# Leveling the playing field: Ahrefs’ free product to help content creators compete in Google

## 30-second summary:

- Google antitrust, the market cases you need to know.
- Google’s featured snippets do not payback content creators.
- How to make content discoverable – no matter the marketing budget.
- Tim Suolo, Ahrefs’ Chief Marketing Officer explains how they intend to level the playing field for smaller players.

While Google faces lawmakers with antitrust cases, it continues making billions from search result ads. Big players invest heavily in professional SEO tools and expertise to help get their content found in Google. Small businesses, nonprofits, and educational institutions struggle to get the organic traffic that their websites deserve. Today Ahrefs, an SEO toolset for digital marketers, releases a new free product – Ahrefs Webmaster Tools – to make SEO more accessible for website owners and help improve the discoverability of valuable content in Google.

## Google’s antitrust case: What you need To know

Google faces antitrust issues for its dominance in web search, digital advertising, and smartphone software. Making $160

billion per year from ads in their search results, Google leaves online businesses struggling to get the free organic traffic that their websites deserve.

## Travel antitrust crackdown of 2019

In 2019, Expedia Group Inc. saw its biggest revenue drop for 14 years, and TripAdvisor Inc. for two years. This is largely thanks to Google inserting its “Flights” feature into the search results for relevant travel queries.

## Back to 2016: Warner’s staff reduction

In 2008, Brian Warner launched CelebrityNetWorth.com to detail celebrity financial information. He hired a team of 10+ people to research the data, maintain its accuracy, and publish the investigations.

In 2016, a Google representative contacted Warner for permission to scrape his data. Warner declined but found his data in Google’s freshly-launched “Featured snippets” nonetheless. As a result, CelebrityNetWorth.com’s traffic dipped 65% within a month. This led Warner to cut staff by half.

# SERP features scrape your content with no payback

Google’s featured snippets aim to answer a user’s query instantly. Since users get their answers directly from the search engine, they no longer have to click through to pages. However, these features pose a problem for businesses that invest heavily in their content.

Google produces no content of its own. The answers for the SERP features come from existing content on websites, like Wikipedia. Google conveniently takes content from publishers and other websites and uses it in their SERP features.

In 2019, Rand Fishkin published the study confirming that less than half of Google searches now result in a click. This is a problem for content creators as they lose out on traffic from Google and, therefore, potential sales.

## Budget is no longer crucial:

# Quality content will be found

Big players invest vast budgets in professional SEO tools and expertise to dominate organic search, making it difficult for small and medium businesses to compete in search results.

Omid Ghiam, Content Marketing Manager at Webflow said,

> *“In an ideal world, great content would show up at the top of search results. In reality, the lack of basic SEO knowledge makes the quality content unheard.”*

To level the playing field for content creators, Ahrefs releases a free product – Ahrefs Webmaster Tools.

The initiative aims to improve the discoverability of valuable content from nonprofits, educational institutions, small businesses, and others who can’t yet afford to hire SEO specialists or invest in professional SEO tools. Dmitry Gerasimenko, CEO and Founder of Ahrefs explains,

> *“Our goal is to facilitate the infrastructure of the free and independent web, where everyone has an equal opportunity at getting discovered online. The competitive advantage should lie in the utility and quality of the information you produce, not in the knowledge of optimizing it for search engines.”*

# How does Ahrefs webmaster tools work?

A completely free SEO tool, Ahrefs Webmaster Tool (AWT) allows website owners to get deep and actionable insights to improve their website’s performance in search.

AWT scans any verified website for 100+ technical issues that

might hinder its search performance, highlights what they are, and explains how to fix them.

It also shows website owners their backlinks, most linked pages, keyword rankings, and estimated monthly organic search traffic.

To get started, all users need to do is sign up. Then, upon registering for a free account, users will need to add and verify ownership of their website(s) via Google Search Console.

Once done, users get access to two tools: Site Audit and Site Explorer.

Site Audit lets users scan their website(s) for 100+ SEO issues that could be hurting their performance in organic search. It also shows a breakdown of the most critical issues, how to fix them, and the affected URLs.

Site Explorer shows website owners important SEO data, including their backlinks, keyword rankings, most linked pages, and more.

This data will help make better SEO and marketing decisions.

“Great content always needs to be the starting point. However, any result beyond the first page won’t get found. Through our current SEO strategy, we’ve seen traffic increases up to 62%, and Ahrefs’ toolset has been a key part of that,” says Fergus Taylor, an SEO specialist at Typeform.

Ahrefs Webmaster Tools provides website owners with the data and insights they need to outrank big players with deep pockets for free.

*Tim Soulo is Chief Marketing Officer at Ahrefs. He can be found on Twitter @timsoulo.*

More about:

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