DEEP DIVE INTO

INTERNAL LINKING FOR SEO

A publication of

HubSpot

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AN INTRODUCTION

Great content and attracting inbound links are major elements of your SEO strategy. If you've created an exciting blog post or ebook, you'll naturally want to work on making sure that you are driving as much traffic as possible to these resources. Internal linking should always be part of that strategy. It's what will enable your new page to draw value from your other website pages.

If you are working on any important campaign, it's absolutely critical to figure out which of your high-authority pages should be linking to your new page and what ongoing efforts can continue to build link authority for your site over time.

WITH GREAT INTERNAL LINKING, YOU CAN MORE EASILY RANK FOR DIFFICULT KEYWORD PHRASES AS YOU SHARE THE AUTHORITY OF YOUR OTHER BEST CONTENT WITH YOUR NEW EFFORTS.

WHAT'S AN INTERNAL LINK?

AN INTERNAL LINK IS A LINK TO
ANOTHER PAGE ON YOUR OWN WEBSITE.

Internal links are important to your SEO strategy because, like inbound links, they help build up the authority of pages on your website that are important for you to rank for in the search engine results pages (SERPs) -- except lucky for you, internal links are 100% within your control!

WHY INTERNAL LINKING IS IMPORTANT

It's easy to overlook internal linking in a space where most link-builders and SEO specialists focus on inbound links and developing links from other sites. You might have heard that inbound links are like votes for your content from other websites; they tell search engines what your content is about.

> INTERNAL LINKS ARE LIKE VOTING FOR YOURSELF AND LETTING SEARCH ENGINES KNOW ABOUT YOUR VOTE.

While it's obviously better to have more people than just yourself vote for your content, if you don't start by voting for yourself, the search engines will have a difficult time considering your page as one of the best on the web. Internal links are valuable not just because they are a direct signal that your content is important, but also because those links themselves pass on their own link authority.

The link authority of internal links makes the value of your blog and other pages more obvious to search engines.

When other websites link to your pages, they bring in ‘votes of trust’ and traffic into your domain. But you can draw even more SEO benefit from inbound links when you apply them to your internal linking strategy.

HOW TO LEVERAGE INTERNAL LINKING

If there's a page on your website that you care about a lot, you should explain its importance to search engines. Start by considering how a search engine understands the value of an internal link: it's looking at how many pages on your website link to that page, and how they link to it.

> IF EVERY PAGE ON YOUR WEBSITE LINKS TO SOMETHING, IT MUST BE IMPORTANT TO YOU -- LIKE YOUR HOMEPAGE, OR YOUR BLOG'S HOMEPAGE.

If the only links to your blog are from your 'About Us' section, and nothing from your homepage or your website's main navigation, you have already sent a strong signal to search engines. Your blog is not very important. If your blog is in the main website navigation, however, Google and Bing will treat it like one of your top pages.

3 WAYS TO IMPROVE THE INTERNAL LINKING ON YOUR WEBSITE

Here are three exercises you should go through to ensure you are effectively using the authority of your internal pages:

1 SKETCH OUT A MAP OF YOUR WEBSITE

Make a list of each page in your main navigation and the links each of those pages include. This will help you understand the links that you already have between each section of your site, and how you've linked them together in the past. Sometimes, laying out your whole website visually is the only way to understand what you've overlooked and what's working. You might just uncover that the reason some of your best pages are ranking well is because you subconsciously did a great job building your own links into them from your other content.

3 WAYS TO IMPROVE THE INTERNAL LINKING ON YOUR WEBSITE

2 LOOK AT THE TOPICS THAT YOU FREQUENTLY WRITE ABOUT

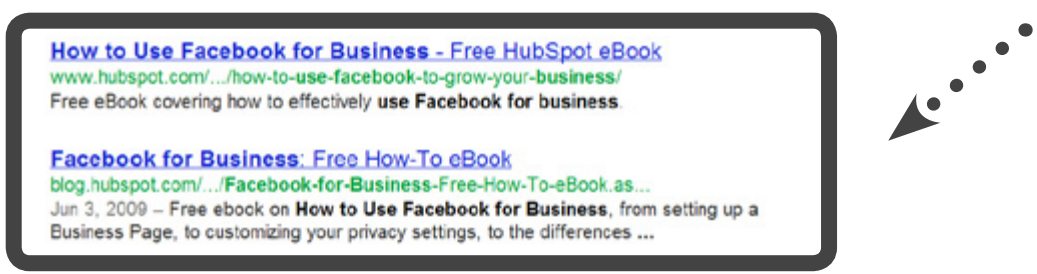
If you're writing regularly about something, you should have another dedicated page on your website about that topic, e.g., a landing page with an offer. Each of your posts should be linking to that authoritative page on the subject, and it should be optimized for conversions. If your landing page has a prominent call-to-action, your effective use of internal linking will help drive more new leads through the offer.

Also, consider where that page lies in your navigation, and if it's worth linking to from your homepage or products page. Depending on your business, you might even find that linking to a specific blog post or page from your website's main navigation might suit you well. For example, if your company often needs to explain your business to visitors, that would make a good blog post that deserves major promotion across your site.

3 WAYS TO IMPROVE THE INTERNAL LINKING ON YOUR WEBSITE

3 THINK ABOUT EVERY OTHER PAGE THAT COULD LINK TO YOUR RANKING PAGE

If it is a page related to a topic you frequently blog about, make sure each of your new blog posts about that topic reference that page and link to it. You can see this in how HubSpot ranks for the phrase “how to use Facebook for business.”



The major factors behind its rank is that we regularly write about how to use Facebook for business, we have a lot of powerful links from our blog posts about using Facebook for business, and we have at least one link in each of those entries to our Facebook for business landing page. Those blog posts we wrote over the last five years about this topic all have great authority on their own because people have linked to them, and each of them links to our landing page to further build that value.

WHAT YOUR INTERNAL LINK SHOULD LOOK LIKE

Good internal links have a set of characteristics. When you work on your internal link-building strategy, make sure to follow the best practices described below:

WRITE RELEVANT ANCHOR TEXT

1

The anchor text should be strong and include relevant keywords that clearly indicate what the linked content is about.

LINK TO STRONG PAGES

2

The page being linked to should provide an in-depth explanation of the linked keyword or phrase. To get the most out of internal linking, select one page (the best you have!) for which you're trying to rank in the SERPs, and always link to that page in your internal links.

BE CONSISTENT IN YOUR LINKING

3

If you continually link to different pages, you're splitting any linking authority among two pages instead of one, making your link half as useful. So be consistent in your efforts to rank for a specific keyword or phrase by linking to the same page.

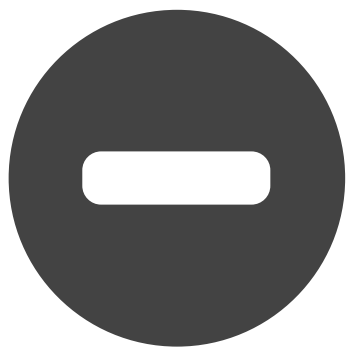
PLACE RELEVANT CONTENT AROUND THE LINK

4

The copy around the linked text should also be optimized. Crawlers read the anchor text *and* the words around it. So seeing a relevant keyword near the linked copy helps in search engine optimization.

EXAMPLE OF DOING IT WRONG

Learn how to measure your marketing today.



EXAMPLE OF DOING IT RIGHT

Learn why measuring your inbound marketing performance is essential to success.

As you can see, the bad example above is not using a strong anchor text, not linking to the most exhaustive page we have on the topic, and isn't placed around industry-specific keywords. In the improved version, the anchor text is far more relevant, giving Google valuable clues about what the link leads to -- in other words, what the page we want to rank in the SERPs is about. Also, this link takes us to a much more thorough resource about inbound marketing analytics, a crucial part of a good user experience. The copy around the linked text is improved as well.

NEXT STEPS

Now that you know all about the importance and qualities of internal links, go ahead and implement a strong internal link-building strategy. Take these three steps to begin the process of accumulating SEO juices and attracting organic traffic through internal links:

1

IDENTIFY WHAT'S OF VALUE

Identify the keyword that is of most value to your organization at the moment. Is it the name of your annual conference? Or maybe a specific industry phrase that prospects use to find your product or service?

2

CREATE AN OFFER AROUND THAT PHRASE

Create an offer that revolves around the topic you have identified in step one. The offer can be an industry report, video, webinar, whitepaper, etc. Now place it behind a lead capture form.

3

START LINKING

Start linking to your offer from various pages, such as your homepage or main website navigation bar. In addition to attracting SEO juices, you will see a big increase in leads thanks to the power of your landing page.

OPTIMIZE FOR SEO

Track the performance of your keywords, links and overall SEO strategy. Learn how you can use HubSpot's software to keep your site up-to-date with the rapidly evolving SEO landscape.

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