



THE RIGHT CONNECTIONS

While attending a networking function allows you to build strategic relationships, the same opportunities exist on the web. Make sure you make the most of online linking.

ON a website, a link refers to anything you can click on that takes you to another page or website. There are a number of reasons why linking to other websites and having them link to you is beneficial.

Links between websites form the foundation of the web. Without links, the utility of the web would be reduced to a mere collection of discrete websites instead of the interactive, interconnected resource for sharing information we all expect.

By embracing the concept of website linking, you are not only doing your bit to make the web a more useful tool for everyone, but also gaining some additional market penetration for the online arm of your business.

Why should you link to other websites?

Linking to another website is when a visitor on your website can click a link and be taken to somebody else's website. In the industry, this is called an outbound link.

If a particular website contains helpful information that would supplement information on your website, consider linking to that website to help visitors learn more about the topic.

Where you feel another website has adequately described a topic, and you do not have the inclination to write similar information for your own website, consider linking to that website.

If you wish to express your alliance with another business or organisation, linking to that website will allow visitors to see the affiliation and learn more about the other business or organisation, thereby boosting your reputation. Where you are a member of an industry organisation, using its logo (with permission) will serve to further reinforce this connection.

In all cases, your web developer should arrange for the link to open the other website in a new browser window so your own website remains open even after your visitor has finished reading the other website.

Keep in mind that original, up-to-date and helpful content on your website is better than simply linking to another website.

How do links from other websites help you?

Having a link from another website is when a visitor on somebody else's website can click a link and be taken to your website. In the industry, this is called an inbound link.

Having other websites link to you will bring more visitors and broaden the number of ways in which you can reach your target market.

Visitors who come from other websites can often be more valuable than visitors who come from search engines, particularly if the other website has given you a glowing commendation together with the link.

Having a link on a well-respected website will add trustworthiness to your business, as visitors will assume that a website they respect will only link to reputable businesses and worthwhile websites. When another business links to you from its website, it creates the perception of that business recommending or endorsing you.

If another website links to yours, search engines consider your website must contain some valuable information and will therefore list you higher in the search results for keyword phrases included in your content.

How can you encourage other websites to link to yours?

Over time, you will find other websites linking to yours for various reasons. To accelerate this natural process of acquiring



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with
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links from other websites, try some of the ideas below.

- Others will be more likely to link to your website if you have unique, informative and well-written content. Therefore, consider what information your visitors might be interested in that cannot easily be found on other websites and add this content to your website in a logical, well-organised manner.
- Write a series of articles about a topic relevant to your industry and about which you have extensive knowledge. Add a note to the bottom of each article which

grants permission for other websites to reproduce your articles, provided they acknowledge you as the writer and link to your website.

- Search for online directories – organised collections of websites, such as www.dmoz.org – and suggest your website for inclusion. Directories specific to your industry, location or target audience will result in more relevant traffic. Perform a web search for *travel directory* as an example of how to find industry-specific online directories.

- Write testimonials for companies you do business with, including suppliers, clients and associates. Give permission for your testimonial to be used in that company's marketing literature, which could include their website and result in a link to yours.

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