

The handy Vuzo guide to top SEO marketing challenges and how to overcome them

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Whether you're Head of Marketing, Ecommerce Manager, or Acquisition Lead, anyone in charge of more than one marketing channel has a lot of plates to keep spinning, a lot of data to keep track of and, more importantly, a lot of targets that must be met.

We talk to lots of marketing heads and typically find they fit into one of two categories:

1. They know their stuff; they can optimise a PPC campaign in their sleep, they fix 404s for fun and Google Analytics is their most visited site. Unfortunately, time doesn't allow them to be so hands-on anymore. Between reading reports, actioning recommendations, keeping on top of all the HR that goes with any job and putting out at least half a dozen fires a day, being as hands on as they'd like just isn't practical.
2. They're a data whizz, and many years ago they started out writing copy or optimising campaigns, but these days they're paid for their ability to manage strategies overarching campaigns. One glance at a report and they can see instantly where their CPA is too high, where budget reallocation needs to happen and already have a good handle on what next quarter or even next year's challenges are going to be. Like those in the first category, their only challenge is time: too much data, and not enough time for action.



Even a full-service digital agency will sometimes have an unconscious bias

If either of these sounds like you, the good news is that there's one very easy solution (at least in our experience)! That is, making sure the data is gathered correctly in the first place, and analysed for key insight, and then presented in a clear and concise manner. Here at Vuzo we:

- Make sure the data coming through accurately, no matter its source;
- Make sure the data coming through is the right data, and actually deriving actionable insight;
- Make sure the data coming through is presented in a way that it doesn't need lots of time to interpret, extract relevant points, and present for senior or business wide buy in.

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The problem with traditional data analytics agencies is that many don't start with the right set of data. Obviously, your web analytics data can be invaluable (assuming it's set up correctly to begin with), but it isn't the be all and end all. Even a full-service digital agency will sometimes have an unconscious bias towards their own channel services.

In this useful little guide, we answer some of the more common digital marketing questions we have come across, including:

1. How do you improve your click through rate (CTR)?
    - Are you optimising/ranking for the wrong keywords?
    - Are your organic listings displaying properly?
2. How do you improve your SEO conversion rate (CR)?
    - Choosing the right SEO keywords
    - Improve conversation rate by ensuring users are landing on the right page
3. Why is Google ranking the wrong URL?
    - Does the right URL exist?
4. What are the next steps for conversion optimisation?

CTR is subjective - it's important to remember that one size doesn't fit all



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1. How Do You Improve Your Click Through Rate (CTR)?
CTR is subjective, and whilst there are plenty of top line metrics that will give you an 'average' CTR, it's important to remember one size doesn't fit all. Organic CTR will vary significantly depending on industry and sector, User location, keyword, device and whether you have a whole host of search engine results pages (SERP) features to also compete with. If your organic CTR is too low, here are a few areas we'll investigate first:

Business should lead SEO, not the other way around

Are you optimising/ranking for the wrong keywords?
We often have clients come to us with a website optimised for specific keywords because their old SEO agency told them it was a good keyword. It had a high search volume and relatively low competition and was deemed a good keyword from an SEO perspective.

So why is this a problem? Business should lead SEO, and not the other way around. Just because a keyword looks good to an SEO, doesn't mean it's a good fit for the business. Deciding which keywords and phrases to optimise a website for can take time, testing, and evaluating. Before we start any keyword research we like to ask:

- What keywords are already generating clicks and impressions and which have been actively optimised vs natural?
- What words do your customers and potential customers use when talking about your products or services? Social listening can be a good starting point from social media but an in-depth Customer Review Analysis using ReviewLab will provide even more accuracy.
- What's worked well from a paid perspective? Which campaigns and keywords did better than others? What does the CTR, cost per acquisition (CPA) and conversion rate (CR) look like? Are they doing to customer landing pages or the same organic pages you're optimising?
- What opinions do your customer support staff have? They spend all day everyday talking to your customers and often have a wealth of information easily overlooked by the marketing department.

Now we've got a pretty good jumping off point to start the SEO keyword research and we're starting with an integrated, joined up approach.



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Carefully crafted metadata is still one of your strongest weapons when it comes to claiming CTR

Are your organic listings displaying properly?

According to Search Engine Journal, Google rewrites meta description for pages over 70% of the time. In Aug 2021, Google announced their new system for generating titles on ranking pages. Whilst it claims it will generate titles from titles tags 80% of the time, many sites have seen their carefully crafted titles receive a Google edit.

This doesn't mean you shouldn't bother with them, carefully crafted metadata is still one of your strongest weapons when it comes to claiming CTR. So, what should these include?



A perfectly crafted meta description should:

- Be no more than 150 characters for a desktop view and 122 for a mobile so front load your important messaging and keywords;
- Be unique per page: if it doesn't have a canonical tag and you want Google to index it, there should be enough individuality for that page to have a unique meta description;
- Ideally include a unique selling point (USP) and call to action (CTA) that gives users a justification to click on your site and not one of the other sites listed or Google SERP features;
- Talk to your customers in a language they use.

A perfectly crafted meta title should:

- Be no more than 66 characters (or 512 pixels if we're being exact);
- Be unique per page, and this included anything between pipes if you're using them;
- Have your most important keywords at the start;
- It's strongly advised you don't keyword stuff to stand a better chance of not having your title changed by Google. Think of the user over Google. Consider what is going to convince a human to click on that title, not what Google might want to see.

This might sound like a laborious job if you have a larger website, but this is where starting with the right data makes it a lot easier.

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Now we've got the building blocks of the metadata right, we can start getting answers to wider questions to improve CTR:

- Are you utilising Schema mark up to its full potential?
  - Whether it's products, reviews, business information – anything you can add to your SERP listing should be utilised
  - Question and answer content can appear in SERP dropdown when marked up correctly which instantly increasing the volume of real estate your brand has

- Who are your core competitors?
  - Are they offering something in their SERP display data that you're not?
  - Or shouting about a USP or something you can compete with?
  - Is their brand presence dwarfing yours?

- What is Google forcing you to compete with?
  - What other SERP features display next to your website? Local listings? Carousels? Answer box results? Paid listings?

By understanding how Google works, what your customer wants, what your competitors are up to and your data, this process not only becomes a lot easier but also more profitable.



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2. How do you improve your SEO conversion rate(CV)?

If you're seeing healthy volumes of organic traffic coming through to your website, it's important that it's providing value. At a top level, it's not uncommon to take a conversion metric and leave it at that:

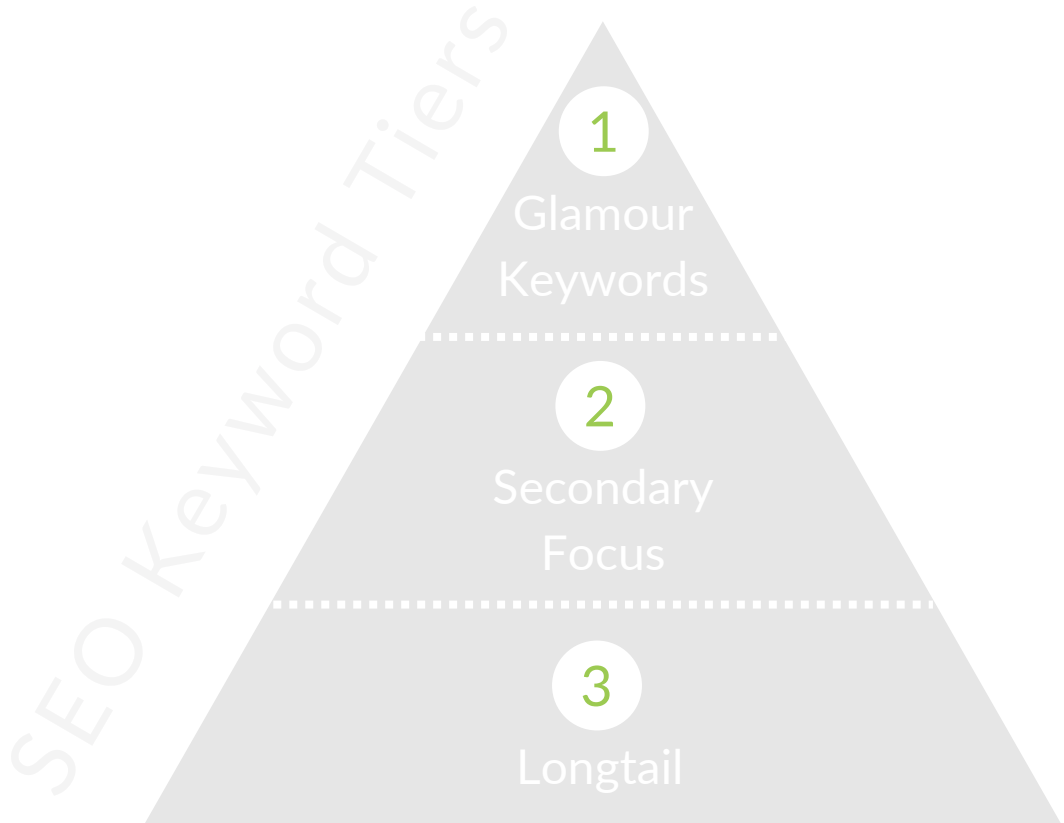
- eCommerce revenue
- Transactions
- Average order value (AOV)
- Email sign up
- Click to call

These are all great conversion metrics but as with the CTR, it's important to go deeper if you want to understand either a drop in CR or continue growth.

Choosing the right SEO keywords

We wrote a whole article on choosing the right SEO keywords which you can read over here.

If you're spending part of your budget optimising your website for specific keywords, it's incredibly important that you're also seeing a healthy ROI. Just like solving the CTR problem, a lot of conversion rate challenges can start with the wrong keywords, or the wrong expectations for those keywords.



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You need to understand the different buckets keywords fall into

When it comes to finding keywords for your SEO strategy, you need to understand some of the different buckets they fall into and what the intent of the user is likely to be:

- Glamour keywords/top tier
  - These are keywords with a typically high search volume. They'll have the potential to send lots of traffic if they can rank high enough, but they'll usually be very competitive and hard to rank for, and are likely to attract traffic at the start of the buying decision-making journey.
  - These keywords are designed to attract those in the awareness or discovery phase of the path to purchase. They're thinking of buying what you're selling but for now, they're just browsing and gathering information.
- Secondary focus/second tier
  - These will be keywords that still have a healthy search volume, but not quite as high as the glamour keywords. They'll also be less competitive, but still require resource and planning to get strong enough rankings to drive traffic.
  - These will attract users in the consideration and evaluation phase of the path to purchase. They've maybe narrowed down some specific models or packages and now they're comparing finer details. For example, [glamour keywords + free delivery] or [glamour keywords + warranty]
- Longtail/tertiary tier
  - These will usually be key phrases not keywords. They'll contain several words, to return something quite specific. Although they'll have a lower search volume, they'll also usually have a lower level of competition too and present an easier chance of ranking quite quickly.
  - These keywords are most likely to result in a conversion, they'll be users at the conversion and purchase phase of their path to purchase.

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Once the intent behind the keyword has been established, you can start designing an SEO strategy around them. Here are three easy buckets to help you manage, asses and report ROI:

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- Attack

- These are the keywords you're going to aggressively target – about 75% of your effort is going to go here.
- This attack bucket is going to be broken down between your top tier, glamour keywords, your second tier and your tertiary tier. Exactly how these are broken down will depend on:
- Your budget and access to resource
- Competitor activity
- SEO managed expectations

- Defend

- These will also be a mix of different tiers but will only need a 20% focus of effort and resource.
- These will be your 'safe' keywords, the ones already ranking pretty well and that return good metrics like healthy CTRs and CVs, so you just want to make sure they maintain the status quo.
- It's important not to become complacent, but with careful reporting you'll be able to see quickly enough if any of these keywords need to change buckets.



- Retreat

- These are keywords that have been part of your SEO strategy previously or maybe just perform well with very little input, BUT they don't provide value.
- Maybe you've got a keyword that is ranking well, but has a really high bounce rate, which is telling Google your page isn't answering a User's inquiry.
- Perhaps you know Product A is being retired at the end of the season and isn't being replaced with anything similar enough to inherit the ranking.
- Maybe it's a set of keywords that have had lots of resource poured into them but for one reason or another, Google isn't playing ball.
- For whatever reason, not all keywords that look appropriate on the surface should be targeted, and if resource is going into them, they might fall into this bucket.

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Once these three buckets have been broken down like this, you should be left with a final 5% of your resource allocation. This remaining 5% is for your tests and learning. PPC data and keyword data from other channels is always helpful, but it's advisable to have an idea of the potential SEO impact before it goes into the bucket allocation.



When it comes to making sure the 'right' page is indexed for the right keywords, like gets a bit trickier for SEO

3. Improve conversion rate by ensuring users are landing on the right page

When it comes to making sure the 'right' page is indexed for the right keywords, life gets a bit trickier for SEO. You can't specify to Google what URL should rank, and so your best bet is to understand why Google is doing what it's doing, and go from there.

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Why is Google ranking the wrong URL?

From Google's perspective, the URL you think is right, isn't optimised as well as the one Google has chosen.

- Maybe Google hasn't seen it yet – check your Google Search Console (GSC) to see when it was last crawled and indexed. You can also submit an indexing request from here too.
- Perhaps Google has a problem with an onsite element – again, anything straightforward will be reported under the URL Inspection of GSC. You certainly won't be the last person to notice a <no index> tag got left in by mistake!
- Check the onsite health of your preferred page with your favourite SEO tool. Most tools will have their own way of measuring performance/visibility/authority, etc.
- Does the ranking URL have more user generated content (UGC) like reviews or social data? Or maybe it just has more content in general which can provide a more detailed answer to a User's query?
- Is the content on it unique? If you don't have access to lots of fancy SEO tools, just take a couple of sentences of copy and run a Google search with double quotation marks around the copy. Google will return any results that it has indexed that contain identical copy.
- Can you see the links going to the ranking page? Are there lots of high value internal links or some natural external links?

Check all these metrics against the URL you'd prefer Google to rank, and you should start to see the difference that Google is seeing when it's deciding which URL should rank.

Don't forget, there are hundreds of factors that contribute to Google organic algorithm, and they can all be weighted up and down from one search to the next. As with all things Vuzo, it's all about making sure you've got access to the right data, and that it's being read in the right way.

Does the right URL exist?

Another reason your conversion rate might be lower than you'd like is because you don't have an appropriate landing page. It's not uncommon to see a set of keywords generating clicks and impressions and think that's enough justification to create a custom landing page but you have to make sure a new landing page can offer a positive user experience.

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According to Google, doorway pages are created to rank for specific, similar search queries and they're very bad. In fact, if Google has interpreted your landing page as a doorway page, it could decide it's not worth ranking at all (and start getting shirty with the rest of your site if it sees too many).

As with everything else here, this is where data is integral. A thorough understanding of the data analysis can indicate if and how a new page should be created and incorporated into the user journey.



4. What are the next steps for conversion optimisation?

Hypothetically, you've got:

- The perfect set of keywords, superbly researched, categorised,
- and strategised.
- An outstandingly optimised website where ranking URLs and target keywords line up flawlessly.

So, what happens next? SEO has done its job, everything optimised for perfect organic visibility, so we then enter the realms of conversion rate optimisation (CRO). These two disciplines work very closely together and overlap nicely.

Hopefully this has been a useful handbook, and we are always available to discuss things further. Get in touch with us now to see where Vuzo could help you and your team!

To find out how we can give you the technical capabilities of a FTSE 100 company, drop us an email at hello@vuzo.co.uk

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