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What is search engine optimization?

Before going any further, the first thing we need to do is answer the question: What is search engine optimization? Search engine optimization, known as SEO by those who practice it, is simply the steps it takes to have your web site show up in the results returned by Google, Yahoo and Bing (formerly MSN) whenever people search for something.

So, for instance, if you run a web site about dog training, and you want the search engines to show your web site when people search for “dog training”, there are steps that you need to take in order for that to happen. Just building a web site and putting great information on it will not result in the search engines sending anybody to your site to buy your products or click on your ads.

SEO is not full of “dark secrets” or hidden knowledge, no matter how much the “gurus” hawking overpriced, outdated material want you to think it is. Like any other aspect of business, it's a skill that can and should be learned. What follows are the steps that you need to take in order for the search engines to take your site seriously enough to send people to *your* site instead of everybody else's.

Search Engine Optimization in One Sentence

As I said before, SEO is not complicated. In fact, I'll tell you how to rank for anything in Google in one sentence:

Get lots of links to your page whose link text contains the keywords you want to rank for.

So, for instance, if you want to be number one when somebody searches Google for the keywords “porch swings”, get lots and lots of links to your site that contain “porch swings” in the link text. When I say “link text”, I mean the underlined blue text in the link. For instance, if I had a link to [my blog](#), the link text would be “my blog”.

Google sees links from another site to your site as a “vote” for your site to rank for the keywords found in the link text. They see it as an indication that your site is worth visiting in the eyes of the webmaster who chose to link to you. Get lots of “votes” from lots of sites for your chosen search terms and Google figures your site must be valuable and should appear in the results for those keywords.

Of course, there's a bit more to it than that (which I'll get into), but that's SEO in a nutshell. Links are king. Get lots of links and you'll rank well. But before you ever get a single link to your web site, there's some research that has to be done to make sure you're efforts to rank for a given set of keywords aren't wasted.

Determining what you want your website to be found for.

The first step in SEO, before you get any links to your site, is to figure out what keywords you want your web site to show up for when people go to Google, Yahoo or Bing and perform a search.

To find out what keywords you should focus getting your site ranked for, you need to answer a few questions:

- 1.What are people typing into the search engines that's related to your web site?
- 2.Are people who search for those keywords looking to buy something?
- 3.How much competition is there for those keywords?

Let's talk about each one of those for a moment:
















What are people typing into the search engines that's related to your web site?

You might be amazed at how many different keywords people type into the search engines while trying to find the same thing. Let's take porch swings as an example. Here's a tool that will show you a lot of different things people are typing into Google looking for porch swings:

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

That tool is run by Google, so it's a great way to know what things people are typing into Google. Put “porch swings” in the box and click the “Get keyword ideas” button and you'll get back more keywords related to “porch swings” than you could ever think of yourself.

Here's a snapshot of some of the results that tool returned:

Keywords	Advertiser Competition [?]	Local Search Volume: March [?]	Global Monthly Search Volume [?]	Match Type: [?] Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
Keywords related to term(s) entered - sorted by relevance [?]				
[porch swings]		18,100	14,800	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[wicker porch swings]		1,000	720	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[porch swing]		60,500	27,100	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[wood porch swings]		590	390	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[cedar porch swings]		320	170	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[wooden porch swings]		1,300	720	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[outdoor porch swings]		720	320	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[wicker porch swing]		2,400	1,000	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[front porch swings]		480	260	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[porch swings for sale]		210	210	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[metal porch swings]		590	320	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[hardware porch swing]		Not enough data	Not enough data	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[teak porch swings]		260	140	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[porch swing cushions]		1,600	880	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
[wood porch swing]		880	590	Add Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>

IMPORTANT! Be sure to select “Exact” from the “Match Type” drop-down box in the upper-right corner above the list of keywords. That way the tool will show you people who were searching for the exact phrases. This gives you a much more realistic figure of how much

traffic you can get if your site ranks well for those keywords. (You can ignore the braces [] around the keywords -- that just means you have “Exact” selected.)

The results shown above are just the first few from a total of 150 different sets of keywords related to “porch swings.” The “search volume” figures are the number of times people searched in Google for those keywords in the given month (or on average, as the second number indicates).

Use the Google Keyword tool to build a list of keywords that are related to your site. Once you have that list, it's time to answer the second question:

Are people who search for those keywords looking to buy something?

If your site got thousands of visitors a day, but nobody wanted to buy what you were selling, it wouldn't help you to get all of that traffic, would it? Remember, people use the world wide web for two purposes: 1) To get information and 2) to buy things. You need to make sure that the people who come to your site fit into the second category.

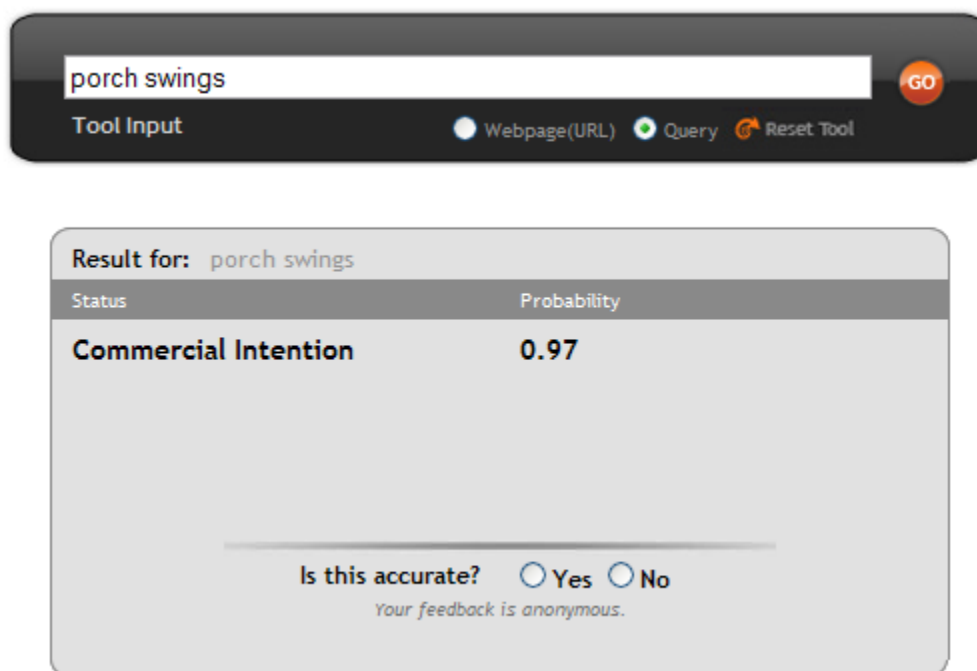
It's simple to do this. Here's a tool that will tell you whether people searching for any set of keywords are looking to buy something:

<http://adlab.msn.com/Online-Commercial-Intention/Default.aspx>

Using that tool is easy: just put the keywords that you want to test into the box, click

the radio button next to “Query” below the box and then click the “Go” button. For instance, my brother Ted sells porch swings, so I put the keywords “porch swings” into that tool.

Here's a snapshot of what it returned:



The tool returned a “0.97” probability of “commercial intention.” What that means is that there's a 97% chance that somebody who types “porch swings” into a search engine is looking to buy a porch swing. That's perfect!

On the other hand, let's say you have a site that sells a video that teaches basic dog training skills. So you follow step one and run “dog training” through Google's keyword tool. One of the keywords returned is “dog training basics”, and the tool says that close to a thousand people a month are looking for that.

“Great!” you say. “Dog training basics” describes my site perfectly. But wait! You haven't run the keywords through the Online Commercial Intention tool above. When you do, what you get back is not good.

Here's a snapshot:

The screenshot shows a dark-themed search interface. At the top, a search bar contains the text "dog training basics" and a red "GO" button. Below the search bar, there are three radio buttons: "Webpage(URL)" (selected), "Query", and "Reset Tool".

Below the search bar is a light gray box containing the results. It starts with "Result for: dog training basics". Below this is a table with two columns: "Status" and "Probability".

Status	Probability
Non-Commercial Intention	0.73

At the bottom of the results box, there is a feedback section: "Is this accurate?" followed by two radio buttons, "Yes" and "No". Below the radio buttons, it says "Your feedback is anonymous."

That tool returns a “0.73” probability of “non-commercial intention.” What that means is that there's a 73% chance that a person searching for “dog training basics” is *not* looking to buy something – they're just looking for free information. You want to stay away from those kinds of keywords. On the other hand, the keywords “dog behavior training” has an 82% chance that people are buyers. That would be a much better set of keywords to rank for.












Okay, so now you have a list of keywords that people are typing into the search engines, and you've narrowed down that list to include *only* keywords that have strong commercial intent. That leads us to the third question you need to answer:

How much competition is there for those keywords?

There are two ways to determine how much competition a set of keywords has in the search engines. The first way I'll talk about is a quick and easy way, but is less precise. The second is much more accurate, but much more time consuming.

Method #1: Advertiser Competition

The first method is to look at the “Advertiser Competition” column in Google's keyword tool. For example, here's a few results from my “porch swings” example snapshot:

Keywords	Advertiser Competition 
Keywords related to term(s) entered -	
[porch swings]	
[wicker porch swings]	
[porch swing]	
[wood porch swings]	
[cedar porch swings]	
[wooden porch swings]	
[outdoor porch swings]	
[wicker porch swing]	
[front porch swings]	
[porch swings for sale]	

Notice that for the keywords “porch swings”, the green bar goes almost all the way to the right – there's very little white showing. That means there's a lot of people who want their site to show up when people search for those keywords. This generally means that it will be a lot harder to get your site into a top position for those keywords, because you have a lot of competition.

On the other hand, the green bar for “porch swings for sale” (the last keyword in the above snapshot) only goes half-way, which means there are a lot fewer people interested in advertising for those keywords. There is still competition, but it's not as fierce. This generally means it will be easier to rank for those keywords.

Your goal is to find keywords that have low advertiser competition while still getting a good number of searches each month. Depending on what you're selling, you may not need thousands of people a day coming to your site.

For instance, Ted only gets a few thousand visitors a month to his porch swings site, and yet he made over \$200,000 from that site in 2008! That's because his keywords all have really good commercial intent, so a lot of the visitors he *does* get are looking to buy. That means he doesn't need as many visitors, which means he doesn't have to focus as much on getting more traffic to his site.

It's important to learn to balance those things. It would be great to get a million people a month to a site from keywords with strong commercial intent, but you need to be realistic and aim for “low hanging fruit” -- keywords that get good traffic and have strong commercial

intent, while not being incredibly difficult to rank for. That is especially important for the “mom and pop” one-man web site, where you're doing all of the work yourself.

The Advertiser Competition method is a great way to get a quick idea about competition, but it's usually best to do more in-depth analysis of the keywords that appear to have less competition at first glance. So once you have narrowed your keywords down to those which get good traffic, have strong commercial intent and have mid-to-average Advertiser Competition, it's time to do some deeper research, which takes us to method two.

Method #2: In-Depth Competition Analysis

To get a really good idea of how hard it will be to rank for a set of keywords, you need to actually analyze the web sites that are ranking for those keywords. For instance, after seeing that “porch swings for sale” only shows average Advertiser Competition, we want to try and see *exactly* how much competition we're up against.

To do this, first we perform a search at Google for the keywords “porch swings for sale.” As of the time of my writing this, that search returns the following web sites:

Rank	Url
#1	www.porchswings.com
#2	www.porchswings.com/porch-swings/814+864.cfm
#3	www.benches.com/casual-furniture/porch-swings/759+769+4294940556.cfm
#4	outdoorfurniture.bizrate.com/products___keyword--porch+swing.html
#5	woodenporchswings.org
#6	porch-swings.blogspot.com
#7	www.cedarstore.com
#8	www.oakswings.com
#9	www.yardenvy.com/porch-swings.asp
#10	www.backyardcity.com/Patio-Furniture-Porch-Swings.htm

(Keep in mind that ranking order will change in Google as the various competing sites continue to work to rank better – so the ranking you see in Google right now might be different from the above, but the principles remain the same.)

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, ranking in the search engines (especially Google) is all about getting links to your web site that contain your keywords in the link text. So we need to know how many links each of the top 10 sites has aimed at them.

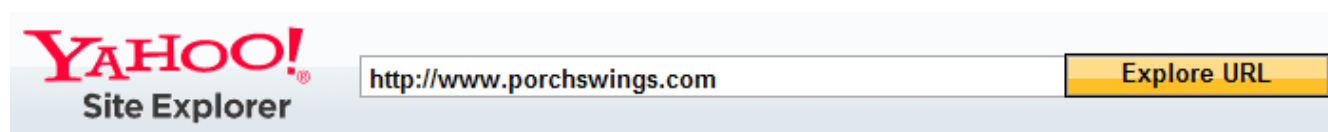
To get this information we go to Yahoo. Why do we go to Yahoo to find out how many links a site has if we're wanting to rank in Google? Because Google purposefully does *not* give you accurate information about how many links it is aware of. Google doesn't *want* you to know, and so they try and hide the information. Yahoo, however, does not suffer from this

hangup, and it's a safe bet that Yahoo knows about pretty much all the same sites and web pages that Google does, so we go there.

Here's the link:

<https://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com/>

You want to enter each of the top 10 ranking pages into Yahoo Site Explorer to see how many links they have. So enter the first url in the box and then click “Explore URL”:



Here's a partial snapshot of what I got back for the #1 ranking site for “porch swings for sale”:

Results

Pages (1,900) Inlinks (1,744) Show pages from: **All subdomains** | Only this domain

Result details: Submit webpage or Site Feed |

1. Shop Hanging Porch Swing and Wooden Porch Swings at PorchSwings.com
text/html <http://www.porchswings.com/> - 80k - cache
2. Lakewood Painted Porch Swing - Porch Swings at Porch Swings
text/html <http://www.porchswings.com/porch-swings/painted/lakewoodpaintedporchswing.cfm> - 219k - cache
3. All-in-One Premium Porch Swing Set - Porch Swings at Porch Swings
text/html <http://www.porchswings.com/porch-swings/classic/allinonepremiumporchswingset.cfm> - 194k - cache

Now, at first Yahoo will show you the pages in the site, but that's not what we're interested in. We want to know about the *links*. So click the “Inlinks” button. That will get you here:

The screenshot shows a search results interface with the following elements:

- Buttons: Pages (1,900), Inlinks (1,744) (highlighted), Show Inlinks: From All Pages, to: Only this URL
- Result details: [collapse icon] [expand icon] Submit webpage or Site Feed
- Results list:
 1. Shop Hanging Porch Swing and Wooden Porch Swings at PorchSwings.com
text/html <http://www.porchswings.com/> - 80k - cache
 2. Lakewood Painted Porch Swing - Porch Swings at Porch Swings
text/html <http://www.porchswings.com/porch-swings/painted/lakewoodpaintedporchswing.cfm> - 219k - cache
 3. Furniture, Furniture Makers, Furniture Manufacturers, Furniture ...
text/html http://www.mainstwebdesign.com/link_library/furniture.htm - 81k - cache

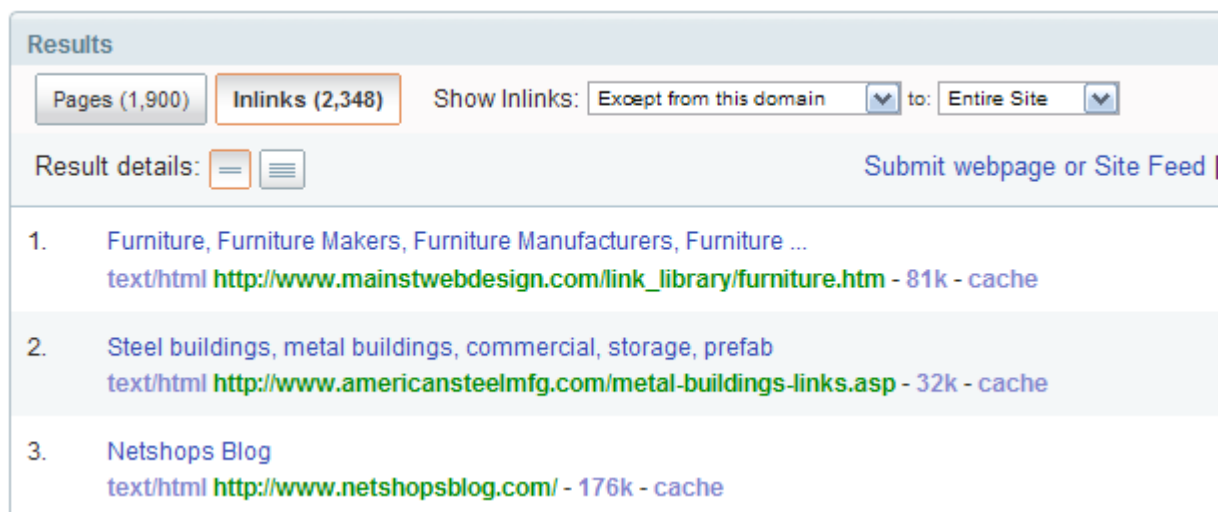
It looks like porchswings.com has a lot of links, doesn't it? Yahoo says 1,744. But that's not accurate. You see, Yahoo is including the links that porchswings.com has *to itself*, which isn't counted much by Google at all. So select “Except from this domain” from the “Show Inlinks” dropdown box to see how many links porchswings.com has from *other* sites:

The screenshot shows a search results interface with the following elements:

- Buttons: Pages (1,900), Inlinks (384) (highlighted), Show Inlinks: Except from this domain, to: Only this URL
- Result details: [collapse icon] [expand icon] Submit webpage or Site Feed
- Results list:
 1. Furniture, Furniture Makers, Furniture Manufacturers, Furniture ...
text/html http://www.mainstwebdesign.com/link_library/furniture.htm - 81k - cache
 2. Steel buildings, metal buildings, commercial, storage, prefab
text/html <http://www.americansteelmg.com/metal-buildings-links.asp> - 32k - cache
 3. Netshops Blog
text/html <http://www.netshopsblog.com/> - 176k - cache

Ah, what a difference! The inlinks count went from over 1,700 to only 384. Now, that may still seem like a lot to you, but I happen to know that *a lot* of those links are duplicate links. By “duplicate links” I mean multiple links from the same domain. For example, porchswings.com has 10 links from a site called netshopsblog.com. Google does not weight duplicate links very strongly at all. It's a lot better to get 10 links from 10 *different* web sites than 10 links from just one web site.

There's one more thing we want to check. Select “Entire site” from the dropdown box that says “Only this url.” That will show us how many links Yahoo knows about to the *entire* porchswings.com site (all of the pages), not just to the home page. When I did that, here's what I got back:



The screenshot shows a search results interface for Yahoo. At the top, there are two buttons: "Pages (1,900)" and "Inlinks (2,348)", with the latter highlighted by a red box. To the right, there is a "Show Inlinks:" section with a dropdown menu set to "Except from this domain" and a "to:" dropdown menu set to "Entire Site". Below this, there are "Result details:" icons and a "Submit webpage or Site Feed" link. The main results list contains three items:

1. Furniture, Furniture Makers, Furniture Manufacturers, Furniture ...
text/html http://www.mainstwebdesign.com/link_library/furniture.htm - 81k - cache
2. Steel buildings, metal buildings, commercial, storage, prefab
text/html <http://www.americansteelmfg.com/metal-buildings-links.asp> - 32k - cache
3. Netshops Blog
text/html <http://www.netshopsblog.com/> - 176k - cache

Yahoo knows about 2,348 links aimed at the entire porchswings.com site. While it's true that a lot of those are duplicates, too, you can start to see why porchswings.com is ranking well for the keywords “porch swings for sale.”

Now you want to repeat the process of finding out how many links the ranking page has, and how many links the entire site has, for each of the top 10 ranking pages. Make a note of the link counts so you can examine them all together once you're done. I've already done that for the top 10 sites that rank for “porch swings for sale.” Here's the breakdown:

Rank	Domain	Links to the Page	Links to the Site
#1	www.porchswings.com	384	2,348
#2	<i>(url also from porchswings.com)</i>		
#3	www.benches.com	1	3,503
#4	bizrate.com	2	23,070,260
#5	woodenporchswings.org	175	177
#6	porch-swings.blogspot.com	52	57
#7	www.cedarstore.com	7,087	9,525
#8	www.oakswings.com	150	152
#9	www.yardenvy.com	0	1,757
#10	www.backyardcity.com	2	8,727

(For the sake of space I only put the domain name in the list instead of the full page url.)

There's a lot we can learn from the above list that is important to knowing how much competition we *really* have for the keywords “porch swings for sale.”

First, let me answer a question you may have asked yourself when reading through that list: How *on earth* is porch-swings.blogspot.com ranking #5 when the site only has 57 links!?!

That's because porch-swings.blogspot.com is a *subdomain* of the primary domain, blogspot.com, and blogspot.com has many thousands of links to it. Here's where the importance of knowing how links a site has to *all* of its pages comes into play.

When a domain has a lot of links coming in to the entire site, Google applies what's known as “authority” to other pages on that site. So, for instance, if you have a web site about porch swings that has thousands of links to it, and you add a new page about a specific kind of porch swing, your new page may not have many links to it at all, but it will probably still rank well for its keywords because the whole site has *authority* in Google's eyes.

In fact, many of the top 10 ranking pages are ranking well because the entire site has authority. For our purposes, let's say that the number of links to the *entire site* represents the site's authority (because, basically, it does). That's why the pages from benches.com (#3), bizrate.com (#4), blogspot.com (#6), yardenvy.com (#9) and backyardcity.com (#10) all rank well even though the ranking pages have few or no links coming into them.

The next question you might have is: Why is woodenporchswings.org ranking so well when it only has 177 links to the whole site?

It's true, woodenporchswings.org doesn't have *nearly* as many links to it as most of the other sites in the list, and yet it's outranking many sites that have a lot more links. This is because the links aimed at woodenporchswings.org contain the right link text, while many of the sites in the list don't have a lot of links with the specific link text “porch swings for sale.”

Let me break this down for you a little bit. Having a ton of links aimed at your site, even if the links are not related to the subject matter of the page, gives your site lots of authority and helps you rank. Having lots of links to your site that are *related* to the keywords you want to rank for helps even more. But having even just *a few* links that have the *same* link text as the keywords a searcher typed in helps your site rank *a lot more*.

So, because woodenporchswings.org has quite a few links that have the exact link text “porch swings for sale”, it ranks well for those keywords even though it has a lot fewer overall links than many of the sites it's outranking. Those other sites have a lot of links, and that helps them, but they don't have many (if any) links with the exact terms “porch swings for sale” as their link text – and so Google figures that woodenporchswings.org is probably more relevant to the search terms.

What this means for you is that you shouldn't freak out when you see the huge link counts to the sites that are ranking for a given set of keywords. Don't instantly dismiss your ability to rank for those keywords until you've done *all* of the research. Look for the sites with the *least* links that are ranking in the top ten, and pay particular attention to those sites. Because those sites tend to give you a much better idea of what you'll need to do to get into the rankings.

You may have been wondering how I knew that some of the links to porchswings.com were duplicates, and how I knew that woodenporchswings.org has links with the link text “porch swings for sale.” I know these things because I created a software tool that does all of the research I've talked about *for you* – in seconds.

It's called WebComp Analyst, and it takes away a lot of the work involved when analyzing how hard it will be to rank for a given set of keywords. Here's the link to the web site:

[Click Here To Go To WebComp Analyst](#)

Okay, so now you know how to 1) find keywords that are related to your web site's subject matter, 2) how to determine if those keywords are worth ranking for and 3) if they are, how to analyze the competition to find out how much work is involved in ranking for those keywords.

That brings us to the next step in Search Engine Optimization – getting links to your web site that will actually *get* your site ranked for the keywords you've chosen.

Getting links to your web site in order to rank for your keywords.

Once you've done the research to find out what keywords you should try and rank for, and how many links (roughly) that you'll need to rank for those keywords, the next step is to actually go out and get links to your site in order to rank for those keywords.

Before going any further, there are two things that you need to know about building links to rank in Google:

1. You don't want all of your links to be exactly the same.
2. You don't want to build links too fast.

Let's talk about each of these things a little bit.

1. You don't want all of your links to be exactly the same.

While it's true that Google favors links with the exact search terms as the link text more than any other kind of link, Google figures that it's not “natural” for *all* of your links to look exactly the same. That is, if you're trying to rank a site for “porch swings for sale” and every single link you get has the link text “porch swings for sale”, that throws up a red flag at Google because it's “not natural.”

What this means is that you need to vary your link text a bit so that you have some variety. I've found that using a 60/30/10 rule works fine – meaning 60% of your links should

contain the exact keywords that you want to rank for as the link text, 30% should contain a variation of those keywords, and 10% should contain something else.

So, to continue with the “porch swings for sale” example:

- 60% of your links should have “porch swings for sale” as the link text.
- 30% should contain something else (perhaps “wooden porch swings for sale”)
- 10% should contain something else (maybe the site url, domain name, etc.)

By varying your link text in this way, you avoid throwing up any red flags in Google's algorithm.

2. You don't want to build links too fast.

Just like Google interprets having all links to a site being exactly the same as “unnatural”, it also sees getting too many links to your site too fast as “unnatural.” Think about it: if a site that was previously unknown suddenly got a thousand links to it overnight, but then never got any more links after that, what would you expect Google to think?

This second situation is a bit fuzzier, though, because sometimes sites *do* get tons of links to them all at once (say some big media event happens that brings a web site a lot of attention). In order to allow for this *natural* occurrence, here's what Google does: when it sees that a site gets a ton of links all of a sudden, it will rank that site well for a few days (in case it was a true surge of popularity), but unless new links keep coming in, the site will fall

out of the rankings after the links stop growing.

That makes sense, doesn't it? If some media event caused a site to be very important in the world of politics or economics or whatever, it would make sense for that site to rank really well for a brief period of time. After the popularity dies down, though, it is no longer so important and falls out of the rankings.

You need to understand this, because it affects how you go about building links to your site. If, after having done the research we've already talked about, you find that you'll need about 200 links to your site to rank for a set of keywords in Google, you don't want to go and get 200 links really fast. If you do, your site will only rank well for a few days, and then it will fall out of the top results.

No, what you want to do is build up your links slowly – say from half a dozen to a dozen per day on average. Once you get to your goal of 200, don't stop getting links completely, but you can slow down a lot more. Unless, of course, you find that you really need more than 200 links to rank. In that case keep getting links at half a dozen to a dozen per day until you're ranking where you want to be, and then slow down.

Doing this sets Google's expectation for your site. If you set that expectation too high too fast by getting 200 links immediately, but you can't sustain that kind of link growth, then your site won't rank well for very long.

Okay, now that we've covered those two important points, let's talk about how you can get links to your web site.

Where to get links to your web site.

There are many ways to get links to your web site, and you should use a variety of them. Don't just use one method to get links, because Google doesn't see that as being “natural.” Are you sensing a theme with Google and “natural”? Google's algorithm is all about things it *thinks* are “natural” (whether or not they really are is outside the scope of this report).

Here are some ways you can get links to your site:

1. Write articles that other web site owners can post on their web sites for free.
2. Create effective “link bait” content and submit it to social networks.
3. Join link networks.

Let's talk about each one of these methods one at a time.

1. Write articles that other web site owners can post on their web sites for free.

One great, inexpensive way to get links to your web site is to write “expert articles” and submit them to the free article distribution sites (most notably EzineArticles.com). The way this works is simple:

- 1.You write articles about subjects relating to your web site.
- 2.You post those articles to EzineArticles.com (and other sites).
- 3.Other webmasters search the sites for articles related to their web sites, find your articles and post them to their own site (for free).

That's all there is to it. The way you get links to your site is that you get to include an “about the author” section in your article that has a link back to your web site. Get enough articles posted on enough other web sites, and you'll soon find your site ranking for your chosen keywords.

There are, of course, a few things to keep in mind when writing articles for distribution like this. They are:

- 1.Your articles should be well written and informative.
- 2.Keep your articles short, and always leave something unanswered.
- 3.Make your “about the author” compelling, to get people to visit your web site.

Let's discuss these points one at a time.

You want to make sure your articles are well written and informative. Remember: although you are primarily writing these articles to get links to your site that will rank it in the search engines, it's human beings who will review your article and decide whether or not it's worth posting to their own site. The better the article, the more people will want to publish it on their own site. Besides that, when a visitor reads your article and it's very well written and

informative, that sets you up as an Expert in their eyes, and they will trust your purchasing recommendations more when they click-through and visit your site.

Keep your articles short, and always leave something unanswered. People usually surf the web to find quick answers to their questions, so keep your articles short and easy to read – no more than 250 – 300 words tops. Also, leave *one* important point unanswered in the article, but make sure that your “about the author” box points them to your web site to get that final answer.

For example, if your article is about how to lose 10 lbs fast, and the article gives 3 solid ways to lose weight fast, leave the *best* way out of the article and make your “about the author” box say something like, “In this article I've given you 3 great ways to lose 10 lbs. fast, but to find the absolute *best* way to lose weight quickly, go to my [fast weight loss secrets](#) site now.”

Do you see why this works? If you “give away the farm” in the article, then the person reading it has no reason to go to your web site, do they? Always save something important for your site. That way, not only do you get links to your site that will rank you in the search engines, but you'll also generate free traffic from the articles themselves. Why miss out on all that traffic by not following this advice?

Make your “about the author” compelling, to get people to visit your web site. This was basically covered in the previous point, but let me reiterate. I see *so many* articles with horrible “about the author” boxes like “Jim Bob is an expert on dog grooming, and has been in the field for 25 years. His web site is at [example.com](#).”

Nobody cares about you Jim Bob! Nobody cares that you're an expert. Nobody cares how long you've been practicing dog grooming or how good you are at it! What they want to know is... *how will you benefit ME?* A much *better* way to put it would be: “Learn how to inexpensively groom your dog like a professional from a 25-year expert in the field at Jim Bob's [dog grooming](#) web site.”

Ask yourself: which do you find more compelling? Which gives a *reason* to click-through? So be sure and write your “about the author” boxes to appeal specifically to the person who just read your article. Again, don't pass up all of that free traffic just because your primary goal is to get links to rank in the search engines.

Keep in mind that each article directory site is different, and has different requirements and guidelines. You need to make yourself aware of these guidelines before posting articles to them.

Many people purchase what's known as Private Label Rights (PLR) articles, which they modify and then submit to article directories and blogs, etc. PLR articles are written by other people, but you buy the rights to modify them and claim them as your own.

One very powerful tool that makes it much easier to rewrite PLR articles (or even your own articles) in order to create dozens or hundreds of unique articles for posting all over the web is:

[Click Here To Go To The Best Spinner](#)

The Best Spinner is what's known as a “content spinner” -- a software application that makes it easy to replace words and phrases in an article with synonyms that mean the same thing but appear unique to the search engines. The best way to understand how it works is to watch the brief video on the home page – it makes it very clear and easy to understand.

Of course, if you're short on cash you can always just write your own articles or do the rewriting of PLR articles yourself, but the advantage of The Best Spinner is that it comes preloaded with more than 800,000 synonyms for words *and* phrases, and it provides a fast and easy interface for rewriting content.

WARNING: The Best Spinner is a great tool for rewriting content, but I do *not* recommend submitting rewritten PLR articles to EzineArticles.com. They don't like PLR being submitted to their directory, and unless you really know what you're doing and how to use a content spinner to make the articles truly unique, I advise that you stick to submitting the “spun” versions to other article directories and web sites that don't mind (and there are thousands of them).

2. Create effective “link bait” content and submit it to social networks.

In addition to writing articles, another great way to get links is to create content that is incredibly well written and informative, or a little controversial, and submit those articles to social networking sites like Digg.com. This process is known as “link baiting.”

If your article gets “dugg” (meaning it lands on the home page of Digg.com), you will receive a *huge* flood of traffic and a large number of links to your site quickly. Then, people who read the articles linking to your site will also link to your site, and so on – it really creates a lot of links spread out over a few days or weeks (which is a good thing).

Since you'll get a lot of links fast using this method, you don't want to use this method and then just stop. You want to use this method *first*, and then keep using the other methods I talk about to keep the links growing to your site so Google doesn't rank it high and then drop it (which I talked about earlier). Or, if your site already has a lot of links, you can use this method at any time, since Google generally doesn't punish sites that are already well linked for getting a bunch more links.

Let me give you a great example of a site that is on the first page of Digg as I type this: WebMd.com created a slide show that helps people understand depression. Here's the link to that slide show:

<http://www.webmd.com/depression/slideshow-depression-overview>

It's visual, interactive, and brief, while providing top-quality information on a common illness. Because it was so well done and informative, it landed on page one of Digg.com, which no doubt sent a flood of visitors to WebMD.com.

Now, it's true that most of the stuff that makes it to page one of Digg is either technologically related (e.g. Linux or space rockets) or just weird (“Funeral director finds 400-

year-old cat”). But the WebMD example makes the point that great content on an important topic *can* and *does* make it to page one.

Even if your site doesn't make it to page one of the home page, if it makes it to the first page of its category you can still see thousands of visitors, and get hundreds of links to your site. The folks who hang out at Digg are the kinds of folks with blogs who love to post about the new and interesting stuff they find there. Digg makes it very easy to post an article from their site to the user's blog, too.

Just remember: you're designing your content for the purpose of getting links, so make it as appealing as possible to as many people as possible.

3. Join link networks.

Although I strongly encourage you to use methods number one and two mentioned above for building links, they require a lot of work. It takes time and effort to write and distribute dozens or hundreds of great articles, and it's a very hit-and-miss process with link baiting – you never know what's really going to take off and finally create that explosion of traffic and links you're working for. You *need* to do both of those things (remember, Google likes to see a variety of links), but relying solely on those processes will make it take a lot longer for you to get your site ranked in the search engines.

That's why I'm an advocate of link networks. Let me give you full disclosure here: I *own* three link networks. I created them *because* I know how hard and time consuming it can

be to rely only on article writing and link baiting to build up the links your site needs to rank well in the search engines.

The three networks I own are:

[3 Way Links](#)

[1 Way Links](#)

[My Way Links](#)

Each one has a different application. 3WayLinks.net lets you easily trade links with other web sites in a 3-way fashion (Site A links to Site B, Site B to Site C and Site C to Site A). Google sees these links as being one-way links, not reciprocal links (you link to me and I'll link to you). Google has long ago stopped putting much value on reciprocal links, but three way links work like a champ. All of the sites in the 3WayLinks network are human reviewed for quality, too.

1WayLinks.net lets you create articles like you would in method one above, but instead of having to wait around for them to get accepted and posted by web masters, it lets you spread your links across a large link network of (presently) more than 1,950 blogs. The articles get spread slowly, so your site builds up links in the slow-and-steady fashion that Google approves of. Think of it as article marketing on steroids.

MyWayLinks.net gives you the ability to pick-and-choose where you get links from, and who you give links to. It's a network of web sites whose owners all want to get (and give) links to other web sites for the purposes of ranking in the search engines. You put your site in the network, and you earn “points” by putting links from other users on your site. You have total control of what links you allow on your site, so you can be as picky as you want. Of course, the more links you approve, the more links you can get on other members' sites. Also, every site in the MyWayLinks network is already well-linked itself, which means Google highly values their “votes” to other sites. It's a high-quality, human-reviewed network of sites, so you know that you're requesting links from sites that will help you rank well.

The common denominator of the three link networks I own is that they take away most (and in some cases all) of the work involved in acquiring links to your site that will help you get ranked in the search engines. I recommend putting your sites in the link networks to build a good solid base of links, and while the networks are doing their job – building links to your site – you go out and write articles and work on your link baiting projects in order to further build up your site's links and traffic.

“Why do you need three networks?” you ask? Remember our discussion about Google and things appearing “natural”? Each network provides *different* kind of links to your site. It's that variety of links that Google loves to see that will get you ranked in the search engines and bring a lot of traffic to your sites. Using one or two of the networks does work, but when you combine all three that's when your rankings can *really* go through the roof.

I personally use all three networks for all of the sites I rank in Google. Thanks to that,

I've got sites ranking in the top ten in a variety of competitive markets: real estate, music downloads, lawn furniture, exercise equipment and more!

Don't freak out if this all seems like a lot of work.

I'm not going to tell you that ranking in the search engines doesn't take work – it does. There are certainly tools that make it *a lot* easier, such as [WebComp Analyst](#) for doing the keyword analysis, and [3 Way Links](#), [1 Way Links](#) and [My Way Links](#) for building links to your site that will help get you ranked in the search engines – but even using all of these tools, you still have the work of actually *building* your site, *creating* quality content for your site, *writing* and distributing articles and *creating* link bait for submission to social networking sites. (Don't forget that [The Best Spinner](#) makes it a lot easier to rewrite content, too!)

It is work, but the great thing is that once a site is ranking in the search engines, it will often stay there for a long time, quietly generating traffic and income for you without any additional work. And once you reach a point of “critical mass”, where your site gets popular enough that it starts building links from other sites without you doing anything other than creating more and more great content, then you've really got it made.

An example site of mine that has reached this “critical mass” stage is [Offto.net](#), a free link redirection service site. People use the site to turn long, ugly affiliate links into short, pretty links, and to keep tabs on how many visitors they're getting through those links. It's a free service, so it appeals to a lot of people. It started off slow, but just a year and a half later the site is generating more than *2 million* page views a month, and has built up a list of almost 5,000 users who I can contact with offers of my own. I had to do the legwork to kick-start its popularity, but now hundreds of new people use the service every day with no work at all!

In Summary

Let's break the SEO process down again so it doesn't seem overwhelming to you. It's really just a matter of:

1. Doing the keyword research to find out what keywords you *want* to rank for.
2. Analyzing the competition to see how many links you'll *need* to rank for those keywords.
3. Building links through article writing, link baiting and link networks in order to get enough links to *rank* for those keywords.
4. Rinse and repeat.

I've got people in my link networks who use that process on literally dozens (some even hundreds) of sites, and are earning an incredible living from doing so. You can be one of those people, too, whether you choose to make one site super-super popular, or whether you find it easier to build up a network of smaller sites instead (which is usually easier and provides more long-term stability).

About the Author



Jonathan Leger has been online since before the World Wide Web was born. He has been writing commercial software since he was 14, and spent 8 years in the corporate world as a software developer before striking out on his own.

He's the creator of a number of well known and respected software and service applications such as:

- [The Best Spinner](#)
- [3 Way Links](#)
- [1 Way Links](#)
- [My Way Links](#)
- [Instant Article Wizard](#)
- [Instant Article Wizard Pro](#)
- [WebComp Analyst](#)

Jonathan is a serious Bible student. He is married to a wonderful woman, Natalie, and has a teenager daughter, Janelle, and a little boy, Jaden, all three of whom he loves very much.

He regularly posts advice and how-to information on search engine optimization and internet marketing on his blog at:

www.JonathanLeger.com

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