Enterprise SEO Tips for Success with Eli Schwartz [PODCAST]

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Enterprise-level SEO is an entirely different beast from general SEO.

Optimizing a website with thousands of pages poses a more complex set of requirements than when you’re optimizing a small business website.

If not well-prepared, companies looking to get started on building enterprise SEO efforts may encounter a lot of technical issues and costly mistakes.

In this episode of Search Engine Nerds, I had the opportunity to interview Eli Schwartz, director of organic product at SurveyMonkey, to discuss enterprise SEO – some of the challenges involved, the decisions you have to consider, and how to achieve success internally at your company.

What’s your take on where things are at with regard to enterprise SEO and the challenges that come with it?

Eli Schwartz (ES): I’ve actually been at SurveyMonkey now for over six years leading our SEO…

Looking back on these last few years, I’ve seen how [general] SEO and enterprise SEO has changed, which means that things are really different in the way SEO gets done, because of the scale of the company and the scale of the sites that we’re working on.

For example, when you want to do a redirect, the best practice

is always to do a 301 redirect. Everyone knows that. That's one of the first things you learn when you start doing SEO.

Well, actually when you're in a really large company, they might not have the technology to do a 301 redirect. They might, by default, have 302s.

How hard are you going to fight to build something brand new to do a 301 redirect instead of a 302?

In an enterprise where there are many levels up to where things get done, you have to determine if it's even worth that fight.

I do a lot of testing to try to understand things. If I'm pushing for a request, I know that that request is right, and I know that that's something that will matter.

I better have my ducks in a row and say, "This matters. We're actually getting hurt because it's a 302, and here's how we're getting hurt, and here's why we should try a 301. Here's why you should dedicate a quarter or an engineer to building something new."

Again, this is not something you're ever going to deal with in a small company, where there's someone that will just do it, or they'll say, "We're OK with that." In an enterprise, you're always spending political capital.

What are the battles that are worth fighting in enterprise SEO?

ES: I would say being in an enterprise, you really have to take the long view.

I use the 301 versus 302 as an example. That's a fight I can never win. There are smaller fights that are winnable, like building navigation.

[There are] things that are not going to happen overnight because you have to have a negotiation between a designer, a product person, an engineer, and all that.

That I think is worth fighting for, but it's worth acknowledging that's probably going to be a long fight, and then once you win that fight, it has to make it into someone's product roadmap.

What is changing in the field?

ES: What I see changing is that more and more large companies are actually looking for in-house SEOs instead of going to agencies.

There aren't that many in-house SEOs for them to hire, because many companies didn't have them, so you don't have those kinds of people that have had that experience of being in-house, negotiating, and having SEO be all about almost diplomacy rather than straight-up technical SEO.

Do you have some tips that would help people accomplish the role easier?

ES: To me, building relationships has helped me to be the most successful in getting things done, because sometimes I do need to make that big case, and sometimes I don't have enough data for the case.

People are willing to do things internally for their friends. Again, there can be so many politics in a large organization.

That would be the biggest tip I would give as you come into an enterprise SEO role – build as many relationships as possible.

Meet people over lunch. Share what you do and share what you're passionate about outside of work.

Those people that you are working with may just take a risk on

something you want and then help you get to that success.

The other piece I would say is be as successful as possible. Find those early wins. It demonstrates the success that you can get from your ideas, and then people will believe you more.

If you can get a significant bump in traffic because there was a noindex on a page, remove that noindex and explain, “Hey, I identified something in our code that was wrong. We fixed it, and look at this hockey stick.”

Everyone will now look at you and say, “Hey, this is someone that really knows what they’re doing. They’re making a difference. I want them to be involved in more projects.”

What would you say would be a good way for people to educate themselves on enterprise SEO and continue to learn?

ES: Conferences have been so valuable to meet those other people at large companies… I want to meet people that have [the] same problems.

Blogs, there are some great blog posts online from enterprise SEOs.

Network on Facebook – find those people and become friends with them.

If people want to ask you some specific questions, how would they reach out to you?

ES: I like LinkedIn. That’s my favorite social network. I accept LinkedIn requests from everyone…

I answer questions all the time on LinkedIn, and I just love

getting to know people and hearing their challenges, because I’m learning from them.

More Resources:

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