Garrett Susman: Welcome back to another episode of the Rank B Podcast. I'm your host, Garrett Susman of IO Rank, and I am hyped. Not only do we have a dude that I recently connected with but respect so much in our industry, but he is also a Rank B Podcast listener. We are going to be talking all about schema, like why it's important, how it's been around forever, what you should do, best practices, what you should avoid, and what's going to happen with all this like SGE AI stuff, and is schema more important or less important semantics today. I'm joined by none other than Dave Oeta. Dave is the owner of Dave Oeta Consulting. He's been in the industry for like way more than a decade, 14 years, worked in digital marketing, helping businesses increase organic leads, converting more sales. And during the last seven years, he's focused on providing the schema markup strategy and design to help businesses build knowledge graphs, working on projects, getting their schema in order, which shockingly, so many websites just kind of ostrich head in the sand, don't even think about it. Dave, dude, thanks for joining me. How you doing?

Dave Oeta: Garrett, it's awesome. It's awesome to be with you and not just listening to you as I'm on my treadmill daily. So I'm excited. I'm thrilled and thrilled for the topic. You know, it's interesting in the world of podcasts, there's so many great SEO podcasts. We were just talking before you, you want to rattle off some of your favorites that you listen to, plug for all these great people. Search with Candor, yes, I love that. I mean, there are so many. It's hard to choose because there's always something great that you have like, "Oh, that's a great topic. Let me listen to that. I wasn't even thinking about it." But yeah, that was worth my time. And I love it. You said you like listening to them on walks. I was thinking, because you and I both work remote, like I don't have the commute anymore to listen to podcasts. So you need to find those moments like you're walking, and you just like, you zone in, and it just takes you to that land of SEO voices.

Garrett Susman: Absolutely. And you know, and it's the way that I feel like I got healthier, my mind and my body. Like, that's a double Duo I can't beat.

Dave Oeta: Dude, I mean, it is. And it's, and it's, I, I, I like getting stuck in my own head without anything sometimes, but other times I really appreciate just having very smart people talking to me while I'm, while I'm exercising.

Garrett Susman: Well, I appreciate you doing these podcasts because they're awesome. They help me a lot.

Dave Oeta: Dude, well, let's get structured. Let's talk schema. So schema's been around for a while. Before we even kind of dive into some of these best practices, what drew you to schema? How did you get involved?

Dave Oeta: Well, as with anything, you know, I do work local and organic for clients, and there was a time, like, eight years ago where I mean, I'd been doing some of it,

but really, I was like, trying to be like, I like this idea of connecting the pieces and like, how do we connect the pieces? Like, this makes total sense. But you once again, back then, like, no one's even talked about, where do I find information? So, you know, doing a lot of research to find the right people at the time, which are still in the industry, to kind of mentor me and find a product that worked. And then, once again, like, when I found search, like, this really excites me. I really love thinking about this all the time. And so, you know, there you go. I probably 80% of my consultancy is schema markup at this point.

Garrett Susman: I believe it. But it's so interesting because, and we were just talking about this too, maybe it's a marketing issue, but I don't think enough marketers and even SEOs understand the value of schema, like, what is it supposed to do? Like, when you're talking to your clients or pitching your services, like, how do you explain the value of schema to people?

Dave Oeta: Well, usually, you know, it goes back to like, schema markup is two sides of the coin, you know? What is it? It's your rich results, which is all the bells and whistles, your rating stars used to be FAQs, how-tos, you know, everything else like that. So, those are something which give you, you know, a real ROI that you could speak to. Now, on the other side is going to be your entity understanding, you know. So, the key with schema markup is it provides the ability to describe an entity or entities which exist on a page, how they relate to each other, how they relate to other entities within the site, how they relate to the internet as a whole. And usually, that is through, like, external vocabulary such as Wikidata, Wikipedia, where you use that to hone in on that major schema class. So, you know, it's both. Now, as we know, as marketers and, you know, working with clients, selling the rich results, the ROI, it's a lot easier than doing entity relationships. But I will tell you, over the last two years, there has been a change, and change in terms of the clients coming to me, and some of the bigger clients, e-commerce, and some of the big brands that come to me, they're like, "Dave, we know how to do rich results. We're doing it. We got a team. But it's like, we don't think that we're really pulling together our entity relationships correctly, and we need you to come and audit, give us some insight into how we can do that and really pull everything together because we feel, and we see a need, and by the conversations going on with Google, that this is the time to do that, or, you know, we need to do that six months ago, a year. Like, what do we need to do to get ramped up?"

Garrett Susman: Dude, it resonates so much because, as we were saying, like, I started in local as well, and I actually worked for review generation software where those stars are so critical. And it was always such a pain in the butt to explain to clients the difference between, like, service reviews versus product reviews and the way that Google handles them differently. And I remember, I think it was, like, 2018, where Google stopped showing stars as rich results in a lot of the service businesses, and people were pissed, yes, yep. And that, in the back in the old days,

that happened, and people were like, "Well, why did it change?" You know, it changed

because, as we know, things that are given to us as SEOs, we kind of abuse. Hat tip to Fa...Rich results that happened recently. And so it's one of those things where, you know, you kind of do it as long as it works, until it doesn't. And then you look at some other opportunities, or you push on the other opportunities that you're already doing, but you put more time and effort into those.

Dave Oeta: Yeah, exactly. And it's... that's, you know, it's like, that's SEO. It's like, there's this whole idea of, like, you know, black hat techniques that you're not supposed to do, and there's always going to be risk of something that you ultimately do get penalized for, like, PBNs, you know, these blog networks and linking. That could eventually hurt. I mean, people still do it, but like, it's frowned upon in our industry because it's... it's man trying to manipulate search results, same with the star ratings, too, to that point. So, rich results is one aspect. The entities is another. And can you explain... So, and we're going to get into this a little bit in terms of the future of Google, but keywords have always been the focus of SEO, right? Like, algorithms always understood specific keywords and relevance that way. But entities, the way that Google algorithms understand the relationships and what things are, has become the primary way that search engines work. Can you talk about that in the context of schema?

Dave Oeta: I think the biggest thing, you know, when I work with people, is, um, you know, like, "Oh, we want to do schema markup this and that." But we have to take a step back. We have to take a step back to, like, what are entities in the first place? Understanding how they are relating, you know, people, person, place, or thing, you know, and also how they relate to each other and understanding the relationship, like, this person is an alumni of this person, is the same as this on social network, you know, getting those connections and understanding what it is an entity. And then, going to the next step, which is, okay, we know what things are, how do we apply that information in a way that is formatted, that is standardized to possibly place that on a website for it to be crawled? Once again, we go from understanding entities into using a vehicle, a vocabulary such as schema markup via schema.org to translate entities into the definitions and the relationships of how they do. That's where, you know, that's where we're moving towards for most. To that point, it's like, that's the thing is, I think a lot of people are hoping that Google looks at their website and understands the relationship, understands, through the content, what type of entity they are. But the schema is actually giving the roadmap. It's still, like, what is the advantage of providing that information to Google compared to a website that doesn't do it?

Dave Oeta: Just depends on its content, and backlinks. So, the way I look at schema markup is, you know, let's push rich results aside for a minute, because that's

basically bells and whistles. It goes back to it's a confirmation layer, you know, it's a Knowledge Graph over your site, but it's a confirmation layer on top of all the hard work you do with title tags, H1s, H2s, the content itself, the way the content is formed, the way it is linked to, basically say, Google looks at it and says, "Okay, we're unsure what you're trying to say here. We're unsure what you're trying to mean in terms of all of these pages." They can look at schema markup and get, like, "Okay, you're saying this is related to this and it's the same as this. Okay, now I get it." Now, will Google use schema markup all the time? 100%? No. But you are ahead of the game if you have that confirmation layer there and you allow Google to use it when they need to. Unlike another site is, we don't have it. So, then, as we know, when you allow Google to look at something and make a choice and, like, they're going to, sometimes more often not, choose incorrectly in terms of what your best motives are, you know? As we know, title tags, you know, title tags change, you know, they can be rewritten. It's because they saw it differently and you didn't give them enough signals within the content to confirm that that title tag should be what it is. So, that's kind of how I look at it. And that example of the title tags, yeah. It's a great point. It's like the same thing with canonical. It

comes up so often in SEO, like, you're trying to tell Google to do one thing and sometimes it goes a different direction. But at least you're providing as much info as you can for them to get it right more often than not.

Dave Oeta: Yeah, I think about this, you know. Let's go back to AMP, you know. AMP was like, put... put... I mean, we all laugh about it, but the... the key piece for me is, is put your data on our servers, you know. Merchant Listing was, give us a feed. It's all about getting used to putting stuff in their hands. And I think that that this is what they're getting at is, if you could get into our hands in an easier way, instead of us crawling you, think about, like, if they could reduce crawling by 2%, 3% across the world through structured feeds and having, like, you know... Wow, you talk about dollar signs in terms of what they would save by giving someone a couple carrots, telling them to do a feed of, you know. As we know, Google, even with rich results, they tell you what they need that works for them, not necessarily for the entity relationships across your site. But I think that's something that moving forward they would want to do because, I mean, what a huge benefit that would be for them.

Dave Oeta: Yeah, and I think that, you know, thinking from, like, a scarcity mentality, they'd be, like, "Okay, we're going to keep this in," but I think that, you know, those are going to be the ones that, you know, when they see what they're missing out on, are going to be pushing everyone. "Oh, we got to get this out there now." It's like, now is six months. It's like, "No, no, I need it next week." It's like, it's six months and I'm lying to it's really eight months or a year. So, I think there's going to be some good conversations now, and I think there's going to be some very rushed conversations in the future.

Dave Oeta: Yeah, I think that, you know, thinking from, like, a scarcity mentality, they'd be, like, "Okay, we're going to keep this in," but I think that, you know, those are going to be the ones that, you know, when they see what they're missing out on, are going to be pushing everyone. "Oh, we got to get this out there now." It's like, now is six months. It's like, "No, no, I need it next week." It's like, it's six months and I'm lying to it's really eight months or a year. So, I think there's going to be some good conversations now, and I think there's going to be some very rushed conversations in the future.

Garrett Sussman: It makes me think of when, during COVID, and you heard about all of these companies shutting down their ad spend or shutting down their marketing, and thinking that, like, they had to... that was a time they had to tighten up, whereas you had the companies that went all in and went even harder and we're able to jump so much further ahead. It feels like it's, like, analogous to schema where so many... you aren't doing this. This is almost an opportunity for your business to jump back because it's not going anywhere, correct?

Dave Oeta: Correct. And one thing I think of when we talk about that example of data feeds and in the past that Google said they want to do as well as where they may go is you think about this, you know. Let's go back to AMP, you know. AMP was like, put... put... I mean, we all laugh about it, but the... the key piece for me is, is put your data on our servers, you know. Merchant Listing was, give us a feed. It's all about getting used to putting stuff in their hands. And I think that that this is what they're getting at is, if you could get into our hands in an easier way, instead of us crawling you, think about, like, if they could reduce crawling by 2%, 3% across the world through structured feeds and having, like, you know... Wow, you talk about dollar signs in terms of what they would save by giving someone a couple carrots, telling them to do a feed of, you know. As we know, Google, even with rich results, they tell you what they need that works for them, not necessarily for the entity relationships across your site. But I think that's something that moving forward they would want to do because, I mean, what a huge benefit that would be for them.

Garrett Sussman: It's going to be so interesting, the internal conversations among teams about this debate, as you mentioned, about whether making your data accessible to LLMS or Google ultimately or not and deciding, for instance, e-commerce is it worth it to cut yourself off from these search engines where you're going to get a lot of visibility by giving them access to your data versus not. It's that incentive. I can imagine those conversations of the value, the way that you're presenting it, how those are going to play out, and some companies are going to just decide that it's not worth it, and I feel like they'll probably lose out.

Dave Oeta: I think that I think that, you know, thinking from, like, a scarcity mentality, they'd be, like, "Okay, we're going to keep this in," but I think that, you know, those are going to be the ones that, you know, when they see what they're missing out on,

are going to be pushing everyone. "Oh, we got to get this out there now." It's like, now is six months. It's like, "No, no, I need it next week." It's like, it's six months and I'm lying to it's really eight months or a year. So, I think there's going to be some good conversations now, and I think there's going to be some very rushed conversations in the future.

Garrett Sussman: Yeah, especially if we know with Enterprises, everything takes, to your point, two, five, 10 times longer. It's like if you're not having them now, it's going to be too late. Okay. Are you ready for some rapid-fire rankings, sir?

Dave Oeta: I am ready.

Garrett Sussman: All right. Before we even dive in, I have to ask, what can you explain that awesome graphic behind you? For those of you who are listening to us via a podcast stream, Dave has this incredible... It's not a grid, it's just a circular entity relationship. I'm going to let you explain it. What do you got there?

Dave Oeta: It's a linked data graph, and it's showing entities that are connected. It's one of the things like, you know, do I want to show my the back behind my office? No, I want to show this cool graphic that everyone knows. And I use this always...

 to show, you know, entity relationships and how they're linked. So, this one, I like this one. It's showing a big network of different entities and how they all link together. And I think it's kind of cool. But it's basically showing a knowledge graph of how things are connected. That's what I'd say.

Garrett Sussman: Very cool. All right. First rapid-fire ranking: what's more important for SEO, schema or backlinks?

Dave Oeta: Ooh, schema.

Garrett Sussman: I love it. Second rapid-fire ranking: if you had to choose one, which would it be, a FAQ schema or HowTo schema?

Dave Oeta: FAQ.

Garrett Sussman: Okay. Why is that?

Dave Oeta: Because you can put HowTo into FAQ. That's a lot of data and a lot of stuff going on. So, you know, I'd say go with FAQ. You can always put HowTo, other schema types into it. I like the way that FAQ is showing right now.

Garrett Sussman: I like it. Third rapid-fire ranking: what's more challenging to implement, schema for a local business or schema for an e-commerce website?

Dave Oeta: I'm going to say local business. It's just because, you know, e-commerce, you know, it's based off of products. There's a product type and a product in... It's just like one. So, and you're just plugging in a data feed. But local is, like, and the service industries, they're saying, like, "What is this?" You know, they're all fighting, it's a service, a product. There's just more unknown, I think, with local right now. And people are fighting over what's the best, you know, entity class for that. And I'm just like, you know, we have to go with what schema.org has at this point. So, it's more challenging right now because there's more fighting.

Garrett Sussman: Fourth rapid-fire ranking: which of these is the most underrated schema type, Event schema or Product schema?

Dave Oeta: Event.

Garrett Sussman: Okay. Why do you say that?

Dave Oeta: Because... you know, like, well, it could be an event, and, you know, that could be something that, you know, Google would want to have more understanding about because it's the same thing. It's the same... It's a location, a date, and it's just like a product. You could look at it, the same way, but... that could be an event. And the event is really about things happening in time, place, and date. And I think that, you know, it's an easy opportunity, easy wins that, you know, some people are missing on, but it can definitely change a lot of how they are seen by Google and could increase visibility for them. So, definitely an event.

Garrett Sussman: Cool. All right, fifth and final rapid-fire ranking: which is more valuable, local business reviews or e-commerce product reviews?

Dave Oeta: Local business reviews.

Garrett Sussman: Okay. Why?

Dave Oeta: I mean, I think it's, um, it goes back to the biggest difference is reviews for local businesses. You know, they could be a service industry or just, like, a restaurant or what have you. It's real people that can actually, like, you know, see the reviews and understand and read them. So, you know, it's really going to be influential. Now, e-commerce reviews are important. Don't get me wrong. You want to see what people are saying. But, you know, it's kind of binary. Do you want to buy it or not? You know, I mean, it's... it's... And it doesn't have as much influence, I think, on the site itself, because local reviews, once again, it's like there's so much more going on. I mean, when we talk about, you know, trying to make a choice, you know, you might have one store that's this much further away than the other one, but they have better reviews. You might go the extra couple miles because of reviews. You

might choose that restaurant because it has better reviews. But when it comes to, like, buying a product, it's kind of binary. It's like, is it good or bad? So, it's not as influential.

Garrett Sussman: It's more transactional, whereas local business, there's a bit more nuance to it.

Dave Oeta: Yeah. Yeah, definitely.

Garrett Sussman: Love it. Dave, that was a blast. This was awesome. Can you let people know where they can find you online?

Dave Oeta: You can find me online at daveoeta.com. That's D-A-V-E-O-E-T-A. And also on LinkedIn. And I'm on Twitter and other platforms as well, but those are probably the two most social things that I'm on. So, and, you know, I love LinkedIn. I have, you know, a lot of great conversations with people. You know, find me. Ask questions. I'm always there to help. Always looking for, you know, smart conversations, especially like schema. It's just great. I can't get enough of it.

Garrett Sussman: Love it, man. Dave, thanks again. This was a blast. I'll talk to you later.

Dave Oeta: Sounds good. Have a great day, Garrett.