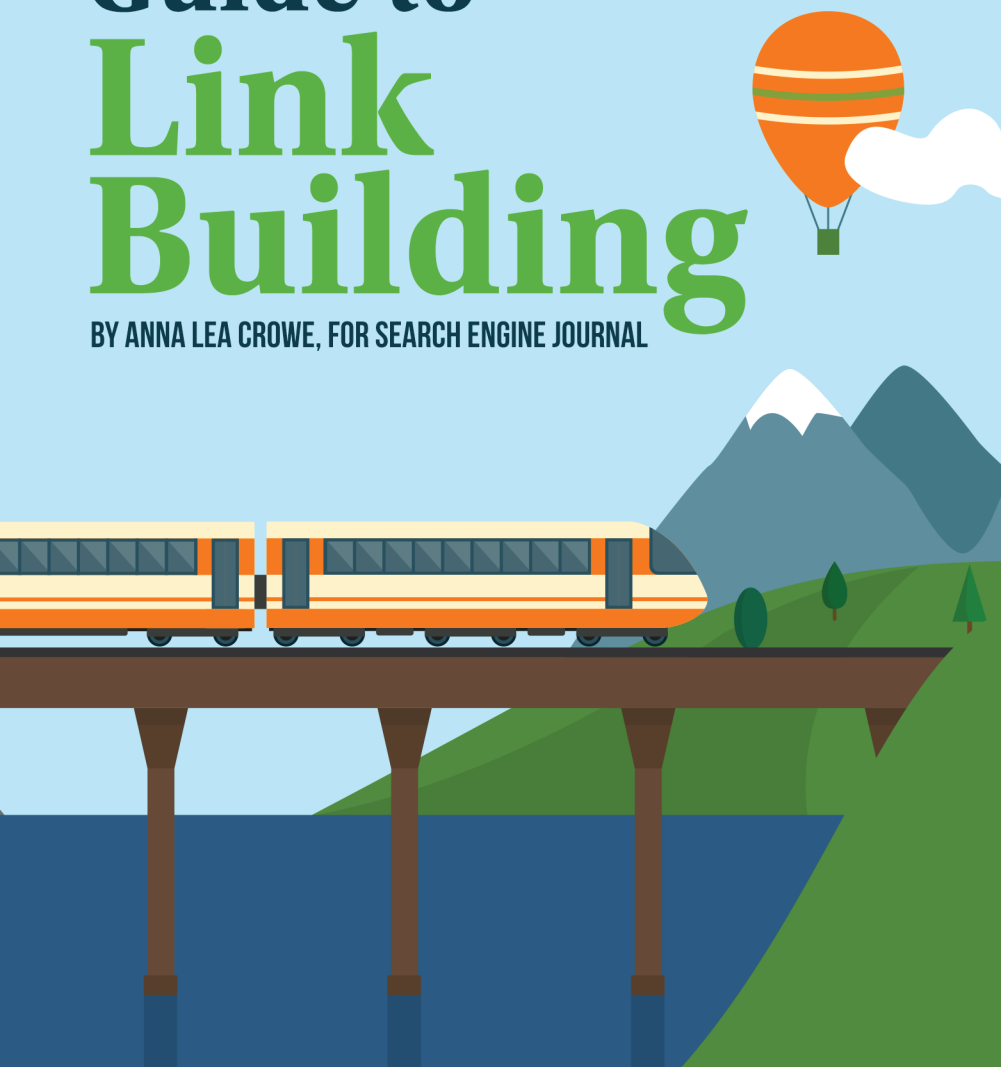


Illustrated Guide to Link Building

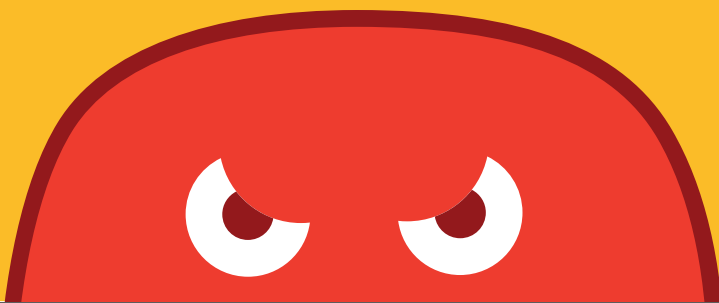
BY ANNA LEA CROWE, FOR SEARCH ENGINE JOURNAL



NEED LINKS?

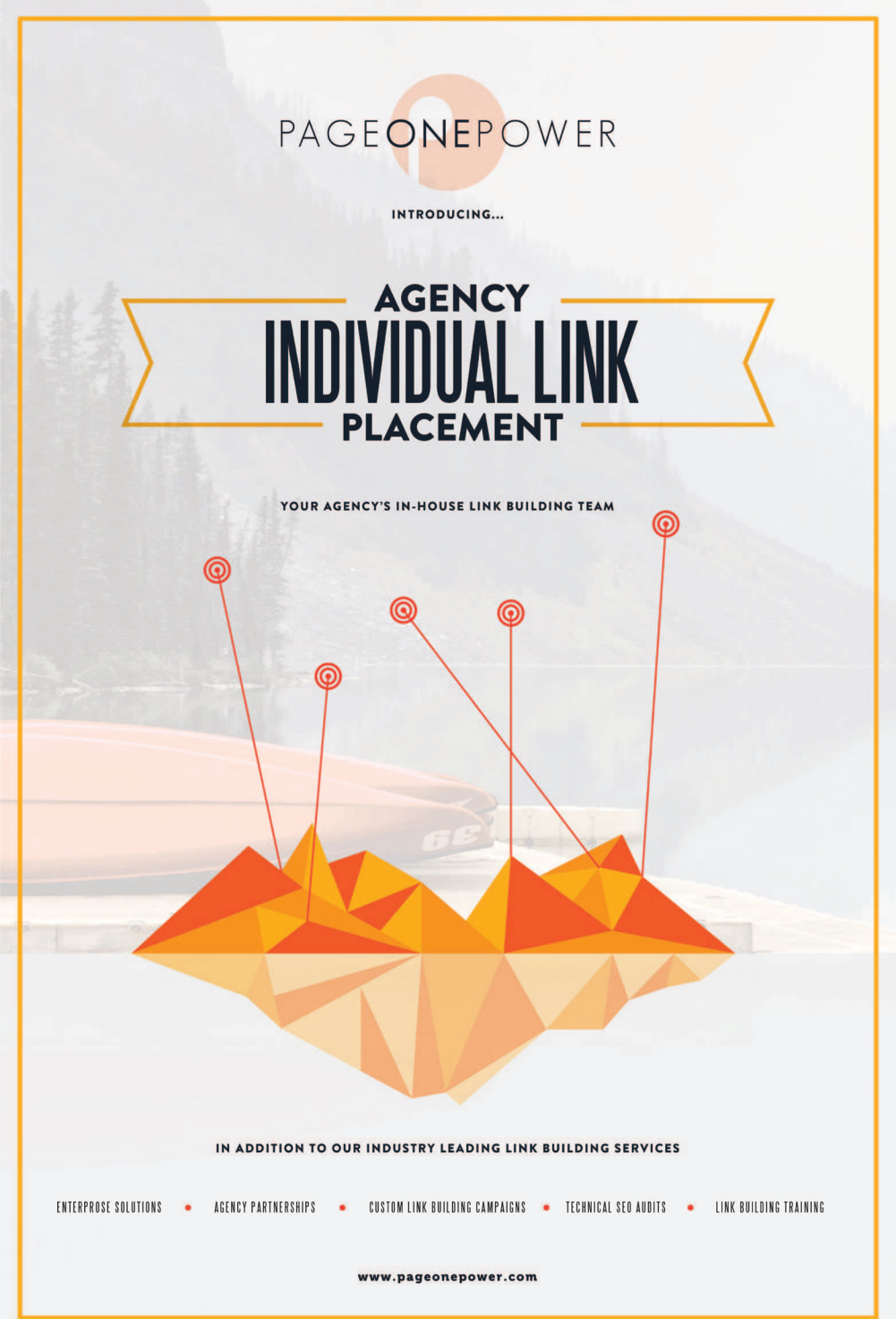
From blogger outreach, to editorial placements,
to custom local citation building, we have
something for just about everyone.

THEHOTH.COM



Illustrated Guide to Link Building

BY ANNA LEA CROWE, FOR SEARCH ENGINE JOURNAL

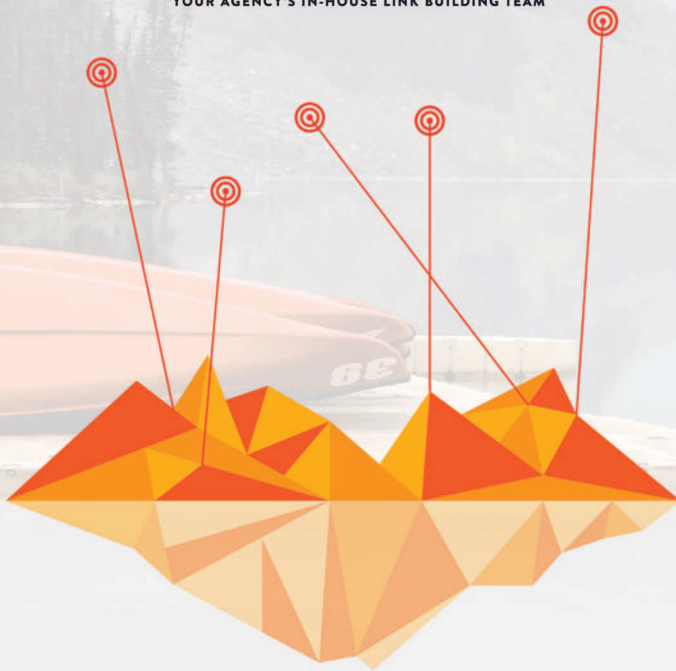


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The results and links suggested throughout the article are dependent on many ranging factors such as site size, current volume of traffic, and dedicated hours. Please use these as a starting point.

Content driven link building dominated last year, but get ready, because there is something far brighter on the SEO horizon. While I saw a handful of brands ([HomeSnacks](#), [HelpScout](#), and Dollar Shave Club's [MEL Magazine](#) to name a few) jumping on the content marketing bandwagon, and others flocking to [full blog](#) mode in spades, link building is bringing us a more integrated version of these link building trends. Enter: Holistic link building.

It's basically a fully integrated marketing approach — a mash up of PR, email, content, social media that integrates all aspects of the business. When you're doing good link building, it looks like you're doing good marketing. You're ticking all of the boxes. To be honest, it's basically a remix of the [SEJ SEO Guide](#) link building sections that we all came to know, love, and see everywhere last year. Except this time, the alliance of all marketing channels is emphasized, making it particularly flattering for smaller brands.

Your content needs to be flawless.

As marketers, we all know [you can't rank without link building](#). In fact, 56% of you said you can't rank without links. And, Eric Enge over at Stone Temple Consulting agrees with us with one slight difference. Eric Enge [stated](#) "Links will clearly not be able to overcome lower relevance or weaker content." So, what does that mean? Your content needs to be flawless. You didn't just wake up to content like this. If your content is not

competitive or relevant there are no amount of links that can help you.

Inspired by Beyonce, links are the web's version of a hustler. My goals for link building have changed. They expand from links to your site, building partnerships, press mentions, podcast features and influencer relationships.

My goals for link building have changed. They expand from links to your site, building partnerships, press mentions, podcast features and influencer relationships.

Not so long ago, creating links went through a few dark seasons where almost every link was ... black hat. No personalized email, content not needed, and only a dab of brand mentions. We built links that were majorly boring and spammy.

But then, the term "link building" has begun to transform to link earning, link giving, and link acquisition. Links are giving back what the search engine space had been missing for so long: quality! meaning! engagement! All is right in the link building universe again.

Let me break down even further, [link earning](#) as I mentioned in this article is about building relationships, being a part of a community, and developing content ideas that actually worth sharing.

Tools

- Majestic
- SEMrush
- Spyfu
- Buzzsumo
- Yesware (or Banana Tag)
- Buzzstream (or Pitchbox)
- Boomerang for Gmail
- Ahrefs (or Moz)
- Google Search Console
- Bing Webmaster Tools
- Google Analytics
- Alexa

Benefits of Building Links

- Quality links increase the overall authority and trustworthiness of a page to the SERPs.
- Quality links to multiple pieces of content regularly can increase domain-wide rankings with time.



Technical SEO

Timeframe: Month 1, 2, 3 and every quarter

Results Detected: 1-4 months after implementation

So your website isn't perfect. Sure, it's got some broken internal links, perhaps a few small pages of thin content, and maybe just one too many pages without the canonical tags.

39% of SEOs tackle technical SEO first

In a perfect world, on-page optimization happens before offsite SEO. Why? Because building links with a website that looks like a Lisa Frank trapper keeper is like eating a Thanksgiving turkey without gravy - worthless. SEJ conducted a survey discovering [39%](#) of SEOs tackle technical SEO first. And, I'm in that 39%.

Before I begin developing my link building strategy, I perform a technical SEO audit. I want to fix what's broken on-site before starting off-site. By analyzing site structure for internal link placement and top performing pages for linkable assets, I'm able to discover existing content that can help guide my link building strategy.

For example, I tap into Google Search Console to find the top pages with low click-through rates. To do this, use the Search Analytics report in Google Search Console and sort by high clicks.



Next, I'll use Google Analytics to find the top performing pages in terms of bounce rate and average time on site.

Advanced Plan 90

Loading Page

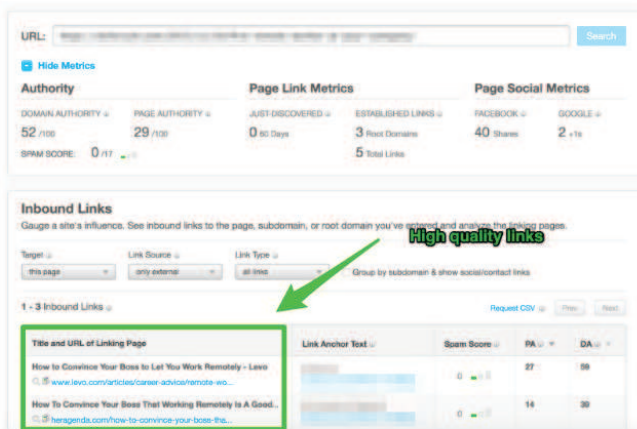
Rank	URL	Score	% New	New Score	Score Rate	Page / Domain	Link Score	2 Pages per Domain	3 Pages per Domain	4 Pages per Domain
203,383	70.81%	144,007	59.57%	1.22	00:01:33	2.07%	4,208	59.00		
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10

Another tactic I'll use is crawling the website using Screaming Frog to find 404 pages. Then, I'll plug these 404 pages into Moz to see if there are any valuable links pointing to these broken pages.

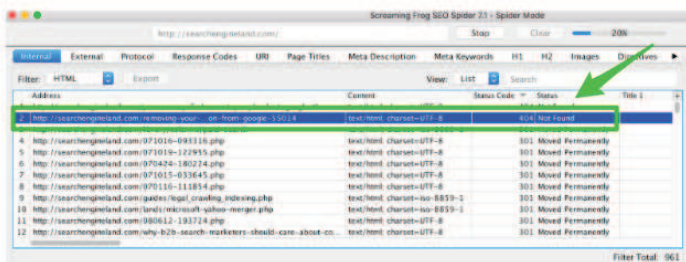
Screaming Frog SEO Spider 7.1.1 - Spider Mode

Address	Content	Status Code
1	test.html; charset=UTF-8	404 Not Found
2	test.html; charset=UTF-8	404 Not Found
3	test.html; charset=UTF-8	404 Not Found
4	test.html; charset=UTF-8	404 Not Found
5	test.html; charset=UTF-8	404 Not Found
6	test.html; charset=UTF-8	404 Not Found
7	test.html; charset=UTF-8	404 Not Found
8	test.html; charset=UTF-8	404 Not Found
9	test.html; charset=UTF-8	404 Not Found
10	test.html; charset=UTF-8	404 Not Found
11	test.html; charset=UTF-8	404 Not Found
12	test.html; charset=UTF-8	404 Not Found

Filter Total: 1,342



Finally, I'll take a look at my competitors by crawling their site in Screaming Frog then plug in their 404 pages in Moz. If I find a page with quality links, I use Wayback Machine to see what type of content was there previously. If it's quality content, I'll rework it to recreate my own and pitch the people already linking to my competitors broken page.



URL:

☒ Hide Metrics

Authority

DOMAIN AUTHORITY ☐

90 / 100

PAGE AUTHORITY ☐

51 / 100

SPAM SCORE ☐

3 / 17

Page Link Metrics

JUST DISCOVERED ☐

0 / 60 Days

ESTABLISHED LINKS ☐

7 Root Domains
21 Total Links

Page Social Metrics

FACEBOOK ☐

122 Shares

GOOGLE ☐

4 + 1s

Inbound Links

Gauge a site's influence. See inbound links to the page, subdomain, or root domain you've entered and analyze the linking pages.

Target

Link Source

Link Type

☐ Group by subdomain & show social/contact links

1 • 21 Inbound Links

Title and URL of Linking Page	Link Anchor Text	Spam Score	PA	DA
[Notiflow] [No Title] http://del.icio.us/lamazeons/information	http://searchengineland.com/removing-your-personal-information-from-google-55014	1	45	97
[Notiflow] How can i have information about myself removed R... http://www.makesureof.com/news/information-remo...	http://searchengineland.com/removing-your-personal-information-from-google-55014	1	35	78

After the technical audit is complete, I'll pop back into Google Search Console to conduct a backlink audit. If there are any spammy or irrelevant sites linking to my client over thousand times from 1 page, I'll add them to my disavow file.

Tools

- Screaming Frog
- DeepCrawl
- Ahrefs (or Moz)
- Google Search Console
- Google Analytics

Benefits of Technical SEO

- Technical SEO will help you get the maximum performance out of your links.
- Technical SEO like a clean site structure and understanding of PR flow is very key for internal link placement.



Link Reclamation

Timeframe: Month 1, 2, 3 & every quarter

Results detected: 4-12 months after implementation

Avg links sent per month: 5-10 depending on site

It seems like the concept of link reclamation is constantly in flux. More and more link builders are skewing toward technical SEO and our ideas on SEO continue to evolve. Still, for link builders starting out, link reclamation has always been a phase hard to navigate — partly because the “rules” for how a website should be built can be confusing when crossing the lines between web developer and SEO manager.

Over the past few years, I’ve worked with brands and to tell you the truth, the struggle is real. The struggle to work with web developers that are open to SEO changes. It’s not a new struggle by any means.

Before you know it, it's been one week, two weeks, three weeks, and you've got little to show for it. And as you prepare your monthly report, a pressing question emerges: Why are the 404 errors not cleaned up?

You're pretty sure the intern is laughing at you, and creating custom content is just too far beyond your reach at this point. The struggle is real, people. But the thing is, building links doesn't have to be difficult. And, cleaning up 404 errors cleaning up your on-site links doesn't have to be difficult or end in a web dev meeting so long and intense you need nap after. Alerts is a great tool I use to watch for links that go down, site migration for new HTTPS URLs, and eliminating redirects.

By day 90, I usually have at least 20 new links in my backlink profile.

After you've cleaned up 404 errors, I'd suggest reaching out to the website linking to that particular link to update the URL. Even though you've added the 301 redirect, it still helps to have the correct link listed. By day 90, I usually have at least 20 new links in my backlink profile. But, it takes time. Fractl spends 30 minutes every day to link reclamation, but as you can see, it's worth it.

Cleaning up 404 errors is not the only way to reclaim your links. You can also do this through brand mentions that are not linked to your website. I dig deeper into this topic of mentions further down. Keep scrolling.

You can also reclaim your image links. You can use a tool like TinEye or manual search operator like `allintitle: [insert title of photo]` to discover where your images are being used. You can easily find pages using your branded content which makes for a quick link building win.

Tools

- TinEye
- Screaming Frog
- DeepCrawl
- Ahrefs
- Majestic

Benefits

- Link reclamation regains lost link value which can quickly increase your rankings and link profile.
- Link reclamation is an easy way to start off a link building campaign because you're not actually building links, you're simply cleaning up old ones.



Email Outreach

Timeframe: Ongoing

Results detected: 4-12 months

Avg emails sent per month: 40

Months ago, if you emailed me with an opportunity to collaborate, I'd give it a hard pass and assume my spam folder missed you. Among the emails are those relatable spam encounters we can all appreciate, like guest blog posts, send money to a country I can't pronounce, and discounts on sex toys. (Hey, I didn't email it.) I've tried a few before, and saw little advantage and a lot of time wasted. But sometime between that time and today, I did a complete 180. Now, I collaborate almost exclusively with people who email me directly.

So what happened? Part of this is due to the sheer fact that brands and people are becoming authentic in their outreach and keep popping up just about everywhere, from my

Instagram to blog comments on this very site. I also learned that their intentions have seriously improved, so I gave them another whirl and ended up loving it.

Tim Soulo at Ahrefs deletes most outreach emails he gets and he doesn't feel sorry. #sorrynotsorry

In a link-crazed search world, manual outreach still manages to be the epicenter of all things link building. Seemingly every single charming, personalized email brings another new link filled with highly valuable content. Plus, it adds a bit of authority to the blog and the site linked.

There's something to be said for an email that can instantly grab my attention in an inbox of 502 emails. I'm talking about the emails who, despite being caught up in the chaos of building links, make you do a double take before hitting the trash icon. Rather than taking cues on other outreach email templates, rely on your own keen sense of communication and creativity to guide prospects, partners, and influencers down the path of collaboration. Link building is now about a long-term relationship, it requires commitment longer than 30 days.

Link building is now about a long-term relationship, it requires commitment longer than 30 days.

To bring link builders into focus, I tapped into my sent mail to show you examples of non-traditional email outreach. Outfitted in emojis and gifs, each email offers a unique take on the person I'm emailing, the brand, and my client to better forge our own collaboration.

Hiya Tony, 🍷

I stumbled across your recent guest post from Kettle & Fire on how to make your own beef broth. I'm happy to say this is on my weekend dinner to-do list. :)

ANYWAYS...I'd love to see if there's a way you could collaborate with us at [Base Culture](#)? I'd be happy to send you some of our all natural, gluten-free products.

Let me know if you're interested. Thanks, Tony!

Warmly,
Anna

Adrienne Crew <acrow@hubspot> 1:25 PM (21 hours ago)

to me

Hi Anna,

Hope the week's going well, this is Adrienne from the eCommerce team at HubSpot. Saw you've been coming by our site recently - find everything you're looking for?

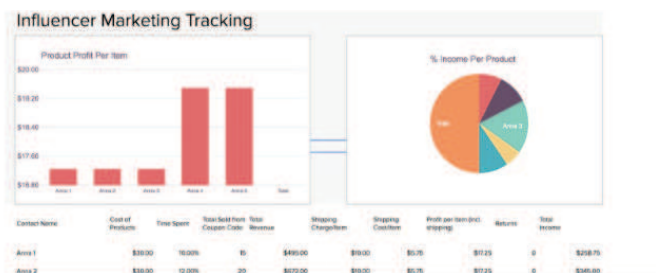
Also, was poking around your site this morning - we actually work with a number of businesses in your space, helping them improve traffic numbers and conversion rates. Figured it'd make sense to connect and see if we can help you do the same.

Do you have a few minutes to chat in the coming days? Check out the quick video below to get some context, and let me know what works best. Feel free to [book time directly on my calendar](#) if that is easiest :)

[About HubSpot | Video Overview](#) (< 3 mins)

Warm Regards,
Adrienne

If you're interested in my processes, here's a snapshot of how my process works for an e-commerce client of mine that is engaging in an influencer marketing campaign. You can [download the spreadsheet here.](#)



Links are connections to other people.

This spreadsheet is complete with sample pricing and metrics to give you an idea of how I track ROI. Depending on your budget, I recommend working with lower level bloggers with a domain authority of between 20 to 30 with a social following between 2,000 to 5,000. Influencer marketing is just one phase of email outreach, but if you're on track to launch a campaign, keep it up! [68% of marketers](#), according to #SEJSurveySays, say influencer marketing is here to stay. It's important to remember that these links are connections to other people, they not only represent your brand but connects your website to their website.

Tools

- Buzzstream
- Yesware
- Boomerang for Gmail
- Muckrack

Benefits of Email Outreach

- Email outreach creates a rare opportunity for you to develop a personal connection with an influencer or brand to sustain and grow a long-term relationship.
- Email outreach can increase your network not from only a linking perspective, but social media as well.



Guest Blogging

Timeframe: Ongoing starting Month 3

Results detected: 4-12 months

Avg blogs posted per month: 4

Today in unicorn SEO news: guest blogging is still yuge. And I have every reason to believe that it's going to make even more of my mystical creature dreams come true.

Larry Kim is what happens when you blend a with high-quality content and an authoritative publication. Larry Kim, founder and Chief Technology Officer at Wordstream, is a #winning example of how to swirl content into a distribution funnel.

Just look at his post on Inc. [40 Amazing Places To Learn Something New Every Day](#) that received 40 backlinks.

Guest blogging can, as you've seen before, look scary. But, enhancing your online visibility or backlink profile doesn't have to be frightening — or require the writing skills of Shakespeare. You just need the proper arsenal to get that natural-looking link building.

Think beyond the links.

It's time we think beyond the links.

There's been an onslaught of guest blogging for links on the market. To make sense of it all, Moz surveyed agencies and freelancers to see if they still use guest posting, 90% of respondents said yes, they still use a form of guest posting. There are a lot of winning entrepreneurs using this in their link building toolkit: Even the aspiring Julie Joyce's will find something to fall in love with.

Just take a look at how other entrepreneurs have used this strategy in the past.

- [Neil Patel](#) publishes an average of 100 guest posts per year.
- [Mark Traphagen](#) shared his thoughts on how Eric Enge built his reputation by writing guest posts.
- [Leo Widrich](#) wrote 150 guest blog posts in 2 months to help build Buffer.

- [Julia McCoy](#) at Express Writers gained \$5,000 from one guest blog post on SitePro.

Here's a quick snapshot of my guest blogging strategy:

1. Set qualifying factors needed to work with a blog. Here's a look at my qualifying factors I review for every guest blogging opportunity.

	www.unicornsarereal.com
Domain authority of 50+	
Social following of 10,000+	
Email newsletter	
Site traffic of 100,000+	
Do they accept guest bloggers?	
Website monthly pageviews	
Website monthly reach	
Similar target audience	
Credit to guest writers with bio	

2. Researching the bio section is key because it leaves opportunity for you to not only add a link, but add a link for users to sign-up to your newsletter.
3. Before I send my pitch email, I connect with the website on every social platform by engaging in replies to tweets and signing up for their newsletter.

Tools

- Buzzstream
- Buzzsumo
- Alexa

Benefits of Guest Blogging

- Guest blogging improves your brand awareness and SEO authority. If you have a solid strategy of posting to multiple websites within a similar timeframe, it gives the illusion that you're everywhere.
- Guest blogging increases your website traffic and leads. By adding a link in your bio to a landing page to sign-up for your newsletter, you're increasing traffic and gaining leads. #winwin



Directories

Timeframe: Month 1-3

Results detected: 4-12 months

Avg directories per month: 6

When was the last time you used a directory? If you're one of the [4 out of 5 consumers](#) in the US to use search engines to find a local business, then you've frequented local directories. While easy to overlook in favor of the latest content marketing trends, choosing the right directories is one of the most important things you can do for your client or business, and not just from an SEO perspective.

***4 out of 5 consumers in the U.S.
now use search engines to find
local businesses, according to
Google.***

And, while John Mueller, father of all things Google, still states that directories are no good, they do help your local SEO.

<https://twitter.com/JohnMu/status/835480412109619210>

Directories help make up a valuable link profile.

Directories are not dead. Directories are one of my all-time favorite marketing strategies. Directories help make up a valuable link profile. And no, I don't mean the spammy, black hat, pay-me-\$50-for-a-link directories that subsisted in my early years of link building. (Although, I still sometimes look at my past directories list in happiness and reminisce about how easy link building once was.) I'm talking about the relevant, targeted directories filled with custom descriptions and a whole slew of potential options to personalize my brand. Directories are more about local SEO and improving your customer experience by being able to discover you on Facebook or in Google Maps. [GreenPal](#) saw a 50-60% increase in volume in 18 months using Yelp.

Lucky for us link builders, there is some seriously next-level links available across almost every niche. From classic Yelp and Manta to the more niche takes like Healthgrades, there's a winning directory out there for every link-lover (which is everyone, right?).

Here's my list of top directories I use.

1. [Yelp](#)
2. [Yellow Pages.com](#)
3. [Better Business Bureau](#)
4. [Best of The Web](#)
5. [Map Quest](#)
6. [City Data.com](#)
7. [Hotfrog.com](#)
8. [TripAdvisor](#)
9. [Facebook](#)
10. [Google+](#)

Tools

- BrightLocal
- Manual - do not automate!

Benefits of Directories

- High quality directories help increase direct traffic and search engine ranking results.
- Directories provide long-term local SEO and consumer benefits.



Proprietary Data-Driven Content

Timeframe: Every 3 months

Results detected: 2-6 months

Avg links sent per month: 60

One of the coolest things about creating your own proprietary data is that it's kind of reminiscent of playing jeopardy. The thoughtful questions, simple responses, and the basic simplicity of being the first to have the knowledge.

Be the source.

Creating your own data for an article is typically one big headache. If you've ever tried to survey customers, you know what I'm talking about. But, as SEJ's own Loren Baker [says](#), "Be the source." When you create your own data,

people will want to link back to the place they cited. Using tools like Google Trends and Google Consumer Survey, you can search for trending topics and build your own data.

Traditional content strategy suggests more content equals more leads, but that's not true.

When researching what topics I may want to cover, I'll start researching with Google Trends and Buzzsumo. These tools are built for research and exploring trends. Next, I'll begin to gather my resources of data whether I'm surveying users or if I'm using my own data. Many SaaS companies don't realize the amount of data they are already sitting on. It's important to note, when building content with your own proprietary data, it's not amount quantity. Traditional content strategy suggests more content equals more leads, but that's not true. You need one major piece of killer content to achieve your goals.

Collaborate with the PR team to create a strategy.

If the content is truly a unicorn, as Larry Kim would say, you need to do all the supporting activities around this piece. Here's a look at how I structure my content support activities:

- Collaborate with the PR team to create a strategy. PR teams develop some of the highest-quality link opportunities, but they leave a lot of opportunities on the

table. This is where link builders come in to do the manual outreach.

- Conduct manual outreach to industry blogs for backlinks and guest blogs.
- Partner with other companies on a webinar to discuss the data.
- Create a blog post series to give further context to the data and optimize for new search terms.
- Utilize the data in presentations at conferences.
- Recreate the data in infographics, charts, and graphs.

Here's a look at some of my favorite data-driven content:

1. [Moz's beginner's guide to SEO](#)
2. [Unbounce's on-demand video content](#)
3. [Qualaroo's guide to surveying users](#)

Tools

- Google Trends
- Google Consumer Survey
- Buzzsumo

Benefits

- Great content has no shelf-life. With high quality content, you will see a spike at the beginning and again 6 months later as you start to rise search rank.
- Data driven content always works because you created something people want. If you did your research right, you should have a powerful piece of content.



Link-Worthy Content

Timeframe: Every 3 months

Results detected: 2-6 months

Avg links sent per month: 40

All content everything has been trending for years now — along with its friends infographics, video, mobile. And, according to our SEJ research, [71.9%](#) of marketers are focused on creating content. But it isn't exactly the easiest link building tactic to pull off in everyday link building worklife. Or so you think. One of the most recent articles from the Content Marketing Institute's [50 Best Social Media Tools From 50 Most Influential Marketers Online](#) is a great example of a link worthy (137 backlinks!) — and time friendly article. Because most of us want [Jeff Goins](#) quality writing on a Parks & Rec Netflix episode timeframe.

These thought-leaders to generate buzz with their name and naturally these marketers will share and link back to this article.

Content Marketing Institute's article features a squad of well-known marketers using quotes from the marketers. Why? Instead of the author having to gather all the content himself, he used quotes from these thought-leaders to generate buzz with their name and naturally these marketers will share and link back to this article. It's pretty magical. This examples from Content Marketing Institute is just one way to create link-worthy content.

You can also reimagine trending content and make it relevant to your brand. Loren Baker describes reimagining content of Star Wars characters into football helmets in our Search Engine Nerds podcast. Or, take a note from Larry Kim on how he built WordStream. Larry told [Conductor](#) in an interview that he created keyword maps that were relevant to WordStream, then created content around those keyword maps.

Wanting for the right topic is pretty much the best excuse to get out of creating link-worthy content that you know you should do but don't want to -- like getting vitamins or going to the gym, for example. In a world where it's all about who you know, it's easy to wonder: *Should I partner with another brand?* The answer is yes.

Co-authoring through your partnerships exposes your piece of content to a new community.

In reality, creating link-worthy content take a lot of time, planning, and strategy. Think of it lie taking the SATs: It's annoying, but with a little help from tutors and ridiculously expensive books, it's totally doable. Co-authoring through your partnerships exposes your piece of content to a new community. It's time to share the link love. I like to think of co-authoring as the SEO equivalent to ride-or-die BFFs -- they never disappoint. Also, when you're looking for opportunities to co-author, check to see if they are using AMP pages.

And, it doesn't end there. When I co-author a piece of content, I work paid amplification into my contracts. Meaning, both parties agree to spend equal cash flow on paid amplification. By utilizing both teams for paid amplification we're utilizing different target audiences with our content syndication partnerships, social ads, and native ads. If the article takes off, then consider repurposing your content into a video, webinar, or infographic to continue riding that trend.

Tools

- Google Trends
- Google Consumer Survey
- Buzzsumo
- Brand partnerships

Benefits

- Link-worthy content attracts more links in the short term and long term.
- Link-worthy content builds positive relationships inside and outside of your community. It positions you in a thought-leadership role.



Podcast Tours

Timeframe: Every 3 months

Results detected: 4-12 months

Avg podcasts per month: 1

Ah, the podcast. Despite the status of being your marketing knight in shining armour — meant to equipped listeners with marketing brilliance and algorithm-resistant strategies — it often goes underappreciated in the link building world. (What can we say? There's just something about a Morgan Freeman voice that adds a certain pizzazz to my morning route to work.)

When I first thought of this idea, I couldn't pinpoint an example of how to get this done. Was it similar to video link building? Blog post link building? Alas, after watching yet another Whiteboard Friday with Moz, I realized these bad boys are in a league all on their own. Just like video link building, podcast link building is meant to be an extension of your brand —

though, similarly, you can promote it alone. Think: transcripts, quotes, mentions, links, and social amplification.

Take a look at HubSpot's [Growth Show blog post](#) after the podcast was live. Did you notice the high-quality links? Or, check out [Buffer's podcast](#) and show notes afterward. And, don't forget about us! After each airing of Search Engine Nerds, SEJ posts a recap filled with quality links.

But perhaps the biggest selling point for me is the increased exposure as an authority in your specific industry and the opportunity to talk directly to your target audience.

I'll be honest: Depending on the podcast, you might not get the same payoff you would from creating proprietary data or high-quality content. But damn, it's more exciting than anything I've seen in a long time — and for free, I'm willing to wager it's the coolest link building tactic you'll find in the coming years.

To secure a spot of an interview, do your research. Take a look into the topics they are covering to find a gap that may not have been discussed yet. Make your email pitch relevant to the podcast and address people by their first name.

Here's an example:

Hey there Danny,

I love the new brand image for [Search Engine Nerds!](#) I was recently listening to Loren Baker on his link building strategies

and noticed he gave me a shout out. Thanks! Would you be interested in featuring me in an upcoming podcast?

Here are some topic ideas:

- **How to Conduct a Technical SEO Audit**
- **How to Perform a Content Audit**
- **How to do SEO for a Podcast**

I'd be happy to send additional topics. I would really love an opportunity to work together.

Please email me back if you're interested in collaborating.
Thanks, Danny!

Warmly,
Anna Banana

Tools

- Manual search using search operators like `inurl:"marketing podcast"`
- Buzzstream (or Pitchbox)
- BananaTag (or Yesware)

Benefits

- Podcasts improve your link profile by showing diverse link opportunities.
- Podcasts increase your authority and trust not only on search engines, but to your potential audience.



Radio Stations

Timeframe: Every 3 months

Results detected: 4-12 months

Avg radios per month: 1

You say radio, we say podcasts — but whichever way you swing it, the fact of the matter is that there is a hell of a lot of link building potential. I'll go ahead and admit it: The decision to not reach out to radio stations because you're working with a PR firm implies a sort of laziness that true link hustlers would capture. Because if you don't try all the link building strategies, how will you ever know which is really The One? These types of questions keep me up at night.

At some point I'm going to have to admit that it just isn't possible (or financially sustainable) to test and email every single radio station on the market worth its salt — and I'll grieve accordingly. So, let's start with local radio stations first.

You can blend offline and online marketing to give your client a new type of backlink result.

To be fair, this is not a new idea, but it is one that link builders often forget. And, it's so simple: Email your top 20 radio stations, ask to collaborate either on air, send products, or get featured on their blog. It's insanely versatile, because you can blend offline and online marketing to give your client a new type of backlink result. It's more than link building hack — it's like having 3 different link building opportunities in one hit.

I emailed a local radio station with a full technical SEO audit of their site and they mentioned my name and website live on air. It was a life-changing moment in my career and for my website's local SEO.

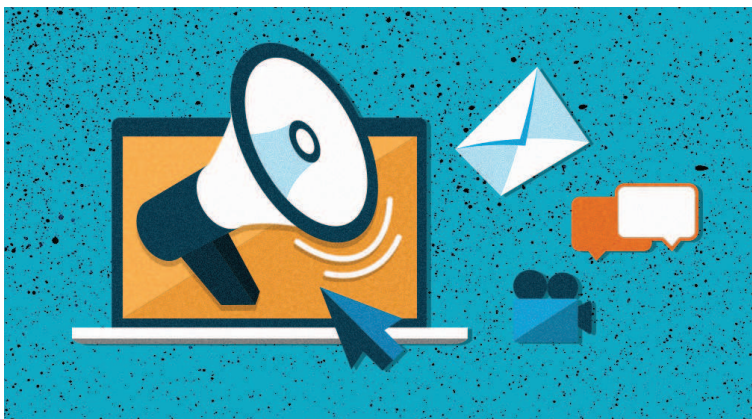
I've also done a similar tactic for clients by mailing products to the radio stations hosts with a handwritten letter followed up with an email. This has typically positioned me to work with them from a contract position, it's hard to get these ones for free.

Tools

- Manual search using search operators like in:title:"local radio station"
- Buzzstream (or Pitchbox)
- BananaTag (or Yesware)

Benefits

- Similar to podcasts, radio stations increase your overall brand awareness connecting the dots between online and offline exposure.
- Radio stations usually have a domain name that's been around for a long time, therefore, increasing your credibility to the link from their site to yours.



Link Repo (Mentions)

Timeframe: Every month

Results detected: 2-6 months

Avg links sent per month: 10 (depending on site size)

I don't need to remind you that brand mentions can be plentiful as any link building tactic. Sure, there are a ton of easy win options, but when you fall in love with a link that you didn't have to put your blood, sweat, and content into, it's hard to not keep coming back to them.

You could always wait (and wait and wait...) and hope they change your brand mention to a link — or you could get creative. But how? Let me introduce you to the wonderful world of link repo.

The concept is simple: Many brands sponsor events, announce employee accomplishments, or run press releases — and those

occasions offer opportunities that use significantly less time to build links than if you were to start the relationship from scratch. Are you picking up what I'm putting down?

This link building method won't just save you time — it will add value to the reader and publication that mentioned you. And, BuzzSumo stated they secured [200 links in one month](#) by monitoring mentions.

Ahead, check out my link repo tactic that will make your client and your backlink profile very happy.

1. Sign up for BuzzSumo Alerts.
2. Set-up backlink alerts to receive daily digest.
3. Set-up brand mentions to receive daily digest.
4. Email websites mentioning you by starting with a thank you, offer help or advice, then ask if they wouldn't mind linking to you as it would make it easy for readers.

Tools

- BuzzSumo
- Banana Tag (or Yesware)
- Buzzstream (or Pitchbox)

Benefits

- If you're creating valuable content, but you're not getting credit for it, you're missing a valuable opportunity.
- Link repo is a high converting link building tactic, so it's easy for you to hit the ground running.



Competitive Links

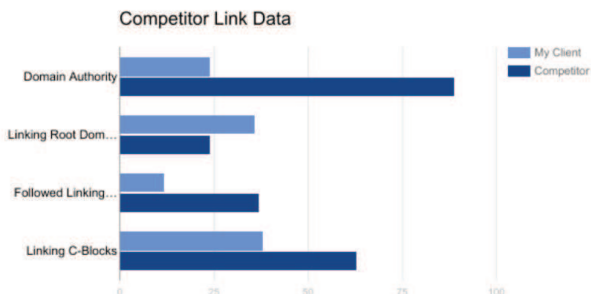
Timeframe: Every month

Results detected: 4-12 months

Avg links per month: 10

I'd easily cough up a paycheck to get featured in the latest trending article on The New York Times or the newest Girlboss Radio podcast, but when it comes to gaining the same links as my competitors, I'm wise to the game. I know that the links my competitors have are just as good (or at times, better) than starting a new high-profile relationship. The biggest challenge is figuring out which links are worth plucking from my Moz backlink report.

To decide what links to target first from my competitors backlink report, I create a graph per competitor that features link analysis data.



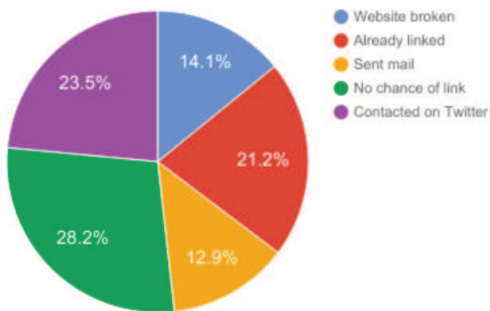
After creating a graph for each competitor, I'll see how I stack up to their link profile and begin to target the most similar link profile.

After I've pulled the data and pick my competitor, I'll manually go through each competitor backlink to determine if I should outreach to them or not. Here's what my spreadsheet looks like:

Author	URL	Title	Anchor Text	Spinn Score	Page Authority	Domain Authority	Category	Contact Name	Date Completed
Sarah email	http://newsweek.com/2017/11/21/sexual-assault-2017-11-21	Sexual Assault: The New Normal		2	75	94	News		11/22/17
Sarah email	http://newsweek.com/2017/11/21/sexual-assault-2017-11-21	Why Women Rule The In-Music		2	75	94	News		
Nick	http://newsweek.com/	Assault	www.newsweek.com	4	72	95	Other Site		
Sarah email	http://blog.irsland.com/blog/2017/11/21/sexual-assault-2017-11-21	Why Blog Advertising: Kate Reynolds, A...		1	70	90	Blog		
Nick	http://blog.irsland.com/blog/2017/11/21/sexual-assault-2017-11-21	10 Companies That Sued Musk		1	70	90	Blog		
Sarah email	http://newsweek.com/2017/11/21/sexual-assault-2017-11-21	10, Nearly 100, Musk		2	68	91	Blog		
Sarah email	http://newsweek.com/2017/11/21/sexual-assault-2017-11-21	Musk		1	68	91	Blog		
Nick	http://newsweek.com/2017/11/21/sexual-assault-2017-11-21	10 Questions to Ask the Musk		2	68	91	Blog		
Sarah email	http://newsweek.com/2017/11/21/sexual-assault-2017-11-21	10 Questions to Ask the Musk		1	68	91	Blog		
Sarah email	http://newsweek.com/2017/11/21/sexual-assault-2017-11-21	Musk		1	68	91	Blog		
Sarah email	http://newsweek.com/2017/11/21/sexual-assault-2017-11-21	10 Social Media Tips to Pin Musk		2	68	91	Blog		

Next, I'll use my stealthy tactics for manually bootlegging competitors links by emailing every individual site. And, finally I'll share a breakdown with my client of the outreach performance.

Outreach Snapshot



Tools

- Moz
- Ahrefs
- Magestic
- Buzzstream (or Pitchbox)
- Banana Tag (or Yesware)

Benefits

- Capturing similar links as your competitors allows you to gain pace on their search engine ranking. You'll have deeper insight into their marketing strategy and main keyword terms.
- By outreaching to sites that already link to your competitors, you already know the site links to similar content so you have a better chance at building a relationship.



Link Gratitude

Timeframe: Once every quarter

Results detected: 4-12 months

Avg links sent per month: 10

When I hear “gratitude” a few things come to mind. First, I think of emoji folded hands with links. Second, I think of my current ever-growing obsession of practicing zen habits with Leo Babauta. But, what do you do after someone links to you? Loren Baker has found the answer and I think it’s pretty genius. You shower your link devotees with a motherlode of thanks, of course. This action is coined “link gratitude” by Loren Baker. By “link gratitude” I mean running an SEO audit, help with their SEO, read, follow, and share their stories.

Maybe you’ve been getting backlinks for years. Or maybe you first found yourself building backlinks circa, oh, I don’t

know, let's just say December 2016. Either way, anyone can benefit from giving link gratitude.

Every quarter or so, I'll go through all my new backlinks individually. I'll check for 404 pages, internal and external broken links, or something as small as an image alt tag. Next, I'll email the webmaster to say thanks for the link and offer to help out by cleaning up their 404 errors or an external broken link.

The better these websites perform that already link to you, the more valuable you become.

And, while I may not see the return immediately, it's something the webmaster will always remember and most likely look for you when needing an external source. The better these websites perform that already link to you, the more valuable you become. Getting the link is the first start to the relationship.

Link gratitude is also a link building tactic I've used in the past when working with bloggers. The majority of bloggers use WordPress which has tools like Redirection and Yoast that make it extremely easy to do SEO. If a blogger is wanting to work with me, but I can't afford the price, I'll provide an SEO audit of their site along with tips they can use to help their site rank better in the future.

Tools

- BananaTag (or Yesware)

Benefits

- Link gratitude opens up an opportunity for you to grow your relationship with a webmaster for long-term results.
- Link gratitude gives you a chance to build a relationship outside of the link that can lead to more exposure on multiple marketing channels.



Content Syndication

Timeframe: Month 7 then every month

Results detected: 1-3 months

Avg articles syndicated per month: 4

Nowadays, it's natural to expect your article to get covered on other sites because it's just *that* good. Amazing copy and beautiful visuals serve as the driving force behind barrage of content sharing — and they've quickly become mainstays on our top posts.

***You want your content to do
“double duty.”***

Essentially, you want your content to do “double duty” (and then some) — links, shares, distributed on other publications, etc. But what's the best way to ensure your content gets seen,

linked, and shared by the maximum amount of your target audience? Answer: Content syndication.

Search engines track links across the internet to help classify content. The content of pages linking to each other is taken into consideration when pulling it into the search results. Some of the biggest sites syndicate their content like the New York Times and CNN.

Republishing your content allows you to leverage your content multiple times. And, it's a more scalable version of guest posting. And, it allows you to get a leg up on your competitors depending on the types of content partnerships you build. When you're working out your partnership contract, if you're starting out, you may want to agree to do a mix of syndicated content and original content to sweeten the deal.

To start, first do a little research on what websites are syndicating content. If you're already a bigger site, then you're going to want a partner that matches your website traffic. Syndicating your content on a smaller channel will not do any good.

I search for websites that syndicate their content on other sites. For example, I wrote for Career Contessa that syndicates for Refinery29. I also self-syndicate on LinkedIn and Medium. Check out how I increased my pageviews by [34%](#) with content syndication on Medium and LinkedIn.

Best practices for content syndication:

- Always make sure the rel=canonical tag is added.
- If you're syndicating content, add a nofollow tag.
- Publish content to your site first and make sure it gets indexed before syndicating.

Tools

- Lawyer for partnership agreement.
- Manual outreach

Benefits

- Content syndication can improve your overall website authority if you're content partner is of equal or greater value than your website.
- Content syndication increases your backlinks to that specific article that's getting syndicated.



Testimonials and Reviews

Timeframe: Month 7 then ongoing monthly

Results detected: 3-6 months

Avg reviews sent per month: 15

An everyday testimonial or review has to fulfill a solid of demands to keep me happy: It has to be loose with its keywords in all the right places (I'm looking at you first 150 characters), and tight in the rest (now you, 200 words); it has to be high-quality, without sacrificing some level personalization; and, most importantly, it has to offer enough trust and authority to survive in the search engines. This is already a big ask in a testimonial, let alone a product review. There is an endless array of testimonial links out there for sites, but choosing them gets a little trickier when you go beyond the one-liners.

Luckily, the bandwagon effect is real and universal favorite for link builders. It may not be the glamorous infographic look you put on display in your blog content, but it is the trusty stagehand that gets the link building job done.

Reviews and testimonials provide fresh content that's frequent. They can signal to the search engines that a page has been updated giving you another opportunity for that page to get crawled and potentially rank higher depending on the quality of that review. These reviews and testimonials also give you a chance to rank for long-tail keyword terms.

To gain more testimonials and reviews, here are a few ideas:

- 1. Implement a referral plan.** For example, you could say we pay 10% for referrals.
- 2. Create a release form for customers** to digitally sign every time you receive a compliment.
- 3. Send a discount code** to your email subscribers and share it on social for every customer review.
- 4. Automate a post-purchasing plan** to consumers who have had a positive experience.

Tools

- Email automation tool (Mailchimp, HubSpot, Aweber, you get it!)

Benefits

- Reviews and testimonials build trust and credibility not only for search engines, but your consumers.
- Reviews and testimonials are organic content. It's one less piece of content you have to create on your end.



Community Engagement

Timeframe: Month 7, then ongoing monthly.

Results detected: 4-12 months

Avg links per month: 1

It's hard to separate community engagement from link building. Instead of prescribing to traditional marketing rules, I strive to integrate community engagement with my link building campaigns. It may seem like an unorthodox tactic to take in SEO, where the idea that "link juice" still exists which usually comes from the same person calling themselves a "guru." Community engagement bridges the gap between offline and online marketing. Break down the idea that link building is only online.

My approach to link building is an egalitarian one — I believe that all marketing channels, social networks, events, and emails can lend themselves to interesting and creative link building

campaigns. The idea that link building is only meant to be done online is really getting to be outdated. And, that's cool.

Offline link building is community engagement with real people in the real world. I've done this by hosting a blogger focus group for a new menu. And, afterwards the bloggers shared articles on their sites and on social about our new menu. They also became long-term influencers that continued to work with the brand for months.

Here are some simple ways to take your link building into your local community:

1. Host an event.
2. Sponsor an event.
3. Sponsor local bloggers to host an event for you.
4. Give away cool swag.
5. Add your swag to another event gift bag.
6. Request to speak at a local event.
7. Volunteer at a local charity.
8. Write an ah-mazing article about a recent industry event.

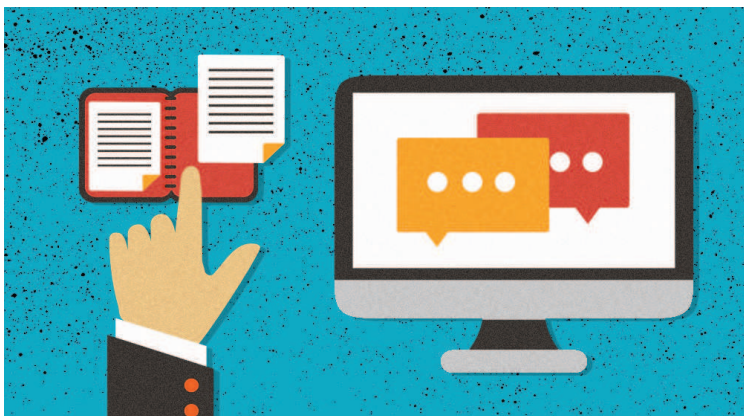
When you're all done, don't forget to pitch local news outlets. They are craving local interesting content so it never hurts to ask.

Tools

- Manual research for industry and local events.

Benefits

- Community engagement allows you to build relationships with your local community that can be a real benefit down the road.
- Community engagement lets you leverage local opportunities to create good content.



Blog Comments

Timeframe: Month 7, then ongoing monthly

Results detected: 4-12 months

Avg links per month: 4

Blog comments are the opposite of the link that keeps on giving. Blog comments are usually the nightmare that never ends.

The second you open up blog comments, you're faced with blah responses or automated machines trying to piece together words for a simple brand mention or unfollow link. Couple this with all the other link building tasks that fill the workday — content creation, link reclamation, podcasts, oh, and actual work — and it starts to feel a little less of a priority.

But before you give the boot to blog comments, know this: There are some ways that blog comments can benefit a brand.

I've worked with some of the top brands in e commerce, tech, and travel to find out how to tackle the beast. Regardless of whether you think blog comments is part of link building or not, they can help your brand if done correctly.

So for those more anti-blog comments, I've adopted my mentality to scope blog comments into community engagement. Think of them as a more sophisticated, grown-up cousin of what once lived of blog comments in the 90s. They are engaging, add value, —and just slightly more work.

From finding high-quality sites and engaging with commenters like a pro, here's my best blog commenting tips:

1. Find high-quality websites to comment. When I say high-quality, I'm looking for websites with a domain authority of 60+.
2. After you pull your list of top websites, search for an article most relevant to your target audience.
3. Now, you can begin to add value with your comments. I follow the "sandwich affect" when I comment on an article.
 - a. Acknowledge the author by name and add a compliment.
 - b. Sprinkle in valuable information you took from the article, while adding additional data that may spruce up the article.
 - c. Again, acknowledge the author by name and end with a compliment.

Remember to keep your blog comment short and sweet. I aim to keep mine under 100 words.

Tools

- Manual commenting.
This is not something you want to automate, spam, or copy/paste!

Benefits

- Blog comments can give you a greater reach to your target audience.
- Blog comments help grow authority and thought-leadership if you're name and face is being seen on well-known websites.



Affiliate Links

Timeframe: Month 8, then ongoing monthly

Results detected: 4-12 months

Avg links per month: 30

Seth Godin on his blog: “You don’t find customers for your products. You find products for your customers.”

I don’t blame you if you equate affiliate links with lots of dollar signs and spammy links. All those nofollow links and the workload — sample blog posts, different banner sizes, and monthly perks — don’t come cheap or without bundles of time. And though you probably already have enough link building tactics that work, that doesn’t mean it’s set in stone.

With long months of content creation ahead of you, it's always nice to pick up a few fresh links or brand mentions that will keep your brand top of mind. That's where affiliates come in. And, while it was rumored that Google was going to [demote affiliates websites](#) that were using dated framework in both their organic and paid results, affiliate marketing shifted toward increasing stand-alone resources.

Gawker Media is a great example. Gawker Media has received [10 million in e-commerce revenue](#) in 2014 alone using Amazon affiliate links. And, The Penny Hoarder [said](#) it's more sustainable than display advertising. Even Uber and Hotels.com are getting in on the affiliate marketing action.

At a SEM Expo conference, Matt Cutts mentioned Google handles affiliate links without an issue. Remember, always add the nofollow link. They are technically paid links. It may not pass link love (or link juice, link nectar, link syrup, whatever!) it does count on other search engines like Bing.

Affiliate links give brands another opportunity to gain user-generated content as well as unique blog posts for the main influencers who you may not have identified without your affiliate marketing program. This also gives you a chance to connect with these key influencers for blog posts, contests, or any upcoming campaigns.

Affiliate marketing may not be in your link building wheelhouse, but I believe it's an evolving channel you need integrate into your online marketing efforts to succeed. Whether it's the current model of affiliate marketing and buy links, or you transform that into a secluded group of your top

25 bidders. You decide what works best for your content and exposure. It's all about performance marketing and focusing on content closest to the purchase decision.

Tools

- Affiliate marketing platform (CJ, Amazon, ShareASale, etc.)

Benefits

- When starting a new site, I focus almost exclusively on affiliate and organic traffic because it's the cheapest and has a high ROI of traffic and revenue.
- Affiliate marketing increases your brand mentions and new links during slow months.



Link Building Checklist

Month 1

Technical SEO

- Internal Link Optimization
- Backlink Audit
- Disavow Update

Link Reclamation

Month 2

Email Outreach

Guest Blogging

Directories

Month 3

Proprietary Data Content Creation

Link Worthy Content Creation

Month 4

Technical SEO

- Internal Link Optimization
- Backlink Audit
- Disavow Update

Link Reclamation

Podcast Tours

Radio Stations

Month 5

Email Outreach

Guest Blogging

Directories

Link Repo

Community Engagement

Blog Comments

Month 6

Proprietary Data Content Creation

Link Worthy Content Creation

Competitor Links

Community Engagement

Blog Comments

Month 7

Link Gratitude

Content Syndication

Testimonials & Reviews

Community Engagement

Blog Comments

Month 8

Technical SEO

- Internal Link Optimization
- Backlink Audit
- Disavow Update

Link Reclamation

Competitor Links

Link Gratitude

Month 9

Email Outreach

Guest Blogging

Directories

Community Engagement

Blog Comments

Month 10

Proprietary Data Content Creation

Link Worthy Content Creation

Affiliates

Month 11

Technical SEO

- Internal Link Optimization
- Backlink Audit
- Disavow Update

Link Reclamation

Competitor Links

Affiliates

Month 12

Repeat

Breakdown of weekly:

Week 1 & 2: Link builder runs an internal backlink audit + competitor backlink audit to identify topics for different verticals of link building.

Week 3: Brainstorm article titles for creating content.
Send article titles to client for approval.

Week 4: Prospect link opportunities.
Build out email templates for client approval.
Find opportunities for co-citation.
Outreach to 50 high-quality prospects.

Week 5: Start writing
Get client to review content.

[Here is an example of my favorite link building spreadsheet.](#)

MONTH 1	MONTH 2	MONTH 3	MONTH 4	MONTH 5	MONTH 6	MONTH 7	MONTH 8	MONTH 9	MONTH 10	MONTH 11	MONTH 12
Email Outreach											
Technical SEO				Technical SEO				Technical SEO			
Link Reclamation				Link Reclamation				Link Reclamation			
Email Outreach											
		Guest Blogpost									
Directories											
		Proprietary Data-Driven Content			Proprietary Data-Driven Content			Proprietary Data-Driven Content			Proprietary Data-Driven Content
			Link-worth content			Link-worth content			Link-worth content		
		Radio & Podcasts			Radio & Podcasts			Radio & Podcasts			Radio & Podcasts
Link Repo											
Competitor											
			Link gratitude			Link gratitude			Link gratitude		
			Content Syndication								
						Testimonials & Reviews					
						Community Engagement					
						Blog Comments					
						Affiliate Links					