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## SEO for Traffic with Content vs. Ranking with Links

By Joel Walsh

How do you grow your search engine traffic without adding a single new link or making any changes to your existing webpages?

It's simple. Just add content.

Simply having keyword-optimized pages of content on your site won't rank you high for competitive search engine keywords-that's a fact of life. But keyword-optimized content can really bring in the traffic for low-competition and unique keywords. The low-competition and unique keywords are typically longer multi-word variants of the keyword. For instance, instead of "search engine ranking," "ranking for search engine traffic niche keywords."

If you have lots of pages of optimized content-and you optimize well-all the search engine traffic from these low-competition keywords will really add up. Plus, you'll usually get more repeat visitors and type-in traffic, too.

Just picture this realistic example of traffic-building with content vs. ranking-building with links. Company A invests \$5,000 for link-building in order to rank for a competitive keyword. Company B invests the same amount, only in content. Company A and Company B: each start out on equal SEO footing: equally old websites with the same amount and quality of content, same content management systems, the same PageRank and quantity, quality, and relevance of inbound links.

Company A's research reveals that \$5000 is just the amount needed to get on the first page of Google for a target keyword that should deliver 100 unique visitors per day if the site ends up in the first position. They dutifully get inbound links optimized for that keyword, following all SEO best practices. Three months and \$5,000 later, the site is stuck somewhere toward the bottom of the second page of Google search results for the target keyword. Six months later, they've actually sunk a bit lower in the SERPs. The good news is that the site is getting some traffic from the links built and from the lowly search engine position, but nowhere near the 100 visitors/day they were hoping for from search results.

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Company B, meanwhile, had content written around a long list of keywords with little or no competition in the search engines, using up-to-date search engine copywriting techniques. They've been enjoying a growing stream of visitors to their site almost since the first page of content was added. Three months later, the site's search engine traffic has grown by a hundred unique visitors per day, or 3,000 per month. Moreover, Company B's repeat visitor traffic has also jumped. Type-in traffic has increased, presumably as visitors forward the URLs of useful pages to their friends. Page views are up, too, not only from more repeat visitors and type-in visitors, but also from first-time search visitors staying longer and browsing more pages. Six months later, the website's content has built a loyal following on the net, generating even more repeat visitors. The search engine traffic is as good as it ever was.

What happened?

### Pitfalls of Link-Building for Search Engine Ranking

Company A thought it had a fairly sure thing: build enough optimized links for the keyword, taking care not to trigger search engine penalties. Yet as they've discovered, there is no sure thing when it comes to search engine rankings:

\* Over-optimization penalty minefield. The search engines, particularly Google and Yahoo!, are very risk-averse when it comes to ranking sites well for competitive keywords. On the whole, they are perfectly willing to risk dropping several good sites from top rankings in order to try to keep one bad site out. They are constantly tweaking their algorithms to identify sites whose link structures are not indicative of a quality site. In the process, plenty of good sites with good SEO also get swept up. This risk of failure is the inherent risk of SEO. True, most of the time, a good site with good SEO does move to the top. But in a large minority of cases, quality goes unrewarded.

\* Competition and the moving target. As Site A was moving up the search engine results for its competitive target keyword, so were the other sites. There is no rest for the victorious when it comes for SEO. The top sites for highly competitive keywords are constantly building new optimized links. That's why any SEO effort has to aim to do at least ten percent better than the site currently in the position it's targeting.

\* Lack of keyword diversity. Too often, websites with modest SEO budgets (and \$5,000 is modest when it comes to a competitive keyword) aim for just a few keywords. Given all the potential pitfalls of an SEO campaign, you need to be going after ten or more target competitive keywords, and at least another ten related but less competitive keywords. That way, failure for a few keywords won't scuttle the whole project. Meanwhile, search engines look for diversity in targeted keywords, so you get much more out of targeting a larger group of keywords. If you can't afford to do this, you're really better off not going after competitive keywords. Sure, you might get those rankings. But what happens if you've spent your budget and still have little to show for it?

Meanwhile, the fundamental advantage of pursuing low-competition keywords is that, by definition, it's much closer to being a sure thing.

### Advantages of Web Content SEO

\*Greater certainty. Not only is a page of content extremely likely to bring in search engine

traffic—unlike the similar investment in links—it won't suddenly disappear. The sites linking to you might stop anytime, or do something to stop links' passing search engine value (such as adding the "nofollow" tag or switching to a search-engine-unfriendly content management system).

\*Cost. Traditionally, copywriting has been more expensive than link-building. But that's changed. As "nofollow" link-Scrooge-ry becomes more and more common, and as paid and reciprocal links get downgraded, the real cost of obtaining quality links increases. Meanwhile, the copywriting market has increasingly adapted to the needs of search engine marketing. To get a search engine visitor, you don't need a Pulitzer-prize winning essay or a killer sales letter. You simply need highly focused, readable, keyword-optimized, information-packed pages of around 250 words each—and more and more copywriting and SEO firms are delivering this service cost-effectively. Blogs, meanwhile, let you and your employees add content easily. Bulletin boards (modified to be search-engine-friendly) let site visitors add content, too. In fact, "natural content" from blogs and bulletin boards is now much more viable than natural link building.

In conclusion, when you look at SEO, don't forget that your number-one goal is not to rank high for a certain keyword, but to get more search engine traffic. In some less-competitive sectors, high rankings may still be a realistic and effective proposition. But increasingly, ranking high for competitive keywords is no longer the best way to get traffic.

Joel Walsh is a professional in the fields of copywriting and SEO who has recently launched

<http://www.UpMarketSEO.com>

, an SEO firm [Publish this article on your website! Requirements: 1.

Live link for above URL/web address. 2. Link anchor text: "SEO firm" OR leave this bracketed message intact.]

## **How To Become An SEO Ninja**

**By Anton Cheranov**

Every website listed in the search engines has a position, or 'ranking', and each one of these rankings can change very quickly, in some cases as often as weekly or even daily. One day your website's in a good position, then the next you're wondering what happened to it. Staying on top of this situation is a must for any SEO professional - you need to become a search engine ninja. If that's what you want to do, then you need to keep these things in mind at all times:

1. Good SEO requires frequent updates and ranking checks.

You might have a good spot today, but all it takes is for a few new sites to open, and before you know it you're back down at the bottom. If you pay attention to your rankings, then you have a shot at fixing things that go wrong before your rankings fall too far.

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2. You should check all your links weekly to make sure they work.

Maintain high-quality, relevant reciprocal links and check them weekly to make sure they're working. Remove any dead links, as search engine crawlers may mark you down if they find them on your site.

3. Tweak and assess your website on a daily basis.

You need to continually assess and tweak your listing to keep your site in its proper place - that is, at the top. This ensures that your site is in the best position possible, and helps you keep your competitive edge.

4. Maintain the content on your website.

Update your content weekly at the very least, to make sure that search engine crawlers come back frequently. Even the smallest changes will be picked up on by the search engines and will help to maintain your ranking. If you can't write, find someone who can: you need content.

5. Keep up-to-date with the latest developments in SEO.

If you can't decide what you should be doing or you don't want to keep up with SEO on your own, you could consider hiring a specialist. Consulting with an SEO specialist will still allow you to make your own changes to your website and learn which things work best, but you'll have someone to answer your questions if you need them.

You should review your SEO techniques at least every few months, to see how the algorithms have changed and to devise new plans and strategies for increasing your rankings based on those changes. Any SEO ninja will tell you that there are only really two major search engines that you need to worry about: Google and Yahoo. You can do well even if you only have the time or energy to focus on these two engines. Being an SEO ninja is hard work, but it can be very rewarding if you've got the dedication for it.

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