

Don't Swap Links, Swap Content!

By Dan Thies

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Conventional wisdom is wrong... again!

That's the only possible explanation for the fact that one of the most powerful search engine positioning techniques ever invented is used by fewer than 1% of all websites.

Ask any "expert" how you can improve your site's link popularity and they'll tell you to trade links with other websites. Don't they know there's a better way?

What's Wrong With Link Swaps?

Don't get me wrong - link swaps are better than nothing. However, there are three big weaknesses inherent in any simple link swap.

First, search engines rarely index links pages, mostly because there are usually no external links to them. Translation: that link swap you just negotiated may not even get noticed by the search engines.

Second, your link usually goes on a page full of other links, with few if any external links supporting it. Translation: search engines like Google will give the link minimal weight, even if they find it.

Third, the keyword content of the page that links to you is completely beyond your control. Translation: search engines may not see the link as relevant to your site's keywords.

What's The Answer?

Instead of swapping links, swap content. If each website provides the other with a one-page article on a subject they both cover, and they set it up properly, the weaknesses of a traditional link swap don't apply.

How To Set Up A Content Swap:

This may take a little more time than a link swap, since each webmaster will want to exercise a little editorial control over articles they publish on their site.

Step 1. Swapping

Agree on the subject, and swap articles. I'll refer to the article each site receives as the "guest

article." The page title and contents of your article should include your site's important search engine keywords, and a byline or resource box with your keywords that links to your website.

Step 2. Publishing

Each webmaster reformats the "guest article" to fit their site's layout, and integrates it into their site - in order for this to work, it must be linked to from a page that's already in all of the major search engines.

Step 3. Linking

Each webmaster sets up a link on their website, pointing to their "guest article" on the other site. This should be a text link, and it should include your keywords. It must be on a page that's already in the search engines, but not the same page your article links to - search engines may not count the link if two pages point to each other.

What A Content Swap Achieves:

Since each article has both internal and external links pointing to it, all the major search engines should eventually find them and include them in their databases.

The links the search engines find will carry more weight because the articles only have one link on them, and because the article itself has external links pointing to it.

In addition, the links on your article will be considered highly relevant to your keywords, because they're found on a page which has been optimized for the keywords you want.

Link Popularity Is More Than Counting Links!

The total number of links to your site does not truly reflect how effectively your site is positioned. Even on the Google search engine, where results are largely based on links, I've seen sites with fewer than 100 external links outranking sites with over a thousand.

Content swaps allow you to make every link count, by creating a highly relevant link that directly contributes to your search engine rankings.

I wish you success...

Dan Thies has been helping his clients (and friends) promote their websites since 1996.

His latest book, "Search Engine Fast Start," is available at <http://www.cannedbooks.com>

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