myweeklymarketing.

Janice Hostager: 0:00
When I bring up search engine optimization or SEO to clients, I tend to see their eyes kind of glaze over. I don't think it's because it's complicated. I think it's because it seems kind of nebulous to people, in part because Google's always updating their algorithm and telling us to try something new, but also in part because it's something that's not visible, so it's kind of easy to ignore. I'm actually guilty of that myself sometimes. I have to be honest when I take on a new client.

Janice Hostager: 0:29
I'd say that 95% of the websites that I have a look at have poor to non-existent SEO. Often when we're designing a website, we think about the colors and the fonts and how nice it looks, and for sure you want to focus on the content. But many times and I'm not trying to throw anyone under the bus here, the website designers or developers don't know SEO especially well and you aren't going to even be aware of it as a customer until you start having issues or unless you assess your site.

So I wanted to bring on an SEO expert. Doug Bradley is the CEO of Everest Legal Marketing, but before you tune out thinking that just because he works in the legal realm, it doesn't apply to you, think about this the legal industry is an extremely competitive market. So if Doug can have success with a competitive industry like lawyers, think about what he can teach us today.

Here's my conversation with Doug.

Janice Hostager: Hey, Doug, thanks so much for joining me today.

Doug Bradley: 1:34
Thank you for having me on. I'm excited to be here.

Janice Hostager: 1:36
So, before we jump into a bunch of SEO questions, tell me a little bit about what your story is and how you arrived at this place, and maybe what's been different than you expected about your journey.

Doug Bradley: 1:49
Yeah, I actually started in advertising in the Yellow Pages believe it or not when people invested heavily in the Yellow Pages. And after that I was recruited to a legal directory

and that's really where I got my first taste of marketing for law firms and I learned a bit about how law firms tick, what makes their phone ring, the types of cases they're looking for and what they're not looking for, and I really liked that job. And then after a few years, I thought I was going to be there forever, and then the company went and laid off all of the salespeople and so after that I decided that you know, I had enough experience with working with client campaigns that I could do some of my own. So I took a few clients to work with them on their website and their search engine optimization, and that was really the start of Everest Legal Marketing was starting with those handful of clients and then growing my client base over time to the point where I could leave my job at that point.

Janice Hostager: 2:57
So law firms are pretty competitive right.

Doug Bradley: 3:01
Ridiculously.

Janice Hostager: 3:02
Yeah. So I'm like how is it that you are able to really create an SEO plan that stands out of an SEO strategy that really gets attention, I guess?

Doug Bradley: 3:15
Yeah, well, you know, focusing on one specific industry for a search engine optimization agency is a good tactic for a couple of reasons, and one of the first reasons is that usually our clients don't need to educate us on what their business looks like.

Doug Bradley: 3:34
We know what a bankruptcy attorney looks like in terms of their marketing and how that might be different from a personal injury lawyer and a criminal defense attorney and where to market. So in that regard, you know the competitive nature of law firms. Really, it's a little different for every law firm and you have to have kind of a good structure for each niche or practice area. But what the other real big benefit of focusing on law or focusing on one industry is. We know what websites we can work with and we've partnered with many websites throughout the years to help allow us to either write content for a website or work with them in some sort of a collaboration to help promote our clients. And we've also created a handful of assets on our own that are open to the public for law firms to take advantage of but we also use as a marketing mechanism for our clients.

Janice Hostager: 4:40
Gotcha. So you have an established relationship with getting some backlinks for them, which is beneficial. Is what you're saying?

Doug Bradley: 4:48
Yeah, backlinks, but also visibility, content distribution, establishing an authoritative voice, absolutely.

Janice Hostager: 4:56
Okay, okay. So you don't really dig so much into the unique value proposition, or do you do some of that as well when you're determining different types of keywords and all that?

Doug Bradley: 5:10
Yeah, absolutely Well, at the end of the day, seo is really simple for law firms. They usually want to be found for their city name and their practice area search. So they want to be found for, you know, Dallas criminal defense lawyer, and so the mechanics of getting that to happen. I wouldn't say it's completely divorced from the marketing mechanism and the marketing language, but from a technical aspect it is. Because the same process that gets that person high visibility in Dallas for that type of a search phrase is going to have the same impact for any practice across the US, as long as it's executed properly, and then the marketing kind of wraps around that strategy.

Janice Hostager: 5:53
Gotcha. So what are some really important basics that every small business should know about SEO?

Doug Bradley: 6:01
Yeah, so regardless of if you're a law firm or a real estate agent or interior designer or photographer, it doesn't matter what kind of business you own. There's really a handful of things you really need to pay attention to for search engine optimization, and so many of these. You can also find some decent information on YouTube, Although I caution anybody. You know, do your research before you actually make any changes. You want to have a well-constructed website, whether that's on WordPress or Wix or Squarespace. It just needs to be well-constructed. It needs to have URLs that make sense for each service that you offer.

Doug Bradley: 6:41

The second thing is that you need to have really good content on each page. If you're a photographer and you do wedding photography, you should have a whole page of content and maybe even an informational video about wedding photography in the city or the geographic area that you're in. And if you do child photography, you should have a whole page about child photography and business portraits. So the content plus the website construction really matter.

And then the third thing, which is kind of the most nebulous, most business owners are kind of like I don't know what this means, but everybody's telling me I need to do SEO is authority building to your website, and so it's the process of gaining links from other reputable websites and other relevant websites that link to you in a meaningful way. That helps position you as an authority for a specific topic.

Janice Hostager: 7:34
Gotcha, Gotcha. So that and that works absolutely in competitive fields such as photography and all the other competitive fields that are out there right.

Doug Bradley: 7:43
Absolutely. This is industry agnostic. Search engine optimization. The way it started, and even today still, is heavily reliant on references from third-party trusted websites. So getting a link if you're a photographer, getting a link from, let's say, a wedding venue, would be great for you Because it's a very relevant local link.

Janice Hostager: 8:07
Gotcha Love it. So when you are working with new clients, do you see some mistakes that people typically make and, if so, you know? Is there a way that you can avoid those mistakes and kind of start out fresh? Or how do you approach your clients?

Doug Bradley: 8:28
So a couple of things that I often see and I'll allow your listeners to research. This is something called content cannibalism. When a business owner is doing search engine optimization on their own and they say well, I do HVAC in Orange County, california, so I'm going to do lots of content on HVAC service and maintenance in Orange County and I'm just going to flood my website with all of this HVAC Orange County content and every page is titled or a variation of HVAC service in Orange County and eventually what happens is you might have dozens or maybe in some instances I've seen well over 100 pages of content that kind of targets the same search phrase, and when you do that, you have all of these pages that are targeting this search phrase and Google doesn't know what to put on Google. So, as a consequence, almost all of those searches are

never going to appear for a search and Google will generally just choose one, and so all of that effort is wasted. So what I like to tell people is one page, one topic, so if you're an HVAC service person in Orange County. You have one page for air conditioning maintenance and service. You have one page for heating service. You know you have those individual practice pages targeting one topic. I see that constantly with law firms and other websites.

Janice Hostager: 10:07
Yeah, I see that with clients too, especially sometimes I will see the same meta description, the same keywords, used over and over again on all the pages. So I'm glad that you brought that up, because I didn't realize. I knew that it was not a good thing, but I didn't realize that Google actually counted that against you.

Doug Bradley: 10:26
Yeah, and it's not so much counting it against you, but you're those pages are going to get filtered out and they're never going to be found and there's not going to be any traffic on them, and, at the end of the day, you just don't want to do anything that confuses Google, and so when we take on a new client.

We look at all of their pages to make sure that it's again one page, one topic and we don't allow the content to veer off track.

Janice Hostager: 10:49
Love it. So you talked a little bit about local SEO. I think it's something that I see with my clients, that it just takes a lot of time and energy to do sometimes. So how important is that to Google, that you have these important backlinks, and are local backlinks more important for a local business, for example, or should they be trying to get national press coverage or whatever Is there a difference between those two.

Doug Bradley: 11:23
That's a great question and I would say, typically speaking, for a local business and law firms or local businesses and you know flower shops or local business you really only have a few miles radius, maybe up to 510, maybe 15 miles radius of your location that you're probably going to draw clients in from, if they're not a referral. But yeah, I would say for local optimization, getting links from local organizations, local businesses, local events back to your website, it does have localization factoring when Google's looking at, wow, all of these local places must be linking to this place in Seattle or this business in Seattle. They must be really relevant for Seattle, For local businesses. I would even say that that might be at least as important as higher authority websites linking to you.

Janice Hostager: 12:20
Interesting. That's good to know. Now, if a company feels like they're working nationally, like they don't have, they work remotely, they don't have any geographic boundaries to kind of hold them in a certain city, do you still recommend that they create pages for local business? For example, they might have a page on their site that's for Austin or for Dallas, for example.

Doug Bradley: 12:49
Yeah, every business, and every even larger regional businesses. Maybe it's a plumbing contractor and you know that plumbing contractor handles all of South Florida, but that plumbing contractor most likely has maybe 5 or 10 or maybe 15 or 20 cities that they want to do more business in and that they want to get business from, and so usually they'll set up localized landing pages that are highly relevant to the geography that they're targeting and is completely unique from any other page on the website, and that works well for many service industries to get into the organic section, or what would be called the local organic section of Google. But unfortunately, in that method you're never going to appear in the map section because you don't have a physical location there.

Janice Hostager: 13:43
Right, right. How relevant is that for Google?

Doug Bradley: 13:47
Well, I mean, if a map location is key, if you want good visibility in a location, but the local landing pages, the local service pages, drive tons of traffic. I have many clients who don't have a physical location in the city, that's, you know, 10 miles away, but they're number one or number two when you do a search and it gets tons of traffic and a lot of visibility because it's just right next door to them. And if you optimize the page well enough and the website well enough, it's going to get traction.

Janice Hostager: 14:22
So like I am in a suburb of Austin texas, I'm in Leander so would it be beneficial if I had a local business? Let's say I'm a photographer and I have all over my site, I have that I'm in the Austin area. Would it be beneficial to even go a little more micro than that, say I'm in Leander or you know, kind of go to the suburbs, or is that not relevant? What have you noticed? Or haven't you really seen that play out like a metro area?

Doug Bradley: 14:51

I think if you're in a metro like Austin, you'll want to focus primarily you knowing your foundational content in Austin. But you know, just looking at a map here on Google, you might also find that you get a ton of business from Georgetown or Leander. And if you do, and if there's a particular, maybe a wedding venue in one of those cities and you think the user is going to be looking for a local photographer in Georgetown or Leander or Marble Falls, you might want to set up a landing page specifically that targets that for photography in Leander or photography in Georgetown. But it wouldn't really be a part of the homepage, nor your contact page. You'd maybe put it up in your website and in a page that says like here are some of the service areas that we work in.

Janice Hostager: 15:46
Gotcha. Okay, that makes sense. So how is it that now Google comes up with updates all the time, right? Yeah, it's been fast and curious the last year so the last one I think, really focused I mean not the last one, the last one I really paid attention to really focused on creating content that is really for the customer first, for the visitor first. So how is it that a business owner can create SEO-friendly content that also engages their audience at the same time?

Doug Bradley: 16:23
Yeah, so I think you know what Google's looking for is providing helpful information to users, and they also want to make sure that when a user arrives at a website, that the user is kind of sticky on the website and so a lot of that user behavior, which is something we recently learned from a little bit of an algorithm leak in the last month user behavior plays a lot more into how well you rank, and it makes sense if somebody stays on your website a little bit longer, if they're watching a video that's embedded on your website, if they're clicking to your client reviews and they're clicking to your past work, you know those types of things are signals to Google that it's a good website to send people to. So what I would say is on any of your pages, make sure that you provide helpful information, make sure that you give examples of your work and also give information about what it is that you do that's relevant for that one page.

Janice Hostager: 17:28
Love it, so how important is mobile optimization for SEO? Like what steps should people take? Because I know that loading speed is important. Correct how fast your phone loads your website. So, do you take your clients down a special sort of path to get that optimized and do you include all the content that you include in your desktop site.

Doug Bradley: 17:58

And yeah, I mean typically, if someone's building on a modern content management system like WordPress or Wix or Squarespace or Weebly or any of the other types of builders out there, typically it's going to be built with a mobile environment built in. And so in that regard, you really don't have to do a whole lot, in my opinion. Technical, that makes it mobile ready because the site's going to be naturally responsive. There's no content management system that I know, that it only designs a desktop version of a website any longer. It's just so ingrained because Google, years ago, said that they're going to index the mobile version of your website first, mobile, first indexing.

Doug Bradley: 18:50
So, and in terms of the load speed, I'll say something maybe that's a little controversial here. You don't need to be a hundred percent on load speed, you need to be acceptably fast on load speed. I have lots of clients who think that they need to be a hundred in green lights across the board on Google's page speed test. You need to be acceptably fast. You can't drag down and take 10 seconds to load your pages. But if it takes a couple of seconds to load your pages because you have photos and videos and graphs and things of that sort on your page, it's going to take that amount of time to load the page, but yes, in general you want to make your website as nimble as possible.

Janice Hostager: 19:34
Right, right. So, regardless, if you've got some huge images, even on your desktop site, you're going to want to pare those down as much as possible, just so they load faster, even on the desktop. That's what you're saying.

Doug Bradley: 19:46
Yeah, you don't. I mean, unless maybe you are a photographer and you want the full resolution on there, then I would also be seeking out some sort of software that helps you condense the photo for display and then allows the user on it to click it and open it in full resolution, because you certainly don't want a five megabyte photo on a page. That's not going to allow the page to load over data.

Janice Hostager: 20:10
Right, what about video? Like? Sometimes clients will have a background video and I know that in the past, web developers have said no, no, don't do it, don't do it, you know. And the designers are like, oh no, it'll look great. And now I've seen more and more businesses do that, and so I think something changed in there. Do you find that people that have that background video, like in their hero image I'm talking about above the fold, like on the homepage is that something that still ranks okay or is that detrimental to their SEO?

Doug Bradley: 20:43
Yeah, no, I think if it's executed properly. You know, typically the clients that we have that have background video. It's usually reduced in resolution from like 1080p or 4K down to kind of standard resolution and there's usually a grayscale applied over it to make the foreground pop out, so that way you're not really looking at the final resolution of the video anyway, and it's typically maybe a 15 to 30 second loop and so it's not 20 minutes of a long interview that you did or something of that sort. It's just a quick snippet of information that helps, you know, give animation and interest, visual interest, to the site, and I think I haven't seen anything nowadays where, again, if it's executed properly, that it impacts visibility as long as it's loading and it's not hindering the load speed to the point where it bogs the site down right.

Janice Hostager: 21:41
Gotcha? Okay, well, that's good to know. That opens up some more creative options for people, right? Yeah, so in this day and age, ai is coming a long way. Do you have clients that use AI to write copy for the website? I know I have an opinion about it. I'm just curious about what you think and what Google thinks about AI written copy.

Doug Bradley: 22:05
Yeah, I think I'm still going to lean on our writers for content, and mostly because my clientele is in a category called YMYL website your money or your life website, meaning that our clients in the legal space, much like doctors or CPAs their content has to be really well written in order to essentially be found credible and that you have the right experience to publish this content. And at the moment, I just don't trust personally AI or ChatGPT to create content that would be acceptable to use in our client's voice. That being said, I do think that ChatGPT is a great tool for creating an outline for a page. It may also be a great tool for providing some information about why a particular thing happens on a regular basis to homeowners in Virginia, you know there might be something there and you know it can give you some of those good snippets of information. But I'm still a little conservative on just letting AI write all of the content for a website, because it still has to be checked, it still has to be improved upon, it still has to be edited and at that point you might as well just have a professional writer write the content.

Janice Hostager: 23:35
Yeah, that is true. And also, from a branding standpoint, you really even law firms, I mean, they need a, they need a brand profile, they need a personality to step out and kind of set them apart from everybody else, right? So, if you've got AI writing

everything, and it's true that you can kind of program your ai to mimic your brand a little bit, but, um, you know, there's, I think and maybe this isn't so much for legal sites, but just having those stories embedded in it or just some personalization really goes a long way I think.

Doug Bradley: 24:12
Yeah, Ai can't artificially create experience, at least truthful experience, I mean. It can make it up, yes, but it can't talk about a case that it had four years ago that was impactful in some way.

Janice Hostager: 24:27
Right, the other thing that we're seeing more and more of and I use it probably every day which is Siri, you know, voice search. So how can we make sure that our websites are set up for voice search?

Doug Bradley: 24:42
Yeah, so I mean specifically, and we haven't seen as much transition to voice search in the legal space, because most times when someone's going to find a service professional whether it be a lawyer, a doctor, a dentist or something of that sort they usually want to sit down and do a bit of research, and so it doesn't really lend itself well too much to the voice search environment. But I would also go back and lean back on if you want more, I guess, featuring in voice search, you have to have great content that answers very specific types of questions and you also have to be considered an authority in that space. So, for instance, if I'm doing legal marketing and I set up a page on my website that talks about marketing for plumbers, it's probably not going to do very well in Google nor in voice search, because I'm not an authority in plumbing marketing, because my website and all of my content is around legal marketing and law firm SEO. I might get into some voice search, into some AI search.

Janice Hostager: 25:49
Yeah, so FAQs are still a good thing to have on your site, right, because Google often pulls that up, but I don't think they're. Are they doing that as much anymore? I think I heard a rumor that was disappearing. So if you type a question into Google, it used to pull up sites that had the FAQs on it. Are they still doing that or is that kind of disappearing?

Doug Bradley: 26:09
It's a mixed bag of frustrating forum search results by Quora and Reddit and sites that have good information. There's a lot of discussion and controversy in the SEO industry

about how much Google has given visibility to forums, and oftentimes, when you dig down into these forums, the pages, they don't really answer the question, and you know there are questions that are answered by anonymous people, and so I think there is still a good space for high quality answers to questions from authoritative and credible people.

Janice Hostager: 26:54
Right, right. I think they have some work to do on that too.

Doug Bradley: 26:57
They have a ton of work to do on that. It's just a mess sometimes.

Janice Hostager: 27:01
Yeah, yeah, I've noticed that too, although I will say I think that Reddit is kind of an undervalued site for marketing for a lot of different reasons. Maybe not that, but there's a lot of ways to connect with people and to just get some good information about what people are asking and what people are thinking about.

Doug Bradley: 27:21
Yeah, yeah, but it's like anything, especially when it comes to the world of SEO when we get this bright, shiny new toy, we tend to ruin it pretty quickly, and that's what we're seeing happen with Quora and Reddit specifically is that the SEO people have caught on early on and they're just creating threads and they're even buying aged Reddit accounts so that they can go in and post things and appear as though they've been a Redditor for the last 10 years. So to me, it's still like you said it's going to require a lot more work.

Janice Hostager: 27:54
Yeah, yeah. So if I let's just say that I have a website that I think is optimized for SEO, because my developer, my designer, designed it and I assume they know what they're doing I only bring this scenario up because I have seen this over and over and over again that people will have a website they think, oh, it's good to go. You know, I just had it done, it's brand new, it looks great, but they don't necessarily know what's behind the scenes, right? So are there some tools that you recommend that people can plug in their URL, that so they could see what's going on? And or is there some other ways in which they can kind of assess the SEO status or condition of their site?

Doug Bradley: 28:44
Yeah. So on my website, Everestlegalmarketing.com, we do have an audit tool. If you have a local business that's verified on Google, you can just type in your business name

as it appears on Google and we'll actually give you a pretty detailed analysis of your website and some things to work on. In terms of tools, I would say there's a pretty good one that we use heavily here called SEO Ranking. It's a very inexpensive tool and I believe they even have a free trial that you can plug your website into. It can give you optimization tips. It can give you a list of phrases that you should maybe market to and create content around. So that's a great tool that I use all the time. And then the other tools that we use, at least in the SEO world, tend to be either cost prohibitive or really technical. The big one in our world is Ahrefs, and that's a really technical tool that gives you a great report card on a website, but you really have to know how to read it and interpret the information.

Janice Hostager: 29:50
Yeah, I think Ubersuggest.com also does a pretty good job of breaking it down so that people that are not living in the SEO world or very technical can go ahead and say "Oh I see that this is a problem".

Doug Bradley: 30:05
Yeah, that tool is owned by Neil Patel, who's a very popular marketer. And yeah, we actually have an account with Ubersuggest as well. And yeah, we actually have an account with Ubersuggest as well. We try to subscribe and look at everything a little bit to see if it has value for our agency.

Janice Hostager: 30:22
Sure, yeah, but like you said, I mean some of those are so expensive to use. Also, moz.com, they have a toolbar that's really handy too to just kind of check your page rank and your domain authority. Is that valuable? Do you think that people should pay attention to domain authority?

Doug Bradley: 30:49
I think that if anybody approaches a website owner or a business owner and says, buy a backlink on my website because we have a domain authority of 80 and we get, you know, 10,000 visitors a month to our website, that's a very dicey game to play because domain authority can be manipulated. It could look like your domain authority is very high but you may not be found for search phrases that are very relevant to the business owner and it can look great on a tool like Ahrefs or SEO Ranking, but it may not be very helpful at all and sometimes it may cost $50 to $200 to get a link insertion or an article posted on this place. That really will provide you no value whatsoever.

Janice Hostager: 31:44

So Google does not use your domain authority as a ranking factor.

Doug Bradley: 31:51
Google technically never has. That's a tool created by Ahrefs and Moz and they use an algorithm on a logarithmic scale to kind of figure out what they think Google's looking for. And it's a great guide and there is value to knowing how authoritative a website is. But at the end of the day, I wouldn't be making my decision to try and get a link from a website solely based on domain authority. I'd be looking at relevancy. Is it a highly relevant website? If I'm a plumber or if I'm a florist, does this website, is it mostly about my industry? Does it appear well for searches? If I look at their last blog entry and I search the title of the blog, do they come up within the first few pages of Google? Because if they do, it's probably relevant, it's probably authoritative and it may be a good place to get a link from. But again, I wouldn't solely base it off of domain authority or domain ranking.

Janice Hostager: 32:51
Good to know. So, Doug, how can people find out more about you?

Doug Bradley: 32:55
Everestlegalmarketing.com, baby, that's it.

Janice Hostager: 32:58
All right.

Doug Bradley: 32:58
And if you want to join, you know I'm pretty active on Twitter. I don't do a whole lot of social media, but I usually like to try and post things on Twitter that are kind of new and trending on Google, maybe things that you should look at if you're a website owner.

Janice Hostager: 33:15
That sounds great. We'll put all the links to all of these in the show notes for today. Thank you so much, Doug. I sure learned a lot, and I appreciate having you on the show today.

So what did you think? Did you learn a few things from Doug? That'll help your SEO too?

For more information about anything we talked about in this episode, visit myweeklymarketing.com/63.

That's all for this week. See you next time. Bye for now.