

CISION[®] EBOOK

PR and SEO

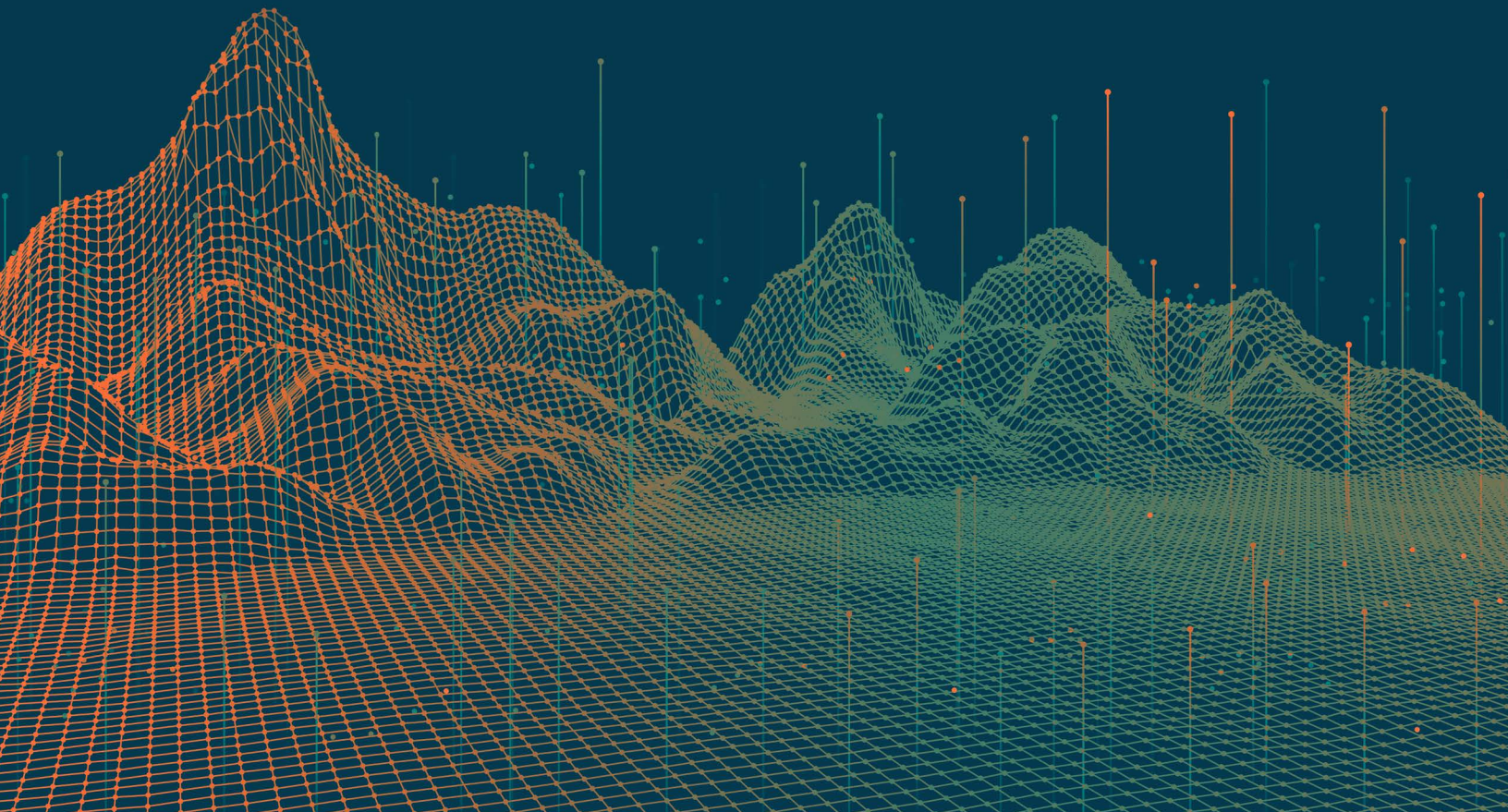
A Beginner's Guide



In a marketing landscape dominated by data (some might even say oversaturated by data), teams are getting smarter about what they measure; the most important metrics are the ones that have a bottom-line impact on the business, after all.

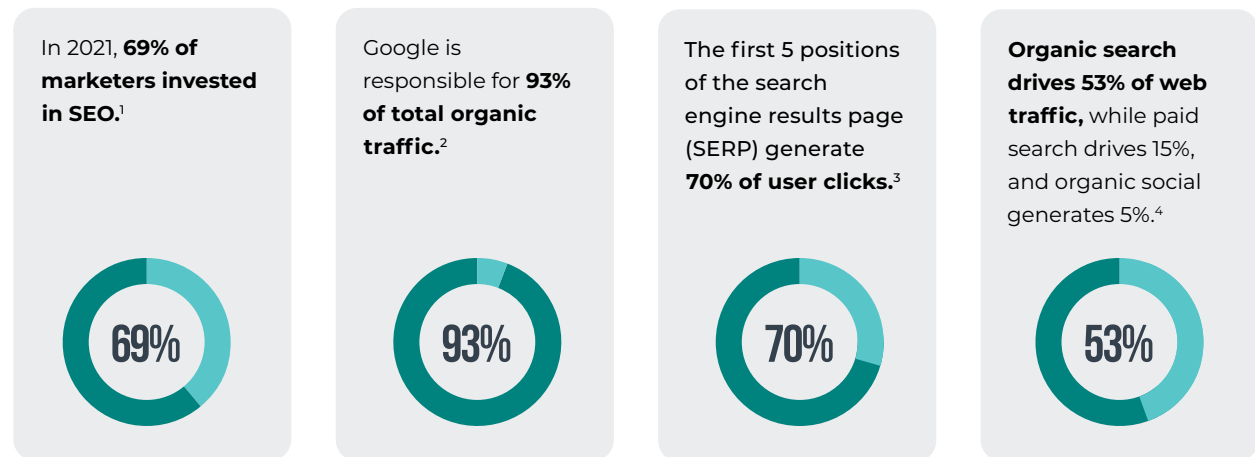
Improved technology means PR and comms pros finally have access to the same level of data as their digital marketing peers, allowing you to prove the value of the work you've been doing using hard numbers. Teams who have integrated their earned media alongside their paid and owned can finally fully measure its impact, often making it the most valuable form of media— not to mention [the most trusted](#).

If a strong SEO (search engine optimization) strategy isn't already part of your larger approach, make that a goal for your team starting now. Why should PR pros care about SEO? Of the many factors that drive SEO success, **high-quality content** and **authoritative links** are two of the most important; two things that are already part of your daily work.



As a PR pro, you specialize in creating – or tapping journalists or influencers to create – high-quality content. And publications, from major media outlets to niche industry trade pubs, tend to have high domain authority, a metric that measures how high a website will rank on search engines. In other words, your work as a PR pro gives you the ability to influence SEO – one of the most powerful digital marketing levers – with the work you’re already doing.

We want to show you how to take advantage of that opportunity.



A NOTE BEFORE WE BEGIN

Consider this piece a fundamental overview of SEO for PR pros. If you’re already familiar with SEO, this information may be a little rudimentary, however, it serves as a helpful refresher. And for context, review our [Communicator’s Funnel](#) so you know how we’re approaching this subject in terms of an integrated strategy.

 **Got questions?**
Find us on Twitter any time at @Cision.



WHERE

THE COMMUNICATOR'S FUNNEL

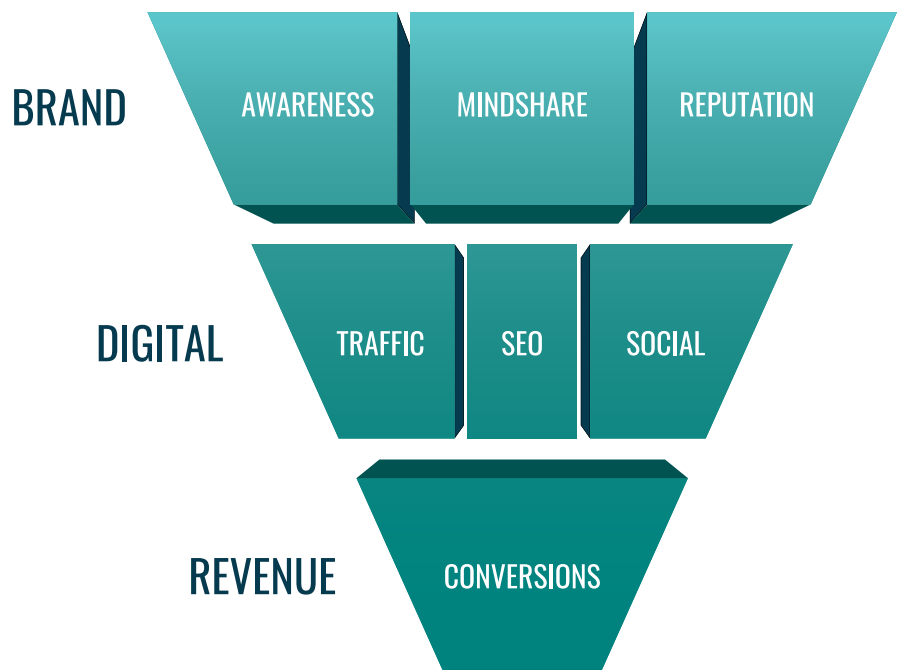


Marketers use a marketing funnel or "Buyer's Journey" model to understand their objectives and key metrics at each stage. We can apply a similar model – the Communicator's Funnel – to PR and communications. Starting at the top, we have brand impact, measuring awareness, and reputation. These metrics give you a good yardstick for the actual impact your PR work is having on your brand.

For the data-driven PR strategy, digital impact breaks down into traffic (both to your website and to other digital properties), SEO (what we're all here for!), and social impact. These are all measurable with tools like Google Analytics, or a strong PR analytics platform that integrates web and social analytics.

This section is our main focus in this piece, since this is where SEO lives and where it will impact PR's digital metrics and goals.

But for further context, we'll mention that the next step down the funnel is revenue, which is why we are tracking all of this in the first place: to measure PR's contribution to the bottom line. By working with your digital marketing peers and accessing their tools, you can measure where your efforts led to actual conversions.



Now that you're thinking about your PR strategy in a more data-driven framework, let's refocus on SEO.

WHAT

SEO (SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION)



SEO was born when website owners realized that high rankings in search engines brought valuable business results. When done right, increasing your website's rank brings higher visibility that inevitably drives increased website traffic, creating a positive feedback loop. This is valuable traffic, because these users are already searching for the product or service you offer; they're often warmer business leads. This is why organic web traffic — traffic driven by natural search rankings — usually drives conversions at a much higher rate than other drivers of web traffic, such as paid search or social search.

SEO TO AMPLIFY PR EFFORTS

As PR pros, we have several audiences to serve. From our executive team to the wide array of journalists we regularly interact with, there is no lack of opinions. But understanding which metrics search engines use to qualify "quality content" is a strong starting point to justify the direction of your PR efforts. So when you're drafting your next piece, consider these SEO qualifiers:

- 1. Engagement metrics:** Search engines seek the "long click"; that is, when someone searches a specific term or phrase, and they click on a search result, do they stay on that page for an extended period of time? If so, that signifies they found what they needed and that link is legitimate. If they quickly abandon the page, and go back to the results, it seems the user was not satisfied with the site. This is where "keyword stuffing" gets sites in trouble; they might get several initial clicks but as people abandon the page at a rapid pace, search algorithms take note and drop the site's search rank.



- 2. Machine learning:** Google is constantly rolling out improvements to its search algorithms that mimic human evaluation of search behaviors. This can get technical, but it means that Google is no longer fooled by “black hat” strategies of the past meant to trick or manipulate search engine algorithms.
- 3. Backlinks:** We dive deeper into backlinks later in this piece, but this is where PR gets to be the rock star. Search engines view backlinks as a proxy for votes and popularity. Journalists understand the value of backlinks and therefore need them just as badly. So never hesitate to ask for a backlink from your PR efforts. That would be like stopping right before the finish line of a race. Ask for a backlink at every opportunity!

TOOLS YOU CAN USE: SEMRUSH

Keyword research tool: Use this keyword research tool to look for the keywords you’ll want to own in upcoming PR campaigns (you ideally want keywords with high search volume and low competition). You can also compare the number of backlinks to your site vs. your competitors’ sites.

SEO TO BENEFIT PR EFFORTS

PR can also use SEO to its benefit. You can use SEO analysis to focus on higher quality sites and the most impactful journalists, in order to drive high quality web traffic that translates to business revenue.

You might already be influencing SEO if...

- You’re interacting with influencers, journalists and bloggers via social media
- You’re pitching guest posts to news outlets or other online publications with highly engaged audiences
- You’re asking journalists, thought leaders, and others who talk about your products for backlinks, direct mentions, etc.



HOW SEO AFFECTS PR

How to prioritize your pitch list for maximum SEO impact:

1

Use Cision to look at previous coverage on the topic you're writing about.

2

Sort outlets by highest Domain Authority. Click on the outlet to add it to your pitch list. The Domain Authority is a 1-100 score predicting how well a website ranks in search engines.

3

If you don't have access to Cision, check out Moz's Open Site Explorer to manually research which outlets have greatest Domain Authority and consider these a top priority for pitching.

A strong SEO strategy includes quality content that target audiences will find useful, as well as the need to build relationships with authoritative websites (think *The New York Times*), in an effort to get one of them to link back to your website. Conveniently, quality links and content are the ingredients to great public relations, so PR can be a powerful lever for driving SEO results.

Recall that SEO is the CMO's favorite marketing channel, because all traffic from organic search is free! If you can drive high-quality traffic from search, your CMO will be happy, your CAC (cost to acquire a customer) numbers will improve, and you can justify additional budget to expand the program driving those awesome results: PR.

PR also drives serious value for digital marketing and SEO, which means executives can justify earmarking budget for another PR campaign, an incremental headcount, or an increase in PR agency retainer.

TOOLS YOU CAN USE: MOZ OPEN SITE EXPLORER

Develop a High-Quality Inbound Link Profile: Moz offers free SEO tools that let you explore metrics like top-ranking keywords and Domain Authority.



MEASURING SEO

SEO is all about getting found when people search in Google or other search engines. PR can be a big asset for this, but with time as a commodity, PR pros need to focus on the most effective publications. Some publications have a high level of SEO impact while others don't, and knowing which are the most impactful to your strategy is key.

To start, look at the Domain Authority of your referring domains to help assess whether they're helping increase your rankings for desirable search terms. This is important because – as we've mentioned – not all links are created equal.

A single link from a high-traffic, highly-regarded website can have a big impact on where you rank in search engines and, consequently, an impact on how easy it is to find your content. Links from lower-traffic, lower-authority sites still improve your search rankings, but to a lesser degree.

SEO impact is a loaded metric, so let's break it down even more, by diving into Domain Authority and backlinks in more detail.





DOMAIN AUTHORITY

Domain Authority, developed by Moz, is a score (on a 100-point scale) that predicts how well a website will rank on search engines. A well-established publication with quality traffic, informative content and strong audience interaction will have high Domain Authority.

Obviously, this means you'll want to include publications with high Domain Authority when evaluating and placing content. This adds a dimension to the research you already do when planning your pitch strategy; start by researching the top publications and journalists in your market, then ask which publications have the strongest Domain Authority and which journalists have the highest impact.

If you're wondering how to go about this, there are different ways to measure a publication's Domain Authority: Uncover content and link-building opportunities, and track your site's link profile over time, comparing it to competitors for intelligent, targeted link-building using free tools like Moz.

With this information, you can focus your PR efforts on the publications and journalists that are going to have the greatest positive impact on your brand by doing things like driving more traffic to your digital assets and bringing more quality eyes to stay and read them, which hopefully turn into warm leads that are easier to close.



TOOLS YOU CAN USE: CISION DOMAIN AUTHORITY WIDGET

Measure PR's influence on your brand's search engine ranking by integrating with the industry-best SEO software provider, Moz. Cision customers can now identify high SEO potential outlets and measure their impact on their company's search rankings.



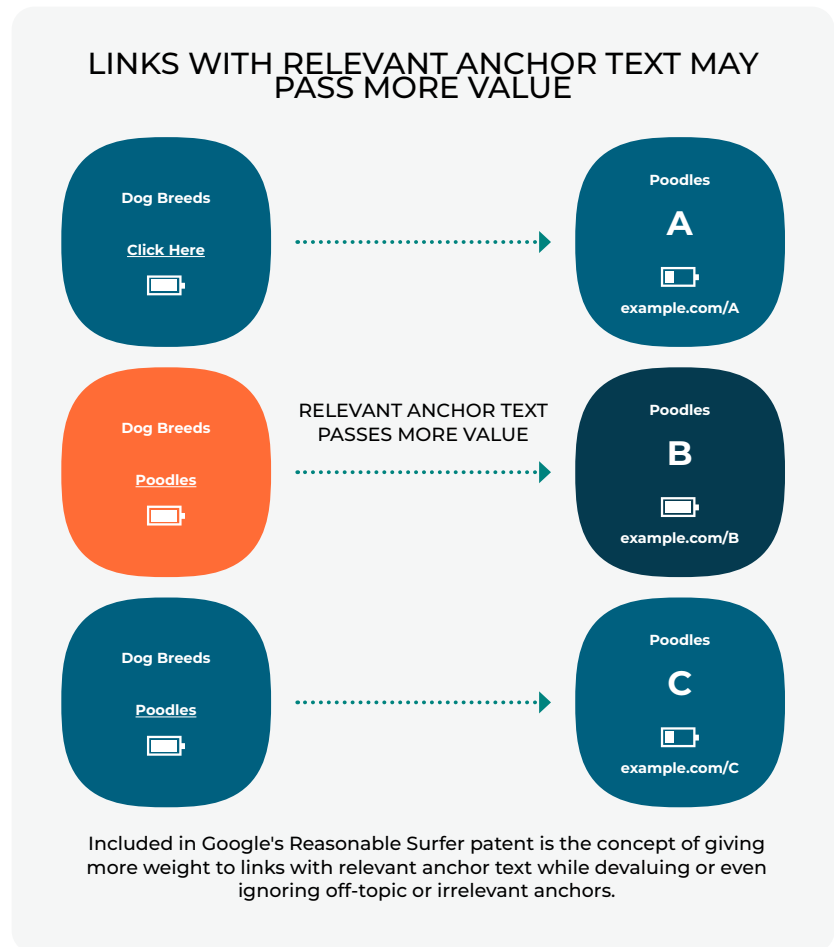
BACKLINKS

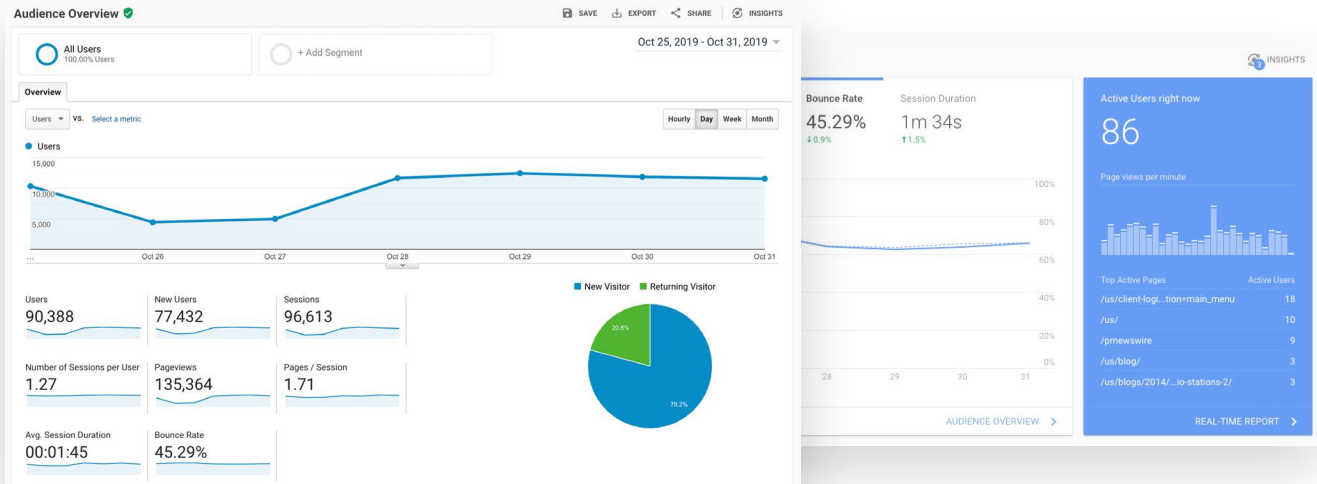
One of your primary goals as a PR pro should be to land backlinks in your PR coverage, because ultimately you want an engaged reader to visit your website to learn more about your brand. If industry influencers or high-readership publications are talking about you, and linking to your website, then Google deems you more credible.

Additionally, if you're frequently linked to on social media or influential blogs, Google sees that as organic interest in your brand, which has a positive impact on your company's search engine ranking. Google specifically gives priority in search to companies with the greatest number of relevant backlinks, and PR is one of the best sources for generating strong backlinks from relevant sources.

To take it a step further, *how* the backlink is structured can have an impact too. "Anchor text" is the clickable text in a hyperlink. Whether or not the anchor text reads "name of your company" vs. "keyword/phrase for which you want to rank" will play a role.

For example, say you are the PR person for an organic dog treat company called Doggums. You've just posted an article titled "How to Bake Your Own Dog Treats" that you're hoping will help drive sales, and you're starting to gain some press coverage. You'll receive more SEO "power" in links where the anchor text reads "how to bake your own dog treats" and links to that article, rather than "click here" or "Doggums" which links to your homepage.





TOOLS YOU CAN USE: CISION GOOGLE ANALYTICS INTEGRATION

Track the amount of direct traffic PR drives to your website from people reading a PR article and clicking a backlink. Track the correlation between your website traffic and PR coverage. If you see both a spike in coverage and traffic, your coverage has likely influenced SEO and helped generate more traffic from search.

- 1: [https://www.hubspot.com/hubs/State-of-Marketing%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.hubspot.com/hubs/State-of-Marketing%20(2).pdf)
- 2: <https://www.oberlo.com/statistics/search-engine-market-share>
- 3: <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-first-page-clicks/374516/#close>
- 4: https://videos.brightedge.com/research-report/BrightEdge_ChannelReport2019_FINAL.pdf



UNLOCKING YOUR POTENTIAL

With PR's unique ability to generate high-quality content and obtain valuable links from authoritative outlets, PR can significantly move the needle for search engine optimization and increase the volume of traffic coming from search.

Forward-looking PR teams are seizing the opportunity to become marketing's linchpin and are optimizing their PR strategy to accomplish SEO goals. By aligning with SEO on keywords and content, shaping their pitch list around SEO impact, and striving for valuable backlinks, they're able to demonstrate tremendous business impact and justify an increased share of the marketing budget.

Ready to start tracking how your PR coverage is impacting SEO?

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