

When optimizing a website for search, it is critical to target the right keywords as they play an important role in its overall success. Given that, it's not surprising that when a page on a website has a subpar performance in search, many marketers jump to change its keywords. But doing so could be a mistake. Let's take a look at why.

### **Understanding the risk**

If a page on your website is not living up to your standards for success in user engagement (bounce rate, time on site, pages per visit, etc.) it isn't necessarily due to your keyword strategy. In fact, it could very well be something else entirely, such as content, or inconsistencies between keyword strategy and content.

Considering that, it is important to first gain clarity about the issues affecting performance before prematurely changing your keywords. Otherwise, you might find yourself "throwing out the baby with the bathwater" when you toss keywords that seem to be underperforming.

Moreover, be mindful that changing keywords can greatly affect your visibility in the search results. Given that it takes a great deal of time and effort to achieve visibility on certain keywords, you need to consider whether or not any keywords changes are worthwhile.

### ***Taking a closer look***

Your web analytics program can help you best understand the issues negatively impacting a page's performance. By examining your analytics, you will gain additional insight into how the visitors who come to your site through your targeted keywords actually perceive your page compared to the visitors who arrive through other means. Armed with a newfound perspective on your search traffic, you'll then be able to determine your best opportunities for improving your site's user engagement, whether they be at the keyword or content level. Ultimately, you need to strive for alignment between the two. **Five tips to achieving alignment**

Before you give up on a keyword that's not living up to your expectations, first follow the below tips to reassess your content's relevance to your targeted keywords. In doing so, you may find that the keyword you were about to discard may become one of your best just by tweaking the content on your page.

1. ***Compare user engagement by keyword.***

Looking at aggregate data rarely provides actionable insights. Instead, drill down to the keyword level in your web analytics to compare different groups of visitors. How much time are search visitors (who reached your site from the targeted keyword) spending on your page versus those who came from other keywords? Is there a keyword that is bringing down your user engagement stats? Conversely, is there a keyword whose visitors are highly engaged?

### 2. **Consider visitors' next steps**

A low time on page doesn't necessarily imply an unqualified user. If your analytics platform offers a click overlay (a feature that demonstrates where visitors click after visiting a page), take some time to analyze your visitors' next steps. Are they moving closer to making a purchase, or stepping back a page in your site hierarchy? Once you've established common next steps, try to assess why visitors are opting for these paths over others.

### 3. **Reassess your content**

Think about the correlation between your targeted keyword and the content on the page. Are they in synch? Put yourself in the shoes of the searcher, and think about your intention when searching for the page's targeted keyword. What kind of information would you expect to find on the sites that are ranking? Try to think about your landing page from the perspective of the people potentially involved in your B2B buying cycle – the CFO, the CEO, the CTO, etc – and ask yourself if your page is providing enough information for all of them?

### 4. **Analyze the competition**

If you're convinced that your content is in line with your keyword strategy, try visiting a competitor's site, especially if they are outranking you. How is their content organized? What kind of information do they offer that you don't? Again, put yourself in the shoes of the searcher, and consider the competitor's page. What about it would encourage you to send the page to a friend or colleague, or link to it from your website or blog?

### 5. **Conduct a usability or landing page test**

Web analytics can speak volumes, but few things offer more insight than a focus group, usability experiment, or landing page test. Directly asking your target audience about their experience on your website can help to clear up inconsistencies in your keyword strategy and content, and uncover new opportunities to improve your site. For example, landing page testing via Google's Website Optimizer can help turn speculation into confirmation by actually presenting two different groups of visitors with distinct versions of your landing page so you can see which one is more successful at engaging visitors.

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There's no denying the significance of developing an effective keyword strategy. However, it's important to remember that its efficacy is largely dependent on how it aligns with your site's content. In the end, achieving alignment between the two will produce the best performance.