

Establishing SEO Smarts in Product Taxonomies



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So your organization has caught the bug. The phrase “SEO” rings out in every meeting. It’s whispered in the halls by consultants. Your company has (finally) decided SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is important. That’s a great thing. All web-exposed organizations have to face the challenges and opportunities SEO presents.

You cannot allow SEO decisions to supersede the heart and soul of your ecommerce strategy. You should never let SEO get in the way of providing customers with quality content that facilitates click-through, buying decisions and good customer experience. However when creating or revising product descriptions, taxonomy, images or attributes or working on product data you do have to devise an SEO strategy, one that works in concert with all of the cardinal rules of good ecommerce.

The smartest place to focus your SEO efforts is on backbone of your product offering. What, you might ask, is the backbone to your product offering? Product taxonomy. There is a great deal of power in SEO optimization of your product taxonomy. Taxonomy provides the road signs to your products via browse and on-site search. SEO provides the on-ramp to your site. So, why not merge the two? A fully optimized taxonomy includes smart methodology to account for customer browse and product groupings, an eye toward on-site search keywords, and a well researched SEO keyword strategy.

Taxonomy provides ecommerce gold: organic, built-in landing pages. Each taxonomy category is a portal to your carefully curated products. They are natural mini-stores, a doorstep to thousands of your products. Landing pages are just begging to drive traffic to your site. Consider a landing page from one of the gold standards from Amazon below:

The screenshot shows the Amazon.com search results for "Gardening Shovels". The breadcrumb trail is highlighted with a green oval: **Home, Garden & Pets > Patio, Lawn & Garden > Gardening > Gardening Tools > Shovels & Cultivators > Shovels**. A yellow callout box points to this trail with the text: "The shovels category on Amazon.com. A great example of a natural taxonomy landing page. Also the #1 result for a 'shovels' search on Google." Below the breadcrumb trail, there are three product listings:

Product Name	Buy new price	2 new price
Gerber 22-41578 Gorge Folding Shovel	\$29.70 \$15.09	40 new from \$15.09
Gerber 30-000075 E-Tool Folding Spade with Serrated Blade	\$75.00 \$40.37	33 new from \$36.87
Fiskars 9668 Long Handle Digging Shovel	\$29.99	2 new from \$28.45

By reinforcing and using multiple instances of the word “shovels” in every part of the ecommerce experience, from the click path to the taxonomy (a fancy word for organizing by high level categories), Amazon attracts and captures customers who search for the term before any of their competitors. You need to do the same with your product data.

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Think of taxonomy landing pages as the “Back to the Future” DeLorean of the ecommerce world, an elegant portal that creates completely new product buying opportunities. If you fail to see how important this or the mechanisms underlying this (for all non-data geeks), then at least consider and see the potential dollar signs. There is no need to create multiple campaign pages to attempt to drive traffic to your site, no need to buy special key words or spend AdSense dollars. Taxonomy landing pages are your built-in campaigns. Establishing keyword -rich pages like this alone can be a key cog in your overall SEO strategy.

In order to properly leverage these pages and find the words and copy that bring customers to your product mix means you must do the up-front keyword research to ensure you are use the right product category names to drive traffic. There are lots of ways to achieve the same results, so let’s walk through an example of how SEO keywording can affect a product category name.

Trash Cans... Waste Bins... Trash Bins?

Let’s say you sell trash cans and want to ensure you are creating the best possible SEO landing page and attract the most customers. How do you bring the most customers to your offering? You want to go after the most potential traffic from the Google and Bing. To do that, you need to understand how people think about your product, not necessarily how experts think about them or insist is the right way, but exactly how everyone looks for product. So, how do most people refer to these products? Let’s take a look:

The screenshot displays the Google Keyword Planner interface. On the left, there are navigation options like 'Tools', 'Keyword Tool', and 'Traffic Estimator'. The main area is titled 'Find keywords' and shows a list of search terms: 'trash bin', 'trash bins', 'waste bin', 'waste bins', and 'trash container'. Below this, there are filters for 'Only show ideas closely related to my search terms', 'Locations: United States', and 'Languages: English'. A 'Search' button is visible. Below the search results, there is a table of 'Keyword ideas (100)'. The table has columns for 'Keyword', 'Competition', 'Global Monthly Searches', and 'Local Monthly Searches'. The top three results are highlighted in yellow:

Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches	Local Monthly Searches
★ trash containers	Low	450,000	368,000
★ trash bin	Low	33,100	22,200
★ waste container	Low	27,100	14,800
★ kitchen trash bins	Low	9,900	8,100
★ trash bins kitchen	Low	9,900	8,100
★ trash bins for kitchen	Low	9,900	8,100

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At ByteManagers, we went through this very example on a recent project. For one of our clients, the product category was initially called “Waste Containers”. When we looked deeper we realized “Trash containers” was the real Holy Grail, the way most people looked for these items. If you want to go after the fat head keyword here, you clearly would choose “Trash Containers” as your taxonomy node, clickpath and item description name. Just by changing your keyword entries and taxonomy names from “Trash bins” 14,800 monthly searches, you can tap a pool of 368,000 potential searches. In the SEO world, that’s accessing a goldmine with one simple change. Obviously, you have to be able to compete with the word you target, but if you are a large organization you should be going after the “fat head” keywords. This is a pretty typical and low-hanging fruit example. By making a simple change, you’re potentially expanding your reach in a major way.

Once you’ve decided on a node name, you can do all the basic SEO follow-through for your landing page. Beyond that, by investing a little more time in establishing original on-page copy that is relevant, keyword rich and virgin, you can achieve top rankings in all the major search engines. Furthermore, by creating Meta tags with keyworded alt tags, file names and captions on images you can rule your marketplace. Achieving this of course is predicated on choosing the right keyword so you can have your SEO work in concert with your product.

Rarely in life is there such a direct correlation between input and output, but in the case of SEO, spending a focused effort on identifying the ways customers search for product will reward you quite handsomely. The greatest difficulty here is in knowing all the resources to mine to find what you’re looking for. At ByteManagers, we’ve spent considerable time and effort on just that. We know what works and how to implement the right strategy. Just as with the DeLorean from “Back to the Future”, we know you don’t need plutonium to get where you need to be. With a few tweaks and our thoughtful guidance, we can hook you up with a straighter line, a Mr. Juicer of sorts, that takes what you already have lying around (in the movie that was beer and banana peels) to rocket ahead of your competitors, establishing your products as the ultimate marketplace.