

# Think Before You Link

By Rozey Gean

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Exchanging links and providing links from your site to others is a widely accepted means of generating more exposure for yourself and others. In many cases, entrepreneurs provide links to other sites that offer related products and services that are an extension of their own.

Before you link, you should take into consideration many factors of what linking could actually mean to your own business and existence on the web.

You should avoid including links to other sites directly from your home page. By adding links to someone else's site directly from your home page, you are creating an opportunity to lose the prospective client before he/she has an opportunity to see exactly what products and services you offer. Once the visitor clicks on to another individual's site, chances are he/she will not make it back to your site.

Refrain from linking to competitive sites. It is perfectly safe to provide links to sites that offer products and services that may complement your own. However, by taking your visitors directly to your competitors, you risk losing their business.

Adequately research all links that you include within your site. Know where you are sending your visitors, the site and owner's reputation, and the quality of their products and services. When you refer a visitor to another site, make sure you endorse the products and services offered there. It would be a good practice to periodically check the link to ensure that it is working appropriately. Dead links are a real turn off to visitors.

Avoid linking to sites that are not relevant to business. This includes games, music, puzzles, videos, graphics, and animations that are totally unrelated to your business. Once a visitor clicks on a link that attracts him/her to a cool game, he/she may get lost in "Game Land" and forget about you.

If at all possible, create a specific page on your site wherein you can include all links. Categorize them by topic to make it easy for your visitors to browse and choose where they want to go. If space and time permit, include a brief summary as to what the site you are linked to entails.

Link swaps can be a viable means of advertising with other sites to gain exposure. Carefully pick and choose other sites with which you can exchange links. Contact the site owner and propose the exchange. Determine whether the link will be text based or a graphic image such as a button or banner. Strive to check each reciprocal link once a month to ensure your link still appears on his/her site. Before you take down another site's link, notify the site owner.

The risks involved in exchanging and providing links are minimal if you do your homework and maintain your research on a regular basis. The results of this marketing technique can prove rewarding and profitable. There is no cost involved, only the time factor entailed in creating and maintaining the links. Providing links to other sites is a great way to show your visitors you have implemented yet another way to better serve their needs!

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Rozey Gean is the founder of the Marketing-Seek.com website where ezine publishers and writers are brought together in an easy-to-use, friendly interface.

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