Targeting
Google
Hummingbird

10 Steps to Targeting Your Optimization
to Google's New Hummingbird Algorithm

As likely 96.54% of all people in the world are by now aware (maybe that's a touch exaggerated) Google has announced the month-old release of its new algorithm named Hummingbird. According to respected industry experts, and some nebulous information from Google themselves, we can get enough of an initial idea of how to target the changes incorporated in this new algo.

People who visit your site also use the product, service or information found there and have questions or comments about them. Therefore if you can provide those searching with the answers, tips and information they're seeking or provide those who are offering such tips, answer and info a forum to provide it, you'll build out your site with the right type of content which Hummingbird eats. According to Danny Sullivan "Google's saying there's nothing new or different SEOs or publishers need to worry about" (i.e. don't try to optimize for Hummingbird). Google advises us to "have original, high-quality content". The difference between such content being naturally generated and it being strategically generated for the purposes of having such content there to result in rankings and traffic IS Search Engine Optimization. So the answer is "YES" you can optimize for it. These steps were valid and vital prior to this new algorithm evidence leads us to believe that they're even more so now.

I offer these ten steps to getting your site optimized for our new friend "Hummy".

1. Define what you are (or what you're optimizing for).   What is it? This may seem super-obvious but the devil's in the details so it can help by sitting down and writing out a good description of exactly what you are.

Example: I'm a product. I'm a noun. I'm a "boot". I'm used for "skiing". "I come in different sizes, colors and versions. I fit different skis. I don't fit snowboards. I'm a new product. I have different attributes such as "flex", "stiffness", etc.

2. Define your target market: Who are they, how old are they, where do they live, where do they use this thing, when do they use this thing, etc. To get this data it's good to do some searches for statistics and demographics on your product and industry (e.g. http://campusguides.lib.utah.edu/content.php?pid=79127&sid=649229)

   For our "ski boot" example we can define them thus:

   a. They're people and include both male and female
   b. They run the range in age (although this can define certain opportunities such as "childrens ski boots") however there are age groups which dominate the sport
   c. They live all over the country but a great portion of them (likely the majority) live within an a couple of hours drive from a major ski area
   d. They ski at established ski areas (e.g. resorts, parks, etc) most often in mountainous areas
   e. When they ski is based on certain seasonal dates however there are key dates among these. A search for this information provided a report by the National Ski Areas Association which states:

   "…visits were estimated to be up 2 percent in the early season; up 16 percent during the Christmas and New Year's holidays; up 7 percent during the January 7 to February 18 period; up 14 percent in the February 19 to March 24 period; and up an impressive 25 percent during the March 26 to closing period".

   This information allows me to generate content (as well as promotions) around the most popular seasonal dates.

3. Research your thing: Hit the main websites that define your thing such as Wikipedia, competitor websites, manufacturer websites, top magazines, etc. Find out what they're made of, how they're made, what they include, what industry terms are used, how they originated, etc. Just selling ski boots on your site doesn't mean you would normally need to know or provide this information but if you want to create a significant amount of diverse and relevant content then it can greatly help.

4. Build your keyword list with a variety of not only keywords but relevant questions, comments, quotes, statements, related terms and related people, places and things. A lot of search queries are actual questions and the mass majority of searches include proper nouns so people are interested in the top skiers, the top ski resorts, the top brands, the top techniques, etc.

Use Search Engines to delve into information about your thing and view how people actually use it in content. Example: Search Google for specific types of sites which offer the more conversational side of content surrounding your thing. Use the Site operator in Google to research (e.g. Site:blogspot.com "ski boots"). This searches all of the blogs on Blogspot for the keyword "ski boots". This search returned the following result at #1:

Ski Blog with Harald Harb
harbskisysems.blogspot.com/
3 days ago - During this period of time there has been a definite evolution in her *ski boots*. I use Diana as an example, because I was able to observe the **...**

Immediately I have a quality conversational topic related to my thing (ski boots). Remember it was Google's contextual search which reached into that page and yanked out the content and placed it into the snippet as the description based on its relevance to my query. I click on to that page and do a page search for "ski boots" and find the following:

"During this period of time there has been a definite evolution in her ski boots. I use Diana as an example, because I was able to observe the transition and improvements of her skiing based on boots. I have always used stiff boots, I have a biases toward stiff ski boots. (everyone on the world Cup uses stiff boots) So it isn't fair to use my skiing as an example for evaluating or comparing".

Kablam! This provides me with a couple of topics that I can "speak to" on my site. These include "can ski boots improve your skiing?" and "are stiff boots better for skiing?". These are the two obvious questions that arise from this and by discussing those, not necessarily "answering" them, but providing pros and cons, varied opinions, facts and information provides you with a ton of great relevant contextually targeted content.

You can back up this process with running certain questions and statements through Google for the question you've created (e.g. "are stiff boots better for skiing?") and see the competition that comes up for them. This search produces some well known companies and so it's potentially and likely a valuable question. You can back this up with a search for volumes of related terms on the Adowrds Keyword Planner.

This search also produces more keywords that I can use such as "boot flex" which then leads me to find "boot flex ratings" which are part of a "ski boot buyers guide". I may just have ski boots on my pages with basic descriptive content which is, more often than not, provided by the manufacturer of the boot. After doing one search I now have a bunch of new terms, content and topics all directly related to my thing.

5. Increase the conversation: Content begets content so by having this quality related content along with a mechanism for dialog (e.g. a forum) allows people to get involved.   Ad a forum or other to your site and begin populating it with topical questions. Link to your blog posts about the same and then to your site. Entice people to contribute. Use "hot" or trending topics or use controversy to spark debate (more on this in #8).

6. Blend "conversational content" with descriptive content on your pages along with links to further content: On my example site (and especially on the "ski boots" product pages) I can include this content either as snippets with a link to the full page of content or a number of links with the main question or comment in the anchor text (though don't get Panda Slapped by spamming), or build out different sections that I can link to such as Tips & Tricks, Q&A, Glossary of Terms, "Buyers Guide", etc, which have the content within. Be sure to also link to your blog posts (which you've created based on your list of great questions, topics, nouns, etc).

7. Drive traffic to these pages

    Join blogs and communities and contribute but don't spam or break the rules by selflessly promoting. If you're able to convey (via an included website URL in your signature, your brand as your username, or allowed links to relevant content, then you can provide valuable content to users of those blogs, build respect in you and your brand and build up your authority – not to mention the potential for links.

8. Mix in Social:

    Make sure you have your buttons to share with Google+, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc so that people can carry on the conversation. Post your content to your Social pages and when people respond and share you can promote their responses on your social pages. If they're on Google+ make sure you mention them and + their comments.

    One idea is to take the top 10 responses to your questions and post them on Facebook and let those folks know you did so along with an invitation to join your Facebook page and continue the dialog there. Send them a message saying something like "you're response of XYZ received a response on our Facebook page, click here to view it and respond" or "your response got +1's on our Google+ page! Click here". Don't generate fake responses or fake anything else but you can definitely notify people of responses when they happen.   You can also get pretty creative with ways to generate responses by way of controversy. For example I can write a post or piece of content on how a particular skier did poorly on a competition and then get that in front of that skier's fans where I can use their fervent support of that skier to get them fired up and anxious to respond. They can even blog about it and generate links such as "Hey did you hear Joe at SkiBlog

said our favorite skier did poorly?". You can also use contests as a point of controversy. Tell the fans of that same skier (and others) that there's a poll going on to pick the best skier.

Your research on "ski boot stiffness" and the top skiers, for example, can provide you with the information for an excellent article on "How 10 of the top skiers feel about Ski Boot Flex". You can use this as a guest blogging opportunity or to generate traffic via those Google+ communities or blogs you're contributing to. This can also generate traffic from searches related to those skiers and the subject of ski boot flex when your page on it gets indexed in one of the Search Engines.

Getting people to talk about themselves or their passion is usually not difficult and you can do an interview with many otherwise difficult to meet people by simply emailing them, asking them on their blogs or shooting an email to their agents or press contacts. "Hi there Mr./Ms. Skimeister, I'm a big fan and long time skier, and I am doing a virtual interview for my blog with those I consider to be the best skiers in the game - and it would be a great honor if I could get your opinion on our topic question. A lot of skiers are concerned about Ski Boot Flex and how stiffness can affect a skier's performance. Could I ask how you feel about it and what you would recommend for them, whether newbies or seasoned skiers? Thanks and best of luck in your upcoming event at XYZ!". This last part is a personalized touch which can be of great benefit in getting a response. You can get this kind of information from a bit of research on the person or from their website. If there's no "upcoming event" then congratulate them on a recent win or award, or their recent marriage, or their association with a charity, etc.

9. Get reviews going on your site: Reviews are loved by Google and there's specific Schema markup just for them. Reviews can be hard to get going and you may be left with a lot of page that don't show a review so to get around this you can do a company review first. CNET does this to great effect with Donwload.com where they have a CNET review and additional user reviews. This does require you to provide a valid review of the products or whatever it is you're reviewing. If you're providing a service then you can ask your clients or customers to review your service and you can post that. This can be done via the website, via other websites such as Yelp or you can ask them to fill out a survey card or simply call them and ask. As long as the review is real it can be posted. One thing you can do is provide them with 5 questions that you wish to be reviewed on and list those as five separate reviews on your website. Remember, false reviews are not only unethical; they're illegal in many states/countries.

Example:

Joe's Plumbing in Los Angeles asks their clients to rate them from 1 to 5 on Service, Timing, Customer Care, Quality and Ability. They get 25 responses and they post 5 different reviews with 25 responses each; one review for Service, a second for Timing, etc. Let's say they had 5 responses for each of 5 different plumbing services (e.g. leak repair, or rooter service). This is great because they can post 5 reviews on each service page (one for each of the review questions. They can also ask for personal statements that they can post along with the reviews

(e.g. "Great Job guys – Joe S. from Los Angeles"). These build respect and confidence in a brand as well as in Google's eyes as it is a signal. It also provides content for specific contextual searches pertaining to those services which can rank in the engines.

10. Now that you really know your product or service, built your keyword and topic list, generated content, launched and linked that content, pushed that content, got user interaction on that content then it's now time to report on that content by using it to determine how you're doing in Google.

    I'm currently finishing a larger paper on getting "Not Provided" data which will have a lot more in-depth information on this but I'll include a few key parts here:

    Since you have your list of keywords, questions, topics and related nouns, it's time to run those against your domain in a Ranking Report. Along with your specific rankings you'll see which pages are being ranked. You can then get an idea from certain elements of the page what you can do to optimize and increase your position.   Combine that with data from programs like Screaming Frog and Open Site Explorer, among others, and you'll see what opportunities you have to do onsite optimization and link-building (I won't get into them here as that's more for a discussion on SEO in general).

    Combine this ranking report data with available keyword data from other search engines in your analytics program and you'll be able to surmise which keywords generated traffic in Google. This is not by any means a concrete method for getting past the "Not Provided" roadblock but a great relative "yard-stick".

    The ranking report shows you where a page or pages are in terms of position for a keyword. Your analytics data will provide you with the entrances to that page from organic search (including Google) and keywords which resulted in entrances (excluding Google). Combining this data with some keyword volume data from the Adwords Keyword Planner (and like tools from other sources) and an idea of Google's market share can give you a decent idea of the quantities you are likely to receive from each keyword.

    My ranking report shows that my page on "Ski Boot Flex Ratings" is ranked 1, 3, 7 and 9 for my four main keywords for that topic (e.g. "sk boot flex index, ski boot flex ratings, ski boot flex index chart, ski boot flex chart) in Google. This will be far more effective if you use a much higher quantity of keywords but we'll limit it to four for this example. My analytics program shows that I received 350 organic entrance visits this week to that page.   Bing and Yahoo generated 50 visits each while Google generated 300.

    I've taken all of this data and placed it in a spreadsheet with each keyword taking up a row and my data on each of those in the columns of that row. There is one for my Google ranking, Bing ranking, and Yahoo ranking and then total traffic for each keyword from Bing and Yahoo and the

relevant quantities from WMT Search Queries. You then have another column for Search Volume and one for "Not Provided" which you expect to fill.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Example Report	Target Page: www.mysite.com/ski-boot-flex-rating							
2	Keyword	Google Ranking	Bing Ranking	Yahoo Ranking	Bing Referals	Yahoo Referals	WMT Search Queries	Google Search Vol.	"Not Provided"
3	ski boot flex rating	1	2	2	50	50	211	210	
4	ski boot flex index	3	5	3	20	25	118	20	
5	ski boot flex index chart	7	n/a	5	0	12		20	
6	ski boot flex chart	9	8	n/a	4	0		20	
7									
8									

(The keywords that you used in your ranking report may differ from the ones that actually generated traffic in Bing and Yahoo so you'll need to either match closely related/ranked ones or simply include them all)

Running those keywords through search volume tools can give you an idea of the amount of traffic you'd expect those queries would get and again you can use WMT to see how many impressions and clicks you got (although WMT isn't very accurate).

Now you have a nice spreadsheet with current data and you have a glaring blank spot under the "Not Provided" column. The next thing to do is to assign a percentage to each ranking position of Google's first page.

Here are some links to available data and opinions on this:
- http://www.smartinsights.com/search-engine-optimisation-seo/seo-analytics/comparison-of-google-clickthrough-rates-by-position/
- http://www.seochat.com/c/a/google-optimization-help/google-ranking-positions-and-ctr-estimating-search-engine-visitors/
- http://www.internetmarketingninjas.com/blog/search-engine-optimization/click-through-rate/

There are other so you can determine for yourself what you feel is the rate which you want to apply.

Take what search volume you have and apply your percentages. Next take those figures and compare them to Bing and Yahoo and see how they match up. You can use real world differences to tweak your percentages. Next apply the same percentages to Google based on the available search volume data, ranking position, your newly defined ranking/clicks percentage and total entrances to that page. Now when you tally up the expected amount of traffic for each keyword that resulted in an organic entrance to that page from Google you can get an idea of which keywords are performing.

Keeping this as a baseline report allows you to optimize that page further and rank higher for keywords where you're not number one. If you rise up from position 9 to position 3 for a keyword that has 700 monthly visits then you can take an average of that 700 monthly visits over 30 days (23 visits per day or 163 per week) and compare that against the traffic you received to that page. If you didn't have any other rises in ranking for similar keywords then you can figure that a lot of that traffic resulted from this keyword or one very similar. If you equally rose in Bing and Yahoo then you can see the amounts of increases you received from those specific keywords and use that against your Google "guestimation".

There are many ways to tweak this data to get "guestimates" and you need to make sure you're not tweaking the data to fit your desired results but only for the sake of increased accuracy.

The biggest loss of the "Not Provided" terms is the data on long-tail keywords as they can generate an army of low-quantity clicks. With this kind of "guestimating" it will be hard to tell if a long-tail, even one well-ranked, contributes any clicks at all from Google.

What this means is that you have to cover your bases as much as possible and the tips above can help you to do that.

Your ranking report, which greatly helps replace the lost Google organic keyword referral data in terms of judging success, can also provide you with direction on next steps. If you're #4 and receiving traffic then you'll want to push for #1 and receive more.

The "Not Provided" debacle will also lead to a rise in the importance of tracking keyword performance on Social sites so make sure you start taking that into consideration.

Best of luck!

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