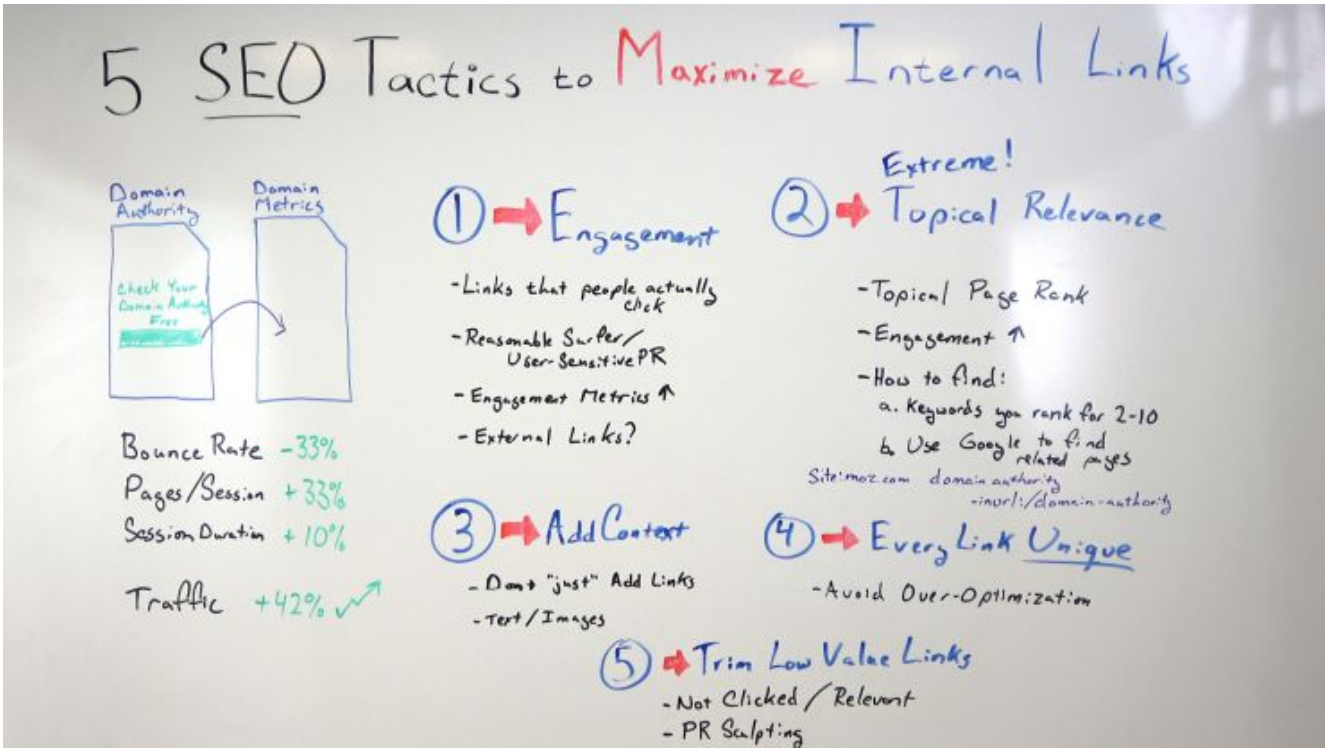
5 SEO Tactics to Maximize Internal Links – Whiteboard Friday

Are you using internal links to their full potential? Probably not. Luckily, Cyrus is here with five tips to help you boost your internal linking strategy – and your site performance – in this brand new Whiteboard Friday.

Resources for further reading:

- Should SEOs Care About Internal Links?
- Internal Linking Best Practices



Click on the whiteboard image above to open a high resolution version in a new tab!

Video Transcription

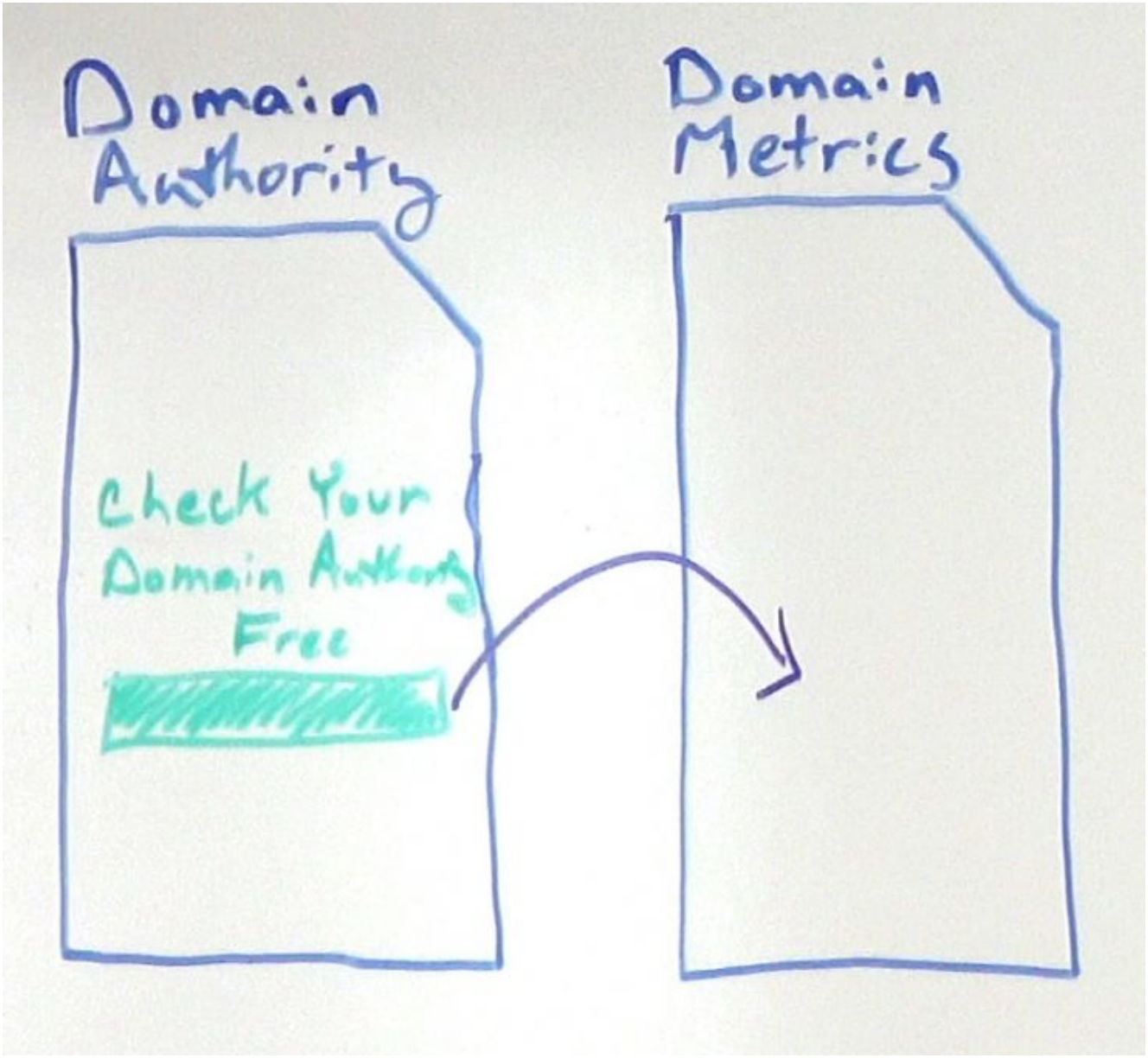
Howdy, Moz fans! Welcome to another edition of Whiteboard Friday. I'm Cyrus Shepard, and today we are talking about

internal links. Specifically, five SEO tactics to maximize your internal links.

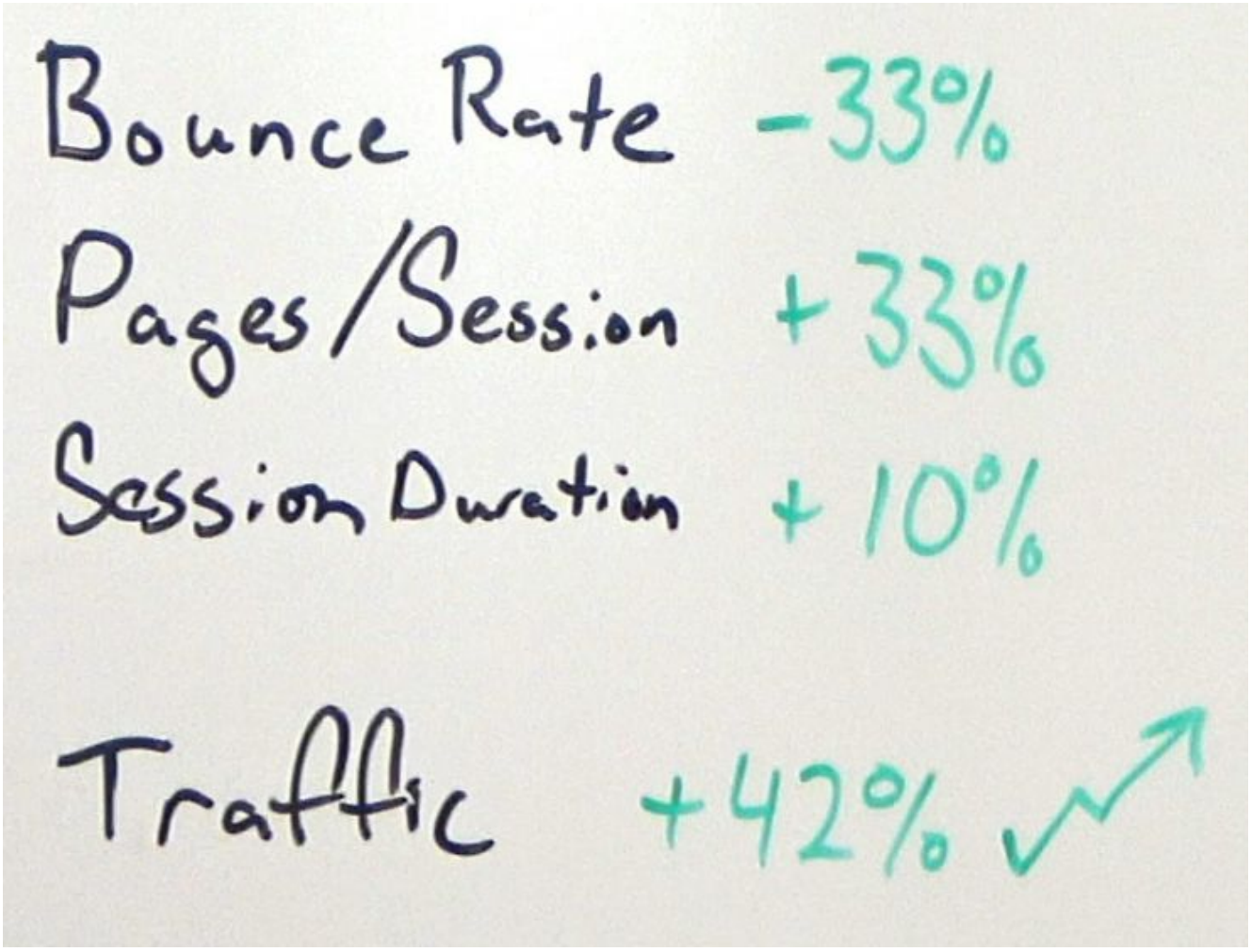
I love internal links. There are a lot of guides out there, internal link best practices – they explain everything. This is not that video. This is not that guide. Instead, I want to show you ways to maximize your internal links for maximum SEO gain, because I see a lot of people who don't leverage their full power, and they think internal links simply aren't as powerful.

But first, a story…

So I have some specific tactics for you to try and employ, and we'll get into those in a second. But first, to demonstrate internal links, I want to start with a story, a story which shows some of their potential power. It's a story of a single link here at Moz that we employed several months ago.



We have a page on Domain Authority. If you Google “Domain Authority,” it’s typically the very first result. Back in January, we added a single link to the page. We had just launched a new tool, SEO Domain Metrics, and we wanted to add a link from our existing page to our new page. So we did. The link said “Check your Domain Authority for free,” and we added it. Within weeks we saw some interesting metrics, not on the page that we linked *to*, but on the page that we linked *from*.



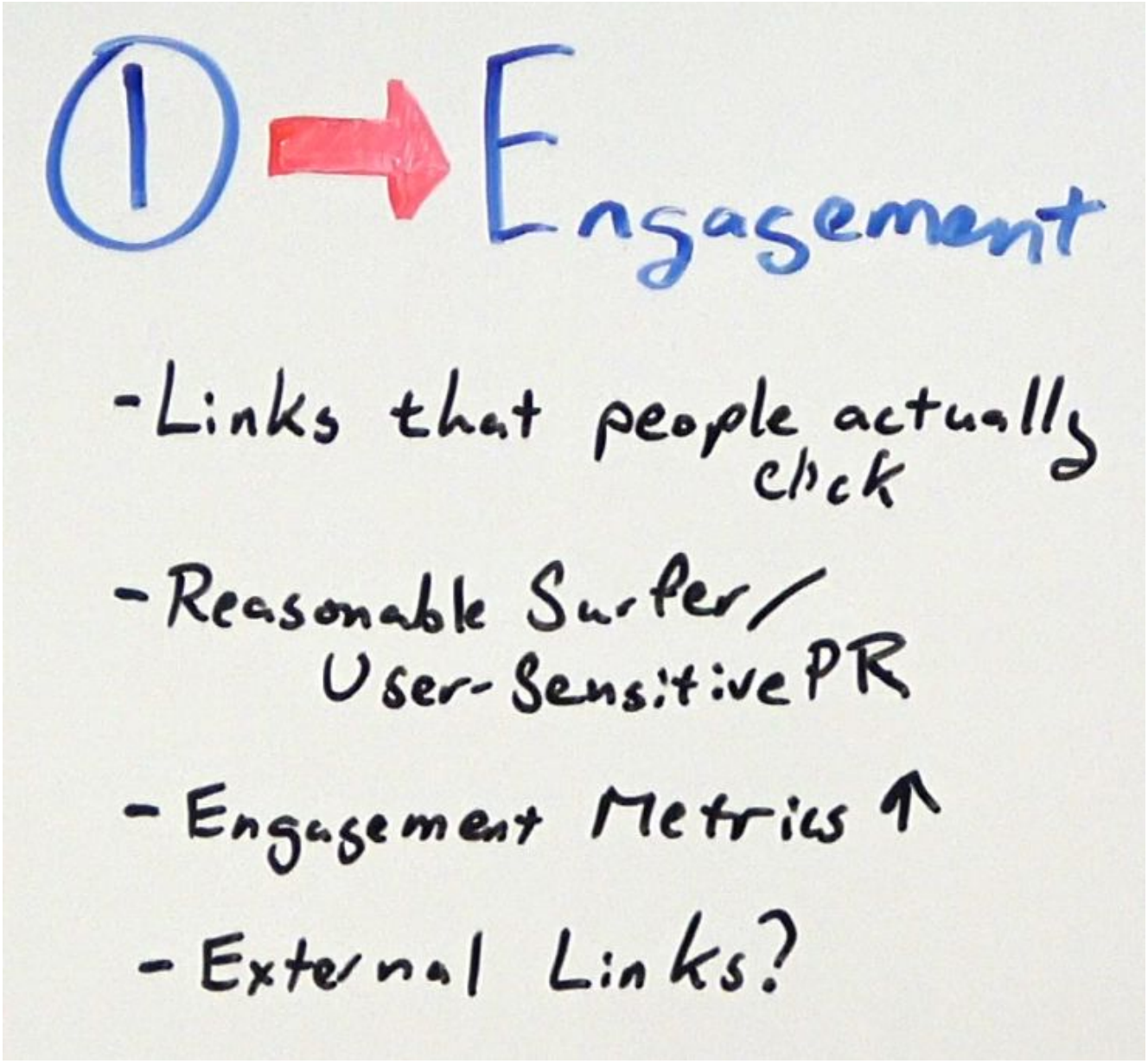
We also included an image on the page to draw attention to the link. Bounce rate instantly went down 33%. Why? People were clicking the link. They wanted to check their Domain Authority. Pages per session went up 33%. So when people were visiting this page, they were visiting more pages pretty much because of this link and the accompanying image.

Session duration was up 10%. So people were spending 10% more time on Moz after they visited this page. Within a few weeks, traffic to the page that we added the link to was up 42%, and it has sustained that traffic increase ever since January when we added that link. Of course, the page that we linked to we added links from all over the site.

Traffic on this page has risen exponentially, and it's now one of the top pages on Moz, probably not all because of this link, but the cumulative efforts of many of those links. So why did that link work so well and why do we think that the

link helped improve those page metrics? So here's the thing that most people don't get about internal links.

1. Engagement



Number one, strive for engagement. When you add internal links to your page, it gives people the opportunity to visit other relevant pages on your site, thereby improving your engagement metrics. That's when you know that your internal links are working when you improve engagement. If you're just adding SEO links for SEO value and there's no engagement change, are you really adding value?

No. So you want to go after engagement. There are some

technical Google reasons for this. Google has several patents that we've discussed over the years – reasonable surfer. There's a patent called User Sensitive PageRank. Through these patents, Google describes how they want to count links that people actually click.

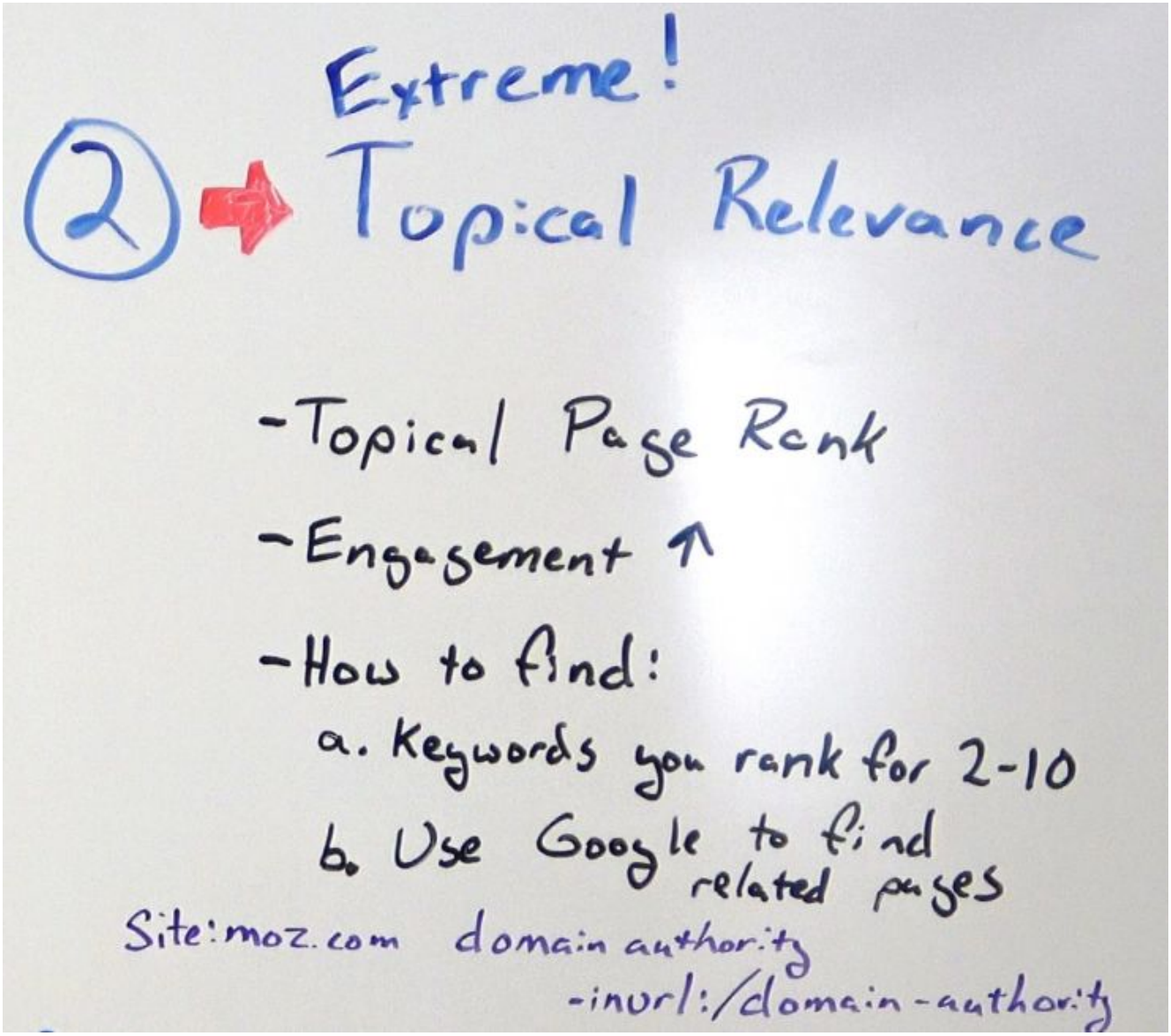
If people aren't clicking on your links, should they really count? So Google has several processes in place to sort of measure what people are clicking or what they might click and actually pass more weight through those links. So you get help with the engagement, but you also pass more link signals through those links that people are actually clicking.

Now think about where you might be putting your internal links now. Are you putting them at the bottom of the page, like in a related post? Is anybody clicking those widget links? Maybe not, probably not. Look at the top of this post, the top of this page. I'm going to add some links about internal linking at the very top of the post. Do you think people are going to click those links?

You bet they are. There's a good chance you're going to click one of those links after you watch this video. Or maybe you clicked on it before you watch those videos. So we would expect those links to pass more value than adding those links further down on the page or in a widget or something like that. You can tell your internal links are working and have value when you see your engagement metrics start to move.

So that should be the number one measure or standard of if your internal links are valuable and are working for you. Pursue engagement, number one rule.

2. Extreme topical relevance



Number two tip, extreme topical relevance. Now people say, yes, you should link to topically relevant pages. I like link to extremely topically relevant pages.

So whenever I publish a new page, I look for the other pages on my site that are very topically related, and I make sure to interlink them appropriately so I can get the right rankings boost to the right pages that I want. There are other Google technical reasons for this too. We talked about reasonable surfer and user sensitive PageRank. Well, Google also has something they patented called Topical PageRank, and that means that links that are more topically relevant pass more value.

Links that are less topically relevant pass less value. You

can also look at your engagement metrics to see if these links are topically relevant because people generally don't want to click less topically relevant links. So a couple of tips for finding your most topically relevant pages on your site. For example, for Domain Authority, I might look at all the other keywords that that page ranks for in positions 2 and 10, which means they rank highly but they're not quite number 1 and I want to boost the rankings.

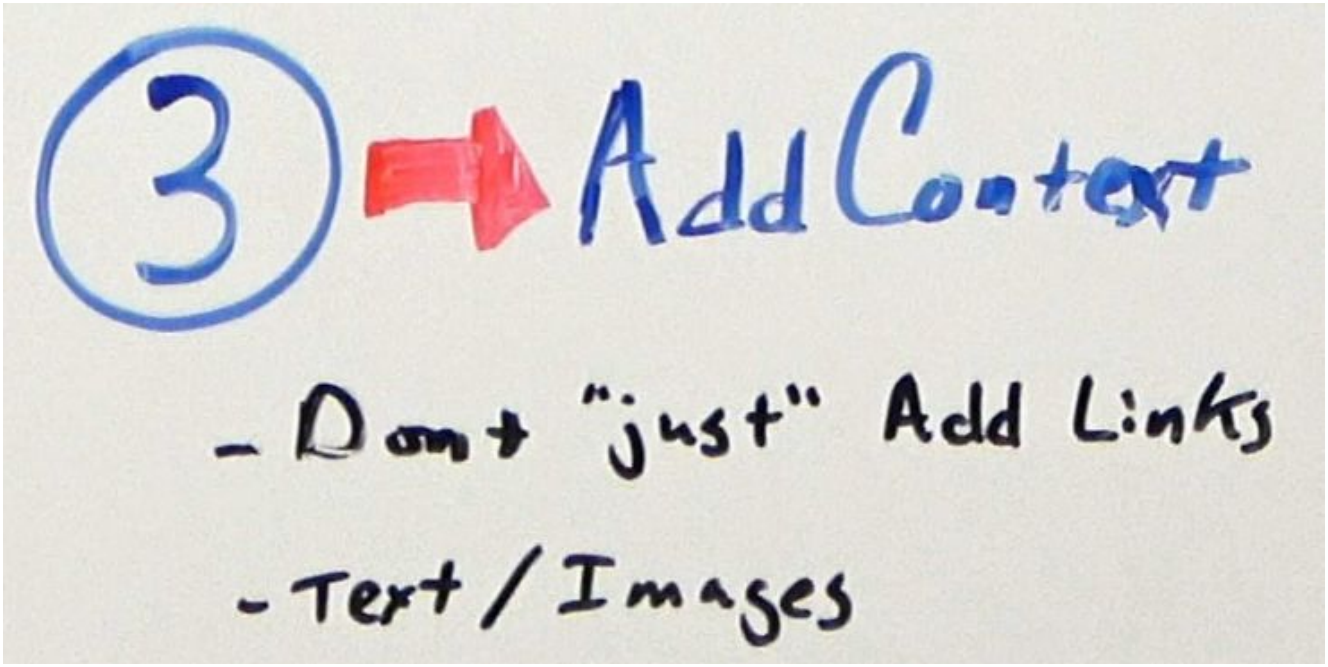
I want to find other pages on my site that also rank for those keywords. So I would use a query like this, and I'll put the code in the transcription below. I would search on my site, site to moz.com, search for my keyword "Domain Authority," and I would exclude the page that I'm actually looking for, so:

site:moz.com domain authority -inurl:/domainauthority

Google will give me a list of other pages on my site that rank for Domain Authority, excluding this, and I know those might be good link targets to link to my page to help it rank for those terms. We have some other resources on that as well if you search around and I'll link to:

Harnessing the Flow of Link Equity to Maximize SEO Ranking Opportunity

3. Add context



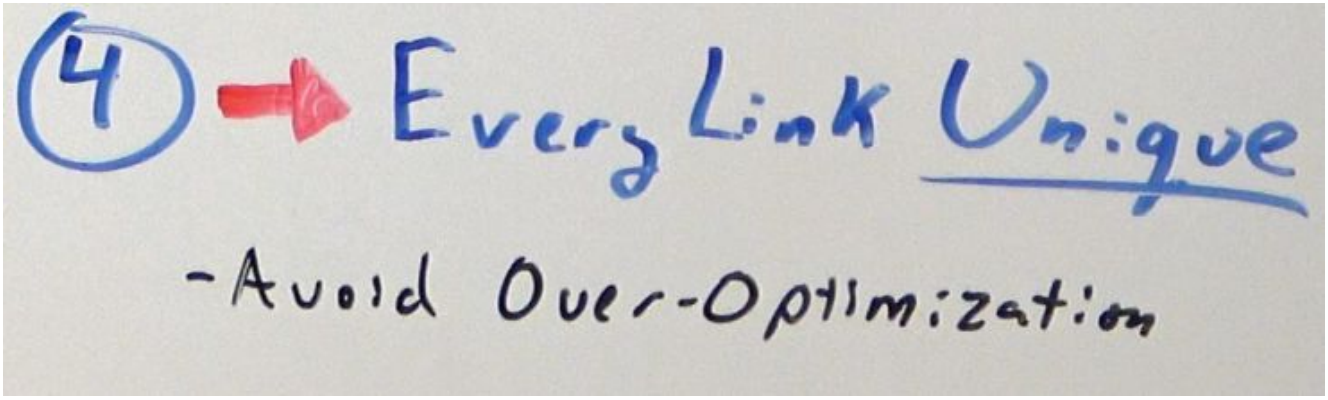
Third tip, don't just add links, add context to your links.

One thing that a lot of people do, that I hate seeing, is when they add a link to a page, they'll just find a piece of relevant text and they'll add a link to it and that's it, without adding any relevant context or anything else like that. In my experience, it's much better if you add context around a link. Google's freshness patents talk about the amount of change in a document.

When they just see a link, they might ignore just a simple link added. But if you add text, if you add image, if you add context around a link to help draw people's attention to it, to help give some relevant signals to Google, that link, in my experience, is much more likely to pass value than simply adding a link and linking some existing text.

So always add context to your links.

4. Make every link unique

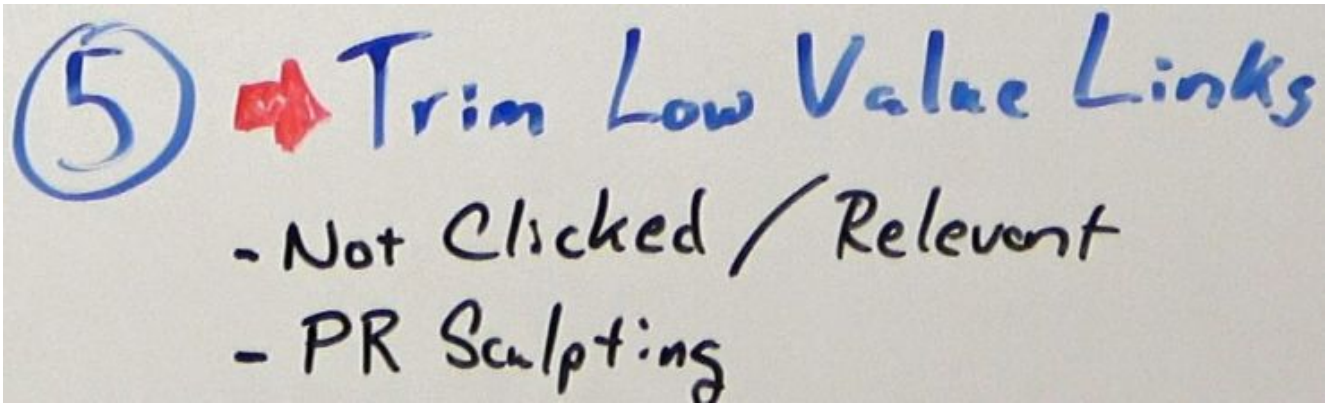


Number four, can you believe we're at four out of five? Number four, make every link unique. Now a lot of people in SEO they talk about link ratio. Should you use exact match anchor text or partial match anchor text? What should your ratios be? I think that's far too complicated.

I think much easier is just simply make every new link you add unique. Make it natural. Use natural words. I tend to avoid exact match anchor text completely. That way I get to avoid something that's very easy to do, which is over-optimization. If you're a new site with not a lot of authority, Google has processes in place to detect over-optimization when they think that you're trying to manipulate your rankings.

So make every link unique. Use natural words. Don't worry about ratios and things like that. If you follow my advice, I would generally avoid exact match anchor text on internal links. Other people may give you different advice though.

5. Trim low value links



Finally, tactic number five, you may consider trimming your

low value links, and this is another technical reason.

This is a type of old PageRank sculpting. The idea is every page has a certain amount of PageRank. If you include lots and lots of links on your page, the value that Google is able to pass through each link is diminished. It’s diluted. So you sometimes may want to eliminate the low value links. So what do I mean by a low value link?

Links that are not engaging and not relevant. People are not clicking them. If they’re not engaging and they’re not relevant, there is simply no point to include them on the page if they’re not being actually helpful.

Conclusion

All right. So those are my five tips for getting the most power of your internal linking. If you have any other tips that you’d like to share with the community, we’d love to hear about them in the comments below.

Hope you enjoyed this video. Best of luck with your SEO.

Video transcription by Speechpad.com

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