

A fresh look at SEO.

Our Goal

Is to craft a content marketing strategy that both
humans and search engines
will love

Two amazing technologies

In the next pages you are going to meet two of Google's most powerful technologies; Hummingbird and RankBrain.

You'll see how they make Google the most intelligent search engine ever built – which is the cornerstone of its success.

Unless you are an SEO expert, you might be meeting these two for the first time, even though they're not new. Even if you know them, you may find that the Hummingbird algorithm and the RankBrain AI don't behave in quite the way you have been told.

That is because there is quite a lot of confusion as to how these two pieces of technology operate, and that means ineffective strategies for making content appear higher on search pages, persist despite long-standing research that shows more effective approaches.

Having said that, many more marketers now understand that there are better SEO strategies than the traditional ones, and it is these we want to explain.

Meet Hummingbird

- Google's current core search algorithm
- Designed to better understand searchers' intent
- Parses phrases not keywords

Hummingbird places emphasis on natural language queries, considering context and meaning over individual keywords.

It looks deeper at content on individual pages of a website.

It has an improved ability to lead users directly to the most appropriate page rather than just a website's homepage.

**This has a
significant impact
on 'traditional'
keyword analysis**

Meet RankBrain

- Machine learning technology
- It interprets searches and returns **related** search results
e.g. trainers ➤ sneakers ➤ sport shoes

RankBrain provides Google with incredible language processing

It can determine the searcher's intent: green cleaning products and eco-friendly cleaning products will yield the same results

RankBrain creates a premium on engagement, freshness, content depth

**This too, has a
significant impact
on 'traditional'
keyword analysis**

What Top SEOs Do Differently

As a result of understanding these two technologies; particularly how they focus on phrases and interpret search terms, SEO practitioners are moving away from just building their content around exact-match keywords

Instead they are:

- Producing comprehensive & semantic-rich content around specific topics (which we call topic clusters)
- Emphasising SEO-friendly site architecture and consistent internal linking
- Aggressively promoting their content through link building, repurposing, paid channels etc.

Research from HubSpot

As long ago as 2015, HubSpot's [Anum Hussain](#) along with other colleagues presented the results of “more than three months of experiments, learnings, analysis” around SEO.

They came up with a content strategy that they summarised as “topics over keywords.” and this is the foundation for what you have been reading today.

In the process, they grew their:

- domain authority from 40 to 60
- weekly organic sessions 13% W/W
- clicks from SERP for one keyword over 1,500%

Some of her key findings were:

- Linking internally really helps ranking positions (as does linking externally)
- Adding related links to old blogs helps the old blog and the pillar page
- The more you write on a single topic and link all the content together, the higher you will rank

If you're interested in how this approach to content strategy was created, [Anum Hussain's article](#) is a fascinating read.

Topic Cluster Methodology

One of the best ways to put Hussain's research into practice is to adopt a topic cluster methodology.

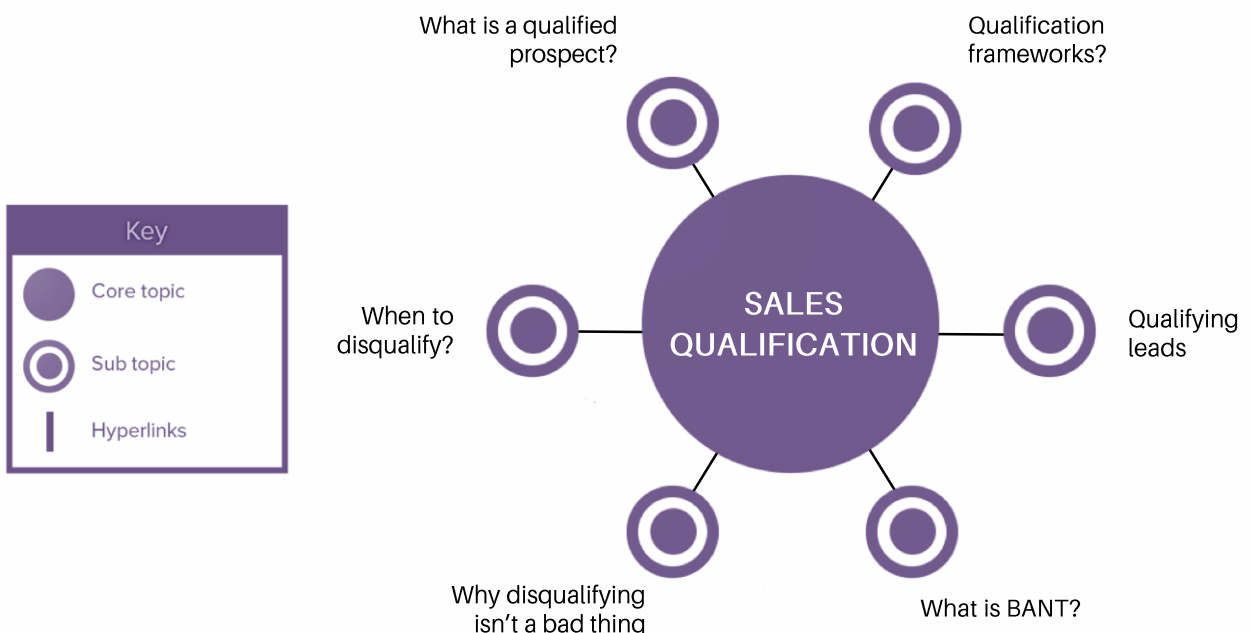
This means having a central ungated 'pillar page' on a topic, such as our studies on [FinTech Lead Generation](#) and [Conversion Rate Optimisation](#) which are both highly relevant to the theme of this eBook, then linking smaller, related blogs to that central page.

Why do this?

Linking relevant internal content within a topic to a pillar page, creates a semantic relationship between the pages' content. Remember how Google technology is focusing on related key phrases, not key words?

Linking topics together generates more depth in the content, which gives the pillar page more authority. Google's RankBrain rewards this linking with higher search placement.

Quick win: Take your existing blogs, group them together by topic, link them to a central long read, thematic page and that will help your content to rank higher over time.

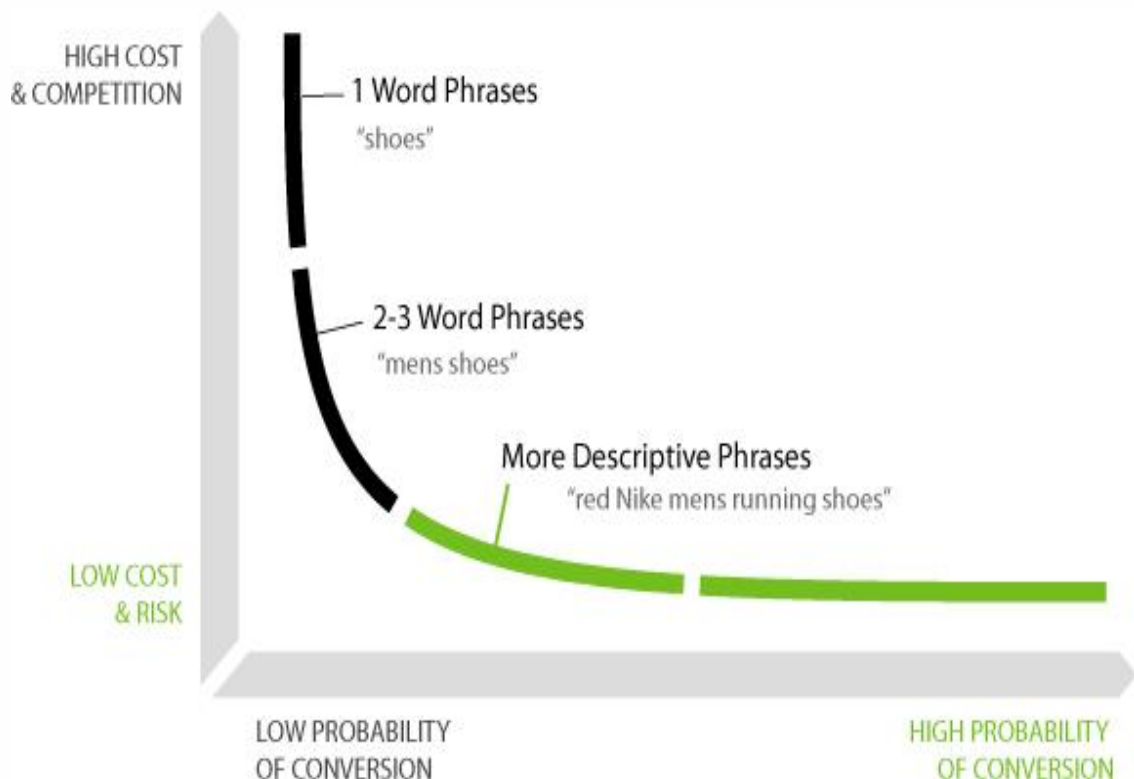


Pillar Content

As we have seen, a pillar page is an **ungated** website page that covers a **core topic** in depth and is linked to a cluster of related content.

The core topic should be a **broad term**.

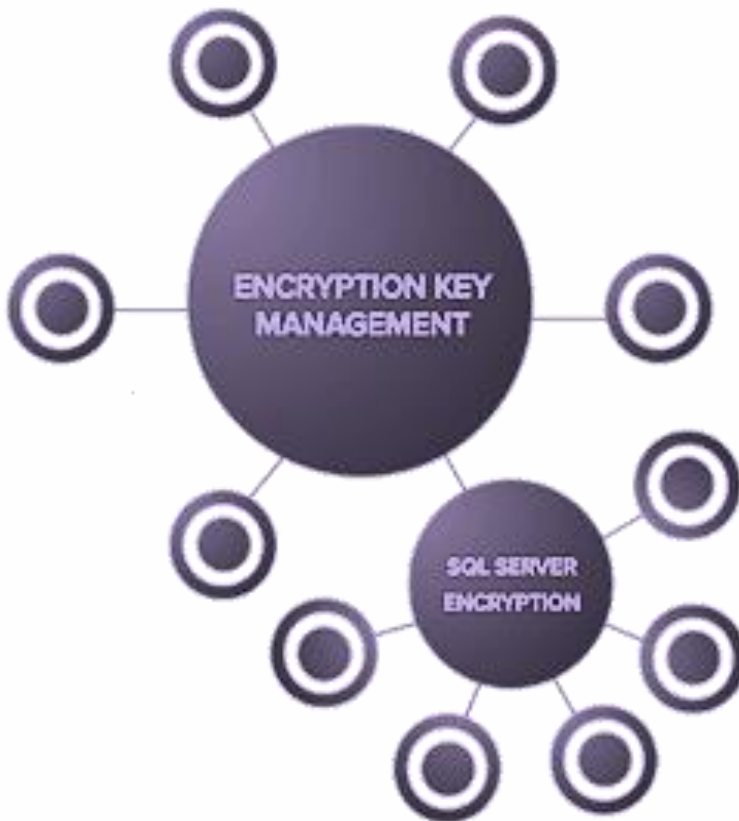
- Between 2-4 words in length
- Industry specific, educational
- Supporting your products or services
- Focus on long tail key phrases (the green area in the graph below)



Topic Cluster Methodology

Over time, your subtopics may well become strong enough to take the shape of a topic cluster and pillar page.

At this point it is time to give your subtopic a pillar page of its own. That means writing a long-format article on the subject, ensuring that all the subtopics you have, link to the new pillar page as well as to the existing pillar page. Link the new pillar page and the existing pillar page together too, as they are relevant to each other.



Pillar Page Layout Tips

Here are some layout tips for your pillar page – remembering that these are long reads so good navigability is essential:

- Reference your core topic in the page title
- Reference your core topic in the URL
- It's a long read, use top navigation
- Reference the core topic in the H1 tag
- Use a landing page for pillar pages, not a blog page
- Put in all the conversion-focused landing page elements you can think of
- It can be helpful to have an anchor-linked table of contents
- Use images with the core topic referenced in the image alt text
- Use H2 tags for section headers
- Sprinkle related core topic terms throughout the page's content
- Add links to all relevant internal resources
- And... add links to relevant external resources
- Be kind to your reader – add a 'Back to top' button

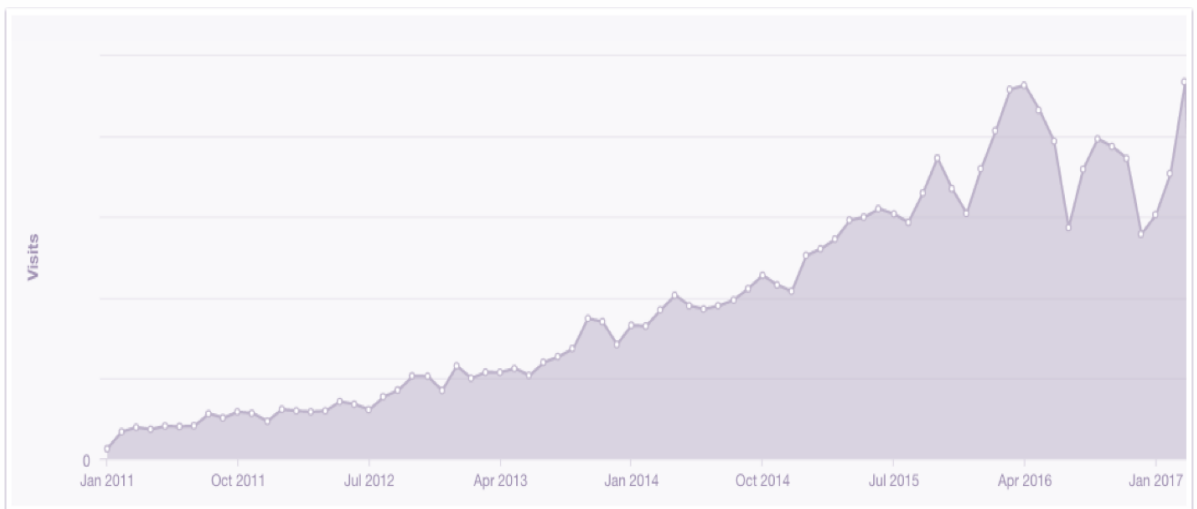
So Does It Work?

“We are receiving about **4x leads** (if you measure by quality) compared to before the text analysis content pillar.”

- Matti, Etuma

Townsend Security decided to create an ungated, comprehensive resource content pillar page around a broad topic.

Unpaid, organic traffic coming from search engines **increased 40% in less than 3 months.**



Content Promotion Checklist

Finally, once you have built your content, you have to promote it. Here's our checklist:

Short-term tactics to do for every piece of content

- Send email series to current contacts
- Create a series of social posts using interesting snippets from content
- Outreach to people who linked to similar content
- Answer five questions on Quora
- Comment on five blog posts on relevant, authoritative sites

Strategic tasks to achieve in the long-term

- Build relationships with industry influencers
- Contribute on industry newsletters
- Guest blog on authoritative websites
- Become active on industry communities
- Boost top-performing content on social media
- Launch remarketing ad campaign
- Syndicate your content
- Update/expand top-performing content
- Repurpose content into new formats
- Continue creating content to support topics

About Us

Flagship Marketing was founded in 2018 to partner with FinTech firms that want to grow more.



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