

SEO VS. SOCIAL MEDIA

WHICH IS BEST FOR YOUR MARKETING?



A publication of
HubSpot

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- ✓ **Convert:** Nurture your leads and drive conversions
- ✓ **Analyze:** Measure and improve your marketing
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AUTOMATION



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INTRODUCTION

We marketers talk a lot about growing the top of the funnel – you know, getting as much traffic as possible to your website. So, how do you fill the top of your funnel so it's practically overflowing? Time and again, social media and SEO take the [inbound marketing](#) cake. But for marketers with limited time and money, SEO and social media often become competing priorities. I mean, it's not like you necessarily have all the resources in the world to throw your full weight behind SEO and social media. And the thing is, it's usually better to do one thing well than two things, well, not well.



So, what gets sacrificed – SEO or social media – if you only have the bandwidth to seriously dedicate resources to one or the other? Which is the biggest lever you can pull? Will SEO have a stronger impact on building the top of your marketing funnel, or is social media the place to spend your time for maximum results? Let's figure out what SEO and social media are good for, and where they fall a little short, so you can select which tactic is right for you when in a marketing resources pinch.



ADVANTAGES OF SEO FOR MARKETING

1 CREATING CONTENT YOU CAN REPURPOSE

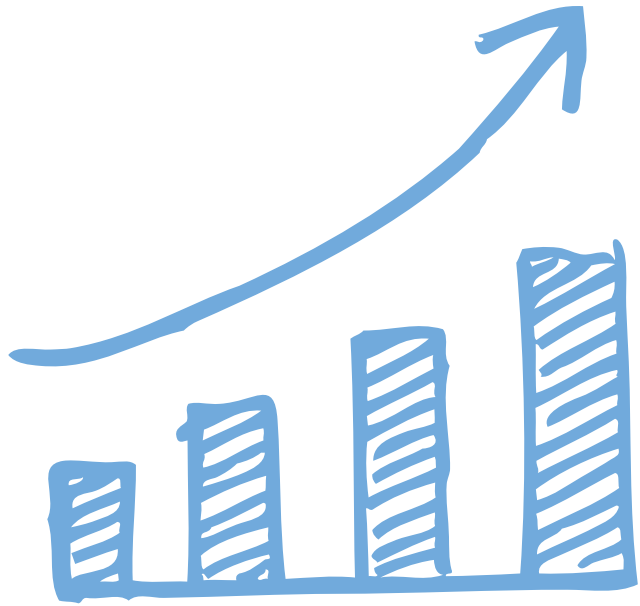
Constant content creation is inherent to good SEO. If you do little else with your SEO other than blog utilizing keywords important to your business, you'll see significant gains -- granted, not as many as you could see if you had a full-time SEO professional working on your business; but you would get some serious lift. So if you're dedicating time to SEO, you're probably creating content that is also feeding your other marketing efforts, like lead nurturing, email marketing, [lead generation](#), and yes, even social media.

2 LONG TERM GAINS THAT DON'T DIMINISH

SEO content is the gift that keeps on giving. When you create a web page, it's indexed in search engines and will return as a result in the search engine results pages (SERPs) for years to come. So if you write, say, a blog post -- especially if it's evergreen content (content that remains relevant for a long time) -- your few hours of effort writing and optimizing that content can continue to drive traffic and leads for years. That's some pretty good ROI.



3 LONG-TAIL SEARCH YIELDS TARGETED TRAFFIC



Investing in SEO means you're probably optimizing for long-tail search. Long-tail search is just what it sounds like -- a search term that is long, usually containing three or more terms. And the longer a keyword is, the more specific it gets. Think about the difference between the search term, "marketing," and "marketing analytics consultants in Boston."

That second search term tells us that the searcher is looking for three things: consultants, who specialize in [marketing analytics](#), and who are located in Boston. That's way more information than a short-tail keyword, and it drives extremely targeted traffic to your website that you can then convert with very targeted offers -- based on the searcher's problem, their stage in the sales cycle, or even their persona. Plus, long-tail keywords are far less competitive than their short-tail brethren, and as such yield quick traffic wins for your website.



4 INBOUND LINKS HELP YOUR WEBSITE AND YOUR REPUTATION

Part of a well-rounded SEO program is generating inbound links, and one of the best white-hat ways to get inbound links is by offering your services as a guest blogger. What's so great about this is that not only do you, well, get inbound links ... but you form strong relationships with heavy hitters in your industry while you do it! Essentially, as your website gains clout, so do you.

5 SEO GIVES AN EDGE TO LOCAL BUSINESSES

If you're a local business with a brick-and-mortar location, you can capitalize on the growth of the mobile market with SEO, too. Mobile searchers are typically out and about when searching for information about your business. That also means they're closer to the point of purchase. Focusing on local SEO ensures you're the first business a lead sees when they're looking for, say, the closest copy center, or an inexpensive place to go to dinner in their zip code.

6 SEO IS EASIER THAN IT USED TO BE

Google's algorithm is getting smarter. Since the first Panda update debuted in February of last year, up until 2012's first Penguin update, Google's algorithm has swayed more and more toward rewarding websites in the SERPs that create stellar content for readers, not for search engines.

AND GOOGLE CAN DO THAT BECAUSE THEIR ALGORITHM IS SMARTER!

It doesn't need to rely on hacky tricks to identify what a web page is about. That means that, while there's a lot that technical SEO could still do for your website, "doing" that basic SEO we talked about in the beginning of this section isn't a mystery that marketers can't master – at its core, it's simply the creation of excellent content.



DISADVANTAGES OF SEO FOR MARKETING

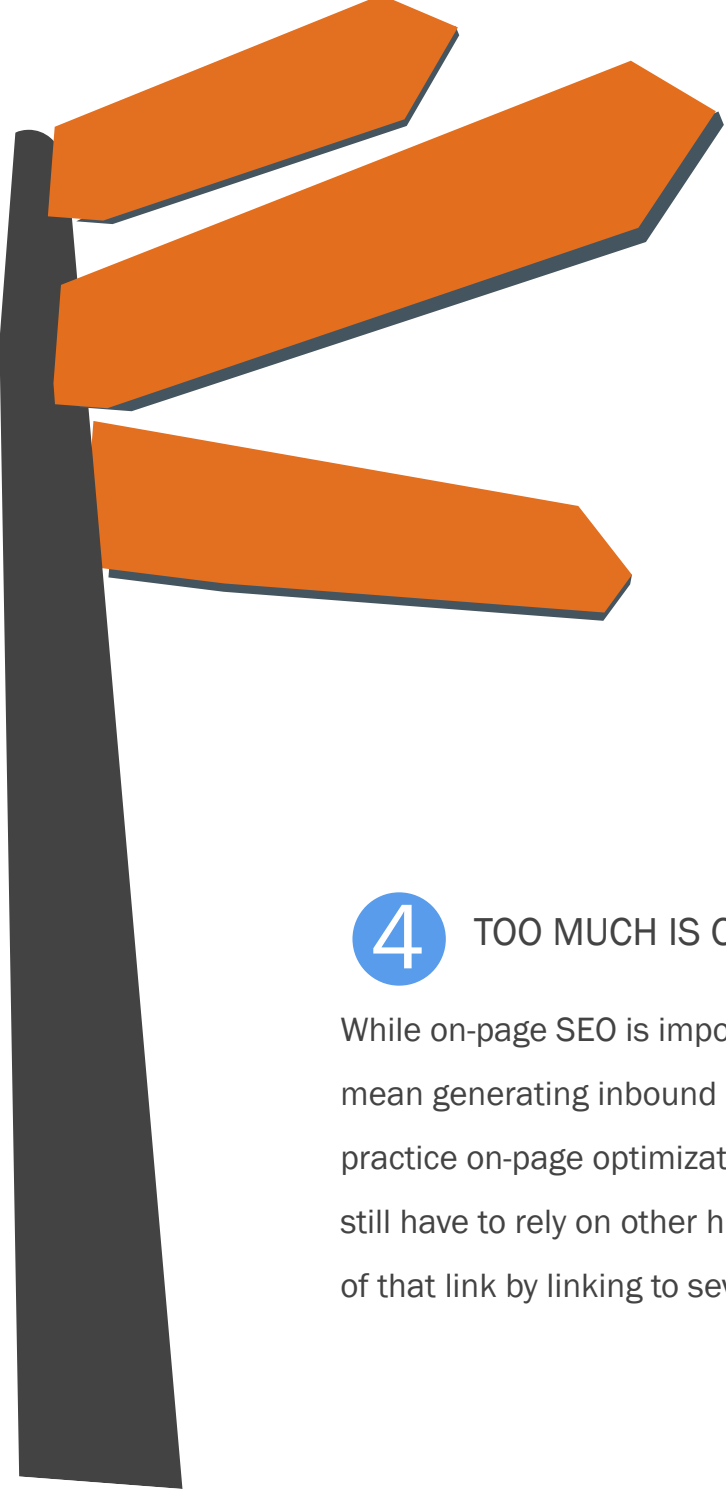
1 SEO TAKES A LOT OF TIME

All that excellent content creation that is the basis of strong SEO is also a disadvantage for some marketers -- because consistently creating top-notch content takes a lot of time. SEO is no longer as simple as peppering keywords all over your web page and in your meta data. And if you're seriously crunched for resources, the content creation required to maintain a sustained SEO program may be overwhelming.

2 YOU STILL NEED TO INVEST IN TECHNICAL SEO

While constant quality content creation as an SEO strategy will get you far, it will only get you so far. There are still some things that are a little out of your reach unless you consider yourself well versed in technical SEO -- you know, 301 redirects, site structure, site hosting, 404 configuration. If that sounds like SEO gobbledygook, even the most steadfast on- and off-page SEO will reach a ceiling. Or worse, if you're working on some legacy technical problems, could see no results because crawlers can't read your site, you're suffering from duplicate content you didn't know about, or some other issue that's preventing you from really taking off.





3 YOU DON'T HAVE JUST GOOGLE TO THINK ABOUT

You know, there are search engines out there other than Google. Shocking, I know. Marketers wisely spend most of their time optimizing for organic search on Google, but the fact is there are plenty of other search engines -- Bing and Yahoo! come to mind -- as well as smaller, niche search engines that keep cropping up every day. This just means that there are different sets of rules to follow for each, making a truly comprehensive SEO strategy just a little more divided.

4 TOO MUCH IS OUT OF YOUR CONTROL

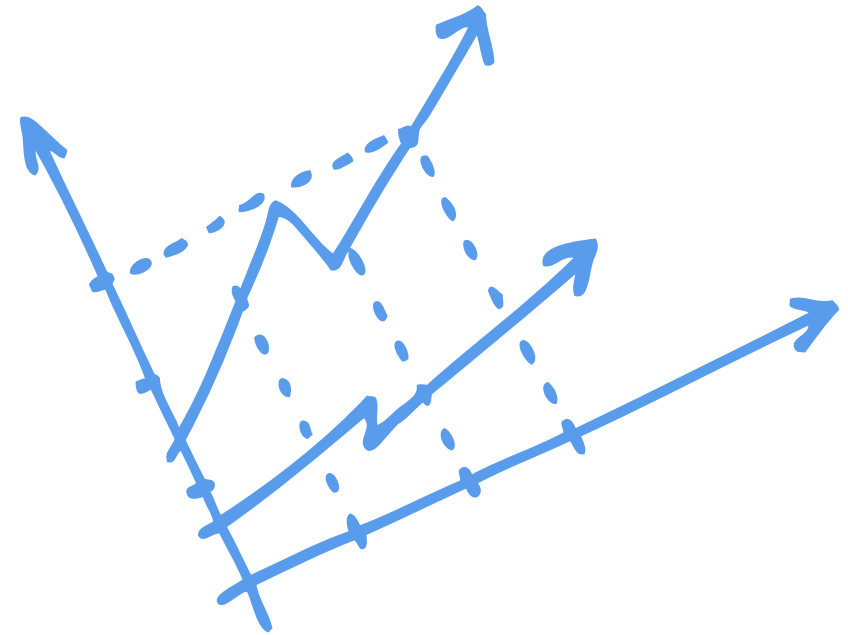
While on-page SEO is important, off-page SEO has a bigger impact. And by off-page SEO, we chiefly mean generating inbound links. The problem is, it's way harder to get quality inbound links than it is to practice on-page optimization. So while you can work really hard to optimize every single web page, you still have to rely on other high-authority sites to link to you, use proper anchor text, and not split the juice of that link by linking to several other sites. And unfortunately, that's all extremely hard for you to control.

5 YOU CAN'T MEASURE EVERYTHING

Does everyone remember the great Google SSL encryption of 2011? It made it so that Google no longer passed referral data for logged in users when those users clicked on a search result. As a result, marketers lost serious insight into a chunk of their organic traffic. Google said it would only adversely impact <10% of searches.

OUR ANALYSIS OF HUBSPOT CUSTOMERS SHOWED IT IMPACTED ANYWHERE FROM **11.36% OF SEARCH RESULTS TO MORE THAN 50%.**

And a marketer with impaired analytics is about as effective as an airplane pilot with an eyelash in her eye.



6 SEO REQUIRES LONG-TERM UPKEEP

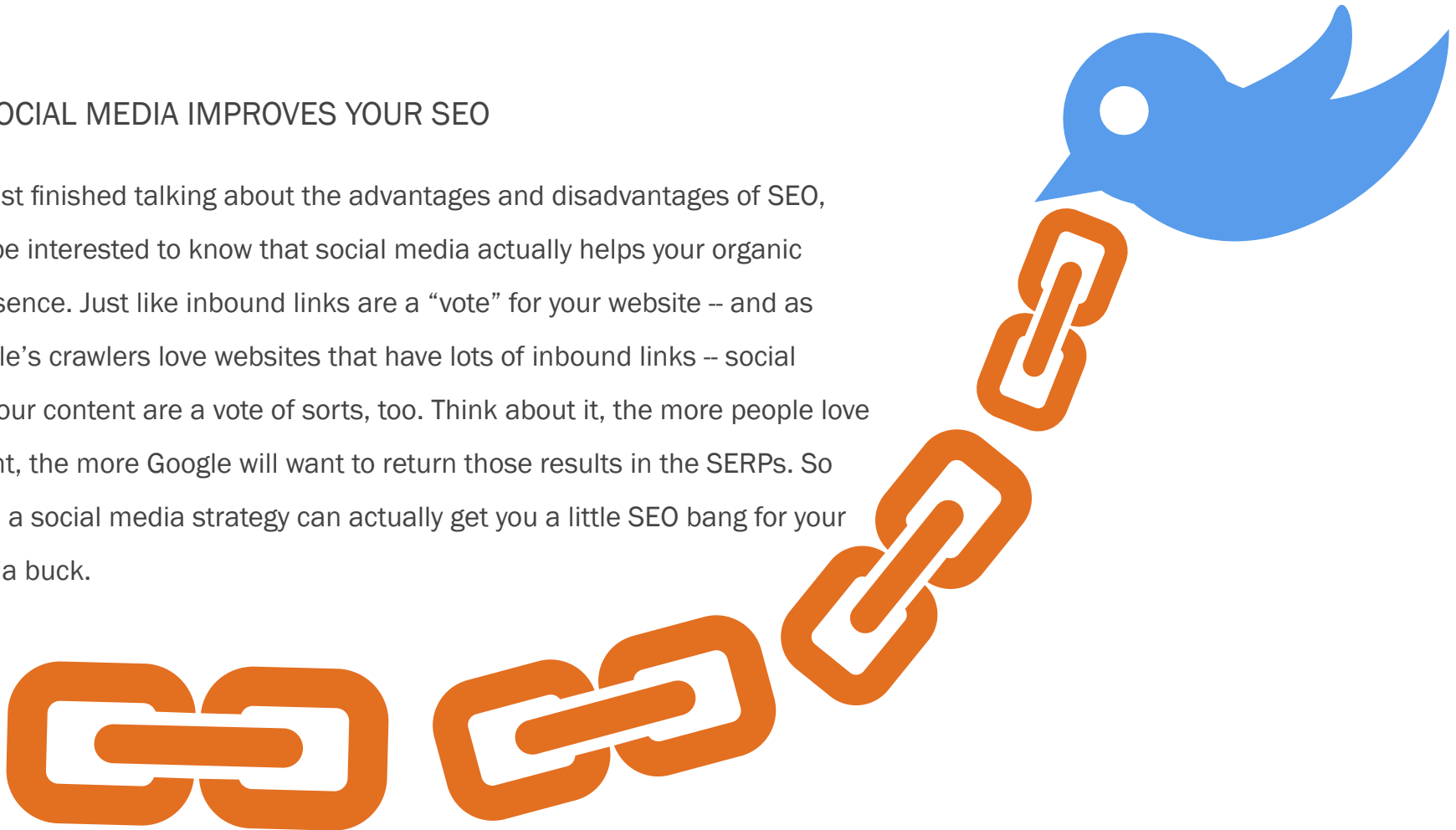
While you may be rocking the SERPs today, if you don't consistently put forth effort to create optimized content and generate inbound links, your rankings will slip, and all your work will be for naught. In other words, SEO is not a one-and-done solution to fill the top of your funnel.



ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MARKETING

1 SOCIAL MEDIA IMPROVES YOUR SEO

Since we just finished talking about the advantages and disadvantages of SEO, you might be interested to know that social media actually helps your organic search presence. Just like inbound links are a “vote” for your website – and as such, Google’s crawlers love websites that have lots of inbound links – social shares of your content are a vote of sorts, too. Think about it, the more people love your content, the more Google will want to return those results in the SERPs. So investing in a social media strategy can actually get you a little SEO bang for your social media buck.



2 YOU'LL BUILD STRONG PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Guest blogging for inbound links lets you build a few good relationships, but social media lets you build hundreds of thousands. Maintaining an active social media presence lets you carry on prolonged, friendly conversations with your followers. And while you do that, your social reach extends even more as their network sees you popping up in their feeds. When you're talking with people one-on-one like you do on social media, you can provide seriously personalized service that other marketing channels struggle to match.

3 SOCIAL CONTENT CAN BE REPURPOSED

If you're investing in social media, it's simple to scalably grow your presence across more than one network, because you can easily repurpose the content you share from network to network. So while you'll rewrite the copy you use in a tweet versus a Facebook update, you can still link to the same great offers, blog content, and visual content to grow your following across several networks without multiplying your required content creation resources.



4 MORE TARGETED NETWORKS MEANS MORE CUSTOMERS

Social media affords you the opportunity to be extremely targeted if you've figured out which networks work best for your business. For example, we know that LinkedIn is an extraordinary performer for B2B organizations.

65% OF B2B ORGANIZATIONS HAVE ACQUIRED A CUSTOMER ON LINKEDIN.

Compare that with Twitter, from which only 40% of B2B organizations have acquired a customer, and Facebook, from which only 43% have acquired a customer, and you can better prioritize how much time you spend on each network. On the other hand, Facebook drives the most conversions for B2C organizations, where 77% of companies have acquired a customer. It's followed by Twitter, where 55% of B2C organizations have acquired a customer, and trailed by LinkedIn, where 51% have acquired a customer. (Source: HubSpot State of Inbound Marketing 2012)



5 SOCIAL MEDIA PROVIDES THE USER-GENERATED CONTENT YOU NEED TO DRIVE SALES

Social media is powered by user-generated content, and if you didn't already know, user-generated content is critical to driving sales for your organization.

“

MORE THAN 80% OF GEN Y -- ALSO KNOWN AS THE **LARGEST CONSUMER GROUP IN HISTORY** -- IS INFLUENCED BY USER-GENERATED CONTENT WHEN CONSIDERING A PURCHASE.

”

“

51% OF THEM ACTUALLY RATED IT **MORE IMPORTANT** THAN THE OPINIONS OF THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

”

And when it comes to purchases like major electronics, cars, hotels, travel accommodations, credit cards, and insurance, many of them won't even make a purchase without first consulting user-generated content (Source: Bazaarvoice). Starting to sweat your social media presence yet?



DISADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MARKETING

1 SOCIAL MEDIA FAILS WITHOUT CONTENT

Since we're talking about the resources needed to scale your social media presence, we should also consider that it's useless if it's not backed by a strong content strategy. Think about it – if you don't have anyone creating blog content, offer content, videos, memes, infographics, etc., what exactly are you going to share in social media? You can tweet 'til the cows come home, but if there's no link to drive them back to your website, your social following doesn't do much for your business' bottom line. And like we mentioned in the SEO section of this ebook, all that content creation takes dedicated resources that time-crunched marketers don't typically have in excess.



2 SUCCESS TAKES A LONG TIME

For your social media presence to drive meaningful results for your business, it needs to grow. But growing a social media following doesn't happen overnight. It takes months upon years to build up a strong social following and wide reach that will drive serious traffic to your website. Of course, you can speed that up a little bit if you abandon the organic growth route and opt for the paid promotion route – but that costs money and management time. Is that something you have as a resource-strapped marketer?



3 SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT EXPIRES QUICKLY

Unlike content in search engines, social media content expires quickly. So while you thought that quippy tweet with the link to the best blog post ever written was this month's crowning achievement, it'll be buried in people's tweet streams within minutes, and within their Facebook news feeds within hours ... and that's if they even see it at all. Social media updates are decidedly not the gift that keeps on giving.

4 MONITORING IS TIME INTENSIVE

Because those streams keep updating, and updating ... and updating ... you have to vigilantly monitor your social media accounts. Every day. Yes, there are social media monitoring tools out there to make this more efficient, but the multi-tasking marketer can easily get bogged down trying to read and respond to all of the content that comes through their multiple social media accounts.



SO, WHICH IS IT?



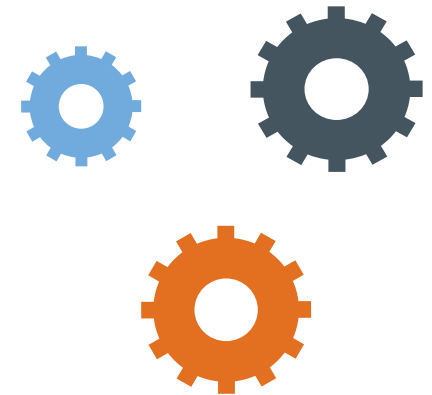
CAN'T IT BE BOTH?



SOCIAL MEDIA AND SEO WORK BETTER TOGETHER

THEY BOTH RELY ON QUALITY CONTENT

Neither SEO, nor social media, can survive without a consistent stream of quality content. Without content, there's nothing for Google's crawlers to pick up and index in search engines -- which means they'll visit your website less and less frequently. Without content, there's nothing valuable for you to share in social media, which means, much like Google's crawlers, your fans and followers will stop engaging with your updates and eventually stop following you.



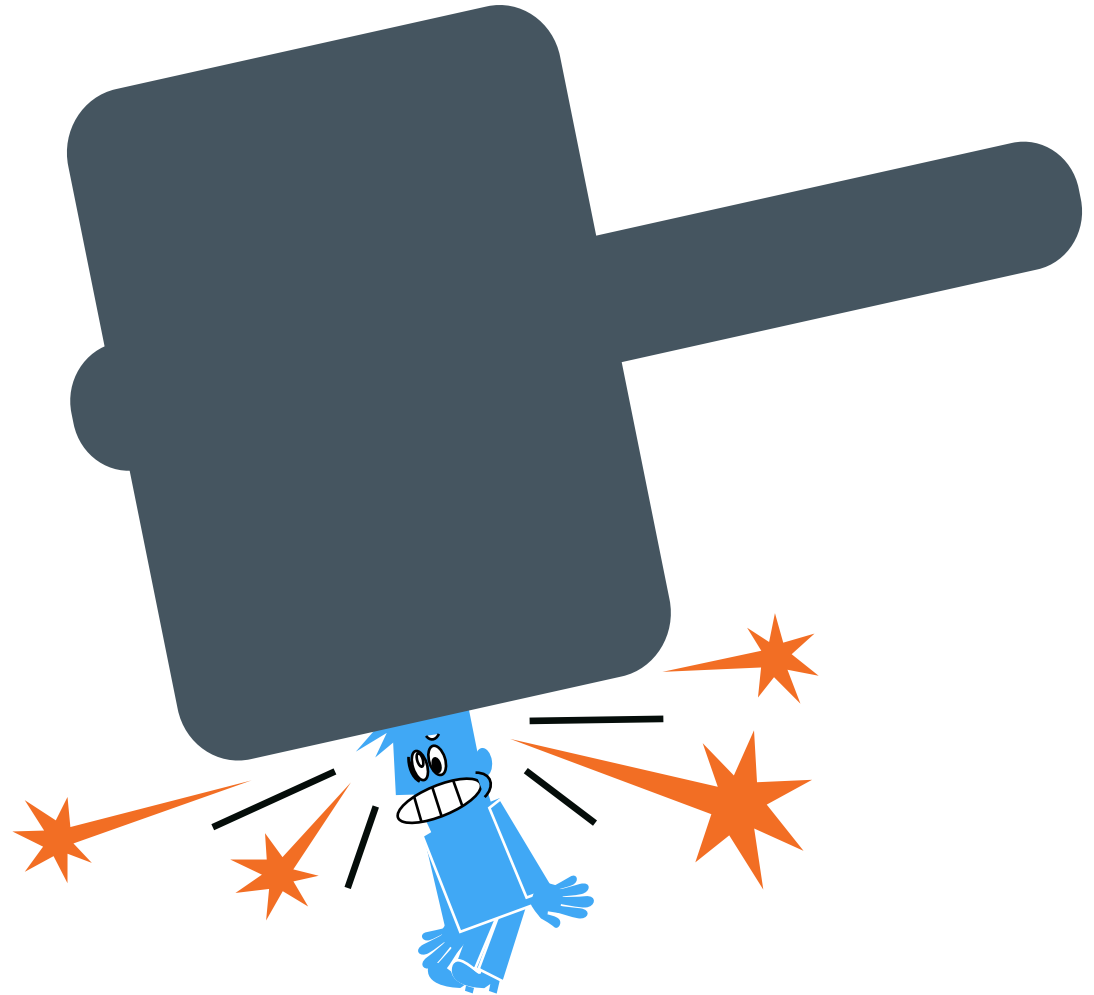
THE LINES BETWEEN SEARCH AND SOCIAL ARE BLURRING

Not only are search engines weighing social shares of content much more heavily when deciding how to rank a web page in the SERPs since 2011's Panda updates, but Google has also launched its own social network -- Google+ -- and integrated the social updates that appear there within Google's organic search results. The importance of the integration of social media and organic search has even gotten to the point where Twitter had to speak up, calling Google out for showing preference to Google+ updates in the SERPs despite the fact that tweets were often a more relevant result to return.



BUT IF YOU **HAD** TO CHOOSE?

Let's assume you are an avid creator of quality content already, and you're trying to decide whether you should invest more time in SEO, or social media. Where do you make the investment? Well, you have **two choices**, both of which were alluded to earlier in this ebook.



1

You could invest in hiring a social media manager to promote all that amazing content you're creating, grow your social following, and monitor and engage with your various social networks.

2

Or, you could shift those resources to a technical SEO hire. Since you're already churning out amazing content that's helping your website skyrocket in the SERPs, you could amplify that effort with a technical SEO who can ensure that your website operated in such a way that Google's crawlers can actually read and index every bit of content you're creating, and not punish your site for mistakes you didn't even know you were making.

Understand how SEO and social media integrate into the rest of your marketing. [Sign up for HubSpot's 30-day free trial to learn at your own pace.](#)

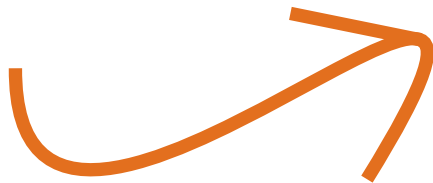


A promotional banner for HubSpot. On the left, an orange box contains the text "30 Days Free". In the center, a dark grey box contains the HubSpot logo (a stylized orange 'o' with three dots) and the text "HubSpot All-In-One Marketing Software". On the right, an orange box contains a white right-pointing arrow.



INTEGRATE **SOCIAL MEDIA** IN YOUR MARKETING

Don't let social media live in a silo from the rest of your marketing. Integrate it with all other assets you are using to optimize your efforts and get better results.



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...to learn how the HubSpot all-in-one marketing software can help you with these tasks.

TRACK THE **ROI** OF YOUR SEO EFFORTS

Not sure if SEO is worth your time and ongoing investment? Make up your mind using real data by tracking the ROI of your marketing channels.



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