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## 10 Things to Consider Before Hiring An Internet Marketing Company

If you are reading this, you are probably realizing that Internet marketing is essential to your business survival in this day and age. Commerce is immensely shifting online, and your competitors are always upping their game. You need a strong and savvy online presence to not only take back your market share, but also dominate and solidify your company's position. If you don't know much about SEO, SEM, PPC and other online methods of branding your business and generating leads, elevating your company's online position can be an intimidating move. It takes constant attention and self-study – and time that you may not have. You need an Internet marketing company to step in and assist with this endeavor.

Finding a great Internet marketing company might be just as difficult as learning Internet marketing altogether. This guide was created to give small business owners simple, yet powerful information to assist in making a good decision. There are thousands of unscrupulous Internet marketing companies out there because of the explosion in SEO and its universal, unequivocal necessity for businesses. They come in all shapes and sizes, each providing an array of services. Some are small, some are huge, some only handle organic search, some only pay per click. Some will help with your local listings, and others will just work on your link building. This guide pinpoints 10 solid things to consider about hiring an Internet marketing company, as well as questions to ask when doing so, and it will help you find the best fit for your company.

Reading this guide shows your interest and concern for having Internet marketing that will work and provide a return on investment. It is our intention to make sure that your interest is met by relevant, helpful content that will put you on the right path. We will start with five things to look for when initially seeking an Internet marketing company, followed by five questions to ask once you find a company you believe could be a good partner for your business.

## Part One: What to Look For

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Keep in mind that by doing research, you become an empowered consumer. This digital age has given us more access to immediate, good and pertinent information than ever before in the history of mankind. We read reviews on countless websites, all effortlessly presented to us by sophisticated search engines that attempt to read our minds. Technology enables us to communicate with friends family and strangers using with too many methods to count. All of this access to information and interaction makes us informed decision makers once we've taken the time to learn what to look for.

What follows are five critical things to look for in an SEO company. Once you learn a little bit more about what is going on in the industry, you'll develop your own set of standards. To begin, these are solid indicators that will surely help narrow down your search.

### 1. Do They Make Promises?

From all of us at Market My Market, this is Internet Marketing 101. Essentially, there are no promises in Internet marketing, because there are no guarantees. Promises can come in many, many different forms, most commonly:

*We'll dispel those myths right now:*

"We'll get you on the front page of Google!" How long, and is it pay per click? This technique can definitely be achieved by using black hat techniques. You can certainly will be page one for several weeks, and then your site will be permanently blacklisted by Google for suspicious link building and will probably never rank again.

"We'll double your revenue in three months!" Perhaps if your Internet marketing company is also buying your products/services.

"Your phone will start ringing off the hook in a matter of days!" Again, probably a long shot. Not to say that there aren't a lot of great marketing companies out there, but it is important to understand that SEO takes time. You may see results in the beginning, but for the full extent of the work to start becoming visible, it could be between three to six months. This is because legitimate SEO practices take time to be processed by search engines. The great news is that once this strategy is laid out and stays on course, these results tend to stick around for a long time.

Why do they make promises? Often times, to earn your business. Google algorithms shift too often for anyone to be able to predict your ability to maintain an immediately desirable position on search engine rankings.

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## **2. Does it Look Like Your Business Falls into a "Package"?**

Your business is unique and should always be thought of that way – by you and by the companies you work with. It always seems strange to see companies offering “packages,” as if SEO is a bouquet of various enticing flowers that can be customized to taste.

“Well do 20 links, 10 blogs, one hour of optimization, three articles”

Though what you’re getting for what you’re paying is fairly transparent, there is no way what’s right for your company is right for another. Some businesses don’t need nearly as much copywriting as others, and one could use more valuable links than the next. When it comes to your business, an Internet marketing company needs a precise understanding of what will work well given your strengths and weaknesses, and a package simply will not suffice. Though some companies may be flexible with their packages and offer some of the deliverables as a substitution, you may find that some companies make it apparent that what they offer is very rigid. This is especially prevalent with much larger companies that may lack the ability or the interest in customizing a marketing strategy just for you.

## **3. Do They Do Marketing for Small to Medium Businesses?**

Many Internet marketing companies claim to excel in every aspect of Internet marketing. They would likely claim that their experts are capable of turning around a business’s online presence with ease. It is important to realize marketing is multi-faceted and varies by business industry and size.

Marketing for large businesses is much different based on their size. There should be an obvious indication that an Internet marketing company can specifically cater to the SMB realm. This will immediately help in filtering out some of the companies that are not right for you. Bigger is not always better. Finding a company that can focus on the unique needs of small to medium businesses will likely allow you to capture a more effective demographic to market to.

## **4. Does the Site Sell You or Inform You?**

Owners of Internet marketing companies and their employees are typically very passionate about the work that they do. There is a lot of pride and creativity that goes into this type of work, and they are pleased when SEO and SEM techniques enable their clients to excel. . This passion extends beyond providing good work, and goes as far as educating and creating quality information that both clients and visitors to the site can use and implement right away. The problem with a site that is superficially selling you on services is the increased possibility that there isn’t an innate desire to disseminate that meaningful information both internally and externally. It could be an indication that:

They want clients/prospects to be less informed so they outsource their Internet marketing instead of doing so in-house

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The company isn't in tune with the most recent trends in search engines and Internet marketing  
The company has a general indifference toward being more than a lead generating website

What you'll notice about sites that don't inform by providing articles, downloadable PDFs, blogs, and more, is that often times they just aren't as sincere. Notice these websites don't really speak to you, and they may not hold your business interests in high regard.

### **5. Do They Focus Heavily on Getting You "Traffic"?**

Everyone loves traffic to their site. It's exciting to know that people are on it one way or another, browsing around, looking at what you created. But the point of traffic is ultimately to convert it into sales. The purpose of focusing on your company's Internet presence is really two things: branding and lead generation. You could find a company that has techniques to drive traffic to your site, and they could do a great job in increasing traffic. But if your leads and revenue are not correlating, that additional traffic hasn't served its purpose.

Be wary of Internet marketing companies that put too much emphasis on traffic and not enough on lead generation. Again, traffic is great but will not justify having an Internet marketing company. You want a company that will be able to level with you; look at the unique position of your company in your market; and determine the best way to increase referrals and leads. If this is all done correctly, you will see a rise in both.

## Part Two : What To Ask

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Now you're at the point where you've found a few companies that could be a good fit for your business and its goals. You may have worked in your own variables, such as the design of their own website and and its messaging; some notable clientele they may have worked with and/or still retain; and reasonable prices with services that seem appropriate.

Initially interacting with them can be tricky. You will often times be dealing with salespeople from the beginning, and it is important to know the difference between their years of pitching and charming experience, and their real ability to communicate how they will really be the best fit for your company and provide the right results. It is important for you, as the consumer, to ask some very important questions when you talk to the SEO company. Your time and money are on the line!

### **Who Will Be Working On My Account?**

We've all come across good salespeople, especially as small business owners. Some are great – charming, witty, almost entrancing at times, especially at the height of their pitch. We'd be lying if we said we never went with a salesperson's services because of the quality and energy of their presentation. But what happens after that? The sales staff you met will be a point of contact, but they are rarely the person that will actually continue to work on your account.

This is how most SEO companies work, whether big or small. You want to know the kind of people that will be on your account day-to-day. Typically, you will be assigned an account rep, or a few of them. There are times when these people may have been hired by the company weeks before being assigned to your account. You want to know you're working with people that have been in the game for a while, and will be able to thoroughly answer any questions you have as you learn Internet marketing over time yourself.

### **Do You Work With Third-Parties Overseas?**

The truth of the matter is nearly all Internet marketing companies are going to have some connection to third parties overseas, but that doesn't necessarily mean they're a scam. It just depends what which work they are outsourcing. For example, programming elements could go to India, content writing to the Philippines, link building to Bangladesh, video transcription to Croatia, and PHP development and graphic design to Eastern Europe. It is the global nature of an industry that is conducted online and can be done anywhere in the world. But you should still be concerned about how much is being done in this manner.

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It is interesting to see how salespeople react to this question. They'll go as far as saying everything is done completely in-house –, an absurd statement given how often they necessitate working with third parties for software, web development, directories, and other Internet marketing tools even domestically. Though it is possible that very large SEO companies could suffice completely in-house, it is almost illogical not to work with other parties for certain aspects of SEO. When asking this question, it is important to get a feel for specifically what elements of their work are outsourced instead of focusing on that nature of the industry altogether.

### **How Often Will We Be in Communication?**

You want to work with a company that has employees you can develop a rapport with outside of just your professional relationship. When you can communicate at this level with people in an Internet marketing company, you will notice their genuine interest in the success of your business. SEO companies have two purposes: to generate more leads for your business; and to increase brand awareness of your business across all online platforms. Communication with your Internet marketing company should be persistent and meaningful. SEO companies need to work for you, and more importantly work with you. You don't necessarily want to speak three times a day, but certainly more often than three times a month. You want to be able to feel comfortable contacting them at any time. They shouldn't make you feel like a nuisance or an inconvenience. Communication should be natural and fluid. And everyone you are in contact with, from your account manager to the people actually implementing SEO deliverables, should always be on the same page.

### **When Should I Start Seeing Results?**

Unless your product is paid advertising, the results should almost be never be instant. Results depend on a several things:

- The competitiveness of your market
- The size of your market
- The amount of money you're investing into your SEO campaign
- Whether or not your website is dated or being rebuilt

Feel free to ask the person you meet with in your first consultation about when they expect your business to see results. They should have a fundamental understanding of the time it could take to achieve results. If you're in a smaller market with little competition and you have SEO going strong from the beginning, you could see online leads in as little as three to four weeks. If you are a small business in a big city that has competition pouring tons of money into their efforts while you're starting at a modest pace, and you're attempting to go for short-tail keywords without a niche in mind, you may never see results.

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There truly isn't a definitive answer to this question, but it is good to ask so you can get feel for the person you're speaking with. You'll be able to sense more reasonable answers that are in the month range (typically three to six months). Be wary of anyone who promises immediate results, or even results "within a month" if they are referring to completely organic methods.

### **How Transparent Are You?**

One of the most important questions you can ask is "How transparent are you?" You want to know exactly what your company is doing with your dollar. Question any use of the word "proprietary," which often involves cryptic link building and submission to link directories. Though this is a pivotal component of SEO, it is quite easy for SEO companies to sweep under the rug and avoid its discussion. It is also easy for Internet marketing companies to take advantage of lack of knowledge by excessively using jargon and "proprietary" means of earning traffic. SEO can get quite complicated, but it doesn't have to be presented that way. Ask questions like "What kind of reporting will there be," "Will you be able to see if your keywords are increasing or decreasing in position," and "Which keywords work best." In fact, here is a list of questions you could ask regarding reporting, which will help with transparency:

- Will I be able to see where people go on my site?
- Will we be establishing goals?
- Will we try out A/B testing?
- Will I have access to Google Analytics?

### **How Many Accounts in My Industry and Market Do You Have?**

This actually may be one of the most important questions you can ask the company. If you are an air conditioning company, and the company you're working with already has three of them in your immediate area, what incentive do they have to take your business to the next level instead of the others? If it's a higher retainer, you shouldn't have to shell out more money to see slightly better results.

Ideally, an SEO company shouldn't have any other clients like yours in your direct area. This will ensure that all efforts are genuinely invested in you and there are no conflicts of interest.

### **Conclusion**

We hope you found this guide helpful in narrowing down the number of Internet marketing companies to reach out to, and then finding the perfect one through your own, "interview process". Remember, your money, time, business, and online presence are on the line. Your Internet marketing company needs to do a good job. Don't be discouraged in this process. If you have any questions whatsoever, please reach out to us. Remember we are passionate about the industry, love talking about it, love learning about it, and love doing it. You can call or email us for guidance anytime.