

What to know about AI in SEO, according to a search expert

Article

Last week, **Cnet faced criticism** for discreetly using an AI text generator to write content—which turned out to be full of errors. Cnet is not the only company leveraging AI for clicks. In the same week, **Bankrate gained buzz** for publishing AI content and **Mint Mobile put out a full ad written by ChatGPT**.

AI is “for sure the hottest topic in the SEO space,” said Lily Ray, senior director of SEO and head of organic research at **Amsive Digital**. “But people are still being a little bit careful because we don't know exactly how Google is going to treat this type of content.”

“Don’t do anything drastic.” That’s Ray’s No. 1 piece of advice for marketers looking to game SEO with AI-generated content.

GPT-3 won’t be available for free forever. The tool’s open season has generated an explosion of AI-generated content (and human-generated content about AI-generated content), but eventually, it will come at a price. Don’t overhaul your team before knowing what that will be.

Google could penalize AI-generated content. “[Google has] literally overhauled [its] search quality guidelines to focus more on expertise and experience,” said Ray. That means Google has a renewed focus on human perspectives. “I would focus on that.”

“Google’s always 100 steps ahead” when it comes to weeding out spam content, according to Ray. And though AI content isn’t inherently spam, mass-generated content without fact-checking, editing, or oversight isn’t too far off.

“I just have a hunch that [Google] is figuring out ways to reverse-engineer how much AI content is used in the content-generation process,” said Ray.

What about the world beyond Google? **Microsoft is investing heavily in OpenAI**. Its search engine, Bing, is still the butt of jokes about outdated internet features. Could this partnership change Microsoft’s suite?

- “This is the first time that I can think of ... since Google has become the predominant player in the space, that there's been any threat to [its] business model or [its] dominance in the marketplace,” said Ray.
- “I think that the idea of integrating these tools into Microsoft products [and] Bing is a brilliant move by Microsoft,” Ray noted.

Google will fight back. The company just announced a **ChatGPT rival** launching this year with a focus on ethics in relation to misinformation and disinformation.

“This is just the beginning,” according to Ray, who is excited about ChatGPT and generative AI but cautious about the dangers of mis- and disinformation. That’s in line with Google’s goal

of prioritizing human expertise, but it's also in line with its business goals of staying ahead of Microsoft and other potential search rivals.

SEO what? AI-generated content isn't going away; it's getting more complex. So are the questions surrounding it for marketers.

- Explore AI, but don't put all your virtual eggs in one digitally rendered basket. Free tools will eventually come with a price tag.
- Listen to Google. Its search engine rewards content based on human experience and expertise. Though AI is increasingly advanced, volume of output will not replace quality of content.
- Keep an eye on new developments. The way people search is changing, either due to AI chatbots, the rising number of people on **TikTok**, or some new unknown disruptor.

For now, marketers cannot afford to count exclusively on generative AI. As Ray put it, "things work really well before they don't."

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