



How To Avoid SEO Scams & Pitfalls

Free report by [SEO Consultant](#) Kevin John Lewis – How to avoid SEO scams & pitfalls.

Lots of different companies and individuals are currently claiming they can get your website to the top of the search engine results.

Some of them are genuine.
Many are fakers, or rip-offs

Read this report to:

- Distinguish the genuine experts from the ruthless conmen.
- Save a LOT of money, by finding out this information the easy way, rather than finding out the hard way – through being ripped off!
- Discover the real ways to get your website successful on the search engines, without losing your shirt!

Scam No 1 **Taking your money and doing nothing at all.**

It's hard to believe, but there really are some firms or individuals out there who charge for a service & give no service whatsoever. They are scammers, con artists – whichever way you look at it.

These are the kind of people who did time share scams in the early 90's until they couldn't get away with it as easily, and then other scams in the mid 90's such as business rate reduction scams & other rip offs.

You know the kind, they fill a room full of people who're sold to believe that they're promoting an actual service – the very few who have been there more than a few months are the only ones other than the owners, who realize that they're actually scamming people.

But with Search engine optimization, these kind of people found an almost perfect niche, as most people have no idea what SEO actually is, they can usually get away with taking the money & doing nothing at all.

Anyone could do this, anyone with a heck of a lot of front, and who cares very little about other people, and whether or not they're creating value.

I have personally come across once such company doing just this (and heard of many more) they were simply a telemarketing organization, phoning company after company trying to convince people to part with a monthly fee, they can be convincing when talking to someone who knows little about search engine promotion (and that's most people).

One of my clients came to me, to tell me that this company (I will not name them for legal reasons) had been taking a monthly fee off them, but they were not getting any more business as a result. So I had a look into what the company had done – and nothing, at all, had been done, either on page, or off page.

This isn't a small company either, from what I can gather they have hundreds of "clients" (victims) paying them a monthly fee.

Tip to avoid this scam

Make sure you really know who you are dealing with. This internet is a great place to remain anonymous or create a false identity. Simply establish who you are dealing with, and get them to tell you exactly what they are going to do in order to achieve the results they say they will achieve.

Ask for proof of the work they are doing, you want to see physical evidence that actual work has been done to your website. Tell them from the off that you will require to see physical evidence of the work you have paid for, you will ask them to show you exactly what they've done – they'll probably back off!

Scam No2

Taking your money and doing very little

This is a more popular than Scam No 1, principally because it allows the conman to hide behind a smoke-screen of activity. What do you know about SEO optimisation, it is probably not that difficult to fob you off with technical jargon.

Usually – they will have a piece of search engine submission software, and will put clients websites into scheduled submissions, or something else equally pointless & ineffective, such as link blasting software, or inclusion in some kind of a link farm. Actually this can be even worse than those who take your money & do nothing – at least if they do nothing they can do no harm!

Tip to avoid this scam

Again, know exactly who you're dealing with, and find out from them exactly what they're doing for the money, ask to see the proof of the work they are doing. Tell them before they start that you will expect reports to show proof of what work has taken place – again, the fakers who plan on doing little or no work may well back out at this stage, they prefer the easy targets.

Don't be an easy target, make it clear you're going to expect results & not only that but you'll expect to see hard evidence that work has been done, the right work, the work they say they are going to do, and make it clear that you will take direct action, solicitors, trading standards and so on if they cannot show this. You'll make it clear that you are no easy targets, and most scammers would choose not to touch you with the proverbial barge pole.

Scam No 3

Guaranteed top rankings on Google

In this scam you will get a phone call claiming that this firm can get you to the top of Google for your given keyword or small group of keywords.

Sounds too good to be true doesn't it? It usually is!

This in & of itself isn't the scam – after all I offer a “results only” service – offering to charge someone only once you've got them the desired result isn't a bad thing at all, of course.

But the scam involves manipulation of the “client” (victim) to tell them what their desired result should be – and in the contract that they are asked to sign! That is, the result will be top position for a keyword or small group of keywords, the keywords will be chosen to suit them, not you – and in many cases you will actually already have very good positions for these keywords, so they have to do little if anything in order to achieve the results they have convinced you that you need.

Usually when I see a site that has been worked on by such a company, they are focusing on a keyword based on being able to convince the client that this is the best keyword – while in actual fact it has been chosen for the lack of competition & the ease at which they will achieve a top position.

Often, the company is actually talking about page 1 ranking, rather than number 1 ranking, and they cleverly manipulate people into believing they're talking about a number 1 ranking, when they're actually talking about page 1, in some cases they may even say no1 on the phone, but the paperwork will show “page one.”

Also – these kinds of companies give very bad advice – by suggesting to a business person that the desired result that they should be paid for, is a no1 or page 1 on google for a keyword. **This is madness**, the desired result for any business owner should be the same – more targeted traffic, more business, more sales – NOT a no1 position for a specific keyword.

When a client tells me they would like me to work with them on a results only basis, I suggest that the result we aim for, and that we set as the target that I'm paid for – is increased targeted traffic, inquiries, sales – not positions.

It would be very easy for me to say – OK, what you really need is a no1 for xxx keyword, and xxx keyword being one that is relevant enough for the client to believe could be a great keyword, but is actually chosen because it's going to be the easiest one to get top ranking for.

But I would never do this, clients turn to professionals in any field for reliable honest advice on what they should do – to deliberately offer the wrong advice in order to make it easier to make a profit, is a horrible practice, and no true professional in any field would do this – only the fake ones.

The second part of this SEO scam, is the contract!

Usually, the contract will say that once the position is achieved, the client must then pay the consultant a lump sum, or £x per month for a certain period.

The lump sum payment, or amount of the monthly payments & number of payments, is usually determined – as far as I can tell – by the amount of money they think you have got to spend, and how confident they are feeling at the time.

Many of these contracts are written in a way so that once you've held the desired position for a certain amount of time (a few days, or a week usually) you are then committed to paying the monthly fee for the set period.

Usually this represents a figure of at least two, to three thousand pounds or more, and often spread out over a period of 6-12 months to make it an easier figure to swallow.

So, this usually means that even if you only have the position for 2 weeks, you have to pay for it for the full period. The contract may say that they will try to get the position back if you lose it, but it doesn't usually say that you only pay while you hold the position.

This means that the consultant doesn't need to be concerned about how long lasting the results are – the aim is to get you to no1 as quickly as possible, which means that often, more risky SEO tactics are brought into play that wouldn't necessarily be used if the aim was for a long lasting increase in results.

This whole idea really winds me up, it's just wrong. By convincing a business person that all they need to focus on is this one keyword – their whole website becomes simply a tool for the firm to get their fee. It stops being about getting targeted traffic & increasing the clients business – and it becomes just about the position.

If achieving a no1 for one keyword was all a website needed to do to be successful – then there would be no problem, but it's not.

Tip to avoid this scam

All your websites need is an increase in targeted traffic, enquiries, sales, etc. Any results only service should be about traffic, enquiries, not simply about certain positions. Are you paying your money for vanity, or to get more sales?

Your website should be focusing on a LOT of keywords, most SEO projects I do include hundreds of keywords, and Keyword research is at the heart of any real SEO operation, if a company advises you to concentrate on one, or one small group of keywords – be suspicious!

Scam No 4 Paid Backlinks

This is where a so called SEO firm, will take your money, invest a percentage of it on buying paid backlinks – and keep the rest.

Usually the people who do this will do very little – if any – “on-page” SEO work, they're not really SEO consultants at all, they're more traders, selling backlinks for more than they buy them for & making a profit.

We all need to make a profit, and this isn't where the wrong doing is, but any SEO campaign that is put together purely or mostly with paid backlinks – is completely doomed, in my opinion &

experience.

A few years ago this would have been OK, but Google, and other search engines, decided that paid links are cheating – so they now discount any paid links from the link popularity of a website, not only this but once they realise that backlinks have been bought for a website, they may discredit a lot of other links that were not paid links, as they will be of the opinion that a certain percentage of your backlinks are paid for links, once they realise link buying has been done for that site.

So, a firm who sells you SEO services & tells you that they can increase your search engine ranking & targeted traffic – who then just goes & buys you a load of paid backlinks, are not offering SEO services, and should be ashamed to call themselves SEO consultants.

I have had personal involvement with such a firm (once again I will not name them for legal reasons) they did **not** explain before hand to the client, that all they were going to do was buy paid backlinks, they did a little bit of on page SEO work when asked why they had done no onpage work, and when they did this, it had to be re-done by me, as it was terrible. Overall, the website this firm worked on actually decreased in terms of search engine positions & traffic, and lost 2 points in google PR as a result!

Tip to avoid this scam

Learn what you are paying for. If the SEO expert were offering to submit articles, then check to see if those articles actually exist and are of a professional quality. If you do not understand some technicality, ask proper questions until you do. As a professional business person you have to check what is being done on your behalf. The backlink scam is easily revealed by minimal checking by you.

Ask the company up front if they are using paid backlinks as part of their service, and if they say yes – run a mile!

Scam No5 :

“Thousands of search engines”

This is where a fake SEO company will tell you “we will submit your website to hundreds/thousands of search engines.”

They may well do this – all they would need is some submission software, that will indeed submit them to thousands of pointless, irrelevant search engines that none of your target market are ever going to use – but this would be of no positive consequence to you.

You need good positions on the main search engines, Google, Yahoo, MSN, and maybe a handful of others – that’s it. Most of the other search engines of value get their feeds from the main search engines anyway – so submitting to hundreds or thousands of websites is just silly. If you ask 100 of your friends, colleagues or customers which search engines they use, they’ll all tell you the same few search engines – these are the ones you need to be found on.

What’s more, your site doesn’t actually need submitting to ANY search engine, not even Google, Yahoo, MSN etc – any websites that I work on, for example, will be listed on all of the main search engines within a

very short space of time, usually less than a week for a brand new website – and I never submit, it's pointless.

The thing about this scam, is that they're not actually breaking the law at all – it will be in their terms that what they do is submit you to x number of search engines, and they will do that – so legally, they have done what they said they would. It's a scam because they lead you to believe that they will increase your traffic & your business, but legally, they're usually covered.

Note : Getting listed in directories is different, and is worthwhile, as long as they're high quality directories.

Tip to avoid this scam

Know that in most cases it will be a waste of time submitting to ANY search engine at all. SEO consultants's don't submit to search engines, even Google – there are MUCH faster ways to get sites onto the main search engines than submitting.

And – understand that only the main search engines are worth concentrating on, being on thousands of other obscure search engines will do nothing for you.

If a firm claiming to offer SEO or SEM services mentions anything about submitting to search engines – drop them like a hot potato, they're not for real! (don't confuse directories for search engines though, manual directory submissions, to quality directories, is a valid SEO practice.)

Scam No6

Clever use of terminology.

There is a clever technique used by scammers in many fields, which involves the use of terminology which confuses the customer / victim, into believing what the sales person wanted them to believe, without actually saying this or putting it in writing.

For instance, there was a business rate reduction scam that was operated by a number of companies in the mid 90's, in which the business person was told that they would only be charged once the council "lodged" their appeal.

The simple fact was that all "lodged" meant was accepted into the queue to be looked into – it does NOT mean that they're going to get a reduction, in fact some people found that they got an increase in rates as the rateable value was actually set too low – but this is exactly what they said, and what it stated in their terms, they said they would get the appeal lodged, and would only invoice once they did – and this is what happened. (and most business owners didn't know, and weren't made aware, that they could get an appeal lodged themselves, in about 5 minutes, by filing out a form & handing it at the local town hall!)

So regardless of what they led people to believe "lodged" meant, they weren't actually doing anything that they could immediately be stopped from doing – although eventually most were stopped, only after many years of successfully doing this.

In SEO, a clever use of terminology would be, for instance, to say "We guarantee we will get your website **indexed** on Google."

Many of my clients do not know what “indexed” means when I first start helping them, so if someone enthusiastically said to them “we guarantee we’ll get your website indexed on Google” then a good percentage of them would be taken in by this.

Indexed of course just means put into the index, it means that you will be found when you type the full web address into Google, but it doesn’t mean that anyone will find you when they search for your related keywords.

Summary of: How you avoid being scammed

OK, so now we’ve discussed some of the main ways scammers who pretend to be SEO consultants will try to fleece you, I’ll now tell you how to ensure you don’t get caught out.

1: Be VERY skeptical about working with an SEO company who telephone you cold. Think about it – if they were giving the results that they tell you they can, why would they need to phone people cold out of the telephone directory? It doesn’t make any sense, if they were so good at what they do they would be getting all the business they need from the search engines, and from referrals from happy clients.

I have never made a cold call to sell someone my SEO services, all of my business comes via my websites, or from referrals. The other REAL SEO consultants are the same, they don’t need to go around chasing business, they’re so good at what they do that business comes to them. If you do get a telesales call about SEO – start asking questions, see how long it takes to get them to hang up. Tell them you’re an SEO consultant yourself and you want to know exactly who they are – that works every time.

2: Ask Questions

Ask what will be done – ask them to produce a report which tells you exactly what they plan to do. In my [free SEO appraisals](#) I not only tell potential clients how their website is currently doing, but I tell them exactly what I think needs to be done. Yes, there is a risk of the client taking this report & having someone else do the work – but that’s fine, there’s only so many clients I can work with anyway, I really don’t mind.

3: Ask to know what you’re paying for.

When I’m producing a quotation, I simply quote for the number of hours that I think need to be put in the project, to do the work which I have identified that needs to be done – and I list any other potential costs in the quotation. When I am working “results only” I base my results charges on the work I am going to have to put in to achieve the results I’m being asked to achieve, and then I add an extra charge to make it worth my while taking on all of the risk, so I still make it clear what is being charged for. (I never ask a client to sign a contract). A real SEO consultant will have no problem telling you what you’re being charged for.

4: be suspicious. If you’re offered a service that you only pay for once you’re ranked no1 – Remember, no1 or page 1 position for one particular keyword isn’t what you’re after – what you are after is an increase in targeted traffic, leading to an increase in enquiries, sales, profits.

5: Make sure that an SEO firm are saying, means what you think it does.

As discussed previously, terminology can be used to make you think they're saying something which they're not actually saying, and that they wouldn't commit to paper. If you're not sure ask for clarification.

6: Watch out for zero research

Be very wary of any SEO consultant who gives you a quotation, or makes any promises without actually researching your website & market, and understanding which key terms you're wanting to be found for.

No real SEO consultant would do this, because until we spend some time researching the potential project, we do not know how much time it is going to take – so we don't know how much we need to charge – and until we know how much competition we're up against, we would be crazy to make any kinds of promises or estimations.

7: Ask to pay via credit card – or paypal.

If you pay via credit card or paypal, and you discover that you have been "had," then you can simply lodge a dispute with paypal, or with your credit card company.

This does not mean you're completely safe if you pay by credit card or paypal, so don't let your guard down as soon as you see these payment options are available – remember that there are a number of ways that they can potentially get away with it even if you do lodge a dispute, by showing the terms & conditions that you didn't read, or by showing that they guaranteed only a number 1 position, and you have a number one position for the most obscure key term imaginable – but at least you do have one potential defence if you have paid by credit card or paypal, that you wouldn't have available if you had paid by some money transfer method such as western union or cash / cheque.

8: Ask for email or phone numbers of clients.

I am only too happy to give telephone numbers & email addresses out for my clients – I don't give them out online because I don't want to get them spammed, but I'm always pleased to give them when asked by potential clients, as I know all of my clients will sing my praises – because I work very hard to gain them fantastic results.

9: Ask for a list of clients, and then tell a little white lie

mention casually that one of the names they have mentioned is one of your main competitors, and see if it effects this persons eagerness to gain your business.

Most real SEO consultants are very careful about taking on clients who are direct competitors of their existing clients. Simply because it causes a conflict of interests. So if you tell them that one of their existing clients is your competitor, and they do not react by showing concern about this – then be suspicious.

Personally, if I get asked to work for a client who I feel may be a competitor of an existing client, I explain that I need to speak to an existing client about a potential conflict of interest, and that I will come back to them. I then phone the existing client and ask. In some cases the existing client tells me it won't cause a conflict of interest because they're in a slightly different area of the market – or in some cases the client makes it clear that they will stick their boot up my behind if I dare work for this other business, in which case I of course have to turn down the new client.

10: Never commit on the phone – or while the consultant / sales person is there if they've come out to see you.

Sometimes a sales person posing as an SEO consultant can show his or her true colours when they believe they have lost the sale – for instance a client of mine recalled how the so called

SEO consultant in front of him, swore at him & stormed out, when he made it clear that he wasn't going to go ahead there & then!

So, don't sign up there & then on the phone or in person. See if they are willing to allow you to do your research & take time to think about it. The more willing they are to allow you to do your research & make the right decision, the more likely you're actually dealing with a real SEO firm.

If you're interested in working with a REAL search engine optimisation & marketing consultant, who will work to help to grow your business – get in touch :

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