Link Your Website

Disclaimer: nothing that you read below has been confirmed or approved in any way by major search engines such as Google. At best it is a summary of what industry commentators say about successful linking strategies. Some of these have been tested, but many can not be proved with testing and must be considered speculation.

Introduction – life before Search Engines

Unbelievably there was a time on the web when there were no search engines. So how did people find websites? They traversed links from one site to another. This act became known as "surfing the web", or "browsing the web". Therefore, in the very first years of the world wide web, people who made websites knew they had to both link out and get links into their website.

This focus was lost as commercial interests quickly entered the Internet in the late 90's and weren't that keen on linking out to other sites for fearing losing traffic. Some even wanted to control who linked into them.

Today search engines strongly reward sites that have good links exiting and entering them. This is the reason why you should spend time cultivating links.

How to Find Good Inbound Links

Browse the web, its as simple as that. To break it down

- Go to a search engine and search on a topic *close to or strongly related to* your web site's topic. In other words you are going to theme your links, i.e. group them

by topic
- Find a number of sites you like and you believe would add value to your web site in the eyes of your users. If you have the Google tool bar installed, aim for sites with a 3, 4 or 5 page rank. If you do not have the Google tool bar, get it. You going to need it.
- Pen an email to the owner (or call them) and suggest a link trade between your site and theirs. Remember email can be caught in spam traps and can be easily ignored, so a call maybe more effective
- When they agree add their details to a spreadsheet of links you are forming (column headings could be date, web address, email address, date requested, spoke to, sent my link)
- Then check back in a few weeks and see if they have added your link. If not, send a reminder

Reverse Links

Finding out who is currently linking to you, and who linked to you after you approached them for a link is very simple. Go to www.yahoo.com and search on *link:www.yourdomain.com.au*. Obviously substitute yourdomain, with your domain name. You can do a similar search on Google, but inexplicably its results are no where near as comprehensive. Note also, that if you just use *link:yourdomain.com.au* you will get different results. If you only have a handful of reverse links, you are in trouble and need to address that as soon as possible.

How to Present your Outbound Links

There are two preferred ways to present your links on your link partner's web site.

1. You could just ask them to add a link under existing text in a para on their site
2. or you could provide them with a para of text with your

web site title above it in bold as the link

Two is the most common approach, as you get the opportunity of optimising the text around your link with further keywords. Follow up is going to be critical. People may agree quickly to give you a link and then do nothing. You will have to chase them.

Timeframe to Success

This is a good question, and it has two answers:

- the benefits of linking are immediate in the sense that you will get traffic from your link partner's site as soon as they upload the page with your link on it and their site visitors can see it. The volume of this traffic depends on how busy their site is. If it is an obscure resource with a low page rank, then the benefit will be minimal but if it is a high traffic site, you will get a share of that traffic.
- the benefits of linking in terms of the SERPs are less immediate. A 9 to 12-month period is minimum. So the sooner you start the sooner you get results.

How Many Links Should I Get?

The short answer is as many as you can. Another short answer may be, many more than your best competitor. A dozen links may get your site on the radar. Twenty links will start your raise on the SERPs, 60 to 100 and your are starting the blitz your competition and look very important in the eyes of search engines.

> *Tip: do not add more than 60 links per page as this page may be consider spam to the search engines.*

So What Does Google say About its Search Engine?

Google is not completely silent on it's search engine. It publishes guidelines to webmasters and summary information about its technology. It does not however confirm specific strategies that webmasters may believe to be effective. Interestingly the main thrust of Google's comments is to focus on your content: create great, compelling content and they will reward you. In other words, make your website good for your human audience and we will do the rest.

In my experience as a web developer, I know that the hardest thing for people to create is compelling content. It is a challenge. One well worth pursuing though.

Should I Pay for Links?

Obviously, the process described above is lengthy and requires ongoing attention. Like a garden, you have to tend it. If you find that you are not securing 3 or 4 links each month, you should outsource this task.

A warning though, if you outsource you will not have hands-on control, or any oversight of who your site links to and who links back to you. This will be in the link traders' hands.

Similarly, you should NOT pay for any *single* inbound link unless the person offering it for sale can demonstrate to you that it is worth the price they are asking for it. Your web stats will tell you if the link you are considering buying is worth it. With web stats you will be able to monitor all inbound traffic. If you get 50 hits a month from their site, and your Google AdSense click-through price is .50 cents, don't pay more than $25.00 per month

Is That It?

By no means, there are many more things you can do to "optimise" your site for search engines. Links are important though, and you have to cover this early. Other ideas and issues concerning optimisation will be included in this blog.

Glossary

SERPS, search engine results pages, that is the results that come up when you use Google and Yahoo. This screen has "sponsored" or paid-for ads on it and "natural" results.

PageRank, this is a Google trademarked tecnology, according to Google

> *PageRank relies on the uniquely democratic nature of the web by using its vast link structure as an indicator of an individual page's value. In essence, Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote, by page A, for page B. But, Google looks at more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; it also analyzes the page that casts the vote. Votes cast by pages that are themselves "important" weigh more heavily and help to make other pages "important".*

Optimisation is the process of analysing a website for the prominence of its chosen keywords and then maximising the prevalence of these keywords throughout a web site. It also includes a good in and outbound linking strategy. Keyword analysis is covered elsewhere in this blog: see Keyword Effectiveness Index or KEI,

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