

NEWSLETTER

September 2014



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1 BEST PRACTICES TO IMPLEMENT HTTPS FOR SEO

Google rarely reveals any of its ranking secrets. This one came as a big surprise when representatives [announced](#) they would reward sites using HTTPS encryption with a boost in search results.



HTTPS isn't like other ranking factors. Implementing a secured layer involves complexity, risks, and costs. Webmasters balance this out with benefits that include increased security, better referral data, and a possible boost in rankings.

What type of SSL certificate works best?

Companies offer a numerous and confusing array of SSL certificates. The two primary ones to consider are:

1. **Standard Validation SSL** – Standard level of validation. This costs between \$0-\$100.
2. **Extended Validation SSL** – Offers the highest level of validation. This costs between \$100-\$500.

From a rankings perspective, it usually makes **no difference** what type of certificate you use. **For now.**

John Mueller of Google has stated that Google [doesn't care what kind of SSL certificate](#) your website uses, but that might change in the future.

Moz has created a very useful [checklist](#) for those planning to switch over to HTTPS and want to preserve their rankings.

- Make sure **every element** of your website uses HTTPS, including widgets, java script, CSS files, images, and your content delivery network.
- Use **301 redirects** to point all HTTP URLs to HTTPS. This is a no-brainer to most SEOs, but you'd be surprised how often a 302 (temporary) redirect finds its way to the homepage by accident
- Make sure all **canonical tags** point to the HTTPS version of the URL.
- Use **relative URLs** whenever possible.
- **Rewrite hard-coded internal links** (as many as is possible) to point to HTTPS. This is superior to pointing to the HTTP version and relying on 301 redirects.

- Register the HTTPS version in both **Google and Bing Webmaster Tools**.
- Use the [Fetch and Render](#) function in Webmaster Tools to ensure Google can properly crawl and render your site.
- Update your **sitemaps** to reflect the new URLs. Submit the new sitemaps to Webmaster Tools. Leave your old (HTTP) sitemaps in place for 30 days so search engines can crawl and "process" your 301 redirects.
- Update your **robots.txt file**. Add your new sitemaps to the file. Make sure your robots.txt doesn't block any important pages.
- If necessary, update your **analytics tracking code**. Most modern Google Analytics tracking snippets already handle HTTPS, but older code may need a second look.
- Implement [HTTP Strict Transport Security \(HSTS\)](#). This response header tells user agents to only access HTTPS pages even when directed to an HTTP page. This eliminates redirects, speeds up response time, and provides extra security.

GOOGLE AUTHORSHIP IS DEAD

2

After significantly scaling back Authorship in June by dropping author photos from search, Google's John Mueller finally announced in a [Google+ post](#) on August 28, that all authorship functionality would soon come to an end, including the tracking of any rel=authorship markup data.



Authorship, was started as an experiment by Google three years ago to connect authors with their content, now joins the ranks of the dozens of other [discontinued products and services](#) that have been sunset by the company over the years.

So what happened? According to Google, and their ruthless internal testing metrics, Authorship failed for three major reasons:

1. **Low Adoption Rate:** Even after three years, Authorship was not widely embraced by influencers, SEOs and the regular Google user. The major complaint being it was “too difficult.” Google attempted, starting in 2012, to help “spur” the adoption of authorship results by implementing auto-attribution but this resulted in many instances of [incorrect attribution](#), some [quite hilarious](#).
2. **Low Value to Users:** According to Google's internal testing, authorship snippets reported no discernible increase in CTR over other results on the page. This caused a lot of consternation in the SEO community since many believed just the opposite: results with profile pics were getting clicked more in relation to non-authored results.

3. **Dilution of Mobile Experience:** Google believed that authorship snippets took away from their goal to ruthlessly optimize for the mobile user. Mobile devices have both limited bandwidth and screen size making it difficult to display full authorship snippets. And even with Google, there exists processing limits that require prioritization of internal resources.

Bottom line: Google has always been RELENTLESS about testing search quality. And with Authorship, at least at this point in time, the value is not there for Google to devote the resources necessary to keep it going.

That being said, as of this writing, **Google Authorship snippets are still fully viewable when logged-in to Google+ personalized search.**

If you have claimed authorship or had placed a lot of resources in advising your clients to set up Authorship markups we certainly DO NOT advise you remove them. It's always possible that Google circles back around to authorship in the future. Further, it's never a bad idea to provide Google every possible signal they can to determine identity and authority, beyond just simple bylines.

3 SEARCHMETRICS RELEASED SEO RANKING FACTORS FOR 2014: IS CONTENT REALLY THE KING NOW?

SearchMetrics [announced](#) their [2014 SEO ranking factors](#) study is now ready for download.

Every year, SearchMetrics releases the study but this is the largest study they've done, with almost 100 pages and by adding dozens of new factors like time of site, bounce rate, fresh links and others.

The key take away from here is that content may now be truly king. Marcus Tober from SearchMetrics said in the report that content is "no longer an addition to, but is the main focus of, SEO."

Here is a breakdown of the study with some charts showing parts of the analysis. But you can download the full report [over here](#).

Content

- There is a measurable correlation between the quality of content and rankings. This is demonstrated by, among others, the analysis of two new features based primarily on word co-occurrence analysis: Proof and Relevant Terms.
- The length of content continues to increase.
- A good internal linking structure is an important factor, and probably the most underrated SEO measure.

On-Page Technical SEO

- On-page, the keyword remains an important part of the overall concept for SEO, often represented by a balanced presence in Title, Description, Body copy, H1, H2, etc. Needless to say, that keyword stuffing should still be avoided. However, there is a definite trend towards developing keywords to topics to generate holistic content.
- Site load speed is a very important performance factor.
- Good site architecture is the beginning and end of effective SEO.

Backlinks

- The quantity and especially the quality of backlinks remains important.
- The number of keyword backlinks continues to decrease, even if the correlation increases.
- Backlink features for Brands (Point 6 below) appear to work differently to the rest of the URLs in SERPs.

Social Signals

- There were minor changes to the previous year, with Social signals correlating slightly less with good rankings than last year.
- Average values rose slightly.

User Signals

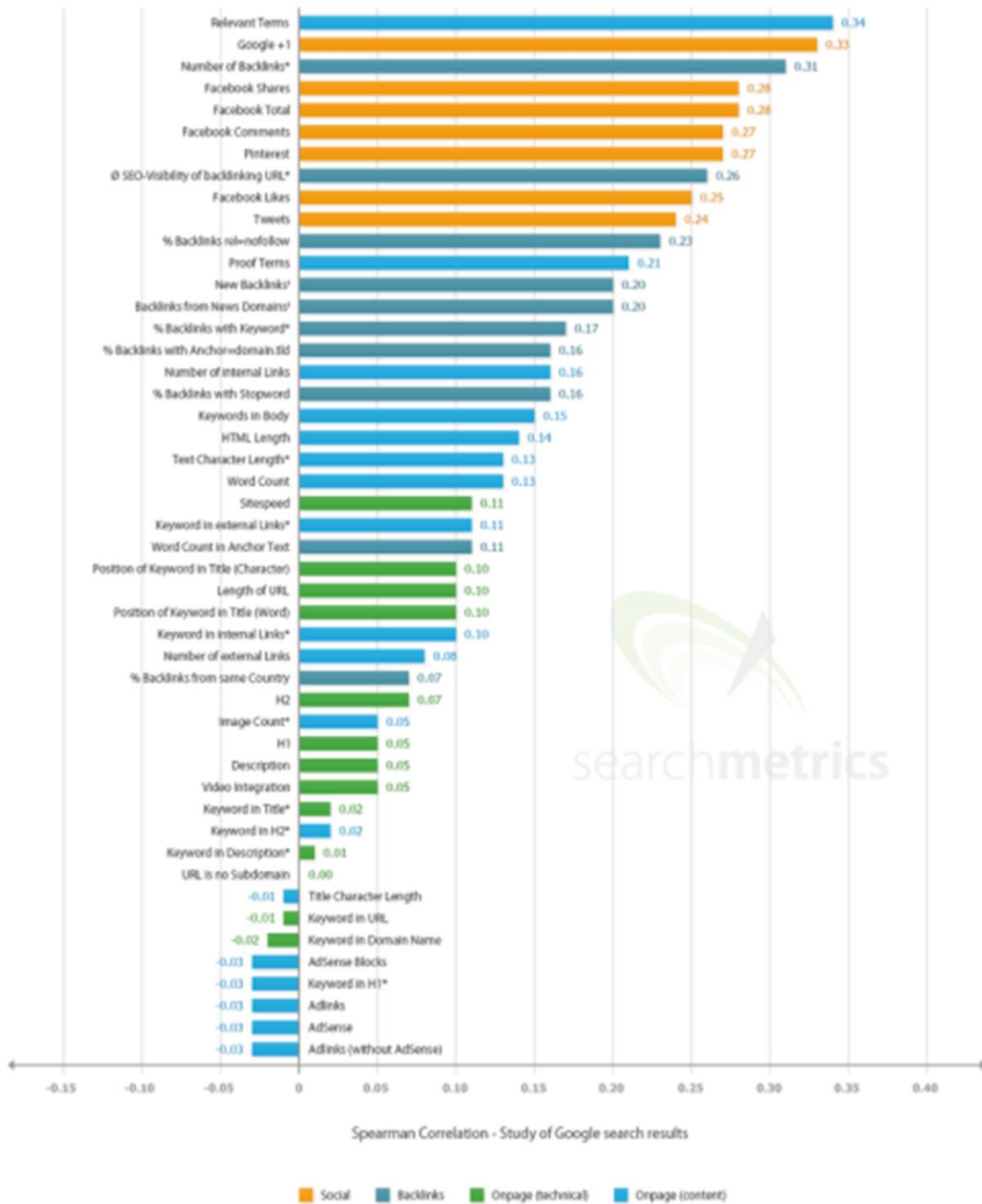
- Both the click-through rate and the time-on-site are considerably higher in better ranking sites – this may appear obvious, but average values determined over many URLs can be used as a benchmark for your own optimization.
- The bounce rate is lower for top-ranking URLs.

Brand Factor

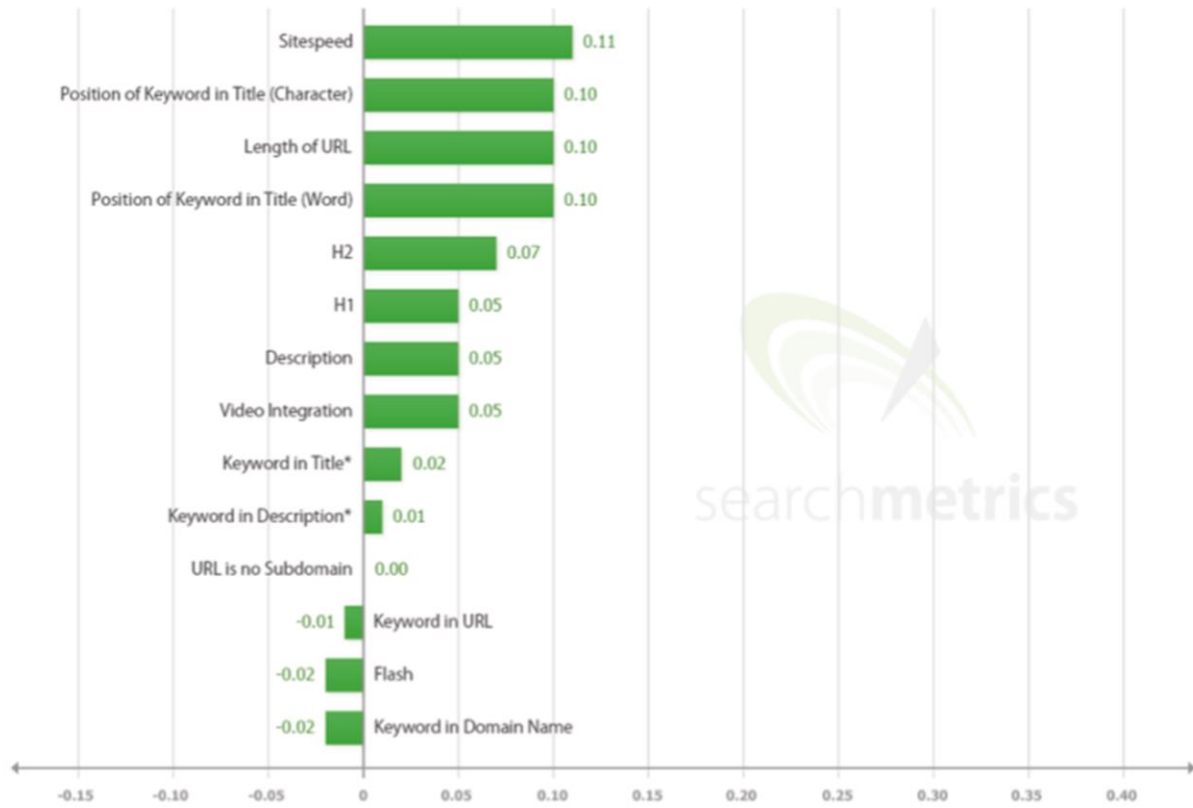
There seem to be special consideration for big brands.

- The Brand Factor and its definition have been revised this year, to show the increasing complexity of its influence and quality.

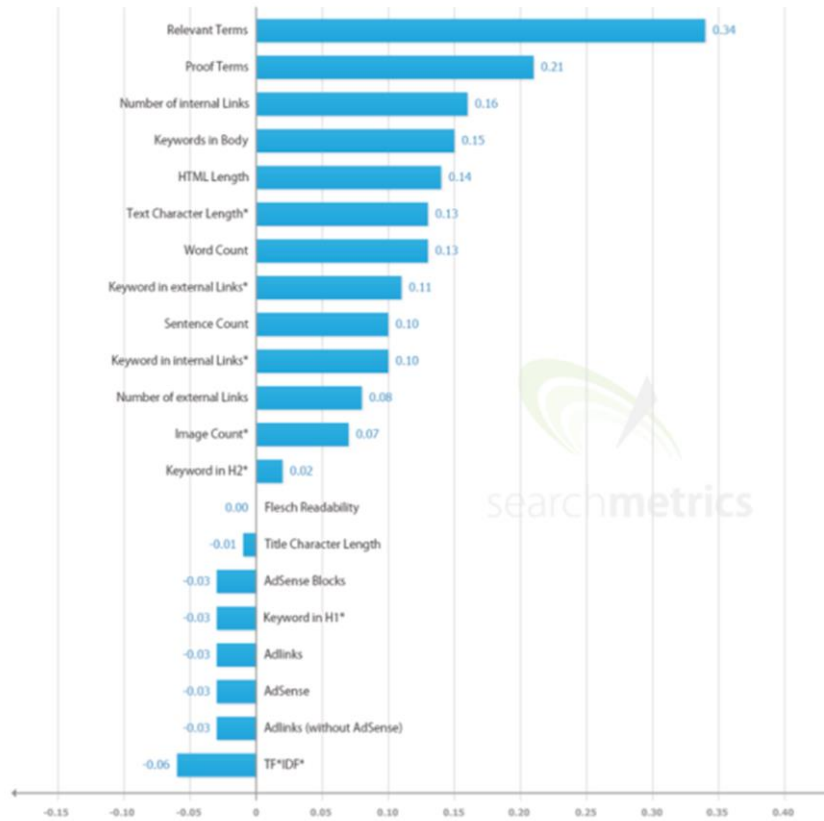
Overall Ranking Chart:



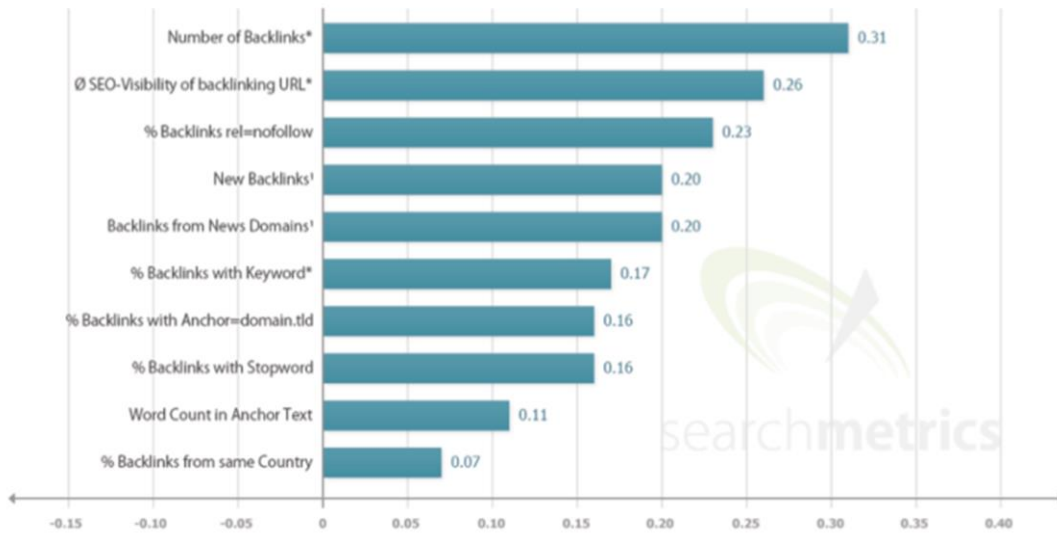
Content Ranking Factors:



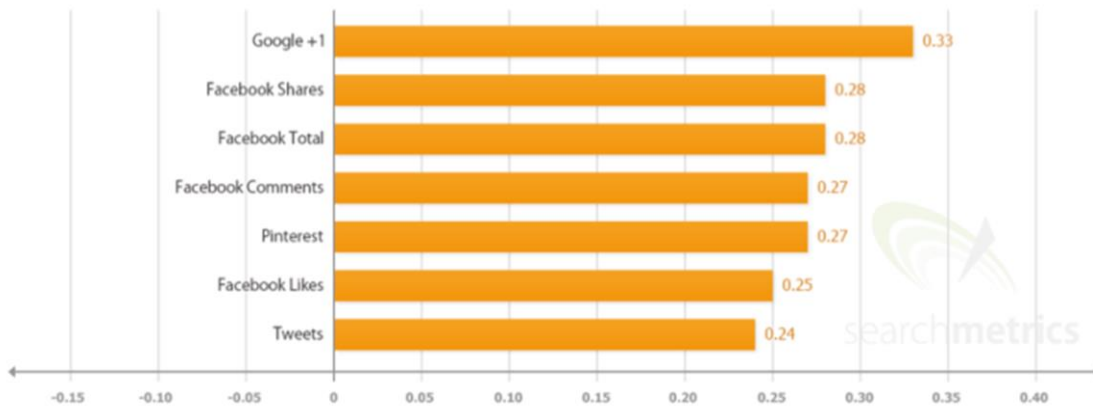
On Page Technical Ranking Factors:



Link Ranking Factors:



Social Ranking Factors:



GOOGLE LAUNCHES ABILITY TO TRACK “WEBSITE CALL CONVERSIONS” IN ADWORDS

4



Seventy percent of all mobile searchers have called a business directly from search ads. AdWords click-to-call ads, call metrics, and calls as conversions help you connect with these customers and gain insight about those calls. However, many customers also call your business after clicking through a Google ad and learning more about the products and services you offer on your website. That's why Google has launched what's likely to become a popular new feature for many AdWords advertisers. Website call conversions allow advertisers to track calls that occur after a user arrives on a web site from an ad click.

Clicks that Lead to Calls

Let's say your Google search ads send people to your website where they research and learn more about your business. Website call conversions dynamically inserts a Google forwarding number on your website that measures the calls made by these customers. Whether they click on the number or dial it directly from their phone, you can attribute the call conversion and conversion value back to the keyword and ad that drove the customer.

How Does it Work?

To start measuring these website calls, place the snippet of code on your desktop or mobile website and a unique Google forwarding number will be generated for each AdWords ad click. These numbers will continue to display for up to 90 days to capture future call conversions. To ensure this experience is seamless, you can customize the look and feel of these numbers to match your website, including: color, font, and size.

Maximize Call Value and Volume

With website call conversions, you can understand which keywords and ads are driving the most phone calls from your website and which are resulting in more valuable calls. You can also assign different values to calls originating from different pages of your website.

You can also automatically optimize your keyword bids to drive more calls or more valuable calls by using Target CPA or Target ROAS respectively. These flexible bid strategies factor in signals like device, location, and time of day to make auction-time bid adjustments that maximize website call conversions and conversion value respectively, while reaching your business goals.

Website call conversions can be used in conjunction with other call tracking solutions as well as with AdWords click-to-call. Note that you won't be able to see whether an actual sale or transaction occurred by using this solution in AdWords.

5 TWITTER WITH ANOTHER EFFECTIVE HELPING TOOL - "TWEET ANALYTICS"



The recent update came from one of the Social Media giant, Twitter. This has already caught up the marketers in pocket. With the new featured "Tweet Analytics" the platform is revealing more to the users by giving complete insights of the Tweets. Now the marketers don't need to pay extra money to view analytic reports from the digital company's dashboard as Twitter has started its own strategic dashboard.

The Twitter users will get detailed information of the activities and in this way they can study the hierarchy of Tweets & related conversations happening in real time. Below are a few exclusive advantages of the Tweet Analytics Dashboard:

- Compare impressions (times a Tweet is viewed by anyone on Twitter web and Android or iOS apps, including logged-out users), total engagements and Retweets month over month.
- Use the Tweet details page to see how many Retweets, replies, favorites, follows, link clicks and embedded media clicks each Tweet received.
- Export your Tweet performance metrics into a CSV file, which now includes both organic and promoted data.

As you know, on Twitter nothing comes between your tweets and followers. The Dashboard enables the users to get a complete idea of the followers who are interacting and engaging with the Tweets. It will help the users to know their organic Tweet's performance through the platform and on that basis the marketers can analyze and develop an accurate strategy for getting more interactions on Tweets. Without any doubt, Twitter is trying its best to outperform their competition by providing such useful insights to enhance the business presence across the World Wide Web.