

The Not So Ancient Art of Link Building

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Introduction of Wisdom

Greetings to all of you website owners and webmasters! This publication was created to demystify all the forums, blogs, and stories you have heard about link building. I for one am sick of seeing misinformation floating around. I will go over tactics and useful tools to boost your natural rankings for all major search engines and try to keep it interesting.

The Year of the Spider

Pesky spiders keeping your site suppressed? Are your pages being indexed? For many people this goes unnoticed and is a very important factor when ranking. We would all love to think that the search engines have our best interests covered but the sad fact is with millions of sites being created each year the search engines have a hard time figuring out what is junk and what is real. A good sign that a search engine likes your site is by looking at the number of pages indexed within the search engine. If you go into Google, Yahoo, or MSN and type [site:www.mydomain.com] without the brackets, you will see the total number of pages the search engine has indexed. This means those pages have a chance to rank. We will go into ranking a little later in this document.

Preparing Your On-Page KungFu

It seems that many people forget or just don't know what it takes to properly optimize a page. The real factors of on-page optimization in order of importance are:

- **Title Tag** – Make sure your title tag is descriptive and no longer than 65 characters
- **Keyword Tag** – Use only tags (keywords) that appear in your pages content
- **Description Tag** – Your description should be DESCRIPTIVE not keyword stuffed!
- **H1, H2, H3** – Use headline tags to improve ranking by placing keywords in them.
- **Page Content** – Each page should have 200 – 700 words of compelling content

Try to focus on 1 – 4 keywords per page as a maximum. This will make your pages more important for those keywords. As a rule of thumb I always make pages geared towards 2 keywords. This not only keeps your pages consistent but the search engines generally have an easier time indexing those pages. Remember though, your title is the most important tool you can use to tell search engines what your pages are about. So keep them descriptive and try having your main keyword(s) at the front. Oddly enough we have seen peoples ranking increase by 10 positions just by changing their titles!

Duplicating Angers the Master

Let's face it, most of us are trying to make a quick buck on the Internet and create a store or affiliate site with as little effort as possible. I have seen this happen all too often and generally it is human nature to cut corners. There is the time consuming process of creating content and no one likes to do it. Unfortunately it is important as a branding tool and a search engine tool. With content you can improve your success dramatically. The flip side of that is not having content or worse, stealing or spinning content from someone else's site. This is a big no no for copyright reasons as well as duplicate content issues. You can always see if your site is in check by visiting www.copyscape.com and see if you are copying someone or if some is copying you! Devote some time to create content for all of your pages, believe me you will have a much easier time getting noticed on the web.

Bad Ninja Link Practices

Linking is becoming trickier everyday. As we saw with the Jagger 1,2,3 update with Google reciprocal linking is not what it used to be and many websites fell off the face of the planet. As the Internet grows search engines will need to get smarter to counteract cheating. And yes as much as we hate to admit it link building is some ways is cheating. There are PLENTY of companies out there still selling reciprocal links to unwary buyers who just don't know any better. Or even worse we see these machine generated sites that web design companies make to pass off as SEO. While most of us know better than to accept a \$99.95 deal some are left stranded in an abyss of paying every last dollar on the hope that one day their website will rank. Wake up people! If it was that easy to rank on the Internet everyone would be #1 and you know that just isn't true. So to stop the insanity please avoid the following:

- **Reciprocal links** – These links are all but completely devalued in Google and other search engines are moving towards not counting them. Reciprocate between complimenting websites like organizations or charities.
- **Site-wide linking** – Having your link on the bottom of every page on someone's site is a bad idea. You know it wouldn't seem natural for someone to do that for you so stay away. Having 5,000 links coming from one IP address is never a good thing!
- **Buying high PR** – While this used to work in the past Google has caught on to this little trick. If you buy links with high PR make sure they are only a couple numbers above you and they come from relevant sites. A good thing to check is the number of pages indexed for the host site and make sure they don't stuff your link in an advertisement section. Google is catching on to that as well.
- **Daisy chaining** – So you think you have it all figured out, you will create 500 sites with content and link them all back to your main site that sells luggage... Well my friend unless you are planning on hosting those domains on separate class C IP addresses then you are in for a rude awakening. This was the "hip thing to do about a year ago and will get you banned in Google faster than a search for Britney Spears.
- **Non-relevant links** – It's called LSI or Latent Semantic Indexing. Still confused? It means that Google can tell that words are related. So if you buy links on sites that have nothing to do with yours you will get found out and your rankings will fall down the hole. Best practice is to only have links coming from like or similar category sites.

By avoiding these pitfalls your site will be healthy and stay out of Google's penalty box or the sandbox as many people call it. All too often I find sites that have been abused and left for dead and the owners have the sad puppy look on their face. But remember it's not too late to turn things around and get some proper link building going. Let's explore how you can fix everything or start out on the right foot!

Shaolin Link Practices

Everyone always points out that their competition is doing better than them. Well of course they are; they are doing something right. Whether that is proper link building or having optimized pages they have succeeded where you have not. Well no longer my friend! Let's give you the information you need to get the right links built and traffic flowing like water. You are asking yourself what works? Well highly relevant one way links coming from trusted sites that have been around for a couple years or more. Of course your next thought is how the hell am I supposed to get links from these sites? There are a couple techniques that work well.

- **Contacting the webmaster** – This is an old method that works but is time consuming. We generally leave this for weekend work or when you have an intern that has nothing to do. The best practice is to send an email to the webmaster and see if they sell links on a yearly basis. Or even better tell them you would be willing to write some content in exchange for a link.
- **Link Baiting** – No we aren't talking about going out on a boat for a couple hours. We are talking about creating something that people want. Think about what your clientele would like to have as a freebie. If you sell dog products create a PDF that talks about proper shampooing techniques. The list is truly endless with this one. You'll find that if people see your site as a resource they will link to you 80% of the time.
- **One Way links** – While one way links are the best there are things you need to make sure of. This would include buying links from sites/pages with Page Rank. Let's face it, if there isn't any Page Rank you are buying junk. Another thing to watch out for is relevancy. Make sure the page your link appears on is semi-relevant to your linked page. Remember search engines see websites as groupings of pages not a single entity so only page relevance is important. Directory links are also ok as long as the page your link appears on is relevant.
- **Articles** – Personally I love articles. Not only are you creating content for your site you are creating a piece of compelling content for other sites. This can drive traffic and create new links for your website. Best of all the pages are completely relevant as you were the one that created the content. There is nothing bad to say about articles. They work and they work well!
- **Press Releases** – If you could inject an article with steroids this would be the final product. Press releases are the most sought-after gem in an SEO's arsenal. With press releases you get branding, recognition, press, and high powered links. We are talking placement on Google and Yahoo news sites! Wake up and smell the traffic because these are simply put the best thing going.

Crouching Page Rank Hidden Dragon?

Yes, we get at least 2 calls a week requesting Page Rank. I am tired of hanging on to the myth that Page Rank is the all important power. In fact I was just watching a show a couple months ago that talked about Google and how they rank things. And of course Page Rank came up in the discussions. I like Page Rank just like the rest of you but when it comes to ranking for keywords you need to learn to let go. As you build links and as your site gains in age you will see that Page Rank will naturally come to your site. I have seen many sites with little or NO Page Rank beat out sites with higher Page Rank. This is because Google no longer places high emphasis on Page Rank. Sure it matters but it is not, I repeat NOT the thing that controls your keyword ranking.

Age of the Links age of the Site

As some of you know link age and site age are playing a more important role in today's results. I have seen sites that are 10 years old with 100 links outrank sites that are 2 years old with 2,000 links for the same term. Search engines are looking for websites that are in it for the long haul. They don't want to include websites that are there to ruin their index. Not to bash MSN as a search engine they are behind the times. They will rank websites that are a couple weeks old just because that site has tons of links. This throws off the index and people get crummy results or worse millions of AdSense sites. Frustrating... So when you are thinking about links and your site keep the age factor in your mind. If you are running a business and you think you will be around for years to come then register your site for 10 years, build long lasting links and for heavens sake make sure your website is optimized. I can say with certainty you will build success following those rules.

You Must Snatch the Link from My Hand

Finally I will leave you with this advice. You need to be diligent with your SEO. DO NOT build links and then stop. DO NOT release some articles and then stop. DO NOT create a few press releases and then stop. This fluctuation will cause spikes in the number of links you have for your site. And if the search engines catch on you could put your website in harms way. When we create programs for our clients we always create it with a 6 month window in mind. This helps the client more than us. Keeping the best interest of your website in mind will lead you to the success you are looking for. We all have a lot to win and lose in this Internet game and our staff wishes you the best success. Use the tools, use your mind and your website will rank!

Conclusion of Confusion

I hope you enjoyed this article. It's hard to get good advice let alone the right advice for your website. And with so many "used car salesmen" out there trying to sell you a lemon we think it's critical that you have the right information in hand. If you have any questions about the topics in this article please feel free to contact us, we would be more than happy to answer all of your questions.

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