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Is Your Web Site Ready For The 2003 Search Engine Shuffle?

Yahoo! and AOL use Google for search results. MSN uses Inktomi. But Yahoo! just bought Inktomi, and Google is getting so popular its partners are getting nervous. It's not enough that search engines constantly change their page ranking schemes. They also regularly shuffle their portal alliances. 2003 looks to be another year of big changes. Is your web site ready? Ask your optimizer.

A search engine optimizer takes responsibility for increasing the visibility of your site in search results. Some optimizers focus on short term results, and chase the tails of the search engines. These tail-chasers are always trying the latest trick to subvert search results. But search engines hate this. They've got teams of whip-smart programmers weeding out these tricksters. It's a big reason why a site can be doing well in the results, and a moment later, it's gone.

Good optimizers take a more long run view. Instead of jumping on the latest trick, they concentrate on proven techniques that keep your overall visibility in search engines high, regardless of the constant shuffle in page ranking schemes and portal alliances.

And some optimizers are just plain unscrupulous. They often appear as spam in your inbox. You'll notice their tell-tale sign: "[Guaranteed Search Results Or Your Money Back!](#)" But search engines don't let anyone control their results. Truly controlled search results have another name: [Pay Per Click](#). Make sure you know what you're paying for!

The key to choosing a good optimizer is finding one with a long run track record of search engine success. Good optimizers should rely on references to convince you of the value of their work, not dubious guarantees, nor the lure of the latest trick. Good optimizers have long term, satisfied clients as references, not people who signed on with them in the last 90 days: "My optimizer has my site doing really well today!" But what about tomorrow? Or over the course of a year? Consistency of results, over an extended period of time, is the defining factor when evaluating optimizers.

Good optimizers employ techniques that work broadly and over time. While you might be falling for some results in some search engines, you are rising in other results in other search engines. Overall, you still have good visibility in search results, and thus good traffic. Good optimizers insulate you from search engine ups and downs.

Just doing one search on one search engine for one search phrase is not the way to judge how well a web site is doing! There are millions of surfers, searching on a great variety of phrases, across multiple search engines. A comprehensive [positioning report](#), which good optimizers should provide, will give you an overall picture of how your site is performing, for a variety of relevant search phrases, across the major search engines. Only such a

comprehensive report gives you a true picture of how your site is performing. And you need to review these reports over time!

So ask for references. References are the key to finding a good search engine optimizer. Ask each optimizer you are evaluating if you can contact three or more of their long term customers. If you get good feedback, you can be relatively confident in their abilities.

Unscrupulous or tail-chasing optimizers employ techniques that don't work or eventually get thwarted. Your site tanks in the results, or just as likely, vanishes. The Web is littered with stories like this.

This is why clients of unscrupulous or tail-chasing optimizers don't stick around! So find an optimizer willing to give you multiple references of clients who report good results in search engines, over an extended period of time; ideally a year or more. Then you can be confident - as confident as is possible when it comes to search engines - your site will weather the storms set to rage across the search engine landscape in 2003.

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