

# THE **small** BUSINESS BIG **MARKETING**

*show*

**INSANELY EFFECTIVE  
MARKETING**

## **Episode #439**

**Part 2 of the best SEO tips  
for small business from  
Dana DiTomaso, one of the  
world's leading SEO experts**



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## **Dana Ditomaso Interview Transcription**

**Tim**

I want to start off by asking you what is and what isn't SEO?

**Dana**

I think it's probably easier to start with what it does not because SEO over the years I've been working in this field for 18 years now SEO has really grown from being really specific technical and content changes made to a website so you improve your rankings and Google and now it is everything that encompasses so many different aspects of online marketing. What it does not is magic and I think that is something that a lot of SEO companies may pretend that there was some sort of magic fairy dust that gets sprinkled on your Web site and suddenly your ranking better but it's not, it's a lot of best practices smart technical knowhow and great content. And then telling people about that content and all of that encompasses search engine optimization.

**Tim**

And at the end of the day it's all about ranking well on search engines.

**Dana**

Ranking well and getting people to click on your rankings. This is the other part of it too as you can rank number one but if nobody wants to click on your listing who cares.

**Tim**

Yes, good point very good point. Is it fair to say that, we talk about Google that's the big daddy of them all? When we say search engine optimization and I'm sort of representing Australian business owners here although I have listeners from all over the world. Do we need to worry about Bing or any other search engines?

**Dana**

Bing can be important. It does vary country by country. The percentage of people who use Bing and even other search engines like Duck Duck Go for example. But what I find is the stuff that works through Google typically works for Bing and really actually one great way to tell if you've got Google penalty is look Google traffic versus your Bing traffic if they both drop then you've done something technically wrong. If only Google drops then you've done something to anger Google.

**Tim**

Do all these other search engines like Duck Duck Go and like Bing are they starting from scratch and building it from the ground up. Or are they actually utilizing what Google's created and sort of what labeling it.

**Dana**

They're definitely starting from the ground up. But Yahoo for example that is a Google search partner so that is Google search at that point.

**Tim**

So, I worry about Google. Now the other question I have because I've got a lot of listener questions Dana but is it really completely pointless, is SEO completely pointless if your website is poorly designed and populated?

**Dana**

Yeah. Honestly why would we spend money to push people to your Web site if it sucks. Work on that first and often the things that will make your web site better are better from an SEO perspective anyway it's the stuff we would have to fix. So, clean up your house before you invite people in.

**Tim**

So, to that point hopefully everyone with a crook website hasn't turned off. There is no need to turn off because I'm guessing the kind of knowledge that you're going to share during our chat today. You can listen to in the context of well how do I fix my current website in order for it to be valuable when someone clicks on it.

**Dana**

Yep absolutely.

**Tim**

Yeah well that's a good thing. Before I again get into listener questions can you explain how Google works.

## **Dana**

Well Google will tell you that it's magic but essentially Google works as they have search engine robot spiders. They go out and crawl the Internet and what they're looking for is they'll take a link from one site and look at another site and then check out that site and they'll do an initial index and they overview all the pages and then decide where should this page go. It used to be that when you did a google search of a specific set of rankings that came up and they changed fairly frequently and then they change all the time and so you and I could google exactly the same thing but because we're two very different locations we're probably going to get two very different sets of results and definitely your past search behavior also influences. So really what Google is trying to do is answer your query with the right type of search result. So, it isn't just of the 10 blue links traditional search engine stuff that we see if it's a local result. If you're looking for a Plumber near me you are going to see maps. If you're researching say should I get Vinyl Plank or should I get some other type of flooring for my house and you're going to see a bunch of different types of results with those types of comparisons. It really depends on what that query is and so what Google is really trying to understand is what is the best result and that's truly how Google works is trying to take the meat of the Internet and then show it to people in a way that answers their question. It may not be the best way for us particularly in that Google is taking a lot of things from people's websites and presenting it on Google without encouraging people to click through to your website and local search is a great example of that. For example, if you're on mobile and you do something like search for a restaurant you might not even see a link to get to the restaurant's website it's just calls or make a reservation right on Google without actually having to go to the restaurant's website which is fine because a lot of Restaurant's websites are terrible. That's part of Google, keeping people on Google because they know that people's websites suck particularly mobile. So, what can google do to keep you on there and present the results in a way that's good maybe not for a marketer perspective but from a Google perspective.

**Tim**

How do we stay up to speed on what Google wants?

**Dana**

That is an ongoing question. There were a few great industry blogs out there for sure, Search Engine Land for example is one good one. There are Moz, Yoast and Zed depending on how you say that letter dot com. And they have a fantastic blog as well and little plug here we have our own newsletter which we send out weekly on Fridays or Saturday. For those of you in Australia and you can go to [kickpoint.ca/newsletter](http://kickpoint.ca/newsletter) to sign up for that and we try to summarize what's happening in the field every week. There is a ton of changes that go on in our industry on a day to day basis. I took a vacation for two weeks once I had a whole folder of reading to catch up on when I got back. So, it's not for the faint of heart to keep up. But as long as you know the major things that are happening you can keep up yourself as well.

**Tim**

In reflective of the questions that we've received for this episode. And you know I speak at a lot of conferences and I see the pain in the eyes of small business owners when you talk about SEO. Google's a monster it's complicated it's got this algorithm that even the best SEO experts like yourself sometimes probably go cross-eyed over and go how do we keep up. What mindset should a small business owner have a vet, a plumber a masseur who's like I know SEO is important. Do they just give up knowing that there are all these much bigger companies out there who have a lot more knowledge and a lot of deeper pockets, talk to me about the mindset?

## **Dana**

I honestly think that big companies are actually at a bit of a disadvantage particularly if it's a place where there is a location that people can come visit because big brands and we've worked with some big brands with lots of locations around the country. They are really terrible sometimes, some of them are quite good but some of them are really bad at Search Engine Optimization at local scale. And so if you have a small business and you serve your locality you actually have a big advantage because you can talk about your location and you can show people that you're involved in your community and that goes a long way with Google because in addition to Google's algorithm doing its computer stuff to look at your side and evaluating it against those different factors there's also human beings employed by Google. These are called search quality raters who go out and check out websites and what they look for three factors: experience, authority and trust. Experience is showing that you know what you're doing. Authority means that people have talked to you for example you've been on a podcast, talking about something like that. This is granting authority right now. And trust is reviews, people saying good things about you that you're a real business that people can turn to when you're not just a locksmith who is a fly by night operation for example. So having those kinds of factors for a local business are really key and it's something that local businesses are really bad at talking about themselves. They feel like they don't want to brag they don't want to go out there and promote themselves but in reality, you're really involved in your community and you should talk more about that. So, a lot of the work that we do with local businesses and encouraging them to do things like sponsor a soccer team for example and talk about that on your website. Blog, we have a physiotherapist here in Canada and whenever there's a marathon in his town we ask him to write about the marathon because sometimes the marathon Web site sucks and that means that he is providing the authority for that marathon and then people will link to him as opposed to the marathon website. He has things about running trails in his area. So, think about you as a business and what you can do to provide people information about your location. You're in that area. Your business is part of that community. So how can you write about that community in a way that conveys that experience and authority and that trust.

**Tim**

Great advice right there and amazing how many small business owners don't want to talk about themselves. But just using you as an example of saying yes on coming on this podcast albeit recommendation from Rand Fishkin, fantastic, but for you just transparently. What is it about appearing on a podcast that adds to your authority and was appealing for you to come on here?

**Dana**

Yeah. So, for me you're going to be linked to our Web site so that's great. And a link is always good. Someone else may hear the podcast and call us for business and so that's always nice and then the other thing too is other people who run podcasts well also hear this podcast and we'll also contact me to get them on their podcast. So, it is definitely a recurring thing that happens. And honestly this kind of authority is huge. I also do a recurring technology column for the radio station here in Edmonton Alberta Canada CBC Edmonton and CBC is the BBC it's across the country and having that column and having a link from the CBC immediately grants our business a lot of authority. And so, this is just adding to it and showing that we're an authority not just in Canada but internationally. And so, when we get calls from people in Australia in the United States who want to have me on their show or on their conference that shows that we don't just serve the Edmonton market but we work with companies around the world and that's really important for us as part of our marketing strategy is to demonstrate that experience worldwide not just in a Canadian context.

**Tim**

Dana the last thing I want to do before we get on to all these questions is your tips on SEO and what I understand is that you are all about ensuring the basics are handled right before you worry about any fancy stuff. So, what are your sort of top five things that small business owners should do from SEO perspective?



**Dana**

Yeah. One of the basics is title tags and so this is when you Google and the blue text that comes up that you can tap is the title of your web site and you can see it when you go to your website to open a browser it's the name of the tab itself. Title tags are really important and a lot of people will put their business name first on the title tag. You get a rank for your business name and do not worry about that your title tag should encompass what you do. Don't spam it full of keywords but make sure it's got some information in there that's useful for people. Explain what you do. Make it interesting make it funny if you're funny but make sure it's got those keywords in there. And I think that a lot of people have home as their title tag that is useless unless you're selling homes. That would be the only thing that would be okay.

**Tim**

How many characters do you have?

**Dana**

Well it's actually a number of pixels a dozen characters so Moz has a great title tag testing tool. You can type in what you want and it'll tell you whether or not it fits. I would say when you get around the 68-character mark think about if you want to cut back a little bit but definitely try to write the most important stuff at the beginning and I find particularly for local businesses we find it's useful to have the post code and the title tag as well. You can toss that at the end even if it gets truncated and you see little or three dot dot dot on Google. It's fine because Google is still reading it and it would count for a ranking perspective.

**Tim**

So therefore, adding that at the end, so does your title tag need to make sense. Does it need to be like a headline or something?

**Dana**

Yes, it does and if you're running any Google ads, we find taking your best performing headline from google ads and make sure that your title tag can actually provide you a nice boost in number of people click on your result.

**Tim**

Nice. Next basic SEO tip.

**Dana**

Please have content on your website. A lot of people don't like writing and I get that. Yeah writing is hard. I totally understand. I am not a huge fan of writing either but you have to do it and you have to talk about what you do and make sure that you're explaining to people what you do in really plain simple language. That's what Google wants. Try to write it by a grade 10 level there is a good app called Hemingway that will evaluate your writing and see how complicated you are and hire a copy writer and just sit down with them. Honestly our best clients who do end up hiring copy writers we tell them sit down with the copywriter for half an hour and explain to them what you do as if they're buying your service and they will write it down and they will turn it into fantastic copy and you are probably really bad at explaining what you do unless you do it regularly. So, this is also part of practice that will help you win sales. In addition to having better web site content so get that content out there.

**Tim**

There are many web sites like design crowd and 99 Designs that make it easy to find designers. Do you have a reference for finding a copywriter?

**Dana**

I don't. I would say. Shop local. That's always good. And try to find somebody, get samples of their writing. A lot of the writers we work with have written for magazines for example they get how to communicate complex things in a really simple way.

**Tim**

Yeah great point. Next tip?

**Dana**

I find images are also really important. Please don't do stock photography if you can at all avoid it and on SEO perspective. You may think well what does it matter. But again this relates to people seeing you and if you have a local business and that means that you're going to come up in map based searches so somebody googles plumber and you see a map they're going to click on your listing and the photos are really important in that listing so spend the money spend a half day with a professional photographer get some photos taken of you. Do your thing wherever you happen to do it. It shouldn't take more than a half day and really in Canada it costs less than 500 dollars. Australia rates are going to vary based on where you are and how many photographers there are desperate for work in your area but definitely spend that half day and make that happen. Having personalised photos that show you particularly if you're in the kind of business where you're going into someone's home to do the work. It makes a huge difference that they can see who the person is before they pick up the phone and call.

**Tim**

Is that good for Google? Are they able to see images?

**Dana**

Yeah, they like it if you upload those images to Google my business listing. So, it is really important from a local SEO perspective particularly.

**Tim**

What about title tags on images how important are they?

**Dana**

They matter if you're down to, I have optimized absolutely everything and I am out of ideas. So that's the last thing you do. It's not first thing you do.

**Tim**

Okay. Any other tips before we get to the questions?

**Dana**

Yeah. If you have a local business as well. We do a lot of local based search engine optimization and what's working really well right now are Google posts and there's a post that you make directly to Google my business page. They show up on what's called the Knowledge panel which is that big swath of information about your business on the right-hand side when you google your brand name. Make sure to post those least once a week.

They disappear after seven days. We found the clients who do that and literally nothing else are seeing good gains in local SEO right now. Totally worth doing.

**Tim**

When you go and create content for say a LinkedIn article and now, you're saying a Google post and Facebook have I think they're called notes. You know you're sort of giving your content away to a third party. Why aren't you better to just put that on your blog or can you do both?

**Dana**

You can do both and in fact the post can be very short. So usually when you post a blog post make sure to make a Google post about the blog post.

**Tim**

Right so not cut and paste but make a summary of a great blog post that's sitting on your own web site?

**Dana**

Yeah similar to what you would make as a tweet or a LinkedIn post.

**Tim**

You're pretty big on load times too aren't you Dana?

## **Dana**

Yeah load times are always huge and I find honestly for small businesses you'll end up in a situation where you, say you have a WordPress website and you bought a template and those templates are trying to do everything for everyone so they have really poor load times. Try to work with a professional developer if you can. And Google also has a free site speed tool that can show you where the issues are. It is worthwhile to pay developers some of their time to make your website faster and some other very small business clients. We put them on Squarespace their site load fast. You don't have to pay to get WordPress updated all the time you don't have to worry about code or hackers or anything like that. It's pretty inexpensive and the sites great so I'd recommend looking at the Squarespace as well. If you can't be bothered with WordPress or don't have a web developer handy.

## **Tim**

Just in regards to load times, some of the other tips you've talked about and going back to mindset. Is it fair to say that like Google don't own the Internet? Right but they do want the Internet to be an incredibly interesting place, helpful, entertaining whatever interesting means to the person is using that time. So, things like load times when your web site loads slowly. Google go, well that is just reflecting poorly on the Internet so we're going to use the word spank you for making the website less interesting and therefore you're not going to rank well. So is it kind of a good mindset to have. Is that like help make the Internet an interesting place and Google will reward you accordingly?

## **Dana**

Yeah part of it and the other part of it too is really thinking about the number of people who abandon ship on your website before it even loads because it's loading slowly. Anything over two seconds every additional second about 20 percent of people just hit that back button and you'll never see them because they're not on your site long enough to

show up at analytics so you have no idea how many people are abandoning your website because it loads so slowly.

**Tim**

Or you can look at your bounce rate, can't you?

**Dana**

No but if analytics never loads because your site is so slow, you'd never see it.

**Tim**

Yeah okay. Any more tips before we get into the questions?

**Dana**

No, I think that's a good foundation for people.

**Tim**

So, Mel of chocolate beige designs asks, is SEO really worth the effort or would our time and money be better spent investing in social media?

**Dana**

Well only a fraction of people uses social media. So, you really have to think about the amount of investment you have to make in social. If you have a fantastic search engine presence, you're dominating your competitors. Then you have to start investing in social but social isn't where you should start. Particularly because with social you are really at the

mercy of the providers so much more than you are with Google. Google despite all its flaws is pretty transparent about major algorithm changes. Facebook will just take away your organic traffic in a second because they want more money. So really think about where you're spending your dollars and if you really want to build an investment or a platform like Facebook and then people stop using Facebook and people go away. Google really isn't going anywhere anytime soon. I don't think so. Well you know next week I'll be proven wrong. But certainly, you spend that investment into Google and if everything is fantastic and you feel like you're done with Google you've got diminishing returns. It's time for you to turn to another channel. Go into social but I don't think that's where you should start.

**Tim**

It's amazing how many small business owners put so much faith and reliance on social media. I mean I guess because its free and I guess because it's talked about and they're using it personally all the time I think too many of them see it as a silver bullet.

**Dana**

Well they're perceived as free but it's still your time one way or the other. You know your time is money.

**Tim**

Jessica Foley, I don't know what her business is but she says how can we best use blogging for SEO purposes?

**Dana**

Yeah. Communicate your knowledge and tell people what you do. I find the best blog posts are based on conversations that you have with customers. So, for example one of the



questions in here I could write a blog post about this. If I write but it doesn't have to be a written blog post as well. You could also do a video and Moz website company that I mentioned earlier who does a lot of search engine optimization. They have the tool for search engine optimization. They have a great series called Whiteboard Friday. Every Friday they post a video and they have a transcript of the video that ranks very well. So, you don't have to write you can also just talk into the camera for 10 minutes and then get a transcription service to turn that into a blog post for you. And that's been really successful for some of our clients as well.

### **Tim**

Is having a blog and keeping it up to date on your website Dana kind of mission critical in Google's eyes?

### **Dana**

I think it depends. You do want to have your web site updated pretty regularly and if you are going to commit to a blog please update it. There's nothing worse than going on a Web site and seeing your last blog post was 2015. It just shows that you've given up on it and it makes your business look stale. So, you do have to keep it updated but also think about whether or not a blog is the right thing for what you do. So, for example working with a moving company and for them we said you know what people are really excited about a blog about moving resources. That's what they get excited about. So technically they're writing blog post but really, they're actually posted as resources. So, the name itself doesn't matter. The fact that you're providing lots of updated information for people to search and be engaged with you. That's the important thing.

**Tim**

How often should you update your web site and what do we mean by update. What is considered a good update?

**Dana**

Make sure that the information is correct. Start there. Particularly things like holidays. Sometimes I'll find an update on web site in February and it says Christmas deals, like you probably should have change that. Shop now for Christmas 2017 so make sure you've got that information updated pretty regularly. And I would say at least once a year sit down go through all the pages on your website take a day have a beer if you have what needs to be updated on the site and that's a really valuable content audit to be done regularly on your site.

**Tim**

That seems to be a long time between drinks. Excuse the pun.

**Dana**

Well don't just have a beer once a year but make sure you do a thorough overview of your website at least once a year.

**Tim**

What about updating once a week with a new blog post or podcast?

## **Dana**

If you have the time yeah if you have the time to devote to that absolutely. I find that what will happen is you'll get busy and then you'll drop off the wagon as you get busy so make sure you're creating a schedule that's sustainable for you and when you have some downtime write extra stuff so you can publish later. Nobody knows that a blog post you wrote three weeks ago is getting only published today because you had a bunch of the hopper. That's fine.

## **Tim**

Yeah good idea. Emily Keown of a box full of matches asks. How do you ensure your SEO efforts bring quality clients not a quantity of bad clients?

## **Dana**

You've got to make sure your ranking for the right stuff. And that means googling the phrases that you think you should be ranking for and also asking people what would you search for if you were looking for what I do. So, if you're just getting into SEO and you've got a few clients or customers under your belt call them and say if you're going to search me what would you search for and then google those phrases and see if the results that come up are relevant to what you do. If they are, those are the phrases you are targeting for search engine optimization. You can also use a lot of keyword research tools, moz. The company I've mentioned a couple times already has great keyword research tool. And Google itself has some rudimentary keyword research tools as well in their ads interface. It isn't as useful as it used to be it doesn't tell you the volume of the phrases sometimes as well as it used to but it certainly does tell you what kinds of things people Google.

**Tim**

I think there's actually a good question coming up so I won't ask it just yet. You're listening to the award-winning small business big marketing show. Thanks to American Express and we're talking with SEO expert Dana DiTomaso from kickpoint.

**Dana**

It's North. Alberta. It's up there. It's snowing right now in Canada.

**Tim**

You know it's 32 degrees Celsius where I am.

**Dana**

Yeah, I don't need to hear that.

**Tim**

Jason Naylor of We do photography asks. How do we use, a bit of a geeky question this one Dana, how do you use schema in brackets rich markup on our website? And what's the best use of it especially for a photographer. I had to google what this meant is it listicles, is it reviews or is it something else. Now listicle I can confirm is a short form of writing that uses a list as its thematic structure but is fleshed out with sufficient copy to be published as an article. So that's very very geeky Jason. Dana can you answer the question simply?

## **Dana**

Yes, you should be using schema. Everybody should be using schema. The reason why, they're little pieces of code that surround items on your site to explain to Google this is what this is. So, for example an address can use local business markup to show a Google this is the address. This is the city this is the state. This is the postcode. And then Google knows that all these pieces are matching that because they can't really tell a lot of time especially cause people write addresses in really different ways. So, for example in Canada our postal codes are things like T5B1L9 for example and people will put a space between the three and sometimes they won't. And so, Google doesn't really know what to do with it. In Edmonton we have a grid system for our addresses and so people will put dashes into weird spots to separate the numbers it's really hard for Google to understand. So, by using schema you can show Google what the address actually is and they can use that kind of information and because they appreciate the effort that you put in to put in schema, skim Web sites that use schema markup are more likely to show up in search results. Google of course will say it's not a ranking factor but if more sites are showing up that use schema then it's probably a ranking factor. So, I would recommend using it.

## **Tim**

What does the business owner do? That sounds like good advice but I have no idea what to do.

## **Dana**

Yeah. So, if you're using a WordPress website and you're using the Yoast SEO plugin that's Y-O-A-S-T SEO plugin. This will do it for you. So definitely get that installed. If you use like Squarespace you might have to use something else so an important thing to do for your web site is get it registered with Google search console. And that is a diagnostic tool where Google will email you if it finds something wrong with their website. Really important to have that. Once you have your website authorize in Google search console. In there is a

section called website highlighter and you can actually highlight fields on your site and say this is my address for example and that Google will play the schema for you and you don't have to do it yourself.

**Tim**

Wow sort of went cross-eyed then but sort of picking up what you put down.

**Dana**

Excellent. Photographer specifically going back to Jason's question. I would say there is photo markup. I would say definitely make sure to use that and if you have an office use local business markup and then check out a few other competitor websites that are ranking better than you. Google has a schema tester and you can run their websites through that and see if they have markup but if they do make sure you use that as well.

**Tim**

Have to get a list of these links before we finish up, I'll put them on the show notes. Google will appreciate that. Luke Krestensen of icprint says paid so many SEO companies, promise results and deliver nothing.

**Dana**

Worst part of my field.

**Tim**

Look it is a bit of a dirty word. I mean you hear some terrible stories from business owners that have spent money hand over fist and got nothing for it. So, what do you say to them?

## **Dana**

Honestly, I think the problem is the barrier to entry far field is essentially a computer and an internet connection. That's the problem so anybody can say they're an SEO expert and I find the best SEO experts are the ones that don't provide you with guarantees. No SEO expert worth their salt is going to say I can promise your number one ranking on Google. It's not something we say so of course what happens is you want that promise you want that guarantee your money is going to pay off and so you end up giving your money to the Charlatan who says I can promise your number one rankings on Google when they can't and then they got your money and they go off into the night, thanks so much here's another business owner willing to cough up their money so that's part of it. So, if you're a CEO person seems supremely confident that might actually be a warning sign. The best SEO experts understand the limitations and we'll tell you this is not easy. This is a lot of work. It's not like we push a button and things happen. And what I find that people really underestimate is the amount of work that you as the client need to put in because we don't know everything about your business, you're the expert and I have to ask you a lot of questions. We're going to have to ask you to do stuff like get photos taken and a lot of clients say well I'm just giving you money make stuff happen and that's not how this works. So, I think honestly that if you are just tossing money into a marketing box and you think marketing is coming out at the other end it probably isn't.

## **Tim**

I've got a couple more questions around this area of selecting SEO expert. Maree Harris of people empowered asks. What do I look for when choosing a SEO expert?

## **Dana**

References. Absolutely. Talk to people. Some people will say to me, oh well how many clients do you have that still work with you every month. But the thing is with some SEO once we've done some major pieces, we really encourage our clients to do the day to day

maintenance stuff and not have to work with us anymore particularly if they're big enough to have an in-house team. So ideally you know our rate of clients who work with us every single month is zero because we really do want to empower people to do their own SEO over time so that isn't necessarily a good thing to think about. But what you're looking for is transparency and you really want someone who's worked with a company for a while and are still seeing results or someone who's learned something as a result of the experience and check out their rankings too when you talk to them and say, What are the phrases you're trying to rank for Google them see if that's actually coming up and make sure that they've worked with them for longer than a few months because absolutely basic changes can make you look great for the first three to six months and then stuff gets hard. So, make sure they've been working with the company for a while not just a short period of time.

### **Tim**

Kirrilie Smout of developing minds. You might have answered this. How do you find an expert who will work by the hour and be prepared to teach you rather than complex packages which tie you up with commissions and then they own all the adverts etc etc etc?

### **Dana**

I think a lot of this is getting a good reference from somewhere so there is a company called Get Credo and they will refer you to fantastic SEO experts. We're actually not in their directory because we're kind of busy but it is a place, we did used to list ourselves once upon a time. John, a friend of mine John Doretti runs that and everyone who is in that directory so you know you're getting good people and if you have a bad experience you can complain to John, he kicks them out so it's totally worthwhile. And then of course Moz has a recommended list for both general SEO and then Moz local has a separate list for a local SEO expert and we're on both of those lists.



**Tim**

So those two things. So, if I'm the local restaurant I want local SEO expert versus if I'm an e-commerce store selling to the world, I want a non-local SEO expert.

**Dana**

That's right and local is a really specific discipline. There is only. I would say maybe 20 of us who are extremely skilled in this in the world. So, you want to try to get the experts at it.

**Tim**

Wow I did not realize that. It was that specific skill set.

**Dana**

Yeah there was actually a conference Local U. Right now, it's only in the US. The next ones in Santa Monica. If you want to go for a trip in January but I do recommend following a local U people if you want to learn more about local SEO and they tweet out lots of great informative articles.

**Tim**

20 people in the world who are absolutely proficient. So, if I am a restaurant and I can't afford one of those 20 people who are local SEO experts. What I'm going to do?

**Dana**

Learn yourself honestly but frankly for a local SEO lot is people are really affordable. I can certainly refer to a whole bunch of people because the great thing about local SEO was once

the basics are handled. You don't necessarily need to do stuff with a SEO Consultant every month forever because SEO there's a lot of foundational pieces but then the ongoing stuff are things that you can learn how to do and don't take up a whole bunch of your time. So, things like Google post for example that I mentioned that's only 5 minutes a couple times a week. That's something that has a huge impact but is not very time consuming. So definitely talk to some of those experts on that list and see what you can get for a quote the good ones do not charge a lot. They get it done and they're good at what they do.

### **Tim**

Sam Hemphill asks what constitutes duplicate content? Do you want to explain what is duplicate content and why it's a bad thing?

### **Dana**

So, the duplicate content happens if you have a page in a web site that has content and another page or web site that has exactly the same content. Or if you have taken an article and asked for it to be republished elsewhere. So now you have the same content on your website and someone else's website duplicate content used to be a big scare tactic because you think it was duplicated. Google wasn't going to rank it was a huge problem. But what I often find is what ends up happening are things like bad redirects. So, let's say for example your web site is [www.yourcompany.com.au](http://www.yourcompany.com.au) Well what if you have the non-www version so it's just [yourcompany.com.au](http://yourcompany.com.au) If I go to both of those. Do they both give me your homepage. Or does one redirect to the other so does the WWW redirect to the none or vice versa. If it doesn't then you end up in a situation where you have two versions of your website as far as google is concerned all with exactly the same content. That's very bad so that can be a duplicate content problem.

**Tim**

You don't want to do that and going back to Google wanting the Internet to be interesting and not very interesting if there's 20 Web sites with the same content on website.

**Dana**

Well then, they can't decide what to rank I mean Google is smart but it's also kind of dumb. You really do need to take it by hand and say here's the pages, rank these. You don't want to make it complex for them.

**Tim**

Arn Betteridge of signatureclothing.com.au asks, I would love your guest to give a list of the ranking factors they say is important. We've started that do you want to add to what you shared?

**Dana**

I'm actually going to refer to two studies that I've participated in that are actually coming out. One of them is a local ranking factor survey and this is a survey of the 20 or so local experts about what they think is important for a local search and that's coming out very soon it'll be on Moz. And they also do a yearly ranking factor survey of thousands of experts in our field for general SEO so I would say look at both of those because me going through that list would take up a lot of time on the program and so there's a lot of different factors out there.

**Tim**

So look out on that local ranking factor survey on Moz. The other one, is that out yet?

## **Dana**

And that's on Moz as well. Yeah and I can give you both those links for the show notes.

## **Tim**

What are the main ways Google displays search results? This is a question coming from me, I was at a conference about six months ago and the SEO speaker talked a lot about all the different ways Google displays search results featured snippets, product listing results, image carousels, answer boxes. Gosh how do we tackle that Dana. Do you want to go through the major ones and talk about how you can potentially be ranked for those the way Google plays?

## **Dana**

Yeah. So, this is part of what I was talking about when you Google your keywords and see what comes up. Part of what you want to look at are one of those called Serp features and Serp is S-E-R-P that sounds for search engine result page. When you're looking at things like search features you want to think about what kind of features lending some interest to this result. As you said Google wants to keep it interesting. So, if you're Googling things like buy Nike shoes maybe it'll show you some product listing results but maybe it'll show you a map as well. If there's a Nike store near you. Image carousels often come up for things like travel or things to do this weekend. Answer boxes if you google things like how to cook a turkey. Those are really rich single results which can point you to a very specific website. So those are the major features and I find that they really depend on maps. It's also a really important feature and it really does depend on the type of querying. The intent of the query and you could say things like buy Nike shoes and you make it a product listing and you can say buy Nike shoes near me that's gone and now you have a map. So really changing just a couple of words in your search phrase really change the intent and the intent is what determines what type of search results you're going to get.

## **Tim**

We're chatting with SEO aficionado Dana DiTomaso from kickpoint. Dana, Anna Smyth, asks what kind of small business do from SEO standpoint when faced with competition from multibillion-dollar companies with huge SEO budgets?

## **Dana**

Yeah sometimes you have to say you know what you win and then you find another venue to try. You know you don't want to go head on with books right. Amazon's going to win that. But you can specialize in a specific niche or you can look at doing things like I mentioned sponsorships. Spend your money getting your name out in the community doing other stuff other than a search engine optimization because sometimes you can't beat the competition there's too many people it's very crowded. Photographer is another example where it can be extremely crowded very difficult to stand out so you want to specialize in a certain niche or build relationships with people who are going to mention you because in addition to Google people do actually read blog posts and other Web sites and if those blogs post talk about you then they might find your website through that. So really do consider different ways you can get the word out. So, for example our newsletter that we have built we're not necessarily going to rank number for SEO we don't really want to. But we have lots of subscribers to our newsletter every week and eventually some of them come around to us for business.

## **Tim**

I love the fact that a SEO can sort of force a business to niche down because you know if you are a photographer or a designer or a copywriter, I mean they're a dime a dozen right. I mean there is no shortage of really anyone in any category we live in a world of parity so what is going to separate you is when you do niche down takes courage to niched. But clearly, it's going to help your SEO if you're a designer for the accounting industry there's a

niche probably a bit of work there to actually. But yeah, I like that and it makes Google's life easier to help identify what you do and how to rank you right?

**Dana**

Absolutely.

**Tim**

Matthew White of ergoflex asks, forgetting one moment about the specifics of SEO how much money should you really pay an agency or person each month?

**Dana**

I think you need to sit down and figure out what your return on investment needs to be. So how much money can you afford to spend on marketing. A good guideline can be four to 10 percent of your gross revenue. So, can you afford to spend that much to an agency and really think about the kind of results you're getting from that agency. And one thing that the bad agencies are really bad at is proving results. So, make sure you are getting a report that makes sense and I don't want reports are just talking about how much traffic you got because last time I checked traffic does not actually pay the bills. Make sure you're getting a report that shows you the actual business you're getting. We had a horrifying experience with one client working with us now and their previous agency counted every time somebody looked at a page for one of their locations as a conversion. That doesn't mean they call or fill up a form which means they looked at the page and so they looked amazing but they didn't understand that they were getting that much actual cash money. Once we fixed that up their conversion rate dropped by something like 90 percent but now was actually accurate and they could tell what was bringing them business and what wasn't. So, making sure you're getting accurate reporting is such a big deal and I find that agencies are a really terrible reporting unfortunately.

**Tim**

So really to Matthew's question, figure out what the return on investment is going to be and for every dollar you spend with your company you're going to get two back then find lots of dollars to spend with them right?

**Dana**

Yeah absolutely. I mean there's diminishing returns at some point but you do have to invest at the beginning just make sure the return is going to be there and the return isn't going to be there immediately. I find that it takes at least three to six months at a minimum before you start seeing returns from a SEO. So that can be where things like AdWords, because we do a lot of AdWords work as well. AdWords or Google ads is what it's called now can be a really nice stopgap while you're trying to rank better.

**Tim**

Okay Fairina Cheng she's in jewellery. Now she said a long one here, I've written an article that brings organic traffic to my Web site. However, it's on a very generic topic. The difference between 9 carat and 18 carat gold rather than appealing to my specific audience. People who want untraditional custom jewelry. It's one of the top most visited pages on my website. However, people bounce off the page without exploring further once they have the info. I'd like to be able to replicate that but for topic that will actually make them want to explore my site. What's the best way to find topics to cover that will actually lead to people taking valuable action on my website?

**Dana**

I would start talking to your customers and see what kinds of questions they had and what kind of research they did before they chose you. And that is what you should be writing about. And I wouldn't necessarily get rid of that article. I mean you can keep that on there.

You never know. Honestly if someone's going to attract to you when it is relevant to what you do so I wouldn't get rid of it but certainly start talking to your customers and seeing what research they did and ask them even to look at their search history and send you screenshots of the kind of stuff they Googled before they chose you and those are great foundations of what you can write about.

## **Tim**

One of the things that Fairina could do. I'm guessing Dana is that within that article that is getting all the traffic she should be linking to other articles within her website so that you kind of holding people longer. I think a lot of business owners forget that linking between pages your Web site as a way of holding people there.

## **Dana**

All the time. People don't link with their Web site pages enough. There are also two additional things too that I want to address. A lot of people think that the home page is the most visited page on your website. If you are doing a good job in SEO which would actually be one of the lower pages that people visit, they should be starting elsewhere on your site so go to your site with fresh eyes look at that page. Is that the best first experience someone could be having with your site and if it doesn't work on it until it is and then the other half of this is Google Analytics. Lot of people don't understand Google Analytics. There is a metric in their time on page. And people think that for example if I land on this blog post and then I read it and it takes me two minutes and then I leave it will save the time on page was 2 minutes for me. That's not true Google can only record time on page if I visit a second page on your site so people could be spending 10 minutes on that page really absorbing the content. Maybe bookmarking you to come back later but because they didn't visit a second page on your site it doesn't actually record time on page. There ways to fix this using stuff like Google tag manager it's pretty technical but this is something you can talk to a Marketer about to how to help fix that up for you.



**Tim**

How does Google know if I go to a Web site and I go to a second page on that website? Google is timing how long I'm spending. What if I go and get a coffee. In fact, have that Web site open on a tab for the next 24 hours?

**Dana**

Yeah so Google will time out your session after a period of time. There's a default set in Google Analytics. You can always change that. And so, what ends up happening is when you come back again, because you know people leave tabs open all the time. So, every time you visit the tab again it's opening up a new session and so what you might find is that people will visit maybe six or eight times before they convert. And that means that your conversion rate looks quite bad but it isn't sessions that converts users. So even if the same person is coming, I would rather have that person convert 100 percent of the time. I don't care how many times they have to come to my site before they buy my stuff. So really think about your user conversion rate not just your session conversion rate and in Google Analytics it is your session conversion rate they report on.

**Tim**

Julie Ryburn of moneyquest, I think we've answered her question but maybe you've got something to add Dana. She asks how often should content be updated to assist Google rankings and does the quality of images have an impact? I think we have covered that.

**Dana**

Yeah, I think so.

**Tim**

Nicky Grummit of G-Fence asks, I have a web developer on my team. What do I ask them to do and how do I know it's working? She kind of put the cart ahead of the horse there.

**Dana**

Well I honestly, I find this a lot where there's developers but they don't know where to start. Tell them to start googling technical SEO that's the part that they're going to have the most impact on and start looking at their site and seeing what they can do to improve their technical SEO. And this is where you can look at things like Site speed. This is where your developer can really shine and make your site load incredibly fast so those are the things they should focus on.

**Tim**

Yeah good point. Good on Nikki for having someone on a team like that. I am amazed at how many, again business owners and it depends on the size of the business and cash flow and all that, but not having an SEO expert or web developer or a copywriter. Most businesses have got a designer on their team right whether it be full time or at arm's length where they can call upon. But having these other people's kind of mission critical if you want to really nail your marketing.

**Dana**

Yeah, I mean you think about hiring a bookkeeper but you don't think about hiring a copywriter, just as important.

## **Tim**

Yes, and much more interesting. Sean Gannon of Lumosia asks. Is there any go to Web sites to get easy backlinks for our content to start to get backlink traction? So, Dana can you explain the importance of a backlink. What it is and then answer Sean's question.

## **Dana**

So, going back to the beginning when I talked about experience authority and trust. The more sites link to you the more authority that you have. But it isn't necessarily quantity over quality thing. I can have 100 links from really terrible Web sites that are also linked to sites for Viagra, casino and sports book betting and those links don't count for anything and they can have 5 links for really high-quality media sources and those are links that are going to matter. So, the sad thing is that the easy links are the bad links so don't bother with easy links. What you can do though and I think a lot of people don't do this is go through your Rolodex, showing my age by saying Rolodex, go to your LinkedIn and look at your business contacts can they link to you? Is there something that you can write about as relevant to what they do and then they can link to your Web site. I think a lot of people under use the business contacts that they have and particularly again if you're in a local area or you're in a niche business why would you not ask somebody who is in an industry related to yours to link to your website. And that's a really easy link. Your already friends with them who wouldn't want to link to their friend?

## **Tim**

I probably get 10 emails a day from people all over the world wanting to provide a guest post on SmallBusinessBigMarketing.com And sometimes I take them up. I used not to because the quality of the content was pretty poor. But now it's particularly good. And that's really what's happening. Correct me if I'm wrong but that is probably someone at an SEO company. I did my web site as having what I call some good Google Guice. If they can provide an article on it with a link back to their client's website then it's a win, right?

**Dana**

Yeah so link building campaign that we did for example for a property management company that owns a bunch of apartment buildings across western Canada. We reach out to moving companies and said, can we give you an article on things you should know when moving into an apartment building and he said yeah great. Got it listed. I think we had an 80 percent success rate on that was exceptionally high for a link building campaign and it did extremely well off of their website.

**Tim**

Please tell me about the Google Guice but there are Web sites that, you'll have to help me with the terminology. But there are Web sites that Google deem as incredibly valuable. And then there's website like a university's Web site or a news page, media Web site. And then there's the Web site advertising Viagra. How does a website get Google Guice?

**Dana**

I hate the phrase google guice but its authority is what I try to say. But really those places are stingy with giving out links and that's what makes them important. So, if they deem your site worthy of giving you a link it means that they find you valuable if you give willing to everybody. Google doesn't care if you're picky about who you give links to and Google cares. And I think that really helps with authority. So, for example getting a link from the New York Times best link you can possibly get. They almost never give out those links but when they do it means that they are willing to donate some other authority to you.

**Tim**

For example, the show notes for an episode of my podcast generally include a lot of links. Any resources that we've mentioned, my guest's website, a listener who sent in a question I'll link back to them. I have a segment on my show called The Monster prize draw in which

I then one of the prizes is a link on my website back to. So, you know a typical show notes page for this podcast is pretty link heavy. A Google looking at that and going yuck.

**Dana**

No. Because people are linking to you and your site has the authority. So really, you're granting these other places authority because those links are topical, you have a topic for the podcast and all the links you're providing are related to that topic. It isn't just a free for all it's clearly on a theme. So, it's definitely valuable.

**Tim**

Okay is a link on social media platform consider the back link?

**Dana**

No, it isn't because.

**Tim**

Because it's behind a password?

**Dana**

Well no because anyone can get a link. Again, it's that value of the link, anyone can sign up for a Facebook page.

**Tim**

Very true. Dan French of French Enviro asks, how do we use SEO and key words to best test ideas and offers?

**Dana**

I actually prefer using something like Google ads for testing ideas and offers because you can get data back a lot more quickly and you can get more concrete data. SEO can be kind of fluffy where you don't necessarily know where your ranking or what people were thinking or what they were Googling but when it comes to ads, you'll know exactly what people were Googling and what they clicked on and you know how long they spent on your site and that sort of thing. So definitely put your testing into ads don't necessarily put in SEO but then take your best performing work from ads and invest that into SEO

**Tim**

Thanks to American Express and kickpoints Dana DiTomaso your SEO will never look so good. How are you going Dana? We are about 50 minutes in. I'm excited. Are you okay?

**Dana**

Yeah absolutely.

**Tim**

I think we're going well. By the way those two and a half pages left of questions. Laurel Guymer of LaPerouse guesthouse in Lorne and I have stayed there it's absolutely beautiful, she asks. How do we small accommodation business compete with Airbnb and booking.com. Well we've kind of touched on that, is your answer going to be Dana niching down?

## **Dana**

Well or you should list yourself in those places. Maybe not Airbnb but booking.com and wotif.com Which I know may not seem quite right cause I'm not Australian but I am familiar with that website. Yeah you can get you can get yourself listed on these sites and I know you have to pay them a commission when you are listed on there but certainly that does provide value and that those sites are ranking really well so why not just get yourself listed on those sites. But then if you decide that is not something you want to pursue then think about things like again getting out there and that local community so if your local travel Association has a website. Often people will find out when they're searching for, I am travelling to Melbourne so I am going to look up some travel Melbourne and I'm going to look at all the different places that they recommend and can you contribute an article. Can you make sure you're listed in their directory for example? What can you do to make yourself stand out? So, Edmonton's tourism here has Explora Edmonton and they'll often feature businesses on their home page and talk about what they do and that really gives them a boost for tourist traffic. So, see if you can build those kinds of relationships.

## **Tim**

Another idea for Laurel's guest house la Perouse down in a little seaside village outside of Melbourne called Lorne. It's a very popular place. People would be Googling things about Lorne all the time, what to do and where to eat in Lorne, where's the best coffee in Lorne. How much you want to do this. Would it be a good idea for her to create a blog that has an what I call editorial mission that is all about Lorne?

## **Dana**

Yeah, I think so. I think that would be valuable. I mean that's where you Google it and see if you can't beat em join em. So if you find that you're Googling this and there's lots of other people who've done this already then don't try to compete with them. See if you can get

listed on there but see if you can contribute guest posts for example as well. But if no one has done this. Yes, go ahead and do that for sure.

**Tim**

Adam Neilands of kelapa organics. Have we answered this, he says with the goal posts constantly changing with Google's algorithm. Where do we start out of all the tasks, we can complete for SEO which one is the most important/impactful for a stronger ranking on Google?

**Dana**

Go back to those foundational items that we talked about at the beginning and make sure you're covering your basics and I find honestly that the thing that I'm doing the most right now is site speed. So, make sure your site is loading quickly and it really does make a difference.

**Tim**

In other foundational one and I was amazed, I went up to a place called Fraser Island a few days ago and I was looking for all different things to do up there. The places that I found their web sites, none of them were mobile friendly.

**Dana**

Yeah do that please.



**Tim**

That matters big time. I mean do you have any stats around that Dana in terms of the size of screen vs. the searches done on what size screen. I imagine most searches are done on a smartphone screen these days.

**Dana**

Yeah absolutely we have many clients where more than half of their traffic is mobile and so this is the other problem is that as marketers and probably you, you sit at a computer all day you think of yourself as a computer. Many of your customers may only experience your website on a smartphone so take a look at your stats. If more than half of your customers are using smartphones to engage with you. Use your website more than half the time on a smartphone. If it irritates you it's irritating your visitors.

**Tim**

Back to Adam's question is he also better going to speak to an SEO company saying listen can you do the foundational work? Listen to this podcast that will explain that. And then what's the other thing, is that the ongoing work that needs to be constantly attended to?

**Dana**

Yeah, I mean it depends again on the competition and so do you need to focus on blogging as content particularly weak in your industry or do you need more authority, you don't have a lot of links leading to you and so you have to build content so people will link to you or maybe you need more reviews for your business. Look at the areas where you're weak versus your competitors and I find that that's the most valuable thing for us to think about how can I catch up with these people.

**Tim**

Cameron Harris of tank on cleaning asks should the SEO on each page of my website be the same or should it be different?

**Dana**

Yeah, each page should focus on different topics I say, try to only push five to seven different key phrase ideas on a page and keep each page thematically similar. You're not going to talk about 18 different topics, so a mistake I find a lot of people make half the services page list everything that they do but they don't have separate pages talking about that particular service in depth so have a mean services page so that people will look at it but then also have a page for each of the types of services that you do.

**Tim**

That's such a great tip and a rookie error by so many businesses. I mean when you list so many things on one-page Google like, what's that page about. You know I see that a lot with FAQ pages which I don't really like those pages. You've got a FAQ and then there's like 20 questions and you Google one question and then you get this little funky dropdown that answers it. I imagine outside of it looking funky it's pretty useless whereas one question one good answer per page would be a better outcome right.

**Dana**

Well what you should do with your FAQ is each one of those you can answer it quickly in a couple of lines and then you have an expanded answer and say a blog post and then you link over to that.

**Tim**

Robert Wheeler of rapid recovery room he says, I'm paranoid about voice search. This is interesting like Siri, Google assistant and Alexa apparently everyone is voice searching on their phones these days and I'm not sure about the best way to get and keep myself in that game.

**Dana**

I think voice search is wildly overstated. I think a bunch of technical nerds got really excited about it but in reality, most of us are just yelling at our phones saying Alexa look this up and then nothing happens right or that it starts to tell you a joke and you're like no I wanted you to turn on the lights. So, I really do think The Voice Search is not as big as people think it is in a realistically voice searchers are just searchers. So, make sure you're ranking well for the types of things that people would search for if they were saying it to their phone instead of typing it in. But searchers themselves are also getting longer and longer. People are typing in sentences they're asking questions whether it's through voice or whether it's through actually typing it into a computer or smartphone. So just make sure you're showing up for those types of longer question phrases.

**Tim**

So, your point there is, first of all right here in our coming towards the end of 2018 voice search is still a novelty. It's going to at some point reach a critical mass. Where we were all using it however, I think your big point there is it's just a search. So, what we're walking into Alexa is potentially what we're typing into google anyway right?

**Dana**

Yeah. I mean a fun thing to look for actually is when you go into Google and you start typing and it's got that auto suggest that comes up whereas thinking about where else you could

go with the thing that you're typing in. So, type in Google and then a space and then type in Google again and then you'll see all the stuff that people say when they're talking to their phone in my Google system just turned on and they were saying much way. That's people who are talking to their phones and didn't realize that Google turned on when they said Okay Google and then all of a sudden now, they're out and it turned on again go away. I'm going to throw it in the next room. But this is what's happening is that people are saying it now realizing what they said and they're saying it again. And so those are actually some really funny phrases you can use and things like Google ads because people are clearly struggling with their phones.

### **Tim**

I love it. That's a nice little hack. Scott Pendlebury of the renovator store asks, I often wonder why most e-commerce companies write their content and then hire an SEO specialist he puts in quotes to rewrite given SEO is really about having relevant amazing and engaging content for the user. My question is why isn't it better to make SEO the core strategy of an e-commerce company's content.

### **Dana**

That is a great question. I totally agree with you and I do not know why they would hire a SEO specialist to rewrite it. And honestly if there's someone calling themselves SEO specialists is rewriting your content for SEO just you know what the keywords are. If I gave a list of key words to the content people and say look these are the things that people are Googling. Go forth and write the amazing content you do but please keep these things in mind you shouldn't need to go back and do it again make it more boring for SEO is so 2005. You do not need to do that anymore. Write great content and make sure you're thinking about keywords. That's what's important.

**Tim**

Yeah, I think it all comes down to writing great content. I mean putting Google out of your mind. Put SEO technicalities out of your mind and like all great marketing focus on your ideal customer.

**Dana**

People too will get really tunnel vision and say all we have to think about SEO but SEO is the actual human being who is going to search something and then click on your site and if that is boring then nobody is going to want to buy your stuff. So make sure it's interesting.

**Tim**

Now I like this question Shane Scrutton of Eaglemont tennis club. I think he's a coach down there. Asked how effective is Google my business for a SEO does it increase your organic ranking. You've touched on that. But let's just go back because Google my business I'm sure has had about 40 names since its inception.

**Dana**

You are correct. Yes.

**Tim**

So where are we at. What is it and what have we got to do as a small business owner to optimize our Google my business listing?

**Dana**

Yeah. So, when you do a search in maps or if a map-based search comes up and there's a listing for your business that is your Google my business listing. So, you have to have one. If you have a physical location or if you service the sewer service area business like a plumber or people maybe you work out of a van. Make sure that you have that service area business claimed on google my business really key. Now the way in which map-based results rank is totally differently than how organic results rank. So, when I talk about map base results, I mean you're on maps.google.com.au And you're doing a search and it's all maps or if you're on Google and you've done a search for a plumber and you see that little map box that comes up we called it three packs there are three listings in the box. That's local. Everything else is organic and those are two different algorithms that rank things two different ways.

**Tim**

So just with map one. So, when it's a map and it's got three listings underneath. How do I make sure that my business is one of them?

**Dana**

So that's local ranking factor study I talked about. But the major pieces are making sure you see what you do on your website. Lots of great reviews, long reviews, reviews that have the key words that say, you know John came out and fix my sink and it was great, but make sure there are long reviews that really makes a difference. Lots of reviews on different websites. Other than Google so for example Yelp, TripAdvisor, Facebook reviews these all matter because what you're trying to show Google is that you're a real business and real businesses have reviews in lots of different places fake businesses don't. So really being out there in the community. All those things matter for your Google my business rankings.

**Tim**

If there are 10 plumbers who have completed their Google my business to a fairly good degree, they got testimonials, they got addresses, they got opening hours. They've got pictures, they've got a lot of stuff. What's google going to do then. Default alphabetical order?

**Dana**

They will look at things like Google posts. What I mentioned before so make sure you're doing google posts and they will look at things like how often the people leave reviews that actually makes a huge difference. They'll also consider how many people click on your listing and proximity to the physical location is a big factor for ranking. So, two people could be just a few blocks away google exactly the same thing and make different results.

**Tim**

Sandy Taylor of Sandy Taylor digital marketing as an SEO copywriter, who works with small businesses, who are new to marketing my number one question would be whether Google will develop google my business into a workable substitute for a Web site for sole traders and optimistic hobbyists who aren't ready for a full web site yet?

**Dana**

Well they actually offer that already. They do have Google Web sites which are bundled into Google my business just to make it extra confusing and you can get a free Web site from Google. It's actually aimed at mostly developing countries such as India, Brazil those types of countries for those websites. But if you're just getting started. Go ahead and make one of those. We see lots of people have Facebook pages listed on their website on the Google my business page. That's also completely fine to do that.

**Tim**

Robert Cagalj of leasecomm asks if I pay for Google AdWords would that increase my Google Guice after my ad has expired?

**Dana**

No there is no linkage between Google organic results and Google ads 100 percent completely separate. I know somebody said they were link to one time they are not.

**Tim**

Are you sure? That business is spending a lot of money with us on AdWords I think will improve their organic ranking.

**Dana**

No. They would never. Completely separate. They don't even talk to each other.

**Tim**

Do they play hockey together during lunch?

**Dana**

I cannot guarantee that but I can say that the Google SEO team is very ethical. They would not want that to happen.



**Tim**

Have you been there?

**Dana**

I have not but several people I know have. I have met a lot of the Google Webmaster team and talked to them and they are very ethical people.

**Tim**

How would you rate your geekiness?

**Dana**

Oh, probably in eleven. I started learning dos when I was 8. I spent a summer teaching myself basic code how to program video games and basic when I was 9.

**Tim**

What's your favorite gadget right now?

**Dana**

Oh man I would say well I just got a new Google pixel phone and I love it but I also recently picked up a Microsoft Surface laptop and I finally went to surface and it is fantastic. So, if you are a Windows user or even some of the Apple people in the office are a little bit jealous of the surface. I was not expecting it. Yeah, they are impressed by it so give it a whirl. I'm really enjoying it as trouble a laptop.

**Tim**

So, Enamul Hasan asks how much of an impact does content marketing play when doing local SEO for small businesses. Is it really worthwhile pitching content marketing to local businesses like tradies, small retail shops or service professionals in a local area to help them rank? Well we touched on that. What have you got to add?

**Dana**

Yeah, I would say it depends on the competition. How many other people are trying to rank you know how sophisticated the competition is. Content may not be the first thing that you want to do but if you got the basics down, you're ready to go to the next level. Absolutely. Content will be the thing that gets you there.

**Tim**

Jim asks can a business perform well from an SEO perspective purely from organic strategies?

**Dana**

Well that would be what you would do for SEO so you're absolutely.

**Tim**

Just for those who don't understand what is organic listing?

**Dana**

An organic listing as a non-paid listing on Google so you see the ads up at the top sometimes the bottom. Those are the paid pieces. Organic is anything that isn't a map.

**Tim**

Okay got it. Joern Stienz asks. I run a small design training agency and my biggest problem is to find the time and energy to create content e.g. write blog articles hence I ordered a few thousand-word articles from a text broker portal but I have not improved my website's visibility. Any ideas on how to make this work?

**Dana**

Yeah don't do that. Well it's just crap. Honestly, it's just somebody doesn't know you are just churning out crap and it doesn't necessarily bring any uniqueness to you. It doesn't show your value as a business it's just that it's not the only thing people are going to find interesting right. I find a lot of these topics are super general and it's not necessarily anything people were Googling and they also sell it to a bunch of other businesses we are back to duplicate content issue. It isn't for you. So, if you really are struggling with the time and energy to create content, writing is not the only way to create content. As I said sit down with a webcam and record yourself talking about something that you did that week for 10 minutes make a transcript ta-da you've created content.

**Tim**

I like that. There're many ways of creating content. I mean you say like writing is just one and we talk a lot about blogging and therefore writing but do Google have a view on words vs. audio vs. video Google on YouTube after all.

**Dana**

Yeah. I mean they can't really understand words from ranking perspective. Words in a video for ranking prospective yet. So that's why you really do need to provide close captioning or a transcript. There also site map specific to videos. Video hosting service like Wistia for example. They provide a SEO friendly video embedding on your website so I'd recommend looking into that. If you do lots of video but really to get started with make the video toss it up on YouTube and get it on your site. Order a transcript to make sure that's on the page.

**Tim**

Don't talk to me about podcasting within that conversation.

**Dana**

Go on. You know you should have transcripts too.

**Tim**

I have. I have a transcript for this episode. Absolutely.

**Dana**

And that's what you need.

**Tim**

So podcasting is an SEO ranking factor?

**Dana**

Yeah and there's also schema for podcasting.

**Tim**

I might need a good SEO company. Do you know any?

**Dana**

No not really. They're all terrible.

**Tim**

I'll do it for you. You're listening to the award-winning small business big marketing show thanks to American Express and we're talking with SEO expert Dana Ditomaso from kickpoint.

**Dana**

I'm far too Canadian to promote myself that's the problem.

**Tim**

Australian problem as well. Steve Witt from the UK his business is not just travel asks, if I have 400 local agents all across the UK. How does each agent get found at a local level?

**Dana**

Yeah so if each agent has an office that people can actually go to and not that isn't their house you can google my business pages for each of those agents and you should definitely set those up so that will give them a spot on the map and then you should implement all the local SEO tactics that we talked about everything that you see from that local ranking factor survey for each of those individual agents. Obviously for 400 that's a lot of work at your end. So, this is really agents can come in and help you with some of that as well such as Google posts.

**Tim**

I know Steve and those agents, a lot of them do work from home what's the problem with working from home?

**Dana**

Google doesn't want to have your home business on there. They want you have the list if you want to have the actual address listed which does rank you better on the map than just having a service area business. Then Google will want you to have a place that people can actually go to. An actual physical office. Rent a coworking space it's good to leave the house now and again.

**Tim**

Charlie Morton. How do I choose key words and what constitutes a long tail keyword?

**Dana**

Yeah so long tail keywords are key words that are long. The idea of that is that there's lots of basic things that people will search for. So, for example say books. Books as a head key

word very basic crime book. Also, pretty basic crime books with a female protagonist. That's a long tail keyword. So, the thing with long tail keywords is you can't really predict what they are because there is millions of different ways people could take that in. So, you have to think about the general topics and for Google that's what they're thinking about. What does the general topic. Just to give you a crime novel set in Alaska with the female protagonist okay so they've got a kind of a sense and I'll come back and say here's a mystery series you might like for example based on the topics. So really, they're thinking about mystery crime Alaska female and that's the entities that they're pulling out of that particular search. So, when you think you about long tail key words don't worry about optimizing for long tail keywords but do think about the types of topics that people might add on to their keywords in order to be more specific. Particularly if the first results they get are kind of generic and not necessarily specialized to them. They might start adding on more and more words to get down to what they actually want. So really be specific on the type of content you provide and when you're researching keywords, some keyword research tools from Moz, SEM rush. They can tell you what people are Googling and you can work those keywords into your content.

## **Tim**

Is it fair to say Dana that the longer the tail on the keyword the closer someone is to buying from you?

## **Dana**

I wouldn't necessarily say that's 100 percent accurate but I would say that somebody is much more specific about what they want when they get down to that end of things. So, you can definitely ensure that people are finding you at least at that point but it doesn't mean they want to buy. It may be that they realize they have been searching for the wrong thing. I find that happens a lot to where they're not necessarily getting the right results and then they get down like, oh it's actually called this, for example so that can be another value that

you provide as if there's a lot of terms that get confused in your industry, that's where you can clarify some of that.

**Tim**

Okay I got it. All right Leanne Parish asks. What's the best way to get a Web site to rank for different geotags for example you might have a business based in Tamworth but they might want to rank in Armadale and Coffs Harbour. How do you get them to rank for areas surrounding Tamworth without adding separate pages? We often get clients who want only five-page web sites so getting them to rank for a far-reaching service area is proving difficult. Please help.

**Dana**

You know you can't. They're going to have to accept that they have to have more pages. Honestly, I find that you have to be able to explain to Google that you do service these areas. It can be something as simple as a testimonials page. We went and serviced this person in Armadale, we did this work for them and they loved us. For example, you can have that in reviews it might help a little bit but is even better if you can have a case study on it on website. Talking about that makes a huge difference. So, you're going to have to add more pages. You can google my business indicate your service areas and that helps a little bit but it's better to have that content on your site.

**Tim**

What about these websites you come across where they have key words stuffed down the bottom often in the footer?



**Dana**

That's old school local SEO.

**Tim**

Well we love a bit of old school just not when it comes to SEO. It's Matt from star gazing in the UK asks regarding the layout of a website nowadays. Should you have all your products on the main page so the U.R.L. is as short as possible. Or should you categorize them and have them two or three pages down the three?

**Dana**

It's better to categorise them if it involves adding in keywords for sure. I mean really Google too. They're almost getting rid of URL's a little bit in search results you might see that instead of listing the actual URL with the slashes and the dashes they're actually just writing the name of what the page is as you go down that's also using a schema breadcrumb markup schema. So really think about what's the best way to logically organize your products and if that involves a lot of folders so be it. Just make sure it's easier for people to get there with things like dropdown menus which some people think is passé. People like drop down menu as you want to surprise people on a website. Right you want to make it easy for them to get to where they want to go so provide that information for them.

**Tim**

I've got to say Dana looking at the kickpoint.ca web site. It is beautiful. It is so easy to get around. It's not shockers with content. You put a lot of work into that haven't you?

**Dana**

Our team has worked super hard and then I will pass that along to our design team and our developers there. They're fantastic.

**Tim**

It's just a great website. You want to see a website in action and we talked at the top of this interview about getting your website right before you start sending traffic to it. That would be a good place to go.

**Dana**

I'll tell you a little story about our website actually. The version we had before that were getting a lot of really mediocre, not great leads and so we really went back and thought about what we wanted to have on our website and what would make the difference for the kind of business that we wanted to attract and this was a huge project this took I would say almost a year from start to finish and when it was launched we saw an immediate improvement in the quality of leads that we got just overnight improvement and we have landed clients that would not have considered us before based on the quality website we had before. So, it's really made a massive improvement in our business. It took a lot of work but the it was totally worth it.

**Tim**

Adam Lawrence from Imperium consulting asks if you would recommend a small business owner to invest time into the learning of and money into the purchase of, one all-encompassing SEO management solution which would it be and why?

**Dana**

I would say you know it's interesting. I've recommended three so there's Moz ahrefs and SEMRush they feel like the big three in this industry. SEMRush does a lot of things, a lot so if you're doing any paid and you want a SEMRush to keep an eye on that as well that's good. I would say that Moz their tool has not been super great in the past couple of years but they've recently reinvested a lot of time and money into it and right now they're link building tools and key research tools I think are the best out there. So Moz would also be another really strong contender to check out.

**Tim**

All listed in the show notes and this is a self-indulgent question for me Dana. What would your SEO strategy to maximize the number of small business owners in Australia to hear this episode?

**Dana**

Well I would start reaching out to different Australian business associations and seeing if they were to mention your podcast in their newsletters which you think well that's not good for SEO but people are going to see that and then are going to link to your podcast from their websites likely these business associations are also linked to your podcasts on their Web sites really are providing a great service and why not try to get the word out there about it. They don't ask for the link you just tell people that you have this thing and then they can link or not link if they choose.

**Tim**

I call that a partnership strategy and it's worked beautifully for me. I mean this business show on Virgin Australia Airlines both domestically and internationally. That was through a phone call. It's on the small business mentoring Institute of Australia. It's on the small

business association of Australia. I tried at least once a month to kind of develop a new partnership I'm talking to entrepreneur organisation at the moment because what it gives you is amplification. You know it's one all of a sudden you know one to many.

**Dana**

Yep absolutely and that's where you need to be and what I would say to you is for all these people who have sent in questions you know if they want to talk about how they implemented the answer to the question and how I've answered their question and then they can write up what they did and the impact that they had then link to you that would be really valuable.

**Tim**

Do you mean a blog post?

**Dana**

A blog post on their own website. So, I listen to the podcast and here's a link. Said this and thanks so much to Tim for creating this great program and link to you.

**Tim**

I mean I'd love everyone to do that but if let's choose one Matt from star gazing UK I'm guessing its business that takes people out at night to look at the stars. Now an article, a blog post on his blog talking about what you just said is of no interest to anyone wanting to stargaze

**Dana**

That would be where it can be a published page so there is really something you promote but if you want people to provide value in terms of links you can think about it in terms of you got a link from another number of different organisations. They aren't necessarily the highest value links out there but it does sound like you've gotten some really high value links. Then if you start thinking about what can I do next, I have all these links or you can start talking to organizations.

**Tim**

Got it Dana. That's the end of the list and the questions. Now I'm going to break the interview rule book here by saying is there anything we've missed. Surely, we have it covered. Anything else you like to talk about?

**Dana**

We have covered so much stuff. I just really want to reiterate make sure you get results from SEO company that you hire. That's the biggest thing. And don't let there be any secrets, surprises, mysteries you should own your own Google Analytics account. You should own your own Google ads account don't let agency set that up for you and then never give you administrative access for that. Especially Google my business account we see that happen all the time and it's such a pain because we lose all that data and we have to start over again from scratch so please make sure you control log ins.

**Tim**

And just on Google Analytics I think might have been the first time we mentioned it. That is a valuable resource to at least check in once a month and then get a sense of how much traffic you're getting, what your bounce rates are and what are maybe the top five things that you would look at Google Analytics accounts?

**Dana**

You want to make sure you've got your goals set up so take the time to do that properly. My favorite report is under acquisition where you're looking at all the different channels that are bringing your traffic and if you ever got a break you can see what channels you bring you the best traffic in terms of convergence and then you want to look at content so you're looking at all the pages on your side and seeing how people are engaging with it. But don't put too much energy into bounce rate. Because again let's say you writing lots of blog posts and you're promoting them and then people assume that one blog post and then leaving well looks like a bounce but maybe it's a repeat visitor. So, it's okay that they bounced. You don't put too much stock in a bounce rate.

**Tim**

Love it. Diana you've been incredibly generous in your time so thank you.

**Dana**

Thank you for having me.

**Tim**

I will absolutely be calling on you as we head into 2020. But I think one of the big learnings is clearly like anything get the fundamentals right. Don't geek out on all the other stuff.

**Dana**

I find people go to a conference and they hear this one weird trick to increase your SEO. And they going to do that when we're attracting it doesn't work because everything else is broken. So really make sure you've got the basics down.

**Tim**

I love it. How do people sign up for you Dana?

**Dana**

They go to [kickpoint.ca](http://kickpoint.ca) You can go to [/newsletter](http://kickpoint.ca/newsletter) to go directly there. It's in the footer of every page of our site.

**Tim**

Clever. Dana DiTomaso thank you.