Why CMOs need to get enterprise SEO right to thrive in a digital-first world

How to ensure your SEO helps you drive revenue and brand growth as the world moves online
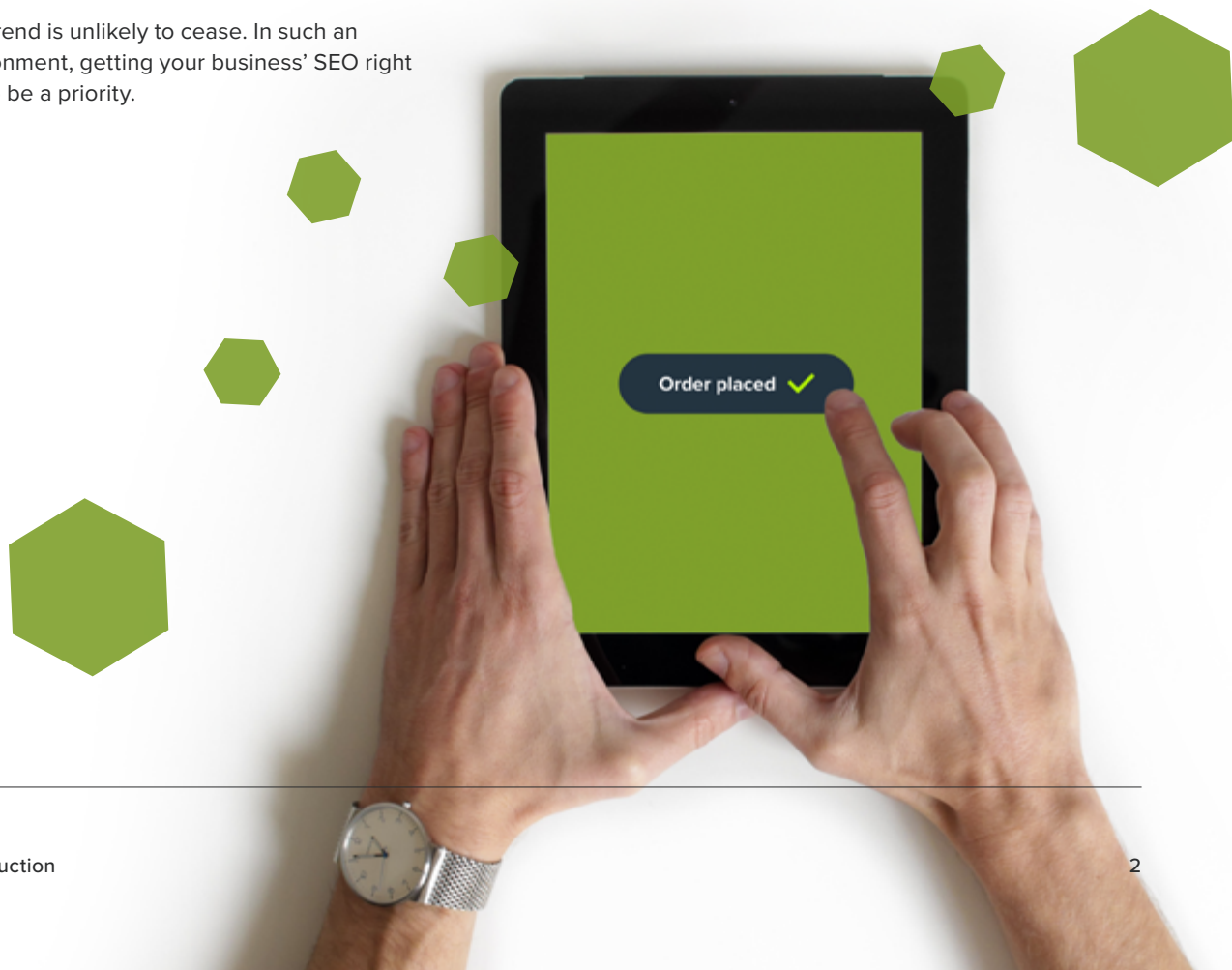
DEEPCRAWL

Introduction

In 2020, marketing leaders in enterprise companies face some formidable challenges. While some of us come to terms with ever-shifting budgets, others have had to reposition their strategy to respond to changing consumer behavior.

Whatever the individual case may be, the common thread across every marketing team is the critical need to drive more leads, sales, and revenue via digital channels.

As we've seen during the coronavirus pandemic, organizations that have been able to pivot online have outperformed their competitors across almost every metric.

But even those brands that have successfully adjusted in the short-term know in the mid- to long-term they need to ensure their website delivers more customers. After all, B2C and B2B customers across most sectors have, during COVID, been willing to experiment with the products and services of digital-first challenger brands.

This trend is unlikely to cease. In such an environment, getting your business' SEO right *has* to be a priority.

Order placed ✓

Today, organic search is responsible for 53% of all site traffic and is *the* most efficient marketing channel for both customer acquisition and lead generation.

For marketing leaders in enterprise organizations, whose teams have to manage hundreds of different websites, and millions of individual pages, tackling SEO can seem like an impossible task.

Even those who can rely on the expertise of their SEO teams soon realize that effectively monitoring and optimizing their technical, on-page, and off-page SEO across all sites is no mean feat — particularly if the main focus is ROI.
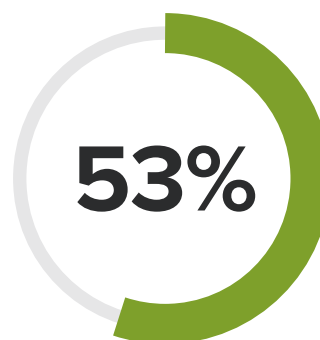
SEO needs to be a key focus. As a Profitworks research reveals, search engine traffic generates between +200–275% ROI, compared to -90% ROI for paid social media activity.

Enterprise SEO might not be the most glamorous marketing tactic, but the more you focus on it, the more revenue you'll make.

So what's the solution to enterprise SEO's challenges?

In this guide, we'll define what enterprise SEO is, explore why it's so important to your future success, investigate the challenges for marketing leaders, and provide potential solutions.

By the end, you should have everything you need to ensure your enterprise's SEO helps you drive revenue and brand growth, even as we face an increasingly uncertain, digital future.

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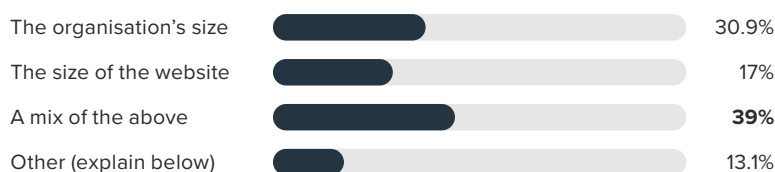
Source: Profitworks

What on earth is enterprise SEO?

There's more to it than meets the eye

Defining enterprise SEO is more challenging than you might initially expect. Many of the existing reports on this topic either refer to enterprise SEO as dealing with large corporate organizations or managing large websites.
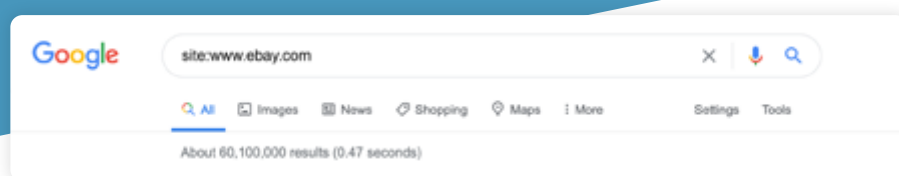
We sent out a poll to the SEO industry to try and clear things up. Here are the results:

When you define Enterprise SEO, what is the key characteristic of 'enterprise'?

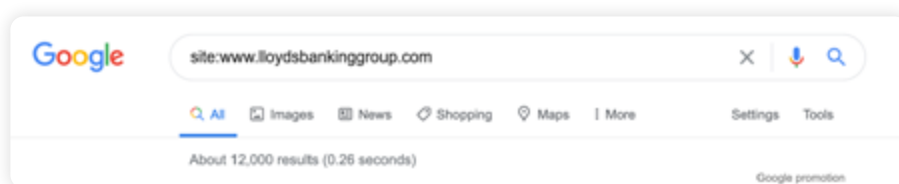|	
The organisation's size	30.9%
The size of the website	17%
A mix of the above	**39%**
Other (explain below)	13.1%

For the majority of responses to our poll, the size of the organization and the size of the website correlate, which makes complete sense. More often than not, big international organizations more often than not need enormous sites to accommodate their different service offerings.
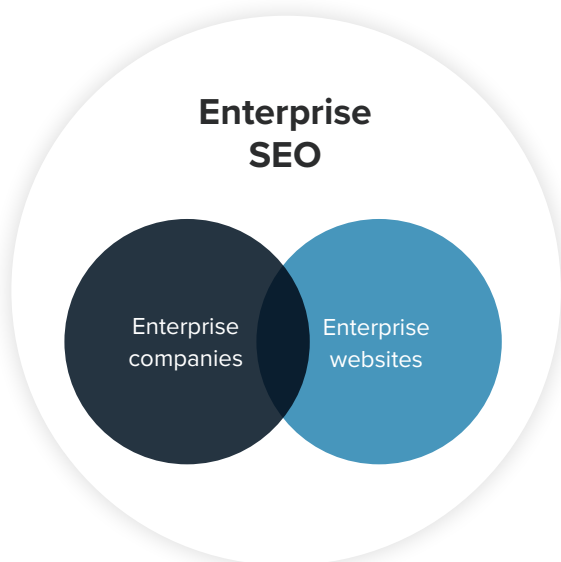
Take eBay, for example:

On the other hand, you also get enterprise organizations that have smaller websites spanning a few thousand pages, such as Lloyds Banking Group:

A better approach is to consider enterprise SEO as an umbrella term comprising both enterprise companies and enterprise-sized websites.

Ultimately, what defines enterprise SEO is scale — whether that's the scale of the brand, the scale of the website, or the scale of traffic.

Enterprise SEO
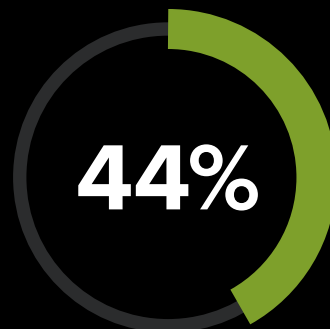
Enterprise companies

Enterprise websites

Enterprise SEO done well = Revenue

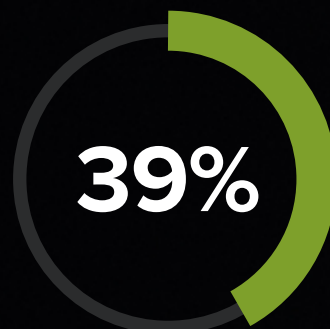## How SEO will help you thrive in a digital-first world

The coronavirus crisis has, for many businesses, made digital-first marketing a necessity. Over the past six months, online sales have soared, accelerating a trend that was already in motion.

According to the EY Future Consumer Index, 44% of consumers expect to do more grocery shopping online, with 39% expecting to do more durables shopping online in the next one to two years.

People are also spending more money when purchasing online. The electronics payments company ACI Worldwide reports the average online transaction value has risen 74% from just a year ago. This trend looks set to continue. McKinsey reports consumers plan to continue shopping online across every industry — from footwear to furniture, medicine to magazines — even when the pandemic is over.

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Given the rapid shift online, it's never been so critical for marketing leaders to shift to an SEO-first strategy. After all, in 2019, 49% of all internet users used Google to discover or find a new item or product, with search traffic accounting for 65% of total eCommerce sessions. As the world has shifted online, it's clear that in 2020, that share will have increased.

Of course, SEO is not the only way of acquiring customers online. But with 70% of respondents in a Databox survey of marketing leaders stating that SEO is better than PPC for generating sales, and with search widely regarded as being the channel that provides the best ROI of all customer acquisition channels, it's certainly the smartest strategy.

Today, it's never been more important to invest efforts in SEO as an enterprise marketing leader. Failing to firmly focus on SEO is likely to lead to a reduction in revenue — whatever industry you operate in.

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That's not to say there aren't positives to take from this situation. With even industry-leading businesses struggling to fully optimize their enterprise sites for search, by getting enterprise SEO right (difficult though that is), you'll be able to thrive in the new digital-first economy.

So, what are the common challenges of enterprise SEO, and how do you overcome them?

The endless, ongoing challenges of enterprise SEO

What they are, and how to solve them

SEO has historically been overlooked in enterprise organizations

Organic search may be the most efficient marketing channel, but in enterprise organizations, SEO is often still overlooked — both in marketing departments and across the wider business.
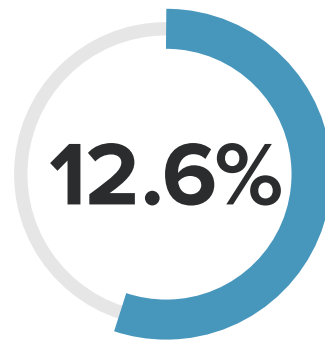
With large, complex organizational structures spanning many different departments across many different countries, multiple teams with different goals and KPIs have all historically competed for buy-in and budget.

Marketing is, however, one of the few areas in 2020 that's seen an increase in spending. Indeed, Duke University's Fuqua School of Business' CMO survey revealed spend on marketing as a percentage of US companies' overall budgets rose to 12.6% in May 2020 — a record high.

As enterprise companies turn to marketing to attract, nurture, and retain customers, and build brand value in response to the coronavirus pandemic, this presents an opportunity. And given organic search's efficiency access all of these goals, it makes complete sense to increase your focus on SEO.

Enterprise websites' scale can make getting SEO right a challenge

Any challenges you face with your website are proportional to its scale. The bigger the site, the bigger the problem. Getting SEO right is difficult enough for smaller sites, so it's understandable why so many enterprise businesses struggle.

12.6%

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Whether you're working with a small website or an international enterprise, the fundamentals of SEO don't change much. What does change is the scale. Managing a website of a few hundred pages is very different from managing a site with thousands of pages. It's not uncommon to invest resources in generating new content to target a specific group of high-value keywords when there are existing URLs that could be re-purposed or optimized. Attention to detail and prioritization is critical in identifying where your efforts should be spent. Always ask yourself the question "which sections of the site drive the most value for the business?"

Data-driven insights should be at the heart of your decision-making.

Olga Szoke
Head of SEO at Tourlane

Whereas in small business your SEO team can quickly implement changes on a page-by-page basis, rolling out optimizations across thousands, sometimes millions of pages can prove to be problematic. For enterprise businesses with multiple subsidiaries (e.g. Johnson & Johnson), the problem further intensifies.

Analyzing the data from these sites alone, before even thinking about implementing changes, is incredibly complex. Even Excel can't be used for some sites, as its 1 million row limit does not leave enough room for all pages in some enterprise businesses — particularly in eCommerce, publishing, and online marketplaces.

For marketing leaders, this means to even analyze your current position in terms of SEO, you need to invest in a powerful solution that can handle this amount of data, and set up efficient processes for collecting and analyzing it as quickly as possible.

There are ways of doing this effectively — namely, investing in technology. But what's clear is the sheer scale of enterprise websites can present blockers from the get-go.

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Legacy issues are often difficult to spot and overcome

Enterprise SEO success is often limited by bloated websites with years' worth of alterations, development work, and site restructuring.

Not only do these factors slow down your website, impacting customer experience and SEO, but they also make implementing SEO improvements and the day-to-day maintenance of your site a challenge.

In an ideal scenario, everything created for a website will be maintainable in the long run. The reality is often different. After all, it's rare that marketing and SEO teams who manage enterprise sites have been there to guide and steer the website from the start.

So where does this leave marketing leaders who want to place more focus on SEO to increase conversions and sales through their website?

Reviewing your CMS and tech stack with your SEO team is a good place to start. This process will make you fully aware of their limitations before you put all of your resources into SEO campaigns.

The potential of enterprise SEO is undoubtedly huge. But first, the foundations need to be in place.

Enterprise websites can be difficult for search engines to process

It may be a moot point, but your website's most important pages need to actually be visible to search engines before they can be shown in the search engines' results pages.

This can pose a problem for enterprise sites with millions of pages to be sifted through. Getting your important pages seen is not as easy as hitting publish. Even optimized content can slip through the cracks if your website's technical SEO isn't up to scratch.

It can be more harmful than you might think if Google and other search engines are left to crawl as many pages as they can find without proper restrictions in place. If search engines find and crawl too many low-quality pages, they could completely miss the new, valuable content on your site that you want to get in front of the eyes of your customers.

The key to encouraging search engines to crawl more of your site's important pages is to increase the visibility and importance of these pages on the site through internal linking, and by restricting their access to low-quality pages that provide little-to-no business value.

> ❝
> **Even** optimized content can slip through the cracks if your website's technical SEO isn't up to scratch.
> ❞

Poor content quality can restrict your growth

As every marketing leader knows, content is critical to the success of your marketing efforts.

For enterprise sites, however, poor content quality can often go unnoticed. Even with a team of world-class content producers, content can still lead to poor user experiences, causing problems for potential customers browsing the site and search engines alike.

One of the biggest factors is the high prevalence of duplicate content on enterprise websites.

With complex navigation, thousands, if not millions of content assets, and internal search pages that auto-generate thousands of new URLs with little-to-no value, you might not even realize how much duplicate content you have across your website.

DUPLICATE SETS

Duplicate Page Sets	2,992
Duplicate Title Sets	4,380
Duplicate Description Sets	3,232
Duplicate Body Sets	3,047

Duplicate content makes it much more difficult for search engines to crawl your site and find relevant content to display in its results pages (and consequently, your audience).

Even more importantly for marketing leaders, the impact of this is Google is likely to miss seeing any new content you publish, limiting its potential impact for your target audience, and reducing the return on investment for your content marketing efforts.

Writing unique content for every single page on your enterprise site takes a lot of time and resources. Few businesses are able to do this.

> **Duplicate content** makes large sites harder to crawl.

John Mueller
Google Webmaster Hangout

Instead, you need to focus on improving the content on pages that add value to your business and prevent the pages that don't from being accessible to users or search engines.

So which pages should you focus your attention on? As a rule of thumb, the pages and content you and your team should concentrate on are:

Pages that receive a lot of traffic

Content that's crucial to your customer conversion journeys

Pages that are currently visible in organic search

Content covering topics valuable to your business which you have a realistic chance of ranking for

And what should be done about those pages that provide little value? Redirect them to more relevant pages with better content, or no-index them.

URL duplication is more of an issue on larger sites, as Google is more likely to miss new content.

John Mueller
Google Webmaster Hangout

The DeepCrawl edge

With so many potential pitfalls across your enterprise site, it can be difficult for you or your SEO team to spot issues at a glance.

Even with a big team of SEO experts, identifying issues takes up a significant amount of time unless you have an efficient, streamlined approach to analyze your data and highlight potential problems.

In enterprise organizations with thousands or millions of pages on your site, it's critical you and your SEO team are able to maintain a top-level view of performance and technical health so you can detect issues before they become a problem. Doing so will save your business time and money in the long run.

Source: DeepCrawl

Website crawling tools like DeepCrawl help, enabling you to easily monitor your site (or sites if you have subsidiary brands).

Source: DeepCrawl

By regularly crawling your website, they allow you and your SEO team to visualize positive and negative changes between crawls.

This helps you ensure your website is technically sound, will mean your content has a better chance of appearing high up in search results, and ultimately, provide a solid base for you to generate more revenue from your website in the new digital-first economy.

[Try out DeepCrawl's monitoring capabilities for yourself.](#)

About DeepCrawl

We don't believe in fads, we believe in building solid foundations which you can build upon.

In our opinion, your site's architecture is the foundation needed for optimal SEO performance. Originally there were no options out there for crawling the largest, hardest-to-manage websites, so our founders created a new, tailor-made tool that could meet their needs from an SEO perspective.

DeepCrawl was built by SEOs for SEOs. Our ultimate vision is to become the tool of choice for marketers across the world — letting them crawl and analyse all of their websites to identify key insights and improve web performance.

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