

Keyword Creativity Episode Two

Using keyword research to tackle new business

Story so far...

Bob Arden runs his own web design company. He's determined to improve the business, starting with the latest new business pitch, a website re-design which demands greater optimization skills than his agency has used before, and a new approach to web site design. He's just met up with Laura, his deputy, in Buck's, his local restaurant, after being away on vacation. Both have something to tell each other.



In this episode...

- Bob tells Laura his big news.
- Mike, Bob's opinionated younger brother, tells Bob how he can work smarter and make his agency a success.
- Bob finds new ways to tackle the web design brief for the Whitewater Rafting Company Pitch.
- Bob starts to reveal the secret past behind the Whitewater Rafting Company pitch.
- Bob starts to get to grips with how to use keyword research to tackle web design projects differently, and to make a difference to his business.

read on...

'Pam's pregnant. The baby's due at the end of March.'

Laura cried out with surprise and delight and then leaned over to kiss me. People in the restaurant turned around, probably thinking that we were celebrating a business win, not that I was going to be a father.

'Bob, that's fantastic! I'm so pleased for both of you. Is Pam okay?'

'She's feeling just fine, and as happy as I am.'

I answered all Laura's questions about names, due dates, whether I wanted a boy or a girl and whether

Pam would keep on working afterwards. Laura and I had shared good news and laughed and cried together before. That was why I could sense that something was not quite right this time, no matter how well she tried to hide it.

'So, what's your news then? Go on, you can break it to me now. Nothing can spoil my good mood. Do your worst.'

She seemed embarrassed and shook her head.

'No, no, it's nothing. Let's enjoy this moment and save my news for another day.'

If Laura said that she didn't want to talk about something that was the end of it. I ordered breakfast, as much to fill the silence as to revive me. I waited for my three raspberry pancakes, two bacon belts and a coffee, still wondering what was wrong with Laura.

Playing happy families

'Hey, it's Pam that's supposed to be eating for two, not you.'

I looked up from my breakfast and saw the beaming face of Mike, my younger brother. He looked like some Hollywood star at his latest movie premiere.

'Well done, Bob, I never knew you had it in you.'

It was just the sort of congratulation I expected from Mike, a chance to have a joke at my expense. I was used to it, so I still stood up and hugged him. It was the first time I had seen him since I'd told him the news, on the phone.

Mike and I are close, even though I'm five years older than him. It's never mattered that we spent our childhood trying to outdo each other, or that we still do. Maybe it had helped me in some way, kept me focussed. Mike's a smart guy, having worked for some of the best advertising and marketing agencies in the country. Three years ago, he set up an agency of his own, advising clients on their marketing and communications strategies. He's still only twenty-nine and success has done nothing for his modesty, either with clients, women or his older brother. He still thinks that I need all the advice he can offer me, and that he's doing me a big favor.

'Laura, long time since our paths have crossed. You're looking as good as ever, even after five years working with this old plodder.'

She smiled briefly but said nothing. There had always been a flirtation between the two of them but Laura obviously wasn't in the mood for it today.

‘I’ll leave you to it, Bob, there’s a lot on at the agency today. See you back there.’

She was out of the restaurant before I had a chance to say anything else. I wasn’t sure whether it was because of Mike or whatever was troubling her, or both.

‘You need to work on your staff motivation techniques, Bob, that’s one unhappy employee, even if she is cute. So, what’s this, a pitch brief? Let’s have a look. I’m sure that I could give you the benefit of my brain power for fifteen minutes. Just think of it as my present to my unborn niece or nephew.’

I had forgotten about the pitch brief that Laura had left on the table. There was never any point in trying to stop Mike interfering, so I ordered two espressos and we went through the Whitewater Rafting Company brief together. We knew the company well. It had been started by George Mackay, forty years ago. He and my father had been childhood buddies and our families had been close when we were growing up. George and my father grew up around here before anyone had thought of calling it Silicon Valley, when it was filled with vineyards and orchards, not office blocks and billionaire homes. George started the business because he had a passion for rafting, not for the money. He had died three years ago, leaving behind a big business, and this pitch brief was proof of that.

***‘More than a quarter of their sales came from their website
but it wasn’t clear from the brief what was behind
its success or where their best customers came from’***

It was also a changing business. Now, more than quarter of their sales came from their website but it wasn’t clear from the brief what was behind its success or where their best customers came from. The brief just said that there were three different types of customers:

- Corporate groups
- Experienced individuals
- Inexperienced individuals.

There was also a list of demographics for each group, but none of it really pulled them apart from each other. I just couldn’t picture what the typical person in these different groups looked like.

The brief said that the successful agency would ‘wow’ the client with its search engine optimization insights for the new website, especially as no work had been done on this before.

‘Is this what your clients call a brief? Not much wonder you want to change things. You sure do need a new way of working. I’ll bet that if I wasn’t here you’d be rushing back to the agency to brief this in as it stands, without really understanding this client’s customers, potential customers, the market or seeing all the other data they must have flying around their business. You just dive into web design without knowing much about who you’re talking to or what you need to say to them.’

I wanted Mike to butt out now. It was easy to tell other people how to run their businesses but when you run

your own you sometimes have to compromise to meet client deadlines. Some clients value work being on time more than they value getting the thinking behind it right. But before I could say anything, Mike started talking again.

‘The brief makes it clear that the new website has to score well in Google results. You know that you have to sort out your agency’s skills in optimization, especially after the last pitch. More and more clients are going to want web designers to offer the complete package, and it makes sense that you do it anyway.’

My brother was never subtle when he dished out advice, but he was right. We thought we’d win our last pitch, as we’d done a terrific piece of flash design. But when we presented the working prototype to the VP of Marketing all he asked was how we were going to make sure that we came out top in Google searches. They stopped the project and got in an SEO firm, who hated everything we’d done. That was the end of three months of work and time to start again.

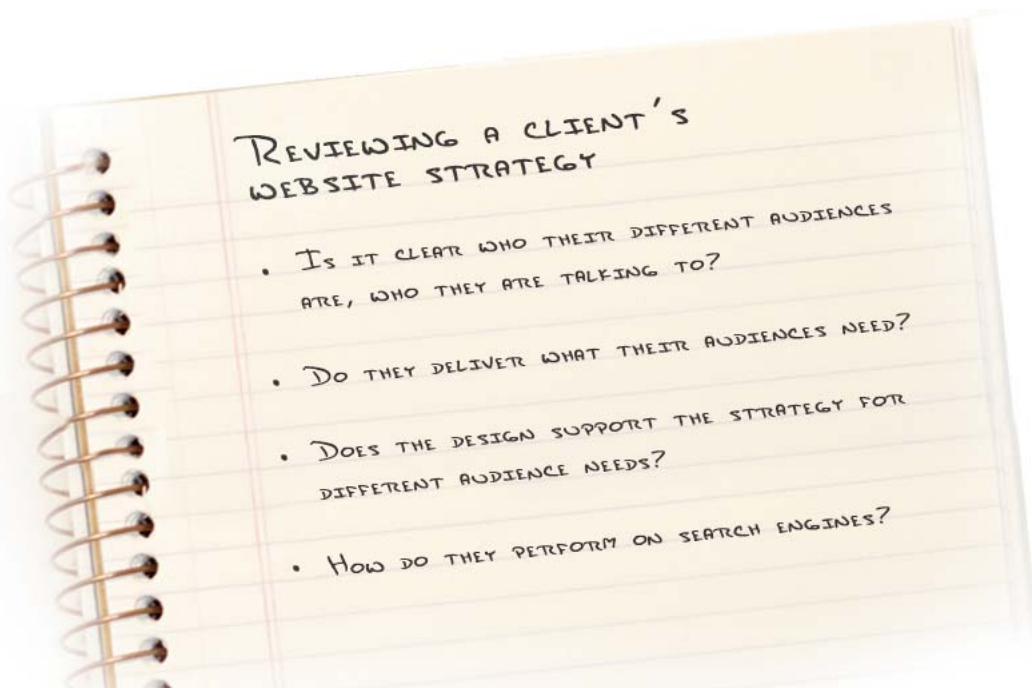
‘You need to start your work on keyword research before you do the design and build, not after’

‘So, what did you learn from the last pitch? You need to start your work on keyword research before you do the design and build, not after. But we’ve got a chance to get it right with this pitch and create a methodology you can use in the future, to win pitches and do great work for your clients.’

He turned over the brief and started scribbling on the blank page.

‘Let’s try and make sure that you’re systematic for once.’

I read as he wrote:



‘Right, let’s see if we can get any closer to getting to really understanding these things.’

Mike was right. I needed to stop clients pushing the agency into delivering against ridiculous deadlines or approaching tasks systematically. Most of all, I needed to make sure that any work on keyword research was at the start of the design process.

Then Mike stopped. I realized that he must have seen the contact details at the end of the brief.

‘Hang on, was this written by who I think it was? It’s not the same Larry Mackay?’ He stopped for a moment. ‘Of course, it must be, he’s George Mackay’s son. I didn’t know that he was back.’

‘He was allowed to come back, Mike. He didn’t break any laws, and maybe I should have seen things from his point of view.’

‘Bob, you’ll never win anything if you keep on being Mr Nice Guy. Larry Mackay let you down. I can’t believe that he’s got the nerve to ask you to pitch for a piece of his business. Are you sure that he’s going to treat you fairly, not just use this pitch as another chance to get back at you? Even if you win it, do you want someone like that as a client?’

‘I’m not going to give him the chance to mess me around. I’m going to try to make sure that we back up every idea we present with facts to support it whenever we can. I don’t like the guy any more than you do, but I want the business, Mike.’

I could see by the look on Mike’s face that he had read the final part of the brief.

‘Hang on, and the other agency pitching is Carter Design? He’s joking, isn’t he?’

‘I don’t care. All I know is that we’ve never beaten Carter Design before. I just want to win this pitch, and you can help me, Mike.’

‘All right, all right. It’s your agency. I just can’t believe that you’re going to trust this guy to run a fair pitch, especially between you and Carl Carter.’

I ordered another two espressos and we went online, to look at the Whitewater Rafting Company’s website. I couldn’t help thinking about what happened ten years ago, and whether Mike was right. Was I crazy to go for this pitch?

In the next episode...



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

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