



## Determining the Best Keyword Strategies For Your SEO and SEM Campaigns

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## I. Introduction

Keyword rankings in the major Search Engines have long been the desire of Website owners and online marketers. Keywords used in Search Engines have evolved proportionally with the World Wide Web. They are not just single word phrases anymore. They are not static short lists of target phrases. Instead, they are growing and live lists full of robust combinations of core keywords plus many qualifiers.

Keywords have become a moving target because of changes in search patterns and the Search Engines. Starting with search patterns, according to Yahoo the average keyword phrase length for searches in 1998 was 1.2 words. In 2006 the average keyword query length was 3.3 words. Searchers have become more adept and include more keyword qualifiers like geo-targeting/region information, product size information, or just more specifics about a search. An online searcher looking for "pizza" may have just searched using "pizza" in the late 1990s. Today the same search would probably look more like "deep dish pizza restaurant in Chicago that delivers". Google recently announced that roughly 20% of search queries each day have never been seen before by them. That means 1 in 5 searches (they tout over 100 million searches per day) is a brand new keyword phrase combination. Those new keywords include things that haven't happened yet or more advanced ways to look for a product, "when did Apple's stock split in 2008" or "what is the best Italian restaurant in Time Square, NY with reviews".

Advancements in Search Engine technology and the Engines' algorithms are also changing the state of keywords and keyword usage. Personalization of search is a new development that attempts to hone in on the intent of keyword searches. A user searches for blueberry, banana, kiwi, and then cherry. Using the search pattern, a Search Engine may tilt the results toward cherry the fruit. Another search pattern could be blue, green, yellow, orange, and cherry. This time a Search Engine may skew the results toward cherry the color. Same thing goes for cherry the flavor. Imagine all of the possible intents of a search for "cherry". Personalization of search also includes factors like IP address for regional targeting, search history, click patterns, and more. A search for "pizza" from Chicago may show personalized results of

pizza restaurants near the IP address of the searcher. Overall this means that a search result page is not static and positions are going to grow increasingly relative to the searcher. Ranking number one for one keyword phrase is not nearly as valuable as ranking for thousands of keywords in the top ten.

## II. Keyword History

The keyword meta tag was one of the first ways for Search Engines to rank Web pages. The technique for optimizing the tag was well known. The early Search Engine algorithms were simple and easily manipulated. Today there are billions of Web pages that are ranked by hundreds of criteria by the algorithms. Old tricks of packing keywords in the meta tags or hiding them repeated hundreds of times in white on white text do not work anymore and carry a high risk of getting a Website penalized by the Search Engines.

[AOL Keywords](#) were very popular at one point. They are still mentioned in some promotions. These keywords were hard coded to one Website. It was a good concept, but more along the lines of shortcuts to content than actual keywords.

[Realnames](#) was an interesting company that negotiated deals directly with the browser companies. When a keyword like Ford or Ford F150 was typed into the URL area of Internet Explorer, the users were taken directly to the Ford homepage or the Ford F150 page. It was possible to own a keyword in a similar manner to AOL's Keywords but with a broader reach. The browser deals did not last and Realnames did not endure.

## III. Keyword Phases

There are three main phases of keywords relating to the intent of the search. This section will examine the categories of keywords and how they should be part of your Search Engine Marketing and Optimization Campaigns.

- A. **Research Keywords** – This is the first phase of keyword searching. They are typically very broad with many types of intent. Using “televisions” as an example, possible intents for the search are: manufacturers, history of, prices, components, sizes, types, brands, reviews, durability, and more. These

keywords can be powerhouses for traffic. Due to the range of intents, much of the traffic may be untargeted and irrelevant.

### **SEO Tips**

Research keywords are very competitive and difficult to rank for in natural search. The holders of these ranks are normally seasoned, established Websites that are considered resources in their industries. These keywords can be powerful for branding purposes. They may be included in an SEO strategy, but expectations for success have to be within reason. There should only be a few of these words in the plan, and they should be targeted to your most general/broad-themed pages. Ranking on these keywords involves a full time effort utilizing as many best practices tactics as possible (meta tags, content, link building).

### **PPC Tips**

These keywords are not very good for PPC campaigns (Google Adwords, Yahoo Search Marketing, Microsoft Adcenter). The costs per click tend to be low because of perceived low market value, the variety of intent and large volume of searches. If they are used in PPC campaigns, they should be used with strong negative keyword lists. They should also be watched for low CTRs (click through rates), which have a negative effect on PPC campaigns.

- B. Shopping Keywords** – The second phase of keywords involves a keyword plus a qualifier or modifier. These keywords are a little more specific. The searcher's intent is starting to come out. Furthering the example of the television search, these searches include "sony television", "lcd television", "52inch television", and "plasma television". Shopping keywords correlate to category keywords.

### **SEO Tips**

Category type keywords are still competitive, hard to optimize for, yet good sources of traffic. They should be part of an organic search optimization campaign. These words are frequently overlooked when optimizing category or mid-level Web pages. The opportunities to rank for the shopping phase of keywords is more reasonable than the research phase words. These keywords require a full compliment of SEO tactics.

### **SEM Tips**

These keywords can be part of your Paid Search Marketing campaigns. Shopping keywords provide the potential to sell a click to a searcher who may not have known they were looking for your Website. A search for “Google Adwords information” may yield a paid ad from MoreVisibility. That searcher may have only been looking for general information, now they know that MoreVisibility is a Google Adwords expert. The click through rates of these keywords should be monitored. They can be improved with negative keywords, “phrase match targeting”, or [exact targeting].

- C. **Buying Keywords** – This phase of keyword searching is the most desirable traffic for Websites. These keyword phrases are very specific. They include model information, color, size, year, geographic information, and more keyword qualifiers. The television keyword example is furthered with “2008 Sony Bravia 52” LCD Television”, “50inch Plasma TV in Denver, CO”, and “Silver Sharp Aquos LCD Television”. Searchers using these types of queries have completed their research and know exactly what they are looking for and are ready to buy.

### **SEO Tips**

The buying phase of keywords can be the “low hanging fruit” when it comes to optimizing the Website except in very competitive markets. The keywords need to be within the content of the Website and have their own optimized pages. For ecommerce Websites, these keywords belong on the product pages. For brochure type Websites, these keywords need to be addressed on service pages, testimonial pages, and other creative content.

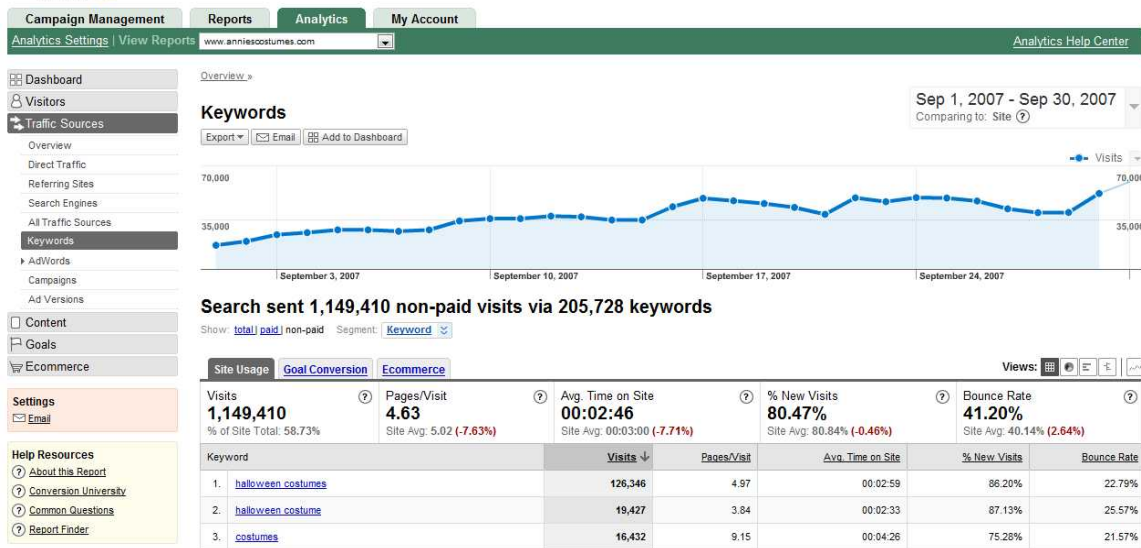
### **PPC Tips**

PPC marketing can be very effective with the buying phase keywords. One of the most challenging aspects of these keywords is coming up with the largest possible variety of phrases that are being searched. Broad match from the Search Engines can be very helpful in capturing even more of these niche keyword phrases. Product model numbers make great buying keywords.

## IV. The Long Tail of Search

Chris Anderson's book *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*, along with many Webmasters' log analytics' observations have led to the concept of the **long tail of search**. Book stores in the airport have limited retail space. They can only stock a few hundred books. Their inventory is restricted to best sellers and new books. Compare that with Amazon. The online giant can sell every book that was ever in print. While the top sellers are nice, there are lower margins because of increased competition. Rare books are more valuable for Amazon to sell. A search for "the illustrated man hardcover" has Amazon at the top two search results in Google.

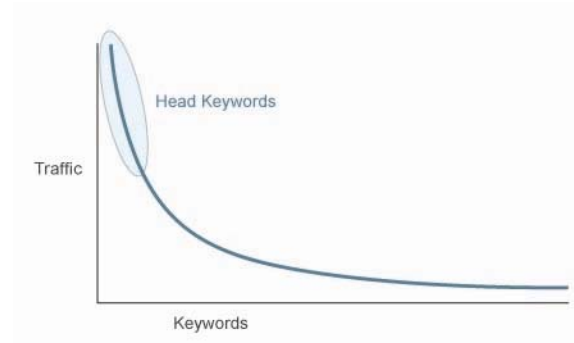
### The Proof!



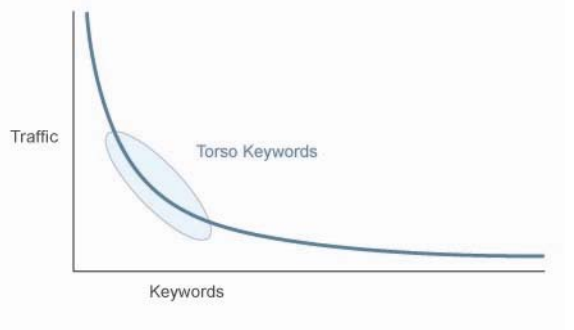
This is a screenshot from Google Analytics September 2007 for a Website that sells Halloween costumes. Search sent 1,149,410 non-paid visits via 205,728 keywords. This is the perfect example of the long tail of search. The highest traffic keyword was "Halloween costumes". The last keyword on the report was "size 4 spiderman costume". Less than 20% of the site's traffic comes from the top ten keywords. The majority of the traffic comes from the other 205,718 unique keywords!

There are three main divisions of keywords found when examining the long tail.

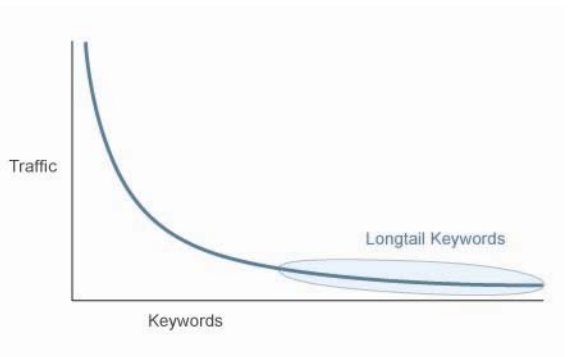
A. **Head Keywords** – These are usually the top ten keywords that drive natural search traffic to the Website. The volume is high, the conversion may be low. They are normally the research phase keywords. Head keywords are the ones that the CEO of a company is most concerned with. They may drive traffic, but most sites can survive without them.



B. **Torso Keywords** – These keywords are harder to define. Depending on the keyword to traffic graph, they fall somewhere between tens and hundreds of clicks per month. Torso keywords correlate with the shopping or category type keywords. A healthy Website has a high curve that includes 20% to 30% of the traffic in this range.



C. **Tail Keywords** – The long tail keywords are the money keywords. These are the very specific keywords that come with a high conversion rate. The buying phase keywords are found in this section of the graph. Many keywords may only have 1 or 2 clicks per month. However, when aggregated together the tail keywords make up the majority of the Website's traffic.



## V. Keyword Discovery

Starting with a blank canvas or Excel spreadsheet for that matter, Webmasters and online marketers do not always know where to begin when it comes to keywords. Online marketers may gasp at this concept. There are still plenty of new companies entering the world of the Internet. A start-up company that sells R/C car batteries may think that its keywords are “battery” and “batteries”. There are several techniques that can be used for keyword discovery.

**Google Keyword Sandbox** – Google provides the option to suggest keywords based on the Website. They quickly crawl the Website. Keyword results are based on a combination of search and Adwords data. This data can be used to start a keyword list.

**Website Analytics** – All log analyzers provide keyword data from the Website. This data is based on how searchers are currently making it to the Website. It can give a rough idea of keywords, but is limited to the content, ranking, and optimization of the Website. This is another good place to start developing a keyword list.

**On-Site Search** – Websites that have their own search boxes have the opportunity to mine those keyword lists for gold. The on-site query data includes the keywords that customers were looking for on the site. This keyword list is the closest a Webmaster can see into the intent of their site users without running focus groups. Information on Site Search usage can also be found in Google Analytics.

After some keyword discovery, the starting list for the R/C car battery company looks more like this: rc car battery, r/c car battery, rc car batteries, remote control car battery, rc car battery pack, rc car battery charger, rc car battery packs, remote control car batteries, r c car battery, rc car battery chargers, r c car batteries, 7.2 v rc car battery, lipo rc car batteries, rc car battery life, rc car lipo battery, rc car battery charging, charging rc car batteries, r c car battery pack, battery for rc car, battery powered rc car, batteries for rc cars, batteries for rc car, battery rc cars, battery powered rc cars, rc cars batteries, battery packs for rc cars, batteries for remote control cars, battery for rc cars, battery

powered remote control cars, battery remote control cars, lipo batteries for rc cars.

## VI. Keyword Research

Keyword discovery is the first step. Keyword research is the process of finding good keywords to optimize for. Potential keywords should be analyzed for relevancy, traffic, buying phase, and competition. Core keywords should be identified with a separate list of modifiers. Then the keywords can be merged together to form large comprehensive lists.

**Overture Search Suggestion Tool** – Unfortunately Yahoo has dropped support for this tool. It was one of the most efficient keyword research tools available for free.

**Google Keyword Tool** – Google provides search data for keywords based on search volume, search trends, and competitiveness. Keywords are automatically expanded to include closely related terms and synonyms. This is a small sampling of keywords suggested based on “sharp aquos tv”:

maximum viewing angle for the sharp aquos hd lcd tv, viewing angle for the sharp aquos hd lcd tv, sharp aquos television, sharp aquos 46 lcd tv, sharp 32 aquos lcd tv, sharp aquos lc 52d62u 52 lcd tv, sharp aquos lc 42d62u 42 lcd tv, 42 sharp aquos widescreen lcd tv, sharp aquos 46 full hd 1080p lcd tv, sharp aquos 37 lcd tv, sharp 32 aquos lcd tv lc32d43u, sharp aquos 26 lcd tv, sharp aquos 42 lcd tv, sharp aquos 52 lcd tv, sharp aquos lc 46d62u 46 lcd tv, sharp aquos lcd television, sharp aquos hd tv, sharp aquos widescreen lcd tv, sharp aquos 32 inch lcd tv, sharp aquos 32 tv, sharp aquos 46 hd lcd tv, sharp aquos lc 52d62u 52 in flat panel lcd tv, sharp lc 32d43u aquos 32 high definition lcd tv, sharp lc32d62u 32 aquos lcd tv, sharp lc 45d40u aquos lcd tv, sharp aquos 46 full hd lcd tv, sharp aquos 32 in widescreen lcd tv, sharp aquos lc45gd4u 45 in flat panel lcd tv, sharp aquos 26 inch lcd tv, sharp aquos gaming tv

**MSN Labs** – MSN’s program is still in beta so the data is limited. There are some amazing keyword tools in development. Funnel analysis can show keyword queries leading up to a search and after

a search. They have seasonal history, demographic data and forecasting of keywords. There are also keyword grouping and mutation tools.

**Paid Tools** – These tools have more bells and whistles. They typically charge a monthly fee. Examples of paid tools are Nichebot, Wordtracker, and KeywordDiscovery.

## VII. Conclusion

Keywords are one of the main ways the World Wide Web is organized today. They are a core component of any Search Engine Marketing and Optimization campaign. Understanding the buying phases of keywords is critical. Keyword lists have to be balanced for all of the phases of search.

Keyword lists should be organic in nature. They need to evolve with the Website and search patterns of the Internet. Top ranking in Search Engines will not be as defined in the near future. Personalization of search is changing the landscape of search result pages (SERPs). Google Universal is the new SERP. These result pages can include video, images, product information, book information, local information, and more. Keywords are not just about Web pages anymore.

The long tail of search is a great concept that can apply to all Websites. Organic search traffic can help Websites sell less of more. The long tail requires less planning of keywords and more content on an optimized site structure. MoreVisibility is seasoned in keyword research, the buying phases, and the long tail. Our search engine experts are heavily trained in this area to help deliver the best results for our clients. If you would like a free keyword evaluation, send your list to [keywords@morevisibility.com](mailto:keywords@morevisibility.com).