



David Jenyns has hunted down the greatest minds in various industries.



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And he's asking them the questions
YOU want answered...



Name: Leslie Rohde

Industry: SEO

Website: www.leslierohde.com

Product: www.seobraintrust.com

Leslie Rohde's Bio: Leslie Rohde is the SEO gurus' SEO guru. He started off as a software engineer in 1974, and worked on fringe technologies for the Defense. He worked on developing and fixing up one of the first portable GPS units. In 1998 he turned to internet marketing excelling as a consultant. He is a true pioneer of SEO strategies and was one of the first people to talk about link reputation. He also created the concept of dynamic linking that has now become a common weapon in the armoury of an SEO expert in the form of no follow and page rank sculpting.



Leslie Rohde

Interview Transcript Below.

David Jenyns: Hi guys, this is David Jenyns from www.davidjenyns.com and also www.theSEOMethod.com. Today I think I've lined up for you something that you probably haven't heard very often. I would consider who I've got on the line today as SEO royalty. I'll take you through a little bit of his back history to bring you up to speed with how he got to where he is now and also I suppose how I got in touch with his stuff.

I'm of course talking about Leslie Rohde and he started off as a software engineer back in 1974 and worked on fringe technologies working for things like the defense and helping develop and fix up the first portable GPS unit. Then he started to move into internet marketing around 1998. Then he started to create a really big presence. He was doing a lot of consulting and was one of the first people, if not the first person to talk about link reputation.

Everybody before that was talking about link popularity, all about the numbers of links. But then Leslie Rohde came along and started to talk about the quality of those back links. He had a few bits of software that I think were probably the first most analytical pieces of software out there. There was SEO OptiLink and SEO Spider. He's had a few claims to fame in this whole development of the SEO industry. He created dynamic linking and using no follow structures to be able to do what is now known as page rank sculpting. He was pretty much the first guy who developed that.

I started following him when I started to keep an eye on Jeff Johnson many years ago now, over four or five years ago. For me, at the time, he knew his SEO stuff and I know he was paying for Leslie's time to come and speak to coaching clients and things like that which showed me it's almost like Leslie Rohde is the guru's guru when it comes to SEO.

So Leslie I'd just like to welcome you to the call and thanks for your time.

Leslie Rohde: Well thanks for having me David. It's fabulous.

David Jenyns: Excellent. Well, I'll jump straight in. The reason I linked this call up, I know I'm really excited to meet you in person. You're coming down to Melbourne. Is that for the first time?

Leslie Rohde: Yes, that's true. Once many, many years ago I travelled to New Zealand, but I didn't have the opportunity to get over to Australia. So this will be the first time I've been on that continent.



David Jenyns: Excellent. And you're coming over for Ed's seminar, so at the tail end I want to ask you a little bit about what you'll be talking about. It will be great to meet you in person.

Leslie Rohde: Totally.

David Jenyns: To dive into the meat of this call, your strength is obviously SEO. I know it is a huge question to start with, but I'd like to get an idea of how you drive traffic when you first launch a new website. I don't know if you've got an example. Maybe we could draw on the SEO Brain Trust which is something you recently launched, or you may have another example. Take us through the process of what you do to start driving traffic through SEO to a new site.

Leslie Rohde: To a very new site, that limits the techniques a little bit. A lot of what I do is with existing sites, larger ones in particular. That is because a lot of my background is in e commerce rather than in the info product markets, although I've done both. One of the things I'm really known for, is how to make a site bigger and actually use that site size as a competitive weapon.

Assuming you get your pages indexed, and there are some tricks and traps there, building more content is probably the best single way to get more traffic, because you're actually dipping into the mid and long tail. The other thing is paid rank sculpting of course. With more content you can even attack the short tail very effectively.

This works primarily with deep keyword pools which most markets actually do have, even info product markets. But the other dimension, you're right, if it's a brand new site, then you really have to do two things. One is you're developing content. That's important, develop more pages. The other thing is, you're going to have to get discovered and you're going to have to pass some sort of eclectic thresh holding that Google seems to do about new sites.

In the beginning, you really do have to focus a lot of your efforts on what we would consider classical link building.

David Jenyns: Yes.

Leslie Rohde: At some point you become like part of the click, you become suddenly trusted. Where that crossover is, nobody knows outside of Google anyway. But as soon as you're trusted, you can build a bigger site and you're suddenly in charge of your own destiny. That's a magic thing to have happen.

But we can certainly talk about what do we do for a new site? It is very different, new site versus aged site.

David Jenyns: Perhaps even a little bit aged, so let's say they've got over that sandboxing period, they've put some content up and got the site initially indexed, so the real basics are done. Where would you take a site from there?

Leslie Rohde: Again it would depend a little bit on life cycle. Even if they're getting well indexed and trafficked, coming to some of their major terms, there are a couple of different things. There are some on-going processes that I always recommend people do. One of these, and this is one of the things that Dan Thies and I go back and forth about keyword research. Dan is focused on doing the really deep keyword analysis upfront even before you buy a domain. What I do, I eschew



Leslie Rohde (continued): that. I'm his other half in many respects and in that regard I just look at the operating website. It will throw off information which is more valuable than you can ever buy from any source.

What I look to do in building traffic is first, I want to see what traffic we're actually getting and what's happening to that traffic on the site. Ultimately it's not about getting traffic, it's about making money.

So I want to see what traffic do I really need and then what is going to happen as you get more and better ranked and you get more traffic, the long tail discovers you. This is one of those mindset things that I'll talk about. That is, you don't actually discover the long tail, because half of those are new searches anyway. Google doesn't even know about them.

Really what happens is, you find keywords showing up in your Google Analytics. You say, oh, I hadn't thought about that one. Is that worthy of a page or not and there are these trade offs you have to do in building out a site. It also identifies things you might want to do articles around that you put into syndication. That's the piece where you're working on site and trying to get the best profit from what we already have on our site and adjust our site appropriately. Simultaneously we're going to go do this off site stuff.

There are a couple of different things going on within the site. We talk about optimization by addition, which is adding more content, optimization by subtraction, which is guiding the content to the right pages so it gets us the most money, and then off site. This is two different things, one is indexation, so you're actually getting spidered and indexed and getting those trust factors in place, and that is also optimization by addition as well, because you're getting link reputation and page rank flow into your site.

David Jenyns: Let's say with the optimization by addition, and you're looking through your keyword research, looking through your different logs through Google Analytics, to determine how much you actually throw up against the wall, is it just a matter of resources, or do you have a set structure, where you say, ok I'm first going to build out with fifty new terms. How does that work as far as how much additional content you're adding?

Leslie Rohde: Right. That's where, and this occurs a little later in the presentation but, I've said this for some years now, so you may have actually heard me say it come to that, and that is I can actually teach you everything you need to know about SEO in twenty minutes. I've done that routinely, there are only about three things you have to actually do right. Those are the skills: how to run a title tag, how to write link text that work, that kind of thing.

That's not the problem. People fail because of the other two aspects, which are mindset and process. Process is really huge, particularly now. One of the themes that Ed has in mind for the upcoming seminar is the new age we're in. Most of the easy stuff is done and doesn't work well anymore and you have to get serious. We're building a real business, think long term. Most real businesses are about their processes. For instance Amazon, the amount of process they must have. Right?

David Jenyns: Yes.



Leslie Rohde: So what I teach is, let's look at keywords and which ones make the most sense. Do the trade offs about which ones we want to focus on, because ultimately we don't have to throw stuff on the wall. We can be very precise in our selections of keywords and our construction of content for both on site and syndication, in order to get inbound links to our site. We can be very precise about that sort of thing by using Google Analytics correctly.

Google Analytics is one of the best things to happen to SEO outside of Google itself. That's where I go with that. The keywords will discover you and then you have to decide what to do with them. That may mean, well, here's this keyword landing on this page. Is that an appropriate page for it to land on? That's the art of content, which is you build a page for a particular keyword. Typically you should only have one or two or three related phrases. Once you have that, you can't keep from ranking for stuff. Dumb stuff typically, but some of it isn't dumb, it's actually good stuff.

Then the question is, well, is that a different page or is that the right page for it to land on? Well, engagement metrics will tell you. Now if you find, well, it's not engaging quite right, but the visitor value is pretty good when it is, then maybe we need another page. There are ways to estimate how much traffic we're leaving on the table at a particular rank and some other tricks like that I'll show, where we can actually make those kinds of trade offs.

That's the approach I take. On a live site it throws of so much data that I can use to actually drive the processes of SEO that that is really where I live. It doesn't take much of a site mind you. So for a 'brand new site' whatever brand new means exactly, if you've got a ten page site, you have something, you have a kernel of something there. When you get to a hundred page site, you are well on the way to having a thousand page site. I don't know anyone who can't have a thousand page site when they think about content the right way.

David Jenyns: So it sounds like the aim of the game in search and I think I've heard you talk about this before, it's really about having as many pages as you can. Obviously you should optimize and focus on the right things and John Reese talked about it as the more pages you have the more tickets you have in the search engine lottery.

It's funny, especially when you start with Google Analytics and you can get just lost in all of the slew of these different metrics and different things to analyse. You talk about a process. As far as going through that process, you talked about some pretty high level things there, as far as what to do. To break it down, and say, you need to jump in and look at your analytics. You should start off by picking out five words. Where do you start?

Leslie Rohde: Well, that's a very good question. It depends. This is about how to focus your efforts. That gets into some of those processes. Let's go there. I skipped over a couple of things there, like how to get links and that kind of thing. Let's go ahead and be strategic for just a moment.

Here's the challenge, and one of the questions you asked me in email, and that is the single biggest opportunity in ranking today. Here it is. It's why top ten no longer matters. That's obviously the teaser line. It's intended to create an email that gets opened. That's up there with the death of pay per click and the other things, right?

It's the steepness of the graph that you get when you look at traffic versus rank. This is one of those things that people have been looking at ever since AOL accidentally leaked the data. When



Leslie Rohde (continued): you look at the data, you find that it takes, given search terms with the same traffic, it takes five number three ranks to equal the traffic of a single number one rank.

Let that cook for a second. I could have lots of pages. If you have a number ten rank, it takes fourteen of those to equal a number one rank. It's obviously for the same traffic terms. So what does that mean to us? That means that we need to not light the wall with a floodlight, we need to pull out a bunch of lasers. We need to be very focused. Basically what it is, if you're going to go after a term, do not stop until it's number one. Just going from number two to number one is three and a half times on average.

What does that say about our focus? One thing that people have said is that short tail matters, and I disagree. Wherever you are going to focus, whether it is short tail or long tail or within a particular segment of your industry, or something of that nature, what it means is, don't stop until you have a number one and then work on the next one. So it almost means you serialize your keyword choices. Almost, it's not quite true, but it is close to that.

I would say, and have said, pick five, no more than five, because that's how many fingers I have. So I want to attack a very small number of terms, I want to absolutely command them, and then, while protecting those, I'll go after the rest of them. So now that restates the question, which five?

The first thing I'd look for is what is the visitor value? I can look at my logs, I can look at my Google Analytics results and see that this particular search term gets me this much from the visitors I get. Now where is that ranked? For example, here are a couple of examples. Say I'm on page three, so I'm on position twenty-five say and I get half a dozen conversions. I get a hundred visits in a month and I get half a dozen conversions. The visitor value is really good.

If I'm getting a hundred clicks a month on page three of results, what does that tell me about the total traffic available if I'm at position five, or position two or position one?

David Jenyns: There's a great deal more there.

Leslie Rohde: Yes, there are thousands, that's a factor of hundred bigger, so it's more like ten thousand. Look deep for those, look for things that have really good conversions and really good value when they convert and try to figure out how much of that traffic is actually available. That's one dimension.

The other dimension is look for things that are knocking on the door. If I'm at position five, I am in the steepest part of the curve because it really goes really fast. It's pretty flat on page two or three.

You can move from position twenty-five to position fifteen and wonder if you actually did any work. You wouldn't be able to tell from your traffic graph that you had actually done anything. It was probably a lot of work mind you, but you're not going to see that in your traffic. When you move from position five to number three, you'll really notice it, and from three to one, you'll be a hero.

So those are a couple of different things and you have to balance what the opportunities are, and ultimately there is some arithmetic that you can use to do that. It's about the mindset. The first part of the presentation that I have for a week and a day away is that people fail from mindset. The skills of SEO are too trivial to build a business around.



Leslie Rohde (continued): It's the mindset and the trade off, the processes we have to use to construct a business based on free traffic, where people get completely bottled up, they get completely in analysis paralysis and they don't do anything, or they do something wrong. That's where the difference between a successful internet business and a non-successful one comes out.

David Jenyns: I think coming back to what you said earlier, the idea of process and being process driven, after you pick out those five keywords, you look at what's converting and also where you are already, trying to identify, let's say, which five to go after. You start off with all the basics we know, on page optimization, getting the keyword in the right place and having you internal linking structure correct. I suppose then you move to the off page or is there anything else you do there as far as working through this process?

Leslie Rohde: Oh, yes, sure, and in fact this is the peeling of the onion, and so now we'll do an abbreviated version of the twenty minute skills to do SEO. There content is king and linking is queen. Like your house, the queen runs things, at least in mine.

Within king, within content, there are only a couple of different things one has to know, or really three things. One is the title tag is most important for SEO, meta description comes shortly after that and then the content itself is just there to sell humans, it really is irrelevant from a search perspective. It attracts long tails, and yes, there in the last five percent of ranking algorithm sure, on page matters. But frankly on page matters when there is so little signal in everything else, that's the only thing you have to go on,. It is like the default, the back up.



You can find whether your page is indexed by looking for some incredibly long string of words on the page and sure enough you will be the only result. The title and description most people think, oh, that is SEO. Yes, it is SEO but your ranking doesn't matter. Your traffic doesn't matter, it's your conversion that matters. Let's make sure you're getting the right traffic. First and foremost, write your title and description to sell. Then back fit in the very small number of things you have to get right in order to do SEO. That's the first thing and the second.

Then there is link text, which is link reputation, a term actually coined by Michael Campbell during a phone call in early 2002 when we were working on a sales letter. Just before the release of OptiLink in 2002, we came up with this term to differentiate from link popularity.

There's the link text and you have to do that. Honestly, that is the largest factor, but whether it's the most important one depends on your competition. Then there is page rank, which is really the structure of your linking. If you get those things figured out, and like I said, it really only takes thirty minutes, to get the essence of those things, you're done. You know everything you need to know in terms of skills about SEO.

Then it is about applying it and applying it the right way. That's when it takes a lot longer than thirty minutes.

David Jenyns: That's the hard part. With the linking, and that's really where the rubber meets the road and that's where a lot of people get stuck. What are your thoughts on as far as getting the process, is it important to be consistently building links and where are some of the different sources as far as getting a variety of links is concerned?



Leslie Rohde: Yes, and that is where I segued away from what your question was, so it goes outward from on page, onsite and then off site. It's the off site thing where most people run into difficulty. Dan in the SEO Brain Trust has done this wonderful thing called Link Liberation which he ran over the summer too as a stand alone program. He has some particular techniques for doing that.

I have my own view of that, which is not inconsistent by any means. What I do is a thing I call Endless Content. People are always stuck with this. If they're told build a one thousand page website, they nearly faint. They can't figure out how they could ever write more than the four pages they already have. Trust me, there is a way. Ed Dale and I talked about this on an interview call some months ago. We've talked about it over the years.

He does the same thing. I think he talks about sausage making and how you can relate sausage making to everything else on the planet. That's what I call topic bridging. It's the game of six degrees of Kevin Bacon. Is that only a US thing?

David Jenyns: I've heard of it, but you're going to have to elaborate.

Leslie Rohde: Kevin Bacon has been in almost every movie back to Humphrey Bogart. The game is, you name an actor or name a film director or name your next door neighbour and try to find in six degrees of separation what the connection is to Kevin Bacon. It's a silly trivia game for people who watch that kind of stuff. It doesn't work for me because I have no clue. That's the trick. How do you bridge sausage making to something else?

That's some of the things you have to do in order to create lots of content on your site, but it also works to create articles. This is where we get to your actual question finally, which is how do you get off site links. You've heard article marketing is king.

David Jenyns: Yes, that is pretty stock standard.

Leslie Rohde: It's standard stuff except the way it is done, no that's not it. The one link you got from EzineArticles, is that it? Really seriously?

David Jenyns: You want to rank for that term with that article?

Leslie Rohde: Well, yes and you only got one link out of the deal. So how is that going to work? Besides, how is that better than actually putting the same article on my website? 'Well off site links are different to on site links.' Rubbish. And that's not the real point. What you really want from article marketing what EzineArticles advertises, is people pick it up and put on their own site. It's the syndication aspects which make article marketing worthwhile.

So now, it's not about writing an article, it's about writing an article that somebody else wants and will pick up and put on their site. What I teach is, if you write an article, and in ten days it doesn't get picked up half a dozen times, you made a mistake. It's not a good article.

One of the popular things is to figure out how sausage making relates to celebrities, because everybody wants content about celebrities. Or, national events of one sort or another, like how does sausage making relate to the current referendum in Western Australia, if there is one, or the current political debate going on in Congress, which there always are.



Leslie Rohde (continued): Those kinds of things are actually going to go viral and that's what the real goal of article marketing is. Now you have links from a whole bunch of different unrelated websites. That's the thing that sets off the threshold filter that says, yes, this is a trusted site.

David Jenyns: That seems contrary to the way a lot of people talk. It's all about getting themed back links. What are thoughts on when people talking about making sure you're getting back links from websites that are relevant to the topic that you're writing on?

Leslie Rohde: I can't tell you my first thought, because it is a PG call. If you take this stuff too seriously...What I really think is, and it is what I actually say after I think it is, you should spend more time looking at search results. When you do that, you'll see that's complete hogwash. The reality is that sites rank for the things in the title and the link text. That link text could appear from anywhere.

The example I've used literally since 2003 about theming, and it's not really theming. I don't want to get into this whole mess about whether or not I'm bashing someone who does theming, like BruceClay for example. No, that is not the case. That's not the case at all.

What I'm actually talking about, more precisely stated, but so precise it is completely unclear, is cross page topic. If I have a page A that is about a certain topic and it links to page B that has a certain topic, is the topic of page A counted in the ranking of page B or is it just the link text, the blue underlined stuff on page A? I contend it is the latter. It is only the blue underlined stuff that gets moved from page A to page B to help it rank.

The proof of that you can actually readily see. The argument is also persuasive in that, and one I've used, that clearly sunglasses and skiing are related. Would you agree?

David Jenyns: Yes.

Leslie Rohde: Yes, you don't have to do that more than once and you'll go buy a pair in the gift shop. So sunglasses and skiing are related. So a skiing site that links to a sunglasses site, you've got to believe that is a good link. Now what about porn and Beethoven? I'm just not getting it. But what data base does Google have to make those sorts of determinations?

We've heard lots of rubric recently about related searches and there's spelling correction and all those other things as you can see on the search results page. Again, if you look deeply in those, you'll find that's not the case. That's at the best co occurrence, people have suggested it may be about the actual click history and things like that. But again, there's not like this big data base that relates topics for one reason and one reason only, it doesn't make sense.

In the time I've been in software engineering, we've been trying to build machines that would actually do natural language processing, would extract meaning from natural language. Guess what? We still haven't done it and that was thirty-five years ago I started this. The reason it doesn't work is, there is so little meaning in natural language. It's not that our software is bad, it's that we've finally realized we don't actually mean anything when we say stuff. We can't actually extract topic.

I don't see this whole theming thing being used in ranking anytime soon. The simple reason is that we don't even know how to do it as humans.



David Jenyns: I think that whole latent semantic indexing which runs alongside of what we're talking about now, I've just always found it is better if you focus on writing that good content that you were talking about. All of that stuff happens naturally if it even does exist, that's all going to happen naturally just by nature of writing good articles on topic.

Leslie Rohde: Right, and again this is something I did over a year ago. Over a year ago I did a video on LSI that was used in StomperNet. It caused a furor on the web, it was absurd and silly.

David Jenyns: You're a troublemaker.

Leslie Rohde: Of course. And then that was used in a launch, oh, he caused so much trouble he had to be sidelined. It was all fun of course. It was way too highbrow and advanced. We had very little engagement on that video. People just glazed over and hit pause and for good reasons too.

There's a bunch of technical issues about LSI about why it doesn't really work at scale for something like that, and not just computationally but about what the algorithm actually does. It's worked great in things like medicine and in law and things of that nature.

You're absolutely right about the so called write natural content. Now that's not like some SEOs, without naming names, will say, oh write good content for humans and Google will rank you where you belong. Yes, right on page seven.

David Jenyns: Where the two people click.

Leslie Rohde: Exactly. Right, and those are your neighbours or your family. The real deal is, it's a long tail attracter, it's about getting that traffic that you didn't even know you needed to go get. By the way, your ranking doesn't matter, it's the money you make that we use to score this game, and so write stuff that is actually going to entice the human to engage and do whatever conversion step you want them to do on your site. So that is the reason to write that good content.

You're right, if you just write it for humans, well, sure enough, who is searching? Humans, they're probably searching with a similar language that you are. So that's exactly right, just write for humans.

David Jenyns: And you mentioned that right at the start when you talked about the content being key. It seems funny coming from someone in SEO, which is that idea of writing to sell. It's not the search engines that are going to pull out their dollars and buy your products, it is going to be the user. So you want to write to them. I think that is excellent advice.

When we were talking about building links and we were talking about writing the article, articles I think are one of the best long standing ways to build links. I'm curious to know, if there are other link methods you use and where you see the best bang for buck in building links?

Leslie Rohde: Again I think content is so good. You write content, you can adjust the article and use it in a syndication approach as well. There are other kinds of syndication that work as well, like press releases and things of that nature. They don't get syndicated as widely as articles that are submitted to the article directories, but those are good.

Then we start getting into the specifics of a business. This is where you can really put it in overdrive. Some of those will be SEO focused, and frankly some of them will not be. Again, the way we



Leslie Rohde (continued): score this game is money. SEO is great but it is not the only pony. If you have a Twitter application, well, Twitter. If you have a Facebook, application, Facebook. Do you get where this is going? Go where those people are.

If you're in a niche marketplace, a very small niche, not just what we call niche in the internet marketing space, but one that is narrow. For example, products for pilots, particularly something like airline pilots only hang out in a relatively small number of places, in airports. Go where they are.

Affiliate marketing, that is another one. A lot of us in SEO have a deep connection to affiliate marketing because ultimately what we do is business opportunity. We talk a lot about information products. Ed Dale is one for example. Think about that and this is the great irony. Selling SEO software you don't do with SEO. You do with joint venture partners. I actually rank really poorly for most SEO stuff. It doesn't matter because it is the Who's Who of SEOs that are recommending this stuff and telling their clients about it and things like that, that's the deal.

The same kind of thing can happen in different markets. In terms of traffic strategies alone, there is social media. Social media is good. Now the ranking benefits are really not there except a secondary and tertiary thing which we could talk about if we had time.

David Jenyns: Do you see that coming down the pipe?

Leslie Rohde No, the people who run things like Twitter and so on are pretty smart. They know that any social network out there that lasts any period of time becomes something of the order of 80% spam. Digg is a good example. I don't remember the exact number, but bookmarking sites in general, they've found it's upwards of three quarters are actually spam accounts.

Nobody wants to follow down that path if they can help it. No following the links is first and foremost in their mind. So there's not a direct benefit. But here you go, unfortunately you can't stop it in some sense, so this is what happens.

You put a naked link on www.twitter.com to www.davidjenyns.com. That's great it's no follow so you're not getting any help from that. Wait, it turns out that the mobile version of Twitter is fed through the equivalent RSS feed that washes out the actual link and puts in place this semantic markup which gets turned back into a link later. So at www.m.twitter.com you end up with a naked link and www.m.twitter.com is spidered by Google.

So there is actually a secondary effect even from things like the social sites which end up does create links.

David Jenyns: Also, the whole idea, Google paying that \$15,000,000 to get the live feed in from Twitter and starting to integrate that in search and getting social media really integrated into search with personalized search and all that sort of thing. Surely Google, they may not be passing that page rank, but Google without a doubt is following all of these links. That at some point has to feed back into the algorithm to start to affect results.

I'm curious to get your thoughts on that.

Leslie Rohde Yes, I think there are several things going on there. One is that Twitter thing. I haven't seen it. It was live for a few days and there was a lot of hullabaloo about it. I haven't actually seen it live lately. I'm wondering if they actually pulled the teeth back on that one because there



Leslie Rohde (continued): were some really serious issues in terms of what I call search reputation control around those live things in Twitter.

So that's one thing, whether they actually leave that kind of social media stuff. Here's the problem. It's impossible for the spam team to do anything about it. It is real time. You could actually see the thing scroll while looking at the search results page. It was Java script writing, there were scrolled results. There was no way they could control search quality, which is a problem for them.

The other things that are going on there are about what does social media mean to Google? I don't think it means as much as people would like it to mean. Here's the primary tie in. Google wants to be a news site. When you type in, what's the weather in Melbourne, they want to produce that result, they don't want to produce www.weather.com. We've all done this. We say, oh, there is a tornado in Atlanta. Because we're trained to, we go type into Google, tornados in Atlanta. There is no search result yet. The tornado will be gone before Google gets around to even indexing the page.

They want to be your news site because there is a lot of traffic there. This whole thing about making caffeine really fast and the high speed indexing that they're doing particularly on real new sites that's about a traffic model which ultimately ties to the revenue model. It's not about wanting to be the 'social' avenue. I think that we're mixing up some things there. The social stuff they know is highly spammy. How much of that are they going to use as a signal in their algorithm? They're dipping into the most polluted well they know of.

David Jenyns: Yes. I was reading an interesting book called Socialnomics and the author Eric Qualman was talking about the idea of the way he sees search going. Obviously when you search for, let's say European vacation, it's going to be more relevant to you to get information back from your friends and photos that they've taken and reviews and that sort of thing. It sounds like a great idea. When it comes to actual application and implementation, what are your thoughts on that?

Leslie Rohde: Right, and that's that other aspect you asked about, which is personalized search. There are a couple of things that are interesting there. One is, they've had the pattern of material from Taher Haveliwala since 2003, that's the topic sensitive page rank. I don't know if you followed that, but what happened is that Taher and two other guys got their PhDs from Stanford. They formed their own company and two months later were bought out for an undisclosed price from Google.

I have started a lot of businesses. In two months you can't even get the phones installed. That was a nice exit play. If you read the documents, it turns out what they purchased was they purchased the guys and they also purchased exclusive rights to certain technology licensed to Stanford. So they're doing IP play, intellectual property.

One of the things they no doubt purchased in that, because Taher has spent his entire academic career going to the same places and doing the same stuff that Mr Page did, including lots and lots of research on page rank. One of them is topic sensitive page rank which tends to split apart the whole notion of page rank in different versions of page rank based around this whole concept of topic.



Leslie Rohde (continued): In a lot of the papers that Page did early on, he talked about personalizing search the same way, by just taking what is a random factor and making a personalized vector. It sounds great until you actually start trying to do it. Then you run into problems, well, I'm not the same person today as I was yesterday, at least in terms of what I'm looking for on the web.



If it does come into use, we have a Google video out there which says that they're now doing it by IP and you have to be logged in and I don't see a lot of changes. If you start seeing lots of changes, I'm going to have to eat my words. But I think if they actually turn that effect up too high, very high at all, that what we're going to run into is that search doesn't make sense to anybody.

Yes, we search a lot, but we search over so many subjects. What is my topic bias really?

David Jenyns: I do know when you're logged in to your Google account, they're obviously tracking all that you're doing and depending on what you click, I'm seeing that my results, more so with search terms that I'm regularly checking in on. Those are the terms where you're starting to see those changes. That I think is based more on the clicks, not analyzing your social media or anything.

Leslie Rohde: Totally and I do this a lot. Everybody has Google Analytics installed and their g mail and what not and so they're always logged in. So I'm saying, oh, I see that position three and then they say, well I'm position fourteen, so are you logged in? Oh, yes I am. Sure enough you log out and hit refresh. So if you're logged in and looking at Google results, realize you're not looking at Google results, you're looking at your results.

David Jenyns: To switch gears and talk about what we were saying before, about building these links. We talked about getting articles and getting good quality content out there. Do you use any other methods as far as buying links, using blog networks, directory submissions? Do you do some or all of it or do you just have a few that you focus on?

Leslie Rohde: Most of the work I do myself is with really high end companies, multi million dollar companies, So it's the teaching I do when I track what students actually say they do, which is usually what they do.

Directory submissions, yes, ok do them but I don't really focus on that. It's really about building out the content. If I have a ten page website, what is more important to me, ten more pages or three more links to those ten pages? One hundred percent of the time I'm going to tell you, more content is better. It's going to allow you to discover more traffic and more different traffic. Content is the focus and it is just about how to get better at creating lots of content.

There is a variety of ways to do that yourself and using outsourcers. That is first and foremost. There is that external linking aspect that has to be done and we talked about that. Certainly there is article marketing. Paid links can work. The challenge there is, knowing how to price the link. Most people run into that. The other thing is it's a recurring cost, it's not a sum investment.

Typically, if you do the maths, you'll find out that often writing content, having outsourcers write content for you, even if it is relatively low quality, is going to beat the paid link. It's not always true, but certainly that's something you should look at.



Leslie Rohde (continued): The other thing is that there are paid links and there are paid links. Instead of going to networks, you can go directly to blogs, to bloggers, particularly in your space, you're getting well targeted traffic as well as a good no followed link. Those are the really good strategies to use. In thirty minutes you can write out exactly what you're looking for and somebody else can get on the phone and start doing that. You don't have to actually do that yourself.

As far as blog networks are concerned, the challenge is to the extent that those things are already exposed and known about. It is well known that Google has a very ivory tower view of linking. Despite how rich they are, they don't score the game based on money apparently.

David Jenyns: Until they became listed.

Leslie Rohde: Right, at least some part of the company is tracking that. The challenge with live networks is they really are obviously only to get ranked. That's the whole point of them, that is the reason we do it. I've done it too. In order to pass the absurd, actually unreachable standard that Google has put in place, you would just simply have to hide. There is no other way around it. You can't say, oh, well I really like the traffic from that blog network. Yes, right. It's really because you're doing it only for ranking, you just have to make sure Google doesn't know you're doing it.

Bear in mind, that even with the tens of thousands at last report of people in foreign countries that are doing spam detection stuff, if you look at what Mat Cutts shows that his spam team works on, you say, wow, I thought I was a spammer. No way. There's amazing stuff that they have to find. We are not public enemy number one. Almost nothing that we would even consider doing is above threshold for Mat Cutt's team.

That said, you can still trip a filter, you can get reviewed and then you're in the bin. It's very important to realize that you're going to want to firewall some things. What I teach, and I haven't actually taught this in a while, but in terms of a network strategy, the closer you get to the thing that pays the rent, the wider and wider you want to get. Your e commerce site should have no inbound links that you've built at least, that are even marginally reprehensible.

Build your own private inbound links and you can fake an affiliate program to do that or actually use a real affiliate program if you have one, and so build in house affiliates if you will. They'll link into your site. Then get those indexed. Now you see you've got some firewall. You can say, hey, I have no idea who that guy is, I'll shut him down right away and then you can go to town on getting those secondary sites indexed. You don't want them ranked, you just want to pass all the page ranks through to your main site.

So if you can do that, you've got that distance between you and anything that could be open to real question, then you're safe.

David Jenyns: The age old argument is, you can't really get into trouble for inbound links to your own site, because if that was the case, you'd just go to your competitor, link with a whole lot of bad links and take them out of the index. How does that play into what you were talking about there?

Leslie Rohde: Exactly and that's the trick. You're absolutely right. The challenge is when 100% of your links are bad. If you already have a thousand links and you can buy into a blog network and you can get two hundred more, go for it, because you've got enough mixed in there. The problem



Leslie Rohde (continued): is if you buy two blog networks and get two hundred links and another two hundred links, it's probably not what you want to do.

The easiest, best way to get a computer science master's degree right now, at least in the United States, is to do some thesis on network analysis for search engines. It's really cool stuff and it results in a whole lot of equations and cool diagrams that are mostly impenetrable to everybody except your committee. You'll get your degree and you'll probably get picked up by Google or Yahoo or someone else.

There is a whole bunch of guys and girls out there studying how to pick apart networks. That's kind of bad for those of us who've made their living on networks. The kind of network approaches that are simple are also simple to find. That's the challenge. If it's simple to do, it's also simple to find.

One of the things that does happen, by the way, is that as these networks get ranked, which they will, then what happens is the edges of the network goes all fuzzy because those sites get linked from outside of network. You want that, and to some extent that's happening because of other spammers that are even less educated. Good for them.

David Jenyns: Doing some traffic equalizer stuff there.

Leslie Rohde: Precisely. That is exactly one of the things that happens. You brought up Jeff Johnson. That was one of the seminars I did was talking about traffic equalizer, directory generator and something else we talked about at one point in his coaching program and how to not make those things quite as blatant as they are out of the box.

David Jenyns: Changing the template like nobody ever did.

Leslie Rohde: For example. That would be a good idea, an earth shattering idea.

David Jenyns: It sounds like there are quite a few ways people go wrong and you've been in the industry so long. Not in relation to the Jeff Johnson stuff that we were just talking about, but where do you see people going wrong?

Leslie Rohde: Traffic equalizer and directory generator were perfect examples of the era. This is now and they're different. What I call it is fixation on the newest silver bullet. There is a silver bullet and it hasn't changed in years and it is called hard work. You can't sell that one, right? One of my catch phrases is that optimization will reduce the amount of work you have to do, but not to zero. You're actually going to have to do some work. Optimization is about making more money or being more effective.

So chasing the latest shiny object does three things really bad for you. It takes time and generally money too. By changing strategies and tactics with each great new idea, which does nothing typically to build anything with longevity, it might actually undo work that you've already done. You have no consistent plan that you're working on, so that you really don't build anything longer term.

In trading stocks and futures and stuff like this, this is the algorithm of the week where people will buy the newest course and the newest charting technique and they'll try it ten times and it fails six



Leslie Rohde (continued): and they'll realize that's what supposed to happen and they switch. The other thing is even thinking about the new silver bullet creates doubt that undermines commitment. That's the biggest one right there. If you're not committed to doing it, how well are you going to do it?

David Jenyns: You hit the nail on the head with the trading analogy. That's pretty much my niche, where I come from. We call it the search for the holy grail, people looking for that perfect entry signal, that's going to get them in at exactly the right time. Every time a new Forex course or new stock course or whatever course is launched, or a new trading instrument, it's designed to catch amateur investors to keep on chasing that shiny bullet.

Business for them is not about generating good products, it's just about generating new products to have the initial sell and have people jumping to those. More people than I could count, that's the way they operate their business. You see it the same in anything to do with creating money.

Leslie Rohde: Yes. Business opportunity is that way. Over here, and you have the same requirement, because you sell in the United States, the new FTC rules. No longer can you say, you and I may differ, the results are not typical. Now what they're saying is, what you have to do is actually survey your customers and figure out what the actual typical result is. We're having a ball with this in the IM space. Lots of alcohol was consumed in Vegas because that's what we do there. One of the running jokes was how we're going to rewrite the FTC disclosure.

The truth of the matter is, if you survey your customers, in any business opportunity area, you're going to find that 98.9%, maybe that's too low, of the boxes do not even get opened. We actually had a very unfortunate situation at a company I used to work for. We sent out bad discs. We didn't know we'd sent out bad discs. We only got out of a thousand we sent out, twenty-five complaints. So that must be the number of people who actually put the disc in the drive. Twenty-five out of a thousand, there's a real number.

That's the challenge, and the thing about it, the really tough thing to get your head around, and you must have this too as SEO, you don't know. They're going to identify themselves, they're going to self identify if they actually open the box and take some action. You can't know in advance who those people are. So you still have to sell to everybody and you just have to realize that most of them aren't going to stick.

I spent fifteen years, I guess, doing taikwando. As I progressed through the ranks and ultimately became a third degree black belt, as you get higher and higher in the ranks you are required to teach and so on. The challenge is, you find the fall out rate is really high at white belt and yellow belt. By the third test, people are sticking but they fall out down the road. You just have to realize when you're teaching this person, you may not see them again in six months.

That's the way it is when you're teaching SEO or anything else, and in the business opportunity areas, you don't know whether that person is really going to take what you have to offer and do something with it. You can't be hung up about it. It just has to be the way it is.

David Jenyns: I think part of that is getting the mindset right and that process. Obviously you need to have the skill there as well. It's a big part of my understanding of what you're going to be talking about at Ed's event coming up. What sort of things have you got planned for that?



Leslie Rohde: That should be interesting and this is something I've been cogitating on for quite some time. There's an opportunity where several things have come together and forced me to finally do this presentation. It's actually parts pulled together and then duct taped. So there are actually three parts to the talk. The first one we talk about is mindset, and the second one is process and then I'll also fit in fifteen minutes of skill work that everybody wants to hear of course. What I'm going to create here and I think it looks pretty good, I've got slides already is an end to end blueprint for a running a business based on free traffic.



That's the headline. That will get the email opened. We'll see how it comes off. Mindset is the most important. What I'm going to do is, I'm going to do this little piece of paper you take notes on, so that when people walk out of that seminar, what they'll have is something they can post next to their terminal which has my one liner of memory aids about how to keep your mind right.

What I'll also do is, I'll map out an outline, we can't do a deep dive on all of it, but I'll outline actual processes that you have to do on an ongoing basis to get ranked.

David Jenyns: Definitely seems like a talk I'll be well keen to sit in on. I can't wait for that one which is only a couple of weeks away now. I think there are still some spots Ed has opened up a little bit further now to expand because royalty, the king of SEO, you, among others are coming to Melbourne. It's going to be a fantastic event.

Leslie, I'd just like to finish up, you've been very generous with your time, I do appreciate that. If people want to find out more about you, I know they can head over to your website, your blog, which is www.leslirohde.com. There is also www.theseoinnovator.com, another site of yours. If people want to keep on the pulse of what you're doing, obviously they can come to Ed's event, but are there any other ways they can keep in touch?

Leslie Rohde: Oh yes, I'm very visible in fact, I'm so visible Google will even correct the spelling of the last name if you get it wrong, so that's very important. The SEO Innovator is kind of the press kit if you will. There is www.leslirohde.com and more and more I'm trying to blog, instead of just having the site which for a long time I'd only blog once a month and I'm trying to actually fix that.

www.Seobraintrust.com is where Dan Thies and I run our teaching and coaching program. Right now it's hard to figure out on the site how to buy into the program because we're moving our marketing funnel around, so nothing is perfect.

David Jenyns: Sign up to the opt in and wait.

Leslie Rohde: If you opt in, I think we actually pitch you to sell at some point. I think, I'm not sure, I'd have to check that. Those are ways you can try to contact me on Twitter, on LinkedIn, there are a whole bunch of ways to find me. But www.leslirohde.com will work. I try to read and answer all the comments on my post.

David Jenyns: And if people Google you, apart from the correction on the spelling, they'll find a whole host of ways. Again Leslie, I'd just like to thank you very much for your time and I'm sure people will love it and hope you guys have enjoyed the interview.



Leslie Rohde: Look forward to meeting you.

David Jenyns: Sounds good.

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