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Advantages of Ethical SEO by Trevor Southwold

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It is useful to think of ethical search engine optimisation (SEO) as a set of practices that both preserve the internet user's experience and promote a particular website. Unlike unethical search engine optimisation, ethical SEO does not breach webmaster guidelines provided by search engines and does not encourage an adversarial relationship with search engine operators. Perhaps more importantly, ethical SEO provides a solid foundation for the continuing success and worldwide enjoyment of the World Wide Web.

When thinking about search engine optimisation, there is a tendency to regard ethical practice with a 'necessary evil' mentality. Many SEO agencies that are driven by results engage in ethical techniques for all the wrong reasons: to avoid the ranking penalties associated with specific unethical practices and enemy status in the eyes of major search engine operators. This betrays a serious miscalculation of the direction in which the internet search industry is rapidly moving.

Search engine operators want to provide their users with a smooth and satisfying internet search experience. This ensures search users will keep returning to the same engine to conduct a majority (or even all) of their internet searches, meaning that advertising space on search engine results pages remains at a premium - and with demonstrable good reason. It follows that changes to search engine algorithms and policies are usually driven by intentions to improve user experience.

Search engines are thus increasingly moving towards a system driven by user response. This intent can clearly be seen in both efforts to factor social media signals into search engine algorithms and efforts to add sophisticated machine learning processes into the underlying mathematical mix. Since the businesses that run internet search engines are vast corporate entities employing many of the brightest minds in the computing world, there is little sense in trying to outmanouevre them as a long-term strategy. Unethical search engine optimisation may work well today and it will probably work tomorrow, but it is very, very unlikely to work forever.

One of the greatest advantages of ethical search engine optimisation is that it keeps an SEO agency 'ahead of the game'. Since search engines strive to provide users with interesting results, producing content that is of genuine interest to other human beings provides the greatest chance of sustainable success. In other words, your business stands the best chance of making long-term ranking gains by implementing an ethical SEO strategy that focuses on improving user experience. If this represents too great a commitment of resources for your business to handle in-house, you should consider outsourcing the work to a reputable (and ethical) SEO agency.

Ultimately, the main advantages of ethical SEO over unethical SEO are that it will never go out of fashion and it will never put your business at risk. While the temptations to employ an unethical agency are very real (lower cost and faster results spring to mind), they should be resisted at all costs - this will set your business apart from unscrupulous competitors and ensure that you never wake up to an algorithm change and a precipitous ranking drop.

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