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**Brian Swanson** • Feb. 12, 2019



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Taking the first steps into the world of search engine optimization (SEO) can be intimidating. If you have spent anytime researching the topic online then you have likely seen the sheer number of articles, blog and videos giving advice on keyword selection, Google ads and content development. Much like the world of tax and accounting there is a rich lexicon of terms and concepts that are seemingly a foreign language to those outside the industry.

While it may seem overwhelming the good news is there are SEO providers and consultants who can guide your efforts and help achieve results (new business opportunities being the most common) with your website and other digital assets. When assessing the marketplace, it's important to know which questions to ask to help evaluate your options. Below is a list of considerations to make prior to starting

the evaluation process. This will ensure you are in the best position possible when

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allows for quick results, but the long-term staying power is limited. Organic SEO is the exact opposite. There is no payment so in one sense it's free. However, it takes time to earn Google's trust and move up in the rankings for targeted keyword terms. Both approaches have their place and can be effective. So be sure that you understand the difference and which service candidate providers are offering.

## Key Considerations

Now that you know the difference between the most common tactics, below is a list of key considerations to make during the evaluation process, including:

- **Experience** – It's often said that experience is the best teacher, and, in my opinion, this is accurate. As a result, it's important to work with a provider that has experience CPA, accounting and bookkeeping firms. While it's true the core concepts of SEO apply to all businesses, regardless of focus, there are efficiencies that can be realized by working with a vendor that has accounting experience. As an example, you will not have to explain the difference between an audit and a peer review and the differences in target audience. In other words, working with an experienced provider will prevent you from having to invest time educating them on the industry and key accounting concepts. It's better to work with someone that understands the business challenges unique to the industry.
- **Flexibility** – There are many companies that will require you to adhere to their process and don't offer a lot of flexibility. While there are important steps that will make your efforts in SEO more successful, it's important that a program has flexibility in it to be adapted to your needs. More specifically, it's unrealistic to believe that any CPA or accountant is going to have a lot of time during tax season to focus on content development or program management. Be sure your candidates can accommodate these fluctuations and will not make unreasonable demands on your time. The more flexibility they can build into a program the

better the relationship will be and more encouraged you (and others in the firm)

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Recommendations being made. Unfortunately, these explanations are all too often not forthcoming and it can result in a state of confusion. Spend time with references and peel back the layers to understand what the relationship will be like. The more information you have the better the decision you will make.

## One More Thought

Please don't work with a provider that guarantees results. It sounds appealing but the truth is that SEO and Google are changing so often that no one can honestly guarantee any type of results. Of course, they can say we have experienced "X" results with others and expect the same with you. That's one thing. If they assert, they can have you on the first page of Google by tonight and keep you there for 6 months... well that's a dangerous fantasy. Remember that Google does offer certifications and has endorsed agencies, but no one knows how Google ranks sites because that information is proprietary.

## Taking the Leap

It can be intimidating taking your first steps into the world of SEO. However, the more information you have the easier it will be to make decisions and evaluate which candidate offers the best value, flexibility and synergy to work with you firm. Good luck in your search.

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