



Business Strategies

Your Roadmap To Stand Out

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By **Michael Hammond**

Now is the time to think about what's your differentiator? How do you stand out in the current competitive mortgage market? One sure way to get there is to create good content that gets you online traction. How do you do that?

In the article entitled "5 Keyword Research Steps not to Overlook to Create Better Content" written by Ann Smarty, she shares some tricks of the trade. She says everything, from SEO to content marketing to customer engagement, is hinging on finding and cornering the best and brightest keyword combinations.

For the most part, you probably have the process down to an art. You know the steps, you are aware of how to use the data and have been doing it for long enough that you have watched the resulting benefits rolling in. But could you be skipping a couple of the more creative tactics in keyword research? Here are some to consider implementing (if you weren't already).

1. Organize Your Keyword Lists Properly

Long gone are the days when we had to create a landing page for every little variation of a keyword we were able to find. I am glad our industry is forced to evolve into a more integrated and smarter tactic. These days search engines prefer long-form expert content that covers a lot of related concepts and is organized well.

Content structure starts at the keyword research level – therefore keyword list organizing is a crucial step (which is overlooked by many content publishers, sadly).

Keyword clustering isn't new, but it's more frequently discussed these days because it helps structure your content and optimize it for a lot of related terms. A more common approach to keyword clustering is finding a common term and going from there. This approach is very limiting but luckily we have more advanced

tools at our disposal.

2. Research Questions Behind Search Queries

Google search offers a great way to research what people are wondering about when they type a query in the search box. We have all seen the expandable section that provides the question, offers a bit of an answer and allows the reader to click-through to learn more.

More than that, it provides a chance for researching niche questions and thus understanding your audience better. That makes answering questions, especially niche queries that fewer sites are trying to answer, an awesome strategy.

Covering niche questions can diversify any site's organic rankings:

"People Also Ask" results help you create better-targeted content (and attract more organic users)

"People Also Ask" results are closely connected to Google's "Featured snippet" algorithm, which means that covering them in your content can give you additional exposure in search.

We don't know how exactly Google finds these questions and how its algorithm decides whether a certain question deserves to be listed there. But after years of using and optimizing for Google, I can be fairly sure that paying attention to whatever Google is showing is a solid marketing strategy.

Make "People Also Ask" results a part of your content research and optimization process. Look for the questions people are asking that you are uniquely qualified to answer. Then create content addressing them, attracting more organic leads and building your site authority.

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3. Use Social Platforms For Keyword Validation

The platforms we have access to these days provide so much opportunity to understand your audience better by simply watching and recording what they do and what they talk about.

Social media is a goldmine of information, as well as a great way to directly engage with customers, would-be customers and influencers. You can also use it to validate your findings when it comes to keywords.

Because the influence of social platforms is so intense, keywords are not just important when it comes to general search. You can get some great insights from social media or even a way to establish a whole other style of keyword driven campaign. Since so much referral traffic comes from social media platforms, there is no excuse not to make it a big part of your efforts.

There are dozens of tools you can use for social media monitoring (Cyfe, TweetDeck, Hootsuite, SproutSocial...). All of those and the many others that exist are great, efficient methods of gathering social insights. But don't underestimate the power of good 'ol fashioned search and sort on the social platforms themselves. Adding a bit of human element means you have a better chance of establishing complete lists that use imagination in the search, something automated tools lack. Use tools to monitor social media context but play with different search operators to find those that work well for you.

The reason social media should be used for keyword research is that it provides real-life context: Actual people talking about your core topic. In this sense, tools that analyze social media context and provide related terms and hashtags can provide additional data for you to work with.

4. Monitor Competitors' Keywords (and How They Use Them)

Your competitors are dominating their own keywords. Maybe you should be following their example. To do that, you need a couple of tools that will help you to find out what they are targeting and how they are doing it.

Free tools really don't have all the features you need (though they can still be awesome for supplementing your efforts), so you need to be prepared to invest some money.

For an in depth competitive insight try Spyfu. Their data dates back to many years ago. In fact, I think it's the first competitive intelligence tool I've come across in our industry.



Keyword research is useful on so many levels, from content brainstorming to gaining organic visibility. There's no one perfect way to do that.

If you don't mind building your own dashboard, Cyfe is an all-in-one business platform that includes some monitoring tools. You select and build your widgets and get only what you need, for about \$19 per month, less if you pay annually.

With Cyfe you can monitor any amount of Twitter search widgets, Moz, RSS feeds (those from Google Alerts, for example), Google Trends, and so much more.

5. Expand to Related Keywords

Sometimes you just need to see what other key-phrases you could be using in order to be inspired and improve your research. I have lost track of how many times I have gotten a whole new campaign started, or even found content ideas, using this method. Though it used to be harder, having to be done manually or with some less than stellar research tools that required a few extra steps.

In the end, keyword research is useful on so many levels, from content brainstorming to gaining organic visibility. There's no one perfect way to do it, but if you want to stand out in today's mortgage market you need to do it. ❖

Michael Hammond is chief strategy officer at PROGRESS in Lending Association and the founder and president of NexLevel Advisors. NexLevel provides solutions in business development, strategic selling, marketing, public relations and social media. He can be reached at mhammond@nexleveladvisors.com.