



The 2024 State of SEO Report

2023 in review, AI in SEO, & 2024 SEO priorities

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Introduction

The State of SEO

State of SEO: What 2023 Was Like and What We Expect for 2024

In the hyper-competitive digital space, SEO remains one of the most effective ways to increase visibility among target audiences, organic website traffic, and overall business growth.

While the value of SEO remains constant, change is inherent to SEO. Weekly and monthly algorithm updates from Google can send marketers scrambling to protect rankings or optimize content to align with new standards like E-E-A-T.

2023 was no exception.

The emergence of generative AI and Google's initial experimentation with its Search Generative Experience (SGE) are the most significant disruptions to SEO since Google's Penguin updates over a decade ago.

However, new challenges often provide opportunities for greater success. Search experts are finding new ways to create and optimize content, eliminate time-consuming manual efforts, improve collaboration, and more through AI.

On average, organic search produced nearly 40% of website traffic across six key industries in 2023. **93% of respondents reported SEO positively impacted** website performance and marketing goals in 2023, according to our 2024 State of SEO Survey.

Organic search remains a top channel for business growth heading into the next 12 months. We surveyed over 400 digital marketing, SEO, and content marketing experts to identify actionable insights and help inform your SEO strategy to maximize success in 2024.

Data & Methodology

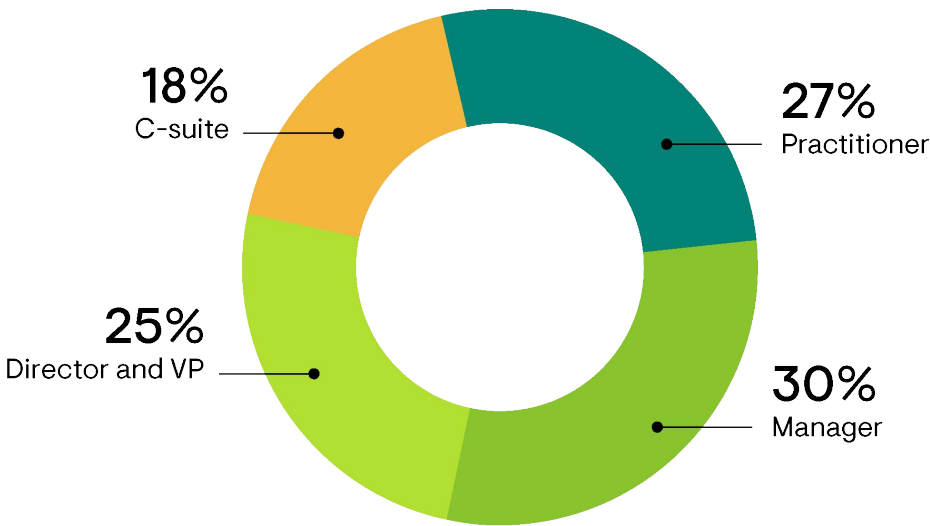
The State of SEO Survey

To learn more about the current state of SEO and the latest trends, disruptions, and priorities for the future of search in 2024, we surveyed **over 400 digital marketing, SEO, and content marketing experts** in North America who serve a primary role in managing a brand's website or digital presence.

Respondents were sourced from B2B and B2C companies ranging in size from mid-market (1 to 999 employees) to enterprise (1,000+ employees).

Our data represents the perspectives of various digital stakeholders across all role levels, including practitioners (think analysts, strategists, and specialists), managers, directors, and above.

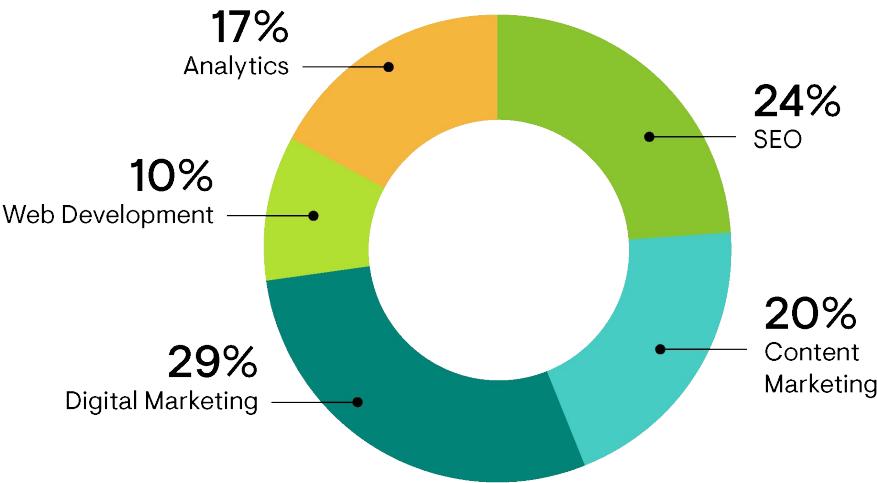
Survey Data: Role Level Breakdown



The State of SEO Survey

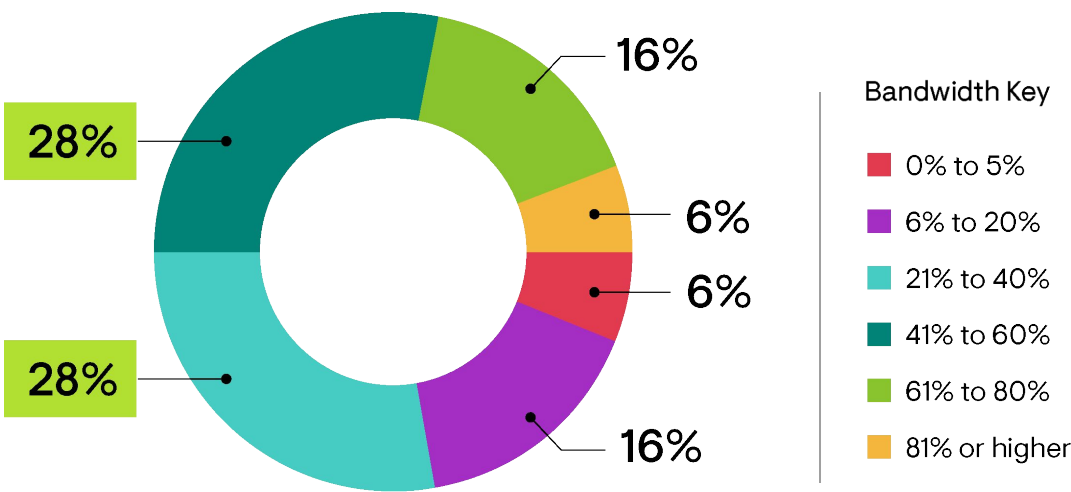
To ensure the accuracy of our data and takeaways, all survey respondents serve a primary job function related to a website’s organic performance.

Survey Data: Job Function Breakdown



On average, a majority of respondents dedicated 21% to 60% of overall bandwidth to SEO efforts over the last 12 months.

Survey Data: Overall Bandwidth Dedicated to SEO

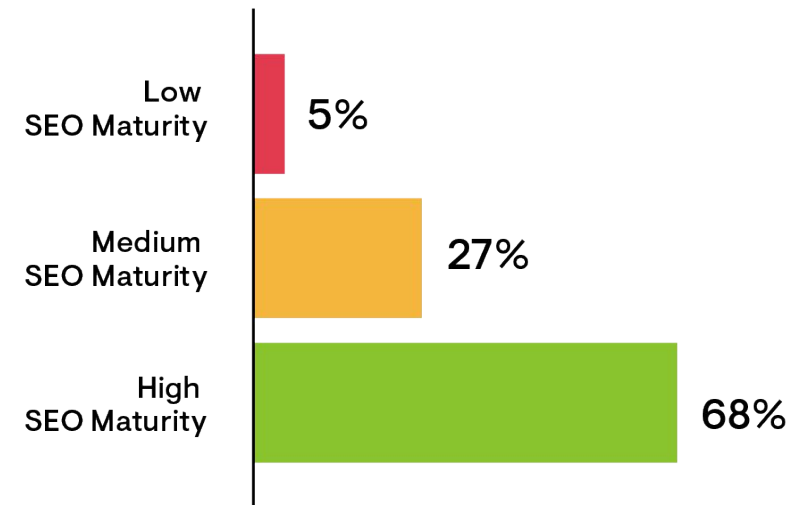


The State of SEO Survey

Throughout the report, we used the concept of SEO maturity to further segment the data. Below is a brief overview of the three levels respondents could choose from to determine their SEO maturity:

- **Low SEO Maturity:** Organizations where SEO is not that important yet. There are currently minimal resources or investments in SEO.
- **Medium SEO Maturity:** Organizations where SEO is moderately important with adequate SEO resources and investment.
- **High SEO Maturity:** Organizations where SEO is a priority. SEO is a significant part of the processes for more than one team with strong investment.

Survey Data: SEO Maturity Breakdown

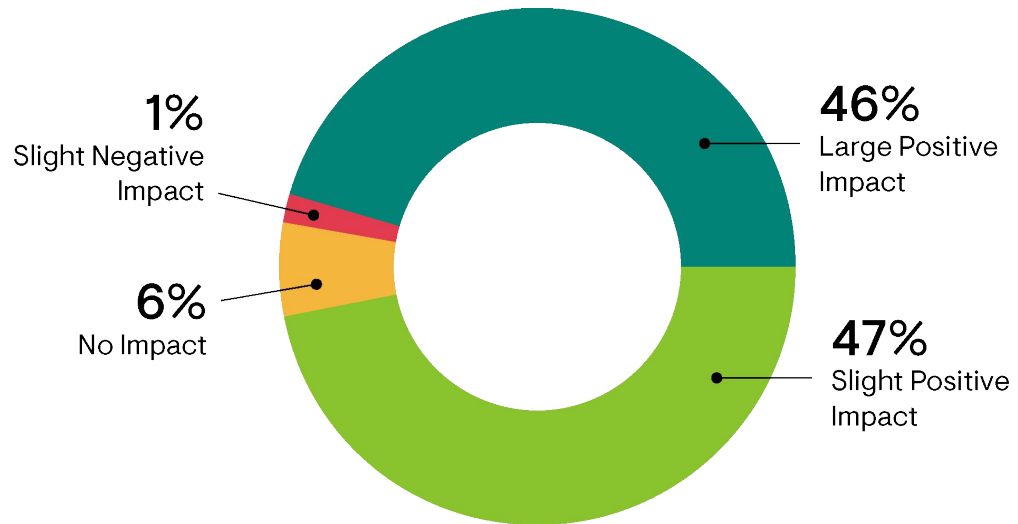


The Current State:

SEO in 2023

The Impact of SEO on Website Performance & Marketing Goals

Overall



93%

reported **SEO positively impacted** website performance and marketing goals in 2023.

The Impact of SEO on Website Performance & Marketing Goals

By Function

Content marketers were **2x as likely to report SEO as having no impact** than all other job functions.

Takeaway:

Content marketers are siloed from regular SEO reporting and results in many organizations. Investing in a holistic and accessible SEO platform like [Conductor](#) empowers content marketers to get immediate insights on SEO performance to evaluate and improve their content marketing strategies.

The Impact of SEO on Website Performance & Marketing Goals

By SEO Maturity Level

98%

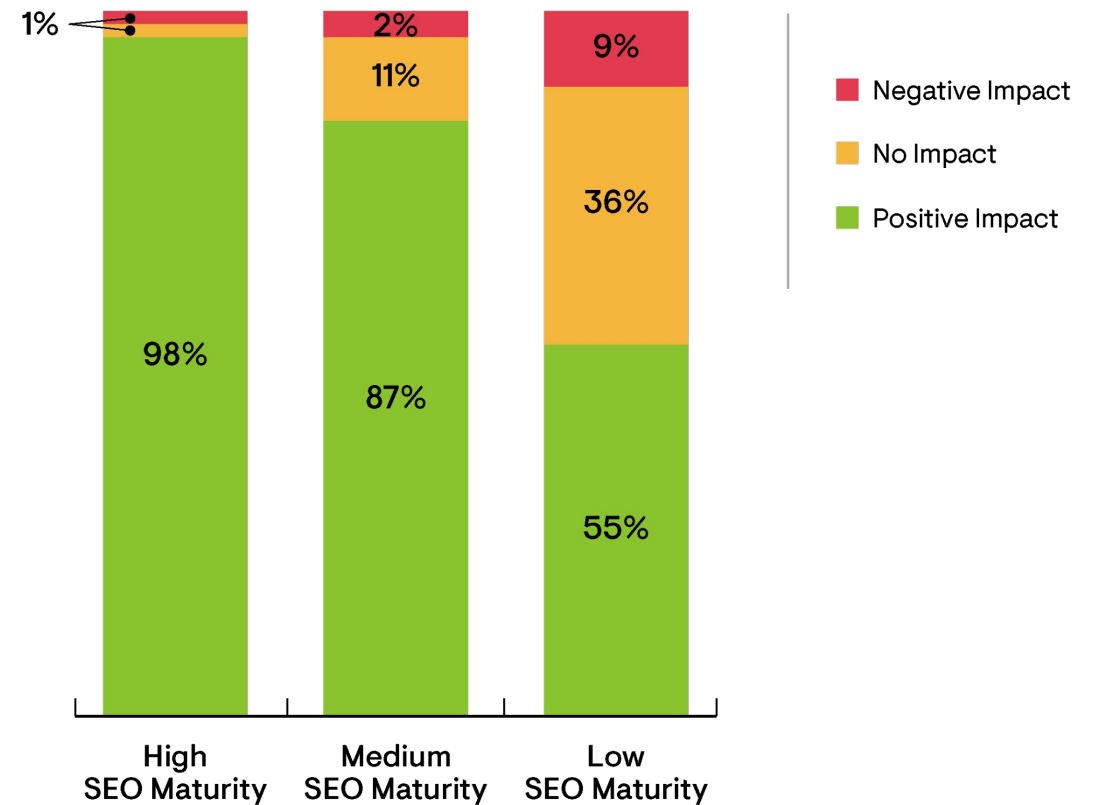
of organizations with high SEO maturity reported that SEO positively impacted performance and goals.

Organizations at the **lowest SEO maturity level** are much more likely to report SEO as having no impact or a negative impact.

Why? On average, Organizations at the highest SEO maturity level:

- **Prioritized hiring** highly skilled SEO talent
- Are **8x more likely** to use a fully integrated enterprise SEO platform
- Report on **twice as many SEO metrics** compared to organizations with low SEO maturity

A lack of the right SEO solution, comprehensive reporting processes, and skilled talent may prevent organizations with low SEO maturity from achieving SEO success.



Top 3 SEO Priorities in 2023

By Role Level

Increasing brand awareness through SEO remained a **top priority for all role levels** in 2023.

Leaders and practitioners also focused on hiring the right SEO talent over the last 9-12 months, while managers put more emphasis on improving collaboration and efficiency to execute faster.

Leaders were the only group to rank adherence to new privacy regulations as a top priority for 2023, highlighting their concern over possible regulatory fines while practitioners and managers remain hyper-focused on efficiency and execution.

Practitioners	Managers	Leaders
1. Securing the right SEO talent	1. Improving SEO collaboration across teams and departments	1. Increasing brand awareness
2. Increasing brand awareness	2. Increasing brand awareness	2. Securing the right SEO talent
3. Managing SEO bandwidth limitations	3. Increasing efficiency through new SEO automation tech (e.g., AI)	3. Adhering to new privacy regulations

Takeaways from the Experts

On Top 2023 SEO Priorities by Role Level


“

Very interesting that only the managers had automation and efficiency efforts in their top 3... It's especially surprising that the practitioners chose managing bandwidth limitations over efficiency and automation efforts, as the latter is the answer to the former.

This tells me that **practitioners are likely underwater** and don't have time to explore these opportunities, which in turn is **causing the managers to look deeper into bandwidth issues while not reporting the issue to the leaders**.

This clearly depicts how understaffed and underinvested SEO still is at many companies and that there is room for significant improvements.”

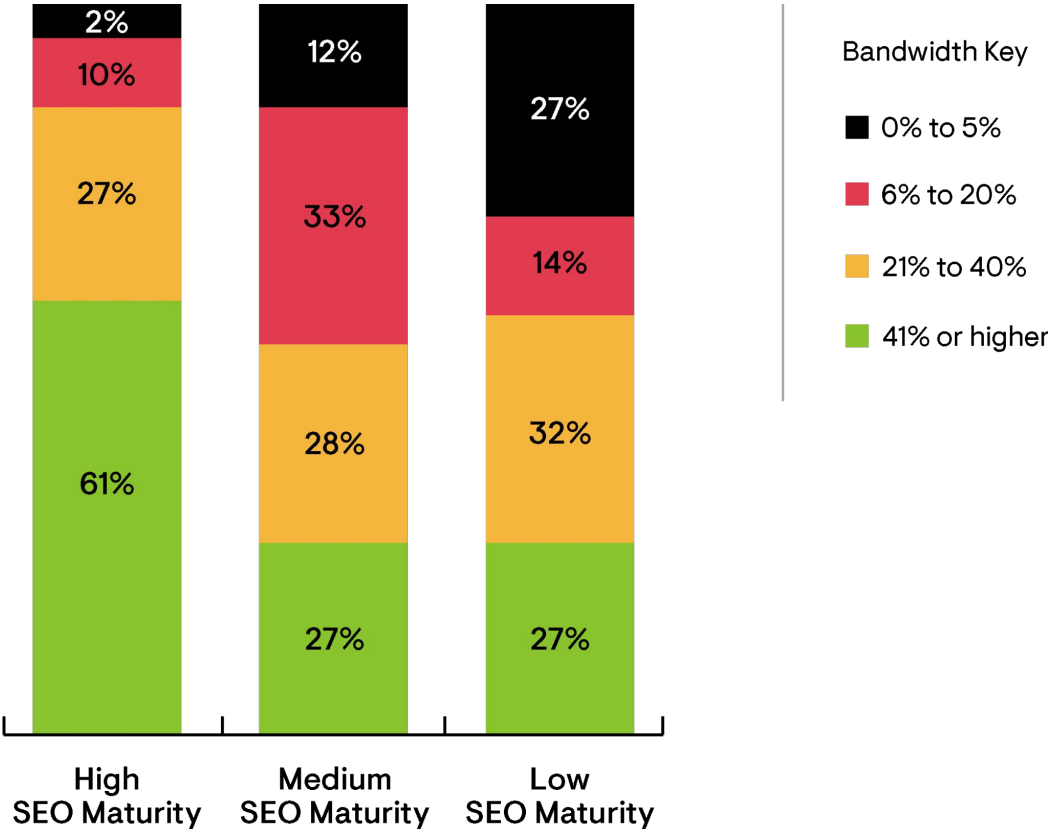


 **Pat Reinhart,**
VP of Services & Thought Leadership at Conductor

Average Bandwidth Dedicated to SEO in 2023

By SEO Maturity Level

Organizations with **high SEO maturity** dedicated around **30% more bandwidth to SEO efforts** than those with medium or low maturity.



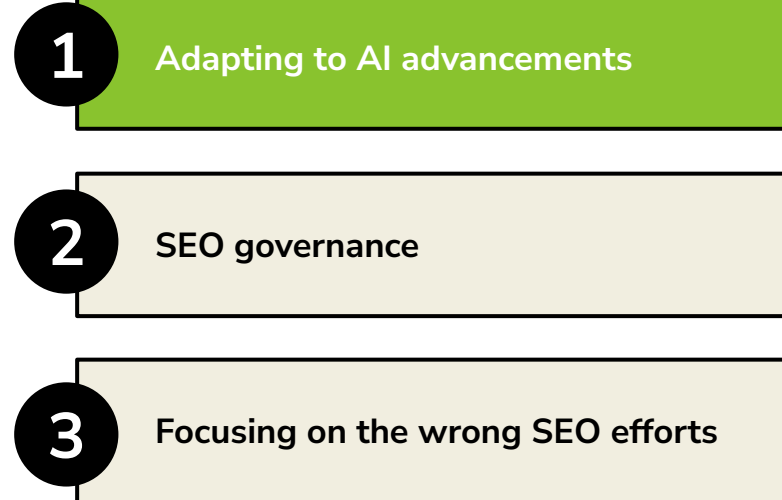
The Top 3 Most Significant SEO Challenges in 2023

Overall

Google introduced a new way to search in 2023 with the trial rollout of its [Search Generative Experience \(SGE\) powered by generative AI](#).

With SGE set to transform how users search and how brands appear on search engine results pages (SERP), it's no surprise that adapting to AI advancements ranked as the #1 most significant SEO challenge overall.

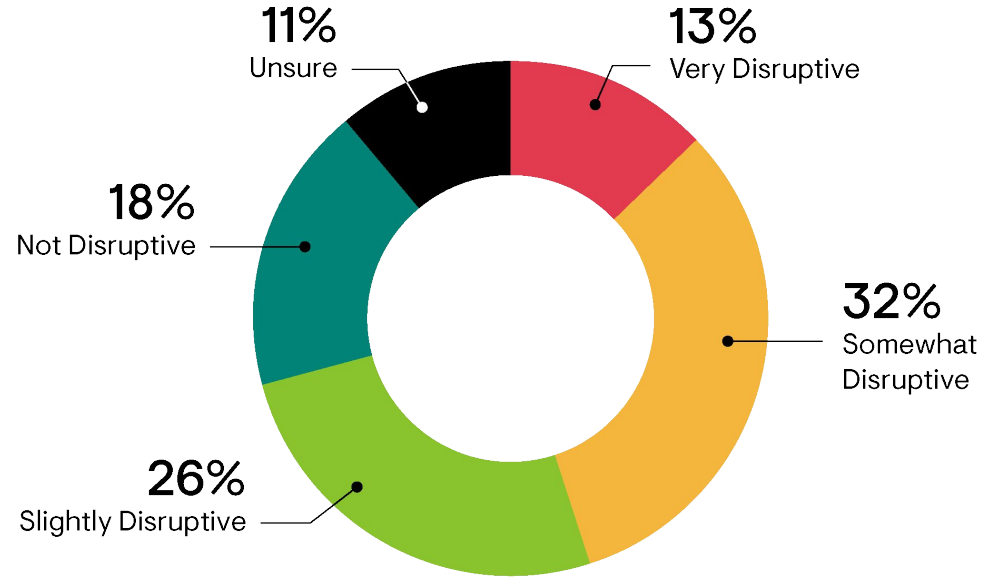
Top SEO Challenges in 2023

- 
- 1 Adapting to AI advancements
 - 2 SEO governance
 - 3 Focusing on the wrong SEO efforts

The Role of AI in SEO

Anticipated Disruption of Google's SGE

Overall



71%

of respondents believe SGE will result in **some type of disruption** to their SEO strategies.

While most respondents agreed that SGE will produce some disruption, they disagreed on whether it will be slightly, somewhat, or very disruptive.

It's too soon to tell, but search experts are predicting SGE to be the most significant disruption to SEO since Google's Penguin updates over a decade ago.

Takeaways from the Experts


On The Anticipated Disruption of Google's SGE Overall

“

I'm shocked as many folks chose 'not disruptive,' since **there most certainly will be a level of disruption** for everyone when SGE launches.

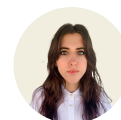
While I appreciate the optimism and believe that this will be a positive change for the industry overall, thinking there won't be any disruption is borderline irresponsible.”



 **Pat Reinhart,**
VP of Services & Thought Leadership
at Conductor

“

Agreed; the **remaining 29% of respondents** who either don't anticipate any disruption or are unsure about the impact of SGE on SEO strategies **may reflect a segment of the SEO community that is either less informed about SGE** or remain **cautiously optimistic** about its effects.”



 **Alexandra Dritsas,**
Principal Solutions Consultant
at Conductor

Anticipated Disruption of Google's SGE

By Role Level



Leaders are more concerned with the long-term impact of SGE on the search industry and anticipate a more significant disruption to their current SEO strategies. A majority of practitioners and managers believe SGE will be somewhat disruptive and result in moderate adjustments to their strategies.

Leaders are more than 2x as likely to believe Google's SGE will be very disruptive compared to managers and practitioners.

Takeaways from the Experts

On The Anticipated Disruption of Google's SGE by Role Level

“

The higher likelihood of leaders believing that SGE will be very disruptive could be attributed to their broader industry perspective, greater exposure to trends, and responsibility for long-term strategy.

That being said, it's interesting that leaders also have the highest percentage (23%) selecting 'not disruptive' among the roles. This could indicate that **some leaders might not be fully aware of the changing landscape** or could be **receiving assurance from their internal teams that SGE won't be as disruptive** as others perceive it to be.”



 **Alexandra Dritsas,**
Principal Solutions Consultant at Conductor

The Top 3 SEO Priorities Related to SGE

Overall

- 1 UX enhancement**
Prioritizing seamless user experiences to ensure content is engaging and valuable within SGE.
 - 2 Long-tail keyword targeting**
Shifting towards long-tail keywords and phrases to capture the conversational queries typical of SGE.
 - 3 Schema markup enhancement**
Enhancing schema markup to provide structured data that SGE can better utilize for generating results.
-
- 3 Image, visual, and rich media enhancement**
Prioritizing visually appealing content and rich media to stand out in the interactive SGE interface.

Takeaways from the Experts

On Top 3 SEO PRiorities Related to SGE

“

Folks need to focus on E-E-A-T when it comes to prioritizing their focus and connecting their content back to entities that Google can understand as experts on that topic. While it's good to see folks thinking about long-tail keyword targeting here, brands need to **stop focusing on the concept of a keyword** and **instead focus on the intent of their customers**.




Understanding not just what they are looking for but why they are looking for it and providing that answer with a high level of specificity and proven expertise will get them farther than trying to 'rank' for a specific keyword phrase. **This will be especially true once SGE launches.**”



 **Pat Reinhart,**
VP of Services & Thought Leadership at Conductor

The Top 3 SEO Priorities Related to SGE

By Role Level

Practitioners	Managers	Leaders
1.  Voice search compatibility	1.  Long-tail keyword targeting	1.  Competitive analysis
2. Monitoring SERP changes	2. UX enhancement	2. User intent analysis
3. Adapting rich results strategy	3. Schema markup	3. Continuous learning

These priorities align with the responsibilities of each role.

- **Practitioners** are focused on monitoring and adapting to SERP and user behavior changes related to search.
- **Managers** are focused on improving elements that map to key search signals for Google's algorithm, including contextual relevance, UX, and Schema.
- **Leaders** are focused on strategic priorities to set their teams up for long-term success with SGE, including competitive analysis and ongoing learning.
 - Additionally, ranking **user intent analysis as the #2 priority related to SGE** highlights how leaders are digging into the more technical page experience signals Google values. They want to know how to improve and where to prioritize investments.

Takeaways from the Experts

On Top SEO Priorities Related to SGE by Role Level

“

It's interesting to see how **practitioners are still thinking and worrying about voice search**. While I understand that the conversational aspect of SGE is still a big unknown, I think **there is misguided attention being given here**.

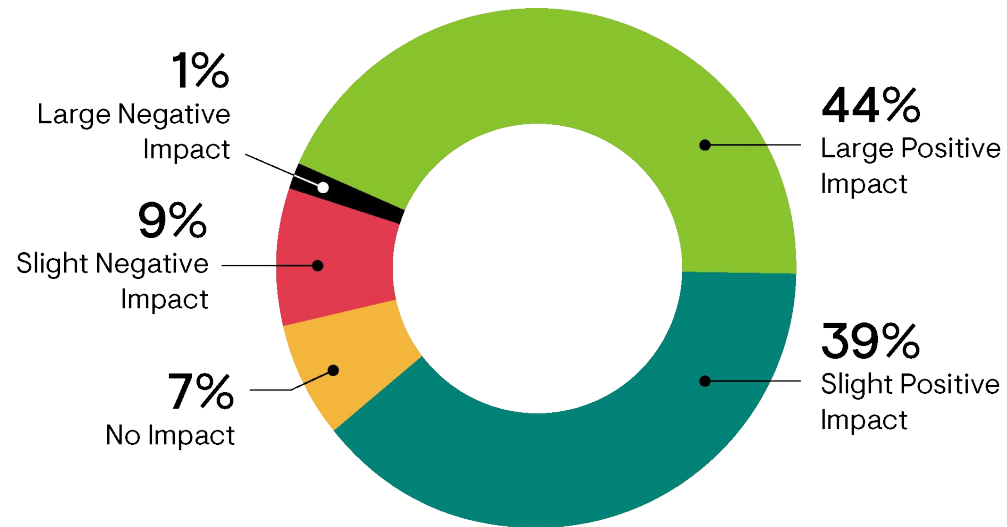
I love that leaders chose 'continuous learning' because that means they get it and understand more than folks are probably giving them credit for. **SEO is not a series of buttons you push in a particular order to make the algorithm work in your favor**. It's a living, breathing practice that **needs to be kept up with**, and more companies need to understand this and implement this thinking moving forward.”



 **Pat Reinhart,**
VP of Services & Thought Leadership at Conductor

Anticipated Impact of AI on SEO in 2024

Overall



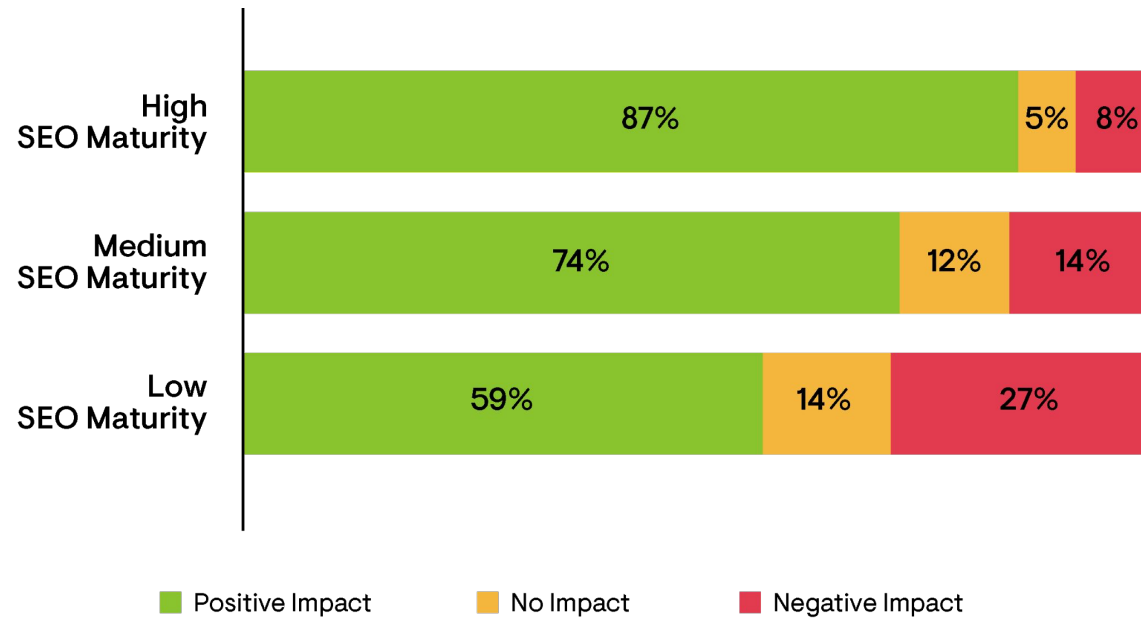
83%

of respondents believe AI as a whole will have a **positive impact on SEO** in 2024.

Digital marketers and search experts remain optimistic about AI's overall impact on SEO in 2024. This could be a result of the perceived UX improvement of Google's SGE, along with the improved efficiency and streamlined collaboration that AI-powered solutions and technologies provide.

Anticipated Impact of AI on SEO in 2024

By SEO Maturity Level



Organizations with **high SEO maturity** had the **highest response rate** predicting a **positive impact**.

While those with **low SEO maturity** had the **highest response rate** predicting a **negative impact**.

Takeaways from the Experts


On Anticipated Impact of AI on SEO in 2024 by SEO Maturity Level

“

Brands that believe AI overall will have a negative impact are missing the vast opportunity that exists within it. The positive things AI can do for teams from a productivity standpoint alone are well worth the hassle and will ultimately make SEO teams more efficient and cost-effective.

It's good to see that most believe it will have a positive impact, but also not surprising that brands with low SEO maturity are more fearful of it.”

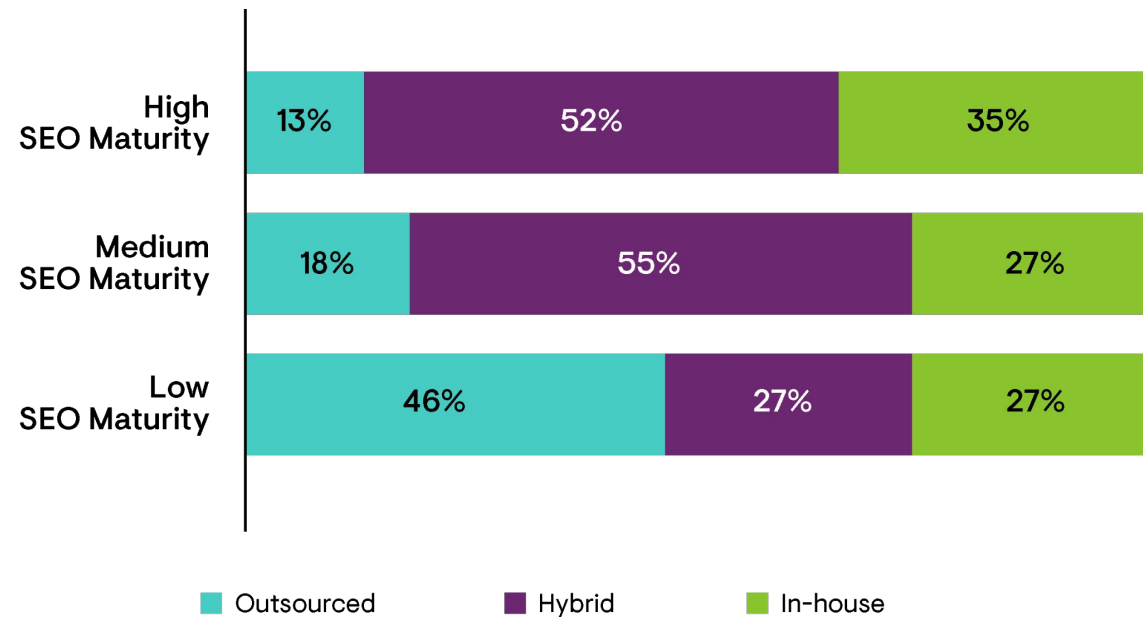


 **Pat Reinhart,**
VP of Services & Thought Leadership at Conductor

SEO Resourcing & Processes

In-House vs. Outsourced SEO Resourcing Strategy

By SEO Maturity Level



Organizations with **low SEO maturity** are most likely to implement a **fully outsourced SEO strategy**.

Organizations with **medium to high SEO maturity** are more likely to adopt a **hybrid or fully in-house SEO resourcing strategy**.

Takeaways:

Implementing a hybrid or in-house strategy allows companies to play a more active role in developing and executing SEO strategies.

The more advanced a company's SEO strategy and investments are, the more likely they are to adopt a resourcing approach that provides the most autonomy.

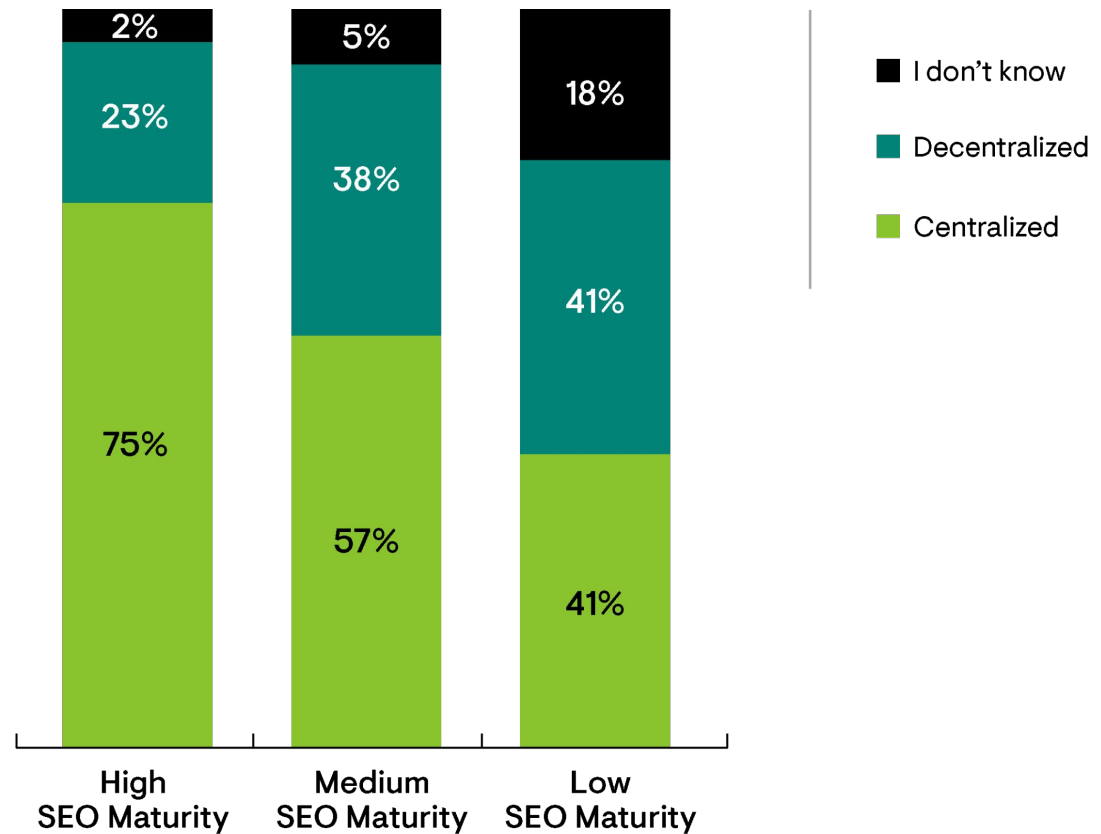
SEO Structure

By SEO Maturity Level

Organizations early in their SEO investments with **low SEO maturity** are nearly **2x as likely to report a decentralized SEO structure** compared to those with high SEO maturity.

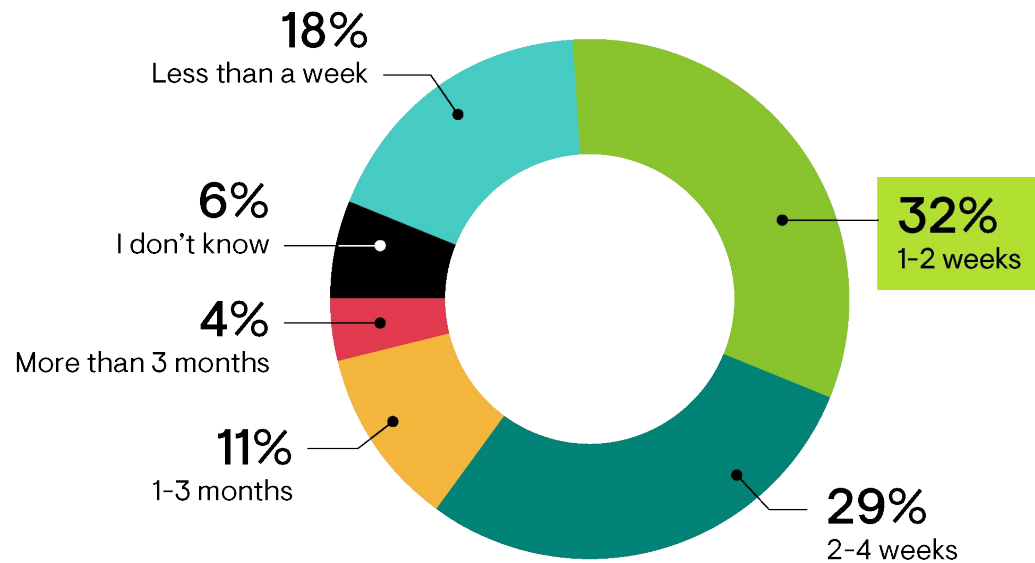
Definitions:

- **Decentralized** = SEO governance distributed across multiple teams, departments, countries, or brands; often functions as SEO silos
- **Centralized** = SEO governance is owned by one department or team to ensure quality and best practices followed



Average Time to Implementation for SEO Requests

Overall



A majority (61%) reported it takes **less than 4 weeks** for the Web Development or IT teams to fulfill an SEO request.

However, organizations with **medium to high SEO maturity** are **2x as likely** to have **SEO tasks completed within 4 weeks** than those with low SEO maturity.

Speed is everything when it comes to SEO. **On average, SEO issues go unnoticed for at least 4 weeks and cost up to \$75K in lost revenue.** Organizations with high SEO maturity know this, which is why increasing time to implementation is one of their top 3 priorities for 2024.

SEO Reporting

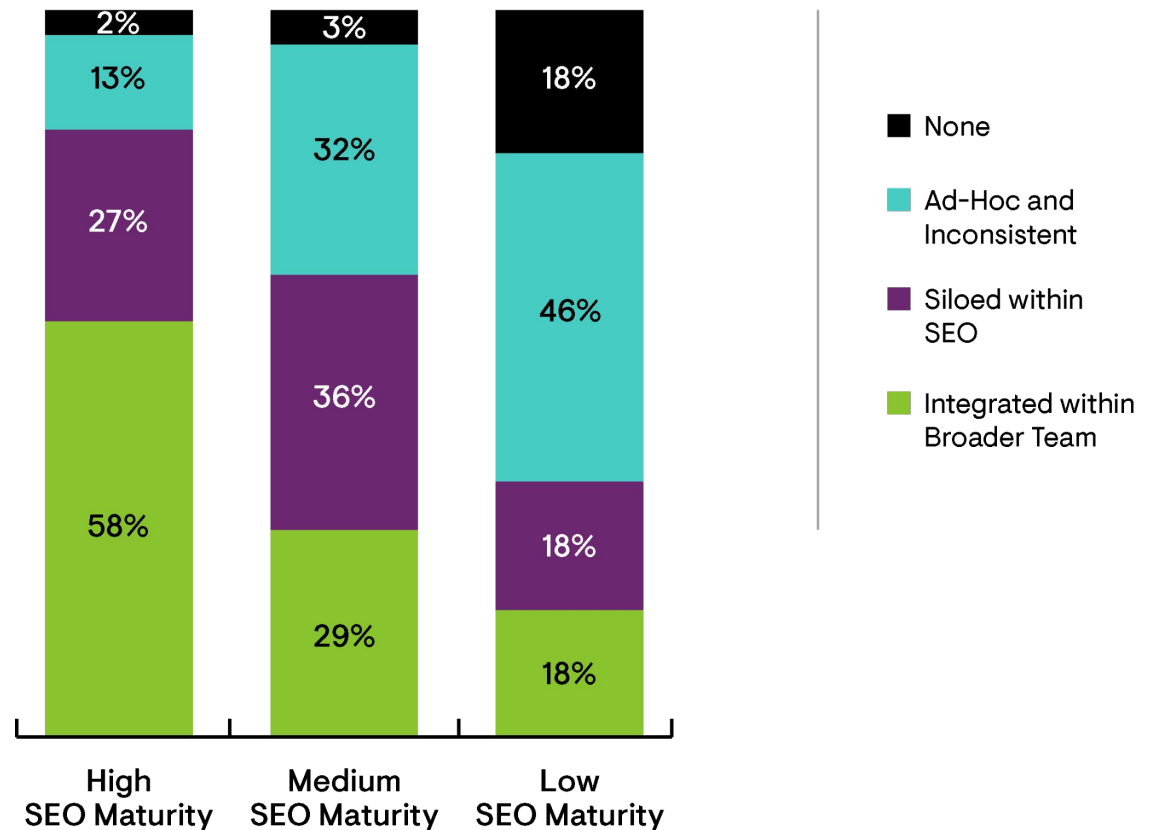
SEO Reporting Approach

By SEO Maturity Level

Organizations with **high SEO maturity** are most likely to implement a **comprehensive SEO reporting strategy**.

Organizations with **medium SEO maturity** are most likely to rely on **siloed SEO reporting within the SEO department**.

Organizations with **low SEO maturity** are most likely to rely on **ad-hoc and inconsistent SEO reporting**.



Most Common SEO Reporting Metrics

Overall

Organic website traffic and engagement are the two most commonly tracked SEO metrics across all company sizes, job functions, and role levels.

Website traffic and engagement are the two most fundamental metrics for SEO reporting. To elevate reporting and provide more accuracy, measure SEO efforts against key business objectives, like lead and revenue generation.

Our [SEO Reporting Template](#) is a great place to start building that framework.

Rank	Most Common SEO Reporting Metrics
1	User engagement metrics (time spent on page, interaction with content, etc.)
2	Organic traffic (sessions/visits)
3	Local SEO (local pack rankings, Google My Business engagement, online reviews, etc.)
4	Conversion rate
5	Keyword rankings
6	Revenue
7	Organic impressions
8	SQLs/MQLs/Leads

Average Number of Metrics Used for SEO Reporting

By SEO Maturity Level

- Low SEO Maturity = 3 Metrics
- Medium SEO Maturity = 4 Metrics
- High SEO Maturity = 6 Metrics

Higher SEO mature organizations are much more likely to report on a **higher combination of complex SEO metrics**, including **lead influence, revenue generation, and Core Web Vitals**, to get the most comprehensive and accurate look at the ROI of SEO efforts.

Low SEO Maturity

1. User engagement metrics
2. Keyword rankings
3. Revenue

Medium SEO Maturity

1. User engagement metrics
2. Organic traffic
3. Conversion rate
4. Keyword rankings

High SEO Maturity

1. User engagement metrics
2. Local SEO
3. Conversion rate
4. Organic traffic
5. Revenue
6. Keyword rankings

Takeaways from the Experts


On Most Common SEO Reporting Metrics by SEO Maturity Level

“

It's not surprising to see keyword rankings in all three cohorts here, but a shift is coming as the concept of a ranking will change after SGE launches. While everyone will still track keywords, SEOs and digital marketers will have to **redefine what a 'good ranking' is post-SGE launch**. Does it exist in the box? Is it still the top 10 blue links? Does that even matter anymore?

What we will see in 2024 is that conversations around SERP real estate will get stronger within brands. **These conversations will focus more on tracking how much of the screen you are taking up vs. where one of your pages ranks.**”

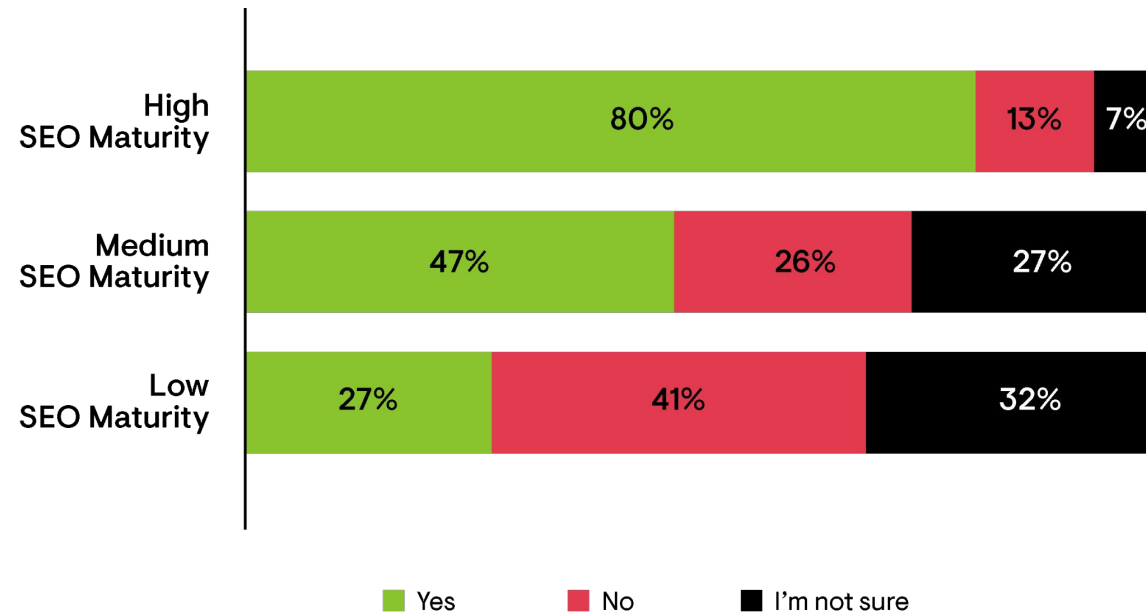


 **Pat Reinhart,**
VP of Services & Thought Leadership at Conductor

SEO Competitor Analysis

By SEO Maturity Level

Does your company run regular SEO competitor analysis?



Organizations with **high SEO maturity** are:

- **2x as likely** to run competitor analysis compared to those with medium SEO maturity
- **3x as likely** as those with low SEO maturity

Competitor analysis plays a significant role in successful enterprise SEO, which is why most organizations with high SEO maturity prioritize it in their SEO strategies.

Takeaways from the Experts

On SEO Competitor Analysis by SEO Maturity Level

“

This breakdown demonstrates **how large of a gap there is between medium and high SEO maturity teams.**

Competitive analysis can actually save teams time by helping them narrow down which optimizations or new content topics to prioritize and go after, which is why almost all high SEO maturity teams implement them compared to less than half of medium SEO maturity teams.”

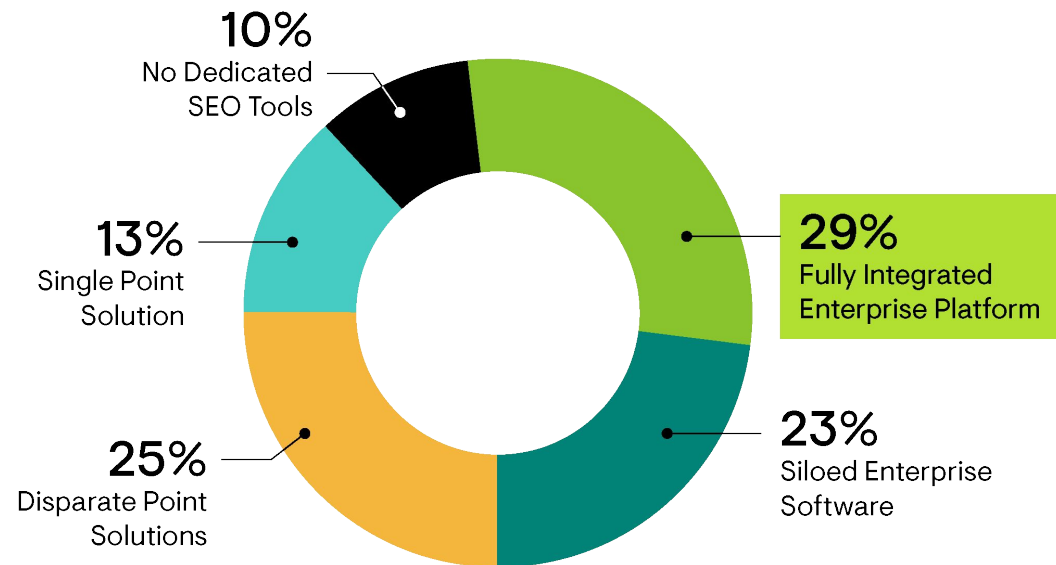


 **Rachel Schardt,**
Principal Customer Success Manager at Conductor

SEO Technology

SEO Technology Type

Overall



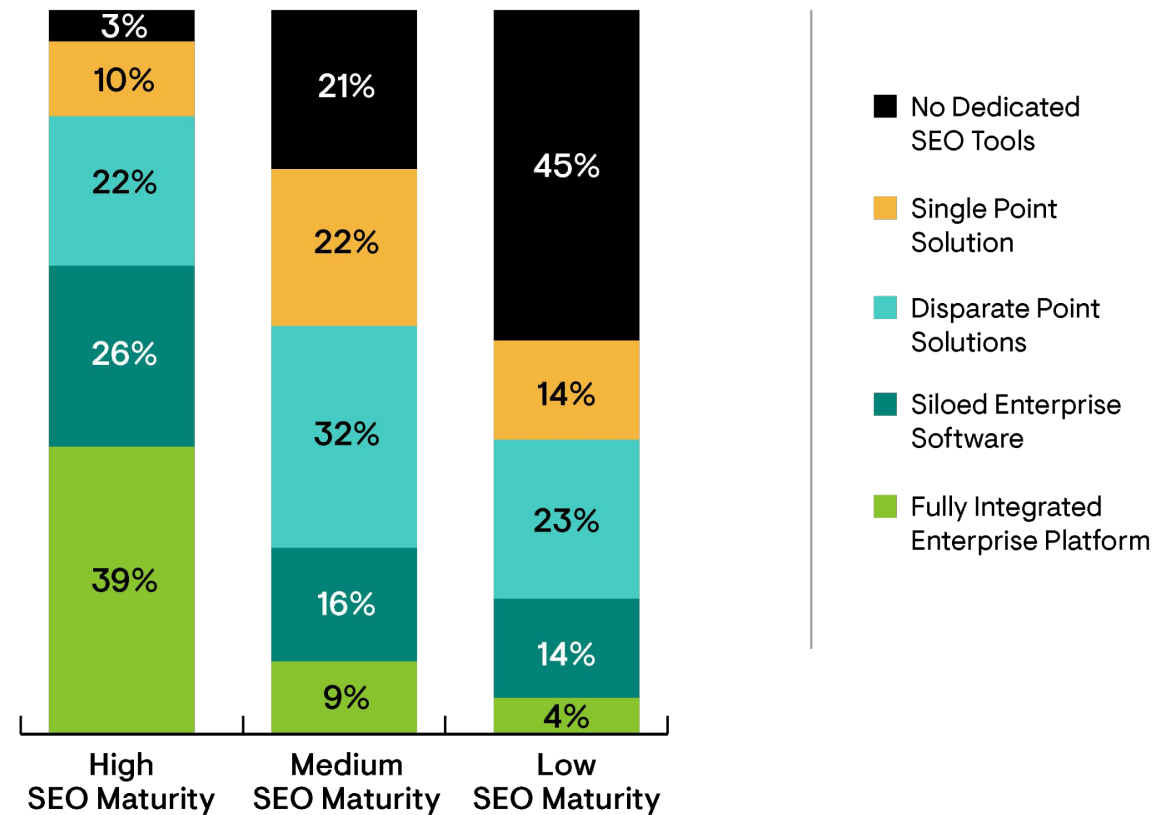
A **majority of respondents** use a **fully integrated enterprise SEO platform** to achieve success with their SEO efforts.

SEO Technology Type

By SEO Maturity Level

However, the split between technology type by SEO maturity levels reiterates the value of SEO technology investments to improve execution and efficiency, drive results, and achieve SEO success:

- A majority of **low SEO maturity** organizations use **no SEO tools**.
- A majority of **medium SEO maturity** organizations use **disparate point solutions**.
- A majority of **high SEO maturity** organizations use a **fully integrated SEO enterprise platform**.



SEO Priorities for 2024

Top SEO Priorities for 2024 vs. 2023

Overall

2023 Priorities
1. Increasing brand awareness
2. Securing the right SEO talent
3. Improving SEO collaboration across teams and departments

2024 Priorities
1. Adapting to the impact of AI on SEO
2. Improving SEO collaboration across teams and departments
3. Being able to measure the performance of SEO efforts

Improving SEO collaboration remains an ongoing challenge for all organizations heading into 2024.

Takeaways from the Experts

On Top SEO Priorities for 2024 vs. 2023 Overall

“

I think one of the **best things teams can do to improve SEO collaboration** is to **tie the work you're trying to do back to how it helps achieve the primary objectives or goals** of other departments.

Create a business case with modeled traffic and modeled revenue (Conductor's Business Case Builder is great for this), and **be as clear and specific as possible on what your ask is from the other team.**”

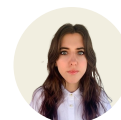



 **Rachel Schardt,**
Principal Customer Success Manager
at Conductor

“

It's not surprising to see the consistent emphasis on improving collaboration as a top priority for 2023 and 2024. This highlights the **ongoing challenge** organizations face in **breaking down silos and fostering cross-functional teamwork in SEO efforts.**

I often hear this challenge from our customers as a core area they are looking to improve to execute faster.”



 **Alexandra Dritsas,**
Principal Solutions Consultant
at Conductor

Top SEO Priorities for 2024

By Role Level

Practitioners	Managers	Leaders
1. Improving SEO collaboration across teams and departments	1. Adapting to the impact of AI on SEO	1. Adapting to the impact of AI on SEO
2. Adapting to the impact of AI on SEO	2. Being able to measure the performance of SEO efforts	2. Evaluating new SEO technologies and tools for investment
3. Being able to measure the performance of SEO efforts	3. Improving SEO collaboration across teams and departments	3. Hiring more dedicated resources to drive SEO programs internally

Adapting to the impact of AI on SEO is a **top priority for all role levels** heading into 2024.

Practitioners and managers are aligned on the following top three priorities for 2024: Adapting to AI, improving SEO collaboration, and better SEO reporting.

Digital marketing leaders ranked AI adaptation as the #1 SEO priority for 2024. The next top priority for this group is setting their teams up for long-term success through investments in emerging SEO solutions and hiring more in-house SEO talent.

Top SEO Priorities for 2024

By SEO Maturity Level

Low SEO Maturity	Medium SEO Maturity	High SEO Maturity
<div><div>1.</div><div>Being able to measure the performance of SEO efforts</div></div>	<div><div>1.</div><div>Being able to measure the performance of SEO efforts</div></div>	<div><div>1.</div><div>Adapting to the impact of AI on SEO</div></div>
<div><div>2.</div><div>Improving SEO collaboration across teams and departments</div></div>	<div><div>2.</div><div>Improving SEO collaboration across teams and departments</div></div>	<div><div>2.</div><div>Increasing rate of implementing SEO improvements</div></div>
<div><div>3.</div><div>Getting buy-in and alignment around SEO investment</div></div>	<div><div>3.</div><div>Hiring more dedicated resources to drive SEO programs internally</div></div>	<div><div>3.</div><div>Improving SEO collaboration across teams and departments</div></div>

Low or medium SEO maturity organizations' top priorities for the next 12 months center on more consistent and actionable SEO reporting, improving collaboration, and increasing SEO investments.

High SEO maturity organizations are prioritizing strategic needs to protect and improve current website performance, like adapting to new AI developments and faster execution.

Takeaways from the Experts

On Top SEO Priorities for 2024 by SEO Maturity Level

“

High SEO maturity organizations almost always have **automated reporting set up**, which is why they can turn their priorities into things that move the needle rather than focusing on how to measure results.

There is a big opportunity here for low and medium SEO maturity organizations to invest in some type of automated reporting setup to **unlock significant time savings that can be redistributed to key business objectives that fuel growth** instead.”



 **Rachel Schardt,**
Principal Customer Success Manager at Conductor



Take Action Now to Stay Ahead in 2024

Organic search as we know it is changing with Google's launch of SGE in 2024. Digital marketers and SEOs remain optimistic, with 83% of surveyed respondents predicting an overall positive impact of AI on SEO.

Now is the time to evaluate your SEO technologies, resourcing strategy, and key priorities to ensure your company is set up for success as a new era of search begins.

Schedule a free Conductor demo to see what a fully integrated enterprise SEO platform could do for your strategy.

Schedule now