

What to Know Before You Hire an SEO

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What does an SEO do?

SEO helps you get found by the right Google searchers to boost your bottom line



Optimize content on your website for search **AND** visitors



Keyword research for your business/industry



Website audit with suggested action items



Link building

Why hire an SEO?

- Hard to do SEO well with DIY
- Constantly changing & updating
- Many aspects to it that combine for best results
- Knowing what's important vs squandering resources
- Can prioritize your efforts for your current situation
- You need customized efforts to match your individual needs

When should you hire an SEO?



- You want to create an overarching SEO strategy
- Your website is not driving traffic
- You have the budget to put into it
- You have prepped your website for SEO to have an impact
- Your team does not have the bandwidth to learn SEO & keep up to date
- You are redesigning your website (and want to bake in SEO from the start)

When should you *NOT* hire an SEO?

- You don't have the budget
- You will not be implementing their suggestions in the near term
- Your team is up on SEO best practices & recent updates
- Your team is implementing an SEO strategy already in place

There are different types SEO professionals

Your business objectives will determine which you pick

Agency vs individual/freelancer

- Technical (crawl/index, load times, robot.txt configuring, redirects)
- Content-focused
- Link building
- Local
- International
- E-commerce

Agency vs freelance

Agency pros

- More than one person so you can stay with the same group for different phases of your SEO journey
- Clear line of sight to expertise builds trust
- Follow industry standards
- Deliverables get delivered, on time and as expected
- Ongoing support
- Can scale as your needs grow or change
- Ongoing maintenance just happens as part of the process
- Project managers have one job – communicate with you about the team's work and actions
- The agency keeps your ongoing records and project plans

Agency cons

- \$\$\$\$\$\$\$
- People leave and you can get handed off to a different expert at a moment's notice and without any say in the matter
- They have lots of clients and you are a small part of their business (and therefore may get less attention)
- May require a long-term commitment with accompanying money outlay

Freelance pros

- Usually more affordable
- Personal relationship
- Individualized goals
- Pivots easily
- Can integrate into your marketing team, even as a contractor
- Flexible for short projects or long-term projects
- You know who is working on your account at all times

Freelance Cons

- One person may not have all the skillsets for multiple SEO projects
- May not have access to all the tools that an agency would have
- If they need to step away from your account there is no one ready to step in
- If your needs change (like from content to tech) you must find a new SEO to work with
- Because they generally work remotely, an SEO may disappear without a trace, and you need to start the process over again
- You need to keep your ongoing records and project plans

Types of SEOs

Content

1. Creating unique content to boost SERP rankings
 1. Writing/text
 2. Graphics
 3. Videos/podcasts
2. Things to consider while working with content SEOs
 1. [copywriting](#)
 2. site structure
 3. keyword strategy
3. April HCU wants to see visitors stay and click deeper
 - Hire this kind of SEO when you want to develop a strategy for on-page content that will rank you above competitors in your area or establish your expertise in the field

Technical

1. Crawl issues
 2. GSC indexing
 3. Load times and bounce
 4. robot.txt configuring
 5. Redirects for web redesign so you don't lose past SEO value
- Hire this type when you are moving or changing your website or you have issues with code and web development

Local

1. Map pack visibility
 2. Get in front of searchers in your area (86% of people rely on Google maps to find the location of a business)
 3. Optimize Google My Business and social channels
 4. Build local links to boost "near me" results
- Hire this type of SEO when you have a local walk-in or service business that relies on nearby people finding you. Examples are franchises, mom-and-pop shops, service providers, and other small businesses.

Types of SEOs (continued)

Link building

1. Connect with other quality businesses to boost your reputation.
- Hire this kind of SEO when you want to develop a linking strategy that goes beyond the basics and after you have ticked all the other SEO boxes

International

1. Get world-wide visibility
 2. Navigate EU privacy issues
 3. Navigate China legal issues
 4. Navigate language and duplicate content issues
- Hire this type when you expand beyond US-based sales and services

E-commerce

1. Large-scale products
 2. Multiple PDPs with diverse colors, sizes or other differentiators
 3. Inventory and tracking for searcher UX
- Hire this type of SEO when you have a large-scale online sales presence and want to increase your visibility for products with multiple sizes/color/etc.

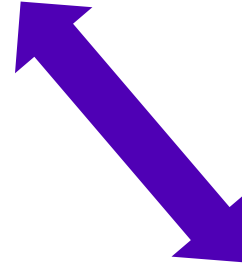
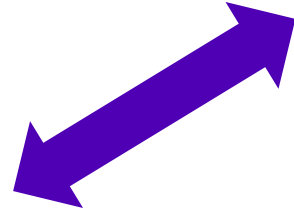
How to prep for working with an SEO pro

Be intentional in your search for a search pro

1. Identify your goals
 - Pick 3-5
 - You can't do everything all at once
 - Do you need tactical SEO, hands-on help, or a strategic thinker
 - If you are hiring your first one, get a jack-of-all trades
 - Once you have a direction, you can specialize (which often costs more)
2. Determine your budget
 - Hourly vs retainer
 - Package vs a la carte
 - Industry expert vs general SEO pro
3. Pick agency vs individual/freelancer
 - Agencies have more resources, but often cost significantly more due to overhead
 - Freelance consultant expect \$75 to \$1500 per hour
 - Local SEO package \$300 to \$1500 per month
 - National agency retainer \$5000 to \$10,000 per month
 - International expert retainer \$5000 to \$15,000 per month
4. Get referrals
 - The ones who are emailing you with "I can get you page 1" probably not the ones you want
 - Like hiring a babysitter. People are quiet about their good SEOs because they are a scarce resource.
 - Job boards
 - Social media
 - Forums
5. Interview potential pros
6. Review references
7. Request an audit (and expect to pay for it)

Are they good?

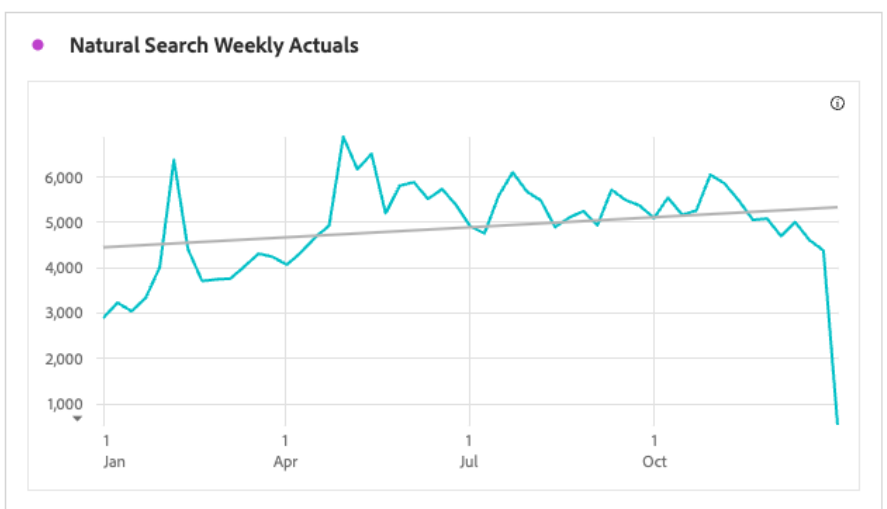
SEO



Interviewing your SEO pro *part 1*

What you should ask them:

- Have you worked with other business in my industry
 - Yes, they know how to position you, but may be on retainer for competitors
 - No, they will need to learn about your industry so expect add'l questions
- Can you guarantee SEO results
 - Yes, RED FLAG. RUN!!! They probably use black hat techniques that can get you banned from Google
 - No, no one can guarantee results. They may offer money back if they can't deliver because they trust in their quality of work, though
- What areas of SEO can you help me on
 - Ideal answer is usually about 3 things from a quick glance at your website.
 - Too many, and they may spread themselves too thin and not be as effective overall
- What should we do in house
 - Often content writing should be inhouse. It's expensive to have an agency do it (like \$5K to \$10K per article)
- How do you pick keywords for my business
 - Expect to hear tools like "Semrush" "Ahrefs" and "Moz" along with competitor research and industry research
- How long will it take to see results
 - Anything less than 6 months and they are full of ...it (another red flag. Best to say "thanks for your time" and get off the phone)
- What has changed in SEO over the last year or 2
 - They should have some answer that tells you they are keeping up. Right now it's a mjr combined update and we don't know the scope or impecations yet (probably not til May)
- What accounts should I be using besides Google for SEO
 - Depending on your industry, you should hear things like Yelp, Google My Business. Thumbtack, Apple Maps, Home Advisor, and social media
- Do you do review monitoring & answering
 - They should monitor and flag, but you should respond. If they say they respond for you, it's a hug red flag and a potential PR nightmare



Interviewing your SEO pro *part 2*

What they should ask you:

- What makes your business unique
- Who is your ideal customer
- How do they currently find you
- What makes money for your business
- What other marketing are you doing now
- Who are your top competitors

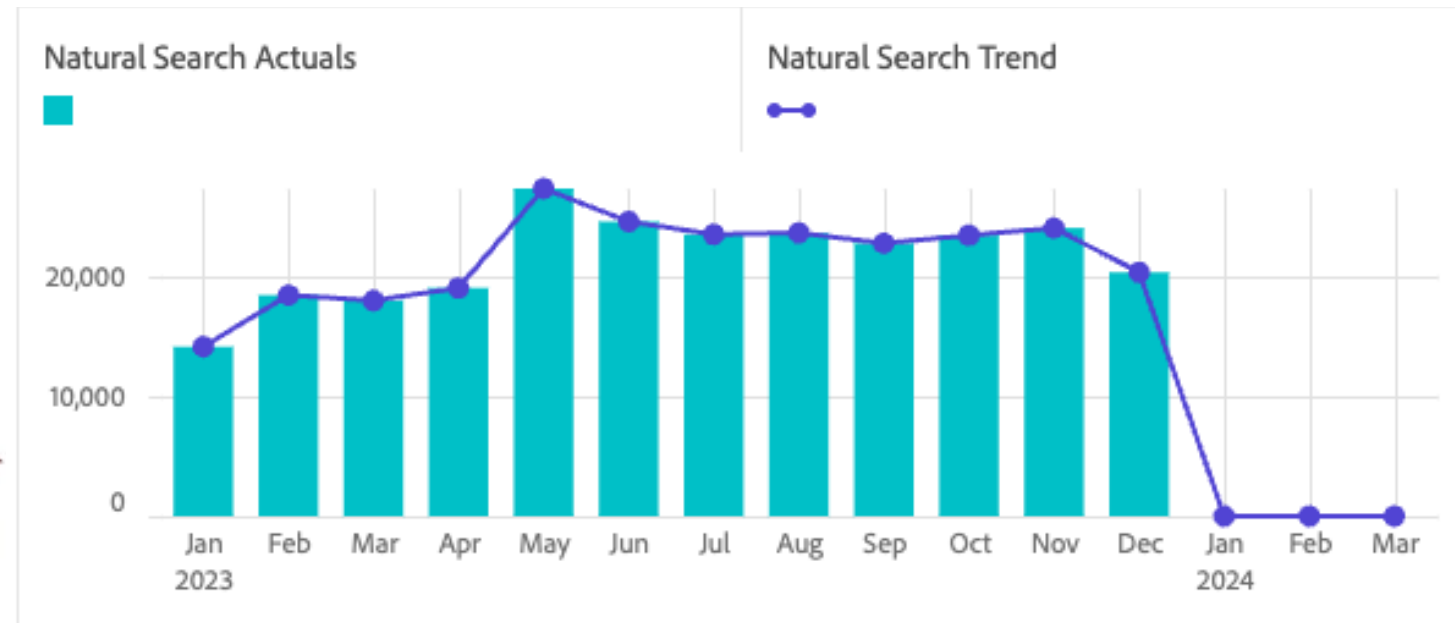
If they don't want a holistic picture of your business, industry, and objectives, it's another red flag

Beware black hat SEO



- Hidden text
 - White on white so search engines see it (and rank for it) but visitors don't see it
 - Altering your website so search engines see something
- Keyword stuffing
 - Adding numerous search terms to get Google's attention, but hard to read
 - Not understandable or helpful to real live visitors
- Buying links
 - Paying sites to link to you
 - Using link farms to boost your site using other clients, and other clients to boost

- It violates the terms of service for search engines
- It can boost rankings short term (so you pay the agency or freelancer)
- It can get you banned by Google or Bing
- Takes years and is expensive to fix banning



Website audit – what to look for

What to look for:



Expect to pay

~1 hour fee

- They should spend ~30 mins looking at your site
- They should have 3-6 items they think you should work on first
 - How much time this change will take
 - Expected impact on your search
 - Business priorities and low hanging fruit for fast, big wins
- They should be able to explain the reasoning behind these suggestions
 - If they are cagey or you feel they are trying to make it sound hard....RUN
- They should care about both search engines and real, live people visiting your site (and buying your product or services)
- They should have some knowledge of your industry parameters

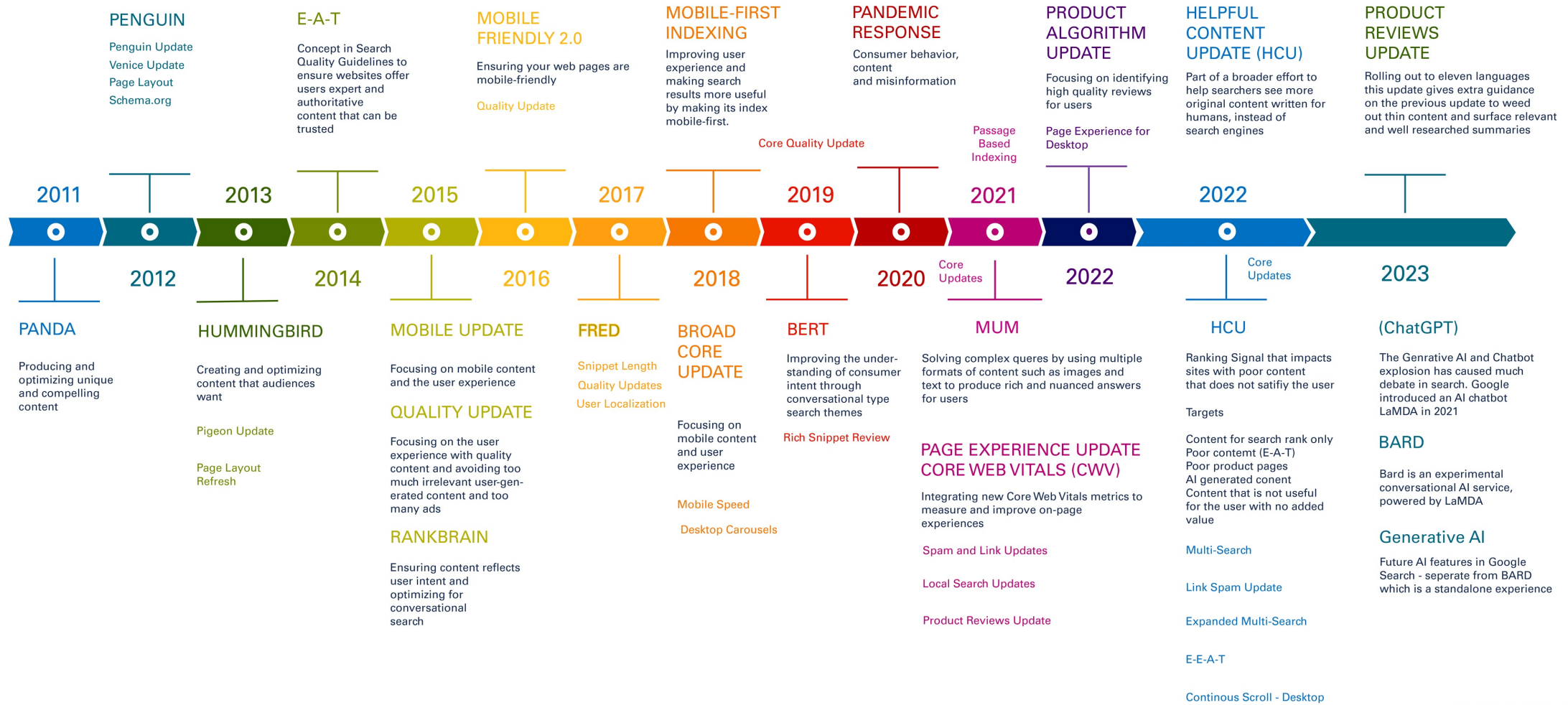
What has changed in SEO?

It used to be that you stuck something on a web page and it ranked. But as SEOs game the system, Google fights back

1. **Good content** vs spammy, keyword-stuffed content (Panda update 2011)
2. **Quality links** vs black hat link schemes (Penguin update 2012)
3. **Local search focus** with mobile prioritized (Pigeon update 2014)
4. **SERP updates** (continual tweaking with infinite scroll as the latest)
5. Position 0 aka knowledge box or **featured snippet** (SERP update 2014)
6. **Intent-focus search** as a “soft” replacement of keywords (Hummingbird update 2013)
7. **Voice search** (Slow build since IBM’s “Watson” in 2011 to current 27% of searches)
8. **E-E-A-T** (Experience, expertise, authority, trustworthiness)

GOOGLE'S FOCUS ON THE USER (HUMAN) EXPERIENCE

UPDATES, ALGORITHMS AND RANKING SIGNALS

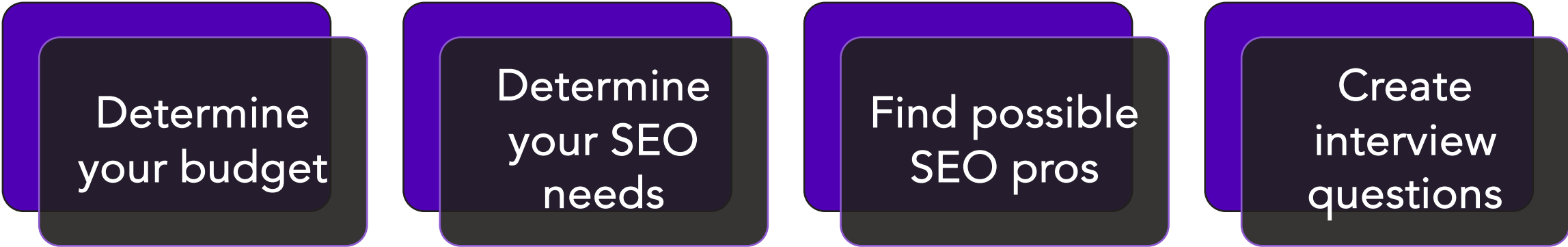




2023 Google Search Ranking Algorithm Updates



Where do I put my time and effort today?



Determine
your budget

Determine
your SEO
needs

Find possible
SEO pros

Create
interview
questions

Requesting Your Online Review

Thank you for attending our class!

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Questions?

