AEO is eating SEO | Steve Toth, CEO @ Notebook Agency

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Show notes

My guest in this episode is Steve Toth, CEO of Notebook Agency and the voice behind AI Notebook and SEO Notebook, two newsletters with 27,000+ subscribers where he cuts through the noise in one of the fastest-moving spaces in marketing right now.

In this episode we'll dig into the current state of the industry, how big GEO is already for his agency and his clients and why he thinks ChatGPT is lazy and what he uses instead.

Check out Steve's links:

- https://seonotebook.com/
- https://ainotebook.com/
- https://stevetoth.coach/

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Full conversation

[00:00:00] I remember very vividly in the early twenty-twenty three thinking, man if this is it what does this mean for my agency and business? Do you think that AEO can be a substantial channel of conversion to client? Yeah. The classic SEO answer depends on If you're talking about my mom searching for someone to go repair her furnace, probably not. But if it's something that I'm integrating into my tech stack at a five hundred person SaaS company then absolutely before we dive in your listening To the masters of search podcast with me Your host Nicholas Bushner each week i sit down With some Of these smartest people around The world and SEO And AI search to bring You their strategies mental models and top pieces of actionable advice.

[00:00:54] If you enjoy this podcast, don't forget to like and subscribe. then follow it in your favorite podcasting app or YouTube. It helps us get top-notch guests And create the best possible content for You! Let's dive into todays episode. My guest Today is Steve Toth CEO of Notebook Agency The voice behind AI notebook and SEO notebook. Two newsletters with more than Twenty seven thousand subscribers where he cuts through the noise in one of the fastest moving spaces and marketing right now. In this episode we'll dig into the current state-of-the-industry, how big GEO is already for his agencies and his clients? And why he thinks ChatchiBT is lazy and what he uses instead. Very much looking forward to this Steve.

[00:01:39] Oh thanks for having me on Nicholas excited to join. Cool, thanks. So let's start with an easy one probably for you. how do you feel about the current state of? I think if you ask me at any point in the

last ten years, i would say it's moving super fast and just continues to move superfast. So we're seeing a big change obviously with decreasing clicks increase impressions... If you looked back couple of years ago people thought this is to the industry and all of our respective agencies, but actually what we've noticed is that demand for tackling this new landscape was even greater than it was a year ago when people were still foreshadowing reduction in clicks. It's as busy at time. industry needs to educate its clients on the fact that demand is still there, although we see people learning about us not from our own websites but within chats.

[00:02:53] And I think as more of an industry able to educate growth marketers and a lot come to a new baseline in terms of understanding how we measure things and accept that has changed rapidly. Don't you feel like the lounge of chat GPD, there's been a new inception moment for complete shift on our industry because when I talk with people from in-house or agency side some tell me especially at last two years. So I would say, twenty-twenty five especially has been one of the like most changing or disruptive years since probably lounge off Google and maybe The Bard update or Penguin update which dates back quite some time. so how do you feel about that? Yeah i mean there is this feeling that Google is sending less and less traffic to the web every year.

[00:04:01] And, that's absolutely true! We know especially in B-to-B when people are researching services and products to buy that you know there is almost a no brainer that LLMs are part of the equation. If we think about it from perspective if you were ask co-worker, do some research on product or service looking integrate into your company and they weren't using AI, you'd probably think that person wasn't doing a very good job. So we've seen this shift... We've seen companies also mandate their employees to be using AI at every turn in increasing that behavior only continuing to increase. so it has been one of the biggest shifts. But I think, you know we're bracing for it. We've been bracing forth a couple of years since the inception of chat GPT there were a lot of SEO efficiencies and now what different ways that we can apply AI to AEO instead.

[00:05:18] I think in the first couple years of chat, GBT it was basically like let's accelerate our traditional ranking strategies but you know now very much using it to accelerate or AI visibility strategies. Got it. and what has been most surprising for you? In how will the whole industry evolves currently? yeah um i It's not so much surprising, but it is delightful to see that we are now speaking to broader marketing organizations when discussing AEO services and not just the acquisition teams at these companies. Suddenly PR brand product even customer service... people who can contribute to the success of an AEO campaign. So it's been a shift in terms, whose contacted us getting services at Notebook Agency.

[00:06:21] we've seen higher level folks suddenly take more interest because really does have to do a lot with representing your brand and not just strictly being, you know non-branded keyword. you know, version of Google ads that we're targeting. You. now it's suddenly about not only those non branded keywords but also the company's broader representation and how your key differentiators or core product truths are reflected in LLMs because people are not only reading websites. so I think the biggest surprise and really delight to see is us being able to integrate more with our clients beyond just the acquisition folks. And have you ever been, let's say frightened or concerned during the last one and a half two years?

[00:07:20] Because I mean when they talk to fellow people that has also been in the SEO industry for quite some time... Not everybody was solely positive about all this change going on. so take us a little bit with you through your feelings during these dynamic times. That existential crisis that I had actually occurred right after chat GPT, so going back three years ago... I remember very vividly in the early twenty-twenty-three thinking man if this is it what does the health of my agency, and what if people just

divert all their searches to this? And at that time it wasn't even really querying the web for things. It was almost like... What's going to happen?". I remember hitting me thinking See change coming and it still is a see-change.

[00:08:28] Coming. but I think you know over the last few years in two year's really like three years since, you Know chat she BT has been out We've had times to kind of reframe what? You know SEO AEO services mean for clients And I think when I taught my course on AEO for CXL, that was a great opportunity for me to really consolidate all of my thinking around this space. That's where I landed on the idea about optimizing for companies' deal breakers being an important aspect AEO services and it not just being about branded acquisition for best project management software, but asking specific questions. About the product's capabilities or asking complex queries with a multitude of facets like best project management software, time tracking client view.

[00:09:36] Gantt charts and twenty dollars per user customer support in AEST right? This suddenly becomes now a game of not just optimizing pages, but optimizing an entire brand presence. And I think that actually opens up more doors in terms the number clients we can work with because every client is fit for non-branded acquisition. some companies don't have huge search volume. Still, those companies are very and rightfully concerned with their representation on LLMs. This creates a market for us that didn't exist before.". What happened between you seeing this as an existential threat? And then basically fast-forward three years being positive—very strong outlook also probably one of the dominant agencies in that space.

[00:10:42] So you just decided, okay I won't give up my life's work because this little AI chatbot or maybe a lot people don't see yet? Yeah, I think learning how it works. That's the biggest empowerment right? I remember quite vividly when Google AI overview started to really surface going back a couple of years now after they kind of retired SGE and started to integrate that into everyday SERPs. people were panicking because The page one results. we're not citing any pages that were even in the top one hundred. And if you think about it like, It was obviously because of query fan out and That was just not popular at a popular idea The time and nobody really knew that. that was the underlying mechanism causing A lot of pages to get cited.

[00:11:43] uh...that weren't in the Top One Hundred for that one keyword. so Just for your audience who is maybe not as advanced, query fan out. It's the process of taking one keyword and spawning dozens of synthetic subqueries in order to improve the final result.". And again it was like there were people saying... seventy two percent of AI overviews, the citations did not even occur in the top one hundred results for that keyword. And you know we now know that Google is creating these fan out queries personalizing comparing and all these different ways in which they're trying to enrich the result. Just the empowerment of better understanding, how AI search results are generated. Having time to test and have an extended campaign with a client... All those things breed familiarity with systems that allow us gain confidence in terms we optimize for them.

[00:12:58] Before we go into the operational details of fan-out queries, how to optimize for that. And I know you have a lot thoughts on it and also proven strategies. Give us quick idea about how big GEO or AEO is. For everybody who's not familiar with the acronym so Generative Engine Optimization Or Answer Engine Optimisation How Big Is This New Field? already for you as an agency, a service and your clients SEO best practices at every turn. But in terms of the interest that we get it our agency and services, that we end up offering I'd say its about sixty forty AEO versus SEO At this point. And yes there's tremendous overlap with SEO Best Practices. but then if you kinda open-up That whole idea About brand representation you know, requires a whole different host of activities than just trying to improve presence for non-branded keyword.

[00:14:13] Right? Suddenly we're looking at help documentation suddenly were looking at more robust comparison or alternative or listicle strategies. there's service that is emerging and it's us providing that at our agency. I would say, you know, sixty percent of the focus being there because of that demand right? So we still try to educate our clients. so Google still sends a lot of traffic in all that kind stuff but what... The reason why they're focusing on LLMs is because The LLM buyer is a lot more bottom funnel. They're the ones who've qualified themselves much better, they are the one's that have been able to ask their deal breaker questions and essentially compact your entire journey into an efficient process of research right?

[00:15:18] So there coming these B-to-B demo calls asking fewer questions, that they've basically already clarified and instead are just seeking validation for. They also compared you against your competition in shortlisted use. so when the clients understand mqls times four, five more qualified. The incentive is there to invest in it. and especially where we operate which You task a person at your company to do research on our product or service and they're not using AI They're not doing their job, and they probably aren't going to keep their job for very much longer Right. So we know how fundamental it is in the journey And that's you know A big reason that it predominates The focus. Okay I know that some people are still very skeptical about how big AEO really is as a channel in terms of conversion impact.

[00:16:34] But, there's case studies out here for example from Webflow and other companies recently had the CMO of Surfer. maybe you know the SAO tool? Recently they have the Cmo. at the podcast he shared with them roughly twenty percent of their paying customers already from LLMs. So I have to ask this question, do you think that AO can be a substantial channel in terms of the conversion it brings to client? Yeah! The classic SEO answer is It depends. and if your talking about my mom searching for someone go repair her furnace probably not. But if it's something that I'm integrating into my tech stack at a five hundred person SaaS company, then absolutely. You know? Absolutely It is much bigger. So i think also depends on the savviness of your ICP desktop search Clients where we see desktop being you know, seventy percent of the The traffic to the website.

[00:17:45] then I think you're also going to see more AEO playing a larger influence. And yeah like you know B to C more that sorry be-to-be More predominantly than b to c at this point. But i think You know things are rapidly changing right? Apple and Google are entering into a partnership with Gemini to be the AI LLM behind iPhones, right? We're seeing more integration into mobile search. You know we were seeing perplexity. even you start to be integrated more in Android phones. so It's just a matter of, you know like for example I bought a set of headphones and it gave me the option to use Perplexity as my assistant. You know i think that we're only going to see that continue. But you know, in today and early twenty-twenty six if your buyer is savvy If your buyer has been judged on the quality of their research And there's actually multiple stakeholders involved In that research then You are gonna see AI become very dominant channel, but if it's just one person trying to solve one problem and they don't have to share their HVAC research with the whole family then less of an issue at this point.

[00:19:28] In the end, Google is like this two-sided story because you have AI overviews. You have a mode but we don't really know because we don' t have that data. so what would say are the biggest and most impactful AI channels? Yeah with the google caveat removed in queries or visits come from either an AI overview, a mode. You know fingers crossed Google get your out together and give us some useful data, but we're still seeing chat GPT dominate as much. As I think that is slowly changing you know? I think one of our things that we discussed was why is ChatGPT getting lazy? or Why do i Think ChatGpT Is Getting Lazy? I'm seeing a lot Of folks in the business world start to migrate over To Claude as a everyday LLM tool.

[00:20:28] And I think there are good reasons for that, and I think the chat GPT got out of the gates is their early leader but they're kind of suffering the consequences of that rapid growth in also the big free tier. Where are we seeing the most referral traffic? It's still from chat GPT But that doesn't mean that you know other LLMs aren't. it's still very important and You said I think it was a LinkedIn post that So ChetGP is obviously most used. Chatbot build your personal opinion. Is that its lazy or gets lazy? Can you can explain what do you mean by that, and what you were using instead? for sure? so like created a lot of chat GPT bots over the last couple years. upwards of forty or fifty different bots for SEO notebook and AI notebook.

[00:21:27] And you know, if I want to create a bot that actually has a good output? I find that I spend probably double the amount of time versus If i have that in a cloud project...and just very tangible example would be-for example um..I need it. generate ten URL strings from Ahrefs that have pre populated. fields them. And I'll ask Chat Shpiti to do that and it will generate the first two, then tell me all of the rest follow the same conventions because its trying to save tokens and basically take a shortcut not have process information half time. i end up swearing at this. but if you do with Claude just does and the team over at OpenAI are probably struggling with this balance of how do they not just... They're not profitable, but how did they be extremely unprofitable versus trying to inch towards that baseline.

[00:22:38] Of at least like you know? Not being such an unprofitible company That there having to save on compute terms like that. And I think the average user is not going to really notice as much, they're also falling back. you know, chat to BT effectively decide what kind of model it's using which is saving them some costs. But I think when it comes to the power user and really wanting knowing what they want out about output It can be extremely frustrating And i'm seeing take a lot of shortcuts. My everyday LLM choice Is definitely Claude Very much like that because also opted for Claude A year ago at least, because I think i somehow saw the or...I don't know how to describe it but I felt like the answers have been more on point.

[00:23:42] It has already with like sonnet three-point five been more Like following my instructions. well so everything you just said I want to make a plus one of that. I also saw that you're building a lot of Claude projects. So basically the Claude version of custom GPTs, which i think have become very popular and a lot people know the concept of a customs GPT. What am curious about is how do you decide something's worth building a project versus just prompting on-the-fly? Well, I think the great thing about projects is they can be shared within your entire company and just used right away. So you know i for example have a project that evaluates link building campaign based on hrefs backlink export And without even adding a word all I really have to do five years of Ahrefs data and it just creates that report for me.

[00:24:46] So I think anything that you know has complex instructions, anything that requires extra context that would aid the quality of an output generally. that's where i tend to create a project in something really that I want to share with my team them to use. You know, it's much better to create that project and the thing I also like about cloud projects is there have an eight thousand character limit. But in Claude, you can make them as long as you want basically within reason. but run into that cap is often and they're also. the only downside of a Claude project Is I believe it cannot be shared publicly. That person would have to set up their own instance. So if the amount of money that saves Anthropic, because you don't have people just using custom GPTs all the time and they're only using them internally.

[00:25:58] It's probably a smart move on their part. I think Claude introduced the option to create these artifacts. so basically this vibe-coded environment doesn't have better wording for it allow people to have like Claude LLM functionality being used in there. I'm not a hundred percent sure if people have to

be active Claude users, but i think this is somehow a workaround where you can basically create an artifact as a Claude project representation. that Yeah, on the I know in the business plans. The artifacts are only being able to be shared within a company. but i believe the artifacts if you're on just a regular plan can Be shared by anyone. But yeah haven't tried You know creating vibe coding my own little environment for custom projects, but then again there's just a lot of things built into the custom project.

[00:27:08] For example like the preview pane and the ability to generate a Word document or an Excel from it that you'd probably want use natively. so basically what I've done now on SEO Notebook since becoming more of a Claude user is giving away those prompts saving some just our clients or my coaching students in the AEO program, but giving a good amount of value away. In terms of direct prompts that people can set up on their own instances.". And what are your favorite AI-enabled workflows for SEO and AEO? No matter if it's in Cloud Projects or something completely different... Yeah I mean we stand out a lot using data for SEO API, digital ocean a lot of our own projects and sorry yeah. Our own internal tools and stuff like that.

[00:28:07] but one of the things I think for Claude specifically in you know maybe just to focus on that again is the adoption skills. so skills being essentially a prompt that can be called upon mid-conversation to give the AI explicit instructions on how to do something exactly the way you want. You mentioned, for example, you find that Claude is a bit easier to follow your comprehensive instructions but if halfway in to invoke a skill, you can be assured that that skill is going to be followed more closely because Claude is going reference at the exact point in time it needs. It doesn't need to front load those instructions and remembering halfway through complex output. so Claude's skills are if you're not using them very underrated.

[00:29:11] And then another thing that is also really useful in Claude are styles, so styles are essentially how your output is written and one of the interesting styles we use as a creative style I think it's maybe even custom for us. I don't remember honestly if it's default or custom, but the creative style basically expands on ideas and explores uncharted territory. And its very good for ideation. whereas you just want something super concise You can use like an analytical skill to make your output no nonsense kind of thing. So If you invoke styles in terms You know, it'll drastically change the type of output that you're getting. And if you are doing more of a brainstorming-type exercise having that creative style that really expands and explores ideas can lead to great stuff.

[00:30:21] Nice! What's your take on AI generated content? Because I mean... A lot people definitely use Cloud and other LLMs create content with them. Do you have an opinion on that? Yeah, in terms of safety I don't think Google has an explicit word checking to see if this content was written by AI and going to reward you. If it's not and demote you. if it is...I Don't think that's scalable for google. And if you think like a google engineer That's probably not how you would approach that problem. But um You know It comes down to abuse right Like Are you just publishing thousands of low quality articles? We know that, those tend to work for a while is like something that kind of flies under the radar. And then Google applies some user behavior metrics to that and we see them plummet.

[00:31:19] they kinda get re-ranked. That's where I would caution people against. at the end of day when you optimize your Google will just tell you bluntly like if you asked John Mueller at a side conversation at Brighton SEO, he would say that. You know, Google wants to reward users that care about their website and caring hundreds or thousands of articles with very little human oversight. Carrying about your website is using AI-assisted content, a human layer and an editing process and brand consistency in good citations, good supporting statistics refreshed on a consistent basis. where there's actual value added Google can pretty efficiently keep track of how pages change over time, because they have their own kind of simplified system and understanding what page changes are.

[00:32:25] And actually dug into that on this week's SEO notebook—that it can see your upkeep of your site. It can see how much love you're putting in to content…and I think long-term. The more it sees, you know a well-capped garden the more. It's going to cultivate that. You remember the SEO heist. Yeah do I can't believe Jake Ward is still bragging about that. To be honest just saw something today About how we yeah? He was hosting a webinar and saying he was from the seo heist. You know II think that's uh, you Know Google You know, Google likes to make an example. uh to kind of scare the industry and they definitely made an example out of that website. So I think that you know AI. again just going back your question.

[00:33:19] like AI generated content is fine but you don't want just a one prompt. write me an SEO article about how to rank on google then hit publish? That's not gonna do much good. But if you weave in some expert commentary, some examples and case studies basically enrich your result with AI can help you. But essentially it's undergoing a stamp of approval. then you're in a lot better stead. but the problem that I had was with what Jake Ward did and the SEO heist. was that, you know? He basically put in the site map of a site called exceljet.net into his tool byword And just URL for URL copied their entire sitemap. I spoke to the owner of ExcelJet. What he told me is they published it on which was causal.app demoted completely is that those Excel formulas didn't even work.

[00:34:31] was literally just publishing a lot of garbage that went under the radar. And I don't think that's very ethical way to act and it does not being good web citizen, but we do have our responsibility as SEOs basically trying to clone a site and then publishing content that is absolutely unhelpful because those Excel formulas didn't even work. You know, I think there's a reason why Google wanted to make an example of. I also don't think that ethics is probably something at least like SEO business ethics. That's what really cared about, he probably just wanted to prove his point that you can pump out a lot of stuff very quickly and get a lot But bridging maybe the idea of AI-generated content and a concept you introduced earlier, fan out queries.

[00:35:46] I can imagine people thinking about hey back in the days we basically had a keyword or if people were searching for that key word or key phrase. And then we created a piece of content and we knew that We would target this keyphrase. now If i enter something into google have like these Fanout Queries. so I have to create more content, right? Because you like somehow target all of these different queries. So what's your take on that? how do handle this operationally if people are thinking about How should i update my content strategy To account for the new reality? Yeah great question and could be tempted to say, let me just use an AI Fanout Query Simulator and try to create a page for every fan out query.

[00:36:36] For your money keyword? And I think that's you know. up on approach. That's not going to work because A You don't know what the actual fan out queries are. we do have ways of telling them in chat BT but In terms of Google clarity in terms of that. They hide all of that stuff, believe me I checked the code and what instead i would encourage people to do is understand the themes that AI wants to guide users down towards. so one of Using the chat GPT deep research clarifying questions to understand, you know what kind of feedback it wants to get from the user. To get to the heart of their query. so in sass I can tell you very plainly that some of the main ways that AI wants to structure those fan out queries are around your comparisons.

[00:37:39] So how do you compare to other products, what your pricing is? What your use case is? it wants Does like what type of company do they work for? What is the size of their company? those are all very common paths that AI Is going to you know, generate these queries because it wants to retrieve a result That's relevant to them. You know if you're looking for project management or your lookings. If you just even put in something Like I need help managing my workflow, right or something like that. and

you know it asks You are you a solo freelancer? Are you working at a large company. You know if you're a solo Freelancer It's gonna give you more of like a to-do list type of app Suggestion. whereas If you're working get a larger, you know two hundred person sass Company is going say yeah try Something like Monday dot com right.

[00:38:37] so it wants to know like who the ICP is What type of company they work for, what's the size of that company? What are their pricing constraints comparing you against different businesses. And if we understand that those are some of the common themes that AI wants to... How it was structure those fan out queries We know. then If we have good coverage around that stuff That is going help us. So even if think about Pricing, usually companies just have one page on there. about their pricing, but actually having pricing for that targets different size companies. Different types of companies and all that kind of stuff... And it may be the same for a healthcare company or finance company, But you still want to call out that pricing-for two hundred person finance fintech startups is X for HubSpotter whatever it is.

[00:39:39] This where you can win because there's an intersection between between playing to that specific ICP and the important criteria of pricing. Do you think Google for better transparency around AI overviews, AI mode and fan out queries etc., so everything is basically hidden in dark? And then chat GPT what people are actually prompting etc.? That they will over time introduce more transparency maybe like a chat GPT search console kind of solution? or do you think that we will basically stay with this black box now, forever? Yeah, it's a great quick question. one accompanies as unprofitable with chat GPT. They're not exactly prioritizing Helping SEO people understand how users are using yet right? So I don't have a lot of faith that that's coming anytime soon for chat GP T. But what they would prioritize is more transparency.

[00:40:47] further advertisers though ultimately not provide as much value for advertisers that SEOs may be able to leverage some of that data should they have clients who are doing active AEO, GEO plus paid ads. That there might be something there. but my real hope and the thing I would love is better reporting from Google. few weeks ago in early twenty-twenty six here, Bing webmaster tools roll out AI clicks and impressions for a citations. And you know being partners like co piloting stuff like that. I think there's a lot of things that i still wish would see in that Bing Webmaster tool tools reporting Like For example the ability to compare periods. That doesn't even exist There but it is start And I think that if Bing puts a little bit of pressure on Google and, you know, Google decides it.

[00:41:53] Hey actually giving SEO AEO folks some understanding about how things are changing in how they can better serve their ICPs. useful reporting, but we don't really have any control of that. We can only hope... I just looked it up today because i wanted to basically go back in time to the beginnings of Google and google introduced AdWords which was Honestly, I didn't know. I would have expected something really different. They only introduced webmaster tools like Google Webmaster Tools back then now Google Search Console in two thousand and six so Only six years after the advertising product. So this sequencing between having the ads product first And then maybe introducing some sort of transparency mechanism After that i think makes total sense Probably also due to the demand from as you said advertisers.

[00:43:03] But I also wanted to ask you about the Bing webmaster tools thing, because they obviously set it up for like a multitude of clients. Because that was pretty easy. so everybody listening. if you have Google search console setup its basically two or three click import is very simple. but how useful did you find data? Well there's couple things i liked about Bing Webmaster Tools Period that there is, you know any visibility on air reporting. as a great start things I didn't like was not being able to compare date ranges or look at year-over-year progress Or whatever. So i didn't liked that. but one other thing. That would say about Being webmaster tools it's a little bit underrated is that they tend to filter out fewer

keywords for what Google thinks are privacy reasons.

[00:43:56] So if you look in Google Search Console and export all the key words generating clicks on your page, then add all of those clicks up... ...and then you'll see big blue & purple & green & orange numbers at the top with you know, clicks impressions CTR in average position. Those clicks and impressions are not going to add up to what you see on the table.". And that's because Google is filtering out quite a bit of data from that. for again like what it deems privacy reasons? In some niches visible than others, but you know there is this the idea about that they filter a lot of those queries and I think even Ahrefs did his study that showed that almost fifty percent were being filtered in some cases.

[00:44:47] But what i've done The keywords that we're seeing in Bing to the key words that were saying in Google and We're seeing you know upwards of like thirty or even forty percent Of the queries at google hides still being shown in bing and in being webmaster tools. So what you can kind of do is use both sources of data as sources of truth, And then what you're doing is your basically saying look if Bing is five percent of search traffic we can extrapolate that and say this keyword didn't appear anywhere on the Google search results probably still being searched on Google higher in terms of clicks and impressions that it's driving, but you won't get that keyword data from the GSC. You have to look in Bing.

[00:45:40] Got it! I think you can do a podcast where you talk about AEO if he did not mention Reddit at least in the current state. But what i found really interesting is a post form. you Where um...you didn't focus on reddit..but actually focused on Facebook groups and that Facebook groups are huge in AEO. And I don't know like how it's in the US, but i can just say at least for Germany or Europe that facebook is not really a thing anymore besides Facebook Groups! Now what do you think of Facebook Group being so huge for citations? Yeah, well I was just peering into Ahrefs one day and decided to put in the path of facebook.com slash groups And i noticed that their traffic is like on an exponential curve. Basically Facebook groups have begun to rank very well in Google.

[00:46:52] So, this was just kind of an insight there and seeing the opportunity. Otherwise, you wouldn't think that have any impact on business. But there's real people out there looking for the best personal injury lawyer in Nashville or whatever and you see this Facebook group ranking in the top three where people are ultimately making decisions... biggest keyword that the Facebook group was ranking for when I last checked, was Chinese food near me. And it didn't even make sense because if somebody's searching down on one end of the country versus the other near me doesn't really do them any good. but again there is this Facebook group that's ranking for Chinese Food Near Me which has just a gigantic key word right?

[00:47:45] So whether its useful or not thats kind mess up there. but they are rewarding Facebook groups and you know, also it's really interesting in terms of what making those posts rank. It is not optimization the beginning of the post into a title tag. So I think that Title Tag has the group name and then, The Beginning Of The Post. but i've seen instances where the beginningofthepost is not even really relevant And it's just sourcing the context of the actual comments to rank It. so its highly intelligent well-structured page is looking at what value are real users recommending and wanting to bring that to light, give visibility for that. So in the follow up post I did was where generated that GPT earlier being a bit lazy whereby you can take one keyword create multitude of keywords, and then this bot are whether it's a cloud project or GPT will generate the.

[00:49:11] pre-populated query parameters in Ahrefs to show you where these social networks are ranking for keywords that are important. So it would search Reddit, Facebook or LinkedIn and see whether the websites were ranked. Actually just this morning one of my teammates had created our own internal tool using the data for SEO API. Search is a bunch keywords and then only looks at where

social networks are ranking. So we basically, you know took that GPT instead of looking in Ahrefs or just now looking our own dashboard to see what those social links. Yeah, I think SEOs will end up ruining it. Not just exploit but look if If you've got a client that is that personal injury lawyer in Nashville You know It's not a batter of saying.

[00:50:13] Just like best injury lawyer and Nashville. here's my link. But maybe you know that injury lawyer actually posts something that's helpful in there and drives some interest back to their site. So I think that Parasite SEO is something that has exploded in the last few years as Google has made it harder for actual websites, especially web sites without a brand presence to rank so effectively. those types of sites don't have brands are now latching on to, you know larger parasites that are ranking in these spaces. So I think those types of sites or the ones that will jump on these posts and um... You can also not just latch onto an existing post but you can analyze what type of posts or YouTube videos or Facebook threads they're ranking And create your own posts that you control as well.

[00:51:09] so multitude ways take advantage of that. Very nicely put, now besides running an obviously very successful agency and newsletters with like almost thirty K subscribers you also started running an AEO agency accelerator. can share a little bit about what made your start. it was basically the idea behind teas that you teach in the accelerator? Sure, came together very naturally. Usually once a year I open up hour-long consulting calls after I usually come back from the Chiang Mai SEO conference. so this year i spoke at a few agency owners who had booked calls with me. And it just became very evident that they were looking for guidance, right? I wasn't setting out to say in twenty-twenty six i'm going to start coaching program and its gonna do this...I don't even have a website for is happening very naturally..and there are two agency owner's that stuck up to me as would be great people like just liked!

[00:52:27] I wanted work them. some capacity uh was. I won't say the names just because well they've talked about it themselves but i'll just be You're kind of more general. One owns a SEO agency that does SEO for rehab clinics and the other one did SEO for law firms, so I saw those two as being too high ticket SEO niches to non-competing businesses. That would effectively be in group coaching format where i'm meeting with both teams once a week or eight weeks And what we are basically doing is shaping their AEOs service for them. So the outcome of that eight week program, um you know is kind of a education obviously but really The Outcome Is What Is A Service That We Can Now Offer To Our Clients? Uh You Know Specifically For AEO Upsells Or Net New Business.

[00:53:27] so we Basically Shape That During The Eight Week And Yeah It's. I've Already Started My Second Cohort With That Again, very natural. I'm booking twenty-five minute kind of discovery calls that are paid but if somebody's interested in that they can go to stevetoth.coach and just read a Notion page on that –I don't really have a website for that–but yeah there is already a wait list…and i don't want it do more than two at a time so kinda have to push them out now into the summer or fall? Interesting. And what would you say, the most important things that agencies have to get right if they want start introducing AEO as a service into their portfolio? Well client education is probably the biggest one because your clients are... It's getting them to plunk down ten K a month on AEO and they don't understand that there is not going to be necessarily this huge up into the right graph of click increases.

[00:54:36] Then, They're ultimately If you frame it in terms of, hey look this is how your being represented right now on the web and there are some important deal breakers that we effectively need to correct. And make more known across all LLMs. You're going to close more deals and what the outcome of this is, better representation for you in addition to improved non-branded discovery. But it's essentially that client education piece I think is most important. And then actually what deliverables are with each deliverable that you give a client? even teasing a little bit of the how. Nice, final question

around your newsletters because you obviously have built them up with some substantial time invest over the years.

[00:55:40] what is like? What makes this newsletter different to other SEO Newsletters that are out there and do would still recommend people start in Newsletter now Very popular again, so they have been popular then a little bit less than again with sub-stack and everything. So like what is why should people subscribe to either the AI notebook or SEO notebook? And What's your whole perspective on where newsletters go over the next years? Well, look the thing that made mine different. um and I got in at a good time. There is no doubt about it. i started SEO notebook comm in twenty nineteen uh while I was still working full-time at fresh books. And at that time you know? I believe there were not even maybe one or two.

[00:56:35] Uh seo round up newsletters. You had like the maus top ten and things like that going out but you didn't have legit SEO strategy or tactical advice going out. So my whole take was, I really started it again very organically and out of a need for personal necessity you know? bunch of great consultants and really pushing the limits on what I knew back then. And that's where it felt like i was becoming a CEO. today, having all this reading…I don't watch YouTube videos much but more reading to learn in testing...and put everything instead of just like in an email to myself or my physical notebook. So I got Evernote and started putting all of my strategies into Evernode, then the next day fifteen different things in here.

[00:57:47] wouldn't it be cool if you know once a week I emailed, one strategy to an email list and called the SEO notebook. quickly get that, it got quickly. within the first couple months gone a thousand subscribers and you know really changed my life. And allowed me to become an independent consultant initially in now agency owner coach etc...and I thought just as it was huge huge thing for my career. But do I think it's worth doing now? It all depends on what you have to say, right? If you have unique value to put out into the world...I would definitely encourage people to do that. if just posting your stuff on LinkedIn or X or Facebook or whatever ...you're not in control of those platforms You could lose your account effectively lose a lot of the hard work that you put in.

[00:58:55] But when you have an email list, it's just a matter of keeping your sending reputation high and doing double opt-in all that kind of stuff but not spamming your lists right? So I would say for long term security no matter what if something happened to my LinkedIn account or another account like obviously assurance of these two lists that I own. So, um...I would encourage people to if they're posting value on the social networks also do that in email because a lot usage of these social networks also comes and goes. Sometimes people will use it for a while, then not use it but there's never a day where professional doesn't check their email inbox right? So that is something which has never really – well at least now this generation or maybe from my ten year old generations you know inboxes are still very important touch point in peoples lives.

[01:00:01] That's very good fundamental advice that there won't be a single day where professional won't check his inbox. Steve, it has been an insightful conversation! Thank you so much for sharing a lot also of your thinking behind the scenes, how you basically approach stuff. If people want to follow you around so they can obviously... So there are many options! People can subscribe to SEOnotebook.com. They can subscribe AI notebook if their an agency owner could take look at stevetoth.coach for the accelerator. where else can people follow? So I'm looking to consolidate into one platform, but we're just actively building that in stealth right now. But the best place in terms of working with us is notebook dot agency.

[01:00:56] and then two newsletters are ainotebook.com and seonotebook. com. And you know if your on those newsletter's you'll hear about all different stuff i am doing as well. redirects to an ocean page at

this point. But yeah, add me on LinkedIn that's the social network Like, I take this from a friend of mine who works at Google in the conversation that i had with him last summer. Pretty soon within five years standing up and LLM is going to be something very quick and highly personalized, right? So LLMs are being now like Google has already announced that certain features will drop on your Gmail conversations or chat conversations. Or you drive files so I would say this personalization And then even moving into the future of having our own primary assistant.

[01:02:25] That is just completely hooked into everything that we're doing, you know how do we optimize for that? but it's probably a conversation for another podcast. Awesome I think. um That's definitely a conversation with other podcasts. so We should probably Do an update episode at the end of the year or next Year if things are moving in to their direction. But i suppose also If people follow You they will Probably learn first? stuff. I do my best to publish all of my latest kind-of thinking on SEO notebook and AI notebook, posting it on LinkedIn but would be happy to do this again another time for sure! Awesome. thanks so much Steve for taking the time. i know you're a busy man. hopefully speak soon. yeah all the best.

[01:03:16] thank you very much. take care same.