



Getting certified – A worthless exercise or a sound investment

Getting certified - a dilemma that has infected organizations and individuals alike. SEO certification has always been surrounded by controversies and has raised many eyebrows. There is a sea of websites that promote and offer SEO certifications, some of them belong to SEO agencies while some to independent organizations. The abundance of such agencies and organizations makes the entire situation confusing and ad hoc.

The ambiguity of the situation is further compounded by the fact that there is no official governing body for SEO practitioners, hence these courses cannot be cross checked or verified for its genuineness. Due to the conspicuous absence of a governing body, the industry as a whole lack set standards and regulations and depend heavily of self policing. No bureau of complaints and no bureau of compliance, a congenial environment for frauds and cheats. 'May hay while the sun shines' seems to have inspired the lot.

Unlike conventional education, SEO is mostly self taught. People learning search engine optimization read articles related to the field, visit forums, participate in discussions, attend seminars and conferences. They then apply their learning, observe results, make necessary adjustments and then repeat the cycle. Though there are many certifications and courses on offer from the self proclaimed certifying authorities, none of them are universally recognized.

As in any other industry, certification works as an endorsement of your expertise and credibility. Showcasing your search engine optimization certified logo, gives your potential clients a sense of security. However, the certificates on your wall would be pieces of junk if you do not have success stories, to validate your claim of being an expert. From a client's perspective, it helps them decide upon a company with whom they can entrust their advertising dollar. A word of caution - customers should be wary as these certifications can be misleading. The only safeguard they can expect comes from verifying results achieved by the company in the past. Also, if I were a customer I would probably go to the certifying SEO agency to get my work done, rather than employing the certified agency. Why would someone settle for the second best when one can get the best.

One question that I think has been left unanswered is that who certifies the certifying agency or organization. The answer to the question is plain and simple – no one. I don't hold any grudges against these firms but the question still needs to be answered to establish authenticity. Search engine marketing industry is more than a decade old and having a certifying authority in our midst still sounds like a far fetched dream. It's about time to form some sort of a consortium and iron out difference to establish a global framework of rules and regulation. Getting search engines to endorse it would prove to be a mammoth task but is unavoidable to ensure sound framework.

Until and unless Search engine marketing industry decides on a set of standards which is endorsed by search engines, these certifications will only have cosmetic value.

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