

SEO Basics: Forming a Link Building Campaign

Link building is a process of searching for quality websites that will place a link to your website on one of their pages. It's an important step in the search engine optimization process because the linking profile for a website plays a large role in that site's search engine rankings. The main components of a successful link building campaign are acquiring links from authority sites, from a high volume of sites, and from local sites; a few other important components are obtaining deep links (to other pages than the home page) and setting relevant anchor text in the links containing your top keywords.

A good link building campaign should consist of several steps:

1. Identifying potential linking sites
2. Requesting a link from these sites through an online form, an e-mail, or a conversation with the webmaster
3. Reviewing your link placement on these sites (allowing for an appropriate amount of time for editorial review)
4. Documenting all these steps to maintain an organized campaign. Maintaining an organized list of potential links and submissions will allow you to see which types of submissions and contact methods are most successful specifically for your site.

There are several methods for identifying potential linking sites. To have an optimized website, you should have links from industry-related authority sites, local sites, and directory sites. There's a free tool called Keyword Rich Domain Finder which allows you to enter a keyword or phrase and it displays several top sites for the given keyword. This tool can be found at <http://www.webmaster-tools.info/tools/keyword-rich-domain-finder>. SEOMoz also has a useful tool that can identify some of the top ranked sites for certain keywords. The tool is called Juicy Link Finder, and it can be found at <http://www.seomoz.org/link-finder>. Juicy Link Finder is not free, but it allows you to enter a keyword and see the top ranked sites for that keyword in the search engines. This list is more comprehensive and can display up to 200 sites. You can export the list into a CSV file in order to keep a documented list of link submissions and placements. A third option is to search for some of your top keyword phrases with various

search engines to find authority sites in your industry. When you find sites that are related to yours and would be able to create a valuable, relevant link to your website, contact the webmaster with a concise, polite message requesting a link or submit a link through a form on the site.

Another quick link building strategy is to submit to directories. There are many free directories on the web to which you can submit a link relatively quickly. Paying directories to include a link is another method for link building that is debated. Some directories are worth it (Yahoo has a good directory with which many sites pay to be listed) while others are often not. You will have to analyze case by case whether the benefits of getting a link from that directory or site is worth the cost. Also note that some search engines give less value to links coming from paid directories.

Another strategy is to just search for keywords and browse through the top results pages for top sites to ask for a link. This can be done with local keywords, especially to build up your site's ranking for local searches. For example at DaBrian Marketing Group, we may search "seo reading, pa" to find local directories or local information sites to contact about getting links that relate to our services and location. For most companies, ranking high for local search terms is a main goal because competing for more general keywords is not realistic or an efficient way to use marketing resources.

The last strategy I'll mention in this article is performing a competitive back link analysis. Back links are the domains containing links to a specific site. Some companies analyze the back links for their competition to find potential linking sites. A free tool called Backlink Watch provides URLs that link to a certain site; this tool can be found at <http://www.backlinkwatch.com>. Some extra information is also given with these results like anchor text and the total number of outbound links from the site. Typing in competitors' URLs can yield some of their top links, which are probably relevant to your site as well; these sites can then be seen as potential linking partners. With all of these strategies, remember that having several high quality links to your site is far more important than just having a large quantity of links. So the next time you start a link building campaign, keep in mind that organization is key and that successful link building often requires patience and persistence.