

ROUGH TRANSCRIPT OF WEBMUMS CHAT BOX DISCUSSION ON MONDAY
2ND MARCH 2009 AT 7PM (UK)

We missed the very first start point in the recording, however Tracey opened up with a question about backlinks:-

Tracey: my links on directories are just homepage links to date, via blogs and forums are other pages too

Tracey: url is www.rainbowtotz-childrenswear.co.uk

Laura: directories usually only allow homepage links anyway, so no worries on that

Tracey: ok

Laura: I'm sorry, I'm just doing a little bit of digging on your site, give me a minute please

Nikki : I'll just jump in whilst laura is poking about

Tracey: no worries, dig away - I feel like a real guinea pig now lol

Nikki: I just want to stress how important it is to be getting backlinks to all the important pages of your website

Nikki: Most people have backlinks to their homepage but you want your whole site to rank within Google and this will push up the listings

Laura A : you've got about 50% homepage links and 50% internal links (links to other pages)

Laura A: that's very good - that's the ratio you want to aim for

Tracey: Phew

Tracey: so I'm heading in the right direction then?

Tracey: It just never seems to improve my sales :(

Laura A: Yes you are

Laura A : the main problem you've got with SEO is that you don't have nearly enough links

Tracey: OK

Laura A : you need o really work on building more of them

Laura A: I would recommend you start with your product pages

Tracey: yep this is the hard bit!! All the forums etc you can't advertise your business and then blogs are a whole other story

Tracey: Can I give you an example

Tracey: point me in the right direction

Nikki: Have you written any articles?

Laura A: Sorry I'm looking at your site trying to find an example

Laura A: One minute - I'm not used to doing this live :)

Tracey: No Nikki - I just sem to hit a dead end when I sit down and try to write, its never been a strong point - creative writing

Laura A: Here's a good one: (url listed)

Tracey: thats ok Laura

Tracey: Fireman Sam pj?

Laura A: fireman Sam pyjamas is a great example of a long tail keyword

Laura A: people will be searching for it, because the show is popular

Laura A: and it's easier to rank for because most people are trying to target the bigger keywords like "boys pajamas"

Tracey: ok, so blog an article on character wear?

Sarah: Sorry - what's a long tail keyword?

Laura A : apologies

Tracey: ditto

Laura A: long tail refers to keywords with lower search volume but higher conversion rate

Sarah: thanks

Laura A: usually they are very specific, so there's not so much search competition - often a couple of backlinks and good on page optimization are all you need

Laura A: and because they're so specific, people are much more likely to be buying rather than browsing

Nikki: pajamas is bad keyword - because lots of people will search that. But 'fireman sam pjs' is good because not so many peeps search it and the ones that do are ready to buy. This is where your conversion rate goes up!

Tracey: Well I do get a lot of hits for it already but then not many sales??

Laura A : conversion is a different issue

Tracey: this seems to happen a lot with my search specific items

Nikki: I haven't seen your page but that's conversion

Nikki : perhaps you need clearer pics, payment terms etc

Tracey: pics are my next thing on my to do list redo

Nikki: A good picture on an eCommerce website is paramount

Tracey : payment terms i thought i had covered pretty well

Nikki: People can't see what you are selling so really good pics are so important

Laura A: get images fixed asap - that's the biggest thing that convinces someone to buy or not

Tracey: i normally use supplier pics wherever possible but sometimes these aren't close enough so i redo myself

Nikki: you need a lightbox Tracey

Laura A: i noticed (at least on the fireman sam page) that your 'enlarged' image is no bigger than your regular image

Laura: is that the same on all pages?

Nikki: Google it and you'll see how to make a homemade one

Tracey: yeah i had noticed that too

Tracey: no

Tracey: thanks Nikki

laura A: Make your buy button larger and use a colour that clashes with the design

Nikki: Amanda what was your specific SEO Question?

Nikki: or are you happy following along

Tracey: thanks Laura

Nikki: feel free to jump in people if you want to ask something related to the discussion

Laura A: and put your images on the left instead of right

Laura A: and put your website copy under the buy button

Tracey: yes everyone feel free to jump in - don't want to be hogging this hadn't expected to be first lol

Tracey: why left?

Laura A: that's where people expect to see it

Tracey: i prefer when shopping on the right lol

Laura A: it's standard for most ecommerce stores

Tracey: oh

Nikki: its proven to convert better as that's where peoples eyes are drawn

Tracey: lol ok

Tracey: Website copy???

Amanda: how come advertising etc best options is always on the RHS?

Amanda: and LHS for Web?

Laura A: most people don't read copy when making a purchase

Laura A: you should have your image on the left, your buy button/price etc on the right and your copy underneath

Laura A: that's proven to convert better

Diane : website purchasing is very visual

Diane: like Laura says those strategies work

Tracey: hmmm, ok, thanks for the advice shall try and make the changes with my template

Nikki: and have been proven with thorough testing

Nikki: at least test it out Tracey - its all about testing until you find what converts best for you

Laura A: as far as backlink building goes, articles do not need to be excellent quality

Laura A: they just need to be good enough

Nikki: have you read about anchor text on Web Mums Tracey?

Tracey: No I haven't come across that one Nikki

Nikki: If you have, then you'll know to be using that to target the keywords you're looking for - let me get you a link

Nikki: <http://www.acornpad.com/anchor-text-why-its-important> Have a read of this, it's from mine, Laura & Diane's ecommerce blog.

Laura A: I'm just going to make a few suggestions regarding writing articles and where to post them, but you will need to understand anchor text before you start writing articles

Amanda: Can i ask about template websites vs custom built websites... mine is BT epages... and not very user friendly so am considering getting one made but it will cost... and my question is it worth the expense or can someone seo my site as it is?

Laura A: as far as seo goes, the site is fine (tracey)

Laura A: changing it will mean you'd probably need to change url's, which will probably mean a drop in traffic

Amanda: How long have you had it Amanda?

Diane: What is your site url Amanda?

Laura A: you should never ever change a URL once it's getting traffic unless you have to

Amanda: not a prob at the moment as mine is seasonal winter woolens

Amanda: had it approx 2 yrs

Nikki: ooh that's a long time

Nikki: was hoping you'd say 2 weeks :-)

Amanda: wont change the url but the back office....CMS

Laura A: sorry Amanda, didn't notice the change in questioner!

Laura A: I don't mean domain name

Amanda: it looks a bit to clunky and doesnt give off a hi end enough feel, but on top of that SEO isnt good

Laura A: i mean the links to the specific pages - if you change your CMS those are going to change

Laura A: how much traffic are you getting in your peak season?

Amanda: no comprendo your ?

Laura : ok I think i'm going a bit too fast

Amanda: depending on PR... best was 320 on in 1 day and generally 60 at peak

Laura A: what's the URL

Amanda : and now it's really tailed off to 20-40 per day, but not worried about that as people arent hunting for warm cardies

Nikki: If you change your whole back system, you will lose all of the placings in the search engines that you already have for specific products as your urls will change for individual products

Amanda: (URL given)

Diane: they are hunting for warm cardies in New York today :-) its snowing

Amanda: ... but I have been told if I do it now it will have time to catch up for Sept which is when the season starts

Nikki: But, if you want to give a breath of life - it might be the right thing to do, depends what sort of restrictions bt epages has

Amanda: well come to my site!!! got a great sale on !! wink !!

Laura A: if you're going to make a change, now is the time to do it

Laura A: you want as much time as possible to recover by next peak season

Laura Ellis: Any advice on what I should look for when choosing a designer for the revamp of my website (url given)

Amanda: but do I splash out or stick to what I have is my ? I need to consider

Nikki: A designer with a knowledge of SEO - proven SEO is always a good start. Designers have a habit of making things look pretty but not pretty for Google

Laura A: i'm taking a look at your links right now

Laura A: whether or not to change depends on what you've got right now

Amanda: that's the problem we all have ... being good sources of lovely gifts etc..and not tekie knowledge then you hear all the shpeel and dont end up knowing where to go

Amanda: hence this is helpful

Nikki: Laura (ellis) just checking your site

Laura E: That's what bothers me. Certainly a search for Cruise Gifts ranks me no.1. I'm quite a niche market with not much competition (at the moment).

Tracey: Unless people know you as Cruise Gifts this isnt what they will search for??

Amanda: nice site the Cruise one

Laura E: Well the biggest search seems to be gifts for a cruise, or cruise gifts. Smoking on cruise ships is another and i have a feature article on the website which ranks highly

Laura E: I developed the website myself with dreamweaver but it lacks certain features eg: search engine, ability to take credit cards, hence the need for a revamp

Sabine: Arghh. I am late. sorry

Nikki: Is your store hosted at the moment Laura E?

Tracey: Hi Sabine

Laura A: Amanda - I would highly recommend a change in CMS

Nikki: Ah - you answered my question

Sabine: Hi Tracey

Laura A: the URLs are atrocious and you only have 18 internal links at the moment

Nikki: Have you looked into something like Mals ecom Laura?

Laura A: most of them fo to the homepage and those will not be affected by a change in CMS

Nikki: You could integrate that with your store I believe

Nikki: Hi Sabine

Laura A: I've actually used mal's pretty extensively, it's the first ecom platform i used.

Laura E: Yes with freeola. Really pleased with them. Never had any downtime. Used them for years. Very reasonably priced. What's Mals?

Sabine: Hi Nikki

Nikki: I looked at it the other day and it looked excellent. Would you recommend it Laura ?

Laura A: it is really great when you're only selling just a couple of products, but doesn't work well when you have got more than 10-20 products

Nikki HmMMM

Diane: which CMS options would you recommend Laura?

Laura E: I've got about 70 odd products!

Laura A: Mals is not a CMS, it just does the cart

Sabine: What type of site do you have may I ask Laura?

Nikki: what about Magento?

LauraA: bedding zone url

Sabine: I mean what do you sell?

LauraA: that's my site, it's x-cart

Sabine: OK

LauraA: obviously I sell baby bedding

Nikki: We are producing a course on that - step by step "How to build your store"

Sabine: Yes, Sure

LauraA: for most people starting out I would recommend Magento

Sabine: I was just wondering whether a hosted platform might be the solution?

Nikki: hosting i'd always recommend EKM

Laura A: i have very little experience with hosted platforms other than mals

Sabine: So do I :-)

Tracey: I'm with EKM much prefer it to my previous platform CC

Nikki: But Magento is excellent as you have full control

Joanne: Hi all, Im using RomacCart - hosted shopping cart with stock control

Nikki: Problem with EKM is that you do need a designer to make the required changes

Laura A: if you're self-hosting (it requires more technical knowledge), go with magento

Sabine: Yes, but it's worth it - believe me!

Nikki: How are you finding that Joanne?

laura A: Nikki - what's EKM?

Nikki: Yes Sabine, Jamie has done a wonderful job on your site but if you're just starting out it can be a little pricey

Nikki: ekmpowershop.com

Joanne: OK - I'm quite techie so built database CMS myself, was a lot of work to customise shopping cart if you're not tech (can see at site url given)

Nikki: They've just introduced a sitebuilder too I see

Sabine: Yes, but my opinion is that you have to budget for this if you want to run a serious business Nikki

Jude: hello, sorry I'm late

Sabine: If you don't want to spend time and money on SEO and all that and want to get selling fast then then that's the way forward. It pays for itself rather quickly.

Nikki: I'd agree Sabine, but many successful businesses have grown from scratch, Magento, self hosted is a good option for that

Sabine: hello Jude

Tracey: Hello Jude

Laura E: I've got romancart too

Jude: Hey all, just reading back on the posts

Nikki: Hi Jude

Laura A: Did anyone have a question we missed?

Jude: ooops I entered the chat and it all went quiet lol

Sabine: I was with 1&1 for a long time and it was rubbish

Nikki: You can do a lot with EKM if you have a bit of techy know how and their custom storefronts are getting better. So you can build an income and save. The SEO isn't bad on there either.

Diane: My CMS recommendation question Laura was for Tracey

Sabine: Exactly Nikki, I started off with one of their custom designs and it wasn't bad

Tracey: Me?

Laura A: I think you meant Amanda Di?

Laura E: Is there going to be a way to print a transcript of all these messages? Was going to copy and paste all the posts but can't get back to the beginning!

Diane: Yes sorry Amanda - did you want suggestions of alternative CMS

Jude: I did the same Sabine, custom design

Nikki: Yes I think Di is keeping tabs of the transcript Laura

Joanne: I have a question - how important is the web copy for ecommerce? I have maternity boutique (url) and think my copy is not great but does it matter that much?

Diane: Yes I am

Laura E: thanks Di

Laura A: for conversion, copy is one of the last things you need to worry about

Laura A: most people who are purchasing never read the copy

Laura A: what is more important is SEO

Joanne: Thanks Laura - what's the most important? Images? Location or call to action?

Laura A: specifically, it should be as unique as possible - try not to use manufacturer's descriptions

Sabine: Well, Laura, mu customers read my copy - meticulously some of them :-) I now because I get tons of emailed questions

Nikki: Joanne - I'd remove those keywords from your homepage if I were you, Google won't like that.

Diane: Sabine, your products are the type that people do want to ask questions

about

Joanne: Nikki - even though they're human readable?

Laura A: if you're selling unique products, then you're more likely to get questions

Laura A: and have people reading your copy

Nikki: yes they are not natural and they wont help you (joanne)

Laura A: but in most markets, especially when you

Sabine: Sorry, not being rude or so, but isn't that the point, sell what people want?

Nikki: you don't need all of that text on your homepage (joanne)

Joanne: OK - will make much more sensible

Jude: a web designer said I had too much text on my homepage but it's for SEO reasons mainly

Nikki: If Google manually looked at your page they would penalise you for that

Laura A: Sorry Sabine - I don't understand what you mean?

Diane: Sabine, yes of course you do - but people looking for pajamas won't have a lot of questions about the pajamas lol

Joanne: I guess I need to make sure all the keywords are in the item descriptions

Sabine: Okay Diane, Point taken. Maybe I am just an unusual web shopper then :)

Nikki: Yes! You don't want to associate all of those keywords with your homepage anyway, you want to associate them with the relevant pages

Laura E: Joanne, love the feel and look of (your site- without the text at the bottom). Could you not create a testimonials page and maybe an about me page so you could remove the welcome to section

Sabine: Jude I had a skype crash :)

Jude: no worries i'm reading here lol

Nikki: Yes, it's a lovely looking site Joanne. I really like the soft colours

Joanne: Thank you Laura - I was told by an SEO person to have some text on the front page, and the bit about me is that, without it there isn't a lot of text at all, and as it's below the fold a lot of people won't look at it anyway.

Amy: Hi Joanne (personal chat)

Joanne: Hi Amy (personal chat)

Jude: (personal chat)

Joanne: (personal chat)

Nikki: Yes, but you are never going to rank for all of those keywords. You need to choose the ones that are relevant and optimise for those. The long tail keywords we mentioned before. You are diluting your page down with all that text too. What SEO was this? tsk!

Laura A: I agree with Nikki that SEO wasn't a very good one

Joanne: He's a friend, so won't name names :)

Sabine: Lovely site Joanne. Like it. Wouldn't worry about the text at the bottom. Everybody only ever reads above the line in my experience :-)

Laura A: The problem with the text at the bottom is that it's borderline spammy and can actually hurt the site.

Nikki: Sabine, it can get you penalised

Sabine: Yes Nikki, that's what I mean. Remove it - wasn't very clear sorry.

Joanne: Thanks guys! So the advice is to get rid of the text and concentrate on getting the keywords into the items.

Joanne: What about the bit about me? Should that stay?

Laura A: that's fine

Laura A: just the almost-hidden text needs to go

Joanne: Thank you so much for the advice!

Amanda: Nikki can you send me a copy of this discussion once its ended as I am trying to read what has been dais and it keeps jumping

Sabine: personally I prefer an "about me" page. Not sure whether that is the norm though?

Jude : or you could have an About Me Page?

Diane: yes we will (transcript)

Jude: Ooops like an echo Sabne lol

Laura E: Joanne, I assume you've got keywords in you meta keywords and description?

Laura A: meta keywords tags are near useless these days - you can skip them without much worry

Joanne: Laura - yes, at the moment most of them are auto-generated from the item name and its categories, this can be changed tho

Nikki: lol - was waiting for you to come in on meta tags laura

Amy: My website has only just gone live and I would like to know how long it takes to start getting ranked. Can it happen immediately if the site is good or is it always going to take some time Also is it worth paying someone to get all the keywords correct etc? I think I need some basic help - what is a meta keyword tag?

Laura A: meta descriptions should be used for 'selling the click' not stuffing keywords

Nikki: you need Google to crawl your site Amy - do you have any incoming links?

LauraA: that's the text people are going to see when your site appears in search engines (usually), so write something that will convince them to visit your site.

Joanne: "Selling the Click"? What do you mean - the click through from Google?

Laura A: use your main keyword for that page if you can, that's it

Laura A: yes exactly

Nikki: Amy, your site is already listed isn;t it? Didnt we have the convo about 'bespoke personalised jewellery'?

Amy: No - not sure how you get them either. Is it like getting editorial but online?

Laura E: Does anyone here use Google Webmaster tools? Have they found any benefit? I've got my google xml sitemap etc and resubmit etc; but often wonder is it worth it?

Amy: yes we did - well remembered (Nikki) Have now changed it to personalised jewellery. Also wondering after you mentioned about US spelling if I should have the US version as a Keyword too?

Laura A: you should verify your site in WMT, but there's no need to resubmit your sitemap over and over

Laura A: verifying in WMT is a 'trust signal' to google - spammers usually don't verify their sites

Laura E: I only resubmit when I've added new pages or removed one eg: I had separate Christmas page, but obviously that's been deleted now til next year . Interesting about the trust signal - never thought of that.

Nikki: its always a sticky issue with a word like jewellery Where is your site hosted? If it's UK based, then I would continue to optimise to a UK market and don't worry about it. You can always write some articles and try to rank for Americanised version = but for now, aim at your UK market until you have started to build a bit more authority.

Amy: Yes UK based. Brilliant thanks. Any tips on the links side of things?

Laura A: Once your sitemap is registered in WMT Google will check it regularly for updates

Nikki: Did you see the discussion on long tail keywords?

Nikki: (amy)

Laura A: so as long as you keep your sitemap updated, you don't need to resubmit

Amy" No I came in late I'm afraid but will fo back to it if I can

Laura E: thanks Laura, one less thing to do .. something that I was doing unnecessarily

Nikki: You might have arrived after discussion but basically you need to establish what people are typing into Google and then optimise for it. No point optimising for 'necklace' as it has too much competition but 'Mothers day necklace' would be an example of a long tail keyword with more specific, targeted searches = more sales for you

Laura A: and usually less competition too

Nikki: yes that too

Amy: so sorry if you repeating yourselves - where do I type in this long tail keyword?

Laura A: it's what people type into Google

Laura A: you want to show on those results pages

Amy: so I need to have this within my copy somewhere?

Laura A: so you use that long tail keyword in your page title, in anchor text pointing to that page, and in your website copy

Amy: how many words is it ok to have in your page title?

Laura A: you want your page titles to be 66 characters or less so that the whole title will show up on a search results page

Laura A: I'm going to have to go soon - are there any last questions?

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Nikki:

a quick wrap up & chat facility on webmums is permanent so please use it.

went wonky here so not all capture (the message window) I think we may take Questions and record audio for you next time or maybe a conference call.

---- mentioned ecommerce training site - membership - sign up for newsletter for updates etc

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Laura E: thanks very much everyone

Joanne: 1 quick Q if i'm not too late. What's the most important thing for conversion to sales?

Tracey: I think its been really good so thanks guys

Laura A: There are two main things I would do for conversion - have really great images and make your buy button stand out

Joanne: Thank You! This has been really helpful

Nikki: Good pics, good product, excellent description, nice "buy' button and create trust for your customer!

Nikki: OK guys that's a wrap. Been great chatting to you, we'll do this again but better next time!

Tracey: Thanks Nikki - was a fab idea!

Diane: thanks Nikki, Laura Everyone - will get the transcript over to you asap Nikki

Amy: So gutted I came in so late - thanks all x

Nikki: You're welcome, glad it's been helpful - we'll keep you posted on the next one.

ENDS=====

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