

Jeremy Blossom:

Hello everyone and welcome to the Secrets of Marketers podcast. The only podcast you can rely on to give you real, raw, unfiltered marketing advice covering the latest tips, tricks and tools that millionaire marketers use to make money online. I am your host, Jeremy Blossom. Sit back, relax, and let's start discovering the true secrets of marketers. Hello, everyone and welcome to another episode of the Secrets of Marketers podcast. This is your host Jeremy Blossom and I am with Geoff Atkinson. How are you Geoff?

Geoff Atkinson:

I'm great, Jeremy. Thanks for having me on. How are you doing?

Jeremy Blossom:

You know what? I'm doing well all things considered. What a crazy time we're all living in huh?

Geoff Atkinson:

Yeah, I know right. Bizarro World.

Jeremy Blossom:

Yeah. You are the CEO and founder of huckabuy.com, and to our audience, this is a real treat because we specialize in all things marketing here at Secrets of Marketers, but a lot of my guests have come on from the paid acquisition side. Geoff, you're coming at it from an SEO perspective, but would you mind just giving us a warm introduction on who you are, where you came from? You've got a really fascinating story.

Geoff Atkinson:

Absolutely. I was a ski racer growing up, from the east coast. I'm from the Boston area. Got into college as a skier. I was also on the US ski team for a year. Then after college, I wanted to get a job somewhere in a mountain town and still be a ski bum but I came across a great opportunity at Overstock at the time, it was 2005 and relatively early days of Overstock and we saw phenomenal growth there. I ended up becoming their SVP of marketing. The founder and CEO Patrick Byrne was my mentor. His godfather was Warren Buffett; his dad was the CEO of GEICO. It's just this incredible career starting opportunity to be a 25-year-old kid controlling 1.2 billion in revenue. Yeah, very heavy in SEO.

Geoff Atkinson:

That was a great channel for us. We went from zero to 300 million in about four years, which was pretty cool. Now I have my own company called Huckabuy that checks a lot of boxes when it comes to SEO, specifically technical SEO. We help our customers like Salesforce, SAP, all these companies drive their organic search growth. Great to be here. You'll get definitely a different take on marketing from me, I'm sure.

Jeremy Blossom:

Yeah, that's what I'm looking forward to. What an impressive resume and you're so humble about it. I love your story. Like most marketers, I don't think, at least some of the really successful ones, a lot of us didn't start off with like, "That's my mission in life. I'm going to go and become the senior vice president marketing for this huge company." You were a skier and you transitioned into this. That I think actually

adds to probably why you were so good at what you did is that you come at it from a different perspective. I'd like to start off just by getting into, you could have left Overstock and literally done anything.

Jeremy Blossom:

You could have moved into the VP role or any other company you probably wanted to do, you could do anything but you specifically have chosen to start your own company around SEO, what's the big reason for you going all in on SEO?

Geoff Atkinson:

It was accidental, but I'm glad that I'm here now. The way that I started this thing was actually with a B2C company, because that was my background. It was online shopping, product price comparisons and coupon type site and at the time, Google had changed their algorithms to not really like these affiliate site models, so we were really swimming upstream. We had built some really cool SEO software that people that knew the company and knew me wanted to start licensing. About three years ago, we pivoted into the SaaS business without me even knowing how great SaaS is, and the recurring revenue model and the valuations and all this jazz.

Geoff Atkinson:

We actually really accidentally built a great business. The problem that we're solving, and this is coming from my experience, at Overstock, is just how technical SEO is and yet the industry is almost entirely driven by services. Tons of agencies, tons of consultants, that can't really fix the fundamental problem. It's a \$95 billion industry with an NPS score of zero. You'd rather go to your dentist than talk to your SEO agency. The problem is that they literally don't have the technical chops or even sometimes the technical access to make the fundamental changes to a website that allow Google to understand it, them to be able to give it the rankings and traffic that it deserves.

Geoff Atkinson:

I just saw it as a outdated industry that was really ripe for disruption, so let's get after this thing from a technical and software perspective. That's really what Huckabuy does. We're the exact opposite of really any other SEO experience you've probably gone down. And that we're software and you literally get the software live, and our average customer grows 62% in 12 months. It's pretty wild, it works. We feel like we've struck gold and now we're trying to reach the masses and get our name out there because I think what we've found is pretty special.

Jeremy Blossom:

Yeah, absolutely. You guys are doing something that I'd say 95, in fact, 99% of the people are not doing. As I mentioned to you in our pre show interview, one our guests on the show is Neil Patel. Him and I talked before after he's come to one of our events. I tell him that, I say that most of the people who are in this SEO space, SEO marketers have gone so far honestly, if I'm being really frank, it's almost a pet peeve of mine. It's gone so far that it's given us SEO and marketing somewhat of a bad name, because they're going out there, over promising these results and saying a bunch of things that they really can't deliver on, because you're right, there's this fundamental issue.

Jeremy Blossom:

Neil also agrees. He's like, "Yeah." He's like, "There's a lot of people that have a couple of the pieces figured out and they oversell those couple of pieces to SEO and that they're missing out on the bigger thing." Let's talk about some of the myths surrounding SEO, and why the technical part is so important. What do you think, as somebody who comes to you, somebody...? And the interesting thing is that these myths, they go from small businesses all the way up to big businesses like Salesforce. What are some of the things that you're having to reset expectation wise or retrain someone when you're going through what Huckabuy can do for somebody versus what they're currently thinking SEO is all about?

Geoff Atkinson:

Neil's great. He's a friend as well and super smart guy. And you're right, there is a ton of snake oil salesmen out there that are giving the industry a really bad name, and it gets back to that NPS score of zero. It's a really hard thing to get to zero. I'd say that the miscommunication is all about, well, what can an agency actually charge you for? And that's their driving light. In a capitalist economy they're going to figure out what they can charge you for and what they can charge you for is typically stuff that Google doesn't really care all that much about. They're going to charge you for optimization of metadata, and metadata isn't all that important anymore.

Geoff Atkinson:

It's all about structured data. They're going to write a lot of content, but they can't write content the way an internal team can, because no one knows about these complex businesses as a third party. Writing is really hard, so if you just have a random agency churning out writing for you, it's usually not a high paid employee and they're just going to write garbage and Google can sniff that out. Then the rest of it is really just snake oil. They'll say that they're doing stuff like a technical SEO audit, or they're going to implement structured data, or they're going to improve page speed. Stuff that does really matter, but they'd end up just not doing it.

Geoff Atkinson:

I wonder how many of the billable hours out there are actually being done, because if I look at some of these agency bills, I'm just like, "What?" They're not doing this. I think that's part of it too. You get a line item on your agency bill each month for \$5,000 and you're like, "What are they actually doing for me for that 5000?" It's really hard to actually figure it out. The reason that the technical side is so important, if you think about, websites are always built for human beings. We spend so much time on UI/UX, but what's the UI/UX for Google? When they come what's their experience?

Geoff Atkinson:

Normally, it's really, really bad and in my opinion, it's actually more important than the user experience in a lot of ways because it dictates how many humans end up coming. There's certain things that they really care about. They care about page speed. They want really fast page speed. They care about structured data, which is their preferred language that allows them to talk authoritatively with a website. They care about good content that's written well. They don't like JavaScript, for example, because they can't crawl it as well as they can HTML.

Geoff Atkinson:

There's a bunch of stuff that they want and essentially what Huckabuy is doing is just listening to Google, listening to what they want out of a website, where they're going, and building software that basically gives them the perfect UI/UX when they come crawl a site. When you do that, the results are

just incredible. No agency could do that. They couldn't actually make a huge impact to page speed, they couldn't create a dynamically rendered version of a website, which is something we can probably talk about later. They're just not able to do that. You end up with this really bad situation where they're basically selling a fake list of goods and they don't really deliver on it either.

Geoff Atkinson:

Yeah, it's a problem. It's a hard problem for Huckabuy honestly, because so many people have been burned. But when they hear about us, and they hear what we do, and actually, we're so big on accountability and credibility and transparency which none of these firms do. We have to hit those things way harder, because they've just been burned in the past.

Jeremy Blossom:

Yeah. The paradigm shift for me when you were explaining Huckabuy to me, was basically what you just walked through. How many times, and this is for everyone listening right now. For your specific business, if you're the marketing director, the CMO or you're the business owner, and you're looking at your website, and you're asking yourself this question, have I made this website for my end customer exclusively with very little thought about what Google says, or they think about my code, how is Google interpreting what I'm trying to say?

Jeremy Blossom:

Or have I actually built this for both where in a way that Google using flat HTML, structured data, is this is being written in such a way where Google can easily go through exactly what it is that we're doing? They actually even like it to a certain point, it goes that far, and my customers can get it too? My customers can understand what we do in a clear, concise way? I'd argue that if you really were truthful with yourself 90% of everyone listening right now would say, "No, I probably really haven't given Google as much thought as I probably should have. I certainly didn't think about it when I was actually building out which code I was going to use for my site."

Jeremy Blossom:

Those are things that I think that are super important and I think the biggest myth of it all, is that look, we could go in all you want and write a really long 5000-word blog post, and try to do as many things as you want, but you're not going to be how Google reads your site and how they interact with your site. That's the competitive advantage that Huckabuy provides, right?

Geoff Atkinson:

Yeah, and a lot of times they don't even realize it too. I'll take Salesforce as a great example. I love them as a customer. They're great. We've fixed a lot of stuff for them, but even these really big companies, they don't realize how much of their site Google just can't even get to and can't crawl because it's really slow. It's got a ton of JavaScript. When I think about like UI/UX, and we always are adding the new fancy thing to our site tracking pixels and JavaScript tags and chat boxes. Very rarely does the consideration like, how is this going to influence Google? Come up. A chat box is a perfect example. Google hates chat boxes, because they don't provide them any value.

Geoff Atkinson:

Google doesn't chat with the company. They are always JavaScript based. They always cause page speed issues, and if you actually like truly A/B tested the chat box on a website, it most likely is always going to lose because it's going to hurt your SEO pretty significantly. I'm not encouraging people to rip down their chat boxes right now, but at least have the consideration of, well, what's this going to do for Google's experience? What is this tracking tag going to do? What's this third party that's based wherever?

Geoff Atkinson:

Because if you think about it, every time a site loads, and you have all those things that have to fire, you're not just loading the site, you're going out to Boston to get the live chat box, you might be going to Europe for a review thing. Just to think about what these pages need to compile makes it really hard for Google to actually figure out what's going on. We'll see efforts with tons and tons of content, and Google literally won't even be able to find it. It's just about clearing up those roadblocks, letting them through and letting them just be able to download everything that they need and they'll reward you for that.

Geoff Atkinson:

That's essentially what we're trying to do is just, there's so many other efforts that are happening that are actually good for the user, but Google's not getting the benefit of that. Let's make sure that they get what they need and be able to reward you for that.

Jeremy Blossom:

When someone says, "Okay, that sounds great, Geoff, but I've got budget going to paid traffic right now. My paid traffic is scaling, it's working for me, I get okay rankings on some of the SEO terms that I care about." What could we really tell these people why they need to care more about SEO? What were some of the things that you saw at Overstock that really was like, "This has got to be a channel that's heavily focused on you can change your business." What are some of the things that you can tell people that really should be focusing more on SEO, but they're not?

Geoff Atkinson:

It'd be really scary right now, if you were dependent on paid channels, because they're most likely getting cut significantly. Say 75% of your traffic's based on paid media channels. You got to cut that 50%, that traffic doesn't keep coming, it's just gone. SEO stands the test of time. Let me give you my take at Overstock. There's no channel better for driving new customer acquisition than SEO, there just isn't. The engine that we built there was new customer acquisition through SEO, right categories, let the SEO and keyword research actually dictate the categories it's how Overstock turned into this furniture, home and garden company.

Geoff Atkinson:

Great new customer acquisition, very low cost. We had that engine just cranking. Then invest heavily in CRM, email marketing, conversion rate optimization, all these technical investments makes such a higher ROI than any paid... Plus, if the paid goes away, all that traffic keeps coming through. You don't lose it. It's just there forever. An investor in SEO is not an investment for this month, it's an investment for the next five, 10 years of your company. When you actually crack the ROI numbers, it's just ridiculous. Then we were really big on branding. I'm a huge believer in TV advertising, I don't think anything moves the needle as much as SEO and TV.

Geoff Atkinson:

SEO is actually a phenomenal branding opportunity, you get hundreds of millions of impressions and you also get that impression of being the number one search ranking, which people actually trust and think about a ton. Our program there was TV, SEO, that's going to drive all the new customers, that's going to get our brand out there. Display is actually a way undervalued channel because everybody values it in terms of the direct response channel, and it just doesn't work that way. Display is super important, and then all the things that matter for CRM. A loyalty program, a credit card, stuff that you can monetize, an advertising program around the site. Those were all the measures that we figured out after...

Geoff Atkinson:

I've managed the analytics as well. We've had, I don't know, 40, 50 analysts working around the clock to try to figure out the actual truth of what's driving success. We would ratchet down stuff like paid search and affiliate spend, and nothing would change. The users would still find Overstock. If they want to buy some more stock they'd still go to overstock, they just aren't going through an affiliate site now, or they're not going through a paid search link. Yeah, it's scary when you think about how much money is being spent and also how much time is being spent on paid media. Then you've got this SEO thing that's so important, and everybody's just ignoring it.

Geoff Atkinson:

There's a reason for that, because it is so technical. It's not what a marketer is used to working on, but if you do invest and you do it right, you can grow a brand like an Overstock. It's tremendous what it can actually do.

Jeremy Blossom:

What's the realistic timeframe for someone coming on and let's say that they've got a score of zero to 10. 10 being they're lights out perfect SEO client, after doing everything right, to a one, somebody who's pe... Because I think most of our listeners spend way too much money on paid acquisition channels and rely on it. I have consulted and helped several of our clients who've gotten banned from Facebook, they've got an ad account shut down. You're reading my mail when it comes to, man, I wish we had SEO going right now because at least there'd be some sales coming through but some of these companies are so over leveraged in one traffic channel, they're not getting that residual.

Jeremy Blossom:

What would be some of the timeframes of these people who are very, very passive on SEO, if they were to put money into it really start to build that up as a channel for some returns, for rankings? Because I think this is also a big misconception and a big reason why a lot of people don't choose SEO. I'd love to hear your response before I give you why. I'd just like to hear your response first.

Geoff Atkinson:

Six months is usually like a minimum. You'll start to see the needle move pretty significantly in six months, if you're doing the right things. If you go down the path of working with an agency or whatever, sometimes it just never even moves, which is sad. But as we said, a new customer is six months, give it six months and you'll start to see stuff really heading in the right direction. If you give it a year, you're going to see double that. That's the thing about SEO. It's pretty linear. It doesn't just jump. It takes time

and investment over time, and you're never really done with it. Good SEO companies will have 30, 40, 50 people working on SEO for 10 years, and that's how they get so good at what they do.

Geoff Atkinson:

Six months is a good time frame to be like, "Is this working or not?" You should have an idea after six months, if your plan of attack is working or not working and that's the other thing. There's just so many bad ways to go about it and bad external things telling you what to do that you could waste a lot of money and a lot of time, but if you do it correctly, you should see movement in six months. No problem.

Jeremy Blossom:

That's what I wanted. I was thinking you were going to give us a timeline around that six months or so because I think that's a big misconception, too. You get agencies out there say, "I'll get you results here in the next 30 days after you start with us." It's a red flag. That's just not how SEO works at all. It's really just about setting the proposition. I think that's what's also hard for your small midsize companies. I can go and spend a million dollars in a month on ads, if I'm going to make all of it back that month, maybe early next month in paid acquisition.

Jeremy Blossom:

You go and you spend that money in SEO, it's more like an investment where it's going to pay off a little bit over time, but if you keep investing in it month, over month, over month, the return on that, the ROI becomes way greater than the original investment was and it doesn't stop. You're still practicing doing best SEO practices, if you just abandon ship and not invest anymore in the channel, it's going to go and turn the other way. That was what I wanted everyone to hear is a realistic timeframe on when somebody could see some type of results that are coming through.

Jeremy Blossom:

It's really interesting that you spent so much time and energy as [inaudible 00:22:32], I know a lot of, [inaudible 00:22:36] with the guys over Investopedia, they got bought by Dotdash. Dotdash's CEO's principles are all based off of SEO. He is tried and true, that's all their traffic that they really want to focus on so far and I get it. Companies like Investopedia where it's all information centric, you're looking for very specific topics you want to read about that. If you're an eCommerce brand, and you've got some funding and you're about to go and launch, what would be some of the SEO tactics you would immediately start to use?

Jeremy Blossom:

If you could do Overstock all over again, what were some of the things you wouldn't have done and some of the things you would be doing?

Geoff Atkinson:

Yeah. The first thing is always keyword research, which is lame to say, but good keyword research and understanding what people are searching for that's relevant to your business is so important. Not only is it important, but it actually can change your business. I'll give you an example with Overstock. When I got there, we were electronics, jewelry and watches type of stuff where bada-boom-bada-bang, pull up the truck and cut the guy a check and he gives you a bunch of flat screen TVs. That was Overstock. It was

a total hustle buyers, got a bunch of watches, God knows where they came from. Let's just cut them a check and get them.

Geoff Atkinson:

As we got smarter, we had SEO analysts that saw the opportunity in the home and garden category. You got to think like 2007, furniture, bedding, all those brands that were participating in that space were big box retailers, they were your Bed Bath & Beyond, your J. C. Penneys, your Targets, and they really at the time didn't have much of online strategy. That's all we were. We were like, "Boy, there's a ton of people searching for this stuff, and there's no one doing it right." Now if you think of Overstock and honestly, over 100% of their profits, and all this stuff is from home and garden, they're known as a home garden company.

Geoff Atkinson:

They're known as furniture, good bedding at a cheap price, patio furniture, mattresses, all those things. That transition of Overstock from electronics, jewelry and watches to a home and garden company was based on nothing other than good keyword research. We figured out that we could take advantage of this huge opportunity, way better margins, all these companies were basically ripping off the American public by charging just through the roof for furniture and stuff. We just moved into these categories and they just took off.

Geoff Atkinson:

That's an extreme example on how important, here's a probably a billion dollars worth of revenue generated out of thin air based on keyword research, and everybody that shopped at Overstock probably has a piece of furniture or bedding in their house. That was all done by SEO and good keyword research because after a while, whenever you'd search for anything bedding or anything furniture, what would you see, Overstock, Overstock, Overstock all the time and you do that hundreds of millions of times a month, people start to think of you as a furniture company and a home garden company. That's one extreme scenario.

Geoff Atkinson:

Here's another one. We saw this keyword called "Black end tables" really random keyword. We didn't have any black end tables, so we told our partners, "Start painting some of your end tables black." And we created a category, it was a five-million-dollar category overnight just by finding people are searching for it.

Jeremy Blossom:

Wow.

Geoff Atkinson:

You can learn a ton about your business and you can actually change your business based on keyword research and based on... It's so much easier to take demand that's out there already and then just provide a product that suits that demand versus inventing a product and trying to stuff it down people's throats. That doesn't work as well. Call things what they're supposed to be called, call things what people search for, and time and doing keyword research can change a business super-fast. Once that's

done, then it's about architecting the site, what does the navigation look like? What are your drop down? I can go forever on that.

Geoff Atkinson:

That's my first and to speak to the eCom community, if you're not doing SEO, good luck. It's just impossible. It's so competitive. Every great eCommerce brand almost every great eCommerce brand has been built on SEO. That's how they got there. Your Zappos, your WAYFARERS, your Amazon, eBay are arguably the two best eCommerce sites in the world when it comes to SEO. They just kill it. Amazon, you could really argue that Amazon was built on SEO.

Jeremy Blossom:

Yeah, I would say that. In fact, I do often bring that up when we're talking with eCommerce brands and I tell them all the time, I'm like, "You're..." Because again, just paid acquisition strategies versus SEO strategies and a lot of people get those things confused because they see the ads and they see the retargeting ads and they see all this other stuff, but they don't understand really, where the difference between a buyer and somebody who's just looking, someone who's interested or whatever.

Jeremy Blossom:

It's like you're trying to compete with paid ads in a screaming match, because you're just like who can be louder, who can be more interesting and dynamic and by all means this is the core of a lot of what we do is we specialize in the paid acquisition side. I'll be the last person to ever put that down. But to your point about search based traffic, last time anybody's made a really big purchase, it's search. You start to, what is the best...? Then fill in the blank. What is reviews for and you just start to go down the rabbit hole because you're in that intent part of the funnel. You're like, "I'm in the consideration phase of looking at what someone has to provide."

Jeremy Blossom:

Question for you, A, were you really closely involved, you probably were since you're the vice president. On the paid acquisition, cost per acquisition numbers and search and in most eCommerce brands, or the examples with Overstock, but what were the differences between the cost per acquisitions between search and paid that you felt?

Geoff Atkinson:

Listen, I'm not against paid marketing. God, we spent over 100 million dollars a year, I controlled \$100 million marketing budget. You're spending a lot of money still, it's just that SEO worked way better. What was interesting about my situation there was I started in marketing, I ended up running marketing, we created this analytics group, the analytics group was the first ones to write pricing algorithms for Overstock. First ones to write forecasting, product forecasting algorithms and making sure things don't go out of stock. We did so well there that I ended up actually then managing all buying too.

Geoff Atkinson:

Basically all the revenue facing fronts of Overstock fell under one guy, which made it really easy for me to see what truth worked and I think that's why Patrick set it up that way. There wasn't anybody like vying for budget to... If I took budget out of the paid and put it into SEO, no one had to answer for that

other than me. It was really easy for me to do, and it was much easier to be surrounded by all these smart analysts to actually know the truth on what was working and what wasn't. I wasn't competing with myself over marketing budget dollars, I knew exactly what I wanted to do and so we did. Paid still works.

Geoff Atkinson:

The way that I view paid is twofold. One is branding, which is measured by how many people search for your brand name every single month. That is such an important metric that no one tracks. How many people searched for you a month? Both how many come through on SEO, how many come through paid? Because a lot of people bid on their brand terms. Then how many people actually just typed your name directly in the URL and just go directly to you? Add those three things up, and watch that number over time. That's how we would measure branding. Was, how relevant are we? How many people are searching for us a month?

Geoff Atkinson:

That was a really easy tip for your audience that was like, that works. Whether you're doing TV, or you're doing radio, or you're doing print ads, display advertising, whatever it is, that'll give you a sense of how effective your branding is. All the direct response paid channels, like paid search, affiliates, now it's like social, social does bleed into branding now. Those were like a math equation basically. If you can spend a dollar and they're going to give you \$1.10 back. You just do that over and over again. We basically we just... We didn't have a budget that we could either get through or not get through, which I know is a weird way to think about it.

Geoff Atkinson:

We would walk up to the ATM machine, put in a dollar and see how much we got back and that dictated how much we spent. Our entire direct response if you will, that was all done based on basically a math equation. It was almost a set it and forget it, which is the opposite of what most companies do. Most companies will obsess over their paid channels; they'll spend all their time on them. We were the opposite. I was like, "Let's automate that and just not even have to think about it anymore." Now we can focus on branding, SEO, email marketing, loyalty program, the credit card, all that stuff that actually made us money. Now our headspace was freed up. We'd have a little team.

Geoff Atkinson:

I think we had three people working on PPC, we had 40, though, working on SEO. That'll show, not a lot of marketing leaders can do that shift, but I was lucky enough and probably naive enough to just do it and as long as things kept growing, no one really second guessed what we were doing. A unique situation, but was lucky to learn a ton about how it actually works and what in reality is the true drivers of growth. If you can get your paid to work as a math equation and just ignore it, it's going to do what it's going to do.

Geoff Atkinson:

Right now, if they still have it at Overstock, it's probably doing really well right now and they're probably spending a bunch because everything's dropped in price and it's a math equation. It just would do what it does, but we wouldn't even worry about that. It's just like, "Let's get set up, forget about it, and then let's work on all this other stuff."

Jeremy Blossom:

That's fascinating. It makes a lot of sense actually too. Was that always the case at the very beginning when Overstock was growing? Is that how you were always thinking about it, or did you take time in the beginning to get the paid figured out what is the math for and then set it and forget it?

Geoff Atkinson:

I'll just tell you how simple... That thinking was definitely already in place when I got there. Patrick, the founder and CEO, I remember him telling a story of the first time that he could, he realized that you could attach these tracking links, the paid links, and track every revenue dollar that came in through a display, whatever it was. He used to buy an image on the Yahoo homepage, it was a big thing. He'd spend a hundred grand. It was way simpler times, but he had that mentality and then I took it to an extreme. He was like, "You have a lot of smart people that work for you. Take this basic mentality of, we want this to be a math equation, but take it so that you can explain it to me and I'll be like, "Yeah, that's the best way to do it.""

Geoff Atkinson:

Then we would just revise that as frequently as we could. By the time I left, it was massively complex and massively efficient, especially when it came to how to price products, how to do forecasting, how to do paid search bids, that all got pretty in depth. The rest of it though, like the SEO is a totally different science. It's a totally different thing. It's very technical. It's about those things that I mentioned earlier. They were just totally different problems and I was fortunate to have a huge amount of dev resources at my disposal at any given time, almost any dev project.

Geoff Atkinson:

One of my closest friends, he ran engineering, and we just got to go hog wild and build the perfect site for SEO and build the loyalty programs and all that stuff that grew what Overstock is today. I don't know how much of it is still there, but it was fun. That's a pretty cool experience to be able to have. That kind of resources as a young professional is crazy.

Jeremy Blossom:

I think it also is a massive value for everybody who's a customer of Huckabuy. You literally got to put into practice everything you're preaching Huckabuy and see it in real time and you've got the most amazing case study because my wife, I was telling her who I was interviewing today and she's like, "What?" She's so excited because when you go around our house and see a bunch of stuff from Overstock. Absolutely, it worked. Everyone listening right now is listening because they're excited to hear from you and like, "Wow, this is so cool. How did he do it?"

Jeremy Blossom:

You're putting all that information and data and insight and things that you learn all the bad stuff too, and you're putting it right into Huckabuy and you basically have created a platform that people can take their websites and make a overstock.com version of it. One of the coolest things as I was getting to know more about you guys is this like use case or this, a dynamic pages functionality, because I think a lot of people probably don't understand it. I'd love for them to touch base on a few of the things that Huckabuy can do. Again, guys, this is all the stuff that Geoff learned from his years at growing a massive online eCommerce brand using SEO. Go ahead and jump right in.

Geoff Atkinson:

The concept is dynamic rendering, is this concept and probably 90% of your audience has never heard of dynamic rendering and I don't blame them either. In my mind, it was the biggest change Google's made in 10 years. Basically, what it means is, it's pretty straightforward. It basically means that websites load dynamically based on what calls them. If I have a mobile device, and I go to your homepage, I'll get one experience. If I go on my desktop, I'll get a little different one. The big change was they said, "Well, now you can actually give a version just for us."

Geoff Atkinson:

That was a huge change, because Google has talked for years about how it's going to be the same thing that the user experiences, blah, blah, blah. The issue was JavaScript. As JavaScript has taken off across the internet, their job to crawl JavaScript is very difficult. It takes like 10 times the resources to crawl JavaScript. Basically what they do they hit it, say there's a chat box, they hit it, they say we don't understand this, they kick it to what they call a rendering queue. A rendering queue is basically like your Chrome browser. It's the same technology, it actually just loads it and then they can go in and crawl, but it takes a lot more money and time and resources.

Geoff Atkinson:

They're like, "This is getting ridiculous." Because almost every page on the internet now has JavaScript on it. Their rendering costs, I think, just got out of control. They said, "Well, now you can actually do this separate version just for us." Basically, they're saying, "Just give us a version without JavaScript." That's what opened the door for Huckabuy to do our SEO Cloud. SEO Cloud is a dynamically rendered, call it perfect version of a website just for Google. We take the site; we convert it into flat HTML. It's super simple. We add structured data, which is the language that they prefer to talk to at the top of the page.

Geoff Atkinson:

Then we have a partnership with Cloudflare, who is the world's fastest CDN network, content delivery network. Your pages are not only now full HTML, perfect structured data, they also load instantly. When Google comes, they can download basically the entire site right away. It was a crazy concept, but they love it. That's dynamic rendering.

Jeremy Blossom:

That's amazing. That's just part of the stack that you guys are offering from a holistic solution?

Geoff Atkinson:

Mm-hmm (Affirmative).

Jeremy Blossom:

You've got dynamic rendering, what else do you guys got? What are the things, tools, tricks, numbers that you're able to poll using your stack?

Geoff Atkinson:

Our stack is right now focused on SEO. The automation of world class structured data, which has become an enormous part of the algorithm. Structured data, it's what powers when you search, they call rich enhancements. When you search for like the weather, and it just shows up, or sports score, it

just shows up, or you type in ask for a recipe, and the recipe just shows up like that. It's all powered by this language. If you've noticed their algorithm and what the results you are getting, almost every single query is going to have some sort of enhancement now. That's all powered by structured data. Voice Search is also completely powered by structured data.

Geoff Atkinson:

We take a site from wherever they are and usually they're zero structured data, we'll take them to world class structure data. That was our first product. Then we built SEO Cloud and now we're building a page speed product. Page speed is a really tough problem. Every website has a problem with it, like everyone. That's where we're like, we've figured out how to fix page speed and it's related to our SEO Cloud product, but it'll actually give you lightning fast page speed, not just for bots, but for users as well, which really cranks up your conversion rates, lowers bounce rates. It does all sorts of stuff. That product's coming out in the next three months.

Geoff Atkinson:

Current customers are getting a taste of it now and it's really impressive. That's part of what we do. When you think about your tech stack and how Huckabuy can help, it's pretty agnostic. Whether you use HubSpot or WordPress or Shopify, we can optimize your interaction with Google and then in three months will actually optimize your interaction with humans as well in terms of a page speed and delivery of that content. That's really what Huckabuy is working on.

Jeremy Blossom:

Yeah, that was going to be my next question, which is, all right, are there any restrictions? Because I have clients that are on, you mentioned HubSpot, they use that for all their blog content, you got other guys on Shopify, WordPress is probably the most popular of them all. That was going to be my next question. Does that matter, do any of those interfaces matter? It sounds like it doesn't because you guys are creating that separate instance for Google to converting things into a file HTML. That's great. It's great to hear that anybody pretty much can convert their existing websites into your platform, and you guys can help them.

Geoff Atkinson:

Yeah, we're pretty much agnostic. There's a couple weird scenarios where we're like, "That doesn't work for us." But nine times out of 10, you're good to go.

Jeremy Blossom:

That's great. I was mentioning to you again on our pre call that I automatically have a few people that I can't wait to see you guys because they're in these really hyper niches where, if any competitive advantage they can get they're going to take and SEO is one of those and it's a huge value proposition for people. You're also one of the very first people I think that did such a great job correlating brand and search together. Oftentimes, you get marketers now days you have so many silos.

Jeremy Blossom:

You've got brand people, you've got paid, direct response, direct to consumer people, you've got search people, and they're inert, they got tunnel vision and they're not actually looking at things in a holistic manner about what that can do and what it really means. I love that you put a quantifiable, black and

white to a brand, because so many times people are like, "Branding is an experience. Branding is this, branding is that." And your way of approach to it is great, because it is. It's like what is the sum total of the people who are interested in what you're doing? And there's a way to measure that, and there's also a way to increase that.

Jeremy Blossom:

And the more you can get people talking, thinking of you, the more likelihood that they're going to do and interact with you and interactions turn into conversations, conversations turn into sales. It's that simple. That's what you've been able to build. I love that.

Geoff Atkinson:

Yeah. I always say there's two metrics that nobody tracks but they always predict how successful a company is doing. One is the one I mentioned earlier, how many people are searching for your brand and just typing your brand in. The second is domain authority. Domain authority is an SEO metric. That means basically how many inbound links and how important are those inbound links pointing to your site? If you look at a company, and both of those metrics are going up, that company is doing great. Their domain authority is going up, people are linking to them and people are searching more and more each month for them. That company is doing great.

Geoff Atkinson:

If they're flat, or one of them's flat, you get a little nervous. You're like, "Okay. Well, maybe it's a long term play." They're just not growing. They predict growth and revenue growth in particular. Then if they're going down, you get really worried because they're for some reason not resonating with consumers, their traffic's definitely dying off. That's super concerning. If you look at those two metrics, and we do that at Huckabuy, we actually will measure all of our customers and we can tell who's doing really well and who's having a hard time. We try to influence obviously, especially that number of brand searches.

Geoff Atkinson:

Those are two things that almost always correlate to how successful a company is doing and they're random. You probably don't have them on the top of your head and your exec dashboard or whatever, but those are the two that almost always predict how well someone's doing.

Jeremy Blossom:

That's fascinating. I'm definitely going to be adding that to my weekly agenda items to discuss with my team. A few more questions for you just because I'm loving this conversation. One is just random, but I thought about it as you were talking. You're a young guy and you were put into an amazing position at a young age. What culture did you create on your team as a marketer to get the maximum performance? I think a lot of people listening either are on a team or running a team. What were some of the things that you did to inspire and get everybody to perform at their best?

Geoff Atkinson:

It's a great question. It's probably a little bit different now. I wouldn't say I'm so young now. I'm 38 now, but when I was young, I charged really hard as you would probably imagine. I think one of the things I did was vocalizing ideas, especially big ideas. When you think about that stuff that we're talking about

here today, there was so many employees that had to learn that change in mindset and we actually didn't even hire marketers, we hated hiring marketers because they would come in and have all these ideas and we're like, "We don't do anything like that here." We loved to hire statisticians right out of college.

Geoff Atkinson:

To be able to get people all on the same page when it comes to a project as complicated and as difficult as SEO optimization at a huge brand like Overstock, I think one thing and that comes from the sports background, I really think, you have to be motivated. Everybody has to see the bigger picture, and they have to know why they're doing what they're doing every day, and how it could possibly change the growth of the whole company. It was a total meritocracy too. It didn't matter your education level, didn't matter where... I was the perfect example. I started there at 22 years old, making 35 grand a year and left at a much different number.

Geoff Atkinson:

It was a meritocracy and people were rewarded based on performance, which in Utah for some reason was very refreshing. Utah's a bit of a conservative state. White males seem to get ahead, and we disrupted all that. We were friendly across the board, we would promote whoever was successful, and that really stoked the culture because you'd have these males that are expecting a promotion and they wouldn't get it and that really fueled the whole company, didn't realize everyone is on the same footing. If you move the needle... I always say like, "Never ask for a raise, never ask for promotion in my life." And I want my team to think the same way.

Geoff Atkinson:

I want them to be like, "God, they're doing so great, we have to give them a promotion, we have to give him a raise, or else Amazon's going to grab them tomorrow." That was the culture was. It was a real meritocracy. People got the bigger picture of where we were going, what we're trying to do and think about pretty inspired. We still stay in touch because that's such a rare thing to go through with a bunch of people and we're all pretty young. We all got together here in Park City this past winter before this coronavirus hit. It was so cool. We all remembered it really positively, and I didn't really expect that, to see them again.

Geoff Atkinson:

I figured some people are going to be really pissed or whatever and maybe it's because we've all been gone for at least five years. Everybody looked back on it really positively and I got to give a lot of credits. Patrick set the tone and a leader like that is amazing. We all just fell into line. He found people... What CEO promotes a 25-year-old? I guess it's more common now but it was just rare. It's a rare culture and to find it of all places in Salt Lake City, Utah is also even more rare. There's a lot of fun, and I'm a huge culture guy. It's part of branding, it's part of everything. I always got this thought of as it's very direct response marketer but branding was a huge part of what we did and culture plays a really big role in that.

Jeremy Blossom:

Yeah, no doubt, it had to. That's why I wanted to make sure we touched on it because there's just no way that, and I'm experiencing this firsthand, you can't ever grow anything when you've got a culture that's divided. I shouldn't say that. You can grow but it won't last. You'll see it just sparkle and then

never turn into a real flame. You see that time and time again, the things that go from a spark to a flame to a raging fire are, it's a core team of people that it's like disinfection that spreads through to other people and inspires them to step up and do more. I always ask this on my show and I have to pat myself on the back and everyone who really knows me knows I'm an avid skier.

Jeremy Blossom:

You guys got to give me credit here. I went to this entire interview without getting into skiing questions because we're talking-

Geoff Atkinson:

[Crosstalk 00:50:47]. We made it. We did really great, especially you. That's pretty impressive for us to go an hour without talking about golf or skiing.

Jeremy Blossom:

You're teasing me with your clubs behind you too.

Geoff Atkinson:

I know.

Jeremy Blossom:

I was like, "Look at his clubs there." I was like, "this is-

Geoff Atkinson:

I did that on purpose.

Jeremy Blossom:

I'm a massive, massive fan of anybody who can excel at anything that they dedicate their time and effort into and you've done that multiple times in your life, man. From being a professional athlete into getting on the US ski team. God knows that I wish I would have done that. That that would have been in my path just because of how much I love it to being a rising star in one of the fastest growing companies in America and not only that, being a part of a culture and then to do it again and start your own company and be the founder of such a phenomenal company and phenomenal organization. What do you do to keep yourself inspired? How do you stay inspired?

Jeremy Blossom:

What are some of the things that you can give somebody else if they're in their boat to stay on fire for what you're doing?

Geoff Atkinson:

Well, first off, Jeremy, you're not doing too bad yourself. You have a heck of a resume and a great story, and I'm sure everybody that's here is here to listen to you more than they'll listen to me. I'd say honestly, it's people like yourself that you get to meet and hopefully change the way they think about things maybe. I'm just really inspired by smart people that are doing cool things. Whether it's entrepreneurs or its athletes. We're in a really unique bubble here in Park City, and that it's mainly a

tourist town, but there's a lot of people that love living here and then they're very interesting people. They always have a story.

Geoff Atkinson:

They've probably been a success somewhere else, and then bought a house here, moved their family here. I try to surround myself with people that inspire me, to be honest, that's what I'm going for. I love doing podcasts. I love to meet guys like you. I'd say, most of the time though, I'm very competitive because of the athletic background just breeds you to be competitive and I have always envisioned where I wanted to go and what I wanted to do, and this was a part of that journey. Was, I wanted to build my own business and then hopefully have it be successful. I don't know if there will ever be an Overstock.

Geoff Atkinson:

I'm pretty driven and then I see a lot of people that are way more successful than me and they just inspire the crap out of me. Guys like you, man, I think you're an inspiration. That's the kind of people that I like to be around or people that are getting after it.

Jeremy Blossom:

Me too, man. That's very nice of you to say, I promise you guys I didn't pay him to say it, but nevertheless, really nice. Sure, a lot of people are going to want to check out your website which is huckabuy.com. How can people get in touch with you? If any brands got questions, they want to follow up, they want to have you on their show, what's a great way to get in touch with you, Geoff?

Geoff Atkinson:

Best way is to come to our site, fill out a Contact Us form and if you mention this podcast, we just make sure that we really take care of them. One, they get a discount if they ever buy a product. Two, it's just your audience is legit and we want to have those conversations. We'll make sure to really take care of anybody that gives us a Contact Us form and says, "Secrets of Marketers, that's how we came upon you."

Jeremy Blossom:

Perfect, you guys. You guys hear it? Go to huckabuy.com reference Secrets of Marketers in the contact form and of course you can reach out to me @Jeremyblossom Instagram @secretofmarketers as well. Geoff, you are an amazing person through and through. I'm so glad we got to meet. Thanks for your time today and I'm sure we will have you back on the show to hear an update on how Huckabuy is doing, man. Thank you so much.

Geoff Atkinson:

That'd be great. Yeah. Next time we'll talk more golf and skiing.

Jeremy Blossom:

Got it, dude. No problem. Thanks, man.

Geoff Atkinson:

Thank you.

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Jeremy Blossom:

There you go. That concludes another episode of the Secrets of Marketers podcast. Thank you guys so much for listening. If you're looking for even more content, more ideas, more things that you can do today to help grow your business, then head on over to my Instagram page @secretsofmarketers. I've got a bunch of content on there and we are giving you guys access to all the behind the scenes stuff that go into making these episodes happen, as well as even more content that you can start to apply to your business today. And if you guys like the show, then help me spread the word.

Jeremy Blossom:

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