

Reconfigure Your Link-Building Strategy

Taking these steps will help to improve your eye care website's search rankings.

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When your eye care website gets linked by a respected website, blog, online publication, forum, or social network, search engines view it as a kind of endorsement for your website. Search engines judge the value of your content based on the number of links your website's content commands. Searches determine the quality of your website by the way readers and other Internet sites respond to your content. Many website managers and marketers actively engage in link building to improve their pages' search rankings.

A fine line differentiates legitimate link building efforts from unfair tactics designed to outwit search engine algorithms with the aim of achieving higher page rankings. Google and other search engines have identified most of these loopholes and use aggressive measures to downgrade websites that engage in off-limits link-building activities.

IS LINK BUILDING WORTHWHILE?

Link building as a search engine optimization (SEO) strategy for your eye care website is very much alive. The focus, however, has shifted to more natural and organic link building compared with the artificial methods of yesteryear. Google and others have been working to refine their algorithms to distinguish between good and bad links, and links to your eye care website continue to be one of the most important ways search engines rank your website in search results. You need to be aware of what type of link building strategies to pursue and which to avoid.



REDUNDANT LINK BUILDING STRATEGIES

Some of the unnatural link building strategies that are no longer effective from an SEO perspective are discussed herein.

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Article submission to directories. Link-building experts traditionally relied on large online directories that accepted original articles from websites and provided them with links in return. Although the practice of achieving links through online directory submission is not completely dead, it is no longer an effective SEO tactic.

The number and value of recognized online directories has decreased recently following the new search engine algorithms. Google does not attach much value to links that originate from online directories, and if the directory has a negative reputation, it may even result in lower rankings for the website.

Artificial participation in online forums. One of the popular tactics to create back links for a website has been active participation on various online forums and blogs. Search engine technology, however, has improved in recent years to an extent where it is usually possible for the search engine to detect artificial commenting on blogs, forums, and social networks that is aimed at creating a larger number of links. Therefore, search engines no longer attach much weight to such commenting activity, rather they rather try to identify authentic activity and responsiveness of genuine readers.

Links for sale. Google and other search engines have consistently advised webmasters to refrain from indulging in unfair link-building activities involving purchasing links in bulk. Search engines have worked hard on improving their search techniques to identify websites

that may be doing this with the purpose of manipulating search engine rankings.

Google has penalized several leading websites during the past 2 years that indulged in paid link activity to boost their rankings. It is a highly risky and ill-conceived link-building strategy. Most paid links are of low quality, which would not be given any value by the search engines anyway. Therefore, such tactics do more harm than good in the current SEO environment.

Two-way link trading. Traditional link building sometimes relied upon the practice of generating two-way links with other websites, often involving a middle party that would arrange link exchange activity between various websites. Search engines are now able to detect such two-way link exchange activity.

Google officially advises webmasters to refrain from link exchange practices because it could lead to a negative outcome for a website's rankings. Any link-building activity that is deemed to be reciprocal is now viewed with suspicion by the search engines. If the website continues to indulge in rampant link exchange tactics, the search engines may pull down the website rankings.

CONTENT QUALITY OVER LINK BUILDING

The SEO strategy for your eye care website should focus on content rather than link building. Link building should be a natural, incidental result of your content quality, therefore, your Internet marketing team should invest maximum time and effort on building superlative content that generates maximum online exposure.

Great content will automatically lead to high-quality back links, higher reader traffic, greater responsiveness and "stickiness" of the readers to the website, and natural social media sharing of content. These are some of the key signals that Google and other search engines use to rank your website in their search results.

Smart SEO managers have already re-adapted their Internet marketing and SEO strategies to make content the central focus of the website. Make sure that your eye care website promotional strategy is in line with the new search engine guidelines and updates. Improved search algorithms are an opportunity, not a threat, for real websites with real content to gain their rightful position at the top of search engine rankings. ■

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