



How to EAT for better SEO



What is EAT? And how does authority content impact your search engine ranking? Listen as SEO pro Gert Mellak neatly sums up Google's ranking criteria.



Gert Mellak

James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 803. I've brought along my special SEO expert, guest, friend, [Gert Mellak](#) from [SEOLeverage.com](#). Welcome back.

Gert: Hi James. Always a pleasure to be here.

James: We have you back a fair bit. I'm talking about you all the time with my private coaching clients. I just had a few calls today actually, in the last 24 hours, I've spoken to three of them. And they're all getting great results, which is always a positive sign. But what we want to do is bring those results to the general audience of SuperFastBusiness, to get a taste for it.

How EATing can improve your SEO

And I've used the word taste deliberately there. It's a take on the topic for today. We're going to learn how to EAT better to improve our SEO, and we're going to break down the EAT acronym. If you're familiar with SEO, you've probably heard this before. But let's start with what EAT stands for, Gert.

Gert: Okay, absolutely. EAT stands for Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness. And this is a concept that came up. And this is especially important because Google's quality raters are judging our websites and feeding their judgment back into the algorithm so the algorithm can learn from their experience. And those people have a certain guideline that's publicly available as a PDF. It's probably the most boring thing you could read. So if you have trouble sleeping at night, it's probably great material.

For us in SEO, it's really essentially the guideline of what Google apparently seems to be looking for. And this concept of EAT comes up several times across the document. And the reason behind it is that Google has essentially a growing problem. And this means that the problem is that it's hard to figure out what is legit and what is not legit.

And for a machine learning algorithm that's essentially just connecting the dots between content, and etc., it's a growing issue to figure out if a site that could be up by now already be put together by someone with a writer without any idea about the subject matter, just copying and pasting and rewriting stuff.

Or if in the future very soon, with an AI machine or machine learning algorithm, essentially, just figure out if this is legit or not, if the person stating that something should be done in a certain way, or giving a recommendation, especially health, finance space, really knows what they are talking about.

James: You know, when I started online about 2005, 2006, there was a business model back then that involved a software called Traffic Equalizer. And these were essentially spam site creators that made hundreds of thousands of pages that then they would run ads on.

And you could actually do Google arbitrage. You could buy AdWords for five cents or two cents, and then you could drive traffic to these mass-generated page things and sell the traffic back to Google on their AdSense program. So this was the racket when I started online, people were doing that, and I just missed the tail of that.

Google's AI against content-creating AI

But I wonder with AI, if Google are training the AI how to determine if a website is real or not, if it's got expertise, authoritativeness, trustworthiness, I wonder if the content creators are also training their AIs to make better content. And I imagine some of the news outlets have already been doing this. And there'll certainly be people. There's big, big money in certain markets. And maybe you're going to touch on which ones are more likely to be affected by this.

But I just wonder, are we in an arms race with AI technology between Google and the content creators?

Gert: I think it's definitely something Google has been taking seriously in the last years. Content creators on their end definitely are looking for solutions to just tell the AI, look write me an article about a certain topic, do research in the top 100 or top 500 websites, put something together that reads well, and let's get this out there.

I think we are not far away from this. There are already AI programs writing copy for ads, etc. out there, and they're not doing a bad job. Especially if you think of the first draft that gets written up, it's very often the hardest part of the work to create a good piece of content.

If you can feed into an AI engine and say look, I want to write an article about email marketing, I want to have a section about subject lines, open rates, email marketing tools, and then the open loop concept; and we talk about this a little bit in this article and it should have a length of 2500 words, because this is pretty much what Google apparently likes to rank, and you get like a first draft, and then just send this to an editor and say, look, make a good piece of content that sounds well and reads well out of this, I think we're pretty much already there.

Then the next step is really going to be AI creating content at scale, AI creating websites at scale. And I think this is just something that must be really scary for Google. Millions of sites, essentially within hours being created, without virtually any costs, really. So it's really easy to create 500 sites about surfing, for example, and see what happens. I think this is scary.

So Google tries to pinpoint what is a legit site? What is a legit site growth? I would expect as well, but especially when it comes back to EAT, Google wants that there is someone behind the website and wants to know that this person really knows what they're talking about.

What's legitimate authority content? What isn't?

James: So how are Google doing that?

Gert: We have several ideas. People are definitely into quality guidelines, quality raters are asked to check who is behind the site. Is there an author, is there an about page, is there a contact page, is this especially in a certain space, it's called your money, your life. So everything that involves a Google user's money or essentially life and happiness and stuff like that is being taken care of very specifically by Google, especially in those spaces.

Google doesn't want to give bad information. So this comes back to Google trying to make users happy. So users are not going to be happy if they get bad financial advice. Imagine you get bad financial advice, you get a mortgage, somebody tells you the 20 percent interest is a good rate. You go out, you get a 20 percent mortgage or 20 percent loan or something like that, you're not going to be a happy Google user, because it is going to affect your money and your life.

Same with health advice. For example, imagine you find a cancer treatment and knocking on your head twice a day is going to cure cancer, you're probably not going to be a happy Google user. So Google needs mechanisms to figure out what is good advice, essentially, very often sticking with mainstream information. We see this a lot with alternative treatment websites and things like those.

Google isn't really too convinced about this space, I think. So very often, they just have to stick with mainstream because they don't know where to draw the line, I think. Okay? But definitely, we need to state who we are. And we need to state that we know what we're talking about.

Do non-mainstream stances have a fighting chance?

James: Are there some markets that we just shouldn't expect to rank well? It seems we're entering an era of censorship and control by large companies - Facebook, and Twitter, Google, Signal; I think there's been a few where they're filtering out the type of content they don't want. I mean, ultimately, it's their website. And they probably can, and I'm having a whole podcast discussion on this topic.

But what if we're in a field that is not mainstream, where we think we're right and mainstream is wrong? Is that just going to be going against the grain and it's not worth the fight? Or are there ways that people can go about that in a strategic manner?

Gert: I think it's definitely worth a fight, but you want to pay attention to whatever resource you can use to backup your information. Okay?

James: So it's like, Science-based research material, etc.

Gert: It could be science research, it could be people with a certain, for example, medical degree. Okay, so there are doctors open for alternative treatment as well, for example.

James: I mean, YouTube takes down videos from doctors about COVID, etc. That's owned by the same company. It seems like even a doctorate's not going to guarantee your information will be viewed favorably.

Gert: There's definitely going to be a point until when you can publish certain information. And then what you're saying is going to be true.

James: And some of those health sites are like, pretty much wiped off the face of the search engine.

Gert: Exactly, but there are other health sites that do really well. They do really well. And the way they do this is really to contrast as much as possible information, there's always going to be something where political interests are much stronger than anything else.

James: So would it be a case of making Google-friendly content and then maybe dealing with their other stuff in the back end, like in the emails or away from the site and private portal, gated community, etc.?

Gert: Obviously, the more channels you have with your audience, the better. We learned this last but not least from SuperFastBusiness.com. But you definitely need to find your way around. So probably not targeting, for example, high competitive queries is probably one thing to go about this, right?

So if you're targeting alternative treatments as a keyword, or alternative cancer treatment, it's probably not very hard to get your things ranking, especially with our track record. But if you target really niche queries, like long tail queries with less competition, I would not expect Google to be so strict on those.

James: Gotcha. Okay, so you might use some of the drug names or specific techniques, and the how tos and so forth, which are also going to attract a specific type of search query, that's probably more relevant.

Gert: Exactly. Very often, the longtail converts much, much better because people are at a certain stage of their buying cycle already, or about to convert, or are going to download whatever you offer them because they're so interested in this topic. And it's very often a bad idea, anyway.

James: I once purchased a few hundred domain names at once from someone else, with websites. And one of the domain names had a series of numbers and letters. And it turns out years later, this was pretty much the same name as an experimental drug that was favored to be able to cure cancer. And I got sent a cease and desist letter that was the size of an old school phonebook. It scared the pants off me.

But I imagine someone searching for that name would know exactly what they're searching for. And they're extremely clued in, in terms of, you know, what they were after, and they would have had a high value, that site. I can understand why they wanted to take it back from me.

Gert: Absolutely.

James: But yeah, I think what we're saying here is, remember we're playing on someone else's playground here. And if they want to close it, we have to get off the ride. And so they're doing everything they can to stop people putting out rubbish content and ranking over good quality content.

They want the EAT, the Expertise, the Authoritativeness, the Trustworthiness. They're hiring people, we think, to look through sites and then tick a cross, or an arrow to say yes or no for these qualities, and to help tune the machine.

How to boost EAT on your website

So what can we do to our website, taking into account EAT? Is there a methodology you would prescribe to boost someone's website?

Gert: It definitely depends on the individual industry. But there are a few things I would definitely add to the list. For a start, whatever you can do to tell Google who you are, and who is behind the site (not necessarily you, this can be someone else) is going to be good.

So I've been auditing, I don't know how many sites since last December algorithm update that dropped really, really hard. One common denominator was that they were very typically affiliate sites. And the typical affiliate site for me, is a site that does not even have a contact form, probably.

So the main idea is just drive people to this website and make them click on whatever link you can, as soon as possible. Provide the necessary content for this to rank, and you get your commission. This is a very typical affiliate concept that has been around for many years. Without any idea of branding, without any idea of real value. Just the higher the affiliate banner, the better. This is just like a very clear concept of what is not working anymore.

And I've seen sites drop 85, 90 percent with this concept in the last algorithm update. And we already saw this in the May update that Google had a clear trend. So we could have seen the May update as early warning signs to make sure we add certain information.

Be transparent, invite interaction

I remember back then, we had a financial website where I said, "Look, make sure you have an about page, make sure you have a contact page." They were giving financial information and then trying to get people into a membership site, which was great, the information was perfect. They know what they're talking about. But they didn't want to have client interaction.

And this is the reason for many sites, why they don't put out a contact page or an about page, because they say, "Look, I'm happy to put this information together. But I don't want any phone calls. I don't want anybody to see my address. I don't want any direct interaction. I'm happy to put this out there. But I don't want to be bothered." And I think this is just, especially in some cases, an impossible scenario these days. So you can't rank any more if you're not putting yourself out there.

James: It's like a lot of platforms demand that you be an actual person.

Gert: Exactly.

James: So transparency, that's one thing we can do. Be more transparent, be easy to contact, have an about page, make it easy for someone to work out who's behind this. Don't be a sneaky front or some behind-the-scenes operation and expect to still rank, is what I'm hearing.

What Google My Business can do for you

Gert: Exactly, exactly. Another thing you can do is sign up for Google My Business, if you don't have it yet. Okay? So if you're a big brand, you might have a knowledge panel, which is something that comes up on the right hand side on Google, when I search for, I don't know, Microsoft, there on the right hand side, that comes up on my panel. And if I search for James Schramko, I've seen as well, congrats on that one.

So as soon as you have a certain authority in a space, very often Google is going to put this up automatically, because they connect all the dots and say, "Look, this is legit. This has value in a community or in an industry. Let's give this person or this brand a knowledge panel," come up with all kinds of details from either financial websites, Wikipedia, whatever resources they might put together, very often Google Books if you've written a book, and then you get this knowledge panel.

If you don't have a knowledge panel, a way to improve the branding within Google, So when I type in your brand, I should get a good impression within Google, is signing up for Google My Business. And it used to be only for local businesses, where they have the address listed to get reviews, etc. But you can now also hide your address. So it's also something interesting for online businesses, where they can sign up there, hide their address, but still get reviews from real people.

They can send out requests to the audience, to happy clients, etc., ask them for reviews, make sure more and more people back up essentially their story or their brand or what they're doing. And this is going to be one very, very positive sign for Google, because in order to get a Google My Business listing, you need to verify it.

So usually, in most cases, you get sent a physical letter with a PIN code, and you have to enter this PIN code into the platform. So Google knows that on a certain address, someone received this letter, gave this to the person who's signing up for Google My Business, and they type in the PIN code. Okay?

The other thing, sometimes it also works with landlines, I think. So if you have a landline, they can call you and tell you the PIN code on the phone. And this works as well. But at least it's already some connection with the offline world that makes it easier for Google to track issues back to someone or an address or a physical or a phone number or something.

James: I have a few questions around that. And firstly, with my knowledge panel, I did have to verify stuff, and I got to select which images I wanted, etc. So I had some editorial control over how that is presented. With regards to the Google My Business, if I put that in for SuperFastBusiness, is that going to now restrict me geographically to more of an Australian bias for search results? Because I'm a global company.

Gert: No, no it isn't.

James: Right. Would have been my only reason for not doing it.

Gert: Yup. You can even type in your markets. You can type in the countries you're active in or not type in any countries really, but you can definitely show them the radius. If you're a local business, tell them to come, I'm working within 50 kilometers, 100 kilometers, or if you're an online business, you can definitely list the countries directly. I think in our Google My Business, I think we listed like 20, 30 countries we usually might get clients from. So there is no boundary, really, just by having the Google My Business.

And on a knowledge panel, this is an interesting point. So it is true you get the control. Google first of all usually shows something really weird and ugly when they identify you as an authority. Then there is a link below that to your knowledge panel.

James: Believe it or not, they didn't choose the best picture of me. You know, I was outraged.

Gert: Yeah, you can then claim your knowledge panel ahead. I just had a client the other day do this as well, where you then have to upload, I think, your ID or some sort of identification where you say, "Okay, this is really me."

SEO and your brand reputation management

James: Everyone listening to this podcast should be claiming their knowledge panels. That's a no brainer. And, you know, I originally got told to do that by [Stephan Spencer](#). And it definitely makes a huge difference when you're searching for yourself, you know, your old vanity check. But in all seriousness, it's very important to do a Google search on yourself, because it's most likely a customer or a decision maker or a supplier or if you're unfortunate enough to still be in a job or doing contract work, they are going to check you. You should control your reputation.

And a fun fact, the reason I got into SEO in the very beginning was because when you search for my name, my acting listing on IMDB used to come up first. And I wanted to have control of my own brand. So I purchased my own name as a .com. And that was the first thing I ranked for myself. So that's the seed of that. That was in 2005, I purchased my first domain, with the intent to control my search engine optimization.

So I've had an affinity for SEO the entire time I've been online. And if you're listening to this, and you don't have control of your own reputation, that's a good starting point.



Gert: Absolutely. And I very often tell these companies that are active in Facebook ads, for example, and say, "Okay, we don't need SEO, we have all our traffic and sales from Facebook ads," I think there is an important point to make here. People are going to search for your brand. I'm not a Facebook ads expert. There are [Ilana Wechsler](#) and others out there that can talk better to that. But people are going to search for your brand. And people are going to be impacted by what they see about your brand.

And there might be a Reddit thread or some forum post from 2010 when your service wasn't as refined as it is today, that might still backfire because somebody claimed that your service is trash.

James: I saw an example of that during the week. I have a client who is finding it hard to get jobs or contracts. And when I searched for his name, every listing on the homepage of Google was about him being a poker player, a gambler. That was his previous occupation for 10 years, he was a gambler. I'm not saying it's a bad thing.

I'm not making any character assessment, but I am saying, someone who's looking to hire this person is looking him up, and instead of seeing glorious testimonials from his clients, or you know, his domination of the homepage, and his LinkedIn and his Twitter and his Facebook and his own website, and his business website, or videos on YouTube, or a podcast or a book, they're seeing Poker gambler, and that might be concerning for a potential employer who is looking to take a risk on a contractor.

So that's an example, a real life example that I came across recently, that reminded me why I got into SEO in the very beginning, and it's step one. Step one is owning your own brand.

The reputation risk with affiliates

Gert: Absolutely. I think there is a growing awareness, we are getting into SEO Leverage more and more requests for what's called online reputation management where you essentially try to push positive results or things you really want people to find to page one, and push off any old forum posts, or sometimes even affiliates trying to rank for your brand and trying to compete with your website.

James: Very common. If you have a program and you have affiliates, please put a term and condition in there. Speak to your lawyer, of course, I'm not giving advice. I'm just saying what I did. I was sick and tired of people cloning me. They were pretending to be me. Even this Skype call we're on now, my username, someone else, an affiliate, registered my own name on Skype, and was using that to try and impersonate me as an affiliate.

And in the end, he gave it to me because he said, People keep contacting me thinking it's you. And I said, "Gee, why would that be the case?" Like, unless your name is James Schramko, then they probably think they're speaking to James Schramko. So it was the weirdest thing. But they were buying domain names with my name in it, they were buying domain names with my brand in it. And they were doing what is technically called passing off.

And in the old gray world of affiliate marketing, unless it's expressly forbidden, or you clearly state it, some affiliates will cross the line and pass off as you and people will think they're dealing with you even though they're not, and they're dealing through an intermediary who's getting commission.

And the big news on that is that you are probably liable for any of those transactions, you know, if they're seen to be representing you. So make sure if you have an affiliate program, speak to your lawyer about putting terms and conditions that expressly forbid people buying or bidding on your own trademark names or pretending to be you, etc. And again, it goes back to controlling your reputation.

And if you do increase your expertise and authoritativeness in the marketplace, then you will start to dominate for your own brand name. And then of course the easy win after that is to scroll down to the bottom of the page and see what else Google thinks people are looking for when they search for your name. And you'll find, what, six or so suggestions that you could make sure you're optimizing for as well.

When someone else is using your brand

Gert: Absolutely, absolutely. We also had a different case. And this is probably also interesting for the audience, where someone wasn't trying to impersonate the brand, but they were essentially using the brand for their own similar product. So they were trying to rank, for example, for SuperFastBusiness, just as a brand example, but then trying to sell their own program. So SuperFastBusiness isn't bad, but you should rather pick my program.

James: That exact thing happened to me. British Telecom in the UK set up a product division called SuperFastBusiness, and they've registered SuperFastBusiness.co.uk, and they started a YouTube channel, and they had Twitter, and the next thing you know, my UK customers are getting confused, because there's this SuperFastBusiness stuff with a different logo. It's talking about high-speed internet, which I can tell you at the time, when I was on 1.5 Mbps, that was anything but high-speed internet. I didn't even know what that was. It was my wildest dream to have high-speed internet.

And they set up these workshops around the UK, like they have deep pockets. And I didn't have the trademark at that time. So I've learned this lesson the hard way. You really have to protect your brand. And you have to go out and grab it with both hands before someone else does. And if you're not trademarked, there's actually very little you can do to stop people selling their own thing under your name.

Leveraging the authority of subject matter experts

Gert: Absolutely, absolutely. This is definitely a big part of it. If we go back to EAT, and what else we can do, we can work with, for example, industry specialists. So very often in the marketing world, you're going to find people who find a niche, build a website, want this rank, want the traffic, get affiliate links or other deals going, pay per lead is a very big model,.

So very often, you still need an expert behind it. So an interesting strategy one could explore would be to partner up with real experts. So if I want to do a health site, because I like the space, I might run the health site, but I might connect the site to some doctors, a few doctors who are willing to put their name up for whatever compensation or just for the glory, whatever they want. But you want to connect critical information to an expert.

So have them be the author. Quality raters at Google are asked to check who is the author of a post. Can they contrast this? Can they find this person on social media linked to the same industry, etc? So Google is going to scan everything and Google is trying to connect the dots. So if they can track your website with an article to a doctor who has a track record on LinkedIn, for example, and has been publishing information or a research paper.

In Spain, for example, everybody who has a university career has a number, which identifies them all of their career. So whenever they sign an official paper, they put in their number, this number is a really good element for Google to stick their teeth in, because they can track it back to whoever this person really is, and what's their profession, what's their experience.

In my case, I think it wouldn't be an issue to track my background back to web development, because I've been active in forums for 15 or 20 years (getting older) 15 to 20 years asking questions, answering questions on web development, etc. For me, giving programming advice would be really a clear case for Google where they can track back, okay, this guy has been active in the programming world for many, many years, and then turned into SEO and marketing, etc. It's not a big deal.

In your case, tracking your name back to business coaching with the [book you have](#), with the experience you have, with the podcast...

James: I can see my podcast episodes on YouTube pop up on the first page across the line. And you can see, like, they're three days apart, five days apart. It's, like, a very established track record. And we're extremely grateful to have you on our team helping us refine that. But some of the changes we've been making recently, we hope will have a significant impact on how our posts rank, and how Google looks at our content on an ongoing basis. But we're definitely taking into account this EAT.

And we do link off to experts who have got a strong track record and who are authoritative and who can be trusted. And that's part of the strategy.

Gert: Absolutely. You want to connect your brand and build your network essentially, but also publish content about your network.

James: That's like you and I were discussing this during the week, that one of the pieces of content that you have also interlinks back to my content for Google search engine. They can actually establish a link between that. So hopefully, when we publish a podcast about SEO, or search engine optimization, and your name is there, they're starting to build that profile and link it up.

Filing in the missing dots

Gert: That would be great. Yeah, definitely, we want our brand linked to SuperFastBusiness. We just need to always think of this like this puzzle for kids where you have, like, all those dots with numbers, and you're connecting the numbers and you get the full picture. I really try to explain to my clients, this is what Google is going to do. So if you miss a dot or two, you're not going to see the picture.

So this comes back to authorities, it comes back to trustworthiness, this comes back to expertise. This comes also through in content. If you're talking about email marketing, and you don't talk about subject lines, you're probably not such an expert, right? We're talking about email marketing, you're not talking about open rates, there are a few dots I can't connect. So at the end, your article isn't as relevant as all the other articles that do tick those boxes, that do connect those dots.

James: So there's good at spotting the gaps, what's missing?



Gert: Exactly. SEO is a gap game. Where am I? What does Google think needs to be connected? And where is the gap? Where am I when it comes to authority? Where are my competitors when it comes to authority? What can I do to get to their level? What do they do in terms of trustworthiness? How do they bring across the trust? Do they have a contact page? Do they have a phone number, address?

This is really easy. People can get a virtual office and the phone service or answering service or something like this, it doesn't have to be you. People very often don't think about it. I don't know how many clients I told to just get a virtual office. It costs \$20 to \$50 a month, and you have your nice business address. If someone looks you up, you have an office building. Google can figure this out, they can send you the PIN code, you can get your Google My Business listings.

There are tricks to work your way around this and work essentially based on Google's guidelines, but still get this credibility that a physical address just has. So many people have probably gone to Google Streetview, and just looked up where this person really is, or where this business really is located.

James: So if your competitor has all the other things that you have, and they don't have Google My Business, but you do, then that might be your extra dot that draws a stronger picture for you.

Gert: Could very well be, depending on the space, it could very well be a part of it. And especially if this listing then gets reviews, and if those people really have been to your site, we don't want fake reviews, it's really easy for Google to figure out, even if they don't tell it to you. But they can really have a good idea if this person leaving a review was really engaging with this business.

On local businesses, they can figure out, is this person locally related to this business to really give an assessment? Have they really been in this store to judge on what it looks like, if the offer is great, etc.? On online businesses, they probably have a very good idea if you have been to the site frequently or lately, etc, to really give a review. So I wouldn't fake reviews. I would encourage happy clients to actively review your site and get additional thoughts Google can connect.



And the more dots Google can connect on your site, the better for you, the higher you're going to rank in general, because they trust you more. And we just see this, there is a better update and better testing. Google has been starting, I think, a few days ago, just where you can get information on a search result.

So you click on the three dots, you can click on something that's called, I think, about this search result or something like this, and then they pull from their EAT database or whatever they have in store for this, to give you data about this result. So James Schramko is sort of a business coach located in Australia, for example, even before I click on it.



So they have a sense and notion that people don't necessarily trust the search result, will want to have information from Google rather than from the site itself, about whether they are an expert, whether they are legit. So we're definitely heading into an era, I think, where only experts are going to be allowed to talk. And Google, unfortunately, will tell us who the expert is.

James: Gert, this is fascinating. I'm going to go and do that search straightaway. That's probably the highlight for me of this episode. For someone else, it might be the verification panel, to go and give yourself that extra boost. Others, it might be the Google My Business. Thanks for explaining EAT to us.

We'll put together a handy little checklist on the post at 803 on SuperFastBusiness.com. There's a search bar on there. You can search for 803. You can click on [Podcast](#), you'll see a list of all the podcasts we've ever done, and find it easily that way.

In the meantime, if you've got a question about SEO, you want to ask Gert, head over to SEOLeverage.com, and you can see what Gert has to offer. Also, we do take questions. If you want us to cover a topic on a future episode, please post below the episode at 803 on SuperFastBusiness.com. Let us know what you'd like us to cover. And I'll see if I can get Gert back to deliver some more SEO goodness. Thank you so much, Gert.

Gert: Thank you very much. My pleasure.



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