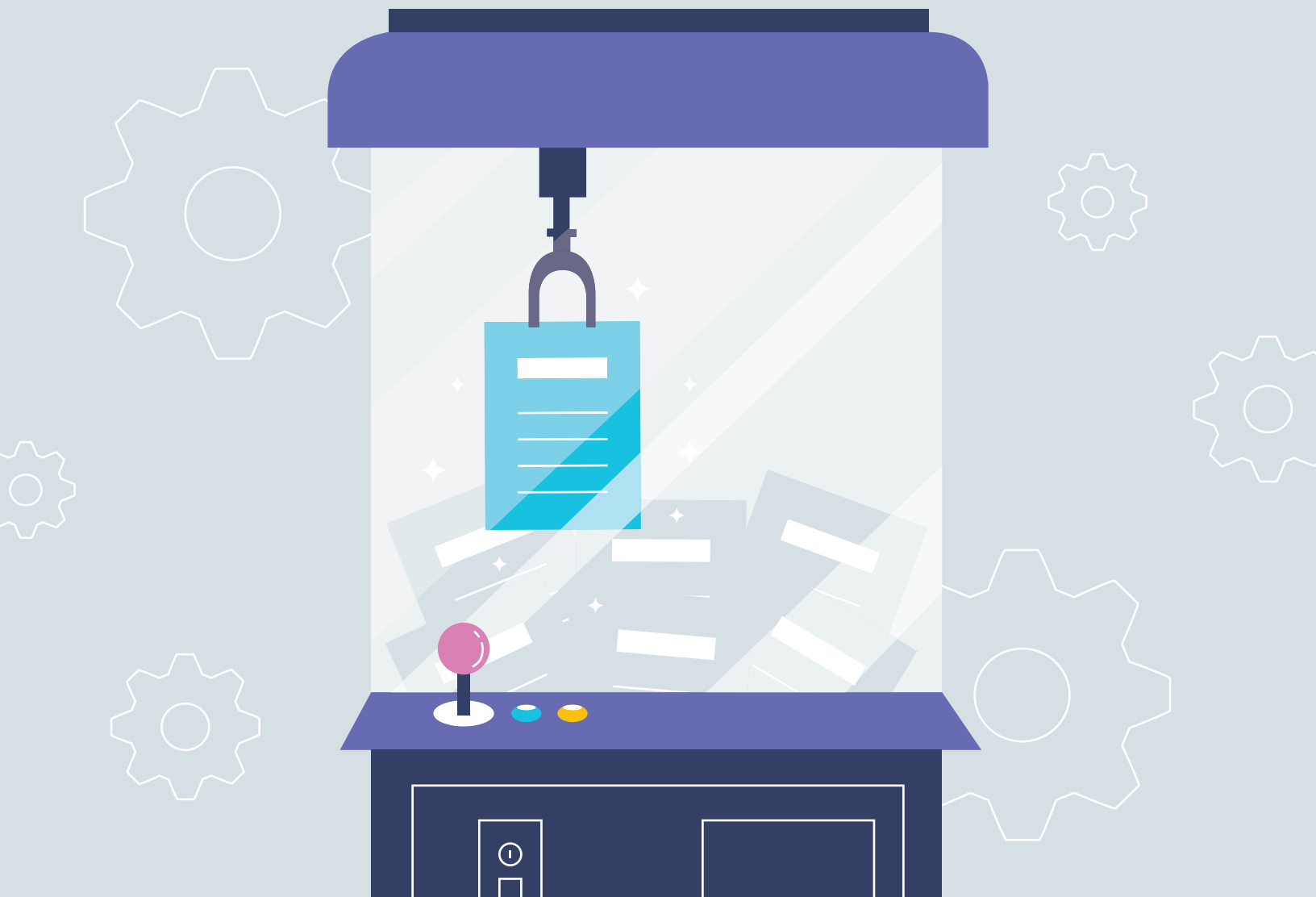


HOW TO USE TOOLS TO DETERMINE WHICH
CONTENT TO RE-OPTIMIZE

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE



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It's a known quantity:

You're only going to be re-optimizing content that has a high potential for return. In this blog post, I'll explain how to identify content with a high potential for return.

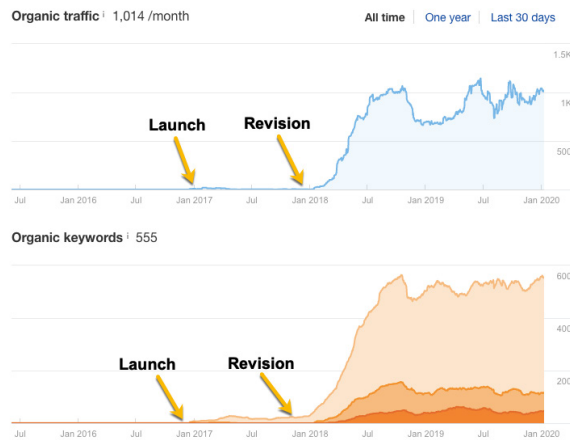
How well does it work?

Brafton's website is a bit of a playground for our marketing team to try new strategies. And that makes sense, because if something goes horribly wrong, the worst case scenario is that **I look like an idiot** for wasting resources, rather than losing a high-paying client on an experiment.

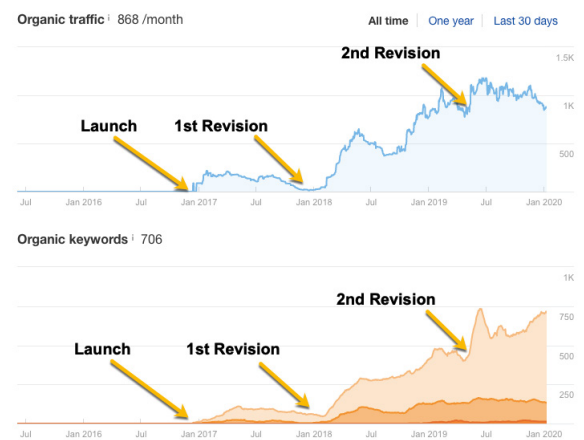
You can't try untested procedures on patients. It's just dangerous.

So we try new strategies and meticulously track the results on Brafton.com. And by far, re-optimizing content results in the most immediate gains. It's exactly where I would start with a client who was looking for fast results.

Example: Top Company Newsletters



Example: Best Social Media Campaigns



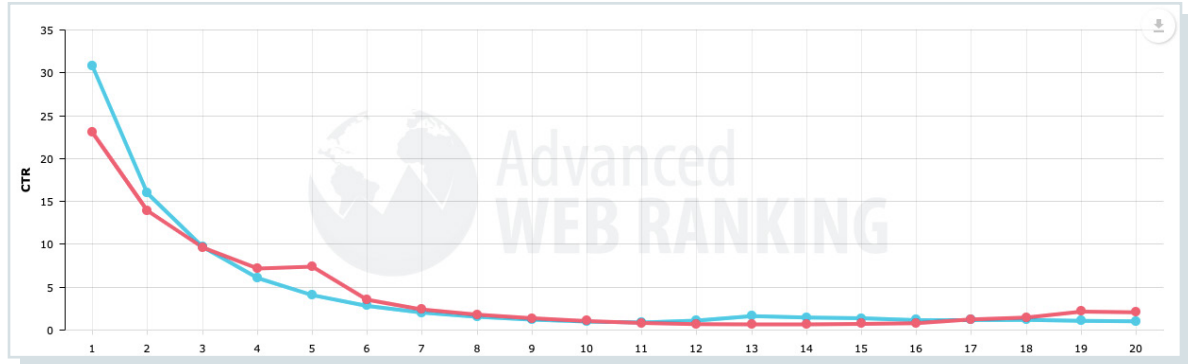
In many cases, re-optimizing content is not a “set it and forget it”, by any means. We frequently find that this game is an arms race, and we will lose rankings on an optimized article, and need to **re-re-optimize our content** to stay competitive. (*You can clearly see this happening in the second example!*)

So how do you choose which content to re-optimize? Let's dig in.

STEP ONE:

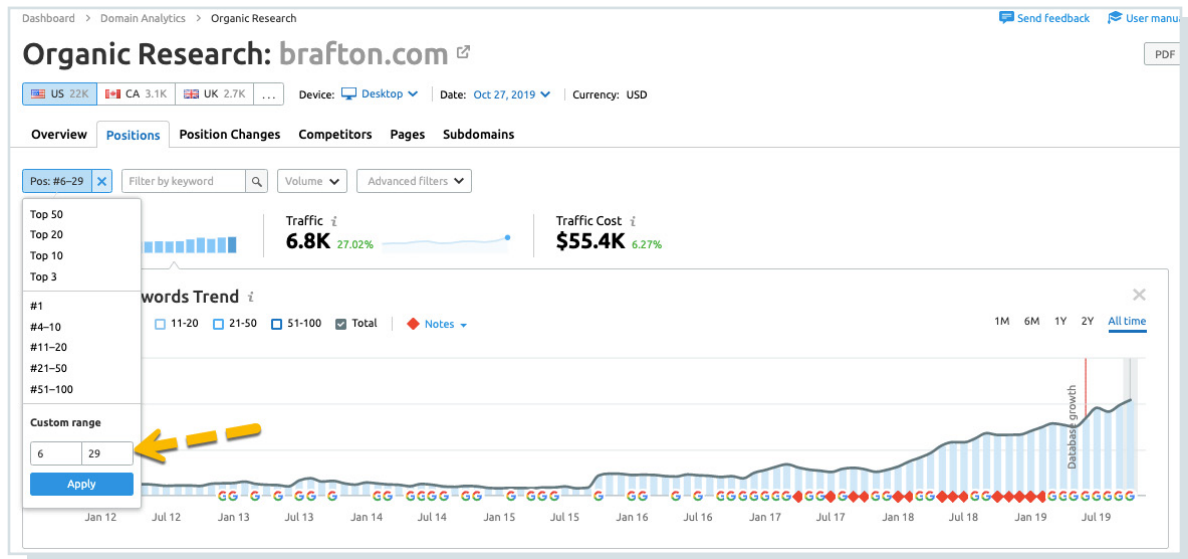
Find your threshold keywords

If a piece of content isn't ranking in the top five positions for its target keyword, or a high-value variant keyword, it's not providing any value.



We want to see which keywords are just outside a position that could provide more impact if we were able to give them a boost. So we want to find keywords that rank **worse than position 5**. But we also want to set a limit on how poorly they rank. Meaning, we don't want to re-optimize for a keyword that ranks on page eleven. They need to be within reach (threshold). **We have found our threshold keywords to exist between positions 6-29.**

Note: you can do this in any major SEO tool. Simply find the list of all keywords you rank for, and filter it to include only positions 6-29. I will jump around a few tools to show you what it looks like in each.



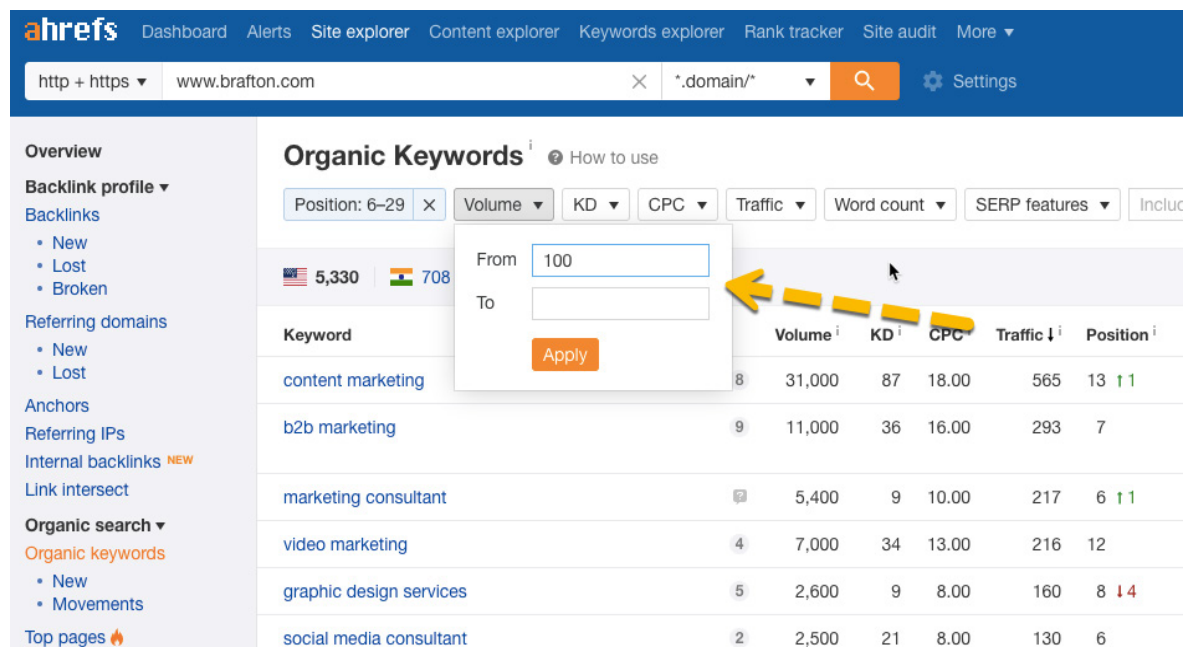
You have now filtered the list of keywords you rank for to include only threshold keywords. Good job!

STEP TWO:

Filter for search volume

There's no point in re-optimizing a piece of content for a keyword with little-to-no search volume. You will want to look at **only** keywords with search volumes that indicate a likelihood of success.

Advice: For me, I set that limit at 100 searches per month. I choose this number because I know, in the best case scenario (ranking in position 1), I will drive ~31 visitors per month via that keyword, assuming no featured snippet is present. It costs a lot of money to write blogs, I want to justify that investment.



The screenshot shows the Ahrefs interface for the 'Organic Keywords' tool. The search bar contains 'http + https' and 'www.brafton.com'. The 'Volume' filter is set to 'From 100'. A yellow arrow points to the 'From 100' input field. The table below shows the following data:

Keyword	Volume ⁱ	KD ⁱ	CPC ⁱ	Traffic ^{↓i}	Position ⁱ
content marketing	31,000	87	18.00	565	13 ↑1
b2b marketing	11,000	36	16.00	293	7
marketing consultant	5,400	9	10.00	217	6 ↑1
video marketing	7,000	34	13.00	216	12
graphic design services	2,600	9	8.00	160	8 ↓4
social media consultant	2,500	21	8.00	130	6

You've now filtered your list to include only threshold keywords with sufficient search volume to justify re-optimizing.

STEP THREE:

Filter for difficulty

Generally, I want to optimize the gravy train keywords – those with high search volume and low organic difficulty scores. I am looking for the easiest wins available.

You do not have to do this!

Note: If you want to target a highly competitive keyword in the previous list, **you may be able to successfully do so** by augmenting your re-optimization plan with some aggressive link building, and/or turning the content into a [pillar page](#).

I don't want to do this, so I will set up a difficulty filter to find easy wins.

But where do you set the limit?

This is a bit tricky, as each keyword difficulty tool is a bit different, and results may vary based on a whole host of factors related to your domain. But here are some fast-and-loose guidelines I provide to owners of mid-level domains (DA 30-55).

TOOL	KW DIFFICULTY
Ahrefs	<10
Moz	<30
SEMrush	<55
KW Finder	<30

Here's how it will look in Moz. Note, Moz has predefined ranges, so we won't be able to hit the exact thresholds outlined, but we will be close enough.

The screenshot shows the Moz Keyword Explorer interface. At the top, there's a search bar with 'root domain' selected and 'www.brafton.com' entered. The location is set to 'United States - en-US'. Below this, it says '4,917 of 5,000 queries available until 11/16'. There's a section for 'Enter additional sites to compare with www.brafton.com to see what keywords you could be ranking for.' with two input fields for 'root domain' and a 'Compare sites' button. At the bottom, there are three filter dropdowns: 'Ranking' set to '#4-30', 'Difficulty' set to '1-30' (with a yellow arrow pointing to it), and 'Volume' set to '101-5b'. There's a 'Reset filters' link. At the bottom left, it says '66 Ranking Keywords'. At the bottom right, there are 'Export CSV' and 'Add to...' buttons.

Now you are left with only threshold keywords with significant search volume and reasonable difficulty scores.

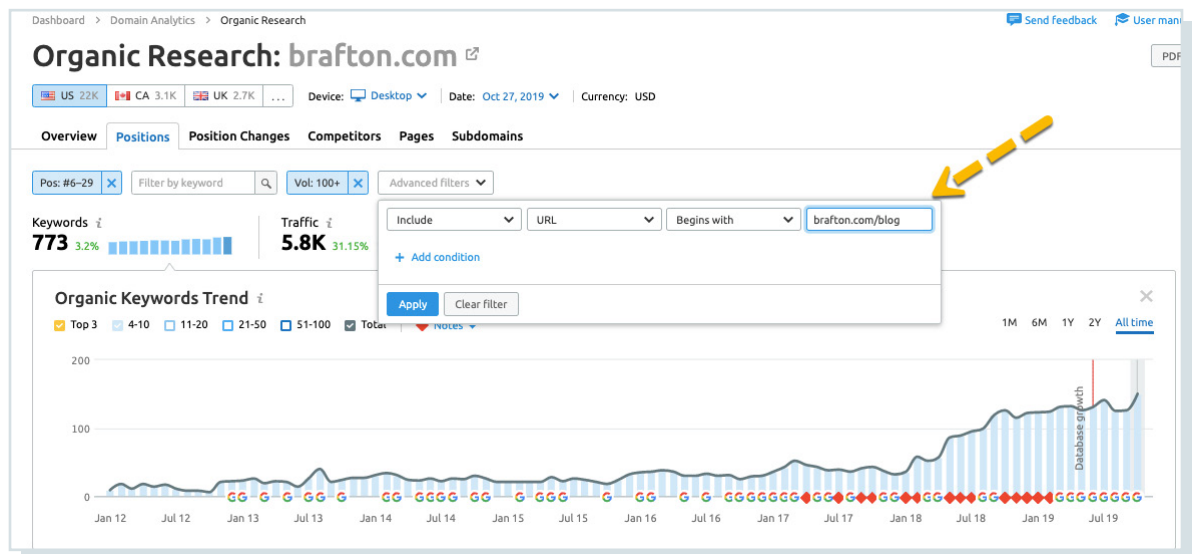
STEP FOUR:

Filter for blog posts (optional)

In our experience, blogs generally improve faster than landing pages. While this process can be done for either type of content, I'm going to focus on the immediate impact content and filter for blogs.

If your site follows a URL hierarchy, all your blogs should live under a '/blog' subfolder. This will make it easy for you to filter and segment.

Each tool will allow you to segment keyword rankings by its corresponding segment of the site.



The resulting list will leave you with threshold keywords with significant search volume and reasonable difficulty scores, from blog content only.

STEP FIVE:

Select for relevance

You now have the confidence to know that the remaining keywords in your list all have high potential to drive more traffic with proper re-optimization.

What you **don't know yet**, is whether or not these keywords are relevant to your business. In other words, **do you want to rank for these keywords?**

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Your website is always going to accidentally rank for noise, and you don't want to invest time optimizing content that won't provide any commercial value. Here's an example:



I recommend exporting your list into a spreadsheet for easy evaluation.

Keyword	Relevant?	Position	URL	Volume	Difficulty
healthcare marketing services	<input type="checkbox"/>	17	https://www.brafton.c	110	54.72
advocacy marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>	11	https://www.brafton.c	210	57.83
hotel digital marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>	23	https://www.brafton.c	110	55.2
remarketing vs retargeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	6	https://www.brafton.c	480	58.94
content management services	<input type="checkbox"/>	15	https://www.brafton.c	110	58.99
bad website design	<input type="checkbox"/>	17	https://www.brafton.c	880	55.57
local seo checklist	<input type="checkbox"/>	9	https://www.brafton.c	110	59.72
website content writing services	<input type="checkbox"/>	18	https://www.brafton.c	140	54.33
sem tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	9	https://www.brafton.c	210	58.57
healthcare content marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>	10	https://www.brafton.c	110	55.88

Go through the entire list and feel out what may be of value, and what is a waste of time.

Keyword	Relevant?	Position	URL	Volume	Difficulty
advocacy marketing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	https://www.brafton.c	210	57.83
remarketing vs retargeting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	https://www.brafton.c	480	58.94
website content writing services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	18	https://www.brafton.c	140	54.33
sem tools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	https://www.brafton.c	210	58.57
components of marketing strategy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	27	https://www.brafton.c	140	58.45
is blogging dead	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	14	https://www.brafton.c	480	59.82
average bounce rate by industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	https://www.brafton.c	110	59.37
funnel metrics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	15	https://www.brafton.c	170	58.44

Now that you have a list of only relevant keywords, you now know the following: Each threshold keyword has significant search volume, reasonable keyword difficulty, corresponds to a blog (optional), and is commercially relevant.

Onto an extremely important step that most people forget.

STEP SIX:

No cannibals here

What happens when you forget about your best friend and give all your attention to a **new**, but maybe not-so-awesome friend?

You lose your best friend.

As SEOs, we can forget that any URL generally ranks for multiple keywords, and if you don't evaluate all the keywords a URL ranks for, you may "re-optimize" for a lower-potential keyword, and lose your rankings for the current high value keyword you already rank for!



Note: Beware, there are some content/SEO tools out there that will make recommendations on the pieces of content you should re-optimize. **Take those with a grain of salt!** Put in the work and make sure you won't end up worse off than where you started.

Here's an example:

[This page](#) shows up on our list for an opportunity to improve the keyword "internal newsletters", with a search volume of 100 and a difficulty score of 6.

internal newsletters	6	100	10	4.00	0.99	15 ↓ 1			SERP	21 Oct
							www.brafton.com/blog/content-marketing/content-to-click-through-the-best-email-newsletters-of-2016/			

Great opportunity, right??

Maybe not. Now you need to plug the URL into one of your tools and determine **whether or not you will cause damage** by re-optimizing for this keyword.

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<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword	● www.braf...	Difficulty	Monthly Volume
<input type="checkbox"/> company newsletter	#1	37	501-850

Sure enough, we rank in position 1 for the keyword “company newsletter,” which has a search volume of 501-850 per month. **I’m not messing with this page at all.**

On the flipside, this list recommended that I re-optimize for “How long should a blog post be.” Plugging the URL into Moz shows me that this is indeed a great keyword to reoptimize the content for.

39 Ranking Keywords				Export CSV
<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword	● www.braf...	Difficulty	Monthly Volume	
<input type="checkbox"/> how long should a video for a blog be	#10	40	0-10	
<input type="checkbox"/> how long should blogs be	#13	38	11-50	
<input type="checkbox"/> how long should a blog post be	#14	38	1.7k-2.9k	

Now you have a list of all the blogs that should be reoptimized, and which keywords they should target.

STEP SEVEN:

Rewrite and reindex

You stand a better chance of ranking for your target keyword if you increase the depth and breadth of the piece of content it ranks for. There are many tools that can help you with this, and some work better than others.

We have used MarketMuse at Braffon for years. I’ve also had some experience with Ryte’s content optimizer tool, and Clearscope, which has a very writer-friendly interface.



Substep One:

Update the old content in your CMS with the newly-written content.



Substep Two:

Keep the URL. I can't stress this enough. Do not change the URL, or all your work will be wasted.



Substep Three:

Update the publish date. This is now **new** content, and you want Google to know that as you **may** reap some of the benefits of QDF.



Substep Four:

Fetch as Google/request indexing. Jump into Search Console and re-index the page so that you don't have to wait for the next natural crawl.

STEP EIGHT:

Track your results!

Be honest, it feels *good* to outrank your competitors, doesn't it?

I usually track the performance of my re-optimizations a couple ways:



1. Page-level impressions in Search Console.

This is the leading indicator of search presence.



2. A keyword tracking campaign in a tool.

Plug in the keywords you re-optimized for and follow their ranking improvements (hopefully) over time.



3. Variant keywords on the URL.

There is a good chance, through adding depth to your content, that you will rank for more variant keywords, which will drive more traffic. Plug your URL into your tool of choice and track the number of ranking keywords.

Conclusion

Re-optimizing content can be an extremely powerful tool in your repertoire for increasing traffic, but it's very easy to do wrong. The hardest part of rewriting content isn't the actual content creation, but rather, the selection process.

Which keywords? Which pages?

Using the scientific approach above will give you confidence that you are taking every step necessary to ensure you make the right moves.

Happy re-optimizing!



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