

KEYWORD RESEARCH

The Keyword Research Playbook

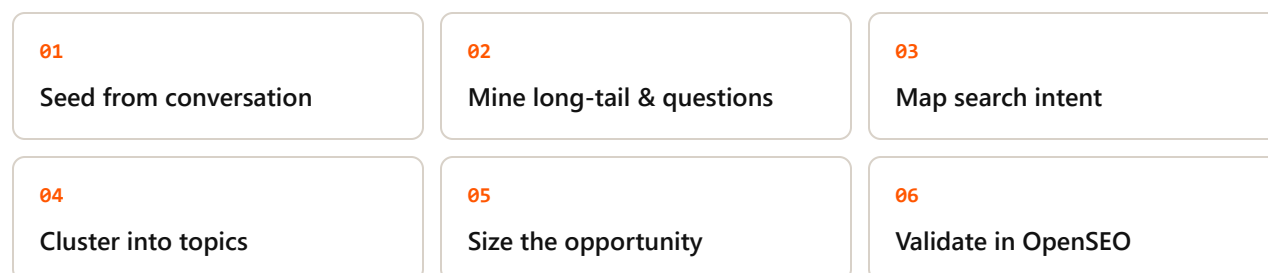
Eight field-tested plays for finding demand that actually converts
— from working SEOs on the *Unscripted* podcast.

Curated by Jeremy Rivera • SEO Arcade

Keyword research is demand discovery — not a volume spreadsheet.

Volume, difficulty, and CPC are the *last* filter, not the first. The terms that convert come from conversations — customers, sales calls, expert interviews — and the tool's job is to validate and expand them. This playbook is eight plays for doing exactly that, each with the practitioner who endorses it. Run them, then execute in OpenSEO.

THE WORKFLOW



Each play names its endorsers, a short "why," a workflow, and a quote from the source interview. The final checklist turns all eight into one repeatable seed-to-brief routine.

Seed from conversation, not a volume report

PLAY 01

Slaymaker • Bajayo • Digneo • Stox • Long

The converting terms are too specific, new, or "wrong" to register real volume — you only hear them by talking to people.

- Interview in order: SME → sales team → customers.
- Capture language verbatim (record + transcribe).
- Harvest the general/"wrong" words prospects actually use.
- Only then open the tool to validate & expand.

"I haven't done keyword research that didn't start with a conversation in the past year."

JEREMY RIVERA • Unscripted SEO

Long-tail & question mining

PLAY 02

Baterina • Moser • Barnard

Near-zero-volume, high-intent terms beat head terms, and keyword tools badly undercount real demand.

- Pull PAA and map LLM query fan-out for each seed.
- Apply Baterina's "rule of three" — 3+ items before a category page, or it reads as thin.
- Answer each question in a 40–60 word block.

"Someone's bullet point is someone else's entire universe."

STEPHAN BAJAYO • Unscripted SEO

Search-intent mapping (hot / warm / cold)

PLAY 03

Merrilees · Ashford

Classify every query by buying readiness and route each to the right page depth, offer, and CTA.

- Hot = ready to buy → lead with the offer, minimize friction.
- Warm = comparing → lead with proof, cases, comparisons.
- Cold = learning → lead with the problem, educate first.

Name the internal and "justice" layer of the problem, not just the external one — even a boring product becomes compelling.

BRUCE ASHFORD · Unscripted Small Business

Opportunity sizing & forecasting

PLAY 04

Rivera · Berkowitz · Baterina

Model revenue before you commit; A/B-test a page type before scaling it.

- Volume → CTR curve → conversions → revenue (state a range).
- Weight effort to bottom/mid-funnel keyword tiers first.
- Run a control-vs-test on a page type before scaling to thousands.

"Traffic is a proxy. It always has been... are you actually losing sales, or are you just losing traffic?"

ERNESTO ORTIZ · Unscripted SEO

Programmatic & data-driven discovery (GSC)

PLAY 05

Rivera · Simmons

Most of your real query data is hidden — mine it instead of guessing.

- Regex-filter Search Console for query patterns you already rank for.
- Triangulate Ahrefs + GA4 + GSC to attribute clicks to likely queries.
- Generate long-tail pages from structured data — each with one unique element.

Only ~3% of query data is visible in GSC — 16 months of history beats recent-only for finding the gaps.

GRANT SIMMONS · Unscripted SEO

Cluster keywords into topical hubs

PLAY 06

Simmons · Homer

Group by shared SERP and intent bucket; split pages that try to rank for too much.

- Detect "topic drift" — outlier queries that deserve their own URL.
- Map clusters to Google's ~8 intent buckets.
- Structure the hub "like a dictionary for Google and AI."

Narrow to a few core "conversations," then map them across the keyword set and the venues your audience uses.

HOLLY HOMER · Unscripted SEO

Intent beyond Google (Pinterest, AI, LinkedIn)

PLAY 07

Bocchese • Alfon • Popp

Demand — and opinion — increasingly forms off Google. Research it where it lives.

- Treat Pinterest as an intent-based search engine (pins/boards/profile).
- Optimize the LinkedIn profile as a ranked, keyword-sensitive asset.
- Track branded Google search as the bridge back from social discovery.

“People aren’t going to Pinterest to follow people. They’re searching for information, ideas, inspiration, products.”

JULIA BOCCHESE • Unscripted SEO

Make positioning map to real demand

PLAY 08

Little • Popp • Homer

Don't name an offering nobody searches for — match the language of a demand wave you don't have to create.

- Test whether your category label has real search behind it.
- For a new brand: social handles + forum presence before content.
- Ride existing demand waves by matching their exact query language.

“Fractional” is a relationship word, not a search word — “no market for it, no search around it.”

GEORGE LITTLE • Unscripted SEO

The seed-to-brief checklist

One repeatable routine that chains all eight plays.

- ☐ **Interview first.** SME → sales → customers. Record and transcribe. (Play 01)

- ☐ **Harvest verbatim language**, including the general/"wrong" words prospects use. (Play 01)

- ☐ **Pull questions** — PAA + LLM query fan-out for every seed. (Play 02)

- ☐ **Tag intent** — hot / warm / cold for each term. (Play 03)

- ☐ **Cluster** by shared SERP and intent bucket; flag topic drift. (Play 06)

- ☐ **Validate & expand in OpenSEO** — volume, difficulty, SERP, intent. (Play 05)

- ☐ **Size it** — project traffic → conversions → revenue; pick the tier. (Play 04)

- ☐ **Check off-Google demand** — Pinterest, LinkedIn, LLM surfaces. (Play 07)

- ☐ **Pressure-test positioning** against real search demand. (Play 08)

- ☐ **Write the brief** — validated terms + the real quotes attached.

RUN IT IN OPENSEO

Every play in this guide runs inside OpenSEO.

Seed expansion, live SERP inspection, saved keywords, and clustering —
usage-based, open source, and built for AI agents via MCP.

- openseo.so/features/keyword-research

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