Pillar & Cluster Pages

Introduction

Clusters use a pillar center as the base of its system. A singular synopsis page that provides a basic overview of the topic at hand. Within this page would be links and resources pertaining to this subject in more detail, but all within clustered groups.

For example; a center pillar on exercising, may have bullet links leading to another page specifically about building abs, providing a much more in-depth description with infographics and detailed resources on the best techniques for ab-gain. Below said link to building abs back on the pillar page, may be a link to a page specifically about losing weight through exercise, where it once again goes into much more depth on the topic. Both of these theoretical pages would link back to the initial Pilar page.

All of the links within this particular cluster would stay within and pertain specifically to its topic, interlinking back to each other, supporting each other as reputable and trusted sources, allowing Google's algorithm to rank them well.

How it all changed

Before the switch to topic clusters, many websites used master URL hosts for the homepage and linked to subdomains or subdirectories. As these pages increased with more information as time went by, the pages began to proliferate and the structure often became spread out and complex, lacking a uniform linking structure. The current search engine topic-based system finds this hard to crawl through quickly, and the lack of grouping within them caused pages that were similar to each other to compete on the algorithm.

Clusters allowed for a search engine to find the information much more quickly, the pillar page with direct linkbacks from their topics being centered as the priority to be shown and displayed for a search.

Many clusters link and reference the ID of each article in simplistic forms (eg; /Exercising-Gaining Abs), but many old websites that were not clustered with blogs can harbor hundreds of topics often having the URL's as random string of numbers that have little effort at filing or management available.

Important: It is best not to overexert with somehow changing 10,000 URL's to match the new cluster model. Instead, it is advised that you rely on the interlinking for the ease of search, rather than the intuitive URL's. **The outlines will have an optimized url suggestion.**

Getting Started

This will be a brief step-by-step introduction on getting started on how to cluster:

A Conversation on Topic

This is not some basic idea throwing in exercising and running off to write, actual effort needs to be expended in this development.

      a] What's the basic theme?

      b] What resources can back up your theme?

      c] Who do you have as expert quotations?

      d] Who is your demographic? [who will be reading this?]

Compiling your Information

Separate and group all of the information you've gathered, from resources to interviews, by topic. Keep all of your topics related to each other and try to group them as best you can with at least 5-10 [preferably 10] distinctive pieces under a singular topic header. Eg; Exercising [topic header]: Gaining Abs [distinctive related topic], Losing Weight [distinctive related topic], Building Muscle [distinctive related topic] etc.

We will start with 5-10 clusters for each Pillar.

What's in a Name?

Naming your topics is important. A snappy name might sound like a good idea, but the Keywording is essential here. The idea is that the keyword in the header is the first flagged, and the content and interlinks within the topic page link back to the pillar article. So, your header needs a keyword. Gaining Abs? "How to Gain Abs" etc.

Strong Pillar, Strong Foundation

Strong houses are built on strong foundations. Your pillar article is your foundation for a good cluster, and a good ranking.

Once you have your information and your snazzy keyworded titles, you'll need to set up your initial Pillar page. The pillar page is basically described as a synopsis, a books blurb, the general overview of the upcoming articles.

Cluster Content

Your cluster content pages are the links found on your pillar page. Consider them the new subdirectories with a few tweaks. The listed links on the pillar page will lead to individual articles. These articles will cover as much information as is readily available on distinctive aspects of the overall topic.

What are the differences between the Old and New?

The tried and true article techniques are still easily applicable with very little change. In fact, many old articles that contain similar information could just as easily be pasted into these with very little effort on the writers/editor's behalf [anything to reduce the effort]. The difference lies in the linking and the focus.

Previous articles might have discussed a wide range of topics pertaining to the subject matter, but as all of that information is now categorized within the confines of their own cluster content page articles, all linked through the pillar page, these articles become much more streamlined.

They only need to focus on a singular significant aspect, and anytime they stray into other territories, they can be linked to those cluster articles of the same topic [mainly the majority of the links are within the clutters, but we can add links to other pillar pages if it helps the user].

How should I handle resources?

Linkbacks from various websites are still all the rage, but the recommendation is to keep the reference links and resources to the bottom of the article for a nice tidy page unless it's a data point we have to reference. [Not completely required, only recommended.]

For other resources covering the same subject, here are a few links to help:
A. https://neilpatel.com/blog/the-complete-guide-to-internal-linking/
B. https://neilpatel.com/blog/pillar-pages-explained/