

NEILPATEL

NEIL PATEL'S
ADVANCED CHEAT SHEET
TO SEO

He is a New York Times bestselling author. The Wall Street Journal calls him a top influencer on the web, Forbes says he is one of the top 10 marketers, and Entrepreneur Magazine says he created one of the 100 most brilliant companies.

He was recognized as a top 100 entrepreneur under the age of 30 by President Obama and a top 100 entrepreneur under the age of 35 by the United Nations.

NEILPATEL
DIGITAL



I rank for some of the most competitive keywords on Google. From “seo” to “online marketing,” I dominate the search listing pages.

Can you guess how I was able to do this?

Well, it's not because I am smarter than you... *because I am not.*

Instead, I've been practicing digital marketing since 2001. After a while, you learn what works and what doesn't. So, if you want to achieve similar results, you have two options:

Option 1: Follow the cheat sheet below. It really works, you just have to put in the time and effort. And over time you'll slowly see your rankings, traffic and revenue climb.

Option 2: Hire my ad agency. If you don't have the time and need it done for you, check out [Neil Patel Digital](#).

And of course, you technically have a third option, which is to figure it out on your own. But you opted into my list, so I'm guessing you would rather have the cheat sheet. ;)

So if you want to grow your rankings, just follow the tactics below. But before you start, keep in mind that this is an advanced cheat sheet... so I skipped the basics.

Here goes:

Find a shoulder niche

I think we can all agree that backlinks are one of the most essential elements of SEO.

They're still a primary currency that search engines examine when determining rankings.

So we break our backs trying to obtain high-quality, relevant backlinks.

But here's the thing.

It can be tricky getting other sites in your niche to link to you.

After all, *you are a competitor.*

Linking to you could potentially dilute their rankings, which is especially problematic if you're competing for those coveted, heavily searched keyword phrases.

So what's the solution?

One technique I've had success with is finding a shoulder niche, which is a niche that's closely related to your site's main topic.

You then create content around that shoulder niche and engage in link outreach like you would normally.

Since you're not in direct competition with the brands you're reaching out to, your odds of acquiring quality backlinks should inevitably increase.

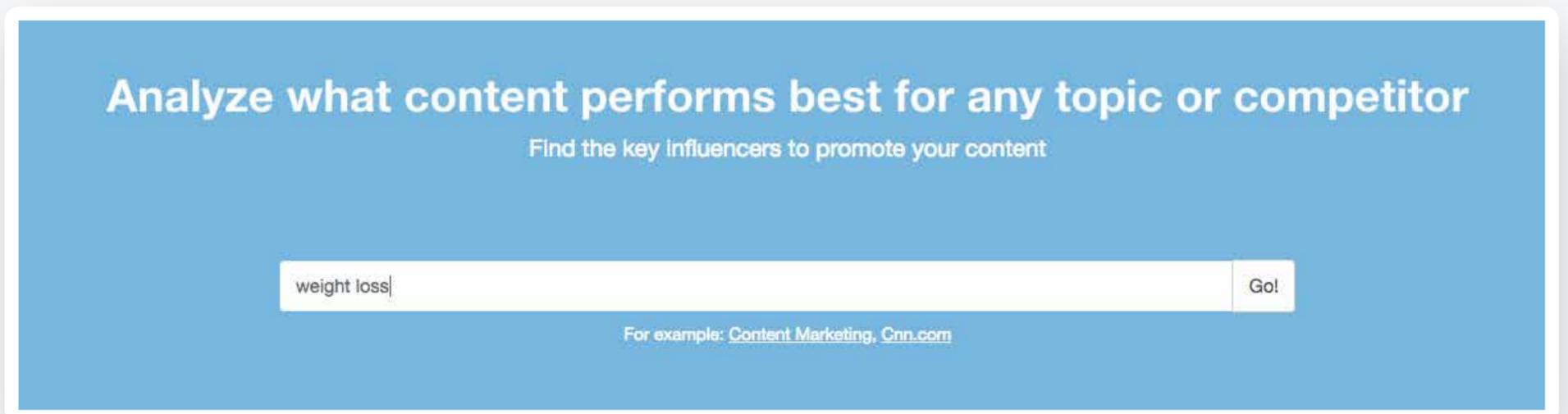
So how exactly do you come up with a shoulder niche?

I suggest using Buzzsumo because it will instantly provide you with a lot of different angles on a topic.

And you don't even need to have a paid account to use it for this purpose.

First you enter a broad phrase.

I'll just use "weight loss" as an example.



Instantly I get dozens of results.

Right off the bat, this particular piece of content about keto recipes catches my eye.

Only B2B Publishers
One Result Per Domain
Exclude Large Publishers
Only Large Publishers

Content Type
Language
Country (TLD)
Word Count
Filter Domains

Apply Filters
Reset Filters

Title	Author	Date	Source	Save	View Backlinks	View Sharers	Share	80	1	564.6K	0	16	0	564.7K
Fast Weight Loss: Lose 10 Pounds in 10 Days (Diet + Workout + Lifestyle) - Timeshood	By Renu	Jan 7, 2018	timeshood.com	Save	View Backlinks	View Sharers	Share	80	1	564.6K	0	16	0	564.7K
51 Delicious Keto Recipes That Make The Perfect Weight Loss Dinner! - TrimmedandToned	By Trimmedandtoned	Oct 28, 2017	trimmedandtoned.com	Save	View Backlinks	View Sharers	Share	594	2	280K	0	9	1	280.6K
Weight Loss Assistant		Aug 19, 2017	weightlossassistant.io	Save	View Backlinks	View Sharers	Share	255.4K	21	0	0	7	2	255.5K
50+ Amazing Before & After Weight Loss Pics That Are Hard To Believe Show The Same Person	By Viktorija G.	Nov 2, 2017	boredpanda.com	Save	View Backlinks	View Sharers	Share	218.3K	138	595	0	127	14	219.1K

Need Help?

I know that the ketogenic diet is really popular right now, so targeting that niche could definitely be viable.

Another resource you can use is Google News.

Again, type in a broad keyword and check the results.

After scrolling down a bit, I see another piece on the ketogenic diet.

Google News

weight loss

Top stories
For you
Favorites
Saved searches

U.S.
World
Local
Business
Technology
Entertainment
Sports

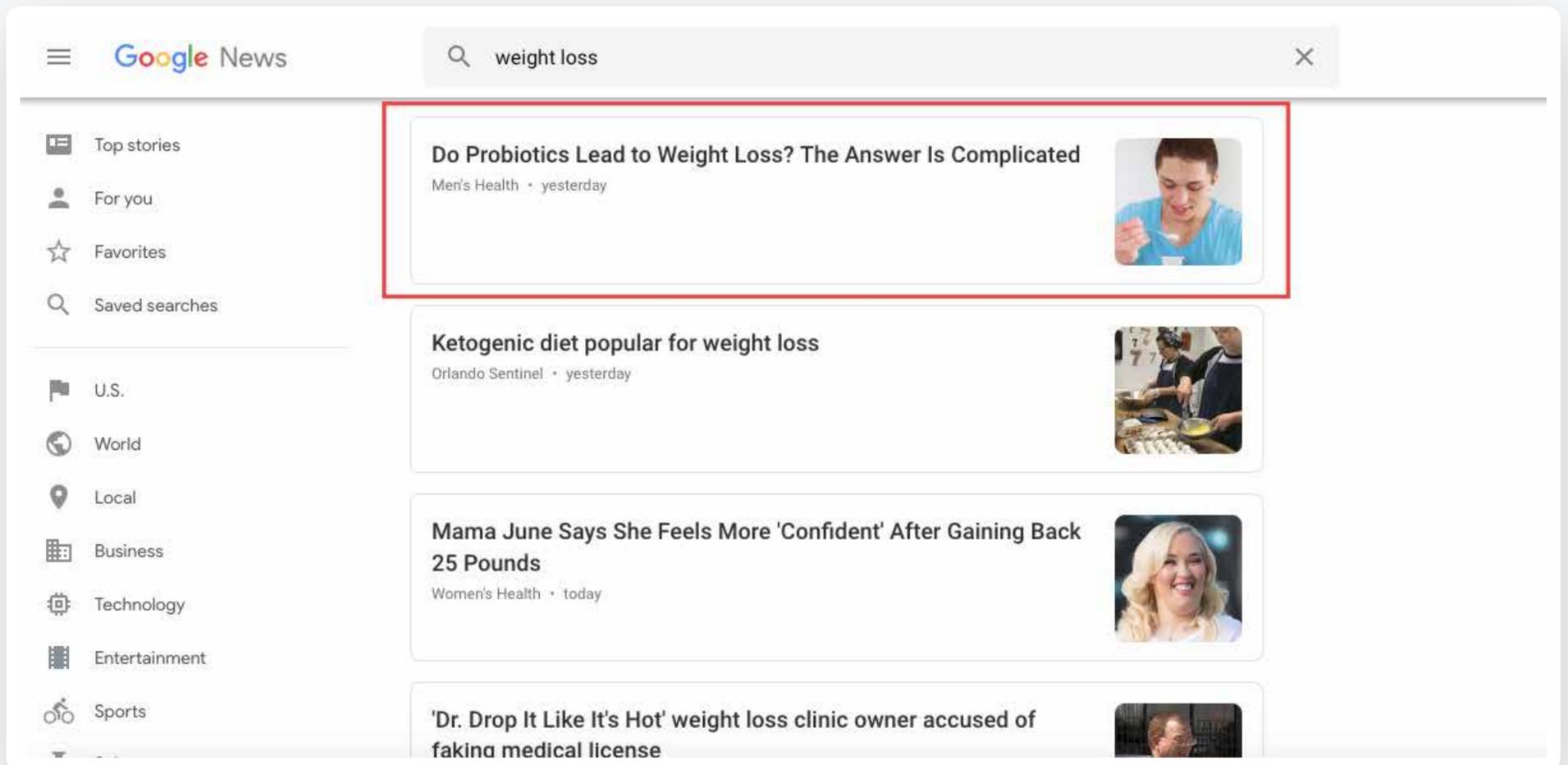
Do Probiotics Lead to Weight Loss? The Answer Is Complicated
Men's Health • yesterday

Ketogenic diet popular for weight loss
Orlando Sentinel • yesterday

Mama June Says She Feels More 'Confident' After Gaining Back 25 Pounds
Women's Health • today

'Dr. Drop It Like It's Hot' weight loss clinic owner accused of

Just above that is another one that could also be interesting involving probiotics.



So just like that I have two potential topics to work with.

At that point, it's simply a matter of creating great content and reaching out to bloggers and influencers.

Use MarketMuse data

Remember back in the day when all you had to do to rank well was perform a bit of keyword research and stuff those keywords into a 500-word article?

It was like shooting fish in a barrel.

But those days are long gone and search algorithms are more sophisticated than ever.

The Hummingbird update back in 2013 really changed the game when it introduced latent semantic indexing (LSI), which made it so Google started looking at the greater whole or the underlying theme of a page rather than simply keywords.

It's what helped their algorithm truly grasp the meaning of content.

Fast forward to today, and it's clear that effective SEO is about comprehensively covering topics rather than just a few keywords.

One particular tool that I've found to be a breakthrough is called [MarketMuse](#), which is "an AI-powered assistant that accelerates content creation and optimization so you can win in organic search."

This is an incredibly robust platform that does a few amazing things including the following:

- It analyzes a potential topic to help you decide whether it's worth your time to write content on it
- Provides clear-cut recommendations on what to write and how to write it
- Provides recommendations on how to optimize existing pages

There's some crazy advanced AI in place here that's light years ahead of most other tools. It's like keyword research on steroids.

[Brafton wrote a recent article](#) that features a case study using MarketMuse that helped them go from the number 16 spot all the way to number 2.

I really like their quote at the beginning that says, "What we **really need** is an algorithm that understands the depth, quality and topics that are being discussed for the keyword you are targeting. We need an algorithm that mimics Hummingbird and gives us a blueprint for who we need to beat and how we need to beat them."

They then point out that MarketMuse provides that algorithm and explain its features in great detail.

For example, there's "depth score," which shows how the quality of your content fares against the competition.

(Optional) Enter the URL to your content: Clear All

Fetch

Select the focus topic of your content

content marketing services digital marketing strategy product landing pages google keyword tool search volume

Or, enter your own topic below Advanced Settings

Analyze

Content Depth Score

24

Average Content Score Target: **32**

Best Content Score Target: **50**

Text to Analyze: In Content On Page

Related Topics: Content

Word Count: **2,020**

Average Word Count Target: **2,107**

Best Word Count Target: **7,807**

20	niche	0	5	-
41	search query	0	2	-
105	traffic	0	12	-
92	people	1	7	-

Download

Top Ranking Pages for "how to do keyword research"

Rank	Title and URL	Content Score	Word Count
1	How to Do Keyword Research for SEO: A Beginner's Guide https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/how-to-do-keyword-research-ht	45	2,003
2	Google http://www.google.com	2	27
3	How To Do Keyword Research - The Beginners Guide to SEO - Moz https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo/keyword-research	35	874
4	How to Do Keyword Research for SEO: A Beginner's Guide https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/how-to-do-keyword-research-ht	45	2,003
5	How To Do Keyword Research in 2017 - Ahrefs' Guide https://ahrefs.com/blog/keyword-research/	42	4,401
6	Why You Should Never "Do Keyword Research" Again http://searchenginejournal.com/never-keyword-research-223054	25	977
7	How to do Keyword Research the Smart Way: Targeting Interest and Intent https://blog.kissmetrics.com/keyword-research-smart-way/	36	2,025
8	Keyword Research for SEO: The Definitive Guide (2017 Update) http://backlinko.com/keyword-research	37	1,878
9	How To Do Keyword Research For SEO http://www.seonick.net/keyword-research/	42	2,989

So if you're looking for a legitimate, next generation SEO tool, I highly recommend taking a look at MarketMuse.

It can help you take your SEO to the next level.

Embrace LSI

Sounds complex, yeah, but I'll give you the exact tools to unravel this advanced form of SEO optimization. I'm referring to LSI graphs and topic coverage.

In Brian Dean's list of the [top 200 ranking factors](#), he lists the following three fairly high up.

- #19 - LSI keywords in content
- #20 - LSI keywords in title and description tags
- #21 - Page covers topic in-depth

So LSI is obviously important.

Luckily, there's another fantastic tool that can greatly help you cover a topic comprehensively and branch out far beyond just a keyword or two.

It's called the [LSI Graph](#), and despite the fact that it's backed by DPO [double pushout] graph transformation, the tool itself is pretty straightforward.

Simply enter in a broad keyword into the search box.

LSI Graph

Generate Latent Semantic Indexing (LSI) Keywords for your SEO content with our free LSI Keyword Generator tool.

seo

GENERATE

I'm not a robot

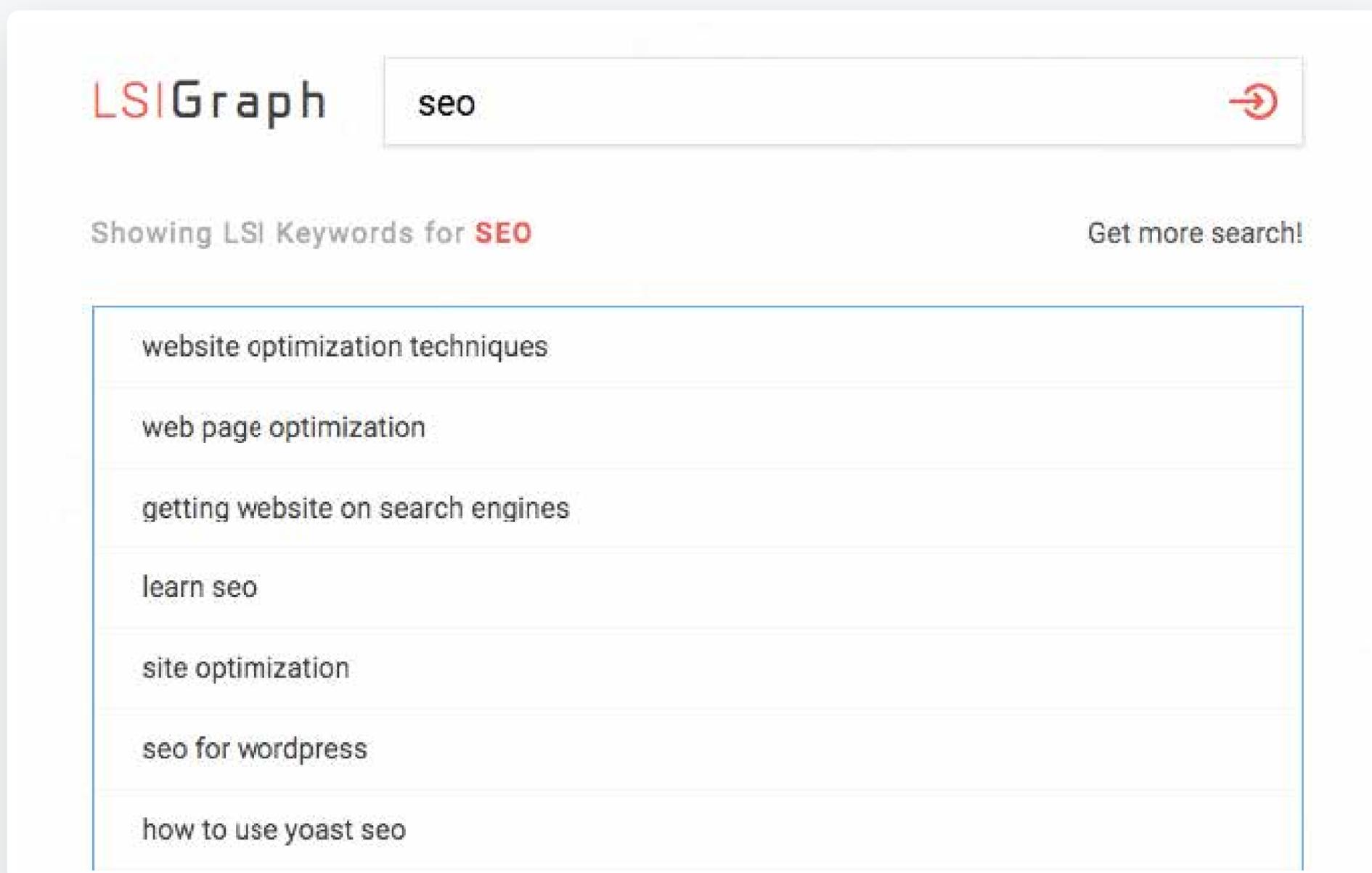
reCAPTCHA
Privacy - Terms

As Seen On:

Entrepreneur SEJ Search Engine Journal NEILPATEL BACKLINKO

Solve the CAPTCHA and click on "Generate."

Here's what I got for "seo."



The screenshot shows the LSI Graph tool interface. At the top left is the logo "LSIGraph". To its right is a search input field containing the text "seo" and a red circular refresh icon. Below the search field, the text "Showing LSI Keywords for **SEO**" is displayed on the left, and "Get more search!" is on the right. A list of seven LSI keywords is shown in a table-like structure:

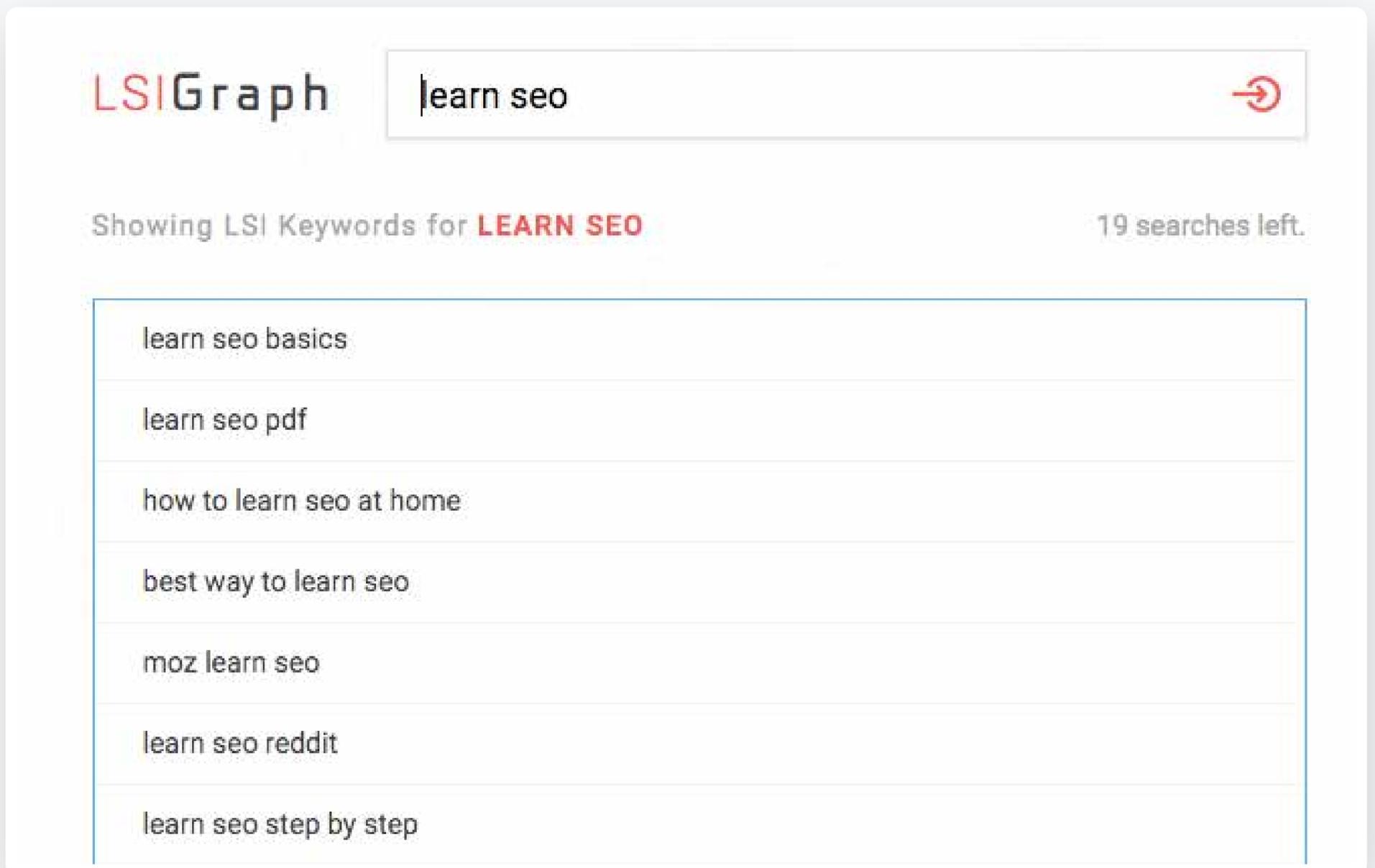
website optimization techniques
web page optimization
getting website on search engines
learn seo
site optimization
seo for wordpress
how to use yoast seo

A list of keyword variations that I can potentially use in my content.

But wait, there's more.

You can get even more ideas by clicking on a particular keyword.

Here's what I got after clicking on "learn seo."



The screenshot shows the LSI Graph tool interface. At the top left is the logo 'LSIGraph'. To its right is a search input field containing the text 'learn seo' and a red search icon. Below the search field, it says 'Showing LSI Keywords for **LEARN SEO**' and '19 searches left.' Below this is a list of seven LSI keywords, each in a separate row:

- learn seo basics
- learn seo pdf
- how to learn seo at home
- best way to learn seo
- moz learn seo
- learn seo reddit
- learn seo step by step

And you can keep repeating this as many times as you'd like until you have a rock solid list of LSI keywords.

I recommend adding them to a spreadsheet that you can quickly reference while writing your content.

When you're done, your post should be incredibly rich and cover all of the angles.

An added plus is that it can provide you with ideas for sections in your content that you may not have thought of.

So I find the LSI Graph to be a tremendously helpful tool.

Focus on voice search optimization

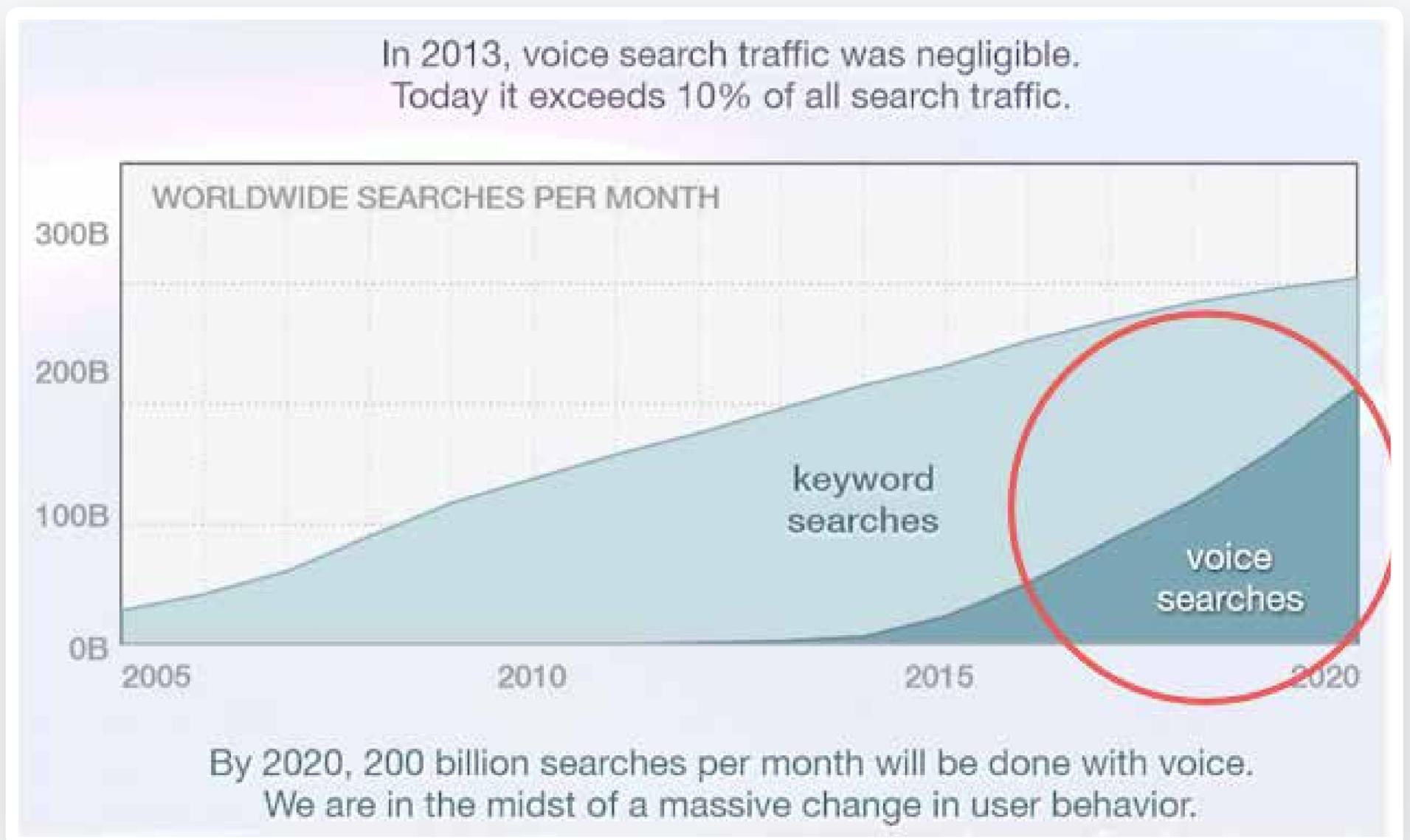
Another huge trend that's happening right now is the rise in voice searches.

Let me rattle off few stats to provide some perspective:

- **Two in five adults** perform a voice search once a day

- Roughly **one in five adults** use it at least once a month
- Millennials are the most heavy adopters with **nearly 36 percent** using it at least once a month

And just look at what the **projected growth of voice searches** looks like through 2020.



It's significant!

I don't know about you, but I find myself using voice search quite frequently, especially if I'm out and about and need to quickly find information. It's simply a matter of practicality on a smartphone.

I mean I could laboriously type in a search phrase and risk making errors, or I could simply say it aloud and have all the information I need in seconds.

So it's easy to see why this trend has taken off like it has.

comScore even goes so far as to say that **half of all searches** will be voice searches by 2020.

This means one thing—voice search optimization should be a top priority.

Tailoring your SEO campaign with this in mind is already important and will soon be essential. Here are some of my top tips for this.

First, you'll want to approach keywords and titles using natural speech.

Just think about it.

When you're performing a voice search, you'll probably say something like "where is the best Thai restaurant in town" rather than something more robotic like "best Thai restaurant."

It's all about using natural language, which often means using longtail keywords.

And as I'm sure you already know, longtail keywords are advantageous anyway and what give you a realistic chance or ranking.

Next, you'll want to create content that's easy to read.

Simple, concise language is your best bet, and research from Brian Dean found that writing at a 9th grade reading level is ideal.

So stay away from overly intellectual language and industry jargon and keep it conversational.



When it comes to content length, a high word count is considered best practices.

In fact, the average word count of a Google voice search was 2,312 words.

AVERAGE WORD COUNT OF RESULTS PAGE

2,312 words



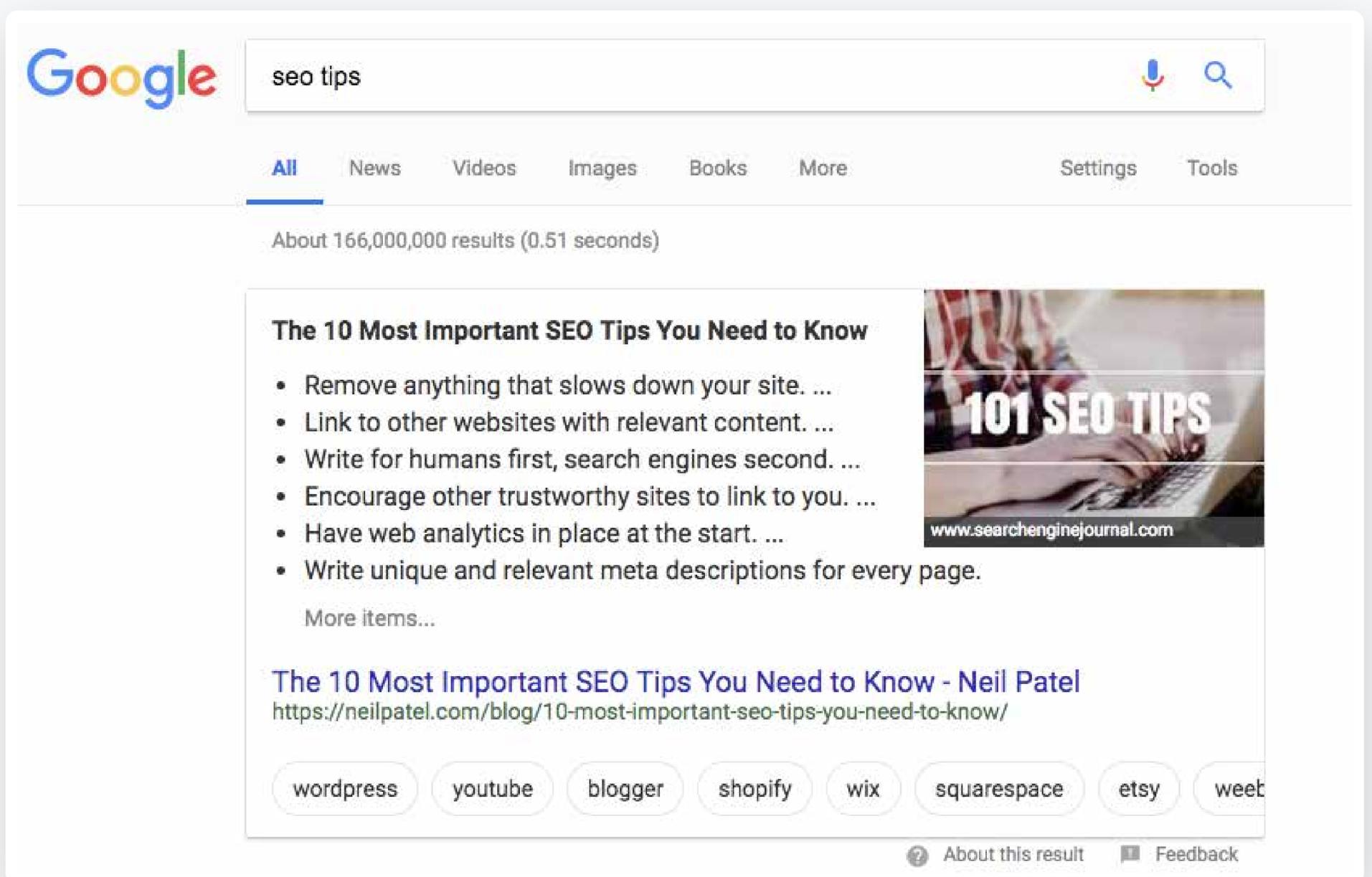
For the whole enchilada on voice search optimization, you'll want to take a look at [this study from Brian Dean](#).

It covers virtually everything you need to know in exhaustive detail.

Optimize for featured snippets

If you're unfamiliar, "A **featured snippet** [otherwise called an Answer Box] is a brief answer to a user's search query, which is displayed on top of Google search results. It's extracted from one of the top-ranking pages for that search query and includes the page's title and URL."

Here's an example of where I ranked for a featured snippet for the keyword "seo tips."



Getting ranked in featured snippets is important because it gives you a huge edge over every other competitor in SERPs.

It's actually known as "position 0" and is even better than number 1. And it's the first thing users see after performing a search and stands out brilliantly.

Needless to say, this can help you generate a high volume of quality organic traffic.

While featured snippets don't receive as many clicks (because users can often find key takeaways without actually visiting a page), they basically steal traffic from the rest of the search results.

So when you look at the big picture, you should still experience an increase in traffic.

In fact, a case study by Stone Temple saw a [20-30 percent increase in traffic](#) for ConfluentForms.com when they ranked for a featured snippet.

Not only that, it can be beneficial from a branding standpoint because your site is featured front and center, which can help improve your authority and credibility.

Fortunately, there are plenty of opportunities to rank for featured snippets.

According to [2017 research by Ahrefs](#) involving 112 million keywords in their US database, 14 million of them had featured snippets in their SERP.

This means that 12.3 percent of those keywords had featured snippets, which they point out is “quite a lot.”

Amount of search queries with a **Featured Snippet**



Total queries: ~112 million
Queries with FS: ~14 million

- No FS **87.7%**
- Have FS **13.3%**

*data from Ahrefs

And I would imagine that this number will only continue to grow over time, especially with mobile searches becoming increasingly common.

After all, many people want information that's brief and concise, and they want it quickly.

So I feel that optimizing for featured snippets is a solid game plan and will only continue to grow in importance.

As for optimization techniques, here are some of the fundamentals.

First of all, you should know that nearly all (99.58 percent) of featured snippets are ranked in the top 10 search results.

So if you're trying to move an existing piece of content to this position, you probably don't want to waste your time optimizing it if it's way down the list in SERPs.

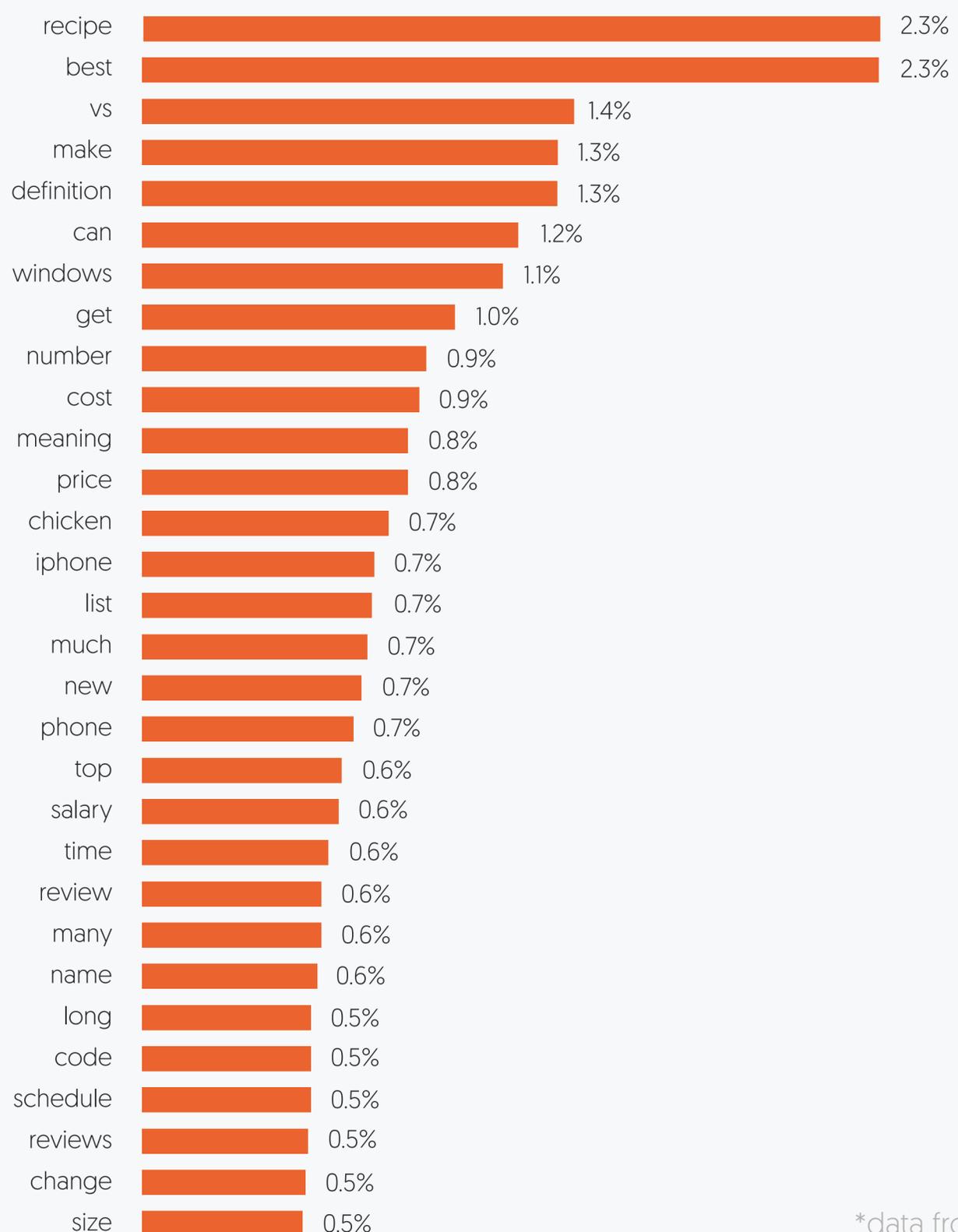
But if it's say number three or four, you most definitely should.

If you've already reached a high-ranking position, you have a much more realistic chance.

Next, it's nice to know which words are most commonly found in featured snippets. Ahrefs provides a list of the top 30.

Top 30 most frequently met words in search queries with **Featured Snippets**

Total search queries = 2 million



*data from Ahrefs

This should serve as a nice road map when deciding on your approach and the specific keywords to use.

When creating content, you'll want to provide a direct answer to a question.

I really like [Moz's approach](#) which is to:

- Ask the question in your article (that may be a sub-heading)
- Immediately follow the question with a one-paragraph answer
- Elaborate further in the article

This way you can still create some great longform content that's super insightful.

You're simply adjusting things slightly and making the answer to a question the main focal point of your content.

Beyond that, you'll want to use organized formatting including sub-headers, lists, bullet points, etc. and expand on the topic to answer a lot of related questions.

This falls in the line with LSI and topic coverage like I mentioned earlier.

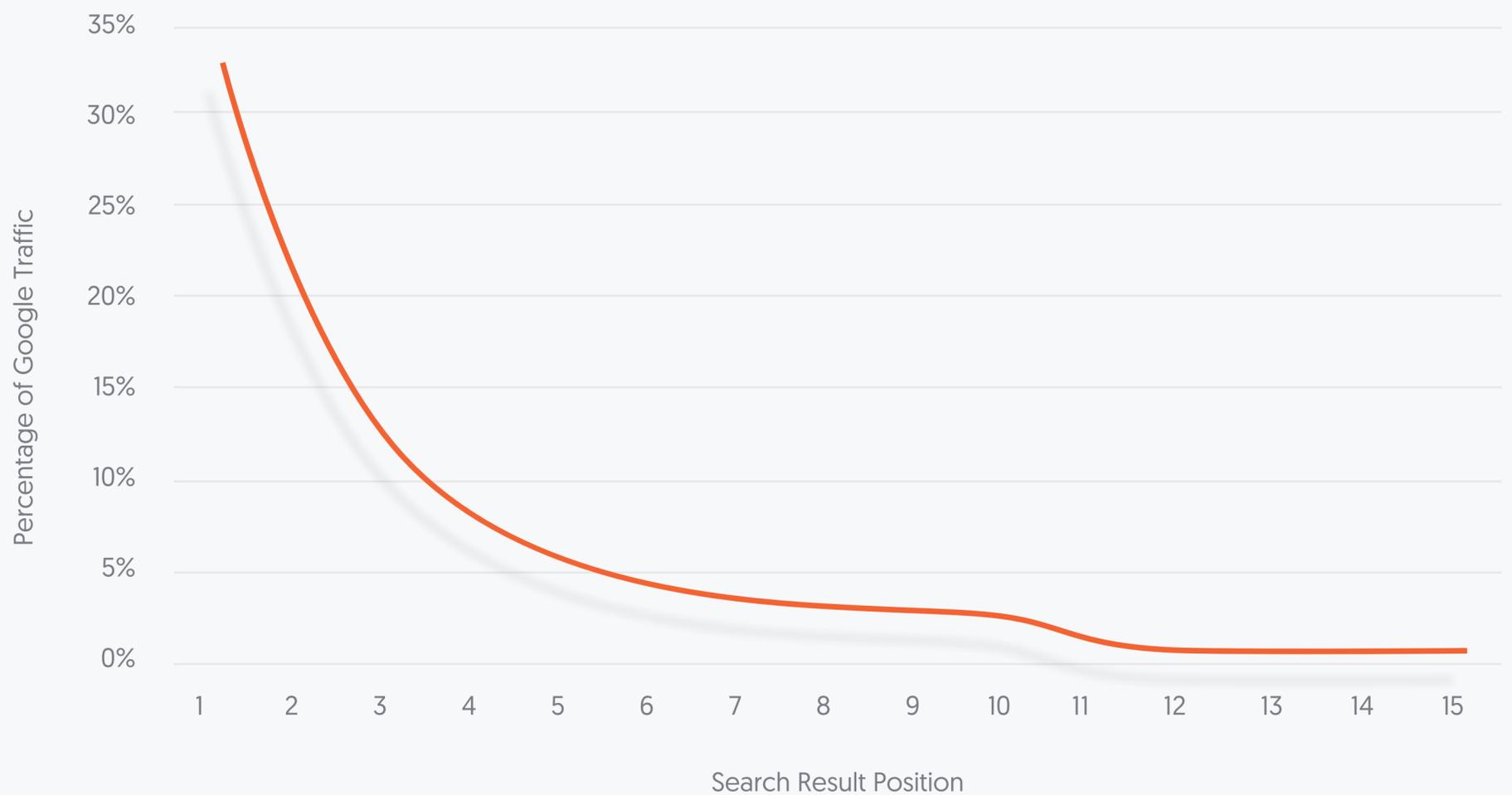
Optimize existing content

Here's the scenario.

You've got a post that's ranking fairly well and is in the top 10 in SERPs. But it's in the lower half somewhere between number 6 and 10.

It's likely generating a decent amount of traffic, but it could certainly be better.

Remember that the [percentage of Google traffic](#) by ranking breaks down like this.



There's a huge disparity between number 1 and number 10.

So if you could take a post from being ranked number 9 to being ranked 1 or 2, it would generate considerably more traffic, especially if it's a heavily searched keyword phrase.

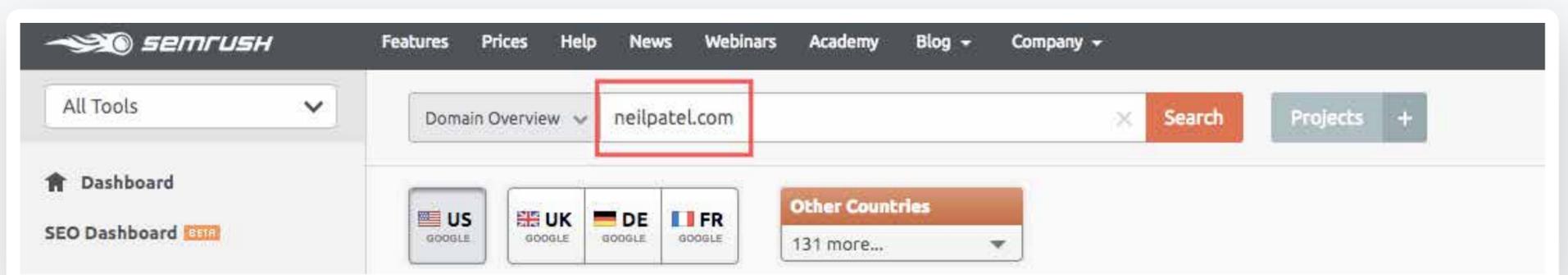
And if you do this for multiple posts, it can have a really big impact.

One way to crank up your traffic is to spend some time optimizing the existing post so that it reaches its full potential.

Here's what you'll need to do for this.

First, use a tool like [SEMrush](#) to find posts that worth optimizing.

Check out the domain overview of your site by searching for it.



Then scroll down to “Top Organic Keywords” for some ideas.

live update TOP ORGANIC KEYWORDS (123,760) ⓘ

Keyword	Pos.	Volume	CPC (USD)	Traffic
affiliate marketing	1 (1)	40,500	6.31	
neil patel	1 (1)	12,100	4.76	
seo	4 (4)	110,000	14.82	
instagram search	9 (9)	246,000	0.66	
digital marketing	2 (3)	40,500	10.77	

[Export](#) [View full report](#)

With just a quick glance, I can see that my post involving the keyword “instagram search” is a great candidate for a makeover.

live update TOP ORGANIC KEYWORDS (123,760) ⓘ

Keyword	Pos.	Volume	CPC (USD)	Traffic
affiliate marketing	1 (1)	40,500	6.31	
neil patel	1 (1)	12,100	4.76	
seo	4 (4)	110,000	14.82	
instagram search	9 (9)	246,000	0.66	
digital marketing	2 (3)	40,500	10.77	

[Export](#) [View full report](#)

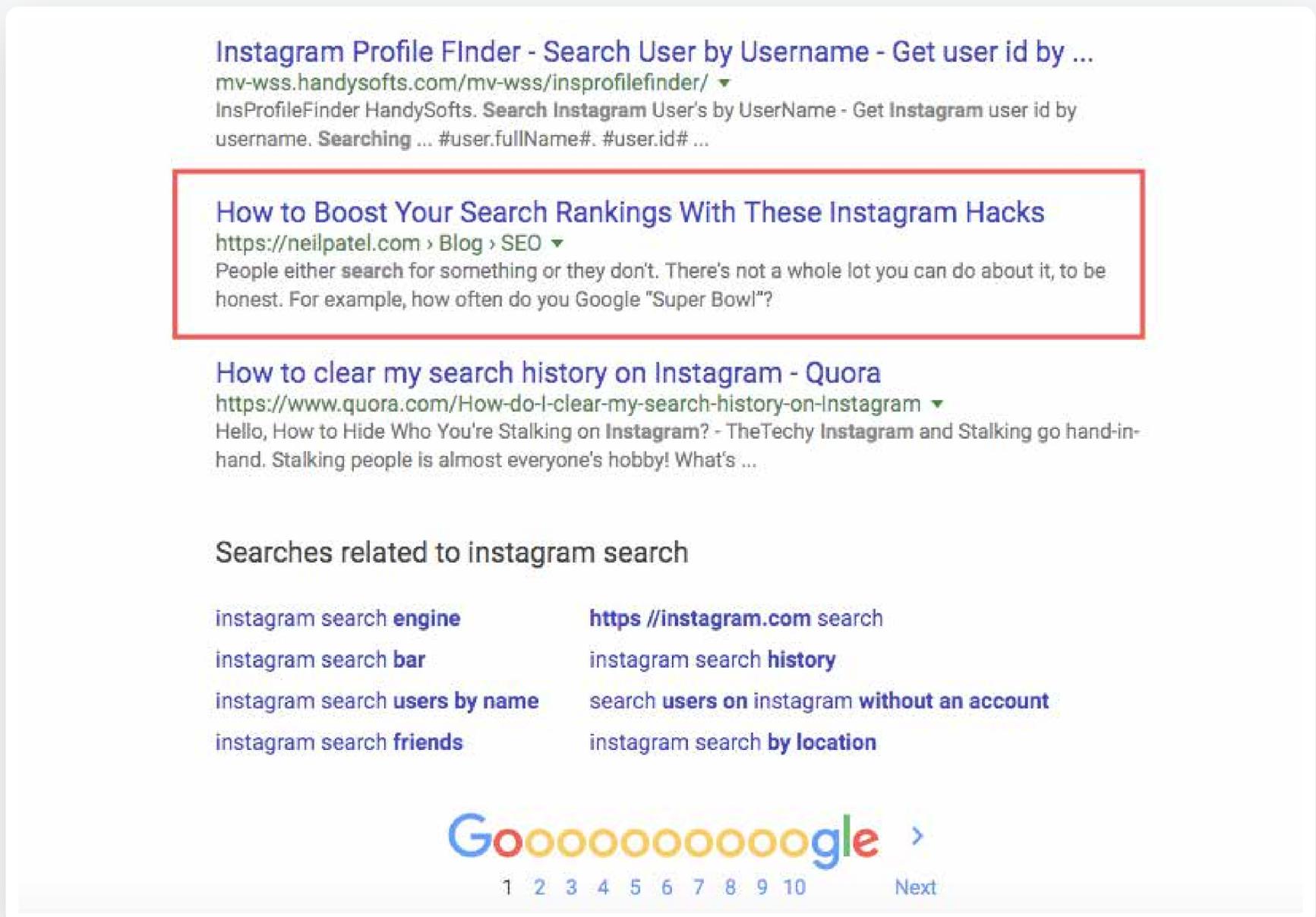
Notice that it ranked number 9 with a volume of 246,000.

So it's right on the precipice of generating a ton of traffic.

It just needs a little TLC.

After clicking on the “instagram search” link from SEMrush, I’m able to find the specific post.

Here it is just like SEMrush said located toward the bottom of the SERP at number 9.



This is definitely something that’s worth my time.

The only question is, what exactly should I do in order to optimize it?

Here are some suggestions:

- Increase the length [aim for around 2,000 words]
- Look for information that can be updated and add new facts, figures, data, etc.
- Adjust formatting to make it more scannable
- Add more images

- Optimize existing images
- Add some internal links

On top of this, it's smart to reshare it on social media, and you may even want to reach out to influencers to see if they'll share it with their audience.

Now keep in mind that this is unlikely to result in a major improvement overnight, and it's not guaranteed to hit number 1.

It just doesn't work like that.

But if you're patient and cover all of the bases, you should see some definite improvement within a month or two.

And once you find the right recipe that works, you can rinse and repeat to get the absolute most out of all your posts.

Use the skyscraper technique to outrank your competitors

All is fair in love and SEO. At the end of the day, search engine algorithms don't discriminate.

They're not going to automatically rank one post higher simply because of who wrote it.

Of course authority plays into it, but that's a whole different story.

What I'm trying to say is that everything in SEO is fair game, and if you execute the right sequence of actions, you can outrank the competition.

One of my favorite strategies for doing this is the [skyscraper technique](#), which involves three key steps:

- 1 Find link-worthy content
- 2 Make something even better
- 3 Reach out to the right people

This tactic involves some of the same principles as what I discussed in optimizing existing content but is specifically

designed to usurp your competitors' top content.

Here's what you want to do.

Start by using a tool like **SpyFu** to spy on a key competitor. I'll use ProBlogger as an example.

Enter in their URL.



Hit enter, and you'll see their monthly domain overview.

Scroll down to the "Top Keywords" section, and you can quickly tell which particular posts are generating the most traffic.

Top Keywords

Rank	Organic Keywords	SEO Clicks Per Month
1	how to make money by blog	2.97k
1	marketing affiliate programs	476
13	search engiens	1.84k
1	blog making money	2.97k
1	affiliate marketing programs	476

[VIEW ALL ORGANIC KEYWORDS >](#)

Note that the free version only gives you five of their top keywords, but that's usually sufficient to work with and still supplies you with a boatload of helpful information.

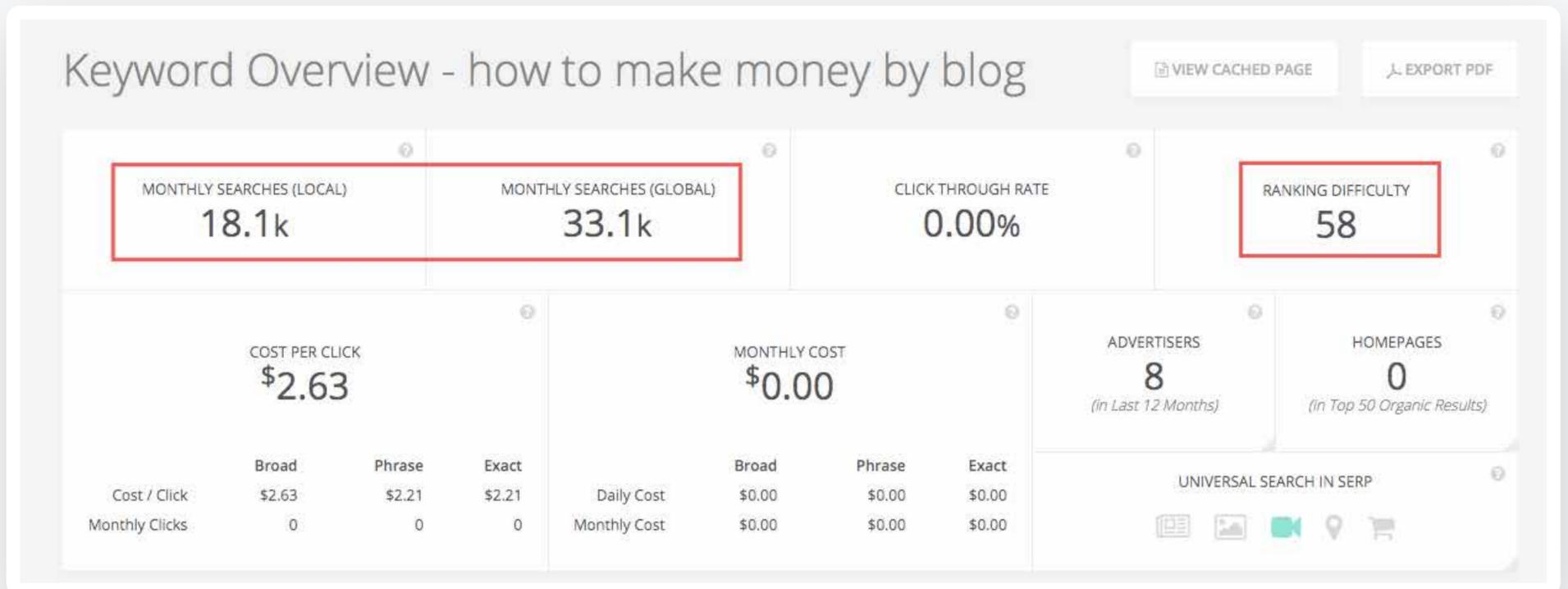
You can learn more by clicking on a keyword.

Top Keywords

Rank	Organic Keywords	SEO Clicks Per Month
1	how to make money by blog	2.97k
1	marketing affiliate programs	476
13	search engiens	1.84k
1	blog making money	2.97k
1	affiliate marketing programs	476

[VIEW ALL ORGANIC KEYWORDS >](#)

Here's what pops up when I click on "how to make money by blog."



Some of the key information I want to check out is monthly searches (local and global) and ranking difficulty.

Ideally, the keyword will receive a fairly high number of monthly searches and be easy to rank for.

Now let's say that I'm interested in competing for this particular keyword.

The next thing I want to do is go back and click on "View all organic keywords."

Top Keywords

Rank	Organic Keywords	SEO Clicks Per Month
1	how to make money by blog	2.97k
1	marketing affiliate programs	476
13	search engiens	1.84k
1	blog making money	2.97k
1	affiliate marketing programs	476

[VIEW ALL ORGANIC KEYWORDS >](#)

From here I can find the link to the specific article that's ranking for that keyword.

Keyword	Rank (Change)	Cost/Click	Ranking Difficulty	Searches/Mo	Est. Clicks/Mo	Est. Click Value/Mo
how to make money by blog	1 (0 -)	\$2.63	58	18.1k	2.97k	\$6.56k
marketing affiliate programs	1 (0 -)	\$0.82	60	2.9k	476	\$6.27k
search engiens	13 (16 ↑)	\$0.26	47	135k	1.84k	\$5.7k
blog making money	1 (0 -)	\$1.74	57	18.1k	2.97k	\$5.17k
affiliate marketing programs	1 (0 -)	\$9.49	60	2.9k	476	\$4.51k

Click on that and it takes me to the actual post.

Access our ProBloggerPLUS Library by joining our FREE membership [Join Now](#) Powered by



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Make Money Blogging



Last Updated Jan 31, 2017

At this point, my goal is to look it over and identify potential areas for improvement.

Then it's time to "skyscraper it" by making it even better.

Some ideas include:

- Creating a post that's longer and more comprehensive
- Updating it

- Making the content easier to digest
- Adding visuals and other media
- Etc.

Now the final step in the process is to reach out to the right people. And what's the best way to do that?

Here's a little trick.

Use a tool called [Backlink Watch](#).

First type in the URL of the post.

You'll then get a list of all of the sites that are linking to your competitor's URL.

BLW Report		Ranking Positions	Competitors	All External Backlinks	Keywords	Referring Domains	P>K Distribution	Anchors	Raw Export	
No.	Backlink URL			Anchor Text	PR	OBL	Flag			
1	https://jeremyriveraseo.com/page/2/				(...)					
2	https://www.lifestylecommunities.com.au/our-news/7-ways-...				(...)					
3	https://www.discover.com/personal-loans/resources/major-...			ways to earn money	(...)	113				
4	https://bizfluent.com/13709463/how-to-become-a-blogger			ProBlogger: Make Money Blogging	(...)	39	nofollow			
5	http://www.thatsoftwaredude.com:80/content/8669/ways-to-...			blogging	(...)	140				
6	http://www.jobground.com/blog/career-advice-blog/5-cre-...				(...)					
7	https://steemit.com/all/@codinggeeks/make-money-blogging				(...)					
8	https://steemit.com/cheetah/@cheetah/2017-08-31			Content	(...)	918				
9	https://moneymakersites.com/how-to-make-money-online-wh-...				(...)					
10	https://mybabymoney.com/how-do-bloggers-get-paid-and-by-whom			more	(...)	44				
11	https://ablogonblogging.com/what-you-need-to-know-to-ma-...			What To Blog About To Make Money: The 3 Step Formula	(...)	50				
12	https://www.mrowl.com/user/crystal/howtoblog/monetization			https://prologger.com/make-money-blogging/	(...)	74				
13	https://affiliateninjamom.com/how-to-make-money-as-a-st-...			monetise	(...)	157				
14	http://www.financialbuzz.com/top-5-online-businesses-to-...			make profit out of the blog	(...)	452				
15	http://schamanen.info/				(...)					
16	http://tyrneathem.com/5-creative-hobbies-can-actually-m-...			opportunities to make money blogging	(...)	67				
17	http://www.howtodoweb.com/video/how-to-video-blog-and-m-...			Make Money Blogging - ProBlogger prologger.com	(...)	45				
18	http://mikedaciuk.com/news-articles/how-to-chase-your-d-...			making money blogging	(...)	88				
19	https://baeronmarketing.com/the-secret-formula-behind-p-...			making money blogging	(...)	0				
20	https://www.blogingceo.com/how-to-start-a-blog/			How to Make Money from Blogging	(...)	147				
21	http://www.dragonblogger.com/10-steps-making-money-free-...			How to Make Money from Blogging	(...)	60				
22	http://allthingsfrugal.com/articles/7-cheap-hobbies-to-...			make money off your blog	(...)	121				
23	https://nicholasrossis.me/2017/09/13/7-best-options-to-...			make money blogging	(...)	97				
24	http://es.timberlandpro.co/index.php?main_page=Payment-...				(...)					
25	http://germanconnect.de/earn-money-at-home/i-want-to-mak-...			Make Money Blogging	(...)	31				

Voila! You can instantly see precisely which sites have linked to them.

Now the final step is to reach out to those sites and let them know about your content.

Considering that they already linked to something similar (in your competitor's content), there's a good chance that many will link to you as well.

And with the right touch, you can surpass your competitor and achieve rock solid rankings.

Get serious about YouTube SEO

Video is huge right now. HubSpot even found that the average person watches **1.5 hours of video per day**, and 15 percent watch more than three hours each day.

So this is certainly a medium I recommend using for marketing purposes.

But how does this relate to thriving in SERPs?

It's simple. Crush it at YouTube SEO to increase your exposure in SERPs. If you can rise to the top of YouTube, odds are you can achieve a solid ranking in Google.

First of all, you need to realize just how much Google loves featuring YouTube content.

Google eats it up.

And this makes sense considering Google bought YouTube back in 2006.

Here's what pops up when I search for "what is seo video."

The screenshot shows a Google search result for "what is seo video". The top result is a video titled "What is SEO? SEO Explained - YouTube" with a thumbnail showing a magnifying glass over a network diagram. Below this is a "People also ask" section with four questions: "What is an SEO in writing?", "What is the SEO title?", "What is an SEO stand for?", and "What is the SEO market?". Below that, three more video results are shown, with the first one, "What Is Search Engine Optimization / SEO - YouTube", highlighted with a red border. The video results include thumbnails, titles, URLs, upload dates, and uploaders.

Well, **Search engine optimization (SEO)** is the process of affecting the visibility of a website or a web page in a web search engine's unpaid results — often referred to as "natural," "organic," or "earned" results. Jul 2, 2016

What is SEO? SEO Explained - YouTube
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Apa6_o3Vc7c

About this result Feedback

People also ask

What is an SEO in writing? ▾

What is the SEO title? ▾

What is an SEO stand for? ▾

What is the SEO market? ▾

Feedback

What Is Search Engine Optimization / SEO - YouTube
 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hF515-0Tduk> ▾
Sep 12, 2011 - Uploaded by Search Engine Land
Search Engine Land. ... Don't know what **search engine optimization** is? Know someone who needs easy to ...

What is SEO? SEO Explained - YouTube
 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Apa6_o3Vc7c ▾
Jul 2, 2016 - Uploaded by Amarpreet Singh
Well, **Search engine optimization (SEO)** is the process of affecting the visibility of a website or a web page in ...

What is SEO (Search Engine Optimization)? - YouTube
 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COL_qPL5xsg

Just below the featured snippet and “People also ask” section, there are three videos. All of which are from YouTube.

Notice they're not from Dailymotion, Vimeo, Twitch, etc.

It's strictly YouTube content.

The logic here is that by following best SEO practices on YouTube, you can potentially get your video content featured on page one of Google.

You're really killing two birds with one stone because you're improving your ranking both on YouTube and Google at the same time.

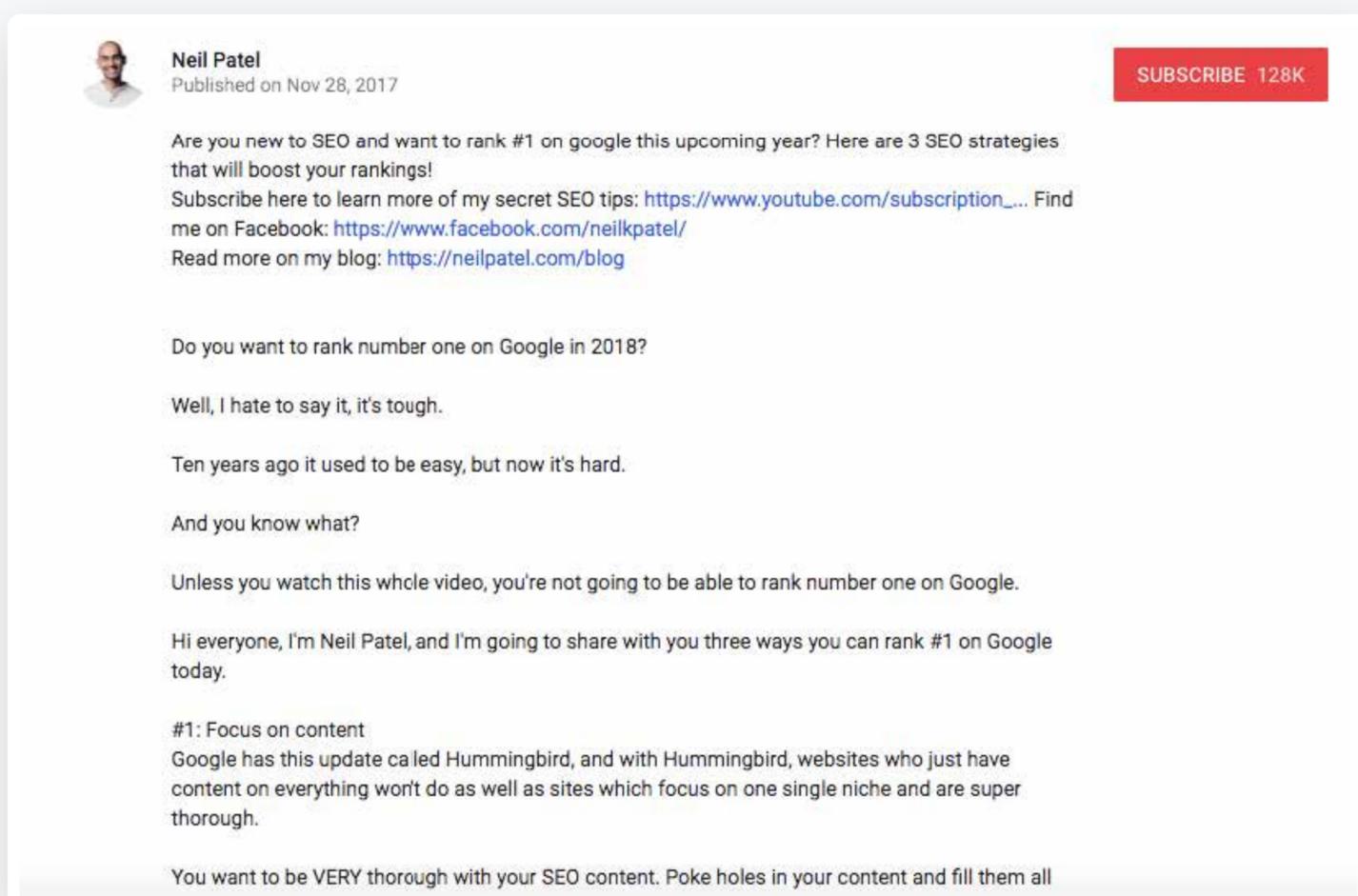
Now I don't have time to launch into an exhaustive guide on YouTube SEO, but here are some of the most important guidelines.

First, make the title at least five words long because this allows you to incorporate your entire keyword in without having to stuff it or make it sound unnatural.

Second, incorporate your target keyword into the video description just like you would with standard SEO.

Third, treat the video description almost like a blog post where it's robust and provides plenty of detail.

Here's an example from my video on SEO for beginners.



The screenshot shows a YouTube video description from Neil Patel, published on Nov 28, 2017. The channel name is Neil Patel with 128K subscribers. The description text is as follows:

Are you new to SEO and want to rank #1 on google this upcoming year? Here are 3 SEO strategies that will boost your rankings!
Subscribe here to learn more of my secret SEO tips: https://www.youtube.com/subscription_... Find me on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/neilkpatel/>
Read more on my blog: <https://neilpatel.com/blog>

Do you want to rank number one on Google in 2018?

Well, I hate to say it, it's tough.

Ten years ago it used to be easy, but now it's hard.

And you know what?

Unless you watch this whcle video, you're not going to be able to rank number one on Google.

Hi everyone, I'm Neil Patel, and I'm going to share with you three ways you can rank #1 on Google today.

#1: Focus on content
Google has this update caled Hummingbird, and with Hummingbird, websites who just have content on everything won't do as well as sites which focus on one single niche and are super thorough.

You want to be VERY thorough with your SEO content. Poke holes in your content and fill them all

It's actually much longer than that, but you get the idea.

Fourth, be sure to actually say your target keyword in your video.

Why?

Because YouTube now transcribes its content, and saying the keyword helps it better understand what your video is about.

And finally, use targeted tags.

While this isn't monumentally important, it certainly helps and also increases your chances of being found in related videos.

For a heck of a lot more information on YouTube SEO, [check out this epic guide from Brian Dean](#).

Strategically link to micro influencers

If you've ever read my content, you know that I include plenty of external links.

I'm constantly linking to original research studies, experts, influencers, and so on.

While some marketers shy away from this fearing that readers will click on another post never to return, I personally embrace it.

I feel that at the end of the day, it's all about providing readers with the best possible content.

And if the best way to do this is to link to other sites, I'm totally fine with that.

But the strategy I'm about to discuss is just a little different and specifically involves linking to micro influencers.

It works by getting quotes, opinions or data from individuals who are experts in their field and then adding links to them.

I personally try to aim for a high volume with a link roughly one every 100-150 words or so.

The more people you link out to, the better chance you have of getting a reciprocal link in return. It's a numbers game.

And the reason I target micro influencers with sizable but not huge followings is that they're more likely to be thankful for me featuring them in my content and linking to them than a macro influencers with hundreds of thousands or even millions of followers.

It's often a big deal for micro influencers but only a drop in the bucket for macro influencers.

They also tend to be more receptive when I shoot them an email.

I also try to stay away from brands and just focus on individuals because I find they're more likely to respond.

Here are the specifics.

Create your content just like you always would—longform with at least 2,000 words is usually best.

But when you're doing your research, be on the lookout for helpful information from people who meet the right criteria.

Let's say that I was writing a piece about recent social media trends, and I came across [this article by Alex York](#) on Sprout Social.



I then click on this link to learn a bit more about Alex.

sproutsocial Solutions Platform Pricing Partners Company Log In START YOUR FREE TRIAL

Sprout Blog » Engagement

ENGAGEMENT

6 Social Media Trends That Will Take Over 2018

by Alex York

6 Social Media Trends That Will Take Over

From there I find his Twitter account and check it out to find that he has a small following of just over 1,000 people.

Tweets 911 Following 874 Followers 1,068 Likes 1,470 Lists 2 Follow

Alex York
@SproutAlexYork

Give me all your pizza and r&b records. Content wizard, wannabe screenwriter, LeBron sympathizer, tiki drink enthusiast. Sr. SEO Specialist @SproutSocial #NUFC

Chicago, IL
alexjork.com

Tweets Tweets & replies Media

Pinned Tweet

Alex York @SproutAlexYork · Mar 13

I'm so excited to show my latest findings into the best times to post to social media. With the help of our data science team, we found the highest engagement times from our 20,000+ customers. See the report here!

Trends for you · Change

- #WorldCup 🇷🇺 Russia win 5-0 against Saudi Arabia
- #ThingsNeverSaidInIndianaJones 4,794 Tweets
- #MyTVShowWouldBeNamed 2,391 Tweets
- #Aquaman 18.1K Tweets

Knowing this, I'm pretty sure that he would be receptive to me reaching out to him later on, so I go ahead and add a nice little nugget of information of his to my post.

Once I'm done, I simply go back and contact each person I included in my post saying something along the lines of...

“

I recently came across your article and was so impressed with it that I included a quote in my recent post. I thought you might like to check it out. Also, feel free to share it.

”

In many cases, the person will be very flattered and willing to link to your piece.

And it's the ultimate win-win because the person you link to is getting extra exposure, and you're getting a link.

I also find that once you get the hang of the process, it becomes very natural and doesn't require a massive time investment.

Use 404 errors to your advantage

I'm sure you've encountered a 404 error at some point.

It look something like this.



No matter how well you run your site and how meticulous you are about checking your links, visitors are going to get hit with 404s at some point.

It could be the result of a mis-typed URL, a broken link or something else.

While most experts agree that 404s don't hurt your SEO directly and won't lead to penalties, they can hurt you indirectly.

By this I mean they:

- Disrupt the user experience
- Create frustration
- Can hurt your reputation and dissolve your brand equity

On top of that, E-Business software platform [Mintox](#) makes a great point:

“

When a link directs users to a page that returns a 404 error, Google recognizes that the page is no longer available and removes it from their search index. It also drops all of the PageRank from links pointing to the page, rendering the links worthless.”

”

So there you go. 404s certainly aren't going to do you any favors.

But what if there was a way to actually use 404s to your advantage?

It turns out there is.

Not only can you assuage the negative effects but actually improve your SEO at the same time.

And it's pretty easy. All you have to do is create a custom 404.

On it, you should include branding elements to make it unique and internal links to top pages on your site.

You may also want to include a search box to quickly reroute users to the information they're looking for.

Also, for many brands a dash of humor works well for minimizing the user's frustration.

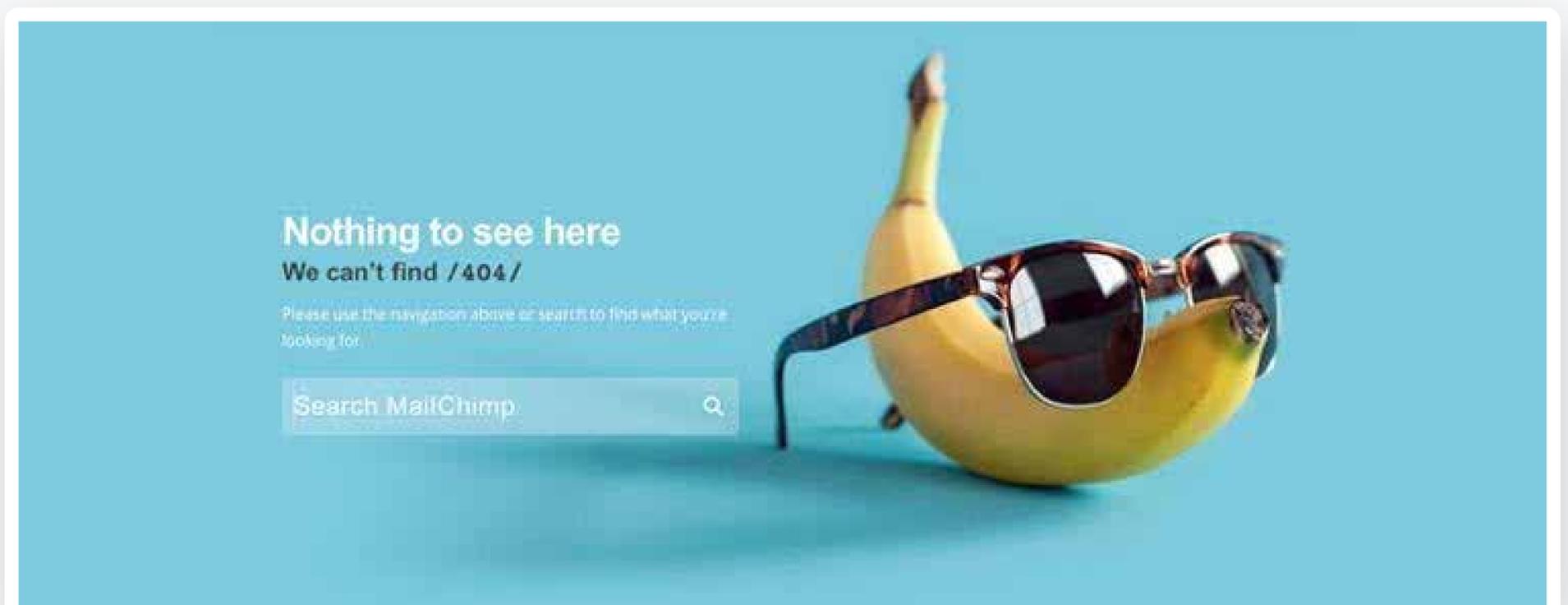
Here are a couple examples of sites that have nailed it.

First, there's ModCloth.



Notice how they seamlessly weave in popular pages from their site.

And here's one from MailChimp, which has a nice bit of humor as well as a convenient search bar.



If you're not sure how to go about constructing your own 404 page, just check out this post from UX designer [Rachit Gupta](#).

Maximize security

In mid-2014, Google officially announced that it was using security as a ranking signal.

More specifically, sites with HTTPS were favored over those with just HTTP.

Here's what they had to say about it.

Google Webmaster Central Blog

Official news on crawling and indexing sites for the Google index

HTTPS as a ranking signal

Wednesday, August 06, 2014

Webmaster level: all

Security is a top priority for Google. We invest a lot in making sure that our services use industry-leading security, like [strong HTTPS encryption by default](#). That means that people using Search, Gmail and Google Drive, for example, automatically have a secure connection to Google.

Beyond our own stuff, we're also working to make the Internet safer more broadly. A big part of that is making sure that websites people access from Google are secure. For instance, we have created resources to help webmasters [prevent and fix security breaches](#) on their sites.

And it's easy to see why they started taking security into account.

Cyber attacks have become a growing problem with an attack occurring every [39 seconds](#).

What's worse is that small businesses are especially vulnerable because they tend to lack the heightened security of larger organizations, making them easy targets.

In fact, small businesses account for 43 percent of all cyber attacks.

While security is important in general, it's especially vital if you're an E-commerce business who's doing transactions online.

So my final point on this checklist is about maximizing security.

The best way to go about this is to obtain a secure socket layer [SSL] certificate.

According to [SangFroid Web](#), "Data from Google Chrome usage shows that more than 70 percent of Chrome users are visiting HTTPS-enabled websites, which indicates that browsing via HTTPS is becoming the norm. Armed with that data, Google is taking steps to 'encourage' the global adoption of SSL/HTTPS."

Fortunately, this isn't a big deal and isn't super expensive. There are even some free options out there.

Check out [this resource from Instant SSL](#) for more on this.

The bottom line is that you should definitely make the switch from HTTP to HTTPS by getting an SSL certificate if you haven't done so already.

Google has made it abundantly clear that *this is a ranking factor*.

And with the state of cybersecurity being like it is, I would guess that digital security will continue to become more and more important over time.

Conclusion

I find SEO infinitely interesting.

The fast rate of its evolution and the constant tinkering of search engine algorithms are what make for an optimal user experience and also what keep SEO marketers on their toes.

And it's amazing to think of how far this practice has come just in the past decade.

We've gone from very basic keyword research to incredibly complex techniques that run the gamut from on-page, off-page and technical SEO.

The points I've listed in this guide should ensure that you cover most [if not all] of the bases.

Whether it's making your posts in-depth by using LSI keywords, creating content that outranks your competitors

or beefing up security, this should make for a comprehensive approach that's necessary for succeeding at modern SEO.

In turn, you can expect a significant improvement in your rankings and all of the benefits that come along with it.

So now that you finished the cheat sheet, it's time for you to implement everything you learned... *or if you feel overwhelmed you can always reach out to me.*

NEILPATEL