

What are the core elements of doing SEO for a real Estate broker/agent website? (Part 1)

When undertaking the SEO process, nearly all of the tasks required fit into the following major areas of work:

- A. Keyword Research
- B. Content Creation
- C. Technical & On-Page Optimization
- D. Improving User Experience
- E. Growing Links & Citations

Let's walk through these processes, in brief, below.

Keyword Research

Every SEO campaign should begin with a specific business goal in mind. Growing rankings or increasing search traffic should never be ends unto themselves, but tactics used to achieve an underlying business objective. Perhaps you want to extend your agency's reach to a broader geography? Or reach a new kind of customer for your practice? Maybe your aim is to improve your reputation? Accelerate the time it takes to help your client(s) sell their home(s)? Or simply to attract more potential home buyers (or sellers) to your business?

Once you've established your business goal(s), you can effectively determine if SEO can help you accomplish it. Keyword research -- the process of uncovering the types of terms and phrases people type into search engines, and how often they do so -- is at the core of that process. If people are searching for terms and phrases that you believe could drive the right audience to your desired outcomes, then you can feel confident SEO is a worthwhile investment.

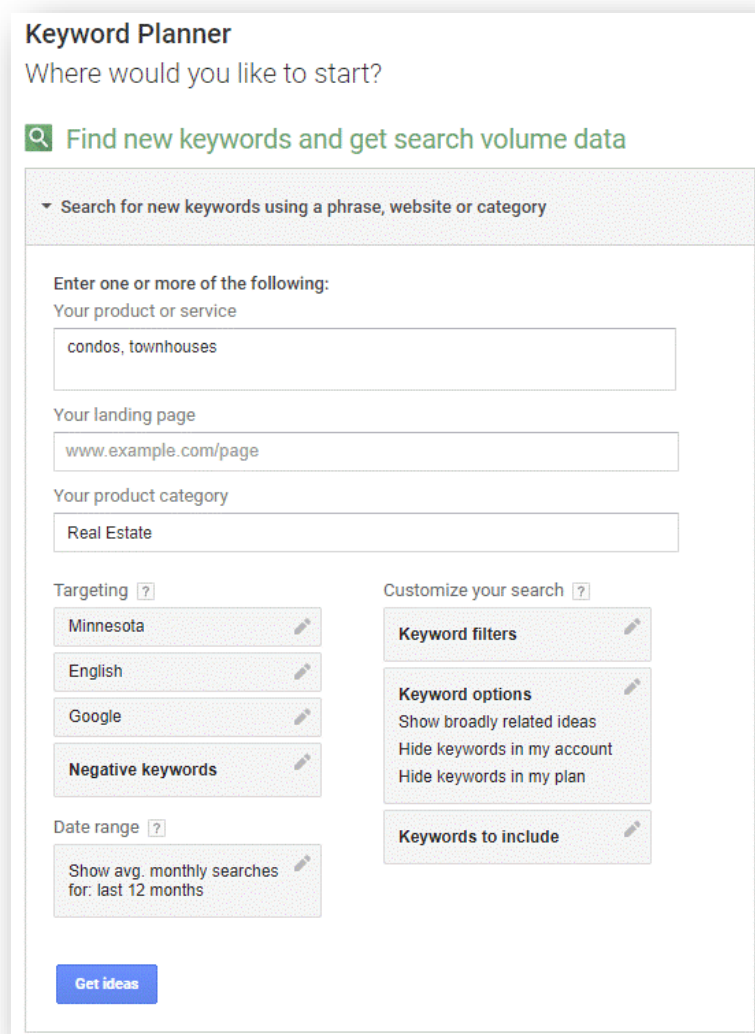
For example, say you're a real estate agent in Minneapolis, MN. You specialize in condos and townhouses in the city and your business goal is to get more sellers to choose you as their listing agent. Before you invest in SEO, you'll want to know whether people are searching in Google for words and phrases that might be a match for your goal. To do that, you'll want to:

- A. Use some tools to uncover what people are searching for and how often
- B. Create a list of words and phrases you want to target, along with metrics to the frequency, difficulty, and value of ranking for them
- C. Prioritize based on the words that best match your goals and what you can reasonably achieve

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Let's walk through this process together, starting with the tools. There are a large number of paid and premium software products that can help, but we'll assume that your budget is limited, and thus you need to rely exclusively on what's available free. Google Search, AdWords' Keyword Planner, and Google Trends will be our mainstays.



The screenshot shows the Google Keyword Planner interface. At the top, it says "Keyword Planner" and "Where would you like to start?". Below that is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon and the text "Find new keywords and get search volume data". A dropdown menu is open, showing "Search for new keywords using a phrase, website or category". Underneath, there are three input fields: "Your product or service" with the text "condos, townhouses", "Your landing page" with "www.example.com/page", and "Your product category" with "Real Estate". To the left, there are sections for "Targeting" (Minnesota, English, Google) and "Date range" (Show avg. monthly searches for: last 12 months). To the right, there are sections for "Customize your search" (Keyword filters, Keyword options, Keywords to include). A blue "Get ideas" button is at the bottom left.

Above is a screenshot of [Google's Keyword Planner Tool](#). To get access, you'll need to create a [free AdWords account](#). Keyword Planner allows you to search by broad topics and get suggestions for words and phrases searchers are using. You can also specify a precise or broad geography (the example above uses "Minnesota" so as to capture the entire state's searches, but you can narrow down to a city or go as big as the entire country).

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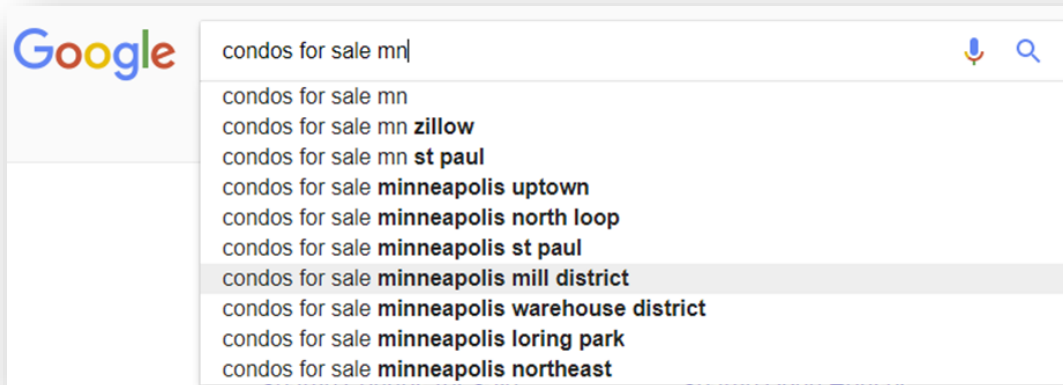
Those keyword ideas can uncover search terms that you should evaluate for targeting with your website's content. It may be, for example, that "lofts for sale" wasn't something you'd considered writing about and serving on your site, but after seeing that 10-100 people search for it each month in Minnesota, it may be a smart SEO and content investment to make

Keyword (by relevance)	Avg. monthly searches [?]	Competition [?]	
houses for sale	10K – 100K	Medium	Ignore this column!
condos for sale	100 – 1K	Medium	
condo	100 – 1K	Low	The "Competition" metric here refers to paid ads, not organic (SEO) results, and thus can seriously mislead you. The quantity of advertisers or the amount they're bidding to be in the paid results doesn't affect the difficulty of ranking with SEO.
townhomes for sale	1K – 10K	High	
townhouse	100 – 1K	Low	Some great keyword ideas!
condominiums for sale	100 – 1K	Medium	
townhouses for sale	100 – 1K	High	Some great keyword ideas!
townhomes	1K – 10K	Low	
new condos for sale	10 – 100	High	Some great keyword ideas!
3 bedroom condo for sale	10 – 100	Medium	
1 bedroom condo for sale	10 – 100	Medium	Some great keyword ideas!
condo townhouse for sale	10 – 100	Medium	
condo search	10 – 100	Medium	Some great keyword ideas!
buying a condo	10 – 100	Medium	
condos and townhomes for sale	10 – 100	Medium	Some great keyword ideas!
townhome	100 – 1K	Low	
lofts for sale	10 – 100	High	

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Once you have these ideas, it can pay to further expand your keyword list by performing these searches in Google and seeing what other ideas the search engine returns. The first place Google will show you ideas is in the search bar itself, via a feature called “search suggest:”



You can take these terms and put them into the Keyword Planner tool to see how much search volume they have. Note that some terms have very little volume (only a few searches each month, possibly even some months with no searches at all), and thus Keyword Planner won't give you data for them.

If you scroll further down in Google's results, you'll find even more ideas in the “related searches” box below the results:

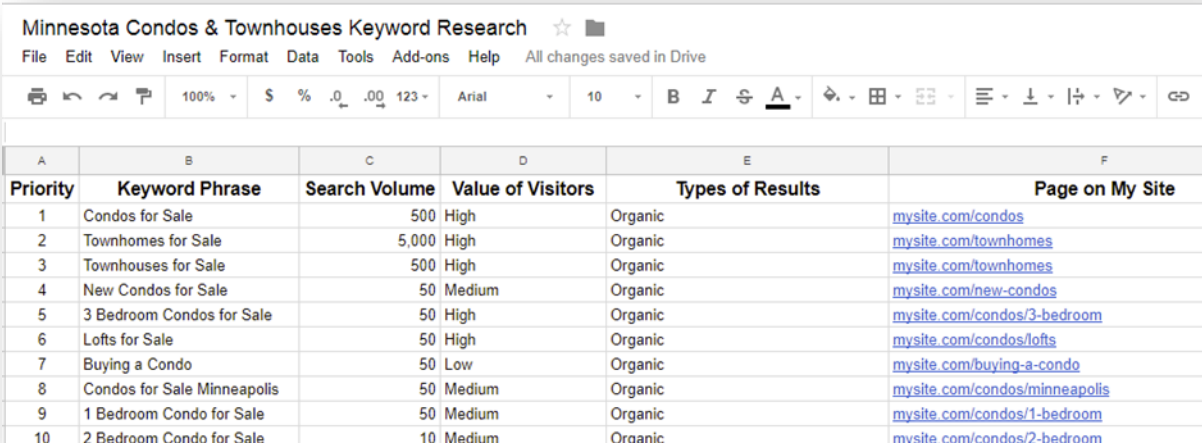


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Together, this iterative process of searching in Keyword Planner and then trying queries in Google Search can reveal a substantive quantity of worthwhile keywords. Your job is simply to choose those whose searchers are likely to match your business goals and for which you can create unique, compelling content.

The process of building a keyword list is straightforward, and you can do it in any spreadsheet program. The screenshot below shows Google Sheets, but Microsoft Excel or even a basic text list in Word or your email program could work. The goal is to build a spreadsheet where you can add keywords, record metric about them, and prioritize which ones to target first.



Priority	Keyword Phrase	Search Volume	Value of Visitors	Types of Results	Page on My Site
1	Condos for Sale	500	High	Organic	mysite.com/condos
2	Townhomes for Sale	5,000	High	Organic	mysite.com/townhomes
3	Townhouses for Sale	500	High	Organic	mysite.com/townhomes
4	New Condos for Sale	50	Medium	Organic	mysite.com/new-condos
5	3 Bedroom Condos for Sale	50	High	Organic	mysite.com/condos/3-bedroom
6	Lofts for Sale	50	High	Organic	mysite.com/condos/lofts
7	Buying a Condo	50	Low	Organic	mysite.com/buying-a-condo
8	Condos for Sale Minneapolis	50	Medium	Organic	mysite.com/condos/minneapolis
9	1 Bedroom Condo for Sale	50	Medium	Organic	mysite.com/condos/1-bedroom
10	2 Bedroom Condo for Sale	10	Medium	Organic	mysite.com/condos/2-bedroom

You'll note that this spreadsheet employs the midpoint of each "range" of search volume provided in Keyword Planner, which helps when performing equations (e.g. adding up the estimates, or using them in a function to help prioritize). The other columns help with the prioritization process -- the "value of visitors," which estimates the connection between the business' goals and the searcher's intent, the "types of results" which indicates whether local, organic, or other types of results are shown, and "page on my site," which records the URL targeting that search query.

For more in-depth on the keyword research process, [check out this guide from Moz](#). And if you're seeking a more advanced, in-depth tool, [Keyword Explorer from Moz](#), [Ahrefs](#), and [SEMRush](#) are all popular in the professional SEO world.

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Content Creation

In order to rank in Google's results for any given group of shared-intent keywords, you'll need a page of content that serves those searchers. This page must balance the searcher's goals -- to get high quality, useful information that solves their problem -- and your own business goals -- often to convert that visitor from a information-seeking browser to a potential customer.

A page's content should be dictated by whom it serves, what they're seeking, and how it will provide the solution(s). There are a wide variety of content options available for the web: text, illustrations, graphs, photos, videos, audio, interactive widgets, and more. For the purposes of proving to Google that your content is relevant to a search query, written text is of primary importance and should exist even if you're employing other types of content. That's because Google is, primarily, still a text-based search engine and leans heavily on its ability to parse the words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that appear to determine if the page is relevant to a given keyword search.

Historically, the practice of SEO involved creating a single page to target even slight variations in keyword searches. That practice is mostly obsolete and today, it's best to group keywords by the searcher's intent -- what they're hoping to achieve -- when crafting pages of SEO-focused content.

For example, below is a spreadsheet of several Philadelphia, PA real estate search queries, grouped by the likely intent of those searchers:

Priority	Keyword Group	Keyword Phrase	Page Title/Headline	URL
1	City Market	Philadelphia Real Estate Market	Philadelphia Real Estate Market: Home Values & Price Trends	mysite.com/philadelphia-real-estate-market
		Philadelphia Home Prices		
		Philadelphia Housing Market		
		Philadelphia Real Estate Values		
		Median Home Prices Philadelphia		
2	Forecast	Philadelphia Real Estate Market Forecast	Forecast for Philadelphia's Housing Market: What to Expect 2018-2023	mysite.com/philadelphia-housing-forecast
		Philadelphia Home Prices Forecast		
		Philadelphia Housing Market Analysis		
		Philadelphia Home Price Trends		
		Philadelphia Real Estate Bubble		
3	Suburbs Market	Philadelphia Suburbs Home Prices	Suburban Philadelphia Real Estate: Home Values & Price Trends	mysite.com/philadelphia-suburbs-real-estate
		Philadelphia Suburbs Real Estate Market		
		Philadelphia Suburbs with Low Taxes		

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Each of the three groups in the spreadsheet have multiple keywords associated with a single page of content. When keywords share intent, this is the optimal way to create content for SEO. Creating multiple pages for “Philadelphia Home Prices” and “Philadelphia Housing Market” when searchers for both of those terms are likely to have exactly the same questions and want to see the same content doesn’t make sense. It’s both a waste of effort and can split link equity and other ranking signals that should be concentrated on a single page across multiple pages (reducing the ability to outperform competitors in the search rankings).

Along with intelligent keyword targeting, you’ll derive the best SEO results from content creation by sticking to the following:

- Help the searcher accomplish their task better than any of the other results on page one of Google’s rankings (more on [searcher task accomplishment](#) here)
- Identify all the potential tasks the searcher is attempting to complete, and order them by probability/popularity -- this should serve as the outline for how the page’s content flows from one section to another (more on how in this video on [Designing a Page’s Content Flow](#))
- Optimize the user experience to be fast, clear, obvious, and immediately useful -- don’t hide important elements, create pages that take many seconds to load, or employ visual design that wastes users’ time or make it difficult to find what they’re seeking (more on [balancing SEO & UX here](#))