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PRE-CONFERENCE WORKBOOK

**CURRENT SEARCH STRATEGIES TO
INCREASE YOUR EXPOSURE**

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SETTING UP GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE

Google Search Console is a key tool for aiding and monitoring your SEO efforts. To set up Google Search Console, follow these steps:

1. Sign in to your Google account associated with your company/organization. Ideally this should be the same Google account that you use for Google Analytics access.
2. Navigate to <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/home?hl=en>
3. Type in a website URL and click "Add Property."



NOTE: Currently in Google Search Console, each subdomain is treated as a separate property. This is also true for http and https versions of a site. Further in the process there will be instructions on how to add these additional properties under one umbrella.

4. Next you will need to verify that you are the owner of this property. There are five methods to choose from to verify. Often the easiest method is listed under "Alternate Methods". If you have administrative access (manager users, edit, collaborate, read & analyze) in Google Analytics with this Google account, you should be able to use the Google Analytics verification method. The same is true if you have administrative access to Google Tag Manager – you can then likely use the Google Tag Manager verification option. I prefer these options because they do not require FTP access to the server. However, if these do not work, you will need to use the recommended method of placing a blank HTML file on your root directory of your server with the filename provided by Google. Once you have chosen your verification method, click "Verify."

SETTING UP GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE

Once you have verified your ownership of the website property, you'll have full access to Google Search Console for this property. You can easily provide others in your organization with access by clicking on the gear button in the upper right corner and selecting "Users and Property Owners." There you can add, delete and set permissions for all users.

Adding Multiple Subdomains and HTTP/HTTPS Versions

Each subdomain requires its own Google Search Console property. Additionally, http vs https versions of a site must each have their own property. However, Property Sets allow you to bundle all of these common site properties together and gain some report information across the properties.

First follow the directions above to create and verify each property. Then create a property set and add the properties to the set:

1. From the Google Search Console home page, click on the "Create a set" button in the upper right.
2. Give the property set a name, then select the properties to add to the set and save.

KNOWLEDGE GRAPH

The Knowledge Graph is a knowledge base used by Google to enhance its search results. It aims to provide information at a glance about a particular search query. Try some examples:

| | | |
|--------------|------------------|----------|
| Pont du Gard | Thomas Jefferson | Marriott |
| Eiffel Tower | Albert Einstein | Google |
| White House | Oxford | Samsung |

Companies and organizations can also have branded knowledge graph results, as shown with our last column of examples. Does your company or organization have a Knowledge Graph result? Do a search for your brand name to see.

GOOGLE ANSWERS

Associated with the Knowledge Graph is Google Answers. Google Answers provide quick answers to questions. Let's try a few:

| | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| How far from the Earth is the Sun? | What is Knowledge Graph? | Arby's menu |
| What is MPG? | 2+2 | awards for Serena Williams |
| How old is Betty White? | How many calories are in a banana? | What is Papyrus? |

What types of answers might your company or organization be able to answer? Try some sample searches. Do any Google Answers come up? Is a competitor answering the question?

GOOGLE RANKBRAIN AND THE HUMMINGBIRD ALGORITHM

Google RankBrain is the machine learning portion of the ranking algorithm to help process search results. It is part of the Hummingbird algorithm.

One of the benefits of RankBrain and Hummingbird is their ability to understand similar keywords, geography and relationships between items. In the early days of SEO, marketers commonly had to use exact match keyword phrases to rank in Google organic search for that term. But RankBrain and Hummingbird have made it easier to rank for similar terms.

Try these searches to see which keywords are **bolded** during your search and enter that term on the line at right.

1. online marketing

2. back doctor

3. financial software

4. local brewpub

5. us president

GOOGLE RANKBRAIN AND THE HUMMINGBIRD ALGORITHM

6. crockpot recipe _____

7. drug store _____

8. Virginia universities _____

9. coffee cup _____

10. gold medal swimmer _____

Now try a few keywords on your own. What types of keywords are important to your organization? Can you use a similar keyword or phrase? What types of associated terms and phrases are bolded?

PERFORMING KEYWORD RESEARCH

Keywords are the foundation of search engine optimization. You can develop keywords and keyword phrases from a variety of sources.

GOOGLE KEYWORD PLANNER

If you have a Google AdWords account, log in and select Tools > Keyword Planner.

1. Select "Search for new keywords using a phrase, website or category."
2. Under Customize your search > Keyword Filters, turn the "Only show ideas closely related to my search terms" item on and save.
3. Start with entering the keyword "tax software" into the keyword box only and click "Get Ideas."
4. Look under the "Keyword Ideas" tab for keyword suggestions. The table provides each entry with an estimated monthly search volume. Use this as a guide when comparing keywords. More broadly searched terms will likely be more competitive. Typically speaking, the more words that are in a phrase, the less competitive it likely will be.
5. You can add keywords to your research list by clicking on the >> for that word in the "Add to plan" column.
6. When you've added all of the keywords you want, you can download these words you added to your plan to a CSV file.



Now try for your own company or organization. What are some keywords you can think of? Enter them into the "Your product or service" search box and click "Get ideas." Use the table on the next page or the Google spreadsheet at https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1pWw_SyFa95awIB1bPERnF21RneXdWdpK2mbY15YGtZo/edit?usp=sharing to record your ideas.

KEYWORD RESEARCH **Google Autocomplete**

Google Autocomplete is the feature that appears when you start to type a search query and Google begins to anticipate what your search might be and “auto completes” it as you type. Queries appear in autocomplete in order of popularity of actual queries that have been performed by you or others, so it can be a good aide in finding extensions to your keyword phrases.

1. Navigate to <http://www.keywordtooldominator.com/k/google-autocomplete-keyword-tool>
2. Enter the term “coupons” in the search box and click the magnifying glass button.
3. Scroll through the keyword results list to find additional keywords you might use. Using this tool, you can select the keywords you want in the Keyword List by checking or unchecking the checkbox.
When done, click the “Add Selected to Your Keyword List” and click “Download Selected Keywords” to download your list.

Now try this with a keyword for your company or organization. Add them to your keyword list table and look up the search volume of each using the Google AdWords Keyword Planner for comparison.

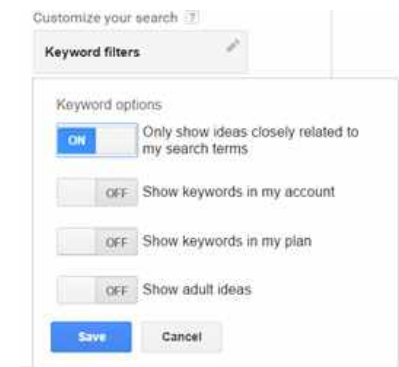
COMPETITOR KEYWORD RESEARCH

There are several ways to get keyword ideas from your competitors. This can help you to determine if you are targeting popular keywords in your industry.

Keyword Planner

If you have a Google AdWords account, log in and select Tools > Keyword Planner.

1. Select "Search for new keywords using a phrase, website or category."
2. Under Customize your search > Keyword Filters, turn the "Only show ideas closely related to my search terms" item on and save.
3. Instead of entering a keyword, this time, enter your competitor's URL for a sample page in the "landing page" form field. Click "Get Ideas."
4. Look under the "Keyword Ideas" tab for keyword suggestions. The table provides each entry with an estimated monthly search volume. Use this as a guide when comparing keywords. More broadly searched terms will likely be more competitive. Typically speaking, the more words that are in a phrase, the less competitive it likely will be.
Look at the keywords. What does Google seem to perceive this site is about?
5. You can add keywords to your research list by clicking on the >> for that word in the "Add to plan" column.
6. When you've added all of the keywords you want, you can download these words you added to your plan to a CSV file.



COMPETITOR KEYWORD RESEARCH

Other Tools: SEMRush

There are many additional keyword tools available, and many of them are free. One to try is SEMRush, which provides additional information beyond keywords.

1. Navigate to <https://semrush.com>
2. Enter the url of a competitor in the search box and click "Search."
3. Click on "Organic Research" at the left to see the top 10 organic keywords it recognizes for your site for free.

KEYWORD RESEARCH *Creating a Final List*

Once you've compiled a research list with many keywords and phrases, you'll want to narrow down the list to a few keywords to focus on at a time. Use a Google spreadsheet to organize your keywords and their search volumes. Use new sheets or tabs for each product or services to keep your words organized.

Look at your list. Sort the list by search volume, highest to lowest. You're looking for words that have search volume, but may not be too broad. For example, if you sell running shoes, the term "shoes" would be too broad. More appropriate choices would be "running shoes" or specific brands, like "Asics running shoes".

Are there words you can combine into longer phrases? Using long tail keywords in this way will help you actually optimize for multiple stem keywords at once.

TITLE TAGS AND DESCRIPTION TAGS

Title tags become the title on a search engine result. Meta description tags can also be the description in the result if Google deems the description is appropriate. Note that Google will, from time to time, rewrite titles and descriptions and will not always use what the website owner has written in these tags. The title and the description present the website owner with an opportunity to craft a compelling message to entice the searcher to click on that website's search result.

Only a certain number of characters will appear in the title and description displayed in search results, so it's important to try to capture a concise message within those character limit guidelines. Otherwise, the title or description may be cut off, leaving a message incomplete. The actual number of characters in the title and description vary because Google uses the Arial font for its search results page on many platforms. Arial is a proportional-based font – each letter takes up a proportion of space based on its needed width. With a proportional font, the letter I and the letter W do not take up the same amount of space. Therefore, we can't know an exact number of letters in the search result title or description because it depends on the letters used.

On the desktop, title tags are generally 60-70 characters in length. Descriptions are typically 150-160 characters in length. When writing and editing title tags, I find it helpful to use a Google spreadsheet using the len() formula to calculate the length of my titles and descriptions as I edit.

Try it for yourself. Navigate to <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Xt7hjb7oF-xj45OWxY0zeXkd8WLbxpZBOsVZ-6WLbIc/edit?usp=sharing> and try the spreadsheet with your own titles.

ADDING KEYWORDS TO CONTENT

As we've established with RankBrain and Hummingbird, it isn't essential to have the exact match of a keyword phrase appear repeatedly on a web page. However, I recommend using the exact match version when possible, just to be clear what the page is about.

Let's try adding a keyword phrase to a page of content. Here is a sample page of HTML content. How would you rewrite this page to incorporate the keyword "personal tax software"?

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Current Title Tag | Tax Preparation Software, FREE Tax Filing, Efile Taxes, Income Tax Returns |
| Current Meta Description Tag | Our tax software is the #1 best-selling tax software. Free Edition includes free IRS efile. Easily prepare your tax return and file income taxes online. |
| Current Body Text | <p>File simply and securely with our tax software</p> <p>With secure data technology for safe filing and free audit support, you can prepare your taxes with confidence. Our tax software also offers up to five free federal e-files.</p> <p>What You Get</p> <p>Our tax preparation software allows you to chat with a tax expert for free unlimited advice. Importing your W2 and 1099 information from last year's return is also free. Before you file, our software double-checks your return for any potential issues so that you have the best tax software experience possible. And like all of our products and services, we are committed to monitoring and protecting your data 24/7.</p> |

ADDING KEYWORDS TO CONTENT

Current Title Tag

Current Meta Description Tag

Current Body Text

DUPLICATE CONTENT

Do you possibly have duplicate content on your website? Some common places where duplicate content can occur are on blogs and on ecommerce category pages with sort features.

How can you determine if you have duplicate content? A first step and free way to find out is to simply do a Google search!

Duplicate Content On Your Domain

To check for possible duplicate content on your domain:

1. Navigate to a page on your website that could have duplicate content. Copy a paragraph from the page, preferably lower than the first paragraph.
2. Navigate to <https://google.com>.
3. In the search box, type "site:" (without quotations) followed immediately by your website domain. Do not put a space after the colon! (ex: site:marketing-mojo.com)
4. Following the domain, add a space followed by a quotation mark. Paste your paragraph and type another quotation mark. Your end result should resemble: site:marketing-mojo.com "my paragraph here"
5. Click enter.

Google will return all of the pages from your site that have that paragraph on it. Look at them. Are they truly duplicates? If so, what is causing the duplication problem?

If you truly do find duplicate content but cannot remove one of the versions, use the canonical tag to point Google and other search engines to the most important version. For more information on the canonical tag, visit <https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/139066?hl=en#2>.

MEASURING PAGE SPEED

Google has clearly defined page load speed as a ranking factor. How does your site measure up? Use the Google Pagespeed Insights Tool to see how you stack up.

NOTE: The page speed tool works on a page-by-page basis. Even if one page of the site is considered to have a good page speed, another page may not.

1. Navigate to <https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/>.
2. Enter the URL and click "Analyze."

Google will return a set of results for the mobile version of the page and the desktop version of the page. The information provided will be very specific on how to optimize the page load speed.

Try this with several of your URLs. You can even compare yourself to a competitor by entering their URLs. How do you compare on scores?

UNDERSTANDING YOUR INBOUND LINKS

Inbound links are still considered a very important ranking factor for SEO. Inbound links are links pointing to your website from another website. Quality and reputation of the websites linking to you makes a difference in their value.

It's also important to understand inbound links because of the Google Penguin update, which looks for spammy links and may penalize your site in search results for these bad links.

To see the links Google has identified for your website:

1. Log in to your Google account.
2. Navigate to Google Search Console. Click on your website's property.
3. In the left hand navigation, choose Search Traffic > Links to Your Site.
4. Under "Who Links the Most," click More>>.
5. To download all of the links, choose one of the download buttons at the top of the page.
6. To see the pages that a particular site is linking to, click on the domain for that website

How many links does the top site have to your website? Does it look odd? Is it abnormally high? Check out the linking domains to your site and see which pages they are linking to.

DISAVOWING SPAMMY INBOUND LINKS

If you see the list of links appears to have some websites in it that you do not want Google to associate with your website, you can use the Disavow option to indicate to Google that you want to disassociate your site with the given linking site.

To disavow links, first follow steps 1-5 for Understanding Your Inbound Links. Determine which links are spammy. First try reaching out to these sites to have links to your site removed. If they are not removed, continue with the disavow process. A sample disavow file looks like this, with only one URL per line:

```
# example.com removed most links, but missed these
http://spam.example.com/stuff/comments.html
http://spam.example.com/stuff/paid-links.html
# Contacted owner of shadyseo.com on 7/1/2012 to
# ask for link removal but got no response
domain:shadyseo.com
```

is used for comments within the file.

Once complete and saved as a txt file, upload your disavow file:

1. Navigate to <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/disavow-links-main?authuser=1>.
2. Select the property you wish to disavow links for.
3. Upload your txt file with the list of links to disavow.

MOBILE FRIENDLINESS

Google now has a separate mobile ranking algorithm for mobile search. Mobile design friendliness is a major factor in how high sites rank in mobile. Is your site mobile-friendly? Try Google's Mobile Friendly Test Tool to find out.

NOTE: The mobile friendly test tool works on a page-by-page basis. Even if one page of the site is considered mobile friendly, another page may not be.

1. Navigate to <https://search.google.com/search-console/mobile-friendly/>.
2. Enter the URL of your website page.
3. Google will tell you if the page is mobile-friendly, and if not, what to fix.

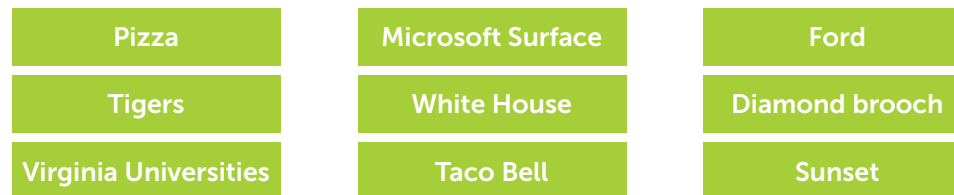
You can also find mobile usability issues listed in Google Search Console under Search Traffic > Mobile Usability.

SEARCH PERSONALIZATION

Every search on Google is now personalized to the user in some way. This can make SEO measurement difficult because rankings won't be consistent among all searchers.

Do a search for the following queries. Try them on your desktop computer and your smartphone. Do the items rank in the same order?

Notice how the different queries also use different types of results. For example, some have image results mixed with the website results. Others have local results. Google is trying to predict the type of information you're looking for based on lots of factors, including search history, location, device and even the query itself.



Now let's see how Google personalizes your search based on who you are. Log out of your Google account and search for your company's name. In a new tab, log in to Google and perform the same search. Compare the two results. Are any different?

What does Google know about you? What does your personal search history look like?

Navigate to <https://myactivity.google.com/myactivity?hl=en>. Here you'll see what Google has tracked for your search history.

IS THAT PAGE INDEXED?

A simple way to tell if pages on your site are being indexed by Google is to use the site: command with a query. This shows only results from the domain you specify. Find a page on your site and use the site operator with the URL to check, like this: site:yoururl.com (no spaces between the colon and the URL). If the page shows up, it is being indexed by Google.

MEASUREMENT: GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Google Analytics will show you how many visitors came to your site via organic search. Let's look at that report now:

1. Navigate to <https://analytics.google.com> and log in.
2. Select your reporting view.
3. In the left navigation, open Acquisition > All Traffic.
4. Select Channels. This report will show you all of the organic traffic over this time frame. If you want to further separate by search engine, click on Organic Search. Then select "Source" under Primary Dimension.

MEASUREMENT: GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE

Google Search Console will show you an estimated number of impressions your keywords had, the click through rate, the average ranking and more. **NOTE: Google Search Console only keeps this data for ninety days. If you wish to see this data historically going forward, it's best to download to CSV and archive the data.**

1. Navigate to <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/home> and log in.
2. Select the property to review.
3. In the left navigation, select Search Traffic > Search Analytics.
4. Use the filters at top and the checkboxes to display the information you wish to see.

MEASURING ROI

Truly measuring ROI can be a difficult process. Depending on how your company organizes sales, there may be many individuals and tracking platforms involved. Track what you can, and try to grow to track more. The closer you get to tracking true ROI, the closer you'll get to understanding which marketing efforts not only drive conversions but drive revenue and lifetime value.

Using the ROI Workbook located at

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1s1Jbcf8a5ss5JxgV8FDiaXePMTN5vvdh61RUDFj24mE> Create your own copy. Enter data that you can attain from your systems to begin tracking ROI.