2025

SEO PAYRANK REPORT

Discover what skills you need to land a job in search marketing and how to push your career forward.

By Knowatoa

Discover your AI search rankings and practical steps to improve it today.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Michael Buckbee

Co-Founder Knowatoa

Knowatoa's by necessity an extremely data driven organization as we track AI search rankings in services like ChatGPT, Perplexity and Google Gemini.

So when people kept asking us "How is AI changing the SEO job market?" we naturally decided to run the numbers.

Like most things worth doing this was a much harder question to answer than I thought and we ended up asking and answering many more questions beyond that.

There's a lot of fear and anxiety in the SEO space right now, and an unintended consequence of this project has been to positively shift my own outlook for the SEO profession.

I think (and there's data to show) that we're at the beginning of a new more interesting wave of search marketing.

It will require some new skills, but I think more so a refocusing on the core skills that the best SEOs always possessed: empathy, intelligence and willingness to learn new things.

Michael J Buckbee

What started as as simple question "How is AI influencing SEO roles?" grew way beyond that very quickly.

Report Overview

Job Data

Ghost jobs, spam, scams and weird metrics have overrun LinkedIn and job boards.

Instead we used job data scraped directly from the sites hiring.

This is a massive hassle, took longer than we would have liked but the end result is refreshingly clear of the kind of weird slop that infests most similar research.

Mission

- Discover what additional core marketing skills you can develop to maximize your earnings.
- Find out what impact AI production skills can have on your career.
- Explore the breadth of what an "SEO Job" can mean.
- Surface what specific tools and technology are most in demand or required to land a role in 2025.

Data Breakdown

Job requirements are essentially free form text boxes with labels that HR folks ignore when posting a role. This results in maddeningly inconsistent data that needs to be normalized.

We found it much better to outright ignore the actual title and description of a role and instead focus on solely the listed job requirements.

And while there's more order, there's still no set requirement listings. For example, we found *twelve* different ways that the requirement to be familiar with "Content Management Systems" were represented (ex: "CMS", "Content Management Platforms", "Content Systems", etc.)

This necessitated a massive AI assisted, but manually driven process of classification to pull meaning from the data soup that we had.

We're extremely proud of the unique dataset we have built as while it's significantly smaller than others efforts we've seen; the quality and insights we can pull are much much higher.

DATASET

Job Listings	493
Raw Requirements	575
Normalized Requirements	375

How to use this report

Use this to land a SEO job

For reasons of efficiency, economics and technological change marketing roles are becoming increasingly multi-functional.

It's not enough to know about SEO in general anymore; you need to have specific experience in closely related topics and technologies.

Review the "Technical Skills Analysis" to determine what aspects of your skills you should highlight in your resume and interviews.

Use this report to plot your career

Many of the job postings that we pulled in are for senior roles with responsibilities that have search experience as a foundational aspect of the job, but aren't solely focused on it.

Review the "Marketing Competencies Analysis and Brand" and consider what additional aspects of marketing you could contribute to in your organization.

Requirements Overview

We separated job requirements into two broad areas: marketing competencies and technical skills.

Marketing Competencies

These are the high level areas of expertise that would all fall under the responsibility of the marketing department in an organization.

Most jobs now have at least a few cross-functional requirements and more senior roles will want strategic knowledge if not hands on experience with almost all competencies.

We identified the following competencies in open positions: email marketing, paid ads management, sales enablement, content marketing and social marketing.

Technical Skills

These are the specific tools, services or brands that are required for the role.

Companies will often ask for experience with specific brands or tools.

For example, instead of just "email marketing" they may ask for "hubspot experience". In other areas this maybe specific software languages like Python or apps like Excel or Photoshop.

Baseline SEO Salary

Types of Jobs

A important nuance of this dataset is that it's not strictly "SEO Jobs" but "Jobs that require some degree of SEO expertise".

While it's primarily titles like **SEO Analyst**, there are two additional categories of job included as well:

SEO + Design/Dev/Marketing
Many technical roles related to website development, design and marketing now have a SEO component to them as well.

SEO + Senior Level Marketing
Nearly every senior level marketing role like VP of Marketing, Growth Marketing Director, and GTM Manager explicitly calls out the need for search expertise.

Job Post Data vs Job Survey Data

We're using data sourced directly from company websites, which is cleaner than that on jobsites or LinkedIn is still messy in lots of ways:

- Companies might be hiring one VP of Search and ten SEO analysts, but there are only two job postings on their site and there's no way to know.
- Wide salary ranges (ex: "80k-160k") distort the data
- Organizations that pay less are reluctant to post public salaries.

Because of the reasons above the average salary listed in the following pages of the report is likely higher than your gut instinct says the average "SEO" salary is as it's not "an average SEO analyst job salary" but "an average salary of all the open positions that require SEO experience".

Marketing Competency Analysis

What area of marketing should you pair with SEO to maximize your value?

	Average Salary	Example Job Titles
SEO Baseline SEM Rush, AHREFs, Screaming Frog, Moz, BrightEdge, Conductor	$112,891	• Growth Marketing Manager • SEO Specialist • Content Manager
SEO & Paid Ads SEM, Google AdWords, PPC, Meta Ad Manager, Microsoft Ads, Bing Ads	$116,548	• Sr. Director Marketing • Marketing Project Manager • Content Researcher
SEO & Content Marketing HubSpot, Conductor, Webflow, Contentful, Wix, WebFlow	$125,524	• Content Creator • Director Marketing • Head of Marketing
SEO & Social Marketing Meta Ad Manager, Hootsuite, YouTube, LinkedIn, TikTok, Sprout	$126,328	• Growth Marketing Lead • Account Executive • Website Manager
SEO & Sales Enablement Salesforce, HubSpot, Marketo, Chili Piper, Eloqua	$133,472	• GTM Manager • Director Marketing • Head of Growth
SEO & Email Marketing HubSpot, Marketo, Pardot, Hubspot, Mailchimp, Constant Contact	$136,100	• VP of Marketing • Director Web Marketing • Senior Growth Marketer

Marketing Competencies Overlap

This represents how often different competencies are paired together on a job listing.
Some of our takeaways from this:

- Many organizations are looking for "unicorns" with at least some knowledge of all competencies
- Content, Paid and Social are the three most sought after and Email and Sales are the least
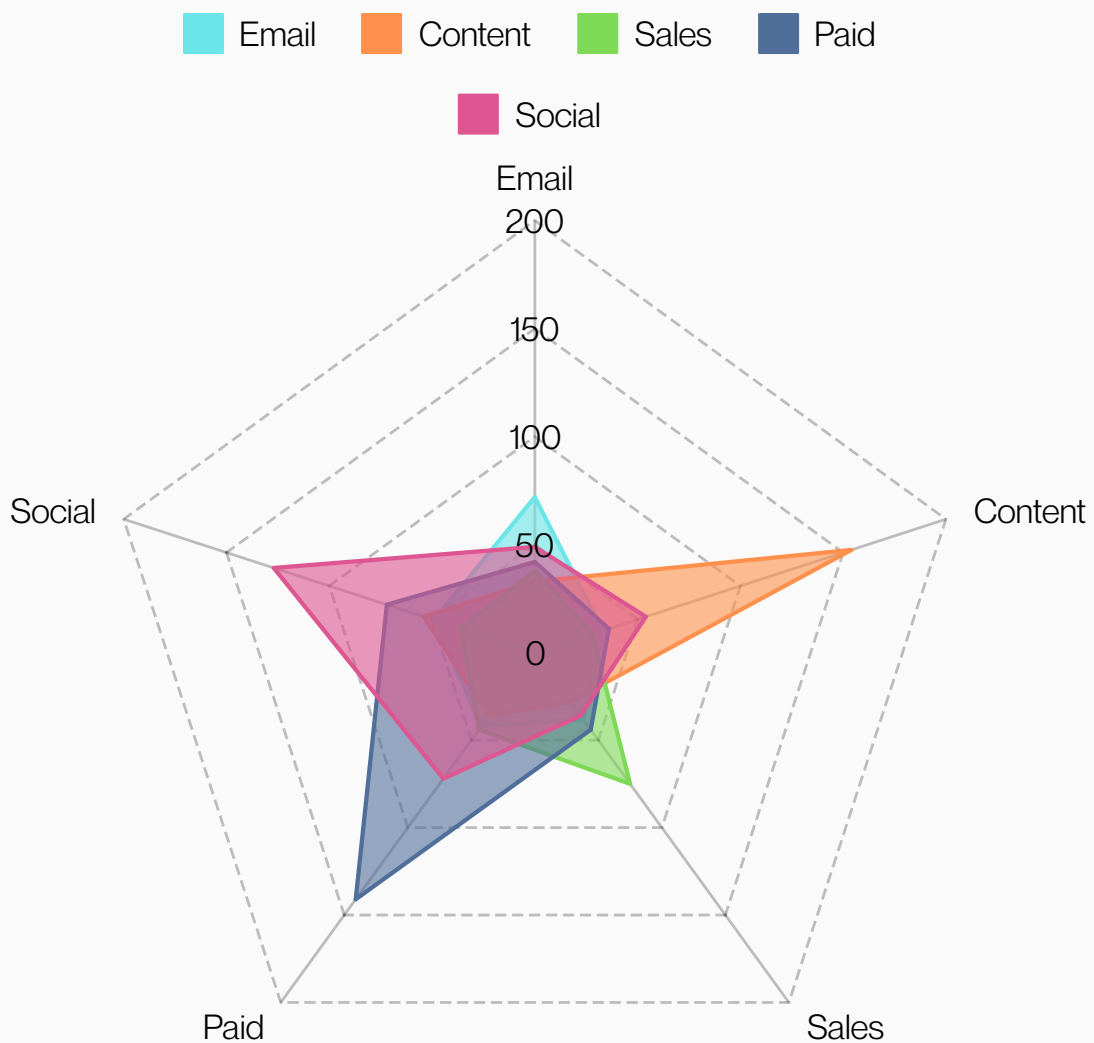
Marketing Competencies Demand

It doesn't matter if a particular job title pays well if there's no actual open positions for it.

This chart represents the overall number of SEO jobs that also require that particular competency out of total of 493.
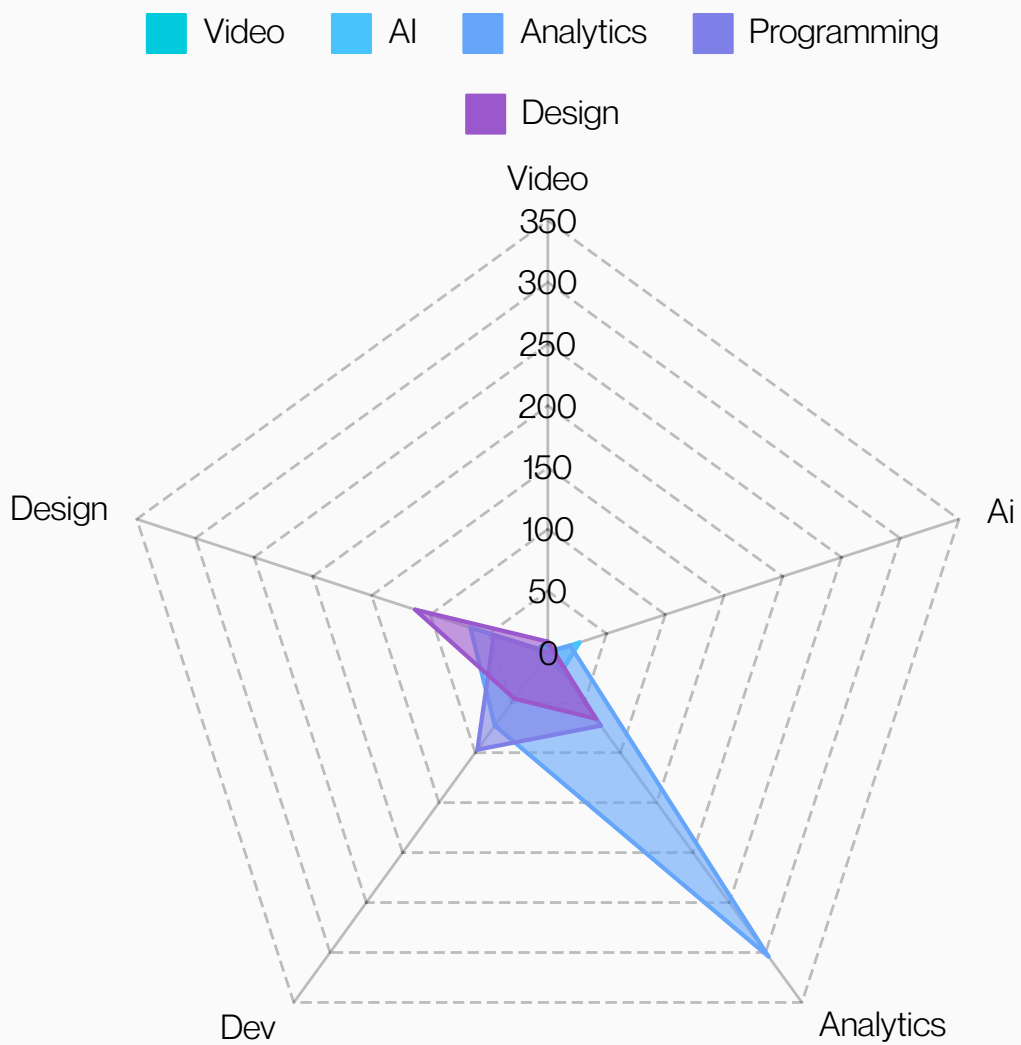
Higher numbers indicate more demand.

Competency	Demand
Content	158
Paid	142
Social	129
Sales	75
Email	73
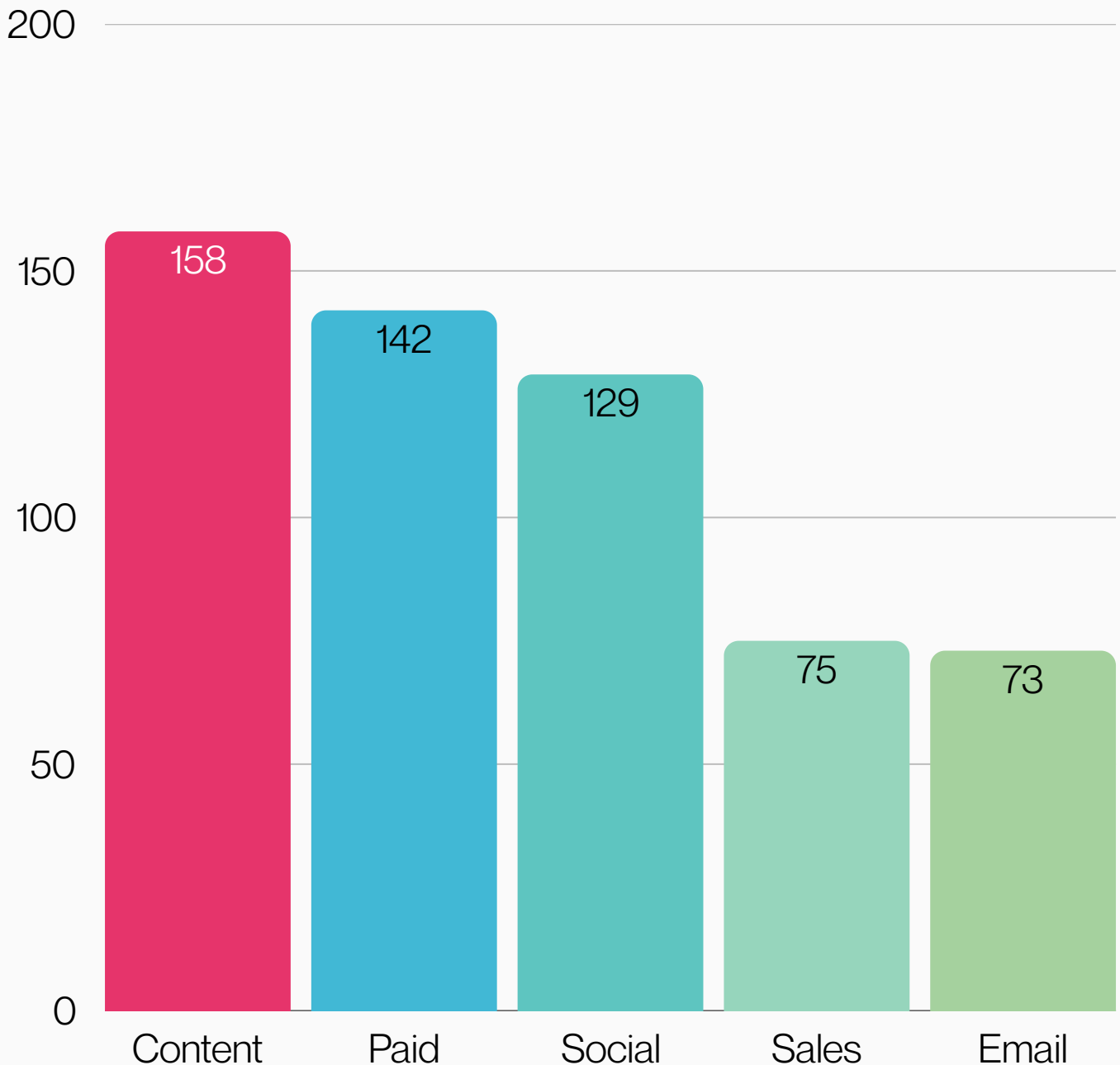
Technical Skils Analysis

What tools and technologies outside of traditional marketing functions are most valuable

	Average Salary	Example Job Titles
SEO Baseline SEM Rush, AHREFs, Screaming Frog, Moz, BrightEdge, Conductor	$112,891	• Senior Manager, SEO • SEO Specialist • Marketing Specialist
SEO & Video Editing Final Cut Pro, Adobe Premiere, YouTube Studio	$66,333	• Creative Director • Video Production Manager • Social Media Markteter
SEO & Design Adobe Cloud, Canva, Figma, Rive, Framer	$88,554	• Marketing Coordinator • Web Operations Specialist • Content Researcher
SEO & Programming Javascript, SQL, PHP, React, Python, Drupal, R, Jira	$111,103	• Senior Product Analyst • Lead SEO Developer • E-commerce Manager
SEO & Analytics GA4, GSC, Looker Studio, Adobe Analytics, Excel, GTM	$114,708	• Senior SEO Manager • Content Producer • SEO Editor
SEO & Artificial Intelligence ChatGPT, Botify, Perplexity, Jasper, Copy.ai, DallE, Botify	$128,714	• Growth Product Manager • SEO Director • Demand Manager

Technical Skills Overlap

This is less conclusive than the marketing overlap data as more of these jobs are primarily something else with a few SEO requirements sprinkled in.

The other major takeaway is that deep familiarity with analytics tools is a must as that's linked far more often than any other technical skill.

Technical Skills Demand

Knowing what skills will unlock job opportunities is what's represented below.
Higher numbers indicate more demand and reflect the number of jobs with that skill requirement.

Bar chart showing Technical Skills Demand: Analytics 307, Design 115, Programming 99, AI 27, Video 9.
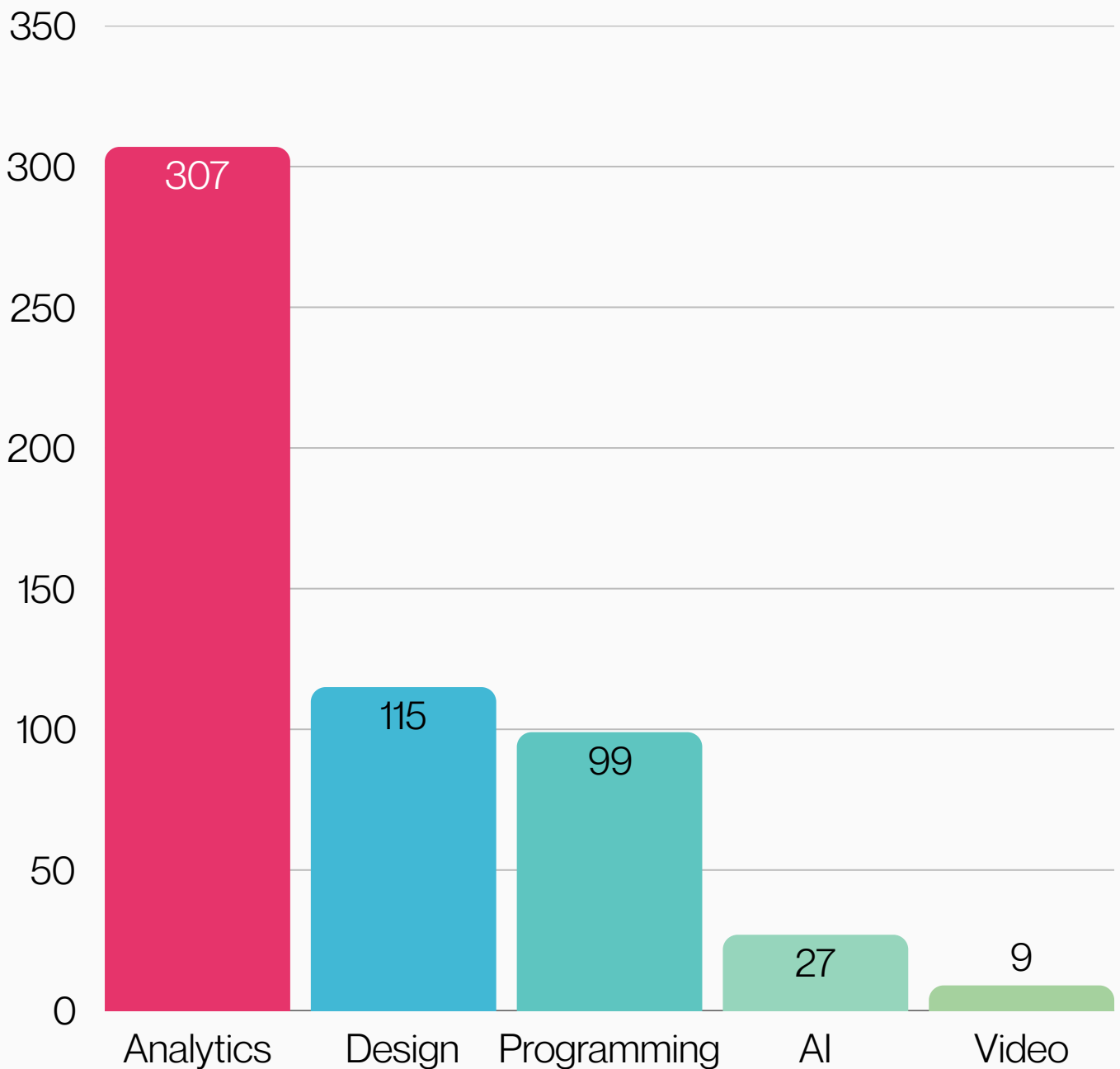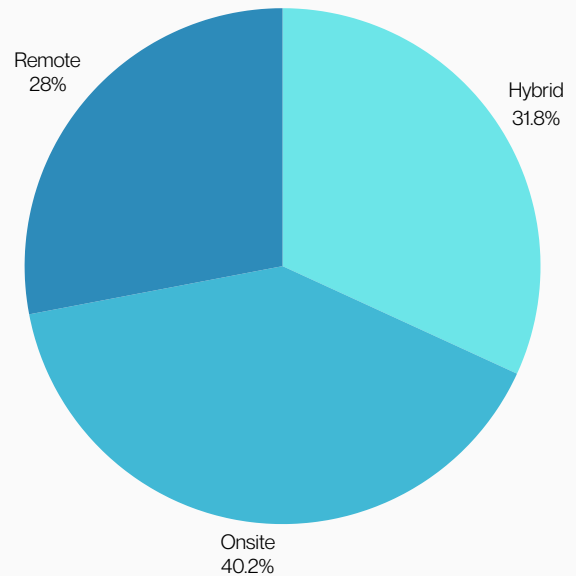
Remote Work Analysis

In Office Requirement

Nearly two thirds of jobs require at least some portion of the work week (hybrid) to be in-office.
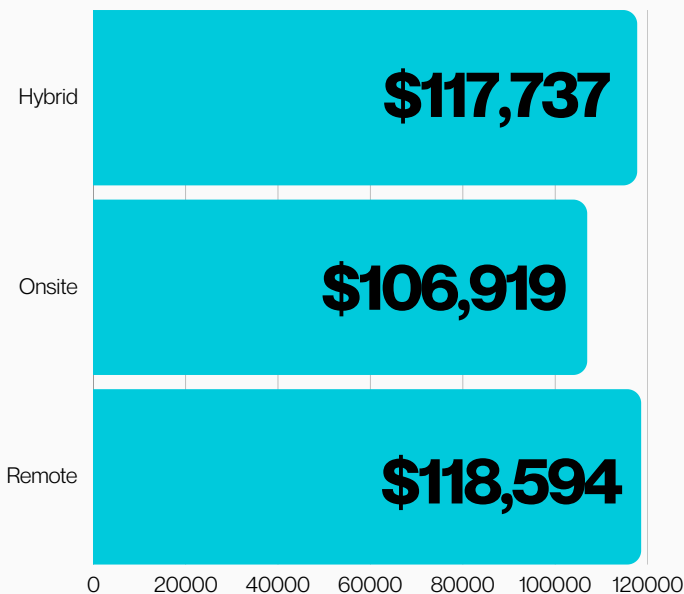
Onsite: fully onsite 40hrs a week
Hybrid: one or more days work from home
Remote: fully remote with occasional in office meetups.

Remote Positions **28%**

Remote 28%
Hybrid 31.8%
Onsite 40.2%

Hybrid **$117,737**
Onsite **$106,919**
Remote **$118,594**

0   20000   40000   60000   80000   100000   120000

Remote vs Onsite Salary

The common wisdom is that remote work is done at a "discount" to onsite work, but the data doesn't hold this to be true.

With both Hybrid and Remote salaries averaging higher than Onsite.

Further, we did find that onsite roles tended to require fewer years of experience, but by five years of experience were equal to remote.

**Average Remote Salary** **$118,594**

AI Impact on SEO Salaries

AI Requirements

Having spoken to literally hundreds of search professionals in the last year I can attest to the deep seated anxieties that people are feeling around AI and it's potential for changing the search profession.

To date, it's still only 1 out of every 25 job postings that require AI knowledge.

AI Job Postings

4.3%

AI Requirement
4.3%

No AI
95.7%

AI Search Jobs

Content Postings

AI for Content Jobs
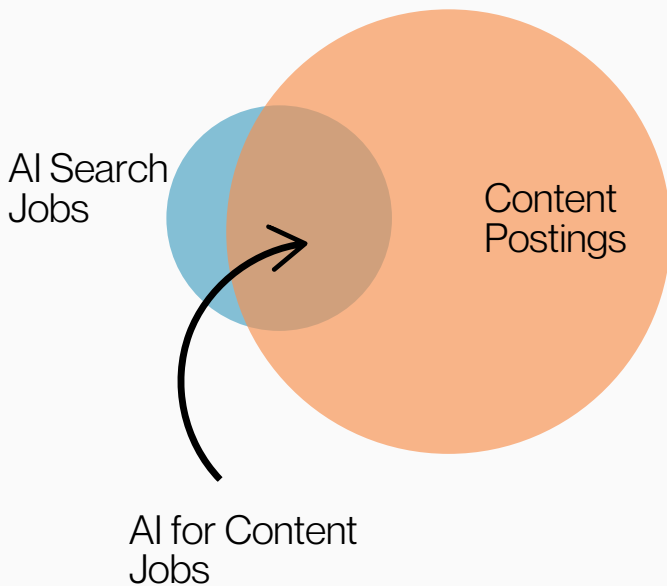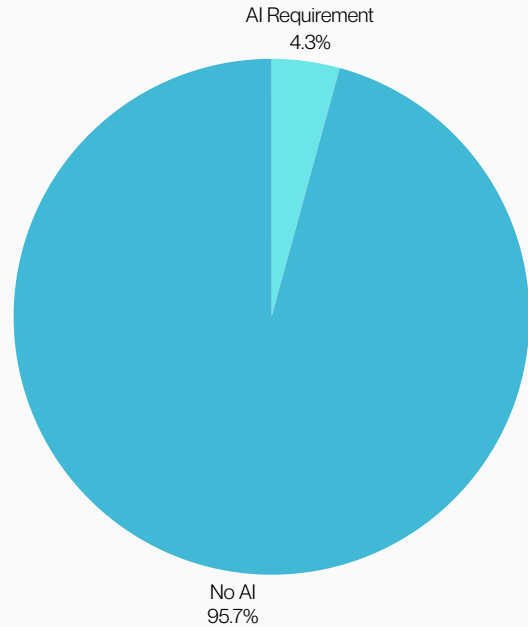
AI Productivity Premium

Over the last year a furious debate has taken place around if Generative AI tools actually make you more productive.

To date, this has been mostly speculative as there hasn't been much data to make a case either way.

Now, from the job posting data we can confidently say that roles requiring AI tool usage are offering a higher salary than those without.

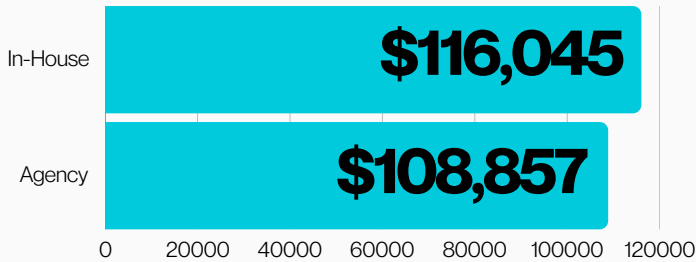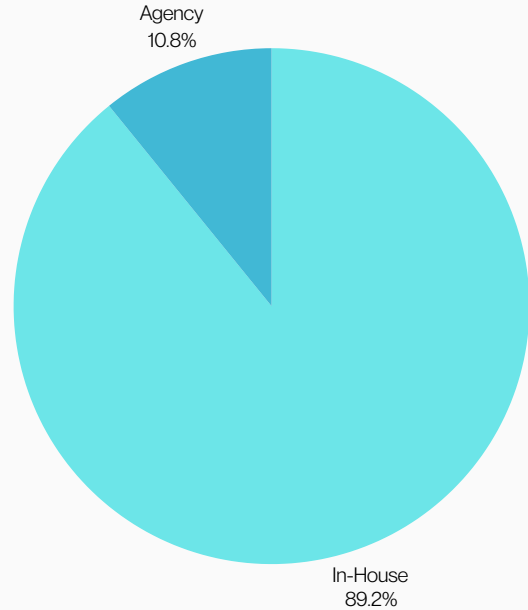### Average AI Salary Increase over Baseline

$15,823

In–House vs Agency

In-House vs Agency

Marketing and SEO work is somewhat unique in that there is a career distinction between working in-house for a brand and working with sites through an agency.

Agency Roles

12%

Agency
10.8%

In-House
89.2%

In-House $116,045

Agency $108,857

0   20000   40000   60000   80000   100000   120000

In-House vs Agency Salary

As well as there being more demand for in-house roles, the average salary for them is also quite a big more.
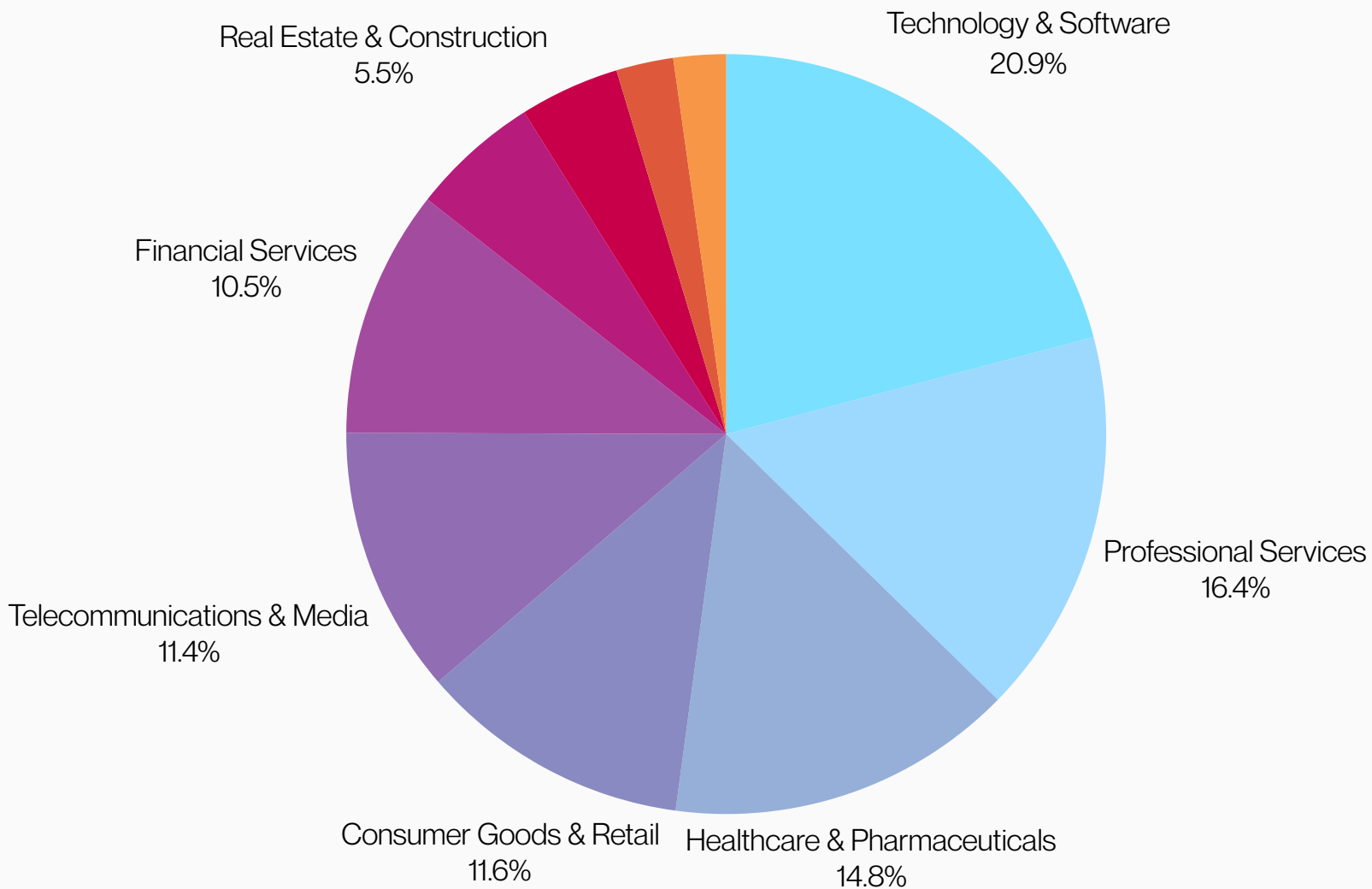
Agency life is generally considered difficult as you need to balance so many different clients with different needs, but there's tremendous opportunities for growth and exposure to the larger marketing industry that's impossible to get in-house.

Average In-House Salary

## $116,045

Industry Demand Breakdown

Demand for SEO expertise remains the strongest in the Technology sector, followed by Professional Services.

Real Estate & Construction
5.5%

Technology & Software
20.9%

Financial Services
10.5%

Professional Services
16.4%

Telecommunications & Media
11.4%

Consumer Goods & Retail
11.6%

Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals
14.8%

Industry Salary Analysis

Salary varies widely by industry. The gap between the top paying industry ("Financial Services") and the least ("Energy and Utilities") is $40,000.
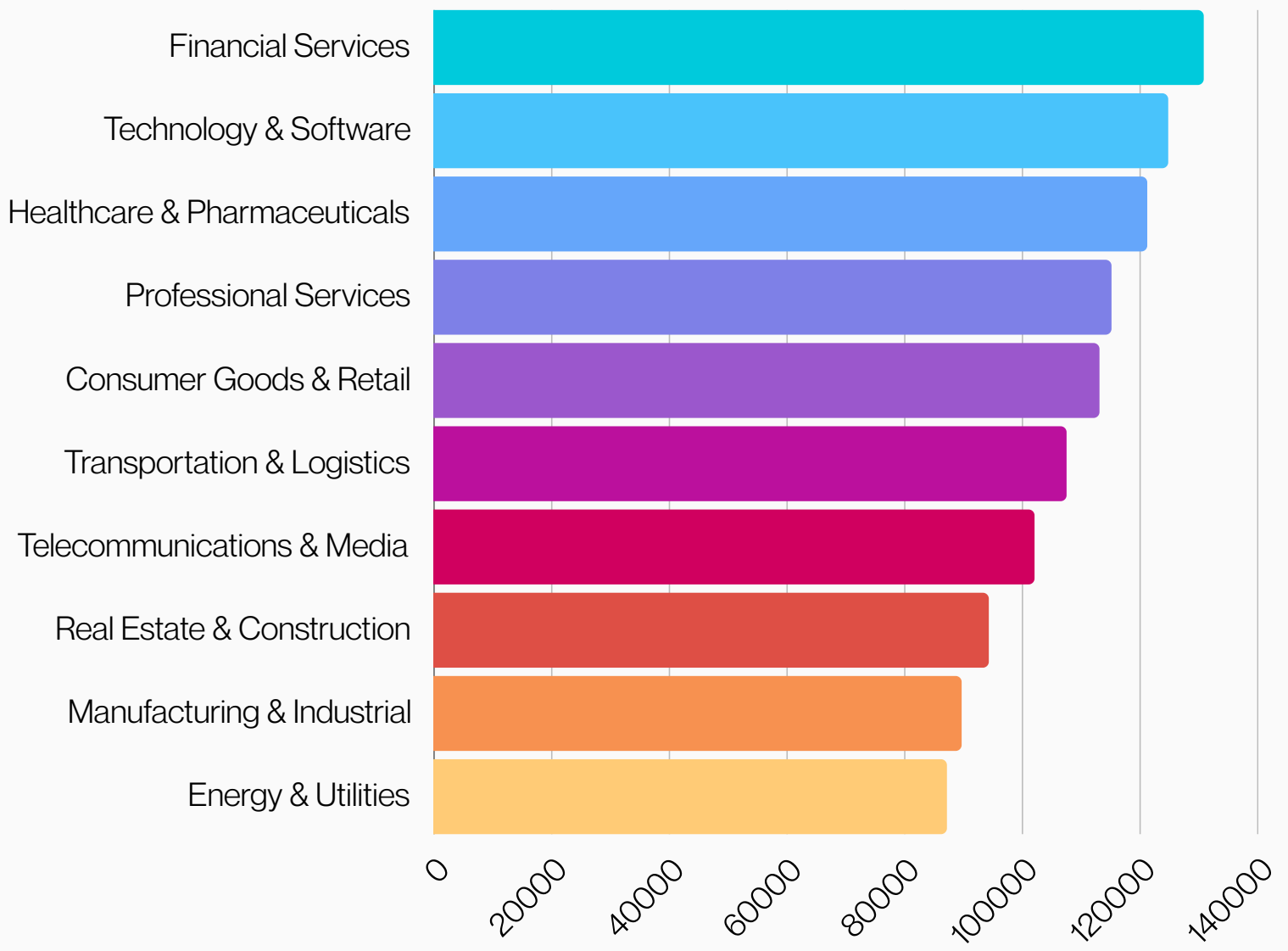
Future Outlook

If there was every any doubt about SEO being dead the existence of so many companies, hiring today for so many well paying roles should put an end to that notion.

Search continues to provide massive amounts of value to brands and our that situation seems unlikely to change even with the massive upheaval happening in the industry with the rise of new AI search tools.

Futureproofing Yourself

There's no guarantees, but the data clearly and unequivocally shows that:

- Learning more skills
- Developing more marketing competencies

Both result in very direct salary increases role to role.

How to get paid more?

Search professionals with AI search optimization skills earn $15,823 more a year on average.

Don't get left behind, build your AI seach expertise, drive more business for your clients and put more money in your pocket by giving Knowata a try today.

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