



Expand2Web Podcast #1 PDF Edition

How one small business owner used WordPress and Thesis to redesign her website and outrank big advertisers in her local area

Don Campbell Interviews Diana Ratliff and Melanie Karrick

Don Campbell: Hi, this is Don Campbell from [Expand2Web](http://Expand2Web.com) and with me today is Diana Ratliff from YourFriendOnTheWeb.com and Melanie Karrick from KeyLargoFitness.com. Hi, Diana. Hi, Melanie. Welcome!

Diana Ratliff: Hi there, Don.

Melanie Karrick: Hi, Don.

DC: Great. Well, I just wanted to have a quick conversation today. I know, Diana and I worked on Melanie's website to put together. Diana led the project and I helped her get the website together, and I just want to get, Melanie, kind of get your perspective on sort of what you were looking for. I know you had a website already and just kind of what your goals were? I was really happy with the way the website turned out and I know you've got some nice measurable sort of, you know, results from it as well. So, first of all, could you just describe like who, you know, who you are and what Key Largo Fitness is all about?

MK: Yes. My name is Melanie and I co-own Key Largo Fitness and Tanning where full service fitness and tanning facility with 2 locations in Columbia, Missouri, and we had a website since 2004 and not really utilizing it to its full ability and was happy with the look at it but with Diana and I getting together, she educated me on some things that could get us the most bang for a buck which our website can and get more attention to it, more traffic to it and just be able to use it more as a business tool instead of just something random out there. And we've been really pleased with the results so far.

DC: That's kind of a comment I've heard a lot. I know a lot of business owners, either don't have a website or they've already got one but it's, I mean, it's not doing a lot for them in terms of, you know, getting new business in.

MK: Correct.

DC: And how did you, so, Diana, what, how did you, guys, meet and maybe you can tell us about yourfriendontheweb.com, too.

DR: Well, Melanie and I go to church together. So, we've known each other for quite a while. It has just been recently that I've been talking to local friends and business owners about websites and internet marketing. I have been doing it for myself for a little over 10 years, and I have sites that rank well and I've learned about any acronym on the web, whether it's PPC or SEO or HTML. I've learned that for myself but I kept running into local people like Melanie whose sites weren't doing as much for them as they'd like their sites to do and I knew I could help and so I talked her. I saw her website and noticed she had an e-mail sign-up form that wasn't functioning or wasn't functioning well and I think that's kind of what got our conversation started, right, Melanie? It was something about the e-mail?

MK: Yes, that's correct and what was very impressive is Diana had done her research and was very educated in general about how to utilize a website better but she also had personalized it to my situation and our business. So, that was really what got my attention.

DC: Yeah, that's great. So, then you had the website and, you know, it sounds like you're kind of in a competitive environment for fitness centers in the area, is that true?

MK: Yes.

DC: And Diana was explaining to me earlier that some of the folks here in that area are doing TV and different kinds of advertisements, right?

MK: That's correct, yes.

DC: So then, were you getting very many inquiries from your website before?

MK: Next to none.

DC: Oh really.

MK: Maybe occasionally. "Oh, I saw your website," or in hindsight, we would put events or things on there and refer people that way but...

DC: Right.

MK: ...not at all.

DC: Oh, one of the things that, so Diana and I, you know, we built your website on a tool called WordPress, and a lot of people know WordPress has served like blogging tool but what is interesting about WordPress is that it's really, it doesn't have to be a blog. It's this open source tool that you can download from the web and use it to build, you know, a nice content-rich website that's easy to update, and my background, I lived in Silicon Valley and I worked at a company called Interwoven for a number of years and they built a website content management systems. So, back in the .com times like 1998, we used to sell the system to big businesses and, you know, it's solved the big problem for them like "How do I update my website?" "How do I keep track of all these changes when, you know, multiple people are trying to update it?" And, average sale price was over \$250,000 for that system.

MK: Oh, wow.

DC: And it usually required a lot of custom services and things like that and kind of fast forward to today and you've got, you know, software like that available for free pretty much and that's, you know, [WordPress is an amazing tool](#). Now, of course, there's some work into getting it set up correctly for your site and for your business and getting it optimized with the search engines and that's what we use. We use WordPress and we use the WordPress theme that's very customizable called [Thesis](#). And then, Diana had all these content and did some research on their keywords and did this nice job I think of getting that all set up and so, what's now, I was kind of looking at the result. It looks like you're ranking for a lot of Google searches that you weren't ranking from before. I know if, Diana, you kind of measured some of those, right?

DR: Right. She pretty much wasn't in the top 50 or her site. I shouldn't say, she. Melanie caught much whatever you compare her to but if I said, rank it all for any of the comparable terms that I did research for, not for health club or fitness center or gyms. You know, all those types of things that people would type in if you're looking for a business like hers and aren't already aware of her, then in just a couple of months or so that the revamped site has been up, she's now, well as of today, she's no. 2 for her primary keyword and as I've said, she wasn't in the top 50. So, Melanie, just in the last couple of week's workout, has come up from no. 12 to no. 2. The tanning is now up to no. 5 and I was even thinking we can optimize that some more. So, it's continuing to go up in terms of search engine rankings. And to me that's exciting, especially since a lot of her competitors are doing some high-dollar advertising. It is great to be able just to have this kind of happen based on some research and some work that we did a couple of months ago.

DC: Yeah, I think, you know, that's the real opportunity for business owners. One of the things that's exciting is that, you know, if I type in "[fitness, Columbia, Missouri](#)," like MO, and she comes up, right, in that first and she is not paying for that. I mean, a lot, there's kind of 2 ways to show up on Google, right. One is to rank for the organic search results like what you're doing, and the other's to run a pay-per-click marketing campaign where you're paying every time somebody clicks on your ad. And so, it's kind of nice to have, you know, once you get this set up, you're getting these free results from...

DR: Right.

DC: That's kind of nice.

DR: Yes. It's very nice.

DC: And so, that kind of puts you at a little competitive advantage for the other people out there, yes?

DR: Well, that's true. If you're not spending all your money marketing your business, you can spend your money putting in existing customers, you know, adding to your facility or spending more time working with your clients, and not always focused on advertising or where the next client is going to come from.

DC: Right. Yet now, the other thing that Diana mentioned earlier, Melanie, was the newsletter. So, it's not, I noticed on your site now you got a newsletter and you have like customers now that are on this and what are you doing with that? Is that something that's now a tool for you in terms of informing your clients and generating business?

MK: Yes, we're actually continuing to develop that as a tool but we recently closed down a location and moved to a new one, so it has been a very helpful resource for updates on that process. And then, I believe part of what Diana, you and I are going to be working on is continuing to see what information we want to put out there, right? And how to utilize that better - is that correct?

DR: Yeah, and yeah, you have I think 261 subscribers right now which is an enormous, you know, when you talk to internet marketers about the size of their mailing list, but considering these are all very targeted people who found Melanie's website and who said, "Yes, I'm interested in membership." You know, so even if they don't come in to one of her facilities now, the fact that she has their e-mail addresses and has permission to contact them means she can let them know if there's a new class offered, if there's a sale, when the pool opens at her new facility, all these kinds of things and she didn't have that ability before.

MK: And as a side note, I think that number's pretty close to the number that we totaled on our newsletter sign-up with the previous website in about 4 years and never utilized that with any newsletter.

DC: Oh, wow, that's...

MK: Yes, so it's been, I mean, daily I'll get the news of new subscribers and it's, I mean, I'm clearing out my mailbox constantly. So, it's very exciting.

DC: That's great and I bet you a lot of those are local people, too. So even though that number, I mean, that's a pretty nice number for, if a lot of the people are local and you're updating on new things are going on with your business.

MK: I've had just a couple of people that thought we were in Key Largo, Florida and we're down in that area, but otherwise, sounds cool.

DC: Yeah. So, and then the other thing was that I noticed, well, the thing about WordPress, I guess is that it's easy to update your site. Are you finding it now that, you know, working with Diana that it's a lot easier to get things changed on your website than you had before?

MK: Yes, definitely.

DC: It that kind of like a classic problem that doesn't help to have is they get this website and it's really hard to change things or to add new content to it.

MK: Right.

DR: Well, if the person who built it disappears, we live in a college town and I do think a lot of businesses hire college students to do it. And then, they graduate and then, the business owner has no idea where it is, how to access anything - the files are on somebody else's computer. And WordPress certainly alleviates that problem. And for me, as the one who's doing a lot of her site updates, it is really easy. She's really clear about what she wants, or if there's a new class or something that I need to put out there. And so, it's not that hard at all to do and it's great that I can do it from anywhere.

DC: Because you can make those changes without having to know HTML, right?

DR: Right.

DC: You just, a second, it's like, the little [editor in WordPress is kind of like a mini version of Word](#) where you can highlight text and bold it, or set things up. So, it's not a huge task to change things or create new stuff, right?

MK: Right.

DC: Yeah. Well, this is great. This has been great, I don't want to keep you, guys, too long but you know, is there any file thoughts or anything about this. I mean, it's kind of exciting little story I think about getting your business, turning it really into marketing tool and not only marketing but just I think keeping in better touch with your customers as well, right?

MK: Definitely. I just can't be more pleased with the look and the user-friendliness and the feedback that we've gotten from it.

DR: That's good to know, and my comment would just be, especially if anyone listening to this, if he doesn't have a website or who has a website that's not doing what they expected it to do, that can be changed. It can be improved. I think, her website and her experience is a good example that a website just doesn't have to sit out there and look pretty and cost you money. It actually can give you leads and give you sales. It's just, it's a matter of having something that's more oriented towards a direct response, that may be includes something like an e-mail list, that does rank. So don't settle for something expensive but then doesn't produce for you. A website, that's where people look these days to find information and it's too important to just let it slide and never do anything with it.

DC: Yes. It's a much more cost-effective way to get the work out about your business than save it for the Yellow Pages or something, right?

DR: Definitely.

DC: Well, I wanted to thank you both for taking some time to talk today and just for listeners, once again, the website we're talking about is <http://www.keylargofitness.com> and that's Melanie's business. So, you can either go to [keylargofitness.com](http://www.keylargofitness.com) or just search for fitness in Columbia, Missouri and you'll find it. And Diana's site is <http://www.yourfriendontheweb.com> and I'm Don from <http://www.expand2web.com>.

DR: Thank you.

DC: So, thank you, both, for your time today and we'll be talking again soon.

MK: Thank you very much, Don.

DR: Okay, bye!