

# How I got a number 1 ranking at Google

By Alex Poole

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A few months ago I decided that to do anything worthwhile online, I needed to start building my own opt-in list. Obvious to most, but to me it came, eventually, like a cartoon lightbulb over my head!

Because I have a full-time job, for now :-), I needed a list-building tactic that was essentially "hands-off". I needed to take an action one time that would continue to bring me opt-in subscribers on auto-pilot while I continued to slave away for my employer.

As a programmer, it made sense for me to write a piece of software that was genuinely valuable to my target market. I knew that if I could offer a tasty enough "carrot" for people to subscribe to my list, then I could just sit back and watch the subscriptions roll in.

I did some research and found that many Internet Marketers who were not technically inclined were paying good money for one of a number of "Affiliate Link Cloaker" products available on the market. An Affiliate Link Cloaker simply takes an affiliate link URL, (such as a Clickbank "hop" URL,) and encodes it into its ASCII equivalent to make it difficult for an unscrupulous user to replace the affiliate's ID with their own and hence steal their commission. Most such tools also place the affiliate page in a frame so the destination URL is not shown in the browser address bar. As a programmer I knew that I could produce such a tool very quickly, and that if I gave it away "gratis" to new subscribers, it should act as a nice juicy carrot to tempt people to sign up. I wrote my "Affiliate Link Framer" product without further ado.

Now I also knew that I could make the most tantalising offer in the world, but would still receive no takers unless I could drive traffic to my website. My next step was to research which keywords people who wanted a product like mine were likely to type into a Search Engine.

I took the free trial at Wordtracker ( <http://www.web-automation.co.uk/wordtracker.html> ) and found that the phrase most often used to search for a product such as mine was "Affiliate Link Cloaker." Other phrases that were also searched on were "Affiliate Link Protector", "Affiliate Link Masker" and a few others. Armed with this knowledge, I set out to build a classic two-page website to "sell" my product.

I chose to concentrate specifically on optimising for Google as this Search Engine now has the lion's share of the market, powering as it does the search results for Yahoo, AOL and MSN as well

as a number of the smaller players. Knowing that one of the most important factors for Google ranking is the page title, I decided that I should include both my primary and secondary keyword phrases in the title. Not wanting to be accused of "spamming" the Search Engines, however, I was careful not to repeat any words. I also wanted to get the word "free" into the title to let surfers know right from the outset that my product was differentiated from the competition by virtue of its price (nothing!) The page title I eventually settled on was:

titleFree Affiliate Link Cloaker | Framer | Masker | Protector/title

The next step was to back up the title with matching page headings. I chose:

h1Affiliate Link Framer/h1

h2Free Link Cloaker | Masker | Protector/h2

h4Stop Unscrupulous Users from Hijacking your Affiliate Links and Stealing your Commissions, all completely FREEE!/h4

As you can see, all the keywords from the title are also mentioned in the page headings, though they are not just duplicated. The "trick" here is to get the words in without too much obvious phrase repetition (which could trip the "spam" filters and be the kiss-of-death to your SE rankings.)

After this step, the rest of the page just needs to contain the same keywords dotted throughout in different orders. Italics and Bold type seem to help, and it also doesn't hurt to put them in the alt tags of any images you use, (though again, if you have many images, vary the words used and their order to avoid excessive duplication.) There are plenty of online tools that allow you to check keyword density (try <http://www.searchengineworld.com/cgi-bin/kwda.cgi> ,) though my own take on all the "density" fuss is that if a page reads naturally enough to a human, it will probably not trip the spam filters.

You can see the end result of my efforts at <http://www.web-automation.co.uk>

Feel free to analyse my keyword density if you want to ;-)

Now some may think that with a nicely optimised page sitting on a website, I could sit back and wait for the traffic. Unfortunately those days have long gone. What I needed to do next was build some "reputation" and "backlinks" for the page.

"Reputation" in Search Engine terms describes the words within the links that point to your page. For example, if a link to my page were to say "Affiliate Link Cloaker" that would be great. The link text matches the theme of the page and reinforces the likelihood that my page is indeed about an "Affiliate Link Cloaker." If, on the other hand, it said "Fly Fishing Supplies" then, clearly, it would do little to reinforce the theme of the page, as those words are not mentioned anywhere on the page itself.

Backlinks are important for any Search Engine ranking, but especially for Google. Backlinks are simply links to your page. Any backlink is good, but a backlink that carries your keywords in the link text and hence enhances your "reputation", doubly so. If, of course, your URL IS your keywords (seperated-by-dashes-please, underscores\_don't\_perform\_well,) then every link to you will also increase your page's reputation automatically.

I was able to place links to my page from a few of my other sites. Unfortunately none of these sites have a high enough Google PageRank to do that much good. (A discussion of Google PageRank is really beyond the scope of this article, but Jim Boykin's excellent site <http://www.internet-advertising-marketing-manual.com/> is a good starting point for further research.)

However, my "small-fry" links enhanced my page's reputation for the term "Affiliate Link Cloaker" just enough, and after waiting a week or so, I saw my page enter the Google index for this phrase. Unfortunately I entered the index at number 20-something, and as everyone knows, only a tiny percentage of surfers ever go past page 1 on the search engines.

At this point I knew I needed a backlink from a site with a higher PageRank than I had access to, so I employed a neat little trick that can sometimes pay dividends. I noticed that my web hosting supplier's front page had a not-to-be-sniffed-at PageRank of 5. I also noticed that the host carried no testimonials from any of its customers. Being very happy with the service I had received from them in the past, I dropped an email to the web host, suggesting that their credibility might be boosted by including some testimonials on their front page, and enclosing one of my own. I waited with fingers crossed. A few days later, to my great joy, I saw that my testimonial had been published on their front page WITH A LINK to my site!

A few days after that, Google's crawler spotted the backlink and my position for "Affiliate Link Cloaker" went to number 3. (Jim Edwards' sales page for his Affiliate Link Cloaker product would be tricky to beat, having a PageRank of 5 with a number of top-quality backlinks,) and my position for "Free Affiliate Link Cloaker" rocketed straight to number 1, where it has remained since. Note that I never submitted my site to Google, but instead just waited for their crawler to pick it up. Most SEO experts seem to agree that this is preferable.

Since this point I have had a steady stream of traffic to my site, mostly from Google, and I have converted a large majority of visitors into willing subscribers, over-the-moon to have received something gratis for which they were expecting to pay. Of course, it would take a little more than a single PR5 backlink and some on-page optimisation to score highly for a search term like "hosting" or "internet marketing" but the same principles still stand irrespective of the level of competition for the term.

So just to recap the essential steps:

- 1) Research your keywords, there's no point scoring #1 for a term that no-one actually searches on!
- 2) Optimise your page for your keywords, paying particular attention to title, headings and the first paragraph.
- 3) Get backlinks. Quality (ie high PR) always beats quantity. Try desperately hard to get your keywords into the link text.
- 4) Wait for Google's crawler to index your site.
- 5) Don't sit there refreshing your site's stats for hours like I used to do. Move onwards and upwards!

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-----Resource Box-----  
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Alex Poole is a web and database programmer specialising in products that save time and make money.

His free Affiliate Link Framer software is available from <http://www.web-automation.co.uk/>

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