



REPORT

How to Create a Winning Content and SEO Strategy

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Methodology

The insights in this report are based on SimilarWeb and MarketMuse data.

The analysis covers content and SEO strategies in the US finance industry from the past 24 months (July 2018 - June 2020). Each insight is accompanied with its specific timeframe and includes desktop and mobile traffic.



Introduction

Competitive research is one of the pillars of SEO and content strategy. In every industry, vertical, and topic, dozens, if not hundreds, of sites are all trying to outdo one another to see who can capture the coveted first-page organic rankings on Google's search results pages.

Trying to **build and execute an SEO or content strategy** without understanding the competitive landscape is like playing dodgeball blindfolded. Your opponents are coming for you, but you have no idea what direction they're coming from or how hard they're going to throw the ball at you.

With the stakes so high, you need the **right toolset** to find which topics your audience is searching for, which ones your competitors are winning on and where they're weak, and how you can produce better content that ranks higher and drives searchers to your pipeline, not your competitors'.

In this report, we're going to look at how you can use MarketMuse and SimilarWeb together to do **in-depth competitive research**, find trending opportunities, and learn how to create content that is as good, if not better than anyone else going after the same topics. This report is a continuation of a previous blog post that can be found [here](#).

The examples in this report will be focused around creating a content and SEO strategy for the keyword *mortgage calculator* for the finance industry, but the process demonstrated can be used across verticals.

Key Takeaways

- Thorough competitive research is key to creating winning SEO content.
- One piece of content on a topic is not enough to rank. You need a content cluster.
- Make your content competitive by finding keyword opportunities and new angles to approach the topic at hand. This will help your website rank better and win SEO traffic.
- Using SimilarWeb and MarketMuse together can give you the insights you need to create a successful content SEO strategy.



Building a Content Cluster

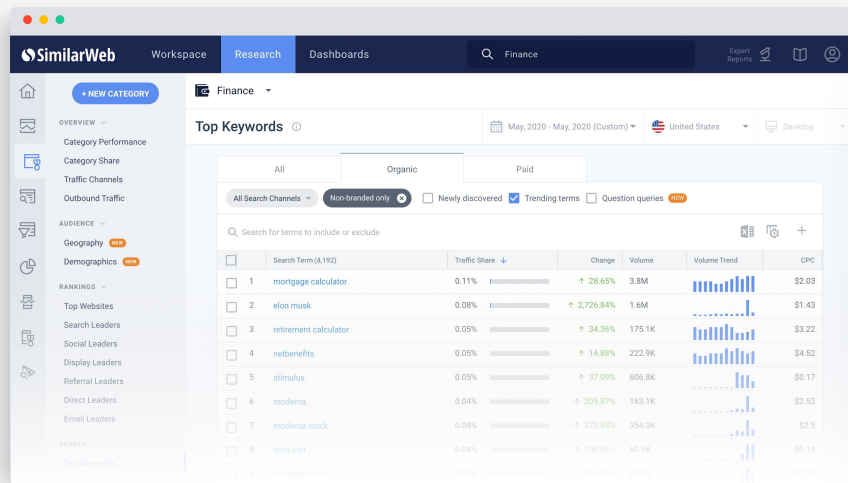
Diving into Keyword *Mortgage*

Ranking high for the topic *mortgage calculator* and generating organic traffic from searchers at this stage of the buyer's journey can bring in a high volume of qualified leads and site visitors. It's an extremely valuable query, which is why it's also very competitive.

First, you need to identify the best topics to focus your marketing efforts. The best way to do so is to look at what consumers search for in your specific industry with **SimilarWeb's Category Analysis**. SimilarWeb allows you to either look at predetermined categories or create your own categories so you can understand which topics are currently most relevant to your audience and are driving the most traffic. When diving into the finance category, you can see that there is huge interest growth for *mortgages* and *mortgage calculators* which indicates these topics have great potential for a content and marketing strategy.

Top trending keywords | Non-branded - Finance Category

US, Desktop & Mobile Web, May 2020



The keyword *mortgage calculators* had the largest traffic share amongst trending keywords in May suggesting that there is an increased demand for mortgage information, and indicates an opportunity to create a multi-channel SEO strategy to win more organic traffic for this topic.

Justifying Your Keyword Investment

Questions that may arise include, “how can I know if answering these keyword questions will provide enough value to justify all of my investment? How can I objectively compare these topics to questions about credit cards?”

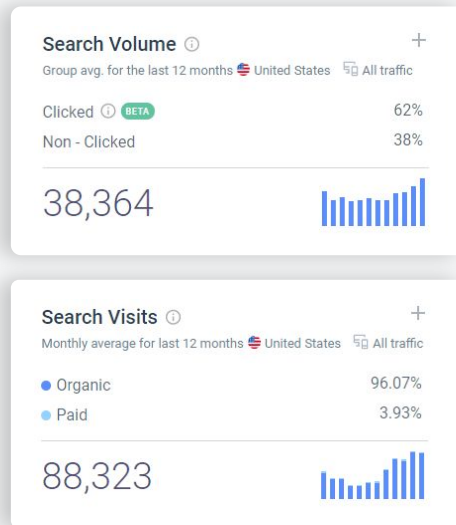
SimilarWeb makes it easy to understand whether you should invest in a topic, and if you could justify your investment to your stakeholders.

To discover how much you should invest, dive into a topic’s performance data and the search volume for a combined keyword group to evaluate the demand and audience size.

SimilarWeb also provides two crucial value indicators of Search Visits and Clicked vs. Non-clicked percentage that makes it easy to **understand the REAL VALUE of a keyword group** and its potential to drive traffic to your site.

The Value of the Keyword Group *Mortgage Questions*

US, Desktop & Mobile Web, May 2020



Mortgage keyword questions are very valuable to invest in because they have a high CTR. They generate more than two times the search visits than search volume, and more than 62% of searches end in clicks.

Finding Keyword Opportunities

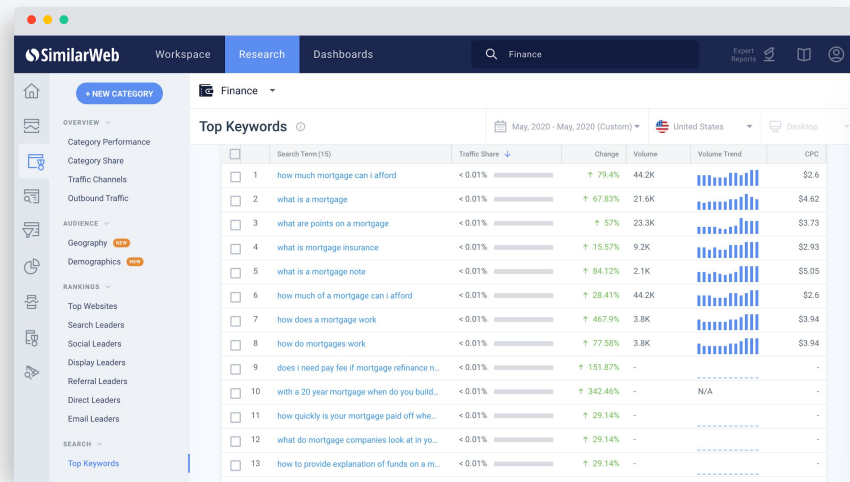
One of the most common mistakes that content strategists make is assuming that if they write a great page for a target keyword, then they are guaranteed to rank well. But, targeting a single keyword is just the starting point.

When determining the best results to show for a query, Google doesn't just analyze individual pages. It also examines the entire associated domain. A domain with a high quantity of expert content on a topic is more likely to rank for a competitive keyword than a site with only a handful of relevant pages. For success on *mortgage calculator*, you would need to **build a content cluster** around the calculator page.

One way to do this is to answer specific user questions about mortgages in general. SimilarWeb's data has identified this as a compelling opportunity.

Top Mortgage Question Keywords - Finance Category

US, Desktop & Mobile Web, May 2020



Companies in Finance sector should focus on growing demand for mortgages and information around them to drive their promotional campaigns, advertising strategy and content creation

Diving into a Valuable Keyword Phrase

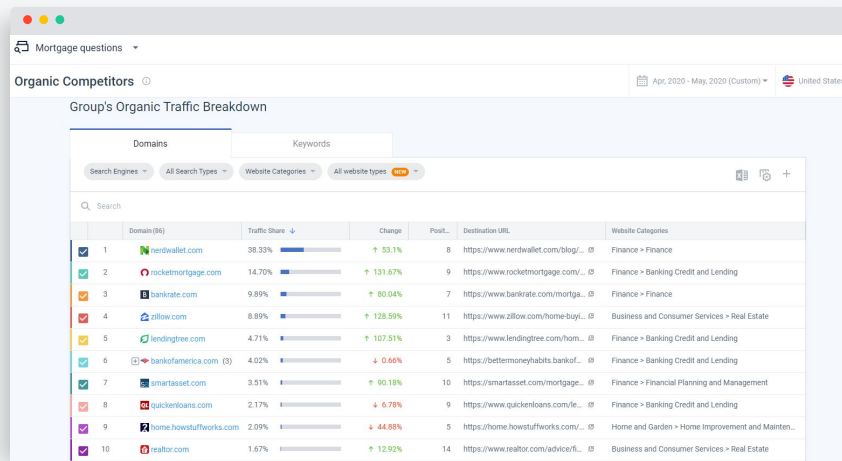
Based on search trends, SimilarWeb identified that these mortgage-related questions could drive a lot of traffic, improve your authority on the topic of *mortgages* and increase your calculator page ranking. Let's dive into the keyword phrase *How does a mortgage work?* since it could be valuable according to SimilarWeb. This will help you understand who wins relevant traffic and evaluate the competition for relevant keywords.

Looking at the *mortgage questions* keyword group, you see that most of the traffic is won by mortgage providers rather than unbiased, finance publishers with strong domain authorities. This indicates that ranking and winning traffic for these topics won't be difficult and justifies your investment.

You can also see the URLs receiving the highest traffic shares for these questions to understand the competitions' content.

How does a mortgage work?

US, Desktop & Mobile Web, April - May 2020



Mortgage questions are not dominated by publishers which means that competing for clicks will be a lot easier and content creation ROI will be higher



Getting Started

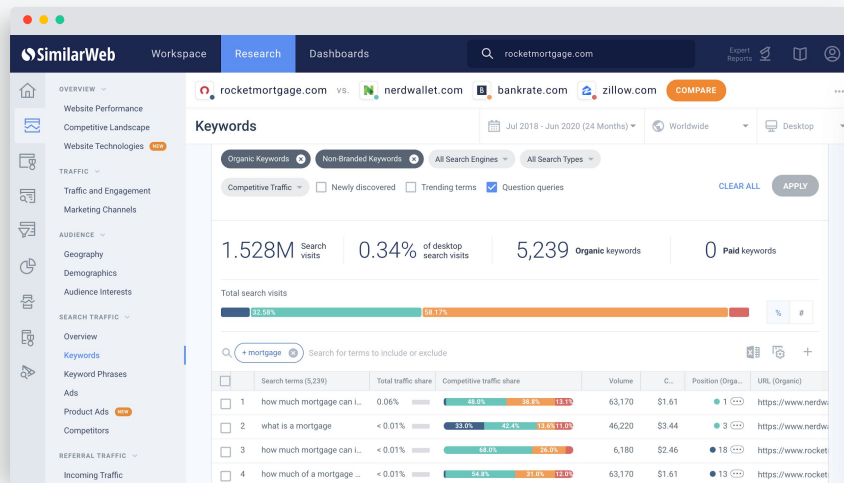
Keyword Prioritization

When prioritizing these topics, one of the best ways to start is diving into the keyword questions that drive the largest amount of traffic, yet from which you're only winning a small traffic share.

SimilarWeb allows you to do this on a large scale and lets you compare your keyword performance to your competition so you can easily find the best opportunities for a content topic cluster to expand your domain authority and generate more traffic to your site.

Non-Branded, Organic Keyword Questions

US, Desktop & Mobile Web, July 2018 - June 2020



Rocketmortgage.com is receiving less than 2% of traffic share from 'how much mortgage can I afford' while winning more than 30% of traffic for 'what is a mortgage'. Rocketmortgage.com should focus on keywords where they have the largest upside to increase their market share.

Validating The Topic Choice

First, check out MarketMuse Inventory to see if your topic appears and if you are set up for success. In this case, according to MarketMuse, you are absolutely starting off strong.

Note: We've blocked the title tag under "Top Related Page" to preserve this inventory's anonymity below:



How do you know?

- You have an Authority Score of 22, indicating that you have other relevant content on your site and aren't starting from scratch.

- You have a Personalized Difficulty Score of 64, while the Difficulty of the topic is 86. Compared to an average site, you should have a much easier time ranking well here.
- Right now, you rank 71 for this topic and your top ranking page for this keyword isn't really about that topic. That indicates an Intent Mismatch, meaning you're already ranking for this topic without explicitly targeting it. If you can nail the intent of the query, you should see a jump in the rankings.

Using these metrics, you can prove that you chose a target keyword that gives you a high likelihood of success in attracting organic traffic.

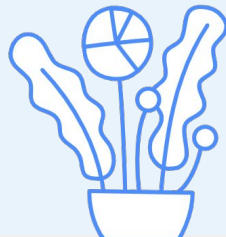
Starting With User Intent

It's important to craft content that matches user intent. Here are the user intents that Google looks for based on the Search Quality Rater Guidelines:

- **Know Simple** - The user wants a short, simple answer to their question.
 - **Example:** "What is the capital of Massachusetts?"
- **Know** - The user is searching for broad, complex queries that don't have a straightforward answer.
 - **Example:** "Massachusetts"
- **Do** - The user wants to actionable results
 - **Example:** "Retirement calculator"
- **Website** - The user wants to navigate to a specific website.
 - **Example:** "Bank of America login"
- **Visit-in-person/Local**
 - **Example:** "Bank of America Boston Massachusetts"

When conducting topic or keyword research, content strategists need to understand which of these user intents Google associates with the chosen topic. This is often called "**user intent mapping**." However, it is usually not that simple as some topics have what is called "**fractured intent**."

Fractured intent is Google's response to queries that don't lend themselves to an explicit answer. This is where the SERP for a topic contains pages that serve different, or fractured, intents. In this case, you can't simply map the query into one single user intent profile.



What is Intent Fracture?

As a simple example, type the query *mortgage* into a Google Search. Examine the SERP and see what Google shows you. This will be different for everyone based on location, but your results should contain:

- Videos
- Local mortgage providers
- News about mortgages
- Definitional pages about mortgages
- Mortgage providers
- Mortgage calculators
- Mortgage rate comparisons

This is a classic example of intent fracture. Your query was broad, and Google responded with broad results that cover almost every stage of the buyer's journey. If you wanted to

rank for the keyword *mortgages*, you would need to cover all of these possible user intents.

This impacts all the basic user intents differently. In the case of a "Know Simple" query with an intent fracture it becomes more complicated to how you need to address the topic and slightly contradicts the definition of a "Know Simple" query, defined on the previous page.

Here, you need to answer the user's question, but also expand upon it and include other stages of the buyer's journey in your content. **An intent fracture means that Google isn't quite sure what the user wants, so it provides a variety of pages that cover a wide expanse of the buyer's journey.**

We need to consider all of the SERP's intent profiles previously listed and create a page that covers all of them.

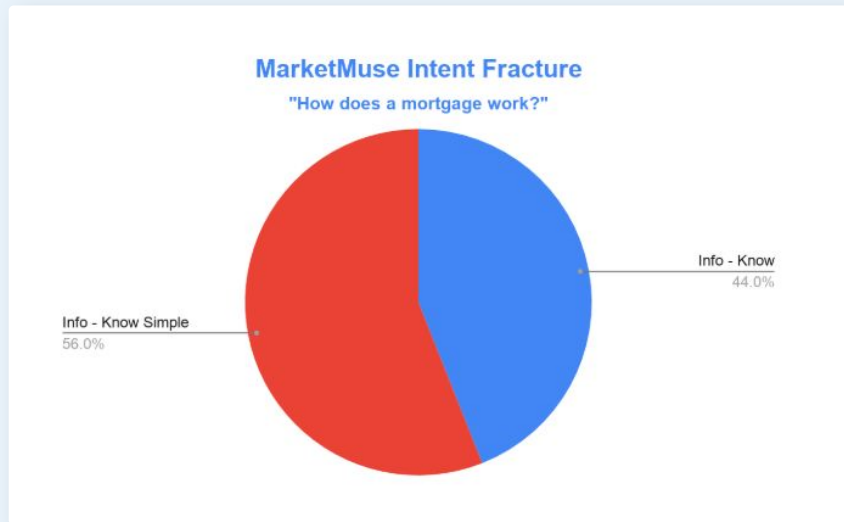
How MarketMuse Comes into Play

One of MarketMuse's newest capabilities is to calculate intent fracture. MarketMuse's AI analyzes the competitive landscape on a given topic and determines the percentage of ranking pages in each user intent profile.

In the case of *How does a mortgage work?* it's easy to be deceived by the typical intent profiles. A manual inspection might lead you to believe that it's a "Know Simple" query. But, MarketMuse's data shows the hidden intent fracture and complexity of the topic.

MarketMuse found that the dominant intent is indeed "Know Simple," but there's also a high degree of "Know" intent profiles. If you want to write a comprehensive page that covers both user intents, you can't just write a simple explainer about how a mortgage works. You have to

determine what else users might want to know once you've answered that core question.



Looking at Core Competitors

MarketMuse can measure content quality at scale. You can look at the breadth of coverage on mortgage topics across your core five competitors to determine how they are ranking. You can determine how well they rank, what kind of page is ranking for each topic, and what the Content Score is for the relevant ranking page.

The image on the right shows what that looks like for *How does a mortgage work?*

Remember: The keyword you ultimately want to win is *mortgage calculator*. Your five competitors are some of the top-ranking domains on that topic, which is why they should be used as a basis for comparison on other topics in the mortgage content cluster.

Topic: How does a mortgage work?					
Competitor	URL	Rank	Current Content Score	Current Word Count	Target Content Score
Rocket Mortgage	https://www.rocketmortgage.com/learn/what-is-a-mortgage	2	47	3,311	42
Bank of America	https://bettermoneyhabits.bankofamerica.com/en/home-ownership/how-does-mortgage-work	4	22	3,571	42
Bankrate	https://www.bankrate.com/mortgages/how-does-refinancing-a-mortgage-work/	15	26	1,672	42
Zillow	https://www.zillow.com/home-buying-guide/what-is-a-mortgage/	18	28	1,996	42
NerdWallet	https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/mortgages/how-to-apply-for-a-mortgage/	20	24	1,638	42



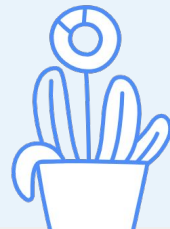
Rocket Mortgage has the best page out of your competitive cohort. They are ranked 2, and their Content Score exceeds the Target Content Score. It is also notable is that Bank of America ranks 4 with a fairly weak page. They have a Content Score of 22 out of 42.

What is a Content Score?

Content Score is a measure of comprehensiveness. Most likely, Bank of America is so authoritative on the topic of mortgages due to its content coverage, its product pages, and its brand. They're ranking well on this topic because they're coasting on that authority, not because their page is necessarily comprehensive.

The other competitors are not even ranking on page one. The Content Scores of their pages are middle-of-the-road, and in some cases, do not quite match the intent of the query. Bankrate's ranking page is about refinancing a mortgage, while NerdWallet's ranking page is about applying for a mortgage. They are **missing a big opportunity** here!

Taking it back to our example about the keyword phrase *How does a mortgage work?*: If you wanted to write a page to rank for this question, you would have ample opportunity to gain ground. As you saw, our Personalized Difficulty is favorable, and the competitive landscape has some weaknesses in content comprehensiveness.

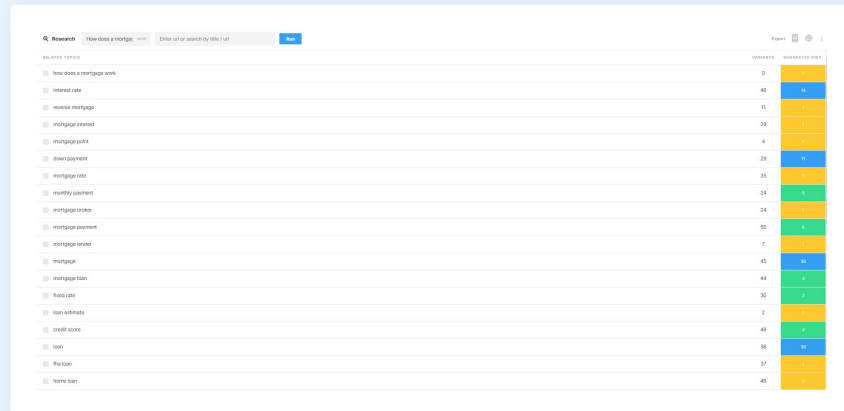


Topic Research

You have your topic, and you know you can succeed. Now, how do you actually create a great piece of content that covers everything it needs to address?

Let's enter your topic, *How does a mortgage work?*, into the **MarketMuse Research Application** to see which related topics our piece of content should cover.

This gives you a roadmap to the topics you'll need to cover. You can find Variants to uncover additional opportunities to cover the core topic comprehensively within each related topic.



The screenshot shows the MarketMuse Research Application interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the query "How does a mortgage work?" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, a table lists related topics. The table has three columns: "Related Topics", "Score", and "Variants". The "Related Topics" column lists various topics related to mortgages, such as "how does a mortgage work?", "interest rate", "reverse mortgage", "mortgage interest", "mortgage pool", "down payment", "mortgage rate", "monthly payment", "mortgage lender", "mortgage payment", "mortgage transfer", "mortgage", "mortgage loan", "fixed rate", "loan estimate", "credit score", "loan", "the loan", and "home loan". The "Score" column shows numerical values for each topic, ranging from 0 to 45. The "Variants" column shows a color-coded bar for each topic, with colors ranging from blue to yellow.

Related Topics	Score	Variants
how does a mortgage work?	0	Blue
interest rate	45	Blue
reverse mortgage	11	Blue
mortgage interest	29	Blue
mortgage pool	4	Blue
down payment	29	Blue
mortgage rate	35	Blue
monthly payment	24	Blue
mortgage lender	24	Blue
mortgage payment	30	Blue
mortgage transfer	7	Blue
mortgage	45	Blue
mortgage loan	44	Blue
fixed rate	30	Blue
loan estimate	2	Blue
credit score	43	Blue
loan	36	Blue
the loan	37	Blue
home loan	45	Blue

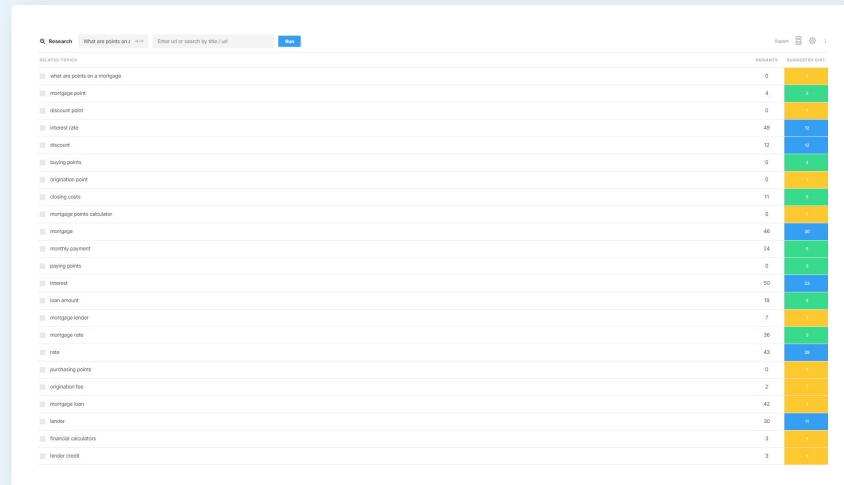


A Deep Dive into Competitive Data

MarketMuse Competitive Data

Right off the bat, it's clear that the top 2 results for this query have covered the topic well, with Content Scores of 47 and 49, respectively. The Heatmap tells a similar story; the majority of the ranking pages have some noticeable topic gaps. Few of the competitors ranking here cover vital topics like:

- Mortgage points
- Reverse mortgages
- Credit scores
- Loan terms
- Loan servicers



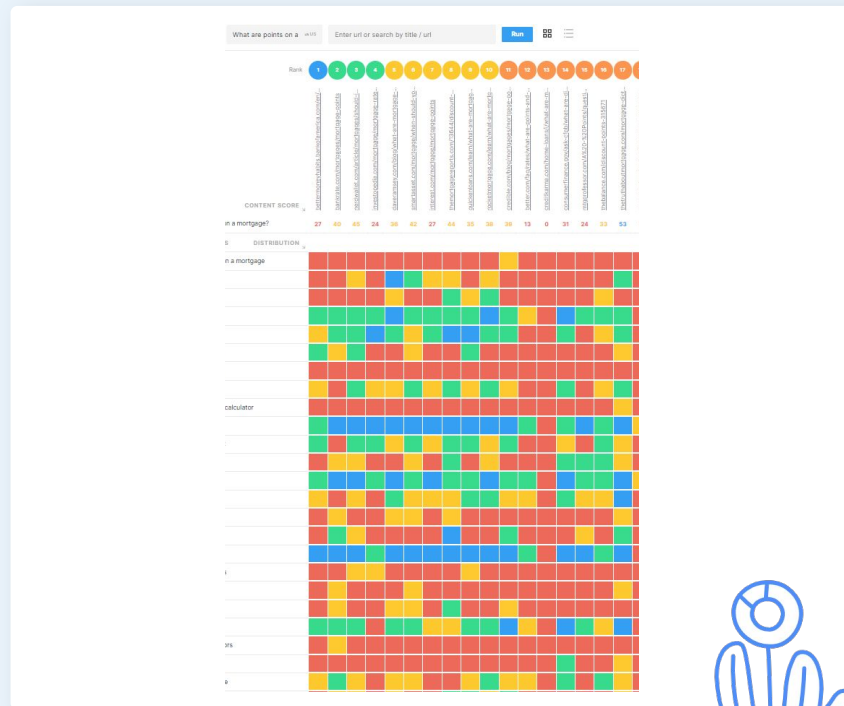
Finding Table Stakes and Content Gaps

Looking at the mapping on the right you know you'll need to cover:

- Interest rates
- Closing costs
- Lenders
- Discounts

You can differentiate your content by including coverage of:

- Origination fees
- The mortgage amount
- Loan officers



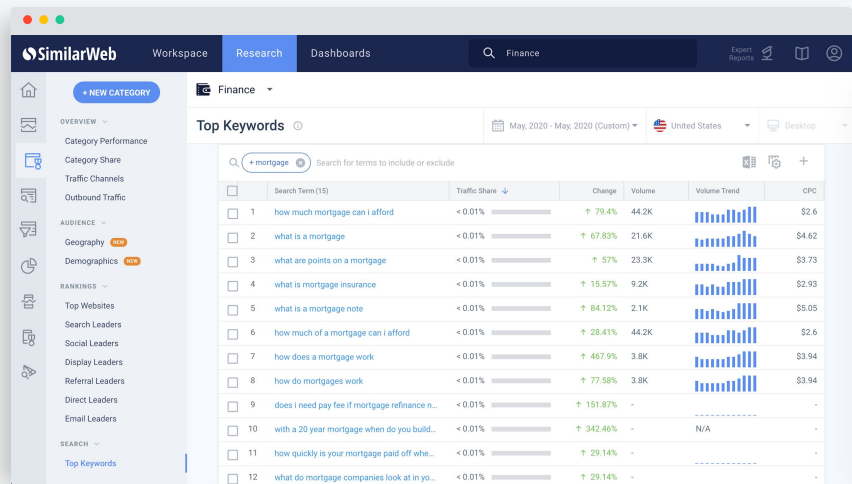
Finding Other Topic Opportunities

Repeat this process until you have a robust cluster of mortgage-related questions that you want your content to address.

Using SimilarWeb's research tools, you can identify which questions receive high traffic volumes and strong click through rates. Once you find a keyword question that looks promising, you can use MarketMuse to figure out if it's a topic that you'll see immediate results or one that needs more published content in order to increase your traffic share.

Top Mortgage Question Keywords - Finance Category

US, Desktop, May 2020



Companies in Finance sector should focus on the growing the demand for mortgages and related information to drive their promotional campaigns, advertising strategy and content creation.



Turning Content Research into Published Content

Starting Your Execution

MarketMuse can help you condense all of your research into an **AI-generated Content Brief**. The Content Brief is a blueprint providing writers with an outline of what is needed for a comprehensive article.

Producing a Content Brief for all of your topics will allow you to equip your writers and editors with everything they need to create the most effective content on your desired topics and target keywords. They include:

- Competitive titles
- Competitive subheadings
- Recommended subheadings
- Related Topics
- Internal and External Linking recommendations (with anchor text)
- Questions you should answer throughout your article

- The Target Content Score
- The Target Word Count

The screenshot shows a 'CONTENT BRIEF' for the topic 'What is the mortgage process?'. It includes sections for 'SUGGESTED SUBHEADINGS', 'QUESTIONS TO ANSWER', and 'TOPICS TO MENTION'. The 'TOPICS TO MENTION' section is a table with columns for 'TOPICS TO MENTION', 'RELEVANCE', and 'RECOMMENDED WORD COUNT'.

TOPICS TO MENTION	RELEVANCE	RECOMMENDED WORD COUNT
loan estimate	85%	5-10
mortgage loan	85%	5-10
loan officer	85%	5-10
credit score	85%	5-10
mortgage	85%	5-10
loan	85%	5-10
mortgage broker	75%	5-10
loan payment	75%	5-10
broker	75%	5-10
interest rate	75%	5-10
home loan	75%	5-10



Want to check one out? Here's a Content Brief for one of the topics we covered here, ["How does a mortgage work?"](#)

Get Started

For many content and SEO teams, content research and planning are moving away from their quarterly planning cycles to a more fluid and adaptable approach allowing them to align with larger business goals and the competitive landscape. Being able to spot, and validate keyword opportunities in real-time, and then create timely, high-quality content is a major competitive advantage.

Combining data from SimilarWeb and MarketMuse will give you a research stack that can make your team more agile in its planning and execution. Test these workflows out and identify which opportunities your competitors are missing, and where you can take advantage.



Knowing your market means understanding your competitors. SimilarWeb PRO offers breadth and depth of digital marketing intelligence.

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