

Marketing Your Business Online - How to Get Found



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Announcer:

Welcome to THRIVE, a Paychex business podcast where you'll hear timely insights to help you navigate marketplace dynamics and propel your business forward. Here's your host, Gene Marks.

Gene Marks:

Hey everybody. Thanks for joining us back again. My name is Gene Marks, and I'm here with Marcus Tober. Marcus, first of all, hello. And thank you for joining us.

Marcus Tober:

Hey Gene. Hey everybody.

Gene Marks:

Glad that you're here. Marcus is the Senior Vice President of Enterprise Solutions at Semrush. So, first of all, Marcus, let's talk a little bit about what Semrush does. And then, we'll talk a little bit about how you wound up in this position and what you do. But tell us about Semrush.

Marcus Tober:

Semrush is a global software company that provides lots of tools, especially connected tools in the digital marketing space. So, based on the variety of tools and on the reach that we have, we could say we are the largest platform, especially for the mass audience. And that's why the audience listening into is actually really the best audience that we can have. And just to super quickly explain about what we do, I mean, we really help businesses to be found online by giving them lots of insights about the competition, about opportunities, about gap state, and maybe confer quite, quite easily to really get up their visibility with ease.

Gene Marks:

You know? Whenever I look at Semrush, I always think of you guys. And I've known you guys for a long time and have been fans of the stuff that you provide. But even the tools that you provide, do you feel like the tools are something that a typical small business owner can handle? Or do you think that these are tools that you're providing to professionals and experts that can help small businesses? How do you feel about the best way to use your tools?

Marcus Tober:

I mean, the good thing about Semrush is you can really start super small. It's a low entry point. You don't need a long commitment. You don't need to talk to sales people for many months to get a good quote. It's really... You can really start quite easily. And the good thing is that, out of the box, using the platform, you get so much data and so many insights that you can use them right away. You don't need to set up your account for a long time. You don't need to be an SEO expert because the tool is really made in a way that you get a lot of recommendations and a good flow, or good workflow, within the software quite, quite easily. And it doesn't matter if you are in a small business or if you grow and then grow into a larger business, because the way... So, how Semrush works is we grow with the amount of data we are able to give you.

Marcus Tober:

If you scale across multiple countries, if you scale with multiple products or services that you're offering, this is where we can give you more data. But typically, if you really start small, we support these companies with licenses, without large commitments, without talking to lots of sales people and that kind of stuff. I think this is really the best... the way how to get into search... not just SEO, because Semrush does more than just SEO. We give you a lot of stuff to optimize your content, your social media experience, how you do PR, that you see how you are found online because your reputation matters a lot as well. Right? So, Semrush is really like the Swiss knife of everything in digital marketing, I would say.

Gene Marks:

Right. So, this isn't really just necessarily about your website, but it's about any particular piece of content that you're publishing online. Correct?

Marcus Tober:

Yes. Correct. And also, I mean, last year, we have started to add, for example, third party applications. So, you can even look at your mobile application, if you have one, by connecting a mobile analytics app into your Semrush account, which is quite easy and handy. And then, you can really see how you're doing in web and app at the same time.

Gene Marks:

Got it. So, if we're talking about different types of content and different types of platform, you know what's near and dear to my heart right now is YouTube, specifically for this podcast. We do the podcast. It goes out in a bunch of different platforms, Marcus. And then, we also have this video version. You and I are talking right now. And we're going to publish this on a page like this on Paychex YouTube page as well. Tell me how Semrush helps businesses promote their videos, because there are a lot of businesses that are doing videos now. What types of tools does Semrush offer that can help promote videos, get more views on our videos on YouTube?

Marcus Tober:

I mean, with video content, important is to understand that people are often not binary. They have a question, and they go on Google, and they do a search. And the video might be the best answer, right? So, if you look at search result pages, you might have some very typical text links. But then, you often have videos where Google believes the video might also answer your question. So, often the journey coming to YouTube starts just in Google search, right? So, if you want to know something about SEO for small businesses, you maybe want to read a blog post, but you maybe want to see a video. And this is where you can also start your finding good opportunities in which areas video might be interesting. If you go on

Semrush, put in any topic that you like into our keyword magic tool, you get a lot of related different other queries.

Marcus Tober:

And to all these queries we collect, is there a video that Google is showing the direct answers? Is there maybe no video because that's a good understanding for you as well that there's maybe not a lot of demand in YouTube. So, that's why... Even if YouTube is a different search engine... So, it's the second largest search engine in the world after Google. So, Google owns one and two. I would really start searching for good topics in Semrush, in our keyword tool, because this is where you can get a lot of inspiration. You also see search volume, like how much demand actually is potentially be there. Because YouTube itself, they don't give you lots of keyword data because YouTube is very personalized, right? So, most people use YouTube with their Google account. So, the video recommendations are really based on their video consumption. But if you really want to understand where typically a customer journey starts and what topics are, where video might be interesting, this is where keyword research is really the key.

Gene Marks:

Is it just keywords? I mean, is that what it's all about, whether you're on Google or YouTube?

Marcus Tober:

Okay. You're right. I mean, keywords is such a, let's say, abused word. So, this is how SEOs often talk. But in the end, what you really mean is a topic. And a topic means it's a lot of different searches, but people mean the same, right? So, if people search for "How do SMBs do SEO?" Or "How to get found online", or "What can I do to get found?" I mean, all these different searches are one topic, in the end. And what you should really do is you should try to understand what I'm offering and what could people search, where a video might really fit to the intent. And it might be really the case that a video is the best answer to this, but you still need to understand that it's not always YouTube where people start their search.

Marcus Tober:

It's often also search. And this is where you need to think about both. But in the end, you're right. If you also look at YouTube and look what kind of videos are already existing, that's also pretty good for inspiration of how long could a video be, what kind of topics people are covering. And this is where you could leverage classical search and YouTube at the same time.

Gene Marks:

So, that's really interesting. So, still taking the example of our YouTube video, let's take this conversation you and I are having right now. It's going to be published in a couple of weeks. The keywords that come immediately to my mind is SEO, search engine optimization, Marcus Tober, Tober, Semrush. Those kind of like jump right out at me. But I'm assuming that Semrush will also provide me with tools if I was a Semrush... using your platform, that could help me suggest other keywords...

Marcus Tober:

Yes.

Gene Marks:

... based on queries that are being asked about SEO. Is that...

Marcus Tober:

Yes.

Gene Marks:

Is that a fair statement?

Marcus Tober:

Absolutely. So, you can filter by-

Gene Marks:

And then-

Marcus Tober:

... by questions, but you can also filter "give me only keywords that have a video in the search engine resell pages." So, you can really filter everything by only video content. But there's one thing that you should definitely have in mind is, a video in the end is not transaction, right? So, if you're selling products or services, you really need to connect to the product or service that you're selling, because the videos is good for top of funnel things, like to get people inspired, to get a lot of brand awareness to your company or your products. But in the end, you have to create a good connection to where you actually sell your products or your services.

Gene Marks:

And how do you do that? How do you do that with a video? What do you recommend?

Marcus Tober:

I mean, with a video, it's... YouTube is actually really good in putting the focus on the video itself. So, the description and the comments and all that kind of stuff is more or less hidden by YouTube now. But what you can really do is you can be very smart in displaying your brand name, your logo, or maybe the product name, in a form that's not really distracting from your video content, but that get people reminded of what you're doing. And often, video is really like an extension of what you're doing anyway. Right? If you believe you can just do great video content and then you're selling your products like the hottest thing on earth, this is not how it works, because you sell products there where people are able to really make a transaction. If you have visual content, you might put your video also on Instagram and have a good app. Then, people can kind of like buy it direct in the app on Facebook. And then, of course, you can put ads on YouTube as well. Yeah.

Gene Marks:

Yeah. No, no. That's very helpful. And again, I always talk about YouTube because it is the second biggest search engine, but you're right. There's Instagram as well. There's TikTok. There are other places. So, let me... I got to specifically get back to Semrush and the products and the services that you offer, particularly for small businesses. So, there are keyword tools that you mentioned, right? What else? I mean, what...

Gene Marks:

I know keywords are very, very important, but what else does a company like yours do, or could do, to help me promote my videos, or a small business owner promote a specific blog that they've written, or an influencer promote a TikTok video that they made? What would Semrush do to help us do that?

Marcus Tober:

I mean, the main important thing is that you really think about, what is the platform? Where do you want to sell your services? If it's your website, if this is the main platform where you sell your stuff, you really need to think about how you can utilize Semrush in understanding your market, the demand, what are people searching? Is there any seasonality that comes with it, so we have the data? Then, you really need

to understand if your website is something Google needs to understand, right? So, it must be crawlable. It must be fast enough. It should have a structure that Google understands the information. That's called information architecture. You should find for opportunities as well. So, what's actually one of the best things you can do in Semrush is you can look at your competition and get inspiration, quite quickly, where can you kind of like maybe extend your content, extend your products, or maybe where you can gain a competitive edge against your competition, because you need to differentiate yourself.

Marcus Tober:

You might also think about how to attract links because Google is still a machine, and links pointing to your website is something that could really help like gain rankings, not in terms of buying links or doing cheap link building, but thinking about where are the communities or the people or the journalists that typically cover your topics that you get an understanding, can you reach out to them? Or what can you do to attract links? And all of these things together is more or less the foundation of doing good SEO, right? You need to have a good crawlable, fast website. You need to have a good content with an edge to it,

Marcus Tober:

You can't just have more of the same. You need to be linked from other authoritative sources. And if you really cover all these things, then you should have a decent visibility. And if you then think about all the other platforms, not just video platforms, but also other platforms where you can kind of like extend your content to, then I think you have pretty good marketing approach.

Gene Marks:

I think, over the years, I've found with businesses... And I've been told this by other SEO experts, Marcus, that search has gotten very much localized over time. You know? A lot of small businesses are local businesses, so they're a plumber or an electrician or a pizza shop or whatever. So, tell us... Give us your thoughts on localization, when you're trying to get yourself organically found online.

Marcus Tober:

I mean, localization is super relevant if you mostly serve local customers. If you are a plumber, like you said, or some service that only offers products or services in an area, you should really look at local SEO because everything else really doesn't matter. If you go and do a search, and you have these three local results, like just maps, like local results, then this is where you should be. And the optimization for these results is very different than doing regular SEO. You should think about getting reviews. You should think about enabling your customers to give you a rating to kind of create a good experience for them, in the way that Google understands, "Hey, you're offering services that are relevant in this area. You should also optimize your page with structured data."

Marcus Tober:

Google knows, "Okay. This is your location. This is what you're doing, so you should use microdata or structured data." Typically, all CMSs, out of the box, they do offer service like this, like Wix and likes. So, they help really small businesses to have a good foundation. But then, what you really should do is... and maybe you know it from some good local services is that they put in a small little card if they do a service, or if their people are on site in your house, and... I don't know, they fix your sink or whatever, that they say, "Hey, please leave a review on Google, my business, or wherever," because that can really make or break if you get found. And of course, Google also looks at where you are and where the searcher is.

Marcus Tober:

And if you are one of the closest businesses, then you have a pretty good advantage. So, it means, if you're in a city where your business is localized in a city center, you have a higher chance to get found. But in the

end, it's really about a mix of everything that's relevant for people in a certain location. And if you have a website with structured data, you get regular reviews, and you do not have lots of one star ratings, I would say then you have a pretty good chance in getting found also locally.

Gene Marks:

It's very, very... That's very, very helpful. So, here's what I'm doing. So my company... I mean, again, I'll use my small business as an example. We sell CRM software, so different types of CRMs. So, one of them is like Zoho, you've probably heard of. We also sell Salesforce. So, if I don't do anything local and somebody starts Googling for Zoho, Zoho corporation takes up like the first three pages of results, because they're buying ads, they've got way more traffic going to their website. I mean, I'm buried.

Gene Marks:

But I guess what you're saying to me is that... Now, my company's is not in Berlin, like you. We're in Philadelphia. So, if I restructure my website in such a way that it's using structured data, it has got a lot of localized information on my website, that I'm a Zoho partner in Philadelphia or Pennsylvania, then I've got more of a chance. When somebody is searching for Zoho Philadelphia, I have way more of a chance of being found top of the first page. Is that a fair statement to make?

Marcus Tober:

It is. So, Google really understands if a query is localized. And if someone searches for electrician without the city name, but Google understands it's a query that's most likely meant to be local, Google will show the local tech.

Gene Marks:

Great. So now, I've been on Google business, so I've got my whole business listing there. And then, I will have clients leave me reviews there. And I have gotten one, one star review, and it really kills me. But besides that, everything else has been very, very good and very positive. So, that's good news. You mentioned structured data. And already, I'm like, "I have no idea what you're talking about." You know? And I think a lot of people listening to this podcast would probably be in the same boat as me.

Gene Marks:

So, what do I do? I mean, I'm not going to... I'm not... I mean, Marcus, I'm not going to go and start ripping up my webpage. I don't know what I'm doing. Do I go to Semrush for this help? Do I go to Fiverr, or some other freelancing site to get somebody that's an expert in social media tools? Do you guys have a channel of partners or experts that I could be like, "Hey, I'd like to hire you for a rate per hour to put that structured data into my site, using your tools"? What recommendations would you give?

Marcus Tober:

So, I mean, we are not an agency. That means we are not going to offer these services. But what we are doing is we have great partners, great agency partners, that really help us to kind of help small to large businesses. So, there's an agency program where agencies get a certification. So, whenever you have these problems... I mean, the first thing you should always do, you should always look at, is Google offering some sort of tool to help you with something. This is always the first thing, because it comes from the source, it comes from the company that actually wants to have you search, like a crawlable website. But if that doesn't work, you should definitely...

Marcus Tober:

Or you can reach out to our support. We can connect you with the right agencies. And on seminars.com, you have also a list of all partner agencies. That means there's most likely one in Philadelphia...

Gene Marks:

I'm sure.

Marcus Tober:

... we'll be happy to connect you with.

Gene Marks:

Next question, when it comes to agencies... When I hear the word agencies, I think of businesses that have five employees or 500 employees. I mean, agencies come in all different sizes. And the typical small business is not going to be spending, can't afford to spend, that much on this stuff. And yet, don't agencies skew more towards larger corporations, bigger brands, where there's money and 10...

Gene Marks:

Is there less opportunity for a small business to get the kind of attention it really needs from an outsider? In other words, is going for an agency... Is maybe hiring somebody independent, at an hourly rate, could that be a better road than going down the agency road for a smaller company? I'm just curious to get your perspective on that.

Marcus Tober:

I mean, it depends, right? So, if you-

Gene Marks:

You don't want to say anything bad about your partners, right?

Marcus Tober:

I know. I totally know what you mean. But the point is, you have to think about what is your objective, right? So, if you want to be really successful online, but you do not have a lot of budget, the best recommendation is to really try it yourself. You know?

Gene Marks:

Yeah.

Marcus Tober:

There's so much good content, like on YouTube. There's so much good content on YouTube. There's so much good content that you can find via Google search. I mean, we have a really, really good blog on Semrush. I mean, seriously, we have a lot of guest posts, posts we are doing ourselves. There's so much stuff. So, if you're on a budget, please try to kind of do it by yourself, because otherwise, if you burn your budget and you're not happy... And with search, the problem really is, it is not like a linear return on investment, right?

Marcus Tober:

So if you spend 100 bucks, and the return on invest is, I don't know, 200, if you then spend 50, it's not like 100, or if you spend 200 doesn't mean it's 400. So, the point is, if you invest a lot of work into paid search, organic search, it doesn't matter, and you only end up being on the second page. You don't get clicks, but you have invested a lot of time and most likely budget without a good return so... But the connotation is, especially when you're a small business, there are always good small local agencies, especially when it comes to SEO. And local SEO is something where you want to have a partner that understands your city,

your community, your neighborhood. And you don't need to work with a 500 people agency, because, I mean, they have lots of opportunity costs.

Marcus Tober:

You will have a highly [inaudible 00:21:34]. So, you should look for a small... a local agency. And this is what you should do. You should look at, do they have ratings and reviews, and from when are they? Are they good? Do they seem to be real or fake? And this is how we should vet the potential partner you should work with. And the best thing... I mean, this is the good thing in SEO. When you talk to a freelancer or an agency, if it's small or big, you should ask for references. And that's something quick, right? Because if you ask, "Hey, what was the last local business you optimize?" And then, if you get a domain name or whatever, you can look up how successful this local business is. So, I think it's... In search, it's super easy to see if you potentially work with a good partner.

Gene Marks:

Okay. Fair enough. All right. Just two more quick questions for you. I know it's late in the day, so you're well past your glass of wine. So, our first question has to do just with... and again, I just got your view... organic versus paid search, right? I mean, Google makes its money off of paid search, as does Instagram and Facebook. And these are essentially media companies. So, are we kidding ourselves, Marcus, by trying... again, small businesses trying to get found organically on Google? Or should we just sort of drink the Kool-Aid and say, "Listen, we need to be having a paid search program if we really want to get our sites, our videos, or whatever found online"? What are your thoughts on paid versus organic?

Marcus Tober:

So, I can definitely tell you that paid is very important while organic is important as well, but both are very different. Organic search is where you need to have some patience. You need to really earn your spot. But then, in the long run, it's really efficient. It's having... if you do it right, having the best ROI compared to any other thing you can do in marketing. But paid search is important because you can really test super quickly. Is there any demand for your product or services? What's the competition? You are able to super quickly look up... Is your message, is your pricing, is whatever you want around your product or services working? Because with paid search, you just create your campaign, or maybe you have multiple campaigns and benchmark the campaigns in an A/B test, and look what goes best.

Marcus Tober:

And if you have enough searches for your product within one day, or maybe two days, you have a result, right? And organic search...

Gene Marks:

I see.

Marcus Tober:

... you have to wait sometimes month to really see how it's paying out. But then, like I said, in the long run, organic search is really what kind of is having the best ROI. But in the end, you should do both, because SEO is really good in top of funnel, where it's high search volume, people and maybe not ready yet to purchase. Whereas, paid is really good in like, when it's close to the transaction. If people search locally for like "buy a MacBook near me", because they want to buy one now, this is where you want to have your ad, right? Because people, they are in purchase mood. And this is where you would need to show up, stuff like this.

Gene Marks:

Yeah. I've learned through all of this, online marketing in particular, is that there's no silver bullet. You have to have a few different types of programs, and then see what works best for you, and then double down. At least, that's what I found has worked the best for me. One final question for you, before I let go, because we haven't mentioned them. But how about Amazon? What are your thoughts? I mean, it's gotten to the point now where people... There, there are a few studies and surveys that have been done saying, when people are looking for products online, they're not even going to Google. They just go right to Amazon and search there.

Gene Marks:

Do you recommend to your clients, if they are eCommerce sellers or if they're Amazon sellers, that do paid advertising on Amazon to be found? And do you have any experience with people that can get found organically on Amazon, rather than having to pay for placement? Just curious what your thoughts are about advertising on Amazon, getting found on Amazon.

Marcus Tober:

I mean, Amazon is a synonym for eCommerce, right? As you said, people go on Amazon and search for their products there. They don't even go to Google. But I believe you should kind of tackle both, especially when you have products that are on high demand. This is where Amazon is really good. But in Amazon, I mean, like in Google, they really try to have you as a merchant, advertising your products, right? Because otherwise, if people search for even your product name, Amazon's showing other merchants with their ads on top of your-

Gene Marks:

Yes.

Marcus Tober:

... your products. But both are very similar. And in the end, what you should do is... If you have a shop, and if you have like a product feed, you can optimize your product and the product feed in a way that you can sell on Amazon and on your website at the same time. If you use Shopify or other shop software providers, you can have a feed of your product data. And you can, in the end, manage Amazon and Google with a little bit of extra effort, but you can sell your products on both platforms. And you should.

Gene Marks:

Fair enough. Fair enough. Final question before I let you go is just the future, Marcus. I mean, you've been in this industry for 21 years. I think it's 21 years, if I read correctly.

Marcus Tober:

It is.

Gene Marks:

Yep. And I'm assuming you've seen a change or two over the past 21 years. What do you think your job will be five, six, seven years from now? Where do you think search is going? Voice?

Marcus Tober:

I mean, what is search and is it still the same like what it was when Larry Page and Sergey Brin invented Google? It was showing the user the best possible result for what he's looking for in this very moment. And in five, six years, a search will be much more visual. There will be more videos. Most likely, people will do more searches with their voice. That means that you have more complex, longer form queries, which means you as a company trying to sell your products and services, you need to think about, what is my

audience doing, how do they search, and in which kind of phase of the customer journey are they, and what should I provide in terms of content.

Marcus Tober:

It will be more diverse, a hundred percent. And search is going to be more complex. And it's going to be more relevant on more platforms, like you've mentioned TikTok before, which is one of the incredibly fast growing video platforms. So, you, as a company, you need to think, where's my audience and what should I do to reach out to the audience? And this is what we SEOs need to think about too. So, we have to adopt our strategy to help companies, or the companies we work for, to make them found on all these different platforms.

Gene Marks:

Marcus Tober is the Senior Vice President of Enterprise Solutions at Semrush. That's S-E-M-R-U-S-H dot com. Marcus, I hope I got that... your URL correct. Thank you very much for joining us. That was very interesting. And we appreciate your insights on search engine optimization. Thank you, Marcus.

Marcus Tober:

Thanks Gene. Thanks everybody.

Gene Marks:

Do you have a topic or a guest that you would like to hear on THRIVE? Please let us know. Visit payx.me/thrive-topics, and send us your ideas or matters of interest. Also, if your business is looking to simplify your HR, payroll, benefits, or insurance services, see how Paychex can help. Visit the resource hub at paychex.com/worx. That's W-O-R-X.

Gene Marks:

Paychex can help manage those complexities while you focus on all the ways you want your business to thrive. I'm your host, Gene Marks. And thanks for joining us. Until next time, take care.

Announcer:

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