



# THAT Linking: Building Quality Links



Link building is an important search engine marketing activity because links help generate traffic and improve search engine rankings. To the search engines, links are viewed, to some degree, as votes of approval between websites. When Website 'A' links to Website 'B', the search engines give credit to Website 'B'. If several other websites also link to Website 'B', the search engines begin to view Website 'B' as an authority and thus, a good website to display for a given topic.

While this is a simplified explanation, following a few basic guidelines and link building techniques will lead to improvements in your search engine rankings and traffic. To begin, let's define what separates a 'good' link from a 'bad' link.

### **Good links:**

- Come from reputable websites – Reputable websites include websites that have many links themselves and are thus viewed as authorities.
  - .govs – Government websites are very good places to get links from, if you can. Since government websites typically have strict linking policies, the websites that do get links are often heavily rewarded.
  - .edus – Links from educational institutions are also fairly difficult to get which makes them valuable as well.
  - .orgs, .coms and all others – Any authoritative website that itself has many quality inbound links.
- Come from relevant websites – Websites with similar themes to your own will strengthen the theme of your website in the eyes of the search engines.
- Contain keywords in the anchor text – The anchor text of good inbound links should include keywords relevant to the page they are linking to. For example, a page optimized for the term *human resource software* would benefit from links that include this keyword phrase or similar phrases. The search engines value descriptive links which help define the theme of a page or website.

**Bad links** – First of all, it's a rare situation when a link hurts a website's ranking. Blatant link spamming is usually the only way to make this happen. If it were easy to hurt a website by providing bad links to it, you could easily damage your competitors' rankings by giving them bad links. Here are some examples of bad links:

- Link farms – Link farms are groups of websites that all link to one another in an effort to raise all their rankings. Link farms are a really bad place to get links from because they are viewed as spam.
- Bad neighborhoods – In the same way that you don't want to walk through bad neighborhoods, you don't want to get links from bad link neighborhoods. Bad neighborhoods are any websites that are viewed as spam or harmful by the search engines. Websites that use black hat SEO tactics fall into this category.
- 'Click here' links – 'Click here' links are links pointing to your website with anchor text that says 'click here' or some other non-descriptive term. These links will never hurt you but would be a lot more helpful if they used descriptive keywords in the anchor text.



- Blog spam – Commenting on others blogs and linking back to your website won't help your search engine ranking but may get you some traffic if your contributions are valuable.

Link building is a tedious process. Each website and industry is unique. Tactics that work on some websites won't work on others and there's not a lot you can do about it. The best thing to do is to try everything and capitalize on techniques that work when you find them. Keep in mind along that way that just like in business, it's not always what you know, it's who you know. Relationships you form online and offline can often lead to scoring a great link from a website that otherwise wouldn't consider you.

Below, a list of ways to go about building links to your website:

**Content creation** – Content is still king in the internet world so you've got to start your link building efforts by creating a good website with great content. Here are some ideas:

- Write articles about your industry
- Create free web applications
- Create informational or entertaining videos
- Write whitepapers (like the one you're reading now)
- Create top ten lists
- Write a glossary of terms important to your industry
- Write reviews of products, places, things or people

**Industry experts** – Based on your industry, there are probably a number of professional organizations, regulatory agencies and industry experts who could provide you with a link. Network with and/or join these organizations if they'll give you a link back. Consider joining:

- The Better Business Bureau
- The Chamber of Commerce
- Any professional organization for your industry

**Directories** – Submit your website to DMOZ and any niche directories related to your industry. Do not pay anyone to submit your website to '1,000s of directories'. This is a scam and won't do you any good.

**Educational institutions** – Based on your industry, there may be educational institutions that will link to you as a resource. For example, if you're a construction company, there may be several construction colleges or architecture schools that may link to you because you provide internships or resources that help their students. If you manufacture a product there may be engineering schools willing to link you to as a resource.

**Government websites** – Government links aren't for everyone. If you support government organizations, charities, have government certifications, or otherwise deal with government agencies, you may have a shot at getting a link. Visit relevant government websites and see if they typically link out. Energy Star



(<http://www.energystar.gov/>) is a good example of a government website that links out to partners. It's worth spending some time on getting .gov links because they are so valuable.

**Niche websites** – Find similar but non-competitive websites and offer a link exchange. This benefits both parties from a traffic generation and SEO perspective.

**Article marketing** – Write a few non-promotional, informative and entertaining articles about a topic related to your industry. Within the article or in the author resource area, add a link back to your website. Then submit this article to article directories like EzineArticles.com and ArticleDashboard.com. When these articles are published, you'll get a couple links back. If other websites decide to publish your articles as well, you'll get links from them as well.

**Guest blogging** – Guest blogging is when you post to someone else's blog in exchange for something, like a link! Approach bloggers in your industry and offer to write a good article for them. You may be surprised by how many will want you to do so.

**Press releases** – Write and syndicate press releases about your company (include links back to your website) and syndicate to the prnewswire.com and other PR websites.

**Social networks** – Submit your website, blog posts or any other content you have on your website to sites like Digg.com and StumbleUpon.com. If your content is unique and interesting, others will recommend it and you may not only see a lot of traffic, but also get links. Also, consider contributing to any social communities used by people in your industry. It's a great way to network with other professionals and possibly find some link opportunities.

**Charities** – Do you already donate to any charities or foundations? If so, make a phone call and see if they'll link to your website as a supporter.

**Job Fairs** – If your organization attends or hosts job fairs at universities or otherwise, there may be link opportunities. Contact the organizers of the job fair and request a link.

**Contests** – Promote a contest online. People always love opportunities to win free stuff and you may get some links for it. Online contests are viral by nature and can be great for promoting your business.

**Competitive research** – If your competitors are successful at getting links, they've done most the hard part for you. Examine the types of websites that link to your competitors and try to get them and similar sites to link to you. Go to Google and type:

*link: www.yourcompetitorswebsite.com* and click *Search*. This will give you a list of URLs that link to your competitors. Visit each link to get more ideas.



These are just a few ideas that will get you started link building. Many more ideas will flow as you analyze your successful competitors. Remember that the fundamental of creating good website content is the key to convincing others to link to you. A resourceful website will make acquiring links much easier. Just remember, the best links take the most effort. Sometimes, you have to pick up the phone, write a letter or send a bottle of wine to the right person to get in. Some websites get link requests all day long so don't be afraid to do something unique to get a link. Successful link building is critical to SEO success, so be prepared to devote some time to it.



## THAT Agency's Online Marketing Services...

- Search Engine Optimization
- Search Engine Optimization Consulting
  - Keyword Research
  - Competitor Research
- Pay Per Click Advertising
  - Banner Advertising
  - Email Marketing
- Social Media Marketing
  - Social Networking
  - Social Bookmarking
  - Media Sharing
  - Web Copywriting
- Search Engine Optimization Copywriting
  - Copyediting
  - Blog Creation
  - Press Release Creation
  - Article Creation
- Online Reputation Management

If you are interested in any of these services, or would like to speak to someone regarding setting up a custom plan for you or your company, please don't hesitate to contact us:

THAT Agency  
Contact: Bill Teubner  
Phone: (561) 832-6262 ext. 134