



The Visibility metric challenges

SEO Visibility - A deceptively simple SEO performance metric.

The Problem

- As you usually track large numbers of keywords, you have to rely on a keyword-group-level performance metric.
- As no industry standard exists, each rank tracker computes its own metric(s).
- Our job-to-be-done here is to help you understand the performance trend at a group level – a trend that you could then reliably correlate with the impact it has on future organic traffic results.
- Even with accurate ranks and search volumes, a group-level metric could tell different stories depending on how it is calculated.

Things get complicated because:

- All keywords have ranks, and these work well when analyzing them at a keyword level – as they can be easily understood in the context of keyword attributes, like the search volume and SERP features. But averaging ranks alone fails when looking at a list of keywords with very different quality attributes.
- Weighting ranks with search volumes would be better, but still far from showing the truth. There's more to it than search volumes, when it comes to the impact keywords ranks have on future organic traffic – specifically: SERP features.
- And even if SERP features could be turned into a single number and taken into account, the metric trend will still fail to correlate with the impact on organic traffic: the CTRs. Dropping 20 positions from #1 to #21 has a totally different impact on organic traffic than increasing 20 positions from #91 to #71 on the same keyword, as in this example)

That's why most rank trackers have to compute some sort of Visibility metric.

Things get *even* more complicated because:

Even with the above challenges solved, there are still quirks that can make a Visibility metric unreliable:

- You wouldn't stick with tracking the same initial keyword list in your rank tracker. You constantly add new keywords. When that happens, any Visibility metric changes its value – not because of keyword rank performance, but because of changes in the keyword list. If the rank tracker doesn't help you understand that, you might confuse the Visibility change generated by adding new keywords with a performance-related Visibility trend.
- You would also remove keywords from the rank tracker, and then the rank tracker could change the historic Visibility values, making the metric unreliable to report on.

And if that's not enough, there's more to the Visibility trend precision:

- On longer timeframes (months), the average Search Volumes change, which also changes the Visibility in ways that correlate with future organic traffic. So it goes into performance-related change, but not rank-related.
- The same goes for SERP features.



- If own branded (navigational) keywords are included, they always rank #1 and usually are very high in search volume, so they'd "dilute" the Visibility trend on keywords that do fluctuate in ranks and are directly influenced by SEO: the non-branded ones. In this case, the Visibility metric can fail with a secondary JTBD: comparing the SEO performance over time against other websites.

The ultimate challenge:

A good Visibility metric trend should reliably correlate with the future organic traffic trend but should also be simple to understand and dissect.

But why do we need a Visibility metric and don't just measure traffic:

- Because the Visibility metric can be computed, understood, and acted upon daily, while traffic needs time for trends to become visible.
- And because traffic would also be influenced by the day of the week and the seasonality of the month, which wouldn't be correlated with the SEO performance or the long-term organic traffic results.

"We didn't know we have a Visibility problem" — an SEOmonitor client.

A Visibility metric like no other.

An accurate overview of a keywords group's performance in Google — in one consistent metric. Calculated as an impression share, you get it at every level. For organic positions and specific SERP features — Local pack, Top Stories, Featured Snippets. With a powerful explainer to know when and why its trend changed.

[Learn more about the Visibility metric.](#) →

