

# You Need to Understand How People Search

December 19, 2025

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I ignored search intent for probably the first eight years I was in domains. Just didn't think about it. I'd look at a keyword, decide it sounded strong, check if there were any sales comps, and make a buy/no-buy decision. Worked fine until it didn't.

The problem is you're leaving money on the table. Worse, you're buying names that feel premium but have no economic foundation. I've done this more times than I want to admit.

Here's what finally clicked for me: the value a founder feels when they look at your domain - that gut reaction that makes them willing to pay - has an economic foundation. There's a market behind those words. People searching that term. Looking for something specific. Ready to spend money. The founder isn't consciously analyzing this. But you need to understand it because that's what creates the feeling they're responding to.

Now, here's the thing, most founders aren't pulling up search data when they evaluate your domain. I've said this before: they're going on feel, on whether it fits their vision. They're not running keyword reports. But that doesn't mean the search economics don't matter. It means they matter to YOU, not to them. You need to understand the market behind the name so you can price it right and hold your ground in negotiation. The founder feels the value. You need to know where that feeling comes from. The search intent is the invisible foundation. They stand on it without looking at it. You need to look at it so you know what you're actually selling.

If you don't understand that, you're having a completely different conversation than reality allows. You think you're selling a strong keyword. The underlying data shows a term with 50,000 monthly searches that's all "how to" queries and Reddit threads. No commercial intent. No revenue potential. Just traffic that goes nowhere.

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I owned a domain, it was a clean two-word .com that I was convinced was worth mid-five figures. Search volume was solid. The term made sense. Then I actually looked at what people were searching for. Every single related query was informational. "What is [keyword]?" "How does [keyword] work?" "Free [keyword] guide."

Nobody was typing "[keyword] for sale" or "buy [keyword]" or "best [keyword] service." The entire search landscape was people looking for free information, not solutions they'd pay for. I had been holding a domain with zero commercial intent and wondering why nobody would pay what I thought it was worth.

That's the difference between search volume and search intent. Volume tells you how many people care. Intent tells you if they'll spend money. One of those matters way more than the other.

This is also why some exact match domains still have value even though Google stopped giving them special treatment years ago. The SEO advantage is gone, but the search behavior isn't. People still type commercially driven phrases when they want to buy something. The domain still ranks high in their mind even if it doesn't rank on page one anymore.

You don't need to become an SEO expert. You don't need to understand backlinks or schema markup or any of that technical stuff. You just need to understand why someone searches a term and what they expect to find. That's where the commercial power lives.

I started doing this maybe three years ago. I'd look up my best names, check the search volume, then scroll through the related queries and see what kind of intent was behind them. Some names I thought were strong just fell apart. Others I'd never thought twice about suddenly looked way more valuable.

It's not complicated. It just takes a little time per domain. But those minutes will tell you more about what a buyer sees than anything else you can do.

And if you've been ignoring this like I did you're not alone. Most domain investors still don't look at search intent. They rely on instinct and comps and hope it works out. Sometimes it does. But you're guessing. And in a business where you can actually know the answer, guessing is expensive.