




Investing in an SEO tool?

Here's everything
you need to ask



 Siteimprove



Organic search has never been more important – or more challenging. A recent report from Forrester found that an increasing number of marketers are turning to SEO tools to understand how their site is performing, create high-quality content, carry out keyword research, conduct technical SEO audits, bring together stakeholders, prove ROI - and above all, get found on search engines.

But there is a dizzying array of SEO services and tools to choose from, all differing in terms of size and capability. It's easy to feel bewildered by the all the auditing, tracking, and reporting tools on offer. Should you select an all-in-one platform, plump for different tools for each SEO element, or try to save money with a free online resource?

With SEO being the most important factor for a site's ranking, this decision shouldn't be taken lightly. After all, the SEO tool you choose can determine the success of your digital strategy and make your job much easier.

Evaluating which SEO tool is best suited to your organization's needs can sound overwhelming, but it doesn't need to be. Here are the some of the most important questions you need to consider if your organization is looking to invest in an SEO tool.

Do you need an **all-in-one** solution or a tool that performs a specific function?

Single point solutions focus on optimizing a single element of SEO, for example, keyword discovery or backlinks. Single point tools tend to be cheaper and can be useful if you have an in-house SEO expert with the skills to interpret the data and implement the required actions, tool-by-tool. With that said, using multiple single point tools can push up the price considerably.

If you're looking to keep things simple, or have limited resources, an all-in-one SEO tool might be the better option. While they can be more expensive, SEO platforms provide a broader suite of capabilities, customization, vendor support, enterprise scalability, and MarTech integration.

The five types of SEO tools

- 1 Content SEO tools.** Tools that help create high-quality content for your site that ranks well within search results. These tools often feature keyword research capabilities, content recommendations, rank analysis, competitive intelligence, and reporting of organic traffic.
- 2 Technical SEO tools.** Technical SEO tools mimic Google's crawler and report back on the technical performance of your site, such as page speed, or duplicate content.
- 3 Local SEO tools.** Local SEO tools are useful for businesses with physical locations that wish to increase their visibility online. These tools provide listing management, templated landing pages for locations, and review monitoring for individual locations.
- 4 Link-building tools.** Link tracking tools monitor backlinks to your site, which Google lists as a key ranking factor in its algorithm.
- 5 Comprehensive/all-in-one SEO platforms.** All-in-one SEO tools combine the elements of the tools listed above into a single platform. They're best for organizations looking to better automate their overall SEO process and get stakeholders onto a single platform. They include workflow automation, campaign management, technical auditing, and content optimization capabilities.

Who is part of your SEO strategy?

There are many different steps in the SEO process and specific tasks may be owned by stakeholders in different departments. These teams might include editorial staff, IT, web design, web developers, programmers, marketing, and branding. External agencies, contractors or partners might also be involved in the process.

In an organization with many employees, perhaps spread across different offices, locations, or countries, it's vital to find a way to communicate important concepts, tasks, objectives, and results to each stakeholder in a structured manner – without all being in the same room, and they may not be SEO-savvy.

If this is the case, you may want to consider an all-in-one SEO platform. All-in-one SEO tools make it easier to prioritize, execute on key projects, collaborate, and ensure accountability across departments and teams with built-in workflow management that gets key stakeholders onto a single platform and coordinates task assignment, management, and completion.

3

What SEO features and functions do you need?

It's easy to think you must need a tool for everything, or conversely, to underestimate the breadth of what is required to launch an effective search strategy.

To help you compare and review SEO tools it's a good idea to make a list of the features you need. Here are some key SEO tool features your tool should include

- Practical recommendations and to-do lists
- On-page diagnostics

- Content optimization suggestions
- Competitor insights and analysis
- Keyword monitoring
- Duplicate content finder
- Keyword suggestions
- Backlinks auditing and monitoring

If you're one of the 54% of organizations who've taken their SEO process wholly in-house, you're likely to need a tool(s) that covers all these areas.

Does the tool match the **size** (and ambitions) of your website?

A large website with thousands of pages will have different SEO requirements to a small, local business with a few pages. Free online tools and single point solutions often have page limits, or caps on keywords, so it's necessary to map out your requirements against what a tool offers.

As your website grows, you may find that you are approaching your tool's limits. Does it allow you to expand your contract for a larger page or keyword allowance? Is it possible to exclude a certain number of pages from being checked so you can pivot to more important campaigns?

While budget can be a constraint, it's a good idea to also weigh up the time, effort, and resources saved when using an all-in-one SEO platform, compared to collecting, analyzing, and comparing data from different single point SEO tools. Working from a single platform enables your team to move straight to the most important part – executing your SEO strategy. Improving productivity can be particularly beneficial for small marketing teams with limited capacity.

Tip

Enterprise SEO platforms tend to have more scalability, with built-in diagnostics that can be invaluable on a global level to identify site-wide issues across languages, regions, or countries.

5

Will you need help with **execution**?

It's all well and good having access to data about your site, but can your team actually analyze the numbers and implement the changes needed? If you're not equipped to fix SEO issues then you might want to consider choosing a tool that offers you SEO services on top, or enables you to outsource the work you need doing via an SEO agency.

If you're in the early stages of building your SEO strategy, you may prefer to choose a tool that is beginner-friendly, with straightforward diagnostics and in-tool explanations of what is wrong, and how to fix it. After all, success really boils down to how easy your chosen tool makes it to understand the data and take the actions you need to improve your SEO.

Tip

A tool that offers a user-friendly 'SEO score' is great for both SEO beginners. It provides a concrete idea of where you SEO currently stands, how much effort is required to take it to the next level, and makes sharing your SEO status across your organization simple – even to those who aren't as SEO-savvy.

Does the SEO tool integrate with your existing MarTech stack?

With more than 8,000 marketing technology (MarTech) tools on the market, automation and integration is becoming ever more relevant. In fact, Gartner found that companies' investments in MarTech now supersede labor, paid media, and agencies for budget allocation.

Yet inadequate technology integration is the main barrier to MarTech investment and use in an organization. The answer? Consolidation. Consolidating your digital tools can reduce operational silos, enable better end-to-end visibility, decrease the time it takes to solve issues, and significantly reduce costs – and your SEO tool is no different.

Tip

List out the MarTech your organization currently uses to identify where you can integrate your existing stack with an SEO tool. This list should include:

- CMS plugins
- Search analytics
- API
- Task management
- Business intelligence
- Marketing automation

7

Does the vendor have dedicated help resources?

If you're new to SEO, or are wearing multiple marketing hats, it is especially important that you have access to the support you need to bring your SEO strategy to life. Not using the technology to its full potential can trip-up your SEO strategy before it gets off the ground. So, once you've compiled your shortlist it's a good idea to investigate the level of support provided by the tool vendor.

Are there professional resources on-hand to help you make the most of your tool? This could be as simple as how-to guides, live chat or phone support – or as advanced as kick-off training, practical in-tool explanations and recommendations, interactive tutorials, help center documentation, blogs, webinars, and customer success managers that serve as an extension of your team.

Does the SEO tool enable progress tracking?

Measurement is a key part of any SEO strategy – after all, each SEO campaign should move your organization closer to its site and business goals. But if you don't regularly track your progress, you can't prove the ROI of your SEO efforts, or understand if you need to further refine your approach for better results.

Many organizations designate SERP rankings as their KPI. But there are other valuable metrics that should be taken into account, such as organic traffic and conversions. These can be tricky to calculate. Fortunately, some SEO tools makes it simple to track and measure your SEO progress and wins through a range of metrics.

Tip

Make sure the tool offers concrete measurement metrics like:

- Keyword rankings
- Domain authority
- Number of/value of backlinks
- Organic traffic
- Form fill submissions
- Downloads
- Sales
- Shares
- Clicks



Does the SEO tool offer reporting?

Reporting is an important consideration when choosing a SEO tool. Look for SEO tools that can break down the barrier between SEO experts and the wider organization through data visualization and simple user interfaces.

Helpful reporting features you should look out for include:

- **Automation.** Does the tool generate, update, and distribute reports automatically or is it a manual process?
- **Export options.** Can you get PDF, Excel, CSV, HTML, and API access to your data?
- **Frequency.** How often are reports updated? Are they on-demand? Can they be scheduled?
- **Customization.** Can reports be customized to meet your requirements? Can you rearrange data and create templates that match goals and different teams?

Picking a new SEO tool vendor is certainly a big deal, which is why you shouldn't rely on search engine rankings or sponsored 'best of' lists to narrow down your options.

Fortunately, influential research firm Forrester recently released a report on the leading vendors in the SEO tool market in 2020. Siteimprove, which is listed as a top comprehensive enterprise SEO platform in the report, is giving you free access to Forrester's full findings, so you can pick the right tool for your organization.

Try out Siteimprove SEO today

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