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Why Firms That Use Black Hat SEO Tactics Should Be Avoided by Trevor Southwold

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If you are looking to employ someone to handle your online marketing but find the whole business of search engine optimisation confusing and the language used alienating, what exactly is it you should be looking out for when browsing potential companies to employ?

The world of SEO can sometimes be murky and uncertain if the company you use is not open or forthcoming about their techniques and practices. To ascertain how ethical an SEO company is, ask them about what they do and how they work to improve client rankings. The answer you get may be packed full of industry terminology and web terms you are not familiar with but the fact that the representative is happy to discuss their methods and practices is positive.

You should be suspicious if the company rep tries to avoid informing you of what they do, just like you should be if they tell you they can guarantee your site will rank number one for your agreed keyterms by the end of your contract. No SEO company can guarantee ranking in first place, any that claim they do should be avoided, as they probably use techniques that could see your site penalised by search engines for trying to manipulate its place in the rankings.

Common unethical tactics include duplicating content and posting it on multiple sites, 'spinning' articles (reproducing similar content numerous times) and buying up cheap domain names and loading them up with your agreed keyterms and links to your site. If you agree a contract with an SEO firm then find that your site zooms up the rankings in the following weeks, they may well be using black hat tactics and you could find your site penalised with a drop in rankings, or even- if the manipulation and abuse of the search algorithms is serious enough to warrant it- complete de-indexing of your site may take place.

An ethical SEO firm will not use these shady practices, nor will they use 'link farms' or paid blog netowrks where vast amounts of low quality content is produced. Search engines like Google are increasing their de-indexing of these services with each update to their algorithm so if your SEO has been using them and the content is removed from search results, your site may fall down the rankings as its backlink authority will be weakened.

Ethical SEO focuses on building relationships with reputable blogs and websites, as well as creating high quality content that is just as useful for human readers as it is for web 'crawlers' that search engines use to list sites.

So before you agree to an SEO contract, make sure you are certain the company you use will not end up causing you headaches more than they increase your net turnover.

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