FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SEO

Arm Yourself with the Information You Need to Make Informed Decisions About Your SEO Agency, Consultant or In-House Hire.
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Search engine optimization (SEO) is a crucial aspect of any marketing strategy, but it is also one of the most difficult, complex and costly.

Whether you are looking to outsource your SEO to an agency, bring on a consultant or hire someone in-house, there are a handful of questions that can help you quickly differentiate between the good and bad options.

In addition to supplying you with these questions in each section of this document, we have also included a checklist of things to look for when evaluating options.
FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SEO

The following are five questions we believe you should ask any SEO agency, consultant or new hire before making a selection:

1. DO YOU GUARANTEE #1 RANKINGS?
2. WHAT IS INVOLVED IN A SUCCESSFUL SEO STRATEGY?
3. WHEN CAN I EXPECT TO SEE RESULTS?
4. HOW DO YOU MEASURE PERFORMANCE?
5. HOW OFTEN DO WE DISCUSS PERFORMANCE/REPORTS?
DO YOU GUARANTEE #1 RANKINGS?

If any SEO promises rankings or immediate results it should throw up a major red flag.
DO YOU GUARANTEE #1 RANKINGS?

Any SEO firm that promises ranking or immediate results right from the beginning is a major red flag.

It is dishonest to promise something that is beyond their control. Claiming that your site will rank #1 or show up on the 1\textsuperscript{st} page for a specific keyword or set of keywords is not accurate. No one, except major search engines (Google, Yahoo, and MSN) can control how websites rank in their organic search results. No SEO can guarantee results because they have no control over the search engine algorithms.

It is true that a reputable SEO understands what factors go into ranking websites and can help increase search engine visibility, but no quality resource will ever promise rankings.
DO YOU GUARANTEE #1 RANKINGS?

What a good SEO will do:

- Ask about the key performance indicators of your business
- Ask about the keywords that already convert for you (leads and revenue)
- Ask you about the keywords you wish you ranked for
- Give you data about competition for existing and desired keywords
- Set realistic expectations with you about a strategy for those keywords
WHAT IS INVOLVED IN A SUCCESSFUL SEO STRATEGY?

There’s an art and a science to SEO, but a good SEO can articulate the how’s and why’s of their process in plain English.
WHAT IS INVOLVED IN A SUCCESSFUL SEO STRATEGY?

A good SEO is able to explain what goes into a successful SEO strategy in plain English; not some overly technical industry jargon that a typical business owner wouldn’t understand.

There’s a definite art and science to SEO and search engines are constantly making changes. As a partner, how your SEO talks to you about SEO strategy and their process for evaluating and improving your site(s) is a great indicator of how they are going to communicate with you down the road.

Every strategy should mention important on-page and off-page optimization, tracking results through website analytics, content development, link building and continuous tweaking/testing to increase rankings and conversion rates.
WHAT IS INVOLVED IN A SUCCESSFUL SEO STRATEGY?

What a good SEO will do:

- Explain SEO in a simple and easily understood manner
- Articulate their process for evaluating and improving your site
- Lay out a multi-phase strategy for success
- Discuss both on-page and off-page optimization
- Have a plan for continuous tweaking/testing to increase rank and conversions
WHEN CAN I EXPECT TO SEE RESULTS?

Rome wasn’t built in a day. A good SEO will set realistic expectations with you and agree to a deadline.
WHEN CAN I EXPECT TO SEE RESULTS?

Probably the most important part of finding the right SEO is setting the proper expectations. Anyone that says you will be fully optimized in 2 weeks is lying. A successful SEO campaign is ongoing and always improving.

The first thing the SEO should ask you is “What are your goals?” Without understanding what you are trying to accomplish, there is no way anyone can give proper expectations. Once your goals are established, the following can be determined: realistic expectations based on the current condition of your website, your competition, and how much time/money/resources you have devoted towards your SEO efforts.

A good SEO will not necessarily be able to say that you will see results in exactly two months. However, they should be able to give you a range as to when you will start to see a noticeable increase in traffic and conversions, and what the process is if goals are or are not met.
WHEN CAN I EXPECT TO SEE RESULTS?

What a good SEO will do:

- Explain that SEO campaigns are ongoing and always improving
- Ask what your goals are
- Give you a reasonable time frame as to when you will see changes
- Set expectations for what happens if goals are or are not met in that timeframe
If performance is based solely on ranking, they’re really saying that their business comes before yours.
HOW DO YOU MEASURE PERFORMANCE?

In order to track whether your SEO efforts are successful or not, you need to monitor your website analytics and ranking reports, but also the key performance indicators for your organization. At the end of the day, rankings don’t keep the lights on... revenue does.

For ecommerce sites, it may be easier to track ROI because your conversions are all online. For brick and mortar stores, or companies that do a combination of online and offline sales, it can be a bit more challenging. To truly track all conversions, an SEO may need your help in tracking phone calls, store sales, etc.

But a good SEO will be focused on how optimization is contributing to your bottom line, not just your rankings.
HOW DO YOU MEASURE PERFORMANCE?

What a good SEO will do:

- Track and monitor analytics, ranking reports and KPIs for your organization
- Supply benchmark reports to show where you stand today
- Consider tracking offline conversions like phone calls, store sales, etc.
- Explain how their strategy will drive traffic that ultimately ties to your KPIs
HOW OFTEN DO WE DISCUSS PERFORMANCE/REPORTS?

SEOs must regularly reevaluate data and search engine changes to keep you headed in the right direction.
HOW OFTEN DO WE DISCUSS PERFORMANCE/REPORTS?

Since optimization consists of an initial setup and then ongoing maintenance, it is important that the SEO outlines when and how often you will meet to discuss your strategy and performance. As search engine algorithms change, your SEO will need to get creative, try new strategies and make adjustments. Meeting regularly also helps keep marketing and SEO strategies running in line. It is not uncommon to meet on a monthly or quarterly basis to talk about your website analytics and conversion goals, and to make recommendations for next steps.

While it is important to see what the SEO has been up to, a good SEO knows that they will require the assistance of their client to get them where they need to be. In a true partnership, both the SEO and client will share updates to make sure both parties are aligned and to look for new opportunities.

Because content is such a big part of SEO, you should devote some resources into writing articles, blogging, and press releases. Ask your SEO how you can help results improve faster.
HOW OFTEN DO WE DISCUSS PERFORMANCE/REPORTS?

What a good SEO will do:

- Outline frequency and agenda for reviewing your strategy and performance
- Establish a partnership by having expectations for you in these meetings as well
- Include content development (blogs, articles, press releases, etc.) in their plan
CONCLUSION

At the end of the day, it’s just as much your responsibility to be informed and educated in order to hold your SEO or agency accountable and get the results you need and expect. Remember to be realistic and practical with your expectations and realize that rank isn’t everything. If traffic, and ultimately ROI, isn’t increasing then it’s probably time to re-evaluate your plan and strategy.

Armed with these five questions to ask your SEO agency, you’ll be ready to take action and start seeing results.

On the next slide, you will find a quick checklist of the questions we encourage you to ask your SEO and the things to look for when selecting your SEO resource.
FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SEO

1. **DO YOU GUARANTEE #1 RANKINGS?**
   - Did they make a guarantee?
   - Did they ask about KPIs?
   - Did they ask about current conversions?

2. **WHAT IS INVOLVED IN A SUCCESSFUL SEO STRATEGY?**
   - Did they explain SEO in easily understood terms?
   - Did they articulate their process?
   - Is there a plan for continuous tweaking / testing?

3. **WHEN CAN I EXPECT TO SEE RESULTS?**
   - Did they clarify and set goals with you?
   - Did they set deadline for a performance review?
   - What happens if goals are / aren’t met?

4. **HOW DO YOU MEASURE PERFORMANCE?**
   - Did they supply benchmark reports?
   - Did they discuss offline conversions?
   - Did they tie performance to your KPIs?

5. **HOW OFTEN DO WE DISCUSS PERFORMANCE/REPORTS?**
   - Did they set frequency and plan for check-ins?
   - Did they task you with your part?
   - Is this going to be a true partnership?