A Simple Keyword Research Process for Winning SEO – Whiteboard Friday

Smart keyword research forms the basis of all successful SEO. In today's Whiteboard Friday, Cyrus Shepard shares the basics of a winning keyword research process that you can learn and master in a short amount of time.

Bonus: Be sure not to miss Cyrus's upcoming webinar, **Build a Winning Keyword Strategy: Start-to-Finish** on May 21, 2020 at 10am PST:

Save my spot

You'll walk through his keyword research process start-to-finish with real keywords, topics, and websites to create a complete keyword research strategy. It's a great follow-up to this Whiteboard Friday!



Click on the whiteboard image above to open a high-resolution

version in a new tab!

Video Transcription

Howdy, Moz fans. Welcome to a very special edition of Whiteboard Friday, talking about keyword research today. Now keyword research, you know how important it is, and it forms the basis of all successful SEO. People who are good at keyword research and having a good research strategy, that often makes the difference between winning and having an SEO campaign that just goes nowhere.

I love keyword research because we all have an idea of what we think we want to rank for, right, but when you use keyword research, you can use data to find opportunities and surprises that you didn't even know existed. So I want to dispel a myth about keyword research. A lot of people think it's about finding the right tool, and you enter the keyword into a tool and you get a list.

Technically, that is keyword research, and that's a fine starting point. But it's not so much about the tool. It's about a process. It's about a process of creating a strategy for your entire website and finding those winning keywords that you can rank for and getting traffic from that are relevant to your business. So it's more than just a tool.

It's a process. There are entire guides and webinars about this. But I think we can simplify it. In the next few minutes, I want to show you the basics of a winning keyword research process that I think you can start to master in just a few minutes and get the fundamentals. In fact, I did write a guide about this. We'll talk about it at the end of the video. It's completely available.

But I want to go over the basics so you can start to get an understanding of the process that will help you win with keyword research.

1. Seed keywords

So first of all, a concept that you are probably familiar with is the idea of seed keywords. We call them seeds because they help grow your keyword list and expand it. Seed keywords are more important than people think, and I'll tell you why you in just a second.

So many tools will give you seed keywords. But I want to dismiss the idea of thinking in terms of tools for just a second. When researching seed keywords, I propose that you think of it in terms of questions, questions that you want to ask yourself.

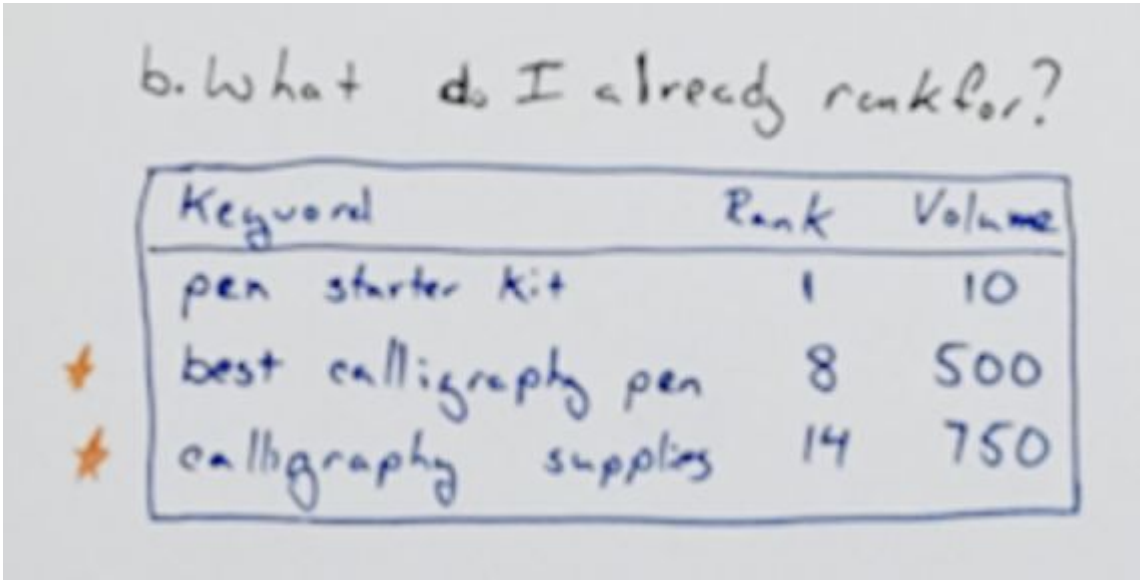
a. What do I want to rank for?

The first is simply, "What do I want to rank for?" In this hypothetical example, our client sells calligraphy pens.

They're like, "Cyrus, I want to rank for calligraphy pens." That's great. That will be your starting point, your first seed keyword.

b. What do I already rank for?

So a second question you can ask is, "What do I already rank for?" Well, let's say the client has an existing website. They sell some pens. Maybe they do well, maybe they don't.



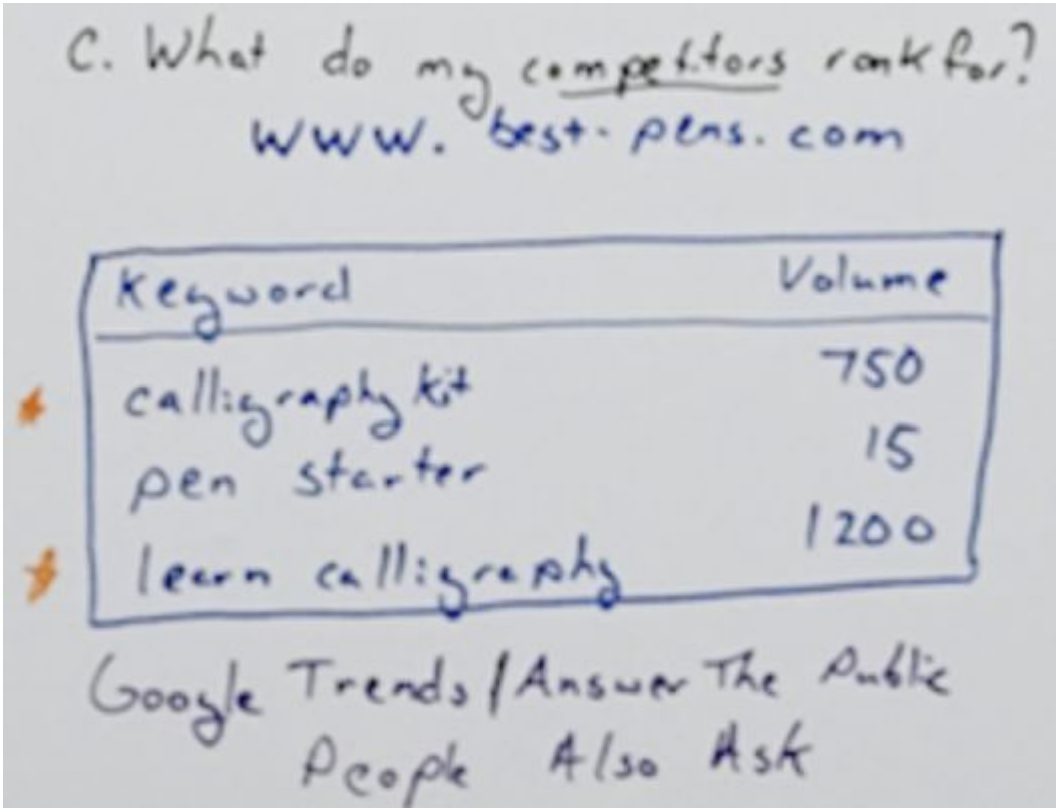
So we want to dig into the data of what is already sending them traffic, and we can do this with a lot of keyword research tools – Moz, Ahrefs, SEMrush. I prefer Moz, 500 million keywords, it's a great set. But you can use whatever you want. So you want to search keywords by site or keywords by URL. We can enter our client's site and see that, oh, they rank for "pen starter kit."

Their rank is number one. It only receives 10 visits a month, so maybe that's not such a good seed keyword. But "best calligraphy pen," they rank number 8, 500 visits a month. "Calligraphy supplies," 14th, 750 visits a month. Those are excellent seed keywords. So we're going to make note of those and use them a little later in the process.

You can also get this data from Google Search Console, rank and volume. Wherever you get it from, these are what you want to search for great keywords that you already rank for, but maybe not number one, with good search volume.

c. What do my competitors rank for?

Finally, let's say you don't have an existing website, or you're starting a new project from scratch.



You don't have a lot of existing data. You want to ask, "What do my competitors rank for or the top ranking sites?" So I might Google "calligraphy pens" and see who ranks number one. Pop it into Keyword Explorer and see all their ranking keywords here and start to find the good seed keywords. So I can see that they rank for "calligraphy kit" – that sounds pretty relevant – 750 visits a month.

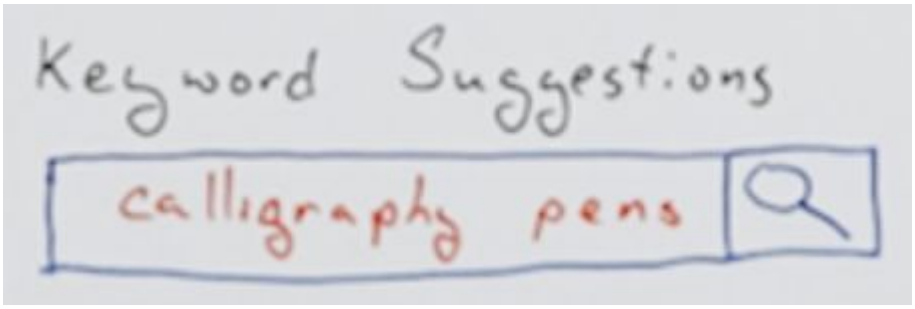
"Pen starter," not so much. I'd probably throw that one out. "Learn calligraphy," that's a great seed keyword. I'm going to make note of that, 1,200 visits a month. You can get seed keywords from literally any keyword tool. Some of our favorites, beyond Keyword Explorer:

Anywhere you want to get your seed keywords, that's where you form the basis of your list.

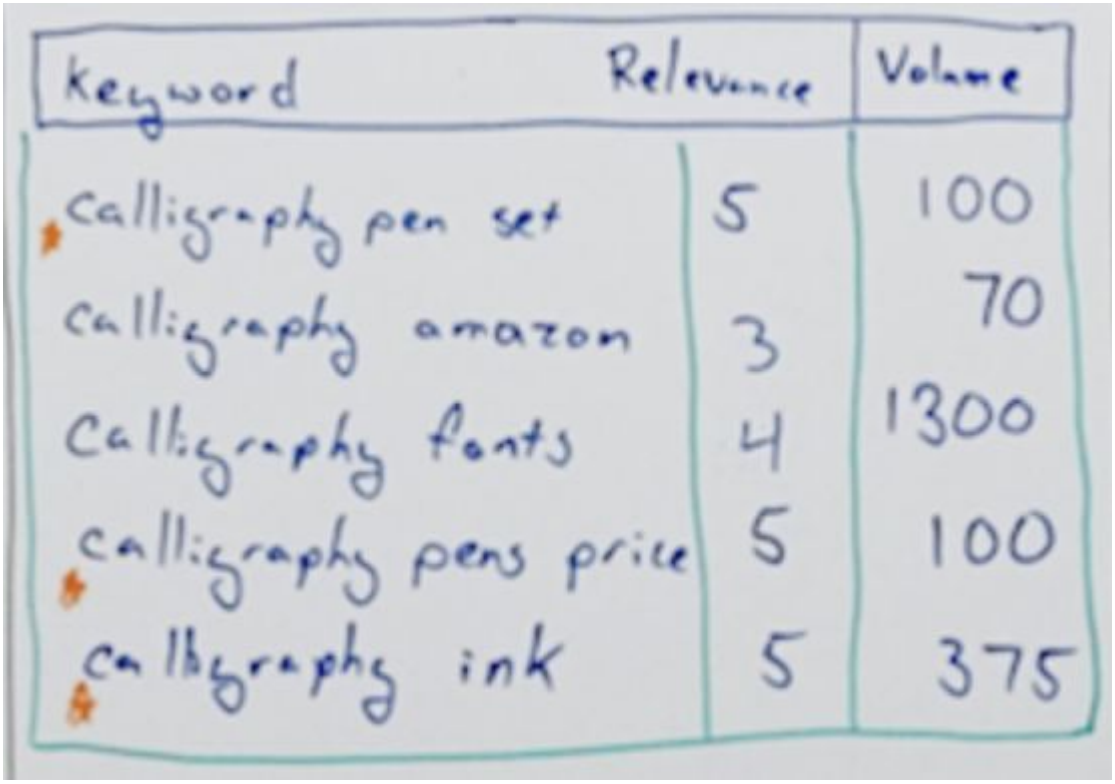
2. List building

So next we're going to start building our list. Seed keywords move into list building. So this is where we want to use a robust keyword research tool, such as Moz, Ahrefs, or whatever

you want. We're entering our seed keywords "calligraphy pens."



We're going to get a list of keywords, sorted by relevance and volume. Now there are many metrics in keyword research, such as keyword difficulty, click-through rate, importance, things like that. For right now, we only want to be concerned with two metrics – **relevance** and **volume**.



You can concern yourself with the other metrics a little later when we're sorting and filtering. But right now, we want to find more seed keywords. That's the key difference here in this process. We're not just finding related keywords. We're finding more seed keywords. We're reiterating. So "calligraphy pen set," highly relevant.

Five means highly relevant. Volume of 100. All right, we're going to mark that. That becomes a new seed. "Calligraphy

Amazon," okay, that only has a three relevance score. Unless you're Amazon, that's probably not the most relevant keyword. We're going to cross it off the list.

"Calligraphy fonts." "Calligraphy pens price," well, that's great. "Calligraphy ink," great with high volume. So what we have done now is we have collected more seeds, and we're going to throw those seeds back in and discover even more related keywords, more seeds. In other words, we're going to start building out our list.

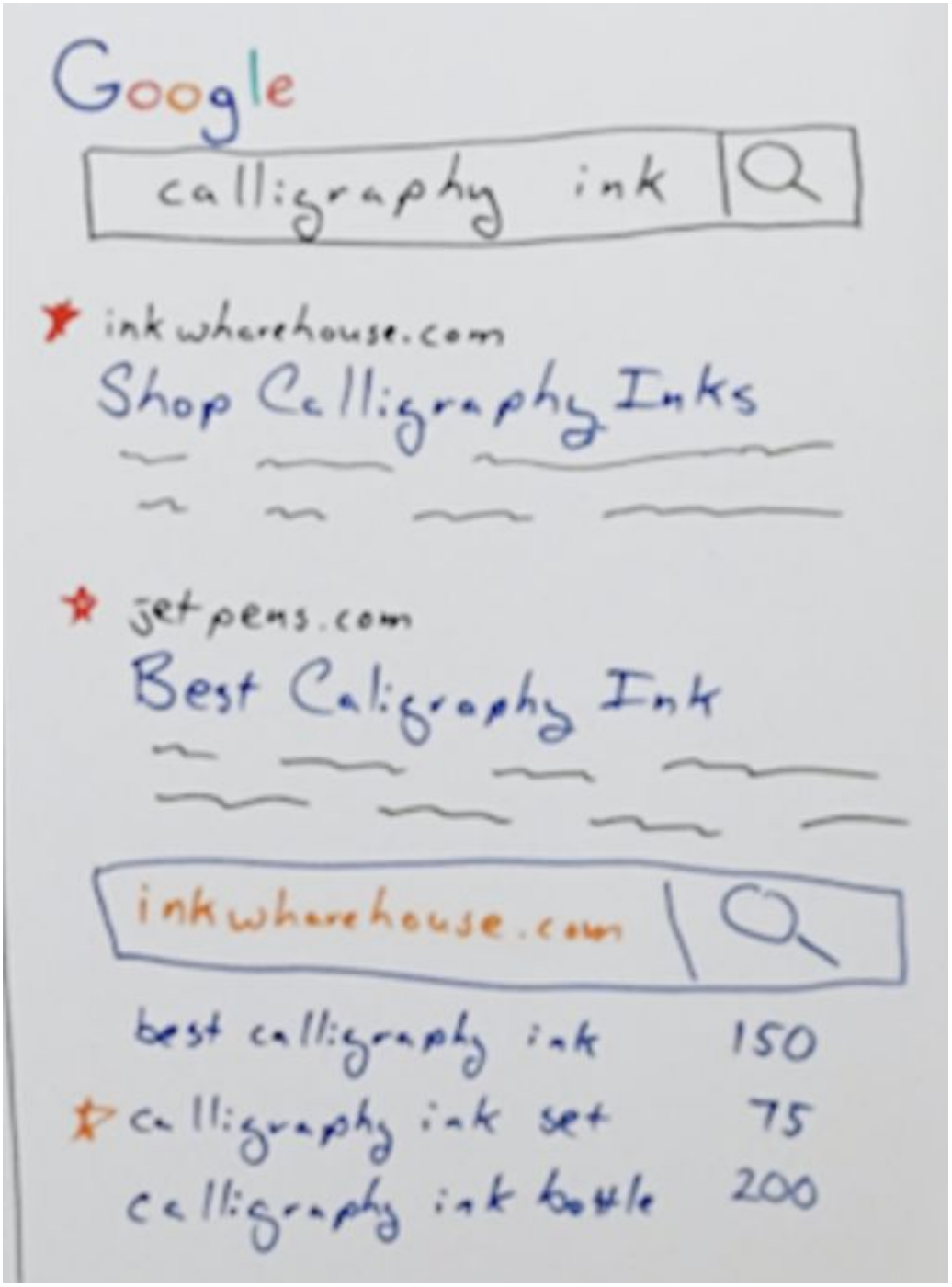
That's the process. Not just get a list of related keywords, but you're finding more seeds. When you find more seeds, continually do this, these become new pages of your site or a new entire content section. So we could have a section on calligraphy ink. We could have a page on price. We're going to group these in our spreadsheets together, and every time we find a new seed, it can become a new topic, a new page, a new idea.

The idea is you want to find as many seeds as possible.

3. Competitor analysis

So when we get these seeds, we're going to reinsert them back, but we're also going to do one final step that a lot of people forget or just don't realize, and that is the competitive analysis. The keyword tool is going to find a lot. Moz Keyword Explorer does a particularly excellent, excellent job of this.

But if you're not using Keyword Explorer, one thing I like to do is I'll take my seed keyword, "calligraphy ink," and I'll put it into Google and I'll see who's ranking in the top 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 positions. I'll look specifically for sites that specialize in this. I might throw out Amazon or things like that.



But Ink Warehouse, Shop Calligraphy Inks, I'll take this page and I'll put it in Keyword Explorer, keywords by site or URL, and I'll get all the other keywords that this page or site ranks for, because they've undoubtedly tried a lot of content. They know what works, what doesn't work.

I'll find new seeds that way. So I can see that Ink Warehouse ranks for "best calligraphy ink," and that's a good one. "Calligraphy ink set," great new seed keyword. "Calligraphy ink bottle," another great seed keyword. So then, we have new seeds, new pages, new topics. We can take these and start the

process again, and we do this over and over and over again until we have a complete set of keywords for every page, every conceivable ranking position, and we can start to build a strategy out from that.

After this, we can start to sort and filter by keyword volume and difficulty and things like that. But that's a process for another time. So I've documented this strategy and so much more in a brand-new keyword research guide, "The Master Guide to Keyword Research." We just released it. It's available free. It covers this topic in depth, and we try to make these concepts as easy as possible to help you win SEO. We're going to link to it below. You can download it and let me know what you think.

Read the new guide

So I hope you learned something today. If you liked this video, please share it with anybody that you can. It would be a great favor to me. Okay. Until next time, thanks, everybody.

Best of luck with your SEO.

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