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A collection of light gray icons arranged around the title. On the left: a lightbulb, a line graph, a computer monitor, a gear, a magnifying glass, and a cloud. On the right: a gear, a lightning bolt, a magnifying glass, a target with an arrow, a curved arrow, and a lightbulb.

# SEO IN 2018

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**7 UPDATES  
YOU NEED TO  
KNOW**

The Social Media Hat

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# SEO in 2018: 7 Updates You Need to Know

Were your SEO strategies effective enough last year? Even if they were, those same strategies may not be so effective this year.

Just like any other area in the technology industry, SEO also keeps changing. An SEO expert understands the challenges faced when trying to keep updated about SEO strategies. Neither your business' market nor Google's algorithm are static, hence your last year's tactics might need tweaks.

In Google alone, there are over 200 ranking factors with continuous updates in their algorithms. Therefore, it is crucial that you keep a close eye on the latest trends and updates in SEO in order to rank well. It is indeed important to keep a close eye on the [factors that impact ranking](#) of your website.

This post will give you help you discover the seven most important SEO updates that you need to know in 2018.

## 1. Mobile-Friendly Websites

Due to the growing popularity of mobile devices and easy access to the internet, the number of mobile searches is increasing dramatically. Mobiles searches are occurring almost as often as searches on desktop.

Here are a few statistics which will help you to understand the importance of mobile-friendly websites:

- Google generates more than [90%](#) of search traffic from mobile, followed by Yahoo and Bing with less than 2%.
- In major B2B companies, on an average more than [40%](#) of revenue is mobile-driven.
- [69%](#) of the customers between 18 to 39 years old use their smartphones to search for products before making any purchases.

So for you to keep up in the SEO game, it's crucial to develop mobile-friendly websites. And your website must be mobile responsive. This means your website should be able to adapt to any mobile screen size. Google has even provided

businesses with the option of testing the mobile version of their websites for mobile-friendliness.

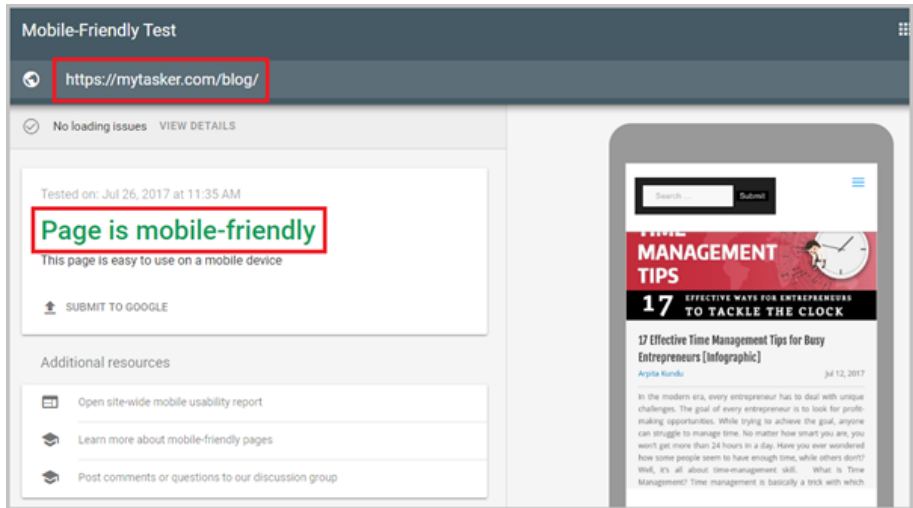


Image Source — Google

In addition to checking the mobile-friendliness of webpages, this tool also provides you with recommendations. Following these recommendations will help you further improve your site for mobile devices.

## 2. Optimize for Voice Search

Search is the future. No matter what happens, people tend to turn to the internet to satisfy their curiosity. There are as many as 65,000 search queries made in a second on Google. You can think of the potential this figure holds. And now that people have the ability to easily conduct searches by speaking into their phones, the number of voice searches is likely to increase as well.

Who wants to type a lot when you have the option of voice search? Voice search programs like Cortana for Windows, Google Assistant, and Siri for Apple have grown quite popular in recent years. At regular intervals, these interfaces are improved and updated to further enhance user experience and improve search accuracy. Since 2008, there has been a huge increase of 3400% in voice searches.

After your web pages are enhanced with the ability to cater to voice searches,

they may show up in the answer box. The highlighted answer box is also known as a “direct answer” or “rich answer.” By making your web pages voice search friendly, you can enhance the visibility of your site for different kinds of searchers.

According to comScore, by 2020, [50% of searches](#) will be voice searches. So it’s important for a marketer to take advantage of the voice search option.

Keywords for voice search are not just keywords, there are longtail+ keywords. The ‘+’ means conversation phrases. You can enhance your content in web pages for voice searches by including conversational phrases.

Think of how people might ask their questions in real life. For instance, instead of just asking “best restaurants Seattle,” voice searchers are likely to use phrases or full questions like, “What are the best restaurants in Seattle?”

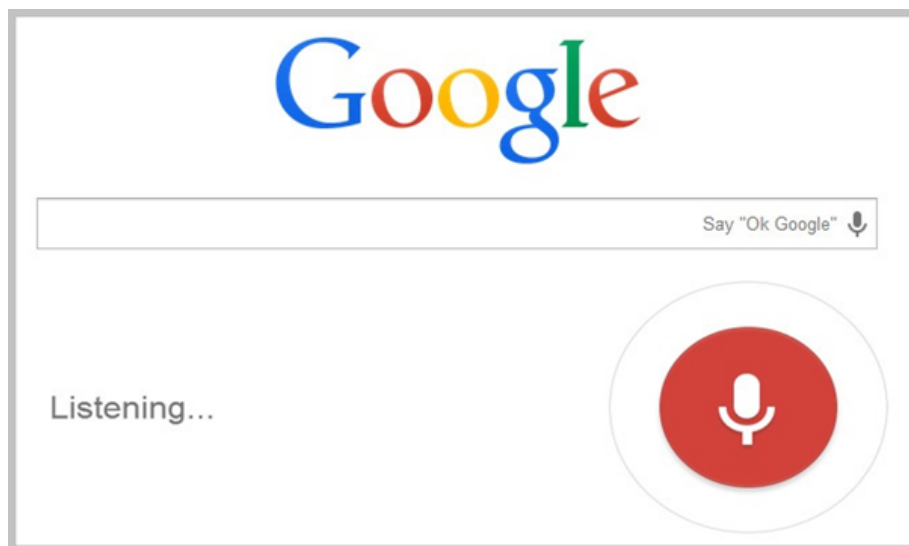


Image Source — Google

Longtail keywords play a huge role in voice searches. It is more like how people communicate in real life.

So you need to effectively keep track of the longtail keywords that you can use. There are various free tools such as [Pro Rank Tracker](#) and [SEO Book Rank](#)

**Checker** that can help you discover potential longtail keywords. These tools also help track the ranking of these longtail keywords so you can understand which ones to use and which to avoid.

### 3. Take Advantage of Rich Snippets

Rich snippets, better known as the Rich Answer box, are the ones that appear on the top of search engine results when you search for something. They contain a summary of the answer to the question searched for by a user. It also features the link to the webpage from where the answer has been taken. The summary is rich in terms of data and information.

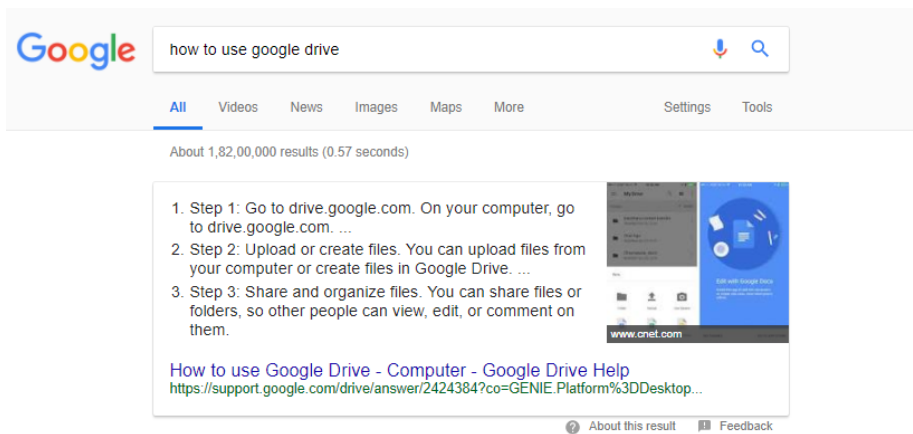


Image Source — Google.com

Rich snippets can be created by adding all of the essential and needed data to your website. This is also known as structured data. Your website's ranking in the search engines will improve if you have structured data. In 2016, structured data was added as a factor for ranking by Google in their ranking algorithm.

But if you're not a web developer, you may struggle to add this structured data to your site. The good news is, there is a tool that anyone can use for adding structured data.

Google's **Structured Data Markup Helper** is an excellent option to help you get started with structured data. This tool will automatically develop rich content based on the information you provide. This content will then be displayed in

search engine results as rich snippets.

## Structured Data Markup Helper

Website

Email

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This tool will help you add structured-data markup to a sample HTML email. [Learn more](#)

To get started, select a data type, then paste the HTML source of the email that you wish to mark up below.

☐ Bus Reservations

☐ Car Rental Reservations

☐ Event Reservations

☐ Flight Reservations

☐ Lodging Reservations

☐ Orders

☐ Parcel Delivery

☐ Restaurant Reservations

☐ Train Reservations

Paste HTML here

Start Tagging

Image Source — Google

When you search for “Kindle Paperwhite E-reader” in Google, you will find all of the vital information under the URL itself. As you can see in the screenshot below, you can see the star rating, number of reviews, etc.

Kindle Paperwhite E-reader – Amazon Official Site - Amazon.com  
<https://www.amazon.com/Amazon-Kindle-Paperwhite-6-Inch-4GB.../B00OQVZDJM> ▼  
★★★★★ Rating: 4.5 - 56,577 reviews  
Kindle Paperwhite E-reader - Black, 6" High-Resolution Display (300 ppi) with Built-in Light, Wi-Fi - Includes Special Offers .... Dimensions, 6.3" x 4.5" x 0.36" (160 x 115 x 9.1 mm), 6.7" x 4.6" x 0.36" (169 x 117 x 9.1 mm), 6.4" x 4.5" x 0.30" (162 x 115 x 7.6 mm), 6.3" x 5.6" x 0.13-0.33" (159 mm x 141 mm x 3.4-8.3 mm) ...

Image Source — Google

## 4. Page Speed Optimization

Always ensure that your website takes no more than 2 seconds to load. The speed at which your webpages load has an impact on user experience. The slower your pages, the more annoyed visitors will be. This could increase your bounce rate and affect your conversion rates as well.

In 2010, Google officially announced that page speed is one of their ranking signals. And it still continues to be an important factor that affects search engine rankings. Therefore, to enhance your website's ranking in Google's search engine, you should improve the load speed of your website.

Your website might experience poor speed if it has too much uncompressed data like CSS files, links, or images. How do you rectify these issues and improve your speed? The best possible way is to delete all the unnecessary links and data. This way you can improve the load speed of your website.

For better results, use the free [Google PageSpeed Testing Tool](#) to check the speed of your site. It will also provide you with some recommendations that can further improve load speed. As you can see in the screenshot below, the tool will give you some optimization recommendations such as minifying JavaScript, leveraging browser caching, etc.

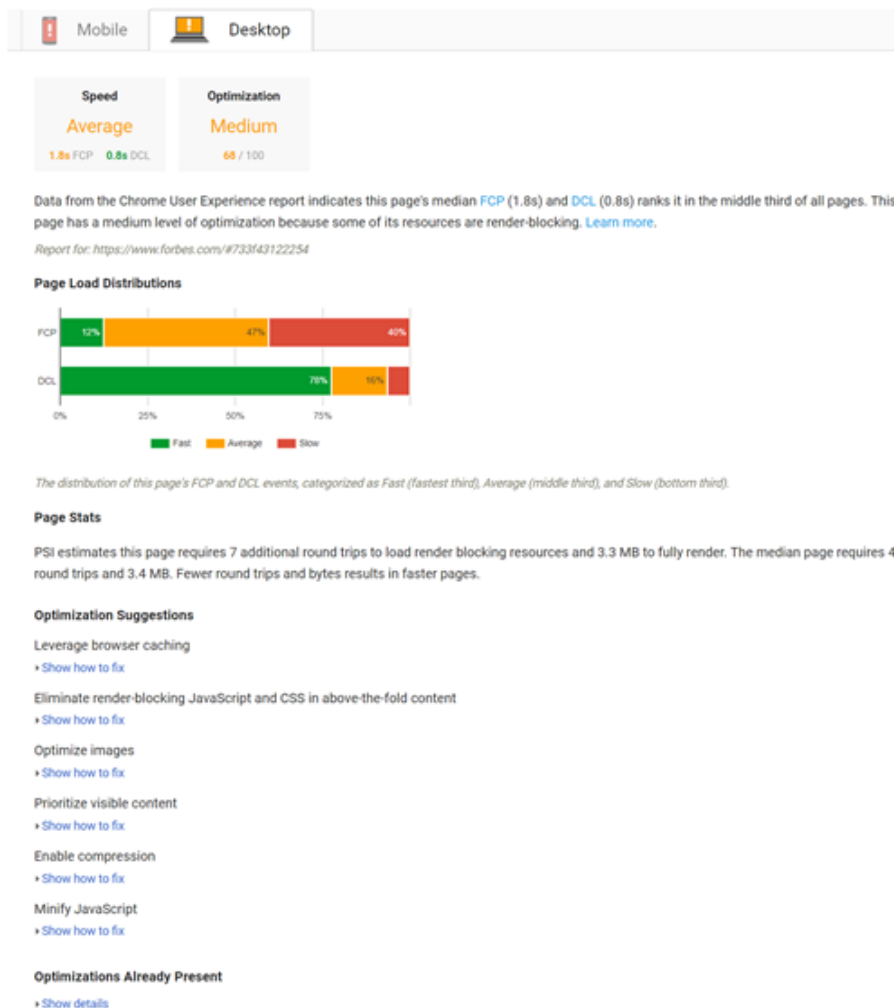


Image Source — Google

## 5. HTTPs (Use of SSL Certificate)

Moving a website from HTTP to HTTPS protects users' connections and secures their crucial information. When a user shares confidential details like bank account info, HTTPS protects that valuable information by adding extra layers.

You need to install the protocol which HTTPS uses, a [Secure Socket Layer](#) (SSL) to your website. SSL certificates makes sure that the data is safe and secure between the browser and the web server.

But why do you need to switch from HTTP to HTTPS? What effect will SSL certificates have on your search engine rankings?

There is a slight correlation between HTTPS and search engine rankings. In 2014, Google included HTTPS in their ranking algorithm and introduced it as a ranking signal. According to Moz, around 50% of web pages shown on the first page of Google's organic search results are HTTPS. Hence, moving your website to HTTPS can boost your ranking in search engines as well.

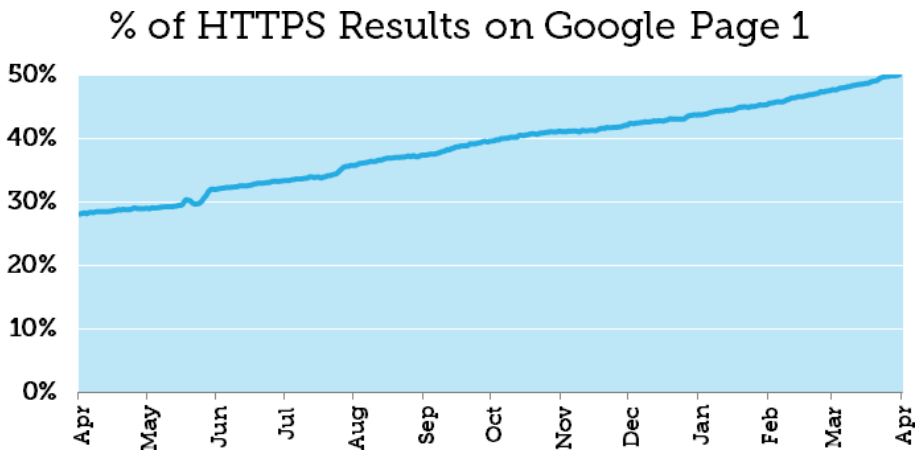


Image Source — Moz.com

Better search engine rankings automatically increase traffic to your website. Also, a secure site wins users' trust, which can lead to an increase in your click-through rate and conversions.

## 6. Use of AMP

The number of mobile users is increasing and so is the number of searches in mobile. During 2009, the web traffic generated by mobiles was only 0.7%. But in 2018, the global percentage of mobile searches has gone up to more than 50%.

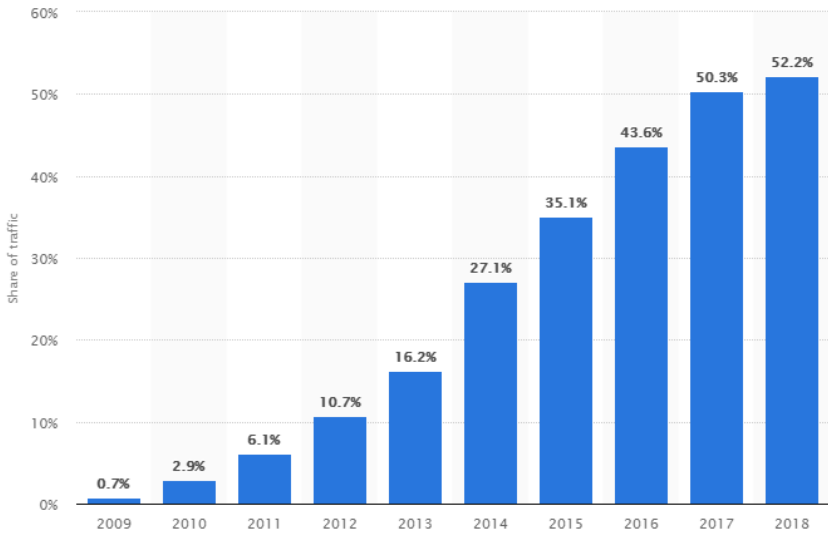


Image Source — Statista

So it is important to enrich the experience of mobile users through Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP). Your SEO and marketing strategies can also be hugely benefited from this. AMP pages are shown in the Google News carousel, and therefore your SEO will get a major boost. That's because your page is likely to get more attention than others.

Take the search term, "Oscar 2018," for example. The recently-held Oscars were the talk of the town. And as you can see AMP sites such as BBC News, Entertainment Tonight, and Metro are some of the top stories.



Oscar 2018



million per ...

Phantom Thread

Darkest Hour (film)

89th Academy A

## TOP STORIES

BBC NEWS



Oscars 2018: Man denies stealing Frances McDormand's best actres...

1 day ago

ET

Entertainment Tonight



Director Guillermo Announces Divorce After Oscars Wins

11 hours ago

[2018 Oscars | Oscars.org | Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences](https://www.oscars.org)

<https://www.oscars.org> › [news](#) › [tag](#) › [20...](#)

More than 175 Oscar® nominees will come together at noon on Monday, February 5, at the Beverly Hilton when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences honors this year's Oscar



## 7. Focus on UX

SEO cannot work in isolation from the rest of the factors that affect the performance of your website, user experience (UX) being one of them. Google's new [Webmaster Guidelines](#) have made it very clear that pages should be primarily made for users. While creating pages, your target users and their experience should be kept in mind.

This is also applicable for search engine optimization. That's because how a user behaves on your site could eventually affect how search engines perceive your site's credibility. So you need to make sure that your site is easy to navigate so people can quickly find what they need.

For both SEO and UX, the focus should be on the user. Therefore, it does not matter if it is optimization or design, you need to focus on creating useful and helpful content for users. User satisfaction is a crucial element, and a common goal for both.

You need to aim for high-quality, engaging, and relevant content. It should be easy-to-read and scan with lots of relevant visuals.

## Final Thoughts

Those who are working in the SEO industry are aware that the industry is very complex and ever-changing. This year too, Google will continue to work to improve their users' experiences by examining the significance of your webpage content. It is predicted that Google will also expect websites to be mobile-friendly and mobile-responsive in addition to containing quality content.

2018 has just started, and you still have time to focus and strengthen your SEO strategies. Feel free to comment if you know of any other SEO updates marketers and businesses need to be aware of.

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## About **The Social Media Hat**

**The Social Media Hat** is first and foremost a resource for small businesses and organizations. We strive to provide business owners with news and information on Social Media, Blogging, Internet Marketing, SEO, Mobile Apps and Technology to help promote and grow their business. With this resource, we are able to:

Tell you what to do

Tell you what to do and how to do it

Tell you what to do and do it for you

**The Social Media Hat** is led by Mike Allton, a leading Blogging and Social Media Consultant.

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