

# 5 B2B SEO Myths That Are Hurting Your Bottom Line

Separating fact from fiction in search engine optimization

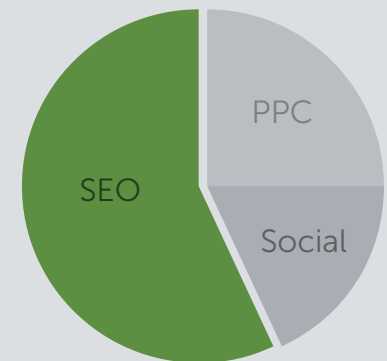


# Search engine optimization: A marketing imperative

As the Internet has matured, search engines have emerged as the primary tool for buyers seeking information about products and services. There are multiple ways your prospects will gather information, and it's important to ensure an optimal and integrated presence across all touch points. But the people who search for information about a word or phrase that's relevant to your business represent a particularly targeted and motivated audience—and search engine optimization (SEO) is a powerful way to connect with them.

Over the past 15 years, an entire industry has grown up around trying to improve search rankings (often called "organic search rankings," to distinguish them from paid search placements). Thousands of web pages provide advice on SEO and thousands of companies offer professional services in this area.

## Impact of Lead Generation Channels



# 57%

SEO Impact

**18%** Social Media Marketing

**20%** Pay-per-click (PPC)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lead Generation Channels

# A wealth of misinformation

As the SEO industry has expanded, a great deal of misinformation has spread. Some of this misinformation comes from shady practitioners who sell questionable services. Some of it is just confusion about search engine ranking factors. And some of it comes from the fact that search engines update their algorithms frequently, so tactics that worked yesterday might not work today. So, what information should you believe?

For B2B marketers, it can be difficult to separate fact from fiction—but it's critical to the success of your SEO efforts. You're likely hearing about the need to optimize your site from many different parties, including your management team, IT team and sales team. Internal stakeholders may have a few ideas about what you should do. If you talk to outside firms that provide SEO services, you'll find a wide variety of perspectives (and prices). Ultimately, you need to make decisions that deliver results and maximize your budget.

**When it comes to SEO...**  
it can be difficult to separate  
fact from fiction.



## Setting the record straight

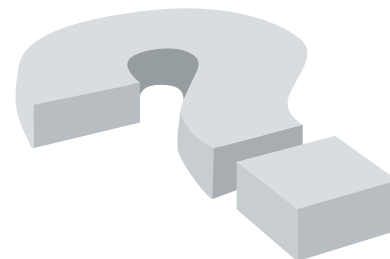
The purpose of this e-book is to dispel five of the most persistent and damaging SEO myths:

- 1 "I already know which keywords we should target."
- 2 "I just need better rankings."
- 3 "I just need to optimize my site, then I'm done."
- 4 "I can use shortcuts and tricks to get quick SEO results."
- 5 "I don't need to worry about developing valuable content."

These are the type of misconceptions that lead marketers to make decisions that do more harm than good, in the long run.

For most B2B marketers, search traffic represents a huge opportunity to connect with a highly targeted, highly motivated set of prospects. Setting the record straight about SEO is critical to making this connection a reality, and to building and executing an effective long-term SEO plan that's fully integrated into your overall marketing strategy.

"Search traffic represents a **huge opportunity** to connect with a highly targeted, highly motivated set of prospects."



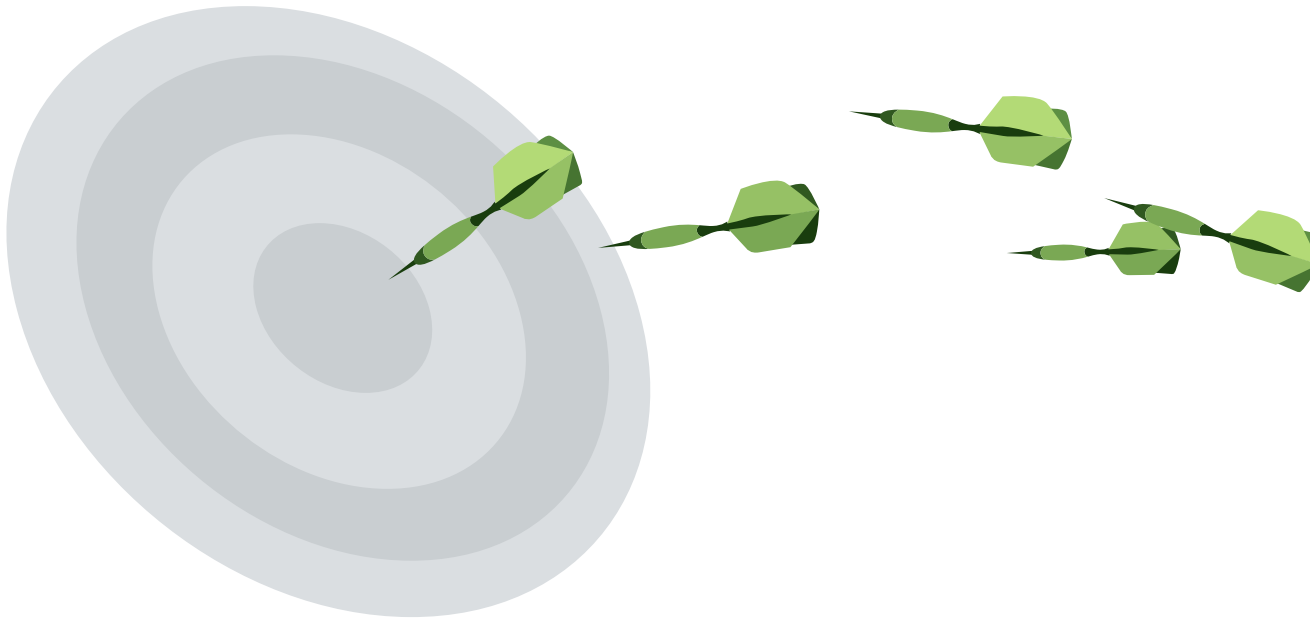
## MYTH

# 1 "I already know which keywords we should target."

You and your colleagues know your industry well. You understand the language your industry speaks. But that doesn't mean you know which keywords you should target on search engines.

Most companies have developed a vernacular of their own, as well as a set of assumptions about how their customers will be searching. These ideas are usually not consistent with the way prospects search for their services.

If you ask your internal team to come up with a set of keywords to target, you'll likely get a wide range of responses. Some team members might think it's a good idea to target broad phrases, while others may have a set of highly narrow keywords in mind.



# 75%

of searchers never get past the first page of results.<sup>2</sup>

# 60%

of all organic clicks go to the top three organic search results.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> HubSpot

# Reality: You need to perform comprehensive keyword\* research.

Comprehensive keyword research is a critical first step in an effective SEO program. This research involves gathering input from multiple sources (including your internal stakeholders) and building a holistic keyword strategy.

In order to target the best and most effective keywords, you need to balance:

1. **Volume**—Select words that are searched often enough that they can deliver a decent-sized audience in the search results.
2. **Relevance**—Ranking for words that aren't highly relevant to your business, or that aren't likely to attract the right audience, will be a waste to time and effort.

An SEO program that doesn't target the right keywords will not deliver meaningful results.

Targeting the **right keywords** is critical to a successful SEO program.



\* The term "keyword" is used in the search industry to refer to both single words and phrases.

# Making smart keyword decisions

Let's say you're a company that makes OEM electric motors of a very specific sort, but you decide you'd like to be listed under "motors" when people search.

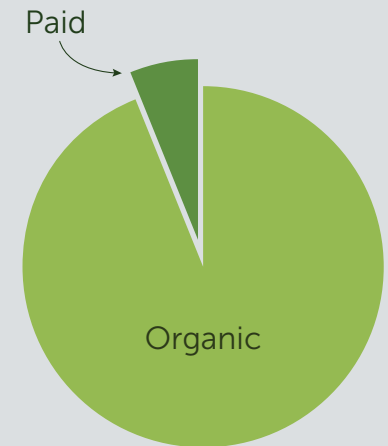
Keyword	Monthly Search Volume
eBay motor	17,4707
Department of Motor Vehicle	98,369
General Motor	93,350
Ford Motor Company	89,349
boat motor	84,767
motor home	65,944
California Department of Motor Vehicle	50,105
motor bike	48,080
motor	44,795
Nissan motor	40,962
motor trend	34,660
Ford motor credit	28,802
motor scooter	26,321

People searching for "motors" are not looking for OEM electric motors. Targeting these terms would be a waste of resources. It would be far better to target something specific, like "brushless DC motors":

Keyword	Monthly Search Volume
brushless DC motor torque	338
brushless DC frameless manufacturer	162
motor brushless DC motor controller	83
brushless DC motor	43
brushless DC design motor	42
brushless DC motor control	37
brushless DC motor vibration	33
brushless DC field motor rotor	31
brushless DC generator motor	30
brushless DC motor theory	25

The example above demonstrates a situation in which there are keywords that have significant volume but aren't relevant enough to be targeted in an SEO program. You'll also find some keywords have little volume but are so perfectly connected to your business, that they're worth targeting. The key is to build a strategy that aligns with the dynamics of your business.

Are you in the 94%?



**94%**  
Organic Listings

**6%** Paid Listings<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Search Engine Watch

# Keyword and content alignment

Keyword alignment is another important part of keyword strategy. You need to determine which keywords align with which pages on your site in order to ensure visitors are driven to the most relevant content. When sites have poorly aligned keyword strategies, they often wind up with multiple pages competing against each other. The result is that visitors land on pages that aren't well suited to their search, and are less likely to engage with the content and convert.

You're likely to find that you don't have existing content to match some of your keywords. This is where your keyword strategy can provide valuable direction for creating and evolving new content. Keyword alignment should be a major driver of your site's content and architecture.



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**Bottom line:** Thorough keyword research is critical to a successful SEO program.

“Keyword strategy can provide **valuable direction** as to how you grow and evolve your content.”



# MYTH 2 “I just need better rankings.”

A key goal of any SEO program is to have your site rank high on search engine results pages (SERPs) for your targeted keywords.

Of course, it's also thrilling and makes your CEO happy. (Just as seeing your competitors rank high in searches is likely to make him unhappy.)

When you track the progress of your SEO initiative, ranking well should definitely be one of your key performance indicators. It's great to have strong placement on SERPs, but what does that really mean for your business?



## **SERP** [noun]: **Search engine results page**

A list of web pages returned by a search engine in response to a keyword query.

# Reality: It's also about managing your presence in search engines, and driving and converting traffic.

An SEO program that doesn't take traffic and conversion into account is fundamentally flawed. After all, the whole point of your efforts is to drive targeted traffic to your site. You need to be measuring how many visitors come to your site from search engines and whether or not they take conversion actions.

There are several tactical considerations to effectively measure search traffic:

## Compelling search listings

There's little value in getting your listings to rank high on a search engine if your prospects aren't clicking on them. Your listings need to be compelling. A good SEO program will involve managing all of the elements that contribute to a search listing.

**Title** – Usually taken from the title of a web page. Extremely important in search rankings.

### **DCS Migration - MAVERICK Technologies**

[www.mavtechglobal.com/services/strategic-manufacturing.../dcs-migrati...](http://www.mavtechglobal.com/services/strategic-manufacturing.../dcs-migrati...)

Maverick offers expert **DCS** consulting and **migration** services, helping you leverage the right **DCS** system for your needs with your **DCS** Next automation ...

Page URL

**Snippet description** – Typically taken from a page's META description or content, depending on the keyword searched.

**Note** – Words in the title, description and URL show up in **bold** if they match words used in the search query. In this case, the query was "DCS Migration."

"There's **little value** in getting your listings to rank high on a search engine if your prospects aren't clicking on them."

# Conversion optimization is an important part of SEO

Many marketers have given little thought to optimizing their sites for conversion. An effective SEO program needs to incorporate conversion optimization. What's the point of driving visitors who just show up to your site and leave?

For some B2B marketers, conversion is defined as a purchase. For many, it involves driving leads. Whatever definition works for you, it's critical that you identify and track site conversion. The goal is to drive business, not just traffic.

## Every page is an entry page

If your SEO program works well, many of your site's pages will show up in search rankings for your targeted terms. Searchers will then click on these listings and enter your site through that page.

With this in mind, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do all of the pages you're optimizing work well as entry pages?
- Can visitors who enter your site on any given page easily orient themselves?
- Can they quickly tell what type of site this is?
- Can they determine where they are in the site architecture?
- Is there a readily available conversion path?

It's important that you ask these questions and plan the journey a search engine visitor will take into and through your site.

The goal of an SEO initiative is **NOT** just to drive traffic, but also to **drive business.**

## Tracking keyword success

Not all search traffic is the same. While you're tracking how many visitors came to your site through search engines, you should also look closely at which keywords they used to get there.

For many sites, most of the search traffic comes from branded terms; that is, terms that include a company's brand name or one of its products. Of course, it's important to make sure you're getting traffic for these terms—and for most sites, this isn't a big challenge. (Some companies do have to compete with distributors, affiliates, etc., to rank for these terms.) The main goal of an SEO program is to drive traffic from non-branded keywords (i.e., phrases that don't use a brand word).

Brand searchers are trying to find your company on the web. Non-branded searchers are not looking for your company. They are searching for a type of product or service, or they are trying to solve a problem for which you have the solution. You need to them to find you when they search.

Note: While Google has recently made it more difficult to identify the keywords that drive traffic to your site, this information is still usually available for at least half of your site visits.

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 **Bottom line:** If your SEO program is focused only on rankings, you will not be delivering real business results.



When addressing business challenges, 81% of business buyers start their search for answers and solutions with a search engine.<sup>4</sup>

4 DemandGen Report, 2012

MYTH  
**3** “I just need to optimize my site,  
then I’m done.”

You’ve made the decision to optimize your site. You’ve done comprehensive keyword research, strategically implemented keywords into your pages and resolved key technical issues.

So, what happens next? Your optimization team rides off into the sunset and your site sees loads of targeted search traffic, resulting in a steady stream of leads and sales, right?

Unfortunately it’s not that simple. You’re not finished.

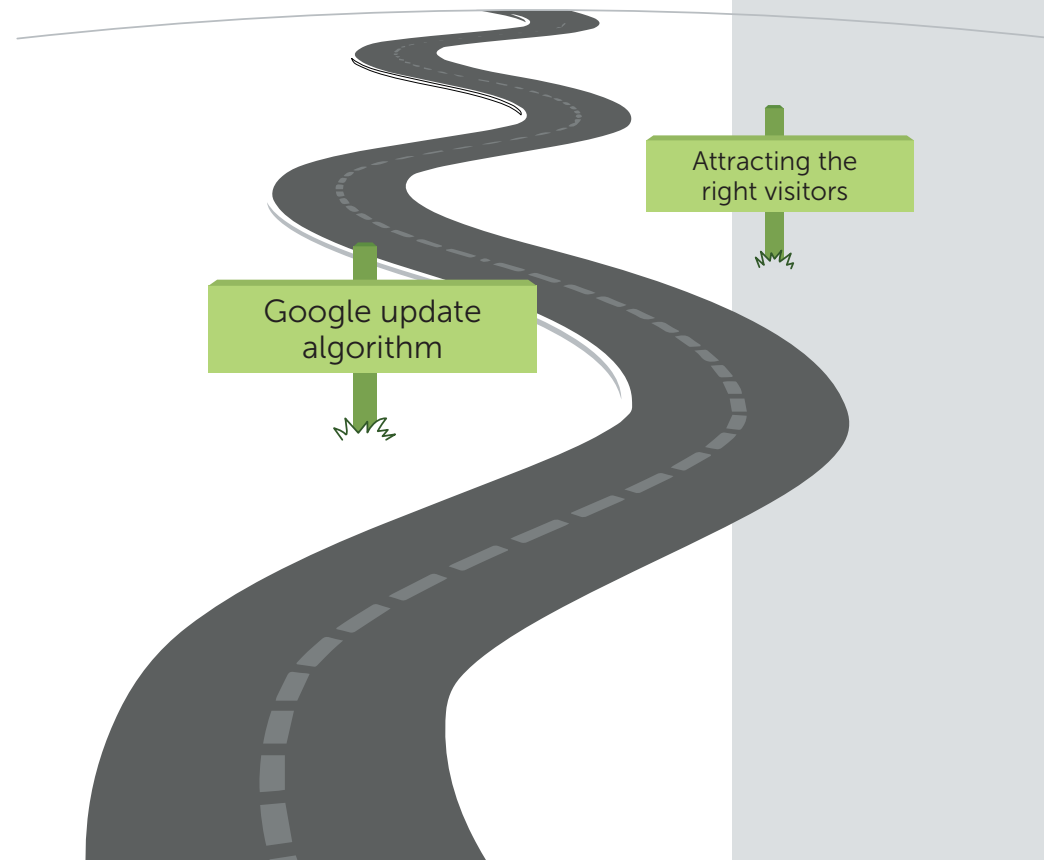


## Reality: SEO is an ongoing endeavor.

It's important to remember that SEO success requires ongoing management, optimization and content development. Many of the tactics you decide to implement in your initial program will take time; many will need course corrections. You will need to constantly track your success and continue to optimize. You should think of your SEO program—and your entire web presence—as a living entity, requiring constant monitoring and updating. Some of the important elements of ongoing management include:

- Tracking and adjustment
- Leveraging SEO across all channels
- Adjusting to search engine changes

“Many of the tactics you decide to implement in your initial program will **take time**; many will need **course corrections**.”



# Ongoing SEO management

## Tracking and adjustment

Many of the changes you make will result in immediate impact; some will take more time. Most will require adjustments. You need to track your search engine presence holistically, including:

- Inbound links
- Rankings
- Total search traffic
- Conversions
- Non-branded search traffic
- Branded search traffic

Your tracking will reveal the need for additional optimizations in some areas. These additional tactics may involve deeper integration of keywords into content, or the creation of new content.

## Leveraging SEO across all channels


Most B2B marketing programs involve multiple channels, including public relations, trade shows and social media. In order for your SEO program to succeed, you need to leverage your keyword strategy and SEO tactical plan across all of these channels.

Are you distributing a regular flow of press releases? Are they optimized for search engines? Are you leveraging your trade show and association listings to obtain quality links to your site? For your SEO program to work effectively, you need to optimize all of your marketing channels on an ongoing basis.



## Adjusting to search engine changes

While the core elements of search success—creating and distributing valuable content—do not change, the search engines do make adjustments in their algorithms. There are more than 200 factors in Google’s ranking algorithm, and Google makes hundreds of algorithm changes every year. It is important to follow these changes and make appropriate adjustments.

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 **Bottom line:** SEO is not a set-it-and-forget-it channel; it’s an ongoing initiative that requires measurement and management.

## Successful B2B marketing programs involve these critical channels:

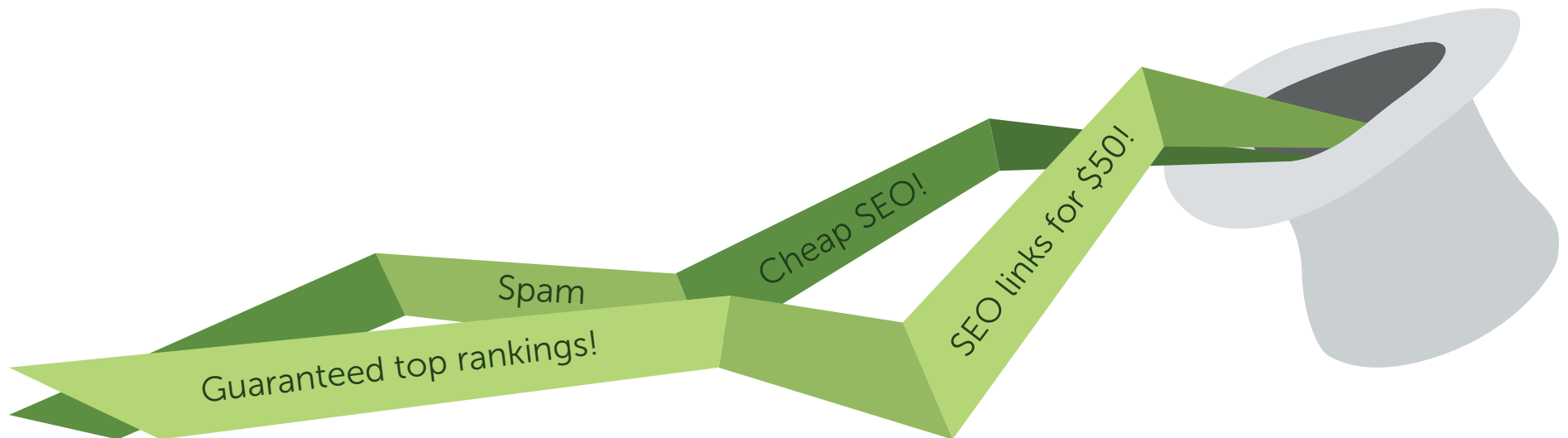
-  Public relations
-  Trade shows
-  Social media

# MYTH 4 “I can use shortcuts and tricks to get quick SEO results.”

If you look for an SEO service provider, you’ll find plenty that promise quick results. Many of these services are very inexpensive (often because they use overseas resources). The offers can be very enticing, especially since they sometimes come with guaranteed results. (Check the fine print!)

These SEO practitioners attempt to fool search engines into thinking certain content is more relevant or valuable than it actually is in order to push web pages to the top of rankings. They use techniques Google has expressly forbidden (called “black hat” tactics).

If you are serious about long-term success, stay away from these approaches.





## Reality: Tricks and gimmicks don't work in the long run.

While some of these illegitimate SEO methods work in the short term, the search engines stay ahead of this curve. While there are some smart black hat practitioners out there, they are not smarter than the major search engines. Black hat tactics do not deliver long-term success, and many sites that use them have incurred search ranking penalties.

Link building, which is an extremely important and challenging part of SEO, is an area where there has been a great deal of black hat activity over the past few years, involving the use of link schemes that violate search engine guidelines. There have been several high-profile incidents in which Google has doled out penalties to sites involved in these schemes. When selecting an SEO company, make sure they don't participate in any link schemes or pursue any paid links (i.e., paying other websites to link to yours).

The promise of easy SEO success may be appealing but remember, companies that have dedicated themselves to creating and optimizing quality content are the ones that have had the most success in search engines over the long haul—not the ones that have tried to cheat the system.

There have been several **high-profile incidents** in which Google has doled out penalties to sites that used questionable link-building practices.



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**Bottom line:** If your goal is long-term success, stay away from illegitimate tactics that promise quick success.

MYTH

# 5 “I don’t need to worry about developing valuable content.”

Deciding to make an investment in SEO without budgeting for resources to create and maintain blogs, thought leadership content, robust social media sites, useful site tools, video, etc., is like deciding to buy a car, but refusing to “waste money” on an engine.



## What’s under your hood?

Companies that have dedicated themselves to creating and optimizing quality content are the ones that have had the most success in search engines.

# Reality: Creating and distributing quality content is critical to a strong search engine presence.

The mission of a search engine is to provide its users with authoritative content that matches their queries. Sites that provide this content are the ones that will succeed.

Your goal should be to build digital assets that move your company to the center of your industry's key conversations. This is how you'll intersect those highly targeted, highly motivated searchers who have problems you can solve.

## Content is king

If your business involves long buying cycles and complex purchase decisions, content assets are critical marketing tools. The good news is that the content marketing investments you make to generate and nurture leads can be leveraged to drive search visibility. There should be many arrows in your content quiver, including:

- Blogs
- White papers
- Case studies
- Articles
- Newsletters
- Tools (ROI calculators, etc.)
- Research reports
- Technical papers
- Video
- Product / services content
- Brochures
- Articles
- Press releases

Each of these assets can play a role in helping to engage and nurture your prospective customers. They can also help your search presence.

Of course, not all content is equal when building links. Assets that help you build links from other credible sites will deliver the most impact in SEO. It's not likely that a blogger will link to one of your brochures. But if you build a tool that helps people in your industry calculate how much their old equipment is costing them, there are many sites that might want to provide that link to their readers. When it comes to content, it's important to think beyond your brand messaging and create real value.

# 55%

of B2B companies reported having acquired a customer through their company blog.<sup>5</sup>

5 HubSpot

# The rise of social media in SEO

Social media is playing an increasingly important role in the distribution of content. And the search engines have taken notice, giving more weight to social signals in rankings. Social media has also become an important part of link building, as the channel has emerged as a primary way that people discover link-worthy content.

## Promoting content and driving dialogue through social media



**87%**  
of B2B marketers use social media to distribute content.<sup>6</sup>



**Bottom line:** Comprehensive content marketing is a key to SEO success.

<sup>6</sup> Content Marketing Institute

# Conclusion

Optimizing your search presence is a critical part of a successful online marketing program.

Your optimization initiative should be a central consideration in your website architecture and content marketing strategies.

In order to achieve success, you need to separate myth from reality and implement a comprehensive program built around a strong, strategic foundation. There are no shortcuts. A focus on long-term investments and ongoing management is the key to delivering targeted site traffic and real business results.

**Find a partner to help implement a successful SEO program today!**

21% of marketers who work with agencies on SEO report being highly satisfied with their program performance, compared with 11% of those who do SEO in-house.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> MarketingCharts, 2012



## The Mx Group

The Mx Group is a demand generation and digital agency that empowers companies with the competitive edge of modern B2B marketing. We integrate strategy, technology, marketing operations and sales optimization services to help companies attract, convert and retain customers. For more than 25 years, clients have trusted us to help turn their marketing investments into measurable revenue.

**For more information, contact The Mx Group  
at 877-504-7770 or [started@themxgroup.com](mailto:started@themxgroup.com)**

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