



10 Tips to Consider When Hiring an SEO Vendor

Introduction

It can be quite difficult to select a Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Vendor. One of the main reasons is because each vendor has different service offerings and quite often it's like comparing apples with oranges.

This White Paper will offer you tips on some crucial aspects of Search Engine Optimization and helps understand how you can compare services of different vendors.

After reading this White Paper you can ask the right questions to SEO vendors and their answers will help you select a vendor who matches your needs.

The following topics will be covered:

- How to shortlist SEO companies.
- 10 tips on comparing SEO vendors.
- Conclusion

Section I: How to shortlist SEO companies.

Use Google, Yahoo and MSN to search for SEO companies using keywords like Search Engine Optimization, SEO Companies, SEO services, Search Engine Optimization Services etc. Do not restrict yourself to just organic rankings, but look at paid listings also. There is a popular misconception that all good SEO vendors will rank on the first page of Google. Many SEO companies get credit links from the bottom of their client's web site which can get them on the first page of Google. But they might not be able to use the same strategy for your web site. So it's not necessarily true that only companies ranking naturally on Google's first page are good. It might take you some time getting used to this concept, but once you consider this, it will open up your mind to a lot of potentially good vendors. You should ideally shortlist 3 to 5 vendors (by looking at the information available on their web site). However if you have more time, you can expand this list to cover 10



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vendors. Make sure to have at least one local company on the shortlist. Although we at SEO Solutions believe that geographical boundaries are not a limitation to successful SEO, we also strongly believe that all things being equal, a local company should always be selected.

Section II: 10 Tips to compare a SEO Vendor

Once you have short listed these companies, start using the tips given below to finalize a vendor.

Tip 1:- Check if the vendor provides Web 2.0 and/or Social Media Optimization?

There is a lot of hype surrounding Web 2.0 and Social Media Optimization. Some of it is true while the remaining is.... well Hype! However, Blogs, RSS Feeds, Social book marking have now become an important part of an overall SEO strategy. Why? Google rolled out Universal search in May 2007. This has drastically changed Google's search results interface as it now includes results from more information sources like News, Videos, and Google Maps. It might be easier to create a video about your products or services and rank this video in Google rather than rank your web page.



In short, just ask your SEO vendor what Web 2.0 and Social media optimization techniques they use and whether you will get all of these services.

Tip 2:- Does the service cover Press Release Distribution?



Online Press Release distribution is a good way to generate links. Also companies like PR Web have a syndication network and their press releases are picked up by other web sites through RSS feeds. Press releases are a great way to get exposure in Google and Yahoo news. They are also effective in countering negative publicity about your company. Hence, it's important to ask your SEO vendor whether they provide press release distribution.

Tip 3:- Ask if your website will be optimized for Local search?

Local search includes not only submission to important local directories like Google Maps or Yahoo Local but also other smaller ones like Citysearch, Ask City and Local.com. You also need to have a listing in Online Yellow page directories. Having presence in these local search engines and Yellow pages web sites will get you local traffic and



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can also get you wider exposure because of Google Universal search interface.

Tip 4:- Does the service include link building?

Many SEO vendors do not include link building as part of their service offering and offer it as an add-on service. While this is fine, what is wrong on their part is not to inform this to you as a client. So while a SEO vendor might charge you \$2000 for SEO, link buying may cost you an additional \$1500. This will significantly increase your budget. So ask your SEO vendor whether the service includes link building or not. If not, how much extra would you need to spend on link building?



Tip 5:- Request a few case studies and references



There are some genuine reasons (for SEO vendors) not to display Case Studies on their web site. But there is really no excuse for not giving out case studies when requested. It is very important that you ask for a few client case studies and references. Either call or email these references and make sure there are not any discrepancies. Ask those references how was their overall experience working with the SEO vendor.

Tip 6:- Confirm who will make changes to your website? You or the SEO vendor?

This is a debatable area. Many SEO vendors come in as consultants and give you a report of what changes need to be done on your website. Ask them who will implement the changes on your website. If the changes are simple in nature (like working on html pages) then some SEO companies will include this work within the quoted SEO price. On the other hand if the changes are extensive and require either programming or database changes, most SEO companies might either work with your existing development company or give you a quote for implementing the changes. In either case, make sure whether the SEO company will make changes to the site. If not, then ask how much extra will they charge?

Tip 7:- Request a few sample client reports and ask them what is their reporting frequency?

It's generally a good practice to ask what types of reports you can expect and what would be the frequency of these reports. If you are still not sure, ask the vendor to show you some sample reports (to get an idea of what to expect). Many SEO



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vendors remove the client name and other sensitive data and show you examples of reports.

Tip 8:- Check how much time they will spend on your project?



Asking how much time they would spend on your project will give you a quick estimate of what their hourly rates are. This will help you compare rates with other vendors and also give you a benchmark for any additional work.

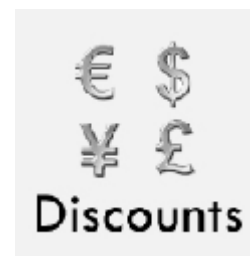
Tip 9:- Clarify what kind of support you will get.

It's very rare in the SEO industry to get face to face meetings with your SEO vendor (Unless the SEO vendor is local or your SEO budget is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars). However, ask your vendor what kind of support you will get. Email, Chat and telephone calls are the three major forms of support. Although not all clients might get chat or telephone support. For email support, ask them what is the average response time to a customer question. It should not be more than 24 hours.



Tip 10:- Negotiating Payment Terms / Frequency and Discounts?

Do not pay the full payment upfront. Payment should be made in at least two installments. Check out the frequency of payment. Also check if they offer monthly installments. Discounts are sometimes possible if you are committing for a longer time or have multiple projects. In either case, ask them for a discount.



Section III: Conclusion

We hope this helps you in comparing a good SEO vendor. If you have any comments or feedback about this white paper, do write to us on feedback@SEOSolutions.com.

About SEO Solutions Inc

SEO Solutions Inc is a Chicago, IL based Internet Search Marketing Agency which specializes in Search Engine Marketing, Search Engine Optimization and Social Media Optimization. SEO Solutions has over 5 years experience in Search Engine Optimization, Pay Per Click and Affiliate Marketing Services. SEO Solutions has executed more than 150 successful Search Marketing projects, and has clients in the US and Canada. Each client is assigned a personal project manager for the duration of

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the services engagement. Our dedicated team stands ready to help Clients of all sizes: from small, innovative startups to public companies.

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