



OrderStorm White Paper
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Search Engine Optimization – Raising Search Engine Position and Increasing Traffic without Using Illicit Link Farms

1. Search engine optimization (SEO) – The goal of SEO is to drive more high quality traffic to your website and increase revenues.

While high traffic can be achieved by many methods, the two most important SEO techniques for ensuring that your traffic is high quality are publishing a continuous stream of well written, relevant content and legitimate link building.

Research statistics show that over eighty percent of web users find what they are looking for in the natural search results. Research also shows that the first three pages of search results receive more than ninety percent of all web user traffic (Source: machInteractive.com). Achieving a top position in the natural search for your most important keywords can bring tens of thousands of visitors to your website daily. Showing up in the first three pages of the natural search is critical for increasing both traffic to your website and subsequent sales.

Moving up in the organic search engine results is achieved in two ways – publishing lots of content and building lots of links. These two strategies work well together as publishing content can be done away from your website to generate the needed incoming links.

2. Use solid SEO techniques that will stand the test of time.

Don't try to chase the Google algorithm. It changes all the time, is unpredictable, and is a highly guarded secret. It is also very unusual in the way it returns results in the natural search compared with the other search engines.

Take for example the keyword 'underwear', none of these well-known brands - Victoria's Secret, Hanes, or Jockey - appear on page one of Google in the natural search. This one example indicates there is something fundamentally unusual about the Google Algorithm as all three of these major brands do appear on page one of Yahoo for the same keyword.

Solid content and a solid link building strategy will insulate you from changes in the algorithms over time that could otherwise cause your page rank to drop. The search engines will continue to base your rankings on content and popularity. The search engines look for original content on your site and links from sites that are contextually related.

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3. Attempts to spam the search engines to achieve high but unwarranted rankings are a short term strategy that carries significant risk.

Search engine spamming involves various techniques used to fool the search engines regarding the real content that your website displays when viewed by a visitor. Over time, webmasters have used many dirty tricks to spam the search engines including hidden links, invisible text, cloaking, keyword stuffing, automatic site submission, excessive use of cross-linking and keywords, duplicate pages, link farms where the linking page has no quality content and so on. Search engines do not like being fooled and work to actively combat practices that provide false information. Websites caught using these illicit tactics can lose their rankings or be de-listed from the search engine indexes entirely.

As a position in the first three pages of the natural search is vital to the long term success of your website, you cannot afford the risk of being expelled from the search engine indexes. If you are currently using a spamming technique to drive traffic to your website now, you can be certain the search engines will eventually find out. The search engines will most certainly ferret out any new spamming methods as their algorithms evolve and penalize websites that use spamming techniques. You also run the risk of being reported to the search engines for spamming by a dissatisfied searcher, customer or competitor.

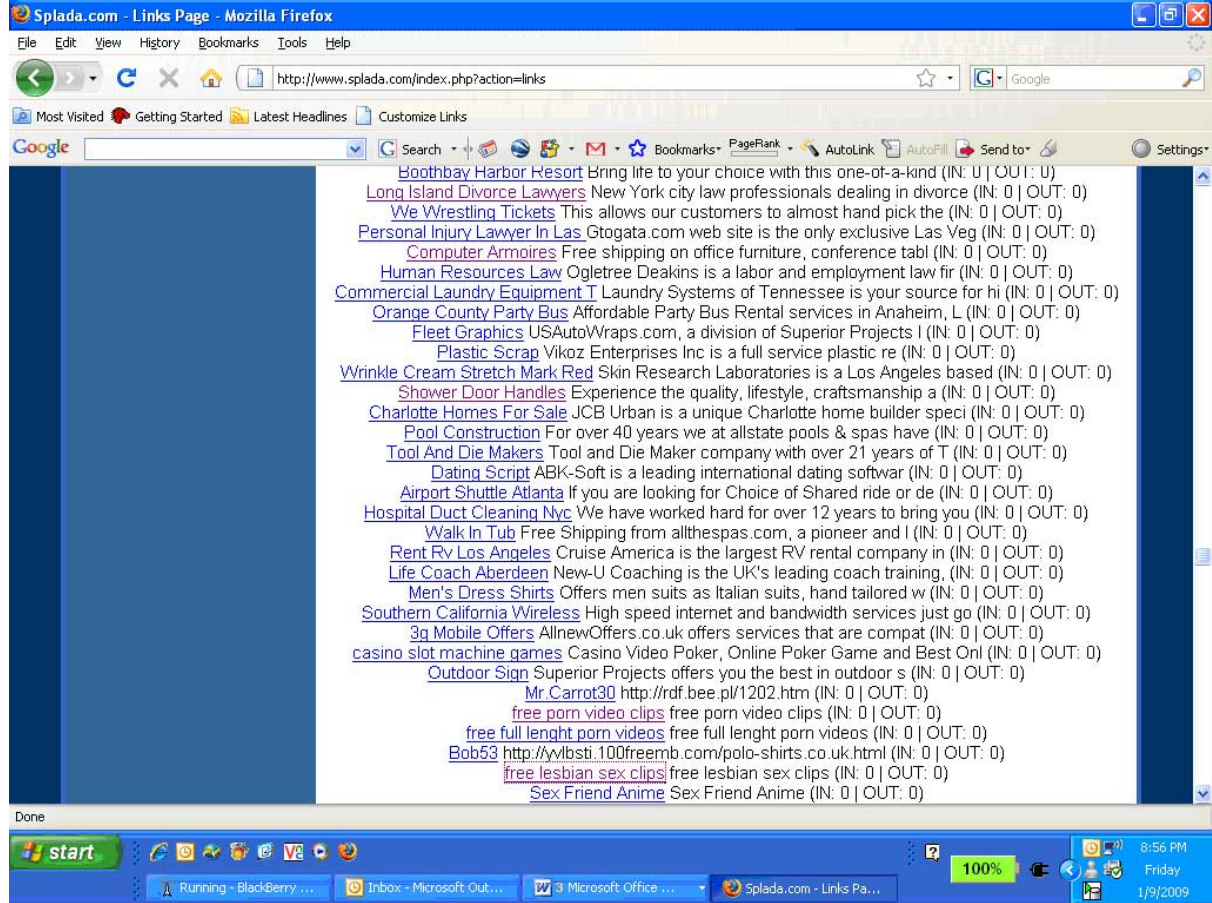
Legitimate content generation and link development will deliver high search engine rankings, send a lot of traffic to your site, and protect you from the risk of expulsion associated with using link farms or other illicit spamming techniques. The search engines goal is to provide relevant content to their users so give them what they want.

4. The current strategies to improve popularity surrounding paid links and link farms will get your website penalized or possibly de-listed by the search engines.

Currently, the most common way to trick the search engines is through the use of link farms. Website popularity is still the primary method of ranking by Google and popularity is judged by the number of links from other websites to yours. However, all links are not viewed equally and link farms are severely frowned upon.

A link farm is a page or set of web pages that have been built for the sole purpose of artificially increasing the number of incoming links to a web site. This is done in order to increase search engine rankings. These types of pages are either filtered out or penalized by almost all search engines. Link farms usually consist of a long list of unrelated links without any sort of groupings, categories or contextual relationship to the root domain. Many link farms have legitimate businesses, illegal businesses like prescription drugs, copyright infringements, pornography, and off-shore gambling all on the same page.

An example of a link farm looks like this.



5. Here's what the search engines have to say about link farms.

Google - Google cautions strongly against using illicit link farms to boost rankings and explicitly states that your website will be penalized for their use.

Webmaster Guidelines

<http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?answer=35769&hl=en>

"If you believe that another site is abusing Google's quality guidelines, please report that site at <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/spamreport>. Google prefers developing scalable and automated solutions to problems, so we attempt to minimize hand-to-hand spam fighting. The spam reports we receive are used to create scalable algorithms that recognize and block future spam attempts.

Quality guidelines - basic principles

- Make pages primarily for users, not for search engines. Don't deceive your users or present different content to search engines than you display to users, which is commonly referred to as "cloaking."

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- Avoid tricks intended to improve search engine rankings. A good rule of thumb is whether you'd feel comfortable explaining what you've done to a website that competes with you. Another useful test is to ask, "Does this help my users? Would I do this if search engines didn't exist?"
- Don't [participate in link schemes](#) designed to increase your site's ranking or PageRank. In particular, avoid links to web spammers or "bad neighborhoods" on the web, as your own ranking may be affected adversely by those links.
- Don't use unauthorized computer programs to submit pages, check rankings, etc. Such programs consume computing resources and violate our [Terms of Service](#). Google does not recommend the use of products such as WebPosition Gold™ that send automatic or programmatic queries to Google.

Quality guidelines - specific guidelines

- Avoid [hidden text or hidden links](#).
- Don't use [cloaking or sneaky redirects](#).
- Don't send [automated queries to Google](#).
- Don't [load pages with irrelevant keywords](#).
- Don't create multiple pages, subdomains, or domains with substantially [duplicate content](#).
- Don't create pages with malicious behavior, such as phishing or installing viruses, trojans, or other [badware](#).
- Avoid ["doorway" pages created just for search engines](#), or other "cookie cutter" approaches such as affiliate programs with [little or no original content](#).
- If your site participates in an affiliate program, make sure that your site adds value. Provide unique and relevant content that gives users a reason to visit your site first."

Link Schemes

<http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?answer=66356>

"Your site's ranking in Google search results is partly based on analysis of those sites that link to you. The quantity, quality, and relevance of links count towards your rating. The sites that link to you can provide context about the subject matter of your site, and can indicate its quality and popularity. However, some webmasters engage in link exchange schemes and build partner pages exclusively for the sake of cross-linking, disregarding the quality of the links, the sources, and the long-term impact it will have on their sites. This is in violation of Google's webmaster guidelines and can negatively impact your site's ranking in search results. Examples of link schemes can include:

- Links intended to manipulate PageRank
- Links to web spammers or bad neighborhoods on the web
- Excessive reciprocal links or excessive link exchanging ("Link to me and I'll link to you.")
- Buying or selling links that pass PageRank

The best way to get other sites to create relevant links to yours is to create unique, relevant content that can quickly gain popularity in the Internet community. The more useful content you have, the greater the chances someone else will find that content valuable to their readers and link to it. Before making any single decision, you should ask yourself the question: Is this going to be beneficial for my page's visitors?

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It is not only the number of links you have pointing to your site that matters, but also the quality and relevance of those links. Creating good content pays off: Links are usually editorial votes given by choice, and the buzzing blogger community can be an excellent place to generate interest. “

Paid links

“Google and most other search engines use links to determine reputation. A site's ranking in Google search results is partly based on analysis of those sites that link to it. Link-based analysis is an extremely useful way of measuring a site's value, and has greatly improved the quality of web search. Both the quantity and, more importantly, the quality of links count towards this rating.

However, some SEOs and webmasters engage in the practice of buying and selling links that pass PageRank, disregarding the quality of the links, the sources, and the long-term impact it will have on their sites. Buying or selling links that pass PageRank is in violation of Google's webmaster guidelines and can negatively impact a site's ranking in search results.

Not all paid links violate our guidelines. Buying and selling links is a normal part of the economy of the web when done for advertising purposes, and not for manipulation of search results. Links purchased for advertising should be designated as such. This can be done in several ways, such as:

- Adding a rel="nofollow" attribute to the <a> tag
- Redirecting the links to an intermediate page that is blocked from search engines with a robots.txt file

Google works hard to ensure that it fully discounts links intended to manipulate search engine results, such excessive link exchanges and purchased links that pass PageRank. If you see a site that is buying or selling links that pass PageRank, [let us know](#). We'll use your information to improve our algorithmic detection of such links.”

Yahoo – Yahoo also cautions strongly against the use of link farms.

<http://help.yahoo.com/l/us/yahoo/search/basics/basics-18.html>

“Unfortunately, not all web pages contain information that is valuable to a user. Some pages are created deliberately to trick the search engine into offering inappropriate, redundant or poor-quality search results; this is often called "spam." Yahoo! does not want these pages in the index.

What Yahoo! Considers Unwanted:

Some, but not all, examples of the more common types of content that Yahoo! does not want include:

- Pages that harm accuracy, diversity or relevance of search results
- Pages dedicated to directing the user to another page (doorway pages)
- Multiple sites or pages offering substantially the same content
- Pages that rely heavily on content or links to content created for another web site, such as affiliate content
- Sites with numerous, unnecessary virtual hostnames
- Pages in great quantity, automatically generated or of little value (cookie-cutter pages)
- Pages using methods to artificially inflate search engine ranking
- The use of text or links hidden from the user
- Pages that give the search engine different content than what the end user sees (cloaking)

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- **Sites cross-linked excessively with other sites to inflate a site's apparent popularity (link schemes)**
 - Pages built primarily for the search engines or pages with excessive or irrelevant keywords
 - Misuse or inaccurate use of competitor or brand names
 - Sites that use excessive pop-ups, install malware (i.e. spyware, viruses, trojans), or interfering with user navigation
 - Pages that seem deceptive, fraudulent, or provide a poor user experience
- Yahoo! Search Content Quality Guidelines are designed to ensure that poor-quality pages do not degrade the user experience in any way. As with Yahoo!'s other guidelines, **Yahoo! reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to take any and all action it deems appropriate to ensure the quality of its index.**

MSN – MSN directly threatens expulsion from the index for participating in link farms.

“Guidelines for successful indexing

The following are recommendations that might help Live Search's [MSNBot](#) and other [web crawlers](#) effectively index and rank your website. Live Search has also provided a list of techniques to avoid if you want to make sure your website is indexed.

Techniques that might prevent your website from appearing in Live Search results

The following techniques aren't appropriate in terms of attempting to gain higher ranking with the Live Search index. Use of these techniques might actually adversely affect how your website is ranked within Live Search, and might even cause your website to be removed from the index.

- Attempting to increase a webpage's keyword density by add lots of irrelevant words. This includes stuffing ALT tags that users are unlikely to view.
- Using hidden text or links. Only use text and links that are visible to users.
- **Using techniques, such as link farms, to artificially increase the number of links to your webpage.”**

6. There are many legitimate ways to create links to increase your site's popularity.

They all involve content in the form of how-to articles, article syndication, press releases, product reviews, participation in the forums, blogging, etc. There is simply no way around the need for unique, relevant and truly useful content to increase your rankings!

Give the search engines what they want – quality content and high quality links. A high quality link comes from a page that has high PageRank and is contextually related to your page. Quality is more important than quantity.

7. Wikipedia's success can be copied by anyone. Anyone can create their own encyclopedia of articles about the various aspects of their products or services that link to their website and drive traffic.

A more legitimate method of creating links to your website is to set up encyclopedic information sites with top quality content about every aspect of your product and service to drive traffic, sales, and rankings to your site at once. Set up your own encyclopedia, your own pages. The

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popularity of content is evidenced by the huge success of Wikipedia – The Online Encyclopedia (www.wikipedia.org).

The domain names for these websites will come from your primary keywords. As an example, if your company sells building insulation, your feeder sites would have domain names like Attic-Insulation.com, Basement-Insulation.com, Steel-Building-Insulation.com, Insulation-R-Values.com, etc. Each website will contain an article related to the domain name that also discusses the beneficial use of your product without an actual sales pitch.



Each encyclopedia site will have links to relevant pages on your main site beyond the home page. These are called deep links and are very important as each page on a website gets its own page rank. The rank of internal website pages is not derived from the home page rank. Content on your main site should be added as necessary to provide a landing area for these deep links as part of your standard SEO. Encyclopedia sites can also carry banner ads for your products and services. Advertising links are all considered legitimate links.

Going back to our example of the keyword 'underwear', you *will* find a Wikipedia article listed on page one of both Google and Yahoo. There is no way around the importance of unique high quality content. Solid content builds and keeps search engine rankings. Content that is so good, everyone wants to link to it. The major advantage of building links using articles is your level of control. You do not have to convince other people to link to you and you do not have to monitor other people's sites to see if the link pages are still up.



An additional benefit of using articles to generate links is the mountain of traffic they will generate. Encyclopedia sites are major feeder sites for customer traffic. People reading your articles are your target market. They will come to your website through the various opportunities presented on the feeder site to click through. They will also buy your products and services as people want to buy from people who provide the information they seek. Top quality information builds trust with customers.

8. Other ways to generate high quality links

In addition to encyclopedia sites, there are numerous other ways to use the content you generate to create links.

Publicity - Links can be generated as part of your company's existing publicity program. Send out online press releases and product announcements, each with a link to your site. Most industries have numerous online magazines and newsletters that would be happy to publish your publicity pieces.

Blogs and Forums – Blogging and participating in related forums will highlight your unique offering and experience. Your signature should always include a link to your website.

Back links - Find which websites link to your competitors' sites. Use a site like www.BacklinkWatch.com to look at your competitor's back links. See who is linking to them and what forums link to them. You can also see which online newspapers, magazines and other media they use for online publicity. Use this strategy to build your own link strategy or add a comment to the threads on their forums (including your own link).

Article Syndication

Articles can be used for double duty by submitting them to the article syndicators like EzineArticles.com or ArticlesBase.com. There are dozens of article syndication sites. These sites will post your article with your link for free. Webmasters come to these sites looking for content for websites or newsletters and will re-print your article with your link – again at no cost to you. One good article can generate dozens of one way links to your website.

Directories

Directory submission can bring instant links but the search engines do not give them much weight. The only directory you really should submit to is The Open Project Directory (<http://www.dmoz.org>).

Social Network Sites

Get your own page on MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, etc. Include links from your own page to your main website. Build a large network of friends. Let them post to your site and link to it. Refresh the content frequently. Respond to requests and questions. Friends will support you by bookmarking and sharing your sites with other friends. For social networks, start with the same original, engaging content as other articles. However, beyond encyclopedia style articles, the following types of content will also work well at generating links.

- Controversial topics
- Bashing the government, brand-names, companies, organizations, politicians, etc.
- Breaking news stories
- Anything funny, gross, disgusting or bizarre

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9. Conclusion

Search Engine Optimization to improve website rankings using engaging, original content on a large scale can be difficult and time consuming work. SEO companies are always looking for ways to cut down on the time this takes by using automated site submission software, machine generated pages, automated link exchange software, automated press releases, link farms etc. Skipping this work leads to the many things that will get your site penalized as all of these techniques produce low quality links and are frowned upon by the search engines.

Get professional help in content development and link building. A solid link building strategy will be resistant over time to the ever changing algorithms of the search engines and will help keep your website highly ranked.