



# NAVIGATING FEAT IN THE AI ERA

HubSpot's Strategy for Building Trustworthy Content

# WHAT'S COMING UP



## INTRODUCTION

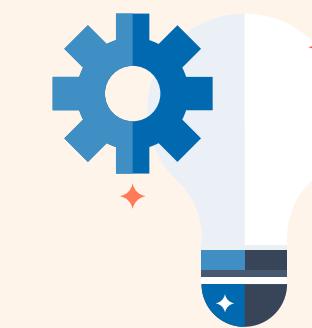
# The Changing SERP Landscape and the Need for EEAT

As Google's search algorithms continue to evolve, the standards for content quality are shifting. In a competitive, AI-driven landscape, Google's EEAT framework—Experience, Expertise, Authority, and Trustworthiness—has emerged as a guiding principle for high-value content that earns and maintains strong rankings. By adding "Experience" to EEAT, Google highlights the importance of authentic, lived insights, prioritizing content that provides users with genuine value and connection over generic, mass-produced material.



## Why EEAT Matters Now

The increased emphasis on EEAT is Google's answer to SERP volatility and the flood of AI-generated content. To protect users and enhance content relevance, Google is pushing for human-centric content that demonstrates real-world expertise, credibility, and transparent insights. This shift is more than a challenge; it's an opportunity. Content creators and brands that build content around EEAT principles can establish a lasting competitive edge by aligning with Google's focus on trust and authenticity.



## HubSpot Blog's Approach to EEAT in a Volatile Environment

At HubSpot, we've [adapted to the challenges of today's SEO landscape](#) by refining our approach to content creation. We are transitioning from high-volume publishing to a more "artisanal" content model. HubSpot prioritizes high-quality, experience-driven, and authoritative content across key topics. By structuring content in topic clusters, investing in first-party research, and updating content regularly, HubSpot consistently aligns with EEAT principles to maintain relevancy, credibility, and trustworthiness.

### What Wasn't Working



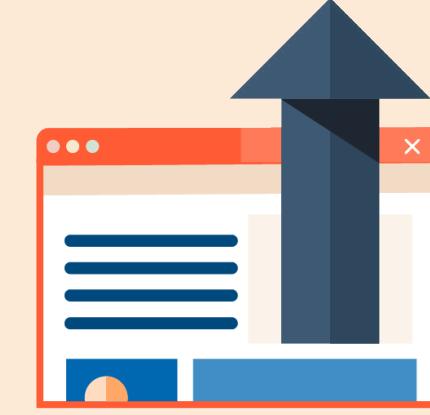
#### Too Broad of a Topic Focus

Covering numerous topics with shallow depth diluted HubSpot's authority.



#### Neutral, Generic Content

Neutral "how-to" or definition-based content was easily replicable by AI, decreasing its value in the eyes of search engines.



#### High Production Volume

The focus on volume over depth made it challenging to pivot content effectively amidst frequent algorithm changes.

### What You'll Find in This Guide

In the following sections, we'll dive into each component of EEAT, examining how Experience, Expertise, Authority, and Trustworthiness work together to build impactful content. Each section will include practical tips, real-world examples, and actionable strategies inspired by HubSpot's content approach. By the end, you'll have a clear, actionable plan for creating content that delivers long-term value to readers and aligns with Google's standards for trustworthy, authoritative information. Let's dive in!

# Creating Content with Real-World Depth and Relatability

Experience, in the context of Google's EEAT framework, is all about genuine, first-hand interaction with a subject. This direct engagement brings content to life, giving it a human touch beyond theoretical knowledge or generic overviews. Content informed by lived experience gains depth, authenticity, and a unique perspective that resonates with readers—and with Google. Experience is the foundation of trustworthiness; readers are likelier to trust and connect with content that reflects real-world insight than content that appears AI-generated or broadly repurposed. For search engines, this authentic engagement signifies relevance and credibility, boosting user satisfaction and content rankings.

## HubSpot's Strategic Shift: Building an Experience-Rich Content Strategy

As part of its ongoing effort to produce impactful content, HubSpot made a strategic shift from high-volume production to a more refined, “artisanal” approach that centers on experience-driven content. Rather than creating large amounts of broadly focused material, HubSpot now emphasizes quality and depth, prioritizing content that reflects its authors’ unique insights and expertise. By adding subjective observations, first-person anecdotes, and practical examples, HubSpot has created a model for experience-rich content that resonates deeply with readers and aligns with Google’s EEAT standards.





## Factory Approach

- ✓ Heavy focus on creating **volume**
- ✓ Most posts follow a similar format and optimization strategy that AI can easily replicate
- ✓ The author is not relevant to the content
- ✓ An expansive topic scope to attract the largest audience possible, even if many viewers aren't a good fit to convert



## Artisanal Approach

- ✓ Heavy focus on creating **value**
- ✓ Post formats/mediums vary based on what suits the topic and the author's storytelling approach
- ✓ The author's experiences and point of view are central to each post, which AI can't replicate
- ✓ A focused topic scope to meaningfully engage the audiences most valuable to our business

## What “Experience-Rich” Content Looks Like

Experience-rich content is grounded in specific, relatable details and authentic perspectives. It uses first-person insights and subjective observations, adding a human dimension to the information. For example, HubSpot encourages writers to share their real-life applications of a tool or strategy, moving beyond just listing product features to include opinions and personal takeaways. This kind of content builds a stronger connection with readers and stands out to Google as genuine, high-value material.

## How You Can Create Authentic Content

- 1 **Use Anecdotes and Personal Stories:** Add personal stories that align with your brand voice, showing readers how a particular topic, tool, or approach directly impacted you.
- 2 **Incorporate Direct Experience, Even if it’s Limited:** You don’t need extensive expertise in every subject to provide authentic insights. Focus on small, concrete experiences that others can relate to.

## HubSpot's EEAT Case Study

After Google's M23 Core Update shifted search focus toward experience-driven content, the HubSpot Blog Team revisited and restructured one of its top-performing posts, "17 Best Free Website Builders." Recognizing that Google prioritized content reflecting lived experience, the team took a new approach—infusing the article with personal insights, hands-on observations, and subjective opinions, creating what they referred to as "Experience Soup."



### A Formula for EEAT

Personal Anecdote +  
Subjective Opinion +  
Objective Observation =  
**(E)xperience Soup**

### Key Adjustments and Results

HubSpot shortened the original list from 17 website builders to a more manageable 7, allowing for greater depth and a focus on first-hand experiences. This approach enabled the author, Ivelisse Rodriguez, to share her personal preferences, opinions, and nuanced observations about each tool, which gave the post a more authentic, relatable tone.



### A Shift in Approach Was Needed



Here's what made the revised post impactful:

- ✓ **First-Person Perspective:** The author included personal anecdotes about her interactions with the tools rather than a detached, third-person review. For instance, she noted specific ease-of-use features she appreciated and aspects of the user interface she found challenging.
- ✓ **Balanced Insights:** The post presented a well-rounded view of each product by mixing subjective opinions with objective descriptions. For example, Rodriguez shared her favorite WordPress themes but highlighted functional limitations in Webflow, giving readers a clear, experience-based assessment.
- ✓ **Real-World Examples:** The post included screenshots, usage examples, and other visuals to help readers visualize the tools in action, enhancing trust and understanding.

## Why It Worked

**Google is capitalizing on a thirst for connection at a time when AI content creation is exploding since AI isn't alive and doesn't have experiences.**

These changes not only improved readability and relevance but also aligned the content with Google's EEAT standards, which value experience and transparency. The post saw impressive results: a 724% increase in clicks, a 350% boost in impressions, and a 251% rise in signups. By showing readers both the positives and limitations based on real interactions, HubSpot achieved a new level of authenticity that resonated strongly with readers and search engines alike.

## Applying Experience-Rich Content Into Your Strategy

### Experience Mapping

Identify areas within your team where unique insights, hands-on knowledge, or real-life examples can add value. Team members can contribute personal anecdotes, share lessons from internal projects, or draw on past experiences with tools and strategies. This approach helps create a roadmap for integrating direct experiences into your content, making it relatable and credible.



## Scenario-Based Tips for Content Creation

Help authors add authentic experiences by prompting them to reflect on their encounters with the topic. Here are a few prompts:

- ✓ “What unexpected benefits or challenges did you encounter while using this tool or approach?”
- ✓ “How has this strategy changed your workflow, thinking, or results?”
- ✓ “What do you wish you’d known when you first started with this tool or method?”

These questions allow authors to surface unique, relatable insights that make the content feel personalized and deeply informative.

## AI-Assisted Experience Gathering

While first-hand experience is ideal, AI tools like ChatGPT and Perplexity can help structure questions or gather supporting information for experience-rich content. For example, use AI to brainstorm potential scenarios, outline questions, or develop a background understanding of a tool before testing it out. However, the final content should always center on authentic human experience. AI should support, not replace, the lived insights that give content depth and relatability.

By anchoring content in personal experience, brands can foster a stronger sense of trust and connection with readers while signaling to search engines that their content meets the highest standards of quality, relevance, and credibility.



# Building Specialized Knowledge and Sharing It Effectively

Expertise refers to an author's depth of knowledge within a specific topic area, developed through a combination of direct experience, education, and sustained engagement with the subject. In the context of Google's EEAT framework, expertise is critical in assessing a content source's credibility and reliability. For competitive fields, especially those that influence financial, health, or personal decision-making, Google prioritizes content that demonstrates a high level of expertise, as it signals to users that the information is trustworthy and authoritative.

## Expertise-Building Strategies: HubSpot's Approach

To ensure content resonates with readers and search engines, HubSpot has applied the following strategies for cultivating and showcasing expertise across its content.

### Columnist Model for Writers

HubSpot now uses a columnist model, assigning writers specific content areas to foster more profound expertise and authority in those niches. This specialization enables each writer to engage more fully with a topic, evolving from a generalist to an authority within a particular niche. Through repeated engagement, writers develop factual knowledge and nuanced insights, which lend authenticity and authority to their work. This topic specialization framework helps HubSpot produce content that stands out as insightful and credible, even in highly competitive topics.

### Building a Freelance Network

HubSpot expanded its team by building a freelance network of subject matter experts to fill knowledge gaps in specialized areas where in-house experience was limited. This network allows HubSpot to produce high-quality, EEAT-aligned content across a broader range of topics by tapping into the expertise of trusted freelancers. By carefully selecting industry professionals who bring first-hand experience, HubSpot strengthens the credibility and depth of its content, ensuring it remains relevant and authoritative in competitive fields.

## Rapid Skilling Up with AI

The HubSpot Blog Team also uses AI tools like Perplexity and ChatGPT as resources to facilitate quick, focused learning. When a writer is new to a topic, they can use these tools to quickly acquire foundational knowledge, uncover key trends, and gain an overview of common terminology. This approach allows HubSpot's team to rapidly “skill up” on new subjects, reducing the time needed to reach a functional level of expertise and enabling them to write on the topic confidently. Although AI tools are valuable for background research, the final content must reflect a unique human perspective—ensuring AI supplements but does not replace genuine expertise.



## Implementing Expertise in Your Content Team

To build expertise within your content team, consider executing strategies that encourage deep, sustainable learning in specific areas.

### Specialization Assignments

Assign each team member a core set of related topics that they will revisit regularly. This allows writers to build long-term familiarity and depth within a niche, strengthening the credibility of your brand’s content. Over time, these specialized writers will develop a reputation for expertise that resonates with readers and search engines.

### Ongoing Training and Development

Create a “knowledge roadmap” for each team member to continuously build their expertise. This might include regular learning sessions, team discussions on new industry developments, and quarterly check-ins to evaluate progress. Setting aside time for training allows you to cultivate a culture where knowledge development is ongoing and valued.

## Transparency in Expertise

Encourage writers to be open about how they acquired their knowledge on a topic. For instance, if a writer conducted intensive research or consulted with an internal expert, they can mention this process in the content. This transparency adds authenticity, assuring readers that the author's insights are grounded in dedicated effort rather than superficial familiarity.

## Unique Observations from Personal Experience

Direct personal observations—even small ones—can be robust markers of expertise. Encourage team members to use their professional or consumer experiences to generate unique insights. For instance, analyzing trends in their email inbox can reveal personal patterns in email marketing that readers might relate to, making content more credible and engaging.

By thoughtfully and transparently establishing expertise, you create content that stands out for its credibility and unique insights. This approach meets Google's EEAT standards and strengthens the relationship between your brand and its audience, creating a foundation of trust and authority.



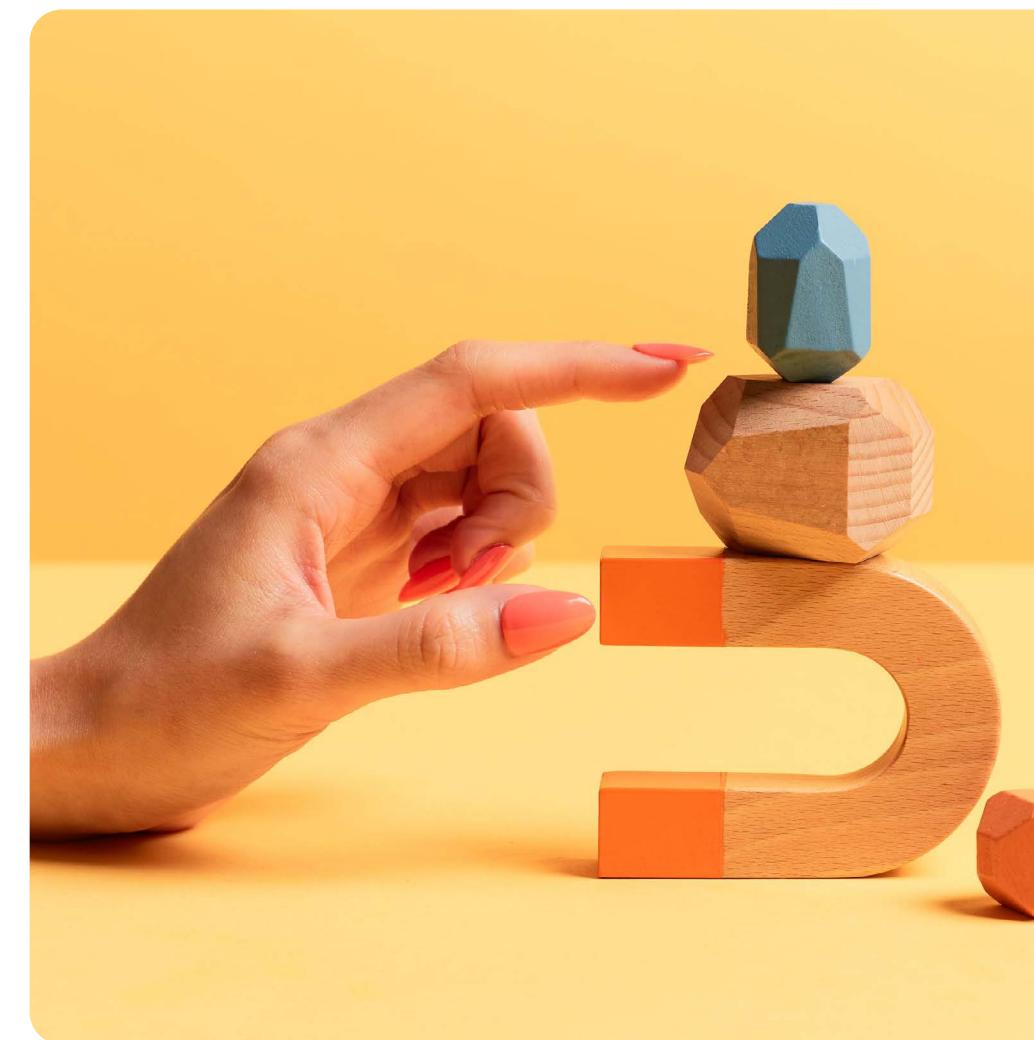
## CHAPTER 3: AUTHORITY

# Creating from a Source of High Reputation

Authority refers to a content creator's or publisher's reputation within their field, established over time through consistently providing accurate, valuable, and insightful content. Building authority means positioning oneself as a trusted source that users—and search engines—can rely on. In the context of EEAT, authority is essential for SERP visibility, as Google elevates content from reputable voices in competitive search spaces, particularly on complex or sensitive topics. The higher the perceived authority of a content source, the more likely Google is to rank its content favorably.

## HubSpot's Authority-Building Strategies

HubSpot's approach to authority centers on strategic topic selection, in-depth content clustering, and leveraging original data to create a high-reputation content ecosystem. Here's how HubSpot effectively establishes itself as an authoritative voice in the digital marketing space:



### Choose Topics that Build Authority and Trust

HubSpot's authority-building begins with thoughtful topic selection that aligns with its brand expertise and audience needs. By narrowing its focus to high-impact topics and related subtopics, HubSpot can consistently produce content with depth and relevancy. This targeted approach makes HubSpot a go-to resource within its expertise, reinforcing its authority over time.

### Topic Clusters and Zero-Click Searches

HubSpot uses topic clusters—interconnected articles that address various aspects of a broad theme—to create a content ecosystem where readers can explore a subject in detail. This cluster-based approach caters to user intent beyond the first click by providing pathways for readers to find answers to follow-up questions within HubSpot's content. For instance, a core topic like "SEO Strategies" might have subtopics on "Content Optimization," "Backlinking Best Practices," and "Technical SEO." By covering these areas in depth, HubSpot keeps audiences engaged, signals authority to Google, and reduces the likelihood of zero-click searches as users remain on HubSpot's site to satisfy their informational needs.

## Guidelines for Topic Selection

HubSpot prioritizes high-value topics where it can provide unique insights or perspectives based on its experience and expertise. For smaller teams seeking to build authority, make sure to:

- ✓ **Prioritize High-Value Topics:** Identify subjects that align with your team's strengths, where you can offer fresh or unique insights that stand out in a crowded content landscape.
- ✓ **Develop Sub-Topics within Clusters:** For each main topic, develop supporting articles on specific sub-topics to create a network of in-depth content. This depth makes it easier for Google to view your site as an authority on the overarching subject.



## Leverage Data and Original Research for Authority Building

The HubSpot Blog Team leverages original research to distinguish its content from general industry insights, especially given the rise of AI-generated material. Original data adds a unique, credible element to content, reinforcing HubSpot's position as a thought leader. By producing data-driven insights through surveys, case studies, and first-party data, HubSpot delivers value that AI-replicated articles typically cannot.

### The Role of Original Data

Original data provides a foundation for authoritative content by showcasing insights unique to HubSpot. This approach helps HubSpot stand out and enhances EEAT alignment, signaling to Google that the information is highly relevant, reliable, and distinctive. Including original data increases engagement and reinforces trust with readers as they gain access to valuable, data-backed insights directly from HubSpot's own research and experience.

## Research Methods for Small Teams

Small teams can adopt research methods to incorporate data without extensive resources through:

- ✓ **Surveys and Polls:** Use tools like Google Forms to conduct small-scale surveys or polls with your audience. These insights can provide fresh data that sets your content apart.
- ✓ **Mini Case Studies and Internal Data:** Leverage insights from your own business metrics, client feedback, or small case studies to create data-rich content. Even simple metrics or anecdotal data can add credibility and authority to your content.



## HubSpot Tip for Small Teams

Meg Prater, Senior Manager of Content at HubSpot, recommends a phased approach that balances short-term and long-term strategies for smaller teams looking to build authority. Start with “quick-win” content, such as tutorials and how-to guides, which are more straightforward to produce and can establish initial credibility in your niche. As you grow, expand into topic clusters and incorporate original data for a robust, sustainable content strategy that increases authority over time. This approach allows small teams to build a strong reputation and presence in their field without overwhelming resources.

By carefully selecting topics, structuring content in clusters, and leveraging original data, you can establish authority within your niche. These tactics not only align with Google’s EEAT standards but also foster trust with readers, positioning your brand as a reliable, go-to source in your industry.



# Creating Transparent, Credible, and Reliable Content

Trustworthiness refers to the degree of honesty, reliability, and accuracy embedded within a piece of content. Trustworthy content is not only well-researched and evidence-based but also clearly communicates its sources and any limitations in the author's knowledge. In Google's EEAT framework, trustworthiness is especially crucial, as it underpins all other elements—experience, expertise, and authority. Google's algorithm increasingly prioritizes trustworthy content to protect users from misinformation. By favoring transparent, credible content, Google helps users find reliable information that meets their needs.



## HubSpot's Trust-Building Strategies

To establish and maintain trust, HubSpot has implemented specific strategies that prioritize transparency, accuracy, and ongoing relevancy across its content. These practices help HubSpot build reader trust and align closely with Google's emphasis on reliable information.

### 1 HubSpot's Transparency Standard

HubSpot values transparency and understands that open communication about the authorship and creation process enhances reader confidence. A notable aspect of HubSpot's transparency is its commitment to openly sharing each author's level of expertise on a given topic. Acknowledge when an author is new to a subject and share how they acquired their knowledge. This method demonstrates HubSpot's commitment to honesty, showing readers that the content is thoughtfully researched, even if the author's background in that area is developing.

### The “Pocket Expert” Approach

Benjamin Berkley, Senior Manager of Marketing at HubSpot, describes a “pocket expert” as a writer who quickly develops focused expertise on a specific topic, enough to convey credible and authoritative information to an audience.

A pocket expert's knowledge is temporary but thorough, centered around intense research conducted over a short period. This allows the writer to:

- ✓ **Develop intense, targeted expertise:** Focus on research that yields a solid grasp of essential concepts and insights relevant to the audience.
- ✓ **Stay audience-focused:** Instead of attempting comprehensive mastery, a pocket expert focuses on what's most useful and engaging for readers.
- ✓ **Acknowledge limits:** Being transparent about the scope and limits of this expertise builds trust with readers, letting them know the insights are well-researched, even if not exhaustive.



## 2 Regular Content Updates

HubSpot prioritizes content updates as a core part of its trustworthiness strategy, ensuring that information remains accurate, current, and relevant. This ongoing process involves regular reviews of existing content to assess its accuracy and completeness. Outdated data, broken links, and references to deprecated tools or tactics are revised or removed, reinforcing HubSpot's commitment to reliable information. By maintaining a proactive update schedule, HubSpot demonstrates that its content isn't static or outdated, building a deeper trust with readers and search engines.

## 3 Consistent Sourcing and Citations

Citing credible sources for data, claims, and statements is fundamental to creating transparent content. HubSpot's commitment to consistent sourcing means that every data point or claim is backed by a reliable reference, whether a statistic, case study, or expert opinion. HubSpot also links to reputable third-party resources whenever possible, providing an added layer of transparency that allows readers to verify information independently. This approach aligns with best practices for building trust and enhances user experience by giving readers direct access to additional sources and further reading.

By committing to transparency, maintaining current content, and ensuring consistent sourcing, HubSpot creates content that users can trust. This approach helps HubSpot align with Google's trustworthiness standards while building deeper connections with readers who seek reliable, high-quality information.

# Implementing EEAT on Limited Resources

Building a robust EEAT (Experience, Expertise, Authority, and Trustworthiness) content strategy can seem daunting for small teams, especially those without an extensive content library or dedicated SEO resources. However, applying EEAT principles effectively by focusing on targeted, high-impact tactics is possible. This section outlines a practical “Narrow and Deep” strategy for smaller teams to build authority and trust without needing extensive resources.

## The “Narrow and Deep” Strategy Guide

Instead of spreading efforts across multiple content areas, a “Narrow and Deep” strategy focuses on high-value topics that align closely with brand goals and expertise. Small teams can produce high-quality, EEAT-compliant content that resonates deeply with readers and search engines by concentrating on a limited number of themes. Here are a few steps on how to do just that:



### 1 Identify High-Value Topics

Start by selecting 3-4 core topics relevant to your brand, aligning with your team’s strengths, and offering high value to your audience. Choosing high-impact topics allows small teams to create focused content clusters that are easier to manage and update over time.

#### How to Choose Topics

Begin by evaluating your team’s areas of knowledge and experience. Look for topics where your brand can provide unique insights or perspectives that aren’t readily available elsewhere. Research keywords and identify content gaps you can address with authentic, experience-based content. These chosen topics will form the foundation of your content strategy, helping establish your brand as a trusted authority within your niche.

## 2 Define Roles and Expertise Areas

Assign team members to specific content areas over time to build familiarity, expertise, and a consistent voice. This allows each writer to better understand their assigned topics, enhancing both content quality and credibility.

### Tips for Role Assignment

If you have a small team, distribute topics so each person can specialize in a particular area rather than covering multiple unrelated themes. For instance, one team member could focus on technical tutorials while another covers industry trends. This specialization helps team members become more confident and authoritative on their topics, reducing the time needed for topic ramp-up and research. As they continue to work within these niches, their content will reflect higher expertise and consistency.



## 3 Source Experience-Based Insights

Gather insights from within and outside your team to create authentic content that reflects real-world experience. Even without direct experience in certain areas, smaller teams can produce credible, experience-driven content by interviewing subject matter experts and leveraging team anecdotes.

- ✓ **Internal Interviews:** Interview team members with firsthand experience using a specific tool, applying a method, or analyzing a trend. For example, if covering email marketing, ask a team member who manages newsletters to share their observations and best practices.
- ✓ **External Expert Interviews:** Contact industry experts or influencers for short interviews or quotes to provide additional authority within your content. Many professionals are open to brief interviews, which can add depth and credibility to your content without requiring extensive research.
- ✓ **User Insights and Case Studies:** If applicable, gather insights from your customers or users. Short case studies focused on customer challenges and successes can add valuable content that enhances trustworthiness.

## 4 Simplify Quality Content Creation

For smaller teams, producing a few high-quality, well-researched articles is more impactful than focusing on quantity. By emphasizing depth and accuracy, you can create content that has a lasting impact, reducing the need for frequent updates or additional content to cover the same topic.

### Focus on Research-Backed Articles

Prioritize creating detailed, in-depth content that includes secondary research (from credible sources) and any primary data or personal insights your team can offer. This approach increases authority and helps your content stand out in a crowded digital landscape.

### Highlight Practical Applications

Include examples or step-by-step guidance to make the content actionable and relatable whenever possible. Quality, practical content is often more engaging and shares well, increasing its potential reach.



## 5 Optimize for SERPs with Structured Content

Use simple SEO structures and best practices to ensure your content is easy to navigate for readers and indexed effectively by search engines. Even without advanced SEO tools, small teams can improve visibility and authority by focusing on a few essential structural elements.

### Use Clear, Structured Headers

Organize your content with descriptive headers (H2s and H3s) that help readers and search engines quickly identify key points and subtopics. Structured headers enhance readability and improve SEO by providing Google with a clear outline of your content's hierarchy.

### Author Bylines and Bios

Include consistent author bylines and bios to establish team members' credibility on their specialized topics. Adding a short bio highlighting relevant experience or expertise adds a layer of trustworthiness, allowing readers to see why the author is a credible source of information.



### Link to Credible Sources

Ensure that credible sources support all data points and claims. Linking to reputable third-party resources or studies adds transparency and builds trust between readers and Google.

By focusing on a select group of high-value topics, assigning roles strategically, and leveraging experience-based insights, small teams can create impactful, trustworthy content that aligns with EEAT standards. This “Narrow and Deep” approach allows you to build authority and credibility over time, even with limited resources, positioning your brand as a go-to resource for valuable, credible information within your niche.

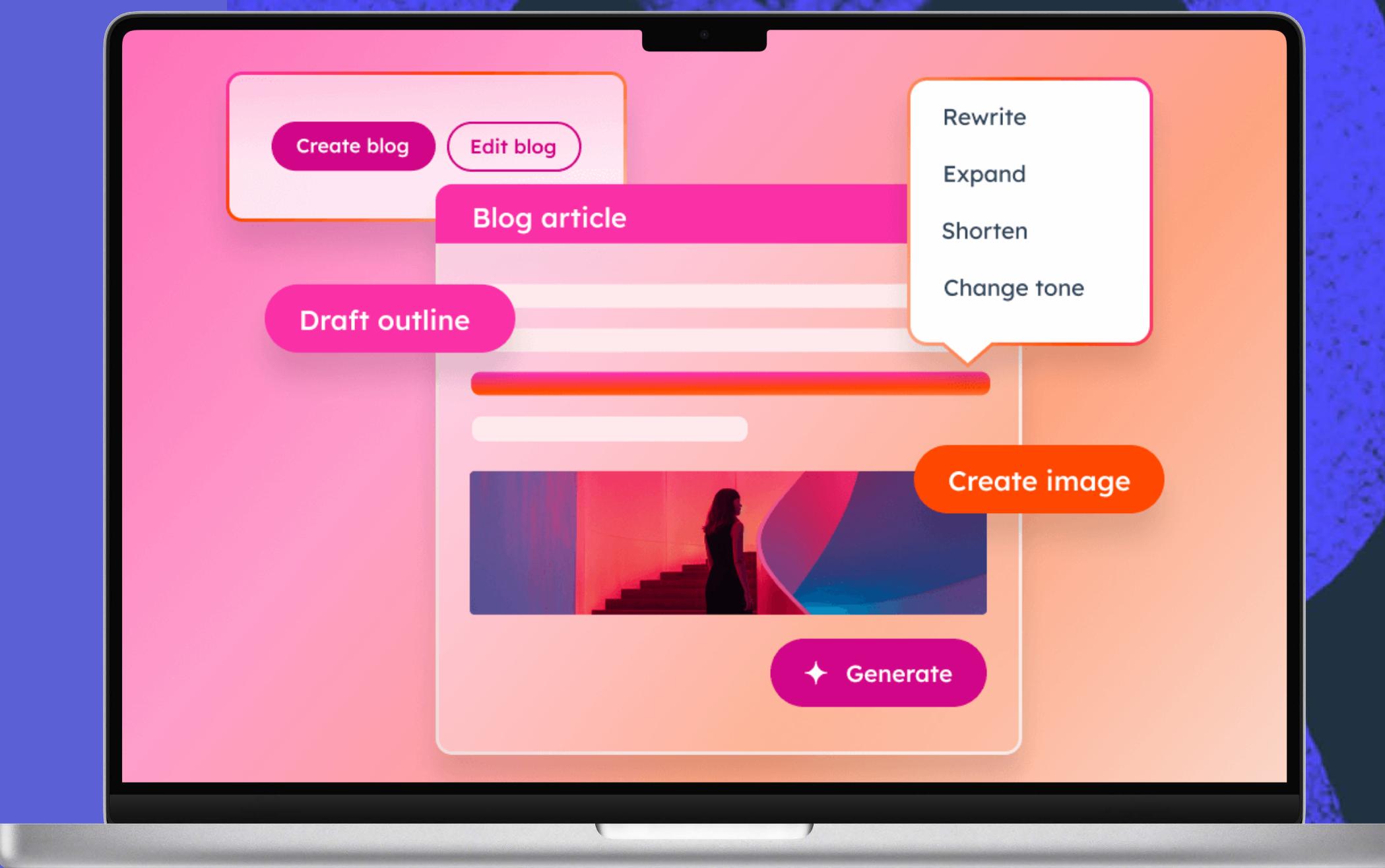
## CONCLUSION

# Final Tips for Applying EEAT Effectively

Implementing EEAT principles doesn't have to be overwhelming. Taking a "Start Small" approach allows for sustainable growth, especially for smaller teams or those just beginning to focus on EEAT. Rather than trying to implement every tactic immediately, focus on selecting two or three high-impact strategies from each section to start building EEAT in a manageable way. This incremental approach makes the process achievable and sets the foundation for long-term authority, trustworthiness, and engagement.

Meg Prater, Senior Manager of Content at HubSpot, advises considering EEAT as a gradual process. Authority isn't built overnight. It's earned through consistent, focused efforts over time. Start by narrowing in on core topics where your team can offer unique insights and experience, then expand as your credibility grows. Remember, even small improvements in content depth, transparency, and focus on user experience can lead to significant gains in search performance and reader trust.

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