



Marketing Moxie Podcast

Episode 11 – Liz Lockard Breaks Down SEO Basics

Show notes at: <http://www.maggiepatterson.com/episode11>

TRANSCRIPT

Maggie: Welcome to Marketing Moxie episode number 11.

Announcer: Welcome to Marketing Moxie with Maggie Patterson, where we get down and dirty on all things marketing for entrepreneurs. Maggie takes a practical, no-holds-barred approach to helping you take action on what matters to your business, all with her signature moxie and sass. Now, it's time to roll up your sleeves and dive in.

Maggie: Hey guys, in episode number 11 I've got a very special, brilliant, basic training episode for you. We are going to talk all about analytics and search engine optimization. Aren't you excited? Yeah, I'm sure you just kind of groaned and thought, "I am not listening to this episode." But, trust me. I have a guest expert today who's going to break this down for us so it's very understandable and is something you can actually go in and apply in your business.

So, I've got Liz Lockhart coming up and we are going to cut over to my interview with Liz and she is going to wow us with some simple strategies we can implement for our search engines and analytics.

Hey everyone, I've got a great guest expert joining us today for our episode on analytics and SEO. We have Liz Lockhart joining us. And, a little bit of background about Liz—I took an analytics course with her last summer and let me tell you. It opened my eyes to a lot of things. I understood SEO from the writing perspective, but things on the back end totally blew my mind. So, I immediately thought of Liz.

So, Liz—welcome to Marketing Moxie.

Liz: Thanks so much for having me.

Maggie: The way we're going to do this, guys, is we're not going to get super technical. We're not going to talk about anything to you that's too scary. Liz's real specialty is breaking it down into really understandable bite-sized chunks. So, Liz can you explain to us what

SEO is and why should we really care about it?

Liz: Sure, SEO stands for search engine optimization. Basically, it's the art of getting found by your ideal customers on the likes of Google. So, matching up with your ideal customers queries, matching your website up is the answer to your ideal customer's Google searches.

Maggie: If I'm totally new to SEO and I knew it's something I should do, what's the absolute best way for me to get started?

Liz: If you are totally new to SEO but you're not totally new to business, you kind of have a head start on it. The basis of SEO strategy that actually works for your business is knowing your customer and knowing their language. The whole goal behind SEO—a lot of people just focus on getting more traffic. I don't really care about your numbers increasing if those people aren't actually becoming clients and prospects of yours.

The thing to start, if you're totally new to SEO, is to make sure that you have a good grasp on what language your ideal customers are using to describe their problems or what questions they're asking that are related to your field and just getting a handle on the words that they're using, because you can then translate that into the words that you use on your website, which will help beyond SEO. It helps with sales and conversions and all that sort of stuff.

Maggie: Do you have any tips on how to go about finding the best phrases, like how do our customers actually phrasing—what kind of word would they use? Would they use PR or publicity in my case? I don't know. How can I do a little research to figure that out?

Liz: It's kind of like a two-step process. Number one, if you've been in business for a while, you probably have gotten emails from prospects and clients. So, you can just go back through those emails and see what language they're actually using to look at the comments on your blog and see what language they're using. If you are hanging out in a social media group that your ideal customer is a part of, put an ear to the social media ground and see how they're describing their actual problem. You can find an online forum where they're hanging out and eavesdrop there.

If you don't have anything, you can straight up survey your customers. That's another option if you're totally starting from scratch and you don't have any of these social media avenues.

Once you have a list of what words you think your customers are using, you can then head to what is the second step, using the Google keyword planner to see how their words match up with traffic stats from Google, so you can kind of prioritize which phrases you actually want to be focusing on in your content.

Maggie: That is where we need to get a little bit more specific, because I know just from working with you and from other clients where they have SEO people involved, this idea of, "You don't want to be competing for the top, most competitive term usually."

Liz: The basis of a good SEO strategy is that you're never actually focusing on just one term. You have a lot of different pages on your website and each page or blog post can focus on a different phrase. So, you can use the Google keyword planner to help narrow your focus of what phrase you'll be targeting in any particular page. You're not just picking three phrases and calling it a day on your SEO strategy. You're trying to do as big an umbrella as you can and to capture as many different phrases your ideal customer would be using.

Maggie: If I'm working on content—we all produce a lot of content. What are three basic SEO tasks we should be including as part of that content creation?

Liz: The pre-step I'm going to say is to make sure that whatever you're writing about is kind of hitting on how your ideal customers would describe that topic.

The actual first step would be to put that topic into Google keyword planner to check against the Google stats for the actual keywords. And, I can share a link with you, Maggie, that you can put below the interview so people can have a step by step of how to use Google keyword planner.

Basically, you check against the stats that Google is saying about what phrases you should be using. If you were to write a blog post about tips on writing a press release, which I'm not even sure if you advocate using press releases all the time. But, let's just say for argument's sake that you're thinking that you really want to talk about beginner's guide to press release writing. Once you put that topic into Google keyword planner, you find out that the phrase press release is actually searched way more. So, you might want to change a little bit about how you describe that topic in the blog post to try and get more traffic out of it. So, that would be number one.

Once you have that phrase, the second step is just to use it in your content. Make sure that you're using the phrase at least three times for an average blog post.

And, then the third step would be to make sure that your URL, which is that little website address that shows up in your browser when you visit your website—that it's not just a bunch of numbers, that it actually includes some actual human language, ideally your target phrase. But, to make sure you're not doing—on Word Press I know a lot of times the default URL it generates is like, question mark P= and it's a bunch of gobbly gook. So, make sure that that website address is actually using words instead of just random numbers.

Maggie: One thing you actually taught in the course I took with you was the SEO plug in for Word Press, the Yost one that is so helpful. So, can you talk a little bit about that? Because, I think that that is such a good, basic tool to wrap your head around this and kind of force you into creating content that is SEO friendly.

Liz: So, if you are on wordpress.org, you can simplify a lot of the technical stuff that goes into SEO by using the Yost SEO plug in. and, what it does is it has a bunch of different settings so you can advanced technical, but one of the cool things it does is on each page and post, it has this little box that forces you to think about what you're doing for SEO on the page. So, it's asking you things like, "What's your title for the page?" This is one of the technical SEO elements. It asks you to focus on, "Which phrase are you trying to target?" It gives you a little bit of a grade of how well you're optimizing the page for that particular phrase. It lets you fill out a Meta description, which is—if you've ever googled anything and seen a page of search results, you see a whole bunch of blue lines. Those are blue hyperlinks that you can click to visit the website. Those are your titles. The little description underneath those—the little ad copy with the search result—that is a Meta description. It really helps simplify a lot of those things that you would otherwise have to know how to edit your code to do for the technical side of things for SEO.

Maggie: Just in a related note to all of this, what about authorship for our SEO? What are your thoughts on that?

Liz: I think authorship is not something that particularly effects SEO as far as what their

disclosing as the actual formula that Google puts out there. I was thinking that authorship, which is basically—once you set it up you can sometimes see your picture in the search results next to you page posts. It will help with your click through rate. If you're the only picture on the search result of a lot of plain text, you're going to get a higher click through rate than say even the first result, necessarily. So, it's kind of one of the tweaks that I advocate for kind of trying to get even more traffic from Google even if you're not number one on the search results.

Maggie: And, this is going to be my last question. I've asked you way more questions, but I love this topic. If I, right now, notice a lot of my traffic is coming from referral traffic and I want more organic traffic, what would be your number one tip? I know that for a lot of people I work with, it is referral from social media. It is guest posting. How do we break into organic traffic a little more effectively?

Liz: There's two big pieces of SEO. There's stuff that you can do on site and there's stuff that you can do off site. So, number one you have to get the technical side of things and your keyword strategies set for your website. Then, the second piece is using those off site mentions in a strategic way to give Google some signals that your site is actually trustworthy enough to link to and a good match for some user search queries. You can continue to use things like guest posting to attract short-term traffic. And, if you're guest posting on the right sites, on strong sites as viewed by Google, then that can start to affect your organic search rankings. It does take longer. You might see an uptake in like three months, six months or up to a year. But, it's definitely a snowball effect. As long as you continue to put the five minutes per post it requires to tweak your website for SEO—as long as you continue to do that in small niches, you'll start to see a snowball effect of traffic.

Maggie: And, I think that's good advice—to be patient. It's not all going to happen overnight.

Liz: Yeah, but it is fun once it starts to work for you because it feels like that's traffic that you didn't work that hard for. But, really you worked at it. It was just small steps along the way.

Maggie: I do really look at my referral traffic because I get a fair bit of it because I do a lot of guest posting. Things that were posted months and months ago—they're still sending me a good, healthy dose of traffic. I think it's important not to underestimate the power of that single guest post and what it can do for you.

Liz: I'm a fan of making sure that you're not relying on any one particular traffic strategy too hard because I love Google and I love guest posting and social media. But, if Facebook decides to change the newsfeed, Google decides to change some piece of their formula, guest posting decides to get banned by Google—there's all these different tactics that we don't have full control over. So, as long as you're matching traffic generation to your website with a bunch of different tactics then you should have a pretty easy time with long term success and not getting too hit by any sudden changes.

Maggie: I think that's good advice because we have seen the Facebook change. We have seen multiple changes in guest posting with Google so who knows what's going to happen next? Change is a good thing.

Liz: If I could add just one last really general piece of advice—when it comes to SEO, a lot of people think about all of these tactics that make you feel icky or to just post on a bunch of forums or do a lot of comment spam that you get on your website or upload a bunch of directories. If you want to stay in the long term good graces of Google, just

put your ideal customer first and treat the internet like you'd like to be treated and just be a nice, online presence and don't ever do anything that makes your stomach turn and you should be fine in Google's long term graces.

Maggie: I think that's good advice for business. If it's making your stomach turn, it's probably not a good idea.

Liz: No short-term gain is going to be worth the churning stomach feeling and ultimate hit by Google down the line once they catch up with whatever short-term hack you found for SEO.

Maggie: And, god knows in the last few years there's been enough of those. I'd be happy to see them all go away so that no one proposes anything crazy. "Why don't we just do this?" I'm like, "Why?" "Oh, it's for SEO." I'm like, "I don't really like this."

Liz: Yeah, I don't want to write that phrase on my page. That doesn't make any sense.

Maggie: You know what it is? All of these things are a great correction to get us back on course so that things are done ethically and they make sense.

So, Liz—thank you so much for your time today. Where can everyone find you?

Liz: My online home is lizlockard.com.

Maggie: Alright, so if you guys want to check out Liz, I will have her linked up into the show notes for the episode and you can find out more about SEO and Google analytics over there.

I'm so glad I had Liz come on and talk about that because these are things we can all go away and it's always a good reminder, even if you are doing them, to really think about these things when you're creating your content and create content that is actually going to be of interest to the search engines, because that's how we're going to get found by Google.

Let's dive into this episode's take aways. Take away number one is—on Word Press, make sure you install the Yost plugin. It is a really simple way to discipline yourself and make sure you are writing and including SEO. That is Yost. So, just picture toast and put Y where the T would be. It is a super easy plugin to help you use it.

Take away number two—put your ideal customer first. If you are starting to feel icky about the tactics you are going to use or the word choice—if you feel like you are trying to manipulate the situation, you're not on the right track. The core of what Liz talked about was finding the language and the words that people will actually be searching for so they can find you easily on Google.

The last one, and I love this strategy from Liz was—don't rely on one traffic strategy. At the point we start relying on one traffic strategy, we rely on all referral traffic coming from Facebook or Twitter or guest posting—no organic. We start to create a situation that's unattainable for our strategies if something changes. Facebook changes, guest posting changes—there's always going to be changes. So, make sure you're using more than one way to get people to your website.

Now, next week we are going to have another awesome episode in the brilliant basics series with yet another expert and we are going to be talking about email marketing. Email marketing is a very pivotal, foundational piece of what we do. But, I think a lot of times we misuse it or we misunderstand how to use it. So, I am thrilled to have another

expert coming back.

Let's talk a little bit about what's going on. I really love getting reviews. So, if anyone wants to leave me a review in iTunes, I would be thrilled to have it. And hey, you may get a shout out on a future show. I have a big list I'm printing out for next week's episode when I tape it. And, if you want to check out what's going on with me, you can always follow my blog posts over at maggiepatterson.com. I've been running a series over on the blog that I'm calling The Ugly Bits. I'm talking about some of the parts of entrepreneurship that we don't always talk about, like things like over thinking it and being authentic and not being authentic in the way you think.

So, if you want to check that out you can head on over to maggiepatterson.com/blog and if you want to show notes and the hand out for today's episode, you can go to maggiepatterson.com/episodenum11.

Thank you so much for listening and have a great week.

Announcer: Thanks for listening to Marketing Moxie with Maggie. Visit our home base at www.maggiepatterson.com for show notes and more episodes.

Show notes at: <http://www.maggiepatterson.com/episode11>