Make Your Links WORK!

The 80-20 Keep-It-Real Guide To Linking

How To Use C ➤T ➤P ➤M And Links
To Grow Your Site Into The Top 3%

by Ken Evoy

---

*Relation and connection are not
somewhere and sometimes,
but everywhere and always*

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

Preface

This book can be read in three ways...

If you would like an original, thought-provoking, and compelling 30,000 foot view of how to build a roaring online business that gets found by the Search Engines *and* that converts visitors into profits, **start at Chapter 1**. Building a link program is only a very small part of Search Engine Optimization (SEO). And SEO is only a fraction of what's involved in building a successful online business. To profoundly understand how links fit into the big picture and how to best spend your business-building time, **Chapter 1 is highly recommended**.

If you want to jump "straight to links," take a few minutes to understand the up-to-date theory, presented in a common sense, easy-to-understand way. In some instances, this presentation differs from "common wisdom." So it, too, is recommended reading. You will get more out of the strategies that follow. **Click here to start at Chapter 2**.

To go directly to the highest yield, most time-efficient strategies for building an effective link program, **skip straight to Chapter 3**. You will receive a simple, powerful, cost-and-time-effective way to build links.

We highly recommend the first two chapters, and reading the book in order, in its entirety. A thorough grounding in the big picture (Chapter 1) and link theory/background (Chapter 2) will help Chapter 3 yield greater dividends.

But if you're in a hurry, do the "best-fit-for-you" reading route and then register for **Value Exchange.**

Ready?

It's all yours.

1.   In The Beginning...

In the "beginning," there was the Internet (**Arpanet**, actually). That was for scientists and academics.

Then came HTML and the World Wide Web. **Tim Berners-Lee** delivered the **"Net for the rest of us."**

As the number of Web sites grew geometrically, Search Engines (SEs) appeared to help us find information.

Moving forward, the next step was somewhat predictable. **Where people go...**

... marketers naturally follow... the beginning of e-commerce.

This "natural" progression, of course, led to the appearance of those who market to marketers, including the "Search Engine Optimization" ("SEO") industry.

For years, only large, well-financed companies and highly sophisticated individuals succeeded commercially, until the most recent major step forward...

Site Build It! (SBI!)... "e-commerce for the rest of us."

E-commerce is simply "doing business online." *Anyone* can do it, with the right attitude, process and tools. That is exactly what you *will* have after reading this booklet. It really is simple... if you stay focused and **keep** it simple.

Your prospective customers search for information. Meet them by **providing it.**

The **Content** ➡ **Traffic** ➡ **PREselling** ➡ **Monetization** process is simple, natural, and powerful. Its success rate is staggering -- 62% of such sites make the Top 3% of all Web sites...

http://buildit.sitesell.com/sbi-businesses/traffic-alexa.html

The documented proof of its power is overwhelming (and unique)...

http://proof.sitesell.com/

If you do not know **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M**, take five minutes and review it now...

http://ctpm.sitesell.com/

Site Build It! provides the complete set of integrated tools, everything you need to execute **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M** *flawlessly.* Most small business people start the process **hoping** that it will "work" (not quite realizing *yet* that *they* make it work).

As they experience the initial trickle of visitors, they wonder. As it turns into a torrent of PREsold customers who monetize in a variety of ways, they "get it." They know how and why it is all happening.

Despite their understanding, the sense of "wonder" remains. The ever-growing snowball effect of a properly built **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M** site (which **SBI!** virtually guarantees) is almost mystical.

There is, in fact, **nothing** mystical about it. The results are neither magical nor mysterious. It just kind of seems that way, when your success grows beyond what you had dreamed possible, beyond what "the experts" themselves achieve...

http://case-studies.sitesell.com/

Quite the opposite, **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M** is founded in solid **logic,** the predictability of **human behavior,** and the ever-more-complex **algorithms** of the Search Engines (but without the need to understand the math!).

A feeling grows. It springs from the liberation of knowing that **you** can do it and *are* doing it. We call it...

The Special Free(dom) Prize Inside Every SBI!

Let's get started...

1.1.   Keep It Real...
Search Engines Get Smarter *Fast*

Everything starts somewhere. And the first Search Engines were indeed pretty simple. To determine the relevance of Web pages for a search term, they looked for keywords in various places on a Web page.

It was easy for marketers to meet/manipulate the crude "relevancy algorithms" of Search Engines. All you had to do was stuff a page with "invisible" keywords (ex., text in the same color as background color) and BINGO! Your page would rank #1 for search requests for that "stuffed" keyword.

"Search Engine Optimization" ("SEO") was not yet an official "profession" (the first

marketers discovered and saved their tricks for their own benefit). Their rudimentary reverse-engineering allowed them to rank highly at the engines for all their important keywords, with little work.

Life was bountiful for Search Engine Optimizers (SEOers). The relevancy algorithms were easy to reverse-engineer and manipulate and "beat." (Yes, even then the SEO concept was to "beat" the engines, sort of like the way you might beat the game of blackjack at the casinos.)

And just to make life extra-sweet...

 ... there was near-zero sophistication amongst competitors.

Some SEOers were "good" (called "white hats" nowadays). They played within the rules. They tried to match the "algorithms of the month" without abusing the SEs (Search Engines).

Others were "bad" (yup, "black hats"). They exploited loopholes in the rules and otherwise tried to fool the engines. Crude tricks like "keyword stuffing" worked, followed by replicated gateway pages. (99% identical, only one optimized keyword would vary.)

But the engines evolved.

As old tricks stopped working, more sophisticated gimmicks emerged. "Non-replicated, zero-value doorway pages" and "cloaking" took center stage. Just like the earlier generation of tricks, they worked at first.

But the engines evolved.

And yet, the games continue, new ploys replacing discarded ones, right up to the extremely sophisticated maneuvers of today.

But the engines never rest. They get smarter. It may not seem so day by day, but month upon month, year upon year, they evolve, and **they always will.**

SIDEBAR

Don't get the wrong impression. Engines do **not** adapt to counteract SEOers. That does happen to some small degree, of course. The main drive, though, is to get better at their primary mission... **recognizing reality.** More on this later.

While the engines *ban* the "bad" SEOers, even the "white hats" will progressively fall by the wayside. In the long run, the Search Engines don't really care whether

an SEOer is "good" or "bad." They are all part of a "whip and buggy industry," unable to keep up with the natural pressure of engine evolution.

And speaking of evolution...
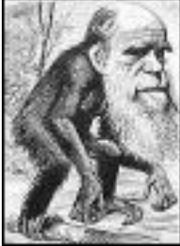
... the Net is a Darwinian environment. SEOers will become extinct as the "search ecosystem" becomes untenable and complex .

SEOers, by the very definition of the nature of their jobs, work specifically to rank highly at the Search Engines, for keywords related to the businesses of their clients. They do that by trying to meet the requirements of the SEs' algorithms.

But there are two problems with that approach...

1) Complexity -- in those "good old days," it was fairly easy to reverse-engineer the engines. It is now amazingly complex. So SEOers make their best educated guesses at what the algorithms "require" in order to rank highly.

SIDEBAR

If anyone ever gives you the impression that s/he knows exactly what the SEs "want," ***run-don't-walk*** in the opposite direction. No one knows the "secret sauce formula." At Google, for example, a grand total of three people *might* know the entire big picture -- everyone else works on a small piece of it.

And those three people? They are tied down by a Non-Disclosure Agreement that makes the one for Coca-Cola's formula look like Swiss cheese.

Frankly, it's the height of ego and self-delusion for any "outsider" to pretend that they know how any major Search Engine determines what a Web page is all about.

And yet, post after post in SEO forums are all about that. It's really just speculation, a waste of time.

As the months fly by, the job of algorithm-chasing becomes harder and harder... with lower and lower yield. **Bad news for SEOers.**

2) Reality -- if the "complexity" problem sounds big, it's nothing compared to the issue of "reality." Actually, **"Complexity Avenue" meets "Reality Street"...**

... at "Impossibility Square."

To understand why, let's jump to an important question and its oft-overlooked answer...

Q: "What is the ultimate goal of Search Engines like Google?"

A: "Recognize what a page/site is all about *and* how good it is."

Sound easy? Well...

It *is* easy **for a human.** But it is incredibly complicated for a machine. Yes, Search Engines *are* getting more and more sophisticated...

- computing power continues to double every 18 months

- hundreds of brilliant computer PhDs work 24 x 7 to
  build smarter algorithms

- major technology jumps (ex., Artificial Intelligence)
  will become important.

So the engines will indeed get better and better at what their goal boils down to...
Recognize Reality.

However, SEOers do not **create** reality. They merely **mimic** it. They try to meet a formula's definition of reality... a definition that is constantly changing and becoming more and more complex.

In a mere year, today's "sophisticated definition of reality" will be considered as crude as "keyword stuffing." How in the world can anyone keep up with that kind of acceleration of complexity?

They can't.

The SEOers' never-ending chase of the ever-evolving algorithms is doomed. Even today, algorithm shakeups cause great consternation. Whenever the "Google Dance" happens, a pained uproar goes up amongst the SEO forums, as if Google owed them a living.

Whenever a major Search Engine changes its algorithms, SEOer teeth-gnashing starts anew. The same controversies flare...

"How unfair," they clamor, "that the engines don't post their relevancy criteria." Somehow, they figure the search world would be a better place if that were to happen. Better for whom? And for how long? Every "black hat" would quickly get to work on mimicking the "secret sauce."

You stand at an important crossroads... take months to learn complicated SEO and run the "treadmill of ever-increasing complexity"? Or use **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** to leapfrog straight to what the engines seek... **reality** (relevance and quality).

The proof of the "power of simplicity" is indisputable -- 62% of **SBI!**-built sites surge into the Top 3% of all Web sites...

http://buildit.sitesell.com/sbi-businesses/traffic-alexa.html

And the entire body of proof of its power is overwhelming (and unmatched)...

http://proof.sitesell.com/

My recommendation? Clear your mind. Simplify your life. Focus on your business. You **will** "win the world" by not meddling with it.

But only you can decide the right path for you. Read this booklet and *then* decide.

As we proceed, remember this important fact...

The Search Engines owe nothing to SEOers, "good" or "bad."

The Search Engines owe nothing to those who use **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M.** They do not "reward" you for creating great Content out of appreciation, nor as a way to say "thank you." *It's merely what happens* because of what the engines want.

So... to whom **do** the Search Engines cater? Simple...

They deliver *searchers* the best search results possible. And they do *that,* in turn, for one reason only...

Search Engines owe their actual customers, *advertisers,* the most targeted eyeballs possible. **That** obligation is why all engines will constantly strive to get better at *the two-word mission that best summarizes their #1 Goal...*

1.2.   *The* Search Engine Mission...
Recognize Reality

"Why is *recognizing reality* the Search Engine's #1 Goal?"

Think about your own reaction when you do a search at an engine. What do *you* do

when it delivers high-quality, relevant sites consistently?

You come back for more. You tell your friends, too, with zeal. Bottom line... more and more surfers do more and more searches.

"And what does *that* mean?"

Ah-ah! A really great question. Now we **are** getting to the heart of the matter...

Ever notice the ads on the Search Engines Results Pages ("SERPs")?

Those advertisers are the SEs' real customers. Surprise!...

All this time you thought that the SE "product" was "search" and that the "customers" were the "searching surfers." Nope... the *real* customers are the advertisers. The "product" is the **targeted** interest that **each and every searcher...**

... openly declares whenever they do a search. **Targeted surfers,** *that* is what the SEs deliver to their customers, the advertisers.

Think that's cynical? No, it's just business. If you want to know who the customer is, *just follow who pays money to whom.*

Bottom line for the SEs... the more relevant the search results, the greater the number of searches, the more ads sold, the higher the profits.

SIDEBAR

There is an interesting "other" bottom line. This one belongs to the marketing companies who **buy** those ads...

As a marketer, it *may* be profitable to advertise. But it is *always* profitable to rank highly in the SERP's editorial listings.

It's **easier** to buy ads, of course. Simply spend money. Hope for a positive ROI.

C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M takes time and effort...

... but the diamonds are forever.

"What happens if an SEO marketing company threatens the SEs by degrading the relevancy of the SERPs?"

They will hurt you, that's what. Why? It's elementary...

If you degrade their relevancy, you hurt the mechanism that delivers targeted surfers to their customers.

And here's the surprising news...

SEOers, "black hat and white," degrade the quality of the SERPs. Oh, and...

... *my* hat does not count. I'm not an SEOer.

It goes without saying that both white hats and black are doomed. The "black hats" play a never-ending game of "stay one step ahead to avoid getting banned." We won't talk about "the bad guys" anymore -- they are irrelevant, worth mentioning *only this one time* for the overview.

The good ones play a slightly different game, "chase the ever-changing algorithm without tricking the engines." However, they are **not** "creating a reality." Although they do not trick the engines, their **focus** is on the engines, not on delivering reality (in the form of high-value content).

In other words, they do the maneuvers that they do so well, specifically for the engines. They put tons of "sort-of content" into the engines' database. That is not what the engines want. In the long run, they seek reality... **genuine content, not facsimiles** that were performed just for the engines' benefit.

Life would be wonderful for the engines if everyone just kept it real. Luckily for you, they don't. Why "lucky"?

Because if you follow **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M,** you have a running head start. And it's only going to get bigger as the engines get smarter. This book shows you how to leapfrog SEOers **and** all other small businesses online. How?

C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M!

This process keeps it simple. You jump straight to the end point, **reality.** That is what the engines want. So easy. So powerful.

"What exactly is *reality*?"

Another fabulous question, and I promise not to get philosophical. I'll use the term "reality" in a very specific sense throughout this e-booklet.

Here is how *reality* works...

STEP 1) Web surfer looks for information by entering a search term at an SE.

STEP 2) Search Engine returns a SERP (Search Engine Results Page), which features links to both **editorial** content (the actual search results) and **advertising** that contextually fits the nature of the search.

STEP 3) Surfer either clicks on an ad, or clicks on an editorial search listing.

SIDEBAR

Most viewers regard "editorial content" as being more credible. (Not all actually understand the difference, an ethical shortcoming of some engines. But that's another story, for another time.)

Think of an *offline* newspaper. You read the stories and you see the ads. Many of those stories are, in fact, the results of publicity efforts by marketing companies. **But you regard it as editorial. So...**

... **your "BS filter" is set much lower** when you read an article in a newspaper. You are more open-minded and believing about what you read. (That is why, by law, those "tricky pages" that look like editorial content but are really one huge sales letter, must say "ADVERTISING.")

Yes, you will notice the ads. You may even read those that "connect" with what you seek -- some of those may be relevant and timely. So you may even act upon those. But generally, we all read ads with our toughest "BS filter" functioning.

Let's compare that with the *online* world...

We're back to the SERP. You may notice the ads, even give one or two a quick read. You might actually click on one that hits you as highly relevant. Other than that, **you click and read the editorial search results with more credibility.**

STEP 4) The surfer decides if the SERP delivered what he wanted and if the content was any good. In other words, the surfer **"recognizes the reality of that page"** (i.e., relevant and good information).

STEP 5) Based on that recognition, the surfer takes other actions. These "other actions" are becoming more and more important to the SEs. They actually

measure and track a variety of parameters that serve as ways to measure this behavior ("off-page criteria" -- we'll get there in a second).

Humans have little trouble recognizing the reality of a Web site. Search Engines do, however. Some day, they *will* use highly advanced technologies like Artificial Intelligence to "simulate human judgment." But for now, if they can't be as "smart" as a human, **they can at least measure what humans do** (collectively) *if and when and after* they click on an editorial link on a SERP.

Let's go back to STEPS 4 and 5...

Suppose that the surfer had entered "porcupine mating habits" as her search term. She clicked on the #1 editorial search listing (the text ad for Viagra did not seem too relevant, but it **might have been**... if the searcher had been a male porcupine).

In any event, our typical Web surfer is now reading a page about the mating habits of the porcupines. Let's see how she reacts (at various levels of consciousness)...

```
Is this page delivering the info I wanted?

Is it excellent material?  Is it well presented?  If so...

Is it so good that I'm interested in this site and will click
through more of its pages?

Wow!  Look at the time.  I didn't realize that I've already
spent 90 minutes here.

Should I provide a link to this page on my own site about
porcupines?  It's great!

Hey, it has an RSS feed!  I'll publish that feed on my site.

Superb -- I'll post about this site in the porcupine forums.
```

The reality? This visitor found **relevant** info. She loves it (i.e., it's a **good** page). How can the engines recognize that reality (relevance and quality)?

On-page criteria provide a "simple degree of relevance"... so *do* sprinkle your specific keywords in all the right places (ex., TITLE, META tags, headlines, body text, links, etc.) *on* each page. Balance with synonyms and associated words, too.

Off-page criteria track human behavior, starting from the SERP to what happens later (up to months later!), to determine **quality.**

For example... Which of the editorial offerings got the click? (Human must have thought the title and description were pretty relevant. Of course, an engine has to account for relative location on the page.)

How long did the surfer take to return and do another search? (The longer, the better that page must have been -- everything else being equal.)

How many links go to this page and how good/relevant are those links? (The more high-quality, relevant links to that page, the better.)

All the examples of our porcupine surfer's reactions (see above) can be measured and tracked. And they increasingly determine **more** than just a "higher degree of relevance".... they also imply *better quality.*

These, and hundreds more, are collectively known as **"off-page criteria."** And, as we'll see, **there is only one way to generate strong off-page criteria.**

SIDEBAR

It is fairly easy to "trick" any **single** parameter, such as "click popularity" (more on this later) or "time to return to engine" or "inbound links." The engines do build in fraud protection and ban the "black hats." But as the number and importance of off-page criteria grow, it becomes **increasingly more impossible to "SEO" them.**

You started reading this booklet because you want to build a successful online business. The way to do that is **not** through SEO. Why **not?**

Because SEO merely mimics reality. And, as time passes, the ever-smarter SEs will recognize SEO'd sites for what they are... **pale imitations of reality** that do not address what the searcher was looking for... **quality.**

SEO sites are not "reality." And the engines recognize that better and better.

1.3.   *Quality* Drives "Off-Page Criteria"

Do you know the special edge that separates **SBI!** users (**SBIers)** from the rest of the pack... including SEO **experts?**

Human behavior.

SBI! sites smell real, because they *are* real.

You simply **know** when someone knows his "island of expertise" and loves it. *That* is what PREselling is all about.

After that, human behavior tells the engines all they need to know.

SBIers have all the pleasure *and* all the effectiveness of *being* real, instead of the tedium and ineffectiveness of simulating reality.

────

Earlier, I mentioned that most SEOers merely play an algorithm-chasing game. They mimic reality.

The problem with that game is that they "play" *against* **the most sophisticated search experts in the world...**

... hundreds of brainiacs, all working for the Search Engines. Not only are they brilliant search experts with a dizzyingly impressive array of skills, their resources are virtually unlimited. And **all they do** is work on "search."

I won't even pretend to know all the off-page criteria that engines track, nor how they weight them. I **can** tell you with certainty that this knowledge does *not* matter. All you have to do is "skip the math" and leapfrog to deliver what they **do** seek...

Reality, in the form of relevance and quality.

Most experts refer to off-page criteria loosely, and almost synonymously, as Google **PageRank.** However, my pet theory is that Google PageRank, while of some value, is merely a diversionary tactic, a bit of SEO entertainment. It keeps SEOers focused on one narrow aspect of off-page criteria, while in fact all the major engines have likely developed hundreds of off-page criteria.

SIDEBAR

What is **PageRank (PR)**?

It is a **relative measure of a site's reputation according to the quality (and, to a lesser extent, the quantity) of its in-pointing links.**

Google's toolbar (available at **http://toolbar.google.com/**) displays the **PageRank (PR)** score of a Web site as a green band. Much has been made about PageRank and how it impacts SEO.

Theoretically, a site with PR of 7 will likely rank higher than a site with a PR of 3 for the same keyword, everything else (ex., on-page criteria) being equal. And a link from a site with a PR of 5 is more beneficial to you than a link from a site with a PR of 3, all else being equal (ex., link from home page or 18th-tier "links page"?).

It's best not to take PageRank **too** seriously... or **you** will soon be on the wrong side of the 80-20 rule (i.e.,80% -- benefits, 20% -- efforts) and start chasing algorithms, too! Worse, you may fall into the "manipulation" trap. Speaking of manipulation... **don't!** So...

How **do** you achieve a high PageRank score? To paraphrase Craig Silverstein, Director of Technology for Google...

<div align="center">

You want the expert sites
in your market
linking to you and
hopefully nobody else.

</div>

How do you accomplish that?

C ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M...** Make your site Content so good that others will ***want*** to link to you. Of course, a little, honest push-start is a good idea...

http://value-exchange.sitesell.com/

Sometimes, it appears as if Google "writes our stuff." Or is it the other way around?

Google loves great content.

And great content is exactly where C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M starts...

http://ctpm.sitesell.com/

Another hand-glove/**Google-SBI!** fit is Google's AdSense Program...

http://adsense.sitesell.com/

SBIers owe Google a big "thank you" for creating AdSense, the absolute perfect-fit income generator for any **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M** site, no matter what your ***primary*** Monetization model may be...

http://buildit.sitesell.com/sbi-businesses/index-monetize.html

Do you see now why even the most competent of the "do-good" **SEOers** degrade the quality of the SERPs? They focus on pleasing the Search Engines through "perfecting" a numbers game, including building more and more inbound links. But they have near-zero focus on delivering truly sparkling information. How can they?

Let's answer this question within the context of our "porcupine mating" page example from above...

SEOers know nothing about porcupine mating, nor do they care. And it shows...

No sparkle. **No** passion. **No** extra-clever turn of a phrase.

No "watch those quill" jokes.

They may score well for all the on-page criteria ("relevance"), but those are now just the "ante." They get you into the "game."

The engines want RELEVANT *and* EXCELLENT content.

The best way to deliver **REALITY? Stop faking it. Be real.**

SiteSell was the first company to conceptualize and develop the natural, powerful process of...
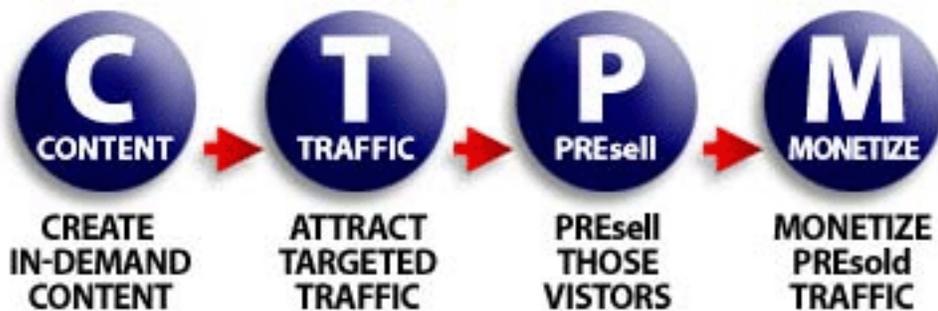
Site Build It! provides the guidance and all the tools necessary to successfully execute the process that delivers reality that ranks. It is beyond the scope of this discussion to review **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** in detail. For more information, please visit...

http://ctpm.sitesell.com/

High-value, relevant CONTENT puts the power of human reaction (an important part of **off-page** criteria) to work for you. More on this in the next chapter.

The bottom line is that SBI! users "build reality"... exactly what the Search Engines seek.

That is why **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** outperforms SEOers now. And it will do so, more and more, in the future. As just one example of this widening gap, please see this

updated traffic study...

http://buildit.sitesell.com/sbi-businesses/traffic-alexa.html

If it sounds simplistic, it is. **It's simple, but it's not easy.** Confused?

SBI!'s unique set of integrated tools removes all the technical and tedious complexity, so the process is *indeed* simple. But it is never easy to build a business. Neither the Internet nor **SBI!** can suspend common sense or the fundamental laws of economics. It takes work to build a business. Take a look...

http://case-studies.sitesell.com/

Examine every one of the case studies of these small business people. Some of them literally add millions of dollars to their net worth -- and they share these million-dollar lessons with you. Their businesses are each different in nature. **Yet they impart similar insights...**

One is the importance of applying effort and passion to achieve the results you want. The other relates to **Site Build It!'s** contribution. With **SBI!**, you can focus on your business while it takes care of everything else.

You will never read those words by an SEOer. It's all math. It's needlessly complex. And doomed to get more complicated while falling behind even further.

SIDEBAR

Use **SBI!** to squeeze full value out of **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** as efficiently as possible.
SiteSell is the originator of **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** and has built the perfect set of integrated tools to empower you to execute the process optimally.

http://buildit.sitesell.com/

Or, if you are a professional Webmaster, please try it for your small business clients...

http://webmaster.sitesell.com/

P.S. to professional Webmasters and SEOers

Please do not take anything in this booklet personally. It merely lays out the **reality of the future of SEO.** It explains the way things are, and extrapolates to what will be. Many people don't like reality when it does not fit their perception of it, especially when it is painful to accept.

Ignoring reality does not make it go away, though.

Actually, what I said just above needs to be shared with everyone. Please do not misinterpret what I am saying in this booklet. This is **not** a "slam" on **SEOers vs. SBIers**. It is merely an extrapolation of obvious trends. That projection ends up at an unavoidable conclusion in the not-too-distant future.

SIDEBAR

I use the term **SBIer** interchangeably with those who use **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** because skilled execution of the process requires the complete set of integrated tools. **Only SBI! delivers the process, in the form of an easy-to-follow Action Guide...**

... hosted by yours truly. And it provides every tool you need to make every step happen flawlessly.

Competent SEOers **can** still be quite effective for now, but not for a lot longer. **SBIers** are destined to outperform **SEOers** by greater and greater margins, with less and less effort. The **updated Alexa study** is one example of that.

The **results.sitesell.com** site is another.

SIDEBAR

We get pickier and pickier and now limit that site to 400 **SBI!** sites that rank in the Top **1%** of all sites -- just a sampling of **SBI!** successes. We eliminate many more than that from this prestigious Web page.

You will not find another page like this anywhere in the world. Why? Well, I can tell you that our competitors **would** build a page like this... if they **could.**

Why do SBIers keep doing better and better?   It's simple...

More and more, engines are measuring off-page criteria. And off-page criteria are measured by human reaction to the quality and the relevancy of the search results delivered. The engines are tracking "human reaction" parameters, a few of which were mentioned earlier...

```
Is this page delivering the info I wanted?

Is it excellent material?  Is it well presented?  If so...

Is it so good that I'm interested in this site and will click
through more of its pages?

Wow!  Look at the time.  I didn't realize that I've already
spent 90 minutes here.
```

```
Should I provide a link to this page on my own site about
porcupines?  It's great!

Hey, it has an RSS feed!  I'll publish that feed on my site,
thereby providing up-to-date mating information on my site as
a service to my visitors, since I don't cover that aspect of
porcupine activity <ahem>.

This is superb -- I think I'll post about this site in the
major porcupine forums.
```

We can only begin to speculate on what hundreds of the top minds who "live search 24 x 7" could dream up. Disregard anything you read in SEO forums when they comment knowingly on Yahoo!'s algorithms -- it's all idle speculation. As I said earlier, there are only a few people in the entire world who have the entire big picture. And **they** are not talking.

However, it is safe to assume one thing...

The engines want to *recognize reality...* quality and relevance.

So here's a radical concept...

1.4.   Why Not Just Give It To Them?

Why bother *simulating* reality? The days of "meeting-the-algorithm" are coming to an end.

Do NOT waste your time on SEO. It dooms you to working too hard, on all the wrong things.

Work on your business instead.

SEO is a treadmill and the engines increase its speed continuously. You run like mad, just to stay a step behind thousands of the smartest minds on the planet at Google, Yahoo!, MSN, Teoma, etc. **Every time they improve their relevancy algorithms...**

... you have to run faster and harder, just to catch up.

Instead, leapfrog SEOers by "keeping it **real." C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** sites are *exactly* what SEs want...

Reality. Relevance... and Quality.

Happy searchers finding what they want.

Here's the basic idea...

STEP 1) Plant enough "on-page hooks" to let the engines know what each page is about. Blend those hooks ("Specific Keywords" -- focus on one per page) into excellent content about that specific topic. *That* is the **SBI!** 80-20 approach to the "on-page" part of business-building.

If you have **SBI!**, use the unique **Analyze It!** tool to show you when "enough is enough" -- no need to waste time tweaking, endlessly perfecting a page for an algorithm. Instead, build a page that delivers tremendous content.

Sure... get the important on-page criteria correct. **Then...**

Don't tweak.

Instead, **create more and more great content...** related and high-value content that delivers what humans want *and* that passes **Analyze It!.**

"Analyze It!?" Yes, this **SBI!** module tells you when you have it "right." Unlike SEO, **SBI!** does not worry about the 14th decimal place of some parameter that happens to be "flavor of the month."

And **SBI!'s** equally unique, specially formatted **Ranking Reports** also tell you absolutely when "enough is enough."

SIDEBAR

Site Build It!'s "Ranking Reports" are for "quoted phrases." It is as if someone was searching specifically for "Anguilla beaches" *with* the quotes.

Generally, **SBIers** rank well for a specific keyword *with* the quotes **before** they rank for it *without.*

Why? Because a search query that *wraps the words in quotes* searches for that **exact** phrase. Google will deliver **many** more pages for the same query without the quotes because it will include all pages that have "Anguilla" and "beaches" separately, anywhere within the content.

But that is *not* **relevant for your non-SEO purposes. Nor is the fact that most searching surfers do** *NOT* **use quotes.**

When you score in the Top 30 of the Ranking Report, it is basically saying, "You've done as well as you can for the **ON**-page criteria for this keyword (phrase)." That is because the quoted-query searches *specifically for that* **exact** *search term.* **So...**

If you are not ranking well for the **non-**quoted variation of that keyword phrase, the route of action is **not** to tweak the search term. You are **already** doing about as well as you can. Instead, **do what I recommend (like an endless loop recording)...**

 ... "Don't tweak this page. Instead build content." Then get inbound links -- a little, honest push-start (next step) by a solid, simple inbound link program is a good idea.

The net result will be like an incoming tide that raises the boat of your site.

You will find that, *without changing that page,* you start to win the Ranking Report for that **non-**quoted word. From there, you'll start to build an unstoppable momentum. You will start to build off-page criteria, which is nothing more than a fancy way of measuring how humans behave **after** they visit your page.

And if you follow the guidance in **Make Your Content PREsell!** (the best helper for learning how to write to communicate on the Net), the *human behavior part* comes automatically. While SEOers constantly chase algorithms and mimic reality, **SBIers** are already delivering the reality, the searcher satisfaction, that the engines **crave.**

At this point... **STOP -- don't tweak -- build more content.**

So, what remains?

STEP 2) Get that snowball started rolling down the hill through inbound links.

SIDEBAR

You will commonly see "inbound" links referred to as "back links." It's a confusing term. Back to where? Back from where? Whose "back"? We will use the more obvious terms "inbound" links" or "in-pointing links" or "incoming links" to mean links from other sites that are **pointing, coming or bound to your site.**

The main benefits of securing a few inbound links?

First, some engines do not have an "Add URL" page -- you can only be listed in their index after their spider follows a link to your site. If you think about it, instead of free submission, inbound links become your "submissions" to engines that do not offer a submission process.

Second, this is a crude but effective way to get your off-page criteria started. Remember, "off-page criteria" is merely a fancy term for measuring how humans behave AFTER they visit your page.

In a nutshell, a few, well-chosen, inbound links **get your site rolling** like that proverbial snowball, ever-accelerating and building...

Make Your Links ROLL!

Bottom line recommendation? Once you have **20+** pages of content, turn your attention to inbound links. **SBI!** takes you through the 80-20 process for building a link program. Like everything else, it's an easy step-by-step program. We'll go into more detail later in this booklet but for now, here's a quick overview...

Start at the major directories, with those appropriate for your circumstances. Work through the important second tier directories, then the theme directories and hub sites. Add a few high-quality links from **Value Exchange.**

Non-SBIers can take advantage of two free SiteSell resources to help execute part of this strategy as easily as possible, **free...**

   i) List your site at relevant "theme-relevant" hubs and directories. What is the best way to find these?

Search It!
http://searchit.sitesell.com/

Choose **Speciality Hubs and Directories** in the "STEP 1 Search Category" drop-down menu, and then proceed through each of the STEP 2 Search Types...
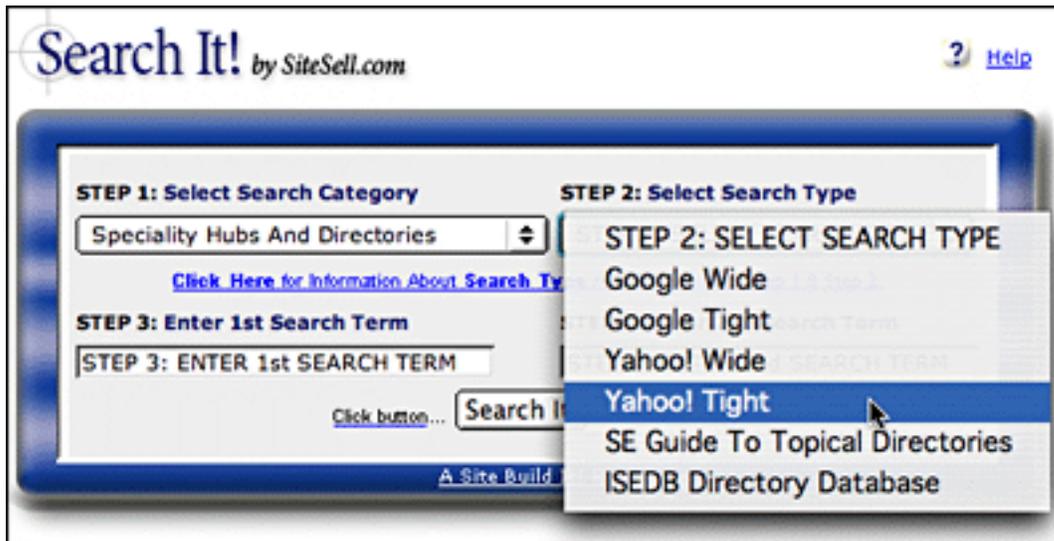
The searches above find terrific, highly targeted hubs and directories. No other tool makes this so high-yield, low-effort... and **Search It!** is totally free.

SIDEBAR

Search It! goes way beyond this function. It is the only ecommerce-related search tool that you will ever need. Keep its tiny window open in a corner of your monitor, for 24 x 7 access and instant info-mining of the Web...

• every search you could ever want, all in one spot
• advanced searches pre-packaged
• constantly being refreshed

From Keyword Brainstorming, Research and Competition to the absolute-ultimate Reference Library For Content, **Search It!** does it all (more, actually!).

Please... take your time and review the online help. Try it a few times and soon you'll be using it 10-20+ times per day. **Search It!** will become your indispensable e-commerce search tool.

---

   ii) Secure high-value exchanges with non-competitive, related sites through **Value Exchange.** Natural and powerful, Search Engines love it. And it's free!

Take your time and **be picky.** Your goal is merely to secure two or three quality exchanges with good sites (and preferably nice people).

http://value-exchange.sitesell.com/

"The World's ONLY True-Blue, Real Link Exchanger that WORKS!"

Links to your site are important for generating high ranking Search Engine results at all the Search Engines. The SiteSell **Value Exchange** is the simplest, fastest, most efficient, and (most importantly) most REAL way to identify high-value sites which want to link to your site. Find high-value, similarly themed sites, and then exchange links to honestly increase your link popularity.

It's a true, ethical use of the Net, exactly the way Search Engines want you to do it... relevant sites linking to relevant sites only.

More about off-page criteria...

If you follow the principles of the **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** process, your site will automatically start to build **all** the off-page criteria that the engines track, *even the ones that you don't know about*.

When engines track off-page criteria, what are they really tracking?

Human judgment... *of your site.*

And why does **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** play a role?

Human visitors will like the content on your site. It is relevant, **and** it OVERdelivers superb information. When that happens, your visitors, collectively, proceed to fulfill all the kinds of **off-page behavior** that the engines track. For example...

• they choose your site more often than the others on a SERP

• they spend a lot of time before returning to the engine for another search

• some of them link to your site from theirs -- it's a compliment to your quality

• some will even publish your RSS feed -- another vote of confidence

• others mention your site in prominent forums, discussion groups, media.

When engines measure which link a surfer chooses and clicks on a SERP, that is called "Click Popularity." It was one of the first off-page criteria. Like any ONE criterion (on-page or off), it can be manipulated. And of course, the engines have the means to detect and penalize most such attempts.

But, even if an SEO trick works for a while, this manipulation is still just part of the "dying black art." As the engines build greater and greater complexity into their

algorithms, measuring hundreds if not thousands of possible off-page criteria, the ability to manipulate it becomes more and more impossible.

See what I'm getting at? Offline human response to your site is trackable from the time the surfer is deciding which page to click on the SERP.

We cannot begin to guess at **all** the off-page criteria that could be tracked. However, if you deliver reality (i.e., a solid content-laden site with high-quality, relevant information), off-page criteria will take care of itself, almost automatically, due to searcher satisfaction.

You cannot fake, mimic or simulate human reaction. It *happens* as your delighted visitors fan out across the Internet and spread the word in trackable ways. It does so automatically, but with a little guidance by you especially at the start of your online experience.

After getting the basic on-page criteria "close enough" (STEP 1 above), STEP 2 **starts the off-page snowball rolling.** Get some inbound links. Build some word-of-mouth buzz in all the right places. Do whatever ELSE is relevant for your target market, your business, and your circumstances. Remember...

"Off-page criteria" simply means how engines measure human judgment/behavior before, during and after a visitor clicks on a Search Results Page to visit a site. It could be as short-term as how quickly visitors return to the engine. Or it could be as long-term as how many relevant links build up to that site over time.

These 2 steps get the snowball rolling down hill, speeding faster and faster in its descent, momentum growing as it builds and builds. From there, you'll start to build an unstoppable momentum. **Just be careful...**

... don't hurt yourself.

As your site builds with more and more Content, as you get more and more inbound quality links and other off-page criteria, you start to win the **Ranking Report** for more and more of your keywords... without endless tweaking. This happens first for the "easier" ones and then for the more competitive ones... **all without having to tweak the pages.**

By now, the "big picture" of how to build a profitable online business (in the most

effective way possible) is becoming clearer to you. It seems so obvious, once you understand it. **So by now, you must be asking...**

1.5.　　But What If SEOers "Get It"?　　They Won't! A Weird Story...

"Geez, if SEOers *get* C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M, won't they out-do us ordinary small business people?"

Good question. I used to wonder about that. But the answer is "NOPE!"

SEOers are very left-brained. Being left-brained can be a great thing. But too much of this great thing can make it difficult to change direction.

Part of C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M is that you have to give up control to gain control. You have to give up control over every single mathematical parameter possible. Instead, **focus on building high-value Content and...**

... "trust the force, Luke." (Darth ended up on the "right side.")

Many SEOers do not yet understand that the science of delivering search results is already way beyond their speculation. It may take them years to realize the fast-approaching demise of simulated reality.

Recently, though, a personal experience has caused me to consider that they may never "get it." The following story drives two points home...

1) Why SBIers will outperform SEOers (more and more as time passes)

2) That Most SEOers won't get it.

Here we go...

A short while back, I noticed a superb question in the searchenginewatch.com forums about "competition" numbers or "SUPPLY" in **SBI!** terms. It is the number of Web sites that supply content about a given keyword. The forum participant was asking what to make of it, wondering about its value. So I decided to help this person out a bit.

We did, after all, invent the entire concept of Keyword DEMAND, SUPPLY, and PROFITABILITY. Sometimes, though, **I regret it...**

... when I see some SBIers get "number-bound!" (SUPPLY and DEMAND numbers are merely generated by the computers of various Web resources. They may have glitches for many reasons. So treat SUPPLY and DEMAND and all "numbers" as fallible guidelines. **Trust your brain above all!**)

The essence of my answer explained the difference between DEMAND (how often SURFERS search for a keyword) and SUPPLY (how many Web pages create content for a specific term). I went on to explain how to use this information to find profitable niches, including a step-by-step process (that does **not** require **SBI!**).

The bottom line conclusion...

```
As long as you apply the human filter at the end of this
process, the SUPPLY-DEMAND-PROFITABILITY process is an
excellent way to identify profitable niches about which to
create content that ultimately turns into traffic and income.
```

SIDEBAR

Full post is at...

http://forums.searchenginewatch.com/showthread.php?p=26206#post26206

The actual discussion, and how it might apply to your **specific** business, is beyond the scope of this discussion. But if you are interested, please visit...

http://find.sitesell.com/

Find the type of small business that best fits your circumstances (ex., landscaper, affiliate, professional, retailer, SOHO, network marketing, etc.). Click to that site. All the answers, **specific for your situation,** are on that site.

To see the exact process that **SBIers** follow...

http://quicktour.sitesell.com/

There was an excellent reply. "Marcia" said that the best way to get started on the

road to building free Search Engine traffic is to work at "ranking highly" for the more exotic, less in-demand words.

SIDEBAR

Yes, this **is** similar to the point made above. You will indeed first start to rank at the engines for the "easiest" keywords. Your most important ones will rank later, without tweaking if you are getting the basics right, as your site grows and its overall "off-page reputation" improves in the eyes of the SEs.

It was a super point. It's very hard for a startup site to rank highly for tough, competitive words. But you **can** "get the traffic ball rolling" by working the fringes.

So I replied, building upon that. This time, though, and just to challenge folks into a little controversy, I lobbed a grenade into the midst of a bunch of "SEO experts"...

I explained why our **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** approach of **"keep it real"** is far more effective, **now *AND ESPECIALLY* long-term,** than SEO. In other words, **SBIers** were destined to outperform **SEOers** now, and even more so in the future.

Here's a direct quote from that post...

```
We choose to leapfrog "advanced, nth degree SEO" and head
straight towards reality. By giving the SEs enough on-page
hooks to sink their teeth into, and by otherwise PREselling
with excellent content and getting some key inbound links,
human visitor behavior takes over and does indeed build the
off-page criteria naturally and organically.


Overall, we show our users how to "engineer success" through
superb content that hits the basic on-page criteria and that
WOWS the human visitors. Ultimately, it is those delighted
human visitors who generate all the off-page criteria (with
a little help from the marketer of course, who must start
the ball rolling by securing a few good inbound links). All
of this to (hopefully) lead into a little controversy...


I find that heavy SEO emphasis is a little like chasing the
Holy Grail. The engines get steadily more and more
sophisticated at reaching the ultimate goal, which is simply
to recognize reality the way humans do. SEOers have to chase
this increasing sophistication constantly. Instead...


We choose to leapfrog the algorithm-chase and head straight
```

to reality. And, all in all it's worked darn well for our tens of thousands of small business users. For example...

My own daughter started her anguilla-beaches.com site by eating away at the edges. She started when she was 14. She didn't rank anywhere in the Top 500 for her toughest word, anguilla. As she built more and more content, got more and more links in from Caribbean and Anguillian sites, as people loved her site more and more, they naturally deliver off-page criteria (we can only imagine what Google must track -- I doubt if more than 3 people have the COMPLETE picture, and their NDA is probably tighter than Coke's!).

The effect is like a boat with the tide coming in. Now she puts up a page about "anguilla wedding," is spidered and ranking in the top 10 within days. It's a slow, steady, tortoise-like process... but the tortoise wins in the end (she has averaged about an hour per week over a period of 2 years). And the only "work" I've done with Nori is on how to write more effectively for the human reader ("PREselling"), not SEO or anything like that.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, "geeks" like Marc Liron do the same thing, but in a bigger way as adults with more time and devotion and generate 15,000 pages per day at his updatexp.com site. Ask him what kind of advanced SEO he does and he'll just chuckle -- he abandoned those worries long ago.

Now, I know I'll get banged by a lot of SEO experts who love chasing the zillion variables down to the 4th decimal point or, worse, who still love "fooling" the engines. But you're over-engineering and doomed to chase the engines instead of delivering what humans want... and THAT actually is what the engines want, too.

We just like to keep it real.

Pretend you are an SEO expert and now re-read that post. **It's a bit like going into a bar in Texas and saying...**

 ... "I can whup any Texan in here."

Talk about heading into the lion's den. I expected to get fried... blasted... toasted. Nope. Find my post at...

http://forums.searchenginewatch.com/showthread.php?p=26256#post26256

... and follow the whole thread from there.

I could not believe the rest of the thread...

- numbers, numbers, and more numbers

- stats about this and whether this ratio was better than that one

- "intitle: and inanchor: combined"

- number of keywords on the head of a pin!

The realization hit me like a ton of hard disks...

Many SEOers don't even begin to take into consideration that **HUMANS** read the Web pages. They don't understand that it's the **HUMANS** that the engines care about.

Worse, their complicated suggestions take a lot of time and energy to determine the degree of competition.

You only need a quick ballpark estimate. Most importantly, I could create two pages of Content about a keyword in the time it takes them just to assess it!

This is incredibly instructive.

It leads me to these bottom-line conclusions...

1) The engines will get *smarter* and smarter at figuring out "REALITY."

2) SEOers will have a harder time playing "MATCH THAT ALGORITHM."

3) SBI! sites will simply do better and better because they deliver REALITY.

4) "It's magical-mystical how well it works" (in the words of **SBIers**). But there is solid **logic and mathematics** behind the process.

5) SBI! sites deliver, NATURALLY, *POWERFULLY* what the engines want.

SBIers, far from being Search Engine experts, outperform SEOers! They do it NOW. And **the gap keeps widening,** as shown in the updated Alexa study...

http://buildit.sitesell.com/sbi-businesses/traffic-alexa.html

Yes, on the surface, the effectiveness of **SBI!** is "almost mystical." This feeling of calm power and effectiveness has come to be known as...

1.6. "The Tao of C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M"

Those who follow the Tao are clear of mind.
They do not load their mind with anxieties and are
flexible in their adjustment to external conditions.

Chuang-Tzu (399-295 BC)

Let's pull everything together to clearly see how a simple, pure focus **upon reality** (relevancy **and** quality) builds businesses, naturally, powerfully, and even, as some would say, "mystically."

There are two basic steps to building a successful Web site and business...

STEP 1) Create great **Content**. The **"C"** of C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M takes care of the "ON-page criteria." Your information both W-O-W-S your targeted visitor **and** gives the engines enough "hooks" to determine "first-look relevance." But mastering "on-page" is not enough anymore. So next...

STEP 2) Start rolling that snowball over the hump and down the hill by getting some good inbound links. How do you get those links?

First, create at least 20 quality content pages. It's hard to take smaller sites seriously. Let's go back to that snowball analogy -- you need to build a snowball of a decent diameter, enough size and weight, to really start it rolling down that hill.

SIDEBAR

OK, I'm stretching here. **But hey...**

... I'm into this snowball analogy too deep now to abandon it!

So... what have we accomplished so far?

A great start!

CONTENT and LINKS... those two strong hands create the snowball and then start it rolling down the hill.

Just above in STEP 2, I mentioned a "hump." This is more than just "part of the analogy." There **is** a hump.

For weeks, often months, **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** can seem a thankless effort. You create content, content, content. Near-zero traffic. You get a few inbound links.

Nothing happens? What do you do, quit?

Nope...

... **"Tortoise it!"**
http://tortoise.sitesell.com/

You "keep on keepin' on!" Continue doing both of these. Do **not** stop.

Persevere.

Trust the system.

Be **patient**. You are building a **long-term** business that is going to substantially alter your future. It does *not* come overnight.

So... **persist.**

More **content.** Get a few more **links**. Create a bit of buzz in a prominent forum. **Keep building your "Brand of One"** (i.e., your reputation).

And then... it happens. A trickle of traffic. Just a trickle, but it's the first sign that you are getting over the hump.

You start to win the Search Engine rankings for the **less competitive** words. You gain a few, natural (i.e., unasked-for) relevant incoming links. Yes...

Human visitor behavior is starting to take over. So do you stop now?

No-o-o-o-o-o-o-o.

You build more and more content. Use your **Analyze It!** tool, if you have **SBI!**, to get the basic on-page criteria correct (for each of your keywords for each of your topical pages, as always).

Some of your PREsold visitors give you more inbound links, without even needing to ask! Directories start listing you. Forums discuss you. **In short...**

The off-page criteria (far more than we could ever discuss here and, thankfully, we don't need to) **build naturally and organically.**

You are over "The Hump."

And now... here's where the ever-growing, ever-accelerating snowball analogy really starts to fit! The Search Engines "see" how frequently your site changes. They return more often. They spider your new content pages faster and faster.

SIDEBAR

Remember those engines that can *ONLY* find you via inbound links? Well, once they've found you, they follow the same behavior. It is all good.

Of course, as you build more and more content, and rank higher and higher for more and more pages, your visitor count keeps growing. It's important to keep your PREselling content at a high level...

That PREselling (" ➡ P") is vital for human behavior to powerfully and naturally create all the off-page criteria. **No manipulation involved...**

Your PREsold visitors merely behave naturally. The engines measure their "judgmental behavior" by tracking more off-page criteria than we could ever imagine! And you do not have to meddle in those criteria at all...

One who wins the world does so by not meddling with it.
One who meddles with the world loses it.

Lao-Tzu (604 BC - 531 BC)
Tao te Ching

As your excellent PREselling content increases, you will receive yet more inbound links, naturally and without asking for them. That, and other off-page criteria, raise the overall credibility of your site. You will find pages that never ranked for their specific keywords start ranking in the Top 30, then in the Top 10... **without** tweaking them.

Wow! Life is good. Now you can stop, right? You know what I'm going to say by now... Don't stop. Why should you? You know and love your material.

Have a blast!

Keep building content, content, and more content. Get the on-page criteria "roughly right." And round and round and round it goes... building all along the way.

SIDEBAR

Most people don't realize that I'd rather be my own customer than the head of SiteSell. I love what I do, but the responsibilities are enormous.

I'd rather be building an SBI! business.

My advice? ***Never*** stop. You **can** slow down once your site is well-established. After all, it does get easier and easier (but never "easy"), regardless of what kind of business you have. Take 2 months off and your site will still be there, growing and earning for you on auto-pilot (one of the advantages of being an infopreneur!)...

http://infopublishing.sitesell.com/

Of course, if you sell hard goods, you'll need someone around for customer support... unless you take your laptop on vacation (something I refuse to do!).

Once over the hump, the ease at which your site flourishes is what creates that magical-mystical feeling. It's what I call...

"The Tao of C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M"

"Tao? C'mon Ken!"

I hate to get "zen"/"Star Wars-y" about it, but you will seriously feel a force with you. It's because your site is real/relevant **and** good (the **reality** that SEs seek).

PREsold humans just naturally build all the off-page criteria for you. As the engines consider you as more and more of an authority, you will start ranking higher and higher for more and more of your keywords at more and more of your pages. The traffic increases, which means more delighted visitors.

And growing traffic means even more off-page criteria are "delivered" by those happy humans, through natural, normal, human, online behavior. These off-page criteria basically reflect how humans respond to your site. Your portfolio of inbound

links is merely **one of many** off-page criteria

SIDEBAR

SEOers seem to forget that inbound links are just one of many off-page criteria. They spend ordinate amounts of time on this single criterion. This is likely happening for three reasons...

1) It's simple and controllable -- you can do something.

2) It's measurable -- long live "Google PR"!

3) There is even complicated, expensive software to help boost your links.

Bottom line? Once you have a solid link program in place, all this fine-tuning represents time better spent on Content. You do not need any fancy, expensive software. You certainly do not need to do anything at all, **just for the engines.**

Do not fall into this SEO trap.

Please don't think that I am saying that inbound links are not important. **They are.** But there is no need to go overboard.

It's relatively easy to get started with a few important, relevant inbound links. *That* gets this whole snowball rolling! Here is the key long-term point...

If you PREsell with great content, you don't have to manipulate all those off-page criteria (**not** possible in any event). All the good off-page criteria happen because of visitor satisfaction. *That* is why **SBI!** sites succeed *way more than others.*

When it happens, you will be astounded. You will scream, "it works." See the Case Studies site to see what I mean...

http://case-studies.sitesell.com/

After a while, you realize that **SBI!** delivers *more* than targeted traffic. And even *more* than "success." Much more. Every "e-box" of **SBI!** comes with a free special prize inside...

http://specialprize.sitesell.com/

SIDEBAR

You can "do" **Content** ➡ **Traffic** ➡ **PREsell** ➡ **Monetize** without using **SBI!.** There is more than enough useful content on the family of SiteSell sites to show you how to do it...

http://www.sitesell.com/sitemap.html

So, yes, you can certainly **"do C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M"** on your own. But why would you want to? No other small business service comes close to offering the value...

http://buildit.sitesell.com/sbi-businesses/value.html

And no one "gets" the process like we do. We constantly push the envelope, helping **SBIers** to do better and better.

And the **SBI! Forums** are the most motivated, high-signal-to-noise, serious small business set of forums in the world. Closed and private, these forums are busier than any open forum, yet populated only by paying, serious, non-anonymous small business people.

"*The* Place For Friendly, Success-Focused Discussion," this is **the** place where **SBIers** come to "help and be helped."

Bottom line? There is no better way to execute **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M.**

---

*"What about when a major new technology comes in,
say full Artificial Intelligence? What will happen?"*

Great question! Here's what will happen...

SEOers will wring their hands in panic, grief, rage. They've done so for years, whenever a major algorithm change happens. But the reality is that the engines do not owe *anyone* a living. If anything, even the "good" SEOers are an annoyance because they do not deliver what the engines seek... relevance *AND* quality. However...

SBIers will clap in glee. They will have an even **bigger advantage.**   Here's why...

The closer the engines come to accurately assessing reality (relevance and quality), the better SBIers will do, especially when compared to the mechanical, mimicking world of SEOers.

The collective mass of many well-written pages (that please the human *and* the SE) is followed by positive off-page human behavior (delivering the "off-page criteria"). The combination builds overwhelming momentum, and feeds upon itself in a positive loop that continues the growth.

Why?

You know that answer by now.

Because SBI! sites *are* REALITY.

Let's borrow a famous slogan for a moment and **apply it to an SBI! site...**

 ... "Engineered Like No Other Site In the World"

SBI! "engineers success" through superb content that hits the basic on-page criteria and that W-O-W-S the human visitors. Ultimately, those delighted human visitors generate more and more off-page criteria that engines detect and measure.

The effect upon the Search Engines is **like a boat with a strong tide coming in.** The **competition?**

 Tide's out.

Your site rankings and traffic go up, up, up. More links and off-page criteria. More content and better rankings. Round and round it goes. **And it does all this** *without* **manipulating the engines...**

Instead of chasing the "SEO Holy Grail" and trying to mimic reality by constantly jiggling Search Engine algorithms, you simply build, build, build Content. **That Content sets the whole C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M process in motion.**

SEO has always been **short-sighted...**

 It's a treadmill.

I know because I've been there, done that and sold over $1 million of software, as a solo entrepreneur, before "e-commerce" was even a proven viable concept. But I also got tired of "playing the game."

I realized that the engines are not "in hot pursuit of SEOers, good or bad." Yes, they do have to protect themselves against whatever the latest "trick" might be -- but the mid-term picture is that they will blow SEOers away simply because **they get relentlessly better at recognizing reality.**

Let me repeat that because it is such a key concept, and so many seem to miss this point. They fall into the trap of SEO'ing instead of building their business...

The engines continuously become more and more sophisticated. Their ultimate goal is simply to **recognize reality (relevant *and* good sites)** the way humans do (no easy task!). SEOers have to chase this increasing sophistication constantly. Instead...

SBIers leapfrog the algorithm-chasers and head straight to reality. Tens of thousands of small businesses use **SBI!** extremely effectively... far more effectively than most SEOers and more than any other small business.

No other service comes close to delivering success. We prove it, too. ***No* one else does... and *they would if they could...***

http://proof.sitesell.com/

From teen-age girls like my daughter (anguilla-beaches.com) to uber-geeks like Marc Liron of updatexp.com (15,000 unique visitors per day), **SBIers** do NOT worry about all the "advanced SEO voodoo." They abandoned those worries long ago.

They merely go about building their business through content. **SBI!'s** building, optimizing, background-automated, and special-function tools do all the rest.

If you follow the **Site Build It! Action Guide** (another piece of near-unanimous advice from the super-successful), if you use **SBI!'s** integrated tools to execute **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M**, if you persevere through and over the hump by building more and more Content and securing some inbound links, that "traffic trickle" will indeed start.

Each of those "ifs" is totally do-able. Each is within your power. And when that snowball starts growing magnificently, **the build** is indeed a wonderful feeling. Your confidence soars. Your motivation triples. But do not get over-confident...

Stay focused. Keep building content. Do you know what your chance of failure is by now? I apologize in advance for **taking the analogy one step too far...**

 ... yup, the proverbial snowball's chance in you-know-where!

You are well on your way to evergrowing-snowballing success! And you know it.

———

Of course, it is not *just* about traffic. Notice that the **"T"** is merely the second letter in **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M.**

While **SBIers** build traffic more effectively more than SEOers, we still haven't reached the real bottom-bottom line. Since their content also PREsells through the delivery of superb and relevant information, **SBIers** build raving fans...

Many SEOers overlook this all-important point. Even if they rank #1 for a certain keyword, **what happens when that visitor arrives?** She reads sub-par content that, at worst, is gibberish since it was "built for an algorithm." At best, she receives material from a brochure that has been "SEO'd"...

No spark. No passion. No sale.

However, **reality shines through.** *Your* visitor recognizes it.

And that is where **PREselling** steps up to the plate and hits a homerun. **SBIers** build raving fans...

PREsold visitors. In other words, each **SBIer** builds...

A Brand of One

Unless you are Amazon and already have a brand, that is critical. It makes the final step, **Monetization,** so easy. And, at the end of the day, it *is* all about the final step of **M**onetization. And **that** is where **SBI!** excels...

The entire **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** process **ultimately aims at the final step...**

➡ **M**

Unlike algorithm-chasers, who may generate some short-lived, non-PREsold traffic, **SBIers'** #1 goal is to OVERdeliver great Content that PREsells. The "**M**" of **Monetization** becomes the easiest part. Take your pick and diversify...

http://buildit.sitesell.com/sbi-businesses/index-monetize.html

---

The Free(dom) Special Prize Inside Every SBI!

Ever noticed the difference between a PGA pro golfer and your local amateur who thinks he's pretty good? The pros make it look so easy. It's not, but they have the proper technique... combine that with practice and the results are excellent.

SBIers make it **look** so easy. They have the right technique, **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M**, and

they do the work. The good news is all the work is business-related since **SBI!** makes all the barriers (tech, SEs, etc., etc.) disappear.

The feeling of the self-building momentum? Of success? Of your business literally growing in front of your eyes? There is nothing like the feeling of empowered confidence, knowing that your business/professional life is improving beyond expectations.

I'm proud to show you our "family bulletin board." Its photos symbolize the special prize far better than I could ever put into words...

http://specialprize.sitesell.com/

Yes, C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M results *are* **almost mystical.** That tide-rising *is* an amazing feeling. But we are all a bit too-left brained to accept that as the basis for success. So let's get hard-left-brained-analytical as we wrap up this booklet.

The Internet is merely the world's most sophisticated, interconnected database. And, at the end of the day, it all boils down to **bits and bytes, 0s and 1s.**

SBIers consistently give the engines enough **on-page** criteria to handle **relevance** (the *first* half of **reality**). They have the two key tools ("Analyze It!" and "Rank Report") to provide the end-point of when "enough is enough."

After that... **HUMANS** see the interface and the words. They like what they see. So their behavior takes care of the **off-page** criteria.

Those off-page criteria are incredibly complicated. They will only get more so, but they are increasingly important to the engines to determine **content quality** (the *second* half of **reality**).

The rest is "just math." Incredibly **complicated math, yes...**

... math for the "triple-thick-glasses and pocket-protector" crew.

But that's OK because we don't need to figure the math out. Let the SEOers play that game. They will only fall ever-farther behind.

C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M is "e-commerce for the rest of us"...

Start the ever-building snowball careening downhill. Once you do that, **Content**

and visitor reaction feed **all** off-page criteria (including inbound links), which feed more **Traffic**, which builds more off-page criteria, while you keep building more Content. All that great content **PREsells** visitors, delivering more off-page criteria and leading to **Monetization**...

C ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M...** round and round it goes.

It all starts, of course, with **Content.** As someone from a more recent century said...

Nothing happens until something moves.

Albert Einstein (1879-1955)

Content starts things moving. Links give it an extra push.

With C ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M...**

You focus on what counts. SEOers focus on endless parameters and detailed, time-sucking link programs.

You keep it real. SEOers mimic reality.

You keep it simple. SEO could not be more complicated.

"Keep it real. Provide what people want."

Yes, basic business rules hold true, even in this third millennium. When you think about it *that* way, doing business has not really changed, even on the Net.

Site Build It! merely illuminates the **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** process and provides all the tools to execute it, flawlessly.

The Tao of SBI! takes it the rest of the way. And as the engines get smarter, **SBI!** sites will widen the "results gap" into a chasm between themselves and SEOers (and all other small business sites)... naturally and powerfully.

Let's close this "big picture," introductory chapter by paraphrasing the words of Einstein and Lao-Tzu...

Content ➡ *Traffic* ➡ *PREsell* ➡ *Monetize*

Content makes C ➡*T* ➡ *P* ➡ *M move.*
Keep it real. Keep it good.
Keep it simple. Make it happen.
You too can "win your world."

The Tao of SBI! *(2005)*

OK, speaking of making it happen, let's get busy...

---

2.   Quality Inbound Links...
Why You Gotta Have 'Em!

Traffic is the lifeblood of your Web site, and your online business. Without it, you won't succeed. But here's the catch... there is no passerby traffic on the Net. **You have to generate your own traffic to thrive and be profitable.**

The best and cheapest way to do this is by pulling in **targeted, free traffic from the Search Engines (SEs).** Study after study confirms that Search Engines are the #1 way that people search for information on the Net. The easier your site is to find through SE search results, the more *targeted* visitors you attract.

So how do you make it easy for a surfer to find you? Build a quality, theme-based, content site that gets Top 10 ranking positions on the Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs) for related keywords (search terms your PREcustomers use). It works like this...

A theme-based content site has **keyword-focused content pages** that rank well with the Search Engines (SEs), attracting lots of **targeted traffic.** But just getting traffic is not enough...

The site's high-value content "warms up" (i.e., **PREsells**) visitors by OVERdelivering what they came for... information.

As visitors start to **like and trust** you (based on what you write about on your site), this credibility creates an open-to-buy or open-to-hire mindset. This, in turn, motivates visitors to click through to your income-generating source (i.e., how you monetize your traffic).

SIDEBAR

As discussed, it also causes them to deliver the off-page criteria that SEs use to "recognize reality."

In other words, to be visible on the Net, follow the **CONTENT** ➡ **TRAFFIC** ➡ **PREsell** ➡ **MONETIZE** process and build a site that **pleases both your visitors and the Search Engines.**

SIDEBAR

A full description of the **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** process is beyond the scope of this book. For more details, visit...

http://ctpm.sitesell.com/

"Pleasing" the Search Engines **and** your human visitors is why it's important for you to develop an effective linking strategy, *sooner rather than later.* Craig Silverstein, the Director of Technology for Google (we met him earlier), explains why in one short sentence...

"Links are the proxy for human judgment of page value."

What does Mr. Silverstein mean by that statement? Good question.

Links are one kind of off-page criteria, which measure human reaction to your Content. A link to your site is like a "vote" for it. You may receive a link from a small, related site or from a respected authority in your particular business field. They all provide a "credentializing" factor to your Web site, some more than others, in the eyes of the SEs. These links tell a Search Engine... "Yes, this is a quality site, worthy of a place in your index."

The easiest way to demonstrate is with an example...

2.1. The Power Of Porcupines

Pretend that you are a Search Engine, just for a moment (but no longer than that, or your headache will be intense). How do you tell whether a page is relevant when a surfer enters "porcupine mating habits" as a search term?

Now that you are a Search Engine, you are obviously going to look for that term ("porcupine mating habits") on each Web page... you'll check places like the Title, headlines, links, body text, etc. You'll look for synonyms for "porcupine" (even scientific synonyms like "Erethizontidae") and related words (ex., "quills"). These are all called **"on-page criteria."**

On-page criteria are important for giving the engines a "handle" on your page.

On-page criteria used to be all that *the first* SEs checked. Now, though, this has been taken about as far as it can. I mean... there are just so many factors you can look for on a page. And hundreds of PhD Search Experts have come pretty close to exhausting those. Only one problem...

On-page criteria do **not** tell the engine one iota about whether the page is any good or not. It will take another decade before computing power and Artificial Intelligence reach the level where an engine can "look" at a page and know, just from the on-page content," whether it's any good. As I've mentioned, this is something that we humans can still boast over the machines!

So what would you, Mr./Ms. Search Engine do now?

Ah-ah! If you cannot be as "intelligent" as a human, why not track **how they react** to each page offered on each SERP? By "peeking at what humans think," the engines can "pretend" to have the intelligence to determine how good a page was (as well as refining relevance).

That is exactly what is happening. More and more, the engines look to **off-**page criteria, but not to the exclusion of **on-**page. They need the on-page data for the "**first-level**-relevance-reality-check." The **off-**page is an important overlay that enables the engines to determine both...

* a higher degree of relevance, **and...**

* how good (or bad) a page may be.

In other words, **off-page criteria bring the engines a heck of a lot closer to "recognizing reality."**

SIDEBAR

From here on in, this e-booklet focuses **purely** on *one* of the off-page criteria... links. There are many other important off-page criteria, but links...

* are easy enough to develop that they *are* worth the effort

* help get you listed in engines that do not accept submissions due to the natural spider activity of link-following

* help get that snowball up and over the hump, after which "the build builds" if you simply keep doing the right things... C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M.

Regarding that hump that I mentioned in the last chapter...

For a site in its early stages, a couple of credentializing links may mean the difference between sticking permanently in a SE's database, and being dropped periodically. Engines sometimes drop sites that do not have any established link popularity.

Yes, you can get relisted, but you may lose weeks. So be proactive...

Get a couple of quality links as soon as you have twenty pages or more.

We will not talk about the ever-increasing complexity and diversity of off-page criteria any more in this booklet. But do remember that they **are** increasingly more important and ever more complex. They are also hardly discussed or understood. Suffice it to say that it will become harder and harder to manipulate those, leaving SEOers farther and farther behind.

Only **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** creates the **reality** of good **and** relevant theme-based content Web sites that naturally and powerfully cause your visitors to fan out across the Web (after visiting your site) and deliver the behavior that in turn delivers the off-page criteria in an almost magical way. Yes...

"The Tao of SBI!"

Let's continue with our "porcupine mating habits" example...

2.2. I Have This Friend...

By the greatest of coincidences, I have a friend (it's always "a friend") that has a site that is all about porcupines. Furthermore, she has an excellent page in that site about the **mating habits of porcupines...**

... a prickly issue, I agree!

How would a Search Engine use linking to decide what's relevant **and** good? Good timing, because here comes someone who is typing "porcupine mating" into Google's search box...
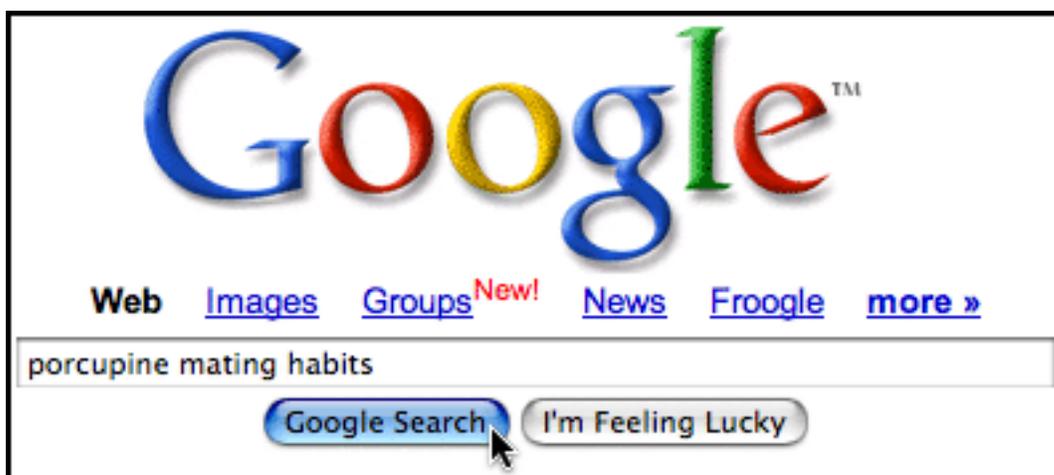
Suppose that you, Ms. Google, find 20 pages about "porcupine mating." The

on-page criteria help you figure out the relevance of each page**, but that does not deliver** any guarantee of the quality of the information.

SIDEBAR

Heavily SEO'd pages are usually pretty poor, actually. How many spammy results have you encountered in Top 10 positions for your search queries over the years?

So you proceed to analyze the off-page criteria.

SIDEBAR

SEs don't do it sequentially like this (on-page, then off). However, this explanation, while simplistic, holds up.

"Inbound links" is one of many off-page criteria. You look at the sites that **link** to my friend's site to more accurately determine relevancy and to get your first indications of quality. (Relevance + Quality = Reality, your #1 SE Mission).

Let's continue this example to understand how engines "weight" various inbound links...

How about if you (the engine) could see that more pages from all kinds of sites link to my friend's porcupine mating page (and/or the rest of her site)? *Everything else* being equal, that would probably give the edge to my friend's page. After all, you might as well send the searcher to the more overall-popular page, right?

Of course.

What about if many of those sites were from **zoos?** Better. After all, zoos are less likely to be related to reproducing cacti, for example, and are more likely to have something about the "Erethizontidae" family.

What if those sites were about **porcupines?** Even better! Now you're getting somewhere!

What if the **single most important site in the whole world about porcupines** linked to my friend's Web page? Wow, that's fantastic. And it would be even better if it linked from its home page. It would be the **absolute best** if that was the only link to another Web site from its home page!

What if 100 of the best porcupine sites all did the same, linking from their home pages? Whoops! Now **that** is the best.

And your friend's page about porcupine sex would get extra brownie points if many of those links came **INto** this page from other pages about the, uh, reproductive habits of porcupines. More points, too, if "porcupine mating habits" is contained in

the text of the incoming link, or near it.

———

Bottom line?

The more sites that link to a site, and the more important they are, and the closer they are to the theme of that site, even to the topic of individual pages, the more **"popularity points"** for that site (and page).

SIDEBAR

In general, "**link popularity" refers to the number of in-pointing links to a site.**

On the other hand, **link reputation is more a measure of the value of a link.** For example... Did that link come from a site that is credible (i.e., have plenty of in-pointing links)? Is that link from a site that contains content on a similar or related theme?

It's not the sheer number of links that matters, **but the quality and the topic of the linking sites.** Hundreds of links from off-topic, sub-par Web sites have relatively little value. A few credible links from related Web sites are worth way more.

———

2.3.   It's Just Common Sense

The Search Engines have been giving more and more weight to inbound links...

They establish the credibility of the "linked" site. An in-pointing link from a quality, related site tells the Search Engines that another Webmaster thinks highly enough of your site to link to it. In other words, the link counts as a vote of confidence.

The more highly the Search Engines regard *the site that provides the link,* the more powerful that vote. In our porcupine example above, the fact that the single most important site in the whole world about porcupines provided a link tells the SEs... wow, this is a great site!

And if it came from the home page, the SE knows that is "valuable real estate."

If you reason it all through, it's just common-sense analysis of human behavior. The SEs are putting humans to work for them, using their judgment (something the SEs lack) to tell them what is relevant *and* good. That (along with a bunch of other off-page criteria) gets factored into the overall equation before the engine delivers its SERP for "porcupine mating habits."

The only links that matter to you are links from quality sites with themes related to your business. For example, having a link from the authority on porcupines is a good thing. However, having a link from an online gambling site is not. Best case scenario of off-target inbound links? The SE ignores the link altogether.

Moral of the story? **Obtain quality links from quality sites with themes related to your business.**

SIDEBAR

Contrary to what you may read elsewhere, link popularity/reputation is **not** the only weighting factor for rankings. It is likely not even the most important one.

The actual content on a page will always be important. I can't see how on-page criteria would ever become irrelevant to an engine.

And other off-page criteria are growing in importance (the engines like to keep these quiet).

So... do **not** obsess and lose days over building and monitoring link exchange programs. That's 20-80 behavior, instead of 80-20. Beyond a certain point, you get very little extra return. And, **if you do it wrong** (by following many of the "quick-and-easy" link exchange methods/software), you can seriously hurt yourself.

Most sites do *not* **have many (if any) in-pointing links.** If all sites had hundreds of incoming links, link popularity/relevance would be weighted more heavily by the engines. But most sites simply do not have that many incoming links -- if the engines weighted links **too** heavily, you would put 99+% of all Web sites at an insurmountable disadvantage.

What does this mean to you? Two things...

   i) Since not many sites have many incoming links, this is an opportunity for you to **grab an edge.** If you are close to the Top 10 for your keywords (say you're scoring #11-15 consistently), improving your link popularity might provide **the extra oomph** you need to tip you onto the first page of search results.

But then again, building more Content-Content-Content that PREsells will likely **ultimately** deliver *ALL* the off-page criteria that engines seek -- and the additional Content Pages give you more and more pages that could be found by the engines!

SIDEBAR

Special Tip: Always remember to ask your link partners to include your most important keywords in the actual link text of your in-pointing link. This will give your site added relevancy for those keywords.

For example, **SBI!** Product Manager, Paul Crane, asks Webmasters to link to his

Ultimatefatburner.com Web site like this...

Reviews of Fat Burners, Diet Supplements, and Weight Loss Programs!

And not like this...

Ultimatefatburner.com

See the difference? The first link provides his site with additional relevancy for the keywords "fat burners," "diet supplements," and "weight loss programs." The second link provides no boost.

---

    ii) Improving link popularity/reputation is more useful if **you are trying to win for tough, general words** like "e-commerce," "computers," or "sports cars." **It's kind of like...**

... the golf pros on the PGA Tour. They are all so good, that the difference between them is razor-blade thin. Every little edge is important.

The problem, though, is that you may need thousands of inbound links to play in *that* league. Try this little experiment...

Go to **Search It!...**

http://searchit.sitesell.com/

Choose the **Competition** category in **STEP 1...**
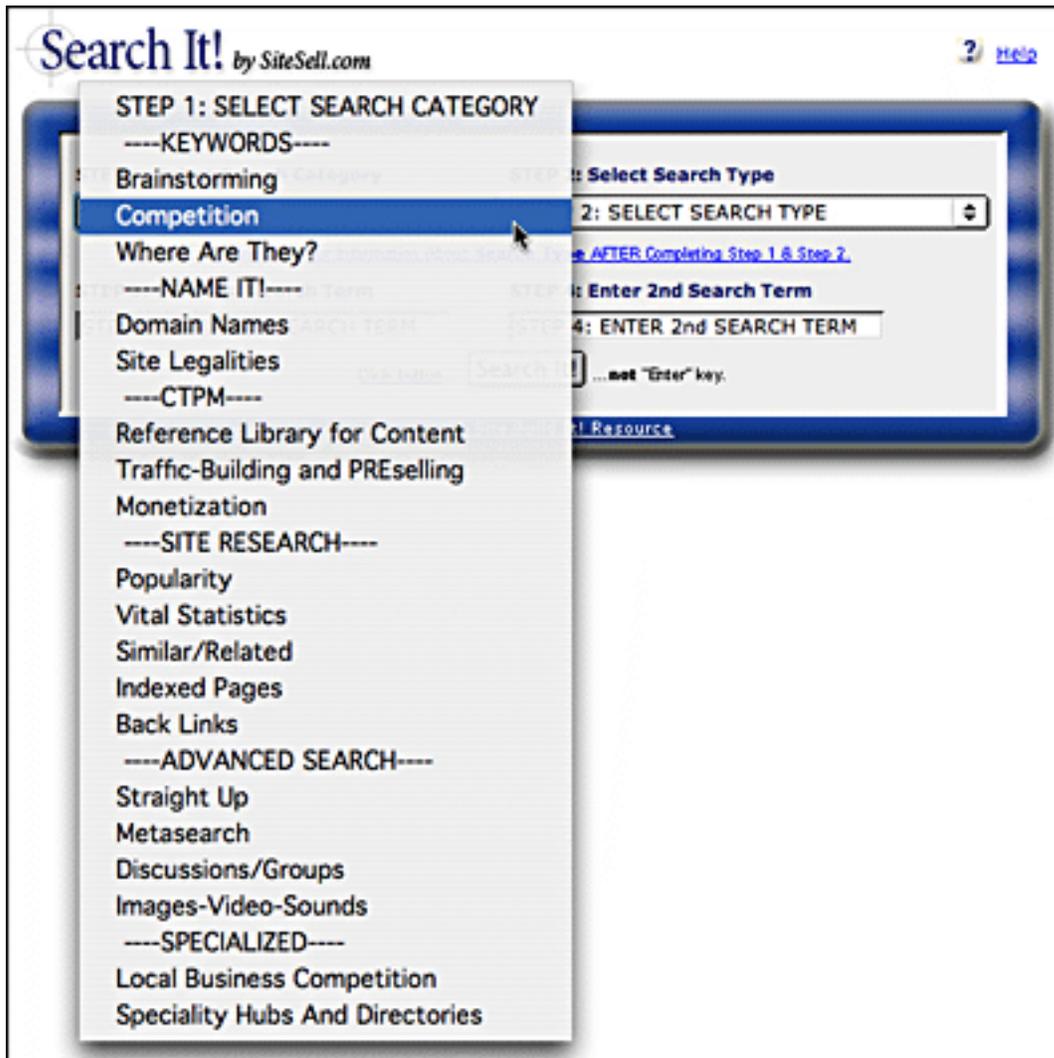
Next, choose **Back Links to SITE (Yahoo! Search)** in **STEP 2** (the Google option is better for finding links to specific pages)...
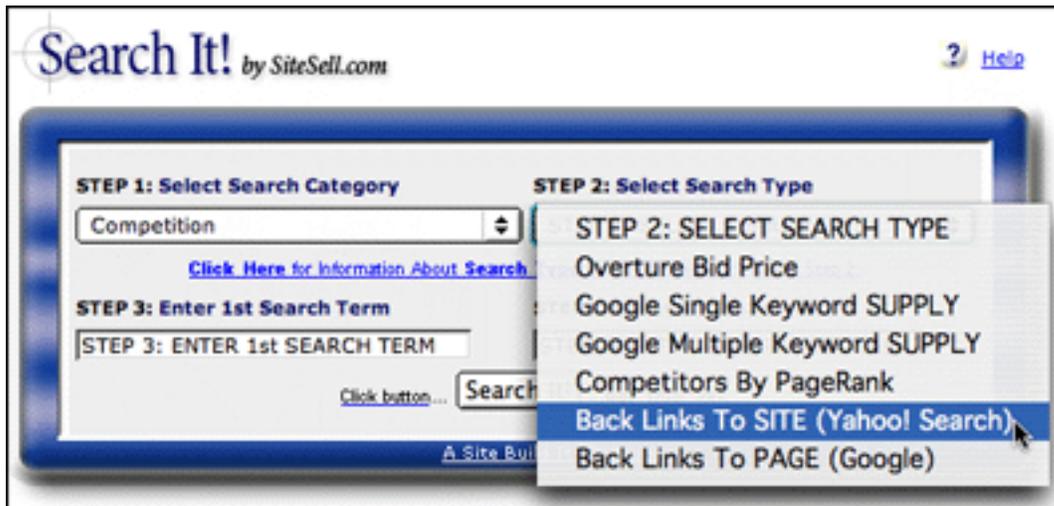
SIDEBAR

Take a look at the entire STEP 2 drop-down menu for the Competition category. It provides unparalleled efficiency for assessing your competition in more ways than merely inbound links.

In **STEP 3,** enter the domain name of the site that ranks highly for competing porcupine-related keywords at the major engines (you can use **Search It!'s Straight Up** or **Metasearch** categories to find those sites.)

Then click on the **Search It!** button -- read the tutorial on "back links" (AKA "inbound links" or "incoming links"). And then click to see how many links go to that site.

Repeat for as many competing sites as you like. Here's what you will find...

A wide scatter.

In general, sites that score in the Top 10 for extremely popular keywords (i.e., high DEMAND) have more in-pointing links. It simply takes better off-page criteria to rank highly for the super-competitive keywords.

On the other hand, sites that rank well for more esoteric words usually have lower in-pointing link counts (especially to that particular page). You can often get a Top 10 for low-demand words purely on the strength of on-page criteria.

And one more observation... you will note that some pages with fewer links score higher than others with more links. More proof that inbound links are not "the all." Yes, sites with more inbound links deserve to be **ranked higher** (especially if those

links come from important, relevant sites, etc.). But SEs are simply way too complicated to pay too much attention to any one criterion.

SIDEBAR

In general, it's not a good idea to compete for general keywords such as "travel" -- leave that to Expedia! The key to success is building a **tightly themed niche** site. **Make Your Content PREsell!** explains how to find the perfect niche, position it well, and deliver it in your own unique voice that visitors find appealing...

http://mycps.sitesell.com/

2.4.   The Bottom Lines

So let's cut to the conclusions...

1) Improved Search Engine rankings are certainly a strong reason to build some inbound links, and especially important in the early stages. **Link popularity and reputation** assist the best sites and pages to "rise to the top."

However, it's not the be-all-and-end-all. If you take a step back to see the forest, you will realize that links are just one of we-can-only-guess-how-many other off-page criteria, and that on-page criteria are important, too. They do become more important for "tougher" keywords.

This e-booklet shows you the 80-20 way to get all the high-quality links you need, without going totally overboard like so many SEOers do (remember, you only have 24 hours in a day, and you have to sleep for at least 2 of them... so put your time into higher yield activities).

2) There is a second reason that inbound links are important...

Inbound links help you get "found" by the spider. There is no way to submit to some SEs. Their crawlers must find and rank you independently. Unless they happen to find you by following a link from a site already on their radar, it may be a long time before you make it into their respective indices. **A single good link can do this, a few make it inevitable.**

Furthermore, **they "credentialize" your site, making it worthy of STAYING in the SE's index.** A few to several are generally enough (if they are of decent quality -- perhaps a major or 2nd tier directory and a few theme-based hubs).

2.5.   Link Exchange Caveats

So far, we've talked mostly about inbound links. Let's introduce the concept of outbound links and link exchanging...

You find a great resource. It would enhance the experience of your site's visitors. You approach its Webmaster, explaining the "fit" for both of you and ask if she would be interested in reciprocating your link with a link of her own. If she says yes, you've got your very first link exchange. Your visitors are enriched by her site, and her visitors are enriched by your site. Everyone is happy.

However, not all Web sites are open to exchanging links. If the site is truly of value and non-competitive, you may still want to provide the out-bound link. Your credibility will be enhanced, amongst your visitors and likely at the engines, too.

Non-reciprocal linking best reflects the **"fundamental reality"** of the Web. **People are searching for quality information.** While they have little impact on your rankings (compared to in-pointing links), your site **should** have a few **out-pointing links.** (More on this later.)

SIDEBAR

Many Webmasters are hesitant to link out because they feel they will lose their visitor forever. But linking to high-value sites builds your credibility, and demonstrates your commitment to your visitor's best interests. Your visitor appreciates this, and will return again... to your site, and to get your recommendations.

Special Tip: Always open out-going links in a new window. That way your site remains available underneath, and easy to access. When opening a new window, it is a good idea to indicate that the link "opens new window," perhaps by including "**opens new window**" small text at the end of a link. Otherwise, users of pop-up blockers may think the link does not "work" (when the blocker stops the new window from opening). Another way to handle this is the way we do it on our corporate site...

http://www.sitesell.com/

Here's what our text looks like...
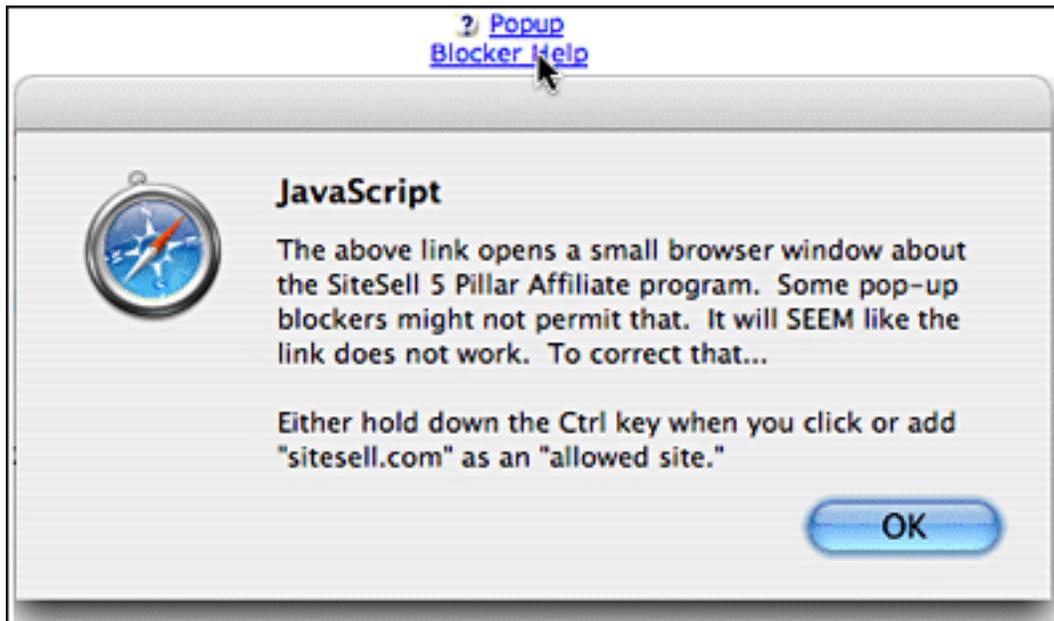
VIEW the SOURCE to see how to deliver the above javascript alert message. If your site is any good, the visitor will enable the popup blocker for your site, too. Believe it or not, there are lots of good reasons to open new browser windows -- just let your visitors know when you're doing it.

The problem with reciprocal linking is that most Webmasters use them as an **artificial attempt** to elevate link popularity. They are **not** focused on providing additional value for their visitors. Instead they hope to trick Google and the other SEs into believing their sites are authorities in their fields.

How often have you seen 50 or 100 links buried deep in a Web site somewhere? And I bet you've never checked out any of those links either. Chances are they were on a hodgepodge of topics, and of questionable quality. More and more, SEs see these pages for what they are, and discount them immediately.

There's nothing wrong with providing your visitors with a list of 5-10 of the best authorities on related topics. And there's certainly nothing wrong with referencing a related Web authority within the course of a discussion on any Web page, with or without reciprocity.

But if you exchange links with a 100 mediocre quality sites, and host those links deep in the uncharted chasms of your site, you're virtually telling the SEs...

"These are not *real* links -- they are not intended to improve my visitors' experience. (How could they be, buried back there?) I'm just trying to fool you."

And what do you think the SEs do when they come to that conclusion? **As usual, the best way to approach things is to think like an SE.**

Would an SE take issue with you linking to a related, quality resource to enhance the experience of your visitors? Of course not -- after all, that's the very essence of the Web.

And will the SE take issue with a Webmaster linking back to you because your site provides value to her visitors? Again, of course not.

Start bending the rules though, and the SEs will be whistling a very different tune. **"It's not nice to fool Mother Nature... or Search Engines."**

Building a "cost-effective" link exchange can be a **prickly business for certain types of sites...**

... no, I promise that we're done with that porcupine analogy!

For instance, if you have a pure sales site, consider several downsides of providing outgoing links in exchange for inbound links...

• **you lose customers with outgoing links**

• **links detract from your sales message**

• **the customer is distracted by too many options.**

In this case, focus more on acquiring in-pointing links with perhaps only one or two extremely high-value exchanges. The exchanges should be well-selected, non-competitive and well-placed (away from your primary sales page that monetizes your #1 service, for example).

Don't discount a link program. But tailor it to focus on landing mostly **in**bound links, with one or two smart and valuable exchanges.

Take-home lesson about reciprocal links?

Exchange links **only** with high quality, relevant sites. Do so for your visitor's sake, and to demonstrate your best intentions for her well-being. If you receive a reciprocal link request from a site that is off topic or of low quality, decline politely. You'll damage your credibility and that of your business by linking to an inferior site.

SIDEBAR

You have to be **very** careful when selecting your **out**bound link partners. It's highly

unlikely that your site's standings will be damaged by inferior quality sites that link **to** you -- after all, you have no control over this.

But if you reciprocate with a link to a lousy site, you are telling the SEs that you are putting your own stamp of approval on that site. If that site happens to be a member of a "link farm" or some other spammy means to artificially elevate link popularity, you will be penalized. So never, ever, ever link to sites employing spammy techniques.

When evaluating outbound links, check...

   i) Google PR

http://toolbar.google.com/

   ii) Alexa Ranking

http://www.alexa.com/

10,000,000 surfers use the Alexa toolbar, which makes Alexa about the most useful "big picture" indicator of traffic. For more information...

http://www.sitesell.com/alexa.html

   iii) your own personal evaluation of the quality and nature of the content.

Webmasters put too much emphasis on the first two. The third puts your visitor first -- and if it's a genuinely superb site, its PR and Alexa score will move up. And you'll have a friend who remembers that you gave a link before she was "famous."

From theory to action, let's keep "rolling" along...

3. The *BEST* Ways To Build INcoming Links *NOW*

As we've just seen, securing inbound links and exchanging links with other sites increase traffic in two ways...

1) increase link popularity/reputation at the Search Engines -- this results in higher rankings at the Search Engines for relevant keywords

2) get spidered and listed at engines that do not accept submissions -- obviously, a huge plus.

These are the big two reasons for building a link program. The third (the **original**) reason was to actually get and send traffic to and from related sites. When one site provides a link to another, it provides a service to its visitors. This "vote of confidence" sends traffic to the receiving site. *Remember this basic but overlooked original reason,* because THAT is actually the "reason" the engines WANT behind each link.

They try to see through shams... and like all other tricks, they relentlessly get better at finding them and eliminating sites that use them.

So... **keep it real.**

Nowadays, the #1 and #2 above are the bigger advantages of building an inbound links (AKA "back links") program. A properly developed link program will deliver far more traffic due to its impact upon the engines than the actual links themselves. But remember... **keep it real and you will never have problems.**

The best (and the simplest) way to build your site's link popularity is to get **IN-**coming links **without** exchanging **OUT-**going links. How? By listing in...

1) major directories

2) second tier directories

3) themed directories and hubs.

SIDEBAR

These three are the best "bang for the buck" as far as building a simple inbound link program to improve your link popularity/reputation. Getting listed will take a bit of time and perhaps a few dollars, but all three of the above are well worth the effort (especially the latter two).

Other methods of building links (publishing an RSS feed, syndicating your content to article directories, setting up an affiliate program, etc.) are worthwhile, but should only be investigated **after** you've finished the first steps. They are beyond the scope of this e-booklet.

READY-SET-GO?

Start this process after you have built 20-30 high-quality content pages. Why 20-30 quality pages? Here's why...

1) Your site is unlikely to attract **quality** links from other Webmasters until it becomes a viable information resource. You won't be able to accomplish this without sufficient content material on your site.

2) Getting a **directory listing** depends upon the reviewing editor. Yes, your site will be reviewed by a real human who knows something about your subject matter. She has to decide that your site contributes something of merit to the directory. If your site is unfinished, or if content is sparse or low-value, it's unlikely that you will get a thumbs up from the reviewing editor.

3) Focusing solely on link popularity to drive traffic is the wrong side of the 80-20 coin. **High-value, visitor-focused content** is ultimately what attracts targeted traffic and keeps them on your site. Yup... **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M.**

Think of that snowball analogy. An inbound link program starts that snowball rolling. But it's Content-Content-Content that will feed the positive feedback loop of human behavior that drives ALL the off-page criteria, which ultimately helps you even more at the engines, which together with even more Content, just keeps bringing more visitors, **which...**

Well, you get the idea by now.

OK, onwards and upwards...

3.1.   The Major Directories

Let's start by looking at the **Major Directories.** I hate to be negative, but the major directories are ultimately doomed. They have been since the Internet hit meteoric growth. There is simply no way humans can keep up with the ever-improving, automated spiders and computer power to give good search results.

Second tier and themed directories probably give better value. But we'll get there in the next sections. For now, let's review the "Big 3" (or is it 2?).

YAHOO! SEARCH Directory

Yahoo! Directory
http://directory.yahoo.com/

Yahoo! was originally a directory. No, it was *THE* directory.

But Yahoo! knew that was doomed. So it went out and bought AltaVista, Inktomi, Overture and rolled it all into the powerful Yahoo! Search to challenge Google. So...

The Yahoo! directory's value has diminished in terms of driving traffic. Almost all searchers at Yahoo! use the spider-driven Yahoo! Search nowadays.

Still, a link from Yahoo! is still considered to be one of the best you can get. And that is probably because a listing in Yahoo! is expensive -- $299/year. That fee alone qualifies you as a pretty serious small business person. But even so, the fee does not guarantee inclusion. It still has to "make the editor's grade."

For most small businesses who should be working the niches, a Yahoo! listing is probably not necessary. You will establish enough quality links as described further below in the booklet.

However, if your business can easily afford it, it is still worth investigating. It is one of the fastest ways to build link popularity -- it is reviewed within 7 days. So it can be a good investment for brand new sites, with big plans that can justify such an expense. But remember...

Your site really has to be good -- let me repeat, **payment is not a guarantee of inclusion.** For more information on the merits of a Yahoo! listing, please check with the **Directory HQ** in **Site Central** (full summary and recommendations appear there). Or, if you are not an **SBIer**, please see...

https://ecom.yahoo.com/dir/express/intro/

dmoz open directory project

The Open Directory Project
http://www.dmoz.org/

Open Directory listings are carried and displayed by many SE partners. For example, the 800-lb gorilla, Google, private labels it as the "Google Directory." This leads to additional exposure for your site. But, just like Yahoo!, the major benefit of a listing is those all-important "link pop brownie points."

Listing in the Open Directory is a no-brainer -- no matter what the nature of your business. Why?

The Open Directory allows Webmasters to submit their sites **for free.**

Yippee!!!!!!

Wait, you know there's a downside, right? **Yup...**

... time. This directory is maintained by a team of volunteer editors. They are horribly back-logged with submissions. It can take anywhere from 3-6 months for your site to get listed.

So while you're waiting for your Web site to be added, develop more link popularity. After all, **you need links now.** Keep moving!

LookSmart
http://www.looksmart.com/

The value of the LookSmart directory has diminished lately. It lost its lucrative contract with MSN to provide back-up listings for its search results (although they have recently been extended).

And LookSmart has moved away from an annual listing fee to a combination of a listing/review fee **plus** a pay-per-click charge. Obviously, **a listing could turn out to be a very expensive proposition** over the course of the lifetime of your site.

Given the change in orientation, you have to wonder how much value a listing in LookSmart is worth nowadays.

SIDEBAR

There is a back-door entrance into LookSmart through the Zeal directory (**http://www.zeal.com/**). There are a couple of caveats, though.

First off, it is only open to non-commercial sites. Secondly, you have to spend a bit of time studying to become an editor (called a Zealot) in order to submit your site.

The optimal strategy? Build your 20-30 high-value pages. Do not monetize during those early month(s). You're not losing much -- traffic is still building and you can "capture" those who enjoy your content through your free e-zine, right? Submit to Zeal at this stage.

Keep building content. A month or so after you are accepted, start your Monetization program. Very effective, if you have the time and patience.

3.2.   The Second Tier Directories Good Return On Investment

Second tier directories are not quite on par with the majors. That shouldn't deter you, though.

Remember, you're not after the traffic from those directories. You want the link.

Advantages?

• Entry is easier.

• They are also relatively cheap, usually around $30 for a guaranteed 48 hour review!

• You can generally get a good link in a relevant category, at a higher level than you would in a major. (For the most part, links closer to the top level directory are worth more -- i.e., a listing in Shopping > Clothes is worth more than one in Shopping > Clothes > Women's Clothes.)

• Your listing is not diluted by a million other links in the same category, making it more valuable to a Search Engine (the more links on a page, the less value is bestowed to each link).

Here are some smaller directories that are worth considering...

JoeAnt
http://www.joeant.com/

GoGuides
http://www.goguides.org

Business.com
http://www.business.com/

Gimpsy
http://www.gimpsy.com/

Blue Find
http://www.bluefind.com/
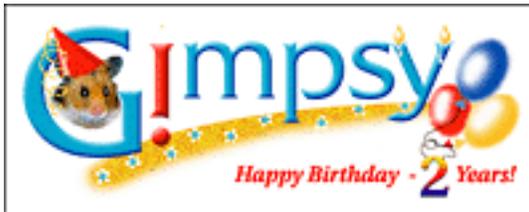
Skaffe.com
http://www.skaffe.com/

SevenSeek
http://www.sevenseek.com/

WoW Search Engine and Directory Service

Wow Search Directory
http://www.wowdirectory.com/

Remember... the real value of a listing in one of these services is an **in-pointing link.** While a listing will bring some visitors, **don't list with traffic in mind.** More than likely, you'll be disappointed.

3.3. Find Themed Directories & Niche Hubs... More Good ROI

List with directories that are specific to your area of interest. These are themed directories and "niche hubs" that offer listings for little or no money. This is powerful because the incoming links are highly specific to your topic, and come from a resource that the engines regard highly... extra points for that!

SIDEBAR

Some specific hubs may request a return link from your Web site. Don't feel obligated to do so. After all, it is the directories' business to list sites. It is not your business to list directories. As always... **give an outgoing link only if you feel it provides real value to your audience.**

One resource provides every search you will ever need to find topical directories and niche hub sites. Here's how to find themed directories, databases and niche hub sites.

Search It!
http://searchit.sitesell.com/

Here's how to start mining for directory gems. You will be amazed at what you dig up.

**STEP 1: Select Search Category** drop-down menu -- click and select **Specialty Hubs and Directories**, like this...
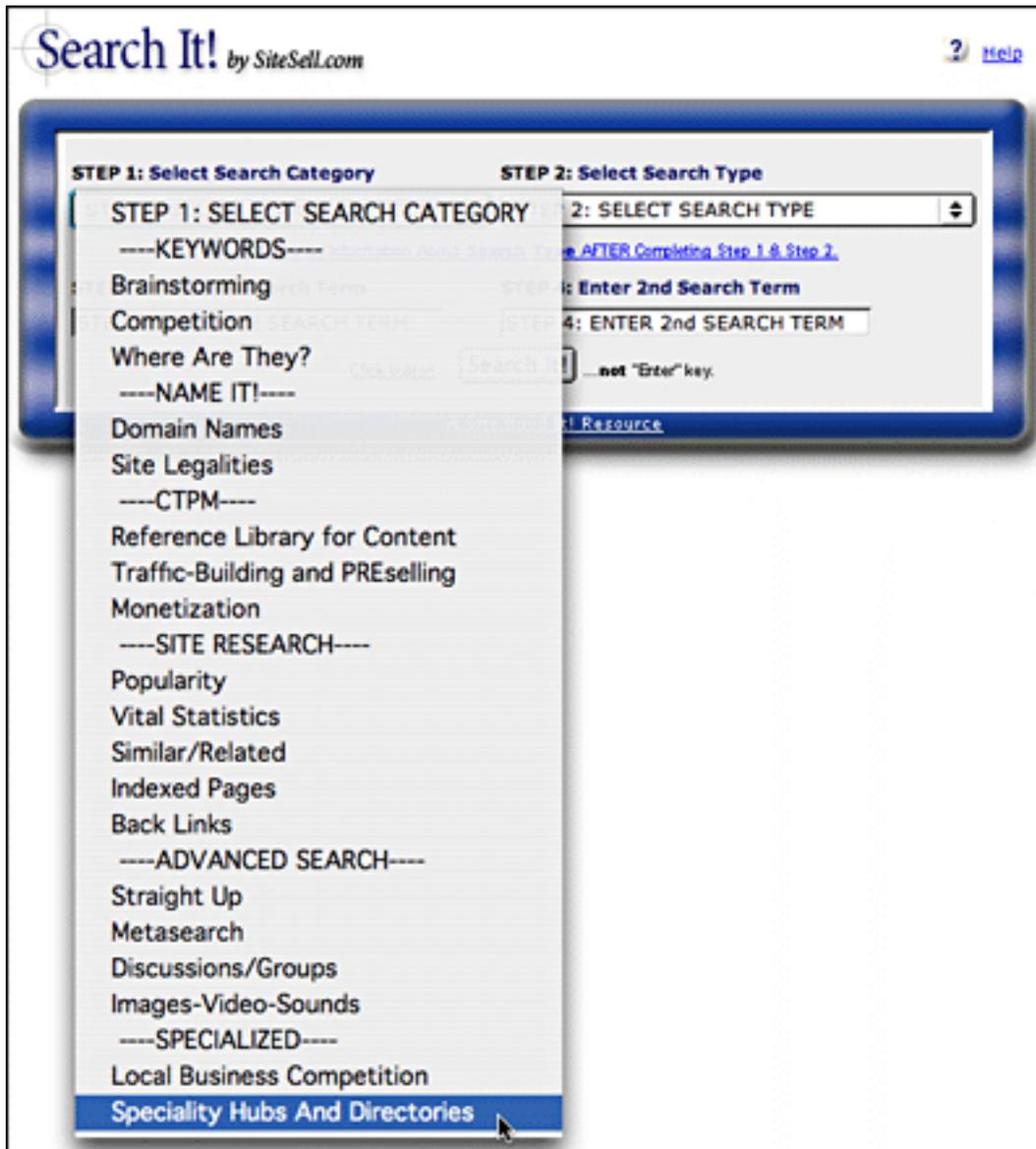
Step 2: Select Search Type drop-down menu, click and select one of the options, like this...
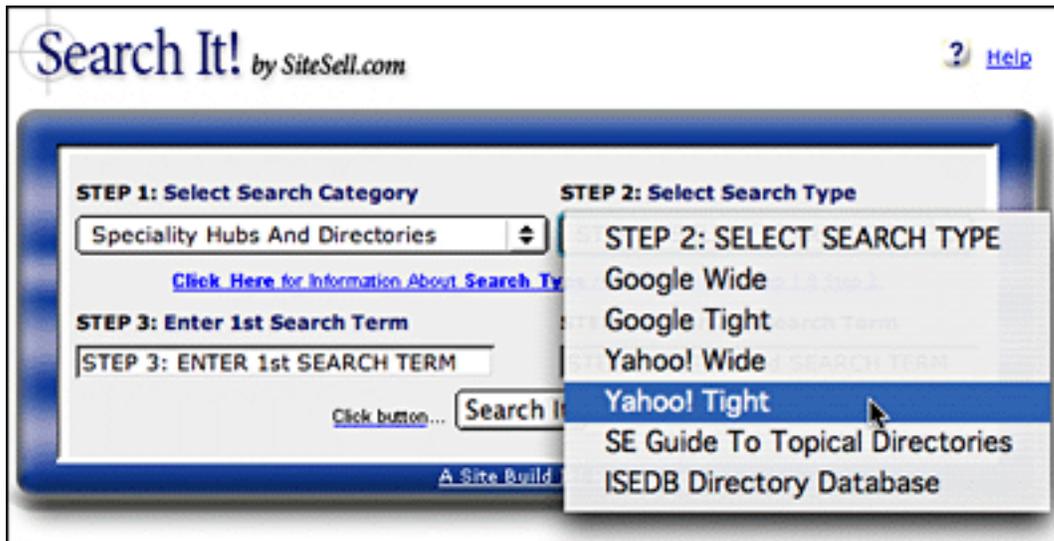
Each search will find something new. I guarantee that you will dig up some absolute treasure here, putting you well on the road to a successful inbound link program. Be sure to review the **"Click Here for Information..."** help for each Search Type before you enter your keywords (Steps 3 & 4 in this case). Properly used, **this is powerful kung-fu.**

Next, click the **Search It!** button. The tutorials reinforce the material you read here, so if you know it all, just skip to the bottom for the Search Results.

You are on your way to establishing your site's link popularity! Well, OK, you still have the work of verifying (the tutorial explains more about that) and listing with the best, most relevant directories and hub sites.

But hey...

 ... I have to leave you with something to do, right?

OK, forward ho! Let's talk about exchanging. No, *not* "link exchanging"... *VALUE* exchanging...

That is what the engines want.

3.4.   Do Not Link Exchange...
Value Exchange!

"Link-exchanging" has become a "bad term," implying all the wrong things. So let's *redefine* it now -- let's call it "value-exchange"...

You and another excellent content site each agree to provide a high-value link to your respective visitors.

With that as the basis of your thinking, here's the key point...

Most of your inbound linking program should be *one-way-inbound-only links,* as explained above. The rest of this section is mostly about value-exchanging. It finishes with a short discussion about one-way-**ou**tbound-only links (i.e., without a reciprocal inbound link).

Value-exchanging doesn't necessarily make good sense for all businesses -- certainly not for pure sales sites or e-commerce stores. But it should fit into the plans for your theme-based content site, provided you do it properly.

What do I mean by "properly?"

Reciprocate links to **enhance** the experience of your visitor. That's the key reason for exchanging value.

Otherwise, you are merely engaging links. That boils down to an attempt to **artificially raise** your link popularity. Perhaps even more damaging is the beating your credibility will take if you link to low-quality, spammy sites.

Bottom line?

Keep it real. Do not do it "for" the engines. Do it for your visitors.

The beauty of that approach is that in the long run, you will also gain at the engines. You never have to lose sleep, worrying about incurring a ranking penalty. Respect the SEs, build your site **for your visitors...**

... and you'll sleep like a baby!

Final point of importance...

You cannot control who links **to you**. So you are not held "accountable" for inbound links (barring some truly outrageous behavior).

But you do **totally** control to whom **you** link! And you are held totally accountable by the engines for that activity. What are the engines looking for?

You already know the answer but it's worth repeating here... **outgoing links to quality sites of similar and related topics!   Reality!**

So link to a quality resource, one that is related to your content. The site does not have to be a Google PR 6/Alexa Top 100,000. But, in your human judgment, you must truly feel that it is an outstanding, related resource. If so...

Link to it with pride as a service to your visitors. "Keeping it real" is not about burying a page, with 100 links on it, somewhere deep in your site, 18 clicks from your home page.

SIDEBAR

Seriously... if you currently have a page of 100 links, buried deep, re-evaluate the practice. Not only are you in danger of being penalized, but the links you have attained as a result of this practice (likely hosted on your partner's own 100 link page) are almost worthless.

Overhaul your link program as outlined in this e-booklet, and watch your entire site start to perform better.   Yes, really... assuming you employ **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M.**

Suppose you *do* find such a great site, one so good that you **want** to link to it as a service to your visitors. Sure, it would be wonderful if you received a link in return. But if it doesn't work out, it's not a bad idea to have a couple/few one-way-**ou**tbound-only links. More on this below.

As you'll see, establishing a good value-exchange program takes **time and effort.** You have to...

• locate quality related resources that do not directly compete with your business

• contact them

• negotiate the exchange, extolling the virtues of your site and the exchange for your visitor

• monitor the exchange.

Phew! It makes me tired, just thinking of it all. Luckily, I have a few solid ideas to accelerate the process. First, though, let's understand the manual process more thoroughly. I don't recommend the "manual process" -- but it will help you understand some of the other types of processes and tips that follow.

3.4.1.   Finding Link Partners 100
The Manual Process

Here's the manual process. It takes time. **Too** much time (wrong side of the 80-20 coin)...

STEP 1) Find sites you want to exchange with, if they agree. This involves quite a bit of research at the engines.

STEP 2) Check the the Google PR, and the Alexa score. Your next step is the important one -- STEP 2 is just a quick screen.

STEP 3) Visit each site yourself, to make sure it delivers. Does the site deliver excellent, non-competitive content? Is it relevant? If so, great!...

Quality + Relevant = Reality!

SIDEBAR

All things being equal (i.e., great content), go for highly regarded inbound links (high Google PR/Alexa ranking). However...

A great site with a low Google PR and Alexa score can be a good value-exchange. Its "scores" will improve if it really is that good. And its owner will be more open to exchanging.

Your call!

If the site's content is of value to your visitors, while being non-competitive, proceed.

STEP 4) Find the right contact person. Is it on the site? Whois? Ugh. More searching.

STEP 5) Send a great e-mail. Discuss why you do not want to "link"-exchange, but that you do want to "value"-exchange! Customize each letter. This is the part that is the most time-intensive. Most recipients are not expecting this request -- many will think you are spamming them!

STEP 6) If the site is nicely done, relevant and would not compete with your business, and if the owner responds positively, complete your link-exchanging arrangements.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If the site is of poor quality (i.e., low value content, lots of banners and flashing buttons, etc.), do NOT link to it, even if some "link exchange service" promises you all the riches in the universe. You will get hurt.

I can't stress this enough -- avoid link farms or pages that have tons of links scattered willy-nilly all over them. No one will ever see the link to you, and engines penalize those pages.

Remember... you have no control over who links to you. So poor links-in are unlikely to hurt you (perhaps with the exception of certain extreme misbehavior). **But if you make bad link-*out* choices, you will pay for those mistakes.** (More on this later.)

By now, you are saying, "What a pain in the..."

You're right and I'm only now coming to the worst step...

STEP 7) Monitor the inbound links from your exchange partner. Unfortunately, not everyone is as honest as you are. And that brings me to...

3.4.2. Finding Link Partners 101
Top 10 "Fraud-Exchange" Tricks

Now, where was I? **Oh yes...**

... Not everyone is as honest as you are.

Trick #1... A month (or two) after you complete an exchange, some Webmasters will take your link down without telling you. That's the easiest trick to detect. Here are some others...

#2) Make links page inaccessible via a clickpath from home page, or even via any page -- **an "orphan" link page is BADLY regarded by Search Engines.**

#3) Bury the the link-bearing page ten clicks deep. Almost as bad as #2.

#4) "You link to me first and I will link back." There's only one problem. She never links back.

#5) Too many outgoing links start cropping up on what becomes a "links page."

A good partner is interested in reality... one or two context-sensitive links within relevant Content on a content page. And, if you find the right partner, you may not have any such problems. If you happen to hit the wrong person, if the sheep changes into a wolf...

Unless you are running automated link-checking software (ex., such as the advanced features of **Value Exchange** available only to **SBI!** owners), you have to check for this kind of nonsense.   Even worse, you have to watch out for the following, which are truly nasty...

#6) Link partner sabotages the link-bearing page by adding a <META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="index, nofollow"> tag to it, or via robots.txt to achieve the same.

#7) Link partner runs the link through a redirect on his own page before sending it to you.

#8) Link partner gives fake links to you (ex., css-styled).

#9) Link partner frames the link-bearing page (which is a low Google PR, even a free geocities page) within a high-ranking site. You don't get the benefit.

Those last four are truly ugly...

... graduating from sleaze to thief. If you choose good partners, they are really unlikely. But the first five tricks? Watch out. And finally...

#10) You submit an "add link" form -- **only then** do you find there is a hidden cost. This is more of a "gotcha" on a niche hub or themed directory. You can always leave if a link was only worth the few seconds it took to hit "submit." Think twice about anyone who would use such a trick. Charges should be upfront -- that shows how they do business.

By the way, the advanced features of **SBIers' Value Exchange** does more than just check for the Top 5. It also checks for the "dirty tricks" such as the META NOFOLLOW nastiness (it even checks for the "nofollow" attribute that can be added to links and that accomplishes the same result within links). Heck, **Value**

Exchange goes so far as to look for "invisibility tricks" that are not even listed above...

• link is "commented" out, making it invisible

• link text is in same color as the page's background color, making it invisible

• link is inside a NOFRAMES tag, making it invisible

Like McDonald's, **SBI!** and **Value Exchange** "do it all for you."

No doubt about it... the manual process is simply not worth the effort. Remember, this is just to build a few links from "regular" Web sites to augment your inbound-only link program.

Luckily, there are tools to automate the process. SiteSell's **Value Exchange** is the best way to make the exercise "worth the time." It cuts down the tedious, time-sucking aspect *AND* keeps it real! You don't "do it for the engines" -- you do it because it makes your site stronger, of greater value to your users. All you do is tailor it to keep your second "audience" (the SE spider) happy, too.

SIDEBAR

Value Exchange *is* simply the best, safest, real, low-maintenance and effective value-exchange program on the Net. **All you have to do is sign up.** There is no registration fee.

After all this, you still want to do things manually? OK, let me give you a couple of tips/shortcuts...

3.4.3.   Finding Link Partner 202
Use Search It!

Let's do quick review of your best 80-20 way to proceed so far...

1) Keep on creating high-value content on your site.

2) Obtain a few quality links from directories (major and/or second tier) and themed directories and hub sites.

3) Build the C-C-C-C-C of C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M.

4) Trust the "Tao of SBI!" -- off-page criteria *will* carry your mastery of basic on-page criteria (as long as you deliver solid content that causes visitors to react).

The last two steps are...

5) Sign up for SiteSell's free [Value Exchange](#) -- you'll receive high-quality, new matches on a regular basis.

And do not devote much time to manually surfing/searching for the ultimate value-exchange partners (great traffic, similar theme, non-competing). The response rate to friendly individualized e-mails requesting a "link exchange" is almost zero. It's not worthwhile -- unless you schmooze better than I do!

6) After that, **simply keep an eye open for suitable link partners** as you go about your **regular** work on the Web. Don't spend time searching for a great site, but when you happen to come across one, don't ignore it.

What's that, you say. Yes, this is the section about finding link partners manually. Did you notice #5 above...

*"Do **not** devote much time to manually surfing/searching for the ultimate value-exchange partners (great traffic, similar theme, non-competing). The response rate to friendly individualized e-mails requesting a "link exchange" is almost zero."*

Honestly, if you follow the "strict" manual process (Finding Link Partners 100), you're wasting your time. But I can show you how to increase your chances.

However, a small caveat before we continue...

I don't actually recommend this as a great time investment for the return on your efforts. You'll get much bigger yields by investing time in creating more and more Content-Content-Content -- *that builds all your off-page criteria, powerfully and naturally.*

If you should decide to do the manual route, what's the best way to do this? Use the **[Search It!](#)** tool's **Back Links** Search Category (STEP 1). Check your own popularity with the major engines for free...
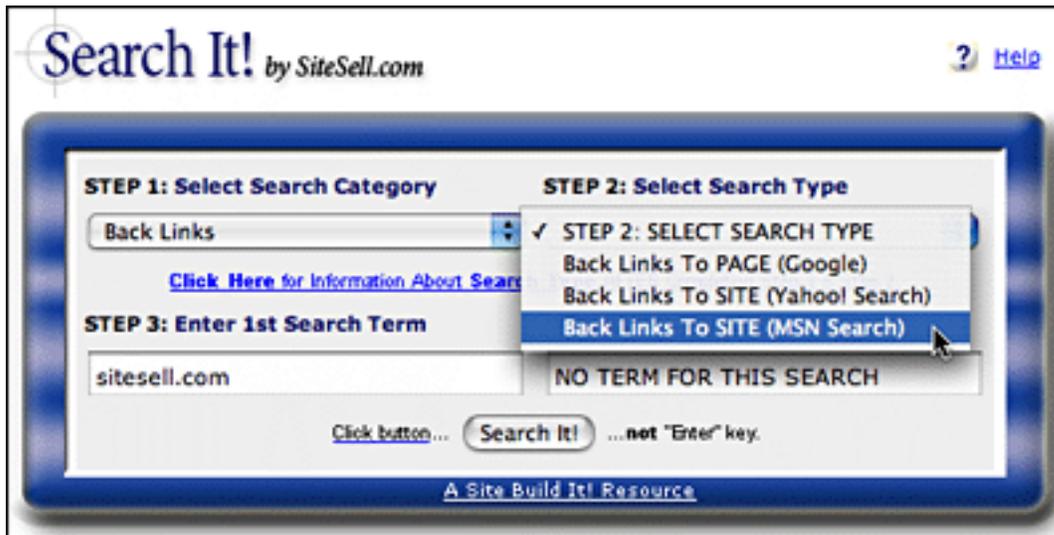
Use it to check the link popularity of sites that you regard as close competitors. Pay special attention to who is linking to them. You'll find...

1) the fruits of interesting directories or other inbound links that you may have missed! Wow, grab these, too!

2) other sites that, since they've linked to this site, are open to linking out and might be interested in linking to you!

Ah... now that reduces all the work of writing 1,000 letters, receiving 200 spam complaints and maybe one reply of interest... from the least attractive of the 1,000!

Divide those "other sites" into...

1) Business competitors (no opportunity here, but do not eliminate just yet!)

2) Businesses complementary to your business

3) Hobby sites (only consider those that are extremely rich in content and well done).

Got your list? Great! To prune your list down further, install Google's toolbar to verify the **PageRank** of the sites in your list.

SIDEBAR
___

Google's toolbar, available at...

 http://toolbar.google.com/

... displays the **PageRank** score of a Web site as a green band.

Sites that are known to Google will show some green in the toolbar -- this number will vary from 1 to 10 -- the higher the better. Sites unknown to Google will show up as a gray bar. Sites that have a white bar are known to Google, but haven't yet established any PageRank score.

You can also use Alexa to **eliminate sites that get near-zero traffic...**

http://www.alexa.com/

For more info about Alexa...

http://www.sitesell.com/alexa.html

SIDEBAR

You can also use the **Related Sites** function of **Alexa** to find sites that are related to your competitors. **You** might even be there!

A word of caution...

Be flexible, and wise, with both of these tools. The purpose behind exchanging links is **not** to manipulate the engines. Of course, you would prefer that your inbound links be from higher Google PR and Alexa ranked pages. But it's more critical that they be great sites. As for linking out... the "great site" part is ten times more important! (I can't repeat this enough.)

Most newly minted sites have yet to build link popularity -- that's the nature of the game. So don't discount high quality sites that have yet to establish themselves, especially if they provide a valuable resource. Spot those young diamonds in the rough.

Remember reality -- add value to your visitor's experience and obtain a quality link. If you get some traffic from an exchange, consider it a nice bonus. But the big bonus, in the long run, is combining this with **C** ➡ **T** ➡ **P** ➡ **M** to get that ever-rolling snowball growing out of control!

OK. All that's left now is to visit the sites on your tightened list and decide which ones **warrant** a link trade (i.e., provide great content, are non-competitive and fit your visitors' needs). Once you've compiled this list...

Draft a nice "form letter" for each site owner. Introduce yourself and your site. **Add a personalized compliment about each site**. Mention that their visitors would be interested in the content on your site, and vice-versa. Don't forget to mention the "plus" feature of a high-value-exchange such as the one you propose.

SIDEBAR

The presence of your Specific Keywords in both your links out, and your links in, gives you a slight boost in rankings. So when you send a request for a link, I suggest that you include your site description, perhaps even the HTML, so the Webmaster can simply copy-and-paste. This way, you'll get the text link the way you want it -- with the keywords in it! Here's an example...

One of the most important keywords for **SBI! Product Manager** Paul Crane's site (**Ultimatefatburner.com**) is "fat burners." He asks that prospective partners link to him like this...

<A HREF="http://www.ultimatefatburner.com/">Reviews of fat burners, diet supplements, and weight loss programs</A>

And not like this...

<A HREF="http://www.ultimatefatburner.com/">Ultimatefatburner.com</A>

Smart move, Paul!

Special Tip: Place a link to your possible link partner's site on your own site **before** you e-mail her with the proposition. Send her the URL so that she can see for herself. Then include the URL of your own site, and a brief description. Then all the Webmaster has to do is cut and paste it into the links page.

How can she say "no"?

Ummmm... pretty easily, it would appear -- if you even get the courtesy of an answer (not likely).

Remember, Webmasters will be looking for links that **add value to their own sites, rather than those that just benefit your business.**   But generally, most are not actively looking for links. So I'm not promising any results with this approach, just trying to save you time from the "totally manual" approach.

Bottom line...

Do **not** waste time **manually** building a value-exchange program. Seriously. Make your short list of sites (if you must) and send a few e-mails. I think you'll find it very low yield. I really hate to be a party-pooper, but that's "the reality."

And that brings me to a far better, rewarding, real, and time-effective way to exchange value...

3.4.4.   Finding Link Partners 303
Value Exchanging!

Why is **Value Exchanging** "the best"? Simple... **It's real.**

Yes, that brings us back to the topic of **recognizing reality.** In the same way that the engines' #1 goal is to **recognize reality** for search results (i.e., relevance and quality), so it is with links. The reasoning is the same...

Many SEOers, whether "good" or "bad," basically try to manipulate rankings by "chasing the link algorithm." That is why you see so many SEOers obsess about PR. The engines don't like being manipulated -- it degrades the quality of the results they deliver.

Instead, **Value Exchange** focuses on keeping it real. No game-playing. It just delivers what you need and **what the engines love... truth.**

Why are **free (non-SBI!) users** raving about the SiteSell **Value Exchange**? Many reasons...

• Webmasters must **sign up** for the program in order to receive leads **and** to become a lead for matching sites. This means your potential linking partners are highly qualified **and** receptive to link exchanging... not parasites.

• Advanced database-matching pairs your site up with other sites that have matching keywords. This ensures only highly targeted, relevant matches are generated.

• The entire process of generating prospective partners and sending out that "first contact" e-mail is automated. This frees up your time to do other more important things... like building your business!

• Oh yes, most importantly... it works! The **Value Exchange** generates credible matches so that you only contact other sites (with similar themes) who have specifically expressed an interest in exchanging links with you. Result? Prequalified **valuable** link requests from quality, like-themed sites -- **the real way.**

So before we continue any further, take a minute to sign up for **Value Exchange** and then come back here. Don't worry, I'll wait.

SIDEBAR

Did a friend send you this free booklet and you're not sure where to register? No problem. All the information you need is available at...

http://value-exchange.sitesell.com/

Registration completed? Great news!

Let's keep going with this small piece of advice...

As you know owners of SiteSell's **Site Build It!** tool have access to a much more powerful version of **Value Exchange.** But first, they learn the "golden rule" of linking, and I offer it to you here...

Treat your link partner the way you would like to be treated.

Sound simple? Yes, it is. But it's the basis of building a long-term link program that not only lasts, it builds. Business is not about tricks, WIN-LOSE deals, and dishonesty. It's about action, persistence, patience, honesty, faith and hard work...

http://tortoise.sitesell.com/

So...

Do not bury your partner's link on an over-populated **link page**. Why would anyone do that with something they are proud to display?

In order for a value-exchange to be effective, link to your partner's site from a page that contains no more than 5 out-pointing links in total. Generally, the fewer out-pointing links a page contains, and the closer the link-bearing page is to your home page, the more value the link provides to your partners. So a link from a page containing 50 out-pointing links, 10 clicks away from home, is worthless.

And that brings me to the extreme no-no...

Never, ever "orphan" a link on a gateway page that cannot be linked to from your home page. SEs look badly upon pages like that. Pretty obvious, if you stop to think about it. **But I guess..**

... a lot of people don't stop to think about it.

Finally, while value-exchanging... do not do any of the nasty **WIN-LOSE "Top 10" tricks that the morally bankrupt do**. They won't last. Nor will you.

3.4.5.   Other Options?... Avoid At All Costs

The Net is a funny place do to business, partly because it's an immature medium. So you will read a lot of bad advice. You will come across a lot of bad products, some of which will actually hurt you or even get you banned.

Their language can be so persuasive and misleading that, before you know it,

you've linked to a "link farm" or joined an FFA (Free-For-All linking sites). And bingo... the engines hate that. You're penalized -- zero "engine credibility." (If we were talking about "Street Cred," you'd be Howdy Doody.)

This booklet cannot cover all the ridiculous advice you could ever read. We've shed light on the good, delivered the optimal 80-20 process within the larger "big picture," and now we are trying to keep you out of the clutches of the vultures and the just plain dumb. But first, a key tip...

The most successful **SBI!** owners focus 100% on **SBI!** and go about their business. They tortoise ahead, relentlessly towards success. I can't give you better advice -- do not allow yourself to get distracted. Follow the advice in this book, ignore all else, and you will do fine. That is the surest way to stay out of trouble.

Even if you do not own **SBI!** (and you should), every excellent, honest, 80-20, high-yield method of building a link program is included right here. However, just in case you are exposed to other "new ideas" or "proven winners" or other irresistible ideas about link exchanging, please remember...

Evaluate the information from the common sense WIN-WIN-WIN philosophy outlined in this booklet. It will stand you in good stead when evaluating link "strategies" (that term itself implies the *manipulation* of engines). Remember, if you make a mistake, you can seriously hurt your reputation at the engines.

So how **do** you evaluate the slew of ideas, advice, get-traffic-quick schemes?

Use the "reality" principle to decide if it makes sense. Combine that with **Content** ➡ **Traffic** ➡ **PREsell** ➡ **Monetize** and the understanding of how a good inbound link program starts the snowball rolling. After that, Content, Content, and Content build *all* the off-page criteria powerfully *and* for the long-term.

So where do *you* think the long-term money is?

Right... **"Content** ➡**"**

With those concepts arming us, let's evaluate a variety of linking strategies and options...

What about those link popularity enhancement programs?

Terrible...

These services "artificially" boost your popularity by having all the participants in the service linking to one another. In exchange for your participation (service is usually

free), you must maintain a link on your site, as well as upload a new batch of pages to your link directory each month. If you don't, you're dropped from the program.

Most of the original ones have disappeared because these services are now seen for what they are -- Search Engine spam, AKA "link farms." Remember... anything designed purely to beat an algorithm, and that is free, and that is so easy to do, will soon be blasted out of the waters by the engines. Why? Because they violate the "Golden Rule"...

Do not manipulate the SE results for your own benefit.

I'll widen the definition of the term, "link farms," to mean any automated process that is designed to generate tons of links on the "I'll link to yours if you link to mine" basis. They're big, fast, easy... and the engines hate them.

Naturally, the engines know how to identify them. And if you link to a site through any kind of proposition like this, you'll hurt yourself.

And guess what? If you read the clever copy of these "services," the newer, more subtle ones don't call themselves "link farms"!

Avoid them like the plague. 'Nuff said.

Bottom line -- keep it real. There are no "strategies" -- just do what you would normally do. Get good links in, ones that make sense for your site.

What about the "interlink your site" strategy?

Let's say that you read advice to interlink your sites (assuming that you have more than one). OK, you have three sites. Should you interlink them? Think about the answer, using the the "reality" principle...

What would you *normally* do? Let's say that you have three sites...

• one on the Caribbean island of Anguilla

• one on tortoise-breeding

• one about online marketing.

These have no business linking to each other. At best, the engines will ignore the links. At worst, they'll be able to "whois" the fact that all the sites belong to the same person, for example. Uh-oh.

On the other hand, if all three sites are about different aspects of Anguilla, *and* you want to link for natural reasons, you won't get hurt. Overdo it, thinking somehow that it confers magical linking power, and you'll be disappointed... possibly hurt.

Bottom line -- keep it real. There are no "strategies" -- just do what you would normally do. Get good links in, ones that make sense for your site.

What about software like **Arelis** and **Zeus?**

If you are a hard-core SEOer who has totally lost site of reality, these are for you. They have a long learning curve. You can easily cross the line into spam territory. And you'll spend tens of hours tweaking and playing and... ummm, not building your business. If you enjoy being on the 20 side of the 80-20 coin, these are for you.

For everyone else? You'll be much better off building all your off-page criteria naturally and powerfully through **C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M.**

Bottom line -- wrong side of the 80-20.

Should you hire one of the many link management services?

If your business can justify the cost, it is possible to completely outsource the creation and management of your link-building program. While this option offers an appealing solution to the drudgery of link-building, inbound links are just **one** of many off-page criteria. You can't outsource them all, nor do you need to.

And **you** are the one who is best suited for this job. **You are the best judge of quality in your industry.** Since you know your business inside and out, only **you** can tell whether a related site really knows its stuff or not. And only you know whether or not a related business is a competitor.

While a reputable link-building firm can save you time, you will need to double-check all work. Realistically, most small businesses do not need to go to such extremes.

Bottom line -- 80-20 says such services are unnecessary/too expensive.

Should you buy in-pointing text links (AKA "text link ads")?

I'm sorry to say that for a regular monthly fee you can have a link to your site placed on a related site. These links are usually priced according to the PageRank and Alexa score of the hosting Web site.

The monthly cost for a link on a PR7 site starts at about $100. Links from sites with a PR of 4-5 costs between $40-60/month. Before you go running to the bank, let's discuss the downsides associated with this practice...

1) Text Links are very expensive. 2nd tier directories will provide you with a lifetime link for less than the monthly cost associated with a link from a PR4-5.

2) How do you think the engines would react to this? At best, they'll consider it advertising and ignore it. But would it surprise you if I told you that Google is blocking the PR value of sites that actively sell links for the purpose of artificially inflating link popularity? It shouldn't be a surprise.

My recommendation? Keep it real. Avoid. There are not "strategies" -- just do what you would normally do. Get good links in, ones that make sense for your site.

What's that?

Yes, I guess I am repeating myself.

Now, if you are **not** a **Site Build It!** owner (still?), and if you are technically inclined or can find someone who is...

3.4.6.   Reciprocal Linking Management Software

There is a way to save on the manual effort. Install a simple **link exchange form** on your site, one that works to reduce your load and hassle.

Master Reciprocal Links is a program that must be installed in the cgi-bin of your Web host. Here's the clever part... a visiting Webmaster must qualify herself as serious by first placing a link on her page, **before she can request a returning link.**

So now you're probably thinking...

"How do I know people won't cheat?"

Ah! A robot named "Link Rover" is sent to the link URL to verify that such a link does indeed exist. If it doesn't, you never even receive the request!

Master Reciprocal Links
http://willmaster.com/master/rlinks/index.shtml
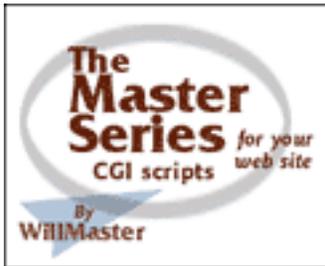
Here's part of the link request form you display on your site...

No, it's not as good or complete as all the functionality that **SBI!** users receive with **Value Exchange.**

Value Exchange checks regularly. It checks to make sure a link can be reached within 3 clicks of the home page. It checks and reports on a whole bunch of stuff.

But... if you already have a site, and you're happy with your results otherwise... hey, **Master Reciprocal Links** is free!

Afraid to install CGI? Looking for a bit more functionality? Check out this paid service...

http://www.linksmanager.com/

LinksManager does require FTP access, but no CGI is involved at your end. The cost is approaching the cost of the entire **SBI!** program, which is a pretty good indication of the value of **SBI!...**

https://secure.sitesell.com/build/order.html#BUSINESS

The upside? Put your link-exchanging on semi-auto-pilot. Avoid their discussion about "links pages." Follow the basic principles outlined here while using LinksManager and you should be pretty happy. The biggest plus is that you can concentrate fully on building a content-rich site.

On the other hand, if you focus on the cost-effective way of building inbound links and use **Value Exchange,** is the expense worth it?

Only you can decide.

Getting close to the end now. Let's take a quick look at specific issues about "linking-out" **and then...**

   ... we'll wrap it up.

3.5.   An OUTgoing Link Program?
Carefully... AND Selectively

Throughout **Make Your Links WORK!,** I sprinkled advice about outgoing or outbound links. This sub-chapter summarizes all the reasons why you would want to link **out** of your site.

Let's take it from the top...

Reason #1) High-value OUTbound links provide value to your visitors. Visitors appreciate being presented with quality, credible links to related material that further enhances their surfing experience. Be highly selective.

Reason #2) Linkage counts both ways with the engines, INcoming and OUTgoing.

Reason #3) Links OUT count with the human editors of directories, too.

Bottom line? If they (visitors, editors, SE spiders) see you provide *bona fide* links to other quality sites, your site is more credible. It's a more valuable resource. So don't make all OUTgoing links purely monetary affiliate links.

Please don't ignore this. You only need a couple of high-value OUTbound links to establish that extra bit of credibility. Include your keywords in the link text, too (just like in-pointing links).

Key Reminder

Nothing is more damaging than linking to a bad Web site.

Always keep in mind that a link out puts your seal of approval on the receiving Web site. Should that site be of low quality, visitors will question your judgment. Should it be a link farm or otherwise involved with some "strategy" that is rightfully in the engines' bad books, you suffer.

The finish line is just ahead. It's time for the wrap-up...

4.   Single Best Course Of Action

Build a super-high-quality niche site.

Nothing in the world comes close to **Site Build It!** for that...

http://buildit.sitesell.com/

By far, the easiest, long term strategy for building link popularity is a passive one. The absolute best way to garner links is by building a site of such high quality that people **want** to link to it, in order to increase the value of their own visitor's experience. What could be easier? Your link popularity builds itself!

The **Tao of SBI!** guarantees it. All **you** need to do to succeed?

Start the ever-building snowball careening downhill. Once you do that, **Content** and visitor reaction feed **all** off-page criteria (including inbound links), which feed more **Traffic,** which builds more off-page criteria, while you keep building more **Content.** All that great content **PREsells** visitors, delivering more off-page criteria and leading to **Monetization...**

C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M

And round and round it goes, while you focus on what counts (instead of the minutiae of SEO or endless hours on "link-exchanging").

And how do you start that snowball rolling? By building a simple inbound link program, sprinkled with a few high-quality **value exchanges** (be patient) and even a couple of super-high-quality outbound-only links. Specifically...

#1) Get IN-coming links from theme-specific sections of the major directories.

#2) Get IN-coming links from theme-specific 2nd tier directories.

#3) Get IN-coming links from themed directories and hub sites.

#4) Participate in SiteSell's Value Exchange, the most REAL way to identify high-value sites which want to link to your site...

http://value-exchange.sitesell.com/

If you haven't done so yet, please sign up now. The search for quality sites that match your theme automatically kicks into gear.

#5) OUTbound-link with high-quality theme-related, non-competing sites as you happen to discover them in the course of normal business or surfing -- exchange links with them, if possible.

And if you have several similar theme-related sites, cross-link them **only** if/when there is a perfectly natural, normal reason to do so.

Remember that **in-coming and out-going** links are **both** important. In general, of course, you want to have far more inbound than outgoing links. But a few, sheer "value links" (above and beyond any affiliate links) qualify you in so many ways.

SIDEBAR

I'll repeat the same advice that was given earlier... Code your HTML so that you open a new window with these links and keep your site present underneath. (**Click here to review this discussion.**)

Bottom line on link popularity?

For small businesses working the niches, a few credentializing links from recognized resources and good sites (**#1-4,** just above) are all you need to start the

"C ➡ T ➡ P ➡ M snowball." They increase your relevance for related keywords. They help keep your young, growing site from being dropped from the various Search Engine indices. And they get you into the no-submission engines.

Past that, "conscious hours of link-exchanging effort" rapidly run into the law of diminishing returns. Create Content instead. Great Content.

The Tao of SBI! takes care of the rest.

Make Your Links WORK!
© and TM 2005 SiteSell Inc. All rights reserved worldwide.