



# 11 Common SEO Scams

How to Avoid Scam Artists

A Guide by Kyle Zinn

**Symphony.**



***More than 70% of businesses are pitched Search Engine Optimization (SEO) services at least once per week.***

So as a business owner, how do you know whom to hire when the market is so seemingly flooded?

Or is it?

## **The 11 Most Common SEO Scams**

Unfortunately, many of these pitches are scams. Fortunately, there are ways to spot the most common SEO scams and simple tips for how to avoid them

### ***Scam #1. Guaranteed Google Page 1 Rankings***

This is the most popular scam, likely because every business owner wants to be ranked #1 for their keywords and most don't like hearing that it may not be possible.

Google's statement on this scam is straightforward. ["Google never guarantees top placement in search results or AdWords. Beware of any company making these types of promises."](#)

Unless you're targeting **niche** or low volume keywords, the competition for your website's keywords is going to be fierce.

Your competitors didn't get to the first page overnight. Instead, they are spending thousands of dollars a month on SEO or marketing services

and have been for years.

The average [monthly SEO retainer costs between \\$1,000 and \\$3,000 per month.](#) Taking the low end figure of \$1,500 a month and multiplying by 12 months comes to a total of \$18,000 a year. Multiply that by three years of SEO services, and you're spending a total of \$54,000.

If you're just now trying to overtake your competition, you're not only years behind them, but they've probably spent more than \$50,000 over the years to obtain and secure their rankings.

If an SEO company is offering a \$100 a month or \$250 a month special, risk-free offer, which more than likely includes "Guaranteed Page 1 Rankings," it's almost certainly a scam. You can't expect to outrank your competitors on a \$250 a month SEO package, and you should never trust this common pitch or any pitches like it.

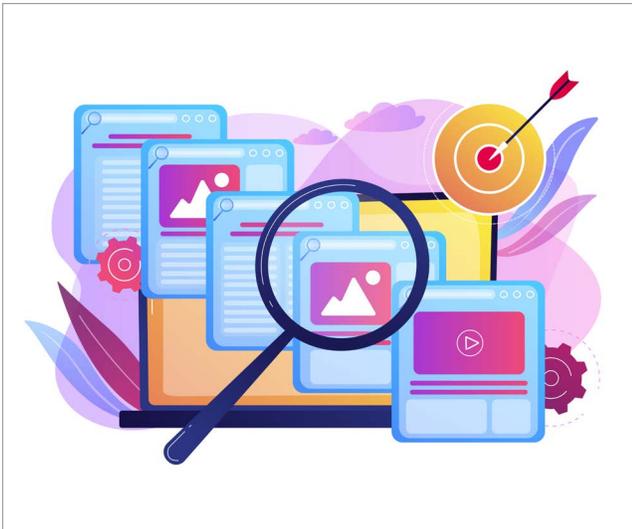
If it were that easy to rank, everyone would be #1.

### ***Scam #2. "We Have the 'Secret' Sauce"***

There is no "secret" sauce.

While no one can claim to fully understand all aspects of Google's algorithm — [not even Google](#) — there are proven techniques and best practices to rank well.

If the company can't or won't outline their processes or tell you exactly what they're doing, chances are they're doing nothing at all — or



even worse — they’re using black hat techniques that will have a negative impact on your rankings.

Google holds you accountable for your SEO’s decisions, stating [“Ultimately, you are responsible for the actions of any companies you hire, so it’s best to be sure you know exactly how they intend to “help” you.”](#)

### *Scam #3. Unsolicited Emails or Contact Forms*

Just about all unsolicited emails or contact forms through your website offering SEO services should just be ignored.

If you didn’t actively seek out the person or company, you’re probably part of a massive auto-generated email list. Bots and scrapers collect email addresses and automatically fill out contact forms on websites. Actual human involvement in these initial communications is rare.

Furthermore, this spam mail generally starts to build up in your inbox when your website is beginning to rank well in search engines – a sign that your current marketing company’s SEO campaign is producing results. To protect your website (and your inbox) from this spam, try adding a [reCAPTCHA](#) to your forms.

### *Scam #4. “We Know Someone Who Works At Google”*

There may be some truth to this claim, but it’s still very misleading.

A company can have a Google Partnership for Google Ads, but not for SEO. To qualify as a [Google Partner](#), you have to create and complete a Partners company profile, pass Google’s Ads certification, and meet certain spend and performance requirements.

Companies that are Google Partners are assigned an account representative. These Google employees have titles like “Agency Development Manager” or “Agency Account Strategist.” This doesn’t mean you have a “special relationship” with Google as some companies claim, and you don’t have access to insider information on how the algorithm works. Nor do you receive any ranking benefits whatsoever.

The Google employee is more or less an account manager who is there to help you sell more advertising. This partnership has nothing to do with SEO. In fact, Google does not currently have any certifications for SEO and does not explicitly endorse any SEO companies.

### *Scam #5. “You’ll Get Over 1,000 Visitors Per Day to Your Website!”*

If you regularly check your website’s contact forms, you’ve probably noticed offers to receive 500, 1,000, or more “targeted visitors” to your website per day. This offer may even include a free 30-day trial offer.

Do not fall for this scam. More than likely, these “targeted visitors” are nothing more than bot traffic. Traffic by itself is just a vanity metric, your conversions will not increase as a result of this traffic.

Bot traffic also misconstrues your [Google Analytics](#) data, and it can be a pain to filter out the bad data afterward. It’s best to ignore these offers.

### *Scam #6. “We Create Instant Link Building”*

Link scammers will offer to create hundreds, or even thousands, of links to your website overnight, coupled with an unrealistic promise of these links improving your rankings. However, the quality of links is important in Google's algorithm.

A quality link is relevant to your website and comes from a trusted source. A quality link is **not** paid for or easily acquired. If your website receives thousands of low quality links from low quality sites overnight, it's going to look like you're trying to manipulate the rankings.

Google doesn't like it when people try to game the system and has become very good at detecting unnatural links. The [Google Penguin](#) algorithm catches on to this tactic pretty quickly and devalues all of those links. In fact, Google may even apply a manual penalty to your website. Trust us, you don't want this to happen.

Not only will you be wasting your money on worthless links, but you'll have to spend even more money hiring someone to fix your website's link profile and remove the manual penalty.

**Private Blog Networks** (also known as PBNs) are an example of a popular black hat link-building tactic. A private blog network is a collection of thin content websites, which generally don't provide any value to users. Their sole purpose is the creation of links pointing to the sites you make money on.

This tactic may sound appealing at first because there are actually some quality Private Blog Networks operating under Google's radar for now. But beware, this tactic is against Google's webmaster guidelines, and Google will act on it.

If people or companies are openly advertising their PBN and anyone can gain access to these networks, chances are it's not operating under Google's radar. Google has likely already found out about the network and devalued all the links and deindexed the websites associated with it. But, the company that owns the PBN won't care if this happens. They will continue to offer the worthless service to anyone willing to pay for it.

### *Scam #7. "We Submit Your Website to Hundreds of Search Engines"*

If you've ever received this "proposal" and looked carefully at the list of search engines they claim they will submit your website to (if they even include it) you will probably see that many of those listed are fake or haven't existed for years.

[There are 3 search engines that account for over 95% of the market share in the US](#): Google, Bing, and Yahoo. The other hundreds of search engines don't matter nearly as much.

### *Scam #8. Web Design and Development Firms Offering SEO Services*

It seems as though every online marketing company offers some form of SEO services now – even GoDaddy!

Beware of these types of companies, especially if you look them up and they don't even have a person on-staff specifically dedicated to SEO.

Many of these companies likely have a limited or basic understanding of how SEO works and bundle it in with their service package to stay competitive.

Make no mistake, you're not going to get the same quality of SEO services as you would if you had hired someone who specializes in SEO.

### *Scam #9. Free Trial SEO Services*

Some companies will offer their services for free for 30 days. All you have to do is give them admin access to your website and maybe even your credit card information. Easy enough, right?

Don't waste your time with these offers. Offering a free trial is a desperate attempt to get new business. An experienced and confident SEO will not offer to do it upfront or even at all.

Recently scammers have used this tactic and other similar offers to inject malware into websites after gaining admin access. Beware sharing admin access to your website with anyone who isn't reputable.

Furthermore, 30 days of SEO services won't yield any long-term results — if it even works at all. Even Google's Maile Ohye recognizes that [“in most cases, SEOs need four months to a year to help your business first implement improvements and then see the potential benefit.”](#) If you want to learn what to look for when hiring an SEO expert, I'd recommend watching the entire video.

### *Scam #10. “We Can Do Everything Your Current Company Is Doing for Less”*

The initial problem with this is it's likely they don't even know what your current company is doing for you, so when they claim they can do everything and more for less, they're already deceiving you.

SEO isn't something that is done, it's a way of doing things. Imagine your current SEO or marketing company is doing things the right way, but you decide to hire a new company anyway. That new company can come in and then proceed to do nothing at all or make very minimal changes and you probably won't notice any drops or drastic traffic changes for the first couple of months.

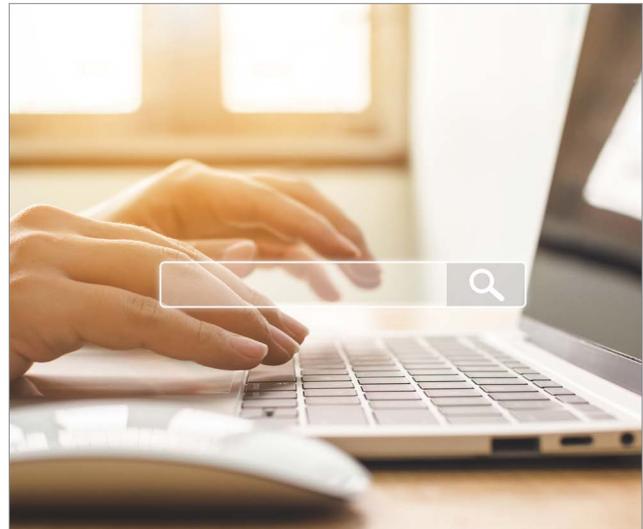
SEO takes time. If all of our current clients stopped their SEO services right now and made no changes to their website, they would continue to see improvements for the next few months as a result of the residual effects of our SEO campaigns.

The main issue with these types of scams is most business owners may never see a drop in traffic even after a year or so of paying this new company, so it will look like they truly can offer the same work for less.

A tell-tale sign the new company is scamming you is if after a few months you notice your month-over-month growth stops and traffic flatlines or even starts to decline.

### *Scam #11. Companies that own your URL, social profiles, Google Analytics, etc.*

Of all the SEO scams, this is the scamiest.



Some companies are more than happy to set-up or take over the hosting for your website, even add Google Analytics tracking to it and create multiple social profiles for the company. However, in the contract, you'll see that they own the domains, social media profiles, and even the [Google Analytics account](#).

As long as you work with them, this won't be a problem, but as soon as you try to leave you'll realize how bad this is for your business.

These accounts are assets specific to your business and are some of your most valuable resources. You should always own and have control over them.

It's possible the company could hold all of these accounts for ransom, and you might think: “So what? I'll just create another one or have my new company do it for me.” But now, all of the work and business intelligence you gathered and paid for will be lost, and you'll have to start over again.

If you're looking to hire an SEO strategist, watch [this video](#) from Google on “How to hire an SEO” before you make any decisions.