

better keywords, better customers:

A BUSINESS GUIDE TO

keyword generation



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EXTRAS:

- [Quick Start Guide for the Keyword Project Sponsor](#)
- [Quick Start Guide for the Keyword Researcher](#)
- [Sample Primary Research Questionnaire](#)
- [Keyword-Driven Website Content Analysis Framework](#)
- [Sample Keyword Research Output Spreadsheet Template](#)



Keyword research is the foundation of any online marketing campaign. No matter what you plan on doing, from creating a website or social profile to a comprehensive search optimization strategy or pay per click advertising campaign, it is essential that you start with keyword research. Your best keyword phrases should be used everywhere from your elevator pitch to your latest social updates.

Once you find out what people are searching for in your industry, you have unlocked the key to succeeding in all areas of online marketing. Let's take blogging for example. Business blogs help drive traffic, leads, and great search rankings for long tail keywords -- phrases that usually include three or more words, have lower search volume, but are searched for by a very relevant target audience. If you start with a great keyword list for your business, you will also have a list of great topics to blog about. It may not look like much, but if you expand upon your main keyword phrases, you will be able to create great content that searchers and search engines alike will love.

Next, let's think about social media. You can take advantage of the keywords you've generated through your research and use them in a variety of ways. For example, you can help ensure that people looking for businesses in your industry will find you by using those keyword phrases in your profiles and updates, as other social networkers can search both using a variety of social media tools and applications. You can also use those keyword phrases as search terms to monitor on sites like Twitter so that whenever someone is discussing that keyword phrase, you will be able to jump into the conversation.

Not last, and certainly not least, is search engine optimization (SEO). If you complete your keyword research before you start your website, you will be able to build perfect on-site optimization by gearing your pages, content, meta tags, and all other elements toward your most important keyword phrases. With this sturdy optimized foundation, you can continue with your offsite SEO via a strong link building campaign built on creating backlinks for pages using the best optimized keywords.

The best part about performing your keyword research at the earliest date possible is that you can begin your online marketing campaign in the right direction. You'll lose a substantial investment in your online marketing if you start out targeting terms that are not profitable for your business -- so why wait?

If you've not yet done the proper keyword research for your company, now's the time to learn more about it and get started today!

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introduction to keyword generation

WHAT IS KEYWORD GENERATION?

Keyword generation is a research and analysis process that helps you find the best words and phrases to use in your marketing content (e.g., website content, search engine ad copy, product brochures, case studies, sales collateral). The goal is to help you better reach specific target markets via search engine results.

The keyword generation research process leverages existing knowledge that your marketing team has already built over time, but also looks at how your products, services, and business benefits are described by competitors, prospects, and experts in the market. With the use of keyword suggestion tools and keyword combination generation techniques, this list of keywords can be expanded even further to capture the “long tail” versions of the relevant keywords universe.



MICHAEL BRENNER
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“I often talk about the importance of putting our audience at the center of everything we do and creating customer-focused marketing plans. Keyword research is fundamental to that process because it allows marketers to get inside the minds of our buyers – not just in understanding what they are looking for, but the actual words they are using. Magic happens when businesses create content that maps directly to their needs and uses our buyers’ own language.”

WHY DO YOU NEED KEYWORD RESEARCH?

Keywords are used to optimize your content and other online channels. Put simply, the more you use your target keywords throughout your online content, the easier it will be for your targets to find you. In the end, you will increase traffic to your website while your company becomes more relevant in the minds of potential prospects.

Discovering the best keywords for your company and using them effectively is necessary for companies to compete in the market today. Keyword research is no longer the exclusive domain of high-priced specialists; there are many tools available that your marketing staff can use to execute a keyword generation project.

HOW? THERE ARE THE FIVE PRIMARY STEPS INVOLVED:

1. Generate a list of keyword candidates from various sources
2. Determine a prioritization scheme based on the intended use of the keywords
3. Gather keyword metrics to be used in the prioritization process
4. Select the top keywords using data and your prioritization scheme
5. Deliver the keywords

OF COURSE, EXECUTING ON THIS STRATEGY IS NO EASY TASK. FOR EXAMPLE, IT CAN OFTEN BE A CHALLENGE TO:

- Ensure comprehensive coverage of keywords and keyword data sources
- Collect accurate, up-to-date keyword data
- Develop a logical, appropriate prioritization system to identify the top keywords
- Obtain buy-in from your organization and ensure that the keywords are being used properly

The first stage of a keyword generation project typically involves researching and collecting data from a number of primary and secondary sources, and using automated keyword suggestion tools to generate a comprehensive list of possible keywords. Next, the keywords are prioritized, taking into account the following three factors and/or their proxies, if actual metrics are hard to calculate or are unavailable:

1. **Search volume**, or the number of searches being done on a particular keyword over a given period, which indicates the potential volume of search-originated traffic for that keyword.
2. **Competition**, a measure of the difficulty to generate a unit of search-originated traffic for that particular keyword.
3. **Audience relevance**, a measure of the quality of the traffic generated by that particular keyword.

Remember -- **keyword selection is not a one-time project**, and should be incorporated into a regular update and refresh schedule.

the business benefits of keyword research

Identifying and using the most effective keywords enables you to optimize your marketing efforts in several ways:

- **Paid search engine marketing** will benefit immediately from keywords with lower cost per click (CPC) or higher conversion rates.
- **Strategic and consistent use of keywords** throughout your online content will undoubtedly allow your site to attain better organic search engine visibility (i.e. higher rankings in search engine result pages).

The top keywords should form the core of your messaging in other mediums as well, including social media. Your non-textual content, such as videos and podcasts, can be tagged with relevant keywords and linked to other online content.

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Keyword Research Tips for Online Marketers

KEYWORDS are the lifeblood of your SEO campaign; pick the wrong ones and you won't get very far. For your SEO efforts to be successful, you must be able to properly identify the terms that your site should be targeting to ensure maximum ROI and conversions. To get you started, here are five keyword research tips that online marketers should take advantage of.

1. Use Your Noggin. First, brainstorm all the terms that you think a customer would type into a search bar when trying to find you. Stay away from jargon and buzzwords, and hone in on the phrases that describe your products, your company, and what it is you do. Make note of research-related terms, buying-oriented terms, and terms that cover the full gamut of what you offer to customers. If you were searching for you, what terms would you use?

2. Use the Right Tools. Employing keyword research tools can help you discover additional opportunities, while also allowing you to see search activity for those terms. This will tell you whether or not a particular phrase is worth going after and how competitive it will be to rank for. Tools like [Google AdWords](#), [WordStream](#), [Wordtracker](#), and [SEMRush](#) are invaluable for this reason.

3. Use Your Analytics and Site Search Data. Between site analytics and log files, marketers are able to find two very important bits of information: the keywords that are currently sending traffic to the website and the terms users are searching for once they get there. Armed with this information, site owners can find opportunities to increase traffic for terms that are already converting, as well as identify new keyword opportunities based on what users are searching your site for.

4. Use Social Media. Be it Twitter, Facebook, or a popular blog/forum, your customers are coming together online to talk about their industry. When they do, what terms are they using to do that? How are they describing what you do, what you sell, and what you offer? What language are they using? One of the great things about social media is that it allows you to observe your customers without them knowing they're being watched. As a result, they act and speak more naturally. By honing into this and using your customers' natural language, you'll be able to target stronger keywords.

5. Use Others. You're an expert at what you do. Because of that, you may have a difficult time thinking like "normal users" and speaking their language. To help, ask people who aren't experts what they would type into a search bar to find you. Consult friends, colleagues, current customers, and so on. You can also "ask" Google what terms it finds most relevant to your business by taking advantage of the related searches Google populates at the bottom of your results page. If Google thinks two terms are related, it's because users have told them so through the way they search.

LISA BARONE
Chief Branding Office
Outspoken Media



a customized approach to keyword research

You should launch your keyword generation project by following the basic framework of conducting research, analyzing data, and prioritizing keywords. The scope and depth of the project, however, will depend on the intended use of the output. Therefore, your keyword generation process should start off with a clear definition of the **scope**.

Typical scoping factors for your project include the desired number of keywords to be generated as well as the number of products and market segments your content is aimed at. More often than not, we suggest generating a separate set of keywords for each product and market segment. This will help ensure that your keywords and content are as focused as possible on the appropriate prospects, and hence bring about the best outcome for your online search marketing efforts.

DESIRED ROLES FOR A KEYWORD RESEARCH PROJECT

There are three primary roles in the keyword generation process:

1. **The project sponsor**, typically a VP of marketing or director of online marketing, who is responsible for setting the goals and scope of the project and ensuring that its outputs are leveraged in the manner intended.
2. **The keyword researcher**, who is responsible for executing or leveraging other resources to execute the research and analysis steps in the project.
3. **The online content manager (and/or social media manager)**, who is responsible for ensuring that the keywords are used in online content. While not required, it could be helpful to have this person involved in the research process, as he or she will ultimately help ensure that the keywords found in the research are used in practice.

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

The success of a keyword generation project will depend on 1) the quality of the keywords that are identified, and 2) whether the keywords are used correctly to optimize online marketing content, hence leading to higher traffic to the site. Examples of metrics include:

- Increased organic search traffic for selected keywords.
- The position in search engine results of each target keyword is increasing.
- More visitors are coming in because of each target keyword increase.
- The bounce rate of visitors is low and the conversion of the visitors from the target keywords is high – which is ultimately what you are trying to accomplish. If they are low for certain keywords, then those particular keywords may not be driving the best relevant traffic.
- Decreased average cost per click.

Keep in mind, however, that even with the right set of keywords, traffic may not increase if the keywords are not used correctly. Therefore, increase in organic search traffic is only a consequence of good keyword selection — not a necessary result — and thus is not really a good success metric per se.

In the old days (2009), keyword research was fairly straightforward. You researched what folks were searching for and generated a targeted page of content around that phrase. You then did your SEO, built some links, and hoped to rank.

If you were successful, you could scale this process. Many content farms rose to prominence and dominated search results by producing tens of thousands of pages targeting every keyword phrase imaginable. The quality of this content wasn't always the best, and many prominent people complained to Google about the value of their search results.

In early 2011, Google responded by releasing what has become known as the Panda Update. The most sophisticated algorithm update in search engine history, Panda effected over 12% of Google's search results and took direct aim at content farms.

Panda uses human quality raters to look at sites, then employs complex machine learning to mimic those human rates to evaluate millions of pages across the Internet. If a quality rater (or Google's search engine) sees page after page of similar looking content, or content based on slight keyword variations, it could count as a strike against your site.

In the age of Panda, keyword research isn't about producing junk content around every conceivable variation of a keyword. Today, we recommend finding the best "natural" keywords that your visitors are searching for, and creating comprehensive, high-quality content around a tightly focused topic.

Supplemental keywords can be used to enhance your focus. Instead of "stuffing" your content with the same keywords over and over, fill it with highly relevant text that contains semantically related language. For example, if your keyword phrase was Houston Auto Insurance, you could use Google's Keyword Tool to find related phrases like "auto insurance comparison" and "full coverage" that might help strengthen your contextual signals for targeted keywords.

The best advice in the age of Panda is to use keyword research to create the best, most comprehensive quality content that you can. Don't game the system. This is a practice that works best for both search engines and humans, and will continue to improve as search engines evolve.



What Does Google Panda Mean for Keyword Research?



CYRUS SHEPARD
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top challenges (and solutions) of keyword generation

There are many common challenges and pitfalls that can derail a keyword research project. Here are just a few examples, with ideas for getting around each.

Incomplete Coverage. With a research-dependent process such as keyword generation, a common pitfall involves not having complete coverage of input sources or prioritization data, which will result in incomplete or deficient output. To alleviate this, the keyword generation team needs to be exhaustive in its planning of research activities, be open to input from all staff members so they don't miss any major data sources, and stick to their research plan even it requires additional time or resources.

Faulty Prioritization Criteria. A poor understanding of the prioritization process can lead to the wrong/inappropriate prioritization criteria being applied. To avoid this, use the tried-and-true prioritization scheme described by experts in the field as a reference, and make sure that each factor in the ranking process makes logical sense.

Inaccurate Data. Bad data (e.g., outdated data sources, data entry errors, and data corruption) can be introduced at a number of points in the process, particularly during calculation or prioritization. To alleviate this, the keyword researcher should always check for a data source's last date of update/refresh, check for data entry mistakes, and keep backups of data files during the process.

Lack of Buy In. The prioritization process and its final outputs might not be completely accepted by the stakeholders. This is expected, as team members who do not participate directly in the process may have questions about the prioritization criteria and research process, or might simply have strong opinions about particular keywords. To address this, keep all stakeholders on the same page, be extremely transparent about the research and prioritization process, and make clear that keyword generation is an iterative process, whereby after each "run," further inputs and feedback are collected to be incorporated the next time.

getting started with keyword research generation

Your company can initiate a keyword generation project immediately if you put the proper focus on the effort. The following resources include high-level process guides and checklists that will help the people in each role perform their activities relatively quickly.

- [Checklist for the Project Sponsor \(Pg. 11\)](#)
- [Quick Start Guide for the Project Sponsor](#)
- [Checklist for the Keyword Researcher \(Pg. 12\)](#)
- [Quick Start Guide for the Keyword Researcher](#)
- [Checklist for the Online Content Manager \(Pg. 13\)](#)

We've also provided a number of templates and sample questionnaires to be used during the research and analysis phases. They are:

- [Sample Primary Research Questionnaire](#) — Use this spreadsheet to record data collected during interviews, material reviews, and database mining.
- [Keyword-Driven Website Content Analysis Framework](#) — A guide that shows you how to analyze website content to discover keywords.
- [Sample Keyword Research Output Spreadsheet Template](#) — Use this template to record detailed information about keywords, including their sources.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CHECK OUT THESE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Keyword Research

[Keyword Research Guide](#) (Wordtracker)

[Keyword Research for Web Writers and Content Producers](#) (Copyblogger)

[Navigating Keyword Strategy in B2B SEO](#) (Galen De Young, Search Engine Land)

[B2B Keyword Research When You're in a Niche Market/Industry](#) (Jody Minetz, Ask Enquiro)

[Jumping Through Hoops: Enterprise Level SEO Tips](#) (Merry Morud, AimClear Blog)

Prioritization Schemes

[Keyword Effectiveness Index \(KEI\) with Google Keyword Data](#) (Vince Law, Maverick Web Creations)

[Additional Prioritization Variables to Consider](#) (Russ Altman, Team Altman.com)

[How Do I Prioritize Keywords for My Search Campaign?](#) (Jeff Shi, The clickTRUE Blog)

[Determining Keyword Value: A Recipe for Prioritizing Page Optimizations](#) (Nuno Andrade, SEOmoz)

CHECKLIST

for the keyword project sponsor

The sponsor is responsible for setting the goals and scope of the project and ensuring that its outputs are leveraged in the manner intended. This short checklist can help ensure that the keyword prioritization scheme is clear and well understood.

- I have developed and finalized a project execution plan.
- I have finalized the prioritization scheme with input from other stakeholders.
- I have finalized the adoption plan of action to ensure the effective use of keywords.
- I have worked with the keyword researcher to produce a presentation that will deliver the final keywords and develop a plan to update them in the future.

CHECKLIST

for the keyword researcher

The researcher is responsible for executing or leveraging other resources to execute the research and analysis steps in the project. This checklist can help the researcher generate the highest quality keyword list.

- I have a project execution plan that has been approved by the project sponsor and agreed upon by other team members.
- I have taken the following steps to ensure primary and secondary research success:
 - Scheduled interviews with relevant staff members
 - Reviewed prior keyword research results
 - Reviewed our present marketing materials
 - Secured access to data sources such as website analytics, paid search analytics, site search analytics, and referral analytics
 - Compiled competitors' names, websites, and publicly available materials
 - Compiled industry reports
 - Compiled lists of the most important websites in the selected segment(s)
- The research and prioritization processes are transparent and accessible to all stakeholders.
- The data is high-quality and the output is sound.
- I have in place:
 - A standardized data entry template
 - A standardized data entry procedure
 - A standardized research output template
- I have conducted a rigorous data review.
- I have incorporated feedback and input from all stakeholders on the output of the project, and will incorporate their feedback as appropriate.
- The keyword list is the best list possible.

CHECKLIST

for the online content and/or social media manager

Of course, generating a list is only half the battle. The next step is to make sure the right keywords are used properly in online content. This basic checklist can be used by the content manager or social media marketer to maintain a practice for implementing your overall keyword and SEO strategy.

- I have vetted and am comfortable with the project execution plan.
- I have developed an adoption plan of action for the output of the project.
- I will participate in key primary research steps in the project:
 - Interviews with relevant team members
 - Review of existing marketing content
 - Review of competitors' marketing content
 - Review of previous keyword research

about this eBook

This eBook was created by OpenView Labs to help companies conduct their own keyword research projects and extend their reach to potential customers. It includes checklists, quick start guides, and sample templates to help you get a keyword generation project up and running in a hurry.

About OpenView Labs

OpenView Labs is the strategic and operational consulting arm of [OpenView Venture Partners](#), a global Venture Capital fund that invests in expansion stage technology companies.

More Information

Visit the [OpenView Labs website](#) for more ideas and inspiration for senior managers of technology companies.

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