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SonicSEO partners with Directory Plus to offer online access to info

Packages will require a 12-month commitment for a directory listing and SonicSEO services

Premium content from New Mexico Business Weekly by Megan Kamerick, Senior Reporter

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Same purpose, different platform.

That's how the members of a new partnership describe their agreement to mesh online marketing and search engine optimization with old-school phone directories.

Directory Plus, a regional directory publisher based in Durango, Colo., and serving multiple markets in New Mexico, will offer its clients complete Internet marketing services through SonicSEO.com, based in Albuquerque.

Search engines basically act like modern-day Yellow Pages, said [Arvind Raichur](#), CEO of SonicSEO, by helping people connect with the businesses they're looking for. Smaller communities are using Yellow Pages more than bigger cities, he said, but they are also looking online.

"Consumers look in the phone book and see a big ad, and they expect them to show up on the first page of a search engine," Raichur said. "If they don't, there is a disconnect. It's a trust issue."

[Ric Romero](#), director of sales for Directory Plus, said he searched for the right company to partner with for three years.

"I interviewed a lot of good and a lot of bad ones," he said.

Raichur and his wife, [Becky](#), chief technology officer for SonicSEO, learned search engine optimization by figuring out how to drive traffic to their site and their clients' sites when they started AttorneyLocate.com in 1998. They branched into other industry sectors and sold the two legal-oriented websites they created to **Internet Brands Inc.** in late 2010. The company has grown to 30 employees and has served more than 4,000 clients. The packages it sells businesses, which Directory Plus will offer its clients, include building websites, optimizing them, doing the analytics on the traffic and monitoring them to make sure visits are converting to sales. SonicSEO also offers social media marketing and e-commerce solutions.

Romero doesn't see an either/or dilemma between online and paper directories.

"A client is a client is a client. I just need to find out where they're looking and how I can get them," he said. "In Gallup and Farmington, Internet investment isn't as large as in phone books, but we both realize people are searching there."

The packages will require a yearlong commitment for a directory listing and SonicSEO services. They start at \$799 per month for 20 pages on a website. How much that increases depends on what a company wants, Romero said.

His strategy will be to offer it to all Directory Plus clients, but his sales team will only take three from each sector — say, three attorneys or three plumbers — for that full package. Romero said otherwise, it would dilute what clients get for their money, since competitors would have similar meta tags and data pushing them to the top of online search results, all part of effective SEO.

"It will definitely be first-come, first-served," Romero said.

The future of directories such as Yellow Pages remains fuzzy. In January, **AT&T** announced it was looking at selling or restructuring its underperforming directory unit. Dex One Corp. was threatened with delisting last fall from the New York Stock Exchange because of low share prices.

An online survey by **Vistaprint**, which focuses on microbusinesses, found that of 1,110 respondents, 66 percent had no interest in marketing via the Yellow Pages.

But don't play a funeral dirge yet, Romero said. People will reach for the first thing available for information, and how they grew up, where they live and their age bracket determine whether it will be a handset or a phone book, he said. Many firms like his have struggled with whether to do the online marketing piece in house or outsource it. There is no one solution, he said.

"It's as infinite as there are ways to search on the Internet," he said.

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