

GREAT \$EO

Why is Great SEO Expensive?

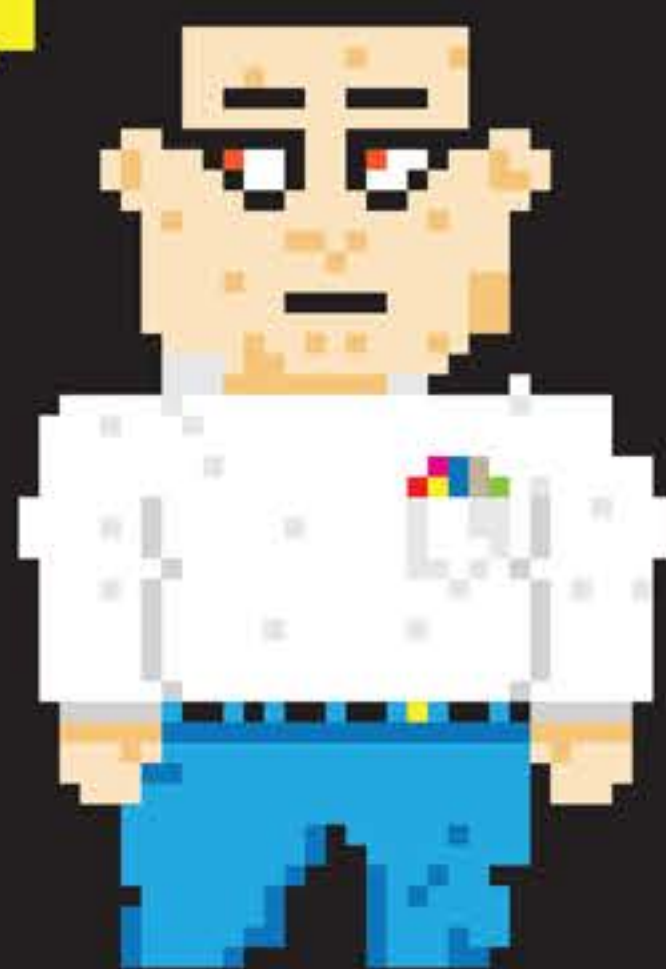


* COMPETITION

- 1 Search is a zero sum game. If you rank better, someone else ranks worse.
- 2 Competitors aggressively reinvest profits. If you invest less than they do, you need a better strategy to catch up.
- 3 Even if you invest the same amount as the current leader, you still need a better strategy to catch up with their lead.

* LANDSCAPE

- 1 Each keyword is unique. Some keywords are localized, others have e-commerce ads, and others have bigger AdWords ads.
- 2 The potential return of organic search depends on the layout of the result page.
- 3 Some variables are hard to influence without money. On a keyword like "car insurance" some of the largest advertisers might spend nearly \$1 billion a year on marketing. That drives brand-related searches & improves user engagement, which Google counts as a signal of quality.



* REACTIVE VS PROACTIVE

- 1 Great SEO plans for the future. Google has done many large updates that hit millions of websites.
- 2 If you ride too close to the limits, then you are more likely to eventually get hit.
- 3 Ex-post-facto issues. Things that might be considered fine today might not be considered fine many years down the road. Clean up costs can be substantial. In many cases the cost of cleaning up a penalty is far greater than the cost of starting over building from scratch.

* SCALING SERVICES

- 1 Stretching small budgets requires short cuts. Those short cuts often mean riding close to the limits, which can work great in the short-term but at great risk in the long-term.
- 2 Factory lines lead to trouble. The more an SEO process is scaled the more it is likely to be factory line styled. And that makes it more likely to have footprints.
- 3 If & when any particular site gets hit, many such sites will get hit at the same time.

* TRACKING PERFORMANCE

- 1 Google holds back performance data.
- 2 For a decade search engines provided keywords in their referrers. Over the past couple years Google has held back more and more organic search data.
- 3 Google provides that same data to advertisers. If you can afford AdWords, you get much better performance data.
- 4 Performance can be lumpy. Due to opaque algorithms & large algorithmic updates, it can be hard to predict the precise impact of any specific change, especially far out into the future, when the algorithms will be significantly different.

