

How to Decipher Fact from Fiction Debunking SEO's Greatest Myths

By: Jennifer Horowitz, Director of Marketing

www.EcomBuffet.com • jennifer@ecombuffet.com • 562-592-5347

This paper is designed to educate you on the facts of Search Engine Optimization (SEO), and help clarify the mistaken beliefs that circulate through the industry, so that you can make smart SEO decisions.

Cutting Through the Myths, Hype and Confusion Real Answers, Real Facts about SEO

The search engine optimization industry is confusing for most. To start with, it is based on complex algorithms that the search engines keep top secret. Secondly, it is often like a different language is being spoken with all the SEO and technical jargon. Last but not least, the controversy in the industry adds to the confusion people often feel.

There are some solid facts, which are indisputable and known through out the industry. Except - even those facts are debated, and you will find “experts” or “gurus” with differing opinions. Then there are all the little details, the ones that no one can agree on, and there is even more disputing and debating going on.

It can be hard to determine who to trust and what to believe. The average business owner doesn't even care – they simply want results and it doesn't matter how they are achieved (please remember we are only talking “white hat” here, ethical methods – we aren't even going into the confusion that comes with adding “black hat” techniques into the mix).

In every industry, this happens. Top experts have differing views and methods. It actually makes for improved potential for learning and results.

Without immersing yourself in the industry and getting to the bottom of every detail and fact, how can you learn to distinguish fact from fiction and choose which side you feel will get the most results?

It actually doesn't need to be that complex – it only takes a little bit of time and a very basic understanding of where these differing views are coming from.

Search Engines, SEO Firms, Business owners...we **all** have our own agendas.

Understand the Agenda and Get Closer to the Truth

If you really look at where people are coming from, and what they have to gain, that can help you understand why they are saying what they are saying. It can

also help you figure out what to take with a grain of salt, what to believe and what to totally discard.

Here are some common SEO Myths, followed by the SEO Truth – and then followed by an investigation into the agenda behind the various groups involved.

SEO Myth: Submission software is a one-time, one-size-fits-all solution, and the state of your web site (i.e. SEO Friendliness) is NOT a Factor.

SEO TRUTH: SEO Friendliness IS a key factor, and one time mass submission is not a solution.

The cold hard truth is that if your site is not search engine friendly, you're losing hundreds and thousands of hits from the very people you most want to visit your site -- those who demonstrate a serious desire for what you have to offer by proactively typing keywords related to YOUR business into the engines.

Just one of the many reasons mass submission companies don't help is that they don't provide any human interaction, and therefore don't invest the time and resources to stay on the cutting edge of the SEO industry. And as the engines change and shake things up (which they are constantly doing), the mass submission companies can't keep up.

Agenda:

- **Mass submission software companies** want you to use their service, so they are going to insist their “one size fits all” mass submission **will** help you gain rankings.
- **Business owners** are looking to get results and to pay as little as possible for those results. That makes some business owners tend to believe the software company claims, and take a chance on it.
- **SEO Firms** spend their days educating themselves about the industry, and therefore have a higher level of credibility than the mass submission software companies. However, they want your business – so some business owners will not believe their claims that hands on, personalized service is better.
- **Who do you believe?** In this case, look no further than the search engines themselves. If you review the webmaster guidelines, you will clearly identify the items that are important to the search engines. You will learn what it takes to get good rankings, and then you can look at mass submission versus personalized services and decide for yourself which method you think will deliver the results you are after.

Let me share with you the valuable lesson that a client of ours in the personal growth industry learned very early on.

His site was attractive, professional and informative, however it was NOT search engine friendly. After many attempts at getting rankings, he came to us and enlisted our help in getting his site search engine friendly and optimized.

Not long after the work was complete and the submissions started, we got a phone call from him...he was so excited he had to share the news (we already knew of course, since we had just emailed him his rankings report that morning).

“My rankings went from 16 in the top 20, to 135 in the top 20.
This is a 744% increase!!”

We hope this client’s lesson has taught you something as well...it takes work, effort and change to get high rankings – but when done properly, the results are astounding!

Here's a dangerous myth about marketing in general.

SEO MYTH: Search engines are not as valuable as other media.

SEO TRUTH: Search engines are the NUMBER ONE way people find what they are looking for on the internet.

Target Marketing Magazine. (Source: IMT Strategies - imtstrategies.com)

"Top Ways Websites are Discovered"

Banner ads 1%
Targeted email 1.2%
TV spots 1.4%
"By accident" 2.1%
Magazine ads 4.4%
Word-of-mouth 20%
Random Surfing 20%
Search Engines 46%

As you can see, search engines are by FAR the most common way that people find web sites - and are more than 10 times as common as TV, magazines, banners, or any other form of advertising!

Agendas:

- **SEO Firms:** They want your business, that is true – but they also base their claims on third party research that has been validated.
- **Other Advertising Sources:** They want your business too, and are out to make their case based on their opinions.
- **Who do you believe?** Many forms of advertising are successful, and should be considered as part of your marketing strategy. However, to decide where

it is best to focus the majority of your budget and time – it is best that you do research and determine, based on facts from third party studies, which methods are working best at any given time.

An article on the front page of USA Today talked about why companies are willing to pay for SEO and SEO Friendliness:

"Companies pay because about 80% of Internet searches are performed with Google technology, says an online newsletter. That's 200 million searches a day, whether on Google or on affiliates such as America Online, Yahoo and CNN.com."

(Source: For Google, many retailers eagerly jump through hoops ; Jefferson Graham. USA TODAY. Feb 5, 2004. pg. A.01)

Now, ask yourself the following:

1. What are my costs for direct mail, banner ads, print ads, booths at trade shows, etc?
2. Would it be worth \$10-20 per day to my business to have every aspect of SEO taken care of by professionals who guarantee results? Can I really afford NOT to have this exposure in the engines that my competitors do?

If you like, I'll be glad to give you a complimentary assessment of your web site and give you a customized recommendation on how SEO can best fit into your business model. Just give me a call at (916) 760-8987. We're getting a tremendous response to our message, so those who call me directly will jump to the front of the line.

SEO Myth: Search engine rankings/positions are permanent. Once attained, they do not move.

SEO TRUTH: SEO rankings are dynamic, they *constantly* change. Your site may move up, down or disappear altogether!

There is no such thing as "permanent" search engine positions. Search engine indices are constantly evolving and algorithms are always changing. As a result, positioning will always fluctuate.

Evidence: The Google Dance. Hundreds of rankings lost, with no explanation.

Google recently adjusted how it ranks sites in its index. After that, Renee Duane's Unforgettable Honeymoon Web site "just disappeared overnight," she says. "We used to be the top-ranked site in the category, and then we were gone."

Her business, which packages honeymoon tours, felt it. "We used to get e-mails and calls every day from people who found us on Google. That's come to a complete stop."

(Source: For Google, many retailers eagerly jump through hoops ; Jefferson Graham. USA TODAY. Feb 5, 2004. pg. A.01)

Agendas:

- **SEO Firms:** Yes, they do want your business.
- **Business Owners:** Yes, they want to save money and not commit to on-going SEO maintenance.
- **Who do you believe?** Again, it comes down to evaluating the facts. Do some research; do a search in Google for a keyword, notice the results. Search for that same keyword every day for a month or longer – do you see fluctuation in the results? You probably will. That tells you that things do change. Would having someone stay on top of algorithm shifts and respond to changes in the industry help your site stay in the top 20? You will have to determine that based on your knowledge and what you see happening.

SEO Myth: "It doesn't matter which SEO company you choose. They all do the same thing – they just submit your site and then you wait!"

SEO TRUTH: Would you make such a comparison about car manufacturers? I mean, could you really mention Ford and Ferrari in the same breath? Of course not! Why, then, is it so easy to believe that all SEO Firms and services are equal?

In this case, all you need to do is ask the following questions and you will come up with the answers to this one.

1. Is it important that I work with an ethical, reputable SEO company? Are all firms ethical and reputable (in any industry)?
2. Do I want an SEO company that delivers a significant and proven ROI (return on investment) on my internet marketing dollars?
3. Do I want results that were achieved by safe, ethical methods that will ensure my site doesn't get banned from the engines?

After answering those questions, we think it becomes clear that not all Firms are the same, and research into the company is a wise move.

For questions about EcomBuffet services, and how our big-picture SEO services can improve your rankings, contact Jennifer Horowitz at 562-592-5347 or jennifer@ecombuffet.com. Mention this whitepaper and receive a Free Search Engine Friendliness Evaluation.