

# Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Firms

# Buyer's Guide 2007

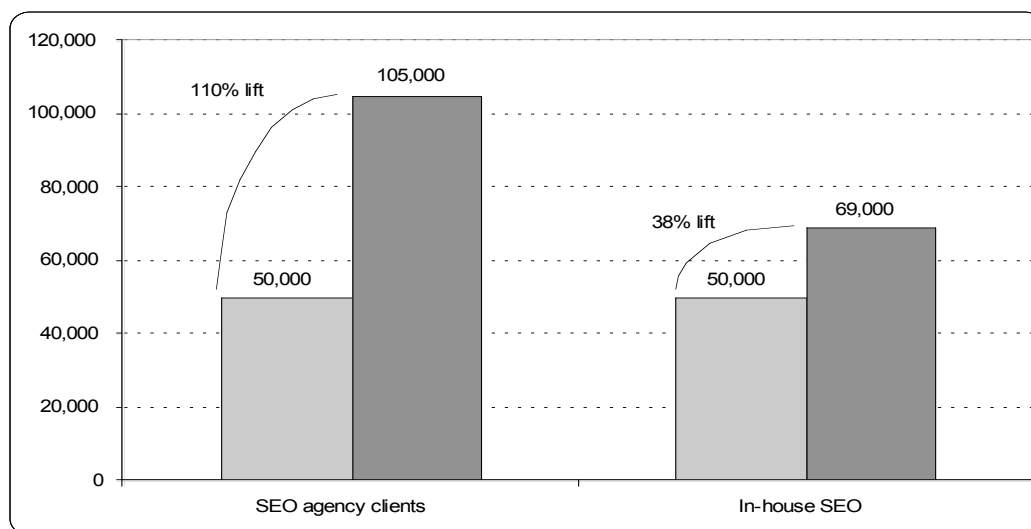
Note: This is an authorized excerpt from the full 354-page Buyers Guide to Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Firms 2007. To download the entire Guide, go to: <http://www.SherpaStore.com> or call 877-895-1717

# Section 1: Introduction

Welcome to the Fifth Edition of MarketingSherpa's Buyer's Guide to SEO Firms!

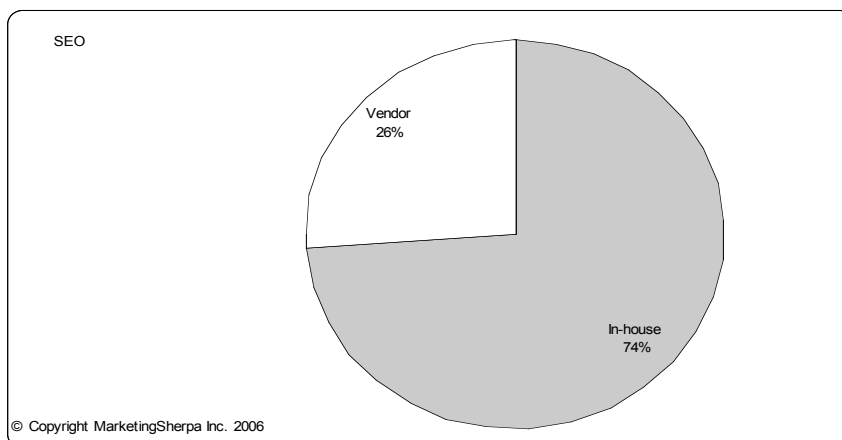
If you're considering hiring an expert consultancy or specialist firm to optimize your Web site for search engines, you've made a great choice. MarketingSherpa data has consistently shown that marketers who use in-house staff to optimize their Web sites see on average a 38% jump in overall traffic. That's nothing to be sneezed at -- however, marketers who hire an out-of-house expert see a 110% jump in site traffic.

**Chart: Six Month Traffic Growth Due to Site Optimization**



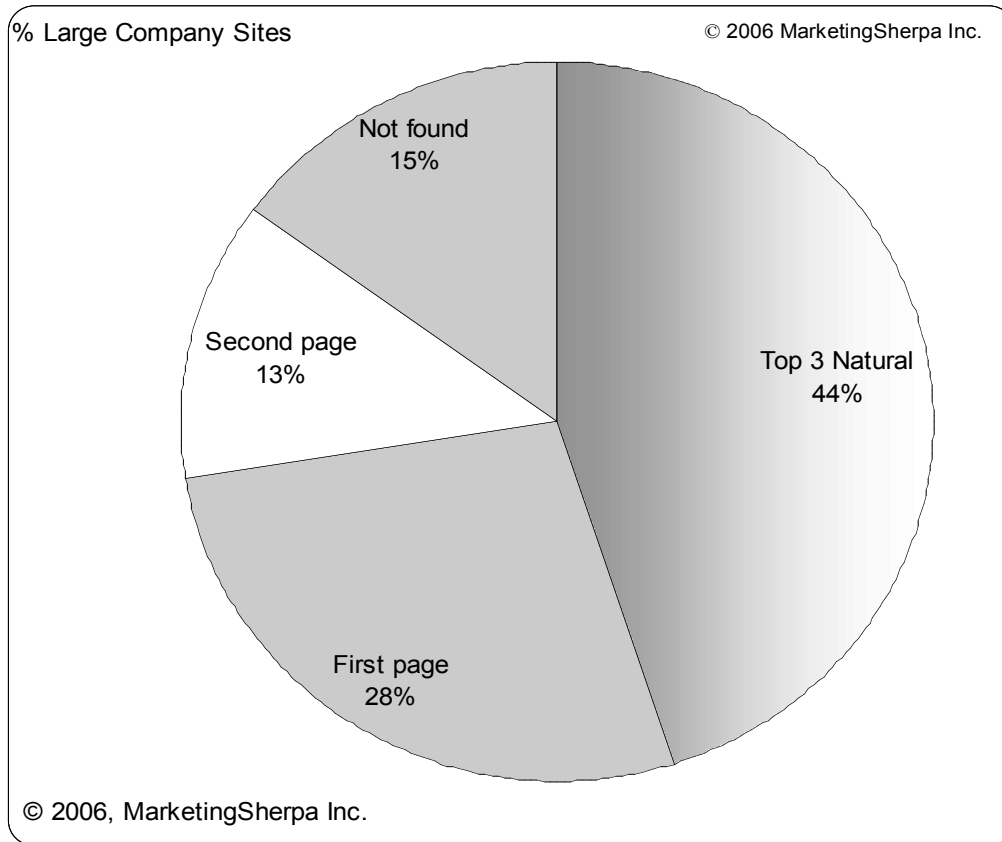
Quite simply - outsourcing not only relieves strain on your internal resources (59% of more than 3,000 marketers we surveyed this summer said the current labor shortage in search professionals is affecting their strategy) - it also can be a significant competitive advantage.

**Chart: Percent of Brand-Side Clients Outsourcing SEO 2006**



However, as you can see from the chart above, only a minority of marketers outsource SEO. If your competitors are not outsourcing and you are, the chances your site will rank above theirs on the search engines is considerable.

### Chart: Organic Search Rankings of Top 44 Largest US Software Firm Sites



The above chart is from an observational study MarketingSherpa conducted of the online presence of the largest business software firms in the US. They have marketing budgets in the millions. They are famous name brands in their respective marketplaces. However, 28% had sites that were so badly optimized (we assume by in-house staff) they didn't even appear on the first page of major search engines for keywords critical to their business. An additional 28% were on the first page ... but not among the top rankings.

This illustrates how even technology companies, which often assume Internet marketing should be easy to accomplish in-house because after all they are a tech firm, can fail at SEO if it's not their primary line of business.

Our advice? Hire a specialist.

How much you invest in SEO tends to depend on how much that traffic matters to your business and how likely you are to track the value of incoming traffic sources, and hence be willing to spend per source.

Marketers at high-growth (in terms of gross sales) ecommerce sites told MarketingSherpa in a March 2006 survey that they spent 12.9% of their total online budget on SEO. Ecommerce marketers working for sites with flat or declining sales only spent 9.3% of online budget on SEO. For both, this was a bit more than a third of what they spent on paid search ads.

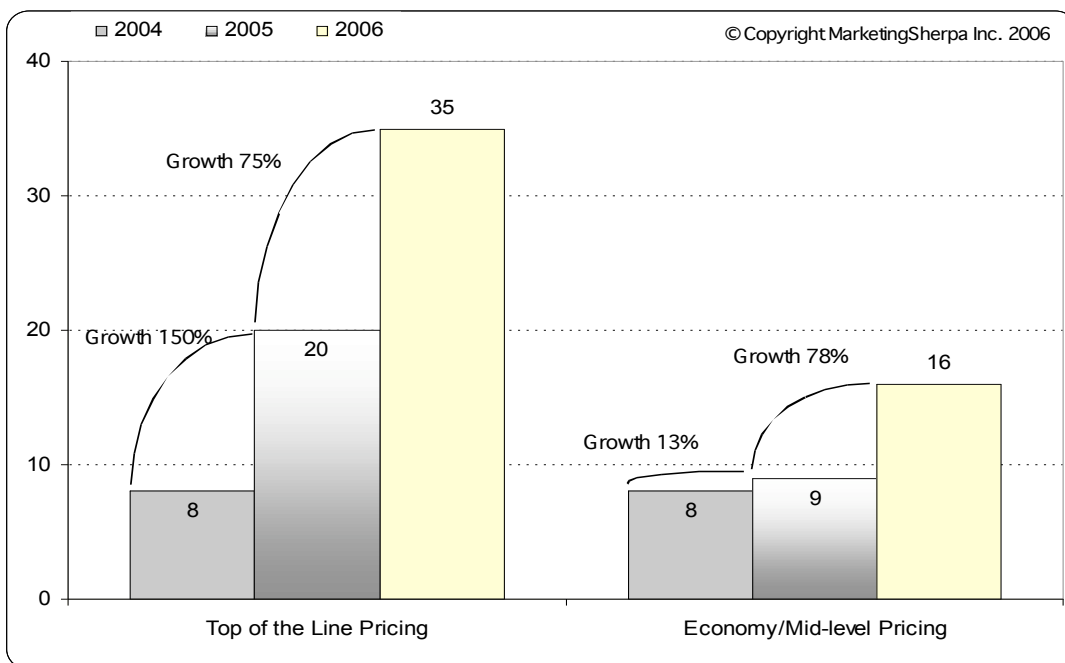
On the other hand, business-to-business marketers working for technology companies told MarketingSherpa in a May 2006 survey that SEO was on average only 5% of their online budget while paid search ads were more than five times that amount.

You'll find more practical information on how to determine a budget for your business model, type of site, and traffic goals in this Guide. You'll also find pricing information for 106 SEO firms in a wide range of levels -- from economy-minded firms to top-of-the-line providers.

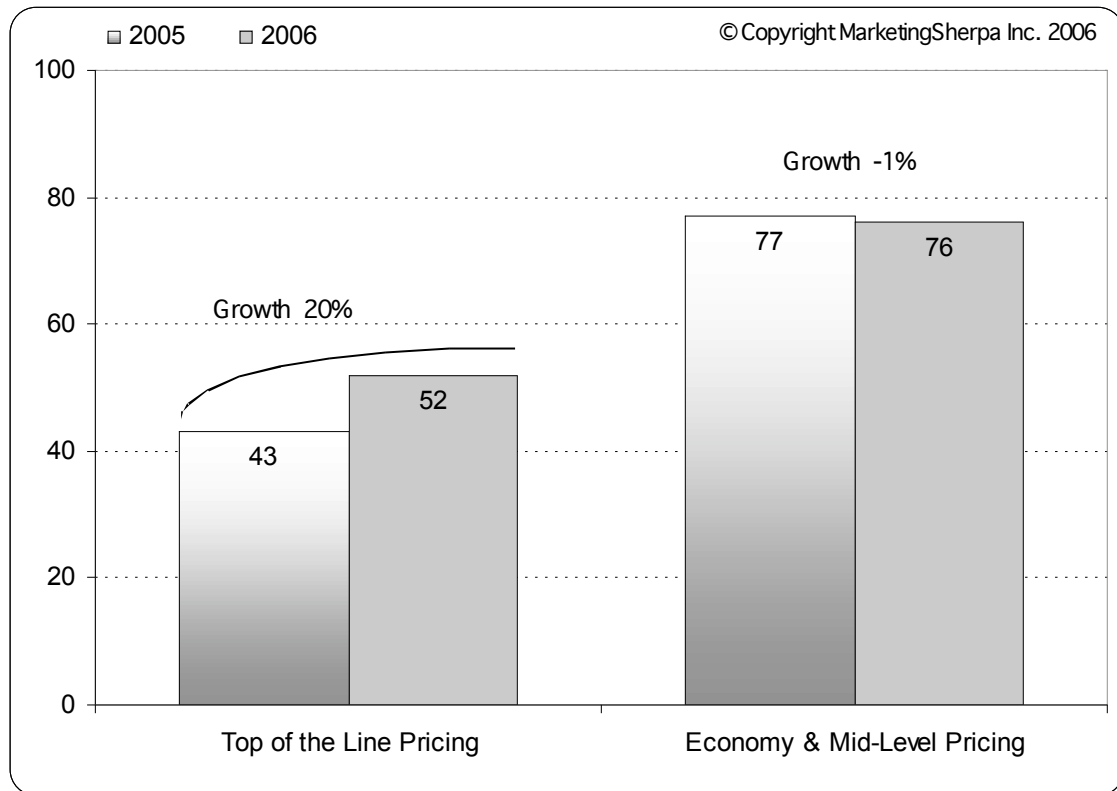
As always we revamped our charts and profiles to reflect your top concerns as potential clients. Every single piece of data in the following charts and profiles is \*entirely\* newly researched. We did not reprint or "lift" information from a past edition for any of the charts or profiles that follow.

In creating the all-new profiles, we discovered two major shifts in the SEO firm industry as a whole.

#### Chart: Three-year Staffing Trends for SEO Firms - 2004-2006



The good news for clients is that firm staffing levels are up year over year significantly. When done well, SEO is often largely handwork requiring hours of staff time. Your SEO firm may need to tweak copy on all of your Web pages and press releases, pursue inbound links from dozens or hundreds of related sites, revamp your site's layout, etc. If they don't have enough staff to put on the job, the job will not be well done.

**Chart: SEO Client Growth Year-Over-Year 2005-2006**

Unfortunately for the optimization industry -- year over year growth in terms of total client accounts for 106 profiled firms is slowing considerably. The number of clients who are willing to pay for top-of-the-line services is still increasing, but smaller clients are not increasing. We have seen similar slowing on the revenue side of the picture with estimated industry-wide revenues only growing by a puny \$300,000 year over year.

We suspect smaller clients may not be educated enough to realize SEO exists or that it's as important (if not more so) than PPC ads for their sites. The SEO industry is not investing in educational efforts the way the Googles of the world are.

This may mean that SEO is still under-invested in as a category. It's a bit like email in that regard.

SEO is a proven tactic that has performed year in and year out for more than a decade now. However, it's not easy, requiring some technical savvy to do well and enough ongoing change in the ground rules to be a bit frustrating to keep track of. Many marketers are addicted to what's new. It's far more exciting to invest on test campaigns in social networking, podcasting, video ads, videogame product placement, street teams ... you name it, rather than good old SEO.

Plus, doing SEO well requires having a great working relationship with your Web development team, often part of the IT department. Many marketers have far better

relationships with their ad agencies (who in turn are also addicted to what's new) than they do with the in-house IT department. Getting newly optimized pages loaded can be a significant challenge.

Even corralling all the writers responsible for site content (merchandising, PR, investor relations, customer service, corporate communications, etc) can be a nightmare of committee meetings and ceaseless SEO training. (Worth noting -- 76% of the firms profiled in this guide will provide training services for your in-house team.)

SEO isn't easy. However, in an advertising world where very few things can be counted on, SEO is a reassuringly safe investment.

And, as MarketingSherpa research also shows, hiring an SEO firm is generally an extremely safe investment as well. This Guide was invented and annually updated to help you find the best SEO firm for your type of Web site, budget and business goals. I and the research team here hope it's very useful for you.

Last but not least, we hope to see that investment mark on SEO to jump significantly for 2007.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tad Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tad Clarke  
Editorial Director

# SAMPLE PROFILE

## ENQUIRO SEARCH SOLUTIONS INC.

1628 Dickson Road, Suite 300 Kelowna,  
British Columbia, Canada V1Y1X9 • 800-277-9997

www.enquiro.com

### OVERVIEW:

**Ownership:** Private

**Founded:** 1999

**First paid SEO client in:** 1999

**Full-time staff as of June 2006:** 21 (as of June 2005: 20)

**Countries in which your company has full-time staff:** Canada

**Full-time staff spending at least 75% of their time on SEO campaigns for clients:** 11

**Years of SEO campaign experience for most skilled company search expert:** 7

**Active SEO clients as of June 2006:** 100 (as of June 2005: 100)

**Revenue from service fees per year:** under \$5 million

**Overall revenues derived from running SEO campaigns:** At least 50%

**Percentage of clients who left because we trained them to take SEO in-house:** 2%

### PROFILE:

#### What makes your company's SEO services unique?

Enquiro understands deeply the importance of success -- we've aligned the entire Enquiro team around one concept: Succeed in Search. We focus on people, not on technology, leveraging technology to help our people provide the best customized solution for the client. It is this focus, on the ultimate goal, that sets Enquiro apart. It's the strategy to develop a relationship with your customer that's truly important. And that strategy has to come from understanding your customer, and how they'll use a search engine, and, in turn, interact with your site. That's where the marketing has to start. We are a service company, rather than a technology company, and we strive to maintain our focus on that. One area that is vitally important to us, however, is to continue to lead in understanding how consumers interact with search. We published the first comprehensive research into consumer search engine behavior.

#### What is your perfect client type?

Accessible stakeholders with clear goals, engaged in working with us to deliver the solution. As committed as we are to search behavior, research, usability and measurement. Responsive with an in-house implementation staff. Our primary niche is online publishers with complex content sites, willing to commit a budget starting at \$75,000 annually.

#### What client is wrong for your company?

We don't want a client that has no corporate buy-in, no clear goals and no measurement mechanism in place. We also don't want a client with unrealistic expectations and no commitment of in-house resources or someone wanting a quick fix. We also do not accept adult or casino sites.

#### What is your stance on non-"kosher" practices?

We would strongly advise against any method that is not 100%

acceptable to the search engines. If the client insists we would unfortunately have to let the client go. We will not participate in any unacceptable practices.

**What publications and speeches has your company done relating to SEO in the past year?** White paper: Google Eye Tracking Study; Sample article: Organic Search: What's in it for you?; Show: Search Engine Strategies Speech: Searcher Behavior; Blog: [www.outofmygord.com](http://www.outofmygord.com).

### PRICING/PURCHASING

- Top-of-the-line services and prices: custom pricing depending on size and scope of the project.
- Company requires contract for SEO services.
- 12 months is the minimum term of service.
- 3 weeks to several months to launch optimized site from the day client signs contract.
- 6 months for significantly higher rankings for chosen keywords.

### CLIENT SPECIFICS

- Industry or vertical niche specialties: online publishing, software/telecommunications, large complex content sites.

#### Current Clients:

**Siemens AG**, [www.siemens.com](http://www.siemens.com)

**Martindale-Hubbell**, [www.lawyers.com](http://www.lawyers.com)

**Hanley Wood LLC**, [www.eplans.com](http://www.eplans.com)

#### Client Types:

- Ecommerce site with 2,000+ SKUs feeding to Search and Shopping Engines
- Ecommerce site with fewer than 2,000 SKUs

CONTINUED ►

## ENQUIRO SEARCH SOLUTIONS INC.

### PROFILE: CONTINUED

- B-to-B marketer seeking qualified sales leads (not direct sales)
- Content site needing positive ROI based on advertising sales
- Paid subscription site
- Fortune 500 concerned with branding and trademark protection
- Consumer lead generation site

### SEO CAMPAIGN TACTICS

Intense keyword research .....	often
Visible copy tweaks .....	often
Long list of keywords on main pages... ..	never
Training clients in copy for SEO .....	often
Adding visible new content HTML pages .....	occasionally
External paid link campaign .....	never
External free link campaign .....	occasionally
Internal linking .....	often
Linking from other client sites .....	never
Blog-related SEO .....	occasionally
SEO press releases .....	occasionally
RSS feed.....	occasionally
Content Microsites .....	never
Conversion specialty .....	often
Metrics services .....	often
Online reputation management.....	occasionally
Redoing navigation and site link/file structure .....	often
Changing site tags .....	often
Making Dynamic CMS systems search-friendly ..	often
Manual submission .....	occasionally
Basic paid inclusion .....	occasionally
Paid inclusion feeds .....	occasionally
Gateway pages visible to search engines only .....	never
Mirror pages or duplicate sites.....	never
Cloaking .....	never
Invisible text.....	never
Trademarked tactic.....	never

### Specialty:

- Other expertise: Search engine interaction research, Competitive intelligence, SERP SWOTS.

### SUPPORT/SERVICE

- Company offers training and consulting to help a client's own staff handle SEO irrespective of whether they use any other company's SEO services.
- Company does not create extra pages or sites for a client.
- Company can optimize the following versions of English: American English, Canadian English, British English.
- Company has a native speaker on staff who handles SEO in languages other than English. These languages include: Spanish/Mexico, Polish, German, Punjabi.
- Outside SEO, company offers its clients the following services: paid search advertising, usability research.
- Company offers the following guarantee: First, we mutually agree to the success metrics (KPIs) and specific goals for each

- client. Once in place we will, if required, we will develop a customized guarantee based on goals achieved.
- Company provides a free preliminary report.
- SEO clients are assigned an Account Executive for regular consultation.
- Customer service available: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. national hours by phone.
- To assure effective communication with far-away clients, the company offers: Based on need, we will arrange for face-to-face meetings, webinars and on-going conference calls. We are also easily accessible via phone and provide a toll-free number. We also provide a sharepoint portal that the client can access anytime. Sharepoint gives us the ability to report on project progress, issues and successes. It also gives the client a forum to report on issues and collaborate on deliverables.
- Response to an emailed question in: 2 hours.

### RESULTS DATA

#### Company provides to clients on request

Clients can receive results reports: online access 24/7, on-demand during business hours, weekly, several times a month, monthly.

	Traffic/clicks	Conversions	Rank by engine/term
Results by keyword	X	X	X
Results by keyword group	X	X	X
Results by search engine	X	X	X
Competitor's activities			X
Results compared to paid search ads	X	X	X

**Note:** We provide customized dashboards for each stakeholder within the organization with specific KPIs for each. In addition to providing rankings, we provide a visibility index report that accurately portrays the likelihood of being seen on search engines, for both the client's site as well as their competitors. This report is based on our in-depth eye-tracking research.

#### Two real-life rankings your company has achieved in organic listings:

1. **Martindale-Hubbell**, [www.lawyers.com](http://www.lawyers.com); keyword: lawyers; search engine rank is in: Google; current position: #1.
2. **Kaboose**, [www.kaboose.com](http://www.kaboose.com); keyword: online kids games; search engine rank is in: Google; current position: #2.

**TOP-OF-THE-LINE PRICED SERVICES: FIRM RANKING CHART**

COMPANY	Year company launched	6/2006 Full-time specialists or SEO services	June 2006 SEO clients	June 2005 SEO clients	Staff-to-client ratio	Year over year client increase/decrease	Typical campaign launch time	Time to get significantly higher rankings	Business hours to answer clients' emailed questions
Advantage Consulting Services Inc.	2003	6	5	10	1:4	60%	1-3 days	1-3 months	1 hour
ATTACH	1996	30	288	1:12	18%	2-4 weeks	1 to 3 months	1 to 3 months	3 hours
Beyond Ink	1999	6	20	1:3	0%	60-75 days	6-12 months average 12-18 for competitive markets	24 hours	24 hours
CompuCallWeb Marketing Ltd.	1999	40		1:1	60%	Immediately	Varies	Within 24 hours	Within 24 hours
Converseon	2001	7		1:1	30%	45 days to months	90-120 days, varies	24 hours	24 hours
Cyberfields.com	1997	6		2	-180%	14-21 days	30-45 days	2-3 hours	2-3 hours
DigitalGrit Inc.	2000	10			40%	4 weeks	6-10 weeks	2-4 hours	2-4 hours
Elixir Systems	2003	5			6%	4 weeks	Varies	8 hours	8 hours
Elliance Inc.	1998	2			36%	2 weeks to 3 mo.	6-8 months	24 hours	24 hours
Enquiro Search Solutions Inc.	1999	11			%	3 weeks to several months	6 months	2 hours	2 hours
EricWard.com	1994	1				1 week - 1 month	Several months	2 hours	2 hours
eVision	1998	2				Varies	2-12 weeks	24 hours	24 hours
Fortune Interactive	2005	14				3 months	3-6 months	2 hours	2 hours
GetToTheTop	1998	3				6 weeks	2-12 weeks	Within 8 hours	Within 8 hours
Global Strategies International	2000	25	30			days	30 days	4 hours	4 hours
Hyperformance Media	1996	3	9			days	6 weeks	20 hours	20 hours
iCrossing Inc.	1998	50	120			days	4-6 weeks	Same day	Same day
iHispanic Marketing Group	2002	5	14	4		24 hours to months	24 hours to months	24 hours	24 hours
IMPAOT	1999	33	24	21		1-2 months	1-2 months	1-2 hours	1-2 hours
Intrapromote LLC	1999	20	75	68		Minimum 4 weeks	Minimum 4 weeks	1-8 hours	1-8 hours
iProspect	1996	60	80	75	1:1	30-60 days	30-60 days	0-2 hours	0-2 hours
Key Position Web Marketing LLC	2001	3	30	20	1:10	2-3 months	2-3 months	Within 2 hours	Within 2 hours

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# Alphabetical Index of 852 Client Names:

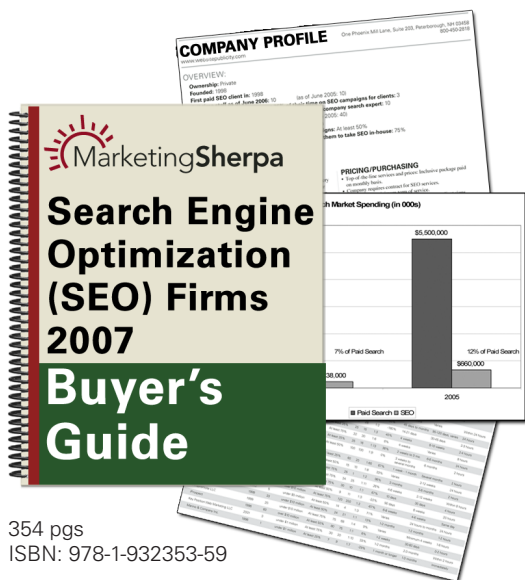
**Please note:** Because of anonymity clauses in many client contracts, this Index is not comprehensive. Some clients do not allow SEO firms to reveal their names. This is particularly true of very large and/or famous companies. We did the best we could to get these names for you and to give you a taste of the clients SEO firms have. We hope it's helpful. These client names were provided at the time the vendors filled out the questionnaire. Many clients switch vendors during the year, so some names may be different now. However, this list is still invaluable to gain references from current and past clients.

CLIENT NAME	CLIENT URL	FIRM NAME
101Apartments.com .....	www.101apartments.com .....	SitePosition Search Marketing Inc.
1031 Allstates Facilitator.....	www.allstates1031.com .....	Pixelgroove Interactive
120 Eglinton Business Centre .....	www.120eglinton.com .....	SitePosition Search Marketing Inc.
123Signup AMS Inc. ....	www.123signup.com .....	6S Marketing Inc.
1-800-Got-Junk?.....	www.1800GotJunk.com.....	Oneupweb
1st National Bank of Arizona.....	www.fnbaonline.com .....	Sitewire
21st Century Insurance Group.....	www.21st.com.....	IMPAQT
48hourprint.com .....	www.48hourprint.com .....	
4LessDepot.com .....	www.4lessdepot.com .....	
<b>A</b>		
A All Animal Control.....	www.Aallanin.....	
A&G Centerless.....	www.....	
A.Farber & Partners Inc. ....		
A.G. Edwards & Sons .....		.....
Abbott Laboratories, Pediasure.....		.....AQT
Abbott Laboratories, Similac.....		.....IMPAQT
Access Office Inc.....		.....Target Logics
Acteva.....		.....SearchMar Inc.
Acucorp Inc. ....		.....SearchMar Inc.
Acura .....		.....Intrapromote LLC
.....	.....adulinsulflex.com .....	.....SitePosition Search Marketing Inc.
.....	.....www.adlersjewelry.com.....	.....TopRank Online Marketing
.....	.....www.advancedlaserclinicsil.com.....	.....Hyperformance Media
.....	.....www.asginvestigations.com .....	.....Stuntdubl.com
A.....	.....www.aerotrailers.com .....	.....eWareness
Aer .....	.....www.aerotech.com .....	.....Intrapromote LLC
Affy i .....	.....www.mrsprindables.com .....	.....SEO Logic
Agri M. .... Ltd.....	.....www.Agrimark.com .....	.....Target Logics
Alberto-Culver Motions.....	.....www.motionshair.com .....	.....Performics
Aleri Inc.....	.....www.alerilabs.com/.....	.....digital-telepathy Inc.
Alfa Romeo .....	.....www.alfaromeo.it.....	.....Ad Maiora
All Covered Inc. ....	.....www.aLLCovered.com .....	.....SearchMar Inc.
Allegis Group Inc. ....	.....www.thingamajob.com .....	.....iProspect
Allegro Development.....	.....www.allegrodev.com.....	.....Pageviews Inc.
Alliant International University.....	.....www.alliantmexico.edu/.....	.....iHispanic Marketing Group
Allied Steel.....	.....www.alliedbuildings.com .....	.....Performics
Allied Tube & Conduit.....	.....www.alliedtube.com.....	.....SEO Logic
Allison & Taylor Inc.....	.....www.allisonataylor.com .....	.....Pageviews Inc.
Aloe Vera Products.....	.....www.aloeveraproducts.com/.....	.....RosArt Multimedia Inc.
Altiris.....	.....www.altiris.com .....	.....UpWord Search Marketing
America Hears LLC.....	.....www.americahears.com .....	.....Medium Blue
America's Insurance Advisors Inc. ....	.....www.AIAVB.com.....	.....Cyberfieds.com
American Bridal Accessories .....	.....www.americanbridal.com.....	.....SEO Research Labs

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or XML feed).....	Blog Business World
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Tactic #7. Training.....	BusinessOnLine
Tactic #8. Reporting.....	ClearTraffic
Tactic #9. Conversion expertise.....	CompuCall Web Marketing Ltd.
Tactic #10. Account executives.....	Converseon
Tactic #11. RSS Feeds .....	Customer Magnetism
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	Elliance Inc.
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Why not let a general ad agency or Web design firm do your search	Epiar Inc.
engine optimization?.....	EricWard.com
Factors to consider when shopping for an SEO specialist .....	eTrafficBuilder Co.
Pros and cons of hiring consultants and small firms .....	eTrafficJams.com
Pros and cons of hiring a midsize firm.....	Evantage Consulting
Pros and cons of hiring large firms .....	eVisibility.com
Firm specialty .....	eVision
Conversion-strategy experience .....	eWareness
Firm location .....	Fathom SEO
Firm stability and scalability.....	Fortune Interactive
Testing a vendor – what you can and can't do .....	GetToTheTop
The Dos and Don'ts of Checking References .....	Global Strategies International
Six Mistakes to Avoid .....	Grantastic Designs Inc.
The Final Step: Negotiating a contract.....	HotelTravelCheck.com LLC
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	Intrapromote LLC
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Location Index .....	Key Position Web Marketing LLC
	KeyRelevance
	Lazworld.com Inc.
	Marino & Company Inc.
	MarketSmart Interactive
	Market-Vantage LLC
	Medium Blue
	Mr. Web Guru
	NeboWeb
	Netpaths
	NetSetGo Marketing Ltd
	Neutralize ( *\ * )
	Noon-an-Night Marketing
	Oneupweb
	Optiem
	PageTraffic
	Pageviews Inc.
	Performics
	Pixelgroove Interactive
	Pole Position Marketing
	Position Strategy Inc.
	Prime Visibility
	Rank Smart Search Marketing
	Rock Coast Media
	RosArt Multimedia Inc.
	SageRock.com
	SearchMar Inc.
	Search Mojo
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	SEO Research Labs
	SEO Inc.
	SEO-PR
	SitePosition Search Marketing Inc.
	Sitewire
	SmartSerach Marketing
	SpiderSplat Consulting Inc.
	StepForth Search Engine Place-
	ment Inc.
	Strategic Ranking, LLC
	Stuntdubl.com
	Submit Express
	Target Logics
	Telic Media
	The Karcher Group Inc.
	Titan SEO
	TopRank Online Marketing
	Trafficdeveloper
	Transcendigital LTD
	UnREAL Marketing Solutions Inc.
	UpWord Search Marketing
	VKI Studios
	We Build Pages
	Web Ad.vantage Inc.
	Zephoria Inc.
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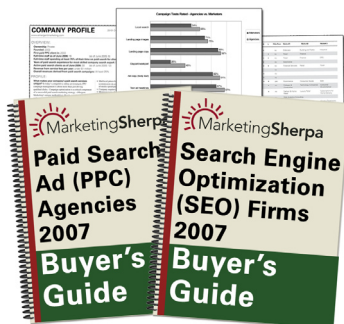
354 pgs  
ISBN: 978-1-932353-59

Which is the best search engine optimization (SEO) firm for your site? And how much should you pay?

- 852 real-life marketers name which SEO firm they use
- 18 pages of Easy Scan Charts
- In-depth profiles of 106 SEO firms
- Practical 84-page Shopping Overview guides you through the decision-making and RFP process.

**YES!** Email me my instant download copy of the Buyer's Guide to SEO Firms 2007 immediately, and then Priority Mail me a printed and bound 354-page copy as well. I'll pay \$199 plus \$9.00 shipping and handling (\$25 if outside the US).

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237,000 marketers read our exclusive Case Study newsletters every week, and thousands attend our annual Summits on email, subscription sales, and b-to-b marketing.

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Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Prov \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_ Zip/Postal \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (in case of questions) \_\_\_\_\_

Charge my:  MasterCard  Visa  AMEX

Card# \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

OR  Bill Me\*  Check Enclosed to MarketingSherpa Inc. CODE: ES1005

\* Billing: I understand I will not receive the Guides until payment is received

Fax form to: (401) 247-1255