yoast *magazine*

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And furthermore

The first edition!

This is the very first Yoast magazine. We aim to make more of these. Perhaps we should make it a Quarterly ☺.

As the 3.3 update of our Yoast SEO plugin contained a lot of readability checks, this magazine is about writing. We've written a few nice articles which can help you to improve the content of your blog posts.

And, this magazine will allow you to take a peek into the office life at our headquarters in Wijchen. We'll tell you about the development process. How do we come up with new features and how do they end up in our plugin? Do not forget to read the Yoast history and get to know the story of how I founded Yoast.

For now, we are very curious to hear your reactions. Enjoy!

Cheers

Joost

Colophon

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Meet Yoast!

The Yoast team regularly attends, sponsors and contributes to events. If you'd like to meet us (again) this year, you can find us here:

WordCamp Nederland
October 14 – 16, 2016
Utrecht, The Netherlands

Conversion Hotel Texel
November, 2016
Texel, The Netherlands

Bits & pieces

Shocking!
Sudden death of marketing fish #1, marketing team declares week of mourning.

Say what?!
Michiel writes a post of less than 1000 words.

He wouldn't dare!
Erwin threatens to resign if we hire any new people before he catches up with the backlog of avatars.

"Tell me more, tell me more..."
Joost and Marieke's footage of their *'Summer Nights'* performance during Marieke's birthday karaoke somehow disappeared.

The history of ~~Joost~~ Yoast

By Marieke van de Rakt

Yoast was founded by my husband, Joost de Valk. For a long time Joost and Yoast were pretty much the same. However, in the past few years the company has grown very quickly. Nowadays, Yoast isn't just Joost de Valk anymore. In this article I'll tell you the story about the teenager Joost who loved websites and the man that started Yoast.

We actually get a lot of questions about the sudden growth of our company. *How did our company start off? What were important conditions making it possible for Joost to start up Yoast? What were the major events or turning points? And what's the secret behind the explosive growth of Yoast in the last few years?* Time to write down our history. Joost and I dove into our archives to reconstruct the history of Yoast.

The early days of Joost

In order to truly understand how Yoast came about, we have to go all the way back to Joost's childhood. Joost was born in 1982 and grew up in Beuningen, near Nijmegen in the Netherlands. Very early on, Joost was intrigued by computers. As he consistently broke the family computer, his parents decided to give Joost his first computer at age 12. *"I had to pay them back, though. I delivered newspapers for two years,"* Joost remembers, *"but, I got my very own computer. And, my parents were one of the first to have internet in the Netherlands."*

Having his own computer with internet access turned out to be key for the development of the future career of Joost. Joost launched his first website in 1994. Building websites and writing code was something Joost really enjoyed doing. *"I loved building stuff in code, all my money was spent on buying extra RAM."* During his early days, Joost taught himself to write code and to speak English fluently.

After high school, Joost tried college and went to different universities. He quickly decided though, that he was much too headstrong for traditional education. He started working at an IT company at the age of 20.

Joost up until 2006

In his early twenties, Joost wandered a bit between jobs. He worked at different IT and hosting companies, mostly in sales functions. *"I was a nerd, writing code and all, but I was able to sell stuff too,"* Joost tells, *"Apparently, I'm a smooth talker."* By then, Joost was already writing on his blog www.joostdevalk.nl about HTML, CSS and coding in general.

> " *Apparently, I'm a smooth talker.* "

In 2005, he became involved in an open source project: WebKit. WebKit was an open source browser (important for building Safari). Joost loved working with developers all over the world. He enjoyed building something that everyone would be able to use. *"The concept of open source really appealed to me,"* Joost explains, *"I liked the equality and the openness of WebKit. I liked the fact that everyone, including me, could contribute to something."*

1992
Joost gets his first computer and builds his first website 2 years later

2002-2006
Joost works at different IT and hosting companies and gets involved in open source

2006
Tycho is born and Joost gets a job as an SEO consultant

2006
Joost's first WordPress website

In the meantime, Joost and I met and fell in love. Rather soon after we became a couple, we found out that I was pregnant. In the summer of 2006, our eldest son Tycho was born. Starting a family was a turning point in Joost's career. When I became pregnant, I was working on my PhD-thesis full time. I was very determined to finish that thesis, although being a mother made things a bit harder. Joost decided he needed a job closer to home to help me take care of the baby. In the beginning of 2006, Joost found a job as an SEO consultant.

2006-2010
Joost becomes Yoast

SEO

That SEO job turned out to be an important career move. Before 2006, Joost never had *any* interest in SEO. That was about to change! Joost: *"As I was able to write code and develop websites, I immediately understood all technical aspects of SEO".*
This technical background combined with his ability to write appealing copy and to speak in public were the perfect

ingredients to become an awesome SEO expert. Between 2006 and 2009 Joost started doing conferences (first as an attendee, but very soon he was asked to speak) and began writing about SEO on his blog.

Joost spoke at conferences like SMX and gradually became a known SEO expert. In 2007, at SMX Stockholm, Joost tried to explain to Rand Fishkin how to pronounce his first name. That's when Rand said: *"Ow that's easy, just toast with a y."* Yoast was born.

WordPress

At around the same time Joost started as an SEO consultant, he also began to work with WordPress. Joost created his first WordPress site in April 2006. I asked him what made him switch from building sites from scratch to using WordPress: *"I was searching for a CMS, as that made it easier to use and maintain websites. I looked into a few and chose WordPress."*
Joost just started as an SEO back then and WordPress seemed the most SEO-friendly to him.

"I already worked on WebKit and was a big believer in open source. The fact that WordPress was open source appealed to me a lot."
Joost quickly became a WordPress fanboy. He began to be active in the WordPress community, started writing about WordPress on his blog and made his first core contribution in 2007.

SEO and WordPress

Joost began combining his knowledge about SEO with his passion for WordPress. He developed a number of small plugins. Those plugins helped WordPress users to optimize their website for search engines. These plugins quickly gathered a large user base.

2010-2012
Joost starts Yoast

In 2010 Joost decided to give up his job as an SEO consultant. He took a leap of faith and began his own company. At that point in time, he was pretty sure he would never hire any employees. So he named his one-man-company after himself and his blog: Yoast. We put his computer in the back of our attic, only a book-case was separating Joost from the washing machine. »

2007
The name Yoast is born, at SMX Stockholm: "…just toast with a y."

2009-2015
Our family is growing, after Tycho comes Wendy, Ravi and finally Borre

2010
Joost starts his own one-man-company: Yoast

2010
Joost develops the WordPress SEO plugin

2012
Michiel Heijmans becomes the first employee of Yoast

Joost made money by doing site reviews and providing SEO consultancy at major companies like eBay. Besides that, he was developing his SEO plugins for WordPress. In October 2010, Joost finally made one plugin of all these little ones: WordPress SEO (Yoast SEO now) was born.

At the end of 2011, Joost met Michiel Heijmans, who also had just started his own business. *"The site reviews were going really well,"* Joost explains. *"I wasn't able to do them all. Michiel stepped in and did some site reviews."* That cooperation turned out to be another turning point in Joost's career. Joost and Michiel started working and brainstorming together more and more. Finally, Joost decided to bring Michiel on board. Early 2012, Michiel became the first employee of Yoast.

2012-2014
Yoast becomes more than Joost

Michiel and Joost hired an office in their hometown Wijchen. Yoast was becoming a name in the WordPress community and Joost put a lot of money and effort in his branding. He hired our illustrator Erwin (freelance at first) to create some avatars and drawings of Joost. Later on, Joost and Michiel decided to hire a graphic designer, Mijke.

In 2012, Yoast started making money of WordPress plugins. Yoast SEO already had a lot of users, but we didn't have any paying customers. In September 2012, Yoast launched Video SEO. With paying customers the support demands rose, that's why later that year, Joost's brother Thijs joined in on the adventure.

In the meantime, I finished my PhD in 2011 and I was working at different universities. At the same time, I interfered with Yoast quite a lot. That was dear to my heart too. Our little family had grown: our daughter Wende was born in 2009 and our son Ravi was born in 2011. Joost and I were both juggling our career and caring for our children. In the summer of 2013, I finally decided to give up my academic career and focus solely on Yoast. That made the combination of Yoast and family much easier on both

Joost and me. Later on we eventually decided to complete our family with our youngest son Borre, born in 2015.

As I joined the company, Yoast started growing faster. My academic career was no longer a limitation to Joost's career and to Yoast. We could now focus on the same things and followed shared ambitions instead of different career paths. It turned out that combining our energy made Yoast grow tremendously. With the growth of the company, Yoast became more than just Joost and Yoast is no longer a synonym for Joost as a person.

2014-now
Yoast keeps on growing!

In 2011, Yoast was Joost. At the end of 2012, Yoast consisted of Joost and another 4 employees. At the end of 2013, Yoast consisted of 10 employees. At the end of 2014, Yoast employed a total of 15 people.

In 2015 the company Yoast existed five years. To praise those past five years full of growth and experience Joost and I decided to celebrate this milestone with a conference: YoastCon! In the course of that year another 9 people joined the company, which made a total of 25 at the end of 2015. In the beginning of 2016, Yoast already hired another 10 employees making a total of 34 in our office in Wijchen this spring.

2012
Erwin starts making loads of avatars and Joost starts hiring more and more employees

2013
Marieke finally decides to focus solely on Yoast

2013
Taco joins Joost, he leads our support team

2014
Omar joins Yoast and makes a real team of the developers

2015
5th year anniversary of Yoast: YoastCon

Photo: punkmedia.nl

Yoast changes

In 2015, Yoast had a major redesign. Our design team replaced the many avatars featuring Joost with new colorful illustrations. We replaced our company color orange with green and purple. The change in design reflected the change of our company. Yoast was no longer a synonym for Joost de Valk. *"My head on every page started to annoy people,"* Joost explains, *"Yoast consisted of more than just me and people didn't seem to get that yet."*

Academy

In 2015, we also launched Yoast Academy. Yoast Academy helps people doing SEO themselves, by learning them how to optimize their websites. We released our first eBook in 2014 and the first online SEO course in 2015.

Open source

Yoast has grown. The company grew and the profit grew. That didn't change our passion for WordPress and open source though. Giving back to the community that made us grow is very important to Yoast. That's why we sponsor many WordCamps and why we hire developers that focus their time and energy entirely on the development of WordPress core.

Support team

With the growth of the users of our (premium) plugins, the demand of support had grown tremendously as well. Taco, who joined Joost in 2013, grew into his role of support and community manager. Nowadays, he leads our support team of 10 support engineers around the world. Besides that, Taco is a very active member of the WordPress community. He speaks at various WordCamps and organizes local WordPress meetups. A true Yoaster!

Development team

In 2014, another Yoaster joined Yoast: Omar Reiss. Omar's involvement was also very important for the growth of our company. Yoast had a team of 3 developers when Omar came with us. We had no clear system yet.

Omar was able to make a real team of the developers. He introduced things like pair programming and set up a system in which colleagues review each other's code. Above that, he made sure that the code quality of Yoast SEO became much, much higher. Joost and Omar were also able to attract new enthusiastic developers to our team. Nowadays, our development team consists of a total of 10 developers in Wijchen and 3 developers abroad.

Management team

Gradually, Michiel and I became more and more involved in the major management decisions. At first, Thijs was also involved. We formed the management team of Yoast. In 2016, Omar and Annelieke joined the management team (after Thijs decided to leave our company).

Working at Yoast

We try to be a family. We try to have fun. After all, Yoast started out as a hobby. Joost was passionate about WordPress and about SEO. He wanted people to share in his passion. That's what Yoast is about. As employers we believe that when you are nice and good to your employees, they will return that in commitment and motivation.

Future Yoast?

We don't know what the future will bring. Google changes regularly and we'll change accordingly. It's hard to see what will be next. We have lots of plans though!

We want to grow our Yoast Academy. We want to learn people about SEO and make people do SEO in a holistic way. We want people to focus on producing quality content, quality web design and quality coding. We want to make more websites better!

2015
Yoast gets a complete redesign

2015
Yoast Academy is released

2016
Both Omar and Annelieke (our review manager) join the management team

spring 2016
a total of 34 in our office in Wijchen!

Duplicate content:
causes and solutions

By Joost de Valk

Search engines like Google have a problem. They call it 'duplicate content'. Duplicate content means that similar content is being shown on multiple locations (URLs) on the web. As a result, search engines don't know which URL to show in the search results. This can hurt the ranking of a webpage. Especially when people start linking to all the different versions of the content, the problem becomes bigger. This article is meant for you to understand the different causes of duplicate content, and to find the solution for each of them.

You can compare it to being on a crossroad, and road signs are pointing in 2 different directions for the same final destination: which road should you take? And now, to make it 'worse' the final destination is different too, but only ever so slightly. As a reader, you don't mind: you get the content you came for. But a search engine has to pick which one to show in the search results, as it doesn't want to show the same content twice.

*Let's say your article about **'keyword X'** appears on* http://www.example.com/keyword-x/ *and the exact same content also appears on* http://www.example.com/article-category/keyword-x/. *A situation that's not so fictitious: this happens in lots of modern Content Management Systems. Your article has been picked up by several bloggers, and some of them link to the first URL, others link to the second URL. This is when the search engine's problem shows its real nature: it's your problem. This duplicate content is **your** problem because those links are both promoting different URLs. If they were all linking to the same URL, your chance of ranking in the top 10 for **keyword X** would be much higher.*

1 Causes for duplicate content

There are dozens and dozens of reasons that cause duplicate content. Most of them are technical: it's not very often that a human decides to put the same content in two different places without distinguishing the original source: it feels unnatural to most of us. The technical reasons are plentiful though. It happens mostly because developers don't think

as a browser or a user, let alone a search engine spider, they think as a developer. That afore mentioned article, that appears on http://www.example.com/keyword-x/ and http://www.example.com/article-category/keyword-x/? If you ask the developer, he'll say it only exists once.

1.1 Misunderstanding the concept of a URL

Has that developer gone mad? No, he's just speaking a different language. You see, the whole website is probably powered by a database system. In that database, there's only one article, the website's software just allows for that same article in the database to be retrieved through several URLs. That's because in the eyes of the developer, the unique identifier for that article is the ID that article has in the database, not the URL. For the search engine though, the URL is the unique identifier to a piece of content. If you explain that to a developer, he'll start getting the problem. And after reading this article, you'll even be able to provide him with a solution right away!

1.2 Session IDs

You often want to keep track of your visitors, and make it possible, for instance, to store items they want to buy in a shopping cart. To do that, you need to give them a 'session'. A session is basically a brief history of what the visitor did on your site, and can contain things like the items in their shopping cart. To maintain that session as a visitor clicks from one page to another, the unique identi-fier for that session, the so-called Session ID, needs to be stored somewhere. The most common solution is to do that with cookies. However, search engines usually don't store cookies. At that point some systems fall back to using Session IDs in the URL. This means that every internal link on the website gets that Session ID appended to the URL, and because that Session ID is unique to that session, it creates a new URL, and thus duplicate content.

1.3 URL parameters used for tracking and sorting

Another cause for duplicate content is the use of URL parameters that don't change the content of a page, for instance in tracking links. You see, http://www.example.com/keyword-x/ and http://www.example.com/keyword-x/?source=rss are not the same URLs for a search engine. The latter might allow you to track what source people came from, but it might also make it harder for you to rank well. A very unwanted side effect!
This doesn't just go for tracking parameters of course, it goes for every parameter you can add to a URL that doesn't change the vital piece of content.

> ❝ *Duplicate content can hurt the ranking of a webpage.* ❞

Whether that parameter is for 'changing the sorting on a set of products' or for 'showing another sidebar':they all cause duplicate content.

1.4 Scrapers & content syndication

Most of the causes for duplicate content are all your own, or at the very least your website's 'fault'. Sometimes though, other websites use your content, with or without your consent. They don't always link to your original article, and thus the search engine doesn't 'get' it and has to deal with yet another version of the same article. The more popular your site becomes, the more scrapers you'll often have, making this issue bigger and bigger.

1.5 Order of parameters

Another common cause is that a CMS doesn't use nice and clean URLs, but rather URLs like /?id=1&cat=2, where ID refers to the article and cat refers to the category. The URL /?cat=2&id=1 will render the exact same results in most website systems, but they're actually completely different for a search engine.

1.6 Comment pagination

In my beloved WordPress, but also in some other systems, there is an option to paginate your comments. This leads to the content being duplicated across the article URL, and the article URL + /comment-page-1/, /comment-page-2/ etc.

1.7 Printer friendly pages

If your content management system creates printer friendly pages and you link to those from your article pages, in most cases Google will find those, unless you specifically block them. Now which version should Google show? The one laden with ads and peripheral content, or the one with just your article?

1.8 WWW vs. non-WWW

One of the oldest in the book, but sometimes search engines still get it wrong: WWW vs non-WWW duplicate content, when both versions of your site are accessible. A less common situation but one I've seen as well: http vs https duplicate content, where the same content is served out over both. »

2 Conceptual solution: A 'canonical' URL

As determined previously, the fact that several URLs lead to the same content is a problem, but it can be solved. A human working on a publication will normally be able to tell you quite easily what the 'correct' URL for a certain article should be. The funny thing is though, sometimes, when you ask three people in the same company, they'll give three different answers…

That's a problem that needs solving in those cases, because in the end, there can be only one (URL). That 'correct' URL for a piece of content has been dubbed the *Canonical URL* by the search engines.


3 Identifying duplicate contents issues

You might not know whether you have a duplicate content issue on your site or with your content. Let me give you some methods of finding out whether you do.

3.1 Google Search Console

Google Search Console is a great tool for identifying duplicate content. If you go into Google Search Console for your site, check under *Search Appearance » HTML Improvements*, and you'll see this:
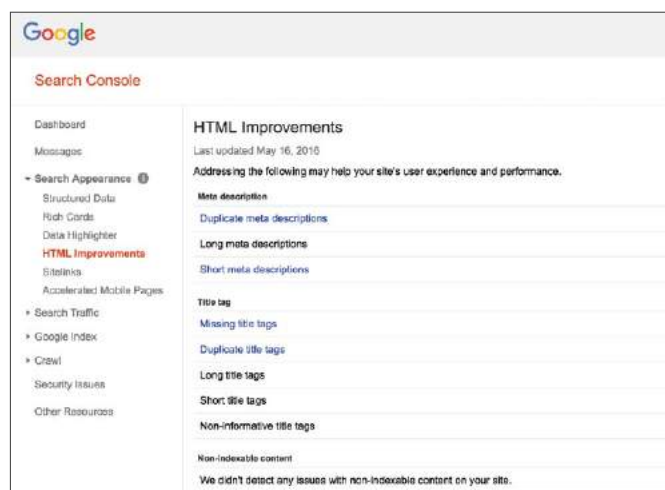
If pages have duplicate titles or duplicate descriptions, that's almost never a good thing. Clicking on it will reveal the URLs that have duplicate titles or descriptions and will help you identify the problem. The issue is that if you have an article like the one about *keyword X*, and it shows up in two categories, the titles might be different. They might for instance be '*Keyword X − Category X − Example Site*' and '*Keyword X − Category Y − Example Site*'. Google won't pick those up as duplicate titles, but you can find them by searching.

3.2 Searching for titles or snippets

There are several search operators that are very helpful for cases like these. If you'd want to find all the URLs on your site that contain your *keyword X* article, you'd type the following search phrase into Google:

1| site:example.com intitle: "Keyword X"

Google will then show you all pages on example.com that contain that keyword. The more specific you make that intitle part, the easier it is to weed out duplicate content. You can use the same method to identify duplicate content across the web. Let's say the full title of your article was '*Keyword X − why it is awesome*', you'd search for:

1| intitle:"Keyword X - why it is awesome"

And Google would give you all sites that match that title. Sometimes it's worth even searching for one or two complete sentences from your article, as some scrapers might change the title. In some cases, when you do a search like that, Google might show a notice like this on the last page of results:

This is a sign that Google is already 'de−duping' the results. It's still not good, so it's worth clicking the link and looking at all the other results to see whether you can fix some of those.

> *In order to show you the most relevant results, we have omitted some entries very similar to the 1 already displayed.*
> *If you like, you can repeat the search with the omitted results included.*

4 Practical solutions for duplicate content

Once you've decided which URL is the canonical URL for your piece of content, you have to start a process of canonicalization (yeah I know, try to say that 3 times out loud fast). This basically just means we have to let the search engine know about the canonical version of a page and let it find it ASAP. There are four methods of solving the problem, in order of preference.

4.1 Avoiding duplicate content

Some of the above causes for duplicate content have very simple fixes to them:

- **Session IDs in your URLs?**
  These can often just be disabled in your system's settings.
- **Have duplicate printer friendly pages?**
  These are completely unnecessary: you should just use a print style sheet.
- **Using comment pagination in WordPress?**
  This feature should just be disabled (under *settings » discussion*) on 99% of sites.
- **Parameters in a different order?**
  Tell your programmer to build a script to always order parameters in the same order (this is often referred to as a so called URL factory).
- **Tracking links issues?**
  In most cases you can use hash tag based campaign tracking instead of parameter based campaign tracking.
- **WWW vs non-WWW issues?**
  Pick one and stick with it by redirecting the one to the other. You can also set a preference in Google Search Console, but you'll have to claim both versions of the domain name.

If your problem isn't that easily fixed, it might still be worth it to put in the effort and to prevent the duplicate content from appearing altogether. It's by far the best solution to the problem.

4.2 301 Redirecting duplicate content

In some cases it isn't impossible to entirely prevent the system you're using from creating wrong URLs for content, but sometimes it is possible to redirect them. Even if this isn't logical to you (which I can understand) do keep it in mind while talking to your developers. Also, if you do get rid of some of the duplicate content issues altogether, make sure that you redirect all the old duplicate content URLs to the proper canonical URLs.

4.3 Using rel="canonical" links

Sometimes you don't want to or can't get rid of a duplicate version of an article, but you do know that it's the wrong URL. For that specific issue, the search engines have introduced the canonical link element. It's placed in the <head> section of your site and it looks like this:

1|

In the href section of the canonical link you place the correct canonical URL for your article. When Google (or any other search engine that supports it) finds this link element, it does what is basically a soft 301 redirect: it transfers most of the link value gathered by that page to your canonical page.

This process is a bit slower than the 301 redirect though, so if you can do a 301 redirect that would be preferable.
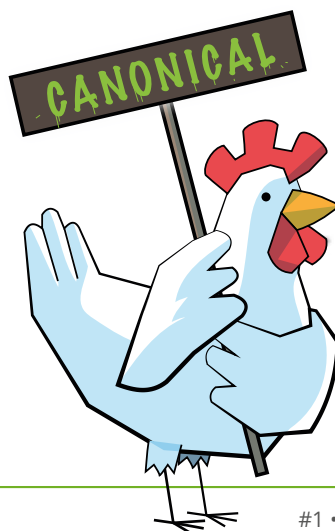
4.4 Linking back to the original content

If you can't do any of these solutions, possibly because you don't control the <head> section of the site your content appears on, adding a link back to the original article on top of or below the article is always a good idea. This might be something you'd want to do in your RSS feed: add a link back to the article in it. Some scrapers will filter that link out, but some others might leave it in. If Google encounters several links pointing to your article it will figure out soon enough that that is the actual canonical version of the article.
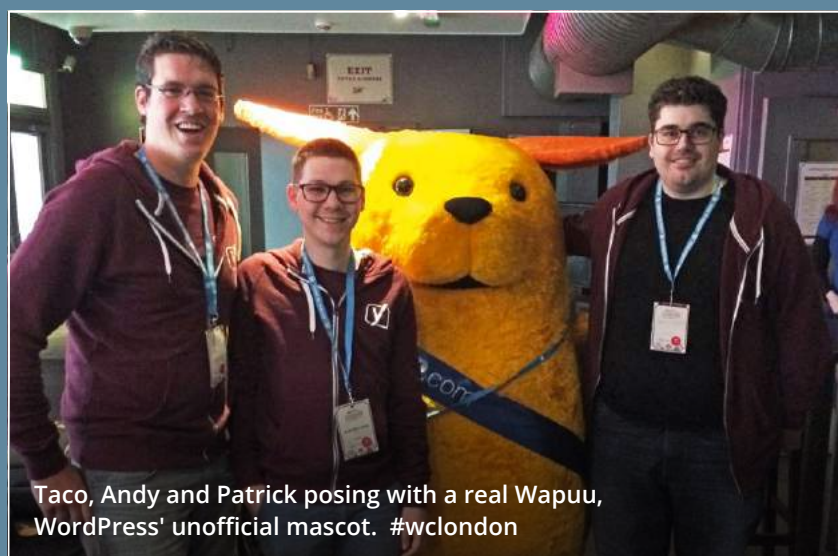
5 Conclusion: duplicate content is fixable, and should be fixed

Duplicate content happens everywhere. I have yet to encounter a site of more than 1,000 pages that hasn't got at least a tiny duplicate content problem. It's something you need to keep an eye on at all times. It is fixable though, and the rewards can be plentiful. Your quality content might soar in the rankings by just getting rid of duplicate content on your site!

KEEP ON READING

You can read more about rel=canonical on yoast.com: **rel=canonical: the ultimate guide**

#phpbenelux

TORINO
WORDCAMP
2016

SPEAKER

Taco
Verdonschot

@TacoVerdo

#wctorino

Taco, Andy and Patrick posing with a real Wapuu,
WordPress' unofficial mascot. #wclondon

" *Where have you seen us?* "

#phpbenelux

#phpbenelux

#wcparis

#wcparis

#wcparis

#wptranslationday
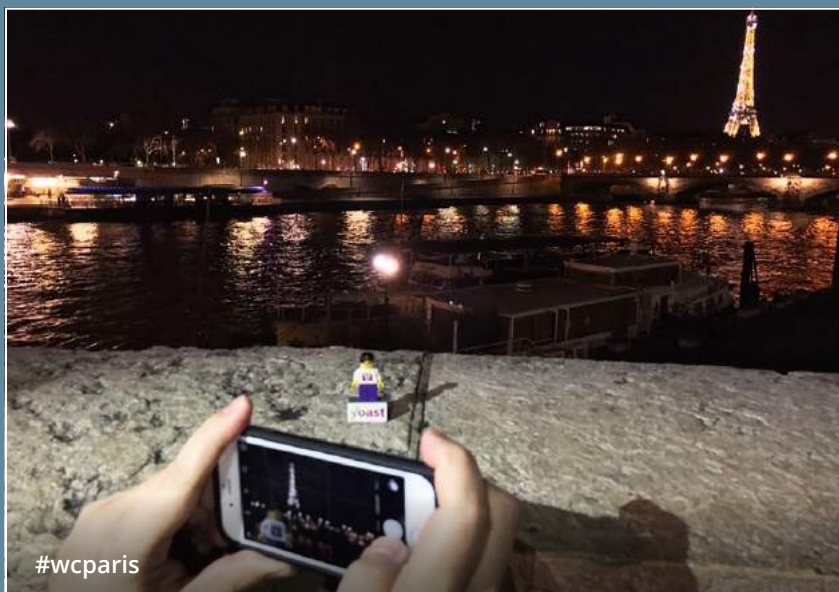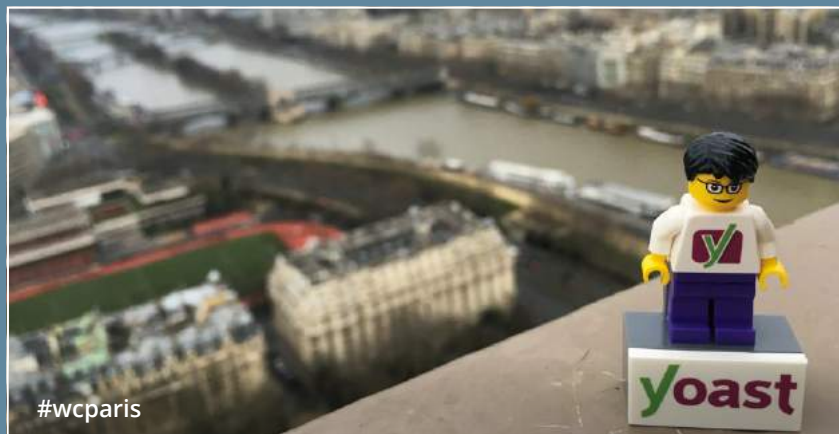
Yoast at WordCamps

It's all about the community. Because we realize that very well, you'll see us sponsor a lot of community events. DrupalJam, PHPBenelux and WordCamps are great examples. Of course, we also try to attend these events. Here are some of the pictures we took in 2016.


#wcparis
Photo by: Andrey Savchenko

Awesome and *SEO-friendly* blog posts

By Marieke van de Rakt

Writing a blog post, like all other writing, is a skill. To keep your readers interested, you should think about the structure of your copy and write appealing texts. You can help your readers to grasp the main idea of your post by providing headings, subheadings and clear paragraphs. If people understand and like your text, they're much more inclined to share, like, tweet and link to your post. And that will increase your rankings. So, in order to improve your ranking in Google, you should definitely try to maximize your writing skills!
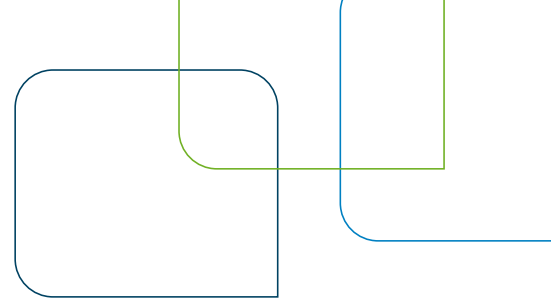
For some, writing for SEO purposes and writing to attract and captivate your audience could seem two contradictory goals. I totally disagree with this. Indeed, if you not only want a good, but also an SEO-friendly blog post, the words you want to be found for should be in a very prominent place. But, using your keywords too often severely damages the readability of your text. So, you definitely shouldn't do that.

In this article, I would like to give some tips on writing blog posts that are both very readable as well as SEO-friendly. I genuinely think those two goals should (and easily can!) go hand in hand.

Elementary writing tips for good blog posts

Before anything, your blog post just has to be a good piece of writing! A lot of bloggers just begin to write when creating a new blog post. They just type what comes to mind. For some, this might be sufficient, because they are natural writing talents. Others might need some help. I always follow the next set of 'rules' myself.

Think before you write

Think hard about the message of your text. What do you want to tell your readers or which central question do you want to answer? What's the purpose of your text? And what do you want your readers to do at the end of the page? Write down the answers to these questions before you begin writing.

Write down the structure of your blog post

Start your post with creating a clear structure. Every post should have
- some sort of introduction (in which you introduce the topic);

- a body (in which the main message is written);
- a conclusion (which should summarize the most important ideas or deduce some new idea).

Write down what you want to say in all these three sections. You now have a kind of summary of your post. The real writing can begin.

Use paragraphs

Everybody uses paragraphs, but make sure your paragraphs make sense. Don't start a new sentence on a new line, just because it looks nice.

> ❝ *Before anything, your blog post just has to be a good piece of writing!* ❞

There should be a reason to create a new paragraph. Every paragraph should present a main idea or a main subject. Ask yourself what the main idea of each paragraph is. You should be able to grasp that main idea in only one sentence. If you need more sentences, you simply need more paragraphs.

Use headings

Headings structure the entire page, so you should use headings. They're important for readability, but for SEO as well. Headings help Google to grasp the main topics of a long post and therefore help to rank. If you want people to find their way in your articles, you should use subheadings. Subheadings will lead people, help them scan your page, and clarify the structure of your articles. Make sure you use your keywords in some subheadings. Not in each and every-one of them though, as it will make the text unreadable.

Use signal words

Signal words help people to scan through your text and help people to grasp the main idea. Let's say, for instance, that there are three reasons for people to buy your product. You should use signal words like: '*first of all*'; '*secondly*' and '*finally*'. Also, words like '*nevertheless*', '*surely*' and '*indeed*' give a clear signal to your readers. Readers will instantly get that a conclusion will follow after words like '*consequently*', '*so*' or '*for this reason*'. Signal words are therefore very important to structure your text.

Let other people read your post

Before publishing your post, let someone else read your post first. Ask him/her whether he understands the main idea of your post. Correct typos and sentences that aren't formulated correctly.

Optimize the length of your article

Make sure your articles have a minimum of 300 words. Google likes long articles, if your article is too long though, it might scare away users. So try to stop at around 700 words. And, as a general rule of thumb: try to put your search terms in about 1 to 2 percent of your text. So in an article of 300 words, you should mention your search terms 3 to 6 times. »

Link to previous content

If you already wrote some content about the topic of your current post, don't forget to link to these posts. It will make your post stronger because you show some authority on the subject. Next to that, your link structure is of importance for your ranking in Google as well. And of course, your reader might be interested in this related posts too.

Add content regularly

Adding actual and functional information to your website will give Google the idea that your website is alive. If it's not an active website, Google will crawl it less often. And this might affect your rankings negatively.

> ❝ *Readable and SEO-friendly should go hand in hand.* ❞

Use our Yoast SEO plugin

The content analysis tool of our Yoast SEO plugin helps you write an SEO-friendly blog post. You start by choosing your focus keyword. This is the most important search term you want people to find this particular page for. The plugin then analyzes your post to check whether you use the keyword frequently enough and on the right spots. Moreover, it does many more readability checks.

Conclusion

The era in which some SEO tricks were sufficient to get your pages to rank high has long ended. Nowadays, content is king. And good content also leads to more Facebook likes and shares, tweets and returning visitors to your website.

Of course, you can do some extra things to maximize the SEO-friendliness of your post, but most important is: just write a very, very good post!

KEEP ON READING

You can read more about structure on yoast.com:

Blog post structure: How to set up an easy-to-read text

Or find out more about headings in Jono's article:

How to use headings on your site

Word search puzzle

L	S	E	I	M	O	N	O	X	A	T	N
O	O	O	D	E	E	P	S	E	T	I	S
S	E	N	I	L	G	A	T	P	G	T	I
T	M	S	G	P	E	N	G	U	I	N	I
N	Z	C	I	T	S	I	L	O	H	E	Y
E	O	U	R	R	A	P	P	A	C	E	R
M	A	D	N	A	P	I	S	B	L	O	G
M	S	D	R	O	W	E	L	I	B	O	M
O	I	T	Y	T	I	L	I	B	A	S	U
C	O	N	V	E	R	S	I	O	N	X	U
E	E	N	O	T	S	R	E	N	R	O	C
D	R	O	W	Y	E	K	T	S	A	O	Y

BLOG   TAXONOMIES

PLUGIN   KEYWORD

COMMENTS   USABILITY

RECAP   LONGTAIL

CONVERSION   UX

SEO   MOBILE

CORNERSTONE   WORDS

SITESPEED   PANDA

CRAWL   YOAST

TAGLINE   PENGUIN

HOLISTIC

Answer (the remaining letters):

_____

At the office

A lot is happening in the Yoast office! Currently 34 people are working at our office in Wijchen. We're growing rapidly and we're having a lot of fun together as the Yoast family.

Workflow

˄ Every morning, our development team starts with a stand-up. During these stand-ups, they keep each other up-to-date on their progress and discuss issues they ran into. After this stand-up, they'll work on improvements on our software and feature requests coming from the community. When a new feature is done, or a bug is squashed, a huge amount of high fives are given. ☺
Want to join our awesome dev's? Apply by sending an email to jobs@yoast.com.

How 'bout them cookies

˄ You can now make your very own Yoast cookies, enjoy!

Learning how to surf

Tweet

‹ This is Erwin, our illustrator, catching a bird out of... the Yoast chimney. The poor little guy had been stuck for a while. Marieke started to hear some inexplicable noise in her work-space. She soon found out we had a new and very unwanted office pet, Erwin, the hero of the day, catched the bird and gave it back its freedom!

˄ To keep our team spirit high (and our blood sugar level low ☺) we go sporting together once in a while. Last year, we got a surf lesson at the beach in Holland. Unfortunately, there weren't many waves that day. But we learned how to roll over, sit on the board and catch tiny waves.

REVIEW TIP

Optimize your category page!

By Annelieke van den Berg

A well-managed and optimized category page can be very valuable for your site's SEO. Nevertheless these pages seem to be out of scope for many website owners. Up to 95% of the sites we review have neglected category pages. Therefore, I'll give you some tips on how to optimize them.

Why are category pages important?

When a post or product is added to a category, the category page changes. This makes it a dynamic page, which Google loves. Therefore they have great potential to become awesome landing pages. They're especially important for webshops, since people more often search for a category, like straight jeans, than for a specific product. But category pages are just as valuable for blogs.

You can optimize a category page in many ways. It can be much more than just an archive page with excerpts of the latest posts or products.

How to optimize?

1 Look closely at your site's categories and check how valuable they are for your website. Make sure your categories:
   · are self explanatory and not vague like 'news' or 'general'?";
   · contain enough posts and/or products. And ask yourself: *"Do I plan on writing more in this category?"*.

2 Write awesome introductory content for each of your categories. Tell your visitors what they can expect to find in this category. Place your most important posts or most popular products at the top of the category page so people won't have to search for it.

3 Don't be conservative with the layout of your category page. Try to think outside the box and go further than just showing excerpts of your latest posts. Seduce your visitors! Add images and links to your introduction. Consider showing only excerpts of the last four posts, and showing just the post links of the next 16 or so.

4 Don't forget to use numbered pagination and noindex the /page/2/, /page/3/ etc. of your category archive. You only want to rank with the first page of your category, right?

5 Last but not least, use breadcrumbs so visitors can easily navigate back to the category page. Breadcrumbs also add valuable internal links. And if a category is very important, it should be in your menu as well.

So go and optimize that category page. They're worth it!

KEEP ON READING

You can read more about category SEO in Joost's article on yoast.com:

Using category and tag pages for your site's SEO

^ Our review manager Annelieke in action

Basic SEO

Did the author use paragraphs correctly in this text?

> **What is your website about?**
>
> The first homepage optimization tip is of course to check what your website is about. This seems obvious, but your mission, the uniqueness of your website, should be reflected on your homepage.
>
> Is your homepage just a large list of products and services, or did you actually take the time to write a decent welcome for your visitors? Now one of the most annoying things a website owner can do, is actually write 'welcome to our website'. By welcoming your visitor, I mean telling him what can be found on your website. What is your main product or service? What can be found on your products and on your company itself on the website? And most important: what is the main benefit (USP; Unique Selling Point) for the visitor?
>
> But isn't this just common sense?

A Yes, because the text is split in three parts by whitespace, it looks better on a screen.

B No, the second paragraph needs a whitespace in between "Now one.. ..to our website'." and "By welcoming.. ..your website.".

C Yes, every paragraph forms a different thematic unit.

D No, the first two paragraphs share the same thematic subject and the third one isn't a paragraph.

Correct answer: **D**

Clarification

A paragraph always consists of multiple sentences that form a thematic unit. Every paragraph has a core sentence that is followed by an elaboration (explanation, nuance, example, etc). You should use white spaces (and sometimes subheadings) to make your paragraph more visible.

In this example the first two paragraphs share the same thematic subject: they're both about the fact that your homepage should make clear what the website is about and what's the unique selling point of your site. The third paragraph is just a loose sentence without a clear message.

Cogito ergo sum

Writing pads

We've had more than one discussion about this in the office: write or type. Typing might be faster sometimes. And it will make sure every thought is saved for later, where paper can get lost. But I really love my writing.

When I graduated, I got a Waterman fountain pen with an 18k gold point. When I left one of my former bosses, he gave me a black Cross ballpoint that I still use today. I like nice pens. I just love to scribble notes when I'm in meetings, during phone calls or whatever. It's what's always available. Pen and paper.

I felt like a mammoth. A fossil. One of the last Mohicans. A while back, I asked our designer Mijke to design a writing pad in her spare time. No rush. Very simple, with some reserved lines for subject, date and attendees at the top and just some extra space for actions and names at the bottom. We ordered ten, just to try. In our almost paperless office (we really don't use that much paper), somehow eight of these writing pads have disappeared from the small stack that was in my office cabinet. I have almost finished mine, and there is one left.

Tomorrow, I'll call out a search trip. We need to find the other Mammoths at Yoast. I know you are out there...

Michiel

Developing the *content analysis* of Yoast SEO

By Marieke van de Rakt

In Yoast SEO 3.3 we've added some totally new features. We've developed awesome content checks, designed to help you write SEO-friendly AND readable blog posts. But how did we decide which features to add to Yoast SEO? What was that process like and who were involved? In this article, we'll take you behind the scenes at Yoast. Take a peek at the first phase of our development process!

Why content?

According to Joost de Valk (CEO), quality content will be become increasingly important. *"Google is getting better at understanding what quality content is,"* Joost explains. *"I expect that in the future, websites will no longer be able to rank well with poorly written articles."*

Quality content is of great importance for SEO, but that doesn't mean that technical SEO isn't important anymore. *"On the contrary,"* Joost emphasizes, *"technical SEO is still of great importance. However, we try to take care of all the technical issues with our Yoast SEO plugin. We cannot write a plugin that 'takes care' of your content though. That part just can't be automated. It can be made easier though, which is exactly why we added those new content checks!"*

Developing content checks

At Yoast we instantly felt that developing checks that will help people to write better blog post was a challenging and difficult task. We know quite a bit about SEO copywriting, but we felt that we needed some 'real' expertise in the field of linguistics. That's why we've hired Irene Strikkers (23). Irene studied Language and Culture studies and obtained a Masters in Linguistics. She started working at Yoast in January 2016.

Irene started out by doing some serious research. She began checking the existing tools, plugins and apps in the field of automatic text review. She wanted to comprehend what was already on the market. *"I made a lot of different texts with the most common*

textual and grammar mistakes," Irene explains, "and I started testing all these different apps and tools."

At the end of her research, Irene had reviewed 24 different tools and apps. She found out that some of them didn't check what they were supposed to check, while others were seriously slowing down a website. She made a long and clear overview of all her findings. That already gave us lots of clues about what not to do.

While executing her research, Irene sat down regularly with our software architects. They discussed her findings and brainstormed about implications and possibilities for features in the plugin. Our software architects (Omar and Anton) showed Irene the challenges and limitations they would have in developing certain features.

Readability first

As Irene was finishing up her research, she presented her findings to a delegation of team Yoast. Most important finding of Irene's research was that a lot of apps and tools focused on spelling and grammar, but neglected readability. Irene found that to be striking. *"Readability actually is of great importance."* Irene explains. *"It determines whether people understand the message of your text. Although correct spelling and grammar are important, these are most certainly not the only factors influencing the readers. A readable text is a text one reads all the way through."*

Irene's research clearly showed a lack of readability checks among most of the existing writing tools. Above that, quite a lot of the proposed readability checks appeared to be relatively easy to develop. Team Yoast therefore decided to focus on readability checks first.

> " *Readability determines whether people understand the message of your text.* "

What kind of checks?

The readability checks that were released in the 3.3 update of Yoast SEO have a lot to do with making sure your text is not too difficult. The checks are aimed to make sure that people understand the message of your blog post. They help to create texts that are both easy to read and nice to read.

The Yoast SEO content analysis, for instance, checks whether your words are too difficult. It also analyzes the length of your sentences and your paragraphs. Besides that the content analysis checks whether you're using enough signal words (aka transition words) and whether you're using passive voice too often.

From ideas to code

Omar and Irene decided on the final checks and features that were going to be incorporated in Yoast SEO 3.3. The findings of Irene's research served as input. As Irene worked closely with Omar and Anton during the project's research phase, the actual decision making was rather easy. Omar: *"Irene actually made the readability checks really specific. She already understood which checks were doable in terms of code and which ones were going to be a bit more challenging. She was great in translating these readability checks into technical specifications. Irene did most of the work, by far. After that, the development team just needed to build these checks into the Yoast SEO content analysis."*

Awesome new features

The 3.3 update of Yoast SEO is a major one. *"These new content checks really add something to the plugin,"* Joost says, *"an update with a lot of technical stuff doesn't change much in the user experience. This update does. The content analysis should really help people to write more readable blog posts. And I truly believe that could do great things for the SEO of a site."*

The development team loves working together with Irene. Omar: *"Working together with a linguist made the development process great fun. It is nice to think about other problems than purely technical ones. In such a multidisciplinary team, people are able to inspire one another."*

This project isn't over yet. Irene and our software architects are already working on new checks to add to the content analysis. We'll keep you posted!

Should you *republish old content?*

By Marieke van de Rakt

Lots of content you write is timeless. One year from now this article about republishing old content will still be as valid as it is today. Still, if you don't share it or talk about it, very few people will notice it. A way to make sure your content won't be forgotten is to republish it. But what's a smart strategy for that? You don't want to annoy your audience with old news. In this post, I'll talk you through different ways to republish your old content.

Why would you republish old content?

A lot of content is valid for a longer period of time. And your audience changes and grows. Things you've written a year ago probably won't be read by your new audience. So, it's a waste of quality copy if you'd publish it only once.

Moreover, sometimes an article or blog post isn't picked up properly the first time. Maybe your timing was off.

An article that was published in summer, perhaps got little attention because of a very hot day. If you share posts on Facebook, you'll most definitely notice that some posts are shared and liked much more than others. The reason why some posts are picked up by a large audience, while others aren't, isn't necessarily related to the quality of your post. Republishing can be a way to give your content a second chance to reach your audience.

Make sure your content is up to date!

Most important advice on republish-ing old content is that you should never republish anything that isn't up to date. Nobody wants to read some-thing that is out of date or no longer applicable. So before republishing, you should do some reviewing and possibly some re-writing.

Republishing content with minor changes

If you want to republish an article in which you've made minor changes, we would advise you to change the last modified date. That way, people are able to see when the article or post was altered last. It's instantly clear that the information is still up to date.

We would advise you to hide the comments on a post you republish. It just looks weird if you push out an article with comments that are made a year earlier.

When updated, push out your article using social media like Facebook and Twitter. Or write about the article in your newsletter. You can mention that you wrote this post some time ago and that the information is still very useful. You can also choose to treat the republished post as a normal post and do the things you normally do to draw attention to new content.

Republishing old content with major changes

Sometimes you'll need to make major adjustments to articles. Things can change entirely, making your old article rather useless. Or, your opinion or advice on how to handle certain things might change.

If you make big changes on an article, rewriting the entire text, we would advice you to publish it as if it were
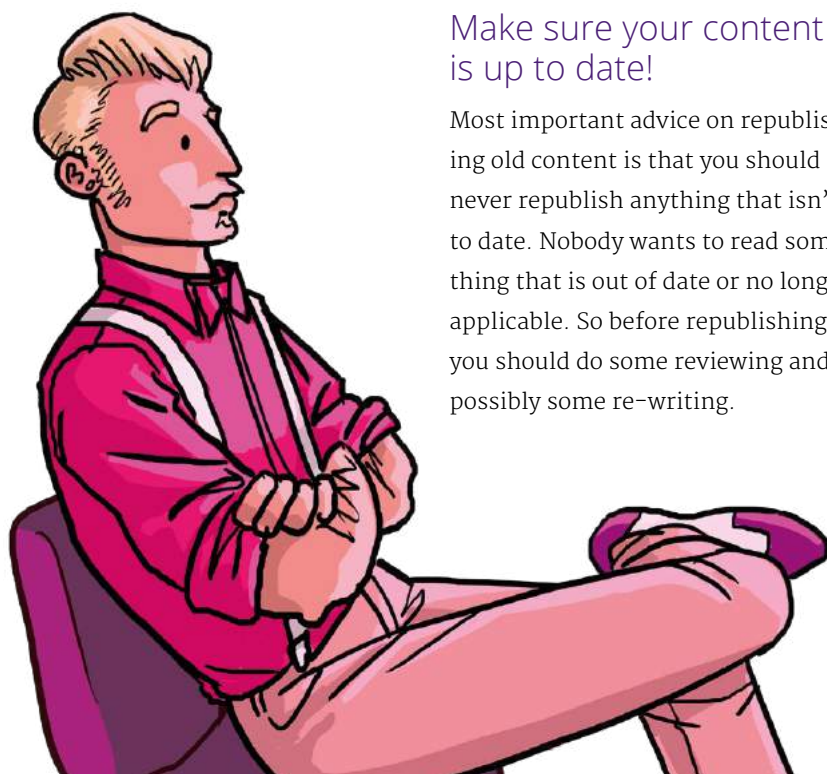
new content. You'll then change the date of the article. Changing the date will enable you to keep all of the links from other websites to your original post (which is great for SEO of course).

Conclusion

Republishing can be a great way to get extra attention to those great articles you wrote some time ago. Make sure to keep those articles up to date, though. And, don't go overboard.

You shouldn't republish your articles every other week. If people notice you're publishing the same blogpost again and again, they'll definitely get annoyed.

> **Before republishing, you should do some reviewing and possibly some re-writing.**

Anton

Have you already met Anton? We're extremely proud of him. His development skills are insane, he's a very enthusiastic WordPress fanatic *and* a great colleague to hang out with! If you run into Anton on WCEU, make sure to say "hi" to him!

Let us introduce Anton to you.

Who's Anton?

Anton Timmermans is our 23-year-old software architect. He grew up in the North of the Netherlands, in a place called Vollenhove. After high school he studied Technical Computer Science at Twente University. After his first year, he decided to stop full-time studying and started working. Since the summer of 2015, he has been working at Yoast. We're so glad to have him on our team! Anton still spends one day a week on his studies. He's determined to finish Computer Science within a few years.

What is it about Computer Science and software development Anton likes so much?

Thinking about how to translate phenomena from the real world into an abstract model, appeals to Anton. His mission is to write code in such a way that every developer understands what his code means. That requires a high standard of quality for his code. He really enjoys brainstorming about these kind of things with his colleagues at Yoast.

Anton also digs learning about the fundamentals of programming. He's currently studying Haskell, a functional programming language. Studying Computer Science offers him the opportunity to think about more theoretical concepts. For instance, he loves to find out different ways to build a functionality, and analyze the pros and cons of different ways of coding.

What does Anton do @Yoast?

As a software architect at Yoast his job is to design and build features in such a way that the functionality still works in 5 years time. Besides that, he also helps and guides the other developers. Anton is a dedicated and hard worker, and one of our smartest and most innovative developers.
He spends a lot of his time developing the Yoast SEO plugin, but he also builds the framework for our Yoast Academy courses and our own site yoast.com.

What does Anton do for the WordPress community?

Besides contributing to WordPress core Anton is a very active volunteer in the WordPress community and helps organizing events. *"I like to give back to the community,"* he explains. Last year he volunteered at WordCamp Europe and he'll be helping at this year's conference in Vienna as well. Anton loves working together with all the people in the WordPress community and being part of that team.

> ## " *I like to give back to the community.* "

Apart from his involvement in Word-Camps, Anton also organizes a WP meetup in Zwolle (close to his hometown). *"Every city of reasonable size should have its own meetup."* According to Anton. *"It's such a nice way to meet people and bring communities together."*

What's more in Antons life?

Hanging out with friends and playing (difficult) board games is a perfect way to spend time. *"I played a game the other night that took more than 6 hours to finish,"* Anton tells enthusiastically, *"I really like to dive into such a game."*

To sum it up, we're quite lucky to have such a great colleague as Anton at Yoast. We're looking forward to work with him on lots of interesting projects in years to come!

In the spotlight