

14 Ways to Build Links Through Content Marketing by @BrockbankJames

Let's face it: link building is tough.

And it's only getting harder.

Long gone are the days when you can get away with buying links, yet links remain one of the top 3 ranking factors.

If you want to rank in 2018, you need a great link profile pointing to your domain.

However, given the fact that earning links isn't getting any easier, it can often be hard to know where to focus your efforts to gain maximum returns.

Say Hello to Content Marketing

For those running SEO campaigns in the majority of industries, your best approach to earning links is going to be through content marketing, however, that on its own can mean many different things.

To some, content marketing means nothing more than running an ongoing guest blogging campaign.

To others, using data-driven studies or even infographics is what first springs to mind.

Content marketing is a minefield, but the good news is that you can approach it in so many different ways and still drive success in terms of link acquisition.

No two SEO professionals are likely to handle their content-led link building campaigns the same way. However, to inspire you to try your hand at a new tactic, here's a look at 14 ways to build links through content marketing, categorized by the budget required to undertake the approach.

(Note: 'Budget' refers to the amount needed to produce the content, not in terms of buying links, something which is strongly discouraged.)

Low-Budget Content Marketing Techniques

Are your link building efforts limited by your available budgets?

Perhaps you're a startup who understands the benefits of SEO, yet don't yet have the budget to go all out and hire a whole team of your own?

On the other hand, maybe you're an agency that is looking at ways to grow the link profile for a client without needing to ask them for any extra monetary investment?

Here are seven content marketing techniques which only need a minimal budget to execute, with the main resource requirement here being time and knowledge with the availability of a graphic designer to add extra visual appeal to content ideal if available but by no means essential.

1. Case Studies

If you're doing great work, why not tell the world about it?

Others love to hear how their peers go about their work and there's a lot which can be learned from a well put-together case study.

Once you begin to share a case study across social media and within your networks, your insight into the processes becomes valuable and you typically won't struggle to utilize these to earn links from industry publications.

Once published, so long as a case study is insightful, data-driven and detailed, by all means, go ahead and forward to the editors of a number of publications within your space – those who are always on the lookout for experts to share their advice and guidance.

2. Data Analysis

Data-driven content marketing campaigns are powerful yet are often relatively low cost to execute in cases where you're simply analyzing someone else's data rather than collecting it yourself.

Whether you're putting a fresh take and analysis upon data collected from sources such as the ONS for the UK or Data.gov for the US, or are drilling down into anything from social media following statistics to the earnings of celebrities as published in the Forbes Rich List, there are many ways which you can pull stories through data analysis.

If you're lacking in resources, you can earn some great links simply by writing up a report of the data and publishing as a blog post including tables and graphs. However if you're able to do so, using a designer to turn into an infographic can be another great way to create a linkable asset to push out to publishers with a view to earning links from the coverage.

3. Expert Contributions

At least one expert works at every business. Many businesses have multiple experts to draw expertise from.

Experts are one of the most valuable assets which can be used from a content marketing perspective.

Too many marketers assume that a linkable asset has to be “something” (e.g., an infographic, a blog post, an ebook), when in fact, people can be one of the most attractive to publishers.

Journalists typically aren’t subject experts, however, they need to utilize specialists to add weight to their articles.

Using the likes of Help a Reporter Out (HARO) or by monitoring the #journorequest hashtag on Twitter, you can connect with journalists looking for specialist advice and input on a topic.

4. Expert Roundups

Although expert roundups might not be quite as effective as they once were, they remain a cost-effective way to earn links from bloggers and specialists.

This form of “ego-bait” works because everyone loves to share something about themselves. If you can encourage 10, 20, 50 or even 100 “experts” to contribute a piece of advice to a roundup, there’s a good chance they’ll link back so long as they’ve got an ‘As seen in’ or ‘In the press’ page.

For maximum link earning using this technique, assess whether a blogger or expert is actively linking out to resources which feature themselves while pulling together a list of prospects to touch base with regarding contributions.

A word of warning here: for the best results when using this approach, don’t waste time responding to requests which you’re not a specialist in. This happens all too often and rarely results in coverage. Stay specialist, however, and it’s a cost and time effective way to land top-tier links.

A top tip here, however, is to ensure you actually are speaking with experts. This shouldn’t be a tactic which you abuse attracting contributions from anyone even remotely

connected to the topic.

5. Guest Blogging

The goal of modern guest blogging isn't to contribute to any website that will let you, as long as they let you include an exact match anchor text link to one of your money pages.

That's so 2010.

If this is how you're approaching guest posting in 2018, forget it.

For guest blogging to work as a link building strategy you need to focus on one main aspect: *adding value*.

When you prioritize guest posting around adding value to a publication and their audience, you'll further position yourself as an expert, build your personal brand, earn targeted and relevant click-through traffic *and* typically earn a great link.

Link building shouldn't be your primary focus for guest blogging nowadays, however.

Think of links as a byproduct of you sharing your knowledge and expertise with a new audience.

6. Interviews

While interviews can be time-consuming to arrange and pull together, if you're able to interview complementary industry experts and host on your blog, this can be a great way to earn links.

When running an interview, focus your questions on topics which you know your wider audience are genuinely interested in.

Are you able to encourage the expert to share specialist

insight and advice, top tips, and guidance?

If so, again, you've got something of value which you can outreach to other relevant publishers to earn links.

Notice the trend of adding value here?

You don't need to be securing the likes of Gary Vaynerchuk to interview, however. Start small but talk to a specialist.

7. Long-Form Guides

Whether you're in B2B or B2C, long-form educational guides (referred to by some as "power pages") can be a great way to earn links from both resource pages and contextually.

Why?

You guessed it: because longer content typically adds value to a topic and contains information that others want to link to.

The first step here is understanding the questions your audience is asking – forming a basis for guides which you can develop to answer these better than any other resource out there (take a look at those which rank in top 5 positions).

Use the likes of AnswerThePublic, Quora, and even Google Autocomplete to begin to understand the questions being asked in your industry and act as seeds of inspiration to write guides around.

Mid-Budget Content Marketing Techniques

If you're lucky enough to have a budget available for content marketing of a few hundred dollars per month, or the availability of senior-level, in-house designers and PR experts, your arsenal of techniques can begin to expand, and you'll be in a position to explore additional ways to earn

links through your content campaigns.

8. Collaborate on a Content Campaign

If you're looking to earn links from new audiences and double up on resources, consider collaborating with a complementary (not competing) brand on a content campaign.

Let's say you're doing SEO for a bed retailer. How about teaming up with a road safety charity to raise awareness on the risks of drowsy driving?

You're able to highlight your expertise through stating the importance of getting a great night's sleep while the charity is able to add insight into the wider dangers and stats.

With two marketing teams promoting the content, in many cases to very different audiences, this can be an effective way to maximize the success of a campaign.

9. Infographics

Even though high-quality infographics still can be great for link building, the reputation of infographics has taken a hit in recent years.

The reason?

So many low-quality infographics did the rounds a few years back.

Today, publishers want to see something that truly stands out before they'll ever consider covering it and linking out.

The main thing to consider here: what's the story?

Simply producing a listicle in infographic format probably won't cut it anymore.

That said, a unique infographic which contains actionable

takeaways can still an attractive asset for publishers and a fantastic way to earn links from both top-tier publishers and bloggers.

10. Local PR

Even if you're a national or an international brand, don't turn your back on local publications.

Local newspapers and online publications (as an example, Lancashire Business View, an online and print publication which connects businesses in the county of Lancashire, UK) are typically great places to do one of two things:

- Land news coverage.
- Contribute expert advice and guidance through a regular column.

What must be remembered is that in many cases, local publications are stretched for resources. This means they, in many cases, welcome high-quality content and stories for two reasons:

- They're geared up to share local success stories.
- It's typically easy work for them to take a well-written press release or article, make a few small edits, and publish as is.

It's easy to overlook these opportunities as you reach out to the bigger publications, but local links are typically much easier wins while still retaining a great level of authority and relevancy to a business.

11. Whitepapers & Research Papers

If you're in a position to conduct research of your own and put together a whitepaper, this can be a fantastic way to earn industry-specific links.

Why? Because you're adding value and giving a fresh insight

into a topic.

Now, in many cases, this is more relevant to B2B companies than B2C, however, that doesn't mean it isn't possible.

Why not consider teaming up with a local university and conducting research into a topic relevant to the products which you sell?

Whether that's kitchen gadgets and you're considering research into food and nutrition or, going back to an earlier example, a bed retailer conducting research into sleep habits.

Working with university students often sees little financial investment required from your end, simply time, on the grounds that they will likely be doing it as part of their studies.

Once complete, reach out and promote to industry-relevant press and so long as there's a real story, data, and insight available, it can be a great way to earn fantastic links in significant volumes.

High-Budget Content Marketing Techniques

If you're one of the few who has higher budgets available to allocate toward content marketing campaigns (typically, we're talking more than \$2,000 per campaign or a large team of in-house resources), you can drive some great results by doing things a little differently and thinking more akin to PR than SEO.

Don't forget, here, that ideas are everything and, when working with higher budgets, it's more important than ever to fully sanity check and analyze your ideas before putting them into production.

12. Build Your Personal Brand & Become the 'Go To' Expert

Being totally honest with you here, this isn't for the light-hearted.

Building a personal brand and establishing yourself as the 'go to' expert in an industry isn't easy. It takes time. Lots of time.

But, when done right, can be very effective, yet not something which most would consider an SEO tactic.

Think of it this way, however...

If you've taken the time to build an audience who consider you as one of the thought leaders in your industry, that's a fantastic pull.

Offer to write a guest post or monthly column for a publication? If you're a known expert, they'll snap your hand off.

Respond to a HARO request as an already respected industry figure? You can almost guarantee that it'll be your response which is used.

Reach out to a journalist on a news topic and offer your insight and comment? Again, you'll stand out way above your competitors doing the same.

A personal brand is valuable and is an amazing asset from a link building perspective.

Take the time to study what the likes of Gary Vaynerchuk, Social Chain's Steven Bartlett or Wordstream/MobileMonkey's Larry Kim have done to build their personal brands through a combination of video content, social media, column writing, and public speaking.

You'll soon start to get some ideas as to how you can do this for yourself, looking with a longer-term view of using your brand to land links.

13. Interactive Assets

While you're probably thinking "huge, astronomical budgets" here, it doesn't have to be the case.

Interactive content assets are a great way to earn links, typically because they require some form of input or engagement from a user.

So long as you're creating something that adds value to a user (or tells a great story), you're going that one step beyond simply designing an infographic.

As an example, see this sleep calculator from Hillary's which lets you input the time you need to wake up at and presents you with a series of times when you really need to go to bed at, based upon sleep cycles.

Sounds simple? That's because, in many ways, it is.

Something like this takes time, resources, and budgets to pull together. But it's not overly complex.

This one example earned 286 links from 195 domains. Not bad, eh?

If you've got data and can generate ideas as to how you could turn that into a useful tool (remember, in this example, the original data will have been relating to sleep cycles and the optimal point at which to take up), it can be a great way to land links.

14. Surveys

Surveys can cost big bucks to conduct, but they give you something which no one else can get – unique data.

If you're able to pull together stories backed by your own data, collected through a survey, you're positioning your content as highly attractive to newspapers, industry publications, and the like.

That said, the stories and results of the survey must be interesting.

Before jumping in and investing in a survey (don't forget you ideally need at least 2,000 respondents for the press to consider it a fair piece of research), take the time to read 8 Tips for Creating PR Surveys.

One final note on surveys: be prepared to follow up outreach with a link reclamation campaign as this approach will often result in large numbers of unlinked brand mentions.

Conclusion

At the end of the day, content marketing remains one of the most effective (and potentially scalable) ways to earn links to support your SEO campaign.

You just need to focus on one main thing, regardless of the tactics which you use... ***ensuring you're adding value at all times!***

More Link Building Resources:

<http://tracking.feedpress.it/link/13962/8555006>