

ROB POWELL BIZ BLOG

How to Use Topic Clusters to Get on Page #1 of Google



Bonus #2 - Page #1 Traffic Surge

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What are topic clusters and why will they improve your SEO?

Topic clusters are what search engines are focusing on as they move away from individual keywords.

Savvy web marketers are quietly reorganizing their content into topic clusters in order to get higher rankings in the search engines.

In this bonus report, I'll explain to you:

- Exactly what topic clusters are
- Why they will give you an SEO advantage
- How to create them

Are you ready?

Let's dive in!

1. What Are Topic Clusters

A topic cluster is a series of interlinked articles or blog posts clustered around a particular topic.

Topic clusters are a bit like 'Category' pages in WordPress. A category page contains links to all the pages or articles that cover that same category.

The difference between the two is that a category page is simply a list of sub-pages whereas the central page in a topic cluster is usually a lengthy article that gives a broad overview of a particular topic.

Here's an example:

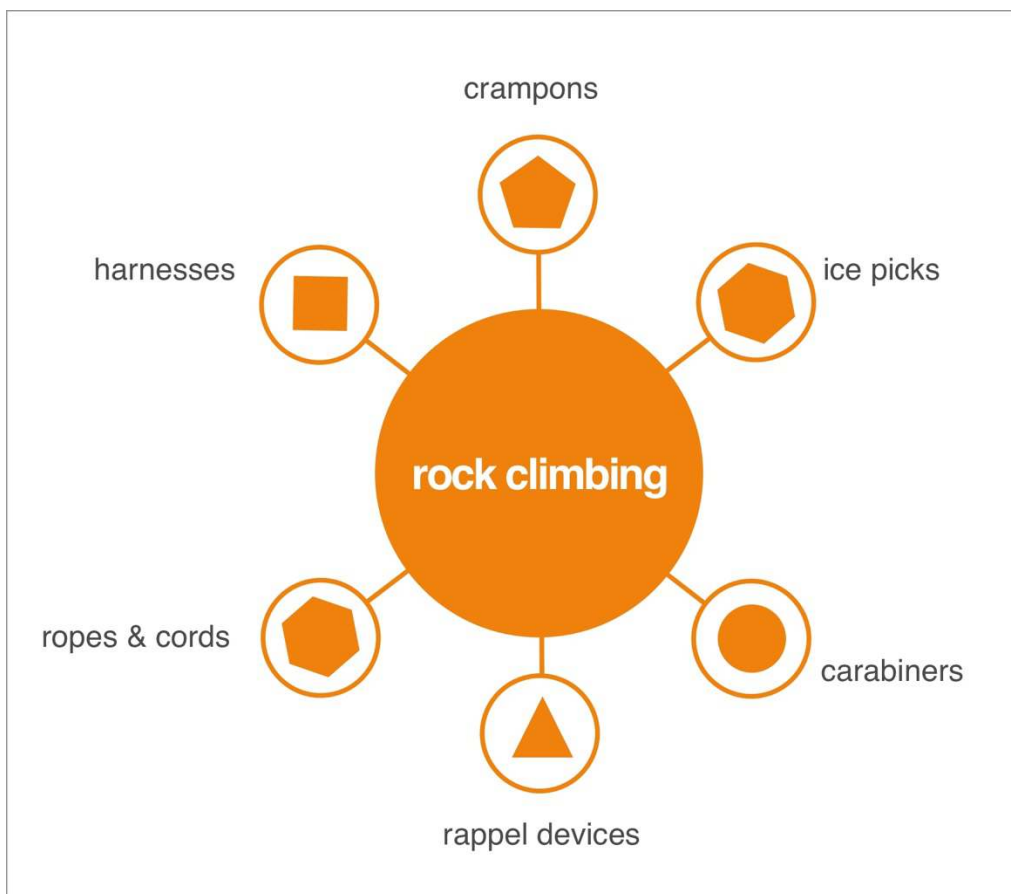
Let's say I have a website that deals with outdoor sports.

And on that website, I have a web page that covers rock climbing.

My rock-climbing page links to a series of related pages, each of which deals with one of the following topics:

- Crampons
- Ice picks
- Harnesses
- Carabiners
- Ropes & Cords
- Rappel devices

The rock-climbing page and the pages it links to are a topic cluster.



Not only does the central page link to the satellite pages, but each satellite page links to every other page in the topic cluster.

2. Topic Clusters and Pillar Content

The page at the center of topic cluster is often referred to as a pillar post.

It's called a pillar post because it's often one of 5 to 10 key content pages that define the focus of a website.

Pillar pages are usually long-form content and they typically give a broad overview of a topic.

In my example above, the rock-climbing page is a pillar post.

Pillar posts often have titles such as:

- The Complete Guide to SEO
- Email Marketing – the Definitive Guide
- Guest Posting – Everything You Need to Know

The satellite pages surrounding a pillar post go into particular sub-topics in more detail.

For example, the satellite pages for a pillar post about email marketing might be:

- How to Segment Email Lists for More Opens and Click-Throughs
- 22 Simple Ways to Grow Your Email List
- 13 Best Email Marketing Services
- 7 Email Marketing Metrics You Need to Follow
- How to Create Email Marketing Funnels

The pillar post on email marketing plus these 5 sub-topic posts would together form a topic cluster.

A key characteristic of a pillar page is that it broadly covers a given topic. In that sense, it acts as a gateway to the more detailed pages that cluster around it and deal with sub-topics of the main topic.

If you're like me, and many other bloggers, you may not have many pillar pages.

The reason for this is that we've been so busy chasing long tail keywords that we rarely, if ever, write broadly-focused articles.

After all, an article about email marketing in general is going to be much harder to rank on Page #1 of Google than an article about 'email marketing funnels'.

But when a pillar page has a series sub-topic pages linking to it, it has a much better chance of ranking on Page #1.

Why?

Because it's at the center of a topic cluster and that means it has topical authority.

3. What is Topical Authority?

In 2013 Google introduced the Hummingbird algorithm and Latent Semantic Indexing.

This algorithm allows Google to recognize that certain keywords cluster together in predictable patterns.

That in turn allows Google to map out the sub-topics that make up any topic.

And that means that Google is able to measure the topical authority of a piece of content. In other words, Google is able to measure how well a piece of content covers a particular topic.

That's where topic clusters come in.

It's difficult for a single piece of content to cover a topic definitively.

But what about a series of articles, each of which covers a different aspect of that topic?

That's going to have topical authority.

And since topical authority is now a ranking factor, the pillar post at the center of that topic cluster is going to rank well in Google.

4. Topic Clusters vs Keywords

Topic clusters are beginning to replace keywords.

Ten years ago, people used to focus on individual keywords.

But with Hummingbird and RankBrain the focus now is context, not isolated keywords.

Increasingly, Google is trying to understand searcher intent, and that means the algorithm is trying to understand context and meaning.

Gone is the era when you could optimize a page for a single keyword.

5. Topic Clusters and SEO

When you create an interlinked cluster of pages around a pillar page, you signal to Google that there's a semantic connection between these linked pieces of content.

And that's exactly the kind of content that search engines are now favoring: topic-based content.

Search engines are favoring sites that cover a particular topic with authority.

Why?

Because the search engines realize that visitors to a website that has topical authority are likely to find all the answers they need in one place, instead of having to visit multiple websites.

The result?

The website with well-organized topic clusters is going to rank better in the search results.

But there's another reason why topic clusters perform better in the search results.

Because the pages in a topic cluster are interlinked, when one page gets an SEO boost it transfers link juice to the other pages in the topic cluster.

6. How to Create Topic Clusters from Scratch

Here's how to create a topic cluster:

Take the head keyword for your main topic (e.g. 'email marketing', 'seo', 'rock climbing') and type it into Google.

Quickly scan through the first ten articles that appear in the search results.

Look at the headings and the sub-headings.

Make a list of the sub-topics that your main topic divides into.

When you've finished this exercise, type your head keyword into Google again.

This time look at the 'Auto Suggest' topics.

See if there are any additional items that you can add to your list of sub-topics:



Then scroll down to the foot of the page and look at the Google 'Related Searches'.

Again, check to see if there are any additional sub-topics you can add to your list:

Searches related to email marketing

[how to do email marketing](#)

[email marketing definition](#)

[email marketing examples](#)

[email marketing tutorials](#)

[email marketing strategy](#)

[email marketing companies](#)

[email marketing tips](#)

[email marketing free](#)



Now take your list of 'email marketing' sub-topics and write 200 to 300 words on each of the sub-topics.

You'll end up with long-form article of 2,500 to 5,000 words.

Of course, 200 to 300 words is nowhere near enough words to cover any of the sub-topics.

That's where your satellite pages come in.

Each satellite page will address one of those sub-topics.

And that's your topic cluster!

Make sure to interlink the articles within the topic cluster.

The pillar post should have links to each of the satellite pages. And each satellite page should contain links to every other page within the cluster.

Here are some examples of how to interlink the pages in a topic cluster:


7. How to Create Content Clusters from Existing Content

To create content clusters from your existing articles and blog posts you first need to do an audit of your content.

Specifically, you need a spreadsheet of your articles so that you can examine the titles and see which of your articles would naturally fit into a topic cluster.

You can do this with a simple plugin called Export Post Info.

After installing and activating this plugin, enter a name for your download file, click 'save Changes', and then click on the download link:



84 posts exported successfully! - [Click here](#) to download the file.

Export post info - Options

Random string

Please specify a random string to make your file name unique. We create a pseudo-random string for you, but you should change it.

You have to save the string so that the plugin generated the export file for you.

[Save Changes](#)

You can find the generated CSV file at: <https://robpowellbizblog.com/wp-content/uploads/export-post-info-Merida5869ppo8552341qpoi87.csv>

The plugin creates a CSV file with the following columns:

- Date
- Title
- Number of words
- URL
- Category

Open the CSV file in Microsoft Excel and create a new column titled 'Topic Clusters'. In the new column you just created, make a note of the broad topic of the article. Then sort the spreadsheet by the column titled Topic Clusters.

You'll find small groups of articles that share the same broad topic. These are your topic clusters:

| C | D | E | F |
|---|---------------------------|-------|---|
| Title | Topic Clusters | Words | URLs |
| 7 Blogging Tips That Will Boost Your Traffic | Blogging Advice | 1068 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/7-blogging-tips-to-b |
| How To Succeed In Your First Year of Blogging | Blogging Advice | 2083 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/first-year-of-blogger |
| Blogging 101 – 17 Tips For First Year Bloggers | Blogging Advice | 1612 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/blogging-101/ |
| 19 Experts Reveal Their Top Tips For First Year Bloggers | Blogging Advice | 3260 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/19-experts-top-tips- |
| Is Your Blogging Strategy Working? | Blogging Strategy | 995 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/blogging-strategy-w |
| Ryan Biddulph On Blogging For Fun and Finding Success | Blogging Strategy | 1537 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/interview-ryan-bidd |
| Which Blogging Strategy Is Right For You | Blogging Strategy | 1 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/blogging-strategy-q |
| Newsjacking for Bloggers – How To Get Links and Traffic From Breaking N | Blogging Strategy | 1833 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/newsjacking/ |
| From Zero to 50,000 Visitors in One Month | Blogging Strategy | 3849 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/from-zero-to-50000 |
| The 7 Business Models of Highly Successful Webpreneurs | Business - General | 2772 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/business-models-of- |
| Teach and Grow Rich: How To Leverage The New Trend in e-Learning | Business - General | 1409 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/teach-grow-rich-nev |
| 71 Online Entrepreneurs Reveal Their Email Preferences | Business - General | 2894 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/71-online-entrepren |
| How To Find a Blogging Niche in 2019 – The Beginner–s Guide | Choosing a Blogging Niche | 2308 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/blogging-niche/ |
| How to Find a Profitable Niche – Your Key to Blogging Success | Choosing a Blogging Niche | 2672 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/how-to-find-a-profit |
| 27 Ideas For Your Next Blog Post When You Can’t Think What To Write | Creating Content | 5481 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/27-ideas-for-your-ne |
| Guide To Using BuzzStream To Create Your Next Expert Roundup | Creating Content | 2244 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/using-buzzstream/ |
| Why You Need a Content Calendar in 2019 | Creating Content | 1675 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/content-calendar/ |
| How To Quickly and Easily Turn Articles Into Videos | Creating Content | 3181 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/articles-into-videos/ |
| Easily Boost Your CTR with These 21 Headline Analyzers | Creating Content | 1394 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/email-headline-anal |
| How Email Marketing Works in 2019 – The Definitive Guide | Email Marketing | 4898 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/how-email-marketir |
| Publishing on Medium – How To Add 13,000 Subscribers in 6 Weeks | Email Marketing | 725 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/publishing-on-medi |
| How To Build Your List on Medium and Get Thousands of New Subscribers | Email Marketing | 637 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/build-your-list-on-m |
| Content Upgrades – How To Deliver Them For Free In 7 Easy Steps | Email Marketing | 1705 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/deliver-content-upgr |
| How To Do Lead Magnet Delivery in 2019 – the Easy Way | Email Marketing | 2011 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/lead-magnet-deliver |
| Top 10 Lead Capture Tools – To Grow Your List Fast | Email Marketing | 1627 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/top-10-lead-capture |
| Quizzes for Lead Generation – How To Boost Your Opt-in Rate in 2019 | Email Marketing | 2605 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/quizzes-for-lead-ger |
| 37 Best Exit Intent PopUp Strategies for More Subscribers in 2019 | Email Marketing | 4306 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/exit-intent-popup/ |
| How To Use Evernote To Organize Your Content | Productivity | 960 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/how-to-use-evernot |
| The 10 Share Triggers That Make Blog Posts Go Viral | Promoting Content | 2779 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/share-triggers/ |
| 27 Experts Reveal Their Most Powerful Blog Promotion Technique | Promoting Content | 4713 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/experts-blog-promot |
| 10 Tips for Choosing a Domain Name for SEO in 2019 | SEO | 1126 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/choosing-a-domain- |
| 11 Benefits of SEO for Bloggers [Infographic] | SEO | 1609 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/benefits-of-seo/ |
| How To Write Blog Posts That Rank in Google in 10 Key Steps | SEO | 3671 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/how-to-write-blog-p |
| Using the KWFinder Tool To Get On Page #1 of Google | SEO | 1899 | https://robpowellbizblog.com/using-kwfinder-tool/ |

In each topic cluster there may be an article that will serve as the pillar post for that topic cluster.

If not, you can easily create one using the process I outlined in the previous section.

When creating topic clusters from your existing content, remember to remove all the previous internal links that lead to other pages on your website.

You want the search engine bots to clearly recognize that this is a self-contained topic cluster. And that means that internal linking should be restricted to the cluster itself.

8. How to Do Internal Links in a Topic Cluster

There are various ways of doing internal links in a topic cluster.

Here are some examples.

Topic Cluster Example #1 - [The Anatomy of a SaaS Marketing Site](#)

This topic cluster uses a Table of Contents at the top of each of the cluster pages:



The screenshot shows a teal-colored page titled "The Anatomy of a SaaS Marketing Site". Below the title, there are two columns of text. The left column is titled "About this research" and the right column is titled "About the researcher". Below these columns is a red-bordered box containing a "Table of Contents" with the following links:

- [Chapter 1: SaaS Homepages - Your product's welcome mat ← YOU'RE HERE.:](#)
- [Chapter 2: SaaS Pricing Pages - Your point of conversion](#)
- [Chapter 3: SaaS marketing site organization](#)
- [Chapter 4: SaaS branding](#)
- [Chapter 5: Case Study #1 - Slack](#)
- [Chapter 6: Case Study #2 - Wistia](#)
- [Appendix A: Overall Methodology](#)

At the foot of each page, it provides a link to the previous page and a link to the next page.

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- A complex hierarchy can often be confusing to users. Make sure that they know where they are at all times by creating continuity across the site. Use design to build a unified user experience across the site.
 - Because a complex hierarchy already presents users with a lot of choice, it's essential that you limit choice whenever possible, and cut out extra fat.
 - Only choose this type of organization if you really need it—i.e. your SaaS website includes various services and products to choose from, and require the complexity of this model to explicate fully. Don't unnecessarily bulk up your site with more pages and options to appear more professional.

[<< Chapter 2 - SaaS Pricing Pages - Your conversion point](#)

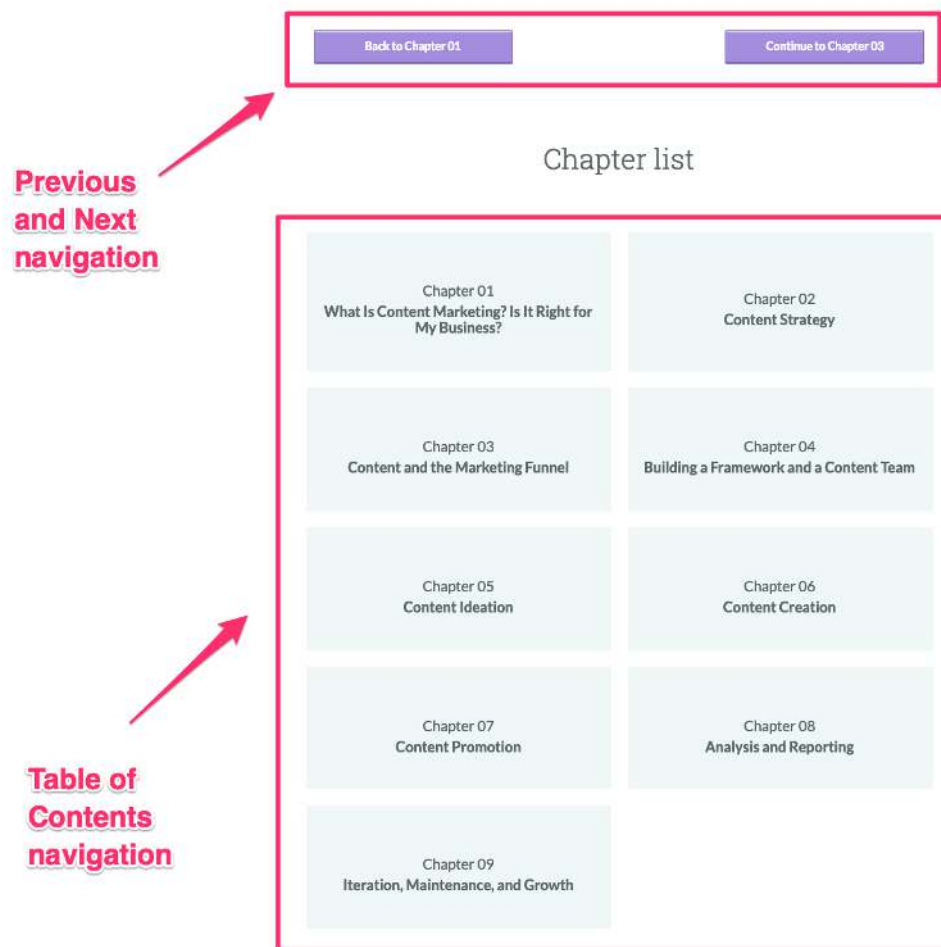
[Chapter 4 - SaaS branding >>](#)

This is a great linking strategy:

- a Table of Contents navigation ensures that every cluster page links to every other page
- the top navigation gives the reader an overview of what the topic cluster consists of
- the bottom navigation encourages the reader to follow a sequence of pages

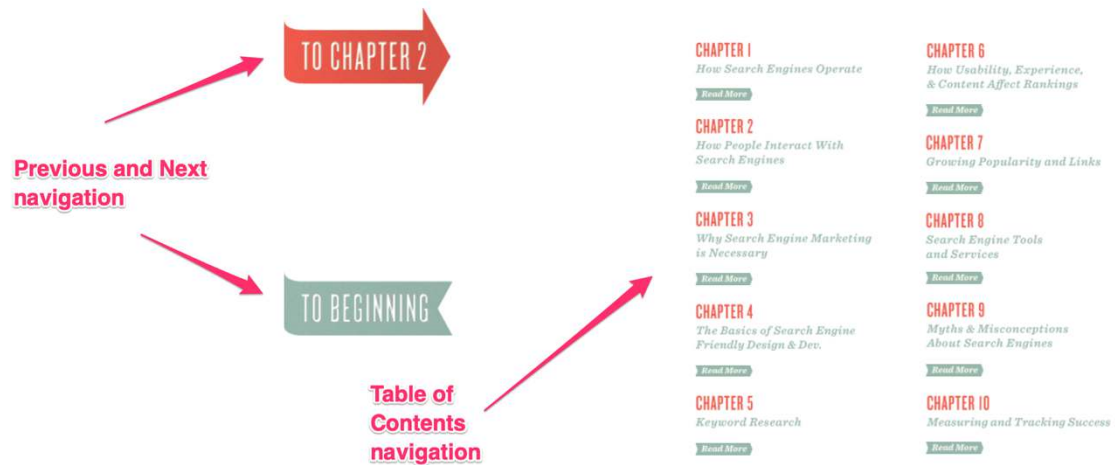
Topic Cluster Example #2 - [Moz Guide to Content Marketing Strategy](#)

This topic cluster uses the same two kinds of navigation as the previous example: 'Table of Contents' navigation as well as 'Previous and Next' navigation:



Topic Cluster Example #3 – [Moz Beginners Guide to SEO](#)

This topic cluster, also from Moz, uses these same two internal linking techniques:



From an SEO point of view the vital linking strategy in all three examples is the 'Table of Contents' linking:

- It tells the search engines that this is a topic cluster
- If one page in the topic cluster gets a ranking boost, the benefit will be passed on to the other page sin the cluster

Conclusion

Organizing your content into topic clusters will help get your articles on Page #1 of the search results.

This is because search engines are now focussing on context and topical authority, rather than single keywords.

In this article I've shown you how to create new topic clusters from scratch and also how to organize your existing content into topic clusters.

A vital aspect of topic clusters is internal linking.

Each page in the cluster should be linked to every other page in the cluster, preferably using a 'Table of Contents' linking strategy, as outlined above.

If you're looking for a single SEO strategy that will lift your rankings in the search engines – this is the one!