



Best SEO Campaign Finalist

Campaign: Nebo Helps P.L.A.Y Save SEO... and Puppies

Nominee: Stephanie Wallace, Nebo

Why this nominee:

P.L.A.Y. is an online retailer of high-end pet beds and accessories designed with pets, people, and the planet in mind. The company's story stems from their desire to create a better dog bed – with higher quality, better design, and more aesthetically appealing products that are also made from sustainable materials. But they don't want to just sell dog beds, they strive to improve the lives and welfare of dogs – and all animals – all over the world so that each has the opportunity to feel the love they deserve.

In 2015, P.L.A.Y. launched a redesigned website that highlighted the retailer's personality and cause in a crowded, low-end marketplace. As with any site relaunch, P.L.A.Y. experienced a temporary dip in organic rankings that limited organic visibility. In order to preserve the remaining SEO value and improve organic visibility, P.L.A.Y. sought to grow their digital marketing initiatives in 2016 through a comprehensive search engine optimization campaign designed to reach new customers and drive brand affinity among repeat customers.

STRATEGY

P.L.A.Y. wanted to connect with people who shared the same world-view as them -- those who considered the lifestyle and décor of their pets as an extension of their own lifestyle. Many of their competitors take a price-cutting approach to their décor products like cheap commodities, but P.L.A.Y. wanted to raise the bar. By nature, P.L.A.Y. is a more expensive option compared to traditional dog beds sold by big box retailers. What sets P.L.A.Y. apart is that they offer high quality products that are stylish and put Mother Earth first, while also staying true to their cause by giving back through their Warm Bellies initiative, the Rescue Pledge, and partnerships with PetFinder, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), and more.

It was Nebo's mission to help reach new customers and create the foundation of this brand loyalty among pet owners through the website. After the redesigned site launched organic visibility decreased, as with any relaunch, and to this end, P.L.A.Y. had very specific goals for search engine optimization efforts in 2016:

Build domain authority of the new site while preserving organic visibility and growing visibility for new keyword themes focused on the durability of the products

Grow organic traffic by recapturing top organic ranking positions that had been displaced by retailers and resellers

Capitalize on organic traffic related to new products and verticals such as beds and toys for cats as well as accessories for pet owners

Leverage the organic landscape to educate potential customers about the benefits of P.L.A.Y.'s stylish & sustainably made products and help them understand the value of giving back with each purchase

Increase revenue from pet beds, which are more expensive and pose greater barriers to purchase, as



well as as pet toys which are more affordable, impulse purchases and are easier to sell

EXECUTION

One of the primary components of Nebo's SEO strategy was removing barriers to indexation and addressing technical hurdles that resulted from the site relaunch. This would be essential in preserving and growing organic visibility. Nebo started by implementing on-page and technical SEO best practices to set the site up for search engine success. This included a technical audit to ensure the new site would be visible and properly crawlable by search engines. Furthermore, these recommendations would allow us to effectively leverage on-page assets moving forward.

Additionally, Nebo optimized existing site copy and created new content to effectively speak to both new and existing customers. Given that many of P.L.A.Y.'s products are large-ticket items, we recognized that the research phase was one of the most important aspects of the buying cycle. Our strategies, therefore, required us to thoroughly understand the value-add consumers consider when making such a purchase and construct our campaigns to speak to the unique benefits P.L.A.Y. offers.

Ongoing off-page SEO and Digital PR efforts designed by Nebo served to increase overall brand reach and share of voice. The strategies were designed to capture new visitors without an established brand preference in the market while effectively leveraging the existing brand authority in the digital space.

Initial efforts were focused on technical optimization of the website as there were serious issues resulting from the relaunch. The site needed updates to address duplicate content, incorrect canonical tags, internal redirects, internal links pointing to broken pages, and trailing slash inconsistencies with URL structures. Furthermore, every individual product was accessible at multiple URLs, meaning that multiple versions of the same page were being indexed. This posed a serious threat of penalties from the search engines. Nebo provided recommendations on facilitating crawling via robots directives, removing duplicate pages from Google's index, and improving site architecture through internal linking structures.

The SEO team then conducted a comprehensive competitive analysis to identify top competitors and their organic search strategies. One of the biggest insights taken from this research was that the space was overwhelmingly undifferentiated. Shopper education and philanthropy in the industry were neglected, creating a market gap for quality content tailored to the discovery phase of the buyer journey. This presented a substantial opportunity for P.L.A.Y. to build authority through educating consumers on their core values and for the marketing channels to promote this material.

The strategy to do this was two-fold: optimize existing site content with new metadata and unique copy for each page that would speak effectively to P.L.A.Y.'s core values and mission as well as create new content to strategically expand our organic reach where the competition was failing to effectively leverage quality content. Nebo outlined specific content gaps found through competitive analysis, industry trend research and analysis of past traffic to the P.L.A.Y. domain. This "content gap" research was then used to build out new content throughout the P.L.A.Y. site that reinforces the quality of products, sustainability of materials and the humanitarian efforts of the company.



Lastly, in an effort to further P.L.A.Y.'s mission of helping shelter animals, increasing organic visibility and building domain authority, PLAY teamed up with local shelters from coast to coast and offered deep discounts to customers who adopted from a participating shelter. Nebo coordinated tactical manual outreach to build partnerships with the local shelters and to promote the partnership and discount available. This outreach leveraged new content assets on the blog that explained the partnership and discounts.

RESULTS

Through our holistic approach to SEO, we were able to reach and engage both the existing audience for P.L.A.Y. and new customers. Our campaign success was driven by sticking to P.L.A.Y.'s core values and making them take center stage. We understood that in a commodity market, the consumer often ignores blatant marketing tactics focused on pushing products or services. By staying true to the brand, we were able to take an authentic approach and add value to our audience while guiding them to the right product for their furry best friend.

Nebo's SEO efforts allowed us to deliver unprecedented results for P.L.A.Y. over the course of the year following the site redesign. From 2015 to 2016, P.L.A.Y. saw increased organic visibility and traffic, as well as increased ecommerce transactions and revenue:

Organic traffic increased over 40% since the relaunch of the site

Revenue from organic traffic increased 78% year over year in 2016

Organic transactions increased 39% year over year in 2016

Organic traffic hit record monthly highs throughout all of Q4 2016, with overall increase year over year of 45% for the quarter

Organic revenue also hit record monthly highs throughout all of Q4 2016, with overall increase year over year of 67% for the quarter

External Links:

<http://www.petplay.com/>

<http://www.neboagency.com/work/semplay/?key=4Qj225yM02b47V1z5kIR>