

Preparing for the Inevitable Availability of Recreational Marijuana – With Noel Abbott

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Medical marijuana is legal in twenty states, but non-medicinal marijuana is only legal in two states so far. One of which is my home state of Washington. So, I have found an entrepreneur who has placed a bet on legal marijuana domain names and built a fledgling business around it. We are going to learn what he has done, how he has done it, and how you might want to do the same in your state. Stay tuned.

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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 and entrepreneur directly from the experts.

In November 2012, my home state of Washington passed Initiative 502, which allows adults over the age of twenty-one to legally possess up to an ounce of marijuana and to legally consume it. As with any discontinuity in business or technology, or society, this represents an opportunity for entrepreneurs. But how do you take advantage of this opportunity? That is the question we are going to answer on today's show.

Joining us to answer this question is Noel Abbott, Founder of THC Media Group. Noel, welcome to the show.

Noel Abbott: Hi, thanks Michael, great to be here.

Michael: It is great to have a local Washingtonian on here too. In what city are you located?

Noel: I am in Bellingham right now. I actually grew up near here, in a smaller town, and then I moved away for college and came back. And instead of moving to my small, rural hometown, I chose a larger, kind of younger culture.

Michael: Bellingham has that. It is a nice area. So I want to start by setting the background and scope for today's discussion about marijuana. Today's show, we are going to talk mainly about non-medicinal marijuana. Medicinal marijuana, I think, has been talked about and it is regulated heavily, and we are not talk about that. We are talking about non-medicinal marijuana or - I don't know what you call it - pleasure marijuana. It is like alcohol. Being able to go to a store, buy alcohol or marijuana, and then come home and enjoy it. But if you have some knowledge or statistics about medical marijuana industry that might help us better understand where we are heading with the marijuana industry, please feel free to share that, Noel.

Noel: Certainly.

Michael: All right. So, Washington State passed this Initiative in late 2012, and now we are in mid-2013. Are there any marijuana stores open yet?

Noel: No. The original timeline from I-502 was to have the retail outlets open in December of this year. I have been following the Washington State Liquor Control Board's progress very carefully, and they have, of course, encountered many more obstacles than were anticipated, and so, now, I think the target date for the retail stores being open and for normal Washington citizens to be able to walk in and buy marijuana from a store is sometime in March or April. I think the licenses will be issued in December as of now.

Michael: All right, so December 2013, licenses will be issued to stores. So, for example, if I wanted to run a liquor store, up until last year, we had to go to a Washington State-run liquor store to purchase our hard alcohol. Wine and beer, you could buy at a grocery store, but you had to go to a State-controlled liquor store to buy. That was changed last year as well, so now you can go and you can buy hard alcohol - vodka, tequila - at the supermarket. And so, in a similar fashion, if I want to run a liquor store, I need to go get licensed from - what did you call it?

Noel: The Washington State Liquor Control Board.

Michael: Now, is that same board controlling marijuana going forward?

Noel: Yes. So, the funny thing is, is they have been managing the liquor market in Washington since their creation, and this whole process of legalizing and regulating marijuana sales was just kind of pushed upon them by I-502. And of course no one really has experience with legal recreational marijuana, so they are kind of improvising. They have been having a lot of debates and discussions that are open to the public, and I have been sort of tuning in to those. They publish the audio online. And it seems like they are making progress in developing a system. As to whether or not it is going to be a good system, there are vastly different opinions on it.

Michael: Yeah. Okay, so that is the keyword phrase I was looking for. Recreational marijuana. You do not call it recreational drinking, but

recreational marijuana is pretty much the phrase that describes the use of marijuana for non-medicinal purposes, right?

Noel: Yes.

Michael: Okay. So, we are going to talk about what you are doing next, but let's try to put some scope around it. Do you know how big the medicinal marijuana market is in the United States?

Noel: It is pretty big. I know that there are questions as to how accurate all of the data is, but I know that, in Washington, in cities that have given medical marijuana dispensaries the go ahead to open up shops, they have just kind of sprung up everywhere. I was on this website the other day. WeedMaps.com, which is a sort of search engine for medical marijuana patients to find and review dispensaries. And that is actually the company that bought Marijuana.com a few years ago, I think, for 4.2 million dollars or something. If you look at Seattle on WeedMaps, there is well over a hundred dispensaries, just for the medical market in Seattle right now.

Michael: Wow. Yeah, all right.

Noel: I think the market is probably bigger than most of the estimates have been.

Michael: Yeah, so I am just trying to put a number around it. Do you think it is a hundred million dollar industry or a five hundred million dollar industry?

Noel: Just for the State?

Michael: Yeah, just for the State. What do you think?

Noel: I would not be surprised if it was in that range.

Michael: Yeah. Okay, and so do you think the recreational marijuana industry is going to be larger or smaller?

Noel: I personally think that it will be larger. I think that the majority of people who consume marijuana recreationally have not gone to the trouble of going and trying to find a reason why they would be medically certifiable to consume it and gone through the with doctors appointment, and then all of the paper work. I think that most of the people who are consuming are just doing it illegally, as they have been for a really long time.

Michael: Yeah. All right. So let's talk about what you are doing. I ran across a press release of yours, and it must have crossed my desk because you mentioned domain names in it, and then I saw that you were a local Washington company and I had to reach out to you. So you put out a press releasing, saying, "THC Media Group had launched." What is THC?

Noel: THC, well, in my company name, stands for Twin Helix Company, but THC is the active ingredient also, and that was part of the reason why I chose that brand name.

Michael: Yeah, and so what does THC Media Group do?

Noel: THC Media Group is going to be a one-stop solution for cannabis entrepreneurs to get their business online and to create a following on social media, and to have a website and email marketing; pretty much everything that they would need for their business to attract attention on the Internet.

Michael: Excellent. So, people are going to have to figure out a lot of things when they are starting up a marijuana business, because there is no model for them to look at.

Noel: Exactly.

Michael: It is not like starting an automotive repair business or a nail service business, or something like that, where they can go out and look at other people who are doing it, decide what they like and what they do not like, and figure out how they want to run their business. It is entirely new, so they need to figure out everything. And what you are saying is you can take all of the marketing and promotion for their online cannabis business of their plate and do it for a service.

Noel: Yes, that will be one option. The other option will be to have access to our platform so that they can utilize all of these tools in one location and manage their online marketing themselves. They could also hire us to manage all that for them.

Michael: Got you, so you are building a software as a service platform that will allow them to service their whole business themselves?

Noel: It is going to be that. It is not something that I am developing from scratch. I am sort of creating partnerships to put together a service that will encompass everything that they need.

Michael: Excellent. But if somebody comes to you and says, "Noel, I see you have some domain names. I want to start up a marijuana shop in Tacoma," what can you do for them?

Noel: I have several of the cannabis keyword domain names for Tacoma, so that could be a starting point, if they came specifically wanting the domain name first. And from there, I would be able to develop a website, setup all of their social media, create custom social media pages with apps that sort of are tailored to businesses to have a more unique social media presence, be able to setup their email marketing, and then also help them come up with ideas to sort of get their business out in the press and get attention beyond social media and email marketing.

Michael: Nice. Well, it seems like you are definitely a one-stop shop. Right now I have got a browser open. I am on your website, THCDomains.com, and I am looking at all of the domains that you have listed, which are a lot. Now I am looking at your generics, so you have things like THCTesters.com, Go420.com, GoGanja.com, and WeedCritic.com, I guess for somebody that wants to smoke every different type of weed and give their review of it.

Noel: There will probably be a market for that.

Michael: That could be a good job. Let's See. HydroponicsBox. So, people that want to buy everything in a box, you have got a domain for them.

Noel: Yeah, and a lot of these domain names are actually people who I have partnered with to commission their portfolio. I sort of put out a press release a while back that was to recruit people who were domain name collectors in the marijuana niche, because what I wanted to build was a very large collection for entrepreneurs to choose from when they decided that they were at that stage in their business.

Michael: Right.

Noel: I do own quite a few of my own, which was partially what started the whole THC Media Group Project. After the Initiative passed, in November of 2012, I stayed up all night buying domain names for various cities in Washington. All of the cannabis and marijuana keyword domain names.

Michael: Yeah. So, I am going to ask you about your domains and what domains you have, and how you are partnering and how many domains you have, and I want to understand how you are working with other people that might want to take advantage of what you are offering as a result of the package, because I think that is going to really appeal to entrepreneurs who are starting their business. They do not just want a domain name. They want access to a website and social media, and services and things like that. So, let me ask you about that. So, prior to starting THC Media Group and THCDomains, your background was not in the domain name industry, was it?

Noel: No, I was pretty much exclusively pursuing website development projects. I graduated college in 2008, and pretty quickly realized that my Degree in Creative Writing was not going to lead to very many job opportunities, so I sort of fell back on the fact that I had always enjoyed playing around with HTML and I familiarized myself with some of the popular content management systems that were out there. And I just sort of started pursuing freelance online web design gigs. I had some very strange clients along the way. Some of the weirdest ones were a taxi cab driver in San Francisco, who wanted to run for office, and then there was a woman who was a colin hydrotherapist. So it was a very interesting mix of people.

Michael: How did they people find you, Noel?

Noel: A lot of it was me seeking out jobs on platforms like Elance.com and Craigslist. Local companies. And eventually I wound up pairing up with a few of my friends from high school, who wound up living in Bellingham as well. And when I found out that they were involved in areas that related to online marketing and graphic design and website development, I sort of teamed up with them and we created a local business here, in Bellingham. HappyChap Media, where we offer affordable website development to smaller businesses, who either do not have a website or who maybe had one built ten years ago.

Michael: And they want to update it.

Noel: Look at their competitors and realize that they need to upgrade.

Michael: Right, and what was the name of that company?

Noel: It is HappyChap Media.

Michael: Cool. All right. HappyChap.com.

Noel: HappyChapMedia.com.

Michael: Okay. And so, along the way, you had a customer that was in the medicinal marijuana industry. Is that correct?

Noel: Yes. Yeah, I was approached by a dispensary in Seattle, who wanted a website, and so I wound up building it for them. And then it occurred to me that there was this whole industry of businesses who needed websites, and so I started focusing on that and thinking about it quite a bit more. And I knew that the I-502 Initiative was on the ballot, and so I had started thinking about it vaguely in advance, and then, when it passed, I decided I was going to create a new project to focus entirely on that.

Michael: So you did not buy any domain names related to this new business - THCMediaGroup.com - until the Initiative actually passed.

Noel: Yes, that is correct.

Michael: See, that is the difference between you and me, Noel, and I credit you for doing this; is that I remember the day the ballots were due. I had my ballot catalogue that describes all the Initiatives, and I was going online and reading more information, and then I ran into the 502 and I was researching how I wanted to vote on it. And I thought: "Here is an opportunity. I probably wasted too much time. I am going to go online and see what kinds of domain names are available." And I think I typed in WashingtonMarijuana.com and WAMarijuana.com, and maybe a couple others, and they were all taken, so I was like: "All right, I waited too long. I am just going to vote and be done with it." But you did not and you registered a lot of domain names at that point in time. How many domain names did you register related to this new business?

Noel: That first night, I think I stayed up until about five or six in the morning, and I registered close to a hundred domain names. I think I almost spent my rent money on it. So, yeah, that was the first round, and then a few months later, I had saved up some more money and I started checking out domain names that were not necessarily all about cities and kind of started brainstorming if there were product ideas that no one had thought of yet, but that were (Unclear 17:09.0) come into existence eventually.

Michael: Like hydroponics in a box, or something like that.

Noel: Yes.

Michael: So, the first hundred that you bought with your rent money - that was pretty much geographic domain names?

Noel: Yes, I looked up the cities in Washington with the highest populations and kind of just used that as a short list, and wound up buying stuff like EverettMarijuana.com and KentMarijuana.com, and BellinghamMarijuana. The biggest cities had already been taken, probably by someone with a little more foresight, who probably bought all the cities with very large populations across the US.

Michael: Right, but when I go to your Geographics Domains tab on THCDomains.com, I can see that you do have domains. You do not actually list them, it looks like, but you have domains in the cities of Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane, Olympia, Everett, Vancouver, Kent, Auburn, Mercer Island, Bellingham, Federal Way, Renton, and then you also have some in Colorado. Denver, Fort Collins, and Boulder. So you were able to get some in the other state that is legal as well,

Noel: Yeah, I kind of went through both States. All the largest cities and tried to snatch up the ones that I could find.

Michael: So, what do you think are some of your best domains? What are your favorites?

Noel: The ones that I own personally - some of my favorites I think are beyond just the geographic domain names. I think those will definitely have a market, but it is a ways off. I think the ones that I got that are - let's see. MarijuanaIndustryData.com and the same for Cannabis and HempIndustryData. I think that with all of these businesses that are starting up in this sort of investment frenzy that is going to happen, there is going to be people scrambling for data, and there really is not very much out there. But if someone was able to build a large amount of data, they could use a website like that to create a business.

Michael: Definitely. Yeah, and I could see some of the domains that you bought that were in your second around that are more brandable and some of them that are more produce and service oriented. Like I can see StrongestMarijuana.com. I can envision somebody who just wants like the most potent marijuana possible, or there is MellowMarijuana that just wants to smoke it and just mellow out. So you definitely put a lot of thought into how people are going to be searching for marijuana.

Noel: Yeah, one that I think is pretty funny is CannabisBedAndBreakfast.com.

Michael: That is a good one.

Noel: It could well be a thriving tourism industry around it.

Michael: Yeah. So, how many, in total, domain names do you think you and your company owns right now?

Noel: Probably close to 250 or 300, and then plus quite a few more from the people who have hired me to broker sales.

Michael: Okay. Well, let me ask you about geo domain names one more time. So, you have got geo domains. Let's see here. Actually, I do not see a lot of the geos. Like you have got BellevuePot.com, EverettPot, KentPot, IssaquahMarijuana.com, and things like that. Did you go city plus the keyword .COM or did you go keyword, then city .COM?

Noel: If they were both available, I would buy them both.

Michael: What is your thought process around that?

Noel: I am planning on offering regional exclusivity to businesses who want to own all of the most relevant keyword domain names in their area so that they can know that no one will have confusion about their domain name if they have, say, EverettMarijuana.com and someone else has MarijuanaEverett.com. So, that was the thinking behind getting all of the variations.

Michael: Yeah.

Noel: And on some of the larger cities, I wound up buying a few .ORGs and .NETs as well.

Michael: Yeah, and so I see a few of them listed there. But most of them, probably - what - 95% of the domains I can see are .COM.

Noel: Yeah.

Michael: Were the .ORGs and .NETs in really popular keyword phrases, or what was your thought process around the .NET and .ORGs?

Noel: In those cases, it was mostly cities like Seattle and Tacoma, where the .COMs were taken, but I knew the .NETs would have some inherent value because the markets were going to be so much larger in those cities.

Michael: Got you. Did you use keyword density tools to determine what keywords might be more beneficial, like if you type in 'Seattle Marijuana' or 'Seattle Ganja' to see which one more (Unclear 22:21.3)?

Noel: Yeah, I did a bit of research. I think that marijuana is the keyword that is more prevalent, but in my experience, looking up different websites and seeing which ones ranks for certain phrases, marijuana and cannabis seem to be on a similar playing field in what gets ranked in Google. I do not think Google classifies word like ganja and pot and weed with as high of a value.

Michael: Yeah, and those come with negative connotations also, so I am not sure. It is hard to tell because none of this has happened yet, but for people that want to use legal recreational marijuana - would they actually use pot or would they actually use ganja, or one of the phrases that is slang on the street?

Noel: It is hard to say. I think that, of course, there is going to be a market for the slang. I do not think the culture surrounding the people who consume marijuana is going to change, so there probably will be stores that use words like pot and weed. But I think that in terms of the reputability that that might suffer a little bit, when you see a sign that says local weed versus cannabis club or something like that.

Michael: Right. Yeah, and cannabis is hard to spell and marijuana is kind of long, but at least I can sound that one out and spell it a little bit easier than cannabis I think. So, since you put out your initial press release - well, your first press release, and then the one that I saw -, how many other domain name registrants have contacted you to partner with you on your venture?

Noel: Actually, quite a few. I think I get maybe three or four inquiries a week at this point.

Michael: Wow.

Noel: But most of the people who are contacting me maybe have two or three domain names, and they phrase it as: "Do you want to buy this domain name?" And right now I am not looking to buy domain names, especially ones that are already registered and that people are looking to flip. So, most of the people that contact me, I wind up turning down, but I think maybe five or six collectors, who have pretty large collections, have contacted me and I have partnered with them to display them on the website.

Michael: Nice. So, what kind of relationship do you create with them? Is it a legal one? Do you have an agreement? Is there a defined commission structure? How does that work?

Noel: There is a defined commission structure. And right now I am handling all of the communications that come in from potential buyers, so I would not necessarily make them sign a contract until I had a buyer who was ready to sell.

Michael: Got it. And because they are contacting you anyways, you do not need to necessarily lock it up.

Noel: Yeah, and I did not want to run the risk of scaring people away by locking them into an exclusivity deal or charging them money to advertise on my website. I just wanted to have the most relevant and best domain names available for people to choose from.

Michael: Definitely. And the more complete your list is, the bigger the venture you look like, so you win as well and you are not locking anything. So, if a domain name investor wants to sell a domain name that is listed on your website, that is their prerogative as well, right?

Noel: Yeah.

Michael: Excellent. So let's say that a domain name sells through your website. What kind of commission structure do you take on that?

Noel: It would depend on the price. Right now, the way I have it set is it is pretty much the commission starts out higher for lower-priced domain names, and then for higher-priced domain names, it caps off at about fifteen percent.

Michael: Okay. And what happens if somebody has a great geographic domain name that they want to lease? They do not want to sell it, so they want to maintain ownership and they just want to turn it into a cash annuity, which is something that you do because you do services. You create a website for a fee, but then you will also charge ongoing marketing expenses. Is that something that they can do through you as well?

Noel: I would definitely consider that. It has not been something that I have fleshed out yet, primarily because there are still five or six months before these entrepreneurs are probably really going to get started on working on their new business.

Michael: Right.

Noel: But that is definitely something that I would consider, and it is definitely something that I am considering for the geographic domain names that I already own.

Michael: Got it. So, you have not made any sales yet. You are doing all of this preparation work in anticipation of the entrepreneurs going out, getting registered in late this year, in December, could fall to next year, and then starting up next year sometime.

Noel: Yeah, that is where I am at right now. I have had a few offers, but they have mostly been low, and I think that the value of the domain names is not really evidenced yet. We still have to kind of wait and see what the industry looks like and whether or not there is going to be some kind of massive crackdown from the Federal Government, but I think it is unlikely and I have a good feeling that there is going to be quite a competitive market in the next year or so.

Michael: Yeah. Well, it is interesting, because the State can legalize it, but marijuana stays in your system longer than alcohol. And if you have a job that requires drug testing and no drug use, then even though it is legal, you could get fired for it. So, there are still all these ramifications around employment law and the Federal Government could overrule the State Government and say, "No, you cannot sell recreational marijuana." Anything is possible, would you say now, Noel?

Noel: As far as the Federal Government trying to overturn the Initiative that the State passed, I do not think that is going to happen. But it is still illegal at the Federal level, and they have not really made clear what their position on the concept of a recreational marijuana industry is.

Michael: Yeah.

Noel: I know that in the medical marijuana industry, the Federal Government has historically only cracked down on people who they suspect of funneling drugs into illegal channels as well as the people who become so high profile that they are just clearly making millions and millions of dollars, and they become the big targets that the DEA focuses on.

Michael: Right. Understood. All right. And so, if shops can start to open up in March/April of 2014, will they be able to basically open up their shop and have marijuana delivered from, I guess, some other state where you can grow it, and then will they start selling it immediately, do you think?

Noel: The marijuana will actually all be produced in Washington, and they are going to have a seed-to-sale tracking system. That was one of the most recent announcements from the Washington State Liquor Control Board; is they announced a request for proposals from software developers for someone to develop a tracking system so that they can have a specific seed and track it all the way from where the plant grows, people harvest it, and then they can track it all the way to when it is sold at a retail outlet.

Michael: Wow.

Noel: So they want to make very certain that no marijuana is coming in from outside sources and especially that no marijuana is coming in from, say, the medical marijuana industry, where it is much less regulated. In fact, there is basically no regulation.

Michael: Wow. So, medicinal marijuana shops can grow their own weed, and they do not want them to grow extra and then sell it through legal channels, like recreational marijuana shops, for example.

Noel: I think the way that the medical marijuana industry works in Washington right now is that the patients are actually the ones who produce the marijuana, and you are allowed to grow up to a certain number of plants. And they can form growing collectives, but I do not think that it is allowed for, say, the collective to grow it in the same location that they sell it. I could be mistaken on that, but I think that there are loose regulations that are sort of vaguely enforced, but there is sort of a separation between the production and the distribution. But in the recreational market, it is going to be very defined. There are going to be growers' licenses, processors' licenses, and then retail licenses. And I do not think you will be able to operate in more than one of those areas if you were going to have a license.

Michael: Wow, they are really creating a lot of bureaucracy there, aren't they?

Noel: Yeah.

Michael: I guess they got rid of some of their bureaucracy with alcohol, so they need to create more with marijuana. Growers, processors, and then retail. What kind of delay are we going to see? How long does it take to grow a marijuana plant? How long might it take in order to actually have retail store selling it if they got a license today, for example?

Noel: If they got a license today, they would be on track for opening the stores in December, which was the original plan. I think, since they are issuing the licenses in December, it will take three to three and a half months for the first products to actually wind up on the shelves at the stores.

Michael: Okay. All right, so three different types of licenses. And the retailers are the ones you are pretty much focused on. Do you see any opportunity in the growers and the processors areas as well?

Noel: I do. I think that the retailers are not the only businesses that are going to need online marketing. I think that for growers and processors, the processors especially are going to be people who develop specialty products; like certain edible infused products and they might want to build a brand around their bakery or something like that. So, there is, I think, a high likelihood that businesses involved in the other areas of this industry are also going to need websites and online marketing.

Michael: Yeah, MarijuanaCookies. I should check that out, right?

Noel: I am pretty that has already been taken. There is MarijuanaMuffin I think.

Michael: I like that alliteration too. That is a good one. Awesome. Okay, so three different types of licenses. You think that you are going to need services in the entire life cycle of the marijuana sales. Excellent. And so, you are in it for the long haul. You have thrown down three thousand dollars in domain name registrations. You have got a beautiful website up and running. You have got some partnerships that are working on this. You are going to pay another year of registrations fees before you even see maybe your first customer. Does it make you a little nervous to start off a brand new business being relatively young and locking up a lot of capital like this without any revenue coming in?

Noel: I still have a day job, but I think I am fairly confident that this is going to happen whether or not there is a Federal crackdown. I think it would be just sort of beyond the scope of logistic ability for them to crackdown on every single business that opens up in this new industry. So, I think that, given that, right now, I am leading for the keywords that I want to lead for and that I already have so much momentum, I am in a good position to build a customer base at the beginning of next year.

Michael: Nice. And Colorado was the first State to become legalized. Is that correct?

Noel: Well, just because of the timezones really. It happened the same night.

Michael: It happened the exact same day.

Noel: Yeah.

Michael: Okay. And are they moving any faster than Washington, would you say?

Noel: I believe so. I have not followed their process as closely as I have for Washington, but I know that the original plan was for them to start opening retail stores this summer. So, I am not sure if they have encountered delays. I certainly have not seen headlines recently about being able to buy pot recreationally in Colorado, but I do know that the original timeline was going to have them opening up their industry before Washington.

Michael: Got you. All right. And so, there is not a lot defined around recreational marijuana use. If people watching this show think the domain name industry is the Wild Wild West, the marijuana industry has got to be the new world, and so there is nothing around how you should do marketing and what is sort of an ethical standard, but you have had thoughts around defining ethical standards for marijuana and cannabis marketing. What are you thinking in that area, Noel?

Noel: Yeah, we are putting together a proposal for ethical standards when marketing cannabis and marijuana. I think it is going to overlap very much so with the ethical standards that are out regarding tobacco and alcohol. Clearly you want to be very careful about advertising the product in such a way that would be appealing to someone who is underage, and I also think it should not be the goal of cannabis advertisers to convert smokers. If someone wants to go out and buy marijuana, they can choose to do that and they do not need help from an advertisement to make that decision for the first time. So I think a lot of the trends that apply to tobacco and alcohol are going to be really

important for advertisers in the new industry to keep in mind when they are marketing cannabis use and selling marijuana.

Michael: Excellent. And where can they go? Will you have that on your website - THCMediaGroup.com - when that is available?

Noel: Yes, that will be coming out, I think, within the next week. It has been a work in progress. I am still doing a lot of research and figuring out the best way to phrase things, but it is nearing completion and it is something that we will be publishing very soon.

Michael: Excellent. All right, Noel, so here is the last question that I have for you. It is regarding domain names in general. You have been a web developer professionally for years. You understand how to build an online presence in its entirety. How important are the domain names? Clearly we have talked about the three hundred or so domain names that you have purchased. How important is a domain name for getting found, for brand recognition, for creating an online presence for these new ventures that are coming out? Can they just pick up any domain MI or MAWA.com, Marijuana Washington acronym? Will that be as good as a generic keyword domain name?

Noel: I personally think that the keyword domain names are better. As far as what is going to perform the best for search engine optimization purposes, that is always going to be influx. I think that Google is really honing in on the fact that they care the most about user friendliness and positive experience from the user, so the domain name, I think, is secondary to the brand that you build and the website that you create. But I still do think that having a generic keyword domain name, especially a geographic-based domain name for a retail store is going to help them out quite a bit.

Michael: Yeah, and does the retail store need to actually be named that same domain name? So, if I buy RentonMarijuana.com, does my business actually need to be named Renton Marijuana?

Noel: I do not think it is crucial, but I think that there is a sense, at least right now, in the way that search engines classify things, where if your domain name says one thing and the name of your business is something else, that

you might get deemed for trustworthiness on that. But I think that people should not be thinking that that is absolutely what they need to do.

Michael: Right. Yeah, because in the real estate industry, we see it every time. There is like a thousand retailers for every large city, and they cannot all have the city plus real estate .COM.

Noel: Yeah, exactly.

Michael: And Google characterizes those differently. Excellent. All right, if you have a follow-up question for Noel, please post it in the comments below the video and we will ask him to come back and answer as many as he can. Noel, if somebody wants to contact you and say thank you for coming on the show or maybe they have a domain name that is used in the recreational marijuana industry that they want to discuss with you and maybe list on your website, what is the best way that they can connect with you?

Noel: They can contact through the website or they can just send an email to Contact@THCMediaGroup.com.

Michael: Excellent.

Noel Abbott, Found of THC Media Group. Thanks for coming on the show, talking about your new venture, and we wish you all the luck, and thanks for being a Domain Sherpa.

Noel: Thank you. Yeah, it was great to be here.

Michael: Great, and we will get you back on here as soon as the first licenses go out and we will talk about your first sale.

Noel: All right, great. I am looking forward to it.

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

Watch the full video at:

<http://www.domainsherpa.com/noel-abbott-thcmediagroup-interview/>

