Using STAT for Content Strategy – Whiteboard Friday

Search results are sophisticated enough to show searchers not only the content they want, but in the format they want it. Being able to identify searcher intent and interest based off of ranking results can be a powerful driver of content strategy. In this week's Whiteboard Friday, we warmly welcome Dana DiTomaso as she describes her preferred tools and methods for developing a modern and effective content strategy.

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Video Transcription

Hi, everyone. Welcome to Whiteboard Friday. My name is Dana DiTomaso. I'm President and partner of Kick Point, which is a digital marketing agency based way up in Edmonton, Alberta. Come visit sometime.

What I'm going to be talking about today is using STAT for content strategy. STAT, if you're not familiar with STAT Search Analytics, which is in my opinion the best ranking tool on the market and Moz is not paying me to say that, although they did pay for STAT, so now STAT is part of the Moz family of products. I really like STAT. I've been using it for quite some time. They are also Canadian. That may or may not influence my decision.

But one of the things that STAT does really well is it doesn't just show you where you're ranking, but it breaks down what type of rankings and where you should be thinking about

rankings. Typically I find, especially if you've been working in this field for a long time, you might think about rankings and you still have in your mind the 10 blue links that we used to have forever ago, and that's so long gone. One of the things that's useful about using STAT rankings is you can figure out stuff that you should be pursuing other than, say, the written word, and I think that that's something really important again for marketers because a lot of us really enjoy reading stuff.

Consider all the ways searchers like to consume content

Maybe you're watching this video. Maybe you're reading the transcript. You might refer to the transcript later. A lot of us are readers. Not a lot of us are necessarily visual people, so sometimes we can forget stuff like video is really popular, or people really do prefer those places packs or whatever it might be. Thinking outside of yourself and thinking about how Google has decided to set up the search results can help you drive better content to your clients' and your own websites.

The biggest thing that I find that comes of this is you're really thinking about your audience a lot more because you do have to trust that Google maybe knows what it's doing when it presents certain types of results to people. It knows the intent of the keyword, and therefore it's presenting results that make sense for that intent. We can argue all day about whether or not answer boxes are awesome or terrible.

But from a visitor's perspective and a searcher's perspective, they like them. I think we need to just make sure that we're understanding where they might be showing up, and if we're playing by Google rules, people also ask is not necessarily going anywhere.

All that being said, how can we use ranking results to figure out our content strategy? The first thing about STAT, if you

haven’t used STAT before, again check it out, it’s awesome.

Grouping keywords with Data Views

But one of the things that’s really nice is you can do this thing called data views. In data views, you can group together parts of keywords. So you can do something called smart tags and say, “I want to tag everything that has a specific location name together.”

Opportunities – where are you not showing up?

Let’s say, for example, that you’re working with a moving company and they are across Canada. So what I want to see here for opportunities are things like where I’m not ranking, where are there places box showing up that I am not in, or where are the people also ask showing up that I am not involved in. This is a nice way to keep an eye on your competitors.

Locations

Then we’ll also do locations. So we’ll say everything in Vancouver, group this together. Everything in Winnipeg, group this together. Everything in Edmonton and Calgary and Toronto, group all that stuff together.

Attributes (best, good, top, free, etc.)

Then the third thing can be attributes. This is stuff like best, good, top, free, cheap, all those different things that people use to describe your product, because those are definitely intent keywords, and often they will drive very different types of results than things you might consider as

your head phrases.

So, for example, looking at “movers in Calgary” will drive a very different result than “top movers in Calgary.” In that case, you might get say a Yelp top 10 list. Or if you’re looking for “cheapest mover in Calgary,”again a different type of search result. So by grouping your keywords together by attributes, that can really help you as well determine how those types of keywords can be influenced by the type of search results that Google is putting out there.

Products / services

Then the last thing is products/services. So we’ll take each product and service and group it together. One of the nice things about STAT is you can do something called smart tags. So we can, say, figure out every keyword that has the word “best” in it and put it together. Then if we ever add more keywords later, that also have the word “best,”they automatically go into that keyword group. It’s really useful, especially if you are adding lots of keywords over time. I recommend starting by setting up some views that make sense.

You can just import everything your client is ranking for, and you can just take a look at the view of all these different keywords. But the problem is that there’s so much data, when you’re looking at that big set of keywords, that a lot of the useful stuff can really get lost in the noise. By segmenting it down to a really small level, you can start to understand that search for that specific type of term and how you fit in versus your competition.

A deep dive into SERP features

So put that stuff into STAT, give it a little while, let it collect some data, and then you get into the good stuff, which is the SERP features. I'm covering just a tiny little bit of what STAT does. Again, they didn't pay me for this. But there's lots of other stuff that goes on in here. My personal favorite part is the SERP features.

Which features are increasing/decreasing both overall and for you?

So what I like here is that in SERP features it will tell you which features are increasing and decreasing overall and then what features are increasing and decreasing for you.

This is actually from a real set for one of our clients. For them, what they're seeing are big increases in places version 3, which is the three pack of places. Twitter box is increasing. I did not see that coming. Then AMP is increasing. So that says to me, okay, so I need to make sure that I'm thinking about places, and maybe this is a client who doesn't necessarily have a lot of local offices.

Maybe it's not someone you would think of as a local client. So why are there a lot more local properties popping up? Then you can dive in and say, "Okay, only show me the keywords that have places boxes." Then you can look at that and decide: Is it something where we haven't thought about local SEO before, but it's something where searchers are thinking about local SEO? So Google is giving them three pack local boxes, and maybe we should start thinking about can we rank in that box, or is that something we care about.

Again, not necessarily content strategy, but certainly your SEO strategy. The next thing is Twitter box, and this is

something where you think Twitter is dead. No one is using Twitter. It's full of terrible people, and they tweet about politics all day. I never want to use it again, except maybe Google really wants to show more Twitter boxes. So again, looking at it and saying, "Is Twitter something where we need to start thinking about it from a content perspective? Do we need to start focusing our energies on Twitter?"

Maybe you abandoned it and now it's back. You have to start thinking, "Does this matter for the keywords?" Then AMP. So this is something where AMP is really tricky obviously. There have been studies where it said, "I implemented AMP, and I lost 70% of my traffic and everything was terrible." But if that's the case, why would we necessarily be seeing more AMP show up in search results if it isn't actually something that people find useful, particularly on mobile search?

Desktop vs mobile

One of the things actually that I didn't mention in the tagging is definitely look at desktop versus mobile, because you are going to see really different feature sets between desktop and mobile for these different types of keywords. Mobile may have a completely different intent for a type of search. If you're a restaurant, for example, people looking for reservations on a desktop might have different intent from I want a restaurant right now on mobile, for example, and you're standing next to it and maybe you're lost.

What kind of intent is behind the search results?

You really have to think about what that intent means for the type of search results that Google is going to present. So for AMP, then you have to look at it and say, "Well, is this newsworthy? Why is more AMP being shown?" Should we consider moving our news or blog or whatever you happen call it into

AMP so that we can start to show up for these search results in mobile? Is that a thing that Google is presenting now?

We can get mad about AMP all day, but how about instead if we actually be there? I don't want the comment section to turn into a whole AMP discussion, but I know there are obviously problems with AMP. But if it's being shown in the search results that searchers who should be finding you are seeing and you're not there, that's definitely something you need to think about for your content strategy and thinking, "Is AMP something that we need to pursue? Do we have to have more newsy content versus evergreen content?"

Build your content strategy around what searchers are looking for

Maybe your content strategy is really focused on posts that could be relevant for years, when in reality your searchers are looking for stuff that's relevant for them right now. So for example, things with movers, there's some sort of mover scandal. There's always a mover who ended up taking someone's stuff and locking it up forever, and they never gave it back to them. There's always a story like that in the news.

Maybe that's why it's AMP. Definitely investigate before you start to say, "AMP everything." Maybe it was just like a really bad day for movers, for example. Then you can see the decreases. So the decrease here is organic, which is that traditional 10 blue links. So obviously this new stuff that's coming in, like AMP, like Twitter, like places is displacing a lot of the organic results that used to be there before.

So instead you think, well, I can do organic all day, but if the results just aren't there, then I could be limiting the amount of traffic I could be getting to my website. Videos, for example, now it was really interesting for this particular client that videos is a decreasing SERP for them, because videos is actually a big part of their content strategy. So if

we see that videos are decreasing, then we can take a step back and say, “Is it decreasing in the keywords that we care about? Why is it decreasing? Do we think this is a test or a longer-term trend?”

Historical data

What’s nice about STAT is you can say “I want to see results for the last 7 days, 30 days, or 60 days.” Once you get a year of data in there, you can look at the whole year and look at that trend and see is it something where we have to maybe rethink our video strategy? Maybe people don’t like video for these phrases. Again, you could say, “But people do like video for these phrases.” But Google, again, has access to more data than you do.

If Google has decided that for these search phrases video is not a thing they want to show anymore, then maybe people don’t care about video the way that you thought they did. Sorry. So that could be something where you’re thinking, well, maybe we need to change the type of content we create. Then the last one is carousel that showed up for this particular client. Carousel, there are ones where they show lots of different results.

I’m glad that’s dropping because that actually kind of sucks. It’s really hard to show up well there. So I think that’s something to think about in the carousel as well. Maybe we’re pleased that that’s going away and then we don’t have to fight it as much anymore. Then what you can see in the bottom half are what we call share of voice.

Share of voice

Share of voice is calculated based on your ranking and all of your competitors' ranking and the number of clicks that you're expected to get based on your ranking position.

So the number 1 position obviously gets more ranks than the number 100 position. So the share of voice is a percentage calculated based on how many of these types of items, types of SERP features that you own versus your competitors as well as your position in these SERP features. So what I'm looking at here is share of voice and looking at organic, places, answers, and people also ask, for example.

So what STAT will show you is the percentage of organic, and it's still, for this client – and obviously this is not an accurate chart, but this is vaguely accurate to what I saw in STAT – organic is still a big, beefy part of this client's search results. So let's not panic that it's decreasing. This is really where this context can come in. But then you can think, all right, so we know that we are doing "eeh" on organic.

Is it something where we think that we can gain more? So the green shows you your percentage that you own of this, and then the black is everyone else. Thinking realistically, you obviously cannot own 100% of all the search results all the time because Google wouldn't allow that. So instead thinking, what's a realistic thing? Are we topping out at the point now where we're going to have diminishing returns if we keep pushing on this?

Identify whether your content efforts support what you're seeing in STAT

Are we happy with how we're doing here? Maybe we need to turn our attention to something else, like answers for example. This particular client does really well on places. They own a lot of it. So for places, it's maintain, watch, don't worry about it that much anymore. Then that can drop off when we're thinking about content. We don't necessarily need to keep writing blog post for things that are going to help us to rank in the places pack because it's not something that's going to influence that ranking any further.

We're already doing really well. But instead we can look at answers and people also ask, which for this particular client they're not doing that well. It is something that's there, and it is something that it may not be one of the top increases, but it's certainly an increase for this particular client. So what we're looking at is saying, "Well, you have all these great blog posts, but they're not really written with people also ask or answers in mind. So how about we go back and rewrite the stuff so that we can get more of these answer boxes?"

That can be the foundation of that content strategy. When you put your keywords into STAT and look at your specific keyword set, really look at the SERP features and determine what does this mean for me and the type of content I need to create, whether it's more images for example. Some clients, when you're looking at e-commerce sites, some of the results are really image heavy, or they can be product shopping or whatever it might be.

There are really specific different features, and I've only

shown a tiny subset. STAT captures all of the different types of SERP features. So you can definitely look at anything if it’s specific to your industry. If it’s a feature, they’ve got it in here. So definitely take a look and see where are these opportunities. Remember, you can’t have a 100% share of voice because other people are just going to show up there.

You just want to make sure that you’re better than everybody else. Thanks.

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