Typing “seo company near me” into Google is easy. Choosing the right agency is not.

On the surface, most SEO firms sound similar. They promise more traffic, better rankings, stronger leads, and improved visibility. The proposals often use the same language, the same charts, and the same confidence. Yet the gap between a capable agency and an expensive distraction is wide. I have seen businesses sign twelve month contracts, sit through polished monthly calls, and realize six months later that almost nothing meaningful changed. I have also seen local companies make one smart hire, tighten up their site, fix their Google Business Profile, improve their reviews, and start getting better calls within a quarter.

That is why the early questions matter so much. If you run a home service company, law office, medical practice, contractor business, or multi location company in a market like Montgomery or The Woodlands, your agency needs to understand more than generic SEO theory. They need to understand local search behavior, service area strategy, lead quality, reputation signals, and how people actually choose a business online.

The questions below are not meant to trap an agency. Good agencies usually welcome them. Weak ones tend to dodge them, overtalk them, or bury them in jargon.

Start with the agency’s grasp of your business

The first thing to learn is whether the agency understands how your company actually makes money. Ranking is not the same as winning business.

1) How do you define success for a company like mine?

If the answer starts and ends with keyword rankings, keep digging. Rankings matter, but they are only one measure. A solid agency should talk about qualified traffic, calls, form fills, booked estimates, branded search growth, map visibility, and revenue trends where tracking allows. If you are investing in **seo services montgomery tx** or **seo services the woodlands tx**, success should be tied to local demand and real lead flow, not screenshots of a position tracker.



For example, a roofer does not need 10,000 blog visits from outside Texas. That traffic looks good in a report and does nothing for the sales team. A better result is ranking in the map pack for storm damage and roof replacement searches in the actual service area, then turning that visibility into estimate requests. The same goes for **seo for roofing contractors** and **seo for general contractors**. The business model shapes the SEO strategy.

2) Have you worked with businesses in my industry or a similar sales cycle?

This question is less about finding an agency that has worked with your exact niche and more about hearing how they think. If they have handled home services, legal, healthcare, B2B, or contractors, ask what changed from one category to another. A company selling emergency plumbing services behaves differently from a custom home builder with a nine month sales cycle. Both need search visibility, but content depth, conversion paths, and local targeting differ.

An experienced agency should be able to explain those differences without pretending every business runs on the same playbook.

3) What do you know about my service area?

This is especially important for local campaigns. If you serve Montgomery, Conroe, The Woodlands, Magnolia, and nearby communities, the agency should ask about where your best jobs come from, where your crews are strongest, and which ZIP codes produce profitable work. Effective **local seo montgomery tx** is not simply adding city names to page titles. It involves understanding service area overlap, competition levels, map visibility, and whether your business should target one central market or several tightly defined areas.

I have seen agencies create twenty thin city pages for places a business barely serves. That can dilute the site and create weak, repetitive content. A stronger strategy often focuses on core markets first, then expands only where there is operational depth and a realistic chance of ranking.

4) Who is our real search competition?

The right answer may surprise you. Your offline competitors are not always your search competitors. In local SEO, you may be fighting directories, lead aggregators, old established local brands, and smaller operators with excellent review profiles. A capable agency should be able to distinguish between broad market competitors and the actual businesses outranking you for high intent searches.

If they have not looked at the search results before pitching you, that is a concern.

5) What will you need from us to do this well?

This question reveals whether they see SEO as a partnership or as a black box. Real SEO work usually needs access to subject matter experts, service details, project photos, customer FAQs, review follow up, and sometimes help implementing technical changes. If an agency acts as though they can do everything in isolation with almost no business input, that often means they rely on generic templates.

Ask how they plan to diagnose your current position

A proposal without a real audit is guesswork. Before anyone talks tactics, they should know what is broken, what is underperforming, and what is already working.

6) What did you find when you reviewed our site and local presence?

You want specificity here. Maybe your service pages are thin. Maybe your title tags are duplicated. Maybe your Google Business Profile categories are weak. Maybe your reviews are decent but stale. Maybe the site loads slowly on mobile. Maybe internal links are poor, or the calls to action are buried.

If the agency cannot point to concrete observations about your current site, they are selling a package before they understand the patient.

7) Do you separate technical SEO problems from content and authority problems?

Many business owners hear “you need SEO” as if it were one thing. It is not. Technical SEO, on page optimization, content quality, internal linking, off page authority, map optimization, and conversion improvements all play different roles. A useful agency will explain where your bottlenecks are.

A contractor site may have strong service pages but weak local authority. A medical practice may have good authority but poor page structure and weak location targeting. A multi location company may suffer from inconsistent NAP data, weak GBP categories, or duplicate local pages. Without that distinction, agencies tend to apply the same monthly deliverables to every client.

8) How will you evaluate our Google Business Profile?

For many local companies, your Google Business Profile can drive as many leads as your website, sometimes more. If you are shopping for **google business profile optimization montgomery tx**, this should not be treated as a side task. Ask how they review categories, services, business description, photos, Q&A, products, posts, service areas, hours, appointment links, and review patterns.

A strong local SEO partner knows that GBP performance often hinges on small operational details. The right primary category can matter. So can image freshness, review recency, and whether your listed services match the search behavior in your area.

9) How do you approach review quality and review velocity?

If you are comparing providers for **review management montgomery tx**, ask for practical methods, not vague assurances. Reviews are not just about quantity. The language inside reviews, the consistency of new reviews, the owner responses, and the platforms involved all influence trust and local performance.

An agency should never suggest fake reviews or review gating. That is a bright red flag. What you want instead is a steady, ethical process that helps happy customers leave honest feedback while your team follows up consistently.

10) What metrics do you think are misleading in SEO reports?

This is one of my favorite questions because it tells you how disciplined the agency is. Good answers often include vanity impressions without context, irrelevant traffic from outside the service area, broad informational keywords that never convert, or ranking reports that ignore map pack visibility and lead quality. Agencies that speak candidly about misleading metrics tend to be easier to trust.

Dig into the actual strategy, not the sales language

At this stage, you are trying to understand whether the agency has a method that fits your market or just a checklist they apply to everyone.

11) What would your first 90 days look like?

You do not need a minute by minute roadmap, but you do need a believable sequence. In many cases, the first few months should include an audit, baseline tracking, technical corrections, core page optimization, Google Business Profile work, local affordable SEO Montgomery citation review, and content planning. If the site is in rough shape, technical and structural fixes may come first. If the site is healthy but invisible in maps, local signals and review strategy may be the faster win.

A realistic answer should include priorities and tradeoffs. SEO is almost never “do everything at once.”

12) How do you choose keywords and pages to target first?

This matters because not all search terms deserve equal effort. An agency should balance search volume with intent, competition, service profitability, and local relevance. For a general contractor, “custom home builder” may be valuable but highly competitive and slower to convert. “Home addition contractor in The Woodlands” may bring fewer searches and stronger leads. The same logic applies to **local seo the woodlands tx** campaigns, where intent often beats volume.

Agencies that chase only the biggest numbers often miss the searches most likely to turn into calls.

13) What type of content do you believe this business needs?

Be careful here. Some agencies still push content calendars full of generic blog posts because it is an easy deliverable. But many local businesses get more value from stronger service pages, city pages with substance, project galleries, FAQs, case studies, and trust content than from endless articles no one reads.

That does not mean blogs never help. They can support authority and capture informational demand. But if a roofing contractor’s site lacks a solid roof replacement page, publishing four broad blog posts a month is rarely the best use of budget.

14) How do you handle local pages without creating thin or duplicate content?

This is a critical question for service area businesses. Plenty of agencies create near identical pages by swapping city names in the headings. That can look spammy, read poorly, and fail to rank. A better approach is to build pages only for important markets, then make each page meaningfully different with local proof, actual service details, common job types, area specific FAQs, photos, and location relevant trust signals.

If you are investing in **seo services the woodlands tx**, for example, the page should reflect the market. It should not read like a recycled Montgomery page with a different H1.

15) What is your view on links for local businesses?

You are listening for balance. Links still matter, but quality, relevance, and context matter more than raw volume. Good agencies talk about local citations, industry associations, sponsorships, digital PR where appropriate, supplier or partner links, and naturally earned mentions. Poor ones promise dozens or hundreds of backlinks without explaining source quality.

For local service companies, a handful of credible, relevant local or industry links can do more than a pile of low quality directory submissions.

Make them explain execution, ownership, and accountability

A smart strategy can still fail if execution is sloppy. This section is where many business owners uncover the real differences between agencies.

16) Who will actually do the work on our account?

Ask whether your campaign will be handled by an experienced strategist, a junior coordinator, or outsourced production teams. There is nothing inherently wrong with having multiple specialists involved, but you should know who is accountable. You also want to know how often senior people review the work.

One common frustration is being sold by the most experienced person in the company, then handed off to someone with little context and a full client load.

17) How do you report progress, and how often do we talk?

Monthly reporting is common, but the format matters. A useful report should connect activity to outcomes. What changed on the site, what happened in maps, where leads improved or dropped, which pages gained traction, and what the next priorities are. If a report is mostly screenshots and colored arrows, it may be hiding a lack of substance.

Good agencies are also willing to explain setbacks. Sometimes a site migration hurts performance. Sometimes Google updates shift local visibility. Sometimes map rankings improve before organic pages do. Honest context matters more than polished optimism.

18) What happens if you need changes made on our website?

This sounds administrative, but it affects results. Some agencies implement changes directly. Others send recommendations to your web developer and hope they get done. Neither model is automatically better, but you need clarity. If every change requires a third party with a two week delay, your SEO progress will slow down.

Ask who owns the CMS access, how approvals work, and whether technical fixes are included or billed separately.

19) What parts of the work do we own if the relationship ends?

This is a practical question that saves headaches later. You should know whether you keep the content, landing pages, tracking setups, reporting dashboards, call tracking numbers, citation accounts, and Google Business Profile access. A reputable agency does not hold critical assets hostage.

I strongly recommend getting this in writing, especially if the agency is also rebuilding your site.

20) How do you adapt to changes in search, including AI search results?

Search is changing. Google surfaces more direct answers, map features keep evolving, and users increasingly rely on summaries before they click through. If you are exploring **ai search optimization montgomery tx**, ask what the agency actually means by that phrase. A serious answer usually involves strengthening entity signals, clear site structure, useful original content, consistent business data, strong reviews, and content built around real questions and real expertise.

Be cautious if they present AI search as a magic add on. Much of what helps visibility in newer search experiences is still grounded in fundamentals done well. Clean data, strong local signals, credible expertise, and clear topical coverage still carry weight.

Red flags worth noticing before you sign

Some warning signs are obvious. Others are subtle enough to slip past a busy owner. These are the ones I pay attention to most:

- guaranteed rankings for competitive terms
- one size fits all monthly packages with no diagnosis
- vague answers about who does the work
- link building promises without source transparency
- long contracts with weak reporting and unclear exit terms

A single red flag may not kill the deal, but several together should make you pause.

What good answers usually sound like

The strongest agencies are rarely the most theatrical. They tend to be direct. They explain tradeoffs. They are willing to say, “Your site needs work before content helps,” or “Your map visibility is held back by category issues and weak review recency,” or “You probably do not need more blog posts yet.” They can speak intelligently about local competition in Montgomery and The Woodlands. They understand the difference between broad awareness traffic and commercial intent. They know that **google business profile optimization montgomery tx** and **review management montgomery tx** are not side dishes for a local business, but often part of the main course.

They also ask you good questions back. They want to know your margins, your busiest services, your strongest neighborhoods, your seasonality, and which leads your team actually wants. An agency that does not care about those details is likely to optimize for the wrong outcomes.

A simple way to compare agencies after the calls

After you speak with a few firms, avoid choosing based on personality alone. Use a short scorecard. Rate each agency on these five points:

- clarity of answers
- understanding of your market
- specificity of the proposed strategy
- transparency on execution and reporting
- realism, meaning no hype and no shortcuts

This kind of comparison helps separate polished salesmanship from actual fit.

The local angle matters more than many businesses realize

For businesses serving a specific region, local SEO is not just a smaller version of national SEO. It has its own physics. Proximity, review patterns, Google Business Profile quality, service categories, local relevance, and market level competition all shape what is possible. A firm that is excellent at national content campaigns may still struggle with **local seo montgomery tx** or **local seo the woodlands tx** if they do not understand map pack behavior and service area business realities.

That matters even more for contractors and home service brands. When someone needs a roofer after hail damage or wants bids for a major remodel, they usually search with high intent and local urgency. Those are valuable clicks. The agency you hire should know how to capture them.

If you are looking for **seo for roofing contractors** or **seo for general contractors**, ask every question above with extra attention to service pages, before and after project proof, local market targeting, review strategy, and call conversion. In these categories, visibility and trust work together. Ranking without proof does not convert well. Proof without visibility does not get seen.

Hiring an SEO agency should feel less like buying a package and more like choosing an operating partner. The right one will bring structure, judgment, and follow through. The wrong one will bring reports, activity, and very little else.

A search for “seo company near me” can open the door. The questions you ask next determine whether you walk into a growth investment or a long, expensive stall.

About Results Digital

Results Digital is an internet marketing service in Montgomery, TX for contractors and trades: local SEO that ranks them in the Google map pack and AI search, and Google Ads (with Local Services Ads management) optimized to booked jobs. Month-to-month, one client per trade per market.

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