neon NOISE PODCAST

Episode 33: Get Your Website to Peak Performance with Wayne Mullins

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WEB DESIGN & INTERNET MARKETING

00:00 Speaker 1: Welcome to the Neon Noise podcast, your home for learning ways to attract more traffic to your website, generate more leads, convert more leads into customers, and build stronger relationships with your customers. And now, your hosts, Justin Johnson and Ken Franzen.

[music]

00:16 Justin Johnson: Hey, Neon Noise Nation. Welcome to the Neon Noise podcast, where we decode marketing and sales topics, to help you grow your business. I am Justin, and with me, I have my co-host Ken. Ken, how are you doing today?

00:30 Ken Franzen: Doing well, Justin. How about yourself?

00:32 Justin Johnson: I am doing fabulous. Thank you for asking. Excited to chat with our featured guest today. We have Wayne Mullins, he is the owner of Ugly Mug Marketing, a results focused marketing agency. He's the author of multiple books, including, "The Freelance Freedom Formula: The Ultimate Guide to Pricing and Proposals," which provides lessons from an industry leading web design company. He has also written, "So You Have a Website... Now, What?: The Insider Guide to Monetizing your Website." Hey, Wayne, welcome to Neon Noise.

01:06 Wayne Mullins: Hey, Justin and Ken. Thanks so much for having me.

01:09 Justin Johnson: Awesome. Hey, Wayne, do me a favor, and fill in the blanks on anything I may have missed, and share a little bit about your background with us.

01:16 Wayne Mullins: Yeah, I'd be glad to. So I'm the founder of Ugly Mug Marketing. We've been around for eight years now. In a previous life, way back in the day, I actually started a lawn and landscape company, and grew that over a three-year period, ended up selling that business at the age of 24, and as a result of the growth of that company, have lots of local and regional business owners reach out to me for help with marketing and sales, and so, that ultimately led into what I'm doing now with Ugly Mug Marketing.

01:51 Justin Johnson: Cool. Very, very cool. You gotta talk quick about Ugly Mug Marketing. How'd you come up with that name? That's pretty cool.

02:00 Wayne Mullins: [chuckle] Yeah. Ugly Mug Marketing, the name itself comes from a quote from David Ogilvy. For those who don't know David Ogilvy, comes over to America, and with $40 in his pocket, decides he's gonna build an ad agency. And within about 15 years, he'd built the largest ad agency in the world. And he had a saying that was, "I would rather an ad that is ugly, that delivers results, than one that is beautiful, that doesn't." And honestly, that's the quote or the phrase that inspired the name, Ugly Mug Marketing.

02:35 Justin Johnson: Very cool. Cool story. [laughter]

02:38 Ken Franzen: Very.

02:38 Justin Johnson: I love it. I highly doubt many people forget your name. That's cool.

02:43 Wayne Mullins: [chuckle] No, it definitely, it sticks in the brain.

[chuckle]

02:46 Justin Johnson: It's...

02:47 Ken Franzen: Place us back in the time with landscaping, when was this? What I'm trying to do, is point us to where the marketing world was during the time you had that three years of growth, and how that sparked all this interest from other local business owners.

03:05 Wayne Mullins: Sure. That would've been pretty much right after college for me. That would have been a couple years out of college. Directly out of college, I got couple of jobs in advertising sales, so I worked for a national billboard company, selling outdoor advertising. From that, I decided I wanted to go out on my own, and the easiest thing I could figure out at the time was lawn and landscape. So jumped into that and really with... You don't have to have a ton of experience to do that type of company or that type of job. But to compete when you're 22 years old, and you're competing with people who are well-established in your community, who have large crews, and name recognition, I was a nobody, who probably, at the time, looked like I was still in high school. And so what I did was, I really just followed, and kind of built systems, and I was very systematic about the marketing approach that we took. Everything from lead generation, all the way down to turning existing customers into what we could call 'evangelists,' in other words, having them out actively promoting on our behalf.

04:18 Ken Franzen: Awesome. So these systems, these predictable methodical routines that you've established, that made everything simple and almost machine like?

04:29 Wayne Mullins: Yeah, absolutely. I think, oftentimes, we, as marketers, as entrepreneurs, because we're such high visionaries, we often overcomplicate things by trying this new thing or chasing this new magic thing that we think's gonna radically change our business. And often, instead of just sticking to the tried and true, and going back to those things, and doing what ends up getting boring. Initially, things are exciting, when you start a new marketing campaign or a new sales process, but over time, that gets boring for high visionary people, for entrepreneurs. And so we tend to convolute it, pour more stuff on top of it, or delete stuff out of it. And so we end up creating big headaches for ourselves, in that process of trying to find this magic bullet, that's gonna be exciting, and it's gonna radically scale our businesses.

05:24 Ken Franzen: Yes. We're our worst enemy, right?

05:26 Wayne Mullins: Absolutely.

05:27 Justin Johnson: Everybody wants the magic bullet.

05:31 Ken Franzen: [laughter] Absolutely. What made you decide... Specifically, I'm interested in the "So You Have a Website... Now, What?" Well, because we have some freelancers, I think, in our audience. I think we have more that are business owners with websites, will be more interested in hearing you, maybe talk about the topic within this book a little bit more. What made you decide to write this book? And touch on a little bit about what's inside.

06:01 Wayne Mullins: Yeah, absolutely. So just a quick history on how it got to the point of needing to write this book. When Ugly Mug Marketing was originally founded, all we really did, at that time, was direct response marketing campaigns for clients. And then we started branching into more traditional marketing campaigns, that still emphasize the direct response aspect. But over time, we kept having clients say, "Can you help with our website? Can you help with our website?" And for the longest, the answer was, "No, we don't do web." But then, finally, just one day after I don't know what number it was, after hearing that question so many times, finally decided, "Yes, we can." And had no clue what to do with web, how to do web. But I knew I could figure it out, in terms of, I knew I can go find somebody and hire somebody who could actually do the work. And so that's how it began. And so, to date, here we are, probably about six and a half years later, in terms of doing web, we've now built right over 500 custom websites. We've built websites in 10 different countries, covered the majority of the states in the United States, in terms of clients where we bill, and kept seeing this recurring pattern, recurring thing that kept coming up.

07:18 Wayne Mullins: People would come to us with this grand vision, this grand idea of, "Once I get my website, once I have this thing built, it's gonna magically help my business grow." And over and over, we would hear this. And so it got to the point where, even today, we'll say, when we're meeting with a prospect, "Look, if you build it, they won't come." Right? Because a website is just a tool, and until you know how to use that tool, it's gonna do like the brochures that you order, it's gonna do just like the business cards you've got stacked up somewhere, or the T-shirts in the back of your closet. They're not gonna do any good. You're website's not gonna do you any good, unless you learn to utilize this tool. And so that's where this book comes from. It's really something for us to communicate with our clients, who were having a website built, that, one, this is not just some magic thing that you build it, and magically, it's gonna transform your business, but you're gonna have to work it. And here's some components, some pieces, to help you start utilizing this tool, this website that you have.

08:23 Ken Franzen: Excellent. In some of the key topics, or maybe components, that you touch on, I've noted here, four main ones: 'know your market,' 'find your competitive edge,' 'what customers need,' and 'what your web developer didn't tell you.' Can we touch on each one of these, starting with 'know your market?'

And maybe you'll fill in any blanks of anything I might have missed there, or some additional topics, or ideas that you might wanna add to it.

08:50 Wayne Mullins: Yeah, absolutely. So the very first one, 'know your market.' We had a client come to us, this is probably, now, five years or so ago, very, very successful businessman. He owned, I guess what would be called a conglomerate, where he owned a lot of different companies all under one umbrella or parent company. And he was launching into a cattle ranch. He had just bought a cattle ranch. I think it was about 2,000 acres of land. And he'd bought it, and he wanted to brand it. He wanted to build a website. And so he comes to us, and we're beginning the process of going through building the website. And this man, although he was interested in cattle, he'd always owned cattle and horses, etcetera, he was not a cattleman. He was a businessman. He was a suit and tie. And so he kept trying to push us towards building a website that was very corporate, which matched him. And so we literally had serious arguments with him over the aesthetics of what the website should feel like, what we're trying to communicate through the website, and most importantly, who we're trying to communicate with.

10:03 Wayne Mullins: And so what we ended up doing for him, is we actually said, "Look, you've got your opinion, we have ours, on what the website should look like, should feel like, and what we're trying to accomplish with it. Here's what we wanna do. Can we come to your next cattle auction with various mocks? We'll present them to the attendees at the cattle auction and we'll let them vote, 'What do you like most? What do you like least? Why?' " And so that's exactly what we did. We went to the cattle auction. We presented the options. And, ultimately, not to say that we were right, but we were right. He, in his mind, saw it a certain way. He wanted to make it the Ritz Carlton of cattle ranches, which is great, nothing wrong with that vision. But he's dealing with cowboys. They didn't see this Ritz Carlton look and feel. What they saw, they wanted to see, was something more Western, something that had a certain element, a certain feel to it.

11:00 Wayne Mullins: The very first thing to know, is you, you as a person, your view is probably skewed, in terms of what you think your customer wants to see. And we get this tunnel vision, because we're so busy at that stage. When we're looking to, either build our first website or rebrand an existing, we got so much other stuff going on as a business owner, as an entrepreneur, that it is very, very difficult for us to put ourselves in the shoes of our perspective customers or clients. And so that is what 'know your market's' all about. You've really gotta dive into and really understand their perspective. And honestly, the simplest way to do that, is to ask them, just like we did with the cattle auction. Go ask them, "What they like? What do they wanna see? What feels right to them?" That's the first one, 'know your market.'

11:55 Wayne Mullins: The 'competitive edge' one, it goes back to, "What makes you different? What makes you stand out?" So using that same example and where we live, there's a lot of different cattle companies, cattle ranches around this area. Louisiana, over in Texas, there's a lot of 'em. The question becomes, "What makes you different? What's your competitive edge and how does that get communicated through the website?" You maybe have to articulate it. You may have to say, "I'm different, because we provide the greatest service, or we have the lowest prices, or we have the most innovative app." But how do you communicate that back on your website? That's the area around 'competitive edge' and I realize that's a... There's a lot of stuff you could really dive into and get really, really deep on identifying 'competitive edge.'

12:50 Wayne Mullins: 'What are your customers' need?' One of the most common mistakes we see people make, when they go to build a website, is they never really sit down and think through, "What do we actually want our website to accomplish, as it relates to respective customers, or clients, and then existing clients, or customers?" And so you have sit down, and think through every single page of your website. "What is it that you're trying to accomplish, and what are you trying to deliver, based on your customer, or your client's needs, wants, or desires?" That's a big element of what we do in the work that we do, as well as what's covered in the book as well.

13:33 Wayne Mullins: And then, in terms of, 'What your web developer didn't tell you.' The most common thing is that... And I experienced this back when I had the lawn and landscape company. I hired a web developer back then to build a website for my company, and it was probably one of the first lawn and landscape companies in this area, this region, to even have a website. And I remember sitting down with the designer, and going through the process of articulating, or attempting to articulate what I wanted the website to accomplish for me. And it was as if he was throwing fuel on my fire, on my desire to have this thing, that would magically help my business grow. And so what I often see, is that web designers, and it's not by malice or bad intent, but they don't really do a good job of communicating to clients, that a website is nothing more than a tool, a tool that's gotta be used. It's not gonna magically transform your business, unless you're prepared to work with that tool. That would be one thing that web developers don't do a great job of communicating.

14:46 Wayne Mullins: The other would be that, I've seen, again, it's rampant in the web development/web design industry, is this belief that a designer/developer who has won a bunch of design awards, is the best, most logical solution, because, after all, they've won design awards. And so, for us, at Ugly Mug Marketing, we will not, we have not, and at no point in the future, will we ever submit any of our stuff for any type of design award. The reason we won't, is because it shifts our focus then, from figuring out what's best for our

client, to trying to win a design award. So what we often see, is we see that web developers/web designers will tout, you go to their website, and they'll have all the awards that they've won, or their sites have won for their clients over the years. There's nothing wrong with that. I'm all for sites that look great, but a great looking site is useless, if it doesn't help the business owner, the company, the entrepreneur, reach their goals.

15:51 Ken Franzen: Absolutely, I agree with that completely. I find it interesting, with regards to... In a little bit, I wanna backtrack, maybe to each one of these points, to maybe a little bit of insight. The 'know your market' with the comparison or the surveying you did with the cattle ranch at the auction, awesome story there, and I think it's something that most businesses aren't taking into consideration, the voice of their actual audience, and surveying them, or reaching out, and talking to their customers to find out what they want. Because their ideal of what they, or how they buy, or what they perceive to be attractive may differ from their customer base. Do you do this type of activity, the surveying, this customer research often for website clients, projects, or marketing campaigns that you're going to embark on?

16:56 Wayne Mullins: Yeah. Every opportunity, where we have to do that, we absolutely will do that. It's not always as exaggerated as that example. What made that example, that case so unique, is here you've got a businessman, who extremely successful, I'm talking about multiple companies doing multiple, multiple million dollars a year in each company. And so what made that one so different, or so unique, is here you've got a very astute businessman, who knows a lot about marketing, he knows how to drive sales, and so, in this case, he was just completely blinded in this new market that he was getting into. Oftentimes, what we discover is, that most clients aren't that completely blinded, you know what I mean? They have a general idea. They have a general feel for what's right. And basically, in this case, he was just completely the wrong way, the opposite direction he should be going. So we don't have to do... We do it as much as we can, but we don't always have to go to [chuckle] cattle auctions, per se, to define these things out.

18:02 Ken Franzen: What are some of the tools then... Would you use a SurveyMonkey type survey or do you do one-on-ones? Do you have your clients engage in the research themselves? What are some of the tools that you might use or strategies you might recommend?

18:18 Wayne Mullins: Yeah, we've used all of those, a SurveyMonkey, we've done internal user experience case examples as well. Another that we've used, and this one can be a little tricky, but we've used Facebook to survey. We've also have used private Facebook groups to survey. If we know that a client's got a closed

group, so we'll have an accurate sampling, we've used those very effectively to get feedback from the actual people that are involved in the organization or customers of the organization. Again, it doesn't have to be a complicated thing. So if somebody's sitting there and they're thinking, "Look, I've got this business. I wanna redo, or rebrand the website, or build a website," it doesn't have to be a complicated thing. It can be as simple as sending out an email, sending out a few different, either wireframes or mocks of what the homepage may look like, may feel like, and using that as the starting point.

19:15 Ken Franzen: Now, 'find your competitive edge,' this is something I see as an opportunity, that many business owners don't vocalize. What is your experience when you're working with business owners? Do you find that most can clearly identify their competitive edge and they vocalize that on their sites, or are you finding that to be a challenge?

19:42 Wayne Mullins: Yeah, I completely agree with you, it's definitely a challenge. By default, most of the clients that we work with, when you ask, "What makes you different? What makes you unique?" They go to the same words, that any of their competitors could use, "Great service, great price, great selection, X number of years experience, industry leaders." They default to these things, that really, anybody could pull away, could take, and use as their own. It's very difficult, sometimes, to get people to really sit down and think through, "What is it? What distinguishes you from everyone else?" It's the unique selling proposition. That's a challenge. It really is. I think it goes back to the clearly understanding... We didn't really talk about this, but your avatar. "Who is this composite person that your average ideal customer or client, that you're trying to reach and communicate with? What are the words? What's the language that resonates well with them and communicates with them, evokes emotion within them? And then how do we massage that into an aesthetic, the look, the feel?" And then the most important part of that, is the content, the words that are being said, the words that are being spoken.

21:07 Ken Franzen: Words that they identify, resonate with well, in particular, being the avatar. Correct?

21:13 Wayne Mullins: Right, that aren't the cliche, the words that anybody else could pick up on, anybody else could use.

21:19 Ken Franzen: Absolutely, absolutely. In identifying... Do you find that the businesses you're working with, they know what that unique value proposition is, that differentiating factor? Or they just have troubles

vocalizing it? Or do you find that you sometimes have to lead them, or guide them into understanding what makes them different?

21:44 Wayne Mullins: Yeah, I think some do. It's a mix. Some get it. Some don't. Oftentimes, that we do have to guide them, help them discover how they communicate their USP. What makes them different? What makes them stand out from everybody else?

22:02 Ken Franzen: You've built over 500 websites across the US and I think you said 10 countries?

22:08 Wayne Mullins: Correct.

22:08 Ken Franzen: That's impressive, and it means that you've probably seen just about everything you possibly can, [chuckle] or at least the majority of it. So when you're working with... You probably work with a lot of businesses that have had websites built in the past and you're not their first site. They're coming to you for the first time, work with Ugly Mug Marketing the first time. They're choosing to work with you, because they don't choose to work with the people they did in the past. What are some of the biggest mistakes that you've seen, you see, either businesses make on the sites that they currently have, or that they'd like to make with you, with the site they're contracting to build with you?

23:00 Wayne Mullins: The very first thing, would be clearly understanding what you want the website to actually do for you. Again, we're in the culture today, where everyone feels, as a business owner, as an entrepreneur, there's this implied pressure that you have to have a website. And the sad part about that, is most people never really sit down, and figure out, "Okay, if I'm gonna have this thing called a website, what do I actually want this thing to do? What do I want this tool to do for me?" And so we have something that we call the natural progression, and what that simply is, is everybody starts out out there as a stranger. They know nothing about our company, our brand, what we do, what we provide. Well, the next step we wanna do, is we want to move them to become a friend of ours, and to move them from a stranger to a friend, there's a couple of things that have to be in place to do that.

23:54 Wayne Mullins: They, first of all, have to know about us. Second of all, they have to like us. They have to have some form of like, or even if they hate what we do, they're never gonna become a friend. If they hate who we are, they're never gonna become a friend. Once we get them to become a friend, the next step in that process, is we want them to become a customer or a client of ours. So the next big component, the big factor that's missing from going from a friend into a customer or a client is trust. You're not gonna turn over your wallet, you're not gonna enter, even your email address, opting in for something, if there's not some form of element of trust in that relationship. And then the final component to that, and this is one that it's the most difficult to engineer on a website, but if executed correctly, can be the most powerful, is turning existing customers into evangelists. 'Cause when you turn existing customers into evangelists, what do they do? They go out and tell all their friends about you. So you bypass that whole stranger portion of it, because they're out there doing the work for you.

25:04 Wayne Mullins: When it comes to the website, that's the process that we attempt to think through when we're designing a website or building a website out, is if we're gonna have people who land on the site, who are indeed strangers, so that until they landed on our page, they knew nothing about us. They didn't even know we existed, until they sat down, and Googled whatever the keyword was, or they clicked on a Facebook ad, or whatever it may be. Logically, how can you utilize your site to bring people through that natural progression? And so that would be a very simple thing that listeners could do. They could literally just sit down, pull up their home page on their website, and ask themselves, "If I were landing here for the first time, and knew absolutely nothing about this organization, this business, how long would it take me to figure out what it is that they do, and how that could benefit me, as a visitor on this site?"

26:03 Ken Franzen: What is it that they do and establishing that trust. So what are some of the things that they should look at or would you recommend that they key in on?

26:13 Wayne Mullins: What I would say, is that... I'm gonna jump back a second and explain something that I probably should have explained a little earlier, that would maybe shed a different light on the conversation. In designs, if you were go to school and study design, there are three C's, the three C's of design. There's composition, contrast, and then there's content. The composition's the structure, the makeup of the thing that you're designing. The contrast would be the colors, the visuals that are used on it. That's the things that create the emotion. And then the content, the content is the message that is the most important part, that we're attempting to communicate. And what often happens, is that designers love to design great, beautiful, attractive, award-winning things. So the first thought in their brain is not the content or the message that we need to communicate. They're thinking about the contrast and the composition. Words, video, the message

being communicated is the most important thing. The content's the most important thing on a website. Every other aspect and element should support the content.

27:30 Wayne Mullins: And so to answer your question, I would say the thing to look at would be, "What content is being delivered that answers that question?" The visitor lands on the site for the first time. What content is being delivered, that would help them clearly and quickly understand who you are, what you do, in relation to their needs, wants, desires?

27:54 Ken Franzen: Perfect. And that, I think is a very, very, very helpful tip. And thanks for backing up, and covering composition, contrast, content, because I think it's so important, that we point out content being the one main component, where, I think you'll agree with me, a lot of times, when you start working with someone on a web design, the focus is on the aesthetics, so much more than the content. And that's backwards, now... With Ugly Mug Marketing, are you guys working on projects... Where in the progression does content development come into play, compared to the design?

28:44 Wayne Mullins: For us, as a company, that's gonna vary based on the client. We always would like to begin with content. We would like to do this really deep dive and help them be able to articulate their USP, their Unique Selling Proposition, through their website, but budget constraints, etcetera. Some people come to us and they just say, "Look, we know what we want. We want a redesign. Here's what we want. We want the same exact pages. Make it look better." In the perfect world, we would only work with clients, who would allow us to go through this drawn-out process of getting the messaging right first. But the reality is, we don't have that luxury. We work with a wide range of people from New York Times bestselling authors, all the way down to the local non-profit, so that's content, content, content. The old saying, "Content is king," is absolutely true on the website. I can't stress enough, it's far better to get your content right, than it is to have the most well-designed website in the world. You can win all the awards in the world for the greatest design and that's fabulous. It'll make you feel good, but content is what's gonna sell. It's what's gonna build the relationship. It's what's gonna move people through that natural progression.

30:10 Ken Franzen: If you were starting a business tomorrow, and that involves quite a bit of things to do, as we all know, what would be your first order of business, as far as marketing goes? Or maybe even jump into that second, how would you start beginning to market your business? What would be the first thing you'd focus on and how would you progress from there?

30:31 Wayne Mullins: The very first thing I would focus on is actually the USP. I would develop my Unique Selling Proposition, first and foremost. The way I would do that though, is I would get crystal, crystal clear about the need, the want, or the desire, that my product or service is gonna feel. I mean, crystal clear. It's the difference between an average bottle of water and Fiji bottled water. What's the difference? They're both bottles of water. Why is it that people are willing to pay two to three times more for the Fiji, than the just, whatever the other bottle of water is? And so they've done a brilliant job of articulating their Unique Selling Proposition, and they support that with the design of the bottle. What's different about a Fiji bottle of water versus just about every bottle of water? The bottle's kind of square, it's a rectangle. It's not a round bottle of water, like every other bottle of water. I would begin by articulating that, first and foremost, nailing down what's gonna make me different, how I'm gonna deliver on the wants, needs, and desires of my target audience, and then make sure that everything else, all the collateral supports that USP.

31:53 Ken Franzen: In kind of the same sense, you're starting your new business, or we talk about a lot of businesses that are already in existence, and your limited resources are time and money. And I'd argue all day long, that time is more valuable than, what I can see that are very valuable, money. What do you see, in your experiences and in the marketing world, are some of the biggest time wasters that business owners are devoting these resources towards and what could you potentially tell them to do differently?

32:29 Wayne Mullins: Yeah, I agree with you, Ken. Time is the thing, early on, that you think you have a lot more of, when you're first starting out. You often feel, when you're first starting out, that money is more scarce than time, and it's a very difficult mentality to shift around, especially if you're bootstrapping. Now, if you've got VC money, more investor, outside investors, that equation may be a little bit different, but if you're bootstrapping, it often feels like you've got more time than you've got money. But I would completely agree with you. One of the biggest mistakes, I would say, is not carefully guarding that time. First of all, not being aware of the value of the time. But the other component or the other thing that I would say, is that not being crystal, crystal clear, that every action you take with regard to marketing, there should be a very clear path to how that's gonna lead to a sell.

33:25 Wayne Mullins: What I see so often, is I see people in the early stages of starting a business, and they look around, and they say, "Okay, social media is the thing right now. I gotta be on Facebook. I gotta be on Instagram. I gotta be on YouTube," whatever the newest and the greatest social media thing they've gotta be a part of. They will literally spend hours and hours figuring out what to post, when to post, how to post, with no thought, zero thought given to, "How am I going to make the transition from all the stuff I'm doing on

social to getting dollars in my bank account?" Early on, I don't think you have the luxury of spending time on things, that aren't as direct as possible to getting money in the bank account. That's from my experience starting several companies over the years, all of them bootstrapped, and I've certainly made those mistakes early on, over-analyzing, trying to over-engineer the marketing side of things. You've gotta keep the path from the marketing piece, component, whatever that is, to the closing of the sale, to the purchase, as short as possible.

34:39 Ken Franzen: So laser focus, and don't be distracted by the things that might seem like shiny objects, and that won't bear fruit in the shorter term?

34:51 Wayne Mullins: Yeah, absolutely. The other thing I would say, just kind of tying into that, a big mistake I think people make, is they... Let's say that I'm starting a jewelry store. I wanna start a jewelry store. Well, what do I do? I go look around at what all my competitors are doing in my marketplace. Well, I see this one's posting on Facebook three times a day, this one's over here doing billboards, or this one's doing newspaper, whatever they're doing. And so what we then think is, "Okay, well, they're doing that. It must be working, so I'm gonna go copy the media that they're using to do that." And I would say that's a big mistake, is looking around trying to emulate what other people are doing, when often they're doing that, not out of a strategic approach, or a strategic thought process. They're often doing that, 'cause that's what they've done for years or that's because... Whatever the reason may be. Just because someone in your space is doing it, doesn't necessarily [chuckle] make it a great thing for you to go copy and go do. I would often say, I would say, ignore what they're doing. You should be aware of what they're doing. But just because they're doing Facebook, doesn't mean you have to do Facebook. You don't have to go do what they're doing, just because they do it.

36:09 Ken Franzen: You bring up an interesting point. I, in a former life, was a Yellow Page rep, and we used to play that hard all the time, with, "So-and-so, you're competitor, is... "

[chuckle]

36:22 Ken Franzen: "Mined this site or has this size ad last year. I can't tell you, if he's going bigger or smaller, but you have to guess that he's doing pretty well with this. You see his trucks all over town... " And you play on that fear, that competitive edge, and it mimics a little bit what you're talking about there, that it's not the best idea in the world, even if they are doing something, TV, radio, billboards, Facebook, whatever it might

be, and they seem to have their stuff together, that doesn't necessarily mean that it's a sound strategy, that's bearing fruit for them.

36:56 Wayne Mullins: I completely agree with you. We would use that same approach, [chuckle] when I was doing outdoor billboard sales, right out of college, exact same thing. And it was amazing, you put up a billboard for a local business, and just a matter of time, before the competitor calls, asking about, "Can I get a proposal on?"

[chuckle]

37:16 Wayne Mullins: It's an outdoor space. And it's, I guess, a human tendency, that when we see somebody else do something, we assume it's the right thing to do. It's a social proof, that we're not even aware we're falling victim to or prey to. And I can't tell you the number of clients we get on the website side of things, where a competitor just got a new website, they see it, so they come to us. They don't usually directly say, "The competitor got a new website." But they come to us, saying, "It's time to rebrand, redo our website." And we know, we're in a very small market here, locally. We're very aware of what takes place [chuckle] in our markets. We can see, "Oh, here's why they're doing it. This competitor just got a new website."

38:02 Ken Franzen: Fun stuff. And you can almost predict that, the of that phone call coming, from when you were selling billboards, knowing that, that one went up, and you'd be like, "Three, two, one. Phone's ringing now!"

[chuckle]

38:13 Wayne Mullins: Exactly. Yeah.

38:15 Ken Franzen: But an interesting point's to look and say, "Well, it is important to understand what your competition's doing. It's not necessarily the path that you travel. Being unique and having that USP will differentiate yourself." What are you working on now, Wayne? You seem like you're constantly on the move.

You've morphed from landscaper to web development company marketer and author. What are you working on now? What's got you excited, either right now, or maybe in the future? What's coming down the line for the marketing/sales world?

38:55 Wayne Mullins: Yeah. One of the things that I'm super excited about now, and it's not new, but it is new, when you get down to a local business level, is utilizing video, and utilizing story in video, as a marketing tool, or as a marketing piece. There's such a need in the marketplace right now, one, for small business owners, entrepreneurs, to understand how to utilize story in their marketing, but then, two, how to utilize that story in video. Right now, I'm obsessed, and doing a lot of studying on video, and the use of story in video, specifically as it relates to marketing, and utilizing it in marketing channels. That's what's got me excited right now. We're doing some stuff behind the scenes with some pretty well known clients, well known names, if I had mentioned, you'd probably recognize, behind the scenes with them, and doing some split tests on what's getting results, what isn't.

40:02 Ken Franzen: Awesome stuff. That's in... And storytelling's something that I find is lacking in so much, whether... Video's, obviously, the optimal medium for delivering a great story. But even in text or through visuals, in telling a story, it's got stickiness that... Would you agree with me? Most white [chuckle] copy's pretty boring.

[chuckle]

40:26 Ken Franzen: You can take that to another level with a story and having it resonate with someone.

40:31 Wayne Mullins: Yeah. The word 'resonate,' that's the key word.

40:35 Ken Franzen: Absolutely.

40:36 Justin Johnson: Hey, Wayne, you've shared a lot of great information with us today. If you can give one piece of parting advice for our listening audience, what would that be?

40:46 Wayne Mullins: Marketing, web, all of it, I would say this and it's easy to say, so then, I have to give a brief explanation. Stop chasing the magic bullets. Stop chasing the magic bullets. Stick to the things that are tried and true, then you'll learn to utilize those tried and true things within the new forms of media, the new forms of marketing that are coming out, that are coming down. Always think through the path of, "How will this piece, this component, lead to a sale?" The distinction, I guess, between brand building, brand marketing, versus the old school direct response marketing. It's nothing wrong with brand building at all. We do it. We have clients who do it. We support them. We build campaigns around that. But we always wanna understand, and it's very important that you understand the path, "How is this thing that we're doing going to lead into the top of the funnel, leading to that top of that funnel?"

41:55 Ken Franzen: Awesome advice.

41:57 Justin Johnson: Neon Noise Nation, stop chasing the magic bullets.

[chuckle]

42:02 Justin Johnson: Good stuff. Hey, Wayne, what is the best way for our audience to get in touch with you? Should they go to your website? How do they purchase your book?

42:12 Wayne Mullins: Yup. So website, they can go there, uglymugmarketing.com. The book is available on Amazon, so they can pick it up there, if they'd like. That's the best two places. And if you don't mind, let me leave with just one simple thing that everybody can do. It's a simple formula everybody can do. They can go to their website today and ask themselves these questions. I think if they did that and walk through these questions, super easy questions, they would realize some things that, maybe need to be adjusted on their website. Is it alright, if I run through those real quick?

42:47 Ken Franzen: Yeah, fire away.

42:48 Justin Johnson: Yeah, fire away.

42:50 Wayne Mullins: Sure. Okay, we call these 'The Critical Five.' 'The Critical Five.' And when we're designing a website, we ask these five questions about every single page, not just about the website in it's entirety, but every single page on the site. The very first question is, "Who's here?" Now, that may vary from page to page. The 'who is here' may vary from page to page. The 'who' on your home page is likely slightly different than the 'who' that is on your products page. Now, it may be the same, but that person that's on the product page is now a little bit more interested, so it's a slightly different person. So the first question is, "Who's here?" Go through every page on your website and ask yourself, "Who would be on this page? Who's here?" The next question is, "What do I want them to do? What do I want them to do on this specific page?" Not the website in it's entirety, but on this specific page, "What do I want them to do?" And it may be as simple as learn something. It may be as simple as click something to go to another page. But what do you want them to do? The next one is, "How do you want them to do that?" Is it a click? Is it a video play? Is it add to cart? How are they gonna accomplish that thing that you want them to do?

44:08 Wayne Mullins: The next one is, "What's in it for them?" The question is "Why?" "Why should they take the action that you want them to take?" From their perspective, not from your perspective, from their perspective. It's the old WFIIM or WIFFM. "What's in it for me?" "What's in it for them? Why should they take that action?" And then the last one is, "When?" "When do you want them to take that action?" And the answer is not always, "Immediate." It's not always, "I want them to do it right now, right today." There are certain instances that it may not be for a week, it may not be for a month, it may not be for a year. 'The Critical Five' is what we call 'em. We ask those questions about every single page. "Who's here? What do we want them do it? How are they gonna do it? Why should they do it? And when do we want them to do it?"

45:08 Justin Johnson: Love it.

45:09 Ken Franzen: Awesome. Maybe a little homework for our listeners.

45:12 Justin Johnson: Go check out 'The Critical Five' and do it on your website today. Good stuff, Wayne. Thanks again for being on the show today. As always, we will have show notes available at neongoldfish.com/podcast. Until next time, this is Justin, Ken, and Wayne signing off. Neon Noise Nation, we will see you again next week.

[music]

45:36 Speaker 1: Thank you for listening to this episode of the Neon Noise podcast. Did you enjoy the podcast? If so, please subscribe, share with a friend, or write a review. We wanna cover the topics you wanna hear. If you have an idea for a topic you'd like Justin and Ken to cover, connect with us on Twitter @neongoldfish or through our website at neongoldfish.com.