# The Future of SEO

Don't Get Left Behind

Google is working very hard at becoming human. At Gravitate, we've always promoted writing great content aimed at humans and not robots as the key to SEO longevity. However, there are a few key tactics when it comes to creating and promoting content that Google wants to see more of.

Developing strategies for these factors is the smartest thing you can do to prepare for the future of SEO:

1. Using Google Authorship & AuthorRank
2. Not treating Google+ like the redheaded step-child of social media
3. Taking advantage of YouTube videos
4. Adding schema markup to your website
5. Understanding how Google uses natural language processing (NLP)

Authorship & AuthorRank

Authorship is a feature that allows content producers to be recognized and earn more visibility online. Typically, the better an author is, the more people read the author's posts and add them to their Circles. This signals Google that the author's content deserves favorable rankings. This is known as AuthorRank.
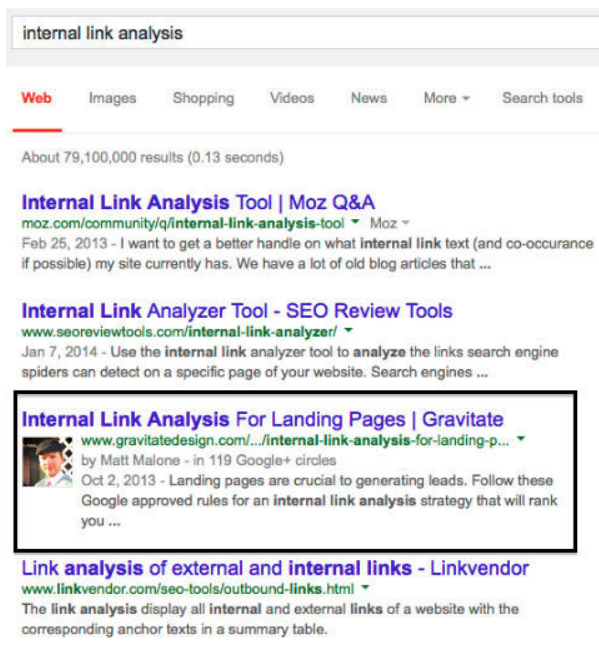
It also adds a picture and rich snippet links on the search results page. Google is experimenting with exactly how much weight this will provide a company's rankings, but the additional real estate has proven to attract higher click-through rates.

Setting up authorship and increasing AuthorRank is one of the most important things companies can do immediately to improve authority, rankings, and organic visits.

For example, look at the screen capture of a depersonalized search for "Internal Link Analysis." The result with the picture clearly captures your attention first.

A/B tests your profile picture, title tag, and meta descriptions to be sure you're capturing the highest click-through rate possible. Keep in mind Google often ignores your meta descriptions and pulls its own content snippets from your page now.

Additionally, showcasing multiple authors as subject matter experts (SMEs) is a powerful tool to communicate the combined expertise of a particular company.

Follow these instructions on setting up your Google Authorship.

Google+ Posts

Say what you will about Google+, but the fact is, Google crawls and indexes each update your post! Notice the image below. I have two separate results indexed from one Google+ update.

If you want online dominance, you need to participate in all channels that provide additional search engine real estate—and this is a big one. You can *really* take advantage of this by sharing YouTube videos on your Google+ updates.

YouTube Videos

YouTube has and will continue to receive better rankings than will standard written content or blog posts. Videos are easy to optimize for keywords, and if you don't have time to write a transcription, YouTube will create one automatically. However, I suggest proofreading and editing before publishing because it will likely be a little garbled.

Add your company URL in front of the actual video description. Because the preview only shows the top two lines of the description, you'll want your website link to be clearly visible.

This can be a great strategy for handling negative SEO, too. If there are negative reviews or articles about your company, you can use videos and blog posts to quickly outrank and bury the haters on page two or three.

You can find more information on optimizing YouTube video and channels here and here.

Schema Microdata

"In psychology, schema is an organized pattern of thought or behavior by organizing information and the relationship among them into categories. This same concept is applied to websites. Organizing the common bits of information (business or product name, product image, product ratings, etc.) on websites helps search engines crawlers and potentially other crawlers, understand your website. Search engines can use this information to more accurately categorize your website and choose which information is displayed on the search engine result page (SERP).

Why is this important? Because we are not only competing for positions on SERPs but also competing for search engine real estate, which is much more than the 10 blue links with a meta description we saw just a few years ago. Schema markup allows you to include more information on the SERPs and can help increase click-through rate," says search specialist Joe Vernon.

Adding structure data to your website can help improve the information that appears in the search results. Like Authorship, this provides more search engine real estate and helps boost click-through rates.
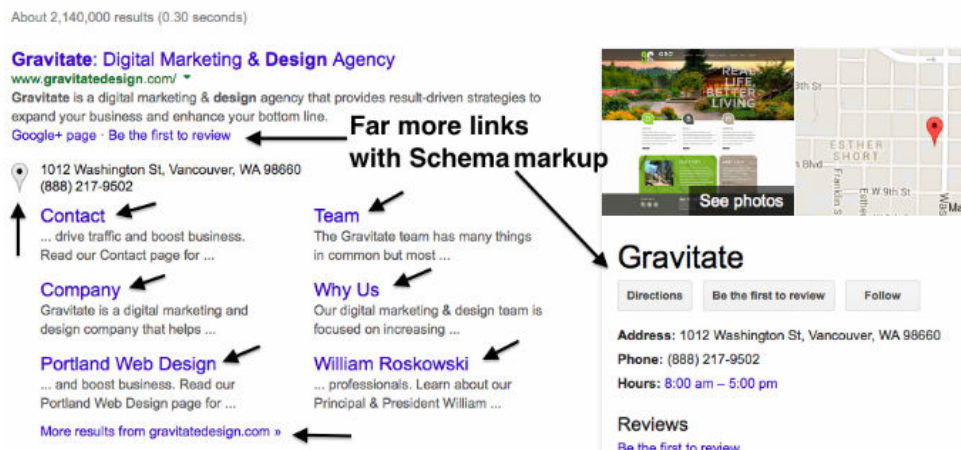
You can verify whether your schema is set up correctly within <u>Google Webmaster Tools</u> under Search Appearance > Structured Data (see image).
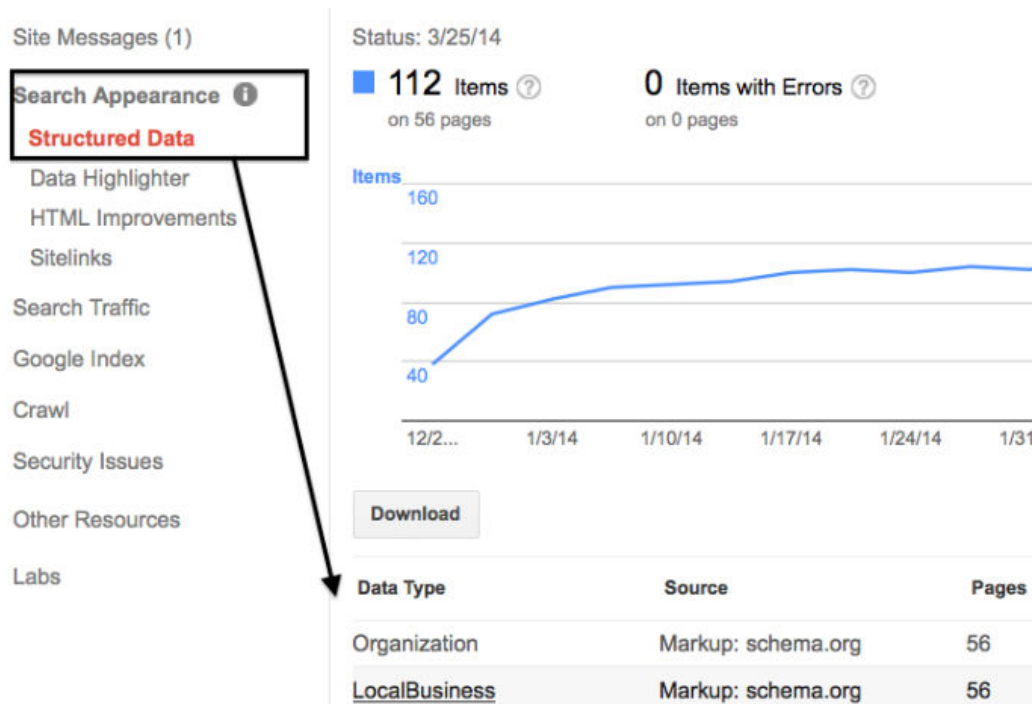
For more information on the different types of microdata available and how to set them up visit Google's official resource on <u>structured data</u>.

Natural Language

Google wants to provide the best answers to our questions and understands we all have unique communication styles. Using conversational writing styles will help Google determine the overall sentiment and emotion of your content. Algorithms are now determining the positive/negative emotion of your content to influence rankings.

This is all part of their [Google] mission to provide the most accurate search results for what you likely mean, even if you didn't use the most accurate words.

To help this, Google is getting to know you personally using what it calls <u>The Knowledge Graph</u>.

Using known information based on your location, Gmail contacts, YouTube preferences, language/slang used in previous e-mails, social media connections, and more, Google can now provide recommendations and search results tailored to you, the individual.

The complexity of Google's Knowledge Graph is making this possible already, and it will only continue to improve over time.

In some cases, Google is providing results before you even perform a search. For example, with Google Now enabled on my phone, I can step outside at noon, and Google will send me a push alert with nearby, top-rated restaurants I can eat lunch at—including a walking map and the estimated time to get there.

Crazy cool, yes.

A little creepy, definitely.

You can learn more on this by reading the official Google Research Publications on NLP: http://research.google.com/pubs/NaturalLanguageProcessing.html