

Case In Point: What You Need To Know About Link Popularity

By Karon Thackston

Case In Point: What You Need To Know About Link Popularity

Karon Thackston
kt@ktamarketing.com

KT & Associates <http://www.ktamarketing.com>

by Karon Thackston © 2003
<http://www.copywritingcourse.com>

Link popularity. The term has flooded the 'Net over the last year, and everybody is in a buzz trying to build link popularity for their sites. But do we really understand what link popularity is, and how it works best? If not, you're about to find out.

Debra O'Neil-Mastaler of Alliance Link (<http://www.Alliance-Link.com>) is here to give us the ins and outs of link popularity and how to ensure your linking strategies accomplish your goals.

KARON: Hi, Debra! It was such a pleasure to meet you in Atlanta for Jill Whalen's Search Engine Conference. Thanks for agreeing to give us some link popularity tips today.

DEBRA: Thanks, Karon... you, too! It's my pleasure to be here.

KARON: Here's the way I see it. While those who work professionally in the search engine optimization field understand the importance of link popularity, many small business owners are just now coming into the "know." Tell me why link popularity is so vital to success with SEO.

DEBRA: The short answer is because search engines, especially Google, use link popularity in their algorithms to determine a Web site's ranking.

Web sites are given a link popularity score based on the quality and number of external links pointing to them. Generally, when someone says he wants to increase his site's link popularity, he is referring to the number of quality links pointing at his site. While this is a good strategy and an important step, it is just that -- a step in the overall SEO process.

KARON: You mentioned link quality. There seems to be some controversy between those who say links don't have to be relevant, they just have to exist, and those who say that links must be from sites that could somehow be associated with your own site. Tell us the truth, Debra... which one is it?

DEBRA: lol The truth is, if I had the answer to link relevancy, I'd be basking in the sun somewhere with Buff Boy on an extended first class vacation, counting the zillions I made from my tell-all link popularity e-book instead of working...

KARON: Grin I like the sound of that! So, tell us what you see as the truth. :)

DEBRA: The most truthful answer is -- I don't know if links have to be relevant. I don't have any definitive answers or truths to tell, and I don't know anyone that can, except the search engines of course.

KARON: So, what should people do about trading links or adding one-way links off their sites?

DEBRA: Here's my two cents: If it makes sense for you to link to a site in a complementary industry, then do it. Your visitors will appreciate the helpful content, and the other site may link back to you. People return to sites with products they want and resources they can use; if it makes sense to have links to pages that complement your products, then do it!

While I don't advocate linking to a bunch of non-related sites, I don't believe there's a penalty involved for linking to a couple of quality sites outside your niche. Most people/businesses have sites they like or a cause they want to support. Promoting these sites shows community spirit and establishes corporate personality.

Add these hyperlinks to a "links we like" section on your resource page. Separating the non-related links is helpful because it wouldn't dilute your sales message or confuse your visitors.

Link because it makes sense for your website. If you link only to influence search engine rankings, be careful. More times than not, this approach eventually leads to a drop in rankings or worse.

KARON: So, put "site-related" links in one section of a page and others in a separate section of the page. Cool. That's easy enough. Now, let me ask you this... what do you think about automated link generators? You know, those programs that are supposed to scour the 'Net for sites that relate to yours and send automated emails asking for a link exchange?

DEBRA: I've never used them, so I can't speak directly to their effectiveness. Since I've been doing this for several years, I've created a technique and amassed solid resources to assist me. Every job I handle is hand crafted, time tested, and client approved!

I will come off the centerline and say that you should always customize the emails you send to potential link partners. No one likes a canned email request.

KARON: What do you recommend we include in emails asking for link exchanges?

DEBRA: Create one that will stand out and be different. That email is the make or break in your quest to improve your link popularity and "get the link." Write a ho-hum email, and it goes to the delete file. Write a compelling personalized email, and you'll probably get the link!

KARON: Great stuff, Deb! Now, link popularity has other benefits, too, right? In addition to boosting SE performance, it gives added avenues for driving traffic to sites. What other ways do those who pursue link popularity benefit?

DEBRA: One of the great things about linking to sites is the benefit everyone receives in the process. It's one of the few, long-term, low-cost, win-win situations out there. Sites that employ strategic link marketing programs know they stand to gain increased traffic for human visitors and spiders, brand exposure, a keen competitive analysis, and higher search engine rankings.

KARON: Yeah, all those things are important to online marketers. So, Debra... what is the most common mistake people make when trying to develop a link popularity strategy?

DEBRA: I've found it's a tie between not developing a marketing plan and failing to see the big picture.

Building a solid link popularity strategy is NOT just about slapping links on a page or making sure all of your Web pages are hyperlinked. It should be part of a long-term search engine marketing plan for your online business.

Link building and link optimization programs should be done in conjunction with a well-organized SEO campaign... period. It's not a quick fix, and the changes won't materialize overnight. But if you implement a thoughtful link marketing strategy, and invest some sweat equity, you'll see the benefits in more ways than one. (Or you could outsource it to a link popularity professional! wink)

KARON: Thanks so much, Debra! I really appreciate the insights.

DEBRA: You're most welcome, Karon. Glad to do it.

Visit Debra's site at <http://www.Alliance-Link.com> for additional information about link popularity.

Most buying decisions are emotional. Your ad copy should be, too! Let Karon write targeted copy and ezine articles for you. Visit her site at <http://www.ktamarketing.com>, or learn to write your own copy at <http://www.copywritingcourse.com>. Don't forget to subscribe to Karon's free ezine at <http://www.ktamarketing.com/ezine.html>.

[Get-Articles.com : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.](#)

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)