

Keyword Research White Paper

What will I learn about doing a keyword research?

Since keyword research forms the foundation of successful Search Engine Marketing (SEM) we have put the basics together in this white paper. We will answer the following questions:

- What is keyword research and what use is it to me?
- When to consider keyword research?
- What is the long tail and why is it so important?
- How to conduct keyword research?
- Which tools could help me with my keyword research?
- I have finished my keyword research, what is next?

The tips and tricks you will find in this white paper will give you enough knowledge to conduct your own keyword research and lay the foundation for successful SEM and optimisation.

What is a keyword research and what use is it to me?

Keyword research, also called keyword review, is research focussed on finding the keywords people use in a search engine when looking for products or services in your sector. So the goal of a keyword research is selecting the words and phrases which have a lot of relevant traffic

The difference between good and bad keywords and phrases can be small. Suppose you sell mobile phones. Would you like to be found on the keyword 'mobile phone' or 'cell phone'? At first glance, rather similar words, they mean the same and are used just as often. Right?

A keyword research shows the following monthly global search queries:

Cell phone <850k, cell phones <200k, mobile phone 9.14M, mobile phones 3.35M

(Source: Google AdWords Keyword Tool). In this specific case you want to aim at using 'mobile phone' and 'mobile phones'. As proven by this example, there could be a big

difference in the number of search results by words with apparent similar meaning.

As an expert in your field of knowledge, you will probably use the necessary professional language. But do your visitors know these words?

It could be that you as an expert use other keywords, when describing your products/services, than the clients you are trying to reach. A keyword research helps you look at your products/services from a customer's point of view.

A keyword research could also come in handy to get new ideas for pages to add to your website, since it could reveal surprising combinations of keywords and phrases.

In short, knowing which keywords and phrases are mostly used in search queries is of high importance, because you are likely to miss a lot of potential customers if the optimisation of your website for SEM is based on keywords hardly anyone uses.

When to consider a keyword research?

There are 3 times in which you should consider conducting keyword research.

You're launching a new website

If you're launching a new website, getting the structure right is extremely important. A good structure enhances the probability that the visitors of your site find what they're looking for, and don't leave your websites before they have done what you wanted, like buying your products.

As previously discussed a keyword research gives you insight in the search queries you're (potential) customers use. In addition to being used as a base for the content on your website, these words and phrases also form the base of the structure of your website. By including these keywords in the structure of your new website you enhance the probability your visitors find what their looking for.

2) You're about to change the structure of your existing website

By making adjustments to the structure of your website the same reasons that apply to launching a new website apply.

3) You're adding content to your website

If you're adding content to your website this will generally be on subject not or not extensively discussed. Within this content you will use terminology which should also be based on your keyword research. If the subjects are not covered by your keyword research it is wise to still do so, this increasing traffic to this content.

What is the long tail and why is it so important?

The 'long tail' refers to the phenomenon that many small ones form 1 bigger one. Some 'top' keywords could generate a lot of traffic. However, the number of keywords and phrases to which this applies is limited. Other keywords might generate less traffic. However, if you add all those keywords with less traffic together, you still get a substantial amount of traffic.

The image below describes this process. On the left are the top keywords and to the right the less important ones. They form a long tail. And that is what the term 'long tail' is derived from.

(Source:www.businessopeners.nl)

Google Vice President Udi Manber indicated in May 2007 that 20%-25% of all search queries are processed for the first time. In addition, research shows that the top keywords are responsible for 30% traffic to a website and the long tail words for 70%.

The number of search queries existing of multiple words is also increasing. This is important for you, since it is easier to achieve a good position in the search engine results by using long tail words than the top keywords. So don't exclude these long tail words, but apply them in a creative way to your website.

How to conduct a keyword research?

Now a walkthrough for conducting a keyword research will follow. Every step includes a short explanation.

1) Brainstorm

Conduct a brainstorm session together with some people from inside your organisation and

write down all words and terms (1-3 words) that describe your product or services. It may also be wise to include someone from outside your organisation, since these people have a different view and description on the products and services you're offering.

It is important to keep the following things in mind when brainstorming:

- Write down everything, even if it might sound crazy
- Do not start evaluating right away, you'll do this later
- Stimulate each other to think creatively. The idea behind brainstorming is using each other's creativity and build on that.

2) Complement and expand

Once you have created a list of keywords, it is time to start complementing and expanding that list. You can do so by taking the following steps:

Brands

Add all your brands to the list.

Products

Add all your products and serial numbers to this list. In case you sell books, you could for instance list the all titles, writers, publishers and ISBN-numbers.

Synonyms

Add synonyms of the keywords currently on your list. This is important, because a search engine cannot recognize synonyms the way people can.

Plurals and diminutives

Add plurals and diminutives of the keywords currently on your list. Sometimes plurals or diminutives are more popular search terms than the general terms.

Existing website

Take a close look at you current website and add keywords that you use a lot.

Advertisements

Analyse your advertisements in the broadest sense of the word (e.g. press releases, ads, radio, TV, online etc.) and add relevant keywords to your list.

Go up one level

Select keywords that are one level above the product you are selling. Suppose you sell furniture. In this case words like 'living room' or 'house' are one level above the product you

are selling.

Web analytics

This step is very important. If you already have a website, you can use web analytics to see which keywords that you are currently achieving high rankings on in search engines. You can also use web analytics to find keywords that are currently being used in your internal search engine* (*if you have one, and if you have programmed your analytics properly)

Combinations

Make combinations of keywords from your current list of keywords.

Analyse your competitors

Your competitors can help you get some great ideas for keywords. Take a look at their website and look at what keywords they use to describe the product and services that compete directly with yours. View their online and offline advertisements, press releases, exposure in the media etc. and use this information to expand your list of keywords.

Industry associations

Take a look at which keywords are used by industry associations to describe the products/services you are selling and add them to your list.

Tools

Use one or more tools from the chapter 'Which tools could help me with my keyword research?' to expand your list.

3) Filter your keywords

Filter out the less important keywords from your list based on the number of search queries performed on the keywords on your list. You can use one of many tools to that will be discussed in the chapter 'Which tools could help me with my keyword research?' to do this.

4) Determine your top keywords and phrases

Based on your current list, including the number of monthly search queries, you can now make a list of your most important keywords and phrases, the so-called top keywords. These are the keywords and phrases, relevant to your business, that have the highest number of monthly search queries. The other keywords and phrases are also important, so don't delete them. You can use them in your content to attract long tail traffic.

Which tools could help me with my keyword research?

There are many tools you can use to expand your list of keywords and determine the quality of your keywords. We'll mention some of them:

Frequently used combinations

If you run a search query and type a * before and after your keyword, you'll find keywords that are usually queried in combination with your keyword. For the search query *car* this leads to, among others, the following combinations:

- car news
- car reviews
- car rental
- green car
- car technology
- car design
- car magazine
- car prices
- car maker
- small car

Etc.

How often does your keyword appear?

When you do a search query in Google, you can also see how many times the keyword appears on the web. Suppose you use the keyword car again. You can add one of the operators below and add them to the URL of the search engine result pages.

Example:

http://www.google.com/#sclient=psy&hl=nl&site=&source=hp&q=car&aq=f&aqi=g4g-o1&aql=&oq=&gs_rfai=&pbx=1&fp=e43c55d1f3d16170 becomes for example:

http://www.google.com/#sclient=psy&hl=nl&site=&source=hp&q=car&aq=f&aqi=g4g-o1&aql=&oq=&gs_rfai=&pbx=1&fp=1&cad=b&as_qdr=d.

Below the search box you see the number of results.

Below we have listed some operators which you can paste behind the URL:

Operator Period

&as_qdr=d 1 day
&as_qdr=d4 4 days
&as_qdr=w 1 week
&as_qdr=w5 5 weeks
&as_qdr=m6 6 months
&as_qdr=y2 2 years

Google AdWords Keyword Tool & Traffic Estimator

You can find this tool using the following URL:

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>. You can fill in your keyword or phrase in the box at the top of the page. If you hit 'search' you will be taken to a result page with the following columns:

Keyword: Here you will find the keyword or phrase you have just entered as well as relevant keywords and phrases.

Competition: The more colour in the bar, the bigger the competition

Worldwide monthly searches: Speaks for itself

Local monthly searches: These are search queries performed in your region.

Local search trends: Here you can see the development of the number of queries on your keyword or phrase over the last couple of months.

Google Trends

With Google Trends you can analyse the search trends over a given period. You can find Google Trends via: <http://www.google.com/trends>.

By typing in a search query and clicking '?search trends?', you'll get a graph that displays trends. By clicking 'all regions' in the upper right corner, you can select your own country. You can even specify sub regions.

Yahoo! Search Marketing

Yahoo! also offers a keyword tool. You need to create a free account, though. This can be done via: <http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com>. This tool, just like Google's Keyword tool, is free.

Note! Use the outcomes of these tools only as an indicator and not as an absolute truth.

I have finished my keyword research, what is next?

With your keyword research in hand, you can now start looking at creating an optimal architecture for your website. You can also start writing copy for your website. You should use your keyword research as a base for both of these tasks.

Conclusion

By doing keyword research you are laying the foundation for successful Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Start off by brainstorming. Expand your list of keywords and phrases by looking at things like your current website, ads or competitors. Use one or more tools to determine the most important keywords and phrases.

Doing keyword research is a time-consuming process, but it is time you want to take. After all, how successful can a website be that is optimised for the wrong keywords??