

SEO BUYERS GUIDE

SMART ADVICE WHEN
CHOOSING AN SEO COMPANY



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YOUR GUIDE

TO BUYING **SEO**

SMART ADVICE WHEN CHOOSING AN SEO COMPANY

If you are a business owner, or in charge of the marketing activity for a company, a key goal will no doubt be to increase your sales, revenue and profitability. Marketing is vast, and it can be challenging to choose which option is right for your business.

Do you recruit a salesperson, spend more on advertising, change your pricing, launch a new website or do you do it yourself? It all depends on your business goals, your budget and what is right for your target market.

It all starts with an effective website

There's one marketing activity that you should consider - the effectiveness of your website. **What traffic do you get on your website? How many of those turn into actual customers? What channels do they come from?** These are questions that need asking, and ones that need turning into solutions.

Google represents a whopping 88% of all UK searches. That's a large search share you'll want to capture. **An effective SEO strategy is vital to improve your website's visibility.** Businesses tend to lean on SEO marketers to help achieve this goal yet why is buying SEO services such a minefield?

How do you avoid those marketing agencies who can only talk in technical jargon? How do you know when you're overpaying for underperforming services?

Not only do you need an effective SEO strategy, **you need a strategy that is better than your competitors'.** Why? Because your competitors all want the same goal as you. Achieving an effective strategy requires an investment in time and money, but you'll need a good agency to help bring you to your goals.

We have put together an SEO Buyers Guide to help you when choosing the right agency for your business. This guide covers the main questions to ask, as well as the red flags to avoid during your decision-making process.



WHAT IS SEO

Search Engine Optimisation is the process of building trust, momentum and authority with search engines. With good, consistent SEO practices, your website will be rewarded with a higher ranking on search engines. As a result, you'll begin to see an increase in the number of online enquiries that won't cost you a penny. Giving you more profit. There is a whole world of possibilities with SEO, but you must have the right tools and expertise in place.

Google and other search engines are constantly amending and refining how they operate. SEO is never constant - some practices that are working for you this year, may not be as effective next year. For great results, you'll need to be experienced in what works and what will negatively impact your website. Could you do SEO yourself? Sure, but could you do it as well as a specialist SEO agency? This guide will help you answer that question.

Things to consider before you invest in a company

Before you choose to invest in SEO you may want to consider these points:

- What part will SEO play in my overall marketing?
- What are realistic expectations of what I might achieve?
- Is my website well-designed? For example, is it easy to use and mobile-friendly?
- Do my website visitors know how to buy from you?
- Do I have a budget for SEO?
- Am I committed to a medium to long-term plan to give myself the best chance of success?

If you are clear you want to invest in SEO, what are the main questions to ask when deciding who you work with?



QUESTIONS TO ASK

Long Contracts

If things don't work out, you'll want to make sure that you're not tied into a long-term contract. SEO agencies should be confident enough to execute effective work on a monthly basis. The results should shape your decision-making, without being tied into a lengthy contract.

Is the company UK based?

There have been many cases of businesses that have outsourced their SEO overseas. In most cases, the experiences have been poor. It may seem like the cheaper option, but is it effective? If there is a problem, are you able to contact them? With a UK-based company, you're able to easily communicate any potential problems.

Contacted out of the blue?

Check your inbox (or spam folder) for SEO companies who propose to help with your SEO. They usually state that your website is performing badly, and they have arrived with their shining armour. Research this company. Make sure they are able to explain their analysis to you in a language you can understand.

Guarantees

Nobody can make guarantees about specific keywords and rankings in Google or any of the other search engines. Any company who does make such bold claims should be avoided. Yet, it is worth making sure any company you consider working with is a certified Google Partner. This means they will have met high standards relating to online marketing.

Cost

We all want value for money in anything that we buy, but like a lot of things, low-cost SEO is usually too good to be true. There are risks to consider when you choose to go with a low-cost SEO agency. For example, will they spend the time to let you know what they have worked on that month and why? Do they spend time looking at the focus keywords and whether they are the right words for your business? Will they create content to improve your website and help you get a better return on your investment? Using such a low cost company could be a risk as there is a chance they may use disapproved black hat techniques which could potentially cause long-term damage to your website.

Look into what you will be getting for your SEO investment - be realistic in what can be achieved in the time you're paying for and ensure you will receive reports on how your website is performing and advice and recommendations on how you can improve it.



QUESTIONS TO ASK

White Hat, Black Hat and Grey Hat SEO

The algorithms used by the major search engines have been developed over the years to combat risky and underhand manipulation of the search engine results and are there to catch websites that go against the spirit of the ranking systems.

These various practices are known as Black Hat SEO, White Hat SEO and Grey Hat SEO and are a way of describing unethical, ethical and practices somewhere in between. White Hat SEO is creating search engine optimisation the way the search engines would like you to, while Black Hat SEO basically breaks the rules and conditions laid out by the search engines. Grey Hat SEO is the middle ground - a bit of both black and white.

Websites that go against the guidelines could be penalised by an outright, or partial ban from the search engines and may cause a business to lose its main source of income if it can no longer be found on the SERP's.



Communication

In our experience working with clients, a good communications plan keeps projects on track. Plus, having frequent touchpoints can uplevel your brand and service and make for happier clients all round.

That means communication is key. Having a plan to communicate with our clients throughout the engagement is an important part of SEO and all parties need to stay engaged in the project for it to be successful. Our clients have access to and are sent monthly SEO reports.

Results

Results are the big thing - you are investing in your website's Search Engine Optimisation so you want to see results for your money. Firstly, it's worth remembering that SEO is not a "quick fix" and seeing your website move up the SERPs (search engine results pages) will not happen overnight. The company you choose to carry out your SEO will share your results with you each month which will track your website's performance, demonstrate any progress that has been made, and what they will be doing in the coming weeks and months and why to help improve your rankings. The report they share with you will likely identify specific keywords for your organic search and from this, recommendations to help your site's growth.