Why Backlinks are Essential in Search Engine Optimisation by Trevor Southwold

Article published on April 19th 2012 | Seo

There is little questions that building backlinks to a website is essential to the success of SEO. A successful strategy of backlink building can prove invaluable to the search rankings of a website and the practice of good back-linking is one of the major obsessions of SEO practitioners.

This is obviously because Google's search algorithms must rate backlinks very highly; but why do Google hold backlinks in such high regard?

It all stems back to the fundamental function of a search engine: their function is to recommend websites based on customer's searches, if the search engine fails to find any relevant results then they have let down the customer. If the customer is searching for a "new chair" and gets immediately directed to a website documenting the latest chairman of the Shepton Mallet branch of the Women's Institute, then that customer is not going to be very happy.

So Google's algorithms are dedicated to sorting relevance, and increasingly to defeating spam content. Material on the website itself is taken into considerable account therefore: the relevance of searched for terms and the click through rates try to discern how popular a site is. But this can only go so far, on page SEO can prove a website is visited a lot but it still might not necessarily be relevant to the particular customer.

So this is where backlinks are invaluable to a search engines like Google. If a website was good enough for another to deem it worth a mention then it must have been good, even better if the websites relate to each other and the key word being searched. Google considers that strong evidence that it must therefore be relevant as, essentially the website's peers are referencing it. Google therefore considers a link from one website to another to be a vote for the relevance of that site.

The next step is for Google to try and assess the quality of the backlink itself. For the search engine they need backlinks to be organic. Understanding the power of backlinks, some of the less scrupulous marketing companies would force links onto irrelevant sites; this is a negative practice to manipulate the rankings, but doesn't necessarily benefit the customers.

Search Engines therefore have further analytical tools to establish whether the article the backlink has appeared on is actually relevant to the original website. One way this is analysed is through the anchor text, a descriptive labelling of the hyperlink to demonstrate how relevant it is. Increasingly Google is also considering the backlink's popularity in itself; how often it has been used to access the website in question.

Truly talented SEO practitioners can work within these algorithms to create quality content that organically promotes a website through high quality backlinks that will appear favourably to Google's algorithms as well as appeal to the customers themselves.

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Article Keywords:
backlink building

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