

BrightEdge Point of View: Schema Markup and Content and SEO Success

SEOs often discuss schema and try to decide if they should implement it. A question to answer first, however, is how much value schema actually offers the average company. Brands must prioritize their time and where they spend their resources and efforts. We believe that organizations need to carefully consider the importance of schema in their specific goals and projects to make the decision that is right for them.

What is schema and how is it used?

Schema is a markup system that helps to further articulate to the search engines what your content contains. Although Google does a good job of accurately determining the type of content and connecting it with search queries, the search engine sometimes needs help identifying the purpose and intent of certain page elements. Schema helps to prevent any possible mistakes. Given the highly competitive nature of current SEO, no brands want to lose potential rankings because of errors.

Schema.org contains schemas for hundreds of [content types](#) – not all are supported by Google at this time. To help focus efforts, Google provided a gallery for the [supported schemas](#). This gallery shows a variety of rich experiences, which require proper schema markup. Some of these opportunities include carousels, breadcrumbs, sitelink search boxes and event details, all of which give brands the chance to be differentiated from competitors in search results.

Product-related rich snippets were one of the schema-driven experiences. Events and carousels are a newer feature of Google – now users can enter queries in the search engine related to activities and get updated information about events in their area. Carousels are commonly displayed for recipes, movies and a few other content types. Best practices for these types of rich experiences generally include using schema to ensure that Google correctly interprets the information on the page and displays it when possible to enhance search results.

For an ecommerce retail site, schema should be implemented in a specific and surgical manner. There's no value in implementing structured markup everywhere, but there is significant value potential in properly implemented product schema with aggregated rating, price, and availability. Rich snippet stars have been proven to improve click-through rates since their introduction. And, it is likely that price and availability rich snippets will help ecom retailers as they attempt to compete with Amazon.

How important is schema as an SEO strategy?

When organizations set out to improve their site's search rank, a number of strong planning and ranking aspects of SEO should take precedence. While schema markup will help improve click-thru rates, it is not known to directly improve search rank. Understanding and correctly using keyword and topic research, designing user-friendly site layouts and menus, fast-loading pages, managing the search crawl, developing high-quality content, and then promoting the content across the web will play a much greater role in the rankings of a website. Before brands expect a significant impact from schema, they need to make sure that they have first optimized the rest of these criteria.

Once brands establish a successful SEO workflow and generate results, schema can provide additional value. Content that contains information for a potential rich snippet, such as an event or a page that might be a good match for a carousel, could benefit from the schema markup.

Schema can help some organizations atomize their content, meaning break it down and repurpose it through various channels without manually reformatting it. There is also a rise in the use of AI and voice search, which may also impact the value of schema for brands moving forward. Artificial intelligence has been incorporated into Google through RankBrain. Voice search has also risen quickly as people adopt voice options on their smartphones and home devices as well as voice-controlled personal assistant devices. In this search atmosphere, the importance of minimizing mistakes in the interpretation of websites becomes enhanced. This will increase the importance of schema for the time being. In the future, we anticipate that artificial intelligence will become even more capable of interpreting websites and consequently minimize the need.

How do I use schema?

As a structured data system, schema has been developed through the collaboration of Google, Microsoft, Yandex, and Yahoo. The Schema.org site includes an exhaustive list of the different types of schemas available, with example code. There are 589 types, 860 properties, and 114 enumeration values. You will need to access the website to create the markup for the pages that you want to emphasize. For additional guidance, Google created the [Structured Data Testing Tool](#), which helps developers ensure a proper schema implementation.

Schema Means Business and Growth for Digital Marketers

After 20 years Google is delivering on its promise to index the world's information and match it to the search intent of its customers. As a thought leader and a market maker, Google has shepherded brands and publishers toward its vision by signaling the market on which direction to move and then adjusting the algorithm in the same direction, usually in a steady way.

After the mobile-first update and HTTP's guidance Google became much quieter about its intent regarding the algorithm. They stopped naming updates and asked the market to focus on content quality and authority and less on specific algorithm changes.

The fact that it is being less specific means to both BrightEdge and Milestone Internet that the vision is largely fulfilled, so we are left to look backward for some clues from what it said in the signaling period for directions from here forward.

In 2011, Google promoted schema markup as a way to improve the matching of content and intent. But since that time there was little evidence of performance lift from using schema markup. That is no longer the case.

Milestone Internet is a leading implementer of schema markup with some of the top brands in the world and since 2018 has seen dramatic SEO performance lift with multiple large brands. Here is the data from 4 large-scale studies conducted between March 2018 and March 2019.

	Traffic Lift from Schema	Revenue Lift
1	26%	\$2 million
2	35%	\$3 million
3	38%	\$3.5 million
4	92%	\$6 million
Averages	48%	\$3.63 million

Is schema right for your site? The data says Yes. Is schema difficult to do? No, not if you have the right partner and platform.

The Takeaway

YES, if you have review assets, are an ecommerce, events, reviews, or recipe site or have a significant local effort to markup. Other companies should also keep an eye on schema and look for mapping evolutions that apply to and would help specific content efforts. Over time, Google and the other search engines will get better at

understanding the meaning of websites and additional microdata explanations may become less important. For now, however, schema markup is required to be part of the enhanced experiences in search results. We recommend that brands hold developers accountable to maintaining proper schema, but make sure general on-page search optimization and page load speed are first.

If you would like to discuss the topic, please call your Customer Success manager or call us at 800-678-8023.

About BrightEdge

BrightEdge, the global leader in enterprise organic search and content performance, empowers marketers to transform online content into business results, such as traffic, conversions, and revenue. The BrightEdge S3 platform is powered by a sophisticated deep learning engine and is the only company capable of web-wide, real-time measurement of content engagement across all digital channels, including search, social, and mobile. BrightEdge's 1,500+ customers include global brands such as 3M, Microsoft, and Nike, as well as 57 of the Fortune 100. The company has eight offices worldwide and is headquartered in Foster City, California.