Content Marketing Research

The Crucial First Step

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Research: The Crucial First Step

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Let's face it — doing research might not be as fun as creating killer headlines, writing the first draft of a genius blog post, or crafting your next irresistible offer.

But solid research is essential if you truly want to be successful as a content marketer.

When you hear the word "research" in conjunction with content marketing, you might immediately think about keywords (and optimizing your content for search engines using those keywords.)

And yes — keyword research is incredibly important. Mostly because it's the language of your audience — even if search engines didn't exist.

But to really dig into your research, you need to start thinking beyond just search engine optimization research. You need to think bigger.

Your audience is online right now, searching for things they want to discover more about, and looking for real-time answers to their questions. They're also socializing online in LinkedIn groups, Google+ circles, and Twitter chats.

So, it makes sense … your best research will come from the digging around and exploring in the places where your audience is socializing and searching.

You need to find out what really makes your prospect tick. You have to figure

out their frustrations, understand their desires, and find out what problems keep them up at night.

This all sounds great on paper, right? You're nodding and smiling and saying, "Of course!"

But research is the often-ignored, frequently avoided red-headed stepchild of content marketing.

What good research does for you (and your readers)

When you do research well — when you build a solid foundation for your content marketing efforts — you can build a complete profile of your ideal client, and how that person thinks, feels, and buys.

This profile shapes everything you do online.

Solid research means your copy practically assembles itself. Your content will be easier to put together because you know your audience so well that you can speak directly to them without a lot of stress or strain.

Writer's block will disappear, and your biggest problem will be trying to find the time and energy to crank out all the high-value blog posts and articles that you know your customers want and need.

Good research also leads directly to more clickthroughs, better opt-in rates, more social media shares, better search engine rankings, and more conversions. Your content marketing metrics improve because research helps you speak directly to your ideal client — in the language they understand, and in a voice they will trust and want to buy from.

When you research thoroughly, you'll be able to anticipate what your customers need — even before they really know they need it. Your relationships with your readers and clients will be better, because your thorough investigations (via social and search) make you look like a mind-reading genius.

And bonus points to you if you got the Ice Cube reference in the headline.

A guide to mastering the art of research

So how can you do better (and more efficient) research, even if it's not your favorite thing?

In *Content Marketing Research 101*, we'll take this typically unsexy topic and turn it around.

In this ebook, you'll learn:

- What you should be researching

- Where to find the tools you need to make the research process faster, better, and more interesting

- The most important thing to consider before doing any research (it's not what you think!)

So let's get to it …

A 6-Step Content Marketing Research Process

by *[Beth Hayden](#)*

Professional athletes log thousands of hours in the gym preparing for competitions on the field, court, bike or ski run.

Athletes can't be great at what they do without putting in that critical preparation time in the gym.

It's the work that most people *never see* — all those hours of workout time — that makes the difference between a good athlete and a truly great one.

In the world of [content marketing](#), you need to think of yourself as an athlete. Your market research is your training — it's what you have to do, day by day and week by week, in order to be great at what you do.

Most of the time when we talk about "work" in our world, we're talking about writing content, creating products, managing social media or email campaigns, answering emails, and taking care of our customers.

But before we can do any of that, we need to get prepared. And we get prepared by doing our research (see: Chapter 1).

So what should your research process look like? What steps can you take to gather the best possible data on your target audience?

1. Get (truly) motivated

Doing market research helps you better understand what your community needs, and that information allows you to help your audience in totally unique ways.

Getting the inside track on how your audience thinks (and what it needs) not only allows you to create perfectly targeted content, but it allows you to create products and services that solve very specific problems.

And yes, that puts cash in your pocket.

But I'll bet money isn't the only reason you started your business. I'll bet you started your company because you genuinely want to help people.

So remember why you need to do market research. We do our research so we can help people them solve their problems and enable them to live better, fuller, richer lives.

If you let truly important motivations light a fire under you — rather than just visions of big payouts — your research process will be a lot easier (and considerably more fun.)

2. Be a part of the community you're researching

The best (and easiest) way to do audience research is to be an integral member of your own market.

So if you've got your own blog, and you have readers who regularly chime in with opinions, questions, complaints and insights, you can gather fantastic market data from that community.

If you don't have your own audience yet, you can participate on other websites and blogs that attract the audience you're trying to connect with.

Join the community you're trying to serve. Take part in discussions and conversations via social networking sites, blogs, forums and other online groups.

Give freely and generously. Answer questions. Participate. Ask nothing in return when you're a new member of the community — just provide helpful insight to other members of that tribe.

And as you're participating and helping other community members, you can learn a lot by watching and learning.

3. Research your audience's mindset

The first thing you need to study is your audience's mindset — the way they look

at the world.

What's important to them? What types of people do they admire? What are their values?

Tools like LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, Google+ and Facebook let you gather information about audience mindset by letting you eavesdrop on their digital worlds (NOT in a creepy way). These online tools give you a daily peek into what people do and say every day — and that stuff is market research gold.

You can also do keyword research to discover more about the way your market looks at the world. Use keyword research tools like WordTracker and Google Keyword searches to find out everything you can about the topics your audience is interested in and the things they want to know more about.

Yes, keyword research is important for search engine optimization, but it's also some of the best market research around.

4. Discover your audience's problems

When conducting market research, you're also trying to find out what your prospects' problems are — all those annoyances and complaints, all the whining and whinging.

You can discover not only the problems that are keeping them up at night, but

the inconsistencies and troubles with your competitor's problems and services, too.

You can discover what's not being done well in your industry — and how you can handle it better.

Discovering unsolved problems or dissatisfaction gives you the opportunity to satisfy needs no one else can, because you have information they don't have (or haven't noticed yet.)

So use social media eavesdropping and keyword research (as well as traditional market research tools like surveys, interviews and focus groups) to discover people's problems.

Then use the insight you gain to create content that speaks directly to your audience in a way no one else can.

Your readers and customers want content that addresses their needs and desires, and talks to them in a way that resonates with who they are and how they look at the world.

When you do market research consistently and well, you will know exactly what kind of content your audience needs and wants. And that knowledge gives you a totally unfair (and completely awesome) advantage in your market.

5. Train consistently

Remember that market research (just like training workouts for athletes) is never a one-time event. It's an ongoing process that you will need to finesse and tweak, revamp and redo — just like everything else about your content marketing strategy.

So plan to do market research regularly. Make it part of your weekly and monthly content marketing routines.

When you're planning how to spend your workweek, structure your schedule to build in time for watching and learning. Make it a top priority. It's one of the most important things you can do to set your business up for success.

Without market research, you'll just be one of thousands of business owners trying to take their best guess about what their customer needs. If you consistently do the research, you'll know exactly what they need — and be perfectly positioned to deliver it to them.

6. Embrace the work

As content marketers, many of us think of market research as an afterthought — something that we have to laboriously slog through in order to get to our actual work of creating products, online content, educational programs and sales pages.

But if we don't do our market research, all our other work will be fall flat. It's critical that we discover everything we can about the people we're trying to reach, and listen to what they're trying to tell us.

Market research is hard because it is messy. You have to wade through ungodly amounts of noise in order to get to the useful nuggets of information that help you understand your audience.

Sifting through all that noise is annoying and tiresome. It's hard.

But we have to embrace this work — even if it's hard. In fact, it's specifically because it's hard that it's one of the best things for us to do.

Because it's difficult, it's likely that our competitors aren't doing it — or aren't doing it well.

And that gives us a spectacular advantage on the competition field. So make sure to pull on those sneakers and get your butt to the gym.

It's probably the most important thing you'll do all day.

Become a Content Marketing Secret Agent with Competitive Intelligence

Who wouldn't want to become a secret agent like Jack Bauer, Ethan Hunt, and Perry the Platypus? We all want cool gadgets, sexy entourages, and glamorous gigs.

More importantly, we want to be secret agents *because they always have inside information*.

And as a content marketer, you can get the secret scoop on your competitors by doing a little high-tech spying.

Using slick online snooping techniques and a little sweat equity, we can all find out what our competitors are doing well, what they could be doing better, and how we can adapt their best techniques to improve our own businesses.

Let's go looking …

Why you need to find out what your competitors are doing

We can find out what products our competitors are creating, what content is doing well on their websites, and how they're ranking in the search engines.

Competitive research lets us see where they're thriving — and where they're failing.

We use our research to help us brainstorm marketing ideas, create better content, and tweak our online strategies so we get better at what we do.

Finding out what our competition is doing is highly motivating – it can be a kick in the pants that motivates us to get stuff done bigger and better.

Because there's nothing like knowing what your competitor is doing well to help you crank out your next great content masterpiece.

How to find your competitors

Many of us know who our main competitors are, but it's a good idea to dig a little deeper than just the top few names.

Look for competitors on social media, in search engine results, and in traditional media outlets. Also, pay attention to people who are making a splash on the speaking circuit and authors writing new books in your industry.

And always keep your eyes peeled for new and talented guest bloggers on your favorite industry blogs. That's a great place to spot new and upcoming competitors.

Start your research

When you're looking at what your competition is doing online, here are a few things you'll be checking out:

- The products and services your competition is offering

- The content they are publishing on their website and on social networking sites

- Their social media strategy

- Their SEO strategy

- Their level of social success

- Your competition's overall strengths and weaknesses

Examining your competition's online content

Are your main competitors using content marketing strategies? If so, how well are they doing? Are they publishing great content on a regular basis?

When you do your research, examine their content in depth — find out what topics they've covering, how good their writing is, what content is getting a strong response from their audience and how many social shares their posts are getting.

Look at what your competition is doing better than you — are they cleverly newsjacking hot topics so they get tons of traffic? Are they coming up with creative ideas and new insights? Is their writing better than yours? Is their audience larger? If so, can you figure out why it's larger, more loyal or more engaged?

By gathering data on their content, not only can you assess how well they're doing (or not doing) with their online marketing, but you can also discover great new ideas. If you find a topic that is taking off with your competitor's audience, you can potentially adapt that topic for your readers by putting your own unique spin or angle on it.

No, I am absolutely *not* recommending you plagiarize or steal ideas. Let me repeat: Don't do that.

But if a specific topic is really resonating with an audience and attracting a lot of discussion, you can figure out how to cover that topic on your site — *in your own way* — and still stay well within the bounds of our online marketer's ethical code.

Researching your competition's search performance

You should always keep an eye on the search result pages in the top search engines (Google, Yahoo!, and Bing) for the most sought-after keyword phrases in your industry.

Regularly run keyword searches to see where your competitors rank. Search engine research can help you figure out new keyword phrases to target in your own SEO efforts.

One of the best ways to see how your competition stacks up in search is to examine how many backlinks they have — and the quality of those backlinks.

Looking at the sites that link to your competitors not only helps you discern how successful that company is in the search engines, but also gives you clues about their online relationships and alliances.

When you discover backlinks to your competitors, you can look at the anchor text phrases they're targeting, which can give you clues about their SEO strategy and the keyword phrases they're trying to rank for.

There are many free and paid tools that will help you dig into this research – Open Site Explorer and Majestic SEO are two of my favorites.

Spying on social results

Check out what your competition is doing on social networking sites. Do they have a substantial and content-rich presence on the major social services, like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and LinkedIn?

Do a quick check through their social media profiles. How many fans or followers

do they have? Are they consistently posting great content on their profiles? Have they attracted vocal brand advocates who consistently talk them up? Are they driving people back to their website and converting them into mailing list subscribers?

Search for your competitor's name on Twitter and Facebook to see what people are saying about them — are the comments generally positive, or are people complaining? Is there a need that the audience has that isn't being properly met by your competitor's products and services?

One of the quickest and easiest ways to search for what people are saying about your competitors on Twitter is just to run a Twitter search for the URL of one of their latest blog posts. For example, this is what people have tweeted about a recent Copyblogger post, "What if Author Rank Never Happens?"

You can easily check to see what content people are sharing on Pinterest from a particular website by going to **www.pinterest.com/source/[yoursitehere]**. For instance, you can see Copyblogger's Pinterest source page here (must be logged in to Pinterest). You can learn a lot by examining the descriptions pinners use when they pin content, and which boards they pin content to.

Another great place to look for feedback on your competitors is on review sites like Yelp, Angie's List, TripAdvisor or InsiderPages. And don't forget about newsletters, forums, LinkedIn groups, Twitter chats and Facebook groups, too — they're always great places to do online social spying, too.

Setting up your system

As with most online research, studying your competitors isn't a once-and-done affair. You'll want to regularly monitor what your competitors are doing online.

The best way to make sure you keep up with your research is to develop systems that make it easy.

Create spreadsheets of the competitors you're tracking (and all the critical information for each), and make good use of the available ways to save your searches using RSS feeds and alerts.

Build time into your calendar every month to revisit your competitive research and see what (if anything) has changed. Then use your planning time to integrate all the new ideas you've found in your research.

Getting the inside track

All the best secret agents do their research — because inside information can mean the difference between succeeding in their missions and failing miserably.

So make sure you regularly conduct competitive research. Then get yourself a fedora, some x-ray glasses and an awesome car, and you're all set. ;-)

A 3-Step Process for Painless Keyword Research

Keyword research is one of the most important types of research you'll do throughout your content marketing career. It's also one of the most difficult.

In these pages, we've already discussed the fact that research isn't sexy, glamorous, or fun. We've also talked about how you need to do research consistently — just like you need to work out in a consistent manner in order to see the real physical fitness results you want.

But there's something particularly arduous about conducting keyword research.

Many of the tools available are confusing and counterintuitive. We don't know what we're supposed to be looking for, and we often don't have a system in place for how to do keyword research effectively.

But, in putting this series together, I took a very close look at the process of keyword research, and I realized that there's a better way to find the keywords I needed for my work … without tears, gnashing of teeth, or the desire for hard alcohol.

I always seem to get lost in the data of keyword research. I feel like all of the information I find is incredibly important, and I can't figure out what to focus on and what to ignore.

Sometimes I make a half-hearted effort to research the keywords I should use in my content, then get irritated and toss my lists aside in favor of doing less frustrating work.

In the next two sections of this ebook, I'm going to give you solutions to your keyword research woes. I'll teach you …

- How to stay focused when doing your research

- How to avoid getting bogged down in the stuff that doesn't matter

- How to take a shortcut that will save you tons and time and energy

Let's get started …

Get focused on your goal

Your goal when conducting keyword research is to identify the topics that matter most to your target audiences, and then discover the exact language they use when they search for information and discuss their questions on social networking sites.

To reach that goal, you need a simple, effective system for keyword research. Follow these three steps to clear up the fog of procrastination and confusion that surrounds the process of finding target keywords for your content.

1. Choose possible keywords to start your research

What keywords have you been trying to rank for in the past?

What are some keywords and phrases you want to target in the coming years?

Remember that keywords are important not only for search engine optimization, but for your overall content strategy and product development, as well. It's incredibly important (and therefore, valuable) to know the exact language that your audience uses when they describe their biggest desires and challenges in your industry.

What do you think your potential clients search for when they look for information in your niche?

What words and phrases do they use in social media channels like Facebook, Twitter and Google+ when discussing problems with their friends and families?

Takeaway: Gather a list of five or six keywords that you can use to begin your research, remembering that your initial list will be your best informed guess as to what your audience is using, and is just a starting point.

2. Determine the popularity and competition score of each of your keywords

Using keyword research tools like the Google Keyword Adwords Tool or Scribe, to check out the popularity of your keywords.

How many times do people search on each of your terms, in comparison to other search terms?

You want to target keywords that attract lots of monthly searches (at least 100,000 for global topics). Lots of searches mean that your topic is in high demand, and that people need information on that subject.

Next, take a look at how much competition you're facing for each of your keywords. How many pages of web content (and how many websites) are specifically targeting your keyword? Are there large numbers of people actively trying to rank for that term? If so, you will have a harder time ranking well for that keyword.

A perfect keyword is one that has lots of searches (high popularity) and very few people actively trying to rank for it (low competition.)

Takeaway: Using keyword research tools (Google Adwords or Scribe), run the basic numbers on the keywords you want to use, or think might be beneficial to your goals.

3. Discover (and research) other related keywords

When you begin the keyword research process, your research tool will also give you a list of related keywords to consider.

Keyword tools select these keywords based on semantic search principles, to help you think of new keywords that may not occur to you in an initial brainstorming session.

Look at the list of suggested keywords, pick a few to dig into further, then run the same tests for competition and popularity that you ran on your original list of possible targets.

Use this process to deepen your research, but don't fall too far down the rabbit hole — focus on finding high popularity, low competition keyword phrases.

Takeaway: During your initial keyword search(s) using the tools above, dig a bit deeper into related words and phrases that come back in the results. Run the same tests on these to determine usefulness and usability.

A powerful shortcut that works

The good news is that there is a simple, easy-to-use tool you can use to conduct all your keyword research.

You can even get access to all this information from within your WordPress dashboard. The tool is called Scribe, our complete content marketing software system.

While you can certainly find every bit of the keyword information you need by conducting research with online tools (both free and paid), the simplicity and power of Scribe makes keyword research completely painless — and even fun (one customer describes his experience with Scribe like he was playing a game).

The newest version of Scribe gives you access to incredible amount of information and data about keyword popularity and competition, and gives you suggested keywords that you may not have considered.

Scribe also analyzes every piece of your content (and your overall site) and makes suggestions for improving your search engine rankings.

Takeaway: Check out our demo of Scribe to find out more about everything it can do to facilitate smart, thorough keyword research.

How to Find the Keywords that Work for Your Content Marketing Goals

When you do keyword research, you're working to discover the actual words your customers use when they search for information about your content topic.

Smart [keyword research](#) will let you uncover great information about your audience — how they search, how they speak, and how they think.

Accurate keyword research helps you optimize your website for the search engines, and it also allows you to shape your content strategy. So it's vitally important that you use smart tactics to help you do your research in a fast, efficient way.

Hopefully at this point, you've conducted some initial discovery sessions using the steps in the previous chapter on keyword research. You've chosen some initial keywords to look into, started to examine particular characteristics of those keywords in search stats, and you've started a list of closely related words and phrases that you can add to your initial list of target keywords.

Now, we need to take this process one step further.

Once you're done with your initial keyword research, you'll need to dig a little further in your investigations. You'll want to see whether a phrase is trending up or down (over a certain period of time) and how your phrases are being

discussed in social media communities.

This section covers the second half of my *No-Stress Keyword Research System*, including tips on searching for trends, looking at social media conversations, and discovering which of your competitors are ranking well for your targeted keywords.

Let's get down to business.

Tools for spotting keyword trends

Once you've narrowed down your list of target keywords, it's time to uncover some broader information about them. You need to get your hands on trending information, so you can find out if your keyword is trending *up* or trending *down* over time.

Here's why it's critical that you find out this information — you don't want to pick a keyword, optimize your entire site for it, hang all your hopes and dreams on it — then discover that the popularity of searches for that word have been trending down for two years (and at the current rate, searches for that word will die out to practically nothing within a year or two).

You want keywords that are not only popular, but have been steadily popular for months (or years). And you want keywords that have a good outlook for the upcoming months and years.

To find out the whether your keywords are headed up or down in popularity, you can use Google Trends. This lesser-known tool allows you to see how often certain keywords have been queried over a specific period of time.

Google Trends even allows you to put in several keywords at a time, and runs a comparison of those keywords for you, so you choose the one that is the best fit for your and your business.

Run your possible keywords through the Google Trends tool, and take a good look through the data. Are your keywords trending up over time? Or trending down? If they are trending up, is this likely to be a short burst of interest in the topic, or does the topic have some staying power?

If you're a Scribe user, this data is already built into your Keyword Research tool — just click on the Google Trends tab to view data on a particular keyword's popularity over time.

Use trending information to eliminate some of your keywords and narrow down your target list, then move on to the next step.

Research your keywords in social networks

Your next step is discovering what social communities need and want, and how people talk about your topic when they're having conversations with family and friends.

You will need to approach keyword research on social media networks slightly differently than you do for search — because users of search and social networks don't necessarily use exactly the same language.

When people use search engines, they are generally looking for an answer to a specific question. Users on social networking sites are there to talk, share ideas, and interact with other users.

You can use social networking search tools to find out the answers to your burning questions about how people use your keywords in everyday conversations.

How are people actually using your keywords and phrases in their conversations?

What questions are they asking?

Are they speaking negatively or positively about your topic?

Are people using different language in their online networking communication, and if they are, do you want to change your target keywords to reflect the new language?

Repeat these questions over and over to yourself in the midst of your research, and they'll take you further along the path to finding the right keywords.

Keyword research tools for social networks

I'll give you a few of my favorite tools for social search here.

But the social networking world is changing so quickly that I encourage you to do your own research and find the tools that work best for you.

Twitter's built-in search tool is one of the best in the biz. You can use their Advanced Search tools to look for anything you want (and include/exclude things like retweets, etc. so you only see the data that is really useful to you).

You can also try tools like Monitter and Topsy, both well-known Twitter search helpers.

Dashboard Twitter tools like HootSuite and Tweetdeck also let you set up streams for particular keywords to help you continuously monitor the Twitter conversation on your topic.

Google+ has a great built-in search function, too. Use the search box at the top of any Google+ screen to run an initial search, then filter your results for groups of people or geographical location using the dropdown menus on the search results page.

Searching on Facebook is trickier than some of the other social networks, but it does have some basic search functions (advanced search capabilities called *Graph Search* are in limited use as of this writing).

Run your search using the search box at the top of any Facebook page (click the magnifying glass to run your search and bypass Facebook's annoying habit of just serving up some random Page it wants you to see). On the search results page, click on "Public Posts" to view the public conversation about your topic.

There are some great all-in-one search tools for social media, too. For one-stop shopping, try Kurrently or 48ers.

Of course, I highly recommend you check out Scribe. Our customers have easy-to-use social networking research built right into the Social Research tool, so you can look at search and social network research on your targeted keyword all in one place.

Check out your competition

At this point, after researching your initial lists using search and social networking tools, you've probably got a short, well-thought-out list of words you'd like to target for your website.

It's not a bad idea to run your final list through the biggest search engines to see who is ranking for those terms. Google is a necessity, of course, but try Bing and Yahoo, too.

Check out the top three rankings for each search terms, and add notes about those sites to your research list.

Refer back to the third chapter on *competitive research* for refreshers on scoping out your competition.

Pick the winner(s)

It's the moment of truth. You need to take a deep breath and decide on a few primary keywords that you're going to target.

You can make an educated decision — based on all your keyword research — on what keywords you want your site to rank for. Write them down, put them above your desk, and then start the process of optimizing your site for those keywords.

For any one piece of content (blog post, article, etc.), you want to pick one primary keyword to target.

For your entire site, pick three or four that will be your targeted keywords.

Need help optimizing your articles and website for those keywords? Check out our free report, How to Create Compelling Copy That Ranks Well in the Search Engines.

Go get 'em, detective

Keyword research doesn't have to be overwhelming, and it doesn't have to be painful.

If you use the steps I've outlined here, keyword research (both in search and in social networks) is fairly straightforward.

If you're feeling overwhelmed at this point, here's the breakdown:

- Choose a few *possible* keywords to start your research

- Determine the popularity and competition score of each of your keywords

- Discover (and research) other related keywords

- Check the trending data on your keyword (is it trending up or down over time?)

- Do some research on how your keyword is being used in the conversations that are happening on social networks

- Take a deep breath, look at your final research results, and choose the keyword(s) you want to target for your site

That's it!

Now it's your turn to go through the steps of this keyword research process for your particular topic. Whether you're writing about kickboxing, guinea pig care, dental hygiene, or professional organizing, this keyword research process can work for you, with just a little work, patience, and skill.

Case Study: How Keyword Research Works in the Wild

You've got a straightforward system for finding keywords that work for you.

You've got a basic understanding of how to use social media search, Google Trends, and online keyword research tools to find the right keywords to use to optimize your site.

But you've still got some questions about how this research works in real life.

Let's take this final chapter on content marketing research to walk through a simple case study that explains how one business owner conducted her own keyword research.

Ready?

Meet Sarah Gabriele

Sarah Gabriele is a talented professional organizer in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. Her specialty is helping people create order in their lives by making small, simple changes.

Sarah's perfect clients are people who are ready to get their homes or offices in order.

Sarah has a (slightly neglected) blog, and would like to do better content marketing in 2013. One of her long-term strategies is to create online products and downloadable courses that feature her organizing advice, so she can expand her business beyond assisting local clients.

Sarah needs to do some research to figure out what keywords she should target for her website and WordPress blog.

1. Choose possible keywords to start your research

Sarah isn't sure what exact terms people use to search for help with getting organized, so she's going to take her best guess before she starts her research.

Her initial keywords will be *getting organized*, *organizing tips*, and *how to get organized*.

Sarah will use a spreadsheet to help her organize the results of her keyword research. You can use whatever works for you — spreadsheet, Word document, Evernote, or regular physical notebook or journal.

Now Sarah's ready to move on to the next step — determining whether her possible keywords are a good fit for her content marketing strategy.

2. Determine the popularity and competition score of each of your keywords

	Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches	Local Monthly Searches
	Search terms (1)			1 - 1 of 1
☐	organizing tips	Medium	90,500	74,000
	Keyword ideas (100)			1 - 50 of 100
☐	organization tips	Medium	74,000	60,500
☐	closet organization tips	High	9,900	9,900
☐	cleaning and organizing tips	Medium	390	320
☐	office organization tips	Medium	3,600	2,900
☐	organizing tips for home	Low	6,600	5,400
☐	home organization tips	Low	6,600	5,400
☐	organization tips for home	Low	6,600	5,400
☐	organizing tips for closets	High	9,900	9,900
☐	home organizing tips	Low	6,600	5,400
☐	school organization tips	Low	2,900	2,400

We can see that Sarah's initial keyword, "organizing tips" is a low-volume, medium-competition keyword.

If Sarah has a global topic (which she does), we are looking for target keywords that attract at least 100,000 monthly searches. Lots of searches mean her topic is in high demand, and that people need information on that subject.

So what does that mean for Sarah? It means she probably needs to ditch her initial keyword, and move on to the next step — looking for other options.

3. Discover (and research) other related keywords

When Sarah uses the Google Keyword Tool, it suggests a whole bunch of related keywords that Sarah might want to check out.

☐ how to organize ▾	Low	1,500,000	673,000
☐ organize it ▾	Low	1,500,000	673,000
☐ help me organize ▾	Low	1,500,000	673,000
☐ what is organizing ▾	Low	1,000,000	673,000
☐ organizing ▾	Low	1,000,000	673,000
☐ decorating the home ▾	High	1,000,000	550,000
☐ in home decorating ▾	High	1,000,000	550,000
☐ home decorating ▾	High	1,000,000	550,000
☐ decorating home ▾	High	1,000,000	550,000
☐ for the home ideas ▾	Medium	823,000	450,000
☐ how to be organized ▾	Low	823,000	450,000
☐ how do i get organized ▾	Low	823,000	450,000
☐ how can you get organized ▾	Low	823,000	450,000
☐ how can i get organized ▾	Low	823,000	450,000

When she sorts her data, Sarah discovers these keywords that are high volume, low competition:

- how to organize (1,500,000 global searches a month)

- how can I get organized (823,000 global searches a month)

- organization systems (165,000 global searches a month)

Then Sarah uses these exact phrases as her *next* three searches in the keyword tool. When she does that, she discovers these possible target keywords (which are also high popularity, low competition):

- get organized

- how to organise (British spelling)

She adds all these possibilities to her spreadsheet or notebook, making note of their popularity and competition numbers.

Sarah has now narrowed her list down to five possible keywords that she'd like to examine further:

- how to organize

- how can I get organized

- organization systems

- get organized

- how to organise (British spelling)

Sarah's next step is to check on trending data for those keywords.
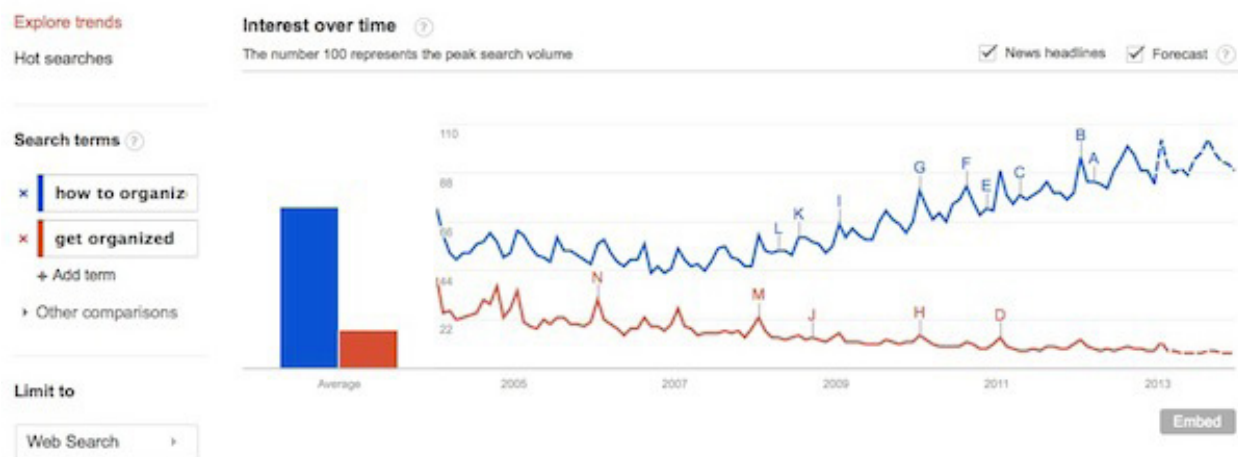
4. Check the trending data on your keywords

Sarah can check out Google Trends to research the projected outlook of her

target terms. For the sake of this exercise, let's use:

- how to organize

- get organized

When she proceeds with her comparison in Google Trends, this is what Sarah sees:

Notice the way Sarah has "Forecast" checked in the upper right corner of this image — that allows Google Trends to show the outlook for that particular keyword for the upcoming year.

Sarah sees that "how to organize" has more overall searches, and is trending *up*, and "get organized" has few overall searches, and is trending *down* over time.

That information will shape Sarah's final decision on what keywords she should target, so she adds that data to her spreadsheet.

5. Do some research on how your keyword is being used in the conversations that are happening on social networks

Next, Sarah is going to check on how people are using her possible keywords when they converse with friends and colleagues in social media networks.
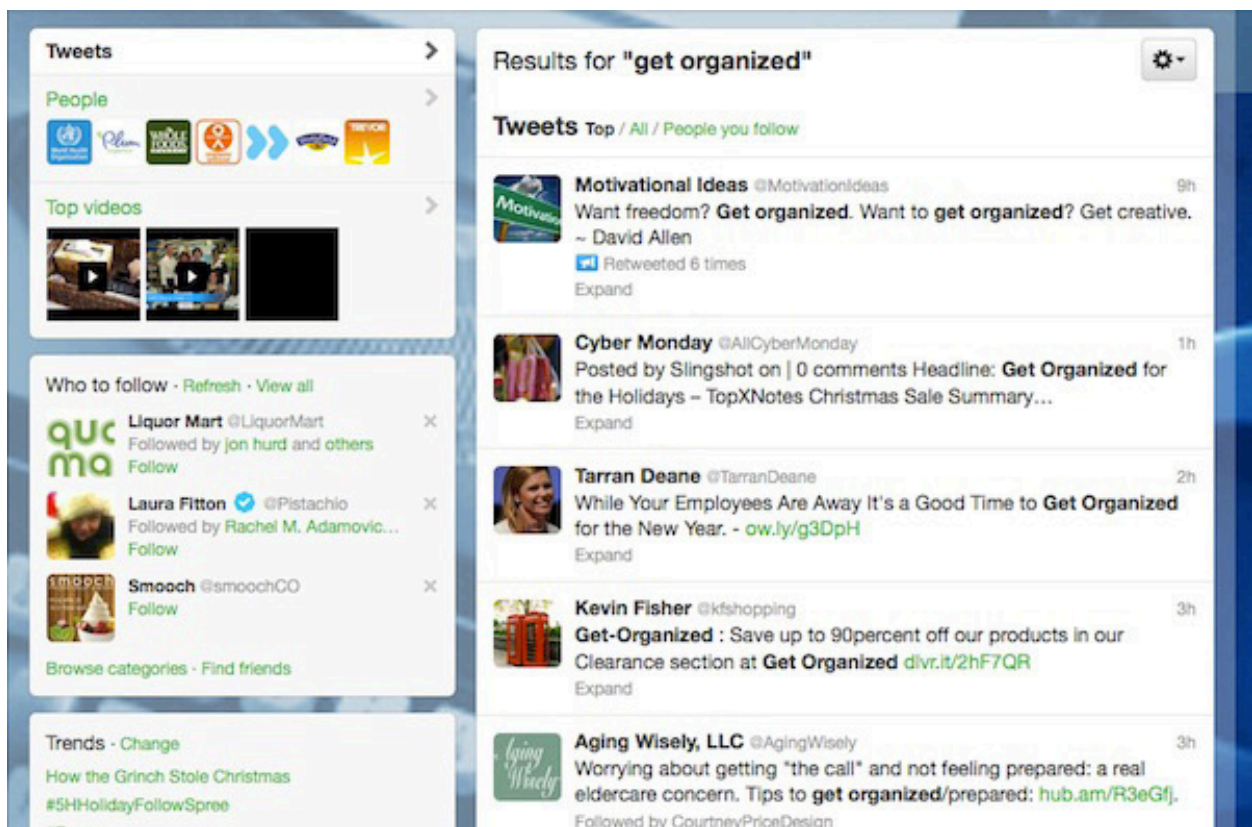
Then she runs the same search from Google+ to see how people in that online network talk about getting organized.

When Sarah runs her possible target keywords through social networks search tools, she makes a very important discovery.

Apparently, when people use the term "organizing systems," they sometimes use the terms to talk about workplace organization or human resource topics. Since she doesn't provide information about that kind of organizational system, she deletes that keyword from her list of possibilities.

Sarah uses the information she gets from searching for her keywords on Twitter and Google+, and adds her notes and thoughts to her spreadsheet.

SUBTLE HINT: This is a great way to get blog post ideas, too!

6. Examine your research results, and choose the keyword(s) you want to target for your site

It's a smart idea for Sarah to do some competitive research, and find out what keywords her competitors' sites are ranking for.

She can also speak with some of her actual clients (perhaps some who found her through online searches) and find out what words they use to look for information about organizing and getting rid of their own clutter.

Then Sarah can choose a couple of keywords to target on her site, and begin the process of optimizing her website for those initial keywords.

She'll need to keep gently tweaking her SEO strategy continually, making sure she's being found for the terms she wants to be found for (and optimizing for new keywords as she discovers them).

How Scribe can help

In the future, Sarah might make a really smart business decision, and sign up for Scribe, our complete content marketing system.

If Sarah uses Scribe, her job becomes really easy — she does all her keyword research directly through her WordPress dashboard.

Scribe makes keyword research simple, efficient, and completely painless for Sarah. Instead of using multiple sites to conduct her research, Sarah's got one easy-to-use tool that will give her all the information she needs.

Check out this screenshot of Scribe, and notice all the information included in the tabs at the top of the Scribe interface. Sarah can use Scribe to do her keyword research in one integrated place, then immediately optimize her WordPress pages and posts using her targeted keywords.

| Keyword Suggestions | Twitter | Google+ | Google Trends |

Target	Keywords	Popularity	Competition %
○	organize house	23	16
○	get organized	42	44
○	organize it	36	40
○	organizing tips	37	37
○	organized living	34	36
○	home organizer	36	37
○	tips organizing	22	37
○	organized home	35	37
○	organize bills	26	20
○	garage organizing	30	36
○	organize	44	54
Target	Keywords	Popularity	Competition %

[Check out our demo of Scribe](#) to find out more about how it can help you conduct smart, efficient keyword research.

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