7 Tips That Will Help You Optimize Your Keyword List for SEO by @alexanderkesler

Tweaking your keyword lists is like regular car maintenance: you have to do it, or else things stop running properly.

Evaluating and optimizing your lists on a regular basis keeps your content high up in search engine rankings.

However, keyword optimization is not always straightforward.

Google’s algorithms grow more sophisticated constantly, and your old bag of keyword tricks becomes less and less effective.

Still, keyword optimization is an essential part of any successful content marketing strategy – it’s just more nuanced now.

Best practices change from year to year based on Google’s changes and user habits.

This list will help you keep your content among the top results and bring in more visitors.

1. Map Your Keywords to the Buying Journey

Not every potential customer starts their journey with the exact product they want in mind – just like not everyone needs to do extensive research.

Your keywords should be targeting everyone whose interests match the content on your website.

Just make sure to map their stage of the buying journey to the appropriate page.

Awareness Stage

Customers in the awareness stage are trying to pinpoint a solution to their problem or what type of product/service satisfies their need.

For this type of search, consumers will use general terms, such as “how to stay fit” or “what should I feed my dog”.

When mapping your keywords to this stage, you should create pages that answer common questions related to your offerings and simply inform the reader as opposed to selling something.

Consideration Stage

Your audience is already looking for a specific solution and evaluating options in the consideration stage.

This means it’s time to build trust and convince your prospects that your solution is the right one.

To attract these types of buyers, focus your keyword selection on the value of your solution.

The Decision Stage

In this stage your customers have direct commercial intent.

At this point, you should use keywords like “buy,” “order,” “demo,” and so on.

Then, it’s up to your content to turn that prospect into a new customer.

2. Use a Keyword Optimization Checklist to Build Your Lists

Keeping track of every aspect of keyword optimization can be overwhelming.

Every section of your website should be taken into account, from subheadings to meta titles. That’s why having a checklist is essential.

Having a structured workflow makes your job much easier. That’s why you should follow a plan when you’re working on your keyword list.

Here’s a short list you can use to get started and create your own workflow:

- Prioritize your efforts and categorize your keywords by segmenting your webpages into groups based on topic and conversion rate.
- Align your top pages or groups of pages with their targeted key phrases, search volume, and difficulty score.
- Create a list of long-tail variations based on your top keywords.
- Don’t forget about branded terms.
- Enable Site Search in Google Analytics to discover the search terms your web users are actually interested in.
- Gather keywords with geo-modifiers.
- Run a competitive analysis to discover some overlooked keywords.
- Align your newly discovered keywords with your existing pages or create new web pages for your website.

3. Pay Special Attention to Mobile

Keywords

People don’t use the same queries to search across all platforms.

As a result, the most popular keywords can change depending on the device the user is searching from.

On mobile, in particular, the queries tend to either be shorter due to the less comfortable keyboard or much longer because of voice search (for example, “coffee shop paris” versus “where is the nearest coffee shop?”).

Make sure you take both versions into account when optimizing for smartphone and tablet users.

Another important aspect to note is that location is a huge component of mobile searches.

In fact, according to Google, 94 percent of users search for location-based info.

That means that, if you have a brick-and-mortal location, you should pay special attention to keywords like “near me” and “nearby.”

Also, optimize your Google My Business page and make sure your NAP information is accurate so your company shows up when users are looking for businesses in your niche.

4. Conduct a Keyword Audit

Even if you used a checklist to come up with new keywords, it never hurts to bring in a third party to check your work.

This is where online SEO auditing tools like Woorank and SEO Site Checkup come into play. Such tools check your on-page SEO, off-page SEO, and even your website’s mobile usability.

Most of them also identify issues like broken links and defective webpages. Plus, many SEO audit tools also give recommendations to improve site visibility and ranking.

You can also conduct audits periodically on old content that’s still ranking for a solid number of keywords, but might need an update to perform better.

This is a great way to rediscover old hidden gems and get them to drive better traffic. After all, just because the content is a bit older doesn’t mean it’s completely useless.

5. Keep an Eye on Keyword Trends

A trend can lead to a big boost in traffic if you know how to leverage it.

Plus, if you get on board ahead of time, there’s less competition compared to more general keywords.

Some keyword research tools, like Soovle, can identify the trending words of the day for you.

If any of them are relevant to your niche, add them to your list. Just don’t forget to clean up the list every once in a while so that your previously trending keywords don’t pile up.

This strategy can give you a short-term boost while you’re waiting for your long-term content to take off.

Google Correlate is one of the best ways to discover seasonal trends and come up with fresh keyword ideas.

This lesser-known tool reveals keywords with similar time-based or regional search patterns to the search query you provide.

6. Don’t Underestimate Long-Tail Keywords

Voice search is becoming increasingly popular, now that virtual assistants like Siri, Cortana, and Alexa are becoming more mainstream.

Many users now prefer to use their voice to find what they’re looking for instead of typing. This applies especially to mobile devices and even TVs.

But if you aren’t adjusting your keyword list to these new trends, you’re missing out on this audience.

To give you some perspective, a study of 1.9 billion keywords found that 29.13 percent of keywords with 10,001+ monthly searches are made up of three or more words.

One surefire way to make sure you’re capturing the voice search audience is to employ more long-tail keywords.

When speaking, users are more likely to ask questions like “What are the best lead generation companies in the US?”, as opposed to typing in “best lead generation companies US.”

Keep this conversational tone in mind when selecting keywords to make sure that your content appears in voice searches.

7. Track Your Internal Site Search

Some of the best keywords might have been right under your nose this whole time, specifically on your own website.

Looking at these queries can help you learn about how people are using your site and get keyword ideas that you’d never think of otherwise.

Plus, if you find that some searches are followed by the

customer leaving the website, you can create content that matches those terms.

Conclusion

Keyword research is one of the highest return SEO activities – and these seven tips should give your traffic a significant boost.

And even if you're already following best practices and your lists are constantly updated, experimenting can yield surprising results.

So the next time you manage your keyword list, use these guidelines to breathe some new life into your strategy.

Who knows, maybe you've been missing out on some profitable keywords!

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