

UNSCRIPTED SEO PODCAST · A COMPANION EBOOK



Organic Growth Engineering

How Adrian Nikolov Turns AI Into an SEO Superpower

A conversation between host Jeremy Rivera and Adrian Nikolov, founder of Haide Digital — on making AI do our jobs better, engineering the funnel, and why authority is the new PageRank.

LISTEN & WATCH: unscriptedseo.com

GUEST: haide.digital · Newsletter — Search Engineered

WHAT'S INSIDE

Ten Ideas, One Engine

- 01** Make AI Do Our Jobs Better
- 02** Back in the Wild, Wild West
- 03** Becoming the Developer
- 04** Own Your Audience — Even If You're an Introvert
- 05** Organic Growth Engineering
- 06** The Duck-Catching System
- 07** Stop Just Blogging
- 08** Authority Is the New PageRank
- 09** SEO Is the Orchestrator
- 10** Ideas Worth Stealing + Connect

A NOTE FROM JEREMY

I sat down with Adrian Nikolov expecting a tools-and-tactics chat and got something sharper: a working thesis for what SEO becomes when you stop fearing AI and start conscripting it. Adrian founded Haide Digital — “let’s go” in Bulgarian — on the bet that the way to survive the disruption is to make AI do the job better. What follows is his conversation, in his words where it counts, organized into the ideas I keep coming back to.

CHAPTER 01

Make AI Do Our Jobs Better

Eighteen years into SEO, Adrian launched Haide Digital about six months before we spoke — and he launched it straight into the storm. The industry narrative was fear: AI is coming for your job. His response was to invert it.

The service he built is deliberately AI-oriented, but anchored by more than a decade of hard-won search knowledge. The point isn't to replace the expertise with automation; it's to give the expertise steroids. As I put it in the episode, the more you cower in fear of the thing that could take your job, the more likely it takes it. You grab the bull by the horns instead.

“

I decided to make AI do our jobs better

— Adrian Nikolov

SEOs are unusually well suited for this. We've been rolling with the punches since Panda — living with the tides of the algorithm shifting under us for years. A new disruption is just Tuesday.

“

creativity is productive as well.

— Adrian Nikolov

CHAPTER 02

Back in the Wild, Wild West

For a decade, everything digital flowed through one company. Alta Vista, HotBot and the rest died; Yahoo folded into what became Bing, and Bing went meek. From 2010 to 2020, optimizing for search meant optimizing for Google, full stop — a black box that paid us little respect.

The monopoly has cracked. As my earlier guest Paul Pape framed it, the civilization we thought was there isn't there — but competition is a gift. It means we no longer have to be hidebound to a single gatekeeper. Adrian watched that episode and agreed on the spot.

“

we're back in the wild, wild west.

— Jeremy Rivera (quoting Paul Pape)

The upside of a frontier is that the rules are still being written. That's uncomfortable for anyone who built a career leaning on Google's monopoly power — and liberating for anyone ready to build.

CHAPTER 03

Becoming the Developer

Ask Adrian for the single biggest unlock and he doesn't hesitate: building his own tools. The developer bottleneck — the thing that once kept ambitious ideas out of reach because of the sheer weight of the technical lift — is gone. He became the developer.

That means self-healing topical-authority systems that collect their own data and get smarter over time — smarter, he says, than everyone on his team. It means ads automation and content automation. It means the death of the manual grind: no more hand-ticking Yoast or Rank Math boxes, hand-adding schema, hand-pushing internal links.

“

I literally don't want to stop.

— Adrian Nikolov

The workload didn't shrink — it grew, because it got interesting. He compares it to his old StarCraft addiction. I know the feeling: I stood up humancertifiedcontent.com from idea to execution in about six hours, something that would have been a huge undertaking two years ago.

CHAPTER 04

Own Your Audience — Even If You're an Introvert

The distributed web collapsed in on itself. The community aspect of our own sites — the commenting, the back-and-forth — migrated to social platforms, in part because we let our comment sections get spammed to death and then ignored them. Rand Fishkin and I have chewed on this on LinkedIn: we handed our communities away.

Which makes one thing clearer than ever: owning your own audience is mandatory. You can't treat Google like an endless ocean to fish in forever. You have to actively build the thing you own.

“

owning your own audience is mandatory.

— Jeremy Rivera

Adrian's sharp objection is that not everyone is built to be a creator. There are introverts, shy founders, big-business people with no social presence at all. This is where AI earns its keep — the systems he builds create presence without requiring the founder's face on camera every day.

“

Turning introverts into social people.

— Adrian Nikolov

CHAPTER 05

Organic Growth Engineering

This is the center of Adrian's thesis and the phrase Haide uses for the work: organic growth engineering — SEO, GEO, and AI automation fused into one engine rather than sold as three separate line items. It's a big concept for a non-SEO to hold, which is exactly why it's worth naming precisely.

It starts with an automated diagnostic that runs through the MCPs — crawling with Screaming Frog, pulling keyword data with DataForSEO — to build a profile of the brand. From that context, Adrian synthesizes everything the brand ever published and everything ever said about it into a voice profile: a synthetic head of content that feeds the topical-authority system.

“

authority is the new PageRank

— Adrian Nikolov

Then the system covers every funnel stage and tracks each page it publishes, because a plan can look perfect on paper and only the data tells the truth. That data-first, ship-first ethos is the whole reason the company is named Haide.

“

It means “let's go.” It means break stuff. It means publish stuff.

— Adrian Nikolov

CHAPTER 06

The Duck-Catching System

Here's the mental model I keep reaching for. Old-school content marketing loaded everything into the top of the funnel to get as many people on the site as possible — feed the ducks, and you'll have a bunch of ducks. The problem is that a pile of ducks isn't revenue.

You need a duck-catching system: navigation, CTAs, internal links, and layout that actually move a cold reader to the next stage. Otherwise you're holding up your hands and hoping the pigeon jumps into your pocket. Adrian calls this the line between an SEO and a great one — the great ones ask whether a page turns the impression into a click, and the click into revenue.

“

you need a duck-catching system to turn the ducks into the next stage.

— Jeremy Rivera

Impressions still matter, especially for new brands; the more people see you across relevant topics, the more likely they search you directly, convert, or tell a friend — still the best referral there is. But impressions without a catching system just leak.

“

you just described the difference between an SEO and a great SEO.

— Adrian Nikolov

CHAPTER 07

Stop Just Blogging

“Blog” is short for “weblog” — a journal entry. Somewhere along the way businesses inherited the idea that success meant throwing spaghetti at the wall and hoping someone liked the throw, and agencies happily sold them more spaghetti.

I've audited the wreckage: a concrete-wall company with posts on hurricanes and paint colors, no headers, no CTA, no links to anywhere. We are well past the point where disconnected content is acceptable. With AI you can finally prompt your own archive — find what's related, build the internal links, connect the threads you already have.

“

it's stupid to just blog.

— Jeremy Rivera

Adrian sees the agency version of this constantly: land a big established brand and immediately rewrite its blogs, because the last agency ‘sucked.’ Wrong move. Read the data, build linkable assets, make a knowledge base, make downloadables, fix the bottom-funnel pages where the money actually is.

CHAPTER 08

Authority Is the New PageRank

Adrian's favorite lens is sentiment and trust: authority is the new PageRank. The work isn't buying a prompt-tracking dashboard nobody understands — it's interviewing the client, mapping the brand values, and having the model tell you who it cites alongside you and why a competitor gets the better mention.

Reverse-engineering was always the useful half of link building, and it's never been easier. You can literally ask the system why it surfaced a citation, and it will tell you: this chef made a top-ten list, got named in a newspaper, showed up in a directory. So chase the mentions. Get the CEO on a podcast, land the press release, make sure what you do in real life is reflected online — even the Eventbrite listing for your trash cleanup carries a followed link.

“

Nowadays, to get cited in AI, you don't even need links.

— Adrian Nikolov

And the frontier keeps moving: Adrian points to Pedro Dias declaring himself the world's greatest AI expert on LinkedIn and getting cited as exactly that minutes later. Off the back of Lily Ray's observation that LinkedIn articles get cited, Adrian started a newsletter the models adore.

CHAPTER 09

SEO Is the Orchestrator

The tidy story people tell is that SEO and LLM optimization are two circles with a modest overlap. Wrong shape. LLMs overlap SEO on every edge — links and citations feed them, content feeds them, technical health decides whether anyone has a good experience at all. SEO isn't a sibling of LLM optimization; it's the heart of it.

And the operating model finally favors us. Google was adversarial — it held the golden keys and made you fight to put information out about yourself. LLMs run on data and input to do their job. Matt Brooks of SEOTeric framed it perfectly: your least trustworthy support rep is named Claude GPT Gemini, and you simply haven't given them instructions yet. So inform them — map your entity, answer their questions, feed the people-pleasers.

“

Claude is a people pleaser. ChatGPT is a people pleaser.

— Jeremy Rivera

That's why Adrian believes SEO is the orchestrator of the new era. The job already demanded UX, development, content, social, CRO and technical chops. Ads will come and go inside every engine, but the organic is what stays — and what brands should be built around.

“

the organic is what stays, and what brands should be built around.

— Adrian Nikolov

THE PLAYBOOK

Ideas Worth Stealing

- 01** Make AI do your job better — the factor you fear is the one that replaces you, so wield it.
- 02** Become the developer: ship self-healing topical-authority systems, not one-off posts.
- 03** Own your audience — AI gives even introverts presence without the daily performance.
- 04** Sell the engine, not the parts: SEO + GEO + AI automation = organic growth engineering.
- 05** Build a duck-catching system — CTAs, internal links and layout that move readers down the funnel.
- 06** Stop just blogging; connect every thread and fix the bottom-funnel pages where the money is.
- 07** Authority is the new PageRank — reverse-engineer citations and earn real mentions.
- 08** Feed the people-pleasers: map your entity and give the LLMs the answers they're asking for.

CONNECT & GO DEEPER

Find Adrian: haide.digital — SEO tools built for nerds · Newsletter: *Search Engineered* on LinkedIn · [Adrian Nikolov on LinkedIn](#)

Listen & Watch: the full Unscripted SEO episode with show notes at unscriptedseo.com

More from the network: seoarcade.com and jeremyriveraseo.com for SEO tooling and strategy · human-certifiedcontent.com for the human-vs-AI content question raised in this conversation

Spread the signal. Let's go.