

088 - How to write Helpful Content - with Katrina McKinnon

Katrina McKinnon 0:00

Instead of putting just a photo of your product on a page, we will often add a little bit of text in Helvetica, so that Google can read the text has a chance, at some point of reading that text, and say what a feature or a benefit to the reader is of that pen, for example. So that's helpful, adding an image to a page with a bit of text in it and possibly a caption, that's helpful. Another thing that's really helpful are tables. So tables allow you to compare ideas or data. And it can be as useful as you know, what's the rainfall in Perth today. But it could also be the characteristics of different products. So fountain pens, I'll just pick that example, again. Fountain pens, you might be comparing two types of pens for a graduation gift. And so data in a table, even in a blog article is super important because it's another way of the reader experiencing and absorbing that content.

SEO Leverage Podcast Intro Music 1:02

Welcome to the SEO leverage podcast, where we talk about search, marketing, and conversion.

Gert Mellak 1:12

Welcome back to SeoLeverage.com. My name is Gert Mellak, and this is episode 88. And today, we're going to learn a lot about how to write helpful content. Google is just at the time of recording this rolling out the so called helpful content and we still need to analyze what this is going to be about. But I thought it would be a good moment to talk to an expert when it comes to content creation. And I'm really pleased to welcome Katrina McKinnon to the show. Hi, Katrina.

Katrina McKinnon 1:40

Hi, good. It's lovely to be here. So thank you so much.

Gert Mellak 1:43

Thank you so much for for taking the time. Your company CopySmiths is focused on writing really creative, SEO optimized content that really performs very, very well. We have seen this with a few of our own clients already. Could you before we talk about this update and and content, could you give us a brief summary of where you're coming from? How do you come to content creation?

Katrina McKinnon 2:08

Okay, so CopySmiths, was born out of me running a web agency for 20 years. And I got very tired of doing absolutely everything, you know, from PPC, to design, to website development to SEO, and I ended up being very average at all of it. So after 20 years, the one thing that I loved, absolutely loved and would dive right into, and we, we were naturally really good at it was, blogging for our clients. And so even though we had agency clients, the one thing that I was

able to scale and do really well was to create fully-fledged blogs for them. Ah, one of our very last clients as an agency that we worked for, you know, on that retainer kind of basis, whereas now, you know, we just charge per article. Our last client, we started off, you'll love this, you'll know you guys love numbers, numbers, we started off with 800 uniques a month and by the time we finished up with them, it was about 14 months, we were on 180,000 uniques a month. Yeah, 250,000 impressions a month. And we were able to also get 60% of those visits over to a landing page. But the, you know 'what while' sad thing was none of it converted. So it was it was kind of like this glorious moment where it was like, wow, really good at this content thing. And then the client was like, 'You're amazing, but none of it's converting for us'. And that was because some, there is a reason that's because I have to justify this to everyone. There is a reason it was because they sold a mileage tracker that was free in Australia. So in America you know, this very inexpensive mileage trackers that you know, and it cost a few dollars and these guys were selling this for around about \$200. So and with, but I had all the extra bells and whistles and it was you know, it's a brilliant, brilliant product for corporate. But it was just you know, it was one of those things, that's a big swing and a miss. But so that's how I came to it was that I just kind of took that one part of my business that I adored and loved and that I just enjoyed doing because I love, love, love content. And I like helping the world, you know, so I'm like sitting pretty at the moment with Google's update. But then yeah, and I've built CopySmiths. So we've now got, I think about 40 or 50 writers on the team. We're very highly processed driven. And because I love SEO, I've baked all of that into our training and into our services. But really, we're just a blog writing service mainly for E commerce stores and that's all we do. We just do that, literally we do that one very small thing, that one thing, but we do it 1000s and 1000s of times.

Gert Mellak 4:53

There's so much leverage and it's funny that you, you mentioned your story. We have a very similar story. I started out as a web programmer on my own and doing the programming, 60 hours a week, or more. And then did everything what you could do in digital marketing, from inbound marketing to Facebook ads, to LinkedIn, and Google ads, whatever. And at some point, like the only thing that was growing and will become the best results was really SEO. So we combined the web development with SEO and now with with our app, have found a perfect fit. And yet, it's just there's so much leverage if you can repeat similar things and add all the learnings. We saw this back in the data, I did a lot of lead generation and once I niche down to, this was the fitness niche, it was just became just easier, because you could suddenly see, see kind of patterns, etc. And now we're niching down pretty much on SEO for a lot of courses, ecommerce sites, etc. And you see patterns again, this, this course about languages works in a very different in a very similar way. And this is the course that I teach to how to play an instrument. And you can kind of leverage this. We're working about on about 3040 projects, usually, you leverage, like what you see in one project. And so let's, let's run an experiment here track it and see if this can also work for someone else, right?

Katrina McKinnon 6:07

Yeah, like if I like if I had one advice for my stupid, younger self, when I couldn't find out where my pants were, it would literally defeat a niche down. I think that, you know, when people come

to me now and they say, 'Oh, I'm thinking about starting an agency.', I sort of say, oh, my gosh, I would rather dig my eyes out with a spoon than have to run an agency where I had to have all those different competencies. Because one little person, like once you get to a certain size as an agency, it's okay, because you can hire all those people. And, you know, really clever people to do it, but there is this sort of ceiling and an agency of about 10,20 people, where it kind of that's when you have to step over that ceiling to get any bigger.

Gert Mellak 6:47

Absolutely. Well, what I feel also from a client's perspective, when you have an agency, they get used so far, right, because they do a little bit of everything. They obviously have people to do mostly Facebook ads, and people who don't love mostly SEO they can't get so far. But then people wouldn't want to step up, now suddenly need a content expert, they need an SEO expert.

Katrina McKinnon 7:05

Yeah.

Gert Mellak 7:05

And someone who, who really sleeps and dreams of Google ads, just to make sure that they get to the next level. And this is really where we see really sweet, sweet spot for us if she is beautiful. For you, obviously, as a content creator. And when we talk about, talking about content, so we have this update now, this Google update. It's called helpful content update. As an SEO agency, obviously you well, we always monitor what happens within update, what changes sometimes in the past, we had a big Panda update, which was a huge content update. And this helpful content is said to be in a, going in a similar direction. But Google just wants to, just clean up a little bit. We have this topic AI, I want to talk a little bit about later as well, which is always a topic on, in this context. How do you what do you think is going to come with this Helpful Content Update?

Katrina McKinnon 7:54

Probably nothing, as with everything. Yeah, I don't know. I'd like I think there will be some changes, I think that there's only a tiny percentage of people who actually get affected. But that tiny percentage get very vocal, they get very noisy, because you know, their world has crashed down behind, you know, down around them, they've lost all their revenue. But it's because they've usually done other silly things such as building, you know, bad backlinks or you know, paying for sponsorships, whatever it might be. And so I think that eventually, the algorithms catch up with those people. But because they see these updates coming through, they correlate them with their bad fortune, their luck. And then they really get noisy about it and sort of, you know, make a big fuss, whereas 95% of the internet are just not going to see much at all, either, because Google literally hasn't crawled them and won't crawl them for quite a while, especially the smaller sites, they won't crawl them for three or four months time. And then the biggest sites that do, they've probably they're already big sites, because they already have helpful content. But I think that the, when people are panicking about it, the one thing I would say is, what Google does is Google will often say, you know, reading literally from their Google Search

Central is, you know, the helpful content update aims to better reward content where visitors feel that they've had a satisfying experience, while content, you know, duh da duh, and it's all about feeling and you know, maybe this, may be that and as usual, Google hasn't quantified exactly what helpful content is, but I think like that's what I'd love to chat to you about is what I actually think those specific things are in helpful content, you know, layout and components in actual blog articles.

Gert Mellak 9:42

It's so interesting. We tailor it a little bit before we started record and , I have, we have been on SEO in the last 10 years, at least, with a very strong user experience focus because at some point, obviously the beginning I've been doing SEO for 20 years. So the first 10 years. We started out with white keywords, white background, just to squeeze keywords, wants to rank for everything, no matter if it converted, if it made sense you just wanted to see. So these were the 10, first 5, 10 years, and we've been tons of backlinks and all this all this kind of stuff. Then the last 10 years, Google got a little bit smarter, in my opinion. You started seeing accurate search results, and they make much more sense. You can't, you can get away with everything anymore. It wasn't much easier to rank things than it is today, but I've always had the feeling, Google doesn't really know a lot of things, right? So Google, it's like, it's like me, I really don't know how to approach a crowd that wants to buy from me until I talk to them, until they get a little bit of feedback, right? To get people on that demo and, and can show them what the app does and can understand what their problems are, the pain points, etc. So, so my theory was always Google throws results at people because they just have so many fantasies, what comes back, and what kind of signals to pick up. And then once in a while there's an update and they address to pick up all those signals and apply them to the algorithm, shuffled the cards again and see what comes up. What's your, what are your thoughts?

Katrina McKinnon 11:06

Yeah, they, they're just like the rest of us, they are completely making it up as they go along. So I totally agree that it is much more about getting down in the weeds and actually going out and putting the algorithm out there and just seeing what happens like they're not, they're not able to predict what's going to happen to everyone's websites or anything like that. Because it's you know, it's what chaos theory or whatever it might be, that might be a little bit too highfalutin for this, but yeah, I totally agree. They, they are, just as we've evolved our businesses, they're evolving their business and their knowledge. And, you know, and all this data that's available now on the internet, they're just trying to make sense of it. So yeah, totally agree.

Gert Mellak 11:45

Absolutely. Let's, let's jump right in, what do you, what do you think makes content helpful?

Katrina McKinnon 11:51

Okay, so very, very specifically, visual images. So I'll go through like a bunch of things that I that we put into our content. And that I know is helpful, because we've watched people in Hotjar using our content, and we know what works. So, and again, like, exactly as you said, it's about just, you know, you don't know where the customer is gonna buy from you unless you go out

and talk to them. And it's exactly the same way, like if you want to know how people are reacting to your content, you just get a tool like Hotjar so that you can actually watch people moving through your website. And I guarantee after you've watched a couple of 100 videos, you'll have a very, very clear idea of what they find helpful. I'll start with one visual. So images are super important, but not stock photography images, what we tend to do is we tend to create, we tend to get a client's, one of the clients product images, or we get a lifestyle image, and we will overlay text on it to talk about the benefit of a product. So instead of just putting out and I've got a pen in front of me, instead of putting just a photo of your product on a page, we will often add a little bit of text in Helvetica, so that Google can read the text has a chance at some point of reading that text and say what a feature or a benefit to the reader is of that pen, for example. So that's helpful adding an image to a page with a bit of text in it and possibly a caption, that's helpful. Another thing that's really helpful are tables. So tables allow you to compare ideas or data. And it can be as useful as you know, what's the rainfall in Perth today. But it could also be the characteristics of different products. So fountain pens, I'll just pick that example. Again, fountain pens, you might be comparing two types of pens for a graduation gift. And so data in a table, even in a blog article is super important, because it's another way of the reader experiencing and absorbing that content. So we, for example, I don't know, we've done 5000, 6000 articles in last couple of years, and I can't even remember now. But anyway, we will literally put a table in every single one of our articles, because we know that, that's part of the user experience. And like and you know, I'm a very visual person, I don't like, I'm not great at reading online. and I think a lot of people are like me. And so it's helpful, it's helpful to break your slabs of text up into very, very short sections. So we literally say to our writers, one paragraph, one idea, one idea, one paragraph, that's it. And your paragraph will always be much shorter than you think. And then it will be shorter again than what you think it is. And so when you have very short pieces of text, it makes it much easier for people like me who are skim reading or just busy or I know the dogs barking or something, makes them much easier to pick out words in that text. So that's another thing to do for helpful content. And with all of these things that I'm saying, we have a checklist in our team, and we don't pay our writers, unless they meet that checklist. We literally say to them, we've got our quality checkers, and we assess the quality checkers assess that article and we literally just say, sorry, it didn't meet the checklist and it's up to the writer to make the checklist, not for us to point it out. And so the listeners to this podcast, I mean, all your customers, everyone can just just have it in your mind that if you create a checklist with these points that I'm saying in mind, you don't have to pay anyone, unless they meet that checklist. So that's the third thing. So another thing is bullets, bullet points, and ordered lists. So again, it's all about breaking up ideas. So one of the things that we do in our content, our content is gonna be a little bit of a style to it now, but one of the things we do in our content is in the very first section, we summarize in three to five bullet points, what people will learn and benefit from by reading the article. So when someone enters that article, they read that first, you know, sentence, which always sort of says, you know, we, we empathize with whatever your problem is, yes, it's hard to buy a graduation gift for, you know, you know, teenagers or whatever. And then we'll have three to five bullet points that will simply say, 'In this article, we're going to help you uncover what the best, you know, colors are for particular people, or what the best writing action is, or whether it needs to be a hardwearing pen or not, or etc.' And so, we never reiterate, we never repeat the sub headings, because that information is

already in the sub headings. We just read, we sort of show what the benefit might be. So that's like a fourth thing that I think is really helpful content.

Gert Mellak 16:39

This, this is really, really great information on what to summarize. It's interesting, we share a prototype article with our clients when we started working with them. So we have a PDF, and it says short paragraph one, headline, to table of contents, takeaways, Intro blah, blah, blah, and then the checklist at the end. They can go through, it's an interesting, we have a very similar methodologies here. So, so helpful, definitely can confirm this as well. We have been learning a lot, especially with click, Click Statistics, whereas why do people not action here? Because then you're doing a heat map, and you see the click something somewhere else. So it's not even

Katrina McKinnon 17:14

I can tell you about that one, too. Yeah, I can tell you about. So with the clicks, one of the things that I learned because I again, I watched 100 of these sort of Hotjar, I don't know which, what do you them like recordings of your screen.

Gert Mellak 17:27

That's like a session recording or something like that.

Katrina McKinnon 17:29

Yeah, session recording. Yeah, I was desperate this, this client that I talked about that last agency client that we had a couple of 100,000 visitors for, sat there and watch the screen sessions. And we had designed, I have this graphic designer, W designed the most beautiful looking panel in the right hand side column with the most gorgeous button, the most beautiful graphics, a little subtle animation that you know, skimmed ever so delicately, delicately across the button. You know what those people clicked on? They clicked on the word click here, in the text in the blog. So again, I sat there and I watched. And because we had so much traffic, I was able to keep changing the page, and just reloading and then clear out all the sessions and watch again, it was so much fun. If you're a nerd, it was so much fun. And I tested things, I was trying to get them to go to an app and so I would literally say by app, no one clicked on that, no one was certainly clicking on the fancy designs, you know, button on the call to action buttons. And then after a while, I kept just simplifying and simplifying, I got rid of all the buttons, I got rid of all the text in the middle that was like, you know, buy this app, because it's the best thing ever. I got rid of all the links on that. And I ended up with a page that just literally had a description. And then the very last bit of text was click here. And that's how we got that 60% click through rate. The other thing that I learned is that people click on text links inside tables. Because tables are an authority piece. When you see a table you gener, you you, you generally think to yourself, well, this is data, it must be true. These are facts inside a table. And so we literally put the links through to the products inside a table. And again, it's just a simple text link. And all the bunnies just click, click, click, click click on those types of links. So again, it's all about putting, putting the links in areas that are helpful to the reader and just not trying to trick them with anything.

Gert Mellak 19:31

It's definitely resonating with what, what Google says. And this is definitely true, or we have at least seen this as well, that the more likely it is that somebody clicks on the link in one way it's going to carry, so if you have links all over the place, obviously links, link choose authority we say it gets diluted on a mathematical level. But also if you have a link at the bottom in the last phrase like these often see in link building allocations where it's squeezing the link in order to be able to charge something and that's it. It goes links are not going to do everything. But also the links in the table is interesting, I sometimes feel we got trained as users a little bit from Wikipedia. So a lot of the concepts we now see as best practices, for example, I always ask our clients to put in Table of Contents, especially for mobile users, just to make sure they know what's coming. And and those those internal links and links and tables and presenting things this list etc. I feel like Wikipedia, either they were 20 years ahead of of the time, with the user experience, or we just got trained by certain authority sites on how we want to consume information we trust. For me, it was always, I've been talking probably in the last three years about Google, really being afraid of artificial intelligence. And what I feel sometimes is the way we present articles, or how you describe it with visuals, with elaborated images, with tables, etc. is not something AI can do right now. No, you can have an AI do the articles, Google would wish this mum stuff could already present, compare articles in different languages and, and draw its own conclusions. It's not there yet. Might get there yet. Right now, when you see an article in the status has a table and the information is elaborated and it has elaborated visuals, it's not an AI article. The thing is, this could be part of the reason why Google ranks them so well, because they just know this is definitely coming from the source of authority and knowledge. And it's not something that's just quickly copied together. And even if you see the affiliate sites have been doing this a lot, and they had been getting really good rankings, the problem is that they copy too much. So they don't take this extra step very often to elaborate or make up their own mind to add some value. But they have been doing this for four years and was working really, really well. Affiliate sites very often, so very small affiliate sites do really well, just because they present the information so well. Because

Katrina McKinnon 21:56

Yeah, beautifully done. Yeah. And that's one of the things that we noticed as well, we used a tool called Surfer SEO, which is kind of like a search engine, kind of like a keyword management tool for articles. We use that on probably 2000 articles, and then we stopped using it. And you know, like surfing definitely has its place, definitely has its place for lower end. I think writers maybe, and you know, for certain keywords, replacements, but anyway, won't defend it, but Surfer definitely got its place, but we don't use it anymore. And now works even better now and does even better because we don't worry so much about the actual keywords or density of keywords that are appearing. Sure we make sure we've got the right you know, seed keywords in and all the related keywords. But what we're focused on is creating a really good user, really good reading experience for people so that there's lots of different interesting points that they can, that the reader can, you know, land on and rest on with their eyes. And it really is about resting your eyes as you go through. So one of the other things that we do, and again, something to add to people's checklist is we always include testimonials. So if we're writing an article about fountain pens, we will grab testimonials or product reviews from clients out of

Amazon or out of their own store, and we contextually place them into the article. So if we're talking about say, grip, we're talking about the grip of a fountain pen, we will go and find a testimonial from a customer, from our client that talks about the grip comfort of that particular pen, and we link it back into Amazon wherever that link, you know, wherever that testimonial was, etc. And so again, that's helpful, it's helpful to see in someone else's words what they think about the grip of a particular pen. And I don't think that the content mills can produce content that is visually interesting and skim readable and those tools like Surfer, fantastic as they are for a certain purpose, they can't create that experience. I suppose that's what I was trying to say about Surfer so they can't create that elevated experience for the reader.

Gert Mellak 24:07

I think where people get it wrong is that AI is not going to move the experience right out of the equation. So then, I am not going to, to just get your, your content up and you don't have to worry about blog writing anymore. This is where I see a lot of, a lot of clients come to me and say, 'Is AI already ready so this can keep my blog maintained, etc?' We're using, we're using Surfer, we have been using other tools InLinks, Pharase, they all serve the purpose to not do what I did 10 years ago with handwritten notes, which was going through the top 20 results and noting down what to have in common, what kind of keywords and what kind of queries and what kind of structure, do they have videos to have infographics etc. So now we fire up surfer and the machine learning helps us analyze this. We click what we might be missing. A very, very important example and this is definitely my memory, was an internet service provider and they were they weren't ranking. And they went ranking because we then figured out eventually when talking about an internet connection, right? And Google was missing this term internet connection. They are one of the leading providers and I think this was Australia. Yeah, one of the leading internet service providers, right. They talk about everything 5g, high speed, bandwidth, I don't know, they don't talk about a freaking internet connection, right? And we fire this up, and they look beyond the terms that's missing. Let's talk about this as an internet connection, what we are offering, right. So sometimes we get so stuck in our, in our technical, specific industry specific mind that we don't take a step back and say, how do people actually call it? So we had another example from Austria, where this was, there are two names, how you can name the front door in German. Yeah. And it just had one on the page. And you would expect and this is, again, by say, Google isn't half as smart as they pretend to be. You could expect Google knows this is a synonym, and still ranks it for the other term as well. No, it didn't. It was putting, it was putting in this term and within five days, this was an authority site. Within five days, it was ranking page one for these other terms. But yeah, it's so and this is very often where I see a lot of advantage with those machine learning tools that analyze this, and that help you, can paste in the text. Am I missing something? Am I missing a subtopic? Every top ranking article, this is what he's talking about. This might have escaped my research. And then yeah, I see this again. I'm always telling my writers to first, user experience, then Surfer SEO and the relevant keywords of the ones they suggest. That is how we tried to go about it. We do use it, I think I'm pretty much all articles right now. Just to really double check. So I understand you have a more creative approach, probably we have a more technical approach. Ultimately, I think everybody needs to have a user friendly, reader friendly article.

Katrina McKinnon 26:59

Yeah. And just like going back to one of your points, you said a little bit earlier about the AI. I think that Google can, I think Google does look at CSS files. I think it looks at layout, I think it looks for those elements, like as you were saying those affiliate sites. You know, some of those affiliate people take such care with the appearance of their website, they just look beautiful. And I think that Google can tell when someone has slapped together, you know, the CSS hasn't been tweaked and styled and it doesn't look good. I think Google can tell when care hasn't been taken with that. So I just wanted to sort of say, put that point back in as well. Like, I think yeah.,

Gert Mellak 27:41

Absolutely. The visual, just a visual aspect and I talked about this in one of the first podcast episodes with Greg Merrilees from from Studio One Design. And he, he even mentioned the figure how many milliseconds you have, until you make up your mind. And this was fascinating to me. So you come to a website, even before you have time to read the text, you already know if you trust these guys, if you like them, if you, the brand is serious for you, if you think they're going to help you, even before you read the text. So definitely just make sense for Google to look into layout, look into design, look into whether they just use a template, that's one of the most used Wordpress templates out there. Or if this is a custom design, how much, how much evidence to this, and just absolutely makes sense. And it should also come back to the user experience signals.

Katrina McKinnon 28:25

Yeah, and also with the blog articles, I think, you know, I know myself, I will literally look or mean, because obviously we, you know, interview, we hire, we hire writers, I know I look at hundreds of application emails. I can tell this a pattern now. So I just literally open up that email. And if they're slabs of text, and it's badly laid out, I don't trust the information. It's exactly the same with blog articles, you know, sometimes you can get away with it, you know, sort of thing, you know, you can get away with it sometimes if the websites kind of doesn't look beautiful, but that will usually be because its reputation precedes it, you know. I'm thinking SEO by the sea, you know, that sort of, you know, those websites that by these absolute SEO nerds don't often look beautiful, but because you know that the content in them is just incredible. Um, you know, you can trust them. But I think it's true with the content, you know, and that's what Google's saying is, and that's one of those engagement signals is whether it bounces out quickly. And I think you've got more chance of keeping your readers on the website, if the the article looks beautiful, if it looks visually interesting. And it's got these sort of aspects that I'm talking about, you know, for the checklist, if it's got those in it, and I'll give you one more. I'll tell you one more. You'll you'll like this one too, is that author profiles. There have been tests that say that adding an author profile doesn't really move the needle in terms of Google for the Google AIT aspects, but I still think for the reader, it might have an engagement aspects such as a lower bounce rate. And so again, just as a checklist, whenever someone has a writer who writes for them, always get a little profile and make sure that that profile is skewed towards the content on the website. So just because someone's a copywriter, for you know, by trade doesn't mean that they don't love fountain pens, or they don't love tea cups, you can always write a sentence about what your expertise is about fountain pens, or tea cups and how much you loved them. And so,

again, a nice photo, that sort of stuff makes people trust that content a little bit more. So that's another thing that you'd ask our writers to include?

Gert Mellak 30:31

Absolutely. I think it ties in to with one phrase I've seen in the description of the helpful content update. And I want to read this out as well, where they say, 'Does your content leave readers feeling like they need to search again, to get better information from other sources?', but this is essentially stating what was called pogo sticking. This is what I have been telling clients for 10 years where I said, 'Look, what what kind of signal we will pick up if they come to your page, don't find what they're looking for, go back and search for something else. It's just logic that Google picks up the signals they can easily track, like the most easiest thing they can track is that somebody searches, click somewhere it goes back searching somewhere, never comes back. So what, what does this mean, the first result, obviously wasn't what they were looking for in this regard. And this is just another signal. So now Google, also ties in and disposal, we used to be called Search- to-task accomplishment. So we're people have a task in mind, and they want to know the height of the Eiffel Tower. Now Google is kind as they are, they just put it out in the search results, and nobody gets it anymore anyway. But they ultimately, they are consistent with serving the user. And when we have this in mind, and recently, what do people hope probably want to see when they come with this keyword to this page? Can we let them know at the top and we have run a lot of experiments with changing the top section, like you mentioned, like the key takeaways, or the summary on top, etc. Yes, breaking really well, for us as well. Similar things, just adding an intro, I was preparing right now presentation for next week, just adding an intro that was SEO optimized and it led to 15 to 25% performance. Just adding an intro to it, we didn't do anything else on the text. The top section is just so important, because people need to know at the top, that this happening, this page is going to help help them. But what we did on one side that got severely penalized with the core update was removed, like the big, they had like a big header on top, we need to scroll down to actually find what this article is about, this is removed, the head of it. It took a couple of weeks, and they were back up just because we focus on what is what is the user actually going to want? And how can we avoid that many people swipe back and click on a different search result, especially on mobile phones.

Katrina McKinnon 32:39

So what I'd say is if we were going to add that to a checklist for an article writer, I would say the first 25 words, need to reiterate, summarize the promise that's made in the article title, and add in a qualifying statement, such as a fact. So that's how we break that down in our team. And then we take that, love a little step further. So maybe for your presentation next week, just you know, you can mention me uhm, that every single, I don't even know what your presentation is about, it could be bad anyway. And then every single, yeah right, okay here we go, every single subheading, we also get our writers to do the exact same thing. So every single subheading, the first 12 words are essentially a reiteration of whatever the subheading is in the affirmative or negative. And then we qualify it with a couple of extra aspects like a fact or a quote or and it's not so simplistic as that, but we kind of reword it into a benefit statement. And so again, people are able to skim read, because they, they rest their eyes for a moment on the

subheading. And then, of course, the next thing they read is the next 10 to 12 words. And so we're just reaffirming what they've read in their subheading, and that works really well for us.

Gert Mellak 33:53

Well, absolutely. And it's also one of the main tactics we use, for example, to try to get a featured snippet, because the sub might be what, what is the best pen for, for a manager? No. And then it says the best pen for a manager is blah, blah, blah. And then it's like blah, blah, blah. And then because because it's really important as well right? And this is really a really good candidate for featured snippets. So whenever we see someone to come up in the top five or so we try to make these kinds of things in, if they don't have it yet. And very often you can then get the featured snippet just making this affirmative statement because Google isn't as smart so they really rely on words on the page and this is, this is a little bit, a little bit of thing, I think its' needs to be taken with a grain of salt. Google is just, I think nothing would happen if they didn't under, didn't announce updates. For the entire SEO agency goes crazy and they stop. I stopped watching all those all those analysis where people have like a million sites they track all the time to figure it out. It is now putting more emphasis on university links or is this now putting more emphasis on the on the 13th word on there.

Katrina McKinnon 35:00

No one don't have time for that.

Gert Mellak 35:02

Neither do I, but I'm definitely in the sooner than they used to, to consume all this data and make my own conclusions and, and all this now, and I'm saying I think nothing would happen if they didn't announce an update. They're doing updates every single day, fair enough. If they didn't announce their core updates, or their major up to two, to stay out there was a ranking drop, manage to figure out again, what is it that Google wants to see and and try to create my version of it and draw my conclusions. But sometimes those updates are really more PR than anything. Google is so smart and coolest. So it's now mobile optimized, and it's going to take speed and elective covered vitals this the entire marketing machine around the covered vitals for two years was crazy, I've yet to see a site that's ranking higher, because the covered vitals are better, right? And there was so much, so so big height. Obviously, tech company has made a lot of money optimizing websites, I do realize Google saves a lot of money, they can call those websites now in the faster way, they don't have to put so much processing time to process faster sites not really good for them. Or very often, updates just need to be taken with a grain of salt.

Katrina McKinnon 36:07

Yeah, I can't remember there was one update. Of course, it kills the story, because I can't remember what the update was. But there was an update about a year ago, and everyone got their knickers in a knot about it. And I was just thinking to myself, 'That's not real.' It's, they Google's just mean, of course, I could be likely completely wrong. But I just felt like, that's just ridiculous. It doesn't matter. Google's just saying that to scare everyone, you would think of as some wasn't the HTTPS thing, but it was something like that, where it was just like every,

Google's just saying that to scare everyone, to make it easier for the crawler to come through. It's not going to be a big penalty or that. And that was the thing that might my reasoning was, Google has to cope and crawl with a huge amount of junk on the internet. Like billions of pages of junk. If Google couldn't crawl billions of billions of pages of absolutely slow loading junky website sites with broken HTML, it wouldn't have a business. So of course, it's worked out how to crawl, slow loading, badly constructed, you know, websites, as long as they've got a little bit of value, and people are linking to them for an obvious reason, then it works out how to crawl them, otherwise, it wouldn't have a business. So it was it was something, I can't remember what the update was, but I was just kind of like, Google can tolerate a lot of garbage. So don't worry about it. Most people's websites aren't that bad. And everyone gets upset about it. And it's quite simple. It's just do like Google, I sort of also think, you know, you've been doing SEO for 20 years as well. And, and it's this thing of, I don't feel like anything's fundamentally changed in 20 years. It's well, it has in it all the little hacks and all the Blackhat stuff, where you what, as you said, you know, what keywords on what backgrounds, but fundamentally all the really good sites that had good content back then, it's still the same good websites that are popular, that have good content or good product, whatever it might be. Those are the ones that naturally float.

Gert Mellak 38:04

Absolutely. And what we just see is what when people say SEO has changed very often, it's a competitive landscape that changed. So we have clients that were like industry leaders, 10 years ago, whatever they wrote about their industry was ranking right away. Right now you have 500 competitors, and 200 usually was probably doing the exact same thing. And yeah, have this back then. So they said, now Google changed, SEO changed, SEO doesn't work anymore. It's just a different landscape. You need to approach just pick different battles, and still, still work out again,

Katrina McKinnon 38:33

and have some fun.

Gert Mellak 38:34

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Want to produce something you're proud of? Right? Something you are proud of and look if somebody comes in with this query, this is going to be the best article they can find. And whatever they do on this page, if it's the best and the lead magnets would even get in the eye and opt in, but this is just the best they can find when they, when they search for this query. Yeah, I think that's that's a good a good foundation for a strategy.

Gert Mellak 39:00

I want to I want to thank you very much. Katrina's was really helpful. Just really recap a little bit. The checklist, we are going to put this over at [SEO leverage.com](http://SEOleverage.com) forward slash podcast, this is episode 88. And we're going to

Katrina McKinnon 39:13

Lucky number.

Gert Mellak 39:12

put this, absolutely, absolutely, put this checklist in there with a little bit of, as a little bit of a help. So definitely what, what I can I can learn from your experience now. So visuals are important, visual aspect of articles is important read and user experience being really important for Google just to figure things out because a lot of things that just no one to, they have a lot of users seeing this interesting point you raised about tables, really trying to take tables into content with maybe, it's not the first thing that comes to mind to have a table and this article, but there's always a way of how you can compare, contrast different things and even you didn't even have a link in there, or a click here or something like this is my track, attention and give us an additional competitive edge, short paragraphs, easy to read checklisst, bullet points or at least all these

Gert Mellak 39:28

Gosh you've been paying attention Gert.

Gert Mellak 39:38

I take, I take notes as my way of listening.

Katrina McKinnon 40:02

Yeah, Gert, I had no idea, because your mind is like a steel trap. You just like remembered everything.

Gert Mellak 40:15

I've stored in my memory. I know what definitely, what I need to check for writers header, I think we've done work too much with testimonials, we might pick this one up, testimonials inside, inside articles but not too much and so much in ecommerce but it's I think it makes sense to even if it's not a product testimonial, just having like a different person, having a different voice. It's very easy to see this tweet, you can pick a tweet until you find a tweet about everything. Somebody having a tweet, the relevance of it? Absolutely. If it's relevant, it's also going to make the user experience better. And then the author profiles definitely I think more and more people and with AI as well, with people being aware that AI might have written this content, you want to know who's behind this, who's putting their face hopefully the right one, and the actual face next to the name in the article, definitely really, really important. I think we've learned a lot, I guess.

Katrina McKinnon 41:06

Can I say one last thing Gert?

Gert Mellak 41:08

Absolutely. I was going to ask you if I'm missing something.

Katrina McKinnon 41:11

The last thing I'll say and it sounds so corny, but it really resonates with me, but content is king, right? But creativity is queen. And that's what people are missing. I think SEOs in particular gets so left brain, they get so focused on numbers. And I'm looking at you, they get so focused on

numbers and the analytics, diving into those reports where people track a million websites to see what's happening in the algorithm. Have a bit of fun, get creative. And the creative is where those moments are those, those exciting moments are when a piece of content or an idea just takes off like a rocket because you get creative with it and you do the work on it. So content is king, but creativity is Queen

Gert Mellak 41:54

Great final statement. Thank you so much, Katrina, where can people go to get in touch with you and find out?

Katrina McKinnon 42:00

Just CopySmiths.com is our website. And then I'm on LinkedIn. I'm mainly on LinkedIn, Twitter, I gave up on, but I'm also on Facebook a fair bit as well, because I help out in a lot of communities and Facebook in writing communities. So yeah, but mainly just copysmiths.com.

Gert Mellak 42:16

Awesome. Thank you so much, everybody listening, this episode is going to be as I said, over at SEOLeverage.com/podcast. And if you'd like to check out how we analyze sites, how we do things with the SEO leverage app, go over to SEO Leverage and book a demo with me and walk you through the app and show you around. Thank you so much for listening.