Make Your Links WORK!

The 80-20 Keep-It-Real Guide To Linking

How To Use C ➤T ➤P ➤M And Links
To Grow Your Site Into The Top 3%

by Ken Evoy

Relation and connection are not
somewhere and sometimes,
but everywhere and always

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

Preface

This book can be read in three ways...

If you would like an original, thought-provoking, and compelling 30,000 foot view of how to build a roaring online business that gets found by the Search Engines and that converts visitors into profits, start at Chapter 1. Building a link program is only a very small part of Search Engine Optimization (SEO). And SEO is only a fraction of what's involved in building a successful online business. To profoundly understand how links fit into the big picture and how to best spend your business-building time, Chapter 1 is highly recommended.

If you want to jump "straight to links" take a few minutes to understand the up-to-date theory, presented in a common sense, easy-to-understand way. In some instances, this presentation differs from "common wisdom." So it, too, is recommended reading. You will get more out of the strategies that follow. Click here to start at Chapter 2.

To go directly to the highest yield, most time-efficient strategies for building an effective link program, skip straight to Chapter 3. You will receive a simple, powerful, cost-and-time-effective way to build links.

We highly recommend the first two chapters, and reading the book in order, in its entirety. A thorough grounding in the big picture (Chapter 1) and link theory/background (Chapter 2) will help Chapter 3 yield greater dividends.

But if you're in a hurry, do the "best-fit-for-you" reading route and then register for Value Exchange.

Ready?

It's all yours.

1. In The Beginning...

In the "beginning," there was the Internet (Arpanet, actually). That was for scientists and academics.

Then came HTML and the World Wide Web. Tim Berners-Lee delivered the "Net for the rest of us."

As the number of Web sites grew geometrically, Search Engines (SEs) appeared to help us find information.

Moving forward, the next step was somewhat predictable. Where people go, marketers naturally follow... the beginning of e-commerce.

This natural progression, of course, led to the appearance of those who market to marketers, including the "Search Engine Optimization" ("SEO") industry.

For years, only large, well-financed companies and highly sophisticated individuals succeeded commercially, until the most recent major step forward...

[Site Build It! (SBI!)](...) "E-business Success. Simple. Real."

E-commerce is simply "doing business online." Anyone can do it, with the right attitude, process and tools. That is exactly what you will have after reading this booklet. It really is simple... if you stay focused and keep it simple.

Your prospective customers search for information. Meet them by providing it.

The **Content** ➡ **Traffic** ➡ **PREselling** ➡ **Monetization** process is simple, natural, and powerful. Most small business people start the process hoping that it will "work" (not quite realizing yet that they make it work).

As they experience the initial trickle of visitors, they wonder. As it turns into a torrent of PREsold customers who monetize in a variety of ways, they "get it." They know how and why it is all happening.

Despite their understanding, the sense of wonder remains. The ever-growing snowball effect of a properly built **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** site is almost mystical.

There is, in fact, nothing mystical about it. The results are neither magical nor mysterious. It just kind of seems that way, when your success grows beyond what you had dreamed possible, beyond what "the experts" themselves achieve.

Quite the opposite, **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** is founded in solid logic, the predictability of human behavior, and the ever-more-complex algorithms of the Search Engines (but without the need to understand the math!).

A feeling grows. It springs from the liberation of knowing that you can do it and are doing it. We call it...

"The Special Free(dom) Prize Inside Every SBI!"

Let's get started...

1.1. Keep It Real...
Search Engines Get Smarter Fast

Everything starts somewhere. And the first Search Engines were indeed pretty simple. To determine the relevance of Web pages for a search term, they looked for keywords in various places on a Web page.

It was easy for marketers to meet/manipulate the crude "relevancy algorithms" of Search Engines. All you had to do was stuff a page with "invisible" keywords (ex., text in the same color as background color) and BINGO! Your page would rank #1 for search requests for that "stuffed" keyword.

Search Engine Optimization ("SEO") was not yet an official profession (the first marketers discovered and saved their tricks for their own benefit). Their rudimentary reverse-engineering allowed them to rank highly at the engines for all their important keywords, with little work.

Life was bountiful for Search Engine Optimizers ("SEOers"). The relevancy algorithms were easy to reverse-engineer and manipulate and beat. (Yes, even then the SEO concept was to beat the engines, sort of like the way you might beat the game of blackjack at the casinos.)

And just to make life extra-sweet, there was near-zero sophistication amongst competitors.

Some SEOers were "good" (called "white hats"). They played within the rules. They tried to match the "algorithms of the month" without abusing the SEs (Search Engines).

Others were "bad" (yup, "black hats"). They exploited loopholes in the rules and otherwise tried to fool the engines. Crude tricks like "keyword stuffing" worked,

followed by replicated gateway pages. (99% identical, only one optimized keyword would vary.)

But the engines evolved.

As old tricks stopped working, more sophisticated gimmicks emerged. "Non-replicated, zero-value doorway pages" and "cloaking" took center stage. Just like the earlier generation of tricks, they worked at first.

But the engines evolved.

And yet, the games continue. New ploys replacing discarded ones, right up to the extremely sophisticated maneuvers of today.

But the engines never rest. They get smarter. It may not seem so day by day, but month upon month, year upon year, they evolve, and they always will.

Don't get the wrong impression. Engines do not adapt to counteract SEOers. That does happen to some small degree, of course. The main drive, though, is to get better at their primary mission... recognizing reality. (More on this later.)

While the engines ban the bad SEOers, even the "white hats" will progressively fall by the wayside. In the long run, the Search Engines don't really care whether an SEOer is "good" or "bad." They are all part of a "whip and buggy industry," unable to keep up with the natural pressure of engine evolution.

And speaking of evolution, the Net is a Darwinian environment. SEOers will become extinct as the search ecosystem becomes untenable and complex .

SEOers, by the very definition of the nature of their jobs, work specifically to rank highly at the Search Engines, for keywords related to the businesses of their clients. They do that by trying to meet the requirements of the SEs' algorithms.

But there are two problems with that approach...

1) Complexity -- in those "good old days," it was fairly easy to reverse-engineer the engines. It is now amazingly complex. So SEOers make their best educated guesses at what the algorithms require in order to rank highly.

If anyone ever gives you the impression that s/he knows exactly what the SEs want, run-don't-walk in the opposite direction. No one knows the "secret sauce formula." At Google, for example, a grand total of three people might know the entire big picture -- everyone else works on a small piece of it.

And what about those three people? They are tied to a Non-Disclosure Agreement that makes the one for Coca-Cola's formula look like Swiss cheese.

Frankly, it's the height of ego and self-delusion for any "outsider" to pretend that they know how any major Search Engine determines what a Web page is all about. It's really just speculation, a waste of time.

As the months fly by, the job of algorithm-chasing becomes harder and harder... with lower and lower yield. Bad news for SEOers.

2) Reality -- if the complexity problem sounds big, it's nothing compared to the issue of "reality." Actually, "Complexity Avenue" meets "Reality Street" at "Impossibility Square."

To understand why, let's jump to an important question and its oft-overlooked answer...

Q: What is the ultimate goal of Search Engines like Google?

A: Recognize what a page/site is all about and how good it is.

Sound easy? Well...

It is easy for a human. But it is incredibly complicated for a machine. Yes, Search Engines are getting more and more sophisticated...

- computing power continues to double every 18 months

- hundreds of brilliant computer PhDs work 24 x 7 to build smarter algorithms

- major technology jumps (ex., Artificial Intelligence) will become important.

So the engines will indeed get better and better at doing what their primary goal boils down to... **Recognize Reality.**

However, SEOers do not create reality. They merely mimic it. They try to meet a formula's definition of reality... a definition that is constantly changing and becoming more and more complex.

How in the world can anyone keep up with the acceleration of complexity?

They can't.

The SEOers' never-ending chase of the ever-evolving algorithms is doomed. Even today, algorithm shakeups cause great consternation. Whenever the Google Dance happens, a pained uproar goes up amongst the SEO forums, as if Google owed them a living.

Whenever a major Search Engine changes its algorithms, SEOer teeth-gnashing starts anew. The same controversies flare...

"How unfair," they clamor, "that the engines don't post their relevancy criteria." Somehow, they figure the search world would be a better place if that were to happen. Better for whom? And for what period of time? Every "black hat" would quickly get to work on mimicking the "secret sauce."

You stand at an important crossroads... take months to learn complicated SEO and run the treadmill of ever-increasing complexity? Or use **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M** to leapfrog straight to what the engines seek... reality (relevance and quality).

My recommendation? Clear your mind. Simplify your life. Focus on your business. You will "win the world" by not meddling with it.

But only you can decide the right path for you. Read this booklet and then decide.

As we proceed, remember this important fact...

The Search Engines owe nothing to SEOers, good or bad.

The Search Engines owe nothing to those who use **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M**. They do not "reward" you for creating great Content out of appreciation, nor as a way to say "thank you." It's merely what happens because of what the engines want.

So... to whom do the Search Engines cater? Simple...

They deliver searchers the best search results possible. And they do that, in turn, for one reason only...

Search Engines owe their actual customers, **advertisers**, the most targeted eyeballs possible. That obligation is why all engines will constantly strive to get better at the two-word mission that best summarizes their #1 Goal...

1.2. The Search Engine Mission... Recognize Reality

Why is recognizing reality the Search Engine's #1 Goal?

Think about your own reaction when you do a search at an engine. What do you do when it delivers high-quality, relevant sites consistently?

You come back for more. You tell your friends, too, with zeal. Bottom line... more and more surfers do more and more searches.

And what does that mean?

Ah-ah! A really great question. Now we are getting to the heart of the matter...

Ever notice the ads on the Search Engines Results Pages (SERPs)?

Those advertisers are the SEs' real customers. Targeted surfers -- that is what the SEs deliver to their customers, the advertisers.

Think that's cynical? No, it's just business. If you want to know who the customer is, just follow who pays money to whom.

Bottom line for the SEs... the more relevant the search results, the greater the number of searches, the more ads sold, the higher the profits.

There is an interesting "other" bottom line. This one belongs to the marketing companies who buy those ads...

As a marketer, it may be profitable to advertise. But it is always profitable to rank highly in the SERP's editorial listings.

It's easier to buy ads, of course. Simply spend money. Hope for a positive ROI.

On the other hand…

C ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** takes time and effort, but the diamonds are forever.

"What happens if an SEO marketing company threatens the SEs by degrading the relevancy of the SERPs?"

They will hurt you, that's what. Why? It's elementary...

If you degrade their relevancy, you hurt the mechanism that delivers targeted surfers to their customers.

And here's the surprising news... SEOers, black hat and white, degrade the quality of the SERPs.

It goes without saying that both white hats and black are doomed. The black hats play a never-ending game of "stay one step ahead to avoid getting banned." We won't talk about the bad guys anymore -- they are irrelevant, worth mentioning only this one time for the overview.

The good ones play a slightly different game, "chase the ever-changing algorithm without tricking the engines." However, they are not creating a reality. Although they do not trick the engines, their focus is on the engines, not on delivering reality (in the form of high-value content).

In other words, they do the maneuvers that they do so well, specifically for the engines. They put tons of sort-of content into the engines' database. That is not what the engines want. In the long run, they seek reality... genuine content, not facsimiles that were performed just for the engines' benefit.

Life would be wonderful for the engines if everyone just kept it real. Luckily for you, they don't. Why "lucky"?

Because if you follow **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M**, you have a running head start. And it's only going to get bigger as the engines get smarter.

This process keeps it simple. You jump straight to the end point, reality. That is what the engines want. So easy. So powerful.

What exactly is reality?

Another fabulous question, and I promise not to get philosophical. I'll use the term "reality" in a very specific sense throughout this e-booklet.

Here is how reality works...

STEP 1) Web surfer looks for information by entering a search term at an SE.

STEP 2) Search Engine returns a SERP, which features links to both editorial content (the actual search results) and advertising that contextually fits the nature of the search.

STEP 3) Surfer either clicks on an ad, or clicks on an editorial search listing. Most viewers regard "editorial content" as being more credible. (Not all actually understand the difference, an ethical shortcoming of some engines. But that's another story, for another time.)

Think of an offline newspaper. You read the stories and you see the ads. Many of those stories are, in fact, the results of publicity efforts by marketing companies. But you regard it as editorial.

So your "BS filter" is set much lower when you read an article in a newspaper. You are more open-minded and believing about what you read. (That is why, by law, those tricky pages that look like editorial content but are really one huge sales letter, must say "ADVERTISING.")

Yes, you will notice the ads. You may even read those that "connect" with what you seek -- some of those may be relevant and timely. So you may even act upon those. But generally, we all read ads with our toughest "BS filter" functioning.

Let's compare that with the online world...

We're back to the SERP. You may notice the ads, even give one or two a quick read. You might actually click on one that hits you as highly relevant. Other than that, you click and read the editorial search results with more credibility.

STEP 4) The surfer decides if the SERP delivered what he wanted and if the content was any good. In other words, the surfer recognizes the reality of that page (i.e., relevant and good information).

STEP 5) Based on that recognition, the surfer takes other actions. These other actions are important to the SEs. They actually measure and track a variety of parameters that serve as ways to measure this behavior ("off-page criteria" -- we'll get there in a second).

Humans have little trouble recognizing the reality of a Web site. Search Engines do, however. Some day, they will use highly advanced technologies like Artificial Intelligence to simulate human judgment. But for now, if they can't be as smart as a human, they can at least measure what humans do (collectively) if and when and after they click on an editorial link on a SERP.

Let's go back to STEPS 4 and 5...

Suppose that the surfer had entered "porcupine mating habits" as her search term. She clicked on the #1 editorial search listing (the text ad for Viagra did not

seem too relevant, but it might have been... if the searcher had been a male porcupine).

In any event, our typical Web surfer is now reading a page about the mating habits of the porcupines. Let's see how she reacts (at various levels of consciousness)...

Is this page delivering the info I wanted?

Is it excellent material? Is it well presented? If so...

Is it so good that I'm interested in this site and will click through more of its pages?

Wow! Look at the time. I didn't realize that I've already spent 90 minutes here.

Should I provide a link to this page on my own site about porcupines? It's great!

Hey, it has an RSS feed! I'll publish that feed on my site.

Superb -- I'll post about this site in the porcupine forums.

The reality? This visitor found relevant info. She loves it (i.e., it's a good page). How can the engines recognize that reality (relevance and quality)?

On-page criteria provide a "simple degree of relevance"... so do sprinkle your specific keywords in all the right places (ex., TITLE, META tags, headlines, body text, links, etc.) on each page. Balance with synonyms and associated words, too.

Off-page criteria track human behavior, starting from the SERP to what happens later (up to months later!), to determine quality.

For example... Which of the editorial offerings got the click? (Human must have thought the title and description were pretty relevant. Of course, an engine has to account for relative location on the page.)

How long did the surfer take to return and do another search? (The longer, the better that page must have been -- everything else being equal.)

How many links go to this page and how good/relevant are those links? (The more high quality relevant links to that page, the better.)

All the examples of our porcupine surfer's reactions (see above) can be measured and tracked. And they increasingly determine more than just a "higher degree of relevance".... they also imply better quality.

These, and hundreds more, are collectively known as "off-page criteria." And, as we'll see, there is only one way to generate strong off-page criteria.

It is fairly easy to "trick" any single parameter, such as "click popularity" (more on this later) or "time to return to engine" or "inbound links." The engines do build in fraud protection and ban the black hats. But as the number and importance of off-page criteria grow, it becomes increasingly more impossible to SEO them.

You started reading this booklet because you want to build a successful online business. The way to do that is not through SEO. Why not?

Because SEO merely mimics reality. And, as time passes, the ever-smarter SEs will recognize SEO'd sites for what they are... pale imitations of reality that do not address what the searcher was looking for... quality.

SEO sites are not *reality*. And the engines recognize that better and better.

1.3. Quality Drives "Off-Page Criteria"

Do you know the special edge that separates SBI! users (SBIers) from the rest of the pack... including SEO experts?

Human behavior.

SBI! sites smell real, because they are real.

You simply know when someone knows his "island of expertise" and loves it. That is what PREselling is all about.

After that, human behavior tells the engines all they need to know.

SBIers have all the pleasure and all the effectiveness of being real, instead of the tedium and ineffectiveness of simulating reality.

Earlier, I mentioned that most SEOers merely play an algorithm-chasing game. They mimic reality.

The problem with that game is that they "play" against the most sophisticated search experts in the world, hundreds of brainiacs, all working for the Search

Engines. Not only are they brilliant search experts with a dizzyingly impressive array of skills, their resources are virtually unlimited. And all they do is work on "search."

I won't even pretend to know all the off-page criteria that engines track, nor how they weight them. I can tell you with certainty that this knowledge does not matter. All you have to do is skip the math and leapfrog to deliver what they do seek...

Reality… in the form of relevance and quality.

Most experts refer to off-page criteria loosely, and almost synonymously, as Google PageRank. However, my pet theory is that Google PageRank, while of some value, is merely a diversionary tactic, a bit of SEO entertainment. It keeps SEOers focused on one narrow aspect of off-page criteria, while in fact all the major engines have likely developed hundreds of off-page criteria.

What is PageRank (PR)?

It is a relative measure of a site's reputation according to the quality (and, to a lesser extent, the quantity) of its in-pointing links.

Google's toolbar displays the PageRank (PR) score of a Web site. Much has been made about PageRank and how it impacts SEO.

Theoretically, a site with PR of 7 will likely rank higher than a site with a PR of 3 for the same keyword, everything else (ex., on-page criteria) being equal. And a link from a site with a PR of 5 is more beneficial to you than a link from a site with a PR of 3, all else being equal (ex., link from home page or 18th-tier links page?).

It's best not to take PageRank too seriously... or you will soon be on the wrong side of the 80-20 rule (i.e., 80% -- benefits, 20% -- efforts) and start chasing algorithms, too! Worse, you may fall into the manipulation trap. Speaking of manipulation... don't! So...

How do you achieve a high PageRank score? To paraphrase Craig Silverstein, Director of Technology for Google... *You want the expert sites in your market linking to you and hopefully nobody else.*

How do you accomplish that?

Make your site Content so good that others will want to link to you.

Google loves great content. And great content is exactly where **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M** starts.

SBIers owe Google a big thank you for creating AdSense, the absolute perfect-fit income generator for any content site, no matter what your primary Monetization model may be.

Do you see now why even the most competent of the "do-good" SEOers degrade the quality of the SERPs? They focus on pleasing the Search Engines through perfecting a numbers game, including building more and more inbound links. But they have near-zero focus on delivering truly sparkling information. How can they?

Let's answer this question within the context of our porcupine mating page example from above...

SEOers know nothing about porcupine mating, nor do they care. And it shows...

No sparkle. No passion. No extra-clever turn of a phrase.

No watch those quill jokes.

They may score well for all the on-page criteria (relevance), but those are now just the "ante." They get you into the game.

The engines want RELEVANT and EXCELLENT content.

The best way to deliver REALITY? Stop faking it. Be real.

High-value, relevant CONTENT puts the power of human reaction (an important part of off-page criteria) to work for you. (More on this in the next chapter.)

The bottom line is that SBI! users build reality... exactly what the Search Engines seek.

That is why **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M** outperforms SEOers. And it will do so, more and more, in the future.

If it sounds simplistic, it is. It's simple, but it's not easy. Confused?

SBI!'s unique set of integrated tools removes all the technical and tedious complexity, so the process is indeed simple. But it is never easy to build a business. Neither the Internet nor SBI! can suspend common sense or the fundamental laws of economics. It takes work to build a business.

Take a look at these SBIers' experiences...

http://case-studies.sitesell.com/

Examine every one of the case studies of these small business people. Some of them literally add millions of dollars to their net worth -- and they share these million-dollar lessons with you. Their businesses are each different in nature. Yet they impart similar insights...

One is the importance of applying effort and passion to achieve the results you want. The other relates to Site Build It!'s contribution. With SBI!, you can focus on your business while it takes care of everything else.

You will never read those words by an SEOer. It's all math. It's needlessly complex. And doomed to get more complicated while falling behind even further.

> P.S. to professional Webmasters and SEOers…
>
> Please do not take anything in this booklet personally. It merely lays out the reality of the future of SEO. It explains the way things are, and extrapolates to what will be. Many people don't like reality when it does not fit their perception of it, especially when it is painful to accept.
>
> Ignoring reality does not make it go away, though.
>
> Actually, what I said just above needs to be shared with everyone. Please do not misinterpret what I am saying in this booklet. This is not a slam on SEOers vs. SBIers. It is merely an extrapolation of obvious trends. That projection ends up at an unavoidable conclusion in the not-too-distant future.

I use the term SBIer interchangeably with those who use **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M** because skilled execution of the process requires the complete set of integrated tools that only SBI! delivers.

Competent SEOers can still be quite effective for the time being, but not for a lot longer. SBIers are destined to outperform SEOers by greater and greater margins, with less and less effort.

Why do SBIers keep doing better and better?   It's simple...

More and more, engines are measuring off-page criteria. And off-page criteria are measured by human reaction to the quality and the relevancy of the search results delivered. The engines are tracking human reaction parameters, a few of which were mentioned earlier...

Is this page delivering the info I wanted?

Is it excellent material? Is it well presented? If so...

Is it so good that I'm interested in this site and will click through more of its pages?

Wow! Look at the time. I didn't realize that I've already spent 90 minutes here.

Should I provide a link to this page on my own site about porcupines? It's great!

Hey, it has an RSS feed! I'll publish that feed on my site, thereby providing up-to-date mating information on my site as a service to my visitors, since I don't cover that aspect of porcupine activity <ahem>.

This is superb -- I think I'll post about this site in the major porcupine forums.

We can only begin to speculate on what hundreds of the top minds who "live search 24 x 7" could dream up. Disregard anything you read in SEO forums when they comment knowingly on Google's algorithms -- it's all idle speculation. As I said earlier, there are only a few people in the entire world who have the entire big picture. And they are not talking.

However, it is safe to assume one thing...

The engines want to recognize reality... quality and relevance.

So here's a radical concept...

1.4. Why Not Just Give It To Them?

Why bother simulating reality? The days of "meeting-the-algorithm" are coming to an end.

Do NOT waste your time on SEO. It dooms you to working too hard, on all the wrong things.

Work on your business instead.

SEO is a treadmill and the engines increase its speed continuously. You run like mad, just to stay a step behind thousands of the smartest minds on the planet at

Google, Yahoo!, Live Search, etc. Every time they improve their relevancy algorithms, you have to run faster and harder, just to catch up.

Instead, leapfrog SEOers by "keeping it real." **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** sites are exactly what SEs want...

Reality. Relevance. Quality.

Happy searchers finding what they want.

Here's the basic idea...

STEP 1) Plant enough "on-page hooks" to let the engines know what each page is about. Blend those hooks ("Specific Keywords" -- focus on one per page) into excellent content about that specific topic. That is the SBI! 80-20 approach to the "on-page" part of business-building.

Use the unique SBI!'s Analyze It! tool to show you when "enough is enough" -- no need to waste time tweaking, endlessly perfecting a page for an algorithm. Instead, build a page that delivers tremendous content.

Sure... get the important on-page criteria correct. Then... Don't tweak.

Instead, create more and more great content... related and high-value content that delivers what humans want and that passes Analyze It! (part of the SBI! system).

The Keyword Ranking Report shows you how each page ranks during a search for its Specific Keyword. If you see a number (from 1 to 30) in a box, it means that a search for that Specific Keyword, at that specific Search Engine, ranked at that spot (i.e., at #1 to #30) for at least one of your site's pages.

If the number is bold, that page ranks at that number in the Top 30 for a search for its Specific Keyword. A plain number reports the best ranking result that was found for ANY page from your domain for a search for that Specific Keyword.

The ultimate goal is to get one page in the Top 30 for a given keyword. Other pages with the same Specific Keyword basically play a useful, supporting role.

When you score in the Top 30 of the Ranking Report, it is basically saying, "You've done as well as you can for the ON-page criteria for this keyword (phrase)."

Now continue to build more content. Then get inbound links -- a little, honest push-start (next step) by a solid, simple inbound link program is a good idea.

The net result will be like an incoming tide that raises the boat of your site. Your site will progressively rank well for harder and harder keywords, until ultimately it wins for the hardest keyword of all. In other words, your lesser words build the "content pressure" that pushes your second tier, which finally pushes your home page into the Top 10.

You will find that, without changing or tweaking a particular page, you start to win the Ranking Report for its Specific Keyword. From there, you'll start to build an unstoppable momentum.

> Anguilla-beaches.com site illustrates this point well. The owner's Top 20 keywords deliver 1/3 of all her found-by-SE results. But her huge base of one-of keywords accounts for nearly 80% of all search terms that find her! That's the long tail…
>
> http://longtail.sitesell.com/

You will start to build off-page criteria, which is nothing more than a fancy way of measuring how humans behave after they visit your page.

And if you follow the guidance in **Make Your Content PREsell!** (the best helper for learning how to write to communicate on the Net), the human behavior part comes automatically. While SEOers constantly chase algorithms and mimic reality, SBIers are already delivering the reality (the searcher satisfaction) that the engines crave.

At this point...

STOP -- don't tweak -- build more content.

So, what remains?

STEP 2) Get that snowball started rolling down the hill through inbound links.

You will commonly see inbound links referred to as "back links." It's a confusing term. Back to where? Back from where? Whose "back"? We will use the more obvious terms inbound links or in-pointing links or incoming links to mean links from other sites that are pointing, coming or bound to your site.

What are the main benefits of securing a few inbound links?

First, some engines do not have an "Add URL" page -- you can only be listed in their index after their spider follows a link to your site. If you think about it, instead of free submission, inbound links become your "submissions" to engines that do not offer a submission process.

Second, this is a crude but effective way to get your off-page criteria started. Remember, "off-page criteria" is merely a fancy term for measuring how humans behave AFTER they visit your page.

In a nutshell, a few, well-chosen, inbound links get your site rolling like that proverbial snowball, ever-accelerating and building... Make Your Links ROLL!

Bottom line recommendation? Once you have 20+ pages of content, turn your attention to inbound links. SBI! takes you through the 80-20 process for building a link program. Like everything else, it's an easy step-by-step program. We'll go into more detail later in this booklet but for now, here's a quick overview...

Start at the 2nd tier and major directories, with those appropriate for your circumstances. Then work through the theme directories and hub sites. Add a few high-quality links from Value Exchange.

Non-SBIers can take advantage of two free SiteSell resources to help execute part of this strategy as easily as possible, free...

   i) List your site at relevant "theme-relevant" hubs and directories. What is the best way to find these?

Search It!
http://searchit.sitesell.com/

Choose Specialty Hubs and Directories in the "STEP 1 Search Category" drop-down menu, and then proceed through each of the STEP 2 Search Types

ii) Secure high-value exchanges with non-competitive, related sites through Value Exchange. Natural and powerful, Search Engines love it. And it's free!

Take your time and be picky. Your goal is merely to secure two or three quality exchanges with good sites (and preferably nice people).

http://value-exchange.sitesell.com/

Links to your site are important for generating high ranking Search Engine results at all the Search Engines. The SiteSell Value Exchange is the simplest, fastest, most efficient, and (most importantly) most REAL way to identify high-value sites which want to link to your site. Find high-value, similarly themed sites, and then exchange links to honestly increase your link popularity.

It's a true, ethical use of the Net, exactly the way Search Engines want you to do it... relevant sites linking to relevant sites only.

More about off-page criteria...

If you follow the principles of the **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** process, your site will automatically start to build all the off-page criteria that the engines track, even the ones that you don't know about.

When engines track off-page criteria, what are they really tracking?

Human judgment... of your site.

And why does **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** play a role?

Human visitors will like the content on your site. It is relevant, and it OVERdelivers superb information. When that happens, your visitors, collectively, proceed to fulfill all the kinds of off-page behavior that the engines track. For example...

• They choose your site more often than the others on a SERP.

• They spend a lot of time before returning to the engine for another search.

• Some of them link to your site from theirs -- it's a compliment to your quality.

• Some will publish your RSS feed or respond to your Content 2.0 invitation.

• Others mention your site in prominent forums, discussion groups, media.

When engines measure which link a surfer chooses and clicks on a SERP, that action is called "Click Popularity." It was one of the first off-page criteria. Like any ONE criterion (on-page or off), it can be manipulated. And of course, the engines have the means to detect and penalize most such attempts.

But, even if an SEO trick works for a while, this manipulation is still just part of the "dying black art." As the engines build greater and greater complexity into their algorithms, measuring hundreds if not thousands of possible off-page criteria, the ability to manipulate it becomes more and more impossible.

See what I'm getting at? Offline human response to your site is trackable from the time the surfer is deciding which page to click on the SERP.

We cannot begin to guess at all the off-page criteria that could be tracked. However, if you deliver reality (i.e., a solid content-laden site with high-quality, relevant information), off-page criteria will take care of itself, almost automatically, due to searcher satisfaction.

You cannot fake, mimic or simulate human reaction. It happens as your delighted visitors fan out across the Internet and spread the word in trackable ways. It does so automatically, but with a little guidance by you especially at the start of your online experience.

After getting the basic on-page criteria "close enough" (STEP 1 above), STEP 2 starts the off-page snowball rolling. Get some inbound links. Build some word-of-mouth buzz in all the right places. Do whatever else is relevant for your target market, your business, and your circumstances. Remember...

"Off-page criteria" simply means how engines measure human judgment/behavior before, during and after a visitor clicks on a Search Results Page to visit a site. It could be as short-term as how quickly visitors return to the engine. Or it could be as long-term as how many relevant links build up to that site over time.

These 2 steps get the snowball rolling down hill, speeding faster and faster in its descent, momentum growing as it builds and builds. From there, you'll start to build an unstoppable momentum. Just be careful that you don't hurt yourself.

As your site builds with more and more Content, as you get more and more inbound quality links and other off-page criteria, you start to win the Ranking Report for more and more of your keywords... without endless tweaking. This happens first for the easier ones and then for the more competitive ones... all without having to tweak the pages.

By now, the "big picture" of how to build a profitable online business (in the most effective way possible) is becoming clearer to you. It seems so obvious, once you understand it. So by now, you must be asking...

1.5. But What If SEOers "Get It"? They Won't!

If SEOers get **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M**, won't they out-do us ordinary small business people?

I used to wonder about that. But the answer is NOPE!

SEOers are very left-brained. Being left-brained can be a great thing. But too much of this great thing can make it difficult to change direction.

Part of **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** is that you have to give up control to gain control. You have to give up control over every single mathematical parameter possible. Instead, focus on building high-value Content.

Many SEOers do not yet understand that the science of delivering search results is already way beyond their speculation. It may take them years to realize the fast-approaching demise of simulated reality.

A personal experience has caused me to consider that they may never "get it." The following story drives two points home...

1) Why SBIers will outperform SEOers (more and more as time passes)

2) That Most SEOers won't get it.

There once was a superb question in the searchenginewatch.com forums about competition numbers or "Supply" in SBI! terms. It is the number of Web sites that supply content about a given keyword. The forum participant was asking what to make of it, wondering about its value. So I decided to help this person out a bit.

We did, after all, invent the entire concept of Keyword Demand, Supply, and Profitability. Sometimes, though, I regret it when I see some SBIers get "number-bound!" (Supply and Demand numbers are merely generated by the computers of various Web resources. They may have glitches for many reasons. So treat Supply and Demand and all "numbers" as fallible guidelines. Trust your brain above all!)

The essence of my answer explained the difference between Demand (how often surfers search for a keyword) and Supply (how many Web pages create content

for a specific term). I went on to explain how to use this information to find profitable niches, including a step-by-step process (that does not require SBI!).

The bottom line conclusion...

As long as you apply the human filter at the end of this process, the Supply-Deman-Profitability process is an excellent way to identify profitable niches about which to create content that ultimately turns into traffic and income.

There was an excellent reply. Marcia said that the best way to get started on the road to building free Search Engine traffic is to work at "ranking highly" for the more exotic, less in-demand words.

Yes, this is similar to the point made above. You will indeed first start to rank at the engines for the "easiest" keywords. Your most important ones will rank later, without tweaking if you are getting the basics right, as your site grows and its overall "off-page reputation" improves in the eyes of the SEs.

It was a super point. It's very hard for a startup site to rank highly for tough, competitive words. But you can get the traffic ball rolling by working the fringes.

So I replied, building upon that. This time, though, and just to challenge folks into a little controversy, I lobbed a grenade into the midst of a bunch of SEO experts...

I explained why our **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M** approach of "keeping it real" is far more effective, especially in the long-term, than SEO. In other words, SBIers were destined to outperform SEOers now, and even more so in the future.

Here's a direct quote from that post...

> We choose to leapfrog "advanced, nth degree SEO" and head straight towards reality. By giving the SEs enough on-page hooks to sink their teeth into, and by otherwise PREselling with excellent content and getting some key inbound links, human visitor behavior takes over and does indeed build the off-page criteria naturally and organically.
>
> Overall, we show our users how to engineer success through superb content that hits the basic on-page criteria and that WOWS the human visitors. Ultimately, it is those delighted human visitors who generate all the off-page criteria (with a little help from the marketer of course, who must start the ball rolling by securing a few good inbound links). All of this to (hopefully) lead into a little controversy...
>
> I find that heavy SEO emphasis is a little like chasing the

Holy Grail. The engines get steadily more and more
sophisticated at reaching the ultimate goal, which is simply
to recognize reality the way humans do. SEOers have to chase
this increasing sophistication constantly. Instead...

We choose to leapfrog the algorithm-chase and head straight
to reality. And, all in all it's worked darn well for our
tens of thousands of small business users. For example...

My own daughter started her anguilla-beaches.com site by
eating away at the edges. She started when she was 14. She
didn't rank anywhere in the Top 500 for her toughest word,
anguilla. As she built more and more content, got more and
more links in from Caribbean and Anguillian sites, as people
loved her site more and more, they naturally deliver
off-page criteria (we can only imagine what Google must
track -- I doubt if more than 3 people have the complete
picture, and their NDA is probably tighter than Coke's!).

The effect is like a boat with the tide coming in. Now she
puts up a page about "anguilla wedding," is spidered and
ranking in the top 10 within days. It's a slow, steady,
tortoise-like process... but the tortoise wins in the end
(she has averaged about an hour per week over a period of 2
years). And the only "work" I've done with Nori is on how to
write more effectively for the human reader (PREselling),
not SEO or anything like that.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, geeks like Marc Liron
do the same thing, but in a bigger way as adults with more
time and devotion and generate 15,000 pages per day at his
updatexp.com site. Ask him what kind of advanced SEO he does
and he'll just chuckle -- he abandoned those worries long
ago.

Now, I know I'll get banged by a lot of SEO experts who love
chasing the zillion variables down to the 4th decimal point
or, worse, who still love "fooling" the engines. But you're
over-engineering and doomed to chase the engines instead of
delivering what humans want... and THAT actually is what the
engines want, too.

We just like to keep it real.

Pretend you are an SEO expert and now re-read that post. It's a bit like going
into a bar in Texas and saying "I can whup any Texan in here."

Talk about heading into the lion's den. I expected to get fried... blasted...
toasted. Nope. I could not believe the rest of the thread...

- numbers, numbers, and more numbers

- stats about this and whether this ratio was better than that one

  - "intitle: and inanchor: combined"

  - number of keywords on the head of a pin!

The realization hit me like a ton of hard disks... many SEOers don't even begin to take into consideration that *humans* read the Web pages. They don't understand that it's the *humans* that the engines care about.

Worse, their complicated suggestions take a lot of time and energy to determine the degree of competition.

You only need a quick ballpark estimate. Most importantly, I could create two pages of Content about a keyword in the time it takes them just to assess it!

This is incredibly instructive. It leads me to these bottom-line conclusions...

1) The engines will get smarter and smarter at figuring out *reality*.

2) SEOers will have a harder time playing "match that algorithm."

3) SBI! sites will simply do better and better because they deliver reality.

4) "It's magical-mystical how well it works" (in the words of SBIers). But there is solid logic and mathematics behind the process.

5) SBI! sites deliver naturally and powerfully what the engines want. SBIers, far from being Search Engine experts, outperform SEOers!

Yes, on the surface, the effectiveness of SBI! is almost mystical. This feeling of calm power and effectiveness has come to be known as...

1.6. "The Tao of C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M"

> Those who follow the Tao are clear of mind.
> They do not load their mind with anxieties and are
> flexible in their adjustment to external conditions.
> Chuang-Tzu (399-295 BC)

Let's pull everything together to clearly see how a simple, pure focus upon reality (relevancy and quality) builds businesses, naturally, powerfully and even as some would say, mystically.

There are two basic steps to building a successful Web site and business...

STEP 1) Create great Content. The "C" of **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** takes care of the ON-page criteria. Your information both W-O-W-S your targeted visitor and gives the engines enough hooks to determine first-look relevance. But mastering on-page is not enough anymore. So next...

STEP 2) Start rolling that snowball over the hump and down the hill by getting some good inbound links. How do you get those links?

First, create at least 20 quality content pages. It's hard to take smaller sites seriously. Let's go back to that snowball analogy -- you need to build a snowball of a decent diameter, enough size and weight, to really start it rolling down that hill.

OK, I'm stretching here. But hey... I'm into this snowball analogy too deep now to abandon it!

So... what have we accomplished so far? A great start!

CONTENT and LINKS... those two strong hands create the snowball and then start it rolling down the hill.

Just above in STEP 2, I mentioned a "hump." This is more than just "part of the analogy." There is a hump.

For weeks, often months, **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** can seem a thankless effort. You create content, content, content. Near-zero traffic. You get a few inbound links.

Nothing happens? What do you do, quit? Nope...

"Tortoise it!"

http://tortoise.sitesell.com/

You "keep on keepin' on!" Continue doing both of these. Do not stop.

Persevere. Trust the system. Be patient. You are building a long-term business that is going to substantially alter your future. It does not come overnight.

So... persist.

More content. Get a few more links. Create a bit of buzz in a prominent forum. Keep building your "Brand of One" (i.e., your reputation).

And then... it happens. A trickle of traffic. Just a trickle, but it's the first sign that you are getting over the hump.

You start to win the Search Engine rankings for the less competitive words. You gain a few, natural (i.e., unasked-for) relevant incoming links. Yes...

Human visitor behavior is starting to take over. So do you stop now?

No-o-o-o-o-o-o-o.

You build more and more content. Use your Analyze It! tool (if you have SBI!) to get the basic on-page criteria correct (for each of your keywords for each of your topical pages, as always).

Some of your PREsold visitors give you more inbound links, without even needing to ask! Directories start listing you. Forums discuss you. In short...

The off-page criteria (far more than we could ever discuss here and, thankfully, we don't need to) build naturally and organically.

You are over "The Hump."

And now... here's where the ever-growing, ever-accelerating snowball analogy really starts to fit! The Search Engines "see" how frequently your site changes. They return more often. They spider your new content pages faster and faster.

Remember those engines that can only find you via inbound links? Well, once they've found you, they follow the same behavior. It is all good.

Of course, as you build more and more content, and rank higher and higher for more and more pages, your visitor count keeps growing. It's important to keep your PREselling content at a high level...

That PREselling ("P") is vital for human behavior to powerfully and naturally create all the off-page criteria. No manipulation involved...

Your PREsold visitors merely behave naturally. The engines measure their "judgmental behavior" by tracking more off-page criteria than we could ever imagine! And you do not have to meddle in those criteria at all...

One who wins the world does so by not meddling with it.
One who meddles with the world loses it.
Lao-Tzu (604 BC - 531 BC)
Tao te Ching

As your excellent PREselling content increases, you will receive yet more inbound links, naturally and without asking for them. That factor, and other off-page criteria, raise the overall credibility of your site. You will find pages that never ranked for their specific keywords start ranking in the Top 30, then in the Top 10... without tweaking them.

Wow! Life is good. Now you can stop, right? You know what I'm going to say by now... Don't stop. Why should you? You know and love your material.

Have a blast! Keep building content, content, and more content. Get the on-page criteria "roughly right." And round and round and round it goes... building all along the way.

> My advice? Never stop. You can slow down once your site is well-established. After all, it does get easier and easier (but never "easy"), regardless of what kind of business you have. Take 2 months off and your site will still be there, growing and earning for you on auto-pilot, one of the advantages of being an infopreneur!
>
> Of course, if you sell hard goods, you'll need someone around for customer support... unless you take your laptop on vacation (something I refuse to do!).

Once over the hump, the ease at which your site flourishes is what creates that magical-mystical feeling. It's what I call... **The Tao of C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M**.

"Tao? C'mon Ken!"

I hate to get zen/Star Wars-y about it, but you will seriously feel a force with you. It's because your site is real/relevant and good (the reality that SEs seek).

PREsold humans just naturally build all the off-page criteria for you. As the engines consider you as more and more of an authority, you will start ranking higher and higher for more and more of your keywords at more and more of your pages. The traffic increases, which means more delighted visitors.

And growing traffic means even more off-page criteria are "delivered" by those happy humans, through natural, normal, human, online behavior. These off-page

criteria basically reflect how humans respond to your site. Your portfolio of inbound links is merely one of many off-page criteria

SEOers seem to forget that inbound links are just one of many off-page criteria. They spend ordinate amounts of time on this single criterion. This is likely happening for three reasons...

1) It's simple and controllable -- you can do something.

2) It's measurable -- long live "Google PR"!

3) There is even complicated, expensive software to help boost your links.

Bottom line? Once you have a solid link program in place, all this fine-tuning represents time better spent on Content. You do not need any fancy, expensive software. You certainly do not need to do anything at all, just for the engines.

Do not fall into this SEO trap.

Please don't think that I am saying that inbound links are not important. They are. But there is no need to go overboard.

It's relatively easy to get started with a few important, relevant inbound links. That gets this whole snowball rolling! Here is the key long-term point...

If you PREsell with great content, you don't have to manipulate all those off-page criteria (not possible in any event). All the good off-page criteria happen because of visitor satisfaction. That is why SBI! sites succeed way more than others.

When it happens, you will be astounded. You will scream, "it works."

After a while, you realize that SBI! delivers more than targeted traffic. And even more than success. It delivers business independence!

"What about when a major new technology comes in, say full Artificial Intelligence? What will happen?"

Great question! Here's what will happen...

SEOers will wring their hands in panic, grief, rage. They've done so for years, whenever a major algorithm change happens. But the reality is that the engines do not owe anyone a living. If anything, even the good SEOers are an annoyance because they do not deliver what the engines seek... relevance and quality. However...

SBIers will clap in glee. They will have an even bigger advantage.   Here's why...

The closer the engines come to accurately assessing reality (relevance and quality), the better SBIers will do, especially when compared to the mechanical, mimicking world of SEOers.

The collective mass of many well-written pages (that please the human and the SE) is followed by positive off-page human behavior (delivering the off-page criteria). The combination builds overwhelming momentum, and feeds upon itself in a positive loop that continues the growth.

Let's borrow a famous slogan for a moment and apply it to an SBI! site... "Engineered Like No Other Site In the World."

SBI! engineers success through superb content that hits the basic on-page criteria and that W-O-W-S the human visitors. Ultimately, those delighted human visitors generate more and more off-page criteria that engines detect and measure.

The effect upon the Search Engines is like a boat with a strong tide coming in. The competition? Tide's out.

Your site rankings and traffic go up, up, up. More links and off-page criteria. More content and better rankings. Round and round it goes. And it does all this without manipulating the engines.

Instead of chasing the "SEO Holy Grail" and trying to mimic reality by constantly jiggling Search Engine algorithms, you simply build, build, build Content. That Content sets the whole **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M** process in motion.

SEO has always been short-sighted. It's a treadmill.

I know because I've been there, done that and sold over $1 million of software, as a solo entrepreneur, before e-commerce was even a proven viable concept. But I also got tired of playing the game.

I realized that the engines are not in hot pursuit of SEOers, good or bad. Yes, they do have to protect themselves against whatever the latest trick might be -- but the mid-term picture is that they will blow SEOers away simply because they get relentlessly better at recognizing reality.

Let me repeat that because it is such a key concept, and so many seem to miss this point. They fall into the trap of SEO'ing instead of building their business...

The engines continuously become more and more sophisticated. Their ultimate goal is simply to recognize reality (relevant and good sites) the way humans do (no easy task!). SEOers have to chase this increasing sophistication constantly. Instead...

SBIers leapfrog the algorithm-chasers and head straight to reality. Tens of thousands of small businesses use SBI! extremely effectively... far more effectively than most SEOers and more than any other small business.

They merely go about building their business through content. SBI!'s building, optimizing, background-automated, and special-function tools do all the rest.

If you follow the Site Build It! Action Guide (another piece of near-unanimous advice from the super-successful), if you use SBI!'s integrated tools to execute **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M**, if you persevere through and over the hump by building more and more Content and securing some inbound links, that "traffic trickle" will indeed start.

Each of those "ifs" is totally do-able. Each is within your power. And when that snowball starts growing magnificently, the build is indeed a wonderful feeling. Your confidence soars. Your motivation triples. But do not get over-confident...

Stay focused. Keep building content. You are well on your way to evergrowing-snowballing success! And you know it.

Of course, it is not just about traffic. Notice that the "T" is merely the second letter in **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M**.

While SBIers build traffic more effectively more than SEOers, we still haven't reached the real bottom-bottom line. Since their content also PREsells through the delivery of superb and relevant information, *SBIers build raving fans*.

Many SEOers overlook this all-important point. Even if they rank #1 for a certain keyword, what happens when that visitor arrives? She reads sub-par content that, at worst, is gibberish since it was built for an algorithm. At best, she receives material from a brochure that has been "SEO'd"...

No spark. No passion. No sale.

However, reality shines through. Your visitor recognizes it.

And that is where PREselling steps up to the plate and hits a homerun. SBIers build raving fans... PREsold visitors.

In other words, each SBIer builds...

A Brand of One

Unless you are Amazon and already have a brand, that is critical. It makes the final step, Monetization, so easy. And, at the end of the day, it is all about the final step of Monetization. And that is where SBI! excels...

The entire **C ➡ T ➡ P** process ultimately aims at the final step... **M.**

Unlike algorithm-chasers, who may generate some short-lived, non-PREsold traffic, SBIers' #1 goal is to OVERdeliver great Content that PREsells. The "M" of Monetization becomes the easiest part.

> Ever noticed the difference between a PGA pro golfer and your local amateur who thinks he's pretty good? The pros make it look so easy. It's not, but they have the proper technique... combine that with practice and the results are excellent.

The feeling of the self-building momentum? Of success? Of your business literally growing in front of your eyes? There is nothing like the feeling of empowered confidence, knowing that your business/professional life is improving beyond expectations.

The Internet is merely the world's most sophisticated, interconnected database. And, at the end of the day, it all boils down to bits and bytes, 0s and 1s.

SBIers consistently give the engines enough on-page criteria to handle relevance (the first half of reality). They have the two key tools (Analyze It! and Keyword Ranking Report) to provide the end-point of when enough is enough.

After that... humans see the interface and the words. They like what they see. So their behavior takes care of the off-page criteria.

Those off-page criteria are incredibly complicated. They will only get more so, but they are increasingly important to the engines to determine content quality (the second half of reality).

The rest is "just math." Incredibly complicated math, yes math for the "triple-thick-glasses and pocket-protector" crew.

But that's OK because we don't need to figure the math out. Let the SEOers play that game. They will only fall ever-farther behind.

C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M is "E-business Success. Simple. Real."...

Start the ever-building snowball careening downhill. Once you do that, Content and visitor reaction feed all off-page criteria (including inbound links), which feed more Traffic, which builds more off-page criteria, while you keep building more Content. All that great content PREsells visitors, delivering more off-page criteria and leading to Monetization...

C ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M**... round and round it goes.

It all starts, of course, with Content. As someone from a more recent century said...

<div align="center">

Nothing happens until something moves.
Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

</div>

Content starts things moving. Links give it an extra push.

With **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M**...

You focus on what counts. SEOers focus on endless parameters and detailed, time-sucking link programs.

You keep it real. SEOers mimic reality.

You keep it simple. SEO could not be more complicated.

"Keep it real. Provide what people want."

Yes, basic business rules hold true, even in this third millennium. When you think about it that way, doing business has not really changed, even on the Net.

Site Build It! merely illuminates the **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** process and provides all the tools to execute it, flawlessly.

The Tao of SBI! takes it the rest of the way. And as the engines get smarter, SBI! sites will widen the "results gap" into a chasm between themselves and SEOers (and all other small business sites)... naturally and powerfully.

Let's close this "big picture," introductory chapter by paraphrasing the words of Einstein and Lao-Tzu…

The Tao of SBI!

Content makes **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** move.
Keep it real. Keep it good.
Keep it simple. Make it happen.
You too can "win your world."

OK, speaking of making it happen, let's get busy...

2. Quality Inbound Links...
Why You Gotta Have 'Em!

Traffic is the lifeblood of your Web site, and your online business. Without it, you won't succeed. But here's the catch... there is no passerby traffic on the Net. You have to generate your own traffic to thrive and be profitable.

The best and cheapest way to do this is by pulling in targeted, free traffic from the Search Engines (SEs). Study after study confirms that Search Engines are the #1 way that people search for information on the Net. The easier your site is to find through SE search results, the more targeted visitors you attract.

So how do you make it easy for a surfer to find you? Build a quality, theme-based, content site that gets Top 10 ranking positions on the Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs) for related keywords (search terms your PREcustomers use). It works like this...

A theme-based content site has keyword-focused content pages that rank well with the Search Engines (SEs), attracting lots of targeted traffic. But just getting traffic is not enough...

The site's high-value content "warms up" (i.e., PREsells) visitors by OVERdelivering what they came for... information.

As visitors start to like and trust you (based on what you write about on your site), this credibility creates an open-to-buy or open-to-hire mindset. This, in turn, motivates visitors to click through to your income-generating source (i.e., how you monetize your traffic).

As discussed, it also causes them to deliver the off-page criteria that SEs use to "recognize reality."

In other words, to be visible on the Net, follow the **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** process and build a site that pleases both your visitors and the Search Engines.

Pleasing the Search Engines and your human visitors is why it's important for you to develop an effective linking strategy, sooner rather than later.

Links are one kind of off-page criteria, which measure human reaction to your Content. A link to your site is like a vote for it. You may receive a link from a small, related site or from a respected authority in your particular business field. They all provide a credentializing factor to your Web site, some more than others,

in the eyes of the SEs. These links tell a Search Engine... "Yes, this is a quality site, worthy of a place in your index."

The easiest way to demonstrate is with an example...

2.1. The Power Of Porcupines

Pretend that you are a Search Engine, just for a moment (but no longer than that, or your headache will be intense). How do you tell whether a page is relevant when a surfer enters "porcupine mating habits" as a search term?

Now that you are a Search Engine, you are obviously going to look for that term ("porcupine mating habits") on each Web page... you'll check places like the Title, headlines, links, body text, etc. You'll look for synonyms for "porcupine" (even scientific synonyms like "Erethizontidae") and related words (ex., "quills"). These are all called "on-page criteria."

On-page criteria are important for giving the engines a "handle" on your page.

On-page criteria used to be all that the first SEs checked. Now, though, this has been taken about as far as it can. I mean... there are just so many factors you can look for on a page. And hundreds of PhD Search Experts have come pretty close to exhausting those. Only one problem...

On-page criteria do not tell the engine one iota about whether the page is any good or not. It will take another decade before computing power and Artificial Intelligence reach the level where an engine can "look" at a page and know, just from the on-page content," whether it's any good. As I've mentioned, this is something that we humans can still boast over the machines!

So what would you, Mr./Ms. Search Engine do now?

Ah-ah! If you cannot be as intelligent as a human, why not track how they react to each page offered on each SERP? By peeking at what humans think, the engines can "pretend" to have the intelligence to determine how good a page was (as well as refining relevance).

That is exactly what is happening. More and more, the engines look to off-page criteria, but not to the exclusion of on-page. They need the on-page data for the "first-level-relevance-reality-check."

The off-page is an important overlay that enables the engines to determine both...

- a higher degree of relevance, and...

- how good (or bad) a page may be.

In other words, off-page criteria bring the engines a heck of a lot closer to "recognizing reality."

From here on in, this e-booklet focuses purely on one of the off-page criteria... links. There are many other important off-page criteria, but links...

- are easy enough to develop that they are worth the effort.

- help get you listed in engines that do not accept submissions due to the natural spider activity of link-following.

- help get that snowball up and over the hump, after which "the build builds" if you simply keep doing the right things... **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M**.

Regarding that hump that I mentioned in the last chapter...

For a site in its early stages, a couple of credentializing links may mean the difference between sticking permanently in a SE's database, and being dropped periodically. Engines sometimes drop sites that do not have any established link popularity.

Yes, you can get relisted, but you may lose weeks. So be proactive...

Get a couple of quality links as soon as you have twenty pages or more.

We will not talk about the ever-increasing complexity and diversity of off-page criteria any more in this booklet. But do remember that they are increasingly more important and ever more complex. They are also hardly discussed or understood. Suffice it to say that it will become harder and harder to manipulate those, leaving SEOers farther and farther behind.

Let's continue with our "porcupine mating habits" example...

2.2. I Have This Friend...

By the greatest of coincidences, I have a friend (it's always "a friend") that has a site that is all about porcupines. Furthermore, she has an excellent page in that site about the mating habits of porcupines... a prickly issue, I agree!

How would a Search Engine use linking to decide what's relevant and good? Good timing, because here comes someone who is typing "porcupine mating" into Google's search box...

Suppose that you, Ms. Google, find 20 pages about "porcupine mating." The on-page criteria help you figure out the relevance of each page, but that does not deliver any guarantee of the quality of the information.

Heavily SEO'd pages are usually pretty poor, actually. How many spammy results have you encountered in Top 10 positions for your search queries over the years?

So you proceed to analyze the off-page criteria.

SEs don't do it sequentially like this (on-page, then off). However, this explanation, while simplistic, holds up.

Inbound links are one of many off-page criteria. You look at the sites that link to my friend's site to more accurately determine relevancy and to get your first indications of quality. (Relevance + Quality = Reality, your #1 SE Mission).

Let's continue this example to understand how engines weight various inbound links...

How about if you (the engine) could see that more pages from all kinds of sites link to my friend's porcupine mating page (and/or the rest of her site)?

Everything else being equal, that would probably give the edge to my friend's page. After all, you might as well send the searcher to the more overall-popular page, right?

Of course. What about if many of those sites were from zoos? Better. After all, zoos are less likely to be related to reproducing cacti, for example, and are more likely to have something about the "Erethizontidae" family.

What if those sites were about porcupines? Even better! Now you're getting somewhere!

What if the single most important site in the whole world about porcupines linked to my friend's Web page? Wow, that's fantastic. And it would be even better if it linked from its home page. It would be the absolute best if that was the only link to another Web site from its home page!

What if 100 of the best porcupine sites all did the same, linking from their home pages? Whoops! Now that is the best.

And your friend's page about porcupine sex would get extra brownie points if many of those links came **into** this page from other pages about the, uh, reproductive habits of porcupines. More points, too, if "porcupine mating habits" is contained in the text of the incoming link, or near it.

Bottom line?

The more sites that link to a site, and the more important they are, and the closer they are to the theme of that site, even to the topic of individual pages, the more "popularity points" for that site (and page).

In general, "link popularity" refers to the number of in-pointing links to a site.

On the other hand, link reputation is more a measure of the value of a link. For example... Did that link come from a site that is credible (i.e., have plenty of in-pointing links)? Is that link from a site that contains content on a similar or related theme?

It's not the sheer number of links that matters, but the quality and the topic of the linking sites. Hundreds of links from off-topic, sub-par Web sites have relatively little value. A few credible links from related Web sites are worth way more.

2.3. It's Just Common Sense

The Search Engines have been giving more and more weight to inbound links...

They establish the credibility of the linked site. An in-pointing link from a quality, related site tells the Search Engines that another Webmaster thinks highly enough of your site to link to it. In other words, the link counts as a vote of confidence.

The more highly the Search Engines regard the site that provides the link, the more powerful that vote. In our porcupine example above, the fact that the single most important site in the whole world about porcupines provided a link tells the SEs... wow, this is a great site!

And if it came from the home page, the SE knows that is "valuable real estate."

If you reason it all through, it's just common-sense analysis of human behavior. The SEs are putting humans to work for them, using their judgment (something the SEs lack) to tell them what is relevant and good. That (along with a bunch of other off-page criteria) gets factored into the overall equation before the engine delivers its SERP for "porcupine mating habits."

The only links that matter to you are links from quality sites with themes related to your business. For example, having a link from the authority on porcupines is a good thing. However, having a link from an online gambling site is not. Best case scenario of off-target inbound links? The SE ignores the link altogether.

Moral of the story? Obtain quality links from quality sites with themes related to your business.

Contrary to what you may read elsewhere, link popularity/reputation is not the only weighting factor for rankings. It is likely not even the most important one.

The actual content on a page will always be important. I can't see how on-page criteria would ever become irrelevant to an engine.

So... do not obsess and lose days over building and monitoring link exchange programs. That's 20-80 behavior, instead of 80-20. Beyond a certain point, you get very little extra return. And, if you do it wrong (by following many of the "quick-and-easy" link exchange methods/software), you can seriously hurt yourself.

Most sites do not have many (if any) in-pointing links. If all sites had hundreds of incoming links, link popularity/relevance would be weighted more heavily by the engines. But most sites simply do not have that many incoming links -- if the engines weighted links too heavily, you would put 99+% of all Web sites at an insurmountable disadvantage.

What does this mean to you? Two things...

   i) Since not many sites have many incoming links, this is an opportunity for you to grab an edge. If you are close to the Top 10 for your keywords (say you're scoring #11-15 consistently), improving your link popularity might provide the extra oomph you need to tip you onto the first page of search results.

But then again, building more Content-Content-Content that PREsells will likely ultimately deliver ALL the off-page criteria that engines seek -- and the additional Content Pages give you more and more pages that could be found by the engines!

Special Tip: Always remember to ask your link partners to include your most important keywords in the actual link text of your in-pointing link. This will give your site added relevancy for those keywords.

For example…

Reviews of Fat Burners, Diet Supplements, and Weight Loss Programs!

And not like this...

Diet-for-health.com

See the difference? The first link provides his site with additional relevancy for the keywords "fat burners," "diet supplements," and "weight loss programs." The second link provides no boost.

   ii) Improving link popularity/reputation is more useful if you are trying to win for tough, general words like "e-commerce," "computers," or "sports cars." It's kind of like the golf pros on the PGA Tour. They are all so good, that the difference between them is razor-blade thin. Every little edge is important.

The problem, though, is that you may need thousands of inbound links to play in that league. Try this little experiment...

Go to Search It!...

http://searchit.sitesell.com/

Choose the Competition category in **STEP 1.** Next, choose Back Links to SITE (Yahoo! Search) in **STEP 2** (the Google option is better for finding links to specific pages)...

Take a look at the entire **STEP 2** drop-down menu for the Competition category. It provides unparalleled efficiency for assessing your competition in more ways than merely inbound links.

In **STEP 3,** enter the domain name of the site that ranks highly for competing porcupine-related keywords at the major engines (you can use Search It!'s Straight Up or Metasearch categories to find those sites.)

Then click on the Search It! button -- read the tutorial on "back links" (AKA inbound links or incoming links). And then click to see how many links go to that site.

Repeat for as many competing sites as you like. Here's what you will find...

A wide scatter.

In general, sites that score in the Top 10 for extremely popular keywords (i.e., high Demand) have more in-pointing links. It simply takes better off-page criteria to rank highly for the super-competitive keywords.

On the other hand, sites that rank well for more esoteric words usually have lower in-pointing link counts (especially to that particular page). You can often get a Top 10 for low-demand words purely on the strength of on-page criteria.

And one more observation... you will note that some pages with fewer links score higher than others with more links. More proof that inbound links are not "the all." Yes, sites with more inbound links deserve to be ranked higher (especially if those links come from important, relevant sites, etc.). But SEs are simply way too complicated to pay too much attention to any one criterion.

In general, it's not a good idea to compete for general keywords such as "travel." Leave that to Expedia! The key to success is building a tightly themed niche site. **Make Your Content PREsell!** explains how to find the perfect niche, position it well, and deliver it in your own unique voice that visitors find appealing.

2.4. The Bottom Lines

So let's cut to the conclusions...

1) Improved Search Engine rankings are certainly a strong reason to build some inbound links, and especially important in the early stages. Link popularity and reputation assist the best sites and pages to rise to the top.

However, it's not the be-all-and-end-all. If you take a step back to see the forest, you will realize that links are just one of we-can-only-guess-how-many other off-page criteria, and that on-page criteria are important, too. They do become more important for tougher keywords.

This e-booklet shows you the 80-20 way to get all the high-quality links you need, without going totally overboard like so many SEOers do (remember, you only have 24 hours in a day, and you have to sleep for at least 2 of them... so put your time into higher yield activities).

2) There is a second reason that inbound links are important...

Inbound links help you get found by the spider. There is no way to submit to some SEs. Their crawlers must find and rank you independently. Unless they happen to find you by following a link from a site already on their radar, it may be a long time before you make it into their respective indices. A single good link can do this. A few make it inevitable.

Furthermore, they credentialize your site, making it worthy of staying in the SE's index. A few to several are generally enough (if they are of decent quality -- perhaps a major or 2nd tier directory and a few theme-based hubs).

2.5. Link Exchange Caveats

So far, we've talked mostly about inbound links. Let's introduce the concept of outbound links and link exchanging...

You find a great resource. It would enhance the experience of your site's visitors. You approach its Webmaster, explaining the fit for both of you and ask if she would be interested in reciprocating your link with a link of her own. If she says yes, you've got your very first link exchange. Your visitors are enriched by her site, and her visitors are enriched by your site. Everyone is happy.

However, not all Web sites are open to exchanging links. If the site is truly of value and non-competitive, you may still want to provide the out-bound link. Your credibility will be enhanced, amongst your visitors and likely at the engines, too.

Non-reciprocal linking best reflects the "fundamental reality" of the Web. People are searching for quality information. While they have little impact on your rankings (compared to in-pointing links), your site should have a few out-pointing links. (More on this later.)

Many Webmasters are hesitant to link out because they feel they will lose their visitor forever. But linking to high-value sites builds your credibility, and demonstrates your commitment to your visitor's best interests. Your visitor appreciates this, and will return again... to your site, and to get your recommendations.

Special Tip: Always open out-going links in a new window. That way your site remains available underneath, and easy to access. When opening a new window, it is a good idea to indicate that the link "opens new window," perhaps by including "opens new window" small text at the end of a link. Otherwise, users of pop-up blockers may think the link does not "work" (when the blocker stops the new window from opening).

Believe it or not, there are lots of good reasons to open new browser windows -- just let your visitors know when you're doing it.

The problem with reciprocal linking is that most Webmasters use them as an artificial attempt to elevate link popularity. They are not focused on providing additional value for their visitors. Instead they hope to trick Google and the other SEs into believing their sites are authorities in their fields.

How often have you seen 50 or 100 links buried deep in a Web site somewhere? And I bet you've never checked out any of those links either. Chances are they were on a hodgepodge of topics, and of questionable quality. More and more, SEs see these pages for what they are, and discount them immediately.

There's nothing wrong with providing your visitors with a list of 5-10 of the best authorities on related topics. And there's certainly nothing wrong with referencing a related Web authority within the course of a discussion on any Web page, with or without reciprocity.

But if you exchange links with a 100 mediocre quality sites, and host those links deep in the uncharted chasms of your site, you're virtually telling the SEs...

"These are not real links -- they are not intended to improve my visitors' experience. (How could they be, buried back there?) I'm just trying to fool you."

And what do you think the SEs do when they come to that conclusion? As usual, the best way to approach things is to think like an SE.

Would an SE take issue with you linking to a related, quality resource to enhance the experience of your visitors? Of course not -- after all, that's the very essence of the Web.

And will the SE take issue with a Webmaster linking back to you because your site provides value to her visitors? Again, of course not.

Start bending the rules though, and the SEs will be whistling a very different tune. "It's not nice to fool Mother Nature... or Search Engines."

Building a "cost-effective" link exchange can be a prickly business for certain types of sites. No, I promise that we're done with that porcupine analogy!

For instance, if you have a pure sales site, consider several downsides of providing outgoing links in exchange for inbound links...

• you lose customers with outgoing links

• links detract from your sales message

• the customer is distracted by too many options.

In this case, focus more on acquiring in-pointing links with perhaps only one or two extremely high-value exchanges. The exchanges should be well-selected, non-competitive and well-placed (away from your primary sales page that monetizes your #1 service, for example).

Don't discount a link program. But tailor it to focus on landing mostly inbound links, with one or two smart and valuable exchanges.

Take-home lesson about reciprocal links?

Exchange links only with high quality, relevant sites. Do so for your visitor's sake, and to demonstrate your best intentions for her well-being. If you receive a reciprocal link request from a site that is off topic or of low quality, decline politely. You'll damage your credibility and that of your business by linking to an inferior site.

You have to be very careful when selecting your outbound link partners. It's highly unlikely that your site's standings will be damaged by inferior quality sites that link to you -- after all, you have no control over this.

But if you reciprocate with a link to a lousy site, you are telling the SEs that you are putting your own stamp of approval on that site. If that site happens to be a member of a "link farm" or some other spammy means to artificially elevate link popularity, you will be penalized. So never, ever, ever link to sites employing spammy techniques.

When evaluating outbound links, check...

i) Google PR

ii) [Alexa Ranking](#)

iii) your own personal evaluation of the quality and nature of the content.

Webmasters put too much emphasis on the first two. The third puts your visitor first -- and if it's a genuinely superb site, its PR and Alexa score will move up. And you'll have a friend who remembers that you gave a link before she was famous.

From theory to action, let's keep rolling along...

3. The BEST Ways To Build INcoming Links NOW

As we've just seen, securing inbound links and exchanging links with other sites increase traffic in two ways...

1) increase link popularity/reputation at the Search Engines -- this results in higher rankings at the Search Engines for relevant keywords

2) get spidered and listed at engines that do not accept submissions -- obviously, a huge plus.

These are the big two reasons for building a link program. The third (the original) reason was to actually get and send traffic to and from related sites. When one site provides a link to another, it provides a service to its visitors. This vote of confidence sends traffic to the receiving site. Remember this basic but overlooked original reason, because THAT is actually the reason the engines WANT behind each link.

They try to see through shams... and like all other tricks, they relentlessly get better at finding them and eliminating sites that use them.

So... keep it real.

Nowadays, the #1 and #2 above are the bigger advantages of building an inbound links (AKA "back links") program. A properly developed link program will deliver far more traffic due to its impact upon the engines than the actual links themselves. But remember... **keep it real and you will never have problems.**

The best (and the simplest) way to build your site's link popularity is to get IN-coming links without exchanging OUT-going links. How? By listing in...

1) second tier and major directories

2) themed directories and specialty hubs.

These two action steps are the best "bang for the buck" as far as building a simple inbound link program to improve your link popularity/reputation. Getting listed will take a bit of time and perhaps a few dollars, but all three of the above are well worth the effort (especially the latter two).

Other methods of building links (publishing an RSS feed and/or blog, syndicating your content to article directories, setting up an affiliate program, Content 2.0, etc.) are worthwhile, but should only be investigated after you've finished the first steps. (See DAY 7 of the Action Guide.)

READY-SET-GO?

Start this process after you have built 20-30 high-quality content pages. Why 20-30 quality pages? Here's why...

1) Your site is unlikely to attract quality links from other Webmasters until it becomes a viable information resource. You won't be able to accomplish this without sufficient content material on your site.

2) Getting a directory listing depends upon the reviewing editor. Yes, your site will be reviewed by a real human who knows something about your subject matter. She has to decide that your site contributes something of merit to the directory. If your site is unfinished, or if content is sparse or low-value, it's unlikely that you will get a thumbs up from the reviewing editor.

3) Focusing solely on link popularity to drive traffic is the wrong side of the 80-20 coin. High-value, visitor-focused content is ultimately what attracts targeted traffic and keeps them on your site. Yup... **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M**.

Think of that snowball analogy. An inbound link program starts that snowball rolling. But it's Content-Content-Content that will feed the positive feedback loop of human behavior that drives ALL the off-page criteria, which ultimately helps you even more at the engines, which together with even more Content, just keeps bringing more visitors.

OK, onwards and upwards...

3.1. The Major Directories

Let's start by looking at the Major Directories. I hate to be negative, but the major directories are doomed. They have been since the Internet hit meteoric growth. There is simply no way humans can keep up with the ever-improving, automated spiders and computer power to give good search results. Second tier and themed directories give better value.

Directory Submit (Yahoo!)
http://help.yahoo.com/l/us/yahoo/ysm/ds/index.html

The Yahoo! directory's value has diminished in terms of driving traffic. Still, a link from Yahoo! is still considered to be one of the best you can get. And that is probably because a listing in Yahoo! is expensive -- $299/year. That fee alone qualifies you as a pretty serious small business person. But even so, the fee does not guarantee inclusion. It still has to "make the editor's grade."

For most small businesses who should be working the niches, a Yahoo! listing is probably not necessary. You will establish enough quality links as described further below in the booklet.

However, if your business can easily afford it, it is still worth investigating. It is one of the fastest ways to build link popularity -- it is reviewed within 7 days. So it can be a good investment for brand new sites, with big plans that can justify such an expense.

The Open Directory Project
http://www.dmoz.org/add.html

The Open Directory allows Webmasters to submit their sites for free.

Yippee! Wait, you know there's a downside, right?   Yup... time. This directory is maintained by a team of volunteer editors. They are horribly back-logged with submissions. It can take anywhere from 3-6 months for your site to get listed.

So while you're waiting for your Web site to be added, develop more link popularity. After all, you need links now. Keep moving!

The optimal actions? Build your 20-30 high-value pages. Do not monetize during those early month(s). You're not losing much -- traffic is still building and you can "capture" those who enjoy your content through your free e-zine, right?

Keep building content. A month or so after you are accepted, start your Monetization program. Very effective, if you have the time and patience.

3.2. The Second Tier Directories –   Good Return On Investment

Second tier directories are not quite on par with the majors. That shouldn't deter you, though.

Remember, you're not after the traffic from those directories. You want the link.

Advantages?

• Entry is easier.

• They are also relatively cheap, usually around $30 for a guaranteed 48 hour review!

• You can generally get a good link in a relevant category, at a higher level than you would in a major. (For the most part, links closer to the top level directory are worth more -- i.e., a listing in Shopping > Clothes is worth more than one in Shopping > Clothes > Women's Clothes.)

• Your listing is not diluted by a million other links in the same category, making it more valuable to a Search Engine (the more links on a page, the less value is bestowed to each link).

Strongest Links (http://www.strongestlinks.com/directories.php) is a list of directories that you can sort by name, Google PR, Alexa ranking, whether they have free submissions, and the cost of paid submissions. Click on the link at the top of each column to sort the list. When you're done with that list, scroll to the bottom of the page and click on the link to the geographic and niche directories.

InfoVileSilencer (http://info.vilesilencer.com/) is another site with a list of directories (many are not included in Strongest Links).

Aviva's Strongest Directories (http://www.avivadirectory.com/strongest-directories/) list uses Page Strength to sort directories. It also indicates which are authority directories, the ones that will give you a bigger boost with the SEs.

Web Directories (http://www.web-directories.ws/sitemap.phph) as a comprehensive list of niche directories, sorted by category, then by Google PageRank.

Remember... the real value of a listing in one of these services is an in-pointing link. While a listing will bring some visitors, don't list with traffic in mind. More than likely, you'll be disappointed.

3.3. Find Themed Directories & Niche Hubs... More Good ROI

List with directories that are specific to your area of interest. These are themed directories and niche hubs that offer listings for little or no money. This is powerful because the incoming links are highly specific to your topic, and come from a resource that the engines regard highly... extra points for that!

Some specific hubs may request a return link from your Web site. Don't feel obligated to do so. After all, it is the directories' business to list sites. It is not your business to list directories. As always... give an outgoing link only if you feel it provides real value to your audience.

One resource provides every search you will ever need to find topical directories and niche hub sites. Here's how to find themed directories, databases and niche hub sites…

Search It!
http://searchit.sitesell.com/

Start mining for directory gems. You will be amazed at what you dig up.

STEP 1: Select Search Category drop-down menu -- click and select Specialty Hubs and Directories.

Step 2: Select Search Type drop-down menu, click and select one of the options, like this...

You are on your way to establishing your site's link popularity! Well, OK, you still have the work of verifying (the tutorial explains more about that) and listing with the best, most relevant directories and hub sites.

But hey, I have to leave you with something to do, right?

OK, forward ho! Let's talk about exchanging. No, not "link exchanging"... VALUE exchanging...

That is what the engines want.

3.4. Do Not Link Exchange... Value Exchange!

Link-exchanging has become a bad term, implying all the wrong things. So let's redefine it now -- let's call it "value-exchange"...

You and another excellent content site each agree to provide a high-value link to your respective visitors.

With that as the basis of your thinking, here's the key point...

Most of your inbound linking program should be one-way-inbound-only links, as explained above. The rest of this section is mostly about value-exchanging. It finishes with a short discussion about one-way-outbound-only links (i.e., without a reciprocal inbound link).

Value-exchanging doesn't necessarily make good sense for all businesses -- certainly not for pure sales sites or e-commerce stores. But it should fit into the plans for your theme-based content site, provided you do it properly.

What do I mean by "properly"?

Reciprocate links to enhance the experience of your visitor. That's the key reason for exchanging value.

Otherwise, you are merely engaging links. That boils down to an attempt to artificially raise your link popularity. Perhaps even more damaging is the beating your credibility will take if you link to low-quality, spammy sites.

Bottom line?

Keep it real. Do not do it "for" the engines. Do it for your visitors.

The beauty of that approach is that in the long run, you will also gain at the engines. You never have to lose sleep, worrying about incurring a ranking penalty. Respect the SEs, build your site for your visitors and you'll sleep like a baby!

Final point of importance...

You cannot control who links to you. So you are not held "accountable" for inbound links (barring some truly outrageous behavior).

But you do totally control to whom you link! And you are held totally accountable by the engines for that activity. What are the engines looking for?

You already know the answer but it's worth repeating here... **outgoing links to quality sites of similar and related topics!** Reality!

So link to a quality resource, one that is related to your content. The site does not have to be a Google PR 6/Alexa Top 100,000. But, in your human judgment, you must truly feel that it is an outstanding, related resource. If so...

Link to it with pride as a service to your visitors. "Keeping it real" is not about burying a page, with 100 links on it, somewhere deep in your site, 18 clicks from your home page.

Seriously... if you currently have a page of 100 links, buried deep, re-evaluate the practice. Not only are you in danger of being penalized, but the links you have attained as a result of this practice (likely hosted on your partner's own 100 link page) are almost worthless.

Suppose you do find such a great site, one so good that you want to link to it as a service to your visitors. Sure, it would be wonderful if you received a link in return. But if it doesn't work out, it's not a bad idea to have a couple/few one-way-outbound-only links. (More on this below.)

As you'll see, establishing a good value-exchange program takes time and effort. You have to...

• Locate quality related resources that do not directly compete with your business.

• Contact them.

• Negotiate the exchange, extolling the virtues of your site and the exchange for your visitor.

• Monitor the exchange.

 Phew! It makes me tired, just thinking of it all. Luckily, I have a few solid ideas to accelerate the process. First, though, let's understand the manual process more thoroughly. I don't recommend the "manual process" -- but it will help you understand some of the other types of processes and tips that follow.

3.4.1. Finding Link Partners 100
The Manual Process

Here's the manual process. It takes time. Too much time (wrong side of the 80-20 coin)...

STEP 1) Find sites you want to exchange with, if they agree. This involves quite a bit of research at the engines.

STEP 2) Check the Google PR, and the Alexa score. Your next step is the important one -- STEP 2 is just a quick screen.

STEP 3) Visit each site yourself to make sure it delivers. Does the site deliver excellent, non-competitive content? Is it relevant? If so, great!...

Quality + Relevant = Reality!

All things being equal (i.e., great content), go for highly regarded inbound links (high Google PR/Alexa ranking). However...

A great site with a low Google PR and Alexa score can be a good value-exchange. Its "scores" will improve if it really is that good. And its owner will be more open to exchanging.

Your call!

If the site's content is of value to your visitors, while being non-competitive, proceed.

STEP 4) Find the right contact person. Is it on the site? Whois? Ugh. More searching.

STEP 5) Send a great e-mail. Discuss why you do not want to "link"-exchange, but that you do want to "value"-exchange! Customize each letter. This is the part that is the most time-intensive. Most recipients are not expecting this request -- many will think you are spamming them!

STEP 6) If the site is nicely done, relevant and would not compete with your business, and if the owner responds positively, complete your link-exchanging arrangements.

> **Important Note:** If the site is of poor quality (i.e., low value content, lots of banners and flashing buttons, etc.), do NOT link to it, even if some "link exchange service" promises you all the riches in the universe. You will get hurt.
>
> I can't stress this enough -- avoid link farms or pages that have tons of links scattered willy-nilly all over them. No one will ever see the link to you, and engines penalize those pages.

Remember... you have no control over who links to you. So poor links-in are unlikely to hurt you (perhaps with the exception of certain extreme misbehavior). But if you make bad link-out choices, you will pay for those mistakes. (More on this later.)

By now, you are saying, "What a pain in the..."

You're right and I'm only now coming to the worst step...

STEP 7) Monitor the inbound links from your exchange partner. Unfortunately, not everyone is as honest as you are. And that brings me to...

3.4.2. Finding Link Partners 101
Top 10 "Fraud-Exchange" Tricks

Now, where was I? Oh yes... not everyone is as honest as you are. Here are the top 10 tricks…

#1... A month (or two) after you complete an exchange, some Webmasters will take down your link without telling you. That's the easiest trick to detect.

#2) Make links page inaccessible via a clickpath from home page, or even via any page -- an "orphan" link page is BADLY regarded by Search Engines.

#3) Bury the link-bearing page ten clicks deep. Almost as bad as #2.

#4) "You link to me first and I will link back." There's only one problem. She never links back.

#5) Too many outgoing links start cropping up on what becomes a "links page."

A good partner is interested in reality... one or two context-sensitive links within relevant Content on a content page. And, if you find the right partner, you may not have any such problems. If you happen to hit the wrong person, if the sheep changes into a wolf...

Unless you are running automated link-checking software (ex., such as the advanced features of Value Exchange available only to SBI! owners), you have to check for this kind of nonsense. Even worse, you have to watch out for the following, which are truly nasty...

#6) Link partner sabotages the link-bearing page by adding a <META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="index, nofollow"> tag to it, or via robots.txt to achieve the same.

#7) Link partner runs the link through a redirect on his own page before sending it to you.

#8) Link partner gives fake links to you (ex., css-styled).

#9) Link partner frames the link-bearing page (which is a low Google PR, even a free geocities page) within a high-ranking site. You don't get the benefit.

Those last four are truly ugly, graduating from sleaze to thief. If you choose good partners, they are really unlikely. But the first five tricks? Watch out. And finally...

#10) You submit an "add link" form -- only then do you find there is a hidden cost. This is more of a "gotcha" on a niche hub or themed directory. You can always leave if a link was only worth the few seconds it took to hit "submit." Think twice about anyone who would use such a trick. Charges should be upfront -- that shows how they do business.

> By the way, the advanced features of SBIers' Value Exchange does more than just check for the Top 5. It also checks for the META NOFOLLOW (it even checks for the "nofollow" attribute that can be added to links and that accomplishes the same result within links). Heck, Value Exchange goes so far as to look for "invisibility tricks" that are not even listed above...
>
> • Link is "commented" out, making it invisible.
>
> • Link text is in same color as the page's background color, making it invisible.
>
> • Link is inside a NOFRAMES tag, making it invisible.

No doubt about it... the manual process is simply not worth the effort. Remember, this is just to build a few links from regular Web sites to augment your inbound-only link program.

Luckily, there are tools to automate the process. SiteSell's Value Exchange is the best way to make the exercise worth the time. It cuts down the tedious, time-sucking aspect AND keeps it real! You don't "do it for the engines" -- you do it because it makes your site stronger, of greater value to your users. All you do is tailor it to keep your second "audience" (the SE spider) happy, too.

Value Exchange is simply the best, safest, real, low-maintenance and effective value-exchange program on the Net. All you have to do is sign up. There is no registration fee.

After all this, you still want to do things manually? OK, let me give you a couple of tips/shortcuts...

3.4.3. Finding Link Partner 202
Use Search It!

Let's do quick review of your best 80-20 way to proceed so far...

1) Keep on creating high-value content on your site.

2) Obtain a few quality links from directories (major and/or second tier) and themed directories and hub sites.

3) Build the C-C-C-C-C of **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M**.

4) Trust the "Tao of SBI!" -- off-page criteria will carry your mastery of basic on-page criteria (as long as you deliver solid content that causes visitors to react).

The last two steps are...

5) Sign up for SiteSell's free Value Exchange -- you'll receive high-quality, new matches on a regular basis.

And do not devote much time to manually surfing/searching for the ultimate value-exchange partners (great traffic, similar theme, non-competing). The response rate to friendly individualized e-mails requesting a "link exchange" is almost zero. It's not worthwhile -- unless you schmooze better than I do!

6) After that, simply keep an eye open for suitable link partners as you go about your regular work on the Web. Don't spend time searching for a great site, but when you happen to come across one, don't ignore it.

Honestly, if you follow the strict manual process (Finding Link Partners 101), you're wasting your time. But I can show you how to increase your chances.

However, a small caveat before we continue...

I don't actually recommend this as a great time investment for the return on your efforts. You'll get much bigger yields by investing time in creating Content-Content-Content -- that builds all your off-page criteria, powerfully and naturally.

If you should decide to do the manual route, what's the best way to do this? Use the Search It! tool's **Back Links Search Category (STEP 1)**. Check your own popularity with the major engines for free...

Use it to check the link popularity of sites that you regard as close competitors. Pay special attention to who is linking to them. You'll find...

• The fruits of interesting directories or other inbound links that you may have missed! Wow, grab these, too!

• Other sites that, since they've linked to this site, are open to linking out and might be interested in linking to you!

Ah... now that reduces all the work of writing 1,000 letters, receiving 200 spam complaints and maybe one reply of interest... from the least attractive of the 1,000!

Divide those other sites into...

1) Business competitors (no opportunity here, but do not eliminate just yet!).

2) Businesses complementary to your business.

3) Hobby sites (only consider those that are extremely rich in content and well done).

Got your list? Great! To prune your list down further, install Google's toolbar to verify the PageRank of the sites in your list.

You can also use Alexa to eliminate sites that get near-zero traffic. And you can use the Related Sites function of Alexa to find sites that are related to your competitors. You might even be there!

A word of caution...

Be flexible, and wise, with both of these tools. The purpose behind exchanging links is not to manipulate the engines. Of course, you would prefer that your inbound links be from higher Google PR and Alexa ranked pages. But it's more critical that they be great sites. As for linking out... the "great site" part is ten times more important! (I can't repeat this enough.)

Most newly minted sites have yet to build link popularity -- that's the nature of the game. So don't discount high quality sites that have yet to establish themselves, especially if they provide a valuable resource. Spot those young diamonds in the rough.

Remember reality -- add value to your visitor's experience and obtain a quality link. If you get some traffic from an exchange, consider it a nice bonus. But the big bonus, in the long run, is combining this with **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** to get that ever-rolling snowball growing out of control!

OK. All that's left now is to visit the sites on your tightened list and decide which ones warrant a link trade (i.e., provide great content, are non-competitive and fit your visitors' needs). Once you've compiled this list...

Draft a nice form letter for each site owner. Introduce yourself and your site. Add a personalized compliment about each site. Mention that their visitors would be interested in the content on your site, and vice-versa. Don't forget to mention the "plus" feature of a high-value-exchange such as the one you propose.

The presence of your Specific Keywords in both your links out, and your links in, gives you a slight boost in rankings. So when you send a request for a link, I suggest that you include your site description, perhaps even the HTML, so the Webmaster can simply copy-and-paste. This way, you'll get the text link the way you want it -- with the keywords in it!

Special Tip: Place a link to your possible link partner's site on your own site before you e-mail her with the proposition. Send her the URL so that she can see for herself. Then include the URL of your own site, and a brief description. Then all the Webmaster has to do is cut and paste it into the links page.

Remember, Webmasters will be looking for links that add value to their own sites, rather than those that just benefit your business. But generally, most are not actively looking for links. So I'm not promising any results with this approach, just trying to save you time from the "totally manual" approach.

Bottom line...

Do not waste time manually building a value-exchange program. Seriously. Make your short list of sites (if you must) and send a few e-mails. I think you'll find it very low yield. I really hate to be a party-pooper, but that's "the reality."

And that brings me to a far better, rewarding, real, and time-effective way to exchange value...

3.4.4. Finding Link Partners 303
Value Exchanging!

Why is Value Exchanging "the best"? Simple... It's real.

Yes, that brings us back to the topic of recognizing reality. In the same way that the engines' #1 goal is to recognize reality for search results (i.e., relevance and quality), so it is with links. The reasoning is the same...

Many SEOers, whether good or bad, basically try to manipulate rankings by "chasing the link algorithm." That is why you see so many SEOers obsess about PR. The engines don't like being manipulated -- it degrades the quality of the results they deliver.

Instead, Value Exchange focuses on keeping it real. No game-playing. It just delivers what you need and what the engines love... truth.

> Why are free (non-SBI!) users raving about the SiteSell Value Exchange? Many reasons...
>
> • Webmasters must sign up for the program in order to receive leads and to become a lead for matching sites. This means your potential linking partners are highly qualified and receptive to link exchanging... not parasites.
>
> • Advanced database-matching pairs your site up with other sites that have matching keywords. This ensures only highly targeted, relevant matches are generated.
>
> • The entire process of generating prospective partners and sending out that "first contact" e-mail is automated. This frees up your time to do other more important things... like building your business!
>
> • Oh yes, most importantly... it works! The Value Exchange generates credible matches so that you only contact other sites (with similar themes) who have specifically expressed an interest in exchanging links with you. Result? Pre-qualified valuable link requests from quality, like-themed sites -- the real way.

So before we continue any further, take a minute to sign up for Value Exchange and then come back here. Don't worry, I'll wait.

http://value-exchange.sitesell.com/

Treat your link partner the way you would like to be treated.

Sound simple? Yes, it is. Build a long-term link program. Business is not about tricks, WIN-LOSE deals, and dishonesty. It's about action, persistence, patience, honesty, faith and hard work. So...

Do not bury your partner's link on an over-populated link page. Why would anyone do that with something they are proud to display?

In order for a value-exchange to be effective, link to your partner's site from a page that contains no more than 5 out-pointing links in total. Generally, the fewer out-pointing links a page contains, and the closer the link-bearing page is to your home page, the more value the link provides to your partners. So a link from a page containing 50 out-pointing links, 10 clicks away from home, is worthless.

And that brings me to the extreme no-no...

Never ever "orphan" a link on a gateway page that cannot be linked to from your home page. SEs look badly upon pages like that. Pretty obvious, if you stop to think about it. But I guess a lot of people don't stop to think about it.

Finally, while value-exchanging... do not do any of those nasty WIN-LOSE "Top 10" tricks (mentioned earlier) that the morally bankrupt do. They won't last. Nor will you.

3.4.5. Other Options?...
Avoid At All Costs

The Net is a funny place to do to business, partly because it's an immature medium. So you will read a lot of bad advice. You will come across a lot of bad products, some of which will actually hurt you or even get you banned.

Their language can be so persuasive and misleading that, before you know it, you've linked to a "link farm" or joined an FFA (Free-For-All linking sites). And bingo... the engines hate that. You're penalized -- zero "engine credibility."

This booklet cannot cover all the ridiculous advice you could ever read. We've shed light on the good, delivered the optimal 80-20 process within the larger "big picture," and now we are trying to keep you out of the clutches of the vultures and the just plain dumb. But first, a key tip...

The most successful SBI! owners focus 100% on SBI! and go about their business. They tortoise ahead, relentlessly going towards success. I can't give you better advice -- do not allow yourself to get distracted. Follow the advice in

this book, ignore all else, and you will do fine. That is the surest way to stay out of trouble.

However, just in case you are exposed to other new ideas or "proven winners" or other irresistible ideas about link exchanging, please remember...

Evaluate the information from the common sense WIN-WIN-WIN philosophy outlined in this booklet. It will stand you in good stead when evaluating link "strategies" (that term itself implies the manipulation of engines). Remember, if you make a mistake, you can seriously hurt your reputation at the engines.

So how do you evaluate the slew of ideas, advice, get-traffic-quick schemes?

Use the **reality principle** to decide if it makes sense. Combine that with **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** and the understanding of how a good inbound link program starts the snowball rolling. After that, Content (and more Content) builds all the off-page criteria powerfully and for the long-term.

So where do you think the long-term money is?

Right... **Content.**

With those concepts arming us, let's evaluate a variety of linking strategies and options...

Q: What about those link popularity enhancement programs?

A: These services artificially boost your popularity by having all the participants in the service linking to one another. In exchange for your participation (service is usually free), you must maintain a link on your site, as well as upload a new batch of pages to your link directory each month. If you don't, you're dropped from the program.

Most of the original ones have disappeared because these services are now seen for what they are -- Search Engine spam, AKA link farms. Remember... anything designed purely to beat an algorithm, and that is free, and that is so easy to do, will soon be blasted out of the waters by the engines. Why? Because they violate the "Golden Rule"...

Do not manipulate the SE results for your own benefit.

I'll widen the definition of the term, "link farms," to mean any automated process that is designed to generate tons of links on the "I'll link to yours if you link to mine" basis. They're big, fast, easy... and the engines hate them.

Naturally, the engines know how to identify them. And if you link to a site through any kind of proposition like this, you'll hurt yourself.

And guess what? If you read the clever copy of these "services," the newer, more subtle ones don't call themselves "link farms"!

Avoid them like the plague.

Bottom line -- keep it real. Just do what you would normally do. Get good links in, ones that make sense for your site.

Q: What about the interlink-your-site strategy?

A: Let's say that you read advice to interlink your sites (assuming that you have more than one). OK, you have three sites. Should you interlink them? Think about the answer, using the reality principle...

What would you normally do? Let's say that you have three sites...

• one on the Caribbean island of Anguilla

• one on tortoise-breeding

• one about online marketing.

These have no business linking to each other. At best, the engines will ignore the links. At worst, they'll be able to "whois" the fact that all the sites belong to the same person, for example. Uh-oh.

On the other hand, if all three sites are about different aspects of Anguilla, and you want to link for natural reasons, you won't get hurt. Overdo it, thinking somehow that it confers magical linking power, and you'll be disappointed... possibly hurt. Simply good links in, ones that make sense for your site.

Q: Should you hire one of the many link management services?

A: If your business can justify the cost, it is possible to completely outsource the creation and management of your link-building program. While this option offers an appealing solution to the drudgery of link-building, inbound links are just one of many off-page criteria. You can't outsource them all, nor do you need to.

And you are the one who is best suited for this job. You are the best judge of quality in your industry. Since you know your business inside and out, only you

can tell whether a related site really knows its stuff or not. And only you know whether or not a related business is a competitor.

While a reputable link-building firm can save you time, you will need to double-check all work. Realistically, most small businesses do not need to go to such extremes.

Bottom line -- 80-20 says such services are unnecessary/too expensive.

Q: Should you buy in-pointing text links (AKA "text link ads")?

A: I'm sorry to say that for a regular monthly fee you can have a link to your site placed on a related site. These links are usually priced according to the PageRank and Alexa score of the hosting Web site.

Before you go running to the bank, let's discuss the downsides associated with this practice...

1) Text Links are very expensive. 2nd tier directories will provide you with a lifetime link for less than the monthly cost associated with a link from a PR4-5.

2) How do you think the engines would react to this? At best, they'll consider it advertising and ignore it. But would it surprise you if I told you that Google is blocking the PR value of sites that actively sell links for the purpose of artificially inflating link popularity? It shouldn't be a surprise.

My recommendation? Keep it real. Avoid. There are not strategies -- just do what you would normally do. Get good links in, ones that make sense for your site.

3.5. An OUTgoing Link Program? Carefully... AND Selectively

Throughout Make Your Links WORK!, I sprinkled advice about outgoing or outbound links. This sub-chapter summarizes all the reasons why you would want to link out of your site.

Let's take it from the top...

Reason #1) High-value OUTbound links provide value to your visitors. Visitors appreciate being presented with quality, credible links to related material that further enhances their surfing experience. Be highly selective.

Reason #2) Linkage counts both ways with the engines, INcoming and OUTgoing.

Reason #3) Links OUT count with the human editors of directories, too.

Bottom line? If they (visitors, editors, SE spiders) see you provide bona fide links to other quality sites, your site is more credible. It's a more valuable resource. So don't make all OUTgoing links purely monetary affiliate links.

Please don't ignore this. You only need a couple of high-value OUTbound links to establish that extra bit of credibility. Include your keywords in the link text, too (just like in-pointing links).

Key Reminder… Nothing is more damaging than linking to a bad Web site.

Always keep in mind that a link out puts your seal of approval on the receiving Web site. Should that site be of low quality, visitors will question your judgment. Should it be a link farm or otherwise involved with some strategy that is rightfully in the engines' bad books, you suffer.

The finish line is just ahead. It's time for the wrap-up...

4. Single Best Course Of Action

Build a super-high-quality niche site.

By far, the easiest long-term strategy for building link popularity is a passive one. The absolute best way to garner links is by building a site of such high quality that people want to link to it, in order to increase the value of their own visitor's experience. What could be easier? Your link popularity builds itself!

The Tao of SBI! guarantees it. All you need to do to succeed?

Start the ever-building snowball careening downhill. Once you do that, Content and visitor reaction feed all off-page criteria (including inbound links), which feed more Traffic, which builds more off-page criteria, while you keep building more Content. All that great content PREsells visitors, delivering more off-page criteria and leading to Monetization...

C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M

And round and round it goes, while you focus on what counts (instead of the minutiae of SEO or endless hours on "link-exchanging").

And how do you start that snowball rolling? By building a simple inbound link program, sprinkled with a few high-quality value exchanges (be patient) and even a couple of super-high-quality outbound-only links. Specifically...

#1) Get IN-coming links from theme-specific sections of the major directories and 2nd tier directories.

#2) Get IN-coming links from themed directories and hub sites.

#3) Participate in SiteSell's Value Exchange, the most REAL way to identify high-value sites which want to link to your site.

If you haven't done so yet, please sign up now. The search for quality sites that match your theme automatically kicks into gear.

#4) OUTbound-link with high-quality theme-related, non-competing sites as you happen to discover them in the course of normal business or surfing -- exchange links with them, if possible.

And if you have several similar theme-related sites, cross-link them only if/when there is a perfectly natural, normal reason to do so.

Remember that in-coming and out-going links are both important. In general, of course, you want to have far more inbound than outgoing links. But a few, sheer "value links" (above and beyond any affiliate links) qualify you in so many ways.

I'll repeat the same advice that was given earlier... Code your HTML so that you open a new window with these links and keep your site present underneath.

Bottom line on link popularity?

For small businesses working the niches, a few credentializing links from recognized resources and good sites (#1-4, just above) are all you need to start the **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** snowball. They increase your relevance for related keywords. They help keep your young, growing site from being dropped from the various Search Engine indices. And they get you into the no-submission engines.

Past that, "conscious hours of link-exchanging effort" rapidly run into the law of diminishing returns. Create Content instead. Great Content.

The Tao of SBI! takes care of the rest.

Make Your Links WORK!