

Content Marketing and the Future of SEO – With Chad Fisher

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Google continues to confuse website owners and search engine optimization experts alike. Just last week I read a blog post on how Candy.com was assessed a penalty in the past and is currently not showing up for any results in Google. We are going to talk to an SEO veteran today that has a new process that might help, and we are going to get an update on SEO that will help you on your business website or on your next development project. Stay tuned.

Three messages before today's interview educates and motivates you.

First, if you're a domain name investor, don't you have unique legal needs that require domain name technical know-how and industry experience? That's why you need David Weslow of Wiley Rein. Go search for David Weslow on DomainSherpa, watch his interview and you can see for yourself that he can clearly explain issues, can help you with buy/sell agreements, deal with website content issues and UDRP actions, and even help you write your website terms and conditions. David Weslow is the lawyer to call for Internet legal issues. See for yourself at NewMediaIP.com.

Second, managing multiple domain name marketplace and auction site accounts is a pain. Inevitably, you forget to sign into one and lose a great domain...or worse. Now imagine using a single, simple-to-use and comprehensive control panel to manage all your accounts. That's Protrada. You can setup search filters, analyze domains, automate bidding, list domains for sale, and buy domains across all major marketplaces. Protrada also has a new semantic engine that builds Google-friendly websites with rich content and network feeds. Sign up at Protrada.com to get 20 free credits and start building and monetizing your domains today.

Finally, if you have questions about domain names, where should you go to ask them? The answer is DNForum.com. Not only is DN Forum the largest domain name forum in the world, but it's the best. You can learn about

DomainSherpa.com: The Domain Name Authority

domain names and the industry, buy and sell domain names, talk about domain name news, and meet other domainers just like yourself. Register for a free DN Forum account and begin advancing your skills and knowledge today. And when you do signup, send me a friend request so we can connect.

Here's your program.

Michael Cyger: Hey everyone. My name is Michael Cyger, and I'm the Publisher of DomainSherpa.com - the website where you come to learn how to become a successful domain name investor or entrepreneur directly from the experts.

Oh, Google, we love you, but you are always moving the gold posts. It makes sense I suppose, given that whenever people figure out major aspects of your algorithm they are going to start gaming it and getting sites ranked high in the organic search results that do not belong there. But for those of us that are blocking and tackling every day in our business, we just want to produce great content and we want that content to rank well. So today I invited on an SEO veteran that has a new process that might help those in need.

I would like to welcome Chad Fisher, Co-Founder of WordsForLess.com. Chad, welcome to the show.

Chad Fisher: Hello Mike, thanks for having me on.

Michael: It is great to have you and it is great to have a fellow Seattleite on the show on our nice overcast day.

Chad: That is right. And considering we hit 60 for the first time this year, this is about as good as it gets.

Michael: I know. Wasn't that great? Like two days ago, or what was it? Friday. It was so hot. I had to take off my sweater for the first time.

Chad: That is right. I know.

Michael: All right, Chad, let's start with this. Why does Google hate us so much?

Chad: Yes, SEO Practitioner. SEO is such a dirty word these days with Google. It is very much not (Unclear 2:07.1) say that you do SEO. The updates over the last, really, two to three years - almost every one of them is coming out against companies and people that are practicing SEO and they are trying to really regulate links, content, and lots of different things that people are coming up with, so you have to be very careful these days.

Michael: Yeah. So, does Google realize that they created a whole ecosystem around SEO and it is difficult to figure out? And clearly they do not want to share all the secrets of how they rank sites well in their search engine, but it just seems like everything is always changing and it is hard to keep up.

Chad: Yes, that is a good point. Once the algorithm initially came out and was so focused on links, everybody adjust. After the fourth update I guess in 2003, and I was not even in SEO at that point. But since then, the focus has definitely been on links. I mean onsite architecture - content - is very important and the reality is, after these latest - Panda, Penguin, (Unclear 3:19.0), Above the Fold - updates, it is even more important to have great content on your site. But links are still important and, as far as Google is considered, I do not see links ever really being extricated from the core of the algorithm itself. But because of these updates, you have to be very careful about the types of links you are building and the type of anchor text that you are using. It is definitely a quality over quantity game these days.

Michael: All right. So, that is what we are going to dig into in this interview. We are going to dig into why links are so important, how to get good links, how to get the right anchor text, and quality - how do you determine the quality. We are going to talk about everybody's whipping child, eHow.com, and how they have created this massive amount of content, much of which is just really crappy content that they pay people low wages in order to produce, but some of it is really good. It actually walks you through. So, I want to understand from your point what good quality is and how you determine good quality from marginal or bad quality, and then how Google might do that on--

Chad: An algorithmic basis.

Michael: Yeah. Okay. So, everybody always talks about Google, Chad. Why doesn't anybody talk about Bing and Yahoo?

Chad: Well, the short answer is there is just not that much traffic on Bing and Yahoo, at least from an organic standpoint. There still is plenty of opportunities on Bing and Yahoo, but typically, if you are optimizing both, content and the links, for Google, Bing and Yahoo come along for the ride. And that is the way most people in the industry have looked at it, because if you build your site correctly Google is going to send a lot of traffic, but so will Bing and Yahoo. But you just have to do a lot of the same things from optimizing your title tags, (Unclear 5:03.0) image, all tags, getting the proper linking internally as well as externally, and adding high quality content. We will go into some of those things.

Michael: Yeah. So is it fair to say that Google is the industry leader in organic search right now - indexing more, prioritizing the better content up - and if you are doing the right things for Google, then Bing and Yahoo just come along for the ride? You will get the same benefit?

Chad: Typically that is the answer. There are some quirks on Bing and Yahoo maybe. Where you can rank in Google in three to six months, sometimes Bing and Yahoo might take a year or a year and a half. But what I have seen historically is that, if you do rank in Bing and Yahoo, often those are a little bit stickier where with Google, especially with all these updates. Things are fluctuating quite a bit. With Bing and Yahoo, you may get up there and rank relatively high and you may stick for six months or a couple years and you might not have to do a whole lot, but there is a bit longer grace period just to get up there.

Michael: Yeah. So, it might take you longer to get to the top and then you might hang out longer at the top, but, as a whole, you are getting less traffic from that top ranking because Bing and Yahoo do not get as much traffic as Google does.

Chad: That is correct. Yeah, and you can see it in your Analytics when you dig in and look at the factor. It is probably a factor of five to six times, maybe even ten times, as much depending on the vertical you are in. Google traffic compared to Bing and Yahoo.

Michael: Yeah, definitely, and that is what I see on a lot of my sites as well. How long have you been working in the search engine optimization realm?

Chad: Good question. So, in 2007/2008, I started getting involved in SEO mainly because I bought a couple offline businesses and I wanted to rank them. I wanted to understand how people got traffic. I wanted to understand AdWords. I wanted to understand web development. So I taught myself a lot of that, and then, ever since then, I started practicing it primarily on my own sites, and then when we opened up WordsForLess over a year ago, and then my own Consulting Brand even before that - PyramidSEO.

Michael: Got you. So you still do SEO consulting at PyramidSEO.com?

Chad: Yes. I probably use that for web development and then my own individual consulting.

Michael: I understand. And so, the couple of sites that you built that you wanted rank well - are they at the top of search engines?

Chad: Yeah, good question. So, when I started I had my own business and, yes, actually the fencing company. I no longer own it, but it does rank relatively well for a lot of Seattle area fencing phrases.

Michael: Oh, you had a Seattle fencing company.

Chad: I did.

Michael: Wow.

Chad: Yeah, and a painting company as well.

Michael: Nice.

Chad: But 2007 was not the best time to own construction-related businesses, as I am sure anybody could tell you.

Michael: No, they were not. And do you run other businesses besides WordForLess.com and PyramidSEO.com that you use for lead generation or other purposes?

Chad: Yes, so I will step back a little bit. So, in 2007, when I had those businesses and I needed to get them to rank and I needed to work on their site, I also started realizing I kind of enjoy building sites, getting them to rank, understand Adwords, traffic, Bing, and Yahoo a lot more, and so that is when I started to really dive into lead generation and understand: "Okay, there is a bigger world out there of traffic, and there is certain types of traffic that are much more valuable." And so that is what started to lead me into building insurance-related websites, online education-related websites, and then that is actually what got me heavier into domaining, because I realized, well, once I started building some of these sites, getting a great keyword domain name - like PTSchools or CounselingSchools.com were some of the names that I have owned and still do own in the (Unclear 8:31.3) - were great assets to buy great names, build a great site, get that traffic, and sell it off to the different for-profit online education, really, aggregators. Everybody from Quinn Street to Brokers Web. There is a lot of those companies that are out there.

Michael: Yeah. And you and I met a couple of years ago at Domain Fest, what is now Web Fest, down in Los Angeles, so you clearly understand the benefits of domain names, as you have said. I know a lot of people love to know what the guests have in their own portfolio. How many domain names do you currently have in your portfolios?

Chad: Sure. Yeah, right now I only have about two hundred. I used to have closer to four hundred names, which is, compared to a lot of guys I have seen on your show, a pretty small amount.

Michael: Yeah.

Chad: Yeah, they are relatively focused. Typically I would only buy if I had a plan to develop the site.

Michael: You would only buy.

Chad: Right.

Michael: What if you saw something on the drop that was like some sort of TradeSchool.com and you were like: "Hey, it is only two hundred bucks"? You wouldn't pick it up?

Chad: I would do it, but usually I would only do it if I had a plan to build it.

Michael: Oh, okay.

Chad: There are obviously people that are in the business of just domaining. I saw myself more as a developer. And if I was buying a name, it was an asset that I could use to build a site, put a very esthetically appealing site on there as well as put great content, build links, get the traffic, and sell the leads, because, to me, that was what my business was. It was easier for me to monetize it rather than buying a name and reselling it.

Michael: Right. So you are not buying a name and reselling it. You are not buying a name and developing it, and then selling the developed website. You want a cash machine. You want to just produce leads on a regular basis and then sell those to some other party.

Chad: Yes. I will say that, in the overall, as I said, that business has changed quite a bit, and we will get into that a bit with some of the latest updates. So, I do not do that nearly as much as I used to just because Google has done a great job of kind of bifurcating the world into affiliates and real companies. Everything from Panda to Penguin to EMD update have segregated the population of, argue, just informational-only sites - getting in the eHow, your example from earlier - or only a lead generation site. Are you trying to extract organic traffic from us? And if you are, we are going to make life harder for you, because being a thin affiliate is very difficult where, three or four years ago, you could throw up almost any site. If it had an EMD on it, you could

rank. You would get great traffic. It was very easy. Those days are not over one hundred percent, but they are a lot more difficult now.

Michael: Yeah, all right, EMD stands for Exact Match Domain. We will go into that. And I am also going to dig in. I want to know, later in the show, Chad, how does Google tell an affiliate site from a real company site. So, do not answer that now. We are going to make people actually watch this show to learn that and learn the tactics that they can do to get a site ranked well. So you said that you have got about two hundred domains. Do you mainly focus on any TLD more than another? Do you not care because search engine optimization can go across any top-level domain?

Chad: Good question. Before .COM, .NET, and .ORG were definitely the focus because, when exact match domains had more of a bonus, those three really got the lion's share of credit. Now that has been dialed back a bit. I am not as particular, but still, if I am going to buy a name or I am going to build a business, it is pretty much going to be on .COM, .NET maybe, or .ORG. .ORG and .EDU in online education is pretty effective; in some cases even better than a .COM.

Michael: Yeah. All right. And if you had to pick three of your favorite domain names in your portfolio that are undeveloped, what would you say?

Chad: That is a good question. That is a hard one for me because I have developed almost all the names. There are some lead generation names. I have ApartmentLeads.com. I have always thought that would be a good one.

Michael: Yeah.

Chad: Because of the apartment websites I have had in the past and my affiliation with a lot of lead generation businesses. I mentioned CounselingSchools.com earlier. Another good one that I would love to build out for lead generation, but I have to kind of rethink the model, like I said, which we will get into a little bit as to why. So those are probably the two. There are a couple of brandable names that I have built out that I really like, but I built on them. I started it. LeadSure.com is one of them. But those are probably the three.

Michael: Cool. So mainly lead generation. You love your lead generation sites.

Chad: I would say yes, but like I said, with a caveat that it is much different. Those are the ones historically that I bought a lot of, but not as much anymore.

Michael: All right, Chad, let's dig into SEO. Everyone knows SEO is the practice of using specific tactics to rank pages of a website at the top of the organic search results on Google, Bing, Yahoo, and other search engines. We are not talking about the pay-per-click advertising that is at the top. We are not talking about the Google Places that are for local businesses that are just underneath or any of the ads on the right-hand side. We are talking about organic, regular listings of sites that are in the search engine's index. But Google knows that people are always trying to game the system and get sites ranked higher, and they have made enemies out of really cute animals, like penguins and panda bears. Which one came first: the Panda Update or the Penguin Update?

Chad: The Panda Update came first.

Michael: Okay. And what was the purpose of Panda? What was that fixing in Google's algorithm?

Chad: Panda, if I had to really boil it down to just a short phrase, was fixing thin content. Large, massive sites. Your eHow example was spot on. There are plenty of them like that, that had hundreds of thousands of pages of very dubious quality. And what it did is the algorithm looked at the sites and you had a lot of pages that were thin. They were a lot of fluff words. I do not know if you have ever looked at Google's patent. They actually cut out a lot of the very much unnecessary verbiage that a lot of people use; and if you have ever contracted low quality writers, you will get a lot of that type of content, and eHow was kind of the king of that. Now, they bounced around a little bit on the different Panda updates, but some of the other bigger content-heavy sites got really hammered. I know I had a particular friend accompanying the business. They were doing close to one hundred thousand

dollars a month just on lead generation site and on the first Panda iteration it got hit and went down to about thirty or thirty-five thousand a month.

Michael: Wow!

Chad: So basically the traffic got hit by about sixty-five to seventy-five percent.

Michael: Wow, and they were getting most of their traffic from search engine optimization; not from paid ads.

Chad: No, it was all organic.

Michael: Wow. Yeah, that is significant, going from a million dollar business down to a three hundred thousand dollar business.

Chad: Yes. Yeah, it was a wakeup call.

Michael: And so I have never heard people refer to the update around fluff words. How would you define a fluff word? Something that does not have value in the content.

Chad: Well, if you are reading, a lot of people use these filler words like: I should have or could have. A lot of prepositions. Not using a lot of strong verbs. Just a lot of this filler-type language that you will see it when you know it. It is kind of hard to actually describe, but if you could take snippet of it and see a lot of that same text in the rest of the web, you are going to know that it is not very unique.

Michael: Got you.

Chad: And it is hard, number one, for some writers. They are not very good at discerning between quality and low quality, and obviously then you kind of need to move on. But yeah, it is a tricky spot for a lot of people. And then simple things like not linking out. A lot of people used to think: "Well, I want to hoard page rank and I want a page that has got tons. I want lots of words. I am going to keyword stuff and I am not going to put any outbound links." It

is actually the exact opposite of what Google and what a reader want. A reader wants to have value. And when they are looking at an article, they want to get something new - something novel, theoretically - that they have never read before, but they also want to have sources. So, when you are linking out to other high quality, but logical, sources in the article, not only is that a great user experience, but that is great for Google as well because when they are looking at it they are like: "Okay, this makes sense. This is what a good article should read like."

Michael: Yeah. But what happens when you are writing really good content and all the other stuff on the web is really crappy, so you do not want to link to it?

Chad: Well, I mean if you read a New York Times article, you read a CNN article, you get on ESPN, or any major sites that are heavy content producers, they are linking. If it is a scientific study, it is authoritative. If it is just another site and they are a competitor of theirs; if they are doing a review of ten different apps, well, they are probably linking out to those ten different apps.

Michael: Oh, okay. Yeah, I could see that.

Chad: It makes sense, right?

Michael: Yeah.

Chad: But a lot of affiliate businesses are just people that do not understand it. They are like: "I do not want to do that because I feel like I am giving up some of my page rank." That is wrong. You need to be linking out to those.

Michael: Sure. Okay. So, after the Panda update came the Penguin update. And I say update like it is a single binary event. It continues to happen. It continues to evolve over time. But after the major Panda release, then there was a Penguin release that happened. What was the purpose of the Penguin release?

Chad: So, Penguin was a lot more focused on anchor text. Where Panda was very much focused on content and it attacked large sites, Penguin could hit a site as small as maybe five pages or twenty pages. It did not really matter. It was almost predominantly associated with the anchor text that you were using. And what I have seen, and people have varying opinions on this, is that it was almost entirely focused on commercially focused anchor text. And I had sites that were hit by Penguin. One that was maybe hit by Panda, but many that were hit by Penguin. Even if you had an exact match that was a commercially-related phrase, your site would get hit and you could go from anywhere from, let's say you were getting, a couple hundred visitors a day down to ten or twenty. It was pretty draconian how bad it could be if you got hit in the first couple iterations.

Michael: So what is an example of a commercially focused anchor text that Google was trying to--?

Chad: Great question. Really, the insurance space got hit a lot. I saw a lot of insurance sites. Auto Insurance Quotes.

Michael: So, Auto Insurance Quotes. Auto Insurance Quote Seattle.

Chad: Cheap Auto Insurance Quotes. Nursing Schools. A lot of the lead generation sites. I mean, granted, it does not mean Penguin was one hundred percent focused on just these phrases, but that is where it really attacked a lot of people that I know and people in SEO Book that I would correspond with. Just lots of different people in the industry. By and large, if you had an affiliate site that was focused on commercial anchor text, you probably were hit by Penguin.

Michael: Now, isn't it normal for people who are linking to your auto insurance quote site to say: "If you are looking for auto insurance, go visit AutoInsuranceQuote.com"?

Chad: Yes, but you have to be more careful now because if it is an exact match domain - like let's say AutoInsuranceQuotes in your example there - and you are in a commercial entity, it is a lot different from owning like BobsBaitandTackleShop. If that is your EMD, which really is not even EMD.

Michael: It is brandable.

Chad: It is a brandable name, right. But if somebody keeps linking to you with BobsBaitandTackleShop, as far as I have seen, it does not really do a whole lot in terms of Penguin because Google is able to discern that is Bob's Bait and Tackle Shop. The only people that are searching for it are the people that really know Bob's company.

Michael: Right.

Chad: But back to AutoInsuranceQuotes. If you have that as your EMD and people are continually linking to you with just that phrase, you could still be in the crosshairs of Penguin where, before, that was not really that much of a problem because that was logical. They are linking to you; that is fine. But that was kind of the loophole that Google started to slowly close. Now you have to have a lot of other types of links. Do not use any anchor text. Use a naked URL. Use something that is related to members of the company and other completely unrelated phrases.

Michael: So, is it safe to say that Google wants to see diversity in the inbound links to your website?

Chad: Yes.

Michael: Any one type of link is bad in massive quantities, but they just want to see natural inbound links, as regular people would do. They would not type in anchor text because who types in anchor text on links, right?

Chad: That is right. When you go out and look and you use tools like Majestic SEO or even SEOMoz's Open Site Explorer, when you are doing link analysis, you will see that the average Joe, when they are building links, is in the most unbelievable way. It will be a long sentence with really very little meaning maybe to the company.

Michael: Right, and sometimes the word 'here' will be linked, like click here.

Chad: Yeah, that is right. That is a very common one. And so, SEO practitioners, myself included, kind of got a bit lazy, where that was always supposed to be a good way to do link building. And because it was so effective for a while, you just kind of got focused on those commercially-focused anchor phrases when, in reality, you always should have been mixing it up.

Michael: Now, let's say that you run a really small company. It is Bob's Bait and Tackle Shop, and you just want to rank well for Seattle Bait and Tackle, or Seattle Bait, or Seattle Fishing. Can you still get away, if you are a small mom and pop, with using anchor text and using links for Seattle Fishing and not be hit by Penguin because you are not using a massive commercial search phrase?

Chad: Okay, it is a good question. I think the answer is, yes, you can definitely do that. Panda, Penguin, and the EMD update. They had Above the Fold. Over the past couple years they have had quite a few.

Michael: Yeah.

Chad: Some of them are rolling into the algorithm, like Panda is actually not even going to be a separate event. Actually they just announced this a couple weeks ago. It is just going to be part of the normal algorithm when they run it. But each time these new updates come out, it is kind of like I said earlier in our chat that it is kind of segregating the affiliates or people that are not a real business, which is what Google is trying to drive to because from their perspective they win as long as more people start using AdWords and as long as it drives people to using their products more often. Making SEO more difficult is a big win for Google. I mean, in fairness, it does clean up the SERPs. It does make it more difficult. But back to your question, yes, you can use anchor text and commercial anchor text as a real company, like Bob's Bait and Tackle Shop, but you still need to be careful. You can overdo it as a real business. The reality is you should probably be creating great content on the site. If you want to rank for Seattle Fishing, come up with twenty-five different ways, or different rivers, or different streams that you can go fishing in Seattle. Create pictures. Do video. Have other people link to you. You do not even need necessarily that exact match anchor text. The days of just using

that to rank, you do not need just that. You can come up with great content. People will come at you with just the URL and other types of links, Google will start to figure it out, and you will rank.

Michael: Yeah, that makes sense. All right. When I worked in Corporate America, we had a saying that whatever you incentivize with people's bonuses will get done. Right?

Chad: Yeah.

Michael: And so, if you look at it in life, in general, people will always do the things that pay them money. There are exceptions. Clearly there are people that work for good and work on great organizations, but in general, in commercial world, people will do the things that earn them more money. And Google is looking at things and they want to clean up the content in their index that does not have as much value to users and there is a byproduct. By eliminating them, they potentially force them to buy Google AdWords and then figure out a business model where they make money as part of the whole process as well. So, my next question that we talked about in the introduction, Chad, is: how does Google tell if you are an affiliate site where your sole purpose is to put up content in order to generate leads that you sell to a third party or if you are a real company that is actually doing whatever your website says, like providing auto insurance quotes or things like that?

Chad: Yeah, good question. They have got a couple different ways. The algorithm, I think, is able to sniff that out, but they also have hundreds, if not thousands, of manual reviewers that are looking at it.

Michael: Really?

Chad: Yeah, I do not know if people realize that, but you can look it up. It is Google Quality Rater Manual or Google Quality Reviews. They have a manual that gets deleted every couple years that shows the different things that they are looking at when they are manually scouring the web. And they take some of that feedback and often will incorporate into the algorithm. But from an algorithm standpoint, there is a number of things that it can look for. It could look to see: do you have a physical address? An affiliate rarely will

have a physical address. And some of this stuff is hypothetical or I am supposing. I do not know for sure.

Michael: You do not know for sure, right.

Chad: Nobody does. Are they looking to see if you have filed an LLC with the state for your business? What is the doing business as name? Do you have a phone number on the site? Do you have pictures or images of people that work at the company? Do have an About Us page that has details like, maybe, the schools or university just going into the level of detail? It is very hard for a typical affiliate to create because they are coming up with just content. Are you using Google Plus? That is a huge thing. If you have set up a Google Plus account and you linked your content to your Google Plus page, so now, when somebody searches for you, your image will show up. An affiliate that has twenty-five different sites - that is a little harder if you are in twenty-five different verticals rather than somebody who has got a real business. Bob's Bait and Tackle Shop. If Bob wants to write all about fishing, that is probably pretty logical.

Michael: Yeah.

Chad: Those are some of the examples. I think there is actually quite a few, even more.

Michael: So, if I have an affiliate site that is up and running right now, I can clearly make it look like it is a real business by adding content to it, by putting a physical address, by having a phone number on it, by having an About Us page with my picture on it, saying: "When you send in a lead, I am personally reviewing these, and here is my education," and all that sort of stuff. But I do not have that right now, let's say. How often does the Google Manual Review happen on certain sites, or is there just no way to tell?

Chad: Certain verticals get reviewed, I think, a lot more often. Those auto insurance phrases that we were talking about earlier in the call. Some of those, I bet, are reviewed by, minimum, an intern at Google probably every couple days or every couple weeks. I have seen sites. There are some great case studies. There is one on a site called AutoInsuranceQuotesEasy. It was

outed kind of by some people at SEOMoz for ranking very high for some of these phrases and making a couple hundred thousand dollars a month, if not more. This was about a year to a year and a half ago, and that was before, I think, they got even more aggressive on the manual reviews. It is the same thing they do with Viagra and with online education phrases because they are worth lots and lots of money. So, now, if Google has companies or those spots, they want real companies ranking there.

Michael: How come no intern or manual reviewer has like come out and gone behind a screen and said, "I am changing my voice and I am going to tell you all the secrets"? How come nobody has done that yet?

Chad: Well, remember, the people they are paying to do that are not the ones that are ultimately making the final decision. You have got Matt Cutts and the Web Spam Team. They are the ones that are probably taking in that input. They will then make adjustments to the algorithm because clearly they want everything, if possible, to run through the algorithm. They do not want to be making a lot of manual changes. They will apply manual penalties, and you will hear about them. Every once in a while a big brand will get whacked with a manual Google penalty, but typically they would like the algorithm to take care of it.

Michael: All right. So is it fair to say that the way Google is moving in the future is, if you have great content, you are going to get more inbound links, and so they are looking at those two criteria primarily to say this should be ranked at the top of search engines, or is that way too oversimplified?

Chad: Well, it is a bit oversimplified. As I was saying earlier, there is more to it. They are pushing Google Plus really hard and (Unclear 29:24.1) of that, so they are trying to push the content of author to rank. Not just: does your content rank and should it rank? How do you, as an author, rank, and how do you rank in particular niches or verticals?

Michael: Okay. So I was going to ask you about author rank. Let me take a moment to talk about Google Plus. Nobody is actually on Google Plus. The only people on Google Plus are the people that want to rank well on Google.

Chad: Right, in many cases, yes, that is right.

Michael: It is frustrating. Let's take one example that I have. I run a website called iSixSigma.com. It is the number one publisher and community for Six Sigma professionals, which are process improvement professionals at large corporations. We serve about seventy percent of the fortune one hundred companies. And yes, we get a lot of shares on LinkedIn. If authors are on Facebook, we will get a lot of shares on Facebook, but in general, most people at corporations are not on Facebook because they are being monitored and they do not want to go onto social networks. Same is true for Twitter. It varies in some degree. But Google Plus - nobody is on Google Plus. I can see it from a corporation standpoint. So, am I just an exception to that Google Plus rule?

Chad: No. Yeah, you are correct. It is not a widespread option by any stretch, but you are starting to see it in certain verticals, and clearly the verticals that are related to SEO or people that understand that. You are seeing more and more of it. In fact, I did a search the other day for a phrase. Four out of the ten results showed up with an image next to it, which shows that the person there linked their content on their site to a Google Plus page. That is the only way to get your image to show up next to the content.

Michael: Okay. So Google really wants to see the authors who are on Google Plus promoted because, if I do a search on Seattle SEO and I see your picture and I know you, I am much more likely to click on it and potentially be more satisfied with the content and like Google more as a result of that.

Chad: I think it is their edge. They basically built their entire algorithm on links, and they have realized that it is tough. The war against links is one that they are always going to have. Links created a currency, right? I mean that is what a link is. They have created this market for links. And because of that, they have realized: "Well, yeah, we want you all to link, but it is a little tricky. It is kind of complicated now for us to regulate that, so we are going to add another layer of complexity, and that is author rank. And because of author rank, we are going to elevate certain content in certain areas because they are talent. We think they are very much the expert in that area." And I

think the reason they are doing that is because I think they think it is going to be a lot harder to game that than it is right now to game links.

Michael: It is a lot harder to game authorship of content than it is to game links.

Chad: Right.

Michael: Why would that be? Can't I just buy really crappy content and put it under my name, or am I less likely to do that because it has got my picture associated with it?

Chad: Yes, that is another good question, and once again, this is all supposition, but with a lot of it, I think that Google circles. And when you are having people add you on Google Plus, the bigger following you have, the more times you are shown. Like if you are showing up on guest posts on authoritative sites, like let's say you are in SEO and you are showing up on Search Engine Land or Aaron Wall and SEO Book. You get on there. You get on SEOMoz. You are getting into those additional locations. You are putting forth high quality content. Google will see that. You are going to have more people that are liking you. Now, granted, this is still so early because nobody is really doing it now.

Michael: Yeah.

Chad: Because of that, they are able to build a profile and use that profile to then kind of apply like a factor to your content, and then that will potentially elevate you above other people.

Michael: Yeah. Okay, so I should definitely be doing Google Authorship Program on Domain Sherpa?

Chad: Yeah. There is no reason not to now. I mean Google, unless for some reason they go away, is a dominant search provider, but I do not see that in the next five to ten years.

Michael: So is that a benefit to you? If I create this show and it is co-written by myself and you, and then I Google Author-Link you to this, and then you are tied to SEO.

Chad: That is right. If we both had a link to our Google Plus pages that was embedded in the content, yeah, we both would get benefit from that. You even more so, being on your site, and depending on how you set up the architecture of linking out your site and all your content, but yes.

Michael: Okay. All right. Well, I will look into doing that. Is it just as simple as linking to your Google Plus profile? That's it?

Chad: Yeah, there are different ways. Like we have built a lot of our sites on WordPress, so there are plugins that you can use, but it is really a back and forth linking. You have got two ways. You want to link the content on your site to your Google Plus page. On your Google Plus page, you want to also link out to the blogs where you are a regular provider of content. That is another way to tell Google: "Hey, these are the four or five sites that I contribute to on a regular basis."

Michael: Yeah, okay, that makes sense. All right. So, if you had to give advice to developers - people that are developing websites and people that are developing businesses - and they want to get a lot of traffic from search engines, what do they need to do differently today from a content perspective than what they did in the past?

Chad: I think the biggest thing is to step back and, before you jump into a project, do not just think about trying to get as much organic traffic as you can get. Step back and holistically look at why am I coming up with this project; is there a business concept behind it? Because, as I mentioned, with these updates, it is not so much just stepping back and saying: "I want to build this site. I want to get organic traffic." It is: "I want to build a business. Organic is one of the channels. I need to come up with great content on the site. I need to think about SEO, but I also need to think about is there a paid search that I need to be utilizing. Do I need to go to AdWords? Do I need to go to Bing or Yahoo? Facebook. Do I need to think about remarketing?" There is just a lot of different types of advertising that you need to consider.

Email campaigns and all these different things that a real company would do. So, it is not just SEO, where before you could literally come up with traffic. Get a site, throw it out there, and you would get a ton of organic traffic.

Michael: Right.

Chad: I would step back and say: "Is there a business purpose or is there a business case for why I am doing this?" And then all of those things will fall into place, but you have to kind of knock them off one by one.

Michael: Yeah. What if one of your customers says: "Yeah, I want to do all that stuff, but I want to make sure my SEO is done first because I know it takes time to mature"? What kind of content do I want to be writing today?

Chad: Depends on the vertical that you are in. So it depends on where you want to compete. If somebody comes to me and says: "I am Steve's Insurance Agency here, in Seattle, and I want to rank for Auto Insurance Quotes."

Michael: Seattle, yeah. Auto Insurance Seattle.

Chad: But Auto Insurance Seattle is little more realistic. Like if they at least had the ability to get more realistic, then I would say: "Okay. Yes, that is a possibility, but you need to step back and think." Organically, that phrase. If we looked at the progression of it over the last seven or eight years, I would show you an ever-failing real estate on the organic side because you look at Google Maps. You look at how much even the AdWords side has really taken up a lot of the real estate. I would say the Auto Insurance Seattle, number one, just from an overall standpoint, is not going to drag you as much traffic organically. So, yes, it is something that is important, but you need to think about Google Places or Google Local. Google Plus Local. You need to think about getting in the map, really, so you can drag that traffic because that is going to show above the organic listings probably ninety percent of the time if somebody types in Auto Insurance Seattle.

Michael: Yeah.

Chad: So, yes, it is important, and there are a lot of architecture things you need to setup on your site so you can rank for that. You need to think about doing some high quality link building, whether it is guest posting or a number of different ways that you can do link building, but you also need to think about your site design. Just a lot of the things a real business should think of before just thinking about organic SEO.

Michael: Yeah. Okay, so you can architect your site properly for SEO, and then you can go out and you can get into certain organizational directories. Like if you are into Auto Insurance, you can go join some auto insurance professional organization. You can get those sort of high quality directory links coming in.

Chad: That is right.

Michael: And you can go out and do guest posting. So you can go onto AAA.com - a known authoritative website - and you can publish good content. And if it is good and non-promotional, and actually provides value to readers and AAA publishes it, then that comes with a lot of value to your website. Not only in real people clicking through to your website and maybe the bio line, but also as passing through that link juice from AAA.com.

Chad: Yes.

Michael: Okay, so those are all the right ways to do SEO. Are the days when you could go onto EzineArticles.com and post there and spin out articles, and then post it onto a million different websites finally over?

Chad: From my perspective, yes, there are ways I think you can still do that. Without getting too technical, the way Penguin works is a batch process right now. I think it will slowly get rolled into the algorithm like Panda does, but the last Penguin update rolled in late September, early October. So you have these windows where you can exploit them, and the people in the high dog verticals are. And even if they get a site to rank for two months, or three months, or four months, it is worth a lot of money. So, at the very high level for certain things I think you can still exploit it, but it is not worth it for the

majority of people because why try to fight that. That window will continue to close down.

Michael: So, if you are building a real business, do not do any system that you can read on the web that says they are going to get you a thousand backlinks for a hundred dollars or they are going to spin a thousand articles from your one article that you have written and get it out and have all these links. None of that get-rich-quick, get-ranked-well-overnight system works long term.

Chad: No, it is quality over quantity. Definitely. They are driving that home big time.

Michael: How do people know if they hire an SEO consultant and they are a scammer versus they are a real quality provider?

Chad: Aaron Wall. I was just reading on SEOBook.com on his blog. It is a very authoritative and great site. And if you are in the SEO industry, almost everybody has read it. And so, he just had a great post. I did not get a chance to read all of it. It was right before our call here, but it was great SEO is expensive. It is not cheap. And that is part of the problem with a lot of the SEO practitioners out there; is that 55 dollars for one thousand backlinks sounds fabulous. I mean a small business owner does not have a lot of money. They are going to be like: "Okay, it is a quantity over quality game. Sign me up. I only have a couple hundred dollars to dedicate to SEO. Let's do this." And the problem is, is three years ago you might have achieved a bit of a benefit from that. In reality, it probably just did not do a whole lot. It did not help you. It did not hurt you. Now it can hurt you. You have to be very careful. That money that you spend. It is not like those links. Google had shifted their tact. You can use the Disavow Tool and you can go out and try to get people to remove links, but that is a painful situation to have to be in.

Michael: Yeah, and I have got some people that I know that have had to go and do that because they paid people hundreds of dollars or a couple thousand bucks and they just spun things out and put these terrible links out there. And I feel for them.

Chad: Yes, it is painful. I have dealt with a lot of people in the industry that has had to do the same thing, and it is a lot of work. Yeah.

Michael: Yeah. So, you have started a new company. It is a relatively new company called WordsForLess.com. What does WordsForLess.com do?

Chad: Great question. The two primary things that we do are content. Actually the core of the business is content. So, we do onsite content and we do offsite content for the purpose of guest posts.

Michael: Okay. So, your number one priority is to write good content on behalf of your customers.

Chad: That is right.

Michael: Why don't they just write it themselves? They are the experts on the topic.

Chad: Most of the time it is time and resources. So, we go back to our Bob's Bait and Tackle Shop example. Bob may be running his business ninety hours a week or eighty hours a week and only has so much time dedicated to writing quality articles for his site and/or doing any sort of guest posting or link building offsite. And so, somebody like that would hire us and we would contract. I will step back a little bit. WordsForLess, ninety percent of the time, works with other agencies.

Michael: So, agencies hire you to do the work.

Chad: Yes, that is right. They hire us to come up with great content. Promote the content strategy, like: What are the different things that we can write about for this client? What are the things that we can say? What are the things that we cannot say? What do they like to focus on? Who can we not link out to? Who can we link out to? Do they need internal links? Do we need to load this on their blog for them? Do they want image in the content. Do they need idea generation? Content is pretty messy. There is a lot of pain that goes into doing it and doing it well.

Michael: Yeah.

Chad: And that what we help with.

Michael: So you help with the entire strategy and set up a game plan - the tactics - that you are going to execute. And these are pretty much long term contracts. You are not coming in and writing a single article mostly. These are agencies who are working with large companies that need help. The agencies do a host of different services, including social media marketing, and video marketing, and buying ads, buying placements on TV, doing maybe public relations, and then they hire to help with the content creation.

Chad: That is exactly right. We are a piece of the puzzle for their service delivery. They will be providing the client with staff support every couple weeks or every month, and you are exactly right. It will have video creation. It will have local citations. It will have an media advisor and then, oh, by the way, here is the content we created for you on your site and here is any of the guest posting that we have done for you offsite.

Michael: So customers are basically coming to you and trading money for time. You can produce content that may be more in-depth, may be better polished, maybe have an infographic, maybe have something custom, maybe you do video, or whatever it is. You produce the content for them. How is that you know more about the content than the customer does, or do you work with the customer to get the content and then you write it?

Chad: A couple things. The first is you are right; we are never going to know the business better than the actual client, so we always leave it up to the client if they want to edit. Some clients are more hands-on. They will edit, and that is perfectly fine. But anybody who has ever gotten into writing realizes it is a lot easier to edit than it is to create.

Michael: It is.

Chad: And so some site owners and that is perfectly fine. They would get in there. If they want to edit or hack it up, we encourage that because it shows that they care and they are interested, and that they are responding to the

work that we are doing. So that is perfectly fine. The other way that we have not touched on a lot of is we manage the process through tools and through software. So, we have a dashboard for our agencies. They can login. They can track the status of every piece of content. They can see where it is at from a work in process standpoint. And from the very beginning, is it writing? Has it been edited? After it has been edited, has it been posted out to a site? Has it been loaded up with an image? They can look at all those different statuses and see: "Okay, where is it at and how are we doing," and then they can communicate that to their end client.

Michael: Yeah, it is a slick workflow system that you have showed me in the past. And it is similar to an ODesk or something like that, where you might hire a writer to do a single or multi-piece, but it actually goes more in-depth.

Chad: Right.

Michael: And being a Publisher myself and working with a team of editors, and then authors on top of that and our own Editorial Team, I know that it is a painful process to produce great content, and having the right tools are important in doing that. So, I understand your business. I understand the business model. Do you mainly work with customers that are long term? If I came in and I said, "Hey Chad, I need these two article," will you work on a per-article basis or are you mainly working long term with companies?

Chad: We work on a per-article basis, so we will take those orders. That is fine. It is not a problem. I mean clearly we are looking for an agency-type relationship or a larger business that will keep us around on a sustainable recurring basis, but we will take those. That is fine. I mean it just depends. We may not be the right fit. In some cases, like you said, going to an ODesk, a text broker, or other third party, if you want to go through a lot of those steps yourself and if you do not have the budget to hire somebody like us, that totally makes sense.

Michael: Sure.

Chad: But like you said, you have to then endure kind of that pain on your own, which as we both know, everything from finding the right writer to editing to coming up with the topics, it is a lot of work.

Michael: It is. And good content is not cheap. I can go on to ODesk and hire somebody to write an article about Bainbridge Island, where I live, and it will probably be decent because there is a lot of content out there on Wikipedia or various sites that can be assimilated and created and people can get a feel. But if I have to hire somebody to write a technical article for iSixSigma.com, they are not going to be able to get it unless they go out to the library and do the research or unless they go buy some books because the library does not have a lot of books on this - a very technical business-oriented topic. And they cannot get it online. So, if they are only going online to do their research and then write something, it is going to be crappy.

Chad: Yeah.

Michael: It just not going to be good content.

Chad: That is right. Yeah, you got to pay for good content. When you are getting something very technical like SixSigma, you are up probably ten, fifteen, or maybe even twenty cents a word range. And that sounds like a lot, but if they are coming up with a very compelling article, it is worth it to you, because you are going to get a lot of traffic. It gives you a lot of professional credibility.

Michael: Definitely. So, what are the sweet spots for WordsForLess? Where do you like to operate and where is it not a good fit if somebody wants good content created? How much do you charge? What kind of word lengths? What kind of topics?

Chad: Yeah, good question. So, the typical article is about maybe five hundred to seven hundred and fifty words. It just depends. We are doing a project for another agency and they want everything to be one thousand to fifteen hundred. But then you kind of break it down to a per-word cost. We usually start around eight cents a word, which is on the high end. If you go to a marketplace or any broker, you are going to probably start at three to four

cents. But like I said, because of all the extra things that we are doing it and managing it, that complete, from our perspective, justifies the cost. And it shows because a lot of the agencies continue to keep ordering from us. But that is the starting point for onsite content. For offsite content as a guest post, it will start around eighty-five dollars for a guest post. It can go up. We just placed one. I cannot say where, but it was fifteen hundred dollars. It just depends on where somebody wants it, what it takes to create it, where it is going to eventually end up, who the audience is, and what the vertical is. Take Six Sigma - that is a lot more difficult to write about than if somebody comes to us and wants to write a piece on a celebrity.

Michael: So, there is a lot companies out there that sell training - Six Sigma Training. A lot of the universities have gotten into this, and there are organizations out there that just sell leads to universities. So, if one of them comes to you and says: "Hey Chad, I want to be published on iSixSigma.com because it is the largest community and they have peer review, and it is really difficult. But if I get an article through, I know it will have a lot of value," that would be your perfect client, right?

Chad: Yes, that is right.

Michael: So then they would come to you and say: "I do not know what to write about to get onto iSixSigma." How would you even handle that?

Chad: Some of our clients or agencies will come to us and it is not so much they have just a specific site in mind. They might say: "Well, we want to get on a particular range of text sites. We want to get on a particular industry-specific site. It does not have to be this one, but we want sites like this." And then, yeah, I mean we would have to quote them. It is really a custom project at that point, where we would have to go do the leg work to try to make a connection, see if we can get in the door, and then we have to come up with the content that is quality enough that will be accepted at that site. And it is a lot of hard work to do that.

Michael: It is, and it is a lot of work that may not pay off. You may actually write a great article that might not be accepted.

Chad: Yeah.

Michael: Or it might not be accepted for six months based on their editorial queue, or who knows what. Do you still get paid either way because you are still doing the work and still pounding the pavement?

Chad: Yeah. Well, the way we structure our range (Unclear 50:50.7) is we will do a little bit of homework ourselves, so we will find out if this is even feasible. Somebody comes to us and says: "Okay, I want an article in New York Times," well, that is not going to happen unless they have an in or they have somebody that they know.

Michael: Right.

Chad: If they take step down and look at some of the sites that are below that, they still are very, very strong. Maybe they have a niche following. We will contact them, maybe will do a little bit of groundwork, and then we will quote them. We will say: "Okay, we think it is going to cost X for us to come up with the piece, create it, and then approach them and then go from there." In some cases, we might have an existing relationship, so we will know. Okay, yes, we can get in there, but it just depends. Our ad network sprung up very popular in the last ten to fifteen years. We are not a content network because we do not own or operate the sites that we work with. It is a very manual relationship, but we are sort of a virtual manual network from the standpoint of we are connecting people who want content and publishers, and we are connecting those dots so they can get content out to different locations.

Michael: Yeah. So the whole idea is really good content and, being a publisher of content, you know good from not good, and then you either put it on somebody's website so they will get more links coming in because it is really good content or go find great websites and get it onto those websites and build those relationships, and get it published, and work it out, and work out any issues they have. And basically you are doing that for a fee. But anybody can go do that. If I run an SEO company, I can go contact Aaron Wall and say: "Hey Aaron, I would like to guest post on SEOblog. Are there any topics that you feel are missing? I would love to write a really in-depth piece,

which has original research and stuff like that. I know you cannot guarantee me the placement, but if I provide you a great article, will you at least review it?" And of course he is going to say yes, and then I actually have to go and write it. So anybody can do what you are doing.

Chad: Yes.

Michael: It is not rocket science. You are just saying really good content is probably going to be shared a lot on social media. It is probably going to have a lot of links coming back. And if it gets published on an authoritative website like SEOBook.com, you are going to get an authoritative link back to your site.

Chad: Yes, small business owners should be doing that. But like you said, it goes back to the question: do they have the time and do they have the resources?

Michael: Right.

Chad: But if they do have the time and inclination, even before you go out and hire a company, even like ourselves, you probably should do some of that work yourself to find out and see: is it something that you like doing? Are you able to do it? Are you capable? Are you getting much traction? And then you can figure out okay, either yes, this is great and I'm good at it - I have a sort of natural proclivity to doing this and I enjoy it - or it is painful and I need to get somebody else involved.

Michael: Yeah.

Chad: And even with the agencies that we work with, they will often do this themselves, but there is just so much volume of work they are getting, they use us kind of as overflow. So, that is very common.

Michael: So do you call this content marketing? What do you call this?

Chad: That is a pretty good phrase to use for what we are doing.

Michael: Yeah.

Chad: We are content generation and content creation, but it also is content marketing. I mean it is still into the guys of SEO because that is the purpose. I am not going to sugarcoat that aspect, but that is the new sort of phrase that a lot of people are using for what we are doing; is content marketing.

Michael: Yeah. But then it also has the additional benefit that you can take that really good content and you can package it up as a book or a pamphlet, and take it with you to conferences that you are speaking at or you have a booth at. Or if you actually meet with a client, you can put it in a nice, beautiful folio and give it to them so it makes you look like you are the expert that you are. There are a lot of additional benefits to that content for marketing that is beyond the benefit of online. But basically, Google is looking at this content marketing online and saying: "Only the people that really care about this are going to put in the money, and the time, and the resources to do it."

Chad: That is right. It is a higher barrier to entry. And like you said, there is so many other purpose. Yes, we do stuff for onsite and offsite content, but we are getting approached for lots of different types of projects. We have a medical company that came to us and said, "We want to write a learning series about our products. Yes, we know the product very well. We do not have the time to come up with thirty articles or fifty articles that are just going to walk through each of these products and how they are going to benefit nurses and hospitals." So, we are doing that. So there are lots of other types of projects that we are starting to take on rather than just developing content for somebody's site or blog.

Michael: Awesome. All right, here is the final question, Chad. We understand that content has a higher barrier to entry and Google has always said, "We want good content. We want that good content to flow to the top. That is what makes our business worthwhile and that is how we can charge advertisers to be on our site." So, if good content is the future of Google and getting the search engine optimized traffic - the organic traffic - from search engines, what is the future of content marketing? Will it always be just good written text? Do people need to start looking at video and/or audio?

Chad: Visual content already has started to take off. If you or your audience is familiar with infographics, that is a huge industry. We work with some infographic companies to help distribute infographics. Once they get created, try to find external sites to work with them. Video, yes. I mean creating video for your site is very compelling just from a user experience standpoint. If somebody comes onto your site, they want to understand what your product, your business, and what your service is. If they can watch a video and interact with it, that is a very enjoyable experience, and most people are going to do that. And so, yes, content is not just words, and text, and images. It is shifting to video and other more dynamic forms of content.

Michael: Yeah. All right. If you have questions for Chad, please post them in the comments below this video and we will ask him to come back and answer as many as he can. Whether it is related to content marketing, search engine optimization, his business, where the future is going - any of those questions, come post them. You can follow WordsForLess on Twitter at [Twitter.com/Words_For_Less](https://twitter.com/Words_For_Less). Chad, if people want to contact you and say thank you for coming on the show and educating us about SEO and where Google, and Bing, and Yahoo are heading in the future, what is the best way they can do that?

Chad: Email is probably the best way. I would just send an email to Info@WordsForLess.com. I am on for that email all the time and yeah, very easy. I am very happy to respond to any questions.

Michael: Excellent.

Chad Fisher, Co-Founder of WordsForLess.com. Thank you for coming on the show and sharing your strategies and tactics for ranking well on the Internet, and thanks for being a Domain Sherpa.

Chad: No problem at all, Mike. Thanks for having me.

Michael: Thank you all for watching. We'll see you next time.

Watch the full video at:

<http://www.domainsherpa.com/chad-fisher-wordsforless-interview/>