"We killed 50% of HubSpot's blog" | Jennifer Lapp, Head of Growth Marketing, LATAM & DACH

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Show notes

HubSpot literally buried traffic as a metric last year. Not because they stopped caring about reach, but because in a world where AI systems deliver answers directly, the old playbook stopped working.

My guest today is Jennifer Lapp, Head of Growth Marketing for LATAM and DACH at HubSpot, where she's been rebuilding the growth engine from the ground up.

We'll dig into the real experiments she's been running, what's actually working and what isn't, and how she's steering her team through one of the biggest shifts in the marketing space ever.

What we covered in this episode

- Why HubSpot held a literal funeral for traffic as a KPI, and what replaced it: brand presence, AI mentions, citations, and behavioral influence
- Operation Everest: how HubSpot killed 50% of its blog content using a Marie Kondo style scorecard tied to ICP fit and revenue quality
- The pricing accuracy experiment that moved HubSpot's AI answer accuracy from below 20% to around 80% across all regions
- Why AEO is not SEO in new packaging, and where digital PR, classical PR, and SEO start to merge
- How HubSpot restructured its growth team from channel ownership to product ownership across Marketing Hub, Sales Hub, Service Hub, and more
- Prompt tracking at scale: why 25 well-chosen prompts beat 100 generic ones, and a hint at how many HubSpot actually tracks per language
- AI-generated vs AI-assisted content, the revival of personas, and the copyright question most marketers are not asking yet

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Full conversation

[00:00:00] We still have a look at rankings, we do not use that as our main KPI. What can other teams learn from how you handle it? How they also make their team future-proof? It's so hard to keep up with all of the changes. So deliberately making time in your calendar as manager is one thing. How could you ask your team to do that if you don't live it yourself? Before we dive in, 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. HubSpot literally buried traffic as a metric last year Not because they stopped caring about reach But Because In A World Where AI Systems Deliver Answers Directly The Old Playbook Stopped Working.

[00:01:13] My guest today is Jennifer Lapp, head of growth marketing for LeadM and Dach at HubSpot where she's been rebuilding the growth engine from the ground up. We'll dig into the real experiment that she has been running – what actually working? And how she's steering her team through one of biggest shifts in the marketing space ever! So welcome to the podcast Jenny. Hi, thank you so much for having me Niklas. Thanks a lot for taking the time. I hope with the introduction i didn't set the bar too high but everybody that has tuned in this will be super insightful episode already from our pre-talk. So... This is going to be very well spent hour for everyone listening! I am hundred percent sure. Can u take us?

[00:02:04] with you back to that moment. That I just described when HubSpot buried traffic? So we realized the traffic wasn't they, The best number or the best KPI. two look at a while ago. actually i think he probably saw all of the LinkedIn posts awhile ago like maybe two three years ago where those big core algorithm updates hit especially HubSpot and all blogs that were focusing on educational content. Maybe you've realized as well in the audience, we did not really engage with that conversation or LinkedIn so much. We didn't want to personally to engage those conversations but for another. Before that shift happened, we already made the very conscious decision to not focus on their KPI that much. Because all of this shifts happening back then was going into Google answering questions in their platform and us wanting to focus on content high level.

[00:03:25] That was the big part of our content strategy, right? Like everyone who knows HubSpot The Inbound Marketing Machine Our content was very tofu. It was trying to be one go-to source that all marketers sales reps and service people Whenever they have something that is remotely related to what our products can offer, we were the one go-to traffic source. But this shift was happening at a time when those queries where Google wanted people stay on their side and not into the blog articles. So... already before all of this conversation happened on LinkedIn, we killed fifty percent off the content. On the blocks. so he went through it and we did marry condo on all over the international and English blogs and said if you doesn't bring us joy We will kill it.

[00:04:30] And we define this. what brings us joy very clearly? We said okay This is this serving our ICP? Is this serving audience? And more importantly for us from a business perspective, is this bringing in not just MRR leads or signups but it's bringin' the right people. So we created scorecards that were scoring system and said okay... From these lead generated through this blog article they fall into a very good or not so good customer in the end from our company perspective. So that was one side of what's happening, and background no-one really knew outside on LinkedIn. The other thing is more. this thing you were going for with burying traffic sounds metaphorical but literally we did. We had a big offsite for all international block teams and also on the English side, we had a ceremony with a big letting go of traffic where we had minutes of silence to commemorate.

[00:05:50] So basically everyone wrote down how traffic made us feel—we were hands-on SEO specialists. so identity as marketers was circling around rankings, CTR traffic. Trying to let go of a number that defined us for so many years especially thinking about the Spanish blog at some point driving more than two million visits monthly or the German blog. when I joined HubSpot, it was at like fifty thousand page views per month and then at peak time more than seven hundred thousand. For a business block. we were so proud of that! And It's really hard to let go. We had everyone write down on card traffic. you gave us accomplishment. If we rank, We will grow our sessions where the impact SEO

is predictable. those were The things that we wrote on Those cards and put them all On a board?

[00:07:03] We sat there for a moment And then we said we had A real speech. Justin on Our team back. Then did this The funeral for traffic, that's what it was called. Where we really went down to reflect. What Was Traffic Actually Measuring For Us? What Impact Did It Reflect And Where Did It Lie To us In A Way So That Was The Main Things We Wanted To Touch On With The Whole Team. other channels right now, newsletters YouTube. Other channels that we build up within that AI driven visibility may might have not resulted in a click but clearly drove influence that we had impact on and from that We redesigned the whiteboard. everyone was putting their letting go messages into the clear signals of what we want our team impact to be defined by brand present visibility, AI mentions citations and this whole behavioral change that we had through time.

[00:08:29] That was I think one of the hardest moments but it also very necessary for me as a manager and lead the way into letting go of this big north star that we were circling our strategies around. I hope, um... The Pope doesn't listen to his podcast because i could see him saying that this ceremony for traffic is a little blasphemous but uh..I totally get it. so no judgement from my side. Let's quickly tap into the whole like LinkedIn hype, etc. before we go on to the traffic gone. and then what comes next? discussion? because how easy was it for you not engage in conversation? Because I also remember very vividly that there were a lot of posts about this Shruck Emoji blog post all kind stuff. so obviously saying from moment This is like you remember back then, but I could imagine in your fingertips it just that want to save people what's actually happening.

[00:09:44] But obviously you can't. so anyway we did reply to that. We had several master classes webinars about our back then what we called Operation Everest, where basically killed all of the content on our blogs. So it was more collecting out thoughts in more thought leadership-driven contents than just engaging with conversations. What helped a lot and I'm super grateful for that is having a lot of content strategists who were either HubSpot users or fans or even ex-hubsporters that were taking on the conversation for us. And they were like, you know I have worked with Hubsport for such a long time and if there are not worried about it then is good reason because way before this traffic drop we already moved the needle around how we're generating demand.

[00:10:46] We created newsletters the YouTube engine. We build a media network to make sure that we just don't depend on only one source of income, if you will like one sort of traffic and I think it's always good in a way supportive of our product or support for the company especially during these times when you might not be able to share everything that is going on behind-the-scenes although I mean. The tendency is more and more to build in public et cetera, And your obviously also sharing love stuff transparently but sometimes it just cannot share everything right? But people always want to have like. i mean everybody's looking for reach. they're seeing this story and they wanted someone engage. If you hit HubSpot or if your name Hubspot, then probably a certain level of reach is guaranteed.

[00:11:48] So... Probably cannot blame people around the ceremony and whole shift that was going on with traffic? What would say how difficult it to steer your team through there because I mean now its obviously gone And you reflect in it. It made alot sense but I could imagine that if you tell the team, hey we will do a ceremony where basically to a funeral for traffic. That not everybody is like. Hey Jenny this sounds like great idea. let's do it! I think they might surprise but everyone was really engaged in and on board with because obviously have been thinking about shift for long time as well. I have the honor of working with very talented marketers every single day. Um, i'm always amazed at how smart. everyone is that have spotted it's insane.

[00:12:45] um so they have been trying to move away from traffic on their own. uh already and for us It was more a now its official. Now it's official That really not focus on as much. we still monitor To be

completely transparent, obviously we still have a look at rankings. We still haven't looked. traffic but we do not use that as our in any way is the main KPI even if it's super smart which I hundred percent believe. you asked like person and leadership capability to give people direction and to also give a certain level of clarity. So even if the conversations were already going on, maybe like during our coffee chat I don't feel so well about traffic anymore etc., how did you approach it? Like when was that moment in time where we said okay... We have to be official but there has been an official change.

[00:13:54] So to guide you back historically, we had the whole traffic dip. I think it was in starting after COVID. When all of the blogs on a lot of sales companies and general or other companies as well were losing organic traffic from Google We sat down in winter that year a strategy not necessarily for recovery, but for cleanup. So we said like we are not twenty-thirty people in the team. We have to make sure that now That when you're seeing as much outcome from organic traffic The effort put into it is really well invested. So that's when we made the decision to do their Mary Condor style block cleaning and after because within that cleanup, We already defined coming from the blogs or other properties, leads and signups for a certain bucket of company type that we're targeting.

[00:15:17] Those were already defined in their period. so then setting up this strategy for long-term growth was fairly easy too much enablement for the team because they have been mapping out that strategy before on their own, like with our help obviously. And then we had a week of team off-site... On site basically in Berlin where everyone was there. We had most amount workshops. I think Spend like two, three hours in the peer groups talking through different scenarios and also building each other up with that. And then making clear we're not just focusing on this one channel for the future. so our team was built-up as a clear SEO team for international blogs. That's seven years ago. Now, we've moved on for the past four or five years to owning the YouTube channels.

[00:16:35] To owning micro apps like Make My Persona Generators Or The Individual Product Pages Anything That Is Happening On The Website. So just having this ownership of one channel Kind of limited everyone in making sure that the other channels grew. So, that was one of the changes we did. and now just recently We had another change on our teams where we took even a step further And divided into The individual hubs that we serve. so right now every person owns Marketing Hub, Content Hub, the new AO product Sales Hub, Service Hub all of the individual products but owns All Of The Narrative and ALL OF THE GO TO MARKET AROUND IT. So it's not just before that we were focused on. you own the blog You own the YouTube channel YOU OWN THE PRODUCT PAGES YOU OWn THE WEBSITE AND YOU OWNT MICROAPPS Which kind of scattered all our efforts a lot made it impossible to really have an impact on disability, to have an effect of what is coming from AI or organic.

[00:17:51] So now having this clear focus on each individual product makes sure that the team understands and steers narrative much better. And would you agree there are still a lot teams out here who struggle with his whole transition going on? If you would agree, why do think that is? I'm pretty sure that we struggle with those things as well. quite the contrary, I guess. But we have um...the opportunity or like a better enablement to really go for testing. i think that is one of the things that we need to focus on especially in AI search at the moment because no-one has their own right answer. Um..no one Like even though there are a lot of experts out there that claim That this how you should do AI Search. answer engine optimization or generative engine optimization.

[00:19:00] It's very early stages and the algorithms, different engines they change almost every day. we see that in citation rates. Impact it has that. now ads are enabled in JetGPT. So making sure the teams are equipped to boldly go where no one had been before, I think is a big challenge for teams at the moment. From what i heard there's lots of things which work pretty well on how you handle them and what made me think especially The team basically comes from an SEO, a content background. And

now you're talking about testing and experimentation. You have named other properties that were not considered part of the classic content in SEO work. maybe before That are somehow in responsibility. I see talks on ever-changing job market and certain roles redundant or AI basically killed this role, now they kill this role etc.

[00:20:13] So what do you think can other teams learn from how you handle it if They also have people in their team that are highly skilled but That has a background is not necessarily our skillset. It's not necessary. What you need maybe for the next twelve to twenty four months so? How Can they Also make their teams future-proof? I think one thing that every manager or within leadership position should focus on is, well maybe two things. One thing it's leading by example which is extremely tough. to be fair right now It's so hard to keep up with all of the changes. So deliberately Making time in your calendar as a manager to grow yourself, To make sure that you read up on the latest updates. That You are um... In communities?

[00:21:16] That you exchange ideas! That you do what we're doing right now. Exchanging ideas and strategies And things worked but didn't Because that is what you demand of your team Right?! You want them to scale-up But how could you Live or like ask your team to do that if you don't live it yourself. So, that is one of the main Main things I know and The second thing that goes with that Is what a managers in leadership often forgets? In various setups is that With the higher responsibility off upskilling. there is still the normal amount Of work that you have to do. executive wise. The operations are still ongoing, but at the same time you have to scale up and You just have twenty four hours a day. And you ideally want to spend eight of them at work in not Twenty.

[00:22:15] so Making sure that the team has this space To sit down with you deprioritize things That don't Have the highest impact At the moment. as a team member can focus your efforts on upskilling in a certain area. I think that is the main challenge because, as you said, skills for SEO and content are different to what we now need. where everything is undefined you have to create the playbooks within your company. Even though there are obviously playbooks from companies out there already, HubSpot is sharing, Semmarsh's sharing, PKI everyone is sharing what they're working on and worked for them or didn't. but that doesn't mean those are future proof strategies because as we know everything changes all of time.

[00:23:17] What worked yesterday might not work tomorrow? What works for German market may not work for a Spanish one. one of the things that I learned in, um...in the past. All of they-the different markets are at different stages so making sure your team has for one thing time to skill up strategies and playbooks from other companies that worked but also make sure you have some time on experimentation with what they own. then really live by this optimized cradle can run experiments by yourself. For me, what I have in my team is like a good experiment that failed. it's worth way more than the strategy you mapped out but did not execute on and this sounds very obvious right now. are you afraid of taking the risk to have an experiment fail?

[00:24:26] Before we go into your actual AI search experiments, because there's a lot to uncover. I would like to get your thoughts on one more thing Because i just listened to a podcast with Kat Wu who is head of product for Claude Cote and co-work at Anthropic And she talked about the merging roles between product managers designers and engineers that you basically have very blurred lines already between the different responsibilities. So, that basically an engineer is more and more tapping into product manager role than a product manager is tapping one more to their engineer roles. do You see this same happening for marketing roles right now? I think The best example there are the blurred lines between SEO, AO and PR what we're seeing right now, one of the most apparent ones.

[00:25:25] Then you obviously have the different fields of SEO. I think One of the risks that i see

happening in industry is everyone says AEO or GEO is just SEO and a nice packaging which Is not true from my perspective. There are alot similarities. there's alot things. if u do SEO well You will also rank an AR search. I'm like, i think a lot of the things are similar. The approach is similar. but what changes with AO is that for me it's not a content or SEO task or priority. It's something we have to build up from leadership on. and you have this blending between digital PR even classical PR. they have to work much closer together than what SEO had to do before. Then maybe having this other shift between affiliate link building and PR, I think that's probably the trajectory where their roles merge most at the moment from my perspective.

[00:26:40] Do you have an opinion on these new concepts of content engineer or marketing engineer? You mean engineer as in what? can you explain that role a little bit more? Of course, of course. So there are certain companies out their US based companies. I think clay was the first one to introduce The concept of the GTM Engineer. i think it worked very well. so if you trace It back. they were basically the First ones too To call people like That and now its Basically an established category. And Now There Are Other Companies trying to find a word for people that have like the skill set of someone who's coming from content, an SEO background but is also able build workflows. For example with NNN and Zapier with other tools so they can create content or research etc... With an agentic skillset in way.

[00:27:41] maybe there are some skills in co-work that gives them a certain briefing or allows to take webinars and extract interesting quotes. That you can then use in blog posts, those kind of things... And they are very much pushing these roles into this category with the idea for someone who is able build their workflows and tools etc., not only do your work as we used it before? I think basically described the role of a senior strategist or senior AEO marketer in my team because that is exactly what they're doing. We have never thought about calling their engineer, I don't know. it sounds nice though yeah but That's exactly what the team is working on right now. Because one thing for example we noticed within our inbound machine The things that people still focus on is creating PDF files for people to download, right?

[00:28:45] Like the classical white paper. What my team was experimenting with is taking different approaches so creating GPTs that people can sign up or building their own HTML tools little apps that people signed-up as the lead generating tool instead of a PDF file in the end, because I think people or the buyer right now they don't want to like. no one wants to read a PDF anymore. if you can just ask GPPT stuff. Or Claude? I don't know of. people in Germany or other regions are still using GPP. that much to be honest. but yeah... Now it's GPT-Five point five coming out Open May. I will probably have a head start for two weeks and then Anthropic would drop. Claude Opus, uh five point zero. And the cycle goes on.

[00:29:40] anything in the end it's good for all of us because race to making better models benefits with more capabilities. so yeah let see. Let's tap into some of the experiments you've been running because this is obviously a big part of the HubSpot growth culture. Running experiments, forming hypotheses etc. and to kick that section off I would like to start with real examples. so can you please walk us through an experiment that maybe worked better than expected? So something that surprised. That's a very boring and simple one, to be honest. The ones that work the best... I still want hear it! So we had big problem on our HubSpot site for all regions And that is that We noticed early-on in our research and tracking our prompt answers that a lot of the pricing information shared about HubSpot was wrong.

[00:30:51] And then in worst case scenarios, we had that happening to sales reps and conversations. so we have prospects who were in conversation with sales saying but JTBT says this is not for your pricing. do not want to have happen, obviously. And the main issue with that was our pricing pages back then were built in JavaScript which is not ideal for crawlers to be accessed from LLMs. so what we did

there? it's very simple and quotation marks For every region or language. We created individual pricing articles on our blog very boring content. It also said HubSpot Editorial, no author on it and walked the LLM step by step through the exact pricing of HubSpon Um, which is different for each region. It's different for Each package.

[00:31:53] you have different tiers. You Have Different hubs? We have different combinations. we have different new um pricing systems coming in every now and then. so it's hard For the AI to really keep track of that. before we launched those articles we were measuring How well Is The AI Answering the question? So we had a set Of What does marketing hub cost In Germany in euros? and then we develop the scoring system with Claude saying that okay if the answer is x, y, z. Then give a score of one to ten making sure differentiation between different subscriptions. So we developed that scoring system first, had a run of like two weeks before we published the new articles and then two weeks Before I think our pricing accuracy score was way below twenty percent.

[00:32:53] We launched in your articles an all languages at this around about the same time. And are pricing? Accuracy increased from that to i Think now it's around eighty percent of pricing accuracy for all the different questions. That was just by creating content that is easily retrievable, it's very well-optimized. so we had very enclosed chunks on each of our content pieces within the articles. We have different schema types added to make it easy trail the whole article and to just take information that it needs. And then what's so effective? It was scary, yeah That sounds like a classic one for every enterprise. business has in some way more complex pricing different stages of product suites For example.

[00:33:52] So would you say I mean with experiments is always one thing too. have an experiment went well Would you say that this is also replicatable? So do think if you would take the same approach and like go to another enterprise company, not from the CRM space but maybe form a different space. Like let's talk about ESG solutions like maintenance management software something like very complex solutions. Do you think it will work in any context? basically for sure. And I think It goes beyond the scope of pricing. It also goes just around explaining what the company does, if you will. Because another experiment that we launched was making sure our products surface around different personas when they chat to PT stuff and Google on AI And that followed the same principle, except I was just a different sphere than we were targeting with it.

[00:35:02] So we had persona-based optimizations where applied the same structural updates to all of those articles. so works... It should even work for explaining different products in an e-commerce space or in little bit more explanatory e-commerce shares. if you take companies like Fairment, for example that do kombucha and stuff. I don't think they have a problem with AI visibility. but if there were to optimize articles more around the explaining and chunking... That is an easy win. you could do Two questions in one First how would come up ideas of these experiments? And then second, how do you validate what's worth pursuing versus was just noise in brackets? Maybe that came from a LinkedIn post from Samji or Guru.

[00:36:09] Yeah, that's a very good question. So lot of our experimentation is happening or like the brainstorming has happened within meetings. so we have dedicated sessions with in our AI grow hours where people just come and present or talk about stuff they've read somewhere. I think would be interesting to try. The main advantage, I want to say with that is you see people are intrinsically motivated. So they come up with their own ideas very easily because it's still a lot of mental effort for experiments no one has tried before. so team work and exchanging ideas everyone within the region or city in certain communities where and exchange ideas with other people, um... And just like try around. Um then when you think about so what do we actually do?

[00:37:18] Everyone prepares a little project brief. So basically similar to how you Do CRO testing You come up within hypotheses. I Think this might happen if i do X Y you present that, and say okay this might be the impact we could see from it. And then show to our team if there is a bigger impact on budget or timeline than we need to discuss with me first along the lines of own and optimize has a possibility to try things out on their own, just letting me know basically that this is what they're focusing right now. A good example for that was simple test we launched at the LATAM site where within our tracking in the AEO product Throughout a certain content type or like topic within the marketing and CRM.

[00:38:32] Sphere was coming from LinkedIn post articles that were really old actually sometimes, but they were structured pretty well. so we looked through all of the linked impulse articles that would generating citations with in our within the prompts that we tracked. Those were not our LinkedIn Pulse articles, those are experts who talked about Household CRM or experts talking about household marketing and just completely unrelated. So... We decided to run an experiment in three markets in Latem, France & Dachh trying to see if it can influence if we generate more LinkedIn Puls articles. That was a fairly easy lift because we had the content already there. A lot of the content was produced on the blog, so we created a cloud project that would create the perfectly optimized LinkedIn Pulse article.

[00:39:29] We have them published and revised by editors And we saw this did work for The Latte Market. It didn't do much for French For German market. It's still inconclusive. So we're still trying it out, but that was yeah That was just an idea that came out of nowhere Just going through all the citation data We had. It feels to me like this skill Of being able To engage in these communities Like forming a hypothesis, forming an opinion also and then being able to sketch out an experiment. I feel like this is probably one of the most important skills now in The Roads. would you agree? Yes yes definitely but it's also one of them was challenging i'd say because if you think about The that everyone has this pressure right now on being.

[00:40:37] AI driven like you have to do a lot of stuff in the eye. what are you doing? and I you do their basic things, right? Like oil. like you automate those things that that you don't want to spend your time on your automated writing emails, your automatic reportings. You automate copying stuff from X-to Z. Your Automate Research which then leaves for the not-automated or not AIifying staff with a task. they have their higher mental workload all of the higher mental capacity that you need to engage within. So, that means a lot. your daily pressure is still being creative even though it's already taking on bigger mental load because you did automate in an IEFI basic simple tasks than before where maybe High mental work.

[00:41:37] Twenty percent was the basic admin stuff. so and now that twenty percent where your brain Was relaxing? That was actually the time when you thought your brain is relaxing, but that Is at the time were your brain can focus down And come up with creative ideas. That's Where they are forming. So now we're removing that space still demanding people to be even more creative than they've been before. So I think freeing up a little bit more time for the tasks that you might not want AI to do, To make sure your brain can still perform in the creativity level that you need Your team to succeed on is super important. One advice i always give for this is to really reserve time on the calendar For everyone of our teams This one hour where you do focus on your growth.

[00:42:33] You do research yourself, not only use Gemini Research to find out what's new in the industry... ...you go through articles yourself and check around LinkedIn or read up on what is new because you need that special time for your brain function. I always had this idea throughout basically my whole career from being a freelancer to then turning it into the agency, which i called random exploration and. The idea was just have an hour or maybe one-and-a half where do something like

randomly clicking through website of our clients? now obviously from agent perspective randomly click the GSC digging through a HubSpot report, which led to me being able create a lot of dashboards and reports where I couldn't find tutorials for.

[00:43:32] And always felt like these random exploration hours were it didn't have clear goal other than hey i want to dig into this client this tool, this thing without really a plan just with like this intrinsic motivation. It really changed a lot of things for me. would you say that? This is the concept That I maybe should get copyright on. You can um...I think actually and thats no joke i think Thats something that at some point Um..you will be able to run workshops On because I Think that Is one Of The skillset people Um, unlearn right now because we are focusing so much on trying to make everything work with AI. So a lot of what you just described is happening through AI like once. I think it's so easy to do all of that when you just describe and get an AI summary in then read for that And but then your not processing it You're not uncovering yourself doesn't stick in your brain.

[00:44:41] It's just like stays in the short-term memory for five minutes and then you forget about it, but they actual uncovering all of those secrets that you just described yourself stay within your long term memory And then in bake into what do when you do afterwards? Okay So everybody listening. You heard the idea here first if you register a company or a domain Or whatever sensor. if he tried to do it Don't try, I will either sue you or have done it before. My next company would be called the Random Exploration Company and its thanks to your very convincing arguments that i should pursue this. Jenny. so thank. Now you're obviously a very transparent person, which is why I also asked to talk about an experiment that maybe didn't work out as expected or where your had high hopes and in the end results weren't quite what you hoped for.

[00:45:39] Can you share one of those? One was having different outcomes from LinkedIn post-articles. That's definitely surprised me. What I, an experiment that did not work out and actually didn't like it much either personally in full transparency was um... That we uh.. I noticed within our experiments. We tend to go back all of the things we tried in SEO. So there were a lot of experiments that seemed to me very repetitive. Of the strategies we did back then, so for example different different summaries on our articles, on things that we actually did not... That we decided within our pruning. We do not want to produce anymore. so having articles just very very TOEFL-oriented didn't work for us to gain AI citations and quickly dropped those again Thankfully because I personally thought bury all of the content and then bring it back to life just because we're now focusing on AI search or answer engine optimization.

[00:47:12] That's why I was very glad that this experiment did not yield the results. You gave me the keyword tofu content, which is obviously I mean shout out on that note to our friend Marvin Müller from OMR Reviews who also had you. German podcast or my tech check where when you would have used the word tofu, he wouldn't have hit a buzzer and then there was like an alarm. And I think our audience is totally capable of translating tofu to um... A great Chinese dish. no just kidding top-of-the-funnel content. Um i had Saskia Sarishin..I hope pronounce it right! I do my best from Meltwater on the podcast. I repeat for a top of the funnel content and i'd like to quickly get your thoughts on it. because she said, yeah.

[00:48:10] For sure tofu content does not drive meaningful results in terms of traffic as this traffic doesn't really convert or conversions. but so im quoting her. What's your take on that? Yeah, I have one hundred percent degree. Um...I think circling back to the experiment or like not experience this strategy we were trying um.. The what you have keep in mind here is that We do a lot of tofu content already On all our platforms for Havspot So it's It's Not Like. It doesn't make a difference if we add more because it was already having the topical authority for alot of content areas that wanted to be covered in. But for anything that we're doing new right now, for example. Now with the launch of AEO product where you

can track all your citations and visibility We need to make sure that we have topical authority in those areas as well.

[00:49:27] I don't want say...we do not compete with PKI or SEMrush on any big visibility things because our AEO products mainly and serving if you have ACRM integration, because you can inform all of your tracking in your prompts on the ICP that you have within your CRM data. But that's sad—that still means we need to make sure people perceive HubSpot as a thought leader and topic authority within the sphere of answer engine optimization. So for those areas, definitely toolful content is very important. But I'm not thinking about content like we're not doing any content on what is SEO right now? Like we are not publishing new wiki pages that are explaining stuff there has been out and that a GPT or Google AI overview can answer in a second.

[00:50:31] What do want to be taken into consideration for the answer from the AI, right? That is what we're going at. So anything whenever their conversation goes deeper than that TOEFL question if we haven't been considered in a first couple of questions and the conversations happening with the AI We will not be coming to later conversation either. so as we see through a lot of prompting it's serving almost always same patterns and the same sources throughout a conversation. It doesn't necessarily change too much in between, so that's why we want to make sure that... We are there through all of these steps happening in our conversations with all of the funnel basically like the whole conversation film. Quick question around prompt tracking because it is something highly discussed topic obviously your size, so of the HubSpot's size.

[00:51:36] Can you share maybe if not the actual number? The range of prompts you're tracking? because I can imagine that you are not happy with a twenty-five prompts that most people track as standard given the size of business and different product ranges etc.? Tracking twenty-five prompts in whatever tool is better than tracking nothing. But I can't disclose the actual number, but um i can tell you that we are. uh We made it somewhat of a science to come up with the prompts and the queries then were tracking. And that is because as i mentioned earlier? We have A product suite. It Is very intense sales service the CRM data hub, all of their different products. They have different personas and industries that they're serving.

[00:52:40] so we tried to come up with a holistic strategy to track the most relevant queries as efficiently possible. So my guess would be somewhere in range from five hundred thousand. For well, I can give you. so we have. I don't want to get in trouble. now We have five five languages as well. So we're also doing that and all of our languages. Okay Let's just talk about one language. so in one language i would okay then i will say per language a thousand prompt? think You are close Nice. Okay, yeah but I think the more important question is what do our advice to or would we advise? The two of us obviously because you also are invested in that too any company. um i think having a starting point of twenty five To a hundred queries is completely fine depending on the product.

[00:53:50] I love giving SEO answers. It depends, so it obviously depends on what product service or what you're offering how many personas or ICPs are targeting and What your main priority in AI visibility is? Yeah yeah i would Obviously a hundred percent agree. So who am I to say? but i would A hundred percent agreed better To have twenty five meaningful prompts where You feel like That's what actual customers or actually, hopefully future customers are asking and also things where you feel like this is what really drives the business forward. So certain features, certain aspects of the product, certain use cases, certain jobs to be done clusters it's better to have twenty five in that sense. In comparison two for example tracking.

[00:54:38] a hundred there are somewhere like top-of-the funnel were maybe not even every prompt That triggers a web search in the end where you basically don't have any chance to then show up. I

mean there are people now talking about influencing training data, i find this highly suspicious... that does sound like black hat SEO from two thousand and eight. yeah it sounds like taking cash and just burning it. if you spend money on trying to influence Okay, I take the answer like in range of a thousand maybe per language. That already gives people sense... You obviously didn't confirm but you gave us little bit to think on? As you said to sum this up what is as much possible with the least effort? the thing you should be following there.

[00:55:43] And then always also think about it's not, It doesn't make sense to just track words. You need try and find The best semantic match To the main question that people are really asking. A hundred percent agree. We're also. I don't know exactly when People listen this but we Are currently working on some research around how much the response of the AI changes based on a persona. So given that search is becoming more personalized and ChatGPT takes into account, And also other chatbots The memory there is so it will probably be different. There'll be a different attachment to your actual prompt Based if you're CTO or head-of growth or if you're like a junior content manager. And we are trying to assess that and understand better how much the responses change, which is also I think super interesting.

[00:56:48] You mentioned Persona quite a lot already during the talk where it's something... Where i feel like If We Burry The Traffic, the persona has its revival? Yes! A lot of people were talking about we don't need personas anymore etc., so do you also feels like personas have become way more important again?! Yes, and I'm very glad about that because before it was very impersonal to be honest. And i remember you were saying in a panel at the...I think It Was The Berlin SEO & Content Meetup You're- I don't know what you said but it was along the lines of if you create content has very low search volume, but it is targeted to the persona. The search volume that we get from Google is also very... It's an estimation.

[00:57:46] And it's the same for all of the prompts, but if you have one person accessing their content and converting on that content, its worth way more than any generic content could be written to anybody where no-one converts because they don't feel engaged with contents. Yep! Yeah. A hundred percent. We can also not only draw this from marketing, even from sales. Like if you work for example in sales and have complex deals with buying committees You have to practice stakeholder aware communication So different people need different forms of packaging Of the same content. so to say a CTO does not care about maybe the actual implications of how you do the AEO work, but he rather cares about if I throw in my sales transcripts and all that kind of stuff over there.

[00:58:41] Is it safe? It's secure is used to train the models blah-blah-blAH All of that. so i think this also something some people But not enough People Think About And Care About Because before was easy to ignore persona It's easier to create content that is generic. That just a fact, it has way more research intent... ...to really think about the persona much more. Yeah but search volume has never been the truth. We perceived as certain truths and I don't mean you or me necessarily But i also dont want take myself out there. I think there was this tendency to look at search volume as a super reliable metric that we basically can pray towards, but we forgot behind the searches and this number in whatever SEO tool you use.

[00:59:44] There are actual people with actual roles an actually backgrounds searching for these kind of thing. And i always felt when were auditing clients SEO performances and they tell told us yeah, we have all this cool content. And it doesn't convert. I would always ask them can you describe a person that would search for that? Yeah like what other person could it be in? oftentimes from top of the final content It was yet. This Could Be This Decision Maker but i could also be student A Student That Is Just Like Researching For The Kind Of Stuff That is, I mean like. that's one of the challenges we have on

HubSpot content as well especially with The Academy. Because It has all of buying stages right? You have people who want to get certified in Content Marketing but then you also got people who wanna be certified in HubSpots sales.

[01:00:38] So there are a certain overlap between having actual people and students. To be fair, I always had this vision of that. one student who now goes into HubSpot Academy. In a few years will-be marketing manager somewhere in the company has heard about HubSpots before and is pushing for HubSpOT. That was one strategy we also had in mind especially for the HubSpott Academy. I think it makes total sense, because in the end you just have to show up where people like engage with these topics or their research. But and basically prepare that transition a way we wouldn't even be able to script so perfectly. So i still see this two buckets of peoples We cannot track every single touch point and we are not able to connect.

[01:01:47] Every single measure two direct ROI in this or the next quarter, This is a little bit also taken from your Academy analogy. And then on the other hand I have people that think about media mix modeling and super complicated attribution systems and the new attribution software and we have To be able to measure everything. and if you can't measure it? What would you say, like what would be your advice from your experience also to those people? Like what's the right way forward given the whole AI visibility ecosystem changes. I think that has been a challenge for me personally as well. we have a multi-touch attribution model on our team which makes it hard to justify some efforts always and they will always be.

[01:02:45] Like best example, we have very popular news setters in our regions. News setter subscribers do not really count as leads but we do have quite an overlap of subscribers that will become leads at some point. so how did we attribute the impact on a new center? still like open question. I don't, it's not like... Yeah i can't like one hundred percent answer that but my so we have different reportings. where we can see this is the impact that this new setter within The Different Region has on NetNew Leeds conversion or netnew signup conversion. That being said even if that number was low our main Our main North Star for that new center, for example is not just the way or like the amount of leads and MLR it brings in.

[01:03:47] It's also four. one thing we are an email marketing software as well so We have to have a good newsletter. That this is just one. That's like, we can't just not do it or invest less resources into. We try to optimize for all of the channels where we count one hundred percent attribute real positive R.I., we are trying to automate as much manual effort possible. so that is probably not ideal stage. but what I always advise my team if you spend If you don't see what comes out of it and you spend way more time on this program than you should spent the other one, that brings in more ROI. Then this is probably not the best investment. There's a final topic. I want to get your opinion because we somehow already touched it.

[01:04:45] We talked about AI, we talked about content. So let's talk about AI content. So, and there's a lot of discussion. And also some controversial talk which I generally appreciate because i think it is good that opinions are exchanged in real examples brought to the table. so what your take on AI-generated content? I'm not completely against AI generated content. or at least not one hundred percent AI generated content. Because it's just not fun to read, I don't know! I think content should always be A-I... Or like, Not Should Always Be. But Content Can One Hundred Percent Be AI Assisted So Meaning Research Brief QA. but It Has To Go Through Human Hands and Eyes And Work At All Times. That Is My the goal that I have with content.

[01:05:48] Fun fact, I am...I have my own website where i run a lot of experiments like that on-on my own as well and they um..i Have two articles on their website That are one hundred percent AI

generated And They Are amongst The ones that generate the most citations for my prompts where I think it's a very dangerous field that we're operating in right now to have AI quote, AI is probably not the safest thing. That's why I think if you generate content with AI You always need to read it edited make sure its factual factually correct because Any AI model is hallucinating, especially in the recent months. I think hallucinations have gone up by quite a lot. so not pushing anything out there that you haven't read or seen um...or edited.

[01:06:58] plus don't generate content just for generating content. i think a lot of things that marketers are very easy to do is just generating a ton of content. I've done that myself, especially on my own website just to generate content but always create content like... That's why i say Create Content not Generate. Create content you would want to read as well. it's the same for never send an email to your database if you don't wanna read that e-mail yourself. I'm playing a little devil's advocate. now. If we look at where software engineering has moved to with all the model advancements like cloud code, opus uh four point six four point seven a million contacts window etc. There are more and more people that are transitioning from like an hands-on engineer role to an architect role.

[01:07:55] so they Are conscious about certain decisions. They have to come up themselves deeply through a problem, they have to not only care about how something looks like but what are the implications for infrastructure blah-blah. But then in the end... The actual code is written mostly more and more And I think even Anthropic is sometimes sharing numbers that ninety percent of the code for certain products Is written with Claude Code. Then It's Written by AI. So why shouldn't it be possible? to move towards a content creation process that keeps in mind all the quality assurance and the necessary context, but where the actual word is then not written by us anymore at least to the extent of ninety percent for example should draw from the code example.

[01:08:55] Well did you know? You probably know because otherwise he wouldn't have brought it up. if your right code with Claude, you don't have the copyright on it. It's an open sphere so that applies to content. then as well if it applies any thought that you've put into If You Didn't Create It Yourself ,you Don't Have The Copyright To It Easy As That Does that answer your question and not really, but I think it's an important point. Yeah already thinking about getting someone from the legal space on The podcast to you think about all this copyright implications because my sense would be that the idea of copyright how we have it codified for example in German law is Somehow coming to a limit. And i'm Not saying That Copyright Is not Important.

[01:09:51] i'm Saying It is Important. But as always regulation is way behind technological innovation. So probably there has to be, so I would rather... Who am i? Im not a lawyer! I have lot of lawyers in my family but.. ..I could see an necessary regulatory change that gives me copyright on certain aspects of code or written words That are produced with the help of AI But they're based on my thoughts. It's obviously hard to distinguish But I don't feel like it's right that if people have, for example... If you would've put a lot of ideas in certain tools you built for HubSpot. That you had no ride whatsoever taking aside all the company owns it. but there is not protection on what ever thing you produce because obviously comes from your brain power!

[01:10:44] But i want to argue against this especially content creation or any creative work. The models are trained on existing things so it's not like they come up with anything new and the same applies to code. So if you don't sit down yourself, can you compare this with someone who has done that? Who does their own work in it? Do we have a copy of while half of the work basically is stolen from, and because you didn't do the training yourself. Claude did it for you.". That's like they whole ethic conversation that we should be having in the law sphere when you think about that Because its not comparable if I sit down. So best example my dad a programmer If i sit down And program something

he could have programmed.

[01:11:42] Can I compare myself to him? It's a very important question. I don't have the answer to that, but i agree That it is something we need more about. these implications We often only talk about AI from either like marketing or whatever background what changes and also especially how you framed it How we want this to be handled. So do we think it's the same? does someone? Deserve the same amount of protection or should it be handled differently, I think is very important questions. This is why also started thinking about getting some run Yes podcast from this field but yeah, I agree with you that its It's not a trivial thing And I just always try to challenge our way of thinking and concepts we have from the past that are maybe not a perfect fit anymore for where technology is heading.

[01:12:55] Yeah, love it! Wow That was very deep in the end. Love that. Okay Crazy Who would've thought Traffic burying ceremony, traffic's a funeral? to leadership principles around how to steer teams through change. To AI search experiments and copyrights. love that! The ethical dilemma of AI? So looking at... How long we've already been talking. I hope people enjoy this as much as i'm doing right now but I still want to wrap it up a little bit. And something that i would like to ask you is, what's the biggest misconception or maybe the biggest confusion about AI search? That do keep running into... I think The Biggest one that I see happening every day and I am probably gonna get alot of comments on this. but For me, having this misconception of AO or DO is just SEO.

[01:14:13] That is I think the biggest one because it's not and we spoke about this a little bit earlier. It is true that certain aspects are similar. you have but its different skill set Its different teams working together Full stop. Yeah, I think you have a strong argument and also very smart people in your corner on that not only from Germany and the dark space but also like From The US for example People That Really Lead The Charge In This Field. So Thanks For Sharing That. Now i Have A Final Question Which Giving Copyright And Giving Credits stole or got inspired from Lenny's podcast, but I always say it like that. So shout out to Lenny who is probably a fan of this podcast. What didn't we talk about? That we should have talked about?

[01:15:21] Oh God came super unexpected actually. maybe i did not read the questionnaire till end. sorry you're exposing behind-the-scenes process. I think we did cover a lot of the things. Um, um, i'm thinking We could have done more, um devils advocate? I really enjoyed that in the end. And there's a lot Of Things That There Have Been Discussions Especially Around AO At The Moment That People Are Not Talking About Or That Are Talking about. Maybe One Thing That We Should Touch Upon In Some Shape or Form Or You Can Within Your Podcast is the dangerous behavior that's happening right now in different spheres, where you have a lot of people who say they know all about AEO. And then there are lots of people just don't engage with those conversations because and negative comments because they have a question about it.

[01:16:32] I think that is one of the things that are dangerous right now in having answer engine optimization being this one big topic, all SEOs and content marketers focusing on at the moment. there's a lot of timid behavior In communities where people just afraid to ask We should have touched on that a little bit as well. Yeah, but I don't-I shouldn't not open up now because then we will be here for another hour Probably probably But at least share. quote from the podcast edit with Lily Ray where she said That. So so she talked about humility and he said quote unquote. nobody fully understands how these systems work Not me, not the people at large language model companies. be skeptical of anyone claiming otherwise.

[01:17:35] Invest in the things search engines and LLMs can't take away from you original research proprietary data real expertise brand people actually talk about everything else. is rented land? Yes I one hundred percent agree And i think we should push that message out because a lot of people are

just scared About making doing something wrong. but as Lily said there's nothing you can do wrong with your own data, research and content. The rest is greenfields. Word! Let's conclude the episode. it has been insane. I really enjoyed that. i hope everybody could feel if they listen. we have two final notes. If people want to follow around what's best place for this? We'll put a link in description LinkedIn. Okay, and your website where people can follow your experiments that you're doing?

[01:18:34] That you just mentioned? The website is Märchen Brause which is a fairytale podcast- That's this one! So there are like no summaries on it. but if you're generally interested in old fairy tales... in the original ones. I'm doing a lot of research on it, so little behind-the-scenes... ...I have a degree in literature and my guilty pleasure is going through old fairy tales from finding out these stigmas and all of the stereotypes that happened back then there. And It So Happens That! It's nice to optimize those for SEO or AEO. So cool. Probably For People. So what I would do, for example is go to that site and if i see there's some sort of update or whatever. What is Jenny testing? It could be something she's tinkering on for testing at HubSpot And then can also draw my own conclusions from it.

[01:19:35] Try it out. I also gave a... So, i'm using HubSpot to host that website. so I had the very early bit of the AEO product on it already and there's a lot things that i am testing through That And There is a summary Of It On The HubSpots Community I posted That Yesterday Where You Can See No performance of the website in air search at the moment, but that's also because my queries are a little bit stupid. I have to revise all of my prompts that i'm tracking for machine browser. Okay so cool. The second announcement we have is and we will probably do another episode Before We actually do that. But then we will do our first conference On October. twenty second in Berlin location still TBD, but we have two awesome locations and the final round.

[01:20:39] And you Jenny will be on stage giving a keynote sharing great stuff talking about growth talking about AEO talking what has worked with hasn't worked actual behind-the-scenes looks. this would be great. We will obviously have some speaker announcements, etc. coming out but still for everybody that is a true fan listening to that. if you want like before we have landing page and everything going on. If You Want To Have A Reserved Seat For The Tickets Which Are Obviously Limited So It's Not A Thousand Person Conference. We Will In The End Be A Hundred Seventy Five People. Then Reach Out On LinkedIn And I'll make sure that you get one, but this is super awesome and thanks so much for being part of it.

[01:21:28] Thank You So Much For Having Me! I'm really excited because also until then It's some time where we can probably share a lot more other interesting stuff That We've Tried out so far. Yeah, very much looking forward to that. So I definitely won't miss your keynote. Jenny thanks so much for taking the time today. it has been an awesome recording. this is why we are like almost at ninety minutes but a time flew. um i appreciate that so much and i wish you all the best and your team at HubSpot! And hopefully uh will speak soon about everything there's still to be spoken about. well thank you so much. Thank You so much bye-bye.