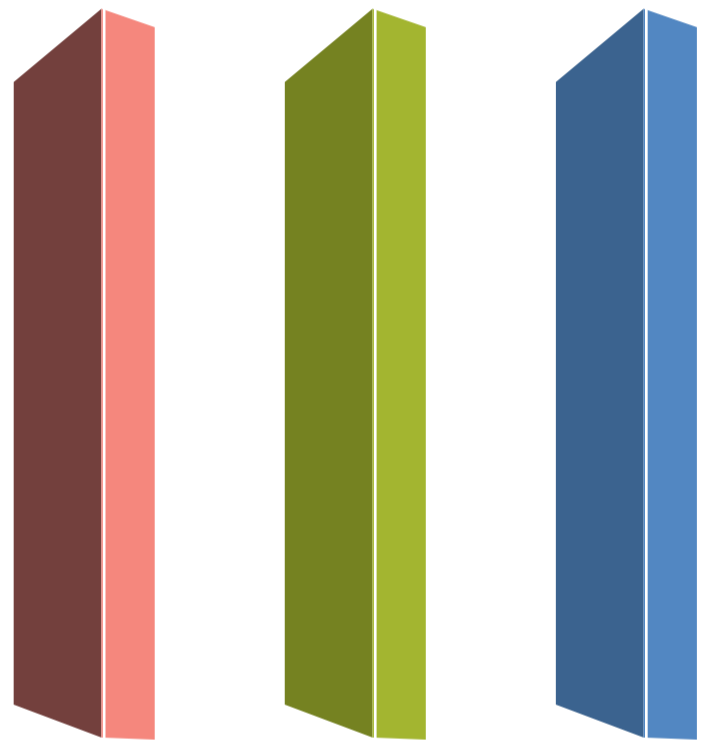# Future-Proof
SEO

Stop Worrying about Search Engine Policy and Algorithm Changes

SEO = Architecture + Content + Engagement

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Lets Get Started

What is SEO?

Break up the two parts of SEO and ask Google…

"What's a search engine?"

Google says: *"It's a program that searches for items in a database that correspond to keywords or characters specified by the user"*

So a search engine is any program or website or app that helps people find stuff. Google's the most well know but think of all the places where people need to find things.

Anytime you ask Siri *"where should I get pizza tonight?"* or use a review site like Yelp, you're using a search engine.

Next, ask Google

"What is optimization?"

"…making something as fully perfect, functional, or effective as possible."

If you define SEO as simply ranking higher in Google, you're about a decade behind the times. I define it as:

Maximizing both your online visibility and the benefit that you get from it.
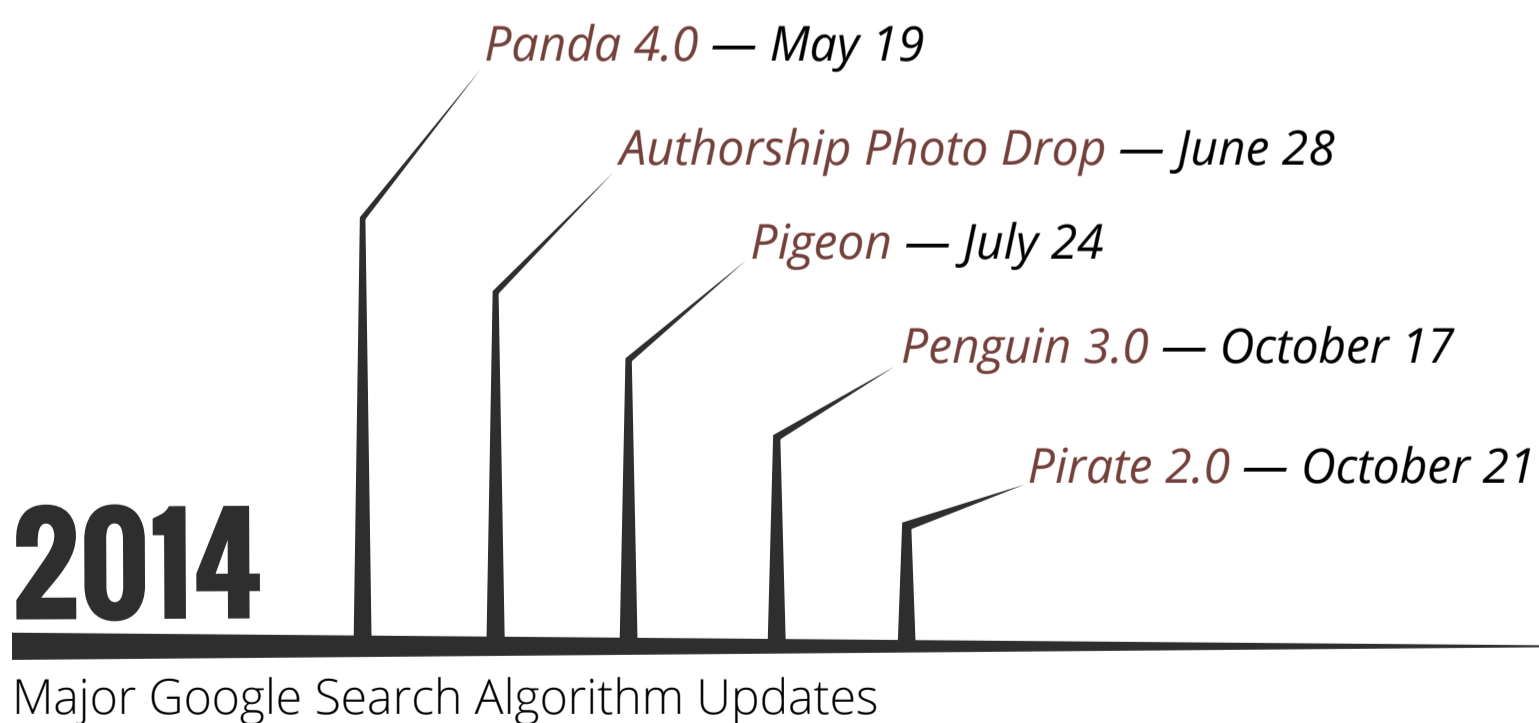
Change: The Only Constant

For years, most attempts at SEO have been reactionary and manipulative. These attempts are destined to fail for two main reasons.

1) Google constantly changes their algorithms. You can't keep up with everything.

2) Google often changes their policies and how they enforce them. Manipulative tactics that used to work can often lead to penalties in the future.

"Google pushes 350-400 algorithm updates live per year."

- Matt Cutts *Google Head of Web Spam*

Panda 4.0 — *May 19*

Authorship Photo Drop — *June 28*

Pigeon — *July 24*

Penguin 3.0 — *October 17*

Pirate 2.0 — *October 21*

2014

Major Google Search Algorithm Updates

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ACE: 3 Pillars of SEO

The old SEO strategy of reacting to the latest algorithm changes and looking for quick-win loopholes has landed many website owners in the Google penalty box. Wouldn't it be better to have a Future Proof SEO strategy?

Let me share the formula with you:

Future Proof SEO = Architecture + Content + Engagement (ACE)

These three pillars work together to create a web presence that will make you an SEO ACE today and can make you immune from the changes that any search engine can throw at you in the future.

Architecture

Organize, code and design your website to be optimized for both search and users. Get this right and you're on your way to success.
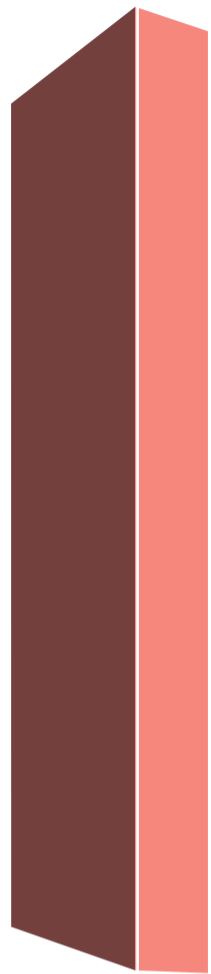
Content

Do you deserve to rank number one? The authority, utility, and presentation of your content should set you apart.

Engagement

You have the content, it's time to get it front of the right people. Focus on building new relationships and nurturing existing ones.

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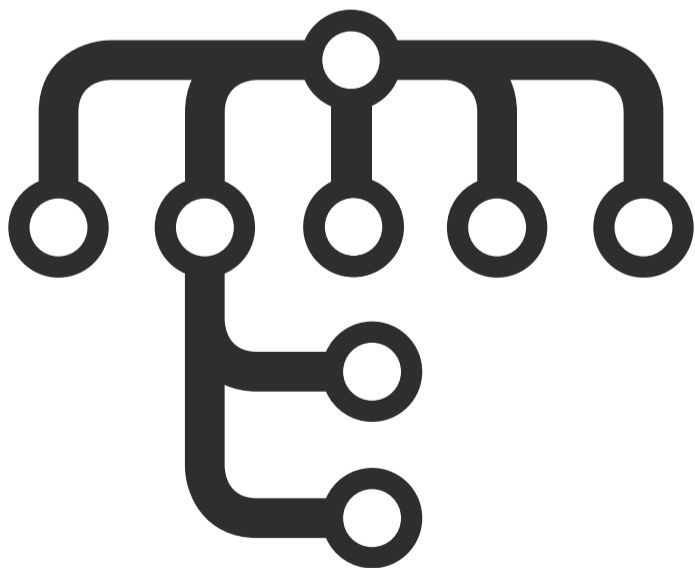
Architecture

Under the Hood

Site Architecture

You own your site. This gives you complete control over the experience and gives you the opportunity to drive people through the proper funnel.

Information Architecture

The main site navigation and sitemap are core elements for organizing your site's content. Understand your audience's intent and the desired outcome. Use this to inform the hierarchy and order of content, and to point users toward a specific action.

Technical Architecture

This encompasses some of the SEO factors that have been around for a long time, including meta titles & descriptions, page titles, proper redirects, & URL structure, as well as newer factors like schema markup.

Plan Your Sitemap

Code Matters

Information Architecture

The way that you organize your website and the way you label your sections are extremely important for SEO. Help Google understand what your website, sections and pages are about by using concise and descriptive names.

Whether your website is large or small, good Information Architecture includes your main navigation, helpful breadcrumb trails and a URL structure that is easy to understand.
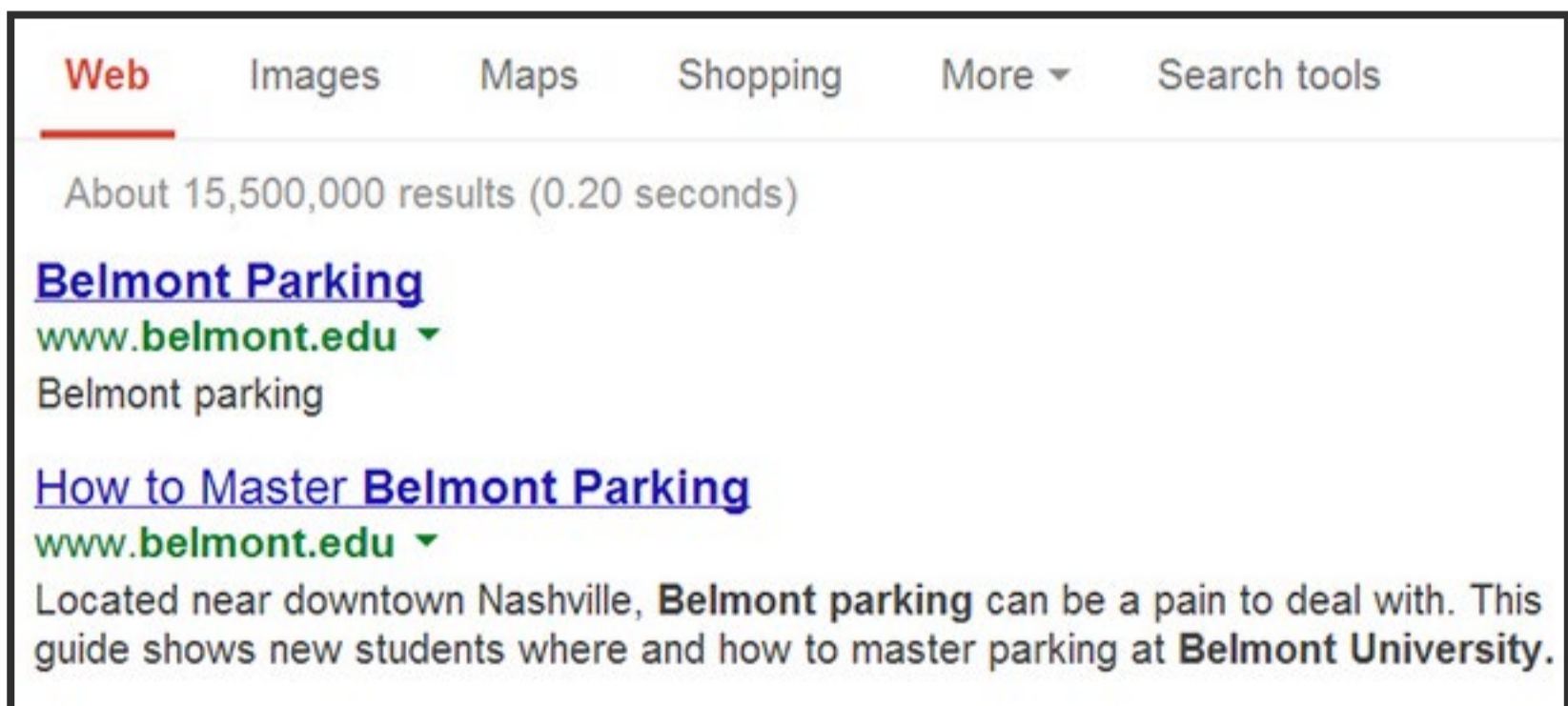
Technical Architecture

Meta titles and meta descriptions have been the foundation of SEO since the beginning. But even when we perform an SEO Audit on a well optimized site, we always find opportunities to improve the meta titles and meta descriptions.

I recently assigned my students to write a meta title and meta description that met SEO best practices, targeting the query: Belmont parking. Here are two submissions. Yes, the first one meets the minimum requirements of including the keyword phrase. But which listing one would you click?

Just because you include a keyword phrase in the the title and the meta description, it doesn't mean you're an ACE at SEO.

Future Proof Architecture

Let's go beyond the basic elements of technical architecture and touch on a more advanced tactic at your disposal: Schema Markup.

Schema is a markup language recognized by all search engines that allow you to tell Google, for example, "this is a review," "this is a phone number," "this is an event," etc.

Here's an example of how this may benefit you on a search engine result page. Everyone loves gold stars! Right?

Content

The Meat & Potatoes

Content to Solve Problems

Everyone has heard the phrase "content is king." We prefer to think about content in terms of solving problems for your business and clients.

Of course you want to rank on page one of Google, but do you deserve to? Does the content on your site provide more value than your competitors? What content did you provide that other sites would want to link to or customers would tweet about?

Better Serve Clients

Content can solve a problem for your visitor.

If you are selling a product, or providing a service, why not include a video on your site that provides additional information about that product or service?

Establishing yourself as an expert through valuable content is the way you deserve to rank well.

Improve Business Efficiencies

Content can solve problems for your business directly.

There are likely things you regularly discuss with clients, vendors, and employees that could go on your site. Point them to the site first and improve business efficiencies.

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Fuel Other Channels

Taking the time to produce great content puts you in front of new customers and pays dividends across other marketing channels.

Social Media

Take that killer content you just wrote for your site and repackage it for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. Give followers a preview and then get them back on your site!

Email

Same principle applies to the email newsletters you're sending out. You are sending out a newsletter, right?

Future Proof Content

Evergreen Content

Write at least some of the content on your site in such a way that it can be utilized for years to come.

Regular Audits

If there is site content that needs updating on a regular basis, setup a schedule to regularly audit your site.
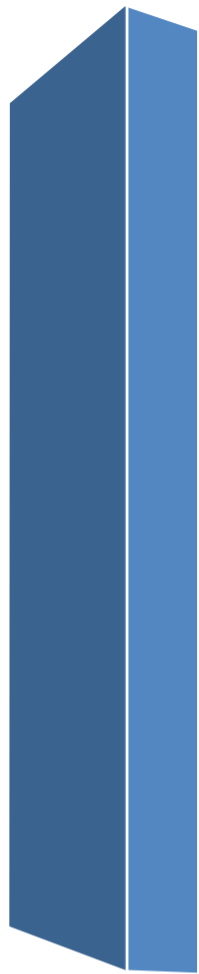
Google Algorithm Updates

Google has rolled out some of the most significant algorithm updates ever, just in the past couple of years. The overarching trend with all of these updates is a shift towards rewarding those with great content. By focusing on quality, you've better prepared yourself for the future of SEO.
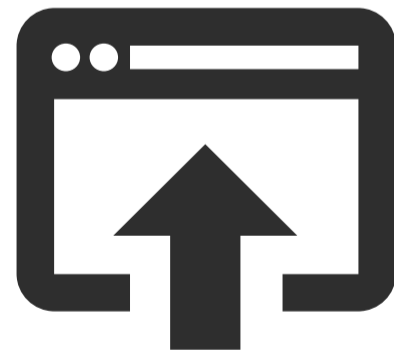
Engagement

Reach the Right People
Build Relationships

Content Engagement Cycle

Great content will get you nowhere without getting it in front of the right people.

Moreover, simply pushing your content out across your different marketing channels is not enough. You need to interact & engage, and build those new relationships.

An engagement strategy is crucial and leads to a self-sustaining cycle if implemented correctly.

- **Build Link**
- **Grow Audience**
- **Increase Authority**
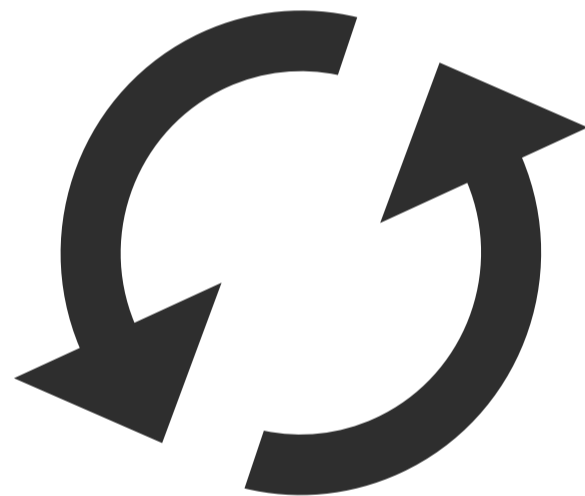
Engagement Evolution

In the past, if you wanted to ACE the Engagement part of SEO, it was all about the links.

In fact, the cornerstone of Google's original success was their PageRank algorithm which was a revolutionary way for search engines to consider links.

Google relied heavily on links because they signaled a relationship between two websites. And they worked great as a signal in the algorithm because links were hard to get, you had to earn them...

... at least until spammers figured out that Google wasn't very good at discerning real links from fake links.

Engagement for SEO in the past was ripe for manipulation.

Fortunately, Google has gotten alot better at understanding many forms of Engagement. Links are still very important but Google also looks at other signals of Engagement to determine trust and authority.

Future Proof Engagement

You still need links, citations, testimonials and a social media presence to maximize your SEO. But it's important to have the right mindset or you run the risk of getting Engagement signals that won't stand the test of time.

Here's three guidelines on building a solid foundation for Engagement:

- Create a site with a fantastic user experience
- Don't just broadcast to your visitors, interact with them
- Engage with visitors where they want to interact with you, not just on your own website

If you approach Engagement with the intent of helping your visitors, you'll be on the right path to SEO success.

Future Proof Formula
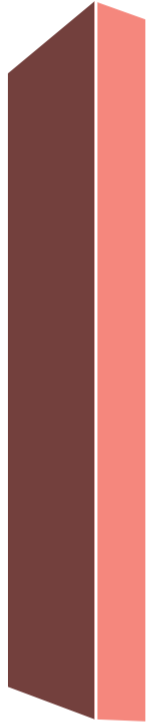
Architecture

Strategic organization focused on simplicity and speed.

Content

Great content that solves a problem.

Engagement

Build relationships with content & stay away from gimmicks.

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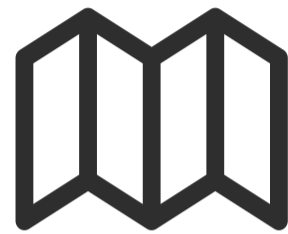Web Site Design and Promotion

Are You Future Proof?

A comprehensive audit of your web presence is the way to make sure you're on the right path to long term SEO success.

Want to do it yourself?

See some of the tools that we use:

www.2thetopdesign.com/resources/

Need our help?

Learn more about our Web Presence Audit & Roadmap service:

www.2thetopdesign.com/seo-audit/

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