Interview Razvan Gavrilas

Interviewer: Thomas Cubel - www.thomascubel.com

25 june 2014

This is the original interview in English. Official French translation is available on
http://www.thomascubel.com/test-interview-cognitive-seo/

Thomas Cubel: Good morning Razvan, thank you for accepting this interview. You are the owner of Cognitive SEO, a nice tool for marketers and especially Search Engine Optimizers. So, for beginning, can you give me something about yourself? Who are you? What are you doing? Etc?

Razvan Gavrilas : Morning Thomas. Tks for having me in your interview. I was always intrigued about search engines and how they work. My first site was done in 1997-1998. And with my first site the interest for search engine appeared. At that time is was Lycos, Altavista and others. So I can say I have been through almost all the starves of the search engine evolution. I have tried various hatless techniques to understand how they work. Doing this I felt the need for a tool that could do the things that I thought were of real help to someone doing SEO and Internet Marketing. This is how cognitiveSEO was born as a concept back 2010.

TC: Now, I propose to talk about Cognitive SEO. I have shown lot of features in the screencast. What's his story, goals and best features?

RG : After the idea of the concept I gathered an initial team and we started working on it. The initial 6 month plan "quickly" turned into 1 year and 6 months, with all the hiccups of a new start-up. The concept was changed several times in the beginning leading to what we have now. cognitiveSEO is an organic services adapting to its clients needs and requirements. That is why you will always see improvements and updates done to the toolset. It is not a static service for such a dynamic industry as the Internet Marketing industry, where Google updates its search engine at least a couple of hundred times each year. Talking about best features I would say that some of the most used features in the tool are the Backlink Analysis and Unnatural Link Detection. These are both used for Analytical and Competitive Intelligence Tasks but also for Recovery and Prevention Tasks related to various Google Penalties. Also the system is highly used by both Agencies, Brands and single SEO Professionals. What I can say here is that the tool is ever-evolving and that what is "best" today might be the "obvious" tomorrow regarding the tool.

TC: What are the technology and the languages used in this tool?

RG : I am not going to be very specific here, but I can say that we use several programming languages in order to adapt to the highly scalable system and super-computational stuff that is done in the "backend".

TC: How did you proceed to develop the functionalities? Do you have make a brainstorming with SEOs?

RG : Being directly involved in the industry I could architect everything by myself and having the team work on implementing the functionalities. What I can say is that the team is always complaining about the change this and that until a feature is final :). Tks to the team for the understanding and support here for building such a useful tool for the SEO pros.

TC: Your tool take data from Majestic SEO, Moz… Why? Resources problem?

RG : Yes. We use data from Majestic and several other providers. We made a choice in the beginning to focus on crafting a solution that will transform complexity into understandable data and we focus on providing added value to the data. We reprocess all the data that enters into the system and augment it with a lot of metrics that can not be done at a large scale due to the highly computational stuff that is done. Examples such as Unnatural Link Detection or Understanding the Link Building Strategies used by a Site by Segments the Links based on where on the page they are being linked from or from what kind of site etc. So we focus on providing the best actionable data for the SEO pro and simplify all his/hers day to day operations by automating a lot of stuff.

TC: Cognitive SEO seems to be expensive for lot of people when they look for the first time your pricing table. What do you want to say to customers about this?

RG : Starting at $99/mo for the value they get from using the system I would say it is really cheap. Let me explain. The ROI you may get for recovering up to 25 sites from a Google Penalty or doing up to 25 Backlink Audits would mean at even the lowest even possible monthly revenue you may earn from a client 25x$100. That $2500. But not everyone has 25 clients. If you have at least 5 that is an investment of $99 to earn by "auto-pilot" $500.
If it is for your site only. Then the value you get from understudying the strategies that your competitors use and the ability to track their daily movements will surely quantify in way more money than the small $99/mo.

It is really about what you expect from the tool. If you need a basic tool to do basic stuff … this is not the tool for you. We are providing a "Cutting-Edge Tool" that provides "Cutting-Edge SEO & Marketing Intelligence". Using the data smartly will allow you to outrank a lot of your competitors and position you better in the SERPs.

TC: On your blog, I have seen and shared lot of good posts. It is your marketing strategy? "Explaining importance and showing the tool"

RG : It is one of our marketing strategies. I would recommend a high quality blog to any business on the internet. Not having a blog for your company nowadays will bring your product or service back to the "stone age". This shows that you care about what you do and allows you to share you expertise in the field that your business operates. It also will give a lot of free content to the people that are most likely to be interested in that particular niche. Summing all those up this will allow you as a brand to create a certain image about yourself to the potential customer of your product or service.

TC: Now, we'll talk about SEO in general. Lot of people said that SEO is dead. I definitively refuse this idea. What about you?

RG : SEO is NOT dead. It will not be dead. The O in the SEO means Optimization. Optimization is what Google needs in order to understand your site better. When Google will be able to understand your site like a "Human", even then SEO will be required to make it clear to the user what he/she should do on the site.

TC: What's your recommendations for a good SEO strategy in 2014-2015?

RG: A good SEO strategy would imply a great understand of the past strategy that was used both by your site and your competitors. Understand what you, or the agencies you worked with did to your site and analyze your competitors in order to understand what they did and how they are adapting their internet marketing strategy. Once you did that and have a clear picture of what the PAST was about you should start thinking about the PRESENT and the FUTURE. As recommendations for the FUTURE would be to focus on building links by attracting attention to your site. This can be done either by great content, controversial content or a great product or service that has something unique. Seems simple but it really

is not. It is actually hard to get a grasp on how to do it best. So my advice would be to TRY and RETRY once you found something that works. And it order to find things that work you need to try the things that don't :)

TC: What's your opinion about Google and his pertinence filters (Panda, Penguin, etc)? Do you approve the principle of giving penalties?

RG : Partially. I think that the industry became too polluted as a concept of SEO in order to normally educate it but simply giving hits. Penalties are a way for Google to impose the new rules by force. And this is how people react best usually when it comes to new rules to be obeyed. Since Google wants these rules to be obeyed it started this crusade on sites that tried to abuse its algorithms. Probably it will end up in the future and Google will be more soft when people get the idea about how it should be done in order to rank better in Google.

TC: You have wrote in some of your posts that unnatural link are very bad for a link profile, but you make posts on Search Engine Journal (Guest Blogging). What's your true opinion about these links? We can make it?

RG : Guest Blogging is not Dead. It will not be. Guest Blogging for SEO is Dead. That is a totally different thing. I even did a post about this in the past. I never posted for the sake of a link. I only post for the sake of creating interaction and sharing my ideas with people that are like-minded. I actually nofollow any link to cognitiveSEO in those posts (hopefully none escaped the nofollow rule :))

TC: Do you have projects for CognitiveSEO or other in the future? Features, evolutions, hobbies projects…

RG : Lots. We are constantly developing new features and working on new concepts. We are releasing at least once per month something new in the tool. Hopefully what we work on will be of real use for our customers. New things are coming in the near feature. So stay tuned and read the blog or follow us on twitter.

TC: Last word for the end?

Thank you for having me on the interview and for doing the super video in French. I would like to thank our customers and supporters for helping us help them by supporting our tool either by being a customer or by sharing the things that we write or do here. I would also like to thank the entire team at cognitiveSEO (almost 10 people now … started with 3) for the great job that they do at implementing the great features that our customers use and for the amazing researches and content that that we craft together.

TC : Thank you Razvan for doing this interview. I (and I think the community as well) I wish you a good continuation in this ambitious project, hoping that everything will turn for the better in the future!