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Janice Hostager: 0:04

I'm Janice Hostager. After three decades in the marketing business and many years of being an entrepreneur, I've learned a thing or two about marketing. Join me as we talk about marketing, small business, and life in between. Welcome to My Weekly Marketing. Hey, hey, welcome to My Weekly Marketing. So unless you've been living under a rock, you know that AI is coming in fast and furious. And whether you know it or not, it is impacting your business. And right now, customers, yours and mine, are turning less often to Google and other search engines, and more often to AI. In fact, I just did it today. So since AI is changing search, after we all dutifully made sure our websites were search engine optimized, right? What does that mean for your website and getting traffic to it? Honestly, most small business owners are still trying to keep up with traditional SEO, and now it feels like AI just flipped a script. The good news? Today's guest is here to break it down and give you some steps that you can take so you don't get left behind. I'm talking with Kevin Vaughan, founder of KTV Digital, and he has more than 30 years of marketing experience. When he realized that nearly 80% of buyers are now using AI tools to do their research and that most businesses don't even show up in those results, he knew something had to change. You're gonna love this conversation because Kevin explains this complicated topic and tells us what to do next. And he's gonna share a free tool that he's created so you can find out how your website stacks up. So grab your coffee and let's dive in. Okay, well, welcome, Kevin. Thanks for being here today.

Kevin Vaughan: 1:55

Thanks, Janice. I'm happy to be here. Thanks for the invite.

Janice Hostager: 1:59

Okay, so let's jump right in. Let's start in some plain English. What is AI doing now to change how search has done?

Kevin Vaughan: 2:07

So that's a very broad question. There's a lot to unpack there. There's what we have to consider is over the past 20 plus years, we've been used to dealing with Google or other search engines like Google, where you'll type in a question, you get a wall of links. And the game was to climb as high up on that link order because 80% of the you know traffic and conversions came from the top five links. So that was the game. So AI has kind of leveled that playing field a little bit because, yeah, and again, AI is really not new at this point because it was November in 2022 when ChatGPT was first introduced to the public. And uh, you know, it's just been a rocket ship since then. Uh, and when ChatGPT

first came out, it was a very constrained data set. So if you remember some of the early searches you were doing there, you know, asking questions, you would only know data up until like, I think it was April 2021. All of that has opened up, right? So now all of these engines, ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude, whatever, all have access to the internet. So they are scraping the same information the way that uh uh search engines do. The difference is they're not giving you a list of links and you have to crawl through. It's actually going through and scraping and consolidating, parsing the data, and giving you a very uh uh concise answer. And the beauty of it now where it's evolved is that when you get that answer, you're getting to either, yeah, it depends on the platform you're using, but it could have some internal links, or if you use perplexity, it has all the source cards up top. Um, so that's changed the journey because people aren't going to Google first. This is what the this is the influential thing with AI. People are going to AI first to ask questions, do some research, because they can have a conversation. You can start with a question, then you can ask a follow-up question, you can whittle it down. You can't do that with a search engine. Um, so search, traditional search as we know it, is still very much vital, still very much in play. It's just not the first touch point anymore. It's further down the line. So where people start looking for products, services, solutions to their problem, they're going to the answer engines first and then working their way down to Google to verify. And we can spend more time on that if you want, but I don't want to just take off on a tangent here.

Janice Hostager: 4:52

No, no, that's that's a great way of putting it because I think you're absolutely right. It always starts for the customer, right? It's like, what are they doing now that we have to pay attention to? And actually, it's not even called SEO anymore, right? So well, the SEO is the old way of doing it. What is it called now?

Kevin Vaughan: 5:12

There are so many different acronyms out there, and you'll it's alphabet soup. All right, you're gonna get lost in it. Don't overthink this. First off, you're gonna hear a lot of things. If you're trying to keep your finger in the pulse, you're gonna hear a lot of "SEO is dead." And I think that's the wrong way to look at it because it's not a polarizing thing. It's not this is SEO and this is now AEO or GEO, and you know, those acronyms are for Generative Engine Optimization or Answer Engine Optimization, and wait a week, it'll be back and that's just the way it goes. Um, so really this new AI approach is really an extension of SEO. So SEO hasn't died, it's just transformed, it's just different now. And again, part of that is because what we think of as traditional SEO or landing on Google is a little further down the experience from, you know, and it's it's funny because I talk with other, you know, business owners and and not necessarily other marketers, but other

people that are just, you know how it is, you get really close to your business, really get close to your product. And sometimes it's hard to zoom out and get that that bigger perspective. But that's what we all need to do. We all need to take a step back and just go, hold on, let's see the big picture here. And when I have these conversations with folks, and I say the journey's changed, people are going to AI first, and they're like, Well, that's what I do. Well, if you're doing that, why do you think your customers wouldn't be doing that as well? Because that's that I mean that's just the reality of it. People are doing that. But to get back to your question, so it's really kind of an SEO 2.0 now, instead of just SEO's gone away. Um, and you just have these other AI elements in there as well. But one of the critical things to keep in mind is that there's no longer like it's not a linear process, it's very scattered because there's so many touch points that could be affected in the buyer's journey through this process. You know, they can engage with you and your brand, you know, through search, what we're talking about today, you know, email marketing, social media marketing, networking events, if you're running TV ads, because believe it or not, there's a whole different conversation to be had about how TV ads are running now. Because with all of the smart TVs and things like that, these TV companies know what the watching habits are of a lot of households. And so if you're an advertiser now, you can hone in a local commercial into a five zip code area and target the demographic in the household you want to target. So yeah, it's a crazy, there's a lot of moving parts to all this stuff, but it's all but it's all integrated and it's all related.

Janice Hostager: 8:12

So the potential is enormous in terms of marketing and all of this.

Kevin Vaughan: 8:16

Yes.

Janice Hostager: 8:16

Yeah, it is a lot. I mean, marketing right now is already a lot. I mean, that's what keeps me in business is that people come to me, it's like, "I am so overwhelmed. I can't, I don't know what to do first," kind of thing. So sticking just with search right now because I think it's enough. I think it's enough. In fact, I was with a client talking to a client this morning who is just trying to search optimize certain pages on their site. Yeah, so what okay, where do we start with all of this? So what's the first step to make sure a website has a chance of showing up in AI results?

Kevin Vaughan: 9:33

Well, I yeah, you know, when I'm talking to a new client, you know, what I want to do is take a snapshot of where they are. I mean, and there's all kinds of analytics tools that

we can use to figure out, you know, where they are. Do they exist in a traditional search? Are they showing up on Google and not showing up on AI? I mean, there's some tactical things you can do, but but you know, basically it comes down to there's some uh some restructuring that you can do if you have existing data, right? And you know, a vehicle for a lot of us marketers is been blogs for a long time. You know, let's write some articles, you know, blogs or articles or features. You know, blog for some folks is a dirty word, but it's it's all the same thing. You're just publishing a piece of content about your business or the solution that you saw to get it in front of your customer. But it can be optimized if it's on your primary domain. And that's another conversation. Don't put it in subdomain, put it on your primary domain. So you get all the traffic from that. Um, and then they're already in your your uh your ecosystem, you know, uh, to interact with your brand. But if if you have a lot of blog content, then probably just need to go through and restructure that and make sure that it's AI friendly. So you want to have um, number one, you want to have just good scalable structure to your pages. So you want all of your headings, uh, you want to break it down into a scalable format, so a lot of lists, a lot of bullet points, things like that that people can easily go through and digest. Because if people can easily go through and digest that, then that's how the robots are looking at it as well. Right. So their AI, um, the way it puts together data, it does it in chunks. And if you start searching this, you're gonna hear like chunkify and all these, you know, different terms, because that's how it's just getting it in small like word groups, these chunks, and putting that information together rather than looking at like a large body of text. So that's why lists and things like that become very useful for you to be cited and referred through those AI engines because it's easy to organize and parse that data. And then when some when somebody asks that question, there's your response. So the other thing is you have to you have to reframe and maybe restructure some of your data or create you know new content um where it answers the questions that people would ask. And that includes not always the good stuff. People want to know when people are searching for a product or service, they want to know, okay, what fixes my problem? How much is it going to cost? How long is it going to take? What are the potential downsides? And so many companies hide from that stuff. They only want to show the victories, they all only want to show the win. But if you really want to showcase yourself as being trustworthy and an authority online, you've got to cover all those bases. And I'll give you a quick antidote like a real-world scenario. So uh I run another company as well, besides KTV Digital. It's uh family business has been part of for a long time called uh TAVCO. We're a technology reseller, we we we support and service the architectural engineering construction space. And we have this new product that we brought on from HT. We were one of the early access partners for this. It just takes uh a sheets of construction plans and converts them into a CAD file that they can drop into their software and start working with. Because prior to that, they didn't have software that did

this. And um they would have to draw by hand, so it would take them two to four hours to do it. Now we can do it in a column. But as wonderful as this software is, there's a few things it doesn't do well, right? So it doesn't do like 3D objects very well. So if you have a 3D object drawn on a page, it just doesn't know what to do with it. Um, also, it doesn't do handwritten handwritten notes very well. It can't read handwritten, it's awesome at text, but not good at handwriting. So I would want to be honest with somebody if they were looking at buying the solution and letting them know that this is not a good fit if that is the stuff that you need to get converted. Uh and then so what I did is I actually wrote an article on that. I'm like HP AI vectorized, this is what it's not good at because it's honest, it doesn't do these things well. And if somebody is looking for that online, they're gonna land on that, and that's probably gonna end up as it you're gonna hear this term a lot, you know, zero click searches. And that's what everybody's freaking out about because back in the Google days, right? It's you wanted to get those clicks to your website, get people to your website and try to get them to hang around. And now these AI summaries are coming around. Uh, a lot of folks are getting answers and then going, okay, I'm cool, and they're moving on.

Janice Hostager: 14:49

And walk away.

Kevin Vaughan: 14:50

Frankly, it's it's not a big deal. Um, it's really not as much to get worked up about, you know, in my opinion, than some people are making it out to be. And one of the interesting pieces of uh of data that I've seen recently, I mean, within the past two weeks, is when you look at dwell time, when you look at people that land on a web page and how at dwell time, how long do they stay on that page? How long do they look? Well, dwell times across the board have kind of increased 37%. And the thought behind this is because people are doing the research and the vetting on AI and zero-click things, the by the time they're landing on a website because they've gone that far down the funnel to take action, they're much better qualified and they're much more intent-driven to convert than somebody who's just landing on your page windowshop. So it's it's just reframing the strategy and the mindset of it, you know, being up front, being honest. If you uh subscribe to any of the methodology of Marcus Sheridan, um, which, you know, in the marketing community, people know who he is. But I think he's on point. He goes, you know, say what others won't say, show what other people won't show. And I think just by doing that and and doing the mechanics of it correctly really puts you in a good position to be cited and and referenced uh through the AI engines as well as

supplement and optimize your traditional SEO. Again, it's a spectrum. They all work together.

Janice Hostager: 16:35

Right, right. Yeah, I can see where this kind of like what I work with is something called the Trail to the Sale. So it if people will start at the awareness stage and you it's really based on the customer journey, right? So depending on where they how they find out about you, and then they go to the next step and the next step and so on. So what you're talking about with AI though is let let's say like your example, you have some information on your site that the AI engine pulls into an answer. First of all, how do you know that your site was used for that? And second of all, how do how does that benefit your business? Because they're not gonna probably click from there unless you they ask for a citation. So sometimes I will do that when I'm working with ChatGPT just to make sure it's valid information. I'll ask for a citation. But unless you do that, you're not necessarily gonna know where that information came from, right? Because it's generative.

Kevin Vaughan: 17:31

Well, and I'll use Perplexity as an example. It's giving you a list of sources that it's generating that answer from. So you do get you do get a link. Um, it it doesn't serve the same purpose as like a traditional plank because a backlink is like, you know, somebody is linking to your content and gives you that authority. And backlinks, I mean, all of that stuff is still important. All of that stuff doesn't go away. It's not a shift into this, it's just adding this new perspective of uh this element of it. But I I look at it again to use the analogy of zooming out. If you're trying to build brand, you want to be as many places as you can be where people will see you. You want to be in front of eyeballs, right? So having your traditional resources in place and getting that traffic is wonderful. How awesome is it to be there? Plus, if somebody searched on an AI to also see your brand. Now, we don't have control of the citations. All we can do is to optimize our framework and our content, the best way using the best practices to be found and to be cited on those platforms. But the best you can do is stay in touch with it. I've developed a tool called the Search Score, which you can input some information about your company. It's very minimal, it's the name of your company and a URL. And it'll give you a snapshot of how you're performing on AI. And the way that I've built that tool is I'm using API access to ChatGPT, Google Gemini, and Perplexity. So I have those three channels that it's going out and using the API call to bring that information in to see what those platforms have to say about you.

Janice Hostager: 19:25

Okay. So is there benefit to be well, I I would say that it sounds like there is a if you're a thought leader, if you're truly a thought leader and you have unique information out there and your site has authority, this is going to benefit you. Is that right?

Kevin Vaughan: 19:42

Yeah, absolutely. And you bring up a very good point, kind of going back to the blog thing, right? I think where a lot of folks have gotten excited about this AI stuff, especially on the marketing side, because they're like, great, I can just create and spend up a whole bunch of stuff easily, but there's a lot of diminishing returns with that because again, it's just if you think of it like a vacuum cleaner, it's just going out across the internet and it's grabbing all this information and it's distilling it into an answer and giving it to you when you ask it the question. So if you're like, hey, I sell dog food, right? So write me an article about you know the top 10 things to know about dog food. Well, it's gonna go out to uh the internet and it's gonna pull all this data and it's gonna come back with a really nice article. And you're gonna read that and go, that's pretty cool, you know? And I a little wordsmithing and it's ready to go. The problem is that kind of falls flat because you're not adding anything new to what is out there, it is recycling old content. And this is where there is just trash and trash and trash that's getting published and promoted online, and it doesn't add anything new, it's just spinning it into a new way to say it. So that's where if you really want to make an impact with the stuff you put together, and you can use the AI to get you started. There's nothing wrong with that. But what you have to do is you have to sprinkle that with your own expertise and success stories, customer case studies, testimonials. You have to add personalization about you and your brand and your knowledge and your experience has to be included in the article because that is what makes it unique. And that is what is going to give you a leg up on everybody else that's just doing the rinse and repeat routine out there.

Janice Hostager: 21:44

Right, right.

Kevin Vaughan: 21:46

And the thing is, it's not done much more work, right? So you just kind of get a starting point, you add your own spin to it, inject it with your personalization that speaks about you and your business, and you got a winner.

Janice Hostager: 22:01

Right. Right. Yeah. And that's a good thing because I think for so long, people were just sort of putting content out to put content out. And I think in this situation, you're right. If

you turn to ChatGPT to write your blog post, you're just rehashing old stuff out there, and it's not going to benefit you, even for SEO.

Kevin Vaughan: 22:20

Well, I mean, you go back to that that strategy 10 years ago. It was all about keyword stuff. Everything was a keyword, right? It's like what's our keyword? And then what's the primary keyword? And then what are alternate versions of that? And then so, okay, I'm going to write an article. It's going to be focused around this keyword, and I'm going to sprinkle in all these alternate ways to say it. Make sure it's in the title, make sure it's in the body, make sure it's in the metadata again, checkboxes, just make sure it's all good to go. That just doesn't work anymore. It has to, it's what it's what's behind the message counts more now. It's more intent-driven. It's more on the semantics of the message that you're conveying. Now you still start with a keyword because I mean, that's the topic, right? So this is the topic of what we're going to talk about. Here's my personal experiences with it. Here's, you know, what you know happened. Here's how one of my customers had great success with it. So anything that you can call out to personalize that to make it absolutely yours and unique, different from everybody else, um, it is what's gonna uh allow you to be easily uh cited and referred for a particular search. And long tail, you know, type keywords uh perform better. So in summary, it's it's really a quality over quantity um equation these days.

Janice Hostager: 23:48

Okay, okay. So keywords are not dead.

Kevin Vaughan: 23:52

No, they're not dead. I mean they they're so relevant, it's just you're you're not gonna uh hang your hat on the keyword and call it good.

Janice Hostager: 23:59

Right.

Kevin Vaughan: 24:00

You gotta add you gotta add a lot more.

Janice Hostager: 24:02

Right.

Kevin Vaughan: 24:03

But it's yeah, it's a starting place for sure.

Janice Hostager: 24:05

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Which you shouldn't, no. Anyway, I don't think, with SEO. You should never just like "whatever".

Kevin Vaughan: 24:10

Right.

Janice Hostager: 24:12

How do you know if AI is picking up your content?

Kevin Vaughan: 24:18

I mean, a lot of it is just testing, uh testing searches yourself. But you have to be careful though, because all of these engines have a bit of personalization to them and they start to kind of learn you and then start giving you answers that you want to see. So, like as an example, Perplexity, I think you can do it in ChatGPT too, but I know Perplexity is an incognito mode. So you can go down and you can toggle into incognito mode and it takes away all the personal, it's like doing Google in incognito. So it takes away all the personalization. So that's gonna give you just more of a baseline of what the performance is. But if you're constantly putting in information about you and your company and your URL, there's gonna be a personal bias to give you that information. So you just have to be careful with that. And then you can use some other tools like our Search Score tool that we've put together, and that's free to use. Neil Patel has one on his Uber suggest site, Mark Sheridan now has one. You're gonna see more of these tools come to fruition. Some paid, some, you know, premium or something like that. But uh that's what we got. I mean, it's kind of the wall west, to be honest with you. Yeah.

Janice Hostager: 25:34

Right. Okay. So let me go back to the question I was gonna ask. So, other than like Q&A's, succinct lists, what other kind of content out there or should we put out there that AI is gonna find favorable?

Kevin Vaughan: 25:48

Anything with authority that's that's showcasing you as being an authoritative voice on uh that particular topic, you know, doing you know deep dives on the uh on the topic itself and being very comprehensive. And then again, showing the good, the bad, the ugly. You know, I mean, obviously, you want to frame that to be in a positive light, or you're selling the wrong product. You need to just be honest and transparent with people. Um, again, that's you have to think in terms of what are people looking for? And if they are able to go online beyond just a Google search and type in a question, have a

conversation that follow-up questions, they're gonna ask, you know, what what is the solution? How much does it cost? How long does it take to implement? How complex is it? Can I get help? Um, you know, what is a service after the sale? You know, what are the negative things I need to be concerned about? All of that stuff. And it's gonna change for every business in every topic that that you want to promote. And but you as the business leader know the ins and outs of your product and or service that you're gonna, these are the conversations you're having with people anyway. It's just kind of the old school thought is like, "I'm gonna keep everything guarded until I'm a one-to-one conversation," you know, click for a quote and get the appointment, whatever, and then you're an open book. But that's what's transformed is you almost have to just put that stuff front and center. By doing that, you're gonna be doing something that you know over 90% of the companies out there, your competitors, are not doing. There's just so many people that won't take that step. It's a leap of faith. I I get it, I get it. I, you know, because I've had to do it myself. I've done it, I've done it with our other company, and I've done things that have completely broken rank with the industry, but I feel that strongly about it and just want to be honest and transparent moving forward.

Janice Hostager: 27:57

Yeah, and even before with SEO, I worked with a company that sold pools, and one of the big questions people asked was, "How much does the swimming pool cost?" And of course, that's not an easy answer. It depends on your area, it depends on so many different factors. But even just having that blog post out there brought so much traffic to their site. It was it was crazy. Even though they were the answer was, well, it depends. But having something like that, because people are always asking this sort of things to to AI as well, right?

Kevin Vaughan: 28:28

Well, see, I I that's an excellent, that's an excellent example and an excellent point because something like a swimming pool, no two are going to be the same. There's a lot of customization and construction, and is there a rock they have to dig through? You know, there's just are there trees that have to be there's just a lot of factors involved. But again, whoever's interested in buying a pool, that's what they're wondering. How much is this gonna cost, right? So they're gonna land on that that you made, and you're probably gonna present it as a rant. You know, yeah, yes, at the end of the day, if you were to summarize it in a sentence, the end is it depends. Right. But it depends because of this and this and this. So you start listing the factors, and again, you're just being honest with me and go, it can cost you anywhere from I don't know what pools cost, so \$50,000 to \$200,000, depending on you know, the construction and depending on, I guess, the amenities that you put into the pool. But you still showcase the range. You know,

typically it depends. Every case is different, but typically we see from this price point to this price point, and you can fall anywhere in the middle. You know, we should have a talk. Here are the things you need to be concerned about. Here are the things that can play a factor in the pricing of your pool and talk to us. Because what that does is when you when you publish that and people land on that web page, all of a sudden you become a voice of trust and authority on that subject. A, you're showcasing you know what you're talking about. You're not hiding any facts. You're like, okay, here's all the things that could affect the cost, but we really need to take a deep dive and see how that affects you, you know, for your particular case. And then so that drives the appointment, which is really what what the company wants at the end of the day, right? They want the appointment to uh present a proposal, right? Yeah for building a pool. So, no, I mean you're you're absolutely uh on point with that.

Janice Hostager: 30:34

I built that no lacking trust factor, too. Yeah, is what you're saying, right? What about company? Content that's not blogs. What about like podcast content or video? Does that get crawled? Maybe crawled isn't even the right word anymore.

Kevin Vaughan: 30:49

I mean again, it's this big web of stuff and it's all connected. Um, so when you're talking about video, are you talking about YouTube primarily or like a Wistia channel? Uh, you know, um, if you do something like uh a Wistia or another platform like that, you can kind of guard and gate that content. YouTube's got to be wide open for the most part. Um there's some schools of thought that that, you know, I've heard that your YouTube channel could actually be more valuable to you in the future than even your website, depending on the traffic that you drive. But I mean, video is its own beast, and it just depends on how you want to put it together. And a lot of people freak out about video because they think it needs to be like super produced and polished, and it doesn't necessarily have to be all that, but you don't want to I I I get not wanting to showcase your brand just from a cell phone, selfie video all the time. So, you know, again, that's a spectrum too. There's you know different uh uh levels of of quality that you look for, but uh video is vitally important and it's just gonna continue to grow because and it makes sense. I mean, if you break it down into you can tell somebody something or you can show somebody something. And if you can show somebody something, but like the old saying, a picture, you know, what is it, paints a picture of a thousand words or something like that, but video just amplifies that infinitely. So video is definitely huge, and you can incorporate that with your other content that you host online, you can embed videos. But I have seen in some search, especially if you're still using Google, which has AI summaries now, or if you're using the Gemini platform, it's delivering

YouTube videos. So if you're optimizing your description and basically following the same practices of what we're talking about, and putting together some content that that will resonate with people they care about, then yeah, the video will do well and it should be cited and referred on these AI channels.

Janice Hostager: 33:06

I feel like anything that Google already has their hands in, they're gonna find a way to incorporate into AI for sure. They already own YouTube, so they're gonna be able to work with that, I would bet, in the future. One thing I've noticed too is that i in Google searches now, I don't know. Yeah, I think it's just a regular search, it will pull up like posts from Reddit, which with AI, that makes me a little nervous because there's a lot of opinions on Reddit that aren't necessarily factual. It's the same with social media. If you're scraping data from all of that, I think it's a good benefit businesses, but it also makes me a little nervous. I don't know.

Kevin Vaughan: 33:45

Yeah, I hear what you're saying. Like, how do you separate the signal from the noise? Yeah. So break that down. Unfortunately, that's just not something we're gonna have. You or I have control over. All we can do is use the resources that are available to us to the best of our ability. And I think as long as you just have to put the information out there and be comfortable with your position on it, as far as policing what happens on Reddit or social media, how it responds, you and I have no control over that. All we can do is be good stewards of the information that we're putting out there for ourselves or for our clients to maximize the resources that we have. I did think of one thing, though, that is absolutely, God, this is compelling. And it's I just heard this, I think, yesterday. It's brand new. But ChatGPT is announcing that they're integrating Shopify data within their platform, which means that if you're looking for things and you're hosting your products on a Shopify store, then your products will show up in those results that people can purchase right from Chat GPT without having to go to your even go into your website.

Janice Hostager: 35:04

Wow.

Kevin Vaughan: 35:06

I don't think it's live. I don't think it's live yet, but it's been announced. And it's like up and coming. Do you keep up with like Gary V? Do you watch any of his stuff?

Janice Hostager: 35:16

Every so often, I just I didn't hear that.

Kevin Vaughan: 35:18

Well, I I haven't heard that from him, but for the past year, he's been talking about social selling. That's his thing. I think it depends on the business. So, you know, my my experience and and knowledge, you know, is really tailored to be to B2B. Um, B2C is kind of a different animal sometimes. And Gary V is definitely a B2C guy.

Janice Hostager: 35:42

Right.

Kevin Vaughan: 35:42

But he's talking about social selling where companies are going to be able to have like live QVC type events and to do a live feed and just be selling products uh through social media channels. So I see this being like a part of that. I mean, regardless if you're B2C, B2B, or B2B2C hybrid uh entity. Um and I bring I have my sites on Shopify store, so it's wonderful for me. I don't know how that's going to work with some other e-commerce platform, but the ability to have that positioned and available for uh sale directly within a AI chat discussion, I think is awesome. I can't wait to see that come to life.

Janice Hostager: 36:32

Right. I mean, there's just so many changes going on right now. It's even really hard for me to wrap my head around any of this. Well, not any of it, but most of it. Like yeah, I guess I'm trying to figure this out myself, let alone guide my clients as to what to do next. But I appreciate that you've summarized it really pretty well for us. So that I mean nobody has a crystal ball, right? So we don't know exactly where all this is heading. So I guess buckle up and stay tuned, right?

Kevin Vaughan: 37:02

Yeah, it's kind of like Texas weather. You don't like it, wait five minutes, it'll change. So this uh AI stuff is the same. I mean, the best we can do is keep pace with uh with what's going on. But what I feel really comfortable with is that I've incorporated a lot of these philosophies into my own products and I've seen them resolve um on these online or AI searches. So I'm like, I I know it works. I know that this system works. And um just one other thing that I don't know if we touched on, uh, but that structured data, all the technical SEO stuff, vitally important. So you need to make sure that your core performance and uh Search Console um is up to par that you're uh that you have a fast site, that you're mobile friendly. Uh, make sure that all your schema markup is there

because that's how the robots see everything from the back end, but not the customer facial, but the back side of the website, um, that's how it gets indexed and organized. Now there's another, and I'm sure you've heard of like a uh a robots file, right? Robots.txt file. Um so now there's an LLMS.txt file. So LLMs, and it's basically kind of like a robots file, but for large language models. Um and I know that um it's kind of a monster if you want to put it put it together yourself. I'm actually working on an AI tool that will generate that, but because I'm both of my websites are on uh Shopify stores, there's a third-party plugin that just does it for things.

Janice Hostager: 38:45

Okay.

Kevin Vaughan: 38:45

Depending on your uh on your uh your hosting provider, your CMS, um, a lot of times there's the third-party apps that you that can do your SEO optimization, like for instance, if a WordPress site, you know, Yoast or or I don't know, what's the other word?

Janice Hostager: 39:03

Break Math.

Kevin Vaughan: 39:04

Yeah, math write or write math or whatever.

Janice Hostager: 39:06

Break math. Yeah.

Kevin Vaughan: 39:07

Yeah. So there's a couple tools like that. And like I know the Yoast, maybe the math one, but I know Yoast for sure, like if you get the paid version, we'll produce the LLM text form as well. So it's just you have to be careful for things that auto-generate stuff and just to make sure that it's doing it correctly, because sometimes they can just send off and go crazy. Um, but as long as you check and and validate that it's it's generating the right information for you, um, that will help you a lot with uh optimization as well.

Janice Hostager: 39:41

Okay. Well, we have covered a lot today. Yeah, sorry. I'm gonna go grab a paper bag and start breathing into it just because there's so much that it's here that we need to just think about. But I guess as in nature of marketing, it never really stands still at all. And it really never has.

Kevin Vaughan: 39:58

No, and there's a lot of moving parts to it. It seems confusing, it seems daunting. Sometimes if you could break it down into simple terms, I've been on this other career path for years and years and years, but through my 20s, I was in top 40 radio. So, you know, programmed radio stations and was on air and all that. So a lot of my marketing experience, you know, even was seeded back then because it's all the same game. We have content that we're creating to reach a particular demographic out there and resonate with them. Whether we're programming music and contests to bring listeners in to generate ad revenue, or we're trying to get people to our website to convert them, to do things. It's the same game. It just changes tactics, and you just have to kind of keep up with that.

Janice Hostager: 40:58

Well, marketing is really based on human behavior, right? So, you know, it really is all about just what people tend to do. And this is just another tool in the tool belt to think about. So um, so you have a speaking of tools, you have a really cool tool that you are offering that you touched on in here. So, can you tell us a little bit about that, the search tool that you created?

Kevin Vaughan: 41:19

Uh yeah, it's called Search Score. Yeah, and it's the search score.ktvdigital.com to get to it. Free tool to use. And you just plug in your website, your brand name, kind of a key term. If you sell lawnmowers, you just put in lawnmowers or self-writing lawnmowers, and it'll give you a report and I'll show you how you show up with these bots. You know, I touched on this earlier, but it's all tied into API access, which API is just a fancy for application program interface. It's just a way for this tool to talk to another tool. Don't get lost in the formalities of it all. It's just a way for this thing to talk to this thing. So I have it connected to uh Gemini, Chat GPT, and Perplexity. So all three of those platforms tie into this. And then so when you run a search, it's gonna look on all three of those platforms on the back end to see how you perform. And it'll give you a list of some things you can do, some links that give you information on how you can fix that yourself. There's also a link to our DIY tools because there's, hey, there's a lot of small business owners that like to get under the hood and tweak it themselves. They just need some help. So we have some tools to do that. Uh, the other thing is it gives you a list of some example prompts of what people may use in AI to search where you would show up. Does that make sense? Like sample prompts of what people would put in. So what's

good about that is if you are looking for ideas of okay, like what can I create, what can I write and publish that would resonate, that will give you some good, some good ideas.

Janice Hostager: 43:03

Perfect. And I'll put the link to that in the show notes.

Kevin Vaughan: 43:05

That'd be awesome.

Janice Hostager: 43:06

Well, thank you so much for your time. You've given us a lot to think about, Kevin. And uh but I certainly appreciate it.

Kevin Vaughan: 43:14

Yeah, thanks for having me and I really enjoyed it today.

Janice Hostager: 43:19

Wow, there is a lot to think about, right? As Kevin shared, it's not something we can ignore. Fortunately, small shifts like the ones we talked about today can make a big difference in how visible you are and how confident you feel moving forward. If this conversation got you thinking, take a good look at your own website and content this week. Ask yourself, am I making it easy for AI and humans to understand who I serve and what I do best? It's not about chasing every trend, it's about building a clear strategic path that connects you with the right customers. For more information about anything we talked about today, visit myweeklymarketing.com forward slash one thirty. If you love today's episode, please make sure to follow the podcast so that you don't miss the next one. Thanks for tuning in today. I'll see you next time. Bye for now.