



unique

**EARNED SEO
MONETISING SOCIAL WITH SEO**

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SYZYGY / GROUP

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1 Social SEO

Social SEO misleads as it misses what search engines look at

The Value of Social Media for SEO

According to TNS research 86% of the UK engages in social media, with over 46% doing so daily. Social media is becoming the main form of communication between friends and associates. It's a big part of the internet and search engines realise this.

Businesses however, are hesitant to enter social media. Marketers are still arriving at best practice for measuring a return on investment. And because it is online, there are expectations of direct revenue benefit from every campaign. What many marketers do not realise is that the value already exists. It exists in your search results ranks on Google, Bing or Yandex.

It's happening right now, to your brand, online every single day for every single search. If you are not looking at social as part of your SEO strategy, you're missing one way to monetise your social.

Social SEO is Earned SEO

The boundaries between social and SEO are clear. Interaction between people and brands in online communities like Facebook, Twitter or Reddit is social. Whereas search engines determine relevance and authority of the best content to meet a search term which SEO attempts to manipulate. However, it is the use of social data by search engines that integrates the channels, bringing them closer through content and what people think about that.

Google also determines the strength of the opinion by judging the sentiment rating and authority of the person making the comment. When consumers talk about a brand online, that opinion may or may not count. How frequently they comment, how many people are listening to them and the topics they usually talk about are used to determine that person's authority. So like many social campaigns, you want people with authority, key online influencers, to talk about you in social media.

Sentiment is another determining factor in rank. Like social media you want good comments and strong advocacy for the brand to benefit from the social chatter. Advocacy can come in simple forms like how many people like something or how many are following your twitter profile. It also comes in more common forms.

Earned media through re-tweets and shares provide data sources for Google and Bing to determine whether the content is worthwhile. The velocity that your brand gathers likes, shares and re-tweets shows extremely strong advocacy and this can rank your content very quickly.

All of these things help determine rank for your brand on websites. However, there are some other things to consider – the semantic web, time, location(s) and presence.

2 The importance of SEO to social

Social SEO misleads as it misses what search engines look at

SEO monetises your social strategy

Interactions in social media can inspire people and create community and advocates for your brand and data describing your service. But in a direct response, measured media world, social often fails to monetise. SEO however, is a proven response channel, easily measured and scalable.

Now, search engines are looking at social data to understand which brands to rank and what to display. SEO is now an important component in proving the value of social through displaying social data and ensuring rank benefits are derived from social interactions.

Social media also plays a vital role in SEO, both by generating links (directly and as part of marketing programmes targeted at influencers), and through the popularity of a brand as expressed through the frequency and sentiment of conversations and media consumed around a brand on social media.

A successful social media strategy must therefore address specific SEO marketing and communications objectives. From a technical point of view, social media activities must be integrated in such a way as to maximise their effect on revenue generation through improving search rank, traffic and conversion rates.

Search rankings of a page for a given search phrase are affected by:

- The relevance of the page to the topic and keywords searched
- The authority of the page
- The authority of the domain on which the page sits.

Earned and owned media

When we talk about websites, Facebook pages and Twitter profiles we are really talking about **owned media**. Things you control that are part of the digital world. An output of owned media is **earned media**, the conversations and interactions with your brand. Ensuring the main component of your owned media – your website – benefits from earned media requires some integration of the four components of Earned SEO.

The link graph

Traditionally, the main factor in determining the authority of a page and a domain was the links to that page and to that domain, collectively described as the **link graph**.

Specifically this considers:

- The number of links and diversity of links
- The relevance of the links (as derived from the content and link graph of the linking website, the content on the linking page, the anchor text used in the link to your page)
- The authority and trust of the page and website

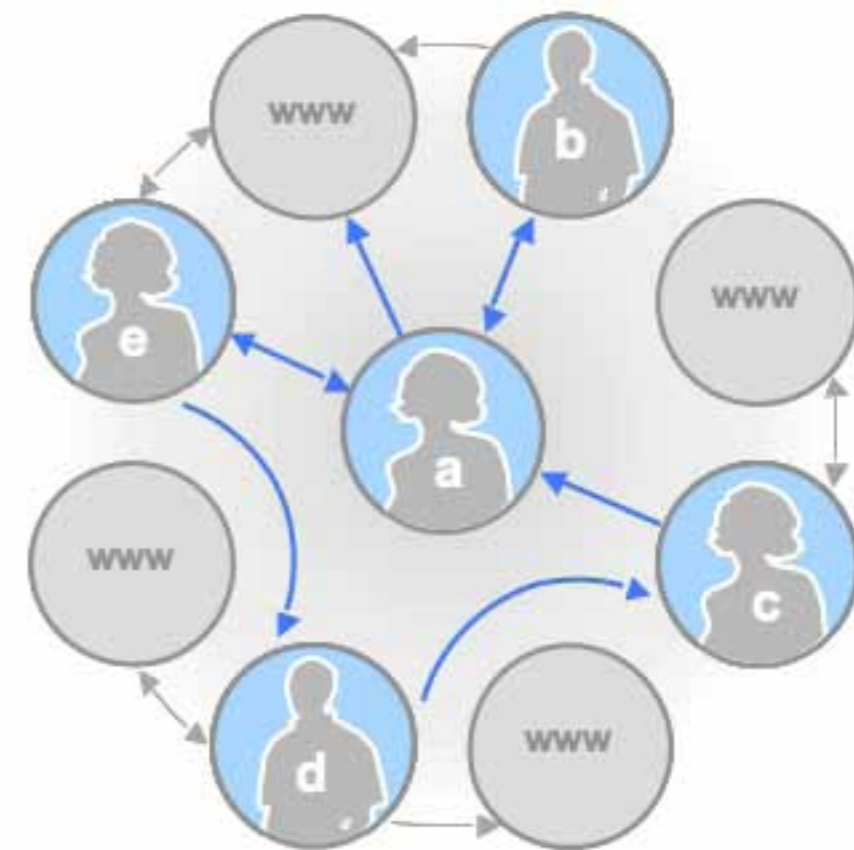
The social graph

Since the advent of Social Media, search engines have expanded their algorithms to consider the reputation and popularity of a brand and its website. This is called the **social graph**.

The social graph considers the connections between people, just like the link graph considers the connection between pages (via links). It looks for two types of publicly declared connections

- links between websites and Social Media profiles and messages
- relationships between people (e.g. Twitter followers, Facebook fans)

Just as search engines consider the nature of links, so too it considers the nature of the people who are talking about a brand or website (and linking to it, from Tweets for example), considering the popularity of a source and its relevancy and authority on a given topic.



TITLE: Google Open Graph
SOURCE: Google

Social Search Engine Optimisation

Earned SEO tends to focus on the practice of exposing good content to a wide audience for sharing and linking. This creates reputation and authoritative signals in the form of:

- 'Traditional' links from social websites like Twitter, YouTube, Digg and Stumbleupon
- Earned citations, impressions and authority feeding into the social graph - that is to say, where content is shared and propagated in a viral effect; and 'liked' or advocated by users of Social Media

The benefits for SEO manifest themselves in different ways.

Increased PageRank for the page holding the content that is being advocated

This is traditional SEO Page Rank theory with the added consideration of trends in what people are talking about. Search engines consider links and the relevance of a page for phrases that are trending. If people are talking about and linking to your content, their influence varies depending on relevance factors such as the context and vocabulary used as well as the authority and reputation of the advocates.

Buzz around a topic or piece of content can propel content up the search engines almost instantly in response to an anticipated interest or demand. Improved search engine rankings from this buzz can be cemented through earning permanent links from other websites.

Page authority can be engineered towards revenue generating pages with strategic engineering of internal links to ensure that SEO performance improves for the most profitable keywords.

However the SEO of content pages themselves helps reinforce the Earned SEO process, as fans and followers are recruited and the brands become more 'social'. Potential customers are also exposed to brand positioning and service related messages that help develop awareness and preference towards your brands

Increased Site Authority for the sites associated with a brand

Propagation of content through social media by influencers naturally leads to more links from bloggers and websites to your websites and your Social Media profiles. In addition to this, citations of your brand are also taken into consideration, again with influence varying depending on the authority and reputation of the advocates.

Although search engines are quite good at understanding who is who on the web, the social graph can be mapped a brand's revenue generating websites by adding 'rel=me' tags to the links between the brands' Social Media profiles and its websites.

Increased Site Authority helps a website's pages rank well for any given keyword, benefiting rank for all profitable keywords.

The elements of “Earned SEO”

The semantic web

Social media is a significant driver of the ‘semantic web’. The semantic web is a common code framework that helps describe the meaning of elements in a web page. It allows you to tell search engines where you have good user ratings to display in the search engine results page. It also describes the physical location of a shop or point to a reviewer as a friend of the brand.

Customers use Social Media as a platform to share their stories and experiences. Yandex and Google now use these to augment search results. By displaying user ratings a brand can monetise positive sentiment with increased click traffic from higher search ranks.

The important aspect of the semantic web is to confirm the relationship between a brand’s website and their Facebook page and the subsequent extended relationships of your followers. This is called your social graph. The social graph looks for edge types – the connection of one to another. Properly described in the code, you can tell search engines where there is another ‘me’, who your ‘friends’ are as well as your ‘family’ and other close associations.

Time (and time again)

Social data in search engines doesn’t last. Google feeds tweets and likes through the search engine but only retains the information that has strong influence on results. The raw data is purged within 14 days. This means the social activity may only have a temporary effect on your search results.

Google uses an algorithm patented as Queries Deserve Freshness (QDF). In this they look for the latest, popularly relevant result, like a news result. A flavour of this is being used with social data to interpret popular, trending topics in social forums like Twitter and Facebook.

For a brand this means you can push yourself high for a short period of time within a particular set of topical queries. However the result does not last and you may disappear soon afterwards. As a result, you have to re-earn your rank time and again in campaign waves before Google understands your brand is consistently relevant to that term and provides more permanent rankings.

Location, location, location

Increasingly, social data is collected via mobile phones with the GPS chips to provide the location. Google also gathers reviewer feedback of a brand's performance in a particular branch or outlet. This means much of the semantic web and reviewer information that Google receives can be mapped and provided back in the search results. So are they using it? Yes they are.

Google Places is the business directory attached to Google Maps. It turns local content about a brand into reputational data and provides this straight back to its users. For destination specific searches, Google makes sure its users see the service performance and reputation of each business.

It's not just location searches either. Increasingly Google is 'sniffing' your IP address and resolving this into a location. When you type into Google a brand's name, Google may understand you are searching from a specific location using the internet's telephone directory of IP addresses. If the brand has local branches, it will provide these back to the user as augmented Google Places listings.

Presence

Search engines favour brands with presence. To truly benefit from earned SEO you have to be in it, be in it big and be an influencer in social media. Search engines are looking for how often your brand is tweeted, how often they interact with you and how serious you are about engaging. This means having the Facebook page, Twitter wall and Youtube channel.

Search engines are also looking for who is talking about you. Is your brand an icon of marketing? If search engines are to believe this, they will look to whether Seth Godin, JP Rangiswami, Mashable and e-consultancy are talking about you. Want to be pre-eminent for design search terms? Search engines will look for your brand in design forums, discussions and blogs.

Presence requires the brand to take online seriously and take social to its heart. Social doesn't mean display advertising on Facebook. For search engines it means the same thing as people. Social means engagement in all forms with all people, particularly the influencers until they start to believe you are a major influence for a given topic.

3 Using content to compel earned media

Create social objects to attract a community of shared interest

In order to support a brand's communications objectives, a successful social media strategy will be one that promotes and positions the brands, builds relationships with customers and influencers and provides a platform for conversations. This requires a community to be generated around shared values and great content.

To support a brand's business objectives, a successful social media strategy must also harness the message credibility, SEO benefits and revenue generation that this conversation can provide. This requires content to be carefully integrated across several online channels.

Influencer Audiences

Content created around a broad set of values rather than a brand's core proposition can be used as link-bait (content designed to attract social media sharing and links from blogs), and as a hook through which to engage with a wider range of influencers including customer-service and business blogs, marketing and advertising blogs.

Building relationships

A steady stream of content on selected themes can be used as the basis for building mutually beneficial relationships with influential tweeters and bloggers. These relationships can be used to propagate content, produce collaborative content and generate links to specific articles using targeted keywords.

- Republishing articles and linking back to influential blogs
- Retweeting (and having the branded content retweeted)
- Commenting on blog posts and linking to related information on the brand's blog
- Offering and requesting guest-blogging
- Collaborating on content production

Link-bait

Fewer, selected pieces of really great content can be promoted via planned marketing campaigns. These pieces of content may include primary research, white papers, creative infographics and video content.

Internal Audiences

Centring the blog on the brand's core values also allows the blog to reinforce the value proposition amongst its internal markets. This has the potential to improve customer service in itself, through service advocacy and 'living the values'.

Automatically publishing blog updates on social media platforms

Social Media platforms, notably Twitter and Facebook, will act as channels to promote content to new and existing followers and fans. These sites accept automatic updates in the form of feeds from your website/blog.

Guest posts to swap quality links

Although mass link-swapping is not a good SEO tactic, guest blogging – the creation and publishing of unique and engaging content on third-party blogs – can be beneficial to SEO as well as taking brands into the blogosphere via relevant, high-quality and authoritative blogs.

Furthermore the links can be engineered in such a way that permanent inbound links are obtained, while outbound links are eventually archived.

Geotargeted, embeddable photos

Photos and images should be submitted to image sharing social media websites like Flickr and geotargeted (by geotargeted we mean associated with a specific geographic location).

These photos can then be embedded by others into their blogs, and into third party websites, notably including profiles and routes on Google Maps.

MRSS & RSS feeds

An MRSS feed would be a feed of all the content that the brand produces across all media. Similarly to using RSS feeds, the MRSS feeds allow people to feed your information onto their blog, earning referrals and links back to the brand websites.

Creating a community

Fan recruitment and engagement on a community like Facebook will focus on communications around the content produced.

Products, tactical offers and promotions

All products, tactical offers and promotions will be communicated on the brand's social media pages. Promotions and offers in particular are extremely shareable, and should encourage sharing amongst users.

For every update of this type, at least one question can be posed around the theme of the update, as a hook into conversation around the content. This may be as simple as asking for people's opinion on the offer.

Direct questions and competitions

Updates to the brand's social media pages should be designed to provoke a response, often asking for contributions. Competitions are a good way of incentivising people to join the conversation, and prompting them into action when they may not have otherwise posted a comment.

Blog posts

Much of the content that is added by the brand will come from the blog posts. This content is designed for inclusion in Facebook, with broad appeal and subjects that are designed to inspire and pose questions, stimulating a response. These blog posts will be fed directly onto Facebook (and Twitter) without manual intervention.

For every blog post, at least one question can be posed around the theme of the content, as an alternative hook into conversation around the content.

Content syndication partners

To extend blogger outreach and marketing to influencers, a brand should seek to syndicate content onto partner websites. This can be achieved via RSS and MRSS feeds, which can be set up using Google Feedburner amongst other providers. Collaborative content would form part of the link-bait campaigns that we propose to undertake, rather than additional content.

Joining in the conversation

As well as creating and publishing content, the blogger relationship team can find out where the most interesting conversations about customer service and travel are happening on the web and make sure that the brand is a leading part of the conversation, using social media platforms. You find this from buzz monitoring.

A successful Social Media strategy is one that takes the wealth of insight that social media provides – thousands of ideas, needs and frustrations straight from the customers mouth – and uses it to reshape the marketing strategy.

Social Media is all about conversations between customers, opinion leaders and influencers. A successful Social Media strategy is therefore one that identifies the most influential people in order to target them with relationship marketing communications programmes.

Listening

We've never been able to understand customers as well as we can today. The analysis of a brand's target audiences' online conversations allows us to understand their sentiment towards a brand as well as those of its competitors. It allows you to analyse customer behaviour, to spot customer service issues and to listen out for comments that would have previously gone unanswered.

Listening allows you to better tailor your response to meet their expectations. The audience who see these conversations will be heavily influenced by what they read, so people's conversations have a big knock-on effect.

Buzz driving SEO

Listening to conversations is not just about improving customer service. It is also about a listening strategy to increase the effectiveness of your link-building, by targeting the most influential bloggers, tweeters and linkers.

We can measure the influence of each person talking about your brand online, which allows us to 'recruit' those influential voices to drive inbound links to the brand's websites.

Listening will also allow us to identify negative sentiment and address these issues quickly, reducing the amount of negative keywords/vocabulary associated with your brand.

Several buzz monitoring services are available, such as Sysomos, which combines a data capture and categorisation tool, with human analysis and expertise.

- Volume of conversation and **where** the conversations are taking place
- The **influence** of the site or person posting
- **What makes** the conversations or posts are **positive / negative / neutral**
- Keywords used in relation to the **brand** to assess **associations** (emotive: like, love, hate vs. Functional: credit cards, interest rates)

The Listening consists of:

- Assessing conversation data through the tool
- Reading through key posts (e.g. Negative / Most Influential)
- Filtering the conversation picked up and adding notable posts into client report
- Extracting insights and monitoring patterns in behaviour/conversation
- Identifying 'Red Flag' posts that need to be dealt with urgently versus conversations that can be monitored

How you join should be driven by a response strategy using informed responses of factual information, solutions, or honest answers to questions. You are looking for a positive community reaction with a social strategy that encourages advocacy and stimulates discussion adopting your content and ensuring earned media is magnified.

Show me the money

Once you have created a community with shared values the question is still asked – how do I make this a profitable exercise?

Integration occurs through the social graph data search engines collect and from earned media like reviews, tweets and location data. This provides a platform for search engines like Google to recalculate your websites 'authority'. In other words it will look again and decide whether you should rank higher in search engines. There are simple technical changes to your website to help this happen discussed in the next chapter.

4 Using earned SEO to monetise social

The revenue benefits of thoughts and endorsements

“Rich snippets”

The increasing appearance of star ratings in search results is driven by semantic mark up in web pages and Google Places.

[Pizza Suprema - New York, NY, 10001 - Citysearch](#)
 ★★★★★ 39 reviews
 Jun 15, 2010 ... What People Are Saying About **Pizza Suprema**. The Owner. **Pizza Suprema**. Owner. Located in Midtown, across from Penn Station and Madison Square ...
[newyork.citysearch.com](#) › [Manhattan](#) › [Restaurants](#) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

TITLE: Rich Snippets
 SOURCE: Google

This is a controllable feature that can be 'cherry picked' for your brand to show it in search results the best positive light. This example is provided by Google as best practice for using 'rich snippets' to display user ratings.

```
<div class="hreview">
  <span class="item">
    <span class="fn">L'Amourita Pizza</span>
  </span>
  <span class="rating">3.5</span>
  <span class="reviewer">Ulysses Grant</span>
  <span class="dtreviewed">2009-01-06</span>
  <span class="summary">"Delicious, tasty pizza in Eastlake."</span>
</div>
```

TITLE: Rich Snippets Code
 SOURCE: Google

The code points out to Google the location and date of the review, comments and claims that it is about your business. The code is placed on your web page using open standards which search engines support to display information.

Importantly, because this displays user ratings, the brand monetises ratings through search. Rich snippets may have an impact on your rank. It will definitely have an impact on your click through rate.

If, as part of your social marketing, you proactively encourage online ratings of your service, rich snippets can show a genuine, long term return on investment through the increase channel sales on search terms where they show.

“rel = me” 😊

Linking from your website to your home page ensures people can see you have one and may visit it in the future. For a search engine it simply provides another link to another page. It will not immediately recognise the relationship between your owned media.

The semantic web also solves this with the “rel=me” tag. The importance of this simple code which takes less than two seconds to add to a link cannot be over stressed. ‘Me’ is an important edge type describing the relationships within your social graph. With this code you claim the next page as another you in a different environment. So you directly connect any followers to your website as well as your Facebook page.

```
<a href="http://twitter.com/t" rel="me">@t</a>
```

TITLE: Other Me
SOURCE: Microformats.org

Your “rel=me” tag should be applied to your blog, Facebook page, YouTube channel, Twitter profile and any other important social media that encourages positive earned media. Rather than having four pots of fans and interactions you have told search engines it's really one big pot.

The result is vital for SEO allowing direct application of calculations of brand authority to be transferred to your website. Brand authority is important as Google's algorithm favours important brands. Social media is an area where brands are discussed and compared. If you encourage this through your owned media this important but small detail will help search engines transfer the interactions to your website.

Transferring interactions increases your website authority and your ranks will rise. Click traffic and revenue can be calculated from the increase in rank providing an ROI.

Buttons and feeds to encourage sharing/endorsement

Websites should encourage and ease the path to people willing to share content. Putting a Tweet this, Like or +1 button on a page helps to provide a simple and recognisable call to action, allowing users to promote and talk about the brand's content and services. These could be quickly applied to:

- Promotions
- Destination
- Blog content
- Homepages

For SEO, these buttons help build your social graph and expose links for more people to pass on. The more people share an article to their connections, the more you will drive traffic to the content. Search engines follow this information to understand which content is trending. Content can appear in search results very quickly, through the QDF algorithm, if it is compelling enough for people to share widely.

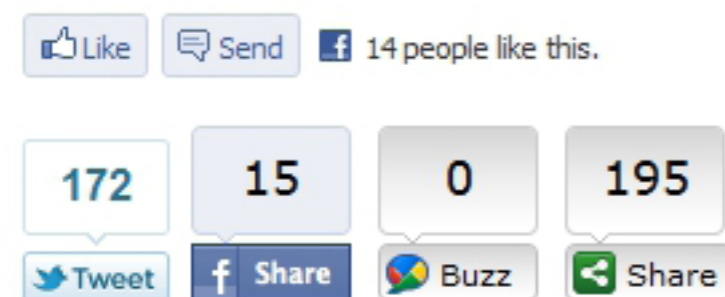
One way of proving content is becoming popular quickly is feeding the share and tweets back to the original content page. As people tweet the content a running feed will gather all the shares to a central archive.

A feed also gathers those sharing the content to the archive, drawing more connections to your social graph. Showing the people talking about your brand, service or piece of content on that page/site shows that information has credibility and wide endorsement.

For blog posts, promotions and guides this provides a further incentive to stay on the page and to share the information yourself. For product and service pages, it provides reassurance and a reason to purchase.

All of these raise your rank. Ensuring it raises rank on key landing pages by feeding tweets of promotions, sales and key earners will increase click traffic and widen the audience. This can be tied to revenue through your SEO tracking to form a visible ROI from social media.

Share This Article



TITLE: Share This

5 Summary

A search engine's measure of your brand's performance in social media

Social media is a big part of the web where consumers compare and rates brands and products. Brands are compelled to be in social media because without a voice, they are no longer an influence on the purchase.

In a direct response, measured world these same brands are struggling to show the revenue benefits of their social strategies, missing the opportunities apparent in search. SEO monetises social.

SEO provides a collection point of the positive things a brand has earned in social and realizes these through increased search engine ranks, click-through rates and visibility of promotions. It's called Earned SEO. And it's the key measure of your brand by search engines.



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Julian's background in online spans over 14 years, from leading internet start-ups, ecommerce websites to agency-side search engine optimisation. Julian has used online community and social strategies for SEO and online reputation benefits since 2003. In 2009 he discovered a new feature of Google's ranking algorithm using social interaction.

Julian creates thought provoking blogs that combine social media and SEO, and speaks at events frequently on search marketing trends, social search, geotargeting and mobile search.

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