

An Interview with Lisa Barone

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As the headline above clearly points out, today I'll be talking shop with none other than Lisa Barone, or more commonly known as The Lisa. In addition to her role as a Senior Writer for [Bruce Clay, Inc.](#), a Search Engine Optimization and Website Marketing company, Lisa is also the very lovable personality, the voice if you will, of the [Bruce Clay blog](#)... which is essentially what we'll be chatting about today.

I've been a reader of the BC Blog for some time now and very much enjoy reading Lisa's, and her partner Susan's, view on all things search marketing. Together they offer an extensive overview of our industry and provide up-to-date and valuable marketing information, updates, and of course commentary. If you're not currently reading the Bruce Clay blog, than I certainly suggest that you start. You'll be glad you did.

I'm very much excited to be doing this interview, as the topic of discussion will mostly be on blogging. However, I do have some general SEM questions that I'll be throwing out as well. And so, without any further ado, here's my one-on-one chat with Lisa Barone:

Hey Lisa... welcome to the Klog. Take off your shoes, have a seat, and make yourself feel as if at home... without the cats of course. I'm not a big fan of cats. I am though a very big fan of the Bruce Clay blog, and ultimately of your's and Susan's writing styles. I think you both compliment each other very well and am very much excited to be interviewing one half of Bruce Clay's dynamic blogging duo.



I'm happy to be here!

I don't wear shoes, but can I sit on the floor? I like sitting on the floor but some people get weird about it so my mom says I have to ask first. Do you mind?

Okay, I'm comfy. Let's get started! (I promise I'll try and behave.)

Ok... first things first... what's the story behind "The Lisa" alias? I'm seeing it referenced just about everywhere, including on t-shirts, and I'm curious as to how it came to life.

It's somewhat embarrassing and I blame the whole thing on [Nathan Weinberg](#)! As most are aware, the Bruce Clay, Inc. blog opened up comments back in January after much reader insistence. This made a lot of people very happy, including Nathan Weinberg. Nathan wrote a blog post called Bruce Clay Adds Comments, Other Stuff and in his high level of excitement (heh) made a small typo and included an erroneous "the" in front of my name. Being an obnoxious blogger, I ran with it and in that week's [Friday Recap](#) I joked that from here on out I was "The Lisa"!

Naturally, I was kidding and just trying to razz Nathan a bit (I'm a big Inside Google fan!). I had no idea people would latch onto it or that [Michael Gray](#) would [start a clothing line](#) with the moniker. The whole thing has been flattering, and just a little bit mortifying.

Say, you've bought your The Lisa T-shirt, right, Karl? ;)

No... I actually haven't just yet. To be honest, I'm having a difficult time deciding if I should buy one with sleeves or if I should go [sleeveless like our buddy Chris Hooley](#). Looks like I'll just have to bite the bullet and order one of each. Moving forward, how did you first become involved in the search marketing industry, and what is it like to be the voice of the very reputable Bruce Clay, Inc.?

It was complete chance that I became involved, which makes me feel very lucky to have "fallen into" something that I really enjoy and am proud of. Before Bruce adopted me I was the Web Editor of a five-man/four-dog online vinyl record operation. I learned a lot about Web sites, business and the music industry, but it wasn't really what I was looking to do.

I started looking for other opportunities and discovered a company called Bruce Clay who was looking for a Technical Writer. I thought, "Hey, I can do that!" I applied twice, turned on the East Coast charm during my interview, and was hired two weeks later after hounding Bruce and Susan nonstop.

I was pretty terrified when I first came on board. I didn't want to be the "voice" of anything because I was pretty sure I'd screw it up. However, the great thing about a company like Bruce Clay is that they really trust their employees. Bruce had faith in me and that gave me the confidence I needed to jump head first into this whole "blogging" thing. Okay, maybe there was a *little* nudging from Susan, but over time I became comfortable speaking publicly and things developed from there. The great thing about the blog is that even though it's a "corporate" blog, Bruce lets Susan and I dictate it. He's given us free reign to express unique opinion, which means the BC blog will never sound like a press release, especially on Fridays.

(Oh - and as for the shirt, I think the Chris Hooley version is the way to go. Let's see those shoulders!)

Very cool Lisa... and for the record I totally dig your "Friday Recap" posts! They offer the perfect blend of search marketing information and entertainment. When considering that you were once a Web Editor for small online operation, what is it like to now be a full-time blogger in an industry as diverse and often at times complicated as the search marketing industry is?

It rocks! I think I have one of the coolest jobs in the world, and I really do mean that. I get to scour the Web looking for interesting topics and then I get to write my opinion on how I think this will or will not impact search. And people read it! I'm basically being paid to do what I've been doing since I was 14 on LiveJournal for free. I come to work and I'm like a kid in a candy store.

The reason I fell for search is because it's complicated. If the algorithm never changed or if people like [Bill Slawski](#) didn't uncover new Google patents, I'd be

completely bored out of my mind and that would make for a boring blogger. The twists and turns are what keep this job and this field interesting.

Fair enough. Looking back to those early days of the Bruce Clay Blog, how has it progressed over the years? As a blogger, how have you progressed?

In a lot of ways I think the blog and I have grown up together. Though it's technically been around longer than I have (as I'm so often reminded of by Susan), I consider the blog very much my baby. We both started out being very "newsy" and "he said, she said", and as we've grown and become more comfortable in our roles, the format of the blog has changed considerably. There's still lots of great search news every day, but in general it's become a lot more social, more opinionated, and, frankly, more fun. When you read the Bruce Clay blog, you know you're going to get your search updates, but you'll also get a heavy dose of commentary, the occasional rant and well-intentioned whine, comments from the peanut gallery (i.e. Susan), and lots of good-natured silliness. We don't take ourselves too seriously and I think that makes us unique.

It sounds really cheesy, but I'm really proud of the blog and the direction it's taken. It's been really fun to grow up with it.

Do we hug now? ;)

Being a full-time Blogger just sounds intriguing to me... mostly in a sense that you get to spend your whole work day reading and writing about search engine marketing. Don't get me wrong... I do my fair share of Blog writing and reading, but nowhere to the capacity that you must. Describe for me if you could a typical Lisa Barone work day as a professional blogger in the search engine marketing industry? Is it simply come to work and blog about whatever is on your mind, or is there certain criteria that you have to follow?

Bruce told you to ask me this, didn't he? He's trying to justify what he pays me! I'm so busted!

Contrary to Susan's belief, I definitely don't come to work and blog about whatever is on my mind (unless it's Friday. Then I totally do!). If that were the case, the blog would solely be about Susan's annoying habits, my cats, and how there is never enough chocolate or coffee within reaching distance. Right now the blog is only partially about that.

Typically, I get to work, moderate blog comments, dive into email and then spend between an hour and two hours going through my feeds. I typically blog through early afternoon and then I move on. Unofficially, I'm the "Bruce Clay Blogger", but officially I'm a Senior Writer for Bruce Clay, so that means there are always more duties to attend to than just blogging. There's client work, internal BC projects, edits to do, and on Tuesday afternoons, I have to pick up Susan's dry cleaning and get her car washed and waxed. It ain't easy being me.

That's another thing... I love how you and Susan seem to always be bickering at each other. The whole idea adds an extra dimension to the Bruce Clay Blog and really makes it fun to read. I can't count how many times I've sat in front of my computer laughing at the snide remarks you

both make. Then again... if your serious about picking up Susan's dry cleaning, than I'm sorry... so, so sorry.

Moving forward, you made mention that you spend a couple hours each morning reading and reviewing your feeds. Personally speaking, my RSS reader is jammed packed with something like 100 to 120 industry related feeds. There are several blogs that I try to read daily, and others weekly. How many blogs are you subscribed to? As a full-time blogger, how many blogs would you say that you read in a given week?

A lot, hee! Like you, I probably have around 120 of "my blogs" that I read regularly, only I read them several times a day, and I'm always clicking through to where those blogs link to find additional "good stuff". It's not uncommon to find myself on a strange, new blog and have no idea how I got there. Come to think of it -- that's actually how I feel working at Bruce Clay sometimes. :)

I try to stay as informed as possible, which sometimes means reading a lot of different takes on the same issue. But it's worth it when you find that one gem that everyone else has passed over or find someone who has a totally new way of looking at something. I've always been a book nerd and my obsession with blogs and needing to be connected at all times is just part of that. I get excited by information.

I couldn't agree with you more. As a search marketer, it's very important to stay as updated and informed as possible, and, as you made mention of, reading multiple views on the same issues is a great way to do so. With that being said... it's not uncommon for a sport professional to have his or her own favorite athlete nor is it uncommon for an author to have his or her own favorite writer. Hands down, who would you say is your all-time favorite industry blogger(s)?

I've been asked this a number of times and my answer is always the same - [Barry Schwartz](#). He's definitely that person I look up to in the industry. He writes three industry blogs, runs [Search Engine Roundtable](#), is a newlywed, and somewhere in there manages to have a "day job". I think Barry secretly gets 48-hour days that the rest of us aren't privy to, otherwise, I have no idea how he does everything it is that he does. Barry's a rock star (even though he [picked Tamar to be his sidekick](#) and totally forgot about me!).

The other person I really admire is [Kim Krause-Berg](#). She's a great example to all the young, upcoming women in this industry that a female's voice is just as strong and powerful as a man's, and that we're talented enough to hang with the boys. Kim's a total rebel sex goddess and I feel really lucky to know her!

Barry and Kim are excellent choices... a couple of my favorite picks too! And, I too often wonder about Barry. I'm convinced that he's either [Danny's](#) robotic Cyborg set to help him control search marketing information or he has in his possession some kind of time-freezing tool. Those are the only explanations I can fathom for his ability to cover as much ground as he does in a single day.

In regards to actual Blogs... what are some of your favorite SEM reads? What blogs would you recommend to other search marketers (assuming that they weren't already a reader)?

Karl, you can't make me choose between blogs! It's like asking me which one of my kittens I love the most (definitely Swat).

The blogs I love and gravitate towards are probably the ones the rest of the industry does as well. The blog I'm really loving right now is [901am](#). They're doing an amazing job covering the new media side of things and really engaging readers. I've become a really big fan.

When it comes to finding your "favorite" search blog I think it's all about what you're looking for. [Search Engine Land](#) is obviously a Must Read for a noise-less view of the industry, [Search Engine Roundtable](#) keeps me up-to-date on interesting forum nuggets, [Michael Gray](#) and [Rae Hoffman](#) are awesome at stirring the pot, Bill Slawski covers things at [SEO By The Sea](#) that no one else is talking about, and [ResourceShelf](#) always comes up with some really great finds. There are so many great blogs out there with slightly varying niches that everyone can find something that interests them, which of course is what makes the blogosphere so great. It's hard to pick favorites.

Great picks, Lisa. There is lots to be learned from these blogs... tons! Ok... moving forward, I'd like to get your opinion on a few things. First of all, with the SEO industry moving as fast as it does, and in so many directions as it does, where do you see our industry being 3 to 5 years down the road?

I think personalization and behavioral targeting are going to change things entirely. We're starting to see a glimpse of that today with search tools like Collarity that can pick up on if you're searching for Java the coffee, the technology, or the island, but it's going to increase tenfold. Once search results are targeted based on past behavior, local search is really going to take off. The engines are going to recognize that when Mary searches for coffee, she means coffee shops located in 11747 (Long Island shout out!) and they're going to display results in her geographical area. It's going to make those long-tail contextual keywords even more important and it's going to ultimately change the way we optimize sites. The good SEOs will adapt and the others will fade away. It's going to be exciting and I know everyone at Bruce Clay is ready for it!

Right on... I couldn't agree with you more. I too am expecting a major push in the local search direction. It will be very interesting to see how local search, satellite mapping, and advertising all come together and fully integrate with cell phones and other mobile devices. It won't be too long before searching on a cell phone is as common as on one's desktop. As a member in the search marketing industry and as of course a blogger who has touched on many of the industry's news, issues, and happenings, what do you feel are some of the biggest misconceptions surrounding search marketing today?

There are so many misconceptions about search and search engine optimization that it's almost impossible to identify the "biggest". The level of ignorance out there about what we do and why we do it still amazes me, even after being in this industry for a little while. I read the comments [Jason Calacanis](#) makes on his blog, or listen to some of things he said in his Chicago keynote, and it makes me want to stab myself in the eye with a pen. It hurts me that much! It's not fun to work so hard at something and then have outsiders come in and degrade it without doing their homework. I think it's really irresponsible.

Some of the untruths that really get my heart racing are that spamming social media is considered SEO or that all SEOs are spammers. Spam isn't optimization, no matter how you look at it. Cheats are cheats, professionals are professionals. There are tons of misconceptions about our industry but that's probably the one that gets me itchin' for a fight the most!

Note to self... don't publish my theory on how SEO is BS... it could lead to Lisa wearing an eye patch the rest of her life. Thus far, everyone that I've had the privilege of interviewing has mentioned their favorite SEM tools and resources. What are some of your favorite tools and resources? Which do you use on a daily basis, and which would you recommend to other industry bloggers?

The greatest tool we have as bloggers are other bloggers. There's such a wealth of smart people and interesting voices that I learn something new every day. My favorite go-to places for blog knowledge and ideas are [Probblogger](#), [Copyblogger](#), and [Performancing](#). All three of these sites offer great tips to both newbie and expert bloggers, and are great resources to help refill your blog juice on the days when your tank is running a little low.

It can also be interesting to throw some of your blog's keywords into Technorati and see what comes up. It can be a good way to jump in on a conversation that's already developed and say something fresh.

As an "A-List" blogger in our industry, what advice would you pass onto someone looking to write for a blog or maybe to start his or her own search marketing blog?

I feel somewhat uncomfortable shelling out "advice". I'm no "A-list" blogger, I'm just someone who's been lucky enough to participate in the conversation and hasn't gotten rocks thrown (too hard) at her just yet.

There's somewhat of a Catch-22 for bloggers just starting out. Everyone tells you to "be different" and "find your niche" but it's hard to do that without first blogging. I suppose my advice would be to blog "silently" for awhile, until you get a sense of what your voice is going to be and what your blog is really about. I look at the Bruce Clay blog and I think two of the things people enjoy the most are our Friday Recaps and the natural bickering between me and Susan (And, yes, we really are like that). Obviously, both of these things developed with the blog. We didn't start out with a Friday Recap. Susan didn't immediately start inserting her (unwelcome and unappreciated) comments. You have to give yourself time to figure out what works for you and what you bring to the conversation.

Michael Gray made some waves not so long ago telling SEO bloggers to [step away from their keyboards](#). I'm a fan of Michael, but I hope there aren't too many bloggers heeding his advice. There's always room for new faces and new opinion. If you're joining the blogosphere, I say, welcome and have fun. If you're having a good time, your readers will enjoy coming back to hear what you have to say.

Looking ahead to the near future of the Bruce Clay Blog, what new things can we expect to see from you, Susan, and the BC blog itself?

We've got some fun things in store! Susan and I are working on a top secret blog-related project that I can't divulge or my keyboard will be taken away from me, but it should be a lot of fun.

We've also talked about creating an About The Bloggers sidebar to give readers some more information about Susan and myself, perhaps even a picture or two. We're really excited about the community that's formed around the blog and we'd like to expand that. We'll be updating our blogroll soon, adding more social features, lots of great stuff. Overall, we're having a good time blogging and connecting with everyone and we hope our readers are enjoying it, as well.

Sounds like you've got some interesting changes in stored for your readers... I'm definitely looking forward to the unveiling of top secret blog-related project. How about a small hint... pleeeaaaaasseeeee?

Alright, one last question before we wrap this up... are you ready for some self critiquing? I would like for you to sell me, and essentially my readers, on the Bruce Clay Blog. Why should internet marketers and other industry spectators read yours and Susan's commentary and opinions, as opposed to the many, many other bloggers that cover this industry? What makes your writing different or desirable?


Well, the great thing about blogging is that it's not an "either, or" scenario. We would never suggest that you read the Bruce Clay blog and drop the others from your feed reader. If you did, you'd be doing yourself a great injustice. We want readers to read the other great blogs out there, we want them to be informed. We just happen to also think that the BC blog should be on your daily reading list. So much of blogging is about the conversation and it's important to listen to all sorts of voices, even Susan's. (She does have a valid point occasionally.)

We're different in that we provide a unique viewpoint. We write from the perspective of a larger, more established SEO firm. Bruce Clay has been around for over 10 years, so it puts us in the position of being able to spot trends early on and talk about how we see them affecting our clients.

Personally, I also think Susan and I are having a lot more fun than some of the other bloggers out there. :) There's lots of humor, snide remarks, and you're almost guaranteed a girly catfight each and every day. What other blog out there can promise you that? If you're not reading the Bruce Clay blog, I'd encourage you to give it a shot for a week. Give me seven days and I'm pretty sure I can win you over! ;)

LoL... you heard it here folks... seven days or your money back! That's the Lisa Barone guarantee! Lisa, with all that was said, I'm now out of questions and that means that you're officially off the hook and free to go. It was a great pleasure to have you on the Klog today, and I want to thank you for taking this time away from your very busy schedule to have this chat with me, and for sharing your blogging and search marketing insights with me and my Klog readers.

Thanks, Karl. It was fun to sit and chat with you. Now go order your The Lisa shirt. :)



About Lisa: Lisa Barone is a Senior Writer for [Bruce Clay, Inc.](#), a provider of search engine optimization and marketing services, as well as a writer for the [Bruce Clay blog](#).

About Karl Ribas: Karl Ribas is the Project Manager at [All Web Promotion](#), and on the side runs his own [search engine marketing Blog](#) and [consultant website](#). He has been designing websites since 2001, and began his involvement with search engine marketing in September of 2003. As both, Project Manager at All Web Promotion and owner of his own website, Karl provides up-to-date, valuable, and effect Search Engine Marketing and design services to a wide range of small to medium sized online businesses.