

The Ultimate Guide for Content Marketers

by SEMrush



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Introduction

You will hardly find a business that doesn't know how important content is and why it should be created. However, when it comes to planning and writing, there are many challenges for content marketers. These include questions like what to write about a particular topic, how to make your content appear on good positions in SERP and where to distribute it, how to measure content performance, and subsequently adjust your content strategy.

The modern content marketer, along with knowing the audience's needs and being a good writer, should also be a bit of an SEO specialist, a PR manager, and an analyst. Considering the lack of knowledge and practice in some of these areas, it's no wonder that many of them feel confused and helpless. And even if you are a professional across the board, it still takes a lot of time and effort to implement everything neatly.

We at SEMrush know how painful it can be, and that's why we have created this guide explaining how to implement each step the right way, and with a minimum of time investment, using our tools. We are also constantly working on the development of a comprehensive toolkit to help content marketers of all skill levels reach their goals with minimal effort.



Who is this guide for?



This guide is for content strategists/digital marketers that choose the content approach as a key marketing strategy. In this guide, we'll show you how to carry out content marketing from A to Z using SEMrush.



It is also for content writers who work on article structure, content optimization and distribution.

Content Analysis & Optimization

Content Analysis & Optimization

A strategic approach to content creation implies that no content should be created out of the blue. Before writing a new piece, you need to know how it's going to fit into your current content strategy and serve the goals that you set for your website.

Moreover, sometimes it's not necessary to produce new content from scratch,

when you could update old material: older pages have a ranking advantage, so it makes more sense to optimize them rather than create new ones.

With all this in mind, step one for any content strategist is a proper content audit.

Content Audit



Tools to use: Content Audit



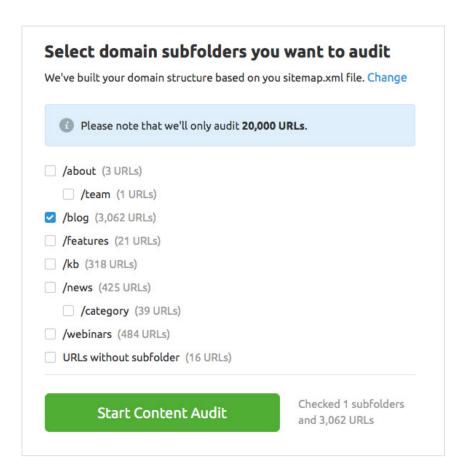
Analyze and assess your content based on SEO/user behavior/engagement metrics.

A content audit is a comprehensive task, and should involve monitoring of various performance metrics. But whatever you do, your ultimate goal is to create an optimization plan that includes a list of pages to update / optimize and new materials to create.

Each metric should not be considered as a sole measure of success, since only a combination provides a full picture. These are the main metrics that you should constantly monitor:

- Traffic and user behavior signals,
- Social media engagement,
- Backlinks,
- Search gueries,
- Organic positions.

In the **Content Audit** tool, you can monitor each of these metrics in dynamic. To begin using it, set up the tool by selecting the subfolders from your sitemap.xml file.

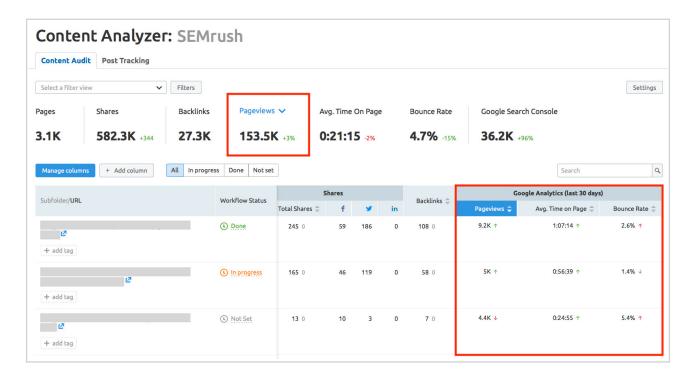


Traffic and user behavior signals

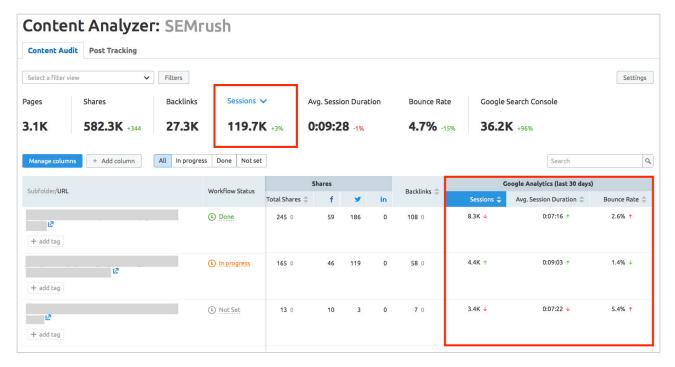
How many users read your content? How much time do they spend on a particular article? Are they ultimately satisfied?

There are five metrics that will help you answer these questions and all of them can be found in the **Content Audit tool**.

- Sessions shows the total number of Sessions, where a Session is a period of time a user is actively engaged with your website.
- Avg. Session Duration demonstrates the average length of a session.
- **Pageviews** is the total number of times the page has been viewed.
- **Avg. Time on Page** shows the average time a user spent viewing a specific page.
- Bounce Rate is the percentage of users that left the particular page without visiting any other pages on your website.



You can switch between Sessions and Pageviews data for every page by simply clicking on the 'Pageviews'/'Sessions' button at the top of the report.

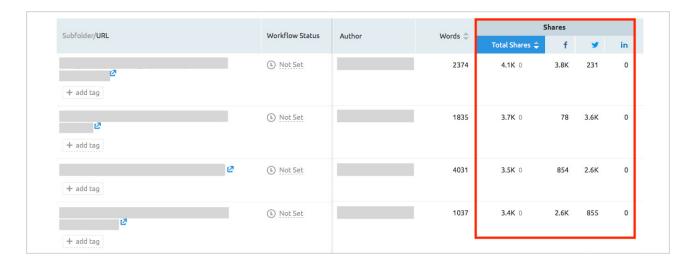


Each of these metrics is a source of insight on improving your content strategy. For example, a small number of sessions may indicate a poor choice of keywords. The rest often signal that you don't give your audience what they expect to get.

Social media engagement

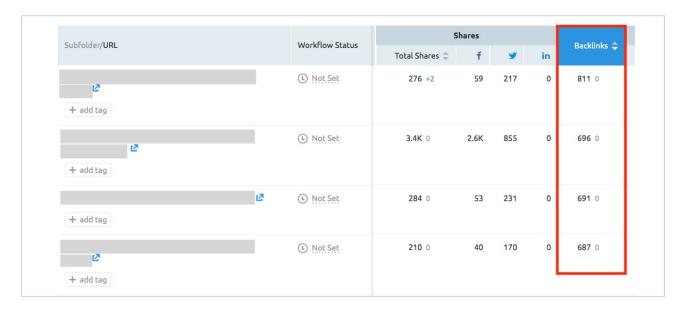
In this section, you can see the number of shares across various social media: Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Sorting the pages by the total number of shares in each social media can help you see what posts get the most engagement and determine your audience's preferences.

For instance, if one of your Facebook posts gets significantly more shares than usual, it could be a sign that the topic that you're talking about is popular with your Facebook audience, so it makes sense to create a discussion around it or deepen the research and produce more content.



Backlinks

Sorting the pages by number of backlinks is a good way to analyze what content has the best referral potential. In the **Backlinks** column, you can see how many backlinks a certain page has and how many of them are new.



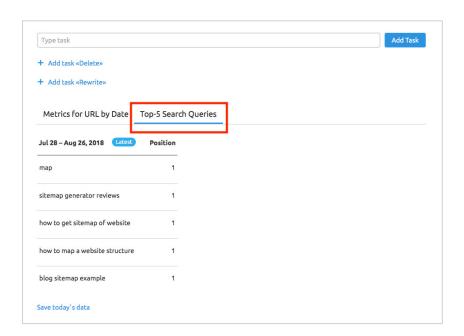
Later on, you can analyse the pages with the richest backlink profiles to look for link-building ideas for other materials.

Search queries

If you connect your Google Search Console account, the Content Audit tool will also give you the number of **Search Queries** your page was displayed for in Google search results.



Data from your Google accounts represents the last 30 days. If you click on the search queries' number, you'll see the **Top-5 Search Queries** for your particular article and the position it has in Google.



Monitoring your search queries will reveal insights into how people actually find your article among other search results and give you the opportunity to find new keywords to target.

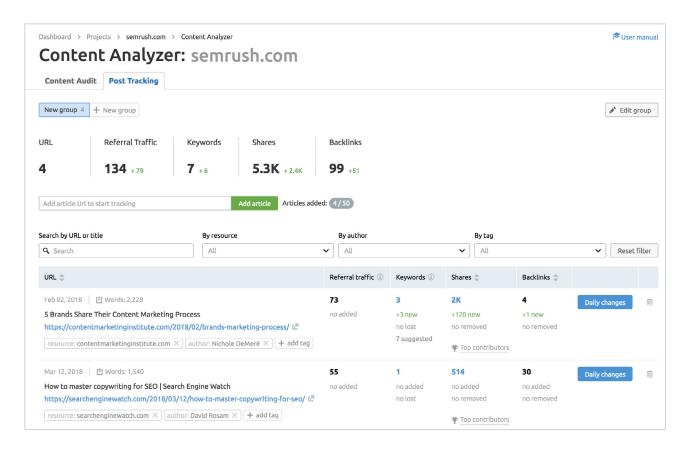
Organic Positions

Tracking your content performance for target keywords is crucial for visibility. In the end, it's the keywords that users search for, so getting your content to the first page of search results requires constant monitoring.

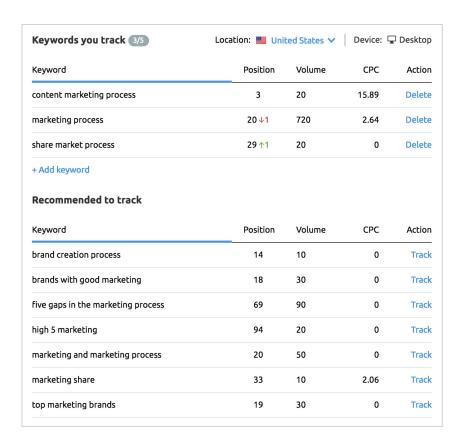
Also, checking how much engagement your post gets on social media and how many backlinks it earns is an unending source of motivation.

And last but not least, it's always useful to keep track of your competitor's performance, paying special attention to their most popular or recent publications.

To do this, you can add the posts that interest you to the Post Tracking tool.



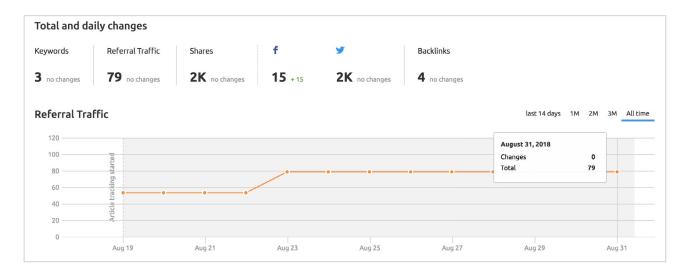
Here, you can select the target keywords of your post by clicking on the **Add keywords** button. You can add the keywords of your choice, or select the ones suggested by SEMrush.



The **Daily changes** button will take you to the charts with the:

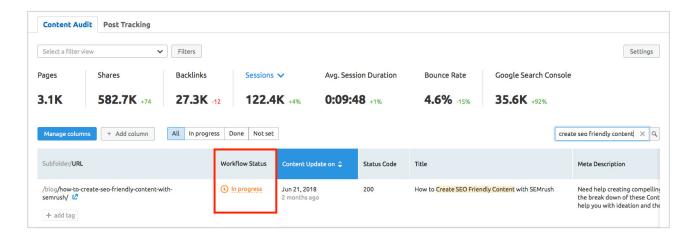
- Post referral traffic trend,
- Visibility trend,
- Shares growth trend,
- Daily changes trend, and
- Backlink trend.

These charts will give you new insights into how your performance for a certain article is changing daily. The charts' data can be filtered for the last 14 days, 1-3 months, or all time.

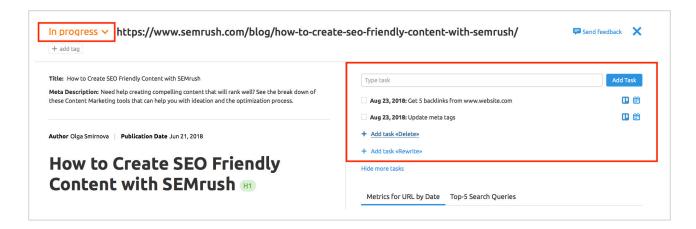


If the page rankings have dropped and do not improve over time, it's the right moment to check for optimization opportunities.

All the content performance metrics are interrelated indicating one thing: whether your audience likes your content or not. It's not enough to monitor just one of those metrics, as the others can be a good source of ideas for optimization and improvement. To keep track of all the optimization work that you do, you can edit the Workflow section in Content Audit.



Here, you can add single tasks, such as "Get 5 backlinks from www.website.com" or "Update meta tags", assign different statuses to those tasks and then evaluate the results of your optimization efforts.



Go to SEO Writing Assistant whenever you're ready to optimize your article.

Optimization of Existing Content



Tools to use: **SEO Writing Assistant**

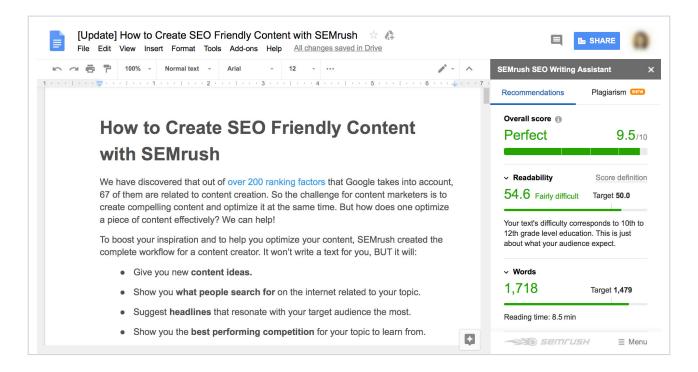


Get a detailed list of insights on how to create or improve your content.

Sometimes it makes sense to just leave the page as it is, if it brings traffic, has a lot of backlinks, and gets good user engagement. But if the results of a content audit show that there is still room for optimization, don't hesitate to take action.

SEO Writing Assistant was created to shed light on what exactly can be improved in your content piece. It's an add-on for Google docs and WordPress that analyzes how well your text complies with the recommendations based on your top-performing rivals we provide you with.

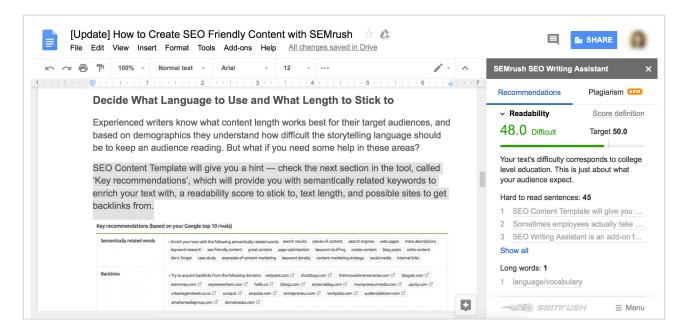
To begin using the add-on, set it up in your browser and open it up in your document. SEO Writing Assistant will instantly give you live metrics and actionable recommendations on how to improve your existing content.



Implement optimization ideas

All the metrics in SEO Writing Assistant are interactive, which means they are altering on a live basis depending on changes you make in your text.

- Overall score is a metric which shows the quality of your content, taking into account all of the metrics below. The closer the number is to 10, the better SEO optimized your text is.
- Readability is the ease with which a reader can understand written text according to the Flesch reading ease score formula. Try to match the target number, which is an average for your top 10 competitors in Google. The add-on will also identify hard to read sentences and long words in your text and highlight them with grey. This feature is available for English only.



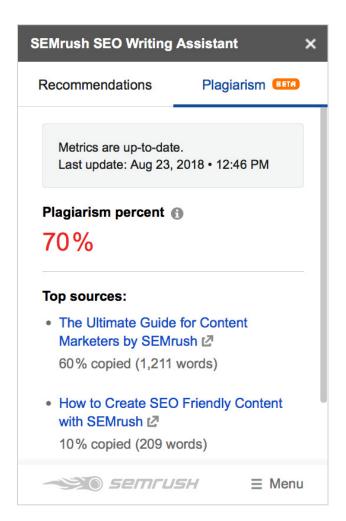
- Words will calculate the number of words in your text and will set a goal according
 to the average word count in your niche. You can also track the approximate reading
 time of your content piece.
- Target keywords are the core of your text, on which all the recommendations are based. You can change them at any time to change the topic or get more precise tips for your content.
- **Recommended keywords** are words that are semantically related to your seed keywords. Once you use them in your content, they will be highlighted with green in the doc.
- Title shows you recommendations for your headline.

The above recommendations will make crawler bots friendlier to you and help your audience spot your article in an endless Google list.

When you clearly have a plan of what content needs to be optimized, you can share your documents with SEO Writing Assistant running with your freelance copywriters and monitor their work.

Check your text for originality

The plagiarism checker feature in SEO Writing Assistant detects the total percentage of copied words in your text and identifies original sources of content from across the internet.

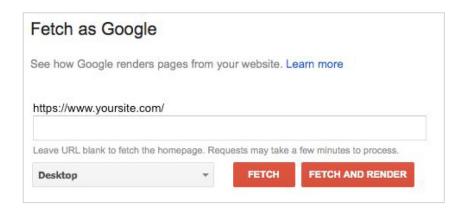


It's available for all languages and is extremely useful if you want to check your own content for originality or monitor the work of your freelance and in-house copywriters.

Recrawl your pages

To finalize your efforts, you need to make sure that your updated pages are properly reindexed, otherwise Google won't be aware of the changes that you've made.

To do that, find **Fetch as Google** in your Google Search Console menu and then type in the page URL in the input bar and hit **Fetch and render**.



Content optimization, as with any other SEO activity, takes time. However, it does not require as much effort as creating content from scratch, which involves additional stages. If you want to know more about dealing with content at ground zero, take a look at the next chapter.

Content Research & Ideation

Content Research & Ideation

Content creation should not be dictated by your editorial calendar. When you write a new post for your blog, it has to solve your user's problem, otherwise it's going to disappear unnoticed. The Internet is full. Everybody understands that but not everybody is ready to accept this reality and rethink their content strategy. Be the frontrunner and focus on value for the users in your writing. At the same time, you need to make your work visible, that is, your texts should be SEO optimized and competitive. To write copy like that you need to know what else is out there, what your competitors are doing and what the requirements are for the text in your niche. Add this to the results of your content audit and you have your content strategy formula.

Taking this into consideration, content creation usually involves the following components:

- Keyword Research,
- Gap Analysis,
- Content Ideation,
- Optimized Content Creation.

Keyword research



Tools to use: Keyword Magic tool

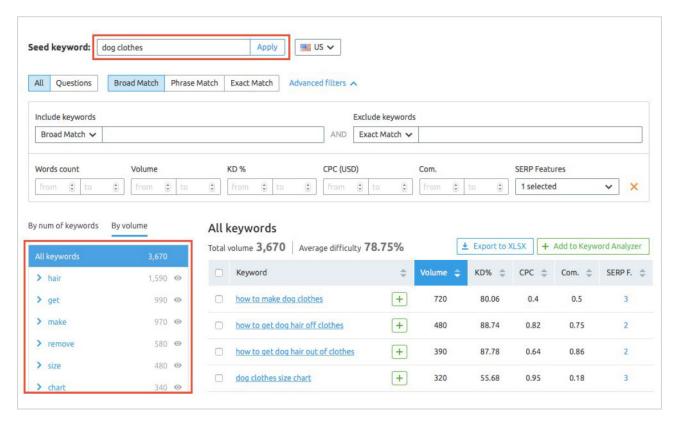


Build your keyword strategy from a single seed.

It's hard to say which came first: topic or keyword research. To look for hot topics you need keywords, and to research keywords you need to have a precise topic in mind.

We suggest that after selecting a general topic to write about, you should focus on finding related high-volume keywords.

You can find the keywords with the exact characteristics in the **Keyword Magic tool**. By typing in your seed keyword, you'll get a list of related keywords sorted into relevant groups.



The structure of your future post can be considered as a list of your keywords. H1 title should usually contain a keyword with the highest volume, H2-a long-tail keyword with less volume, H3-a more precise keyword with even less volume etc.

Once the structure of your post is ready, working with the text is easier, since every chapter focuses on the limited number of topics.

Gap Analysis



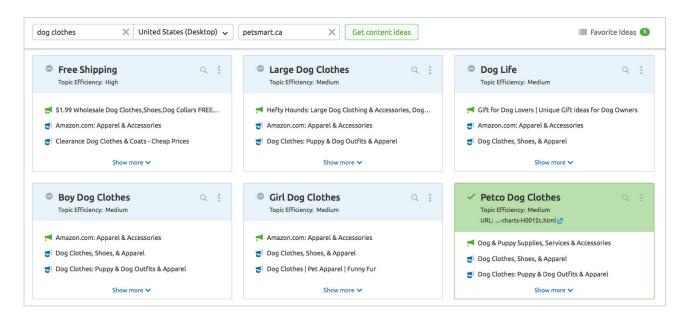
Tools to use: Topic Research



Find the gaps in your content logic.

After you've completed your keyword research, next you need to identify if new content on a specific topic would be of benefit to your website. One of the ways to do this is to find out whether your competitor has any articles on this topic and check if you have similar content to compete.

In **Topic Research**, you can quickly identify if a specific domain has any content on a topic you're interested in. The tool will highlight those subtopics with green.



Using this feature, you can find out:

- What kind of content you need at the moment,
- What topics are covered better by your competition, and
- What topics are not covered at all.

It is a great source of ideas for your new post and a simple way to identify gaps in your content logic.

Content Ideation



Tools to use: Topic Research

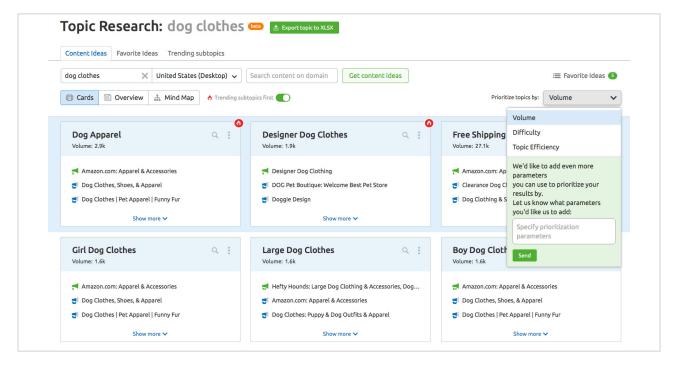


Gather ideas for the best topics and headlines in your niche.

Finding ideas is not the same as finding precise topics and the best headlines. However, a "shouty" headline is what often makes the whole post. 8 out of 10 people only read the headlines, so if yours is not catchy enough there's a fairly high chance people won't click on it.

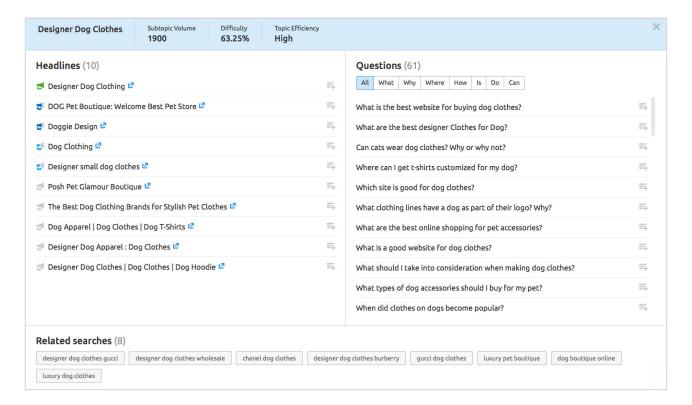
Once you've conducted the gap analysis and spotted the topic that you haven't covered yet, your next step will be to create content on it. The **Topic Research** tool will help you find the most trending subtopics and headlines for your topic.

All you have to do is to simply type in your seed keyword and you'll see a dashboard with the most popular resources posting on the related topics.



By default, the tool will show you trending subtopics first, which is a great opportunity to focus on your audience's interests. Trending subtopics are the most popular subtopics over the last 60 days across the internet, and the number of articles on these subtopics is growing. You can prioritize the results by volume to look at the most popular subtopics first, by difficulty to see the keywords with the highest difficulty first, or by topic efficiency to get the most efficient topics first.

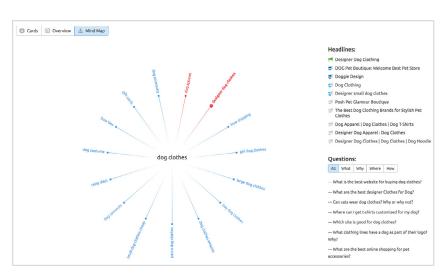
For each resource, you can see the most popular headlines, questions with the seed keyword and related search queries to expand your keyword coverage.



The bullhorn color code indicates how popular the headline is in terms of backlinks.

If you are a visual person there is a Mind Map view that you can switch to at any time. This view is essentially a more visual presentation of your topic cards, along with headlines, questions and related searches.

To be familiar with the latest trends around the topic and attract your readers with the shoutiest headlines and the most relevant content, perform this research regularly to stay on top of things.



SEO-friendly Texts



Tools to use: SEO Content Template

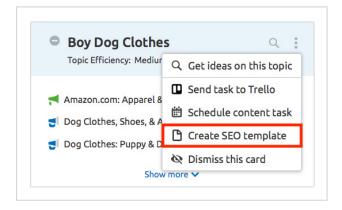


Create SEO-friendly texts based on industry best practices.

Getting high ranks in Google implies that your content is SEO optimized.

But search optimization does not mean using keywords in every sentence. When users search for a particular term, they expect to see a text of a certain length, readability and depth of analysis. Moreover, they have to click on your organic snippet or backlink anchor first. And if the anchor text is written on the referring side, the snippet is something you create yourself by writing the meta tags.

You can consider all of these factors even before writing your copy if you take a look at what performs best on the SERP.



When you've found interesting topics in Topic Research, you can get a list of SEO recommendations for your future text by creating the SEO Content Template in one click.

You can also type in an additional combination of keywords to get SEO tips on all of them at the same time.



These tips are based on the results of your **top-10 rivals on Google**, so if something works for them it might also work for you.

In the **Key recommendations** section, you can find semantically related words that usually appear in the texts next to your target keywords. Using them enriches your copy.

Semantically related words	$\bullet \ \text{Enrich your text with the following semantically related words:} \ \left(\text{small dogs} \right) \left(\text{dog life} \right) \left(\text{furry friend} \right) \left(\text{diy dog} \right)$
	dog sweater needle and thread dog costumes dog vest dog shirt quick and easy dogs and cats
	(stepbystep)(giftcards)(fityourdog)(wintercoat)(doghoodie)(dogapparel)(puppydog)(dogcoat)
	clothes for small
Backlinks	• Try to acquire backlinks from the following domains: mostvaluablenetwork.com 🖸 alltheinternet.com 🗹
	acculturated.com ☑ (roia.biz ☑) (howtostartanllc.com ☑) (searchalot.com ☑) (keywordsuggests.com ☑
	pgaa.com ☑ petfirst.com ☑ 100searchengines.com ☑ cbwm.com ☑ bingj.com ☑ ask.com ☑
Readability	Average readability score of top 10 URLs: 50
Text length	Recommended text length: 1878 words

You can also see the list of resources from which your rivals get their **backlinks**. Ranking among the top players requires you to have similar backlink profiles, so try using this list for outreach.

The average **readability** and **text length** will tell you what your audience is expecting from a text. Though long content on average ranks higher, if the typical content in your niche is 600 words, think twice before creating a 5000-word longread.

Now, you can go directly to **SEO Writing Assistant** to make sure you're creating a perfectly optimized text that complies with recommendations we've provided to you before.

When your text is ready, or even before, you should think about the channels to distribute your content. Some of them require nothing but a link, some demand a certain format, but in all cases, content distribution is one of the most important elements of your content strategy.

Content Distribution

Content Distribution

Writing new text is not enough, it has to be distributed properly for better visibility.

By distribution we mean promotion on social media, getting backlinks and posting it on external resources.

This step is very important for two reasons:

- 1 All SEOs know that getting organic positions takes time, sometimes up to a year, and that is why no agency will promise quick results. But good promotion increases your chances of being noticed.
- 2 If you are writing for external blogs, there might be specific requirements for the texts that need to be considered even before content creation.

Proper distribution is crucial for your content success, so we gathered a list of recommendations on how to simplify the process with SEMrush tools.

External Resources



Tools to use: Brand Monitoring Tool



Find ideas for outreach and link building.

If you want your content to be published on a partner blog or any other media, there are several steps you need to take:

- Find relevant resources.
- Get in touch with them and agree on the publication.
- Write copy for that site or adapt your already created material based on their requirements.

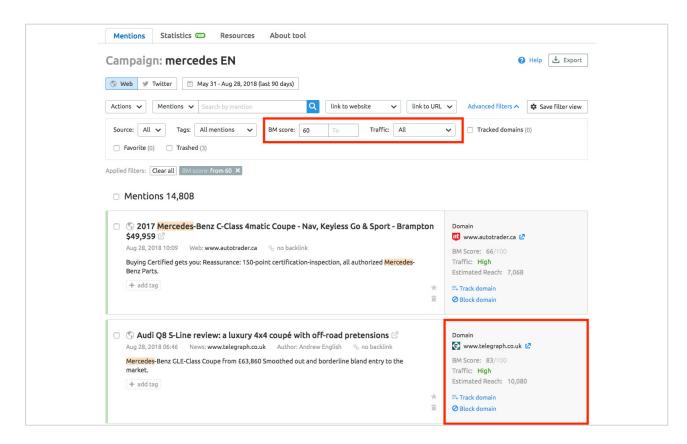
Mentions opportunities

The first step in content distribution is to make a list of all the most authoritative resources in your niche or industry and get in touch with them. However, if their number is limited and some of them are too big to approach, you can browse your competitor's distribution lists or industry keywords e.g. "content marketing" to search for ideas.

In Brand Monitoring, you can find external resources that your competitors use to publish their content or resources that cover topics related to your business. To quickly browse through the gathered resources, use handy filters by:

- Traffic,
- BM score.

The filtering option will help you to understand how reputable and high-quality a resource is to publish your content.



If some of the domains that mention your brand name are of no interest to you, they can be blocked from further research.

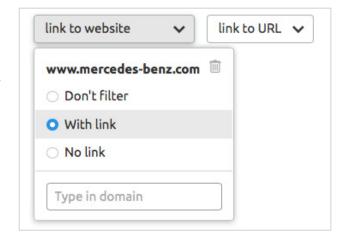


Backlink Opportunities

Publishing content on your own blog, you gain additional traffic and find potential leads, that is why it's a better tactic; however, guest publications are a great means of promotion. Getting backlinks from partner resources is a valuable source of referral traffic.

To find opportunities for backlinks, you can also use Brand Monitoring. The resources that mention your brand name are already interested in your product, so contacting them makes total sense.

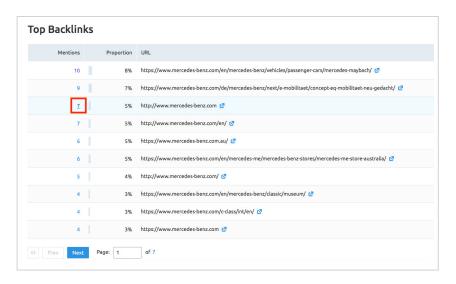
And if they mention your competitor's name, they might also have backlinks to their sites or to a certain URL.



To check this, use the **Backlinks** filter.

These sites can be great for outreach, too.

Using the Backlinks report in the 'Statistics' tab, you can identify the type of content on your competitor's or your website that gets the highest number of backlinks and traffic from external resources. The 'Top Backlinks' table will show you in detail your best pages to offer to a certain publisher, so that you can get a backlink.



If you click on the mentions' number, you'll see a list of these mentions and resources they are found on.

Social Media Distribution

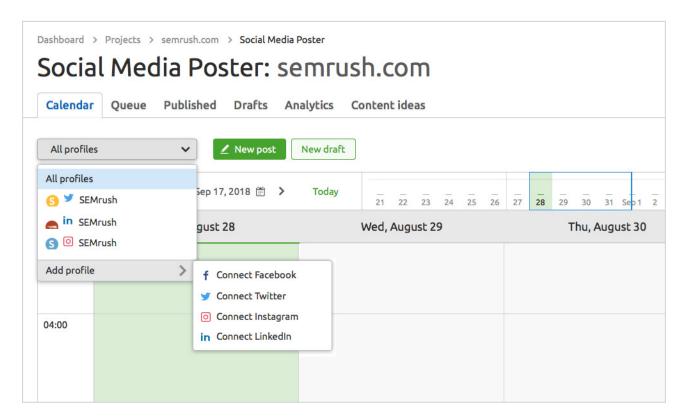


Tools to use: Social Media Poster

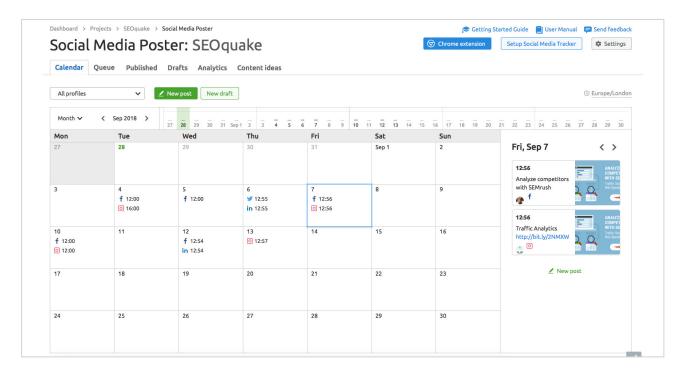


Cross-network publishing, scheduling and analytics in a single tab.

Once your content is ready, you need to start thinking about how to distribute it effectively. Considering that each social network has its own rules and audience, your content needs to be presented in different ways to match the expectations of a particular social network. For a social media professional this means posting copious volumes of material every single day.

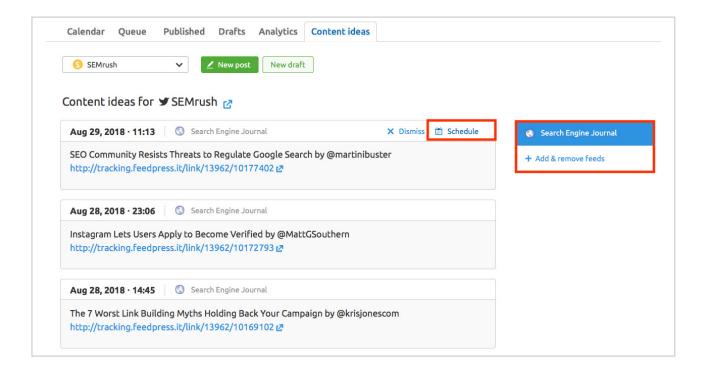


With SEMrush Social Media Poster, you can schedule your Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram posts for weeks ahead and let the tool do the rest. If you like things a certain way, you can create a personalized posting schedule and your posts will go live at preset times every day.



If you had no time to find an image for your post, or were simply lacking the inspiration to finish it, create draft posts and come back to them whenever you're ready.

Remember that posting just promotional content is never a good idea and your strategy must have a mix of everything, including entertainment, news and events in your niche, etc. This is where the Content Ideas feature comes in handy: simply connect RSS feeds from your favorite blogs and share great posts with your audience in one click.



Content Performance

Content Performance

Monitoring is truly the main trend of the century. We monitor everything, from the number of steps we take, to our sleeping cycles. The same applies to the content in which you have already invested so much. Performance monitoring is crucial both for the evaluation of the efficiency of your efforts and for the future amplification of your content strategy.

you need to take into account and we have already touched upon some of them in the first chapter. In this part we'll tell you how to apply your knowledge not just to content audit but to general evaluation of its performance.

There are three main groups of metrics

SEO Outcomes



Tools to use: Post Tracking

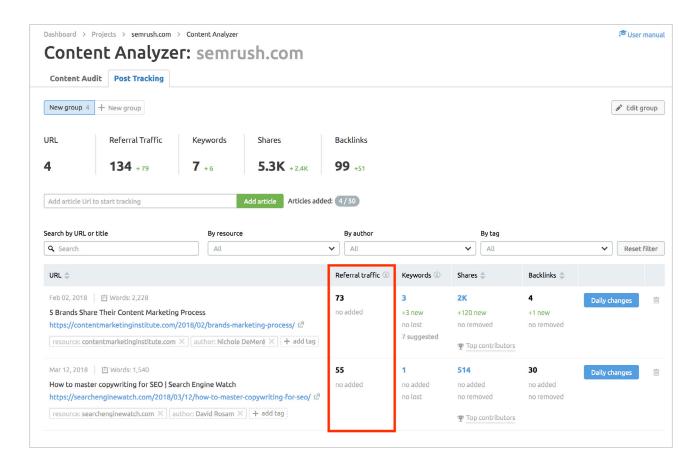


Track the results of your SEO efforts.

Traffic

The first and foremost concern of every content creator or ordering customer is how visible their content will be for search engines. Moreover, traffic is a good indicator of the relevance of your materials.

Go to Post Tracking to check how much referral traffic has come to your domain from a particular article since its publication.



You can also check the Organic search group in the Google Analytics report to learn how much traffic your updated posts bring you and how well your new posts perform.

Here's the roadmap for you:

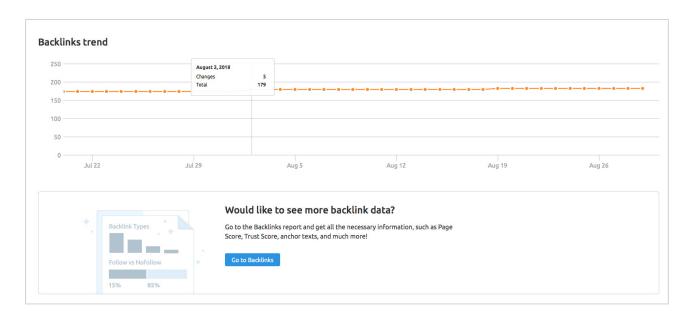
Google Analytics - Acquisition > All Traffic > Channels > Check the Organic search

Backlinks

All SEO experts agree that backlinks are an important ranking factor, it's what makes them crucial when assessing how well your content performs. In addition, contemplating your competitors' backlinks can help you pinpoint prospective PR channels.

The Post Tracking tool lets you monitor the changes in your backlink profile and see if the optimized articles turn out to be more effective in terms of backlinks.

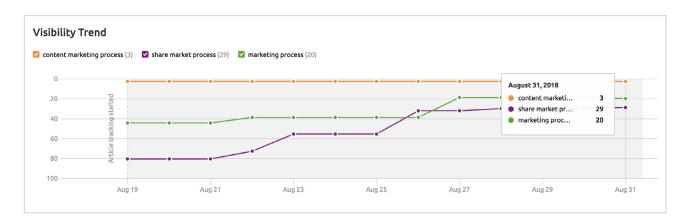
Switch to the **Daily changes** report to delve deeper into backlink trends and your progress.



The tool will prompt you to go directly to Backlink Analytics to get more insights into backlink data in just a click.

Keywords

Even in this age of progress and innovation SEO is still very much about keywords. And the new list you have created based on the recommendations from previous chapters should definitely affect your rankings.



Monitor your articles' visibility in the Post Tracking tool to find out if you have used all the keyword options available to their fullest.

Engagement Metrics



Tools to use: Post Tracking



Check how engaging your content is.

Let's see if your content can not just attract users, but make them express their feelings explicitly.

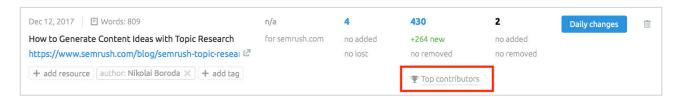
Shares

It's always heartwarming to know that people like what you're doing, and it's even more pleasant when you see them tell their friends and colleagues about it.

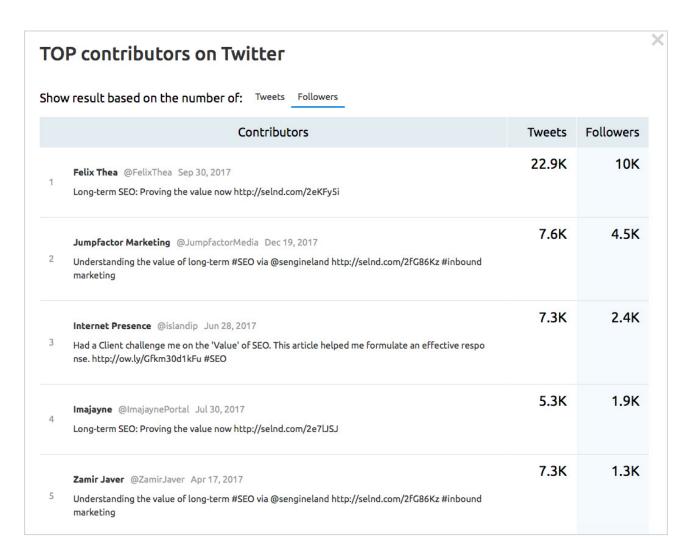
You can find all the information concerning shares in the 'Post Tracking' tab of the SEMrush Content Analyzer.



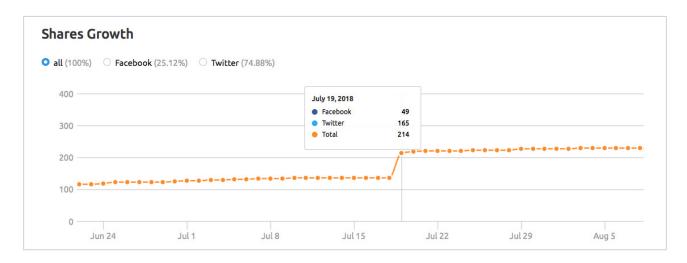
To see the value of each like and share in Twitter, click the **Top contributors** button.



This will give you information about how influential the people who shared your piece of content are. Sorting them by the number of followers can show you the coverage that your content gained.



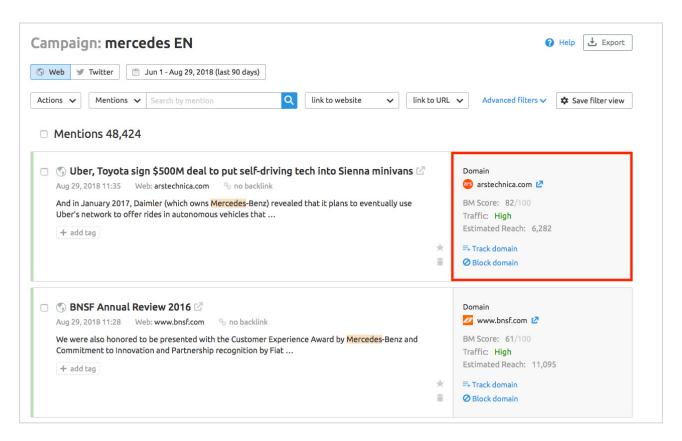
You can also check how each post's shares grew over time in the **Daily changes** tab.



Mentions and comments

Mentions don't just prove that your content is engaging enough to make people put the word out about it, they can bring you real clients and PR opportunities.

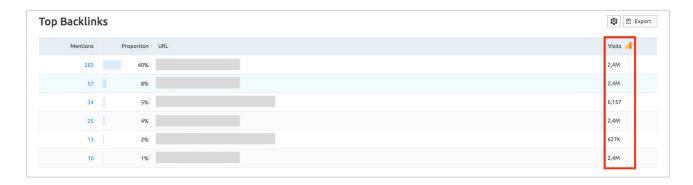
Maybe opinion leaders and local influencers are already talking about you. To see the resources that mention your website or your brand choose the **Mentions** tab in the **Brand Monitoring tool**.



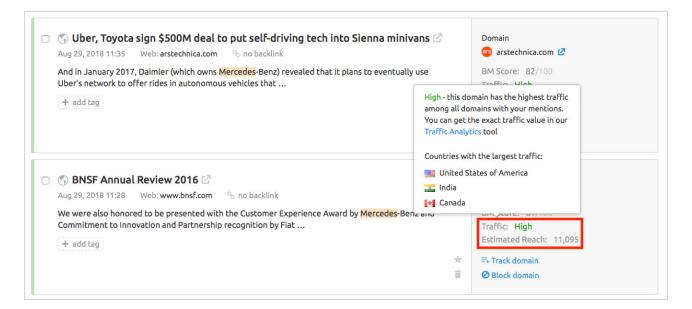
Mentions can be filtered by source, period, presence or absence of backlink to let you gain a better understanding of what exactly may trigger them.

Brand Monitoring also allows you to see how much traffic you get from a mention, depending on whether a mentioning resource has a backlink to you or not.

If you have a backlink from a resource that mentioned you, connect your Google Analytics account in the 'Statistics' tab to access your referral traffic data. The 'Top Backlinks' table now will refill with Visits data, which allows you to see and assess the amount of referral traffic from all of your backlink mentions to your particular landing page or URL.



If you get a mention without a backlink, you can still quickly estimate the approximate reach you get with this mention. To do so, go back to the 'Mentions' tab and look for the 'Traffic' and 'Estimate reach' lines of any mention under the mentioner's domain name.



And if you see one of your posts mentioned in some respectable media, don't forget to check the Comments section directly in the mentioning article. Comments often mean more than likes and shares combined. If someone is eager to spend their time sending you feedback, your content definitely strikes a chord.

Content Management

Content Management



Tools to use: Marketing Calendar



Manage all your campaigns from one place.

When developing a content strategy or just creating texts for a company blog, you can't neglect teamwork. And this might be either a gift from above or a real trouble spot with all the deadlines, interconnections and editorial issues. SEMrush content managers and blog contributors have weathered numerous marketing campaigns and deeply understand your needs.

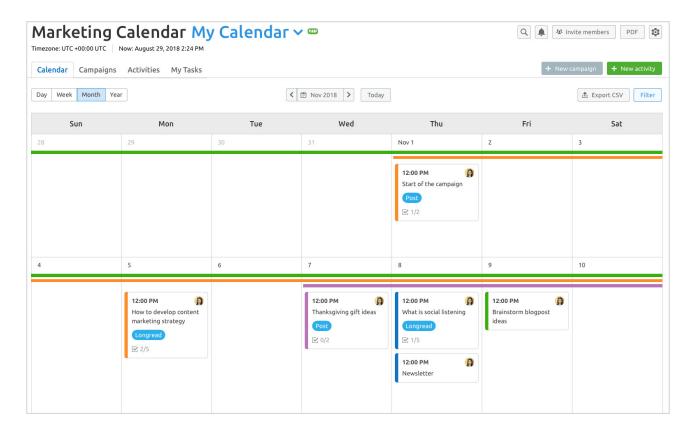
To assist them we developed the

Marketing Calendar, a tool that helps writers meet deadlines and manage multiple tasks with ease. An editor no longer has to do ten things at once as she has an all-round tool to fix all the issues.

Simple task management and the possibility to leave comments on campaigns and activities are just a few of the useful features we offer.

Converge your campaigns

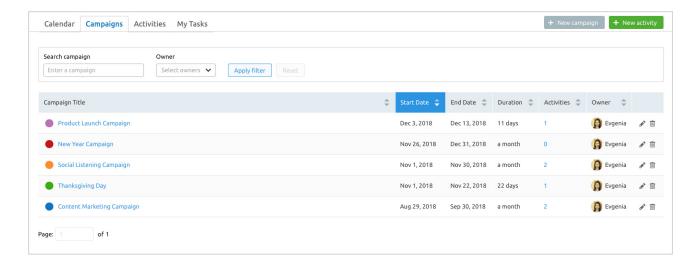
Managing several content campaigns can be tricky until you find a solution to monitor them in real time. Having access to every campaign task is an additional advantage.



In Marketing Calendar, you can assign a color to each campaign, add the main activities you're planning (each activity would have a separate card) and give each card a tag for quick filtering.

Call your co-workers

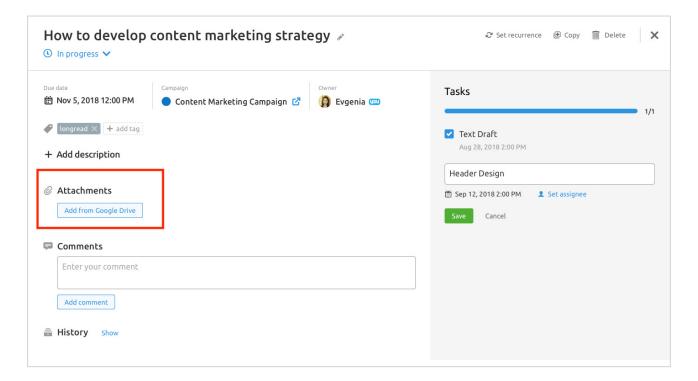
As soon as you share the calendar with your colleagues you'll need to have the information about all the tasks and their performers at any moment.



You can also filter the information by campaign or by campaign owner for your convenience.

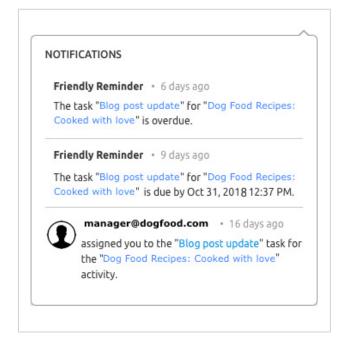
Manage your tasks in one place

Our tool also lets you see all the details concerning each activity and task (owner, deadline, level of completion etc.) in one tab. All the changes made by your colleagues are also displayed in real time.



If you want to share the document you're working on with teammates, you can add it as an attachment to a card. For the numerous marketers who use Google Drive to store and edit files, we have added an integration allowing you to quickly add a doc, a older or any other file from Google Drive to the card

To guarantee you won't miss any important deadline we have added the Notifications feature to the calendar home page. You'll be notified two days before a task assigned to you is due.



Conclusion

According to many studies, content marketing is still one of the most effective digital marketing techniques. As a result, is it one of the most popular ones and definitely the most commonly applied. The reality is that every company produces some kind of digital content, but to distinguish yourself online and help your business grow profits you need your content to be of exceptional quality and value to your readers.

It is without doubt a complicated task, but with a systematic approach and a mighty toolset such as SEMrush, your content marketing efforts can be streamlined and taken to the next level.



We love your feedback!

Was this study helpful? Is there something else about content marketing that you are interested in? Drop us a line at content-analyzer-feedback@semrush.com and our next post will be about it!