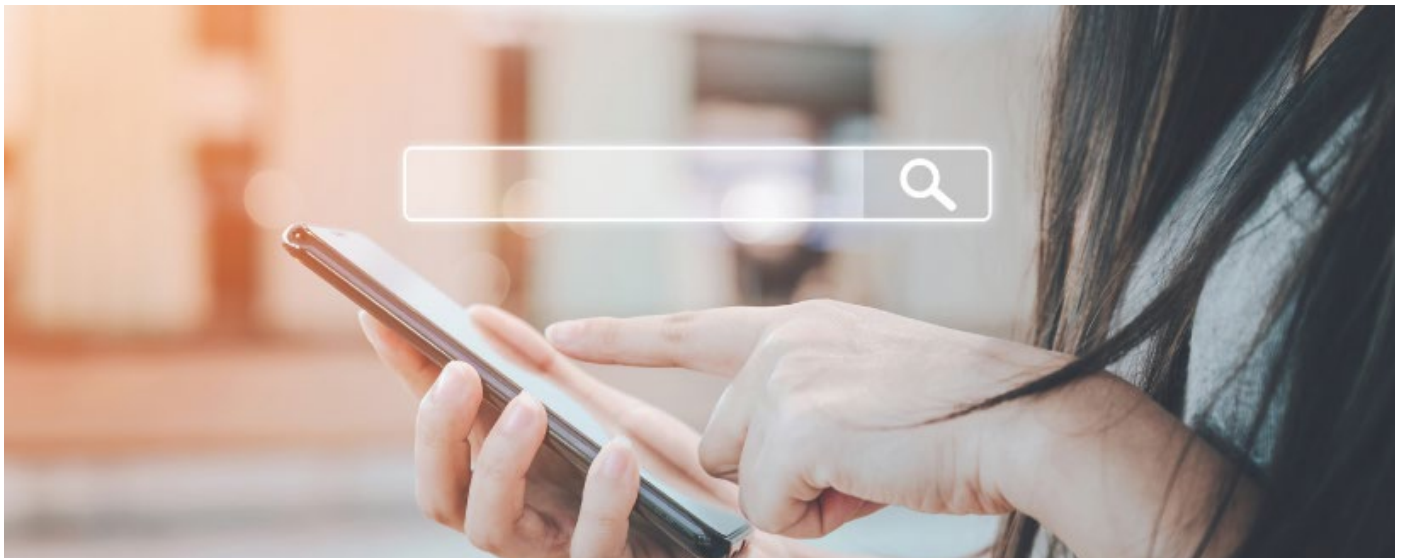


# Top Five 2021 Association Chapter SEO Trends



Heading into the second half of 2021, and more than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, association membership management remains a top concern for most association chapter organizations. They continue to explore ways to better engage with existing members and improve their connection with potential ones, as much of that engagement is virtual.



A strong digital presence is essential to connecting with both groups. Adding a Search Engine Optimization (SEO) component to your digital communications plan can help ensure you're providing what they need. This plan requires you to go beyond keywords and pay attention to metrics like web traffic, time spent on a page, click through rates and social shares.

Just when you think you understand SEO, it changes, so being clear on which techniques to incorporate into your planning and on your site, and where, can be challenging. But the work is worth it: 70 to 80 percent of web visitors focus only on organic results and ignore paid listings, great news for association chapters that may be struggling more than usual financially right now.

Here are the top five SEO trends we believe association chapter organizations should incorporate into their chapter's digital planning in 2021.

## **Artificial Intelligence**

Artificial intelligence (AI) – think Google’s Search algorithm – continues to have an increased impact on the effectiveness of an association chapter’s online content. Updating your site with more advanced search can help improve your customer experience, as you make it easier for visitors to find your site and specific pages on it.

Google doesn’t share many details about how they use AI, but it’s believed that user experience “signals” are key. Those signals include things like click-through rate and time spent on a page. To improve your impact on AI, look for ways to deliver useful, well-organized content that provides visitors what they want and gets them to spend more time on your site. And to make sure you’re giving visitors what they need, ask members what they want to see online and where they’d expect to find it on your site.

## **Long Form Content**

Web pages with 3,000 or more words get three times more traffic and four times more shares than shorter pages. Aim for longer, absorbing content your readers will want to share, like an interview with a subject matter expert in your field or a discussion of a study done in your industry. Write scannable headers (especially important for mobile devices) to give eyes a quick break and provide a hint of what’s to come. Include relevant, credible links and make your content easy to share, with social links at the top and bottom.

Worried you don’t have time to develop enough long form content? Not all of your pieces need to be that long. Incorporate long-form content into your overall communication strategy and balance it with shorter content. Look outside your board for help getting it done, to your members, your sponsors and even to other chapters. Perhaps you have a member with a skill or an opinion they’d like to share. Ask them to write a blog post. Maybe you have a sponsor who wants more exposure to your members; they could write an article. Or consider trading content with a chapter in your organization or a in a related field your members would be interested in hearing from. It shouldn’t be a hard sell for any of these groups, as they’ll see the value of connecting with your members without standing in front of them.

## **Video**

According to Cisco, video is projected to surpass all other content forms in terms of audience consumption. Increase traffic to your website with embedded videos. Quality, relevant videos increase the time people spend on your site, while improving page rankings and conversions. Since you’ll most



likely be storing your videos on YouTube, optimize your video channel name and description for SEO, with a user-friendly summary of what your channel, and your chapter, are about.

### **Image Optimization**

It used to be that pictures were just images. Today, the images on your association website also help with SEO, if they are high quality and relevant to the pages they're on. As with video, images should have keyword rich file names. They should also have ALT tags, which search engine "spiders" use to classify and find images (and as a result, pages) on your website.

### **Data and analytics**

Data from your association website clarifies your visitors – who they are, where they spend time on your site and what they want to find on it. Analytics can help you verify which web pages are getting the most visits (and which aren't getting many) and where visitors are coming from. It can also provide information on page loading times, indexing, redirects, response errors and bounce rates, and identify unusual traffic sources, such as potential spam sites, which can hurt your online credibility.

With data analytics, you can adjust your site to better meet visitor needs, while creating content for your site and in marketing campaigns that better target and engage with those visitors. Set up a Google Analytics account to continue to understand your audience and as their needs change and ensure your efforts online continue to meet those needs.

Start your SEO strategy by putting yourself in the shoes of your web visitors. As a visitor, do you believe your web content is valuable and trustworthy and easily accessible? This may sound overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. Tap into the resources you have, to set up the right plan to get more of the right people to visit and stay on your site.

