

7 Steps to Greater Link Popularity and Higher Search Engine Rankings

By Dave James (c) 2008

Link Popularity is one of the most important factors affecting your Search Engine rankings. When your site is popular with other web-sites, the Search Engines love you, but if you are the new kid on the block, they ignore you - totally. It's great to be popular and improving your Link Popularity will also get you higher rankings on the search engines.

Why is Link Popularity important for Higher Rankings?

Search Engines are just software programs that try to analyze the utility and validity of your content with regard to certain keywords. They also try to understand the importance or ranking of your site against all competing sites in their indices.

Just How do Search Engines Learn About the Utility and the Validity of Your Content?

Search Engines just love sites that users love to visit. They love it even more if users spend more time at the site before they browse away. Now how do they know which sites humans love? Obviously with the billions of web pages on the world wide web, the Search Engines cannot manually go to each site and check their content. They let other humans do that work for them. Then they watch as others link to your site. They watch your Link Popularity.

Link popularity simply means how popular are you on the World Wide Web. And your popularity is determined by the number of people linking to your website. The greater the number of external links pointing to your web-site, the greater your ranking. Simple, isn't it?

Here is how to find YOUR link popularity: Go to Google.com and type in "**link: followed by your URL**". This returns all the sites that link to you in the Google index. eg. link:<http://www.yourdomain.com>.

How Do You Get a Lot of People to Link to You?

Getting people to link to you is easy if you establish your presence. Show that you are a master of your domain. Even if you deal in manure, and there are people out there wanting to know more about it, you have an audience. And if you establish your presence well enough, the links will automatically follow.

Here are a few ways you can grow your inbound links.

1) Articles: Almost anybody can write articles. This is the easiest way to get started on your way to Search Engine manna. It's just a question of putting down your thoughts in a coherent manner. As long as the information you are providing is useful and valid, your articles will be sought after by publishers out there. There are also hundreds of article directories on the net.

To find article directories, Google 'Article Directories'. You get nearly 53 million hits. There are also some awesome free tools available for this.

For those with a morbid fear of writing, you can find 'Ghostwriters' as well as 'Virtual Assistants' on the Internet. Search on Google for those terms and you will find many a link to sites that provide you suitable services. You may also use sites like Elance.com and RentACoder.com for people who will write articles for you.

2) Blogs: Blogs are not as easy to do as Articles are. But they are a very useful tool, nevertheless. When you have a blog, you have an audience. It's like a fan base. They have certain expectations of you. They want you to churn out hit singles or albums. But they want you to give them more. Even though they started out as mere diaries or daily jottings of a few people, currently they are excellent link building, content management and search engine optimization tools.

In fact almost any industry can have a blog portal. As always run a search and you will find something in your industry. Or you can go to blogger.com or wordpress.com to start your own blog free of charge.

3) Free Products: The easiest way to do this is to write a tool and provide it for download. Or maybe even provide a service for free. The greatest example of building a business with free service that comes to mind is hotmail.com. Once your service becomes a must-have, it's only a matter of time before you can start making money from it. Also you can have people point to your site to give their customers access to your tool.

4) Trackbacks: This is the easiest way to get your links out there. What you do is go to other blogs (Authority Sites) in your industry and become a regular contributor. Or comment on the blogs. Along with your signature, most people provide a link to your web-site. And the more links you have pointing back to you, the more popular you get. Also, when you become a major contributor/commentor, people start valuing your opinion more.

5) Syndication: You can offer your articles to other sites for publishing for free or for payment. Your article links back to your site.

6) Reciprocal links: You provide a link to another peer site, in return for them linking back to you. This is a good way to get your target industry users to come to your site. Also you introduce your users to other sites that they may be interested in visiting. They will be thankful to you for pointing them in the right direction. And they come to trust you more.

7) Partner links: Your local Chamber of commerce, Suppliers, Resellers, Affiliates, Sites selling complementary products etc.

Study your competition. Google your product and study the linking strategy of top ranking sites. There are tools that help you do this. Webposition.com has a good tool but I prefer EliteSEOTool.com as it has some additional features that I love. These tools help you conduct an ongoing study of your competition and their rankings thereby helping you beat them consistently.

Of course, no amount of link popularity will help you if don't have the content to keep visitors at your site. So start with good content.

A note of caution! Make sure that you are being linked to by Authority sites with a Good PageRank. Also the linking sites should somehow be relevant to your industry. If not, it only serves to confuse the Search Engines and your rankings will suffer.