



LINK BUILDING FOR BEGINNERS

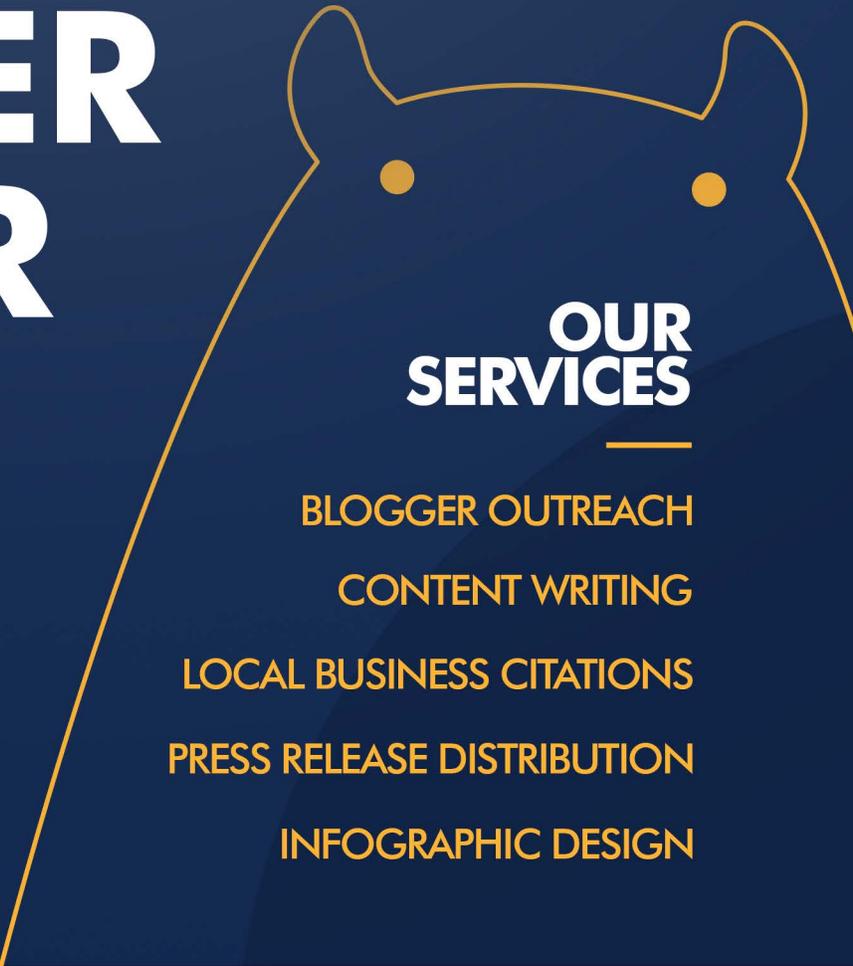


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“ In 1999, I started this company with the mission statement, “We will work toward bringing in the greatest amount of relevant traffic to our clients’ websites, using the most ethical methods available.” That mission remains true today.

Jim Boykin, CEO & Founder of Internet Marketing Ninjas

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READY TO SCALE YOUR LINK BUILDING?

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to Get Quality Links
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INBOUND

Chapter 1

Link Building Fundamentals

SEJ
EBOOK

Written By
Roger Montti
Owner, Martinibuster.com



This chapter began as a solo presentation about links given at SMX East in New York.

The information has been updated.

It is an overview of how search engines may use links and what I believe are best practices for cultivating links.

The goal of this chapter is to build a foundation from which you can better understand how search engines may use links and what the best approaches may be.

Reason Why Search Engines Use Links

Search engines used to use just the text on a web page in order to rank a web page. However web publishers began adding keyword phrases in a way to help rank their pages.

Not all pages that ranked were relevant, resulting in a poor user experience.

Information retrieval researchers began work on new ways to identify relevant web pages, particularly with links.

Search engineers noticed that the best pages on the Internet tended to accumulate links.

The more links a site had the more important it tended to be. Conversely, the less links a site accumulated the less important it was judged to be.

Links were (and continue to be) counted like vote.

Modern search engines today use a combination of AI, machine learning, links and page analysis to rank websites.

An important change with how sites are ranked is that the kinds of links that are used for ranking purposes have been narrowed down to the most relevant.

The goal has always been to count links that are meaningful to the content they are linking to.

Not to complicate matters, but there is also a thing called [link ranking](#) that may be in use, a method to rank the links themselves.

By ranking links, popularity and relevance can be more accurately measured.

Links that are paid for and not the result of an editorial decision tend not to count.

Search engines continue using links as a way to measure popularity and authority. However it's no longer enough to simply acquire links to assure rankings.

Because web publishers have employed a number of schemes to increase their rankings, search engines have improved their algorithms in order to ignore artificial links (example: [advertorial guest post links](#)) or non-relevant links ("powered by" links).

ranking Links May Not Always Influence Top Rankings

I have to stop here and note that links are not necessarily the most important ranking factor.

To what extent links help rank websites is an open question that cannot be answered. What is known is that links continue to play a role in ranking.

Other factors such as how accurately a web page satisfies a users search query plays an increasingly important role.

Thus, a web page with a lot of links could be judged as important but still not rank at the top of the search query if the page itself does not satisfy the user's information needs.

An example could be a search query for Jaguar.

- In the USA, the top two results are the USA websites affiliated with the auto manufacturer.
- In the UK, the top three results are affiliated with the UK versions of the manufacturer's website.

These differences in rankings represent the information needs of users in the USA versus the needs of users in the UK.

There are many scientific research papers and patents concerned with understanding user satisfaction of search engine users, understand what users mean when they use ambiguous search queries, and even for understanding if a user on a mobile device is satisfied by tracking where on the search results page the user lingers (Viewport Time).

Tracking user satisfaction is an attempt to enhance the accuracy of satisfying the information needs of users when they type a search query.

Satisfying the information needs of a user could be referred to as the goal of a search engine.

In that context, links could be said to play less of a role for ranking. By how much is unknown.

We only know that *links continue to play a role.*

Links as a Measure of Importance & Relevance

The process of reducing the influence of non-relevant links has been going on since nearly the beginning of the use of links for ranking purposes.

The goal has been to filter out artificial or non-relevant links in order to be able to create a map of the entire Internet made up of genuine links that are useful for judging if a site is important and/or relevant for various keyword phrases ([Reduced Link Graphs](#)).

Search engines use links as a way to judge if a web page is important, to understand what topic the web page belongs to and also to identify spam. These judgments are then used for ranking or not ranking web pages.

Examples of How Links Communicate Importance

Links from important websites may be a signal that a web page is relevant for a particular topic.

- A large amount of spread out across an entire site may indicate that a site is important.
- A web page that is rapidly gaining links because it solves a problem in a way that excites users may begin to rank well so that more users can discover the page.
- A web page that has not gained links in a long time could be considered stale because users don't feel enthusiastic about the content anymore.

Links as a Validating Signal

As previously mentioned, websites are not ranked by order of which sites contain the most links.

Search engines rank websites according to which site will be the most useful to the most users.

Links are used to create candidates of web pages that are then put through other algorithmic processes that judge if those candidate pages are the most useful.

Links are important to all web publishers because they continue to be one of the ways a site becomes “worthy” of consideration for ranking. Search engines are aware that new sites don't tend to have too many links and will still send traffic to those sites.

But until those sites become popular with users and acquire links, they will be unable to rank for a wider range of keyword phrases that attract more traffic.

Thus, it is important to create web pages that site visitors will find useful and enjoy enough to recommend to a friend.

A site that is able to cultivate word of mouth enthusiasm will be able to cultivate spontaneous links from other websites. This is the gold standard of links. It is a method of promoting a website that I call Cultivating Links.

Cultivating links is a process that focuses on creating useful pages that solves problems for site visitors. For example, a typical problem could be acquiring winter shoes.

A site that makes the process of purchasing those winter shoes in such a way that makes consumers enthusiastic is going to generate word of mouth enthusiasm which in turn tends to generate spontaneous links.

A quality user experience that cultivates links could be based on brand equity (people love your brand), low prices, fast shipping, ease of checking out, etc.

If You Build It Will Google Rank It?

Of course a little promotion to get the word out about a site is important. As in the real world, building a business only begins when the doors first open.

Random foot traffic has never sustained a business. Creating a plan for cultivating links and awareness of the site is a key part of creating a successful web presence.

Summary of Link Fundamentals

- Links tell search engines that your site is important.
- Links can be a sign of relevance for keyword phrases.
- Not all links are useful for ranking purposes.
- The best links are links given freely by relevant sites.
- A plan for cultivating links can be useful for building a successful site.



Link

What Is Link Spam?

Definition of Web Spam

“Web spamming refers to actions intended to mislead search engines and give some pages higher ranking than they deserve.”
–“[Web spam taxonomy](#)” by Zoltan Gyöngyi, PhD (Google) and Hector Garcia-Molina (Professor, Stanford)

Google’s Definition of SEO

“...make it easier for search engines to crawl, index and understand your content... you should base your optimization decisions first and foremost on what’s best for the visitors of your site.” –[Google Search Engine Optimization Guide](#)

As you can see, Google’s definition of SEO differs from the version the SEO community believes.

Google's interpretation is focused on creating a site that is easily crawled, easy to be indexed and that is easily understood by search engines.

The link building advice is passive but useful. So it's **good to read what Google has to say:**

“Effectively promoting your new content will lead to faster discovery by those who are interested in the same subject. As with most points covered in this document, taking these recommendations to an extreme could actually harm the reputation of your site.

...Putting effort into the offline promotion of your company or site can also be rewarding. For example, if you have a business site, make sure its URL is listed on your business cards, letterhead, posters, etc. You could also send out recurring newsletters to clients through the mail letting them know about new content on the company's website.”

That's not a lot to work with. But it's a good start.



How to Avoid Link Spam Issues

Some of the worst ideas look great on the back of a paper napkin.

Examples range from “getting the word out” by registering on discussion forums to announce a giveaway offer to dropping links on blog comments.

In general, a link that is controlled by your company or your agent can be considered spam.

The result of poor link building practices may manifest in the form of ranking positions sliding away.

Best case scenario, nothing happens to your rankings because the links don't count.

But if you see your ranking positions begin to decline, this could be an indication that the link building may have been relying on poor link building practices.

Taking the link building process in-house is a way some companies keep control over the process. This can be considered the safest method for building links, provided you have a quality link building strategy.



Link Building Overview: Content Marketing

Depending on how it's done, content marketing can be a euphemism for link building and I agree to a certain extent.

Done badly it resembles a paid link campaign utilizing networks of sites and networks of authors that accept money for article contributions.

There is a robust industry in authors who specialize in placing articles in authoritative publications.

Strictly speaking, these can be considered link schemes and there is a risk attached to those schemes. I don't endorse these kinds of schemes.

Here's an important insight about content marketing: Content creation for the purpose of cultivating traffic is one of the smartest ways to cultivate natural links.

Instead of focusing on obtaining links from the article itself, create a piece of content that focuses on driving traffic to your company site.

This means that all links are no-followed if it's published on a site that is not your own.

Any content is good enough to drive traffic is good enough to cultivate high quality inbound links.



Viral Link Bait Strategies

Done properly a link bait strategy that focuses on a relevant topic of interest to regular visitors of your site will produce high quality links.

The best kind of strategy revolves around creating a useful piece of content that potential customers would link to and share on social media. That is what I call Relevant Content Baiting.

Any strategy that is non-relevant and focuses on a gimmick or humor may end up attracting visitors who are not interested in your company product and will never return or turn into a sale.

That kind of link bait, in my opinion, tends to attract irrelevant links to a web page on your site that is irrelevant to the core product that the site revolves around.

For example, if your site is a Hilton Head, SC seafood restaurant and you run a fish photo contest and it goes viral, the links will likely

not be relevant for seafood restaurant. They'll be relevant for the "fish photo contest" page.

In my opinion, because Hilton Head, SC is a destination and because a restaurant is a local business, it makes far more sense to cultivate travel related links to attract tourist business from outside of the state as well as cultivate local type citations so that the restaurant ranks in the local search.

In my opinion, viral link building strategies are rarely a viable solution unless the topic is directly related to the product or service.

Search Engines May Rank Links

Search engines, in my opinion, based on various patents and research papers, **rank relevant links** from relevant sites and ignore everything else.

This creates what's known as a **reduced link graph**. It's a map of the Internet, ordered by topic, with the spam sites left out. The ranking process begins from there.

Relationship Between Links & Content

Ranking a site is not solely about cultivating links. Content is said to be the most important ranking factor.

If your content is useful then the links will, with some promotional effort, begin accumulating.

Chapter 2

What Is a Natural Link? (A Good Link)

SEJ
EBOOK

Written By
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What's the difference between natural, quality, good, and bad links?

In the SEO world, terms like natural links, quality links, and good links are thrown around like crazy.

Whether you're going into a client pitch, attending a search marketing conference, or your boss asks you why you aren't getting quality links, it's important to know (and be able to explain) all the different types of links.

This chapter will help you:

- Understand each type of link by providing you with definitions.
- Determine which types of links may be able to help boost your rankings.
- Figure out which types of links you may want to add to a disavow sheet.

Although there is normally debate on specific types of links (.edu and relevant, manually-updated directories, for example), this will be a good baseline for you to use.

Types of Links

Natural Links

A natural link is one that occurs organically (not easily seen as being placed by your company).

Natural links don't:

- Have tracking parameters.
- Exist within sponsored or paid content.
- Redirect through JavaScript or monetization tools.

A natural link exists as a reference to a piece of content, website, or source.

Unnatural Links

Unnatural links are any links that are paid for.

These types of links can be placed and tracked by PR firms and media buyers, or monetized through affiliate programs, CPC campaigns, influencers, or monetization scripts.

If these links aren't nofollowed, Google can potentially take manual action on your site or your site could be negatively impacted algorithmically (most likely by Penguin), because they are not earned/natural.

What are unnatural links? Links:

- With tracking parameters (e.g., UTM source and medium).
- Within sponsored content on a site (because search engines do not know who paid for the content to be placed).
- From sites using monetization scripts because scripts say you get paid for linking to retailers.

You can find these in the site's code, outbound redirects, and other mappable techniques.

Semi-natural Link

On occasion, you'll discover a "mixed" link pattern. For example, you may find a natural link that uses tracking parameters.

Let's say you click through from an influencer who has been paid to share a link. That link will lead to the landing page that may have the tracking parameters in place.

Bloggers, aggregators, and others who follow that link may copy and paste it directly into their site giving natural links that also have these parameters. This could result in an unnatural but organic link scheme.

To help resolve this, make sure that as a person reaches your site through a tracked link, you set a redirect to pass the parameters but also resolve to the natural page structure. (i.e., the `utm_campaign` redirects to a version without any UTM parameters).

Now you'll have the standard and non-tracked URL as the one they use and be able to properly attribute sales, traffic, and leads back to the original site.

You can still measure the halo effect of additional links and exposure by pulling a link acquisition report and crawling/scraping the likes, shares, and retweets from the initial influencer.

What Are Quality Links?

Quality links are links that come from high-quality sites.

This definition will change depending on the quality of the SEO you're talking to. Here is what I look at to determine the quality of a website:

- The site is niche, or at least has a regularly updated section about the topic.
- There are no outbound links to adult, illegal, payday, or scam sites.
- You won't be able to see that they allow sponsored content (with the exception of clearly marked advertorials).
- Media kits and publicly viewable advertising sections do not have a price for or mention of text links or backlinks.
- Finding them in the Google news feed is a good sign that they are trustworthy or high quality in Google's eyes.
- Acquired links will be by staff writers and not contributors. Contributors can be bought more easily and many large publications have begun nofollowing their links. Do a Google search for Huffington Post and [nofollow](#) and you'll see multiple discussions from when they flipped the switch. The links come from body copy. That has to be earned – unlike blog comments, forum mentions, press releases, and
- other areas where anyone can easily build or buy links.

What Makes a Good Link?

A good link is different than a quality link. It can be any type of link that can have a positive impact with a bit less risk.

The factors of a good link vs. bad link can also change based on the type of SEO you're doing **local** vs. national and country-specific vs. international – Russia and Yandex vs. the UK and Google).

A good link for Yandex should be ones that are approved by the Russian government and aren't also linking to sites that have banned content, contraband, and things that are forbidden in Yandex.

Alcohol gifts, for example, could potentially be bad for Yandex traffic, but good links for other countries and search engines. Local directories that are managed, maintained, and don't have a

submit your site option may be good for local SEO, but probably not national because of the content relevance and potential quality.

If they have a lot of age and continuously clean out old sites, dead sites and 4XX errors they may be beneficial instead of harmful.

If you notice I'm saying **may** or **might,** it's because there is no solid yes or no. It depends on the specific situation and website.

You could have a blogger who has great niche content but no age or authority and may quit blogging in a year. Although it looks like a good link, it would fall under "maybe" or "OK" for me. That is 100% debatable.

Then there is an established blog without a huge following that sticks to its niche. They are not doing well in Google though with organic even though they have great content. This would fall under "OK" for me as well.

Another could be a new blog that is content relevant but doesn't have a ton of SEO traffic, but does have a lot of engaged readers. This would be a good link for me because they have a quality audience and if they continue down the niche path they could be a great source of traffic/sales and also pass authority from their links for SEO.

The trick with good backlinks is to determine and watch how they impact you currently and what they may do in the future. Each site is unique and each link should be considered independently before disavowing it as bad or keeping it as good/quality.

How Can You Build Quality Links?

You'll find a ton of posts on Search Engine Journal about [building quality links](#), including a [few I've written](#). (Use the search box and you'll find them.)

What works best for me is always keeping a few things in mind when creating copy that I want to get links for.

- Who have I empowered or made feel important or have an emotional reaction?
- Why would that person want to share, link to or call out my content by tagging a friend in it?
- Did I provide a solution to a common or unique problem?
- What is unique, special, or different about how I'm presenting this content?

- Which ways have I better explained, detailed, or given examples of something complex, funny, or useful?
- How have I enabled people to easily share and link to this content?
- Where have I advertised it so that I can keep it in front of people who can give me quality backlinks and references (sometimes this is an influencer who has a large following of bloggers and journalists)?

When someone mentions natural links, it's all about quality. That means they can't be easily acquired, they're in a good **SEO neighborhood**, and that they are in topically related content sites that match your services, stores, site, or niche.

Focusing on quality over quantity is what can help to protect your site as Google updates.

More importantly, focusing on quality can help constantly bring in relevant readers through referring sites who may also become customers, engaged readers, and a new source of links and social media traffic.

Chapter 3

3 Ways to Measure Link Quality

SEJ
EBOOK

Written By
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Owner, Martinibuster.com



The following are ideas that I came up with during the course of my two decades in the Internet marketing experience, and nearly 20 years building links and watching trends come and go.

These three tips are like a framework for thinking about what it truly means when we talk about quality links.

Understanding what makes a link relevant and useful for ranking and sales is important. It can help you better understand how to use your resources for maximum effect.

1. How Many Site Visitors Will Convert?

One way to judge the usefulness of a link campaign that someone may suggest to you, is asking yourself (or your SEO) how likely is it that visitors from the sites they want to attract links from will convert?

This isn't about accuracy, like actual numbers. What I'm going after is a back of the napkin guesstimate. It's a quick way to get a thumbnail estimate as to whether something is or is not useful.

2. Do a Quality Check of Inlinks & Outlinks

Then take a peek at what kinds of links those sites have. If they have great inbound links, then great.

If it looks like they mostly have links from obvious link building schemes then probably back away.

Then take a look at their outbound links. Are they linking to shady or irrelevant sites? If so, back away.

Would You Pay for a Link from these Sites?

I'm not suggesting you pay for a link. I am simply suggesting a mental experiment of asking yourself if you would spend money to advertise on that site.

And if your answer is yes, put a dollar figure on it. Ask yourself why you would pay so much.

If your answer is because of some third party metric, stop. Just stop. :)

Traffic Is Not the Ultimate Metric

Not all sites send traffic. Not all quality web pages have a high PageRank (or whatever metric you want to use to measure the quality).

Some pages have low outward measures of quality. But they do have what I like to think of as a different kind of power and that's relevance and being in a good community.

Being in a relevant topical neighborhood is a good thing.

Sometimes these neighborhoods are small and don't have a lot of traffic and that's OK. That's the nature of certain link neighborhoods, particularly in the B2B niches.

3. Semantic Relevance

Many years ago, I was chatting with a well-known link builder. The topic was identifying a good link. He encouraged people to think semantically for relevance, because relevance, according to him, was about word-matching.

As an example, he proposed that a Thai recipe site would make a good link for a Thailand travel site because they both had Thai and Thailand in common.

His point of view made sense and many people shared his opinion. Yet I strongly disagreed with the idea of semantic relevance.

A quick way to tell if a “semantic relevance” link is useful for ranking purposes, a thumbnail estimate, is to estimate if the traffic has the potential to convert. If it does then it is a good link.

If the link does not have the potential for converting then it is probably not a good link.

Why is that? Let's return to the Thais recipe site.

Visitor Intent Relevance

How likely do you think it is that a Thai recipe site visitor will convert to buying a flight to Thailand?

How likely are the recipe site visitors to buy a cookbook?

The answer to that indicates what I like to think of as the relevance of visitor intent.

Traffic Intent

Another rule about relevance exists that holds that if a link brings traffic then it's a good link. There's truth in that. But not all traffic is good. Some traffic is useless.

The reason some traffic is useless is because of the visitor intent of that traffic.

Why are they coming to the site? The following explains how that works.



The Unsuccessful Wildly Successful Viral Link Campaign

Several years ago, I did a link building clinic in New York. An audience member stood up and related the amazing results of his company's viral link campaign.

This was a Business to Business (B2B) company. It manufactured products that were purchased by university science labs and the United States military.

Their link building strategy was based on trend-hijacking. It's basically about selecting a popular trend then create a way to tie into that trend.

At its most basic, it can be a holiday-themed sale. At its most ambitious, it could be tied to a video game or a popular television show.

They trend-hijacked a wildly popular video game that had been in the news for weeks by creating a novelty event directly tied to that video game. The event, featured on a specially created web page, was featured on viral website, BoingBoing.

Thereafter the web page went viral. Links from all the newspapers, social media, blogs, and videos brought server-crushing traffic.

The marketing person related that the site gained thousands of links and the most traffic they had ever experienced. Yet he was confused because their rankings remained the same.

I asked him if there were any sales bumps after the viral link campaign. He responded no, there was no uptick in sales. The sales curve remained exactly the same, as if no links or traffic had happened.

To recap, the site gained massive amounts of links and traffic. There was no lift in sales, which meant there was no brand awareness gained from the massive traffic.

You know why this happened, right?

This is like when dozens of kids form a circle around two kids who are fighting. The intent is not to show support for one or another kid.

People linked to the site for all the wrong reasons. The traffic relevance intent of the link was all wrong.

Viral

Becoming very popular by viral processes, self-replicating processes to produce from person to person or enhanced spreading of information and other Internet sharing through social media, video clips, images, text message, viral marketing, advertising, or brand.

And this is why certain kinds of viral link campaigns, the ones where the relevance is off topic are, in my opinion, worthless.

The viral link campaign offers the appearance of success, as measured by links and traffic. But true success is not measured just in links.

Success is measured in ranking, relevant traffic quality, and the most important metric, sales.

Analyzing Link Quality

Now that's three ways to determine if a link is useful. All three methods are complementary and should be helpful.

The first method is to ask, will the traffic from that link convert?

The second method is to examine the inlinks/outlinks to gauge their link neighborhood.

The third method is for determining if a link is relevant by examining the user intent for clicking on a link from one page to your page.

Lastly, thinking about links within the semantic paradigm may not be a good approach. It leads to wishful thinking, where the person starts imagining connections of relevance that don't really exist.

Chapter 4

50 Types of Links You Want & How to Build Them

SEJ
EBOOK

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Over the years, link building strategies have evolved and matured. Long gone are the days of link farms and link exchanges.

Today, link building is about earning links through outreach and high-quality content and less about spammy techniques that try to trick search engines.

Still, link building (or link earning, if you prefer) remains an effective strategy for increasing organic reach and getting discovered. However, it can also be leveraged to drive traffic as well.

However, many brands and marketers still struggle to implement a successful link building strategy.

Why Is Link Building SO HARD?

A decade ago, link building was easy. You tossed a few bucks at a link farming company or set up dozens of your own sites and interlinked them. A few hundred dollars or a few hours of work and your site was rolling in top ranks.

Those were the days, right?

Wrong.

The problem was that link building was too easy.

If link building were still easy, then everyone would be doing it. (And everyone used to.)

Link building today is hard.

But with the right tools and knowledge, you can be one of the few utilizing it to its full potential.

Below you'll find 50 different types of links you should be earning for your business or clients, as well as strategies for acquiring them.

Keep in mind, there is no easy way to build links and not every link type will make sense for every type of businesses. But I am certain you will find at least a few new link strategies to implement.

Since this is a long list, I am unable to go into great detail for each type of link, so whenever possible I have offered additional resources where you can learn more about the specific strategy.

LINK BUILDING



50 Types of Links & How To Earn Them

The strategies below are a mix of options for driving ranking and driving traffic.

In general, social, forum-style, and certain PR links don't have direct impact on organic rankings but are great for driving referral traffic.

1. .EDU Links

While **.edu links are not inherently more powerful**, .edu sites do tend to have high domain authority, making these links valuable.

To earn .edu links, you can allow guest posts from students (ideally those studying your industry) and encourage them to share the post with teachers/classmates.

Consider offering students a discount or ask about an alumni directory at your alma mater.

2. .GOV Links

Much like .edu, .gov sites tend toward high domain authority.

To earn .gov links, focus on how you can help veterans of the armed services.

Offer discounts, training, or scholarships and reach out to your local **VA** or **SBA** and notify them of your program.

3. .ORG Links

These carry the same benefits as .gov and .edu links, but are easier to get.

Try sponsoring a charity program, offer your services/products pro bono, or volunteer.

4. Editorially-Given Links

Editorial links happen naturally when you publish high-quality, engaging content.

Build a diverse content marketing plan for the best chance of earning these.

5. Links from Traditional Media or Press

The best way to get **links from the press** (e.g., newspapers, magazines, radio, TV) is by creating a resource or study that journalists will cite.

You can also use **HARO** to answer reporters' questions, but it can be time-consuming to sort through the twice-daily emails.

This is a good in-depth post **[about media link building](#)**.

6. Internal Links

Internal links are some of the easiest to build.

If you use WP, I recommend a **[related post plugin](#)** to find more internal linking opportunities on your own site.

7. Links from Complementary Businesses Within Your Niche/Industry

Complementary businesses have a similar target audience but don't directly compete with you.

To earn links try offering to exchange guest posts, write a review of their product/service, or co-build a marketing campaign.

8. Links from Competitors in Your Industry

If you can get competitors to link to you, you know you are doing something right.

Consider creating a job board or do some in-depth, original research that's so valuable they can't help but link to it.

9. Niche Forum Profile Links

The value of these links lies in the audience, which are people who are highly involved in your industry.

Search for top niche forums in your industry and start engaging.

Offer value first, then share links when it makes sense.

10. Social Media Profile Links

If you don't already have your site added to all your social profiles, go do that now.

A simple step, but it sometimes gets overlooked, particularly because there are just so many social platforms.

Check:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Snapchat
- Goodreads
- Reddit
- Tumblr
- Pinterest
- Flickr
- Quora
- Periscope

And any others where you maintain a presence.

11. Social Media Post Links

You want to post new content to your social channels.

But also use a tool like Buffer or Hootsuite to schedule content multiple times to keep driving traffic.

12. Links from Reddit

This is separate from other social media links because it requires a very careful approach.

Reddit users particularly dislike being sold to, but it can be done if handled carefully.

Brent Csutoras has written extensively about [marketing on Reddit](#).

13. Links from LinkedIn Company Directory

Another simple, but overlooked link.

If you haven't already, create a company page and add a link to your site.

14. (Relevant/Non-spammy) Industry Directories

No, don't go out and get dozens of crappy directory links.

But DO look for legit industry directories.

[This is a good source for finding niche directories.](#)

Can't find one for your industry or niche? Create your own.

15. Links from Local Directories

Think Yelp, Bing, etc.

This is particularly important for local brick-and-mortar stores, but can help online brands, too.

[Check out this post](#) for a list of local directories.

16. Links from Template Directories (Create a WordPress Theme)

If you have the dev skills (or someone on your team does), create a WordPress theme or plugin that others in your industry would find useful.

Alternatively, commission one and white label it.

17. Links from Ebooks

Write an ebook, then add a link.

Simple stuff, right?

Writing a book can be time-consuming, so consider hiring an editor to help you turn a series of blog posts into a book.

18. Links from Local News Sites

Similar strategy for getting traditional media links, but focus more on your local area.

[This is a good resource to get started.](#)

19. Guest Blogging Links

Yep, good old guest blogging.

Find an industry news blog or complementary business blog and pitch a solid, well-written post.

20. Manual Outreach Links

Manual outreach is a numbers game, but it does work.

Look for **broken links** to pitch resources for, reach out to webmasters when it makes sense, and above all make sure you are offering value.

[This video on Moz is a great resource for manual link building.](#)

21. Google My Business Link

Don't forget to claim your listing and add your website link.

In many cases, people will see this information before they see your site.

22. Links with Brand Name Anchor Tags

See your brand listed or talked about somewhere? Ask for a link.

Set a Google Alert for [brand mentions](#) and reach out when you find someone is talking about your brand.

23. Links with Key Term Anchor Tags

Branded anchor tags are good, but so are key term anchor tags.

You can literally see real-time sales and conversion data for any website, and which campaigns drove that traffic. Start your free trial today.

Use key term anchor tags internally, and ask for them when you are comfortable doing so.

24. How-to Guide Links

Is there a topic or process you spent a ton of time researching or perfecting?

Publish a resource or how-to guide for others in the same position.

Think about it – if you were looking for a resource there's a good chance other people are searching for a guide, too.

25. Resource Guide

Compile a list of resources or ideas people in your industry would find useful.

For example, a list of 50 links you'd want to earn or places to find free stock photography.

Offer value and you will earn links.

26. Infographic Links

You can create these based on your own research or curate stats from other sites.

Create in-house using a tool like Canva (they have a specific infographic creator) or outsource.

27. Infographic Citation Links

I mention performing and publishing your own research a few times in this post.

That is because unique research is fantastic at attracting links – including from infographics.

Make sure you send out your research results and state it can be used in infographics.

28. Links from Q&A Sites

Go on sites like Quora and offer useful answers to questions.

The key here is offering value, not just searching for places to drop your link.

29. Links from Emails

If you have a newsletter list, use it.

Also, consider sponsoring a newsletter for a complementary business.

30. Graphic Links

Anytime your logo shows up online, ask for it to be a clickable graphic with a link to your site.

31. Links from Videos

YouTube is often touted as the second largest search engine, so make sure to upload any video you record there with an embedded, [clickable link](#).

Don't overthink video.

You can go live on Facebook using a smartphone and good lighting, then upload the video to YouTube.

32. Links from SlideShare

Did you give a speech, teach a class, or present a webinar?

Repurpose the content by uploading those slides up on SlideShare.

Make sure to add KT's and a link to [optimize your slides](#).

33. Links from Reviews

Ask bloggers or influencers in your industry to try your product/service and write a review.

Some will do this in exchange for product, some will charge.

34. Links from Wiki Sites

There is much more than just Wikipedia.

Find a Wiki related to your industry and contribute.

Publishing industry-related research is helpful for this.

[Here is a list of hundreds of wikis.](#)

35. Dofollow Links

When possible, ask for followed links in all of these strategies.

BUT, don't forget about nofollows.

36. Nofollow Links

Most of the time followed links are better, but [nofollow links](#) are better than no links at all, so don't turn these down.

Plus, ill-placed links can be penalized by Google, while nofollows won't and may drive a good bit of traffic.

37. Ask People You Know

Ask friends and close colleagues if you can link to them and if they will to you.

It never hurts to ask, but tread carefully here.

Make sure there is value in the link.

A concrete company linking to a baking company is a stretch, but a cupcake company linking to a bouncy house rental company makes sense.

38. Conduct an Interview

Ask an industry friend or expert a few questions through email or by phone and publish the results.

Make sure to send a link to your interviewee, they will likely share on social and extend your reach.

39. Give an Interview

Keep an eye open for social media posts from people in your network asking for interviews and give an interview yourself.

40. Links from Podcasts

Pitch to **be a guest on industry podcasts** (or start your own podcast).

This is a good guide for pitching podcasts.

Pitching can be time-consuming, so you consider outsourcing that part.

Just be careful to only pitch podcasts that make sense for your brand.

41. Contribute to a Crowdsourced or Quote Post

Contributing your thoughts to a quote post takes just a few minutes and will often earn you a link to at least a social profile if not your site.

Aim to share valuable advice, not just earn a vanity link.

42. Write a Crowdsourced or Quote Post

Flip the script and write your own crowdsourced post.

Make sure to send the final link to all who contributed and tag them on social media.

43. Links to News

Set a Google notification to email you when industry news is trending and write a post about it.

News posts can be short and sweet, the goal is to publish fast and ride the wave of trending topics.

44. Create a Tool

[CoSchedule's headline analyzer](#) is a perfect example of driving links through tool creation.

So is [HubSpot's blog topic generator](#).

45. Create a Template

If creating a tool is outside of your resources, create a template people in your industry would share.

For example, a link outreach email template, an infographic template, or a editorial calendar template.

These can be hosted on Google Drive or you can ask people to exchange their email for access.

46. Links from Webinars

Either sponsor a webinar with another brand ([like SEJ](#)) or host your own.

Make sure to upload your slides to SlideShare after.

47. Links to Original Research

Doing original research is just about guaranteed to draw links.

The simplest way is to start an annual industry poll and publish the results.

Create an infographic for additional link opportunities.

48. Links to Glossaries

Draw up a list of top industry key terms and create a glossary of definitions (e.g., [SEJ's SEO Glossary](#)).

If done well, this will attract links from competitors, journalists, and bloggers.

49. Links to Your Case Studies

First things first, you'll actually need to create a case study.

Consider partnering with a complementary business to divide the workload, or outsource if doing it yourself isn't feasible.

50. Links Your Competitors Have

Use a tool like Ahrefs, find out what links your competitors have and target those sites through manual outreach, guest blogging, or interviews.

Final Thoughts

While the reputation of the practice has suffered over the years due to risky tactics that no longer work, link building isn't a dirty word.

Link building is an exchange of value – how can you and a site owner help each other?

What can you offer in exchange for a link?

If you look at link building through this lens, you will be more successful and earn **higher-quality links** that can up-level your SEO value for good.

Chapter 5

Link Building Techniques: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

SEJ
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Written By
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We all know that we need links to rank well.

But some people are still unsure about what constitutes a good link or a bad link.

That information is critical in making smart link building decisions. Dabble in questionable link building techniques today – even unintentionally – and you will eventually find yourself on the wrong side of a penalty, costing you traffic and sales.

That's why it's so important to understand exactly what kind of links have a positive impact on ranking and are acceptable according to [Google's Webmaster Guidelines](#).

So we're going to delve into the good, bad, and ugly of links.

This post will explain which type will hurt your website, which will just waste your time by not improving ranking, and which will propel you to the top of the search results.

On a related note, it's important to [have a strategy](#) rather than just blindly building links. This will save you time, money, and energy while improving your results.

The Good Links

Good links tend to be earned naturally and generally aren't scalable.

Organic link building takes a lot more time and effort, but it also means the links you do get are more valuable because they are more difficult for your competitors to replicate.

This gives you a more dominant position in your market, and that's what we're all looking for, right?

Editorial Links

The most obvious example of a good link is when, unbeknownst to you, a journalist (or contributor, or blogger) is so amazed by you, your company, or your products or services that they take the initiative to write an article about you and link to your website.

Contrary to what some in the SEO community (including Google) claim, this is pretty rare.

Equally as good is when a personal relationship leads to a similar situation, either directly or through an introduction to a journalist, contributor, or blogger – provided that there is legitimate value for their audience in your story.

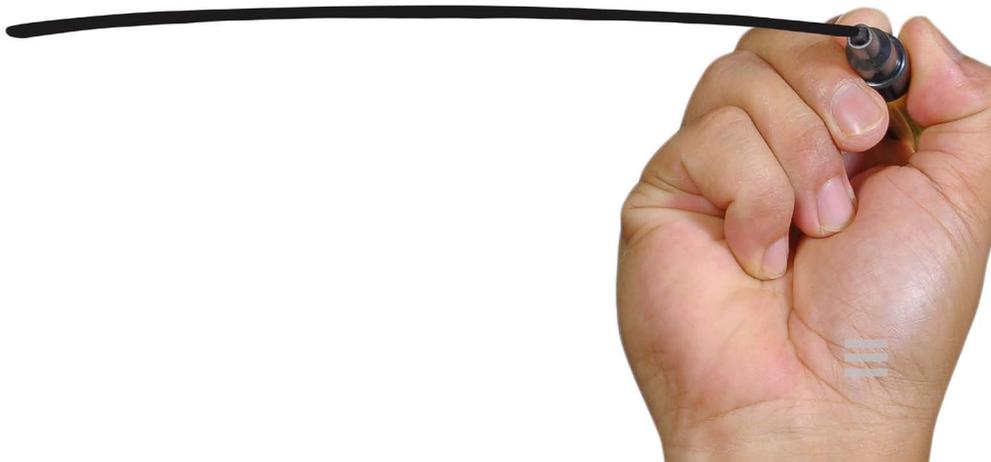
For example, in a recent article on the role of traditional public relations in SEO that I wrote for another search publication, I included several quotes and a link from a friend who runs a large and successful PR firm precisely because her insight was incredibly valuable to the audience, thanks to her extensive background.

Guest Blogging

Guest blogging, when done properly, ranks just a little below the previous two examples in terms of value, primarily because while the website it's published on has editorial oversight, it's still produced by you rather than a more objective third party.

It's imperative that these articles provide value to their audience and not be there just for a link. In fact, because Google has cracked down hard on guest posting as a link building tactic, I find it best to be overly cautious by going way beyond the expectations of value and be extremely conservative in terms of outbound links to your own website.

GUEST BLOGGING



To play it safe, any guest blogging should be done with the intent of building your brand and reaching a larger audience – rather than building links. Building links is simply a byproduct of doing a great job at that.

Niche Directories

In general, directories are all but dead. However, highly focused [niche directories](#) can still be a valuable source of links.

That being said, you may only find a handful of worthwhile directories focused on your niche, and their SEO value will vary dramatically, but it's definitely worth looking into.

You should expand your thinking beyond the traditional idea of a web directory and look at trade organizations, niche-specific networking groups, and professional associations as well because most have a members directory these days.

When evaluating a directory, you'll want to ensure that they:

- Have a vetting process, rather than just accepting anyone who is willing to pay the fee.
- Regularly publish valuable content that search engines can access and index.
- Regularly prune broken links from members who no longer have an active website.

Building Those Good Links...

Gone are the days of precisely matching anchor text to the keyword phrases you want to rank for. It looks unnatural, and thus easily identifiable by Google's algorithm, which will only continue to get better at spotting patterns [thanks to artificial intelligence.](#)

When someone else links to you without your input, the anchor text tends to be pretty natural, so you don't have much to worry about.

When you're the one creating the links, however, such as when guest posting, you need to be much more careful because your own actions (vs. those of a third party) will be viewed with much more scrutiny if you're ever manually reviewed.

There is a time and place for exact match anchor text, but in most cases, I tend to opt for something more descriptive, like I did in the previous link to my SEJ article on artificial intelligence.

You should also generally link to the most relevant internal page rather than the homepage (unless you're citing the company, in which case you should use the company name instead of a keyword).



The Ugly Links

While it may be easy to produce these types of links in large numbers, they won't have much impact (if any) on your organic ranking.

Investing time in producing these type of links is a waste of time, money, and energy because they will never generate much of a return on investment.

To make matters worse, if you use these link building tactics – even though they aren't effective – you're likely to eventually suffer a penalty.

Guest Posting at Scale

If you've been in the SEO industry for more than a few years, you probably remember when article directories were the hot new thing and you could simply fire up a program to submit your article to thousands of these websites at once.

Most of these programs even had the capability to “spin” or modify the content, resulting in a “unique” article for each submission. This created a swath of trash websites that served no purpose other than displaying ads within mostly useless and redundant content.

Those days are thankfully behind us. However, even when performed manually and at a smaller scale, this tactic is problematic when you’re doing it primarily to build links because it creates obvious patterns that Google’s algorithm can easily identify.

Links From Non-Relevant Websites

There is virtually no value in links from a divorce lawyer’s website pointing to a general contractor’s website.

Today Google is pretty good at identifying the topic of a website, and they generally only assign significant weight to links that are relevant to their target.

No matter how easy it may be to acquire a link, don’t waste your time if it isn’t relevant.

Header, Footer & Sidebar Links

Google doesn’t give much weight for links in certain areas of a web page, including headers, footers, and sidebars.

In general, sitewide links are a bad idea except in a few cases:

- Linking to a relevant sister publication that you own. For example, if Huffington Post linked to their India edition, that would be fine. However, if you ran a general contractor business and a mortgage company, a sitewide link from one to the other would be risky.
- Identifying software that runs a website, as you see with most content management, blogging, and e-commerce systems.
- Identifying who designed a website.

An important caveat here is that while you don't need to use the nofollow attribute on these links, you do need to use branded terms such as the company or publication name rather than keyword rich anchor text.

The Bad Links

Further down the rabbit hole are links that must be avoided at all costs.

You should disavow any bad links you've used in the past because they will absolutely result in a penalty when you're inevitably caught. From that point forward, Google will start watching your link building efforts with far more scrutiny.

When you've landed on Google's radar, any actions that may have been dismissed as an honest mistake will now be viewed as an attempt to unethically manipulate ranking.

Paid Links

You might be thinking that you can get away with buying paid links because you're doing it on a small scale and/or through personal relationships, right?

That sounds plausible until you consider that if a website owner is selling links to you, they're most likely selling links to at least a few other people too, and those people are most likely buying links from other websites. You can see how quickly the network expands from there.

Think of how many people, buyers and sellers, are really involved, and then ask yourself how difficult would it be for an organization with the data and resources of Google to identify paid links.

All they need to do is catch one buyer or seller and then follow the breadcrumbs to identify the other buyers and sellers.

Comment or Forum Spam

While it's easy to blast thousands of links to forums and comment sections of blogs, it's also easy to destroy your brand by doing this because you're slapping your spammy links all over someone else's website.

Besides, links in the comment section of blogs are nofollowed, and many forums nofollow outbound links as well, so you won't see much, if any, SEO benefit but you will open yourself to the risk of a link-based penalty.

Especially since you'll anger other website owners who will be more than happy to report you to Google.



General Directories

We've already discussed how niche directories have the potential to be valuable. However, you should avoid general directories like the plague.

These are the epitome of everything Google hates because they typically accept any website (except those promoting porn, gambling, or violence) so long as you're willing to pay their fee.

This is a textbook example of a paid link. The directory isn't relevant to your website, and in most cases, it lacks any useful content.

Private Blog Networks

Why go through the hassle of building legitimate links when you can just install WordPress on a few dozen domains and link to any website you want anytime?

Well, for starters, just like with paid links, it's pretty easy for Google to identify private blog networks, leading to penalties in the short term, and more scrutiny in the long term.

The more significant reason not to use private blog networks as a link building tactic is that you'll still need to publish loads of original, high-quality content and create inbound links to the blogs in your network in order for it to have any value at all.

That time, money, and energy would be better invested creating amazing content and earning inbound links to your own website.

When you consider that owners of most legitimate websites continually work to produce new content and earn new links, the value of a link from their website to yours continually becomes more valuable.

Conclusion

Links are an essential part of SEO today, but if you don't know which type violate Google's guidelines, you can easily end up doing more harm than good.

Links aren't going to disappear as a ranking factor anytime in the foreseeable future, so it's critical that you understand exactly which type will improve your ranking, which type won't, and perhaps most importantly, which type will get your website penalized.

Chapter 6

Link-Building Outreach 101

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  NORTH STAR
INBOUND

SEJ
EBOOK

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Link building is the hardest SEO strategy to execute because its parameters are largely beyond your control.

You may have a great story to tell or fantastic content to share, but success hinges on your ability to persuade other people to link to it. That requires outreach.

Lots and lots of outreach.

I am the owner of an agency that specializes in link building. My team and I have sent millions of outreach emails over the years, working from an essential truth: **Quality and quantity of outreach are both essential to earning links.**

Whether you're running a digital public relations campaign, promoting a resource guide, seeking sponsorship opportunities, or looking to become a thought leader in your industry, the fundamentals of good outreach are the same.

You need to figure out:

- **WHO to reach out to** (Prospecting)
- **WHERE to get in touch with them** (Contact Finding)
- **WHAT to say that will persuade them** (Template Creation)
- **WHEN to send your email** (Outbox Strategies)
- **HOW many emails to send** (Following Up)

It's helpful to have a thick skin because no matter how fantastic your pitches are, most of them will be ignored. You will need to send a lot of emails and always follow up.

Link building isn't easy, but whether you're new to the strategy or looking to boost your win rate, this step-by-step guide can help you improve your outreach efforts.



1. Prospecting: How to Target the Right Publishers

Prospecting is the single most important – and time-consuming – part of the outreach process. There is a staggering number of websites out there, and more are being created every day.

Building a solid list of targets can be tricky. You want to find sites that are both **relevant and reputable**.

If your campaign is about “Rebuilding Your Credit After Bankruptcy,” you don’t want to waste your time pitching to weightlifting blogs. If a site is sketchy (gambling, adult content, drugs), you probably don’t want your link appearing there. Carefully identifying and selecting your targets is critical.

Whether you’re hoping to reach news outlets, blogs, or industry publications, the prospecting process starts with understanding your topic or niche.

Begin by making a list of search terms to work from, using these methods:

- **Identify your campaign's main themes and subtopics.** Using our example “Rebuilding Your Credit After Bankruptcy,” your main theme would be credit. Subtopics could include personal finance, bankruptcy, getting out of debt, or even buying a home. Find as many angles to the subject as you can. Making a list of search terms and all their variations will help you uncover opportunities in relevant niches.
- **Brainstorm ‘adjacent’ topics and themes.** Don’t search for the exact title you plan to pitch. You won’t get far by offering publishers content they already have. Instead, think of fairly common topics most likely to be covered by the journalists or websites you’re hoping to reach. For example, “what is APR” or “how to choose the best credit card.”

When you’ve solidified your search terms, next you can explore the variety of tools available for identifying potential publishers.

Start with these steps:

- **Google** – Manual searches are time-consuming and not very scalable, but done right, Google can be an excellent place to start. Use advanced search operators to test phrases, spot patterns, and fine-tune your prospecting terms before you feed them into a paid tool. For example:
 - Use quotes to find exact phrases like “write for us” or “guest author.”
 - Type site:.org or site:.gov to limit your search results to URLs that end in those suffixes.
 - Type a word after inurl: to specify that the term must appear somewhere in the URL.

Once you feel good about your prospecting terms, you'll probably want to move on to using a paid tool, like one of these:

- **BuzzSumo** – This tool allows you to search for top content by a specific topic or publication. It can help you quickly identify top influencers to target with your campaign.
- **Pitchbox** – This service helps users find relevant blogs, influencers, and websites. It includes blogger outreach, an advanced search, and a feature called “hot off the press.”
- **Scrapebox** – This utilitarian tool can harvest URLs based on terms you input. The quality of the results will depend on the quality of the search terms, but for sheer volume, it packs a lot of power.

2. Contact Finding: How to Find Email Addresses

Finding contact information for the link prospects you identified in the previous step isn't always easy. Ideally, you want the name and email address of a real person.

Personalizing your outreach greatly improves the odds of a positive response. But as with everything, if you spend too much time scrolling through "contact us" pages, you'll quickly get upside-down on your budget.

The key to executing this step efficiently is two-fold:

Find Multiple Contacts for Each Prospect

Often in campaigns, marketers use a 1:1 contact-to-website ratio. That's a mistake.

You can increase your odds of a response by finding multiple relevant contacts within a publication.

Just make sure you only reach out to one person per organization at a time.

Use Tools to Automate the Process

If you've never signed up for a subscription to a service like Meltwater, Cision, or MuckRack before, get ready for some sticker shock.

These paid tools are expensive – but you'd be hard-pressed to arrive at a lower cost by paying an assistant hourly to Google all the information you need.

These companies are dedicated to keeping up-to-date contacts for thousands of publications worldwide. Their services are ideal for PR projects, but it's worth noting that the contacts are primarily journalists, so they might not be helpful if you're targeting smaller blogs.

Pitchbox is a great tool for blogs. If you use it for prospecting, it can gather contact information as it finds relevant blogs simultaneously.

Alternately, you can upload your own list of websites and have Pitchbox find contact info for them. Just know that the contact it collects might not be the exact one you need. Always review who you're reaching out to before you hit Send.



3. Template Creation: How to Write a Great Email Sequence

Make no mistake: Writing a good email is an art form. Having been on the receiving end of some real clunkers, I can't emphasize enough how vital it is to **make your template personable, relevant, and valuable.**

And remember that it doesn't stop with one email. **Follow-ups are as important as the original message.**

When you sit down to craft your pitch, be sure to create a sequence that includes at least one or two reminder emails.

Here are a few more essentials to keep in mind:

- **Be personable.** You're creating a relationship with a person and their website. If you want people to trust you and your content, coming across as spammy is the kiss of death. To avoid this, inject personality into your email. Connect on an emotional level. Be likable and authentic.
- **Use customized fields.** If you send too many emails with identical subject lines or body content, email filters might flag your messages as spam. You can decrease that risk by using customizable fields that auto-populate the subject line and message with the prospect's name, publication, recent article title, and other identifiers.
- **Proofread.** Grammar and punctuation errors are a big turnoff for most readers. It's also important to be careful with customized fields. Nothing gives away an auto-generated email faster than personalization mistakes. Check your emails for errors and awkwardness before sending.
- **Write multiple subject lines.** If you have a bad subject line, it's likely that you'll have a bad open rate. Brainstorm at least half a dozen subject lines and imagine how you'd react upon receiving that email. Would you open it? Ask a friend or colleague the same thing. If you're torn between two subject lines, split your campaign and do an A/B test.

- **Keep emails short and sweet.** People are busy, and your message will certainly not be the only one in their inbox. The more skimmable you can make it, the better. Use bullet points instead of long paragraphs, if necessary. Templates should be tasty to consume and easy to digest.
- **Be clear about what you're asking.** We don't mean, "Hey, can you give us a link on your website?" But if you want the reader to share your resource, report on the results of your study, or accept a guest post submission, make sure that comes across clearly.

4. Outbox Strategies: The Right Way to Send Outreach

While sending in bulk has its advantages, it's important to not send in quantities that will get your account flagged as spam by Google.

The current limit for Gmail outreach is 500 emails per day; however, even that amount could get you flagged if your emails are identical in content.

And you won't earn any links if your prospects never see your emails. Try more strategic approaches:

Build Volume Gradually

If you have a fairly new email address and you don't usually send a lot of messages, you'll need to build your volume gradually.

Start with 10 pitches a day, then 20, then 30, etc.. Make sure you're using your email for other types of messages, as well.

Schedule Sends for Mornings & Weekdays

Be thoughtful about the time of day you send your messages. Generally, business hours are best. Reporters should be contacted first thing in the morning.

Bloggers often can be reached in both the morning and evening, as many of them write as a side hustle. As a rule of thumb, no one wants to read your pitch on a Friday afternoon.

Review Subject Line Performance

Keep an eye on your open rates. If you see a subject line that works particularly well, use it more.

Watch for Drops in Open Rates

A sudden drop in open rates could indicate that your messages have been flagged as spam. If that happens, scale back and change your template.



5. Following Up: The Importance of Sequences

Just because someone ignored your first email doesn't mean they aren't interested.

In every campaign my company has ever done, we've been astonished by how effective follow-up emails can be.

In fact, second messages are often more valuable than the first. The key is to be personable and polite.

Here's what a typical follow-up sequence might look like:

- **Follow-up 1** – The first reminder generally goes out about a week after the original message. It should be short and sweet while it reaffirms the ask: “Hope your day is going well. I sent you a message last week. Did you see it?”
- **Follow-up 2** – The second follow-up should empathize with the recipient: “Hey, I’m sure you’re busy. I don’t want to bother you, but I’d really love to know if you can use the piece I sent.” This is a great time to ask for feedback – why they think it would or wouldn’t work.
- **Guilt email** – When all else fails, make the person feel guilty about not responding, even if the answer is No: “My boss is hounding me. I have a deadline on this. Please just let me know one way or the other.”

As with everything else, automation is your friend.

There are several tools that can send follow-ups automatically based on a schedule you create and depending on whether the contact has replied to any previous messages.

- **Pitchbox** – In addition to its other capabilities, this tool allows users to choose the length of time between sends and the day messages go out. Follow-ups appear seamlessly in the inbox thread.
- **Mixmax** – This is a great paid add-on for Gmail if you are sending in smaller sprints. Create quick replies, get reminded on when to follow up, and get notified of opens or clicks. This is a tool for someone who isn't looking for an expensive monthly service but wants to step up their game on manual outreach.
- **Buzzstream** – Similar to Pitchbox, Buzzstream allows you to create automated, customized follow-ups that send based on the criteria you input.

Outreach is ultimately a numbers game. By implementing these methods, you can make the numbers work in your favor. It's important to establish a vetting process for prospecting and finding contacts, so you don't waste your time sending pitches to irrelevant websites.

You're going to send a lot of emails, and they can't seem cookie-cutter, so creating personable, customizable templates is also imperative.

Your email open rate will be much higher if you send a personalized message with a catchy subject line, but you should still expect a lot of people to ignore that message.

Automated tools that show you open rates and other statistics can help you improve your win rate, but ultimately, the only way to master outreach is to jump in and do it.

Then monitor and analyze your results, learn from them, and continually improve your strategy by doing what works best for you.

If you'd like to learn more about our link-building and outreach process, visit us at North Star Inbound.



Chapter 7

How to Build Links for Bing vs. Google

SEJ
EBOOK

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Link-Assistant.Com



Have you ever wondered why you rank well (e.g., Page 1) on Google, but rank poorly (Page 4 or lower) on other search engines, like Bing?

It can be confusing. You've invested in SEO. Shouldn't optimizing for one search engine work for all search engines?

Well, not always.

Good SEO isn't only optimizing for one search engine.

Google is the world's most popular search engine. Their algorithm updates have reshaped search and SEO time and time again.

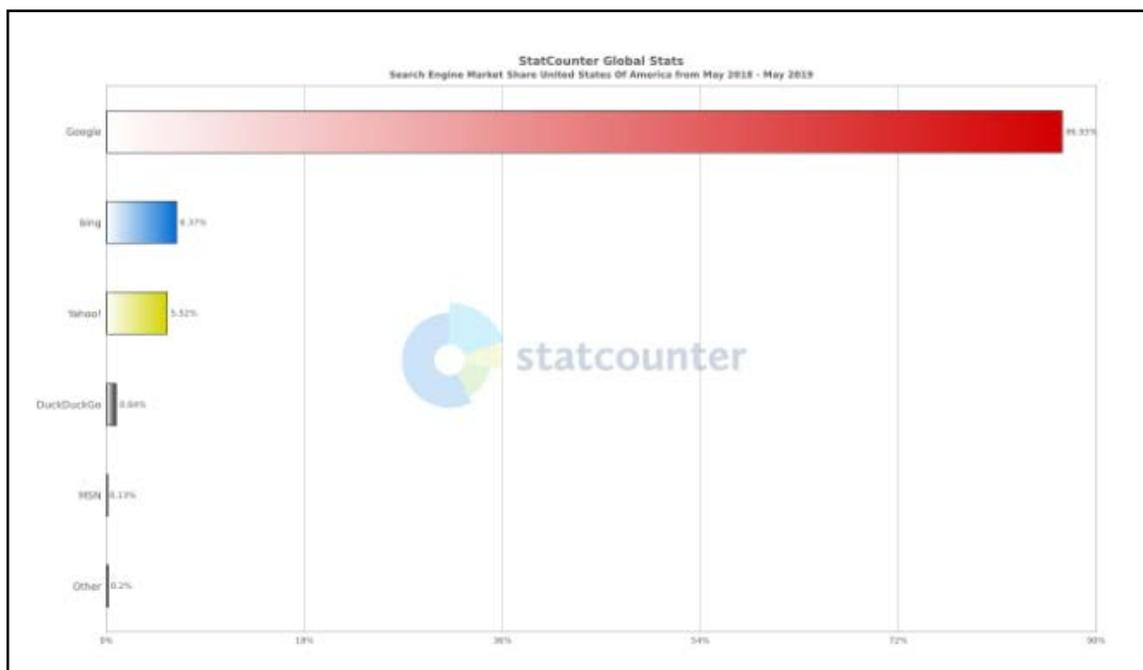
As a result, some SEO professionals today completely ignore any search engine that don't start with "G" and end in "oogle".

That's a problem.

While Google owns **91.88%** of the global market share, its total U.S. market share is **86.93%**, according to StatCounter's most recent data.

That means more than a third of your U.S. customers are searching for you on platforms other than Google.

So if you're only optimizing for Google, you're missing a huge share of the market.



Fortunately, optimizing your content to appeal to search engines beyond Google doesn't mean starting from scratch.

Bing (and by proxy Yahoo, which has been powered by Bing since 2010) is the second most popular search engine in the world.

Together, Bing and Yahoo own **4.76%** of the total global desktop search engine market share and 11.89% of the U.S. market share.

The best news?

SEO techniques work similarly across both platforms. So you can continue to focus on **content marketing** and **link building**.

But, as you may already have guessed, Bing and Google have a few **key differences**. These difference may lead to discrepancies in your rankings.

This chapter will cover how building links for Bing differs from link building for Google and how you can create one link building strategy that will help you optimize for both search engines.



http:// www.

1. Be (Cautiously) More Aggressive with Link Count

Google and Bing both value backlinks with a few important differences. One of those differences is regards to quality versus quantity.

Google tends to value PageRank as one of its key ranking signals, even though they removed it. In Google Search Console, Google used to describe PageRank as:

“PageRank is Google’s opinion of the importance of a page based on the incoming links from other sites. (PageRank is an important signal, but it’s one of more than 200 that we use to determine relevancy.) In general, a link from a site is regarded as a vote for the quality of your site.”

In recent years, we’ve seen a **declining correlation** between link count and Google rankings. In fact, some sites that rank well don’t have a lot of inbound links — they have more authoritative inbound links.

This means Google considers a few high-quality links with more PageRank to be infinitely more valuable than hundreds of links from low-quality sites.

Meanwhile, Bing also values high-quality links. But Bing places **more importance** on link quantity:

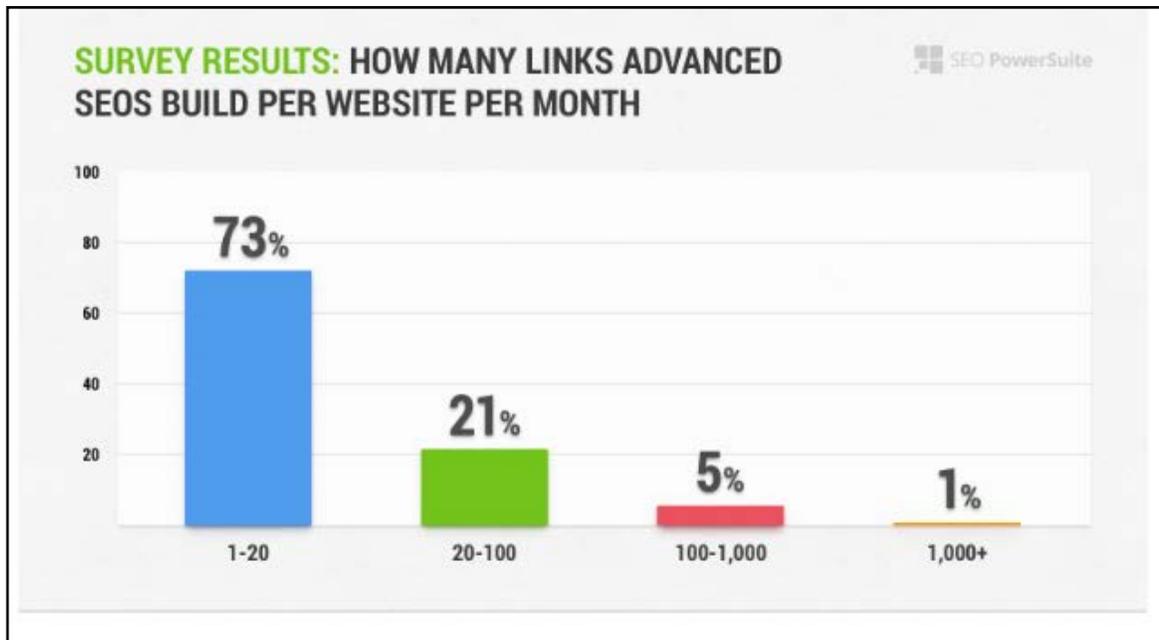
“Links pointing to your site help Bing discover new pages on your site. Traditionally, it is also regarded as a signal of popularity. The site linking to your content is essentially telling Bing that they trust your content.”

Want to improve your site’s Bing ranking in a hurry? Build a few more links each month than you otherwise might have.

Just remember that link quality matters. You absolutely shouldn’t start linking to spammy or irrelevant sites.

How Many Links Are Enough?

My team recently conducted a **link building survey**. We polled 628 advanced SEO professionals to find out how many links they build per website per month. Here’s what we found:



- 73% of our respondents said that they built between 1-20 new links each month. This is a healthy number if you want to improve your search rankings.
- 21% of our respondents build between 20-100 new links per month. This link building strategy, while more aggressive, will likely yield more tangible results on Bing.

The bottom line:

- For **Google**, focus on very high-quality links.
- For **Bing**, bet on the number of links.

A word of caution: you want your site to rank for both Google and Bing with the same link profile. So be **[mindful of Penguin.](#)**

Don't go too wild. Like Google, Bing hates link schemes, reciprocal links, and spammy paid links.

For the best results, build no more than 20 backlinks each month. Focus on authoritative top-level domains and well-established sites.

Bing heavily weighs **.gov, .edu, and .org domains**. Bing also places greater emphasis on **domain age** than Google.



2. Place Less Emphasis on Anchor Text Diversity

There's a noticeable difference in Bing's attitude towards keywords in the anchor text when compared to Google.

Since Google's 2012 Penguin update, sites with too much exact-match anchor text are liable to get slapped with a penalty.

Now compare that to [Bing's guidelines](#), which actually encourage you to optimize your anchors:

"Carefully plan which actual words will be linked — use targeted keywords wherever possible."

The practical consequence of this is that we see 10% more sites on Bing with keyword-rich anchor text. In fact, more than half of Bing's top 30 results (52-53%) all contain optimized anchors.

Given this, it's theoretically possible (and quite easy) to **over-optimize** your links for Bing, though I don't recommend it.

Your site ranking will almost certainly plunge on Google as Penguin hits you for over-optimizing your anchor.

Instead, use a cautious blend of exact-match anchor text with branded, naked link, partial match, long tail, generic, and other types of anchor text.

If you want to start increasing your amount of anchor text with keywords, make sure you:

- Understand your current margins with Google and increase them gradually.
- **Check on your competitors** that rank well on both Google and Bing with a link analysis tool. See what percentage seems to be working for them. Build up to their level.

3. Drive Links with Social Media

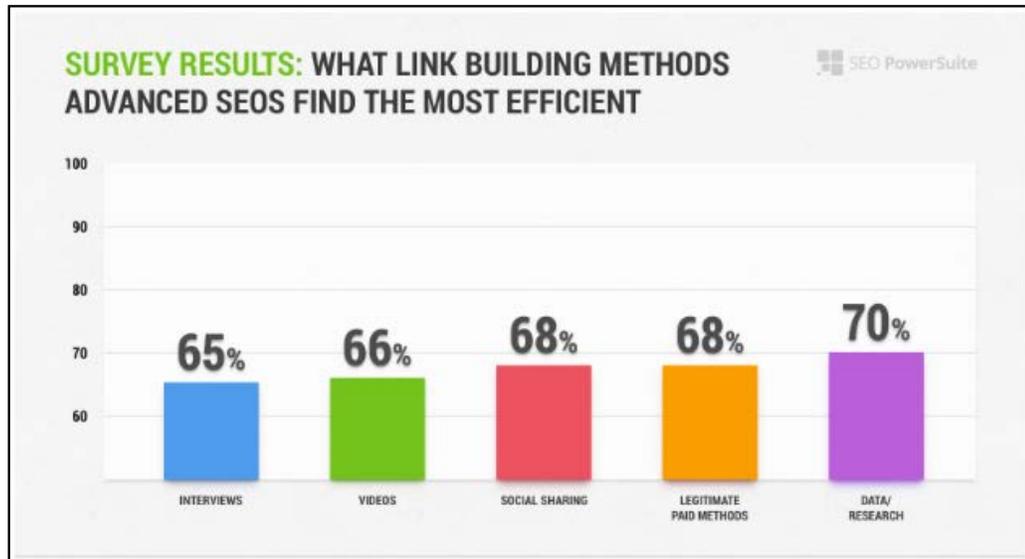
Bing has [stated outright](#) that their algorithm considers social media signals in site rankings:

“Social media plays a role in today’s effort to rank well in search results. The most obvious part it plays is via influence. If you are influential socially, this leads to your followers sharing your information widely, which in turn results in Bing seeing these positive signals. These positive signals can have an impact on how you rank organically in the long run.”

In fact, [Searchmetrics’ analysis](#) of Bing’s ranking factors found that not only does Bing value social signals, but that social signals have a strong correlation with better rankings.

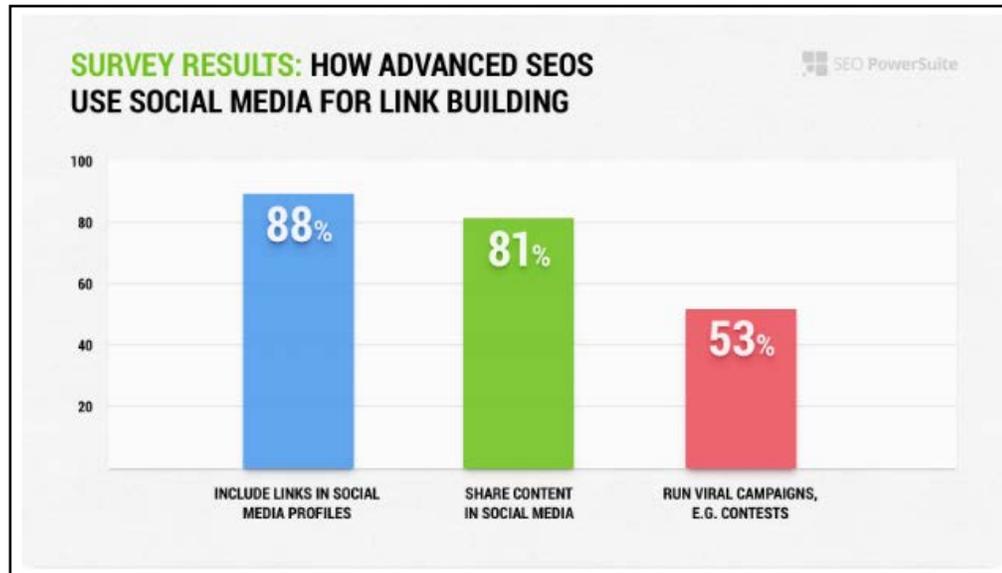
This coincides nicely with some of the new data our recent poll uncovered — that modern SEOs consider social sharing to be one of the most efficient ways to build links in 2017.

In fact, 68% of the polled advanced SEOs, who have used social sharing with link building in mind, found it to be efficient:



A few more specific examples of how our respondents have used social media during June 2016 – June 2017 to increase their backlink profiles:

- **88%** of SEOs included links in their social media profiles.
- **81%** of our respondents shared their content in social media.
- **53%** of respondents created viral campaigns (e.g. contests).



You can also use software to search for influencers in your niche on the platform of your choice. Create a list of these influential figures.

Then, when you create high-quality content that might appeal to them, reach out to them. Ask them to share it. (Our research showed original data/research to be the most compelling and efficient type of content for link building).

Finally, don't forget about video content. While YouTube might be the one-stop shop for all things video, you don't want to lose out on the benefits of those hard-earned backlinks.

Instead, find a native hosting solution for your video content. Then reach out to people who have liked and shared your videos in the past. Ask them to link to your website instead of YouTube.

Conclusion: Don't Sabotage Google SEO While Link Building for Bing

One thing I haven't touched on in this article is that if you wanted to build links exclusively for Bing, it would theoretically be much easier than building links for Google.

Unlike Google, Bing doesn't mind if you ask other sites for links, as long as those sites are reasonably authoritative.

However, there's little sense in building a bunch of links for Bing if it's going to **drop your Google rankings** in the process.

So, rather than optimizing for one search platform over another, you're better off looking to your content. After all, creating link-worthy content is the best type of link building.

As **Bing's Webmaster Guidelines** state:

"Content is what Bing seeks. By providing clear, deep, easy to find content on your website, we are more likely to index and show your content in search results. Websites that are thin on

content, showing mostly ads or affiliate links, or that otherwise redirect visitors away to other sites quickly tend not to rank well. Your content should be easy to navigate, rich and engaging to the visitor, and provide them the information they seek.”

Ultimately, link building isn't about optimizing for a particular search engine. It's not about discovering a loophole that will help you game an algorithm.

Good link building starts with mutual trust. You write content someone values. You earn their respect. And, as a result, they will share your valuable content with others.

Only once you have the right content is it time to use the strategies above. These will help earn your content a few more interested eyeballs.

To borrow one of [Bruce Clay's](#) metaphors:

“In fishing, there're a couple of things you have to do. 1) You have to use the right bait; 2) you have to fish where the fish are. That is link building. You have to come up with something that your community cares about and then put it in front of them.”

Chapter 8

5 Tips to Run a Sustainable Link Building Campaign

SEJ
EBOOK

Written By
Patrick Reinhart
VP, Digital Strategies, Conductor



Do I want to do link building?

As I wait for the collective sigh of everyone reading this to subside, I think that this is a question that everyone in search asks themselves on a regular basis.

While the answer being overwhelmingly no for the majority of the population, the main reason being the time that needs to be dedicated to the campaign, everyone knows that [link equity](#) is a necessary part of the equation for a successful run.

So that leads to the question, “Do I need to do link building?”

LINKBUILDING

Do I Need to Do Link Building?

The answer to that question depends on your perspective of the industry and where your site falls from an equity standpoint.

To me, sites fall into three buckets which determine how much time and effort need to be dedicated to these types of campaigns:

- Unestablished.
- Established.
- Big brand.

If your domain authority (yes, we all know this isn't a real thing, but it's widely accepted so let's get over it) is low because you haven't been paying attention to your search presence (for shame), then you are probably going to need to spend a sizable amount of time here just to get off the ground.

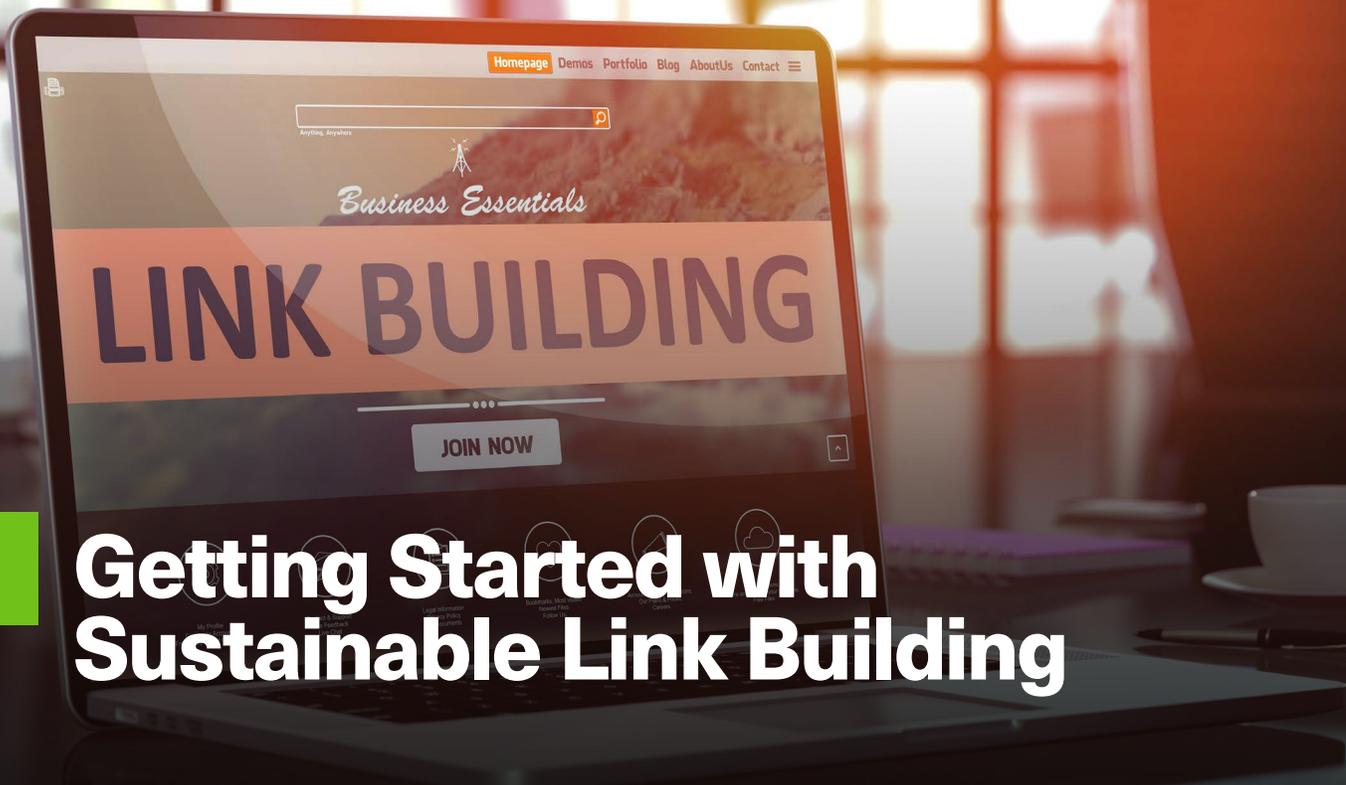
Being an established site means that while you don't hold big brand equity, you have been building your authority up over time and can compete on terms that are important to your business and probably have some form of link building in the mix.

If you're a big brand you have links coming to you like water through many channels naturally with little to no effort, so enjoy that little slice of sunshine while the rest of us try to solve this jigsaw puzzle in the dark.

The three buckets above are not just to characterize sites by equity, it also characterizes them by the challenges they face from a link building perspective:

- **Unestablished:** Have to launch a campaign from scratch, most likely has zero resources to dedicate to this effort and even less budget.
- **Established:** Have established search processes and budget but are most likely paying a third party so they don't own the process or relationships.
- **Big brand:** While links are naturally coming in, most of them are pointing to the home page, which doesn't help the site as a whole. On top of that, most big brand sites are glacial when it comes to changing processes and development.

So now that we understand how sites stack up against one another from a link perspective, or at least how you can easily place where your site stands, what do you do next?



Getting Started with Sustainable Link Building

These days you simply can't just “start doing link building” as there are many questions that need answers:

- Who is dedicating the time to this?
- What's the process of identifying links?
- How do we avoid appearing unnatural?
- Can I trust this won't trigger some type of penalty against my site?

While all of these are important questions that need answers, they still don't speak to the more important over-arching one, "How do we do link building in a sustainable way?"

Sadly, most folks are still doing link building like it's 2004.

People are burning calories on these campaigns, but they aren't burning them in a smart way. Thinking a little bit differently about how you approach this effort will bring much more value in the long-term.

Below are practices and ideas that you can try to run a sustainable link building campaign that won't burn out in six months or burn your website down.



1. Look Before You Reach...Out

Let's use data people!

Link building campaigns are typically very myopic in scope as most people think this way:

- Look for a relevant site with high domain authority.
- Send out prospecting email asking for a link.
- Hopefully get a response and work out a deal, rinse, repeat.



2. Get More Specific

Are you focusing on the domain as a whole?

The problem with this approach is that you are only focusing on the overall domain authority, which, as I referenced before, is actually not a real thing even though it is a widely accepted metric.

So why are we basing our efforts on a made-up number?

The solution?

Get more specific.

It makes more sense to dig down and look at the individual pages that make up a domain you would like to link to and what their backlink profiles look like.

If they have strong page authority and you have a piece of content (or can create one) you believe would make sense for them to link back to, that's a smarter way to find linking opportunities.

If you are selling baseball tickets to a certain game, wouldn't it make sense to get a link to that page from someone writing a specific piece of content about that game or the teams playing?

This analysis isn't hard to do if you are looking at the right data. You can set up a simple table and match up URLs:

Your URL	# of Backlinks	Page Authority / Equity / TrustFlow	Topic / Category	Their URL	# of Backlinks	Page Authority / Equity / TrustFlow
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If you want to get crazy (and really don't want to do any manual work) you can also pull rankings from large indexes such as SEMrush for each URL you discover in your link tools and do some math that calls out which URLs rank for the same keywords, which would indicate they are about the same thing.

It would look something like this:

Your URL	Page Authority / Equity / TrustFlow	# of Backlinks	Their URL	Page Authority / Equity / TrustFlow	# of Backlinks	# Common Keywords	Avg. Rank	Total MSV
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If you're worried about where you can get the backlink data, there are many tools for large sets of links to do this type of analysis (e.g., Majestic, Ahrefs, Link Research Tools).

Most of these tools will have the URLs categorized already, but even if you have to roll up your sleeves and look at what the content on the page is, that is better than blindly sending out emails with no data behind them.

This approach can also help with your outreach because you can include the rationalization of why that site should link to you and the shared benefits you two could potentially provide to one another over time.

3. Form Partnerships

There is absolutely nothing wrong with forming alliances with sites and writers that are doing things related to your business.

A lot of negativity clouds around this approach because people start throwing around “guest blogging” and “link networks”, which really isn’t what this approach is about.

First off, there is nothing wrong with guest blogging if you do it the **right way**.

The problem with guest blogging stemmed from a network of sites that were trading them back and forth in an unnatural way, not because Google felt like too many relevant people were writing for each other’s sites.

If you find like-minded folks who run websites in your industry and you feel there is a mutual benefit to contributing to each other’s sites, then you should do that, just do it in moderation and keep expanding the pool of folks you are partnering with.

4. Work with Influencers

In this world, nothing can be said to be certain except death and that people are going to talk about stuff on the internet.

No matter what product or service you sell, there are people who are considered experts on that product or service – and a lot of other people are listening to these experts.

Your job is to find them.

Most influencers – whether they are writers, vloggers, or speakers – actually aren't that hard to get a hold of.

Mine YouTube for folks who are reviewing products or services like yours and send them a message to see if they are open to being sponsored.

Most of the time they will partner with you for a free product or a small fee (depending on how popular they are).

They will just have to disclose that they received compensation for the review per Google's guidelines, which isn't a big deal.

Or they won't, but you didn't hear me say that.



5. One Last Thing: Don't Buy Links

I can't believe I still actually have to say this, but [buying links](#) shouldn't even be on your radar.

This is an outdated, time-consuming, soul-crushing methodology.

And let's be serious – you can do better.

While link [building / earning / whatever you want to call it] isn't the most fun activity, it's a necessary evil of our trade and shouldn't be ignored.

Conclusion

Now that you've read this, figure out which bucket your site falls into, pull some data, and start making smarter decisions.

Chapter 9

An Approach to Achieve Link Building Scalability

SEJ
EBOOK

Written By
Adam Heitzman
Managing Partner, HigherVisibility



Link building can be an extremely arduous task.

But it's a necessary one.

It's one of the most effective ways to improve the authority of your website and ultimately keyword positioning, but it's also a lot of work.

Link building involves:

- Reaching out to other website creators and business owners
- to network.
- Guest posting.
- Research.
- Constant communication.
- And much more.

The underlying theme of link building is that it requires human effort.

While you can, and many businesses do, automate their link building efforts by sending out robotic scripts via email or hiring offshore link building companies, this is not the best way to improve your online credibility.

People don't respond well to robots; they respond to other people.

If your **link building is struggling** but you're unsure how to scale a process that requires individual human effort, check out the following tips.



1. Consider Your Workflow

The first thing you should do is write down your link building process.

Which element takes up the most time? Which feels the most tedious?

That's where you want to start streamlining.

Link building shouldn't feel like a chore; if it does, you probably need to cut out a few steps whenever possible. Consider your workflow.

How do you get from point A, to point B, to point C?

Are there any steps that can be cut out?

Using an efficient workflow program could be a good way to save time and scale your link building efforts. This [article](#) by Search Engine Journal lists five different kinds of email automation workflows you can use to help save time.

2. Network

Thinking back to what we said earlier about human effort being a key asset to link building, one thing you can do to scale the process is to work hard at building relationships with other professionals in the business.

Seek out:

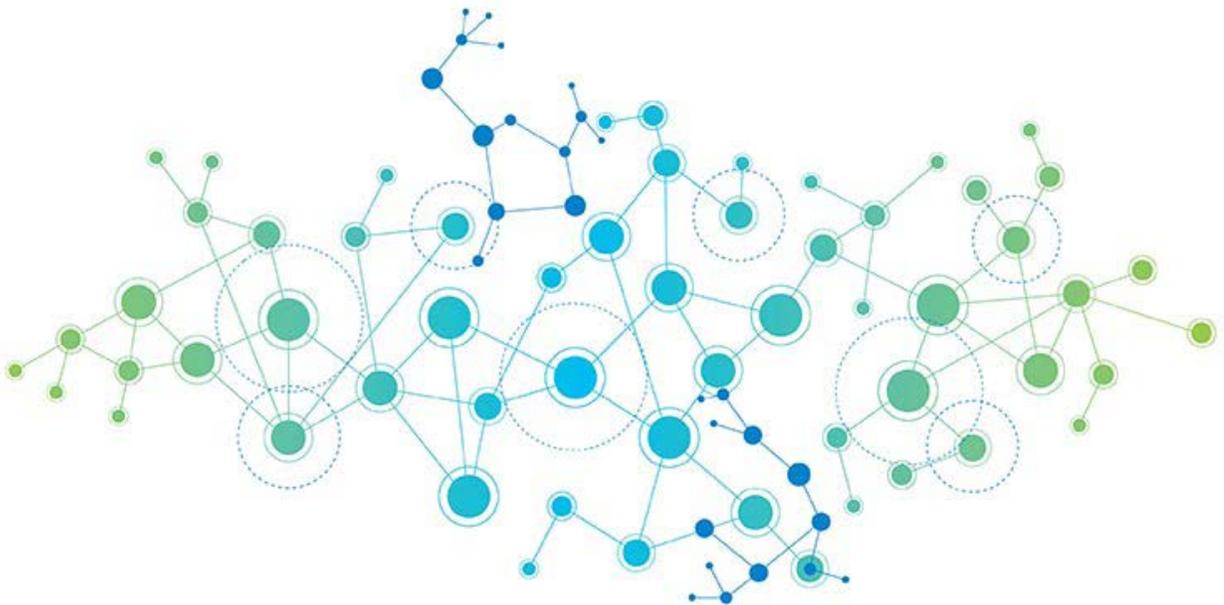
- Business owners.
- Digital marketers.
- Social media managers.
- Bloggers.

Establish a valuable relationship based on trust, respect, and mutual need.

It's much easier to ask someone for a favor when you already have a relationship with them as opposed to reaching out to a stranger.

Offer to guest post on their websites and let them do the same on yours.

The more networking opportunities you make for yourself, the quicker and easier it will be to gain backlinks in the future when you need them.



3. Focus on Producing Quality Content

Something else you can do is focus less on link building and more on [quality content creation](#).

[Content](#) is the foundation of link building.

If you aren't producing valuable content, it will be much harder to get backlinks, no matter how much time you spend trying.

It may sound basic, but building a repertoire of quality content is the first step you should take before investing in link building, and many businesses make the mistake of glossing over this.

Check out this [article](#) by Search Engine Journal on how to combine content and social media to aid your link building efforts.

4. Redesign the Presentation of Your Content

Create **titles** that are clear and engaging.

Include eye-catching photographs, especially for your thumbnail.

Never skip the **description**! This is your first chance to catch the eye of your audience – you don't want Google pulling random sentences from your post that won't make sense to a reader.

The better your content looks, the more passive links you'll receive. And embracing passive link building is a major way to scale your strategy that business owners often overlook.



5. Use Templates

This isn't the same as sending out robotic emails; your templates should be well thought-out, creative, and personable. But they're still a template and can be adapted to various requests and businesses.

The “meat” of the template can be the same, but add in some personal details like a blog post the person has written that you like, or ask them questions about a topic you plan on writing about for your own website.

There are various types of link building strategy templates you can create: “mention” templates, “broken link” templates, and guest blogging templates, among others.

See the examples below:

‘Broken Link’ Template

This type of template has a high rate of success. All you have to do is go on the website where you want to receive a backlink and identify a broken link.

Then, create a resource that can be used to replace the broken link, and email the user with it. Your email could look something like this:

Hi [insert name],

My name is _____ and I'm a big fan of your work on _____ [website/blog]. I was just reading your piece on _____ and I noticed that you have a broken link over [insert anchor text]. I have a resource on this topic that I thought your readers might be interested in! I've attached it to this email. I'd love it if you could look it over and consider using it in your post. Thanks so much!

Sincerely,
[your name]

‘Mention’ Template

You can use this template if you've recently featured someone's work on your website and want to let them know in hopes that they'll share your post. It can look a little something like this:

Hi [insert name],

My name is _____ and I write at _____ [name of your website/blog]. I've also contributed content to [list sites in same niche market]. I'm writing because I have some article ideas for your blog and was wondering if you would consider letting me guest post to your website. I really enjoy writing valuable content and I would love to create some that would engage your audience. Let me know if this is something you're interested in and I'll email you the topics. Thanks for your consideration!

Sincerely,
[your name]

Guest Blogging Template

Hi [insert name],

My name is _____ and I write at _____ [name of your website/blog]. I've also contributed content to [list sites in same niche market]. I'm writing because I have some article ideas for your blog and was wondering if you would consider letting me guest post to your website. I really enjoy writing valuable content and I would love to create some that would engage your audience. Let me know if this is something you're interested in and I'll email you the topics. Thanks for your consideration!

Sincerely,
[your name]

One way to streamline the process of creating and adapting templates is to utilize this next suggestion...

6. Build a Team

Build a link building team isn't possible for everyone.

But if it is possible for your business, you should definitely take advantage of it.

Train your employees to write quality content and then seek out backlinks. They should know how to monitor your site's SEO progress and be creative about coming up with new linking strategies.

Even spending **20 minutes a week** on technical SEO can put you leaps and bounds ahead of the competition. Think about how much more you can accomplish with 2 or 3 people working on link building as opposed to one.

Even if your budget is tight, consider allocating some money from another area to build a team; it will pay dividends in the end if you select the right people and train them properly.

7. Broaden Your Market

The more people your content appeals to, the more shares and backlinks you'll receive. It's a simple game of numbers.

If your content isn't being shared the way you want now, think about widening your audience.

You can do this by searching social media to see what topics are trending in specific groups, and then adapt your target to appeal to those people.

Make the effort to join the conversation, and reap the benefits in SEO.

Summary

Link building is hard. It takes a lot of time, energy, and patience.

You have to try new things, fail, and then try again.

But if you stick with it ultimately you'll get to a point where it's possible to scale your link building strategies and spend more time on other aspects of your website's SEO.

If you're just getting started with a link building campaign, learn the [**fundamentals of link building**](#) and [**how to create a sustainable link building campaign**](#).

Now get out there and start networking!

Chapter 10

Link Building to Link Earning



Written By
Anna Crowe
Assistant Editor, Search Engine Journal



To build a high-quality backlink profile, you need to stop working on building links and start working on earning links.

Real talk: Link earning is about creating trustworthy, awesome content and promoting it like crazy.

The discipline of link building is perceived by the public as something negative, due to Google spreading fear into link building with the reboot of Penguin and penalizing big name companies.

Check out how Google's John Mueller responded to a webmaster's question, "Is link building in any way good?" in [this Google+ Hangout](#). He responds "In general, I'd try to avoid that."

Yet as I witness a rise in content marketing, it's clear that a shift is occurring in how SEO pros create an off-site SEO strategy.

Look at how links have evolved:





Why Do You Want to Earn Links?

I hear this question from my clients a lot.

What is the value of a link?

Why do I want to earn a link from these prospects?

Increase Traffic

Gaining links organically grows your website traffic.

A link from another site will send you more visitors.

A link doesn't guarantee a conversion, goods bought, or social shares – that's the website's job.

Brand Awareness

When you gain a link, you're gaining additional exposure.

So, if you get a link on New York Times you'll most likely be seen by a lot more people.

If you gain a link on a small blog, most likely you're not going to get a ton of exposure.

But, if it's your niche audience, it's completely worth it.

Search Engines Care About Links

As much as we want to believe the myth that links don't matter, that is simply not true.

Links add authority, trust, and value to your brand so, therefore, search engines boost your brand if other trustworthy sites are linking to you.

When trading the labor-intensive link building strategies for the earned, it's more effective to view the big picture.

A content strategy — as you might have heard “content is king” — can give you a structured way to assess what value you offer, who is listening, and where to distribute.

Developing a solid content strategy that integrates link earning into the promotional phase will have the most impact for long-term success.

Link earning isn't a marketing tactic. It's how you impact your community to earn the actual links.

So, how do you not only create amazing content but help nurture relationships that make people want to share your content?



In Creating Awesome Content, Strategy is Everything

You can employ a number of marketing tactics to improve website traffic:

- Email drip campaigns.
- Community management.
- Pay-per-click ads.

The list goes on.

Before you start with a campaign, give it the content it needs to succeed by creating a strategy.

It makes a difference.

A strategy is the first thing you should do when creating content for link earning.

- Who do you want to target?
- Where do you want to get links from?
- What are your competitors doing?

These are all things to consider when making a successful link earning strategy.

How to Create a Roadmap for Link Earning

Creating a roadmap for link earning is essential for making decisions about your content.

But, how do you decide where to start?

Researching your competitors and listening to your customers allows you to effectively process the type of content that is generating the most links and what engages your audience.

Developing a system of researching, content mapping, and promotion is the lifeblood of link earning.

Here are the four steps strategy for turning content into links:

1. Research

One of the hallmarks of developing your strategy is finding data-oriented information on your audience and competitors to create actionable takeaways.

To quickly find competitor information, I type in a keyword I want to rank for in the search box (using incognito).

I'll take the top five to eight competitors listed and ignore the big players, like Amazon product pages and Facebook pages. Then, I plug those URLs into link building tools (e.g., Moz, Ahrefs) to begin pulling data.

For example, in Moz, you're able to view the most linked pages of that site. I'll note the top 10 articles that are being linked for each competitor.

Next, I'll add my competitor URL into BuzzSumo. I'll note the top 10 articles that are being shared.

BuzzSumo also gives you the option to "View Sharers," which is great to start adding to my persona discovery list.

After I have all my data pulled, I'll build my personas.

The information from BuzzSumo, social media, and Google Analytics will help me to define demographics, goals and challenges, values, and any additional insights I might uncover.

2. Creative

[Mindmeister](#) has an amazing tool for content message mapping.

I use this tool to help clearly define my message for the content I want to publish.

Content mapping will also identify if there are any gaps within your strategy.

At this stage, I begin building my editorial calendar with Trello. I give myself the freedom to throw as many ideas out there as I can pulling the resources from the research phase. I'll pair each idea with a topical keyword phrase to keep it structured.

Once Trello is planned out, I'll begin pairing my content with design ideas.

I try to be purposeful in connecting the dots for each visual.

For example, would a video or podcast work best for an interview article? Or, perhaps an infographic or ebook for a research-oriented piece?

Also, I'll decide what types of content upgrades I can feature for each article.

3. Promotion

After the article is written, I'll run through my content promotion workflow. Again, this process is laid out on Trello.

First, I'll go down my on-site SEO checklist. The usual meta titles, alt tags, H1 tags, etc. are all in play here.

Once I hit publish, I'll submit my articles to social bookmarking sites and answer any relevant questions on Quora or Reddit.

Then, I'll email my the team at SEJ with pre-populated tweets and links to the social bookmarking sites for a little extra love.

Next, I'll schedule the article in Buffer to be published on Twitter three to four times throughout the next week or so and once on Facebook and LinkedIn.

Depending on the direction of my personas, I'll also allocate \$50 to \$100 social ad spend.

And then, I'll schedule a dedicated blog post email newsletter to my audience with a pre-populated tweet.

In addition to the email newsletter, I'll send a personalized email or tweet to all of the people I mentioned in my article. And, any influencers I think might be interested in this particular piece.

Within a month or so, I'll look to start syndicating my content. Whether this is on my own platforms like LinkedIn or Medium or I pitch it to Huffington Post.

And, lastly, I'll look for any opportunities to fit my article in a guest blog post.

Bonus Tip: Set-up [Google Alerts](#) for the long-term growth of the article.

4. Measurement

Now that you've hit publish, you want to start tracking your metrics.

Ask yourself: how does promoting your content increase awareness, deliver links, contribute to social shares, or add to the bottom line?

Jay Baer shares metrics of content marketing in one of [my favorite SlideShare decks](#).

Baer separates these metrics in four categories:

- **Consumption metrics:** How many people viewed, downloaded, or listened to this piece of content?
- **Sharing metrics:** How resonant is this content, and how often is it shared with others?
- **Lead-gen metrics:** How often does content consumption result in a lead?
- **Sales metrics:** Did we actually make any money from this content?

5 Link Earning Ideas to Try

By now, it's well-documented that link earning is more than a one-trick pony at gaining organic space in the SERPs.



Link earning doesn't happen overnight.

It takes time to build relationships, be a part of a community, and develop content ideas that actually worth sharing.

Let's take a look at some link earning ideas to try:

1. Data-Backed, Long-Form Resources

A serplQ study of the average length of the content in the top 10 results of search queries found that the top-rated posts were more than 2,000 words.

Now, I'm not advising that you hold yourself to these length restrictions. Each piece of content should match your audience's needs.

However, creating valuable content that is backed by statistics, quotes from authoritative sources, or your own data can help people.

This [one article](#) has 564 linking root domains because they did their own research.

Let's take Vero's [40 Tips for Dramatically Better Emails](#) article, for example.

This article currently has 161 linking root domains, more than 8,000 social shares, and a Page Authority of 44.

What makes this piece so successful?

- It's very well-written and researched spiking at over 8,000 words.
- The design is clean and each tip is coupled with a real-life example.
- It provides relevant data for key points.

Vero's content is useful to its email marketing targeting audience.

This style can also be used in ego bait or interview style content.

Groove does a great job at interviewing up-and-coming top tech company entrepreneurs. [The article](#) they wrote with Zapier's CEO, Wade Foster, has 70 linking root domains, 1,500+ social shares, and a Page Authority of 44.

2. A How-To Guide

How-tos, tutorials, ebooks, and guides all create valuable content that helps to attract and convert potential customers.

When you begin educating people, you begin to earn their trust.

Trust eventually converts to links and revenue.

Take a look at the partnership between Chupamobile and Kissmetrics. They needed a conversion carrot for their emails and, so this [lead gen](#) page was created. The page converted [44%](#) right off the bat.

Or, how about [this repair guide](#). This guide currently has 31 linking root domains, 13,841 social shares, and a Page Authority of 74. Why does this work?

- The interactive features engage the audience.
- The content helps customers solve problems, in turn, making them happier.

3. Engaging Visuals

Content with relevant images gets [94%](#) more views than content without relevant images.

Engaging visual content builds your digital story.

Visual content is like the Nutella to your peanut butter. Without it, it's just not that good.

Let's take a look at some visual content:

- **Interactive Infographic: [Only 9% of America Chose Trump and Clinton as the Nominees](#)** by New York Times
- **Memos: [Bill Nye Takes One Badass Photo, Becomes Hilarious Meme](#)** by Nerdist
- **Comparisons: [Video Game Characters with Realistic Body Types](#)** by Bulimia.com
- **Graphics: [Perceptions of Perfection](#)** by Superdrug Online Docter

Or, what about this interactive map, [Your State's Favorite Reality TV Show](#). This map currently has 71 linking root domains, 984 social shares, and a Page Authority of 52.

Why is this map killing it?

- It makes a personal connection with every reality TV show binge watcher in the United States (guilty!).
- The visual content is done very well.
- The content pairs nicely with data.

This also includes video. Robbie Richards discusses in a very [detailed case study](#) how he used long-form engaging content with visuals and video to earn links.

He talks about this article, [How To Fly A Quadcopter](#), which now ranks number 2 for “how to fly a quadcopter.” This article has nine linking root domains and over 1,000 social shares.

4. Community Building

Building a happy community around your brand takes time, trust, and authority.

Your community represents a lot of things:

- Your brand.
- Your ideal customer.
- Your ongoing support system.

They’re the ones who convince others to use your products or services. They help expand your reach and represent the voice of your company when you’re not there.

[Sephora built a forum](#) for their community. With 23 linking root domains, 1,173 social shares, and a Page Authority of 54.

Groove built got [1,000+ subscribers](#) from one blog post in 24 hours. This article currently has 32 linking root domains, 2,197 social shares, and a Page Authority of 49.

What did they do right?

- Groove is transparent, honest, and they share real data in their posts.
- They talk to their consumers within the post.
- Content upgrades can also be seen scattered throughout the post.

5. Tools

Creating tools or quizzes is an extension of your brand.

These typically require a user to interact with your content.

It's a fun personalized experience for both the brand and the user. This requires you to truly understand who your audience is and what their needs are.

HubSpot pretty much invented the idea of using tools for inbound marketing. Their [website marketing grader](#) has generation 313 linking root domains and a Page Authority of 79.

What makes this work?

- It requires users to plug in their email address before even playing. Lead generation tool already!
- It gives the users personalized information based on their website.

CoSchedule also created a similar tool called the [Headline Analyzer](#). Again, the personalized interactive content makes this a win-win.

And, my personal favorite: Android's [Find The Phone For You](#).

Why Link Earning Matters

Link earning is not a solved problem. But, there are many who are experimenting with ways to legitimately earn high-quality links.

It's high time for SEO pros to unite to build the groundwork link earning for businesses to grow organically in the search engines.

- Steve Sheinkopf, president of [Yale Appliance and Lighting](#), stated content marketing strategy is the engine that drives their engagement. Their traffic tripled from 40,000 to 150,000 monthly visits. And, they've built a Page Authority of 46 with 23 linking root domains.

- River Pools and Spas is another small business that has benefited from link earning. Just one blog post “[How Much Does a Fiberglass Pool Cost?](#)” has generated [over \\$2 million](#) in sales, eight linking root domains, and a Page Authority of 39.

It's proven that a fierce commitment to strategizing, creating, and promoting content plays an important role in pushing your content and links forward.

Chapter 11

The 7 Worst Link Building Myths Holding Back Your Campaign

SEJ
EBOOK

Written By
Kristopher Jones
Founder / CEO, LSEO.com



As long as search engines shroud their algorithms in secrecy, the industry will continue to be rife with spam and myths.

I'd argue this encourages businesses to pursue the wrong strategies rather than strategies that work.

That's why some people have lost faith in the [value of SEO](#). This limits opportunities more than it creates new ones.

As you read through this chapter, you'll notice a number of popular myths that cast a negative light on [link building](#) and leave people scared of pursuing manual link building practices.

This is understandable from where the industry has come from.

You've likely heard or read advice from link building experts like, "it's no longer 2006!" and "link building should be completely natural."

But I'd argue that this leaves us blind to good link building opportunities.

Do search engines justify links by their ends (value) or by their means (practice)? I'd argue the latter.

But the point here isn't to argue ethics. It's to showcase value.

Here I'd like to dispel seven popular myths and misconceptions about link building that are causing more harm than good.

Once we've busted these myths, we can deliver our clients more value by better understanding the core basics of link building.



Myth 1: Backlinks Are a ‘Top’ Google Ranking Factor

This myth dates back to a Google Q&A, when Google Search Quality Senior Strategist Andrey Lipattsev stated that [links, content, and RankBrain](#) were Google’s top three ranking factors.

But if this were true, it would ignore a vast majority of signals, such as user experience, query intent, and hundreds of other ranking factors to prioritize pages by the amount of backlinks they have.

John Mueller even [clarified this](#).

Google’s ranking factors are dynamic, employing different algorithms when determining the results of different queries for different user intent.

But countless correlation studies have shown that pages in the top three results tend to have an huge number of backlinks.

The question is:

Do these pages rank high because of their backlink profile – or do they have so many backlinks because they have are ranking high?

It's all relative.

Would a Position 4 result with more twice as many clicks eventually overthrow a Position 2 piece of content with twice as many backlinks?

How do Google and Bing weigh these different considerations against each other?

We don't know. So we shouldn't limit our strategy.

Does this mean that backlinks aren't an important ranking signal? Of course not.

The influence of links may be more substantial in first-page search results when most other factors remain equal.

BACKLiNKs



Myth 2: The Penguin Penalty

Penguin is an algorithm, not a penalty handed out by Google.

The distinction is important for two reasons.

- Google won't warn you when your site is devalued because of its backlink profile.
- Recovery from an algorithmic devaluation offers simpler solutions.

Despite [promises from Google](#) that Penguin 4.0 does not trigger negative sitewide ranking actions, countless case studies have proven differently.

Check out these case studies [here](#) and [here](#) for more proof.

Recovering from [negative SEO](#) caused by spammy link building only requires disavowing those links that qualify as obvious spam.

Generally, you shouldn't worry about Penguin if you're pursuing good linking strategies and avoiding links farms and networks.

Even if Penguin does catch some malicious links, which every site has, then I still wouldn't freak out because chances are Penguin won't even register those individual links.

PENALTY



Myth 3: Link Quality Can Be Defined by DA or PA

How do search engines define [link quality](#)?

We aren't sure.

So how should you define link quality?

This might be considered more of a misconception than a myth.

Third-party metrics, such as Domain Authority (DA) and Trust Flow, are merely barometers or guesses for how well a site compares to others.

DA is neither a ranking signal, nor does it give us complete insight into how qualitative a website is for link building.

I've run into so many sites with a high DA that were either abandoned or just obvious link farms.

This isn't to trash DA specifically. The problem is relying on a single proprietary metric to justify junk link campaigns and charge clients.

So let's take a stab at determining what a good link is:

- Linking domain offers content relevant to your business.
- Linking domain has high traffic value.
- Anchor text is contextual.
- Linked-to page offers value to users.
- The website has an editorial process in place for content.

It's really that simple.

What's dangerous about this line of thinking is that chasing DA leaves you blind to opportunities right in front of you.

This includes ignoring relevance, new websites, and even low-hanging fruit in the fruitless quest for DA.

Myth 4: Asking Someone for a Link Is Spammy

As we've all heard, asking someone for a link or exchanging a link between sites is spammy.

There are countless examples of “expert advice” saying you could risk a [manual action](#) if the site you get a link from does this often.

But reclaiming citations or manually reaching out for a link from a relevant directory or publication should not be grouped into the same category as link exchanges.

If so, it would mean that [broken link building](#) and [resource link building](#) should be avoided.

Myth 5: High Link Velocity Contribute to Manual Penalties

Many people fear that building tons of links to a single piece of content could negatively impact its keyword rank.

As impressive as search engines are, their ability to index the entire web and identify trends like this would be nearly impossible.

Besides, it makes sense that a highly original and valuable webpage would generate backlinks exponentially on its own.

Every time somebody links to your content it increases its visibility and gives it the opportunity to acquire additional links.

If this increases keyword rank enough, this effect significantly compounds.

It's the very idea of organic link building.

That said, if you acquire a ton of low-quality links from content networks and spammy directories, then you could be slapped with a manual penalty or significant link profile devaluation.

Myth 6: Guest Posting Negatively Contributes to Link Building

We've been hearing about how [guest posting is dead](#) for years.

These statements, like many from Google, were later rescinded or clarified.

Why would search engines punish you from guest posting in a highly relevant and trafficked publication to market your business and thought leadership?

Obviously, contextual links are valued higher than homepage links in your byline, but spamming your contextual links with keyword-rich anchor text could be self-defeating.

Guest posting just to build links misses the point of link building.

Guest posting, and even acquiring [nofollowed links](#), could have indirect benefits on your digital marketing from increasing your brand visibility across the web to your flow of traffic from these sources.

Myth 7: Link Building Is All About Links

This leads me to my last point that link building is [much more than increasing the volume of links](#) to your site.

Link building can:

- Increase your brand's visibility across the web.
- Increase traffic to your domain.
- Showcase your brand's authority and value.

Primarily, manual link building should be more about **building relationships** with other websites for marketing opportunities than simply acquiring a link.

I compare it to brand building in many aspects.

With that said, link building does have an obvious direct result in your rankings, but it also offers many positive indirect results that go on behind the scenes.

Conclusion

The moral of the story?

Avoid spam, but don't avoid low-hanging fruit and good opportunities in the pursuit of DA or appeasing a penguin god.

As with everything online, digital marketing is just as filled with facts as it is fallacies.

Know how to spot the truth and follow the best practice of link building for the best results for your marketing campaign.

Chapter 12

The Ultimate Guide to Outsourcing Link Building (For Beginners)

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  **FATJOE.**

SEJ
EBOOK

Written By
Joe Davies
Co-Founder, FATJOE



Ranking high on Google is becoming something of a competitive sport.

Organizations are involved in a kind of zero-sum arms race, duking it out with each other to climb their way to the top of page one to secure the attention of users.

Just describing the process is exhausting, let alone sitting down and taking part in it.

For this reason, ever increasing numbers of businesses are outsourcing the link-building process to trusted third-parties: people with the skills and pre-existing networks to take the pain out of the process.

Why Outsource Link Building?

Take a look at some of the reasons why your firm might want to outsource link building.

To Save Time

If you run a small business, you might not have the luxury of being able to hand over the somewhat tricky task of building links to your fully-staffed marketing department. Heck, you might not even have a marketing department!

The idea, therefore, that you have time to contact websites, create content, upload links, and check that they've been implemented is laughable. Of course, you don't have time: you have a business to run!

Outsourcing your link building to an agency, however, helps you skirt around this devilish time sink and keep your head above water. You could save yourself weeks of the year by handing your link building strategy over to somebody else.

So You Can Scale Results

It can be hard for those with multiple websites to scale results or copy strategy from one to the next without the power of outsourcing.

Outsourcing provides practically unlimited labor to get the job done and allows you to create synergies between websites. Once you've got a process in place on one, you can then duplicate it across the remainder.

So That You Can Avoid Hiring In-House

Hiring a team of people for link building can get very expensive, very fast.

Not only do you need skilled content creators to generate compelling content for target websites, but you also have to supplement their efforts with outreach specialists, graphic designers, and managers to oversee the effort. For most, it's just not worth it.

With outsourcing, however, you can avoid hiring in-house altogether. You can build a fully-equipped marketing department at a fraction of the cost you'd pay if you tried to bring it in-house.

So That You Can Get Unlimited Scalability

Being physically proximate to the people who work for you is so yesterday. Today it's all about global workforces and infinite scalability.

Imagine if you had to rely on people who lived in your local area for all the skills you require to develop your link building strategy?

You'd be limited for choice and might not get access to either the quality OR the quantity of the people you need.

By outsourcing, you skirt around this pesky problem, tapping into talent both nationally and internationally.

So You Can Get Predictable Costs

Link building processes can be “productized” and “commoditized.”

In non-business speak, that means that the price becomes predictable, and you know what you're getting ahead of time.

Outsourcing link building works out a lot cheaper overall than doing it in-house, and costs tend to be more stable over time.



Where to Outsource Link Building

Okay, so if you've now decided you want to outsource link building, where should you look?

Hire People Through Upwork

Upwork is a platform where people offer their skills and time in exchange for money. It's an excellent place for companies to find budding link builders – people who are willing to put in the hours that they aren't.

The advantage of gig work sites like Upwork is that you can find talent quickly and you don't have to go through the process of formally hiring anyone in-house.

The downside is that you'll need to write Standard Operating Procedure documents and, in all likelihood, also have to provide management and training.

Link builders offering their services through Upwork might not understand that quality is more important than quantity, or that specific link building strategies are superior to others.

Find People for One-Off Gigs on Fiverr

Fiverr is similar in concept to Upwork, making it easy to hire freelancers offering link building services. Services are sold in a 'gig' format, meaning you get a predictable deliverable for a set cost. Again, you benefit from the fact that you don't have to go through the expensive process of hiring somebody.

Beware, many of the SEO services offered through Fiverr are of low quality. Freelancers may offer the world, but the final product might not be up to scratch.

If you can, try to find recommended Fiverr SEO services: those with an established track record of success. Avoid cheap options like the plague.

Hire a Filipino from OnlineJobs.ph

Getting a Filipino to do your link building for you guarantees that it'll be cheap. Wages in the Philippines make geographical sense to businesses in the Western world.

You may need to pay for training, and there could be language barriers.

Use an SEO Agency

SEO agencies tend to cost a lot more than the options we've discussed so far, but they often offer a far more in-depth service and, at the very least, understand the SEO landscape.

Quality SEO services are unlikely to get you into trouble with Google for using "black hat" techniques that go against the terms of service. And they tend to be a good option for absolute beginners.

In general, however, they could be a waste of money for those with intermediate or expert SEO knowledge who could orchestrate their own team or make use of individual link building services.

Use a Specialist Link Building Provider

Link building providers, like FATJOE (shameless plug), are great for SEOs who have their own strategies and campaigns and need them executing.

There are no ongoing charges or minimum or maximum orders: just predictable and straightforward pricing.

With a link building provider, you get all the expertise you need, with no training and no SOPs.

Check out [FATJOE.com](https://fatjoe.com). (Use this link to claim 25% off your first order.)

Best Practices

What are some link building best practices?

Use Safe & Natural Anchor Text

Back in 2012, the link building world changed forever. Google released Penguin 1.0, a series of updates to its ranking algorithm designed to catch people using dubious link-building strategies.

No normal website, for instance, should have 100 percent of its links redirecting users to “cheap used cars.” It’s not how things work naturally on the web.

It’s crucial that those new to the link building game bear this in mind. Avoid “keyword stuffing.”

Focus on your brand and let the anchor text flow naturally within the rest of the content. It shouldn't feel out of place or like it's just there to provide the link (even though that the only reason it exists).

Link to a Variety of Pages, but Mainly Your Home Page

You'll want to link primarily to your homepage. Doing this will help this particular page act as a funnel for your organic traffic.

Other pages to link to include blog posts, articles and, occasionally, money pages.

Slow & Steady Wins the Race

When it comes to link building, you don't want it to look artificial: slow and steady wins the race.

The most successful link builders emulate natural popularity over time.

BEST PRACTICES





How to Measure Results

Once your link building strategy is up and running, how do you make sure it's generating results?

Measure Organic Traffic

Don't fall foul of keyword OCD. When it comes to your site's effectiveness, it's not individual keyword rankings that matter but rather overall search traffic across all your keyword targets.

Getting on the first page for the majority of related keywords is better than being first for one or two, and then in fifth-page oblivion for all the others.

Consider the Quality of Your Links

It's not just the quantity of your links that matter, but their quality, too. Google and other search engines tend to place more weight on links from high-quality authority sites than sites nobody has ever heard of.

Ideally, you want your links to be incoming from domains that Google considers trustworthy and professional.

Relying on Private Blog Networks (PBNs), that use expired domains with authority backlinks is a bad idea.

Sure, they might provide you with an immediate boost in rankings, but once search engine web trawlers discover the practice, you could be punished.

To stay on the right side of the guidelines, it's a good idea to discuss the standards you expect with your outsourced team.

Be clear on your rules ahead of time. Or, alternatively, choose a link building agency with high standards of practice.

Reporting

If you use an outsourced team, do they report on all of the links that they create?

They should!

Reporting is not only essential for you to check that the outsourced team has included your anchor text as specified, but that the link exists and you're getting what you paid for.

Quality services provide you with tools to see precisely what you're getting in context and in real-time.

Chapter 13

Link Building Terms You Should Know: The Ultimate Glossary

SEJ
EBOOK

Written By
Julie Joyce
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Do you ever hear link building terms casually thrown around and wonder what they actually mean?

If so, this chapter is for you.

Here's an alphabetical list of link building terms you should know.

A

Anchor Text

This is the text inside of the anchor element and the keyword(s) that you click on in order to go to a target page.

Algorithm Updates

We are almost always referring to Google when we speak of algorithm updates. For a list of major updates see [History of Google Algorithm Updates](#).

Basically, this just means that something has changed in the way Google looks at sites.

Alt Tags/Attributes

Alt is an attribute (described below) that should be used to describe an image. Screen readers use alt attributes to describe an image to a visually-impaired user.

Attributes

To summarize, attributes describe more about a particular HTML element. As mentioned just above, alt is an attribute for an image link. For a full explanation see [this guide](#).

B

Backlinks

This term refers to the links that are pointing to your site from another site. People also call them simply “links”, referring links, inbound links, and incoming links.

Bots

Also called robots/crawlers/spiders, bots retrieve information from websites.

Brand Mentions

If your brand is mentioned within content without a link, whether it’s on a website or in social media, this is a brand mention.

Broken Links

A broken link is one that points to a nonexistent resource.

C

Canonicals

A canonical element tells a search engine which page is the desired one to use as the original source in order to prevent duplicate content.

Citation Flow

This is a trademark Majestic metric that measures the link equity of a website.

Citations

These are mentions of your business's info like name and phone number. They are not usually linked and can help search engines to better trust a business.

Class C

People call this a C class network or block also and it refers to IP addresses. [Click here](#) if you need a more technical definition.

Cleanup

This refers to cleaning up potentially bad/spammy links usually, but it can refer to tidying up any other issues related to a site.

Click-through Rates

CTR is the measure of how many people actually click on a link to your site vs how many times your site appears somewhere.

Co-citation

This is a semantic measurement of the relationship between multiple items.

Competitive Analysis

This refers to looking at one site in relation to its competitors. Link builders sometimes use competitive analysis in order to identify links that other sites have but their site does not, giving them a list of links to pursue.

Content

Content is anything consumable including text, videos, infographics, etc.

Content Marketing

Often viewed as a nicer way of saying that you're building links, content marketing is the practice of creating content that can naturally attract links after it's been shared.

Conversion Rates

This is the percentage of users/visitors who complete a specific goal. That goal can be submitting a contact us form, downloading an ebook, buying a product, etc.

Crawlability

This refers to how well search engine spiders can get through and follow links on your website.

D

Deep Links

Deep links refer to links that go to pages other than the homepage.

Deindexed

This refers to a site being kicked out of a search engine's index for various reasons, usually a violation of guidelines.

Directories

Directories are sites that list other sites in various categories. Some can still be valuable, especially locally, but some are simply spammy lists of sites with no real value.

Disavow

When you disavow a link, you're telling Google that you don't want the link credited to your site. You can send disavow lists straight to Google.

Disclaimer

A disclaimer can be used for various purposes but in link building terms it is a notice saying that links on a page have been purchased or that the article is sponsored.

Dofollowed Links

Links are automatically followed unless a nofollow attribute is added (and possibly unless your Wordpress plugins override everything to be nofollowed) and there is technically no such thing as a dofollowed link. There is no dofollow tag but people use this term a lot to simply mean a followed link.

Domain Authority

Domain Authority is a metric created by Moz to predict how well a site will rank.

Domain Rating

This is an Ahrefs metric designed to indicate the strength of a site's link profile.

Duplicate Content

Duplicate content can occur due to many reasons but it's thought to be a poor signal to Google so it's undesirable. Canonical tags are used to help a search engine bot to understand where the original page is.

E

Editorial Links

If someone gives you a link without you requesting it in some way, that's an editorial link.

Evergreen Content

Content that doesn't become outdated easily is considered to be evergreen content.

F

Followed Links

Links are naturally followed unless they have a rel="nofollow" attribute on them in the code. The term "followed" is used to tell search engines to "credit" the links towards the sites they point to so they will help the sites rank higher.

Footer Links

These are the links in a site's footer. They used to be heavily spammed but that is not seen as often these days.

404s

The 404 HTTP response code signals a page that is not found.

G

Google Analytics

A free website analytics program that gives you all sorts of information about your site.

Google Search Console

Another free program from Google, formerly called Webmaster Tools. Search Console also gives you information about your site and can be connected to Analytics. There are various reports that can be run to help you get more information about how your site is performing in the SERPs.

Google Webmaster Guidelines

Found [here](#), Google Webmaster Guidelines are subject to alteration. Your site can be penalized or deindexed for violations of their guidelines.

Guest Posts

These are articles written by someone who does not typically write for the websites they're placed on. Large scale guest posts with keyword-rich anchors are listed as a violation of Google's guidelines for links.

H

Hidden Links

Hidden links are links that are coded so that they do not appear as links.

Href

This is an attribute of the anchor tag for links. It contains the URL and the anchor text.

I

Image Links

This is an image that links to another page, either internally or externally. Not all images contain a link.

Inbound Links

Links pointing to your site from another site are called inbound links.

Indexation

This refers to how a search engine has crawled and cataloged a site.

Infographics

Containing both images and text in one single format, infographics are a common form of content.

Internal Links

These are links to other pages on your site. Your internal links are critical for navigation and crawlability.

IP Addresses

An IP address is a series of numbers identifying a computer.

J

Juice

Many people highly dislike this term, but the phrase “[link juice](#)” is still used to indicate the value of a link.

K

Keywords

These are the words and phrases that indicate the topic of a page, the content of an image, or the relevant terms for a link in the form of its anchor text.

L

Landing Pages

These are the pages that a user hits when they first visit your site from any avenue.

Link Exchange

Once a common form of link building, a link exchange is when site A links to site B in return for B linking back to A.

Linking Domains

This is the number of unique domains linking to a site. It is different from the gross number of links.

Link Reclamation

[Link reclamation](#) is a process of adding links to your site from broken links or unlinked mentions

Link Schemes

Google gives you a list of violations to its guidelines, including an array of practices that they consider to be [link schemes](#).

Links Pages

These are pages listing multiple links, intended as a resource guide.

M

Manual Penalty

Google will notify you of a manual penalty through Search Console. A manual penalty (officially called a manual action by Google) is different from an algorithmic issue. (For more about the difference read [The Complete List of Google Penalties & How to Recover](#).) With a manual penalty you have the chance to fix the issues and send in a reconsideration request to Google.

Mobile-First Indexing

This is the new way Google indexes a site. They crawl and index the mobile version first. If you only have a desktop version, that's what will be indexed.

N

Nofollowed Links

Adding a rel=nofollow tag to a link tells a search engine not to count it towards the site it points to.

Noise Anchors

These are keywords such as “click here” “website” etc.

O

Off Page

Link building is an off page SEO practice as it does not require working directly with the website.

On Page

On page SEO is comprised on anything done on the site in order to improve its position in the SERPs.

Open Rates

This is the percentage of people who receive an email and open it.

Outreach

Outreach is the practice of contacting sites that you'd like to link to your site, whether by email, the phone, or social media.

P

Page Authority

Page Authority is a metric created by Moz to predict how well a page will rank.

Page Not Found

Also called a 404 error, this is a page that no longer exists where it once did.

PageRank

PageRank is Google's way of measuring the importance of a website. This is no longer a publicly available metric. Toolbar PageRank was once available for anyone to see.

Paid Links

A violation of Google's guidelines, a paid link is one that has gone live in exchange for money.

Position Tracking

The practice of tracking where you rank for various keywords across a period of time.

PBNs

Private blog networks (PBNs) are networks of sites.

Q

Query

A query is a request made to a search engine in order to get information.

R

Rankings

This refers to where you appear in the SERPs for each query.

Reciprocal Links

Otherwise referred to as a link exchange, reciprocal links are links where A links to B and B links back to A.

Reconsideration Request

If you have been hit by a manual action or affected by security issues, once you fix the problem you submit a [reconsideration request](#) to Google.

Redirects

Redirects send a site or page elsewhere.

Referring Domains

In your link profile you may have 15000 links but only 5000 referring domains due to having multiple links coming from the same site.

Rel

[Rel](#) is an attribute that is only present in the code for a link.

Resource Pages

Pages that mostly list resources and links.

Robots.txt

This is a text file used to give instructions to search engines. It's commonly used to block crawlers from specific areas of the site.

S

Search Operators

Search operators are words and symbols used to help narrow down a search.

Second-tier Links

Links that point to sites that link to your site.

SERPs

The SERPs are search engine results pages, which is the list of sites returned in a query.

Sitemaps

A sitemap tells a search engine how to get to all of your pages that you want crawled.

Sitewide Links

These are links on every page of a site, such as in the footer or blogroll.

Source Code

The actual code of a page that can be viewed in a browser. Not all code is viewable in this way.

Spam

Jokingly referred to as “sites positioned above mine”, spam can refer to anything that is undesirable or unsolicited online.

Spiders

Search engine crawlers.

Sponsored Posts

If money is exchanged in order to publish a post, it's a sponsored post. Most sponsored posts contain disclaimers but not all do.

T

Targets

A target is the page you want a link to lead someone to.

Templates

Many link outreach specialists use templates (that can be modified) for outreach. A template is simply an outline for something that is often used.

Toxic Links

These are links that are thought to potentially harm your site.

Traffic

The amount of visitors to a page or site.

Trust Flow

This is a trademark Majestic metric that measures the categorization of a website.

U

Unlinked Mentions

This is when your brand is mentioned in content with no link to your site.

Unnatural Links

Links that are paid, spammy, or part of a link scheme.

URLs

A URL is a web address.

URL Rating

Another Ahrefs metric, the URL rating measures the strength of a target's backlink profile.

V

Velocity

The speed of link growth.

W

Wayback Machine

Using the Wayback Machine you can view a site's archived pages from various dates.

Widget

Widgets are bits of code embedded on a page, usually designed to provide links back to page.

X

XML sitemap

This is used to tell search engines about all of your pages and where they can be found. XML is a markup language.

Y

Yandex

Yandex is a Russian search engine.

Z

I've seen everything from Zen to Zzzzz here – but as far as I know, there are no link building terms that begin with the letter Z.