

# Growing and Sculpting Your Link Portfolio

## OVER THE YEARS, POOR QUALITY LINKING AND SPAMMY

duplicate content have tarnished the term link building, with shady black-hat sites also trying to game the system. Some people shy away from the idea of link building, thinking they would rather stay with their current marketing strategy than risk getting penalized by Google.

Link building by itself isn't a bad SEO practice, which is why we wanted to dispel the myths and profile how link building can benefit your brand.

We collaborated with [LinkResearchTools](#) to discuss how brands can use SEO to drive traffic, [increase visibility](#), and make an impact on their business and marketing efforts. We

covered everything from common marketing tactics for name recognition, simple ways to increase how many links you can get pointing back to your website, and tools for monitoring problems and broken links as they arise. With this white paper, you should have the knowledge and tools you need to create a successful link building strategy and improve the traffic and links to your pages.

## Link Building and Outreach Efforts

Outreach marketing is one of the most prominent strategies for white-hat link building. This form of marketing gets perceived as a relatively low-cost method because in-house teams can easily reach out to owners of blogs for links or create guest post content for industry websites.

However, even though outreach efforts are affordable and accessible, don't mistake them for being completely easy. Conducting blind outreach in-house means that you may not be providing the level of quality you want while scaling to meet budget demands. The following are a few strategies to stretch your outreach budget and efforts so that you can maximize your impact with limited resources.



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## Monitor Who Is Already Linking to You

You can make a splash with your outreach efforts early on by tracking who is linking to you. LinkResearchTools has a [Link Alerts](#) option that works in a similar way to Google Alerts. Whenever someone links to you, you're alerted with information about the domain and the context of the link. This notification not only allows you to make sure your outreach efforts are paying off but also enables you to find sources that are already linking to you naturally.

Websites that are already linking to you naturally are doors that are open to you. In most cases, the companies behind these sites already found value in something you said on your blog or something you offer on your website. You need only a few minutes to check the links and draft emails thanking them for mentioning you. This communication opens the door for future guest postings and long-term collaboration. LinkResearchTools also has a [Contact Finder](#) tool that allows you to find emails of the sources linking to you. This tool is important when you need to contact someone about guest posts or ask someone to remove unwanted links.

### GET CREATIVE WITH GUEST CONTENT

Many attempts at guest blogging result in cheap, basic articles that fail to offer value. These bad practices have made marketers wary about allowing guest bloggers to publish content on their sites and have limited the opportunities for quality links for many brands. If you're looking to gain exposure among some of your industry's top publications — if not the top publications in the world — then you need to offer something of value beyond a basic blog post, especially if your brand doesn't carry a significant amount of pull.

Neil Patel and Kanye West can write terrible guest blog posts if they want to, but you can't. One easy way to stand out is through [digital multimedia content](#).

Instead of writing an article, create an infographic to develop something exciting for you and your collaborating party. Record a video tutorial or thoughtful commentary that can generate views and shares. You can also consider investing in interactive flowcharts and graphics to get and keep viewers' attentions. If you're unsure about what makes content compelling, check the strongest blog posts your competitors or a popular website connected to our niche have. You can do that using the [Strongest Subpages Tool \(SSPT\)](#) from LinkResearchTools.

Not only will these techniques help you to stand out among other individuals conducting outreach, but they will also offer more value to both parties. Content with relevant images alone gets 94 percent more views than content without them, and attractive images increase an audience's willingness to read something by 80 percent.

### TRACK YOUR COMPETITORS' OUTREACH EFFORTS

If you're like many companies, you operate on a limited SEO budget and must produce results almost immediately. This scenario leaves you with two options: You can scatter your link-building efforts across blogs and websites that you think are fruitful and hope for the best, or you can limit your outreach to strategic placements that will have a major impact on your brand and your competitors. In all likelihood, you would prefer the latter.

You'll find two tools to monitor your competition. The [Common Backlinks Tool \(CBLT\)](#) allows you to find your competitors' best links and identify common backlinks for up to 50 domains. You can see which websites are performing best for them, which allows you to go on the offensive and strategically plan your outreach efforts around those websites. Using the [Link Juice Thief \(LJT\)](#), you can spot the strongest websites that your competitors are commonly linking to and try to get a link there. This way you will have your competitors (indirectly) linking to you.

## Link Building and Influencer Marketing

As social media and internet use have exploded over the past several years, so has a new generation of celebrities. While we certainly acknowledge celebrity heroes and athletes, we're

## INDUSTRY INFLUENCERS



PEERS



NICHE BLOG



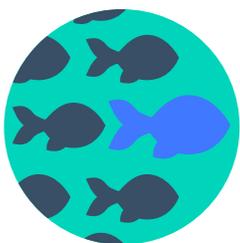
NEWS OUTLET

more inclined to cheer them on if they have a strong social media presence. Conversely, today's favorite celebrities aren't known for their sporting skills or acting abilities at all. These big names garner attention as YouTube stars, bloggers, and Instagram models.

Armed with a smartphone and a brand, these influencers attract thousands of people to their posts, creating active and passionate communities that they can mobilize with a few clicks. Some Instagram celebrities [charge a dollar per like](#), and they can get more than 200,000 likes per post, turning them into millionaires based on showcasing their new favorite makeup or nail polish.

Companies are starting to pay close attention to these online influencers. They appreciate tracking these links and promotions, whether they're getting mentioned on Instagram or on their personal blogs. [According to eMarketer](#), 61 percent of marketers planned to use influencer marketing in 2015, and 35 percent of marketers said their influencer strategy was at a mature stage.

You don't have to sell a B2C beauty product to harness the power of influencer marketing. Many B2B companies are taking advantage of this tactic with marked success. You simply have to work toward identifying the influencers within your industry and brainstorm ways to work with them in a way that benefits both parties.



### DEVELOP A LIST OF INDUSTRY INFLUENCERS

Before you set out to create an influencer marketing campaign, draft a list of potential influencers you could work with in your efforts. These individuals include industry peers

who offer complementary products, niche blogs with large followings, and news outlets that cover your field. You want to find influencers who have a sizable social following to drive

traffic to your website, but ones who aren't so big that they will ignore your efforts.

Remember, Kim Kardashian and Tom Brokaw probably aren't interested in your accounting software. You also want to identify influencers who will have pull when they link to you. Most influencer marketing strategies are twofold: The social media element drives short-term traffic, while the blog links give juice and SEO value for long-term sustainability. Once you have a list of 20 to 30 potential influencers, you can start brainstorming ways to collaborate with them.



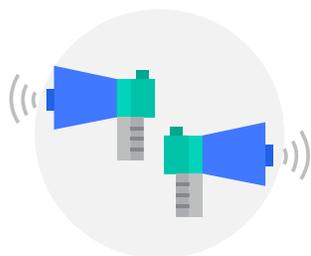
### COLLABORATE WITH KEYWORDS IN MIND

Many companies focus exclusively on catching influencers' attentions so much that they're willing to collaborate on whatever they suggest, regardless of whether the collaborations benefit their own brands. However, you want to create content that's relevant to both audiences, so that their customers can learn about your products and services and you understand how both would fit into your combined business strategies.

One of the best ways to make sure your strategies line up is with the [LinkResearchTools Competitive Keyword Analyzer \(CKA\)](#). The CKA allows you to identify the "low-hanging fruit" where you can easily improve your search traffic with promising keywords. You can also see who is ranking well in your niche for certain terms to better understand your competition.

Using this tool, you can pair potential influencers with keywords that allow them to rank high in value so that you get to benefit from their SEO power along with their traffic. The best part is that you can analyze up to 25 keywords at once so that each keyword can have its own influencer strategy.

This approach also helps you set goals for improvement by tracking the value of the keywords as you work with them.



### GIVE AS MUCH AS YOU RECEIVE

The key to successful influencer marketing is forming a long-term relationship that benefits both parties. Your strategy isn't going to pan out if you're

constantly asking people to promote your company without offering anything in return. Instead, make sure you're talking up their brands on your blog and linking to them, while mentioning them and what they do on social media. Not only does this approach prove that you're offering something of value to them, but you're also breaking the ice and starting relationships. A few tweets back and forth might not seem significant at first, but they can pay large dividends to you.

The good news is that the more you give to and grow your audience, the more influencers will want to work with you. Within a year, you could end up on the receiving end of collaboration emails. While outreach efforts and influencer marketing are two great ways to drive traffic to your website, they put the power of link building in the hands of a third party. As you continue to build links, you need the right skills and tools to make sure these external resources are still live and providing value to your company.

## Link Management and Cleanup

Proactive link building is only half of the SEO process; the rest is reactive link management to make sure that the links that point to your site are active, come from reputable sources, and continue to offer value to you. Remember, as you continue to build links and grow your outreach efforts, the number of domains and posts that you'll need to monitor will also continue to grow. A few tools and regular audits can help you make sure that you're only pointing the search crawlers in the directions you want so that you don't get on the receiving end of countless dead links.

### UNDERSTAND THE LATEST PENGUIN UPDATES

In April 2012, Google released Penguin, a spam update

created to target bad links and keyword stuffing. Over the past four years, Google has continued to release Penguin refreshes to hone in on bad SEO practices and punish sites that manipulate audiences with unnatural links. Typically, Google's refreshes leave many quality sites unaffected and devastated companies that were using shady SEO practices. Many people in the industry anxiously awaited the refresh and scrambled for months to recover after the updates.

However, in September 2016, Google finally [made Penguin a part of its core algorithm](#), which means that Google will always be evaluating poor links and penalizing websites for them. You need to continually employ link audits on your website to evaluate who you're linking to (and how) and make sure the links that direct back to your website don't damage your SEO strategy and tarnish your brand image.



### RUN REGULAR LINK AUDITS

You'll find plenty of tools that you can use to monitor your links. We already discussed the Link Alert tool that allows you to make sure all links going to your website

look natural and aren't on inappropriate Web pages, but simple monitoring tools can help you track past links.

Along with WordPress options and scanners that review past links, the [Link Detox \(DToX\)](#) tool helps you immediately spot bad links and clean up your profile. Since Penguin 4.0 is an ongoing part of Google's algorithm, companies should perform these audits at least once a month to prevent a massive backlog. You may also want to increase the number of times you perform an audit as your website grows and attracts more links. This approach will also allow you to address any penalties immediately and get them corrected. Failure to act fast could cause a large buildup of backlinks attached to your name, which will continue to hurt your SEO until you address them.



### USE REL= CANONICAL LINKS AND THE DISAVOW TOOL

The [Link Detox \(DToX\)](#) tool allows individuals and companies to tell Google that they don't want their websites to

be associated with certain links and that they don't want certain links to be considered part of their framework. The concept of disavowing links has helped many white-hat SEO sources avoid penalties because black-hat and undesirable sites linked to them. Disavowing will be crucial in the Real-Time Penguin era. If you discover unnatural links that point back to your website, or spammy sites linking to your brand, then you can use this link type to distance yourself and reduce the damage to your pages and your website traffic.

Canonical links, as they're sometimes called, work to prevent duplicate content issues. You'll find these links helpful for blogs that create daily roundups where the content is relatively the same or for posts containing scraped content. If there's anything that Google hates more than spammy links it's duplicate content. Canonical links can prove that you're aware of the content similarities and actively aren't trying to plagiarize.

### CREATE LINK REDIRECTS

Of course, maintaining proper SEO health doesn't always entail an endless game of whack-a-mole against terrible sites that spam and plagiarize your brand's content. You're also up against simple linking problems such as microsite removal, updated URLs, and websites that become unpublished. Links from these sources can also cause problems for you as they lead Google to dead ends. Along with fighting penalties, a large part of SEO monitoring involves creating redirects. You may need to create a specific landing page or redirect to a home page if you can't find an appropriate link. Fortunately, the [Link Juice Recovery \(LJR\)](#) and [Link Redirect Trace](#) extension can quickly find any problematic links for your team to fix.

You will also want to keep SEO in mind when you make major website changes — especially to the structure — as a poorly planned remodel can cause thousands of broken links that frustrate you and the blogs for which you've worked hard to gain those coveted placements. Link monitoring might seem like a daunting task, but once you start to set aside an hour a week — or day, depending on the demand — to cleaning up your online presence, your SEO results will start to improve and the giant mountain ahead of you will start to seem like a molehill.

## Track Your SEO Progress

As you continue your SEO, outreach, guest blogging, and influencer marketing efforts, you need to track your progress to ensure that you're investing the right time and resources into your marketing strategy. Plenty of marketers fly blind when they need to set their strategies and tactics. They either choose to measure elements that don't provide value, such as potential impressions or reach, or they fail to set actionable goals to push themselves toward improvement. Any improvements they gain are through luck, but they still fail to see the complete picture.

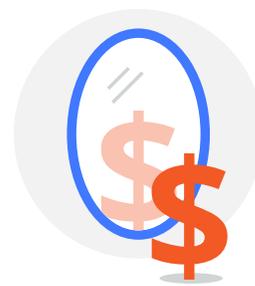


### SET YOUR GOALS ALONG THE SALES FUNNEL

Each piece of content you create should have a corresponding goal within your sales funnel. For the marketing tactics discussed above, most of these efforts will

fall in the top and middle of the funnel.

First, you want to drive as much new traffic as possible to your content and expose people to your brand, which are top-of-funnel goals. You also want to increase the links and improve your rankings around specific keywords, which are middle- and bottom-funnel goals depending on the keyword type. Finally, you want to track the sales and revenue that's generated from your SEO efforts, especially if you invest in complex digital content pieces for your influencers.



### IDENTIFY USEFUL SEO METRICS

You'll find [many vanity metrics](#) that will tell you what you want to hear, but these metrics won't translate into sales or improvements to your SEO efforts. The number of social

media followers is one of them. Many social media pages and channels exist that have thousands of followers, but these sources rarely get more than one or two interactions per post. In these cases, outreach and influencer efforts fall on deaf ears despite identifying people with seemingly large numbers of followers.

By identifying useful SEO metrics that paint an accurate picture of the situation, you're able to identify pain points and take steps to fix important issues. Three useful metrics are

the [LRT Power\\*Trust](#), [Link Dextox Risk \(DToXRISK\)](#) and [Link Velocity Trends \(LVT\)](#) to keep an eye on your performance.

When you first begin to make attempts to [increase visibility for your blog or website](#), driving traffic through SEO efforts can feel like an uncertain venture. You might spend more time cleaning up the damage of bad links and trying to improve your standing than you spend conducting outreach and getting frustrated by the slow nature of relationship building. However, keep in mind that these feelings and efforts are perfectly normal. Never trust someone who says that your SEO problems can be solved overnight and results can be seen by the weekend.

SEO development and refinement is an all-out process that you will continue to improve upon and work on throughout the life of your marketing campaigns and blog or website evolutions. Once you're ready to commit to the work involved in increasing visibility and improving your SEO, you will start to see the fruits of your labor translating into higher engagement with your content and your brand following.

## [Join the ultimate SEO metrics training for 50% OFF plus FIVE FREE Bonuses](#)



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