

Niche keyword Research



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1. GETTING TOP SEARCH ENGINE RANKINGS

In this chapter you will:

- Learn why keyword research is the most important part of any web site design project
- Explore the various tools available for carrying out keyword research
- Learn how to choose profitable keywords
- Download and install the Google Toolbar
- Carry out your own extended keyword research into a topic of your choice
- Use the Keyword Worksheet and the sectors graph to help you decide which keywords have the best potential
- Use the Assigning Keywords worksheet to organize your list before starting to build you first page.

No matter what your level of expertise, do not gloss over this chapter. If you choose the wrong keywords you run the risk of:

- a) Not ranking well in Google, or
- b) Not being found despite ranking highly for your keywords

1.1 Keywords & phrases – the strong foundation for your web site.

Lets state something obvious here.

THE PURPOSE OF A WEB PAGE IS TO PROVIDE VISITORS WITH INFORMATION.

It does not matter whether that information is a sales pitch or “free information”, the function of the web page is the same – to provide information.

If the web page doesn't get visitors, you as the webmaster have failed, and the destiny of the web page is to become lost amongst billions of others in an increasingly tangled world wide web.

If you want to get visitors, you can pay for them, or get them for free at search engines like Google. In my opinion Google is the only search engine worth optimizing for. Besides providing other smaller search engines with results, I am increasingly seeing other search engine algorithms becoming closer to

that of Google. My plan of attack is to optimize for Google and eventually you will rank well on other engines too.

Let's state another fact:

TO GET FREE TRAFFIC FROM GOOGLE, YOU NEED TO COME UP IN THE TOP SEARCH RESULTS WHEN SOMEONE SEARCHES FOR A KEYWORD OR PHRASE RELATED TO YOUR WEB PAGE.

What this means is that you need to know what terms, related to your web page, people are typing into the search box at Google. By knowing this information, you can design your web page around these terms and hopefully Google will think your page is important enough to show in the top of the search results.

Here is the equation:

We get a top 10 position for our chosen term

+

We know people are searching for that term

=

FREE TRAFFIC.

1.1.1 HYPOTHETICAL CASE STUDY – A web page about “carp fishing”

The first step is to find out what terms people are typing into the search boxes at the search engines in order to find information about carp fishing. The obvious phrase would be “carp fishing”.

SUPER TIP:

If you want to start an affiliate business but do not have ideas for a topic or niche, read my review of Strike It Niche at:

<http://ez-search-engine-optimization.com/reviews/keyword-research/strike-it-niche-review.htm>

As far as I know, there is no decent way of finding out what people type into Google to find this information. Google does have a keyword tool for those who want to use its pay per click advertising model, however, it is not really detailed enough. We need another tool.

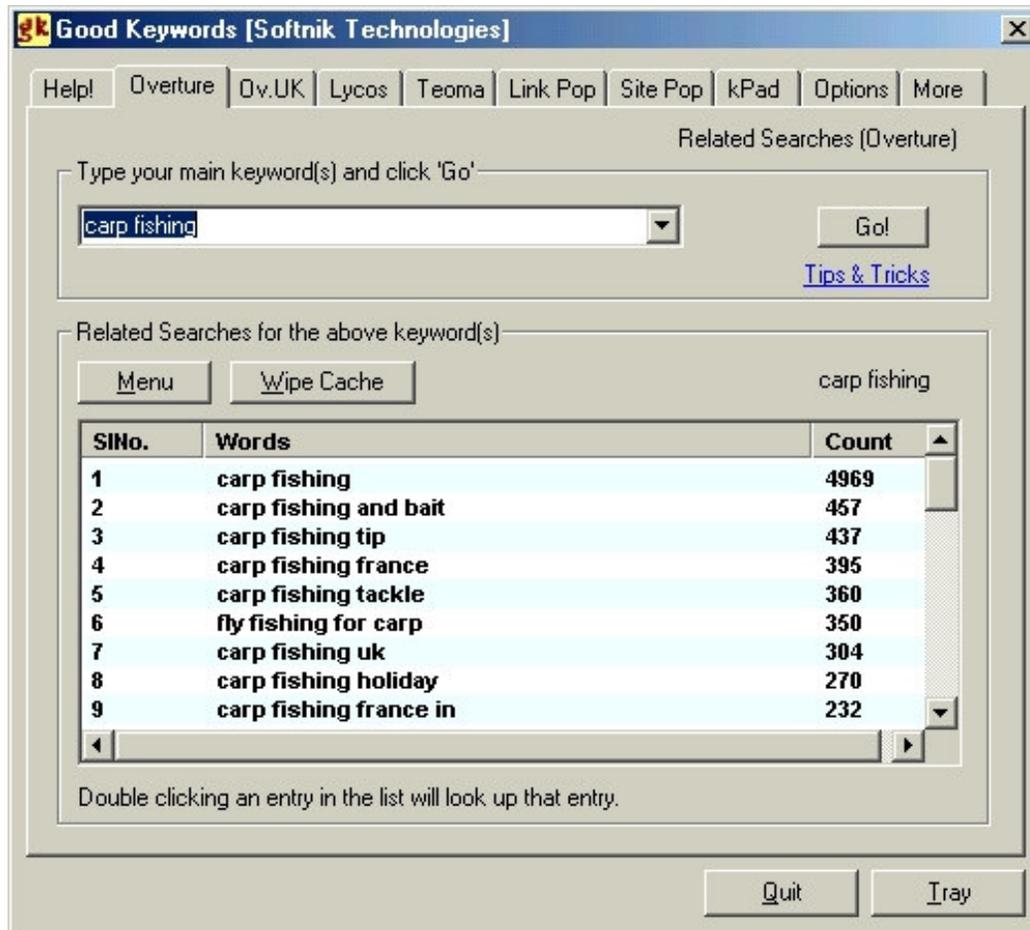
There are several available, and luckily there is a good free one.

Good Keywords (<http://www.goodkeywords.com>) allows you to type in a generic phrase (like carp fishing), and it will produce a list of related terms that have been searched for in the last few weeks. It also provides the number of times each term has been searched for.

Download it and try it for yourself. The help is a little sparse, but the software is fairly intuitive.

Once you have it open in front of you, click on the Overture tab of Good Keywords, type in the phrase you are interested in, and click the Go! Button.

On the next page you can see a screenshot showing the first few results I obtained using the Overture tab of Good Keywords:



Note:

The numbers that follow are the number of times that keyword phrase has been searched for in the last few weeks. Obviously bigger is better here.

One thing that you should be aware of is that Good Keywords uses the 'Overture Term Suggestion Tool' (a free web based tool designed by Overture to help webmasters find keywords to target for Pay per Click (PPC) campaigns). Good Keywords therefore suffers from the same problems that the Overture Suggestion tool does, namely:

1. Singles & plurals are lumped together
2. Suspiciously high searches for some terms (see story at the end of this chapter) – so number of searches may be inaccurate
3. Word order is often changed from that which was actually searched.

Because of these limitations, you need to use common sense. For example, a phrase lower down the list was:

"canada carp fishing holiday in"

This phrase was most probably typed in at Overture as:

"carp fishing holidays in canada"

Another thing to note is that the more searches there are for a term, the greater number of web site that will probably be competing for that term, and the harder it will be to get a top 10 position. You always need to check out the number of competing sites to decide whether a keyword is potentially valuable or not. This can be done at the search engines by typing each phrase in manually.



Type in your search phrase "inside quotes" to find out the number of sites that you actually have to compete against. The difference between the numbers of results if you use/don't use quotes around the phrase is often huge.

This discrepancy is caused by the way the search engines treat phrases in quotes. If you use quotes, the search engines will only return those sites that have the exact phrase on them. Without quotes, the search engines return all pages that contain all of the words in the phrase, just not necessarily the exact phrase.

If you optimize for the complete phrase, you only have to compete with the other pages that also contain the exact phrase because as you should automatically beat any page that does not have the complete phrase.

Typing in each phrase is time consuming I know, but it is something you must do. If you don't, you will end up choosing keywords that you have very little chance of ranking well for in the search engines.

Good Keywords is obviously flawed, but it can be a useful free way of researching terms for your pages.

NOTE: The next keyword tools we will look at provide this competition and other useful information for you, thus saving hours of your time. Finding competition is a piece of cake.

a) Nichefinder

You can read my review of Nichefinder at:

<http://ez-search-engine-optimization.com/reviews/keyword-research/nichefinder.htm>

The same query “carp fishing” in Nichefinder produced these results:

KEI	DtoS	Supp (R)	Dem (R)	Keyword Phrase
8836	94	1	94	bait carp fishing recipe
4930	28.67	6	172	bow carp fishing
380	3.25	36	117	canada carp fishing
2880	17.89	9	161	canada carp fishing holiday in
1877	14.44	9	130	canada carp fishing in
486	0.1	50800	4969	carp fishing
1740	3.81	120	457	carp fishing and bait
224	0.57	695	395	carp fishing france
538	2.63	78	205	carp fishing france holiday in
1537	6.63	35	232	carp fishing france in
136	0.51	533	270	carp fishing holiday
441	7	9	63	carp fishing ontario
100	0.91	121	110	carp fishing rig
19	0.05	6800	360	carp fishing tackle
150	0.99	152	151	carp fishing tackle uk
1948	4.46	98	437	carp fishing tip
81	0.27	1130	304	carp fishing uk
2304	16	9	144	carp fishing usa
5	0.02	21200	350	fly fishing for carp

(Output was produced using the Nichefinder Results Analyzer

<http://ez-search-engine-optimization.com/reviews/keyword-research/nichefinder-results-analyzer.php>) after analysis by Nichefinder)

KEY TO COLUMN HEADERS:

KEI stands for Keyword Effectiveness Index. Nichefinder does not provide this value, but the Nichefinder Results Analyzer will calculate it for you. KEI is based on a calculation devised by Sumantra Roy

<http://www.searchengineguide.com/1stsearchranking/>), to indicate the potential or profitability of a keyword. The higher the value the better the keyword. Typically values above 10 are worth considering. For more information on KEI, see: <http://www.wordtracker.com/help/keihelp.html>

DtoS is the demand to supply ratio,

Supp(R) is the number of competing web pages. The (R) refers to Raw. Nichefinder displays it results as both raw and nice, where raw is the actual number, and nice is a simplified number. Personally I like to have the raw numbers as they tell me exactly how many people are searching for a keyword. The good thing about the Nichefinder Results Analyzer is that you can import any of the Nichefinder results into it, filter the results using your own criteria, and only output the values you want to see.

Dem(R) is the number of searches in the last few weeks. Notice demand figures for Nichefinder are the same as for Good Keywords. Not totally reliable, but a good indicator. In my opinion, Nichefinder is a much better and more detailed keyword analyzer than Good Keywords for the extra data it provides.

b) Wordtracker

You can read my review of Word Tracker at:

<http://ez-search-engine-optimization.com/reviews/keyword-research/word-tracker.htm>

If you know how leverage the most value out of Wordtracker, you can get fantastic results. John Alexander has written a book on Wordtracker called which shows you a few secrets to getting the best out of this remarkable search tool. You can read my review of this eBook at:

<http://ez-search-engine-optimization.com/reviews/keyword-research/wordtracker-magic-review.htm>

In some ways, Nichefinder suffers the same limitations as Good Keywords; however, it is a far better tool. Its advantage over Wordtracker is that you actually own the software – no monthly or annual fee. Wordtracker on the other hand is a subscription-based service.

There are no two ways about it; Wordtracker is by far the best keyword research tool around.

It may not seem cheap, but it is worth its weight in gold. You can dig very deeply into your niche area and find hundreds – even thousands of potential keywords. It is well worth buying it for a day (which usually lasts longer than 24 hours if my past experience is anything to go by). It is possible to do the keyword research for lots of pages in a day – certainly enough to keep you busy for a month.

There is a free Wordtracker trial that you can use as many times as you want. Although limited to a single search engine, and by how many words it retrieves, the free version is still a great way to do preliminary research.

The beauty of the paid version of Wordtracker is that you can query all the main search engines for competition including Google. See my review at: <http://ez-search-engine-optimization.com/reviews/keyword-research/word-tracker.htm> for a list of all extras you get with the paid version.

I would highly recommend you go to the Wordtracker site and try out the trial version. Get familiar with it. Download the Word Tracker Manual and read it.



"Target the wrong keywords and all your efforts will be in vain."

Brent Winters, Preside
FirstPlace Software, Inc

Some people achieve a top 10 placement in a major search engine and get plenty of traffic. Others do the same but get nothing. Why?

The first group selected keywords that many people are searching on, and they did not!



Once you understand the basics, buy Word Tracker for a day and do your research. You will be amazed at the how much you can dig into Niche areas. For what it's worth, I believe that the numbers reported by Wordtracker (for the number of monthly searches) is far more accurate than any other tool available.

Using the free trial, here are a few of the results from Wordtracker for the search term "carp fishing":

Click here to add <u>all</u> keywords to your basket			
Keyword  explain	Count	Predict	Dig 
carp fishing	305	288	
carp fishing tips	88	83	
carp fishing bait	61	58	
carp fishing tackle	28	26	
fly fishing for carp	25	24	
carp fishing rigs	19	18	
uk carp fishing	18	17	
carp fishing south africa	17	16	
fishing for carp	17	16	
carp fishing in france	16	15	
carp fishing bait recipes	15	14	
carp fishing uk	12	11	
lake michigan carp fly fishing	11	10	
carp fishing in holland	9	8	
carp fishing tenerife	9	8	

Click on any keywords in the list that you think might be of interest to you. This will save them for you so you can carry out additional research on them later. Once you have selected all of the keywords you are interested in, you can get Wordtracker to calculate the competition at any of the major search engines (Google included – and this is a great feature). Once you have done this, you can get the results sent to you by e-mail to import into a spreadsheet such as Excel. Below I have shown a portion of the e-mail Wordtracker sent me (I have tidied it up a little to make it clearer).

KEI	Count	24Hrs	Competing	Keyword
670.618	151	2	34	carp fishing tips
663.048	118	2	21	carp fishing bait
529.000	23	0	0	carp fishing bait recipes
42.241	35	1	29	carp fly fishing
40.333	33	1	27	carp fishing in france
28.564	404	6	5714	carp fishing
5.657	37	1	242	fly fishing for carp
5.556	10	0	18	carp fishing holidays in france
1.650	33	1	660	carp fishing tackle
0.450	19	0	803	fishing for carp

NOTES:

Wordtracker provides the **KEI** value too.

The **count** figure is how many searches for this keyword were carried out in the last 60 days.

24Hrs refers to how many searches in the last 24 hours.

Competing is the number of competing web pages (in this case at AltaVista as that is the only Search Engine you can use in the free trial version). The AltaVista competition is usually very much lower than the Google competition, so I recommend you buy a day subscription to Word Tracker once you have several potential niches identified. Just to do that final checking and selecting of profitable keywords.

Lets compare the results from all of the tools so far:

Take the phrase: "carp fishing tip(s)" and compare the values for the number of searches:

Good Keywords, Nichefinder & Keyword Analyzer:

carp fishing tip,437

Wordtracker

151, carp fishing tips

Wordtracker suggests that there were far fewer searches for carp fishing tips than the Overture suggestion tool, which is used by Good Keywords, Keyword

Analyzer & Nichefinder. This may be in part due to Overture lumping plurals and singulars into one phrase & possibly misspellings.

What this means is that Overture lumps the following search terms together:

carp fishing tip

carp fishing tips

And common misspellings of this phrase.

This failing of the Overture suggestion tool is a big disadvantage. You can see why Wordtracker is the choice of professionals.

c) **Keyword Analyzer**

Nichefinder is a great way for rapidly finding niches, and Wordtracker is phenomenal. However, if you want to get into Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising, you really do need a separate tool. Up until recently I would have recommended Adwords Analyzer (read my review at: <http://ez-search-engine-optimization.com/reviews/google-adwords/adwords-analyzer.htm>)

However, recently I was introduced to a new product by Goran Nagy. This product is called Keyword Analyzer. You can read my review of Keyword Analyzer at: <http://ez-search-engine-optimization.com/reviews/keyword-research/keyword-analyzer.htm>

I don't have time to give justice to this great tool here, but it does pretty much everything Adwords Analyzer does and more. Deeper digging (resulting in thousands of keywords found), exact matching option when looking for competition, and much much more.

If you are going to by advertising using PPC, then this is the tool I would recommend you look at. For screenshots, visit Goran's Sales page at: <http://ez-search-engine-optimization.com/keywordanalyzer>

1.1.2 OK, time to put this knowledge to work

Carry out these tasks before you continue with this book:

1. Try the free trail of Wordtracker. Read the manual that you can download from the Wordtracker site (look for the link to the manual once you have entered into the trial version). Type in some phrases and let Wordtracker do its magic. Get a feel for this wonderful tool.
2. Do the same with the Good Keywords software. Try a few searches and read the help file.
3. Read my review of Nichefinder & look through the sample Nichefinder results I provide on this page after I typed in "gift ideas":

<http://ez-search-engine-optimization.com/reviews/keyword-research/giftideas-results.txt>

4. If you want to get into PPC eventually, consider getting a copy of Keyword Analyzer.

1.1.3 Decision time

Decide which keyword research tool most suites you, and if appropriate, buy it now. Take into consideration that the free ones are free, but not the best. If you are serious about learning SEO and getting pages ranked well, I recommend you either buy Nichefinder (which you will then own) or buy a day subscription to Wordtracker when you have time to devote a few hours to carry out your research.

Let me just finish this section with a true story:

Last year I carried out keyword research for a web page of mine about pheromones. I was going to send my traffic to a merchant's site and get commission on any sale generated. Using the Overture tool, I found 4 or 5 terms with reportedly 47000 + searches in recent weeks, and that is just on Overture. I thought, hey, great, it should be several times this many searches originating from Google. I created a couple of pages and optimized them. I got #1 position on MSN, and later, #1 on Google too for some of my chosen terms. I could see the \$\$\$ signs in front of my eyes. Two days later I had received on 6 visitors. I was heart broken. My millions were melting away before my eyes. I checked on Wordtracker and found that in the last month, there had only been 41 searches for my main keyword according to Wordtracker. I'll leave you to decide which my favourite keyword research tool is.

1.1.4 One final free tool you need

No self-respecting SEO would be without this free tool from Google. The **Google Toolbar** gives you valuable information about the web sites on the Internet. By using this tool to “spy” on other sites, you can make informed decisions about which keywords are best to target.

All will be explained in the next section where I describe how to find the best keywords.

For now, go to: <http://toolbar.google.com/>, and download your free copy.

Once installed, you will have this added below your address bar in Internet Explorer:



Click on the options button, and make sure that “Page Info Menu” is checked.

Now you have a tool that can quickly tell you the Page Rank (Google’s measure of importance) as well as the number of incoming links a web page has. These are two valuable pieces of information that an SEO needs.

1.2. More to do:

You have installed the Google Toolbar, haven’t you?

1. Open Internet Explorer and visit any site on the Internet. Watch the Page Rank bar change.
2. Hover your mouse over the page rank bar and the toolbar will pop up a help showing you what the page rank of the page is (a value from 0 to 10).

0 = Unimportant
10 = Most Important

3. Visit <http://cnn.com>. What is the Page Rank of CNN website? Does that mean it is important or unimportant?

OK, you get the idea?

4. While you are still at CNN, click on the small information button on the toolbar that looks like a small blue circle with the letter **i** in it. Select ‘Backward Links’ from the menu. Google will appear and show you all of the main pages linking to cnn.com (Google actually only includes links from PR 4 or higher pages, so there is likely many more links pointing to CNN than suggested with this tool). At the time of writing this, CNN had 110,000 links

pointing to it. That is the reason it has such a high PR – lots of other sites linking to it.

More about PR and links later. Let's get back to your keyword research.

Armed with your new research tools and a copy of **Worksheet 1 - Keyword Research** from the back of this book, you will now build up a list of some keywords and then evaluate their potential.

This worksheet is designed to help you find the best keywords. The worksheet itself is fairly straightforward. Below is a small sample of this sheet.

WORKSHEET 1 – Keyword research

Niche topic idea:

	KEYWORD	GOOGLE COMPETITION (search in quotes)	Average PR of top sites	Keyword Sector(s) – see sector chart
1				
2				

Write down the Niche topic idea at the top so that you can easily file away your research. As you build up more and more keyword lists, this will become important.

Now, using your chosen keyword tool, start finding keywords. Write the keywords into the table provided – each worksheet can hold 20, which is about the right number for your preliminary research.

Once you have found 20 keywords, enter in the value for the competition. This is the number of web sites returned at Google when you search for your keyword phrase **INSIDE QUOTES**.

E.G. search for **“carp fishing tips”** and not just **carp fishing tips**.

(Note that if you are using Nichefinder or Wordtracker, the competition is done for you)

As you search out this information at Google, click on a few of the top 10 results for each keyword phrase and check out the PR of those sites that will

become YOUR competition should you choose that phrase to target on your site. Work out a very rough average, and enter it into the PR column.

Now your worksheet is almost complete. You have just one more column to fill in before you have everything necessary to make informed decisions on which keywords to target, or whether this niche is just too competitive.

We will work out the last column in a moment. First, let me explain a few things.

You can create a web site that ranks well for most keywords you really want. However, those keywords that have high PR competing sites, or just a lot of competition, will take much more work to make them rank well, and that extra work has nothing to do with how you build your web page.

Those keywords that have lower competition are generally less profitable words to target, and therefore have not held much interest for the high PR sites (who, let's face it, can target pretty much any keyword they want, so will pick the more profitable, high competition keywords). That gives you the opportunity to make those keywords yours. Since there are less big sites competing for top positions on those phrases, many of the competing sites will be low PR sites that are relying solely on web page optimization for their ranking. With this course, you can out-optimize them, and put your page ahead of theirs in the search engines.

I am not saying you have to ignore higher competition keywords, just don't expect good positions immediately for pages built around high competition keywords. We will look later at the extra work required for good rankings under these circumstances.

My recommendation is to try to select keywords with low competition and low PR sites competing for them. As you grow in confidence, you can attempt some of the harder keyword phrases and carry out the extra SEO work that is required (and we cover that in later chapters) to rank well.

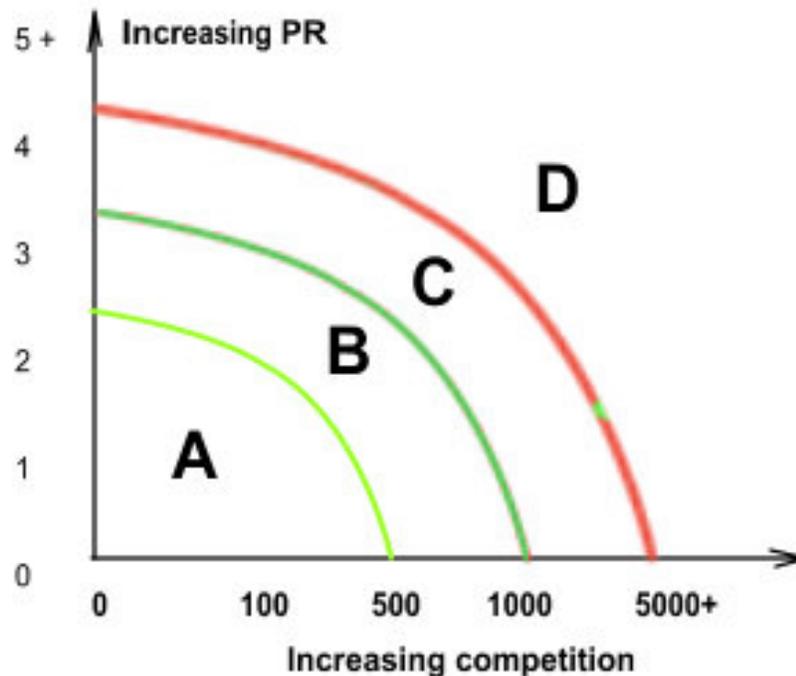
Doing things this way will allow you to see some excellent results immediately, and the way I see it is this:

GOOD RESULTS = GOOD MOTIVATION

BAD RESULTS = NO MOTIVATION. GIVE UP AND PAY SOMEONE ELSE TO DO THE WORK FOR YOU.

To help you decide once and for all whether a keyword is a good one to target, I have developed the Sectors Graph. This is drawn below to help you decide what is realistic. You will now see how to fill in your Keyword Research worksheet with the sector information your keywords fall into.

1.3 Sectors Graph



Look where your keyword phrases appear on both of the axes.

For example, consider a keyword with:

2000 competing sites and an average PR of competing sites of 3.

On my chart above, this keyword would fall into:

Sector C for competition

Sector B for PR

On my Worksheet, I would fill in

PR B, Comp C, or just **BC**

Look at the guidelines below to see whether this is a good keyword to target.

Sector A – the easiest keywords to rank well with.

Sector B – Still a good chance that web page optimization alone will get you good rankings.

Sector C – Other factors like incoming links and Page Rank are becoming more important. You won't rank well without a reasonable PR and good incoming links to your site.

Sector D – Only select these keywords as a long-term strategy. You will need to get actively involved in link exchanges to rank well for these.

Our imaginary keyword is OK for PR competition, but not as good for Web site competition. I would not discount this keyword phrase, but I would certainly not expect it to rank well immediately. This would be a great phrase to use as the main keyword of the site.

1.4 To Do:

Complete your worksheet with the sector information.

QUESTION: Have a look through your list. Do you have 5 or 6 keywords with AA, AB or BB sectors?

If Yes, then you have some great keywords to target for your site. Choose the best overall keyword from your list with a BC combination (or at the very most a CC combination of sectors) to use as your main keyword phrase for the site.

If No, then you need to either Find more keywords in this niche that may be more suitable, and check all new keywords for sector, or, leave this niche and try to research another one with better low competition keywords.

Do not go on to the next section until you have enough good keywords to work with. How many keywords you need depends entirely on how many web pages you want to build. You will need one good keyword per page, plus 3 or 4 other keywords to target as secondary keywords.

1.5 So We Have a List of Keywords, What Next?

So you can see exactly how to optimize your web page, I will continue to use the carp fishing example I started previously. I would like to suggest that YOU choose 3 or 4 different but related keywords to use on each of your web pages. One keyword will be your primary keyword phrase – the best of the 3, while the others will be your secondary keywords.

The primary keyword can have slightly more competition than the secondary phrases, and it should probably have the most monthly searches of the group. It is impossible to be too specific here, as the primary keyword must also make sense as the theme for a web page.

Let's suppose I wanted to build a 10-page site. What I would do is go through my list and pick out the very best 10 keywords (by evaluating monthly searches, low competition, relevancy to my intended site etc). Once I have my best 10, I would divide the other keywords up and assign each one to a primary keyword. You can use Worksheet 2 – Assigning Keywords for this purpose.

WORKSHEET 2 – Assigning Keywords

	Primary Keyword	Secondary Keywords
1		

Write in your 10 best keywords in the primary keyword column. Then sort through your left over keywords, and assign each of them to a primary keyword. Write these into the secondary keywords column.

Let's use my keywords as an example.

The following keywords from my list are all related and can easily be put together to create a web page about carp fishing baits:

carp fishing tips
carp fishing bait
carp fishing baits
carp fishing bait recipes

You obviously need to look at your own niche and decide on the primary & secondary keywords you will use for each page.

“Carp fishing baits” would be my primary keyword for this page as it encompasses all that this web page is referring to. The primary keyword is the keyword I will mainly optimize my web page for.

“tips” and “recipes” would be secondary keywords that I will use within my page, to try to capture search engine traffic looking for these words (in association with carp fishing baits). These secondary keywords can help increase the potential audience of your page by capturing visitors who use them in their search. It is always a good idea to use several secondary keywords or synonyms of the main phrase.

WORKSHEET 2 – Assigning Keywords

	Primary Keyword	Secondary Keywords
1	Carp fishing baits	tips, recipes

Each row of this worksheet represents a single web page.

Just as a note, if you have a great keyword, I highly recommend creating a web page with that as a primary keyword, but also use the same great keyword as a secondary keyword on a number of pages. This is a little trick I most often save for the main keyword of the whole site. That way the whole site has a theme running through it, and the search engines love that, especially when the pages are linked together properly.

Summary - In general, you want to choose highly relevant keywords, with a high number of searches and a low number of competing, low Page Rank web pages.

This article on Niche Keyword Research is actually **chapter one** of an exciting new Search Engine Optimization eBook. In the book, you will find out what to do with your keywords when you have found them.

After taking you by the hand to optimise your web pages for the search engines, the book then takes a good hard look at two factors which are perhaps the most important today for good rankings in the search engine – Page Rank & Link reputation.

For more information on this must have resource, visit the ez-Search-Engine-Optimization.com website.

While you are there, why not sign up for my free ezSEO newsletter. You will receive lots of free information that can positively affect your online business.