

# SEO Providers

SEO is complicated. It involves hundreds of variables and is a continual process of adjustments and building authority over time. It requires experience, deliberate decision-making and a fine mixture of art, science, and research. In addition, proper SEO is not cheap and, perhaps the worse part, it's hard to know if an SEO provider is actually doing their job.

The good news is with the right provider, SEO can be possibly the most powerful marketing venue for your business. It can drive viable customers and gain online exposure that can't be attained through any other marketing outlet.

The bad news is if you choose the wrong SEO provider, it can be an exercise in futility; costing your company wasted time, effort, and marketing dollars. Your company can be misled for years while your competitors are incorporating an effective plan and converting customers you could have captured.

For the SEO professional, it is pretty easy to spot the vendors of a counterfeit service, but through the eyes of a typical business, all providers are often blurred together. The result is unqualified SEO providers lose business, businesses lose customers, and the term SEO becomes a questionable service. My goal in this article is to help equip you to make the right decision for your SEO needs. The following 5 items are common tactics often used by less-than-qualified SEO providers.

**Guaranteed Ranking:** The reality is even the most seasoned SEO expert does not know what it will take to rank a website with Google, Yahoo, and Bing. The magic recipe is not public and is different with each search engine.

The Only assurance worthy of consideration is one that is performance based. For example, if a company states, "if you are not top page ranked within 6 months for a viable keyword phrase, they will continue working for free until you are ranked", it's a promise worth merit.

**Bait And Switch:** Did you know there are several places you can be listed on the top page of Google, Yahoo and Bing? There is the maps section, Sponsored Listing section (or PPC), and then organic positioning. Organic positioning is what most businesses think of when they want an SEO service (the area that fills up most of the screen on the left of a search results page).

Many SEO firms will confuse their services by saying things such as "top page placement". This is a tactic very common in the SEO world. Make sure you clearly understand what an SEO firms means by "top page placement". Organic placement is the most effective place to be listed with Google, Yahoo, and others.

**Thirty Days Or Less:** This tactic plays on the customer's desire for instant gratification. Ranking a website organically takes time. If anyone is telling you they can rank your website in 30 days or less, he should be eliminated as a viable solution. The reality is organic SEO takes months of work and adjustments.

**Keyword Selections:** This technique is almost impossible to detect. This involves an SEO provider choosing ineffective keyword phrases that sound good, but produce little-to-no traffic. They choose ineffective keywords because they are non-competitive and easy to rank.

About the only way to not fall prey to this tactic is to have multiple SEO providers perform a keyword research, then compare the data. Otherwise, you could be on the top page of Google for worthless keyword phrases. It will look good, but mean very little.

I can remember talking to a subcontractor about their SEO services. My contact rattled off 10-20 keywords they were ranked for on the top page of Google. After I got off the phone, I ran a quick analysis to find the keyword phrases they gave. Each produced little-to-no traffic, were not competitive and were easy to get ranked. They were marketing themselves as an SEO provider.

**Track Sales:** It is critical to track lead sources and compare with any reports given by an SEO firm. Tracking reports are easy to embellish. Of course, this is more to assure that the keywords you've been ranked for are effective. But investigate your SEO campaign as much as possible.

**Conclusion:** Unethical techniques by SEO providers have generated a backlash. Many claim the entire industry is "snake oil". I can't blame them given how frustrated I have been trying to educate others and address this issue. Unfortunately within any profession, there will be authentic professionals and less-than-qualified alternatives. The less-than-qualified alternatives will thrive because sensationalism and over-promises sell. The reality of Internet Marketing, although exciting, can't compete on the surface with false promises of quick ranking, unrealistic guarantees, and cheap pricing. It is worth the time for you to make sure you have the right provider on your team. - *John Carroll*

