

Topic | Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Tutorial 23

Sourcing inbound links

This tutorial explains how to check the inbound links to your site and help you source new links

Reading time: 20 minutes | Prerequisites: Tutorial 22

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1. How do I check who links to my site?

The very first thing to do is to check who is already linking to your website. A simple way to do this is to use SEOMoz's OpenSiteExplorer.org tool. To utilise this free tool visit www.opensiteexplorer.org. Click on the "see how it works" link to watch a short video.

Open Site Explorer is Powered by SEOMoz's Linkscape

Linkscape's Index		Crawled in the Past 22 Days:	
9.2	Trillion Links	399	Billion Links
0.4	Trillion URLs	51	Billion URLs
98	Million Root Domains	98	Million Root Domains

Last Index Update: August 23rd, 2011 Next Index Update: September 2011

[Learn More About Open Site Explorer's Data & Metrics](#)

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Then just \$99/mo, cancel anytime

Screen capture copyright: OpenSiteExplorer.org

2. Checking competitors' links

Go through the same process as above but use your competitors' website instead of yours. You can also use the address of sites that rank well in search engines for your keywords. You will discover a lot of doors to knock on to acquire new links!

3. What about my business name?

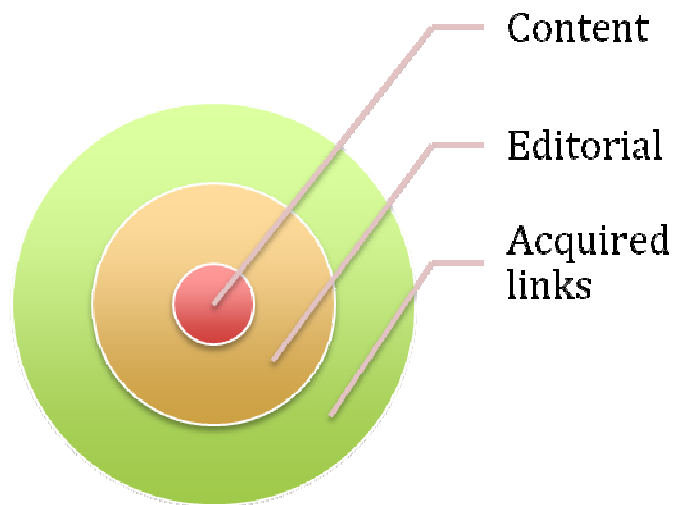
OpenSiteExplorer will show you which sites link to you. However, there are many other people or businesses that might have mentioned your business name online but who haven't linked to you using a hyperlink. Google your business name to find these webpages. Pick this low hanging fruit first. Contact them and ask if they could kindly put a hyperlink on the article in order to allow the reader to access your site for further reference.

In the Tourism Industry especially there is a large chance that your business has been reviewed in a media release (travel magazine, local or national newspaper, other). Dig for your name and business name on search engines and contact the editors!

4. Different link building techniques

The first focus when building links should be on writing informative website content. **If the content is not worth linking to, you can try as hard as you want but no one will link to you. Content is key.**

Unfortunately many amateur search engine optimisation companies will focus all their efforts on acquiring links without first looking at the bulls-eye: the content. If the content is compelling enough, many sites will start to naturally link to you or will happily link to you once you establish contact and show them the value your website's copy could bring to their users. If you intend to work with a SEO company, ensure that they provide guidance on how to best improve your content.



Before we start reviewing all the techniques, it is important to clarify that it is **the individual pages of a website that are linked to** and not the website itself as a whole. Therefore, you should direct your newly acquired links to your website's most relevant page and not to the homepage (unless the homepage is the most relevant one in that instance).

Once you have checked your existing inbound links as well as your competitors', print them out and put them aside. Then get a blank piece of paper and a pen.

Turn your computer off, and think about:

- Your past clients
- People who you know
- Existing or past connections through a client, through a friend
- Suppliers
- Associations you are a member of
- Charities you regularly donate to
- Universities you collaborate(d) with
- Regional councils you are part of

a). **Customers, suppliers, industry contacts**

Go through your entire existing supplier list and do the same for your customers. **There is a significant chance that your past customers own a business that is related to your main offer or to another service you provide to your clients.** As mentioned above, they could already have written about you but they might not have created a hyperlink.

Are you part of an association, chamber of commerce, tourism association? Establish contact and ensure you are being linked to from their site. Often all you might need to do is upgrade to the next membership level and you will be provided with a link. Because these organisations are generally themselves a member of more relevant, popular, and larger organisations, the value of their link will be maximised.

b). **Regional partners or cluster**

Identify regional partners who could link to you providing they complement your offer.

Do you offer massage therapy services to complement your bed and breakfast accommodation offer? Ask your therapist to link to you. Work out an arrangement if you cannot link to them directly from your website (you wouldn't want your clients to calculate the mark-up you make from their site!). Think about including the link as part of your contract even.

Think about setting up a meeting with your regional tourism partners to discuss how you could work together to improve both your own and your region's visibility. Setting up a joint blog for instance is a very simple way to add fresh content that shows clients how they can maximise their experience in your tourism region. Brainstorm ideas offline and find a way to market them in a web environment.

Tourism operators can have very different levels of Internet-readiness but working in clusters is a sustainable way of making positive changes to the online visibility of your region.

c). **Safe, relevant directories**

Consider submitting your site to safe, genuine directories. Be prepared to write a compelling description of your business and to wait for up to 6-12 months sometimes for your listing to be reviewed and accepted by the search engines. Your application can however be fast-tracked if you pay a certain sum of money.

This article from search engine watch

<http://searchenginewatch.com/showPage.HTML?page=2167881> offers good guidelines to follow when submitting to both the Yahoo! and the DMOZ directory.

Try to also identify some niche directories. To find directories, go to Google and search for: allintitle: "the name of your sector" directory.

Avoid dubious travel directories, as the majority are only there to make money by selling links. Their purpose is not to genuinely help the traveller. Think outside the square, what other activities apart from tourism does your business offer? What other sectors do you tap into?

- Arts? Look for specific arts niche directories → google: allintitle: arts directory
- Music? → google: allintitle: music directory
- Bushwalking? → google: allintitle: bushwalking directory
- Adventure? → google: allintitle: adventure directory

d). Blogs and forums

Using other people's blogs

Identify blogs and forums about your main and secondary industry sectors. Leaving comments on other people's blogs and participating in forums will not provide link value as such. **However, you are going to soon start developing an online profile.**

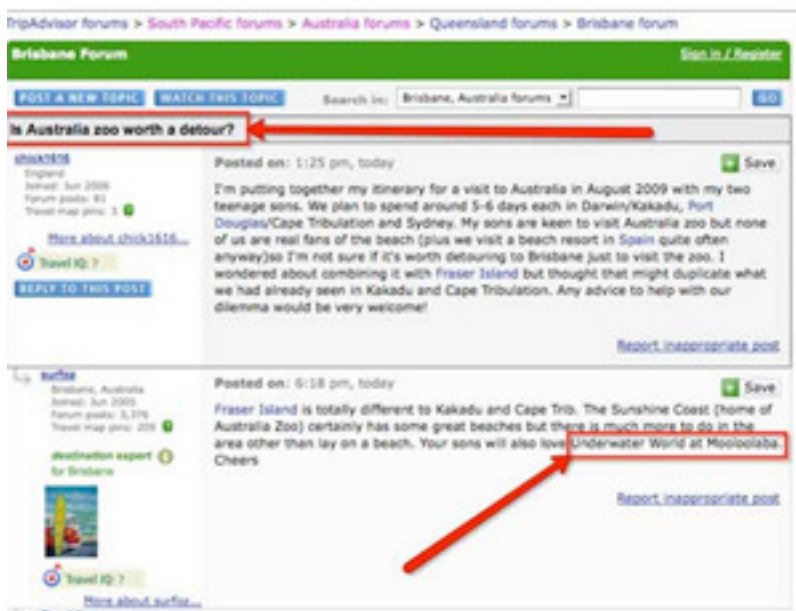
Participating in discussions about the development of your industry will also develop your brand and you will soon see new opportunities and contacts develop.

- Start with a search engine and search for blogs relevant to you.

Search for a blog about luxury travel, a blog about bed and breakfasts in Australia, a blog about small tourism businesses, a blog about hot air ballooning, a blog about white water rafting etc.

- When appropriate, leave comments on blog articles. Also make a note of the name and website of other people who left comments. Run their website through the Yahoo! links analyser tool and see if there is a link you haven't thought about.

- Forums are another way to interact with your industry. Think of them as a lively online discussion group where people ask questions and others help by providing answers. TripAdvisor.com hosts a highly regarded travel forum where you can advise visitors on things to do in your region!



The screen capture from TripAdvisor shows a forum page asking if Australia Zoo is worth a detour. A user replied and also mentioned Underwater World at Mooloolaba in their response.

Screen capture copyright: TripAdvisor

Starting your own blog

One of the main search engine optimisation benefits of blogs and forums is the generation of new content. Advancing the world's knowledge will allow you to maximise your online presence and attract many passers-by who will opt to naturally link to you.

e). Press releases

Press releases are also a great way of generating interest in your business, especially since they can now be distributed for free online. The link value of the online press release itself can be trivial. However, the press release will be indexed by search engines and increase awareness of your business in the long run.

www.pr.com, www.newswiretoday.com and www.prlog.org are three sites that will distribute your press releases for free.

5. Establishing contact

By now you should have a list of linking possibilities. **Go and check the website of every company on your list.** Look for pages that would be relevant to the content of one of your webpages. Write down the contact details (phone and email).

The hot air ballooning company might have identified a hot air balloon supplier. The ballooning company owner visited the supplier's website where he found a page describing the fabric used to make the balloon itself. He believes that this page would benefit from being linked to a specific page on his site where he has got photos of that fabric floating in the air!

Now think about how to best establish contact with the website owner. Google them and find out what you have in common. Are they going to be more responsive on the phone? Or is email best? **Do not mention that your end objective is to receive a link but focus on how your businesses complement each other and how fantastic their content is.**

Aim to develop an offline relationship. The Internet is only a medium and should never be the basis of the relationship itself. After having established contact and only when you believe the relationship has got a solid, concrete base, suggest that, **since your sites complement each other so well, it would be a good idea for them to link to you.** The company might ask for a link from you (link exchange).

6. Where do I ask them to put the link?

Special "links pages" are obsolete and should be avoided. You should ask the person linking to you to put the link within their text, where it would benefit the reader most. This also applies to your website when you link to someone else.

For example: Before visiting our Alpaca farm, why not enjoy a morning breakfast amongst [lorikeets in the beautiful Norman Park bird sanctuary?](#)

Remember to use the keywords in the hyperlink of the website you are linking to (for instance, lorikeets Norman park bird sanctuary) as search engines feed on it to understand what the page you are linking to is about. Avoid the "click here" link that doesn't say anything about the destination.

7. Key learning outcomes

- OpenSiteExplorer.org is a great tool to use to find out who links to you. Ensure you also check who links to your online competitors using the same tool.
- Work with your regional partners to create linking strategies.

- Remember, the key to attracting highly relevant and quality links is to have really good content.

8. Related material

a). Related tutorials

- Target market 101
- Search engines 101
- Critical components of optimising a website
- Keywords
- Understanding inbound links to my site
- Bringing people to my website with e-marketing
- Travel and tourism links
- Blogging for tourism

b). Related websites

- Link building resources: www.searchengineguide.com/link-building/
- Earn your links: www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwbW-ILkfjU&feature=user
- Link schemes:
www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?answer=66356&query=link+exchange&topic=&type