Paula French of Search Influence Discusses Foundational vs AI SEO on SEO On-Air Podcast

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Paula French, Director of Sales and Marketing at Search Influence, appeared on the February 6 episode of the SEO On-Air podcast to discuss the evolving relationship between foundational search engine optimization (SEO) and AI-focused search strategies.

The episode, titled ?Foundational SEO vs. AI SEO: What Businesses Actually Need,? examined how artificial intelligence (AI), large language models (LLMs), and AI-enhanced search experiences are influencing digital visibility. French joined a panel of SEO professionals representing agency, in-house, local, and enterprise perspectives to explore how organizations should approach search strategy as discovery platforms evolve.

During the 40-minute discussion, French addressed a central industry concern: whether AI-driven optimization replaces foundational SEO fundamentals. She explained that while AI tools are reshaping how information is surfaced and interpreted, the underlying signals that determine visibility remain rooted in technical soundness, structured content, and topical authority.

?Visibility in organic and AI results is a competitive advantage,? said French. ?For years, organizations have

relied on strong technical foundations and credible content to earn discoverability. As AI search tools expand, those fundamentals remain essential. There are additional tactics and nuances to how the content is written that we?ve found to be effective in helping AI tools include and cite our brands.?

The panel discussion emphasized that AI optimization should be viewed as an additional layer rather than a replacement model. Participants noted that LLM-driven platforms and AI-generated search summaries continue to reference and synthesize information from well-optimized websites. Technical health, entity clarity, internal linking structures, and content depth remain core drivers of visibility.

French discussed the concept of SEO maturity as a decision-making framework. Organizations with limited organic traction may benefit most from strengthening foundational elements such as crawlability, content structure, and authority development before investing in AI-specific tactics. Businesses with established search visibility, however, may be positioned to refine content for improved citation and interpretation by AI systems.

The conversation also addressed market pressure to adopt ?AI-first? strategies. Panelists agreed that reactive shifts without strategic assessment can create instability in long-term performance. Instead, they encouraged organizations to evaluate their current SEO posture and align investments accordingly.

SEO On-Air is a podcast initiative of Stan Ventures, a white-label SEO and link-building agency. The program features discussions with industry professionals on search trends, technical developments, and digital marketing strategy. The February 6 episode contributed to ongoing industry dialogue about how businesses can adapt to rapid technological change while maintaining sustainable search practices.

French brings more than 16 years of experience in digital marketing and SEO strategy. Throughout her career, she has worked with organizations in higher education, healthcare, and hospitality to adapt SEO and content strategies in response to changing search behavior. At Search Influence, she focuses on helping institutions strengthen their presence in both traditional search results and emerging AI-driven interfaces.

The full episode of ?Foundational SEO vs. AI SEO: What Businesses Actually Need? was released on February 6 and is available to listen to via Spotify.

About Search Influence

Search Influence is a woman-owned, ROI-focused digital marketing agency that helps drive prospects into and through the marketing funnel with analytics-backed search engine optimization and paid digital

advertising. Founded in 2006, Search Influence?s core purpose is to optimize potential. The agency collaborates with well-regarded brands and institutions both nationally and locally in New Orleans. Clients include the Tulane School of Professional Advancement, Tufts University College, Associated Hearing Professionals, New Orleans & Company, and Audubon Nature Institute.

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For more information about Search Influence, contact the company here:Search InfluenceAngie Scott(504) 208-3900info@searchinfluence.com1423 Pine St New Orleans, LA 70118

Search Influence

Search Influence, a national SEO and digital advertising agency since 2006, delivers demonstrable ROI for clients. Specialties include SEO, Paid Advertising, and Analytics. In-house experts collaborate with clients for results. Also an informative blog.

Website: https://www.searchinfluence.com/?siembed

Email: info@searchinfluence.com

Phone: (504) 208-3900