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When you shop locally you support an entire community not just a business.

From the CEO's Pen by Jack Llewellyn, Chamber CEO

Spread Seeds of Kindness and See What Grows

Think of the last time a stranger made you smile.

How long did you carry that memory with you?

Today's world could use small acts of kindness to remind us that we have more in common than not. Sometimes, the smallest things have the biggest impact on others. Like tiny seeds carried on the wind, small acts of kindness have the power to spread far and wide, rooting in places we may never see, but the impact is no less real.

A few years ago, the Chamber hosted author Barbara Glanz for workshops on the power of kindness in customer service, and her lessons have stuck with me. As the hustle and bustle of summer brings the steady buzz of life to our town, I am reminded of the importance of sharing kindness with others and how it can impact a community.

In her best-selling book, *The Simple Truths of Service*, Glanz tells the story of Johnny the Bagger, who painstakingly printed and cut out notes of compassion and kindness that he would place into each customer's bag at the checkout line of the grocery store where he worked. This "small" token of kindness completely transformed his workplace's culture, and Johnny soon had a string of customers three times as long as the other checkout stands. The customers were so eager to be in his presence that they were more than happy to wait a little longer. While Johnny's act was quite simple, it had a profound impact.

As consumers, we have become increasingly engrossed in our screens, and we are becoming more

disconnected from each other as a result. Not that it makes any of us bad people. We just aren't entirely present. The story of Johnny the Bagger illustrates our tendency to gravitate towards compassion as an important part of being human.

So what does it take to be a Johnny in our world today?

The answer is the same as it has always been. Practice small acts of kindness every day and see what grows. Help a lost tourist with a smile, thank the front-line person, take the time to look each other in the eye, and say, "How are you doing today?" You never know what another person is experiencing; your kindness could be the difference.

This month I want to challenge each of you to see how you can implement acts of kindness in your daily routine – whether towards a customer, a server, your best friend, or a stranger – and see how their face lights up. I guarantee it won't be forgotten by you or them. And the next time someone makes you feel good with a simple act, turn around and pass it along to someone else. Our community and the world will be better for it.

If you want to see what we are up to at the Chamber this month, visit our website, durangobusiness.org, and check out our events calendar to see what programs or workshops you would like to learn about. If you haven't attended one yet, our staff of friendly professionals welcomes you with open arms and is here to assist.



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chamber@durangobusiness.org

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Nominations are now open!

Now's the time to start thinking about next year. Nominate an individual, non-profit or business that has made a positive impact on our community! [Nominate here](#)



Ribbon Cuttings – Coming Up – Celebrate these Businesses!

Find more information [here](#).

Mon, July 24 5:15pm Ribbon Cutting & Grand Opening

AIS Medicare & More

Thurs July 27 5:15pm Ribbon Cutting & Grand Opening

Blackmore Group

Mon July 31 5:15pm Ribbon Cutting & Grand Opening

ParkerDane Salon & Boutique

Thurs. Aug 10 5:15pm Ribbon Cutting at **Manna Soup Kitchen** to celebrate their new outdoor dining pavilion

Upcoming Programs & Events!

Find more information [here](#).

Wed. July 19 4pm **Member Open Office Hours – any questions, join us!**

Thurs. July 20 5-7pm **Business After Hours at Happy Pappy's Pizza on North Main**

Wed. July 26 noon **Lunch & Learn Workshop Creating Customer Experiences**

Tues. Aug. 1 8am **Coffee Connections with Durango Jin Shin Jyutsu**

Thurs. Aug 17 5-7pm **Business After Hours at Toh-Atin Gallery**

Wed. Aug 23 noon-1pm **Elevate Your Brand Lunch & Learn Workshop**

What's Happening with our Chamber Members

July 22 Rio Grande's Narrow Gauge K-28

Locomotives

July 24 – 30 Summer Hayride Farm Tour with Jack-a-lope Acres

July 30 Ice Cream Social at the Gable House, benefitting the Animas Museum & La Plata County Historical Society

Aug 4-6 Pino Nuche Indigenous Art Market & Juried Show

Aug 4- Sept 4 Flower Festival at Jack-a-lope Acres

Aug 5 Fort Lewis College Skyhawks Club Casino Night

Aug 14-20 Summer Hayride Farm Tour with Jack-a-lope Acres

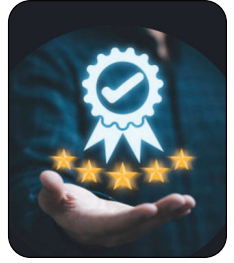
Aug 16 Annual Employment Law Update with DAHRM

Sept 20 La Plata County Economic Development Alliance Summit

Do you want your program or event listed? It's free through your member online portal. Questions, ask Hannah@durangobusiness.org or call (970) 247-0312 ext 2

Register Now for the Next Workshop on Creating Extraordinary Customer Experiences Wed, Jul. 26 from noon to 1pm

Join Dan Hurdle, former CEO/GM for numerous service & sales verticals, including food service, health care, education and financial services. Dan will be presenting an impactful workshop on providing excellent customer service. Learn how to inspire team members to create the highest levels of motivation, engagement and loyalty in the frontline workforce. Sponsored by TBK Bank. Only \$10/members.



[Reserve your spot](#)

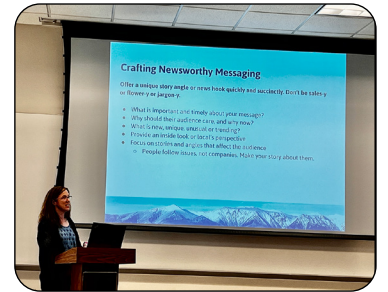
Get to Know the CEO with Kerry Siggins, StoneAge Waterblast Tools

Kerry Siggins shared her story and how she launched her career as the CEO of StoneAge. Congratulations to Kerry on being named the 2023 Entrepreneur of the Year for the Mountain West Region by Ernst & Young. Stay tuned for the next Get to Know the CEO speaker session!



June Lunch & Learn Workshop on PR Strategies for Small Businesses

Theresa Blake Graven with Treehouse Communications offered helpful tips on how to create an effective PR plan and measure results. Sponsored by TBK Bank.



Make Connections through the Chamber Diplomat Program!

The Chamber Diplomats help support the business community by assisting with member retention, recruitment and engagement. They also meet key business members, build relationships, help celebrate accomplishments, and enhance community involvement. There are a few spots available for 2023! Find out more [here](#).



Receive Referrals with Leads Group Monthly Meetings!

Want more qualified business referrals? Join the Chamber's Leads Group which meets once a month with individual sessions set up beyond the group. Each group offers an exclusive seat from different industry sectors, and all industries are welcome! Limited space is available in the Chamber's two Leads Programs. Learn more [here](#).





Join Pappy & the Chamber July 20!

July 20th Business After Hours is hosted by Happy Pappy's Pizza & Wings from 5 to 7pm at 2411 Main Avenue. Enjoy food, beverage & door prizes, plus a special monthly prize from Star Liquors!

[Pre-register online & SAVE!](#)



Union Social House

adds New Food Trucks to their location at 3062 Main Ave.



Berkshire Hathaway

Home Services

opened a location at 842 Main Ave.



Featured Leadership La Plata Alumnus: Emily Lashbrooke

What do you do for a living? I work in Economic Development.

What LLP class were you in?
Class of 2021-22



What do you love about LLP? I love the connection to my class and learning all about La Plata County

What do you like about the chamber/what does the chamber do for you? The chamber provides the opportunity to network with other businesses and I love the Lunch and Learns.

What do you love about Durango? All the city activities and yet I live in the Mountains.

Fun fact about you? I owned and ran a restaurant for 20 years and made all my own pies.

Interested in participating in LLP? Learn more about LLP plus how to become involved in LLP committees. DurangoBusiness.org/LLP

Featured Chamber Diplomat: Renee Bruch

What is your business?
Animas Signature Signs

How long have you been a DIP? A year and a half

How long have you been a DIP?
Currently serving my second go round as a Diplomat. Total 11 years



Why did you become a DIP? As a fairly new community member and business owner, I remember how difficult it was to meet people and feel connected with the area. I joined the Diplomats to get to know other business owners who may be struggling in the same way and be a helping hand. I am happy to offer professional advice on marketing and signs, connect like business owners who might be of assistance to each other, help businesses and individuals to navigate their way within the chamber and the community or just be a friend for someone to feel comfortable talking with. The chamber is a perfect avenue for all of those efforts and being a Diplomat is a great way to have more intimate relationships with other chamber, business, and community members.

Fun fact about you: I enjoy training animals. I grew up on a horse's back and competed with the US Pony Club through my teens. I not only trained my own horses for competition, but I also worked with a neighbor training their Percheron/Thoroughbreds when I was in grade school. I don't often ride any longer, so now I enjoy working with Rex, my husband Travis and my black lab mix. Rex knows multiple tricks by voice as well as hand commands.

Learn more about the Diplomat Program [here](#).

YPOD Feature of the Month: Rebekah Click YPOD Board Member

What do you do? I work for Durango Motor Company as a Social Media and Communications Specialist.



Why did you want to be a YPOD board member? I wanted to become a board member to learn more about Durango and connect with other peers within the professional community here. I also wanted to grow professionally through workshops, business tours, and more.

How do you like to spend your time? I like to do almost any kind of crafting, hiking, golfing, and watching Lord of the Rings Extended Editions Trilogy on repeat.

Information about the YPODs can be found [here](#).



Total Event Attendees

686

1st Qtr

857

2nd Qtr

Business After Hours



215

1st Qtr

231

2nd Qtr

Coffee Connections



22

1st Qtr

59

2nd Qtr

Lunch & Learn Workshops



103

1st Qtr

74

2nd Qtr

Business Facts Views

12,734

1st Qtr

13,164

2nd Qtr

Monthly Newsletter Views

3,072

1st Qtr

4,913

2nd Qtr

Radio Interviews



32

1st Qtr

24

2nd Qtr

Website Page Views

23K

1st Qtr.

20K

2nd Qtr.

Reference USA Downloads



12K

1st Qtr

35K

2nd Qtr



188 Diplomat Hours



102 YPOD

(Young Professional of Durango)



144 LLP Events



Facebook
Followers

4.2K



Email
Subscribers

2.5K



Instagram
Followers

2.3K



Email
Open Rate

47%

PLUS

Ribbon Cuttings 9

Meet the CEO Attendees 60

Eggs & Issues Attendees 148

City Council Forum 47

HR Workshop 99

Clean Day 100

Girls Gone Golfing 110

Business Connection

Durango Business Improvement District

Tim Walsworth, Executive Director

By Sara Lynn Valentine

The mission of Durango Business Improvement District, better known as BID, is to promote and support businesses downtown and on North Main. BID is funded with a small, 2 mill levy-property tax paid by approximately 400 commercial properties that are located within the district. "This funding allows us to work on behalf of every business in the district," says executive director Tim Walsworth. "Unlike the Chamber, we don't have members. Rather, we have constituents." BID was created in 1997 via a private election. Constituents in the district assessed the mill levy on themselves, through 2025.



What does BID do to help property and business owners in the district? "The services and programs we provide fit into six buckets," Tim says. "Bucket One is marketing, which includes promotions to get people into downtown and North Main businesses." The second bucket is communication. BID provides accurate, brief and timely information for busy business owners - for example, notification of a street closure that could affect the day's business - or details about an upcoming promotion that business owners can benefit from. The third bucket is events. BID directly manages four annual events: the San Juan Brewfest (August), a fundraiser for United Way; the Balloon Glow (October); Downtown Children's Halloween (in partnership with the Durango Chamber); and Singing With Santa, Durango's popular holiday kickoff on the day after Thanksgiving.

These events held within the district attract people directly to BID businesses; but Tim makes it a point to also actively support events in Durango-at-large, because anything that



brings people together in positive ways benefits all Durango businesses. The fourth bucket is visitor Information. This includes the downtown Ambassador program. BID employs friendly



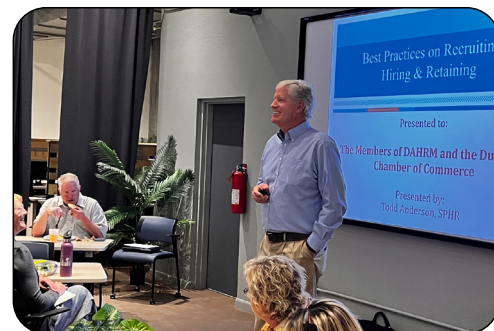
locals to wander downtown and answer any questions tourists (or locals) might have, and produces an annual map and business directory that are available to the public via printed brochures plus signage placed at Buckley Park and at the train depot. BID is also a partner in the Durango Welcome Center, which opened in 2012. Bucket Five is beautification: BID partners with the city to find roughly seventy businesses to host and maintain the hundred or so beautiful flower barrels seen all over downtown in summer. And BID partners with the Chamber every Memorial weekend for Downtown Clean Day, recruiting a hundred or so volunteers to spit and polish up before summer kicks off.

The final bucket is advocacy. BID monitors roughly fifteen public meetings (City Council, the Design Review Board and the Planning Commission, for instance) a month. BID stays current with programs and plans various boards are discussing and recommending to the city. When decisions are relevant to constituents, BID weighs in. "Sometimes they listen and sometimes they don't," Tim says. "It's BID's job to know what's coming and to watch out for our businesses. We are the protectors of downtown and the promoters of North Main." With regard to North Main, BID is supporting development and redevelopment of the North Main corridor, with the goal of seeing more restaurants and more retail. "We want to diversify it and open it up for everybody," Tim says.

BID has two websites that are great resources for events and activities in Durango. For detailed information on events, DowntownDurango.org/Events. For shopping, restaurants, activities, anything going on downtown, check out HeartofDurango.com - a microsite for that person who's heading downtown and wants to know what's going on. To learn more about BID, visit DowntownDurango.org or call 970-375-5068. You can reach Tim at timw@downtowndurango.org.

HR Workshop On Hiring, Firing and Retaining

Thank you to [The Leavitt Group](#) for providing lunch and hosting our featured speaker, Todd Anderson with Platinum HR who shared beneficial HR information to more than 60 individuals. The Chamber continues to partner with the [Durango Area Human Resource Managers](#) organization to bring businesses helpful HR information to staff and business owners. Watch for more sessions: August 16, the Annual Employment Law Update, and November 9th Ask a Lawyer. [Learn more here.](#)



Supporting Durango's Business Community!

The Chamber, in partnership with the Durango area Association of Realtors and the La Plata Energy Council formed a governmental affairs coalition that participates in meetings and monitors local and state policies and legislation. Each organization educates, supports or opposes issues as they are related to each of their membership organizations.



If you are interested in learning the policies and legislation that the Legislative Affairs Coalition reviews, see the [here](#).



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NEW! Value-Based Memberships

The Durango Chamber is now offering value-based memberships with the ability to choose what works best for your business. The previous structure was a “fair share” model, based on the number of employees with 15 total membership levels. The Chamber has been working on this change for several years, and hasn’t altered its structure in 10+ years, nor has it changed pricing in 5 years. The current 15 levels are being simplified to 7 and all members are being offered a choice of what’s best for them.

The new Value-Based Membership Structure allows business owners to determine what’s important in their partnership with the Chamber, what their needs are, and how they want to take a leadership role in the business community. The Chamber is also making it easier by featuring investment payments via check or credit card. Payments

can be scheduled as frequently as monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, or annually. Some benefits are a la carte and pay as you go, so businesses can still utilize marketing, advertising, networking, branding, and sponsorship opportunities, even if it’s not included in the membership level.



The transition began in January 2023, and the Chamber works on a rolling 12-month year, so member anniversary months remain the same.

If you have questions, please contact the Chamber at (970) 247-0312 ext 2.



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Tuning Out the Noise: What's Distracting Workers and Efforts to Reclaim the Workday

Disorganization and Online Distractions Top the List

Latest Results from The Harris Poll

Barrages of meetings, emails and online distractions eat away at workforce productivity, and the majority of U.S. employers say they are working to eliminate time wasters to help employees feel more in control of their time.

This is according to a recent survey from The Harris Poll commissioned by Express Employment Professionals.

Nearly 7 in 10 U.S. hiring managers (68%) report their company is actively identifying and/or eliminating “time wasters” (i.e., behaviors, obligations, and other aspects that may waste time in a workday) from their employees’ days. Companies doing so report the most common items they are identifying/eliminating include disorganization (44%), online distractions (44%), unnecessary tasks (such as approval processes and reporting) (42%), interruptions (39%) and unnecessary meetings (38%).

By eliminating some of the “time wasters” in a workday, employees may be able to feel more in control of their time.

A strong majority of hiring managers (87%) say their company has taken actions to ensure employees feel more in control. Communicating the importance of work/life balance (42%), offering flexible work hours (42%), offering remote work options (34%) and providing tools to help employees organize tasks/projects (34%) are among the ways companies are attempting to help employees reclaim their time.

Employed Americans concur, as more than 9 in 10 (94%) say companies should take steps to help employees feel more in control. In their opinion, this includes offering flexible work hours (63%), remote work options (51%) and communicating the importance of work/life balance (50%).

Today's workforce has so many factors fighting for its attention that it makes sense to implement tactics to increase focus and productivity; but it must be done mindfully, according to Express Employment International CEO Bill Stoller.

“Successful companies are ones where employees are engaged and feel valued,” he said. “Once that foundation is in place, these workers will buy into a culture of



efficiency because they believe in a higher purpose for their employment.”

Survey Methodology

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between Dec. 1 and Dec. 15, 2022, among 1,002 U.S. hiring decision-makers (defined as adults ages 18+ in the U.S. who are employed full-time or self-employed, work at companies with more than one employee, and have full/significant involvement in hiring decisions at their company). Data were weighted where necessary by company size to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within + 3.2 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

The Durango Express office is located at 321 So Camino Del and serves the Four Corners area. Local businesses and applicants are encouraged to stop by, visit ExpressPros.com/durangoco or call (970) 403-8780.

Cow Girls Gone Golfing – June 2, 2023!

SAVE THE DATE! Friday, June 7, 2024

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and Sky Ute Casino Resort



[More photos here!](#)

La Plata County Extension: Health Tip of the Month by Nicole Clark

When your bowels and diet disagree, learn from a low-FODMAP diet

Presently showcased under farmers' market stands and your local grocer, you'll find an array of seasonal produce. The show's stars include apricots*, beets, greens, broccoli*, cabbage*, cauliflower*, carrots, cherries*, peaches*, potatoes, strawberries, tomatoes and summer squash*. Delightful! So long as you aren't affected by irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

The name kind of says it all. [IBS](#) is the name of a mysterious and poorly understood GI complaint. It consists of abdominal discomfort (bloating) and abnormal bowel movements, typically 1) diarrhea, 2) constipation, 3) alternating, or 4) undefined with varied symptoms. Urgency to use the bathroom, sense of incomplete bowel movements and discomfort take an emotional toll and affect quality of life.

What's clear is food acts as a trigger (or for the optimist, food is therapy). [Stress](#), irregular eating patterns, caffeine, dietary fats, spicy foods and alcohol may also increase the severity of symptoms. However, current studies find a weak association between the latter factors and severity.

The first line of defense then, is diet. The diet with demonstrated superiority in symptom reduction is the low-FODMAP diet.

In summary, [FODMAP's](#) are short-chain carbohydrates (oligosaccharides, disaccharides and monosaccharides) with poor absorbability, which makes them easily fermented ("F") by gut bacteria. They also include polyols ("P") which are sugar alcohols found in some fruits, vegetables and artificial sweeteners. Poor absorbability allows gut microbes to ferment these carbohydrates resulting in bloating. It's worsened by the osmotic effect of these foods causing fluid accumulation.

Did you look at the list of FODMAP foods? There are many. Avoidance can feel discouraging and unattainable to follow. It's important to note, a low-FODMAP diet is not forever. Doing so may lead to malnutrition.

Here's how to start a short-term elimination diet. 1) Remove all high-FODMAP foods for 4 - 8 weeks (to the best of your ability), 2) gradually reintroduce high-

FODMAP foods within one food group, 3) document your symptoms, what you ate and how much, 4) remove food groups you just challenged, 5) reintroduce another food group, continuing documentation. It's a bit of trial and correction, but eventually, you'll know your triggers and tolerable dose.



What about probiotics, can they help with IBS? Some studies show IBS sufferers have low counts of *Lactobacillus* sp. and *Bifidobacterium* sp. However, there is insufficient evidence related to exact species, combination of species, dosage and duration to make supplement recommendations. [Clinical trials](#) are in progress, so stay tuned!

In the meantime, connect with a qualified healthcare provider and/or registered dietitian to help guide you through the initial phases of the low-FODMAP elimination diet.

*High FODMAP foods, to name a few.

References are available upon request. Email nicole.clark@colostate.edu

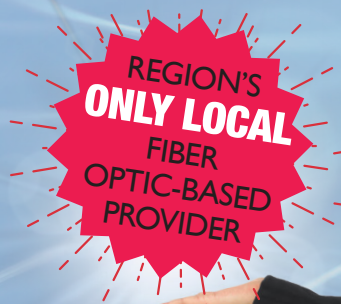
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Nicole Clark, RDN
Family and Consumer Science Educator
Colorado State University Extension/La Plata County

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AWAKEN YOUR ADVENTURE



LLP Monthly Focus: Let Go and Be Free.

By Stacy Reuille-Dupont, StudioB



Ahhh, the 4th of July.... The time of year we celebrate our collective freedom as a nation. During this holiday month, celebrate aspects of freedom in your leadership style alongside the birth of our nation.

This is a great time of year to build our personal authenticity, set goals to be fully ourselves in all relationships, and let go of judgments designed to keep you small and in line with societal rules. Adopting authenticity and letting go of that which no longer serves you will increase your effectiveness at home and at work.

As you sit by the water, cabin porch, that big tree, or backyard kiddie pool raising nothing more than your glass, celebrate your freedom. Consider how you engage in freedoms that allow you to bring the best parts of yourself to your relationships at home and at work.

First, think about the goals you have been reaching for. Are there any that have become stagnant and outdated? Get rid of them – free up your focus.

Are your goals really reflecting where you want to go and who you want to be? If not, lose them with the next drop of condensation as it drips off your glass. Free up your conscience.

Do you feel guilty about your progress, direction, sacrifices, or another idea surrounding your authentic expression of yourself because others are uncomfortable with your courage to live fully as yourself? In my opinion, this brand of guilt is toxic, so chuck it, and begin to free up your shoulders, the place many of us hold tension and guilt.

As your shoulders loosen, roll them back a few times and then forward a few, follow that with some shrugs, and finally roll them up, back, and down into their natural alignment. As you do this, you'll open your chest and free your breath. Enjoy the feeling of power in your aligned, authentic posture.

Take a deep breath. Feel your chest expand and your body respond as the oxygen penetrates your cells and you activate your relaxation response. Free up your mind and let go of all those thoughts that keep repeating in your head just causing fear and worry. Let go of anxiety and just be.



Freedom is all about just being. Relax and let go of all “shoulds” and “coulds” and free up your schedule. Feel your skin relax and rest as you free your body and allow space for all parts of you to relax in kind.

Don't worry about places you would like to change or see differently in the mirror, toss the ideal and free your expectations. Accept who you are today for all your greatness.

Freedom, it rolls off your tongue nice and even. Bask in the ease of the word and let it become your motto for the day.

Do not get caught in the mind game of how difficult it is to let go of those thought patterns and pre-conceived notions, those pesky ideals of who and how you should be.

This month allow, yourself the pleasure of being just as you are, today, in this moment, without “shoulds,” “coulds,” and “have-tos.”

Keep the thoughts of openness and options flowing through your head, and make it clear worry, fear, and negativity are not welcome to linger and sour your day of wonderful, sweet freedom bliss.

As our favorite month for lounging progresses, use this time to let go and create your own authenticity and freedom. Then watch yourself, along with your relationships and life build into something sweet and delicious. Just like freedom feels.

Author: Stacy Reuille-Dupont, PhD, LAC, CPFT, CNC - [Learn More About Me](#). She owns [Studio B](#) a place to Create.Your.Self. We are passionate about helping people create a vibrant life using psychology and physiology.

How AI is Revolutionizing Search Engine Optimization for Small Businesses

Periodically, the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) gurus come out and tell everyone some <insert noun> is changing SEO forever. Add that to the nearly constant adjustments search engines are making to their algorithms and hitting the moving target of organic ranking success becomes as impossible as winning a giant stuffed animal at a carnival. Sure, you see it happen on occasion but never to you.

This article is going to tell you that artificial intelligence (AI) will forever change SEO. We know. You've heard claims like this before but this time it's true. Because for once we're leveraging machine learning against the machine. It's a war of the alphabet AI versus SEO and here's why it's changing the search landscape forever:

AI Takes on SEO

SEO has long been a critical component of digital marketing strategies for small businesses. Businesses have paid experts a lot of money to optimize their website's content and structure to improve its visibility on search engine results pages (SERPs) and attract organic traffic. In recent years, SEO has undergone significant changes due to the rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning technologies. In this blog post, we will explore what you need to know to stay ahead in the game and score a few wins in organic traffic.

Smarter Keyword Research

Keywords are the foundation of SEO, and AI is making keyword research smarter and more effective. With AI-powered tools, small businesses can now analyze vast amounts of data and identify high-performing keywords with precision. These tools can also provide insights into user intent, helping businesses optimize their content to better match search queries and deliver relevant results. AI-driven keyword research can save time and effort while helping small businesses target the right keywords and improve their SEO strategies.

Future thought: If you've been in the digital marketing world and watched organic traffic drop off, algorithm change after algorithm change, you may be wondering what smarter keyword research means for those wily search engines. If every company has tools available to it to maximize keywords, then how does one company rank higher than another? (The old "if everything is urgent, nothing is urgent" idea. If everything is machine optimized, nothing is machine optimized.") That is yet to be determined, but one thing that does become apparent is that businesses that are not optimizing for keywords using AI may be at a disadvantage.

Enhanced Content Creation

Content is king in SEO, and AI is revolutionizing content creation for small businesses. AI-powered content generation tools can analyze user behavior, search patterns, and competitor data to generate high-quality, relevant, and engaging content. These tools can also help optimize content for SEO, including optimizing headlines, meta tags, and other on-page elements. This allows small businesses to produce content more efficiently and effectively, keeping up with the ever-increasing demand for fresh and engaging content.

The "ahem" moment: AI creates amazing work and can help small businesses do a whole lot more with less. But it's a mistake to think it's ready to go out the door the minute it's created. Think of it as a cupcake without icing and sprinkles. Yes, it's good but with a little extra flourish, it can be amazing.

Improved User Experience

User experience (UX) is a critical factor in SEO, and AI is playing a significant role in enhancing UX for small businesses. AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants can provide personalized and real-time support to website visitors, improving engagement and satisfaction. Machine learning algorithms can analyze user behavior and preferences to offer personalized recommendations, improving user experience and increasing the chances of conversion.

But what does that have to do with SEO and rankings? AI-driven UX improvements can help small businesses create a more user-friendly website, resulting in better SEO performance.

Another "ahem" moment: AI is a broad term that encompasses many abilities and a lot of software companies are racing to add AI to their platforms because it's sexy. For instance, your e-mail marketing platform probably recently rolled out a copy creator. Don't assume they're all capable of the things we're referencing in this article. Some AI companies are producing enterprise software that can do everything short of predicting the future based on your customer's past behavior. That free addition to your already free newsletter software probably doesn't.



Enhanced Search Results

AI is also transforming the way search results are presented to users, and this has implications for small businesses. Google's AI-powered algorithm updates, such as RankBrain, are increasingly focusing on delivering more relevant and personalized search results. This means that small businesses need to optimize their websites for [rich snippets](#), [featured snippets](#), and other types of content that are prominently displayed on SERPs. By creating content that is more likely to be featured in these enhanced search results, small businesses can improve their visibility and drive more traffic to their websites.

Future thought: Rich snippets and featured snippets have been around for a while now and many of us have been trying to pin the tail on that donkey by creating blog posts in a format similar to abstracts but instead of an executive summary we use a bulleted list of what the article conveys. Again, if everything is optimized this way then it becomes the new norm, not a differentiating factor.

Advanced Data Analysis

Data analysis is a crucial aspect of SEO, and AI is enabling small businesses to analyze large volumes of data with greater speed and accuracy. AI-powered analytics tools can provide in-depth insights into website performance, user behavior, and other key SEO metrics. These insights can help small businesses identify patterns, trends, and opportunities to optimize their SEO strategies. By leveraging AI for data analysis, small businesses can make data-driven decisions and continuously improve their SEO efforts.

Still another "ahem" moment: this will involve leaning into the technology, learning what it can do, analyzing it, and applying it. It will also be an investment. These types of insights aren't going to be free. Factoring this into your future budget is a wise expenditure.

Local SEO Optimization

For small businesses that rely on local customers, AI is also transforming local SEO optimization. AI-powered tools can help small businesses optimize their online presence for local search, including managing business listings, monitoring reviews, and analyzing local search trends. This can help small businesses improve their visibility in local search results, attract more local customers, and gain a competitive edge in their local market.

AI is changing the SEO landscape for small businesses in significant ways. From smarter keyword research and content creation to improved user experience and advanced data analysis, AI is empowering small businesses to optimize their SEO strategies and stay ahead in the ever-evolving digital landscape. Embracing AI-powered tools and technologies can help your small business optimize its efforts in many areas. Of course, we could also be putting our brains on cruise control and paving the way for machines to become sentient. But if it helps you achieve first-page search result rankings, isn't it worth it?

Christina Metcalf works with small businesses, chambers of commerce, and business professionals who want to make an impression and increase their customer/member base. She loves road trips, hates exclamation points, and is always looking for the perfect quaint beach town that no one has ever heard of. LinkedIn: @christinagsmith



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