

How Content Supports SEO: A Case Study

White Mountain Knives is a long-standing SEO client of ours. We've actually published about our efforts for their campaigns that you can see in our previous collection of case studies.

But since we've had quite a long runway to look back on now, we can see more clearly why quality content matters in SEO.

There are lots of ways to gauge the efficacy of SEO, and in the (relatively) short term, link building and basic on-page optimizations will get the ball rolling.

But once you've been at it a year or more, you really have only one option for sustained, long-term, rankings: quality content.

Fluffy nonsense just doesn't cut it, especially in an industry like the one served by White Mountain Knives. The greater knife community is entirely unforgiving of low-quality content and thin fluff. Frankly they have no time for it, and nothing but scorn.



What White Mountain Knives needed to support their improved rankings and continuously growing domain authority was expert content production from a team with a seasoned, experienced writer on hand – one that knew both the outdoor industry as well as a lot about knives – ahem.

That has been the secret to our long-term success on behalf of this client, which will be broken down here.



The Positive Feedback Loop

Content supports SEO in lots of different ways. The most straightforward way is that it populates a website's pages with copy that's keyword optimized. When optimized properly, a page or blog post can also contain internal links with telling anchor text as well as a structure with optimized headings.

This is true for on-page copy as well as for copy on CMS pages, like blogs and other evergreen pages.

Yet optimized copy goes much farther than the basics. A truly informative piece of evergreen content will go above and beyond simply indicating to Google that the page (or another page on the same website) is an authority not only on the keyword itself but on all relevant, related subject matter.

For instance, news, blogs, and other articles can educate customers on new product releases, uses for existing products, maintenance protocols, how to make repairs or customizations, or just on certain skills.

You only need to look through the blog on White Mountain Knives' website to see that there are posts dedicated to product reviews, steel chemistry, blade profiles, knife maintenance, and other highly relevant

topics. Most of these deal with specific brands to increase visibility for the keywords targeted, but others focus on more generic topics that offer insight and convey authority, benefiting the overall domain.

In fact, after a year or two, the only way to keep SEO results going is with good, content-marketing level copy that goes far above and beyond keyword-optimization by answering important questions and providing important insight that just can't be gotten anywhere else.

This is something I've written about at length before. You can learn more about it in my previous case study: [SEO and Content: The Different Ways Content Is Important in SEO](#).

To summarize, there are tons of ways in which content supports and SEO campaign and for which there is no substitute:

- It improves keyword density
- It transfers authority to target URLs
- It captivates attention and engages customers
- It can increase time on page and pages per session
- It results in greater over contextual authority for the general domain
- It can promote items and specials, resulting in cross-selling opportunities (even blogs sometimes have page value)

So where is the proof of this? To see it in action we have to take a closer look at the growth of White Mountain Knives' blog over the past few years.

Blog Posts and Important Metrics

Access to Universal Analytics is no more, so unfortunately, I can't go in and show you this, but when we started doing SEO for White Mountain Knives, there was exactly zero traffic to their blog. Zero – none. It had monthly visits of 0.0 across the board.

That continued through the first year, more or less, and it wasn't until we were a few years in that results started to snowball.

The image below shows blog traffic to White Mountain Knives' blog over the past year and a half or so, when GA4 became accessible.

Unfortunately, GA4 makes it hard to see growth, because the user interface is inferior to UA and shows traffic to top blogs rather than all traffic to pages categorized under the blog slug. Nonetheless, you can see that we're way past the point of getting zero traffic to the blog.

In fact, their blog averages close to 1000 views per month, which is quite something for an eCommerce website that really does not rely on organic blog traffic at all. That would be a low metric for a website whose sole value proposition was content, but in this case we're trying to improve their visibility for key products and categories. Any blog traffic is just gratis, and a testament to the insight and industry experience of the writer.

All accounts > White Mountain Knives

White Mountain Knives

Try searching "path analysis"

100

A

+

Pages and screens: Page path and screen class

Custom

Dec 10, 2022 - Aug 6, 2024

blog

×

Rows per page: 10

Go to: 1

	Page path and screen class	Views	Users	Views per user	Average engagement time	Event count
		↓				All events
		12,058 0.06% of total	9,220 0.86% of total	1.31 Avg -93.11%	1m 10s Avg -82.18%	42,192 0.07% of total
1	/blog/35-cool-things-you-can-do-with-swiss-army-knife-tools/	1,869	1,661	1.13	1m 04s	6,780
2	/blog/which-lock-type-is-best-for-a-survival-pocket-knife/	1,108	962	1.15	1m 56s	3,925
3	/blog/	954	448	2.13	37s	2,120
4	/blog/in-search-of-the-best-kizer-knife-these-top-10-should-definitely-make-your-list/	931	722	1.29	51s	3,271
5	/blog/a-quick-hogue-deka-review-wharncliffe-magnacut-blade/	714	522	1.37	1m 01s	2,720
6	/blog/21-awesome-and-inspiring-uses-for-your-leatherman-pocket-knife/	669	574	1.17	1m 32s	2,410
7	/blog/exom-reate-gravity-knife-why-its-a-great-pick/	570	419	1.36	41s	2,050

The interesting thing is that it’s not just that the blog gets organic traffic. What’s really telling is the time on page. You can see that over on the side of the image above. As you can see, there are several URLs that have time-on-page metrics of over a minute, with some close to two.

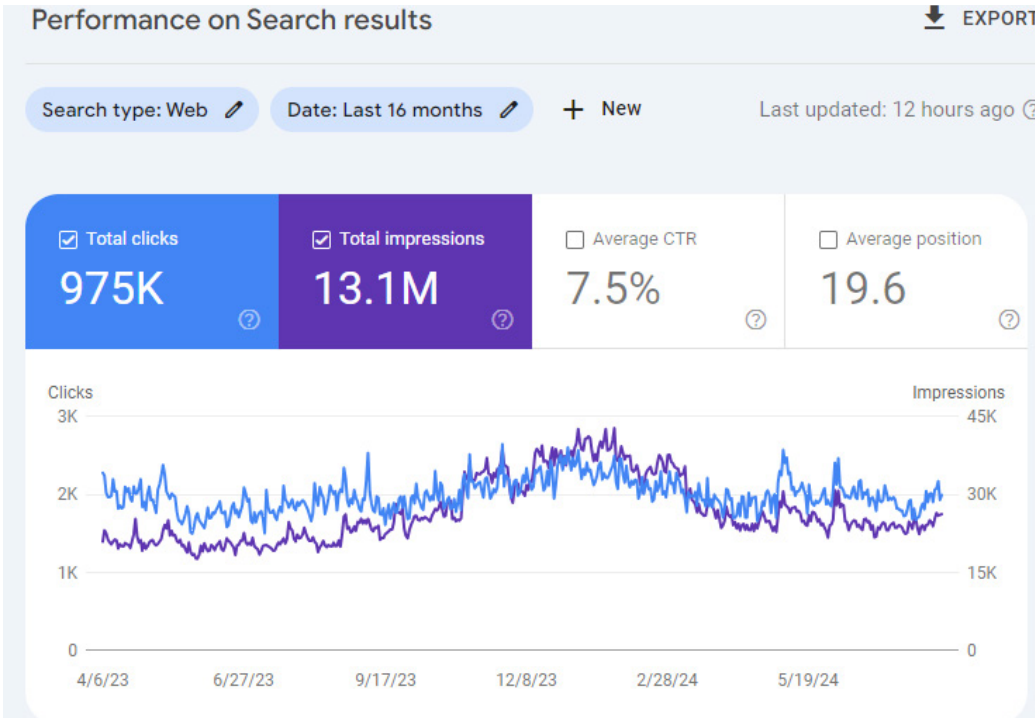
That means that people aren’t just clicking. They’re reading, and that means they’re interested and the post is answering their questions.

The Broader Impacts in SEO

As I stated, the main purpose here was not to drive traffic to the blog – that’s just a little bonus that’s nice to have after the fact, and which benefits both White Mountain Knives and visitors that land on those pages.

No, our goal was to drive traffic to key target URLs for specific keywords (that I won’t divulge as that’s part of our secret sauce). Nonetheless, as you can see from the still below from Google Search Console, traffic is on a general upward trend for the past 16 months.

Again, it’s a shame I can’t show you what UA looked like from the past four years or so. It tells a much more compelling story. But this is good enough.

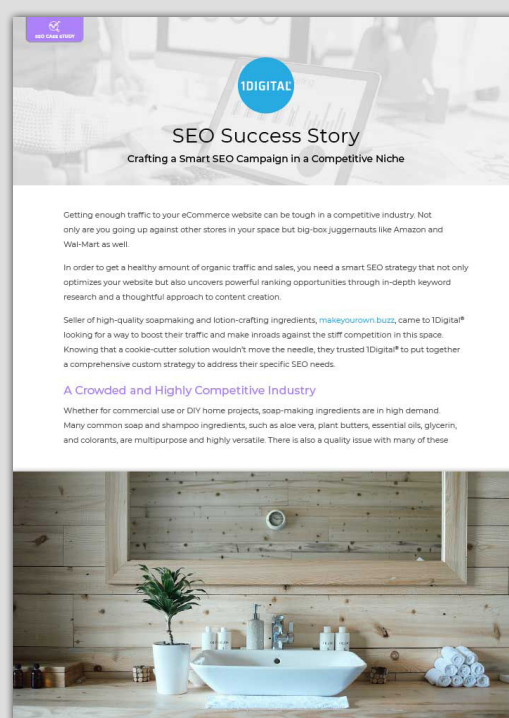
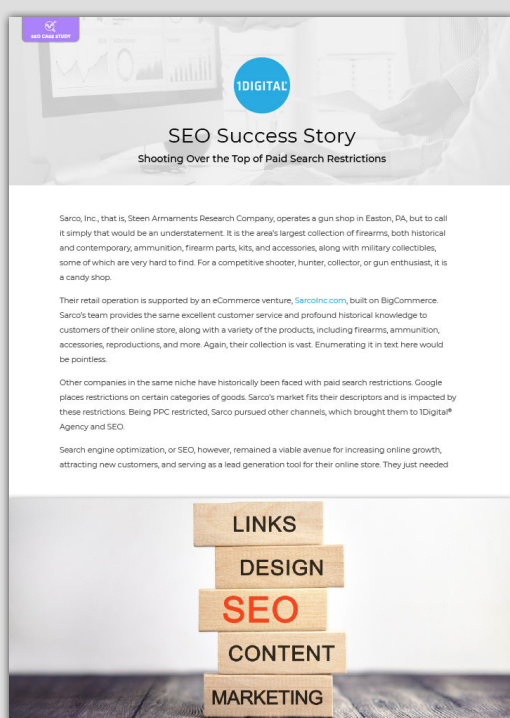
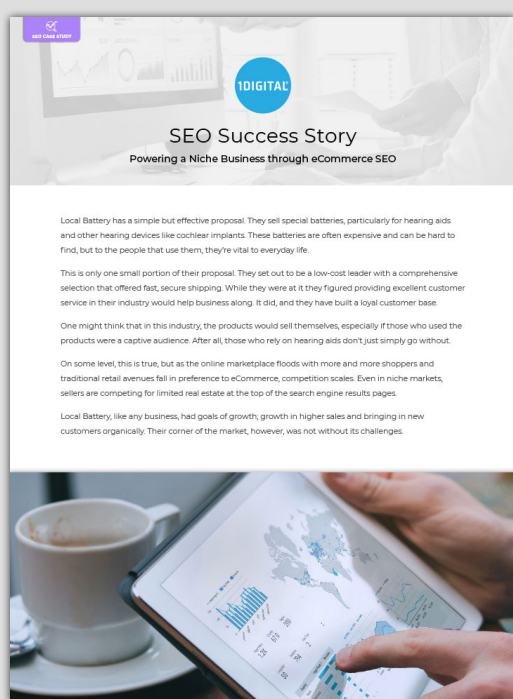


There are ups and downs in all SEO campaigns but you can see the general upward trajectory. Moreover, it's important to note that average position (though you can't see the trend from the image above) has also been on an upward climb.

And, as a final note, I would like to draw your attention to the click through rate, which has averaged, for White Mountain Knives, almost 4 times higher than the overall eCommerce average.

That's something that can only be done with expert keyword targeting (and which good content also helps).

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