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SEO Expert or Just a Cowboy?

By Martin Day

As a website owner it is perfectly natural to expect your website to rank near the top of the search results. After all, with all that fantastic content that you've just spent days and weeks fine-tuning, how could it not be immensely popular?

And as sure as night follows day, when your site fails to make the first page it's tempting to blame Google, because, how could your beautiful new website be the problem?

So, take a deep breath and read the next line.

It's not Google's fault, it's not your website's fault: it's your fault.

Sorry, but you haven't finished the job. Your next task is going to be challenging, but in this new world, competition is fierce, and to finish the job you'll need to pay careful attention to the various ways you can claw your site up the rankings.

But don't despair. You can get help, it even has a name Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and there are plenty of consultants and companies offering SEO services, the only problem is sorting the wheat from the chaff. Luckily for you, you are just about to read The Six Golden Rules for Choosing an SEO consultant.

Golden Rule Number 1: Contacted by an SEO firm? Keep your wits about you!

Although it does not automatically follow that all SEO firms that contact you are just out for a quick buck you should keep your wits about you and be wary of any that do. The majority of good SEO consultants will rather react to an inquiry than spend time trawling the Internet looking for poorly optimized websites.

Golden Rule Number 2: Guarantees are lies - spurn them and the companies that offer them

Okay, as Golden Rules go it is not fair to say that all guarantees are lies, there are a few genuine

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guarantees that are offered in good faith and as a sign of confidence, nevertheless err on the side of caution and treat them all as you would a suspect standing over a dead body with a smoking gun.

SEO consultants have no control over how the search engines search; they have no influence over the competition and so no matter how much you want it they are not in any position to offer you meaningful guarantees with regards to the results that can be achieved.

There are no 'special relationships' or 'tricks', if you are offered a guarantee, or think yourself covered for insisting on one, it is quite possible that the guarantee offered will be worthless.

Guarantees that are freely offered are generally not what they seem. Anyone with a basic knowledge of SEO will be able to rank you high for an uncompetitive search phrase; being ranked number one for a search phrase that no one is using is as useful and expensive as erecting a billboard in the middle of the Sahara Desert.

Golden Rule Number 3: Secretive SEO's should be shown the door

Your relationship with an SEO consultant should be similar to that you would expect from your accountant as you are ultimately responsible for your website and the actions of the people that you employ to build and maintain your website.

There is no reason for an SEO consultant not to explain why and what they are doing and they should be prepared to document all that they have done. They should not insert undocumented code and you should be careful of those that want to install their own software; give consideration as to what will happen if you decide at a later date to end your relationship with them.

Golden Rule Number 4: Treat references with a pinch of salt

References are useful but will not always tell the whole story. Ten years is a lifetime in SEO, and it is a subject that is more to do with understanding the 'now' than the 'then'.

Search engines in their current form first started to appear in the mid 90's and a lot has changed in search engine technology which gave birth to the SEO consultant. As the search engines have become more adept at spotting and penalizing websites that achieve prominence by stealth rather than merit, so SEO techniques have had to evolve.

Despite the SEO basics being the same for any website how they are applied and to what degree is very dependent on each specific website; its design, maturity, market, purpose, objectives, the type and size of the organization as well as how competitive the market. Some SEO techniques that are relevant and effective for some websites will be irrelevant and ineffective for others.

Golden Rule Number 5: Prepared to be disappointed

Limit your expectations. No matter how good the SEO consultant they will not be able to take you from

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'nowhere' to a number one listing overnight. There is no magic bullet that will allow a one page website to permanently out rank a large multi-national, if you believe those that say there are, expect to be disappointed.

SEO takes hard work, time and patience.

Golden Rule Number 6: Are they worthy of your trust

The most important quality to look for in an SEO consultant is trust, as more often than not you will be entrusting your SEO consultant with your business and reputation.

If you are not familiar with SEO speak you need someone who is not going to exploit your ignorance, isn't going to shift blame on to others and is going to do things right, with long term objectives, and not implement solutions that offer immediate rewards followed swiftly by long term and serious pain.

A good and trustworthy SEO consultant is worth their weight in gold, like good neighbors; when you have found one, think twice before moving.

Have you got a Champ or a Chimp?

The following is a questionnaire that can be used as an aid to ask potential SEO consultants a number of questions.

Based on how they respond to the questions it will help you root out those that lack the basic knowledge, expose those that are willing to tell you what you want to hear and identify those that are prepared to tell you what you should hear.

It is not recommended that the information you glean from the questionnaire is used as the sole criteria for evaluating an SEO consultant but it will help identify the SEO cowboy, saving you time, money and heartache.

http://www.surveyalaxy.com/surPublishes.asp?survey_id=2271

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SEO – Search Engine Optimization You Can Do

By J. Ratliff

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We all know what SEO is, and it seems like it has kind of an "executive" sound to it doesn't it? The

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truth is, thousands of webmasters spend millions of dollars every year on SEO services. Now, I am not discounting the importance of these services.

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.

Internet Business Promoter

(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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