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Link Myths

By Scott J. Patterson

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As competition among websites increase, close attention is being paid to rankings in major search engines. Since a high ranking in a keyword can "make or break" a business, webmasters are looking to find any method to increase their ranking. By examining the algorithms of Google and other search engines, it is easy to see that a high value is being placed on the number of links (and quality) pointing to a website. As a result, most webmasters have realized the importance of finding partners to link to their Internet business.

Although link exchanges are vital to any marketing plan, there are some myths that are perpetuated by many so-called "experts". To run a smart link exchange campaign, it is important to understand these myths and make sure that you do not fall for them.

Myth 1 – Link to every site

When I first started my link exchange campaign, I would link to every site possible. As a result, my rankings suffered. As I learned more, I discovered that I could improve my listings by linking to sites that complemented my own. In order run a smart link exchange program, it is important to focus on linking to sites that are closely related to your product or service without being a direct competitor.

For instance, my original site sells Ethnic Jewelry. So, I look for link partners among other jewelry stores that do not sell the same type of jewelry that is listed in my store.

Myth 2 – All people will add my site if I add theirs first

To receive a link from an Internet business, most people will usually add the site's link first. Unfortunately, not every potential partner will add your link even if you have already added theirs. Sometimes a website is just not interested in linking with your site. The problem is many webmasters will not let you know that they are not going to link to your site. So, you might be linking to a website that is not returning the favor.

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A great way to ensure that you are only linking to reciprocal sites is to put each link into a "temporary position" until you receive validation that the site is listing your business.

Myth 3 – The name of my website should be in the title of the link

Another mistake I made when I first started out, was to have the name of my website in the links that were pointing to my business. Eventually I learned that many search engines, especially Google, pay attention to the title of the link pointing towards your site. So, if you are looking for top placement for specific keywords, then they should be used in the title of the link instead of your website name.

Taking the Ethnic Jewelry example from above, your link title would look like this:

Ethnic Jewelry Store: Here we sell evil eye jewelry and Turkish jewelry.

Myth 4 – Only link to sites with a high Google Page Rank

In my opinion, the biggest "Catch-22" for webmasters is that many sites will not link to an Internet business unless it has a certain "Google Page Rank". But at some point, every site has started out with a low page ranking. So how did they get a high ranking if no one would link to them in the first place?

Instead of focusing on a page rank, many successful websites look instead at the quality of the Internet business. If it is evident that the webmaster has taken the time to create a quality site, then you can be assured that a high ranking will eventually happen! By linking to a well designed website, you can be ensured that the value of your link will increase as the website gains a high ranking.

Myth 5: Put all the links on one page in no particular order

When the Internet first gained popularity, webmasters used links as a way to help their visitors. Initially, they placed links as way to complement the content of the website. As the importance of links increased, the focus shifted from helping the visitor to helping the webmaster.

Instead of dumping your links onto a single page, you can help both your partners and visitors by creating a directory. Here, you place each link partner into a specific category. This will help visitors (and search engines) navigate your site with ease.

Myth 6: I should avoid all types of "automatic" link programs

Many Internet marketers recommend avoiding automatic link exchange software. They feel that using these programs will actually hurt your rankings rather than help. But, there are a lot of great link exchange websites that automate the process of finding links hurting your search engine rankings.

For instance, <http://www.linkmarket.net> and <http://www.gotop.com> are two excellent sites that allow you to shop for link partners. When you find sites that are complementary, you add them to your "basket" and the link exchange websites sends out an automatic email requesting the link. These two sites allow you to save time, while avoiding the "black hat" techniques that are prevalent among many

automatic-linking services.

While exchanging links can be a time-consuming process, it is well worth the effort. By taking time to properly link to complementary websites, you will find that your rankings in important keywords will improve.

Scott Patterson brought his online store: <http://www.mizambar.com> to the top of the Google search engine by exchanging links. To find out how he did this and other techniques with NO computer experience, check out his site: <http://www.buildingastore.com>

Book Review – Loyalty Myths: Hyped Strategies That Will Put You Out Of Business - And Proven Tactics That Really Work

By Adam McFarland

Did you ever wonder if some of those age old sayings about marketing are true? For instance, we've all heard "It costs five times more to acquire a new customer than to retain a current customer." But does anyone have any proof of that? That is exactly what a group of authors set out to do in *Loyalty Myths: Hyped Strategies That Will Put You Out of Business - and Proven Tactics That Really Work*. The authors, Timothy L. Keiningham, Terry G. Varva, Lerzan Aksoy, and Henri Wallard are all experts in consumer loyalty and use their wealth of knowledge to dispel common myths and offer insight into what really works.

The book chooses an interesting format - the first six chapters are devoted to dismiss over fifty common 'loyalty myths' and the final two chapters are used to learning about why customers are loyal and how a loyalty program should be managed. Each of the 'loyalty myths' chapters contains several 'myths' grouped together by common themes, such as *Loyalty Myths That Subvert Company Goals* and *Loyalty Myths Regarding Employees*. The chapters both begin and end with an example pulled from industry that encompasses all of the myths mentioned in the chapter, with the actual myths discussed in the middle.

The authors spend a couple of pages banishing each of the fifty three myths. Some of the myths are things that we tend to take for granted, such as "Companies tend to know their customers," while others like "share-of-wallet increases as customer lifetimes increase" would seem intuitively true. For each and every one, the authors use solid historical data to dispel the myth and show the negative business effects of believing it.

The final two chapters focus on seven 'loyalty truths' such as "Don't manage for customer retention before you manage for customer selection" and "Customer loyalty and brand imagery are far from independent; you must manage them hand-in-hand." The authors do a good job of going through how to build and measure a loyalty program around these 'truths.'

The book is an extremely fast paced, entertaining read. Anyone reading the book with an open mind will agree with the authors' solid reasoning. In particular, business owners, CEO's, and anyone in

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marketing or consumer affairs will directly benefit by eliminating these `myths' from their business and implementing the `truths.' This book can have a very real impact on your company's bottom line. Many businesses mindlessly pour money into customer loyalty programs without taking the steps outlined in this book. For some companies, a loyalty program doesn't even make sense. For others, their program needs a significant overhaul. This book will help you identify where your business is and give you the tools to make improvements.

The only downside with the book is the sheer number of myths. Many of the `myths' blend together and readers would probably be more likely to retain the `myths' if there were ten as opposed to fifty-three (similar to the seven `truths'). The amount of myths also doesn't allow for the authors to go into quite as much detail as one would like for each `myth.' There are several myths that aren't so much dispelled in the paragraph or two devoted to it, but within the context of the entire chapter. It just seems like it would have made more sense to combine many of the myths.

Overall, *Loyalty Myths: Hyped Strategies That Will Put You Out of Business - and Proven Tactics That Really Work* is a tremendously entertaining and enlightening read. Anyone that has an interest in consumer loyalty will learn a great deal of directly applicable information that can save their company money and help differentiate them from the competition.

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