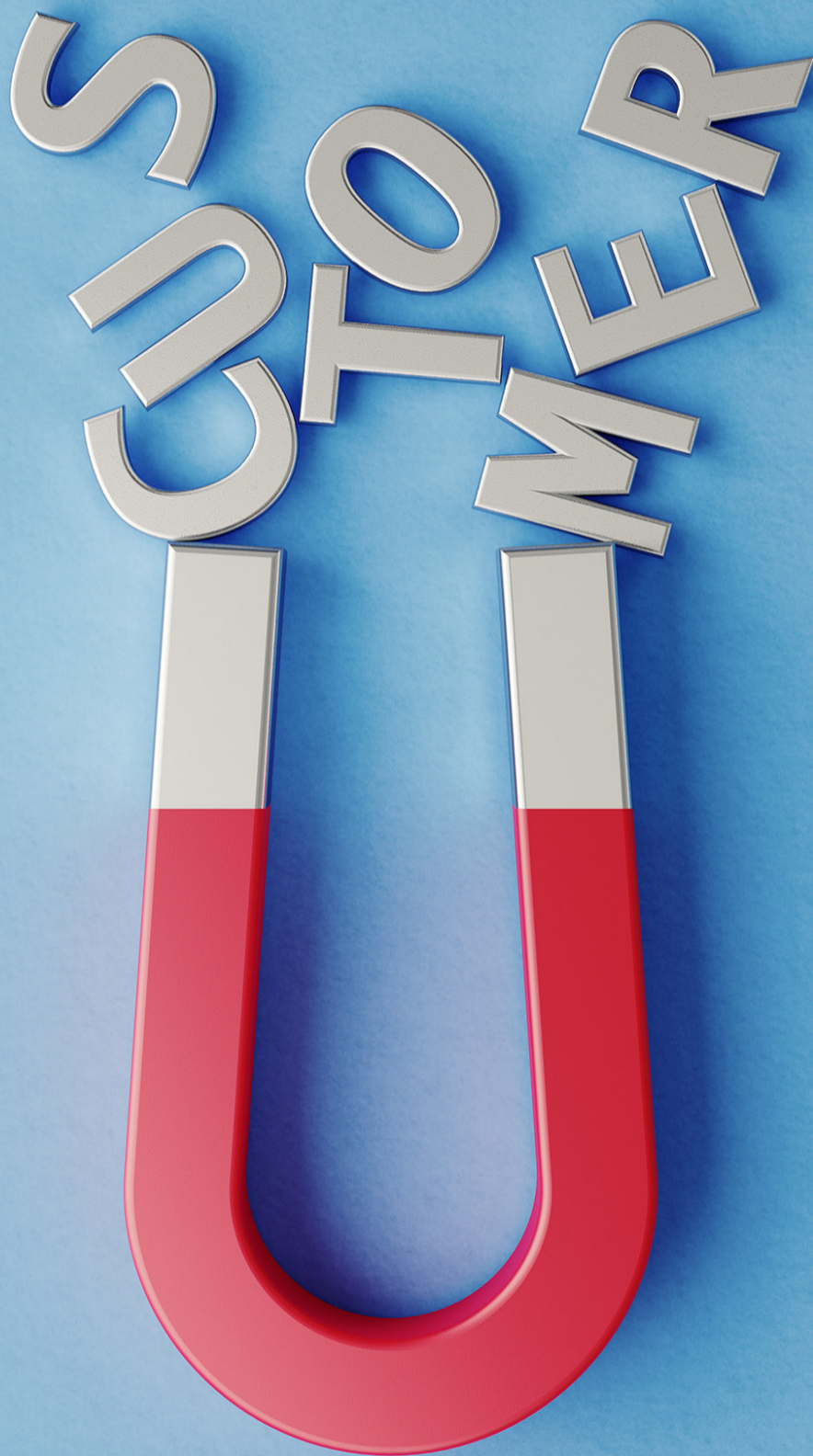


Putting SEO at the heart of e-commerce



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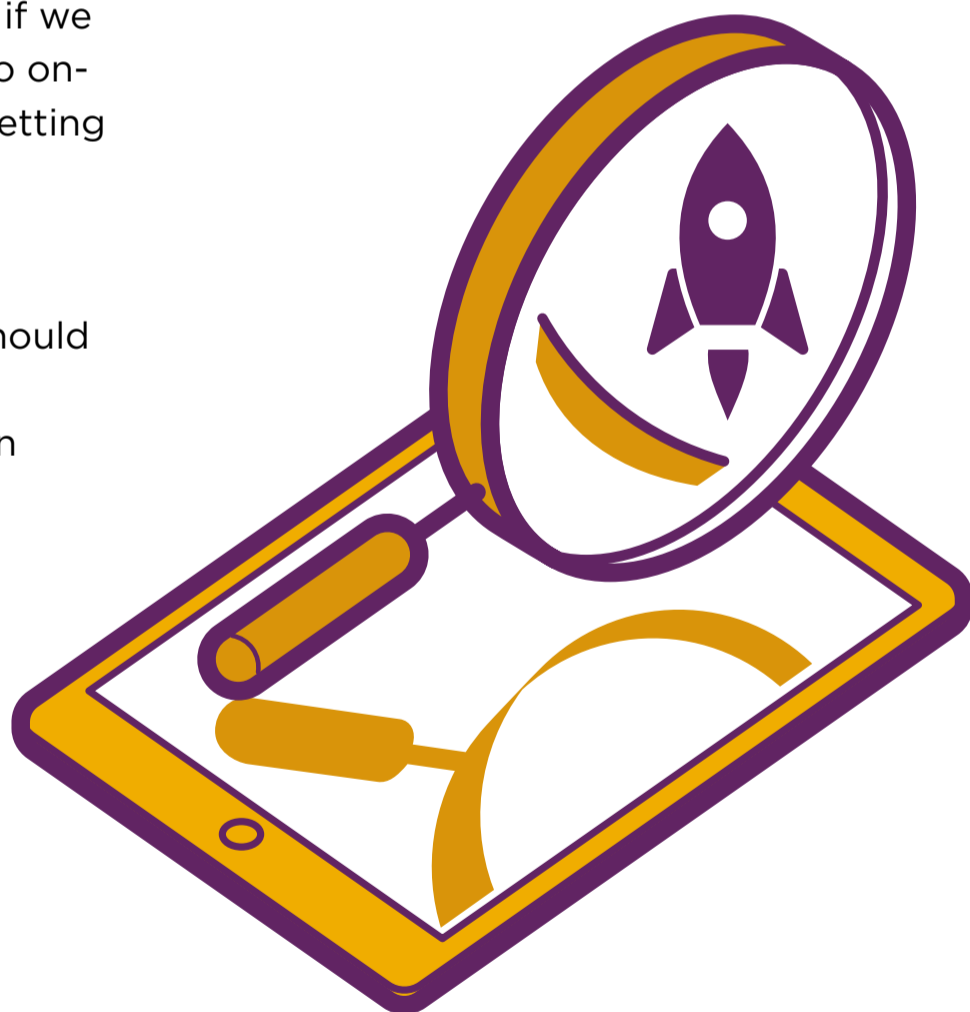
Introduction ●

There are many different ways brands will prioritise work on their websites, be it optimisation of content, improvements in structure, or technical changes.

However, all of these updates should be working towards a common goal - achieving the best for your audience.

SEO is about serving customers, not search engines. It sounds simple enough, but time and again this gets put to one side for development or strategy which isn't focused on SEO. However, if we lose this focus when it comes to on-site changes, we're ultimately setting ourselves up for failure.

SEO which serves customers should be the basis of all activity on a site. It's only when this has been achieved that you'll truly have SEO at the heart of your e-commerce website.



Executive summary .

Centralising SEO within an organisation isn't an easy task, and can be difficult to visualise. Below are six truths which work together and contribute to a brand having SEO at its heart:

1.

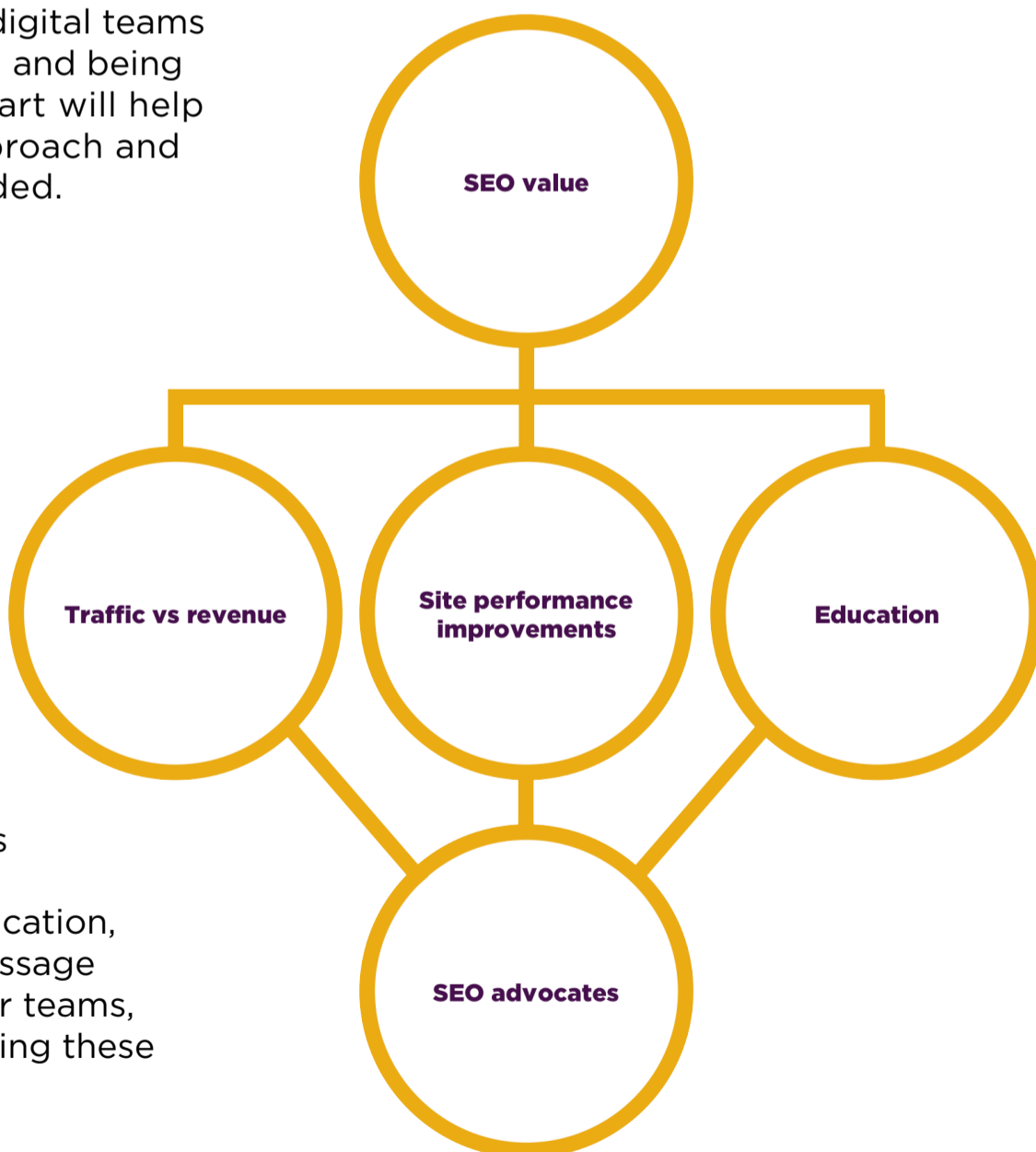
The brand has a clear vision for SEO

A clear, identifiable goal will help galvanise teams towards a common pursuit. Driving effective change in the organisation will require all digital teams to pull in the same direction, and being clear with teams from the start will help create a single focused approach and to deliver the changes needed.

2.

All teams understand the importance of SEO

Getting teams to buy into the importance of SEO may come from different sources, but it is important to highlight the benefits to the site in language that other teams can understand. Whether it's through business cases, site improvement metrics or education, it's imperative to get the message across by working with other teams, creating advocates and making these departments a little bit SEO.



3.

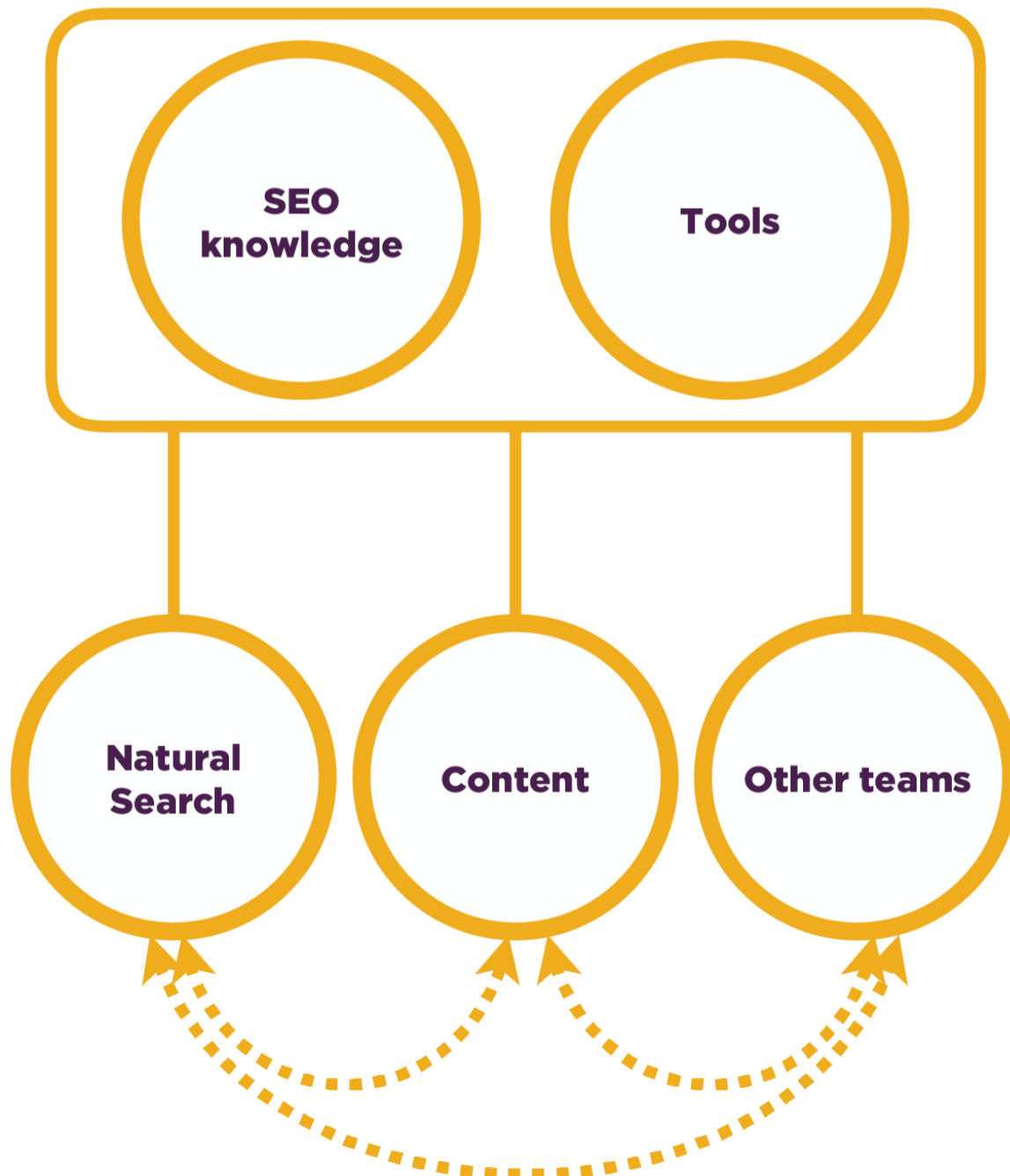
Thought leaders are included in all site changes

All site changes have the ability to affect the performance of the website, from content optimisation to technical changes. Appropriate SEO advice should be included for any site changes, especially those which include fundamental alterations, and this should be from the very beginning of any planned changes.

4.

The brand has an integrated approach to SEO

This means giving teams the skills and responsibility to make the best choices to drive the performance of the site. This includes allowing different departments to have the tools and responsibility for SEO elements within their remit, while also collaborating with other departments to make the best use of resources.



5.

There is a continued review of performance

The basis of good SEO is to not stand still and to always look for improvements. With the challenges of a shrinking market, developments in technology, along with factors outside of anyone's control such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, large retailers are like a shark - stop moving and they risk death. Other retailers are struggling or failing as the new strain on their websites shows the weaknesses in their current digital set-up, where we've seen issues like queues and limited stock for very large retailers over the last few months.

6.

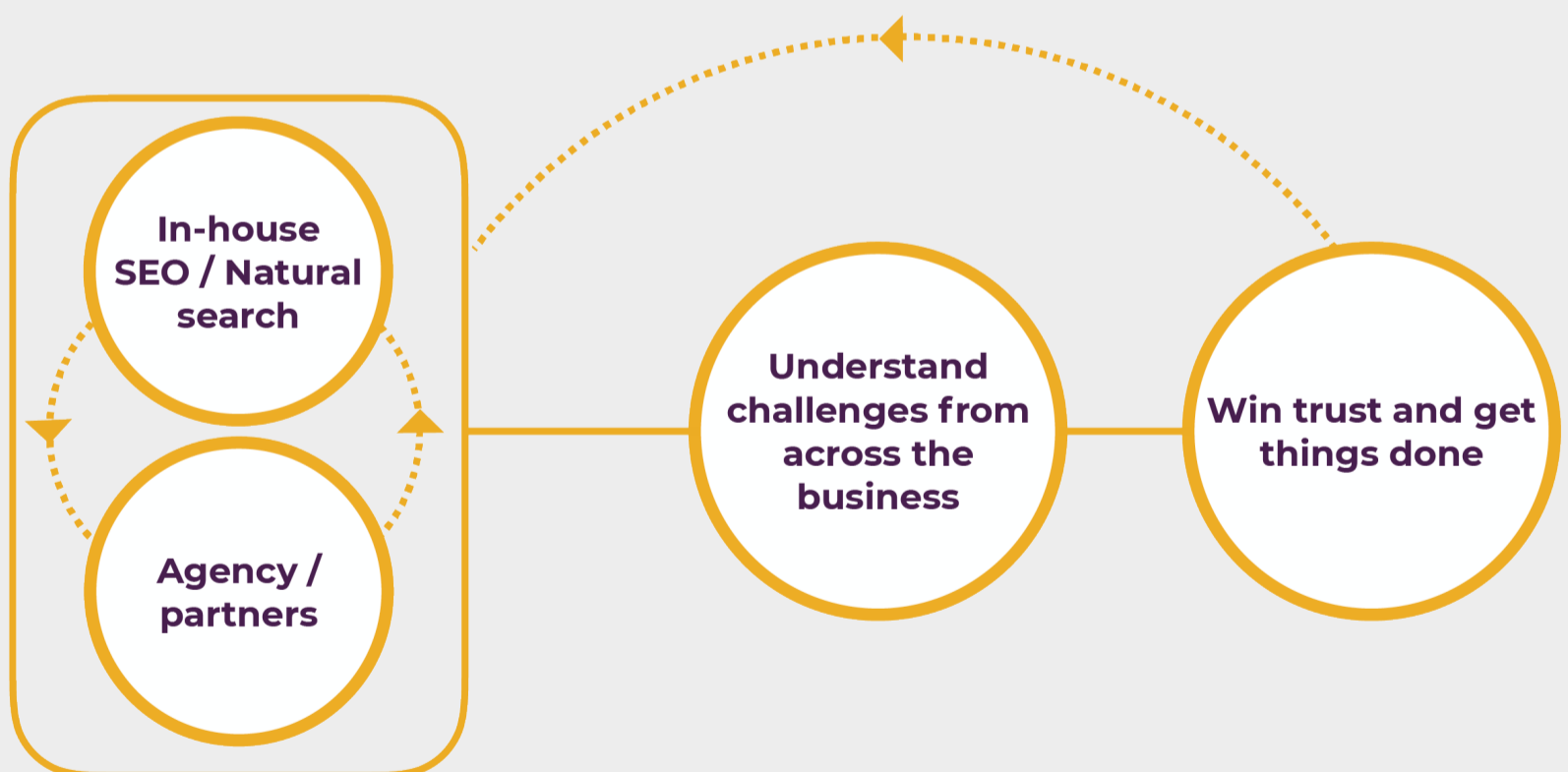
The organisation is open and generous with education and knowledge-sharing

None of us are as smart as all of us. The best way to create advocates across a business is with education and finding ways to give teams buy-in as to what's being done by sharing skills and giving responsibility. This gives teams greater ownership and enables them to take pride in the part they're playing in improving SEO.

What do we need to do to get there? ●

It's no surprise that a lot of the work will take place with your in-house SEO teams and partner, but we need to delve deeper than that. Other departments and teams will have their own priorities and stakeholders to work with, not just the SEO team, but it's important to remember that we want all digital teams to be a little bit SEO.

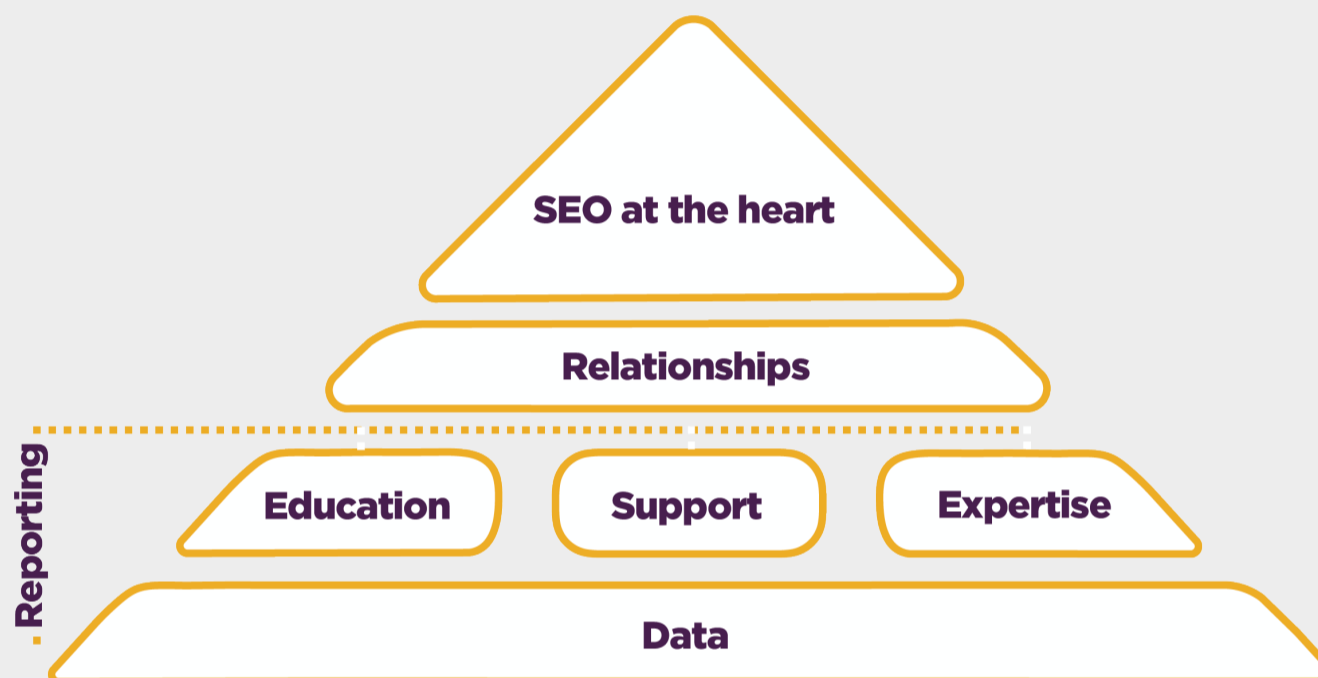
To help drive this change, we need to understand the wider business and the challenges and hurdles that exist there too. This means you and your partners may need to rapidly extend your network beyond the immediate SEO teams; you need to win hearts and minds in order to deliver the mission. Getting to a position where SEO is at the heart of a brand is not a simple process, and it will require careful planning and support from across the business.



While there is no silver bullet to achieve this, the plan can feature certain elements which will work for most companies.

Data should support all changes on the site, and this also feeds into education,

support and expertise regarding larger strategic site changes. These should all be reviewed and optimised through data collected from reporting. Working together, these elements will help to build relationships throughout the brand.



Data

In order to create the best plan, we must have a clear understanding of the challenge.

We need to understand both the internal hurdles and issues which get in the way

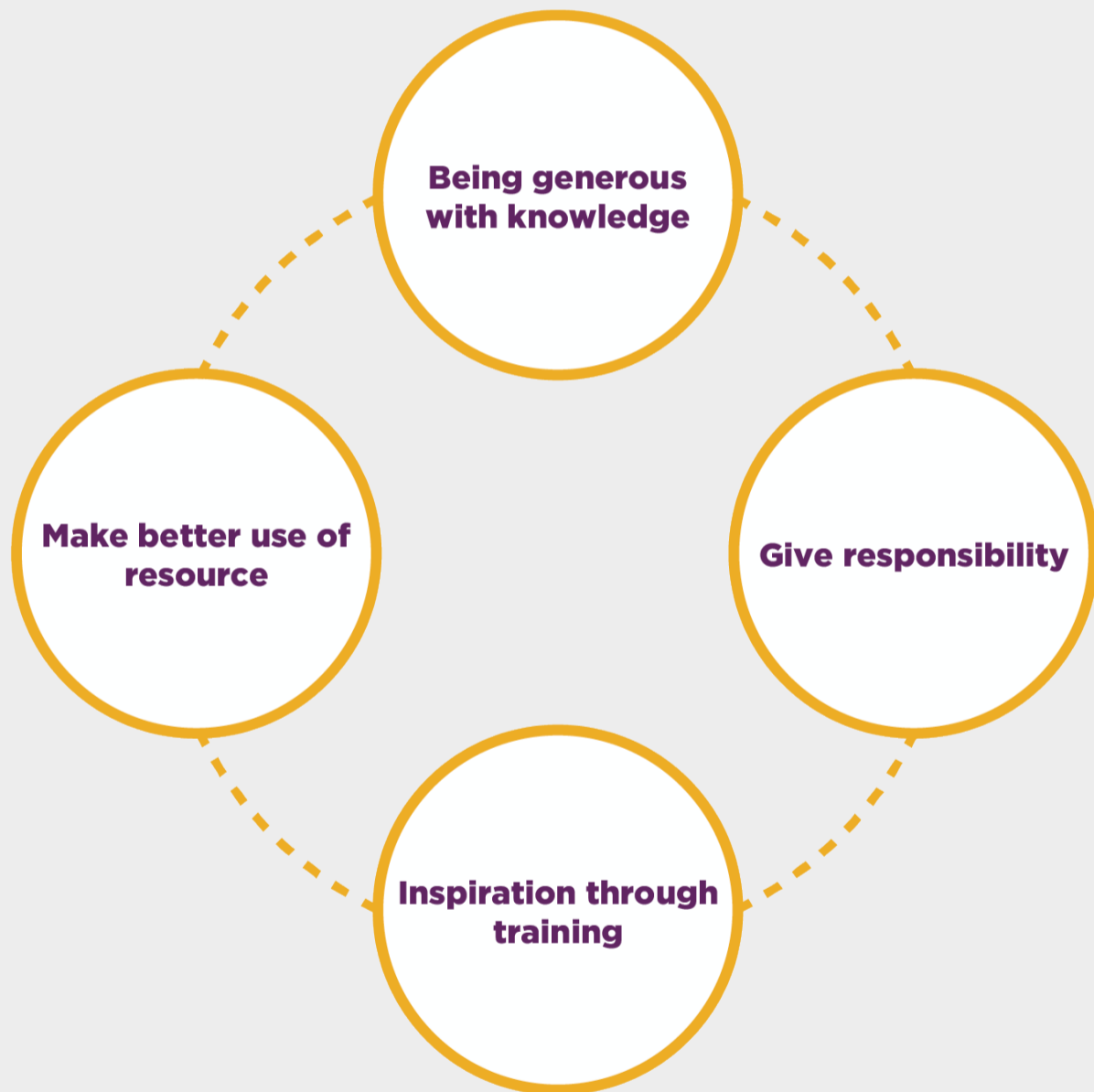
of greatness, as well as how the company performs in the market - both with customers and against key competitors.



Education

This is about being generous with knowledge and getting the right people doing the jobs which make most sense to

give brands a competitive advantage. By giving knowledge freely, you will start to create advocates across the business.



Support

When we talk about education we don't mean removing the need for an SEO team - far from it. By allowing teams to have the responsibility for appropriate tasks, your SEO team will in turn have the time and resources to effectively support SEO actions which require their skills.

This includes providing support for more in-depth queries from other departments, giving ownership for tasks and being able to feed queries back into training for the wider business.



Expertise

This is about having the right experts available for larger tasks and initiatives, big taxonomy changes, migrations and overarching strategies. If you have the necessary resources and expertise available for these bigger tasks, then they can be given the level of focus and attention that's required.

Support may come from internal teams, partners or a mixture of both, but can't be downplayed. Failing to put the right level of time into heavy-lifting site changes can spell disaster.

Strategic support



Technical expertise

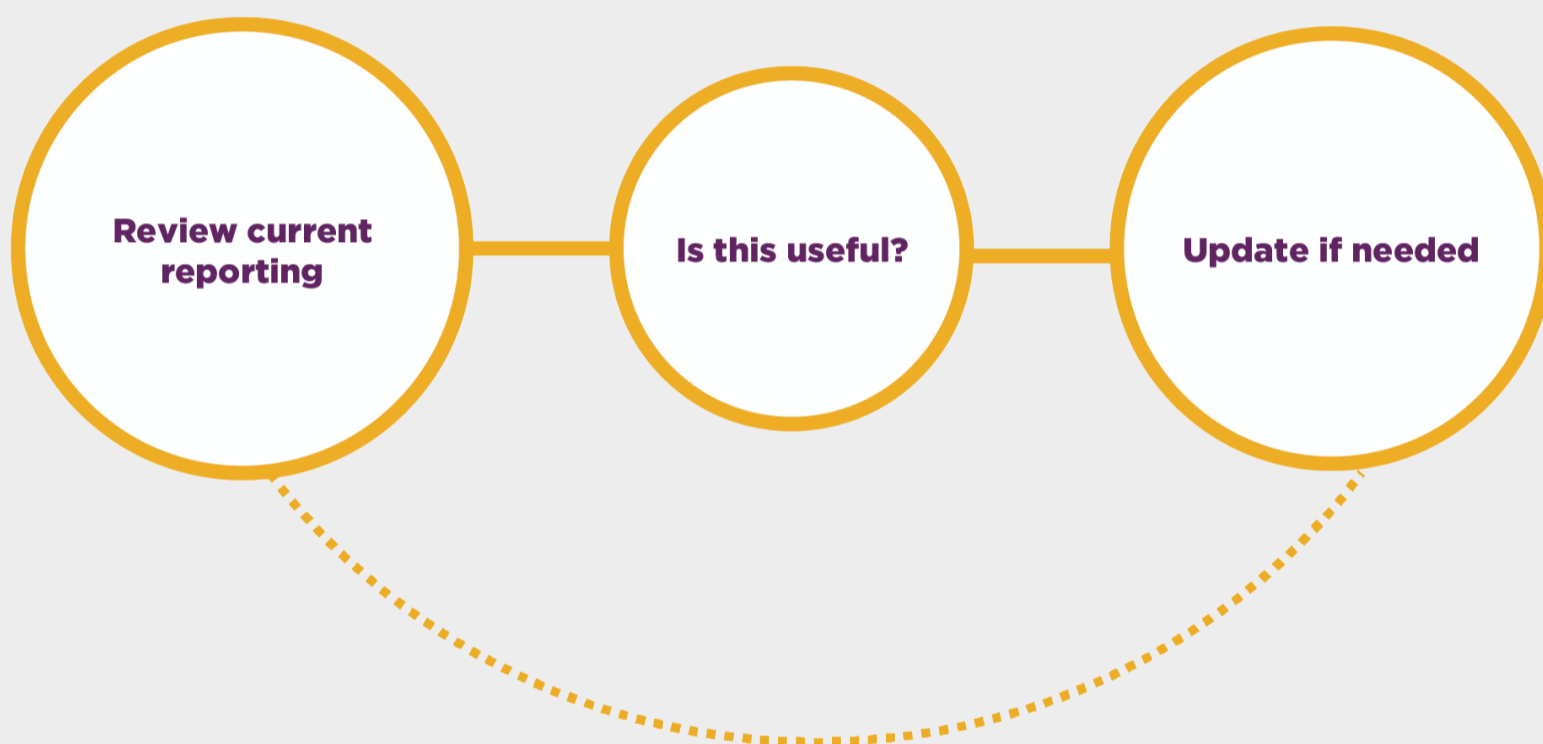
Ongoing monitoring and recommendations

Optimisation

Reporting

Reporting is key, as it drives change for all other pillars, and it shouldn't stand still. Rather, it should be reviewed to ensure that you are getting the right

information you need to make informed decisions. Relying on vanity metrics can mean you miss opportunities or react too late to risks.

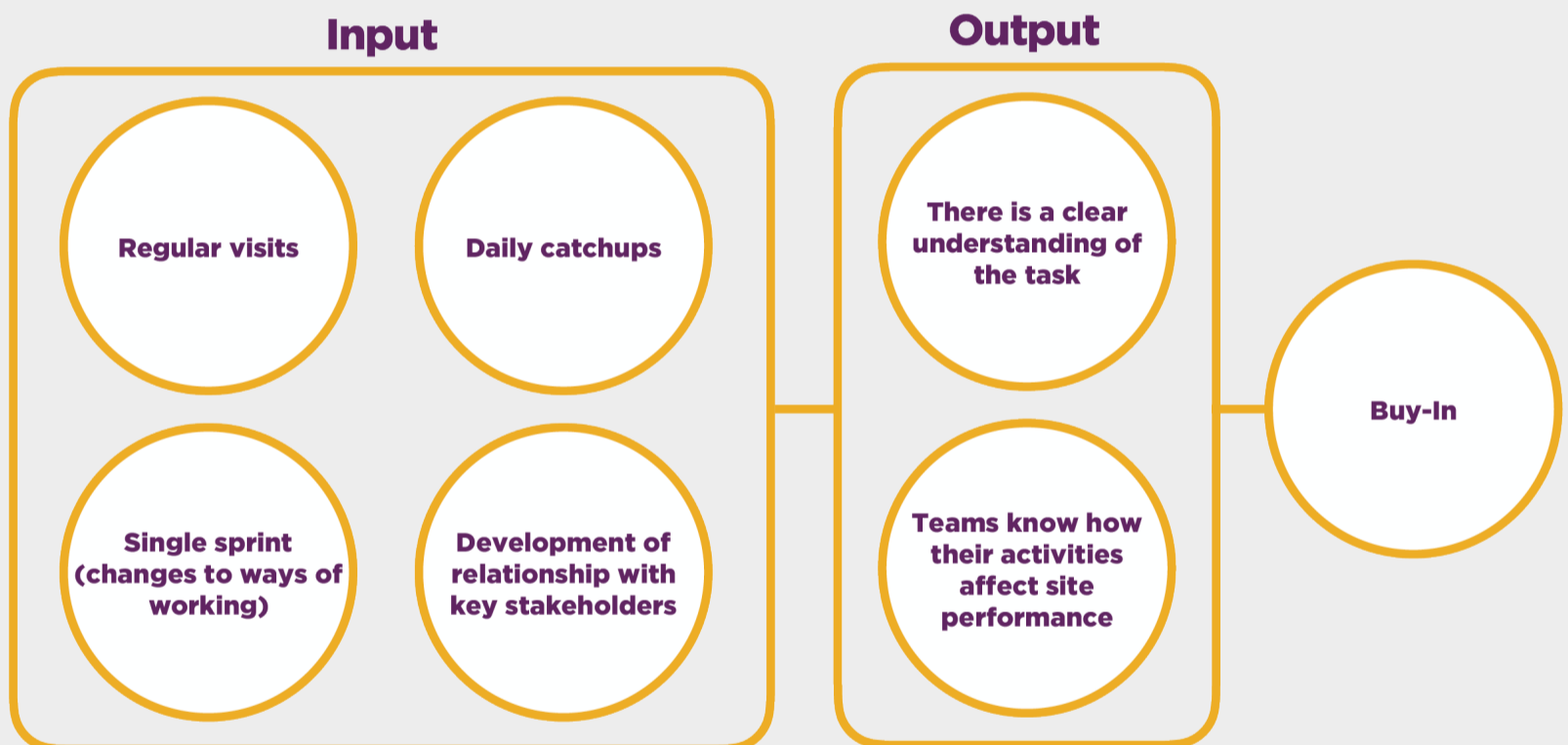


Relationships

To make the plan work, it's essential to work with all the digital teams and to put in tangible effort in order to make things happen and achieve your aims. This should include:

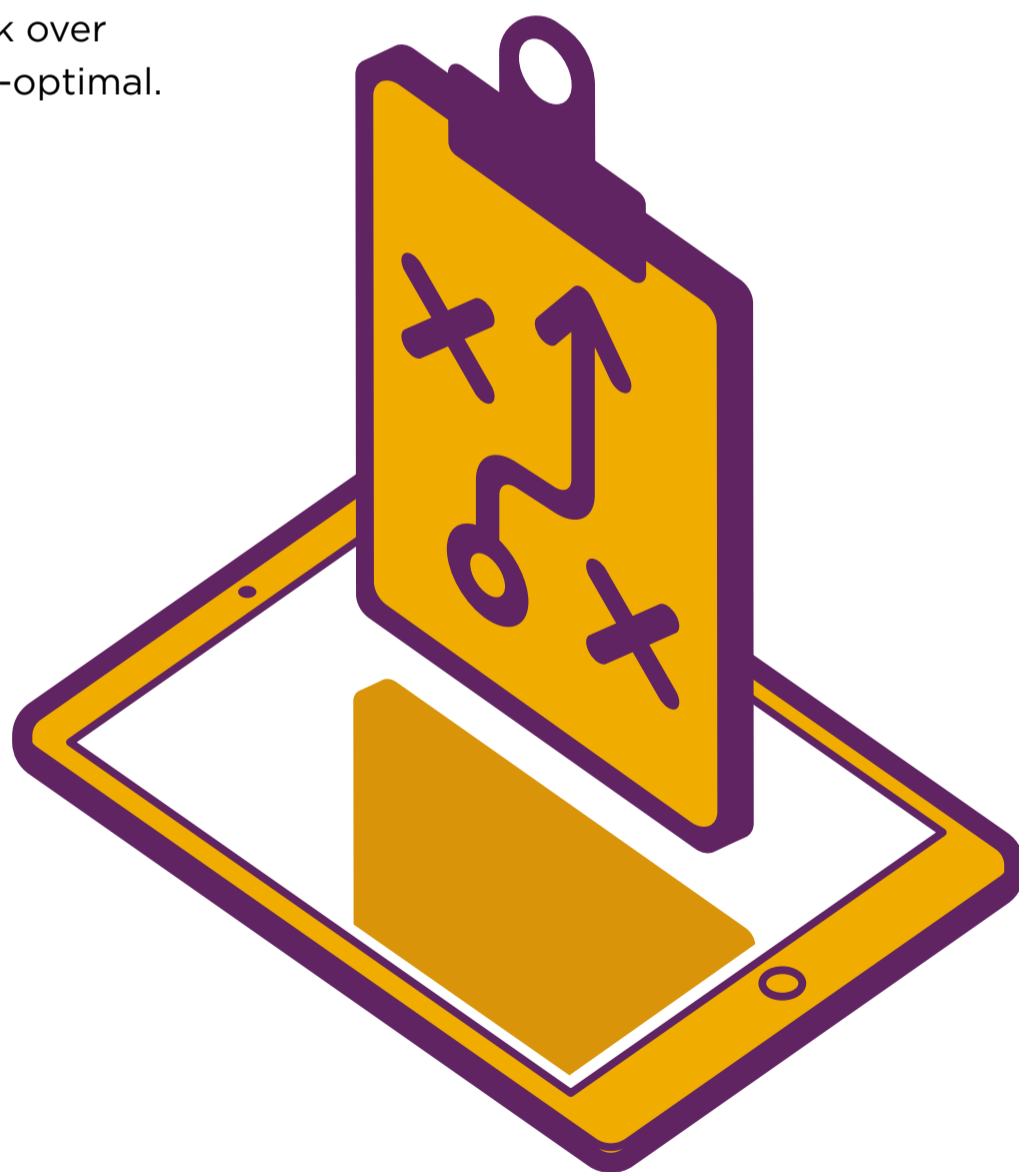
- Regular visits
- Single sprint - where possible
- Development of key relationships

As a result of these efforts, the in-house teams should have a clear understanding of the tasks at hand and they should know how their work has a direct effect on the performance of the site. This in turn helps to attain buy-in from across the business at large.



What's the first best action? ●

To create a plan which addresses the unique challenges of a particular brand, it's important to have the full picture. Putting SEO at the heart of e-commerce means brands must be clear on the task at hand and how they can overcome challenges as a group of teams working together. It is vital to spend the right amount of time and effort on this stage, as any plans created without the right data will have a question mark over them, and are likely to be sub-optimal.



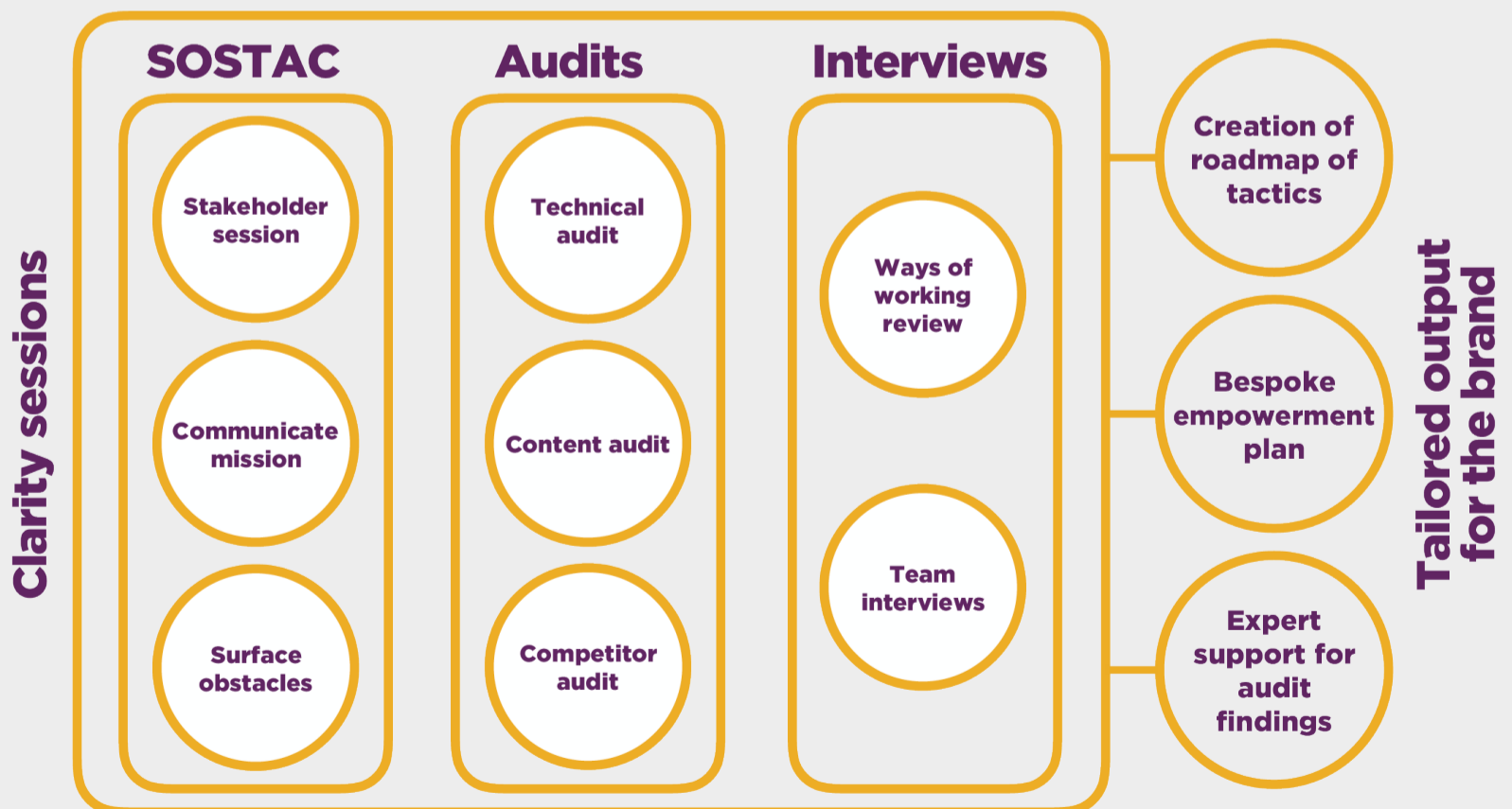
Clarity

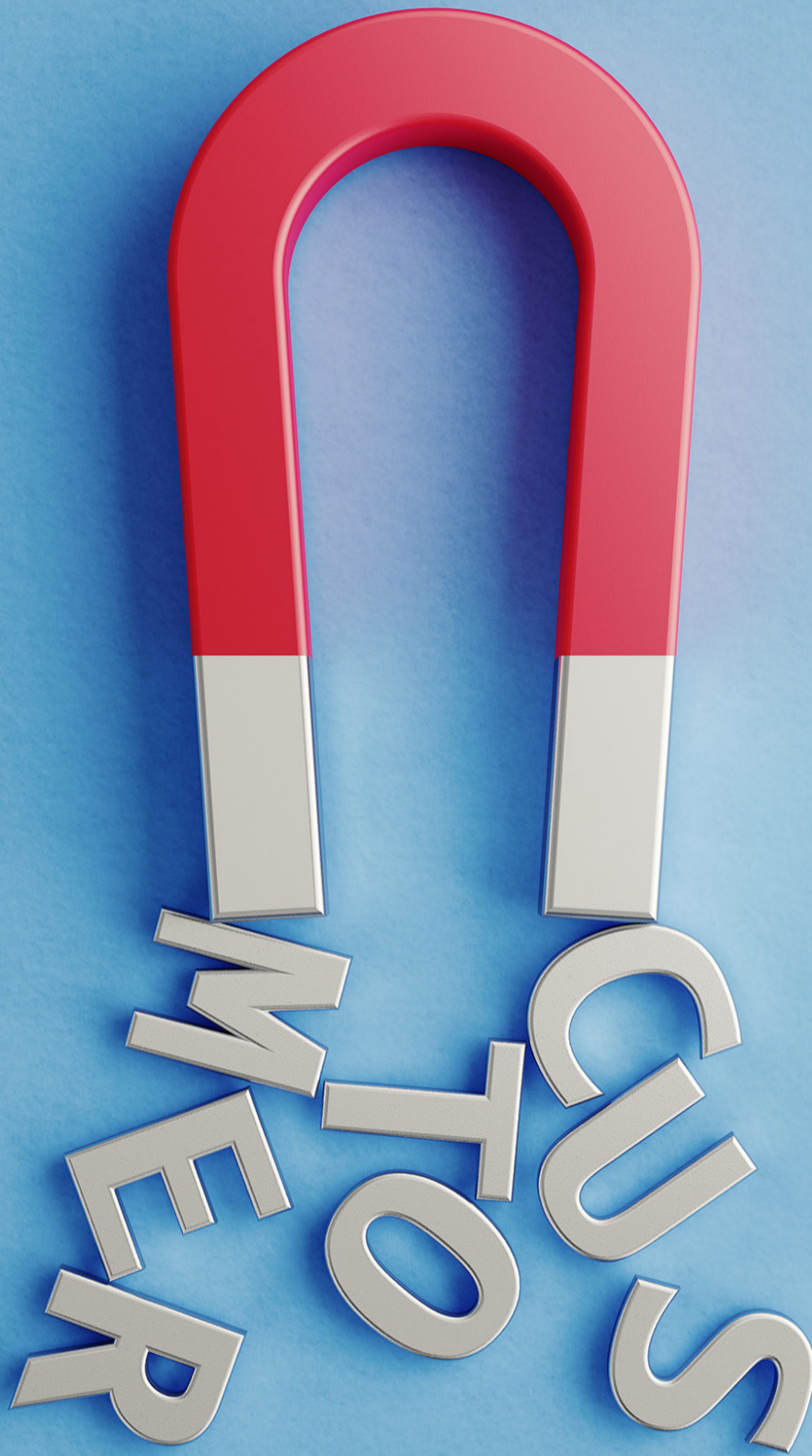
Whether you are starting a new period, a new partner relationship or finished a project, it is always pertinent to get a clear understanding of a brand's unique challenges. Consider the following:

- SOSTAC session with product leads / team leaders
- Site and competitor audits - including technical and content
- Team interviews and process review:
 - Time spent across the department to understand their unique challenges, how they get around them, and how they complete tasks
 - Understand how work is prioritised
 - Review current backlog and understand the importance of each task

Until you have that data and have gained insight from it, any plans will be questionable. What is important is to allow your brand to get the right elements in place to create digital success. This may require changes in approach or attitude within the digital teams.

If you are able to utilise your own experience and bring in the expertise of agencies and partners where needed, then you can start to truly put SEO at the heart of your brand, creating an environment where the business understands the importance of SEO and delivers on its digital ambitions.





●ORGANIC

info@theorganicagency.com

LONDON

Hogarth House
136 High Holborn
London
WC1V 6PX

iPhone: 020 7099 6737

EXETER

Southernhay Studios
Southernhay East
Exeter
EX1 1AP

Phone: 020 3745 2000