Google Alerts for Link Building: A Quick and Easy Guide

If you're a link builder, you know how tough it can be to persuade other site owners to link to your site with "out-of-the-blue" pitches. This is true even if you have great content or have been building links for years.

That's why the mantra "link building is relationship building" exists. Often, before you build a link, you have to build a relationship with the site owner first. This means anything from following them on Twitter, commenting mindfully on their posts, writing emails to them to discuss their content without pitching links, etc. It's a productive strategy, but also a time-intensive one.

However, there's another – relatively quick – link building strategy.

Is your ear itching? If you're the superstitious type, this means that someone is talking about you.

Sometimes a webmaster will publish your brand name, products, or target keywords on their site without actually linking to your site. In SEO, these are known as "fresh mention" opportunities. These are typically some of the easiest link building opportunities available, since you don't really have to explain yourself to the site owner. Mostly, you just have to ask them to put an <a href> tag in the code.

But how do you find these fresh mentions? There are multiple methods and tools, but today I'm going to highlight the one I use most often: Google Alerts.

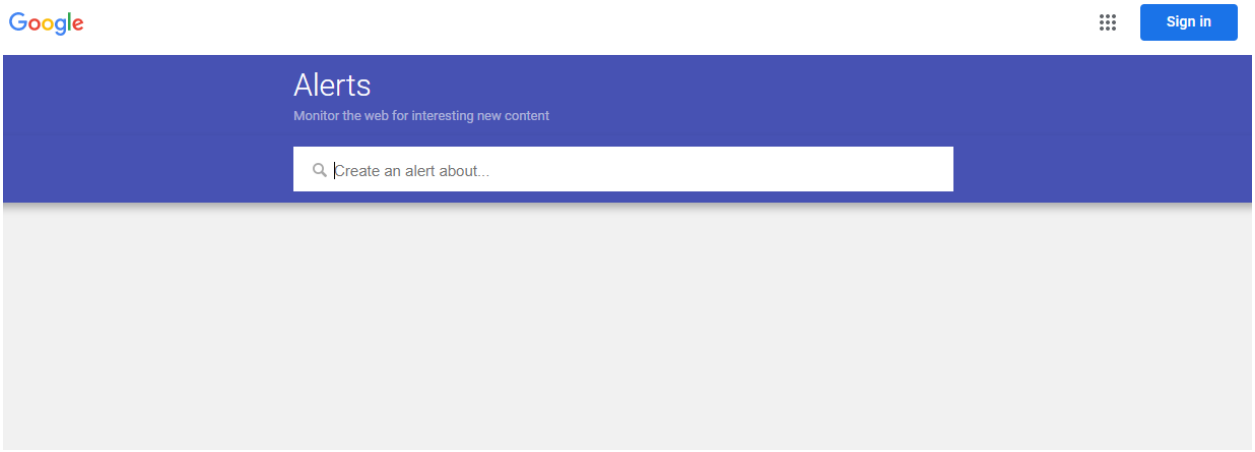
Google Alerts is beneficial in a myriad of ways beyond the

world of link building and SEO, but there's no doubt that it's the best way to stay on top of your fresh mention opportunities. Allow me to explain how you can use it!

Setting up Google Alerts

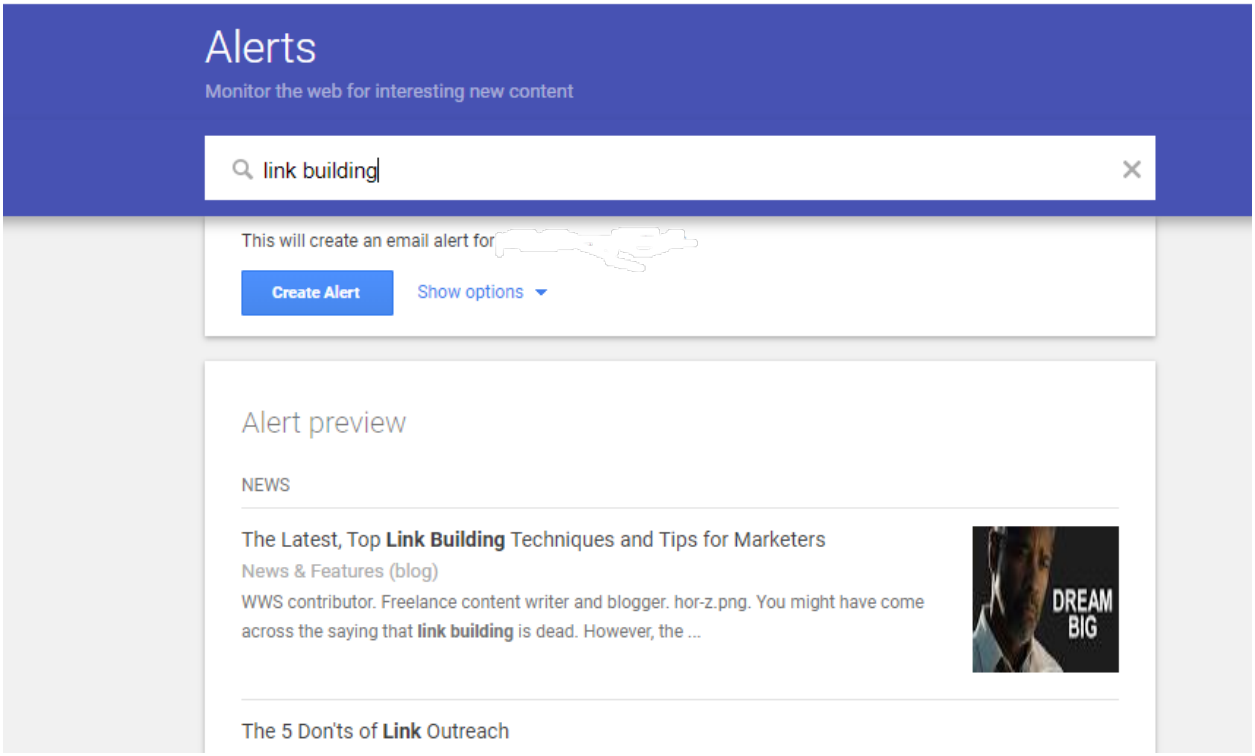
First off, the obvious: you need the correct link. To start using Google Alerts, head over to Google Alerts. You can technically set up alerts without a Gmail account, but I would recommend having one. If you don't have one, click here to find out how to set one up.

When you have an account set up and land on Google Alerts, you will see a page that looks like this:



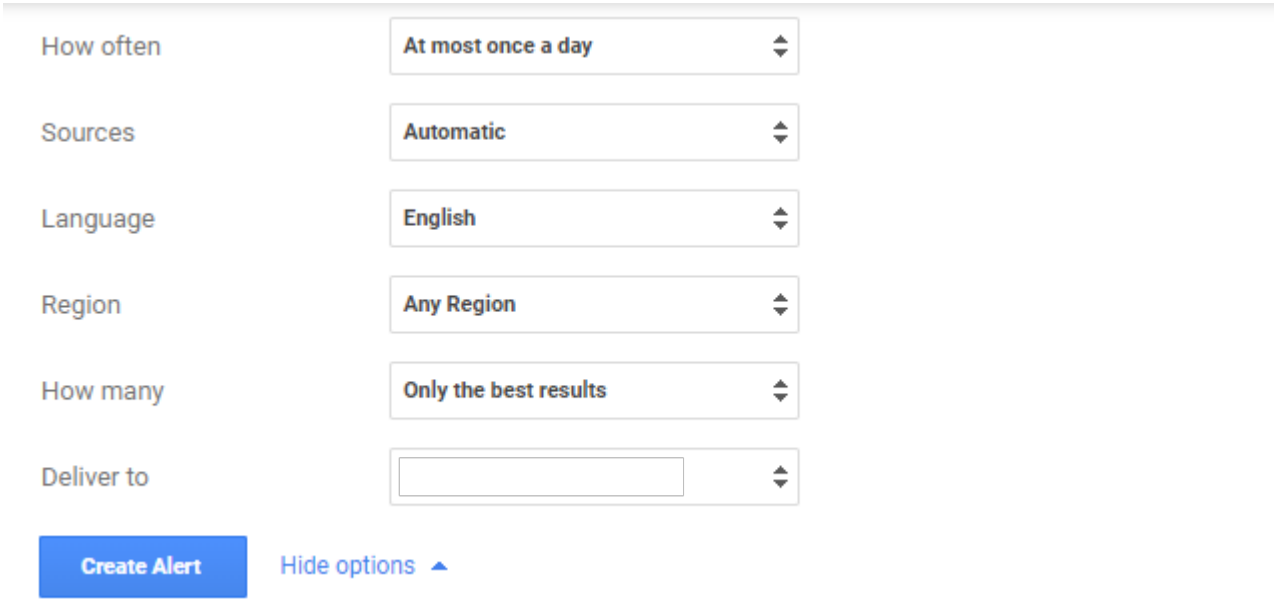
No, there's not much to see. Not yet anyway.

Let's take a basic example. Say you want to create an alert for mentions of link building. Simply type the phrase into the bar at the top.



You will see something similar to the image above, even before you click on anything else. The first box asks for which email address you want to receive the alerts (I've erased mine for the purpose of this article, but trust me, it's there). Below that will be examples of recent alerts for your query.

Click the "Create Alert" button, and alerts will be sent to your selected inbox going forward. However, you can customize a few settings before you do so. Click the "Show options" dropdown next to the button to see a list of settings you can adjust:



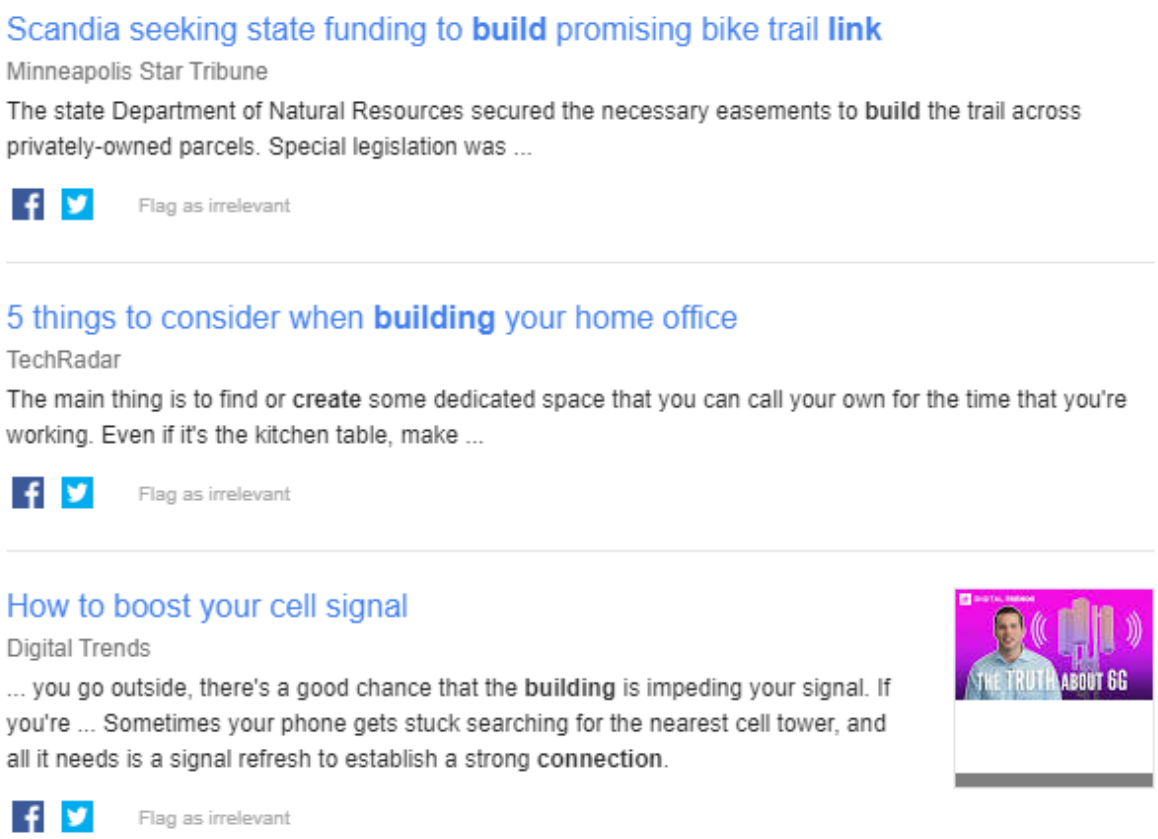
Each item is auto-filled with the default setting. You can adjust the settings so that you only get alerts from specific regions, for certain types of content, and more. In general, I have found the default settings to suffice, but there are valid reasons you might want to change them (if you're only interested in video content, for example).

When you're done with the settings, you can create the alert!

Google Alert tips

Quotation Marks

From that point on, assuming you stuck with the default option of once-a-day emails, you'll get an email every 24 hours that looks like this:

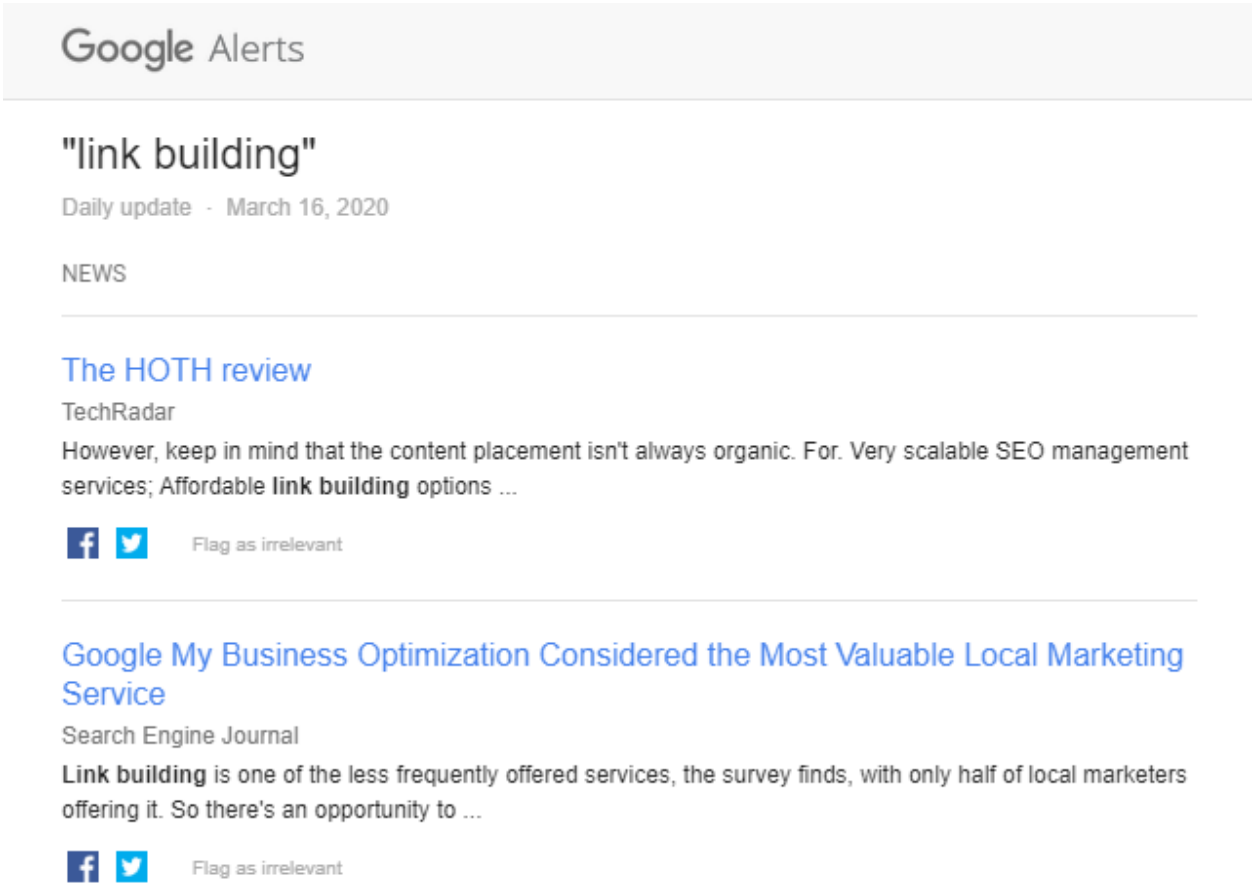


Notice the returns in this example include pages that talk about each individual word from your query (in this example the word “link” and the word “building”). Obviously, this isn’t helpful, and it’s a waste of time to sift through these results.

So, how can you make sure that you only get results for an exact phrase? Quotation marks!

I (intentionally) made this mistake when setting up this alert. Notice in the image from the first section that “link building” didn’t include quotation marks around it. Without them, Google Alerts will return results like the ones in the image above.

The quotation marks indicate that you’re looking for an exact match of that phrase, so when you set up an alert using them you will get something that looks like this:



Much better, right?

Note that you can combine terms with and without quotation marks in one alert. Say for example I was looking for content related to link building around images. Instead of "link building images," a phrase not likely to occur too often, I could use:



This will return results that include both the exact phrase "link building" AND the term "images".

Set up multiple alerts

If you're using Google Alerts for link building, I recommend setting up more than one alert. Consider some of the following:

- Your brand name
- Your products or services

- Your focus keywords
- Personalities associated with your brand

If you're concerned about all the emails flooding your inbox, adjust the settings to decrease the frequency or stagger delivery days. You can also set up a separate Gmail account that only serves to receive these emails. I personally find the former to be the better option, but I know people who do the latter.

Consider setting up alerts for your competitors as well. Doing so may give you a window into their link building and publicity strategies that you can learn from. Along with that, you might find new potential target sites that aren't mentioning you. If they mention your competitor, it's likely they are relevant to your niche.

Also include common misspellings of any of the list items above. While Google's algorithm is typically smart enough to correct such misspellings in its search, a few valuable results may seep through even still.

Conclusion

Google Alerts can be helpful for other purposes other than link building. Certainly, if you're engaged in an online reputation management campaign, they're a necessity. Some use Alerts to track the kind of publicity their competitors are getting as well.

There are other excellent link building tools out there that can complement your "fresh mention" strategy if you are a link builder, but Google Alerts is an essential. I hope you find Google Alerts as helpful for link building as I have. If you have other tools or suggestions, please mention them in the comments below.

http://tracking.feedpress.it/link/9375/13572275