



How to innovate your content marketing strategy

**Six Steps to Reverse Engineering a
Resource Pillar Page**

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Introduction

Content marketing and retrograde analysis

Let's begin with a question: What is content marketing? We could give a long definition of what content marketing is, but we can say that it's just "Storytelling". The best content marketers are the most effective storytellers, they're able to make people excited, keep their attention and get them back on the content again. To achieve this we need to plan a long-term content marketing strategy, but this looks like to climb a steep mountain: we can see the summit but is really far away and we don't even know the trail. But, if others have been able to climb this mountain before then we can do it too.

The first thing to do when you try to climb any mountain is to focus on the steps, not how steep it is. To help to understand this concept would be useful to watch the TED TALK of the Chess Grandmaster Maurice Ashley, where he talked about the idea of "Retrograde analysis", that is "to look ahead, it pays to look backwards in the past". This idea is not based on solve a problem, but on preventing it, and we can think of applying it not only in a chess game but also in the content marketing world, where it takes the form of "Reverse Engineering Content", that is the process of working backwards to create a valuable piece of long-term content by recycling a series of planned content initiatives. So, in this case when you're thinking of recycling your content you must think of your content like a series of pillars, a stabilizing foundation for your content marketing strategy.

Introduction

Content marketing and retrograde analysis

A pillar content, or pillar page, is nothing more than a website page that covers a broad topic in depth and is linked to a cluster of related content. Generally, there are two pillar pages used most commonly:

- **Resource pillar page:** it's a heavy internal and/or external links and "book-markable" reference page. It works like a library where you can offer all the resources about a topic to the customers and they can also add this page as a bookmark and then keep coming back to it in the future;
- **10x content pillar page:** it's a deep dive page on core topic and where the format is like an ungated guide or eBook. The most important thing to consider when you're creating this type of pages is to offer the content as a downloadable resource so that the customer can use it at any time and this will also help you to create a conversion funnel.

Between this two, the most important is probably the "resource pillar page". In fact, it can be seen as a long-term content marketing strategy approach to gaining website authority or reach high ranking on the search engine, and, it's a potential link page to various "10x pillar content pages". For example, if you run a company that offers dental health products, could be good for you create a resource page about causes, prevention and treatment of gum disease with a list of links to help customers better understand this topic.

So, let's see how to Reverse Engineering a Resource Pillar Page.



STEP ONE

DETERMINE REACH TERM

DETERMINE REACH TERM

The reach term represents the top of the “mountain”, it’s a main topic that you want your company to be known for and build authority around, what you’re aspiring to rank for on the search engine. Reach terms usually have high monthly search volume and are generally one to three words in length to use to make the most of your efforts in creating marketing content. Because of that is extremely important to choose a term that supports your products and/or services, if not you will not be able to reach all the customers you are looking for.

So, how can you find potential reach terms? A good way is to search on Google terms that you think are useful using the “Keywords Everywhere” plugin to help you to determine monthly search volume. To be good you should consider terms that have at least 2,500 monthly searches. In our previous example, a reach term could be “gum disease” that has over 90,000 monthly search volumes.





STEP TWO

IDENTIFY CORE TOPICS

IDENTIFY CORE TOPICS

Once you identified your reach term, you have to identify a series of core topics, that represents the “half of the mountain”. They are still difficult to get to but not as the reach term. Core topics should contextually support your reach term and they are generally between three to six words in length, for example “gum disease cause” or “gum disease symptoms”.

To find these potential core topics perform again a research on Google and review Google’s autocomplete and related searches suggestions. Their monthly searches must remain high but achievable and a good value could be between 300-2,500. You should also analyse the first page of the search engine result listings, click through top-performing link, review the page’s content and find out if you can improve this content and provide new valuable resources. If you can’t then skip it.

So, your goal is to rank for each core topic first, and more content you’ll create for each of those topics more you’ll get closer to the reach term which you want to rank for.





STEP THREE

SOURCE SUBTOPIC
CONTENT TO
FORM YOUR TOPIC
CLUSTERS

SOURCE SUBTOPIC CONTENT TO FORM YOUR TOPIC CLUSTERS

With this step we're at the base of the mountain and subtopics essentially are what we do in our weekly basis, every single weekly task. Now, your core topics should be supported with subtopic content assets that are influenced by each subtopic you identify, and to do it at best it is good practice to think about these subtopics in the form of a question. This because it is how people search on search engine and your assets should be answering to those questions.

Following our previous example, if people are afraid of gum disease they may type on Google "How do I know if I have gingivitis?" and in this case a good subtopic content asset could be "Three signs that you might have gum disease".





STEP FOUR

BUILD PILLAR PAGE

BUILD PILLAR PAGE

The next step is about “how” create this content, in particular of “design”, an element that sometimes it’s just more important than the content that you’re creating. In fact, you can have the best message but if people can’t easily read it, you will not communicate effectively with them.

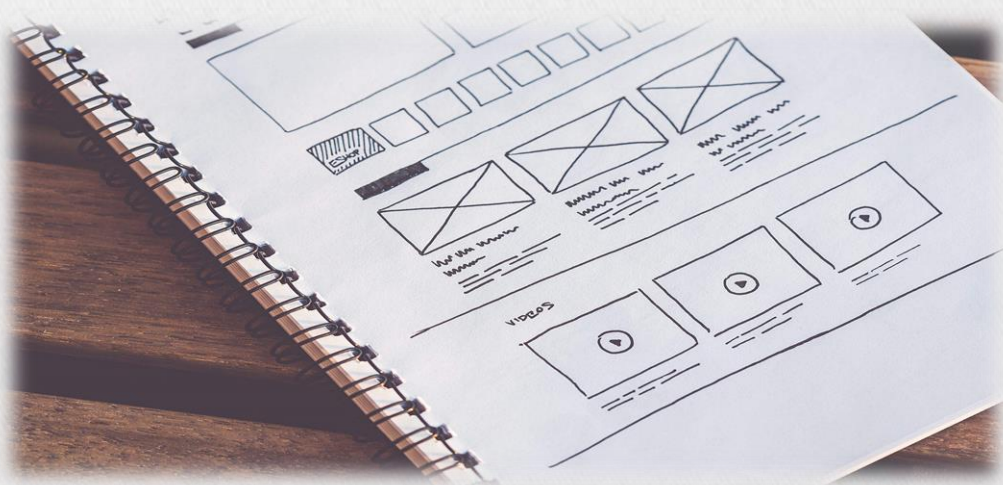
So, here are some layout tips to use on you Resource Pillar Page:

- First, use on-page SEO best practices and put references to the reach term in the Title Tag, the URL and “h1” Header;
- You may need an anchor-linked table of contents that will contain all the related core topics that you want to include on this page;
- Then you have the “definition” on the top, this because it will help you to optimize the page for the “featured snippet”, that are the quick direct answers you see at the top of the Google search results page that appear in response to some search queries. It’s the best way to communicate to a search engine what the page is about and therefore also with visitors;
- Another best practice is to put social media sharing buttons and make easy for people to share this content;
- Moving down in the page, it’s necessary to have a section for each core topic and visitors will be linked down to the specific portion of the page from the anchor table on the top;

BUILD PILLAR PAGE

- Within that portion there should be descriptive content for each core topic. So, don't just give all the different links to those resources but describe what this content is about;
- Then lastly, indicate the most valuable related subtopic content assets.

It seems really difficult to create a good resource pillar page, especially if you're not a designer, but it's not entirely true. In fact, HubSpot offers a variety of free pillar page templates to use, so design will no longer be an obstacle that keeps you from creating valuable content.





STEP FIVE

LINK ALL RELATED
CONTENT TO YOUR
PILLAR PAGE

LINK ALL RELATED CONTENT TO YOUR PILLAR PAGE

The first thing you have to do is to make sure that all your subtopic content assets link to the resource pillar page, whether it's a video on YouTube or a blog post.

There are two different areas where you can insert links:

- One on the top of this piece of content, for example a blog post, where is recommended a text-based link;
- And an image call-to-action at the bottom of the page.

One important thing to consider is that if you have 2/3 pillar pages that are all related one of your subtopic content assets, you can link all those pillar pages from the same content assets. The only thing to keep in mind is the visitor's experience, if it's useful you can redirect him to every content you want, and it will also help you to understand how the structure of your internal links should be.





STEP SIX

INCREASE WEBSITE AUTHORITY VIA INBOUND LINKS

INCREASE WEBSITE AUTHORITY VIA INBOUND LINKS

The last step is probably the most important one.

Of course, you're not the only one who will be competing for attention online, a lot of people are competing for the same terms. Coming back to our topic about gum disease, we can see for example that both Colgate and Crest, big brands in the dental health, have a resource pillar about that reach term, but their positioning is completely different. In fact, while that of Colgate is in the first places, the Crest one ranks on the ninth page of Google.

Why is this happening? Because of the Inbound links. These are a critical piece of your marketing plan and both quality and quantity of your inbound links matter greatly for your ranking on Google. In the example, Colgate has almost three times inbound links compared to Crest.

The inbound links are the image of how authoritative your website is, and the way that Google prioritize its content it's based on this authority and not so much on the quality of the content. Create valuable content still something very important but if you want to reach the ranking you're looking for on the search engine you need a strong link building structure that shows you're credible. This is what develop a valuable inbound marketing strategy means.



CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Where should you get started?

Focus your time and energy on creating your first topic cluster to help to make your “climb” more manageable and less overwhelming. Don’t try to create all the different content and pillar page at once, but the best thing you can do is to start small, understand this process and then go for bigger project when you have figured out. The reason why it’s so important is because if you’re able to rank well for that cluster that’s will help you to have more impact and visibility for your next campaign.

To make everything little easier, HubSpot has its content strategy tool that can help you to plan and organize your topic clusters and pillar pages. The tool shows you:

To understand your domain authority based on inbound links;

How many inbound links the page is getting;

To see the monthly search volume of your keywords;

The core topics similarity that is, in percentage, the relevance between a subtopic and the core topic it is linked to.

You should not be in a hurry to reach the top of the mountain, building your road map may take time, weeks, months, years, but is not important. Focus on long-term, take your time to practice and work on it and to keep you motivated remember that the reason why you’re doing all of this is to get to the top. Once there you will see your return of investment, how this experience was valuable for you and you will understand that it was totally worth it.

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