98% YOY growth in organic traffic for independent mortgage broker

SEO boosts organic sessions by 14,793% in the first two months
The challenge

John Charcol approached us in 2018, looking to develop a digital strategy to drive more leads into the business whilst also further strengthening the perception of the brand as a trusted expert in the space, in light of heavy investment from aggregator platforms.

The solution

We began with a quick wins audit to generate momentum quickly and identified a large amount of bloat on the site in the form of very dated news articles, product pages with large amounts of overlap and an abundance of thin, highly duplicated Q&A content. Our first priority became a data-driven cull of the site’s pages, removing 89% of content URLs, resulting in a leaner and more relevant content profile.

From this foundation we set about further improving the content by redesigning the page templates to create consistency within and between articles, strengthen internal linking and improve mobile friendliness. Given the YMYL nature of the site we also undertook an EAT audit, highlighting opportunities to improve the site’s profile of expertise, authoritativeness and trustworthiness. One area we focused on was the creation of in-depth profile pages for John Charcol’s content authors to showcase the depth of experience that makes them the go-to voices on complex mortgage topics.

Despite the wealth of content on the site, our opportunity sizing audit had highlighted a number of gaps in the existing content strategy that represented prime opportunities to target new customers. Working very closely with John Charcol’s product, marketing and compliance teams we created 30 new guide articles to target key customer knowledge gaps high in the funnel, covering areas such as ‘stamp duty’ and ‘capital gains tax’, as well as fleshing out existing guides to better address revenue-driving search terms.

Our next focus then became digital PR to improve the site’s link profile, also aligning John Charcol with topic areas such as self-employed workers – a core target demographic that had previously alluded the brand. Using a combination of surveys, interviews and a Freedom of Information request we built a multi-faceted campaign around the challenges of supporting a baby as a self-employed woman.
Our outreach approach focused on a variety of angles; from the little-discussed Maternity Allowance to the rising pressure to return to work, securing coverage across a range of top tier news outlets, business publications and motherhood focused sites.

To showcase knowledge in more depth we also worked closely with Ideal Home on an exclusive guide to self-employed mortgages, authored in conjunction with John Charcol’s experts who now regularly comment on trending finance topics for the site.
The results

The newly revamped content section of the site was an instant hit, generating 14,000 organic sessions in its first two months compared with only 94 in the same period of the previous year. Several of our new guides now rank in position one for their primary keywords, with one notable example driving 1.4k sessions and 11 highly valuable enquiries within just eight weeks of going live.

Our site improvements prepared the brand well to weather the storm of future Google updates, benefitting hugely from an algorithmic change to bring a sharp 142% hike in organic visibility that has been sustained since.

This spike has translated to a 98% YOY growth in organic traffic and a 30% increase in enquiries for the brand.

Don't just take our word for it!

“Builtvisible brought a strong financial services background to the account and quickly set about getting to know our business in great depth. It’s paid off in spades as their work has been tightly focused around how we can bring in the kind of customers we’ve struggled to target in the past and really level up our digital performance as a business. Their campaigns didn’t just build links but really showcased our knowledge and expertise in the sort of publications we never thought possible.”

Robyn Clark, Senior Content Writer