Seven Steps to a Better Search Campaign



A WordStream White Paper

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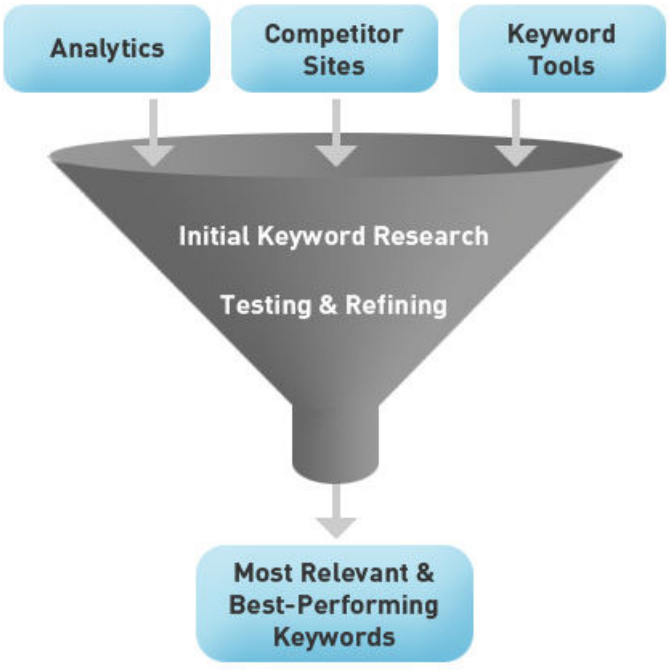
If you've got seven days, you've got the time to create a hard-working, high-performance search campaign. Whether your focus is organic search engine optimization (SEO) or pay-per-click (PPC) marketing, also known as paid search marketing, these seven simple steps will help you build a comprehensive, relevant, dynamic keyword database that will drive traffic and revenue through search. As soon as next week, your business will start to see:

- An increase in traffic
- More qualified leads
- Lower search marketing costs

These are just a few of the benefits you'll experience with more effective keyword research, organization, and management. Let's get started and see how it's done!

Step 1: Start Broad with Extensive Keyword Research

Broad keyword research puts you in a position to target a variety of keywords, so you can see which terms and phrases actually drive the most traffic and revenue for your business. The most critical part of keyword research is *refining your targets;* you can then focus your time and marketing spend on the best performers. But you'll never know which pockets of keywords work best for your business if you don't start with a broad base. Your best performing keywords are often non-intuitive!



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To generate an extensive, but relevant, list of keywords, it's important to *aggregate keywords from multiple sources.* To do this, you'll want to look at your company's:

- ***Past*** — Use a free analytics package such as Google Analytics or a custom analytics package to see the various ways people find and reach your website, as well as which keywords drive the most traffic. Your historical site logs are a goldmine of relevant keyword data, and too often underutilized.

- ***Present*** — Talk to peers and colleagues. Look at your competitors' sites (or use a competitive keyword tool like the one in WordStream for SEO). Pay attention to what your customers say when they talk about you on blogs, review sites and social networks like Twitter.

- ***Future*** — Use free keyword tools to get an idea of how much potential traffic a keyword opportunity represents. WordStream's Keyword Niche Finder can help you uncover profitable pockets of related keywords that you may be neglecting.

Combining the forces of past, present and future data will provide you with a strong body of keywords to test and learn from. However, a vast amount of keyword data is only valuable insofar as you maintain the ability to control it.

In Step 2 of our guide, we'll discuss strategies for organizing keyword research so you don't get lost in your own data.

Step 2: Build a Smart Keyword Infrastructure

As discussed in Step 1, it's important to start with a broad base of keywords when embarking on a search marketing campaign. But a large number of keywords can quickly become unmanageable.

However, you can do extensive keyword research without losing control of your campaigns. The key is to create a **flexible, dynamic keyword structure** that makes it easy to manage a large and growing list. This means transforming a keyword *list* into a keyword *database.*

A keyword database has a number of advantages over a keyword list or spreadsheet:

- It's **private and proprietary**, unlike lists generated by third-party keyword tools, based on public data.

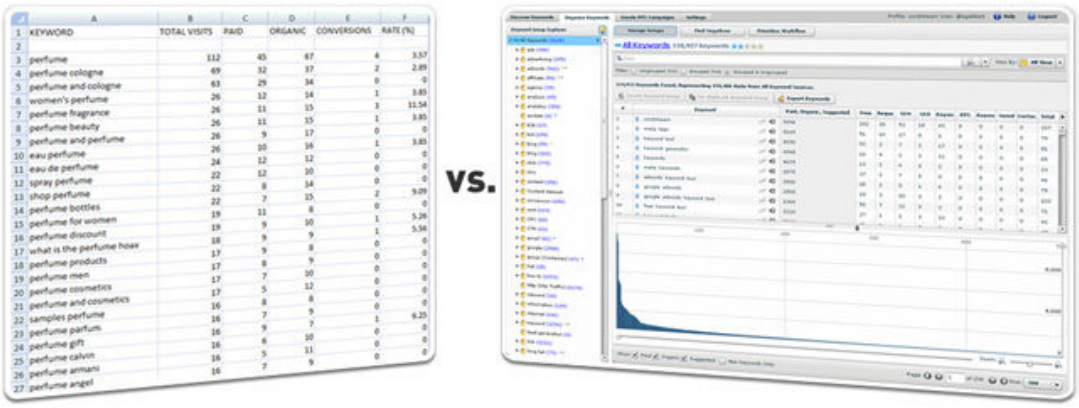
- It's **easier to organize and manage** than a static spreadsheet, supporting smart relationships among data sets.

- It's **easier to update**, encouraging expansion over time so your campaigns can grow.

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- It's **actionable**, so you don't just analyze your keywords, you take steps to get better results.

- It's **collaborative**, so multiple members of your team can work simultaneously toward common goals.



Static, Slow, Not Integrated with Other Tools

Private, Dynamic, Actionable, Collaborative

In short, a keyword database is a system that allows for more effective keyword management.

WordStream Keyword Management for PPC is a Web-based platform for creating a well-managed keyword database, with tools to help you discover, organize and act on the keywords that drive the most value for your business.

Step 3: Group and Organize Your Keyword Research

Starting with extensive keyword research allows you to evaluate a number of opportunities and determine which keywords truly have the potential to drive profits for your business.

However, evaluating and refining your keywords will be a lengthy and tedious process if you don't first impose a meaningful order on your research. So the next step is to **segment your keywords into small, tightly related groups**. Grouping your keywords will change *everything else you do in search for the better.* Here are just a few of the benefits of better keyword grouping and organization:

- **Higher Quality Scores, click-through rates (CTR) and conversion rates** for paid search campaigns

- **Better search engine rankings** and more qualified organic search traffic

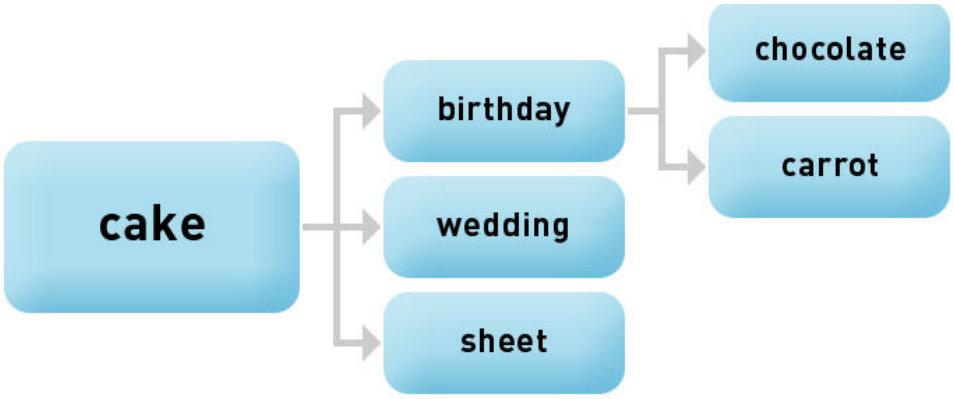
- The ability to **efficiently target a group of related keywords** with a single Web page

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- **More manageable research**
- An outline for an **SEO-friendly information architecture** (or site structure)

Breaking a large keyword list down into groups can be daunting, if you're not sure where to start. Here are three tips to help you organize your research:

1. **Start with large, high-level groups.** Strong candidates for top-level keyword groups are broad terms corresponding to an offering provided by your business, be it a product or service. A top-level group is usually one word—a noun—such as "cake" or "contracting."



2. Next, **segment your top-level groups into narrower subgroups.** Second-level groups often include a modifier that specifies the offering in question—for example, "birthday cakes" or "chocolate cake."

3. **Keyword grouping tools**, like our free Keyword Grouper and Keyword Niche Finder, can make quick work of what would otherwise be a cumbersome manual process. You can export your groups in a .csv file for further tweaking.

In the next step of our guide, you'll learn how to exploit your keyword group structure to prioritize PPC and SEO content creation—so you can start seeing returns on your work!

Step 4: Analyze and Monitor Your Results

You've done your research and organized your keywords. You have a system in place for ongoing keyword management and growth. This provides a strong foundation for your paid and organic search marketing campaigns. But until you have a good understanding of which keywords really work for your business, you can't learn from your campaigns and improve your results.

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The next step is to use keyword analytics to **analyze your keywords and monitor results**. Keyword analytics allow you to drill down to the level of the keyword group or the single keyword to see which terms drive the most traffic and conversions, as well as which terms are weak performers and nonstarters.

To start refining your research and homing in on your most effective and cost-efficient keywords:

- **Start using a Web analytics application**, if you don't already have one in place. There are some great free analytics tools available, such as Google Analytics. You'll have access to a wealth of valuable information about your site's performance, from page views to bounce rate to keyword referrers.

- Where possible, **integrate your analytics** with your search marketing tools so all that valuable data becomes actionable. This quick video demonstrates how WordStream syncs up with your analytics account to help you make more data-driven marketing decisions.

- Keep an eye on which keywords and keyword groups are **driving traffic and triggering goals**, such as newsletter signups, white paper downloads and, of course, sales. Also note which keywords aren't pulling their weight.

We know your plate is full. With limited time in the day, it's crucial to determine where your time as a search marketer is best spent. In the next section of this guide, we'll explain how to set priorities based on your best-performing keywords.

Step 5: Set Priorities and Create Content

Web analytics are a window into your search campaigns' performance, and integrating analytics with your keyword workbench, as discussed in Step 4, enables you to act on that valuable data. The next step, naturally, is to actually start taking action! You can do this by f**ocusing on your top keyword performers**.

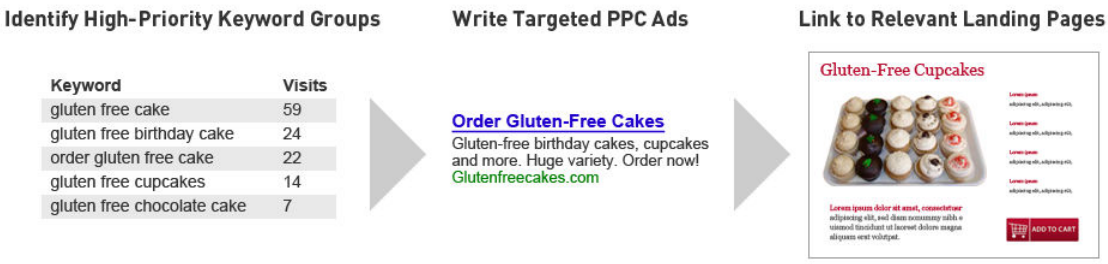
There's no end to the number of activities you can carry out in search engine marketing. The trick to finding continued success lies in being able to determine where best to spend your time (and your money). The most powerful way to prioritize workflow? Use analytics to ensure you can closely follow your best performing keywords and recognize opportunities you're not currently capitalizing on.

There are a couple of ways to approach this:

- Focus on the groups of keywords that drive the most traffic and spend. Remember, your top-performing keyword *group* may not be the same as the *single* top-performing keyword. Target your ad campaigns and organic content at these groups first.

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- Identify gaps in your PPC and SEO campaigns by analyzing them side by side and against potential traffic gains. With keyword source analysis, you can easily compare the performance of keywords from paid and organic search to each other and to traffic estimates from keyword suggestion tools.



When you've determined which keyword groups deserve immediate attention, start funneling those keywords into content that can capture qualified traffic, including:

- **Targeted PPC text ads —** Your ads should be closely aligned with your keyword groups, focusing on the top keywords in each segment. Be sure to include a compelling call to action, and write several ads so you can test variations against each other.

- **Relevant PPC landing pages —** Ideally, each keyword group and PPC ad will be connected to highly relevant landing page. This leads to high Quality Scores, which improve your ad positioning and lower your costs.

- **Optimized Web content —** Your keyword groups aren't just useful for your PPC campaign structure. You can also use them to generate ideas for website and blog copy that will draw in recurring organic SEO traffic.

Crafting content around your hardest-working keywords will ensure that your efforts pay off. However, to keep ROI high, it's also important to eliminate areas of wasteful spending. In the next step, we'll see how to weed out undesirable keywords.

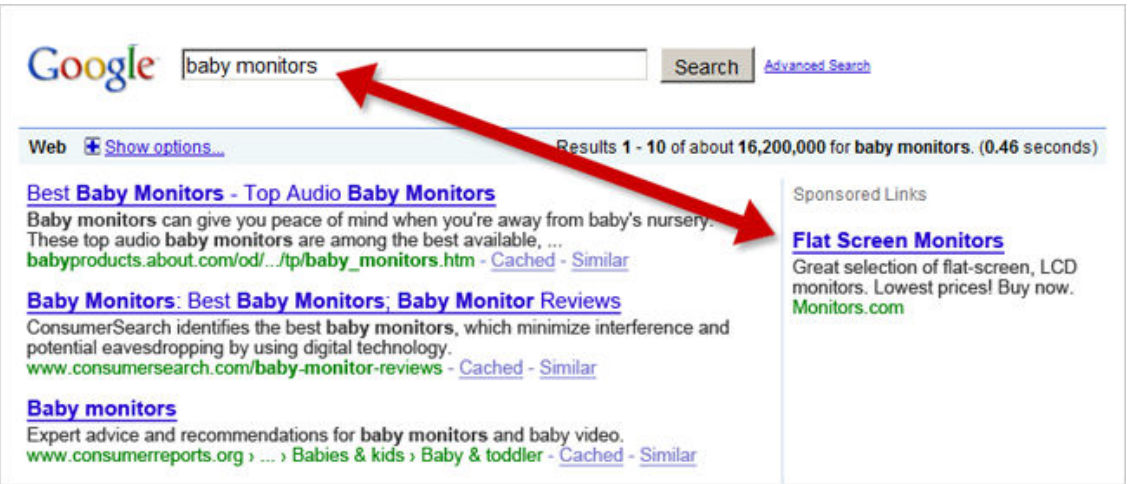
Step 6: Reduce Wasteful Spending with Negative Keyword Discovery

Step 5 of our 7-step guide focused on top-performing keywords — that's where you should direct your content creation efforts first for the strongest return.

However, for long-term success in search marketing, it's also critical to identify keywords that hamper performance and filter them from your research. This process is known as **negative keyword discovery**.

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This will save you time and money on both the paid and organic fronts. For PPC, negative keywords reduce wasteful spending on irrelevant impressions that drag down CTR and irrelevant clicks that don't convert. (And higher CTR boosts your Quality Score, further reducing your costs.) Eliminating those same keywords from your SEO research prevents time and money being wasted on optimizing content for the wrong audience.



So how do you go about finding negative keyword candidates?

- You can start by **brainstorming**. For example, if you sell bedding, your negative keyword list should include "music sheets," "work sheets" and other phrases that aren't related to bed sheets. In addition, you can often find negative keyword lists online for your industry.

- You can look at your **search query reports** in Google AdWords and identify negatives on a case-by-case basis. This will help you catch negative keywords that wouldn't have otherwise occurred to you.

- You can set up **rules, or filters**, that catch and eliminate irrelevant keywords from your research *before* you use them in your campaigns.

The third option is the most efficient, because it filters out whole groups of keywords that don't belong in your research — even those that haven't yet found their way in! WordStream's smart negative keyword tools do just that, greatly simplifying the negative keyword discovery process.

Negative keyword discovery is just one of the repetitive, ongoing tasks that every search marketer faces. In the final section of our 7-step guide, we'll cover how to manage the continuous nature of SEM.

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Step 7: Keep Going — Maintain Gains, Continue to Grow

The first six steps of this guide have walked you through the process of creating a well-organized keyword database and putting those keywords to work in highly effective search marketing campaigns. Completing these steps will put you well on your way toward more profitable PPC and SEO efforts.

To succeed in the long term, however, it's key that you **don't stop there**. Search marketing isn't a one-time project, it's an ongoing process. The more you put in, the more you get back. To see continuous improvement, you need to commit to *continuous* effort in the areas of:

- Keyword Discovery and Negative Keyword Discovery
- Keyword Grouping and Organization
- Keyword and Keyword Group Analysis
- Content Production and Prioritization
- Search Campaign Refinement

It sounds overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. With one robust platform that handles all these keyword management tasks, you can create large-scale, high-performance search marketing campaigns without sacrificing productivity or blowing away your advertising budget.

If you want to start taking steps to build a better search campaign, contact us today to set up a live demonstration with one of our customer service representatives, or begin a free trial to see what WordStream Keyword Management can do for your business.

About WordStream

WordStream is a provider of innovative, integrated keyword management solutions that simplify complex search marketing processes. Our patented software provides search marketers with a private, scalable online workbench for efficiently and continuously conducting PPC and SEO tasks including keyword research and negative keyword discovery; search query analytics; keyword grouping and organization; search marketing workflow and prioritization; and relevant ad copy and Web content creation.

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