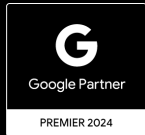


Here's what happened

Our take on the trends you need to know about from the past month

September 2024




Recent industry updates to help you stay ahead

 [OpenAI previews its new Strawberry model](#)

 [TikTok Search Ads Campaign launch in U.S.](#)

 [Google updates its spam policies document](#)

 [Google Ads adds Video Enhancement for Performance Max](#)


 [Google AI Overviews Spotted For Branded & Navigational Queries](#)

 [YouTube launch pause screen ads](#)

 [IAB releases its annual advertising outlook](#)

 [Google Analytics launches new updates, new visualisation tools](#)

 [Meta shares reels performance playbook for marketers](#)

 [Google Ads to deprecate enhanced CPC for search and display ads](#)

 [Reddit publishes 2025 Marketing Moments Planning Guide](#)

 [Moz Data shows recent Google HCU prioritised larger brands](#)



1 **Generative Engine Optimisation:** what is it and how does it differ from standard SEO practices?

2 **Google's HCU:** what this means for your SEO strategy

3 **WordPress vs. WP Engine:** the recent drama explained.



1

Generative Engine Optimisation

What is it and how much does it actually differ from standard SEO practices?



What is 'GEO'?

For nearly two decades, the way we search has been defined by the idea of ten blue links.

However, we're now seeing a huge rise in the popularity of platforms such as ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Claude.

As a result, we've seen the concept of **Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO)** start to gain traction within the digital marketing community.

Put simply, Generative Engine Optimisation is the practice of optimising an entity to be featured in the responses generated by AI applications, features, and models like ChatGPT, Gemini, Google's AI Overviews, Claude, and Perplexity.

While many elements of GEO are important for SEO, there are some key nuances to be aware of that will impact your brand's performance on generative engines more than they will on standard search engines.



Where to focus?

Many of the following areas are important for traditional SEO, but they are especially important for increasing the visibility of your brand in generative engines such as ChatGPT.

- **Structured data** - focus on key entities (people, places, concepts). Use precise terminology and provide context to help AI understand their relevance. Link to authoritative sources, and markup entities to enhance AI recognition.
- **Citations** - ChatGPT prioritises high-authority publications, meaning digital PR is even more important. Target high-visibility content sources used by ChatGPT to enhance brand inclusion in its responses.
- **Natural language** - Content strategies will need to evolve to answer complex, multifaceted questions—rather than simply targeting specific keywords.

Remember, building visibility in generative engines isn't about gaining website traffic, it's about ensuring your brand shows up for relevant questions. **Having your brand cited is more important than having your content regurgitated.**



ChatGPT vs. Rivals

Each 'answer engine' will provide different results, so it would be wise to focus on assessing your brand on one platform as a starting point.

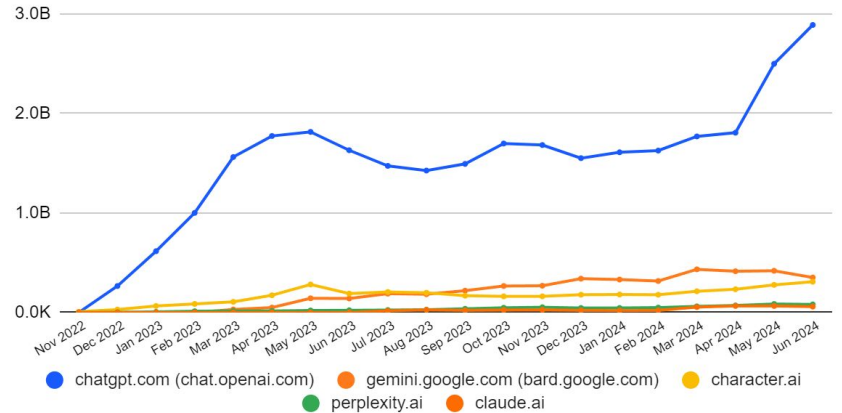
If we look at the number of visits and traffic driven to these platforms, you can see clearly that ChatGPT is the largest in terms of sessions and monthly active users.

Therefore, if you're planning to assess your visibility anywhere, **ChatGPT is the place to start.**

However, this visitor figure is still dwarfed by Google, who get 80 billion sessions per month, approximately **30 times as much traffic as ChatGPT.**

ChatGPT and Rivals

Desktop & Mobile Web Visits, Worldwide



Getting started

If you'd like to build a better understanding of how your brand is performing on these platforms, start by focusing on three areas:

- **Brand perception research:** Evaluate how AI platforms like ChatGPT and Perplexity perceive your brand, using this understanding to influence your brand's reputation.
- **Content research:** Analyse preferred content types and formats prioritised by AI-driven search engines. Focus on structures and formats that resonate with AI algorithms.
- **Cited sources:** Target high-visibility content sources used by ChatGPT to enhance brand inclusion in its responses.



2

Google's Helpful Content Update

What this means for your SEO
strategy



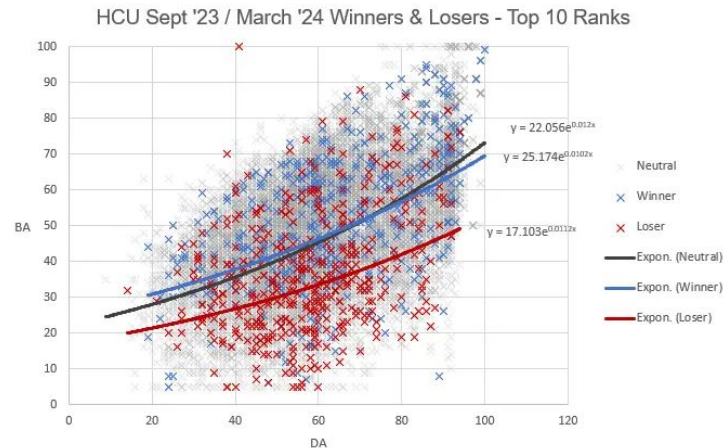
Google's HCU

Google's 'Helpful Content Update' was originally announced back in August 2022, and has since become part of their core algorithm.

In some [recent research](#), the SEO software company Moz found that the biggest winners from the recent HCU were those with the biggest brand authority vs. domain authority, and those that lost the most ground were those with a relatively low brand authority vs. domain authority.

To put this another way, an HCU loser will have lower brand awareness than their domain authority - essentially brands which Google may classify as **'over optimised'**.

While this hypothesis has gained a lot of traction in the SEO community over the past month, it doesn't mean smaller brands can't compete via SEO best practices.



Average Domain Authority & Brand Authority of Analyzed Sites

	Domain Authority	Brand Authority	DA:BA ratio	Spam Score
Winner	64.02	51.94	1.40	1.34
Loser	57.88	37.03	2.00	1.32
Neutral	62.75	50.56	1.39	1.33

MOZ

Based on the top 10 ranking positions



So what should SEOs do?

Keep Striving to Make Your Content Valuable - Even if the Helpful Content Update (HCU) primarily serves as a signal for brand awareness and demand, that doesn't mean you can afford to overlook the quality of your content. Google continues to reward content that engages users and encourages longer visits. In the long run, this approach will benefit your brand as well.

Don't Be Passive - While some of the optimisations you perform between Google updates might not directly drive your site's recovery, that doesn't mean they're wasted efforts. The timing of SEO improvements yielding rewards can be unpredictable, but they do contribute to long-term success. This isn't a dismissal of SEO's value.

Don't Overlook Links as a Ranking Factor - Links still matter for SEO. While I'm not suggesting they're a magic solution, if your site has strong domain authority (DA) but lacks brand authority (BA), you need to focus on brand-building efforts.

Keep Doing What You've Always Done – and More - Rather than abandoning any SEO strategies, consider expanding your focus. Is building demand for your brand part of your role? In part, yes – every team member contributes to that goal. It may not be your primary responsibility, but it's important to push your leadership and colleagues to invest in brand-building initiatives. Doing so is essential for achieving long-term organic success.



3

WordPress vs. WP Engine

The recent drama explained.



WordPress vs. WP Engine

In mid-September, WordPress founder Matt Mullenweg [wrote a blog post calling WP Engine a “cancer to WordPress.”](#) He criticised the host for disabling the ability for users to see and track the revision history for every post.

In reply, WP Engine sent a [cease-and-desist letter](#) to Mullenweg to withdraw his comments. It also said that its use of the WordPress trademark was covered under fair use.

Then, Mullenweg sent his own [cease-and-desist letter to WP Engine](#), saying that they had breached WordPress and WooCommerce trademark usage rules.

Mullenweg then [banned WP Engine from accessing the resources of WordPress.org](#). While elements like plugins and themes are under open source license, providers like WP Engine have to run a service to fetch them, which is not covered under the open-source license.



Advice for WP Engine users

There has been a recent and very public debate between Matt Mullenweg and WP Engine. This resulted in Matt blocking WP Engine's access to carry out automatic updates on WordPress or its plugins.

On 1st October, WP Engine confirmed that it has successfully deployed its own solution for updating plugins and themes.

Hallam are advising:

- **Not to be concerned** if you're already maintaining directly with us as our upgrade process was unaffected
- If you're a WP Engine customer and we don't maintain for you, the solution they've deployed will mean everything **works as normal now**

If you have any concerns, contact us or your WP Engine account manager.



Thanks for reading

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