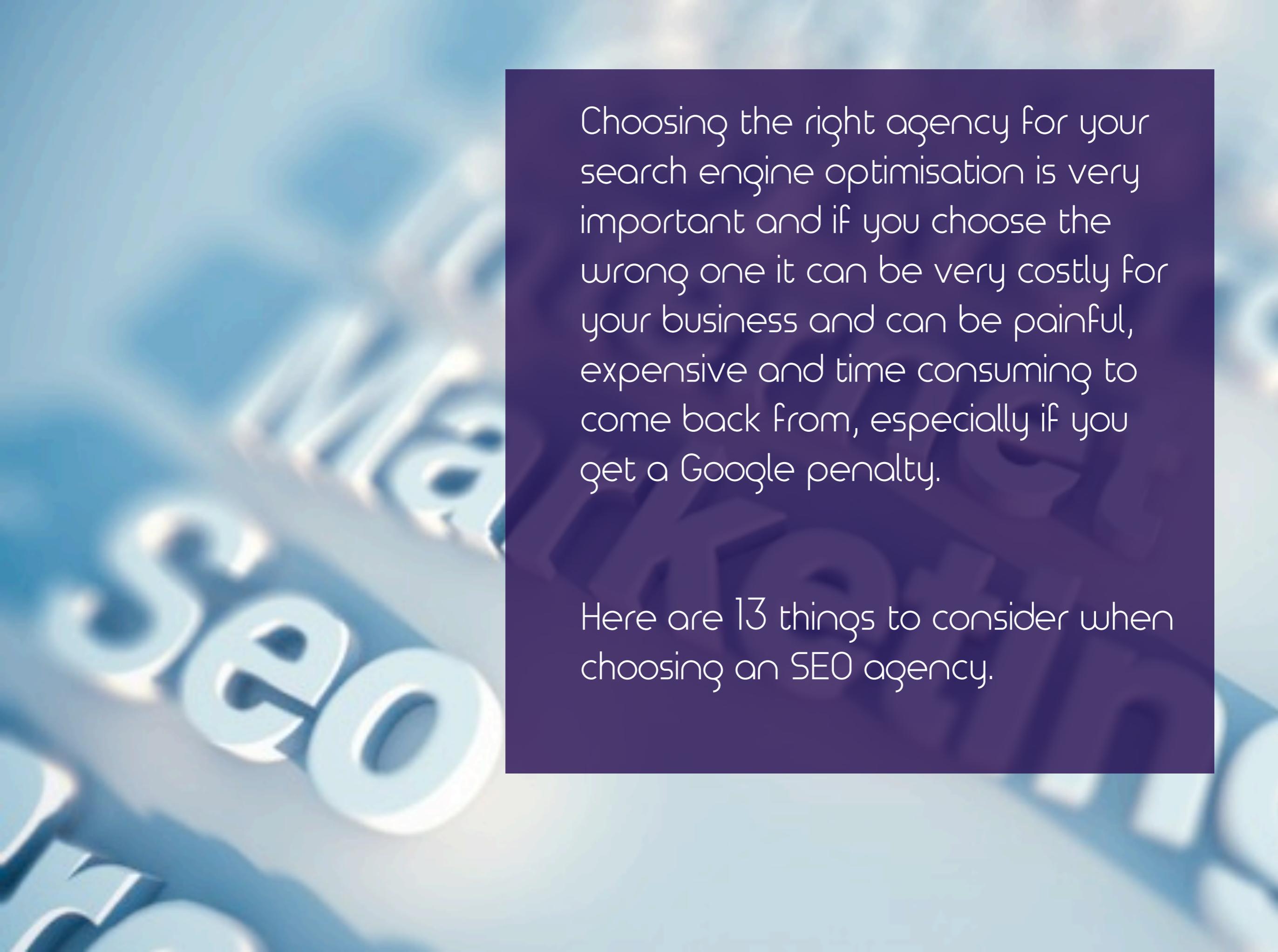


# Sleeping **GIANT** media

BIG on Search

Your Guide to Choosing a Search Marketing Agency  
How do I find the right SEO agency for my business that I can trust? 13 answers



The background features the letters 'SEO' in a large, 3D, light blue font. A dark purple rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text. The overall background is a light blue gradient with a subtle pattern of geometric shapes.

Choosing the right agency for your search engine optimisation is very important and if you choose the wrong one it can be very costly for your business and can be painful, expensive and time consuming to come back from, especially if you get a Google penalty.

Here are 13 things to consider when choosing an SEO agency.

## 1. Have they asked about your business?

Are they interested in you, your business and your market or just getting you to the top of Google? Do they seem interested in how your business works, working out the best way to help you and how they are going to work with you in the long term?

They should be telling you what they will do to help, asking you about your goals and business aims, coming up with ideas and they should be looking to start any activity by researching your business and it's place in the market.

If you don't know what your targets and goals are going to be because you don't know what is possible or measurable when doing SEO, they should be able to advise and discuss realistic targets that will benefit the business and give you an idea of the outcomes.



## 2. Being a good fit

Before choosing an agency to work with, you should decide whether they are a good fit for your business. You will have to trust your new agency and potentially work with them for a long time. Make sure you're going to get on and work harmoniously. This is down to personalities and the way the business is run.

### 3. Do they talk your language?

If they come in and completely befuddle you with technical knowledge and big words without really explaining themselves in terms you can understand, how are you ever going to know what they are doing for you? Will you ever understand what's going on and how your money is working for you?

SEO isn't rocket science, it is something that has to be studied and kept up with, but it isn't a magical mix of things not known to the average human. Agencies that are secretive or confuse you with techno babble should be kept at a distance. You should know everything they are doing for you and they should explain anything you are unfamiliar with. There should be complete transparency as this leads to a better understanding of how they are helping you and means they can give you detailed reports on what they have done, how they did it, what worked, what didn't work and what they are going to do moving forward.

## 4. Access and permissions

You will need the agency to have access to your AdWords accounts and analytics for any work they are doing. This is something there is no way around if they're to do a good job.

What you should make sure though, is that the accounts are yours. If you are having any account set up by the agency they should be doing it in your details and you should have ownership of these accounts. You should be able to exclude them at any time. You don't want a scenario where the agency have the ownership of your analytics and when you leave them you lose all of that data.

## 5 . Results driven

Are they results driven and able to explain to you in measurable terms the impact of their work? You need to know what the potential ROI is and they should set agreed goals with you, whether this is a transaction, someone filling in a contact form, visiting a certain page, going to YouTube to see your latest video or simply getting more relevant visits to your home page. The goals agreed should be business focused and you need to totally agree with and understand them. There should be a plan in place to review these goals regularly as the businesses work together.

## 6. Lengthy contracts

There is a need in business to place a notice period in contracts but these shouldn't be overly long and there shouldn't be a need to be tied in for a year or longer. The notice period should be in place to give the agency time to do a complete and professional handover of the account so that the client can continue the work themselves or hand it to another agency with minimal impact. It should be explained to you that SEO can take a while to take effect and the plan for this explained. There shouldn't be the need to place you on a year or more contract that ties you in. A short contract keeps pressure on the agency to continuously perform and to explain themselves every step of the way.



## 7. Promising position one

If anyone promises you position one on Google for your whole website or just particular keywords, stop talking to them. No one can promise this. There is so much that can affect this that no promises can be made. You should be looking for reasonable targets and timeframes to let you know what should be achievable.

## 8. Are they real people you can talk to?

Make sure there are real people that will look after your account and not just the sales person. You should have a team or individual (depending on the work involved) that will be your sole and long term contact. You need to know that you are being looked after consistently by the same individuals and that there is someone on the end of an email or the phone who will be there to answer your questions and talk to you, as often as agreed, with a full report that they will explain to you in detail.

## 9. Is SEO a bolt on to their central business?

Check that they know what they are talking about. Make sure they aren't a website design agency or some other business that have just bolted on SEO because some clients have asked for it. Don't get me wrong, not all people that do a lot of different services are bad, just make sure that you clarify their knowledge of the area you're employing them for. SEO is a massive field and is constantly changing. If someone is trying to be all things to all men (or women) then they won't be keeping up to date with the latest practices and will be focusing on the services that they are more proficient in.

## 10. Previous work and experience

As with anything, have a look to see if they have a proven track record. They should be able to show you what they have done for other people. Hopefully this will be on their website and easy to find. Look at what they have done for the companies and their results. If you can't see one that matches what you need ask them to provide one. They should have plenty of examples to show you. Also check when they worked with these clients, whether they still work with them and when the testimonials were written. You want to know that they are currently doing good work, not that they were doing good work three years ago.



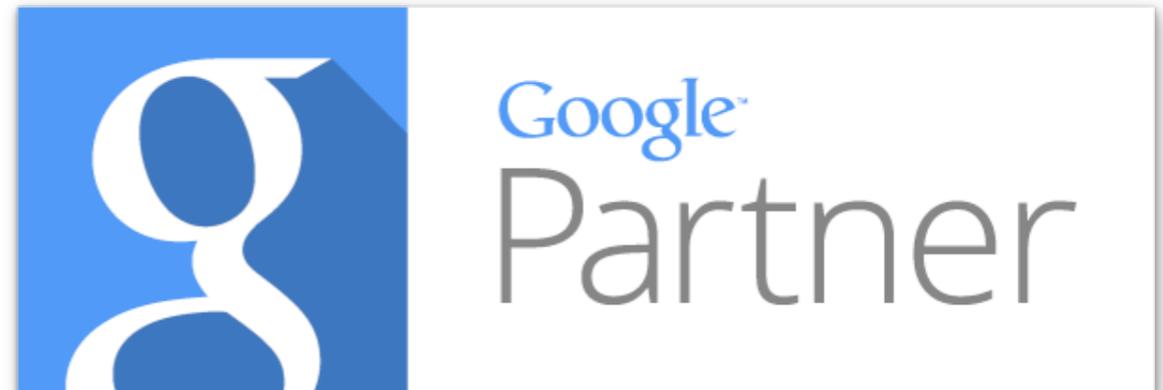
## 11. Social media and content

Have a look to see that they do social media and content writing. These are very important parts of SEO and if you can get this in one place then it should make the whole process so much easier. It doesn't mean that they have to do everything for you, but if they can advise, help with planning, implementation and subjects it will make the whole process much easier. If they aren't talking about social at all then they aren't up to date with SEO.

## 12. Google Partner

(This is more for AdWords (pay per click) but is often a service run alongside SEO.)

Check for the Google Partner badge. This shows that an agency is trusted by Google. You can't have this badge without running successful accounts, members of the team being qualified through Google exams and running things above board. The badge should link through to an official Google Partners page. If it doesn't link through, then double check they are allowed to use it. As I say, this isn't for SEO but does show they at least run their PPC service professionally and has some trust value.





### 13. Saying they work with Google

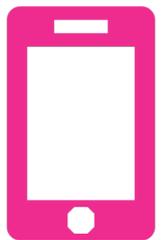
This is different to Google Partners on the previous page. You can be a trusted Google partner, but no-one works directly with Google or can get any help with cheap clicks or website rankings from Google. Google will not support promises of such things.

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This isn't an exhaustive list and there are other things to look out for when searching for any supplier and if you have any other points you feel are important or have any questions on this please feel free to contact me or leave a comment on our website.



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