

Selecting a Search Engine Optimization Company

A Search Engine Optimization Company can be an invaluable asset in your Internet marketing campaign. They specialize in knowing how to raise your search engine positions, monitoring those positions on the regular basis, and adjusting their strategies to account for undesirable results in any given month. Since this takes a lot of time, effort, and specialized knowledge, it can be in your best interest to go to an outside source rather than try to maintain high search engine positions on your own.

However, like every business, there are good companies and there are lemons. Knowing the right questions to ask and the criteria to look for will help you in choosing an affordable, effective search engine optimization company.

When looking at different companies, begin by considering the approach they employ to raise your search engine positions. Steer clear of companies that use cloaked, doorway, or bridge pages to raise your positions. These techniques violate most search engine policy, and in the worst case scenario, will only get your website severely penalized, if not removed entirely from a search engine's index.

A cloaked page is a page that is created which is invisible to the regular visitor to your website. The cloaked page is coded to detect a search engine spider and divert them to this special page, which is set-up to artificially boost your search engine position. Doorway or bridge pages utilize the same concept, but often reside on an entirely different server. Google, one of the largest and most important search

engine on the Internet, will remove your website from their index if they detect you have cloaked pages. Never, never employ any company that uses this technique!

Another important element is to get a guarantee that the company you hire will not work with your competitors while they are working for you. Obviously, this would seriously compromise the effectiveness of the search engine optimization campaign. Be aware that some companies will use the success they achieve for your website to sell their services to your competitors. So get your guarantee in writing, and make sure it is legally binding.

Of course, one of the most important factors you want to check out is the company's track record of results. However, don't take the company's word for it. They will undoubtedly be slanting their results in order to sell their services to you. To go beyond their simple statement of success, ask them a few pertinent questions, and verify their answers.

Ask them which engines they have achieved the best results on. The ones that are important are the most popular engines, and these are the ones you want to see good results on. Since the popularity of search engines can change with the landscape of the overall Internet, check out the Nielsen Netratings page at Search Engine Watch. You can access this at <http://www.searchenginewatch.com/article.php/2156451>.

Next, find out what keywords and phrases they are claiming great results with. It's easy to get high rankings with unpopular words. For instance, the keyword "cat leashes" will get high popularity ranking because no one else would think of using it. What you are looking for is good results using popular keywords. Check out the

software Wordtracker, available at www.wordtracker.com. You can order a free trial, or a subscription ranging from 1 day to 1 year. This software rates the popularity of keywords and phrases based on actual search engine use.

Next, look for good results over an entire site that the company claims to have successfully worked for. You want to see a wide range of positions over a number of different search engines using different keywords or phrases for the entire site. Request a report for any client the company claims to have done well for. This report should show good positions on a number of the most popular search engines for a variety of different, popular keywords and phrases.

When you are checking out search engine optimization companies, make sure they have actually done the work they are claiming to have done. Some companies will use other company's results in order to get you to sign on with them. If you are in doubt, call the company they are showing you results for, and ask for the name of their search engine optimization company.

It's important to keep in mind that a successful search engine optimization campaign will result in maximum exposure across a wide range of popular search engines using a variety of keywords and phrases. This is the formula for a successful campaign, and you should keep it always in the forefront of your marketing strategy.

Ask the search engine optimization company you are considering for a report that shows you rankings across a number of popular search engines for a period of at least six months. Remember: search engine marketing is a process that is continual, and you need a company that not only understands this, but keeps constant tabs on

your search engine positions. That company must also be able to adjust its strategy in the event that search engine rankings drop.

Since search engine marketing is an on-going process, your positions must be constantly monitored. If you want your search engine optimization company to do this for you, request a sample of a monthly report. It is essential that this report should show rankings for the most popular search engines. Don't be impressed by a report that only shows great results for a limited number of small search engines. These are fairly easy results to acquire. Also confirm that the popular search engine results they are showing you are indeed the popular search engines currently.

Be sure the sample report the company shows you is in a format that you can easily understand. For example, it could be in the form of a chart that covers a period of at least six months and presents data such as the top 50 positions broken down on a monthly basis or the top 5 pages each month. Then, ascertain that the company you are considering actually monitors these positions or pages every month, and that the sample report they show you includes findings and recommendations for the specific site. This insures that the company will actively monitor and make adjustments to their strategy on a continual basis rather than simply gather statistics on your positions. You need a company that is actively participant in your search engine marketing campaign, not just an information gatherer.

Obviously, your finances have to figure into your choice of company, but bear in mind that a search engine optimization company is crucial the success of your marketing campaign. It is not just a casual accessory. If you cannot afford a company that will do a thorough and reliable job for your website, you might consider waiting until you do have the finances in place.

If you have to find a company and can't wait for your finances to catch up, you may be able to find an affordable company that will also be able to supply quality, reliable work, such as a fairly new company. Just remember that there are risks involved with using a company without a proven track record - and that risk is your money! Don't take that leap unless the company can supply you with at least a few references.

References are the most reliable indicator of a good company. Don't use a company that won't show your references because of any reason, confidentiality included. Remember - even doctors will provide references! The firm you choose should provide you with a minimum of two references, one that is from the past, and one that is current.

When you contact these references, be prepared to ask precise, specific questions so that neither of your time is wasted. Ask them what their experience was like with the company, such as their availability to answer questions and deal with problems and their ability to meet deadlines. Ask the reference to rate the overall performance of the company.

Find out if the company requested that the reference make significant changes to their web pages that affected the visitors coming to their site. You are looking for a search engine optimization company that can balance the needs of both search engines and site visitors without compromising either.

The most essential question to ask is whether the work of the search engine optimization company resulted in higher profits for the reference. Without profits, it doesn't matter whether your positions are at the top of the list or not.