Stop Asking for Links in My Old Content! by @tonynwright

I love marketing automation.

So much so that we built a practice around helping companies set up effective marketing automation campaigns where we write workflows, playbooks, scripts, and provide technical help on a variety of platforms.

I hate marketing automation.

My inbox is a mess. I receive hundreds of emails each week from clueless marketers. They think because they have my email address they can send me cold pitches asking for meetings, phone calls, or downright spam me.

These marketers are clueless as to how to effectively use marketing automation. And they are ruining the tool.

But if you give an SEO who is tasked with building links access to marketing automation?

Watch the industry take another reputation nosedive as formerly respectable SEO pros join the ranks of those who send communications with the salutation “greetings of the day.”

Several free marketing automation tools have become popular of late – the most notable being Mailchimp’s marketing automation tool.

I’m not blaming Mailchimp for the recent increase in unwanted link requests – it’s just a tool.

But ever since they started offering their service for free, I’ve seen the irrelevant link requests more than triple. Both

to our site and our client’s sites.

Great tools in the hands of the incompetent do more damage than good.

Can You Change a Link in Your Blog Post from 2010?

If you are asking me to change a link in an old blog post, there should be a reason.

Not just because you put my email address into a playbook that dictates a follow-up every three days or so.

I don’t think that asking for links in old content is inherently bad. If you have something truly relevant and it will add value to a post – show the value.

Let me show you how it should work.

Here is an excerpt from an email I received recently:

Hi,

I just came across your Excel resource page (https://example.com/active-link-building-process-prospecting-finding-links-part-1/) and wanted to drop you a quick email with a suggestion.

My colleague Brenda has published a list of the best Excel tutorials from around the web. Here’s the link – www.theirlinktoaspammylookinginteriorpage.com.

Perhaps you could add a link to this on your page? Please let me know your thoughts.

Thank you in advance.

Let’s break this down.

The Greeting

It’s a simple “Hi”.

OK, being informal may work for some.

However, in most cases, going formal or more personalized is the way to go.

What They Should Have Done

Just reading your own name in an email can increase open rates by more than 65 percent, according to a Chadwick, Martin and Bailey study.

I’m not a fan of putting the name in the subject line – although it can increase open rates, but my gut and experience tell me that it’s spam, *unless* I know and trust the sender.

The Open

This email’s open isn’t horrible – except that it is.

The blog post (which is more than 5 years old) is not an Excel resource page. It’s an old link building process that is 8 years old.

We keep it up because it does drive some traffic from organic – but we probably should update it or take it down (agencies are the worst at taking care of their own sites).

What They Should Have Done

First rule of link building using e-mail: do your research.

Research is hard.

It’s difficult to find influencers and topics that are relevant to what you are pitching. It takes blood, sweat and a lot of tears.

But if you don’t do the research, you might as well not do the campaign.

I would imagine that this link builder is seeing little to no valuable interaction with anyone if the research they did to find us is any indication.

The Body

Who is Brenda?

Why should I care that Brenda put together a list of Excel tutorials?

What credentials does Brenda have?

And if her research is as good as the e-mailer’s, why would I trust these tutorials are any good – much less provide a link from my site recommending the tutorial?

What They Should Have Done

Tell me why this content is relevant to me and my audience. Where do you see this content being placed?

Remove as much friction and make it easy for me to fulfill your request if I decide it’s a good one.

When writing an email pitch, I always make sure I am using at least one of Robert Cialdini’s Pillars of Influence.

If you aren’t familiar with them, I highly recommend you immediately go and read Cialdini’s book, “Influence”.

Here are the six pillars of influence. I keep a laminated copy of them in my wallet and on my desk.

- Reciprocity
- Scarcity
- Authority
- Consistency

- Liking
- Consensus

The Ask

Again, you just assume I sit around, waiting for your e-mail about content that is irrelevant to me and then say, “Perhaps you could a link to this on your page?”

PERHAPS?

What They Should Have Done

The ask is the most important part – and how you ask should depend on who you are and who you are asking.

In this case, a cold email where there is no relationship, the ask should not be for a link. It should work toward creating a relationship.

The ask needs to provide a reason that the prospect should continue to interact with you.

Frequently, a cold email isn’t enough. You need to interact with the person in other settings such as Twitter, Facebook, etc.

You can read more about creating relationships with influencers in my article, How to Build Quality Links – Not Quantity.

The Close

You want my thoughts?

I don’t think you really do.

Thanking me in advance means nothing.

What They Should Have Done

In most cases, the close should be very simple.

You've hopefully already made your point and provided a reason for either a link or a continued relationship.

I recommend always giving a phone number as well as social links where they can contact you. If you aren't willing to give your phone number to the prospect, you shouldn't pitch them. Period.

What's Missing

We could talk about what's missing in this email for days. We've talked about quality research. We've talked about personalization.

But the main thing this email is missing is relevance.

I have no respect for Brenda at this point. If I saw anything by her, I would assume it was spam.

She may be a very legitimate researcher that hired a bad agency – but the perception is that she doesn't care anything about me.

The Follow-Up

I have received no less than 15 e-mails from different email addresses with similar messages asking me to link to Brenda.

I can't block them fast enough.

I don't know if these folks are using a marketing automation tool (in the email headers, I can't tell), but if they are they are doing it wrong.

Marketing Automation Is a Rifle –

Not a Shotgun

Link building doesn’t scale.

You can’t build quality links using a Python script or a bot.

Quality links come from real people. But that doesn’t mean you can’t automate some of the tasks.

Marketing automation can work for link building – but you need to use it like a rifle. Use it to automate tasks that target.

For instance, if you have a list of articles you’d like to send to an influencer – relevant articles they would be interested in – you can set up a script to send each article on a different day.

I’m not a fan of creating autoresponders for influencers. There are too many variables to create an effective script.

But you can keep in touch with influencers and build trust over time. When you wield marketing automation like a shotgun, you blow a hole in your campaign.

You can’t target hundreds or thousands of people and effectively build quality links.

There are many tasks that can be automated in your quest to build relationships with influencers – and ultimately links. Those include:

- **Sending relevant articles and information.**
- **Keeping in touch and top of mind:** Schedule messages asking how you can help the influencer, not how they can help you.
- **Reminder:** If an influencer says they will help you, they may have good intentions, but it probably isn’t top of mind. Creating friendly reminders based on their actions can help you make sure to follow up appropriately.

- **Coordinating advertising efforts:** If you use Facebook to target influencers (you should), then you can make sure they are getting served the right ads in some automation platforms.

Conclusion

It’s not about the tools, it’s about connecting with people. Sounds cliche, but it’s true.

If you have a good outreach plan, marketing automation tools can help. If you just “spray and pray,” marketing automation will only make you fail faster.

More Link Building Resources:

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http://tracking.feedpress.it/link/13962/8905401