Nine mistakes to avoid when contacting websites for backlinks

30-second summary:

- A backlink is a link that directs visitors from another website to yours.
- Obtaining backlinks is fundamental to improving your sites search engine ranking, the best ranking sites have thousands of backlinks.
- While backlinks are important, they are not easy to get and the outreach process can be timely and expensive.
- There are a common set of guidelines to follow when looking to obtain backlinks. However, these guidelines are often breached, impacting a sites ability to get more backlinks.

Anyone who knows anything about boosting a website's SEO and earning the praise of the Google Gods knows the importance of backlinks. Not only do backlinks send more traffic to your site, but they help you gain notoriety as an authority in your industry.

Some backlinks are gained organically, which means one website stumbles upon the amazing content on your web page and links to it without you asking. Others are gained by paying, providing content, or begging and pleading.

Backlinks are not an easy job

Let’s be honest, earning backlinks as a newbie or start-up isn’t easy. It sometimes takes years to gain the type of authority and notoriety that makes other websites willingly backlink to you as a resource. So, while you’re gaining traction, building SEO, and working your way to the top, you may need to take a different approach.

This is where soliciting other websites for backlinks comes into play. With millions of websites crowding the internet, there are plenty in desperate need of quality content. So, what does that mean for you?

You offer to write a quality, content-driven article (more on this later) free of charge for a website to use on their blog. You might be thinking, “What? Why would I write an article for free?” Well, when you slip a backlink to your website into the article, you’re increasing the chances that you’ll see a boost in traffic and SEO.

But, as the old saying goes, nothing worth having in life is truly free.

This is why, in addition to the time it takes you to write the article, you may need to pay a publishing fee. Websites know how valuable backlinks are and they’re not afraid to charge you for them.

Not sure that jumping through all of these hoops is worth it? Well, it is and we’re about to tell you why.

What are backlinks?

Simply put, a backlink is a link that directs visitors from another website to yours. Think of it as a reference. Backlinks are mostly found in informative blog posts. If you’ve ever clicked on blue, highlighted words in an article,

and found yourself redirected to another website, you just clicked on a backlink. And chances are, that website owner paid for that link.

You can get backlinks in a few different ways. The easiest way is to pay the publishing site to place a backlink in an existing article. This method is generally cheaper and requires less work on your part. But, you have less control over the anchor text or the article's content. If you don't care, great! But if you want more control over your backlinks, you'll need to provide the content yourself.

That means writing a blog post with a link to your website embedded naturally and contextually. Some websites post the content with your backlink on their page free of charge. These are usually websites with low domain authority in need of content to fill their pages.

While these backlinks aren't as valuable to your site, a backlink is a backlink and even ones from low ranking sites can help boost your SEO.

If you're shooting for more high-profile websites with high domain authority, you'll need to provide both the content and pay a publishing fee.

The fees are usually outlined in the publishing site's guest post criteria and can range anywhere from $30 to hundreds, so be prepared to shell out some cold hard cash.

Why are backlinks important?

So, why do website owners pay money (or provide free content) to receive a backlink? Backlinks are actually a much more cost-effective way to advertise your business or website. By making a single investment, you could gain thousands of visitors that convert to sales.

Increased traffic on your website also helps boost your SEO

and your ranking on the SERPs (search engine results page). But that’s not all. Backlinks are like a glowing recommendation from a well-known professional in your field. When a high-ranking website backlinks to yours it gives you more credibility. In time, this will increase your domain authority.

The number of referring domains is one of the first things Google considers when ranking your site. The more you have, the higher your site will rank on the SERPs.

Proof that backlinks work

Still not convinced that backlinks are worth your time or investment?

Websites with more than 300 referring domains are much more likely to rank in the number one spot than, let’s say, a website with only 50 backlinks.

The quality of your backlinks is just as important as the quantity. The higher the domain authority of the referring website, the better it is for your SEO and ranking. For example, if you’re someone designing a new sports beverage, you’re much more likely to gain traction with an endorsement from a professional athlete like Shaq than you would be from a high school basketball coach.

Major mistakes to avoid when contacting websites for backlinks

Now that we’ve covered the basics of what backlinks are and why they’re so important, you’re probably ready to run out and start contacting publishing websites, right? Not so fast.

Publishing sites are inundated every day with websites looking for backlinks. Not only does your article need to stand out

from the crowd, but you need to follow some basic guidelines. Some guidelines are common sense etiquette and professionalism while others are specifically outlined by the publisher.

Do your research before pitching to a website. In addition, avoid these nine mistakes.

1. Don’t haggle over the price

There’s nothing more insulting to a blogger than having someone try to beat down their posting price. Some blogs advertise a specific price for getting a backlink on their website. Others welcome free content and give you a link as a “thank you”. For those that charge a flat fee, be careful how much haggling you do. If the price is $100 to post, don’t offer them $50. You won’t get very far and you may burn some bridges along the way.

That’s not to say that asking for a small discount is always out of line. If it feels appropriate, ask for 5 or 10% off the price – but don’t be surprised if they decline.

Remember, you aren’t the only person willing to pay for backlinks and you won’t be the last. You’re a dime a dozen. Don’t blow your chances for getting a backlink on a reputable site with a high-domain over a few dollars. If your link successfully posts, the investment will pay for itself ten-fold.

2. Don’t create over promotional content

There’s no denying that backlinks are a form of self-promotion, but when your content is over-promotional, both the blogger and the readers will pick up on it right away. No one likes to read an article riddled with countless links.

They’re an eyesore and take away from the content’s value. When creating a post to pitch to a publishing site, focus on the customer experience, not your own agenda.

What are the customer’s pain points and how does your content address them? Are you providing valuable, credible content that answers your reader’s burning questions? There are countless ways to include your backlink in the article without hitting the reader over the head with it. Publishers want content-driven submissions, not a sales pitch.

3. Don’t ignore the blogger’s criteria

Rules were made for a reason – and the guidelines bloggers have for guest post submissions have a purpose. If the website you’re pitching to has specific criteria for submitting, follow it.

Similar to a job application, provide all the required information and follow the structured guidelines. It’s hard enough for bloggers to weed through countless emails and pitches – if yours breaks even one rule, it’ll get tossed aside without a second thought.

The most common guidelines surround the length of the article, what to include in the initial email (bio, headshot, and other details), the format (Google Doc, PDF file), and the submission process.

Read all of these guidelines before submitting your work. Not doing so will be a waste of time for both you and the blogger you’re pitching to.

4. Adhere to the word count

Another important guideline that many publishing sites will

give you is the word count of the articles. The average length of a blog post is about 2,000. This isn’t just a number that the bloggers pulled out of thin air.

Google prefers blog posts over 2,000 pages. New data suggests that 2,100 to 2,400 words is the ideal length for boosting SEO. They often provide the most value to readers. But that’s not to say that posts between 500 and 2,000 words have no place on the Internet. There are plenty of readers who prefer a short, concise, and to-the-point article that’s only 1,000 words or less.

Trust that the blogger you’re pitching to have done their research and selected a specific length of all submissions for a reason. Don’t disregard their request. Avoid submitting articles that are way over or way under the word count. Also, avoid adding useless information (fluff) just to reach the word count. Publishing websites will see right through this and likely reject your article, costing you a backlink and much-needed exposure.

5. Stuffing your content with backlinks

One per customer – that’s the theory behind including backlinks in an article. If you successfully pitch your idea or article to a publishing website, most allow one backlink to a page on your site. Not four, five, or ten. Don’t stuff your article with backlinks. Not only does it look sloppy and unprofessional, but it hurts your credibility and the legitimacy of the article.

Remember, you should be creating content-driven articles that include helpful information. Backlinks should be included in a discrete and meaningful way. When an article is riddled with links, readers are much less likely to read the entire thing and it’s even more unlikely that they’ll click on any of the

links. A few links scattered throughout an article are much more attractive and won't overwhelm the reader (or annoy the blogger you're pitching to).

6. Pitching to irrelevant websites

Not staying in your lane is another major mistake to avoid when contacting bloggers for a backlink. When you approach a blogger in an industry that's not relevant to yours, it shows carelessness. You clearly didn't research the publishing site. It appears as if you've just mass-emailed a list of websites that accept guest posts. And you can guarantee that the publishing website will give you as much time and attention as you gave the research process. Zero.

If you're a property management company, you shouldn't be contacting bloggers in the fashion or beauty industry. Stick with real estate websites or even companies that offer financial or loan advice. Make sure that the relationship makes sense before contacting the websites.

7. Hounding the blogger

There's something to be said about following up with a website after pitching your article idea. Follow-up emails show responsibility, eagerness, and a certain level of professionalism. Contacting the blogger more than two times or hounding them for a response, on the other hand, screams desperation.

Once you initially make contact with the website, wait a few days before sending a follow-up email. When you do, indicate that you just want to confirm that they received your submission or ask if there's any additional information they'd like. If they don't answer after this second attempt, give it up and move on. It either means your article idea wasn't a good fit at this time, the content wasn't up to snuff, or

perhaps they’re not interested in backlinking to your website.

All of these reasons are legitimate. Don’t take it personally. Accept that it’s a dead-end and start pitching to other websites.

8. Rambling in the initial email

We get it. You’re excited for the opportunity to post on a blogger’s site. You want that backlink. But it’s important to remain calm, cool, and collected – and that means avoiding overly long emails that ramble on about how honored you’d be if they’d publish your article and backlink.

The blogger doesn’t need or want your life story. Keep it short, simple, and to the point.

Not only do overly long emails annoy bloggers but your intended message will get lost in the shuffle. Check the blogger’s criteria once again. What specific details do they ask for? Be sure to include all of these, without going overboard. Most bloggers want a short synopsis of what your business is about, who you are, and what you want (aka a backlink).

In some cases, you can briefly touch on your budget, but this isn’t always a good approach. If their criteria already outline a price, remember not to haggle too much. If they don’t mention a price, you don’t want to offer more than they normally charge and end up spending too much. When in doubt, avoid talking costs until you get a response.

9. Submitting unoriginal content

This is SEO no-no number one. Never, ever, ever submit duplicate content to a website for publication. Not only does this teeter on breaking copyright rules and possibly

plagiarism, but it hurts the host site’s SEO.

The last thing you want to do is offend or negatively impact the business that you’re pitching to. Not only will it put a bad taste in their mouth about you and your website, but it’ll downright piss them off. It also shows that you know very little about how backlinking works.

The content you submit should be unique and written specifically for the publishing site’s target audience. Even if you have the perfect article already written for your niche, avoid pitching it to multiple websites at once. Then, you’ll find yourself in a pickle if more than one blogger accepts it. Instead, try pitching blog post ideas or outlines where you can create original, unique content for each website.

Backlinks are an important part of the SEO puzzle. As your website climbs the Google ranks to claim a spot at the top, you may need a little boost. Backlinks are one way to get this boost without spending a fortune.

You won’t get a response from every blogger you pitch to. In fact, you may only hear from a handful out of hundreds. And of that handful, you may only succeed in posting one or two backlinks. So, while you’ll win some and lose some, the most important thing to remember is to always play by the rules.

More about:

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