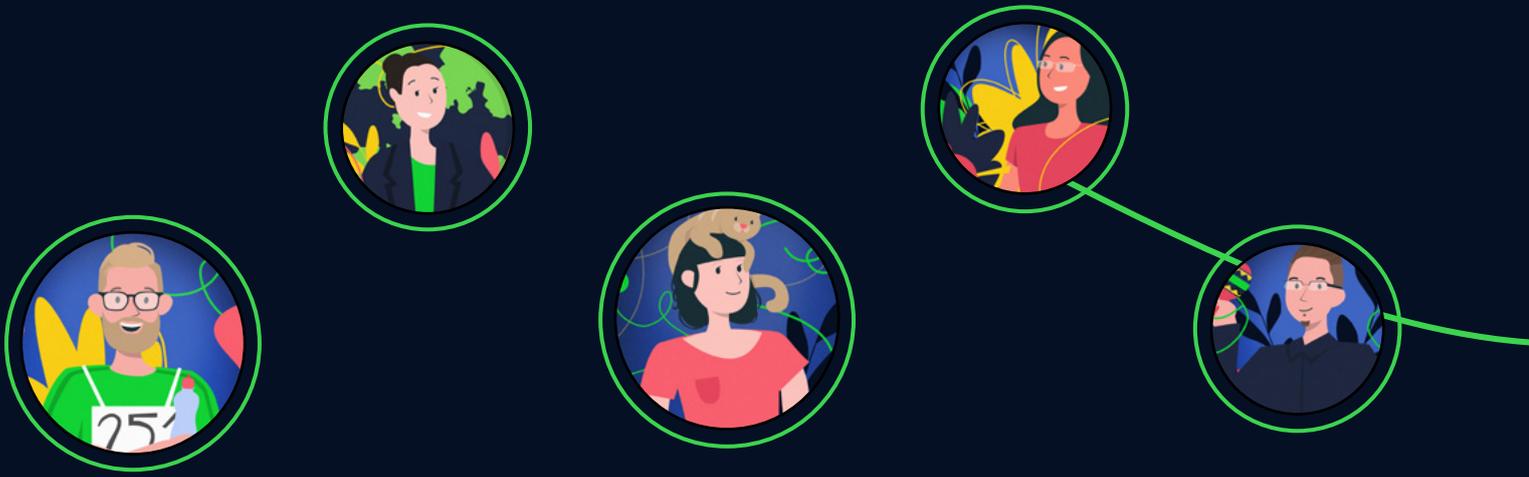




A Non-Technical Guide to **Enterprise SEO**





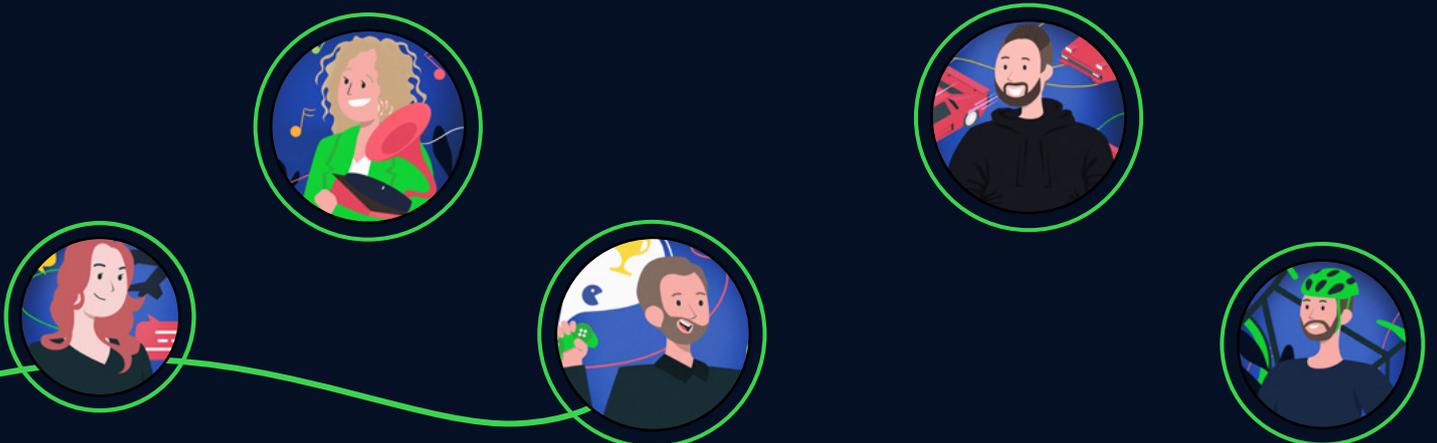
ONELY

While it takes expertise to succeed online, it takes experience to maintain it. **That's where we come in.**

Onely has a reputation for being advanced, **but our goal is simple: we want to make your website more profitable by making it better.**

Working directly with your team, we provide the actionable solutions you need to be primed and ready for search engines and customers alike. We make your website rank higher and load faster, so the people who matter most can find out how amazing you are.

Discover why major international brands have trusted Onely's award-winning team of specialists to improve their website and maximize their revenue flow.





Hi! My name is Maria, and I'm the Head of SEO at Onely.

Over the years, I've worked with dozens of enterprise companies and helped them improve their websites. What you're about to read is a result of my extensive experience building projects that deliver business outcomes.

My goal is to help you understand how working with an external SEO agency can help your company and how to approach onboarding and organizing work to maximize your return on investment.



Let's not waste your time explaining the importance and impact of SEO.



These days, it's the primary consideration in every successful content strategy, and it's slowly becoming an integral part of product development.

And after 2020 and the unprecedented shift towards online shopping, you probably noticed that **everyone's in on the secret.**

Established brands with sizeable marketing budgets do enjoy certain advantages when it comes to SEO. Still, it isn't unusual to see much smaller competitors give them a run for their money. Pick any large brand, regardless of whether it's a unicorn startup or an established enterprise, and look at its non-branded keywords. You'll see many **SMBs outcompeting the big shots** in Google's search results, despite having smaller budgets, smaller teams, and less experience.

Why?

It's not because enterprise organizations lack the skill diversity or the budget to invest in search marketing.

It's because, in large organizations, **the number of stakeholders and competing interests makes it a challenge to build effective SEO strategies**, integrate them into the product backlog, and get the executive buy-in.

If you're facing these challenges, you might be on the lookout for an external center of excellence that could jump in and provide your team with expert guidance and additional resources to support your internal team.

That's where **Enterprise SEO** comes into the picture.



What is Enterprise SEO?

If you look up Enterprise SEO, you'll find **definitions that focus on a specific set of technical problems**. These problems - dealing with millions of pages, duplicate content, optimizing the server configuration, etc. - are usually associated with large websites, which, in turn, are associated with enterprise environments.

But these definitions aren't helpful in the slightest. **They don't address the core issue.**

We take a different approach. No two websites are the same, even if they belong in the same industry. Websites aren't defined by the organization's size, but by their tech stack, type of services they offer, their content, and, most importantly, by the business goals.

From a search engine perspective, there's no difference between an enterprise website and an SMB website. A business with ten employees can easily maintain an eCommerce website with tens of millions of URLs. At the same time, a Fortune 100 enterprise can have a relatively small website that serves a different purpose altogether.

What's essential is that **similarly-sized organizations share the same organizational issues**.

That's why at Onely, we define Enterprise SEO as a specific approach to building SEO processes. This approach is determined by a particular set of organizational problems that enterprise organizations share.



The solution

This whitepaper aims to unpack Enterprise SEO and share our experience in approaching and solving these problems for enterprise organizations.



Whether you're currently on the lookout for an external center of excellence to gain a competitive advantage, or you're just interested in the challenges this process potentially presents, we'll share our perspective to help you make the right decision.

We'll break down the challenge into **three parts**:

- **technical challenges**, which will discuss the specific problems an external center of excellence can help you solve,
- **onboarding**, which will help you understand how long it might take, what you can expect from an SEO agency, and the steps you can personally take to speed up the process,
- **organizing work**, which will discuss how you can seamlessly involve an external SEO in your current process.

Technical challenges



As I mentioned, different enterprise organizations have different goals for their websites, and they all need a bespoke SEO approach.

However, there's one characteristic of Enterprise SEO that determines the set of technical issues we're usually tasked with – **most large organizations have an in-house SEO or even a whole SEO team.**

This means that somewhere in your project tracking software, there's probably a list filled with SEO recommendations waiting to be implemented. New pages are regularly added to your product, and they need optimization, auditing, building links, and so on. That's probably the core of what your SEO team does.

For you, this potentially has the following outcomes:

- The most challenging technical SEO aspects might rarely get addressed, which generates technical debt.
- Being busy with day-to-day maintenance, your SEO team is left with little time to take a closer look at your tech stack and proactively diagnose the pain points before they pose a threat to your organic acquisition.
- Your process might not work when it comes to effectively tackling an immediate problem, like conducting a site migration or resolving volatile JavaScript dependencies.
- You may lack the extensive experience that helps conduct once-in-a-decade projects, like rethinking your tech stack with web performance in mind.

These factors contribute to the fact that we're usually tasked with **bespoke issues** deeply rooted in your tech stack's specifics.

As you can imagine, some of these issues are obscure. It's hard to diagnose them, and it's hard to address them with no experience. One example is a JavaScript dependency that works properly in a browser but makes it impossible for Google to see the contents of your page. You can probably imagine that **stakeholders might be skeptical** if you tell them this has to be addressed immediately, postponing tasks with a more visible positive effect.

That's why it's paramount that an external SEO team can justify its recommendations, backing them up with data and guiding your team through implementation.

◀Case study▶

In 2019, we started a long-term cooperation with a Fortune 500 global software provider. We specifically helped them optimize a product that helped legacy brick-and-mortar brands integrate an eCommerce website into their sales mix.

Because of various delays, the platform was in development for 5+ years before it hit the market. It was primarily built with vanilla JavaScript, and our goal was to help their massive in-house SEO team optimize web performance to improve load times for users and speed up crawling for Googlebot.

It quickly became clear to us that their problems were much more foundational than that.

A deep dive into their analytics made us understand that they suffered from an incredibly obscure cross-contamination issue: Google regularly surfaced pages from store X for brand queries for store Y.

It took several weeks of investigation and gathering data to understand how several JavaScript bugs at the platform's core caused this to happen. Fortunately, we were able to build a case strong enough to convince multiple teams to move away from web performance optimization and address the cross-contamination first before it resulted in lawsuits from disgruntled customers.

Prioritizing work



Our deliverables with every enterprise client fall on the following spectrum:

- Some organizations ask for a comprehensive audit, a broad, long-term strategy, and documentation that will help them implement it all. They want to use it as a reference for multiple years to come.
- Other organizations want us to join their Scrum team to start working as soon as possible in sprints, focusing on the immediate priorities and adapting to the circumstances.

While these processes seem on the opposite ends of the spectrum, the #1 challenge of preparing audits for enterprise organizations remains the same: **setting priorities backed with data.**



Our best shot at delivering meaningful results is to start with recommendations that promise the greatest return on investment.

To fully understand the immediate priorities and efficiently communicate them to all stakeholders involved, we need to get a complete view of your product.

This means analyzing:

- Your tech stack and the potential technical risk areas for Google and your users,
- Your current organic performance and the competitive landscape,
- A complete set of SEO metrics relating both to your current rankings and your technical performance.

Such analyses take up to several weeks, depending on the size of your product.

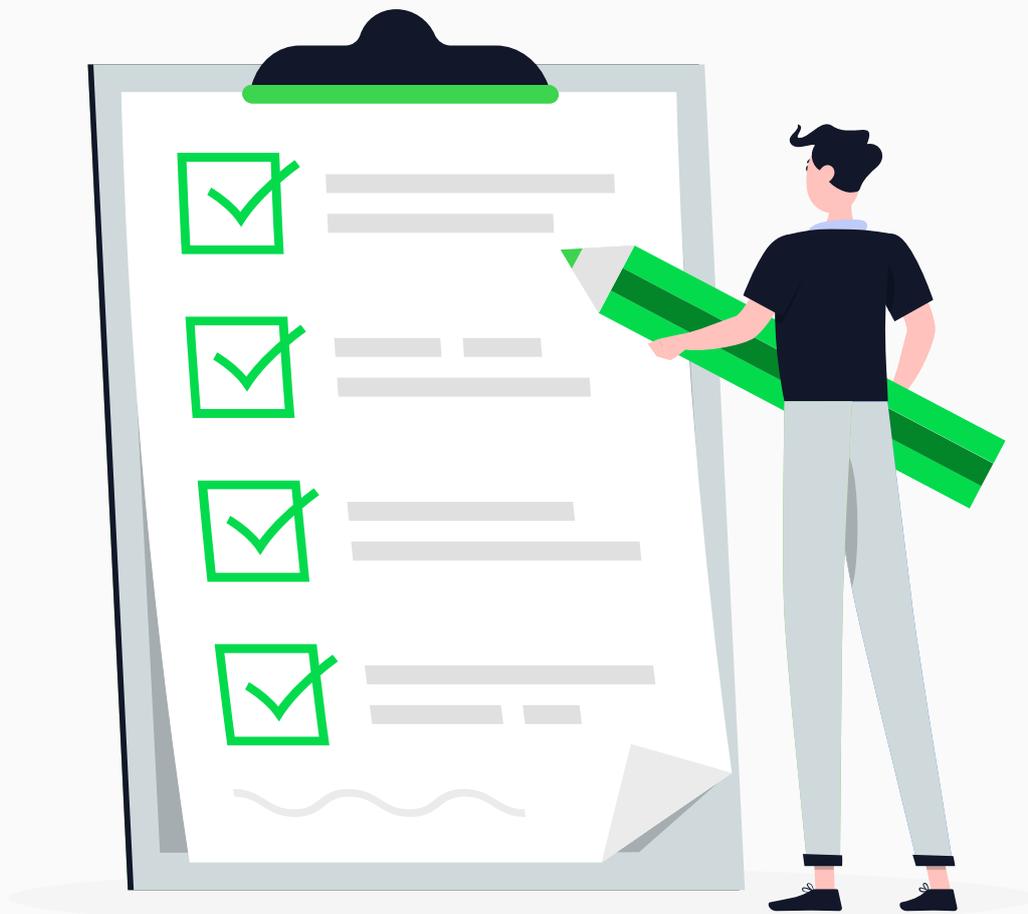


Our goal is to fully understand your needs as soon as possible so that we can provide you with a sound plan of action that's backed by data - this helps get the executive buy-in and deliver growth quickly.

But analyses of your product aren't nearly enough. It's crucial that you spend some time with us explaining your needs, your current strategy, and the goals you want to achieve. It's impossible to tell what the best course of action for your business will be by just looking in from the outside.

So whether we start by planning the first sprint or by drafting the long-term strategy, we always strive to have a list of priorities that are:

- Well-documented,
- Visible and clear to you, and
- Adjusted to your needs.



Onboarding

We love working with companies that have a seasoned in-house SEO team. Your team knows the product inside out and often profoundly cares about its success.

But just as often, **your in-house SEO team is overwhelmed with responsibilities** - maintaining the website, content optimization, link building, web performance... The list goes on. An in-house SEO specialist is expected to be a jack of all trades who deals with light developer work, content optimization, and even building strategy.

This is precisely why when your organic performance suddenly plummets or when you need to conduct a complex migration within months, you may find yourself in dire need of more resources.

In many cases, working with an external SEO agency is the quickest way to deliver results. However, **not all solution providers may be equally prepared to work with an enterprise client.**

Legal ramifications, specific data privacy requirements, building an effective process, and working parallel with an in-house SEO team are all challenges that make it so hard to involve external partners in your optimization efforts.

Being prepared to overcome these challenges is equally as important as a deep understanding of technical SEO. That's because **SEO always takes time, and nobody wants to waste months going through onboarding.**

Onboarding is the main bottleneck when you decide to work with an external company. In one extreme instance, onboarding took ten months before we could even start discussing building a work process with the company.



But **there are things the agency can do to prepare** and make the process go as smoothly as possible.

«Case study»

We were recently contacted by a product lead in charge of one of the leading marketplace websites in South America, owned by one of the world's biggest eCommerce enterprises.

The team saw their organic visibility sink after one of Google's recent core updates. They were determined to use our services and immediately implemented changes based on our recommendations to reverse the negative trend. In the first meeting, we started discussing joining their Jira to work within their dev team's sprint cycles.

We started immediately gathering data and working closely with the product team to form an agile strategy. And suddenly, all that had to stop.

It turned out that the client's product team wasn't fully aware of how intense the onboarding process needed to be due to their enterprise requirements - they never wanted to work this closely with an external solution provider. The legal team estimated the onboarding process to take four to six months. This meant that our strategy could potentially become obsolete before we were able to start the actual work.

Luckily, we went through a very similar onboarding process before. Once we coordinated with the client's legal team, it turned out that their estimates were off - we already had the proper level of data security implemented, and our insurance was more than satisfactory.

In the end, the paperwork took about three weeks, and we were able to start addressing their visibility drop promptly.



Each company will have its internal rules, procedures, and requirements for onboarding, but typical steps include:

- Negotiating the contract and scope of work,
- Conducting security checks,
- Acquiring a specific type and level of insurance by the agency,
- Filling out surveys and all the necessary paperwork,
- Consulting the legal team.



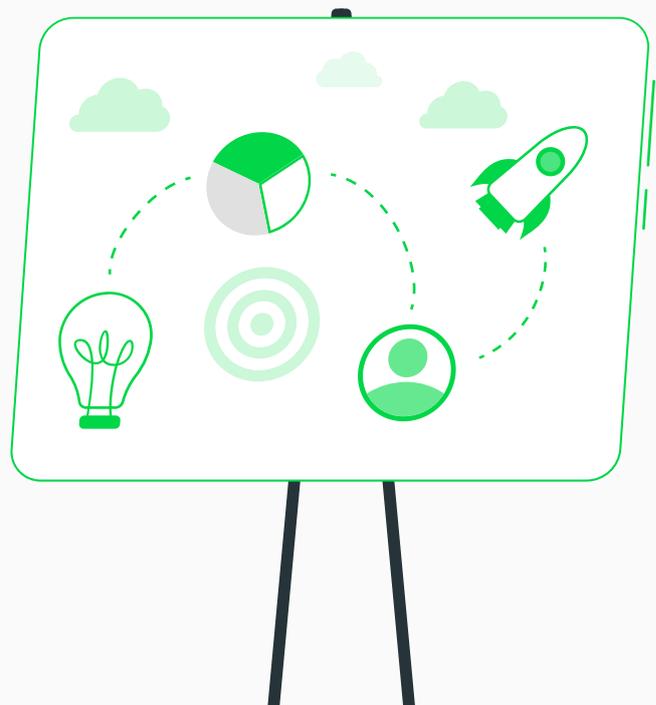
The specifics will always vary, but **it's vital that the partner you choose:**

- Has experience in onboarding with enterprise clients,
- Is willing to go through the obstacles to meet your formal requirements,
- Communicates with you to make sure both parties are satisfied

How do we fulfill these expectations at Onely?

Our previous experience plays a significant role. Working with enterprises helped us create effective methods to get through the process of onboarding. In addition, with each project, we gained more knowledge and understanding of what you may need as a client.

The number one thing that you can expect from us is to help create a connection between our organizations. It makes the process smoother if we proactively propose an effective method of communication that meets everyone's needs.



Contract and agreements



Negotiating the contract is where it all starts. The primary considerations here are the scope of work, deliverables, timeframe, and so on. The more bespoke your partner's approach is, the better for you - all these elements will be adjusted to your needs.

It also speeds up the process if your partner has experience negotiating and signing NDA and NCA agreements. There's a limited number of considerations that we need to discuss to prepare them, and we're prepared to ask all the necessary questions and cut down the time it takes to sign to a minimum.

Security challenges

Security requirements are the most complicated and time-consuming. Working with sensitive data on an enterprise level calls for an exceptional level of security. If your partner doesn't have experience implementing security solutions, working them out during onboarding might significantly prolong the process.

The requirements might involve:

- Data storage,
- Securing computers,
- Employees background checks,
- Defined procedures in case of unexpected events.



Learning on our experiences, we're always prepared to provide documents regarding:

- our data privacy solutions,
- details of how we approach security in the workplace,
- how we protect our equipment, such as computers and the Internet connection,
- the software we work with,
- background checks of our employees.

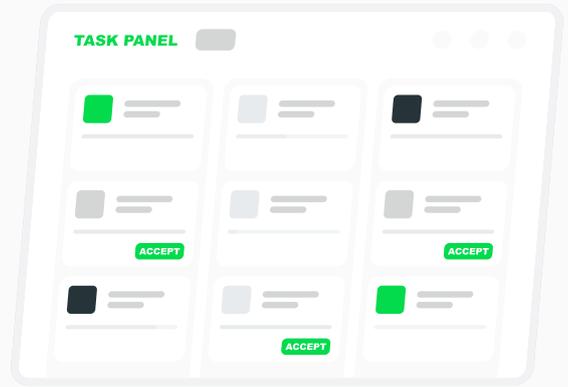
Insurance

One of the biggest challenges while onboarding is getting adequate insurance. After all, working with an enterprise requires an exceptional level of care. The stakes are high, and mistakes are costly.

Obtaining the right insurance might take a while. But time is not the only aspect. When cooperation with a large company comes into play, the cost of insurance might also be very high. **This is the step that a lot of SEO agencies won't be able to overcome.** The price might simply be too high compared to the prospective gain.



Organizing work



Once we can get to actual work, there's one last enterprise-specific obstacle that needs to be addressed: how to organize work when your developers are under pressure from multiple different teams, including an in-house SEO team?

Task prioritization plays a role here, but there are several other aspects you should pay attention to when setting up the cooperation.

Working with in-house SEOs

First and foremost, your in-house SEOs mustn't feel left behind. We might have more experience in some areas of technical SEO, but they are the ones that know the product inside out. We think it's crucial to acknowledge that we have the same mission: to maximize your search visibility. Your SEO team likely has a roadmap and a strategy that we need to respect regardless of our findings.

We're always hired to help, and it doesn't help anybody if your SEO team feels unseen and left behind once we end our cooperation.

Communication

As usual, **communication is essential** if you want to conduct a complex project that involves tens or hundreds of people.



In our experience, you should expect an external SEO agency to spend up to 10 hours per week for communication. This includes weekly status updates, planning ahead, and providing your devs and SEOs with specific guidance.

This helps quickly address obstacles, monitor progress, and allow for close inspection of the changes being implemented.

Training

Working with large enterprises often involves in-house training. Whether it be about setting up a preferred workflow, getting to know the project management system, or simply integrating the teams, it is a crucial building step for further collaboration.

A flexible SEO agency will adapt to your needs, including training in your preferred communication format (e.g., many dev teams want tasks to be prepared in YAML, Python, gherkin syntax, and so on).



Wrapping up

Although it's increasingly more common to see SEO involved in product development from the very beginning, it's just as often prioritized when organic visibility drops due to a Google update or an unexpected bug.

When you work in an enterprise environment, **you might think that getting an external SEO team involved is too tricky** and time-consuming, especially when a pressing issue needs to be addressed. This belief can be reinforced when you look for Enterprise SEO services online and find dozens of articles that focus on the scope of your website, not the scope of the challenge itself.

This whitepaper is meant to let you know that there are SEO agencies out there that can help you. Onely is just one of them, and there are other partners you can find that are prepared to jump in and help you reach your goals.

What you need is a mix of experience working with enterprise clients, extensive technical expertise, and the ability to efficiently communicate with both your developer team and your C-level executives.



Handwritten signature of Maria in a grey rectangular box.

