Transcript of:

026 Content Marketing: How design fits into your content strategy with Shayne Tilley from 99designs

You're listening to the Keep Optimising podcast to increase your traffic, improve your conversion rates and grow your profits. Hello and welcome. If you're looking to improve the performance and return on investment of your marketing, then you've come to the right place. I'm Chloe Thomas, the host of this marketing focused podcast, and it's very, very cool to have you tuning in. We've recently had a very, very lovely review coming via Apple podcast.

So thank you very much for this one, Redds Gone Green. So Red's Gone Green from the US says that this is by far my favorite, best podcast to listen to, full of actionable tips that I can implement right away. Also, Chloe ask such great questions to the guests, then clarifies the answers so there's no confusion on the listener's part? Well, I am blushing slightly as I read that up. A huge thank you to you for putting that one up there.

Red's Gone Green and I am now feeling the pressure to live up to your review. So hopefully I will do just that in this episode, because today I'm talking to Shayne about content audits, blogs, strategy and graphic design, because this month we're all about content marketing. So in today's episode, I'm talking to someone who's been there and done it, creating content strategies for B2C, physical product retailers and also the hugely successful B2B e-commerce software company 99designs. Shayne sharing how he handled a full content refresh at 99designs, including how they analyze the past performance, how they put together the future strategy, how they updated and audited their past three thousand blog posts.

And of course, we get into how to improve the graphic design of your blogs, too, because it's not just about the text. Get ready for a mix of performance content design and SEO. We're going to meet Shayne in a second. But before we do, please do check out the sponsors. This podcast is brought to
you by Klaviyo, the ultimate eCommerce marketing platform for brands of all kinds and sizes. Whether you're an entrepreneur just starting out or you're part of a marketing team at a multinational brand, Klaviyo will give you everything you need to create memorable marketing moments, building customer relationships that keep shoppers coming back time and time again.

[00:02:18.240] - Chloe Thomas
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[00:02:29.500] - Chloe Thomas
Today, I'm chatting with content marketing expert Shayne Tilley Shayne is head of marketing at 99designs, and he's been in marketing for over fifteen years and has the perfect marketing aptitude list, a touch of nerd, a sprinkling of creativity and a dusting of mathematician. So as well as knowing how the numbers need to stack up, he's also very well versed in how the right design can totally change the results of a content strategy. Hello Shayne.

[00:02:58.360] - Chloe Thomas
Hello. Thank you for having me. It's great to have you here. Now, before we get into all that cool stuff around content strategy, how did you get into marketing?

[00:03:08.590] - Shayne Tilley
With the marketing! So I had a more traditional marketing background. So my first marketing roles were classic direct marketing, where we sent a lot of letters, where we made a lot of phone calls and we knocked a lot of doors. That was probably more than 15 years ago. And then by chance, I was given an opportunity for a very small company at the time called Side Point, which was an online-only company. And I was asked to lead their marketing efforts of a team of me.

[00:03:43.030] - Shayne Tilley
And it was really an introduction into the commencement of digital marketing and a different kind of marketing.

[00:03:50.020] - Shayne Tilley
And it was a little bit of a leap of faith from them and a leap of faith for myself.

[00:03:54.580] - Shayne Tilley
And fifteen years later, it's been a really remarkable journey to see how much the marketing ecosystem has evolved and really come to where we started almost fifteen years ago.
[00:04:09.220] - Chloe Thomas
Yes, it's kind of someone who also started off with a lot of paper and a lot of money to the postage people. It’s kind of interesting how the level of tracking we had back then now exists in so many different formats online. Hence, where the mathematician bit comes in.

[00:04:26.470] - Shayne Tilley
Yeah, it was beautiful just seeing the ability to understand the impact of the work we were doing in almost real time. I remember a magical moment in Google Analytics where we launched an EDM campaign and I could see the number of people looking at that page right now. And it kept going up and up and up. And it was just illuminating into the level of insights that we could gleam and how we could better serve our customers by observing what they were actually doing, as well as having them share their feedback to us.

[00:05:02.410] - Shayne Tilley
And obviously we've learned from we continue to learn, we don't have all the answers it hasn't illuminated everything. But just being able to see the impact of that work and continue to iterate and optimize and do things better is what's kept me around to a larger degree for a long period of time.

[00:05:22.120] - Chloe Thomas
And that's what we're here to talk about today, how to optimize your content marketing to take it to the next level, because I think I've certainly over this year have worked with and advised a number of eCommerce businesses who are in that bizarre situation where they don't have enough stock to supply the demand. And so they're marketing manpower has had to be shifted to these softer marketing methods.

[00:05:48.430] - Chloe Thomas
And it's a lovely problem to have, but it's a very weird one. Where are you going? Yeah, turn off the Google ads. They point in running them. You know, I'm pulling faces of shock because I still can't believe we've done that in various places this year. But it's that side to the moving self, to places like content and like social. And I think it's led to a recognition of something which we've all known all along but a lot of people haven't paid attention to, which is actually there's doing content for the sake of content and there's doing content that actually delivers.

[00:06:20.890] - Chloe Thomas
And within that, of course, is graphic design, which is what you're hear kind of to major on, on today Shayne! So why does the graphic design element have such an impact when the Internet works on text?
Yeah, I mean, you can imagine, you know, even go back in time and look at the magazines and the publications that we read or maybe even still read. And and they are all styled in a different way. They all delivered information and content in different ways. And there were certain aesthetics and qualities that we really gravitated towards as individuals, depending on where we're at my life. And it's the the same rules apply with the content that you create from a branding point of view.

You know, are you trying to present your brand narrative in a certain way and make your readers or clients or customers feel a certain type of affinity when they read what you are producing, whether that's on your own site, whether that's through your social media content creation and bringing design and branding, thinking to the content that you produce can really help amplify and give you a real point of difference and repeated branding impressions in the way in which you're aspiring to be with your customers or clients.

The other design consideration is helping people consume your content and actually taking a design thinking approach to making it very easy for people to read your blog post or your content. And how do we communicate clearly with structure, with my spacing, with good typography, to really make sure that all the investment you put in creating this content doesn't get lost in the legibility or difficulty in actually reading it. We don't want to be putting out blobs of text that no one has time to or the energy or the will to try to work their way through.

It's kind of like, I think back to when I first started off in this industry. It's like fifteen odd years ago. We try impressively long paragraphs and now a paragraph of more than one sentence is a rare beast, isn't it, because it makes it more readable.

Yeah, I had an old mentor give me a rule of thumb many years ago about no paragraph should read more than three and a half lines.

If it's more than three and a half lines, it's whatever comes next or the whole paragraph itself will probably not get.

So that's been a sort of sometimes you break those rules and some long form content necessitates more than that. But that's your starting point. The other challenge I give my team and others when
talking about content is, I assure you, in review and editing, you could say the exact same thing you have produced in draft with half the words and probably have more meaning. So reducing word counts to deliver the same value is an amazing thing. You know, you might get caught in the sort of SEO narrative of it's got to be as many words as possible.

[00:09:28.550] - Shayne Tilley
But I think that's a notion of a distant past. And that's now how well can you communicate and deliver what people are looking for? And pulling bits out can actually be a virtue.

[00:09:39.980] - Chloe Thomas
Especially, as you know, Google will be flipping to user experience as a key part of that search algorithm. That ten thousand-word piece on how to reboot your computer is going to be as powerful as the hundred-word piece that shows you how to reboot your computer is a Google or indexing on mobile, and that's going to look horrible.

[00:10:04.040] - Shayne Tilley
Or even voice like these, like how to restart your PC. Like, I've got to be able to respond in language and I can't do that with a ten thousand words step by step guide. So you know that shorter form, very direct answers to specific questions can be as formative in a modern content strategy as that long-form approach that worked well and still in some instances does, but not always.

[00:10:29.810] - Chloe Thomas
It's interesting that you mention about how do people actually read the content we're producing? Because on this podcast, we've just done our social media month where the only time we really talked about content more than a tweet or an Instagram photo was when we were talking about fact. You need some content to talk about on social media.

[00:10:48.950] - Shayne Tilley
Yeah.

[00:10:49.400] - Chloe Thomas
Which is such a throw away way of thinking about content because it takes time to research, to write, to pull together, to get the graphics, to edit it. So it's actually usable to set it up on the site, to launch it, to see to it, etc. And I think it's something which historically we've been quite bad about thinking about. And we have to put out one blog a month. Oh, I've done my blog.
[00:11:13.460] - Chloe Thomas
Brilliant. I'll go and work on something else for a couple of weeks and then I'll come back and we don't actually we're very bad about thinking about how people consume our content. I know that's what you've been doing a lot of looking into. Yes.

[00:11:23.740] - Shayne Tilley
It's one of the gaps in the middle that's often overlooked. And I can understand why, because a lot of our focus is cool how many people are arriving and that's great.

[00:11:31.880] - Shayne Tilley
And then what do they go on and do? Do they go and read another piece of content or go and buy my product ideally or give me their email address? But understanding what's happening in the middle is really important to facilitating that transition and meaningful way. Even at ninety nine for our own blog many years ago, we wanted to redesign it as you do. And the first question we asked ourselves was at what point do people drop off? And we realised that such a small percentage of people actually got to the end and we had to take a hard look at the way in which we're presenting our content, the types of articles we were writing and how we were writing them, the way we used images and aspire to set a goal of improving that performance, to increase the number of people so engaged in that piece of content that they get to the end.

[00:12:24.440] - Shayne Tilley
And that was a real masthead statistic for our blog redesign to make sure that we are actually fulfilling that potential of that content to as many people as we could, knowing that, that creates because we take a quality first approach creates that sense of trust, that sense of affinity, and will ultimately drive people to either come back later or continue to explore the 99designs ecosystem if it's the first time that they've come.

[00:12:55.860] - Chloe Thomas
You said you did or this this piece did you come up with kind of like a rulebook of these are the things that blog posts will stick to blog posts for the time being? I think it's something which everyone can stand.

[00:13:06.510] - Chloe Thomas
Did you come up with like almost like a rule book of how to create a blog post more engaging?

[00:13:13.050] - Shayne Tilley
We did, it was complicated. So we first we have to understand where people are dropping off. And then we looked at the different types of content we were creating. And was there any differences in what people were getting through or not. And that helped shaped listicle versus long
form shortfall. And this inspiration and lots of images, not many images. So we started to understand what types of content people were consuming more of and less, and then sort of bringing some of those design elements to other types of content to see that would that would help.

[00:13:44.850] - Shayne Tilley
We also looked at writers, so we use a diverse set of writers for our blog. It's not the same person, the same voice where the different writing styles that we're getting more engagement than others and start to sort of breakdown and interpret that. And then we came up with a bit of an overarching strategy kind of, he's the type of writer that we're looking for. And we're always recruiting new writers under that sort of thematic, but also then defining we call it a magazine article or a book chapter.

[00:14:19.740] - Shayne Tilley
And we sort of create, allocate based on what demand we're trying to capture, whether this needs to be a magazine or whether it can be a book, whether it needs to be a book and have a much more significant investments. So we got very granular with the types of content we create, who writes and all the different visual elements that we would place to really optimize around that reading experience. I mean, the moment we did that, we started to see an amazingly positive response from Google, from search when we were showing them that this was the place to actually fulfill upon that thing that, that person was looking for.

[00:14:56.880] - Shayne Tilley
You know, we've grown significantly since that change was put in place.

[00:15:03.120] - Chloe Thomas
I like that because it's what anyone can do. We can all look at past blogs and go, oh, well, this is one where we just talk about new products. This is when we talk about behind the scenes. And this is when we talk about Lookbook. And I think every eCommerce business has got a mix. If they actually went back and looked to see what those different ones are, to then go, which ones have get the views, which ones get the bounce back bounce rates, which ones get the dwell time.

[00:15:26.730] - Chloe Thomas
Yeah. And just simply you can go. Well, no one cares when we say new product, but everyone cares if we go behind the scenes. Let's do more behind the scenes. It's such a simple thing. Yep. Yep.

[00:15:38.130] - Shayne Tilley
And you might still need to fill some of the content voids in the user journey with particular types of content like reviews and all that sort of stuff. But yeah, I like to fulfill a branding execution, all that sort of stuff. It's absolutely, you know, look at the other, I guess the other caution I would say is you
start to explore some of these engagement metrics is to not just look at for the time on site to actually look at like where people are getting to, because I can open a blog post and sit there for five minutes whilst doing other things.

[00:16:09.810] - Shayne Tilley
And it still looks as though I'm there. You can use Google events to track. Cool. I just got to twenty five percent of the page. Yeah, I just got the fifty. Yeah. I just got to say I got to the end so you can actually build different trigger points throughout the page to help you understand where they're getting to rather than are they just sitting on your, your introduction and tweeting them on Twitter or browsing Facebook.

[00:16:36.600] - Chloe Thomas
Yeah, I love it when you can get those kind of stats, because I think a lot often times people dwell on bounce rate and it's like, well, yes, bounce rate is a measure of how good your content is. It's also a measure of how accurately the things that drove the person to that page did at driving them to a good page is like, oh, I'm going to be going to fess up here. My website, eCommercemasterplan.com has almost always is its best, but most visited page a page which relates to the first book I wrote, which is about "The five eCommerce Business Structures"

[00:17:09.720] - Chloe Thomas
So Mail Order Marketplace is online only, etc., which for some unknown reason ranks really well and has done for years on a Google search for eCommerce business structure, the rest of the page of which is people looking for team structure, not business type. And so lots of people click to it and are wildly disappointed, wildly disappointed by my content, but it's not the pages fault. It's because Google, for some unknown reason, wants to thank me for this.

[00:17:39.850] - Chloe Thomas
And so we can't wholly rely on that balance. Right. So we can get those events set up. It's groundbreaking and really understanding your content.

[00:17:49.720] - Shayne Tilley
And you touched on a really fascinating point, it's eventually Google figures that out, like that post will rank until Google realizes that this is not the best destination for me to send people searching for that.

[00:18:01.510] - Shayne Tilley
It'll start to understand the missed intent because it will look at who goes back to Google and goes to the second result or the third result or searches for something slightly different, because the context that Google thinks you're looking for is wrong and it will learn. And and I talk content
strategy being a long term investment in understanding how you produce and present a piece of content to meet an intent better than anyone else in the world will mean you’ll have a future proofed content strategy that will continue to deliver value long after the initial success that you might be feeling now.

[00:18:38.650] - Chloe Thomas
And all good long term content strategy start with a core of being able to produce and present a piece of content that delivers against the content better than anyone else. And it's exciting to be part of teams that are able to find that groove. And it's very hard to have that traffic taken away.

[00:19:01.930] - Chloe Thomas
And I love the fact you bring up that long term strategy, because one of the things I've written down I really need to ask you is when you did this big content review, did you then go back and amend posts that were already life to bring them up to spec?

[00:19:16.790] - Shayne Tilley
Yeah, that was one of the very first things we did was a content audit, we called it. So we looked at everything we had produced across many years. 99design had been around at that point for I think seven or eight years. So a lot of accumulated content debt. And we looked at every single blog post we had and went, OK, what do we want to rewrite? Because it's great, but it's irrelevant. What do we want to just let go?

[00:19:46.870] - Shayne Tilley
Because it was some random tidbit about an event that no one cared about and we just deleted it. And then what do we want to consolidate? So post we want to bring together because they made a broader into something like that. So we cleaned up our content that as a part of that re instantiation of our blog, that was really important.

[00:20:08.080] - Shayne Tilley
And we you know, we looked at all of the reason we produce this content might be, in this case, the rank for a particular time. Like, who was ranking and what were they writing that we were on and all that sort of stuff. So it was a very rigorous over three thousand posts at that point, one by one actually taking, crossing, moving as we look to inject new life into our tableau and in terms of patience, to maybe put fear, but also excitement at the long term viability.

[00:20:40.630] - Shayne Tilley
We set out on a three year journey of rebuilding our blog from the ground up.
And that's the time we set ourselves to get good at this again.

And we turned what was about fifty to sixty thousand first time visitors a month to our blog to over a million in that three years.

So that was the journey just our blog went on over a long period of time.

Wow! There'll be a lot of people going three years. A new content strategies were long term things, but three years I guess you've said that the you know, you changed who you were writing what who was writing what you were writing. You went back three thousand on pace was clearly not something. It's going to happen overnight, is it?

But what was the did you think new content or past content was the core one to fix first.

Past content! Because we wanted to have a good quality signal for what we wanted. Everything that was indexed to visit us all was great. And we wanted to reduce that sort of signal to noise ratio of good to frankly not very good and really make sure that anything anyone read, you know, delivered value, but also told Google we delivered value and to make that strike rate as high as possible, then build the faith, build the cool 99designs whatever they create is great and says about value.

So I'm going to give them a bit of the benefit of the doubt in the new stuff they create and give it a shot quicker.

And what we found the result was we were ranking faster with the new stuff because the old stuff was actually, you know, consistently good and not be afraid to delete a bad post that's not creating value for you, even though you might have really enjoyed producing it because it could be costing you more than it could be helping.
[00:22:38.500] - Chloe Thomas
And three or one redirecting it, I'm guessing, too. Yeah, for the most part, yeah. Oh, for the most part, I suppose you have to have some material on redirect it to, don't you

[00:22:47.450] - Shayne Tilley
Yeah, with three or one redirected everything. I mean we're going to get a bit SEO in the moment, but I want everything.

[00:22:53.170] - Shayne Tilley
But we, we wanted to make sure we had a good alternative or we just throw that one to the main blog page.

[00:23:01.300] - Shayne Tilley
I mean, you get some soft redirects. We know this new one isn't really like the old one.

[00:23:07.180] - Shayne Tilley
And so we have to we have some clean ups to do. So we did some fortin's, which is how Google this content no longer exists and never come back to make sure our indexation was healthy.

[00:23:19.590] - Chloe Thomas
So I just want I do want to get to SEO. That was perfect, but I just didn't want everyone want to go, wow, we no longer sell dog food. Let's just delete everything on dog food and leave it hanging out of the box.

[00:23:30.850] - Shayne Tilley
Yeah. You want to basically eliminate a page. [mumbled].

[00:23:36.670] - Chloe Thomas
Exactly. I don't want people coming in. We did what you and Shayne said. Yeah. And like oh so we had to add in that little health warning around deleting, deleting blogs.

[00:23:46.480] - Chloe Thomas
But, one of the things which it strikes me, especially when I look at my own blogs, which are dire for this, I'm terrible at this, is these days I expect to see quite a large number of images as we go through a blog post, and having been thinking about this month of content that we're doing at the moment, actually I find that I want those images to feel like I'm in the right place. You know, if I'm on
someone's site, which is normally graphics and illustrations, and suddenly there's some hideous corporate stock photography, which just doesn't hideous because it doesn't fit, I should say, that tends to gel.

[00:24:24.260] - Chloe Thomas
So with that, there's some kind of rules of thumb you can give the guys on how to get the graphics right.

[00:24:32.600] - Shayne Tilley
There's two ways, one is to do it yourself. And I would really encourage you to come up with a style guide, a branding guide for the content that you produce, which should be a natural extension of your brand assets and your own brand guide site to create a version that's a blog post or social media post and to kind of know and be able to define and articulate what that is. And then two directions. One is you can go and get help. And I'm happy to share sort of our structure because we invest as much in design as we do in the words.

[00:25:05.930] - Shayne Tilley
I'll talk to that in a minute, or if we can do it yourself to build out templates to get consistency. So to use a tool like canvas, for example, and have, you know, your hero image in your colors, in your style and your theme just to create that consistency in that repeatability. Alternatively, you could look to engage with a designer.

[00:25:29.250] - Shayne Tilley
You could come to 99designs, there are many of them and actually talk to someone and either work on a case by case basis or, you know, go on a more like ongoing relationship where you might say, cool, we're going to produce three of these a month and we'd love you to create the hero image and the image images for us and sort of work, work with them long term. So we have a 99designs designer on our platform who creates all our blog images for us, know we use our own platform.

[00:25:59.000] - Shayne Tilley
The other thing we have is a formula. So we we have a formula of whose job it is to lay out a blog post beautifully for us. It's like a typesetter, like a layout.

[00:26:10.310] - Shayne Tilley
You know, when we produce newspapers, I'm not sure that the technical word, but they'd take all the articles and sort of lay them out into it. That's the same thing.
[00:26:18.650] - Shayne Tilley
So someone comes through all that content and just lays it out beautifully and make sure it does honor our content production style guide and really make sure that we put our best foot forward.

[00:26:33.020] - Shayne Tilley
That might be a bit over the top and difficult initially. But once you start to create some tangible value from your content, then reinvest in it and look to bring some of that typographic and layout consideration to the stuff you produce. But, you know, find some good help to do. That would be my advice.

[00:26:53.750] - Chloe Thomas
I love the fact you said you've got the kind of blog layout person who does all of them, because I think it's having run businesses where I have multiple people writing blog post, the lack of consistency used to drive me insane and trying to teach everyone what to H tag, where to put images, what the images should look like, how to resize the images, how to tag the images and all the rest of it was an absolute nightmare. So I love the idea of even in the smallest business, you can nominate someone as the person who puts those blog posts up.

[00:27:22.490] - Chloe Thomas
And that must just create so much more consistency from a brand and a reader readership.

[00:27:27.800] - Shayne Tilley
Yeah, like if I was to say, come and write and share some of your insights on 99designs Chloe, I'd be saying, cool, I want you to focus on the story you want to tell. Don't worry about the layout, the composition, how to break it down. We're going to help you with that. I just want to get as much of your wisdom as your insights out into a doc and then let the professionals who know how to turn that into a beautiful, laid out visual story.

[00:27:52.960] - Shayne Tilley
How help you tell that in a more profound way. But I don’t want you wasting a second of your time on that. So. Yeah! And I guess that consistency maintains that preserves that quality. Yeah. It's good for a number of reasons.

[00:28:06.500] - Chloe Thomas
And you mentioned investing there. So why would you spend as much time and effort on the layout and the graphics as you would on the text itself?
[00:28:16.430] - Shayne Tilley
No, it’s probably about a third. We invest to what we would pay for the production. So yes, we invest the most in the writing in the words itself, because no content can exist without it. But yeah, so we probably invest about a third more on top of that to design and present it in a beautifully consistent way.

[00:28:38.420] - Chloe Thomas
So all of you out there who spend two hours writing it and five minutes loading it up, that should be an hour.

[00:28:45.950] - Shayne Tilley
Well, we say exactly. That’s a great way to put it. Yeah. I mean, then you should probably spend three hours distributing it, but we can get into that at a different point.

[00:28:56.770] - Chloe Thomas
Yeah. We’ll hold off on distribution today simply because I think we’ve covered a lot of great stuff there, Shayne, so we’re now going to pause for a mind of our sponsors and then we’ll be talking about the wider world of content marketing.

[00:29:11.870] - Chloe Thomas
Success in twenty twenty-one means building stronger relationships with your customers last year saw a lot of consumers switching to buy online, leading to surges in new customer acquisition. So how are you planning on turning your new first time buyers into profitable repeat customers? Well, that’s what Klaviyo is for. Klaviyo helps businesses create memorable marketing moments through email, SMS and personalized website experiences. And that is what creates repeat purchases. That’s why Klaviyo, the ultimate eCommerce marketing platform, is used by over fifty thousand eCommerce brands around the world.

[00:29:46.790] - Chloe Thomas
Get started with your free account today. Visit klaviyo.com/masterplan, thats klaviyo.com/masterplan.

[00:29:57.460] - Chloe Thomas
OK, Shayne, so far, we’ve gone deep into the power of our content, getting people to read it and the strategy of doing our content, content reorganisations I suppose. So now you get to wow us with your insider knowledge about the whole of content marketing. So for the following questions, your answer can be anything to do with content marketing, which of course does include everything we’ve already talked about.
So Shayne you ready for this? I’m ready.

Ok, let’s start with content marketing newbie advice. If we’ve inspired someone to take their first step with content marketing, what do they need to know to give themselves the best chance of success?

Chloe, so I think number one is know where your audience is, know where they’re consuming content. And that’s really important in understanding where you should focus your attention. I use a really good example. I spent some time with an equestrian retailer and they wanted to increase their content production schedule. And my cool. That sounds great. Awesome. I love it. Where are you going to put it? And they wanted for some reason for it all to be on Twitter.

My Twitter? I’m like, doesn’t intuitively make sense. Let’s go and talk and see how many equestrienne people are on Twitter. And it was comparibly really small to somewhere like Facebook. And we explored it and like well, horse enthusiasts are often riding the horse. They don’t have lots of little points of time. They’re like focused in another area. They get to an evening and then they go and look at beautiful pictures on Facebook.

And, it’s like I thought, this is where your content strategy needs to live because no one’s talking about horses on Twitter. They’re all doing it on Facebook. So lean to that when it comes to producing great content.

So know where your audience is. And then secondly, produce value, not just content. We just spoke about how to think about the value of your content and the value in it over how many leads and sales you might ultimately get. Be super patient. We had a three year run rate. You should see results much sooner than that. But, you know, the end is is potentially eternal. So just be patient. You understand that a well produced piece of content that ranks well can continue to deliver value for years to come.
Like the piece of content you mentioned before, Chloe. So it's not about SEM where it's like I pay for an ad. How much does that turn into a customer?

You can actually think a lot more long-term. Distribute, which we won’t talk about, but be ready to go and share your content in various ways. In various places, rule of thumb is about fifty-fifty production.

The distribution is how I approach a lot of our key content pieces and then finally build systems, build repeatable systems. So, understand the workflow of how to turn a piece of content into a reality, systemize it so you can repeat and optimize and keep actually making creating content easier and cheaper, and more effective every time you do it. And that over a long period of time can be quite magical.

I love that last point in particular. I think a lot of people think that content has to be, think of it as an art rather than a science. And I think that means they forget that they can systematize it. Okay. Now, once you've started, of course, you've got to Keep Optimising. So what's your favourite way to improve content marketing performance?

So it's to have the right measures in place. And I've spoken a lot about optimizing inside the content. But what I also really encourage people to do is understand what value means for you. So it might be leads, it might be sales, it might just be brand affinity. And that's OK. So to start with your not star of an outcome of value and then work back from there and have measures in place to go cool in order to get a lead, they've got to give me their email address.

OK, how do I prompt for an email address and what's the right way to do that. OK, cool. I've got to get them to that prompt, you know, and work backwards and really start knowing that some of your big improvements might be further down that journey. So it's not always about traffic. It could just be about an elegant way to ask for someone's email address or a relevant way or a different way and sort of be ready to optimize at any part of that reader turned client turned customer journey.

But you've got to understand ultimately what your value is or you'll end up creating content for content sake. And that's never good for anyone. No.
[00:34:28.240] - Chloe Thomas
And it creates when you have to go back and do an audit, it creates an awful lot of stuff to trudge through.

[00:34:34.360] - Shayne Tilley
Yeah! like three thousand really challenging posts to go through one by one, and quickly decide what to do with them, that sort of thing. Yes

[00:34:42.100] - Chloe Thomas
Yeah! Save your future self, only create content that fits with what you’re trying to get people to do.

[00:34:47.530] - Shayne Tilley
If you can send this podcast back a few years and time and put that somewhere in my office. I love it.

[00:34:54.640] - Chloe Thomas
Yeah, I like that idea. Time traveling podcast. OK! It's impossible to improve our marketing unless we’re monitoring the performance by the list of stuff we could monitor can be overwhelming. So what for you is the number one content marketing KPI?

[00:35:12.540] - Shayne Tilley
Its long term return on investment. And I say that with a very deep level of, I even attribute my own time and I put a value to that. And I pay myself and make sure that the time I’m investing in the content that we’re producing and the distribution we make and the hosting bill we pay and everything we do at a channel level is getting better and better.

[00:35:34.110] - Shayne Tilley
So I look at all our content and go, cool, what's the channel return on investment?

[00:35:38.460] - Shayne Tilley
And it might be not profitable to begin with, but it builds on itself and then starts to actually get to a positive return on investment that you might invest in creating more content. And so, yeah, it's really just making sure you're costing everything in your production processes, including your own time, and then understanding what the value is of the value you get out of that interest and presentation you get.
Excellent.

I love the bit about putting some value against time because I think a lot of people think content is free, it so isn't free.

It's not free! and it's stopping you from doing something else. And is that a more effective use of your time or not? So understanding your own effective hourly rate and applying that to everything you do is a really kind of critical part of your own time management, as much as growing your business, which is a great stick to force you to delegate and systematize as well.

It's super hard, it's really hard, particularly with content you love to talk about. And you're like, I really want to labour over this piece of content for ten hours because I want to share my wisdom with the world. But like, that's starting to add up really quickly when you've got a double that or at a bit more on distribution and then you've got to find maybe help to get it formatted beautifully. And so it can be a trap at times as well.

Oh, yes. Ok, finally, it's crystal ball time. What's coming up in the next six to twelve months, we should be getting ready for with our content marketing.

I think voice is a big one. So, you know, this is a sort of an interesting SEO nuance, it's like being able to produce content that can be used in a voice response.

And I think that's really exciting and challenging and shorter is better. You know, getting to the point is better. I think beyond that, it's just all the different choices we've now got to produce content, whether that's from your traditional blog strategy through to getting all authentic talk. You know, there are so many different places to house that content and being really good at knowing where the greatest value long-term comes from.
And you aim for knowing where your target market is as a starting point, but just knowing exactly where the biggest bang for the buck will come, because we have got a big team and it’s exciting, but even we struggle to keep across all the different social platforms, all the different, you know, global markets. It's you know, it's a challenge for everyone.

Yeah. And far better to do one well than lots badly.

And I couldn’t agree with you more, you know, going on a channel rather than spread yourself too thin because, you know, they’re not adage of like “be great at one thing or horrible at many”.

And the harsh reality of the competitive of content. Whatever you’re thinking about writing tomorrow, a thousand other people are probably already working on it today. So, you know, being exceptionable in one way, in one place can really help you stand out and then own that space and then look to expand in time. And that’s the patience and allow others to play in other areas is also hard at times as well.

OK, Shayne, we’re very nearly at the end of the show, so could you please let the listeners know where they can find you and 99designs on the web and social media, please?

So I think we have even created a special URL. We can find 99designs at 99designs.com if you do forward-slash keep dash optimising (/Keep Optimising). I think we’ve got a special offer for everyone so you can go and enjoy that. You can find me on Twitter a little bit at @ShayneTilley, but you’re better off visiting me at ShayneTilley.com and dropping me an email. It’s much more likely to get a response.

Available everywhere but fastly available via Twitter and email Shayne. Love it, Shayne, thanks so much for being on the Keep Optimising podcast today for putting together a special offer for our listeners as well, because I'm sure that's going to get a few of them giving 99designs ago and in the show notes without a link. Go to my blog post of how I've used 99designs to come on with my podcast Logo. So if you’re looking at your phone right now that logo you're seeing, that is a piece of 99designs work and I couldn’t have come up with it without them, as you will discover when you read the blog post, We'll put a link to that in the show notes for you.
[00:40:13.270] - Chloe Thomas
So Shayne. Thanks so much for coming on. It’s been fascinating talking content with you. So thank you.

[00:40:19.300] - Shayne Tilley
It’s been a pleasure. Thanks so much for having me.

[00:40:21.770] - Chloe Thomas
Well, didn’t we cover a lot with Shayne there? We talked about content, audit, what to do with the old stuff, how to get your house in order, how you could go about building your rule book of who, what, the focus, what you need things for. We talked graphics of course, because the way it looks is key template. Tools like Kambah or systems like 99designs are particularly good. We talked about running crowdsourced competitions to find your ideal design and designer and he also shared that great piece of advice.

[00:40:51.950] - Chloe Thomas
I thought around the fact that your creations should be two thirds text, one third graphic, and layout and then spend all that time again on distribution. Now, if you want to get the great off we mentioned so you can give 99designs a go yourself, then you’ll find all that at 99designs.com/Keep Optimising, optimising with an S of course, and you can get the links to that offer and everything else we discussed and the full transcript of this episode and much more at Keepoptimising.com remember with an S not a Z

[00:41:26.250] - Chloe Thomas
I actually have one of the listeners telling me it was with an S not a Z this week.

[00:41:29.630] - Chloe Thomas
So clearly that message is starting to get through. Repetition, all about the repetition. Well then, thank you very much for tuning in to this episode of the #keepoptimising podcast. If you have enjoyed this episode, then do check out our recent social media episodes where we touch on how to distribute your content, which, of course, is going to really help you build on everything you’re learning in our content month. Please do also tell your fellow marketers about the show, because it’s my aim to help as many marketers as possible to improve the performance of their marketing.
[00:41:59.090] - Chloe Thomas
And I can't do that if we're not all spreading the word and getting them listening. So have a great week and make sure you listen to the next episode so I can help you to Keep Optimising your marketing. Access everything Keep Optimising at #keepoptimising.com, that's with an S, not a Z.