SEO in 2022 - Critical factors to incorporate
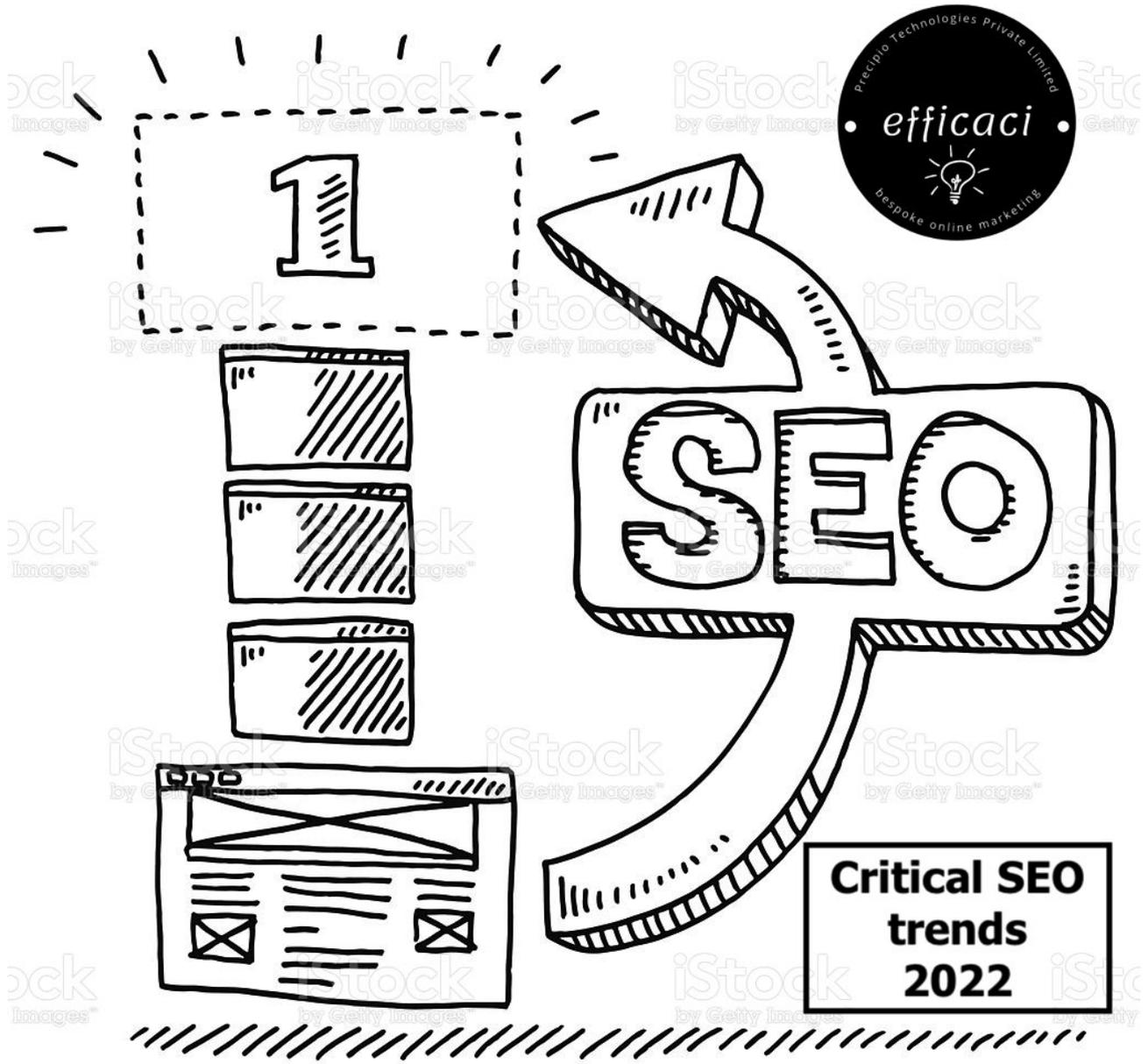

Google has about 93% of search market-share, according to some online sources. There are differences in data here and Google, of course, will not endorse any. This market-share declined by 1% in the last year and all other search engines grew. And, I do not foresee a substantial decline in Google's market share soon.

The most growing search engine today, worth a mention, is DuckDuckGo, which has grown over 40% in 2021 alone. A privacy-focussed search engine, DuckDuckGo will see a lot more traction in the future.

Keep this in mind, it is always wise to keep your SEO strategy open to all search engines. In this article, when I refer to Google, I am referring to a search engine. Google's branding is so awesome that even the most experienced marketers think 'Google' when someone mentions search.

Local and generic search results drove over 70% digital traffic in 2020 and 2021. This emphasizes the importance of SEO, going into 2022. From what I can foresee, I recommend taking a research-based, structured approach to the existing SEO function.

More important your SEO in 2022 should integrate the following critical trends to grow your SERPs and build a sustainable business.

Trend #1 Core Web Vitals and Desktop Page Experience

Rolled out on June 16th, 2021, Google's "Page Experience Update", ushered in better user experience by measuring "quality of page performance". Quality of a webpage performance depends on faster load times, mobile-friendliness, stability of page, security (https) and intrusive interstitials (pop-up ads etc.).

Core Web Vitals
Now in your favorite developer tools

	LCP	FID	CLS
PageSpeed Insights	✅	✅	✅
Chrome UX Report Brand new API, BigQuery and Dashboard	✅	✅	✅
Search Console	✅	✅	✅
Chrome DevTools	✅	TBT	✅
Lighthouse	✅	TBT	✅
Web Vitals Extension	✅	✅	✅

LCP = Largest Contentful Paint, FID = First Input Delay, CLS = Cumulative Layout Shift, TBT = Total Blocking Time

Fast pages and page speed have been a SERP ranking factor since 2010. However, introducing Core Web Vitals brings 3 extra dimensions to measure the overall page experience.

Core Web Vitals, as prescribed by Google, are largest contentful paint, cumulative layout shift and first input delay. Optimize for these factors and Google will understand that your webpage is doing better than the defined 'EAT' criteria.

According to Google – "Page experience is a set of signals that measure how users perceive the experience of interacting with a web page beyond its pure information value."

Trend #2 - EAT

EAT is one of the most significant ranking variable, and stands for Expertise, Authority and Trust. Though we cannot quantify these factors in terms of numbers or percentages, they are still ranking factors that showcase the quality of your web page.

Danny Sullivan ✔ @dannysullivan · Oct 11, 2019

Replying to @dannysullivan @rustybrick and 4 others

Is **E-A-T a** ranking factor? Not **if** you mean there's some technical thing like with speed that we can measure directly.

We do use **a** variety of signals **as a proxy to tell if content seems to match E-A-T as humans would assess it**.

In that regard, yeah, **it's a** ranking factor.

Taking a deeper look:

✳ Expertise – Accuracy, relevance with time and the depth of information on your web page will underline your expertise in the domain. Small actions like author bio's or links to such bios and regular content audit can take care of this ranking factor to a large extent.

✳ Authority – This is measurable in terms of the number of social media shares, citations that you get for the content. Authority is going to be the key to content marketing and promotion for SEO in 2022.

* *Trust* – *Trust is always to related to brand, and it defines the perception of your website and brand. Quality standards, references and similar factors can build trust quickly. Incorporate domain related standards and certifications to help your brand build consumer trust.*

Google's BERT update of 2019 (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) was a predecessor to the EAT concept. This update used neural network-based technologies for natural language processing. The aim was to build a deeper understanding of the complete context of a search query. Today, search results consider the context, too.

They retired BERT for the MUM (Multitask Unified Model) update on June 2021. This update overcame the format and language barriers by analyzing previous information about the search query and delivered improved results with lesser internal searches. MUM understands text and images and translates back and forth in over 75 languages, the exact number of languages that Google Assistant caters to. Can you see a relationship with voice-based search?

Google has upped the content quality criteria and businesses that focus on EAT will reap richer rewards in time. So, SEO in 2022 will focus on honest and EATable content.

Trend #3 - 4. Spam, Stuffing, Cloaking, Irrelevant Links and other "Toxins"

The latest Google update of 17th November 2021 has much to do with optimization strategies that bordered on 'spam'. In line with the June and July content quality updates, this update cleaned up many websites that used spam, like stuffing, cloaking, irrelevant links and other toxins for black-hat optimization from search results. SEO in 2022 is going to see a sea of change because of these updates.

Keeping away from such stuff is critical:

* *Keyword Stuffing – Overly using keywords on web pages can be detrimental to ranking and Google considers this spam. Optimize with a range of 1% to 1.5% and your content should be good to be indexed.*

* *Cloaking* – Most certainly a dishonest practice, cloaking is a technique that shows different content to search engines and users.

* *Irrelevant links* – Links on third party sites which are not relevant to your domain will not get your optimization anywhere. Similarly, buying links is a dangerous practice too. Believe me, Google can sense them and create its own intelligence to black-list your webpage in no time.

* *Toxins* – Other strategies or practices akin to using duplicate content without proper canonicalisations or using too much of advertising on your web page could be toxic. If it has to be for advertising, opt for google AdSense.

To be in Google's good books, consider EAT and stay away from all the above. Adhere to Google Webmaster Guidelines to build rankings faster. Google is forever teaching us 'Honesty is the best policy', and so did our primary school.

Trend #4 - The snippet problem

Quick searches have evolved through voice and image search. So, snippets that help get a quick insight into the results for a search query, which are available today, will not exist (my prediction). Most times, snippets show misleading information due to cloaking and other practices. Because of the MUM and content/spam related updates, those webpages that are toxic will not show on search results and thus the need for snippets becomes redundant.

In conclusion…

SERPs will get harder to come by and SEO in 2022 is going the honest way. So, business should put more energies into creating relevant, in-depth content and fine-tune the UX besides their normal SEO process. Gaming the search game will not cut it anymore. It never did.