

ESSENTIAL
**SEO
TOOLS**
FOR AGENCIES



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File Edit View History Bookmarks Window Help

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17	89063	Travel
18	07421	Phone
19	93012	Computer/Office Equipment
20	24601	Postage
21	35151	Other Total
22	10460	Benefits
23	35246	Payroll taxes
24	76745	Salaries
25	76023	Commissions and bonuses
26	23674	Personnel Total
27	14878	Web Research
28	10567	Independent Research

Using Excel for SEO: 5 Essential Tips & Tricks You Might Not Know



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Similarity

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Competitive Analysis

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Baseline Traffic

Forecast Value

Report ROI

Measure your ROI and sell your success to the C-Level

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CHAPTER 1

20 ESSENTIAL TECHNICAL SEO TOOLS FOR AGENCIES

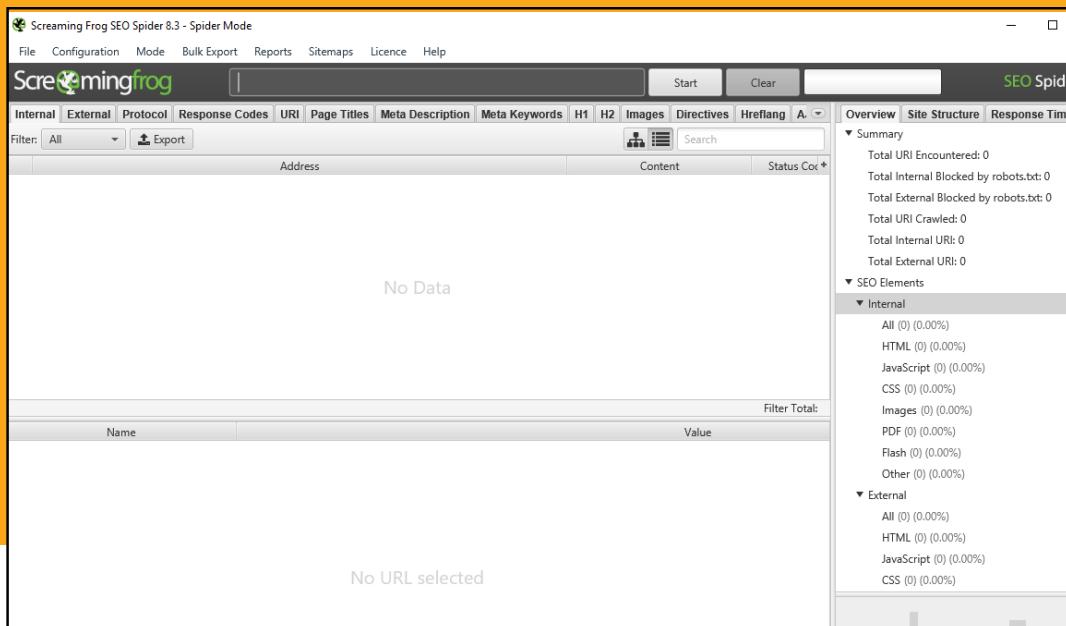


WRITTEN BY
BRIAN HARNISH

There is no shortage of technical SEO tools for agencies.

From identifying issues with site speed, to crawling, to indexing, it's important to have the right tools in your arsenal to identify any technical issues that may be impacting organic search performance.

What follows is a list of essential technical SEO tools that every SEO professional should become familiar with.



1. Screaming Frog

Screaming Frog is the crawler to have.

To create a substantial website audit, it is crucial to first perform a website crawl with this tool.

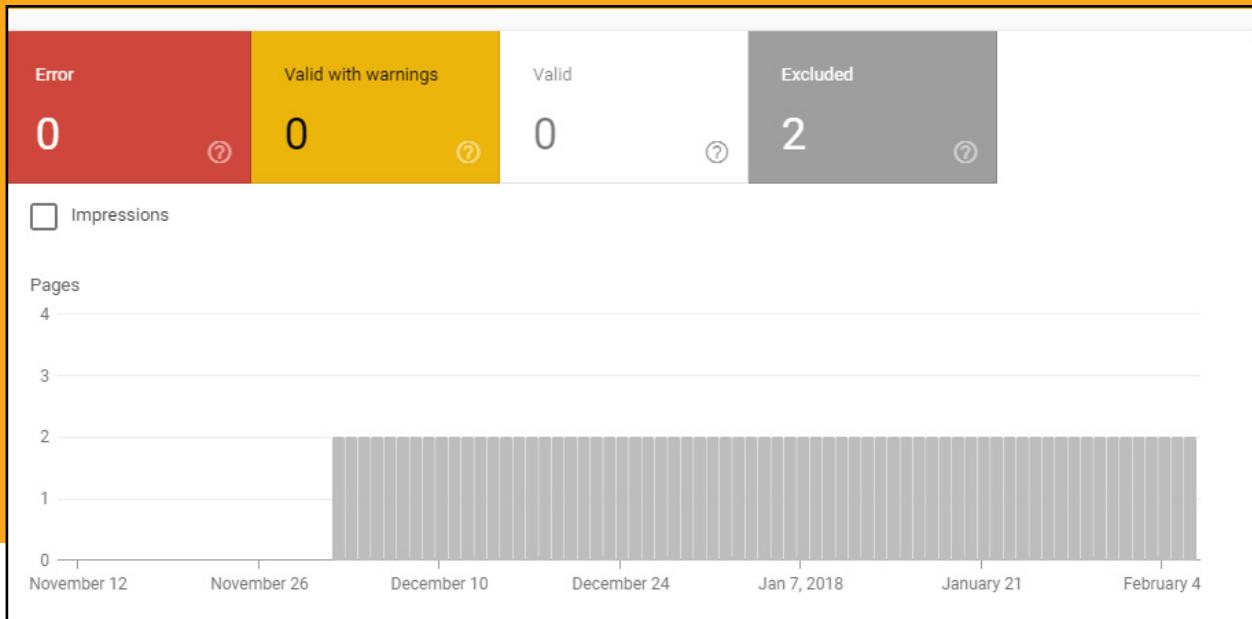
Depending on certain settings, it is possible to introduce false positives or errors into an audit that you otherwise would not know about.

Screaming Frog can help you identify the basics like:

- Missing page titles.
- Missing meta descriptions.
- Missing meta keywords.
- Large images.
- Errored response codes.
- Errors in URLs.
- Errors in canonicals.

Advanced things Screaming Frog can help you do include:

- Identifying issues with pagination.
- Diagnosing international SEO implementation issues.
- Taking a deep dive into a website's architecture.



2. Google Search Console

The primary tool of any SEO should be the [Google Search Console](#).

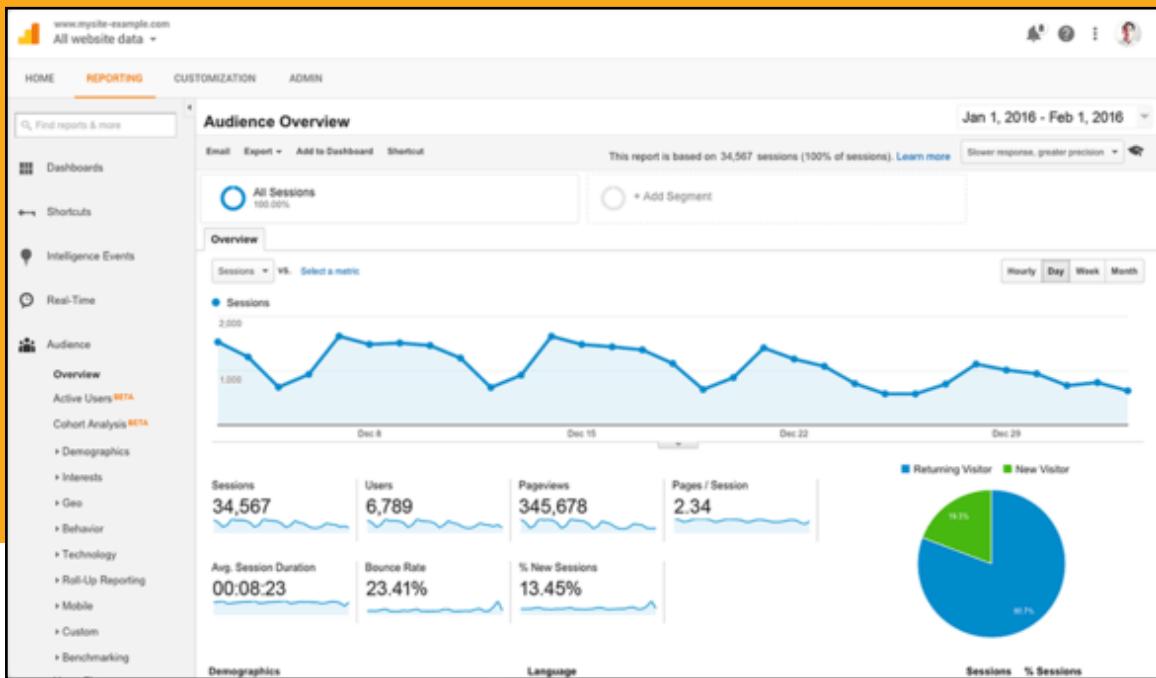
This critical tool has recently been overhauled. The new version replaced many old features while adding more data, features, and reports.

What makes this tool great for agencies? Setting up a reporting process.

For agencies who do SEO, [good reporting](#) is critical. If you have not already set up a reporting process, it is highly recommended that you do so.

This process can save you in the case of an issue with website change-overs, when GSC accounts can be wiped out. If it is wiped out, it is possible to then go back to all of your GSC data because you have been saving it for all these months.

Agency applications can also include utilizing the API for interfacing with other data usage as well.



3. Google Analytics

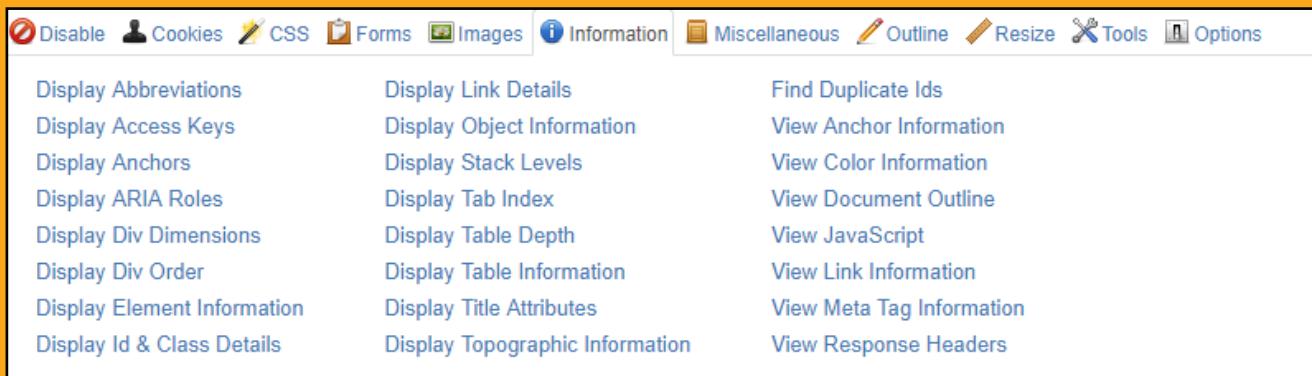
Where would we be without a solid analytics platform to analyze organic search performance?

While free, it provides much in the way of information that can help you identify things like penalties, issues with traffic, and anything else that may come your way.

In much the same way as Google Search Console works, if you setup Google Analytics correctly, it would be ideal to have a monthly reporting process in place.

This process will help you save data for those situations where something awful happens to the client's Google Analytics access.

At least, you won't have a situation where you lose all data for your clients.



4. Web Developer Toolbar

The web developer toolbar extension for Google Chrome can be [downloaded here](#).

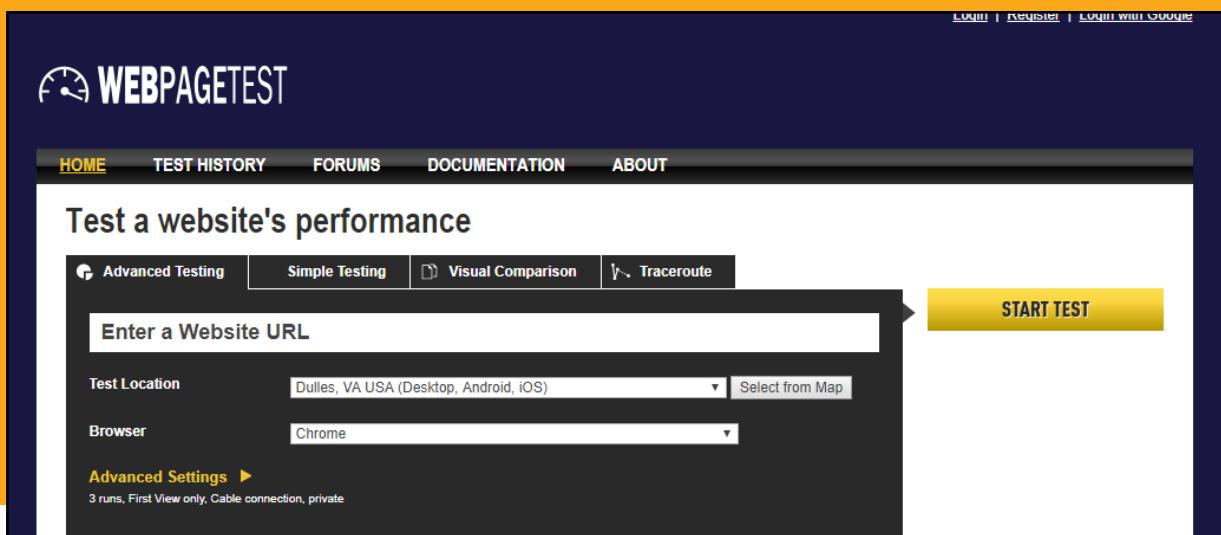
It is an official port of the Firefox web developer extension.

One of the primary uses for this extension is identifying issues with code, specifically JavaScript implementations with menus and the user interface.

By turning off JavaScript and CSS, it is possible to identify where these issues are occurring in the browser.

Your auditing is not just limited to JavaScript and CSS issues.

You can also see alt text, find broken images, and view meta tag information and response headers.



5. WebPageTest.org

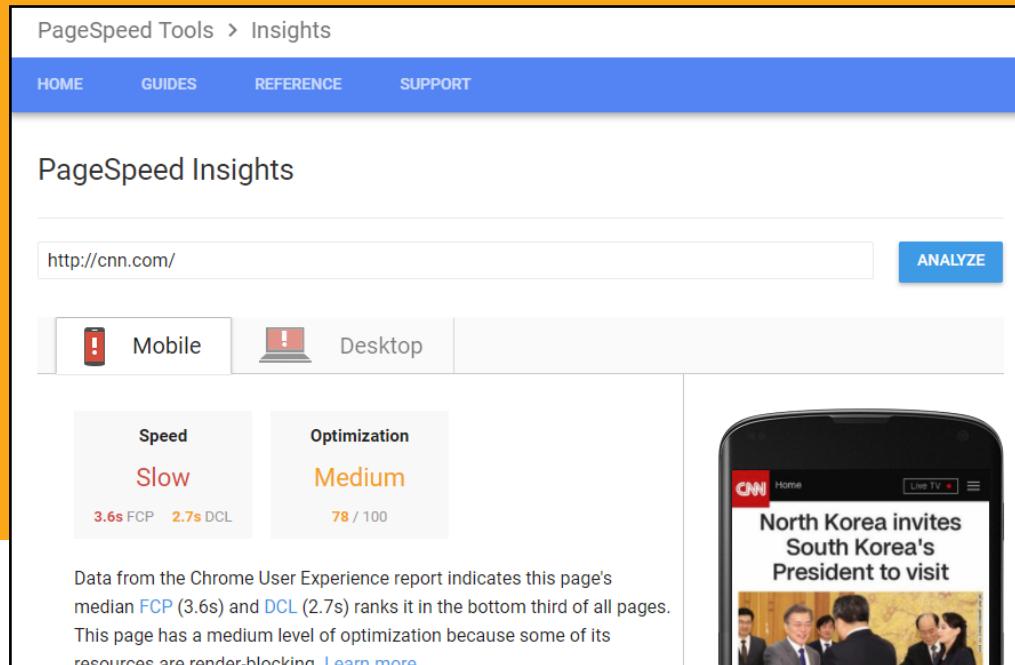
Page speed has been a hot topic in recent years, and auditing website page speed audits brings you to a plethora of tools that are useful.

To that end, [webpagetest.org](https://www.webpagetest.org) is one of those essential SEO tools for your agency.

Cool things that can be done with WebPageTest.org include:

- Waterfall speed tests.
- Competitor speed tests.
- Competitor speed videos.
- Identifying how long it takes a site to fully load.
- Time to first byte.
- Start render time.
- Document object model (DOM) elements.

This is useful for figuring out how a site's technical elements interact to create the final result, or display time.



6. Google Page Speed Insights

Through a combination of speed metrics for both desktop and mobile, Google's PageSpeed Insights is critical for agencies who want to get their website page speed ducks in a row.

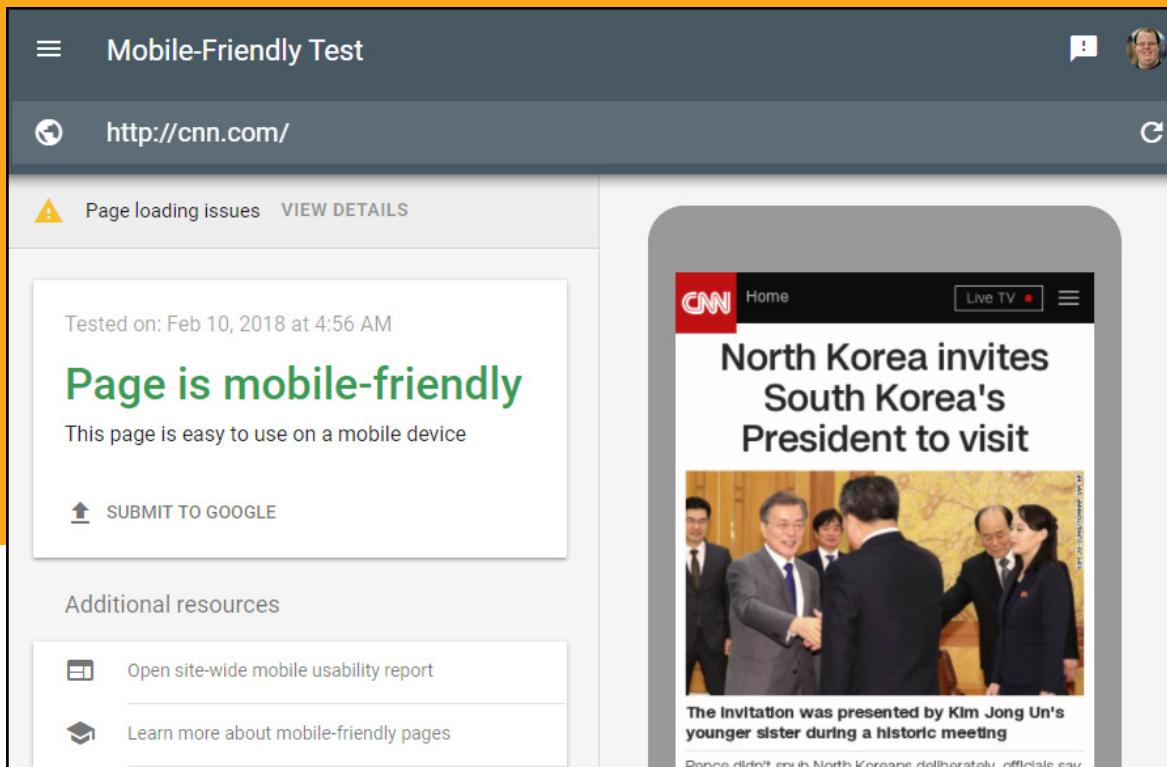
It should not be used as the be-all, end-all of page metrics testing, but it is a good starting point.

Here's why: PageSpeed Insights does not always use exact page speed. It uses approximations.

While you may get one result with Google Page Speed, you may also get different results with other tools.

To perform an effective analysis, it is crucial to maintain the mindset that Google's PageSpeed provides only part of the picture.

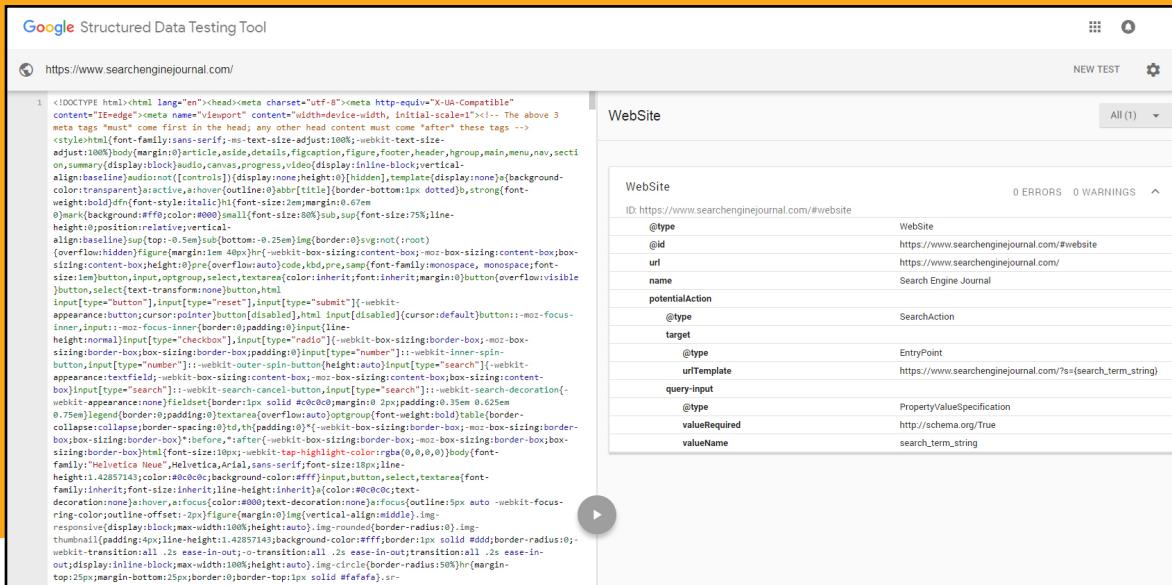
To get the entire picture of what the website is really doing, it is recommended to use multiple tools for your analysis.



7. Google Mobile-Friendly Testing Tool

For any website audit, determining a website's mobile technical aspects is also critical.

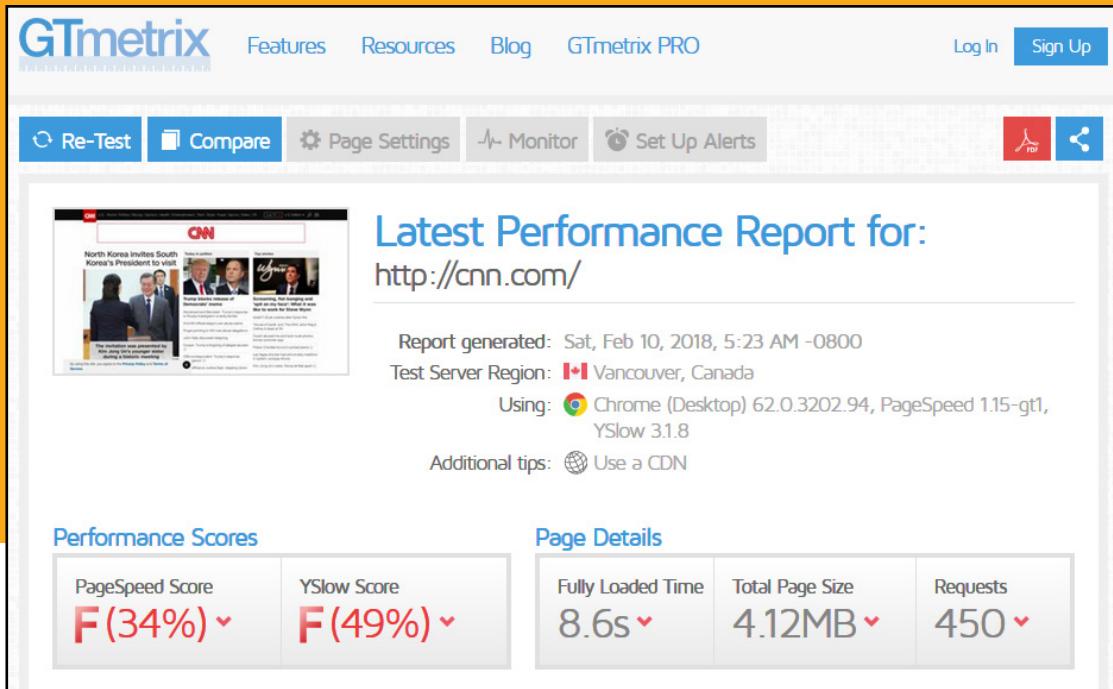
When putting a website through its paces, Google's Mobile-Friendly Testing tool can give you insights into a website's mobile implementation.



8. Google's Schema.org Structured Data Testing Tool

This tool performs one function and one function well: it helps you test Schema structured data markup against the known data from Schema.org that Google supports.

This is a fantastic way to identify issues with your Schema coding before the code is implemented.

A screenshot of the GTmetrix website showing a performance report for the URL http://cnn.com. The top navigation bar includes links for Features, Resources, Blog, GTmetrix PRO, Log In, and Sign Up. Below the navigation is a toolbar with buttons for Re-Test, Compare, Page Settings, Monitor, Set Up Alerts, and sharing options. The main content area displays the latest performance report for CNN's homepage. It shows a preview of the page with a headline about North Korea's President visiting South Korea. Key metrics include a PageSpeed Score of F(34%) and a YSlow Score of F(49%). Other details shown are Fully Loaded Time (8.6s), Total Page Size (4.12MB), and Requests (450).

Latest Performance Report for:
<http://cnn.com/>

Report generated: Sat, Feb 10, 2018, 5:23 AM -0800
Test Server Region: CA Vancouver, Canada
Using: Chrome (Desktop) 62.0.3202.94, PageSpeed 1.15-gt1, YSlow 3.1.8
Additional tips: Use a CDN

Performance Scores		Page Details		
PageSpeed Score	F(34%)	YSlow Score	F(49%)	
Fully Loaded Time	8.6s	Total Page Size	4.12MB	Requests
				450

9. GTMetrix Page Speed Report

GTMetrix is a page speed report card that provides a different perspective on page speed.

By diving deep into page requests, CSS and JavaScript files that need to load, and other website elements, it is possible to clean up many elements that contribute to high page speed.

The screenshot shows the Nu Html Checker interface. At the top, it says "Showing results for https://www.cnn.com/". Below that is a "Checker Input" section with options to "Show source", "outline", "image report", and "Options...". A dropdown menu "Check by" is set to "address" and shows the URL "https://www.cnn.com/". A "Check" button is present. Below the input area, there's a message about "Message Filtering" and a "Message Filtering" button. The main content area displays three errors:

- Error** A `meta` element with an `http-equiv` attribute whose value is `X-UA-Compatible` must have a `content` attribute with the value `IE=edge`.
From line 1, column 42; to line 1, column 103
`<js><head><meta content="IE=edge,chrome=1" http-equiv="X-UA-Compatible"><meta`
- Error** Bad value `text/html` for attribute `content` on element `meta`: The legacy encoding declaration did not start with `text/html`.
From line 1, column 126; to line 1, column 177
`<t="utf-8"><meta content="text/html" http-equiv="Content-Type"><meta`
- Error** A document must not include both a `meta` element with an `http-equiv` attribute whose value is `content-type` and a `meta` element

10. W3C Validator

You may not normally think of a code validator as an SEO tool, but it is important just the same.

Be careful! If you don't know what you are doing, it is easy to misinterpret the results, and actually make things worse.

For example: say you are validating code from a site that was developed in XHTML, but the code was ported over to WordPress.

Copying and pasting the entire code into WordPress during development does not automatically change its document type. If, while during testing, you run across pages that have thousands of errors across the entire document, that is likely why.

A website that was developed in this fashion is more likely to need a complete overhaul with new code, especially if the former code does not exist.



11. SEMrush

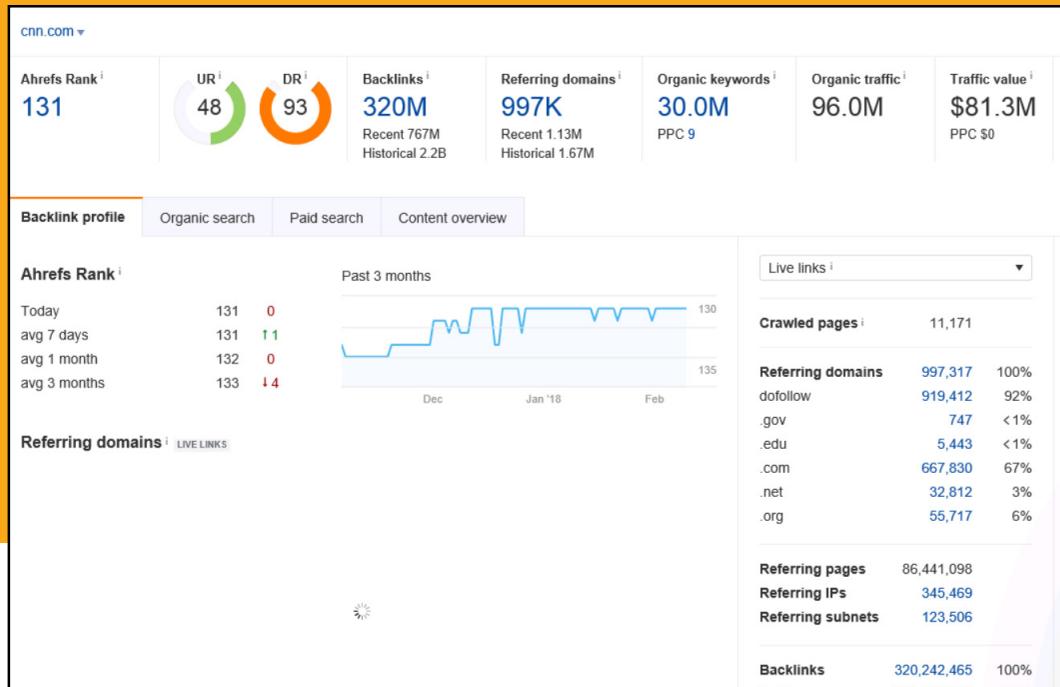
SEMrush's greatest claim to fame is accurate data for keyword research and other technical research.

What makes SEMrush so valuable is its competitor analysis data.

You may not normally think of SEMrush as a technical analysis tool.

However, if you go deep enough into a competitor analysis, the rankings data and market analysis data can reveal surprising information.

You can use these insights to better tailor your SEO strategy and gain an edge over your competitors.



12. Ahrefs

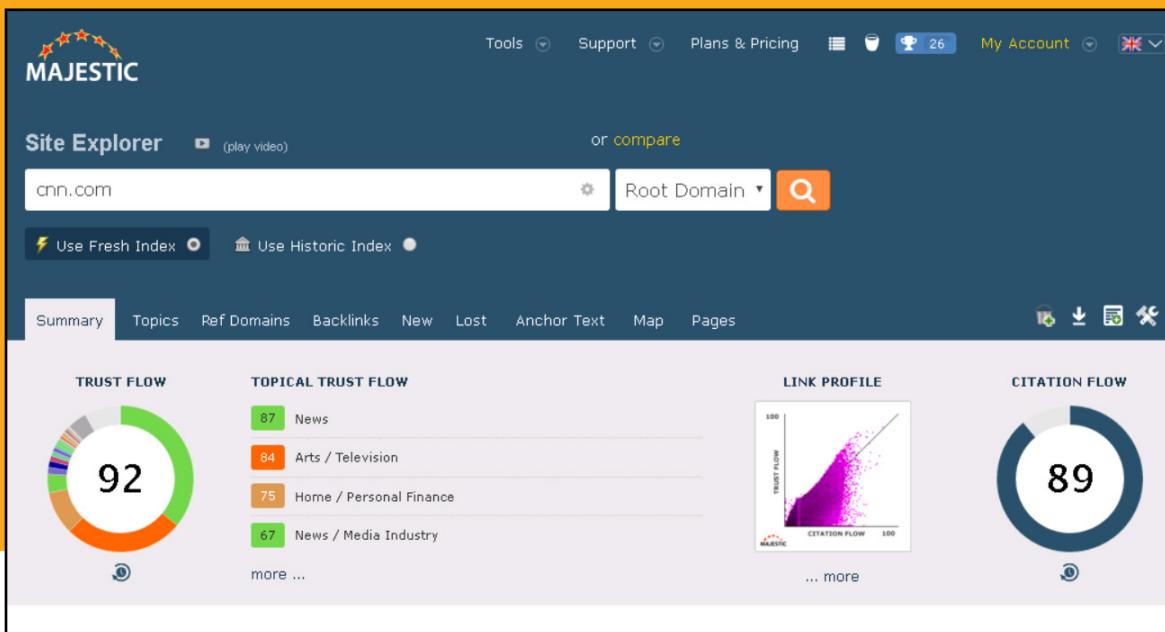
Ahrefs is considered by many to be a tool that is a critical component of modern technical link analysis.

By identifying certain patterns in a website's link profile, you can figure out what a site is doing for their linking strategy.

It is possible to identify anchor text issues that may be impacting a site using its word cloud feature.

Also, you can identify the types of links linking back to the site – whether it's a blog network, a high-risk link profile with many forum and web 2.0 links, or other major issues.

Other abilities include the ability to identify when a site's backlinks started going missing, its linking patterns, and much more.



13. Majestic

Majestic is a long-standing tool in the SEO industry with unique linking insights.

Like Ahrefs, you can identify things like linking patterns by downloading reports of the site's full link profile.

It is also possible to find things like bad neighborhoods, and other domains a website owner owns.

Using this bad neighborhood report, it is also possible to diagnose issues with a site's linking arising out of issues with the site's website associations.

Like most tools, Majestic has its own values for calculating technical link attributes like Trust Flow, Citation Flow, and other linking elements contributing to trust, relevance, and authority.

It is also possible through their own link graphs to identify any issues occurring with the link profile over time.

Any agency's workflow will greatly benefit from the inclusion of Majestic into their link diagnosing processes.

The screenshot shows the Moz Bar extension integrated into a web browser. The extension's interface displays various SEO metrics for the page. At the top, there are tabs for 'On-Page Elements', 'General Attributes', 'Link Metrics', 'Markup', and 'Http Status'. The 'On-Page Elements' tab is active, showing the following data:

Tag/Location	Content	# of Characters
URL	https://www.cnn.com/	20
Page Title	CNN - Breaking News, Latest News and Videos	43
Meta Description	View the latest news and breaking news today for U.S., world, weather, entertainment, politics and health at CNN.com.	117
Meta Keywords	cnn news, daily news, breaking news, news today, current events	63
H1	Not found	--

Below the table, the main content of the CNN homepage is visible, featuring a large headline about Trump blocking a memo. To the right of the headline, there are two small navigation boxes labeled 'Today in politics' and 'Top stories'.

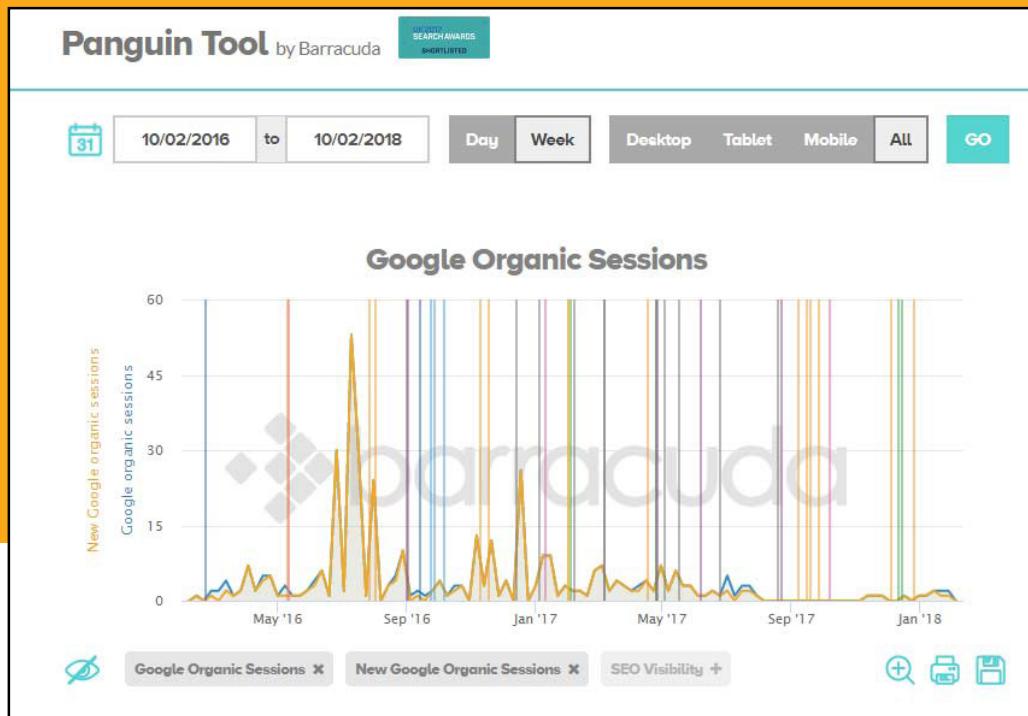
14. Moz Bar

It is hard to think of something like the Moz Bar, which lends itself to a little bit of whimsicality, as a serious technical SEO tool. But, there are many metrics that you can gain from detailed analysis.

Things like Moz Domain Authority and Moz Page Authority, Google Caching status, other code like social open graph coding, and neat things like the page Metas at-a-glance while in the web browser.

Without diving deep into a crawl, you can also see other advanced elements like rel="canonical" tags, page load time, Schema Markup, and even the page's HTTP status.

This is useful for an initial survey of the site before diving deeper into a proper audit, and it can be a good idea to include the findings from this data in an actual audit.



15. Barracuda Panguin

If you are investigating a site for a penalty, the Barracuda Panguin tool is something that should be a part of any agency's workflow.

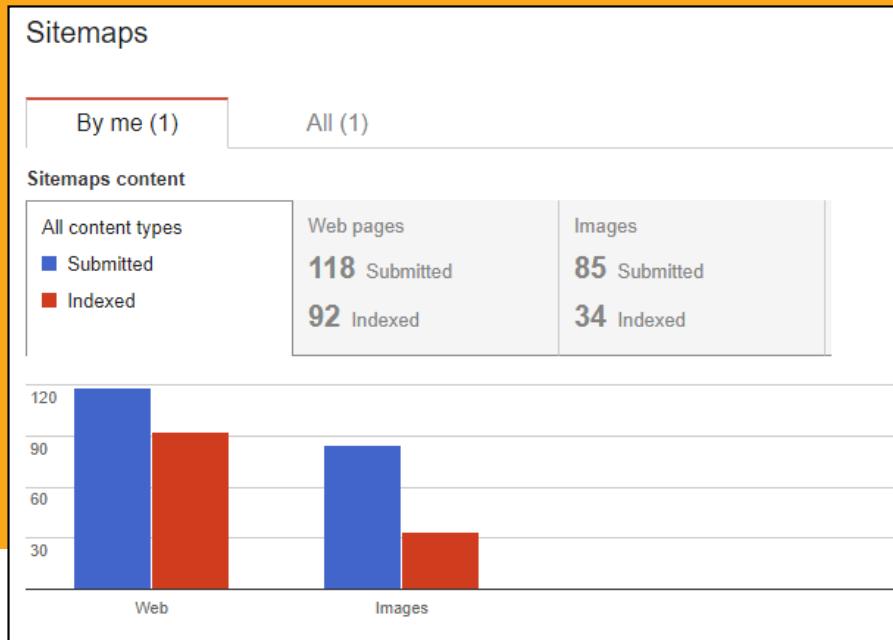
It works by connecting to the Google Analytics account of the site you are investigating. The overlay is intertwined with the GA data, and it will overlay data of when a penalty occurred with your GA data.

Using this overlay, it is possible to easily identify situations where potential penalties occurred.

Now, it is important to note that there isn't an exact science to this, and that correlation isn't always causation.

It's important to investigate all avenues of where data is potentially showing something happening, in order to rule out any potential penalty.

Using tools like this can help you zero in on approximations in data events as they occur, which can help for investigative reasons.



16. Google's XML Sitemap Report in Google Search Console

This is one of those technical SEO tools that should be an important part of any agency's reporting workflow.

Diagnosing sitemap issues is a critical part of any SEO audit, and this technical insight can help you achieve the all-important 1:1 ratio of URLs added to the site and the sitemap being updated.

For those who don't know, it is considered an SEO best practice to ensure the following:

- That a sitemap is supposed to contain all 200 OK URLs. No 4xx or 5xx URLs should be showing up in the sitemap.
- There should be a 1:1 ratio of exact URLs in the sitemap as there are on the site. In other words, the sitemap should not have any orphaned pages that are not showing up in the Screaming Frog crawl.
- Any parameter-laden URLs should be removed from the sitemap if they are not considered primary pages. There are certain parameters that will cause issues with XML sitemaps validating, so make sure that these parameters are not included in URLs.

The screenshot shows the BrightLocal Local Search Audit interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Clients & Locations', 'CitationBurst', 'Tools', and a dropdown menu. Below that, it says 'Location: BrightSmile Dental / Local Search Audit' and 'Generated: 8th June 2016'. There are 'See how it works' and 'Actions' buttons. The main area is titled 'Local Search Audit' with a sub-section 'Summary'. It displays the location as 'BrightSmile Dental - Boulder' and the website URL as 'brightsmiledental.com'. Below this, there are six performance metrics in cards: 'Links & Authority' (Good), 'Search Rankings' (Good), 'Local Listings' (Poor), 'Reviews & Ratings' (OK), 'Google My Business' (Good), 'On-Site SEO' (OK), and 'Social Channels' (Poor). Further down, there's a section for 'Links & Website Authority' with a 'Status: Good' button. At the bottom, there are three metrics: 'Google Index Count', 'Link Count', and 'Linking Domains', each with a help icon.

17. BrightLocal

If you are operating a website for a local business, doing SEO should involve local SEO for a significant portion of its link acquisition efforts.

This is where BrightLocal comes in.

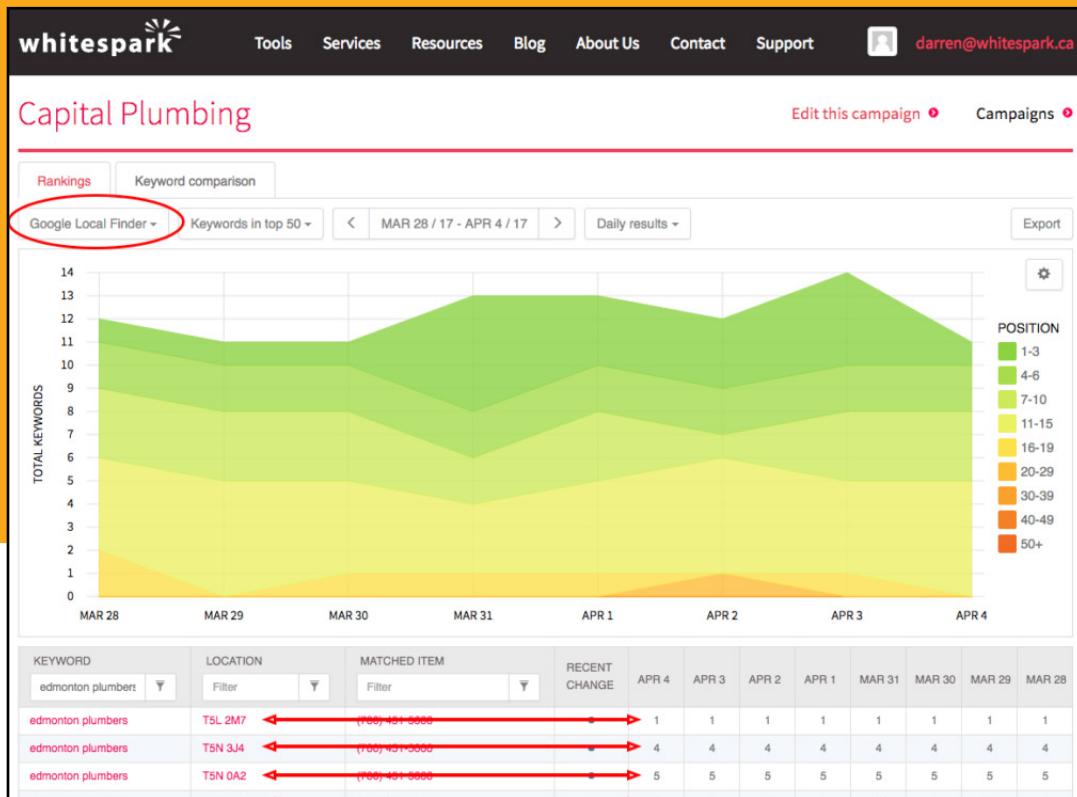
It is normally not thought of as a technical SEO tool, but its application can help you uncover technical issues with the site's local SEO profile.

For example, it is possible to perform an audit of the site's local SEO citations with this tool. Then, you can move forward with identifying and submitting your site to the appropriate citations that have not happened yet. It works kind of like Yext in that it has a pre-populated list of potential citations.

One of its essential tools that is great to have is that it lets you audit, clean, and build citations to the most common citation sites (and others that are less common).

BrightLocal also includes in-depth auditing of your Google My Business presence, including in-depth local SEO audits.

If your agency is heavy into local SEO, this is one of those tools that are a no-brainer from a workflow perspective.



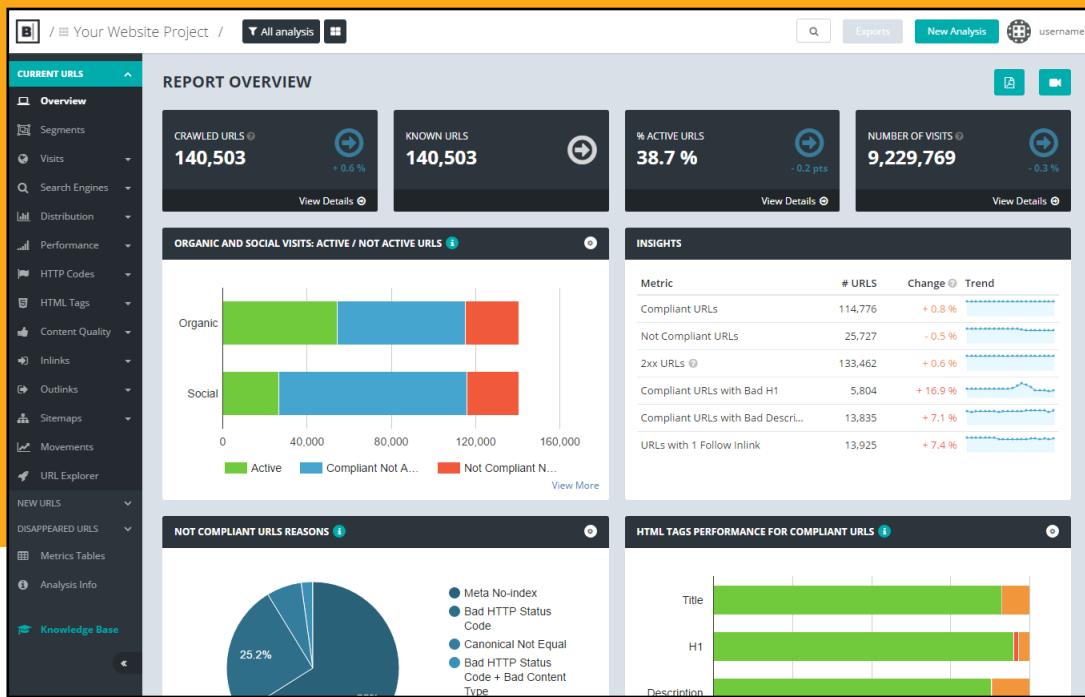
18. Whitespark

Whitespark is more in-depth when compared to BrightLocal.

Its local citation finder allows you do a deeper dive into your site's local SEO, by finding where your site is across the competitor space.

To that end, it also lets you identify all of your competitor's local SEO citations.

In addition, part of its auditing capabilities allows it to track rankings through detailed reporting focused on distinct Google local positions such as the local pack, local finder, and, as well as detailed organic rankings reports from both Google and Bing.



19. Botify

This tool is one of those in-depth tools that comes along once in a great while.

For technical SEO, Botify is one of the most complete technical SEO tools available.

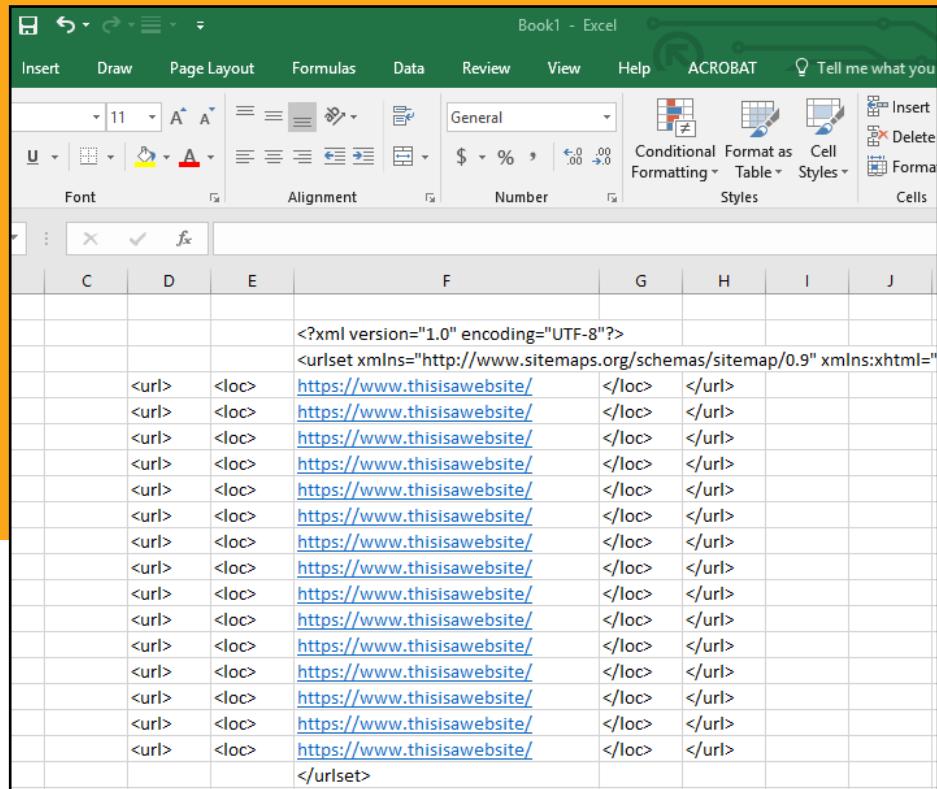
Its claim to fame includes the ability to reconcile search intent and technical SEO with its in-depth keywords analysis tool.

It is possible to tie things like crawl budget and technical SEO elements that map to searcher intent.

Not only that, it is possible to identify all the technical SEO factors that are contributing to ranking through its detailed technical analysis.

In its detailed reporting, it is also possible to detect changes in how people are searching, regardless of the industry that you are focused on.

The powerful part of Botify includes its in-depth reports that are capable of tying data to information that you can really act on.



20. Excel

Many SEO pros aren't aware that Excel can be considered a technical SEO tool.

Surprising, right?

Well, there are a number of Excel super tricks that one can use to perform technical SEO audits.

Tasks that would otherwise take a significantly long time manually can be accomplished much faster.

Super Trick #1: VLOOKUP

With VLOOKUP, it is possible to pull data from multiple sheets based on data that you want to populate in the primary sheet.

This function allows one to do things like perform a link analysis using data gathered from different tools.

If you gathered linking data from GSC's "who links to you the most" report, and other data from Ahrefs, and other data from Moz, you know that it is impossible to reconcile all the information together.

What if you wanted to determine which internal links are valuable in accordance with a site's inbound linking strategy?

Using this [VLOOKUP video](#), you can combine data from GSC's report with data from Ahrefs' report to get the entire picture of what's happening here.

Super Trick #2: Easy XML Sitemaps

Coding XML Sitemaps manually are a pain, aren't they?

Not anymore.

Using a process of coding that is implemented quickly, it is possible to code a sitemap in Excel in a matter of minutes, if you work smart.

See the [video I created](#) showing this process.



Super Trick #3: Conditional Formatting

Using conditional formatting, it is possible to reconcile long lists of information in Excel.

This is useful in many SEO situations where lists of information are compared daily.

Want some more Excel tricks? Make sure to read Chapter 10 of this guide: Using Excel for SEO: 5 Essential Tips & Tricks You Might Not Know.

Tools Alleviate Manual Work & Create Streamlined Workflows

For the competitive SEO agency, there is no shortage of SEO tools at your disposal to get the job done.

From link monitoring, to reporting, to identifying website technical issues, tools can mean the difference between a lean, mean, and awesome SEO agency and one of the rest.

Where do you want to be?



CHAPTER 2

12 GREAT LINK BUILDING TOOLS THAT ARE ESSENTIAL TO YOUR SUCCESS



WRITTEN BY
KEVIN ROWE

Link building strategies certainly have changed over the years.

So have the SEO tools we use.

Since the old automated link building tools that automatically placed comments like KontentMachine or GSA's Search Engine Ranker, modern tools have moved to a manual research and outreach platforms.

Tools that I and many of my link building colleagues use today look more like ones used for public relations (PR) rather than link building,

In fact, some of my favorite tools are for PR.

However, there are still some tools specific to link building that are not going anywhere.

My list here has both PR tools that can be used for link building as well as link building specific tools.

The tools available can be listed in three areas:

- Research.
- Prospecting and outreach.
- Reporting.

Link Research Tools

I consider research not the process of finding sites but the process of determining what type of sites you should be approaching.

This means you should be establishing quality criteria, categories of sites, authority metrics, and others.

Below are the two tools with the largest database of links and robust reporting.

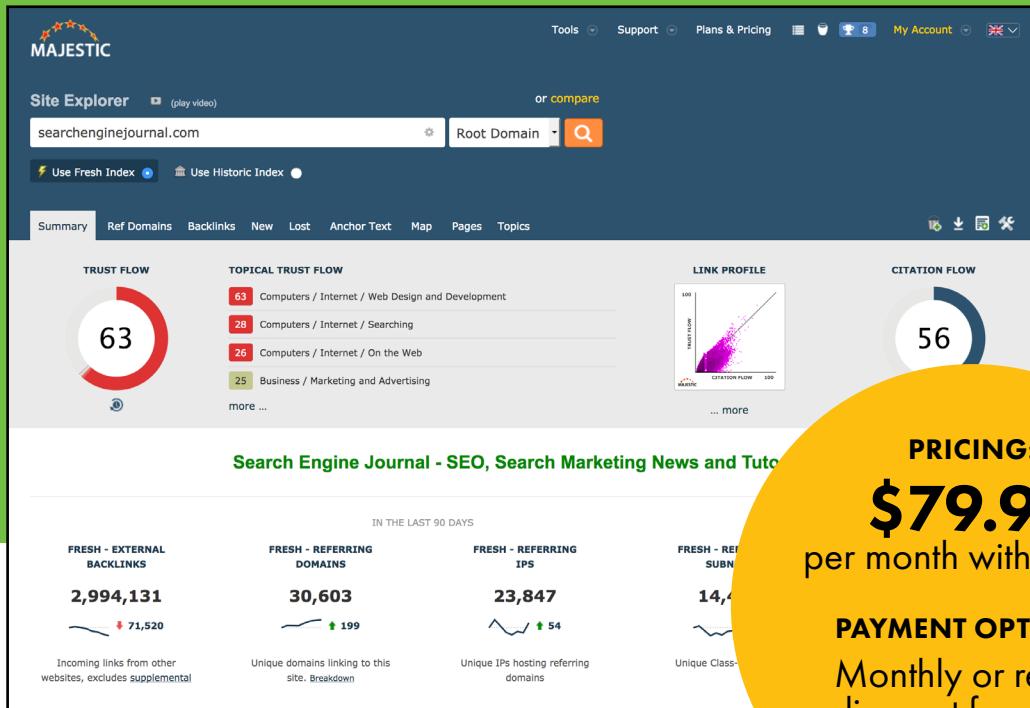
I've included both of these sites as I constantly see each having data that the other doesn't.

You may find some links to you or your competitors' sites in Majestic that aren't listed in Ahrefs, and vice versa.

These tools can be used together to build a comprehensive list of sites to analyze.

As with many SEO tools, the pricing has packages and depends if you pay for the year or monthly.





PRICING:
\$79.99
per month with 1 user

PAYMENT OPTIONS:
Monthly or receive
discount for annual

Majestic

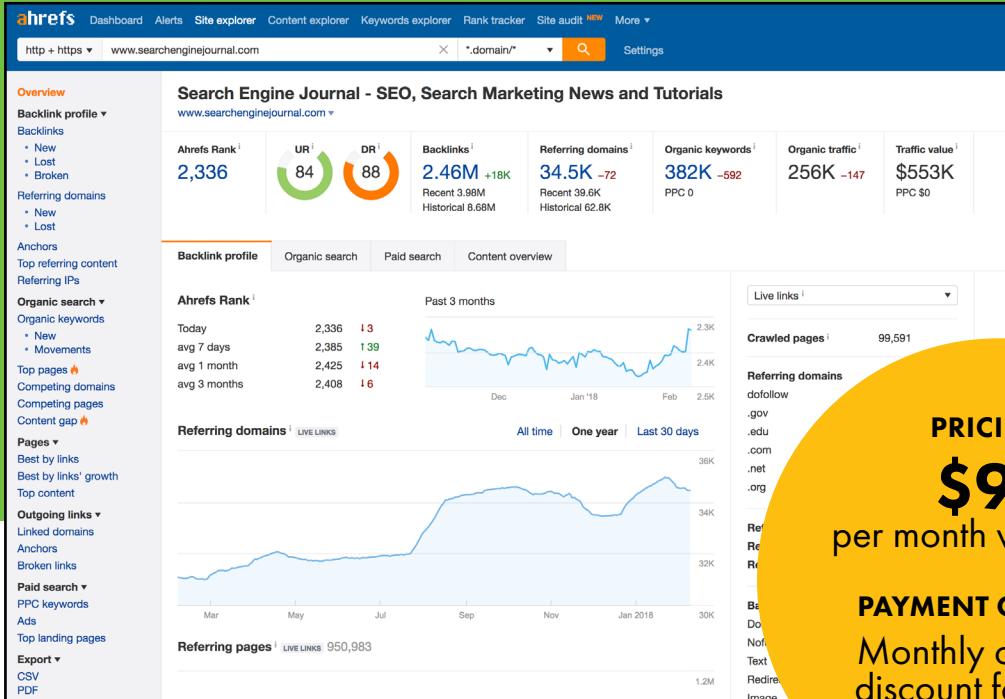
I can play around in Majestic for days, just swimming through the amount of links.

Here are some recommendations on how to use it and what reports should influence your link building.

Topics: This data can be used to identify the types of sites you should be generating links from. Consider running this report on the link profiles for top ranking sites, then finding sites that fit into similar categories.

Referring Domains: Use this to evaluate:

- The number of unique domains you should be focusing on building for your site.
- The trust/citation flow distribution (count of domains by trust/citation flow).



Ahrefs

In contrast to Majestic, Ahrefs has some reports that are much easier to run inside the tool.

It certainly costs more, but if you want more data, then Ahrefs is the right choice.

Here are reports to use in Ahrefs over Majestic:

Pages > Best by links: Two useful applications of this report are:

- Identify competitors' most linked content to influence your content strategies.
- Identify type of sites that link to content you will produce.

Pages > Best by link growth: This is a “trend” report that provides content that is generating links over the last 30 days. Find content here that is receiving a rapid number of links and create content that is more robust.

Prospecting & Outreach Tools

Finding highly relevant sites, that will link to your content, is the most excruciating part of link building.

You can create a large list of sites and bulk outreach to save time, but when you're evaluating your link building success on:

- Links gained per hour.
- The quality of those links.

Then it's best to handle prospecting manually or in a semi-automated approach.

The tools I've listed below can be used for the most popular link building strategies.

The screenshot shows the Citation Labs platform's interface. On the left, a sidebar lists 'Keyword-Grader', 'Reserved', 'Buy-Packages', and 'Campaigns'. The main area is titled 'Opportunities' with a sub-section 'Current Opportunities'. It displays a table with columns: 'Broken URL', 'Links', and 'Relevancy'. The table lists several URLs from various government websites like bhsoc.org, nimh.nih.gov, and hhs.gov, along with their link counts and relevancy scores (mostly C). At the top of the main area, there are filters for 'Minimum Links' (set to D) and a 'Filter' button.

PRICING:
Starts at
\$67/month
STRATEGIES:
Broken Link Building
APPLICATION:
Prospecting

Broken Link Builder by Citation Labs

This tool is worth noting in the prospecting list as it can reduce the time it takes to find broken links.

Inside the Opportunities report, you will have a list of broken links along with the sites that are pointing to those links.

Check out my SEJ article on [broken link building](#) for tactical advice on using this data.

The screenshot shows the Pitchbox software interface. On the left is a sidebar with icons for Campaigns, Pipeline, Inbox, Unread, Emails, All Emails, Project Overview, and Tasks. The main area has tabs for Workflow, Outbox / Sent, and a search bar. Below is a table with columns for Opportunity, URL, Title, and Contact information (P1 done, P1, DA, PA). The table lists various websites related to productivity apps.

PRICING:
\$99-1.5K+
/month

STRATEGIES:
Blogger outreach, influencer outreach, online PR

APPLICATION:
Prospecting,
Outreach

Pitchbox

Pitchbox is certainly one of the more pricey tools on the market when compared to email tools like MailChimp, but the integrated prospecting is helpful to reduce the time to qualify sites.

If it wasn't for a few key features, it would truly be a glorified email system:

- Prospecting sites list builder
- SEO metrics integrated right into the opportunities report

PRICING:
\$99-499+/month

STRATEGIES:
Blogger outreach, influencer outreach

APPLICATION:
Prospecting

BuzzSumo

What a great tool for building lists of blogs, influencers, and authors!

Out of all the prospecting tools on the list, BuzzSumo has the best filtering options.

You can use the tool for a lot of purposes, but for link building, these are two very effective use cases:

Identifying authors: The content research and influencers sections provides lists of authors/influencers that is searchable by keywords in the content they shared or produced. One fantastic use-case for this is to search through the “most shared” report and find influencers that received more than 2,000 shares of their content then outreach to them to share yours. This can yield a lot of natural links.

Identifying sharers/backlinkers: The second use-case goes a layer deeper than the first, finding those that have shared the content. Pull a list of shares or backlinking websites by content then create similar, but better content.

PRICING:
\$97-297+ /month

STRATEGIES:
Blogger outreach, influencer outreach, directories, blog rolls, resource linking

APPLICATION:
Prospecting, Outreach

Ontolo

If you're a technical link builder then Ontolo might be your tool of choice.

It certainly doesn't have the user-friendly setup of BuzzSumo, but its robust features makes up for it.

The screenshot shows the BrightLocal Citation Campaign interface. At the top, it displays the status as 'Finished' and the campaign ID as '182285'. Below this is a summary table with columns: Date, Ordered, To-Do, Submitted, Pending, Live, Updated, Existing, and ID. The table shows data for Oct 6, 2017, and a total row. To the right of the table are buttons for 'Buy More Citations' and 'Actions'. Below the summary table are sections for 'Expected Submission Completion Date' (Oct 20, 2017) and 'Expected Campaign Completion Date' (Nov 17, 2017). A 'How is your CitationBurst campaign delivered?' section includes a 'Login/Password' input field. The main area is titled 'Directories' and lists 10 entries from 'yell.com' to 'touchlocal.com', each with its citation site, type, authority, and date.

No	Citation Site	Types of Site	Authority	Date
1	yell.com	General Directory	89	Oct 6, 2017
2	tupalo.com	General Directory	70	Oct 6, 2017
3	hg.org	Niche Directory	70	Oct 6, 2017
4	ibegin.com	General Directory	70	Oct 6, 2017
5	spoke.com	General Directory	67	Oct 6, 2017
6	uksmallbusinessdirectory.co.uk	General Directory	66	Oct 6, 2017
7	brownbook.net	General Directory	64	Oct 6, 2017
8	2findlocal.com	General Directory	64	Oct 6, 2017
9	where2go.com	General Directory	60	Oct 6, 2017
10	touchlocal.com	General Directory	60	Oct 6, 2017

PRICING:
**\$3/site or
\$2/bulk**

STRATEGIES:
Local Citations

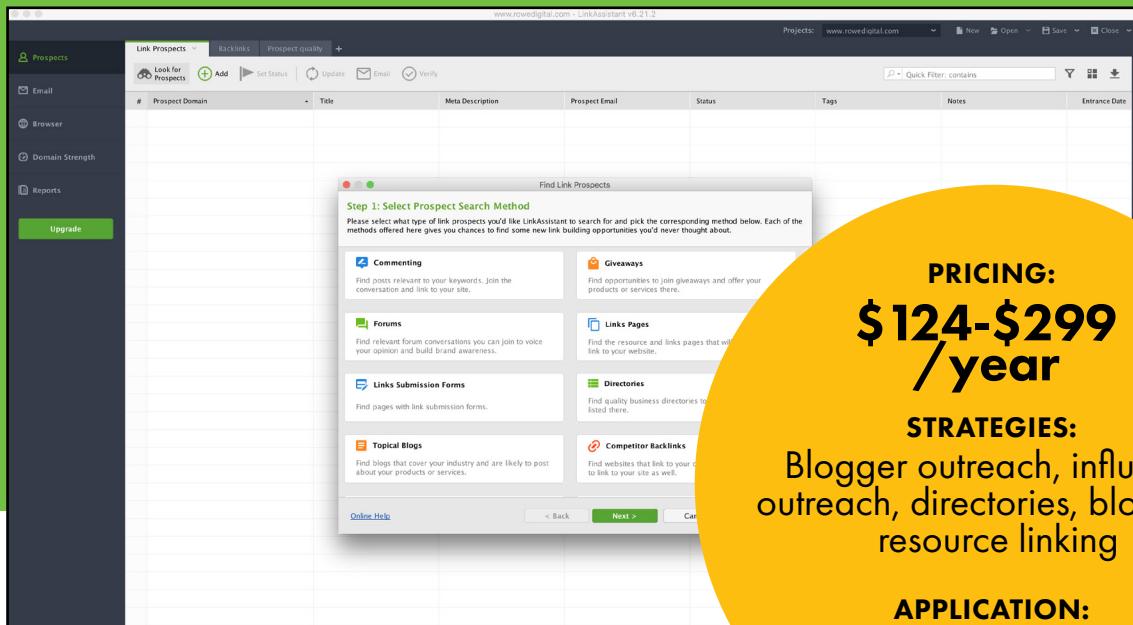
APPLICATION:
Prospecting, outreach,
citation submissions

BrightLocal

Citation building is important for local SEO and should be considered a link building project.

One of the tools with the best value for submitting and managing citations is BrightLocal.

There are two components to BrightLocal: citation monitoring and citation building.



PRICING:
\$124-\$299
/year

STRATEGIES:
Blogger outreach, influencer outreach, directories, blog rolls, resource linking

APPLICATION:
Prospecting, Outreach

Link Assistant

Part of the SEO Power Suite, this deceptively simple tool has some surprises packed into the prospecting functionality.

I'm not going to talk to the older tactics that Link Assistant can be used for (e.g. forum linking), but the guest posting, giveaways, and links pages (resource pages) can yield a large, unfiltered list for you to dig through.

As you filter through the list of sites on any of the prospecting lists, you can create a custom email for each site.

The screenshot shows the Muck Rack interface. At the top, there's a search bar with 'digital marketing' typed in. Below the search bar are navigation links: SEARCH, MEDIA LISTS, ALERTS, COVERAGE REPORTS (with an 'UPGRADE' button), WHO SHARED?, ACTIVITY, and EXTRAS. On the left, there are several filter boxes: 'SEARCH' (checkboxes for 'All people' and 'Verified journalists'), 'MUST APPEAR IN' (checkboxes for 'Names', 'Bios', 'Tweets', 'Shared articles', and 'Bylined articles'), 'MEDIA OUTLETS' (checkbox for 'Bloomberg, The New York Times' with 'Include' or 'Exclude' radio buttons), 'LOCATIONS' (text input for 'Region, country, state or city'), 'BEATS' (checkbox for 'Business, Fashion, Sports'), and 'MEDIA TYPES'. The main content area is titled 'People' and shows a list of results. The first result is 'Gerilyn Manago' with 2,332 FOLLOWERS, described as a 'Social Media Editor, Freelance Digital Marketing Manager, @WestfieldCorp'. The second result is 'Eric Guelhers' with 316 FOLLOWERS, described as a 'Founder and Managing Editor, Programmatic Marketing Founder //Programmatic // Digital Marketing Expert'. Below the results, there's a section for 'Eric Guelhers' with a bio: "'Data' Prédictions pour le Marketing Digital pour 2018 | Programmatique Marketing By Eric Guelhers ... Date > Prédictions pour le Marketing Digital pour 2018... See article — programmatique-marketing.fr". To the right of the results, there's a sidebar with 'New York, NY', 'Arts and Entertainment', and 'Los Angeles'.

PRICING:
Starting at
\$2000/year

STRATEGIES:
Influencer outreach,
Online PR

APPLICATION:
Prospecting, outreach

Muck Rack

In contrast to the other tools, link building is a byproduct of your campaign using Muck Rack.

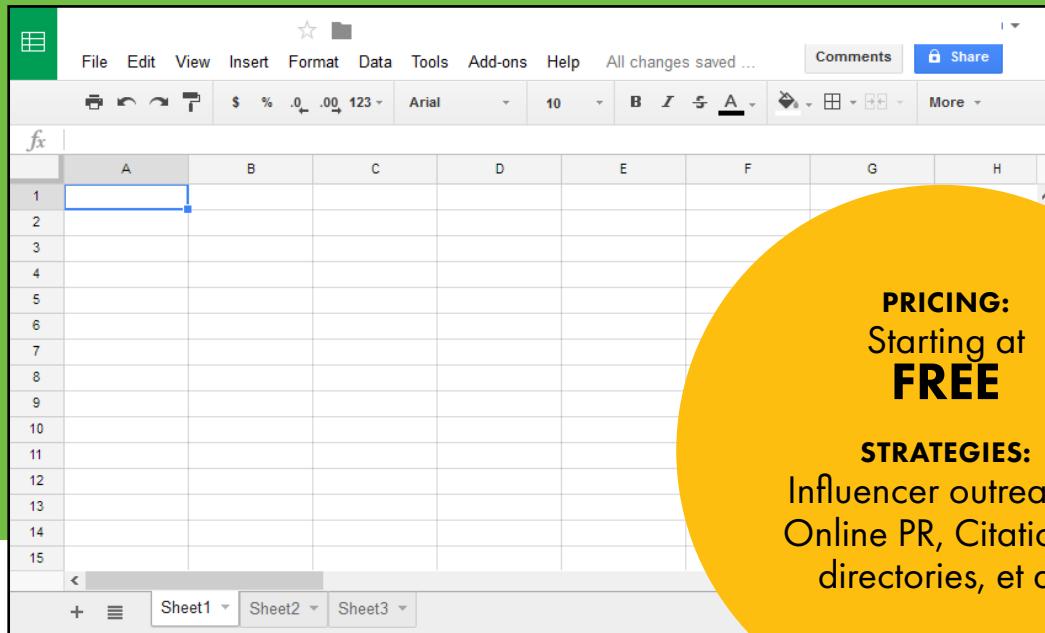
Here you can find journalists for major or niche publications.

Don't expect to use standard link building tactics to win placements here, as it's a true online PR play.

Link building is moving towards influencer outreach and online PR, so PR tools should be on this list.

Reporting

Although many of the tools in the previous section have reporting functionality built in, I've found them all to lack enough custom reporting or the ability to associate links to ranking performance.



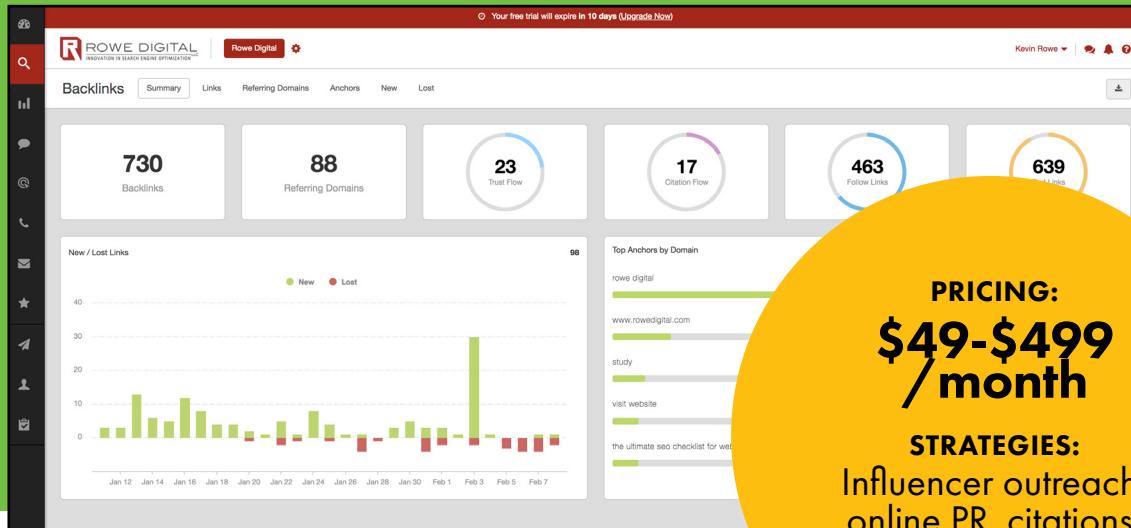
Google Sheets

You may not expect to see this widely-accessible tool on a list for link building, but the ability to fully customize your reports means it can be used for almost any reporting.

To start, a simple report you can create is a link acquisition and quality report.

Include the following columns on the sheet:

- General fields
- Date acquired
- Link details
- Domain
- Placement URL (page of link)
- Anchor text
- Page title
- Destination URL (what page on your site the link points to)
- Linking domain metrics
- Domain Authority (Moz)
- Page Authority (Moz)
- Linking domains (Ahrefs linking domains pointing to the page where your link lives)
- Total links (Ahrefs links pointing to the page where your link lives)
- Spam score (Moz)



Agency Analytics

Agency Analytics automatically populates the dashboard with data from Moz and Majestic and connects that data to critical performance metrics, like ranking and organic traffic.

Qualified traffic that converts to leads or sales is the purpose of our link building and SEO efforts so reporting needs to make a connection between them.



PRICING:
\$19/user per month

STRATEGIES:
Influencer outreach,
online PR, citations,
directories

Cyfe

This tool can be built out as a hybrid between Google Sheets and Agency Analytics, meaning it's very customizable but can also automatically, and easily, aggregate data from multiple sources to create a meaningful report

Conclusion

I've curated this list with the intent to have a tool for every reader, providing enterprise-level with affordable solutions and highly technical tools to the very simple.

But most of all, I hope you can find a tool here for the link building tactic that best fits your approach.

Furthermore, I want you to realize the diversity in the available tools and that you will need to select the right one for the job.

You don't need to have a \$1,000 monthly tool budget to be a link builder, but all of them will take time.



This sponsored chapter was written by CopyPress. The opinions expressed in this article are the sponsor's own.

Google has been the major power in search for roughly 18 years. That means young marketers entering the workforce have never known a life without Google as their main search appliance. Throughout that time, through a multitude of algorithmic, business, and technological changes, two things have remained true:

- Google uses links as a backbone to its ranking algorithm.
- Google's only reliance in this world is on great content. The day it stops delivering relevant results for queries is the day it ceases delivering value.

There is no argument that **SEO has drastically changed over the years**. It has become a sweet mixture of art and science.

The ever-changing landscape has rewarded those of us that have gone down the path of mastering this mixture with lucrative careers. We are sought after because people want practitioners that can see and adapt to the future, not those that are tied to the past.

Despite all of the change and need to stay on top of the ever-changing market, those two items I stated have remained true. Every site needs links and content in some varying degree of each other.

The issues that have faced SEO are:

- Developing great content and developing great links is arguably the most expensive portion of developing organic search results.
- Developing great content often falls to another silo in an organization, and often remains uninfluenced by search.
- The reason for point two is that it is often difficult to plan, measure, and report the ROI of content development. This became especially true once personalized search appeared making “rankings” less than a concrete metric, and Google took away visibility on organic search traffic keyword sources.

CopyPress developed the **Keyword Juicer** as a tool to address this issue for SEO.

The tool is designed to squeeze out keywords you may have never focused on for content creation. It uses machine learning to bucket similar terms as Google sees it, and it allows search professionals to order content as well as predict and report on its ROI.

Let's Start With Machine Learning

I love machine learning and AI. I also believe people often try to engineer solutions to problems that don't actually exist.

Here are the problems we were looking to solve:

Traditionally SEO has looked to create content around valuable “keywords.” However, the reality is that many keywords have a semantic similarity, and thus, very similar search results.

Some examples:

1. Popular Infographics

Google search results for "popular infographics". The search bar shows the query. Below it, the "All" tab is selected, followed by other categories like Images, Videos, News, Shopping, More, Settings, and Tools. The results page indicates about 20,600,000 results found in 0.43 seconds. The first result is a link to "The 60 best infographics | Creative Bloq" with a snippet about why brains crave infographics. The second result is "The 100 Best Infographics of 2017 [Interactive] - Siege Media" with a snippet about creating beautiful infographics. The third result is "10 of the Best Infographic Examples of 2016 - HubSpot Blog" with a snippet about the importance of infographics for SEO. Below these results, there is a section titled "Images for popular infographics" showing thumbnails of various infographics, with links to "More images for popular infographics" and a "Report images" button.

2. Award Winning Infographics

Google search results for "award winning infographics". The search bar shows the query. Below it, the "All" tab is selected, followed by other categories like Images, Videos, News, Shopping, More, Settings, and Tools. The results page indicates about 5,820,000 results found in 0.53 seconds. The first result is a link to "The 60 best infographics | Creative Bloq" with a snippet about the winner of the Beautiful award. The second result is "9 Infographic Design Examples That Will Leave You Inspired" with a snippet about how infographics have grown in popularity. The third result is "The 100 Best Infographics of 2017 [Interactive] - Siege Media" with a snippet about creating better infographics. Below these results, there is a section titled "Images for award winning infographics" showing thumbnails of various award-winning infographics, with links to "More images for award winning infographics" and a "Report images" button.

Traditionally, SEO practitioners wouldn't look at these two terms as being extraordinarily similar. They share the term "infographic," but if you are [**optimizing for an infographic**](#) development agency, this is the very top of their seed list.

Historically, these terms may have been earmarked for two separate pieces of content. However, looking at the results, we find that 7 out of 10 of the organic listings across the two SERPs are similar. Google either finds the terms to be similar OR feels that content from these seven URL answers the queries appropriately.

A smart marketer armed with the Keyword Juicer can quickly pool similar terms into buckets (with a similarity percentage they customize), so they can find groups of terms they can create 10 times the amount of content around to own multiple SERPs through one piece of content and minimize costs.

We tackle the task of bucketing and similarity analysis by:

1. Pulling the top 10 search results for each keyword we pull via SEMrush.
2. We then use a logistic regression to compare every URL set against every other URL set. This is a huge task. To put it into perspective, for a 10,000 keyword list, we have to run 100 million comparisons.
3. Once we have similar percentages, we then bucket terms together.
4. We then display the buckets with the FULL keyword count, volumes, and value of each bucket and whether we found one of your URLs in the top 100 URLs ranking for that term.

Show 10 entries

Category	Keywords	Total Volume	Total Value	Estimated Traffic	Total Traffic	Active URL	Approved	Active Group List
10 best infographics	4	110.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
amazing infographics	2	90.00	390.60	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
animated infographics	2	410.00	6,892.10	0.00%	0.00	No	No	Yes
animated infographics software	2	30.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
app for infographics	36	360.00	7,160.40	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
app infographics	27	310.00	2,842.70	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
apps for creating infographics	12	120.00	756.00	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
apps to create infographics	14	140.00	882.00	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
apps to make infographics	15	150.00	945.00	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
award winning infographics	5	140.00	3,449.60	0.00%	0.00	No	No	Yes

Showing 1 to 10 of 309 entries

Previous 1 2 3 4 5 ... 31 Next

Project Notes

More importantly, we show you your current traffic volume and what percentage of the total universal traffic you have. This allows you to highlight high-value buckets that you do not have value or have low-value numbers for and prioritize their content creation.

We then allow you to pull Readable.io scoring for all of the URLs that rank in the top 10 for the buckets keywords. You can use this data to create style guides for your content based on the competitive averages and data.

We then allow you to track your baseline traffic and measure future gains in the system. Then, you can show your CEO we spent \$2,000 on this piece of content, but it will generate \$24,000 worth of traffic over the next year based on volume and comparative costs per click.

Squeezing Out Valuable Keyword

The reality of SEO life is that keyword research is very time-consuming.

Basic seed term creation is no longer an issue with great tools like SEMrush readily available to us all.

However, building huge lists of keywords and analyzing their value and priority is something that has remained a staple of SEO auditing and analysis.

In our system, we are able to take competitors and squeeze out the terms they are ranking. This “juice” is found in two places.

The screenshot shows the Keyword Juicer software interface. On the left is a sidebar with navigation links: HOME, SEM RUSH, PROJECTS, GROUP LISTS, SUBSCRIPTIONS, PAYMENTS, SUPPORT TICKETS, and COLLABORATORS. Below these are LOGOUT and a user icon. The main area has a search bar, filter options, and a table titled 'Category'. The table columns are: Category, Keywords, Total Volume, Total Value, Estimated Traffic, Total Traffic, Active URL, Approved, and Active Group List. There are 10 entries shown, each with a green circular icon and a yellow highlighted category name. At the bottom, it says 'Showing 1 to 10 of 309 entries' and has a page navigation bar with buttons for Previous, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, ..., 31, and Next.

Category	Keywords	Total Volume	Total Value	Estimated Traffic	Total Traffic	Active URL	Approved	Active Group List
Creating Infographics	155	8,790.00	1,675,022.40	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
creating infographics	96	5,800.00	634,984.00	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
making infographics	90	2,670.00	218,112.30	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
create infographics free	88	3,290.00	269,582.60	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
tool for creating infographics	87	1,700.00	76,857.00	0.00%	0.00	No	No	Yes
infographics generator	81	1,850.00	115,995.00	0.00%	0.00	No	No	Yes
make infographics online	80	1,760.00	103,787.20	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
create Infographics online	79	4,560.00	237,849.60	0.00%	0.00	No	No	No
infographics free	77	1,490.00	79,238.20	0.00%	0.00	No	No	Yes

1. **Unbucketed:** This “bucket” of terms is anything that is similar to other terms we measured (at least shares one URL with another term but does not match the percentages you set to bucket). You can find meaningful terms here that are longer tail and turn them into singular buckets that you can then move into content production.
2. **Not Related:** These are terms whose top 10 terms do not have any similarities to any other terms. Here you will find the longest of the long tail, but a lot of these terms will be wildly unrelated terms. It is a good space to find new seed terms. It is also very valuable for negative keyword list building for PPC.

The Keyword Juicer is meant to be used iteratively. You start with one group of seed terms and competitors in one project, and as you scoop up new seeds and find new competitors, you begin new projects with the new data, slowly growing a massive usable list of data.

Tracking Value You Can No Longer Track

Keyword Juicer allows you to take gap analysis to new levels. Not only can you show the opportunity in search to a customer, CEO, or another stakeholder, you can lay out a plan of action and measure it as it goes into work.

Further, you can measure traffic growth based on keyword and bucket-level, helping you replace some of the visibility lost when you lost access to Google search data in analytics. While it is not an exact traffic analysis, it is close enough to accurately gauge the opportunities and wins.

Our goal with creating the Keyword Juicer was to create a tool that allows marketers to easily scale, analyze, and report on content value.

Our vision is that marketers will need to continue to think like publishers to stay valuable in Google's eyes, and they must balance this need to create content with the reality that marketing dollars must show ROI.

While the concepts we used to build the software are not new, we allow for the use of these trusted tactics with the power of modern machine learning and elastic server technology to help the marketer go further with their analysis.

As a part of our sponsorship, we are offering everyone who has downloaded this ebook a **free Beta version of the software** to test and give feedback on.

You can sign up for your account and training sessions at KeywordJuicer.com.

CHAPTER 3

TOP 7 SEO KEYWORD RESEARCH TOOLS FOR AGENCIES



WRITTEN BY
BEAU PEDRAZA

So what makes a premium keyword research tool worth the investment? Why even use one in the first place?

In short: It's all about the collected data, time being saved, and the deeper knowledge of the vertical that can be gained by the user.

In addition to directly speeding up the discovery process, keyword research tools also grant you access to current and historic data that can turn challenging campaigns into well-planned missions. Plus, you can discover your competitors' content gaps across search engines.

When it comes to SEO, the difference between great data and poor data is all the difference in the world.

Having information on demand and the knowledge to strategically target relevant search terms is critical.

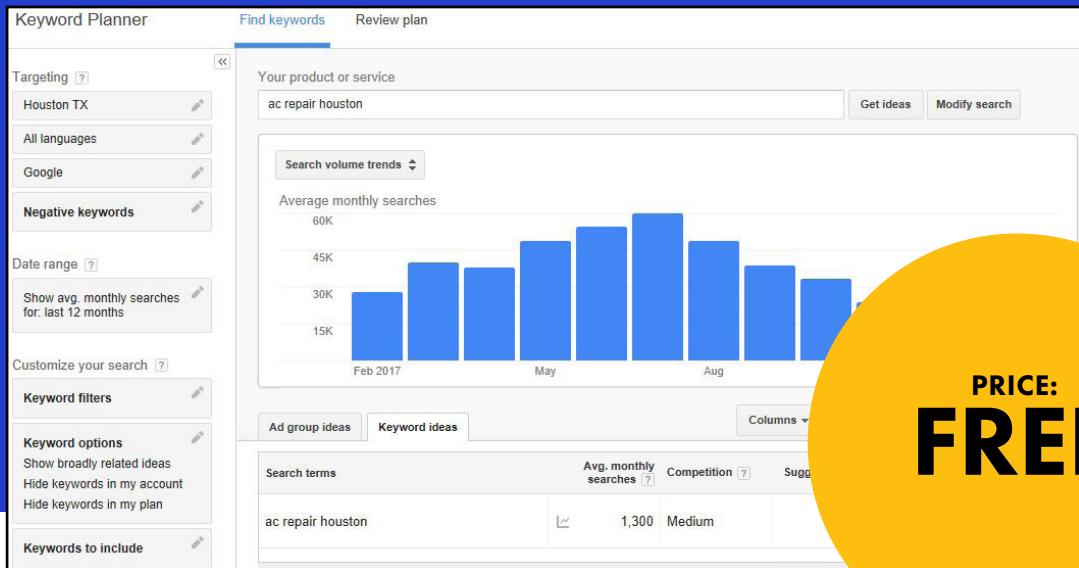
Many experts in our industry know how to do it by hand the old-fashioned way; and there's nothing wrong with being able to create content around keywords that are statistically proven using the DIY approach.

However, the amount of time you will save in the long run can be worth the up-front cost of a high-quality SEO tool package.

A premium SEO keyword research tool offers invaluable benefits to agencies.

A great tool should be able to scale up as accounts and employee levels grow.

Let's cover seven well-known keyword research tools in the SEO world and go over the benefits and features that each provides, each using a single search term for comparison.



Google Keyword Planner

Often referred to as AdWords Keyword Planner, Google's classic keyword research tool is a feature within the AdWords ecosystem.

The big question for those doing SEO: is it still relevant in 2018?

Long considered the baseline standard for SEO keyword insights, Google loves to make it difficult to use for SEO pros with minimal PPC expertise.

Keyword Planner can show trends and data at a city, region, even for a Nielsen DMA-level area (perfect for major metropolitan areas).

When coupled with landing pages from your competitors, it's easy to pull relevant high-volume keywords.

This screenshot shows the Google Keyword Planner interface with several input fields and targeting options. At the top, there's a field for 'Your product or service' containing 'ac repair houston'. Below it are fields for 'Your landing page' (with 'www.example.com/page') and 'Your product category' (with a dropdown menu). On the left, there are targeting options: 'Houston TX', 'All languages', 'Google', and 'Negative keywords'. On the right, there are sections for 'Customize your search': 'Keyword filters', 'Keyword options' (with 'Show broadly related ideas', 'Hide keywords in my account', and 'Hide keywords in my plan'), and 'Keywords to include'. At the bottom, there's a 'Date range' section with 'Show avg. monthly searches for: last 12 months'.

Google's Keyword Planner is also one of the best fundamental tools to use when teaching those [new to SEO](#) about the landscape, especially when you have the access to active AdWords campaign data.

One of the major criticisms voiced by the SEO community revolves around the merging of search volumes for similar keywords.

Previously, each search variation would have its own reported volume (e.g., "dog park near me" would report differently than "dog pars near me") and the often-repeated sentiment among SEO professionals allude to a weakened level of service and general uselessness.

Considering the rising competition in the industry, and the improvements many of the bigger vendors have made in recent years, it's easy to understand this side of the discussion.



Moz Keyword Explorer

Long held as the industry standard for SEO resources, Moz continues to update their core services, and their Keyword Explorer tool is no exception.

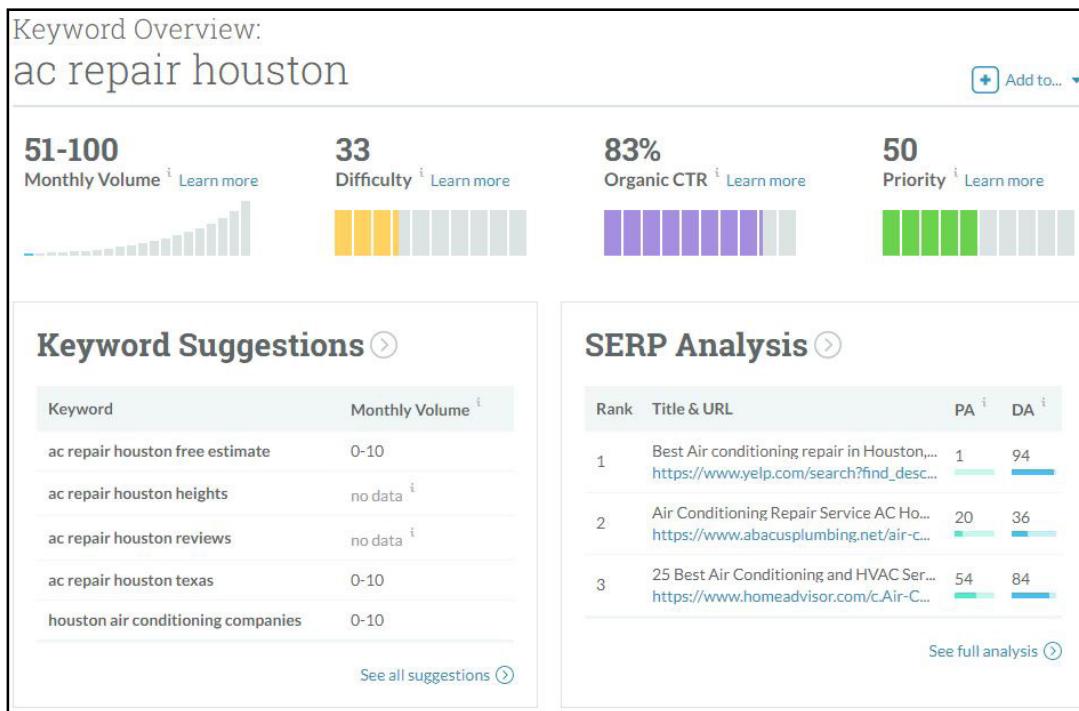
Pricing is for the entire suite of services, which is ideal for agency or multi-seat requirements.

Recent changes of Moz's service offerings have been met with mixed-to-positive reviews. While that can be said for many vendor efforts in search marketing, Moz is a company that continually tries to keep up with the trends and provide cutting edge solutions as they have for over a decade.

When you enter a term into the Moz search box, you'll receive a combination of data segments.

Keyword Overview looks at the entered term on its own and addresses expected searches per month, the difficulty of competing against Page 1 results for the same term, a rough estimate of organic click-through opportunities (versus paid ads and non-organic positions on the search engine results page), and the perceived priority that the user should assign to optimization for this term, where the higher the score, the higher the demand and a lowered level of competition.

For what it does well, there are a few issues with Moz's tool.



For one, it tends to rank among the lowest in the volume of keyword suggestions provided, with roughly 1,000 results delivered per seed term.

Moz also provides the same granularity of search volume data that Google's Keyword Planner provides, providing estimated ranges rather than concrete numbers. It can also be argued that since seasonality and demand are an important factor when it comes to volume per month, that a lack of granularity shouldn't be held against them, but rather, be seen as a barometer of expectations rather than a predictive service.

Moz updates their U.S. database frequently across 40 million+ Google search engine results pages and cycle upwards of 15 million keywords on a monthly basis, allowing for them to keep up with changes in the landscape and [how people search](#).

Moz's Keyword Explorer provides a user-friendly aesthetic that allows agencies to quickly identify opportunity, track performance, assess competitive threats, and drill down into the page-level details for head and niche terms.

The screenshot shows the SEMrush Keyword Overview interface. At the top, there's a search bar with 'ac repair houston' typed in. To the right of the search bar is a yellow circle containing text about pricing. The main content area displays a table of keyword results.

PRICE:
From \$99/mo for Pro to \$399/mo for Business, Free for first ten uses

Rank	Keyword	Volume	Difficulty	Score
1	AC Repair Houston	1.0K	High	90
2	Houston AC Repair	1.0K	Medium	85
3	AC Repair Houston TX	1.0K	Medium	80
4	Houston AC Repair Service	1.0K	Medium	75
5	AC Repair Houston TX 77077	1.0K	Medium	70
6	Houston AC Repair Services	1.0K	Medium	65
7	Houston AC Repair Services	1.0K	Medium	60
8	Houston AC Repair Services	1.0K	Medium	55
9	Houston AC Repair Services	1.0K	Medium	50
10	Houston AC Repair Services	1.0K	Medium	45

SEMrush

SEMrush has a well-earned reputation as one of the best search engine optimization tools in the marketplace.

This tool suite provides paid and organic keyword data, along with competitor information, and does it well.

SEMrush excels at many things, but we're here to focus on keyword research for organic search.

This detailed screenshot shows the SEMrush Keyword Overview page for the query 'ac repair houston'. The top navigation bar includes 'Keyword Overview', a search bar with 'ac repair houston', a 'Search' button, 'Projects', and an 'Upgrade' button. Below the navigation is a country selection section with 'US GOOGLE' selected, and other options like 'UK GOOGLE', 'DE GOOGLE', and 'FR GOOGLE', along with a link to 'Other Countries'.

The main content area is titled 'Keyword Overview: ac repair houston'. It shows live data from 16 Feb 2018, for Desktop device, and USD currency. There are three tabs: 'Overview' (selected), 'Phrase Match', and 'Related Keywords'. Under 'Overview', there are three sections: 'ORGANIC SEARCH', 'PAID SEARCH', and 'TREND'.

- ORGANIC SEARCH:** Shows Volume (1.0K) and Number of results (7.3M). A table lists the top 10 keywords with their respective volumes and difficulty scores.
- PAID SEARCH:** Shows CPC (\$67.51) and Competition (0.71).
- TREND:** A bar chart showing the trend of the keyword over time.

When you enter a search term, SEMrush can provide hundreds of thousands of keyword suggestions (among the major players in the industry, only Ahrefs can boast about delivering more).

When you enter a search term into the box, you're presented with a number of panels that may seem a bit daunting at first.

PHRASE MATCH KEYWORDS (799)				live update RELATED KEYWORDS (424)			
Keyword	Volume	CPC (USD)	SERP	Keyword	Volume	CPC (USD)	SERP
foundation repair houston	1,900	49.51		ac repair in houston	40	56.20	
windshield repair houston	1,600	5.15		ac repair houston tx	170	71.07	
iphone repair houston	1,300	5.95		ac repair in houston tx	70	41.94	
garage door repair houston	1,000	69.55		houston air conditioner repair	40	0.00	
ac repair houston	1,000	67.51		air conditioning repair houston	880	57.21	

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

By drilling into the organic competitors section, you'll begin to understand why their platform is ideal for competitive keyword gaps, as it will show other in-kind and general domains that occupy the search landscape.

Being able to cross-check seed and long-tail keyword data with what your competitors are ranking for is a major reason why many search industry veterans use SEMrush.

SEMrush will also cover terms it believes are semantically-relevant for the initial query at both a phrase and relational keyword level.

live update ORGANIC SEARCH RESULTS				live update ADS COPIES			
1-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	81-100			
1. abacusplumbing.net				\$57 Off Any AC Repair Service - 60-Minute Houston Response		RayMark AC & Heating Inc. - Fast & Reliable AC Repair	
2. yelp.com				www.getonecallhouston.com	Ad	raymarkac.mydex.com	Serving The Greater Houston Area Since 1990. Call Now For A Free Estimate!
3. homeadvisor.com				200+ 5-Star Reviews. A+ BBB Rating. Call The Old A/C Experts. Available Now.			
4. homeadvisor.com				Harvey caused AC Issues? - \$50 Off & a Free Service Call	www.ars-houston-tx.com	A+ Houston AC Repair - \$50 Off AC Repair	
5. abchomeandcommercial.com				AC & Heating Repair, Maintenance & Installation. Available 24 Hours, Call Today.		www.universalhomeexperts....	Call Universal Today! Trust Our Expert Techs With All Of Your AC Repair Needs.

Often, this data will require a bit of filtering, but this is doable within Keyword Analytics, as is the ability to determine the type of SERP features that a term ranks for across your site or the competition, thanks to a Position Tracking option.

This feature also outlines potential outcomes for Page 1 rankings based on competition, difficulty, and can also handle multiple-location campaign tracking at the city and hyperlocal level, making SEMrush a powerful service.

For agencies that wish to collaborate across internal teams and believe SEO and PPC work best when they work together, SEMrush also has you covered. PPC data is also provided for a keyword, which is critical for high-competition, high-cost conquering campaigns.

SEMrush provides considerable data related to organic search results, but its historic information on ad history and other paid search metrics vital for deeper collaboration within an agency or in-house work can't be beaten.

The screenshot shows the Ahrefs interface with the search term 'ac repair houston' entered. It displays various metrics like total search volume (91K), total clicks (73K), and a bar chart for volume distribution across different ranges. A yellow circle on the right highlights the price information.

PRICE:
From \$99/mo for Lite to \$999/mo for Agency

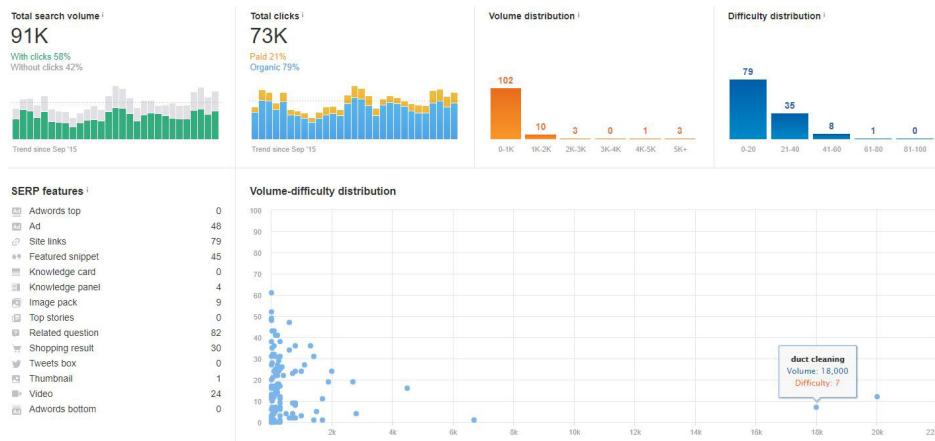
Ahrefs Keywords Explorer

***Disclosure:** The author is a subscribed user of Ahrefs and is not being compensated for his review.*

Ahrefs Keywords Explorer is a powerful, all-purpose SEO tool which provides an expansive database that is updated monthly.

Ahrefs' keyword generator provides more results than any other tool in the marketplace, and they provide full transparency about how their metrics and database operate.

When a keyword is identified in Keywords Explorer, Ahrefs takes you to the screen below, where the amount of options provided can feel overwhelming at first.



Ahrefs has many strengths outside of keyword research, but the data they provide when a term is entered is outstanding.

Keyword Explorer provides multiple levels of data along with terms broke out in parent/child topic format, making it easy to pinpoint intent and fine-tune terms which apply and those which overlap.

The screenshot shows a table from the Ahrefs Keyword Explorer tool. The table has 12 columns and 15 rows of data. The columns are: Keyword, KD, CPC, Volume, Clicks, CPS, RR, Parent topic, SERP, and Update. The rows list various search terms such as 'appliance repair near me', 'duct cleaning', 'gas fireplace repair', etc., along with their respective metrics and parent topics.

Keyword	KD	CPC	Volume	Clicks	CPS	RR	Parent topic	SERP	Update	
appliance repair near me	12	9	20,000	15,126	0.77	1.3	appliance repair near me	SERP	16 Feb '18	
duct cleaning	7	13	18,000	16,345	0.89	1.3	air duct cleaning services	SERP	16 Feb '18	
gas fireplace repair	1	4.0	6,700	6,059	0.90	1.3	gas fireplace repair	SERP	16 Feb '18	
heat recovery ventilator	16	1.3	4,500	4,718	1.0	1.4	heat recovery ventilator	SERP	16 Feb '18	
appliance repair service	2	4	2,800	1,544	0.55	1.3	appliance repair near me	SERP	16 Feb '18	
energy efficient heaters	5	19	1.3	2,700	2,788	1.1	most efficient space heater	SERP	16 Feb '18	
furnace service	24	25	2,000	1,599	0.79	1.3	furnace service	SERP	16 Feb '18	
ac duct cleaning	4	19	15	1,900	1,785	0.93	clean dryer vent	SERP	16 Feb '18	
gas fireplace service	0	1	3.5	1,700	1,411	0.83	1.4	gas fireplace repair	SERP	16 Feb '18
what does a tune up consist of	3	11	3.0	1,700	1,220	0.73	1.1	car tune up	SERP	16 Feb '18
furnace tune up	2	5	16	1,500	1,534	1.0	1.2	furnace tune up	SERP	16 Feb '18
gas line repair	3	1	6	1,400	665	0.48	1.2	gas line installation	SERP	16 Feb '18
energy efficient water heater	0	31	3.0	1,400	1,329	0.98	1.1	best water heater	SERP	16 Feb '18

They break down terms by search volume, click data (which can be toggled given that many informational queries receive high search volume but low clicks), and a difficulty rating system.

For topic-related key terms that appear when a keyword or keywords are added, you're presented with a number of data points.

This includes the term's placement ranking on SERP, along with the type of SERP result, the estimated difficulty of reaching first-page rankings, along with a drop-down SERP snapshot which pulls in the result for the user, all on-demand.

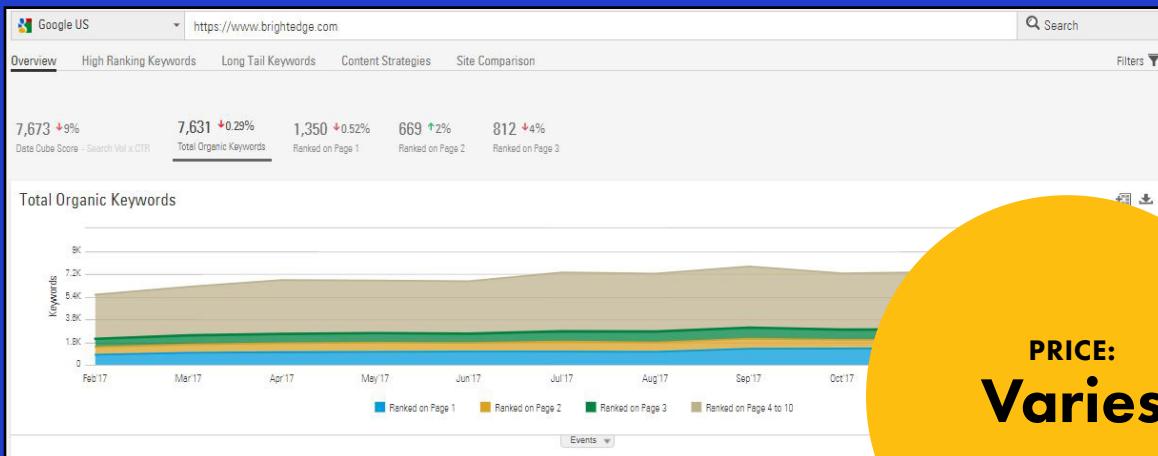
Tracking can be done at the city level and by language.

One of the downsides of Ahrefs is its price.

While the tool is powerful, it can be a challenge to scale for smaller agencies who would rather have many seats for users and client accounts.

Ahrefs offers options outside of their normal pricing structure via a “Contact Us” link.

But if you’re OK with a single login and fine with being booted when another user needs to do research, Ahrefs is a well-rounded solution for any digital marketing agency.



BrightEdge Data Cube

***Disclosure:** The author is a subscriber of BrightEdge services and is not being compensated for his review.*

Of all the tools being covered here, BrightEdge is likely the one that sticks out the most.

Whereas other options are either free or can be manually integrated on a monthly level and by anyone with a mouse and keyboard, BrightEdge is a platform that handles client reporting, domain management, integration across Google and Adobe analytics, as well as social media integrations and analysis.

BrightEdge is also the one that doesn't allow for manual submission of tracked domains – to do that, you'll need to speak to your client rep.

Often compared in discussions with fellow SaaS vendor Conductor, BrightEdge offers a robust keyword research tool known as Data Cube, which provides historic data on a monthly level for any domain or keyword.

The Data Cube feature can be easily added to their reporting platform, known as Story Builder, which makes providing client reports with broad performance results for terms that center around a common segment a breeze.

The screenshot shows the Data Cube interface with the search term "ac repair houston" entered. At the top, it displays competition levels: Total Suggested Keywords (780), High Competition Level (474 or 60%), Medium Competition Level (187 or 23%), and Low Competition Level (117 or 15%). Below this is a table titled "Track" with columns for Keyword, Search Volume, Competition, Keyword Value, and Universal Listing. The table lists various keywords related to air conditioning repair, such as "portable ac", "air conditioner", and "hvac", along with their respective search volumes (e.g., 301,000, 246,000, 110,000), competition levels (High, Medium), keyword values (e.g., 80, 83, 90), and universal listings (Local 3-Pack, Images, Local 3-Pack, Quick Answers).

	Keyword	Search Volume	Competition	Keyword Value	Universal Listing
1	portable ac	301,000	High	80	Local 3-Pack
2	portable air conditioners	301,000	High	80	Local 3-Pack
3	portable air conditioner	301,000	High	83	Local 3-Pack
4	portable air conditioning	301,000	High	83	Local 3-Pack
5	airconditioner	246,000	High	90	Images,Local 3-Pack
6	air conditioner	246,000	High	88	Images,Local 3-Pack
7	air cond	246,000	High	88	Local 3-Pack
8	hvac	110,000	Medium	98	Local 3-Pack
9	ac	110,000	Medium	83	Local 3-Pack,Quick Answers
10	air conditioning repair	74,000	High	99	Local 3-Pack
11	ac repairs	74,000	High	99	Local 3-Pack
12	air conditioning repairman	74,000	High	99	Local 3-Pack
13	airconditioning repair	74,000	High	99	Local 3-Pack
14	ac repairman	74,000	High	99	Local 3-Pack
15	air condition repairs	74,000	High	99	
16	window air conditioners	74,000	High	83	Local 3-Pack
17	window air conditioner	74,000	High	83	Local 3-Pack
18	air conditioner repairman	74,000	High	99	Local 3-Pack

Because Data Cube only tracks at a U.S.-level for desktop and smartphone, filtering will be important.

In the top-right, you can add filters covering a number of categories using include, exclude, greater than, less than, or by number.

This comes in handy when you use the Data Cube for competitor gap assessments; the filter can easily exclude branded search terms to highlight how non-branded performance for a site compares to their real-world reputation (or how other forms of marketing and advertising influence consumers).

The only big downside is that Data Cube updates monthly, usually around the 6th to the 9th of the new month. This, however, is overshadowed by how well it covers keyword data for the term and by domain.

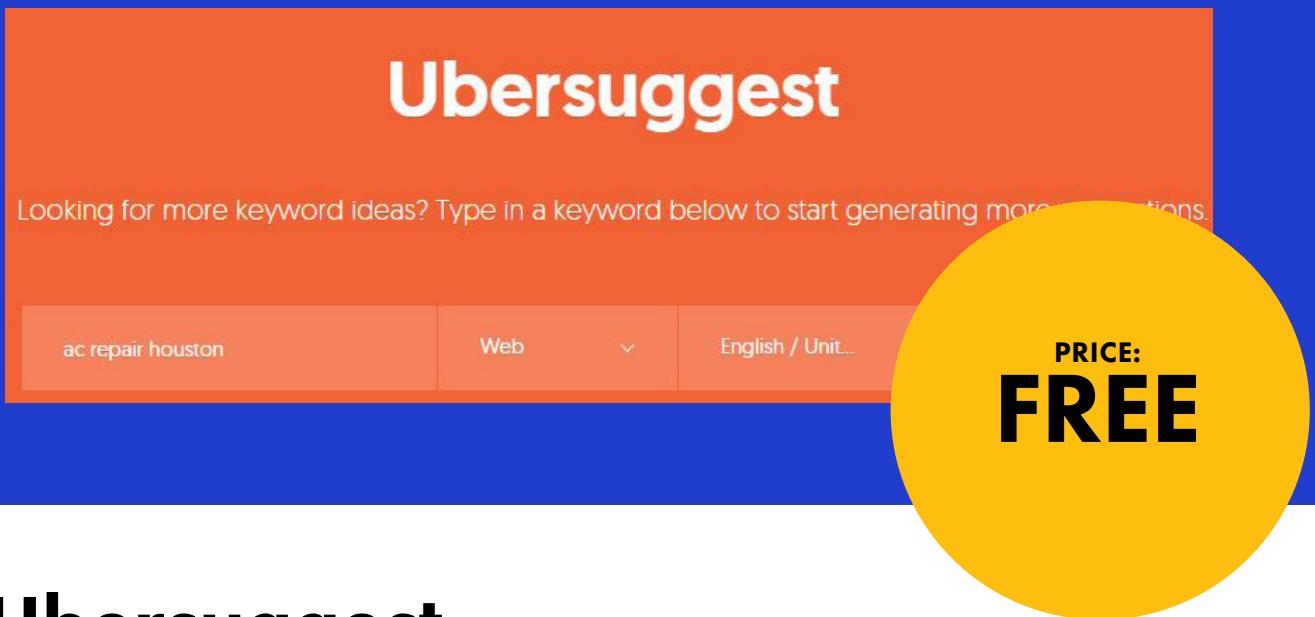


BrightEdge is a powerful platform that is great for agencies that are seeking to scale up with minimal hassle.

Contracts typically run for one year and services provided can be added or customized to fit your agency's current and growing needs.

Tracked keywords are also additional, which can often fail to scale up based on the demands of each new client, but provide exceptional hyperlocal tracking to the ZIP code level and update weekly.

Keyword granularity is minimal at best, and research features in Data Cube don't go broadly into parent topics or cover paid search metrics like Ahrefs or SEMrush, but for a young agency with a young staff and the desire to keep it drag-and-drop, BrightEdge is ideal.

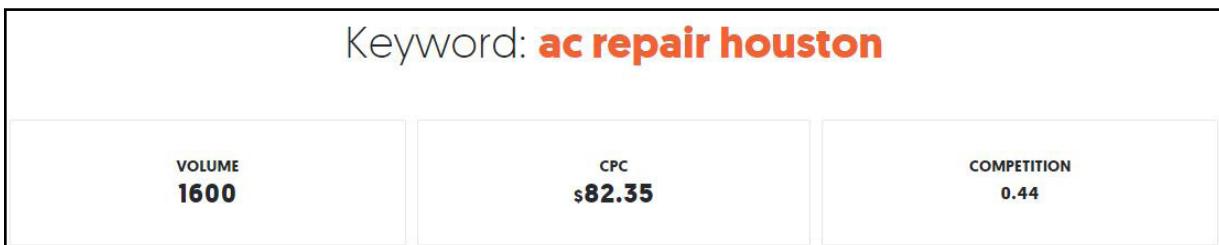


Ubersuggest

Developed by industry thought leader Neil Patel, Ubersuggest is a free tool that anyone can use, and it functions similarly to how Google's search bar uses autocomplete.

You can easily see this for yourself by heading up to the omnibox and typing in a word slowly, letter by letter.

This is a time-wasting task that nobody wants, making Ubersuggest a great way to expedite this.



Once you've entered your term, you'll first see a summary section highlighting search volume, estimated CPC, and the logarithmic level of perceived competition.

	KEYWORD	SEARCH VOLUME	CPC	COMPETITION
<input type="checkbox"/>	commercial air conditioning repair houston	10	\$ 77.78	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	air conditioner sales houston	10	\$ 59.25	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	air conditioning repair school houston tx	10	\$ 33.52	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 hour air conditioning houston	10	\$ 16.96	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	air conditioner prices	1600	\$ 7.37	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	central air conditioner	22200	\$ 6.79	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	hvac system	9900	\$ 6.12	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	home air conditioner	5400	\$ 5.48	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	air conditioning unit	27100	\$ 4.64	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	air conditioner	301000	\$ 4.62	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	air conditioning system	2900	\$ 4.44	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	goodman ac	14800	\$ 4.38	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	air conditioning units	14800	\$ 4.1	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	central air	6600	\$ 4.08	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	ac units	12100	\$ 3.12	1.0
<input type="checkbox"/>	used air conditioners houston	10	\$ 2.82	1.0

The best part? You don't have to focus on web results.

You have the options of zooming in on Google's Image, Shopping, YouTube, or News results as well. Considering the price tag, this is pretty nice to have.

Ubersuggest also supports numerous languages and countries, which other premium services often make it a challenge to replicate or find inside of their platform.

Because Ubersuggest uses Google's autocomplete API, this tool is great for both young and experienced SEO pros who either seek a quick way to learn about how search works, or are comfortable with how keywords and content work together at a topic level.

PRICE:
From \$48/mo for Pro Lite to \$88/mo for Pro Plus

KeywordTool.io

Often compared to Ubersuggest, Keyword Tool uses Google's autocomplete API to pull in data by speeding up the manual process at a high rate.

The biggest benefit of using this service is that, unlike Ubersuggest, you can also pull terms across Bing, Amazon, and even eBay.

While the website claims to be free, this is a half-truth.

You can see the keywords provided, but to access the data behind the pulled terms (search volume, competition, etc.), you'll need to pay.

Keywords	Search Volume	CPC	Competition
ac repair houston texas	0.000	0.00	0.00
ac repair houston free estimate	0.000	0.00	0.00
ac repair houston near me	0.000	0.00	0.00
ac repair houston heights	0.000	0.00	0.00
ac repair houston yelp	0.000	0.00	0.00
ac repair houston reviews	0.000	0.00	0.00
ac repair houston 24 7	0.000	0.00	0.00
ac repair houston 77095	0.000	0.00	0.00
ac repair houston car	0.000	0.00	0.00
ac repair houston ms	0.000	0.00	0.00
ac repair houston	0.000	0.00	0.00

**Do You Need This Information?
Keyword Tool Pro Provides Search
Volume Data
For English Keywords. Try It Now!**

The benefit of using KeywordTool: it works well for discovering variations of keywords to build content around.

The downside: all of the other tools above do the same thing.

Are there any benefits to getting a Pro Plus account? Well, it offers a simplistic user experience and it could be worth it if eBay or Amazon search optimization is important to you.

It's a well-made tool, but it doesn't cover deeper needs of content marketing, which rely on a deep understanding of topics, context, and semantically-related terms.

Which SEO Keyword Research Tool is Right for your Agency?

This is, by no means, an exhaustive list of keyword research tools.

Even among the tools discussed in this chapter, there is no "perfect" keyword research tool. Each tool has benefits and shortcomings.

When selecting a keyword research tool, it's best to understand where your agency's strengths and weaknesses lie.

Tools such as Google Keyword Planner and Ubersuggest are great for quick compiling of keyword data. In many cases, the data that can be exported from their outputs can help seed deeper research with the help of Moz and Ahrefs Keyword Explorer.

While Moz and Ahrefs (especially SEMrush) are more robust in their data being provided, they come with a steeper learning and usage curve for inexperienced SEO pros. They also require more of an upfront cost, which may not be feasible for a new agency.

A service like BrightEdge comes with the biggest costs associated, but its SaaS solution for SEO covers many areas inside of a single ecosystem, including the ability to explore keyword data. This may be a benefit for agencies that wish to reduce redundancies across vendors, but eventually, it is likely that the need for a second tool will present itself as talent and effort levels increase inside of your SEO department.

One tool that we didn't go over involves you – the digital marketer.

Because great content requires a deep understanding of the main idea (e.g., "ac repair houston") and the supporting subtopics that require coverage (e.g., "central ac vs portable ac systems") and the common issues that users seek answers for (e.g., "freon," "refrigeration loops," "coolant refills," "troubleshooting"), the effectiveness of a keyword reporting tool is only as strong as the SEO pro using it.



THEHOTH

This sponsored chapter was written by The HOTH. The opinions expressed in this article are the sponsor's own.

3 Easy Keyword Research Methods You Can Do In Less Than 10 Minutes With A FREE tool

Do you want three effective ways to find tons of highly targeted keywords?

The problem with most keyword research is that it starts by going to Google Keyword Planner, which only will spit out a fraction of the ideas you need, and requires a lot of creativity to get going.

In this chapter I'll show you three easy keyword research methods that you can perform with free tools.

1. Find “Easy Win” Keywords

Did you know you might be sitting on a hidden pile of gold?

If your site has been around for a while, there's a good chance that with a few changes you could drastically improve your traffic.

The vast majority of the traffic is on the first page of Google – especially in the top 3 positions, which can account for more than 30 percent of the total traffic!

It's great to be in the top 3, but what about all the keywords that you're ranking for below that in positions 4-30?

Google already “likes” you for these keywords and sees you as relevant, you just haven’t broke into the top positions.

So if you could find these keywords that your site is ranking for, and boost them up, you could see a massive jump in traffic!

We want to move keywords that are just missing the first page to make the move up to the first page and we want keywords at the bottom of the first page to move toward the top.

How do you find these keywords?

You can use our free tool: [**Google Rankings Checker.**](#)

First enter your URL and click search. After it gathers the data it will display a list of keywords that your website is ranking for.

Because most clicks go to the top three positions, look for the keywords ranking in the 4-30 slots and focus on boosting those up.

The screenshot shows the THEHOTH Google Rankings Checker tool. At the top, there's a red cartoon character logo and the text "THEHOTH". Below that, the title "Free Google Search Engine Rankings Checker Tool: Find Your Top Traffic Driving Keywords" is displayed. A subtext explains: "Our Free Search Engine Ranking Tool gives you valuable information about what terms your site already ranks for. Enter your domain below to identify high volume keywords that you can easily boost to page one!" There's a link "Want to get DAILY rank tracking updates? Click here!" followed by a search bar containing "http://www.stpetecountryclub.com" and a red "START" button. Below the search bar, the URL "stpetecountryclub.com" is shown next to a small Google icon. A line graph tracks search volume over time, showing a steady upward trend. Underneath the graph, a table lists "Top traffic-driving keywords" with columns for #, Keyword, Rank, Volume, Traffic %, # of Results, Search Trend, and Actions. The table includes rows for various keywords like "st petersburg country club", "st pete country club", and "saint petersburg country club".

You can look at your pages and make sure that they are properly optimized. If not, you could add the keyword to the page in the title or H1. Additionally you could build some internal links to the page with that keyword or some external links!

2. Uncover Your Competitor's Keywords

The task of brainstorming for new keywords can be daunting. Especially in small niche industries, how many keywords are actually relevant to your company?

The good thing is you can just uncover what your competitors are ranking for!

First, go to our free tool [Google Rankings Checker](#) and type in your competitor's URL. They can be direct competitors (where they sell the same thing you do) or indirect competitors (meaning they just market to the same people you do).

Examine the list of keywords and take note of the phrases that you aren't targeting. Start

3. Find Related Keywords

When you're going to create a new piece of content, it's a good idea to understand the topic at hand to maximize the amount of traffic you can get from the long tail.

You know your main keyword for the article, but what other facets of the subject should you be including to help rank for additional long-tail phrases?

Here's how to find those long tails:

First, go to our [Google Keyword Planner Alternative](#) and put in a seed keyword.

The HOTH Google Keyword Planner Alternative

The HOTH Google Keyword Planner Tool helps find high volume terms that relate to your primary keyword.

Enter a keyword or keyword phrase below to get started.

START

Keyword Research Tool | golf courses st. petersburg

All Phrase Match Keywords

#	Keyword	Volume	CPC (USD)	Comp	Results	Search Trend	Add Links
1	golf courses in st petersburg t...	860	0.89	0.12	674000		Add Links
2	mangrove bay golf course st pet...	170	0.00	0.14	83000		Add Links
3	st petersburg golf courses	140	1.27	0.38	559000		Add Links
4	clene acres golf course petersbu...	90	0.00	0.00	1000		Add Links
5	best golf courses in st petersb...	90	0.00	0.07	540000		Add Links
6	mangrove golf course st peterb...	90	0.00	0.10	36000		Add Links
7	public golf courses in st peter...	70	0.00	0.21	1290000		Add Links
8	golf course st petersburg fl a...	70	2.89	0.33	568000		Add Links
9	golf courses st petersburg fl	70	1.99	0.28	644000		Add Links
10	st petersburg golf courses publ...	50	0.00	0.12	1010000		Add Links
11	golf courses in st petersburg t...	50	0.86	0.31	689000		Add Links

Our tool will spit out a list of awesome long-tail keywords you can use throughout your article to rank for more phrases! Make sure to include these variations while writing your content.

Remember that you don't have to create a new article for every new keyword you come up with. You can also go back and add these new keywords to your already existing webpages.

Conclusion

Keyword research doesn't have to be a guessing game. You can drastically and quickly improve your traffic by using these three easy methods!

CHAPTER 4

10+ TOOLS YOU CAN USE FOR SEO COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS



WRITTEN BY
ALEXANDRA TACHALOVA

Do you know what your SEO competitors are doing, how they rank in Google, and how much traffic they get?

Knowing this information can be the difference between future SEO success or failure.

That's why a competitive analysis is an essential step when developing your SEO strategy.

This chapter will explore some SEO competitive analysis tools that can help you answer all (or most) of your questions and provide you with the most accurate data about your client's current competitive landscape.

SERP Analysis

This section will cover tools that can show you what's going on in Google SERPs for any domain you want to analyze.

Please note that there may be some data discrepancies.

The tools listed below work by scraping Google search results and the dataset accuracy mostly depends on the number of keywords that each of these tools has in its database.

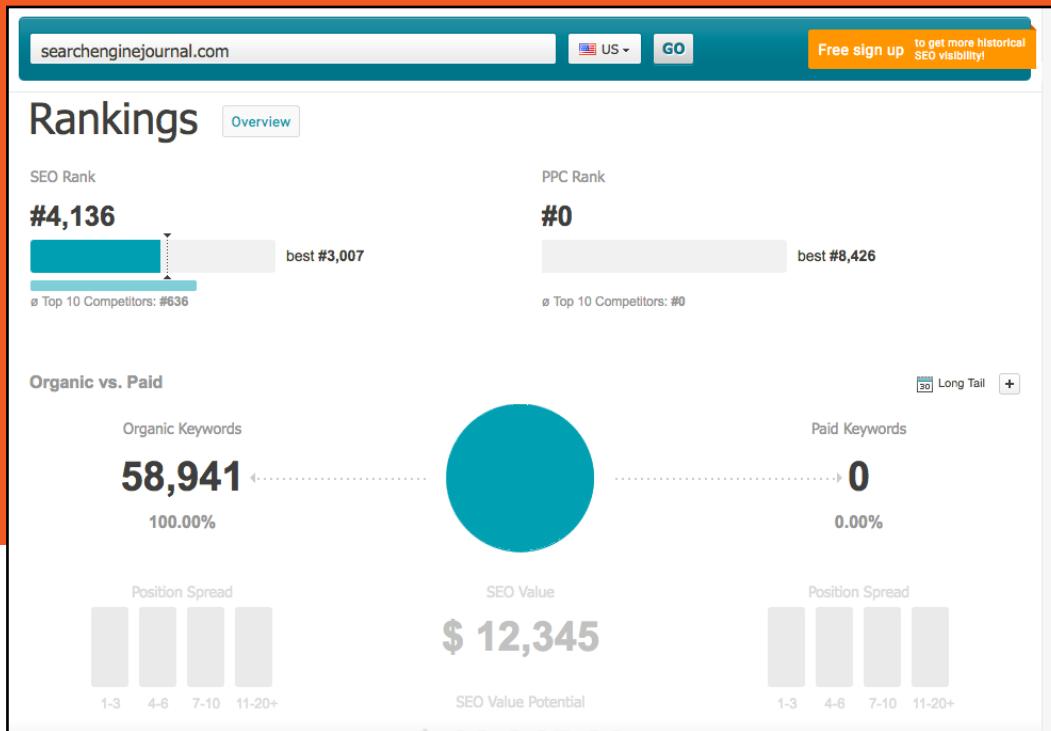
The reason why the number of keywords matters so much is pretty simple. The more keywords a software has, the better it can show your competitor's current ranking positions and their estimated traffic.

Also, we can't ignore the logic behind peeking under a competitor's hood.

The process is based on matching the keywords for which several domains are ranking: if datasets overlap, chances are these sites are competitors.

However, when we try to analyze relatively small sites (i.e., that have less than 1,000 keywords), we come across an issue.

For instance, some of these tools can show that a domain's competitors are YouTube or Wikipedia even though the real competitors are lurking.



1. Searchmetrics

This tool was founded in 2005 by Marcus Tober and was primarily focused on competitive analysis. After a couple of years, Searchmetrics began shifting its focus more toward the enterprise market.

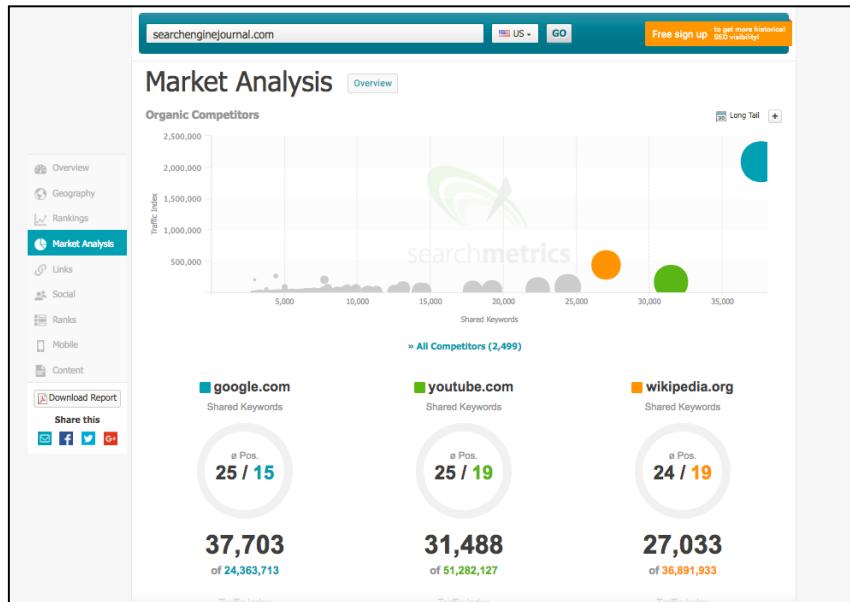
As content marketing influence kept growing, Searchmetrics concentrated on content marketing performance rather than SEO.

However, the Searchmetrics Suite will still tell you about a site's position in search, how well a certain domain is ranking in Google, and for what kind of keywords it is ranking for.

As I mentioned earlier, some tools can incorrectly identify your competitors.

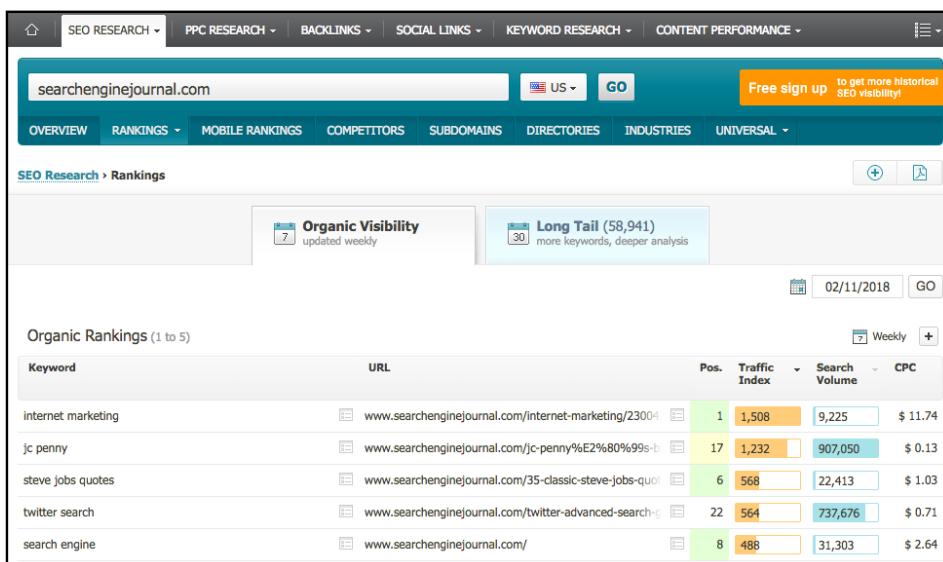
Searchmetrics, in particular, has an algorithm that is based on matching sets of keywords without considering any additional metrics.

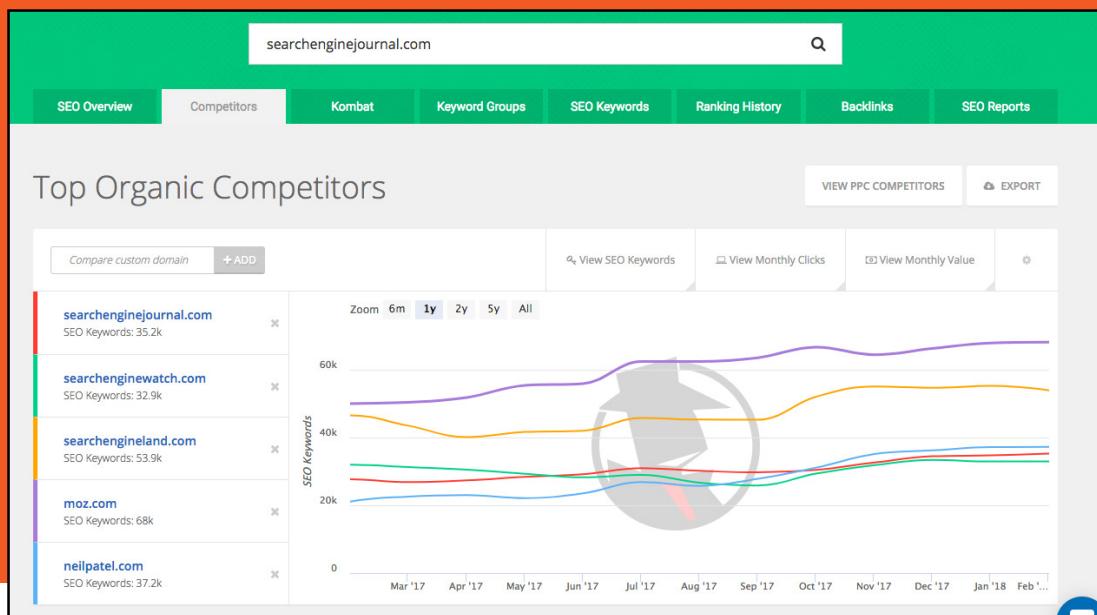
On the screenshot below you can see that Searchmetrics shows that the competitive landscape of Search Engine Journal consists of Google, YouTube, and Wikipedia:



However, let's not jump to conclusions here.

If we let this minor flaw slide, I can say that Searchmetrics has a nice array of handy organic rankings reports that automatically filters out long-tail keywords by displaying them in a separate tab:





2. SpyFu

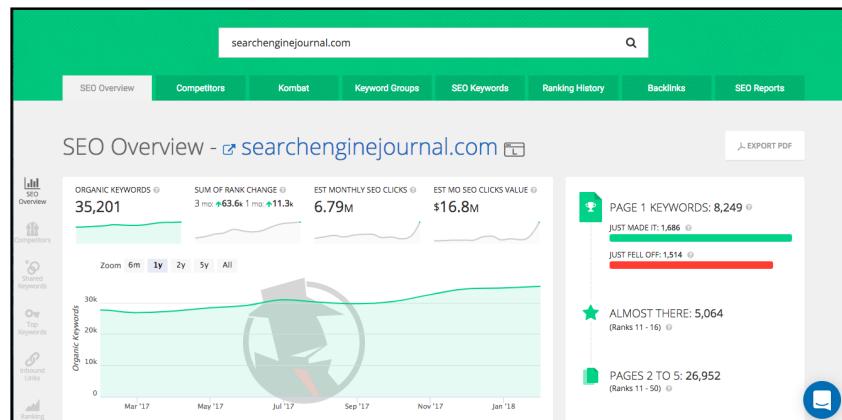
Just like Searchmetrics, SpyFu has been around for a while and specializes in providing SEO competitive landscape data.

If you're trying to identify your most aggressive competitors, SpyFu can also give you a list of competitor names for the domain you're analyzing.

Here's a screenshot that shows rivals of the same domain I analyzed using Searchmetrics. Obviously, SpyFu is much more accurate.

The SEO Overview dashboard is another great feature.

It gives you a comprehensive overview of a domain's performance such as the distribution of its position on the first page of search results and some other details.



The screenshot shows the 'Organic Listings' section of the tool. It displays a table with columns: Keyword, Position, Trend, Search Vol, and CPC. The data includes:

Keyword	Position	Trend	Search Vol	CPC
seo-news	2		1,300	\$7
search engine marketing news	2 (+1 ↑)		40	\$0.05
seo news	2.5 (-1 ↓)		1,300	\$7
search engine optimization news	3		30	\$0.05
search engine news	4 (-1 ↓)		320	\$1

TOP ORGANIC KEYWORDS IN GOOGLE

Organic Listings

76 5.2 (+0.2 ↑) 115,690 \$12,968

[VIEW MORE](#)

3. iSpionage

It seems like most tools visualize their data alike.

However, iSpionage supports more search engines including Bing and Yahoo, and covers Google databases like Australia and Canada.

Unlike SpyFu, the list of top organic competitors in iSpionage doesn't look so well organized.

However, it's one step ahead of Searchmetrics by displaying fine-tuned results:

The screenshot shows the 'Top 10 Organic Competitors' section. It displays a bar chart comparing SEO Traffic Value for various websites. The data is as follows:

Website	SEO Traffic Value	Overlap Keywords	Keyword Count
moz.com	\$58,041	1,270	9,341
wordstream.com	\$211,514	1,103	15,292
google.com	\$2,428,715	1,024	470,048
searchinginland.com	\$100,597	984	7,335
searchenginewatch.com	\$56,613	832	5,025
wikipedia.org	\$18,834,695	829	1,983,456
en.wikipedia.org	\$18,803,688	826	1,965,273
entrepreneur.com	\$279,000	675	78,880
hubspot.com	\$133,818	568	26,452
support.google.com	\$94,410	555	30,409

Top 10 Organic Competitors

The screenshot shows the G2 Crowd Grid for SEO. At the top, there's a search bar and tabs for ALL, SMALL BUSINESS, MID-MARKET, and ENTERPRISE. The grid itself has four quadrants: Contenders (top-left), Leaders (top-right), Niche (bottom-left), and High Performers (bottom-right). SEMrush is positioned in the Leaders quadrant, which is further divided into Market Presence (vertical axis) and Satisfaction (horizontal axis). Other tools like Moz, ClickX, and Netnigate are also visible in the grid.

Best SEO Software

Search engine optimization (SEO), or organic search marketing, refers to software designed to improve the ranking of websites in search engine results pages (SERP) without paying for placement. These products provide SEO insights to companies through features, such as keyword analysis, backlink tracking, and trend analysis, to identify the best strategies to improve a website's search relevance. Many tools also offer competitor data and broad industry analysis. SEO tools are often used by product and marketing teams, as well as SEO specialists, to identify areas for improvement on their web properties that could help produce higher rankings in search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and Bing.

Some SEO softwares offer search advertising, or paid search, optimization tools as well. Search advertising tools analyze pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, conversion metrics, and ad placement. To learn more about search advertising products, please visit our [Search Advertising](#) category.

To qualify for inclusion in the SEO category, a product must:

- Analyze a website's content and provide data and suggestions for improvements within search engine results pages
- Provide historical reports on optimization-related metrics

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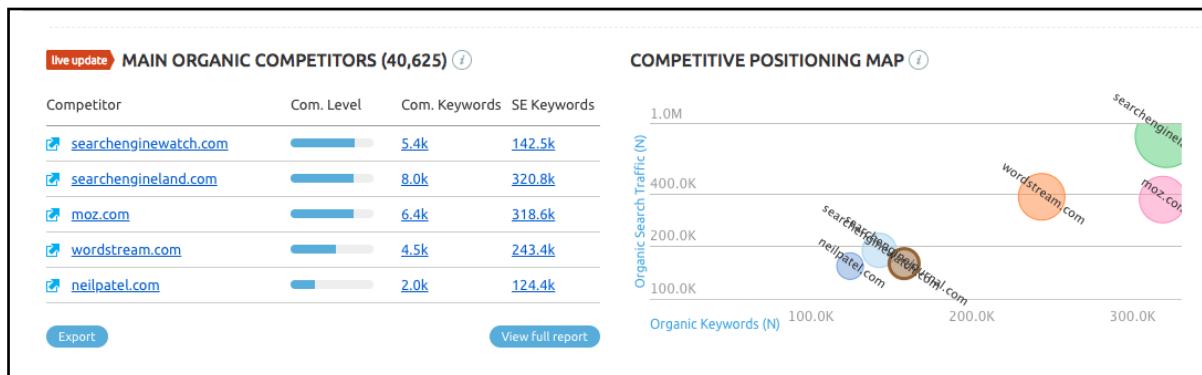
<https://www.g2crowd.com/categories/seo?segment=small-business>

4. SEMrush

If you go to G2Crowd, you'll find that SEMrush is the leading SEO software for small and mid-sized businesses.

SEMrush supports an extensive database of 131 countries (e.g., Google databases).

I ran the same analysis to identify organic competitors for Search Engine Journal, and the results are quite impressive:

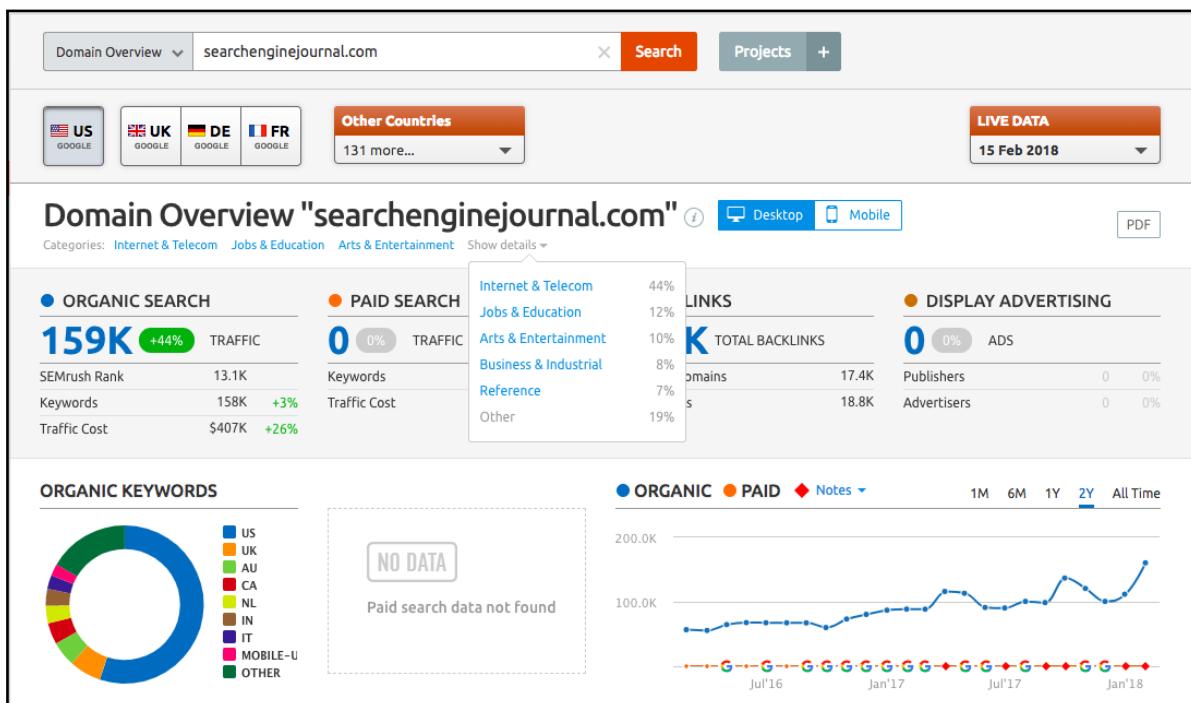


Another cool feature is that SEMrush's dashboard displays proportion of branded to non-branded traffic, the number of search queries, and the amount of traffic branded search brings along with how its been trending over time:



SEMrush also shows you what category (or categories) does a domain belong to based on the keywords for which it ranks in Google.

Knowing this will help you locate successful keywords your competitors are using to rank well in Google, and whether those keywords are relevant to your niche.



Unique searches	Common	Competing domain
90,089	97,897	quora.com ▾
115,266	72,720	forbes.com ▾
120,030	67,956	searchengineland.com ▾
121,788	66,198	support.google.com ▾
124,759	63,227	techcrunch.com ▾
124,859	63,127	moz.com ▾
126,416	61,570	apple.com ▾
128,691	59,295	cnet.com ▾
128,957	59,029	hubspot.com ▾
129,918	58,068	lifewire.com ▾

5. Ahrefs

Ahrefs is well-known for its outstanding quality of backlink data and being among the best link tools on the market.

Not so long ago Ahrefs has implemented a set of reports for competitor analysis that shows you a list of competitors based on the number of related keywords.

Speaking of data accuracy, Ahrefs won't detect your competitors with precision because Ahrefs doesn't count in such metrics as the size of a domain or the type of industry a domain belongs to.

To organize their data and put things in order, Ahrefs has excluded big domains like Quora, Google, and Apple from their results. This will really improve the overview of the landscape they're building.

If you feel like there is some inconsistency with your keyword strategy, use Content Gap report. This report allows you to spot the keywords your rivals are visible for but your domain isn't:

The screenshot shows the 'Content Gap' report interface from Moz. On the left, there's a sidebar with various SEO metrics like Backlink profile, Referring domains, Anchors, and Organic search. The main content area is titled 'Content Gap' and includes sections for 'Show keywords that any of the below targets rank for' (with dropdowns for 'searchenginejournal.com' and 'moz.com') and 'But the following target doesn't rank for' (with a dropdown for 'searchenginejournal.com'). Below these are filters for 'Volume', 'KD', 'CPC', and 'Number of words'. A table then lists keywords with columns for Keyword, Volume, KD, CPC, and Highest position. The table shows data for 'searchenginejournal.com' and 'moz.com' across four keywords: 'seo', '8675309', 'keywords', and 'backlink checker'. The 'highest position' column indicates the current ranking for each keyword.

Keyword	Volume	KD	CPC	Highest position
searchenginejournal.com				
seo	214,000	85	11.00	—
8675309	55,000	33	0.06	—
keywords	18,000	78	—	—
backlink checker	15,000	84	7.00	—
moz.com				
seo	214,000	85	11.00	3
8675309	55,000	33	0.06	7
keywords	18,000	78	—	3
backlink checker	15,000	84	7.00	3

This gives you an opportunity to seize the moment and improve your rankings. Taking advantage of this information can help you move forward with your SEO strategy.

Note: Be sure to read Kevin Rowe's chapter, 12 Great Link Building Tools That Are Essential to Your Success, to learn how you can take advantage of analyzing your competitors' backlink profiles.

#	Domain	All Keywords	Common keywords	Relevance	Visibility
1	searchenginejournal.com	488	—	—	↓ 0.00 0.02
2	searchengineland.com	689	127	18.43	0.02
3	searchenginewatch.com	396	92	23.23	0.11
4	seroundtable.com	505	77	15.25	↓ 0.00 0.02
5	seobook.com	180	46	25.56	0.00
6	wordstream.com	701	75	10.70	↓ 0.00 0.02
7	advertisercommunity.com	4 037	43	1.07	↓ 0.02 0.79
8	devaka.ru	5 398	53	0.98	↓ 0.15 2.55
9	searchengines.ru	11 085	81	0.73	↓ 0.03 2.90
10	quora.com	58 888	153	0.26	↓ 0.06 1.18
11	google.ru	64 238	84	0.13	355.91
12	mozilla.org	62 446	63	0.10	↑ 0.06 51.16
13	searchengines.guru	55 066	45	0.08	↑ 0.06 5.05
14	stackoverflow.com	161 994	114	0.07	↓ 0.02 7.70
15	stackexchange.com	124 443	71	0.06	↓ 0.28 0.00

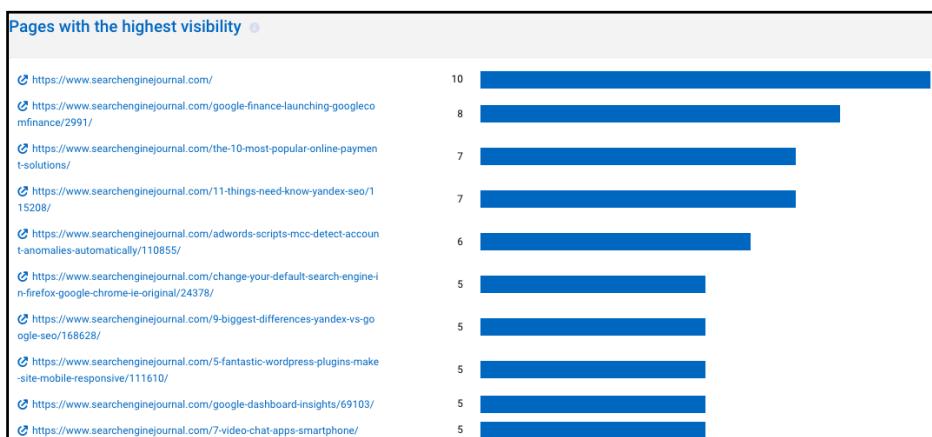
6. SERPstat

SERPstat is new to the market and seems to mirror features other SEO software tools have.

The quality of its data is comparable to SEMrush and SpyFu.

The main dashboard gives you an overview of the most visible pages, which is extremely useful.

It will save your time and help you avoid the endless process of exporting organic rankings data and building pivot tables in Excel:





7. BrightEdge

BrightEdge is an enterprise-level platform that offers many great features for keeping an eye on competitors.

For instance, BrightEdge's SEO X-Ray technology consolidates myriads of keywords in a "Reverse Index" of the web. It reveals which keywords are moving your competitors on top of SERPs – and that you should be taking advantage of as well.

SEO X-Ray follows the trail of your organic search history and identifies previously unknown competitors so that you can stay alert.

It also lets you analyze your competitors' SEO campaigns in great detail, along with their recent link strategies, or find which of their single pages drive the most organic traffic.

The screenshot shows the Audience Intent Explorer interface. At the top, there are tabs: Analyze Content, Measure Visibility, Investigate Competition, Research & Optimize, Manage Strategy, Report & Share, and a user profile icon. Below the tabs, a search bar contains the query "fitness buddy". A green button labeled "VIEW TOPIC SUGGESTIONS" is visible. The main area is titled "TOPIC SUGGESTION" and displays a table with columns: KEYWORD, CUSTOMER JOURNEY STAGE, AUDIENCE DEMAND (MONTHLY SEARCH VOLUME), and OPPORTUNITY (COMPETITION). Two rows are shown:

KEYWORD	CUSTOMER JOURNEY STAGE	AUDIENCE DEMAND (MONTHLY SEARCH VOLUME)	OPPORTUNITY (COMPETITION)
gym workout	Late	1,900	LOW
workout buddy	Late	1,000	LOW

On the left side of the table, there is a sidebar with a tree view of topic suggestions under categories like "Fitness", "iPhone", and "best".

8. Conductor

Conductor is another enterprise-level tool you can look into if you need more options.

Their source of keyword data comes from SEMrush.

Conductor allows you to view the market share that belongs to a certain brand you're analyzing by pointing out both its current situation, and estimates its future potential growth.

This kind of data can help your clients comprehend their future SEO prospects, and gives reasons why hiring an agency is their best bet.

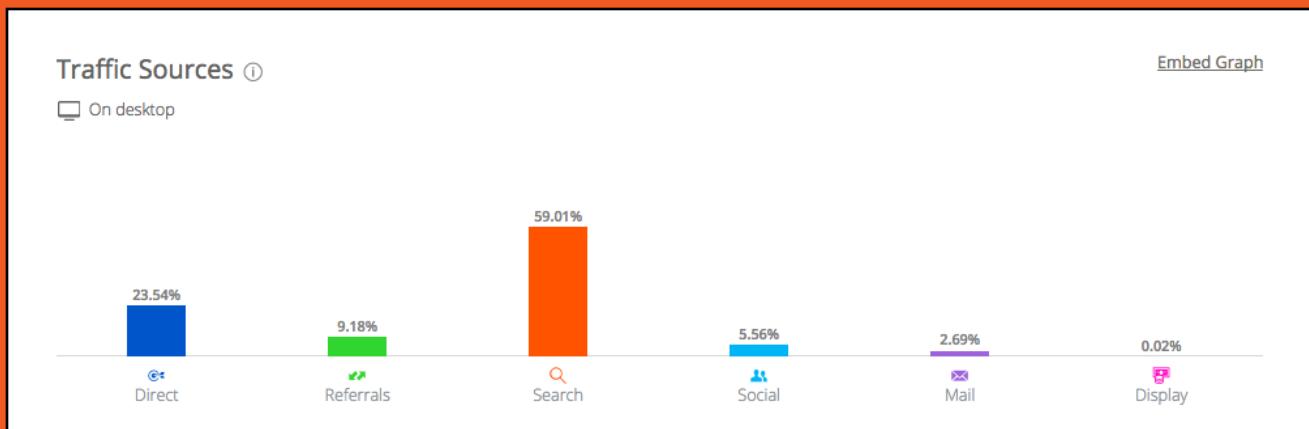
Traffic Analytics

Analyzing the SERPs helps you to understand your competitive landscape and gives you a list of pages that are ranking well in search engines.

But the fact that some sites may be showing up on the first page of search results doesn't necessarily mean they're getting a lot of traffic.

What's more important is getting access to real user behavior that can reveal hidden SEO opportunities.

That's why you can't survive without tools that can give you traffic analytics insights.



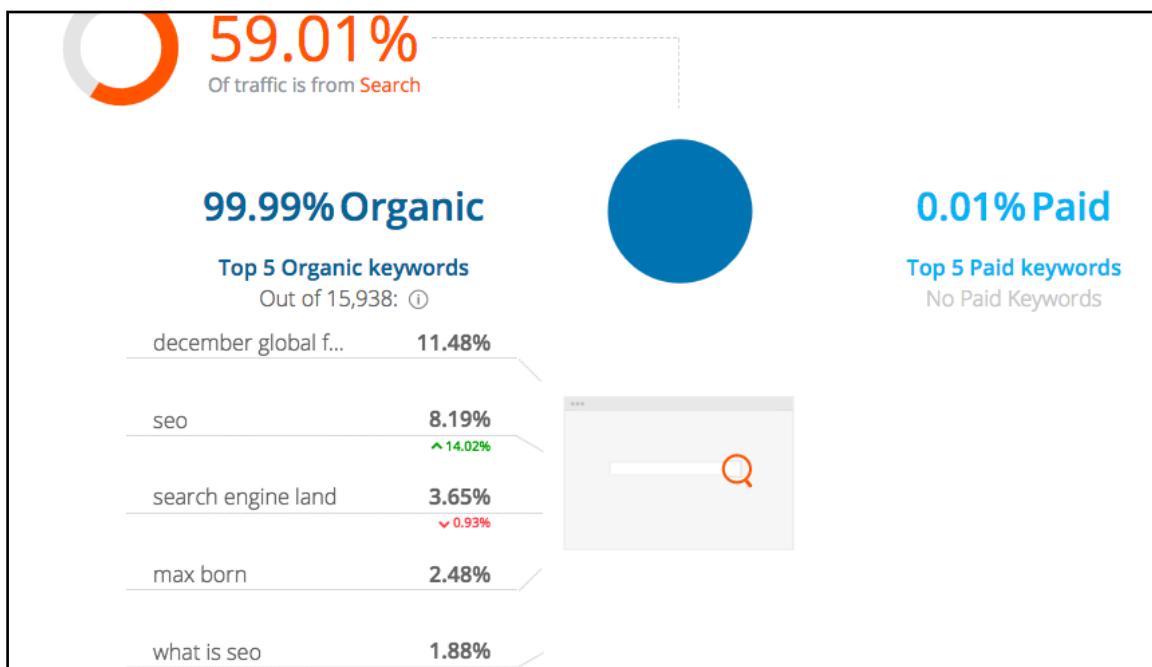
9. SimilarWeb

SimilarWeb helps you learn exactly how a site attracts traffic.

This tool shows you traffic distribution across all channels (Search, Social, Direct, etc.) and also displays the percentage of search traffic that comes from various search engines.

The option of looking up the keywords that bring the most visitors from search engine results is at your disposal.

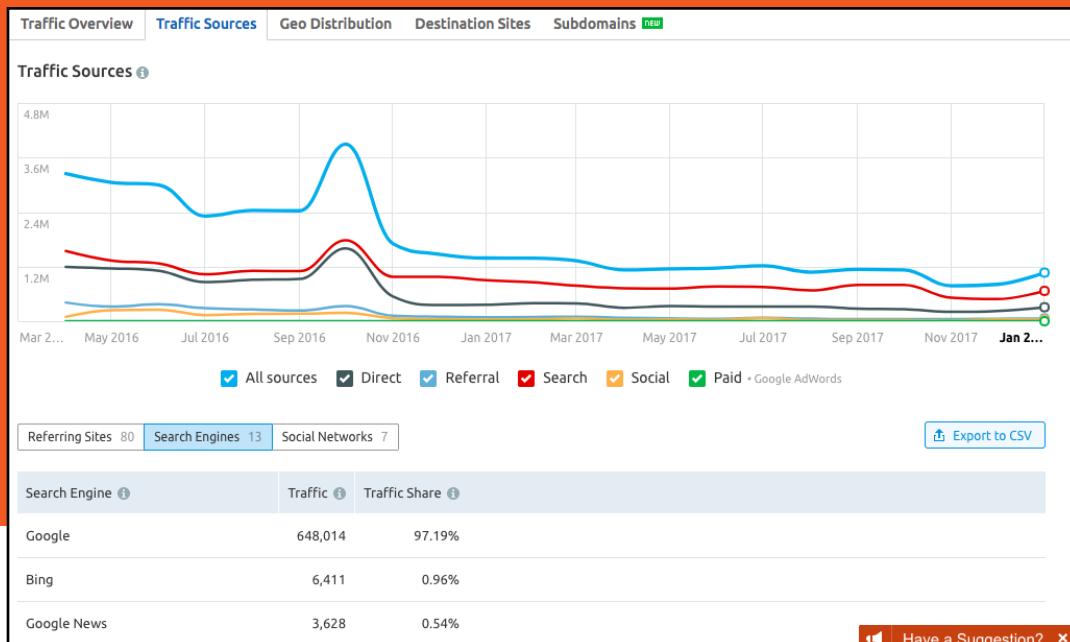
With the help of this data, you can tell for certain which keywords should be your priority because they have the potential to bring more traffic to your client's site.



SimilarWeb also shows you the list of competitors based on what kind of sites are ranking in search engines for the same set of keywords:

The figure displays a list of competitors and similar sites for [searchenginejournal.com](#) as of January 2018. The top navigation bar includes the site logo, URL, a compare button, a date indicator (Jan 2018), and a download button. Below this, the title "Competitors & Similar Sites" is followed by a "Rank" tab. The list is organized into two rows of four sites each, showing their URLs and small screenshots.

Rank	Site
1	forbes.com
2	unc.edu
3	moz.com
4	wordstream.com
5	searchengineland....
6	searchenginewatch...
7	copyblogger.com
8	seobook.com
9	seroundtable.com
10	seochat.com

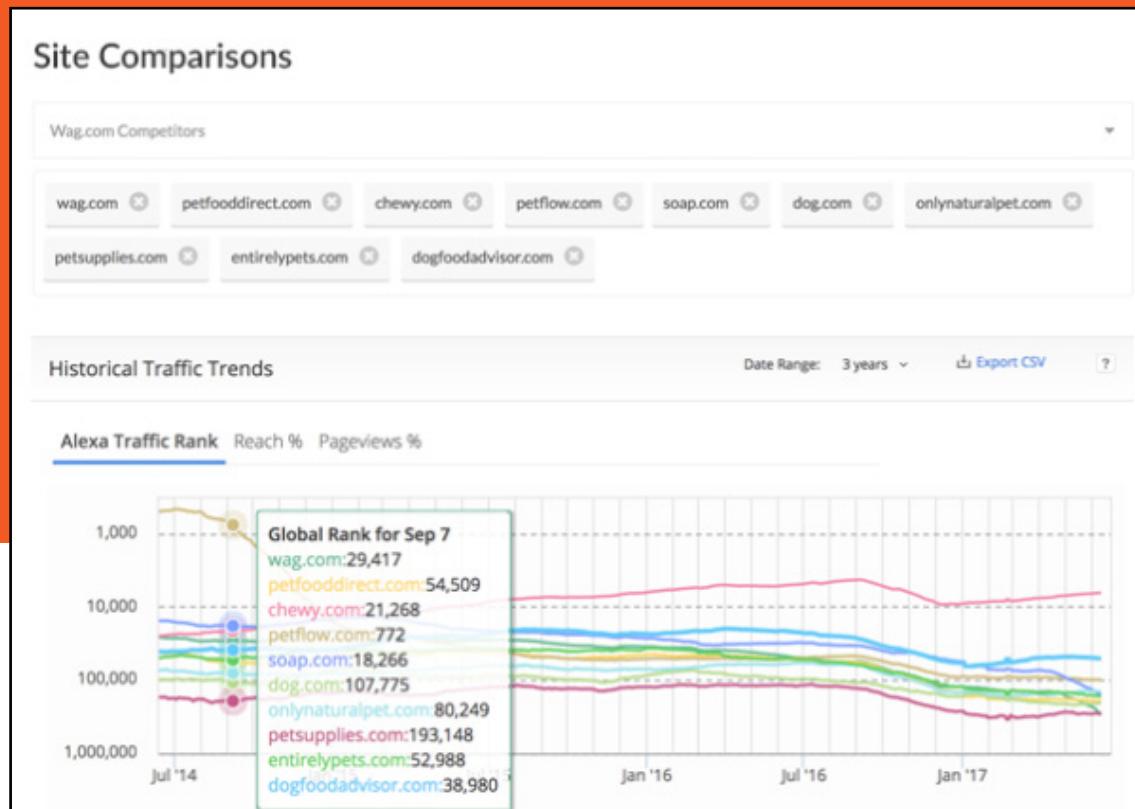


10. SEMrush Traffic Analytics

SEMrush has some traffic analytics data, but there's still some work that needs to be done to improve its functionality.

SEMrush offers information about traffic distribution across various search engines but unfortunately provides no keyword data.

Currently, SEMrush Traffic Analytics doesn't have any data for mobile devices, so for some industries where the volume of online traffic is always high, this data may not be so valuable.



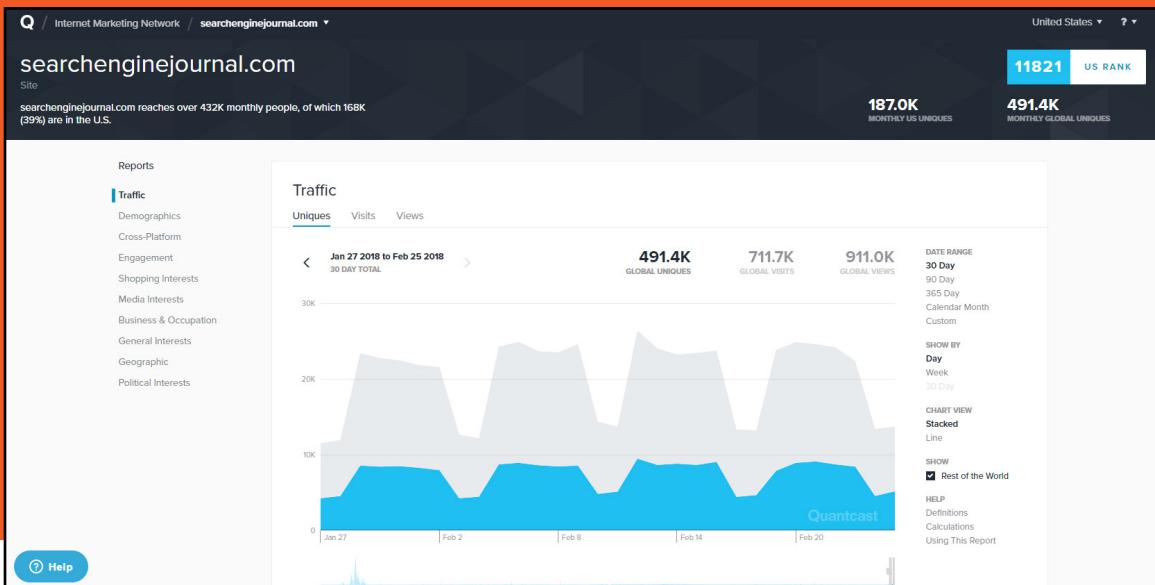
11. Alexa

Historically, the biggest complaint against Amazon-owned Alexa has been its inaccurate data.

Originally, Alexa's traffic data was gathered from users of the Alexa toolbar.

That all changed in 2008 when Alexa updated its ranking systems to include more sources. However, it's really hard to say how much the data has changed, for the better or worse, since that time.

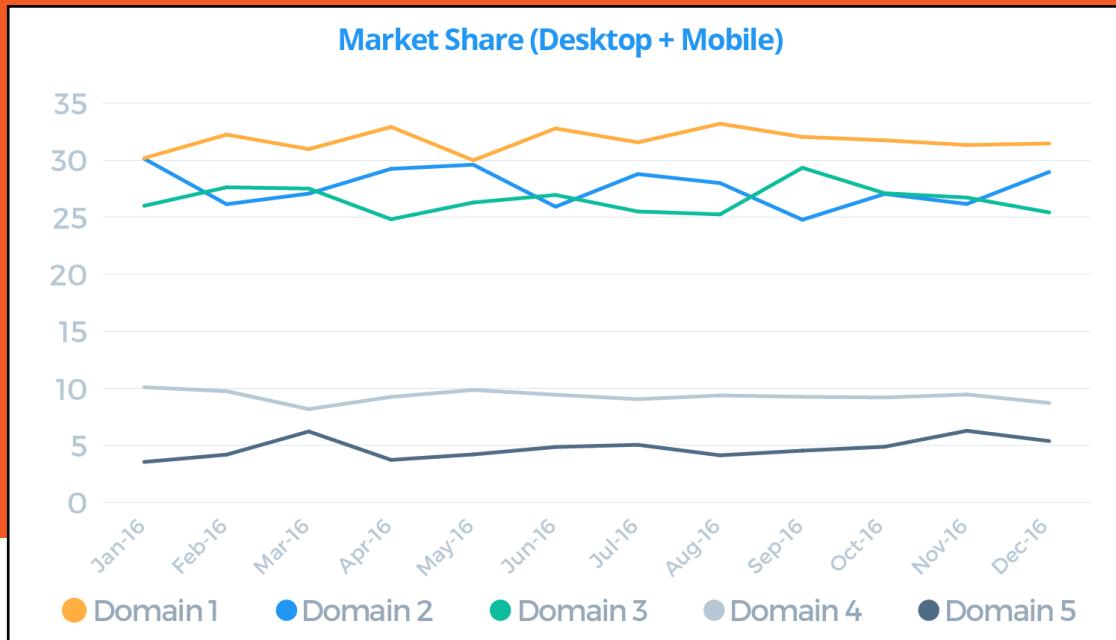
Regardless, Alexa is still a popular service that boasts a lot of (paid) competitive analysis reports that can give you a good representation of demographics and traffic data.



12. Quantcast

Quantcast used to have a product comparable with SimilarWeb, but about a year ago they've decided to get rid of their standard solution and switched to custom-made reports that represent unique datasets based on clients' needs.

This tool can be a good fit for enterprise-level clients who want to see custom-based datasets to further interpret what's going on in the industry.



13. Jumpshot

Jumpshot is a promising and overall consistent tool that launched only a couple of years ago.

Its data comes from Avast – and the data quality is high.

Jumpshot can also shed some light on such intricate data like CTR of a specific button located on your rivals landing page. Not bad for competitive intelligence.

Conclusion

Hopefully, this chapter will help you make an informed decision as you're selecting your competitive analysis tool.

There are many great tools available – but ultimately it's about choosing the tool that is right for you.

CHAPTER 5

YOUR GUIDE TO SELECTING SEO RANK TRACKING TOOLS



WRITTEN BY
BENJ ARRIOLA

In the early years of SEO, ranking was the primary measure of success.

SEO professionals focused on ranking #1 for their desired golden keyword and relied heavily on rank tracking tools to monitor their improvement over time.

Over the years, SEO pros quickly learned that ranking alone is a poor indication of success.

Ranking #1 for a keyword means little when that keyword brings little relevant traffic or few conversions.

This realization prompted SEO pros to combine rank tracking with other metrics, such as organic search traffic and conversions.

Should We Track Ranking?

As Google improved over the years, tracking keyword rank has become more difficult on the most widely used search engine.

Among the problems with rank tracking:

Google Doesn't Like Keyword Tracking Tools

Google has to spend money to keep the search engine alive. Its primary source of revenue comes from ads and sponsored results.

Rank tracking tools visit search engines and use the server resources; however, they do not contribute to Google's revenue flow because they don't click on the ads.

Google has also created Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) that allow developers to obtain keyword ranking data without Google's user interface.

APIs provide the rank tracking data developers need for free.

The only catch is that Google limits the number of API requests per day.

As a workaround, most rank tracking tools scrape the ranking results directly from Google's result pages.

When Google detects this, it will display a CAPTCHA form to verify that the query was made by a human.

Since there are also tools to work around the CAPTCHA form, Google will temporarily block the IP address if there are rapid, successive queries from the same IP address.

If the pattern of scraping continues for a significant amount of time, Google will ban the IP address from visiting Google.

When looking for rank tracking tools, this is one of the main features you need to consider, especially if you plan to track a large number of keywords.

Google Displays Different Results in Different Locations

Keywords will rank differently when the search is done in different geographical locations, especially if the keyword is about a local company, organization, or person.

Keywords like “car mechanic,” “dentist,” and “plumber” often have a local intent and you can expect these results to be different depending on where they are searched from.

When looking for rank tracking tools, also consider if they are capable of tracking results from different regions especially the ones associated with your target market.

Google Delivers Personalization to Results

Google tracks the types of results you tend to click on and the results you hit the back button on.

Google can do this whether you are logged into a Google account or not; however, it can be more difficult when you are logged out.

To disregard personalization, several techniques are used such as:

- Logging out of a Google Account.
- Using Private Browsing or Incognito Mode on your web browser.
- Adding the URL parameter &pws=0, which tells Google to disable personalized web search results.

Ranking as a KPI

If keyword ranking seems to be inconsistent, should we even report on it as a key performance indicator (KPI)?

You can show an SEO client #1 rankings for keywords, but when they search that keyword in their location or on their personal browser, it may be a different ranking position.

The main factor to pay attention to is not the rank itself, but the trends.

Rank shifts are important to make note of regardless of the ranking position.

Even when the ranking is different in other regions or on people's personal browsers, the trends of movement will often remain consistent.

Types of Rank Tracking Tools

Keyword ranking tools come in different forms and can be classified based on installation type.

The three main types are:

1. Web Browser Plugins
2. Desktop Applications
3. Web-Based SaaS Applications

This chapter will discuss each type, along with their unique advantages and disadvantages.

1. Web Browser Plugins

Browser plugins are add-ons that extend the capabilities of your web browser. SEOBook's Firefox Rank Checker Extension is the only one of its kind.

Advantage

Using a plugin is helpful because it can mask the scraping tool as a web browser.

Because Google doesn't like rank tracking tools, if it tries to detect the user-agent, which is like the identification card of a web browser, it will appear as Firefox instead of a scraping script because the tool runs within Firefox.

It runs instantaneously, thus if you need to find the ranking quickly, you can use this plugin and get the ranking numbers right away.

Disadvantage

Even when a Firefox plugin has the user-agent of a normal web browser, the speed and behavior of the queries done from the same IP address will appear unnatural.

Getting blocked from search engines is common when using this plugin if you run a large number of keywords.

Browser plugin ranking tools are ideal for small sets of keywords, typically 100 or less, when you want the results immediately.

2. Desktop Applications

Desktop applications are programs you install on your own computer.

As a standalone program, they do not require the web browser.

They are capable of running larger lists of keywords without getting blocked by Google.

Desktop applications accomplish this in two ways:

- **Emulating human behavior** by adding time and pauses between queries, copying a web browser user-agent, downloading all page assets (e.g., images), and not just the ranking results.
- **Using a rotating list of IP addresses** that you supply. This allows the tool to make it appear as if the queries are coming from different computers worldwide.

Examples of tools like this:

- WebCEO
- SEO Smart Suite
- Internet Business Promoter
- Advanced Web Ranking

Many of these tools are not only for rank tracking and can be used for a number of purposes like backlink analysis or keyword research.

Advantage

Can run a larger amount of keywords compared to the browser plugin tool without getting blocked by Google.

Disadvantage

Even with human emulation and using a number of proxy IP addresses, if you are using this within a digital marketing agency that has multiple SEO clients, it will be difficult to handle them all. You can't speed up the process because that will counteract the human emulation.

You can attempt to increase the number of IP addresses, but this greatly increases the cost if you are getting new IP addresses just for the sole purpose of rank tracking.

Desktop application rank tracking tools are ideal to use for small boutique SEO businesses, or for conducting SEO on your non-SEO business.

This works when you don't have a large amount of keywords to track, and it will keep the cost down.

3. Web-Based SaaS Solutions

Web-based software as a service (SaaS) solutions do not run on your local computers. Instead, they run on a subscription-based server.

This eliminates the challenge of maintaining multiple IP addresses.

These solutions don't run on your computer, so you don't need to worry about leaving them running overnight.

This really is a better solution, which is why many of the desktop applications mentioned above also have web-based versions of their products.

Some of these web-based services focus primarily on ranking, while others have multiple capabilities.

Primarily rank tracking tools:

- Authority Labs
- AWRCLOUD
- Stat

Multipurpose SEO tools that include rank tracking:

- Dragon Metrics
- Linkdex
- BrightEdge
- Searchmetrics
- Conductor
- seoClarity
- Moz



Advantage

Web-based solutions are more stable, require less maintenance, and manage IP rotation for you.

Many of the web-based tools have the capability to track local results within a city, as well as international results for different countries, which allows you to track ranking for your target market.

Disadvantage

Web-based solutions tend to cost more than the desktop application rank trackers, and since they run on a server, most rank tracking is queued and scheduled, so you will not get immediate results.

It's best to use these SaaS solutions when you are a large digital marketing agency or a large SEO company.

The other options may not be able to handle the large volume of keyword tracking that is needed when dealing with multiple clients.

Tracking Number of Indexed Pages

Aside from tracking the ranking of keywords in search engines, you can also track the amount of pages indexed by search engines.

There are three ways to determine this in Google:

- Using the Site: operator to view the number of results that appear for a specific domain.
- Using Google Search Console's (GSC) report on the number of indexed pages.
- Using GSC's status of indexed pages within your submitted XML sitemap.

All three will often give different results.

Usually the GSC indexed pages will give the largest number of pages, but may include duplicate content pages.

GSC's status on the pages indexed within your XML sitemap is only helpful if your XML sitemap has a complete list of all the URLs on your site.

The site: operator will often have the fewest number of URLs because it removes pages with thin or duplicate content, low-quality pages, and spammy pages.

This information can be obtained from Google alone; however, there are many tools that will pull this information for you along with their rank tracking software.

Tracking Local Maps Ranking

In local SEO, you must optimize organic search results containing geographic information like a city, state or country.

You also must optimize the results in Google Maps and other online map websites where the ranking algorithm is different from the main organic search algorithm.

Since optimization here is targeted separately, it needs to be tracked separately using local map rank tracking tools.

One platform that does this is BrightLocal. It will track your businesses ranking within local maps results and you can set the location of where the search query runs.

Pricing Is Determined by the Number of Keywords

Every search query uses server resources on web-based rank tracking tools.

It takes a longer time to run and increases the risk of getting blocked by search engines.

When running desktop applications, you can add in as many keywords you like, but to avoid getting blocked by search engines, you either decrease the speed of the request or you can keep the speed high but increase the number of IP addresses you will use to run the queries.

Running the request more slowly will cost more as it will take longer to complete.

Using a higher number of IP addresses also incurs additional costs.

2 Tools That Have No Price on the Number of Keywords

Google Search Console

The Google Search Console is free.

Google doesn't charge by the keyword, but you aren't allowed to specifically assign keywords to track.

It will just show you the top 1,000 keywords that have high rankings, impressions, and clicks.

SEMrush

You can assign specific keywords to be tracked and priced accordingly.

If you don't assign keywords, it will scrape various phrases from the pages of your site and check the ranking of those phrases at a low frequency, about once a month or longer.

Both GSC and SEMrush may not choose the keywords you really want to track, and they won't give you the latest ranking numbers, but they can supply you with thousands to literally millions of keywords that your site ranks for.

Select the Best Rank Tracking Tool for You

This wasn't meant to be an exhaustive list of SEO rank tracking tools. These are just a few rank trackers that I (and many others in the SEO industry) consider essential.

I highly suggest you do your own research.

New keyword rank tracking tools are coming out all the time.

There will be rank tracking tools that only do rank tracking and there will be some that are more expensive that do a lot more – and possibly could replace some of your other SEO tools.

Some tools may have APIs where you can integrate the data with your custom-built tools.

Other tools may be focused only on the U.S. market, while others might be international or some other specific country where rank tracking should be done on other search engines (e.g., Baidu, Yandex, Naver, Seznam or others).

Consider all of this during your rank tracking tool selection process.

Find the rank tracking tool that best suits your specific needs.

CHAPTER 6

TOP 5 ESSENTIAL SEO REPORTING TOOLS FOR AGENCIES



WRITTEN BY
BROCK MURRAY

A quality SEO reporting tool is a necessary investment for any digital agency, large or small.

For one, clients are going to want to see evidence of progress. It's a whole lot easier to have an automated report with all important key performance indicators (KPIs) delivered on a scheduled basis, rather than manually assembling and cross-referencing data points at the last minute.

Additionally, good SEO reporting software will give you the information you need to flag action items, see the results of experiments, and ultimately run a successful SEO campaign.

There are hundreds of SEO reporting tools on the market, each with its own benefits and drawbacks.

Agency Analytics, SEMrush, Moz, Google Data Studio, Authority Labs, and SE Ranking are just a handful of the resources available to agencies.

Similar to the adage in real estate – pick any two of location, price, or size – as an agency you must weigh the balance of price, features, and ease of use.

For instance Google Data Studio is free and comes jam-packed with rare features like database integration, but there is a steep learning curve.

SEMrush is always adding new features and is relatively easy to use, but it will cost a pretty penny, especially for larger agencies.

What to Look for in SEO Reporting Tools

With so many SEO reporting tools out there, how can you be sure you're choosing the right software for your agency?

Here are 13 essential requirements of SEO reporting tools.

1

Accurate & Current Regional Data

SEO reporting is all about data, so it's important that the software have access to accurate and current data localized to your client's targeted region.

Search data from the U.S. is meaningless if your client is trying to rank for London plumbing services, so localization matters.

Data must be updated reliably so you can make informed decisions about where your client stands against the competition.

2

Integration with Third-Party Tools

Especially for full-scale digital marketing campaigns, the ability to report on all KPIs in one place is essential.

The more available integrations with third-party tools (e.g., Google Analytics, Google My Business, Majestic), the better.

Some tools even allow you to upload custom data sets.



3

Scalability

You don't want to have to retrain on or reinvest in new software every time your agency reaches a new tier.

The right SEO reporting tool should work just as well whether you have one client or 200.

4

Strong Suite of Features

A great SEO reporting tool should include:

- Position tracking.
- Backlink monitoring.
- Competitor data.
- Analytics.

It is a bonus if the tool has reporting features for social media, email marketing, call tracking, and/or paid ads to make it a full-suite digital marketing software.

5

Continually Improving & Updating Features

SEO is constantly evolving. So should SEO reporting tools.

As we continue the transition from website optimization to web presence optimization, the ability of reporting tools to integrate new features is essential.

6

Ability to Customize Reports

Each client will have different KPIs, objectives, and priorities.

Reflecting this in reporting is paramount to client retention.

Your reporting software of choice should be able to emphasize the right data at the right times.

7

Client Integration

A good SEO reporting tool must have the client in mind.

It should have a simple bird's eye overview of the basics, but also be easy for clients to dig into the data at a deeper level.

This can mean automated summary reports or 24/7 client access to the dashboard.

9

Access to Support Resources

When you encounter a roadblock, quality support resources can help you find a detour.

Whether it's detailed support documentation, a chat feature/support desk, or responsive customer support on social media, finding the help you need to solve the issue is important.

8

Ability to White Label Reports

While white-labeling is not essential (no client will sniff at receiving a report with a Google logo in the top corner), it helps keep branding consistent and gives a professional sheen to everything you send a client's way.

10

Cost-to-Value Ratio

With a proper process, time investment, and leveraging support resources, it is entirely possible to get better results out of a free reporting tool than one that breaks the bank.

No matter which direction though, you want to keep costs reasonable.

The last thing you want is a reporting software that causes hesitation in expanding your staff or client base due to the associated cost.

11

Ability to Export Reports

Even if clients are given unrestricted access to the dashboard, you want reporting that is even more accessible.

The ability to export all data via PDF, CSV, XLS, or e-mail is important.

12

Automation

With the ability to automatically send reports on a recurring basis, you can save time and money and dedicate those resources elsewhere.

13

Ease of Use

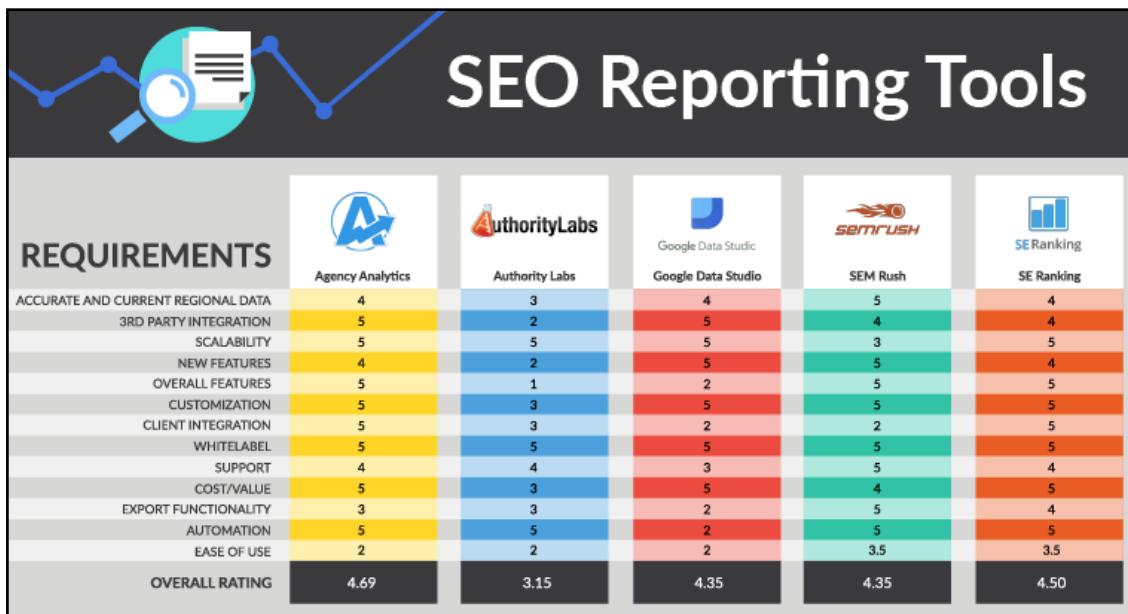
There is value in intermediate and advanced reporting tools that might take longer to learn but facilitate more complex analysis.

In general, however, the ability to quickly get new users up to speed is important, whether they are clients or staff.



Top SEO Reporting Tools

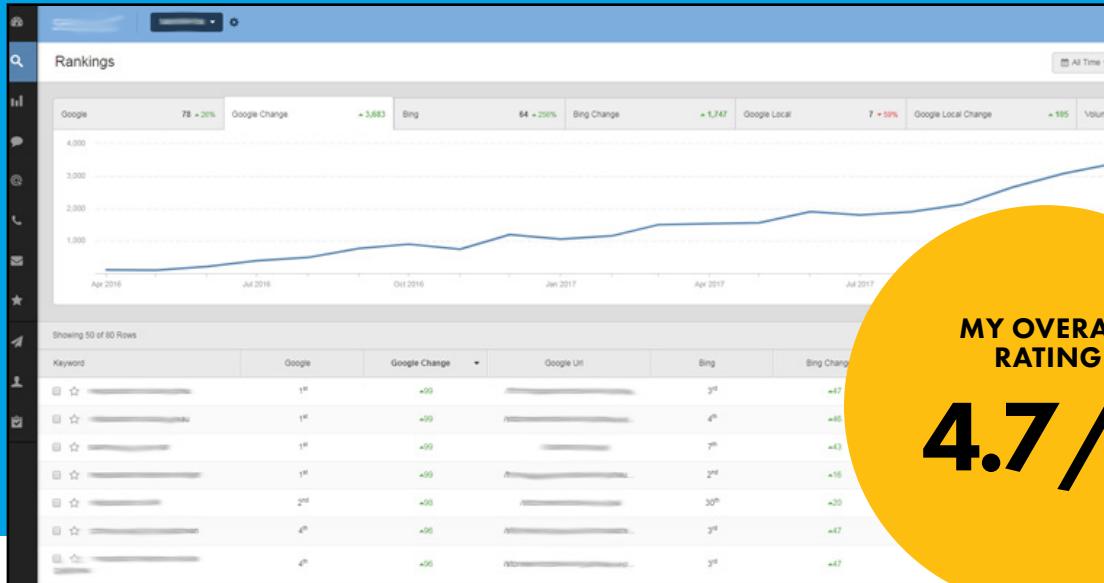
In evaluating five of the most popular SEO reporting tools based on the above criteria, here is how they stack up:



The chart is a heatmap comparing five SEO reporting tools (Agency Analytics, Authority Labs, Google Data Studio, SEM Rush, and SE Ranking) across various requirements. The requirements are listed in the first column, and each tool has a logo and name next to its row. The scores range from 2 to 5, with higher values indicating better performance. The overall rating is provided at the bottom of each column.

REQUIREMENTS	Agency Analytics	Authority Labs	Google Data Studio	SEM Rush	SE Ranking
ACCURATE AND CURRENT REGIONAL DATA	4	3	4	5	4
3RD PARTY INTEGRATION	5	2	5	4	4
SCALABILITY	5	5	5	3	5
NEW FEATURES	4	2	5	5	4
OVERALL FEATURES	5	1	2	5	5
CUSTOMIZATION	5	3	5	5	5
CLIENT INTEGRATION	5	3	2	2	5
WHITELABEL	5	5	5	5	5
SUPPORT	4	4	3	5	4
COST/VALUE	5	3	5	4	5
EXPORT FUNCTIONALITY	3	3	2	5	4
AUTOMATION	5	5	2	5	5
EASE OF USE	2	2	2	3.5	3.5
OVERALL RATING	4.69	3.15	4.35	4.35	4.50

In considering all requirements, Agency Analytics stands as the best value, followed by SE Ranking, SEMrush, Google Data Studio, and Authority Labs.



**MY OVERALL
RATING**

4.7 / 5

1. Agency Analytics

Agency Analytics is a quality introductory/intermediate reporting tool for agencies. Among the tools on this list, it is one of the most cost-effective and easy to use for small to mid-sized agencies.

It starts at \$49 per month with unlimited staff and client logins, a white-label dashboard, and automated branded reports. You can also purchase additional campaign and keyword credits if you hit the default cap.

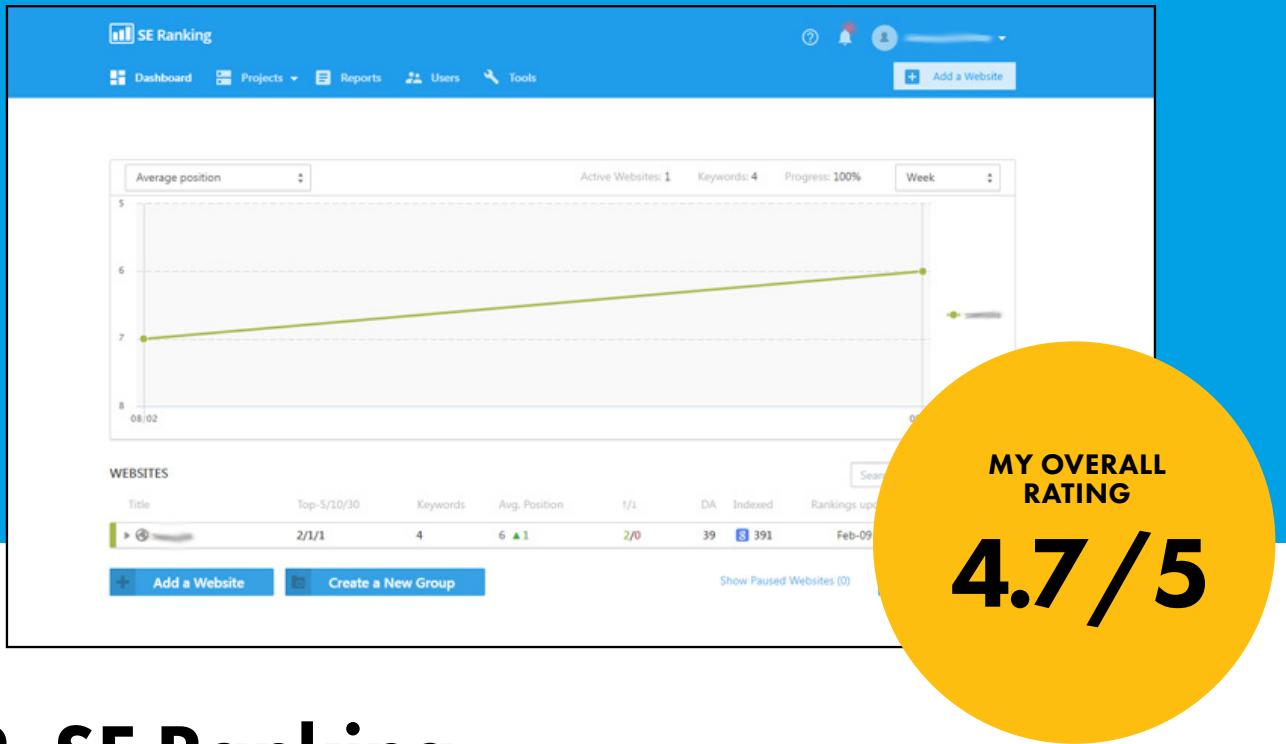
Agency Analytics comes with 30+ third-party data integration, from the basics like keyword rankings and Google Search Console to integrations with call tracking software, email marketing software, and more.

However, this reliance on third-party data means if there is an interruption in the transmission, you may have incomplete reports.

Though new integrations are always being added, they can be glitchy at first which makes them unreliable to share with clients until stabilized.

With the ability for clients to log in and view daily data updates, it provides real-time transparency.

Automated reports can be customized, and the drag-and-drop customized dashboard makes it easy to emphasize priority KPIs.



2. SE Ranking

The most cost-effective of the tools on this list, SE Ranking has plans starting at just \$7 per month – though the minimum of \$39 per month plan is necessary for agencies monitoring multiple websites.

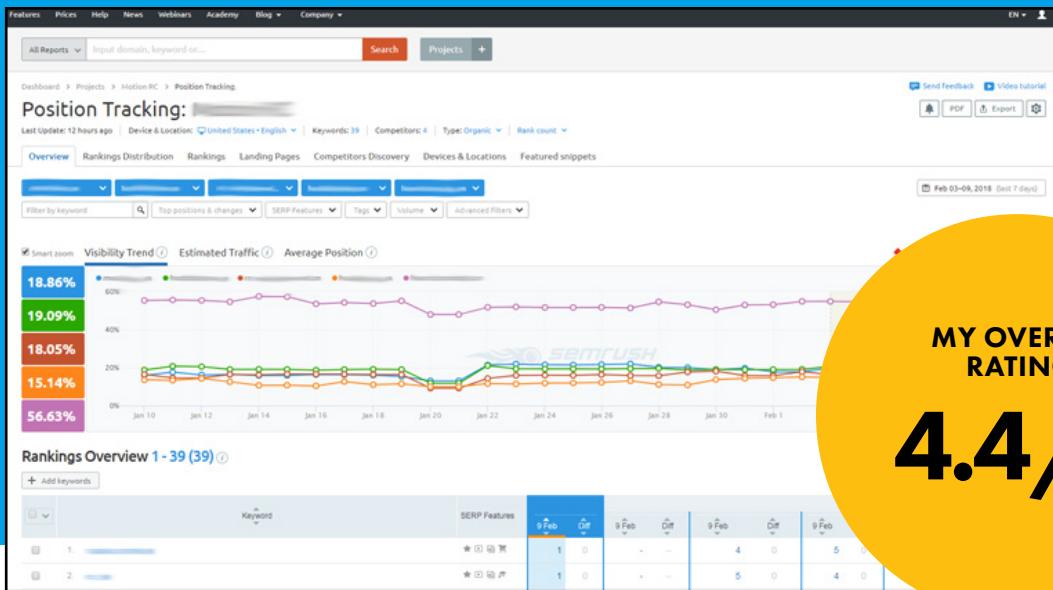
Setup is a breeze, as the on-screen tutorial guides you through the process.

SE Ranking features a strong collection of SEO-related tools, including current and historical position tracking, competitor SEO research, keyword suggestion tool, backlink explorer, and more.

SE Ranking is hooked up with Zapier, which allows users to integrate more than 1,000 apps and provide a high level of automation between apps like Klipfolio, Salesforce, HubSpot, and Google Apps.

At a beginner to intermediate level, SE Ranking is an effective SEO reporting tool.

You may want to look in a different direction if your agency requires more technical implementations or advanced customization.



3. SEMrush

SEMrush is one of the most SEO-focused reporting tools on the list, which is reflected in their features. Starting at \$99 per month per user, SEMrush provides a full suite of tools that can be learned at an intermediate level.

A major downside of SEMrush, especially for cost-conscious agencies, is that an account comes with only one user login.

Having to purchase individual licenses for each SEO analyst or account manager adds up quickly and everything but the business license caps out at three users per account. This makes scalability an issue.

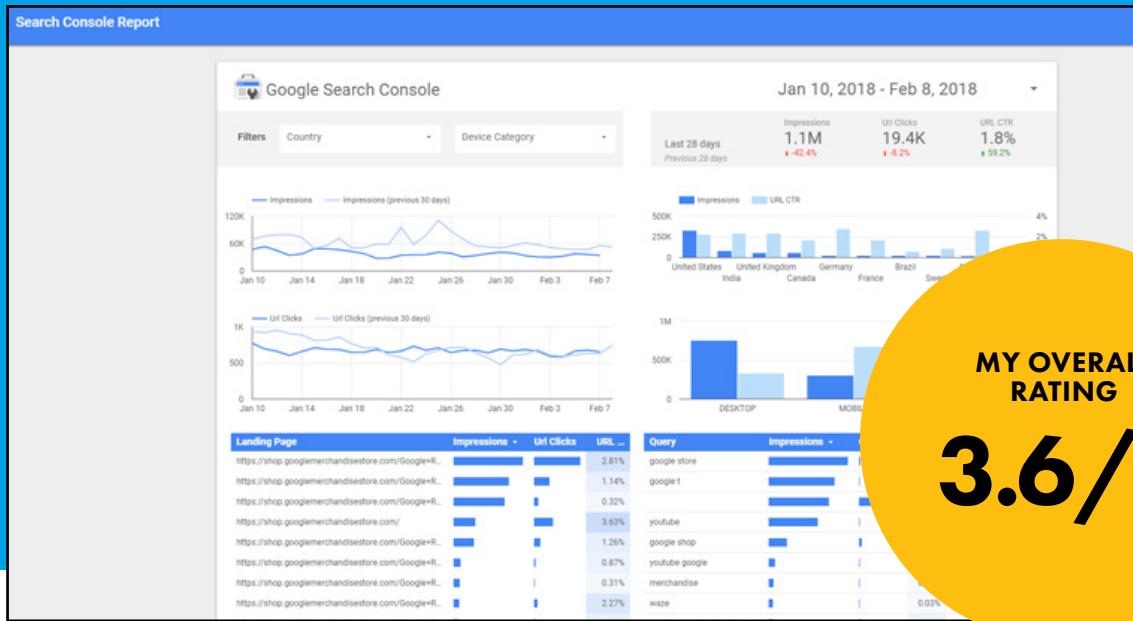
SEMrush has both branded and white label reports, depending on your subscription level. It uses a proprietary data stream, tracking more than 800 million keywords.

The ever-expanding “projects” feature covers everything from position tracking to backlink monitoring and social media analysis.

Though it doesn’t fall specifically under the scope of SEO reporting, SEMrush’s innovation makes it a one-stop shop for many agencies.

Project features include Ad Builder, which helps craft compelling ad text for Google AdWords, to Social Media Poster which allows agencies to schedule client social posts.

Combining such diverse features under the SEMrush umbrella offsets its relatively high cost, especially if you can cancel other redundant software.



4. Google Data Studio

Currently in beta, Google Data Studio is one of the newest offerings from the Mountain View megacorp.

Though it is much more technical and requires more time investment to set up than most other tools on this list, it should be intuitive for staff who are familiar with Google Analytics.

If you're on the fence, GDS is completely free.

A major upside to GDS is superior integration with other Google properties like Analytics, Search Console, AdWords, and YouTube.

Like other reporting tools, it also allows third-party data integration, but the ability to query data from databases included MySQL, PostgreSQL, and Google's Cloud SQL sets it apart.

With proper setup, you can customize reports with important KPIs, pulling from lead information and customer information. For e-commerce clients, you can even integrate sales data.

Though initial setup will be much more technical, the ability to import templates saves time and effort.

You can also create your templates, which better reflect your processes and can be shared across clients. Google also has introductory [video walk-throughs](#) to help you get started.

The screenshot shows the Authority Labs software interface. On the left is a vertical sidebar with icons for DOMAINS, RANKINGS, ADD KEYWORD, OPTIONS, REFRESH COMMON, EXPORT, EXPORTS, BANNED, SUPPORT, PROFILE, and ACCOUNT. The main area displays a 'Ranks Report' for February 8, 2018, with a date range from 'First Added'. It lists keywords with their current rank, previous rank, and change. A yellow circle highlights one keyword entry. At the top, a message says '5 keywords successfully added' and '1 keyword already existed.' To the right, there's a large yellow circle containing the text 'MY OVERALL RATING' and '3.2/5'.

5. Authority Labs

If you're looking for a straightforward position tracking tool, Authority Labs gets the job done.

Authority Labs is \$49 per month for unlimited users, though for white label reporting you will need to upgrade to the \$99 per month plan.

You can track regional ranking data, get insights into "(not provided)" keywords, track competitor keywords, and scheduled automated reporting.

However, the lack of other essential features like backlink monitoring or analytic data means you will have to supplement this tool to provide a full SEO reporting picture for clients.

Conclusion

There are many quality SEO reporting tools on the market.

SE Ranking has fantastic cost to value ratio, while Google Data Studio has advanced reporting capabilities if you can withstand a higher barrier to entry.

Agency Analytics prioritizes client access which is a big deal if transparency is a core value for your agency.

Authority Labs keeps it lean and clean, while SEMrush is always adding innovative features.

Consider what matters most to your agency. Is it:

- Feature depth?
- Scalability?
- Cost-to-value ratio?

Once you weigh the factors that matter most for your agency, you can find the right SEO reporting tool.

CHAPTER 7

THE TOP 5 SEO SOFTWARE SUITES FOR AGENCIES



WRITTEN BY
CLARK BOYD

The complicated, multifaceted nature of SEO should be self-evident to most marketers.

Even on a small website, you still need to get the technical basics right, analyze how your audience searches for your products, create great content, then promote your brand.

Amidst all of these moving parts is the need to track progress against business objectives and monitor competitor activity.

If we scale that challenge to enterprise level, where thousands (sometimes millions) of keywords are at stake, across territories and multiple devices, SEO could seem like something of a thankless chore.

This is where the all-in-one SEO software suite comes into its own.

Businesses use these platforms to avail of everything from an at-a-glance performance overview to detailed insights about specific website issues.

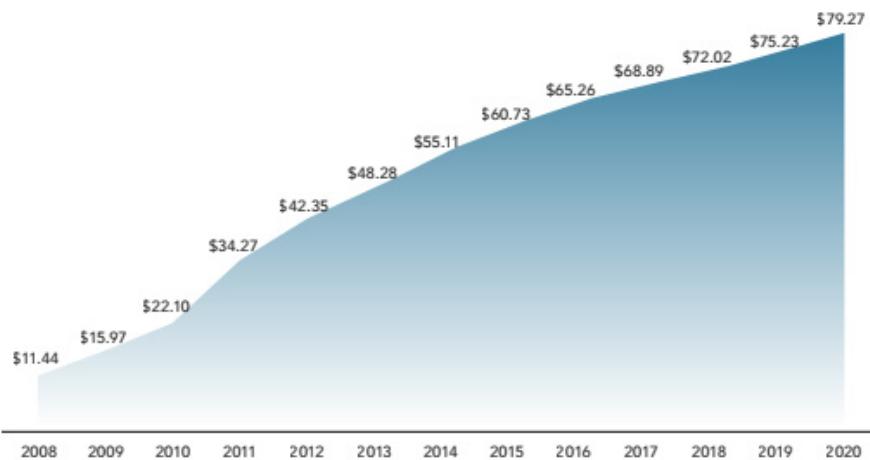
As SEO continues to evolve into an ecosystem of interfaces and devices, linked together by searches – both typed and spoken – the need for a unified view of strategy is greater than ever.

Brands are backing this up with their marketing budgets, too.

Marketing spend on SEO in the U.S. alone is projected to reach almost [\\$80 billion](#) annually by 2020, according to Borrell Associates' Trends in Digital Marketing Services report.



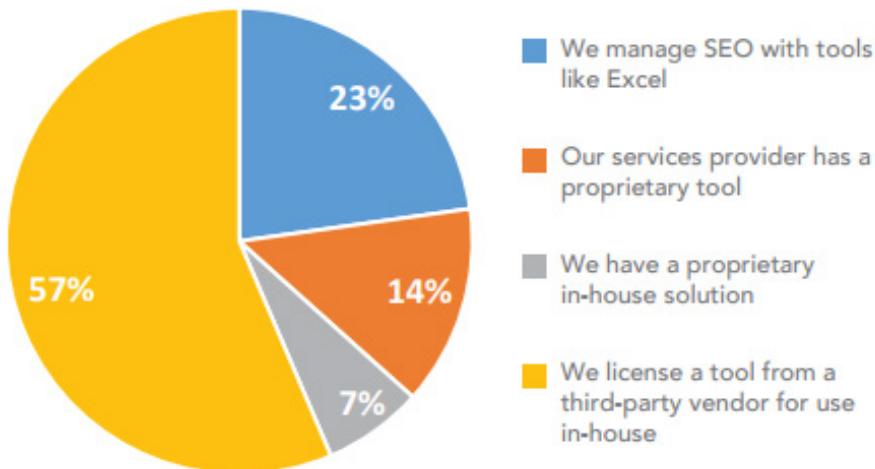
Table 2: Total U.S. Spending for SEO (2008-2020 in \$ Billions)



One of the chief SEO-related expenses is technology.

Digging a little deeper, we can see from SEMPO's State of Search 2016 report that nearly 60 percent of brands manage their SEO program through a third-party software solution:

Table 4: What technology do you use to manage SEO?



Clearly, the enterprise SEO technology market is big business – and it only looks set to get bigger.

What Is an SEO Software Suite?

The phrase “SEO software suite” can be somewhat tricky to pin down.

There are so many potential components to an SEO strategy that the task of covering them all – and covering them well – in one platform is a sizable task.

So first of all, let’s draw some boundaries for our guide.

When we say “SEO software suite,” we mean technologies that perform at least the majority of the following:

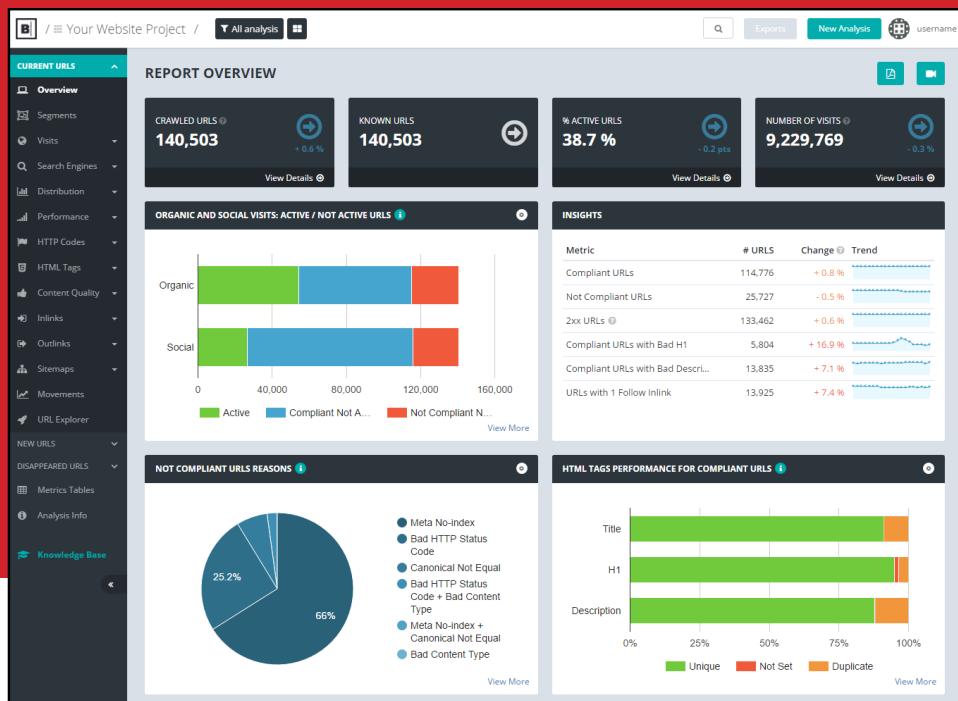
- Keyword opportunity research
- Keyword rank tracking
- Universal search analysis
- Page reporting and recommendations
- Content optimization recommendations
- Competitor tracking and analysis
- Backlink analysis
- Site crawl functionality
- Technical SEO crawling and recommendations
- Social media metric tracking
- Analytics integrations

That is a broad spectrum of capabilities, but it is what modern marketers require of an SEO software suite.

It is also worth stating that no SEO platform is the standout performer in every single one of these areas.

Where a platform perhaps falls short of being the industry leader, search marketers may want to complement their SEO software suite with a specialized tool to compensate for this.

Ultimately, this guide will highlight the areas in which each platform excels, to help you navigate this competitive landscape.



Botify

Botify's DNA is in technical SEO, which has won the platform a significant number of fans in the advanced SEO community.

Along with its proprietary crawling tools that use log file data to analyze search engine behavior, Botify also manages to provide user-friendly dashboards that tie technical SEO fixes to business performance.

Historically, that has been the SEO equivalent of squaring the circle.

However, technical SEO remains absolutely fundamental to improved website performance.

A tool like Botify helps get those essential messages across.

The platform has developed into a full-service SEO software suite that goes beyond technical SEO to provide content recommendations and track social media metrics.

The core Botify Analytics product that uses the company's proprietary crawler to report on site performance is now tied to Botify Keywords, a new product that reveals the rankings impact of SEO and content issues.

Botify Keywords pulls queries from Google Search Console and will surely benefit from the recent GSC upgrades.

As an SEO software suite, Botify has entered the market in a different way than the other platforms in this guide.

Where others have started as rank trackers that branched out into intent signals and content idea generation, Botify is a technical SEO software that is building organically on that platform over time.

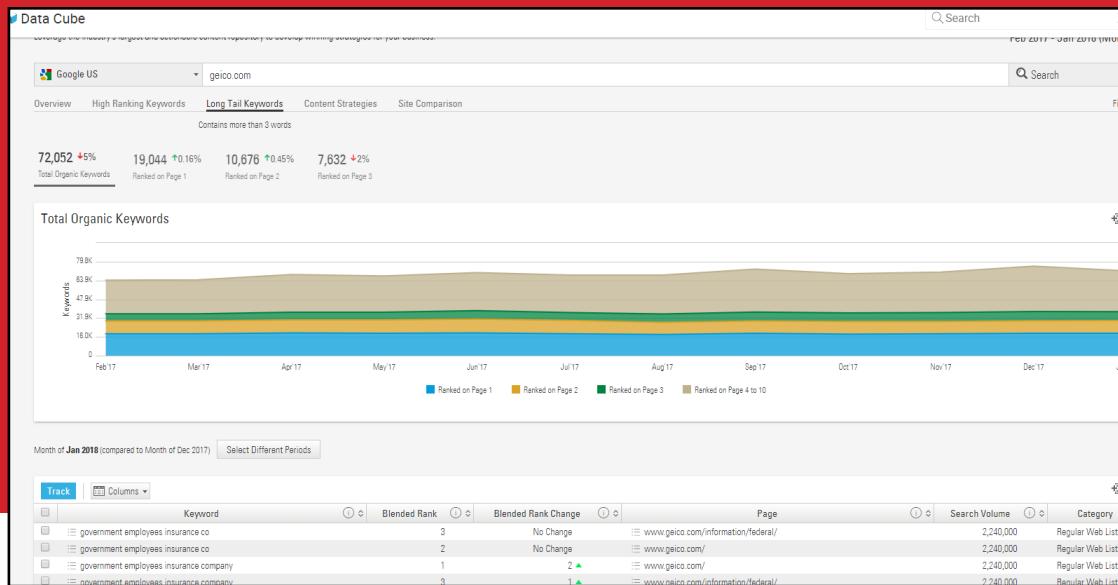
All of these areas combine to create an advanced SEO strategy, but it is worth noting where Botify's core strengths lie in comparison with the competition.

That means you may want a specialist content marketing platform to complement your Botify license, rather than using Botify to cover every aspect of your SEO campaigns.

Unique Selling Points:

- Exceptional technical SEO analysis, including a crawl budget report and log file analyzer.
- Botify Keywords helps to tie technical SEO to performance improvements.
- Frequency of crawls and availability of data are both at a very high level.
- The ability to segment website content and isolate issues is invaluable.
- Intuitive dashboards that communicate technical issues to non-technical audiences.

(Disclaimer: The author has a business relationship with Botify.)



BrightEdge

BrightEdge has gone through a number of evolutions over the past decade, most recently seen in its move into AI-assisted content generation.

The core BrightEdge product is its rank tracking software, which updates weekly and produces automated reports that can be customized to each brand's needs.

This is complemented by the StoryBuilder, which helps marketers to make sense out of the masses of data available in such a platform.

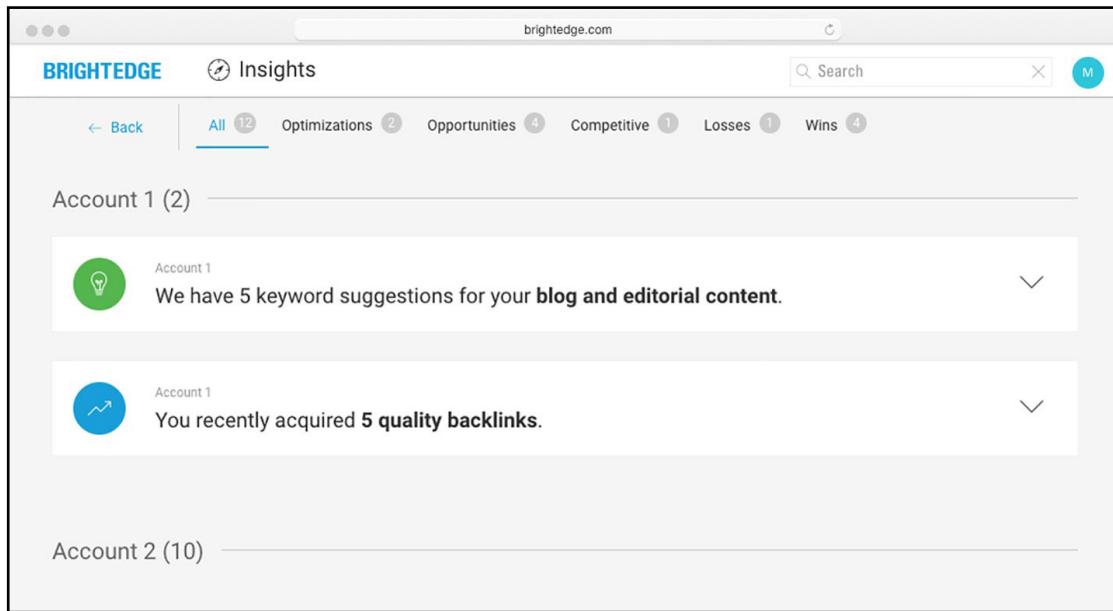
Perhaps the real game-changer for BrightEdge in the last few years has been the creation of the DataCube.

DataCube makes use of BrightEdge's own index to suggest new keyword ideas and also creates an overview of SEO visibility over time.

The latest AI-driven innovations in the platform include an Insights product that automatically surfaces new site developments for marketers, and a new content platform that can optimize content as it is being created.

With integrations available for a range of analytics software packages, BrightEdge is undoubtedly a leading contender for enterprise sites.

BrightEdge covers a significant number of the bases in our initial list of criteria – and new innovations are frequently released.

A screenshot of the BrightEdge Insights web interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the BrightEdge logo, a search bar, and a user profile icon. Below the header, a breadcrumb navigation shows 'Back' and 'All 12' (with 12 items). To the right of the breadcrumb are links for 'Optimizations 2', 'Opportunities 4', 'Competitive 1', 'Losses 1', and 'Wins 4'. The main content area is titled 'Account 1 (2)'. It contains two expandable sections: one for keyword suggestions ('We have 5 keyword suggestions for your blog and editorial content.') and another for backlinks ('You recently acquired 5 quality backlinks.'). Below this, another section is partially visible for 'Account 2 (10)'.

One point to consider for the largest sites out there will be cost, as many BrightEdge packages are based on the number of keywords tracked.

As we move into a mobile-first, highly localized, personalized version of organic search, monthly fees for a BrightEdge license can grow quite quickly for marketers in need of accurate tracking across devices and territories.

Tracking a query on desktop and on mobile will count as two keywords from your total allocation, for example.

Furthermore, it is worth corroborating some of the findings in BrightEdge with other tools.

The technical SEO recommendations are somewhat limited and rankings are pulled weekly, based on normalized values from a number of crawls over that period. In the case of the latter, you can end up with a ranking position that does not tell the full story.

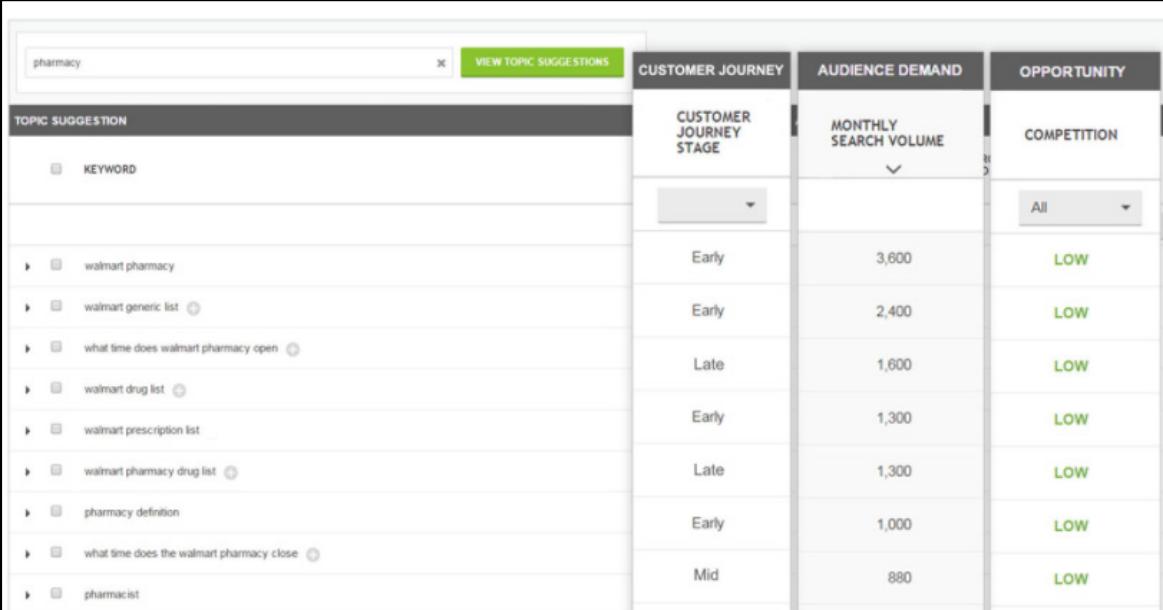
Rankings can be pulled daily and at a local level, but again this typically comes at an extra cost.

Those are not hesitations about the platform's technological capabilities, but they are worth bearing in mind for marketers looking for an all-in-one SEO platform.

BrightEdge does a lot of things – and does them well – but it is still a good idea to use specialist tools for technical SEO and backlink analysis.

Unique Selling Points:

- Intuitive, customizable dashboards with many API integrations available.
- Can track rankings in more than 76,000 locations.
- DataCube is great for keyword and competitor research.
- Universal search rank tracking is very useful.
- Latest AI-driven developments could prove invaluable for time-poor digital marketers.



The screenshot shows the Conductor platform's interface. On the left, a sidebar lists 'TOPIC SUGGESTION' and 'KEYWORD'. Below this, a list of search terms is shown, each with a small icon and a dropdown arrow. The main area features a table with three columns: 'CUSTOMER JOURNEY STAGE', 'AUDIENCE DEMAND', and 'OPPORTUNITY'. The 'CUSTOMER JOURNEY STAGE' column has dropdown menus for 'All' and 'Early', 'Late', 'Mid'. The 'AUDIENCE DEMAND' column includes a dropdown for 'MONTHLY SEARCH VOLUME'. The 'OPPORTUNITY' column includes a dropdown for 'COMPETITION'. The data in the table is as follows:

CUSTOMER JOURNEY STAGE	AUDIENCE DEMAND	OPPORTUNITY
Early	3,600	LOW
Early	2,400	LOW
Late	1,600	LOW
Early	1,300	LOW
Late	1,300	LOW
Early	1,000	LOW
Mid	880	LOW

Conductor

Conductor is another enterprise-level software that has developed significantly beyond its initial offering as a rank tracking platform.

In terms of its positioning in a crowded market, Conductor's focus has shifted slightly more toward the understanding of audience intent and the importance of strategic insight for SEO performance.

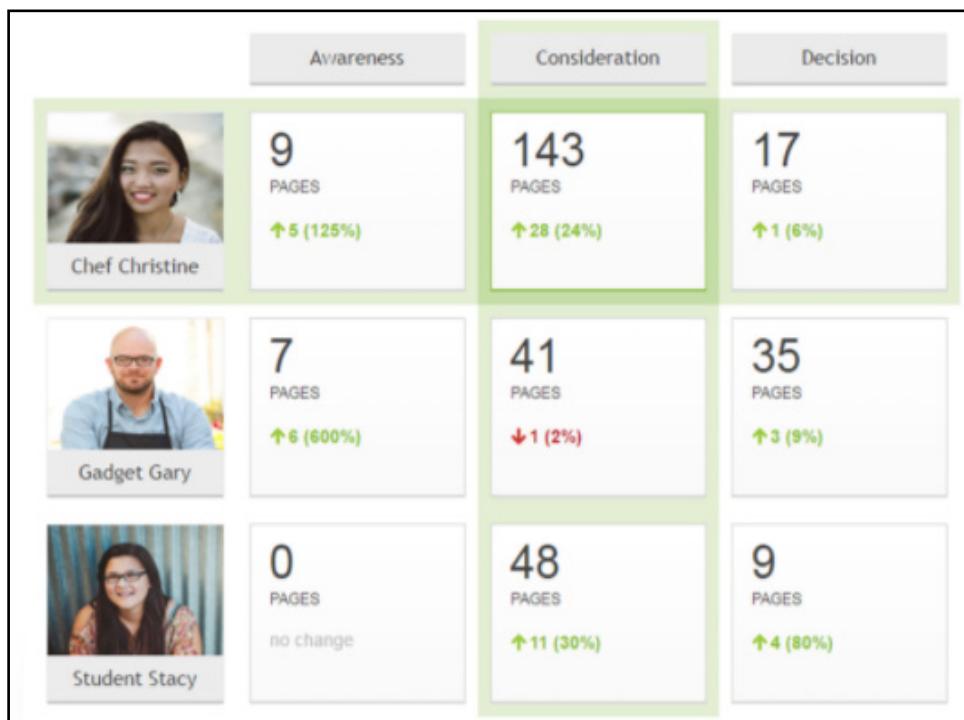
Many of the dashboards within this platform are devised with the aim of helping you prioritize your workloads and emphasize the areas that will drive performance.

I have always found that Conductor excels in its usefulness as an SEO platform. That may seem a trite and vague observation, but it is perhaps the most fitting phrase.

When working on an SEO campaign, I can use Conductor to get things done.

Of course, it may just be that it tallies well with my particular way of working, but it has the feel of a technology built by SEO pros to help others overcome daily challenges.

For example, Conductor has tools that map content to a particular phase in the purchase journey, highlighting where a site performs well and poorly. This leads to actionable insights through a simple but effective visualization.



Conductor does not excel when it comes to technical SEO analysis, although it is possible to integrate the tool with DeepCrawl.

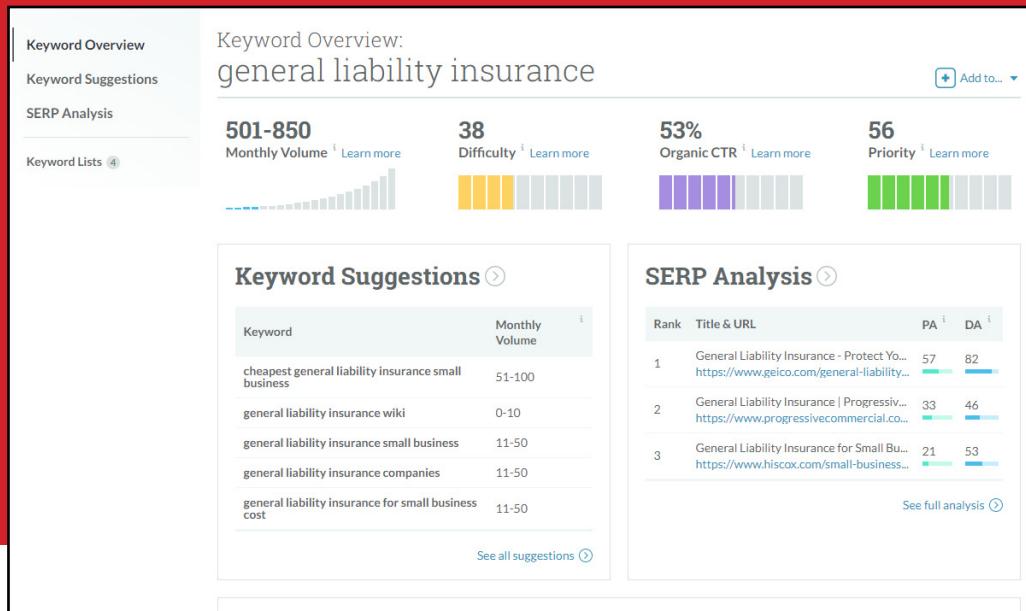
It should also be paired with a specialist backlink tracking tool, as this could be considered one of Conductor's blind spots.

Furthermore, it is arguable that Conductor's performance dashboards are not quite as visceral and effective as those of Searchmetrics and BrightEdge, when it comes to driving home the top-line numbers.

Overall, however, Conductor offers a sophisticated package that nurtures a healthy approach to organic search, beginning with a more nuanced understanding of consumer intent.

Unique Selling Points:

- Insightful audience and content planning tools.
- Dashboards help to visualize and simplify the SEO and content marketing work flow.
- The Business Case tool is handy when trying to demonstrate SEO potential to senior management.
- Lots of integrations with external Analytics and SEO technologies.
Support for over 100 international markets.



Moz Pro

Moz Pro is one of the most popular all-in-one SEO software suite contenders, and for good reason.

Signing up for a license provides access to:

- A backlink checker (Open Site Explorer).
- A rank tracking tool (Rank Tracker).
- An on-page analyzer (On-Page Grader)
- And quite a few other helpful tools.

Moz Keyword Explorer is perhaps the highlight and is the newest addition to this particular software suite.

I particularly like this tool for keyword research as it fits in with the new landscape of obscured search volumes and topic-driven content generation.

While still sticking to the SEO fundamental of pinpointing search queries to target, Keyword Explorer goes further to suggest new topics and highlight their level of priority for the business in question.

These keywords can then be added to the Moz Rank Tracker, allowing marketers to keep track of their progress.

Where is Moz a little weaker than the competition?

Given the significance of backlink analysis for SEO performance, it would be advisable to pair Moz with a tool like Ahrefs or Majestic.

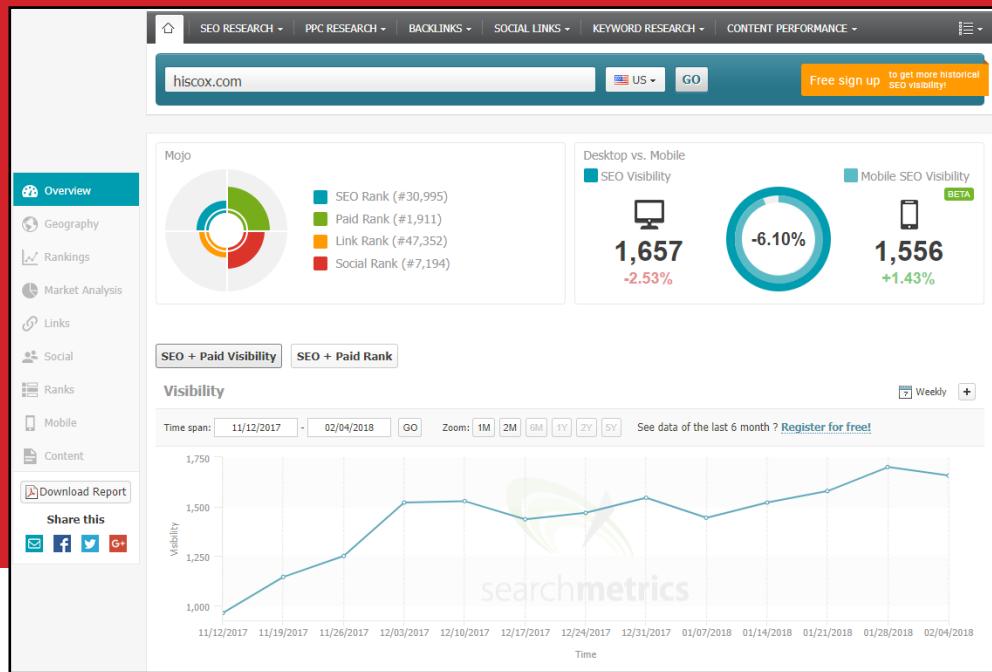
None of these tools lay claim to a “full” index of URLs and there is significant overlap between them, but the differences are significant enough to merit the use of more than one backlink checker.

Moreover, some of the tools (such as Moz Local) are best used for sites with a smaller footprint, as a license will only provide access to a limited number of locations or keywords.

Nonetheless, a Moz Pro subscription starts at just \$99 per month, making it a worthy addition to your SEO toolbox

Unique Selling Points:

- Access to a range of SEO tools at a reasonably low cost.
- Moz Keyword Explorer is a fantastic tool for keyword research and SERP analysis.
- Open Site Explorer remains a useful competitor analysis tool.
- Moz’s proprietary metrics, such as Domain Authority, are illuminating for SEO strategies.



Searchmetrics

Berlin-based Searchmetrics provides a variety of SEO solutions, ranging from the entry-level Searchmetrics Essentials through to the enterprise-ready Searchmetrics Suite.

The tool is packed with proprietary metrics, including a visibility score.

You can see the historical organic search visibility for a site based on its ranking positions and the search volumes tied to those rankings.

Searchmetrics allows for an at-a-glance assessment of SEO performance and is particularly helpful when used for competitive analysis.

Essentially, it helps us answer those perennial-but-painful questions like, 'Is our SEO working?'

A host of new innovations in the areas of mobile, content, and local search have developed Searchmetrics into a comprehensive SEO software suite that helps marketers understand what impact their activities are having.

The Mobile App Rankings feature should prove very valuable, as it provides insight into rankings on both Android and iOS across paid and organic listings. This is an important aspect of the mobile-first landscape, but not one into which we have always had the clearest of views.



With support for more than 100 international markets, Searchmetrics is also a good option if you manage campaigns across a long list of markets.

As with the other companies in this guide, there are trade-offs within this tool.

Undoubtedly, Searchmetrics is a great SEO platform for data-driven marketers that want to see the bigger picture and also dig into the details.

The keyword discovery tools within Searchmetrics are not as sophisticated as those available from other platforms, however.

Also, Searchmetrics is lacking in its ability to generate the more creative aspects of SEO, such as content marketing and link building campaign ideas. That isn't to say that it lacks entirely in these areas, but it is fair to say that Searchmetrics provides less intuitive support for these areas of organic search.

On the whole, Searchmetrics is an indispensable platform for many in the SEO industry, both for the reliability of its data and the competitive insights it can provide instantly.

Unique Selling Points:

- Huge repository of data (over 250 billion data points, according to the company's official figures).
- Intuitive dashboards for monitoring SEO performance.
- Paid search features are helpful for managing SEO and SEM campaigns together.
- Renewed focus on content marketing and mobile SEO.
- Rank tracking available in over 100 countries.

Summary

SEO software suites have diversified their offerings in line with the increased complexity of a modern organic search campaign.

All of the technologies above do a good job of covering the essentials: rank tracking, competitor analysis, and content recommendations.

However, agencies will start to notice distinctions among the platforms on closer investigation.

While no platform is the standout performer in every area of organic search, each contains impressive capabilities and excels in at least a few categories.

Some of these software suites contain more sophisticated technical SEO analysis, for example, while others place the onus on advanced content marketing capabilities.

The important thing for agencies is to enter this assessment with a clear idea of where their priorities lie.

CHAPTER 8

7 ESSENTIAL SEO BROWSER EXTENSIONS & PLUGINS



WRITTEN BY
DAVE DAVIES

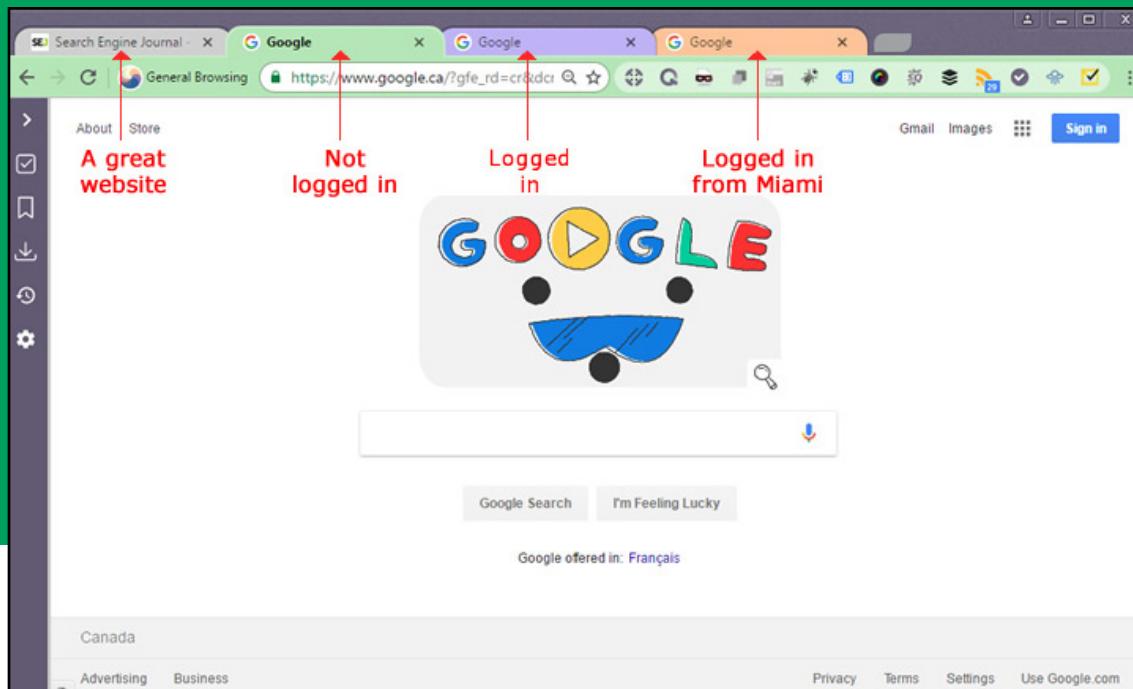
The vast majority of people use browsers to access the web.

But most SEO professionals take it a step further and use those same browsers to do a lot more.

In fact, some of the most important tools in my arsenal are my browser and its extensions.

So, let's dive right in and see what we can do with them. And the best part is, all of them are free.





1. Ghost Browser

[Ghost Browser](#) is built on Chrome so everything available to you there is available in Ghost Browser... and more.

The biggest reason I switched to Ghost Browser is for what they call “sessions.”

Essentially a session is a fresh instance of Chrome that operates within new windows or even tab(s).

In the image above, you’ll see there are four different colored tabs, each with a different site up.

Each of these colors represents a session and they’re independent, which is why one of them is not logged in, one can be logged in, and another is logged in from a different location.

You can run multiple tabs for each session.

So, for example, I can be logged into one session as me to manage an AdWords campaign but also logged in through a different account to access the client's analytics and Search Console (where they aren't controlled by the same account).

Similarly, each session can be used to log into different social accounts, etc.

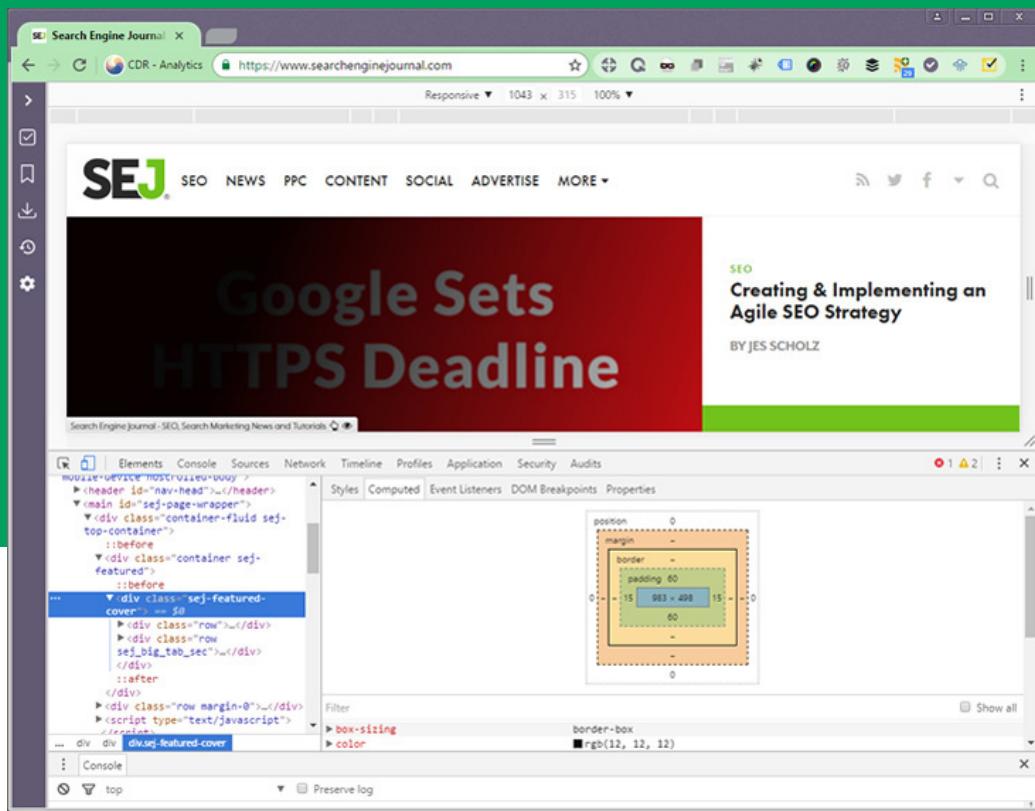
Ghost Browser also has Tasks. Essentially, you can save sets of tabs with their login state as a project and not have to log in and out or open all the different tab sets you likely regularly do each time you need to access them.

The free version supports three sessions at a time – so even it is three times better than what you're likely currently working with.

There is a pro version. I found it worth the investment based on my usage, you may not.

Either way, after using the free version for a bit you'll wonder how you ever survived without it.

Note: I also discussed Ghost Browser in my article on [non-SEO tools](#) for the SEO.



2. Chrome Developer Tools

There is virtually no way I could cover all the features, functions, and uses of [Chrome Developer Tools](#) in this article.

The tool is built into Chrome and is accessed via Chrome Menu > More tools > Developer tools.

Easily the most common tasks I use it for is to find code, determine the size of elements, and troubleshoot them.

As illustrated in the image above, the tool allows you to hover over and select an element on a given webpage and it will display its code and (in this case) the computed output characteristics.

You can even adjust the code right in the Developer Tools to see how it would render prior to making the changes to the live site. You can do this on the desktop

site or set it to render the page as it would on many popular mobile devices.

This isn't the most advanced of its functionality, which includes various speed, security, and troubleshooting capabilities ranging from generating waterfalls of resource load times to indicating which resources are slowing down the site load.

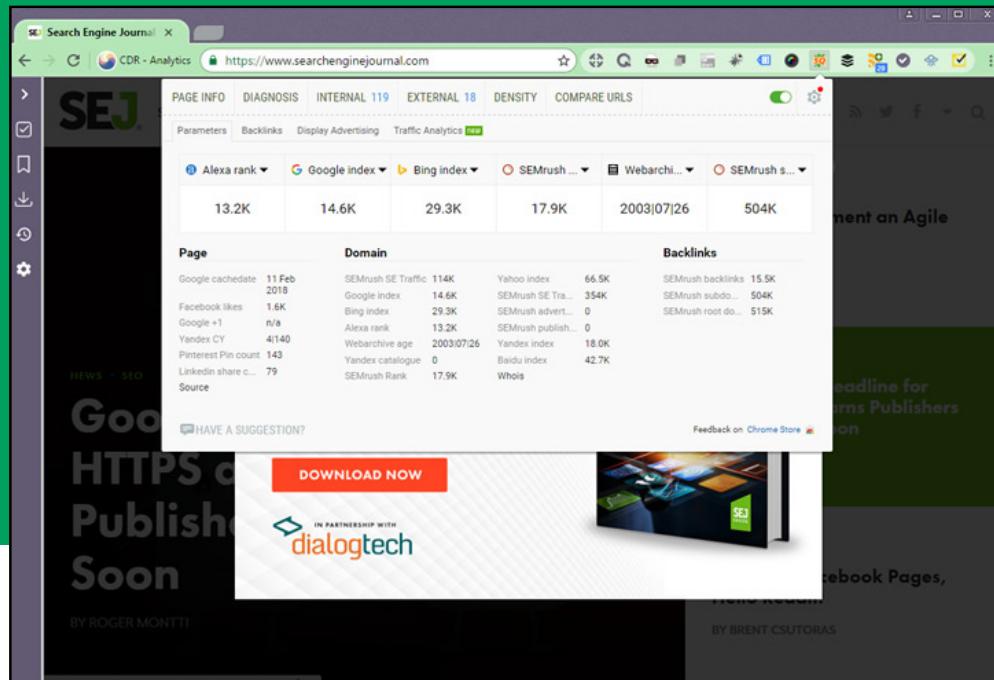
The advantage to all this vs. some of the other online tools you might use?

The results are real world.

That is, you're seeing how your browser on your connection is impacted by the resources being loaded.

Read the tool's page and explore. There's a ton in there.

When you know what data you have access to, you'll know where to look when you need answers to related questions.



3. SEO Quake

[SEO Quake](#) is a classic among the extensions and plugins used by SEO pros – and for good reason.

Essentially, SEO Quake gives rapid access to an array of data that we all want.

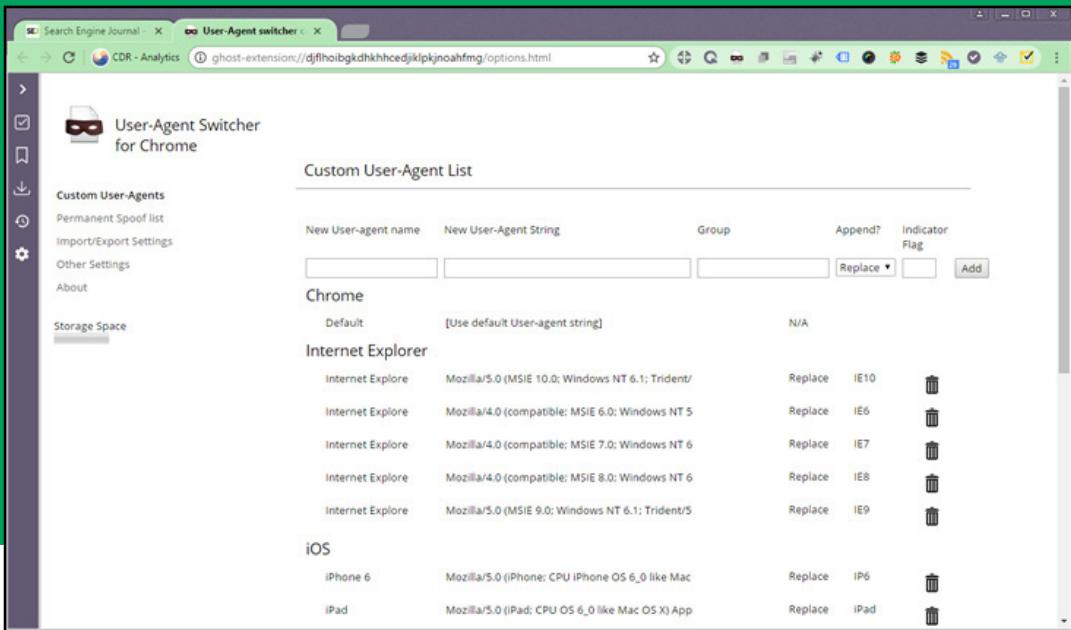
On any given webpage a simple click to pull in the metrics will list backlinks data, cache dates, indexing information, and more.

With a couple extra clicks you gain access to the internal and external backlinks data, keyword density information (if you're interested in that), and a ton of information regarding the use of Schema, heading tags, metas and more.

SEO Quake is not a replacement for site audit and analysis tools but gives an excellent quick snapshot of a page's information.

Perfect when you need just some limited info or are on a phone call and need to pull up some core metrics.

It even ties in with SEMrush to yield some basic traffic stats as well – handy for competitor research, especially when considering new content strategies.



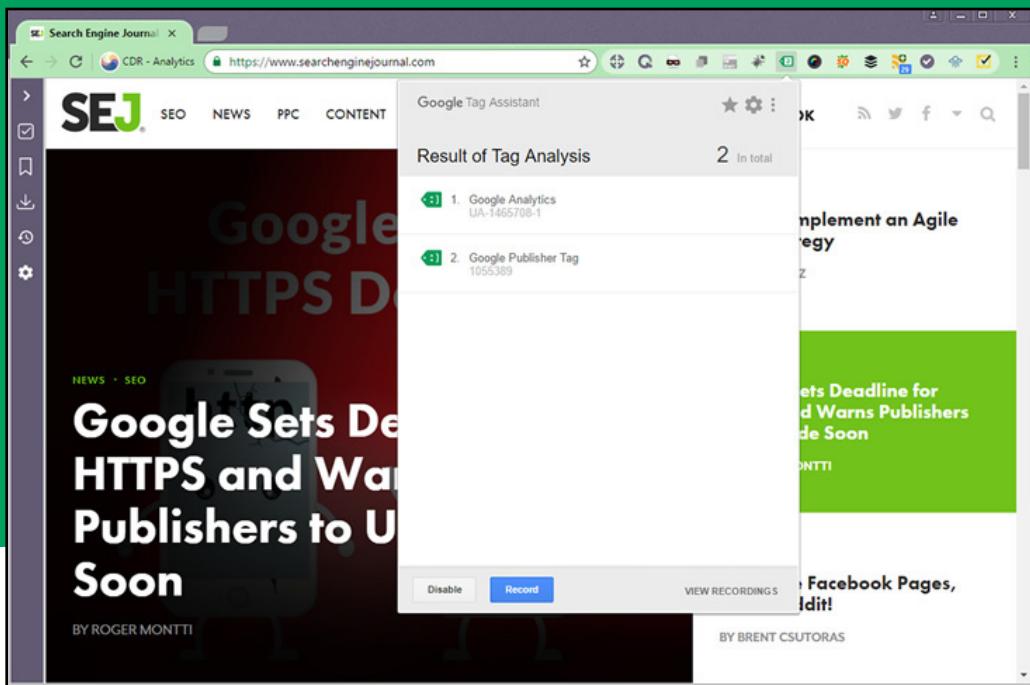
4. User-Agent Switcher

This is extremely helpful when developing new sites – especially when that site is built using less predictable technologies.

Essentially [User-Agent Switcher](#) is exactly what it sounds like: an easy to set up plugin that switches the user agent info sent allowing you to view a site as a different browser or bot.

I can't count the number of times I've used it to troubleshoot crawl issues or uncover differences in how Googlebot is viewing a page versus a browser.

Obviously, it can also be helpful when determining how a site will load with different browsers or operating systems as well.



5. Tag Assistant

Google Tag Assistant is an extremely useful tool, especially for those who use Google Tag Manager.

It can also be handy when you simply need to identify issues with analytics or other tracking codes (AdWords, etc.)

The icon for the extension changes color depending on whether there are issues detected and makes note of the issues when clicked.

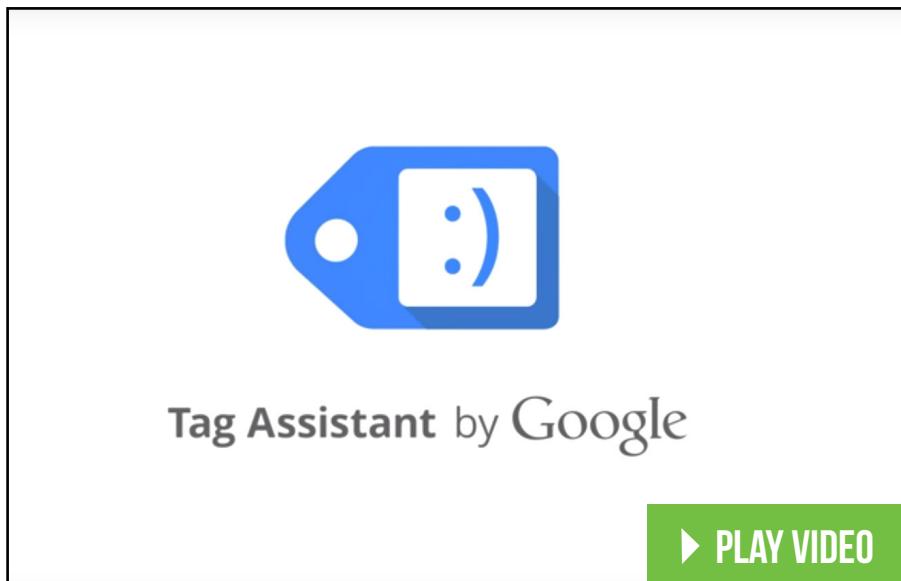
Search Engine Journal gets a green light, as illustrated above, but warnings and errors get reported when there are duplicate or empty tags or tags not configured properly.

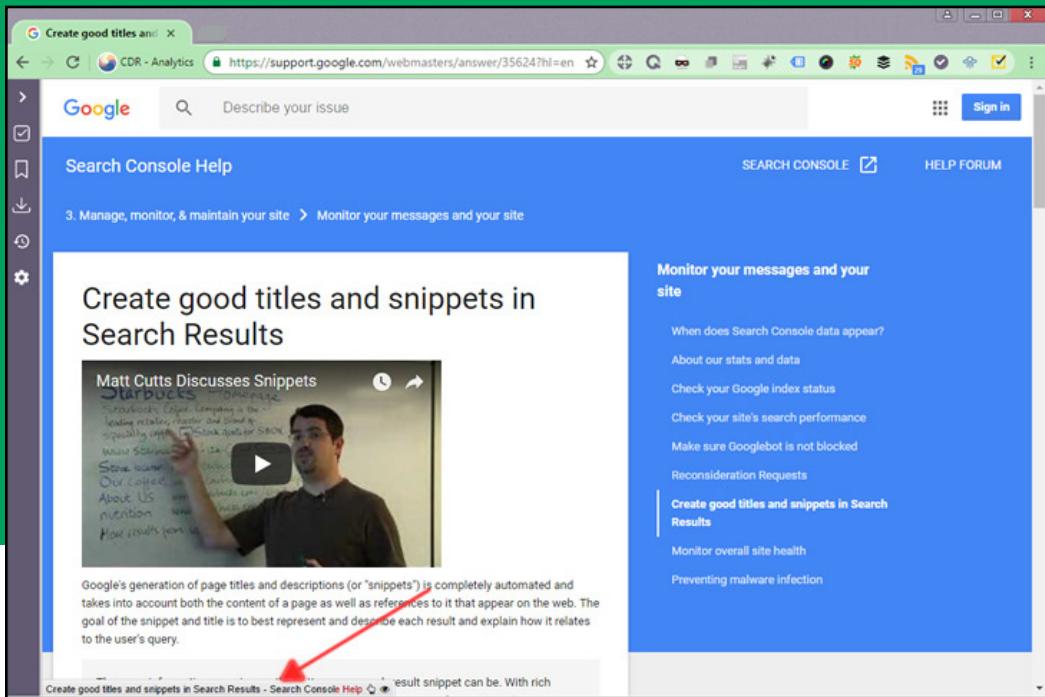
Tag Assistant also reports on duplicate or analytics code issues.

It handily lets you record a session allowing you to navigate paths within your site (or other's) and then review the recording to find errors and issues.

It's an invaluable troubleshooting tool across an array of scenarios.

Here's Google's video outlining some of its core features:





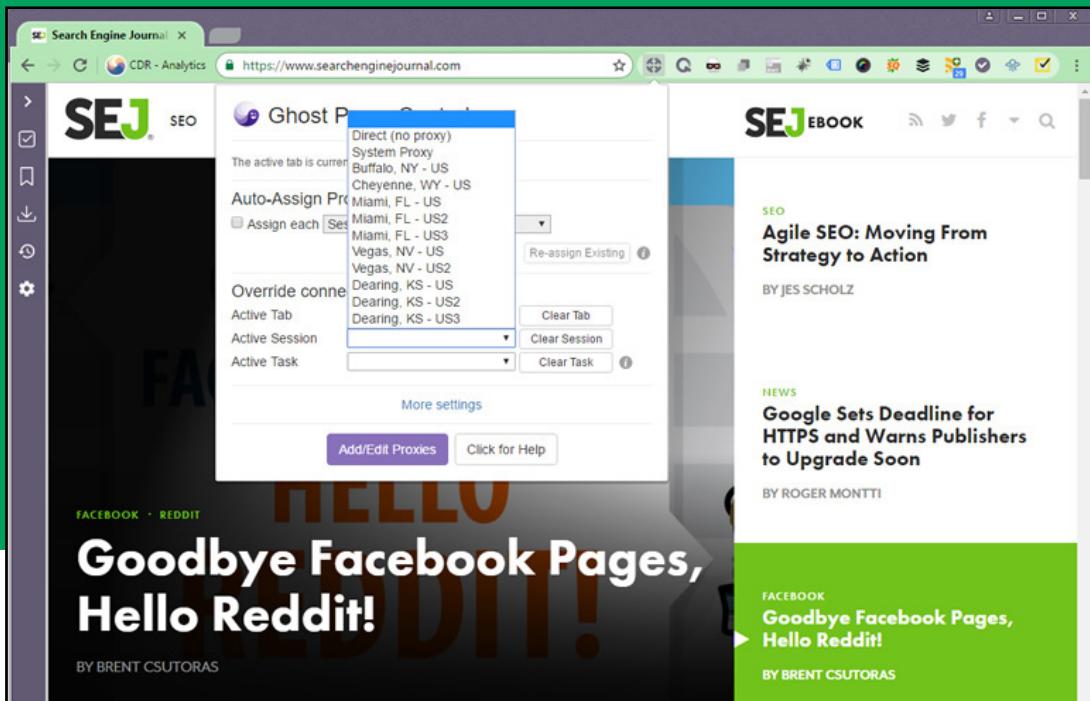
6. Show Title Tag

By no means a critical plugin but a handy one, [Show Title Tag](#) simply displays the page title within the browser.

You can move it to any of the corners of the browser and the red text indicates where it's likely to be cut off in search results.

It's helpful when viewing competitors' sites to quickly seeing how they're doing their titling beyond the short snippet that would appear in the tab and without viewing the source or opening Developer Tools.

This plugin is also helpful when you're navigating your own site, highlighting instances where your title might be too long.



7. Ghost Proxy Control

The Ghost Proxy Control extension comes pre-loaded with Ghost Browser.

Basically, you can add your proxies in and access them easily via the extension.

One of the big perks to the combo of Ghost Browser and Ghost Proxy Control is that you can load different proxies into different session and basically have a tab for each location.

I've found this incredibly useful for checking SERP results from various location and having the ability to view them at the same time, side by side.

It's specifically interesting for local SEO.

The ability to check not just rankings from different locations but compare easily how the layout might differ.

The control allows for a proxy to be assigned to a single tab or an entire session (indicated by multiple tabs of the same color).

While the extension is free, proxies generally are not.

Although free proxies are available, I pay about \$20 per month for 10 dedicated proxies.

Conclusion

There are definitely more browser extensions and plugins than what I've included on this list of essentials.

However, most of those require subscriptions, are too similar to one of those noted above, or don't apply to the duties of virtually every SEO pro I know.

For example, Moz and BuzzSumo have great extensions. But they can be quite frustrating unless you have a paid subscription.

CHAPTER 9

8 OF THE BEST SEO PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS



WRITTEN BY
ANNA CROWE

True story: My first job out of college was as a junior account executive at a local ad agency.

I managed anywhere from 7-10 clients at a time. From responding to client emails, ghostwriting email responses for my senior account executive, creating and pitching presentations, coordinating efforts between our teams, and the usual coffee runs, I did it all.

Can you guess how I kept this all organized?

A legal pad.

If these project management tools had existed in 2010, I may have spared myself hours of crying in the parking lot fist-pumping to gangster rap and daydreaming about how I'm going to quit my job.

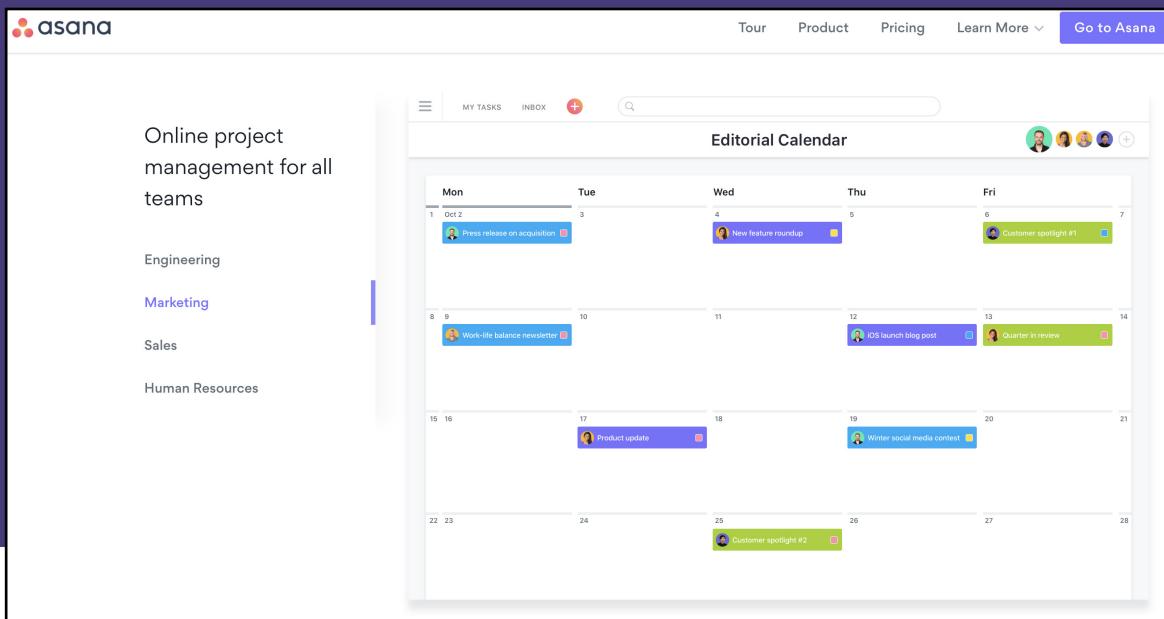
But, how do you know which project management tool is best for managing SEO?

Lucky for you, I've got the inside scoop.

I've tested, failed, and succeeded with various project management tools.

So, thanks to a little help from my fellow Search Engine Journal writers and readers, here are eight essential project management tools for SEO.

The search ends now.



1. Asana

With so many SEO project management tools on the market, how are you supposed to choose just one?

From Google Docs to Slack to Basecamp — heck, even Linkio manages your link building — there is a tool for just about everything.

Your choice of project management tool really depends on what tools you like to use and what you want to accomplish for your clients.

But what happens when you have zero budget?

Enter: Asana.

While Asana isn't new, it's completely free with unlimited tasks and to-do lists. Asana is my personal choice for managing SEO projects.

I don't use Asana because I have to. I use it because I like to.

Features

By allowing users to create lists, set reminders, assign tasks to projects, manage due dates, including team members, and communicate via comments.

Asana is a great one-stop-shop for SEO teams looking to manage their workflow while adhering to deadlines.

Asana integrates with third-party tools, such as Google Drive or Dropbox, which makes integration seamless. Users can also refer back to previously completed tasks and easily adjust due dates while including the additional functionality of creating recurring reminders.

Managers can assign team members to specific projects to ensure that employees are only focused on tasks that pertain to them specifically, which ultimately allows for increased productivity and decreased confusion.

Cost

The Asana app and website is free to use.

The free version allows up to 15 users to create an unlimited number of tasks and projects while having a basic dashboard and search access.

For \$6.25 per month, teams can have an unlimited number of users as well as advanced features like additional dashboard and search capabilities and more. For much larger organizations, there is an enterprise version as well.

Why It's Good for SEO Pros

Asana can be a majorly awesome tool if you're looking to better organize your processes.

In either a large or small team, deadlines and details can get lost resulting in missed deadlines.

Asana's user-friendly and streamlined approach will help teams to delegate the work, never miss a deadline, and disseminate the necessary support documents to the correct tasks and users.

"Collaboration with team members. Timeframe. Scope management. Transparency. Working with client dev teams"

Dawn Anderson, managing director at Move It Marketing, uses Asana with TeamWork, Basecamp, Trello, and TeamGantt, for multiple uses including, "Collaboration with team members. Timeframe. Scope management. Transparency. Working with client dev teams."

The landing page for Basecamp features a central cartoon illustration of a person with their hair on fire, looking stressed and sweating. They are surrounded by several thought bubbles containing text like "HEY! NOBODY TOLD ME THAT!", "How was I supposed to know?", "Re:Re:Re:", "BLAH BLAH", and "WHO HAS IT?". A large number "90" is shown above one bubble, and "17" is shown below another. A speech bubble on the left says "make this a thing of the past". In the top right corner, there's a badge from Forbes stating "BASECAMP IS ONE OF AMERICA'S TOP SMALL GIANTS 2017". The top navigation bar includes links for "How it works", "Real results", "Pricing", "Learn", "Support", "Sign in", and a prominent "Try it FREE" button.

We've been expecting you.

All growing businesses run into the same fundamental problems. Hair on fire, buried under email, stuff everywhere. The good news? [Basecamp solves them.](#)

2. Basecamp

Having been around for over a decade, Basecamp is considered a reliable tool that excels at giving organizations a high-level view of their teams.

Like Asana, Basecamp can help monitor tracking, but also offers additional features like direct messaging chats, centralized document storage, and a scheduling tool.

Basecamp aims to take on Slack, Asana, Google Drive, and Dropbox by melding all of their competitors into one robust management tool.

Features

Designed with the harried business person in mind, Basecamp helps managers and team members stay on top of their professional lives. The app boasts that users will no longer drown in a sea of emails as that feature is already embedded into the app.

Additionally, the scheduling and tracking features help ensure teams never again miss a deadline.

Another interesting component of Basecamp is that managers can eliminate the need for “check-in” meetings by sending an automated message daily to employees that ask for a recap of what they accomplished that day. Then employees can “tag” teammates in their recaps to explain what they need help with or what they finished.

Cost

A unique feature of Basecamp is that the app doesn't charge for an increase in the number of users or projects. So unlike some of its peers, Basecamp charges a [flat-fixed fee of \\$99 a month](#) for a team, no matter the size.

Why It's Good for SEO Pros

Managing a client's SEO consists of many different timelines and action items. Keeping track of client emails, meetings, and central documents is a full-time job.

By offering one of the best all-encompassing software solutions, Basecamp helps busy SEO pros stay on top of their entire business by more efficiently checking in with their team and deadlines in one easy to use the app.

"Basecamp is our primary means of communication with clients, for any deliverable, it allows an easy way to track the conversation and adjust docs accordingly."

Casie Gillette, senior director of digital marketing at KoMarketing, uses Basecamp mainly for communicating to clients.

"Basecamp is our primary means of communication with clients," Gillette said. "For any deliverable, it allows an easy way to track the conversation and adjust docs accordingly."

The screenshot shows the Linkio homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for HOME, FEATURES, FREE TOOLS, RESOURCES, LOGIN, and a green 'Sign Up Free!' button. The main headline reads 'A simpler, smarter way to **manage** your **link building**.'. Below the headline are two buttons: 'WATCH LINKIO IN ACTION' and 'TRY LINKIO FOR FREE'. The central part of the page displays a screenshot of the Linkio software interface. The interface includes a left sidebar with navigation options like 'Brands', 'Anchor Test Planner', 'Campaigns', 'Team', 'Users', 'Permissions', and 'Custom Columns'. The main area shows a 'Campaigns Grid' titled 'Campaign Grand Pending Month 4'. It displays a list of tasks with columns for 'Link Type', 'Anchor Type', 'Anchor Text', 'Destination URL', 'Last Published URL', 'Status', and 'Source'. There are 50 total backlinks and 25 published backlinks. A small red notification bubble with the number '1' is visible in the bottom right corner of the interface.

Linkio is the best way to plan, track, automate, and report on link building

3. Linkio

Only available since September 2017, Linkio is one of the latest SEO project management tools to hit the market.

This service helps to track link building tasks, which is a cornerstone activity for many SEO professionals.

By allowing users to plan, track, automate, and report on link building campaigns, teams can quickly use the software to help make a major impact.

Features

If you just can't yet let go of the Google Sheets tracking methods, you will find it refreshing that Linkio doesn't swear off all spreadsheets.

Instead, the software is linked to Google Sheets, allowing users to still use the technology they are already familiar with while removing some of the user error commonly associated with spreadsheet tracking.

Another benefit of Linkio is its ability to help team members increase productivity by helping them no matter what stage of the cycle they're currently involved with.

Whether an employee is focused on anchor text planning, campaign setup, delivery management, or another task, Linkio has the ability to help manage no matter where in the process they are.

Cost

Although the app is new, and therefore fewer people can vouch for it, there is no real downside to giving it a try thanks to its affordable price.

Because the app is in its beta phase, it's free and the company maintains there will always be [a free version](#), even after its beta testing phase.

Why It's Good for SEO Pros

As it is geared towards link building, the app was created with SEO professionals in mind.

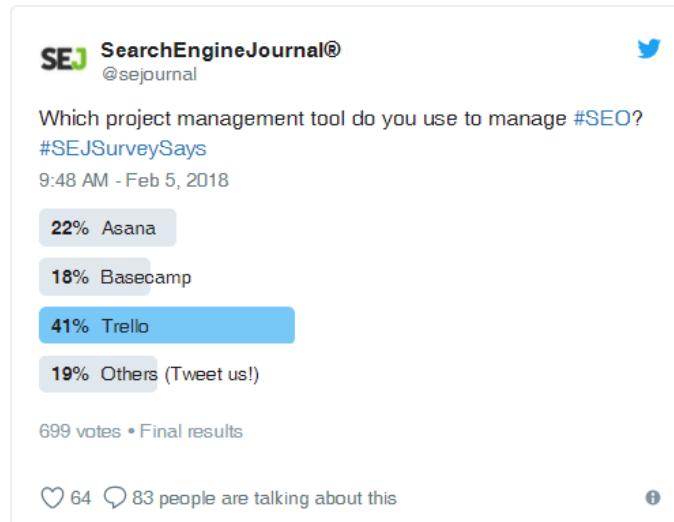
By focusing on a specific aspect of SEO, Linkio was designed to help marketing professionals improve their management of all link building activities, no matter where in the search marketing cycle they occur.

4. Trello

Touted as one of the best collaborative project management tools, Trello helps users to better [manage their SEO projects](#) and teams one board at a time.

By making it easy to add tasks, due dates, team members, and comments, users can become more organized while still allowing for a high level of flexibility.

Plus, it won our #SEJSurveySays. Take a look:



Features

One of the advantages of Trello is that teams can manage their workflow in an extremely visual way.

Groups can add “Trello Cards” to “Trello Boards” and easily assign team members, due dates, as well as attachments. The interface looks more like a bulletin board, which might be useful if you’re used to writing out tasks by hand.

Another key feature of Trello is the ability to follow a workflow from start to finish by easily advancing a card as it adapts throughout the process.

For example, content creators can benefit hugely by marking a piece of content as done for each step throughout each part of the content creation process.

As an article is written, it can be tracked as it advances from writing, editing, and posting in a visual way by moving the project card through its various stages of completion. You can see [how Buffer uses Trello](#).

Cost

Like some of the previously mentioned apps, there is a free version which is capped at a 10MB limit when it comes to documents and uploads.

For small teams, this free version allows for unlimited boards. For [\\$9.99 a month](#), Trello gives users an unlimited number of “power-ups,” the option to attach up to 250MB in files and more.

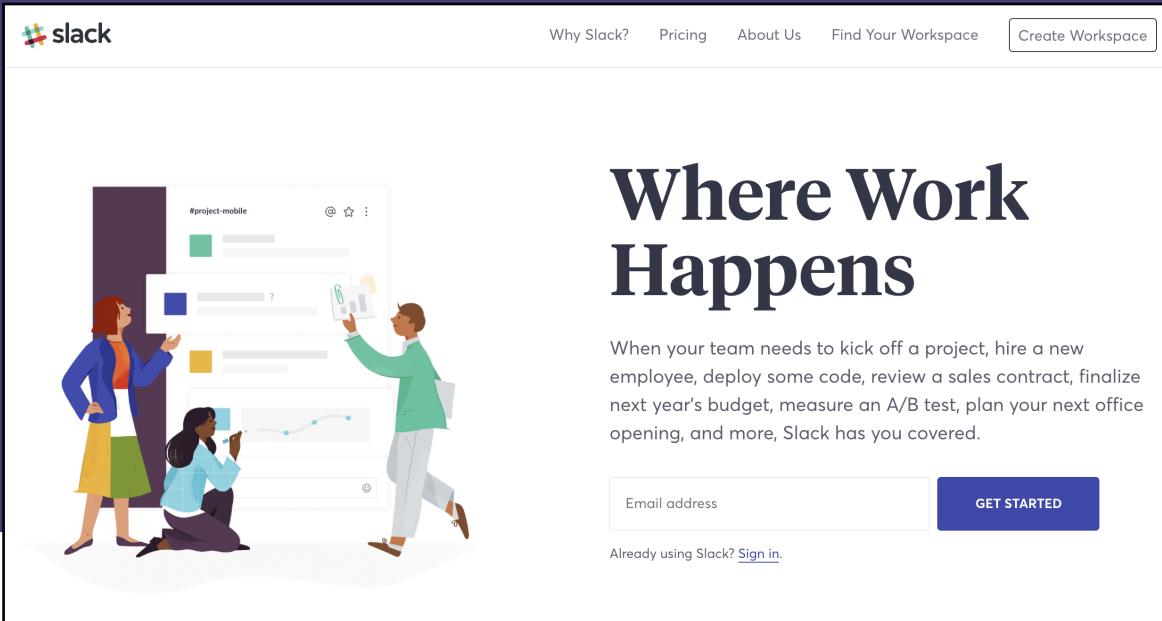
Why It's Good for SEO Pros

Are you responsible for several different projects all for one customer? If so, the visual management of Trello makes it easy for to see where they are in terms of their progress. And, [it's great for managing your content strategy.](#)

"We use Trello for managing our personal and team tasks, Basecamp for communicating with clients and Slack for communicating internally," said [Julia Shaffer](#), an SEO associate at Knucklepuck. "The three tools work well together to create an efficient work environment!"

By easily moving Trello cards around, you can copy a similar task for a new project or show the project's progression while keeping track of client notes.

"We use Trello for managing our personal and team tasks, Basecamp for communicating with clients and Slack for communicating internally."

The screenshot shows the Slack homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the Slack logo, 'Why Slack?', 'Pricing', 'About Us', 'Find Your Workspace', and a 'Create Workspace' button. Below the navigation is a large, stylized illustration of three diverse people (two women, one man) interacting with a digital interface. One person is pointing at a chart, another is holding a document, and the third is looking on. The interface has a header that reads '#project-mobile'. To the right of the illustration, the main headline 'Where Work Happens' is displayed in a large, bold, dark font. Below the headline is a descriptive paragraph: 'When your team needs to kick off a project, hire a new employee, deploy some code, review a sales contract, finalize next year's budget, measure an A/B test, plan your next office opening, and more, Slack has you covered.' At the bottom right of the page, there's a call-to-action section with a text input field labeled 'Email address', a blue 'GET STARTED' button, and a link 'Already using Slack? [Sign in.](#)'

5. Slack

Imagine, for a second, that a tool existed that allowed you to never have to check your work email – ever again. Would you use it? (Raises hand).

Slack is a communication platform that allows you to chat with other team members, clients, your mom, whoever! It's an awesome SEO project management tool because Slack integrates with other project management tools like [Asana](#) and [Trello](#).

My favorite part about Slack?

Slackbot.

Slackbot is like your own personal assistant. I can set reminders, create automated responses, and answer questions.

Features

Slackbot isn't the only project management feature for Slack. With Slack, you can create separate channels to communicate to other marketers or chat with clients. And, many use [Slack for community management](#).

You can also set reminders. Simply type /remind in a channel and Slackbot will send you a reminder at the day and time you specify.

For those of you who enjoy checking things off your list, Slack has a To Do bot that lets you keep your checklist within Slack.

Cost

Good things often come with price tags, but with Slack, it's free for most businesses. But, if you want to upgrade, Slack offers an \$8 per month and \$15 per month plan based on your needs.

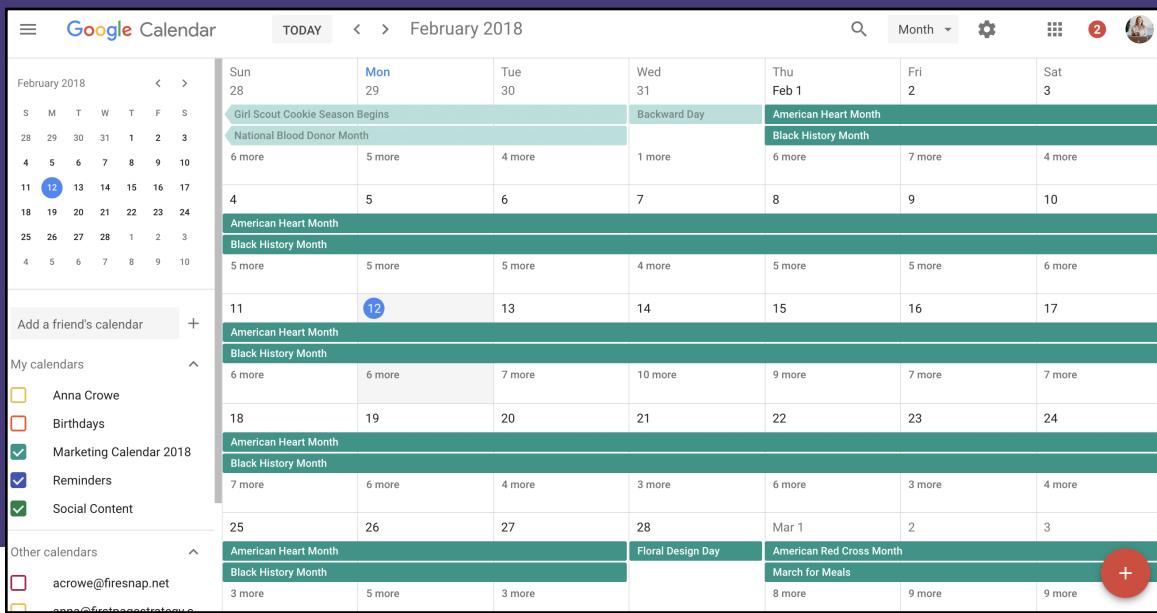
Why It's Good for SEO Pros

No matter how much or little money you have to invest in SEO, Slack has helped businesses of all sizes keep their hard-earned cash because the majority of features are available with the free plan.

With Slack, you can create channels to communicate directly with your SEO clients so you can gain back that time you would spend in hour-long meetings and 10+ email threads.

"We use Slack for internal messaging among employees to quickly share links, graphics, and to schedule a meeting," said [Jack Nolan](#), Digital Marketing Strategist. "We use Flow for project management including project delegation and following up on tasks and processes. Slack and Flow are great because they stress communication, which is the most common hurdle in SEO project management."

"We use Slack for internal messaging among employees to quickly share links, graphics, and to schedule a meeting"



6. Google Calendar

For most of us, Google Calendar is a necessary evil. Regardless of how much you use your calendar, having ongoing Google calendar date with your clients or bossman is an inevitable part of the marketing game.

If you fall in the anti-Google Calendar camp, there's always Microsoft Office 365 that offer similar features.

Features

Investing in the right calendar tool can bring your SEO work to life for a client that might not be SEO savvy. It's a necessity; missing a meeting or deadline doesn't boast well for client relations.

Many SEO pros prefer Google Calendar because it allows them to give each project its own calendar and name. For example, I use a format "2018-02 Monthly SEO Pow Wow" so my clients can quickly scan their calendar and know that it's time for our monthly check-in.

Google Calendar also has some pretty awesome sharing functionalities. As part of my onboarding process, I typically ask my clients to share their work calendar with me so I can easily book meetings if needed.

One of my favorite features with Google Calendar is the ability to use hashtags. With hashtags, I can search my calendar database for time/date stamps and export as a PDF.

Cost

The easy-to-use Google Calendar costs absolutely nothing, making them perfect for SEO agencies on a budget.

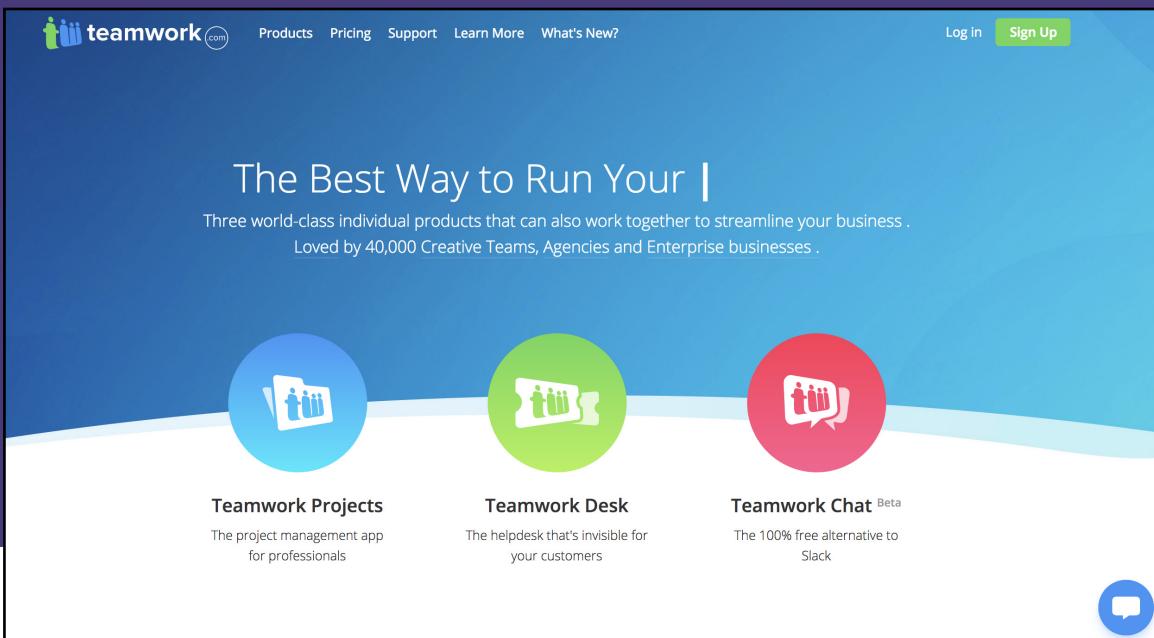
Why It's Good for SEO Pros

Half the battle of organizing your SEO projects is finding the right tool for scheduling meetings with clients, reminders, and managing the project schedule.

Sure, I could keep using an excel document, but haphazardly handling deadlines and expectations is no way to keep a client coming back. Instead, I use Google Calendar to get my SEO jobs done.

And, it works great as a [marketing calendar](#).

The majority of my clients use Google Calendar and plus, it integrates nicely with my Asana tasks.



7. TeamWork

Chances are you've probably already done a free trial of some of the tools listed above.

But, you're still reading this for a reason. You want to find The One. Your SEO project management soulmate. The tool you could commit to for life.

And, for me, TeamWork is the one and only project management tool I recommend for SEO agencies. It's my ride-or-die choice.

Features

Because agencies are going to need flexibility with the number of users, TeamWork allows you to have an unlimited amount of users and multiple people on one task.

The ability to have more than one person on one task is a downfall of my first place, Asana.

TeamWork also integrates with Google Drive, OneDrive Box, and Dropbox for file storage. And, it works well with your accounting software like Harvest, Freshbooks, and Xero, which makes invoicing clients much easier.

The best feature about TeamWork? Repeating tasks.

And, I'm not the only one who uses TeamWork that way.

"Primarily for assigning tasks to both myself as well as key stakeholders and to organize campaign activities and assets," said [Marc Nashaat](#). "I use milestones to denote high-

level initiatives and create associated task lists that detail more granular components of those initiatives. The task lists are also useful for repetitive efforts and on-boarding activities."

For SEO agencies I've worked for in the past, I've helped set-up templates within in TeamWork that can be repeated for specific SEO projects.

For example, if you're writing a blog post that is targeting a featured snippet, you can create subtasks within that blog post for steps you need to take to achieve that coveted position zero.

These templates can be cloned for new clients.

Cost

Affordable with competitive integrations, this TeamWork also wields the power of the free plan.

From 100MB file space with 5 users and 2 active projects, this free plan should be enough for you.

When you're ready to spread your wings, TeamWork offers a [paid plan for \\$9 a month](#). This plan comes jam-packed with 100GM of file space, up to 100 users, and unlimited projects making it affordable for most SEO agencies.

Why It's Good for SEO Pros

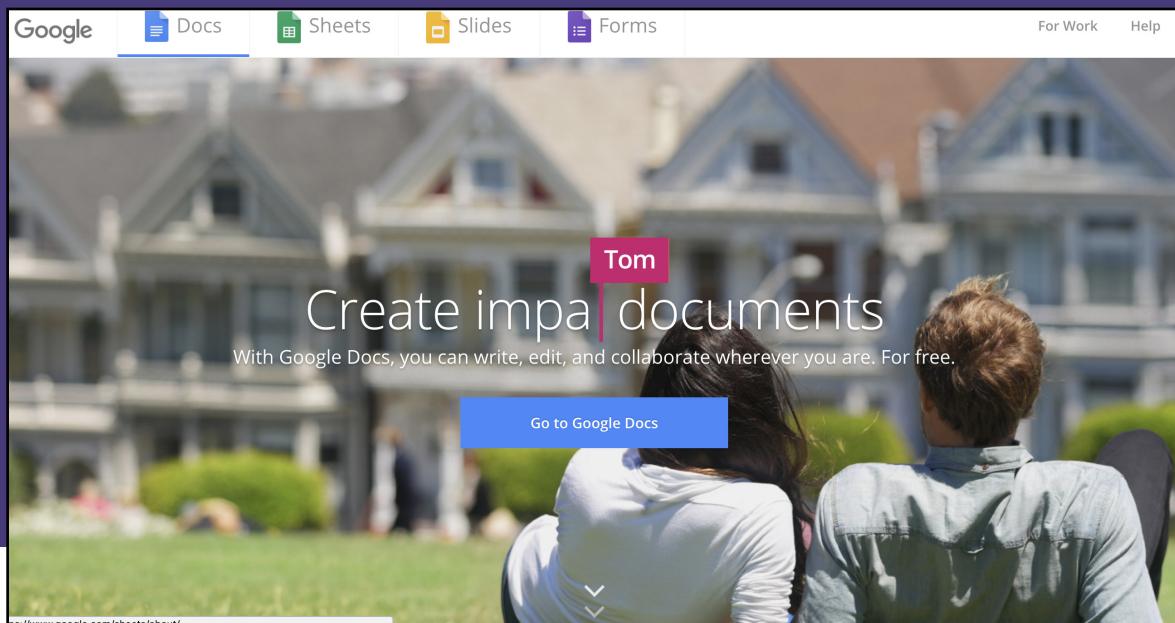
At some point, if you're a baller, your SEO agency is going to outgrow the limitations of an Asana or Basecamp. And, if you're a remote SEO agency, you need to make sure your project management tools are on point.

[Kyle Faber](#), an SEO consultant in Milwaukee, uses Teamwork mostly for team collaboration.

"Teamwork is great for collaboration and communication."

"Audits, reporting, task management, collaboration. All play different roles in getting things done," he said. "Teamwork is great for collaboration and communication. Trekking helps keep boards, cards, and tasks organized (teamwork has this also, but isn't as smooth, IMO), and sheets help keep our data and needs organized beyond how task management works. We also use Google Docs as well."

TeamWork not only provides a better solution for your employees but for your clients.



8. Google Docs

Working on your SEO projects in Google Docs is the easiest way to make yourself feel like an Excel genius with knowledge of pivot tables and formulas without actually having to know how to do them.

Easy-to-use interface and [shared cheat sheets](#) from other SEO pros, make Google Docs a go-to for project planning. (Tell me you miss those days of the #DIV/0! error and I'll beat Takeru Kobayashi's hot dog eating contest numbers.)

Features

With Google Docs, you can do a [site audit like Annie Cushing](#), create an [agile SEO project like Distilled](#), or do some [long-tail keyword research like Mitch Monsen](#).

But, I have to say one of the best features of Google Docs is the [Add-Ons](#).

The Add-Ons allows you to automate the SEO reporting and research process.

For example, [Search Analytics for Sheets](#) is my most commonly used tool in Google Docs. It's a Chrome extension that pulls data from Google Search Console directly into your sheet. So, no more CVS file downloads or manual copy and pasting.

Cost

Surprise, it's free! No gimmicks, no surprises. If you have a Gmail account, you already have access to Google Docs.

Why It's Good for SEO Pros

Between the cloud collaboration functionality and the SEO-specific Add-Ons, it's hard to find anyone who doesn't use Google Docs.

"We use a super powerful, fully automated, custom Google Sheets tool for project management," said [Lucy Kirkness](#), director and head of SEO

at Pandable. "We have a set of sheets which 'talk to each other' to manage all tasks, deliverables, action items, and hands off client campaign reporting. The Google Sheets PM tool also leverages Google Drive for client management, file storage, and reporting.

"Google Sheets is the best tool for our agency as it is fully customizable with endless options for integrating APIs and automation (unlike many project management software). We spend most of our time in Gmail, Gcal, or Gdrive, so this solution enables us to integrate all of our day-to-day processes and communication. Oh, and it's free!"

"We use a super powerful, fully automated, custom Google Sheets tool for project management"

Bonus: More SEO Project Management Tools

While I listed the majority of project management tools that I've worked with in the past for SEO projects, I did get a chance to connect with a few other SEO pros on their favorite project management tools.

[Yoav Rheims](#), webmaster at TestPrep, is a big advocate for Microsoft Office 365.

"I am using these tools to plan reports, checking audits for some tests I made (A/B, technical, etc.)," Rheims said. "Also, love Office 365 for the one price to get enough tools for my team to work together and how easy it became to connect external tools to Microsoft's own ones."

And, [Milos Dosen](#), regional manager at Dejan SEO, uses Freedcamp for his daily project management.

"We now use Freedcamp for task management," Dosen said. "It gave us a solution to combine the flow we liked in Trello with the task set up that we love in Basecamp."

I've never had experience with Freedcamp, but the tool does offer the same benefits of the other free tools list above.

In case you want to try something new, here are a few honorable mentions:



So, What Are the Best SEO Project Management Tools?

If my legal pad was a \$1 soft taco after a long work week, any of these project management tools is burrito and margarita on a three-day weekend.

Like a reset button for my daily routine, these project management tools make every second of working on my SEO clients tastier.

Is there a world of difference in each SEO project management tool? Not really.

Are they all efficient and easy-to-use to use leaving you more time to work on what really matters for your SEO clients? Definitely.

Keep in mind that all of these project management tools are not for everyone. While Asana, Basecamp, Linkio, and Trello offer different features, they all strive to make it just a little easier for an SEO marketer to do their job.

However, I've found the best SEO project management tools for me are a combination of Slack, Google Calendar, Google Docs, and Asana.

Whether you're an experienced SEO or you're new to the business, try out the above project management tools and see how it helps your business.

CHAPTER 10

USING EXCEL FOR SEO: 5 ESSENTIAL TIPS & TRICKS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW



WRITTEN BY
JENNY HALASZ

Excel is beloved by most SEO professionals – and by many paid aficionados, too.

Of all the SEO tools I use on a daily basis, few are more powerful or more versatile than spreadsheets.

While Word, PowerPoint, and Access have their little idiosyncrasies and challenges in daily work, Excel has stood the test of time and continues to be just as valuable as it has ever been.

There is simply no easier way to sort and categorize data quickly with so little input required.

I use Excel daily to sort lists:

- Keyword lists alphabetically.
- Revenue reports by most revenue earned.
- Pages by highest bounce rate.
- And every other thing you can think of or sort by.

Excel is also great for de-duplicating lists. You can easily take a huge list of data, like inbound links, and sort it and remove all the duplicates with a few clicks.

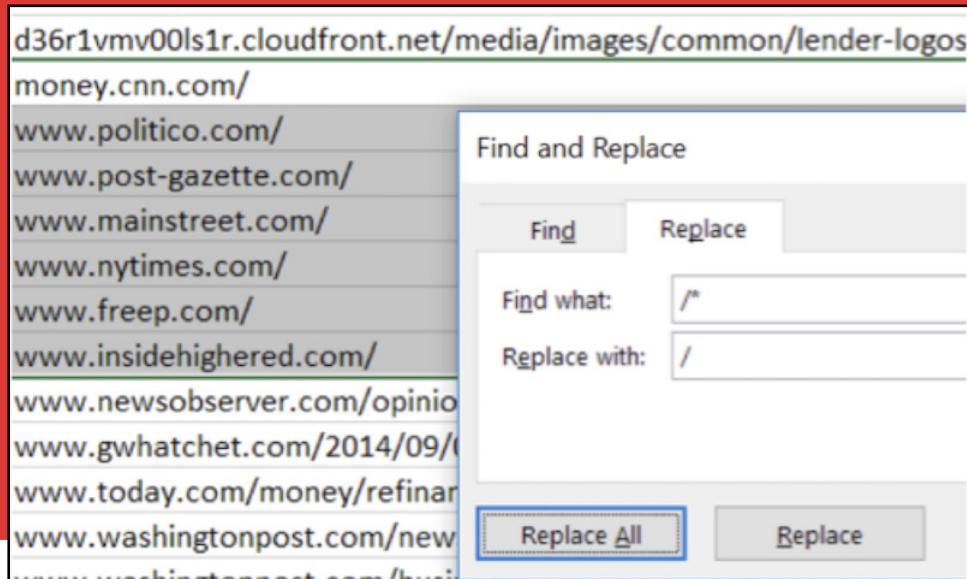
Pivot tables are phenomenal for categorizing and re-categorizing data sets with many values. Want to know how many people clicked on a particular keyword from a particular referral source by the date they clicked? There's a pivot table for that.

And the VLOOKUP command is a poor man's database, perfect for combining lists from multiple places quickly without having to enter all of the data into a cumbersome tool like Access.

Chances are, you already know all these tricks.

So what follows are some things you might not know you can do with Excel.

Note: While this chapter focuses on Excel, you can perform most of these tasks in any spreadsheet program, including Google Sheets.



1. Wildcards

Excel supports the * command as a wildcard.

If you want to cut off part of a data set, it's easy to do.

For example, let's say you have a very large list of links but you only want one sample URL from each domain.

After you find/replace for http:// and https://, you can reduce every single URL to only its top-level domain by finding and replacing for /* – the star is a wildcard that removes everything after the first backslash.

If you want the backslash left on, replace for /.

If you want the / gone, replace for an empty field.

Then you can use that de-duplication function to remove all but one example of every URL.

Source Domain	Source URL	Length
l...ymlm...r.co...r	http://l...ymlm...r.co...r/articledirectory/printart.php?artname=The 6 Key St...r	118
carli...elation...g	http://www.c...elation...g.org/unlock-hip-flexors-work/	58
z...reversescript...ion.ku...info	http://z...reversescript...ion.ku...info/znamehrez-hamstring-exercises.sh...r	74
ja...p...k...lan...d...od...rum	http://ja...p...k...lan...d...od...rum/child-backpack/	46
ca...l...dra...e.co...r	http://ca...l...dra...e.co...r/icon/photos/?p=96	41

2. LEN

This one counts the number of characters in the string.

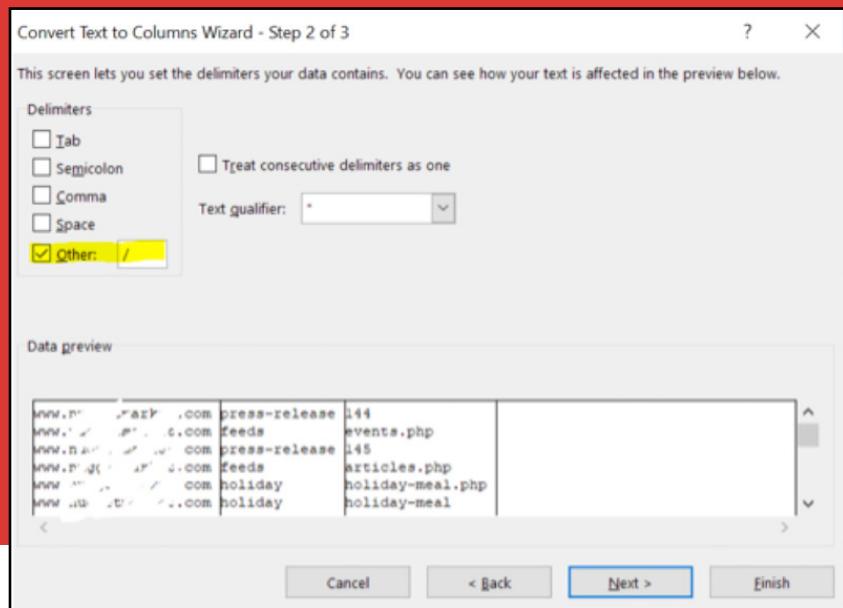
This is great for checking the length of titles or meta descriptions. But it can also be used to bring the longest string to the top.

Taking the previous example, let's say you wanted one sample URL from each domain that you deduplicated, but you wanted an interior page instead of just the top level domain.

You'd take the same steps as above, but instead of editing the URLs in place, you'd copy them to a new column (Source Domain) and edit those instead.

Then, use LEN to find the character length of the Source URL and sort by Col A ascending and Col B descending.

That will bring the longest URL for each domain to the top of the list and then when you de-duplicate, it will save the first instance of that domain – the longest URL.



3. Text to Columns

Text to columns is another brilliant feature of Excel.

You've probably used it to make a .csv file useful, by delimiting the data by commas. But did you know you can actually delimit any character you want?

I use this all the time to delimit by the backslash.

This is a terrific way to take an output from Screaming Frog or another crawler and quickly build out a visual architecture map.

By putting each subfolder in its own column, you can use a pivot table to find out exactly how many pages are in each level, then use the data from the pivot table to quickly build a visual map in something like Visio.

Keyword	Sort
beverages menu list with price	#VALUE!
ideas for alcoholic drinks	#VALUE!
ideas for drinks	#VALUE!
mixed drinks for parties	1
party drinks recipes	#VALUE!
alcoholic drinks for parties	#VALUE!
party drinks	#VALUE!
cool alcoholic drinks for parties	#VALUE!
best mixed drinks for parties	6
fun drinks for parties	#VALUE!
good alcoholic drinks for parties	#VALUE!
drinks for parties recipes	#VALUE!
alcoholic drinks recipes for party	#VALUE!
alcoholic drinks for party	#VALUE!
best alcoholic drinks for parties	#VALUE!
best party drinks recipes	#VALUE!
good party mixed drinks	12

4. Find

The Find function is one of the most useful functions in Excel.

You can use it to eliminate things from lists of keywords.

For example, let's say you have a huge list of keywords and you want to find things that only contain one version of a word (useful when categorizing).

You would start a new column, then use this formula where "word" is the word you want to find.

=FIND("word",B2,1)

This will show you the character count at which that word starts, and an error if the word isn't there at all... like this list where I looked for anything with "mixed":

Just sort by the "Sort" column descending, and you'll bring all the keywords that contain "mixed" to the top of the list.

cnn.com	https://www.google.com/search?q=site%3Acnn.com%20motorola
hln.com	https://www.google.com/search?q=site%3Ahln.com%20motorola
foxnews.com	https://www.google.com/search?q=site%3Afoxnews.com%20motorola
bbc.com	https://www.google.com/search?q=site%3Abbc.com%20motorola

5. Concatenation

Concatenation is great for putting together simple rows of data, but it's even better for automating the creation of a lot of URLs.

Let's say you wanted to search a lot of sites to see if a particular keyword was in text on that site... maybe you're doing a link audit and you need to see if your client's domain name appears anywhere on a list of sites.

You could (theoretically) concatenate a simple list of commands that you could then run in a crawler like Screaming Frog to see if there are any results.

So, hypothetically speaking, you would do this:

Take the command you need to add and put it into a row in excel.

Let's say the site is motorola.com, and you're looking for the word "motorola" on a lot of websites, one of which is www.cnn.com.

Put the site you are searching on in A1. You'll use this command in Excel:

```
=“https://www.google.com/search?q=site%3A”&A1&”%20motorola”
```

If each row in column A has a new value in it, then in theory, you could have a full set of Google commands to put in list mode in Screaming Frog.

Using the Custom configuration, you could look for any results that had “No results found for” motorola.com in the code.

This is all theoretical, of course, because scraping Google is a violation of their terms of service.

Summary

Hopefully now you see many uses for Excel that are beyond the standard mathematical and accounting uses.

Excel is simply the best and fastest way to slice and dice small data sets, and an essential SEO tool that belongs in your arsenal.