

Content Marketing and Web Design for Temporary Staffing And Executive Recruiting Industries



David Searns
CEO

CEOCFO: *Mr. Searns, what is Haley Marketing Group?*

Mr. Searns: We are a content marketing and web design firm that focuses on services the temporary staffing and executive recruiting industries.

CEOCFO: *What are some of the challenges specific to the staffing industry?*

Mr. Searns: One of my favorites is that staffing and recruiting firms have two sets of customers. They have the employers who are hiring and the job seekers who are looking for work. At any given time, one of these audiences is more in need of help than the other. Back in 2009, during the "Great Recession," many employers stopped hiring, while job seekers needed a great deal of help finding work. Now the labor market is getting much more robust and employers need more help finding talent. So, if you are one of the 17,000 staffing companies in the United States or 3,000 plus in Canada, how do you attract people to your firm? Or make yourself known, especially if you are a small company with a limited sales force and marketing budget? This is where Haley Marketing comes into play. Our role is to help that small to midsized staffing and recruiting company to more effectively get themselves found, stand out from the competition, stay top of mind with employers and job seekers, and to make it a great deal easier to close more placements.

CEOCFO: *Would you walk us through a simple engagement and something a little more outside of the box?*

Mr. Searns: Usually companies come to us for one or two reasons: Reason number one is that they have a specific project in mind, for example, they need a new website. About one-third of what our organization our business is developing websites to try to help our clients position themselves in the best way possible. Other clients will come to us for something very specific like blogging. They know that they want to be more active in blog writing, but they do not know what to write about, they don't have the time to write or they simply do not like to write. Therefore, they will outsource that function to us, and we will take on the responsibility for producing blog posts each month. Those are examples of people who come to us with a very specific project in mind. The other type of client that comes to us is someone who does not know what they want to accomplish, but they have a desire to improve their marketing. One of my frustrations (and favorite challenges) is that the average marketing spend in the staffing industry is just 0.4% of sales. Staffing companies do not spend a great deal on marketing. It has always been a sales driven business. But if you've ever been on the receiving end of one of the bazillion cold calls staffing companies make, you know that most companies sound exactly alike. That's why we get owners of small businesses and managers in larger staffing firms asking us to help them market their firm more effectively. In recent months, more and more staffing executives are telling us that they want to stand out more strongly in the marketplace, so that they will attract the right kind of candidates. Those companies may engage us for a variety of different projects. It could be a marketing strategy, developing a strong foundation for their marketing through their corporate identity, core messaging, website, outbound and inbound marketing, creating a direct marketing campaign, or providing a plan for better using email and social media. With regard to the "outside the box" kinds of projects, we get some great requests for social media marketing efforts that really push the envelope as well as direct mail campaigns that help our clients' sales people to be more productive. We recently design a video mailer for a client with a highly targeted prospect list (an audience of less than 50 people). That mailer generated three appointments on the first four uses.

CEOCFO: *Do you attract more generalized staffing agencies or are more specialty agencies?*

Mr. Searns: It is really a mix. We have nearly 900 clients, which include startups and one person recruiting firms all the way up to larger national staffing organizations. In terms of their specialty, we have many generalized or commercial staffing firms that provide clerical and light industrial staffing services, but we have an equal number of clients that are

very specialized in disciplines like accounting, IT, engineering, creative services, legal, and healthcare. Overall, we have a pretty good mix of different types of staffing firms.

CEOCFO: *Once you are able to drive someone to an organization or website, how do you get them to take action?*

Mr. Searns: There are lots of ways we can get people to take action, although this leads to one of our biggest challenges, which is demonstrating to our clients that what we did worked. This is Here's why this is such a challenge for us. When our client's sales person makes a call to a prospect, and that prospect buys services, the sales person tells their boss, "I sold this". The fact that the lead came in from the website means nothing to the sales person. Therefore, we look for ways to help drive conversion from their website. Usually that's by offering some sort of compelling content that a person can download or opt-in to receive. For example, you are a journalist, and if we are working with a staffing company that specializes in placing creative writers, we would want that staffing company to develop content that you (and other journalists) would find interesting. It is not going to be about hiring or using temp help. It is going to be about topics like trends in writing, how to be a great creative writer and best practices for writers. It may also include content that is related to the staffing firm's services, such as wage and benefits trends. Our goal is to create content to attracts you to the staffing company's website. Once we get you to that website, then we have to get you to take an action. And, there are many ways we can drive encourage you to respond. Typically, people enter a staffing website through a blog post or a page with job information, and not necessarily the home page. In designing a conversion strategy, we have to design each blog post, blog page and job page to have a clear and compelling call to action, so we can capture your contact information. Then we can put you into a relationship nurturing process with more regular communications. We can also integrate those nurturing communications with sales person follow up to convert you from a content consumer to an actual client of that staffing company.

"Our core mission is to make world-class marketing more affordable." - David Searns

CEOCFO: *Does the same content that works for an employee also work for an employer and how do you balance the two when creating content?*

Mr. Searns: In some industries, the same content works. If you are placing high level executives or professionals in accounting or IT, the person who is the job seeker could very well also be the employer. So we can write content that appeals to both audiences. But, if you are dealing with entry level workers or general laborers, the interests of the hiring or HR manager are completely different than those of the job seeker. When we develop content plans for our clients we have to look at balancing content across audiences and building areas within a website that are specifically designed for people with different interests. For a section of a website focused on employers, of there is a great deal we're likely to create content focused on how to be better at hiring, managing and retaining employees. For job seekers, the content is going to be more about managing your career, landing the job you really want and getting that next promotion.

CEOCFO: *Are you able to account for regional differences when you are creating content or a program?*

Mr. Searns: That is a great question and the answer is yes and no. Some of the regional differences we know because our Marketing Advisors work directly with each of our clients and the client will guide us in regard to local issues and styles of communication. However, since we do not live in the same markets as our clients, there may be local events or nuances to communication that we do not know about. Therefore, we try to encourage our clients to be highly collaborative in the content development process. They tell us things that we need to include or augment our content with their own locally focused posts or other content.

CEOCFO: *Haley provides a wide range of services. Are there one or two areas that, in general, your clients do not take advantage of or do not utilize enough?*

Mr. Searns: People who do not live in the marketing world, but are consumers of marketing services, tend to follow trends. For the past several years, social media has been really hot. And mobile is getting hotter every day. Our clients see these trends, and they get excited to implement them. For example, five years ago, we did not offer blogging services or social media marketing, but today, these areas represent 40% of our business. We adapt our services based on our clients' needs and desires. However, when you react to trends, you tend to forget the things that are tried and true. This is why I am such a big fan of direct mail. If I can integrate a strong direct marketing campaign into a company's sales efforts, I can make their sales people infinitely more productive. For example, we recently did a campaign for a company that was struggling with pricing pressures. We developed a content plan that educated prospects about the bottom line value of quality. The campaign resulted in a 100% improvement in cold call to appointment ratios and reduced the average sales cycle by 67%.

CEOCFO: *What has changed from your original concept?*

Mr. Searns: When we started the firm in 1996, we were purely direct mail, and we were ghostwriters to help sales people stay in touch with their clients. We did a great deal of writing letters and articles, and one of the things that I learned was that you must be consistent in nurturing relationships with people. If you want to build relationships, you have to continually add value to the conversation, not just force sales pitches down people's throats. Over the years, what's really changed is the method of communication. In 1996, it was all personal letters and in person drop offs. Today we still use these tools, but we also need to include email, direct mail and social media. Great marketing is both evolutionary and revolutionary. Another lesson I learned is that while everyone follows the hot buzzwords, the core principles of marketing do not change. Content marketing worked in 1996 and it works today because it gets people to pay attention, makes you stand out and makes your sales efforts easier.

Another thing that has not changed is the challenge of getting sales people to embrace marketing or change their methods. It's not the fault of the sales reps; they are compensated for producing results, which makes them inherently impatient. Therefore, when we are talking to someone about nurturing relationships, and investing time every single day to share content and build social networks, the sales people sometimes think that we are nuts. Content marketing does not have an immediate payoff. However, when people do it consistently it delivers amazing results. One of the biggest changes we have made over the years is to ensure the sales people are included in planning the strategy and content, and reporting back on the results. When marketing is doing everything separate from the sales team, the results are rarely as good as when everyone works together.

CEOCFO: *What is the competitive landscape? Are there many companies in your arena?*

Mr. Searns: There are very few companies in our arena. When I tell my friends that we have a marketing company that focuses on the staffing industry, they think that we are crazy. Who would run a marketing firm for an industry that does not believe in marketing? That's why there are only a few companies that are direct competitors to ours. Haley Marketing has been around the longest with 19 years, and we have the deepest team with 36 people in our organization. We don't have a direct competitor that can match our experience or the depth of our team. However, our number one competitor is "do nothing." There are many firms in the staffing industry that invest near zero in their marketing. Even after 19 years, we are still on a mission to educate our clients about the value of marketing. Our second biggest competitor is a local firm, because one of the challenges of being vertically focused is that we deal with people all over the world and we have never met many of our clients face-to-face. In order to be successful working remotely, we've developed some amazing systems and procedures, and we are very process driven. This enables us to effectively service clients without sitting across the desk from them to review the latest design or content. A local competitor can deliver that in-person experience, which is why we work so hard to deliver expertise, a service experience, and a value that they cannot match.

CEOCFO: *What is ahead for Haley?*

Mr. Searns: Right now, the biggest change we see happening is in the area of reputation management. The search engines, which are very important to our clients in terms of driving both employers and job seekers, have overtly stated that reputation and online reviews matter. In response to this trend, we recently launched a new reputation management service. In fact, we created an entire new company to help companies build more positive reviews and manage their online reputations more proactively. Our service really designed for B2B; we are not doing any of the consumer things that you hear many of the ads for. We are enabling businesses to get faster customer feedback, build positive reviews and testimonials, and keep their unhappy customers off of social media. Beyond reputation management, the future of Haley Marketing will be the same as the past - innovation. In the last 19 years, we've made many changes in our services and business practices as the economy, technology, the world of marketing and our clients have changed. As these changes continue to occur, we will continue to pivot and bring great ideas to our clients.

CEOCFO: *Put it all together for our readers. Why use Haley Marketing Group?*

Mr. Searns: The short answer is that there is nobody in the world that can match our depth of experience or the depth of our team when it comes to developing marketing solutions for staffing and recruiting firms. Our core mission is to make world-class marketing more affordable. I grew up in a family staffing company, and that is the core reason we serve this market. When my family wanted to go out and get professional advertising agency help in the 1980's and 1990's, we were too small and could not afford it. The ad agencies did not want to give us the time of day because we did not have a \$100,000 plus budget. Haley Marketing Group was created to serve those small to midsize companies like my Mom and Dad's firm. We truly do make world-class marketing much more affordable for our clients. That has been our mission since day one and the biggest reason why people choose to work with us.



Haley Marketing Group.

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