

AI Search, SEO, & Content Marketing

Trends & Predictions for 2025


What is the future of SEO and content marketing in 2025?

The search landscape has changed more over the last 12 months than it has since the inception of search engines. Google's [AI Overviews \(AIO\)](#), answer engines like Perplexity, and shifting success metrics have created challenges and opportunities unlike anything seen before.

This guide cuts through the noise with actionable insights on what to prioritize—and what to ignore—as you navigate this transformed digital ecosystem. We've gathered expertise from industry leaders to help you not just survive these changes but leverage them to outperform your competition in 2025 and beyond.

Is SEO dead?

"SEO isn't dead, it's just different."

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

To emphasize Pat's point: No, SEO isn't dead, but it is evolving rapidly, and it will never be the same.

The expansion of Google's AI Overviews and answer engines like Perplexity and ChatGPT Search are changing the way people ask questions and find information, which is, in turn, transforming the search landscape.


As new terms and buzzwords emerge—like SXO (Search Experience Optimization), AEO (Answer Engine Optimization), or traffic optimization—it's important to remember the core principle of SEO remains the same, no matter what you call it. Companies need to create exceptional experiences that satisfy user intent, deliver value to customers, and align with how search/answer engines surface information to increase brand visibility and awareness.

What is changing are the metrics and numbers search experts previously relied on. Organic traffic numbers and keyword rankings are now directional indicators rather than definitive measures of success.

What matters now is creating sustainable, adaptable systems rather than relying on individual tactics or team members.


"SEO has gone from a singular profession to a company-wide practice. A lot of people are going to start looking at the necessity to build a system that will outlast any individual person. And any SEO that is not thinking that way is thinking the wrong way."

SEOs have to change from doers to influencers now. They have to educate and evangelize vs. pressing buttons."

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

The brands that embrace change by adapting to the new AI search landscape and leveraging AI for automation and efficiency benefits rather than fighting it will be set up to thrive.

"Automation is not the enemy. Generative AI has been one of the greatest productivity tools that has ever happened to me in my entire career. People that embrace it are the ones that are going to do well."

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

Every major shift in search has led to adaptation, not extinction. **This AI search disruption may be the biggest yet, but it's bringing opportunity, not apocalypse.**

Top SEO trends & predictions to prioritize for 2025


1. AI Overviews to expand to all queries.

AIO, Google's AI-powered search result type, now has over 1 billion users. Google announced that the upcoming iteration will be a new experimental search mode known as [AI Mode](#).

AI Mode will be able to answer more complex queries by using advanced reasoning and thinking/multimodal capabilities, which will build on AIO's momentum to disrupt the way people get information. But more on that in our next prediction.

Let's focus on what this AIO expansion means for search queries, rankings, and CTR in 2025 and beyond.

"Expect many new developments around AIO, like AIOs for commercial queries, and as we've recently seen—Google testing ads within AI overviews. The former will decrease visitors, and in the case of the latter: these ads will push organic results even further down the SERP."

 **Steven van Vessum**, VP of Organic Marketing, FamilyCare

In short, AIO will expand to incorporate ad types and appear more often for all types of queries, while LLMs will get better at understanding what users are searching for and why, paving the way for AI Mode's future launch.

"What Gemini is allowing Google to do is what they've always talked about wanting to do: correctly matching a user's query and intent to the most relevant piece of content in their index. The SERP will eventually become completely AI-driven / generated."

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

Keyword rankings and ranking positions on SERPs will lessen in importance as brands focus more on aligning content with search intent in a brand awareness play to secure brand mentions in AI-generated answers.

"The days of positional obsession—hyper-focusing on specific positions on SERPs—are coming to an end. We're rapidly moving to a future where traditional search engine rankings are less relevant with the expansion of AIO and rise of answer engines."

 **Wei Zheng**, Chief Product Officer, Conductor

Helpful Resources:

- Learn more on how to educate leadership about the changing search landscape in [this blog](#) by resident SEO expert Pat Reinhart.
- Dive deeper with these [10 actionable strategies](#) you can implement today to optimize your content for AIO and answer engines.

2. Answer engines are the new search frontier. Optimize accordingly.

Emerging answer engines—Perplexity, ChatGPT Search, and the forthcoming AI Mode from Google—are the future of search.

As more users start their searches on these answer engines, agile brands are looking to optimize their websites and content to ensure they are the source behind the answers these AI-powered search engines provide.

*"SEO success is no longer just about ranking for clicks—it's about **positioning your brand as the AI's go-to source.**"*


 **Seth Besmertnik**, CEO & Co-founder, Conductor

So, what optimization efforts should you focus on?

Along with prioritizing fundamental SEO best practices, aligning efforts with Google's E-E-A-T framework is key. Prioritize educating SEO and content collaborators on the overall concept, what it entails, and why it's more important with the expansion of AIO.

*"Optimizing for LLMs or AI Overviews aligns with traditional SEO best practices. **The fundamentals haven't changed: create helpful content, structure it properly, and build brand authority.**"*


Do that, and you'll show up in both search results and AI-driven answers. Stop overcomplicating it."

 **Zack Kadish**, Sr. SEO Strategy Director, Conductor

Creating original, authentic, and helpful content—the Expertise element within E-E-A-T—should be a top priority moving forward to increase digital visibility and brand authority across all search engines.

*"Optimizing for LLMs is not that different from a traditional search engine. You just have to be more targeted. **The best way to optimize is to be original.**"*

Do this by having folks in your organization provide a unique POV on a relevant topic. This should be the focus because that is what all of these LLMs and answer engines are trying to do: connect real people with real experts' opinions. Because AI doesn't make things up yet, right? It just regurgitates and stitches things together that already exist."

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

The good news is that Google seems in favor of incorporating more website links within AI Mode results—at least according to the [latest Google Labs visualizations](#)—compared to what we've seen with AIO. You can keep your brand top of mind when users are ready to convert by becoming the cited source and showing up in the links AI Mode highlights.

Pro Tip:

ICYMI: Learn 10 actionable strategies to optimize your content for AIO and answer engines in [this expert article](#).


3. Organic traffic panic continues as zero-click searches rise. Shift focus from traffic to conversions.

Expect organic traffic to fall as zero-click searches continue to rise, thanks to users getting more queries answered directly on the SERP.

If you're seeing significant drops in organic traffic since AIO rolled out, you're not alone. Check out our [case study on our own website](#) (conductor.com) to see how it's impacted our traffic so far.

"We're at an inflection point or really an impasse here where there's going to be a shift in how people look at success when it comes to organic traffic."


*Zero-click searches will rise. Traffic will go down. What I think this is going to do is **force people to think more about conversion and the quality of traffic vs. just traffic in general.**"*

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

Organic traffic is quickly shifting from a key SEO metric to a directional metric. Forward-looking SEOs and digital marketers should focus on resetting expectations with leadership regarding which ROI metrics they focus on and why.

"When people come to your site, are they engaged? What's their time spent on site? Are people engaging more deeply with your content, and, ultimately, is that leading to more conversions?"

That is what the new success metrics will look like in organic."


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

Additionally, [brand demand, brand mentions, and branded traffic will become more important metrics](#) to understand digital visibility and performance in an AI-powered answer engine future.

You will lose traffic to things like glossary and generic content, but if you're creating the right type of helpful, original content, you will get more of the right traffic to your website—AKA those ready to convert.

*"People are still so focused on how much organic traffic they're driving **when they should be focused on driving quality traffic that converts.**"*

Take, for example, the recent Hubspot case—they saw a [massive drop in organic traffic](#), but I don't think it has had that much of an impact on converting visitors to trials, prospects, and revenue because, at the end of the day, they are primarily losing vanity visitors that weren't driving revenue."

 **Steven van Vessum**, VP of Organic Marketing, FamilyCare

The implications are clear: successful SEO in 2025 requires shifting focus from organic traffic volume and SERP rankings to conversion quality. This means:

- Educating leaders on the metrics that matter moving forward
- Prioritizing conversion optimization over traditional traffic metrics
- Developing deeper understanding of user's search intent to inform your content strategy
- Creating original, unique content with authoritative authorship

The key to thriving in this AI-dominated landscape is truly understanding the search intent of your target audience and solving their problems more thoroughly in your content than the competition.


4. Continuous, invisible search engine algorithm updates are coming.

Detailed, labeled algorithm updates will become a thing of the past. As the LLMs that power leading search engines like Google get more advanced, algorithm changes and the reasoning behind why sites are being rewarded or penalized will become harder to pinpoint.


Ironically, even Google's teams will not fully comprehend the resulting changes. As machine learning works autonomously and complex updates adjust the algorithm more often, the engineers involved will be further removed from what is actually changing.

"I see Google eventually moving into one constant update and not announcing anything. AI will allow them to do that. And you can see it happening already. All of the 'named' updates are kind of gone, right? Now, there are just core updates when they actually push something live.

While that shift is probably still a few years away, we will definitely see more core updates more often starting now."

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

"For the most part, Google's algorithm is a living, breathing organism that mostly manages itself, and Google's engineers are just there to make sure it doesn't roll off the mountain."

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



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5. Technical SEO and UX optimization are more important than ever before.

[Technical SEO](#) and [UX optimization](#) are key search trends for 2025. They will continue to be determining factors that influence which brands succeed and which get left behind. These elements remain key signals to search and answer engines regarding which sites get crawled, indexed, and cited.

Technical SEO has evolved from periodic checkbox activity to a 24/7 monitoring requirement.

"People need to understand that technical SEO needs to be part of a process and not just something they look at once a month or once every six months to see how it's doing."

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

As websites face increasingly complex indexing challenges and algorithmic uncertainty, a proactive, user-friendly technical foundation is non-negotiable.

"This is something SEOs have been shouting from the rooftops for years, and now is the time to take action because the C-suite is finally listening."

You could have the best content in the world, but if there are technical issues on your site, it's all for nothing. Having good UX is critical to SEO, especially now with how crowded the SERPs have become, the increase of zero-click searches, and the growing reliance on LLMs. Overall, you need to ensure when a user lands on your site, they have a good experience, they don't leave, and they convert."


 **Zack Kadish**, Sr. SEO Strategy Director, Conductor

The reality is that websites never sleep, and neither should your technical monitoring. This always-on approach requires embracing automation and dedicated monitoring solutions.

The goal isn't just awareness but rapid response before traffic, rankings, and performance get impacted.

"To be healthy and successful from a technical SEO perspective, you need something constantly watching the site. And that thing is not a human being. You need to embrace technology to understand what's happening on the site on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis."

It's about moving faster and ensuring that when something does break—as it will—you are notified and can fix it as soon as possible."

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

Staying indexed and visible now requires real-time monitoring and issue resolution. With Google's indexing becoming more selective, maintaining technical and UX excellence isn't just about optimization—it's about survival.

6. The new link building combines digital PR and earned media.


The era of transactional link acquisition has been dead for a while. What you should focus on is expanding digital PR and earned media efforts—approaches that generate authentic engagement, create genuine value, and naturally attract quality backlinks.

This evolution reflects both Google's advancing detection capabilities and the SERP benefits of authentic brand building. As AI-powered search algorithms become more sophisticated in 2025, they can better distinguish between manufactured link strategies and naturally earned media mentions, which they reward with increased domain and brand authority.

"Traditional link building is changing to digital PR. This is the right way to build links. A lot of great companies have already been doing this for a while.

*Yet, I still see so many wasting money on buying links every month. **Everyone should stop that immediately.***

Think of link building more as a brand authority-building play and work with your content and marketing teams to create these opportunities."


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

This transition isn't merely about avoiding penalties but reflects a more strategic integration of content and PR. When content teams consistently produce valuable resources that organically earn attention, the result is sustainable authority that search algorithms reward.

Prioritizing digital PR and earned media efforts helps increase brand authority, which can, in turn, increase brand mentions and citations among answer engines.


"These LLMs and AI-powered search engines rely on a knowledge graph, which is essentially just a big network. They are leveraging that network to determine which businesses or people are important and how entities are related to provide the right information.

*As a result, **you need to make sure you're noteworthy and diversify where your brand is getting mentioned**—like news interviews, Reddit forums, social media conversations, email newsletters, and Wikipedia pages—to increase brand authority so your original content gets found and cited by these new search/answer engines."*

 **Steven van Vessum**, VP of Organic Marketing, FamilyCare

In simple terms, the path to visibility has fundamentally reversed.

"Before you could use organic traffic to build your brand. Now you have to build your brand, and then you're getting organic traffic. So it's like an UNO reverse card."

 **Steven van Vessum**, VP of Organic Marketing, FamilyCare

The mechanical process of isolated link acquisition is being replaced by holistic reputation management, experimental brand awareness efforts, and successful earned media.


For marketers in 2025, this means aligning SEO efforts with broader communication strategies, creating content worthy of citation, and trying out new channels and collaboration outreach to improve brand authority. The companies that succeed will be those that earn attention through comprehensive efforts rather than those that try to buy it.

Which SEO trend to ignore?

Heavily keyword-driven SEO strategies.

Everyone in SEO loves a good keyword, but it's time to move beyond an SEO strategy focused exclusively on keywords and SERP rankings.


"People need to think in terms of topics rather than keywords. Keywords are still important, of course, because users drop them into their favorite search engines, but answer engines and LLMs rank topics."

Steven van Vessum, VP of Organic Marketing,
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To be clear, tracking and reporting on keyword and SERP rankings can still be a helpful indicator of the effectiveness of your overall strategy.

"There's nothing wrong with understanding where you're ranking and what you're ranking for; it just shouldn't be the only thing you're relying on.

Keywords should be an adjacent metric that helps give you an overall idea of brand visibility and where you're appearing."

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

In other words, tracking keywords still has value—but making them the centerpiece of your strategy will set you up for failure moving forward.

Top content marketing trends & predictions to prioritize for 2025

1. Higher quality content creation powered by AI.

As GenAI tools improve and elevate the quality of the content they can produce, content marketers need to adapt and embrace them throughout the content workflow to drive results. However, thorough editing and review processes are still needed to catch hallucinations or factual inaccuracies in AI-generated content.

*"I think **people need to not be so scared of AI**. There are a lot of creative ways you can use AI for content.*

But, on the other hand, you also shouldn't take it at face value when it generates content on its own."

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

The key is finding balance—using AI to handle repetitive tasks while preserving the human creativity and expertise that make your content distinctive. Instead of seeing AI as a threat, view it as a tool that can free you to focus on adding unique value through your brand's perspective and expertise.

"It's not about dropping in a generic prompt and hitting publish on whatever the AI spits out.

*Instead, **it's about leveraging generative AI where it makes sense** within your content creation workflow to boost efficiency and offset skill set or resource gaps."*


 **Shannon Vize**, Sr. Content Marketing Manager, Conductor

Increase experimentation with these tools for topic research, content gap analysis, title tag and meta description versioning, and other content creation steps.

As AI-generated content quality improves, content folks will also start to shift their role from primarily writing-based to more of a hybrid editor and supporting writer role.

"I think what we're going to see this year, but also the years after, is that these AI writing tools are going to get better and better.

Right now, these tools are our sidekicks. It could very well be in a couple of years, it's the other way around. Where we are letting these AI tools do the legwork and that you're essentially just editing the AI's work. Many translators are already being handed AI-translated content for editing."

 **Steven van Vessum**, VP of Organic Marketing, FamilyCare

Pro Tip:

As AI is integrated into more content workflows, **ensuring content quality should be the primary focus** for content marketers.


Conductor's Content Score in [Writing Assistant](#) measures content quality with comprehensive evaluation criteria across topic coverage, readability, syntax, content objective, how well it answers related questions, and more to ensure it's optimized for success from day 1. [Start your 3-week free trial today](#) to see Content Score in action.

2. Create original content with a unique POV to achieve search success.

In 2025, Creating original content with a unique point of view (POV) is no longer just a best practice—it's a requirement for SEO and content marketing success.

"Don't just rewrite what's already out there—be original. What's your unique POV? Too many people focus on just getting more content written.

Ask yourself: what makes your content different? How does it truly help? Original insights and first-hand experience are what set you apart."

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

As search engines become more sophisticated, generic informational content is being deprioritized in favor of content that demonstrates originality, expertise, and value in alignment with Google's E-E-A-T methodology.

Brands that deliver unique perspectives, proprietary data, first-hand experiences, and expert insights into their content will stand out and get rewarded with increased visibility in search and answer engines.

Here are some proven strategies to prioritize originality and translate experience within your content:

- **Target relevant, hyper-targeted, niche topics and create comprehensive content around them.**


Remember, answer engines and LLMs rank topics, not keywords. The future of successful content marketing is specificity. Do the audience research required to zero in on niche topics and then delve deep into each topic.

This content strategy lends itself well to [pillar pages and topic clusters](#), which also help boost content and overall website performance on SERPs. The goal is to provide a level of detail that answers all the questions your audience has and validates your brand as an expert.

"User-generated content forums are dominating SERPs. This creates a huge opportunity to understand and own the voice of the customer.


By scraping top and relevant subreddits and Quora threads, you can uncover high-volume, relevant pain points for keyword/topic research and original content creation.

*This fuels new blog topics with strong engagement and demand and increases overall brand presence in AIO and search. **More helpful content using your brand's authority and expertise means more visibility across Google and LLMs."***

 **Zack Kadish**, Sr. SEO Strategy Director, Conductor

- **Create more data-driven content.** Prove your expertise with research-based, data-driven content tailored to your specific area of expertise that competitors can't steal without crediting you (literally). Providing exclusive data and insights conveys your experience within your industry and product vertical and your commitment to delivering the most accurate and helpful insights your audience is searching for. Producing this type of content also helps generate earned media opportunities, which boosts the authority of your site.

*"**Creating exclusive data-driven content**—think annual reports, articles recapping your market surveys—**provides excellent backlinking opportunities** from reputable publishing/news sites. These backlinks help improve your brand and domain authority across traditional and emerging search engines."*

 **Shannon Vize**, Sr. Content Marketing Manager, Conductor

- **Develop an authentic voice in content, especially on social.** Readers want some personality. It improves content readability and builds trust by establishing a brand voice that AI can't replicate easily. Identify how you can experiment with your brand voice to infuse more personality into your content. This is especially true on social media, where users want to see more behind-the-scenes content with a more engaging, fun brand voice.
- **Build authorship around multiple subject matter experts.** Collaborating with or having internal subject matter experts author articles is essential to increase credibility. Identify the individuals within your company who are trusted experts, both internally and externally, and collaborate with them to leverage their expertise through bylines and quotes.

3. Diversify content distribution channels to maximize ROI of content.

The rise of zero-click searches and answer engines means you can't rely on search alone for content distribution. Instead, you need to diversify content distribution channels to maximize content ROI. One reliable channel is email.

Newsletter open rates remain high, and if you're consistently delivering value (read: not spamming your database) by providing targeted, value-driven content, then you will build trust, which, in turn, leads to higher clicks, more engagement, and more conversions.

Find engaging ways to distribute and promote your content in newsletters and emails. If you wouldn't open it or click through, your audience won't either. Consider adding a CTA on top-performing pages or articles to subscribe to your newsletter by teasing exclusive access to similar content.

Another great channel for content distribution is social media. The best way to drive engagement with content via social is by tailoring posts (think graphics, videos, and copy) to the best practices of that channel.

"Diversifying content across TikTok, YouTube, and other platforms maximizes ROI by reaching audiences where they engage most.

*But **remember that different generations consume content differently.** For example, Gen Z favors short clips over a text-based format. Always make sure you're tailoring social content for your target audience based on the platform."*

 **Zack Kadish**, Sr. SEO Strategy Director, Conductor


What works on LinkedIn won't work on TikTok. A one-size-fits-all approach will set you up for low engagement and low reach. But if you take the time to develop channel-specific strategies and allocate adequate resources, social media can help you significantly expand the reach of your content and drive results.

4. Video, video, video.

Video result types were the fastest-growing search engine result type analyzed in our [annual Benchmarks Report](#). Video isn't just a nice-to-have anymore—it's a must-have in any content strategy to stay competitive in search results and engage audiences across generations.

"Video is dominating search results. If you're not thinking about how to integrate it into your content strategy, you're already behind. And make sure you host it on YouTube—not your website or Vimeo.

Google prioritizes YouTube above all other platforms."

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

The shift in search visibility of video result types presents a significant opportunity for brands to capture audience attention in new ways.

"Creating short-form and long-form video content enhances visibility in SERP result type features, as AI Overviews often pull from video and Google has been showing video result types directly on Page 1."

 **Zack Kadish**, Sr. SEO Strategy Director, Conductor

This evolution requires content marketers to think beyond traditional written formats and strategically incorporate video content to maximize visibility. Develop niche, topic-specific videos that address your audience's questions in a visual format. These can serve as complementary pieces to written content or standalone as valuable resources.

*"Just like written content, the most successful videos provide unique perspectives and demonstrate genuine expertise. Don't just repurpose what's already out there—**bring something fresh to the conversation through your video content.**"*

 **Shannon Vize**, Sr. Content Marketing Manager, Conductor

Instead of treating video as a separate initiative, look for natural opportunities to incorporate it within your current content workflows:

- Add explanatory videos within complex how-to guides
- Create video summaries of comprehensive reports or studies
- Develop visual demonstrations of products or services
- Use short clips to highlight key statistics or insights from longer content

*"The brands seeing the most success with video aren't just creating standalone content—they're strategically **using video to enhance their overall content experience and capture visibility across multiple search formats.**"*

 **Zack Kadish**, Sr. SEO Strategy Director, Conductor

By diversifying your content formats to include video, you increase your chances of appearing in more search results and provide your audience with content in their preferred format—creating a more user-friendly experience that drives better results.

Which content marketing trend to ignore?

AI-generated, generic content at scale.

Creating huge volumes of AI-generated content will not improve digital visibility in 2025 and beyond.


"Content marketers need to re-educate leadership on this notion that you can generate vast amounts of AI-generated content and expect it to be high quality. If it were that easy, everyone would do it."

You don't necessarily need more content. You just need to make sure that the content you do create hits all the right notes."

 **Shannon Vize**, Sr. Content Marketing Manager, Conductor


Google's stance on AI-generated content supports this:

"If you look at the guidance from Google on AI-generated content, it's clear that they aren't against AI-generated content, but they do emphasize using it wisely. At the end of the day, you want to make sure that your content is helpful, experience-driven, original, and resonates with your audience."

 **Steven van Vessum**, VP of Organic Marketing, FamilyCare

Remember that search engines are actively reducing the amount of content they index, not looking to add more.

*"Google doesn't have any appetite to discover, crawl, and index even more content because it's super expensive for them. So they're pruning their index and raising the content quality bar. **In no world would Google want more generic, low-quality content.**"*

 **Steven van Vessum**, VP of Organic Marketing, FamilyCare

What's ahead for SEO and content marketing in 2025

The winners in the search landscape of 2025 and beyond will be brands prioritizing conversions over traffic, quality over quantity, and strategic AI integration rather than resisting it.

As answer engines reshape how users find information, success demands original content with genuine expertise, technical excellence, diversified distribution strategies, and video integration. The most significant search disruption in history isn't the apocalypse some feared—it's an opportunity for adaptable brands to thrive.