



14 ACTIONABLE WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR TRAFFIC

A handy guide on how to set up your website or blog for success.

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INTRODUCTION

Traffic is the currency of the Internet. High page views directly translate to more lead generation, increased sales, and greater influence within your industry. So then, how do you increase website traffic?

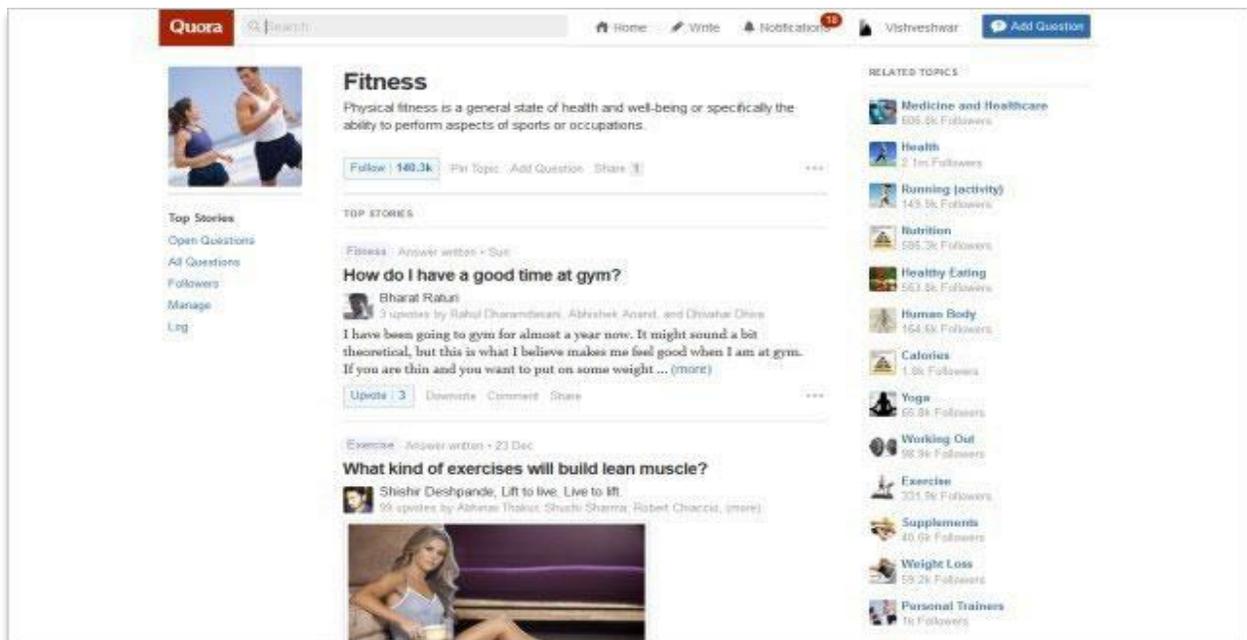
Well, one way is to by outright buying the traffic from ad networks, but that's not a particularly smart or sustainable strategy. You'll have to spend money for each visitor who ever reaches your website, forever. A better strategy is to either create content that users will be likely to share or that which users are already searching for (i.e. organic traffic).

And the only way you can do this by having a blog.

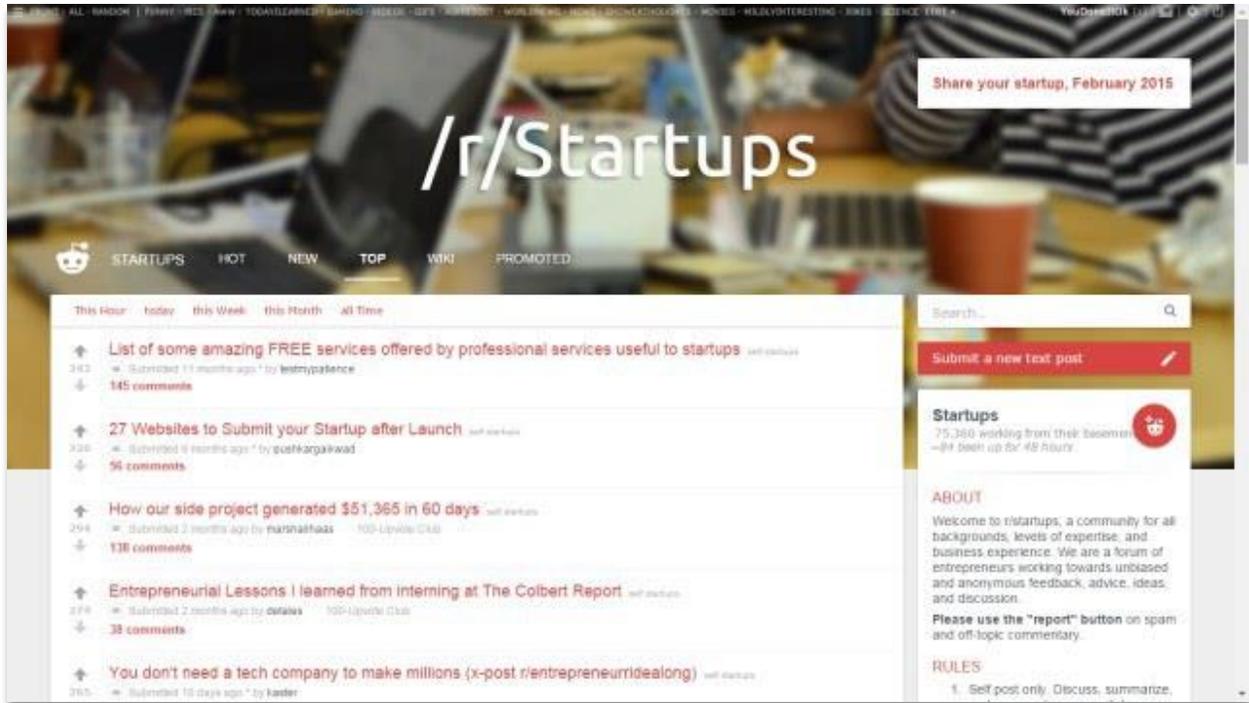
So many businesses ponder over this question: Should our website have a blog? The short answer is yes. The long answer is absolutely. Assuming you already have a blog up and running, or that you've just set it up, here's what you need to do to start driving traffic to it:

GET TO KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Take the time to understand who you're creating something for before you creating. What are the most common problems your audiences face? What is the kind of content that is most popular with them? How can you increase the chances of your content being shared? There are many different ways using which you can gather these insights. Let's discuss a couple of them.



Quora has a topic page on every subject under the sun. When you go these pages, you are presented with the most up-voted recent posts on a single page. This is a great place to gauge the kind of things that people within a particular community are interested in. For instance, the second result on the “Fitness” page features a question about how to build lean muscle. You could spin this as “X Things You Need To Start Doing To Get That Lean Build”; back it up with some research and you have a great story for your blog.



Similarly, Reddit has subreddits for all the topics that you can imagine. Within subreddits, you can browse through new, top, and controversial content, and further sort them according to time.

Using these, you can get a better idea of what kind of content gets popular among this particular audience. Apart from that, it's also a goldmine of great links and resources that you can use to build a story.

For instance, you could browse through the 20-30 most-upvoted links, and then compile all the tools and services mentioned there to create a toolkit for startups.

In the end, you want your content to be shared the most. And how would that happen unless you know how your audience thinks?

CATER TO A NICHE

Unless you're Huffington Post, trying to run a general interest website probably isn't the best idea—it takes more effort to maintain; and establishing your authority as a subject matter expert is significantly more difficult.

Instead, try to keep it focused on your business or a specific theme.

For an example of a website that successfully captured a niche, [look at Freshome](#). It's not that there aren't any other architecture and design related websites on the internet, but Freshome has managed to make itself the most visible one through its relentless drive in finding and featuring the best design related content.

Started in 2007, it now has 74,000+ followers on Twitter, 80,000+ RSS subscribers, 4,50,000+ fans on Facebook, and sees 10 million unique page view everything—pretty much leaving in dust most major brand name architecture and design publications.

By catering to a niche, you're basically making a statement that says, "I'm great on this subject and you would do well by listening to me."

People buy into this perception.

WORK ACCORDING TO A CONTENT STRATEGY

When you play dart, do you ever just aim it towards the roof and then expect it to magically hit the board? Not really, right? So why would you want to do that with content?

Kristina Halvorson, author of the book [Content Strategy For The Web](#), defines content strategist as a person who defines not only which content will be published but also why it is published in the first place.

If you want more traffic or more sales or really more anything on the web, you have to put on your content strategist hat and start thinking about the what, why, who, and how of every piece of content that you create, lest it all be in vain. So think about:

- › What you're creating.
- › Why you're creating it.
- › Who you're creating it for.
- › How will you promote it.

Obviously, this is a bit of an oversimplification, as getting into too much detail about content strategy is beyond the scope of this post, but here's an [expansive guide on content strategy](#) if you're serious about making your content efforts count.

If content strategy is the information inside a book, design is the cover that everyone judges it by. A bad design experience can single-handedly fail an otherwise good website. With technologies like HTML5 and CSS3, today's responsive designs are a far cry from those used just a few years ago. So whether your website is new or if it's been around a while, it could probably do with a facelift if you haven't given it one yet.

Obviously, the quality of what you get depends on entirely on how much you're willing to spend, but the two broad options are to either get a custom design or use a pre-designed template.

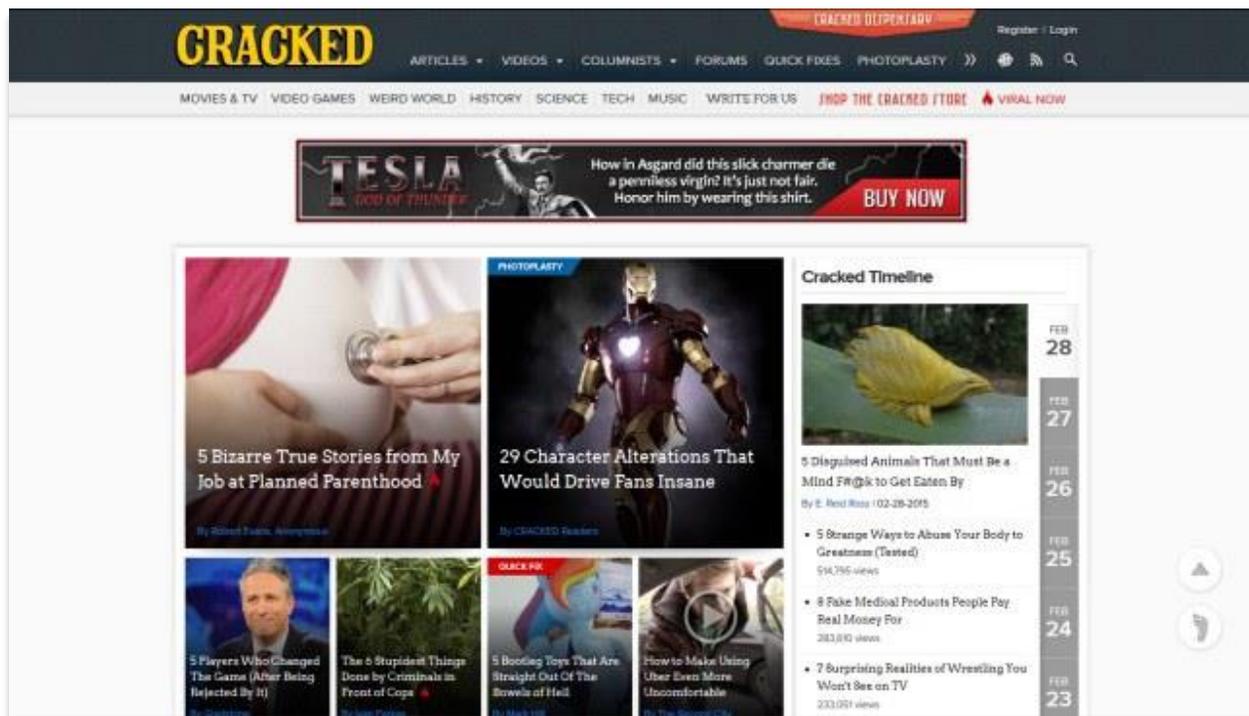
If you're looking for a something bespoke and don't mind loosening your purse strings, you could have [freelance web designers](#) or [professional design agencies](#) to create something specific to your brief. If you're looking for pre-designed templates, online marketplaces such as [ThemeForest](#) and [Template Monster](#) have you covered.

Lastly, remember that the devil is in the details. For instance, posts with social sharing buttons [receive up to 7x more mentions](#), but paradoxically, having too many buttons [can have the opposite effect](#).

So get into a growth hacking mindset and always be on the lookout for the little changes you can make which have big results.

WRITE BETTER HEADLINES

You can create the most amazing content in the world, but if you can't write a headline that grabs people's attention and moves them to take action, it'll never work.



What makes websites like Listverse, Cracked, and BuzzFeed so insanely popular? If there's one common theme that you can see by even just a cursory glance at their content—it would probably be their propensity for list-based stories. And there's a good reason for this.

According to [research conducted by Buzzsumo](#), lists are the king when it comes to headlines; followed by posts that answer the question why and what, and how-to posts. So make sure you use this information to

your advantage when writing headlines and work primarily with these formats.

There's also a couple of handy tools that you can use to test and improve your headlines:

(a) Emotional Marketing Value Headline Analyzer

A free tool will analyze your headline to determine the Emotional Marketing Value (EMV) score. As you know, reaching your customers in a deep and emotional way is a key to successful copywriting, and your headline is unquestionably the most important piece of copy you use to reach prospects.

To test, I entered the headline of this post. Here's the result.



"This score indicates that your headline has a total of 37.50% Emotional Marketing Value (EMV) Words. To put that in perspective, the English language contains approximately 20% EMV words.

And for comparison, **most professional copywriters' headlines will have 30%-40% EMV Words in their** headlines, while the most gifted copywriters will have 50%-75% EMV words in headlines."

A perfect score would be 100%, but that is rare unless your headline is less than five words.”

(b) Headline Analyzer from CoSchedule



Some headline types get more traction than others for social shares, traffic, and search engine ranking. The right amount of words—and characters—can make all the difference in how your audience reads your headlines. And that can dramatically impact click-throughs to read your content. Research proves that readers share emotional and positive headlines with their social networks.

Headline Analyzers helps you write captivating headlines that your audience will share by suggesting small changes that have a big impact.

TRIGGER YOUR READERS' EMOTIONS

Sure, humans are rational beings, but more than that humans are emotional beings. We do so many things because our emotions drive us to do them, often without even realizing it.

If you want an example of a website that's turned emotion-driven content sharing into almost an art form, look no further than Upworthy. The modus operandi is simple—use attention-grabbing headlines to repackage meaningful videos, pictures, and stories. But they do it well. They do it so well, in fact, that they now receive over 27 million unique visitors a month. What's happening here?



In a research titled, *[“What Makes Content Go Viral?”](#)*, two University of Pennsylvania professors studied 7,000 NYT articles to discover the factors that contribute to higher sharing of content.

They found that articles that inspire anger, awe or anxiety in readers gets shared more than, let’s say, those that inspire sadness.

Create content that surprises, informs, inspires, uplifts, and motivates your readers.

Occasionally, you can even risk pushing their buttons for the right cause and playing on their fear of missing out on something. But please never bore them or make them sad.

If you’re going to remember one thing, remember this: Positive emotions work better than negative emotions, and strong emotions outperform weaker emotions.

OPTIMIZE CONTENT FOR SEARCH ENGINES

At the time of writing this, about 50% of all the traffic that this blog has ever received came from search engines, with the remaining 50% coming from direct, referral, social, email, and other sources.

This is a source of traffic too big to ignore.

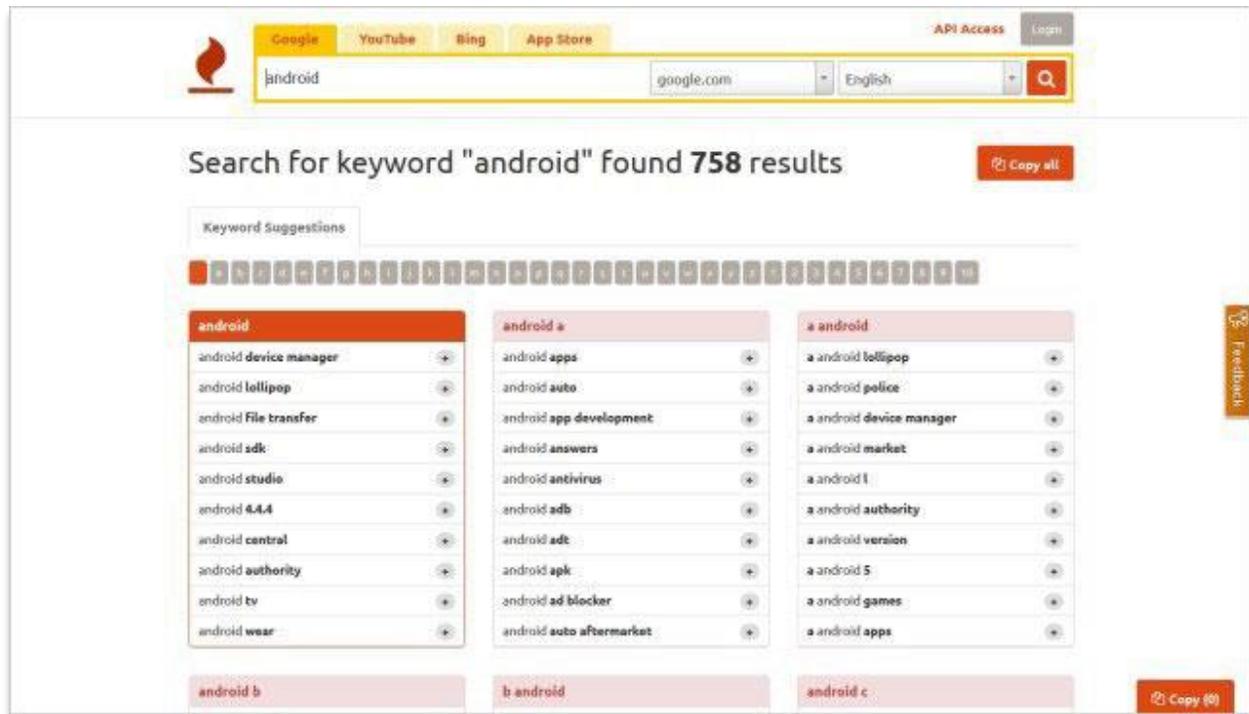
Optimizing your content for search engines takes little effort and if done right, yields sustainable results over time.

Unfortunately, beginners and people outside the industry tend to see SEO as some sort of cheap trick where you stuff keywords on a page in the hope that it will somehow make the post more attractive in the eyes of the search engine. This is not so. It's much more than that.

The first step while writing search optimized content is doing a thorough keyword analysis.

There are quite a few tools that can help you get this done, but here we'll focus on the few that are most effective.

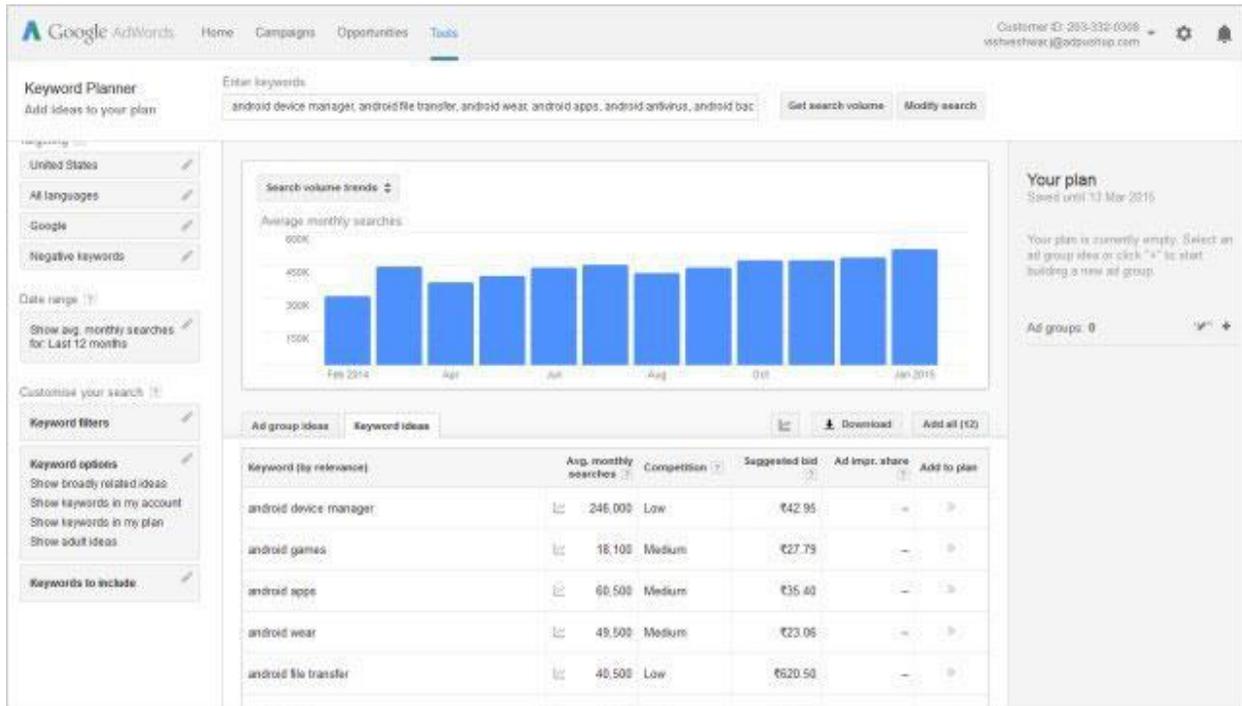
[Keyword Tool](#) helps you use Google Autocomplete for keyword research. It extracts Google suggestions and presents it to you in a convenient form. To generate long-tail keyword suggestions, Keyword Tool prepends and appends the term, which you specify with different letters and numbers.



Wait, hang on! What are long-tail keywords? And why should you focus on them? Here's how the guys at Yoast describe it:

"Keywords that are more specific (and often longer) are usually referred to as long tail search terms. Long tail keywords are more specific and less common. They focus more on a niche. It's much easier to rank for long tail keywords than for more common keywords. Another benefit for focusing on long tail keywords is that, although these keywords are used less in search, the visitor that finds your website using them is more likely to buy your service or product."

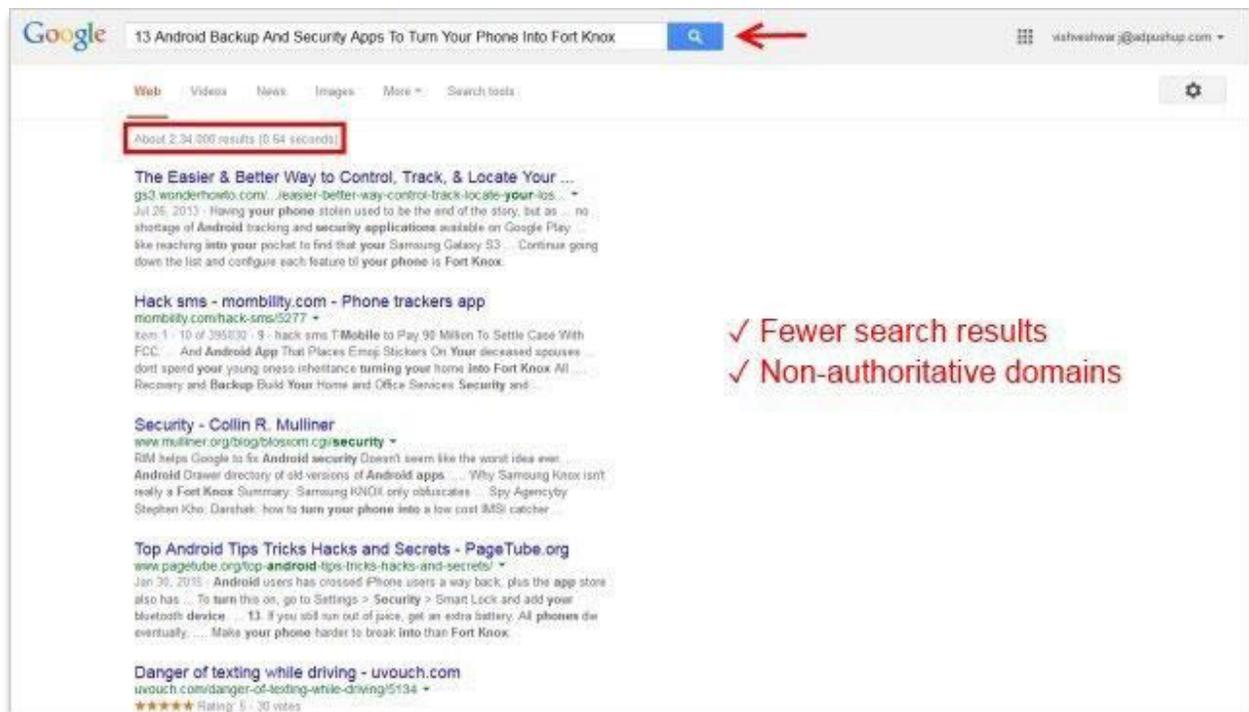
Once you've selected keywords you'd like to create content for, it's time to test them for competition. There's no better tool for this than Google's Keyword Planner. You can get search volume for a list of keywords that you can either enter manually or using a CSV file.



Keyword Planner will now give you the estimated monthly search traffic that each of these keywords receives.

It may be difficult to rank on something that's heavily searched, at the same time, anything that receives less than 500 searches a month may not be worth your time.

Choose keywords that have search traffic between 500 to 5000 searches, then try different headlines in Google with those keywords, if you come across a result that doesn't have too many authoritative posts listed on the first page of search—you should write it.



Now that you're done with the planning, it's time for on-page SEO optimization. Thankfully, there are multiple plugins now that do a great job of helping you optimize your post for search engines. Most of them work have a check-list that prompts you to ensure certain specific things such as set a focus keyword, write a meta description, and include the keyword in multiple places before you hit publish to ensure that your post is optimized for that particular keyword.

Few of the most highly-rated WordPress plugins are [WordPress SEO by Yoast](#), [All in One SEO Pack](#), and [SEO Ultimate](#).

LEARN HOW TO MARKET YOUR CONTENT

Creating great content that's optimized for search engines is only one part of the picture when it comes to driving up page views. Half of the picture, to be precise. The other half must be social sources, but what works on one network may not necessarily work on the others.

So, which networks should you distribute your content on?

(a) Facebook: Facebook is usually the largest source of social traffic for most blogs and websites. And although it now charges money to promote your content, there are still open and closed groups for specific communities where people interact on a daily basis. These are good places to promote your website, provided that you're actually posting something of value.

(b) Twitter: Unless you already have 100,000 followers on Twitter (congratulations if you do), just throwing a tweet out there about your new post isn't going to really break the internet. Instead, try to think of Twitter as a medium to reach the right people and somehow get them on your side. Having an influencer retweet your tweet has a multiplier effect. Other than this, you should also regularly re-post older content from your blog on Twitter, with slightly altered headlines each time, this helps you get more out of the same content, and increases readership by reaching those who may have missed it the first time.

(c) Discovery and bookmarking sites: Websites like Pinterest, Digg, StumbleUpon, and Delicious allow users to bookmark, discover, and share interesting content across many different subjects ranging from astronomy to fashion. Whenever you create something new, be sure to submit it to these websites so that your content has higher chances of being discovered by users online. [Here are 50 more such websites.](#)

(d) Communities: Online communities like subreddits in Reddit, Triberr, Inbound.org, GrowthHackers, Google+ communities, LinkedIn groups, Hacker News, and others are great places to reach a large number of people, but you have to be careful.

Blatant peddling of your own brand is almost universally frowned upon and on moderated communities such as Reddit, it can even lead to bans.

To avoid this, always aim to post the right content in the right community, so for instance, don't post cat gifs in r/startups (no matter how good the gifs).

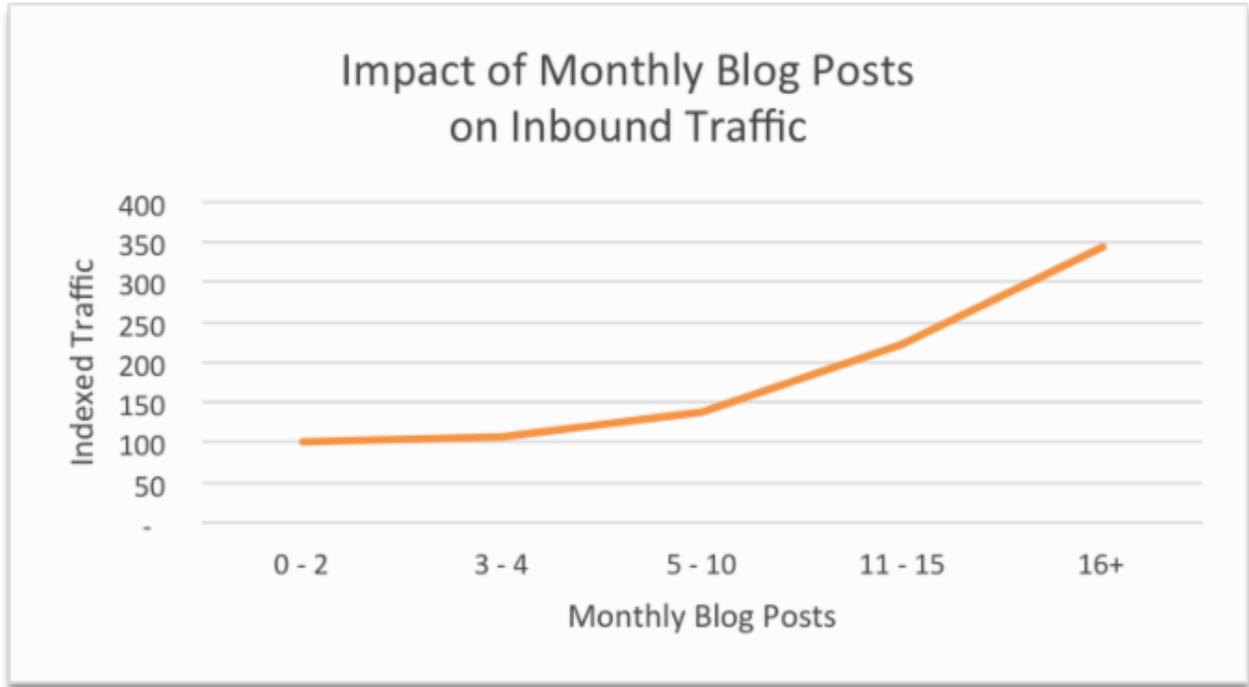
(e) Directories: Blog directories such as Alltop and Technorati can help new blogs gain audience, get more targeted traffic, and generate high-quality backlinks. Here's a [list of 131+ such blog directories](#) you can submit your blog to.

Can you automate this and make it less tedious? Yes! Once you have these basics in place, you should move on to scheduling your content distribution by using services such as the [Buffer App](#) and even further simplify the process for yourself by using task automation apps such as [IFTTT](#) and [Zapier](#).

INCREASE THE FREQUENCY OF POSTING

[Lindsay Kolowich](#), Hubspot blog's lead writer, shared [this amazing research](#) breaking down the frequency of publishing content.

She found that **companies that published 16+ blog posts per month got almost 3.5X more traffic than companies that published between 0 - 4 monthly posts.**



[Kristi Hines](#) wrote a brilliant post on the KISSmetrics blog on [How to Get Google to Index Your New Website & Blog Quickly](#).

We recommend you give it a thorough read because she definitely knows what she's talking about.

DON'T IGNORE EMAIL MARKETING

Make your readers an offer they can't refuse. Give them something of value (the most popular example is an eBook) in exchange for their email and their permission to be contacted. This way you can build an email list that you can use to promote your content in the future and create a hedge against any fluctuation in other traffic sources.

At AdPushup we use GetResponse as the email marketing software of our choice. Since its implementation in the beginning of January 2015, we've been able to amass 2.5x email subscribers than what we had in the beginning.

We send a weekly newsletter that has an average unique open rate of 22.17% and a click through rate 4.84%, which has helped us build an army of loyal subscribers.



GENERATE BACKLINKS FOR YOUR CONTENT

Backlinking entails websites with quality content linking out to your content as a valuable resource. Now this can either:

- › Happen *naturally* (long term strategy; you establish yourself as an authority so that people regularly link to your posts)
- › Or *unnaturally* (short term strategy; you reach out to industry leaders or customers and request them link your posts in theirs.)

How do you get the right kind of back-links?

- › Write valuable content mentioning industry leaders and then let them know about it. Create useful lists. Neil Patel naturally linked out to [one of our posts](#) in his blog post. [Here's the link](#) to his article.
- › Create viral content. Independent bloggers and large publications will immediately pickup on such stories and link back to you if your content is valuable, thrilling or even entertaining.
- › Build something of real value. If your blog is intelligent and informative then it will automatically encourage link building.
- › If you have created something of value, then reach out to your customers or other influencers in your niche and request them to link back to you.
- › For even more tactics, we thoroughly recommend that you read [this list of link building strategies](#) from Brian Dean of Backlinko.

Pratik Dholakia shares another popular link building strategy:

Here's another white-hat link-building strategy that can be quite effective. In this case, you're actually helping publishers fix broken links, which can be helpful to their readers. However, this only works if your content is good enough to replace the lost content.

To do the broken link-building method, you must find broken links on a site that is relevant to your niche.

You then contact the webmaster with the broken link and recommend your site as an alternative to the broken link. To find out more, you can read the [broken link-building Bible](#) at the Moz blog.

— [Pratik Dholakiya, E2M Solutions](#) (via [SearchEngineWatch.com](#))

INCREASE SESSION DURATION AND DECREASE BOUNCE RATE

Why should you worry about session duration?

Because the longer visitors interact with a particular web page, the higher Google ranks that page.

How to increase session duration?

- › *Increase internal linking* by linking back to your previous posts.
- › *Add 'Related Posts'*, if you're using WordPress, then we recommend the [JetPack plugin](#) for this feature. It's working pretty well for us.
- › *Add a 'Popular Articles' section*, like QuickSprout Blog does.

Why should I worry about bounce rate?

Because your visitors are not finding your content valuable or relevant to their search.

How do you decrease bounce rate?

- › Write valuable, in-depth content
- › Improve your UX & UI (quick navigation, content divided into sections, responsive design, less page load time).

CREATE “EVERGREEN” CONTENT

Look at any popular web site or blog and you’ll notice that they almost always have a few landmark posts that as meticulously researched and brilliantly written, posts that are clearly a cut above the rest. These posts usually go on to become authority pieces in their concerned subjects that other people love to link to—thereby increasing its value as time goes by.

Some people like to call this “evergreen” content, which as the name suggests, is something largely immune to the passing of time because of the way that content is created. The [Beginner’s Guide to SEO from Moz](#) is an excellent example of evergreen content.

WELCOME SITE RANKING indexing

THE BEGINNERS GUIDE TO SEO

Let's Get You Started
In the wonderful world of SEO!

New to SEO? Need to polish up your knowledge? The Beginner's Guide to SEO has been read over a million times and provides comprehensive information you need to get on the road to professional quality Search Engine Optimization, or SEO.

The Beginner's Guide to Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is an in-depth tutorial on how search engines work. This guide covers the fundamental strategies that make your website search engine-friendly. Download your copy of the world's most-read guide on SEO!

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CHAPTER 1	How Search Engines Operate	CHAPTER 6	SEO Usability, Experience, & Content-Affect Rankings
CHAPTER 2	How People Interact With Search Engines	CHAPTER 7	Tracking Popularity and Links
CHAPTER 3	Why Search Engine Marketing is Necessary	CHAPTER 8	Search Engine Tools and Services
CHAPTER 4	The Basics of Search Engine Friendly Design & Dev.	CHAPTER 9	Myths & Misconceptions About Search Engines

For comparison, consider this: A post such as “Top 10 Celebrity Moments at the Oscars 2015” will see heightened reader interest during a specific, brief period of time before it becomes irrelevant. Now compare this with something like, “100 Most Gripping Crime Drama Movies Ever Made,” and you’ll instantly notice the appeal and longevity of the latter. Sure, it takes more effort to create such content, but it yields better returns in terms of user interest, in the long run.

Apart from just user interest, longer posts also have an SEO advantage, as explained in [this post on the serplQ blog](#). The highest-ranking websites had more content on average than websites that were ranked lower in search, with the sweet spot being somewhere around 2,450 words per post.

[Chris Fielden of Moz says](#) that these are the things that you need to do in order to create and maintain a successful evergreen post:

- › Find something your target audience wants
- › Give it to them
- › Keep the content fresh with regular updates and improvements
- › Listen to user suggestions and make changes accordingly
- › Listen to user suggestions about other resources they might find useful, and create them

HARNESS THE POWER OF GUEST BLOGGING

When you're just starting out on your website or blog, it may be difficult to attract users via organic channels, no matter how good the quality of your content.

This is because search engines take into account factors like how old the domain is and how much content the website has in total into its ranking algorithm, amongst other factors. Other than paying for traffic, there's little you can do to remedy this.

One thing that you can do though is start guest posting at other already popular blogs and later, once you reach a certain level of visibility, allowing people to guest post on yours.

Apart from the fact that guest posting helps you establish your online presence, it also helps drive traffic to your website, and increase your domain authority—given that the links you're receiving are from high-ranking domains.

The popular social media scheduling app Buffer relied heavily on guest posting as part of their initial promotion strategy, eventually acquiring up to 100,000 users just from it, and establishing themselves as one of the industry's leading blogs in the process.

Here's what Leo Widrich, the co-founder of Buffer has to say about it:

"We have built an internal analytics dashboard that would show us how many signups we are getting every day and where they are coming from. There was nothing else we did, literally. Just guest blogging."

A more recent example is when Alex Turnbull, CEO and founder of Groove, [explained how guest blogging](#) across other popular blogs such as Buffer, KISSmetrics, OnStartups, and AngelHack helped them reach over 1 million people:

"There's no faster or cheaper way to reach massive audiences than guest blogging. By leveraging existing audiences in a way that delivers value, you create opportunities for exponential growth."

But wait a minute, I hear you say. Why would anyone accept my guest post when no one even knows me?

Well, start small. Instead of reaching out to the big guys right at the start, go ahead and pitch great stories to smaller blogs first.

Once you have a few published blog posts under your belt, pitch to bigger, more established blogs and show them where you've been published before.

It often works as a rite of passage where bloggers become more receptive to your pitches when they know that your posts have already been accepted and published at other places.

GET EXPERT HELP

In the beginning, when you're still in process of establishing your own online presence, it pays to be noticed by or be seen associating with industry experts. It helps build your credibility and join the conversation. And by this, we don't mean sending people unsolicited LinkedIn request asking them to do you this favor and that favor.

We're talking about a symbiotic relationship where both parties stand to gain something from each other. Here are a few ideas how you can use the influence of others to your advantage:

Round-ups: Pick a subject that matters deeply to a certain category of people, for instance, revenue matters to publishers, and nutrition matters to fitness freaks. Make a list of people who talk extensively about said subjects and are widely seen as experts in their fields.

Once you've done that, it's time to frame your concept. "We Asked 15 Top Bloggers What You Can Do To Increase Ad Revenue In 2015, Here's What They Said" and "10 Fitness Experts Weigh In On The Cardio Vs. Weights Debate" are examples of story concepts.

Lastly, start emailing the experts on the list you made explaining your story concept, eliciting their response. Though you won't have a 100% response rate, with some luck, you should have enough material for a stellar post.

Quote posts: This is similar to round-ups, except instead of asking the experts for responses, you search for what they've already said or written previously about a particular subject, and compile the list in one post. Once you have published the story, send all the experts that you've quoted a brief email stating that you have quoted something they said in a post and would love it if they could share it on their social networks. In most cases (it may take follow-ups), people oblige.

Interviews: Last but definitely not the least, conduct interesting interviews. A couple of formats are always a hit with people such as success stories and tell all interviews. Great interviews always have universal themes with multiple takeaways that readers can apply to their own life situation, or at least be inspired by, which increases its sharability. An interview that gets too specific may hold very strong interest for a few, but it probably won't get you huge traffic.

You get the traffic. They get to bolster their *expert* image. It's a win-win for both.