

## **SEO Business – The Joys of Reselling**

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As a facet of the Internet economy, search engine optimization is a specialized service that shares several characteristics with other web-based businesses. While the objects of our labours might be seen and used by millions of unique people in millions of unique places, our workspace consists of a 17" – 24" monitor, a miniature window on an exponentially expanding world. A 24" portal might seem small by modern building standards but as both Yahoo and Google will tell you, size is not the issue, depth is. That 24 inches represents the largest window of opportunity anyone could ever open.

One of the greatest characteristics of the online economy is that the Internet has created a common space shared by over ¼ of the planet's population. This has fostered an environment in which information, which is the only product actually created on the Internet, is transcontinentally transportable. Information products can be created and posted to the 'net from anywhere in the world. A site designed in Bangor Maine is just as accessible in Mexico City as one designed in Bangalore India. That site can also be worked on by anyone in the world. For example, a small online search marketing office in Victoria BC can work on the website of a major Canadian fashion retailer as if the staff were housed in the Montreal headquarters of the much larger firm. One of our employees has actually based himself in the far northern regions of British Columbia, near the 60-degree line that marks boarder to the Yukon.

For those of us working on the production side of the monitor, the Internet is more than a marketplace; it is the primary space in which we do business. Discussion forums are meeting halls and a corporate boardroom can take the form of a multi-user chat environment. Over the past decade, the Web has grown to become one of the fastest growing employer sectors, allowing virtually anyone with skills, talent and connectivity to start their own business. Social and professional networks that have developed over time between complimentary service providers have spurred much of that growth. Like the world of traditional businesses, word-of-mouth recommendation continues to be the best way for online businesses to attract new clients.

After a decade of development, the Internet has become a far more complicated working environment in which micro-specialization is necessary. For instance, many web design firms turn to third-party vendors to provide customizable shopping carts for their clients. The artistic function of a website is far different than the commercial function of a shopping cart, requiring entirely different skill sets to create. Both the website design firm and the website application firm benefit from their relationship and, provided both do right by their shared clients, can build lasting reciprocal relationships into the future.

For search engine marketing firms, there are a lot of complimentary businesses out there all of which are looking to add value to the services they can offer their clients. SEO firms dedicated to organic placement and SEM firms dedicated to the management of paid-search advertising campaigns are the first and most obvious matches for reciprocal relationships. Unfortunately, most SEO and SEM firms continue to try to be all things to all clients and have not yet realized gains from the natural synergy between SEO and SEM firms.

Aside from members of the search marketing industry, most obvious natural relationships for SEOs are with website design firms. More often than not made up of less than five employees, most website design firms survive from month to month without creating long-term sustainable income sources. They create stunning sites for their clients but those sites are often one-time design contracts. These firms are rarely able to wrangle a multi-year maintenance contract from their clients who are often small businesses themselves.

Another obvious area for SEOs to find long-term referral relationships is with mainstream advertising and public relations firms. These businesses serve clients with a pressing need for organic search engine placements. As noted in countless articles and surveys over the past year, most large corporations and many smaller ones with recognizable brand names have neglected organic optimization on their sites. As the PPC market shifts, many of these businesses are again looking to their advertising agencies for search marketing advice. While the established ad-agencies are expert at nearly every aspect of marketing in the world, they have not become experts at search engine marketing, as shown by the search placement of many of their largest clients.

A third place for SEO firms to establish relationships is with local or regional Internet Service Providers and hosting firms. Local ISPs are often the first place new online businesses seek advice and establish a professional relationship with an online third-party vendor. ISPs are always looking for ways to improve on services they offer their clients and working with an ethical SEO firm is a good match.

There are literally dozens of other opportunities for search engine optimization and other web-service firms to do business together. Our firm, StepForth Placement has been working with a growing network of service-resellers for about two years. In this time, we have developed a simple, two tier reselling system that works well for our company and the firms we do business with.

The first tier is called Direct Sale and offers resellers a 10% commission on all referrals that convert to contracts. In other words, a business we have a relationship with markets our service and receives a 10% commission on our initial service fee. Under this system, a \$3000 SEO contract nets the reseller \$300. This is obviously our most popular package as it gives the reselling firm a quick payment without them accepting responsibility for the success of the SEO campaign or for communication with the client.

The second tier is called Value Added and allows the reseller to offer search engine optimization and market research services. Here the reseller charges whatever they feel their market will bear for our services. In exchange for this, they accept all responsibility for the success of the SEO campaign and communication with the client. This type of package is most popular with larger advertising firms and for SEM firms that wish to also offer SEO services via a third-party vendor. (Oftentimes a client may not even be aware the SEO campaign is conducted by an outside firm.)

Reselling SEO services offers many advantages over trying to offer those services in-house. While search engine optimization can be compared to common sense website design there is a lot of common sense to be learned. Professional SEO firms have already invested the time to learn the ethical techniques that can place a site in the Top10 at the major search engines. Reselling SEO services offers site design companies and advertising firms another marketing avenue they can confidently market to their clients. It can also provide a side stream income that can help smaller companies with their monthly bottom lines.

Many SEO firms have some form of reseller option available to complimentary web-service businesses. For those that don't, offering a fee for referral program is a relatively simple way to increase business while developing long-term relationships with other web-professionals around the world.

For more information on StepForth Placement's reseller program, please visit our [SEO Resellers](#) site.