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SEO CONTENT GAP ANALYSIS

HOW TO OUTRANK YOUR COMPETITION

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to SEO and search marketing there are two things that we constantly discuss – the power and importance of content, and the constant need to test, test and test again.

Businesses have to be able to adapt to both the demands of the industry and the needs of their clients/customers. They have to look for opportunities and take them to make sure that their strategies are as dynamic as possible.

One area that can prove beneficial and covers the two points above is the inclusion of an SEO content gap analysis as part of an on-going strategy. The main benefit of doing this is to identify areas where your competitors might be weak and to subsequently outrank them. This eBook will look at gap analysis and how to build an effective plan to boost your performance. Here goes…

WHAT IS A GAP ANALYSIS?

A gap analysis is the method of assessing and understanding whether or not a business's objectives are being met and if not the tactics that need to be employed to ensure that they are met. The 'gap' is the space between where a business currently sits and where they want to be within a certain timeframe.

In some circles a gap analysis may also be referred to as a needs analysis, needs assessment or need-gap analysis. For the purposes of SEO, a gap analysis looks at several things including:

Missing content – A gap analysis allows you to look at all of the content on your website and find out which piece are missing altogether or need work. If you were an eCommerce site you might have a large number of products and some of them may be missing a description. This will make it almost impossible for a user to find it on the search engine results pages (SERPs). With this in mind it is vital that you make a list of content that is incorrect or missing and add this to a content calendar. Making sure that you have a comprehensive list and strategy for filling the gaps is a must, think about your services and products, how you would like to describe them?

Also consider and other ways in which you can tell the search engines and ultimately the customers about what you have to offer.

Uncovered topics – Ask yourself, are you missing content that could give you a boost in organic search? It is all well and good describing your products and services and launching them in the form of a blog but are there wider topics that you can branch out on?

Competitor targets – This is a big one. If you are to gain an advantage over your competitors then it is vital that you are completing a competitor analysis. The benefit of this is that they will be ranking or trying to rank for the keywords that you are after. Look at the length, frequency and relevancy of their posts and adapt your strategy accordingly.

The process of a competitor analysis in terms of this task consists of two primary steps that help answer the following questions:

•   Which keywords are your competitors ranking for that you are not?

•   Which keywords are your competitors ranking for on the first page that you are for on page 2 or lower?

We'll look at this in a little more detail later but these questions are ones to keep fresh in your mind.

It is also important to differentiate between the services and products that your competitors offer. If you only have a crossover on one service for example, then make sure the analysis concentrates on this area. Trying to outrank them in all areas could mean that you start to turn up in organic search for irrelevant results and whilst visitors to the site are nice, irrelevant traffic has a 0% chance of converting. Balance in this area is key.

New developments – Keeping up with the news and the industry in which you operate is one of the most important things that a business can do. If you are not maintaining an active view in regards to what is going on around your business then you risk missing out in the long term. News, technical innovations or new concepts could all help you to progress, but only if you acknowledge them in your content.

PREPARING FOR A GAP ANALYSIS

There are three very simple steps when it comes to preparing for a content analysis, and this is a model that can be applied to any site, even new ones that are preparing to launch.

The three steps are:

Identify – At this stage, the reason you started your gap analysis is because you are trying to improve something.

Ask yourself the following questions:

• What are your objectives?

• Is your content not showing up for relevant queries; if not why?

• Is it not ranking high enough or lacking relevancy from search engine perspective?

• Who is ranking above you or for the terms you want to target and why?

• Does it generate non-converting traffic?

Analyse – This stage of the plan analysis is key. You have the key questions above to give you a baseline and now you need to go a little deeper. For all of the objectives listed above and in your master plan, look at the current position and situation you find yourself in and make sure you have everything you need to inform your strategy. Ironically in a gap analysis there may be gaps. Think about the tools that can help you get the most from the data you have and use others to get even more information. Knowledge is power after all.

Close - Create a tactical plan to bridge the gap and reach your goals.

Another common tactic here is to run a SWOT analysis. **SWOT** (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats), is a gap analysis strategy used to identify the internal and external factors that affect the effectiveness and success of a product, project or person.

When discussing the potential that a content gap analysis presented an untapped opportunity, Rand Fishkin presented his own five-step plan for running one for your business. Once these factors are determined, businesses can then define the best solution by playing to their strengths, allocating resources accordingly, while at the same time avoiding potential threats. His steps were as follows:

- **One:** Identify the keywords you're targeting.

- **Two:** Prioritise your list based on the terms/phrases you believe will be most valuable (and remember that doesn't always mean highest search volume).

- **Three:** Starting from the top, write down four to six types of intent and/or pieces of unique information that you believe searchers might have/want when performing each query.

- **Four:** Perform the query in Google, and look through the top ten. Do you see results that answer all of the intent/info types you wrote down? Write down how many are missing (including 0 if everything's already fulfilled).

- **Five:** Use your number as a way of prioritising the creation of new content or the modification/addition of content to existing pages. Then watch and see if Google feels the same way and begins rewarding you for this.

PREPARING FOR A COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

The first step is to discover which keywords your competitors rank for, but you do not. This data will give you great examples of potential keywords that could be valuable to your business and the types of content your competitors are using to rank for those keywords.

If we take the example of tea, (I'm currently on cup number three!) and specifically leading brand Twinings, we are able to run a keyword analysis and see areas where they can concentrate in order to further their rise in SERPs.

Adding the URL twinings.co.uk into a tool like Searchmetrics will generate a list of keywords. According to the data that they can harvest, there are currently 6854 (including long tail keywords) for which they rank. If we then order them it is clear to see that they are ranking in P1 for many of the brand terms. This is common and, in truth, would be a worry if they weren't ranking for brand terms.

If we scroll little further down the page however, we can see some target keywords that they are not in P1 for.

herbal teas	www.twinings.co.uk/tea/fruit-herbal	2	184	3,101	£ 0.67
herbal tea	www.twinings.co.uk/tea/fruit-herbal	2	244	4,139	£ 0.66
iced tea	www.twinings.co.uk/about-twinings/latest-news-and-artic	2	184	3,135	£ 0.51
how to make iced tea	www.twinings.co.uk/about-twinings/latest-news-and-artic	2	208	3,503	£ 0.87
teas	www.twinings.co.uk/tea	2	1,396	23,656	£ 0.87

The above terms are all in P1 which is a strong enough position but the gap analysis will allow them to increase relevant organic traffic and should see a rise in conversions. If we take the term from this list with the highest search volume 'teas' and expand it we can see that it is www.whittard.co.uk that holds P1.

This forms the most basic form of competitor analysis. Once you know who is above you it is possible to compare the content that they have on page and look at which page they have ranking in SERPs for that term. You can then do numerous things to improve you page. Things such as:

- Adding more relevant content

- Adding more relevant keywords

- Updating the meta tags

If we look at this page it has very little content on it. In fact it has three subpages linked to it for classic black teas, English breakfast and fruit & herbal. By adding at least some intro copy this page would have a far better chance of ranking in P1. This would prove a useful test for Twinings and should the goal of being P1 for this keyword be reached they will have successfully completed a gap analysis.

In order to look at a more detailed overview of the keywords that were possible targets for Twinings, I used the Keyword Gap tool in SEMRush. Entering the two URLs, (and PG Tips) the tool looks at all the keywords for which there is a ranking.

It told me that my primary URL (Twinings) had a total of 12,042 keywords of these 1,806 (14.9%) were shared with Wittards.

This will become my data set. I took the 1,806 keywords and downloaded them as an Excel document and sorted them for Twinings in organic rank from high to low. The below image shows how the search appears before it is downloaded and sorted.

Once you have the data in the correct format you are ready to go to the analyse stage of your plan. If we take the 1806 keywords and see how many Twinings rank on the first page for, we end up with the number 400 (22%). Wittards themselves rank for 217 (12%) of the keywords on P1. Crucially you must then look at the difference between the two figures. Wittards actually had 25 keywords in higher positions than Twinings.

Pulling a list of these together will provide a list of quick wins for Twinings as they are terms they can add to keyword planner, target and monitor. To understand the full effect of the difference between Twinings and Wittards, I used the SE Ranking Research tool in beta, I can break the two companies down in terms of location. In the UK Twinings have 3.9K keywords for which they rank and Wittards have 5.4K.

Websites in SERPs ⑦

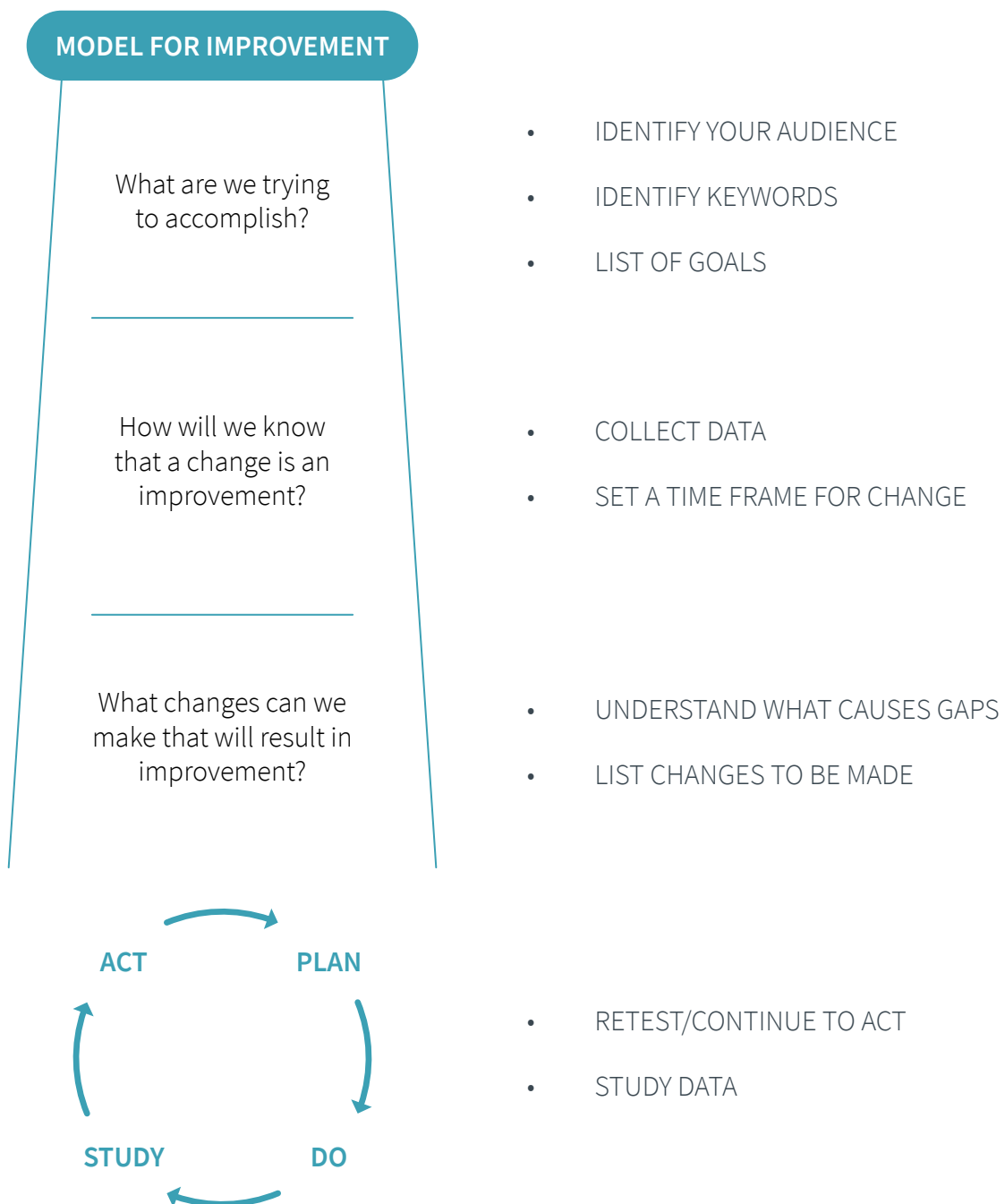| URL	Position	Estimated traffic	Monthly traffic cost	Keywords number
☑ www.teas.co.uk/	1	11.2K	19.3K	111
☑ www.whittard.co.uk/tea	2	106.1K	84.5K	5.4K
☑ www.telegraph.co.uk/trave...	3	15.7M	19.9M	1.9M
☑ www.teapalace.co.uk/	4	10.4K	14.1K	875
☑ www.twinings.co.uk/tea	5	98.1K	63.4K	3.9K

Whittards also has significantly more traffic, presumably due to the extra keyword rankings. As part of the gap analysis Twinings should target the relevant terms from the unshared 1,500 keywords.

IMPLEMENTING YOUR FINDINGS/GAP ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

Once you have determined where the gaps lie in your content, which pages need more and which content needs altering, it is important the you come up with a content calendar which all of those in the content process can work from. This will allow for a structured procedure and in the long terms will deliver the results that your business craves.

Using the following framework you should be able to plot a successful course through your gap analysis:

MODEL FOR IMPROVEMENT

What are we trying to accomplish?

- IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE
- IDENTIFY KEYWORDS
- LIST OF GOALS

How will we know that a change is an improvement?

- COLLECT DATA
- SET A TIME FRAME FOR CHANGE

What changes can we make that will result in improvement?

- UNDERSTAND WHAT CAUSES GAPS
- LIST CHANGES TO BE MADE

ACT PLAN

STUDY DO

- RETEST/CONTINUE TO ACT
- STUDY DATA

FINAL THOUGHTS

Following a gap analysis and putting all of the things you have learnt into practice, many sit back and feel the job is done. This is one of the most common errors that many marketers make.

As we said at the start your gap analysis process should evaluate everything you currently do and testing is key. You have to rerun the tests, and then analyse your positioning regularly if you are to stay ahead of the competitor. Failing to look for new opportunities or polish existing content and keyword lists can be the difference between success and failure.

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ABOUT US

Located in North West England, Click Consult is a multi award-winning search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC), with over 70 professionals employed and with a portfolio of over 60 clients from across the UK, Europe, Americas and Australia.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year 2018, adding to its long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within both RAR's and Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'.

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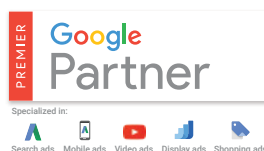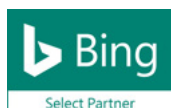
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