

A - How do I find the best keywords for my web site?

Keywords are the words that web surfers enter in search engines to find web sites. It is important that your web site has good search engine rankings for popular keywords that are related to the theme of your web site.

Note: the term "keywords" relates to both single word keywords and keyword phrases, for example "NHS Dentist Manchester".

The right keywords are important to the success of your SEO activities!

It's pointless to optimise your web pages for keywords that nobody uses in the search engines. In addition, in order to get targeted visitors, the keywords must not be too broad or too general.

Which keywords are the right keywords for your web site?

Use focused and targeted keyword phrases that are common enough so the web searcher will use them, but selective enough that they don't return millions of matches. Very specific keywords generate highly qualified, targeted traffic that increases your sales. The first step in choosing the right key words is to make keywords very specific. Ideally you should:

- ❖ use keyword phrases that consist of two to four words
- ❖ avoid very competitive keywords
- ❖ be specific
- ❖ only check the keywords that are important to you

For a successful online marketing campaign, you have to target the right keywords. The keywords you use should be relevant for your web site and web surfers should be searching for your keywords. Most people use a two to four word phrase in a search, so phrases are very effective.

Single words cannot be promoted effectively. For example, it is not likely that someone looking for "free software download" is going to type just "software" into the search box. Avoid the most popular keyword phrases because you'll be competing with millions of other pages for a search engine's attention. It is unrealistic to think that a new web site could rank number one on a popular phrase like "mp3". More established companies who have been on the Internet for several years will have the big advantage of a high link popularity. Internet users who use four-word searches are more likely to purchase goods or services than those using fewer words.

Start with multiple word keywords and then extend your keyword list

Search engines analyse all pages of your web site and put them in a context. Start with multiple word keywords and then extend your keyword list. If you're selling MP3 files, you should optimise your web pages for keywords such as "independent bands mp3", "alternative grunge mp3", "pop music mp3 download" and similar keywords first.

B - Three different keyword types

When web surfers want to purchase something online, they go through three research phases. Web surfers usually start with general keywords. After becoming more educated about a particular product or service, they will use more specific keywords. As soon as the web surfers know what they want, they use specific keywords. For that reason, keywords can be divided into three types:

- ❖ Browsing Keywords
- ❖ Comparing Keywords
- ❖ Buying Keywords

1. Browsing Keywords

During the first research phase, web surfers use general keywords to find information. For example, a web surfer might be interested in a laptop PC. The keyword that the web surfer might use in search engines could be:

laptop

People who use keywords for browsing are usually looking for information only. Keywords for browsing usually have a very high search volume. Getting a top 10 ranking for these general keywords is very difficult and nearly impossible. But bear in mind, these browsers are not yet ready to make a commitment.

2. Comparing Keywords

In the second research phase, web surfers narrow their selection because they now know what type of product they want. For example, the web surfer might have found out the he is interested in a 17 inch widescreen laptop with bluetooth. The keywords of these web surfers are more specific:

Laptop 17 inch widescreen
Laptop widescreen bluetooth
Laptop under £700
Sony Vaio laptop
Acer Widescreen laptop

People who use keywords for comparing are more ready to buy. Comparing keywords are probably the best keywords that you can target for your search engine optimisation campaign. They often have much lower search volume than general keywords but they will lead to more sales and it is much easier to get top 10 rankings for these keywords.

3. Buying Keywords

During the last research phase, web surfers know what they want to purchase. They are just looking for the web site with the best offer. For that reason, these surfers use very specific keywords:

Sony Vaio VGN-AR11B 17 Inch Laptop
Sony Vaio VGN-AR11B free shipping
Acer Aspire 9303WSMi

People who use keywords for buying are ready to buy. However, these keywords won't help you much if you offer competing products. If you are confident that you offer the best deal for these very specific products then they can be useful but care needs to be taken.

C – How many keywords?

More is not always better

In recent years, many sites simply stuffed as many keywords as possible into their pages, trying to catch all manner of searches. However, the objective of the search engines is to deliver the most relevant searches possible to the searcher. To this end, a site page which focuses on only 2 or 3 carefully selected keywords is likely to be ranked higher than a similar page which lists 20 or 30 keywords.

The latest thinking is that a site should ideally be optimised for only 1 or 2 carefully selected keywords and certainly not more than 3.

“But I have hundreds of products...” I hear you cry.

A wide range of products or services isn't a problem when selecting keywords, it just requires a little thought. Rather than optimising all of your site for a wide range of keywords, it can be better to optimise individual pages for 1 or 2 specific keywords and then make sure that it is easy for the Search Engines to find these pages. In this way it is possible to optimize your site for 100s of keywords but still have a high degree of focus on each individual page.

D – How can I tell which are the best keywords?

Keyword Efficiency Index – KEI

You may have come across KEI as a measure of how good a particular keyword is. But what is KEI and how do you calculate it?

What is KEI?

Essentially, KEI is a measure of the ratio of the number of times a particular keyword is used in a search in a given period of time (the popularity) against the number of websites in your target universe which list that keyword in their content (the competition).

There is no fixed formula for KEI. Different people will use different calculations to produce often widely different results! For this reason you have to be VERY careful if trying to compare the KEIs of keywords that have come from different sources. Unless you can be sure that all KEIs have been calculated in the same way, you shouldn't compare them.

Where KEIs are useful is to look at the relative strength of different keywords all produced using the same KEI formula. This can show you which keywords have lots of searches but not too much competition (Good) or not so many searches and lots of competition (Not so good). If you wish to know, the formula we use at BSA Webworks is:

$$\frac{(\text{Popularity})_2}{\text{Competition}}$$

We are normally looking for keywords above 50 as a good starting point. Anything over 150 is really worth looking at.

Be careful, KEI is not everything!

KEI is a useful comparator but it has limitations. Most significantly it takes no account of **RELEVANCE**. A keyword with a lower KEI but close relevance to your offering is likely to prove more effective than a high KEI Keyword with limited relevance.

Also consider the different keywords types discussed in B above. A general keyword may have a high KEI because of the large number of times people use it in searches but if they are only browsing, it is difficult to generate real enquiries and business. A more specific keyword, likely to be used by someone actually looking for something to buy, may well have a lower KEI but will offer significantly more opportunity to secure business.

The Final Check

Once you have selected the shortlist of keywords which you would like to target, there is one final check to make, and that is how your site compares to others on page 1 of in terms of page rank and number of links.

For any given keyword, 2 major factors in where Google lists sites are:

- Number of incoming links to the site
- Google page rank

Broadly speaking, for a given key phrase, sites with higher page rank and more links will rank higher on Google. It is therefore vital that you check that your site compares favorably in these areas with the competing sites.

This is easy to check using the Firefox web browser & a simple plug in (both of which are available for free download via the bsawebworks.com website).

To make this final check, open Firefox (with the SEO for Firefox plugin installed) & go to Google.

1. For each of the selected key phrases, do a Google search (remember to use quote marks round the phrase).
2. For each of the sites listed, note the page rank and number of links
3. Compare these to those for your own site.

If your site compares favorably, then there is a good chance that you should be able to obtain a listing for that keyword. If however the comparison is unfavorable, although this does not mean that the keyword should be ditched, it does mean that getting good listing for it will take longer & involve more work!

IN SUMMARY

Good keywords are at the heart of effective Search Engine Optimisation but there is no hard and fast rule as to how to select the best ones for your site. Tools and calculations can help but careful consideration of your objectives and a focus on RELEVANCE are vital parts of the selection process.

A search on Google will unearth a host of information on Keyword selection – or we would be most happy to work with you on selecting and implementing appropriate keywords for your site.