

Ten Ways to Get SEO Clients . . . beginning with your local market

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If you're a professional search engine optimizer, the field is wide open for you as far as clients are concerned. But how on earth do you find them?

Let's face it: virtually every single business Web site is a potential client. But if you send out bulk e-mail, you risk getting tar and feathered by the E-Mail Spam Police.

So, how can you get started in this industry if you have little to no advertising budget, and how can you build a clientele?

1. Consider starting on a local level where you have some personal connections. Join your area's Chamber of Commerce, and make it a point to meet and get to know as many of the members as you can. Once you find out that they have an online business, ask them about their business and their traffic. How pleased are they with the results they're getting from their Web site? That's a perfect opportunity for you to casually explain your services and how you can help them.
2. Form relationships with area Web design firms, hosting companies, and Internet Service Providers. Offer them a referral fee for any SEO clients they send you. Then, turn around and send them business as well.
3. Look into other local clubs and organizations that you might consider joining. Examples might be the Kiwanis Club, the Lion's Club, or the Rotary Club. Even if you don't join, let it be known that you'd enjoy speaking to the group about search engine marketing, which is certainly a topic of interest to anyone with a Web site.
4. Consider purchasing a small ad to run in your local newspaper advertising your services. Your ad doesn't have to be long or expensive. What about:

Do you have a Web site that is struggling for traffic? Do you know that Web sites don't attract traffic by themselves? <http://www.yourwebsite.com>

5. Try to get on a local radio or TV station to talk about search engine marketing.

6. Is there a Board of Realtors in your area? A legal association? A convention and tourism office? What other industry is known for having Web sites? Any of those would be excellent places to recruit new clients. Again, work out a relationship that will benefit all parties. Offer a discount to anyone who is a member of the tourism bureau, for example. Offer to speak at one of their meetings. Offer multi-site discounts for any clients with more than one site.

7. Work hard for all of your clients, going much further than giving them 100% in the beginning until you can prove to them that you know what you're doing and can bring results. Those clients will begin recommending your services to other clients, and your business will continue to grow, eventually outside of your local area.

8. If you're going after many clients in a local market, consider purchasing a couple of local domains yourself, using your locale in the name of the domains. In other words, set up a directory of Web sites for your location. This will help you build link popularity for your clients. Plus, you can allow other local businesses to submit their sites, which are now prospective clients for you as well. Offer services like enhanced listings, positioning services, directory submissions, affiliate offerings, and so forth.

9. Set up a domain to advertise your services, and then get it listed in all of your area's online yellow pages and business directories as well as the major search engines and directories. Believe it or not, I know many professional SEO's who don't even have their own Web sites!

10. Write articles, both for your local newspapers, as valuable content for your site, and to submit to related online resources to "prove" that you're knowledgeable in search engine marketing. Always list your name, company name, and URL at the bottom of your articles in your byline. Then, spend some time promoting your articles online. You'll be building name recognition, credibility, and link popularity at the same time.

Let me give you a final bonus . . . #11.

11. [A]<http://www.academywebspecialists.com/>[ATEXT]The Academy of Web Specialists[/A] and [A]<http://www.searchengineworkshops.com/>[ATEXT]Search Engine Workshops[/A], in a joint effort, are in the process of having a job data bank set up to where companies who are looking for full- or part-time SEO's can search through the database for trained optimizers. Optimizers will be able to enter their data, and companies can search through a variety of variables, including location, experience level, training, full or part time, etc.

Students who have taken a class under me in the past, through the Academy, or through Search Engine Workshops are eligible to enter their information in the database. We're hoping that the job data bank will be open for business within the next month or two. This will be a wonderful resource for both trained search engine optimizers looking for work and companies who are looking to hire optimizers.

In Conclusion

Search engine optimization as a full- or part-time career choice is wide open with possibilities. If you'll start with your local market first, you'll rapidly gain clients and prove yourself in the industry. From there, only the "Web" is the limit!

Robin Nobles, Director of Training, [A]<http://www.academywebspecialists.com/>[ATEXT]Academy of

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