

Top 5 Questions To Ask Your SEO Provider In 2018

SEO

Question 1: Are your ranking methodologies 100% white-hat?

Correct Answer: Yes

Why:

In search engine optimization there are three main optimization methodologies. Black-hat, white-hat, and gray hat. Black-hat search engine optimization is provided by smaller, less-developed search engine optimization agencies, significantly increases the risk of your website being penalized, and is often offered at a lower monthly rate to lure uneducated business owners in (less than \$1000/month)

In contrast, white-hat is used by more developed agencies, does not increase the risk of penalty on your website, and produces longer-lasting results. However, it is usually offered at a higher monthly rate than black or gray-hat services (\$1500/month+)

Gray hat is a mixture of both black and white-hat ranking methodologies. It is often offered by developing agencies. While it is not as bad as black-hat it still adds some amount of unnecessary risk to the search engine optimization process. This amount of risk depends on their methodology distribution, meaning they could be 99% black-hat and 1% white-hat, or the opposite could be true. In either case both agencies can consider themselves gray-hat if asked.

With this question you want a definitive 100% YES. If they cannot give you this answer you probably now have an idea why.

Question 2: Is ALL Of Your Work Done In-House?

Correct Answer: Yes

Why:

The vast majority of search engine optimization agencies will, once they sign on a new client, outsource their fulfillment work to another agency. These agencies are often overseas and only take a fraction of your monthly payment to the SEO provider you hired. No matter what work they are doing for you, you want them to, again, give you a **definitive YES.**

Question 3: Where Have You Ranked Your Own Website?

Correct Answer: **Varies**

Why:

If they are unable to rank their own website, how can they possibly rank yours? This question is a great way to weed out the all-stars from the wanna-bees. The reason this question varies is because every agency is structured differently.

If they have one location: You want to see them ranking #1 for a highly competitive keyword or set of keywords. This could be like “SEO Los Angeles” or “NYC SEO”, NOT “best seo in Los Angeles 90061”

If they have multiple locations: You want to see multiple locations with a ranking within the top 5 search results. Depending on the locations, each page can take a TON of resources to support and hold up at the top of Google.

If you are not sure whether or not a keyword in Google is competitive, I highly recommend you [take a look at our SEO Education Course](#). It will teach you everything you need to know about hiring a true SEO Expert.

Do NOT let them try to tell you things like:

- “That is confidential information”
- “We rank on page one for over X-thousand keywords”
- “We rely on referrals to generate business”
- “We just redesigned our website, it is too new to rank”

Get on the computer, open up an incognito window, write down specific search terms, and look for yourself.

Question 4: How Do You Develop Your Ranking Methodologies?

Correct Answer: **Independently**

Why:

You want an SEO agency that is proactive in their research to refine ranking methodologies. Far too many agencies rely on websites like Search Engine Journal and Moz to get their information about “what is changing in the world of Google”.

News flash: By the time they completed their research and published their article, the primo SEO agencies have already adjusted their client’s websites to **TAKE ADVANTAGE** of any changes. They are proactive, not reactive.

What you are looking for is some sort of network they have taken the time to build and maintain specifically for research and development. You, as a client, do NOT want your website to be the guinea pig their tests. It’s an awesome way to catch a site penalty and need a new website.

Question 5: Where Do You Get Your Search Volume Estimates From?

Correct Answer: aHrefs, Moz, SEMRush

Why:

Search volume, or the number of people typing in a specific phrase every month, is directly correlated to whether or not you are going to see an ROI from your SEO campaign. These numbers need to be accurate and realistic, because anything else can lead to either massive disappointment (in the case the estimate was far too high) or unpreparedness (in the case the estimate was far too low—you can't keep up with the work and it looks unprofessional).

The wrong answer here is Google Keyword Planner / Google Analytics

Over the past few years this tool has INTENTIONALLY become less and less accurate to confuse SEO's. There are massive fluctuations in search volumes between keyword variants. For example:

“mold removal new jersey” - 40 people search per month

“mold remediators nj” - 500 People search per month

Keyword planner combines both keywords and search volumes into one or two “mega terms”. For example, your SEO would see:

“mold removal new jersey” - 540 searches per month

And try to optimize your website accordingly.... incorrectly. You're barking up the completely wrong tree, and that is a DANGEROUS thing in the SEO industry.

You want your provider to be using a third-part traffic estimation tool such as ahrefs, Moz, or SEMRush. Any of the three options are companies independent of Google who consistently purchase large amounts of data to calculate these values.

Of the three, the most accurate tool (by a LARGE margin) is ahrefs.

If they name a tool other than the three mentioned above, and other than Google keyword planner, there is a high chance the data their tool uses still taps into Google Keyword Planner for data!