your clients' prospects and customers truly want at each stage of their lifecycle before feeding these insights back into your SEO and content strategy.

Focus on providing as much value as possible to each individual user — not on trying to game Google's increasingly complex SEO rules and requirements.

Leverage invaluable first-party data from calls to find out what prospects and customers truly want. And analyze high-value visitor behavior and seek to identify how you attract more of these types of visitors moving forward.

Look beyond traffic. Instead, working to directly link each visitor to the ROI that they bring to your business.

That said, this is virtually impossible without the right type of tools. Look for tools like CallRail that will automate as much of this process as possible, making it easier for you to record, synthesize, and analyze first-party customer data.

In all, remember one thing: SEO isn't about satisfying Google — it's about satisfying prospects and customers.



CallRail

Dial in your SEO strategies with CallRail.

Layering call analytics on top of your SEO strategies is a great way to connect the dots between traffic generated and ROI. See how with a FREE 14-day trial to CallRail and get started driving SEO business value today.

[Start Free Trial](#)

