

Enterprise SEO: What You Are Actually Buying

A straight guide for marketing leaders spending real budget on search

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Enterprise SEO is the most over-sold line item in most marketing budgets. The word "enterprise" gets attached to a bigger retainer and a longer slide deck, and six months later nobody can point to what changed. This guide is the honest version: what enterprise SEO actually is when it is done properly, what you are paying for, and the questions that separate a real programme from an expensive report.

It is written for someone spending two to ten thousand a month, or about to.

What makes SEO "enterprise"

Not the price. Enterprise SEO is what local SEO is not: it is the problem of scale. You have hundreds or thousands of pages, multiple stakeholders, a development backlog you do not control, and existing rankings you cannot afford to break. The work stops being "add some pages" and becomes "change a large system without breaking the parts that already earn".

If your site has fewer than fifty meaningful pages and one decision-maker, you do not need enterprise SEO, and anyone selling it to you is selling you the label. Local or standard SEO will do more for less.

The four things a real programme actually does

Most of the value sits in four areas. If a proposal does not address these, it is a content mill in a nicer font.

- **Technical foundation at scale.** Crawl budget, index management, site architecture, Core Web Vitals, structured data deployed across templates not pages. On a large site this is where the biggest, fastest wins usually hide, because the problems repeat across thousands of URLs.
 - **Content that maps to how buyers actually search.** Not volume for its own sake. The right pages for the right intent, built on a clear topical structure, so the site becomes the authority on its subject rather than a pile of articles.
 - **Authority and credibility off-site.** Earned mentions and links from places that matter in your sector. This is slow and cannot be faked, which is exactly why it is a moat once you have it.
 - **Measurement that ties to revenue.** Rankings and traffic are inputs. The programme should report on the metrics your board cares about: qualified pipeline, assisted conversions, revenue from organic. If the only report is a rankings screenshot, you are not buying enterprise SEO.
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What you are paying for, honestly

You are paying for judgement and prioritisation, not hours. On a large site there are always a hundred things that could be done. The value is in knowing the five that move the number this quarter, sequencing them around your development constraints, and not breaking what already works. The deliverables are the visible part. The thinking is the part that is actually worth the money.

A good programme spends the first month understanding before it touches anything: a full technical and content audit, a competitor and opportunity analysis, and a prioritised roadmap. Be suspicious of anyone who wants to start "publishing content" in week one.

On a large site, that is how you create problems at scale.

How the work is usually structured

Most credible enterprise engagements sit in three rough tiers, by depth and ambition rather than by a magic number:

- **Foundation.** Fix the technical and structural problems holding the whole site back, then maintain. The right starting point for most. This is where the compounding begins.
- **Growth.** Foundation plus a steady content and authority programme aimed at taking specific, valuable territory from competitors.
- **Scale.** A full programme across multiple locations, languages, or product lines, with the measurement and stakeholder management that complexity demands.

The honest advice is almost always to start at Foundation and earn your way up. A team that pushes you straight to the biggest tier before they understand your site is selling, not advising.

The questions that expose a weak proposal

Ask these before you sign anything, with anyone, including me:

- "What will you do in the first 30 days, before you publish a single page?" (Good answer: audit, analysis, roadmap. Weak answer: start producing content.)
 - "How will you avoid breaking our existing rankings?" (A real team has a clear answer. It is the thing that keeps them up at night.)
 - "What will you report on, and how does it connect to revenue?" (If the answer is rankings and traffic only, keep looking.)
 - "What will you not do?" (A team with a point of view has a list. A team that will do anything you ask has no expertise to offer.)
 - "Who owns the work if it does not move?" (You want a team that names the number they are accountable to.)
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What good looks like a year in

Twelve months into a real programme, the technical foundation is sound and stays sound, the site ranks for the commercial terms that matter and not just easy ones, organic is a named line in the pipeline report, and the gains are compounding rather than plateauing. You are not anxiously checking rankings every week. The trend line is up and to the right and you understand why.

That is the bar. Anything less is a report you are paying a retainer for.

What to do next

If you are spending real budget on search and you are not certain you are getting this, the fastest useful thing is an independent audit of where you actually stand. No retainer required to find out.

Book a 15-minute call and I will tell you, straight, whether your current programme is doing the four things above, or just the visible ones: [consentleads.uk](https://www.consentleads.uk), or reply to the email this came with.

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