

The Dark Side of Internet Marketing  
Black Hat SEMs  
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We all know the familiar Western movie symbols of the good guy wearing the white hat and the villain wearing the black hat. That imagery has carried over into many facets of our culture, including the "good guys" and "bad guys" in Internet marketing.

Although there is no generally accepted definition of a "black hat SEO," the terms "black hat SEM," "black hat," or "black hatter" typically refer to search engine marketers or Internet marketing consultants who promise you the moon very quickly and then abandon you when your site is blacklisted with search engines... and you're out the fees that you've paid them. Be aware of these kinds of scam artists: their tactics don't work for the long haul.

Some of the "techniques" that black hatters use are:

Hiding text on a background of the same color in an effort to get search engines to index quicker

Submitting sites to search engines for indexing hundreds -- and even thousands -- of times

Creating "doorway" pages that are of little or no use to the visitor. These may contain hundreds of thousands of non-related words and phrases on a page that is not the main entry page to a site. It is simply used to attract search engines

Spamming other people's sites by posting URLs to guestbooks repeatedly, or by spamming blogs, forums, or other interactive site features

The use of hidden links on a page Redirects from doorway pages to the actual site

Creating an exact copy of a site that already ranks well in search engines

These tactics are "black hat" techniques because they will get your site banned from search engines. So, don't use them!

Make sure to ask any potential Internet marketing consultant about the techniques he or she uses in his or her search engine positioning campaigns. Ask to see case studies or testimonials from other clients. The last thing you want to do is pay an unethical SEM (search engine marketer) to get your site better rankings just to have your site banned from search engines.