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Man teaches how to get websites noticed

By **Tim Barker**
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
01/15/2010

Today, Norty Cohen opens Buzz-hound Learning Lab in Maplewood, sharing space with Hatch, a focus group and research facility. Among its initial offerings, Buzzhound will offer classes on search engine optimization, the process of improving a website so it ranks higher in search engine results.

Cohen says he sees a strong market for the 10-member classes (prices range from \$600 to \$700 per person) at a time when there is so much emphasis on reaching customers through the Internet — particularly when research suggests it is critical to rank high in search results. By some estimates, 65 percent of all searchers will go to the first 10 sites they see.

It seems like we hear a lot these days about search engine optimization. Why is that?

There are 100 billion searches a month online. More and more people are using their cell phones to search and that's where people are finding customers and businesses.

Even though Yellow Pages is still a \$16 billion-a-year business, where everything is going is search. If you are in business or if you are in marketing, you need to understand search.

What is the most important thing one needs to know about SEO? And are there any big no-nos?

You need to understand how and why people are coming to your site. And how and what you need to do to improve your content. And to make more opportunities for people to find you online.

... There are people who will say that you can't fool the search engine, that you can't do this thing called black hat, where you put in some things that may not be true. I think the biggest no-no is not doing anything and assuming people are going to find you.

You have this lab set to open today. What sort of response are you expecting?

We've had several major corporations commit to sending people to the classes. We tried to price it so that it's incredibly reasonable, while at the same time, there is a ton of information that happens in one day.

There are two instructors, so it is a five-to-one student-teacher ratio. These people are experts much more than myself. Several major corporations have committed to sending several people, and that's just in our first couple of announcements. We're really going to start much more heavily marketing next week.

What prompted you to open Buzz-hound?

I've been trying to learn this subject for some time. And I found it to be incredibly hard. It was hard to follow webinars. It was hard to follow books. It was sort of like an advanced math problem that you just needed someone to show you how to do it.

And once you got into understanding it, it became very basic. And I realized we could create a business that could truly teach people how to help their businesses.

You've said you don't think this is the sort of thing that can be taught or learned online. Why is that?

Search engine optimization is a language. It's just like learning any other language. Someone has to show you and speak it for you so you can hear them.

If you go into the lab and you try the programs and the instructor shows you how to use them, it becomes very natural to you. But it's the whole sort of foreign language aspect to it that makes it difficult to learn.

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therisetothetop January 15, 2010 7:12AM CST
I took Buzzhound and it was a great experience especially since you don't need tech experience to really "get it".

Norty is a great guy and I wish Buzzhound nothing but success.

mv8167 January 15, 2010 7:48AM CST
Where/how can we get more info on these classes? Contact Info?

G. Robert Bishop January 15, 2010 8:05AM CST
I'm a small business owner and excited to be taking the course today! For those interested in more information, just go to the Buzzhound website: <http://bit.ly/8x5Sqc> I'll report back on how effective it is!

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NORTY COHEN
Position • **Founder of Buzzhound Learning Lab**
Age • **55**
Education • **Bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Missouri, 1978**
Personal • **Married to Lori Cohen. They have two grown sons.**

yesterday's most emailed

1. With Medium Mac, suspend disbelief
2. St. Louis area volunteers safe so far in Haiti
3. At north St. Louis parish, a dog watches over communion
4. ABB murder victim's home ransacked by burglars
5. E. Desmond Lee, 92; philanthropist has died
6. Thieves could be e-looking at ATMs
7. La Russa steadfast in support of McGwire
8. Missouri to probe shuttered nursing home
9. Clooney was here: St. Louis locations in 'Up in the Air'
10. Faust Carousel taking a rest, but will answer the bell in March

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