

Business Owner's guide to SEO

Gaining a competitive advantage in today's online market can be a bit of a challenge. They say that there are many ways to Rome and although this is true, the problem is that once business owners find their shortcut they tend to relax and don't keep an eye open for further opportunities. One of these is **SEO** (Search Engine Optimization).

This article will help a savvy business owner in understanding the basics of SEO including the choice of an SEO company, effects on the website, timelines, results and performance tracking.

What is SEO?

First of all let's clarify what SEO is and isn't. SEO is a process of technical and semantic adjustments performed on one's content and/or website in order to make the targeted content more accessible for search engines and help them understand the theme and focus of the site. A natural result of a well optimized website is increase in search engine result page position. SEO itself doesn't get your website higher in the results, it's the fact that your site's topic becomes clear to search engines that results in better position. An SEO company cannot guarantee you a placement in any search engines.

How to choose an SEO company?

Your initial research is very simple. Just type in "SEO" in Google and work from the top down. SEO companies that could get ahead in the results themselves are likely to produce the results for you too. Make sure that the company you're researching has an office in your local area as proximity is always an advantage. Compare the prices and features and don't be shy to ask questions, no matter how silly you think they are. The SEO market is competitive and companies are competing for leads, they will do anything to get your project. Another thing you may want to ask them is to give you a few examples of websites they have optimized and see how competitive those were in the first place.

How will SEO affect your website?

SEO doesn't often make dramatic impact on your website's visual appearance. You may expect to see some revisions in the site headings, extra text content on your front page, footer or see additional pages added to your site. If your website is dynamic or database driven, your programmer may need to be involved in some stage of the optimization process. Make sure you factor in the cost of this when you're getting your proposal and working out your budget for SEO.

How soon can you expect to see good results?

This depends heavily on how difficult and competitive the search term you're focusing on is. Generally, easier search terms can be conquered within weeks and some more generic terms may take up to six months to surface up. The best way to ensure quick results is to select a niche keyword as your immediate focus and work your way up.

What's the best way to track SEO performance?

Take time to look at your website statistics. They should be supplied to you with nearly any hosting deal you may have. Pay special attention to where the traffic is coming from. If your main referrer is Google, MSN, Yahoo and other search engines this means that your SEO has worked fine. In addition to this you should check to see if your audience is qualified. For example you wouldn't want traffic from UK on a website that sells products that only deliver within Australia. If you are running other advertising campaigns such as 'Pay Per Click' or Banner Ads, make sure your SEO separates these on special landing pages so that traffic from those doesn't interfere with your natural, organic search traffic statistics.

And remember SEO is not expensive if your sales are going well as a result. Your sales are the ultimate gauge in the effectiveness of not only your SEO, but any marketing campaign you may engage in.

About the Author

Dejan Petrovic is an [SEO consultant](#) based in Brisbane, Australia. Dejan specialises in [search engine optimisation](#) for small businesses.

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