12 Content Research Tools You Should Be Using

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When it comes to content marketing research, there are a lot of tools at your disposal — so many that it can be overwhelming.

From keyword tools and question-and-answer sites to open discussion forums and backlink analyzers, there are tools designed to help you with every step of your content marketing research.

But don't let the sheer number of tools available drive you into analysis paralysis. Remember, this is an idea generation strategy, so try them all, pick a few favorites and make this a part your continuous content research and planning. Here are twelve you should be using if you aren't already:

1.   Google AdWords: Keyword Tool

All research starts with keywords, so if you haven't already conducted thorough keyword research for your business, I recommend this as your very first step. The Google AdWords: Keyword Tool is one of the best free keyword tools available to marketers. This tool is tied directly into Google AdWords, and it uses *approximate* search frequency from Google (read: don't rely too heavily on this search frequency data). This tool can tell you which keywords are searched more than others based on broad, exact or phrase match volumes, depending on your settings. You can also view local (U.S.) or global data, which is essential for some location-based businesses. Additional data includes local search trends and location and languages for international research.

Overall, the Google AdWords Keyword Tool is extremely useful for the optimization part of any content marketing campaign. It is imperative to optimize your compelling content, otherwise, it may not be found.

2.   Soovle

This is a great little site to help quickly generate ideas. All you need to do is enter a keyword phrase and Soovle will display keyword suggestions from up to 15 different websites. You are able to customize which sites are included, which can be useful depending on your niche. For example, Amazon and eBay are choices, so if you are in the ecommerce business, these choices make more sense for your research.

This tool is helpful for researching quickly across a number of platforms. You also have the ability to save searches, making it easy to see how keywords have performed over time. This tool provides a different keyword research perspective compared to the Google AdWords tool.

3.   Ubersuggest.Org
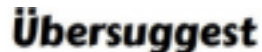
This next tool is similar to Soovle, but Ubersuggest alphabetizes the results – and that's a good thing, because the results are plentiful. Using Ubersuggest is easy: type a term in the search box, choose a language, choose where you would like your results from (the Web overall, or certain verticals like shopping or news) and click suggest. The tool takes your base search term, adds a letter or a number after it and brings back alphabetical keyword suggestions.

Ubersuggest allows you to add suggested keywords to your "basket," which is just a collection of the keywords you have selected. You are then able to export your basket as a text file or copy and paste it, so you may do further research.

4.   Topix.Com

Topix.com is a helpful resource for anyone looking for content ideas. Just enter a search term and the Topix engine will produce results that include news articles, forums, question-and-answer sites and blog posts that relate to your keyword.

The variety of search results allows you to find a vast amount of information from all over the world in just a few seconds. If you're looking for geo-specific results, Topix allows you to set a location to get local results, making this idea engine a content marketing research hotspot for local, national and global businesses.

5.   Bottlenose

Bottlenose is a relatively new tool which can be used to highlight trending articles and social commentary based on specific keywords. It's a social search engine and can really help you create news or hot topic-led content.

While Twitter, Facebook and other large social media networks are great for content marketing research, there is so much information available, it can become hard to digest. Bottlenose allows you to view social media information in a way that is more easily digestible.

6.   Spezify

Similar to Bottlenose, Spezify is also a social search engine – though it is less structured and more visually interesting. This tool creates a tapestry of related tweets, images, music etc. And not only does it look cool, it's also extremely useful.

Spezify offers a different way to take in the abundance of social information. For visual learners, there couldn't be a more effective tool. Also, the range of sites Spezify searches is across all industries and verticals, which makes it useful for a variety of different projects.

7.   Yahoo Answers

Question-and-answer sites can be a gold mine. Yahoo Answers is one of the biggest answer sites, getting millions of questions and answers. The way it works is pretty simple: people submit questions and the Yahoo Answers community answers them. When someone submits a question, the person has to categorize it by topic, which makes it easy to find and easy to answer.

Yahoo! developed a point system so other users rank answers and the "best" answers are given the most points. Users that accrue points have proven to be reputable and are granted certain privileges, such as the ability to ask, answer, vote, and rate more often.

Wouldn't we all like to know what questions our customers have about our products and services so we can answer them with our marketing? We can, through answer sites like Yahoo Answers and Quora.

8.   Quora

This Q&A site is considered more high-end compared to Yahoo Answers. Quora is a continually improving and refining its collection of questions and answers. The questions and answers on Quora are reviewed, edited, flagged (useful or not) and organized by users. Like Yahoo Answers, the questions are categorized for easy browsing.

The creator of Quora has said the goal is to have each question page be the best available resource for someone who wants to know the answer to any particular question. Though Quora is only a few years old, this site is rapidly growing and the average caliber of answers is quite high. This site is a great resource for

finding out what type of content could be useful to customers by learning what industry questions are frequently asked.

9.   LinkedIn Discussions

[LinkedIn](#) is best known as a B2B website connecting people. But did you know they have lots of great discussions going on too? There are thousands of industry groups on LinkedIn – truly something for everyone. In these groups, industry professionals discuss industry news, events, standards and more. These group discussions can give insight into industry communities that may not be found elsewhere. By perusing these industry groups, you can see frequently asked questions, spot industry trends and identify sentiment towards products or services. As LinkedIn requires a LinkedIn account login for participation, discussions are full of high-quality content, as people are held accountable for their contributions.

10.   Discussions On Google

One of my favorites is Google D*iscussions*. It's not easy to find on the Google.com page, but if you perform a keyword search and click "More" on the left column, you will find "Discussions." This is a very easy way to find people discussing products or services specific to your industry.

A Google discussion search usually brings results from question-and-answer sites, review sites and more. By browsing these results, you can gain insight into consumers' thoughts, experiences and questions with products or services, making Google discussion search a valuable content marketing research tool. While you are there, you just might want to participate in the discussions!

11.   Open Site Explorer

The [SEOmoz](#) tool [Open Site Explorer](#) pulls the back link profile of websites, making it tremendously useful for content marketing research. By using the "Top Pages" tab and browsing a competitor's back links, you can see where they have been successful in content marketing.

Are lots of reputable websites linking to one certain piece of content? Are there lots of spammy sites linking to their landing pages? What blog post has the most back links? The answers to these questions can provide a look into your competitor's content marketing strategy, allowing you to fill in the gaps or piggy back off of what they have started. What is working for them could work for you – if you do it better.

12.   Your staff

Last but not least: talk to your employees. Interview the person in the warehouse, the delivery gal, accounting team, sales people, the help desk, and so on. Ask them what questions they are asked by your customers. You will discover all sorts of ideas. And believe me, if they are being asked in person, people are searching online for those answers, too.

This is where you come in. You need to provide the answers to these questions in your content in a compelling way. You must produce quality content that positions your brand as the expert in your industry – the company to trust – so consumers will choose you over your competition.

Conclusion

With these tools, almost anyone in any industry can generate hundreds of content ideas. Did I miss your favorite content marketing research tool or method? Or do you have any great examples of how you put one of these tools to use? *Let me know in the comments below*.