

Building Your Brand via Links and Citations

Change Your Thinking About Linking

Ranking

Links have always helped websites rank better in Google organic search. In the past few years they have gained considerable, irrefutable influence on Local Search rankings, as well. High rankings are one of the best ways for small businesses to gain more online visibility.

Overall Visibility

Links to a company website and mentions of a business (aka *citations*) on other websites are a proven way to increase the **overall online visibility** for a business by establishing a presence in more of the places where prospective customers are likely to look for products and services like those it offers.

Good Community Karma

Links and mentions can also be visible online evidence that you support your community by sponsoring local groups and events, donating resources to area non-profits and volunteering your services to benefit your city, town and/or neighborhood.

Mary Bowling





Visibility X Reputation = Brand

What Are You Already Doing in Your Community/Industry?

EXERCISE 1A - List 3 things that are you doing to support your community and/or industry. Check the websites of the causes you support and see if you are mentioned or linked to there:

EXERCISE 1B–List 3 additional causes you might be interested in supporting in your community and/or industry:

EXERCISE 1C– In the list below, circle the 3 types of activities that you are most willing to do to help promote your business within your market area:

- | | | | |
|---------------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| Encourage Referrals | Network | Sponsor | Volunteer |
| Display Expertise | Advertise | Donate | Join |
| Educate Prospects | Share News | Earn Trust | ? |

Other:



Upgrade Links and Citations

Look at the web pages that already link to your website or mention your business to ensure they are as accurate and as complete as possible.

EXERCISE 2A– Use _____ to determine which pages on the internet already link to your website. Look at the information about you on those pages to see if it can be improved in any way.

URL

Improvement Needed

www.yellowpages.com/basalt-co/mip/ajax-pool-spa-inc-471861375 *Get more reviews, update payment methods*

EXERCISE 2B – Use Google to search for your business name and location to determine which pages on the internet already mention your business. Look at the information about you on those pages to see if it can be improved in any way:



URL

Search Google or type URL 

Improvement Needed



Get More Online Referrals

1. Membership in local business groups and industry groups

Consider joining appropriate local and professional associations to anchor your business to your geography and industry.

2. Listings on local and hyperlocal websites

Get listed on sites associated with cities, towns and neighborhoods from which you'd like to draw more customers

3. Barnacle SEO

Get listed on sites that rank well for terms for which you would like to rank

4. Promote features that make your business special

Take advantage of any qualities that entitle your company to be listed in niche directories, like veteran-owned businesses or handicapped-accessible stores.

Exercise 4: Using the suggestions above, identify at least 3 websites that you could use to encourage more online referrals to your business.

URL

Notes

Why Do Competitive Link Research?

To learn which good links your competitors have that you might also be able to get and to learn which **types** of good links top ranking businesses in your industry in other areas have that you may be able to get.

Exercise 4: Use Bright Local's tool to identify the top rankers for a term you'd like to be found for in both your location and in other locations.

<https://www.brightlocal.com/local-search-results-checker/>



The screenshot shows the 'View search rankings from any location' tool. It includes a search term field with 'hot tub', a search engine selector with Google and Google Maps options, a country dropdown set to 'United States', a language dropdown set to 'English', and a search location field with 'Nashville, TN 27238'. There are 'CHECK SEARCH RESULTS' and 'RESET FORM' buttons at the bottom.

Then, use _____ to look at their links for possible opportunities for your business and note them here.

URL

Notes

Link Opportunity Prioritization (1-5, 1 being most important, 5 being least)

Paying for sponsorships

Donating time/volunteering

Paying for group/organization membership

Sharing your knowledge

Being creative to get mentions not related to your business

Community Involvement

In the past few years, have you donated time or money to any charities or organizations? Please provide details.

Are there any charities, organizations, or causes that you really care about (even if you didn't donate time or money recently)?

Does your spouse have any involvement with local charities or organizations?

Do your children participate in any local organizations or sports?



Would you be willing to donate products/services/time to local charities or organizations? What would you offer/donate?

How would your management team answer the previous 5 questions?

How would your other employees answer those questions?

Local Events/Groups

Do you have the ability (and would you be willing) to host events for other groups at your location?

Would you be willing to donate time/money to local groups?

Where did you go to college? Do you consider yourself an active alum?

Are there any specialty organizations for your line of work? How about specialty schools?

Info About Your Business

Is there anything 100% unique about something you sell or a service you provide? (something absolutely no one else sells or provides)

Have you won any awards? (personally, or as a business)

What certifications do you have? (any certifications, no matter how small)

Are there any business directories or associations that you're a member of? (or were a member of in the past)

What is your ethnicity? (there are always directories in every city for businesses owned by different ethnicities, so this could be a big opportunity)

Have you ever published anything? If so, what, where, and when?

Have you ever written a blog post for any other website? If so, what, where, and when?



Have you written any amazing content for your own site or blog?

Do you have any internal-only guides or checklists? (could be customer facing or for employees only)

Are you currently hiring? If so, for what positions?

Are there any specific brands of tools or equipment that you use in your business? If so, are any produced by a small company or a local company?

What websites and/or blogs do people in your industry pay attention to?

Have you ever been interviewed? Was it print only, or is there an audio or video file of the interview? Where can we find it?

Do you offer any discounts? (for example, for military veterans or seniors) If not, would you consider doing so?

Do you collect testimonials from customers? Would you be willing to?

Other Businesses

Have you ever written a review or testimonial for another business, service, or product? If so, what/where/when?

Are there other businesses you refer customers to? If so, which businesses and why?

Are there any “complimentary” businesses that you tend to work with?

Do you have any promotions set up with other businesses to offer deals to their customers? If not, would you consider doing so?

Does anyone in your family own a business?

If you could pick 3 websites to be featured on, what would those sites be?

Do you know anyone personally who is publicly visible? Someone involved in local politics, schools, television/radio, etc?

Do you know any journalists or bloggers?

Do you have any ideas for links you could get from other sites?