How To Choose an SEO Agency



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Today’s consumers begin their customer journey with a search engine. That means companies with a website need to rank on the first page of Google or any other search engine such as Bing and Yahoo. This makes search engines the most powerful online marketing tool available. Not only do search engines attract the highest volume of users, but they also bring customers to you.

Websites that rank on the first page of Google see a massive increase in traffic and conversions. Ranking on the first page increases traffic by 134% for those previously listed on the second page. Ranking in first place on the first page of Google gets 34% more organic traffic than 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th place combined, and get this: 75% of search engine users never scroll beyond page one.

However, to rank in Google's top ten (the first page), you need a fully optimized website that is best buddies with search engine algorithms. This is achieved through the practice of ethical search engine optimization (SEO).

SEO is not magic, but it does require knowledge of search engine algorithms and a specialist skillset. This is why most business owners turn to experienced and reputable SEO professionals. However, choosing an SEO agency to handle your online presence is not as straightforward as it should be. Not every agency will deliver what it promises. But there are tell-tale signs to look for to make sure you pick the right one.

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Do their SEO strategies meet Google's guidelines?

Top SEO agencies understand how Google's algorithm works and do not stray outside the boundaries. You should seek experienced professionals with a proven track record of ranking their clients in elevated positions. More importantly, you want to be assured the methods it deploys are ethical. Search engines have a "Quality Guidelines" list that prevents underhand tactics designed to manipulate search engine results. And there are a lot of SEO agencies that use "black hat" tricks.

Illegal SEO techniques include automatically generated content, sneaky redirects, scraped content, paid link-building schemes and thin content (less than 300-words per page). Google makes it clear that any websites violating the quality guidelines will be banned from search engine listings until the issue is remedied.

Google states, "Website owners who spend their energies

upholding the spirit of the basic principles will provide a much better user experience and subsequently enjoy better ranking than those who spend their time looking for loopholes they can exploit.”

Be wary of SEO agency promises

SEO works, but it takes time to reach the highest ranks. You shouldn’t expect to climb into the top three spots within a year. It can take six to 12 months to get onto page #1 of Google.

That’s probably not the news you want to hear, but it is the advice you should look for when choosing an ethical SEO agency. Anyone that promises to get you on the first page of Google in three months is using black hat techniques. Quick results may be great in the short term, but they will have damaging long-term effects that could potentially cripple your business. Good SEO involves a slow and steady climb to the top, but you stay there when you get there.

Are their testimonials genuine?

Testimonials are supposed to provide consumers with assurance and confidence. The problem is that online testimonials can be faked. Never trust the testimonials published on a website alone. Quality SEO companies have a solid online presence. You should be able to find positive reviews on consumer rating websites like TrustPilot and Trustist, together with a choice of social media accounts.

You would expect an experienced SEO agency to have many positive reviews and maybe even a smattering of negative or mediocre comments. But even these so-called trusted platforms can’t be trusted. A company or its competitors can fake reviews.

The best way to verify whether the positive reviews are genuine is to contact the people advertised on the agency's website. If the reviews are honest, you should be able to find the businesses on the first page of search engines. It is even better if the SEO agency also publishes case studies on its website.

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Ask about your own keywords

Search engines rely on keywords to match search terms with the most relevant pages. However, search engines rank millions of websites that are all using the same principle keywords.

A creative SEO agency will use smarter tactics, namely niche keyword research. This technique identifies high-quality keywords that have the lowest competition. Essentially, niche market research avoids competitive searches by tapping into searches using long-tail keywords. This enables businesses to find their target audience more often.

For example, let's say you provide a self-development program targeting people with depression. General keywords that everybody will use are:

- "Self-development tools for depression."
- "Depression Therapist."

These may be high-quality keywords, but they're also highly competitive keywords. Niche market research will identify long-tail keywords that target people looking for a specific product or service. For example:

- "How to cure depression without medication."
- "What causes depression?"
- "How to manage and overcome depression quickly."

Long-tail keywords increase conversions because they pinpoint

customers looking for a specific solution.

Does the agency specialize in local SEO?

Local SEO helps small and medium-sized businesses attract customers by targeting search engine users in your local area, and 46% of all Google searches have local intent.

Optimizing your website that informs Google how you can provide a solution to individuals in your area will help you to show up in search engine results. Moreover, attracting local customers leads to more sales.

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