

How To Master SEO by “Testing” with Kyle Roof

Daryl Rosser: Hey guys, welcome back to another episode of the Lion Zeal show. In this episode, I'm sitting down with Kyle Roof, and we're discussing his SEO agency, and more specifically how he has basically the cutting edge of every other SEO, and every other agency because he does testing. So a lot of people know about the idea of testing. The idea that you can go out there and you can test different SEO's to really know what exactly is working today, rather than relying on other people's guesses and estimates, and supposedly tests that they're doing. You actually do the test yourself, and you know exactly what's working with SEO.

So if you don't know Kyle already, he runs the SEO intelligence agency along with Dori Friends, and basically he's a very good SEO that does testing. In this interview, what we're breaking down is how exactly he does tests, we're actually breaking down some of the actual test results he's done, and you have to take his work for it unless you've tested it for yourself. But also you're going to learn obviously how to do the testing yourself.

So, breaking down those two things, and I'm also breaking down his agency and how he built this up to- I can't even remember now, but I think it was like 10, 13 people, or something like that, working for his agency. So he done an SEO agency, and he's a prolific SEO tester, so we're going to discuss both of those things, how they tie together, and how ultimately being able to test the time, and knowing what works with SEO helps him scale his agency.

So that's what we're discussing in the interview, it's a really good one. I really hope you guys get a ton of value out of it. So with that said, let's jump straight into it, enjoy.

Kyle, hey man. Thank you for joining me on the show today, it's cool to have you here.

Kyle Roof: Thank you so much for having me, I appreciate it.

Daryl Rosser: So for anyone that doesn't know you already, do you want to introduce yourself, and explain what it is that you do.

Kyle Roof: Sure. My name is Kyle Roof. I am a reformed lawyer, I practiced law as a trial attorney for four years, and I decided that I hated it and I needed to take a sabbatical for a year, and I did the most logical thing and I moved to South Korea.

My one year sabbatical in South Korea turned into five years, and while I was there, I started a web design and development company. I think these are all logical life choices.

Daryl Rosser: This makes sense.

Kyle Roof: A to B, really. A to B to C.

My brother does web development and I brought him into the business, and we were basically sub-contracting out to a lot of guys that were working in India, and I had the bright idea, I was like hey you know what? Why don't we go open a company in India, instead of sub-contracting? And so my brother was in, and we go to India, and we go to this town called Dehradun, which is in the foothills of the Himalayas. We start a company, we get employees, and then I leave to go back to the US for a little bit, and my brother is there, and the next thing you know, my brother has been arrested by the police. They've raided our place, they've taken all of our computer equipment, and they've chased off all our employees.

They were saying that we didn't have the right paperwork. And my brother was like we do have the right paperwork because we did this all above board. And the police chief tells my brother you have two choices. You can wait until the magistrate comes to sort this out, or you can leave town tomorrow. And my brother goes, well when does the magistrate come, and the police chief goes I don't know. So my brother's like I think I'll leave town tomorrow.

So he leaves, and so at this point we're haemorrhaging clients, and he was doing development. We had just started, I got the bright idea because I'm a savvy businessman, of doing SEO because this could be recurring income. So my brother takes four development clients that he can handle, he's like I can take these four, and then I'm looking at how I'm going to make money, I was like I'll take the SEO clients and at that point, I realized I need to learn SEO.

Daryl Rosser: That would probably help.

Kyle Roof: Yeah, this was also the point in my life, I had invested about \$30,000 into this venture and this was the point in my life where I had \$31,000. So I was basically at the end of it, and the options were SEO or bust. That's when I decided to learn SEO. I was like I need to learn SEO this very moment. So what had happened, I did what I think a lot of people do, that I searched what is SEO. You get a lot of nonsense. So then I started kind of piecing some things together, but then you realize there were ranking factors, and is this a ranking factor, and you get nine idiots that say yes, nine idiots that say no, and nine very learned idiots that say maybe.

Daryl Rosser: When was this by the way?

Kyle Roof: This was 2012, 2013.

Daryl Rosser: Okay.

Kyle Roof: So I decided what I should do is just create test sites, and then that's probably what people are doing, I was like I think this is what SEO's do, they create test sites and they can tinker with them, and then that's how I started to learn SEO. And now I have a firm that I co founded with my business partner, his name is Andrew Steven, it's called High Voltage SEO, it's how this firm going, and in 2015 I was invited to speak at a conference, SEO Rockstars. They're like, what do you want to talk about? And I was like I could talk about the test I'm doing, maybe as a refresher for people. Again, thinking this is what SEO people did. So I get to this conference, and I show like, well I'm doing these single variable tests, kind of using the scientific method, and this is how I've adapted it to the algorithm, and I realized quite quickly that people aren't doing this.

Daryl Rosser: No.

Kyle Roof: SEO's aren't doing this at all, so then that's also in addition to my agency, then SIA started the SEO intelligence agency where every month I do these single variable tests and we present them to the group and it's a group of SEO professionals that are paying membership to see the tests and to see the results and get into it. So that's what I do, I have an agency where we have about 50 clients, we have an office in Phoenix, an office in Berlin, and an office in Melbourne. We have ten employees. I'm also the lead tester for SIA, where I do the single variable tests on the algorithm to figure out what works.

Daryl Rosser: That's cool man. I'm curious 'cause you're right, most people do not test whatsoever, how did you- I presume the question people have, is how do you manage to test while managing 50 clients and having an agency and a business that actually does SEO while testing SEO?

Kyle Roof: The biggest thing is having a staff and a business partner, that's a big thing. But you know, actually what helped is out there, was actually- and maybe a lot of people actually miss this, is writing down the processes. Like how do you do X, write down every step. Actually have a process together, tweak it, figure it out, and then you can grow your agency where you can have employees doing SEO work because you have it out step by step. But then basically what I'm trying to do there is boil them down to single variable tests. The concept is that we can get an environment in Google, and then change one thing and then we can see whether that is or is not a ranking factor, is what I'm doing.

So what we'll do, is we'll start with a fake keyword, so a word that doesn't exist in Google's database so it'll pick out a long term, and then you type that in and you'll see a page which says this doesn't exist in Google's results. What you get at that point is that any pages that you create that are optimized for that term, are your pages. Those are the only ones that exist. So often what we'll do is we'll

create five pages and we'll index them in our most standard test, and then often what we'll do is we'll tweak the third result. And so then when we tweak that third result for whatever the factor is that we're testing, if it goes up then we know that's a positive factor, down, a negative factor, no movement, it's not a factor.

The idea's that there aren't any other factors, because again we're trying to eliminate as many factors as we can within the algorithm. There are times in tests where you have to use different domains, so in those situations we'll buy completely fresh domains, so we're launching five completely fresh domains at the same time. Again, in order to eliminate as many factors as possible.

Daryl Rosser: Okay, interesting man. How do you come up with the ideas of what to test? I presume it just kind of comes up, like as an SEO you're just kind of fascinated-

Kyle Roof: Sure, in the simplest sense, what are the top on page factors? What are they? Let's go figure that out. And then you can take it to, do Instagram links past use. Do they, I don't know. People are saying that they are, but people say that they don't. What about links from index sites. Can you still past use with those?

So what we do, instead of getting into a flame war that you see on a lot of forums, yes they do, no they don't, I did it, we actually do it in a single variable environment, and we see if it works or not.

Daryl Rosser: Interesting. Do you get inaccurate results sometimes, you have to test it multiple times to really truly understand it?

Kyle Roof: Most tests we'll do between three and five times, because there's times where you see things that are unforeseen, we are dealing within an algorithm, so that's the whole control factor that we can't deal with. I'm not much of a tin foil guy in the sense that Google is tricking SEO's, I don't really think that happens that much, especially when you're in a completely brand new environment. So when we watch these pages, because they are for a term that doesn't exist, Google isn't prepared to gain it.

Daryl Rosser: Sure.

Kyle Roof: Versus, it's not payday loans, where they're quite aware of what people are doing in the payday loans space, so they're really monitoring that. We're going into a completely fresh environment where I don't think they have the time or energy to monitor. So what we're seeing, is the freshest, most virgin environment of the algorithm.

Daryl Rosser: That makes sense. Going back to when you first started out a little bit then. So you randomly moved to South Korea, which is interesting, it must have been cool. And why did you even start the web design business? We didn't get into that.

Kyle Roof: While I was there, initially I was teaching english at a public school, and it was just a 9 to 5 job, and for me coming from law where you're working 12, 14 hour days, where 9 to 5 was just a vacation. This is absolutely amazing, so I had a lot of extra time on my hands, and then I started another business and career with a Korean business partner, and we needed to start a website, so I built a website, and in the process of building the website, I built up a team to handle the functions, it was a pretty kind of heavy website. What we actually ended up doing, was we opened up a high school in the US in California, and we needed a website to maintain the high school. That's kind of how everything kind of snowballed from there, so building up a pretty complex site to handle students and registration and classes and stuff like that, so that was a lot of function, and I realized that most websites are not this difficult and I had already built up a team of people that could then build sites, and that's kind of how I got into web design and development.

Daryl Rosser: Alright, and you kind of breezed over, yeah we have 50 clients and stuff like that, as if that was super easy and you just did it in a few days.

Kyle Roof: It's super easy, yeah. It takes no time. So I met my business partner online, he actually hired me for a job. And then we worked another job, and then we worked another job, and then we had this job that failed miserably, and then he was like, you know what? I think we should start a SEO firm, and I was like I agree we should. So then we worked together for about a year and a half before we actually met face to face. And we serviced all sorts of clients, so we go from local, to national, to international clients, and we have several different products that we offer kind of within each of those areas. But we're boutiques, and bespoke, so we don't necessarily have packages that are preset, except in some circumstances we do. When we're dealing with maybe a partner that we're white labeling with. But otherwise, we usually try to position ourselves in the sense that we will create a package that will meet your needs, so most of our proposals are 35 page proposals.

Research that's put in, and competition, and thoughts.

Daryl Rosser: -The fact that you guys do so much testing on this stuff, do you kind of show that like you're different to other agencies?

Kyle Roof: That's our tagline. We don't test on your site, the other thing that we go into when we talk to meetings, is obviously you're a huge company and you're taking to three, or four, or five other agencies, we tell them ask those agencies how many tests they're running right now.

Daryl Rosser: Okay nice.

Kyle Roof: And ask to see them. And we know that the answer is zero. They're not running any tests, and they can't show them. And we can show, hey we're running 20 tests right now, these are the things we're running. So when we say that we

don't test on your website, we're serious. We go and we figure it out. And it's real- it probably really helped our growth a lot.

Daryl Rosser: That's cool, so that's like a USP or whatever you want to call it.

Kyle Roof: Yeah for sure.

Daryl Rosser: Cool, quality has gone really bad on us but we'll keep pushing through and hopefully it picks up again. But that's cool man, so you said you're working with all sorts of clients, not particularly local ones, or national. What's your average client if you could keep it simple?

Kyle Roof: Well for us we really kind of look at the amount of revenue they're bringing in, because that's going to dictate their marketing budget. When you look at maybe you want to be in the neighborhood of \$2000 a month for a package, so that's \$24,000 a year, if somebody is doing \$500,000 in revenue, their marketing budget should be at least \$50,000. So that's probably a fair number in terms of revenue where we're looking at. And then obviously, higher is better.

Daryl Rosser: Do you use PBNs?

Kyle Roof: That's the sweet spot. Do I use PBNs? Not as much anymore, we're pretty heavy on guest posting right now, and the reason is that our clients like to see those things, so everything we do is very transparent. If clients are comfortable with PBNs we'd be happy to build them, but mostly clients that we've dealt with at the corporate level, are not that down with PBNs when you explain the whole thing, but they understand guest posting. And so we can tell them these are the 20 options we just found, these are the ones we want to go for, and here's why, and we allow them to accept or reject those, so most of our heavy link building comes from guest posting.

Daryl Rosser: Okay. And because I guess you're so into testing, what guest posting, does it allow you to control some- The PBNs are cool because you have full control over absolutely every aspect of it, which I presume you would like as a testing guy. But with guest post, are you allowed to still control enough to make it effective, like angle text and stuff like that?

Kyle Roof: Well the biggest thing to worry about is that when you look at certain metrics, domain authority is a decent metric for potential rank, but it assumes good internal linking. So the issue that you look at when you want to get a particular posting, okay so the DA is 50 and that's great, I'd love to get that link, what you need to look at, in their internal linking, if they lack internal linking, you're not going to get the value of what we're talking about. If you look at domain authority, or trust flowers, adoration flower, or age refs, you need to see the internal linking, and so what the testing has really done for us, is to not just identify a good opportunity, but a good opportunity of where we're going to be placed on that site, so that we know we're going to get value out of that link.

I think a lot of people will be like hey that's a DA 80 that's great, but then the post that they get, the link they get, is on an orphaned page. Through our testing, we know that domain authority isn't an actual thing. If you don't have that internal linking, it's not passing any juice to that page, you've just picked up a link to an orphan page that isn't going to pass the juice that you're anticipating.

Daryl Rosser: So you're saying if it's a really powerful domain and you create a page on it but it's not internal linked anywhere, then it's useless.

Kyle Roof: It's useless, it's completely useless. The other thing I would consider too, when we're talking about guest posting, is that I'm pretty sure that if you buy a list from somebody on Facebook that was like hey do you want guest post and they give you a list, Google has that list.

Daryl Rosser: It's probably pretty easy to find.

Kyle Roof: That's probably a waste of time. So the guest posting that you need to do needs to be pretty legitimate where you're doing actual outreach to sites that clearly aren't doing this, it's not their main focus, or at least they're doing it a way that's palatable to Google. So that's another thing to consider when you're talking about guest posting.

Daryl Rosser: Okay, I presume you need a decent sized team to do all this stuff, reaching out to people all day long?

Kyle Roof: I have a full time person, that's all she does.

Daryl Rosser: Just one person? Okay.

Kyle Roof: Yeah, so I've got on the team, we've got somebody that's doing scripting, basically all day, and then we've got another team member that is doing just outreach all day.

Daryl Rosser: Okay, in terms of scripting, what do you script for?

Kyle Roof: We look at topical trust flow, as a important measure to filter, and then we'll filter by TF and DA. By trust flow and domain authority, as basic kind of starting points. But the other thing we do though, so you've got sites that you filter, and they match and the sites that don't, something that I realized is that you could have sites that are completely on point, for a particular niche, but they just don't have those metrics yet because it's a new site. So in a way it's almost like investing in small caps. So we'll actually circle back to those sites and be like, look we would love to post on your site, and that's actually usually pretty easy to get onto those types of sites, because they're not getting inundated with offers, they're new but you can see that somebody is loving this site, they're putting a lot of time and effort into it, it's a real site, they just don't have the

metrics yet. I love getting links on those sites, because it's easier to do, and you know they're going to grow.

Daryl Rosser: For sure.

Kyle Roof: So something we do, is we kind of have two levels, the ones that meet the criteria we're going after those, but then we also circle back and do a manual review on those ones that didn't quite make the mark for the metrics we were looking at and to see if they're on point, and then we go after those as well.

Daryl Rosser: Interesting. I've had someone, it's more of like a white hat SEO guy, and he says he doesn't even check metrics, he just contacts sites to basically get links.

Kyle Roof: That's fair.

Daryl Rosser: I'm curious then, what is like the most shocking or surprising test result you've ever had? If you can share that.

Kyle Roof: Sure, the main authority one was a big one. So I mean that's obviously Moz has made a fortune off of the concept of domain authority as a metric, and there's a real blurry line I think between Moz's metric and the concept of domain authority. And they're two separate things, but the basic idea is that I don't think there is any intrinsic value to a domain. What I think, what we perceive as domain authority is the independent page authorities of a site.

I think a page can have page age, a page can have it's own links coming in, and they can also then receive the value of internal links, and that age can be very strong, but that doesn't mean the entire site is strong.

Daryl Rosser: Interesting.

Kyle Roof: So I think that was one of the bigger concepts I think that we played with, is the idea of there really is no domain source. So how we did that, was we actually created orphan pages, so we have five fresh sites, each site has an orphan page, and they're all identical. They're all index for a fake keyword, and for the domain that's in the number three spot, we fired a whole bunch of real quality links at that number three spot. So if domain authority is a real thing, that that domain authority has gone up because we're firing links at the domain, that orphan page should rise. And it doesn't.

Daryl Rosser: Interesting.

Kyle Roof: So you've got five fresh domains, they don't have any links coming into them other than maybe random scraping things, but they're completely fresh, we've got five pages that are index, we fire quality links at that number three spot that should move anything up, and that orphan page doesn't move. And we've done that test multiple times. So that's telling us that domain authority is not a thing.

But through other testing that we've done, we know that domain DA from Moz is actually a really good indicator of rank. A really good indicator of this can rank, so that the idea that DA is a good number, but you need to look at the internal linking that's going on. Where you might actually get that link and then that can kind of lead you to-

Daryl Rosser: So if you check a site and it's got a really high DA, it's got a link from a big poster or a home page or something like that, then it's going to be a good link, but if it's orphaned like you said, no links to it at all, then it's no good.

Kyle Roof: I think you're wasting your time, and a lot of those, if you're paying for, you could pay hundreds of dollars for that post, and in the end it's worthless.

Daryl Rosser: Interesting. That should save some people some money, actually.

Kyle Roof: I hope so, that's one of our biggest pushes. Our goal is that- there's only so much time, there's only so much money, and don't- the biggest thing we want to help people avoid is wasting time and wasting money on things that aren't going to do anything. They're plenty of things that you can do. They're going to move the needle, let's not waste time on things that don't. That's really one of our biggest pushes. And when it comes down to it, there's also no point in guessing. There's no point in having an opinion. There's so many things within what we're doing that we can really figure out if it is or is not a ranking factor, so let's go do that. Let's go figure out if it's a ranking factor, and then we don't have to waste our time on it if it's not.

Or even if we're like maybe not, then maybe don't do it, because we know these things for sure.

Daryl Rosser: Sure. So if someone wants to go out there and test, you can't explain the basic concept where you pick a keyword that has zero results in Google, and depending what the test is, they can create like five pages on the same domain and stuff like that, and isolate one idea, so changing the title tag or whatever. What are common mistakes that kind of screw up the test results that people could make when doing that?

Kyle Roof: The biggest mistake is not understanding what you're testing. So you might have the idea of I want to test domain stacking. So there are like 37 things involved in domain stacking. You can't really just test domain stacking, you can do a case study on does this work, but what you really need to think about before you get a test started, is what are we actually testing? So in the first point of that, it might be a link from a high value web 2.0. Will that pass juice? So that's like the very most basic part of it, I'm going to get a thing from Google drawing, does that pass juice?

So the very first thing you need to look at is does that thing pass juice? That's step one, so it's not just building this whole domain stack out, or some complex

SEO process, it's actually breaking it down into individual things, and seeing what each individual- so most people start off like I want to test this, and then they have all these ideas about what they're testing, but they're not testing one thing.

Daryl Rosser: You can't isolate what exactly worked, you could have followed the entire process and it just one little idea that worked.

Kyle Roof: It was like thing seventeen. You need to start off on one and work your way back.

Daryl Rosser: Okay.

Kyle Roof: When you're working in closed environments, that's the whole point, nothing else is going on in this environment. So the idea is that if you do this one thing you know that that one thing is a ranking factor or not.

Daryl Rosser: Okay. And how long have you been doing testing now then? Quite a few years?

Kyle Roof: Yeah, full time for two years now.

Daryl Rosser: SO do you have to retest stuff after six months, a year or something and do the results change often?

Kyle Roof: That's actually what's really been fun to do, so I'll circle back and I'll see old tests and a lot of things I do especially on page factors, are some of the easiest things to test. What are the top on page factors? What's interesting and what kind of fits into how I think about SEO, is that when you think about kind of a bell curve of things you can do, there's like 80% of SEO that I think is pretty evergreen. You're doing these things that's here, the stuff on the end, that's where the new fancy techniques come in, we're going build this or we're gonna do that, and those are the things that Google is looking at, and gets rid of.

So what testing has really shown me over time, is the vast majority of it is consistent, it's pretty evergreen. There's the weird stuff on the end that people are gaming and that's what Google is focusing on. So when we circle back when we test things, the core stuff remains the same.

Daryl Rosser: Okay so on page it's pretty much the same.

Kyle Roof: It's pretty consistent. When you're talking about some crazy things, though, we test old school things, and one thing that we tested six months ago was- have you heard of the home to home link?

Daryl Rosser: No.

Kyle Roof: So it's the idea of, you put your money keyword on your home page, but the link is to your homepage.

Daryl Rosser: Okay yeah.

Kyle Roof: A home to home link. And we tested that, and it totally worked.

Daryl Rosser: Really?

Kyle Roof: Straight up. So the home to home link was a home run, it was something like SEO 2008. And you'll see it on super old pages, where they've got all these home to home links, so when you click on it, it just refreshes the page and brings you back to where you are. It totally worked.

Daryl Rosser: That is really interesting. I usually delete them, if I'm doing links to the error pages, I'll delete it off the home page because I don't want to link back to the same page because-

Kyle Roof: Right, it seems stupid.

Daryl Rosser: Yeah.

Kyle Roof: It totally works.

Daryl Rosser: Have you tested scaling up a little bit? Like having ten of them, and seeing if it still works?

Kyle Roof: That I haven't, we just did it in the one, on a home to home.

Daryl Rosser: Just go back to old school strategies, keywords stuff, 50 keywords linked into the homepage.

Kyle Roof: There's a lot of old school stuff, one of our favorite targets is Moz, and earlier this year they had a post which said eight old school things that don't work anymore, I think from April or May, and we debunked four of those. Four of those old school methods still actually work. That's what it comes down to- amazing is that when you're reading those types of articles, they talk about this doesn't work, because this, but then the next thing you never read about, is because we tested it.

Daryl Rosser: Moz is like whatever Google says, they'll agree with.

Kyle Roof: I think so. I appreciate Moz and we rip on them a lot, but the thing that Moz does that I appreciate is they put themselves out there. They do actually post things, and there are a few things that we found that are completely correct. The idea of you put a link on a page and it passes juice and it gets a rank result, and then you remove that link from the page, and Google crawls the page even

if the link is gone, the value still passes. That's called a link echo. Moz identified that a couple years ago, and we tested it, and it's 100% right. That link echo will last for five to seven months, so you get the link. So then what we did, is we took that a step further that Moz didn't do, is then we used link shorteners, so we fire the link at a test page, it moves, we change the link, and fire it at a completely different page, that moves, and the original one stays.

Daryl Rosser: Interesting.

Kyle Roof: So you can get multiple value out of the same link by having a shortener and you can just change it within the shortener program like capsule link for example, where you can go in and change the destination URL, so you get multiple use.

Daryl Rosser: Unless the shortened links are 301ed right?

Kyle Roof: That's right. So you get the value of the link multiple times. And then you know it's going to last for five to seven months, you could conceivably put your links on a cycle, and continue to point them and get the juice value out of it.

Daryl Rosser: Have you tested anything- have you ever taken stuff like that to the extreme and actually tried doing that sort of thing at a higher level like you just said?

Kyle Roof: Well that kind of stuff I've taken to clients, and say look we can do this, and this is what we've tested, this is what it is, and depending on the clients risk tolerance, that's the kind of thing most do it.

Daryl Rosser: I heard a lot of people answer PBNs and stuff, but there's some clients that you explain it to them and then yeah if it works sure.

Kyle Roof: I have several clients that are down with it. It depends on how you talk about it too. It's like, okay so we've got our main site, and then we've got people that come to our site that are really interested in this one little thing and we don't really have a lot of content on it and we get a little off brand, if we were to talk about our own site. So what if we built another site, flesh that concept out a little bit and then brought traffic to it? There's nothing wrong with doing that. That's a PBN.

Daryl Rosser: Yeah. It is.

Kyle Roof: So that's what major brands do. They have niche sites that they don't want to get into that concept so heavily on their own site so they create another site, gets a lot of traffic, and of course it links back to the main site. Well they've created a PBN, but it's not a PBN.

Daryl Rosser: I'm pretty sure Viperchill wrote about it a while ago, about all these huge companies, huge groups, they all own all the sites, and they just put a link back to their main site and they're crushing it.

Kyle Roof: I actually consulted with one of those companies that they outed, and I was like hmm. No we don't do that, that's crazy.

Yeah I did a full scale audit and consultation for one of those companies and we talked about that strategy that they're doing.

Daryl Rosser: That's clever. So you work with some corporate star clients?

Kyle Roof: Yeah, for sure. Obviously I can't really name clients but I work with, as I said- I work with some national clients but I work with clients that are international, so. We have our office in Berlin, and one of the purposes of having that office was to get some clients that are looking to move from the US to a European market, and we're now getting a few of those clients.

Daryl Rosser: Okay, so what is the SEO like when you work with other corporate clients? What sort of stuff do you do for them?

Kyle Roof: The only problems you run into with that, are you say like hey our URL structure is terrible, and we should change it to this, this and this, but then it has to go through seven pieces of some chain or it comes back around, and then the answer is just no. Well, we're kind of killing ourselves here and they're going to be like. That's the biggest thing. But when you're working with a smaller company, you can say like hey our URL structure is terrible, we should do this, and they're like good point, you're 100% right, and we'll do it.

So there's that. The chain of command is often ridiculous, especially coming in as a consultant. When you come in to consult with the company, you have people that are already entrenched, and you need to make sure people understand that you're not going to steal their job, I don't want your job, I'm just here to consult on this. I need to make sure you're doing a great job, I'm here to support you. So that's easier to do in a small company, once you get to a larger company you don't really have that interaction so you see all these people that think you're trying to take their job when you don't want that job. There's a reason I do SEO, so I don't have to have a 9 to 5 job.

Daryl Rosser: Yeah.

Kyle Roof: I'm not trying to take your stupid job, I don't want it. But then it's hard to convey that, so you get a lot of resistance, and I think the larger company deal with just more resistance you have to play with. Then the whole thing is done, but then they still continue to pay, that's the other thing too. You can tell them it's a problem for this, this, this, they'll completely agree, and they won't change

it because they can't for whatever reason, but they'll continue to pay you. It's still fresh.

Daryl Rosser: So it's mostly for those guys, it's just like consulting and advising on what to do, for them not to do it, you're not really doing much yourself?

Kyle Roof: They don't want you to do it.

Daryl Rosser: Yeah.

Kyle Roof: They have people in house to do that work. What they realize though, is that they're paying this marketing team, but that marketing team does not have the level of SEO expertise that you have. They're bringing you in for the consultation, they don't want the implementation. Whereas when you're dealing with smaller clients, they want that implementation, they want you to be able to do it.

Daryl Rosser: Got it, that makes sense. So how do you get in front of the corporate clients, local clients is relatively easy enough, you've got to speak to some business owners, you can call them, email them whatever, it's not so complex, but the bigger corporate clients, how do you get these consultant gigs?

Kyle Roof: A lot of those come from strategic partnerships. I found that there are digital marketing agencies that can get in front of these types of clients but that they don't have maybe the SEO expertise in house. So with our company we have I think four strategic partnerships with digital marketing agencies in different niches that are doing different things that they have the ability to get in. So what we have done is, we have taken our time to get in with these agencies and then that gets us in front of these clients. That's probably one of the biggest things we've done, it's been successful over the last two years.

Daryl Rosser: That makes sense, and they do a load of the work for you, they kind of bring you in and you do what you do which is SEO.

Kyle Roof: Right, if there are obvious problems though, I mean now you're dealing with extra stages of people to deal with and then you have to have a pricing structure that's going to work, especially if they're doing a whole package and you're part of that, versus you're handling it and then paying them, giving them a kick back for it. So you have to make sure that the pricing works out well, and the model works out well.

There's one firm in particular I work with in San Francisco that works with start ups in San Francisco, and they need pretty solid pricing so that they can on the fly go okay you need this, it's this much. You need that, it's that much. You need SEO, it's going to be this much and then it's within a range where I know I can work with it. So really one of the hardest parts of that whole process is figuring out the pricing that can work in those models.

Daryl Rosser: Okay. So how big is your team these days?

Kyle Roof: We have ten employees, and then my business partner and myself.

Daryl Rosser: Okay, what do people do?

Kyle Roof: We've got, as I said one woman on our team, her whole job is outreach. We have two SEO techs, and they do a lot of ground work. We've got a developer tech, and he does more of the technical side of things, so when we need to fix something on a site, he's doing that versus some techno things on the SEO side of running optimization rates, and figuring out those things. We have those techs, we've got content writers, then we have account managers. Account managers are actually the most important part of it, somebody that is forward facing, that can explain what you're doing interface with the client and then kind of come back to you for the strategy of it.

Daryl Rosser: Okay, so you're not sitting there calling up 50 businesses a day, dealing with all your clients.

Kyle Roof: God no. And there's no way to do that, there's no way to have yourself like that. So we need to- something that we learned is that you have to give enough touches to the client in order to keep them understanding that you're working, so I'm not going to talk to you every day but you can see that I'm doing stuff. That's a big hurdle to overcome. How can you express that you're working when you're not talking to them everyday?

Daryl Rosser: Yeah.

Kyle Roof: The worst phone call you get is the client is like, what have you done the last month? That's the call you're trying to avoid. So then when you've got regular touches through your count manager and through automated reports that are coming, just so they can see things are happening, and then you've got a task system that will kind of ping them when tasks are done. Then that's how they can kind of see that happening, and that's what they're looking for. Hey I'm going to give you 3,000 a month, that's 36,000 a year, they could conceivably hire somebody out of college and probably have them full time and so why should they pay you that 3,000 a month, or should they just hire somebody out of college to do the work?

Daryl Rosser: Yeah.

Kyle Roof: What we need to explain, is what we have the expertise, plus we have the team so you're not just getting one person, you're getting nine people, and we're doing all these separate things, but then they can also then see the work. If somebody, if they're paying full time is sitting in the office they can actually see that person sitting right in the office and they know what they're doing.

Daryl Rosser: Yeah, okay. This is an interesting question. If you had to start over again, would you start an SEO agency again?

Kyle Roof: Yeah, I like it a lot. At the end of the day, I get paid for my ideas. And that's a real blessing. I'm not getting paid because I can fix a 404, or I'm not getting paid because I can build a back link. Really at the end of the day I'm getting paid for the concept of it, and that's what the agency allows me to do. I think if you're a solo guy, that's one of the biggest problems or the biggest things to then take the next level, is to have people that can do that ground work and then you can just get paid for the strategy, and for the ideas. That's probably the hardest next step, is not doing the work yourself. And I'm at the point where I'm really not doing that work myself, my level of work is at the strategy level and managing the people doing the work. So I'm getting paid for my thoughts and that's a great thing.

Daryl Rosser: That's really cool. I presume something that helped with achieving that was, you mentioned earlier about creating processes and really breaking down step by step, how to actually do SEO so people can do it. Does that tie into it a lot?

Kyle Roof: Oh for sure, and that's actually where my business partners come in in a huge way, is I think I'm probably more on the strategy side of things, 'cause I'm running the tests and I'm figuring out what's going on, but then if it were up to me we'd be spending tens of thousands of dollars a month per client, but he's able to take the processes and go okay, this is what we know works, and turning it into an actual process.

We turned a corner about a year and a half ago, where we- what we did was we sat down and we figured out okay we want to do this one thing, who does this work? So it's 15 minutes of this SEO tech, and it's an hour of this content writer, and then senior manager needs to oversee it for 20 minutes, so then we actually market valued out that cost. We're only paying that person maybe ten bucks an hour, but the market value is 30 bucks, so then we calculate out 30, at 50, and then the account manager is 150, and then we figured out what that actually costs, and how much time it takes. So then we're putting boutique packages together, we're doing it according to what were actually doing, and how much time it takes.

At the end of the day, you throw on an expertise multiplier, say 20% on top of that so you know at the end of the day if you have to negotiate that 20% based on you need to give somebody a kick back for the introduction or they want to negotiate the price a little bit, you've got that expertise margin that you're negotiating but you know you're making money because you priced it out on market value.

Daryl Rosser: Got it.

Kyle Roof: That was a big turning point for us, and then also figured out exactly this one task takes 120 minutes, but these are the different people that are working in that 120 minutes, and that was a big thing for us.

Daryl Rosser: I like it, yeah. I think a lot of people, especially myself when I stated out, you kind of make up the price and somebody asks you- \$1000.

Kyle Roof: \$500, exactly. \$450, I can go lower. But then at the end of the day, you're like we're going to do this, do that, and do that, and do that, but then at the end of the day what we realized is that we didn't price out what those things actually cost.

Even if I did it myself, what would it actually cost? It's five hours of my time to do these things, maybe my time is worth \$200 an hour, well that's \$1,000 but I'm only charging them 500, well now I'm really losing money.

Daryl Rosser: Absolutely.

Kyle Roof: So then the idea's pricing things appropriately for what you're worth, what your employees are worth, and if they can make it work price wise. I think that's where most people probably fail, they lose money, and they don't realize they're losing money. They're like hey I'm making \$1000, but what they don't realize is that they're actually losing money on that 1000, because of the amount of time that things take and the amount of time they're actually putting in themselves.

Daryl Rosser: Yeah, that's very true. What is, say three big mistakes you've made over the last few years of building up your agency or just doing SEO in general?

Kyle Roof: Three big mistakes. The first one was not pricing out things from the start, was doing exactly what you mentioned. Somebody was like hey so you pitch it and they love it, and they ask how much, and you're like- you're trying in your mind, how much will this person pay? That's probably not the right way to do it.

Two other mistakes though. I'm not sure. There's no reason you can't go after a huge client. And there's no reason that you can't contact them. You can contact huge clients. So you can figure out somebody that's in their marketing department and there's no reason you can't reach out to them. It doesn't matter that they're huge, huge and huge, and it doesn't matter that they've got a marketing thing of 20, you can find a mistake that they've made, contact them and just let them know.

And you might have to do that 20 times, but if you do that 20 times to 20 huge firms and one comes back like hey we would like more information, you just made a huge client. So don't think that you can't go up. Something that I realize is say you're at that \$500 level, that first time you say I'm \$1,000 it's really hard to say.

Daryl Rosser: I got to say it in person.

Kyle Roof: Exactly, right. And, it's \$1,000. But the first time that somebody says yes to that \$1,000, well that re calibrates yourself now that you're at the \$1,000 level. So then you start having the same anxiety about well you know I really think I'm worth \$1,500 and I've priced this out and it's a \$1,500 thing, and then that becomes hard, but then once you say \$1,500 that's an easier thing, and that's kind of how it ratchets up.

As soon as you say \$3,000 for this, and the person says yes, now you're at that \$3,000 level. You could, you really could, as long as you're providing the value. It's not just \$500 of value and I'm trying to charge \$3,000 but you're actually doing that service level, but you can honestly say that this amount of service, this value is actually worth \$3,000. You could skip up. And that's a hard thing to figure out.

Daryl Rosser: What is the difference in value then between a \$500 package and a \$3,000 package? You calculate based on your cost of your time and effort as well now, that's not the value, right?

Kyle Roof: Well no, because then there's also the expertise. So you probably need a bunch of those \$500 ones to actually figure out what you're doing. It's one thing to know this is or not a ranking factor, but then there's also the knowledge and understanding of how just a project works. When I talk to people that are new in SEO and they're like how can I time a project or how can I give a reasonable amount of time, this project is going to take this amount of time. Usually what I tell them to do, is look at the competitors and how many domains that they have linking in to their pages. SO let's say they have ten domains, now go back to your processes of what you can do in SEO and how many links can you get from individual domains in a month?

It's probably two to three, for the brand new guy. Maybe two. So if you need ten, all things being equal, and you can build two a month, that's a five month project. Now, month number one is strategy and audit. Month number two is on page and getting where it needs to be, and then you've got that finance, so that's actually a seven month project. That's how you can then estimate how long that thing's going to go. Now, what are those things going to cost? How much will it cost for you to build two links a month. Figure that out. The on paging, figure that out. The strategy, the audit you might do, figure that out. And then you can price that from there. So I think that's where the value comes from, is that knowledge.

You probably need a few of those \$500 clients to feel good about that knowledge to then price it up, because then you get the client and how do we accelerate this? How do you accelerate it? Figuring out how to accelerate, that's where that knowledge comes from. Seeing the pitfalls that happen in a project or an SEO project, that's where that expertise comes from. So that's then how you ratchet up your price I think, is in that knowledge.

Daryl Rosser: Absolutely. And before you wrap it up, I think you were talking about one or two more different test results you were discussing before we started recording. Am I right? Do you want to jump into them? I think people might-

Kyle Roof: Which ones were they?

Daryl Rosser: I don't remember.

Kyle Roof: I have so many. One thing that we talked about, was so Google talks about unique content right? Google just wants unique content, fresh content, we want the most unique things going on the web, so my thought process as soon as you read that is like how much unique is unique? So we tested that. Have you ever seen that little blue line where it says we've filtered out these results because we think they're the same?

Daryl Rosser: Yeah.

Kyle Roof: You get that little blue line. So you can get past that filter, the duplicate content filter, with 51% unique content, so that's what we tested and figured out. Your page only needs to be 51% to get past that threshold for Google's uniqueness, which is a pretty low bar. So when Google was talking about hey we need fresh new things, they need 51% unique. Super easy to do.

When we were talking about previously, we were talking about I worked on a project about a year and a half ago where we basically did a really complex manual spin, where we launched 6000 pages, 3000 of which are on the first page of Google, for their terms. It's all the same content. It's spun very well, through a manual spin, but it's not unique by any stretch of the imagination, but it gets past that 51% and they rank.

The other thing that we looked at though, not that long ago, were images. Unique images, and we tested stock photo versus unique photo, and stock images win. And where I think that comes from, is that Google knows what that image is. It already understands it, it's already processed it, so then it can index it and rank it, where if it's a brand new image, it doesn't understand what that image is, it's going to take time for it to understand that this image is actually this thing, because Google can't actually see anything.

Daryl Rosser: Yeah.

Kyle Roof: So it's a really funny thing when Google talks about what it wants and what it prefers and what's the best web experience but then at the end of the day, it needs to understand things, and the way it understands things, it's already been processed. The content doesn't need to be very unique and you could get by just buying a stock photo. Like stock photos. In those tests we were just using the ones that are already indexed in Google under free licenses, and those outrank completely fresh new image.

Daryl Rosser: That is pretty crazy.

Kyle Roof: That's fun stuff.

Daryl Rosser: Yeah that's really cool, even with images alone I imagine is tons and tons of tests you can do to play around with different things.

Kyle Roof: We've done a lot of fun things, like putting words in an image. So you've got an image of a bicycle, this is a bicycle, and then running it through ad words, because the ideas that ad words can look at a page and give you keyword suggestions.

Daryl Rosser: Yeah.

Kyle Roof: But ad words can't read that, ad words can't give you the suggestion that no this page is about bicycles, when it's got the image on it and the word says bicycle, it can't even give you the suggestion when it's a bicycle and no words. So Google really isn't looking at those images the way that I think that they want you to think that they are.

Daryl Rosser: That's cool. Before we wrap it up, is there anything else you want to cover or final words of wisdom or anything like that? I appreciate you joining me today man.

Kyle Roof: Thank you for having me. I think the biggest takeaway I've gotten in SEO is that there's really no point in guessing. There's really no point in opinion. There's such a small area that's actually kind of the opinion area of SEO, I think so much is testable if you think about it the right way. If you put together what we are actually looking at, what we're actually trying to test, and then you form a test to test that one thing, you can actually figure out what's actually going on in SEO, and there's no point in getting angry about what this person's opinion is or that person's opinion. Let's just go figure it out. And that's what I've been doing for the last several years, and it's benefited me, not even in just having this testing group, but then also my own practice.

When clients ask you what should we do, should we do this or that, you know what I can tell them if I don't know? I tell them we'll run a test. There's several times where clients are like, real complex questions. Should we do our URL structure like this or like that in this particular situation? I don't know. Let's test it, let's actually find out, and clients love that. Because now we're saying we're going to run a test just for you, you're going to get knowledge your competitors don't know, and you're going to have an edge. Let's go figure it out. And clients love that.

So if you nail that sort of thing, I think it's not just good for your own knowledge, but then you can also take into those kind of situations and I think improve your own practice.

Daryl Rosser: I presume some tests, like the on page are relatively simple to test, but some of them must be very difficult to even come up with an idea of how we can test it.

Kyle Roof: Yeah sure, and you'll get half way through a test and especially when you're dealing with links, and you'll screw it up, and you'll realize that this has been a complete waste of time and here's why. But even those errors then also lead to other tests, or more knowledge. There were several times where tests have been just complete busts, but the knowledge that I gain, is like oh that's how this might work, and then it leads to other testing. So the failed tests are usually just as valuable as the ones that are successes or we've gotten something out of.

Daryl Rosser: Okay, cool man. I don't want to cut you off, have you got any-

Kyle Roof: No no no.

Daryl Rosser: Well where can people find you if they want to see some of your test results or connect with you, ask you some questions or anything like that?

Kyle Roof: Sure, so my agency email is HVSEO.co, high voltage SEO .co, and people can always email me through that. I'm Kyle@HVSEO.co, feel free to send me any questions. And then the SIA, the testing group that we're in, that's the SEOintelligenceagency.com. That's how they get to that. It's a monthly subscription kind of thing where people can get in.

What's really great about the group too is it's not just the tests, but it's a community. So people are on Skype everyday, people are on Facebook everyday, mainly Skype is super active by like has anybody played with this? And what you get, because the mindset of the people are people that understand the idea of testing, and not just opinions, so when somebody asks, hey has anybody played with this thing, it's not just, it's like yes I've done it and this is what I've done with it and this is what I'm doing with it. So you get real practical things, even if it's not specifically test related, you get real practical advice, because it's just people that are doing SEO. That's always fun to be with, not just people that think you're not SEO or pondering. But people are actually doing SEO and doing it every day.

Daryl Rosser: Absolutely man. Well thank you again for joining me today, it's been fun. I've got some good nuggets myself.

Kyle Roof: Good stuff, thank you for having me.

Daryl Rosser: Alright, hope you guys enjoyed the episode, and I'll see you guys next week.