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**Rising Above the SEO Reputation**

**By Kalena Jordan**

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How many times have you seen an article referring to SEO (search engine optimization) as a "Black Art" or "underhanded", "manipulative", "sleazy", "deceptive", "sneaky" etc?. I could go on and on but you get my drift. The thing is – our industry has a pitiful reputation which is being reinforced on a daily basis by the media and word of mouth.

This realization hit me between the eyes recently when I read a comment in a search engine forum from an SEO who claimed he used his ethical SEO methods as a Unique Selling Point. Look what we've been reduced to – differentiating ourselves from the masses because we DON'T break the rules. What other industry could boast such a thing? Apart from the used car industry, I can't really think of any.

So where did this nasty reputation come from and why has it been allowed to propogate? Well, it's mainly care of the hundreds of cowboys out there who decide one day they are online marketing experts, announce themselves as SEO's and set up a backyard biz, deciding (naively) that the fastest way to achieve high rankings is to break the rules, "crack" the search engine algorithms and undermine the search indexes by generating pages and pages of search engine spam. They do this by creating doorway pages designed for search engine spiders rather than humans, complete with hidden text, hidden links, cloaking and lots of other "tricks" they come across as they surf the Internet.

Problem is these self-proclaimed experts don't bother to do their research and learn that such spamming techniques have long been ineffective. Nearly all the search engines these days have sophisticated methods of detecting and removing spam within days of receiving submissions. Penalties for spamming the search engines differ from engine to engine, but can range from being "red flagged" and put on a watch list, to being hit with a ranking penalty, to having your site permanently banned from their index (in severe cases). The type of scumbag SEO's that would play Russian Roulette with their client's web sites in this fashion are well-deserving of scorn. It can take months for search engines to lift such penalties, if they decide to at all.

## Rising Above the SEO Reputation

While ineffective, such search engine spamming techniques have defined the reputation of the search engine optimization industry to date. In turn, this reputation is eroding business for so-called "ethical" SEO's – a term I use loosely to describe SEO's that don't try to undermine the search engine indexes when optimizing web sites. Actually, I'm not really comfortable with the term "ethics" to describe SEO. Until the industry establishes and accepts a standardized Code of Practice, we are just measuring others by our own personal standards and a set of arbitrary rules. But the SEO's I'm talking about strive to keep search results as relevant as possible by revising the visible site content and following the guidelines set down by the search engines in the optimization process. Some SEO's call this "White Magic SEO" – a tongue in cheek response to the "Black Magic" jibes I guess.

Not surprisingly, search engines have been reduced to lumping all SEO's into the "untrustworthy" basket. On their Webmaster Do's and Don'ts page (<http://www.google.com/webmasters/dos.html>), Google state: "Be very careful about allowing an individual consultant or company to 'optimize' your

web site. Chances are they will engage in some of our "Don'ts" and end up hurting your site". Chances are? Sounds a bit presumptuous if you ask me. Likewise, at a recent search engine conference, a representative from AltaVista declared that "all SEO's could be described using four letter words". The typical Internet user can only come to the conclusion that, according to some very reliable sources, SEO's are not to be trusted – now how fair is that?

So the main problem is – how do we address this reputation issue? Do we establish and agree on a standard Code of Practise as in development on sites such as the World Association of Internet Marketers (<http://www.waim.org/ethics.html>), SEO Consultants (<http://www.seoconsultants.com/seo-code-of-ethics.htm>) and SEO Pros (<http://www.seopros.org/members/practices.htm>)? Do we race around locating and reporting search engine spam in the hope of improving our reputation in the eyes of the search engines? Or do we simply follow our own set of standards and hope potential clients can come to their own untainted conclusions? Personally I'm looking forward to the day when I no longer detect immediate suspicion when I tell people I optimize web sites for a living.

Article by Kalena Jordan, CEO of Web Rank. Kalena was one of the first search engine optimization experts in Australia & New Zealand and is well known and respected in her field. For more of her articles on search engine ranking and online marketing, please visit <http://www.high-search-engine-ranking.com>

### **SEO – Search Engine Optimization You Can Do**

**By J. Ratliff**

#### **SEO – Search Engine Optimization You Can Do by J. Ratliff**

We all know what SEO is, and it seems like it has kind of an "executive" sound to it doesn't it? The truth is, thousands of webmasters spend millions of dollars every year on SEO services. Now, I am not discounting the importance of these services.

## Rising Above the SEO Reputation

Indeed, SEO is very important not only to the big website portals, but to your website as well.

However, I do believe that a lot of the people who spend thousands annually, do so without needing to. I have done SEO work on a dozen websites for businesses, and about 20 of my own. My secret? It's all in the software.

If you have not checked out this software, I highly recommend it.

(IBP) for

short. I use it everyday, not only for my websites, but also for any SEO work I do.

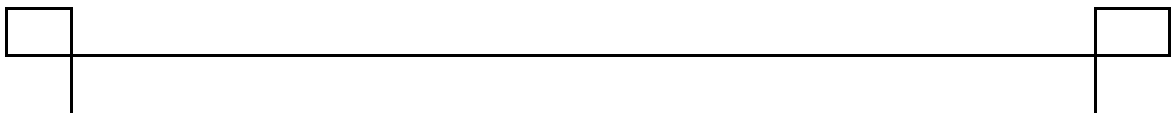
It does cost around \$200, but it is worth every penny plus some.

Save money and do your own SEO work.

J. Ratliff is a webmaster, part time SEO guru, and affiliate guru. He has achieved certified SEO status from ExpertExam.



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