



Women of Internet Marketing Introduction

[Search Marketing Gurus](http://www.searchmarketinggurus.com)' owner, editor and chief writer (as well as bottle washer!), Liana “Li” Evans, interviews two women weekly for this interesting series. Designed to shine the spotlight on the great accomplishment of women within all areas of the online marketing industry, the series has become a popular “must read” among all search industry professionals.

The column is published weekly on Wednesdays. If you would like to suggest a woman to be interviewed, please send an email to smg@searchmarketinggurus.com.

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[Women of Internet Marketing Wednesday Part 16](#)

Welcome back to the Women of Internet Marketing Series! After a two week hiatus due to colds and conferences, I'm back with two new great women for you to meet and learn about. Both have been in the industry for about the same amount of time, however they are literally oceans apart.

Before I introduce to women tonight, I'd like to also point out the new section on Search Marketing Gurus. In the navigation below our banner you'll see a link to "[Women of Internet Marketing](#)". That page is a great resource of all the interviews that have been done, as well as links to groups and information about different blogs written by women within in the industry. Shortly after each article is written and posted, I update the PDF versions of the interviews, so feel free to download them.

Now, onto the introductions. Tonight let me introduce you to Dana Todd, and our first "Aussie" interviewee, Sophie Wegat.

Dana Todd



Most people in our industry know Dana Todd by the color of her hair. David Wallace even featured her in his "can you guess who the SEO/SEM is?" picture quiz a few months back. I only knew about Dana as this woman who knew a heck of a lot about Search Ads, and for the longest time never actually met her, so I didn't know about her hair until last year in San Jose. I think that goes to show, her knowledge of the industry is what most people recognize her for.

Dana started out in web design in 1995 and then picked up search marketing in 1996 after realizing that the company they were outsourcing their search work to could be comprising their business. Today, Dana is one of the foremost authorities in our industry and is currently the Executive Vice President of [SiteLab International Inc.](#) She is also one of the founding members of [SEMPO](#) and was it's first president upon formation. Now let me allow you the audience to get to know this wonderful lady a bit more.

Q: Dana, can you give me a little insight into how you came into the Search Marketing Industry?

A: I started out at one of the first interactive agencies on the West Coast, Bien Logic, and we were experimenting with all kinds of online marketing and technologies in those days. We were originally outsourcing SEO to vendor partners in 1996, but after exposure to liability from some aggressive tactics (cloaking and page-jacking), we decided to bring it inhouse to incorporate it into our website development methodology. At the same time, we were buying banner ads on search terms from major engines, and the results were phenomenal. It really was more of an "ah-ha" than any other media buy we'd done online, and even though the early tracking tools were not the greatest, we could track responses that blew away our other ad campaigns. I was a convert! Danny Sullivan asked Catherine Seda and me to speak at the first SES about search banners and Goto.com (the predecessor to Overture), which really were quite new to marketers' budgets in those days. Since



then, things have changed a lot, and I’m glad to have been lucky enough to help evolve the industry into what it is today.

Q: *What’s the major difference between journalism and what you do now?*

A: Advertising comes easier to me, and I find it to be more creative. I did print ads for a while too. I like the immediacy of action that you get with advertising – as a journalist, you never really know what impact your words and articles may have on other people. With advertising, it’s quantifiable and the process is exciting. It’s like art plus mind control (ha ha). Specific to search engine marketing, I love the linguistic aspects of it and the insight into how people really think. I was forced to do a lot of crossword puzzles as a child, for which I’m now grateful because my vocabulary is fairly extensive.

Q: *Most successful industry accomplishment?*

A: Building SiteLab with my wonderful partners Marlene Matheson and Mike ZeMans; we’re a boutique interactive agency that survived the tech recession and came out fighting. The loyalty of our team was astonishing during those dark times. And I guess I can take some partial credit for helping to start SEMPO. I am really proud of the work we did to build our own trade organization to stand for the things we love about this industry, and to help build friendships and businesses worldwide.



Q: *Why do you like/love this industry?*

A: Everyone here is weirder than me. (Just kidding.) No, really - the people in this industry amaze me with their huge brains and hearts. Perhaps due to Danny Sullivan, who encouraged ongoing dialogue and helped build an interactive community that is an inquisitive bunch of genuinely nice people who are almost as interested in sharing and exploring together as they are in hoarding their business models.

Q: *What aggravates you most about this industry?*

A: Ridiculous hype and words like “Web 2.0”.

Q: *You’ve been in this market for quite a while now, what are some of the major changes you’ve seen take place?*

A: I’m on my second bubble, but I will agree with the experts that this time around it seems slightly more stable than last – with rare exceptions, the companies that are being funded and merged now are decent companies with real potential. The biggest difference this time around is Google – not since Amazon has the Internet world seen such a disintermediating colossus, and with significant staying power so far.

Another major change is how people have altered their “information intake” patterns so significantly in the last 10 years. We always hoped for this level of adoption in the early days of the Internet, but I don’t think we foresaw what it would do to newspapers, television and other forms of media that have served to provide both information value and entertainment value. Where will all that money go? In reality, the tail is not efficient – harnessing it all back into a collective enterprise or industry will be nearly impossible. I expect that it’ll be dissipated into a number of channels, and not just all online.



Q: You're a big part of [SEMPO](#), can you explain why you feel this organization is important to our industry?

A: I helped to start the organization with Barb Coll and a small group of people, and subsequently served on its Board and as its President. Jeff Pruitt is our new President, and I will continue to serve on the Board to help support the new officers. SEMPO is important to this industry because it's independent – it's not tied to a publisher agenda, a larger organization agenda, or a personal agenda. We are member driven in our initiatives, and we are focused on issues that serve the broader needs of our collective group. We have many different contingencies in our membership, from small SEM firms in emerging countries to inhouse marketing officers of major brands. We strive to find common ground among us all, and move the resources into place to help.

Our biggest claims to fame are that we've tracked one of the largest research studies in the industry since 2004, and we've recently launched a distance learning program called SEMPO Institute that will help to fill many open positions by training people from entry level to hard-core professional.

Q: What advice would you give for other women starting out in this industry, based on your own experience?

A:

- Be yourself. Believe it or not, I used to act a lot more conservatively in my early career (my hair was a relatively normal shade of red then, and I typically dressed in suits, which was weird to the other Internet folks back in the day). I gingerly started edging back into my punk rock roots a bit, and surprisingly enough the response has been overwhelmingly positive. I'm not going to break out a face full of piercings anytime soon, don't worry; my point is, don't be afraid to be different. Don't worry about consensus. The best ideas were sometimes the ones that the executive committee hated.
- I'd give this same advice to a man, btw. I do find, however, that women typically try to get everyone to agree, or to vote or something. That works in many situations, but it rarely achieves the highest creative goals. You can't be afraid to stand up for your ideas, even if they fail.
- Find a mentor or a client to believe in your ideas, and build your foundation from there. Ideas only go so far, though, so make sure you can back it up with an excellent implementation.
- Admit when you don't know the answers. You won't look like an idiot, I promise. You'll cause more damage if you fake it, because then expectations will be set that you can't live up to.
- Take risks. Fail. Fail really big. Then get up and succeed. Count your failures as proudly as you do your successes, as long as you learned something from the process.
- Always get contract terms in writing!

Q: What's a typical day like for you at SiteLab?

A: Rather blurry, I think. I work as an internal consultant to client teams on both web development and marketing projects. I do some external consulting for clients as well, helping with strategy and large scale search projects, as well as helping to drive the creative process. I eat a lot of popcorn and chocolate.



Q: *Who's your favorite blogger to read?*

A: Believe it or not, I don't follow specific SEM blogs on a regular basis. I usually read them as a response to an email or a news-alert or something, rather than doing the proactive feed-read thing. I do have a secret weakness for the gofugyourself.com blog about horrid celebrity clothes. The two gals who write it are comedy writers, and they absolutely kill me sometimes with their scathing critiques. What's cool is that they're generally not just plain mean or obvious in their comments, but rather take time to craft amazing insults. Takes it to a fine art, like cocktail party gossip in the South.

Q: *Right now, how many women bloggers do you read?*

A: Lots – I don't discriminate in one direction or the other. As I said, I probably read more non-industry blogs than SEM specific ones, but I do try to remain somewhat aware of the various writers out there and what they're saying. Chicks hold their own in the blog world pretty handily, I think.

Alright, now it's that time of the interview where we can be completely silly and fun!

Q: *Joe Morin or Gord Hotchkiss?*

A: Joe for party info, Gord for deep intellectual discussion. Why can't I have both?

Q: *Surely you get comments on the color of your hair, what's the craziest thing anyone's said to you about it?*

A: I typically get "Is that your natural hair color?" at least once a week, but mostly people are complimentary about it. I've had people chase me half a block to compliment me, which is so amazing. I think the weirdest situation is when I'm in a room full of conservative execs and *no one* says anything. You know they're sitting there thinking about it and staring, but they're afraid to mention it.

Q: *Wildest search party you've ever attended?*

A: I think the WebmasterRadio party with the sumo wrestlers at San Jose last year was pretty nutty, although pretty much any WebmasterRadio party is that way. Brandy and Daron always hook it up. And the Marketleap boys threw legendary after-parties back in the day, complete with pole dancing and massive ingestion of drink.

Q: *Who can rank for "I'm a sexy SEO" faster – [Greg Boser](#) or [David Naylor](#)?*

A: I'm betting on Greg, cuz his posse is just a little more sober than Dave's on most days and I think he can pull off a hat trick like that. Although Dave might get a link boost from all his female fans.

You know I'd have a tough time placing bets on that one Dana, DaveN has got FanGirls ya know! ;) *whistles innocently* So now I'll quietly move along to our next featured woman of internet marketing, Sophie Wegat.



Sophie Wegat



This week's 2nd featured woman comes from the "Land Down Under", just outside of Melbourne is where [Sophie Wegat](#) hails from. Unfortunately this is one lady I haven't gotten to meet yet. Maybe one day I'll make it to Australia, so until that time, I'm going to have to settle for the interview.

Sophie is the owner of [Think Prospect](#), which is a web design and search firm that services the Melbourne area and around the world. Sophie started the business back in 1995, and describes the most important part of her job as "*to ensure my clients are not just satisfied with the results but thrilled. I work hard to learn about their business including their processes, goals and priorities.*" Sophie also has her [Think Prospect blog](#), and you can also catch her on [Crea9site Forums](#) where she is an administrator. Her handle there is "sanity", which I'm sure has garnered her a few chuckles here and there. So, let's get to know a little more about Sophie.

Q: Why do you like/love about the search marketing industry?



A: It's a great industry that's always changing, keeps you on your toes and allows you to communicate with a great bunch of people. I love people's ability to share knowledge and ideas. I also love working with clients to come up with a solution to their needs and implement it in a successful manner. Helping them navigate such a "new world" is a great feeling.

Q: Alright so lets take this in reverse, tell me what aggravates you most about this industry?

A: Trying to keep up is not always easy! It would also be nice to live nearer the action.

Q: So, Sophie, how'd you get into Search Marketing?

A: I fell into it really. I started out designing websites and as a part of that also worked with my clients to make sure their website was being found by those we wanted. I studied log files, discovered search engines and that was that.

Q: What do you consider your most successful industry accomplishment?

A: Hmmmm I really couldn't narrow it down to one. I treat each happy client and successful website as an accomplishment. I also really appreciate the knowledge I've gained, people I have met and the friendships I have made.

Q: Do you think being a web designer and experienced SEO gives you an advantage over just web designers or just SEO's?

A: As a web designer I think having experience with search engines and SEO is a huge advantage. I don't deal with the big end of town and a lot of my clients don't differentiate between building a website and having it rank in the search engines. They just want to go to one person who does it all. Being able to build websites in a search friendly manner from scratch makes that much easier. As far as SEO's go I think any knowledge with design, usability and code is a bonus.



Q: What differences do you see between optimizing for Australia and optimizing for the US?

A: As far as actual optimisation goes it's pretty much the same. The US is the default for the world online - so if you're targeting Australia (or another country) you have to be a lot more country specific.

There are also more variables - are searches using a US version of a search engine or an Australian one? Are they selecting "pages from Australia" or the whole web? Where is the website hosted - it's better to have it hosted in the country you are targeting.

I do find keyword research a tad frustrating. You're not really able to drill down to see detailed Australian searches - I find an AdWords campaign often works better.

Australia, as a relatively small country, often doesn't see advancements for some time. For example Google Local was first launched just a few weeks ago.

On the positive in many markets it's no way near as competitive as the US - yet. ;)

Q: You're an admin on Cre8asite Forums and quite active there, what do you think sets this forum apart from others?

A: From the first time I visited cre8site I was excited by the holistic approach they took to building websites. This was back in 2002 and believe me most forums were focused on SEO, SEO and SEO. I also loved the way people interacted. We've always approached the forums as like being guests in Kim's home. You treat your guests well and in return they treat the hosts and the place with respect. It works well.

Q: What advice would you give for other women starting out in this industry, based on your own experience?

A: Gosh, that's a hard one. I think to start with you have to be motivated. There's so much to learn, you have to be motivated to put in the hard yards reading, learning and most importantly experimenting. It takes time and effort so you need to be prepared to be patient. Making friends and networking can also help a lot. Make sure you contribute and give back as well as get help from others. I definitely wouldn't be where I am now if not for the friendships I've made. Finally don't be afraid to promote yourself - this seems to be something that comes a lot more naturally to men and I know it's something I really struggle with.

Q: What's a typical day like for you at your company, Think Prospect?

A: No two days are the same but usually I start by catching up with email, blogs, forums and the like. I then move on to doing the actual work, preparing quotes etc. I'm also trying to schedule more time in to blog and market the business - which like I said above I've not always done. We're a home based business but don't generally do the dressing gown thang. I try to keep business hours and separate it from my family life. Sometimes easier said than done.

Q: Who's your favorite blogger to read?

A: I don't have a favourite but I always look forward to posts by Rand Fishkin, Kim Krause Berg, Rae Hoffman, Peter Da Vanzo and Seth Godin. I'm funny with RSS, I'll subscribe to hundreds of blogs



then cull them ruthlessly only to resubscribe. I'm a bit anal and can't stand to see lots of unread posts. Sad I know.

Q: Right now, how many women bloggers do you read?

A: Well you of course, Li *suck* [*Li comment: Of coursing sucking up is allowed folks! ;)*]. Plus Kim Krause Berg, Rae Hoffman, Miriam Ellis-Loraditch, Donna Fontenet, Diane Virgil, Debra Mastaler, Kalena Jordan and many more who I forget right now. To be honest I don't differentiate between women and men. I either like em or I don't.

Now for some fun! Yes even the "Aussie" doesn't get out of this. I was going to ask her if she says Goo' Day and "Ozzie Ozzie Ozzie Oy Oy Oy!" but I opted to find out about Vegemite. ;)

Q: Bill Slawski or Ammon Johns?

A: I'm greedy so both!

Q: You're stranded on a desert island and can only have 3 Search Professionals with you, (male or female) – who would you choose and why?

A: Well Peter Da Vanzo as he'll manage to rustle up some drinks, Bill Slawski as I imagine he'd be really practical and Scottie Claiborne for a damn good time.

Q: Do you eat the vegemite stuff?

A: Love the vegemite! On hot buttered toast it is the best - but not too much - just wave the lid over the toast as my mum says.

Q: Funniest thing that's happened to you on Cre8site?

A: I suspect there's been far too many to name one. On a previous forum I moderated everyone thought I was male at first....

Well Sophie, I certainly wasn't confuse! :)

Thank you, Sophie and Dana for taking the time to allow me to interview you both, this was a real treat. Stop back next week, where we'll have our 17th installment in this series. Thanks to our luncheon, I'm stocked up for a lot of weeks to come!