

Race to the top



*Ryan Kelly of
WSI Smart Marketing
is San Francisco Bay Area's wizard
of search engine optimization*

By Jim Brumm

As a boy, Ryan Kelly dreamed of becoming a paramedic or a forest ranger. His life went in a different direction, but early on we can see the start of a theme: being in service to, and helping, others.

“Really, I wanted to be like my dad,” says Ryan. “He co-founded a medical diagnostics company that was hugely successful and he did it by helping, caring about, and providing his clients with quality products and sincere, first-rate customer care. That was so attractive to me.”

Today, as vice president of sales and marketing at WSI Smart Marketing in Santa Rosa, California, Ryan carries forward that theme of helping others. Every day he works hard to help businesses increase their sales and achieve their dreams.

WSI Smart Marketing is a family-run company, part of the world's largest digital marketing network with over 2100 active consultants in 87 countries. Within this vast global WSI network, WSI Smart Marketing in Santa Rosa is the fifth largest in the U.S. and the sixth largest in the world. Ryan and his crew are obviously doing things right.

WSI specializes in Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Advanced Paid Search with Google, Facebook, Instagram, Conversion Tracking, Digital Marketing Consulting and more.

Search engines such as Google look for specific things when choosing which results to display for a given search. Knowing how search engines “think” is paramount in ensuring your customers can find you on the Internet. Getting your company's website to appear consistently in the top three to five spots in an Internet search is not easy; in fact, it can seem like magic. But Ryan and his team are Internet wizards and understand SEO like no one else.

In the early days of the Internet, Ryan was a senior account executive for a Yellow Pages publisher. Seeing that the Yellow Pages were in trouble, he said to his boss, “We have to get hold of this Internet thing.” He was charged with assisting in rolling out new Internet marketing packages and then testing the first digital marketing efforts for that company. From that experience he realized that understanding and mastering digital marketing was going to make the difference between success and failure for most businesses.

“. . . my favorite thing is seeing a business grow and succeed because of our efforts. That's why I love what I do.” — Ryan Kelly

In 2007, Ryan, along with his father, Ken, and mother, Judy, decided to launch their own digital marketing company. Research revealed that WSI was an established and proven expert in the field, offering an abundance of knowledge, education, certifications and support to their members, and the Kellys signed on to become part of the WSI Digital Marketing family.

“The great thing about being a part of the WSI network is that I can get information and support from a thousand other people,” says Ryan. “If someone has a question I can't answer, I can network worldwide to find the best answer in a short amount of time.”

In reality, it's usually the other way around; other WSI consultants are now calling Ryan for advice and help. Ryan is one of 25 top producers known in the company as the “Top

Guns,” and he was one of just eight top-performing agency owners worldwide selected to work on the Global WSI brand as well as train others at annual meetings.

In 2018, the WSI corporate offices requested submissions for topics of discussion from their WSI agency partners. Out of hundreds of submissions, Ryan’s was one of three chosen, and he delivered an inspiring TED-x style talk at their annual, global conference in Montreal, QC. He has built an international reputation as a proven expert, sought-after speaker, and mentor to the digital marketing industry.

Ryan is expressive, laughs a lot, talks fast, and has a bounty of positive energy and enthusiasm. His eyes flash when he speaks of his passion for his work and his love of getting positive results for his clients. When it comes to SEO and digital marketing, he is firmly in his wheelhouse.

“I’ve always been a concept-to-completion guy,” he says, leaning forward in his chair. “I love mowing lawns and washing my car, things where I can see tangible results. But my favorite thing is seeing a business grow and succeed because of our efforts. That’s why I love what I do. And,” he adds, grinning, “it’s fun!”

Ryan describes SEO as “the act of aggressively pursuing first-page placement on Google and other major search engines.” This is done first by seamlessly integrating key words and phrases into readable, relevant website content that will catch the attention of search engines when people are looking for what your company offers.

From there, the WSI crew helps their clients design and purchase high-intent clicks and advertising impressions on websites such as Google, Facebook, Instagram, and a plethora of others, depending on the type of business and who they are trying to reach.

Finally, Ryan and the WSI team are conversion tracking specialists. They are proficient at helping their clients understand transparently where they are winning and losing in their different aspects of marketing. Bottom line, they make sure they are spending their clients’ marketing dollars wisely.

“Before starting, we study everything we can about the character and culture of our client’s business,” says Ryan. “We learn their goals, their vision of the future, what needs they have, why they do what they do, and whether or not we can help them.” Ryan points toward the next room. “We’re a small, fun business. We have a pool table over there if people would rather shoot pool while we brainstorm instead of sitting in our conference room. It’s about building relationships. We don’t do



Ryan Kelly delivering his TED-x style talk at the global WSI Digital Marketing conference

one-night stands with our clients; we get married and work with them over time.”

WSI can also design and build stunning, effective websites for their clients. Judy Kelly, the firm’s director of production, recently won her second Web Marketing Award—the Oscars of the web industry—from the Web Marketing Association. She also won an IAC award from the Internet Advertising Competition for designing one of the best websites in the *world*.

WSI Smart Marketing is a “Google-Verified” partner. “Collectively WSI contributes a little over three-billion dollars of

Google’s ad budget,” says Ryan. “I can call them with questions anytime, and they pick up.”

As a Google partner, WSI constantly is watching for Google changes to their search algorithms so that Ryan and his team can make the necessary changes to keep their clients’ search results at the top of the page.

A firm believer in giving back to his community, Ryan Kelly sits on the board of directors of the Sonoma County Alliance, which is dedicated to building a healthy economy, community, and environment. He is also a member of the Expeditionary Learning Board of Directors for Lawrence Jones Middle School in Rohnert Park, California, and a member of the Rohnert Park Unified School District Citizen Oversight Committee. WSI Smart Marketing regularly donates to the LIME Foundation, which advocates for the disadvantaged throughout the community.

Ryan also hosts an event with his friend Justin Bartlow called Poker 4 Presents. The poker tournament raises money for COTS (Committee on the Shelterless) in Petaluma. Last year’s sixth annual tournament raised enough money to adopt 32 people and five transitional houses accommodating six to ten people in each, as well as to send 22 kids to camp.

If you would like your business to appear consistently on the first page of Google searches, dominate in social media and increase in sales and services, give Ryan a call.

Internationally recognized as a leader in digital marketing, WSI Smart Marketing is a bridge between where your business is now and where you want it to be.

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