

Search Off the Record - 50th episode

[00:00:00] ♪ [music] ♪

[00:00:10] [applause and cheers]

[00:00:16] **John Mueller:** [00:00:16] Woo-hoo! Wow, so many people here. What did we sign up for?

[00:00:23] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:00:23] I have no idea. [laughs]

[00:00:25] **John Mueller:** [00:00:25] So cool to see so many SEOs here. I mean, I can almost see you. I hope you're real people.

[00:00:33] We're here today to do the last session of the day, which is a little bit more fun. It's technically a podcast recording. It's kind of in the style of our podcast, which I think will be a little bit weird, a little bit fun. Maybe also some useful stuff along the way. Today, I'm joined by Lizzi.

[00:00:54] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:00:54] Hey.

[00:00:54] **John Mueller:** [00:00:54] Lizzi works on the Search Documentation at Google. [crowd cheers] All of the documentation that you all are hopefully quoting. Right?

[00:01:03] Martin Splitt: [00:01:03] Yeah.

[00:01:03] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:01:03] Yes, yes, yes. [laughs] One person.

[00:01:06] **John Mueller:** [00:01:06] She makes all of that. And I'm also joined by Myriam, [crowd cheers] who is an SEO trainer.

[00:01:14] And here to keep a straight, or better, honest. I don't know about straight, that's like a different topic. But here to keep us honest, and we got a bunch of questions that were submitted through the form. So it's not a live Q&A, but rather, it's like a live Q&A, but the questions came earlier. We picked a bunch of questions that we thought would be interesting to discuss. We'll kind of see how it goes, and curious to see how you all like it. Anyway, this is Lizzi's first big presentation, [crowd cheers] it's almost like a first time speaker. [crowd applause] Woo-hoo! So cool.

[00:01:55] When when I invited them to join us, I didn't actually tell them what kind of session it was.

[00:02:00] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:02:00] No, how could he do this to us? Look at this stage.

[00:02:04] **John Mueller:** [00:02:04] Yeah, it was fun. But they agreed, and they didn't jump out, so I'm pretty happy, really thankful that you're here.

[00:02:12] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:02:12] Oh, God.

[00:02:13] **John Mueller:** [00:02:13] How do you like the conference so far, Lizzi?

[00:02:15] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:02:15] Well, it is also my first SEO conference. I've never been to one before. This is a first of many things.

[00:02:22] **John Mueller:** [00:02:22] Oh, my God.

[00:02:23] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:02:23] I know. I'm a little peopled out. But it's going well and I'm glad that we're reaching the end.

[00:02:29] **John Mueller:** [00:02:29] Okay. So... [crowd laughs]

[00:02:31] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:02:31] I... [laughs]

[00:02:33] **John Mueller:** [00:02:33] You've had enough of SEOs, or...?

[00:02:35] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:02:35] Oh. Hmm... [laughs]

[00:02:37] **John Mueller:** [00:02:37] Okay. No comment.

[00:02:38] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:02:38] Is this on the record? [laughs]

[00:02:41] **John Mueller:** [00:02:41] This is "Search Off the Record." We're only being recorded live by camera and for a podcast. It's off the record, but kind of on the record... Sorry!

[00:02:50] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:02:50] Gray record.

[00:02:51] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:02:51] Okay, all right.

[00:02:52] **John Mueller:** [00:02:52] Anyway. Myriam, you have the first question that we picked out. What do you have on your mind?

[00:02:59] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:02:59] Oh, yes. A very important question. "The" question you are all wondering when it comes to SEO: What's your favorite movie quote, John?

[00:03:08] **John Mueller:** [00:03:08] Oh, my God. [crowd laughs] Did someone actually submit this?

[00:03:12] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:03:12] They did. No, it was a real question.

[00:03:14] **John Mueller:** [00:03:14] Okay, wow.

[00:03:15] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:03:15] Just for you.

[00:03:16] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:03:16] Legit. And it was just for you. So, do you recall what your favorite movie quote is?

[00:03:21] **John Mueller:** [00:03:21] Umm...

[00:03:23] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:03:23] Have you ever seen a movie before? [crowd laughs]

[00:03:25] **John Mueller:** [00:03:25] Yes.

[00:03:25] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:03:25] Yes. Okay, good.

[00:03:27] **John Mueller:** [00:03:27] [laughs] I have one on my Twitter profile, but I can't remember it. Oh my God.

[00:03:31] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:03:31] it's the pinned one.

[00:03:33] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:03:33] It's the pinned tweet, yes.

[00:03:35] **John Mueller:** [00:03:35] Oh, the SEO answer.

[00:03:38] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:03:38] Yes.

[00:03:38] **John Mueller:** [00:03:38] "It depends." Right?

[00:03:40] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:03:40] No. "That's just your opinion, man."

[00:03:43] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:03:43] Yes.

[00:03:43] **John Mueller:** [00:03:43] "That's just your opinion!" Oh, yes, of course.

[00:03:47] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:03:47] We have the answers. That's okay. We have you covered.

[00:03:49] **John Mueller:** [00:03:49] Okay. Cool, okay. We'll see. All right, cool.

[00:03:56] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:03:56] Wait. That's in the script. "John struggles. Lizzi interrupts."

[00:03:59] **John Mueller:** [00:03:59] Oh, my God.

[00:03:59] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:03:59] Check. Check.

[00:04:00] **John Mueller:** [00:04:00] Well it's good we have clipboards, because then, we look official. I mean we're a podcast, so nobody sees what we looked at anyway.

[00:04:06] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:04:06] E-A-T.

[00:04:09] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:04:09] Oh, eat the words. Okay. The next question we've got here, Neil asked, "Which is your favorite? Subdomain or subdirectory?"

[00:04:19] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:04:19] Hmm... [laughs]

[00:04:22] **John Mueller:** [00:04:22] This is kind of a trick question, I think.

[00:04:24] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:04:24] Is it? Why is it a trick question? I keep hearing it brought up. Everyone, laughs. I don't feel like I'm let in on the joke.

[00:04:32] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:04:32] Because you haven't had to suffer through the joke.

[00:04:34] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:04:34] Okay. Enlighten me.

[00:04:37] **John Mueller:** [00:04:37] All right, I don't know. Do you want to start, Myriam?

[00:04:39] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:04:39] I have opinions. I think we all have opinions on this.

[00:04:43] **John Mueller:** [00:04:43] Subdomains.

[00:04:44] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:04:44] You just pick one at random?

[00:04:45] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:04:45] Okay. Let me start ranting about subdomains. After 15 years in the industry, I can tell you that whenever a developer or engineer comes up to you and goes, "Oh, yeah, your marketing thing, that's going to be a subdomain." You should know something, they don't want you messing stuff up. They are afraid of you, and they're just going to put you in a little box with a nice little subdomain, because everything is safe. "Marketing cannot touch us." You should always ask, "Hey, are we doing the subdomain for security reasons? For any technical reasons? Are there constraints? Are you just doing this because you can? Why?" Well, John, the Google end, tell us about it, and then I can continue ranting.

[00:05:28] **John Mueller:** [00:05:28] Continue ranting? I don't know. When we asked the the Search quality engineers, they're always like, "Do whatever you want." And then we tell them, "Well, we can't tell people to just do whatever they want. We have to give them some advice." And they're really opinionated about this topic, right? I don't know, who here is for subdomains?

[00:05:50] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:05:50] No one.

[00:05:51] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:05:51] Oh, really? It's subdirectory.

[00:05:52] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:05:52] No, I'm telling you. No one.

[00:05:55] **John Mueller:** [00:05:55] Non one? How about subdirectories? [faint cheer]

[00:05:57] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:05:57] Yes!

[00:05:58] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:05:58] Everyone is subdirectory.

[00:05:59] **John Mueller:** [00:05:59] Oh, my gosh. Okay.

[00:06:00] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:06:00] But it's more syllables. It's harder to say!

[00:06:04] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:06:04] Have you ever optimized a website?

[00:06:05] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:06:05] No. Apparently not. [laughs]

[00:06:07] **John Mueller:** [00:06:07] Yeah. It's kind of weird. We talk with the engineers and they're like, "Oh, just do whatever you want." And from a practical point of view, oftentimes, subdirectories are seen more as being a part of the main website. And I think that's where a lot of the SEO kind of input comes from, where they're like, "Oh, we want our part of the website to be seen as a serious part of the website. Not just like something separated out that is safe."

[00:06:34] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:06:34] But once upon a time, because I am old enough to know this, SEOs could rank multiple subdomains for queries and just push the competition down. We can no longer do this. Obviously, subdomains have lost their shine from that standpoint. But from another standpoint...

[00:06:51] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:06:51] [laughs]

[00:06:52] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:06:52] I'm keeping you honest.

[00:06:54] **John Mueller:** [00:06:54] Yeah. Okay, fine.

[00:06:56] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:06:56] Let's not forget our history. So if you have the constraint of having to use a subdomain, ask why. Figure out what's going on and try to work with your team. Because

ultimately, this is not a Google problem, this is your client or your company type of problem that you need to negotiate together to figure out what are the pros, what are the cons.

[00:07:21] **John Mueller:** [00:07:21] Okay. You're saying it depends?

[00:07:23] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:07:23] I didn't say it. [speakers laugh] We are allowed two "It depends" per person.

[00:07:28] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:07:28] Per person, that's too many.

[00:07:29] **John Mueller:** [00:07:29] Oh, no. I just used my "It depends." Oh no! [laughs]

[00:07:31] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:07:31] You did!

[00:07:32] **John Mueller:** [00:07:32] Oh, no! [everyone laughs]

[00:07:35] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:07:35] All right. What's next on the list? I think Myriam, you might have a question?

[00:07:38] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:07:38] Yes, yes. Someone asked, not me. Totally not me, "What is the appropriate reaction after an update?" Let's start with you, Lizzi.

[00:07:49] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:07:49] Oh, appropriate reaction. For me, it's weird, because I'm publishing when the update happens. I sometimes know a few days ahead of time to publish a blog post or an update to that updates ranking change log page that we now have. When I'm pushing that, I'm thinking, "Okay. This is all I have to do. It's like publishing a blog post, no problem." And then I see the reactions on Twitter and then I start thinking, "Should I be panicked?"

[00:08:15] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:08:15] And then it makes me panic as well. Because honestly, one of the last updates, I just posted an innocent picture saying, "Whenever my partner wears this t-shirt, an update happens." And then John shows up on Twitter and goes, "What are you worried about? If you optimize things properly, and I trust you do, you should be fine."

[00:08:39] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:08:39] Yes.

[00:08:40] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:08:40] And if anybody tells you you'll be fine, that's the time you start stressing out and wondering, "Am I doing something wrong?" Everybody is having meetings and webinars explaining how I should survive this thing that I should be fine for. So...

[00:08:55] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:08:55] If that is the reaction, what is the appropriate reaction? What should we be reacting to these updates with?

[00:09:01] **John Mueller:** [00:09:01] I mean, I'm pretty sure you have helpful content. Right?

[00:09:06] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:09:06] Yes, yes. But it feels like a trick question. [laughs]

[00:09:09] **John Mueller:** [00:09:09] Or are you going off and deleting half of the website when the update happens? Just to be sure.

[00:09:14] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:09:14] No, not half.

[00:09:16] **John Mueller:** [00:09:16] Nobody would do that, right?

[00:09:17] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:09:17] Nobody would do it. Would they? They wouldn't tell us.

[00:09:20] **John Mueller:** [00:09:20] Okay.

[00:09:21] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:09:21] I don't think so.

[00:09:22] **John Mueller:** [00:09:22] Yeah. What do you think, Myriam? What should be the appropriate reaction? You're saying "It'll be fine" is not appropriate?

[00:09:30] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:09:30] In the event of an algorithmic depression, please fold yourself in the brace position.

[00:09:40] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:09:40] [laughs] There's a physical position to be in?

[00:09:43] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:09:43] Can you show the physical position? [everyone laughs] I will be providing the alt attribute for this, since we are doing a podcast.

[00:09:51] **John Mueller:** [00:09:51] Oh, my gosh. Okay.

[00:09:53] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:09:53] John's looking stressed.

[00:09:54] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:09:54] John, do you need to Google this?

[00:09:55] **John Mueller:** [00:09:55] I need to Google it, yes. [laughs]

[00:09:59] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:09:59] Insert transition sound effect here. Okay.

[00:10:02] **John Mueller:** [00:10:02] Okay.

[00:10:03] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:10:03] Next question.

[00:10:04] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:10:04] Ta-da!

[00:10:05] **John Mueller:** [00:10:05] What are you doing on Monday, Lizzi? We're talking about updates. What do you think?

[00:10:10] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:10:10] I was hoping to recover from this event, but what are you saying?

[00:10:14] **John Mueller:** [00:10:14] I don't know.

[00:10:15] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:10:15] You didn't prepare the blog post?

[00:10:18] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:10:18] The big, big, big update? That one?

[00:10:19] **John Mueller:** [00:10:19] No.

[00:10:20] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:10:20] No. Okay, all right. Never mind. Okay.

[00:10:21] **John Mueller:** [00:10:21] No, don't panic.

[00:10:22] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:10:22] Don't Panic.

[00:10:23] **John Mueller:** [00:10:23] It'll be fine.

[00:10:24] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:10:24] No bracing.

[00:10:24] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:10:24] Okay. Not yet.

[00:10:26] **John Mueller:** [00:10:26] Anyway. Another question that we got [inaudible]. Natalie asks, "What will the above-the-fold look like in 20 years time?" 20 years is a really long time, but I don't know. Lizzi, what do you think?

[00:10:40] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:10:40] I think it will be Origami. I think not just one fold, I think we need multiple folds.

[00:10:46] **John Mueller:** [00:10:46] Like folded phones?

[00:10:48] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:10:48] Maybe 20 folds.

[00:10:49] **John Mueller:** [00:10:49] 20 folds?

[00:10:50] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:10:50] Yeah, 20 years, I think one per fold. I think, we already have the device that opens like this. There could be, a more interesting device that turns into a bird or something.

[00:11:00] **John Mueller:** [00:11:00] Okay.

[00:11:00] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:11:00] Yes.

[00:11:01] **John Mueller:** [00:11:01] So, above the folds. This doesn't sound very serious.

[00:11:05] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:11:05] Well, what do you think? I mean... Myriam, do you have a serious answer?

[00:11:09] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:11:09] I actually do, though. I really, really do.

[00:11:11] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:11:11] Okay, alright. Let's hear it.

[00:11:12] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:11:12] So we've seen things evolve, very, very fast. I've been around for a while, and things keep getting faster and faster. In 20 years, things will have evolved and so will the fold. Even today, I find myself making cocktails in my kitchen and asking, "Hey, Google home, next." For the next step of the recipe. So, the way I consume your content is in the way you think I'm going to, and that's going to keep accelerating. Because as humans, that's why we do. We aren't made to just stand in front of a desktop or a phone-- Well, the phone is now a part of me, but it will keep evolving.

[00:11:51] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:11:51] Do you think that the fold will ever disappear? We will be in a sort of VR goggles metaverse walking around, seamless type content experience?

[00:12:01] **John Mueller:** [00:12:01] 20 years, who knows, I don't know. That seems like...

[00:12:06] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:12:06] That's a spicy question.

[00:12:07] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:12:07] It's spicy? Okay.

[00:12:08] **John Mueller:** [00:12:08] Like 3D glasses search results. I think the tricky part for us, because we work with the Search Console team, is what a Search Console going to show when things evolve like that. We'll be hit like two-dimensional rankings, left and right. It's already something where when you look at the search results like videos and other things you can swipe to the side. Things you can swipe up and you click on them and they get bigger and everything. It's already... There are lots of changes there, but like what Search Console shows is a ranking position. Is it like a 3D position?

[00:12:41] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:12:41] We should take a stroll behind the graph in 20 years. I want to be able to see the behind the scenes.

[00:12:46] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:12:46] I see. A three dimensional graph of the three-dimensional material? I see.

[00:12:50] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:12:50] Yeah.

[00:12:51] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:12:51] Moving into range.

[00:12:52] **John Mueller:** [00:12:52] But that's really hard to print out. If you create a PDF and you print it out for your clients...

[00:12:57] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:12:57] You think there will be printers in 20 years still?

[00:13:00] **John Mueller:** [00:13:00] Sure.

[00:13:00] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:13:00] Sure? Yeah. It's okay, we must have them. We have paper here. Paper remains. We need the clipboards.

[00:13:06] **John Mueller:** [00:13:06] Okay.

[00:13:06] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:13:06] Moving over to links.

[00:13:08] **John Mueller:** [00:13:08] No!

[00:13:08] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:13:08] Oh, Links.

[00:13:10] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:13:10] Links.

[00:13:11] **John Mueller:** [00:13:11] Who submitted this?

[00:13:12] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:13:12] What kind of question is this?

[00:13:13] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:13:13] It's yours.

[00:13:14] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:13:14] It's my question. Okay, I'm prompted. All right, Chris. Chris asks, "As an SEO, we are interested in backlinks. However, actively working on backlinks often becomes a gray area in terms of link schemes. What are Google's main criteria for penalizing backlinks?"

[00:13:34] **John Mueller:** [00:13:34] John, over to you.

[00:13:35] **John Mueller:** [00:13:35] John. Oh, my gosh. It's algorithmic. [laughs]

[00:13:41] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:13:41] Now that you have the Google opinion, can we have the SEO opinion?

[00:13:45] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:13:45] He didn't even give his opinion. Let's hear it. Let's hear it. [laughs]

[00:13:51] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:13:51] Oh, it's not just algorithmic?

[00:13:52] **John Mueller:** [00:13:52] Well, it's something where I imagine, over time, the weight on the links. At some point, will drop off a little bit as we can't figure out a little bit better how the content fits in within the context of the whole web. And to some extent, links will always be something that we care about because we have to find pages somehow. It's like how do you find a page on the web without some reference to it?

[00:14:23] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:14:23] Uh-huh.

[00:14:24] **John Mueller:** [00:14:24] But my guess is over time, it won't be such a big factor as sometimes it is today. I think already, that's something that's been changing quite a bit.

[00:14:36] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:14:36] I have an opinion though, an SEO opinion. Chris, we have to talk, you and I. Because when you say here that it often becomes a gray area in terms of link schemes, I want to know did anyone hear the words link and schemes together and think, "Yeah, that's going to be good, clean SEO?" Just wanting to know. If I come into your inbox saying, "Hey, can I interest you in some link schemes?" Are you convinced? Yes, no?

[00:15:04] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:15:04] Oh, my gosh. We have three people who are going, "How much?" Okay, let's talk after this while they're out of earshot.

[00:15:12] **John Mueller:** [00:15:12] So, how much?

[00:15:14] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:15:14] Ultimately how organic are the backlink, though? But...

[00:15:17] **John Mueller:** [00:15:17] No, I think I think he wants a link from you.

[00:15:20] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:15:20] Oh!

[00:15:21] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:15:21] I do get a lot of propositions like this on LinkedIn. But seriously...

[00:15:27] **John Mueller:** [00:15:27] I think that's why it's called "Linked-In".

[00:15:28] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:15:28] Oh, that makes sense. [everyone laughs] [crowd cheers]

[00:15:34] **John Mueller:** [00:15:34] All right. Next question. Myriam, what's up?

[00:15:38] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:15:38] Hi, Lanendra. I got your question. "Schema documentation says we should mark up any relevant information on web pages. When adding schema types like organization or site link search, is it alright to add it to all the pages, even if there are tens of thousands of pages?"

[00:16:02] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:16:02] Well, is it all right? It's fine. You can do whatever you want, it's schema. You can put whatever schema you want on pages on the web, it's open. But you don't need to. You really only need to put the organization schema on the homepage, and that's what the documentation says. But if there are other kinds of site setups, maybe you have multiple organizations on the site, you might want to have a specific for that store or something. It might be an e-commerce platform

that has multiple stores, then you might want to have the organization markup for each of those store pages. But you don't need to duplicate it across every page on your website. Just the homepage is fine.

[00:16:43] And for other schema types, the documentation spells out what pages it should be on. But that's really up to you. If it makes sense to put it on more pages, go for it, but you don't need to. If it's causing problems, you don't need to go and put it on every page. Do you see this differently, Myriam?

[00:17:02] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:17:02] A little bit, but it's more of an opinion than an SEO opinion. I'm a human being and I wonder about things online...

[00:17:08] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:17:08] Oh, you're suspicious. You're a suspicious user of the internet.

[00:17:12] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:17:12] I'm very suspicious.

[00:17:14] **John Mueller:** [00:17:14] You don't trust Google's opinion. Why are you here?

[00:17:17] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:17:17] You can have an opinion, but there's a reason why schema exists beyond Google. There's more than Google.

[00:17:22] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:17:22] Yes.

[00:17:23] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:17:23] Schema, ultimately, is something that, as a website owner, somebody who works to improve a website, you should be interested in. It's a way for you to communicate semantically, give meaning beyond what you have on the page, beyond the code you would normally have. For me, I'm very interested by the concept of multi-entities. What do I mean by that?

[00:17:50] If I'm talking to you about a house and I'm talking to you about something that's for sale, these are two concepts. But put together, you know that a house for sale is something else. Just like the act of cutting, hair, haircut becomes something different. So, when you want to communicate that information, because you're stuck in that murky ambiguous in between sometimes, multiple entities can help with that beyond what a search engine would want to understand and display. Because at the end of the day, most of us here in this room are going to be using schema to get those sweet, sweet stars, that extra information that will push some of the competitors down, make you look good, spiffy. Yes, but there's more to this, so I highly recommend you look into schema. It's constantly evolving as well. It's a living thing that you can contribute to.

[00:18:43] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:18:43] It should also be relevant to the page. Don't just put every schema that you've ever heard of. It needs to be...

[00:18:49] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:18:49] It's not because you can that you should. And that should be a mantra.

[00:18:54] **John Mueller:** [00:18:54] What do you mean, you can contribute to it? You can just make up a new schema?

[00:18:58] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:18:58] Can I?

[00:18:59] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:18:59] [laughs] I think you can propose it. If you wanted to write a proposal and submit to schema.org, you could suggest something. I don't know if Dan Brickley is here from Schema.org, but we can chat to him after.

[00:19:11] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:19:11] Absolutely. Same goes for you, you can genuinely propose something. If you're part of an evolution or something that you go, "Hey, this is new, we're having a hard time describing this thing," schema can help.

[00:19:25] **John Mueller:** [00:19:25] Cool. Okay, but what will search engines do with it? Like put the cat schema on my pages? What would happen?

[00:19:34] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:19:34] Is there a cat picture schema? The public wants to know.

[00:19:38] **John Mueller:** [00:19:38] I would be surprised if there isn't.

[00:19:40] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:19:40] Cat as an entity and then types of cats, breeds of cats?

[00:19:43] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:19:43] Or multi entity cat pictures.

[00:19:45] **John Mueller:** [00:19:45] Multi entity cat pictures, okay. I guess there's always a difference between what you need for some specific feature in Search and what you can do. And that range of like what the minimal requirement is versus what... The maximum is open-ended, you can do whatever you want.

[00:20:06] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:20:06] Yeah. But I think that they don't want to get carried away with naming things. You can name so many things with the taxonomy and everything. It really needs to have a purpose. I think when you are proposing something, it goes through some kind of review process to make sure, will it be used somewhere, because we don't want to just add it for the sake of adding things.

[00:20:23] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:20:23] The problem when you work in Search Engine Optimization is that you have to convince people to put that schema there.

[00:20:29] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:20:29] Sure.

[00:20:30] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:20:30] Don't burn any goodwill by putting it all on all pages and forcing people to do extra work. You will lose a lot of the goodwill from any team that works with you that has to slog through and implement this. Be wise, it's not because you can that you should use all the scheme on all the pages.

[00:20:47] **John Mueller:** [00:20:47] But for optimization, you have to get all of those tiny little things...

[00:20:50] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:20:50] Are you trying to stuff schema everywhere? [Lizzi laughs]

[00:20:54] **John Mueller:** [00:20:54] Okay. Fine, I won't. Okay, fine. Just like bare minimum to get stars everywhere.

[00:21:00] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:21:00] Okay, just the review stars. That's the only one you know.

[00:21:03] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:21:03] Those are favorites.

[00:21:04] **John Mueller:** [00:21:04] Just stars. Five stars everywhere. Another question we got. Ian asks, "What is your take on templated content outlines, like using a similar set of headings and subheadings across all pages on your site, and of course, with unique body content?" What do you think about that? Lizzi, you're a writer...

[00:21:25] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:21:25] Yeah. My first reaction is, it can be helpful to have a templated approach, because there might be certain pages on your site that you could replicate something, especially with reference documentation. In the structured data documentation, things follow a certain pattern where we start with an intro about what the feature is, the feature availability, examples, how to do it, and then the reference table at the bottom. It follows a certain pattern and it can be helpful for people to get familiar with that pattern and then they know where to find those things.

[00:21:58] And from a writer's perspective, that can be helpful to plug things in. If there's a formula that is working, I think that that can be a helpful framework. But Myriam's going to [laughs] interject with the concerns, because I think I generally look at these questions with a little bit of rosy eyes.

[00:22:15] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:22:15] She said plug-in. Plug-in means that some folks are going to go, "Hmm, let me stuff this page." No, that's not how you should work.

[00:22:23] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:22:23] What are the concerns here? So what am I not seeing?

[00:22:26] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:22:26] First of all, just before anything, we love templated content, because that enables us to work with different writing teams, for example, and always have the same consistency, the same coherence. And if you have a template as a brand, you have a specific type of, let's say article, and it's trusted, you know how it's going to go [complicit cough] any SEO publication out there, we know, templates.

[00:22:52] But ultimately, you can have some great things going on with templated content, it brings rigor, etc. If you're doing this, spinning up some content or letting GPT-3 vomit something in there, just because you selected your H1, H2, H3, and you're like, "Go!" This may not be super helpful for you, because [wincing] Google and any other search engine doesn't owe you indexing. You may submit that content, going, "I'm done! There, fixed it." But then, you're like, "It doesn't work." I had one of those cases recently...

[00:23:30] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:23:30] Hmm.

[00:23:30] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:23:30] But it was a legit-- No, no. Don't judge me. It was a legitimate template.

[00:23:34] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:23:34] I want to know more. Tell us more.

[00:23:35] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:23:35] I work with a company that sells alcohol. When times are good, it goes quite well. When times are bad, it goes even better. However, these distillery pages that we had were very important and we had to keep the same approach. And Google, not you, John, not you, Lizzi, but just Google as a whole, all of Google just went, "No, we're not indexing this." And if you have this issue, please don't scrap your templated content. Just go and ask yourself, "Hey, why would anyone, or any bot, or any machine or anything think these distilleries are the same?" The easiest way to get out of this rut is to optimize your H1. Just have it be meaningful, please.

[00:24:22] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:24:22] Were all the H1s the same for every distillery or...?

[00:24:25] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:24:25] No, not even. It just said random distillery name up in the highlands or the lowlands or all the lands.

[00:24:31] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:24:31] I see.

[00:24:32] **John Mueller:** [00:24:32] By optimizing the H1, you mean including relevant keywords?

[00:24:36] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:24:36] Say the things. Say it's a distillery, for example. [Lizzi laughs]

[00:24:40] **John Mueller:** [00:24:40] Okay. And for the H2s, you should use...

[00:24:43] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:24:43] No, you don't use them.

[00:24:44] **John Mueller:** [00:24:44] People also ask questions and just...

[00:24:45] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:24:45] No, H2s, you skip them. Oh, no. H3s. Which ones are the bad ones?

[00:24:49] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:24:49] I don't know if you followed that Twitter thing where somebody demanded justice for H3s. We really do need more H3s in life, they are not loved enough?

[00:24:58] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:24:58] No, I thought we were not meant to use them. Is that right, John?

[00:25:01] **John Mueller:** [00:25:01] No, no H3s. It's like you're disorganized.

[00:25:05] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:25:05] Oh! [laughs]

[00:25:06] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:25:06] But if I put it on top of the H1, does that help?

[00:25:09] **John Mueller:** [00:25:09] That's kind of confusing.

[00:25:11] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:25:11] Yes.

[00:25:12] **John Mueller:** [00:25:12] The H3 and the H1. Maybe with CSS, you can tweak it around. I don't know.

[00:25:16] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:25:16] No, no, no. You use the proper order. Don't do that. Don't listen to his advice.

[00:25:21] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:25:21] Okay, keeping you honest here, let's get back to it. Templated content works, because it brings consistency, coherence, and human beings have a tendency to like certain anchors. We like familiar things. We like to know how a template is going to take us on this journey and we trust it. At the end of the day, Ian, what was the official question? Templated content outlines? Yes, they should work unless they're not helpful content, in which case make it helpful.

[00:25:50] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:25:50] Whoo!

[00:25:50] **John Mueller:** [00:25:50] It's like the helpful content update.

[00:25:52] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:25:52] No, no, no.

[00:25:53] **John Mueller:** [00:25:53] You'll be like, "The H1, H2, H3 content update."

[00:25:56] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:25:56] We're not talking about the helpful content of it.

[00:25:57] **John Mueller:** [00:25:57] No! Okay, good. That's fine.

[00:25:59] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:25:59] All right. John might go rogue here.

[00:26:04] **John Mueller:** [00:26:04] No, it's okay.

[00:26:06] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:26:06] Didn't that just happen?

[00:26:05] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:26:05] Oh, okay. It's fine?

[00:26:07] **John Mueller:** [00:26:07] It's fine.

[00:26:08] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:26:08] It's fine? [laughs] Okay. Next question we've got here. B asks, "Should the image alt be purely about the image or specific to the web page topic? What does the crawler look for?"

[00:26:21] **John Mueller:** [00:26:21] The alt tag.

[00:26:22] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:26:22] Yes, the alt tag.

[00:26:24] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:26:24] Okay, it says here Myriam has feelings. And Myriam does have feelings, folks. It's not an alt tag, it's called an alt attribute.

[00:26:32] **John Mueller:** [00:26:32] But I posted it on Twitter, that it's an alt tag.

[00:26:34] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:26:34] Yes, the team allowed him to get this through. It is a misinformation. That is not helpful. [Lizzi laughs] It is called an alt attribute, and...

[00:26:42] **John Mueller:** [00:26:42] That's just a technicality.

[00:26:45] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:26:45] "I shall overcome."

[00:26:47] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:26:47] She's never going to come back to this podcast. [laughs] I don't think. You will overcome though.

[00:26:53] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:26:53] Yes, I am overcoming...

[00:26:54] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:26:54] Let's get you back on the train of thought. [pants] Purely about the image or specific to the web page?

[00:27:00] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:27:00] I do have an anecdote about this, first and foremost. More than ten years ago, a French company was tasked with optimizing a political figure's website, and the SEO agency did not get paid. So they decided to optimize every single alt attribute of this woman who was in politics for Pamela Anderson. And in France, if you type Pamela Anderson, this old lady, who does not pay SEOs showed up, until she realized this and then paid the agency. It was great fun.

[00:27:34] Today, would you be able to pull this off? Not necessarily. However, it is very important to keep in mind that this alt attribute is very useful for other human beings. For example, folks coming into Brighton had a few train troubles and I did get feedback on Twitter going, "Hey, my internet connection is shi... not good."

[00:27:57] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:27:57] Fill in the blank.

[00:27:58] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:27:58] Yes. "But your alts are giving me life. I feel like I'm there, it's really fun. Thank you." This is one of those cases that you wouldn't expect because I know the word

accessibility just popped into your head and you went, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." No, there is a real use for this. And you should describe what is on the image. Don't do the SEO thing of, "Oh, my article is talking about Core Web Vitals, but I have like this piece of toast that is a great image. Let me rename it Core Web Vitals so I can boost things. No, it's a piece of toast. Just say it's a piece of toast. Maybe provide some context as to why you chose a piece of toast there.

[00:28:33] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:28:33] What if the toast is one of those special toasts that has a burned in image...

[00:28:37] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:28:37] Say so.

[00:28:38] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:28:38] That says Core Web Vitals on it. It's a special toast. I bet there's a toaster that exists.

[00:28:42] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:28:42] You are a great SEO, actually.

[00:28:44] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:28:44] Oh, I'm inventing products now.

[00:28:46] **John Mueller:** [00:28:46] You're saying like fill the alt tag with lots of keywords?

[00:28:50] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:28:50] No. [Lizzi laughs] But you can always explain the context. And if the context is filled with keywords, well good on you.

[00:28:58] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:28:58] Hmm. Hmm.

[00:28:59] **John Mueller:** [00:28:59] Okay. The thing that I like to think about, especially for the alt attribute, to avoid too much trouble, is that oftentimes, you have an image on a page and you could just describe the image, but you really need to describe the context of the image as well. If you're searching for a beach and there's a picture of a beach, then that's fine. If you have a hotel web page and you have a picture of a beach, then it's not like, "This is a picture of a random beach." But it's like, "This is the beach near the hotel."

[00:29:33] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:29:33] I'm offering a contest.

[00:29:35] **John Mueller:** [00:29:35] Okay.

[00:29:36] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:29:36] Do not hesitate to tweet any brightonSEO picture with an interesting alt that you think would be correct. And John, may... should give feedback if you're hesitating on, "How do I write a good alt?"

[00:29:52] **John Mueller:** [00:29:52] Okay. It's funny, because I include a lot of information in my alt attribute information. A lot of information...

[00:30:00] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:30:00] Okay. Easter eggs?

[00:30:01] **John Mueller:** [00:30:01] Which is more interesting, sometimes, than the tweet itself, and nobody responds to it. It's terrible. I don't know, nobody responds...

[00:30:08] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:30:08] I have information on this. The first time I ever had an SEO publication talk about me is because there was information in the alt regarding Crawley. That is the name of...

[00:30:20] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:30:20] Yes, yes, yes. The spider. That is how we released, we did a soft, secret release of the name was in the alt text, and somebody found it. It did take a few days, but...

[00:30:28] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:30:28] Somebody?

[00:30:29] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:30:29] Yes, somebody. Was it you?

[00:30:30] **John Mueller:** [00:30:30] Cool.

[00:30:31] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:30:31] Was it me?

[00:30:32] **John Mueller:** [00:30:32] I don't know.

[00:30:34] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:30:34] Martin is saying... Yeah, it was you?

[00:30:37] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:30:37] No, he was confirming that it was me all along!

[00:30:39] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:30:39] Okay, it's fine. I believe you.

[00:30:41] **John Mueller:** [00:30:41] Okay, cool. Someone is reading the alt tags. I mean text-- attributes, attributes... Oh my God, I'm going to get murdered afterwards. [everyone laughs]

[00:30:50] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:30:50] Alt attributes!

[00:30:51] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:30:51] Tags is short, it's easy to say.

[00:30:54] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:30:54] Attributes!

[00:30:54] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:30:54] Tags, subdomain, it's punchy.

[00:30:57] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:30:57] You have more misinformation than TikTok. [everyone laughs]

[00:31:02] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:31:02] Shots fired! [laughs]

[00:31:04] **John Mueller:** [00:31:04] All right. All right, maybe we should stop here. That's all for this episode. Don't forget to like and subscribe. I don't know how you do that live, but make sure to--

[00:31:14] **Myriam Jessier:** [00:31:14] Click the bell!

[00:31:16] **John Mueller:** [00:31:16] Click the bell, [everyone laughs] like...

[00:31:18] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:31:18] Thumbs up.

[00:31:19] **John Mueller:** [00:31:19] Like and subscribe. Thanks for joining us here, live at brightonSEO. I hope you had a fantastic conference. Thanks a lot, everyone. [crowd cheers] Cool! Thank you. [applause]

[00:31:33] ♪ [music] ♪

[00:31:36] **Lizzi Sassman:** [00:31:36] Well that's it for this episode. In the next episode of "Search Off the Record," we'll be chatting about redirects. Thank you folks for listening and goodbye!

[00:31:45] ♪ [music] ♪