The Ultimate Content Gap Analysis Guide

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Content gaps are a fact of life. Until recently, the process of finding them has been tedious at best. Many content strategists rank content gap analysis right up there with the content audit.

The process is a necessary yet time-consuming part of content marketing. But it doesn't have to be that way. Let's see if we can change that perception and make it easier to get started with content gap analysis.

What Most People Miss When Conducting Content Gap Analysis

Part of content strategy involves determining what content needs to be created (or updated) to meet the requirements of your target audience.

There's a typical pattern in the way many content strategists approach content gap analysis, or at least the way they write about it. Here's what they miss:

- **Most content gap analysis examples are simple**
- **They only uncover easy-to find keyword gaps**
- **Their approach is restricted to site analysis**

Just because you've written about a topic doesn't mean you've closed the gap.

It's easy to map the gap on a small website, especially when comparing to one that's substantially larger. Small sites have so little content that it makes it simple to find those gaps using any tool. Finding content gaps becomes significantly harder as the size of your content inventory increases. There are more pages to analyze with each page potentially addressing multiple topics.

Restricting content gap analysis to the site level means you miss a bigger part of the picture. Namely that on-page content gaps also play an essential role in the authority and findability of content. Site-level gap analysis is based on an incorrect premise that writing about a topic means you've covered the gap.

It's not enough to throw the "correct" keywords into some content so that you can check off all the right boxes. If you write about a topic and that blog post ranks poorly or fails to rank at all, would you still consider that gap to be covered? From a search engine perspective, definitely not. Poor ranking combined with poor content score indicates that your content is lacking depth.

Automating Content Gap Analysis

Analyzing content gaps at scale requires automation. You'll need an inventory that can be analyzed to determine which pages rank for what topics and which topics are lacking in coverage.

Frequently, large sites aren't lacking in topical coverage. It's just that those pages aren't addressing their respective topics in an in-depth manner. So you need to know which pages need optimization.

With a big site, you'll most likely have a correspondingly large number of opportunities. So prioritization becomes imperative.


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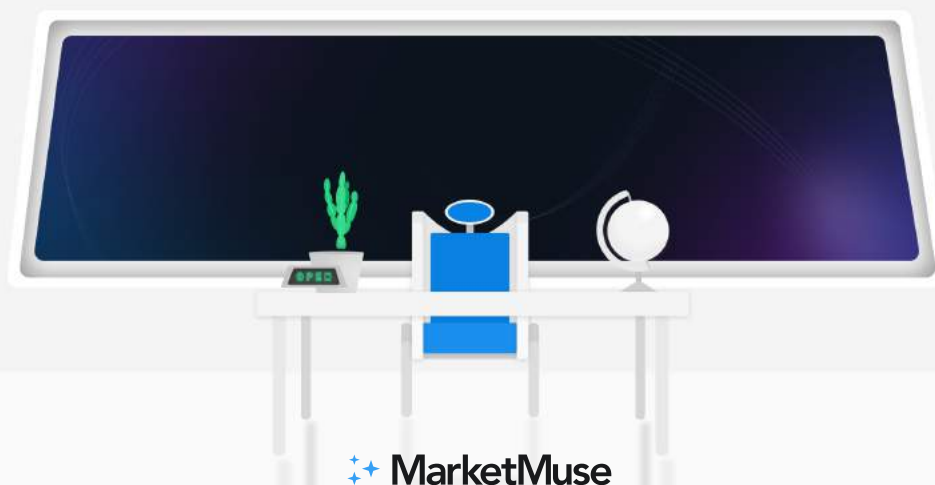
Content Gap Analysis Example

There's nothing like a few examples to help bring clarity to a concept. So let's take a look at some instances where content is missing on a particular page and on a specific site.

We'll be using some screenshots from MarketMuse Suite for our examples. It does all the hard work of creating an inventory, conducting an audit, analyzing and prioritizing the results for review.
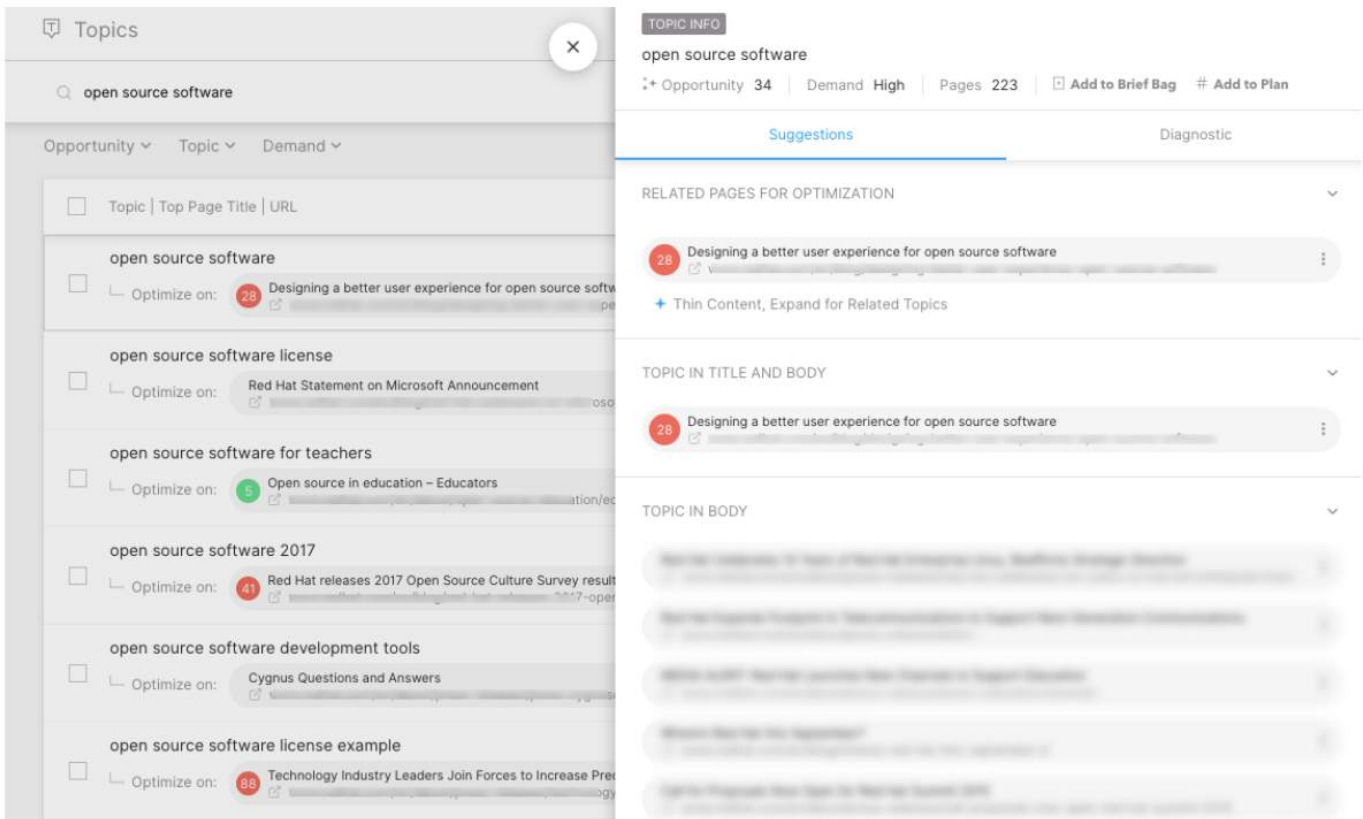
The number of gaps and how you address them depends on the size of your site and the scope of your topic. This first example is from a website with a large content inventory that is ripe for optimization. Consequently, there are more opportunities for optimizing blog posts and filling content gaps, than there are for creating new content. But here's one.
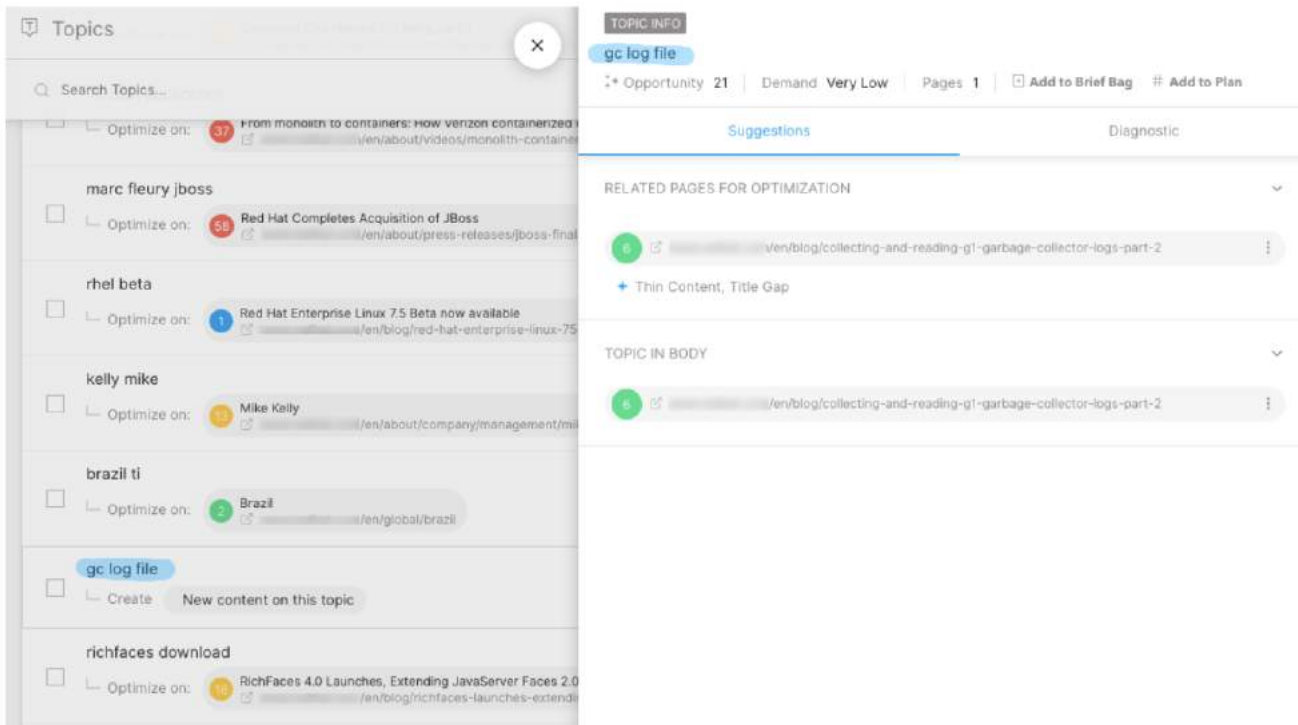
In this case, there's only one page related to the topic of "gc log file," and it's doing quite well already, ranking 6th for a related topic. So it's a good idea to fill this gap by creating a new page with this focus topic.

Content gaps are more subtle and harder to find in sites with larger inventories, but they do exist.

In the following example, we see that the site has numerous pages mentioning the topic "open source software." But none of them are ranking on the first page for this topic. So, for all practical purposes, a gap exists.


MarketMuse has determined that this specific page ranking 28 for this particular term is the best candidate for optimization. To close the gap, the owner of this site needs to optimize the current content for that specific focus topic.

When a content gap exists because the content we've created is less than optimal, we need to improve its content score. Doing this creates an article that exhibits a greater depth of expertise and increases the site's breadth of knowledge. We're talking about building authority.

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Take the case of the topic "buyer's journey."

Whether you're creating a blog post from scratch or updating an existing article, there are essential related topics that need to be covered.
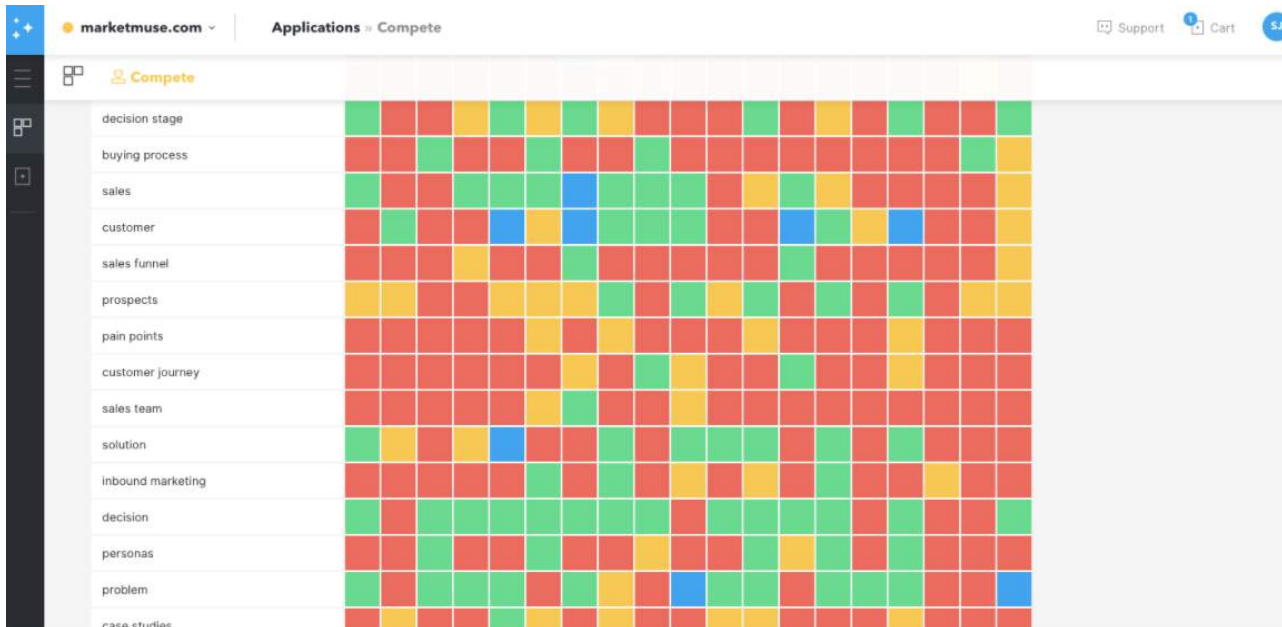
This screenshot is just a small snippet of the model for this particular topic. Running along the X-axis at the top of the page are the top 20 URLs for this focus topic. Down the left side are all the related topics. All the red squares represent content gaps.

To have any hope of ranking your content, you'll need to discuss the basics like "buyers," "stage," "content," "marketing" and so on. But to maximize its ranking potential, you'll need to go one step farther than the competition and cover related topics like "buyer personas" and the "decision-making process." Those are the gaps that you see in the heat map that your content should fill.

Finding Content Gaps in the Buyer Journey

Another way of finding content gaps is to look at content as it relates to the customer journey. To do this, you'll first need to identify your potential customers. Every type of buyer persona will have a unique journey, so the process and the content that supports it will be different.

This is not about creating content to match high traffic keywords. It's about matching content to users, regardless of traffic potential. In fact, some of the most valuable keywords (at the bottom of the funnel) receive very little traffic. **But they convert well.**

Once the audience is identified, you'll need to undertake some content mapping to ensure you have content that matches all stages of the sales cycle. Depending on your findings, you may need to optimize existing content or create additional content.

Now that you've identified your audience and mapped out their journey, it's time to map the gap.

Content gaps at the site level can impact site authority. It's difficult to be considered an expert on the subject if your site is missing substantial amounts of context your competitor provides.

Content gaps can exist at the page level as well. In this case, a page on a specific focus topic is failing to mention important related topics within the text.

How MarketMuse Helps Find Content Gaps

MarketMuse tracks the content inventory of your site and maps topics to their respective pages. You can examine topics to get a better sense of what pages rank for specific topics and their related terms.

Page details provide additional information to discover content gaps existing on the page. The gap map renders a visual competitor analysis. This provides you with a significant advantage over your competitors. It immediately shows what needs to be done to create in-depth content that exceeds their standards.

Make content gap analysis part of your marketing strategy to ensure your content matches the goals of your business and the people who read your blog.

Integrate MarketMuse into Your Workflow

Order a MarketMuse Content Brief to create optimized content the first time. Briefs are a complete blueprint helping writers craft expert-level content that your audience will enjoy and search engines will understand. Your SEO lead will be happy too!

Make use of the MarketMuse Optimize Application to verify that a piece of content meets your quality target. Get real-time feedback on how to improve, as you write in our editor.

Use the MarketMuse Research Application to identify opportunities, understand topical context, and ensure new content comprehensively covers the subject.

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