

E: Hi, welcome to the Pagewiz podcast, this is Elisa from PageWiz. I'm here today with Mike Templeman, who's the CEO of Foxtail Marketing. Foxtail Marketing is an ROI-focused digital agency that enables businesses to maximize their revenue through proprietary online strategies. Hi Mike, thanks for joining us. We're pleased to have you! I want to jump right into a little about Foxtail Marketing, because I know you describe Foxtail Marketing and what you provide as "it's time for companies to be able to trust their marketing agency again." That seems to be part of your mission, so what do you mean by "trust them again?"

M: As we look at the digital marketing landscape, there's really no barrier to entry for individuals to be able to come in, set up shop, hang their shingle, and start selling expertise, and with most business owners being too busy, or even the marketing managers too busy to really vet the individuals, they take a lot at face value, and what ends up happening is there are a lot of agencies that over promise and vastly under deliver. And as we explore an engagement with a new client our biggest hurdle after we've pitched them is never "who is Foxtail Marketing, what have you done before," these types of things, they always bring up, "I've heard everything before, I just don't think I can go through this again, I've been promised the world and never seen anything close to that, and I just can't trust." What we've found is that most agencies are more concerned with growing revenues and building their client base than growing their clients' revenues and achieving the goals that were set from the beginning. And this isn't me trying to indict the entire digital marketing industry, I know many agency owners that are great and do it the right way, unfortunately there are a lot of groups that don't take those steps. So here at Foxtail, yeah we have it up on our walls with some vinyl lettering and that type of thing, but trust is a big thing for us, it's one of our founding tenets, and the reason being that if we're working with a smaller group, that owner or entrepreneur is literally putting their livelihood in the hands of their marketing agency saying "I'm giving you revenue, I'm giving you cash, I need to see something in return." If we're working with a larger group or a marketing manager it's often times their job can depend on the success of that marketing agency, and if an agency goes into it not understanding the weight that is placed upon them and the trust that is required I don't think it can be a successful relationship. What we really tell everybody is our goal is to create that relationship of trust for our clients and our agency so that they understand that we're not in it for our success, but rather their success.

E: That seems to be one of the great advantages of the digital agencies, the digital marketing such as PPC and landing pages because it's so metric-driven, because of that digital aspect, that now marketing can be held to a higher standard of accountability, what are you actually contributing? You've got metrics now behind it.

M: And that's where when we look at the metrics that are being used, the industry's been using incorrect metrics because we focus so heavily on the front-end metrics such as clicks and keyword rankings, and click-through rates, and engagement scores, and all these types of things. But at the end of the day, I can go to a client, and we've worked with many clients who said "I saw an increase in traffic, and I saw a lot of my money going out the door, through paid advertising, but I never saw sales from it." That's where, as much as we can talk about metrics and being able to understand at a very granular level what everybody's doing online, and where they go and how they interact, it always has to finish at the most important metric which is sales and revenue for the client. I don't like us getting caught in the trees and not being able to see the forest by focusing on the wrong kind of metrics. I think metrics are very important and do tell us a lot, but they have to be tied into the success metric at the end.

E: Yeah, and you know that's true for everybody, but I know in our talk today we're really going to focus on small businesses, so especially for them you say their revenue, their cash flow, and it's a big risk in a sense because as a small business the numbers they're dealing with are a bit smaller so it's a greater risk for them.

OK, for people who might not understand the difference between remarketing and retargeting are programmatic, what do you mean by those?

M: Retargeting is the process of having a cookie tracker on your website, pixel tracking, IP tracking, there's a couple ways of doing it, and what you end up doing is following the visitors who have been to your site around the web, so you can do that on Facebook, you can do it on Twitter, LinkedIn has a solution that's very expensive, and there are different networks that provide access to their network to be able to market, that's the AdWords network, AdRoll, those networks. Programmatic buying is not anything new, but it's real-time bidding, purchasing of large sections of display ads, of having a smarter display campaign wherein you have certain criteria and business rules that are followed, it's a very gussied up term for display ads. Let's be honest, programmatic had a big problem in that it's not been able to show a significant increase in ROI over typical display ads, as people have claimed that it's become smarter and smarter and smarter it has had a lot of issues in proving out ROI, similar to the native advertising platforms and content promotion platforms like Taboola and Outbrain. Again, they're very fun and they're nice, but the ROI results are kind of hard to find.

E: Interesting, OK. And I think I know when I was reading through your site you've got a report that goes into a lot more detail on all the different subsets of PPC so we can put a link to that in our resources section on the page so people can find that on the page where you're listening to the Podcast. So, OK. Alright let's go into some of the nitty gritty for PPC and small businesses. PPC, because it is just money and you can see how much money you're spending at any given time, and because it's complicated it can be intimidating to small businesses who just don't have the internal expertise to run a PPC campaign, so are they avoiding because it seems like too much of a hassle, or what's the obstacle there?

M: Well with PPC campaigns they are very easy to deploy and very hard to master, and whenever you have something like that it provides the opportunity for those who don't have as much experience to lose a lot of money. The reason being that there are so many aspects of a strong PPC campaign that take time, they take effort and they take expertise and knowledge, that if they're not deployed correctly you really are taking a knife to a gun fight in that the groups you are bidding against have those optimized campaigns, and if they are bidding with an optimized campaign against an un-optimized campaign you're going to have a bad day. And that's the truth of the matter, so a lot of small businesses come in, they dabble, they lose their shirt, they never show an ROI and they write it off as a lost cause, and that's something we see time and time again. Especially if you look at AdWords, it's notorious for doing that, social media PPC has a very bad reputation of not providing any ROI for clients but if that were the case, why are there so many success stories about those mediums out there, and it's because there really does have to be some experience and some time and some consideration put into the campaign, so if there is a small business owner that's looking to get into the PPC game I always caution don't just jump in and use your free Facebook or AdWords coupon that they send and just test out a campaign. Rather, do your research, read as many blogs, read as many how-to guides, read as much as you can, create the best campaign, and then start leveraging your budgets, but don't ready-shoot-aim the situation.

E: Because their budgets are so small and I was looking recently at some Labor Bureau statistics, and small businesses are getting smaller - they used to grow to over 20 employees at the 5-year mark or something like that - what they're finding is they're now mostly by the five or seven year mark they're still staying under ten employees, so the small business are staying smaller. So to help them find the best economies and find an ROI and maybe go through that painful trial and error experience, what do you think are some of their best options for finding some economies there in running a PPC campaign?

M: You bring up a good point. PPC and any type of paid advertising, really any type of digital advertising relies very heavily on data. But the data set that you can create directly correlates to the success of the campaign in my personal opinion because you have more information to optimize from. When you have a small budget you don't have that many data points and it's hard to get that many data points if you only have a couple hundred bucks a month. At the end of the month you may only have a couple dozen clicks to go off of and that's really not a data set that you can glean any real information from. There is some, but it's difficult. So what I tell, and this goes back to my last point on doing your research on the platform and the methodology to use the platform, but here's where we also give advice is steal. Steal, steal, steal, and I know it sounds weird but hear me out. I am a huge proponent of doing as much research on your competitors and other companies that are targeting your audience and are successful with it. So while they may not be a direct competitor, if you're targeting women ages 35-45 in North America with children and that's your target audience then OK, go look at the brands that are also targeting them, and what are they doing incredibly well that are showing these types of results that you can take from. And what I tell people to do is create out a large sheet, whether in Excel or Word, and just write your anecdotal feedback and go look at some of the ads they've created, look at their AdWords, go look at their social promotions, go look at their display ads, just by searching around for them, and write down what you see similar and you'll start noticing some correlations between all of these groups. Start writing down what you see similar because those groups do have the budgets to get those big data sets and if they have those budgets to get those data sets then they are getting the knowledge and information and you can borrow that and you can steal. Don't plagiarize that, don't plagiarize anything, but stand on the shoulders of these individuals, take their great ideas and build upon them. Make something better than them. There are no new ideas, everybody does this and you shouldn't feel bad about looking for the great tactics that are out there and saying "that's a great tactic, how can I make that work for my company?" And when we do that you're not limited by your budget anymore, you are able to leverage the budgets of these larger groups, learn from it, and effectively deploy your smaller budget.

E: It's sort of like pirating someone's electricity, tapping into their line, you can't see their back-end data itself, but when you see what they're doing you can make some deductions and conclusions from that.

M: Exactly, their marketing is going to be a direct result of the data they receive. They're not going to raise a bunch of false flags to throw off competitors and waste a bunch of money, but rather they're optimizing, optimizing, optimizing. It comes into play with something I know we're going to talk about later with landing pages. The landing pages that some of these groups have have been through thousands of variations, have been vetted by psychologists, have had large ad agencies brought in to do the whole Mad Men thing where they have the wants and psychographics and desires of the customers and all these things. Great, you can't do that. Most small business can't, so let's go look at their landing pages, look at twenty of them and identify all the things that are similar and all the things that seem to work and then make a great landing page using those ideas.

E: Yeah, I know that's a great idea. So for the PPC ads, what kind of things should they be looking for? What kind of sites the ads are showing on, what sort of copy they're using, what are some of the things they can look for?

M: All of the above, like you said. The sites that they're advertising on, the times of day they're advertising, the ad copy they're using, the calls to action they're using, the color schemes they're using, the colors of the buttons they're using... get granular! What types of imagery do they use in their display ads, where are they injecting their message when it comes to native advertising. All of these things have been tested time and

time again and I usually suggest starting with some of the bigger competitors before moving downstream and identifying what stays consistent as you go.

E: OK, so what you're saying is that starts with understanding your personas, you want to look a big company's ads and their landing pages because they're targeting the same persona. The small business still needs to have then a really good understanding of their own and the challenges of gathering a good-sized volume of data for PPC campaigns in terms of understanding their customer base. Are small businesses gathering this kind of information, are they gathering it but don't know how to get to it, what data are they gathering that they can use that's specific to their business?

M: That's a great point, and we actually come across that far too often when we talk with a client, and something that we do with our agency that is required before we work with anybody is we build out a buyer persona and a customer journey. And we do that because if we don't know where we're trying to end up, and small business really have to stop and identify who their buyers are. And what ends up happening is, trust me, I've started a couple companies and sold them and I've been involved in e-commerce and all these types of businesses and back in the day I did a lot of stuff that I look at now and say "oh my goodness I wasted so much money" because I would have an anecdotal buyer persona, in my head I'd say "yeah I know who I target. I target men and women in this state that have money." Well that's about as broad as you can get, but guess what, that's what 90% of small businesses are doing with their buyer personas, instead they should be looking at the psychographics of their buyers, what do they fear, what do they desire, what do they need, what are their wants and initiatives in their lives, that type of stuff. What are their age groups, what are their demographics from married, single, household income, all of those things. You should get as specific as possible. Every time you create one of them you write it down. Write it down and create out, we call them here baseball cards, you create out your buyer persona baseball cards, and we even go and grab a stock image of someone that looks similar because we want to give a face to that person, because as you personalize them you think about them a little bit better. We put them on there and say "what do we know about Susie Swanson? Susie is a mother of four, she is aged 35, she is worried about keeping her family healthy through this flu season and she is driven by price, driven by effectiveness, and she is driven by safety." So if we're going to sell her a health supplement we have to talk about certain things like that, and then we go into things like what are the sites she goes on, what are the social media platforms she engages with, what are some of the brands that really are successful in targeting her and what do that do well? All of those items are on this buyer persona so that at any time when you're launching a new marketing initiative you pull out your baseball card and say "OK, I'm targeting Susie Swanson, I'm targeting Tim Thomas here," whoever you created, and it keeps you consistent with your messaging. It allows you to evolve them too because these baseball cards should grow as you learn more and more about your customers. And if you ever do work with an agency you can hand that right over to them and they are now up to speed on who you are targeting as opposed to having to do all this discovery, and unfortunately a lot of trial and error to identify these people.

E: Obviously there are free and low cost survey tools so they can always run surveys and questionnaires to get some information about their current client base, but do you find that small businesses are already collecting some data that's useful in building their personas but maybe they don't know it or they don't know how to find it, so it's data they already have but they're not tapping into it. Do they have data sources like that?

M: Absolutely, their customer database, their CRM, their current client base is their target audience, whoever's engaged with them has shown a propensity to want to engage with them so they should look at getting better people and look at their best customers and start building personas off of them. Usually you

have that data, and usually it's anecdotal, but if I said "Who's your best customer?" and most small businesses are able to say "Ah, it's this person, I see them all the time," and I say "tell me about them." If they tell us about them we're building a persona for them. In a sense they usually have it sitting in their CRM or they have it sitting in their head from who they know their best customers are.

E: So they've got their personas and they find some of the bigger boys that are targeting the same personas so they can look at what they're doing and try to deconstruct their data, is that analysis process different from, say, the PPC campaign or social media ad or there meaningful distinctions in terms of how they should analyze what they're seeing these other companies do in different campaign options.

M: There are some activities that are just far outside the budget a small business owner will have, but a small business owner has to try and avoid as much as possible going gun to gun against these big groups because they just have more budget and there are some activities they do that they don't expect to have a good ROI on that they do just to suppress smaller businesses and you'll see that where they target broad keywords on PPC. Broad keywords are a quagmire, they can be useful but oftentimes try and stay away from them but you'll notice when you do broad keywords large companies will come in and they will have their ads showing there, and the reason they do that is because they have the marketing budget to do it and they're not getting a good ROI on these broad keywords but what they're unable to do is show up for any variation they might not be thinking of that helps keep the smaller groups always competing against them and always running up the PPC budgets for these smaller groups. So as you do look at some of the activity these groups do, don't take some of their foolish ones if you will and say "I need to be doing that as well." Now there are certain things that the big companies do that you should just not follow suit with. If they're getting a full page spread on the Wall Street Journal you shouldn't say that's going to be our go-to-market strategy. You do have to take it all with a grain of salt.

E: But in terms of the costs now of running a PPC campaign, obviously there's the cost of running the campaign but there's the follow on cost, so say it's successful and you get all these leads in then you need a system to nurture these leads and I would think that's also a place where small businesses are really challenged, one in finding the budget, and two in finding a system to nurture and manage and respond to those leads in an efficient manner.

M: That's right, so we as an agency here we like to say we're full service, so while we do focus on SEO, PPC, social media, all these other types of activities, we describe ourselves as a full funnel agency, and most businesses do need to have that full funnel view on their marketing because customers nowadays, and if anybody wants to know what a funnel looks like just search "marketing funnel" and there are hundreds of examples and they usually break into three different stages: awareness at the top, convincing in the middle, closing at the bottom. You need to be aware of where your marketing activities are falling into that funnel because if you can't abandon people within the funnel. And what I mean by that is if you're running a PPC campaign, a social media promotion campaign, anything like that and all it does is drive awareness of the pain point or awareness of your solution then you're putting people into the top of that funnel, and if you never touch them again you've abandoned them. If you somehow get them into the middle of the funnel and never touch them again then you've abandoned them there and what you want to do is maintain a relationship with your customers for a 6-12 month period because while some customers are going to purchase instantly, some might do some research and some might just be in your target audience and the pain point's not there yet. And the way you do that is you nurture them with remarketing and retargeting, you also should have a lead nurturing activity with email marketing, some people might not be ready to buy but they would be happy to follow you on social media so you encourage them to follow you on social media, you encourage them to sign up for a newsletter to get specials, to receive blog posts, anything like that. And

through email marketing, remarketing, retargeting, and social media activity you're able to maintain that constant touch with the client for at least that six month period and that ensures that if they were falling into the funnel at the top, mid, or close to the bottom, they make it all the way down to the bottom to a purchasing decision and they're not left to be abandoned. If they didn't have the exact impetus or need right then to buy then you will be in front of them when they do have that. Very important in certain B2B industries where the sales cycle is longer, or even B2C where you want to create a recurring customer. And the best part is remarketing, retargeting, email and social, they're all cheap. Emails don't cost money to send, and I know it costs money for the system to send them, but you can send as many as you want usually without cost. Remarketing / retargeting is extremely cheap to do, and social media activity is just the time it takes to put that in, so while PPC might be expensive to push people into the funnel with your ads, you can keep them in the funnel and keep moving them down the funnel with much cheaper methods of marketing.

E: So it sounds like when you're designing, well I was going to say as a small business, but any business really, but particularly so for small businesses when you're designing your PPC campaign that at the same time you need to be planning "all right, what's our nurturing method that we're going to use. Is it taking them to a landing page that tells them about our newsletter where they can hear deals and community involvement and they can sign up for the newsletter and that's the plan." And that needs to be part of the PPC campaign plan, you shouldn't think about them as two separate things, that's what I'm hearing.

M: Exactly. Nothing in digital marketing exists in a vacuum anymore. Your PPC is tied to SEO, your SEO is tied to your social media, everything's tied to your email marketing, which is all tied to content marketing. When I talk about the funnel it needs to be visualized, you need to pull out a whiteboard, talk to your team, pull in your co-founders or just do it yourself. Draw a funnel and start talking about your activities and start identifying where do they fit in this funnel. Now if you notice you have an activity that's just sitting on an island all by itself in the funnel with no support above or below it then you have a problem, you need to identify that and visualizing helps.

E: Yeah I think we're all understanding more of that, seeing things - the images - will help us understand what's going on and sometimes that's painful for me to say as a writer because I still believe we need to use our words. I like my words, but yeah visualizing it does make an important difference because then you can see "how are we trying to move people from point A to point B and where the gaps are." I want to shift gears a little bit because I know we're going to be wrapping up soon and you've mentioned a bit in passing SEO but we haven't really talked about it and I know that can be a challenging issue to sort out if they've got a small budget does PPC make sense for a small budget, does SEO, especially with everything we hear about local searches and if you're a local business how important SEO can be. What are some of the challenges a small business has in sorting out that debate between PPC and SEO?

M: So between SEO and PPC, again I don't believe it's one or the other, they should usually be used in concert. With SEO, small businesses do need to understand their position in the ecosystem. Let's compare this to the African Savannah if you will, you've got your large competitors that are running around out there with massive budgets that aren't really afraid of anything, that have the ability to be featured, talked about on Forbes and the New York Times, all these places. There's no way a small business can compare to it, they're the elephants just trampling everything in their way, or the lions just eating what they wish. And then you have our small businesses who are sometimes prairie dogs just popping their heads up, little meerkats like that and they need to be quick and they need to be clever as opposed to just trying to go and fight a lion or fight an elephant hand to hand. So they look at their SEO on a local level, almost any small businesses can outrank a national competitor on local terms. So if you are trying to compete nationally for certain keywords that are very broad, for instance if you're selling hunting equipment, hunting equipment on a

national level for your e-commerce site is going to be very difficult because now you're going up against Bass Pro Shop, Cabelas and Walmart and Target, all these groups, or if you really focus initially locally then you have a chance of narrowing your competitors down to very small. So now you're taking the elephant and the lions out of the equation, you're going up against a bunch of other meerkats, which is good and you can move your way up the food chain. So start small locally, optimizing your Google MyBusiness, optimizing your local citations, getting into partnerships with local groups, all these types of activities and really focus on the on-site content even if you're an e-commerce site or some of these local searches. Now once you start establishing a foothold and you start getting traction locally now you can start going out on national keywords, and as you grow broader you're always going to run into more competition, but as you go broader you can keep that competition down by going after longtail keywords and semantic variations, and what I mean by semantic is "hunting equipment" is a boolean term. It's either "hunting equipment" or it's "hunting equipment", I mean we're talking about hunting equipment, however if you want to look for a term like "the best composite bow for elk hunting" now you've narrowed that, now you've answered a question for someone who wants to know what type of bow is lightweight for going after a certain type of creature, and I'm not a hunter but just using this as an analogy, you can narrow it and the big dogs, or big elephants and big lions, are not necessarily going after that, they're going after "hunting equipment." So create out a page on your website that is incredibly specific and rich in content for that topic. It can be a blog post it can be a product page, you can do whatever you want, but go deep. Look at these big groups, while they can get a lot of links and they can get a bigger presence than small businesses can they usually don't spend as much time on the nuances so their product pages aren't rich and they don't have these super engaging blog posts or those types of things, and that is where small businesses can compete, and so they start local and they stay in these niche keywords and as you continue to chip away at a percentage of the market share you can afford to go after these bigger and bigger keywords, but if right out of the gate you say "I'm a meerkat and my competition is that lion and that elephant over there" you're going to get trampled or eaten, but if you work correctly and stay in your lane and do what's proper and have the understanding you will be successful with SEO.

E: I think that whole description was so great because we started the discussion on digital advertising and its metrics and obviously we need to draw the metrics back to ROI but that's a real boost, digital advertising and all these new means of advertising and marketing, PPC, SEO, and all that provide in terms of tracking metrics, but at the end of the day for the digital marketing to work it's still back to basics, right? You still need to understand your personas and who you're selling to and you need to understand what makes you different and what's going to help you stand out.

M: Correct, there are no shortcuts to marketing, some people will read a blog post about how this one company was able to turn a \$300 budget into two million dollars on Facebook and if that were the case and if that was replicable every single time that person wouldn't be writing a blog post about it they would be Warren Buffett. What happens is people take these growth hacks or these flash-in-the-pan-solutions and say "that's what I'm going to do." Now there are some really good things that can be gleaned from those, but when we're looking at your campaign you have to understand that it really does come down to the basics of who you're going after, putting in the hard work, taking care of your systems, and understanding what you're capable of and not looking for that shortcut or that big homerun because yes they can happen, no doubt they happen, but the problem is the odds are not in your favor for it to happen so you should really work the stuff that is in your favor and try to load the deck as much as possible in your favor.

E: Absolutely, well OK Mike I think we're going to wrap it up there. Where can people find you online or Foptail Marketing?

M: Go to FoxtailMarketing.com, I also write for Forbes if they want to just search my name "Mike Templeman" might be my Forbes column or my Entrepreneur magazine column and I write about marketing on both of those locations as well as some other ones, but FoxtailMarketing.com for general information on the company, and then if they want to follow me on any of my columns they can go there or on Twitter, I'm [@MikeTempleman1](https://twitter.com/MikeTempleman1).

E: Great, OK, and we'll put that in the resource links as well below. Mike, thanks so much for joining us, this was reall interesting.

M: Well thank you, this was great, thank you very much.