

**Trademark Productions Web Talk Radio Show Transcript**  
**Matt McGee**  
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Dwight Zahringer: Welcome to another edition of the *Trademark (Webtalk) Radio Show*. I am Dwight Zahringer of Trademark Productions and this week our special guest is Mr. Matt McGee.

Matt's an independent online marketing consultant who helps businesses of all size utilize the Internet. He's an SEO specialist who is focusing a lot on social media, blogging and local search, along with a variety of other tactics as we all have in our arsenal.

He writes a popular small business search engine marketing blog called [HyperlocalBlogger.com](http://HyperlocalBlogger.com), which is targeted to help local small businesses do

some marketing online. He's also an Assignment Editor for *Search Engine Land* and he began speaking at Search Engine Strategies Conference in 2006.

In 2007, he moved over to SMX, is that correct?

Matt McGee: Yes. I've been speaking on a bunch of different conferences around the country.

Dwight Zahringer: Excellent. And he's a moderator at *Sphinn* and the *Small Business Brief Forum*.

He's been interviewed by *The Wall Street Journal*, *Search Engine Watch* and a variety of other outlets online. Matt, thank you for joining us; I appreciate you taking some time out of your busy schedule today.

Matt McGee: Hey, thanks for having me. I appreciate it. Looking forward to it.

Dwight Zahringer: Excellent, excellent. Matt, we figured that you would be a good person to have on to help a lot of our listeners learn more about social media. A lot of our clients consists of small businesses who would benefit from hearing this discussion. Everybody's finding that the Internet is a great way in outreach to drive business to us.

But first, let's go a little bit of background and tell exactly who you are what you're doing. What made you decide to get involved more so as a search engine marketing consultant for small businesses? How did you feel that this point in your career that you were going to focus more on local and smaller businesses?

Matt McGee: Well, I kind of fell into it almost by default, almost having no choice. Back in the mid-90's I was building websites and doing web design and web development for small business clients and it just came to be over time – that's when Excite and Lycos and Yahoo were very popular. Google was just being formed in the late 90's.

So our clients were like, “Well, the website looks nice and all that sort of stuff, but what if people can't find it. And what do we do to get people to visit our website?”

And so, I kind of just fell into search marketing and SEO by default somewhere around 1999 or 2000 just realizing that ‘Gosh, it's nice to have a professionally done website, but it doesn't serve any purpose if people aren't coming to visit it.’

So, it was just like I said, it was just kind of by falling into it, the needs and demands of our clients.

Dwight Zahringer: Sure. We've mentioned that you've spoken at numerous events and have a history of helping large and small companies become more successful not only using social media, but tactics involving SEO and online marketing.

Would you recommend that businesses should be try to participate in as many different services so they don't have to have just one set of resources? Should they be using a combination more? What are you finding beneficial for a lot of your clients right now?

I guess start with social media and then let's talk a little bit about SEO.

Matt McGee: Okay. Well, I think – one of the tough things in answering these kind of questions about small businesses is the definition of a small business is so – it varies so much.

Matt McGee: I work out of my house, I do business consulting for clients. And then there's small businesses that have ten, 15, 20, 100 employees. They might have five offices in different states.

And so, what works for one small business may not work for the next small business. And so, I think from the small business owner perspective, it's important to just keep that in mind that you have to understand your station and understand your situation.

What works for the one-man band may not work for the larger small business; what works for the larger may not work for the one-man band.

Dwight Zahringer: Absolutely.

Matt McGee: Generally speaking, I believe in trying new things. There's always new opportunities coming down the pike for small businesses to get visibility in social media and SEO.

I don't know that I'd say that they should try as many different things as possible and be spread too thin, but I do think it's important to try. Give these new opportunities time to work and then move on if they don't and that's one of the benefits that a small business has is that because they're small you can react quicker, you can take more chances, you can move more quickly than the big competition.

And so, I do think generally speaking that there's a lot of value in having an open mind and being somewhat experimental in seeing what is going to work for the situation you're in.

Dwight Zahringer: Sure. No, I understand exactly what you're saying there. Maybe we should back it up a little bit and talk about small businesses in different segments.

We are an agency as our self here in Detroit and we work with a lot of small businesses, but I understand it's kind of a convoluted statement because it could mean Larry the Carpet Cleaner that has seven trucks that's operating in five counties in southeastern Michigan that maybe does under \$1 million of sales a year, but is active on something like that and he does have \$100,000 towards a marketing budget.

And then let's talk about maybe the smaller end of a business that might be just between a \$250,000 to \$1 million of business and they have a product or a service that they're focusing on. Maybe it's a larger CPA firm. It might be a mortgage company that's localized to a geographical area. So, the budgets can definitely be different and our recommendations are going to be different.

I think one of the big keyword topics—and this is one of the reasons we wanted to talk to you more about it too—is social media. I am opinionated, a little bit myself, but I wanted to ask you first, what are your thoughts on that in as far as, I guess, going after – let's talk about Larry the Carpet Cleaner or use Joe the Plumber for instance.

Dwight Zahringer: Let's talk about Joe the Plumbers first and then let's talk about the small-town \$250,000 company or \$1 million company with a couple employees that are looking to make a dent. Maybe it's a heating and cooling contracting

company; something small, but they definitely want to take a portion of their \$200,000 budget and throw it towards localized online search.

So, let's talk a little bit about getting them involved in search, how it can be beneficial. But then also as far as activities and social media and getting involved in that aspect of it. Basically, how do you preface that? How do you start that with them?

**Matt McGee:** Well, the first thing in any venture, whether it's marketing or something else, involves having a plan and setting goals. This is very important in search marketing and very important in social media. I would assume most listeners realize the need to do that.

In terms of specifics of social media, questions tend to ask which site should I be active on? How much time should I spend? So, those kinds of things. What I like to encourage clients to do is investigate and find out where their customers are. If your customers are on Facebook, then that's where you need to be. If your customers are on Twitter, that's where you need to be. If they're on MySpace, MySpace is still very highly used in the younger demographic.

So, in terms of figuring out which direction you need to go, I mean, the answer to that question where social media is concerned, at least, is you need to go where your customers are.

**Dwight Zahringer:** No, I – I agree with you there, too. But what about when they're a little bit more budget conscious? What I tell a client is, 'Well, is it a mirage? If you're utilizing social media, is this really the space you should be playing on? Yes, you'll have customers there, but who's going to be taking care of executing some of these campaigns? Are you paying for someone? Are you looking to

have – be trained and have it be done in-house? Where can the money be best spent?’

Matt McGee: Yeah, exactly. And so, he’s not carrying a laptop with him or an iPhone from plumbing appointment to plumbing appointment. And so, in his case it might be more advantageous to try some local options, especially since his target market is only local.

We have – in my area, some retailers that don’t sell online; it’s total just brick-and-mortar. And they are using Twitter not to sell products, but just to gain visibility. And I’ve just started following them within the last couple months. At some point I’m going to check with them and say, ‘What are you getting out of this? Have you noticed any benefits?’

From my point of view, there’s one of these local businesses that the products they sell don’t interest me whatsoever. I’m not their target customer, yet I think it’s interesting that they are kind of front-of-mind for me in terms of just being on my Twitter feed constantly. They tweet three, four times a day; not necessarily about their products they sell, but just about what’s going on in town, local events coming up, local news. They participate in conversation with other local Twitter users that I follow.

I see them quite regularly and I’m more familiar with who they are and what they do. I’m able to sort of put more of a sort of human face to them. Even though I am not their target customer and I’m not necessarily going to go spend \$100 or \$200 there’s still some visibility there.

I want to follow up with them at some point to see what they’re getting out of this. I think Twitter is brain-dead simple and there’s a lot of benefits there...

Dwight Zahringer: Sure.

Matt McGee: There are a lot of benefits there for a local business because you can have these conversations with people that are directly in your area.

And even if you don't specifically sell products, there's at least opportunities for visibility and getting name recognition and brand recognition.

Dwight Zahringer: Sure. Good points. Why do you think social media suddenly becomes such a major topic in the industry? I know that it's becoming very brand aware. We're seeing commercials with Verizon and T-Mobile talking about tweeting and updating your Facebook with your phones in their commercials. So, they're becoming very mainstream.

What do you think also has contributed to the sudden rise in this interest?

Matt McGee: Well, for me, it's kind of the same reason 60 years ago everybody started talking about radio and how radio was changing the landscape of the United States. 50 years ago everybody was talking about TV and let's all gather around the television in the living room.

And the reason is because it's what people are doing and we're business owners or we're marketers. We need to be interested in what people are doing. How they're spending their time and how can we reach them. So, I think that, to me, at least, this is why social media has been the hot topic for the last – at least, certainly the last year, if not the last three or four years.

There was a report this month from Forrester, which is one of the big research agencies, and they said that, according to their surveys, more than four out of five U.S. adults are active in social media in some way at least once a month.

That could be either writing a post on their own blog or posting on Facebook or reading someone's blog. They're at least active in some way at least once a month, more than 80%. That's a hard number to ignore.

And then I've seen some other stats within the last couple weeks or so that Facebook's membership has grown so much that if it were its own country, it would be the fourth biggest in the world behind China, India and the United States.

You can't ignore that. It's where people are and so it makes sense that we're going to talk about it more. It makes sense that as business owners and marketers we're going to try and say, "Alright. Well, how can I get involved in this?"

Dwight Zahringer: Well, this brings up another important point and then I want to move forward a little bit more and talk some about some of the stuff you have going on as well.

I see some of my customers utilizing or trying to jump into some of these social gamuts such as Facebook and trying to understand Twitter and build up their following; not really having a goal right off the bat, but then being excited, playing around, they set up their account, it's under their personal name, they create a group, they start talking about events at their work but then sharing pictures of their dogs and their kids.

It becomes a little convoluted, but then after working at it for a month or so they say, "Well, it didn't really work out for me."

Well, did you have a plan? "Well, you know, I wanted to try it out and see how it worked."

Well, what was your plan? What were your goals? “Well, we want to increase business.”

So, how many hours did you work at it? I mean, they don't seem to treat it as a complete business and they play around on there, look at pictures of their friends, different things, and move away a little bit from the fact that they are trying to get some business out of it.

So, it seems to be a very, very special, I want to say, Old World recipe, a grandmother's secret recipe of the mix, the correct mixture of how much you're actually doing that's creating conversation, participating in conversations and working that – different types of areas to show how you're trying to introduce your message in a little bit of some of your profession, some of your specialties, some of the products and services you're offering.

Matt McGee: Yeah, I agree. I agree 100% with what you're saying. I've seen small businesses go about it completely the wrong way with not having the plan and not knowing how to balance the personal side of it versus the business side. Some small businesses jump in.

And you love the enthusiasm. I mean, that's one of the things I love about working with small business owners is that there is this energy and this enthusiasm there. But then they jump in and they treat it as nothing more than a sales channel.

And that's wrong and on the flip side they might do nothing other than post pictures of the kids and the dogs. Well, that's wrong too.

And so, yeah, I agree with you 100% that there needs to be more education on what that balance is. And I think, really, what that balance is – as we were saying earlier, is going to depend to a large degree on who you are and what your business is and who your customers are.

An example would be my wife. She is a real estate agent here in town, so she's a small business owner herself. I've encouraged her to get active on Twitter, but I did not encourage her, though, to get active on Facebook because I am not a big Facebook guy.

To me, Facebook is all those people poking me and sending me the quizzes and the games and other things.

Dwight Zahringer: Oh, yeah.

Matt McGee: ...it's just so annoying to me. But my wife loves Facebook, right? And she – so, she's on there probably an hour – at least an hour a day and sometimes it's not until after dinner when she's home. If she's obviously busy with clients during the day then Facebook has to wait.

So, she's out there and she's taking the quizzes and she's chatting with her friends and she's connected with all the local real estate agents, but I swear to God she has gotten clients this way because what happens is is that they find her – you know, they do a search on Google and thankfully she comes up pretty highly.

Then they visit her website and they do some research on her background and eventually they find her Facebook profile and she's somewhat open about it. And so they can see that she's got a personality, they can see that she's fun to be around, they can see the kind of stuff that she's interested in.

And I guess – I haven't analyzed it too deeply, but I guess what is happening is that people are saying, "Yeah, this is the kind of person we'd like to spend the next three weeks or six weeks driving around town looking for houses with."

So, it's been a real surprise for me. I told her when she got started, 'I just think you're going about this all the wrong way. It's not a game. If you're doing this for your real estate business, quit with all the quizzes and all that sort of stuff.'

But I'm telling you, she's gotten clients that way.

Dwight Zahringer: So, it's a little bit of the pot calling the kettle black.

Matt McGee: Exactly.

Matt McGee: It's been educational for me to watch her go do her own thing, completely ignore my advice and yet get clients.

Dwight Zahringer: Well, you know that's a great case study to point out and say sometimes when you go about trying to get business, you're not always as successful because you do have too much of a sales front that's going on.

And I guess that's why we're talking a little bit about the social media aspect. Since your wife's taking more of a backseat to selling and allowing some of those relationships to happen, that's allowing her to come through because of other ways: you're meeting by accident, you happen to be in the same book aisle of the store, whatever it may be, and you have similar interests. They find out that this personality, this person, like you're saying, is someone that

they want to drive around town with looking at 12 houses in the next three weeks or so.

It is building up that profile and that persona of who you are before people actually ever really meet or talk with you.

Matt McGee: Yeah, exactly. I think one of the primary elements of getting involved in social media is the personal connection, it's opening up the opportunities for a personal connection whether it be through your blog or through being on Facebook or Twitter or whatever it is.

It's an opportunity to be yourself and let you or your company's personality come through. And I've seen other real estate agents on Facebook where their status update is always about "Just listed, 3 bedroom, 2 bath MLS number" whatever it is. It's just a complete turnoff.

Dwight Zahringer: Yeah.

Matt McGee: You're right. It does kind of, in a sense, prove the human element of what social media is all about those connections.

Dwight Zahringer: Sure. I'm going to take a little bit of a turn here. You have a blog that's called the HyperlocalBlogger and you offer a lot of tips and advice to other local bloggers and to your readers.

Tell me a little bit more about it. Probably a lot of people are unfamiliar with the term. So, what does it really mean and then how can it help people out?

Matt McGee: Yeah. It's typically called hyperlocal blogging or local blogging. Generally speaking, whatever you call it, the idea is that you are writing about stuff that

happens. The phrase that I like to use is that you're blogging about the streets around you, blogging about the streets where you live.

You're writing about stuff that traditional media usually ignores. So, it might be stuff like school board meetings, what's happening at the community center, the new business opening across the town, even the terrible pothole problem on your street and that sort of stuff.

It's really getting granular in terms of what you blog about.

Dwight Zahringer: So, connecting on a lower level again. So, I guess, how important is it then for, a lot of smaller business, whether it's Joe the Plumber or that smaller real estate company, to be involved in blogging if you're in a local small business?

You're saying there's some good benefits in general, but how does a business become benefit from getting started in that?

Matt McGee: I don't think it's for everyone, to be frank. I think if you're a small business that sells nationwide or offers services on a real wide geographic basis, I'm not sure it's for you.

Local blogging, hyperlocal blogging really started out within the last three, four years as the realm of the real estate agent because it makes perfect sense. If you're looking for a real estate agent, that person, the agent you want, should be someone that is an expert on the local community.

So, for a real estate agent a local blog is a great way to show off your knowledge of the area. But I do think that there's opportunities for other businesses. There's a florist down in Anaheim, California that actually has two or three different blogs, but one of them is her business blog.

And not only does she write about what's going on in the flower industry and some occasional posts about new flowers and new displays and all that sort of stuff, but she also blogs about local important events happening in her hometown.

When people are searching for information about these events, a good blog is a real terrific SEO tool and it's not real difficult, in a real targeted geographic area, to write blog posts that are going to rank very well on Google and other search engines for local terms

Dwight Zahringer: Absolutely.

Matt McGee: And so, I am certain that her blog comes up quite often when people are not necessarily searching for flowers, but searching for terms that are related to the local community down there.

It's a visibility kind of thing: they land on her blog, they get the information that they want about the event that's coming up. They may not be ready to buy some flowers right then, but she is noticed.

Dwight Zahringer: They know who to go to when they're ready.

Matt McGee: Exactly.

Dwight Zahringer: It shows a lot of transparency in the individual that it's just not all about pushing and selling their products; it's just not an ATM teller that you just go in there to get money and check your balance and that's it.

There's a little bit more of a flair in showing that they really have a social interest in other things that are going on and just not trying to captivate an audience to sell or push them something. That's an important part, too.

Matt McGee: Yeah, I agree.

Dwight Zahringer: Matt, social media, big buzzwords. You're an active conference attendee and speaker, so we've been through that the past couple years and we see the different hot topics and terms.

Actually, are you going to be attending PubCon in November?

Matt McGee: I am not certain yet. I don't know what my plans are. I've never been to a PubCon. I would love to go to one.

Dwight Zahringer: Oh, you need to go to one. We can definitely meet up out there and play a game or two or have a drink or two and then talk a little SEO and social. It's a lot of fun, but they released a schedule yesterday, actually and it's amazing because on every session hour there's something, one, two or three things involving Twitter.

Lots of Twitter. A lot of affiliate stuff coming back up again, believe it or not. A little on the site reviews and, of course, we're always talking about SEO and we're going to have the battle matches of getting links, paid linking.

This year they scheduled Matt in another Q&A session with Google engineers at the same time in a different room.

Well, basically, moving forward, what do you think the future of social media is holding? I mean, what's the next Facebook? What's the next Twitter and

the tweets? What do you think is going to be the big next thing and did you anticipate anything coming up and changing?

Matt McGee: Well, I can't claim to be much of a forecaster. I do think – I am real, real bullish on Twitter. I think there are opportunities for businesses of all sizes, especially small businesses, to take advantage of Twitter. That, to me, is the way of the future.

I think it enables instantaneous and direct communication with client and prospects pretty much no matter what kind of industry you're in. There are so many examples already of businesses that are using Twitter. Restaurants are posting daily menu specials, retailers that are posting "Limited-time sales between 3:00 and 6:00 today, 25% off if you mention Twitter at the register," and so forth.

This kind of stuff works.

Dwight Zahringer: Sure, yeah.

Matt McGee: It sounds kind of hokey, maybe, but it's a real productive tool and I think the folks that run Twitter, they understand what they've got on their hands here.

They launched this *Twitter 101 Guide for Business* a month ago; really incredible helpful information for small businesses trying to figure out what Twitter is and how they can use it.

They really are on top of the game in terms of recognizing the business potential of what their own tool is, whereas Facebook on the other hand, early on I don't think Mark Zuckerberg and his crew recognized the potential business elements of Facebook. I think they're interested in it now, but if they

were on top of that game four or five years ago, I think they'd be a lot further ahead than they are.

Dwight Zahringer: Sure, sure. I was trying to explain to my father about Twitter and he's an old, retired guy, but he was a little bit in advertising and marketing and I think it was pretty amazing. He put it pretty correctly. He's like, "It sounds like a very personal, impersonal way of doing business."

And I said, 'I think that kind of resonates with me a little bit there.'

Matt McGee: Yeah.

Dwight Zahringer: Because I guess tweeting is personal but yet a little bit impersonal to a certain aspect; you're trying to drum up some business.

Matt, we've got to wrap things up here for our show. But, the last question I wanted to ask you here regarding some kind of template that you would be able to provide or that you could point some of our listeners in a direction that small businesses or any business, really, could follow to help get themselves started in utilizing social media outlets?

Matt McGee: I've tried over the last couple years in writing on my own blog and on *Search Engine Land* to try and profile a bunch of different small business owners that are successfully doing this.

I mean, I've done a profile of a guitar teacher that built his business by posting videos on YouTube, a small bakery outside New York that built their business posting photos on Flickr; they are now being featured on those Food Network challenges.

I've done profiles of a local photographer getting active on MySpace and reaching out into teens in her local area and getting lots of graduation bookings from it.

I don't know that there is one set template. I think it's just important to do as much learning and research as possible in your industry and find out what other people are doing that works and apply it to what you're doing.

Dwight Zahringer: Great, great. Matt, a couple quick more things and then we're going to wrap it up.

Matt McGee: Okay.

Dwight Zahringer: But to first I want to plug you and [HyperlocalBlogger.com](http://HyperlocalBlogger.com) and when you will be speaking out at different conferences and events. Which ones are you going to be at that are coming up?

Matt McGee: Actually, I think my next speaking engagement is probably not going to be until early next year at SMX West. There was a conference in Denver in a couple weeks that I was due to speak at that has just been canceled and is going to be reorganized into a smaller event, but I don't have the details on that.

So, probably at this point, depending on what happens with PubCon, which I'm not going to speak at, but I might attend, I would think SMX West which is in the Bay Area.

Dwight Zahringer: Perfect. I think you should keep PubCon on your sites. Give (Brad Tabkey) or talk to some of your buddies over there at *Search Engine Land* and I'm sure we can help you out with some type of a pass, get you over there and

meet some of the usual suspects. It's in Vegas, it's a good fun time and there's a lot of good topics that happen there. So, I think you'd be pleasantly surprised.

Last thing we're going to do is play just a quick little game. I'm going to give you ten seconds to go ahead and blurt out anything you want about the following topics. I'm going to throw out a word and I'm going to give you ten seconds to talk about them, okay?

Matt McGee: Okay. Yeah, alright. Sounds good.

Dwight Zahringer: Alright, Caffeine.

Matt McGee: Caffeine. I don't think it's as big a change as people think.

Dwight Zahringer: Alright, perfect. Vince.

Matt McGee: I think that was overblown to a large degree.

Dwight Zahringer: Bing.

Matt McGee: Bing.

Matt McGee: Not really sold on Bing yet. I think there's opportunity there, but I'm not convinced that they're going to grab it.

Dwight Zahringer: A quick thing. Matt, are you seeing a lot of refers coming in for Bing for you and your clients and a lot of your stats over the past couple months?

Matt McGee: Not yet.

Dwight Zahringer: Really?

Matt McGee: Not as many as I had hoped.

Dwight Zahringer: Really. Interesting. So, how do you think that's going to work out, then, with their entire merger with Yahoo. I heard a great analogy that came from Jeremy Schoemaker which is basically Yahoo went off of the defense. They got off of the offense and went on the defense and that's why they've kind of petered out as being a leader over the past couple years.

But what do you think that's going to mean for people? I guess we're talking about social media, SEO, small businesses using the web to grow their businesses, but what is this partnership going to mean with Bing now filling up the results of Yahoo in the coming months?

Matt McGee: Yeah. I mean, I think to one degree it makes things a little easier because now there's going to be two primary, major crawling search engines; it's just going to be Google and Bing as opposed to Google, Yahoo and Bing.

So, in that sense it's going to be a little easier because you don't have to worry about three, you only have to worry about two.

In the other sense, I think back in the day when Yahoo used to use Google results, earlier this decade, I remember experiencing a lot of confusion from small business owners because they could never figure out how to get listed on Yahoo and there was just a general lack of understanding that Yahoo was actually showing Google search results but that they looked different.

I think there's good and bad to it. Yeah, I mean, it's. I've always been a fan of Yahoo and so the news that they were kind of throwing in the towel on having their own search engines, that was kind of sad, I thought.

Dwight Zahringer: Yeah. The story that kind of went the wrong way.

Matt, I want to thank you very much for giving us some of your time today. I know you're a busy gentleman and we appreciate you obliging to speak to us and our listeners this week.

Again, Matt McGee, he is the author of [HyperlocalBlogger.com](http://HyperlocalBlogger.com) and also an Editor at *Search Engine Land* and over at *Sphinn* and I invite everybody to reach out and visit his blog. He's a great guy, he's been a great guest. Thank you very much for your time, Matt, and I hope to see you over at PubCon.

Matt McGee: Hey, thanks for having me. It's been a blast.

THE END