Joe:	00:00	And this is our February 2019 Q&A call. It's Joe and Nicole here from 2820 Press. How's your day going Nicole? Katie from our team should be joining us shortly. But what we want to do this month is to kickoff a series of Q&A sessions that really are a little bit less formal than some of the content strategy webinars that we've been hosting. And Nicole, you've been gathering up some questions that folks have been sending into us. Usually at the point when a prospect is sending us notes about signing up for one of our free consultations. You get a lot of the same questions again and again and again. And so what we thought we'd do, and I've only seen a rough list of the questions we've prepared. This is totally off the cuff.
Nicole:	00:50	We're going with it.
Joe:	00:51	We're having fun with this today and the goal is for folks to be able to chime in in the comments and we will answer your questions in our common thread as well. So hit me with the first one.
Nicole:	01:10	What are the biggest challenges small business owners encounter when trying to maintain their own site?
Joe:	01:17	Yeah, so we hear this quite a bit. I mean this is one of the things that it's often very difficult for other folks who work in the digital space to understand and we've been spending a lot of time in the past few months working with businesses that work in physical spaces is very easy when you're talking to digital marketers that are very caught up in the digital space where everything is bits, everything exists in virtual space. And those folks tend to be very well versed and very fluid in keeping websites up to date. However, a lot of our more recent clients are folks who are consultants or restaurant owners, folks that are actually operating in the physical world and they don't necessarily have time or desire to sit in front of a website all day. So the biggest thing that we do when we're setting up a new website for a client is to make sure that the content management system, you'll hear us refer to this as the cms or the back end. The back end has to be really easy to use and this is one of the reasons that we build almost all of our projects on wordpress because wordpress is now at version 5. Here's Katie. Hello, Katie.
Katie:	02:41	Hi.
Joe:	02:44	We're talking a little about what is challenging for business owners in terms of keeping websites up to date. Right? And what I was just explaining is we've been using wordpress for

some time now as our goto content management system for a bunch of reasons, but I think the big thing is there's been a lot of change in wordpress in the last 18 months or so. And without getting into the inside baseball of it, the team that manages the open source version of wordpress, which is still free and available to anybody publicly. You can download it, you can run it on any hosting service that supports it. The trick with WordPress is for a long time, it was considered a little tough to use if you weren't already a developer or designer. The open source developers, the volunteers essentially, that run this project really saw some challenges on the horizon comparing what they think of as their product to things like wix or weebly or squarespace, right?

Speaker 1: 03:59   The commercial hosted platforms that are out there that you can use to run websites. And so they've made a huge campaign to streamline the back end of wordpress so that it is much more user friendly and much easier for a novice user to get in there and manage. We might touch on why you would use Wordpress as opposed to wix or squarespace a little later. But suffice it to say, the first thing that we do is make sure that any, any elements of the site need to be controllable from that back end. So you as a business owner need to be able to change any element of your site from images to text anywhere without having to go through a developer. And I think that's a big shift from how the development community approach small business websites, even up until, maybe, a couple of years ago we heard this from a couple of folks in discovery sessions in the past week where they were hearing pitches from development folks saying, well there's an upfront cost, but then you're going to have to pay us every time that you want to make a change to the website.

Joe: 05:15   We think that's bananas. And so we do two things with clients. One is we have our Website Recharge program where we will overhaul or build out a new website in about eight weeks. And then our goal at the end of that is that you should be able to keep that up to date yourself. Now, to kind of get back to the original question, how do you make sure that you have time and energy to keep that thing up to date? It's about putting together a content calendar and scheduling out as far in advance as you possibly can, what you're going to be adding and updating on the site so that you don't fall behind, especially when you are pulled in eight different directions and updating your website is not the thing that's at the top of your mind. A Wordpress now has the ability to schedule things in advance so you could sit there with an entire month of fresh, evergreen content, update

your site once, put all of those times in when those new articles are going to go live and then just set it and forget it.

Joe:	06:25	Bronco style. So that's one big way that you don't. You try and get out of the idea that it's a garden that you have to tend to every single day. I'm a big fan of staking similar tasks and activities to the point where if you can do a bunch of the same thing all at once, do that. So you take about a half day or a day, you load up all your new content for the entire month, and then you set the auto timers and then you're good, you're good to go. That's probably the biggest change that I've seen when we've worked with clients in the past, when we can get them to adopt that kind of scheduling, they'll have a site that feels really fresh day to day and you don't fall behind on things like dated blog posts that you see, oh no one's updated the site in two years.
Joe:	07:23	The other element that's important is in your wordpress layout and your theme. Especially look for things like copyright dates or other elements that could easily fall out of date. Those should be automated where wherever possible. So you don't want to have. This is something that we actually look for when we're doing audits of our prospect sites. We look for something like a copyright date that's outdated, that clearly shows no one may have worked on this site for quite some time. So your customer is going to the site wants to see things that are fresh and updated, they want to see that the lights are on and if they're seeing things that look like they're two, three, four years old. Then you're already starting that relationship as a disadvantage. One last thing before we move on to the next topic.
Joe:	08:14	If you really are working in your business in a way that updating your website is not something that is part of what we would say, your zone of genius, not the thing that you really get excited about doing. Then there's a practice called content operations. That's a phrase that our colleague Rob Mills is using a lot and we're adopting it as well. And it's the notion that it's often really beneficial for you to bring in a team of folks that just runs websites and keeps them organized and keeps them up to date. And that's something that we do for our clients as, once again, that's not something that we require clients to do. You should be able to run your own website. But if you know that site is going to be tough for you to keep on top of, on a regular basis, that's where it's good to call in some folks like us that can do that for you, day to day. So that's my long answer to Nicole's very short question.

Katie:	09:20	That's great. All right. Are we ready for the next, next question?
Joe:	09:24	Yeah. Katie, why don't you intro yourself for folks who are.
Katie:	09:28	Sure. I also have Emily with us too. So we'll do both intros.
Joe:	09:34	Excellent.
Katie:	09:34	Hi, I'm Katie. I'm the Director of Operations here at 2820 press. I really lead up our client services and sales teams, along with our production teams to ensure that everything is running on time and on schedule for all of our clients and that we're delivering everything as satisfactory and to all of our client's needs. I really enjoy doing that and working with the team that we have in place. And to my left is Emily. Emily is our strategist. Do you want to do a little bit of intro?
Emily:	10:10	Yeah. I'm fairly new Strategist here with 2820 Press. I'm loving it and I'm just getting my hands dirty, so I'm excited to be working with you guys.
Joe:	10:19	Fantastic. So for folks who are just hopping on or joining us on the replay, once again, this is our monthly Q&A, really informal. We're trying to just rattle off some responses to things that folks ask us pretty frequently when when we're setting up our free consultations or discovery sessions. So I think Katie has our next question for today.
Katie:	10:41	Sure. So more customers and clients demand our companies to be always on. How can you ensure that clients get great service at odd hours without wrapping up your staff?
Joe:	10:53	Yeah, so we talked about this quite a bit, because we're obsessed about client service. We like to work with companies that are obsessed with their customers and clients as well, but I'm also a big fan of setting boundaries and making sure that, as much as possible. You want to set the right expectation up front about what it's going to be like to work with you. Now, this varies a lot from industry to industry and we've been working quite a bit lately with some folks in the hospitality industry where you may be making a reservation for dinner someplace tonight. You're trying to find information really quickly about is, where this place located? What's the menu like? And so you want to make it really easy for folks to find the right kind of contact information. If you are a place that has a physical storefront one of the best things you can do is have a listed

contact number, phone number, and an email address and hours of operation.

Joe:		And then just really make it clear that this is when you have somebody staffed. Now for a service business, there are a couple different schools of thought and it really depends on the kind of customer journey that you're supporting. So for folks in the consulting world, for instance, there's a strong sense when you have projects that are working on longer timelines, there's less urgency. You can set up some more semi automated solutions. So for instance, in our case, we know it's rare that a client is going to be so urgent really needing some of the things that we do that they're going to call and hire us that day on the spot. We're not a locksmith. So one of the things that we've done is we use a tool called acuity scheduling and it makes it very, very easy to schedule a consultation with any member of our team.
Joe:		So when you're looking at our website, for instance, you can see exactly when folks are available. You can pick the time that works best for you and you can be assured that when we show up for that consultation, we're going to be 100 percent ready and focused and you're not just calling in and kind of distracting us or we're feeling like we're not going to be 100 percent attentive to you and your needs. That's a really good way for us to also set the boundary that calling us up directly out of the blue. It's not the best way that we can serve somebody. So we set that boundary. There's another interesting thing emerging around chat bots and chat based customer service, so the, you know, the idea with certain folks in certain industries. If you have a product or a service that's a little bit of an impulse buy that's a little bit of a -- I'm investigating and I might jump on something if somebody responds to me really quickly and yet there's no way that you could or should be monitoring your phone and your chatline and your text messages 24/7. So to that extent we're seeing a lot of hybrid tools that will add text like features, chat to your site or to your Facebook page and if you're not available or if you don't have an agent that's available, you can set up a bot to provide a little bit of limited support. And I find it really helpful to disclose when there's a bot as opposed to a person. I think sometimes people try to be really clever and they set up their bot and, to give it a name and they say, I'm here to answer all your questions. And really all it can do is just answer the same three things over and over.
Joe:		So the idea there would be to just load that thing up with more broad question and answer models that somebody can work through and steer towards something like a scheduled

appointment. Now that said, if you do run the kind of service where you have to be responsive 24/7, engage somebody that can help you. We use a team called Moneypenny. These are folks that are available during our business hours who can answer our phones. We've trained them, they know what our businesses about. They can represent us accurately so that Robin, who is our team leader there, is essentially a part of our team knows as much about our business as any of us and can engage comfortably on the phone with any of our clients. She also has a crew of backup folks that can hop on the phone when she's not available.

Joe:		And that's a really affordable service even for a company of our size. The neat trick there is because they're staffed up 24/7 at the call center, we have a special secret hotline that we give to key clients that they can call and talk to a person 24/7. It's a really big value add, but it doesn't cost us much more to offer that as a service. So if you do require that kind of support and handholding, there are some really great services out there to ensure that you're providing the customer experience. All of this ties back to one of the things that we try to do when we're working with clients is focus on that end to end customer experience to make sure it's consistent. You don't want to have a really fantastic website and then no one's answering your phone. And likewise, we find that sometimes it's the other way around. We might work with a business owner who is kind of chained to their cell phone all the time and they want to build out that website as that 24/7 sales assist to be able to answer a lot of questions before someone picks up the phone and calls them at 10 at night. So all of those elements are things that I think go into what you should be thinking about for that end-to-end customer experience.
Katie:		Just piggy-backing off of the first question, EMily, let's ask question number seven, sort of goes back to all the cms platforms that we were talking about before
Joe:		I don't have a script or numbers. So I like this because it gives folks a sense of how we are at our team meetings because you're peppering me with questions.
Emily:		So the question is, I have attempted to build my own site using a diy solution, but it looks so cookie cutter and I want my site to stand out. How do you ensure that the website you build clients are unique?
Joe:		Yeah, there was a running gag that was floating on social media a couple months ago and one of our clients, and we have a

screenshot of this and we always bring it up. There's a visual of which of the two possible websites are you building today? There's something that's happened in the world of web design where things have standardized quite a bit and it is very, very challenging if you just open up Wordpress out of the box. There are some great themes in Wordpress. If you launch squarespace, squarespace gives you some really gorgeous themes. And the problem is you can tell exactly when someone has used one of those five basic squarespace themes. You can tell when someone is using one of the stock wordpress themes and the, uh, the opportunity cost of noodling around with all of those design features can be really high if you're not a professional designer or developer.

| Joe: | 18:54 | And so it goes up really quickly. This may be one of my biggest criticisms of some of the services, the platforms that are marketed are small business. You'll see an offer that says; use our site builder, it's $5 a month and what you get is a site that looks like it costs $5 to me, but you might spend hours and hours and hours of your time trying to customize that and it still ends up looking really janky. So all of that said, there are upgrades that you can get to all of those platforms that you can use themes and templates that are not as widely adopted. And the goal here is not to end up with something that is 100 percent unique to you. I equate this more to purchasing a car, right? This might be the only place where if you are going to buy a car, you decide first what kinds of features you want in the car. You may have an idea of what brand of car you already like. You don't set out and say, I need to get from point a to point b, so I'm going to start building my own car in the driveway. No one does that except for some of the guys on that Motor Trend Channel that my dad likes to watch. No one's building cars just to get from here to the store and so if you already know, okay, well do I need a car? Do I need an SUV? Do I need a pick-up truck? What is it that I'm trying to get done? You can narrow down picking your theme on Wordpress or picking a template on squarespace is very similar and you may have to pay extra to get something that is able to express your style a little bit better. So be ready, you know, for a little bit of the sticker shock of bumping up significantly in price when you're making your site stand out from all of the other folks that have come in at the entry level package. |

| Joe: | 20:59 | But if there's one thing that you can do to really set your sight apart, I think, in 2019 it's typography. It is a a piece of attention to detail that designers are always put first and foremost. But I think if you're doing the self- serve platforms, just shifting to a slightly less often used type face, or font, will help you stand out |

there. And not only that, if you can get good at mixing fonts really well, that I think is the real sign that this is a polished site. So if you have a mix of different kinds of type faces on the site, never more than two really three at the absolute max, if there's really specific reasons for it. You don't want it to look like a ransom note. But you want things to be really clear and crisp and you can go to a web font foundry now.

Joe: 22:06   It's so much easier now than it was even a couple of years ago. And you can find some things that are very elegant and very polished that really reflect who you are as a brand and what you're trying to communicate. So I'm really fond of that kind of customization even if you're using a very minimalist baseline theme, picking that right typeface is good and it helps too. If you've given thought to a standard font for your brand, for your company to have that be consistent across all of your communication, that's a big one. Okay. So I think we have time just for one more quick question. A half hour goes really fast.

Katie: 22:55   I want to pick a good one. Talking about customizing websites and all of that. I think this is a good wrap up for this episode. I don't like, my current website is outdated. It doesn't look good on mobile devices, but I don't have time to update the site on my own and I don't have 15 to 20K to spend on a new site design that some of these bigger agencies are quoting me. So what are my options?

Joe: 23:27   Yeah, I mean this, this comes down to what's the budget for a website these days. I mean, we believe that you should, you should be able to have a fully responsive, uh, accessible effective website for under $5,000. How we get to that kind of price point is again, the car analogy. You're not building the car from scratch. One of the things that has happened even when we've worked with partner agencies and with the caveat that we love our partner agencies and we love our clients that use them. You know, there are times where building everything from scratch, maybe the right thing to do for your business model, but you're going to need a big budget. You're going to need a long time frame. You have to have a lot of patience to be able to pull that off and to do it remotely well can get you very quickly into the high five, low six figure budget for things.

Joe: 24:27   If you are a small business, you should be able to invest about $500 a month in your website design and maintenance in such a way that it is unique. It looks gorgeous. And what we do when we take on a project like that is we have a, a robust pattern library of elements from themes and other work that we've done in the past that we can draw on and we can snap together

from even just a couple of initial interviews. What we think is going to be the right user experience and the right design to layer on top of the existing platforms, so instead of building everything from scratch, we're starting with a highly customized, a template and a set of solutions that then we can map those design elements on top of so that you're not inventing the wheel every single time. You're starting from a place of 70 to 80 percent complete and then you customize on top of that. So that really becomes your solution.

| Joe: | 25:37 | Okay, so that's a half hour of Q&A. It goes fast, but that's okay. We're going to do a lot more of these, so keep an eye on our Facebook page and on our website at 2820.com And the other thing you're going to see us do if you're on the facebook page, live today, February 5, 2019. We're actually going to do a website tear down in a couple minutes. So you're going to see one of the websites that Katie and the team have just built and we're going to walk through all the little decisions that that lead into that. So I think that make that this entire next half hour may answer the question that Katie just posed, how do we actually take a client through those decisions? So thanks for listening and feel free to add your own questions in the comments. We will be monitoring those to chime in and respond. |