



**MalaneNewman** [white paper]

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## Search Engine Optimization

Here are some tweaks you can implement that will help your search engine rankings. To implement these strategies, it is important to take these enhancements one at a time at your own pace, **but perform the Link Popularity strategy first**. **DISCLAIMER:** The strategies in this document have proven to be effective for many clients, but every web site is different. I am communicating these ideas to you only because of my own client experiences, as well as the frequency with which we find these ideas confirmed by other information sources:

**1. YOUR WEB PAGE'S LINK POPULARITY:** This is nowhere near as involved as it looks! Essentially, the link popularity of your web page means "how many other web pages on the Internet, which are themselves sufficiently popular, whose page content is somehow relevant to my page content, have a link on their page that goes to my page?" In addition to our own efforts to elevate the link popularity of your web page, you need to continue this effort yourself for the sake of your continued growth. **A WEB PAGE CAN NEVER HAVE TOO MUCH \*GOOD\* LINK POPULARITY, IF THE OTHER LINKING SITES ARE QUALITY SITES.** In essence, the bigger engines (especially Google) interpret a link from someone else's web page to your web page as a vote, BY the other web page, FOR your web page (this is Google's definition, by the way). But, the search engines look at more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; they also analyze the page that casts the vote. Votes cast by pages that are themselves popular and have many other relevant sites linking to it, whose page content is somehow relevant to your page content, weigh more heavily and help to make your page "important." Link popularity weighs heavily when many major engines (especially Google) are deciding where your web page will land in their search results.

The objective is this: if you get a site to link to you then you gain popularity points. Have them link to your home page from theirs, and vice-versa. Links on your home page to your link partners can be at the bottom of the page in size=1 font if you wish. If that site has a lot of quality sites linking to it and it links to you, you get a lot of points, but if that site has few sites linking to it, you get only a few points. As such, a link from Microsoft.com would be worth more to you than a link from Bobspage.com. In essence, if enough quality sites link to you, your site becomes a quality site by association. So you want the best sites, not the most, to link to you. Likewise, if you link to other quality sites, then your site is assumed to be a quality site by association. However, the link-from page must be covering topics related to the topics on the link-to page, in both directions. All other links are ignored in terms of link popularity. And do not bother to buy hundreds of URL's and cross link them. The search engines can locate them and filter them out faster than you can submit them. What can you do?

- Never stop inviting such web pages to link to your home page, and offer to reciprocate. The quality of your link partners' sites is more important than the number of link partners you have.
- Focus your invitations on web sites that rank well in the biggest search engines.
- Ask sites that link to your competitors to link to you. To find out which sites are linking to your competitors, visit a search engine and enter "**link:**" followed by the competitors' domain name, such as "**link:www.yourcompetitor.com**" or run your competitor's domain name through **www.alexacom.com**.

Here's a recommended process to make your accumulation of link popularity painless and effective:

1. Devise a simple, straightforward form email with the Subject line "Request for Reciprocal Link from **www.yourdomainname.com**." In the body, include the following text, followed by your signature (preferably with logo):



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“Dear Webmaster,

**We are writing to propose a reciprocal link exchange between our two web sites, for the sake of boosting the link popularity of both. This exchange will NOT involve any money changing hands, nor the use of any banners or other objects for either of us to download. Since your site content and ours are sufficiently related, we will include a hyperlink on our links page to your links page, and ask for the same in return.**

**Since Google heavily considers a web page’s level of link popularity when determining the page’s rankings in their search results, this proposed link exchange will be extremely mutually beneficial! In turn, since 85% of all web-based sales result from favorable search engine rankings, I urge you to reply at your earliest opportunity.**

Sincerely,

Your Name, Your Title

Your Company Name

Your web site address

Your email address

Your telephone number (optional)”

2. Grab your list of current keywords from your META tags of your home page, and search at least Google (Yahoo, MSN and AOL Search would be good too, if you can) with each of your keywords. For each search, note the first 10 domain names of your competitors in the results. This is where copy-and-paste to Microsoft Word really comes in handy, to speed up the process.
3. With your list of your “keyword competitors,” go to <http://www.alexa.com/> One by one, copy and paste each domain name (without the http or the www) from your list of competitors into the Alexa search term box, and hit go. The resulting page will show the web site addresses of other web sites linking themselves to your competitor, and most of these web sites will have an email address somewhere for you to capture.
4. If the site content of your competitor’s “link partner” is reasonably related to your site content, BUT NOT IN DIRECT COMPETITION WITH YOU, forward your form email to them, removing all extraneous header information, as well as the “Fw:” in the subject line. Address the forwarded form letter to each recipient individually, and avoid sending group emails about link popularity. Keep your form letter for future use.

That’s how you do it manually. I understand there are a number of freeware programs out there that will help to automate the process. Either way, you need to be seeking new link partners every month from now on... it’s worth the effort and it doesn’t take much time, which decreases over time by the way. It’s a big gun in your arsenal to achieve the rankings that will bring you 85% of your sales.

**2. RICH PAGE CONTENT AND KEYWORD DENSITY (combines with 3 and 4 below):** This refers to the number of times a particular keyword is repeated on a displayed web page. Current wisdom says to divide the total number of times each of your keywords appear on your web page by the total number of words displayed



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on that page ([www.keywordcount.com](http://www.keywordcount.com) has an excellent keyword density calculator that's free). Keep the resulting figure at 8% for each of your first five most important keywords, 6% for your second five most important keywords, and 4% for the remaining five. By doing so, you will have achieved optimum keyword density (without going too far), for a content-rich web page that the search engines will adore. Combines with (3) and (4) below.

**3. TEXT-TO-META PARITY (combines with 2 above and 4 below):** Google and many other major U.S. search engines are now also looking for parity between keywords content and displayed page text when determining rankings for a web page being submitted to them. Your new keywords, in the tag that begins with "META NAME="keywords" CONTENT=", also ideally need to appear as the FIRST visible text on the actual web page, in the order of their appearance in your keywords META tag. You will need to work these keywords into a couple of sentences for that displayed text that make sense when you read them, while maintaining the original respective order of the keywords themselves. Not only does this establish the essential parity between keywords META content and displayed text for the search engines' submission bots, but it also increases your chances that search engines who pull their descriptive text for search results from your page text will first find the exact text you want them to use.

**4. KEYWORD LINK TEXT (combines with 2 and 3 above):** Link text is the hypertext that links one page to another. In order to help your visitors find what they want and show search engines what your pages are about, use keyword phrases as link text instead of words like "Click here!" Also, your links should be in actual HTML text format... NOT within Java or Flash code, and NOT just an image. These links look great, but they don't help you in the search engines.

**5. KEYWORD URL's FOR YOUR SUB PAGES:** Current research suggests that another factor affecting a web page's rankings is the use of keywords as URL's for sub pages in a web site. For example, if your site sells industrial widgets, consumer widgets and widgets for astronauts, naturally your site will have links from the home page to the three sub pages which each focus on one of these types of widgets. So, these three sub pages would be named, respectively, **industrial\_widgets.htm**, **consumer\_widgets.htm** and **astronaut\_widgets.htm**.

**6. THE SITE MAP PAGE:** A feature common to most well designed web sites (of all sizes) is a site map page. This is a new page you need to include with the other pages in your web site, and is similar in concept to a table of contents in a book. Its original purpose was to give your visitors a separate page in your site with an overview of the contents and organization of your entire site. However, a site map page can also be used to provide additional paths for any visiting search engine spiders to visit all your sub-pages, even though their first encounter was with your home page. This can help you populate search engine results under more of your keywords, which simply means: MORE EXPOSURE. A site map simply lists links to every other page on your web site, and optionally includes a brief enticing phrase or sentence describing what will be found on that page if the visitor clicks the link (remember keyword density when composing these descriptions). Your home page will have a link to your site map page. In turn, your site map page will have a link to every other page on your web site. Plenty of paths for the little spiders to follow!

**7. THE "ALT" ATTRIBUTE OF AN IMAGE TAG:** NOTE: THIS STRATEGY IS STRICTLY OPTIONAL, AND SHOULD ONLY BE USED IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO IMPLEMENT ALL OF THE OTHER STRATEGIES ABOVE. Many search engine submission bots are now also looking at the content of the ALT attribute of image tags, which are the tags that look like this: ``. In lieu of one of the other suggestions above, you can change the ALT attribute content of some or all image tags on a given web page to include some or all your keywords from the



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META tag for that page, like this: .  
**NOTE: keywords in your image tags also count toward your page's overall keyword density, #2 above.**

[End]