

So, Here's the Thing Episode 123

Laylee Emadi

Welcome to so here's the thing, the podcast for small business owners, entrepreneurs and creative educators who are ready to take their business to the next level, through candid conversations, tactical approaches and a few unpopular opinions. We're lifting the veil on what it takes to build both a life and a business that you love. I'm your host Layli Ahmadi, a coach for creatives and founder of the creative educator Academy, where I help entrepreneurs step into the role of industry leaders and educators. I'm so glad that you're here. Now let's jump into today's episode. Hello, friends. Welcome back to the show. Today, we are being joined by the incredible Sarah Dunn who I adore I'm so so excited for you guys to get to know her. Sara is a wedding SEO specialist for planners, photographers, venues, other wedding professionals who want their websites to rank higher on Google. And apparently this is important, we're going to talk about why it's important, because I need to learn about this too. So I love that Sarah has a knack for making SEO easy to understand. And she's created unique wedding SEO frameworks that simplify what it takes to get your wedding business in front of your ideal and dream clients. So we're going to talk to her all about SEO. Before we like dive into the topic. Sarah, tell us a little bit about like yourself and why you started teaching on this why you started helping pros with their SEO like what sparked this for you.

Sara Dunn

So I love SEO, that will probably come as no surprise because I do SEO every single day for my business. And while I do specialize in the wedding industry, SEO has some great simple principles that can really apply to any type of business. And so we can definitely talk about SEO in general today. Because I don't come from a wedding background. I actually come from a background of being a general web designer and developer. And I did that for about seven years working mostly with local clients who are near me in southwest Michigan. So I worked with dentists and mortgage companies and law firms and those kinds of small local businesses. And one of the things that really changed my business was when one of my clients when we were talking about a new website project, he looked at me and he said, so since we're doing this new website, it'll help us rank higher on Google, right? And I of course, was just like, yeah, huh, sure. Uh huh. And then I immediately went back to my office and started looking up every piece of information I could find about how SEO works. So I've done SEO in a really wide variety of industries. And 2017, I really found a heart for the wedding industry in particular, and decided that that would be the audience that I work with on a daily basis. But I do come from a more general background, and I'm really excited to talk to your audience lately about in general, coaching education, how people with great information, can get found more in search.

Laylee Emadi

Oh, I'm so excited about it too. Because I mean, just like most of the guests that I bring on the show, my listeners know like, I need this information too. Especially when it comes to things like SEO in the past when we've had Don Richardson from tech savvy, creative on I've shared with our audience, like, if it's anything techie, I typically just like shut my ears. And I'm like, I don't I don't want to learn this. I don't know what this is. I don't have time. So tell us like, what exactly is SEO? I mean, I know it stands for search engine optimization,

Sara Dunn

search engine optimization, like,

Laylee Emadi

I know something. I feel so I feel so smart. Right now I'm just getting and what like, what is it? And what's the benefit to actually paying attention to it? Because I know what it stands for. And I know it helps people find you. But like, is there more to it than that?

Sara Dunn

I mean, at the basic level, that is what it is. But I do think the intimidation and overwhelm starts directly with the name search engine optimization, okay. Like, what's the search engine? What are we optimizing? So here's how I like to explain SEO. Essentially, it is the art of influencing search engines to show your website, your information in the search results for free. So there are certain things that Google looks for in order to understand the content that's online. And we just need to learn what those things are and use them to our advantage. And that's what we do every day with SEO is to figure out what are those things that the Google robot is trying to find within content and make sure that our content serves that to the user? So in a nutshell, that's what SEO is. What we're not talking about is paying \$1 for advertising. So this is not about Google ads, where you actually pay money to get to the top of the search results. SEO is about getting there for free, which is why it's so amazing and has so much benefit for website owners and content creators is this is traffic you can earn just by having great content, not by paying \$1 for it. So I love SEO and playing that game, because it's that long term payoff.

Laylee Emadi

I also think it's kind of fun, because as we were talking about it, I was remembering like, my start in the entrepreneurial space, like a decade ago when I started out in photography, and I photographed dancers and high school seniors in Dallas. And so I remember constantly going into like incognito mode and being like, where am I ranking? Like, where's my website when you google Dallas Dance photographer or Dallas senior photographer? And I remember it was like, it felt like a game. Like I was like, Oh, I'm on page two, I'm paid at page one, like, I've made it, you know, but as an educator, as a speaker, as like somebody in thought leadership, like, what's the benefit? I mean, obviously, the benefit is getting found, but, but like, what are some ways to get started in that thought process? And I just feel like it's maybe a little bit more overwhelming when you shift into a new space. That's not like, local service provider. Like that's such an easy search for me to put into Google, like, get us started on that journey. Because I'm because I don't know.

Sara Dunn

You're so right, it does seem so much more clear in your mind when you serve a certain area. And you can clearly define your service to be like, this is the keyword people would be looking for to find what I have to offer. And that gets so much muddier when you start teaching and educating online. So you're not location specific. And you're probably, you know, people that could teach on a lot of different topics and have a lot of expertise. And so, you listening, I want everyone to think about the fact that the things you teach, and the things you know, are things people are searching for on search engines right now. So you have that knowledge experience, you have favorite tools, you have tips and tricks. And these are all topics that people are going to Google and searching for. And you could be the person who delivers their answer. That's what's so special about search is that people are actually going to find answers. They're not like hanging out like they are on social media and scrolling where you're trying to interrupt them and get your message in front of them. It's like, they're actually searching for something,

you know, and you get to become their expert. When they land on your website, and they read your content, they watch the video you have on that topic or whatever type of content you're creating, maybe they listened to the podcast episode you have about that topic, all of those things can get found in search, and people were actually looking for it. You weren't interrupting them while they were doing something else to try to get them interested.

Laylee Emadi

Oh my gosh, that is like that could be such a game changer for so many educators. Because I feel like I see it every single day with like Academy students with my coaching clients have that question of there are already people teaching what I teach. And they're much more popular, or they're already people with hundreds of 1000s or verified on Instagram or whatever, all these followers, but this kind of levels the playing field a little doesn't it?

Sara Dunn

A little bit? Yeah. Because you can think about, you know, what are the many things that you know, and you can have separate content about all of that, that could all get found in search? So it's almost like it's broadening your opportunity. Not you're competing with one person. It's like, what are all the different things that are part of my genius? And how do I make sure that I have the content that people are looking for on that topic?

Laylee Emadi

Oh, I love it. Okay, so I love that concept. What are some first steps that people can take to, like, optimize their SEO to like, Is that the right terminology? Even? I don't even? Yes,

Sara Dunn

yes. And I love the first step conversation. People come to me all the time, or answering surveys that I do, where I'm like, What's the biggest challenge you have with SEO? And they're like, I don't understand how to get started, like, what's step one? And I always like to think about step one with SEO is thinking about your ideal customer. So not thinking about oh, you yourself, what do you want to get found for think about what they are trying to find out? And that might be searching for exactly what you do. So maybe you're a photographer, business coach. And that could be a phrase that people type into Google to get found. But beyond that, it's really important to think about your ideal client and some of the struggles they're having and some of the questions they might be asking a search engine for the answer to, you know, maybe it's questions on pricing, maybe it's questions on presets, all of those like really specific little things that you maybe teach in a larger course or you have content on on Instagram are real. All of those little things are opportunities. And so it all starts with thinking about what your ideal client wants to know, and what they might actually search for, then, so here's the thing, you can actually go and use an SEO tool to see if you're right. So that's kind of step two is okay, maybe you've brainstorm this whole big list of maybe questions or search phrases that you think people are searching for, I like to recommend that people go to a tool that's called Uber Suggest, ubersuggest.com. And it lets you do some free searches to actually get keyword ideas. So you could put in one of those topics. It'll tell you how many times every single month people search for that on Google. And then it will give you a whole list of suggested keywords, things that are similar topics. And then it'll tell you how many times each of those things get searched for on Google. So that's like, the really easy step one and step two, that you can really start thinking about what people want to know. And I mean, a bonus to that is, if people are asking for that on Google or a search engine, they're probably interested in that content on your other platforms as well. So it's a great thing to use what we call keyword

research. That's our fancy phrase for what I just talked about. It's great to use keyword research to actually inform some of the content that you put on all your platforms, not just your own website or your blog.

Laylee Emadi

Gosh, that could be so helpful. And actually, as you were talking about that, I remembered sitting next to you like in person, and you showing me this and being like, what a great tool. And I was like, oh, yeah, this is awesome. And I never looked at it again. So now I'm gonna have to put it on my list. Like, what a great way to find potential for content pieces to create, because so many people struggle with, like, I don't know what to share. I don't know what to talk about. Next. I don't know how to break down my topic into smaller topics. So this could be a really great tool to help them find that right?

Sara Dunn

Absolutely. Yes. And another one is answered the public, which is a tool that you can kind of put in a topic, and it will show like this really cool rain cloud of things people search for around that topic as well. Sometimes formatted as questions. So that can really be a good idea generator, too. So I'd also recommend that

Laylee Emadi

one. Okay, amazing. And we're gonna link will link everything in the show notes. As always you guys. So if you're like on the go, while you're listening to this, don't worry, we got you covered in the show notes. Okay, these are amazing. Step one. And step two. I love how clear that was. I love how easy like, I feel like I can do this. We're doing good. You haven't lost me yet. So you were talking about keywords? Where do keywords go? Like? Do they just go just generally anywhere? In your this, this I kind of already know the answer to but I feel like people want to know, like, where do keywords go?

Sara Dunn

Yes. So if you want to get found on Google, you have to use these keywords on your website. So in general, we want to use them on your website. And we need to really use the keywords on the content where it makes sense. So I think for most educators, and people who are teaching others, we really need to be doing mostly content SEO. So through your blog, through your helpful tips, that's really where you're going to bring in the most traffic when you can get those articles to rank. So basically, when you find a keyword that you're interested in getting found for you're like, oh, yeah, people need to know about the best lightroom presets for 2023 for wedding photographers, and you go to Uber Suggest you see people are searching for that, that is then going to be the title of your blog post that you write about that topic. So you're gonna create the best content on the internet about what the best lightroom presets are for wedding photographers in 2023. And you're gonna give all the information you can think of you're going to talk about the why you're going to link to the ones that you would recommend, you're going to give people information about how they would make the decision on which one to choose. And then you're going to publish that on your blog. So what you're doing then is you found what someone wants to know about. You've put that phrase in the title of your blog posts, and you've written a really helpful article about it. And that makes it really clear to Google what this should get found for online what they should rank on the page first page of Google. So the place that you need to be using these keywords is definitely on your own website. And then you can also think about those phrases if you wanted to create a YouTube video on the same topic, if you wanted to use something similar as a hashtag on Instagram, so you can kind of take it from there. But if you want to get found on Google, your own website needs to be the hub for the best and longest content you have on that topic.

Laylee Emadi

Okay, that makes total sense. So for those out there who are multi passionate, maybe they have they still have Their service side of their business. And they're also like getting into education or course creation or whatever they want to do as they diversify their their business offerings. Is there like a competitiveness within your own website? Like, what's best practices on that? Like, how do they? How do they make sure that they're ranking for all the things? Is it? Can it all be done in one place?

Sara Dunn

Yeah, this is a big debate when someone wants to start kind of like a new branch of their business. And sometimes you'll hear, and I'm going to answer this from an SEO perspective. Now, if if anyone listening is being coached by someone who's helping you with the strategy for this, they might have their own opinion. But from a purely SEO perspective, it's actually best to put your education and your original service on the same website. And the reason for this is that Google actually understands your authority based on your domain name. So if you have been at Sarah's photography.com, for 15 years, and now you're going to start educating, if you start a separate website, essentially, to Google, that's a new business and you're starting at zero authority, like you've never existed before, it doesn't matter that Sarah's photography.com has been out there for 15 years, because now you're at Sarah coaches.com. And that's entirely new. So I would tell anyone who's like just getting started with education to start by putting the content on your existing website, you know, maybe a separate page that's about education or coaching, maybe some separate blog posts that are specifically for that audience. And then, you know, I do see certainly the business reasons to separate those things later. But I would probably start on the platform that you already have, because that's where you're actually going to get ranked for those things faster because of the authority you've built in the past. Does that make sense?

Laylee Emadi

Yeah, it definitely does. And I think it's something that's so good to know, especially as people, I think we tend to overthink the importance of like titles and names and business names. And so people do they, they're like, all the time. In fact, I ran into this myself, I'm not put I'm not putting myself above this, this like quandary of like, oh, everything I have says, you know, lately morning photography, but I haven't done photography as like the sole part of my business for like, six, seven years now. But honestly, I'm too lazy to legally change anything. And my domain has always just been my name. So I was lucky about that. But I do think that we overthink the importance of that. In fact, I get invoiced by coaches, who are insanely high level coaches, and I pay them so much money. And when the invoice comes through, it's their original, like their very first domain, which, yeah, it has nothing to do what they do now. And I don't even I don't even blink at it. I'm just like, Oh, that's interesting. So

Sara Dunn

totally, I mean, TN, a totally tangent conversation. But I also think that we all overthink naming things. And when I started my branch, Sarah does SEO, which was separate name from my original web design agency. I was just like, it needs some sort of name. And I'm just going to name it something and go with it. And it'll be fine. And would I choose the same name now, now that I have a team of seven and we're all Sarah does SEO, maybe I wouldn't choose that name again. But at least I just like did it and got started. And it was fine. Yeah. And you can only hire Sarah's from now on so I do have one other Sarah, which is totally ridiculous. And we get a ton of students in wedding SEO bootcamp who are named Sarah, just because I think they're very encouraged by Sarah does SEO?

Laylee Emadi

Yeah, they're like, I can do it. Yeah. That's amazing. Oh, my gosh, so funny. So what would you say would maybe surprise some of our listeners about the potential of leveraging SEO in their business? Like, what do you think would shock somebody when you say this is why you should pay attention to SEO.

Sara Dunn

So here's the shocking fact. And this is the shocking truth that the content you're already creating could be bringing you 1000s of more visitors to your brand and your website, every single year. If you just help search engines to find it better, if you just took the steps to learn a little bit about SEO, and I know so many educators and coaches, content is the way that you market your business. You're out there, you're sharing thoughts and advice and expertise. And, again, as I said, people are searching for that. But you've got to make sure that your content is good enough, long enough, optimized right for keywords, the actual things that people are searching for, if you want that to get as much free traffic as possible. So I see so many people who do online business, that could be paying a lot less for things like Facebook ads, and other ways of marketing, if they could just optimize the content that they're already putting out on their website or their podcast or other platforms in a better way. So I think a lot of people when they think about SEO, they're just like, that is for some sort of techie person to do for me. Like, I don't want to learn it. I can't learn about that, because it's about things called metadata and schema and alt text. And those are like the tiniest little pieces. I have seen so much content rank on the internet, that someone didn't create for SEO purposes. Like they didn't know anything about SEO, sometimes clients come to me. And there's someone who has done a good job just blogging for a few years. And they've never done SEO before. But Google has found their content anyway, and said, Hey, this is a really helpful article, this is something we're going to serve to people as an answer to a question. And it didn't take that content creator actually thinking about SEO and how to optimize it was like, the person said, people have this question, and I'm going to answer it. And they didn't do anything with their metadata or alt text or schema, or anything super technical, because at a basic level, all Google's trying to do is connect a searcher with the best information that answers their question. So I would encourage people just to try and get started with creating content that's based on keywords people are searching for, even if you don't understand all those tiny little details, because you can have success with ranking. Even if you don't know the full process.

Laylee Emadi

I love that. And I think it's really encouraging to just to kind of approach learning a little bit more about it, even if you outsource it, because for me, for example, like this podcast, this is my pillar content, you guys, like you know, if you're listening, I put out a new podcast, if you like, twice a month, every other week. And this is my blog as well and lives on the blog, the show notes live on the blog, but I outsource the blogging of it. So it's on me as the business owner to understand enough to be able to go in and look at those metrics and see like, hey, is this going right? And is the person that I'm outsourcing to who's also editing this episode? So what's up watching you, but like, are they doing what I'm paying them to do? And I think so often, we hear outsourcing and we get excited. And we're like, ooh, take it off my plate. I never want to think about it again. I guess that's just like my two cents as like a coach of like, No, you need to still be tracking your own stuff and making sure that you're getting the value of what you paid for.

Sara Dunn

Yes. Let's talk about that for a second. Like how could someone actually figure out if their website is ranking on Google? So yeah, like, Hey, you're like lately? Yes. Okay. So same tool. Let's say you're like, lately, you got a podcast or you've done blogging for a while, you've never really thought about SEO, I think you might be surprised, you might find out that you rank for some things online. And the way to actually go and figure that out. My favorite way is to again, use the same SEO tool that I talked about already, which is called Uber Suggest, and there's an option that's called Traffic estimation. Again, what why do SEOs make things sound so complicated? That sounds really scary. It's like, basically, I want it to be called Tell me about this website. Because you can put in any domain name, any website, URL into the box, and it will tell you about that website's SEO success. So how many keywords Does the site rank for? What are those keywords? What position? Or how high? Are they in the search results, you can find all that out through using this tool. So Uber suggests and then click on traffic estimation on the left, put in your own website, and just see how this tool says that you're perceived online right now.

Laylee Emadi

Oh, I am excited to go do that. That sounds really, really interesting. That's the thing about owning your own business is that I think we all are interested to see how our things are going it can just be intimidating to kind of tackle things that are out of our visionary or, you know, like artistic brains. So I'm excited to have some tangible steps that people can take today to see how they're doing, and then move forward.

Sara Dunn

Yes, and here's something else that you can glean from using this tool. So let's say you put in your website into the traffic estimation tool, and it says that you rank in position 20 for a keyword. So here's what that means. Position. 20 means that you're the 20th website in the organic search results. And that probably is the bottom of page two or the top of page three, which is kind of a bummer, because in that position, you're probably not going to get a lot of traffic. But this is immediately actionable because the tool will tell you what page on your website is ranking in position 20. You could go into say that's a blog post, go into that blog post and more specifically, use that keyword phrase or add a little bit more information up out that keyword or the information that someone who's searching for that would want to know. And you could probably get your website to move up from position 20, maybe to like position eight. And that would be the first page of Google. So these are just like tiny little steps. Again, you don't need to know anything technical about SEO, just look at the keyword, how could you use it a little bit more strategically and clearly within your content, and you could see yourself start ranking even

Laylee Emadi

better. Oh, that's so exciting. I feel like so many people are gonna listen to this episode, and just like go in and start actually utilizing this. So that's amazing. Okay, so before we get into our signature question that we end every episode with, which is your unpopular opinion on the topic, is there anything else you think our listeners should know? As they start this, like, potential overhaul for some of them of the way that they the way that they approach their content and keywords?

Sara Dunn

Yeah, I want you to, I don't know, I'm worried about the word overhaul lately. Like, it always feels like this big project, when people are like, let me work on my SEO. So I, what I want you to know is that you can take it in the tiniest little steps. And you probably have things that you've already done that can be improved just a little bit to actually start getting you some organic search traffic. So it can be like learning one little thing at a time you implement it, you check back in on your rankings in, let's say, three

weeks, and you're like, I'm all dope, I'm amazing at SEO, and then you can go do it again. And then learn a little bit more. So baby steps to see success, and then just keep yourself going with it. And it'll really pay off.

Laylee Emadi

Okay, I did have one question that popped into my mind because I love that encouragement. Can people like can you retro actively fix old blog posts to change like the results of your current rankings?

Sara Dunn

Absolutely, yes, I get the question a lot. Can I actually go and edit my old content? And better optimize it? And the answer is absolutely. And Google wants to see you doing this. Google wants to see that you actually update content on your website. So I actually did this on my website recently, for several pieces of content that I wrote in 2018. I did an article about SEO issues with Squarespace. So don't listen to this and say, Oh, Sarah says Squarespace has SEO issues it did in 2018 When I wrote the article, but they fixed so many of them. And I was like, I have to go rewrite this post because I need to give Squarespace more credit than this. So I went into that blog post, I actually took out some of the things that they fixed, I moved to the top issues that still exist. And I actually updated the publish date of that blog post so that it was more current. So benefits of that it's like a more current article. And it also shows up at the top of my blog feed. So it looks like I created something new, even though it is five years old, and it's just been updated with like, 30 minutes of work.

Laylee Emadi

That's amazing. Okay, that's, that's really good to know. Because I feel like we're all about working smarter, not harder over here. So that's gonna be really good for people to do. Amazing. Okay, so moving on, and wrapping this amazing episode up. You're such a genius. Thank you for sharing so much amazing stuff. What is your unpopular opinion on, on SEO as a business owner?

Sara Dunn

All right, this is going to be unpopular with some of our content marketers, and content creators who are listening. But I really do think that if you're marketing your business, by using content, you should know the basics of search engine optimization, because it's so powerful, and you're creating stuff anyway, you could do a little bit of work that actually helps that content to get found, instead of just be this amazing, something that you created, that people don't see after you stop promoting it on your own social media. So just the basics, I'm not asking everyone to be an SEO expert. But if you can employ the things that we talked about today, actually figuring out what people are searching for creating content around those topics, and making it as good as it can possibly be. You can be bringing people into your website all the time, even when you're on breaks, or you're on vacation, or you don't feel like social right now, your website can still be bringing in new people who have never heard of you before. And it's really really powerful.

Laylee Emadi

Oh my gosh, that is so helpful to hear. I think. In addition to that, like this, this should and will probably be its own podcast episode, but with all the changes that are happening on the regular social media that people have been using in their businesses for the past like decade like Instagram, like Facebook and the changes that are happening with a meta to monetize those things. This is even more important, I think to be able to you utilize all the tools at your fingertips. So I hope people listen to this and like, go

do their little audit and think about ways to bring more traffic in from different sources than just your typical social media marketing.

Sara Dunn

Absolutely. Me too.

Laylee Emadi

Yeah. Okay, thank you so much Sara and where can people find you?

Sara Dunn

So I am at Sarah does SEO on most platforms and I would actually recommend to your listeners that I have my most general SEO advice over on tick tock so if you want to follow and just get like the tiny little pieces of SEO advice here and there. Definitely check me out on Tik Tok at Sarah does SEO.

Laylee Emadi

Amazing and we'll have all that linked for you guys, as always. So thanks again for coming on. For show notes and resources mentioned on today's episode head to so here's the thing [podcast.com](https://thethingpodcast.com) This show is brought to you by the creative educator Academy, where we teach creative entrepreneurs how to teach because I believe that industries thrive when experts can share their knowledge. Well, if you're enjoying the podcast, I'd love to read your review in iTunes or see your rating on Spotify. Thanks so much for listening, and I'll catch you on the next episode.