

Only 30% of SMBs would recommend their current SEO provider, survey finds

“I was surprised to see that many clients blame themselves for the SEO agency relationship going sour,” said Brian Dean, founder of Backlinko, referring to his survey of 1,200 business owners, in which just 30% would recommend their current SEO agency and another 30% said they would leave a negative review.

The report also found a strong relationship between budget and satisfaction, with clients who dedicated over \$500/month to SEO services being 53.3% more likely to describe themselves as “extremely satisfied” compared to those who spent less. Budget was just one of the many factors that contributed to the overall perception of SEO services – the survey also asked business owners about their comfort with the subject, expectations, preferences and their top priorities when selecting an agency.

Client education and satisfaction. “In fact, 50% of our panel told us that ‘I feel like I need more training to fully benefit from what SEO offers,’ and another 28% said that they didn’t have the staff to implement the SEO provider’s recommendation,” Dean told Search Engine Land.

The survey also found that 44% of SMBs left their SEO provider because they were dissatisfied with business results and 34% said it was due to responsiveness and customer service issues. The subset of business owners that were happy with their SEO service were found to be twice as likely to describe themselves as “extremely web savvy,” whereas lapsed clients (those that have worked with multiple SEO services) were significantly more likely to claim that they are not web

savvy.

“This finding shows that client education can be the difference between losing a client after a few months... and having a loyal client for years. And that supporting clients with resources (or just being a ‘squeaky wheel’) can help agencies get their client’s title tag changed or their Google My Business listing fixed,” Dean explained.

Client expectations and preferences. The top three priorities for business owners enlisting SEO services were increasing site traffic (65% of respondents), accessing new customers (62%) and driving up brand awareness (61%).

Business owners’ expectations from SEO service providers.
Image sourced from Backlinko.

On the flip side, social media presence seemed to be a lower priority, with just 26% of respondents marking it as extremely important. Once more, Dean cited a lack of education as a possible factor, explaining that agencies can see the benefits of social media marketing but SMBs may not be aware of the potential.

“Marketing pros understand that social media can help boost traffic, brand awareness and sometimes even sales. But it’s a challenge for a pizza shop owner or a dentist to see how posting on Instagram will help bring more customers through the door. It takes someone with social media marketing experience to connect the dots.”

Choosing an agency. 74% of SMBs said reputation was the highest priority, marking it as either “very” or “extremely” important. Cost (70%) and Google rankings (59%) were also considerations when selecting an SEO provider.

Physical location was also a large factor in whether a client chooses or stays with an agency – 78% of US-based SMBs considered their provider's location either "very" or "extremely" important. Interestingly, just over half the respondents actually knew where their agency was located.

In line with the social media findings mentioned above, an agency's social media presence was lowest (38%) on the list of considerations.

Why we should care. The survey paints a bleak picture of client satisfaction. Even if they blame themselves, that doesn't absolve SEOs. Clients who understand what we're doing, why we're doing it and what they're paying for are happier with our services. For clients who need it, SEOs should consider education a part of their regular duties.

The relatively low value placed on building a social media presence may not apply to all brands, but a client's priorities should be listened to – not assumed. As Dean stated in his findings, "a newly-hired SEO provider that says: 'Our first step is going to be to get more likes on your Facebook page' isn't speaking their client's language. On the other hand, kicking off the client-provider relationship with: 'I look forward to helping you get more targeted traffic and customers' will likely result in a more satisfied client."

The findings also suggest that an agency's social media presence is a much less important factor than geographical location. Instead of pouring resources into social campaigns, buying local ads or raising awareness for your services within your immediate community may be a more worthwhile investment.

About The Author

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<http://feeds.searchengineland.com/~r/searchengineland/~3/6lIqCoiUCx0/only-30-of-smbs-would-recommend-their-current-seo-provider-survey-finds-319076>