

Is SEO still relevant?

 By Warren Harding

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I have been reading numerous articles the last while about how SEO is becoming less important, so I thought I would look at this. A good starting place for me was the LinkedIn Hottest Skills list.

Every year, LinkedIn looks at who is being hired in the network and which job skills are important, and 2014 was no different. To find the top skills answer, they analysed the skills and experience data of over 330 million LinkedIn member profiles. If your skills fit one of the categories, there's a good chance you either started a new job or garnered the interest of a recruiter in 2014.

Here is the South African 2014 Hottest Skills List vs the Global Hottest Skills list:

The 25 Hottest Skills of 2014 on LinkedIn The 25 Hottest Skills of 2014 on LinkedIn

South Africa

- 1 Statistical Analysis and Data Mining
- 2 Storage Systems and Management
- 3 Network and Information Security
- 4 Middleware and Integration Software
- 5 Java Development
- 6 Business Intelligence
- 7 Public Policy and International Relations
- 8 SAP ERP Systems
- 9 Perl/Python/Ruby
- 10 User Interface Design
- 11 Non-Profit, Fundraising, and Grant Making
- 12 Mac, Linux and Unix Systems
- 13 Marketing Campaign Management
- 14 Data Engineering and Data Warehousing
- 15 Web Architecture and Development Framework
- 16 Materials Engineering
- 17 Social Media Marketing
- 18 Recruiting
- 19 Software QA and User Testing
- 20 PR and Communications
- 21 Digital and Online Marketing
- 22 Oil and Gas, Subsea Engineering/Offshore Operations
- 23 Clinical Research and Trials
- 24 Database Management and Software
- 25 Economics

Global

- 1 Statistical Analysis and Data Mining
- 2 Middleware and Integration Software
- 3 Storage Systems and Management
- 4 Network and Information Security
- 5 SEO/SEM Marketing
- 6 Business Intelligence
- 7 Mobile Development
- 8 Web Architecture and Development Framework
- 9 Algorithm Design
- 10 Perl/Python/Ruby
- 11 Data Engineering and Data Warehousing
- 12 Marketing Campaign Management
- 13 Mac, Linux and Unix Systems
- 14 User Interface Design
- 15 Recruiting
- 16 Digital and Online Marketing
- 17 Computer Graphics and Animation
- 18 Economics
- 19 Java Development
- 20 Channel Marketing
- 21 SAP ERP Systems
- 22 Integrated Circuit (IC) Design
- 23 Shell Scripting Languages
- 24 Game Development
- 25 Virtualization

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Firstly, and as has been predicted for the last few trends seasons, data is important. We live in an increasingly data-driven world, and businesses are actively hiring experts in data storage, retrieval, and analysis. Across the globe, statistics and data analysis skills were highly valued. Big Data is here and things are getting interesting.

And the issue is...

Now, for what we came to look at - SEO and SEM are placed at number 5 on the global skills list, but here in South Africa, we haven't ranked SEO as highly on this skills list. Actually, SEO and paid search didn't even make it on the SA list of 25.

I believe the issue in SA is the "rise of the technical marketer". In South Africa, digital, online, and SEO marketing skills are becoming an expected skill for marketers, with at least a basic understanding of SEO and the impact on the business. Companies still too often look at junior employees for this skill, even though it is vital to get it correct.

What does this mean? I am an advocate for content marketing, SEO and paid-for search, but at the end of the day, what companies really care about is simple - traffic to their websites. I think content marketing and SEO and SEM will be around for a while, driving traffic to sites.

The next question is, what do these sites do with the traffic, and are they prepared to convert effectively?

ABOUT WARREN HARDING

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