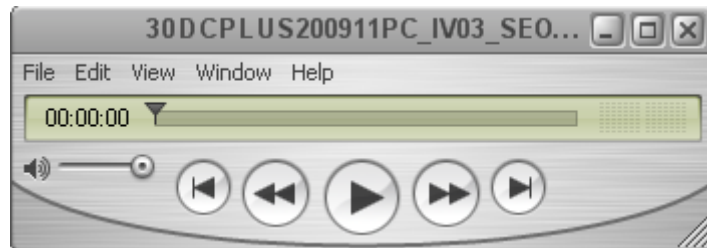




## Thirty Day Challenge Plus – Interviews – November 2009

### 30DCPLUS200911\_IV03: SEO Brain Trust

**Running Time: 1 Hour**



### Intro

Welcome everybody. I'm very excited today. It's Ed Dale with you and we've got a very, very special interview for you all.

They have been described as the Torville and Dean, the Bert and Ernie, the - no, I can't say that next one, I just can't do it - it would take us in a whole different direction, which is a whole problem - the Siegfried and Roy of **Search Engine and Pay Per Click marketing**. They work with dangerous tigers; they work without nets; they are people who, I am pretty sure, instead of having two kidneys have an extra brain where one of the kidneys are! And we've got them here today and I am going to try and drag them down to my level to try and wrestle some PPC and SEO gems - I'm talking about none other than the dynamic duo, the Batman and Robin, the - I can't think of any more! **Leslie Rohde** and **Dan Thies**.

Welcome guys, hurrah! I wish I had some applause here, but I don't, I just have to [claps]

Key:

[ED] = Ed Dale  
[LR] = Leslie Rohde  
[DT] = Dan Thies



## Interview

**[Starts at 00:01:44]**

[ED] Really, these two guys, when it comes to Leslie, with good old Search Engine Optimising, I mean, I think he started doing this in 1954 (or something like that) and the day Pay Per Click came out, Dan was already trying to figure out ways to work it out. These guys have extraordinary backgrounds in Pay Per Click and SEO. I have had the privilege of working with both of them in my time as a StomperNet Faculty Member.

I managed to corrupt them into the Cult of Macintosh, the Cult of Twitter – they would all scorn me for my Macs and for my Twittering, and now they're doing both! So I'm ready for those apologies any time now, guys.

[DT] Yeah, OK Ed, you were right about Twitter.

[ED] Thank you; thank you very much! Can you remember that day, just as an aside, before we get into this seriously, we were all sitting around after one of the StomperNet conferences, and I'm talking about Twitter and you guys were giving it to me – do you remember that?

[DT] "Ed Dale's Twitter Army" was what we were saying.

[ED] Yes, that's it, and Dave Taylor, you were letting me have it about that, and now Dave Taylor is a Twitter addict!

[LR] Easily, yes.

[ED] Anyway, I digress. I've been in therapy and I'm all better now.

[DT] All bow to Ed Dale and his Twitter Army!! [laughs]

[ED] Yes, thank you very much!

Now, before we get into talking about your core competencies, one question I love to ask every person we interview is how each of you actually made your first dollar online, and how you first came to the online marketplace.

Leslie, let's start with you – what was your background? What were you doing in the world prior to making your first dollar online, and what was the first dollar online you made?

[LR] Well, I've been a software engineer since 1974, so I was writing programs for other people, a lot of Aerospace and Defence, some business, but all of it technical in some way. I was an oversight for the first man-portable GPS receiver, for example, for the Military and for the Defence Mapping Agency, and some weird stuff like that. So, way out there on the lunatic fringe of technology. But then I had to do some industrial stuff too, like process control for an asphalt production plant (that's a little bit strange).

[ED] Funny, I was only using one of those this morning, and the lawn's looking so much better now!

[LR] Yeah, that's what my Dad wanted to do, "black-top it and paint it green." Saves on mowing!



He was an engineer too, obviously, by that statement.

This "Internet" seemed like maybe it might actually work (and this was back in the day when everybody was arguing about whether everybody needed a URL or not) – this was just before the Millennium Bug, if you recall that?

[ED] Ah! Some of the greatest IT scams in Human History! Where every CIO in every company in the world complicitly scammed their Board so they could get all new gear and all new equipment and amazing budgets!

[LR] I got paid \$200 an hour to learn COBOL! (It made a great movie too – "Office Space" is all about Y2K Bug)

Starting about 2 years before that, I wrote a book about **how to save 50% on the purchase of a Diesel Generator**. So I actually started out as an eBook publisher, and learned how to write (and it still shows, by the way!) from Marlon Sanders, then in 2006/2007 Frank Kern put a cap on that kinda stuff and got me where I am now, in terms of writing.

So, my first dollar online was a \$19.95 eBook on how to save money on the purchase of a Diesel Generator for Home Power use.

[ED] That is awesome.

[LR] And I spent \$40 on the Victory Dinner!!

[ED] [Laughs] That's fantastic!

Dan, what was your background before you got into this crazy thing?

[DT] Way, way "Back in the Day," and for many years I worked at Kinko's (you probably have a few of them in Australia) [like ProntaPrint in the UK]. I was making copies, selling copies – particularly for me running the computer labs.

I had started, back in 1990 or 1991, a paper "snail mail" newsletter called "The e-Marketing Newsletter", because while I was in College trying to pay for stuff I had gotten stuck in these Telemarketing Boiler Rooms where they try and call you up and sell you magazine subscriptions, and I had no competency to work the phones, but I was pretty good at helping them optimise their calling patterns and working with their databases and stuff like that.

So, just out of that friendship, and going to conferences and stuff like that – just meeting people – people would ask, "Do you have a newsletter?" So I had to come up with something to sell! That wasn't really online, but it was a \$300 a year subscription and I had a few people subscribing to that.

When the Internet came along, I had a few Web Sites, and my first Web Site was a text only Web Site for a pizza delivery place near the University of Washington, and I got 50 cents a pie!

But when I took my paper newsletter online, I started giving it away, and I started doing Pay Per Click advertising when GoTo.com came along, and I was buying ads in peoples email newsletters to get people onto my newsletter, and all I did was review some other people's products. Most of the time, my review said, "This guy's thing sucks," and, "no, you won't get rich by using this." But, a lot of the time, people would buy the stuff even if I said it was bad, so I think that my first dollar online was



probably a commission check from Clickbank, and then shortly after that, the folks on my list told me (I did a survey, and I said, "I've got this great book on email marketing and I've got a couple of other ideas, which one do you want?") they wanted a book about SEO. So I locked myself away for a couple of weeks and finished up that book. I started selling that in 2001.

[ED] Wow. It always amazes me, these "First Dollar Stories". I love that: Diesel Generator for Home Use, and Pizza Parlour Web Site!

[LR] Yeah, Dan started out as a Pizza Affiliate!

[DT] Yeah, paid for performance.

[LR] It's pretty cheesy, if you think about it!

[ED] [laughs] OH PLEASE!!

[DT] [laughs] OK, I'm outta here, Leslie, have a good night!!

[ED] OK, Time Check. That was 8.5 minutes in before Leslie's first really bad pun. Pun Warning – you may want to warn your children that there may be some bad puns ahead!

Let's bring it forward to today, and let's kick it off with Dan first, because you're known for Pay Per Click advertising. You've obviously got Mad Skills in a bunch of things, but you're mostly known for Pay Per Click. **What's the one thing that drives you crazy that you see people doing time after time, that you wish they wouldn't do, or that they miss, or that they don't do but should do?** What's that forehead-slapping thing that you keep seeing people do?

[DT] There are so many!

[LR] Other than interviewers asking him that question?!

[DT] Thank you, Leslie!

With Pay Per Click, the first and worst thing that everybody does wrong is a combination of wishful thinking and just not understanding how the system works: **People go out and they spend good money making bids on Broad-Match Keywords.**

[ED] Give us an example.

[DT] If you do a Broad-Match on "Baby Shoes" because you sell Baby Shoes, that could show up in somebody's searches for "Child Shoes" or "Baby Gifts" or any number of other things that you don't sell.

Google has this Keyword tool (that you can use for free) and there's a Match-Type menu that you can select Broad or Phrase or Exact Match (you can even look for negative matches, which we probably won't have time to get into today) – the default there is Broad Match, so people will size a market on what the Broad Match volume is, and not realise that if they'd flicked that to Exact Match, it might be a 10<sup>th</sup> or a 20<sup>th</sup> of the amount of traffic. So they might think that there are 20,000 searches a month, when in fact there are 800. When you divide that by 30 days and realise that maybe your best-case scenario is to get 20% of that, it's not quite as good as it seems at first.

You'll see people putting a lot of effort and time in preparing to go after a market – and certainly it's



better to do the work and build a good Web Site and do all the stuff to make it work – but go into it knowing that 1) the market's not that big and 2) the right way to target it is to target with Exact Matches.

[ED] Very good. Very good.

Leslie, in SEO – people trying to get into that “magical left hand side” of Google, the “free” part.

[LR] Yeah, “free, as in beer”

[ED] That's it – Thirty Day Challenger's know that “free” is very much in inverted commas. An investment in time is what's required.

**What is the one thing that you wish people would do that they don't do? What's the core thing that you see them missing?**

[LR] You can say it a bunch of different ways, but I say it as a **lack of focus**. The different things that can mean:

One is, **you can just not have listened to Dan Thies about doing Keyword Research** (that kind of dovetails into that thing about Baby Shoes and about understanding what it means to be doing Keyword Research).

The other thing is that **they somehow think that one page can rank for everything**. They think, “I have this page, it's who I am, and all of my customers should come to this one page, and that one page should be everything that they need.” So they're treating Search as a floodlight, and they want to map out the entire landscape. They say, “I want to be number one for everything, from short-tail to long-tail.” **It doesn't work that way. If you want to light up the whole wall, what you have to do is get 1,000 lasers, not one flashlight.** You can end up with a lower “total output” of light (100 lasers is less than a 10-watt light bulb, but you'll actually burn a hole in the particle board if you try this at home, kiddies!).

**Search works like lasers, not like floodlights.** That's the primary thing that I think they do wrong, starting out. What that ends up “flowering” as is they have too small a Web Site, they don't have Pages targeted to a particular Keyword, they don't even understand where one Page is supposed to rank for one thing vs. another, so **their Pages are actually competing all against themselves for exactly the same Keyword.**

[ED] Yep, exactly, that's a great point.

What's exciting you at the moment? Leslie, we'll go with you first. **In terms of looking at the SEO side of things, what's the thing on the horizon or just starting out that you think is going to be a real factor, say, in the next 6 to 12 months?**

[LR] [Laughs] Well, it's kind of “Good news and Bad News” depending on what you do, and this is going to sound a little self-serving, but the fact is (and I can prove this if you push me up against the wall and force me to show it) there is going to be a great “winnowing” of the SEO community over the next 6 to 9 months. We're already seeing it, over the last 18 months. Dan and I just recently did a Webinar on this – We've seen more change in the last year and a half than in the 5 years prior.

[ED] What do you mean by that? Can you give us some examples?

[LR] Google is finally making some very significant changes, and this was even before **Caffeine** (we



haven't even started to talk about Caffeine yet – why they need to be faster and why they need to be “more comprehensive” – those are “words of art”, and what they mean by that we have to tease out and understand), but there's already some foreshadowing that they've done. Just over the last 18 months there's been a bunch of things, like First Link Priority, the changes in NoFollow, the different ways of doing snippets, triple-indented listings in addition to double-indented listings (and the fact that triple-indented listings don't actually get counted as a triple, only as a single). All of these things are stacking p to create a “narrowing” of the Search opportunity. So, at some point in the not-too-distant future – a year, maybe two at the outside – what we're going to find is we're going to look back and see a dramatic shift in the balance of what Google wants to do with Search.

They've always been driven by this concept of “**Diversity and Authority**,” right? They want to have authoritative results, but on very different interpretations of what the search meant (that's their idea of Diversity). So, if you type in the word “java”, they want to bring up the programming language, the country and the coffee, right? That's the diversity aspect.

But they've always had this major influence around Authority, because of their genesis in Page Rank and such. **More and more, what we're seeing is that they are siding with Authority, and giving up on Diversity.** So, two years from now, we're going to find a Search page and it's going to be covered with specialised Searches and sponsored spots, and maybe two organic listings, and in many cases only one.

[ED] Yep, and that is such a significant change.

Now, you mentioned **Caffeine** there, and the people listening may have missed that reference. Caffeine refers to the more “real time” system – their ability to try and incorporate and take into account this incredible real-timeness that has occurred with Twitter and Facebook status updates and all these sorts of things. Is that a fair description of it, Leslie?

[LR] Well, they describe Caffeine as the “New infrastructure”, they talk about “rebuilding the machine”. So it's the Six Million Dollar Man, right? “We can make him better. We can make him faster.” They haven't said it is a dramatic change in algorithm, in fact they said the opposite. They said, except for professionals (the only people reading something like this!) you're not going to really notice a difference.

There have been some differences noticed, of course, and I think that's because Caffeine doesn't offer a full index right now, or at least not one that's updated at the same rate as the main index. So if you can notice differences between Caffeine and the main Google engine, I would not draw any conclusions from that yet. I would listen carefully to what they have said, and if you look at the significant, really, really, really big updates – there was the one they called Big Daddy (wow, great code name!) and Caffeine (OK, Caffeine, faster, we get it). Big Daddy was an infrastructure update – they were making the machine bigger, stronger and faster.

Why? Well, we've already seen an experiment with this. In fact when I was on a panel at SMX in New York a few weeks ago, one of my co-panellists was a gentleman who operates Search for 6 large media outlets in the US, including the Chicago Times and the Los Angeles Times. What he was doing was Page Sculpt (Page Rank Sculpting stuff), but he was doing it on the fly based upon News. So, whenever there was breaking news, he would remove links from their Home Page and focus all of their ranking influence on those links [that were left]. He was trying to very rapidly get ranking changes, and he was seeing those – he was actually able to demonstrate that.

You see, Google wants to be your News site – they don't want you to have to go to CNN to get News, they want you to find that in the normal Search Results.



[ED] That's exactly right, because, of course, they want to put their ads next to it.

[LR] Yep, instead of CNN getting those landings. So that's why they want to be faster, and Caffeine is properly named. They've already said this. There are two kinds of conferences that Google goes to: there's the ones with marketing people and business folks and whatnot, then there's Geek Conferences where they're actually talking about Search Engines, and Spam Fighting and those kinds of things. Now, in the same way that I worked out what to do with the Link text by reading the Google papers, you get the same thing when interacting with the engineers who are talking about the technology. It's not that they let the cat out of the bag, exactly, it's just that by knowing **what** they're working on you can figure out **why**. That doesn't take any trick at all.

[ED] Exactly.

[LR] At some of these conferences, they've disclosed the fact that they're updating page rank daily, or hourly.

[ED] Yeah, I think Marissa Myers said the other day at least twice daily.

[LR] What she didn't say is "not for the whole index" and that's the thing. What they do is they go figure out what set of the web they want to update very rapidly and what set of the web is fine to update only weekly or less often than that, because they have a lot of information about what constitutes rapidly changing sites.

[ED] Exactly. So for somebody listening to this; for somebody who's got a niche site; they're doing Underwater Kickboxing, or whatever they happen to be, what should they be watching for? What should they take from all of that?

[LR] It means you have to focus even more and so the kind of stuff that Dan does, you know, the deep keyword study and that kind of stuff? It becomes even more important because now you have to be – it's not enough to be – you know, people are still talking about "I have a page one listing" – So what? You could get zero clicks at position eight.

[DT] Congratulations! Here's a cup of coffee!

[LR] ...which you will not be able to pay for with your SEO!

But instead what you have to be is you have to be *the* authoritative result, *the* single authoritative result. For what search? Well, it might be eight words long.

[ED] Let me interrupt you there. Describe what you mean by authoritative search? Do you want to explain, because there's literally a look to that. Do you want to explain that term?

[LR] Really, I mean, it's about results. If you're number one, you're the authoritative result. It's a chicken and egg almost. Here's what I've told people for many years and Dan does too: look, you can argue about what is a good page and what is not a good page, and what Google should do or shouldn't do, but the fact is they define the game, right? So the most authoritative result is the one that is currently at position one. Done: End of analysis!

So the only question then becomes: "how do I do that?", not: "what does it mean?", or: "what's wrong with it?". The right question is: "how do I do it?".



It's getting to the point where it's not sufficient to even be number three. I mean, number three is good: it means you're knocking on the door, but you should see the steep graphs between number three and number one. Typically it's a factor of four in clicks, assuming the same listing – there are some other issues there around SEO about actually getting a good search snippet and a title that's clickable and Dan and I harp on that more than we do on actually ranking, but the fact is that if the exact same search listing at number three vs. number one you could be looking at a factor of four and that's actually without the fold-line influence. So if you're looking at something where – Dan, what was the one you saw the other day where there was literally only one organic result above the fold on a 1024x768 screen?

[DT] Yeah, I was in Scrapbooking Supplies and that's actually a pretty nice size niche that we've got some friends that sell stuff and do affiliate stuff in there and make money with AdSense and that, but literally there were three paid listings and, this is on a 1024x768 monitor, so three paid listings and one organic listing and then 12 local business listings, which – obviously, that's not going to look the same everywhere – not everybody's in a major metropolitan area where there's going to be that many local listings, but not just above the fold, but you actually had to click down – way down to get to the number two organic listing and I think we're going to see more of that. The window in which your "SEO" gets to play gets smaller and smaller, so it becomes increasingly important to find keywords where you can be number one and grab that spot and hold it.

[ED] It's a really good point, because if you factor in media as well – what were they calling it? The Universal Search, with video and the like as well.

[LR] There can be product results; there can be local map results; there can be image results; there can be videos; there can be all kinds of stuff and they're only going to add more to that mix. I mean, news doesn't show up nearly as often right now as it probably will as they get better at crawling the news.

[ED] Tell me, Dan, let's just cut across to PPC again. What do you see as the most interesting development going forward in the next six to 12 months? What are you looking at? What's exciting you?

[DT] Well, what's interesting is a lot of the stuff that we see happening with SEO and affecting SEO really involves Google doing stuff that introduces bugs that might be opportunities in SEO, but basically as hacks to improve the performance of this big machine, because not only are they serving more searches than ever before, in more places than ever before, but they're also trying to bring in more types of search. So, it used to be that you did a search for "Baby Shoes" and all they had to do was go look up the organic results for "Baby Shoes" and they were happy. Now they've got to get the paid results, now they've got to get video and all this other junk and all this stuff has to happen in a few milliseconds!

[ED] It's absolutely mind-boggling, actually, when you start to just think about the task that they have. It absolutely boggles my mind, the computational power and everything they have to do, to do that. But keep going – keep going!

[DT] So, what's interesting, I like – one of the things after I got the Mac is I got the iPhone and then, of course on iTunes they've got iTunes U and you can just go search and you will find Google Engineers out at Universities all over the World, talking about their systems and talking about how their ad systems work and how all their tech works and that kind of stuff and you get a lot of cool information out of that, they don't reveal any secrets willingly, but they do give you stuff that becomes actionable. And one of the things that's interesting is, we're almost a year and half, maybe more since they rolled out this thing called Live Quality Scoring, where when you do a search, they



are, in theory, actually going in, looking up and computing the quality score of pages and quality score of ads against the keyword. And what's interesting is, that's probably more something else was done to improve the performance and the speed of the system, but they sort of have to find a good way to polish that – can you say “turd”?

[ED] Yes, on ours, yes – we're not at the Frank Kern level of...

[DT] If you've had Frank in, I'm pretty sure I won't say anything that he would say!

But they have to find some way to polish it, so they pitch this Live Quality Scoring as a feature. Well, what they don't tell you in that announcement (and people find out later) is that, what happens is that search queries, basically keyword bids that have too low of a volume, they now no longer compute a quality score for them and they just don't show you that. So, what was a very popular strategy about two years ago, for people doing affiliate stuff, was to do just like tonnes and tonnes, like thousands and thousands of exact matched keywords for product names and things like that. And, in fact, there's a tool called Speed PPC, which is still really useful for lots of stuff, but they designed this thing so that it would create a separate ad group and a separate ad and a separate landing page for all of these hundreds and thousands of exact-match keywords. Well, what's happened since Live Quality Scoring rolled out is that most of those exact matches don't have enough volume for the ads to display! So what Google is doing, sort of by accident – I don't think it's by design, but they're driving more people to do more broad match and to do more phrase match, which is a little bit sloppier and it's a little bit harder to target properly and make sure you've got a good ad and a good landing page, and sometimes you just can't win on the lower end of the volume spectrum, but that's one thing that I think is almost kind of a moving target; that sweet spot in terms of volume on the search term, where you've still got some good profitability and good targeting. Because the more precisely you can target, the more carefully you can write ads, the better you can do with landing pages and offers and everything else, and making all that stuff work together – but if there's not enough volume, it's kinda hard to test, so there's sort of a sweet spot in the middle there and you find that the guys playing at the very top level of, like, broad match on “hotels” who basically, they have an ad budget, and they're sort of measuring for ROI, but it's largely based on a lifetime value of the customer and not necessarily on a transactional profit. At that high level you've got people that are just burning money in a way that most of us and the small business world can't do, but in the middle there's a whole lot of room where you can easily beat the guys that are broad-matching their way into a search result page, if you are doing exact matching. And fortunately, the people that are just throwing out a drift net of exact match are being kind of cut off by Google. But a lot of the fun and games of doing affiliate stuff with Google is just plain gone, because they just don't want us: they don't want product review sites; they don't want that stuff and you know, every year it seems like you've shifted your business model a little bit to stay ahead of what Google's doing, but I think it was Frank and Trey, about six months ago that put out the Screw Google thing – they've got a great system where they're still doing PPC, Affiliate Arbitrage stuff, it just doesn't use Google, and I think a lot of stuff is just going to move other places, or onto the Content Net, where they're not nearly as worried about your business model.

[ED] Let me get your opinion on something that we've been looking at a lot lately, which is the local search phenom and the impact of Google Maps and local businesses and so on. Dan, perhaps you first: how are you seeing that impact? Do you see that as a major factor? What have you been looking at in that area?

[DT] Well, local is one of those things that is really, really challenging to figure out because, as far as we can tell with Google, they just haven't figured out a good model for how to monetize it and so they haven't really put any effort into doing it well.



They've got this thing here, and I'm sure at least in larger countries, where you register your business, they mail you a postcard and then you go punch in the secret code from the postcard to verify that you own the business and then you can add some information, like a website and stuff like that to your listing, but it's still, honestly, if I do a search for "Barber's Shop, Atlanta, Georgia" what they do is basically, the first few listings are whatever they have tags of "Barber's Shop" that's closest to the exact geographic centre of Atlanta, Georgia according to Google Maps, when you search. And so they're starting to, and you're starting to see now, where even if you don't add geographic parameters to the search, they're starting to, based on your IP address, guess where you are and are starting to show local results anyway. That's what, you know the other day, when I was doing the search for one of the scrapbooking keywords that I was interested in for somebody and said: "Holy cow, they're showing me local results!" I'm not logged in, you know, I haven't done anything to cause them to show me local results and so you're starting to see more of that, but they still just do a lousy job of it and I think that they've made attempts to reach out into local markets with advertising in fits and starts – like here they had a thing where you could buy excess radio ad inventory, trying to sell inventory for radio stations – that didn't work out very well for them and probably didn't work very well for many advertisers. But there's a model there, there's a play there, I just don't think that they've figured out what it is yet.

[ED] Exactly! And Leslie, what about on the left-hand side of Google? Do you see local being a factor on that side?

[LR] Well yeah, it's wrapped up in this whole thing named Universal Search, which is almost the opposite of anything universal! That's the thing about it that's so striking – it's the standard marketing play of naming something for what it's not!

[ED] Like Clean Coal or the Internet Freedom Act?

[LR] Yeah, for example. Like, every place I've ever lived: Balcones Woods, they took down the trees to build houses!

And that's very, very true – wow, that's a dumb comment! That's certainly true of Universal Search as well. [laughs] Dan's operation Bend Over is an example of how they're using this extra page rank to rank YouTube videos, because they're spending – what was it? I forget the numbers, it's like 20% of all Internet traffic is actually video and a sizeable percent of that is actually YouTube, and they're paying for this bandwidth. I mean, those of us with high speed Internet connections don't realise, it's like – somebody's footing the bill for this and they have not figured out a way to monetize this and if you look at their whole model what they have is something that almost looks like Intel.

Where Intel has done nothing that made any money except the CPU – that's it! You know, 100% of everything else they have ever touched has just been turned to turds, right? Because we've already established we can say that much!

So what Google is faced with is having kind of latched onto all these other things: there's local; and there's video; and there's news; and there's shopping; and all these other things. And what is the real pay-off? It's not clear to me that they've figured out internally whether or not those are adding enough value that they're actually getting visitors as a result. And frankly, how could they know that? Because they've got this 3:1 lead over Yahoo, so does more visitors even matter? I think what they've got at this point is a bunch of white elephants! They have a whole bunch of visitors, they have a whole bunch of other things – these 20% staff projects that somehow made it all the way to production, and now they're going: "Crap, we have all these things that are using our bandwidth! What do we do with this stuff?"



Local Search is fabulous for users, *I think*, although you know, frankly most of the time I'd rather just hit the maps button and do that way, if that's what I really want. I'd rather they did it all on Maps and just left the organic alone. Me! That's just me, right?

So I think that Maps, like Dan was saying, it's like: "Aaargh, we don't know what to do with this and so we're doing something with it and hoping to God that we figure it out!" and Universal Search is an absurd term for that!

[ED] It's interesting though Leslie, and I know both you and Dan operate this way, but for me and I know Rob Somerville's very much of this opinion too, the key to understanding Google often times (well, as much as any person outside the organisation can), is to look at them from, not so much from the measuring and the performance and all these sorts of things, but actually asking the reasons why they're trying to do this stuff in the first place, and if you work backwards from that I think that's a big deal. But the big problem for me and for a lot of people who are listening to this, of course, is that this is a full-time job. In fact, I would go as far as to say that just following what Google is doing borders on obsessional!

[??] In the present company you could be right!

[ED] Exactly! Two of the charter members of Google obsession on the call here today!

How do we practically translate all of this for people whose concern is creating leadership in the "widget" area and selling lots of "widget" stuff? How do we distil this down, Dan, to make it real for people?

[DT] In terms of "What's Google doing?"

[ED] Yeah, well it's a full-time job trying to keep track of all this and for me, obviously, much of the people listening to this, I hope as much as they've found this conversation as interesting as I have – at the end of the day they want to spend their time looking at the world of Underwater Kickboxing and developments in Underwater Kickboxing and selling Underwater Kickboxing stuff!

[DT] Obviously that's why people like Leslie and I exist, because it's our job and our mission to keep track of what Google is doing. The thing we've been saying for years is that 80% of search never changes. Well, it might have gone down to 70% in the last year, but what you're really interested in is – yeah, that foundation, but what you're really interested in is: somebody's got to tell you when something has changed and you've got to do something about it, right? Because if you're trying to sell baby shoes, or the famous sausages you don't have time to keep up with that: you need somebody who's job it is to do that and keep you up to speed on "Hey, alert! Emergency! Warning! Your website navigation that has worked just fine with your keywords in those footer links at the bottom of the page – that isn't working anymore! Hey, guess what? All these Blog networks that were working great for a couple of years: at this point now, they're knocking those links out of the indexes as fast as you can add them and so you're running on a treadmill and you probably need to find some new ways to get links!"

That's sort of what our mission is and sort of what our new program that we're doing is all about.

[ED] Yeah, I want to talk to you about that. Let me ask you one final question and then let me introduce it, because we have the phrase around Thirty Day Challenge: "It's the backlinks, stupid!"

What (for both of you) is the best place for backlinks at the moment? What do you think – well, I'll leave it at that – what do you think is the best place for backlinks, Leslie? Or Dan?



[DT] I'm gonna go first, just because I am the World's foremost authority on this!

[LR] That is true!

[ED] I know!

[DT] We did a backlink building class back in 2006 that got bootlegged all over the place. I've got tonnes of testimonials of people who stole the thing off of BitTorrent, but we finally did the updated version this summer – we're calling it Link Liberation now, we're actually doing another live session, starting like, right now with the folks that are in our new training program, but what's become more and more true than ever before – and it's always been true that good marketing that makes you a profit and gets you links is the best way to get links!

[ED] So great content, for example, on a Blog: so an engaging, interesting Blog which...

[DT] Great content! Having a following on Twitter! God damn it, Ed Dale, Twitter is actually... the links on Twitter are no-followed, but if you can get hundreds of people looking at your stuff and engaged in the conversation through Twitter, through Facebook and all this kind of stuff it is amazing how many links you get from stuff that you do nothing but just promote and market to an audience. And so be able to get people into a conversation, build relationships with people – it's shocking over the last two years how many more people can actually create a link, can actually put content onto the web and can even give you a followed link – and like nothing that ever existed before! And so, to me, I think the best place to get links is to start building relationships and start building an audience and start, you know, get down and start doing the marketing that you should have been doing all along, because a lot of the short cuts and tricks to go, you know, go add links to link blocks on Squidoo pages, which, you know, there's only ten and yours goes through and it's just like a free for all links page. Or there's this thing where people got this monthly subscription to sites where they can go create a profile that's got linked on it, but the problem is those profile pages don't have any links to them and so they're not getting indexed and so I'd much prefer, at this point, to just go where the people are and get the people excited and do promotions that get the people worked up and some links will shake out of that but, more importantly, you can also make some profits.

[ED] Very good point! Have you got anything to add to that, Leslie?

[LR] Yeah, I mean I'll always find something to add [laughs], but no, and Dan's absolutely right and the challenge, I mean both the good and the not so good about all of that is that people will send you all sorts of traffic and you can't necessarily very finely target exactly all of that traffic and all that ranking, so you still have to do site structure or do whatever in order to guide it to your highest revenue place, and that's fine. That's not really about link building, it's about how you actually use that juice once you get it.

But beyond that there's another piece of this and that is, where's there's endless links on the one side and that's you focus on... there's three pieces of puzzle: there's what you do with your site, or your group of sites, and that's a site structure thing; and then there's the endless link side, which is kind of the link liberation story about how you actually drive, through social and other techniques, links into that site structure; well, the other side though, is building your own content, so along with endless links, there's endless content. And, in fact, I think you'll probably remember Ed, that I actually did a video entitled exactly that: Endless Contents! And there are some straightforward techniques that people don't really quite get their head around about how to grow their own website or grow a set of properties – a set of websites that actually serve to increase the total mass they have on the web and focus that to where it's going to give them the best profit.



[ED] Give us a little example. Give us a little titbit example of what you're talking about there with endless content.

[LR] OK, well we get this all the time. It's like: "Well, I have this little niche and I just, you know and there's no way I could write content about..." fill in the blank

[ED] Sausage making!

[LR] Well OK, so Sausage Making, OK there you go. Well Sausage Making: do you know what they wrap sausages in? Do you know what they put inside sausages? How do you tie the ends on a sausage? How big is a sausage making plant? How many people are employed annually in a sausage making plant? Do I need to go on?

[ED] That's fantastic! I wanted for you to give the example because it stuns me – one of the things we get in the Thirty Day Challenge is: "Oh, there's nothing to write about! It's just a boring product, there's just nothing to write about anymore!"

[DT] Just go type the name of your industry or product into Yahoo Answers and see how many questions people have! It's amazing!

[ED] Great!

[DT] What country in the world creates the most sausage? What other things are going on? How did they get to be the biggest sausage producer in the World? You know, it goes on and on and on...

And so, if you think there's not endless content on a subject, I tell people: you just haven't thought about it enough.

[ED] It's so, so true!

Fellas tell me, you mentioned before and I'd love to tell people about it because I'm such a raving fan of the stuff that you guys do: what are you doing at the moment? What are you working on?

[DT] Well, we call it the SEO BrainTrust and that's because it's the two of us – both of our brains, and you've spent a little bit more time with us than most folks have, but even in this short call people may have picked up that Leslie's a little bit more technical and analytical – not that I am not, but he's a lot more just down into the technical details and I don't know if ruthless is the right word, but he's just relentlessly honest about what he finds, whether he likes it or not, whether we like it or not!

[ED] And more importantly, whether you like it or not!

[LR] Yes, yes – tough love is my trademark!

[DT] And so Leslie serves in that role as the Left Brain and then I become the Right Brain, where I do feel sorry for people and I do certainly have, for whatever reason, a gift or a curse for explaining and softening and finding new ways to apply the same information in creative ways.

[ED] This is not, as we would say here in Australia, pissing in your pocket, but I've got to say – Dan was universally loved in the StomperNet forums for his ability to go in and – I mean, it was legendary, I think you pretty much had some sort of permanent device hooked into those forums, and the way that you were able to answer people's questions and take something that was very complex and



make it as learnable as the concept would allow was something that was very big and I just wanted to say that because it's very true.

[DT] I appreciate that! And the thing is, Leslie will make it as complex as it needs to be and so, we need to do both sides of that, right? We need to tell the whole story and sometimes for people they just need us to be able to break it down into: "OK, what do I need to do right now?"

And so, having realised that we are better off working with small groups of people and that we're better off with business honours school {???WHAT???}, we've crafted this coaching program where we're able to have Q&A calls every single week, where people can call in. We usually get about halfway through where we've answered everybody's questions and then we start calling people out and saying: "Look, we're all here" because we'll often have twenty or 30 people on the call, but only a half dozen or maybe five or 10 people asking questions and being involved in the conversation and we can really advance the cause for someone's business quite a bit in five or 10 minutes on the phone, just looking at their website with them and figuring out what they're going to do next.

Not everybody's going to call in and use us for that every week, but everybody's got access to us and so, you know part of the plan here is to keep it small enough that we're always accessible, because I personally like being accessible – I like being able to create the illusion that Leslie actually cares about people by having a small enough group...

[ED] No! You talk about obsessiveness – that is a full-time job!

[DT] ...that his mean nature doesn't come through nearly so much!

No, seriously though, what Leslie will do is the tough love thing. He will say: "Your site is just ugly and you need to redesign it!" and I will almost fight to the death to find some nicer way to say that! So sometimes they need him and sometimes they need me!

[LR] And you know on those weekly calls – the one I did last week, we truly had, as Dan said, probably about five or 8 people, somewhere around that, actually involved in asking questions, but they ask multiple questions during the call and so I go: "Wait, there's more hands raised, you know, raise your hand again and let's go back around".

And there were a couple of different cases where one of the other people in the group actually had the answer for somebody else. And so, because we have people who really have businesses that are making \$100 or more, and generally speaking a lot more than that, but not all of them, frankly – these people really have been through some of these things themselves and when someone else asks a question often times somebody else has the answer. One in particular I can remember was about shopping carts and like, all I needed to do was spend about four weeks studying all the shopping carts, right? And I might not finish! I think it's one of those things like painting the Golden Gate Bridge – by the time you're done, it's time to start over! So, this particular question was about some particular aspect of shopping carts and one of the other people on the call had used a [particular] shopping cart to fix that problem, so there was a dialogue there where I unmated both their lines and we discussed what the issues were and whether that was gonna work for Lisa or not. And this happens more often than not, just because of the nature of the people and the size of the group – and that's really critical, you know. We really cannot do this at the size that StomperNet *was* and we sure as heck can't do it at the size that StomperNet *is*!

So we're doing both: we're living two lives! We are continuing to be involved in StomperNet at a reasonable and rational level, given the amount of people over there, but we're also doing the thing that we do best where we can add the most value to someone's business; where we work with them



almost one on one – it's the closest to one on one that those people can, frankly, afford, because one on one with us doesn't come easy. I don't actually have clients, I have partners: if you want to actually work one on one with me, it's a percentage share of your business. And Dan's doing the same thing.

For this program though, this is the way you can get that kind of access on a recurring basis and, knock on wood, I don't think we've ever had a failure in that regard: a person actually agrees to work with us and does what we tell them to do, they always make more; they don't lose it!

[ED] Fantastic! Well look guys, thank you so much for being on the call today. It was fabulous hearing some of your views about, I suppose, not only the things that make us all slap our foreheads, but also some of the key things that are happening over the next twelve months.

Let me tell you, just outside of the SEO world, or it might be something in the SEO world – I love to finish on this question, which is: What's the thing, and I say it could be anything – it could be completely outside of Internet Marketing that's really exciting you going forward over the next twelve months? What's the thing that's most interesting you at the moment? What about you, Dan first?

[DT] Well, I did a presentation at StomperNet Live (gosh, was it Number 8, back in August? It's amazing just how many of those monster-events they've actually done), which I called "The Six Things You Need To Know To Survive" and you know, SEO is great, PPC is great, but understanding Analytics, Conversion Testing, Email Marketing – one of the things that I think people don't realise is the joint venture and affiliate marketing side of things – even if they're an affiliate, they can actually have affiliates and find creative ways to help people generate leads for them and stuff like that! And if everything else fails you, if Google hates you, if everything else fails you: you can always go and find partnerships with people and save your butt, no matter what else happens. Joint venture and affiliate marketing – when you start to understand that, when you start to learn how to work with people, it can save your butt in every possible way!

So that's what excites me right now!

[ED] Very good!

Leslie, what about yourself?

[LR] Well, you know, nothing has changed. I'm 54 years old and I've been a technologist since I was in sixth grade and it hasn't changed.

What excited me right now, honestly, is some technology. I noticed this Christmas a year ago, I guess and I actually did a video and talked about it a little bit on New Year's in 2009. There's some things that have been reshaped, technology-wise and some opportunities that exist that I think are going to create some incredible new tools or new tool opportunities in 2010, and so that's one of the focuses I have right now, in addition to working with and of course doing the stuff in the SEO BrainTrust and the higher level stuff I'm doing with partners, but I think there's an opportunity to do something truly astounding with respect to online marketing in 2010 and 2011 and there are some things I'm dipping into in that regard that are really, kind of, lighting my fire.

[ED] Very good.

[LR] But fair is fair, Ed – so what is it for you?

[ED] Um, for me...



[DT] What's the next Twitter? We're taking notes!

[ED] Ha ha ha!

[DT] Yeah, right! Buddy, we've learned our lesson!

[ED] Yeah, for me, I think still – and I think it's got a huge amount of legs to run – for me the App Store phenom with the iPhone is something that continues to blow me away! I always thought it would be huge, but I had no idea and I'm pretty sure Apple had no idea about how insane – well, we've never seen that in the history of software. We've never seen that number of programs created for a platform – you know, people forget, we're talking sixteen months here – 16 months!

[LR] And I think it's 80,000 apps, right?

[ED] It just crossed over 100,000!

[DT] OK. And people complain about the process for approving those, but I wouldn't even delete 100,000 emails, much less approve 100,000 apps!

[ED] I don't know if you saw this. I Twittered this morning – my open plea to iPhone developers: Man up! I mean, seriously – do the math! Do the math!

I mean, nobody knew that this number... I'm gonna get all flustered! The Apple Store does it's reviews – part of the secret to it's entire success is the fact that it hasn't allowed pieces of turd, like the open source software that you guys and I all know and love, has been the key to it's success: that apps have to meet a basic level. Now does that mean that there are some inconsistencies? And does that mean that there are some strange decisions? Yes! But you can count them on two hands, and when you look at it as a percentage of the number of actual apps approved, we're not even talking standard deviations – we're talking just microscopic amounts, compared to what's being done. And it's obscuring the extraordinary story, which is: in software there's never been this much money made by developers for any platform, for anything in history! Nothing even comes close!

[DT] What about Android?

[ED] Well, Android's an interesting one for me because (and this is so funny), because there are two ways to go with it and – do I think Android is going to get totally mainstream? No! Because at the moment it's horrific: there's nothing that's consistent; the interfaces are horrid; every device has it's own flavour of Android; and all of these things.

So, to me, you know, for Joe and Jane Smith – they revel in the simplicity: they don't care about App Store approval; they don't care about blah, blah – they just want to know that there is an app for that! Right? And that it works; and when they touch it they expect things to do things in a certain way; and that's what the Apple benevolent dictatorship has provided. Sure, that may impinge upon some programmers' beliefs in open software freedom and open access to a platform, but it's not what works and Apple has proved that!

You want to get the numbers? They sell 2% of the handsets in the World and have 30% of the mobile handset profits. Full stop! Something is working there, folks! Something is indeed, working!

So, for me, I think the Android story is a story where people have got a bit of a bee in their bonnet. Do I think Android is going to be successful? I think it's going to be a success, because I think any



market requires two players to breathe – I think it's a physics thing or a biology thing. So, I think that's going to be interesting.

But here's the thing and this is my worry – OK? We've heard this before and it was a little thing called Windows 3, right? Disparate platforms - it was horrific to use, it was horrid, and there was this beautiful system called Macintosh, which was beautiful to use at the time, it was superb.

[DT] And it was when Microsoft introduced Windows 3.1 is when I decided not to renew my Macintosh Developer's Licence Agreement, because I realised that they had lost enough ground that they weren't going to be able to gain it back anytime soon.

[ED] That's right! But now, what are the differences there? For me the differences are an incredible established user base. You've got 40 million of these – there's no way there way there were 40 million Macintoshes.

[DT] No! Or PCs even!

[ED] I don't think there were that many PCs – you're absolutely right! So there's this huge momentum. But for me, the exciting this is, and I see this every day – I'll give you a classic example: I'm really enjoying film photography at the moment – I love great ironies: vintage guitars, going back to the raw mechanics as opposed to the gee-whiz incredible. I suppose it's an irony. However, a light meter is very important obviously: if you're using manual photography without a meter, which everybody would have even in their most basic point and shoots, you need a light meter! And it just occurred to me, as I was out walking – I wonder if there's an app for that?

[DT] Oh my goodness!

[ED] And of course, sure enough, there are about three light meters available in the app store and the fact that I could just go – boop! Hit the buy button and have it download while I was walking: that is incredible! So that eco-system and that infrastructure and that whole thing, to me, is immensely exciting!

That tricorder, for Star Trek fans, you know? I think the iPhone is the tricorder and for me, that is creating an extraordinary shift in the way people do computing, because I don't know about you guys, but I spend far more time on my iPhone now than in front of my desktop. I may be a freak on that, but it's getting close!

I can pretty much run my business from my iPhone. It's the need for typing, you know? It's the whole typing thing is the only reason why I couldn't use my iPhone all the time.

[DT] Yeah, the thing is, with typing, is the software keyboard is better than the little tiny chicklet thumb keyboard, but what they really need to do is give me some kind of a Bluetooth keyboard, where I can unroll something and type and then roll it back up!

[ED] I suspect there's a reason that they're not doing that and I suspect that reason might be released in the first half of 2010!

[DT] Yeah, I'm hoping that reason gets released!

[ED] Exactly! So, I think if we see some sort of tablet – because I think, just as we would look at typing on a screen as: "How horrific! How horrible!" but just as now I can't use a Blackberry anymore – I tried using a Blackberry the other day and I just had lost it, you know, as compared to typing –



I'm just so used to typing on the virtual keyboard now.

For me, the mobile space, I think is something that is going to be really, really interesting for everybody and for Internet Marketers that are listening, the question that I would be asking myself is: in my niche (you know, in the Underwater Kickboxing) what sort of mobile application can I do? Can it be geo-location based? Where's my nearest Underwater Kickboxing dojo (local pool)!

[DT] Underwater Dojo!

[ED] That's it! You know, that to me is extremely exciting!

[LR] I totally agree, I think those are huge opportunities, if you can spot those. Those are all very big and they go viral almost instantly!

[ED] Absolutely right!

Well chaps, we'd better go and thanks everybody for listening.

I've got to say a huge thank you to **Leslie Rohde** and **Dan Thies**. There's a link along with this audio and I really encourage you to check out their new coaching program. I think it's absolutely fabulous. I give it my total double thumbs-up in terms of backing, because I know these guys, worked with them personally for a long time and really enjoy their stuff too.

And I hope you got a lot out of it – there are a lot of good tips in today's little recording, so thanks fellas – much appreciated!

[LR & DT] Thank you very much, Ed.

## Resources:

SEO BrainTrust - <http://thirtydaychallengeplus.com/SEOBrianTrust>  
Click here to find out more about SEO BrainTrust.