



SEO SERVICES

COMPARISON & SELECTION GUIDE

By Roger Bauer
<http://SMBConsultingInc.com>

SEO PRICING COMPARISON GUIDE

SEO Pricing Plan Comparison

By Roger Bauer

I'm frequently asked by prospects, clients, and partners about SEO pricing and how competitively priced our firm (SMB Consulting) is in comparison to others out there. Since it is such a frequently asked question, it seemed logical to create a report focused on the SEO pricing of several reputable firms. What follows is an overview of the pricing structures and monthly fees charged by some of the better firms in the industry.

Please note, it is beyond the scope of this document to obtain and share the pricing for every single search optimization firm out there so this is a small snapshot designed to help you get a feel for the typical value of a search optimization campaign.

For starters, Rand Fishkin of SEOmoz.org published the following blog post which discussed common pricing models for firms offering SEO services so let's dive in here.

The 7 Most Popular SEO Pricing Models

- **Hourly Consulting**
The simplest way to price a project is to charge by the hour. Rates in SEO vary with the lowest, entry level folks around \$40-50, mid-tier consultants around \$100-\$200 and high-demand firms & people from \$300-500. SEOmoz is obviously actively trying to limit our clients by going way outside the norm and charging \$1000 / hour.
- **Project-Based Consulting**
Many SEOs will use the business model common to web development agencies and charge a flat fee (often in several chunks over the course of a project). The total price is based on an estimate of time, effort and personnel involved in the project. At SEOmoz we often charge in this fashion for a site review + keyword research + consulting time or for an on-site SEO training series.
- **Contract Services**
Plenty of SEOs offer dozens of individual services, such as Debra Mastaler's [directory submission service](#), Eric Ward's [link building & publicity campaigns](#) or Jessie Strichiola's [SEO assessment services](#). These offerings present a single price for a set amount of work, though I have little doubt that many of them are customized and have modified pricing based on the factors discussed in the next section.
- **Standard Profit Sharing**
Some limited number of SEO providers offer profit sharing based compensation. These frequently include a relatively small down payment to begin work and then a percentage of revenues (usually before non-essential expenses) from sales through the website. This can be a good option for SEOs who have great confidence in their abilities

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and are ready to assume a significant share of risk. We at SEOmoz have tried this in the past with mixed results - one big problem is that you'll need to ensure that the business operations, outside of the website, are running on all cylinders, which really doesn't fit well with the job of SEO.

- **Modified Profit Sharing**

As above, but modified profit sharing typically includes a clause that gives the SEO firm a cut prior to any expenses and may even set minimums of payment. Other modifications could make the deal similar to a Pay-Per-Action (PPA) or Pay-Per-Lead, the latter of which can be a better way to limit risk. Both SEOs and those seeking their services should be wary of any kind of profit-sharing deal. It's akin to a real business partnership in many ways and shouldn't be treated with any less weight.

- **Monthly Retainer**

A few good SEO firms I know use a basic monthly retainer with a standard workload package (or several options). My [friends](#) up in Quebec modify this system so that during development, marketing & ongoing maintenance, different prices are charged as part of the retainer. This can be a very good model for companies seeking to retain clients over a long period of time, but it can also be abused by those who claim (hopefully falsely) that the site will "lose its rankings" if the customer cancels.

- **Pay for Rankings**

This is one of the more interesting strategies that SEOs employ. The idea being that you pay one price for reaching, say, page 2 of a particular result, another price for position 10, 9, 8 and so on, usually with particular bonuses for #1-3 rankings. It really only makes sense for companies seeking to rank for a particular set of terms/phrases that they know converts quite highly. I suspect that searches like [DUI Attorney Orange County](#) might fit well into this system.

- **Pay for Traffic**

As with pay-per-ranking, a traffic payment system treats SEO very much like PPC. I like this model in some respects, because it does measure the SEO's work, but it can get messy as the quality of traffic isn't measured here (of course, this usually only counts search engine traffic, but still...).

With those covered, let's dive into the prices themselves. If you're in the market for SEO services, there's a lot of factors that can affect what you should expect to pay, not to mention the great number of formats an SEO contract might take (as noted above). The following can all affect the price you might pay for organic optimization consulting or hands-on services:

- Size & Complexity of Website
- Size of Brand/Organization
- Difficulty of Project / Competitiveness of Rankings
- Personality Issues (if you're a very controlling personality, expect a generally higher price)

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- Reputation, Notability & Demand for the SEO Firm

The prices themselves are all across the board, but here's my take on the general ranges:

Service	Low End	Mid Range	High End
Site Review + Consulting	\$500	\$2,500	\$10,000
Hands-On Editing of Pages/Code	\$2,000	\$10,000	\$50,000
Manual Link Building Campaign	\$500	\$5,000	\$20,000
1-Day SEO Training Seminar	\$750	\$4,000	\$12,000
Keyword Research Package	\$100	\$500	\$2,000
Viral Content Development + Mktg	\$1,000	\$7,500	\$20,000
Web Design, Development + Mktg	\$5,000	\$25,000	\$100K+
Monthly Retainer for Ongoing SEO	\$2,500	\$7,500	\$20,000+

You might see the incredibly wide discrepancy of prices above and think (if you're a potential client) the prices on the high end are evil, greedy SEOs gouging customers foolish enough to fall for their machinations. Likewise, if you're an SEO, you might look and think that some of the folks on the low end or mid range are insane to offer such valuable, time-consuming services for so little.

And thus, balance is achieved.

You can read the entire post here:

<http://www.seomoz.org/blog/seo-pricing-costs-what-should-you-charge-how-much-should-you-pay>

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Individual SEO Firms & Pricing Models

1st Query

Seattle firm charges \$500 to \$5,000 per month.

<http://www.1stquery.com/>

Matt Aaron

\$500 to \$2,000 per month for organic SEO services. Based in Houston, TX.

<http://www.googlematt.com/>

ACS SEO

California based firm that has some very large corporate clients. Charges between \$10,000 to \$150,000+ per month.

<http://www.acsseo.com/>

Beanstalk Search Engine Positioning

British Columbia based firm that charges between \$500 to \$25,000 per month.

<http://www.beanstalk-inc.com/>

Blue Moon Works

Denver firm charges between \$5,000 and \$100,000 per month.

<http://www.bluemoonworks.com/>

Clientside Search Engine Marketing

Oakland, California based SEM firm charging between \$10,000 and \$150,000+ per month.

<http://www.clientsidesem.com/>

ComuniLab

Italian firm charges \$500 to \$50,000 per month.

<http://www.comunilab.it/>

David Mihm

Portland, Oregon SEO guru charges anywhere from \$5,000 to \$25,000 per month for his expertise.

<http://www.davidmihm.com/>

DottedOnline

Chicago firm charges between \$1,000 and \$150,000+ per month for its expertise.

<http://www.dottedonline.com/>

Eastline Marketing

Lebanon based firm that charges \$25,000 to \$50,000 per month.

<http://www.eastlinemarketing.com/>

Eckweb Designs

Charges \$51/website page (not sure what that includes or means but that's the price they publish at:

<http://www.eckweb.com/prices/index.html>)

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Freezing Hot

Ohio based firm charging between \$500 and \$5,000 per month for SEO.

<http://www.freezinghot.com/>

Future Now

Brooklyn based firm has monthly fees in the \$2,000 to \$25,000 range.

<http://www.futurenowinc.com/>

High Rankings

Massachusetts based firm is widely recognized as one of the industry leaders including hosting one of the better SEO forums around. Charges between \$2,000 and \$10,000 per month.

<http://www.highrankings.com/>

Sara Holoubek

New York based SEO asks \$10,000 to \$50,000 per month for her services.

<http://www.saraholoubek.com/>

Hybrid6 Solutions

Los Angeles firm charges between \$500 to \$25,000 per month.

<http://www.hybrid6.com/>

Local SEO Guide

Los Angeles firm charges between \$500 to \$10,000 per month.

<http://www.localseoguide.com/>

Magnet Search Marketing

Canadian company which bills clients \$5,000 to \$150,000+ per month.

<http://www.magnetsearchmarketing.com/>

Marketing Pilgrim

North Carolina based firm charges between \$500 to \$100,000 per month for SEO.

<http://www.marketingpilgrim.com/>

Net Concepts

Madison, Wisconsin firm asks \$10,000 to \$150,000+ for its knowledge and skill-set.

<http://www.netconcepts.com/>

New Media Northwest

Seattle firm asks \$2,000 to \$10,000 per month for its services.

<http://www.newmedianorthwest/>

On React

German firm focused on their local market. Fees range from \$500 to \$10,000 per month.

<http://onreact.com/>

One to Market

Overseas company charges between \$5,000 to \$150,000+ per month.

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<http://www.onetomarket.com/>

Portent Interactive

Washington based firm that charges \$10,000 to \$150,000 per month for its services.

<http://www.portentinteractive.com/>

Rank Smart

Austin, Texas firm charges between \$5,000 and \$100,000 per month.

<http://www.ranksmart.com/>

Rapid Blue

United Kingdom firm charges between \$500 and \$150,000+ per month for SEO. Targets small businesses.

<http://www.rapidblue.co.uk/>

Real Estate Marketing

Los Angeles firm specializes in the real estate marketing niches and charges anywhere from \$500 to \$50,000 per month for its services.

<http://www.realestatemarketingblog.org/>

Refresh Web

Tighter range of pricing for a set of targeted campaigns as demonstrated below.

Site performance audit, thorough competitive analysis, keyword effectiveness research, and a comprehensive search engine marketing plan	\$4500
New site consulting package: competitive analysis, keyword research, SEO strategy and detailed site optimization plan	\$4500
Top-level page optimization, internal link development, paid inclusion, external link development, monthly monitoring and ranking reports	\$2000/month (annual contract)
Pay per click campaign development and bid management	\$2500 setup, then 20% of spend/month
Secondary optimization, blog set up, podcasting, video testimonials, web PR, white papers, case studies	estimates provided in the SEM plan

<http://refreshweb.com>

Reinvent Business

It has been awhile since I have chatted with James (owner and operator of Reinvent Business), but the last pricing quote I received was for \$2,500/month for a minimum of six months.

Learn more at <http://reinventbusiness.com>

Rusty Brick

New York based firm charges between \$10,000 to \$100,000 per month for SEO.

<http://www.rustybrick.com/>

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Shimon Sandler

Charges a monthly retainer of \$2,000 for 10 hours of consulting.

<http://www.shimonsandler.com/?p=200>

Search Engine Genie

Firm located in California that charges clients \$500 to \$5,000 per month.

<http://www.searchenginegenie.com/>

Search Rank

Phoenix based SEO firm charging between \$1,000 to \$150,000+ per month.

<http://www.searchrank.com/>

SEO Genies

Indian firm that charges anywhere from \$299 to \$2,199 per month depending upon complexity of the project.

<http://www.seogenies.com/SEO-Packages.php>

SEO Inc.

Highly reputable firm that does not publish pricing publicly. You must request a quote from them to receive any pricing information.

<http://seoinc.com>

SEOMoz.org

Seattle based firm has large following in the SEO community. Charges \$5,000 to \$100,000 per month for SEO. Very reputable organization that is one of the pioneers of the industry and has one of the best SEO blogs and communities around.

<http://seomoz.org>

SEOptimism

Charges anywhere from \$1,995 to \$7500 for a range of SEO services. Learn more by visiting:

<http://seoptimism.com/SEO.htm>

SEOptimize

UK firm charges between \$1,000 to \$25,000 per month.

<http://www.seoptimise.com/>

SEO Visions

Charges anywhere from \$5,000 to \$150,000+ per month

<http://www.seovisions.com>

Slingshot SEO

Indianapolis based SEO firm charges clients \$1,000 to \$150,000+ per month.

<http://www.slingshotseo.com/>

SMB Consulting

Kentucky based firm that has served smaller businesses for SEO. Charges between \$500 and \$4,000 per month for organic SEO services. (Editor's NOTE: I am affiliated with this firm as a principal.)

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<http://smbconsultinginc.com>

Stone Temple Consulting

Southborough, MA firm charges between \$5,000 and \$150,000+ per month for its services.

<http://www.stonetemple.com/>

Sugarrae

New Jersey based firm that charges between \$2,000 and \$50,000 per month. Rae Hoffman is one of the more “colorful” personalities in the SEO industry.

<http://www.sugarrae.com/>

Top SEO Partners

Indian firm that charges anywhere between \$500 and \$5,000 per month.

<http://www.topseopartners.com/>

Tribal Internet Marketing

Netherlands based firm charges between \$1,000 to \$50,000 per month.

<http://www.tribal-im.com/>

Virante

Durham, North Carolina firm charges between \$5,000 and \$150,000+ per month.

<http://www.virante.com/>

Eric Ward

\$5,000 to \$10,000 per month gains you access to this SEO expert.

<http://www.ericward.com/>

We Build Pages

New York based firm that offers wide range of internet marketing services. Reportedly charges between \$5,000 and \$25,000 per month for SEO services.

<http://www.webuildpages.com/>

Web Optima

Firm based in Spain that charges between \$500 and \$5,000 per month for its services.

<http://www.weboptima.es/>

WebPageFX

Charges a setup fee that ranges anywhere from \$1,500 to \$5,000 then a monthly link building and monitoring fee ranging from \$250 to \$650.

<http://www.webpagefx.com/Search-Engine-Optimization-Pricing.html>

While there are far too many firms to list all of them in this particular document, it is my hope that this pricing comparison rundown is helpful to you in seeking a reputable search engine optimization firm for your business. As evidenced by the rundown, SEO is not an inexpensive endeavor, but the value of a top search ranking can be quite substantial so the pricing ranges you see from the more reputable firms reflect that.

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Cumulative Comparison Chart

SEO Pricing Comparison

Firm	Location	Monthly Fee		
		Low	Mid	High
1st Query	Seattle, WA	\$ 500	\$ 2,750	\$ 5,000
Matt Aaron	Houston, TX	\$ 500	\$ 1,250	\$ 2,000
ACS SEO	California	\$ 10,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 150,000
Beanstalk Search Engine Positioning	British Columbia	\$ 500	\$ 12,750	\$ 25,000
Blue Moon Works	Denver, CO	\$ 5,000	\$ 52,500	\$ 100,000
Clientside Search Engine Marketing	Oakland, CA	\$ 10,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 150,000
ComuniLab	Italy	\$ 500	\$ 25,250	\$ 50,000
David Mihm	Portland, OR	\$ 5,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 25,000
Dotted Online	Chicago, IL	\$ 1,000	\$ 75,500	\$ 150,000
Eastline Marketing	Lebanon	\$ 25,000	\$ 37,500	\$ 50,000
Freezing Hot	Ohio	\$ 500	\$ 2,750	\$ 5,000
Future Now	Brooklyn, NY	\$ 2,000	\$ 13,500	\$ 25,000
High Rankings	Massachusetts	\$ 2,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 10,000
Sara Holoubek	New York	\$ 10,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 50,000
Hybrid6 Solutions	Los Angeles, CA	\$ 500	\$ 12,750	\$ 25,000
Local SEO Guide	Los Angeles, CA	\$ 500	\$ 5,250	\$ 10,000
Magnet Search Marketing	Canada	\$ 5,000	\$ 77,500	\$ 150,000
Marketing Pilgrim	Raleigh, NC	\$ 500	\$ 50,250	\$ 100,000
Net Concepts	Madison, WI	\$ 10,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 150,000
New Media Northwest	Seattle, WA	\$ 2,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 10,000
On React	Germany	\$ 500	\$ 5,250	\$ 10,000
One to Market	Overseas	\$ 5,000	\$ 77,500	\$ 150,000
Portent Interactive	Washington	\$ 10,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 150,000
Rank Smart	Austin, TX	\$ 5,000	\$ 52,500	\$ 100,000
Rapid Blue	UK	\$ 500	\$ 75,250	\$ 150,000
Real Estate Marketing	Los Angeles, CA	\$ 500	\$ 25,250	\$ 50,000
Refresh Web	Austin, TX	\$ 2,000	\$ 3,250	\$ 4,500
Reinvent Business	California	\$ 2,500	\$ 6,250	\$ 10,000
Rusty Brick	New York	\$ 10,000	\$ 55,000	\$ 100,000
Shimon Sandler	New York	\$ 2,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 10,000
Search Engine Genie	California	\$ 500	\$ 2,750	\$ 5,000
Search Rank	Phoenix, AZ	\$ 1,000	\$ 75,500	\$ 150,000
SEO Genies	India	\$ 299	\$ 1,249	\$ 2,199
SEO Inc.	Carlsbad, CA	\$ 2,500	\$ 6,250	\$ 10,000
SEOMoz.org	Seattle, WA	\$ 5,000	\$ 52,500	\$ 100,000
SEOptimism	San Francisco, CA	\$ 2,995	\$ 5,248	\$ 7,500
SEOptimize	UK	\$ 1,000	\$ 13,000	\$ 25,000
SEO Visions		\$ 5,000	\$ 77,500	\$ 150,000
Slingshot SEO	Indianapolis, IN	\$ 1,000	\$ 75,500	\$ 150,000
SMB Consulting, Inc.	Louisville, KY	\$ 500	\$ 2,500	\$ 4,500
Stone Temple Consulting	Southborough, MA	\$ 5,000	\$ 77,500	\$ 150,000
Sugarrae	New Jersey	\$ 2,000	\$ 26,000	\$ 50,000
Top SEO Partners	India	\$ 500	\$ 2,750	\$ 5,000
Tribal Internet Marketing	Netherlands	\$ 1,000	\$ 25,500	\$ 50,000
Virante	Durham, NC	\$ 5,000	\$ 77,500	\$ 150,000
Eric Ward		\$ 5,000	\$ 7,500	\$ 10,000
We Build Pages	New York	\$ 5,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 25,000
Web Optima	Spain	\$ 500	\$ 2,750	\$ 5,000
WebPageFX		\$ 1,500	\$ 3,250	\$ 5,000
Average		\$ 3,557	\$ 32,704	\$ 61,851

Source: SEOMoz.org; SMB Consulting Research & Analysis

Top 7 Keys to Selecting an SEO Partner

1. **Peruse their results**—a legitimate search engine optimization partner should have demonstrated at least three sites within the top 10 rankings on one or more of the major search engines for a term or group of terms with greater than 400,000 competing pages. The greater the number of competing pages indicates a highly competitive search term. If a firm demonstrates that they have achieved elevated rankings within ultra competitive keyword arenas, your confidence level should be much greater that they know what they are doing and should be able to duplicate similar results for you.
2. **Seek testimonials**—a legitimate SEO firm will have no problem delivering testimonials or contact information for current or past customers. Find out how long it took for the firm to begin to demonstrate results and how informative they have been to the customer throughout the process. Notoriously black hat practitioners will be rather elusive as to their methodologies utilized to achieve success in the search universe.
3. **Find out if they provide access to SEO education as part of their fee structure.** Organic search optimization is not a onetime event. It takes time to climb the search engine results pages, and any firm worth their salt will stay on top of the market. A true partner will have no problem sharing their research and a methodology with you before, during, and after an SEO campaign is complete. Find out whether a potential partner is willing to share their methods with you once you become a customer especially if you desire to bring the tasks in-house down the road.
4. **Read published articles**—a prospective partner’s articles can greatly aid you in your determination if you agree with their approach or not and whether their strategies mesh well with your organization. Remember, you’re selecting a firm to help you achieve marketing success so that firm should be practicing some of the methods they preach.
5. **Listen to interviews of key personnel**—many search firms don’t want to be in the limelight out of fear that they may be discovered as illegitimate. Quality firms generally have someone within their organization participating in media relations of some sort whether that is conducting interviews or being interviewed—seek those that aren’t hiding, and you’ll likely find one that will do a great job for you. Why would someone hide from sharing their knowledge if they are confident and assured that what they are doing is above board?
6. **Do your homework!** You should have a basic understanding of what is involved in an SEO campaign before you decide to outsource the work or seek professional help. This will not only benefit you but the firm you ultimately hire. While most reputable firms willingly share their methodologies, bogging them down with repeated status checks or hounding them daily about your ranking within the search landscape for your chosen keywords isn’t going to help things. Once you decide upon a firm to help propel you to the top of the ranks, let them do their job, and ask questions when you legitimately want to learn something, but don’t expect miracles overnight or within a week.
7. **Be leery of firms that guarantee #1 rankings!** This should probably be the top tip, but we saved the best for last. No firm can guarantee a top ranking within any of the major search engines. Search engines are constantly changing and evolving so it’s similar to hitting a rapidly moving target. That’s not to say that the best firms can’t get you to #1 because they can on a consistent

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basis, but they shouldn't guarantee that due to the complex nature of search. Keep in mind that search engines are dynamic tools that attempt to inventory a massive amount of data, and every site cannot be top ranked.

Did you know that 2 out of 3 search marketers who outsource their SEO encounter obstacles that prevent them from implementing their vendor's SEO recommendations? Furthermore, 1 out of 2 search marketers underestimate the resources required to implement their vendor's SEO recommendations. (iProspect: "Natural SEO Outsourcing Study" 2005)

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About the Author

A Louisville, KY native, Roger Bauer has been involved in business for most of his life having grown up around a family business. It is this upbringing that led to Roger want to become as well versed in business as possible, and his desire to help other small business owners drove him to start this consulting firm in 2005.

He has worked in several industries including: retail, education, healthcare, technology, sales, logistics, and hospitality.

Roger values honest communication, quick results, teamwork, and low pressure tactics. He enjoys watching Jim Cramer's Mad Money, bicycling with the [Louisville Bicycle Club](http://LouisvilleBicycleClub.org) (<http://LouisvilleBicycleClub.org>), and [University of Louisville](http://louisville.rivals.com/) (<http://louisville.rivals.com/>) athletics in his spare time. He is also an automobile enthusiast, general sports fanatic, animal lover, and always interested in improving himself.

Roger is a [Sullivan University](http://Sullivan.edu) (<http://Sullivan.edu>) graduate with a BSBA with Emphasis in Computer Science. He achieved a 3.86/4.00 GPA while completing his undergraduate degree and takes great pride in his academic accomplishments.

Roger is the founder of SMB Consulting, a sales and marketing consulting firm specializing in personalized marketing campaigns, search engine optimization and strategic initiatives. To learn more about the firm, point your browser to <http://smbconsultinginc.com>.

