

10-STEP GUIDE TO
**SOCIAL LINK
BUILDING**



A publication of
HubSpot
socialfresh

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- ✓ **Convert:** Nurture your leads and drive conversions
- ✓ **Analyze:** Measure and improve your marketing
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AN INTRODUCTION

INBOUND LINKS

INCOMING LINKS TO A WEBSITE OR WEB PAGE RECEIVED FROM ANOTHER WEBSITE OR WEB PAGE; ALSO KNOWN AS BACKLINKS

A business that doesn't generate inbound links is like a car without gas: it exists but doesn't work. So how can you generate links?

Through link building: the key off-page search engine optimization factor. The more links you have pointing to your site, the more traffic and better rankings you can secure through search engines. Inbound links bring three major benefits to your business:

- BRAND EXPOSURE AND AWARENESS
- DIRECT/INDIRECT TRAFFIC (AND LEADS)
- SEARCH ENGINE RANKINGS (RESIDUAL TRAFFIC)

Social media becomes a key tool in attracting a large number of inbound links at a low cost. In this deep dive we examine how to magnetize others to link to your site without spending a red cent on advertising or other promotions. Get ready to learn the ten quick ways in which you can start collecting inbound links organically.





GUEST BLOG POSTS

Guest blogging is one of the quickest ways to attract links. You ask for permission to or are invited to write an article for someone else's website. Besides SEO benefits, guest blogging also gives you access to an entirely new audience, sometimes a much larger one than your website's. Contributing to another blog enables you to build relationships with other influential figures in your industry.

Most blogs welcome guest contributors because it helps them to publish more content and from a fresh perspective. When guest blogging, bring your best content. Resist the temptation to save all your best stuff for your own site. When searching for sites to blog for, look for sites that have an audience relevant to your business. Selecting a site that isn't relevant to your audience won't drive quality traffic to your blog, and can only benefit from an SEO standpoint.

TIPS ON HOW TO EXECUTE

- Do your research. Select blogs that are aligned with your audience and topic.
- Network and look for opportunities to guest post on top industry blogs.
- Deliver your best work, making it hard for anyone to turn away your great article.
- Create a landing page to which visitors will land and convert.
- Plan the SEO terms you are optimizing for.





CONTESTS

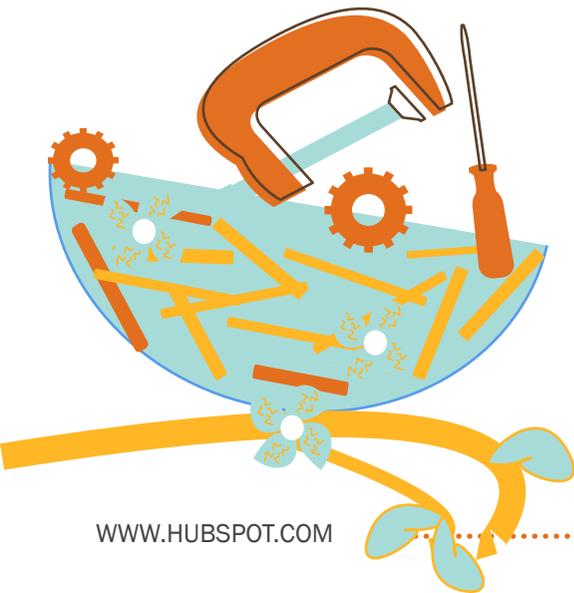
The Internet overflows with contest opportunities offering prizes. They get shared easily and present an ideal platform to increase brand exposure, links and leads. Savvy bloggers have recognized the power of giveaway events and incorporated them in their marketing efforts to attract traffic and generate buzz.

SEE A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

In 2008, Brian Clark of CopyBlogger put up two Twitter contests. [One](#) offered an iPod Nano for the best 140-character story submitted by readers. [The second](#) asked readers to submit their best haiku to compete for a MacBook Air. After writing their story or haiku poem, readers had to share it on Twitter and copy and paste it into CopyBlogger's comments section. The results were phenomenal: the two blog posts attracted 111 links and a ton of new readers from all the social media buzz.

TIPS ON HOW TO EXECUTE

- Give away valuable prizes (ideally, related to your product or service).
- Select a social contest platform, incorporating popular networks.
- Provide clear rules for contest participants and keep them simple.
- Check with a lawyer for sweepstakes regulations in your city/country.
- Use a simple winner selection system like Random.org.





CONTROVERSY

Covering a controversial topic is a great way to attract inbound links and social sharing. Your subject needs to incite debate from the inside out and not be provocative for the sake of it. Create content that starts a debate; don't merely alienate readers.

A portion of your potential audience will strongly disagree with you, and that's ok. Still, ensure that you can back up your view. A key element here is to find a topic that can reasonably be defended on both sides. Controversy incites debate if your content tackles a topic of interest to your target audience. So find a topic highly relevant to your audience, take a side, and watch the interest flood in.

SEE A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

The website SocialTriggers.com [published a blog post](#) about how web design is more important than content, challenging the mantra "content is king." We know that both elements are important, but picking one over the other gets people thinking, talking, and sharing.

TIPS ON HOW TO EXECUTE

- Monitor forums for the most discussed topics.
- Browse through websites like Digg, Reddit for the most popular articles.
- Pay attention to the most common questions from your customers.





DIRECTORIES

The day of the Yellow Pages has pretty much passed us by, with sites like Google and Yelp serving as directories to help us find the answers to our searches. Local directory sites, from CitySearch to Yelp, are built on the Yellow Pages concept and are often free for business listing.

If you are trying to rank in search engines for your region or city, local directories are your friends. They will provide you with relevant search traffic, add you to the list of industry competitors, and offer you backlinks to build your SEO authority.

TIPS ON HOW TO EXECUTE

Think of the many directory listing opportunities floating around you can tap into. For U.S. businesses, the Better Business Bureau is a popular directory that lists members by city. Here are some other great opportunities:

- Local directories (Yelp, citysearch, local newspapers)
- Church websites
- Alumni websites and professional organizations
- Industry directories

Look for organizations like this and check to see if you have the links you want and if you can control the anchor text. Anchor text is the actual term/s (or image text) that are hyperlinked to your website. If you can control the alt text, target the words you want to rank for on search engines.



LISTS

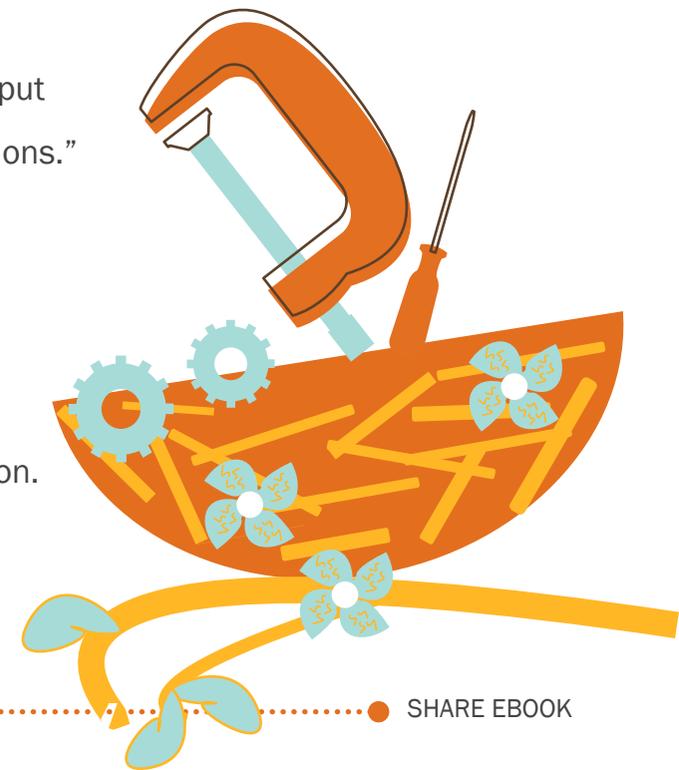
The true force of “top lists” or “top resources” content is often overlooked. Routinely, lists are the most popular types of blog posts and attract inbound links. It’s a proven success formula that David Letterman has been using for decades in his nightly Top 10 lists. What’s so great about lists? We understand them immediately, they have the power to astound (and entertain) us and provide us with actionable steps.

SEE A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

The most popular post I’ve ever written is ‘50 Photos to Inspire Life as a Digital Nomad,’” says Corbett Barr, who blogs at ThinkTraffic.net. “The post has received over 391,000 page views and more than 30 links. What is the key to its success? “The post took me about two days to put together. I think it was so popular because of the content. People love those big photo collections.”

TIPS ON HOW TO EXECUTE

- Success stories. Give your readers several examples of why something works.
- Winners. List a group of people, companies or tools that are the best at something.
- Recap. Detail the history of your industry. Find the ten best quotes by Richard Branson.
- Fun. Sometimes it pays off to be a bit silly. Make fun of yourself or your industry.





FIND WHICH BLOG POSTS BRING YOU THE MOST VIEWS & LINKS

Blog Analytics – HubSpot

	PUBLISHED	AUTHOR	COMMENTS	INBOUND LINKS	PAGE VIEWS
	Today	Pamela Vaughan	1	0	278
	Today	Corey Eridon	1	0	563
	Today	Jeanne Hopkins	7	1	763
itors	Today	Corey Eridon	3	1	1,053
	Yesterday	Anum Hussain	3	5	1,360
	Yesterday	Corey Eridon	7	6	2,220
n]	Yesterday	Sarah Goliger	5	1	916
s Explained	4 days ago	Kipp Bodnar	36	28	796
	4 days ago	Lauren Sorenson	4	3	241
n	4 days ago	Pamela Vaughan	3	6	700
Strategy	4 days ago	Anum Hussain	20	18	4,307

Blogging takes time. To validate the time spent, you need insight into the results your blog is driving. Which posts were most effective at generating traffic and inbound links? Are some days better for blogging than others? HubSpot's blog analytics can help.

- ✓ Track views and comments.
- ✓ See the number of inbound links for each post.
- ✓ See RSS and email subscriber rates.

[Request A Demo](#)

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DEFINE NEW CONCEPTS

Creating a new concept, whether small or big, can make you and your website a highly cited source. When you originate an idea, authority follows. And so do links. When you define new concepts and coin terms that support your brand and teachings, you have something that money can't buy: “viva voce” lifetime advertising.

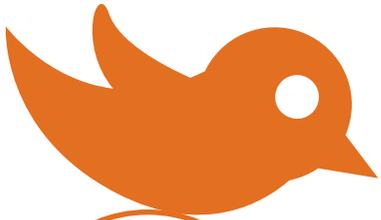


SEE A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

McDonald's with their “Would you like fries with that?” question didn't know it would stir a swarm of brand references in the business and marketing industry for the “up-selling” concept. Scott Monty penned a blog post back in 2007 asking readers what it should be called when Twitter users meet in real life, and the term Tweetup was born. Seth Godin, famous marketing book author, coined the “purple cow” phrase to convey the meaning of marketing distinction. This strategy alone gets Seth mentions and links, with some companies even naming themselves after the purple cow concept.

TIPS ON HOW TO EXECUTE

- Spot new trends in your industry early.
- Notice common problems and pain points.
- Look for complex ideas and start discussions around these topics.
- Find creative, short, and memorable names for your new concept.



7

HOW TO CONTENT

People online are searching for information they can use right away. Sometimes it is hard to find what we are looking for and we'd rather pay someone to spend the time, effort and energy to do it on our behalf. Or at least to give us step-by-step instructions. That's why how-to content works.

Well-written, step-by-step articles and blog posts are in demand, especially when we need to learn something practical. People use search engines everyday to find out how to cook sweet potatoes, get out of debt, or cure snoring. Your customers, too, are searching for instructional content. Everyone wants to know a short cut. The best how-to posts have three common characteristics:

●.....THEY ARE INSTRUCTIONAL.

Take the perspective of teaching someone from scratch - don't assume they know a third of the equation to start.

●.....THEY ARE ACCESSIBLE.

They distill the mammoth web of information out there into a few easy to digest steps.

●.....THEY ARE RESEARCHED.

Either you are a foremost expert on the topic at hand or you need to search that person out. Research and find the necessary answers to provide the best how-to content.



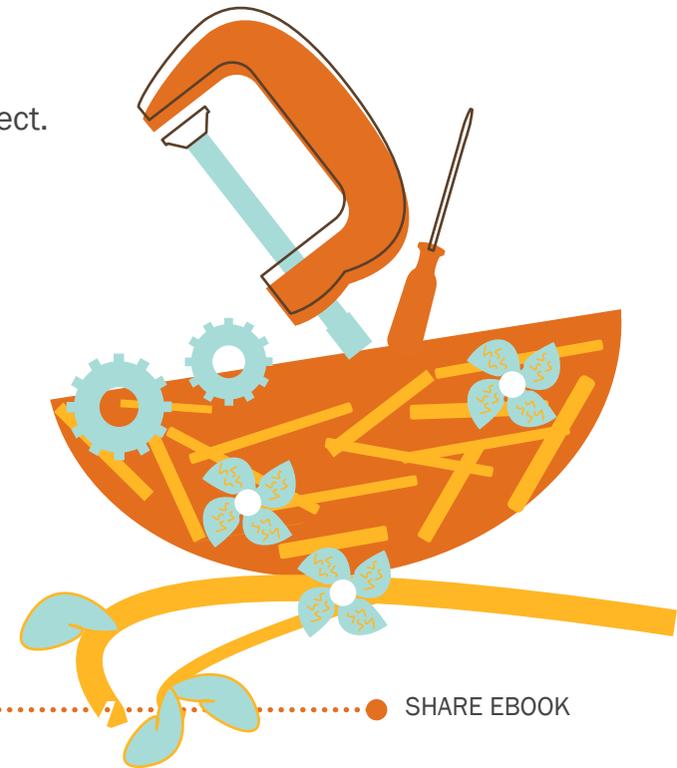
SEE A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

Pat Flynn published a story on how to get a niche website to rank high on Google using backlinks. At 3,238 words, his post is exhaustive and includes three videos totaling of screen-cast instructions. In fact, Google is loaded with how-to content that lives just in a video format. Pat also included illustrations in the article to help the reader visualize his concepts.

The post is laid out in a step-by-step, easy to understand, “do this, then do that” format. It also includes a section with links pointing to continued reading as part of a series of articles he has written.

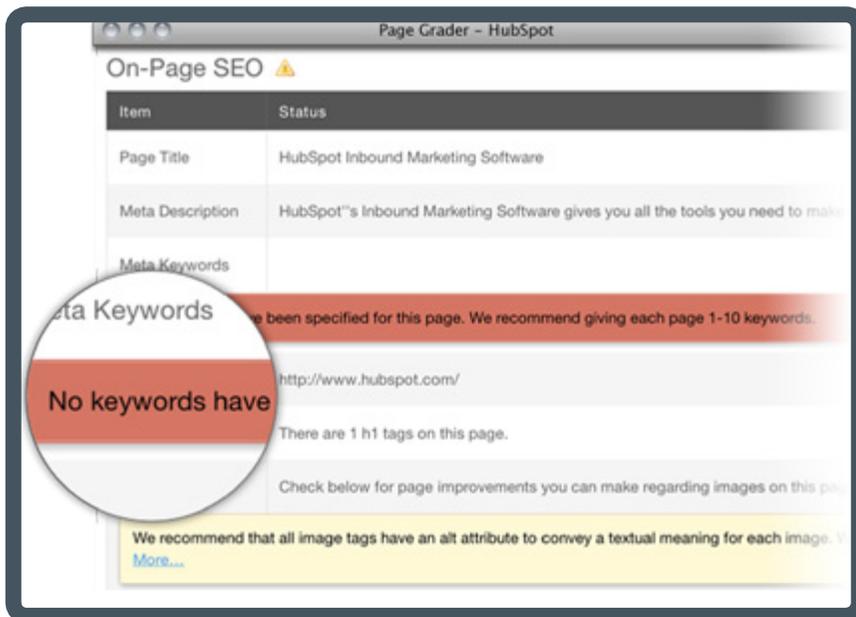
TIPS ON HOW TO EXECUTE

- Target a relevant topic or pain point.
- Find something that has not been written about or take a new stance on an old subject.
- Use step by step, easy to follow instructions.
- Cite examples.
- Use rich media, such as photos and videos.





EASILY DECIDE WHICH KEYWORDS TO TARGET IN YOUR LINK BUILDING EFFORTS



HubSpot's built-in search engine optimization makes it easy to pick the right keywords and find link-building opportunities that increase your website's search rank.

- ✓ **Keyword Analysis:** Find and track your most effective keywords.
- ✓ **Link Tracking:** Track inbound links and the leads they're generating.
- ✓ **Page-Level SEO:** Diagnose and fix poorly ranking sites.

[Request A Demo](#)

[Read More](#)

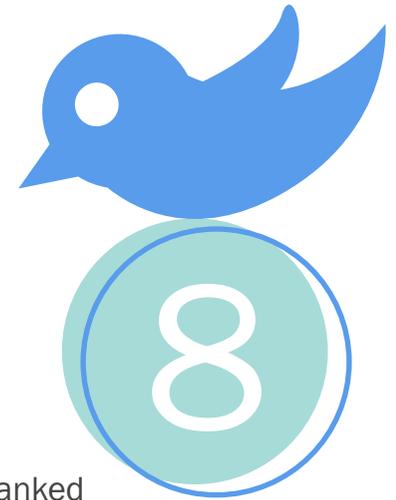


BADGES

Badges should link back to your website or a specific web page. A mix between a logo and a banner, a badge should serve as a mini-ad for you, but also carry value for your readers.

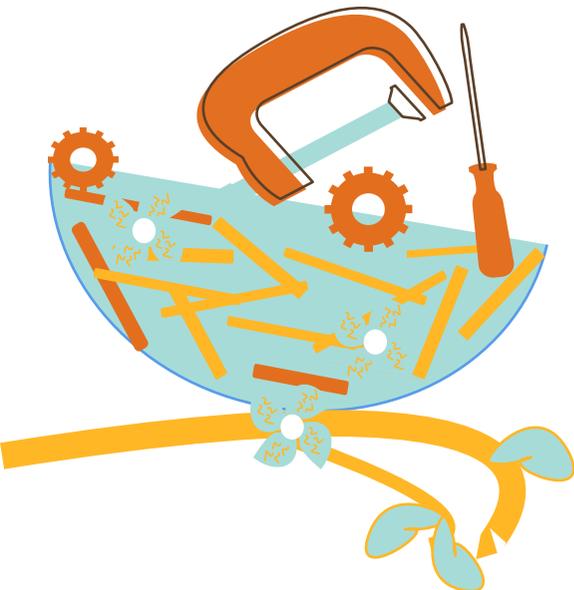
SEE A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

SocialFresh.com published an article asking readers to nominate the best corporate blog examples. Judges ranked the ten winners and provided a badge. Several of the winners still feature these badges on their website, linking back to SocialFresh.com.



TIPS ON HOW TO EXECUTE

- Do it yourself or post a bid on Guru.com or Elance.com to get the graphics done.
- The badge should look professional, hype-free, and have a compelling call-to-action.
- Paste the badge code on your site/blog & give instructions on how to share.
- 125px by 125px is a good size for a badge, but you can offer multiple size options.
- Note the blogs you want to feature your badge and size the badge easily fit them.





SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social networks offer great opportunities for getting noticed and attracting links. Wikipedia lists more than a hundred active social networks that have significant user bases, but the core ones remain Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Google+. The links you post on these networks should lead fans and followers back to your website. That is the baseline of benefit from social networks.

TIPS ON HOW TO EXECUTE

Look at your marketing analytics to see what social networks you are currently getting the most (and most valuable) traffic and focus on those.

Your website and blog should include social media sharing buttons to let people easily spread your content across their networks. With one click your readers should be able to promote your website to their community. Consider incorporating the Facebook “like” button, the “retweet” button, the LinkedIn “in share” button and now Google’s +1 button. Test and find out which social sharing buttons work best for your specific website.



CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

Marketing professionals should always be looking for new places to share their content, and syndication can greatly help in this task. EzineArticles.com, the most famous article directory, is a true content distribution channel for two main reasons:

- Once your article is posted there, it appears on the home page until it gets pushed down by a newer post.
- Your article is syndicated across their platform, which creates opportunities for attracting direct traffic and backlinks.



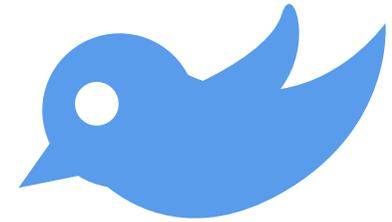
EXAMPLES OF DIRECTORIES

Alltop, Technorati and SocialMediaToday.com are all services that can feature your content allowing users to click through to find your website. On the professional syndication level, ReadWriteWeb gets some articles syndicated on NYtimes.com; Mashable does the same with USA Today and CNN.

TIPS ON HOW TO EXECUTE

Find more places for your content to be listed so that you can add more links that you control. Consider news websites and educational websites. You can also make syndication deals with other blogs, publishing their best blog content on your site and allowing them to do the same for you.

NEXT STEPS



Now that you have the ten fundamental steps to social link building, you are in a good shape to rock your SEO strategy and get more exposure to your content. However, that is not enough to be successful with lead generation.

- Once you attract high-quality traffic, you need to focus on [capturing it and nurturing it](#) in a way that will enable you to build long-term relationships with your new contacts.
- Make sure that while you are improving your SEO strategy, someone on your team is working on creating [landing pages](#), [calls-to-action](#) and [lead nurturing](#) campaigns. Thus, you go beyond the top of the marketing funnel and start getting into the interesting part.
- Track your performance with [marketing analytics](#) & discover what worked and what didn't in terms of customer acquisition.

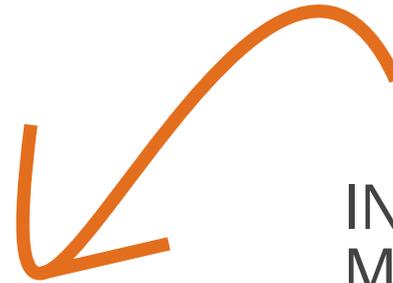


If you are not sure how you can go about this entire process, we are here to help! [Get your free and customized inbound marketing assessment](#) to learn about the current state of your marketing and where you can get in the future using the HubSpot all-in-one marketing software.



OPTIMIZE FOR SEO

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



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to learn about these and HubSpot's other tools in our all-in-one marketing software:

INTEGRATE YOUR MARKETING

Don't separate SEO from social media and blogging. Ensure that your marketing is integrated for powerful results. [Find out how in a live demo of the HubSpot software.](#)



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