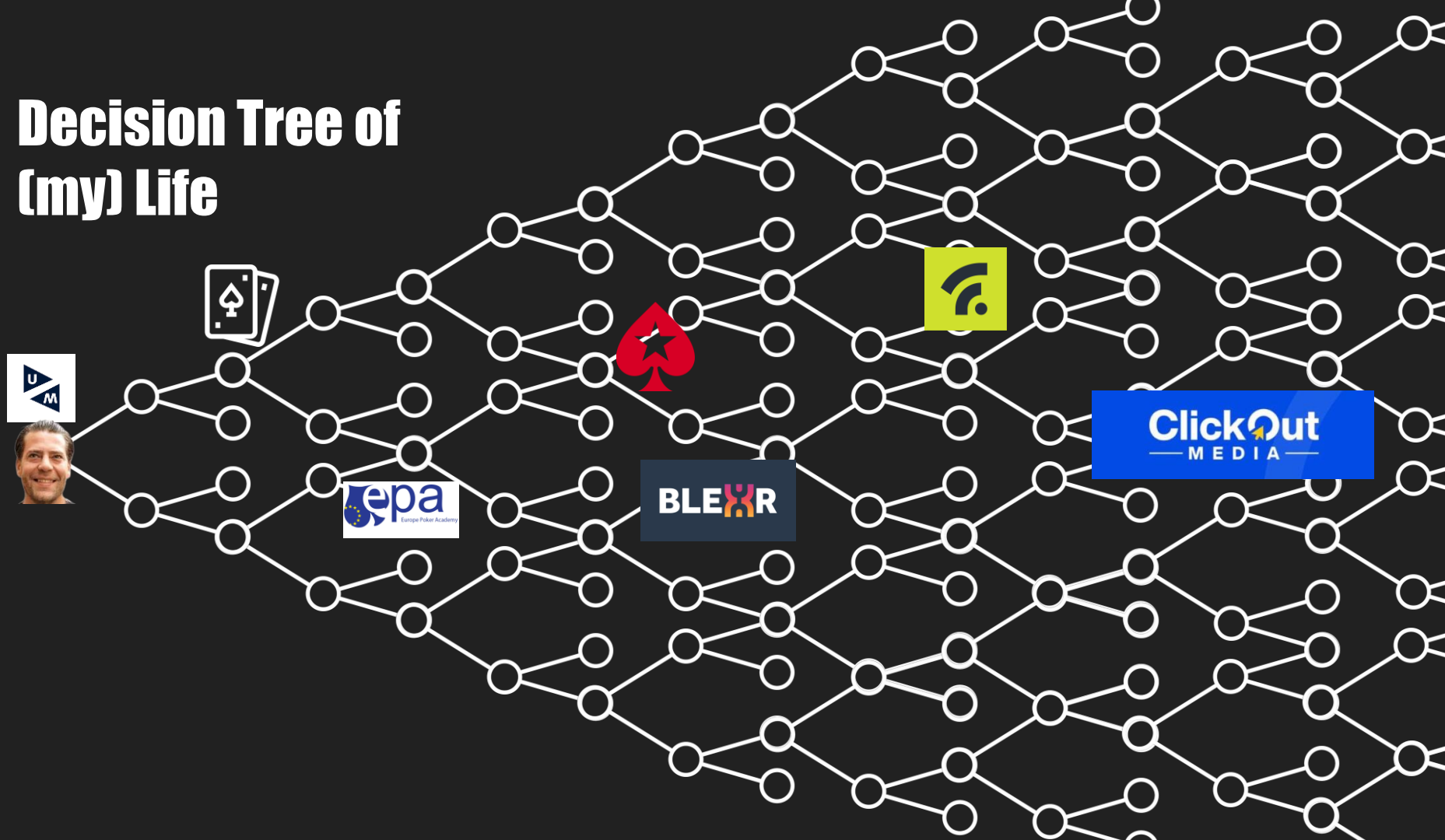
SEO Game Theory:
Parallels Between SEO & Poker

Koen Bongers

Decision Tree of (my) Life



My Current Role

March ‘23

6 websites,
15 languages

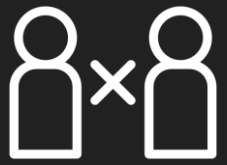
2 site migrations, 3 redesigns

163 people

> $60 million revenue YTD

4 verticals

Overlap between Poker & SEO



PvP

Zero Sum

Numbers' game

Incomplete Information

Opportunity Costs

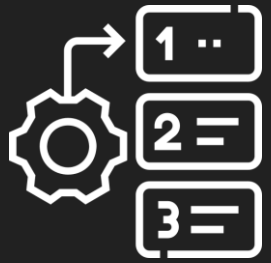
Attributes of a Great Poker Player

Probabilistic thinking

Thinking Ahead

Removing Biases

Table Selection



Ruthless Prioritization

Stress Resistance

Most Important Attribute of a Successful Poker Player

Expected Value

$$EV = \sum P(X_i) \times X_i$$

The sum of each possible action/outcome multiplied by its probability

Expected Value

$150

$100

$100

$$EV = (.7 * \$150) - (.3 * \$100) = + \$75$$

$$(x * \$150) - ((1 - x) * \$100)$$

$$250x = 100$$

$$x = .4 = 40\%$$

Expected Value

		Volume top 15 KWs	Average KW Difficul	Share Owned by non-affiliate	SV for Affiliates	Non-affiliate Market share	Average traffic top 10 competitor	Average Referring Domai	Average Domain Rating
Reg US	Sports	212.000	74	67%	69.960	Operators	374.320	31.996	65
Canada	Sports	20.700	58	42%	12.006	Publishers	43.989	23.832	54
UK	Sports	91.400	73	44%	51.184	Mix	92.300	3.630	54
Italy	Sports	76.000	50	78%	16.720	Operators	178.170	9.763	44
India	Sports	68.900	46	30%	48.230	Operators	33.610	7.570	45
Malaysia	Sports	4.930	47	44%	2.761	Mix	2.463	20.014	65
New Zealand	Sports	6.870	53	66%	2.336	Mix	8.225	21.011	61
Chile	Sports	8.480	31	71%	2.459	Operators	6.185	2.129	25
Argentina	Sports	8.350	36	36%	5.344	Operators	4.883	2.214	38
Peru	Sports	26.400	27	45%	14.520	Operators	12.086	2.795	34
Brazil	Sports	163.400	44	63%	60.458	Mix	24.530	366	29
Colombia	Sports	30.150	41	82%	5.427	Operators	5.100	1.570	30
Mexico	Sports	19.300	30	69%	5.983	Operators	6.104	3.444	39

Expected Value

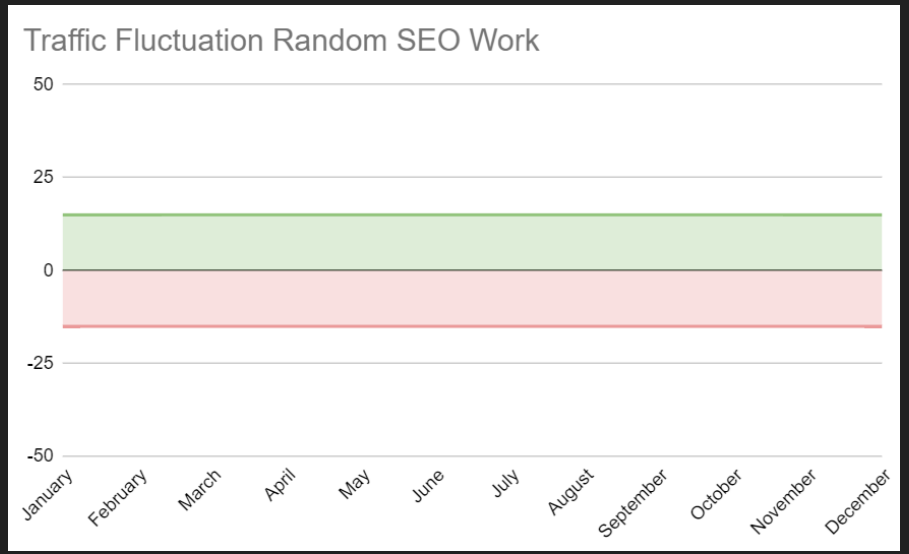
Region	sports bettir	Population	GDP	Multiplied
California	43	38,965,193	$104,916	233,020
Texas	43	30,503,301	$86,987	151,243
New York	75	19,571,216	$117,332	57,408
Illinois	50	12,549,689	$90,449	56,755
Pennsylvania	46	12,961,683	$78,544	54,975
Washington	38	7,812,880	$108,468	52,542
Florida	72	22,610,726	$73,784	46,713
Georgia	51	11,029,227	$78,754	42,561
New Jersey	53	9,290,841	$90,272	39,419
Virginia	49	8,715,698	$86,747	38,559
Michigan	47	10,037,261	$70,038	37,258
Massachusetts	52	7,001,399	$110,561	37,156
Ohio	64	11,785,935	$78,120	33,146
Colorado	49	5,877,610	$93,026	27,885
Indiana	48	6,862,199	$76,004	27,121
Tennessee	50	7,126,489	$75,748	26,991
Maryland	55	6,180,253	$87,021	24,202
Minnesota	53	5,737,915	$86,371	23,293
Arizona	58	7,431,344	$73,203	22,848
Utah	30	3,417,734	$86,506	20,696

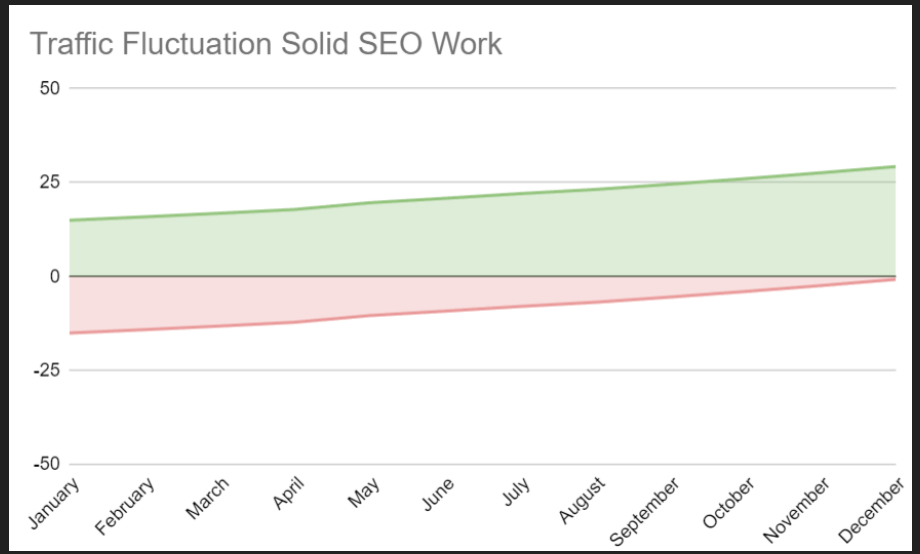
Why Should You Give a 💩

Most senior SEO's I meet seem to be missing these attributes, and it's stopping them from becoming a great one

SEO is one of the easiest industries to be an imposter

- Stakeholders often don't understand
- It's easy to look busy
- Even if you spend your time poorly, you could still deliver results





LET'S GET TO THE MEAT OF IT

⚠ Disclaimer ⚠

Your Mileage May Vary

Common Mistakes

Too Loose

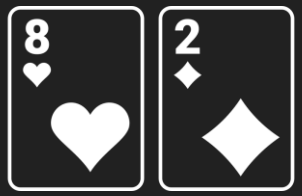
Stakes Too High

Time Management

Not Adapting

Table Selection

Playing Too Loose



Playing too many hands

=

Adding too many pages /
Working on too many sites

- Page updates = performance
- Page, subfolder, language, and domain level
- If you can’t update it once per year, don’t add it
- News excluded

Playing Too Loose

Keywords	Average Rank	AI Traffic Value (USD)	AI Share of Voice	Above the Fold	Average CTR
2,113	22.83	1.61M	70.41K	72	1.92%
946 (81.06%)	5.07 (−18.17%)	1.18M (275%)	60.53K (613%)	60 (500%)	1.1%

+ Add KPI

AI Share of Voice

Average Rank

Playing Too Loose

Keywords	Average Rank	AI Traffic Value (USD)	AI Share of Voice	Above the Fold	Average CTR
3,897	35.02	129.38K	27.12K	154	0.55%
2,362 (154%)	12.99 (58.93%)	42.34K (−24.66%)	6,835 (33.7%)	20 (14.93%)	0.48%

+ Add KPI

AI Share of Voice

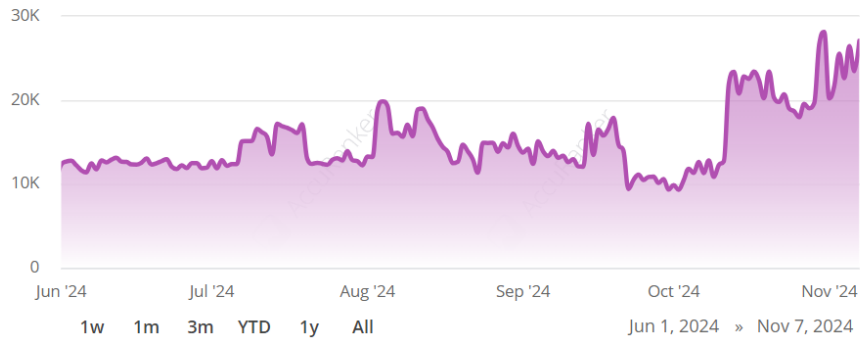
Average Rank

Playing Too Loose

Keywords	Average Rank	AI Traffic Value (USD)	AI Share of Voice	Above the Fold	Average CTR
3,897	35.02	129.38K	27.12K	154	0.55%
2,362 (154%)	12.99 (58.93%)	42.34K (−24.66%)	6,835 (33.7%)	20 (14.93%)	0.48%

+ Add KPI

AI Share of Voice



Average Rank

Stakes Too High

- Best way to go broke in poker
- Great way to burn money in SEO

Launching new sites in competitive niches

Continuing to invest in dying projects

Not adapting to the game

Social Parasites

Forbes WSJ
The Telegraph

Media partnerships

Google does not owe you 💩

Mike King's Everything Google Lied to Us About

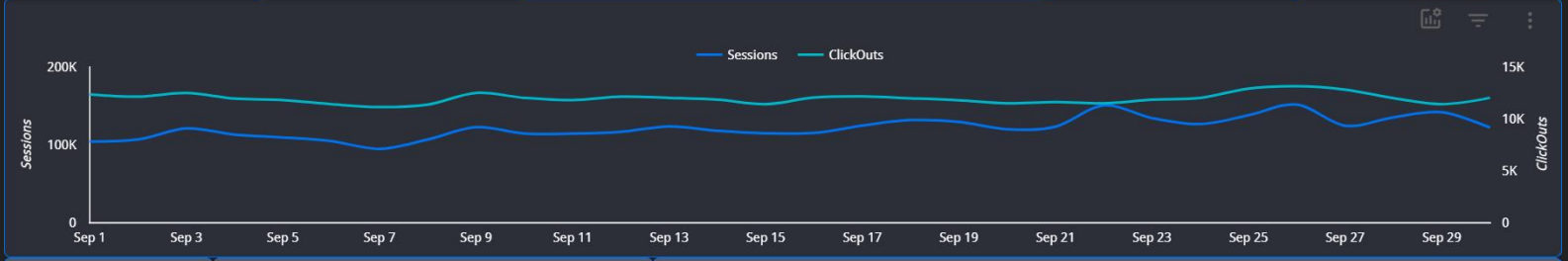
Poor Time Management

- Type faster
- Use bookmarklets
- Optimize project management
- Dashboards/reports
- Automate relentlessly
- Optimize meetings
- React to algo changes
- Anticipate the next update
- Recruitment & training

Poor Time Management

Tag | Organic: Organic (1) | Geo URLs | Category | Commercial Page | Sep 1, 2024 - Sep 30, 2024

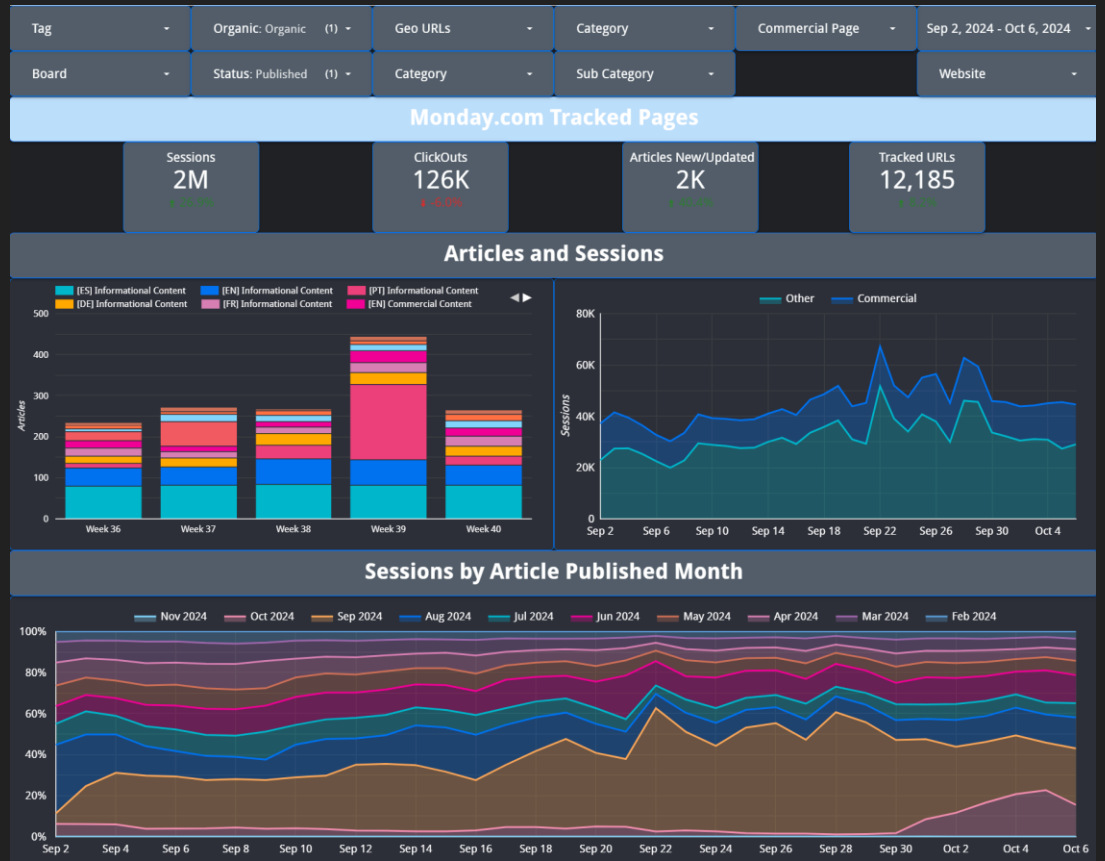
Sub Category | device | **Page Trends** | Locale | Website: Exclude T...(1)



Country Page | Tag | Page URL Contains | Enter a value

	Page URL	Sessions	% Δ	ClickOuts	% Δ	Click CR	Δ	Share of Clicks
1.	https://www.[illegible]	6,285	-1.0% ↓	7,118	-1.2% ↓	113%	-0% ↓	2%
2.	https://www.[illegible]	9,515	-	6,924	-	73%	-	2%
3.	https://[illegible]	11,953	20.6% ↑	6,061	31.9% ↑	51%	4% ↑	2%
4.	https://www.[illegible]	6,159	20.3% ↑	5,927	18.2% ↑	96%	-2% ↓	2%
5.	https://www.[illegible]	4,526	8.0% ↑	5,462	-6.2% ↓	121%	-18% ↓	2%
6.	https://www.[illegible]	7,523	808.6% ↑	4,662	789.7% ↑	62%	-1% ↓	1%
7.	https://www.[illegible]	9,972	9.4% ↑	4,629	20.4% ↑	46%	4% ↑	1%
8.	https://www.[illegible]	4,797	7.2% ↑	4,336	-5.3% ↓	90%	-12% ↓	1%

Poor Time Management



Poor Time Management

+ Add description

Off On

When **Status** changes to **Updated** and only if **Tier** is **equal to 2** push **Next Update** by **1 month**

Created by [redacted] Updated 5 months ago

+ Add description

Off On

When Next Update arrives **notify Manager** and set **Status** to **Update Needed**

Created by Koen Bongers · Updated 9 months ago

+ Add description

Off On

Slack

When **Status** changes to **Published**, **notify** in [redacted]

Created by Koen Bongers · Updated 9 months ago

+ Add description

Off On

When **Status** changes from **Sourcing Deals** to **Ready for Content O...** **notify** [redacted]

Created by Koen Bongers · Updated 8 months ago

Poor Table Selection

If you don’t know what your competitive advantage is, you’re just gambling

Poor Table Selection

- Are you playing on the highest EV tables?
- How easy is it to replenish your bankroll?
- Will you play tight or aggressive?

What's a Competitive Advantage?

V VALUABLE	R RARE	I INIMITABLE	O ORGANIZED	
NO				COMPETITIVE DISADVANTAGE
YES	NO			COMPETITIVE PARITY
YES	YES	NO		TEMPORARY COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE
YES	YES	YES	NO	UNUSED COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE
YES	YES	YES	YES	SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

What's a Competitive Advantage in SEO?

	Valuable	Rare	Inimitable	Organised
Buying guest posts	✓	✗	✗	✗
Subject matter experts network	✓	✓	✗	✗
Domain authority	✓	✓	✗	✗
Large publisher network	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brand building	✓	✓	✓	✓
Highest margins	✓	✓	✓	✓
Portfolio management	✓	✓	✓	✓

Glenn Allsop's Detailed.com Report

Picking your competitive advantage

Portfolio Management

SERP overview [illegible] | 2 Nov 2024 | Compare with | Identify intents | API | Export

	Search result		Words	DR	UR	Backlinks	Domains	Traffic	Value	Keywords	Top keyword	Volume
1	Online Casinos [illegible]	International Tier 1	6,229	88	8	10	8	532	$6.4K	17[illegible]	[illegible]	1.5K
2	Casin[illegible]	Repurposed	4,008	47	29	19,630	286	961	$12.7K	932	[illegible]	1.5K
3	Online Casino[illegible]	Local Untopical Tier 1	7,084	82	7	10	8	301	$3.7K	166	[illegible]	1.5K
4	People also ask											
5	Casino[illegible]	Repurposed	4,591	55	35	627	290	165	$2.2K	41	[illegible]	1.5K
6	Online Casino [illegible]	Local Topical Tier 1	6,131	70	12	21	17	144	$1.8K	32	[illegible]	1.5K
7	Online Casinos [illegible]	EMD	7,105	24	11	66	31	104	$1.3K	39	[illegible]	1.5K
8	Casinos [illegible] 2024	Parasite	4,726	70	1	0	0	55	$712	18	[illegible]	1.5K
9	online casino [illegible]	Social Parasite	N/A	83	0	0	0	40	$532	15	[illegible]	1.5K
10	Online Casinos[illegible]	Repurposed	10,871	55	20	287	70	26	$323	12	[illegible]	1.5K

Closing Thoughts

- Learn some basic statistics
- Be aware of biases
- Pick your projects carefully
- Adapt when conditions change

- Audit your time:
  - Delegate
  - Dashboards/reports
  - Project management
  - YOAO

- Own your competitive advantage

Mandatory Sales Pitch

Don’ts:

- I probably don’t need your links
- I probably don’t need your tool
- I probably don’t need your services

Do’s:

- Get in touch if you want to work for us
- Try and sell me your sites
- Follow me in the hope I will start publishing content
- Be clear & concise in your messaging

Koen Bongers
Owner at Koob B.V.