YOUR GUIDE TO
GOOGLE E-A-T

Content

PURELINQ
CONTEXTUAL LINK BUILDING SOLUTION

FREE E-BOOK

EXPLORING E-A-T CONTENT AND LINK BUILDING

We've created something we're excited about, an e-book that explores E-A-T content in relation to link building.

Google likes high-quality content. What does Google consider high-quality? E-A-T. Content with Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness.

E - Expertise

A - Authoritativeness

T - Trustworthiness

In this e-book, you will walk away with:

• A significantly stronger knowledge of not only why and how to build links to your site's **E-A-T content** to drive conversions.

• How to implement E-A-T quality content into your outbound link building strategy.

• Learn what tools will get you outperforming top ranking sites.

Download Free E-book Now!

www.purelinq.com/eat

rockcontent

Boost your SEO strategy with interactive content experiences

84% of consumers expect brands to produce content that entertains, provides solutions and produces experiences. Is your company meeting their expectations?

Your audience demands premium content experiences. **Rock Content helps you deliver.**

More engagement, more traffic
Users will engage and spend more time on your page, attracting backlinks

Get valuable data from your prospects
Interactive content provides you with valuable data so you can make improvements on your SEO On Page

Improve your mobile experience
Improve your mobile experience and you can get valuable points from the search engines

Increase your conversion rate
Interactive content converts 2x more than static content

2000+ brands have already selected Rock Content

Request a Demo →
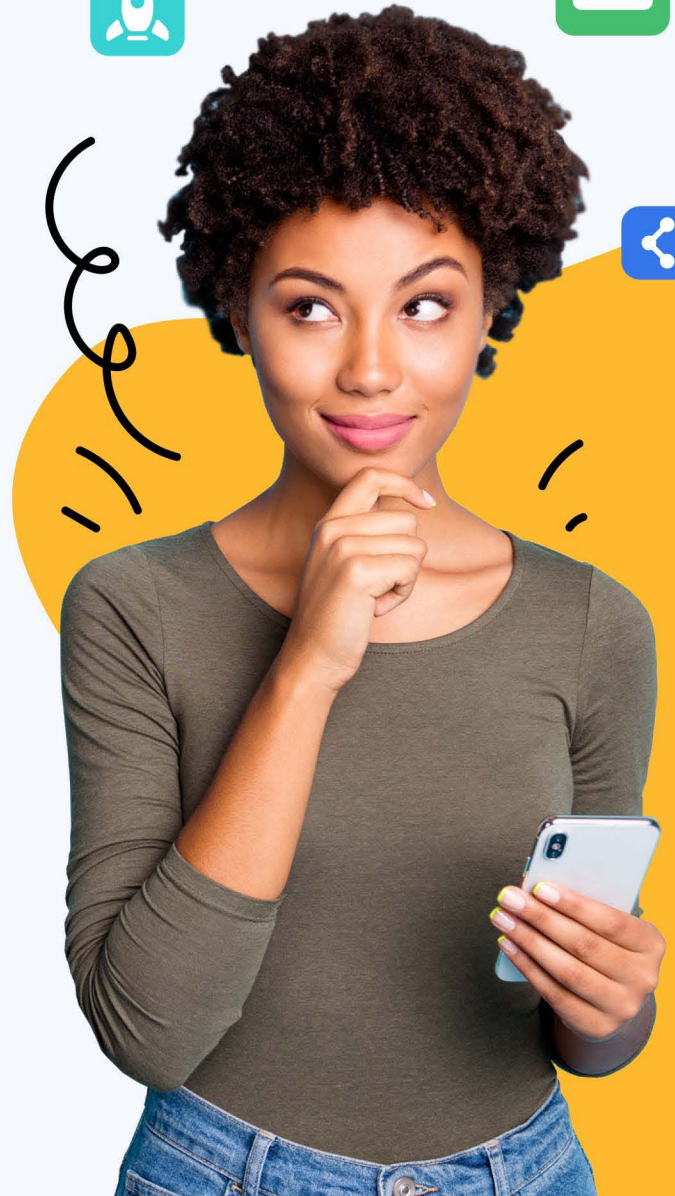
What Exactly Is E-A-T & Why Does It Matter to Google?
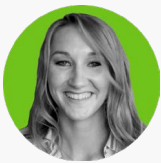
Anna Crowe
Assistant Editor, Search Engine Journal

E-A-T means Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness.

E-A-T is part of Google's algorithm and baked into Google's Search Quality Evaluator Guidelines.

Even Google says that E-A-T is "very important."

3.2   Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness (E-A-T)

Remember that the first step of PQ rating is to understand the true purpose of the page. Websites or pages without some sort of beneficial purpose, including pages that are created with no attempt to help users, or pages that potentially spread hate, cause harm, or misinform or deceive users, should receive the **Lowest** rating.

For all other pages that have a beneficial purpose, the amount of expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness (E-A-T) is very important. Please consider:

E-A-T should not be confused with "eat" and the foods we put into our mouths. Although, I have to admit, I'm suddenly craving a burrito. 🌯

If you're an SEO professional, you've probably heard a lot about E-A-T over the past few years.

But, what **exactly** is E-A-T? Is it a major update, a little tweak, or something in the middle? Do you need to change everything about your SEO strategy? Or can you safely ignore it like that half-eaten taco still in the fridge from last weekend?

In this guide, I'll explain exactly what E-A-T is, dive into Google's Search Quality Rater Guidelines, why it matters, and how to help your site rank better by feeding it E-A-T style content.

Here's a breakdown of what you can expect:

- **Chapter 2:** Google's Search Quality Raters Guidelines: A Guide for SEO Beginners

- **Chapter 3:** How to Use Structured Data to Support E-A-T

- **Chapter 4:** E-A-T & Link Building: A Guide to Evaluating Prospects

- **Chapter 5:** Surprising Facts About E-A-T

- **Chapter 6:** Google's E-A-T: Busting 10 of the Biggest Misconceptions

What Exactly Is E-A-T?

E-A-T is one of many guidelines Google uses to determine whether the content is valuable to readers and whether it should rank well.

The first mention of E-A-T occurred in 2014 when Google added the concept to their Search Quality Guidelines.

Google search quality evaluators were instructed to pay attention to:

- The **expertise** of the creator of the content.

- The **authoritativeness** of the creator of the content, the content itself, and the website.

- The **trustworthiness** of the creator of the content, the content itself, and the website.

In a nutshell, E-A-T is a characteristic that indicates a page is high-quality, making it helpful to users.

4.1   Characteristics of High Quality Pages

High quality pages exist for almost any beneficial purpose, from giving information to making people laugh to expressing oneself artistically to purchasing products or services online.

What makes a **High** quality page? A **High** quality page should have a beneficial purpose and achieve that purpose well. In addition, **High** quality pages have the following characteristics:

- *High level of Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness (E-A-T).*
- A satisfying amount of high quality MC, including a descriptive or helpful title.
- Satisfying website information and/or information about who is responsible for the website. If the page is primarily for shopping or includes financial transactions, then it should have satisfying customer service information.
- Positive website reputation for a website that is responsible for the MC on the page. Positive reputation of the creator of the MC, if different from that of the website.

Here's an example from Google that highlights what they mean by E-A-T:

> "High E-A-T news articles should be produced with journalistic professionalism – they should contain factually accurate content presented in a way that helps users achieve a better understanding of events. High E-A-T news sources typically have published established editorial policies and robust review processes."

Is E-A-T A Ranking Factor?

No, E-A-T is not technically a ranking factor, but it can impact your content's rank.

This is (almost) as confusing as Burger King's Whopperito, I know.

E-A-T is a guideline Google uses to determine what content is high-quality and should be ranked higher and part of several different aspects of its algorithm. So while it's not a direct ranking factor, it can have an impact on your overall search rankings indirectly.

While it does matter, it might not be important as some SEO professionals thought.

Gary Illyes from Google has indicated that all the talk about E-A-T is overblown and rarely mentioned internally.

Tweet

Natalia Witczyk @witczyk · May 13, 2020
Replying to @methode
And no EATing or yes EATing during the course? ;)
♡ 1   ⟲   ♡ 3   ⬆

Gary 鯨理 / 경리 Illyes ✓ @methode · May 13, 2020
No eat. Externally it's mentioned infinitely more than internally.
♡   ⟲ 1   ♡ 10   ⬆

So Why Is E-A-T Important for SEO?

Have you ever heard of the phrase "content is king"? Or "just create high-quality content"?

Don't answer that. Because, of course, you have. SEO pros have been blasting for more content on repeat.

While well-intentioned, those phrases make my eyes roll because they didn't actually tell us anything about what makes high-quality content.

More images? Longer form content? Alt tags galore? Better metas? The world may never know.

Now, Google is giving us a little bit of insight into what they consider high-quality content, and that can have enormous implications for content marketing and SEO pros.

E-A-T guidelines tell real human reviewers, who evaluate hundreds of websites, exactly what type of content Google considers high-quality.

According to their guidelines, great content should:

- Help users.

- Be created by an expert.

- Be posted on an authoritative site.

- Be trustworthy.

- Be updated regularly.

If possible, the content should be created by a high level of expertise, though "everyday expertise" from people with real-life experience is acceptable when appropriate.

Pages that spread hate cause harm, misinform, or deceive users may receive a lower E-A-T rating from search evaluators.

Here's Your E-A-T Checklist with 7 Ways to Improve Your Website's E-A-T

Now you know that E-A-T is not related to your mom's lasagna but to Google's algorithm. You know why it matters – and why SEO professionals are all at twitter about it.

But what does it mean for your site? It means you need to up your content game.

Here's a seven-step checklist to help your site be more authoritative and trustworthy.

1. Tell Visitors Who You Are

All three prongs of the E-A-T guidelines indicate Google wants to know who creates content and whether or not that person(s)/ website is a legitimate source for that knowledge.

If you don't already have an About Us page or a Team page that outlines who your team is – and who your content creators are – now is the time.

Author pages are a simple way to establish your team's expertise, authority, and trustworthiness.

2. Work With Experts to Create Content

Google doesn't just want good content; it wants content from people who know what they are talking about.

Rather than hiring ghostwriters to produce half-baked content on high-click key terms, work with experts in the field to create content Google will trust.

This might mean interviewing a scientist, hiring an expert to guest post, or working with another company to publish top-notch research.

3. Make the Purpose of Your Content Clear

What is the point of your content?

Do you want to inform, explain, convince, describe?

Use titles and headings that make the purpose of your content extremely clear and use straightforward language.

For example, I used headings in these posts that are questions, so you know you will have all your questions about E-A-T answered.

Don't produce long, meandering content. Get straight to the point and cover the topic as clearly (and as thoroughly) as possible.

4. Update Content Regularly

We create an incredible amount of data every day.

By 2025, we'll create an average of <u>463 billion GB of data every single day</u>. This means content gets outdated fast.
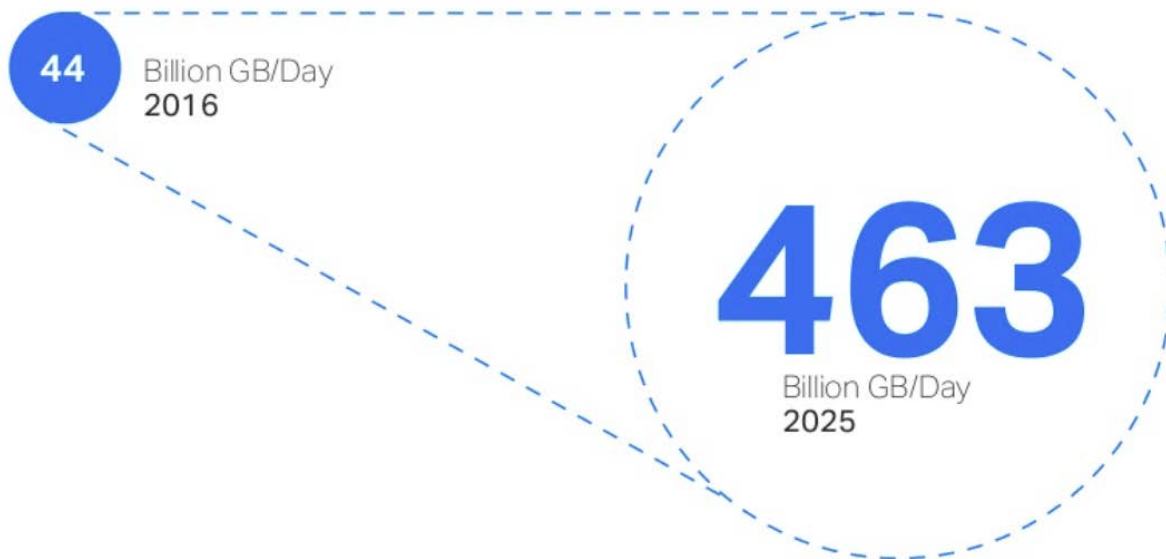
Tools get updated, sites get taken offline, people take on new roles, and Google updates the algorithm... again.

In my experience, the average lifespan of online content is around two years, depending on the topic and the industry.

Keep your content accurate and up to date by including content updates in your SEO strategy.

Update stats, best practices, and check for dead links every few years, particularly for high-ranking content.

5. Link to High-Quality Sources

If you want to be seen as an expert, then you need to rely on real data.

Link to official sources, studies, and research papers to back up your points and show you do know what you are talking about.

Use trusted sources like NCBI and JSTOR to find studies to back up statements.

You can also link to tweets, papers, or reports done by industry professionals. For example, in this article about E-A-T, I referred to comments from Gary Illyes from Google, who could (probably) be considered an expert on Google.

6. Consider Multiple Viewpoints

To be trustworthy, content should look at problems from multiple angles and examine what each angle contributes to the overall conversation.

For example, if your content is about the best types of ice cream to eat, there's a good chance one type of ice cream isn't perfect for every person.

One person may like their ice cream made with locally farmed eggs like this "Not Fried Chicken Ice Cream Bucket." And, another person may have a hard time choosing between ice cream and a cocktail, so they'll opt for The Boozy Capsule collection from OddFellows Ice Cream. Or BBQ flavored ice cream.

The possibilities are endless. But the goal is to explain the different viewpoints on a topic to establish trust with your audience and make it look like you're an expert.

7. Pay Attention to Your Online Reputation

Your online reputation can impact the trustworthiness of your site and your content.

[Protect your brand reputation](#) by keeping an eye out for negative press and responding to negative reviews promptly.

Claim all your social profiles for your brand name (so someone else doesn't try to scoop them up!), and encourage customers to leave positive reviews about your brand.

You don't need to go crazy trying to build a massive brand if it doesn't make sense for your business, but make sure your good name doesn't get smeared.

🍩 Doughnut Take E-A-T Lightly

Every time Google makes a change, there are a few SEO marketers who think it's the sign of the Apocalypse like the great Twinkie shortage of 2012.

The good news is, Google has made it clear that E-A-T isn't a massive change that will tank search rankings.

Instead, it's an internal guideline that helps Google determine whether a piece of content is high quality.

But that doesn't mean it's useless. SEO pros can use the E-A-T guidelines to better inform their content creation process and produce great content Google is more likely to rank well.

Google's Search Quality Raters Guidelines: A Guide for SEO Beginners

Dave Davies
Co- Founder, Beanstalk Internet Marketing

E-A-T is a concept we first learned of in Google's Search Quality Rater Guidelines.

In this chapter, you will learn about this document, the quality raters who use it, and whether it can impact your Google search rankings.

What Are Google's Search Quality Raters Guidelines?

Google's Search Quality Raters Guidelines is a quasi-frequently updated document (last update as of this writing was October 14, 2020) that Google Quality Raters use/reference as they rate websites.

As the name suggests, they are the guidelines that these raters are to use as they perform their function.

The guidelines outline the conditions and elements that need to be considered and how the site should be rated by that person.

The most recent version is a 175-page read, compared to the 168-page version it replaced.

If you're interested in reading it yourself, you'll find it here. And wonderfully, Google places their updated versions at the same URL so you can bookmark it and always be able to find the most current version easily.

What Is a Google Quality Rater?

For those unaware, Google has hired many thousands of individuals from around the world to rate websites and record whether the site is good or bad across a variety of areas.

Now, it is important to understand that **these people have no impact on the rankings of the sites** they rate.

That said, one can argue that their role is much **much** larger than that.

They don't influence the rankings of the sites they rate.
They influence the rankings of **every site.**

How Do They Influence the Rankings of Every Site?

In the spirit of transparency, I need to note that I don't get to just call Sundar, John, Gary, or Martin over and Google and ask them exactly how their algorithms work.

Like everyone else, I pay attention to what they say and what's going on in the results and make best guesstimates on how certain functions and signals will be best treated.

The most likely structure to make the feedback of ~10,000 quality raters actionable is to do it in the way that Google does almost everything: algorithmically.

In the backend of the system, the raters are using a slider to assign values:

| Lowest | Lowest+ | Low | Low+ | Medium | Medium+ | High | High+ | Highest |

This data would then be made available to machine learning systems that would use it to augment the algorithms based on known signal data.

For example, if a site or group of similar sites are consistently rated High or better, the system could review all the signal data from the site(s) to look for commonality.

And by signal data, I am referring to everything from structure, size (of page and domain, and related section for that matter), backlinks and backlink profile, author signals, navigation, and likely a whole lot more.

The same would be true for site(s) with Low values.

With this, the system would likely:

- Produce a set of results based on what the new algorithm produces across a variety of phrases and niches.

- Send the top-ranking sites in that set to the raters.

- And, assuming the raters favor the new results page, push the signal adjustments into the global algorithms we all know and love, either globally or in testing.

It is also possible that Google may skip the review phase and just push the new signal weights into the algorithms for testing, but I suspect they use their raters more often than not.

So, while a Quality Rater does not impact an individual site's ranking, collectively, they do influence the algorithm that powers all that is Google.

Arguably, significantly more influence than just looking at a single site and deciding that it should move up or down the results is deciding how all the results on a page are positioned.

Now that we understand what the Search Quality Raters Guidelines are, the next question we need to explore is:

What Are The Raters Looking For?
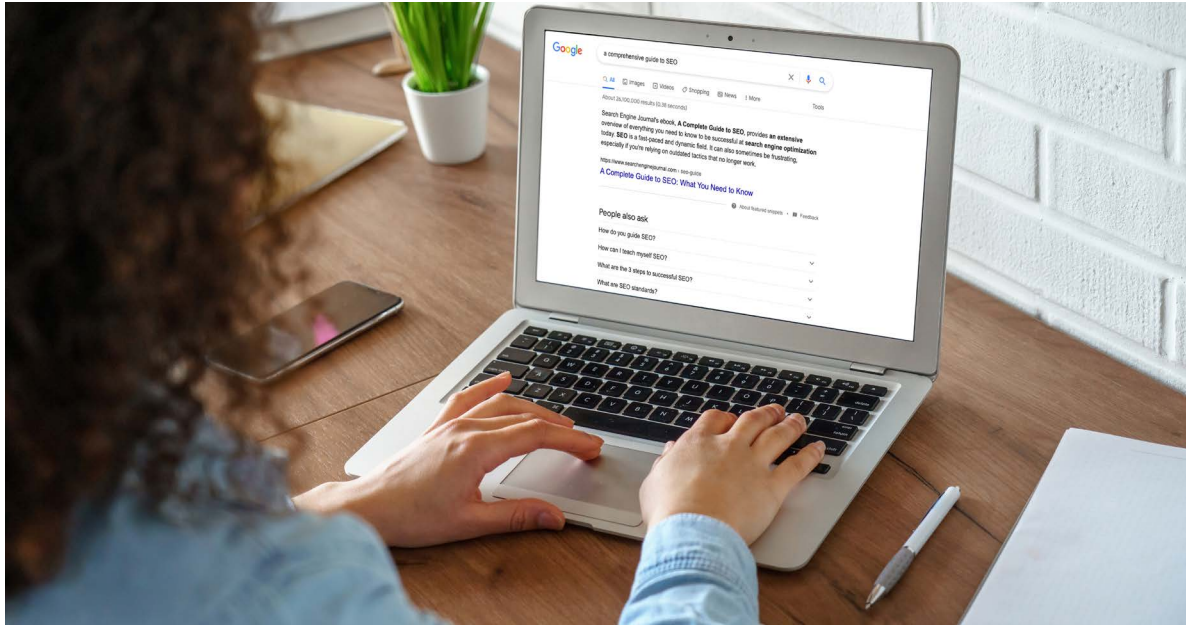
When we're looking at the areas the raters are instructed to look at, we're essentially:

- Looking at what Google wants the algorithm to produce.

- Getting a glimpse of what their algorithms will focus on.

The guide states:

> "As a Search Quality Rater, you will work on many different types of rating projects. The General Guidelines primarily cover Page Quality (PQ) rating and Needs Met (NM) rating; however, the concepts are also important for many other types of rating tasks.

We won't be looking at the tasks specifically here and will focus on the more important (from the context of this piece):

- Needs Met.

- Page Quality.

What do they mean?

Needs Met

This is an area that gets too little attention – and in their October 14, 2020 update, it appears that the folks at Google agree as they grew that section.

I hadn't actually caught the changes in this section when reading it, but while reviewing some other write-ups while putting this piece together, I was happy to have it pointed out by Jennifer Slegg in her write-up here.

It's something to pay close attention to, because Google is.

What Is Needs Met?

Needs Met is a fairly straightforward concept... it basically means intent.

The question that raters would be asking themselves in assessing a page is: "How helpful and/or satisfying is this result?"

That's it.

During this testing, a rater may visit a single page or visit a search results page and rate every result.

Both will send the information to Google about the site structure, device, demographic, and location results differences. I'm sure a number of other factors apply to the grading of each result (there's a reason they have more than 10,000 raters around the world).

These ratings will then be used to drive changes to improve the results to algorithmically determine which signals or signal combinations are common to the higher rankings results.

I suspect that in the case of Needs Met, the signals will predominantly focus on the onsite factors, including but definitely not limited to content, links on the page (expanded on in the recent version), structure, and user experience.

It is important to note that, as with the real world, the Needs Met rating does require decent Page Quality. In fact, the guidelines state it clearly:

> **The Needs Met rating is based on both the query and the result.**

One can have a medium Needs Met with a low Page Quality, but it would be highly unlikely that they could get a high Needs Met rating.

After all, the user intent isn't satisfied if the searcher doesn't trust the result.

Interpretation

One final element of Needs Met that is worth noting before we move on to Page Quality is the interpretation.

By this, we are to consider queries with multiple possible meanings such as the following, from the examples they give:
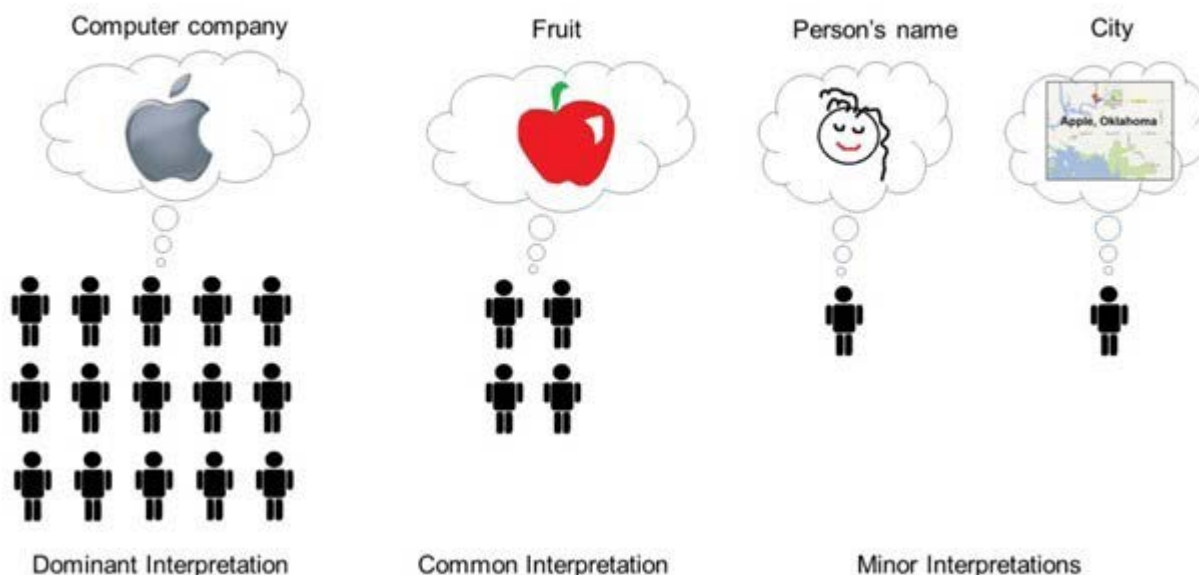
When the rater is assigning a Needs Met score, they are to give more weight to pages satisfying higher intents.

This prevents:

- A "Highest" rating being given to an authoritative piece on Apple, Oklahoma.

- Training algorithms to focus on the wrong signals for the majority of users.

While this was in previous versions of the guidelines, it ties to the subtopics update announced at Search On. While not directly related, I find it interesting that the announcement of subtopics came on October 15, 2020 – the day after the updated guidelines were published.

The subtopic update does address slightly different issues that are directly referenced in the guidelines – the goal of both is to show diversity in results, where there are multiple meanings or topics that may satisfy your intent as a searcher.

As an SEO, I like to keep something specifically in mind:

If I can address multiple possible intents for a query (often including additional content available via easily visible links), then my page naturally satisfies a greater number of Needs Met and thus, has a higher probability of meeting a user's intent.

Page Quality

Page Quality ratings are based on a number of factors, all of which interconnect (almost like a Google algorithm, right?).

And the weight given to each is based on the type of site and query (again... the similarity is uncanny).

The key ones noted in the guidelines are:

Your Money or Your Life (YMYL)

As Google words it, a YMYL site is one that:

> **... potentially impact a person's future happiness, health, financial stability, or safety.**

With YMYL sites, raters are directed to put more weight on E-A-T.

The guidelines categorize them as:

- **News and current events:** News about important topics (e.g., international events, business, politics, science, technology). Keep in mind that not all news articles are necessarily considered YMYL (e.g., sports, entertainment, and everyday lifestyle topics are generally not YMYL). Use your judgment and knowledge of your locale.

- **Civics, government, and law:** Information important to maintaining an informed citizenry, such as information about voting, government agencies, public institutions, social services, and legal issues (e.g., divorce, child custody, adoption, creating a will, etc.).

- **Finance:** Financial advice or information regarding investments, taxes, retirement planning, loans, banking, or insurance, particularly webpages that allow people to make purchases or transfer money online.

- **Shopping:** Information about or services related to research or purchase of goods/services, particularly webpages that allow people to make purchases online.

- **Health and safety:** Advice or information about medical issues, drugs, hospitals, emergency preparedness, how dangerous an activity is, etc.

- **Groups of people:** Information about or claims related to groups of people, including but not limited to those grouped based on race or ethnic origin, religion, disability, age, nationality, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity.

- **Other:** There are many other topics related to big decisions or important aspects of people's lives which thus may be considered YMYL, such as fitness and nutrition, housing information, choosing a college, finding a job, etc.

Most people don't think of shopping when they think of YMYL… but it's in there.

Content Sections

According to the guidelines, the sections of a website can be divided into three main categories:

- **Main Content (MC):** Main Content is any part of the page that directly helps the page achieve its purpose.

- **Supplemental Content (SC):** Supplemental Content contributes to a good user experience on the page but does not directly help the page achieve its purpose. The example they give is navigation ease of access links. Critical to the site, but not necessary to satisfy Needs Met.

- **Ads:** Advertisements/Monetization (Ads) is content and/or links that are displayed for the purpose of monetizing (making money from) the page.

Following their direction, understanding a webpage is quite simple.

- What's outlined in blue in the screenshot below is Master Content.

- What's outlined in red in the screenshot below is Ads.

- Everything that remains is Supplemental Content.

Here is how a page might be broken down:

The ease-of-access and volume of the Main Content play their parts in Page Quality calculations.

It's what assists the rater value on not just whether the need is met, but also how easily supplemental content is accessed, should it be desired.

SEJ » SEO

Google Research Paper Reveals a Shortcoming in Search

New research highlights a little known area of information retrieval that Google hasn't quite succeeded in: Long Form Question Answering

Roger Montti / April 15, 2021 / 8 min read

277 5.4K
SHARES READS

A recent Google research paper on *Long Form Question Answering* illustrates how difficult it is to answer questions that need longer and nuanced answers. While the researchers were able to improve the state of the art of this kind of question answering, they also admitted that their results needed significant improvements.

I read this research paper last month when it was published and have been wanting to share it because it focuses on solving a shortcoming in search that isn't discussed much at all.

I hope you find it as fascinating as I did!

What Search Engines Get Right

This research centers on *Long Form Open-Domain Question Answering*, an area that Natural Language processing continues to see improvements.

What search engines are good at is called, Factoid Open-domain Question Answering or simply Open-domain Question Answering.

Open Domain Question Answering is a task wherein an algorithm responds with an answer to a question in natural language.

What color is the sky? *The sky is blue.*

Long Form Question Answering (LFQA)

The research paper states that Long-form Question Answering (LFQA) is important but a challenge and that progress in being able to achieve this kind of question answering is not as far along as Open-domain Question Answering.

E-A-T

And now, specific for the section you are likely reading this piece for, it was important to understand what has been outlined above to add context to this important section.

Let's begin with what E-A-T stands for:

- **Expertise.**

- **Authoritativeness.**

- **Trustworthiness.**

How Do the E, A, and T Differ?

The line between expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness can get pretty blurry.

Here is a basic outline of each:

Expertise

The expertise of the content creator is related only to the content of the page being judged and not the site as a whole.

It does not have to be an author, and the criteria are not set in stone.

When looking for information on lung cancer, an in-depth study on causes, impact, statistics, etc., from an important medical school or institution, or government agency would likely get a high score.

If the searcher were looking for information on what it's like to live with it, a personal account from a bank teller whose partner lived with it for years would fulfill the Expertise criteria exceptionally.

It may be on an important site or an exceptional member of a forum answering questions.

It's all about context and addressing with expertise the need to be met.

Authoritativeness

The authoritativeness of the content is judged by the authority of the content itself and the domain.

In general, this would be based on external signals such as links and link quality, brand mentions, citations, etc., both to the content specifically and the domain as a whole.

When thinking of authority, I can't help but think of a patent granted in 2015, [Ranking Search Results Based On Entity Metrics](#).

In it, they discuss the following key metrics:

- **Relatedness:** How related are two entities?
  Example: Empire State Building and Skyscrapers.

- **Notability:** How notable is an entity in its domain?
  Example: Semrush is more notable in the SEO tools than the software domain.

- **Contribution:** How is an entity viewed by the world?
  Example: Does it have critical reviews, fame rankings, etc.?

- **Prizes:** Has the entity received prizes?

    Example: The types of awards and prizes an entity has received.

While there are certainly other characteristics, I find these guidelines helpful.

Trustworthiness

The content's trustworthiness is judged again by the trust of the content specifically and the trust of the domain.

Trust is similar to authority but more pointed.

Where authority focuses more on the volume of quality references, trust focuses more on specific signals and sites.

An example they use in the guidelines is the BBB.

While they don't talk about it being used as a positive signal, they do note that a bad rating based on a significant volume of users could be used as a negative.

E-A-T and Rankings

It's important to remember that all of these things relate to the query intent and the subject.

Google gives a great example of this in their guidelines when discussing a theoretical someone whose spouse has liver cancer.

If the person is looking for information on treatments, the expertise would be a high level of E-A-T in medicine and liver cancer specifically.

If the spouse is looking for support in handling this horrible situation, the E-A-T would likely not come from the medical community but others whose spouses have battled the disease.

Both topics relate to liver cancer, but the E-A-T criteria is very different.

It is hopefully obvious, but let me stress one very important fact.

E-A-T is not a ranking factor.

Say it with me:

E-A-T is no more a ranking factor than the prep material you used to study for your driver's test is a turn signal.

It outlines what should be produced as a final product, allows and describes situational variance, and is then used to identify and tune the practical signals.

E-A-T is what the raters are guided to look for.

Raters use E-A-T to assist them in how they are rating websites.

Here's a tweet from Google's Danny Sullivan that explains it well:

← **Tweet**

Russ Jones @rjonesx · Feb 20, 2020   ···
Replying to @joehall and @Moz
So, when "looking for EAT", what is it looking for? ultimately there has to be some data measure.

💬 1   🔁   ♡ 3   ⬆

Danny Sullivan ✔ @dannysullivan · Feb 20, 2020   ···
Our systems aren't looking for EAT. Our raters are using that to see if our systems are working well to show good information. There are many different signals that, if we get it right, align with what a good human EAT assessment would be. See also: webmasters.googleblog.com/2019/08/core-u...

Search.

In particular, raters are trained to understand if content has what we call strong E-A-T. That stands for Expertise, Authoritativeness and Trustworthiness. Reading the guidelines may help you assess how your content is doing from an E-A-T perspective and improvements to consider.

💬 5   🔁 41   ♡ 49   ⬆

Let me say it one last time: It is not part of the algorithm.

The purpose of outlining E-A-T in the Search Quality Raters Guidelines is that if the raters use it to judge websites, and Google uses these ratings to adjust their algorithm, in the end, the algorithm will align with the E-A-T principles.

So, E-A-T can be used as a guiding principle for design, content creation, and supporting external signals. It can be used, as you used the information from your driving guide the first time you hit the open road.

But you can't optimize for it specifically.

The Search Quality Raters Guidelines and E-A-T Takeaway

If you're just getting your feet wet or looking for a different point of view, hopefully you've found this helpful.

The Google Search Quality Raters Guidelines are an important document. It tells us where Google wants to go, and they're throwing a lot of resources at it.

They also update it as they look to tune different parts of their algorithms.

1SEO Digital Agency's E-A-T Checklist

Casey Quinn
Digital Marketing Specialist, 1SEO (SEJ Partner)

As Google works to improve the search experience for billions of users by only recommending which websites and content best satisfy their search intent, its algorithms are constantly being updated to ensure relevant and trustworthy content is being delivered to those surfing the web.

Thus, the search giant has introduced a series of guidelines to protect searchers from less favorable content and only display the highest quality results on its search engine results pages (SERP) called Google E-A-T.

E - Expertise

A - Authoritativeness

T - Trustworthiness

Why Does E-A-T Matter?

So how does E-A-T factor into your company's search engine optimization (SEO) strategy?

It's important to note that E-A-T doesn't replace your SEO; rather, it supplements your organic search strategy by providing a framework for the optimized content on your website.

Expertise

To display that you're the expert, in the eyes of Google, you have to have the ability to clearly communicate the knowledge you have about a given topic, product, or service in a way that is easy to understand and engaging for your target audience.

Simply having the right information is no longer enough; you have to find a meaningful, creative way to convey that content that resonates with your audience.

Authoritativeness

There's an important distinction between being an expert and being the authority on a given subject. This means not only having high-quality content for your audience but, more importantly, having that content linked to relevant websites that Google deems have domain authority. Who's mentioning, sharing, or building off of the content you're creating?

Trustworthiness

Last but certainly not least is trust. Often, this is the area experts struggle the most with in terms of connecting with their target audience.

When consumers are looking to buy into a product or service, there are significant steps of their journey that business owners often overlook.

Ask yourself a few quick questions:

- How transparent are you with customers?

- Are you responding to all positive and negative reviews?

- What policies are listed on your site?

- Is your website secure to protect your end-users data and confidential information?

These are the types of things that factor into your brand's trustworthiness and require a proactive approach.

To help improve your E-A-T, our experts at 1SEO put together a comprehensive checklist of the most important aspects to focus on... we hope you're hungry!

E-A-T Checklist

✔ Optimized Content

When optimizing your website's content with all of the core keyword terms and phrases you're trying to rank for on search engines, make sure everything is factually correct, relevant, and as concise as possible.

Cut out the fluff and make sure your audience can trust your expertise and industry authority.

✔ Brand Trustworthiness

Be sure to avoid any content which can be deemed misleading or deceptive to search engine users. You have to be as transparent as possible with users to build your site's trustworthiness with Google.

This means responding to reviews (the good, the bad, and even the ugly) to help prospective customers gain true insight into your products and services.

✅ Building Authority

It's no longer enough to simply be an expert in your industry.

You have to go that extra mile to truly show users why you are the authority on a particular topic to satisfy Google's E-A-T guidelines.

This means having your content and articles shared by other experts in your space and showing that you're a trusted source of information for a given topic.

✅ Content Relevancy

What purpose does creating irrelevant content serve users? It doesn't.

Be sure to stay ahead of the curve with your content and regularly update blogs and other on-page content as research, studies, or corrections become available in your field.

Industry Expertise

You'll also need to be able to clearly communicate the knowledge you have about your industry in a way that makes users want to engage with you, your site, and your brand overall.

Avoid jargon or any content which will confuse site visitors and gear your content to mirror the way your target audience speaks and searches.

Website Security

Google has made a massive push on search users' security in recent years. Be sure your website is secured by converting from HTTP to HTTPS by obtaining an SSL certificate.

✔ Page Purpose

Evaluate the core pages of your website and ask yourself these two simple questions: "What is the purpose of this page?" and "Does this page fulfill that purpose for users?"

Too often, business owners feel the need to create a wide variety of pages in order to rank for particular search terms or are under the impression that more pages will drive more traffic, and in turn, generate revenue.

In actuality, it's better to create site pages that provide value to end-users, answer their most important questions, and make them want to engage with your business in the long run.

✔ Forums & Discussion

Suppose you're looking to improve your E-A-T score in the eyes of Google. In that case, you'll also want to regularly engage with trusted industry forums, discussion boards, and groups online to share your content and expertise.

By sharing your content and interacting with the right individuals in the right places, you'll likely increase your chances of getting picked up by other industry authorities and generating some high-quality backlinks rather than hoping people stumble across your site's blog page.

High-Quality Backlinks

How toxic are your site's backlinks? If you're not sure, you'll absolutely want to conduct a backlink audit and content analysis to see how your backlinks measure up to those of your competitors. Not all backlinks are weighed equally, be sure you're linked to safe, trusted sites.

Customer Reviews

When was the last time you've checked your company's reviews on Google My Business or in places like Yelp? Online reviews play a substantial role in your E-A-T score and are a primary source for prospective customers looking to learn more about your business before buying into your products or services.

From an SEO perspective, reviews create an excellent opportunity for your business to optimize responses with targeted keywords and phrases.

Get Ready to E-A-T with 1SEO Digital Agency

Of course, most business owners feel that they are experts in their industry, have authority online, and can be trusted by customers – but how can you really know?

Find out how hungry your site is for success by taking the E-A-T quiz we put together for you and start winning online with 1SEO Digital Agency.

How to Use Structured Data to Support E-A-T
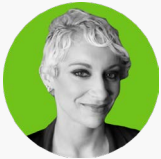
Lily Ray

Sr. Director of SEO & Head of Organic
Research at Amsive Digital

Google's concept of "E-A-T" (Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness) has become a hot topic in the SEO community in recent years, as well as a source of many myths and misconceptions.

One of the most prominent questions and mysteries surrounding E-A-T is whether and the extent to which it is a direct ranking factor in Google's algorithms.

However, Google has been consistent about the role E-A-T plays in both its algorithms and how it is used by search quality raters, stating that "Google's algorithms identify signals about pages that correlate with trustworthiness and authoritativeness," as opposed to E-A-T itself being a quantifiable, measurable metric used in Google's algorithms.

To solidify this point, Google recently provided an update on this question, indicating that E-A-T is not in and of itself a ranking factor but rather a framework that encompasses the many signals Google uses to evaluate and rank great content.

In this March 2020 update, <u>Google stated that</u>:

> **Assessing your own content in terms of E-A-T criteria may help align it conceptually with the different signals that our automated systems use to rank content.**

Google's communications about E-A-T leave a lot of room for interpretation and debate, which tends to result in one common question among many SEO professionals:

If E-A-T is so important, how can I optimize my content to improve its perceived E-A-T?

While Google's official answers to questions related to E-A-T leave many SEO professionals uncertain on what next steps to take, there is one reliable, underutilized method we can use to improve not only E-A-T, but also overall organic performance: **leveraging <u>structured data</u> (Schema.org) to its fullest capacity.**

How Structured Data Can Help With E-A-T

Proper use of structured data can help with E-A-T for a number of reasons.
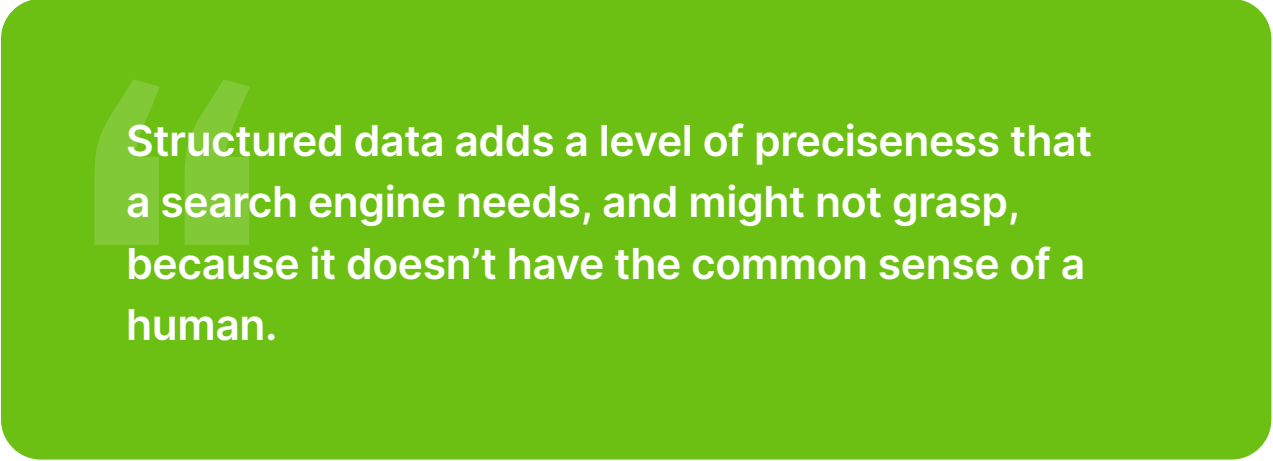
For one, structured data helps establish and solidify the relationship between entities, particularly among the various places they are mentioned online.

In Google's own words, providing this markup "helps" them by "providing explicit clues about the meaning of a page" that Google then uses to "understand the content of the page, as well as to gather information about the web and the world in general."

Using structured data to establish these relationships can streamline Google's ability to assess the E-A-T of a given page, website, or entity because it can help:

- Reduce ambiguity among entities.

- Create new connections Google wouldn't have otherwise made in its Knowledge Graph.

- Provide additional information about an entity that Google might not have obtained without the structured data.

According to Knowledge Graph and Google patent expert
[Bill Slawski](#):

> **"Structured data adds a level of preciseness that a search engine needs, and might not grasp, because it doesn't have the common sense of a human.**

Without confidence about what entities are included on a page, it can be challenging at best for search engines to accurately assess the expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness of those entities.

Structured data also helps to disambiguate entities with the same name, which is undoubtedly important when evaluating E-A-T.

Slawski provided a couple of interesting example of how this might work:

> " When you have a person who is the subject of a page, and they share a name with someone, you can use a <u>SameAs</u> property and point to a page about them on a knowledge base such as Wikipedia to make it clear that when you refer to someone like Michael Jackson, you mean the king of pop, and not the former Director of Homeland Security - they are very different people. Businesses sometimes have names that they might share with others, such as the Band Boston, which shares a name with a city.

Structured data essentially serves as a way of spoon-feeding Google crucial information about the topics on your site, as well as the individuals who contribute to it.

This is an essential first step in Google then being able to accurately assess the trustworthiness and credibility of your site and the creators of its content.

Implementing Structured Data for E-A-T

There are a few different methods of implementing structured data: JSON-LD (which is preferred by Google), Microdata, and RDFa.

Google has also [recently added documentation](#) on adding structured data dynamically using JavaScript and Google Tag Manager.

For WordPress websites, the popular SEO plugin, Yoast, has many built-in Schema capabilities and has been actively expanding on new Schema types and features in recent months.

For the purpose of improving E-A-T, the method of implementing structured data is less important than the [types of Schema](#) marked up on the website.

Improving E-A-T requires giving search engines as much information about the credibility, reputation, and trustworthiness of the authors and experts who contribute content to your website and who make up your company.

E-A-T also encompasses your brand's reputation and the experience users have both on your website and when using your products or services.

These aspects are particularly important to mark up with Schema whenever possible.

It is also crucial to properly structure your Schema so that search engines can understand the various properties of a given entity and the relationship between them and other entities.

Alexis Sanders offers a fantastic explanation of the benefits of nesting Schema and how to do it correctly in this article about JSON-LD.

For example, the Schema shown below comes from my personal website's homepage and demonstrates how nesting looks when done properly. (This was done by setting my site settings to a "Person" using the Yoast plugin, and filling in all relevant fields on my profile.)

WebPage

0 ERRORS   0 WARNINGS   ∧

ID: https://lilyray.nyc/#webpage

@type	WebPage
@id	https://lilyray.nyc/#webpage
url	https://lilyray.nyc/
name	Lily Ray: NYC Based SEO Professional, DJ, Drummer & More
inLanguage	en-US
datePublished	2018-05-06T19:45:35+00:00
dateModified	2020-04-17T15:23:00+00:00
description	Hi! I'm Lily Ray, a Brooklyn, NYC based SEO professional, fitness lover, DJ, and drummer. Learn a little bit more about me and what I have to offer!
isPartOf	
@type	WebSite
@id	https://lilyray.nyc/#website
url	https://lilyray.nyc/
name	Lily Ray
inLanguage	en-US
description	SEO Professional, DJ, Drummer & Fitness Enthusiast
publisher	
@type	Person
@type	Organization
@id	https://lilyray.nyc/#/schema/person/c88b190a6332bd5bbb1f93544584075c
name	Lily Ray
description	My name is Lily Ray and I am a Brooklyn, NYC based SEO professional, DJ, and drummer. I was born and raised in the California Bay Area by two New York City transplants, and I returned to NYC at age 18 to attend NYU. I've lived in Brooklyn ever since. I'm an avid biker and lover of the outdoors, exercising, eating well and staying healthy. I'm great grand-niece of the artist Man Ray and the mama of a smart little mini-Aussie named Marcy.
sameAs	https://www.facebook.com/lilyraynyc/
sameAs	https://www.instagram.com/lilyraynyc/?hl=en
sameAs	https://www.linkedin.com/in/lily-ray-44755615/
sameAs	https://twitter.com/lilyraynyc
sameAs	https://www.myspace.com/twoseconds
sameAs	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3rMHQU8-hYbKLAgkHyfwMg
sameAs	https://www.soundcloud.com/lilyray
image	
@type	ImageObject

Proper nesting of Schema makes it so you can:

- Essentially read the resulting Schema aloud from the [Structured Data Testing Tool](#).

- Get an understanding of the main entities on the page, as well as their relationships to one another.

Nesting also eliminates the common issue of having multiple redundant or conflicting Schema types on the same page (often due to having multiple plugins injecting Schema simultaneously).

On a product page, for example, it's important to clearly describe and differentiate the relationships between the **Organization** which **publishes the website**, and the **Organization** which **manufactures the product.**

By placing those correctly in a nested structure, you can clearly describe the difference in their roles – rather than just saying that both of them are "on the page."

Which Schema Types to Use to Improve E-A-T

There are a variety of Schema types and properties that are crucial to have present on your website to send the right signals to search engines about your organizations' E-A-T.

Below are five examples of some of the highest-priority opportunities to use Schema to signal good E-A-T, but there are many more where this came from.

1. Person Schema

Google's first mention of E-A-T in its Quality Rater Guidelines starts by asking raters to consider "the expertise" as well as "the authoritativeness of the creator of the main content."

This information can be communicated to search engines through the use of Person Schema.

This Schema type includes dozens of options for properties to be listed to provide more context about the person, many of which strongly support E-A-T, including (but not limited to):

- affiliation

- alumniOf

- award

- brand

- hasCredential

- hasOccupation

- honorificPrefix

- honorificSuffix

- jobTitle

- sameAs

Consider including Person Schema with the above properties at least once where your founder, content creators, and/or expert contributors are listed on your site. (Assuming this information is also displayed on the page – which is a prerequisite for structured data compliance.)

An author biography page is a good candidate for featuring this Schema type.

Remember that any content marked up with Schema must also be visible on the page in order to avoid a [spammy structured data manual action](#).

Another way to enhance your use of Person Schema is to use it to disambiguate that individual's name from other identical names in Google's Knowledge Graph.

If that individual is listed in the Knowledge Graph (which you can verify using this [handy tool](#)), consider linking to their Knowledge Graph URL using the sameAs property.

This effort can give Google the extra bit of confidence it needs to ensure the right individual's Knowledge Panel is displayed for queries that are specific to them.

Even though [Google announced](#) that it has deprecated sameAs markup for social profiles, you can still use sameAs for other purposes, such as linking to:

- The individual's Knowledge Graph URL.

- Their Wikipedia page, a freebase or Crunchbase profile.

- Other reputable sources where the individual is mentioned online.

Furthermore, it's worth remembering that there are more search engines that use Schema than just Google, so listing social profiles using sameAs is probably still a good approach.

2. Organization

Organization Schema is undoubtedly one of the best Schema types to support E-A-T efforts.

This Schema type offers a variety of properties that can provide additional context about your company or brand, for example:

- address

- duns

- founder

- foundingDate

- hasCredential

- knowsAbout

- memberOf

- parentOrganization

Many companies implement Organization Schema without leveraging these fields or the many other properties available using this Schema type.

Consider incorporating all of this information into your most relevant page about your organization (generally an "About Us" or "Contact Us" page) and marking up the page accordingly.

3. Author (Schema property)

Author is a Schema property that can be used for any Schema type that falls under the CreativeWork or Review classification, such as Article or NewsArticle.

This property should be used as markup for the author's byline on a piece of content.

The expected types for the Author property are either a Person or Organization, so if your site publishes content on behalf of the company, it's important to list the author as an Organization and not a Person.

4. reviewedBy (Schema property)

The property reviewedBy is a great opportunity to showcase your website's good E-A-T.

If you use expert reviewers on your content, such as medical or legal reviewers, consider displaying their name on the page as the individual who has reviewed your content for accuracy.

Then, you can leverage the reviewedBy property to list that person (or organization)'s name.

This is a great approach to use if your authors may be lacking E-A-T or a strong online presence, but your reviewers are the true experts with a known online presence.

For WordPress to websites using Yoast, a reviewedBy feature is currently being considered for their roadmap, which will allow you to indicate the individual who has reviewed your content by selecting among your authors in WordPress.

5. Citations (Schema property)

Using the citation Schema property, you can list the other publications, articles, or creative works your content cites or links to.

This is a great way to show search engines that you are referencing authoritative, trustworthy sources to support your work, which is a great strategy for E-A-T.

Furthermore, listing citations in Schema markup can help position your brand in relation to the other brands you associate with, which can potentially provide Google with qualitative information about your trustworthiness.

Use Structured Data to Support E-A-T Initiatives

The Schema.org library is continually being expanded.

And while structured data itself is <u>not a direct ranking factor</u>, Google consistently recommends adopting its usage and using as much of it as possible to help its search engine make sense of your site.

Presumably, by helping Google better understand your content and the entities included on your site through structured data, this will also streamline and improve their efforts to assess your website's quality and E-A-T.

Pay attention to the ever-evolving Schema.org library and take advantage of the many Schema types and properties listed there as a guide for how your content should be structured.

E-A-T & Link Building: A Guide to Evaluating Prospects

Kevin Rowe

Founder & CEO, PureLinq

E-A-T has been a hot topic when it comes to on-site content.

But why, how, and when should you consider concepts in E-A-T with link building efforts?

Your site cannot have E-A-T without a link and brand mention profile.

In the Search Quality Rater Guidelines, Google states that "sources of reputation" are "news articles, Wikipedia, articles, blog posts, magazine articles, forum discussions, and ratings" when establishing Page Rating.

And it's easy to determine that E-A-T can, in certain niches and to varying degrees, be leveraged in evaluating a site's fit to secure a link.

But, Google's Ben Gomes said in a 2018 interview with CNBC that:

> **"You can view the rater guidelines as to where we want the search algorithm to go.**
>
> **They don't tell you how the algorithm is ranking results, but they fundamentally show what the algorithm should do.**

Even though E-A-T doesn't directly have an impact on ranking, it can result in creating signals that drive direct ranking improvement.

Still, it's essential to use your own experience when understanding what does and doesn't work in your niche.

If you follow Google's recommendations or guidelines strictly, you'll always be playing the long game or may not see any results when it comes to link building.

And it's clear that Google cannot even implement an algorithmic interpretation that has the strictest interpretations of these guidelines.

A great example of this is under recipes.

My eight-year-old daughter and I were looking for banana bread recipes on Google.

We found one from Allrecipes.

I found that this recipe was actually way off on the bake when we baked it by more than 30 minutes. But it had more than 15,000 reviews.

I can dig up a hundred similar examples fairly easily.

So there is a major caveat when applying my interpretation of E-A-T to guide link acquisition.

Don't use E-A-T guidelines to strictly evaluate prospective sites in every niche.

When Should You Apply E-A-T Standards for Link Prospects?

There are three major considerations before even bothering to review a site against your guidelines, under a fair interpretation of Google's search quality raters guidelines.

- If the sites are entirely useless, then no need to do an in-depth analysis.

- Not every niche or scenario requires a strict analysis of a site to build a link.

- A natural link profile doesn't just have E-A-T sites.

Let's start with a "useless site," as there is no point in further review of a site if it is not designed to create value but is "made for SEO."

Google's page quality guidelines state that:

> **Websites or pages without any beneficial purpose, including pages that are created with no attempt to help users, or pages that potentially spread hate, cause harm, or misinform or deceive users, should receive the Lowest rating. No further assessment is necessary.**

I do not believe in having a strict interpretation of the phrase "beneficial purpose."

My interpretation is that if the site has no relevant content that helps users, then it's useless.

But it isn't so clear.

For example, The Million Dollar Homepage had no value but to sell ads so a guy could make a million dollars by selling ads.

This site has over 94,000 backlinks (Ahrefs) but only ranks for 1,200 keywords.

This is an extreme example of a site I'd just avoid.

As for point 2, there are specific niches that require much stricter review than others.

YMYL sites have much stricter standards than other niches.

In the guidelines, Google provides some guidance on what constitutes a completely useless site.

Also, Google explains that YMYL vs. other sources will have different sources of reputation.

The last point is just a reality check for people who review your link profile or even build disavow lists with a strict interpretation of what is "high" or "low" quality.

If you've analyzed backlink profiles for competitive niches, then you've certainly seen a mix of links that you may consider varying degrees of quality and with a wide metric variation.

Ahrefs shows that bestcolleges.com's page that ranks for "best online colleges for psychology" has a mix of link quality and domain rating (DR).

There are certainly many lurking and confounding variables that also have an impact, but it's so commonplace that you cannot ignore this fact.

What Are the Criteria for Evaluation?

My team and I have built a score with over 50 variables we delivered called PureGrade, to understand the likelihood of the site having a positive, negative, or neutral impact based on main content (MC) and supplemental content.

That said, Google uses an interesting scale that, in my opinion, provides way too much freedom to raters.

My team has used these criteria to rank sites that don't necessarily qualify for YMYL content.

This has been built based on a manual review of over 60,000 sites and thousands of pages across hundreds of enterprise-level projects.

And, Moz's spam score has over "27 common features" that they claim correlates with a significant amount of banned or penalized sites.

I don't recommend using Moz's spam score, PureGrade, or other single metrics as gospel for disavowing or prospecting new sites.

However, it helps to illustrate the point that we need to evaluate sites against a set of criteria and not only one or two.

Google guides its raters to use a scale of lowest, lowest+, high+, high, medium+, medium, low+, lowest +, and lowest.

It's important to note that this scale is used to rate the ranking site and not the linking site. This doesn't mean you can't use this scale to evaluate prospects.

For the purposes of this article, which is to make a connection between the quality rater guidelines and link-prospecting review criteria, I'll only be listing out elements of a site based on E-A-T from ideally what Google's, or search engines, "algorithm should do," and not what I've seen work to drive ranking improvements.

The rater guidelines only press on the idea of finding an expert in the niche and verifying that they are experts.

These core elements to review are:

- About us, contact, or customer service info.

- Outbound link profile.

- A "positive reputation" of the main or supplemental content.

Beyond just finding the authorship, it's essential to evaluate the MC pages, and one key indicator is whether the site mentions "buy dofollow links" anywhere on the site.

If the site does say this, then it's likely that most of the articles are not from reputable sources, and you should avoid it.

This is not the case when the site mentions "paid guest posting." This can mean they offer sponsored posts or affiliate links.

This is just how sites make money and can be separate from the main content.

With an outbound link profile, search for overly commercial links.

These are typically links that surprise the user when clicked by funneling the user to the homepage or transactional pages.

Finally, the "positive reputation" is much harder to establish.

Use a mix of metrics from Ahrefs, Majestic, and Moz to understand the site reputation profile.

But you can also use tools like BuzzSumo to identify if the articles of the prospect get shared or have engagement.

Using E-A-T to Create Content Assets for Link Building

Finding and evaluating link opportunities is only half of the equation – you also have to create content that will add value to the pages that link to your site.

If you follow E-A-T principles for your "link bait" pages or articles, you can easily illustrate the mutual benefit of the link placement when you pitch sites.

Moreover, Google will perceive the linking relationship as natural if both sites involved have high-quality, relevant, and useful content. In turn, the link helps boost the authority of both websites.

What type of content attracts links and lends itself to E-A-T qualities? I've found the following content forms to be the most effective for link building purposes.

Primary Data

The key to building content assets for link building is creating unique content that no other site can offer.

By conducting or sponsoring research, such as surveys, you can collect and present fresh data and insights that no one else in your industry has.

A prime example of a successful survey is this study by BrightLocal, a local marketing software company. At the time of publication, this survey has 35,334 backlinks (Ahrefs).

If you don't have the resources to conduct a survey, in-depth case studies also perform well.

Aggregated Secondary Data

Even if you can't produce your own primary data, you can still use data to demonstrate your expertise, authority, and trustworthiness and create content that adds value to referring pages.

A great way to do this is to write an article that combines all the information and data a reader would want to see into one source. With proper citation, you can use other organizations' research to your advantage.

To differentiate your content from competitor content attempting the same strategy, you can interview experts in the field and add their quotes to the article.

Or, you can hire an expert to review your content before publishing and prominently display the partnership on the page.

Thought Leadership

Your company or website's strategies, values, and stance on key issues within your industry are what set you apart. Use these unique ideas to build your link profile.

Especially if the content is written (or ghostwritten) by your CEO or most prominent representative, thought leadership articles can build name recognition while earning links.

To meet E-A-T standards, be sure to highlight the writer's experience and accolades on the page and link to their profiles.

Tools

Tools perform well in organic search and as link building assets. Create a page with a useful tool that solves a problem for readers or automates a process, and other sites will readily link to the assets.

Securing Links

With your target sites identified and content published, it's time to actively pursue links. Tools like PitchBox simplify the outreach process and facilitate collaboration on link building campaigns.

PitchBox streamlines contact discovery, provides outreach templates that still allow for personalization, and automates follow ups, saving precious time.

A Final Note

It's really important to note from the rater guidelines that:

> **Frequently, you will find little or no information about the reputation of a website for a small organization. This is not indicative of positive or negative reputation. Many small, local businesses or community organizations have a small "web presence" and rely on word of mouth, not online reviews. For these smaller businesses and organizations, lack of reputation should not be considered an indication of low page quality.**

When evaluating micro-influencers or small blogs for prospects, you have to realize it's not always critical to be strict.

How to Source Subject Matter Experts to Produce E-A-T Content

Kevin Rowe
Founder, PureLinq (SEJ Partner)

By now, most content marketers and SEOs are familiar with E-A-T, Google's guidelines for estimating content (or entities') quality according to expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness.

So why is it that so much of the internet is still filled with low-quality, low E-A-T content?

Most businesses feel the pressure to create a steady stream of content that answers the burning questions and solves the most challenging pain points for their target audience.

At least, that's the goal.

The reality, on the other hand, is that the content they produce is often incomplete and lacks the expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness that Google (and its users) are looking for.

The problem is that when trying to create E-A-T content, those people typically run into one of two problems. Either:

- They don't have the in-house expertise for the specific content they want to produce, or

- The experts on the team don't have the time, interest, and/or ability to create the content.

That's how most content skates by without even a passing glance from someone with a professional or educational background to actually verify the information (and it shows).

That's when it's time to consider hiring a subject matter expert (SME) to review and lend their authority to your content, especially when producing content related to "Your Money or Your Life" (YMYL) categories like health, finance, medical, etc.

Sourcing experts (real experts) isn't easy, but this post will break down who qualifies as an expert, where to find them, and how to leverage them to build E-A-T-worthy content.

What Makes Someone an Expert?

To create authoritative content, you need an expert. That, however, begs the question, "Who do you – and, more importantly, Google – consider an expert?"

First of all, there's a difference between "everyday" and "official" experts, and the more specialized your niche, the more difficult it will be to find people who have achieved mastery in their field of expertise.

Everyday Experts: For non-profession-based topics – such as travel, lifestyle, and product reviews – the people with subject matter expertise are often self-taught. They are usually hobbyists who may not have an official degree or certification but do have a loyal following and in-depth knowledge of a topic.

These everyday experts may teach a course, publish to a blog or popular social account, or run a business.

Official Experts: On the other hand, professional fields – including health and medicine, law, finance, and technology – often require a higher level of education and experience to be considered a true expert. You can expect both Google and your audience to hold this content to a higher standard, as it often intersects with topics that relate to "Your Money or Your Life" (YMYL).

"Official" experts will be those who hold advanced degrees or titles or have many years of documented professional experience.

In either case, subject matter experts should have a digital footprint to help prove that they actually have the expertise to knowledgeably explain the topic at hand.

Depending on your industry, that could mean publication in research journals or news articles, award recognitions, public speaking appearances, education, or professional history.

For example, if I type my name into Google, you can see that the algorithm is able to connect the dots across the web and build a profile of my experience from the various information it finds.

Each relevant piece of information is useful to the <u>Search Quality Raters</u> who conduct in-depth reputation research into the website and content creator to determine overall content quality.

How to Find Subject Matter Experts in Your Industry

Sourcing experts in your industry can be a challenge, especially for those who work in particularly technical fields. If you're lucky, you may have someone in your company or network who has the time and specific knowledge to act as an expert reviewer.

For those without in-house expertise, your next step will likely be to reach out to your network. Even then, though, you may not find exactly what you're looking for in terms of subject area knowledge, cost, availability, or online street cred.

In that case, it's time to get creative with your sourcing strategy.

Where to Source Expert Contributors

Finding a subject matter expert often won't be as simple as putting out a call for applications. To source experts in your niche, you should go to the places where those people tend to spend their time.

This means reaching out directly and sourcing individuals from expert communities. Here are seven places to start your search:

1. Public Relations Platforms

Small business owners, professionals with personal brands, and high-ranking executives turn to platforms like Muck Rack to build their reputation. Sourcing experts from a public relations platform can lead to a mutually beneficial relationship for both you and the SME.

2. Academic Publishing Platforms

For academic experts, you can use sites like Google Scholar to find the top scholarly articles published on any topic. For topics related to health and wellness, the publishing arm of the National Institutes of Health can be a great place to search for relevant studies and their authors. Just be sure to filter by publication date so you're only looking at experts with recent experience.

3. University Faculty

You can also find revered academic experts by identifying the top universities or programs for a related field and searching their faculty lists or department publications.

4. College Students

While they don't have as much experience or recognition in their field, college students – grad students in particular – can be a good source of subject area knowledge. If you're concerned that a general content writer won't understand your topic, and track record isn't a concern, try searching at a local college or university.

Reach out to the college's Career Office or Writing Center. Career counselors are always on the lookout for job opportunities that they can pass on to students, and writing centers actively recruit students across disciplines with niche knowledge and above-average writing skills.

5. e-Learning Platforms

You can learn just about any skill online, and the people who teach those courses are ideal subject matter experts. Online course platforms like Udemy have thousands of instructors who are passionate about educating others and have experience creating content for their audience.

6. Online Communities

There's a Facebook group, Slack community, or subreddit for just about any topic you can imagine. Most industries will have professional networking groups you can tap into for an expert perspective.

7. Your Own Audience

Sometimes, you'll need to produce very specific content – so specific, in fact, that it's only relevant to your own organization. If you're looking for someone with expert knowledge of your particular product or service, crowdsourcing content from your own audience could be a solution.

Offering a credit or discount system in exchange for answers to common user questions, tutorials, and product-specific blog posts can help you cut content production costs while employing writers who have specific knowledge of your product. (Just make sure to have an editor review it before the content is published.)

8. Content Marketing Networks

If you'd rather outsource your entire content marketing operation, content services like Clear Voice employ a vast network of professional writers across different niches. Just make sure that you hire an agency that has proven experience in creating content tailored to your industry.

As you reach out to people across various networks, be respectful of any established communities. Take some time to understand the rules and conventions for reaching out on different platforms, and make sure to establish the value of what you're offering.

Ask yourself, "What's in it for them?"

Paying experts fairly for their time is a must (unless you want low-quality content). If they are relatively inexperienced in marketing themselves as an expert, you could also offer to help them build their brand by promoting the content you create together.

3 Ways to Leverage Subject Matter Experts to Build Authoritative Content

Now that you've found a subject matter expert, it's time to consider how to make the best use of them to create E-A-T-level content.

This decision will likely come down to a few key considerations, including:

- **Topic Complexity:** Some content areas are just too complex to be written by a general content writer. They may spend more time just researching the content than it would take a subject matter expert to write it.

- **Cost:** We all know that cheap content isn't good, and good content isn't cheap. On the other hand, you have a budget to stick to. The more specialized the content, the more you'll likely need to pay per hour of your SME's time.

- **Availability:** If you're working with a practicing doctor, lawyer, financial advisor, or any other professional expert in their field, chances are they won't have a lot of extra time on their hands. Is it the best use of their time to write out basic information that a general content writer can find on Google?

With these factors in mind – complexity, budget, and SME availability – you can decide how involved your expert should be in the content production process.

Typically, there are three levels of SME involvement that you should consider.

Level #1: Editor

The first option for incorporating expertise is to simply ask for your SME to review the content after it's been produced. If there is already a good amount of existing content on the topic you want to address, a content writer can do most of the legwork when it comes to researching and synthesizing the topic.

After that, the expert will review the content for potential technical inaccuracies, information gaps, and appropriate terminology. This option is best for when you're concerned about cost or your SME's time constraints.

On the other hand, if you are creating complex, technical content, a generalized content writer may not be able to write confidently with the necessary depth and understanding of the topic. At that point, there may be only so much a subject matter expert can do in the editing phase without requiring major structural revisions.

Level #2: Consultant

Say you want to get your SME more involved in the process, but for some reason (usually either budget or time), you can't give them full control over content creation.

In that case, you should consider bringing them in during other key points throughout development. This could mean asking the expert to help brainstorm content ideas, create an outline for a content writer to follow, provide relevant research, and as discussed, suggest edits to the completed draft.

With this method, there's a clear differentiation between content writer and subject matter expert so both can focus on what they do best.

If you choose to go this route, you should start by identifying the phases of content development – your monthly content strategy meeting, for example – in which an expert opinion would be most valuable.

That way, you can be respectful of your expert's time (and your business's bottom line).

Level #3: Creator

The last option is to give the expert full rein over the content production process.

Think of the way Netflix operates. The streaming giant [offers freedom](#) to trusted writers and directors to create the type of shows and movies they want to make. In the hands of a great team, this lack of interference can result in great content. (Ever heard of Orange Is the New Black or House of Cards?)

When it comes to creating web content, allowing your SME to take ownership over the process could result in new and interesting perspectives that set your content apart from all the other "expert-reviewed" articles out there.

You also won't have to worry too much about accuracy when the SME produces the content. However, you should know that there's more to content creation than pure factual accuracy.

Writing requires its own skillset, and even people at the top of their field may struggle to write engaging, meaningful content.

Just think of your past teachers or college professors. Some of the most brilliant people make for horrible educators because they struggle to explain the source material in a way that connects to their audience.

An experienced editor can solve this issue, though, by reviewing the draft for comprehension, grammar, style, and structure.

Just keep in mind that with a greater time commitment, you'll likely be spending more for expert-created content.

Tips for Successfully Onboarding New Subject Matter Experts

Onboarding is a vital component of bringing on any new team member. Even if your new SME will only be working with you for a few hours a month, it's important that they understand your organization, your procedures, and your expectations.

A misalignment on how they fit into the content development process, who the target audience is, or what you expect from them can lead to a poor working relationship and poor-quality results.

Collect Professional Information from Your Expert

During the onboarding process, make sure to build out the author biographies for your expert contributors. Take global consulting giant McKinsey's strategic and corporate finance blog for example. Each article features a brief author byline. This short biography is linked to a profile page that includes a longer bio, publication history, education, and social media profile links.

Beyond helping Google to trace the digital paper trail of your SME, adding author bylines to your content signals to your audience that they can trust the information you're providing.

Set Expectations

Give your subject matter expert everything they need to succeed in their role. This includes information about your company and your audience, a clear schedule for when their content is due, and ways to reach out when they need more information.

You may also find it helpful to create a document that outlines their role and responsibilities as a subject matter expert.

What do you want them to focus on? What don't you want them to focus on? Are they just there to fact-check, or do you expect them to provide more in-depth feedback? What should that feedback look like?

Setting clear expectations upfront ensures that you'll get what you need, and the SME won't waste their time on sentence-level issues like grammar or style (unless you want them to).

Wrapping Up

The more involved your subject matter expert is in the content creation process, the more E-A-T-compliant your content will likely be.

Don't be fooled. Just because you put an expert's name on a published article does not mean that it will be E-A-T compliant.

In response to a tweet stating "I am seeing a growing number of sites who are 'renting' specialist's [sic] names in EAT segments to add to the bylines in order to add authority to their content."

Google's Danny Sullivan responded, "It doesn't work like that."

It's true.

Jeffrey Cammack @spammack · Oct 8, 2019

@JohnMu @dannysullivan I am seeing a growing number of sites who are "renting" specialist's names in EAT segments to add to the bylines in order to add authority to their content. 🤔

Q 3   ⇄ 4   ♡ 5

Danny Sullivan ✔ @dannysullivan · Oct 8, 2019
It doesn't work like that.

Q 2   ⇄ 2   ♡ 14

There are plenty of other signals that Google's algorithm uses to determine content quality. An author's credentials are just one of them. At the end of the day, the objective is to produce content that will be valuable to your audience.

Enlisting the help of a subject matter expert is just one step toward achieving that goal.

Surprising Facts About E-A-T

Roger Montti
Owner, Martinibuster.com

Want to Know What Google Wants?

Google recommends that publishers review their quality raters guidelines.

SEO professionals have been doing that for years, looking for any clues to unlock some secrets of Google's algorithm.

But here's why much of what you've read about **optimizing** for E-A-T may need an update.

What Is E-A-T?

E-A-T is an acronym for Expertise, Authoritativeness and Trustworthiness. It is a concept created by Google for third-party quality raters as a standardized method for judging search results. Google also recommends it to publishers as a way to measure the quality of their content.

The reason Google created E-A-T is strictly for measuring the quality of content, particularly for third-party quality raters.

According to Google's Search Quality Guidelines:

Unless your rating task indicates otherwise, your ratings should be based on the instructions and examples given in these guidelines. Ratings should not be based on your personal opinions, preferences, religious beliefs, or political views.

Personal opinions would make the ratings submitted to Google unreliable. That's why the concept of E-A-T was developed.

The search quality raters guidelines and the concept of E-A-T reflect the kinds of sites Google's algorithm attempts to rank.

E-A-T As Ranking Factors – Is It Possible?

There are no actual patents or research papers that establish the existence of those three concepts (expertise, authoritativeness, trustworthiness) as ranking factors.

What Google has admitted is that there are signals that indicate that a site is trustworthy but Google has never said what those signals are.

It must be repeated that the Quality Raters Guidelines do not provide hints for what those signals may be.

If the guidelines instruct the rater to review a page for an author, that does not mean that Google uses an "author signal" in the algorithm. It is asking the rater to do that in order to be a better judge of a website authority. That's all.

There are concepts represented by E-A-T that can be expressed in real factors like links.

Expertise, authoritativeness, trustworthiness are not actual ranking factors or ranking metrics in use by Google.

How Does Google Know if Content Is Authoritative?

There are real factors like links that have traditionally been used to establish expertise and authority as well as understanding what users want to see.

If a webpage receives many links, particularly from webpages about similar topics, then the webpage receiving the links can be understood as being authoritative for that topic.

There is no actual metric called "authority" that Google uses. Authority is simply a quality of a webpage that Google can guess at based on (undisclosed) signals.
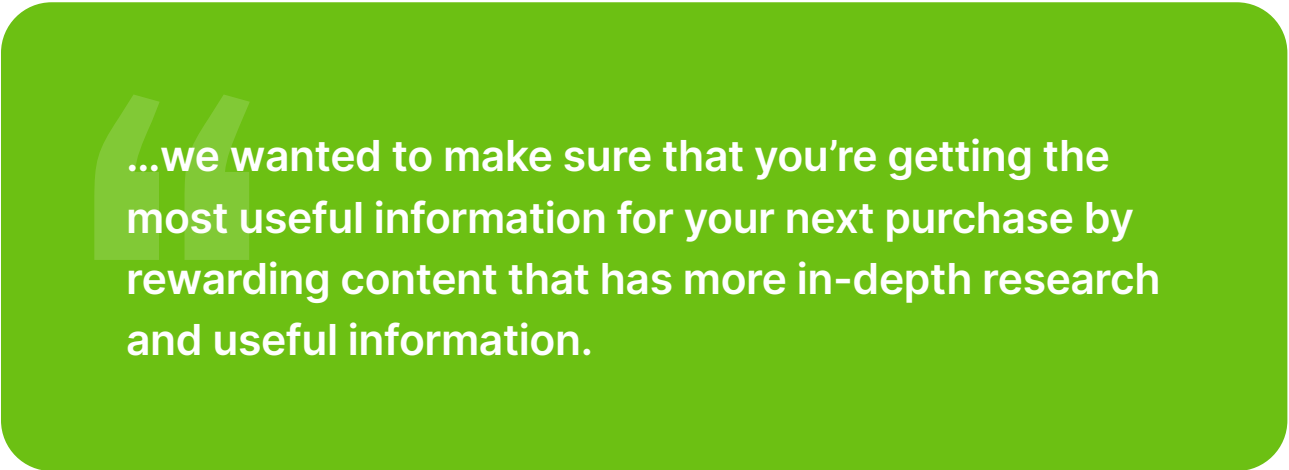
Links are pretty much the only signal that we know about that can indicate that a webpage is authoritative.

But it's not the only one. In April 2021, Google disclosed that AI is used to identify if content is authoritative or not.

Google Uses AI to Understand Expertise and Authority

Did you know Google relies on AI technologies to understand content better?

Google is using AI to weed out low quality content related to shopping and product reviews.

> **"...we wanted to make sure that you're getting the most useful information for your next purchase by rewarding content that has more in-depth research and useful information.**

According to that statement, Google is using AI to understand if web content is superficial or if it has the contours and features typical of "in-depth research" and other qualities typical of sites that are useful to users.

Google Research and E-A-T

Ultimately, Google's search results pages are about showing users what they expect to see.

Many of Google's patents and research papers that describe link analysis, content analysis, and natural language processing all revolve around understanding what users want and understanding what webpages are about.

- Links can communicate what page is **expert.**

- AI helps Google understand what web pages are **authoritative.**

- Content analyzed by AI and Links communicate which web pages are **trustworthy.**

- On-page signals may indicate expertise, authoritativeness and authority… as well as their opposites.

How the E-A-T Concept Translates to Better Ranking

E-A-T is an abstract idea created to teach the quality raters how to judge a site.

The search quality guidelines do not provide clues to ranking factors.

The concepts of expertise, authoritativeness and trustworthiness need to be defined in order to be understood.

Once E-A-T is understood the publisher will have a firm idea of how to improve content, to optimize it.

Expertise

Qualities of Expertise

Expertise is the quality of competence and technical skill. Expertise demonstrates a mastery of the topic, depth of knowledge, and hands-on experience.

As an example, when a webpage is about curing an ailment the topic must generally be approached from a scientific point of view in order to qualify as an expert.

An expert page teaches, reveals, and provides knowledge. An expert webpage will demonstrate qualities of depth of knowledge that can be signaled by the subtopics it raises or maybe by the citations it makes to other work.

Depth of Knowledge Is Not Comprehensiveness

Do not confuse depth of knowledge with being comprehensive. Depth of knowledge means that a topic is deeply understood.

Comprehensiveness is concerned with how broad the scope of the content is.

When evaluating a webpage for expertise, it may be helpful to ask, how does this webpage signal that it communicates depth of knowledge?

Content is expert if a topic contains a specific kind of information for a given topic. For example, it is almost required for an article about headaches to mention aspirin.

Understand Depth of Knowledge in Order to Understand Expertise

Adding "expertise" to an article is more than the laughably simplistic practice of adding an author box with the author's academic credentials.

Expertise in webpage content is the expression of depth of knowledge and experience.

One can't simply cannot add an author biography and expect it to magically become an expert article.

The first step toward adding expertise to webpages is understanding what depth of knowledge actually is.

What Is Expertise?

Expertise has been studied in a number of disciplines. Some researchers state that "expertise results from practice and experience, built on a foundation of talent, or innate ability."

The educational field has a system for measuring student's depth of knowledge called Webb's Depth of Knowledge. In it there are four levels of depth of knowledge.

The beginner level starts with the ability to remember facts. The fourth level consists of the ability to bring together facts and ideas from different areas and stitch them together into a coherent thesis.

A scientific research organization called Global Cognition states that there are two kinds of expertise. One kind of expertise (Routine Expertise) is the ability to solve problems using similar routines and solutions over and over.

The second kind of expertise is called Adaptive Expertise. Adaptive Expertise is characterized by the ability to formulate solutions for problems that are changing or not previously seen before.

In both cases the results are:

> "...the thinking and qualities that lead to consistently superior performance.

Expertise is generally defined as the result of:

- Practice.
- Feedback.
- Analysis.

What Does It Mean to Have Content with Expertise?

Given what is known about expertise and depth of knowledge, it can be said that expert content contains evidence that the author physically handled the object of the article, has actual experience in the topic, provides analysis, measurements, and comparisons.

Example of Expertise in Content

I wrote an article about structured data. None of the top ranked articles on the topic mentioned that structured data is a markup language (like HTML is).

Google's machine learning (and whatever else they use to understand a topic) probably knew that and may have responded favorably to that expert observation.

It's not that my observation was good because it was different than the top ranked pages. It's that my observation demonstrated a deep understanding of what Schema.org structured data is.

Authoritativeness

Being authoritative is not the same thing as being comprehensive. This is a common mistake that publishers make when attempting to create authoritative content.

The Difference Between Authoritative and Comprehensive

- Authoritativeness has to do with being reliable, trustworthy, and accurate.

- Comprehensiveness has to do with the quality of having a wide scope.

Accuracy (authoritativeness) and a wide scope (comprehensiveness) are not the same thing.

Elements of Authoritative Content

So when reviewing content for authoritativeness, go back to the definition of authoritativeness and review the content for qualities such as accuracy, soundness of ideas, and validity.

Can You Optimize for Authoritativeness?

What is authority? Metrics for authority can be the links that point to your site. That's pretty much what is known and confirmed for authority.

But authority and authoritativeness are just concepts and are not actual ranking factors or metrics that Google uses. There is no "authority" metric at Google unless you call PageRank an authority metric.

So if you talk about "optimizing for authority," in a way you're really talking about how to optimize for PageRank, which is kind of silly. One does not optimize for PageRank. PageRank is something that is accumulated by a webpage.

Related: The Three Pillars of SEO: Authority, Relevance, and Trust

Trustworthiness

People will link to your page, talk about your site in social media, and cite a wide range of pages from your site if your webpages satisfy users on a consistent basis.

That kind of user satisfaction on a wide scale can cause individuals to regard your site as a trustworthy source of information, services, or products.

It is generally understood that Google does not use social signals for ranking purposes. If Google uses them for anything it's not something that is known.

But social signals can be the smoke that tells you there's a fire raging that indicates you are doing something right.

Optimizing for Trustworthiness

Googlers have made references to the trustworthiness of a website. Research papers and patents have made references to trustworthiness.
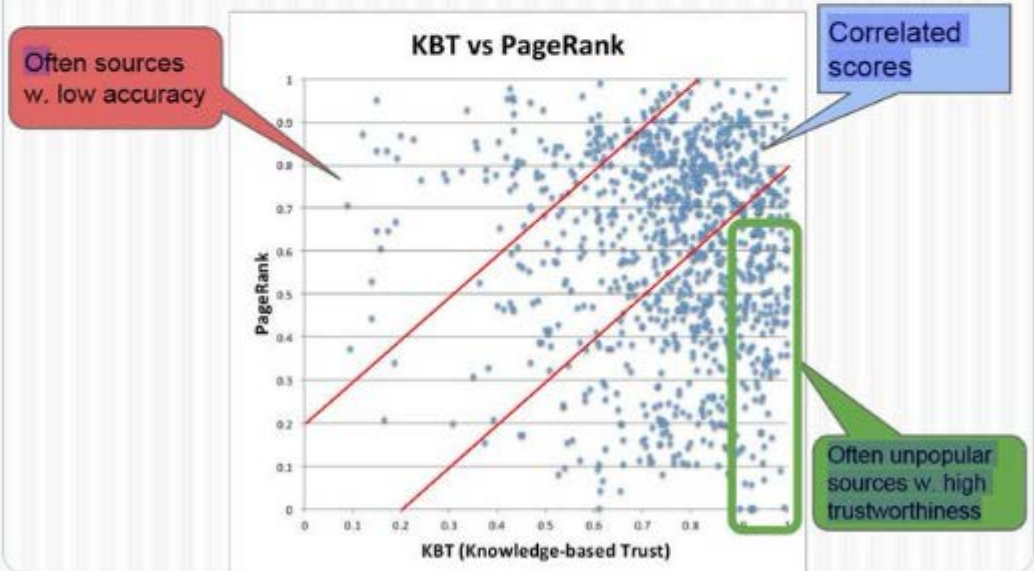
An interesting research into trustworthiness relates to link analysis (**Read:** Link Distance Ranking Algorithms for more information).

Another line of research is [Knowledge-based Trust](). But [Bill Slawski](), an expert on Google patents, said it's unlikely that Google uses it.

A specific **trustworthiness** metric where a site accumulates "trust points" to indicate trustworthiness isn't something that Google has researched.

Link distance ranking is the closest thing that Google might be using that approximates trust, but there is no actual trust score. Link distance ranking can identify spammy sites as well as quality sites.

Aside from being careful about where you get links (which you should be doing anyway!), **there's no way to "optimize" for trustworthiness.**

You just have to be a reliable and trustworthy source of information. If people notice then Google might also notice, perhaps by the way other sites link to your web pages.

E-A-T Is Not an Algorithm

In October 2019 at Pubcon Gary Illyes confirmed that E-A-T was not an algorithm.

Gary Illyes was asked about E-A-T point blank and everything he said matches up with what Googlers have been saying about the QRG and E-A-T.

Optimizing for E-A-T

You can build expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness using all of the above approaches that focus on excellence.

Expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness in content are more than just descriptions and perceptions of your site. They are qualities that your content can contain.

So it makes sense to think hard about what those words expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness mean and apply your insights to every webpage that you publish.

The 10 Steps Every Marketer Needs to Take to Build Authority Online

Stephanie Mansueto
Head of Content, Rock Content (SEJ Partner)

One of the best investments a business can make is in building brand authority.

Brand authority is not something that you can claim for yourself. Brand authority comes over time and from hard work, a strong relationship with your customer base, and smart marketing campaigns.

With a strong brand authority, your target market will look to you as trustworthy and an expert, which will (hopefully) lead to more sales.

As humans, we have been trained to follow the recommendations of those in authority. However, we simply cannot know everything, so we lean on those that have experience and credibility to educate us.

What does this have to do with brand authority? Simply put, people want to do business with brands they trust. Brand authority took years to build up and relied heavily on word of mouth and paid advertising, but the internet changed.

In this article, we will cover:

- How to build a strong brand authority both online and offline.

- Thinking like a journalist – how it can improve your credibility.

- How to brag about your accomplishments and remain humble.

- And so much more!

I wish there were a one size fits all strategy that can build brand authority, but the truth is that it takes time and patience to build up your credibility.

To get you moving in the right direction, here are some tips that every brand should take to get started building their authority.

Think Like a Journalist

Creating content as a journalist is a smart way for marketers to build brand authority. When marketers create content like journalists, they will look at their content differently. Journalists tell stories that hook the reader in with a unique perspective on a topic.

To write like a journalist, marketers should aim to:

- Cite multiple sources in your article, including those from your organization and outside as well. Sources can provide different points of view, facts or statistics, and real-life examples.

- Identify a hook to capture the reader's attention without focusing on your business or product. Marketers have a job to do – market a product or service, but most people don't care about your product; they care about how your product will improve their lives.

- Be concise. Journalists use language that most people can understand. If your copy is too complex and challenging to read, you will lose trust with your audience.

Share your Voice on Authoritative Sites

Every industry has thought leaders, and those thought leaders are likely writing blogs. Reaching out and offering to share your unique perspective on their site is an intelligent way to introduce yourself to a new audience.

Engage with your Industry's Community

Find and follow your industry peers, wherever they may be. Conversations about your industry are likely happening on social media right now. When you participate in these conversations, you build your network and your brand as an approachable leader within your industry.

Ways to build authority by engaging your community:

- Be helpful. To be seen as an expert, you will need to give away free advice that helps solve real problems.

- Be active on social media. While social should not be the only channel you distribute your content on, it can and should be used to build authority. Share your content and other thought leaders' content too. Engage in conversations about your industry in an authentic way. You can likely find groups of people that are actively discussing challenges your target audience faces.

- Invite peers or thought leaders to join you in a webinar or event to share expertise and talk about your industry.

Find Your Niche Topic and Write for It

When creating your content calendar, focus on strategic topics rather than casting a wide net and attempting to cover a wide range of issues. Finding your niche will help people better understand your expertise and makes your content more focused. When your content is scattered, it makes it challenging to build a dedicated audience.

Share What Your Knowledge Without a Hidden Agenda

Sharing your expertise is an essential part of building your authority, but you can lose credibility if it comes across as self-serving. Give your readers value by helping them solve their problems.

Collect and Share Customer Testimonials

Testimonials are objective; they tell potential customers that your business is credible and worthy of their business. Use your customer testimonials through your website to increase visibility and further drive home the value your brand brings.

Create a Diverse Content Strategy

Content marketing is more than just writing a blog. With such a wide range of content formats available, marketers can't put all their eggs in one basket. Creating a mix of content formats is the best way to capture your audience's attention in their preferred format.

Popular content formats and how to use them to build authority:

- **Static assets such as ebooks or white papers**
  Long-form content, mainly white papers, is often seen as authoritative because it will take a deep dive into a particular topic, helping the reader increase their knowledge.

- **Infographics (static and interactive)**
  Infographics will often feature data on a particular topic that is backed by research. And because infographics are more visual, they are positioned well to be shared frequently on social media.

- **Assessments or quizzes**
  Assessments and quizzes are often used in B2B marketing and allow users to answer questions about themselves, including the challenges they face, to receive a custom and personalized result on how to improve.

- **Case studies**
  Case studies act as social proof that what you claim you can do, you actually can do.

- **Videos**
  Video is quickly becoming an essential part of building brand authority. Marketers can use video in various ways such as webinars, social media posts, and even product explainer videos. Videos are better at capturing attention than any other type of content, and the information shared in the video is often retained more.

- **Audio**
  The most popular type of audio content is podcasts. Depending on your podcast format, you can build authority by inviting industry experts to chat with you about best practices, or you could share your own stories.

Showcase Your Accomplishments But Be Humble

When we share what we have accomplished as a brand, our customers and prospects will notice. When your company is recognized for its accomplishments, make sure to share the news on social media. Share your achievements in a humble way, which will make you more approachable.

Network, Network, Network

Networking is a great way to put your name out there. Whether it's at conferences or industry events, or social happy hours, use these moments to build up your network with people within your industry that will promote you to their network too.

Be Passionate

It's one thing to share your knowledge, it's another to share your passion. When you love what you do, it can show in the content you create. Sharing your passion for your industry can be contagious and it is the one thing that nobody can teach you... it comes from within.

Passion shows that you genuinely care about helping others within your industry. Share your passion with others: share industry news, quick wins you have achieved, and personal victories. When you are passionate, people can feel it will want to be around you and share your excitement and do. Like I said, passion is contagious.

Building brand authority takes time and effort, but you will be on your way to growing your authority both online and off with these simple steps.

Google's E-A-T: Busting 10 of the Biggest Misconceptions

Lily Ray
Sr. Director of SEO & Head of Organic Research, Amsive Digital

E-A-T (Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness) is a concept Google first published in its 2014 edition of the <u>Search Quality Guidelines</u>.

These guidelines are used during Google's search quality evaluations, in which it hires thousands of quality reviewers who are tasked with manually reviewing a set of webpages and submitting feedback about the quality of those pages to Google.

The raters' feedback is then benchmarked and used by Google to improve its algorithms. E-A-T serves as Google's criteria for these reviewers to use to measure the extent to which a website offers expert content that can be trusted.

According to the guidelines:

> **For all other pages that have a beneficial purpose, the amount of expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness (E-A-T) is very important.**

Google instructs its evaluators to consider:

- The E-A-T of the main content of the webpage they are analyzing.
- The website itself.
- The creators of that website's content.

In the current version of the Quality Guidelines, E-A-T is mentioned 137 times in 175 pages.

Within the past year, E-A-T has become a major topic of discussion within the SEO industry, particularly as it relates to organic traffic performance changes due to Google's core algorithm updates beginning on August 1, 2018.

SEO professionals began speculating (and Google later confirmed in a Webmaster Central blog) that E-A-T played a major role in the updates, which seemed to overwhelmingly affect YMYL (your money your life) websites with significant E-A-T issues.

As is often the case with the exchange of ideas within the SEO community, the discussion around E-A-T quickly led to confusion, misunderstanding, and misconstruing of facts.

Many of these misconceptions stem from a disconnect between what is theory and what is currently live in Google's algorithm.

Surfacing results with good E-A-T is a goal of Google's, and what the algorithms are supposed to do, but E-A-T itself is not an explanation of how the algorithms currently work.

This post aims to debunk 10 myths and misconceptions surrounding the topic and clarify how E-A-T actually works and how Google is using it.

1. E-A-T Is Not an Algorithm

E-A-T is not an algorithm on its own.

According to Gary Illyes during a Q&A at Pubcon, "Google has a collection of millions of tiny algorithms that work in unison to spit out a ranking score. Many of those baby algorithms look for signals in pages or content" that can be conceptualized as E-A-T."

So while E-A-T is not a specific algorithm, Google's algorithms look for signals both and on off-site that correlate with good or bad E-A-T, such as PageRank, "which uses links on the web to understand authoritativeness."

2. There Is No E-A-T Score

In the same Q&A, Illyes confirmed there is "no internal E-A-T score or YMYL score."

Not only do Google's algorithms not assign an E-A-T score, but neither do quality raters, who analyze E-A-T in their evaluations, directly affect the rankings of any individual website.

3. E-A-T Is Not a Direct Ranking Factor – Expertise, Authoritativeness & Trustworthiness Are Also Not Individual Ranking Factors

This is more of a discussion about semantics than it is to say that E-A-T isn't an important consideration for rankings.

Google has at least 200 ranking factors, such as page speed, HTTPS, or the use of keywords in title tags, which can directly impact the rankings of a given page.

E-A-T doesn't work this way; its role in rankings is more indirect:

Danny Sullivan ✔ @dannysullivan · Oct 11, 2019 · · ·
Replying to @dannysullivan @rustybrick and 4 others
It's almost like we look for signals that align with expertise, authoritativeness and trustworthiness. We should give that an acronym like E-A-T and maybe suggest people aim for this. Oh wait, we did: webmasters.googleblog.com/2019/08/core-u...

> **Get to know the quality rater guidelines & E-A-T**
>
> Another resource for advice on great content is to review our search quality rater guidelines. Raters are people who give us insights on if our algorithms seem to be providing good results, a way to help confirm our changes are working well.
>
> It's important to understand that search raters have no control over how pages rank. Rater data is not used directly in our ranking algorithms. Rather, we use them as a restaurant might get feedback cards from diners. The feedback helps us know if our systems seem to be working.
>
> If you understand how raters learn to assess good content, that might help you improve your own content. In turn, you might perhaps do better in Search.

💬 2   ⟲ 9   ♡ 34   ⬆

Danny Sullivan ✔ @dannysullivan · Oct 11, 2019 · · ·
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.

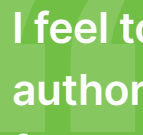In that regard, yeah, it's a ranking factor.

💬 6   ⟲ 41   ♡ 75   ⬆

According to AJ Kohn, when asked about how E-A-T factors into the current algorithm:

> I feel too many SEOs are thinking expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness are ranking factors, but they are not how the algorithm works; they just approximate what it should do. A far better conversation would be around, for example, what would Google do algorithmically to impact those things? When it comes to, say, health - would Google employ BioSentVec embeddings to determine which sites are more relevant to highly valuable medical texts? I'm not sure they are (I tend to think they're experimenting here) but either way, this is a far better conversation than say, should I change my byline to include 'Dr.' in hopes that it conveys more expertise?

4. E-A-T Is Not Something That Every Site Owner Needs to Heavily Focus On

Google is explicit in its Quality Guidelines that the level of E-A-T expected of a given website depends on the topics presented on that website, and the extent to which its content is YMYL in nature.

For example, "high E-A-T medical advice should be written or produced by people or organizations with appropriate medical expertise or accreditation."

However, a website about a hobby, such as photography or learning to play guitar requires less formal expertise and will be held to a lower standard in terms of E-A-T analysis.

For companies who discuss YMYL topics – which can have a direct impact on readers' happiness, health, financial success or wellbeing, E-A-T is of the utmost importance.

It is also important to note that ecommerce sites are considered YMYL by definition because they accept credit card information.
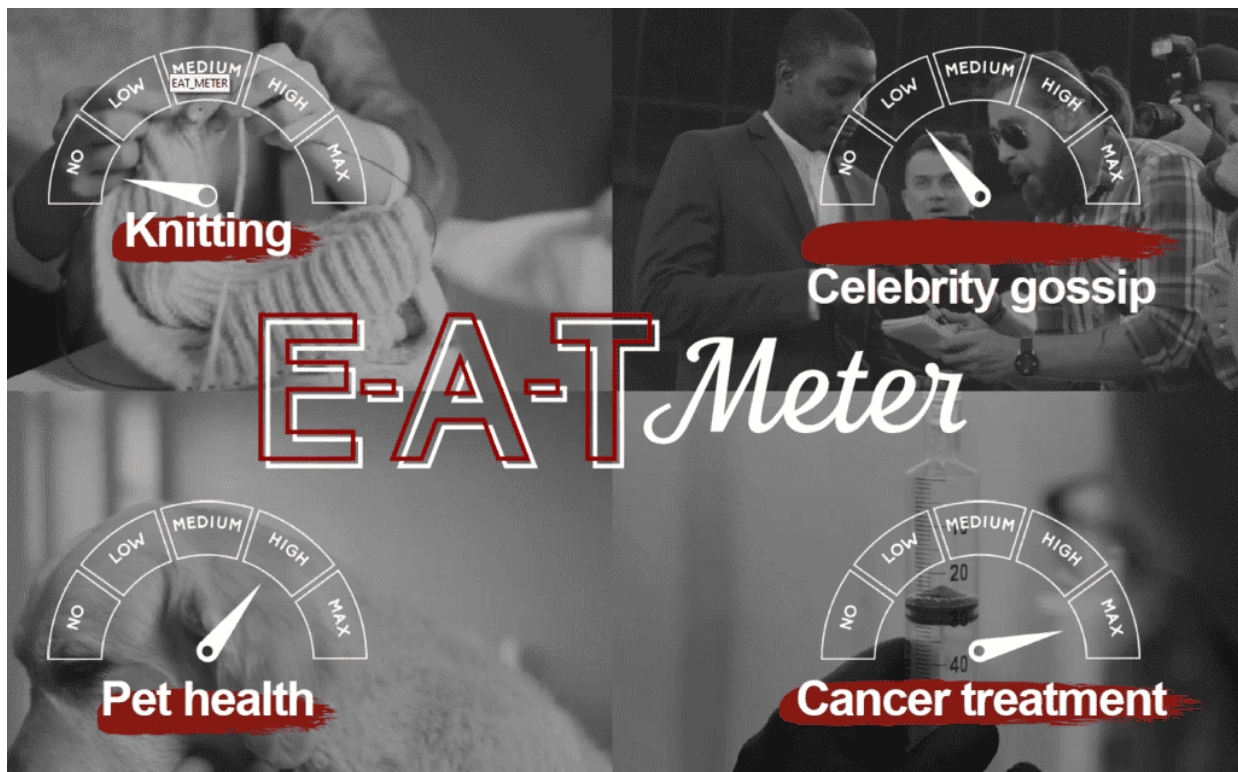
This E-A-T meter helps illustrate the extent to which E-A-T matters for websites in different categories.

5. Focusing on E-A-T Is Not a Replacement for Technical SEO Auditing or Any Other SEO Objective

Addressing E-A-T does not improve SEO performance in a vacuum.

All the traditional initiatives that go into a successful SEO strategy, such as on-page optimization, earning high-quality links, and technical SEO, must also be executed for E-A-T efforts to be successful.

For sites that have been negatively impacted by algorithm updates, E-A-T is just one area to consider.

Recovering from core updates requires improvements across many different areas of the site, such as improving overall site quality, addressing user experience issues, reducing technical SEO problems and improving website architecture.

Furthermore, if a site contains severe technical issues such as poor page load times, or issues with crawling or rendering content, Google may not even be able to properly index the site.

Prioritize E-A-T among other SEO efforts in accordance with how severe the other issues are that may be affecting your website performance.

# 6. E-A-T Is Not New – Neither Is Google's Fight Against Misinformation

With all the new content about E-A-T, some SEO professionals have claimed that E-A-T is a recent initiative by Google that started around the time of the August 1, 2018 core algorithm update.

However, E-A-T was first introduced in the 2014 version of the Google Quality Guidelines.

In addition, I conducted [research](#) focused on E-A-T and discovered that 51% of analyzed websites that saw performance declines during the 2018-2019 core updates were also negatively affected by the "Fred" update in March 2017.

Google's efforts to reduce misinformation and surface high-quality, trustworthy content predates the August 1 update.
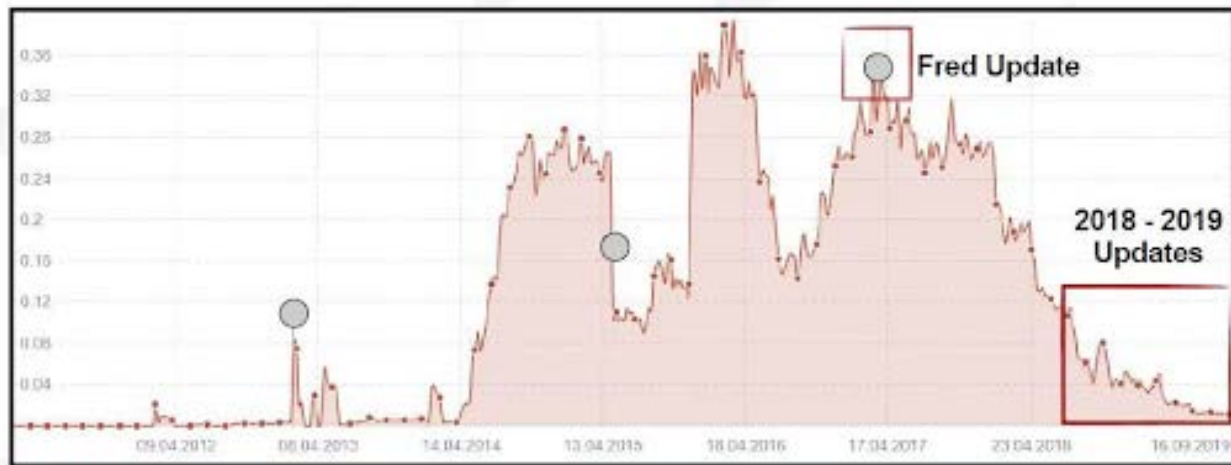
Google has also engaged and invested in several initiatives aimed at improving the trustworthiness and transparency of its search results and reducing fake news, such as:

- The Trust Project.

- Project Owl.

- Google's presentations on combating disinformation.

7. The August 1, 2018 Update Was Not Officially Named 'Medic' or 'the E-A-T Update'

Although the August 1 update was informally named the "Medic" update by Barry Schwartz, generally speaking, core algorithm updates no longer seem to have official names by Google.

Some digital marketers refer to the August 1 update as "The E-A-T Update," which is not only incorrect but also misleading, given that not E-A-T was not the only issue causing performance declines during that update.

8. Adding Author Biographies Is Not in & of Itself a Ranking Factor (Google Is Not Able to Recognize or Retrieve Information About Every Author)

One of the most common recommendations to improve E-A-T is to ensure all content contains a byline for the author who wrote it, and ideally, each author has a biography or a dedicated page explaining who they are and why they can be trusted to provide high-quality content.

In the Quality Guidelines, Google repeatedly recommends that quality raters should look at individual author biographies as a way to determine the extent to which the authors are experts on the topics they write about.

However, in a [Webmaster Hangout](#), John Mueller suggested that author biographies are not a technical requirement, nor do they require a specific type of Schema markup to be effective. However, he did recommend the following:

> " With regards to author pages and expertise, authority and trustworthiness, that's something where I'd recommend checking that out with your users and doing maybe a short user study, specifically for your set up, for the different set ups that you have, trying to figure out how you can best show that the people who are creating content for your website, they're really great people, they're people who know what they're talking about, they have credentials or whatever is relevant within your field.

In his Pubcon Q&A, Gary Illyes also stated that:

> " In web search, we have entities for very popular authors, like if you were an executive for the Washington Post, then you probably have an entity. It's not about the author, it's about the entity.

So while Google is able to recognize established authors in their Knowledge Graph, it may not have the same capabilities recognizing all authors.

However, Google has run a variety of initiatives related to authorship in the past several years, so it may be working on this capability.

9. YMYL Sites Are Not the Only Websites Being Affected by Core Algorithm Updates & E-A-T Is Not the Only Issue Causing Performance Declines After Algorithm Updates

While recent core updates have overwhelmingly affected YMYL sites – particularly sites in the health or medical space – there are other categories that have felt the impact.

For example, recipe sites saw enormous fluctuations after each core update since August 1, 2018. However, most of these sites have similar levels of E-A-T: they are usually run by cooking enthusiasts who are all equally qualified to post recipes online.
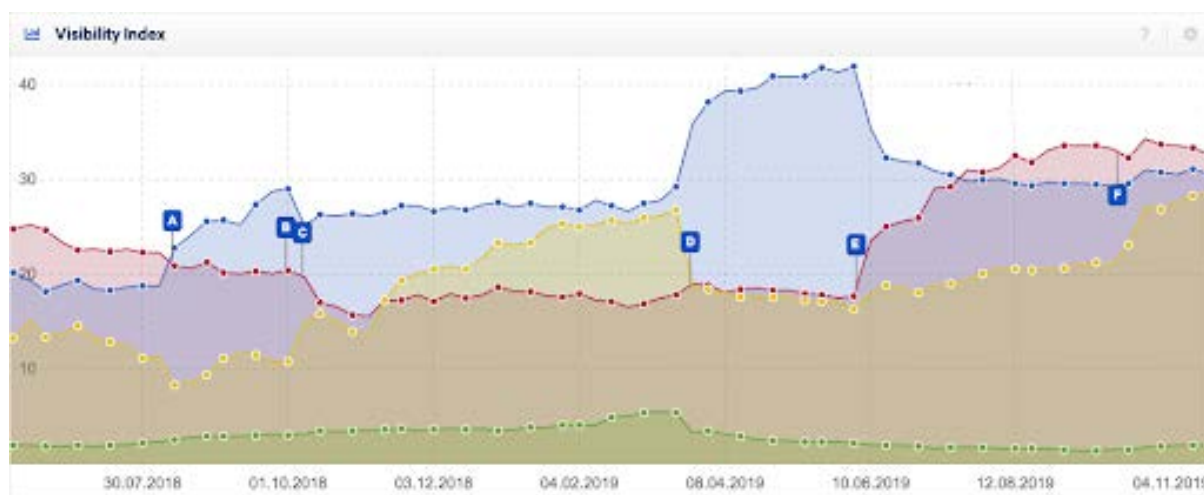
Four competing recipe sites saw major performance impacts during recent core algorithm updates, despite having similar levels of E-A-T.

However, many recipe sites face a unique set of SEO challenges that extend beyond E-A-T, such as site architecture issues, overwhelming ads, and poor page load times.

These other issues can certainly be responsible for performance declines during algorithm updates.

10. E-A-T Is Not Something You Can 'Plaster on Your Site' & Expect Immediate Results – Addressing E-A-T Takes Time

With certain SEO tactics, such as optimizing metadata or fixing technical issues, it's possible to see immediate performance increases once Google re-crawls and indexes the updated content.

E-A-T doesn't exactly work this way, given that it is not a direct ranking factor.

Improving the perceived trustworthiness of your site is a resource-intensive task that takes a significant investment of time and effort to complete.

It takes a while to improve trust with your users, and it can take even longer for search engines to process those changes. This is especially true for sites that have been hit by algorithm updates due to E-A-T issues.

Google often doesn't do major reassessments of the overall site quality until the next core update rolls out – so any work that was done to improve E-A-T might take at least several months to be reassessed.

However, the benefits of improving E-A-T extend beyond just SEO: E-A-T updates can enhance user experience as users feel more confident that they can trust your website, your authors, and your brand.