

CHEAP SEO SERVICES

I'm sure you've heard the old adage 'you get what you pay for', well with online marketing and search engine optimisation (SEO), it's exactly the same. If you really want SEO on a shoestring, or to go with the cheap £99 service, go ahead.....

.....but before you jump in, just read through this document, which will give you a flavour of the kind of service you will get. It's not just the price that should worry you, but it's what some companies are actually passing off as legitimate SEO, which not only gives the industry a bad name, but does nothing to help you gain good rankings in the search engines for your website, or actually make any money from your website.

1. Submission Service

There are many cheap 'submission' services out there, all selling a service to get your website listed in the main search engines – well, in fact not just the main search engines, but about 400 search engines.

- a. **You do not need to pay** to get your website indexed by the search engines. All you need is to get a link from another website that has already been indexed by the search engines, to point to your website. That is all – just links, nothing else. If you decide to pay someone to do this for you, it's just money for old rope.
- b. There aren't 400 search engines, only 4 that you should concern yourself with: Google, Yahoo!, MSN & Ask. Once your website is listed in these search engines, your site can potentially appear in search results for the whole web, and these search engines provide results to many smaller search engines.

DO NOT EVER PAY FOR A SUBMISSION SERVICE!

2. Doorway Pages

Some search engine optimisation companies don't actually optimise your website. They optimise doorway pages which link through to your website, which are hosted on their own servers. This way they don't ever touch your website, so in effect, the optimisation is not yours. They will research keywords, then produce (often through software) pages full of your keywords, with links in them so visitors who find these pages click through to your website from them. Often the content on these pages has a lot to be desired, because it is just keyword repetition.

The pages may rank well as the SEO firm will also send links to these pages from link farms (see below), to try and artificially inflate the rankings of these pages (which search engines do not like). However, once you decide to stop using the SEO service, all your traffic will be switched off, and you will be left with your un-optimised website, which is what you started off with.

3. Greyed or Invisible Text

You may have been to some websites and seen some greyed out text below the main page content, which lists loads of keywords. This is some SEO companies' idea of optimisation. It looks awful, is unprofessional and is against search engine guidelines. Even worse, some put keywords into invisible text (i.e. text which is the same colour as the background), which search engines can read, but site visitors cannot see. Do not ever go down this route, as it looks unprofessional and can put off visitors to your website from contacting you.

4. Link Farming

Linking is the buzzword in search engine optimisation at the moment. People will tell you that you need to get as many links as you can to get good rankings, particularly in Google. Well, this is a myth. Yes, links are important but it is the quality of the links, not the quantity. However, some SEO practitioners will go out and get as many links as possible to artificially inflate your rankings. They will list your website on 'link farms' which are domains which have no purpose other than to list thousands of websites to get links to them. These sites have no content, are of very low quality and in fact will be no help at all with your website's link popularity. Often these sites will be hosted by the search engine company themselves and list all their clients. Some of these sites list less than reputable websites, and unfortunately, if found by a surfer, will make sure your website is tarnished with the same brush. The SEO company will never tell you where your links are either. Do you really want your site listed alongside some dodgy porn site or site selling certain medication that we won't go into here??

5. Meta Tag Stuffing

Some SEO companies' idea of optimisation is to stuff keywords into all the meta tags. This includes the title tag, meta description and meta keywords tag. The title tag and meta description tag show up in a search engines' results page, so the last thing you want is your site to appear in the search results with just lists of keywords as a site description. The idea of a well written title tag and meta description tag is to encourage surfers to click on your listing, and not your competitors'. Therefore having meta tags stuffed with keywords not only does not help your rankings, but actually puts people off from clicking on your website's listing in the search results!

6. There are other more technical methods which can lead to your site getting banned. These include 'cloaking', java script redirects, CSS spam, all of which I won't go into here, but you need to be aware that they exist. You can get good search engine rankings using these techniques, but you could also find your site being banned from all the search engines. The search engines will not tolerate cheats, or these methods used by websites to trick their way to the top of the search results. For more information, look at Google's webmaster guidelines: <http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en/webmasters/guidelines.html>. Once your website is banned, it is a complicated and time consuming process to get your website re-listed.

Other things SEO firms may do:

- i. Optimise your website regardless of whether or not your site needs improvements made to it – they say that's what you asked for and the content of your site is not their responsibility. They are not concerned about the number of enquiries you get through your site, and their job is done once they have 'optimised' your website.
- ii. Optimise your site for obscure keywords that nobody is searching on so that you easily get good rankings, or only optimise your site for your company name, which is also no good, since people who do not know your company are more likely to search on keywords related to your products or services. You may get good rankings for these obscure keywords or for your company name, but it is unlikely you will actually get any visitors to your website.
- iii. Use software to optimise your website which automates submissions (see 1 above), and automatically produces content pages and meta tags. No effort or thought is put into the optimisation, and does nothing to give your visitors a positive experience on your website.

What some SEO firms will not do:

i. Advise you on what improvements you can make to your website, to make sure that when visitors do actually find it in a search they will stay on the site, re-visit the site and actually make an enquiry or buy from you – after all, sales and enquiries are what you want, aren't they?

ii. They won't work with you over a period of time to make continual improvements to your website and to the optimisation. They won't find out your objectives or how the SEO fits into your overall marketing plan or business strategy.

These are just some of the things that you can expect if you buy a cheap service - but is this what you really want – to give your money to someone who cares very little about your website or your business, take your money and use methods that could actually lead your website getting banned by the search engines?

The choice is yours - but remember, you get what you pay for!

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