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2025 Insights

What We Learned in Search

Antalya, 22–26 November 2025

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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. About the SnS Salon & Contributors
3. What We Stopped Doing: Myths, Models & “Best Practices” We Abandoned
4. What Kept Working Across Markets, Algorithms & Business Models
5. AI in SEO: Capability Multiplier vs. Mediocre Automation
6. Growth SEO vs. Safe SEO: Navigating Risk, Politics & Reality
7. Measurement, Risk & Ethics: Working in a Volatile Landscape
8. The Human Edge: Soft Skills, Confidence & the Real 2026 Skill Gap
9. 10 Practical Lessons & Predictions for 2026
10. The 2026 Practitioner’s Toolkit (Tools, Frameworks & Resources)

1. Executive Summary

More strategic retreat than conference, the first Search 'n Stuff (SnS) Salon in Antalya was designed as an invite-only mini-retreat for a small, curated group of senior SEO practitioners. Instead of stages, slide decks and sponsor keynotes, the focus was on critical thinking, real projects and honest conversation. Over several days of co-working, shared accommodation and roundtable sessions, participants compared what had actually worked – and what had very clearly failed – in 2025.

The core cohort of this first edition brought together six experts whose work and thinking we already trusted: Tamara Novitović, Giulia Panozzo, Begüm Kaya, Yağmur Şimşek, Mert Oğuz and Onur Zeybek. Nobody came to "perform a talk". Instead, they brought live cases, half-finished frameworks, uncomfortable lessons, and the kind of stories that never make it into polished conference slides or LinkedIn threads. Supported by partners like Marriott Executive Apartments, Özpınarlar Turizm Grubu, StudioHawk and Düzey Turizm, the Salon created the right habitat for deeper listening, real debate and collective problem-solving around SEO, AI and measurement.

This executive summary distils the most important outcomes of that week: the myths we agreed to retire, the strategies that kept working across markets, the ways AI is genuinely reshaping research and execution, and the soft skills that now separate "good implementers" from true strategic leaders.

What emerged was not another list of "SEO hacks", but a clear signal that **the discipline is maturing into a strategic leadership function.** The key shifts:

- **AI's real value is capability augmentation**, not content speed. The winning workflows use AI to write code, automate analysis and democratise technical skills, while humans stay firmly in charge of judgment and strategy.
- Several "sacred" best practices—obsessive meta tag tweaking, keyword density checks, competitor copy-pasting—are being **actively deprioritised** in favour of higher-leverage work.
- Traditional **forecasting is breaking down**. Instead of pretending to predict traffic in a storm of updates and AI overviews, leaders are reframing success around "**visibility gains**": AI citations, brand presence in communities, and multi-platform reach.
- **Ethics and disclosure around AI content** are becoming non-negotiable—both for regulatory reasons (e.g. EU AI Act) and to protect long-term user trust.
- The real differentiator for 2026 is not another micro-tactic, but **soft skills**: the ability to educate stakeholders, argue for action in risk-averse organisations, process criticism, and build a credible personal and brand identity across channels.

If there is one overall lesson from the Salon, it's this:

SEO is no longer just about "fixing pages". It's about owning how a brand shows up across search, AI systems, and communities, and having the strategic and human skills to steer that.

2. About the SnS Salon & Contributors

SnS Salon: 2025 Insights – What We Learned in Search took place from **22–26 November 2025** at Marriott Executive Apartments in Antalya. The format was intentionally small and collaborative: roundtable sessions, structured questions, and on-camera conversations designed to produce "**raw, operational intelligence**", not polished talks.

Core prompts included:

- Which strategies, myths, or reporting models did you abandon in 2025?
- Which approaches kept working surprisingly well across markets and industries?
- When did AI genuinely unlock strategy—not just speed up mediocre tasks?
- What changed the way you think, not just the way you optimise?
- What single lesson would you take from 2025 into 2026?

These questions also shaped this document, which is meant to be a **downloadable reference** for senior marketers and SEOs who want more than surface-level "trends".

This report is shaped by the shared experience and perspectives of six practitioners who work at the intersection of SEO, product, data, AI and community.



Tamara Novitović

Tamara Novitović is Head of SEO at Bazoom and an international SEO speaker focused on technical clarity, smart link strategy, and ethical AI use. She has worked across agency and in-house teams, helping brands compete in highly regulated and competitive niches where link strategy, risk, and long-term sustainability intersect..



Giulia Panozzo

Neuroscientist turned marketer, consultant, speaker and trainer based in London. With a BSc in Psychobiology, an MSc in Neuroscience and experience in advanced research (TMS, EEG, tRNS), she helps brands make science-backed marketing decisions, improve measurement, and design experiences grounded in real user behaviour. She has spoken at TEDxVicenza, BrightonSEO, WTSFest, Heapcon, SMX and more.



Begüm Kaya

Product-focused SEO and digital wellbeing consultant, currently Organic Growth Strategist at Omniscient Digital. Begüm is known for connecting SEO strategy with product reality and meaningful reporting. She is active in the search community as a mentor with Women in Tech SEO, a SERPConf brand ambassador, and community engagement lead for Search 'n Stuff, and advocates for ethical, sustainable, and mindful use of digital.



Yağmur Şimşek

Independent SEO and content strategist, founder of Search 'n Stuff Community & Networking Events and co-founder of Global Cyber Security Network. With 10+ years' experience across agencies and in-house (including SEO Manager for Philip Morris International's UK market), she specialises in content-led growth, AI visibility, and building bridges between teams, while running community-driven events for search professionals.



Mert Oğuz

SEO and growth expert with 15+ years of experience, strengthened by leading SEO teams at large-scale e-commerce platforms such as Trendyol.com and n11.com, and now co-founder of Monz Agency. Mert focuses on SEO & AI-driven growth strategies, semantic content optimization, technical SEO, and multilingual strategies, particularly for marketplaces, e-commerce, and healthcare sectors. He leverages AI for time-efficient solutions, rapid insights, advanced analysis, and automation, while continuously monitoring performance metrics and conducting competitor benchmarking to identify scalable growth opportunities.



Onur Zeybek

Onur is an SEO Consultant with over 15 years of experience, having led and managed SEO strategies for numerous companies across diverse industries (education-oriented content platforms, health tourism websites, SaaS products, and real estate platforms). He focuses on technical SEO and holistic-NLP-driven strategies, designing search-engine-LLM-friendly code and content structures that support sustainable organic growth. He closely follows emerging technologies and evolving digital ecosystems, while actively keeping up with the latest trends in SEO, digital marketing, growth hacking, and Python-powered AI and NLP tools.

3. What We Stopped Doing: Myths, Models & “Best Practices” We Abandoned

A recurring theme was not just what to do, but **what to stop doing**. Several long-standing habits were called out as low-ROI in 2025.

3.1 Obsessive Meta Tag Optimisation

For large e-commerce and enterprise sites, **hyper-tuning titles and meta descriptions** has largely lost its edge:

- **Giulia:** “For me, it’s titles and descriptions… Google tends to change them anyway when they think there’s a better match for the page and its content.”

Granular A/B tests on tiny wording changes rarely justify the effort when Google rewrites snippets on the fly. The group now treats meta tags as “**hygiene factors**”: good enough, scalable, and mostly templated.

Nuance: For niche B2B or smaller sites, clear and intentional titles still matter — but mostly as basics rather than magic levers. As Yağmur noted, she’s not fully convinced they drive big results anymore, yet they remain non-negotiable because many stakeholders still see them as a fundamental. In practice, they function as a “baseline signal” that the SEO essentials are covered, which helps build trust and manage expectations, especially in agency or freelance relationships.

3.2 Keyword Density

Requests for “keyword density audits” (how many times a word appears in each article) are still arriving in inboxes, despite being functionally irrelevant in a world of semantic search and entity understanding.

The consensus: **density analysis is an educational artefact**, not a strategic tactic. If you ever do it, it’s to teach stakeholders *why* it no longer matters, not because it will move rankings. There are now more insightful analyses on where search is heading—particularly toward vector embeddings—so we concluded that our go-to methods should evolve accordingly.

3.3 Competitor Mirroring

Copy-pasting competitor tactics, content structures, link patterns, page templates, was described as a “**crazy waste of time and money**.”

- You only ever see the **surface**: you can’t see hidden PBNs, unreported paid placements, or risky tactics propping up those rankings.
- You risk copying **short-term hacks** that don’t align with your brand, risk tolerance, or regulatory constraints.

Look for what they’re not doing (or doing badly), and build your own, more durable path.

Yağmur put it simply: “Don’t mirror their pages, map their blind spots.” That means focusing less on copying layouts and more on building what they’re missing: clear use-case content, genuinely useful tools/templates, and a visible, credible presence in the communities that shape discovery and trust.

4. What Kept Working Across Markets, Algorithms & Business Models

Not everything was abandoned. Some approaches surprised people not just because they worked, but because they **kept** working across industries and updates.

4.1 The “Hybrid Content Product”

Tamara’s standout success was what she calls a hybrid content product:

- Create substantial, high-value articles on external high-authority sites (news portals, niche publishers).
- Combine original data, case studies, and linkable assets (calculators, interactive charts, visualisations) within each piece.
- Engineer these assets to:
  - Rank and attract their own organic traffic on the host site, and
  - Earn high-quality backlinks to the client via natural attribution.

In one case, an article published on a German news platform generated 25,000+ visits and briefly outperformed the client’s own site in traffic. When the same framework was adapted with interactive elements such as calculators and visual tools, it consistently delivered results in low-volume, high-intent keyword environments.

This effectively delivered “**parasite SEO results at a fraction of the usual cost**”, but without the disposable, spammy feel of traditional guest posts.

4.2 Verticalised B2B Downloadables

For a B2B AI software client, Begüm moved away from one generic whitepaper and instead created multiple vertical-specific reports:

- “AI in Healthcare”
- “AI in Public Sector”
- “AI in [Other Industry]”

Each report sat behind a form as a gated PDF, while a broader on-site article covered general AI applications and linked into these industry-specific assets. The outcome: more qualified leads and a better match between **persona pain points** and content.

The pattern: **one core insight base, many persona-specific executions**.

4.3 Blogging & Personal Entity Building

Onur highlighted something deceptively simple:

- **Blogging isn't dead; it's your identity hub.**
- A consistent, high-quality personal blog tied to your name, role, and social profiles acts as the **anchor for your entity** in both search engines and LLMs.

His advice: Launch a clean blog on yourname.com, clarify who you are and what you do, publish there first, and use social platforms as distribution—not your only home.

Consistency across name, title, and presence becomes an **E-E-A-T signal for humans and machines**.

5. AI in SEO: Capability Multiplier vs. Mediocre Automation

A lot of noise in 2025 framed AI as "content machine vs. writer". The Salon conversations were much more practical:

AI is most powerful when it writes code and structures, not when it spits out finished articles.

5.1 Programmatic Analysis Without Hallucinations

Mert and Onur shared their workflow for core update impact analysis:

1. Export **pre- and post-update** data from Google Search Console.
2. Ask an LLM (e.g. ChatGPT, Claude) to write **Python or R code** that compares the datasets and outputs meaningful deltas.
3. Run that code on the real data

Because the AI is writing **code, not conclusions**, it operates directly on truth-bound numbers—**eliminating hallucination risk** while saving hours of manual spreadsheet work.

5.2 Democratising Technical Skills

One of the clearest shifts we discussed was how AI has quietly become a technical co-pilot for people who don't write code for a living. Instead of waiting days for developer support, practitioners now:

- Generate complex Excel/Sheets formulas on demand
- Have code blocks translated and explained during technical audits
- Debug scripts and automation flows without pulling in an engineer

As Yağmur described it, “AI has made it possible to get hands-on with technical work that used to sit firmly in the ‘ask a developer’ bucket.”

The result is significant: solo consultants and non-developer SEOs can now implement ideas they previously only sketched conceptually. Strategies that once stopped at the slide deck are actually being built, tested, and iterated, without needing a full engineering team on standby.

5.3 AI for Research & Persona Insight

Beyond execution, AI is quietly transforming the research and discovery phase of SEO. They’re now used to build culturally grounded buyer personas and surface market-specific language, from regional shorthand like “DACH delivery” in German-speaking markets, to role-driven terms (“CFO-approved reporting,” “procurement-ready pricing”), use-case shorthand (“multi-entity billing,” “handover reporting”), trust and risk signals (“audit-ready,” “enterprise-grade security”), and decision-stage modifiers (“migration risk,” “implementation timeline”) — while also uncovering the deeper question patterns behind those searches, such as “What breaks if we switch?” or “Who is this actually for?” These are nuances classic keyword tools routinely miss, yet they often make the difference between content that technically ranks and content that genuinely resonates with real buyers.

Instead of starting from a flat keyword list, practitioners are using AI to map out the semantic neighbourhood around a topic: related entities, colloquial phrases, regional modifiers, pain points, and intent signals across different markets. This feeds directly into content strategy – from how categories are named and structured, to which use cases get their own landing pages, to the tone and examples used in localised copy. In practice, AI helps SEOs move from “we translated our keywords” to “we actually sound like we belong in this market.”

This absolutely accelerates strategy, but the group was very clear: **AI proposes, humans dispose**. The risk isn’t that AI will make SEOs lazy; it’s that it will scale lazy thinking if its outputs are taken at face value. The teams getting real value from these workflows are the ones treating AI research as a starting point to interrogate, validate, and refine using first-party data, local experts, and real customer feedback, not as a final answer.

“Relevance engineering” is basically: map intent universes + fan-outs, then design content ecosystems to show up in those expansions.

Build “prompt packs” per persona (their vocabulary, modifiers, constraints) and use them to audit whether your brand is retrievable in LLMs.

6. Growth SEO vs. Safe SEO: Navigating Risk, Politics & Reality

One of the sharper debates centred around the question: **Is “safe SEO” the same as “growth SEO” in 2025?**

Short answer from Tamara: Absolutely not.

6.1 When “Growth” Becomes Manipulation

Tamara argued that some so-called “growth” strategies in 2025 look less like optimisation and more like **search engine manipulation**:

- Scripted, AI-generated content at scale
- Programmatic SEO that floods the index with shallow pages
- Aggressive link schemes in high-stakes verticals (betting, trading, YMYL)

These can work—sometimes alarmingly well—but sit far outside what most brands can safely tolerate from a risk, compliance and reputation standpoint.

6.2 Testing vs. Shipping: Risk Tolerance in the Real World

The “Growth vs Safe” divide also plays out inside organisations:

- Begüm’s view: Many companies are so risk-averse that testing becomes “procrastination disguised as diligence”. They A/B test every harmless change instead of shipping obvious improvements, and the biggest risk becomes doing nothing.
- Giulia’s counterpoint: In large enterprises, testing is often a political necessity. You run pilots not because you doubt the SEO logic, but because you need hard numbers to unlock scarce developer time and budget.

The practical takeaway: great SEOs are not “growth” or “safe” in isolation, they’re fluent in both languages, and know when to lean on which.

7. Measurement, Risk & Ethics: Working in a Volatile Landscape

7.1 The Forecasting Crisis & New Visibility Metrics

Everyone agreed: classic forecasting is on life support.

- Giulia:"I cannot trust traditional forecasting anymore", Historical models break when each quarter brings a new update and AI overview layout.

Instead of pretending to predict traffic with false precision, the group is shifting toward **probabilistic and visibility-driven models**:

- Comparing previous forecasts to actuals via GSC API to **quantify typical variance**, not hide it.
- Framing success as "**visibility gains**"
    - AI citations in tools like Gemini/ChatGPT (benchmarked with tools such as **Waikay, GeoGenie, and so on**)
    - Brand mentions in key newsletters, communities, and podcasts
    - LLM bot hits in server logs, surfaced via **Screaming Frog Log Analyser**

The message to leadership becomes: **we can't control volatility, but we can measure and grow our footprint across the ecosystem**.

Onur & Mert's approach takes this further by grounding forecasts in real, seasonal data rather than abstract industry averages.

- They select a sample group of strategically important keywords, examine how the company performed on them in the previous year, and build growth forecasts anchored in this historical seasonality.
- They then layer in how top competitors performed, distinguishing whether changes stemmed from algorithm updates or genuine growth initiatives, to construct their own "industry average" based on the competitors they closely monitor.
- This creates a more realistic, context-aware forecast that reveals where the company actually stands. And as they scale this workflow, they're increasingly using LLMs and n8n to automate data gathering, comparison, labeling, and reporting—turning what used to be manual detective work into a semi-automated, repeatable forecasting system.

7.2 The Ethics of AI & Disclosure

On AI content, the common point was: “It should definitely be disclosed.”

Key reasons:

- **User trust:** People are more suspicious of AI-written text than AI images. If they later discover they were misled, trust erodes, just as it did with faked reviews.
- **Regulation:** The **EU AI Act** and similar frameworks are already pushing marketing teams toward transparency obligations by 2027.
- **Safety:** In sensitive YMYL niches (finance, medical), Tamara highlighted the risk of entirely AI-generated articles published without quality assurance, especially under fake AI “authors”.
-

A pragmatic middle ground discussed:

- For high-impact or complex content, use labels like: “Written with AI assistance, reviewed by [Expert Name / Role]”
- Build internal processes to ensure humans own the final facts and framing, especially where harm is possible.

8. The Human Edge: Soft Skills, Confidence & the 2026 Skill Gap

When asked “**What’s the biggest SEO skill gap nobody admits?**”, the answers rarely mentioned tools or markup. They centred on **human skills**.

8.1 Processing Criticism & Building Confidence

Giulia shared using the **ABCDE framework** , often use in cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), to handle harsh feedback:

- **A**dverse event – e.g. bad review, critical comment
- **B**elief – what you tell yourself that means (“I’m not good at my job”)
- **C**onsequence – how that belief affects your feelings and actions
- **D**isputation – challenging the belief with evidence
- **E**nergisation –the more constructive set of emotions and behaviours that replace the original belief

This helps separate **critique of work** from **critique of self**, which is essential in a field where experiments fail and opinions are loud.

8.2 Stakeholder Education as a Core Skill

A recurring pattern:

- Clients still ask for **keyword density audits** or micro-tuning meta tags.
- Leadership still expects precise **traffic forecasts** in an environment where that precision is fantasy.

The group agreed: **explaining what not to do is now part of the job**.

Modern senior SEOs spend a large portion of their time:

- Reframing conversations away from outdated rituals
- Teaching stakeholders why visibility now includes **AI, communities, and brand mentions**, not just blue links
- Using simple stories and analogies to connect complex tactics to business outcomes

The unglamorous truth: if you can't educate and persuade, your technical skills will never make it to production.

9. 10 Practical Lessons & Predictions for 2026

Based on the Salon discussions, here are ten distilled, practical lessons to carry into 2026:

- **Use AI to write code, not just copy.**
  Focus on workflows where AI generates Python/R/Sheets formulas and automation rather than final articles. This is where the leverage—and safety—lives.
- **Stop over-optimising the invisible.**
  Treat meta tags and density metrics as hygiene. Do the basics, but stop burning days on tweaks Google will overwrite.
- **Build hybrid content products, not guest posts.**
  Create assets on third-party sites that can rank and earn links at the same time. Think calculators, data visuals, deep case studies.
- **Forecast visibility, not just traffic.**
  Start reporting on AI citations, log-level LLM hits, community/newsletter mentions and SERP presence across formats—not just sessions.
- **Assume AI disclosure will become standard.**
  Build lightweight disclosure patterns and review processes now, before regulators and users force you into a crisis.
- **Treat testing as a political tool, not a religion.**
  In enterprises, use tests to unlock buy-in. In smaller, nimble environments, accept that sometimes shipping is the real test.
- **Go niche and vertical with B2B assets.**
  Replace one vague "ultimate guide" with multiple targeted reports or downloadables aligned to specific industries and roles.

- **Build utility, not just content.**
  Templates, calculators, checklists, datasets.
- **Plan for backend discoverability.**
  Clean APIs, structured feeds, schema that's actually maintained, because assistants will increasingly do things, not just "answer things."
- **Optimize for influence, not traffic.**
  Traffic is a lagging indicator; reputation footprints are the compounding asset.
- **Invest in your own entity: yourname.com.**
  Your blog and consistent online identity are long-term assets for both search engines and AI systems trying to understand who you are.
- **Upgrade your emotional and communication skills.**
  Learn frameworks like ABCDE, storytelling, and executive-friendly reporting. They'll unlock more impact than another micro-tactic ever will.
- **Redefine SEO as a strategic search presence.**
  In 2026, the job is not "ranking pages" but engineering how your brand shows up across search, AI, and communities—and aligning that with revenue, trust, and long-term resilience.

10. The 2026 Practitioner's Toolkit (Tools, Frameworks & Resources)

AI, SEO & Organic Growth

- **Waikay**
  Shows how AI models perceive your brand, helping you identify gaps, distortions, or missed positioning in AI answers.
- **GeoGenie (beta)**
  Uses AI to simulate personas and market behavior when entering new countries or verticals.
- **n8n**
  Automates SEO data, workflows, and alerts so teams focus on decisions, not manual operations.
- **AlsoAsked**
  Maps real user questions around a topic, making search intent and content structure painfully clear.
- **Notebook LLM**
  A workspace for reasoning, synthesis, and experimentation with long-form AI-assisted research.
- **Airops**
  Builds repeatable AI-powered workflows for research, reporting, and internal SEO tooling at scale.
- **Cursor.ai**
  Lets SEOs "vibe code" scripts for analytics, reporting, and custom dashboards without being full-time developers.
- **Peec.ai**
  Tracks where and how your brand appears inside AI-generated answers and summaries

- **Screaming Frog + Log Analyser**
  Combines crawling with server logs to understand how bots (including LLM crawlers) actually hit your site.

- **Jina.ai (reader.jina.ai)**
  Shows what LLMs can realistically read and extract from your pages — not what browsers render.

- **Ahrefs / Semrush**
  Baseline SEO intelligence for keywords, competitors, backlinks, and trend analysis.

- **Majestic**
  Deep link graph analysis focused on trust, relevance, and backlink quality over volume.

- **Yext**
  Manages structured brand data across platforms to improve consistency and discoverability.

- **Advanced Web Ranking**
  Reliable rank tracking with granular SERP features and geo-level accuracy.

- **Sitebulb**
  Technical SEO auditing with strong prioritisation and visual explanations.

- **SE Ranking**
  All-in-one SEO platform with solid tracking, audits, and reporting at accessible scale.

- **Wappalyzer (Chrome)**
  Instantly identifies tech stacks behind websites for competitive and integration insights.

- **Rendering Difference Engine (Chrome)**
  Compares raw HTML vs rendered output to spot JS, indexing, or rendering issues.

- **Web Developer (Chrome)**
  Quick diagnostics for front-end, accessibility, and technical checks during audits.

- **Yoast**
  On-page SEO guardrails for WordPress, ensuring baseline hygiene and consistency.

- **Moz**
  Classic SEO metrics and tooling with a strong focus on authority and search fundamentals.

Performance & Analytics

- **Google Search Console API + Python/R**
  Enables large-scale, repeatable analysis and forecasting instead of manual GSC exports.

- **R Studio / Google Colab + Gemini**
  Used for advanced statistical and causal analysis, with AI acting as a coding assistant.

- **BigQuery**
  Scales SEO and analytics data storage for serious analysis across large sites or datasets.

- **Looker Studio**
  Turns complex SEO data into stakeholder-friendly dashboards.

- **Screaming Frog + ChatGPT**
  Exports crawl or log data and lets AI summarise findings or generate analysis scripts.

Content, Links & Brand

- **Hybrid content product frameworks**
  Blends PR, content, and distribution for reach and authority without throwaway posts.
- **Newsletter & community tracking**
  Monitors brand mentions and influence inside private or niche communities where real signals form.
- **Brand mention monitoring**
  Tracks unlinked and linked mentions to measure authority beyond backlinks.
- **Content Harmony**
  Aligns content briefs with SERP intent, competitors, and structure expectations.
- **Frase**
  Optimises content using SERP-driven topic coverage and NLP insights.
- **Keyword Insights**
  Clusters keywords by intent to support scalable, logical content planning.
- **ContentGo AI**
  AI-assisted content production with a focus on SEO-ready structure.
- **BuzzSumo**
  Identifies content that actually earns attention, links, and shares.

Mindset & Soft Skills

- **ABCDE Framework**
  A practical method for handling criticism, stress, and setbacks constructively.
- **Personal operating routines**
  Systems for educating stakeholders, managing expectations, and protecting SEO impact internally.
- **SEO MBA**
  Deep strategic thinking about search, brands, and long-term growth — not tactics.
- **Growth Memo**
  Sharp insights on modern SEO, experimentation, and decision-making.
- **Every.to**
  Cross-disciplinary thinking on business, technology, and creativity that sharpens strategy.

Staying “good at SEO” in 2026 isn’t just about knowing how things work – it’s about staying close to where the thinking happens. Across the roundtables, people kept coming back to the same pattern: the best practitioners don’t just read docs, they plug themselves into living systems of information.

What this looks like in practice:

Curated Newsletters as Signal Filters

Practitioners rely on a small set of high-signal newsletters to track algorithm turbulence, AI changes, and standout case studies. Rather than doomscrolling X or LinkedIn, they let a handful of trusted writers pre-filter the noise and surface what's actually worth reading.

Newsletters mentioned (but not limited to) are:

- SEOFOMO
- MarketingFOMO
- AI Marketers
- Core Updates
- WTS Newsletter
- Tech SEO Tips
- Keyword Insights Newsletter by Andy Chadwick
- ZEO News
- Ecommerce SEO Newsletter by Freddie Chat

Communities as "Early Warning Systems"

Private Slack/Discord groups, WhatsApp chats, forums and invite-only communities now act as real-time radar. People share sudden traffic drops, odd SERP layouts, AI Overview experiments and legal/policy shifts days before they're written up anywhere public.

- Women in Tech SEO
- Digital Marketing Union
- Search 'n Stuff
- The SEO Community
- Freelancing Friends
- Digital PR & Link Friends
- Keyword insight SEO Community
- SEO Brein

Events and Recordings as Deep Dives

Conferences, webinars, workshops and their recordings are used less as “once-a-year inspiration” and more like on-demand training. Teams bookmark specific talks (e.g. log analysis, AI Overviews, entity SEO) and revisit them when those problems show up in their own roadmap.

- Search ‘n Stuff
- Women in Tech SEO
- Search London
- BrightonSEO
- HiveMCR
- SearchNorwichXL
- SERP Conf. SEO Conferences
- Visibility Summit Dubai
- SEO Office Hours
- Duda Webinars

Check wider lists below:

- Search with Candour Podcast
- SEO Product Unveiled Podcast
- The Long Game
- Crawling Mondays
- The Yoast SEO Podcast

and many more...

Personal Knowledge Bases

Many are now maintaining their own Notion/Obsidian/Drive hubs: saved threads, test results, client learnings, schema snippets, prompts that worked, internal SOPs. Over time, this becomes more valuable than any external resource – a personalised playbook shaped by real outcomes.

Put simply: in 2026, the edge doesn’t come from having one “secret source”, but from running a tight information stack – a few great newsletters, a couple of trusted communities, and a habit of turning what you learn into your own documented, test-backed system.

This Salon report is designed to be a **starting point**, a reference you can return to when the next update hits, the next AI feature rolls out, or the next stakeholder asks, “So… what’s really working in SEO now?”

The short answer for 2026:

the people who win will be the ones who use AI to think better, not just produce faster, and who treat SEO as a strategic practice that spans technology, behaviour, and trust.

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