

# Creating Link Popularity - Without Getting Banned

By Dan Thies

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By now, most webmasters know that link popularity is the single most important factor in driving top search engine rankings. But did you know that some some links can actually kill your search engine rankings?

The importance of links has led to the creation of "links programs" such as LinksToYou and others. If you're already in a links program, hold on to your hat, because I've got bad news for you.

How Links Programs Work:

In a links program, every member of the program uploads a page or pages to their website. These pages carry links to the other program participants' websites.

Why They Don't Help Search Engine Rankings:

All of the major search engines are aware of these programs, and most of them use automated processes to weed out "identical" pages. Even if a search engine recognizes the link, they won't give it much weight.

How Links Programs Can Kill Your Business:

The most popular search engine in the world today is Google. In late 2000, Google began a systematic campaign of permanently removing links program participants from their index. Altavista has begun a similar program, although recent problems kept them from executing it.

Don't the operators of links programs know all this?

Of course they do, yet they continue to operate and proliferate. Tobacco companies know cigarettes kill people, yet they continue to sell them.

What To Do If You're In A Links Program:

First, immediately remove all of the program's pages from your site. Second, remove all the links they had you set up on your other pages. Third, if possible, cancel your membership... then get to work creating some legitimate link popularity.

Creating True Link Popularity

If you want your site to have lasting popularity and relevance with the search engines, you need links from related sites. Dedicate 10 minutes a day to locating and contacting other webmasters to swap links, adding your site to directories, and publishing articles in your area of expertise.

## Create Multiple Layers Of Links

For some search engines, links to your home page are good enough. At least some of your links, though, should be targeted at your internal pages. For example, if your site sells tools for gardeners, get some links set up to your "how to" and FAQ pages too. This will help you get more of your site's content into the search engine, and increase referrals significantly.

## Get Those Links Indexed!

It doesn't do you any good to set up links if the search engines never find them. You can submit the pages that link to you, but most search engines nowadays won't index them unless there are other links to those pages somewhere on the web. Consider adding a "resources" page to your site, linked from your home page, with links to all the individual pages that link to you.

## My Secret Recipe: How To Make Sure Your Links Get Indexed

In order to ensure that the links pointing to your site get indexed, you really have to take an additional step, and set up a second domain and website - ideally with a completely different hosting provider. For instance, the gardening website in the above example might need a partner site like "gardening-resources.com" with a single page linked to every webpage that links to your site.

Once you've set up the secondary domain, add a link to it from your main site's home page, and wait for the search engines to index it. Don't forget to link back to your main site, of course. You should submit this additional site to the same directories that you use to list your primary site.

It also helps to ask for an additional link to your secondary domain when you set up links swaps. Just explain how the secondary site helps both partners, by adding link popularity and helping the links pages get indexed. Any sensible webmaster will gladly add the second link.

## What Happens Next?

As the link popularity of both of your sites grows, they begin to feed on each other. Don't neglect to track any search engine referrals to your secondary site - if they grow to a high level, you may want to turn it into more than just a links page. If you've done a good job of optimizing your primary site, though, chances are your secondary site will never outrank your primary site on any search.

If you take these initial steps today, and commit to a program of link building for ten minutes a day, your site's traffic will begin to rise dramatically within just 2-3 months, and it should only get better if you stick with the program.

I wish you success...

Dan Thies is the editor of Website Promotion Central, one of the Internet's ten most popular websites on the subject. He has been helping his clients (and friends) promote their websites since 1996. His latest book, "Search Engine Optimization Fast Start," reveals the techniques he's used to consistently beat the experts at their own game, and is available at <http://www.cannedbooks.com>

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