An SEO guide to audience research and content analysis

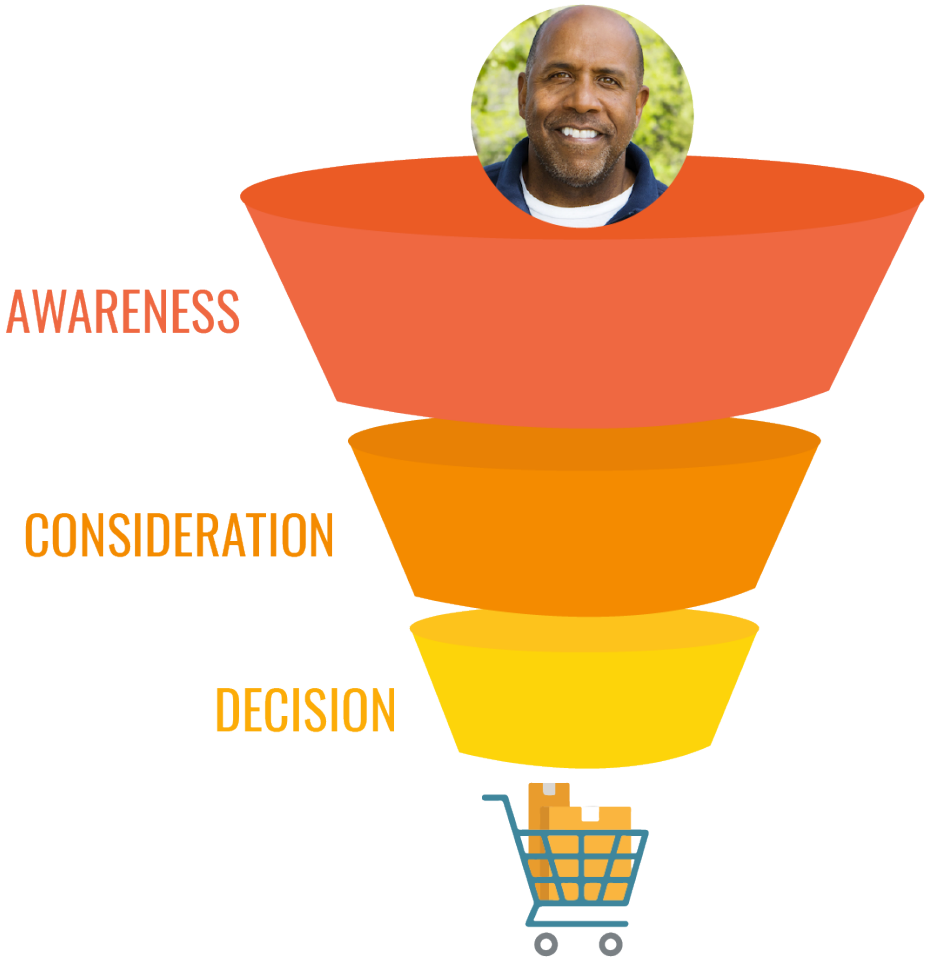
How your customers find you can vary significantly. It may be based on their interests, needs or pain points.

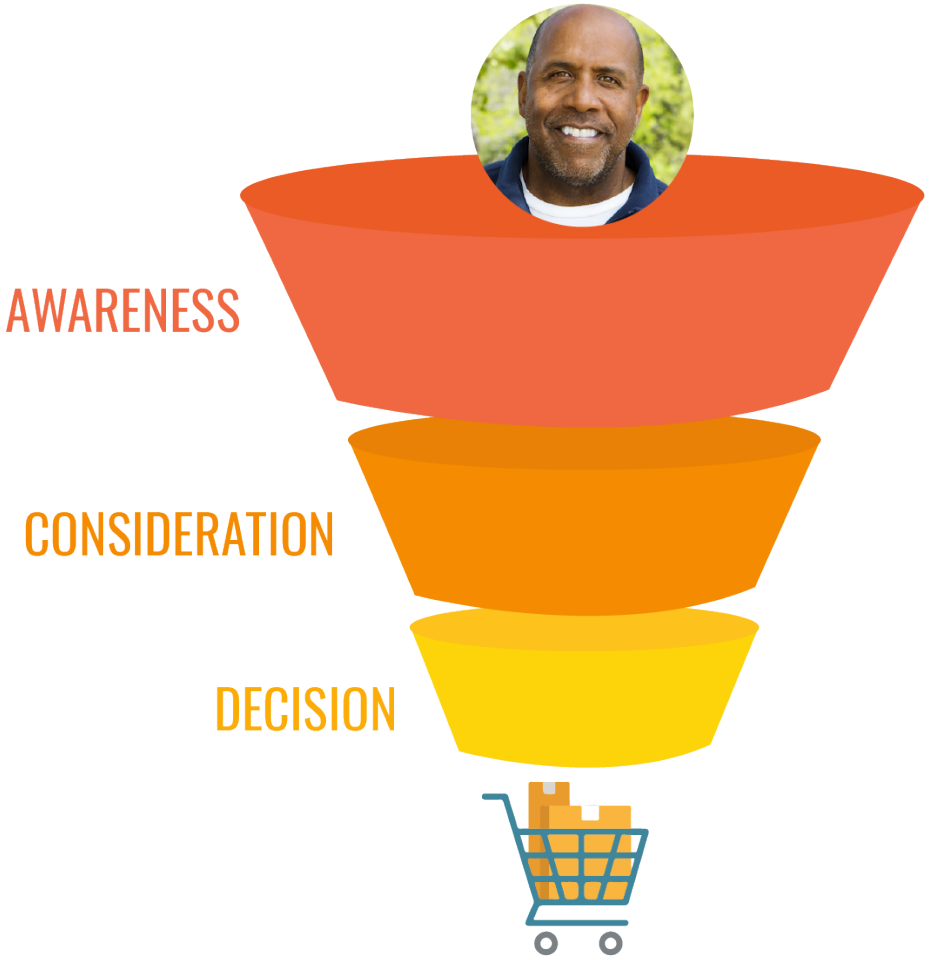
Some people may already know exactly what they need and search for that on Google. Others may be just starting the research process. Others may already know what they need and compare to identify the best source to purchase from.

In this stage of your SEO research and planning, you'll want to identify:

- Target personas
- Buying stages
- Potential keywords

Your goal will be to map your target personas, buying stages and keywords for each persona and buying stage.


AWARENESS
CONSIDERATION
DECISION


AWARENESS
CONSIDERATION
DECISION

Persona research

You can start by using customer service data or information from your Google Analytics demographic details. With this information, you can start creating target personas.

Below is an example of possible target personas for a real estate company.

Persona Research



The Small Family

Blake and Sally Fredericks

- 34 & 38 years old
- Single Income Family
- Household income $71,400
- 1-2 kids, preteen or younger
- First or second time buyer
- More likely to buy in a suburb/subdivision

Pain Points:

- Overall affordability
- Quality of school districts
- Convenience to job
- Prefers a newer home



The Millennials

Jack Whitaker and Kiara Harris

- 32 & 31 years old
- DINK: Dual Income No Kids
- Combined income $96,250
- First time buyers
- Top 20 Metro Market
- More money to spend upfront without children

Pain Points:

- Convenience to job
- Prepared to renovate / invest in an older home
- Environmental impact



The Single Woman

Barbara Lindor

- 68 years old
- Retired
- Medium income $52,200
- 2-3 kids, college or older
- Seasoned buyer
- More likely to buy in a suburb/subdivision

Pain Points:

- Quality of neighborhood
- Convenience to family, friends, and healthcare facilities
- Overall affordability

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Once you have your personas and ideas of who they are, what they need, and what they are looking for, you'll want to map out the possible steps they'll take in their buying journey.

Buyer's journey



Buyers Journey
The Small Family
Blake and Sally Fredericks
Researching Best Areas for Families
Looking for Realtors
Purchase
AWARENESS
CONSIDERATION
DECISION
Getting to Know the City
Check out Homes

Finally, you can add the possible keywords they'll search for and map them to the journey.

Persona:   

AWARENESS

Keyword

- Real estate auction
- Foreclosure auctions
- Online auctions for houses

Journey

Researching how to get into real estate auctions

CONSIDERATION

Keyword

- How do I buy a foreclosure house
- Real estate foreclosure auctions
- How do I get into commercial real estate foreclosures

Journey

Researching potential companies or websites to work with

DECISION

Keyword

- Best real estate auction website
- Luxury real estate foreclosure company

Journey

Comparing pricing, customer service, and reviews

Persona:   

AWARENESS

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Comparing pricing, customer service, and reviews

Map keywords to persona to the buyer’s journey

The goal of this phase is to identify all of the possible ways you can be found and to make sure you have content optimized on your website targeting these buying phases and keywords.

You’ll start by identifying primary, root phrases. As you progress, you can go deeper into long-tail terms or semantically related keywords.

This will allow you to identify gaps and opportunities that were missed during your initial baseline and competitive research. Some of these keywords won’t be uncovered unless you truly understand your audience and their needs and pain points.

This stage will complete your research phase and give you all the information to create your content strategy and focus your on-page SEO priorities.

Evaluate your existing content

With your comprehensive keyword research, the next step is to look at the existing content of your site and see if it’s optimized properly.

- Does your website have pages that are not getting any traffic from Google, pages that are near-duplicates or multiple pages targeting the same keyword?
- Do you have content pieces to match the keyword list you created in the previous stage?

Before creating a content calendar or editorial strategy, it’s ideal to audit your existing content. By reviewing your existing pages, you can decide which pages need to be removed, consolidated or optimized.

Some of the elements you can look for include:

- Page traffic
- Primary keyword
- Number of keywords ranking
- Word count
- Internal linking

To perform a content audit, you'll need to export all of your pages from your CMS or use an SEO audit tool, such as Screaming Frog or Semrush Site Audit, to get a list of your site's existing pages.

Consolidate all of this data into a content audit spreadsheet. Your spreadsheet could look something like this:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1		Basic info			Category			Metadata		
2	URL	Words	Date	Author	BJ stage	Type	Format	Title	Description	H1
3	https://url/blogp	560	Jun 28, 2019	Robert Rose	Awareness	Blog post	Video present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header
4	https://url/blogp	1265	Aug 09, 2019	In-house writer	Consideration	Blog post	Images present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header
5	https://url/succe	723	Aug 30, 2019	In-house writer	Decision	Success story	Video present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header
6	https://url/blogp	1578	Oct 05, 2019	Brian Dean	Awareness	Blog post	Images present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header
7	https://url/manu	2567	Oct 25, 2019	In-house writer	Consideration	Manual	Video present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header
8	https://url/blogp	1765	Nov 02, 2019	Andy Crestodina	Awareness	Blog post	Images present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header
9	https://url/produ	897	Nov 16, 2019	In-house writer	Consideration	Product des	With CTA	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header
10	https://url/manu	720	Dec 05, 2019	In-house writer	Consideration	Manual	Images present	Meta Title	Meta Description	Header
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17										

Assess your site’s content

Once you have collected all of the data, go through the URLs and label the pages:

- **Keep**: The page is optimized and performing well and can be left alone.
- **Optimize:** The page could be ranking better with improved on-page SEO.
- **Rewrite/revamp:** This is for pages where the content needs to be revamped or rewritten.
- **Remove:** These pages are not performing well and should be removed. When doing so, it’s important to remove the page from your sitemap, Google Search Console, and any inbound links.
- **Consolidate:** If there are multiple pages targeting the same keyword, consider moving all of the content into the URL that is performing best and using 301 redirects for the other pages.

How to optimize, revamp or consolidate pages

Once you have all of your pages labeled, it’s time to optimize your content. Some pages may be performing well but could be refreshed to help them perform even better. Others may be performing poorly and need to be optimized to rank.

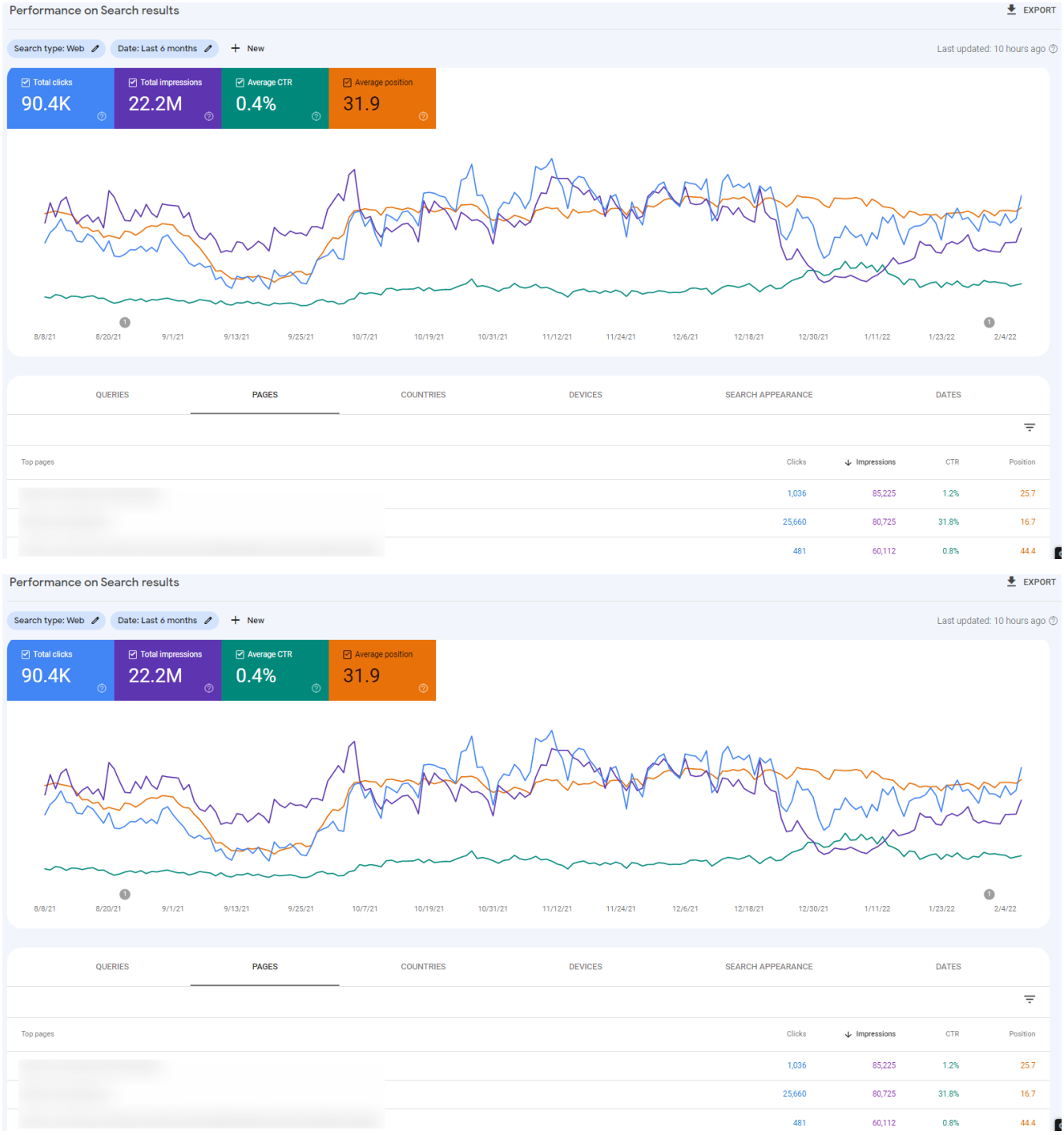
Typically, this process will involve two steps:

- Editing and re-optimizing the existing content.
- Expanding the article with new content.

Select the primary and secondary keywords for each page

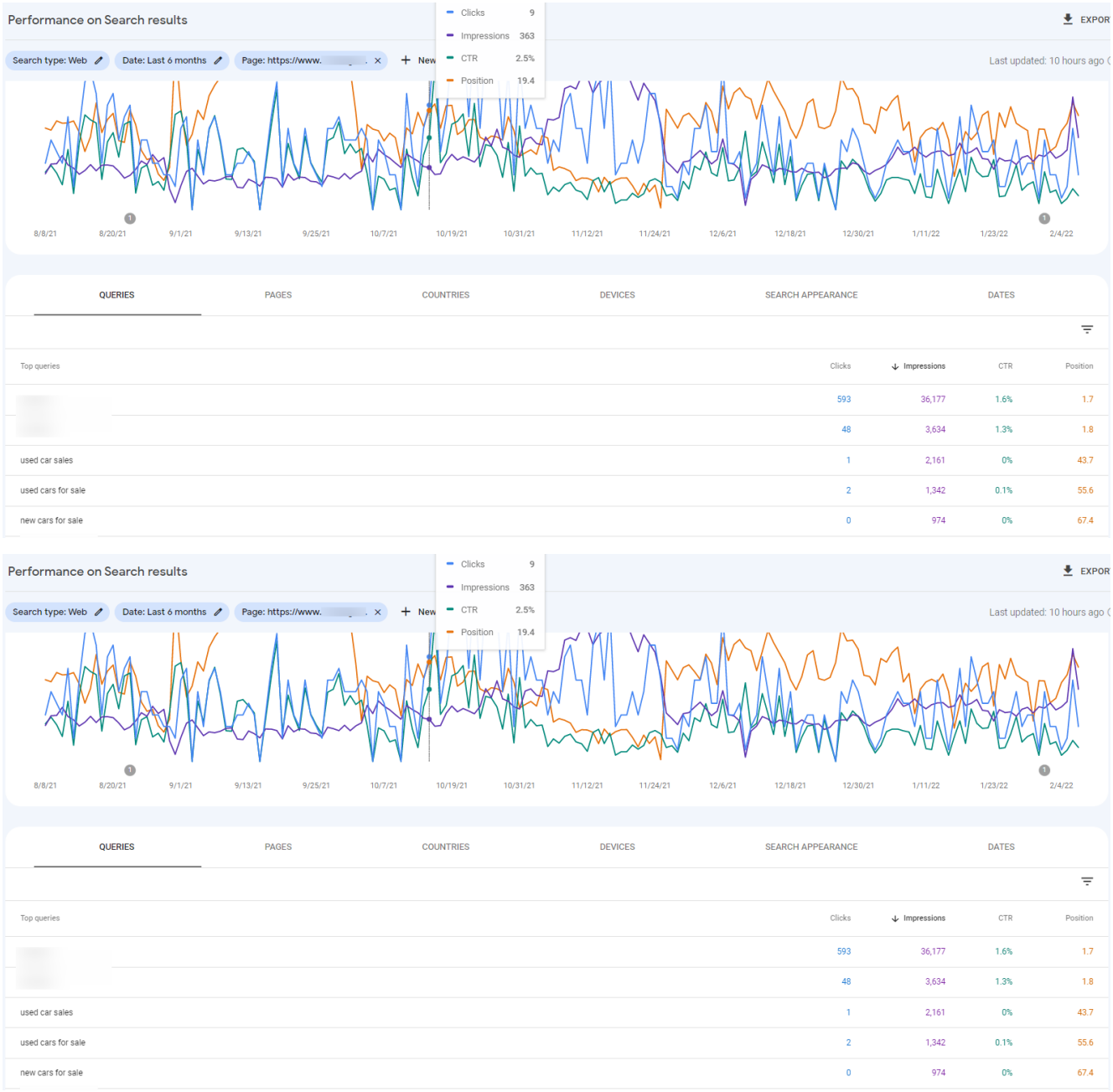
The best way to gather this data is to use Google Search Console for ranking pages or your keyword database for pages that are not.

To gather data from Google Search Console, click on *Performance > Search Results* report:



Performance on Search results
EXPORT
Search type: Web
Date: Last 6 months
New
Last updated: 10 hours ago
Total clicks
90.4K
Total impressions
22.2M
Average CTR
0.4%
Average position
31.9
8/8/21
8/20/21
9/1/21
9/13/21
9/25/21
10/7/21
10/19/21
10/31/21
11/12/21
11/24/21
12/6/21
12/18/21
12/30/21
1/11/22
1/23/22
2/4/22
QUERIES
PAGES
COUNTRIES
DEVICES
SEARCH APPEARANCE
DATES
Top pages
Clicks
Impressions
CTR
Position
1,036
85,225
1.2%
25.7
25,660
80,725
31.8%
16.7
481
60,112
0.8%
44.4

You can click on a page to see the keywords that it’s ranking for and the clicks, impressions and average position for each:



This will help you identify target keywords for each page, which you can add to your spreadsheet.

For each page, add the target primary and secondary keywords you will use when performing the necessary content updates.

Revamp existing content

When optimizing pages, you need to make sure that you are preserving or adding the correct on-page SEO elements. Let's review these:

Primary keyword optimization

The primary keyword should appear in the:

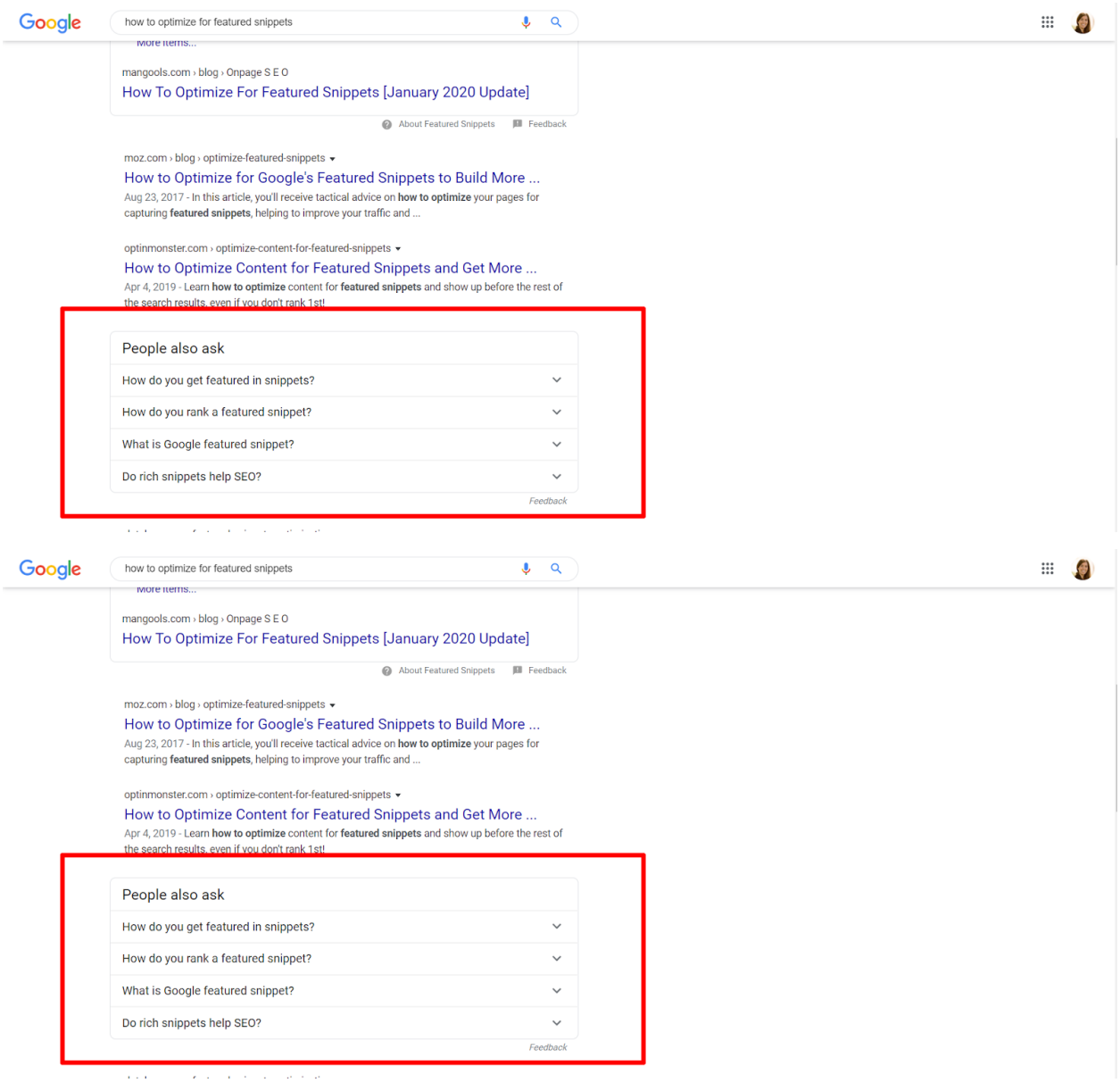
- **Meta (page) title:** For existing articles, you can edit an existing article's meta-title. Use the Google SERP Simulator to see how your title would look. Where possible, start the title tag with your primary keyword and add modifiers to your titles.
- **Meta description:** Up to 230-character description of the article. Make sure that you use the primary keyword as close to the beginning of the meta description as possible.
- **The first heading of your article is the title.** This should be an **H1** heading. The title/heading should include the primary keyword.
- **First paragraph.** The primary keyword should appear in the first paragraph, ideally within the first **100 words.**
- **Anchor text:** Include the primary keyword in at least one outbound, internal link.

Adding any secondary keywords

All related secondary keywords should be incorporated naturally into the article. For each related keyword, add them in an H2 heading. Whatever the focus keyword is for each paragraph, it should be both in the H2 heading and in the paragraph following the heading.

Questions and answers

Q&A is an easy way to expand upon your articles by finding related questions. Take the primary keyword, and search for it on Google. Use the questions in the "People also ask" box as section headers:

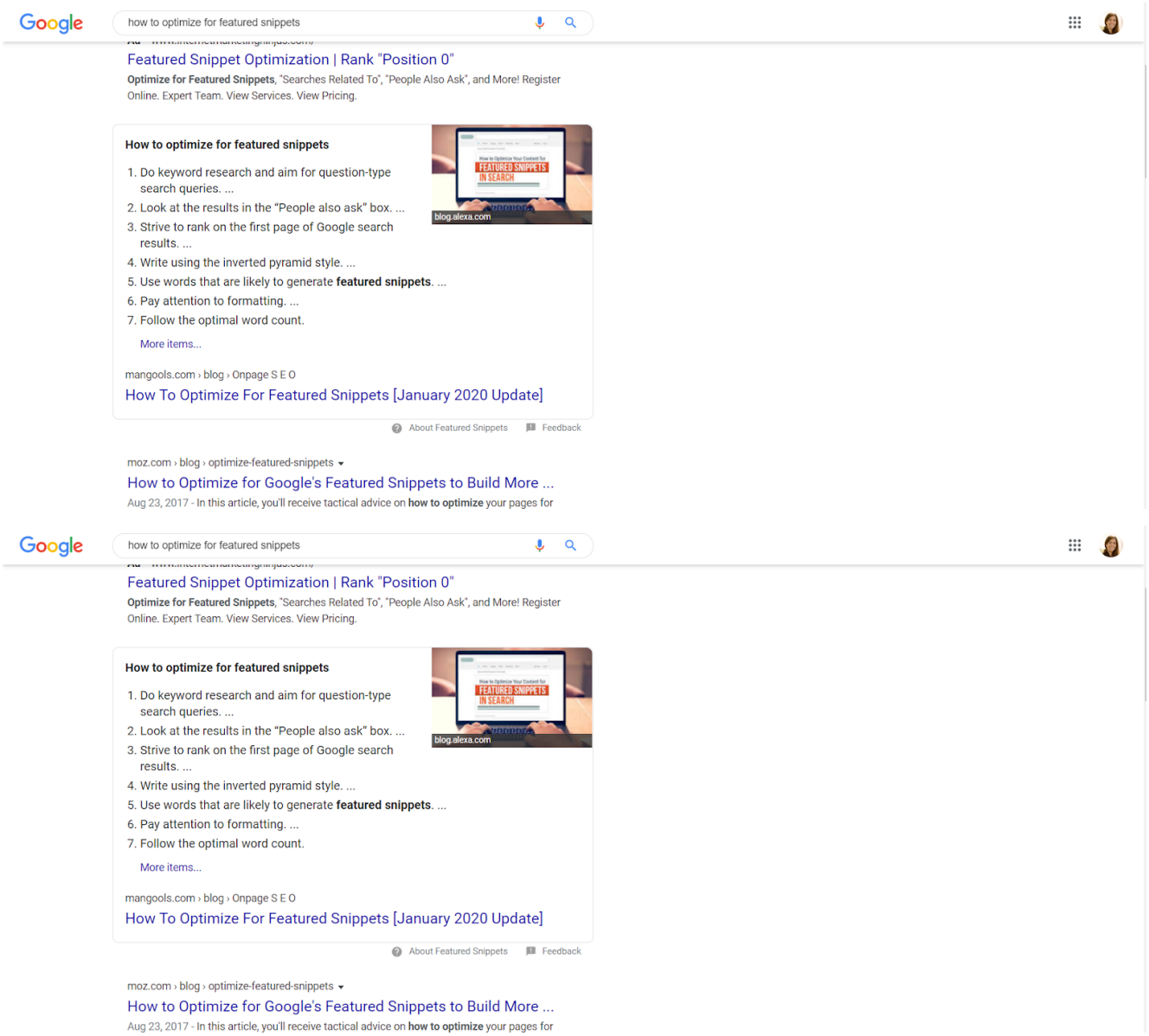


Google
how to optimize for featured snippets
mangools.com › blog › Onpage S E O
How To Optimize For Featured Snippets [January 2020 Update]
About Featured Snippets
Feedback
moz.com › blog › optimize-featured-snippets
How to Optimize for Google's Featured Snippets to Build More ...
Aug 23, 2017 - In this article, you'll receive tactical advice on how to optimize your pages for capturing featured snippets, helping to improve your traffic and ...
optinmonster.com › optimize-content-for-featured-snippets
How to Optimize Content for Featured Snippets and Get More ...
Apr 4, 2019 - Learn how to optimize content for featured snippets and show up before the rest of the search results, even if you don't rank 1st!
People also ask
How do you get featured in snippets?
How do you rank a featured snippet?
What is Google featured snippet?
Do rich snippets help SEO?
Feedback

The section header with the question will be an H2. In the next section, you should answer the question as quickly and succinctly as possible. Don’t re-state the question; instead, immediately provide the answer.

If the question was “How do you get featured in snippets,” then the first sentence should answer the question: “To get into featured snippets, you need to ask questions and answer them using paragraphs, lists, and quick answers.”

Use bullet points! Google loves listing answers with **bullet points**, so where possible, answer the question and immediately add a list with bullet points:



Content formatting

Use proper formatting to make the content easy for people to read quickly. Here are a few suggestions for formatting your content:

- Break up giant walls of text. Give information in short paragraphs. Use succinct sentences.

NUTRITION ✓ Evidence Based

How Much Water Should You Drink Per Day?

The body is about 60% water, give or take.

You are constantly losing water from your body, primarily via urine and sweat. To prevent dehydration, you need to drink adequate amounts of water.

There are many different opinions on how much water you should be drinking every day.

Health authorities commonly recommend eight 8-ounce glasses, which equals about 2 liters, or half a gallon. This is called the 8×8 rule and is very easy to remember.

However, some health gurus believe that you need to sip on water constantly throughout the day, even when you're not thirsty.

As with most things, this depends on the individual. Many factors (both internal and external) ultimately affect your need for water.

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- **Add lists.** Google loves lists! Are there any paragraphs or sections you can change into bullet points or

numbered lists? If so, do it!

Internal links

Add 2-3 internal links to other relevant pages on the site. Keep your anchor text short. Then, find at least 3-5 relevant pages on your site, and link to your target pages. Every page of your site should contain as many links from other site pages as possible.

External links

Add 2-3 external links to relevant pages. Good external links serve a strong purpose. They create a natural link map and connect your sites to authoritative sources. Google will give more weight to a page that has good external links.

Add new content

If the article is thin, you can add new content to expand on key points.

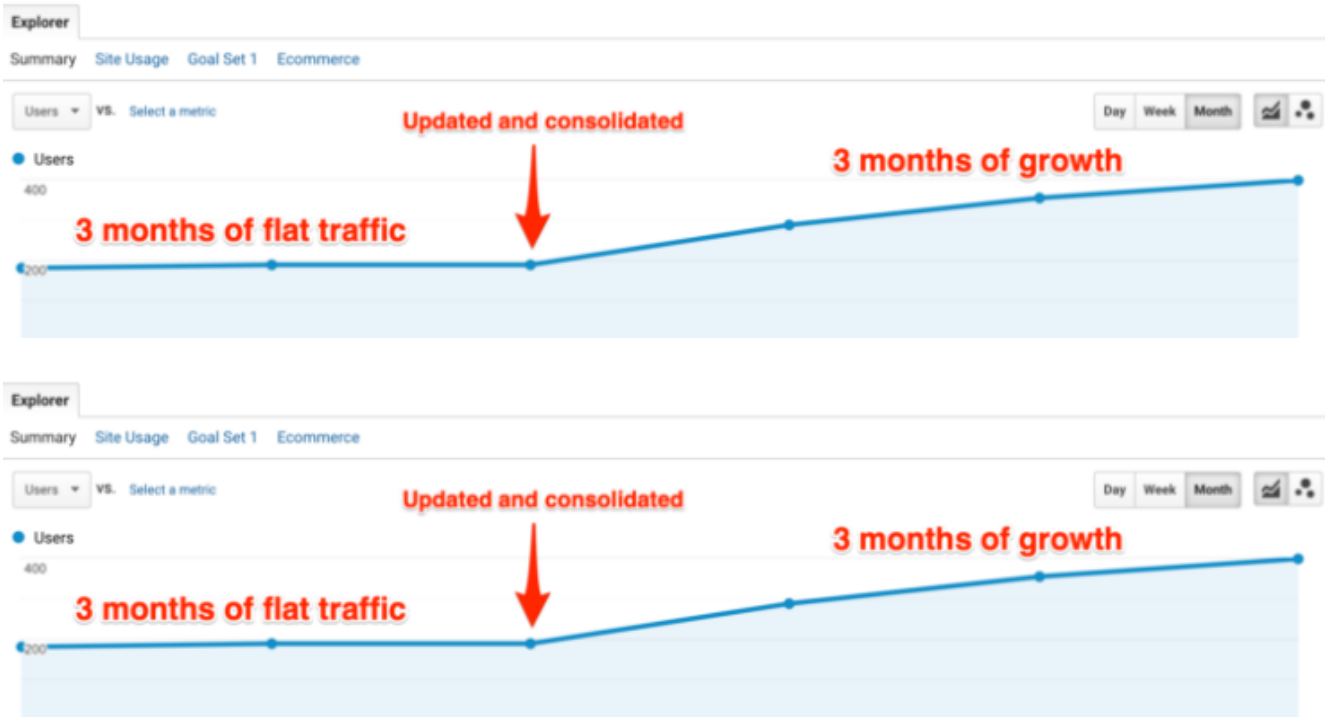
Writing new content

- **Add more paragraphs**. If you can add a list, more sub-headings, etc., all the better!
- **Reading level.** Keep the language at a 7th-grade reading level whenever possible. The best content is easy to read and understand, not dense and impregnable.

Images

- Add new, optimized images to your revamped content.
- Along with the link, please write the **alt text** for the image. This should be a one-sentence image description that includes the primary keyword.

Content consolidation



When there are several short pages or articles that are all ranking for the same keyword, it might be ideal to consolidate these articles into one longer, more comprehensive piece.

When consolidating articles, keep in mind:

- Take bits and parts of the different existing articles and merge them into one that makes sense.
- You should write the TARGET URL slug at the top of the document and include the new, optimized meta title and meta description.
- Add links to internal pages and external sites

Prioritize your fixes

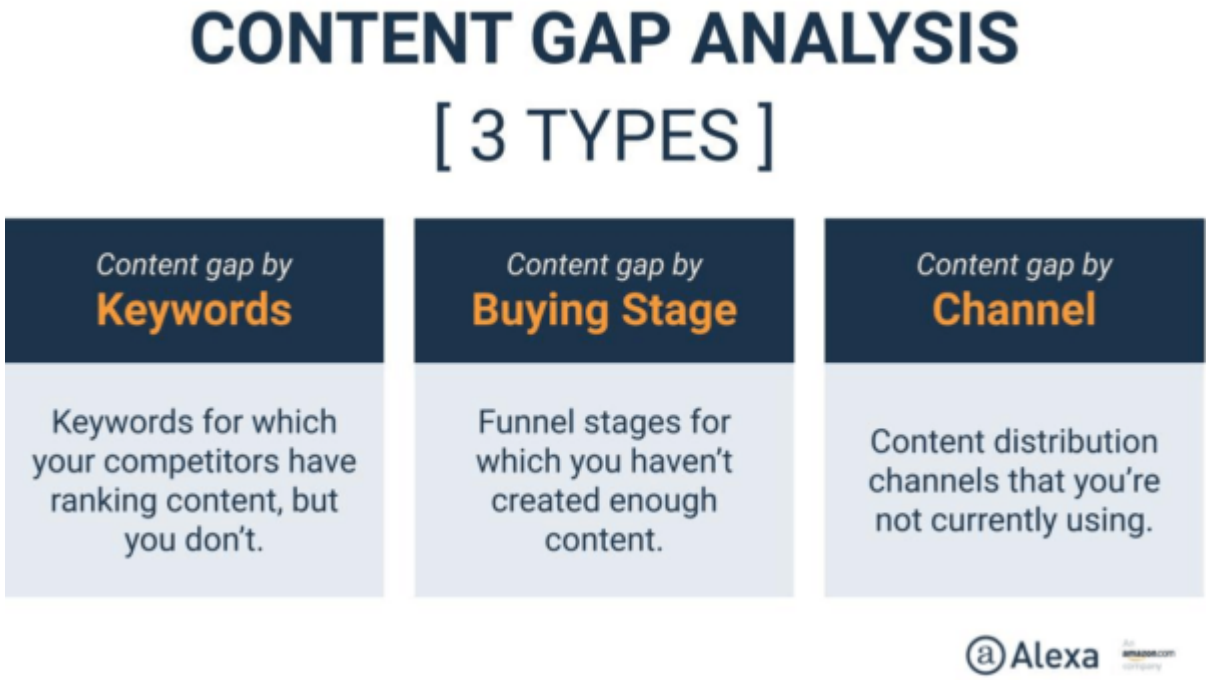
Once you have created and labeled your spreadsheet and added target primary and secondary keywords, the final stage is to prioritize and assign your optimizations based on traffic or keyword importance.

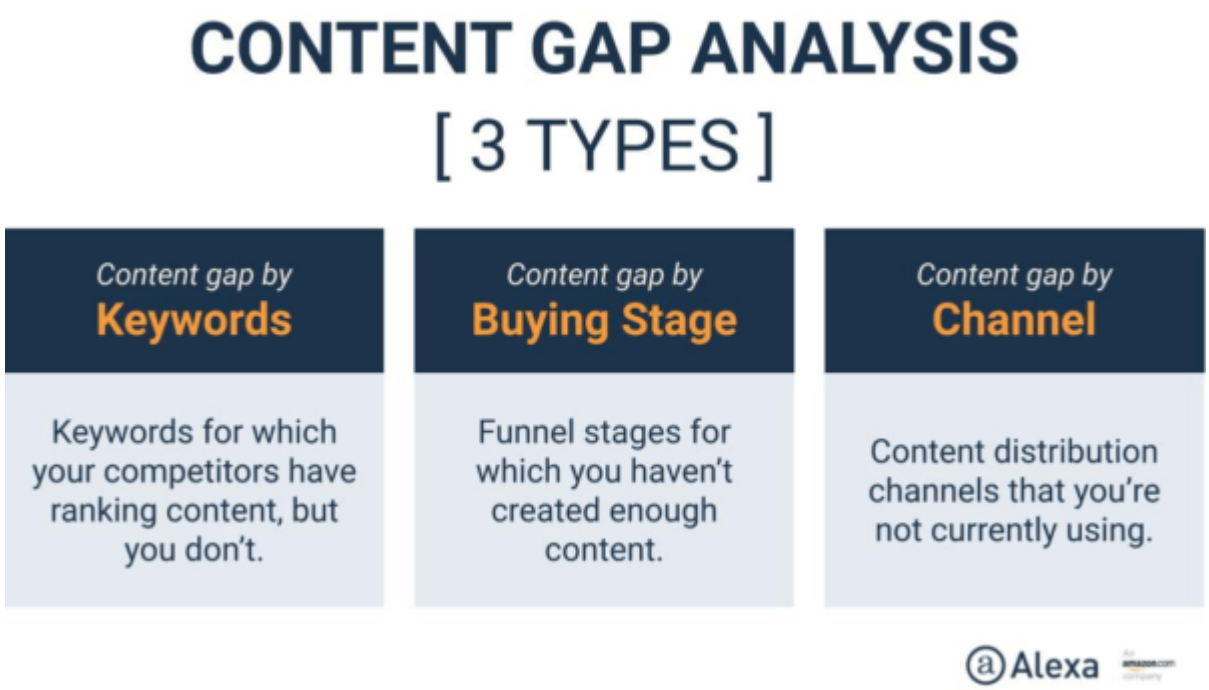
If you have pages targeting important keywords that are not ranking well, move those to the top of the priority list.

If there are pages that have a lot of traffic and could be

performing better, these should also be prioritized.

At the end of this stage, you should have a comprehensive keyword list that you will have mapped to existing pages or labeled to be created.





Mind the gap

During the early stage, you want to be mindful of identifying

persona, content and keyword gaps. If you don’t have content targeting some of your keywords, you’ll be missing opportunities to reach your target audience.

Most sites will have a degree of cannibalization as the SEO and content plans go through different teams and stages.

Before spending significant resources on producing new content, first, identify and maximize the content you already have, and then “mind the gap” by creating a content plan that targets all keywords that haven’t been optimized.

Opinions expressed in this article are those of the guest author and not necessarily Search Engine Land. Staff authors are listed here.

New on Search Engine Land

About The Author





Marcela De Vivo is an industry veteran with more than 20 years of digital marketing experience, Marcela travels the world speaking about SEO, data-driven marketing strategies, and workflow automation and optimization. Marcela owns a digital marketing agency called Gryffin based in California.
https://searchengineland.com/seo-guide-audience-research-content-analysis-385055