

WEB
PRO

Search

If SEO is a bit too much to handle alone, why not contract the job out to someone else?

This month's recommended...

Search forums

Name Webmaster World
URL www.webmasterworld.com

Info The "granddaddy" of them all. However, Webmaster World covers much more than search, and some of the brightest Search Marketing minds in the business post here, in every topic you can think of.

Name e-consultancy
URL www.e-consultancy.com/forum

Info E-consultancy is a top UK online publisher of e-marketing reports and how-to guides. It's a good place to swap ideas with SEO, PPC and copywriting pro's closer to home.

Name HighRankings.com
URL www.highrankings.com/forum

Info Moderated by US search expert Jill Whalen, HighRankings.com has nearly 14,000 members and is an increasingly popular forum dedicated to the art of SEO.

Hiring Search Engine Optimisation

Sourcing SEO expertise can be fraught with frustrations. Who can you trust in an industry awash with bona-fide experts, charlatans and blog-reading dilettantes? It's tricky to find optimisers who have not only the technical nous, but a flair for creating buzzworthy content and a good business head. Do you opt for an "all-in-one" agency with a track record and fees to match, train existing staff or recruit fresh in-house talent?

There's a growing trend in the UK to hire permanent SEO staff. With a little planning, this can be a wise move. We may lag behind North America (where optimisers can command enviable salaries), but we're catching up, as the rise in related vacancies on Monster.co.uk demonstrates. But finding the ideal candidate is often a slog. It isn't a widely accepted, academic vocation, and some firms perhaps feel defeated even after reading their Guide to Recruiting SEO. Given the complexities of optimisation, it's worth

considering contracting a consultant to guide you through the hiring process.

Ideally, a talented SEO all-rounder will have an astute knowledge of search marketing and a promising portfolio. Ask if they're comfortable with copywriting, keyword integration and link building, and are they advocates of the fundamentals of "ethical" SEO? Pay-Per-Click skills are also desirable, as is experience in usability. Ask a candidate to dissect a website: do they have a "user first" mentality that addresses design, structure and copy? A veteran pro may be difficult to find, but a savvy self-starter shouldn't be. If you don't find an all-rounder, an agency may be your best bet. Shop around and ask for testimonials, or hire a search specialist to work alongside your account manager and designers. ●

Mark Buckingham is a search marketing specialist and freelance writer, and proprietor of www.netseek.co.uk

How to... Avoid Google's Supplemental Index



Expert advice

Name Joe Balestrino
Job title SEO consultant
Company Mr SEO
URL mr-seo.com

Google's Supplemental Index can be a serious problem for many online businesses. Few are even aware of its existence. Google created the supplemental index in order to remove superfluous pages deemed lacking in viability from organic search results. Site pages

in the supplemental index will only show up for organic searches when no other results are available, which is seldom the case. To find out whether your site has pages in the supplemental index, type "site:www.yoursite.com *** -slijkf" into the Google search field.

1 Individualise each page's metadata

One of the most common contributing factors for why pages end up in the supplemental index involves the use of identical metatags. For administrators of large sites, it's an unfortunately common practice to input the same title, keyword and description tags for each page with the intent of replacing them later. Others may forget to create new metatags when swapping templates from one page

to another. Failure to change these tags may tell Google that the content of the affected pages is redundant and that there's no need to list them unless there are no other results to show.

2 Separate product descriptions

Using manufacturer's product descriptions that can be found on several other websites, especially in combination with improper metadata, tells Google that your content is duplicate and of little value. For sites that require these

descriptions, circumventing the problem by putting them into pop-up windows – keeping the manufacturer's content will remain separate from the page.

3 Original content

Original content is not only of value to your traffic, it also helps the search engines distinguish your site and establish the validity of your pages. Information on your products or services that can't be found elsewhere places a premium on your pages.

4 Establish backlinks

Once you've made the changes in steps 1 through 3, concentrate on acquiring fresh inbound links. Links force the spiders back to the page and will help any changes you've made to be noticed.

How to ...

Do you have a suggestion or question about SEO? Use the subject line "Pro Search" and email us at havewaysay@netmag.co.uk

