

EBOOK

SEO+UX=PB&J

ACHIEVING DELICIOUS WEBSITE RESULTS
THROUGH SEO & UX INTEGRATION

By Tom Shapiro, CEO at Stratabeat, Inc.

VELOCITIZE

 **WPengine**

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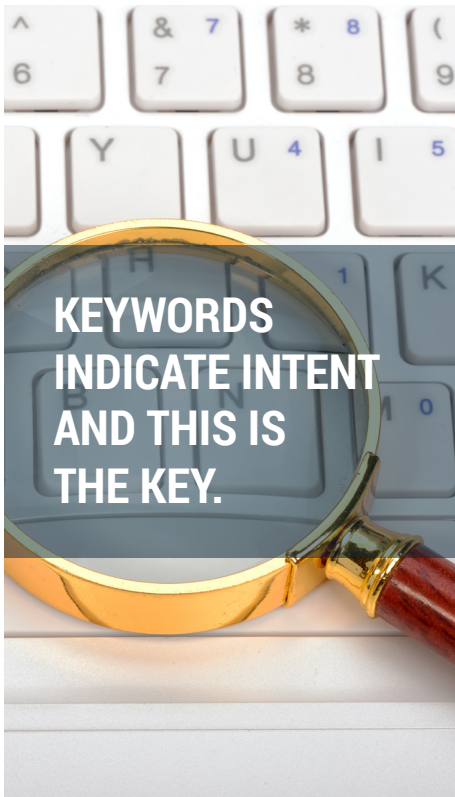
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Chapter 1

SEO AND UX GO TOGETHER LIKE PB&J



Some things just go well together. Salt and pepper. Steak and eggs. Wine and cheese. And of course, peanut butter and jelly.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and User Experience (UX) may on the surface appear to be staggeringly different. But digging deeper, when integrated together well, they make a delicious combo.

SEO is a demand capture mechanism like no other. Looking to get in front of people seeking coconut skin moisturizer? Or a battery load tester for a car? Or accounting software? Then you've got to make your web content rank higher in Google search results!

Capturing demand and translating the demand into leads or revenue, though, are two completely different things. What if your organic rankings are high, but the resulting traffic leads to a poor site experience? What if those clicking through on your search listings become frustrated and annoyed? Not only do you lose the sale, but you potentially lose the prospect for years to come. Ouch!

To build a successful business, it's best to match superior SEO with superior UX. Someone who enjoys a great experience on your website is far more likely to think favorably of your brand. There is also a greater probability that they will engage with your brand and make a purchase.

To that end, here are five ways that you can integrate SEO and UX for better website and business results.

Mapping Intent to Experience

The first place to start when integrating SEO and UX is with your audience. The way you can do that is through the development of audience personas. Describe your target audience profiles in as much detail as possible.

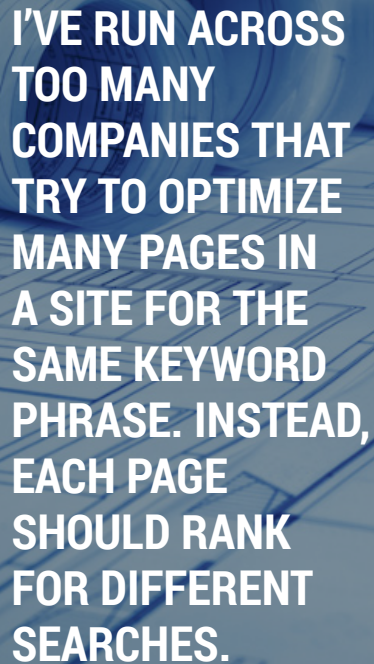
What are their needs? What are their wants? What are their challenges and frustrations?

From an SEO perspective, what are the specific keyword phrases they use when searching in Google?

Keywords indicate intent, and this is the key.

Someone searching for accounting software, for example, may be seeking a list of features and benefits. During the purchase journey, though, he or she may also search for ways to improve cash flow or even a budgeting calculator.

The point is, the user experience will be different depending on what is sought out. If a user doesn't find what he or she is looking for quickly and easily, then site abandonment is likely.



I'VE RUN ACROSS TOO MANY COMPANIES THAT TRY TO OPTIMIZE MANY PAGES IN A SITE FOR THE SAME KEYWORD PHRASE. INSTEAD, EACH PAGE SHOULD RANK FOR DIFFERENT SEARCHES.

Information Architecture

Another area that benefits both SEO and UX is information architecture – the organization and hierarchy of your site structure. For SEO, your website should be well organized and categorized so that it's easy for a search engine algorithm to understand what each section and sub-section is about. Furthermore, it should be clear what each specific page is about and how the pages relate to one another in supporting an overarching topic.

I've run across too many companies that try to optimize many pages in a site for the same keyword phrase. Instead, each page should rank for different searches. Think of your pages as components that make up a content ecosystem.

Beyond the organization of the website, aim for clean, intuitive, easy-to-understand navigation. Although being innovative is typically a compliment, navigation is not where you want to be overly innovative to the point that your site visitors are confused. They don't have the patience to figure it out, and instead will simply be frustrated and angry at the experience.

Google conducted a study in 2012 that found that the easier it was for web users to understand a website, the more they felt the site was well designed. Sites with low visual complexity were seen as better than those with high visual complexity. Also, sites that aligned with an industry framework were also seen as more appealing.

In other words, making your site easy to decipher and understand for both search engines and visitors results in a more positive result with regards to SEO and UX.

Content Strategy

Once you've mapped intent to experience and have architected an easy-to-understand website, it's time to develop a content strategy that's going to take your SEO and UX to another level.

Content is critical to SEO success. If you think that optimizing your website technically is sufficient to rank high in Google search results, you are going to be disappointed. While technical optimization is the starting line, it's simply a means to enable bot crawlers to easily read and understand your website's content. Without content itself, Google will have no idea in which areas you are authoritative and why it should rank you for specific searches.

Develop content that supports your areas of expertise and the types of things your audience is searching for. Aim to develop a logical flow of content that supports your target audience as they go from the top of the funnel all the way through to purchase at the bottom of the funnel.



AIM TO DEVELOP
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PURCHASE AT THE
BOTTOM OF THE
FUNNEL.

From a UX perspective, don't be boring. Aim to excite your audience and evoke an emotional response. Jonah Berger, in his book *Contagious – Why Things Catch On*, points to emotions as a key factor in what gets shared. He found that high-arousal emotions actually lead to even greater sharing.

Your organic search rankings will be strengthened the more your content is shared and backlinks are established to your content.

The neuroscientist Antonio Damasio found that people with damage to the part of the brain that triggers emotions (in other words, people who couldn't feel emotions) had an extremely difficult time making decisions, such as purchase decisions. In other words, if your content is not evoking an emotional response, you'll be making it mentally difficult for your target audience to engage with your brand and purchase from you. Even for B2B purchases, purchase intent declines when emotional content is reduced during the sales cycle, according to Google and CEB.

Site Speed

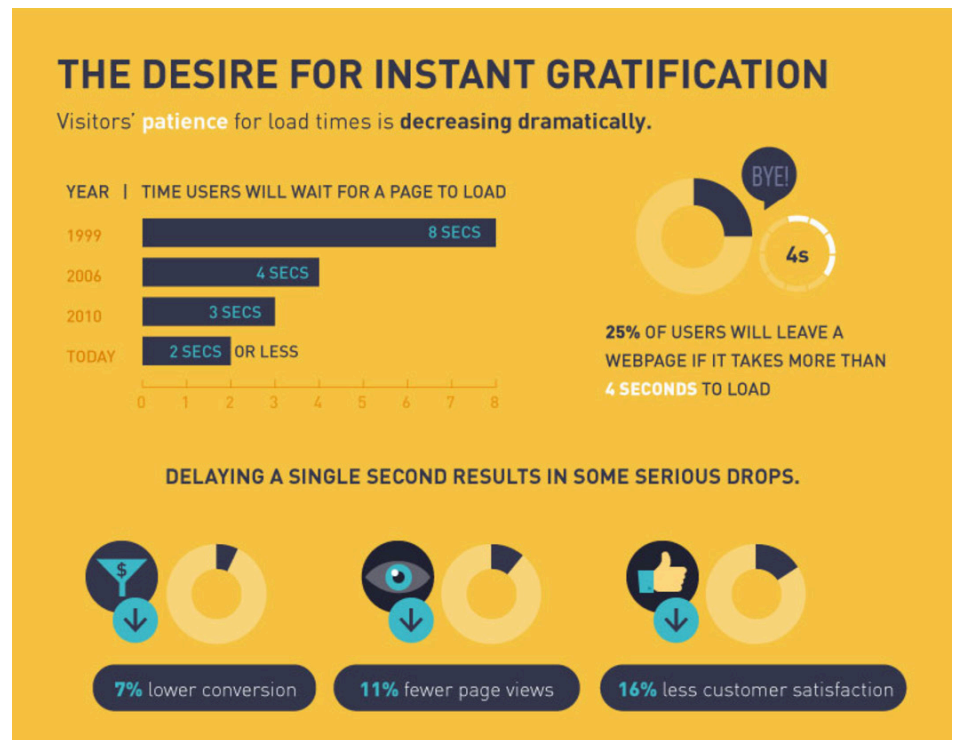
After investing in content production, you want to make sure that it's delivered fast to your site visitors, whether it be video, interactive landing pages, educational articles, and so on. Rapid content delivery affects both SEO and UX.

Google has publicly stated that site speed is one of its organic search ranking factors. Optimizing page speed throughout your site is clearly worthwhile for your business. And just last year Gary Illyes, Webmaster Trends Analyst at Google, announced that Google would be looking at mobile site speed to help determine the rankings for mobile searches specifically. The bottom line is:

the faster your pages load, the better for your organic search performance.

Page load speed is not only good for SEO; it's just as beneficial for UX. Fast loading pages make web users happier. No one enjoys the agony of sitting around waiting for web content to load.

Many studies through the years, in fact, have concluded that individuals will abandon pages that take too long to load. One study concluded that 47 percent of consumers expect to wait no longer than **two seconds** for a web page to load. After four seconds of loading, a quarter of your audience will be gone.



Source: *How Site Speed Affects Your Business*

As for the correlation of page speed and your business, consider these statistics.

A one second increase in page load time can result in a seven percent reduction in conversions.

Auto parts retailer AutoAnything.com increased conversions by nine percent after cutting page load times in half. **Seventy-nine** percent of web shoppers who run into site performance problems say they won't return to the site to buy again and approximately **44 percent** tell others about the bad experience.

Engagement

When talking about SEO, what is too often ignored is what happens after the click and why that matters. Welcome to the world of post-click SEO.

Google engineer Paul Haahr, in his presentation "How Google Works: A Ranking Engineer's Perspective", confirmed that

the click-through rate (CTR) of a search listing impacts its positioning.



This perfectly fits into Google's stated aim of providing relevant search results. If many people are clicking on a certain listing among the search results, users are clearly finding it relevant.

Beyond CTR, it's just as critical now that you focus on the post-click metrics related to your web pages. One of the reasons for this is Google's introduction of Google RankBrain in 2015. RankBrain is a machine-learning artificial intelligence system that helps the Google algorithm determine the relevancy of content for searches, and is powerful enough to account for post-click factors in search rankings.

Jeff Dean, Google Senior Fellow, has confirmed that RankBrain contributes to the ranking of every query in Google. Greg Corrado, Principal Scientist / Director of Augmented Intelligence Research at Google, has stated that RankBrain represents the third most important signal contributing to the result of a search.

What this means is that you should be aiming to increase engagement metrics such as page views, time-on-site, and interaction. The more that Google understands that users are finding your content relevant, valuable, and even irresistible, the more likely your search engine listings will rise in the rankings.

Summary

SEO and UX have historically focused on different areas of web marketing. However, by integrating SEO and UX, you'll be able to not only improve your SEO results but also positively impact the feelings of those who visit your website.

Peanut butter and jelly are completely different foods with very different qualities. Yet, when mashed together in a sandwich, the taste is magical. Start treating your SEO and UX like PB&J, and you can achieve more delicious marketing results.



Chapter 2

HOW IGNORING UX CAN DESTROY YOUR SEO RESULTS





Imagine investing time, money, and resources in search engine optimization (SEO). Online competitive intelligence. Technical SEO. Mobile usability. Keyword research. Site architecture. Internal linking. Content development. Content amplification. PR, sharing, and external links. You get the picture.

This is all great for your brand, right?

But what happens if people land on your site and don't like it? What happens if your site frustrates them? Or if they just don't see the value? What happens if you lose them as a prospect because it's such a poor experience?

In that case, driving traffic may be one of the worst things for you to do for the success of your brand. The more traffic you drive, the more damage you do to the brand. In this type of situation, you need to fix the experience before you focus on SEO.

A mediocre experience leads to mediocre results. Bad experience leads to bad results. Too often, traffic growth is looked at in a silo. It's someone's job or it's the agency's job, without taking into account a more holistic view of the business and a more integrated strategy. To generate maximum leads or revenue from your SEO initiatives, you must ensure a superior experience on your website. This is critical to unleashing business growth and driving your company's success.

The Optimization of Pasta

Years ago, I took a phone call from a pasta brand. The marketing team was interested in SEO and requested a proposal. I asked for access to the brand's website analytics so that we could have a deeper understanding of the site's strengths and weaknesses, helping to inform our proposal.

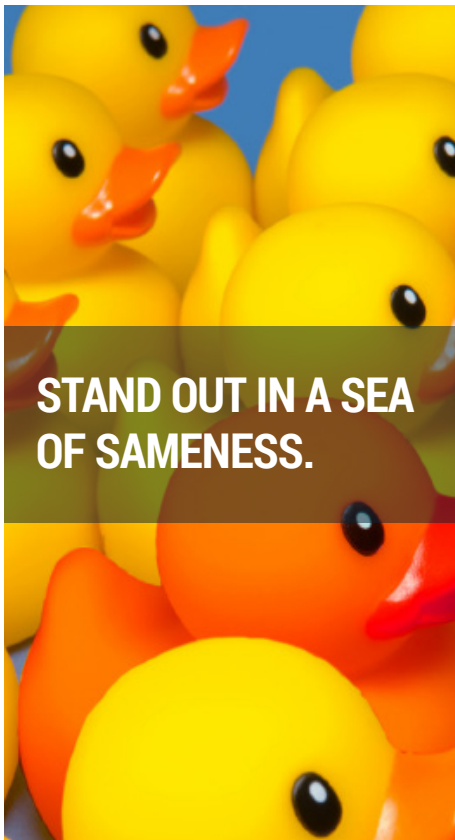
Although I liked the people I spoke with at the brand, what I found in the web analytics was something no sane marketer could like. In digging deeper and deeper into the numbers, I realized that almost every visitor to its website would leave immediately upon landing on the site – the visitors were not going beyond a single page.

I also noticed that the brand had made a large investment in videos. Although they included them throughout the site, visitors were not sitting through them. The videos were boring. Really boring. The website experience was bad. The site's engagement metrics were in the toilet. Ugh!

If we came back with a traditional SEO plan, it would have driven many more people to this negative experience – in other words, the brand would have been investing its money in a plan to turn people off. Not just this time, but for years to come.

Is that really how the brand should be investing its marketing dollars?

Instead of submitting a standard SEO proposal, we instructed the brand to transform the marketing message and fix the brand experience. At the time, fragmentation of the family was a hot topic in the media. As an Italian company, the brand had a great deal of authenticity as a pasta manufacturer. We proposed that the brand focus on bringing the family back to the dinner table.



By upgrading the website and launching a campaign fully committed to making meals meaningful and bringing the family together again, the brand could engage more deeply with its audience.

And SEO? We would build SEO into the DNA of a redesigned website as well as a new dedicated microsite and optimize everything throughout the campaign for greater visibility.

The brand loved the idea and together with its other agencies, we launched the new campaign. The results? Traffic increased significantly. More importantly, revenue increased and the brand now had a platform on which to build a powerful relationship with its audience for years to come.

Not only that, but the brand was now stronger and meant something to consumers, benefitting all forms of marketing in which the company engaged. Had we instead simply optimized the existing site and drove more traffic to it, the brand would have suffered.

Lost in a Sea of Sameness

Even if your website does not deliver as bad of an experience as the pasta brand's site, your differentiation can play just as significant a role in the success of your SEO efforts.

The other day, for example, I was searching for plane tickets to Chicago. I was struck by the lack of differentiation of what I found online. The websites all felt the same. The lack of thought and creativity in the sites was numbingly obvious. In the end, I really didn't care from which site I purchased my tickets.

Too many times buyers are faced with a [sea of sameness](#).

SEO without an effective brand strategy is like playing marketing roulette. Without clear positioning and differentiation, and without a message that cuts through the noise and evokes an emotional reaction... your visitors will travel down the purchase path only so far. In this scenario, the returns on your SEO are going to be limited. Make sure your uniqueness is unequivocally clear to site visitors before you start driving traffic growth.

Advertising for the Competition

Do you have any competitors with a cool website? A site that draws visitors in and engages them on a deeper level? A website that makes them want to tell their friends or associates about it?

Competing against a website like that when your own site is frustrating or boring is asking for trouble, no matter how much SEO traffic you're driving. Your site may accurately describe your offering, but does it get your audience fired up and excited about your brand? Does your site get them thinking about how they'll feel after making the purchase?



**BEFORE INVESTING
IN SEO TO DRIVE
TRAFFIC, ENSURE
THAT YOUR USER
EXPERIENCE IS
SUPERIOR.**

It's rare now for a buyer to not check out at least a handful of options before making a purchase. If your competitors are out-marketing you with their websites, in essence your website will act as an advertisement for the competition. Ouch!

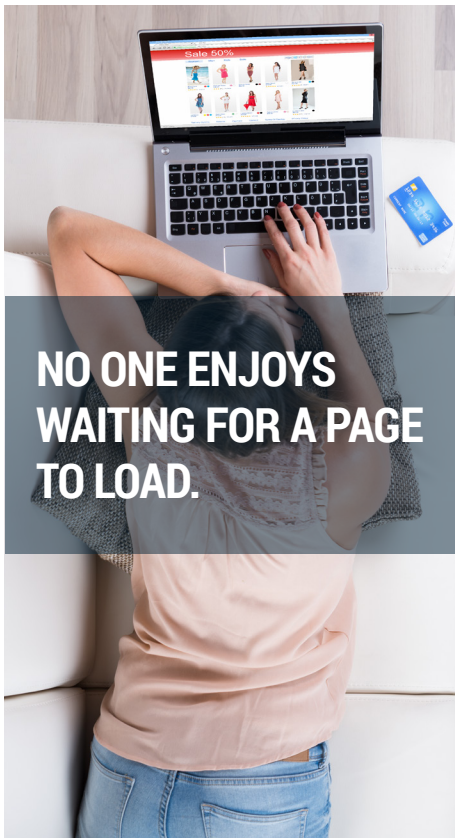
Driving organic traffic through SEO is a fantastic part of the marketing mix. However, remember, it doesn't matter how good your SEO rankings are if your UX is subpar. Before investing in SEO to drive traffic, ensure that your user experience is superior. That way, you'll be able to reap the business rewards from all of that time, effort, and investment.

To unleash revenue growth, focus on BOTH – be the best at SEO and the best at UX.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands typing on a silver laptop keyboard. The laptop screen is open and displays a complex dashboard with various data visualizations, including bar charts, a pie chart, and a line graph. The background is softly blurred, showing a tablet device on a wooden desk. The overall lighting is warm and professional, suggesting a business or tech environment.

Chapter 3

HOW SITE SPEED IMPACTS YOUR SEO AND UX



Speed matters! More specifically, website speed matters to your business.

Sites that load quickly perform better across a range of marketing metrics, whether you look at organic search results, site engagement, or conversions. It may not be the sexiest thing to focus on in your digital marketing, but site speed certainly delivers valuable benefits for your business.

A Forrester Consulting study commissioned by Akamai found that:

- 47 percent of online shoppers expect a web page to load in two seconds or less.
- 40 percent will abandon a retail web page if it takes more than three seconds to load.
- 52 percent say quick page load is an important factor in their loyalty to a site.
- 79 percent who experience a dissatisfying visit (including pages that took too long to load) would no longer buy from that site.

If you've ignored site speed up to now, hopefully these stats are waking you up to the importance of a fast website. Although the Forrester study was focused on online retail, site speed is important to the success of your website whether you are a B2B consulting firm, SaaS platform, or socially-minded non-profit.

The study is reflective of the greater online population. After all, no one enjoys sitting around waiting for a page to load. Often the experience results in frustration and a negative brand experience.

Impact on User Experience

Stanford University professors Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass in their studies found that people react to technology identically to how they react to other people. It's why you feel uncomfortable and awkward if video quality is choppy and slightly delayed in a video conference – regardless that the technology is not human, you react as if it were.

Think about how you operate online. You visit a website, and it's as if you're interacting with a person. The site either delights you and gives you some sort of satisfaction, or it frustrates and annoys you. But the reality is that a website is merely bits and bytes. It has no inherent emotion. Regardless, as a human, you react emotionally. This is why, when faced with a really slow website, the interaction can transform into a full-on emotional meltdown.

Many times, as users, people will jump to a competitor's site when faced with slow loading pages. Or they jump to the search engines. Or they may even just walk away from their computers, frustrated and angry. Regardless, the emotional damage is done, and that negative feeling is then associated with your brand.



**MOBILE USERS
EXPECT PAGES TO
LOAD AT LEAST
AS FAST AS ON A
DESKTOP.**

Impact on Organic Search Rankings

As you can see, slow loading pages negatively impact the user experience. Now, let's dive deeper into the benefits of site speed for your business from an SEO perspective, as well.

In 2010, Google applied for a patent related to the inclusion of site speed as an organic search ranking factor, and the patent was eventually granted on February 4, 2014 ([US Patent 8,645,362](#)). Google also publicly [announced](#) in its "Webmaster Central" blog in 2010 that site speed would play a factor in organic search rankings.

It's clear that Google cares about site speed. And this focus can be seen in many Google initiatives, from Google DNS to Google Hosted Libraries, Google Fiber, PageSpeed Tools, AMP Project, and Google's contributions to the latest web performance standards and protocols.

Within Google Analytics, under "Behavior" there are even options for Page Timings, Speed Suggestions, and User Timings. Google is on a mission to make the web faster for users.

The SEO software company Moz ran a study related to speed, and found that the time to first byte (TTFB) is a noticeable ranking factor for Google. Interestingly, though, the study did not find that the actual full load speed had a noticeable correlation on rank.

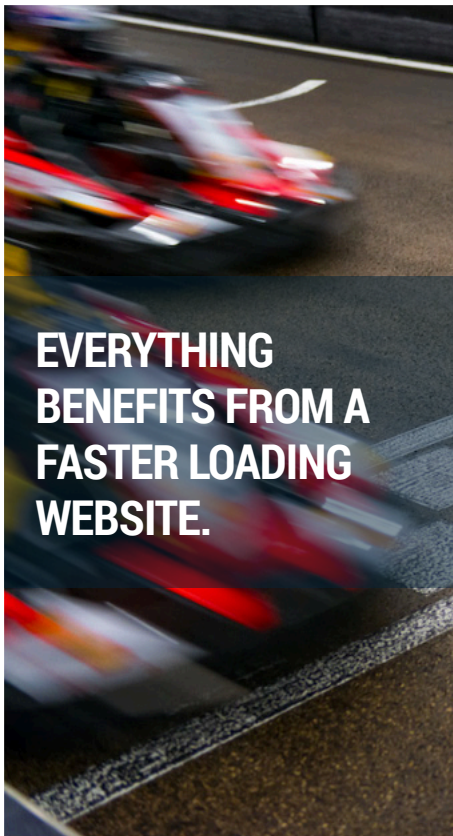
Although it's unclear just how significant a factor site speed is on your organic search rankings currently (relevancy is still a more dominant factor), it is clear that it's part of Google's algorithm and signs point to load speed increasing in weighting given Google's extreme focus on speed.

When looking at your site speed, pay special attention to mobile. Mobile users are often on slower internet connections, yet even so, 85 percent of mobile users expect pages to load at least as fast as on a desktop, according to Usabilla.

Last year at the Search Marketing Summit in Sydney, Gary Illyes, Webmaster Trends Analyst at Google, confirmed that Google would be updating its page speed ranking algorithm to look at a mobile site's speed independently from desktop speed. (Historically, Google's algorithm had factored only the desktop site's speed, even if the mobile site was much slower.)

Google has stated that over 50 percent of searches are from mobile devices, and last year HitWise came out with a report [stating](#) that the figure was closer to 58 percent.

For certain industries, mobile represents the vast majority of searches, with mobile representing 72 percent of the searches in the Food & Beverage industry, for example. Given the trend towards greater percentages of mobile computing, expect mobile-specific website speed to play a much larger role in mobile organic rankings moving forward.



Impact on Conversions

UX and SEO are not the only benefits of a faster loading website. As with any business, you want your UX and SEO to lead to conversions, whether you are looking for site visitors to translate into sales, leads, sign-ups, downloads, or any other type of conversion. Here again, page-loading speed can have a major impact on your results.

Consider the following studies

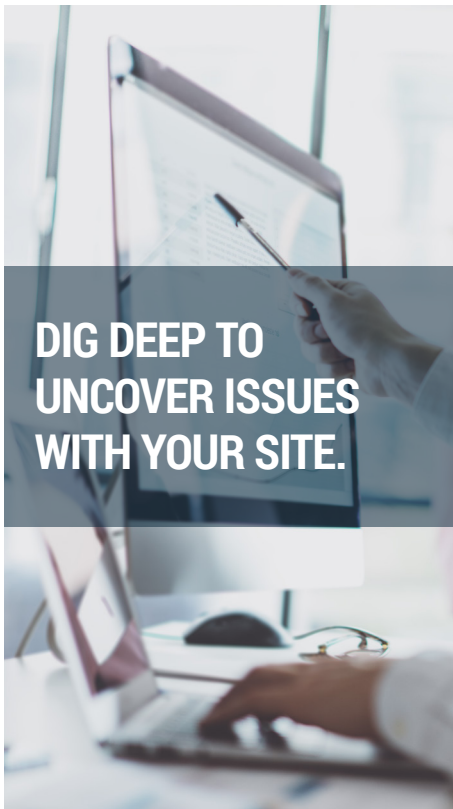
- Amazon and Walmart each increased revenue by 1 percent for every 100 milliseconds of improvement in page load time. (Source: GlobalDots)
- Amazon calculated that a page load slowdown of just one second could cost it \$1.6 billion in sales each year. (Source: FastCompany)
- A two-second delay in load time during a transaction results in abandonment rates of up to 87 percent. (Source: Radware)
- Making each page in a transaction two seconds faster results in more than double the number of completed transactions. (Source: Radware)
- 51 percent of online shoppers in the U.S. say that site slowness is the top reason they'd abandon a purchase. (Source: Brand Perfect)
- Mobile pages that are one second faster experience up to a 27 percent increase in conversion rate. (Source: SOASTA)
- *The Telegraph*, a British publication, measures its conversions in terms of page views. It found that a four second delay reduced page views by 11.02 percent, while an eight second delay reduced them by 17.52 percent. (Source: Optimizely)
- For every incremental improvement in site speed that Intuit achieved, conversions increased. Conversions increased 3 percent for every second reduced from 15 seconds to 7 seconds in load speed; 2 percent for every second reduced from 7 to 5 seconds; and 1 percent for every second reduced from 4 to 2 seconds. (Source: Norberth Danson, full-stack senior software engineer at Intuit, at Velocity 2013)

Optimizing Your Site Speed

To speed up your website, there are a number of techniques that can typically be applied, no matter the site. Some of these general techniques include:

Use a fast web host. For WordPress websites, WP Engine is lightning fast.

Use a CDN (Content Delivery Network), which is a network of distributed servers that deliver web content to a user based on geographic location, providing a higher degree of availability and performance for accessing web content.



**DIG DEEP TO
UNCOVER ISSUES
WITH YOUR SITE.**

Reduce the number of HTTP requests. When someone visits a web page, the web browser pings the web server, requesting the files that make up the content for the respective web page. When the server responds with the requested files, the browser renders the content on the page. The browser makes a separate HTTP request for every file on your page. The more files on the page, the more HTTP requests, and consequently the longer your site takes to load.

Optimize images. Large file size of images is one of the most common impediments with page load speed. Make sure you minimize the file size without reducing image quality too much. You want small image files but you also want to avoid an amateurish-looking website.

Streamline your HTML code. Bloated HTML increases the volume of data that is transferred to users. It can also impact JavaScript performance when you're manipulating the DOM.

Minify JavaScript and CSS. Minification is a process that strips out all unnecessary characters, comments, and spaces in the code, thereby streamlining the code.

In the case that you have many images on the page, **use lazy loading of the images.** Lazy loading delays the display of images, where the images will not load (ideally fading in rather than just suddenly appearing) until the user scrolls down to their location on the page.

Minimize the number of plugins used, and for the ones installed, switch off the plugins that are not in use.

For more optimization information and for a list of Google's speed rules, check out the [Google PageSpeed Tools resource center](#).

Analyzing Site Speed

Although the general recommendations listed above are a great place to start enhancing site speed, you'll benefit by uncovering the specific page load impediments slowing down your own site so that you can take corrective actions customized for your own situation.

To that end, there are a number of tools that you can use to analyze the site speed of your own website and to retrieve corresponding optimization recommendations for fast-loading pages, including:

[WP Engine WordPress Speed Test](#)


[Pingdom Website Speed Test](#)

[Google PageSpeed Insights](#)

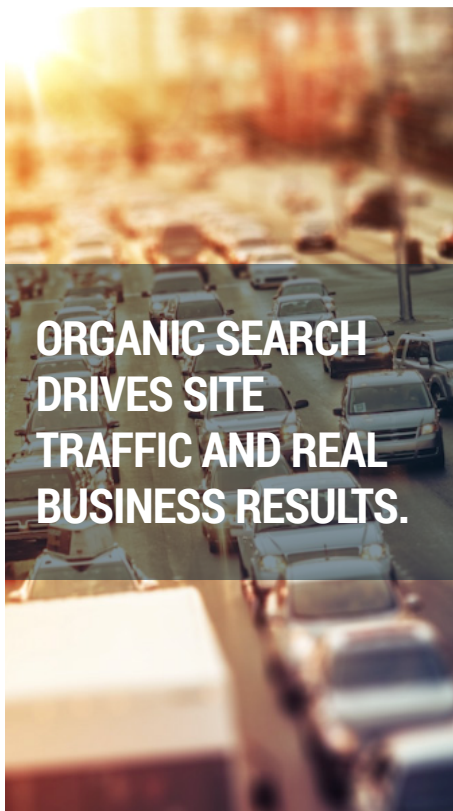
[Google Mobile Website Speed Testing Tool](#)

Chapter 4

THE ROI OF INVESTING IN SEO AND UX



| 2014 | | 2015 | |
|------------|--------|--------------|--------|
| value | % | value | % |
| 590,787.00 | 39.33 | 622,400.00 | 38.48 |
| 574,987.00 | 34.95 | 573,258.00 | 35.44 |
| 386,457.00 | 25.73 | 421,897.00 | 26.08 |
| 502,231.00 | 100.00 | 1,617,555.00 | 100.00 |



Is the tail wagging the dog?

Countless companies talk about wanting to achieve marketing ROI, but when it comes to SEO and UX, too often brands look at the wrong metrics or fail to take a holistic view.

SEO has certainly proven to be a powerful marketing driver for many companies, and UX has recently started gaining the broad-based business respect it has long deserved. To maximize the value of SEO and UX for your business, though, it's time to take a fresh look at your ROI calculations.

The ROI of SEO

Kissmetrics, an analytics software company, took an unconventional route to building a software business at the time, and that was largely through its blog. The blog featured a mountain of posts, infographics, and guides. By 2013, the number of monthly blog visitors increased from zero to more than 350,000, mainly from organic search.

That year, the blog wound up accounting for approximately 82 percent of the company's site traffic and over 70 percent of leads. The more successful the blog was at SEO, the more successful it further became. By 2015, Kissmetrics wound up increasing its blog traffic to more than 793,000.

A real estate agency launched a new microsite that relied exclusively on SEO to drive traffic. The site was optimized for hyper-local neighborhood topics. The new site wound up with 3X the organic traffic of the main agency website and doubled the leads of the agency within five months. That's right, the real estate agency **DOUBLED** its leads **WITHIN FIVE MONTHS**, largely through SEO.

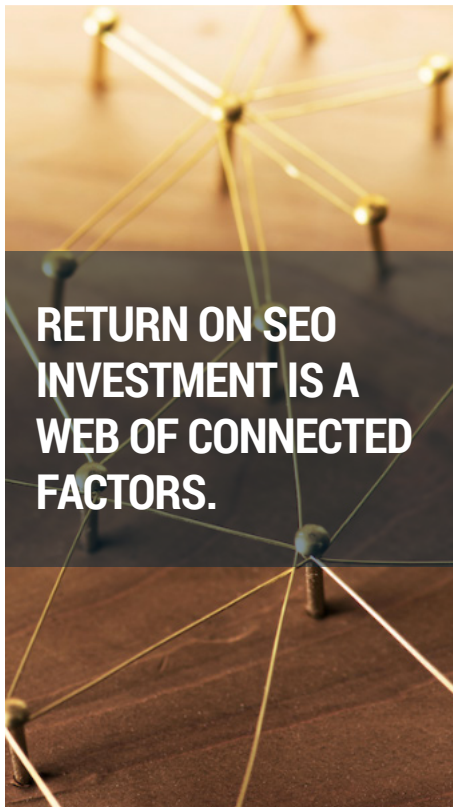
If you're looking for a business case to invest in SEO, you'd be hard-pressed to find better examples. Clearly, organic search can drive not only site traffic, but real business results.

When talking ROI, though, it's important to look at the big picture. A 20-person company was crushing it with its organic search traffic. It experienced increases across the board for a range of keywords. It achieved many page one rankings. New blog posts were beating the traffic numbers of old posts by 2X, 3X, and even 10X. Overall monthly organic search traffic had more than doubled year-over-year.

Even so, the president of the company kept talking about its "poor SEO performance." Everyone was confused. When pressed, she revealed that what she was specifically referring to was the ranking of one keyword phrase that she had the habit of checking (which, by the way, was still on Google Page One).

Huh?!?

To measure the ROI of SEO, it's important to look at the entire ecosystem of rankings, branding, traffic, and conversion results. It's crucial to factor in the entire



RETURN ON SEO INVESTMENT IS A WEB OF CONNECTED FACTORS.

funnel. Broad, generic keywords are great for attracting top-of-the-funnel visibility, while middle-of-funnel SEO is good for capturing prospects while in the purchase journey or nurturing those you are already in touch with, and bottom-of-funnel optimization helps you increase your conversions.

The more that you can strengthen each layer of the funnel, the stronger your overall ROI will be.

With this in mind, set up tracking and reporting that looks at the broader range of topics and keywords. Analyze not only rankings data, but traffic and leads (or sales when relevant). Clarify mini-conversions along the journey (e.g., a video view, a 5-page site visit, or an initial whitepaper download), as the reality is that many of your site visitors may not be ready for your ultimate conversion event when they initially land on your site.

When calculating your return on SEO investment, the ultimate determination is going to be:

$$\text{ROI} = \text{LTV} - \text{CAC}$$

LTV stands for Lifetime Value, and CAC stands for Customer Acquisition Cost. It's one thing to understand how much an initial purchase is worth, but if your customers tend to purchase from you for two or three years, then your ROI calculation should factor in the longer-term value to your business based on the average purchase price and lifetime expectancy. After all, you are not applying additional marketing costs to the incremental revenue, or if you are, it's negligible compared to the initial acquisition investment.

SEO is no longer just about choosing keywords and implementing certain technical fixes to your site. Think more holistically. Remember to include content strategy, content development, content amplification, partnerships, outreach, and PR in your measurements. Although historically these have been on separate line items, your SEO efforts today should be 100 percent integrated with your PR, for example. All of this leads to more mentions, more shares, and more links, helping your organic rankings, traffic, and conversions.

Be sure to customize your ROI metrics based on the nature of your business and what you need your site visitors to do while on your website. It's not always about selling another widget.

For example, when I worked with one of the largest newspapers in North America, SEO was all about page views, page views, page views. Why? Because our client's business model was based on advertising revenue, and increased page views meant more advertising dollars and greater leverage when negotiating future advertising deals. In that case, it was equally as important to measure the page views for the organic traffic coming to the site compared to other channels, as the actual traffic numbers themselves. For this publication, generating more page views was in and of itself a major priority, and so measuring the success of SEO without the inclusion of page view metrics made no sense in this particular case.



**SMALL UX CHANGES
CAN LEAD TO BIG
RESULTS.**

The ROI of UX

Even as early as 1966, IBM's CEO at the time, T.J. Watson, Jr., wrote, "Good design is good business." He went on to write, "Since design excellence concerns all areas of the business, you should make certain that all your people are aware of its importance."

There are many real-life business examples that back up Watson's claims. According to [The Business Value of User Experience](#) by UX architect Jim Ross, the number of unique visitors to the Walmart website increased by 200 percent after the company revamped its ecommerce experience; the retailer American Eagle Outfitters increased sales in the month after a website redesign by 53.6 percent; Bank of America undertook a user-centered redesign of its account registration process, and online-banking traffic consequently increased 45 percent; Microsoft changed the color of links in its Bing search engine to a bolder blue, and estimated \$80 million in additional advertising revenue to come as a result.

Even when looking at UX from a stock performance perspective, having a UX focus appears to translate into better valuations. An analysis by the Design Management Institute [concluded](#) that design-driven businesses have outperformed the S&P by 228 percent over a recent 10-year period.

In addition, two Product Design Directors at Facebook, Geoff Teehan and Jon Lax, had developed what they called the "UX Fund" by identifying target companies such as Apple, Nike, and Netflix that valued design, innovation, and positive customer experience and then investing \$50,000 in such companies. After a year, the fund grew by 39.3 percent, beating all of the major stock indices, including a near 4X beatdown of the S&P 500. After ten years, the UX Fund returned 450.1 percent on the initial investment, whereas the NASDAQ returned merely 93.2 percent. (UX rules!)

Clearly, there's a major financial payoff to more intuitive websites, beautiful branding, and better user experiences. It does indeed appear that good design is good business.

Improving your UX goes well beyond design changes. It also involves a greater degree of empathy in understanding your audience's motivations, objectives, and challenges. Sephora, the cosmetics and beauty retailer, for example, observed that millennials shopping on its site would first go to YouTube for videos about the products. The brand then created its own library of videos to align with this user behavior.

In determining the business value of UX, it's helpful to set up measurable A/B tests on your website. This will enable you to see first-hand what drives certain onsite user behavior. A/B testing is an effective means of doing this, as the testing is done concurrently. This is much better than sequential testing, which can be influenced by countless outside factors such as seasonality, holidays, weather, etc.

Remember that when measuring the value of UX, it's not only conversions that you want to consider. For a checkout process, drop-off is a metric that should be examined for every step in the process. For blog design, the success metrics may lean more towards social sharing, mailing list opt-ins, or funneling site visitors

from the blog to product/service pages. Or your business may benefit from UX improvements that reduce help desk or technical support calls. As with SEO, remember to view your UX benefits holistically.

For UX ROI calculations, you can rely on the same equation as previously provided:

$$\text{ROI} = \text{LTV} - \text{CAC}$$

Taking it a step further, you can also play around with this collection of [UX ROI calculators](#) by Human Factors International.

The Missing Link

In the majority of literature I've found online about the ROI of SEO and/or UX, there's no mention of conversion optimization. Think about that...

If you were looking to get fit and lose weight, imagine if what you read covered only the exercises you should do. Imagine reading about the best workouts for ripped abs and toned legs. Or the best training for different body types. That's all helpful. But if you're skipping the vegetables every day, yet eating donuts for breakfast and cake for dessert, guess what. You'll miss your fitness goals. Massively.

The way to ensure that your SEO traffic and UX are producing ever-increasing ROI is conversion optimization of your website. This means not only A/B testing as mentioned above, but also analysis of heat maps, clicks, scroll maps, and user sessions.

Without it, the ROI conversation is really half empty. If the same traffic and a similar overall experience can generate 50 percent more conversions through refinement of the funnel, messaging, offers, layout, and calls-to-action, then leaving it out of the conversation is equivalent to dedicating yourself to getting fit but eating donuts every day.

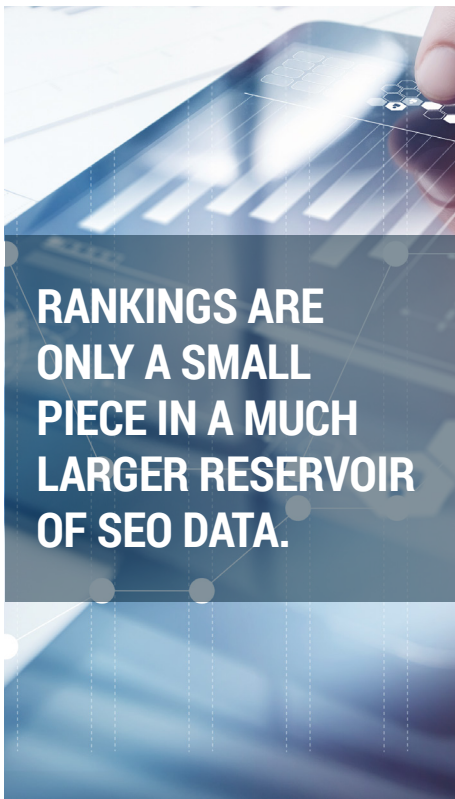
Remember, a search ranking by itself is not a return on investment. A clean, sleek, user-friendly interface by itself is not a return on investment.

Translating those into leads, orders, customers, registrations, trials, downloads, and revenue is a better measure of true ROI for your brand. It's therefore critical for you to continually test and optimize your website for greater conversion rates, and this in turn can drastically improve your SEO and UX ROI. Imagine going from eating donuts to eating oatmeal, berries, and some lean protein while maintaining the same exact fitness routine – magically you lose weight, gain strength, and improve overall health. Sounds like better ROI, right?

Chapter 5

HOW TO REPORT ON SEO AND UX TO THE C-SUITE





Digital marketers and UX pros love data and metrics. Many are true data junkies. Websites and performance marketing can be measured, refined, and improved on an ongoing basis. What's not to love?

The C-Suite cares about data and metrics, too. With numbers, they can understand the heartbeat of the company and can communicate with investors in a substantive way.

So, everyone loves data and metrics. Should be party time, right? Then why is it that so many marketers completely miss the mark when it comes to reporting to the C-Suite?

Impressions and Button Colors

Log into [Google Search Console](#), and you'll find impressions data for a range of organic search keywords. One keyword may have 10,000 monthly impressions, while another has only 500 impressions.

On the conversion optimization side of things, you may test a green button compared with a blue one. Or a red one compared with an orange one.

When you're getting ready to make your monthly or quarterly report for the C-Suite, just remember to toss all of that into the trash can before you enter the room. That is, if you ever want to be invited back.

The C-Suite doesn't care about your impression numbers. Oh, they certainly don't care about the color of your CTA button either. Sure, you can make great use of such data among fellow marketers and UX designers. You can conduct all sorts of cool hacks that prove out more data points, and yes, absolutely, it's all helpful in improving your results.

Then what the heck is wrong with the C-Suite? Why don't they get it? Or...maybe, they do get it. But here's the thing. Their "it" is very different from your "it."

SEO Specialists

If you are an SEO specialist, you are used to reporting on organic search rankings. But even you realize that rankings are only a small piece in a much larger reservoir of SEO data. After all, you may rank near the top of Google's search results for a relevant term, but if that term has only a few searches each month, it's as if you have a billboard in the forest. No one will see it, and therefore there's very little business value in it.

On the other hand, you may have a lower rank on another keyword phrase, yet drive much more traffic from it due to high search volumes.

Adding traffic numbers to rankings is helpful, but it's still not the complete picture. You may also be reporting on domain authority, click-through rate, keyword competitiveness, shares, video views, external links, mentions, etc. All of these metrics are valuable to the day-to-day SEO practitioner in order to optimize further and drive increasingly better results.

If this is where your reporting stops, though, it's not for the C-Suite.



UX Experts

If you are a UX designer, you are most likely used to reporting on engagement metrics, A/B tests, surveys, etc. As with SEO, there's a world of data to be gleaned from high-level engagement metrics such as page views, bounce rates, time-on-site, time-on-task, use of onsite search, use of navigation, error rates, back button usage, exit rates, and task completion percentages. At a more granular level, you may examine heat maps, click maps, scroll maps, and every step in the conversion process (e.g., which clicks or form fields cause excessive abandonment during the process).

When you combine audience personas with journey maps, you can layer in your analytics to see where the path is a smooth flow aligned with the customer's objectives and where they start to zig and zag due to confusion. Or, where they simply lose interest and drop off.

You can also now use emotion recognition technology as offered by [Affectiva](#), [iMotions](#), and others to gauge your audience's emotional reactions to your website. Eye tracking, facial expression analysis, and galvanic skin response all help you to measure the success of the user experience from the physical reaction of users separately from their onsite behavior. The understanding of emotions is far beyond what your site analytics can reveal, and so adds a new dimension to your examination of the customer journey and experience.

These are all highly useful data points to the UX designer and to those responsible for upgrading designs, messaging, and offers. However, if you are talking to your CEO about reducing time-on-task for an activity from 15 seconds to 10 seconds, she is going to kick you out of the room...

The C-Suite

The mountain of SEO and UX metrics you collect and analyze is useful and helps you to improve website performance. However, what the members of your C-Suite care about may be very, very different. If you want all of your SEO and UX work to be given the credit it deserves, learn to talk to executives in their language.

What your C-Suite cares about is growth:

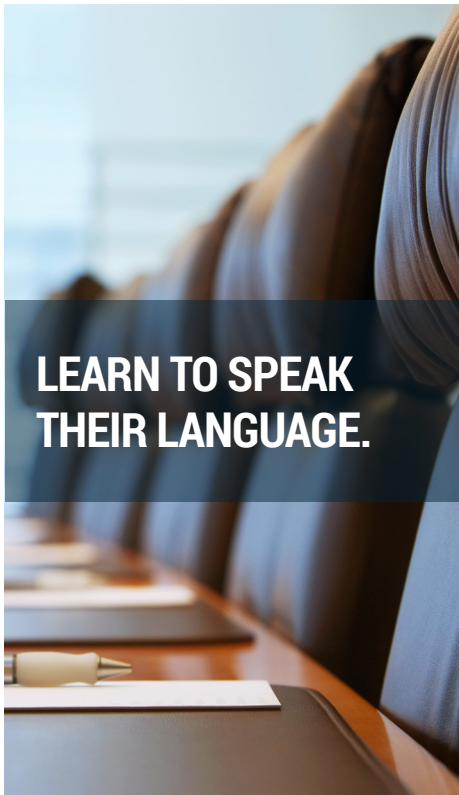
What impacts growth, and how?

What are the impediments to growth?

What are the means to more efficient growth?

What are you doing to drive greater growth?

This means instead of talking about impressions, rankings, time-on-task, or navigational flow, talk about revenue. Talk about conversions. Talk about profit. Talk about customer acquisition. Talk about leads. Talk about transactions and average order size. Talk about customer lifetime value vs. customer acquisition costs, or in other words, talk about ROI.



LEARN TO SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE.

Your C-Suite wants to understand the strategy to get from here to there. They do not need all the gory details of your HTACCESS file or of a scroll map analysis of your About Us page.

If you really want to engage your C-Suite and get them fired up, learn to speak to them in the following terms:

The Language of Levers – Your executives want to know what the company can do to achieve greater growth more efficiently – with less effort or investment. What are the strategies you can recommend that would produce 2X, 3X, or 10X results?

The Language of Momentum – It's always easier to grow when riding the waves of market change rather than fighting against any new market directions. What are the coming trends on which the brand should capitalize for an easier path to growth?

The Language of New Markets – Bain & Company conducted a five-year study of growth-driving moves by 1,850 companies to determine how businesses achieve sustainable, profitable growth. The research revealed that companies realize their most ongoing, profitable growth is when they push out the boundaries of their core business into an adjacent space. How can your data reveal new, related market opportunities that would be a natural extension from your core business today?

The Language of Segmentation – How can you slice and dice the market further in order to dominate specific audience segments? This might be related to the types of keywords on which they search. Or, this might be geographic or demographic in nature. Or, it may even be the difference in targeting a different department or title/role if B2B. Ownership of a segment is a very profitable proposition, and one that executives understand give the brand a competitive edge.

The Language of Competition – Whenever you educate your execution team on deeper insights into competitors' strategies, tactics, plans, and results, their ears perk up. They are always eager to understand the "Moneyball" of the market, where they can efficiently gain a competitive edge where a competitor is weak, using the wrong metrics, or simply not paying attention.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **TOM SHAPIRO**

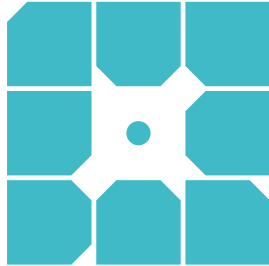
Tom Shapiro is CEO of [Stratabeat](#), a branding, design, and marketing agency for middle market companies. Shapiro's thoughts have been published widely, including CMO.com, CNN.com, Forbes, MarketingProfs, and National Center for the Middle Market.





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