



S1E15

The Death of the Direct Click: How Scrunch is Redefining SEO

Season 1 Episode 15 Notes

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Episode Synopsis

On the road to Thirst, Dan sits down with Preston Melle of Scrunch to talk about how AI is reshaping the way people search, and what it means for businesses trying to stay visible. As more people turn to ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Claude for instant, contextualized answers, they're visiting fewer websites directly. Preston's central idea: your new VIP user is an AI bot, and if your content isn't structured for bots to digest, they'll pull answers from your competitors instead of you.

Preston shares how AI has crept into his own life, from designing a Utah-friendly garden to finding the perfect travel backpack, before breaking down how Scrunch actually works. Rather than pulling data secondhand through APIs, Scrunch simulates real user searches to show brands exactly where they show up and where competitors are winning. He also explains how its Agent Experience Platform helps optimize sites for AI crawlers and why tools like Scrunch complement traditional SEO rather than replace it.

About

Preston Melle



Highlights

Preston is an Agency Partnerships Leader at Scrunch, working with more than 35 top agency partners to make AI search visibility central to how they serve their clients.

He entered the AI experience space ahead of the curve, helping businesses adapt as customers increasingly turn to AI platforms instead of traditional search.

As the connection point between agencies and Scrunch, he tailors solutions to each partner's unique reporting needs, services, and perspective.

Expertise

Preston helps brands understand how often they show up in AI platforms like ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Claude, and where they can improve their visibility as search behavior shifts.

He specializes in customer success, guiding agencies and businesses through adopting new tools and translating complex change into simple, actionable steps.

With a background spanning customer success, marketing, and business growth, he helps clients get ahead of changing search behavior rather than scrambling to catch up.

Related Links

- [The No Fluff Guide to AI Search](#)
- [Explore trends, data studies, and free AI-search tools at Scrunch Labs](#)
- [Connect with Preston on LinkedIn](#)
- [About Dan Posner](#)

Show Notes

In This Episode

- How search behavior is shifting from Google's ten-open-tabs approach to getting a single, contextualized answer from ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Claude
- Why Preston says "your new VIP user is an AI bot" and what that means for how you structure your content
- Real-world examples of AI-assisted decisions, from planning a Utah-friendly garden to choosing the right travel backpack within a budget
- The tradeoff between AI's helpfulness and the privacy questions that come with feeding it more personal context
- What Scrunch actually does: showing brands how often they appear in AI search results and where competitors are winning
- How Scrunch collects data firsthand by simulating real user prompts across AI platforms, rather than pulling it secondhand through APIs
- The Agent Experience Platform (AXP) and how it helps optimize your website for AI crawlers to digest
- Why Scrunch complements rather than replaces traditional SEO tools like SEMrush, including why a former SEMrush partnerships leader jumped on board

Memorable Quotes

- "Your new VIP user is an AI bot."
- "More people are going to these AI platforms and getting an answer immediately."
- "We're actually collecting our data firsthand... we simulate what a user will experience."
- "We just want to help businesses to get ahead of this new behavior that we're seeing in the market right now."

Key Takeaways

- Search behavior has fundamentally changed; people increasingly want one contextualized answer, not a page of links to sort through.
- If AI bots can't easily digest your content, they'll pull answers from your competitors instead of you.
- Visibility in AI search is now measurable, and knowing where you show up (and where you don't) is the first step to improving it.
- Optimizing for AI crawlers is becoming as important as optimizing for human visitors.
- AI search tools like Scrunch don't replace traditional SEO platforms; they fill a gap those tools weren't built to cover.