



Episode 49

Why does SEO Cost so much



**Maria: [00:00]**

Hello and welcome to Designer Discussions with Mirjam, Jason and Maria. We pronounce the J and Jason's name, but not Miriam. So if you see us online, shout out to Miriam. It's not mere jam. Today we're going to talk about why is SEO so expensive and what can you do as an interior designer to have better SEO for your business?

Intro: [00:05]

Welcome to the Designer Discussion Sessions podcast. Tune in each week where we discuss marketing, branding, PR and business advice for design professionals.

Maria: (00:27)

This episode is brought to you by Kitchen and Bath Marketing Solutions. Jason is our resident expert on both design and digital marketing. Make sure you reach out to him and have him help you with all those things that have been bogging your business down. Are you worried about your email newsletter, your Facebook ads, any of those things? He has a proven track record and he will be able to give you measurable results. Remember, always reach out to Kitchen and Bath Marketing Solutions if you have any issues and you want to grow your design and remodeling business.



Jason: (01:27)

Maria, that is a question I'm asked a lot by designers. They often get into why do I have to pay so much for SEO? And there's a lot of reasons why, but that's what I'm going to talk about today with some solutions as well. But I'm going to start on why SEO is so expensive. When I'm often asked by designers about SEO, they say, well, I have my web designer build in SEO when he built the website. So why do I need to pay for it? Ongoing. And I say it's simple. Google updates their algorithm over four to five, actually in between five and 600 times a year. So as SEO goes, which is search engine optimization, in order to stay top of mind and top of the search engine, you have to keep up with all of the algorithm changes. And the average interior designer does not have the want to or the time to keep up with all that. So that is one of the main reasons that SEO costs so much is that it's always forever changing. SEO is actually based on a couple of factors. Some of those are the nature of what you do, so that will determine what the competition is and how many other businesses are in your area. So, for instance, if you're in a large Metropolitan area like Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Dallas, you're going to have more competition than if you're in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Because just by the nature of designers that are in the area, you have more competition to rank for the same keywords that you want to rank for. So that's one of the factors. Also, you want to look at what is the size of the market. So it's not only how many competitors are there, how many potential prospects are in your area looking for the services that you offer, and that's also determined by the population size, housing as opposed to commercial, whether you do residential designers, commercial design. So that's another fact that it gets into all of that. In terms of the time I have talked about one of them in terms of the search engine always changing their algorithm and a lot of the changes are sitting between five and \$600. A lot of those are not directly effective to your website, but many of them are. And when it changes, you have to be on top or you may be ranking one week, but then the next week it does not.



Jason: (03:27)

And so often when we work with clients, I tell them do not look at your rankings every day because it's like the stock market. It will go up and down depending on what's happening. So look at it at least once a month where you can get an overall view of what's happening. And so that's when you can get a realistic view on how is your search and how is your website trending in the search engines when you look at it, if you're going to do SEO yourself, some of the things that you need to look at in terms of one of the things I always talk about is we actually have a podcast on this and we also have a guide on my website, Google My Business or what is called Google Business Profile. You need to set that up because that's a free service that you can set up on your own. And I talked about this on our podcast. If you spend 4 hours just to set it up, initially you have most of the work done and then all you have to do at least once a month, look and do updates which will take you in between five and ten minutes a month to do. But you need to spend that initial time to do Google My Business Profile. At a minimum that you can do on your own or if you hire an SEO firm, they can do that on your behalf. But that helps you in the map listing. And so when you type in a keyword, that is the area. So you have the ads first, then you have the map listing which is around your local area, then you have the organic listing. So to get in the map area, that's Google My business. And so that's what you want to do first. Next is that they look at and when I say, hey, I'm actually talking about the search engines, they actually look at how credible you are. One of the ways that they look at that is your links is who is actually linking to your website. So in the old days, a lot of SEO firms used to do a lot of links to your website that were high quality, low quality, they didn't care, they just wanted to do a whole lot of links to your website. Nowadays that does not work. Google and other search engines.



Jason: (06:27)

Look at the quality of the link, not the quantity. What I mean by quality, an easy one is the Chamber of Commerce. So if you're a member of the Chamber of Commerce, usually not always. You may even have to ask them. They can link back to your website and that is a link from a high quality organization. All of the organizations that you're in the aside, the American Society of Interior Designers, the AIA, the American Institute Architects, the NKBA National Kitchen and Bath Association. All of these are large national, regional and local organizations that have power and they have influence. If you have a link and if you're a member of these organizations, you can ask to take a link back to your website. That's a link that shows that you are a real business and you're credible by the links that helps you on that side. Another way is content. We always say in SEO, content is King and having up to date, relevant, unique content is vital for you to rank in the search engines. And we had talked numerous times about having a content on your website that is up to date, relevant and unique. And if you have a blog, you don't have to blog every day, but you should at least have a blog once a month. And even if you just even did once a quarter, you can do what we had talked about in other episodes of Content pillar piece where you have a long form article, over 15 to 2000 words long on a topic that you can keep up to date. And so that's something that you can do. So that's just a quick overview in terms of why it actually costs so much. Because all of this that I had talked about, a lot of SEO agencies work on this every day and there's also citations and there's a lot of the technical SEO in terms of all Tags and all of that on the back end of your website. But in terms of the actual cost, like I said, depending on where you are in the world and depending on the competition, these numbers vary. But on the low end, on the low end for local, you can expect to pay anywhere between \$504,000 a month in SEO cost. Now when you go on the lower end, 200 a month, you want to make sure that the SEO agency is doing white hat techniques and not black hat.

**Jason: (08:27)**

Now the difference in the two black hat means those are avenues that the search engines look at that are not what they really want you to do, but that can get you ranked fast. But if they figure out that you're doing these black hat techniques, they'll slap your website and you'll be the index from the search engines.

Mirjam: (08:58)

Jason, can you give an example of what that would be?

Jason: (09:02)

Black hat. So one of the black hat that used to happen a while ago, is keyword stuffing. So if you want to rank for a certain keyword, say interior designers in Chicago, you'll have an article where the majority of the article says interior designers in Chicago and overarching. So that's just one way overusing. Keywords is not looked at with the search engines in good light. But you want to talk to the SEO agency to make sure that the techniques that they are using are white hat that are acceptable, that will last long term and that will not have an immediate comp. And then after a while you're not even on a search engine. Whenever you're looking on the lower end of SEO, that's what you want to look at on the higher end. If you're paying on the higher end, you want to make sure a you want to talk to other clients that they have in your niche to make sure that they are doing what they say they can do. But also you want to make sure that they're using all of the avenues that are available. When I had talked about off page SEO, you have the home page with your content and then you have the technical SEO behind the scenes that they're using.



Jason: (10:02)

All of those, they're also using Google My Business and what they're doing is actually white hat and then also talk to the restaurant. So that's what you want to look at, whether you're on the low end or the high end. But like I said, if you're on the low end, make sure that they're doing white hat techniques and not black hat. If you're an organization, if you're a bigger organization where you have a lot of employees, you actually have money to spend and you're really looking to scale and you want to rank on a regional and national scale. On the regional side, you can look to spend anywhere between 4010 thousand a month in SEO if you're looking to go regionally or nationally. And so because you're having the ten X everything I had just talked about. So you're having to 10x the content, you're having a ten X, the links, you're having the ten X, all of the on page, the all page, and the technical SEO. So you're having a 10x a lot of that work. So I had talked about in one of our other podcasts, a lot of SEO is about digital ditch digging. It's a lot of manual labor that you have to do and a lot of designers don't have time to do a lot of stuff. And even if you have employees that are skilled in SEO and know the technical side, if they're designers, they don't want to do SEO because SEO is not a design heavy job. That's more technical and that's more like for a designer that's like working on specifications to have you understand that's like working on a spec. A lot of designers hate specs because there's a lot of technical information, data content. That's what SEO is. So a lot of designers don't like to do that. So even if you have a marketing team in house, a lot of times your marketing team do not want to work on SEO because of the technical aspect of it. So on the higher end, that's what you can expect to pay in between four and ten K a month if you're a larger organization. Like if you're a Fortune 500, honestly, they spend over month easily because these are your national like the Coca Colas of the world. So for instance, in our industry, that may be like the cold, that may be like the Constantino.

**Jason: (12:02)**

So they'll spend upwards of month just on SEO because they're looking to be nationally and internationally. And like I said, you're ten to 20 X and a lot of that same work that you're having to do over and over again. So that is just a basic overview of the cost and why SEO costs so much. And one of the other things I want to talk about is that reputable SEO agency knows that after a while, once you run SEO, it gets easier. And after you rank for all the terms and all of the work out, there, a lot of the times after a few years you've done everything that you can do and they'll actually drop you into a maintenance contract where it's actually easier to maintain than it is to do everything over and over. So actually ask the SEO company about that. Do you have after a few years, after you've accomplished everything that you plan to do, do you have a maintenance mode and or can you teach our in house staff how to do the ongoing task? Because once you've done all the heavy lifting, it's easier to maintain it than it was to get there in the first place.

Maria: (13:43)

So Jason, some of the things I did because I worked with you guys to help me with my SEO is that I did move to the longer format blog posts and I removed short blog posts, things with just lots of pictures and not a lot of text to go along with it. And then I was also told to download. Is it called SEO?

Jason: (14:11)

It's either SEO Quake?



Maria: (14:23)

Yes. And then I got that. So that was one of the things I was asked to do was to set up SEO Quake on my website so that I could keep it's almost like a health report that you keep running at all times for your own website. And it will say, hey, I noticed you have 15 extra new pins this week and I found a backlink for you on someone else's website or it gives you all of this information and it's almost like taking a little bit of the glasses off of what makes it so mysterious and makes it something that even as a designer, you could have something to manage your own SEO or if you hire someone, you could track their success and their progress and growth. So it seems like there are tools out there to help make this not seem so scary. I don't know if those have always existed, but it just seemed like SEO was so difficult until I talked with you guys.

Jason: (15:11)

Yes, and there are a lot of tools out there. You also have for WordPress. If you have a WordPress website, you can download Yoast SEO and they have a free version and a paid version. If you're going to do SEO, get the paid version and it helps you and it guides you on what you need to have on your website. Looks at your links, look at the content. It looks at all of this and handy suggestions on what you ought to do. Also free website that you can add your site into is Gtmetrics.com. You can add your website in there and it will hand you a health report on your website in terms of the speed because they look at what the overall speed of your website is. If you have any broken links, what the links look like, what the content looks like. It gives you an overview of the health of your website and that also hand you suggestions on what you can do on the SEO side. One other that I did not talk about. So some SEO firms, they also do consult. So if you have an in house team, you may not want to hire an SEO firm to do your SEO.



Jason: (16:23)

You just may want to have them consult on you with their SEO. And that cost can be anywhere between a few hundred to a few thousand dollars a month. It just depends on what the scope of work is, what you're asking them to do, and how much help you need from them, how often. So you also have the project based SEO where they'll just work on it for a certain amount of time and stop. That's not as popular, but it helps if you plan to take over SEO or bring SEO in house where you can hire an SEO team for fixed amount of time, say for like six months up to a year and hire them for that cost and then have them at the same time that they're working on SEO. Train your in house staff to take it over once they leave. So those are the three ways. Either hire them outright to do your SEO, hire them as a consultant or do a project where it's just for a fixed amount of time and they hand it over to you.

Maria: (17:23)

I think this is really helpful as a follow up because we did just have a conversation with a brand and one of the things that they had mentioned in that podcast was that they can tell when they're wanting to work with a designer and create a brand partnership. They check to see if we know how to use our SEO keywords and if we're positioning ourselves well. And so I think it's a really good lesson to just start to lean into understanding SEO so that our businesses can grow and have some positive change.

**Jason: (17:23)**

Like I'd mentioned at the start, I hear from a lot of design firms that ask why is SEO so expensive? So hopefully today you learned a little bit why that is the case. And I know SEO is a lot of work. So if you have any questions at all or if you want to have us do a free consultation for you, feel free to reach out. You can reach us at either my email, Jason@kabms.com, or you can head to our website, which is Kitchenandbathmarketingsolutions.com, and we'll be happy to talk to you and help you out and help set you on the right path. Because SEO, I would say it's easy, but it's a lot of work. So you can learn how to do SEO, but you have to know the steps and you have to do them the white hat way, not the black hat way. So you can have longevity in the search engine and not get slapped.

Mirjam: (18:45)

Jason, I have one last question for you about the linking out from your website. So if you think about designers website and they have a Press tab where they show off their media coverage. I think it's a good idea to link back to the actual article if it was published online because it is usually very trustworthy media site. But does that hurt your link to or is that overall a good idea?

Jason: (19:13)

That's a good idea. It's just if you do it a lot. So if you do a lot of that and like I said, I don't want to get too technical and anybody that has any questions on this, it depends also on either the article that it's on the blog, the page. If you have a lot of links out from that page and just make sure that you are mindful of who you're linking to. And you want to also be mindful of who links to you as well. Because like I said, the search engines are looking at quality, not quantity.

Maria: (19:51)

Awesome. That is great information. Those are a lot of things that designers can do to help improve their presence on the Internet.

**Jason: (20:23)**

Go to our website. We have an SEO checklist. If you had under the Resource library under SEO, you'll see a checklist here where we have the all page, all page SEO, what you need to look for if you plan to do SEO yourself. But if you need any help, like I said, feel free to reach out to us. We are here to help.

Maria: (21:05)

Thank you Jason Lockhart. We appreciate you always sharing with us here at Designer Discussions. If you think this podcast was helpful for you and maybe you could help a friend. Please feel free to share and if you loved it, please come over and leave us a review. It helps us with our search and link Juice on our podcast so we can be found more easy. Thank you so much, love seeing you. We'll see you next week. This episode is brought to you by kitchen and Bath Marketing Solutions Jason is our resident expert on both design and digital marketing. Make sure you reach out to him and have him help you with all those things that have been bogging your business down. Are you worried about your email newsletter, your Facebook ads? Any of those things? He has a proven track record and he will be able to give you measurable results. Remember always reach out to Kitchen and Bath Marketing Solutions. If you have any issues and you want to grow your design and remodeling business.

Outro: (21:21)

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