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Top Skills

AEO
Web Strategy
Growth Marketing

Brian Gilley

GEO/AEO Strategist | AI Search Visibility & Technical SEO | SEO & AEO Advisor at The Dyrt | Founder, SocialSEO.com (acquired)
Louisburg, North Carolina, United States

Summary

I've worked in search since 1998, before it was called SEO. Today my focus is AI search visibility (GEO/AEO): getting brands cited in ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude, and Google AI Overviews, and building the technical foundation that keeps content crawlable and retrievable at scale.Most recently I led SEO and AEO at The Dyrt, a camping marketplace with 120K+ indexed pages. Non-paid web users went from -28% to +76.5% YoY, mobile SEO page views grew 122% YoY in 2026, and the company had its first profitable year in 12 years. I now advise The Dyrt and consult independently.Before that: SEO Lead at AAA (keyword visibility 95K to 600K+), Director of Technical SEO at LOCOMOTIVE (Cox, Sunbrella, Credit.com, Quadratec, Reliant/NRG), and 12 years running my own agency, SocialSEO.com (acquired 2014).A few tools I use: Profound, PromptWatch, Ahrefs Brand Radar, GSC, GA4, Amplitude, Looker Studio, SEMrush, Ahrefs, Screaming Frog, Botify, n8n, MCPs, Claude Code, Cursor, and custom built GPTs.

Experience

The Dyrt
SEO Lead
March 2025 - July 2026 (1 year 5 months)

Results

- Helped swing non-paid web users from -28% to +76.5% YoY (Mar–Oct 2025), then grew mobile SEO page views 122% and active users 47% YoY (Jan–Jul 2026); contributed to the company's first profitable year in 12 years
- SEO page avg position 13.7 to 4.7; top-3 ranking queries/day +361% YoY (GSC, Feb 2026)
- Ran Jira SEO workstreams across content, product, and engineering; monthly exec reporting (Amplitude, GSC, SEMrush, Looker Studio)

AI Search (GEO/AEO)

- Built and owned the GEO/AEO program across ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude, and AI Overviews, incl. an AI Visibility Tracker (Ahrefs Brand Radar, Looker Studio, 3rd-party tools)
- Built a query fan-out tool (Streamlit) and vector content analyzer to prioritize entity and UGC enrichment
- Turned first-party data into citable content: AI TL;DR summaries, review sentiment analysis, branded datasets, help center audit, and third-party "facts" reconciliations
- RAG-style pipelines (Claude, n8n, Replit) produced 20K+ meta descriptions and state-level SEO content Technical & On-Page SEO - Designed an AI "self-healing SEO" framework for 30K+ programmatic pages using GSC decay signals
- Resolved soft 404s on ~11K Next.js pages and canonical clustering; fixed schema across all campground pages; reconciled indexation across 100K+ URLs
- Led internal linking (Near Me, 45+ National Park pillars, footer, nav) and a site-wide pruning project removing non-local links to reduce non-relevant link equity loss
- Video SEO for 42K+ UGC videos, query drift analysis, A/B tests, Pro page optimization

Authority, Citations & Link Building
- Managed brand-citation and link building for AI retrieval, targeting competitors' strongest backlinks (Ahrefs, SEMrush)
- Managed agency link programs (Link Fish Media, ZipSprout/Citation Labs) for targeted, top-level camping location pages
- Built framework for a Claude/n8n + Pipedrive prospecting AI workflow for the ad team's outdoor advertising partners

AAA-The Auto Club Group
SEO Lead
January 2024 - March 2025 (1 year 3 months)

As the SEO Lead, I managed SEO strategy development and technical SEO initiatives to improve website performance and search engine visibility:

Core Work
- Grew keyword visibility from 95K to 600K+, first-page rankings from 12K to 30K+, and SERP features from 3K to 35K; membership conversions up 9%

- Implemented a RAG-based AEO framework and custom AI agents for content, competitor analysis, and SERP extraction, making AI visibility a tracked KPI
- Built new core service and pillar pages across insurance, membership, travel, and roadside services; optimized local SEO for AAA branch locations in 13 states
- Resolved 300+ crawl and indexation issues (site health +20%) and retained 98% of organic traffic through a multi-site migrations; built Looker Studio dashboards via custom API integrations
- SEMRush and Similarweb competitive analysis and data mining
- RAG AI-optimized content improvements
- Query intent and engagement optimization
- Cross-departmental SEO guidelines, training, and compliance

Self Employed
Senior SEO Consultant
February 2019 - December 2023 (4 years 11 months)
Wake Forest, North Carolina, United States

Providing SEO consulting for multiple brands within the finance, outdoor, and home services industries. Focus areas included technical SEO, targeted content creation, E.E.A.T. strategies, and website improvements through data-driven metrics (multivariate split testing, funnel/journey improvements, CTRs, Web Vitals, mobile optimization).

Technical SEO Infrastructure
- Comprehensive website audits
- Site architecture and navigation optimization
- Crawl efficiency and rendering optimization
- Internal linking strategy and execution
- Schema markup implementation and monitoring
- Page speed optimization and core web vitals
- Accessibility standards compliance

Content Optimization & AI Integration
- E.E.A.T. strategy implementation
- Thin and duplicate content resolution
- AI-powered content creation using: GPT-4, Claude, Bard, CoPilot, Perplexity
- Programmatic SEO implementation
- Content quality monitoring

Conversion & User Experience
- User journey mapping and optimization
- Top of funnel strategies
- Click-through rate (CTR) and Conversion rate optimization (CRO) enhancements
- New feature UI prototyping, integration mapping, and testing

LOCOMOTIVE Agency
Director, Technical SEO
July 2022 - November 2022 (5 months)
Apex, North Carolina, United States

Ripstop by the Roll
Digital Marketing Director
July 2017 - October 2017 (4 months)
Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill Area

Targeted and relevant content creation for products and product categories to support website hierarchy and unique product pages. Analytics and data mining to support affiliate and cottage vendor growth areas of the business.

Note: My time at Ripstop by the Roll was cut very short due to a stage IV cancer diagnosis. After 2 years of treatments, I am currently in remission/no evidence of disease (NED)!!

LOCOMOTIVE Agency
Director, Technical SEO
August 2015 - July 2017 (2 years)
- Client management and working in a cross-functional capacity to outline SEO growth, reporting, new initiatives, and overseeing implementation across departments and to stakeholders.
- Technical SEO implementation including organic search, technical audits, performance enhancement and site speed optimization via CDNs
- Mobile responsiveness, image optimization, crawl efficiency and UI/UX improvements through advanced site architecture
- Site architecture including link depth optimization, sitemap integration, JavaScript/Ajax crawling, and migration management
- Content strategy development encompassing on-page and off-page SEO initiatives across topical, holistic, and long-form content
- Structured data implementation for featured snippets, schema markup, and knowledge graph integration

- Analytics expertise using Google Analytics, Search Console, SEMRush, Ahrefs, and specialized SEO APIs
- Programming proficiency in R for data visualization and Python for scraping, parsing, and report automation
- Competitive analysis and market intelligence to inform strategic SEO decisions
- SEO deliverable creation, performance reporting, and strategic roadmap development
- Link building strategy development including citation outreach and competitive link analysis
- UX and analytics consulting with focus on data-driven optimization

*Tools & Skills:
- Google Analytics and Search Console, SEMRush, Ahrefs, SEO APIs, and various specialized SEO tools. R programming for data visualization and analysis. Python for scraping, parsing, and generating reports.

ThemeSnap.com
Founder / Managing Partner (Company Acquired 2017)
July 2008 - June 2017 (9 years)
Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill Area

ThemeSnap was the first marketplace in the world to sell Drupal themes online. We are now a broader themes marketplace that connects customers to awesome web designers and developers from around the world who build and support Drupal and WordPress themes, HTML Templates, and other digital assets. ThemeSnap added over 20,000 customers and 500+ digital goods authors and growing.

Roles / Responsibilities:

- SEO strategy development and implementation
- Topical content development
- Author/Partnership development and curation
- Social media marketing
- PPC advertising
- Analytics, A/B spliting testing
- Link outreach & acquisition
- Competitive mining and growth strategies
- Customer email marketing
- Re-marketing & CRO initiatives

- CTR optimization
- Affiliate program management/outreach
- Custom Drupal development (modules, themes)

SocialSEO.com
Founder (Company Acquired 2015)
October 2002 - January 2015 (12 years 4 months)
Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill Area

I started SocialSEO.com in 2002 as a small Internet marketing agency that provided SEO best practices, content development, and link outreach and acquisition, to enhance the website rankings and visibility for our clients. SocialSEO.com also provided brand development, Drupal CMS development, and web design.

Roles / Responsibilities:

- Technical SEO, on-page, and content development strategies
- Link building mining, strategies and acquisition
- Client analytics and key performance indicators (KPIs) reporting
- Articulate best SEO strategies, practices, and timelines to clients and development teams
- Develop and manage day-to-day client relationships and ensure client KPI's are being met
- Maintain and advise on SEO from in-depth competitive research
- Client lead generation growth
- PPC campaign creation and management
- A/B split testing
- Web development project management (agile development)

Clients Included:

Walt Disney (subsidiary websites), Sony.com, Drugstore.com, HughesNet, Eurobookings.com, VisionDirect.com/Beauty.com, GreatSchools.net, and over 120 large and small SEO clients.

HotelsFirst.com
Co-Founder / Managing Partner
October 2010 - September 2014 (4 years)
Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill Area

HotelsFirst.com was acquired and rolled into another hospitality business in 2014

Co-founder at HotelsFirst.com, an online hotel booking provider with over 100,000 hotels worldwide. Search hotels with features like landmarks and airport proximity, star ratings, and by other popular attractions.

Roles / Responsibilities

- Website SEO implementation
- New content development for geo-specific targeting
- Social media marketing
- Link outreach & development
- Ongoing development improvements with an emphasis on technical SEO implementation

MedicalWeb, Inc.
Online Marketing Manager
May 2001 - September 2003 (2 years 5 months)
Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill Area

Managed online marketing initiatives, including SEO and website development, for a network of company-owned medical websites. Created and managed PPC campaigns, promotional email marketing, and link building campaigns. Managed marketing team's ongoing strategies.

Roles / Responsibilities:

- Led and managed SEO, content development and marketing roll-out for company's internal web properties (60+ websites)
- Built new marketing programs for customer acquisition and customer retention
- Managed all email / cross-promotional product marketing
- Handled market research, market budgets, P&L, and revenue forecasts/ reporting
- Managed small team of designers/developers

ComedyWorld, Inc
Associate Marketing Manager
2000 - 2001 (1 year)
San Francisco Bay Area

Managed online marketing initiatives for Comedy World Radio Network brand.

Comedy World radio was hosted by popular entertainment personalities. Sandra Bernhard, Ken Ober, Ahmet Zappa, Kennedy, Allan Havey and Sue Murphy were some of those delivering Comedy World's young, edgy, and high-intensity shows. Comedy World Radio Network's programming was broadcasted on FM and AM radio stations across the country and on Sirius satellite radio.

Roles / Responsibilities:

- Led and handled on-page SEO (main site and other web properties)
- Worked with forming business development and syndication partnerships with niche verticals
- Analytics / Marketing tools analysis
- Video marketing
- Subscriber newsletter creation and syndication
- Affiliates program development and management

NicheMusic, Inc.
Marketing Associate
1999 - 2000 (1 year)
San Francisco Bay Area

Worked closely with sales and ecommerce to drive visitors, sales, and brand identity throughout the web.

Roles / Responsibilities:

- Purchased targeted online advertising placements
- Built web traffic through online music channels
- Worked with content development strategies to increase visitations
- Managed targeted ad spots on both print and web

The Walt Disney Company
Marketing, Mammoth Records
February 1998 - October 1999 (1 year 9 months)
Chapel Hill, NC

Organized and marketed promotional materials for local music venues. Promoted bands via the few web channels pre-2000. These included forums, Usenet, and other various online communities. Assisted with ecommerce

marketing Mammoth's music through the web store and brick and mortar stores. Improved and managed guerrilla marketing tactics for interns and Mammoth team.

Education

North Carolina State University

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), PR, Marketing Communications · (1996 - 1999)

Wake Technical Community College

Communication and Media Studies · (1998 - 1998)