

HOW TO HIRE A SEO COMPANY

Get a good understanding of what to do
when hiring the services of a SEO company



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01 Introduction

If you are thinking of using the services of a SEO company choosing the right one can be challenge. How do you choose the right firm that not only provides good service but also delivers the result?

Going through this process will invariably be time consuming, and as we all know, time is a precious commodity. If you are ill prepared, the whole exercise may end up being an expensive waste of time and money.

This guide is intended to help busy business owners and managers understand and be better equipped when choosing the services of a SEO company.

Before beginning your search, it is a good idea to get familiar with what SEO is and how it operates. This will show that you have a reasonable grasp of the subject and that you can't have the wool pulled over your eyes.

To further help you, Acumenology has produced a series of Business Guides on a range of relevant topics. You can find these at: www.acumenology.co.uk/business-guides

02

When should I hire a SEO company?

In an ideal world the best time to carry out SEO is when you are either launching a new website or considering a re-design.

This way your site can be optimised from the onset.

However, if this is not the case, SEO can be carried out at any time but remember that doing so may require an element re-designing and updating the website.

A good SEO company will be able to help optimise your existing site.



03

Make a shortlist of possible companies

It is advisable to make a shortlist of between 5 – 10 companies depending on the time at your disposal.

The best way of doing this is by using the different search engines (Google, Yahoo & MSN) and type in the relevant keywords – SEO, SEO companies, SEO services etc.

Do not rely only on the sites that appear in the rankings. Take a look at companies in the paid listings as well and do not only look at companies on the first page.

Examine their site, go through their offering and use your judgement to add your chosen companies to the shortlist.

If budget is an important consideration you may wish to look at companies located say in India. In this case you would need to add 'India' in the search criteria.

You can also search for overseas companies by using the services of portals such as [freelancer](#) and [people per hour](#)

We recommend that you include at least a couple of overseas companies in your shortlist.

We will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of working with companies such as companies later in this article



04

Write a brief

STEP 1

The Brief

Information about your company and requirements for the SEO Company to prepare an appropriate proposal.

The brief should include the following:

- **Requirement** – as regards your SEO & internet marketing requirements.
- **Company Background** – outline of the company and its business including products/services.
- **Marketing Programme** – outline of your marketing plan.
- **Website Information** – details of your website including its strengths and weaknesses.
- **Timelines** – any critical time constraints.
- **Any Other Information** – anything else useful that may help the proposal.

STEP 2

SEO company Information

Information about the SEO Company for you to assess the company and the proposal.

You should consider asking the following questions:

- Can you show me case studies and sites you have worked on?
- What was the client's ROI?
- What increase in traffic can I expect?
- Do you have clients I could contact to see if they were satisfied with your service and results?
- Do you offer any internet marketing services to compliment the SEO?
- What kind of results can I expect to see and in what timeframe?
- What are the main things that are required to get my site ranked?
- How long have you been doing SEO?
- Can you give me a step-by-step breakdown of the processes involved, time frame and requirements from me for the SEO process?
- Does your service include link building?
- Who will make the changes to the website? The SEO Company or me?
- Can you give the frequency of reporting and show me examples of some client reports?
- What support will I get?
- What will happen if our relationship is terminated?
- Do you have any experience of my industry?

And the most important of all.

- What exactly will you do, how long will it take and what will it cost?

You may find that some of the companies will not bother replying to you and this could be for a number of reasons:

- They cannot give you the information you require.
- They are intimidated by the questions
- They can't be bothered as it is a lot of work.

- They know you are talking to a number of other companies and are not interested.

Invariably overseas companies are unlikely to respond especially as a number of them work as freelancers.

The reason for asking the questions is to sort out the companies who are likely to provide a good service and results from those who may not.

A good SEO Company will have already prepared replies as these are fairly standard questions which any potential client may ask.



05

Be wary of the following

As with anything there are certain things you should be wary of.

- Companies that guarantee #1 or top 3 ranking or promise to get you in the top 10 quickly.
- Companies who are not transparent and do not give clear explanation of what they intend to do.
- Companies who offer to Pay for Backlinks or says that they will get you inbound links.
- Submitting your site to 'thousands of search engines' and getting traffic from fake search engines.
- Clever use of terminology as you may not know or understand what they mean.
- If pre-payment is asked for.
- SEO's who own shadow domains.
- Offer to sell keywords in the address bar.
- SEO Companies that send spam emails.

06

Services that should be offered by a good SEO company

The following is a check list of some of the services a SEO company should offer:

1. **Website and Server Analysis** – This is to ensure that there is nothing stopping the search engines from indexing your site.
2. **Keyword Research** – This is the key for SEO and a good company should do a lot of research in coming with the relevant keywords and phrases customers are likely to use for your site.
3. **Optimisation & Content Writing** – Your content may need to be rewritten and or added to in order that search engine ‘spiders’ can read and correlate with the chosen keywords.
4. **Site Redesign** – Your site may need some minor redesigning to ensure it is user/search engine friendly.
5. **Site Maps** – The internal link structure needs to be clean and efficient; an efficient site map will allow easy access for a search engine ‘spider’ to view all the pages for indexing.
6. **Manual Submission** – To ensure proper indexing your website should be manually submitted to the search engines. Search engines do not approve of automatic submission and doing so can result in future problems.
7. **Link Building** – A link building campaign is vital for SEO success and this should form an integral part of a SEO’s service. Google places a great deal of value on the amount and quality of inbound links.
8. **Regular Reports** – It is always important to know how your keywords are doing within the search engines. You should be provided with weekly or monthly reports

9. **Maintenance** – Search engines are constantly refining their algorithms used to determine rankings and the competition is refining and adding content to their own sites. Thus, SEO should not be seen as a one off or short-term process.

07

What to look for in a good SEO company



- A satisfactory reply to the majority of the questions stated above?
- A proven track record.
- Prompt and efficient service
- Honesty & Transparency
- Good reporting
- Testimonials that check out
- Time and effort devoted to keyword research and link building
- Engagement in social media optimisation and blog marketing
- Never use auto submissions to search engines



08

What about using an overseas based SEO company?

If budget is a major concern, then the idea of using an overseas based SEO should be considered.

As you have read, getting your business up the search engine rankings can be a time consuming and labour intensive.

Since quotes are based on the estimated time required to optimise your site, an overseas company's quote should be significantly lower.



However, this has to be balanced with the quality service, potential language and time difficulties and deliverables offered.

Beware if the company fails to deliver as stated in their proposal. What comeback do you have?

You may wish to consider payments against agreed milestones as a way to protect both parties.

09

How much can I expect to pay?

There is no clear-cut answer and there are many costs associated with SEO.

Some companies will break their services down to number of hours, whilst others will take performance as a reference point. Some will offer to charge based on results.

However, as you would expect costs do vary enormously. Before you embark on this process you need to be sure that you need the services of an SEO.



Certainly, if you are carrying out e-commerce, SEO can help significantly.

For e-commerce sites SEO companies will analyse current traffic and revenue generated and may cost the process based linked to your turnover since it is easy to demonstrate a ROI (return on investment).

The information given below is intended only as a guide. Costs will vary considerably, and you need to carry out your own due diligence.

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What should I expect to pay for?

The following services are part of the SEO process and you should expect to pay for them...if they are used.

- **Online Market Research**- Competitor and industry research, research into the psychology of the targeted audience, keyword research etc.
- **On-site Optimisation**- On-site changes that are made in order to improve search engine rankings. On-page optimisation can include improving keyword density, writing headings and meta tags, cleaning source code, setting up links etc.
- **Copywriting** - Writing content for your website is an important part of any search engine optimisation campaign. It doesn't matter if your website ranks #1 if the words don't communicate your message and make the sale.
- **Off-site Optimisation and Marketing**- Includes setting up external links, partnerships, manual submission to search engines, directories, setting up ads etc.
- **Tracking and ROI Analysis**- Tracking traffic changes and patterns as well as accurate ROI analysis is what makes a SEO campaign successful or not.

The following items may be charged for or may be included as part of the package:

- Email and phone consultations
- Client training and education
- Preparation of reports and other documents and materials related to services to be provided



12 Conclusion

It is important to choose the right company and ensure they deliver on their promise as otherwise the whole exercise can be a waste of time and money

With SEO being complicated, we hope the information presented will better prepare you to start discussions with your shortlisted companies.

You will certainly give the impression that you know what you are talking about and that you can't have the wool pulled over your eyes.

Acumenology has produced a series of Business Guides on a variety of topics relevant to starting and running a business.

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www.acumenology.co.uk/business-guides

11 What should not be charged

- To automatically submit to untargeted search engines.
- To present standard reports generated by SEO software.
- Monthly optimisation of pages on your site. You should only pay once for having your site optimised.

