Separating 7 SEO Truths from 7 Common long held Misconceptions

By John Alexander

I am very angry and concerned that people have been telling you lies!

Don't get me wrong, I am not angry at all.
Actually, I am not upset or even mildly annoyed and I doubt that people are telling you any lies.
(At least I hope not.)

For this article, I wanted you to notice the impact the first sentence had on you. It's a typical manipulative tactic that you'll see used in some e-mail communications. When you write natural emotional content it can be used to set a mood or a tone. Things that have a "marketing spin" usually appeal to the emotions, but then there are always some folks trying to exploit that element of human nature to try and control you. After a while you nearly get tired of these kind of tactics in communications. I'll do another article on this someday to help you become more aware of these types of tactics so you can spot them instantly. Some are pretty subtle.

But for today, I wanted to review 7 long held SEO misconceptions and discuss the truths.

In order to separate the SEO truths from traditional misconceptions or errors, you always must first examine the truth.

For example, if an expert is trying to determine a counterfeit $100 dollar bill from a real $100 bill, he only gains insight by examining the real bill first. You could examine many different counterfeit bills for a long time and never gain any ground at all. But once you know and understand the real government issued bill, then you can spot the false things much more quickly.

A Word about Hats: White, Grey or Black

First let me say that most SEOs are not all bad people. They are not all schemers who are just out to get your money. Like anything else, there are people who are good and bad in every area of life. When it comes to practicing SEO skills, there are many people doing many different things, but it all comes down to the intent of the individual person.

People pegged for being "black hats" usually think quite a little bit differently than the SEO professional. The Black hat is more prepared to lose the domain and knows that they are always on the run and they often view the search engines as the enemy. Search engines MUST be "outsmarted" or so they are convinced. Some tend to enter more like a game with throwaway domain names that they'll purchase in quantity knowing that they'll have to do the same types of things over and over again each time they get penalized.

White hat SEO professionals are more focused on creating high quality, useful content that serves a purpose and satisfies the reason why the user searched. They are not on the run, because they have nothing to fear being caught at. They tend to do the job once for long term stable rankings that can last for years.

Black hat technique tends to relate to "tricks" and little "short cuts" to try and fool the search engine.

Okay so this fits in part, with the first misconception or idea that was first pitched years ago. However, this first misconception is a major misconception. Here it is...

Misconception 1. You are at war with the search engines to gain top rankings. Therefore you must learn to do sneaky tricks to outsmart their algorithm. Therefore you must learn ways to beat the search engine to gain top visibility in search results. Have you heard this story before?

While this whole concept (probably dreamt up by a marketer years ago sometime) it cleverly appeals to a human beings somewhat carnal side of being "sneaky" or being able to beat the search engines at their own game by using "secrets" and "tricks." Even though the pitch may appeal to some people, the only trouble is that the concept is 100% FALSE from beginning to end. Some of you may be disappointed to hear this because for years, you thought you were at war with the search engines. Think a little bit more and let's separate marketing pitches from the real truth.

Truth 1: The truth is that you have never been at "war with the search engines." You are not required to "outsmart" or fool" the search engines at all to gain top visibility for your Web pages.

Listen up now. The only one you are truly competing with for visibility is your competitors, NOT the search engines. The whole idea that you must "beat" the search engines or "outsmart" the search engines is a completely false concept.

You never need to compete with any search engine. You never need to trick it or even try to "fool it" in order to get excellent visibility. A search engine does not really care whether you rank number 1 or not. They are fine with it, so long as you are offering relevant content that is useful and satisfies the reason why the user searched. Obviously any search engine does not want junk showing up in the results.

The only competition you have now or you have ever had, or will ever have in the future is with other competitors pages, not the search engines.

Being "sneaky" may appeal to some emotionally in a marketing pitch. It may make you even feel like the service or the course or publication will ultimately "make you smarter" somehow. But people need to learn to distinguish truth from error and you'll be blowing far less money on e-books, tool sets and memberships that appeal to the emotion but are founded on untruths.

Many marketers come across with this anger or emotion in their messages using words that are planted to trigger your emotions.

You can be sneaky...
I am angry because...
I am so embarrassed by what happened...
You are going to learn a secret...
I am going to show you something exciting!
etc...

Don't let your emotions be exploited.

Learn to recognize a marketing mailer that is attempting to exploit your emotions. Recognize these types of messages. Separate them out from communications that offer advice based on truths. I'll do an article on this in the future.

Misconception 2: You must submit your Web site to the Search Engines, therefore you need to buy our services and we will submit your site to 30,000 search engines for only $29.95 per month. The misconception here is that a submission to a search engine is beneficial.

Truth 2: You are far better employing strategies that allow search engine robots to find your pages on their own (without submitting.) Any company that bases their whole concept of traffic or SEO on submitting does not understand how search engines work themselves. If you are using this type of service, save your money. There is no valid reason to be using a submission service for search engines. It is still being offered today widespread because there are always new people coming online to be exploited.

Misconception 3: If a Web site has been banned, the person must be an evil or unethical person.

Truth 3: Search Engine Workshops reject anything related to Spam or short cuts or tricks that are outside of the search engines guidelines, but we do not believe people are "always evil." Many people that get banned or penalized by the search engines, are not even aware of SEO best practices. The only thing they turn out to be guilty of in the end, is of never having had any real structured SEO skills training.

In other words they were listening to some bad advice or perhaps were not even aware that each search engine has guidelines. In some cases it's their Webmaster that may have gotten their site banned. Every situation is different but ultimately it's far better to gain your skills sooner than later. It is not always about good and evil but there most definitely is always a story behind the story and it boil down to user intent.

Misconception 4: SEO is a nightmare to try and learn.

It is extremely important to measure each SEO influence and get each factor exactly right. Therefore you need to research how many characters go in a title tag, keyword density, keyword prominence, keyword placement, how many keywords can go in a Meta tag plus all of the other factors for each individual search engine. This concept is what people seem to talk about because it's what some people are selling, but it is also completely false.

Truth 4: Sure you can spend your days measuring these types of things, but chances are you will be burning out after a while and getting very few success stories. This is because there are for more important things to understand that have an extraordinary impact in the results. SEO influences all affect one another, plus each search engine grades on a curve based on each specific industry.

Any researcher that tells you he is giving you the latest criteria based on these old fashion units of measurement will not make much impact. These days you are looking for the big picture, not individual influences one at a time. We have seen cases where people spend hours working on one page, when they could have dozens of pages performing for them in minimal time with much less stress. Yes I mean all 100% white hat strategies too, because these are all that we teach our students.

Misconception 5: You need to spend hours tweaking your source code each month to keep those top ranking positions. Therefore you cannot possibly manage your own in house search marketing. False again.

Truth 5: There are advantages to having your SEO handled by a professional firm that has been structurally trained. But don't buy it if someone says they must continually "tweak your code" to keep you in top place. It is just not true. Yes, you may want them creating fresh new content. Yes, you'll want continued practices if you're Blogging maybe for example. But if a page is ranking in top spot, leave it alone. If you do look at making changes, make sure you are grabbing a look at the entire search landscape for your industry.

Misconception 6: SEO is Dead. This myth makes a great attention grabbing article headline although in my opinion it has been a little bit over-used and rather gimmicky. If you've read it, it is completely false.

Truth 6: SEO is merely more competitive these days but SEO is far from being dead. SEO is alive and well!

It may feel like it is dead if you are relying on old second hand advice or listening to some marketers who are pushing their next big thing. Most Webmasters have access to all of the same old common tools that everyone else has, so there feels like there is less advantage than a few years ago.

Misconception 7: There is only one correct solution to solve a specific SEO challenge. If it is not my way, it is the wrong way. Needless to say this is also false.

Truth 7: For any specific SEO challenge there are often multiple solutions to choose from. In many cases there are alternative strategies that are all white hat and yet very solid solutions. Don't let anyone tell you that there is only one way. Every Web site is different with different challenges and you need to be equipped with the full range of solutions.

To gain a real significant advantage, the answer rests with building your genuine SEO skills and less reliance on tools.

Since we are talking about misconceptions in this article, let's take it a step further and discuss a few old and new
"confidence schemes" to be aware of as well. Confidence schemes are not exactly misconceptions but you need to be aware of at least a few of the newest ones.

A Con Man or "Confidence man" is (a swindler who exploits the confidence of his victim)
according to this source

A few other names for Confidence men include bunco, scam artist, fleecer, swindler, shark, rainmaker, hustler.

Some confidence schemes operate on the same old methods,
others come up with new methods. Here are some examples
of old con tricks and new ones to be aware of.

From Wikipedia:

The Phishing Scam:
"Phishing is a modern form of scam in which the artist communicates with the mark, pretending to be from an official organization that the mark is doing business with, in order to extract personal information that can then be used, for example, to steal money. In a typical instance of phishing, the artist sends the mark an email pretending to be from a company (such as eBay). This email is formatted exactly like email from that business, and will ask the mark to "verify" some personal information at their website, to which a link is provided. The website itself is also fake but designed to look exactly like the business' website. The site will contain an HTML form asking for personal information such as credit card numbers. The mark will feel compelled to give this information because of words in the email or the site stating that they require the information again, for example to "reactivate your account". When the mark submits the form (not checking the URL), the information is sent to the swindler."

A Blogging Scam:
"The Ogged Scam: A new con trick born in the age of blogs. For this scam, the con artist creates a pseudonymous internet persona and befriends a group of people online who will become his marks. Then the scammer feigns some terrible disease, such as stomach cancer. Finally, the scammer subtly pushes the idea that his online "friends" could pitch in for something to make him feel better, such as a $700 gift certificate to the French Laundry. After the boon is received, the scam artist claims a miraculous recovery or doctor error."

The Paranoia Scam
"The Paranoia Scam is a scam that involves the con man telling the mark various lies about the different scams and instigating false attempts so that the mark (feeling worried and with no place to hide their money from fraud) turns to the con man for help."

For more insights of these types of scams and and what to be aware of, visit Wikipedia.

Have SEO topics been used for scam purposes?

Unfortunately, SEO has been used as a buzz word by the modern types of hustler.

I think you'll agree that there have been plenty of cases where people have been sold some expensive bill of services in the name of SEO, but never really delivered on their promises. Genuine SEO Professionals seldom need to hype up their offers as there often is a trail of success and results that follow their work. In other words, it is evident that they are good at producing fair to highly satisfactory results without to much hoopla in their presentation.

Still, there are SEO scams being worked. But there are ways to determine if you have found a dependable and trusted resource. There ways to help you distinguish those services who actually are keeping their skills up to date and by studying truths you can quickly learn to detect error and protect yourself.

About John Alexander
John Alexander is Co-director of Training at Search Engine Workshops offering live, SEO Workshops with his partner SEO educator Robin Nobles, author of the very first comprehensive online search engine marketing courses. John is author of an e-book called Wordtracker Magic and has taught SEO skills to people from 87 different countries world wide. John is also Director of Search Engine Academy with localized Search Engine Academy training centers where the Complete SEO Mastery Workshop and 6 Month Mentoring programis taught locally to business owners and individuals in communities across North America and Internationally in Asia.

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