

Competitive Keyword Opportunity Scoring Framework

Marty Marion's SEO Opportunity Score Model™

by Marty Marion

Full Methodology Explanation

To identify where your brand should focus its SEO efforts first, I developed a structured scoring model I call the **Marty Marion SEO Opportunity Score™**.

The purpose of this model is to answer a practical business question:

Where can your brand most efficiently capture organic demand that competitors are currently winning?

Rather than prioritizing keywords based on a single metric such as search volume or ranking position, the Opportunity Score combines multiple factors that together reflect:

- Market demand
- Competitive weakness
- Realistic ranking mobility
- Revenue potential
- Effort required

The formula I created is:

Opportunity Score =

$$\begin{aligned} & \log_{10}(\text{Search Volume} + 1) \\ & \quad \times \log(1 + \text{Rank Gap}) \\ & \quad \times \text{Proximity Multiplier} \\ & \quad \times \text{Intent Multiplier} \\ & \quad \times \text{Difficulty Multiplier} \end{aligned}$$

Each component plays a specific role in ensuring the prioritization is balanced, realistic, and aligned with business impact.

1. Search Volume Component

$\log_{10}(\text{Search Volume} + 1)$

What Search Volume Represents

Search volume measures how many times a keyword is searched each month on average.

- A core category term may receive 9,900 searches per month.
- A mid-tier category term may receive 2,400 searches per month.
- A niche subcategory term may receive 300 searches per month.

Higher search volume means more potential traffic. However, search volume alone can be misleading.

Why We Do Not Use Raw Search Volume

If we used raw search volume directly, very large numbers would dominate the model.

- 10,000 searches appears to be 100 times larger than 100 searches.
- 30,000 searches appears to be 300 times larger than 100 searches.

But real-world value does not scale in a straight line.

Because:

- Click-through rates decline rapidly beyond the top positions.
- Conversion rates vary by intent.
- Higher-volume keywords are typically more competitive.
- Only ten organic results appear on page one.

Traffic potential increases, but it does not increase proportionally to search volume.

Why We Use a Logarithm

The logarithmic function compresses large numbers into a more balanced scale.

For example:

If search volume is:

100

$$\log_{10}(100) = 2$$

1,000

$$\log_{10}(1,000) = 3$$

10,000

$$\log_{10}(10,000) = 4$$

Notice that although 10,000 is 100 times larger than 100, the log value only doubles from 2 to 4. This keeps high-volume keywords important without allowing them to overwhelm every other factor.

Why We Add 1

If search volume were zero, the logarithm could not be calculated. Adding 1 prevents mathematical error. For meaningful search volumes, adding 1 has no practical impact on the result.

What This Component Achieves

This portion of the formula values demand intelligently rather than emotionally:

- High-demand keywords are rewarded.
- Extremely large volumes do not distort prioritization.
- The model reflects diminishing returns in traffic scaling.

2. Rank Gap Component

$\log(1 + \text{Rank Gap})$

What Rank Gap Represents

Rank Gap measures how far behind your brand is compared to a competitor for the same keyword.

The formula is:

Rank Gap = Your Brand Position minus Competitor Position

Example:

If a competitor ranks at position 4, and your brand ranks at position 24

Rank Gap = 24 minus 4 = 20

This means the competitor is 20 ranking positions ahead. Simple math.

Why Rank Gap Matters

If competitors outrank your brand for a keyword with meaningful search volume, that represents lost traffic and revenue opportunity.

A larger gap indicates greater competitive weakness. However, raw gap values can be misleading.

Why We Do Not Use Raw Rank Gap

A gap of 10 positions is meaningful. A gap of 60 positions appears larger, but it is not six times more important in practical SEO terms.

For example:

- Moving from position 18 to position 8 is a gap of 10.
- Moving from position 90 to position 40 is a gap of 50.

Although 50 is larger than 10 numerically, the second scenario still leaves the page far from page one. Large gaps do not scale linearly in value.

Why We Use $\log(1 + \text{Rank Gap})$

The logarithmic transformation compresses extreme differences.

For example:

If Rank Gap is:

4

$\log(1 + 4) \approx 1.6$

20

$\log(1 + 20) \approx 3.0$

80

$\log(1 + 80) \approx 4.4$

The gap increased from 4 to 80, which is 20 times larger.

But the log value increased modestly from 1.6 to 4.4.

This prevents massive gaps from overpowering the model.

What This Component Achieves

It rewards meaningful competitive disadvantage while avoiding exaggerated prioritization of extreme but unrealistic gaps. It keeps the model grounded in practical SEO dynamics.

3. Proximity Multiplier

Ranking Distance Adjustment

What Proximity Measures

Proximity evaluates how close your brand is to page one. Ranking movement is not linear.

Scenario A: Close to Page One

Your brand ranks at position 18. The goal is position 9. That is a movement of 9 positions.

This is often achievable because:

- Google already considers the page relevant.
- The page is on page two.
- It has partial authority signals.

Incremental improvements may produce upward movement.

Scenario B: Far from Page One

Your brand ranks at position 90. The goal is position 9. That is a movement of 81 positions.

This requires structural improvements and significant effort. These are not comparable efforts.

How the Multiplier Works

The score increases when:

- Your brand ranks between positions 11 and 30.
- A competitor ranks in the top 10.

This reflects realistic probability of movement and search engine validation.

What This Component Achieves

It prioritizes keywords that are realistically capable of moving within weeks or months, not those requiring full-scale campaigns.

It aligns prioritization with achievable near-term impact.

4. Intent Multiplier

Revenue Alignment Adjustment

Why Intent Matters

Not all searches are equal.

Searches fall into four ‘traditional’ categories: (My personal philosophy is that these are superficial with minimal true Intent Behind The Intent, but they will serve for this model’s purposes very well.

- Informational
- Commercial
- Transactional
- Navigational

Commercial and Transactional queries indicate surface-level buying behavior.

Informational queries indicate likelihood of research or learning behavior.

Navigational indicate a desire to go somewhere.

SIDEBAR:

Anyone who knows me in the SEO world knows that I created the concept of **Intent Behind The Intent™** which is a process that identifies the UNWRITTEN psychological, behavioral, and heuristic-driven motivation behind specific search queries.

It is a priceless model for creating content for all channels, but it gets applied only after we identify keywords at the observed level that we can more easily optimize for, for faster results.

So for this model, the Marty Mario SEO Opportunity Score™, we use the standard good old 4 traditional categories of intent, as much as it pains me to do so.

Why We Adjust for Intent

If two keywords have similar volume and ranking gaps, but one indicates buying behavior and the other indicates education, the buying-oriented keyword should be prioritized.

The Intent Multiplier increases the score for: commercial intent and transactional intent.

Informational keywords remain neutral. Navigational keywords are almost always ignored.

What This Component Achieves

It ensures SEO effort aligns with revenue potential rather than vanity traffic. It reflects business impact, not just traffic quantity.

5. Difficulty Multiplier

Effort-to-Reward Adjustment

What Difficulty Represents

Difficulty estimates how entrenched the competition is for a keyword.

Higher difficulty indicates:

- Strong authority domains
- Significant backlink profiles
- Stable ranking incumbents

Lower difficulty indicates:

- Less entrenched competition
- Greater volatility
- Faster potential ranking movement

Why We Adjust for Difficulty

If two keywords are equal in demand and gap, but one is dramatically harder to rank for, the easier keyword often produces faster results. The Difficulty Multiplier slightly favors lower-difficulty keywords while not excluding high-difficulty terms entirely.

What This Component Achieves

It balances ambition with realism. It supports efficient allocation of SEO resources.

Why All Components Are Multiplied

The model multiplies rather than adds. This ensures balance. If any one factor is weak, it meaningfully reduces the total score.

For example:

- High volume but low proximity will not dominate.
- Low difficulty but low demand will not rise to the top.

This produces disciplined prioritization.

What the Marty SEO Opportunity Score™ Represents

The final score is not a traffic forecast. It is a structured opportunity index.

Higher scores indicate:

- Strong demand
- Measurable competitive disadvantage
- Realistic ranking mobility
- Commercial relevance
- Efficient effort-to-reward ratio

Sorting keywords this way produces a defensible, data-driven optimization roadmap.

Strategic Value for Your Brand

This framework ensures your brand does not:

- Chase vanity traffic
- Overreact to extreme rank gaps
- Overinvest in impractical battles
- Ignore revenue alignment
- Misallocate SEO resources

Instead, it identifies where competitors are capturing category demand and ranks those opportunities by realistic, near-term impact.

It transforms competitive ranking data into a disciplined execution plan. And it works.

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