# The Definitive Guide to Keyword Organization: Build a Foundation for Search Marketing Success

*"Anything worth doing is worth doing right"* – Hunter S. Thompson

When discussing successful search engine marketing (SEM) campaigns, many will immediately point to obvious tasks such as keyword research, bid management, ad writing, copywriting, link-building or conversion optimization. These are all important, but all too often an integral step is missed or left out – keyword organization. Keyword organization, or grouping, is an extension of keyword research that sets your pay-per-click (PPC) and/or search engine optimization (SEO) campaigns up for profitability and success.

Think of a search marketing campaign as a delicate structure that you must build, with each task or layer of complexity building upon the last. If built on a foundation of poor keyword research lacking in organization, this delicate structure of a marketing campaign can and will fall! So, whether you are in the beginning stages of an SEM campaign launch or already in progress and need to make repairs, apply keyword organization and build a foundation for search marketing success.

## What Is Keyword Organization?

At its core, keyword organization is the process of taking your bulk list of keywords and placing each term into meaningful, relevant groups. You can apply any number of verbs to keyword organization, such as clustering, grouping, segmenting and even categorizing. However you describe it, the process is the same.

## Why Is Keyword Organization Important?

If the analogy of a building's foundation is not clear enough, there are countless benefits to having a meaningful keyword organization plan for your SEM campaigns.

- **Cross-Channel Application**: Keyword research, and by extension keyword organization, lies at the intersection of all of your search marketing activities. Both PPC and SEO begin with keywords in their raw state. The effort you put into keyword organization will have an impact across these marketing channels and will positively inform the decisions you make for both.
- **Productivity**: Organization just makes sense. Nobody can justify working from a list of keywords numbering in the thousands, let alone making efficient decisions with even a list of 100 keywords. At its simplest, keyword organization will provide a categorical structure by which you can quickly and efficiently navigate your entire keyword database.

- **Create a Roadmap for Structure**: Whether you are discussing PPC campaigns and ad groups or referring to your website's information architecture, proper keyword organization will practically guide you through both processes like a roadmap.
- **Increase Profitability**: At the end of the day, marketing in any form is intended to make money. Keyword organization has a tremendous effect on the potential profitability of your search marketing campaigns through improving Quality Score, tapping into the long tail of keywords and providing a stable, scalable foundation for growing your campaigns.



**Figure 1 Cross-Channel Application**

## Keyword Organization for Pay-per-click (PPC)

Pay-per-click advertising is a system built on rules and structure, two elements that fall directly in line with keyword organization. As PPC has grown more complex through the years, it has become increasingly challenging to lower cost-per-click (CPC) and to adhere to every best practice for Quality Score, relevancy and conversion optimization. Keyword optimization isn't the cure to comply with every best practice, but it provides the foundation to get you well on your way.

## Quality Score

- **Quality Score Defined:** Quality Score was created to improve the relevancy of PPC ads served for the end users of search engines (first with Google, but closely followed by Yahoo! and Microsoft). The idea was to reward advertisers for providing a relevant user experience with increased ad position for a lower CPC. The core formula is a bit messy, but suffice it to say that

click-through rate (CTR), historical performance and the location of your keywords from ad group to ad to landing page all play a major role in determining Quality Score.

- **Campaign Structure:** It is generally accepted that to improve Quality Score, the two primary elements to get right are to make sure that you write ads that are appealing (and will increase CTR) and that contain the keyword that triggered the ad to display. Imagine an ad group with 100 keywords and then try to write an ad that is appealing and contains every keyword in the ad group. It's impossible! Keyword organization in concert with your campaign / ad group structure will allow you to intelligently break down your list of keywords into tight ad groups ultimately allowing you to write Quality Score friendly ad text.

## Lower PPC Costs

- **Quality Score:** There's that term again – Quality Score. Keyword organization allows you to create tightly themed campaigns and ad groups, which will improve your Quality Score. The benefit? Lower cost-per click. Increasing Quality Score allows your ads to obtain a higher Ad Rank (Google AdWords) which is directly applied to the formula for actual ad position in the search results. Over time, your ads will begin to display higher in the rankings for the same or lower CPCs.

- **Focus on the Long Tail:** One or two term keywords with high search volume are referred to as the "head" in the long tail theory. Inversely, complex keywords with three or more terms are referred to as the "long tail" and generally have lower search volume. Research has proven time and time again that long-tail keywords produce more conversions at a lower price. Why is that? Long-tail keywords have less search volume and less competition, which directly translates into less money spent on lower-converting searches and lower cost-per-click. Keyword organization provides the necessary structure for you to create granular keyword segmentations (and ad groups) to effectively target the long tail.
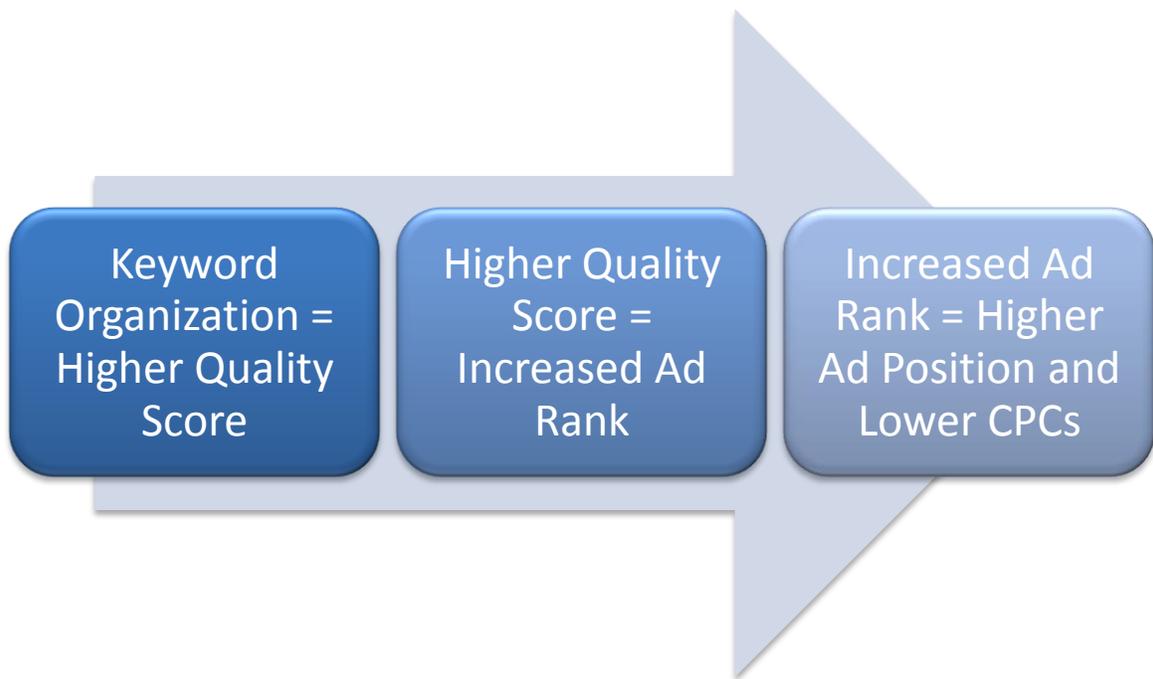
## Keyword Organization for Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO is based on the organic search capabilities of the major search engines like Google, Yahoo! and Bing. The search engines crawl websites, index the textual content of the site and semantically match that content with relevant search queries. The ability for the search engines to 1) crawl your site and understand the prioritization of your content and 2) understand what keywords on the page are the most important make keyword organization an integral part of the SEO process.

- **Website Structure & Information Architecture:** SEO is as much a part of a website's creation as graphic design or programming. While some programmers or designers might argue, when looking at the long-term success of a website's search marketing campaign, SEO has to be involved from the beginning. The structure of content, otherwise known as information architecture, plays a significant role in instructing the search engines as to the overall importance of a page (and by association, the keywords targeted on a page) compared to the rest of the website. Keyword organization must be used in tandem with search volume stats, product or service offerings and design limitations to determine the best site structure for SEO.
- **Ongoing Content Creation:** Search engine optimization is not a one-time event. Search engines like Google "love" fresh content and to see that websites are growing and evolving through time. This means that as an SEO, your job is to continue creating keyword-rich content. When keyword organization is used to inform a website's information architecture, it can also be used in the long-term to inform decisions surrounding new content. What keywords have you targeted and which have you not? Where should a page on "keyword X" be located on my site?

# How to Get Started with Keyword Organization

1. **Keyword Research**
    a. Before you can organize, you need to start with keywords!
        i. There are subscription-based keyword research services available. But you can also get valuable research data with the Google Keyword Tool (free) or WordStream's Free Keyword Tool to start compiling a database of relevant keywords:
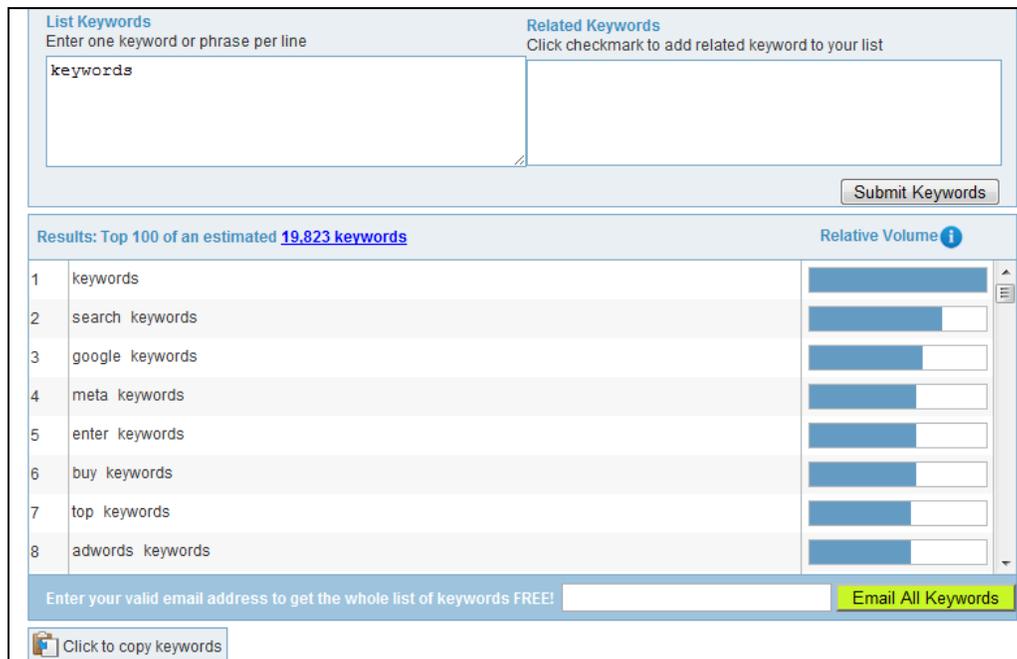


<div align="center">Figure 3 WordStream's Free Keyword Tool: Results for a search on "keywords".</div>

2. **Keyword Organization**
    a. With a list of keywords in hand, the real work begins. Search volume, keyword length and keyword frequency all play a role in how to organize your list of keywords. In the past, the process of organizing your keywords based on all of those variables would have been a pen and paper scenario, or completed with the use of Microsoft Excel. Now there are tools available to make keyword organization more efficient.
        i. For example, let's look at the Free Keyword Grouper. This web-based tool allows you to input up to 10,000 keywords. At the push of a button, the Keyword Grouper will analyze your keywords and provide you with a list of possible segmentations.
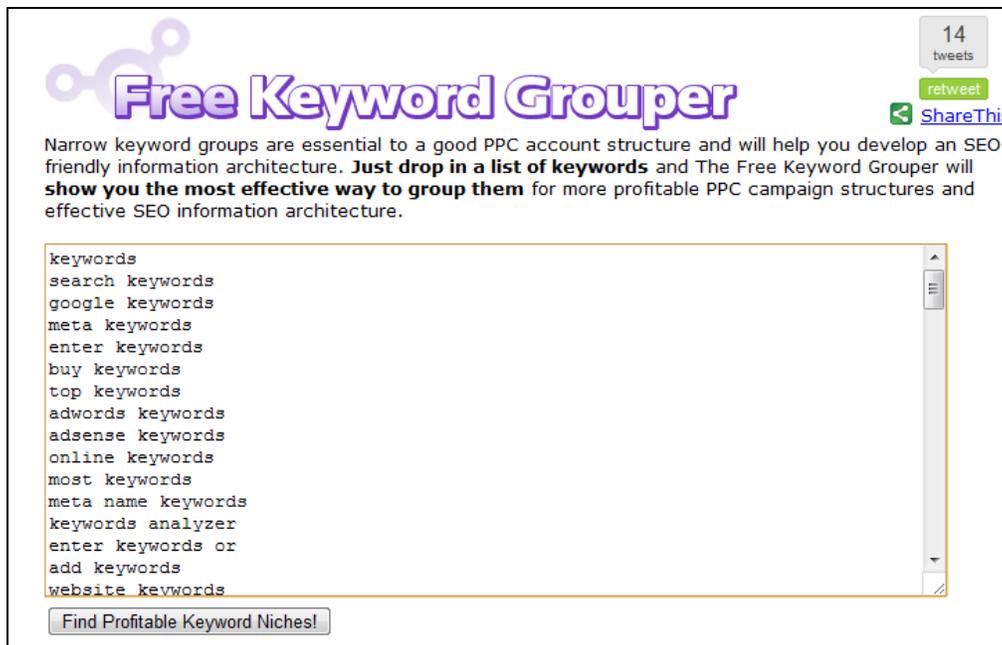
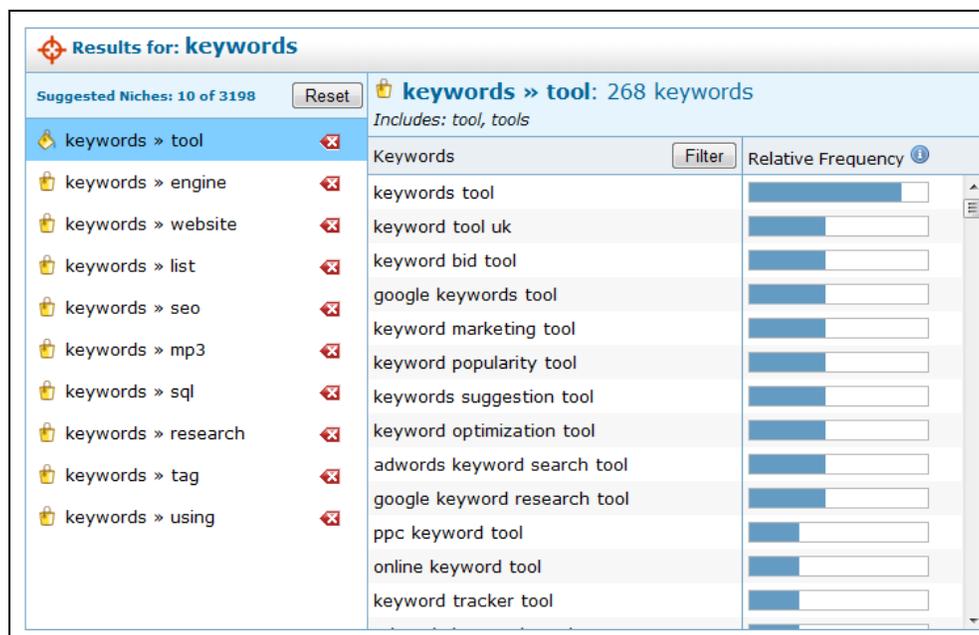**Figure 4 The Free Keyword Grouper: Copy/Paste Keywords for Segmentation**



**Figure 5 Free Keyword Grouper: Segmentation Results for "keywords".**

b. The Keyword Grouper has its limitations (granularity of organization, number of keywords), but is a great place to start. If you are looking for more flexibility, the next step would be to look into a keyword management solution.

   i. WordStream's Keyword Management software for PPC and SEO takes keyword organization to the next level with tiered segmentation and organization,

actionable traffic and conversion analytics and sync capabilities with Google AdWords.
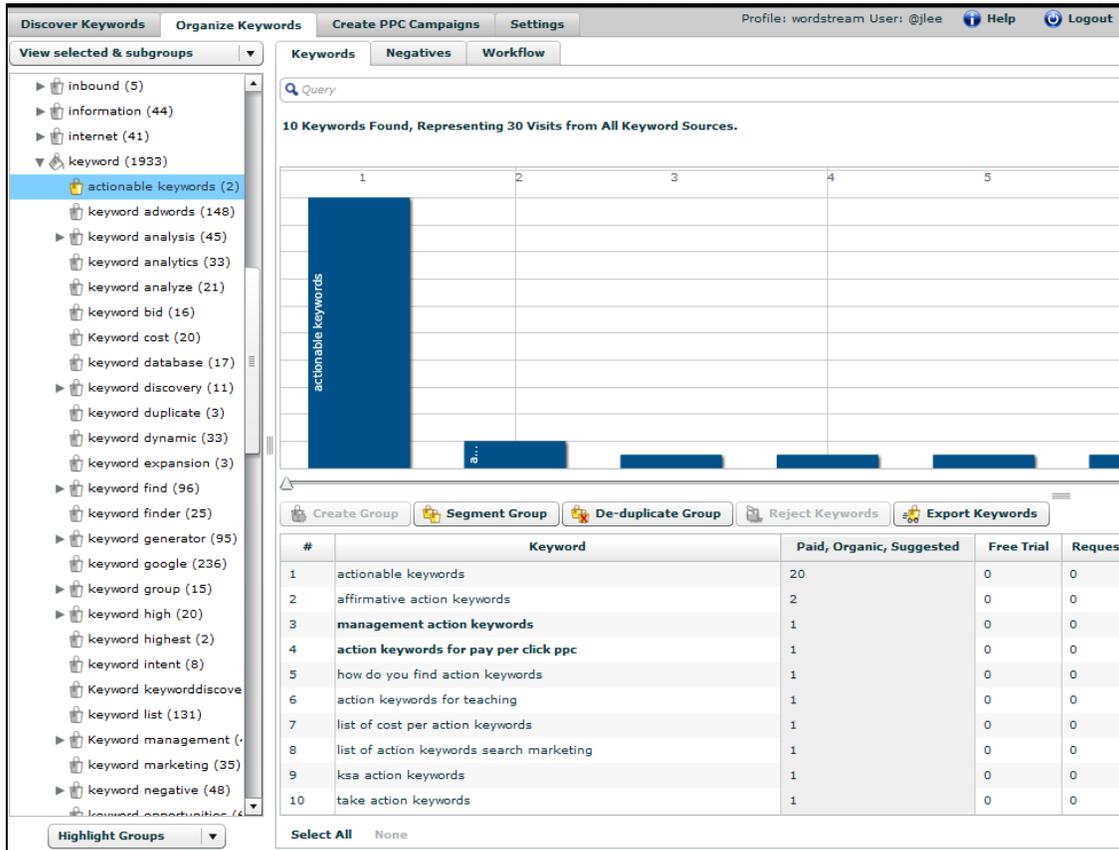


**Figure 6 WordStream's Keyword Management for PPC**

3. **Best of Both Worlds**
    a. Let's say that you have completed your keyword research and have dabbled in keyword organization, but you're finding that you aren't 100% confident in the keywords you are targeting. Maybe you have found that the cost-per-click is too high for PPC. Or perhaps you are up against major brand websites for control of the SERPs for SEO. In either case, you need to find profitable keyword niches to find success.
        i. This is where the Free Keyword Niche Finder really shines. Here you can enter a single keyword, product or service and receive a report that is essentially keyword research and a step towards keyword organization all in one.

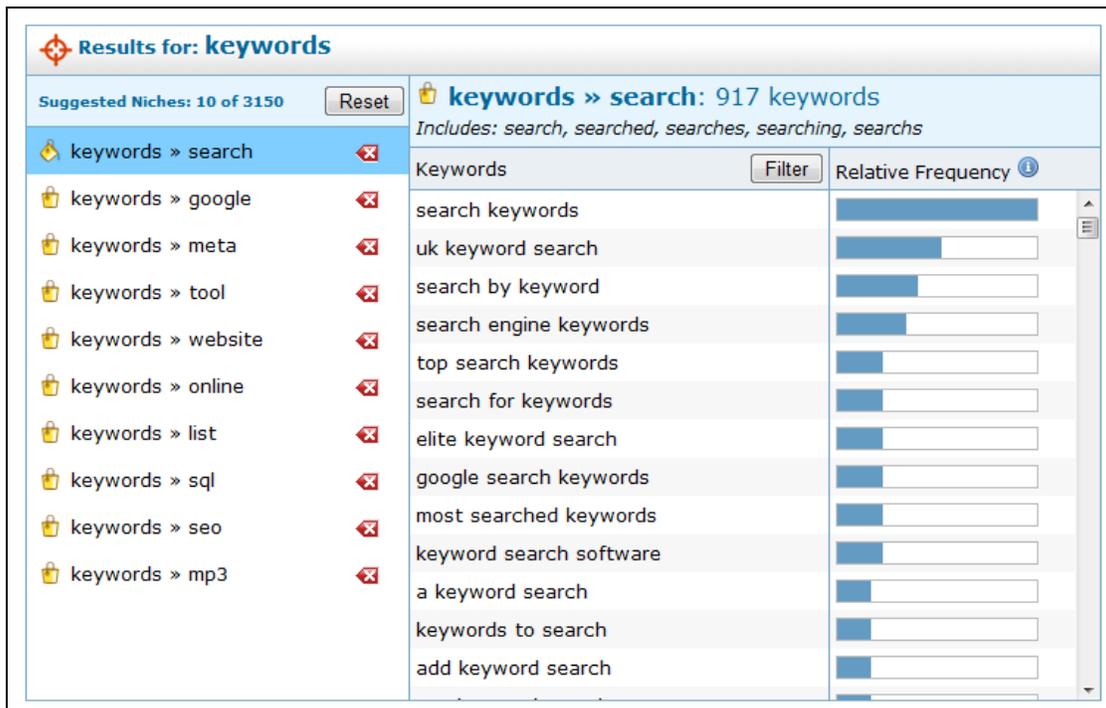Figure 7 The Free Keyword Niche Finder: term "keywords".



Figure 8 Niche Finder results for "keywords".

Whether you are managing a large-scale PPC campaign or manning a mom-and-pop store's SEO efforts, there are tremendous benefits to utilizing keyword organization as part of your search marketing process. SEM can be such a powerful marketing tool, but will undoubtedly fail without the proper foundation of keywords organized for success!