



Wil Reynolds: Hello everyone. There we go; perfect, perfect. Okay. I'm going to go ahead and start going through this discussion on search optimization now because I know there are going to be a ton of questions and I want to make sure that everybody leaves here with something that they may have heard or have thought was true but wasn't sure about and at least they can get an answer from a pretty credible source. Search engine optimization is something I've been doing now for about eight years. When I started, it was like "Why would you optimize for Google? They're nobody. Back then it was excite and Lycos and all those kinds of players.

And the reason why I love interacting with an audience like yourselves is search is full of a lot of people who claim they really know what's going on and they lead a lot of you down paths that are totally wrong. And then you come along and meet someone who might know what they're talking about, and say "Well that's not what I was told three or four months ago." So this presentation is geared to you firing questions at me. I've been doing this long enough to where I'm usually pretty comfortable answering about 80 to 90 percent of your questions on the fly. Any ones that I can't answer, I will try to when I get back home and do a little research, see if I can get you a real answer. So by all means, when something comes up that you have a question about, please raise your hand, and we'll try to get that question answered if we can. The only thing that I ask is that when I answer one of your inquiries that you kind of take it at face value. This isn't an opportunity for us to have a total back and forth. If you want to talk about it a little bit later, that's fine, but just to make sure that everyone here can get some of their questions answered I'd prefer it if you pose a question, I'll give back my thoughts on it, and then we can move on to others.

First, if you're sitting in the proximity of or sitting on one of the yellow cards, could you number down the right hand side one through eight for me, please? They're kind of scattered throughout. All right. And how I sound out there, I'm assuming I'm okay? Great. That's the right hand side [laughs]. Doesn't matter which one you want. I think that the biggest farce about search, and it's what I hate the most about being involved in this industry, is the SEO myth, which is every site ranks well for something. And people will tout that as a great ranking. I once had someone tell me they didn't need my services because they already ranked number one for the word New York. I said, "Wow, that's tough. I've been involved in this space for awhile and New York is a tough one." I typed it in. I didn't find them. I said, "Well, where are you guys?" "Oh, if you type in New York as one word, we're number one." Well, your domain is newyork.com. What did you think was going to happen?

So, it's things like that that I've come across in the eight years that I've been involved in search where it has prompted me to make sure that to the best of my ability, I can educate folks that are trying to figure this whole thing out. It's a lot to learn. And educate you guys who walk out of this room saying that you learned something, picked something up,



or even better, you can keep your SEO team a little more accountable. Because a lot of times you don't know whether or not these things are as hard as they say, and that's what we're going to go through today. And like I said, as things come up, please raise your hand and we'll get to you. So we're going to talk about timewasters. There are things that I'm still asked about today that I'm like, I haven't done in four or five years, which just goes to show that with all the information out there, people still are trying to figure out this whole search thing.

One of the most important things is developing a search architecture. I'll get into what that means. Selecting keywords to me is hands down the area where most people are weakest, so I want to also touch that. Linking, and why you should use FireFox when you work on linking, I will show that as well. And I'm going to give a lot of examples. Theory is kind of a waste at this point. Let's really get down to brass tacks so I can show you some of these tools. And the whole "Do I want to do this myself or do I want to outsource," I will give my best attempt at giving an unbiased view on that. And you know, these rules change a lot. And what I've always done for this in my third time I've been here at the Affiliate Summit speaking about search, and if you just bring your business card and put it anywhere up here, I will send you every bookmark that I've aggregated for the last five years about search. I am here to educate you so that you can use, or have at your disposal, the same tools I use every day. They're free. Almost every tool that we use is free. So a lot of what's out there on search is a myth. When somebody says they've developed a proprietary tool, they haven't, okay? There's only one way to rank well in search and it's to stay on top of the industry like a madman. All right. These are techniques that I have not used in at least four years, maybe even six. Image alt tags, have any of you heard, "Well let's put your keyword in the image alt tag, and that'll help you rank well." No, it's not. The keywords meta tag, haven't done one of those in three to four years either.

Keyword density analysis--this is one of my favorites. I haven't done keyword density analysis since like 2001 because back then you would actually develop an individual page for each search engine, as crazy as that might sound, you would develop a page for Excite, and you knew that Excite wanted the terms mentioned 2.6% of the time to 3.2. And then you fell out of the range. Well, all those kinds of things have changed, and it's one of those myths that are still out there that's an absolute waste of time. Optimizing your site for one-word terms might be great for traffic, but you're surely not going to get a whole lot of conversions and I think that's what we're all here to discuss. And submitting a website: don't submit. I have not submitted a website since I can remember. The technology is good enough that if you actually develop a website that's actually worth people visiting and going to that they're actually going to link to it and then the search engines are going to find you on their own. There was even a time when, and we don't know if Google is still doing it, they gave more of a boost to sites they found on their own, because when you were submitting it, you were telling Google, "Hey, I want you to come check me out." So they're saying, "Ah, well you might be doing something



that you really want us to find you versus us finding it naturally through the web or on our own." So if you're using any of these five techniques, you might as well stop, because none of them are really helping you. There's other things you can work on that have much more of an impact. Of course, doing an image alt tag helps, but as some people will say, there's 200 things that Google uses in its algorithm. I focus on five to 10 of them, and I've done a decent job at this so far. So here are things and techniques that I do use.

Developing a circular architecture. I will show you exactly what that means on the next slide. I do ridiculously intense keyword research. It's where we probably spend the majority of our time on a search campaign. When I have PR optimization, doesn't mean page rank. I'm talking about press releases. Press release optimization is actually a very, very nice thing to do. Are there any of the folks here from Pepperjam? Anyone? There we go. Pepperjam, who is upstate from us in PA, they recently did a press release about a new blogging-shopping engine that I think you all should check out. It's pretty neat. But, they did the press release, and they got picked up on biz.yahoo.com with a link over to Pepperjam. You can't pay for that kind of link. You know, that's biz.yahoo.com. That's huge. And it came through them properly linking their press releases.

Valuing links is another really big thing. You can go out and get a thousand links, and have them mean nothing, or you can go out and get 10 strong links and have them matter so much more than the thousand. So it's about how you use your time. Research is easily, if you're doing this yourself, don't kid yourself in thinking that the techniques you used today are still going to work six months from now. You literally have to stay on top of this industry regularly. It's a bit of a moving target, and it's what most people hate about search, but since I gravitate toward chaos, I absolutely love it. And the resurgence of the meta descriptions tag. For a long time, I'd say "Ah you know what, it's not really worth it, it's minor in an overall algorithm." But now, what research is showing is that people don't just click on you because you're number one anymore. They're scanning everything that's above the fold, which is before they have to scroll. They're scanning all that and then they're making a judgment on whether or not they're going to invest that one little click on whether they're going to visit your site. Therefore your meta description tag should be something that's going to be more marketing-esque, so that it catches someone's eye. If you have a free shipping offer, put that in your meta description tag when you're doing the free shipping offer because as I'm scanning through, and I see all these ten companies that Google says offers a suit, if I see free shipping on one of them in the description, I'm more likely to click on it. You do it on pay per click, why wouldn't you do it on the organic SEO side? Okay.

So the first thing we're going to touch on is developing a search architecture. And what we mean is how you go about developing, how Google sees your site as a whole. And I'm going to jump out to a site now. I'm obviously, our site is a pretty good guinea pig. If you notice, how many of you are familiar with page rank at least? I can talk about it a little



bit? Great. That's what I figured. We have a page rank of five on this page, but as you go through the site and click on different links, which this better pick up, there we go, you'll notice that our page rank drops to four, which is typical. Your home page always gets the most precedent for what you're working on, and then all the pages that are linked from it, if they're linked properly, will also get a very significant portion. So for us, the way we developed our architecture from our home page, is all of the most important pages are linked directly from the home page. And because we developed our navigation the way we did, every page you go on now has links back and forth to each one. So when you look at the example on the left, as you develop your hierarchy, if you can imagine, even if your site is totally search friendly, if you have a page rank of six on the home page, then it's a five on level 1, more than likely. Now there's no absolutes in search, these things change with a lot of variables here. But for the sake of this conversation, if you have page rank six on your home page, more than likely you're going to get a five or four on your next page, a three or a two on the next, so if you start to put your site's important pages deeper and deeper down to where they're not properly linked from other pages easily, you are hurting your own ability to rank well. So as you develop an architecture, the way we've always done it is more how it's done on the right hand side, which is, not only is the home page linked to each of these main pages, but our navigation was developed so that the red level one also links to all the others, as well as to the home. And the green level one links to all the others plus that one.

So that's how we went about developing our architecture, and that's how we consult with our clients every day on how to go about developing their architecture for search. Very often when people are developing website, search is one of the last things they're thinking about. And then they call on someone like us or they try it themselves and they can't figure out why it's not working. And very often it's because there's architectural issues with the way the site was developed. The best way to create more of a circular architecture are using drop downs. Now of course, if drop downs don't work for you, if it's an ability reason or something, that's fine. But from a search perspective, which is what we're here to discuss, drop downs are hands down one of the better ways to go about creating a circular architecture. Now there's a caveat with that. There's only like two ways to develop a drop down so that you get the maximum impact from all the search engines seeing the text and the links that are in them. Usually, you're going to make sure that that any of the important text or links are not in JavaScript. Search engines do not read JavaScript they haven't for a very long time so if you have a JavaScript-based drop down, Google doesn't see any of it. They don't see it. So therefore all those links that it should see, it's not going to see. Okay? We use dynamic HTML and CSS for a lot of our drop downs.

Site maps - site maps are critical, because if properly implemented, they're on every page of your site. Okay, now let's think about how we go back to the architecture. Now you have a link on every page of your site that goes to a site map, which links out to every other important page. So all of the pages on your site are one page away from the site



map. It's one of the easiest things you can do other than redevelop your entire architecture is put in a really strong, not overly optimized now remember, the site map some people are going to go to as a useful tool for themselves. There's nothing I hate more than a site that's just butchered for search and not for users, because if no one can use the site, I don't care how high you rank. They're just going to hit the back button and go to the next person. So make sure you keep that in mind as you're using some of these techniques. Always put your brand and your conversions and what's best for your users above search. Always. There should never be a compromise. Other things like useful links in a section are very helpful if there are other popular products you might list along with that, as long as the keywords are in the product name. It's also wise to link those over to other pages as well. And I have seen folks spend years trying to optimize their website, and we sat down with them, and within five minutes I'm like "Well this is the reason why you haven't gotten anything." And it usually has to do with their architecture or the implementation of their website, which we are about to get into right now. One of the biggest issues that I've found that people I can't believe that development companies still develop sites of this are any of you in the middle of having a site developed? Okay. Anyone who's in the middle of having a site developed, listen up to this very closely and do not pay that final check without the team at least taking a look at this, because if you ever want to optimize your site, you will be absolutely screwed, and then you're going to have to go and get everything redone. Who wants to pay twice for work that your team should have already known? So let's go out to some of my favorite sites. And I think you'll kind of get what I'm into in a little bit.

All right, let's go to Bluefly. My internet is so slow. All right. Of course you know, it's been fast all day, and now...Bluefly, when it finishes loading, has about a page rank of six or seven, and do you all see where the page rank is, right here? I'm kind of rolling my mouse over it? Good. All right. It's still loading. And when it completes, it's like a six or a seven. The problem is, every single link from here uses a lot of question marks. Have you ever seen those URLs with a lot of question marks and equal signs and ampersands? Search engines hate that. They've always hated it, and there's easy ways around it during the development process that will keep that from being an issue. And Bluefly has not finished loading, for some odd reason. But their home page is like a 6. Every link see how this link on the top here has "department.jsp?folder%". The search engines hate that, and to the point where this page, when it's done loading, will have a page rank of 0 even though it's linked directly from the home page, which has a page rank of 6. Okay. So what that means is if your URLs are structured in that way, good luck trying to get your site to rank well for competitive terms. Maybe for uncompetitive terms you might be ok but for very competitive terms, that will kill you. They're page rank for this page is a two. Notice, on our site, where we didn't have all the gobble-de-gook at the end, our home page was a five, and all of our other pages were fours. This page was directly linked from their home page, from a six down to a two. Let me give you another example. Assuming that this thing loads pretty fast. How many of you have those kind of sites, where you're just like uh-oh, is that us, and you're not going to raise your hands, I know.



[laughter]

If you're in the middle of developing a site, I can not tell you enough, now is the time to tell your team, look, there's two things that are not in my bookmark. If you have a site like that, you may want to write this down. There are two very techie things that you don't need to know about rather than to tell them that they need to implement it. If you are on a Linux or Unix based-platform, and your sites are on that platform, they have to use something called mod-rewrite. It's a small little plug-in that they can drop in, and it can get rid of all that stuff, so that your site is then search friendly, that's one. If you're on a Windows-based environment, or an IIS environment, it's something called the ISAPI re-write module. It let's you re-write all those URLs, so Google also thinks they're all static, instead of dynamic. So many of you have probably heard that Google doesn't like dynamic pages. It's true. So what you have to do, is make your pages look like their static. It's not a trick, everybody does it. Amazon, who I worked for a while does it. Barnes and Noble, who I worked for a while does it. How many times have you done a search for a random product, and Amazon is showing up in the top ten, a lot right. How many of you have seen some kind of Amazon link, somewhere there? How many of you have seen a Barnes and Noble link somewhere up there, other than when you're searching for Barnes and Noble? There is a reason for that. It's because Amazon, from the beginning developed their architecture to where all their URLs are formatted that way. Barnes and Noble didn't and it takes so much effort to go back and redo it, that they are missing out on traffic and sales everyday because of one small thing. So if you're in the middle of getting a site developed, or if you are about to get one developed. That's something that if search engines matter to you, your team should know about, and should know how to implement. Yes, we have a question.

Man 1: Why is it that extensive to do it after the fact?

Wil Reynolds: Here's why. Usually for us we'll charge somebody five grand to do a search architectural audit. We wouldn't need to do that architectural audit, if our team had built it right in the first place. Then, now somebody has to go back and fix it, you've already paid that last check. They're like, oh it's going to cost you this much for us to do this, now they're learning on your dime for something they're going to apply to the rest of their customers, and you footed that bill. I don't think it's fair. If your team is great at programming and not great search, bring someone in or now you know. If you don't know the intricate details of this, bring someone in, and sit down with them for five hours, most of the teams that I've sat down with, they get this, within five hours. You sit there with our tech team their tech team, they are like, "Oh, so that's all we've got to do. Yeah, that's all you got to do, it's really simple."

Let's see if the govberwatches site will load. Ok. Home page, with this very slick looking guy buying a watch, and this site has a page rank of five, great right. Ok. So a company like this just might want to rank low for a word like Gucci watch. Maybe, you know, they



sell them. They might want to rank well for that term considering it's typed in tens of thousands of times a month, notice where the page rank goes, and look at the URL when it loads. You know what I'm not going to wait for it to load, and it just moved. There we go. Now notice that have one, just one, what we call a parameter, it's a question mark meaning something equals something. Many of your sites probably have long strings of those, their page rank, from a page directly linked from their home page, again, went from a five to a zero. Google has said I assign no prominence to this page, and it all has to do with their architecture. They're in the middle of developing a site right now, and they chose to, actually, they just finished this site, and they chose not to bring us on for like five hours worth of work. Now, they have no chance for ranking well, for all the different brands, as well as, the different model numbers. By now, I don't know how many of you are aware, but when people type in brand names and model numbers, they're ready to buy just that thing. So it doesn't make sense for you to rank well for the word Gucci, which you have on your home page, but not Gucci watch 05016x, trust me that guy wants that watch, so you better make sure that your site is architected and developed in a fashion that lets you easily rank well for those kinds of terms.

Other things, important links in Flash and images that kills us. If you have a very important text, but it's in a flash or it's in an image, the search engines aren't going to read that. Now, I have always had somebody say, search engines read flash. Yeah they do, it's just like a big text file to them. There's no bolding, there's no this, there's no that, although they read it, it's not going to help you rank well if it does. If you have orphan or entry pages, they're also never going to rank well, because they're not linked from your overall architecture. They're just sitting out there on the side, and that's ok, your landing pages are usually prime examples of pages that are sitting off on the side, that aren't linked from your architecture. That's fine because you're not trying to get them to rank well for anything, but the pages that you would like to get to rank well, should be directly linked from your architecture.

Re-directed home pages. How many of you have heard of 301 versus 302. It's a simple rule. 301. That's it, it's just 301. I have a tool, that I have in my tool set that will hit your site and tell you whether or not you have a 301 or 302 re-direct. Therefore you run it, it's a free tool, it's in my bookmarks, which I'm giving out to anybody that gives me their card, and then you'll have it, so then you'll know whether or not the site is friendly or unfriendly, and then use it to go back to your programming team and tell them, hey you need to make that a 301. They should be able to do it. Yes, question?

Man 2: Could you please classify what is the difference between a 301 and a 302?

Wil Reynolds: Good question, and you know what it's very technical, and I don't know, but I know that when my clients have redirects and I run this tool, if it doesn't say 301, we can't even take their business on until they fix it. See the thing is for me it's not knowing the intricate details of all this. It's knowing what's keeping me from achieving ridiculously high rankings for my clients, and if I know it's a 301 vs. a 302.



[Inaudible]

Wil Reynolds: I'd have to bring my tech guy Joe up to explain it all, and you guys would all be asleep by then, but you should know there's a tool that you can run on your site, when your site goes to your home page, it has another thing that it redirects the user to it. You should run this tool. If your redirect is JavaScript based remember what I said before, search engines don't read JavaScript, so therefore they don't see that redirect. These are the kinds of things that, literally I have seen people fix like that, and change the entire landscape of how they go about ranking. Question?

Woman 1: For a search engine reading JavaScript, is that on the table for change, and if it does how is it going to change everything that's running off...?

Wil Reynolds: Good question, it's been that way since I started search. They haven't changed it yet, and searches is not a very forward looking business. Yeah you can get into fore-looking. My clients don't want to know what might help their rank 12 months from now, they want to know what's going to help them rank now. So for right now if you have important things in JavaScript, it's only if they're important, you need JavaScript, we use JavaScript on everything that we do, but we make sure that the most important part to our sites are not dumped into JavaScript, because we know that the search engines may not read them.

There's a question there too?

Man 3: Yes. We've got some links to our home page embedded in a tool that we distribute to a lot of different websites. We have HTML links on a lot of different websites. And we were going to put some logic into that HREF. It has our home page and then it has a question mark and then it has a cool JavaScript link to it. Would we still get credit because our home page is on there, or is the fact that there's a question mark in the URL just make it go...

Wil Reynolds: Not as much. Not as much. And just remember, there's no absolutes in search. One thing you guys should realize, as someone who's done this for eight years, there's no absolutes. Google made a liar out of a lot of people in my position. If they say, "There are two hundred pieces to the Google algorithm, " There are? What did you do, talk to Sergey Brin and Larry Page? I know they don't return my phone calls, and I've been working with them for eight years. So there are no hard and fast rules here. And be very fearful of someone that comes along and tells you "Well, this is how it has to be, ' I mean, there are some things I am giving you today that really legitimately are that, but there's always another way. There is usually another way around some of these things. And if something doesn't sound right, it doesn't sit well in your gut -- listen to your gut. I tell you, shopping carts and content managers kill search engine optimization, people. And there's a reason why. The people don't know how to develop them so that we can do



what we do.

Two things. If your shopping cart has a bunch of question marks and equal signs, your shopping cart is not search engine maximized. Search engines may find the page, but they are not assigning it all the prominence they could if you wrote those URLs to put in slashes instead of all of those question marks and equal signs. Another great thing about doing URL rewriting is that you can start to put the keywords in your URL. Even if your content manager or e-commerce tool kicks them out as some crazy numbers, wherever you see that number, you can rewrite it and call it something, say 'suits' or, if someone is going to the Gucci director which, in your CMS might be slash number twenty, now you can say that wherever you see slash number twenty, call it "Gucci watches." Why? Because that is an important piece of how Google goes about ranking websites.

And there is a difference between search-friendly and search-optimized. Saying that the search engines can get to a page is very different than saying that a page can be tweaked so it maximizes the visibility. That's a huge difference. I recently worked with a content management company and they said "Our CMS is search-friendly, " and it was. The problem was that it automatically generated their title tags. So, if you wanted to go in and change your title tags, which, hands-down is the most important thing you can change on your website, it's automatically developed by a tool that puts in the name of your company first. You're already ranked well for the name of your company. The name of your company should go at the end of your title tag, if you have to have it there. There are those kind of brand managers that are like, "We have to have the name Mercedes somewhere." Well then, put it at the end, because you are going to rank well for Mercedes without even trying. If you are trying to rank well for the term "luxury cars, " you've got to put that first. And if your CMS automatically generates your title tags, then that CMS has to be rewritten. So those are the some of the things you may want to look for as you are working with developers on sites.

And, let me see how I am doing for time here. Good. Linking. Linking is always the big thing. I'm going to get through this pretty quickly. If you develop something worth linking to, people will link to it. It's really that simple. If you develop something that's of value to people on the web, people will link to it, okay? Things like calculators, articles, free trials, et cetera. I also mentioned spreading yourself somewhat thin on links. What I mean is, don't go out there and spend a thousand dollars a month for a link on one website. Because if that website gets banned, or if something happens in it with Google and they pull it, or they do some kind of crazy programming technique... How many of you, and you may not have even known it, how many of you bought links on one of those websites with all of the question marks and equal signs in their URLs? We don't buy links from websites where the page that our link is going to be on has a bunch of question marks and equal signs. Why? Because we know Google is not going to assign the highest level of prominence to that link. Therefore it lowers the value of it. And I'll be damned if I pay a



thousand dollars for that!

So these are the kind of things that are hopefully starting to come together where, even if you are going out and getting links, the people that have a lot of question marks and equal signs in their URLs, they're not getting the maximum that they could for your link and your dollar. That is one of the criteria that we use when we go out and get links for our clients. We do not submit our client sites to websites that have question marks and equal signs in their URL. Okay?

Another thing to consider is how many links are on the page. Page rank, which is so important, it's not totally out and gone, gets divided up by the number of external links on that page. So me personally, I'd rather take a link on a page with a page rank of three that has three links than on a page that has a page rank of eight, with three hundred. Just do the division. Each person now just gets a small little piece. All three hundred get a small piece of that eight hundred passed on to their website, versus only competing with ten people who are all getting a piece of the PageRank of three. One of the things that I like to do...

Let me go back to something. This is one of these shady techniques, so you should be cognizant of it. People will often charge you for links and use a robots.txt or what's known as a 'no follow' tag. The no-follow tag came about when people started spamming blogs with their comments. You've seen that, when someone posts a comment that's just like "Hey! Rolex watches!" You're like, "The article was about women's clothes." People used to do that, and as a result, you can put something on your URL to keep those links from being spidered. Where this hurts you most is if you are doing reciprocal linking. I might give you a link on a page that Google never sees because I put the no-follow tags on all of my links, and you just linked to me and I got all of that power from your link and I gave you nothing. Although you see it there, from a Google or a MSN or a Yahoo! Standpoint, that link means absolutely nothing. That is something else you should be cognizant of.

And people that link to you, this is one of the easiest things, run a check and see who is linking to you. And lots of times they will link to you with "hey, it's <http://www.thinkseer.com>."; And I am like 'would you mind changing that link from thinkseer.com to Seer Interactive SEO professionals. And they say "Oh yeah sure. Thanks for using my article, I'm glad you liked it." Now I have a link with the text that matters. Because I am not trying to rank well for the word www.thinkseer.com, they already do, okay. It's something to consider. And using a PageRank search, this is a very nice tool that I am going to show you, assuming that this internet works well with me today. What you do is... Let me just Google it. Google PageRank search. Great. SEO Chat, this tool here, it's in my bookmarks. if you come up and give me your card, you



don't need to write it down. There are a lot of things here that I'm going to show you. This page, when it loads, will actually show you the page rank, along with the listings. So you can do a link-colon-competitor name sorted by the page rank, and now you can see all of the highest ranked sites that are linking to your competition. It is the savviest way to get high-power links from your competitors. So let's give this a shot.

Let's use one of my favorites. all right. So SEO Consultants is a word that I would love to rank well for. And, we are down at number four? Yeah, we're down at number four, but I would certainly love to be number one. So, let us take SEO Consultants directory. I am in their URL, seoconsultants.com. I might as well be prepared to be at number two for a very, very long time, no matter how hard I try. I am going to use a tool, which is also mentioned in my links. Watch my right-click. I will go down to a little thing called SEO Open, a FireFox plug-in. (This is why I mentioned earlier that you want to use FireFox.) I can easily go to Google and say "show me Google's back links"--I do not have to remember the syntax, type in all those things, trying to figure it out. There it is.

Now, this shows me everybody who is linking to Google or SEO Consultants. What it is not showing me is how valuable these individual pages are. So, I will take this syntax and drop it into the page rank search. I will order them by page rank and submit the query. It will come back in order of page rank. So, if I was competing with them, I might go to CSS border design challenge. (I would not in this case, because they would not give me a link.) But, this is an idea for your competitors--now you can go out and find out the sites providing the most powerful links to them. Those are the sites you should visit and point out to them that they reviewed these guys' site, but did not review yours. They might still not review it, or you might get a link--perhaps the most powerful links, instead of just randomly getting links, some of which may consist of those URL strings with a bunch of stuff in them. This is the kind of strategy we use. I am giving you the exact things we do on a daily basis to work for our clients.

Man 1: Can you do those steps--one, two, three, four, on Google?

Wil Reynolds: All right. I did a search on Google, and there is a tool called SE Open for FireFox, and that is what I used. But, the syntax is typically what you see right here--link: http://www. and then your competitor's URL. You take that and put it into the page rank search, which I did right here. Then, have it order them by page rank and click search. That is how it comes back with all the different sites ordered by page rank, showing the page rank right next to them. What does this help me do? It keeps me from having to click to each one of those sites to see what their page rank is--that would be a waste of my time. I need to work as efficiently as possible. Many of these FireFox plug-ins will help you work much more efficiently.

OK. I showed you the tool. I want to get through a few other things, so I will skip ahead a little bit. Keyword development: we all stink at it. Do you know why? We do it because



we are biased by our own search behavior. I have sat down with many people who say, "I do not search that way!" Then, I pack up my bag and leave. Because, unless you buy your own product every single day and that is how you stay in business, you need to make sure your keywords resonate with the people typing them in. Do not look at the ten top keywords report in your web analysis tool, because those terms are already ranking well. Someone might say, "We are doing great, ranking well on those terms!" Well, that is because people are already finding you on those terms. You never know the terms people might be typing in that you are not ranking well for because they are obviously not getting to your site from them. So, the best search optimization people, in my opinion, are people who can take their own search behavior and throw it out the window. Take your own bias and get rid of it! Because if you bias your own search on how you would search, you are only going to rank well for the terms you yourself would find. And the closer you are to the product, the more likely you are to use acronyms, jargon, or other things that no one else except you and the people in the industry know. Now, if you are selling only to people in the industry--that is great. If not, then you need to call it what the man on the street calls it or do not target those terms.

I will give you an example. We are working with a company. They sell used office furniture. We want them to rank well for the words used office furniture, but from a branding perspective, we want to call it pre-owned, everywhere on the site. Pack up the bag! Do you know why? People do not type "pre-owned furniture" and we showed it to them. You have a great brand, yet no one is coming to your site. How do you stay in business if not by selling things to people that came to your site? This is one of those things where you need to balance brand with what is good for search. This was one of those cases where it did not make sense. They had to stick with what was best for their brand--I understand that. But, I cannot get your site to rank well if you are unwilling to make certain changes. Do not think you will be able to trick Google using some technique to get your site to rank well. That is not the case--you literally need to make changes to your site. But, all is not lost. How many have you used the Overture keyword suggestion tool? Great. However, it is also bad. There are many flaws inherent in Overture keyword suggestion tool. Does anyone know any of the flaws?

Man 2: They are broadly matched and use... [inaudible].

Wil Reynolds: You got it. One of the things they do is broad match, if you did not hear that. What that means is that singulars and plurals get lumped together in one number, even though there can be a big difference between who searches on them. So, if you target a single, but most people type the plural, the Overture will not teach you which ones to target. Overture also lumps together those misspellings. So you will not find a decent amount of misspellings for keywords that people might type in, because Overture lumps them together--they know what you are really looking for. You want to do what I call starting wide--do not bias your work results. If you are Prilosec and you sell heartburn medication, do not start your keywords research using "heartburn medication." Start it on "heartburn" and you will see that people are more likely to type "heartburn drugs" than "heartburn medications." You will see they are looking for heartburn



symptoms. They might find some online Canadian pharmacy selling heartburn medication. Start wide and you will not bias your results. However, if you start narrow such as starting with "heartburn drug." Type in "heartburn drugs" in these tools and that is what you will get back.

Always remember that people search for solutions for problems and not the other way. There are some technical elements that I want to go through. These are all tools that are in my bookmarks, so you need not write them down. I have already given you the bad news. Before we get there, I want to show you a couple of tools. I will skip ahead a bit to get to where we were talking about singulars vs. plurals. How many of you have heard of Google Trends? Great. How many of you actually use it? Great! Because, you can do things to help you figure out whether you should use singulars or plurals. Here is an example. Let us look at "accounting jobs" vs. "accounting job." More likely, they will be the same, but they are not. How many would have guessed either one? The Overture tool would have given you the singular. Here, you notice that more people type in the plural. That is one of the areas where the Overture tool absolutely stinks. It is not a bad tool, but if you know the flaws inherent in the tool, which I am trying to give you today, you can look in other places before you make a conclusion based on those tools.

So remember when I had you all write down one through eight on your yellow index cards. How many of you have the yellow index cards? Raise your hand just so I know where you are. Perfect. Would you do me a favor, and we're going to go through this really quick. Would you write down the word you would type in to find this product. And we're going to do this really quick so start writing. What would you type in to find this product? What would you type in to find this product? And because I love these things cause I won't bias your results. What would you type in to find this thing? And most of you are probably writing pretty much the same thing. But there's always some people that don't. And they might actually want to purchase from you if they could find you. And if you had the right key words in your site so that you were found. But lets make it get a little more complex. What would you type to find a company to set up your phone office system for your office with multiple extensions? What would you type in to find them. I think some of you guys are starting to see where I am getting with this right. And when everybody stands up with their cards and says what they typed in. You are going to see that people will all look for the same product or service and every one of them might call it something different. And the may all be willing to purchase from you if you did the keyword research to find out that they are all taking in all these different derivatives. We are actually working with a company that works on infertility. What would you type in to find a company or an individual that could help you with infertility problems. What would you type in? You would be amazed with what you might find. I'll tell you when you do keyword research, sometimes you would find some really sick things. You'll like wow, people really type that in. If you ever do any work for Disney, you would be amazed at some of the people that are probably hanging out a bit too long. Okay. And what would you type in to find an organization like mine. You are looking for somebody



to get you in to the to top at Google. What would you type into the search engine to find me? All right, now take your yellow card and hand it to the person to your left and if there is nobody to your left, hand it to the person to your right. Can someone with that card, stand up and tell me what your person had for this product? Someone? Don't make me come through the audience. Cause I will start picking you out. You got one right there.

Woman 1: TV.

Wil Reynolds: TV, so the first one was TV. Anybody have anything other than TV? Look how many hands are up. Of only a few cards. What do you have?

Man 1: flat screen TV.

Wil Reynolds: Wide screen TV.

Man 1: Flat screen TV.

Wil Reynolds Flat screen. Okay, so we have TV and flat screen. Anybody doesn't have those, put your hands down. Anybody else with others.

Woman 2: Plasma TV.

Wil Reynolds: Plasma TV. We got a plasma. If you are a plasma, put you hand down.

Woman 3: TV entertainment system.

Wil Reynolds: TV entertainment system. She's ready to buy a plasma TV but she's calling it a. But you know what. The thing there that I am trying to illustrate to you all is that you have to call it what people are calling it. You know you might want to call it a plasma TV cause it's a plasma TV. Why don't you do a compare our plasma TV to LCD TV's. Now you have both keywords on the page. You are providing a comparison to the two which is valuable to people which people might link to if its done really well and now you got both keywords up there. It's a plasma TV. But I can't call it an LCD TV. Okay. Of course you can't call it an LCD TV when it's a plasma. But there are ways around that. Okay. Let's go to this one. All right, somebody start. We got you again.

Man 1: Yeah, Rio.

Wil Reynolds: Her name is Rio and she dances and in the... No, not that one. Okay. You might come back with lyrics. If you typed in Rio, you may just come back with lyrics. Next.

Woman 4: Mp3 player.

Wil Reynolds: Mp3 player. Great. Anything different?



Woman 5: iPod.

Wil Reynolds: I knew it. There's always an iPod on that one. It's not an iPod. But that's what people call it. You tell grandma you want an mp3 player. She is going to buy you an iPod. This, this should be somewhat easy but lets see. Say it again my friend.

Man 2: Laptop.

Wil Reynolds: Laptop. Anybody, anything other than Laptop. Geez. What do you got?

Man 3: Notebook.

Wil Reynolds: Notebook.

Man 4: Computer.

Wil Reynolds: Computer.

Man 5: Laptop computer.

Wil Reynolds: Laptop computer. Important if you just put laptop up in your title tag and don't put the word computer along with it. Guess what, you are not going to rank well for the word laptop computer. Okay. We got another one in the back.

Man 6: Notebook computer.

Wil Reynolds: Notebook computers. You guys are starting to see it. This. I love boxers. Know I can say it's a boxer, but what all did you say was for this item here.

Man 7: Dog.

Wil Reynolds: Dog. Anybody different that the dog?

Man 8: Boxer dog.

Wil Reynolds: Boxer dog. Anything other?

Woman 6: Pet.

Wil Reynolds: Pet. Wow.

Man 9: Brindle boxer.

Wil Reynolds: Brindle boxer. Someone who really knows, would call that exactly what it is. Some of us are out there calling it a pet. It's a brindle boxer. I didn't even know that. Now lets get really, really into when you get to the services side this whole thing goes nuts. What would you type in for these guys. Find a company to put in your multi phone system.



Woman 7: Phone office system.

Wil Reynolds: Phone office system. Does everyone here have that? Didn't think so. Come one, give me a couple others.

Man 10: Phone service.

Wil Reynolds: Phone service.

Woman 8: PBX.

Wil Reynolds: PBX. Good.

Woman 9: Corporate phone system.

Wil Reynolds: Corporate phone system.

Man 11: Business telephone system.

Wil Reynolds: Business telephone system. Come on you guys on this side of the room. Give me a little love. What do you have?

Woman 10: Multiline phone installer.

Wil Reynolds: Multiline phone installer.

Man 12: Multi extension phone system company.

Wil Reynolds: Multi extension phone system company. And you will notice. All these people are looking for the same freaking product. So if you don't have all these different keywords and finding very creative way. And this is why when it comes to search, you cannot be one of those companies or you can't work with one of those companies that just stuffs a bunch of keywords in there. That's easy. Good search and optimization people can not only achieve a high rank. They can do it without making your site look god-awful and not make any sense. So it's one thing just to throw these keywords in. It's another thing to add some value. You have a question?

Man 13: How do you do this without a whole room full of people.

Wil Reynolds: The question is, "How do I do this without a whole room full of people?" And you know why. Because I have been doing this for eight years. I have learned to take my bias, ball it up, throw it out the window. I have learned to call my mom. Mom, I know you are 65 but, what would you type in to find this, cause you know what, she buys things on Google, or through Google that she finds. Well I think you guys are starting to get the idea. So lets get to what you would type to find a company like mine.

Woman 11: Search engine helper.



Wil Reynolds: Search engine?

Woman 11: helper.

Wil Reynolds: Did I get a search engine helper? I got to change my cards.

Man 14: SEO.

Wil Reynolds. : SEO.

Man 15: SEO expert.

Wil Reynolds: SEO expert.

Man 16: SEO consultants.

Wil Reynolds: SEO consultants. That's my favorite because we rank well for it.

Woman 12: Google top rank.

Wil Reynolds: Google top rank. I once had someone tell me, oh your site stinks. You don't rank well for anything. What do you mean, we are like number one or number two for SEO agencies, we are number five for SEO consultants? Well, I typed in Top ranking company firm SEO. Well dude, you're one. I did the keyword research and found, and I looked at the conversions for keywords and found that we are not really targeting search engine optimization, we're targeting SEO. Does anybody have any idea why we are targeting SEO as our main term instead of search and optimization? Ross what do you think, bro?

Ross: We're targeting people who know what SEO really means.

Wil Reynolds: You got it. We are looking for a more savvy consumer. You know why, cause we are not cheap, we are not the guys that are going to submit your site out to a hundred search engines for fifty bucks. That's not us. We don't want the person that types in search engine optimization, you know why? They might be looking for tips, newsletters, tricks and you know what, unless you're here. You are not getting all my bookmarks, okay? So, therefore, if you think about it, I don't want those people coming to my site. We might be able to say, "yeah, we ranked great for it", but I want to make sure our site attracts the right kind of people. Cause you know what? I don't have that much time to sit there on the phone with someone that tells me that they want to rank well for a term for \$500. So, therefore, I want to make sure I try my best to attract the more savvy audience. There's some new tools out there. Anybody know who these guys are? You know it! Who is it?

[audience responds]



Wil Reynolds: Thank you. These guys sucked, okay? [laughter] But, I mean, where are they now? Donny Wahlberg's lucky his brother's the one that actually became successful, even though he was Marky Mark. Ugh. Ugh. Awful! But, we're not here to talk about those guys, are we? But, they are tools, and I want to show you some new tools. So, there's a double meaning there. [laughter]

Google Trends, which we skipped to, and I showed you the accounting job versus the accounting jobs. I think that might have been somewhat eye-opening. But that's only one way to use this. I don't know if any of you have seen my article that I wrote about this a while back. So, if you did, this is verbatim from it, check your iPod or your imp3 Rio player, whatever, for the next couple of minutes. But if you haven't, take a look at something. How you go about using your home page real estate is a very important thing during different times of the season, potentially. And, because I love watches, although I don't have one on today, I typed in Tag Heuer, Movado, and Omega watches. What you'll notice is that Omega is typed in so much more than all the others every month of the year. Come holiday season, Movado jumps from the stepchild to even sometimes higher than Omega. So, what does that mean? What that means is, come holiday time, you better make sure Omega and Movado get the same amount of play if you're looking between Omega, Movado and Tag Heuer. You now know, leave Tag off on the side, but you better leave some space for Movado if you can. If you want to optimize for that term, you better start six months out, so when the holiday season comes, you're ready.

Another thing, just so that you're aware, cause these aren't my bookmarks, is, with Google Trends, you'll see over here to the right we have United States and "all years". You can actually do these searches by different countries, and by different times. Make sure that you do your searches, if your audience is U.S. based, do them for the U.S., because these people will skew your results like mad. What people in the U.K. type in as another thing that Google Tr..., no, not Google Trends, Overture Keyword Tool doesn't tell you this. What people type in the U.K. sometimes is absolutely different than people in the United States versus other places. If you look at the bottom here, one of the neat things; it's giving me cities where this was most often typed in. This is a guess. This is not the kind of thing where you want to run out and open up a shop in Miami to sell Movados. But, it's giving you an idea of some of the regions where people may be typing in these terms.

Competitive analysis, this is pretty easy. If you target some terms and you're doing PR and other things to build recognition for your brand, and the gap between you and your competitor stays the same, I don't know whether that PR worked for you. Now, is this going to tell you that PR didn't work? No. Do not take a tool and run with it. But it may give you an indication that you might want to do a little more digging in the sense of what did that campaign actually do for you.



How many of you have seen the commercial for Google where it says "Google Pontiac", instead of saying go to pontiac.com it says "Google Pontiac"? Good. I bet you that whoever came up with that idea told the firm, "oh, this worked great! It worked great!". It didn't work great. You know why? Cause my buddies at Google have showed me the way. If you look at the search trend for the word "Pontiac" in Google, how many times people search for the word "Pontiac" and compared it to "Mazda", Mazda, with their Solstice is trying to compete with Pontiac's new Miata, okay? They're flat. They're flat. But there is a spike back in 2004. Anybody got an idea? If anybody answers this, I'll give you an hour on the phone of free consulting. [laughter]. You got it. You got it. Oprah. And you know how I figured that out? If you take Pontiac out, (that's really good. See, you guys didn't think Oprah would come in handy).. Watch, when I put in "Pontiac", notice how it puts these letters above? That spike, letter A, if you look over to the right; "Pontiac hopes Oprah giveaway will capture more attention for..." blah blah blah. Guess what? It did capture attention. But that whole "Google Pontiac" thing? Nah, sorry, didn't work. Their firm will tell them that worked from here until the cows come home. It didn't work. You know what? Call Oprah again. She works. [laughter] Cause this isn't even a minor difference. You're talking about huge to little.

So, that's search trends. One quick thing; MSN has a new thing called adLab. How many of you've heard of it? People have heard of it? You guys are on top of this. This only came out about two weeks ago. And one of the best things it does, and pardon me if I start speeding up here, because there's a few things I want to get to. One of the things it does is if you type in "BMW", and this is the example they give cause their data set is not big. So right now for most of your things that you're optimizing for, they're not going to have data on this yet. But, what it does is their ad funnel will show you what people typed in before and what they typed in after they typed in your key word. So, now you're saying the average person who typed in "BMW" after making that search, he typically did a search for, not Mercede, for Mercedes. Obviously this tool is truncating the plurals, so it's not there. They searched for Lexus, Audi, and Mercede, Benz, and then Honda was the next one. You can also do this for what they call "incoming", so up here where you see "direction", if you do it for "incoming", it'll show you the five before someone typed in "BMW". This is going to be a really nice tool once they get more data into it.

OK. There's something that we refer to as the search engine, over-search-engine optimized, highly-ranking, butt-ugly site. This site here is one of those sites that.. we typed "luxury items" or "luxury gifts" and this site came up. Doesn't make me feel very luxury. However, their competition, that also ranks well, has a site that looks like this... and this.... Very often what I found is that people get so into trying to rank well they butcher their sites. Remember, these sites all came up in the top ten. It's only a back button away. Your competition, from a search perspective, is a back button away. So, therefore, you need to invest in things like usability. You need to make sure that people recognize your name when they come to your site; "Oh, I've heard of those guys before."



That's where PR's going to help. Because, if your site's just out there, and you're not investing in anything other than search, good luck.

One of the things I've often said, is that if you build your site for humans, you don't have to worry about all these darn penalties that people talk about. Right now, the whole penalty thing is way over, way overplayed. I've seen case studies where things like security logos, purchase without login, or getting a white paper without login, go a long way in increasing conversion by up to 10-11%. If I'm driving all this traffic to your site, then it's your responsibility to make sure that you have streamlined that process so that when people get there, they're most likely to convert. Good. I got two slides left and I think I'm going to get them in. The whole do-it-yourself versus out-source...any of you that saw me speak six months ago in Vegas, you've seen this before. Well, it call it my "Toilet and Taxes Slide". I own a few properties, and one day I decided "I'm going to fix the toilet, because I can Google the model and the schematic and go to the store and fix it." I was on my back for three hours getting water dumped on my face when I could have been laying in my hammock...to only have to call the plumber anyway and pay him to come and fix what I wasted three hours on. I will never again try to fix a toilet. You know why? Because my best work is sitting here in front of this laptop, and for me it's better to spend the money on having someone do it, than to try to fix it, spend three hours on my back to be just more frustrated than when I started. And it's like doing your taxes. Every time I did my own taxes, it never turned out as good as when the accountants said "Oh, did you realize that you missed this, this, this and this?" I'm not going to do that again either. You have to be ready to invest about 18 months. And that's pure honest. You have to be ready to invest about 18 months because you're going to have to test and tweak things that we already know works. Which is OK. I think doing it yourself is a great way that even if it doesn't work, now you're empowered to help keep some of the people you're honest, because there's a lot of not-honest people in this space. I always say "Go with your gut". If you don't feel something's right, don't go with it. Simple.

I think opportunity cost is the biggest issue. If it takes you 18 months to get up to speed on something that takes us 6, well what's that 12 months worth to you in terms of sales and leads? That's another thing. Obviously your budget, you know the only way to get a good, cheap SEO, this is how people got me for really cheap: I had just first started. If you can find someone that's got a lot of experience and just started, you got yourself a gem. Because the people that are "I've been in this space for a while, I kind of dabble in it"--they're not too good usually.

Software. The tools that I showed most of you today, they're all free if you noticed. I don't pay a dime for any of those, they're as available for me as they are available to you. There aren't many tools out there that really help in the search process, like Page Critic, OK. Page Critic. Page Critic is a software that if you download it, your competition could download it, and if you plug in the keywords, what it tells you to do is going to be the



same, exact thing. So great, if your competitors and use it, are you guys going to up the top 10, or they are going to start tweaking and bumping you out. It's not always that easy as it is to buy some software have it kick out some recommendations. The competitiveness of the landscape is critical. If you're not in a very competitive space, then you can get away with things like Page Critic, and by all means use it. But if you find, when you're doing your keyword research, that there are terms that are being queried very often, and you know people are making money on them, they're calling professionals to do it. And the question is, you know, keep your ego out of SEO. Don't pat yourself on the back because you got a number one for New York as one word. I'd rather be number 20 for New York as two words than number one for it as 1. Because you need to analyze the traffic and the impact of that traffic, rankings are just means to ends. So if they're not actually referring you business, you're wasting time.

And some signs you might want to run from a search firm: If they cold-called you, they're not really that busy. And if they're good? They're busy. A required retainer is B.S. Because, once I get your site ranked in 12 or 18 months, you're going to continue to rank well for those terms for at least another 12 months without me touching the site. Because a lot of the things we've done are not picked up by Google until after we've actually done your campaign. So you're going to keep going up after we're done. If someone says that they require a retainer to keep your rankings? I wouldn't trust them. Because what are they going to do? What if you're already ranked 12? What were they doing to collect that retainer every month? Not a whole lot.

Now that you have some tools and you have the tools that are in my bookmarks, look up these query-volumes yourself. If you go to a site called SEOBook.com, they have tons of tools up that are available for free, and one of them is a great query research tool. Make sure that they're not telling you to rank well for keywords like "black shoes in Alabama" because no one is typing that in. So now you are empowered with tools like this to know nobody's typing that in, so what if it costs you 50 bucks to have someone optimize the term "black shoes in Alabama", you just wasted 50 bucks, because nobody's typing that in. Your common come-backs if their site doesn't rank well for anything, "Oh we're the shoemaker's children, you know, we didn't have time to do our own SEO." OK. "They're busy working for their clients" is another one, "we're so busy working for our clients that we didn't have time to do our own". How can you tell me that the search is worth it for me if you're not going to do it for your own site? And my favorite is "we like to stay under the radar". I like to stay on top of the radar. I'm trying to stay in business. So while they're staying under the radar, I'd be a little concerned about that comeback. If they don't rank well for anything, that's a biggie. If they don't proactively--don't ask them if they're going to analyze the traffic. Sit back and say "Well, what reports do I get?" If it's "Oh, we give you a ranking report every month", put on your shoes, find a new firm. You know why? Because you're not in this for rankings--get your ego out of SEO--you're in this for business. Therefore, you want to make sure they're tracking through your process how many people are adding to cart from search, how many people are completing the



purchase, how many are returning, and what that value is to you. If they're just giving you a ranking report, it's not enough. They're heavy on scare tactics like "Oh well, you did this, you're going to get banned on Google." All right, that's a big thing these days "Oh, are you going to get banned?" Most of the time it's going to be lifted as long as you fix what you did--and you know what you did. Fix it, take it out, and then usually you'll come back, OK? The idea that it's all over--like its the end of the world, is not necessarily the way to go. And anybody that says they have propriety software or they dabble in search? You have to eat this stuff for breakfast if you're going to be good at it. That's why I said you have to be willing to invest that amount of time. Speaking of time, I'm almost out, so are there any quick questions before I split?

[Inaudible]

Wil Reynolds: Yes?

[Inaudible]

Wil Reynolds: For keyword research, the tools we use most are Digital Point, these are MI-bookmarked, it's Digital Point which gives you the top 10 for Word Tracker for free. Which some might be paying for Word Tracker? It gives you the first 10 for free on Digital Point. I use Google Trends, I use Keyword Discovery and SEO Book are the main ones I use for Keyword research.

[Inaudible]

Wil Reynolds: Oh yeah, just drop your card and you will all get my bookmarks, I usually do it on the flight home. Any others? Yes.

[Inaudible]

Wil Reynolds: I don't remove it, I just don't spend my time optimizing it because I know there's a thousand other things I could work on that are going to have more impact than the words in the keyword meta tags, so that's why I don't really use it much. And...one more in the back, I think this might be the last one.

[Inaudible]

Wil Reynolds: Yes.

[Inaudible]



Wil Reynolds: Straight Talk on Search Engine Optimization
Affiliate Summit 2006 East
July 9-11, 2006 in Orlando, FL

Wil Reynolds: A properly optimized circular architecture will not have a negative impact. I mean, some of the brands we work with are pretty big, we have to be very careful with the techniques that we use. If people are out there linking to you, try to get them to link to the deeper pages on your site and not just to your home page, because that's one of the hardest things to get, is what we call "deep links". OK? Any others? I probably have time for one more and that's it? All right, great. If you want my bookmarks, just drop my card up, I swear I won't email you after that. Thanks.