

Over the Top

By David Evans, PhD, MBA



When something sounds too good to be true, it usually is—especially when it comes out of the mouth of an unscrupulous Internet marketing salesperson. Many a snake oil search engine optimization (SEO) peddler will say or promise anything to get you to sign on the dotted line. And some of these offers can be tempting.

Who wouldn't want 1,000 "high-quality" links for \$1 or a website's worth of unique content churned out within 24 hours for the low, low price of \$20 per page?

Here are four common offers that are too good to believe, and will end up costing you more in the long run when you have to hire a second company to clean up the mess.

1. MARKET EXCLUSIVITY: GUARANTEED!

Exclusive is as exclusive does. Most surgeons think exclusivity means that, in their market, their Internet marketing company targets only specific search terms for their practice. If you are in Chicago and you want exclusivity, you want your Internet company to be focused on you, and only you, to rank for terms like "Chicago breast augmentation" or "top facial plastic surgeon in Chicago."

But most companies offer geographic exclusivity, not search engine exclusivity.

This means the company will work with only one surgeon in a geographic radius, typically 10 to 15 miles. In a small city like El Paso, Texas, 15 miles may cover all types of exclusivity. But in any medium-to-large market, there could be many more surgeons in the city targeting the same search terms.

Cut to the chase by asking for specifics when a salesperson promises exclusivity.

2. FIRST-PAGE ORGANIC RANKINGS: A MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE!

This should raise a big red flag. No company can ever promise first-page organic rankings. It just doesn't work that way.

Most surgeons think "guaranteed rankings" means their site will rank for the most highly competitive search terms. But it isn't that straightforward.

Cut to the chase by asking for the specific list of terms that will be targeted. (It's much easier to rank for your name than for a term like "facelift Los Angeles.") Also, make sure first-page rankings means the organic listings, as opposed to pay per click (PPC) listings. (Some companies simply purchase PPC ads for inexpensive search terms to "guarantee" your site ranks on page one so they can start charging your credit card monthly.)

3. FORGET RANKINGS. IT'S ALL ABOUT TRAFFIC

Some SEO companies go the other way. They say that SEO is not about rankings, it's about traffic. It's true that without traffic, there are no leads. But without rankings, there is no traffic. Your site has to rank for some search terms, or prospective patients will not find you. Plus, traffic isn't all SEO-driven. There are many routes leading to the same destination. If you start a radio

advertising campaign, your traffic will go up because people will hear the ad and go online and search for your practice.

Cut to the chase by making sure the company is addressing all the components needed for a successful Internet campaign.

4. UNIQUE, EXPERT-CRAFTED WEBSITE COPY WITHIN 24 HOURS

I'm sure you have heard the pitches and promises: Unique content for your new website, delivered in 24 hours, for just \$20 per page. They may deliver some content, but odds are it is recycled and not even carefully repurposed. You get what you pay for, especially with content. Search engines will catch on, penalize your site, and you will be back to the drawing board.

Cut to the chase by sampling some of the content in advance and visiting other clients' pages to see if there is any overlap.

Don't be swayed. Be prepared, and know what questions to ask next time you look to hire a new Internet marketing firm.

David Evans, PhD, MBA, is the CEO of Ceatus Media Group, based in San Diego. His column, "The Edge," appears in every issue of Plastic Surgery Practice. He can be reached via PSPeditor@allied360.com.