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Social Media, Keyword Match Domains and the Future of Search by [Robert Stevens](#)

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Search engines are always changing and, as a direct consequence, so are effective search engine optimisation strategies. It can be difficult even for dedicated agencies to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field and small businesses that want to handle SEO in-house are faced with a decidedly uphill struggle.

Partly because it is difficult to rely on the continuing success of any given technique, it is important to be aware of the general direction in which search engines (and thus SEO) are moving. A working familiarity with the vector of change will help agencies and businesses alike to ensure that their efforts do not go unrewarded and continue to provide a satisfactory return on investment for months or even years to come - whether that investment comes in the form of money or time.

It is generally agreed by experts in the SEO industry that search engines are moving away from some of the more traditional and thus outdated methods of assigning relevance and value to web pages. Although exact keyword match domains have traditionally been regarded as one of the strongest means of ensuring relevance for a given key term, most industry experts agree that the major search engines will be moving away from this in the coming years. As a result, businesses that want to maximise their internet presence might do better to focus their efforts on establishing a recognisable brand identity than choosing to register a domain on the merits of its influence on search rankings.

By contrast, the degree of integration of social media signals into search engine rankings is increasing all the time. Social media has provided search engines with a number of exciting opportunities - one of the traditional problems posed by backlink-driven relevance is that a link to a certain web site often represents a vote on the relevance to the anchor text used within the link (e.g. "this analysis of the UK budget" as a link probably directs users towards an analysis of the UK budget) but it does not necessarily count as a vote for the quality of the piece - the link could just as easily lead to a substandard piece of analysis that many users searching for such analyses might find unsatisfactory.

Social media has enabled search engines to glean a better understanding of how internet users perceive the quality of a given piece of content or web site. As a result, search engines are increasingly seeking ways in which to seamlessly integrate the data on offer through social media services with the search services they control. Many industry experts agree that this trend will continue over the coming months and possibly even years, so a business or agency seeking to improve the search engine rankings of a given web page in the middle-to-long term would do well to consider the possibility that social media signals will soon come to play a significant role in the ranking process.

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