The Link Building Webslog

This is not the link building article you – or really anyone – were probably hoping for. It isn't a step-by-step guide to getting the best backlinks, it isn't some list of hot tips or new opportunities, and it isn't the announcement of some great tool. What it is, unashamedly, is a window into the brutal slog that is outreach-based link building.

What can you expect?

1. YELLING IN CAPSLOCK.

2. Some tips and tricks.

3. Weeping and gnashing of teeth

Courtesy Some Ecards
All kidding aside, one of the few aphorisms I've come to believe is that sharing how we do things as SEOs is almost never a problem, because 99% of people don't have the follow-through and resources to make it happen. I would love to be proven wrong by the readers on Moz.

My goal here is to give a realistic understanding of the monotonous slog that is white-hat, outreach-based link building. I happen to think that link building is a perfect counterexample to the "Pareto Principle". Unlike the Pareto Principle, which states that 80% of the effect comes from 20% of the cause, I find that unless you put in 60-80% of the effort, you won't see more than 20% of the potential effect. **The payoff comes when you have outworked your competitors, and I promise you they are putting in more than 20%**.

Courtesy Quotiss
The goal of this “**Webslog**” is to document the weeks and months that go into a link building campaign, at least as far as how I go about the process.

Courtesy Aaron Burden
> *Also, look at that gorgeous fountain pen. I frickin’ love fountain pens.*

I will try and update this document every week or so with progress reports, my motivation level, the tips and tricks I’ve employed over the last few days, the headaches, wins, and losses. By the end of this, I hope to have accomplished something along the lines of a link building journal. It won’t be a blueprint for link building success, but hopefully it will mark on the map of your link building journey the things to avoid, the best way to get through certain jams, and when you’re just going to have to tough it out.

Journal Entry Day One

Day one is almost always the best day. It’s a preparation day. It’s the day you buy the gym membership, purchase a veritable ton of whey protein and protein shaker bottles, weigh yourself – in all reality you accomplish nothing, but feel like you have done so much. Day one is important because it can provide momentum and clear a path to success, but it also presents the problem of motivation being incredibly disproportionate to success. It’s likely that your first day will be the most

discordant with respect to motivation and results.

Rand does a great job explaining the relationship between ROI and Effort:

However, I think the third component here is motivation. While it does largely track the chart Rand provides, I think there are some notable differences, the first of which is that, in the first few days, your motivation will be high despite not having any results. Your motivation will probably dip very quickly and become parallel with the remainder of the "effort" line on the graph, but you get the point.

Courtesy Drew Beamer
It's essential to keep your motivation up over the course of the "slog", and the trick is to disconnect your motivation from your ROI and attach it instead to attainable goals which *lead* to ROI. It's a terribly difficult thing to do.

Alright, so, Day One prep.

Project description

For this project, I'll be employing a unique form of broken link building (Part 2). If you've seen any of my link building presentations in the last 2-3 years, you may have caught a glimpse of some of the techniques in the process. Nevertheless, the link building method really isn't important for the sake of this project. All that matters for the sake of our discussion in the method is:

1. Outreach Based (requires contacting other webmasters).
2. Neutral with regard to Black/White hat (it could be done either way).
3. Requires Prospecting.
4. Ultimately brings Return on Investment through either

advertising or an exit.

In addition, I won’t be using any aliases in this project. For once, I’m building something respectable enough that I don’t mind my name being associated with it. I do still need to be careful (avoid negative SEO, for example) as this is a YMYL industry (health related). The site is already in existence, but with almost no links.

So, what are the returns on investment (or effort) that I’ll be tracking and, importantly, won’t be tracking?

Courtesy financereference.com

1. Emails sent to links placed relative to:
    - Subject line
    - Pitch email
    - Target broken link
2. Contact forms filled to links placed:
    - Subject line
    - Pitch email
    - Target broken link
3. Anchor text used in links placed
4. Not tracking:
    - Deliverability
    - Open rate
    - Reply rate
    - Domain Authority of source

I know #4 will sound like a cardinal sin to many of the professional link builders reading this, but I’m really just not interested in bothering a recipient who chooses to overlook the email. I’m certain that the speed of emails sent

will not impact deliverability, so the other statistics just seem like continuing to ring the doorbell at someone's house until they are forced to answer. Sure, it might work, but it also might get you reported.

Preparation

There are a couple of steps I take every time I begin a project like this.

1. Set up email, obviously. I typically set up russ@, info@, contact@, media@ and a catch all. I don't use Google. It just seems, well, wrong. I have had success with Zoho before, although honestly I just need the email so I often go with a CPANEL host and then add the MX records to Cloudflare.

2. Set up a phone number for voice mail. I like Grasshopper, personally. This is not to improve rankings (although I do put it on the site), it's to improve conversion rates. Email messages with a real phone number and real email address from a real person, with the same domain promoted as the domain in the email, just seem to do better when your project is truly above-board.

3. Set up SPF and DKIM records for better deliverability.

4. Set up a number of Google Docs sheets which will help with some of the prospecting and mail sending.

5. Set up my emailer. I know this is vague, but one of the things I try to do is **create stumbling blocks to cheating**. There are some awesome tools out there Pitchbox, BuzzStream, LinkProspector and more, but I find each very tempting to take shortcuts. I want to make sure I pull the trigger personally on every email that goes out. Efficient, no. Effective, not really. Safe, yeah.

Honestly, this is about as much as I can do in one day. I look forward to updating this regularly, make sure you follow @moz

or @rjonesx on Twitter to get notified when we update this journal.

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