

What's Next in Search Engine Optimization?

Search engine optimization, or SEO, is something part magic and part science. Knowing just the right amount of keywords and keyword phrases to use on a page or blog post is just one part of the equation. Then, just when you think you've gotten it down, something changes. And, that's just what's happening in the last quarter of 2016.



According to former MOZ CEO, [Rand Fishkin](#), there are many changes coming to SEO late in the year, as well as into 2017, that web developers and SEO specialists should be aware of. [One tip he mentions](#) is, "Google doesn't use the keyword meta tag in search rankings."

"What! I thought that was what drove SEO in the first place," you cry.

Hold on for this bumpy ride because some of the things you thought you knew are going to be very different in the future.

The Top 5 Changes

1. Meta descriptions and keywords, both highly-leveraged areas of a web page, were what you probably learned drew traffic to your site. In the future, they won't have nearly as much weight, if any. However, don't toss them out just yet. They will still have a lot of influence over click-thru rate. Tip: Write meta descriptions like you would [email subject lines](#) to help draw in search rankings.
2. Keywords in search are no longer tied directly to keywords in web page content. Seriously? Yes! Rather search engines, particularly Google, will consider the intent of the keywords so it can match that intent to relevant search. For example, if you baked cakes, and used "cake baking" as one of your keywords, your brand is more likely to show up in search results for weddings than it would for bakeries.
3. Heading tags, focusing on H1 tags mostly, will have no more weight than any other heading tag on a page. Going forward, it's not as important to use an H1 tag as it will be to present the most important content near the top of the page, sans H1 if desired. Tip: Think newspaper lead sentences/paragraphs - a person can learn a good amount about a story simply from a well-written lead sentence.

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4. Search results rankings have lost their shine. When using a search engine, the ranking of first-page search results does not have as much weight as in the past. Google has found that even though #1 search rankings were nice, the masses (people) also clicked on content below the first search result to find what they were looking for. Tip: Create an SEO goal to be on the first page, but not necessarily in the first position, on the search results page.
5. Unique and well-developed content for inbound marketing efforts will continue to drive search results. To ensure you're content is being found and to draw in your target audience, it's more important than ever to create content to draw your audience down the [buying funnel](#).

Bonus Tip

If you have a physical business location, [local search](#) will play an even larger role in 2017 than it has in the past. If you do not already have a local listing, or manage a local presence online, make it a goal for the new year.

Remember, SEO is changing all the time. Working with a skilled SEO professional should help you reach your SEO goals and increase your target market search results.

What SEO-related questions do you have?

Additional Resources

- [Dominate Local Search Rankings With These 5 Tips](#)
- [8 Keyword Phrase Placement Options to Increase SERP](#)
- [8 SEO Tips to Aid in Search Engine Rankings](#)

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