Using topic clusters to increase SEO rankings in practical



Topic linking comes under the wider term, internal linking. Internal links in SEO go to web pages in the same domain, internal links are considered to be of less value than external links.

However, the topic clusters can be strategically used to significantly improve your site's performance and increase rankings.

What internal linking is

Internal links are useful for Google to identify content on your site. Google's bots find new content by crawling websites and following links. It means that if you post fresh content and it is not linked to any other page on the web, it won't be found, nor ranked.

Google itself confirms that, saying –

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> *"Google must constantly search for new pages and add them to its list of known pages. Some pages are known because Google has already crawled them before. Other pages are discovered*

when Google follows a link from a known page to a new page."

How topic clusters work

While internal linking is quite broad, topic linking is narrower. Topic linking is simply linking posts with related themes on your website to one another. A simple way to explain it is to consider Wikipedia. For every article on the online encyclopedia, there are links to many other relevant topics.

That is, among others, one of the reasons Wikipedia consistently ranks, not just on the first page, but as the very first search results for several queries.

According to Google,

> *"The number of internal links pointing to a page is a signal to search engines about the relative importance of that page."*

This very fact is why the homepage of any website ranks higher than other pages on the website, it contains more backlinks. Therefore, an important strategy would be linking to similar topics on your website to increase their value and push the rankings.

Siloing and topic clusters

According to Alex Bill of ClothingRIC, topic clusters are a group of articles that support a pillar page, with a purposeful linking structure and content format. There can be two types of pillar pages, a resource page and a 10x content pillar page which contains a mix of external and internal links respectively.

Let's assume that you manage a travel website. You might have pages giving a general overview of different countries. Also,

you may have pages talking about different cities. Siloing comes in where each page about a country contains links to different pages about cities in that country.

Even further, you may link the city pages to “places to visit” within each city page. On and on like that, that’s how it works. You are basically organizing your ecosystem. Think of your website as a web.

Using links for siloing improve your site in the following ways

- Easier search navigation for site users
- Easier crawling by Google bot
- Strategic value distribution

Siloing makes navigation around your site easier for visitors. Instead of having to search for items on their own, the backlinks are there to guide them. That would make each user spend more time on your site than they normally would.

In addition, value is rightly distributed across the pages on the website. I mentioned above that the homepage has a higher rank than other pages, and one of the reasons is that it contains more backlinks. What happens is that value is distributed equally from the homepage to each linked page.

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Organizing topics with siloing

By running an internal linking campaign using siloing of topics, NinjaOutreach was able to boost their site traffic by 50% within three months. Using the necessary tools, they

sorted out all their posts (about 300) into tiers one, two, and three. Afterward, the pages were linked to one another by their values.

To implement the siloing approach, consider the whole website as a pyramid with multiple steps. The homepage is the first tier, sitting at the very top, then each link from there falls to the second tier and each link from the pages on the second tier falls to the third and so on.

The link value is passed from the top down and that means pages at the lowest rung will have the smallest value. The main point is that siloing, when done right, can be used to push your most important pages further up in the pyramid so that they can gain more value, rank higher and eventually attract more traffic.

Here is what you need to do

- Determine which articles/posts should be regarded as a “tier one”. Typically, these are the posts that bring in the most conversions and traffic. Using Google Analytics or any other analytics tool will help you identify such pages. New articles that you need to gain recognition may fall into this category too.
- Those pages classified as tier one should have links to them directly from the homepage. That guarantees maximum value. You may also include some in the page footer. Make sure you maximize every space available.
- Tier two pages are the ones next in value to the tier one pages. Add links to tier two pages from the latter. You may follow the one link per 100 words rule. Then link to tier three pages from tier two pages.
- While linking, be careful to make the anchor texts and links as natural as possible. That is, they should fit their immediate context. Google’s bots are really smart and throwing keywords and backlinks indiscriminately might earn you a penalty.

- In case you are unable to find a suitable way to add links within the post itself, a smart trick is to create a “related articles” (or whatever you call it) section. Then add a couple of relevant links to that section.

Conclusion

Topic linking is a smart way to organize your site and strategically position web pages to attract more traffic. Certainly, implementing this using siloing would not result in instant improvements. But like NinjaOutreach, you may begin to notice slight changes after a month of doing so. If it is not yet, topic linking is an important method to include in your SEO strategy.

Pius Boachie is the founder of DigitiMatic, an inbound marketing agency.

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