Content goals: Links, keywords and conversions

Ever since the early days of the internet, content has been a driving force in how we interact with the web. Bill Gates famously stated, “Content is king,” and even Google told us that content and links are driving forces behind their search rankings algorithm.

We get it…content is important. But do we really understand how to leverage content to be successful online?

The first step towards executing content well is understanding the primary goals of online content. For marketers, the main three goals of content are link acquisition, keyword improvement and conversion assistance. There is a case to be made for a fourth goal – branding and awareness.

However, branding bleeds into link acquisition and keyword growth as search visibility is a means of increased awareness online. The one exception might be publishing content on authoritative third-party websites where you don’t receive the benefit of earned backlinks or organic traffic, but still earn exposure and the potential for referral traffic.

But I want to focus on the three main KPIs marketers need to consider with their content marketing – links, keywords and conversions.

Crafting linkable content to build authority

Search visibility and success, start with links.

Links, along with content, are a primary factor in how search engines rank pages within their results and if you want

stronger search rankings, links must be a consideration. While links can be earned passively, you can't rely on others to find your pages serendipitously if you want to earn visibility in the most competitive search results – you need strategic content promotion and link building.

However, not all the content you create will be link-worthy or suited for link acquisition campaigns. Promoting the right pages is key to link building success and a firm understanding of what types of content are linkable will guide your link development strategy.

Linkable content targets a broad audience at the top of your marketing funnel; this content is intended for people in the awareness stage who may be engaging with your brand for the first time. You want your content to apply and be useful to as many people as possible, making it link-worthy – people don't link to irrelevant content, no matter how good the outreach email is.

Some common examples of linkable content include:

- Definitional or foundational content.
- Well-designed, visually compelling content.
- Controversial, opinionated content.
- Engaging, interactive content.
- Trendy, newsworthy content.
- Etc.

These types of pages cater to larger audiences and can sustain link building campaigns.

Almost ironically, it's difficult to get these linkable pages to rank in search because they are often competing for visibility in highly competitive SERPs (due to their broad topic coverage). However, if you can rank in these results, it's very likely you'll continue to earn links passively via citations from others covering these broad topics.

Ultimately, even if your linkable pages never rank well in search, they will still help you secure links that build topical authority and credibility for your brand and website, helping other more keyword-focused content rank.

Leveraging keyword-focused content for increased visibility

Links support rankings, but linkable content doesn't always rank well – it's designed for links, not rankings. However, you should also craft strategic, keyword-focused content with the intent of earning search rankings and visibility.

The primary goal of keyword-focused content is to rank well for a set of keywords and themes, and unlike linkable content – which targets a broad audience – this type of content addresses a more narrow, specific searcher intent and audience.

To find this audience, you need to execute strategic keyword research and niche analysis. Finding the right keyword targets is an extensive process, but you can get started by considering the following:

- Which terms and phrases are directly associated with your products and services?
- Does Google provide any "related searches" for these terms?
- Which terms does your audience use? Are they different?
- Do you see common synonyms or alternative phrasing on the current ranking pages?
- Are your competitors using different terms on their site?
- Etc.

This is not a comprehensive list, but these questions should get you started in the right direction.

As you tease out potential keyword targets, you also need to assess the viability of those terms and think about whether you can create something that could rank well for those searches – what is the search opportunity associated with each?

While there are a variety of factors that go into search opportunity, it essentially boils down to search volume and competition. The higher the search volume, the greater the traffic opportunity and lower competition mean a greater likelihood of ranking your content.

One important thing to remember with search volume is that estimates (from tools like SEMrush) can be low for an individual term because they only provide volume for that specific phrase. However, if you build a page that ranks well for an individual term, that page will also likely rank well for all the associated long-tail keywords, which can add up to a significantly higher total search volume.

While it can be difficult to secure links to keyword-focused content – again, this content focuses on a smaller audience – ranking your pages will provide the opportunity to earn passive links as citations from other content creators exploring the same subject. You should pursue any link opportunities available, but these pages typically rank based on their laser-targeted focus and the merit of other relevant pages (linkable content) on your site.

Building converting content to capture qualified traffic

Linkable content and keyword-focused content work together to improve organic search performance and bring more people to your site. However, you still need converting pages to capitalize on this increased exposure.

Converting content targets visitors at the bottom of your marketing funnel, prompting them to take a specific action (email signup, phone call, purchase, etc.). The promotional nature of these pages makes it hard to convince other sites to link. For the same reason, Google will only show these pages in searches that are commercial and specific to your product or service, and these are typically the most competitive search results.

However, with proper internal linking you can support rankings for your converting pages by transferring authority from your linkable pages. You can also use internal links to guide organic visitors to converting pages from high-ranking keyword-focused content.

Converting content is crucial to the success of your business, and I recommend checking out these resources to learn how to write converting pages and optimize your site for conversions:

Holistic content marketing for the win

Different types of content should have varying goals, and the three main goals of content online are link, keywords and conversions. To build a successful website, you need to address all three of these goals with your content.

The most effective content strategies account for these KPIs with various types of content that all work together to support each other – linkable content builds authority and supports rankings for keyword-focused content. The same content earns visibility and attracts new visitors to the site, internal links from those pages funnel organic visitors to converting pages where they fill out a form and get in touch with a sales person.

Investing into content is paramount to digital success, and

when all your pages are working together as part of a holistic content marketing strategy, it can be a beautiful thing.

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

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