WEBEminence

Search Engine Marketing Guide

BIG Results for SMALL Business Websites

WebEminence.com

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About Me

Before you read on, you may want to know who's writing this….

My name is Ryan Bowman and you probably downloaded this guide through my site WebEminence.com.

Read more about me here.

Through WebEminence.com, I build simple and affordable websites for small business owners and entrepreneurs. Since many of my clients ask me how they can get more traffic from the search engines, I wrote this guide for them and anyone else who cares to know the answer to this very important question.

Pay What You Want…

After writing this guide, I was trying to decide how much to sell it for…$29, $75, $90? I know this information is very valuable and I planned to give it away free to my clients and make it available to everyone else at a price.

I eventually decided to give it away free to anyone who wants to read it and let you decide how valuable it is. Read, enjoy, and all I ask is for your feedback at the end. I'll also give you a chance to pay for this guide if you think it's worth the money. I accept Visa, Mastercard, and shameless promotions :) No pressure though… Just read and enjoy!

Is This Guide For You?

This guide is for you if you have a website and are looking to get more traffic from search engines. It's written especially for **small business owners** who know very little about how search engines work. Even if you *think* you know A LOT about search engine marketing, I'm confident you will still learn a few new strategies that can drastically improve your search engine presence. This is not an exhaustive overview of search engine marketing. These are the methods I use to expand my presence in the search engines. If they work for me, they can work for you too.

My goal is to give small business website owners a basic understanding of how search engines work and also give actionable methods that you can start working on immediately. I know small businesses don't have the budgets and staff that larger companies devote to SEO (Search Engine Optimization), so this guide was written with that in mind.

Let's get started…

> *TIP: If you do not yet have a website but are interested in getting one, you may want to first read my* **Beginners Website Guide** *for tips on how to get a website up and running.*

New Website = Instant Traffic?

It is true that having a presence online is critical. Even if you are not getting thousands of daily visitors, having a professional website legitimizes your business and gives your prospects and customers more trust in you.

Many people believe that all they have to do is put up a website and the floodgates will open as website visitors pour into their new website.

Unfortunately, it's not so easy. The traffic to a new website is usually better described as a trickle.

The slow trickle will not build into a tidal wave by itself. Strategic promotion is necessary. You may not immediately get the flood of traffic you were hoping for, but with a little effort you can create a steady flow of visitors that can solidify the future of your business.

Website Traffic Basics

Where Does Website Traffic Come From?

If you want visitor traffic to your website, you first need to know where website traffic comes from. Website traffic generally comes from 3 main sources:

1. Search Engines

Most people go to a major search engine (Google, Yahoo, or Bing) when they are searching for something online. With the explosion of smartphone usage, the number of searches is growing since everyone now has Google in their pocket.

Links from search engine results pages account for 80% of most website traffic. This is why getting your site ranked high in search engine results is so important. Search engines are not going away any time soon.

2. Links from Other Websites

It's called the World Wide Web because every page on the web is connected to other pages via links. **If your site is online but there are no links pointing to it, it's just floating out there in cyberspace and even search engines may have trouble finding it.**

Since you click on links all the time, I think you already know what a link is. But just to be certain, website links are any image or text that is "hyperlinked" to another website. When you click the link, your browser displays the linked website. Links from websites other than search engines account for about **15%** of website traffic on average. These links could be on large websites like Facebook and Twitter or smaller sites like your friend Suzy's blog.

Getting links to your site from relevant websites can be a great way to get some extra traffic, but it also plays a major role in boosting your search engine rankings (more on that later).

3. Direct Entry

On average, about 5% of website traffic comes from a website URL directly typed into the address bar of a browser or a link clicked in an email.

This may occur if someone sees your website URL in an email, hears it spoken, or finds out about it some other way and then types it into their browser. Some common examples may be seeing a URL on the side of a contractor's truck or on a business card.

Direct entry accounts for a small percentage of total traffic, but if you do a lot of promotions in print or by word of mouth, this may be a major source of traffic for your website.

*We'll talk about all 3 sources of website traffic in this guide but since **Search Engines** and **Links From Other Websites** account for 95% of web traffic, that's where we will focus our attention.*

Search Engine Keywords and Competition

Do you ever wonder how search engines work? Why do certain sites show up on the first page of results while your site is on page 42?

The first step to understanding how search engines work is understanding keywords. Keywords are the phrases that people type into Google and other search engines before clicking the search button.
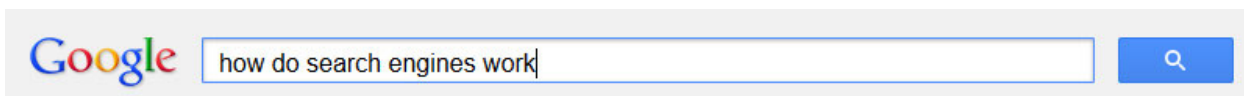
After a website is published online, a search engine will find it and decide whether or not to include it in their index. Then the search engine's top secret algorithms go to work to determine what keyword searches the website might be relevant for and how high to rank the site for these keyword searches.

We'll never know exactly what is included in search engine formulas for ranking sites, especially since they are changing all the time. But we can learn a lot from listening to what the search engine companies DO tell us and looking at the types of sites that consistently rank on the coveted first page of the search results.

One key component to understand when untangling the web of keywords and search engine rankings is **COMPETITION**. Some keywords have very little competition and some have many websites competing for positioning in search engines. It's much easier to get high rankings for keywords with less competition obviously. However, these less competitive keywords also have less search volume every month and less potential to create traffic to your website.

For example, since I build websites for small business clients, I would love to be ranked on the first page for the keyword "**small business website**" which is a popular search term with thousands of searches each month. However, that keyword is so super-competitive that I may never be able to compete with the large companies with big budgets vying for the top spot. Since I'm a small business, I would probably have better results carving out a niche in less competitive keywords like "**affordable small business website**" or "**small business website on a budget**" that are still competitive but not nearly as competitive as "**small business website.**"

What are your "dream keywords" that may be too ultra-competitive for you to ever get your site ranked? Search for these keywords in Google and look at the related searches for a quick idea of some less competitive keyword searches that you may be able to target. I'll mention some more robust keyword research tools in the next section for those who want to do more in-depth keyword analysis.

Search Engine Competition Continued…

To explain how search engine keyword competition works with another example, I will use a client's website. This client sells hog hunting lights so one broad keyword is "**hunting lights**" and a more targeted keyword is "**hog hunting light**".

The hunting light sold on his website is called the "**terminator hunting light"**.

If you search Google for **"terminator hunting light",** his website will probably show up on the first page because there is little competition for that very specific keyword. There probably are not any other pages on the internet about *Terminator Hog Hunting Lights*.

However, if you search for **"hunting light"** or **"hog hunting light"**, his website may not show up in the search results because there are a lot of competing web pages for these keywords.

More work needs to be done to rank for these competitive keywords – but they also have potential to generate a lot more traffic!

When you first publish a website online, you can usually expect to rank for low-competition keywords like your own business name and product names within the first month provided your site is *search engine friendly* (more on that below) and there are no other products or businesses with the same name. But it will take time and effort to get ranked for more broad and competitive keywords.

So how do you know which keywords are competitive and which are not?

The quick and easy way is measure the level of competition for a keyword is to do a search in Google for the keyword and see what results show up. There are two things to look for:

1. If there are a lot of sponsored (paid) ads in the top and right side, that is a sign that it is a competitive keyword.
2. If there are a lot of listings on the first page of search engines with the exact keyword in the title of the page, then it is a competitive keyword.

There are many tools and services for measuring keyword competition and search volume, but many of them require you to sign up for a free account or pay a fee to use them . The Google Keyword Tool is a popular tool, but will soon be only available to Google Adwords advertisers. Another free tool is the Keyword Tool from SEOBook.com. It does require that you sign up for a free account.

These tools are beyond the scope of this guide, but for those who want to get their hands dirty with keyword research, they are vital. If you are one of my clients, you are in luck. I'll do this keyword research for you while building your site.

If you decide to do some research on keyword search volume and competition, here are some good benchmarks....

Any keyword under 2,000 searches per month I would consider **low** volume and 2,000-20,000 searches would be the **medium** range. Anything over 20,000 searches per month is a **high** volume keyword, but they can go up into the millions. You can be certain that keywords with search volume in the millions are likely to be VERY competitive.

As a small business, it is wise to target keywords that are in the medium range for competitiveness and search volume. **And you will find, as most website owners do, that over 75% of your traffic comes from a combination of many less competitive keywords that you never thought of until you look at your traffic statistics. These are called long-tail keywords and usually are made up of 3 words or more.**

Look at the list of some of the keywords that resulted in visits to my website in a recent month. You'll see they are all 3 words or more and each resulted in only 1 visit to my website. When you have hundreds or thousands of these keywords, it really adds up and usually becomes a large portion of your total website traffic.

free colorful resume templates that make me stand out of crowd	1	0.2 %
hise breadcrumbs wordpress	1	0.2 %
compare features of weebly pricing	1	0.2 %
daily deals business	1	0.2 %
bought a website now what	1	0.2 %
how to determine cost of 5 page website	1	0.2 %
web sites packages london uk	1	0.2 %
http //webeminence.com/ reviews	1	0.2 %
how much for a 5 page website	1	0.2 %
ework xl .com	1	0.2 %
elegant themes breadcrumbs	1	0.2 %
what is a web package	1	0.2 %
why a business should have a website	1	0.2 %
nice front page design	1	0.2 %
eworks excel review	1	0.2 %
intuit website own review	1	0.2 %
website cloning service	1	0.2 %
elegant themes flexible breadcrumbs	1	0.2 %
buildings for small businesses	1	0.2 %
cheap websites for sale	1	0.2 %
affordable websites nj	1	0.2 %
how much would a website cost of 5 pages	1	0.2 %
cheap web design victoria bc	1	0.2 %
pre packaged websites	1	0.2 %
resume website template	1	0.2 %
how much should i charge for 5 page website	1	0.2 %
how does one setup a website for an accounting/tax prep small business?	1	0.2 %
godaddy templates paypal and credit cards	1	0.2 %
philippines to singapore package	1	0.2 %
web design comapnay montreal	1	0.2 %
review of intuit websites	1	0.2 %
homestead web sites	1	0.2 %
what is a 5 page website	1	0.2 %

Getting Some Google Love

Since the majority of traffic comes from search engines and Google has a death grip on 80% of all searches, it's pretty clear that getting your website ranked in Google is the ultimate goal for now.

To get some love from Google, you have to give Google what it wants - (1) good quality content, (2) a clean site that is engaging and easy to navigate and (3) incoming links to show that your site is valued by others. **And with goals like these, you enter the realm of Search Engine Marketing…**

Search Engine Marketing

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is a form of internet marketing seeking to raise the visibility of your website using Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and paid advertising. I'll talk about all three and show you how you can use them to boost traffic to your website.

Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is one of the most important tools you can use to get more traffic to your site. SEO seeks to optimize a website in order to acheive higher rankings in search engine results.

SEO includes on-page and off-page techniques. As you would expect, on-page techniques are those that are completed ON your website and off-page optimization are techniques that are employed OFF your website. Off-page optimization mostly entails links from other websites.

On-Page Optimization - Making Sure Your Website is Search Engine Friendly

If you are a client of Web Eminence, you're lucky because most of the on-page search engine optimization is already done for you. Web Eminence creates websites using Search Engine Friendly techniques. You can read more about this on my blog here.

To summarize, on-page optimization includes having well-written code, speed-optimized content, and a site that is simple to navigate and keeps the visitor's attention. You want to include target keywords within your content naturally without using any old school keyword spam techniques like white text on white background. If a website is Search Engine Friendly, it will usually be indexed quickly. Being indexed simply means it's included within the search engines results.

Being "indexed" means your site is included in search results for a keyword. How high your site is ranked in the results is determined by other aspects of SEO that we will talk about in this guide.

TIP: *There are many aspects to building a Search Engine Friendly website that are beyond the scope of this guide and not necessary for you to know if your site was developed by Web Eminence. If you are building a website on your own, you may want to read the* **Search Engine Friendly** *chapter in the* **SEOMoz SEO Beginners Guide**.

On-Page Optimization - Content Is King

Google likes content. Sites that are continually updated with fresh content are typically rated higher by Google (and website visitors) than sites that are old and stale without new content.

This is why it is important to continually add content to your website on a regular basis if possible. If you have a simple 4 or 5 page website, this may not be a priority for you. But even updating your site with new content a few times per year can make a difference.

One of the most popular ways to add fresh content to your website is to post to a blog. For example, my client who owns a hog hunting website might write a blog post once a month about hog hunting news, techniques, recommended products, etc.

Read more on blogging on page 18…
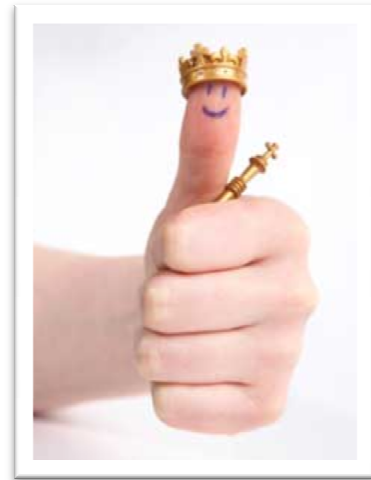
Off-Page Optimization - Getting Links to Your Website

Getting links to your site is THE most important aspect of SEO and I will focus on it for the majority of this guide.

Incoming links are vital because they can be a source of website traffic when visitors click the links. But more importantly, Google and other search engines determine website value and authority based on the number of incoming links from other websites. An incoming link is essentially a VOTE for your website and the site with the most votes usually wins in the Google rankings

This is not the only factor in search engine rankings, but it is the most important ranking factor at this time and cannot be ignored in optimizing your site.

Wiki-Dominance

Have you ever noticed that Wikipedia.com ranks very high (usually in the top 3) for many searches?

Take a look at the number of incoming links Wikipedia.com has at the time I wrote this guide and compare that to a brand new website I created for a Web Eminence client. You can get this information from OpenSiteExplorer.org, explained later on

Wikipedia.com Total Incoming Links: 1,500,000

New Site Total Incoming Links: 2

Which website do you think has a better chance of ranking high in search engines? ...the website with over 1 million incoming links or the site with only 2 links?

(By the way, I hate to break it to you, but if your site is new, you probably only have a couple links too)

Wikipedia.com is ranked very high in search engines mainly because it has so many links pointing to it. Other websites find the infomation on Wikipedia so useful that they link to it often and each link is a vote in Google's eyes. As a result, Google has determined that for certain searches, Wikipedia has proven to provide the most useful information and so it is listed high in the results very often.

Now, most website owners will not be able to increase incoming links to over 1 million. However, if the owner of this new site could increase the number of links from 2 to 200 in the next 12 months, it would definitely have a noticeable effect on search engine rankings.

TIP: While most of this guide will be about building links to your website, one of the most important aspects of building a popular website is creating content that is compelling and useful so that your visitors will want to return and share it. This is the most natural way to create links to your site in the long run and it's why Wikipedia gets so many incoming links.

So the natural question is – How do you get more links to your website? I'm glad you asked… but let's first look at the structure of a link.

The Anatomy of a Link

To understand how links work in search engine optimization, you need to know the structure of a link. On the web, the most common links are text links and image links. They allow you to click on an image or anchor text and be taken to the linked website. Below is an example of the HTML code behind a text link:

Complete Website

The URL in red is the website where the user will be taken when the anchor text is clicked. The anchor text, in orange, is what is displayed (usually in blue and underlined) for the user to click. The output of the code above would be Complete Website. You'll see if you click on that link, you are taken to http://webeminence.com.

The key aspect of link anatomy to grasp for the purpose of SEO is the anchor text. The anchor text is a major clue to Google as to what the website is about. If there are hundreds of websites linking to my site using the anchor text "complete website", there is a better chance my website will rank well for the search term "complete website".

For years, many website owners used this to their advantage and focused on one or two keywords and used automated processes to build thousands of links to their website using their target keyword as the anchor text. **However, in 2012 Google released an update to discount these links or even penalize websites that use the same anchor text thousands of times to try to influence the search engine results.**

Now, the best practice for search engine optimization when creating links is using various anchor texts to keep it looking natural. For example, instead of using "complete website package" thousands of times, I may use the following list for my anchor text and vary it with each link:

complete website package
complete website
simple website
simple website package
affordable website

It's also smart to use your website URL or even general terms like "click here" as the anchor text because it's how Google expects natural links to appear. So in my case, I would use "Webeminence.com" as the anchor text on some of my links.

So the moral of the story is – when you are in control of a link to your website, you should use appropriate anchor text. If other websites are linking to you and you cannot control the anchor text, then there is nothing you can do. Since these links are natural incoming links, you shouldn't have to worry about the anchor text. Just be thankful for the link!

Relevant Links Rule

Very simply stated, the more links you have, the higher your site will rank. Before I get into a long list of different methods to get links to your website, it's important to mention the types of links that are best. Almost all links are good - except links that come from penalized sites. How do you know if a site is penalized by Google? You really don't… just make sure you get links from reputable sites. Stay away from gambling sites, adult sites, and other sites that appear questionable.

Relevant links are best. This means that if you have a hunting website, you'd rather have incoming links from hunting websites than dating or music websites. Like I said, **all links are good, but relevant links are more valuable to help you rank for your targeted keywords.**

Now that you understand the basics of SEO and why incoming links TO your website are so important, we can get into the practical stuff - how you can ACTUALLY start getting links to your site NOW.

Link & Learn in Online Forums

Online discussion forums are typically high-ranking websites with Google because they are usually very active with new content added daily as users create posts. **You can get incoming links to your website in online forums by taking advantage of the signature function.** Most online forums allow you to add a signature to all your posts and include a link to your website.

The first step is to find an appropriate forum for your niche. In the case of hog hunting, I would search Google for "*hunting forum*" and find a hunting forum that appears to be active with a lot of members and recent posts. Then determine if the forums allow signature links. You can do this by browsing the posts and checking to see if their are signatures under the posts.

Once you find a good forum that allows signature links, you can register for the forum and become active. Check the forum daily or as often as you can and join the discussion. Don't try to sell your product or service by just posting links to your site. That may be considered spam and might get you kicked out of the forum. Just join in the discussion and try to add value to the conversations. If you are being a constructive member in the forum, other members of the forum will naturally want to see your website and what you do.

You can then add your signature to the bottom of all your posts by editing your profile within the forum. All online forums have different rules like requiring 10 posts before a signature is allowed so you will have to do some research on each particular forum. It is best to have a link to your site with a relevant keyword as the anchor text. For instance, for HogHuntingLight.net, I might want the link to be "*Hog Hunters Love my Hog Hunting Light*" .

Here's an example of what my signature looks like in an online forum. I change it occasionally, but this one was promoting a blog post I wrote on credit card processing fees. The signature is below the line in red and blue.

If you are active in a forum and have a link in your signature, the result could be tens or hundreds of incoming links to your website depending on how active you are in the forum. Some search engine experts argue about the value of these signature links because Google can easily tell these are signature links added by you. Plus, the hundreds of signature links on your posts might only count as one link to a search engine since they are all coming from the same site.

I still recommend being active in forums for several reasons:

- The links cannot hurt, and they probably will help
- You will learn a lot and meet some people in your industry by being active in forums
- You'll get targeted traffic to your site through your signature link

I have been active in forums and received a lot of traffic and a few clients. I've also learned a lot from joining in the discussions with many beginners and experts in my field. My 'hog hunting light' client took my advice and became active in forums too. As a result, he received most of his traffic and sales from online forums in the beginning stages of his website.

Online Directories Are NOT Useless

Before search engines, online directories were the way to find what you wanted online. Although they are not used as much now due to the growth of search engines, they are still useful.

Online directories are great places to get free links to your website. Again, SEO experts argue about the value of these links for search engine rankings, but links in quality directories, like links in forums, cannot hurt and probably will help.

There are large general directories like DMOZ and Yahoo! Directory where every website should want to be included. But even better is finding specific directories in your niche. For example, I found a directory called WebsiteDesignersList.com that appeared in search engine results for many searches I was targeting. I discovered I could get a featured link in their directory for a few hundred dollars per year. Spending $200+ may seem too expensive for some people, but it has been a great value for me. I get 4-5 clients a year from that link and it's one of my highest referrers of traffic.

You can see is my directory listing on WebsiteDesignersList.com shaded in red below.

Many local services like daycare or chiropractors have online directories. All it takes is a quick search to find them. Some directories will have free listings and some only offer paid listings. Many paid listings will be worth the investment because they will generate targeted traffic e and produce a relevant incoming link to your website the way WebsiteDesignersList.com did for me.

Besides specific directories for specific industries, there are also thousands of general directories where you can get your links for free. These are more questionable in their value as they will not provide much traffic, but since they are free, it is usually worth it just for the links back to your website especially if your site is new.

It would take a lot of time to get your site in 100+ directories, but this is something I have outsourced using the Directory Submission services from SubmitEdge. They will only include submitting your site to free directories, not paid ones. If you have a new website, I would recommend taking advantage of this service once to get a good base. I'll talk more about SubmitEdge and other link building services on page 17.

WARNING! *If you are not overwhelmed yet, you probably will be in the next couple pages. If you have read this far in one sitting, you might consider taking a break to ponder what you've read so far and take action on some of the items.*

If you read through this entire guide at once, you'll probably be so overwhelmed that you will do nothing at all. Realistically, the things in this guide should take 12 months or more to implement well. So don't feel like you can understand all of this and implement it in one week. It will take time and you may need to read certain sections more than once.

Article Marketing

One of the most popular link building techniques among search engine marketers is article marketing. There are hundreds of article directory sites online like ezinearticles.com and goarticles.com. Authors can submit articles free and the articles are then posted to the article directory website with a resource box at the bottom of the article that includes a link to your website along with a short bio.

The purpose of these article directories is to allow webmasters to find free articles to use as content on their website and in their newsletters. *So why would you want to post articles on these directories?* One result of posting your articles to these directory sites is links to your site from the article directory website. If your article is picked up by any content publishers, that will increase the links back to your website as content publishers are required to also publish your resource box with the bio and link.

While article marketing can have positive effects on traffic and search engine rankings, it can be a lot of work. You need to write articles and submit them to popular article directory sites manually. Luckily, this is something that can be outsourced too. Since I've mentioned outsourcing a couple times now, let's take some time to look more closely at how you can outsource your article marketing and other link building efforts.

TIP: *There are many free and paid article submission systems that will submit your articles to many directories at once. The consensus seems to be that many of these systems aren't reliable. I can't say for sure because I haven't used any of them to submit articles in recent years.*

If you don't want to pay to outsource your article marketing as I discuss below, then the best option is to manually submit your articles to about 10 article directories. Do a google search for "10 top article directories" and you will quickly find the most popular article directories.

Link Building Services

I've already mentioned the services of SubmitEdge and I will mention them again here. Some of the methods listed in this guide can be employed with little or no monetary investment, but if you are serious about ranking your website higher for your targeted keywords, it may take more time than you are able to devote. If you don't have a lot of time but have some money to invest in SEO, I would suggest outsourcing some of the work to an SEO firm. I have used SubmitEdge to build links to many different sites for several years with good results. I don't rely on their service entirely but use it to supplement my own Search Engine Marketing efforts.

SubmitEdge offers an Article Submission Service where they write articles and submit them to several popular article directories as described above. Their service, reporting, and results have proven to be worth the money for me and are they use acceptable practices that are safe for ranking in Google and other search engines.

If you have any questions about using their services, you can contact me. They have a wide variety of options besides article marketing. Some are worth the investment and some not in my opinion. It's best to use several of their services in combination if you can afford the investment. But contact me before you choose and I can give you some advice. I am an affiliate with SubmitEdge so if you purchase through my link, I'll receive a small commission. As a thankyou, I'll be happy to help you in filling out the required forms after your purchase as well as advising you before your purchase.

I'm always investigating new companies and new ways of outsourcing link building and SEO. Contact me on my website or check out my blog for the latest.

> *A word of caution regarding link building services* – *It's important for incoming links to appear natural. It would be a red flag to search engines if your new site all of a sudden had 10,000 links. For this reason, if you outsource your link building efforts, it's smart to spread it out over longer periods of time.*

Take Advantage of the Blogging Explosion

I shouldn't have to tell you that blogging is HUGE. I'm sure you've noticed.

Wordpress.com, a popular blogging platform that hosts around 40% of the blogs on the web, offers these stats.

As of the time I'm writing this, the stats show that there are over 65,000,000 blogs hosted on Wordpress.com and 368 million people viewing blog posts every month.

That's more than the entire US population!

So if you didn't know it before, you know it now! Blogging is HUGE.

How do you take advantage of the explosive growth of the blog world? Here are two ways:

1. Post To YOUR Blog

The most obvious way to use blogging to your advantage is pretty obvious. All you have to do is POST TO YOUR BLOG! Sounds easy right?

In my experience with clients and even my own sites, I've found that most blogs fail because they aren't posted to regularly.

You may have landed on a blog before with the last post being from December 2007. Not very enticing, is it?

Typically, you don't see many blogs without new posts in the last 5 years because Google is smart enough to exclude these outdated blogs from their search engine results. **They would rather include fresh blogs with updated content.**

That's why it's so important that you post to your blog regularly. Not only will this keep your website looking fresh to the search engines but it will give you more search engine positions. I define a *search engine position* as a top 10 ranking in a search engine for a keyword search.

Here's an example to further explain "search engine positions."

Let's say you have a 5 page website describing your Heating and Air Conditioning business. From a 5-page website, you will be lucky to get 10 search engine positions on the topic of heating and air conditioning.

BUT – if you create 50 blog posts on your blog this year, you are drastically increasing the number of positions you can have in search engines as each one of your blog posts will have the potentional to rank for different search engine keywords.

I know what you're thinking now – How can I come up with topics for 50 blog posts? Regardless of what your business is, there are probably hundreds of thoughts that fly through your brain every day that could potentially be turned into blog posts. Try keeping a paper and pen handy or a text document on your computer so you can jot down potential blog post ideas before they escape your mind.

If your heating and air conditioning business is in Atlanta, you might post on the following topics:

- How Atlanta weather patterns will affect AC costs next year
- Best filters to use in furnaces
- How to maintain your furnace and air conditioner
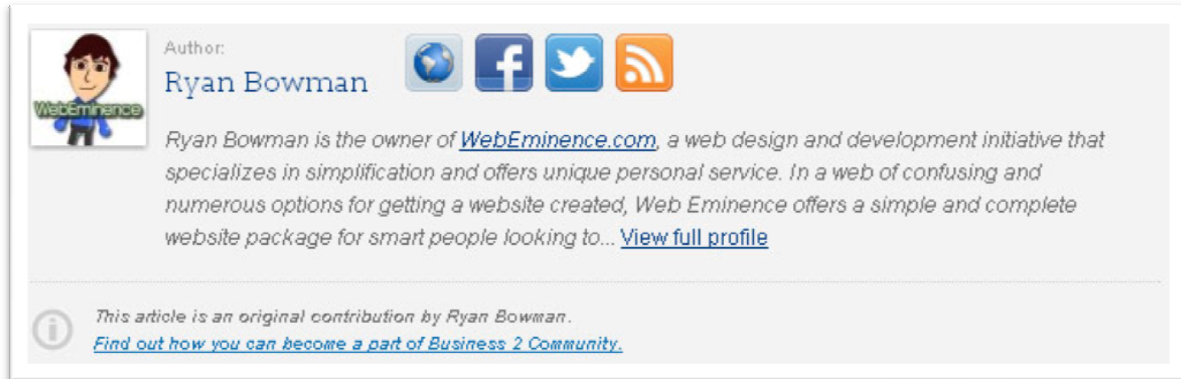- Case studies on how new AC units save homeowners money

The goal of your blog should be to create unique and useful content for your readers and visitors. Your blog posts don't need to be targeted to specific keywords. If you are writing on your topic, the keywords will naturally flow into your content. But it doesn't hurt to make sure you're including keywords within the content. Just make sure it is natural.

TIP: *A great way to create blog posts is to use content already created within your business. What text content is created in your business? Reports? Case Studies? Product Reviews? Promotional Materials? Videos? Can any of this content be published as blog posts to increase the content and search engine positions of your website? Many people are already creating content daily in their business for multiple purposes.*

2. Guest Post on Other Blogs

Most blog owners that are SUPER successful probably utilized the strategy of guest posting at some point in the life of their blog. So what is guest posting?

Many blog owners welcome other writers to submit posts on their blog as a guest. They do this to create fresh content on their blog without having to write the content themselves. The benefit for the writer of a guest post is increased exposure and links back to your website within the post or in the byline at the bottom of the post. **For example, look at my byline on a website where I make guest blog posts below.**

[Click here to see one of my guest posts live on Business2Community.com](#)

As you can see in my byline, I am able to put a brief description of who I am and what I do. The author resource box also has links to my website and social profiles. This is just one example. The resource box or byline will look different on different websites.

As a result of guest posting, I receive traffic to my site from visitors who click my links and these links also count as incoming links to help build my search engine rankings. The amount of traffic and search engine benefit I get from the incoming link depends on the popularity of the blog I'm posting on. The best way to maximize the effect is to guest post on active blogs that have a lot of comments, social shares and traffic. You can check a blogs traffic and popularity using SEMRush.com before deciding to submit a guest post. More on SEMRush.com on page 31.

Obviously, any smart blog owner will not let just anyone post on their blog. And usually the highest quality blogs have strict requirements for guest bloggers that make it difficult to get published. They may want to check your credentials, writing quality, writing experience, etc., so you may have to put forth some effort to sell yourself.

Start Small

If you're in the technology niche, you're probably not going to be able to guest post on a top technology blog like Mashable.com for your first guest post. You may have to start with smaller websites and build up your writing reputation. **And you don't need to post on massive blogs to get a**

benefit. Most small business owners can get great exposure and search engine benefits from guest posting on some average size blogs within their industry even a few times per year.

You'll want to find blogs within your industry niche to get the most benefit from links and traffic. If there are no blogs within your industry niche, then you can expand your search to more general industry topics. Not finding any blogs within your niche would also be a great reason to start your own blog to fill the void.

Finding Guest Posting Opportunities

If I was an air conditioner contractor, I would find guest posting opportunities by searching Google for things like "air conditioner **guest post**" or "air conditioner **blog**". Many blog owners will have links to submit a guest post and if they don't, you can just email the blog owner and ask them if they would allow you to create a blog post that would be valuable to their readers. You can include some possible topics you wish to write on to give them an idea of your expertise and writing interests. Make sure to include incentive for them by explaining how they can benefit from you posting on their blog. The biggest incentive for them is free fresh content for their blog.

What if I Can't Write?

If you don't think you can write well or just plain hate writing, that's no excuse to not take advantage of blogs. It does make it more difficult but not impossible. There are a few ways to get around this road block.

First of all, is there someone within your company that can write blog posts? If so, consider taking advantage of their abilities. If you don't have anyone within your company with the time and ability to write, this is something you can outsource. There are tons of writers on Elance that can research and write blog posts for you on your topics. The cost usually averages anywhere from $20-80 per article. It's well worth the money even if you can only afford to do one article every few months. Just sign up for Elance free and write a description of the types of articles you need written. You'll get several proposals from qualified writers.

You can watch my video and read the accompanying blog post to see how easy it is to post a project on Elance.

Promote Your Blog Posts

So you're posting to your blog – GREAT! **You're probably doing more than 80% of other blog owners out there who have blogs that are sitting stagnant.**

Now here's the next common problem. How do people see your blog? Many blog owners put their head down and commit to writing hundreds of blog posts and hope that Google rewards them for their diligent content creation. This is like having a garage sale but not putting out any promotional signs on the busy streets nearby.

Before writing my next blog post, I often ask myself *"Is there anything else I can do to promote my PREVIOUS blog post?"* My time may be better spent promoting my recent posts rather than creating new content. If you just keep creating new blog posts hoping to get traffic, you may get lucky OR it may never come. Rather than relying on luck, a better approach would be to promote each of your blog posts using all the methods described in this entire guide and some other methods that are specific to blogs.

Here are some ideas for promoting your blog posts:

- Post the link to your Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social profiles. This can be made automatic using tools like FeedBurner and linking your social accounts.
- Put a recent blog post in your forum signatures like I do.
- Comment on other relevant blogs and share your blog post (only if it is relevant to the conversation). See the section on blog commenting on page 26.
- Share the post with other website owners in your industry and ask them to share it with their audience
- Post the blog to specialty blog bookmarking sites like BlogCatalog and BlogEngage

> **TIP:** *If you are serious about building the popularity of your blog,*
> ***BlogEngage*** *will place your blog posts in front of a large community of other bloggers to help give it a kick start. I have paid for their upgraded marketing services and as a result, every time I publish a blog post, it is syndicated on 3 blog websites and shared on multiple social profiles managed by the owner of BlogEngage.com. It is blog promotion on autopilot.*

The possibilities for promoting your blog posts are endless. You don't want to spend 6 months promoting one blog post, but the key is to find balance in writing new blog posts and promoting your published posts. If you can't find a good reason and venue for sharing your blog posts, then you might question whether you should have written it in the first place. Sorry to sound harsh, but it's the truth!

Be Social

After blogging exploded in popularity, something else took off…the next explosion was social media with the growth of Facebook and Twitter.
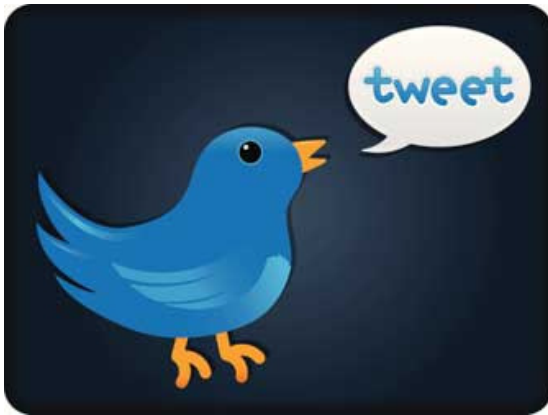
If you're reading this and you have a pulse, there's a pretty good chance you have an account on Facebook, Twitter or both.

There are entire courses written on marketing on Facebook and Twitter. And if you're interested, I would recommend Small Business Social Media Marketing Courses by Laura Roeder.

I've read a lot of her stuff including her courses and can confidently say it is worth the investment. Her prices and options may change from time to time, but at the time of writing this, you can pay one monthly price to get access to all her courses. It is not cheap at $90+ per month, but you can pay a few months just to watch all the courses and then cancel if you want. That would be more than worth the price you'll pay. You will learn the fundamentals and advanced strategies for using social media in your business that includes Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and more. **I don't get commissions for recommending her service. I just recommend it because it's GOOD!**

You Don't Have To Master Social Media – Just Use It

Even if you don't have time to harness the power of social media with an expansive marketing strategy and taking courses, it is still critical to understand the importance of social links and make them work for you. Google has stated that they place high value on links from social websites and it affects their search rankings. So if you don't have links on social media platforms, it's going to negatively affect your rankings. Or to state it positively, if you DO have links in social media along with a lot of likes and retweets, it will propel you higher in the search engine rankings.

If you tweeted a link and it was retweeted 500 times, it can have a huge positive effect on your rankings within a matter of hours!

I know it's not that easy to get 500 people to retweet, but you can still do little things. If you're on Facebook or Twitter, post a link to your home page or new blog post. Try to be creative and encourage friends and customers to retweet it or like your link on Facebook. If you know someone with a huge following on Facebook or Twitter, ask them to post your link. I actually used a service called JustRetweet to get retweets while I was building up my following on Twitter.

Social media is moving constantly and changing fast. Google knows this and monitors social media to see what is happening EVERY SECOND! **It's easy to be overwhelmed by the size and speed of the social media platforms and DO NOTHING. Don't be one of those people. Even having a small presence on social media can boost your search engine rankings.**

Manual Link Building

One of the most obvious and powerful methods of building links is so simple it is often overlooked.

I call it *manual link building* and it involves simply searching Google for your target keywords and seeing if there are any sites within the first 2-3 results pages where you can get links.

The sites ranked on the first 2-3 pages for your keywords obviously have a good reputation with Google already and a link on one of these sites would be a huge vote for your website to be ranked for the same keywords also.

Links on these sites will provide a second benefit too – since these top sites are already receiving a bulk of the traffic when your target keywords are searched, having links on these sites is going to get you a slice of the traffic pie.

So what kind of sites will you find on the first few pages of Google for your target keywords and how can you get links? Let's take a daycare service for example:

If I search "seattle daycare" in Google, I see the following:

- General directories like Yelp.com
- Specific daycare directories like Care.com
- Local Google Places links
- Competitor daycare websites
- Preschool websites
- Craigslist classifieds
- Government sites on childcare

The question I ask myself is - "How can I be seen on these websites?"...

- Can I get a listing on Yelp.com. Care.com, or Google Places?
- How are my competitors getting ranked so high in search engines? *(See Analyze the Competition below)*
- Can I link up with the preschool website to become a recommended after school daycare?
- Is it worth it for me to advertise on Craigslist?
- Does the government site allow daycares to register on a list and post a link to my website?
- Are there any personal blogs written within my industry niche? Maybe I can connect with the blog owner...

Don't expect to get links on every site that you find in the top page of Google for your target keywords. Some of these sites may be dead ends but considering every angle may allow you to find one link that will result in just 100 visitors a month. That one link and extra visitors can make a huge difference in your business!

> **TIP:** *When doing manual link building, don't search Google for only your exact target keyword. Make sure to also search variations of your keyword to find all the opportunities for connecting with other websites. If you need more ideas for keywords to search, use the related search suggestions on the search engine results page.*

Build Relationships Online

Since the internet runs on technology, people forget that there are relationships behind all the bytes and bandwidth.

Don't be afraid to reach out to other website owners within your industry niche with an email or phone call. You never know how you might be able to take action that is mutually beneficial. Maybe it will be a referral, a link, or a guest post. You never know until you ask. Many people who are having massive success online became successful because of a single link on a popular website that helped launch the popularity of their own website.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when contacting people.

- Recognize what they are doing online FIRST. Don't just talk about yourself and what you are trying to do. People will appreciate that you're understanding their website and their business
- Offer incentive – It's probably not worth contacting people unless you can offer them incentive for working together. Maybe you can pay them for referrals or offer to recommend their product or service in a blog post or on Facebook.
- Consider sending an email just asking a question first before hitting them with a proposition. If they respond and you start a conversation by email, you'll hopefully create a natural opportunity to work together.

Blog Commenting

Remember how we talked about the explosion of blogs in recent years? One of the reasons for their popularity is the commenting function that allows readers to post their own comments and get involved in the discussion. It creates interactivity that keeps visitors interested and engaged.

I'm sure you've seen comments on blogs before. It's the section at the bottom of a blog post that allows readers to post comments. Here's an example of how the comment section looks on my blog.
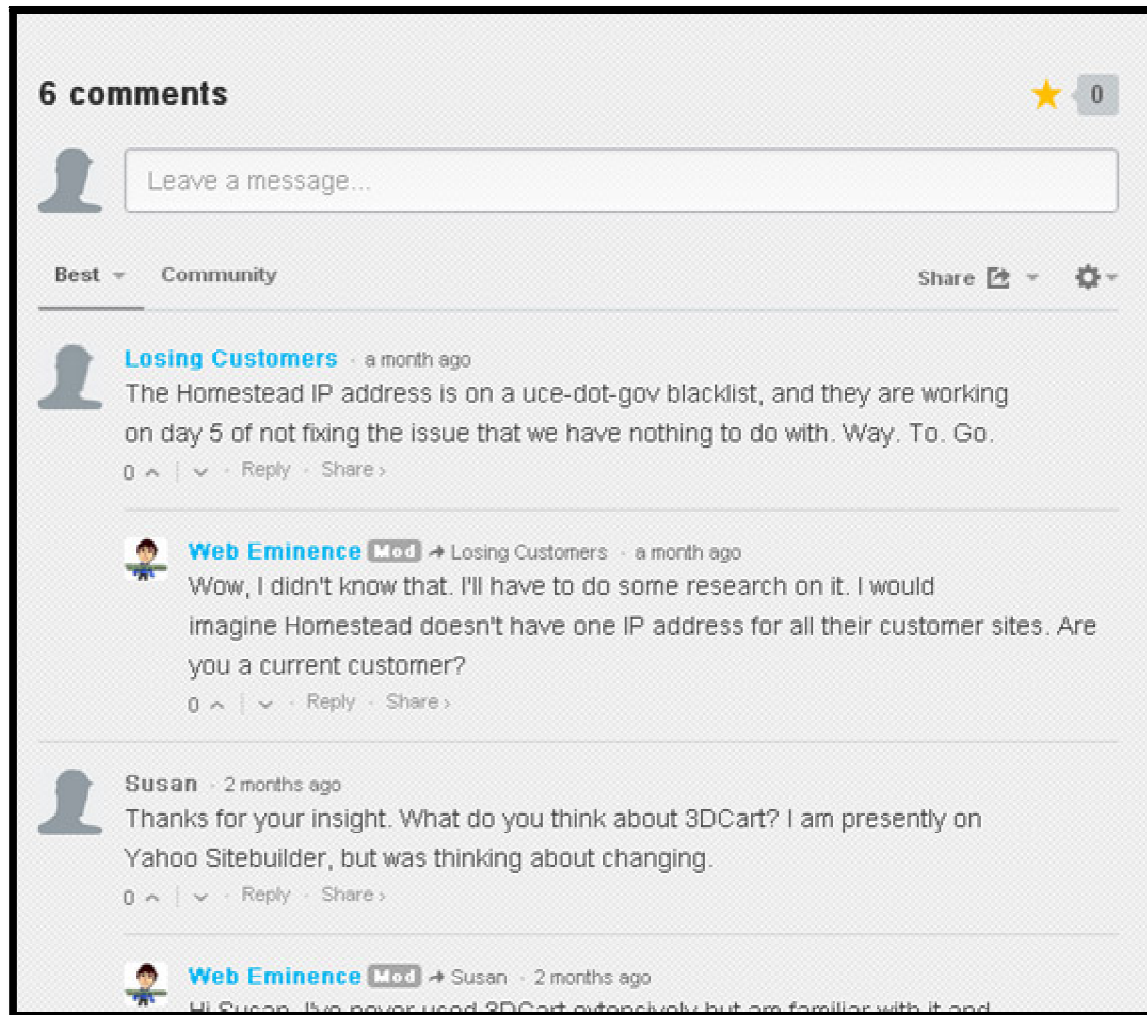
Commenting on other blogs can benefit you because comment sections typically allow you to include a URL back to your website or some kind of personal profile. The names in blue in the example above are clickable links.

This link back to your website will allow people to easily click and head over to your website. The secondary benefit is that it will often count as a link back to your website for SEO purposes. Many people will question the value of blog comment links because the links are made into "no-follow" links by adding a small piece of code to the link. This basically means search engines won't count the link as a vote for your website and it

won't help your search rankings. If you want to read more about the value of "no-follow" links, you can read [a great blog post on the topic here](#) but it's beyond the scope of this guide.

Even though many blog comment links can be "no-follow", I still like blog commenting and recommend it for a few reasons:

1. I'm reading blogs anyway. I don't usually devote special time to blog commenting for links. But since I'm already reading blogs, I might as well leave a constructive comment and get some exposure and traffic back to my site. I don't care if the link is "no-follow". I actually think having a lot of "no-follow" links looks natural to Google. And natural is good when it comes to search engine optimization.
2. I learn a lot from reading the blog posts and blog comments.
3. There have been months where my largest traffic referrers were from comments I posted on popular blogs.
4. It can't hurt - and it probably will help

So if you're reading an interesting blog post and find that it allows comments at the end, go ahead and leave a useful comment adding some constructive information or asking a question. Make sure to put your website URL in the URL field if provided, but don't post your link in the comment section unless it is useful to the readers. Otherwise, it may be viewed as spam and your comment will probably be deleted.

> *TIP:* *One of my favorite ways to make my blog commenting more efficient is setting up Google Alerts for topics I am interested in or topics I have written blog posts on myself. Google Alerts will email me when a new page or post is published on the topic and I can be the first to comment on it. This is a great way to get targeted traffic on specific topis. Sometimes, I even include a link to my related blog post within the comment if it is appropriate.*

Press Releases – Extra! Extra!

Press releases were the holy grail of SEO several years back. There is a lot of debate over their usefulness now. They are another example of an SEO method that can't hurt and probably will help so I wanted to make sure to mention them.

Press Releases are similar to article submission mentioned above. They are short press articles written as a news story and submitted to newswire sites like PR Newswire.

Journalists and news outlets all over the world scour these newswires looking for newsworthy articles to publish. If they find your press release interesting, you might get published on a high ranking news website.

Even if your press release doesn't get picked up by a news agency, you still get the benefit of getting your site linked on the newswire websites. These newswire websites have a high reputation with Google and your press release page can rank high in the search engines on its own for certain keywords. The links back to your website from the press release page will help your own website rank higher too.

In my experience, the effect of press releases is often short lived, but the cumulative benefit is somewhat unknown so I recommend doing them occasionally as your budget and time allows - and as you have news to share. Similar to article submission, I use SubmitEdge's service to write and submit a Press Release for me and there are many other services online that will submit a press release to the newswire sites.

You may want to write the press release yourself to make sure it is well-written and will have a better chance of engaging journalists and being published. You will probably want to do some research on writing a press release before diving in. It's a specific style of writing and there are ways to make your press release more enticing to news agencies and readers.

Link To Yourself? Internal Links

The web consists of web pages connected by internal and external links. So far we have been discussing external links, which are links from one website to another. **Internal links are links within your website from one page to another.** For example, you may have a blog post that links to your About page or your About page may link to your Contact page. These are all internal links.

If you search for "complete website package" in Google, my site will probably come somewhere on the first page (if not, let me know because I have work to do :). There are a few reasons for this. I have a lot of external links to that page with the anchor text "complete website package" and I also have a lot of **internal links** linking to that page with the same anchor text.
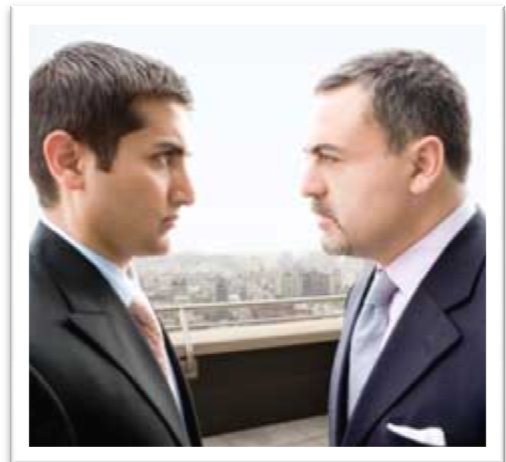
A complete and optimized site will have a lot of internal links to other pages within the site that will be useful for the visitor. Internal links don't have the ability to boost your rankings as much as external links, but they can help search engines know exactly what your page is about and give more weight to your target keywords. Make sure to link to other pages on your site whenever you can during the creation of your site and when creating new pages or blog posts.

Analyze the Competition

A big part of marketing is knowing your competition. If you're in an industry where you are the only player, than you are VERY LUCKY! Unfortunately, most of us are involved in tough competition online with many other websites.

Do you ever get tired of searching Google for your targeted keyword and finding the same competing website in the top spot? Every wonder how they do it? You may not be able to figure out exactly how they do it, but you can probably get a good idea.

There are a ton of tools online to analyze your competition. I've gravitated towards two tools over the last few years and I'll share them with you here. They both are free but offer paid versions to expand their services.

1. OpenSiteExplorer.org by SEOMoz.org

MOZ (formerly SEOMoz) is one of the most respected Search Engine Optimization authorities on the web today. They created an awesome tool called *OpenSiteExplorer* that is basically a search engine for links. You can find it at http://www.opensiteexplorer.org

You can input any URL and it will give you a list of all the links that are pointing to that website along with a lot of useful metrics you can use to track your own site's progress and compare with your competitors. You can search any URL but it's most useful to search your own sites, competitor sites, or other sites in your industry that are ranking well in the search engines.

To analyze the competition, just type in one of your competitor's website URLs and browse through their incoming links (links pointing TO their website). You'll see "followed" links and "no-follow" links. You'll probably want to set the filter to show only "external" and "followed" links. This will give you the most useful information.

If the competitor's website is ranking well in the search engines, you should see a long list of incoming links pointing to their website. Look for websites in the list where you might be able to get a link too. And look for the types of links they have pointing to their site.

Are they directory sites, review sites, blogs, or news sites? Analyzing your competitors' links might open your eyes to new websites and industries you've never thought of investigating for links back to your site.

OpenSiteExplorer is free to use, but the free version limits the number of searches you can do daily and the number of results shown.

2. SEMRush.com
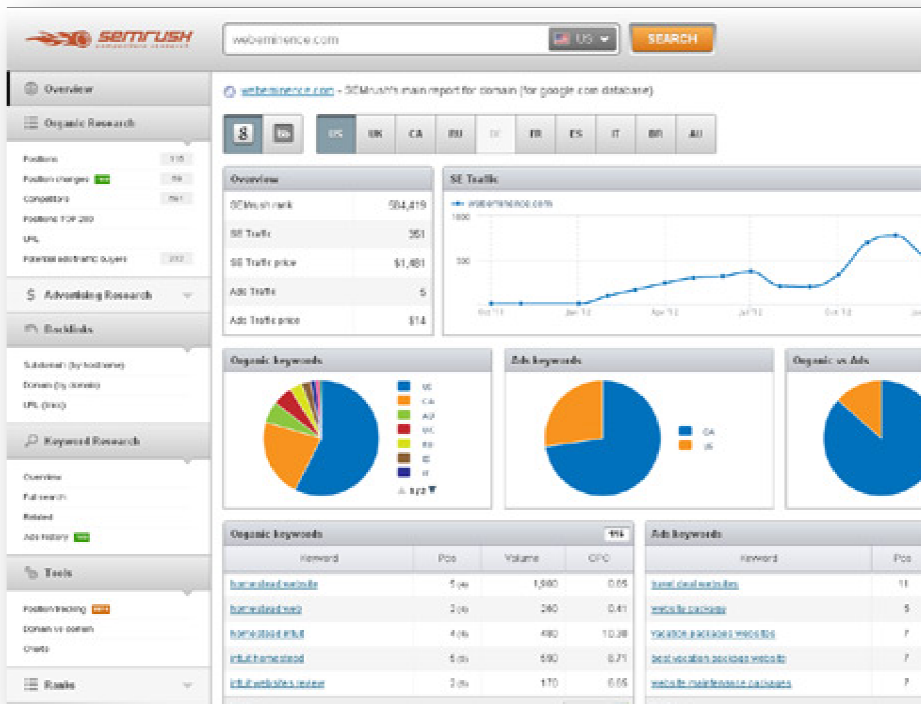
SEMRush was built precisely for Analyzing the Competition.

SEMRush offers a sleek interface that's easy to use and offers a ton of great info for free. Just type in your own URL or a competitor's URL and let it do its work. It will churn out useful metrics on any website like total traffic from search engines, top keywords, number of positions in search engines, advertising dollars spent in search engines, and a lot more.

SEMRush also has info on incoming links similar to what OpenSiteExplorer offers. It may be easy to get overwhelmed with the SEMRush report but here are a few things to focus on when analyzing a competitor's website on SEMRush:

1. **Traffic Rank** - How do their traffic metrics compare to yours? You want to analyze competitors that are doing much better than you and ignore the ones getting less traffic than you for now. There's no point in imitating people doing worse than you.
2. **Top Keyword** - What are your competitor's top keywords? Are you targeting these keywords already or do you need to start?
3. **Advertising** - Is the competitor using ads? What is their breakdown of organic traffic vs ad traffic? Have you considered advertising in search engines? You might be interested in my Pay Per Click Management service on Page 33.

New Links vs. Cumulative Links

If you are willing to dedicate a certain amount of money to invest in building links to your website, I would recommend spreading it out over a period of time. For example, if you wish to invest $1,000 in link building services, it would be best to spread out the spending at $200 per month over 5 months. **Building too many links at once looks unnatural to search engines and can actually hurt your rankings. It's better to build links slowly over time.**

While it is important to always have fresh new links, the number of links you gain over time will have a cumulative effect of boosting your rankings over the long term. So if you consistently invest in link building efforts, over time you should see the benefits of higher rankings in the search engines.

All investments you make in link building now should produce lasting benefits as your search engine rankings have the potential to continue for many years. It is a worthwhile investment. You may eventually be able to lower the amount of link building and only do enough to maintain your rankings.

How Fast Will My Rankings Change?

Every search engine is different and has different algorithms to determine their rankings. These algorithms are changing all the time. Google and other search engines are constantly spidering the internet looking for new sites, links, and content. If you do a lot of link building, you can expect the changes to be taken into account by Google in 30-60 days and usually faster. I've found most other search engines including Bing tend to be so slow in updating rankings that I don't even worry about them at this point.

Pay Per Click Marketing

Website owners who don't have the time or patience to wait for Google and other search engines to increase their rankings have the option of paid advertising. In the search results for Google, you usually see sponsored ads (paid listings) at the top and right side of the page, the areas highlighted in the screenshot below.
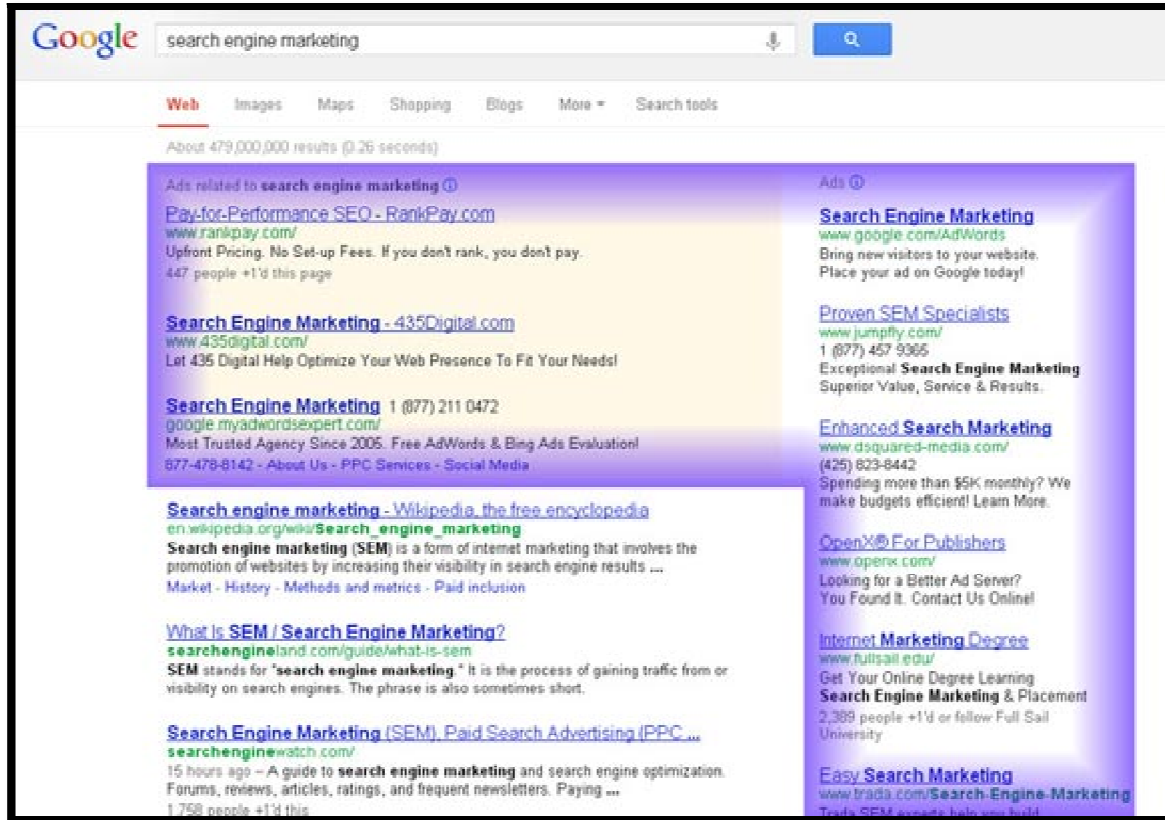
These ads are placed by Google Adwords advertisers who pay to have their sites listed in these positions. It is basically an open auction where advertisers bid a certain amount per click to have their site listed. The website with the highest bid amount per click AND most relevant website according to Google will be displayed in the results. The advertiser is only charged when the link is clicked. Typical costs per click in Google range from $0.05 to $2.00 depending on the keyword search.

There are many benefits of pay per click marketing including:

- Fast inclusion in search results usually within hours
- Bid on as many keywords as you want
- Start and stop the campaign any time or schedule it for certain times of the day
- Set daily and monthly budgets to limit the amount you spend
- Test different keywords and see how your site is converting sales and leads
- Target the whole world or small geographical areas (countries, states, cities, etc.)

As an example, let's look again at my client who sells hog hunting lights. If I was to set up pay per click advertising for this website, I might choose 30 keywords like the following:

Hog hunting light
Hog hunting lights
Hog hunt lights
Hunt hogs light
Hog feeder lights
Hunting lights

I would then choose a bid amount per click. Let's say $0.10 per click. If I were to set my daily budget at $10.00, I could then get 100 clicks in one day for $10.00. Those 100 clicks would be people who type in these search terms so I know they have some interest in hunting lights. If one person out of the 100 visitors buys from my website and I make a profit of $20 on the sale, then I made a $10 profit from the sale ($20 revenue minus $10 advertising cost).
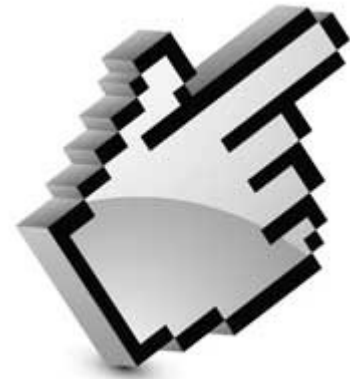
If pay-per-click marketing is consistently profitable on a daily or monthly basis, you can increase the daily and monthly investment to increase profits. However, if you invest money on paid advertising and do not get positive results, it may mean that your website or advertising campaigns need to be optimized to increase your return on investment.

Pay-per-click marketing can be very complicated with a lot of variables that need to be considered to produce a successful campaign that minimizes costs and increases profit.

I simplified the entire process in the example above to explain how Pay Per Click advertising works. It is actually fairly complex to advertise in Google Adwords. If you wish to try it for yourself, you can sign up for a Google Adwords or Bing Ads account. Adwords is the advertising platform for Google and Bing Ads is for advertising in Yahoo and Bing. I would recommend trying Adwords first and expand to Bing Ads if you have success with Adwords.

If you're interested in having someone setup Google Adwords advertising for you, I would love to help you out. I am a Certified Google Adwords Consultant and am taking on 50 clients to manage their Pay Per Click advertising at a cost that is much more affordable than what you will find elsewhere.

Check out my Pay Per Click Management Service and see if it's a good fit for you.

A Few Other Techniques...every little bit helps

Email signature

One other popular technique that can produce some traffic is posting your link in your email signature. Depending on your website and the number of emails you send, this may or may not produce traffic for you. If you're someone who emails hundreds of people every day, it may be a very good idea to add your website link to your email signature. This will not have an effect on your search engine rankings. It is just an easy way to produce some extra traffic to your website and it only takes 5 minutes to setup.

Print and visual advertising

While print and visual advertising is not a major source of traffic for most sites, it can be significant for some businesses. You may have a truck or vehicle for your business that you can put your logo and website on. Or maybe you do trade shows and can hand out business cards or flyers. Think of ways to incorporate your website into things you are currently doing so that you can increase the traffic to your site. I have used VistaPrint many times to get business cards or promotional materials created. They are affordable and make the process very easy with pre-designed templates and fast production.

Do Nothing = Expect Nothing

There are no guarantees in the field of Search Engine Optimization. The only guarantee I can make is if you do nothing, you will probably not increase your rankings in the search engines.

There is a lot more you can learn about search engine marketing but my goal was to give you a quick overview and some actionable items that you can put to work right away to increase your rankings.

The key is diligence and consistency. I understand most small business owners won't be able to do all these things. The key is to figure out how much time and money you can spend and do it regularly monthly or yearly. If it's only $100/year or 30 minutes per month, it can still make a tremendous difference over the long term if you do it consistently.

This is an investment in your business and future. I am 99% certain if you take action on some of these stategies, you will see results. See the checklist on the next page to help you visualize the steps.

SEO Checklist

T o help you do SOMETHING instead of NOTHING, I'm providing this handy checklist to recap the different steps you can take to start improving your rankings in the search engines. If you don't remember the details of any of these steps, you'll have to go review that section in the guide.

- ✅ Become active in **online forums** in your industry niche
- ✅ Research **online directories** where you might get a link
- ✅ Submit your first article to **article directories**
- ✅ Consider **outsourcing your link building**
- ✅ Write a blog post for your blog or write a guest post
- ✅ Sign up for Twitter or Facebook if you haven't already
- ✅ Contact 5 people following my **Manual Link Building** approach
- ✅ Comment on 3 blog posts within your industry
- ✅ Write and submit a **press release**
- ✅ Reasearch 2 competitors on OpenSiteExplorer and SEMRush
- ✅ Consider my **Pay Per Click Advertising Service**
- ✅ Set a schedule for the month/year for your SEO activities

What's Your TOP SEO Strategy?

If you are a small business website owner and have had some success in the search engines, I'd love to hear from you. I would like to feature several people in this section who are willing to share the SEO strategies that have helped their website get better rankings.

If you have a unique tip that has worked for you and has not been mentioned in my guide, contact me and let me know. If I like it, I'll feature it in this section and include a link to your website.

Click here to read the TOP SEO strategies that were submitted to me and find other updates to this guide.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me.

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ryan@webeminence.com

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