Starting a new Local SEO engagement – Q&A with Darryl Quinlan

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This blog post is part of an insightful series of interviews we are conducting with successful & well regarded web designers, SEOs and agency owners. Read all our other SEO Agency Q&A articles here.

**All answers are the words of the interviewees and any opinions expressed are those of the interviewee and not necessarily of BrightLocal.*

This Q&A interview is conducted with Daryl Quinlan from Glacial Multimedia

Daryl is the Local Search Manager at Glacial Multimedia, medical marketing specialists. Glacial integrates a mix of new media marketing tools; medical website design, search engine optimization, internet marketing, web video/audio production, website analytics, social media optimization and software development.

1. What research & planning do you do before you start active SEO work? How important is this planning phase and how much time/effort do you spend on it?

Research and planning are essential when beginning SEO work. It is crucial to understand where my clients currently stand before starting. Some require far more attention and work than others clients need to have a realistic expectation of the amount of time involved. I can spend where from an hour to several hours in the research and planning depending on what exactly client is expecting for results and what their expected timeline is.

Do you have a checklist or framework that you use to help you plan ur research and tasks for each new client?

I use a generalized framework, but again it depends on the clients expectations. There are definitely areas that require primary investigation like Google, Google Maps and Google places. However most of my clients are in the medical profession, so investigating their presence in sites like healthgrades.com, vitals and Yelp become a high priority area as well.

3. How do you prioritize what tasks to do first?

My first tasks are always to determine an approach and plan of attack with the client. For example are they looking to focus more on their practice or themselves? The two are intertwined for me, but often the client will have a singular focus and will not be talked out of it, so for example if the client is looking to boost their practice rankings, that becomes the focus rather than on the doctors at the practice. Well optimized profiles in the big three (Google, Bing and Yahoo) become step number one. It is surprising to me how many clients are unaware of the differences between Organic and Local, then again I'm in the game and they're not so I guess it's not as surprising as I thought.

4. What time frame do you plan for with a new client and why not longer/shorter?

Again it's dependent on the clients expectations. Often the clients have unrealistic expectations for ranking. They feel that throwing at bit of money at the issue will immediately shoot them up the ranks. That is just not the case. You need both a short term and long term strategy. Personally I find long term strategies the easiest to plan for and the most beneficial, however explaining to a client that ranking well in a highly contested area will take some time, effort and patience, is not always the easiest conversation to have.

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5. What KPIs do you track for your clients and what tools do you use to track performance?

At Glacial Multimedia, we track all aspects of performance, leads, calls, site traffic, rankings etc. In my specific area, local search, I track rankings and citations as well as consistent comparisons with my clients competition. I primarily use BrightLocal to track these items, but we also have our own proprietary software for additional tracking for site traffic, calls and leads.

6. Do you provide a client with a specific set of targets & timelines? Do clients ever question these targets and how do you handle their expectations?

I provide specific targets, typically page ranking for specific keywords but do not provide concrete timelines and instead provide estimations of when a client can begin to see movement and progress. Clients consistently question targets and progress, they are clients after all, but the questioning is more to ensure progress is being made. I find that education is a key component in my relationships with my clients. By better understanding the process and having full disclosure in the work being done on their behalf, clients tend to be far more receptive and understanding.

7. How regularly do you meet or talk with a client in the first 3 months?

After a client contracts with my company I have a few initial meetings to understand the client’s needs and expectations. Once we both have a clear understanding of what needs to be done and what work will be required I provide monthly reporting to each client. After that it is dependent on the client’s needs for communication. Many clients merely want to know work is being done, but do not need detailed information beyond reporting. Others, well, let’s just say some clients need quite a bit of hand holding where 2 or 3 conversations a week is not uncommon.

8. Do you structure your agreements with monthly payments, upfront payments or both?

Both. We offer many services with different levels of payments again all dependent on a clients needs and wants versus their budget. Most of my clients will wind up on a monthly maintenance plan after an initial set up fee.

9. What tools do you ask clients to give you access to, and are clients ever reluctant or wary about giving you access?

I always begin with an honest conversation to see what work the client may have done on their own. Often the practice may have created profiles within Google, or the myriad of medical review sites. If this is the case I do request the usernames and passwords associated with those profiles. On the flip side, I also share any information related to profiles I create at a clients request. None of this information is proprietary, regardless of what certain companies like to portray, and should be shared freely. I do have the occasional client that is reluctant to share their information at first, however it is the rare client that will not share this information once I explain why it is necessary.

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