

Keyword Creativity Episode Three

Secrets and Lies

Story so far...

Bob Arden runs his own web design company. After discovering that he's about to become a father for the first time he's determined to improve the business, starting with the latest new business pitch, a website re-design for Larry Mackay, an old buddy that he had fallen out with. He's listening to advice from Mike, his opinionated younger brother, in Buck's, his local restaurant, particularly about how to bring keyword research into the heart of his web design process. Still, at the back of his mind, he's worrying about Laura, his deputy at the agency, and the secret she hasn't revealed yet.



In this episode...

- Bob reveals all the secrets behind the Whitewater Rafting Company pitch.
- Mike shows Bob how to get the most out of keyword research, to inform every step of the web design process.
- Mike has some bad news for Bob about someone in his agency.

read on...

Mike and I spent twenty minutes reviewing the Whitewater Rafting Company's website, both muttering comments and agreeing with each other as we went through it. Then Mike pushed the laptop away and shook his head.

'You've got to make sure that you don't miss a trick here, Bob. If you do, I'm sure that Larry will use it against you. As it stands, his website doesn't recognize the three key groups in the brief, and he's going to expect you to address that. But you need to do more. You need to think differently. You need to think harder about the people in the groups.'

Of course, he was right. Mike always was.

'You need to think more about what the individuals in the audiences need. I bet Larry has plenty of insight in his sales data, customer feedback forms, even what their customers tell the guides when they're with them on their trips.'

'Good point, Mike, but Larry said that he expects us to do our own digging for the brief, that he doesn't want us to pester him before the presentation.'

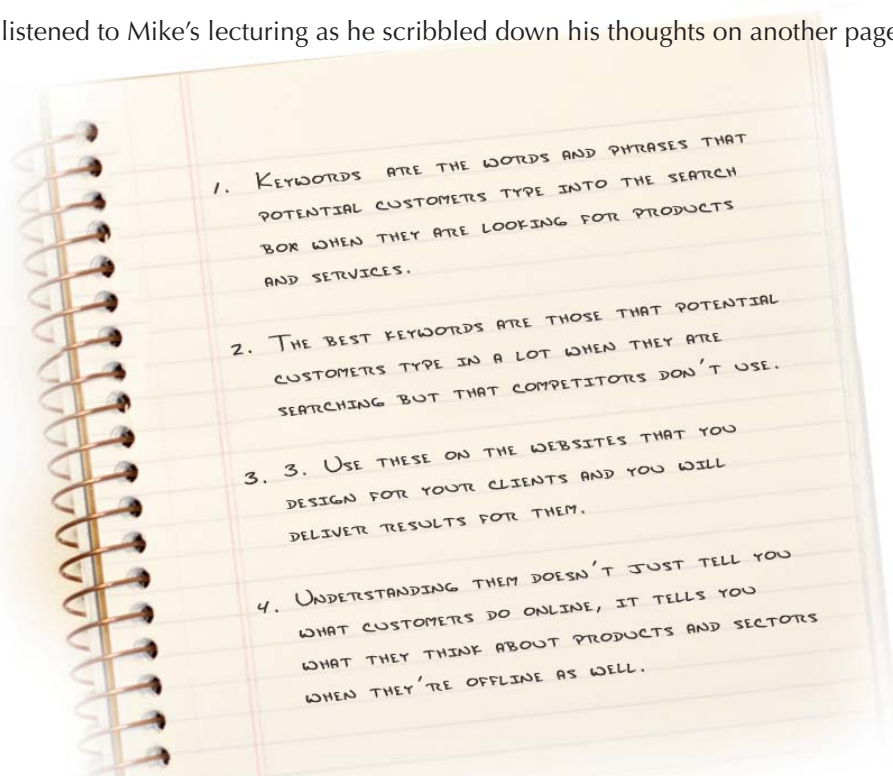
'Good. That gives us an advantage. He's probably hoping that you'll trip up if you work away on your own, but I'll make sure that you don't. I expect you know all about keywords?'

I scowled at him. 'Of course I know all about keywords. I've got a web design company and I'm not a caveman, so I don't need my little brother to tell me about the importance of keywords.'

Keywords as a market research tool

'All right, all right. Let's just say that maybe I've got a different way of looking at things than most people. Take that look off your face and listen to me for a minute. Keywords are not just about optimization, they're also the most valuable research tool you have to hand to help you understand customers. Got it? I'll even write it down for you.'

I listened to Mike's lecturing as he scribbled down his thoughts on another page.



‘Be glad that you’re my brother, not a client, or I’d have to charge you for this. I just hope that your kid’s going to be brighter than his father.’

‘Or his uncle.’

He laughed. ‘Right, that’s it. I’ve got things to do and you need to run off to your agency. See you around.’

We hugged and said our goodbyes, both accustomed to our continual bickering, both knowing that it meant nothing, that we’d both miss it if it stopped. I’d given Mike a reason to try to prove that he was smarter than me, again, and there was no better way to get him to work for me for free.

Larry’s story

It was a ten minute walk from Buck’s to the agency, time to get things straight in my mind before being sucked into today’s crises. The sun was shining, Mike had helped me get off to a good start on the pitch and I was going to be a father. So why did I feel so unhappy? It was because of Laura. Something wasn’t right with her, and I was sure that I wouldn’t like whatever it was she wanted to tell me this morning. She hadn’t told me what was worrying her and I hadn’t told her the full story behind this pitch. We had known each other long enough to know when things weren’t right and I wanted both of us to set things straight. We needed to talk, properly.

What could I tell her about this pitch, about Larry Mackay and the reasons why Mike thought I was crazy to go for it? Larry and I had been best friends since we could walk and then we went to Stanford University together. There were three of us then, me, Larry and Carl Carter, and we were the best of buddies.

They were boom times and we came out of Stanford expecting to be multi-millionaires within a couple of years, just like everyone else did. We started-up a web design business together and did pretty well at first, but then things got messy. That was when I learned never to mix work and play. Larry had been seeing a girl casually for a few months, but it didn’t work out. Soon after the break-up I bumped into her at a party. We hit it off, really hit it off.

‘I still believed that we could win the pitch. We just had to make sure everything we presented could be backed up with evidence’

Pam and I were married only a few months after meeting at that party. Larry said he was fine with it, as they had never been that close. He was even my best man. But he wasn’t telling the truth, and I should have known that, should have trusted my instinct. He disappeared after the wedding, leaving his part of the business in a mess. I even had to come back from my honeymoon. Maybe that was what Larry wanted to happen. Carl and I tried to keep the business going, but we couldn’t sort out the mess Larry had left behind. A month later it was all over. The business closed and Carl kept on saying that it was my fault. He said that I should never have married Pam. So, within a month of my marriage I had lost my two best friends and my business. The last time I saw Larry Mackay was on my wedding day, ten years ago. Carl and I saw each other around, through our new web design businesses, but we never spoke.

It was strange that Larry had reappeared in my life the week that Pam and I found out that we were having our first baby. It was even stranger that he had asked me to pitch for his business, and that it was Carl’s website design agency that I was up against. It might seem crazy, but I still believed that we could win the pitch. We just

had to make sure that everything we presented could be backed up with evidence, so that Larry couldn't pull it apart if he wanted to. That was never easy with design ideas.

Back to work

My walk in the morning sun was over. I stood outside the agency. It was good to be back, good to see my people looking up and smiling as I walked inside after a week away. But then I saw Laura with that look on her face again. What was worrying her so much? Then my cell phone rang.

'Bob, it's Mike here. You need to know that something's going on with this pitch, something bad.'

'Calm down, Mike. I know there's history with Larry and Carl, but I'm going to make sure that Larry has to give us the business, no matter what, and you're going to help me. I thought I was supposed to be the worrier.'

'It's not that, it's something else. Someone at your agency has been spotted with Carl Carter. They must be feeding him all the work you do on pitches.'

After the shock, I felt the anger inside me, a burning in my stomach. 'Right then, I'll get rid of them right now. We haven't started on this pitch, so he can't know anything yet. Who is it?'

'Bob, I'm sure that my information's right, so don't doubt me. It's a she, not a he.'

I dropped my phone as soon as he said the name. It was Laura, the only person I trusted to take care of my agency, the sister I had never had.

In the next episode...



- **Bob finds out the truth about Laura.**
- **Mike tells Bob how smart keyword strategy can drive web content and win pitches.**

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