

industry *insights.*

October 2025

what's new for *october?*

This month's updates follow a theme of refinement of reinvention.

Google cleaned up search, Meta tested ad-free scrolls, and AI kept shifting the furniture. Small tweaks, big takeaways: clarity, quality, and creativity still win.

Here's what's new in digital, what it means, and how we see it



SEO, content & organic *social*.

01: Google quietly removes “&num=100” parameter, reshapes ranking data.

In September, without warning, Google retired the “&num=100” URL parameter that let ranking tools pull 100 results per query in a single call. The change broke many rank trackers overnight, forcing them to make ten times as many API requests to get the same data | [Search Engine Land](#).

What it means:

The ripples have been immediate. For marketers, this update has caused temporary volatility in Google Search Console. Across our clients, we’re seeing impressions dropping and average positions rising.

Our take:

While it might look like a dip in visibility, this is actually a good thing: it’s cleaned out the artificial noise from scraping tools, giving us a truer picture of performance. We’ll take cleaner data over clutter any day.

Reporting might look odd for a while, but the long-term outcome is a healthier, more accurate dataset for tracking real users, not bots. Think of it like decluttering your wardrobe. It looks emptier for a moment, but what’s left actually fits.

02: Google's August Spam Update: a step towards cleaning up the SERP.

Google's latest Spam Update ran from 26 August to 22 September 2025, targeting cloaking, link spam, and mass-generated content across all languages | [Google](#).

What it means:

Despite rumours, this wasn't an "AI content crackdown." The target isn't the tool, it's the intent. Whether a piece was written by a human or a bot, if it exists only to please the algorithm and not the reader, it's in Google's crosshairs.

Our take:

For brands, this reinforces what we've always said: focus on useful, original content that serves your audience first. We say that authentic, intent-driven writing will always outlast the latest SEO shortcut.

03: AI summaries are changing search behaviour.

AI summaries have quietly taken the top spots on Google's SERP, reshaping how users interact with search.

A [September study by Etavarian](#) found evergreen pages (long-term, consistently relevant content) now attract 10–25% fewer clicks as users get instant answers from summaries. Supporting research from [BrightEdge](#) shows AI Overviews overlap with organic results in 54.5% of cases, with even higher rates in healthcare and education.

What it means:

Some fear a zero-click future, prompting a rush to publish quick, shallow summaries. But AI tends to cite sources with strong trust signals, fresh updates, and structured data. A Cornell study ([GEO-16 framework](#)) confirms that content with clear metadata, recency, and depth is far more likely to be referenced by AI engines.

Our take:

Evergreen content isn't withering; it just needs more careful pruning. Users may be clicking less, but summaries are rewarding brands that publish credible, well-structured, and insightful content. Quality still earns the click.

[Read more about SEO in the AI era here.](#)

04:

Instagram hits 3 billion users, and shifts focus again.

Instagram has surpassed three billion monthly users. CEO Adam Mosseri announced [in a post](#) a stronger focus on DMs, Reels, and Recommendations, plus a new feature letting users guide their own algorithm preferences.

What it means:

Instagram is moving further towards private engagement and personalised discovery, taking cues from TikTok's recommendation model. Brands will need to adapt with short-form, shareable content and stronger community interaction.

Our take:

Trends may change, but storytelling still wins. We'll be focusing on authentic Reels, carousels, and real conversations over just chasing the algorithm.

paid media & *social*.

01: Performance Max gets more transparent reporting

Google has rolled out enhanced Performance Max reporting, giving advertisers detailed visibility of how assets perform by channel, across Search, Display, YouTube, Discover, and Gmail | [Search Engine Land](#).

What it means:

Advertisers can finally see which creatives are pulling their weight — and which are coasting. Until now, Performance Max reporting was like looking through frosted glass; now, the view's much clearer.

Our take:

For Bamboo Nine clients, this is a welcome upgrade. We can now pinpoint which creative assets perform best per channel, optimise budgets more precisely, and refine messaging for each placement. In short: sharper insights, stronger creative decisions, and smarter spend.

02: AI ad copy gets more brand control

Google has also introduced new text guidelines for Search and Performance Max campaigns that use AI-generated assets ([Google Ads Help](#)). Advertisers can now block up to 25 specific terms and set tone or message restrictions.

What it means:

It's a welcome guardrail for brands worried about AI going off-script. Advertisers can now prevent awkward, off-brand or risky phrasing before it appears.

Our take:

AI can be a handy co-pilot, but you still need to steer. These tools give us firmer control, keeping copy sharp, compliant and on-brand. It's like giving your creative robot a proper style guide.

03:

Meta launches ad-free subscription model in the UK

Aln what many social media managers are seeing as a pretty stunning move, Meta is rolling out ad-free options for Facebook and Instagram in the UK. Users can now pay £2.99/month on web or £3.99/month on mobile to use the platforms without ads | [Meta](#).

What it means:

While this sounds small, it could cause a ripple in ad performance. As some users opt out, remarketing pools may shrink and competition for remaining audiences could intensify.

Our take:

Our response is simple: strengthen first-party data, broaden audience strategies, and rebalance spend as the uptake stabilises. It's another reminder that the future of paid social will rely on consent, creativity, and context more than ever. We'll be keeping a close eye on this and reporting our findings soon. Watch this space.

design & *development.*

01: AI in design and development: cautious progress, real results

Across the industry, AI use in design and development is growing fast. Around 47% of developers now use AI daily to speed up coding, and 6 in 10 designers use it to explore layouts and concepts. Studies show it can cut project review times by 30% or more, but the best outcomes come when human creativity leads.

What it means:

AI is taking on the heavy lifting, speeding up builds, drafts, and repetitive work. But it's not replacing creativity; it's just clearing the path for it.

Our take:

At Bamboo Nine, we're embracing AI carefully. We're using it to speed up early concepts, automate small tasks, and reduce repetitive coding. But human strategy, creativity, and quality control always lead the process. For clients, this means faster delivery, more experimentation, and the same high standards you expect. Our approach is simple: AI supports our people, it doesn't replace them.

thank *you.*



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