Crowd marketing: A link building method that only 2% use to rank higher on Google

30-second summary:

- Link building still plays a prominent role in SERP ranking, even in 2020.
- Crowd marketing is a technique that is based on building backlinks on forums and communities.
- Most people don’t use it, and you can take advantage of that.

Crowd marketing: What’s that?

Crowd marketing is one of those often neglected link building methods, that can give you a competitive edge in Google ranking. It is often called forum or community marketing because that’s where those backlinks come from.

In this article, we’re going to discover why this link building strategy is still useful in 2020, the best practices to apply, and things to be aware of. Stay tuned!

Content created in partnership with Crowdo.

Why would crowd marketing benefit your SEO strategy?

There are tens of thousands of **niche-relevant forums** with a large number of visitors and great metrics. Crowd marketing does not only provide pure SEO gains, but also indirect benefits. Some of the advantages are as follows:

- **A stronger and diversified backlink profile:** Links from niche-specific forums can strengthen and diversify your backlink profile. As an outcome, you'll rank higher on Google Search.
- **More views and more brand awareness:** You will get a lot of eyes on your website which is great for brand awareness.
- **Increase in website traffic and prospective customers:** Since we're interested in targeting very specific online communities, you can expect an inflow of traffic to your website, and possibly more leads and customers.

As mentioned above, this technique has been largely underestimated, and that's actually great! That means you can take full advantage of it and **possibly outrank your competitors.**

Digital community marketing and its types

There are a dozen sources that could be relevant to perform crowd marketing campaigns. Those include but are not limited to:

- **Blog (comments section):** Heavily overused and no longer effective way of building backlinks. Why? Because blog comments aren't usually moderated well, meaning that it's an open book for spammers, and that's not what we are after.
- **Social media and Q&A Websites:** Once again, probably effective for brand awareness, not so much for a boost in SEO. Why? Again, low moderation and the fact that all the links from those platforms don't build up any authority of a backlink profile.
- **Forums/communities:** Bingo, we've just reached our sweet spot! There is a multitude of forums for every niche, with real human visitors and a high emphasis on

moderation and helpful content. That’s what we’re after, as links from those sources can give you a solid boost in SERP.



Forum link building: A checklist and best practices

1. Search for niche-relevant forums

Context is king, and this rule holds for link building as well. Make sure to do a thorough search and handpick only those communities that discuss subjects relevant to your niche.

Here are some tips that can help you along the way:

- **Avoid the so-called “hello threads”** where people greet each other and discuss literally everything. Those are useless for SEO purposes.
- **Search for niche-relevant forums**. Let’s say you have a car shipping business – you should only search for resources that discuss vehicles.
- **Keep in mind, that there is a limited number of websites**

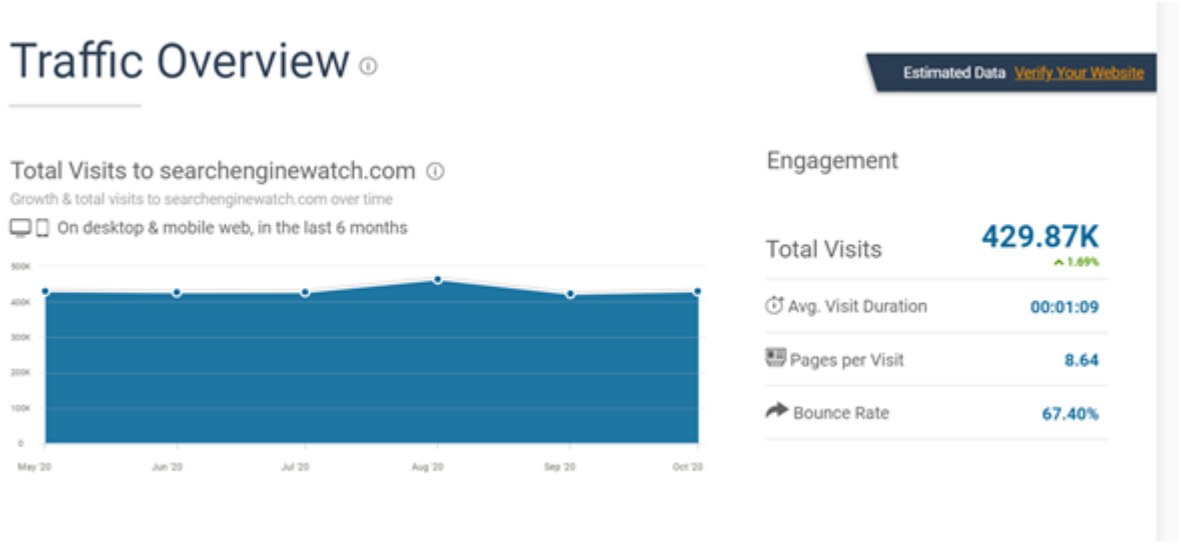
relevant to your business. No need to be upset though, because you can also find relevant threads on common forums. For example, if you trade cryptocurrency – you can search for specific threads about crypto on IT forums.

- **If you find any local websites, that's even better.** If you offer a local service and you happen to find a digital community right in your area – that's an additional bonus point for backlink building purposes.

2. Look at the amount of traffic

You should target popular websites with real human audiences. Websites that receive a high volume of traffic and user engagement look trustworthy in the eyes of Google, and can also put your business right in front of your target audience.

You can use tools like SimilarWeb to estimate the amount of traffic a website receives. There is no right and wrong here, but at Crowdo we would advise you to aim for forums with at least 30,000 visitors per month. Usually, it's not a good sign if a forum does not receive a lot of traffic, this may indicate that it's no longer active or it became a hub for spammers with no human audience whatsoever.



3. Look at the metrics (here we go, SEO nerds)

When you decide whether a certain forum will be useful for your backlink campaign, make sure to take a good look at its website metrics. Let’s have a short overview of the important metrics to keep in mind:

1. **DA/DR:** This figure indicates the overall strength of the domain. The higher, the better, try to look at websites with 50+ DA.
2. **TF:** This metric is based on the trustworthiness of a website, based on the **quality** of its referring domains. For example, links from educational websites or Wikipedia would have a much higher ranking weight, than links from social profiles.
3. **CF:** This figure is based on the **number** of referring domains. It is useful to see how trendy or viral the webpage is, but it does not say much about the quality of information.
4. **PA/UR:** This metric is calculated the same way as DA, but limited to a specific webpage. It comes in handy when you’re looking at a particular forum thread, as it’s a separate page (hence a separate URL).



DA PA TF CF

Website traffic

4. Check whether a forum is properly moderated

In our case moderation refers to the extent to which forum content is being reviewed/removed by admins, as well as their tolerance towards self-promotion or even spam.

Whilst you can use tools that assess the "spam score" of a certain website, it's better to stick to your judgment. Just spend some time and skim around the forum, look at what people post and what they talk about.

If you see tons of lookalike comments that include the exact same promotion, poor wording, and links, this is a warning sign, that the forum is not being moderated, and thus probably contains a lot of spam – this clearly is a *"no go"*, because backlinks from those websites are toxic and will do more harm than good for your SEO in the long-run.

On the other hand, forums with aggressive moderation will never let you place any link, even if it fits the context and the discussion. To conclude, medium moderation is usually preferable, because it means that a link can be included ONLY

if it’s relevant.

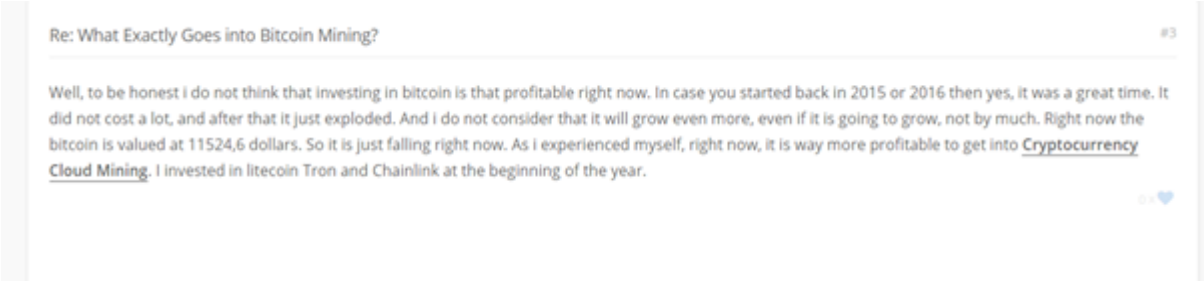
Action time: Writing solid forum replies

Now you know everything you need to pick decent websites for link building. Yet, you’re not a guru of crowd marketing if you don’t know how to use them properly.

Let’s take a look at some do’s and don’ts when it comes to posting replies with a backlink to your website.

DO’s:

1. **Use proper language, grammar, and jargon if applicable**. The word “crowd” is here for a reason. If the community you’re targeting uses specific vocabulary, then use it as well. Proofread your comments and check for any grammar issues.
2. **Analyze the discussion before posting anything.** Your comment should blend in with the rest of the thread. Make sure to read other user’s replies to get a better idea of the subject matter.
3. **Link back to your website in a natural way.** Once you’ve written a solid comment, use this chance and include a backlink naturally. Use appropriate anchor text and don’t even try to do clickbait or push users to visit your website aggressively.



DON’Ts:

1. Attempt to hide a backlink. This is black hat and will be punished by admins (or even by Google, if used excessively).
2. Use software for mass posting. This doesn’t work anymore and will likely get you a Google penalty.
3. Copy-paste the exact same answer template with your link. Context surrounding the link is important, so make sure it’s unique and sound.

Forum links: dofollow or nofollow?

“Nofollow links are useless” is probably one of the most common SEO misconceptions you will ever come across. In fact, having a natural mix of dofollow and nofollow links is very beneficial.

It is already confirmed that Google treats “nofollow” as a hint, that can potentially result in higher rankings, depending on the context, anchor text, and the referring domain. For example, everyone claims that Wikipedia backlinks are useful, although they’re always nofollow.

The main takeaway is

If you see that all the links posted in a particular forum have a nofollow tag, that’s not a reason to quit, as they might still be helpful for your ranking. Other than that, people click on the links regardless of their tag, so for traffic-generation that does not play a role at all. Just ensure that not all of the backlinks you build are nofollow, because this also doesn’t send Google the right signal.

Crowd marketing: So is it black hat

or white hat?

The technique itself is entirely organic and white hat if you use it the right way. Basically, any SEO method can be turned into black hat if it’s abused.

For example, the same words can be said about outreach guest posting. If you genuinely reach out to website owners, propose interesting content, and use the opportunity to build a few links – that’s great and won’t ever get you penalized.

Now if you’re building a blog network solely for link-building purposes (for example, PBN), this is a black hat scheme that won’t go unnoticed.

The same logic can be applied here. If you’re writing genuine and helpful replies, that benefit the community and include relevant backlinks to your website, then you’re doing everything right. A well-carried crowd marketing campaign is not based on spam or volumes, quality is still key.

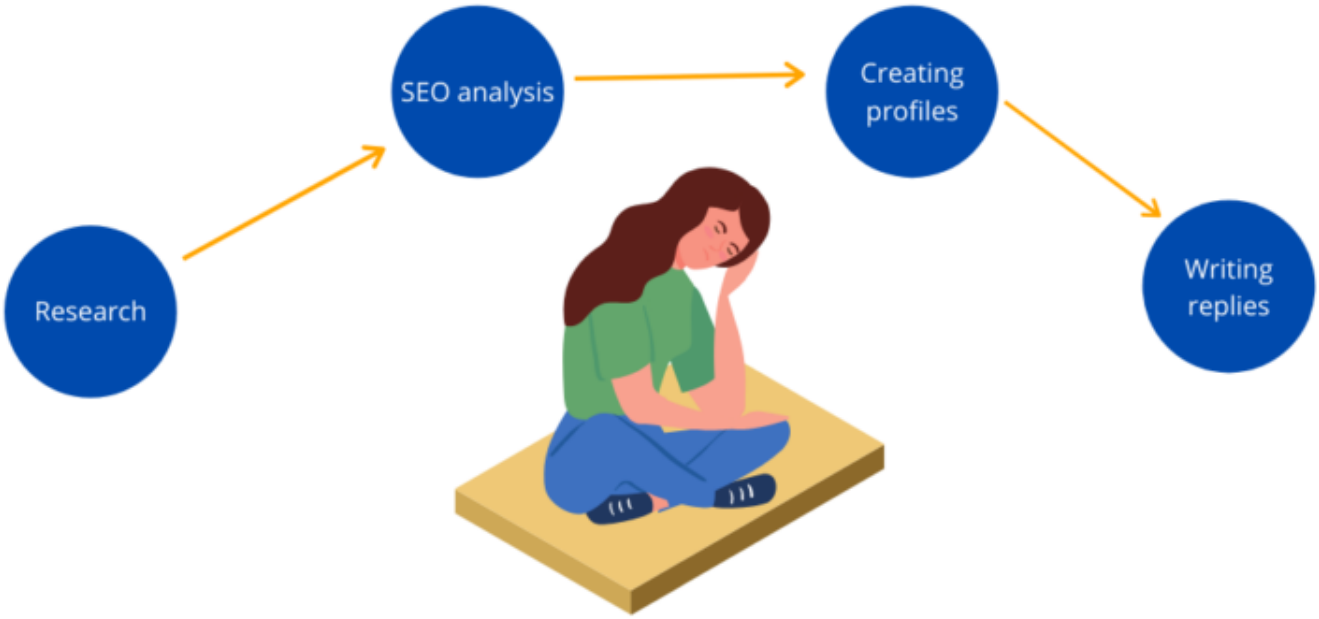
Don’t try to fool Google and use automated software and spam all night long, because that’s black hat and that’s punishable.

That’s great but looks like there are so many things to keep in mind…

Crowd marketing is definitely time-consuming! Let’s just summarize some of the things that you need to set up for a successful crowd marketing campaign:

- You have to do a lot of research to find relevant forums and communities.
- You have to check their metrics, traffic, and level of moderation.
- You will have to create an account for each of them. In

most cases, you'll also have to build up some reputation before posting any links (or anything whatsoever).
- In some cases, you will have to pay a membership fee to join an online community.
- You have to search for niche-specific threads and write helpful replies for each of them.



As you can see, this does require a lot of time, resources, and dedication. That is why more often than not, SEO enthusiasts prefer to outsource this task to reputable link building services like Crowdo. There's no one restricting you from doing this yourself, but soon you'll find that it's hard to do on a large scale.

In any case, don't fall victim to shady backlink providers or freelancers, who are willing to do the job for cheap. You've just seen that doing it "the right way" is not easy, so if you see suspiciously low prices, that often means that either software was used or no research was carried along the way. Both of these will diminish your genuine SEO efforts.

Conclusion

We hope that you've learned everything there is to know about forum link building. If you would like to leave this job to professionals, you're welcome to check what Crowdo has to offer with a 10% discount, exclusively for SEW readers!

If you want to find out more about forum link building, make sure you read their latest report here.

Andrei Cucleschin is a Marketing Lead at Crowdo. Besides writing content, he's passionate about design, traveling, and coffee.

More about:

> *Crowd marketing: A link building method that only 2% use to rank higher on Google*