

Learning SEO From The Experts: A Step-By-Step Guide



www.HubSpot.com or [@HubSpot](https://twitter.com/HubSpot)
www.Grader.com or [@Grader](https://twitter.com/Grader)

SEO in 2010 and Beyond



Ranking Algorithm:
 $f(n)$: Context + Authority
+ Social Graph

[Learn More Tips in our Free SEO Kit: 5 Steps to Improve Your Website](#)

This Kit Includes 3 Videos, PowerPoint Slides and an eBook to help you attract more website visitors from search engines and convert more of them into paying customers.

[Download the Free Kit Online >>](#)

Foreword

Search engines have become a core resource for individuals looking for businesses. Search engines are a larger source of business referrals than the Yellow Pages. Businesses no longer need to spend thousands of dollars on advertising in directories and magazines. Every business with a website has the potential to get found by more customers online. The way to do this is through **search engine optimization (SEO)**. This ebook serves as a practical, comprehensive guide to improve your SEO.

By reading this ebook, you will gain a stronger understanding of all aspects in the SEO process. SEO tactics include identifying keyword opportunities, acting on those opportunities, and continuing to improve your results over time.

This ebook features contributions from top SEO experts. It is also designed for a diverse audience. Whether you're just getting started with SEO or have been at it for years, this ebook is sure to provide some practical tips on how to improve!

This ebook will help you take actionable steps to attract more high quality traffic from search engines. We encourage you to apply these strategies to your own company website, and share them with other website owners.

Contents

I. Identifying Keyword Opportunities

by Jeff Quipp of Search Engine People Inc.....Page 4

II. Mastering On-Page SEO

by Aaron Wall of SEO Book..... Page 8

III. Link Building Strategies

by Rob Ousbey of Distilled.....Page 13

IV. Tips for Ongoing SEO Improvement

By HubSpot.....Page 19

V. Additional Information and Resources

By HubSpot.....Page 21

I. Identifying Keyword Opportunities

Contributor: [Jeff Quipp](#) of [Search Engine People Inc.](#)



Jeff Quipp is the founder and CEO of Search Engine People Inc. (SEP), Canada's largest search and social media marketing agency. In 2009, Jeff was recognized as being one of the 20 Most Influential Marketers by Invesp.net. SEP also received Profit Magazine's 100 Fastest Growing Companies in Canada award in 2009 and 2010.

Jeff is a frequent speaker at various Internet marketing conferences worldwide and is widely recognized as one of the pre-eminent authorities on new media, mobile, search and social media marketing.

Why Keywords Are Your Foundation

The way people shop has changed in the age of search engines. People are increasingly using search engines to help them find the products or services they are looking for. To do this, they type **keywords** into sites like Google, YouTube or Bing. The engines then rank sites related to these keywords based on **relevance** and **authority**.

Web [Images](#) [Videos](#) [Maps](#) [News](#) [Shopping](#) [Gmail](#) [more](#) ▼



internet marketing ← *Keywords*

Search

About 160,000,000 results (0.25 seconds)

[Advanced search](#)

Whether you know it or not, your website is already targeting certain keywords. Search engines extract these keywords from your on-page text, headers, page titles, inbound links and other factors. However, you might not have made a conscious decision to target those keywords. Even if you did, you might not be monitoring your rankings or have a sense of how good your chances are of ranking well for those keywords.

Choosing the right keywords is often the difference between getting found in search and not getting found. As a result, keyword research is the foundation of an effective online marketing strategy.

There are several variables that impact keyword selection. These variables can be divided into two groupings - primary selection variables and prioritization variables.

Primary Selection of Keywords

It is important to understand what aspects of keywords make them important to your business. The different variables or characteristics of a keyword help determine whether the keywords are worth consideration in your SEO strategy. Only if keywords pass the primary selection tests can they be subjected to the prioritization variable tests. Considerations for primary keyword selection are:

- Ensuring keyword terms/phrases have sufficient search volumes
- Ensuring the chosen keyword terms are *relevant*
- Assessing levels of *relative* competition

If a search term doesn't satisfy the criterion of sufficient volume, then it is removed from the list. Likewise, if it does not satisfy the relevancy criterion, it should not be considered.

Prioritization of Keywords

Two things to consider when prioritizing keywords are:

- Competitive advantage for the product/services
- Profitability of the products/services associated with the keywords

Prior to entering the vetting process, a Keyword Opportunity List should be generated.

Generating the Initial Keyword Opportunity List

The first phase of creating the initial Keyword Opportunity List involves brainstorming as many keyword ideas as possible.

- a. Listing root brands and product/service names (e.g. lawyer)
- b. Brainstorming variations of product and brand related keywords
- c. Talking to clients to determine what terms they use in search
- d. Studying competitors' sites
- e. Adding geographic variations (e.g. Miami lawyers, Dade county lawyers)
- f. Adding descriptive variations (e.g. personal injury lawyers, slip and fall lawyers)
- g. Taking all the variations and entering them into the [Google AdWords Keyword Tool](#), which will suggest numerous other variations.

With this list in hand, now the keyword list can be vetted.

Choosing Relevant Keyword Terms/Phrases

Once all keyword possibilities with sufficient search volumes are selected, keywords must then be filtered for relevancy. You don't just want to pull in traffic; you want to ensure that your traffic is of high quality. Quality traffic helps you convert your visitors into customers at a higher rate.

Let's demonstrate the importance of relevant traffic through an example. If a small law office in Boise, Idaho were able to achieve a ranking for the generic term 'lawyers,' they would be inundated with irrelevant calls from people in New York City, Chicago, Miami and Los Angeles. Realistically, less than 1% of the queries from the term 'lawyers' would be potential clients from the Boise area, meaning:

- It would be a tremendous distraction for the staff taking these calls or filtering out the bad leads

- It would eat up the time and resources you need to nurture your more valuable leads in the Boise area

Assessing Keyword Competitiveness

People have a tendency to emphasize traffic over relevance. You need to make sure the search terms you're targeting have sufficient traffic, but often you don't want them to have too much either. More traffic usually correlates with high competition.

Let's go back to the Boise law firm. Let's say they want to rank for the term 'lawyer.' This puts them up against almost all law firms in the English-speaking world, including larger and more powerful ones. As I'm writing this, there are 112 million Google results for 'lawyer.' Only 10 are on the first page of Google.

When picking keywords to target, you clearly need to choose your battles wisely. So how do you do that?

There are several free tools for assessing keyword competitiveness. One example is the [SEO Chat Keyword Difficulty Check Tool](#). The higher the score the keyword gets, the more competitive the term, and the more difficult it is to rank for. Generally speaking, terms with a difficulty score over 60 will require much more than just on-page optimization if you want to rank on the first page of search results.

[HubSpot Internet Marketing Software](#) is a paid tool that includes a keyword monitoring component. In addition, it also helps you maintain a dashboard of relevant keywords, including their search volume, competition, your ranking and the number of visits from that keyword search.

What You Need to Beat the Competition

After picking your arena, you need to figure out how to beat the competition in that arena. The way to do this is for your site to gain **authority** and **relevance** for those terms.

Authority

Authority is assessed by understanding the link profile of your site versus those other sites ranking for the keywords you are targeting. External links from other sites are the single most powerful ranking tool amongst the major search engines of today. The three most important elements of these linking factors are:

- Number of links to a website (more is better)
- Number of links to the specific page one hopes will rank for the term in question (again, more is typically better than less)
- The anchor text of links to the specific page (see the upcoming link building chapter for more on this)

Links are the biggest factor in gaining authority and search engine rankings. HubSpot software allows companies to compare their own link profiles to those of their competitors.

As a rule of thumb, one's site could compete for rankings (in the short term) with other sites with similar link profiles. Tackling sites with more powerful link profiles requires time and dedication. The bigger the gap, the more time, effort and budget is needed. When a large gap exists between two competing sites in the number of

inbound links, it is very difficult for the site with less links to make-up ground and compete for keyword opportunities.

Relevance

Relevance, on the other hand, means looking to see if the other sites are specifically trying to rank for the term(s) in question. On-page relevancy can be quickly assessed by looking at simple elements.

- Keyword match in the title of a page
- Keyword match in a site's internal navigation
- Keyword match in the domain name

By considering both authority and relevancy, it's a relatively simple process to determine opportunities. If rankings for a given keyword term are dominated by much more powerful sites obviously targeting the term with their on-page factors, then it's likely best to look for another keyword opportunity. If, on the other hand, those same sites are powerful yet aren't specifically targeting the terms (or visa versa), then potential does exist.

At the end of this process, you should have a list of keywords that have been vetted. Now, it becomes a process of prioritizing all the remaining keywords. While the same primary assessment variables can still be utilized to determine priorities, secondary assessment variables now can also be considered.

Additional Prioritization Variables

1. **Competitive advantage** – Does the firm have a distinct competitive advantage (in terms of price, quality, delivery time) that can be leveraged to increase the likelihood of sales?
2. **Ability to scale or fulfill** – Is inventory or ability to fulfill limited? If so, other products and services with more potential might be a better priority.
3. **Profitability** – How profitable is a product or service? More profitable items are often more desirable to promote.
4. **Lifetime value of item client** – If the sale of a given item is made, the current value of the sale is not the only consideration. One should also take into account the average lifetime value of the purchaser of the item in question.

Often, the keyword terms with relatively high search volumes and low competition are the best opportunities. Of course, relevance must be factored into this equation as well.

In addition to looking at volume vs. competition, it often helps to look at the additional prioritization variables.

II. Mastering On-Page SEO



Contributor: [Aaron Wall](#) of [SEO Book](#)

In 2003, Aaron Wall founded SEO Book, a leading guide to search engine optimization. In the 7 years since, he has offered numerous free SEO tools and created the leading online SEO training program, which comes with an exclusive member community. His site offers thousands of posts tracking the field of SEO for businesses large and small.

Why On-Page SEO is Typically Overlooked

On-page optimization is a critical but often overlooked aspect of SEO. The problem with doing only on-page optimization is that there is a glass ceiling to it. Search engines rank websites according to their authority and relevance to the search terms as well as their authority on the web. On-page optimization creates relevance, while building inbound links generates authority.

Even though off-page optimization offers more SEO benefits, on-page optimization is really the first step to SEO improvement. Off-page SEO is about building inbound links from relevant websites. But how can search engines deem your pages relevant to your keywords if you have not even made it clear to them what your page is about?

On-page optimization is basically about two things:

- Picking the best keywords around which to base each of your pages
- Making it as clear as possible to search engines that your page is relevant to those keywords

On-Page Optimization: The Old Way

When I first got into SEO, many people took a fairly mechanical approach to on-page optimization because it was what worked back then.

Hundreds of tools littered the web that allowed you to measure the keyword density of a page. Some of them taught that more was better. As a result, webmasters would crank out keyword-stuffed text that was not interesting and was brutal to read.

How did you optimize your page content back then? Stuff your keywords everywhere:

- The URL
- The page title
- The meta description tag
- The on-page H1 heading
- Aggressively throughout the page content

Web copy on SEOed sites was dense, and it looked the part to end-users!

In 2003, Google responded to this rise in user-unfriendliness. Google got much better at looking at what it considered natural language usage patterns. At that point, old “optimization” strategies ended up getting pages filtered out of the search results for some of the keywords they were targeting.

Worse yet, when some people were making their copy more keyword dense, they would strip out important keyword variations, so the page wouldn’t rank as well for the related supporting keywords.

Obligatory Reference to the Long Tail

Chris Anderson wrote a popular book entitled *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*. The long tail describes how many marketplaces work in terms of statistical distribution.

In the previous chapter, we looked at keyword opportunities. The Long Tail is another way of looking at keyword competitiveness.

There are a few keywords with high search volume and traffic. At the same time, these are the more competitive keywords that are hard to rank for. Fortunately, there is a whole ocean of barely explored long tail keywords that have little traffic but for which you have a better chance of ranking.



Overlooking the Tail

When deciding which keywords to target, many webmasters focus on the big money/trophy keyword phrases. As mentioned previously, these are the hardest ones to rank for. Many of these trophy keywords actually seem more important than they are when you look at the revenues they drive.

Sure, many people who want SEO services will search terms like ‘search engine optimization’ or ‘SEO.’ But many webmasters underestimate the value of the keyword tail. For every person searching on a keyword like ‘SEO,’ there are likely 10 or more people searching for less common keywords such as:

- How do I rank better in Google?
- Improve Google placement
- Rank better in search engines
- Search engine ranking

These are often not the words that industry insiders use to describe their own business. But keywords are not about them – they are the words that their *customers* type into search engines.

Most search terms have many variations. If you are only focused on the most well known version, then you are up against the stiffest competition (as the most popular keywords are typically the most competitive) while you are leaving money on the tail (by neglecting other keywords).

How Long Is the Tail?

Describing the mechanism of how the market works is nowhere near as powerful as raw numbers.

- In 2007, Google's Udi Manber stated that only 20% to 25% of the search queries Google sees each day are unique.
- Demand Media runs a content mill that publishes hundreds of thousands of articles targeting long tail keywords. Their revenues are rumored to be north of \$200 million, with the majority of that income coming from long tail search traffic.

Example Ranking Data

The ranking data on the right is for a page that ranked #1 for 'link building' on Google. Note that in spite of ranking well for that page, the page got over 400% more traffic from other related keywords.



The screenshot shows a search engine ranking tool interface. At the top, it says 'Searches' with tabs for 'Most Common', 'Most Recent', and 'Found'. Below this is a table with three columns: 'Keywords', 'Page', and 'Hits'. The table lists various search terms and their corresponding page rankings and hit counts.

Keywords	Page	Hits
439	Free SEO Tools & Search Engine...	2,125
231	SEO Book.com ~ SEO Training Made Easy	1,555
565	How to Build Links Fast: 101 Tips &...	1,330
	link building	274
	seo link building	39
	linkbuilding	25
	how to get links to your website	24
	link building tips	19
	how to build links	19
	how to link build	18
	seo links	18
	best sites to link to	15
	link building strategy	14
	link building techniques	10
	get links	9
	inbound link strategy	8
	link building strategies	8
	how to get websites to link to your website	7
	how to create inbound links	7
	build links	7

On-Page Optimization: The New Way

Rather than repeating the same word over and over again, you should use a diverse set of related keywords to help you rank for a variety of long tail keywords.

Did I know the above page was going to rank for over 500 different keywords? No way! But I knew I was positioning myself to rank for many by making the page relevant to many of them. If diversity is the spice of life, then keyword diversity is SEO salsa!

If you look at the above keywords, you can see a pattern emerge amongst the sub-keywords. Many of them contain:

- 'How to'
- 'Link' or 'links'
- 'Build' or 'building'
- 'Strategy' or 'strategies'

Most long tail keywords end up being variations of the core keywords along with a common keyword modifier.

Rather than making a repetitive page title which is like...

Link building, Link building tips, Link building strategy

...you can use a page title that includes variation in it, like...

Link Building Strategy: How to Build Links

Just like you would use relevant modifiers in the page title, you also want to work in relevant keyword modifiers and alternate forms throughout the page text. This is one area where keyword density analysis tools can be helpful. You may also want to find common related keywords in competing pages that you may have forgotten to target. Including such keywords once or twice on your page is sufficient.

The key is to make it sound natural while covering a variety of keyword options. One of the ways to write naturally is to ignore the concept of SEO until after you have the first draft version of your page. From there, you can go back into the page, add some variation and cover additional keyword ideas.

Four common points of variation are:

- Singular vs. plural
- Alternate word order
- Synonyms and acronyms
- Keyword modifiers

How Do You Find Those Related Keywords to Target?

Variation is good, but where do I start? Traditional keyword research tools should help you, but it also turns out that the search results themselves are a fertile ground.

- When you begin to type a keyword into a Google search box on the Google homepage, Google will try to auto-complete your search query. They use aggregate search volume to power this, which tells you two things about the keywords they are recommending:
 - Those are keywords other people searched for in the past
 - Those are the keywords Google is recommending new searchers to search for, helping to drive traffic to them
- When you look at the top ranked listings in the search results, many of those websites will also include related keyword modifiers in their page titles. Clicking through to some of the better pages will also show you related keywords and concepts they are targeting in their page copy.
- Almost all major search engines offer a related searches feature on their search results pages. Look through those for additional keyword ideas.

Closing the Loop

The above process is driven off of aggregate user data. However, one of the most important lessons in SEO is that no data source is as useful as your own web analytics.

Make sure you are tracking traffic and conversion data from day one. Through your analytics data, you will uncover many ranking ‘accidents’ or alternate keyword ideas you may not have thought to target. If you are doing particularly well in a certain area, consider making more pages targeting related variations of those keywords.

Since conversion and user experience are also important, make sure your content is easy to read. Use generous formatting to break up the content with:

- Short paragraphs
- Bulleted or numbered lists (where relevant)
- Relevant headers and sub-headers throughout (to make scanning easier)
- Conversion-focused links within the content area of the page

III. Link Building Strategies



Contributor: [Rob Ousbey](#) of [Distilled](#)

Rob takes Distilled's number of dedicated search marketers to three. He studied engineering and management but looked forward to working in radio after graduation. Two years of producing programs for a national station later, he became a freelance web developer for four months - promoting everything from Shakespeare to sanitary pads - before being tempted back into a regular 9-5 routine by Distilled.

The Role of Inbound Links in SEO

While on-page optimization is a good first step, you will ultimately get much more leverage by having links from other sites to yours. Inbound links used to just be a source of referral traffic. Now, they influence your search engine rankings as well.

Google was the first search engine to use links as a significant ranking factor. They viewed a link from one site to another as a 'vote' for the target site. The more votes you have, the more authoritative your site is considered.

Specifically, there are two main benefits gained through each link:

1. Better SEO authority of the linked-to page and increase in authority of the site as a whole
2. More relevancy of the page for the keywords that are used in the link's anchor text

Anchor text is the clickable text of a link. To give an example, let's say a page was linked to in the following ways:

[Bob's Hardware Store](#)
[Buy Power Tools at Bob's Hardware Store](#)

The second link (often referred to as an 'anchor text rich' or an 'anchor text specific' link) is more likely to help Bob's store rank for the keyword phrase 'power tools.'

Note that not all links pass value. Webmasters can add a 'nofollow' attribute to an outbound link in order to achieve this. Links from some popular sites such as Wikipedia, for example, are all nofollow. The way to verify whether a link passes value is to check its HTML. This is achievable in different ways through different browsers but is generally doable.

Link Building with Head Terms vs. Long Tail Terms

In the previous section, you learned how to identify the search terms that your site would benefit from targeting. Slightly different link building tactics may be required, depending on the competitiveness of a keyword.

Head Terms

Ranking for highly competitive head terms typically requires a more diverse source of links pointing to the appropriate page that targets the term. The links will need to use the corresponding keyword as the anchor text as often as possible.

Mid and Long Tail Terms

Pages that target less competitive mid-to-long tail terms don't typically require as many external links. Instead, sites can rank for these terms by gaining authority through strong, trusted links, often to the front page of the site. Solid information architecture and good on-page keyword targeting will then provide the relevancy signals needed to rank for these terms.

Most of the link building tactics discussed later in this chapter can be used either to target specific head terms or simply to build the authority of the site, depending on your specific needs.

Tools for Link Research

It's often useful to know about the links your site currently has. This information can help you make decisions regarding whether to aim for more links that will build site authority or to focus on deep links with specific anchor text.

Researching your competitors' links can also be valuable, particularly in identifying link opportunities or niches that could also be useful to your link building campaign.

Yahoo! Site Explorer - <http://www.siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com/>

Yahoo! provides a free tool that lists up to 1,000 of the links to any site. Enter your domain name or a particular page, select the 'Inlinks' button, and change the settings to 'Show links: except from this domain.' Also select 'to: entire site' if you'd like to see links to the whole site rather than just a single page.

These links are not in any particular order, and the list will include links that do not pass any value as well as those that do.

Open Site Explorer - <http://www.opensiteexplorer.org/>

This tool provides information about the top 1,000 links to a site. These can be filtered to exclude links that do not pass value. Additional information about each link includes the anchor text used and the authority of each linking page.

The Open Site Explorer tool also includes reports that showcase the most popular pages on the site, the most common anchor text used to link to a page or site and other information about the strength of the page.

HubSpot - <http://hubspot.com/products/>

The HubSpot Inbound Marketing software includes a 'Page Grader' component that helps analyze the SEO value of a page, including its inbound links.

Page Grader assesses the optimization of every page in your site, making it easy for you to fine-tune pages to get the top ranking for specific keywords. Page Grader tracks the following metrics for every page on your site:

- Ranking in search engine results
- Search engine visits
- Inbound links
- Internal links
- Page Grade

The Page Grader dashboard lists these key search engine metrics by page and makes it easy to prioritize which pages to optimize first.

Page Grader
Optimize each page of your site

[Export to Excel](#)

<p>691</p> <p>PAGES W/ PROBLEMS</p> <p>GO TO PAGE DETAILS TO FIX THEM</p>	<p>739</p> <p>TOTAL PAGES</p> <p>739 IN THE PAST 30 DAYS</p>	<p>1.3</p> <p>AVERAGE PAGE GRADE™</p> <p>LOW</p>	<p>104,619</p> <p>TOTAL INBOUND LINKS</p> <p>31,468 TOTAL INTERNAL LINKS</p>
--	---	---	---

[Search](#)

STATUS	PAGE TITLE	RANKED KEYWORDS	VISITS	INBOUND LINKS	PAGE GRADE
⚠	Inbound Marketing Software HubSpot	148	88,200	64,849	88
⚠	Marketing Webinars	43	5,350	116	14
⚠	Keyword Tips	17	927	49	4
⚠	HubSpot Customer Case Studies	16	2,326	14	11
✅	Organic vs. Paid Search	16	289	14	4

Rankings

This page is currently ranked for the following keywords:

KEYWORD	RANK	MONTHLY SEARCHES	DIFFICULTY
hubspot	1	< 1	17
internet marketing software	1	1,300	93
online marketing software	2	150	88
website marketing software	9	24	83
internet marketing	23	29,000	97
website marketing tool	40	6	83

Showing 6 Keywords.

Explore all your keywords in [Keyword Grader](#).

The Spectrum of Link Building Tactics

Before looking at some particular link building tactics, it's worth considering how creating each link can require a different mix of input from the link builder and from the editor of the linking site. Different link building tactics require a different mix of manual input on the part of the link builder and editorial decisions on the part of the site from which the link is gained. Link building tactics can be divided into those that are:

- Completely manual
- A combination of manual input and editorial decisions
- Completely editorial

Manual Link Building

At the top of this spectrum are tactics that require input from no one but the link builder. These could include leaving links in the 'comments' section of other sites, adding links to social networking profiles or submitting a site to online directories that accept every submission.

Clearly, these can be easy ways to increase the number of links to a site. Since these links are so easy to obtain, they offer little to no value.

Mixture of Manual and Editorial Input

The center of this spectrum is where a lot of link building time and effort can (and typically does) get spent. In many cases, it involves building relationships with sites and individuals who may link to you, or contacting site editors to tell them about particular content your site has and encouraging them to link to it.

Completely Editorial

The bottom of this spectrum covers situations where a link was given unprompted. When a site has particularly high-quality content or provides useful or unique resources on a particular topic, people are more likely to link to it without needing to be asked or invited.

Link Building Techniques

Now that you know why link building is important and understand its different types, let's look at some specific tactics that have been proven successful. This is by no means an exhaustive list of techniques that are used, but it should help you get started on building links to your site and hopefully inspire you to think of ways that your site can continue to attract links in the future.

Quality Content

The purest and most fundamental form of link building is to simply create a compelling reason for people to talk about your website (or business, or organization), and then let them share it with others by linking to it. Think about your niche, and identify some sites from which you'd like to attract links. Then you can create content that would be relevant to their audience as well as yours. You can openly state that others should feel free to share your content as long as they link back to your site.

Examples of quality, viral content that could attract links include:

- A home electronics retailer's page explaining how to create a wireless home network
- An industrial window cleaning company's list of the most photogenic spots in their city
- An auto insurance company's weekly 'auto repair' video in response to questions submitted by the public

A blog is an ideal place to publish such content. It encourages you to continue producing quality content and gives incentives for others to come back to your site and share your content.

Directories

The technique of submitting to relevant directories has been maligned in recent years, typically because of the low quality of many directory sites. Search for sites in your niche or your local area that maintain some kind of directory or recommended website list. You can begin by looking at professional organizations and trusted local sites or searching online for terms such as 'furniture repair directory.' In general, it's good to target sites that have a reasonably high Page Rank and don't contain 'spam' listings.

Outreach

Traditional PR practitioners and advertisers will recognize that contacting publishers (typically journalists) to 'pitch' a story has online parallels – you can contact a website owner or blogger to introduce them to your organization, your products, or any non-commercial content you've created. Use search engines to find relevant sites to contact, or use directories such as Blogged and Blogflux to find blogs in a particular niche. When contacting people by email, be as genuine as possible and don't give the 'hard sell.' Explain why you chose to contact them (perhaps because they're very relevant or have written about or linked to similar content in the past). Invite them to take a look at your site, or point them to a particular page.

Giveaways

Competitions and prize draws are specific link building tactics that often work well. You can give away a substantial prize on your site and receive links to the competition page, or you might consider giving smaller prizes to a variety of publishers and letting them run competitions on their own sites in return for a link back to you.

Guest Blogging

If you have particular expertise or insight in your niche, many sites may be interested in having you create content for them. They get the benefit of having some useful content on their site, and you can be credited with one or more links back to your site. Additional benefits of guest posting are that you may get exposure to a new audience, and you may have better control over the anchor text used in your links. To begin guest blogging, try talking directly to other site owners who you know and who may be interested in having you create content for them. Alternatively, you can search online using specific terms. For example, a telescope manufacturer might search for opportunities using 'astronomy blog.'

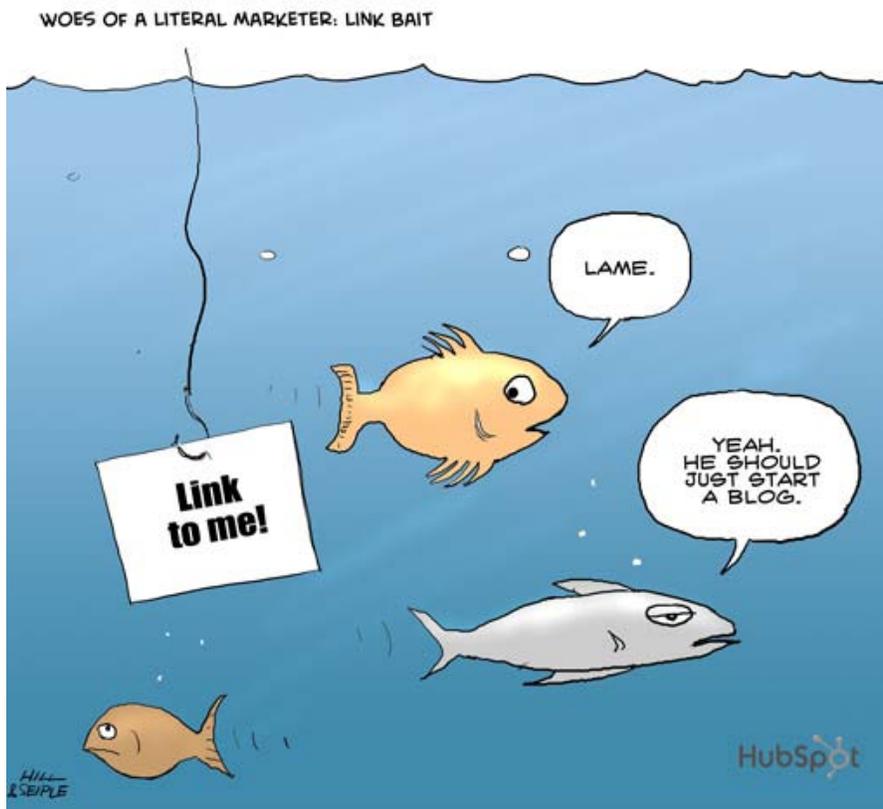
Use Your Community or Customers

The people who already interact with or have purchased from your site may be a useful source of links. Perhaps consider the following:

- Ask your existing, satisfied customers to promote you. Email them to invite any that have a blog or website to help you by reviewing or linking to you. You might include the HTML code for the link in the email, so they can simply copy-and-paste the snippet into their site.
- Many community sites create badges or buttons for members to place on their own sites. This allows users to show their allegiance, while also linking back to you.

Link Bait

Defining this term as ‘content designed to attract links’ makes it sound a lot like anything else described here. In fact, the term is typically reserved for content that is also highly shareable. Such content often reaches success by being shared widely throughout social media sites first before being linked to by bloggers and other site owners. Examples could include a clever information visualization, creative videos, useful resources, breaking news, quizzes or amusing cartoons. Link bait doesn’t necessarily need to be ‘flashy’ as long as it is creative: a well written ‘Top 10’ list or a simple piece of controversial content could get 15 minutes of fame as the web’s ‘hottest thing’ and get many links from a variety of sources.



LENNY WAS A HOPELESS MARKETER WHO TOOK THE TERM "LINK BAIT" A LITTLE TOO LITERALLY.

IV. Tips for Ongoing SEO Improvement

So you've gone through the initial SEO improvement steps. You've assessed your current standing, identified keyword opportunities, optimized around your keywords and begun a link building campaign. Rather than looking at this as the end of your SEO improvement, look at it as the beginning! Now you know what's important, how to identify opportunities, and how to act on them.

The following are some tips for monitoring and continuing to improve SEO.

Set Up a Ranking Dashboard

To help monitor your rankings, you can set up a dashboard as shown below. Note that the +/- marks under 'Ranking' indicate an increase or decrease in ranking since the last time you checked. You should monitor such a dashboard in regular intervals, such as bi-weekly or monthly.

<i>Keyword</i>	<i>Target Page</i>	<i>Conversion Rate</i>	<i>Monthly Searches</i>	<i>Keyword Difficulty</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
Boston PR Agencies	YourSite.com/	10%	480	64	11 (+2)
Public Relations Consulting	YourSite.com/consulting	5%	2,400	63	6 (-3)
Branding Service	YourSite.com/branding	12%	4,400	64	2 (+1)

Keep in mind that each of these keywords will have a corresponding 'keyword family' that contains all the modifiers of the keyword. The search volume within this keyword family is likely many times larger than that of the keyword itself. If you want to get more granular, you can monitor keyword families instead of keywords themselves.

Experiment with Keywords

The keywords you are currently targeting may not be the best ones at drawing in traffic and converting traffic into customers. If data on search volume, difficulty or relevance tells you that another keyword would do better in any of these metrics, test it out.

Maintain On-Page Optimization

On-page optimization should be maintained alongside your keyword experiments. Additionally, you should not modify the content of any page without keywords in mind. Changing basic elements such as your page title or even on-page text can change your rankings.

Maintain a Focus on External Link Building

Regularly invest in link building, since this will help your SEO like nothing else. It also requires more long-term commitment and networking.

Continue to Look for Opportunities

By constantly working to improve your SEO, your site itself will evolve. You may need to explore new keywords or create new pages targeting different keyword families.

V. Additional Information and Resources

Many websites are sitting on big opportunities to get found by more people online. Search engine optimization is an effective way of getting more traffic your website and improving the quality of that traffic.

While many have trouble getting started with SEO, we hope that this ebook will serve as a helpful guide to generate more traffic and improve the quality of that traffic.

Have questions on how to improve your SEO or online marketing in general?

Post them on Inbound.org!

Want **personalized feedback** on your website or SEO?

Run your website through [Website Grader](#), a free SEO tool from HubSpot.

Sign up for one of our [Website Optimization Webinars](#).

Additional Online Marketing Resources:

[HubSpot Marketing Blog](#)

[HubSpot Marketing Webinars](#)

[HubSpot Marketing Hubs](#)

SEO in 2010 and Beyond

Google
bing
YAHOO!

facebook
twitter
linkedin

yelp
YouTube
flickr

Ranking Algorithm:
f(n): Context + Authority
+ Social Graph

HubSpot

[Learn More Tips in our Free SEO Kit: 5 Steps to Improve Your Website](#)

This Kit Includes 3 Videos, PowerPoint Slides and an eBook to help you attract more site visitors and convert more of them into paying customers.

[Download the Free Kit Online >>](#)