

Top SEO Problems & How to Fix Them

When organic traffic and conversions decline, it can be hard to know where to begin. Often, we look for the one thing that caused everything to go downhill. But smoking guns are not typical in SEO.

Consumer trends, algorithm changes, technical challenges, and searcher intent can all be factors in fluctuations in ranking, traffic, and conversions. Often SEO problems have deep roots.

In this checklist, we identify the most common causes of SEO problems, and how to fix them—not just for now, but for the long term.

Reduced Visibility: Ranking and Traffic Declines

Seasonality

Your business ebbs and flows at certain times of the year due to external, seasonal factors.

How to address

- Create a strong library of evergreen content to support topics that have year-round demand.
- Create seasonal content well-ahead of time to allow authority to build.

Resources

- [Google Trends](#)
- Two Octobers recorded webinar: [How to Craft an Audience-Driven SEO Strategy](#)

One-off event

You had a large sale or promotion. Your business was featured in a prominent media outlet and/or you had a new product release.

How to address

- Review data and customer feedback from the event.
- What can be translated into evergreen site content or design enhancements?

Resources

- [Google Analytics](#)
- Social listening tools, like [SproutSocial](#)

Competition

New competitors have entered the space and/or existing competitors have improved their presence.

How to address

- Regularly review the top-ranked sites for your primary target keywords.
- Assess where content gaps exist to address and improve visibility.

Resources

- Your top keywords: [Branch Explorer](#)
- Ranking competitors: [SEMrush](#), Google searches of your top keywords

Intent mismatch

Your content does not align with consumer search intent so Google is favoring other content.

How to address

- Review Google search engine results pages (SERPs) to understand what Google interprets to be good content for your target keywords.
- Conduct research to understand what questions and topics are important; include those in your content.

Resources

- Google searches of your top keywords
- [Alsoasked.com](#), [Answerthepublic.com](#)

Mobile unfriendly

Pages on your site have a poor user experience and do not pass Google's Core Web Vitals which assess page experience and speed.

How to address

- Review Google PageSpeed Insights for all page types.
- Use Search Console to check page experience for all page types.
- Ensure key page elements load quickly and that overall mobile experience is good.

Resources

- [Google PageSpeed Insights](#)
- [Google Search Console](#)

Content format

Competitors now rank for SERP features such as Featured Snippets or People Also Ask while your site does not appear in these types of results.

How to address

- Add Schema mark-up to any applicable pages.
- Ensure pages include thoughtful outlines, lists and heading structures (H1, H2, etc).

Resources

- [Schema.org](#)
- Google searches of your top keywords to see which features & schemas are being featured

Google update

A Google algorithm update has caused a shift in the search landscape, resulting in rank drops and lower visibility for your site.

How to address

- Review the components of the latest algorithm update. Does your site “violate” any of the inclusions?
- Compare the timing of recent algorithm updates with organic traffic changes. Do any coincide?
- Maintain focus on quality, targeted content.

Resources

- [Google algorithm history](#)
- [Branch Explorer's Algorithm Explorer](#)

Declining Conversions: Drops in Lead or Revenue

Poor navigation

Your main navigation is confusing and difficult to follow. Consumers have trouble finding what they need.

How to address

- Avoid a cluttered or difficult to follow navigation.
- Ensure the structure reflects how consumers will browse your site to find what they need.

Mismatched keyword targeting

You've chosen target keywords because they have high search volume but they do not match the content or intent of the page.

How to address

- Select keywords primarily based on consumer intent and page purpose vs search volume alone.
- Create audience personas to help refine targeting strategy.

Resources

- [Four types of keyword intent](#)

Irrelevant content

Page content does not address consumers' main questions and pain points. It is not formatted in a way that is engaging or helpful.

How to address

- Research what questions consumers have related to the page topic. Address the most prominent questions and subtopics.
- Reference top-ranked competitors as a guide.

Resources

- Google searches of your top keywords, looking at “People also ask” & “Related searches” sections

Key Takeaways

1. Understand factors out of your control like seasonality, one-off events and Google Updates.
 - Use learnings to create content and improve user experience.
2. Regularly monitor your site for experience improvements, like page speed, schema and navigation.
 - Take steps to continually improve page speed, user experience and SERP feature visibility.
3. Get a thorough understanding of your consumer and what is important to them. Know your competition.
 - Make sure your content strategy centers around these.
4. Consider factors beyond search volume.
 - Ensure keyword targeting and page content align with consumer intent and where prospects are in the sales funnel.

Additional Resources

Dive into better SEO with these additional Two Octobers resources

- Two Octobers recorded webinar: [How to Craft an Audience-Driven SEO Strategy](#)
- Two Octobers recorded webinar: [SEO Keywords for Ecomm Revenue](#)
- Two Octobers recorded webinar: [Understanding the Depths of Consumer Intent](#)
- Blog: [How page speed impacts performance](#)

Looking for help diagnosing and fixing an organic traffic problem? We'd love to help. Contact us at twooctobers.com.