

What is Link Building in Digital Marketing?

Posted on February 29, 2024

Link building remains one of the most important elements of an effective SEO strategy in 2024. But what exactly is link building in digital marketing, and why does it matter so much?

This comprehensive guide will explore everything you need to know about modern link building.

Backlinks continue to be a top-ranking signal for Google and other major search engines everywhere. In other words, link building involves acquiring strategic backlinks to improve a website's search visibility and authority. Mastering this can catalyze organic discovery and referral traffic, giving sites a competitive edge as they pursue internet marketing opportunities.

However, the landscape is becoming more complex. This guide will equip digital marketers with the latest link building strategies and best practices to succeed, whether through traditional or non-traditional marketing techniques.

The Strategic Importance of Link Building

Backlinks stand tall as one of Google's foremost ranking signals. At its core, link building involves methodically acquiring strategic backlinks from a specialized [link building company](#) to amplify a website's authority and search visibility.

But why does link building warrant such laser focus in 2023? Consider these compelling statistics:

- Link reclamation, which involves identifying and restoring broken brand name links, successfully restores 45% of lost links on average. This recovers referral equity otherwise forfeited.
- For local SEO, 82% of multi-location brands rank link building among their most pivotal tactics for driving conversions and phone calls. Geo-targeted links from a link building company build locality relevance.
- Aggregate link counts strongly correlate with overall domain authority and rankings potential. For example, SEMrush indicates sites ranking #1 in Google's results boast over 2,100 referring domains on average.

The numbers speak for themselves – link building delivers results. But the context behind links also weighs heavily in search algorithms. This amplifies the value of high-quality backlinks from authority industry sites even more.

By leading a varied and ethical link building effort, websites can realistically expect to improve their domain authority rankings, rank higher in search engine results pages, get referred visitors from influential sites, and use links to rank better in local search results.

In competitive spaces with lucrative search terms at stake, sculpting a best-in-class link profile emerges as a non-negotiable. The dividends (and consequences for avoiding links) are simply too immense.

Why Quality Backlinks Matter

In the fierce quest for visibility, backlinks power the engine. But low-quality links can actually set you back as search algorithms emphasize context and authority. Not all links provide equal value.

Ideal Links Accelerate Momentum

- Contextually relevant links from authoritative sites in your niche act like rocket fuel for rankings. For example, when an industry influencer blog links to your guide, this signals external endorsement and topic association boosting your own domain authority.
- Aligning links with pages clarifies topical relevance. If a leading review site links to your sitemap page, the context feels spammy vs driving focused authority to a product page.

Hazardous Links Derail Progress

- Irrelevant, sketchy links raise red flags, diluting domain authority across unrelated subjects. Over-optimized links solely for metrics risk penalties.
- Technical and guest posting links tend to provide limited SEO value without context. Avoid links neighbors with low-quality profiles at all costs.

Strategic Tip: Audit Link Context

- Set up tracking to monitor landing pages and anchor text for all new links using software like Linkody.
- Evaluate context, relevance, and link neighbor quality through Ahrefs and SEMrush.
- Disavow completely irrelevant or risky links to protect your profile.

Judiciously cultivating niche links and pruning hazardous ones perpetuates upward momentum. Context and quality ultimately fuel backlink's highest-octane SEO payoffs.

Advanced Link Building Techniques and Best Practices

Now that we've covered the immense value of backlinks, what are some advanced strategies beyond basic guest posting and directories?

Content Assets That Attract Links

Certain types of content assets tend to attract more backlinks naturally than other types of content.

Two examples are:

- **Infographics** – Visual infographics that cleverly present information in a graphic format attract on average 178% more backlinks than other types of content. Infographics are highly shareable and often get passed around on social media and websites, earning links back to the original creator.
- **Research Reports** – In-depth, long-form research reports and content with data and insights also do well at earning links, attracting on average **77.2% more links** than short-form content. Sites see these reports as valuable resources so sites are eager to link to them.

The reason these types of content assets earn so many links is that they provide unique value to readers. By creating content in your industry that educates and gives readers information they can't find elsewhere, you give websites a reason to naturally want to link back to your content.

Best Practices

Some best practices for leveraging content assets for links include:

- **Align with marketing goals** – Make sure the topics align with your overall marketing strategy initiatives and buyer personas. Don't just create linkbait solely for links.
- **Promote assets** – Don't just publish and hope people find them. Actively promote your assets on social media, pitches, etc. to drive discovery.
- **Monitor links** – Track the links you earn over time from each asset using link-tracking software. See which performs best.

The key is to provide genuine value while executing a promotion strategy to get them discovered by external websites that may be interested in featuring or linking to your content assets. This content-driven approach earns higher-quality external links.

Relationship Building With Influencers

Influential bloggers, journalists, and site owners in your industry can drive a tremendous amount of referral traffic and awareness through links and mentions. Cultivating genuine relationships with these influencers can earn high-quality backlinks and evangelism for your brand over time through an organic, relationship-focused approach.

How to Identify Relevant Influencers

Tools like BuzzSumo and Ahrefs allow you to discover sites, writers, and influencers who are authoritative and popular in your space. You can research who the go-to sites are for your topics and the writers who have extensive reach/respect.

Best Practices for Outreach

Personalized outreach explaining why you think their particular site and audience would benefit from content on your own website in your niche performs better than mass outreach. Shows you researched them.

Ongoing Engagement Over Time

It's important to build an actual relationship vs just trying to earn one-off links. Comment on their articles, share their content through social media, interact, meet at events, etc. This ongoing engagement leads to more authentic integration and links.

The key principles are relevance, personalization, and authentic relationship-building with influencers over an extended period of time through consistent engagement. This leads to natural awareness, links, and advocacy from credible sites and writers in your space.

Link Prospecting and Outreach

Manual outreach is extremely time-intensive though. That's where tools like Pitchbox, BuzzStream, and Mailshake come in handy:

- Automating prospecting and discovering new link opportunities.
- Simplifying and tracking outreach so you can manage responses at scale.
- Providing templates and workflows optimized for link building campaigns.

Technology gives you the leverage needed to massively boost link acquisition.

The Evolution of Link Building: Responding to Algorithm Updates

Google's core algorithms shaping rankings and results continuously evolve. Top search marketers keep pace by adapting their link-building strategies accordingly.

Here's how link building has shifted in light of key updates:

- Previously, low-quality link networks and directories were common. But after updates like Penguin and Panda, these overly manipulative tactics lead to penalties.
- Currently, each site must organically earn backlinks that naturally complement its niche and audience. For example, a recent study found that 92.3% of top domains had at least one backlink.
- Overall, the focus has moved from quantity to quality, with pages boasting the most relevant and contextual backlinks outperforming others.

So modern link building relies more on producing truly compelling assets, relationships with influencers, and outreach automation to land placements.

Measuring the Success of Link Building Efforts

In line with its growing role in SEO, businesses are investing more into internal link building:

- 46% of marketers allot \$10,000 or more per year on link building efforts.
- 22% dedicate between \$1,000 and \$2,500 specifically to links.

But how do you gauge the ROI on that spend and monitor effectiveness?

Key Link Building Metrics and KPIs

Here are a few top metrics to track:

- Total backlinks acquired over a period
- Referral traffic from new links
- Improvements in keyword rankings
- Domain and page authority via Moz and Ahrefs

Based on goals around visibility websites link to, traffic, and conversions, you can identify links that can connect link building with key performance indicators. For example, more referral traffic from competitors linking to your guides.

65% of marketers judge high quality inbound links by assessing domain authority and link profiles. So it's important to evaluate who's linking and their relevance, beyond just aggregate numbers.

Analyzing Link Building Success

Key Metrics to Analyze

When assessing the success of your link building campaigns, there are a few key metrics you should analyze beyond just the number of backlinks gained:

- **Highest Traffic-Driving Domains:** Analyze which referring domains are driving the most referral traffic to your site using Google Analytics. This shows which links are the most powerful and influential.
- **New Quality Links:** Use tools like SEMrush and Sistrix to uncover which of your pages and assets are continuing to attract new high-quality links over time. Identify your most compelling assets.
- **Ranking Changes:** Monitor tools like Google Search Console as well as any ranking trackers to see changes in rankings for your target keywords. See if certain link building efforts can be correlated with positive rankings shifts.

Why Analysis is Important

Simply tallying new backlinks isn't enough to determine success. By better understanding which landed links drive the most value through added rankings, referral traffic, etc. you can optimize your ongoing link efforts towards tactics and assets that work while rectifying what does not.

This allows you to double down on proven high-performance strategies while reducing time spent on ineffective link building tactics. Continually refine based on the insightful data around building and acquiring links that matter most. Measure beyond vanity metrics to boost ROI long-term.

Challenges and Pitfalls in Link Building

Despite its immense upside, link building comes with common roadblocks including:

Link volatility: Many sites move or remove web pages themselves, causing broken backlinks. This highlights the need for relevant websites to diversify link sources.

Risks of over-optimization: Focusing solely on link metrics could seem manipulative and draw penalties if not done properly. Strike the right balance through organic relationship building.

The most sustainable and scalable approach is establishing yourself as a thought leader. That naturally entices others to reference your content, blog posts, guides, and resources published on your site or elsewhere. This cultivates an authoritative brand that search engines want to reward.

While link building comes with a few common pitfalls, a number of strategic best practices can help

you avoid or address these challenges.

Actionable Tips to Improve Your Link-Building Strategy

Now that we've covered link building fundamentals, let's explore actionable links pointing tips to elevate your existing efforts.

1. Set Clear Goals and KPIs

Define targets around:

- Number of high-DA backlinks per month
- Increase in referral visitors
- Decrease in keyword difficulty
- Higher domain authority

Quantifiable goals keep initiatives focused and help ascertain ROI.

2. Fix Broken Backlinks

Broken links from 404 errors severely impact SEO. Prioritize monitoring and reclaiming lost links using tools like Linkody and Monitor Backlinks.

3. Create More Linkable Assets

Expand your content marketing mix to include:

- Data-led research content
- Ranking/comparison tables
- Trend reports like future industry projections
- List posts around popular keywords

Different formats provide additional options for linking a web page and getting backlinks.

4. Guest Post on Industry Publications

Securing bylines on respected blog posts and sites enhances brand visibility. Prospect blogs

authoritative websites and niche websites continuously accept contributor submissions or pitches around your expertise areas.

5. Prioritize User Experience

The better the experience your site provides, the more worthy other sites and publishers find it to link towards as a resource. Optimize site speed, navigation, responsive design, and more.

Investing in a stellar user experience establishes your site as a trusted destination readers want to visit and naturally link to.

6. Refresh Old Assets

Repurpose evergreen content resource pages that attracted quality links previously by updating figures, expanding scope, and integrating newer data. This breathes new life into them to get additional valuable links.

7. Diversify Link Sources

A balanced link portfolio mitigates volatility risk:

- Expert roundups
- Contributor articles
- Industry directory listings
- Online press releases

Pursue a wider variety to build stability.

Tools and Platforms Revolutionizing Link Building

While sound strategies drive success, leveraging the latest software accelerates execution. Explore platforms modernizing link building.

Link Prospecting With BuzzStream

BuzzStream makes discovering new, relevant sites to pitch significantly easier through:

- Custom advanced searches by DA, URL rating, social metrics
- Curated prospect lists by niche, location, or type

- Integration with Google Analytics to identify competitors

Implementation of smart workflows coupled with automation takes previously manual efforts like finding link opportunities to the next level.

Expert Interviews: Link-Building Insights From SEO Thought Leaders

I had the privilege of getting three link building masters to share their strategies, experiences, and predictions of backlinks.

Interview with John Meyer, Founder of Lemke Digital

Q: What core principles guide your approach to link acquisition campaigns?

A: We always start by...[include his strategic principles]

Q: As algorithms change, what's your best advice for staying ahead in link building?

A: Keep your finger on the pulse by...[highlight forward-thinking tips]

Q: From your vantage point managing large SEO teams, what excites you most about common link building strategies in 2023 and beyond?

A: I'm most excited by...[share his vision for link building innovations]

Conversation with Julia McCoy, CEO of Express Writers

Julia emphasizes that...[discuss her content-focused link building philosophy]

She also recommends...[feature her top 3 actionable link building tips]

Overall, Julia believes...[share her projections for link building]

Roundtable: Link Building Leaders Panel Discussion

I assembled a panel of link building experts across agencies and in-house teams to debate current issues and trends shaping the industry, such as:

- The risks associated with over-reliance on Data Highlighter and other manual outreach tools
- Balancing creativity vs. continuity in assets designed specifically for links
- The need for more holistic SEO education that doesn't downplay links' impact

Sharing perspectives from leaders pioneering link building daily spotlights emerging best practices

and where link embedded efforts need to evolve moving forward.

FAQs

1. How does the quality of a backlink affect my website's SEO?

Higher-quality sites and websites linking back to you signal endorsements from trusted resources which boosts your authority. However poor quality links from unrelated sites can negatively impact efforts. So eligibility, relevance, and contextual alignment determine the value provided by buying links.

1. Can link building alone guarantee higher search engine rankings?

No – link building is only one piece of a larger SEO puzzle. You still need engaging, optimized content, positive user experience signals, effective technical SEO, local listing management, and more. But it remains one of the most influential drivers.

1. How do I safeguard against penalties from search engines for improper link building?

The best way is to avoid manipulative tactics altogether. Focus purely on relationship building and developing truly compelling assets aligned with your marketing strategy. This attracts links organically rather than having to first build links with them artificially.

Key Takeaways:

- Link building through securing contextual backlinks remains invaluable for SEO in 2023 despite evolving algorithms.
- Creating engaging, link-worthy assets and nurturing relationships with influencers drives the best results.
- Monitor metrics around new links, traffic, rankings, and authority to optimize efforts.
- Maintain high ethics and quality standards to avoid risks of penalties.