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SEARCH QUERIES AND USER INTENT

USING SEARCH CONSOLE TO INFORM AN SEO FRIENDLY CONTENT STRATEGY

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

While there is a wealth of tools available to search marketing agencies, for start-ups and smaller brands – a suite of expensive tools is just not an option. Search Console, however, is free to use and can deliver a host of useful information – so much so that it remains vital to search marketing even when expensive tools are an option.

In this eBook, we're going to look at one specific aspect of the Search Console offering – the search queries report – and how it can assist marketers in analysing intent and in developing SEO friendly content.
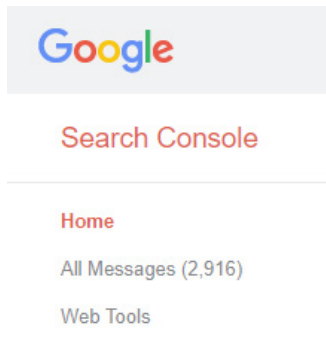
WHAT IS SEARCH CONSOLE?

A free Google product, Search Console is a tool for webmasters, search professionals and anyone interested in their performance on the search engine results pages, which enables brands and individuals to monitor and maintain the search presence of the accounts they manage, optimise their presence, check for various errors in mark-up, accessibility and more.
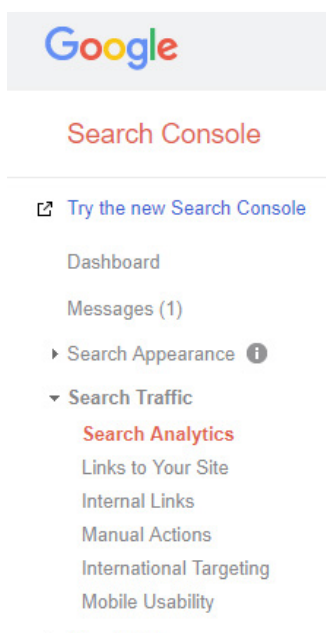
WHAT IS A SEARCH TERM?

A search term is the word or phrase a user types or speaks to a search engine in order to find a product, service or information on the web.
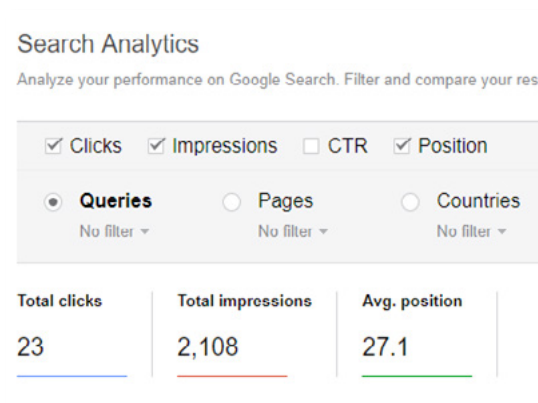
HOW TO FIND SEARCH TERMS

Firstly you'll need to log in to your Search Console and select the right site.

You'll then need expand the 'Search Analytics' menu and select 'Search Analytics'.

This will bring you to a page that looks like the below – giving you a number of ways to analyse your performance in search.

We're going to look at 'Queries', but there are a number of ways we can organise them.

- **Clicks –** shows you how many times your result has been clicked on for a particular term.
- **Impressions –** shows the total number of times a result of yours has been seen in search for the term.
- **Click through rate (CTR) –** the result of a sum which divides clicks by impressions.
- **Position –** where your site ranks for a particular search term

This page and the various filters offers a fantastic range of possible insights for your brand. Not only does it offer you a clear list of the search terms that are bringing people to your site, it can also tell you how well you're satisfying various terms. For example, CTR will show you how appealing your particular result is comparable to the competition. Are you getting a lot of impressions but a low CTR? It might be time to update your meta titles. Do you have a high click through, but low position? Maybe your page is sending the wrong signals to Google – something you could rectify, perhaps, by auditing the page's links and content, refining the copy to better meet the search term.

HOW TO USE QUERY REPORT TO UNDERSTAND USER INTENT

The purpose of finding intent is, primarily, to enable brands to offer an improved experience to consumers. While the ultimate goal is to have a visitor to your site convert in to a consumer, the auditing of intent is to identify areas where you can add value to the consumer, potentially influencing their decision making in the long run.
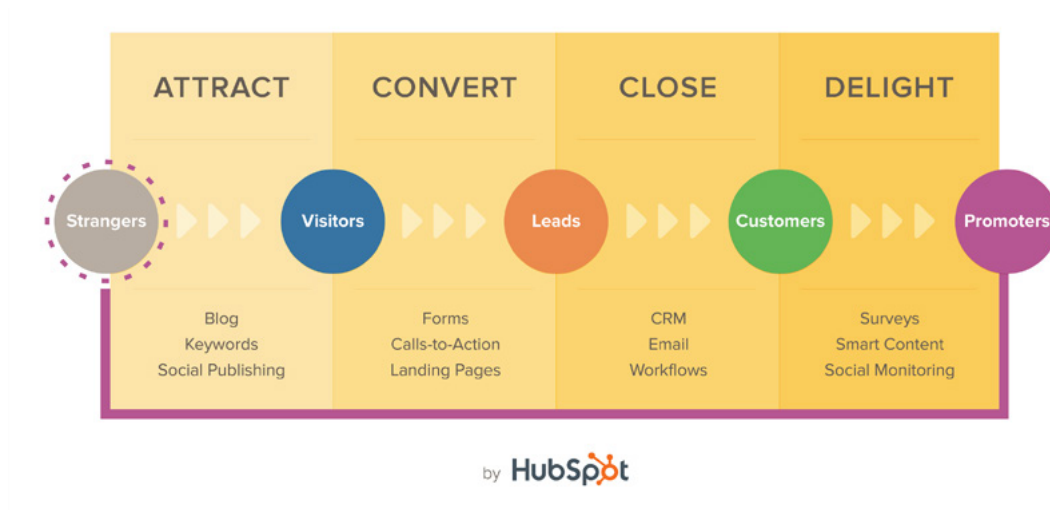
Your search query report from Search Console is an, albeit incomplete, list of queries for which your website is appearing. As stated in the previous chapter, this can be sorted in a variety of ways – one important one for searcher intent is simple alphabetical sorting. Below for example is some of the 'Attract' (if we follow Hubspot's process above) level search queries:

964	what does it mean when you appear in searches in linkedin
965	what does keyword not provided mean in google analytics
966	what does seeing a hummingbird mean
967	what does weekly search appearances mean on linkedin
968	what is conversion rate optimization cro
969	what is link reclamation
970	what is ppc
971	what is pr in seo

Equally, the following – which fits again in to the first box – shows that users are searching for resources and blogs that will help them improve their search marketing knowledge.

466	how to run twitter ads
467	how to search keywords on google
468	how to see keywords in google analytics
469	how to set up a google shopping campaign

Aside from being able to answer queries about the meaning of seeing a hummingbird (it's good luck, apparently), I know that for these queries we have some pretty in-depth blog content which answers the query.

The intent in these queries is to learn to master a specific technique, so we supply educational blog content (linking this to more extensive resources and eBooks). When examining your own brand's query report – it's important to identify where these terms are taking your consumers and whether those pages are adding value to their journey.
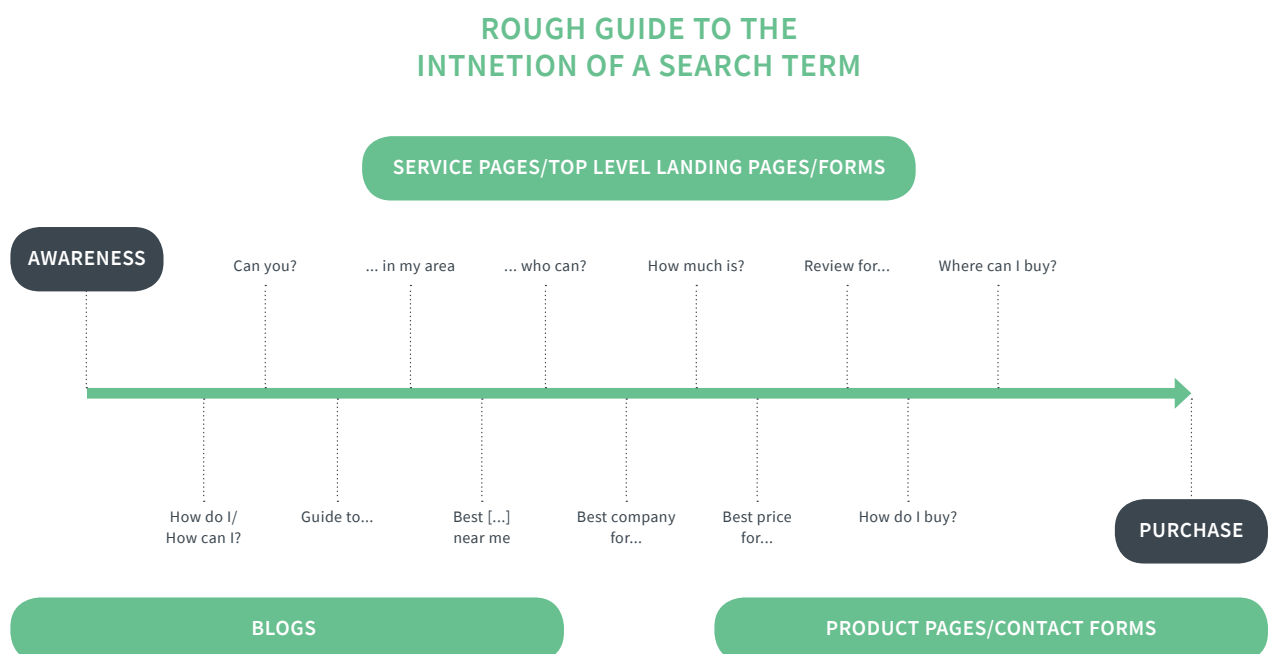
By ensuring your brand is there at the start, by addressing low-purchase intent, informational queries, you can begin the process of building a relationship with the consumer that can mature over time until they are purchase ready.

WHAT CONSTITUTES INTENTION?

While it's impossible to read the mind of each searcher, there are a few loose guidelines that you can look to use when judging the intent level of the queries you're appearing for. Look for active and passive search queries. While 'how do I?' is passive, some localised searches like '[your industry] in [region]' are further along the buyer's journey.

Intent comes in all shapes and sizes – and it's important you're there for all of them with the right content. Judge the intent along a line between awareness and purchase. The previous diagram from Hubspot can give you some indication of what pages you need to place at which part of the journey, but you can use the diagram below as a guideline.

ROUGH GUIDE TO THE INTNETION OF A SEARCH TERM

SERVICE PAGES/TOP LEVEL LANDING PAGES/FORMS

AWARENESS

Can you? ... in my area ... who can? How much is? Review for... Where can I buy?

How do I/ How can I? Guide to... Best [...] near me Best company for... Best price for... How do I buy? PURCHASE

BLOGS PRODUCT PAGES/CONTACT FORMS

As the above rough guide shows, there is a continuum of intent – and it may be that the searches sometimes take place out of order (looking up how to guides after receiving a shock quotation, for example) – nevertheless, we can cater to all levels with pages set up to satisfy that particular query and, therefore, remain relevant to our users at all stages.

In this regard, making a note of all of the queries of this nature for which you appear that are listed in Search Console an plotting them on a line, you can see what kind of page you should be serving them comparative to what you are serving and make amends where necessary.

USING SEARCH QUERY REPORT TO DEVELOP A CONTENT PLAN

There are a number of ways you can use this report to help develop a content plan – the first of which is to use the method detailed in the previous chapter in order to identify any gaps in the content you have at present as compared to the search terms for which you appear – developing blogs for appropriate terms where you're currently featuring service pages, for example.

The second is to identify the terms for which you are not appearing. While you may want to use a second tool to make sure you don't miss anything (as stated, this report doesn't give all queries, so you can use something like Searchmetrics or AWR to double check if you have the tools available, if not, you can always use 'site search:' to look for particular terms on your site.

A useful tool for adding to your list of potential search terms is Answer the Public, in to which you can enter an industry or service and receive a list of queries that have been entered in to Google by users. By crosschecking this list of questions against those you appear for and, again, plotting them against the line of intent, you can develop a list of possible targets which you can then check against Keyword Planner for volume and difficulty in order to prioritise those targets.

CONCLUSION

Search Console has changed a lot since it was Webmaster Tools and with those changes has come an increase in the functionality and the benefits of proper use. There is now a lot of information available in Search Console (including the option to retrieve sixteen months of data – which was added in mid-2018) making it as important for good search marketing as AdWords and Google Analytics.

Using the search queries report can offer a wealth of insight in to what you are doing well, what you are doing less well and, indeed, what you aren't doing but should be. For that reason, you should be carrying out at least a quarterly review of the report – search changes all the time and, while it has changed, the way we search has not changed as much over the last two decades as it is likely to do in the next five years as voice search alters not only the way we search, but the way we phrase our searches.

GET IN TOUCH WITH US TODAY

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'.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Blog
Click Consult regularly posts actionable insights on its blog – dealing with all aspects of search marketing. From technical SEO to PPC, content marketing and Analytics advice, the Click Consult blog has something for everyone of any ability.

eBooks
Click Consult produces in depth eBooks on aspects of search marketing on a regular basis, dealing with the latest best practices, changes to standard practices, methods of improvement and more.
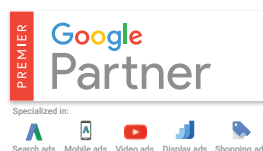
Infographics
Sometimes what you need is a quick point of reference about complex subjects. Thanks to its team of highly talented designers, Click Consult is also able to distil its vast experience into easy to understand visual content.

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