

You've had the discovery call. The salesperson understands your Shopify store, talks confidently about technical SEO, and presents a plan that sounds tailored to your business. Then the contract is signed—and the person doing the work is someone you've never met.

This handoff is common in agency services, but it doesn't have to be a surprise. You can find out who will actually manage your SEO before you commit, what that person will do, and how the agency will keep you informed if the team changes.

That matters because ecommerce SEO isn't just a strategy deck. It involves decisions about Shopify templates, apps, product and collection pages, internal links, and how changes interact with the rest of your store. The person accountable for the plan should understand how that work gets implemented—and be reachable when priorities or results need to be discussed.

Whether you're speaking with OneLittleWeb or another provider, ask for specifics before you buy. This guide explains what to ask, how to evaluate the answers, and how to tell whether a proposed team can actually support your store.

Start by separating the pitch from the delivery model

A sales conversation is designed to explain the service and help you decide whether to proceed. It may be led by a founder, sales representative, strategist, or account executive. None of those roles is automatically a problem. The issue is when the agency leaves you with the impression that the person pitching will personally do the work, without confirming that in writing.

Ask the agency to describe the delivery team in plain language. You want to know who owns strategy, who handles recurring work, who implements changes, and who answers questions. If one person covers several roles, ask how much time they will actually have for your account.

Ask these questions before signing

- Who will be my named account contact?
- Who will be the day-to-day SEO operator working on my account?
- Will the person who developed the strategy remain involved after onboarding?
- What work will your team do directly, and what work will you recommend that my staff or developer implement?
- How many other accounts will the day-to-day operator manage?
- What happens if that person leaves, takes leave, or is reassigned?
- Will you tell me before making a staffing change?

Listen for concrete answers. "You'll have access to our whole team" may sound reassuring, but it doesn't tell you who owns your account. A useful answer names the roles, explains the communication path, and sets expectations for continuity.

Get the roles and responsibilities in writing

You don't necessarily need a contract listing every individual task forever. But you should have a written scope that explains what the agency is responsible for, what your team must provide, and how work moves from

recommendation to implementation.

Role or responsibility What to clarify Named account contact Who coordinates communication, meetings, approvals, and follow-ups? Day-to-day SEO operator Who reviews the site, manages the work plan, and monitors progress? Implementation Who edits Shopify settings, theme code, templates, content, or app configuration? Reporting What data is reviewed, how often, and how will outcomes connect to business performance? Staff changes How will you be notified, and how will the new person receive account context?

Pay particular attention to phrases such as “ongoing optimization,” “technical SEO,” or “content support.” Those can describe very different amounts of work. Ask what deliverables you’ll receive, how often they’ll happen, and what is excluded. A recurring service should have a clear operating rhythm—not just a recurring invoice.

Understand the junior team handoff risk

A junior team handoff isn’t automatically a warning sign. Skilled specialists often work in teams, and a junior operator can do excellent work with clear oversight. The risk is an undisclosed handoff: a senior person sells the engagement, then a less experienced person inherits the account without adequate supervision, store context, or decision-making authority.

Ask how senior staff stay involved. For example, does a senior strategist review technical recommendations? Is there a regular account review? Can the day-to-day operator get a decision approved quickly when a Shopify change could affect templates or revenue?

Also ask how the agency documents your account. A good handoff should include your business goals, baseline data, site architecture, known technical constraints, completed work, open issues, and upcoming priorities. If you switch providers or your contact changes, that record helps prevent repeated audits and contradictory recommendations.

Watch for answers that avoid accountability

- “We don’t assign people until after the contract is signed.”
- “The team may vary depending on workload,” with no named owner or escalation path.
- “Our process is proprietary,” used to avoid explaining how work is managed.
- “You’ll hear from us regularly,” without a meeting cadence or response expectations.
- Promises of guaranteed rankings instead of a clear plan tied to business goals.

These answers don’t prove an agency will do poor work. They do mean you should request more detail before committing. If you can’t determine who is responsible for the work, you can’t properly evaluate the service.

Ask for baseline data before accepting a growth diagnosis

If an agency says your organic growth has plateaued, ask what data supports that diagnosis. A plateau can mean several things: clicks have leveled off, organic revenue has stalled, product-page traffic is flat, or rankings have shifted for a particular group of searches. Those are different problems and require different responses.

Before approving a strategy, establish a baseline using the data available to your business. That may include organic sessions, organic revenue, conversion rate, search landing pages, branded versus non-branded traffic, product and collection performance, and changes in the number of indexable URLs. Compare appropriate time periods and account for seasonality, promotions, inventory changes, and site releases.

Impressions can help explain search visibility, but they are not a business outcome on their own. A report full of impression charts or screenshots doesn't tell you whether the work is bringing qualified visitors or contributing to sales. Ask how the provider will connect SEO activity to your store's actual goals.

Useful questions about a plateau

1. Which pages or page types have stopped growing?
2. Is the issue lower visibility, weaker click-through, reduced conversion, or less demand?
3. Have traffic and revenue changed in the same direction?
4. Did the plateau begin around a theme release, app installation, migration, or catalog change?
5. What evidence would confirm or disprove your proposed explanation?

A credible operator will be comfortable describing uncertainty. They may need to investigate before giving you a definitive answer. That is more useful than an instant, confident diagnosis based on a quick glance at a dashboard.



Know what Shopify handles—and what it doesn't

Shopify provides important SEO foundations. Shopify includes SSL by default, so storefront connections are secured without you having to arrange a separate certificate in the usual setup. Shopify also provides an auto-generated sitemap, which helps search engines discover eligible URLs.

Those defaults are helpful, but they are not a complete SEO strategy. An SSL certificate does not determine whether your pages are useful, well structured, or earning qualified organic visits. An auto-generated sitemap does not guarantee that every URL in it deserves to be indexed, that key pages are easy to find through navigation, or that search engines will rank them.

Shopify stores still need careful attention to information architecture, page content, metadata, canonical behavior, redirects, structured data, crawlability, and internal links. The exact work depends on the store, its theme, its apps, and how the catalog is organized. Shopify Plus can support more complex and high-volume businesses, but the platform tier does not remove the need for good SEO decisions or sound implementation.

Ask the proposed operator to distinguish platform defaults from work they plan to perform. For example: What has Shopify already configured? Which issues are specific to your store? Which recommendations need developer

involvement? This helps you avoid paying for a vague “Shopify SEO setup” that simply restates features your store already has.

Check whether they understand app and theme debt

Shopify stores change constantly. A new review app, search tool, subscription feature, page builder, or theme update can add scripts, markup, templates, and technical dependencies. One addition may be harmless; years of additions can create recurring technical debt that makes the store harder to maintain and harder to diagnose.

Theme changes can affect page speed, heading structure, links, structured data, mobile usability, and how product or collection content is rendered. Apps may create duplicate content, inject links or metadata, or introduce behavior that complicates crawling. These effects aren’t inevitable, so avoid providers who blame every SEO problem <https://onelittleweb.com/seo-guide/should-you-outsource-shopify-seo> on apps without investigating. Ask them to show what they checked and how they reached their conclusions.

Ask how technical recommendations are implemented

- Will the SEO operator review app and theme dependencies, or only run a crawler?
- Will changes be tested in a staging environment where possible?
- Who approves edits that could affect checkout, merchandising, or revenue?
- How are releases documented so a later traffic change can be investigated?
- Will your developer receive implementation notes that are specific enough to act on?

An audit is a starting point, not proof that technical debt has been resolved. Ask which issues the agency will fix, which it will only flag, and how it will verify the outcome after implementation.

Test their thinking about SKU scale and internal links

A small Shopify catalog and a large one create different SEO problems. As SKU counts grow, the store may accumulate near-identical product variants, discontinued products, overlapping collections, and URLs that are difficult for shoppers—or search engines—to navigate. A sound plan should consider how products are grouped and which pages deserve to be prominent.

Internal linking is part of that structure. Collection pages, navigation, related products, editorial content, and useful product links can help customers discover relevant items and clarify relationships between pages. At SKU scale, consistency matters: important products should not rely on a single temporary link, while low-value or redundant pages should not crowd out your strongest destinations.

Ask the operator how they would evaluate linking patterns across your catalog. A generic suggestion to “add more internal links” is not enough. They should be able to discuss which page types need links, how they will identify gaps or inconsistencies, and how the recommendations fit your merchandising priorities.

Make reporting about decisions, not screenshots

Agree on what the agency will report before work begins. A useful update should connect the work completed to what changed, what remains uncertain, and what the team recommends next. It should include meaningful business context—not just a collection of screenshots or a list of impressions.

You may want reporting to cover organic revenue and sessions, relevant landing-page performance, conversions, technical issues resolved, implementation status, and next steps. Choose metrics that fit your baseline and

business model. If attribution is imperfect, the provider should say so and explain what the data can and cannot support.

Ask to see a sample report with identifying business information removed. Check whether it explains decisions and results, or simply displays charts. Also confirm how often you'll meet, who attends, and how you can raise an urgent issue between meetings.

A simple way to evaluate the answer

Before signing, ask the agency to send a short written delivery plan. It does not need to reveal confidential methods. It should make the working relationship understandable.

1. Confirm the named account contact and day-to-day SEO operator.
2. List the first priorities and the baseline data needed to evaluate them.
3. Separate recommendations from work the agency will implement.
4. Define the communication cadence, reporting, and escalation path.
5. Document how a junior team handoff or staffing change will be managed.
6. Clarify what "ongoing optimization" means in recurring deliverables.

Then compare the answers across providers. The best fit is not necessarily the agency with the most polished pitch or the biggest team. It is the one that can explain who will do the work, how decisions are made, what the scope includes, and how the results will be evaluated against your store's baseline.



The bottom line

You don't need the person pitching to personally make every change in your Shopify store. You do need transparency about who owns the work and enough senior oversight to keep the strategy coherent. Ask direct questions about the named account contact, day-to-day operator, implementation responsibilities, and staff transitions before signing.

For a Shopify or Shopify Plus store, also check whether the proposed team understands the difference between built-in platform features and the SEO work your business still needs. Shopify's default SSL and auto-generated

sitemap are useful foundations—not a substitute for diagnosing plateaued growth, managing app and theme debt, or building consistent internal links across a large SKU catalog.

If an agency can answer those questions clearly, show how it will establish a baseline, and report on outcomes that matter to your business, you have a much better chance of getting the service you thought you were buying.