

Whitepaper: 5 questions to ask when planning SEO content

If you're in it to win it, invest time up front in planning your content.

Here are a few key questions to consider before kicking off your SEO content creation.

1. Is there demand?

Content is a lot like business. Your idea might be amazing...to you...and maybe your mom.

But, if it doesn't solve a real problem that exists in your niche, there is no market for it. And it'll fall on deaf ears.

Why ask this:

Avoid many, many, many wasted hours. It is not fun to create content only to have it fail. If you blindly chase that topic idea and later find that it didn't get the viral buzz you had dreamed of, you'll be very disappointed that you wasted the time creating it.

How to answer:

Find out if there is interest in your content idea by doing keyword research.

Hint: You can use the Keyword Difficulty Tool to find out if your topic is in demand and how hard it will be to rank for it.

Start with a seed phrase that represents the topic you are envisioning.

Evaluate the balance between its popularity and competition scores.

We've written other posts on how to choose the best keywords for your site. So we won't get into that detail here.

Knowing the popularity and likelihood of ranking, you can determine whether the seed phrase you entered is worth pursuing.

If it is not, you might stumble on some relevant alternatives that are still in-line with your concept. Consider allowing this keyword discovery process to slightly reposition your original idea into something that preserves the essence of it, but satisfies a proven demand that people have shown an interest in.

2. What syntax does your customer use?

Word choice can be a very personal thing. You say to-may-toes, I say to-mah-toes.

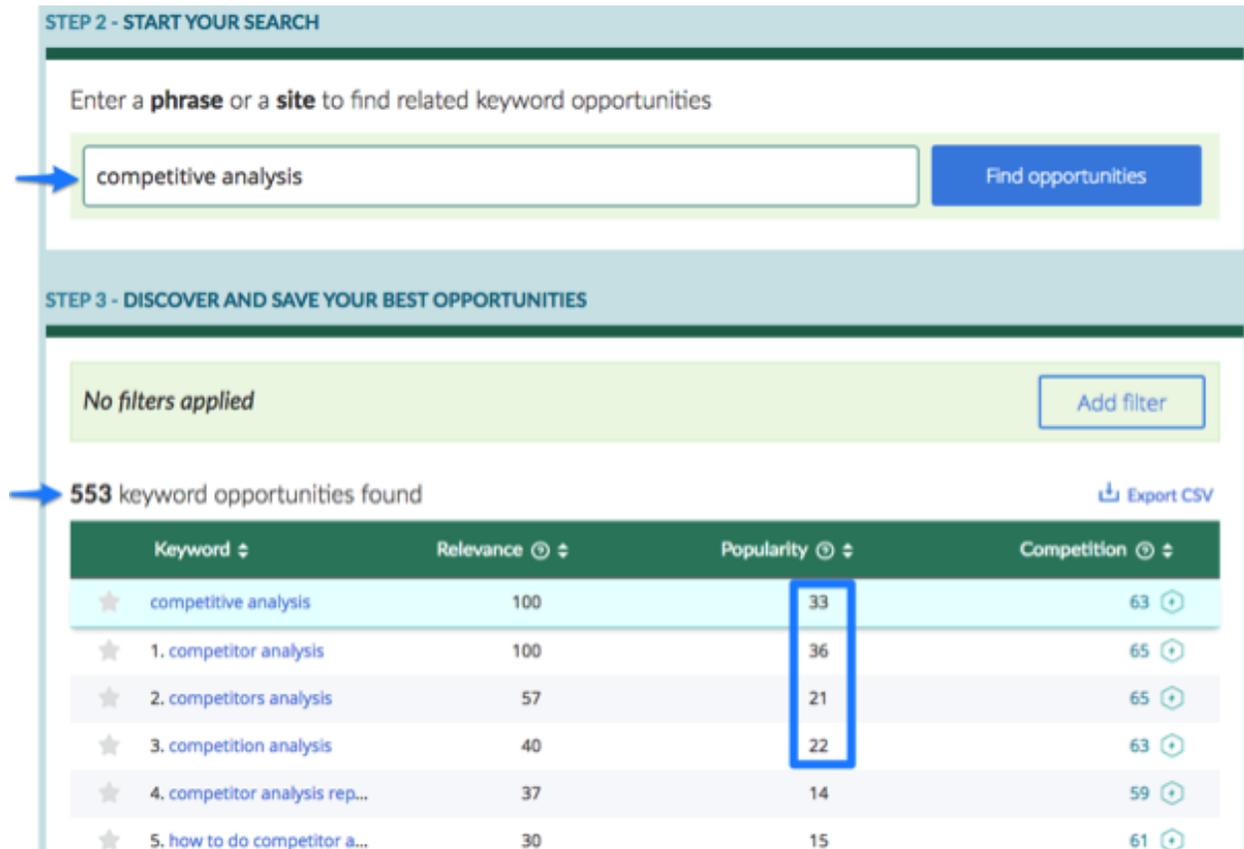
When it comes to driving organic traffic to your SEO content, the best word choice is far from subjective.

Here's an example. I work with some really smart people. Pssst...Data Science team, I'm talking about you. And they use big words. For example, when talking about competitive analysis, they might use the lingo "contextualizing market position."

While a legitimate way to convey the same thing, the rest of the world might not communicate that way. Using common language, or layman's terms, is the best way to ensure your content captures and resonates with the largest audience.

For example:

The layman’s term for “competitive analysis” returned 553 closely related keyword options, with the top options showing a decent popularity relative to the competition score.

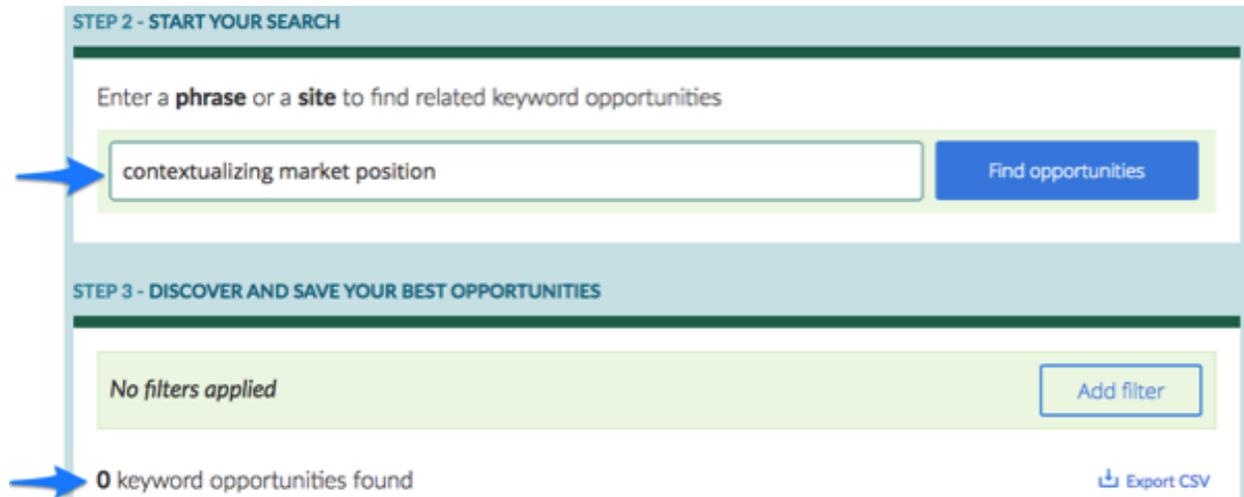


The screenshot shows a two-step process. Step 2, 'START YOUR SEARCH', features a search bar with the text 'competitive analysis' and a 'Find opportunities' button. Step 3, 'DISCOVER AND SAVE YOUR BEST OPPORTUNITIES', shows 'No filters applied' and '553 keyword opportunities found'. Below this is a table with columns for Keyword, Relevance, Popularity, and Competition. The first row, 'competitive analysis', has a popularity score of 33, which is highlighted with a blue box. Other rows include '1. competitor analysis' (popularity 36), '2. competitors analysis' (popularity 21), '3. competition analysis' (popularity 22), '4. competitor analysis rep...' (popularity 14), and '5. how to do competitor a...' (popularity 15).

Keyword	Relevance	Popularity	Competition
competitive analysis	100	33	63
1. competitor analysis	100	36	65
2. competitors analysis	57	21	65
3. competition analysis	40	22	63
4. competitor analysis rep...	37	14	59
5. how to do competitor a...	30	15	61

Compare that to the 0 results and 0 popularity of the complex phrase “contextualizing market position.”

Read: People don’t use that language in search.



The screenshot shows a two-step process. Step 2, 'START YOUR SEARCH', features a text input field containing 'contextualizing market position' and a 'Find opportunities' button. Step 3, 'DISCOVER AND SAVE YOUR BEST OPPORTUNITIES', shows 'No filters applied' with an 'Add filter' button. Below this, it states '0 keyword opportunities found' and includes an 'Export CSV' link. Blue arrows point to the search input and the '0 keyword opportunities found' text.

In this case, though the phrase is intellectually outstanding, it is just that...outstanding. There's a downside to that. When it comes to satisfying content demand—a key ingredient in SEO success—common language usually yields the highest search potential. And as we see, this phrase does not.

Why ask this:

Avoid using unrecognizable or uncommon jargon. Use the same lingo your customers use.

How to answer:

Keyword research. (It's amazing how many problems keyword research solves!)

In addition to validating content *demand* (mentioned above), keyword research also clues you in to the *syntax*—the words and phrases—your prospects use to answer their questions in search. Looking at the popularity of keywords can shine a light on the best way to speak their language.

So with one swift move, you can tackle question #1 and #2.

Get your answers here >> Sign up for a trial of Advanced for access to our keyword research tools.

3. What stage of the customer lifecycle does it address?

Now you know what's in demand (from #1). And you know what language resonates with your audience (from #2).

As you zero in and choose SEO keywords to write content about, think about what intent the keyword implies.

Put yourself in the searcher's position. If you typed that keyword into Google, what would you be hoping to find? What does that search term tell you about what the searcher wants?

- Do they want to learn about something?
- Are they just curious what something is?
- Do they have a problem and are looking for a solution?
- Is that problem something your business helps solve?
- Are they looking to buy something?
- Does your business sell that something, or a great alternative?

Why ask this:

Align the SEO content you create to the intent of the searcher. Make sure you deliver what the searcher is seeking. Google will thank you for it—in the form of rankings.

How to answer:

If you can't tell on gut instinct what the search intent of a keyword is, go to Google and see how the top 10 results answer that search query. Trust that Google is a good judge of search intent. If the top 10 results are all educational, that's what Google has learned the searcher wants for that query. If they are transactional, then it's likely a buyer keyword with purchase intent.

4. How well is your competition serving searchers' interest?

Do they fully answer the question? Or do they offer a shallow answer that leaves the searcher in need of more details?

Why ask this:

Getting to page 1 on Google—or better yet, rank position #1—is a competitive challenge. Someone has to get bumped to make room for your spot in the limelight. For that to happen, you need to offer something that satisfies search intent better.

How to answer:

While you are still answering question #3 above, scope out your competition. This is what you are up against. So you must do a better job at answering search intent, with more enticing content, than one of those guys.

Look at all organic results on the first page and consider:

- What intent are they serving (educational, transactional, etc)?
- How thoroughly do they answer the search? Is it concise and to the point? Or do they take a more holistic approach to answering by covering other closely related topics?
- How long is the content (i.e. word count)?

- What media do they use to tell the story (i.e. images, video, infographic, etc.)?
- Do they cite and link out to other external resources?
- What call-to-action or next step do they take the visitor down (i.e. content download, free trial sign up, purchase, etc)?
- Does the page look nicely designed?

5. What would you want the reader to do next?

If you get your SEO content to rank on the first page, what would you hope to achieve when a visitor clicks through and lands on the content?

Here are some options for likely next steps:

- Buy your product
- Join your email list
- Download a piece of content in exchange for their email
- Share the page
- Just read it and go—no commitment expected. And then...retarget them with ads

This goes back to the question #3 above about searcher intent. The search intent of the target keyword suggests what stage of the funnel a searcher is in. Your expectation of what you want these visitors to do next should be consistent with what their intent implies about the stage of the customer lifecycle they are in.

The buyer journey can be a long one, with many micro commitments that lead them down your sales funnel. Each piece of content should address a single stage of that lifecycle with the goal of getting the visitor to take one small step forward in your funnel.



In other words, don't expect someone who is seeking educational content to stumble on your content and immediately buy your product. They aren't ready.

But, you can help educate them with your content and offer a killer downloadable guide about whatever it is they are learning about.

They'll get to know you, know the topic they are learning about, and in time as they become purchase-ready, they will have been on your email list for awhile getting all sorts of valuable content from you, and already trust you—making their decision to purchase from you easy.

Why ask this:

Your content should meet a searcher's readiness to commit. Give them what they are looking for and offer a call-to-action that will *gradually* move them closer to becoming a customer.

How to answer:

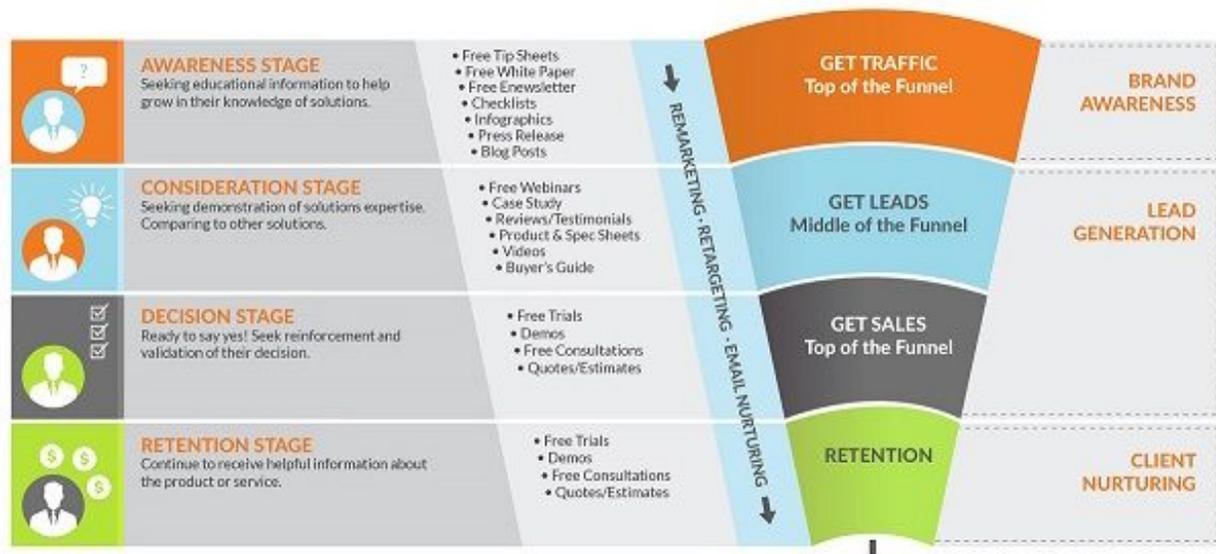
You already have...if you've done your homework for questions #1-4.

You'll have the insight you need to know what your prospects want, what stage of the lifecycle they are in, and what the competition is doing.

Use that to offer up the best answer and the most suitable best call-to-action.

Reference:

Here’s a handy guide for content types that align to the various funnel stages.



Source: Foxtail Marketing

Published on Forbes: Your Step By Step Content Marketing Strategy

Takeaway

Creating SEO content and getting it to rank is hard work. Arm yourself with the knowledge to make the most of it. That means planning based on proven signals about what has the highest chance of ranking. But it also means thinking forward to the next step of how you will reap the benefits once you’ve gotten on the first page of Google by converting your organic visitors—even if that means capturing their email and nurturing your new relationship with them.

Need assistance on building out SEO contact. Contact us at BanyanCreativeNC.com

Research prepared by Alexa.com

