

How to Choose an SEO

In my experience and opinion most website owners' priority is to get top search engine positioning for their selected search terms; and who can blame them?! They, as many, understand the importance and the benefits in having a highly ranked website. However, what's not so clear, is that there are many dangers that exist when practicing with the wrong SEO techniques and strategies.

Regardless of one's opinion on "White-Hat" versus "Black-Hat" SEO, it can be said that some techniques and strategies fit a project, while others simply do not. Understanding the differences and when to use them is what being an SEO is all about. Subsequently, this is why so many Internet companies choose to work with SEOs.

Think of a website optimizer as a veteran carpenter or plumber. Similar to the two handyman, a great SEO has their own tools, experience, education, and industry know-how needed for each and every project. When given a project, a great SEO must decide on which tools, techniques, and strategies are the most appropriate for the task at hand. In addition, and even more important, a great SEO must also decipher which of the tools, techniques, and strategies they should avoid using for fear of jeopardizing long term success.

With this being said, the main question is how exactly does a website owner choose the right SEO company or consultant, and how will they know that the strategies and techniques that are chosen are safe and most appropriate for a long-term campaign? The following tips are very beneficial to those looking to hire an SEO, and are helpful in separating one type of SEO from another.

- **Request and Review References** – It is perfectly appropriate for companies, those looking to hire an SEO Firm or consultant, to request references before agreeing to move forward in the early stages of an SEO campaign. References will most likely highlight the SEO's success rate, work ethic, customer service efforts, strategies and techniques, and many other traits needed to gain a better understanding of an SEO. If an SEO's current and past clients won't vouch for the company... who can?
- **"Google" (Search) the SEO Company** – Searching an SEO's name and URL can provide several types of information about the company that might otherwise be unknown.

When searching an SEO, weave through the top few listings, assuming that they belong to the actual company, and focus on those that appear on the second half of the first page all the way through the third. Typically, this is where comments, reviews, press releases, articles, affiliations, and so many other informative resources regarding the company can be found. This is great because it aids in understanding how others, both inside and out, interact with and perceive the SEO Company or consultant.

- **Request and Search Their Keywords** – This may seem to be seen an awkward request, however, the benefits in researching are insightful and rewarding.

For your information, simply by searching the company's key search-terms and viewing how well they rank will be a direct indicator as to how your company will be ranked / handled. It is important to understand that not all great SEO's are going to rank high for terms such as "Search Engine Optimization" or "SEO Consultant"... simply because there are too many SEO companies and only 10 first-page positions. However, focus on how well the SEO ranks for the keywords they were brave enough to provide and see first hand just how good the SEO is at SEO.

- **Talk With More Than One Representative** – Obviously this tip is only beneficial when feeling out SEO companies and not one-man operations, but the idea itself is simple and informational. It is natural for an SEO Company to have all potential clients funneled through a sales-department or people who are capable of talking-up their services. It is very rare that a company will communicate directly to the SEO team responsible for optimizing their website.

To avoid the corporate runaround associated with speaking to a company's sales-team, simply request a second phone call, but this time request one with a member of their SEO team. An SEO will typically provide more realistic answers to questions regarding strategies and techniques as well as those related to success rates and overall expectations.

- **Request and Review Affiliates** – You can verify that a SEO is indeed a great SEO by reviewing those organizations that they associate themselves with. Questions to ask yourself are: Is the SEO Company associated with industry organizations such as SEMPO or SMA-NA? Does the company use 3rd party service providers, and if so are they highly reputable? These are appropriate questions you should be asking before hiring an SEO company or consultant.

Also ask yourself the question, if an SEO Company or consultant is unable to provide adequate industry-related affiliates, what does that suggest about their involvement in the Search Engine Optimization industry?

In conclusion, deciding on which SEO Company or consultant to move forward with is a very difficult task. Companies should base their decision on whether or not they believe an SEO possess the necessary resources and understanding to rank a website, as well as a better understanding of how to keep a website listed within a search engine's index and off of their banned list.

Every SEO company and consultant will naturally vary in their views and opinions about search engine optimization, as well as which techniques and strategies are best. Utilizing the five tips highlighted above, a company should have little trouble deciphering through their list of possible SEOs, and finding one that best compliments the ideas and goals of the specific project at hand.