The ultimate guide to choosing keywords for ROI

Let me say this first – keyword research is hard! Every SEO has done it, but few will ever master it completely.

This is not supposed to be just another keyword research post. This post is about going beyond raw search volume data, using metrics which will help you choose keywords which deliver the best ROI for you right now.

To start with I am going to assume you have carried out your keyword research already, and are starting off with a comprehensive list (if not, our complete guide to keyword research for SEO will help you do this).

The more keywords, the better: you want to start with a massive data set and then use the below points to whittle down your keywords.

Here is the full list:

1. Get Cost Per Click data

Cost Per Click, or CPC data is invaluable to SEOs. Why should we have to test one keyword's effectiveness against another's when the PPC guys have already got it figured out?

If marketers aren't spending money to appear on the keyword, it's clearly not commercially viable. We want to be using CPC data to exclude keywords.

Any keywords with less than 50p CPC clearly isn't commercially viable, so ditch them from your list, and prioritize all those keywords with over £1 CPC.

2. Focus on what you already rank for

This point is about prioritizing short term goals. There is no point focusing on a keyword, no matter the search volume, if you don't rank for it.

Moving a keyword which isn't ranking to page 1 is going to take time, and will only start delivering traffic right at the end. Moving a keyword from position 11 to position 9 can take no time at all, and you will see the traffic coming through instantly from managing to get on the first page of Google.

Below is the classification we use at Zazzle Media to secure short-term wins for our clients and to help them to manage their expectations too. The position range column refers to the ranking position of each keyword on Google.

Position Range	Opportunity Group
2 – 4	Short Term
5 – 20	Quick Win
21 – 39	Medium
40+	Long Term

Click-through rate studies all show that it's page one or nothing, and as 'Short Term' and 'Quick Win' all sit on page 1 & 2, the vast majority of your traffic will be coming from these.

Long term keywords should not be ignored, especially if they can deliver significantly more traffic than other keywords, however your keyword optimisation strategy should reflect the effort-to-benefit ratio which the above classification will identify.

3. Choose the easy options

SEO is not done in a vacuum. For every campaign you invest in, there is always going to be a competitor out there investing more than you.

Ranking above a bigger brand is hard, very hard! If you're not up for going toe-to-toe, budget-wise, with the big players in your field, then you'll need to go after the easier keywords.

You can outrank more authoritative sites with more specific, more engaging content. However, as a rule of thumb we use referring domains as a signal of competitiveness on the keyword.

We use Majestic's Open Apps to get referring domain data at scale. However, any backlink audit tool is sufficient. It's best to look both at domain and URL level with this, with extra weight put on URL level (a 75/25 split).

Compare the average difficulty score for your keyword set against the URL on your site you wish to target the keyword on, and rule out any keyword massively out of reach.

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4. Focus on traffic, not search volume

So, if I'm searching for a fashion item… I type in 'dresses' only to see that the results page is full of women's dresses – this isn't what I wanted! I then have to change the search to 'men's dresses' to get the desired result. Think about the

thousands of other men in my position!

But seriously, some keywords will have more clicks per search, some less. Did you know the clicks per search for the phrase ‘Chelsea Boots’ is only 0.64? This means that out of every 100 searches, it only results in 64 clicks.

A search volume of 25,000 looks absolutely massive, but a clicks per search of only 16,236 massively reduces what was a huge keyword.

We get this information from Ahref’s keyword explorer, and it really is impossible to do it any other way. You can get a lean towards how strong a keyword is through inspecting the SERPs and seeing the conformity of the ranking URLs. Are all the websites similar? Or are we seeing informational mixed with commercial results, mixed genders, etc.?

Google is all about delivering the best results for its users, and a mixed bag of results is a quick indicator that it doesn’t know what the user wants, so we’d anticipate lower click volume. It’s impossible to do it this way at scale, but will help you choose between a few keywords.

5. Use seasonal data/trends

Lots of businesses rely on seasonal traffic, which will completely invalidate average search volumes. Make sure your traffic estimates are based on when you are busiest, and focus your strategy on delivering growth at that point in time.

This means on-page and technical changes made months in advance, before consolidating link equity to key pages when they need it most.

Equally so, Google trends is your friend; go after keywords with an upward trend (obviously), don’t prioritize a dying keyword. You can get exports of your top keywords and use a SLOPE formula to determine whether your keyword is increasing

or decreasing.

This is especially handy for your long-term keywords, to determine their true value.

6. Focus on keyword categories, not individual keywords

When completing keyword research, your keywords should be tightly categorized and mapped to individual URLs or directories. This allows us to see opportunity at a grander scale, helping you redraw the boundaries, and think more naturally about optimization.

Optimizing for individual keywords is so far outdated – content marketing helps us move beyond this and optimize for topics (this guide will help you do so). This helps us to be more informative and more comprehensive than our competitors. By grouping keywords by tight semantic relationships, you will not only have the head term, but also all the queries people have.

Think about it: what is more relevant and more authoritative than a directory/website that has great, in-depth content for every stage of the funnel?

Focusing on groups of keywords is not only more natural, but will deliver more opportunity for traffic growth as your supporting content ranks for keywords in its own right. If you have done enough to capture the right keywords, you can get conversions through bottom of the funnel, informational keywords.

The above six points will help you to have a more strategic approach to your initial keyword research, which enables you to get the best out of the resources you have – and get above the competition.

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SEO and social media would at first appear to be very diff

erent practices, especially when taking into account paid social advertising. How

ver, there are significant SEO benefits to be gained from utilizing social media

advertising as both an outreach platform and also as an analytics platform.

Both

Google Display Network and Facebook have great audience targeting capabilities

that allow marketers to get in front of target audiences. In Part 2 of our series on

killer demand strategy, we dive into how to target your personas and audiences on th

e Google Display Network.

Paid search is rapidly becoming the most powerful digi

tal marketing channel, with more than 2.3 million searches occurring every day.

By taking control of their customer data, marketers can gain visibility on their

paid search activities, and overcome the rising cost of customer acquisition and

retention.

SEO is a many-headed beast. From off-page elements to on-page elemen

ts, covering all aspects of SEO can easily become a Herculean task, especially

when dealing with large websites. That is why a tool that crawls your website on a

regular basis and brings back reports on what needs to be fixed is a must-have.

What are the key features that you should look for in a web crawler?