Transcript of:

024 Content Marketing: Outreach and Digital PR tips with Spark Toro's Rand Fishkin

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You're listening to the Keep Optimising podcast to increase your traffic, improve your conversion rate and grow your profits. Chloe Thomas: Hello and welcome.

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Chloe Thomas: If you're looking to improve the performance and return on investment of your marketing, then you are in the right place. I'm Chloe Thomas, the host of this marketing-focused podcast, and it's very, very cool to have you out there tuning in. In today's episode, I'm talking to one of my marketing heroes about where you should be putting your content online. So we've talked a lot in this series about content on your website, about your blog.

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Chloe Thomas: What we're talking about in this episode is about working out where else you could put your content, how you can leverage other people's platforms. And that is a whole skill set, an art in itself, and something which is quite different to a lot of what we do with our eCommerce marketing.

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Chloe Thomas: And Rand is going to take you through some really clear ways to make it work. We're also going to be talking about the tool he's currently been building for the last couple of years, which is excellent, called SparkToro, and which will really help you start this journey or improve this journey if you're already on it. Now, we're just about to meet today's guest, but before we do, please do check out the sponsors.

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Today, I'm chatting with content marketing expert Rand Fishkin. Back in 2003, Rand co-founded what has become one of the pillars of SEO knowledge sharing and an awesome software toolset. Yes, I am talking about MOZ. Now he's busy with the new software tool, "SparkToro" which is a
market research and audience intelligence tool. Now what that means is that it shows you what publications and people influence your target audience, which means the publications and blogs that you should be including in your offsite marketing activity.

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Chloe Thomas: Hello, Rand.

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Rand Fishkin: Hi, Chloe. Thanks for having me. Chloe Thomas: It's great to have you here. Before we get into off site content marketing, how did you end up in the world of SEO and content all those years ago?

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Rand Fishkin: It's been a long time, so I dropped out of college in 2001 and started working with my mom, Jillian, who was running a marketing agency, old school marketing agency, and her clients started needing websites. This was the dawn of the digital era. And I like designing and building websites, so that's what I did. We had a very unsuccessful run for a few years following the dotcom crash and then eventually wound up in a situation where we couldn't pay our subcontractors, which included some SEO people.

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Rand Fishkin: And so I had to do the work myself. And that meant learning the practice, which I found very frustrating. And I became increasingly incensed at Google and the other search engines, Opacity, and misinformation around how optimization really worked and how to do it. So I started this blog that was supposed to help people learn SEO just as I was learning it called SEOMORS. That later became MORS. It turned from a consulting business into a software business.

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Rand Fishkin: I was the CEO for many years and yeah I grew it to around 40, I think maybe to around 50 million dollars a year in revenue these days with tens of thousands of customer venture-backed business. And I left that company a couple of years ago, almost three years ago now to start SparkToro, which is obviously yeah, as you mentioned in the market research audience intelligence space, and yeah.

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Rand Fishkin: Really, I have loved building a company more independently and getting to talk about things outside of the SEO world for the first time in almost two decades.

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Chloe Thomas: So yea Rand. One thing I wanted to ask you is how you go from being at Moz, which was a business which covered whilst it was just SEO, it had a really wide remit in many ways. There's a lot going on in the world of SEO.

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Chloe Thomas: What then led you to almost kind of zoom in on one specific area with SparkToro, or do you think SparkToro is like a widening of interest rather than a smoldering of interest?
Rand Fishkin: Yeah, I think that's in many ways SparkToro is broader than just SEO. But the interesting thing, Chloë, about SEO, of course, is that it's just so big and dominant as a traffic driver and there are so many facets to it. I think that was a very big area as well. So I wouldn't say SparkToro is necessarily larger. What I like about it is that it is a little bit more on the creative and human side. It's a little bit more on the personal communication and outreach and psychology end of things.

Rand Fishkin: I enjoy that after spending many years in sort of the technical weeds of how does this algorithm work and how do you modify things to fit its needs.

Chloe Thomas: I can imagine that... I was thinking about it and looking at if I specialize in the whole of SEO for a while, what would be the most different bit to then go on and specialize in? And I think it is the outreach bit. And that's a bit which I find a lot of businesses really struggle with, is they know they should do this kind of amorphous thing called link building, but they have no idea where to start, especially when you have to invest so much time and effort building those relationships.

Chloe Thomas: So I can see, there's a big problem that you're solving with the software.

Chloe Thomas: But what I really want to do is take a step back from that and start off by asking the question of, what is the importance, which we may have already answered a little bit here, but what is the importance of doing content marketing that doesn't sit on our own website? Why should we be investing time and money in doing that?

Rand Fishkin: Yeah! Look, I don't think that what's generally called digital PR right! Sort of, you know finding the outlets, the publications in people and sources of influencer that reach your audience and then reaching out to them and building some type of relationship, doing marketing of all kinds could be paid. Advertising could be.

Rand Fishkin: Submitting a content piece could be getting them to share something of yours on a social channel. I think that is not a requirement. Not everyone needs to do it just like SEO. Not everyone needs to do it. It's not right for everyone, but it is a potentially very powerful channel because it influences so many things. Right!

Rand Fishkin: I think that brand marketing is one of the most underrated elements of digital by almost everyone in what I call sort of the tech and SEO world of marketing. And yet it is an incredibly powerful amplifier and a multiplier of your efforts. And brand marketing is best done through places that people already know, like and trust. So building your own community, building your own media property, that's potentially plausible, certainly. But being able to do that on someone else's website that's already captured, that audience they already know, like and trust.
Rand Fishkin: That's a really powerful thing.

Rand Fishkin: I'm dogfooding here.

Rand Fishkin: Right. I myself, do a lot of podcasts and webinars and video interviews and contributions to sites of all kinds. And, you know, back then before covid-19, I did tons of travel, events, and conferences which are also forms of digital PR or offline PR. And those helped build a very well-known brand for SparkToro among a certain portion of the audience that we want to reach, right, and we're relatively new, we have a lot of work to do, but being able to reach those people through channels they already pay attention to is so much easier than trying to become that channel ourselves.

Chloe Thomas: And it's interesting you say, about building the brand in front of a specific audience. And I'm sure that you let me get some slightly random and wacky requests to speak at things and be on things. So amazing because literally just before we got on this, I was looking at an email where someone wants me to speak at a pharmaceutical conference in Barcelona. And it's like, well, even if they're willing to pay me double my normal fee, I'm not sure it's worth the time and effort of going there because I'm not really interested in the pharmaceutical industry as an audience, you know, which I think brings us to you know, you can spend a lot of time and effort doing and creating content and leveraging other people's platforms.

Chloe Thomas: But if they're not the right platforms, it's a waste of effort and cut off the money as well.

Rand Fishkin: Yeah, I think that there's a lot of biases of all kinds that nudge people to make poor decisions about where to invest their time and energy and effort and dollars or pounds. And that stems from a misunderstanding and a lack of data about where an audience can be reached. So this is one of the core problems we want to solve with SparkToro. Right, because we saw it so many times. I saw so many times as so many businesses that I helped or advised or mentored or invested in that they struggled mightily to find, hey, you know, we were making easy presentation software.

Rand Fishkin: That's sort of a substitute for PowerPoint. Where do we find professional coaches and real estate investors who give presentations and teachers who are looking for software like this and what publications they read, what conferences and events they go to, what YouTube channels they subscribe to. Right! So we can go do targeted investments in all those places that aren't just throwing money at Google and Facebook. I think one of the big frustrating things of Google and Facebook becoming monopolies in their respective spaces is that they have been able to, over the past decade, pull a ton of data out of their platforms and hide a lot of that information from us.
Rand Fishkin: I don't know if you remember the old Google ad plan or tool, but it was pretty spectacular, right?

Rand Fishkin: You could plug in your site, see all the other websites that people visited like yours and get all these all these topic data, get all this interest data. Now, it is barely usable. They basically throw money at us. Tell us your website. We'll figure it out. We won't we don't want to tell you anything. Just give us money. What are you going to do? Say no. Where else are you going to go?

Rand Fishkin: Right. That's sort of a prisoner's dilemma for all of us. And Facebook is the same way.

Rand Fishkin: So I think that, SparkToro exists to try and help give some of that data back to people and also to nudge folks to think more critically about where they might be able to reach their audiences.

Chloe Thomas: Yeah, and because I think it's easy to just think, oh, I'll just go on Google, my area of expertise or the area of the products I sell and then look at the first ten people who rank. But certainly in the eCommerce space when we're looking at, you know, trying to promote our products, the first 10 are probably other eCommerce businesses who are probably doing a shocking job of their own content marketing, let alone helping us with ours.

Chloe Thomas: Then, you know, the next ten are going to be the biggest news agencies in the world who probably aren't the right place to start either. And it's really, really tough just to go to Google and look for it these days. So I think we have to be using some of the tool because, you know, as you said earlier, this is about relationship building with people to get them to agree to come and do things with you.

Chloe Thomas: And there's an awful lot of time and effort that can be spent, either building relationships with the wrong people when you could be building them with the right people.

Rand Fishkin: Yeah! So I have this analogy that I like to make. I wrote a blog post about it and called it "The Wall Street Journal problem". I'm sure in the UK maybe, I don't know, the Guardian problem or whatever it is. But the Wall Street Journal problem, which is marketers, we walk into a boardroom, meeting room, CMO's there, CEO's there. They're like, OK, we want to go invest in whatever ad campaign, a press campaign an outreach campaign, a content distribution campaign.
Rand Fishkin: And we think that these publications are right for us, they'll help us reach our audience. And the CEO goes, I want you to get me in The Wall Street Journal. I golf with our customers every weekend and they read The Wall Street Journal just like I do. So you get us in the wall. Regional, that's what will make a difference. The marketers are kind of like, oh no, not again, this is awful.

Rand Fishkin: But what's happening is there's confirmation bias and there is exposure bias happening. There's also probably some prestige seeking that's happening from the executives. But it's very tough for marketers to say, well, I have data that shows that The Wall Street Journal is not read by our customers. That's a really difficult thing to do unless you have an extremely large survey and very, very accurate survey takers. Yes! Which doesn't exist. You know, bad news, accurate survey takers don't exist, at least on questions like what do you read, watch, listen to, pay attention to, what you really want to do is you want to be able to get all of your customers home addresses, break into their houses, steal their phones, get their unlock codes, browse through and see what they actually consume.

Rand Fishkin: But of course, this is illegal and totally unethical. And so instead, the way that we do it with SparkToro is basically to take a sample of all the people whose data is public, if you have a public social profile, like a Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Reddit, YouTube, Medium, Quora, Instagram, whatever! Right, we go and crawl those just like Google does, and we aggregate that data together and go.

Rand Fishkin: Oh, okay well, people who describe themselves as, you know, whatever it is, professional coach or yoga instructor or real estate agent or people who frequently talk about the paleo diet or people who follow the Dungeons and Dragons Twitter account, you know, like what do they also listen to? Read, watch, follow, pay attention to engage with, share, and talk about. And then that data you can bring in and say, well, boss, I'm with you.

Rand Fishkin: We can work on a Wall Street Journal. I just want you to know, 1.5% of the audience you told us to target engages with the Wall Street Journal and 17% engages with this niche publication. Are you sure you don't want us to put twenty times as much effort into that?

Chloe Thomas: And also the chances are that niche publication, a higher percentage of that audience are interested in you, whereas The Wall Street Journal, it's a really tiny part, you know, so if we are talking about buying ads, I know we're not really talking ads here, but, you know, you could probably buy 12 months back page if we're talking Old-World of the niche for what you could get maybe a two inch by two inch in the Wall Street Journal, one episode midweek maybe.
Chloe Thomas: So yeah. But, it's really hard when the boss is saying that because it probably comes down to ego.

Chloe Thomas: But let's dive into why or how to go about working it out. So how do we work out where we want to get other publications? Allowing us to put our content on or getting them to write about us. And let's just do it as we do it on SparkToro for the sake of simplicity.

Rand Fishkin: Oh, sure. So, you know, once you've run a SparkToro search, you get a list of results, right. And it'll say it's always ordered by a percentage of the audience. Right. So, 17% of whatever it is professional coaches in the United States engage with, or read, watch or follow this social account and these websites and you know 17%, 15%, 12%, 11% that goes right down there. Now, what you can reasonably do then, at least in SparkToro or any other tool, you know, there are lots of PR database tools that work in similar fashion.

Rand Fishkin: So they don't have a percent number, which I think is really valuable. But they will tell you, oh, here is whatever The Guardian's section that covers technology start-ups. And so if you have a tech start up right here, here's who you can pitch or whatever and get an email address. And SparkToro has the same kind of thing, right. You click a little checkbox next to the items that you're interested in; you can add them to a list.

Rand Fishkin: Once you add them to a list in your account, you can get email and contact information for those folks.

Rand Fishkin: My advice is not to send an email saying, can I write a guest post for you? I think that works in 0.001% of situations. Instead, I would do three things right. If you know that a high percent of your audience is paying attention to a publication, a high percentage could be four or five percent, to be totally honest. Like that's still a significant portion, especially if you have a sizable market and you see four percent are paying attention, visiting a particular website.

Rand Fishkin: That's. Amazing, right? That's a big audience for you. I would look for a shared common connection between you and the person you want to reach out to, right. So if Chloe Thomas runs eCommerce MasterPlan and I've got this new product, I'd love to get featured on her show. I want to be a podcast guest on there. Who do I know that knows Chloe? Oh, Rand Fishkin was on there. I know. Rand, we used to.

Rand Fishkin: I'm going to email Rand I'm going to ask him for an introduction to Chloe, that introduction, the warm intro is one of the best ways to ensure that you will get at least a very productive conversation.
Rand Fishkin: You might still get to know whatever you want to try and do, but you'll almost certainly get a no. But maybe we could do this or maybe we could do that, right?

Rand Fishkin: So I would urge that warm intro. The other piece of advice, if you have no way to get a warm intro right, your network just doesn't exist.

Rand Fishkin: Whatever, go follow that person, that publication on their social channels, whatever, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, you name it, go follow them on there. Have several interactions over the course of a few days on an unrelated topic that is authentic. Right. So I don't know.

Rand Fishkin: You see that I'm tweeting about, what was I tweeting about the other day Posta and we have a little fun exchange about it.

Rand Fishkin: And then, oh, I was on a podcast yesterday. I tweeted about that. And you're like, oh, I watched this. I thought it was really good. I am not sure about this part. And then you send me a cold email.

Rand Fishkin: And you say, hey, Rand, it was fun chatting on Twitter the last couple of days and related to this thing that you shared, I was wondering if... now there's your opening right. And since I have had an interaction with you on social media already and we sort of chatted and we know who each other are, your chances of getting whatever it is.

Rand Fishkin: Whether it's, hey, I want to sponsor something. I want to do some bit of co-marketing together. I want to contribute some articles. I have some research I want to share, maybe you'd be interested in writing about it. Maybe you want to tweet this piece for me... whatever it is.

Rand Fishkin: The chances are much, much better that you will get a response and a positive response if you do it one of those two ways.

Chloe Thomas: Yeah, as someone who gets an awful lot of people wanting stuff and cold emailing with various atrocious emails, I have to say either of those two, I will actually-definitely read your request. At the very least, it won't be a podcast request send automated response, I'll actually read it. Trust me, is worth putting some effort into. So that's a great advice. Then I spent quite a large portion of the soft name playing around on SparkToro.
Chloe Thomas: I think I'll be using it on a very regular basis as of now, one of the things which I thought was particularly good and particularly interesting is that you split out websites, podcasts and YouTube, because I think often when we, as you mentioned, guest posting. Often when we think about getting involved with the people for this, we think either about PR and trying to get them to write something or we think about writing something for them.

Chloe Thomas: And it's always very much the written aspect. So we have to split those out on SparkToro because you're seeing people getting greater traction with the video and the audio, or is it that you should try all three?

Rand Fishkin: I mean absolutely, you should try all three. But also, I think the more creative your requests, the more successful it's going to be. Right. So if it is Hey!, Chloe, I think I want to be a guest on your podcast.

Rand Fishkin: Would, could work, but what if you have the VP of marketing for an exciting eCommerce company who is using your tool or product, and you're like, hey, Chloe, would you be interested in having so-and-so from Nike on your show?

Rand Fishkin: Chloe in response: Yes, I would, Rand: yes you would, make that introduction! And then tell you, you know, and then my friend from Nike, like maybe you mentioned us on the show. Yeah. You know, casual maybe and maybe not. Right, and maybe you'll have a conversation and the person who introduced you, they'll come up and you'll think, oh, maybe I should have that person who introduced us on. They seem really interesting as well.

Rand Fishkin: Great opportunity, right? So my suggestion for a lot of folks is to think more broadly than just one type of pitch, right? Relationship building means helping people first. Right. Without the thought of return.

Rand Fishkin: And then if returns come great for me, a ton of my, you know, successful, whatever you want to call it, pitching or outreach comes because I almost never ask for that thing directly.

Rand Fishkin: But I am every day helping people. Right, just like all day, every day, whether it's on social channels or through email or whatever. You know, this podcast ends and you're like, oh, hey, do you know somebody who does X and then introduces three degrees in six months from now, something else comes back that really helps SparkToro.
Rand Fishkin: But engaging in those kinds of activities on a regular basis means that you get this constant flywheel turning of opportunity that falls out of help you provided. And I think that's a really great way to go. And so my suggestion would be on this front to not let the medium limit your creativity, but to open yourself up to all kinds of possible ways that you could help a person or an outlet and start building a relationship and then have that relationship bear fruit sometime in the future.

Chloe Thomas: I love that.

Chloe Thomas: Don't limit yourself. But what I also like that Rand, as you were touching on that, this becomes a flywheel and you've got to be doing it. This isn't something which you can go right. In January, we should do some outbound content marketing and it will be great in the same ways you could go January, we are going to run some Facebook ads, do all our optimization, run them throughout the year. This is something you have to like, commit to the mindset, commit to the work and do it.

Chloe Thomas: We certainly week in, week out, if not day in, day out.

Rand Fishkin: I believe it's still possible to run a campaign. Right. You can absolutely say, hey, we're going to run a digital PR campaign for the next six months. And we know that the first couple of months are going to be a sort of R&D process to figure out who the outlets are and what kind of pitches we want to send and what we think is interesting. Then we're going to go have the conversations and figure out what works and doesn't, and then we're going to pitch the next tranche of folks and yadda, yadda, so you can make those kinds of investments.

Rand Fishkin: I think the problem comes when, you know, whatever it is, it's two months in. You've got your target list. You started contacting folks and your executives say, OK, where's our ROI? Like, we've put 12 grand into this. Where's the return? Let's go.

Rand Fishkin: No, my friends, this is not how it works, right? When you're investing in things like content marketing and SEO and digital PR, you should anticipate, you must anticipate or you'll be doomed to fail. You must anticipate that you will put in months of effort before you see any return at all and that the majority of the ROI will be invisible to you over an eighteen to twenty-four month period and maybe longer. Because what happens is, you know, let's say you get a dozen podcast appearances, right?

Rand Fishkin: Maybe podcast marketing is like the big thing you do.
Rand Fishkin: So you're on a dozen podcasts over the course of three months. Right. And what happens is it that all those people who hear you on the podcast immediately go to your website and buy your product?

Rand Fishkin: Noooo! No one works that way. That's not how marketing has ever worked. That's madness. The only channel that works like that. And I think, unfortunately, it's biased for people to think that all digital marketing works like this. The only channel that works like that is paid Google ads, right. Where someone searches for, OK, I want an amber heart-shaped necklace and I need to buy it right now. Give me that Google. OK, here's an ad click buy.

Rand Fishkin: Right, that's the only channel because the person has expressed the intent. But digital PR is designed to essentially brand people with this in the back of their heads. They know your name, they are familiar with your company. They have a positive impression of who you are and what you do. And it's preferable to use you versus somebody else to buy from you versus somebody else.

Rand Fishkin: And so every ad that you run, every time you appear in search results, every time you were in their Facebook feed, every time you're on their Instagram feed, every time they think about the problem that they want to solve, they think of you.

Rand Fishkin: And they might not think of that problem or have that problem this month or next month or the month after, but at some point, some percentage of those people who heard about you will come to check it out. Like nobody's racing... Well! Maybe a few people but, you know, nobody's racing from this podcast to go to SparkToro and run marketing searches. But sometime in the future, some of them will think, oh, yeah, I should go figure out what my audience pays attention to.

Rand Fishkin: Hey, what was that thing that was on Chloe's podcast? Let me search for Keep Optimising. Go to her podcast. Oh, yeah, Rand Fishkin, SparkToro.

Rand Fishkin: OK, let me take that and I'll never I will never know how those people reached me. I'll never be able to attribute that traffic. And that's why it's so effective, because if it were perfectly attributable, all your competitors would be investing in it making the space flooded and you would never have a chance to compete and there would be no ROI. It is because it's so serendipitous and hard to measure. It's because so many people say, well, if I can't measure it, my CEO is never going to invest in it.

Rand Fishkin: Awesome! That means your competitors will, right? That means your competitors have a chance.
Rand Fishkin: That's why this stuff works so well. Yeah.

Chloe Thomas: The difficult things are often the best ones to be doing. Hold it, Rand we're going to pause now for the mind of our sponsors and then we're going to talk about the wider world of content marketing.

Chloe Thomas: It's safe to say that most of us have been doing more shopping online lately, and if you're an eCommerce brand, that means you might be seeing more first-time customers. But once they made that first purchase, how do you keep them coming back? Well, that's what Klaviyo is for. Klaviyo is the ultimate email and SMS marketing platform for eCommerce brands. It gives you the tools to build your contact lists, some memorable emails, or to make key messages and more way, way, way more.

Chloe Thomas: Whether you're launching a new business or taking your brand to the next level, Klaviyo can help you get growing faster. And it's free to get started. Visit Klaviyo.com/masterplan to create your free account.

OK, Rand, so far, we've gone deep into putting your content on other people's platforms, now you get to wow us with your insight and knowledge about the whole of content marketing. So for the following questions, your answer can be anything to do with content marketing, which does, of course, include putting your content on other people's websites.

Chloe Thomas: Right, Rand. Are you ready for these? Rand: Let's do it. Chloe: OK, let's start with content marketing newbie advice. If we've inspired someone to take that first step with content marketing. What do they need to know to give themselves the best chance of success?

Rand Fishkin: Oh, unfortunately, Chloe, that list is incredibly long. And I don't think there's any way that I could possibly detail it all here. However, I will say my old company MORS, has a great beginner's guide to content marketing and SEO that might be worth investing in. It is free. When I say worth investing in because it is hours of reading and comprehending. So that might be worth checking out. I also have been very impressed by what the Content Marketing Institute folks have put out.

Rand Fishkin: You can find a number of great resources there.

Rand Fishkin: I have a couple of presentations on content marketing that someone could check out. I believe they are hosted on my old SlideShare. So if you go to yes, if you go to SlideShare.net/RandFish, you will find several presentations on content marketing that might be valuable one of interest that is a top answer.
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**Chloe Thomas:** And guys, we will link to all of that from the show to make it easy to find. OK, then once you've started, of course, you've got to Keep Optimising. So what's your favourite way to improve content marketing performance?

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**Rand Fishkin:** Gosh, I think the best way to improve it is to diagnose where you are experiencing a challenge. So content marketing, in my view, always should work like a flywheel. You make some kind of investment, right, you research what your audience wants, what you need to talk about, you publish some content around that on your own site or someone else's you amplify that content, then, you grow the subscriber base right. The people who pay attention to you and follow you on social channels are same people who sign up for the email updates on the blog or the website itself.

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**Rand Fishkin:** Right. And then you hopefully earn ranking signals that help your content reach more people through SEO and through Google as well. And then this flywheel continues. Right? You do it again, and you do it again the first few times, you're not very good at it, but then you start getting better and it starts working better. And because more people are subscribing, they're amplifying it more when you do publish it.

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**Rand Fishkin:** And then it reaches more people right!

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**Rand Fishkin:** This thing keeps spinning. Where you find the best improvements is when you identify a point of friction in that flywheel and then try and then work to solve it. So, for example, let's say that you are having a lot of problems earning amplification of your content on social like people are just not paying attention. You have very few followers when you post about it. Your content just doesn't do that well, it's a real struggle. So instead, try and figure it out, all right… who are the people that are influential on these social channels in my field to an audience that would care about this stuff.

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**Rand Fishkin:** Let me start relationship building with them. Let me run by to run my content by a few of them, like, hey, I'm reaching out like I don't need you to share this. Can you just tell me, is this worth amplifying? Like, am I missing something here? Why do you think maybe we're struggling, whatever it is. Right. It could bring in an agency or an expert to help you with it.

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**Rand Fishkin:** But fundamentally, you've identified the problem, like where in the flywheel am I stuck? And now you're working to solve that. That's where you get the best improvement when you invest.

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**Chloe Thomas:** I really like that. I never thought of it that way. I'm now analysing my own marketing flywheel foreign work is what I should be focusing next. But that's not what I'm supposed to do right now. What I am supposed to be doing right now is asking you the next question, Rand which is, it is
impossible to improve on marketing unless we're monitoring the performance, but the list of stuff we could monitor can be overwhelming. So what for you is the number one content marketing KPI?

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Rand Fishkin: Ah, it depends a little bit on where I'm working and what I'm working on. In general, the thing that I am personally most interested in for my content is the number of subscribers and for me, that's email subscribers. So that's like my number one metric for how is my content marketing going? Am I getting more email subscribers to my…. in the case of SparkToro, it's a blog, but it could be a news publication or it could be The Washington Post sends me their big digest update every day.

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Rand Fishkin: That KPI is so effective because email subscribers to my content are the most likely folks to turn into subscribers and customers of our product. But for another business, it might be a different story, right? It could be raw traffic for you. It could be that for you it's not raw traffic, it's the number of people who made it from the content to any product's page. And that's our KPI. We know if they visit a product page now, we can retarget them and do remarketing to them.

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Rand Fishkin: And that's our big conversion channel. So that's what we're trying. That's what our funnel looks like. But your funnel may look different, right? So you have to design an effective funnel, that is, and figure out where content fits in it and then see where people are going through that funnel and which is the point you can measure the activity that correlates best to conversions and more business.

[00:35:40.650]

Chloe Thomas: Nice.

[00:35:41.130]

Chloe Thomas: Again, I'm now thinking of all kinds of other things, but I'm going to keep focusing on getting this podcast done everyone. Don't worry. OK, finally, it's crystal ball time. What's coming up in the next six to twelve months that we should be getting ready for in content marketing?

[00:35:54.540]

Rand Fishkin: I think the pandemic will radically change consumer behaviour over this holiday season. I think obviously we've seen a massive lift in e-commerce in general. I think we'll continue to see that. I believe we will see, at least here in the United States. And that will probably be true for most of the Western Europe, maybe to a lesser degree, and the UK as well, which is we will see a lot of remote holiday types of celebration and a lot of remote gift giving.

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Rand Fishkin: So people sending things to people over the web, which is which is great. That's a very safe way to do things. I hope people do that. I mean, the covid-19 rates right now are mind-numbingly awful and so, so scary. And I would caution people against thinking that you can invest in content marketing on your own site right now if you haven't before, and build up a very effective practice before the holiday season. It's too soon.
Rand Fishkin: That's not going to work for you. You might be able to start making those investments today and have success in Q1 and Q2 of twenty twenty-one.

Rand Fishkin: But be prepared for that. What you can do right now is digital PR, right. That's what you call the off-site content, finding the publications where people are searching for solutions to their problem or where they are, you know, reading about things. There is a lot of content consumption happening right now. In the United States, there's a ton of people when I say a ton, I mean one hundred million-plus people whose addiction to news is going to quickly transfer to something else.

Rand Fishkin: They're in the habit of every day I spend three hours refreshing five thirty eight dotcom, seeing who's going to win the election. OK, what do I hit refresh on and read now?

Rand Fishkin: And you have an opportunity there, right? But those are going to be channels that they're already paying attention to. And so what I would encourage you to do is to consider; where can I go reach my audience? What are they paying attention to over the next 60 days and go get in those places.

Chloe Thomas: Nice, I like it. OK, well, Rand we are very nearly at the end of the show. So could you please let the listeners know where they can find you and your business on the web and social media plays.

Rand Fishkin: Sure, yeah, absolutely. For folks who want to give SparkToro a spin, it's free to try, as Chloe pointed out. So that's SparkToro.com. We have a forever free account. So you could just sign up for free.

Rand Fishkin: You never need to pay and keep using it. The best places to follow me? Well, it depends on what you want. If you are looking for an exclusively professional content and much less regularly, you can follow me on LinkedIn where I'm Rand Fishkin, if you are looking for a more full-featured life of Rand, which includes lots of pasta recipes, some politics, some economics, I tweet about that stuff that Twitter.com/Rand Fishkin and lots of marketing stuff as well.

Rand Fishkin: And then the blog where I publish content is SparkToro.com/blog. Chloe: Excellent!

Rand Fishkin: Rand thank you so much for being on the Keep Optimising podcast today. You've shared so many good insights and ways of looking at this amorphous side of marketing, I think has made it a lot clearer for all of us, certainly for me, if no one else. So thank you very much for being on the show.
Rand Fishkin: Yeah, my pleasure Chloe. Thank you. Take care.

Chloe Thomas: Well, lots of really cool inside out, particularly, I got it completely brain side tracked with the insider tips there and some of those ways I think, you know where to focus being that friction point on the flywheel and then also around what that KPI looks like. And yeah, that's just as you can tell, the brain's still wearing. Maybe, maybe I should have paused; maybe I should've left recording this bit till tomorrow.

Chloe Thomas: But lots of good insight there from Rand. And I think for me the key things around that digital PR or doing content marketing that doesn't exist on your site are to think widely about the sorts of things you could do to help the people you're reaching out to. Is it about being a guest on their show? Is it about writing content for them? Is it about giving them the products they write about you? What is it that you can do that would be really helpful for them?

Chloe Thomas: I love that idea of connecting warmly and so interacting on Twitter, on social media, starting the conversation on social media. So as they recognize you, when you're when you land in their inbox or getting that intro. And then I think the third part, which really resonated with me, was about trying to make sure that you are looking to both connect with the right businesses, but also that you're committing to this long term. So that long term, maybe it's a six-month campaign.

Chloe Thomas: Maybe this is something you do day in, day out. But the ROI comes in overtime as it all builds and builds and builds and builds.

Chloe Thomas: So I hope you found that as interesting as I have. You can find the links to this or those bits we discussed with these great resources Rand mentioned the full transcript of the episode, important notes and more at Keepoptimising.com. Remember, that's with an S, not a Z. And you know, if you want a bit more about Rand and his journey, then there's his book, “Lost and Found” a painfully honest field guide to the start-up world, which is available on Amazon as e-book and paperback.

Chloe Thomas: So thank you for tuning in to this episode of the Keep Optimising podcast. This month, we have no webinar because the Christmas and New Year diary issues have just taken their toll this month. So it's a webinar free month, which means you've got some time to catch up on any of our past episodes that you've missed. So a couple I would recommend, based on what we've been talking about in today's episode are; the PR episode, which comes out next week with Mark Hurk, because that's really going to build on how you go about outreach and why you might want to do it.

Chloe Thomas: We talk a lot about strategy appeal, strangely enough, office the PR episode and why not go back and have a listen to a whole month on SEO.
Keep Optimising Podcast: [https://keepoptimising.com](https://keepoptimising.com)

[00:42:15.550]
**Chloe Thomas**: So you got four episodes, about SEO numbers, six to nine. And I think, you know, there's a big overlap between outreach for content purposes and outreach for SEO purposes. So going back and having a listen to those will certainly help you on your outreach journey.

[00:42:33.340]
**Chloe Thomas**: Well, Please do tell your fellow marketers about the show, because I want to help as many marketers as possible to improve the performance of their marketing. Have a great week and make sure you listen to the next episode so I can help you to Keep Optimising your marketing.

[00:42:48.490]
**Chloe Thomas**: Access everything Keep Optimising at Keepoptimising.com.