Backlink Basics!

Backlink Building Strategies
To Help Boost Search Ranking
And
Traffic To Your Website

CHAPTER 1:

WHAT THE HECK ARE BACKLINKS

Backlinks, also known as incoming links, inbound links, inlinks, and inward links, are incoming links to a website or web page. In basic link terminology, a backlink is any link received by one web page, directory, or top level domain from another web page.

Inbound links were originally important (prior to the emergence of search engines) as a primary means of web navigation; today, their significance lies in search engine optimization (SEO). The number of backlinks is one indication of the popularity or importance of that website or page (for example, this is used by Google to determine the PageRank of a webpage). Outside of SEO, the backlinks of a webpage may be of significant personal, cultural or semantic interest: they indicate who is paying attention to that page.

Search engines often use the number of backlinks that a website has as one of the most important factors for determining that website's search engine ranking, popularity and importance. Google's description of their PageRank system, for instance, notes that Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote, by page A, for page B. Knowledge of this form of search engine rankings has fueled a portion of the SEO industry commonly termed linkspam, where a company attempts to place as many inbound links as possible to their site regardless of the context of the originating site.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

Websites often employ various search engine optimization techniques to increase the number of backlinks pointing to their website. Some methods are free for use by everyone whereas some methods like linkbaiting requires quite a bit of planning and marketing to work. Some websites stumble upon "linkbaiting" naturally; the sites that are the first with a tidbit of 'breaking news' about a celebrity are good examples of that. When "linkbait" happens, many websites will link to the 'baiting' website because there is information there that is of extreme interest to a large number of people.

There are several factors that determine the value of a backlink. Backlinks from authoritative sites on a given topic are highly valuable. If both sites have content geared toward the keyword topic, the backlink is considered relevant and believed to have strong influence on the search engine rankings of the webpage granted the backlink. A backlink represents a favorable 'editorial vote' for the receiving webpage from another granting webpage. Another important factor is the anchor text of the backlink. Anchor text is the descriptive labeling of the hyperlink as it appears on a webpage. Search engine bots (i.e., spiders, crawlers, etc.) examine the anchor text to evaluate how relevant it is to the content on a webpage. Anchor text and webpage content congruency are highly weighted in search engine results page (SERP) rankings of a webpage with respect to any given keyword query by a search engine user.

Increasingly, inbound links are being weighed against link popularity and originating context. This transition is reducing the notion of one link, one vote in SEO, a trend proponents hope will help curb linkspam as a whole.

When HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) was designed, there was no explicit mechanism in the design to keep track of backlinks in software, as this carried additional logistical and network overhead.

Most Content management systems include features to track backlinks, provided the external site linking in sends notification to the target site. Most wiki systems include the capability of determining what pages link internally to any given page, but do not track external links to any given page.

Most commercial search engines provide a mechanism to determine the number of backlinks they have recorded to a particular web page. For example, Google can be searched using link:yourdomain.com to find the number of pages on the Web pointing to yourdomain.com. To find link information on Yahoo type linkdomain:http://www.yourdomain.com. Google only shows a small fraction of the number of links pointing to a site. It credits many more backlinks than it shows for each website.

Other mechanisms have been developed to track backlinks between disparate webpages controlled by organizations that aren't associated with each other. The most notable example of this is TrackBacks between blogs.

Backlinks In Marketing

When we think of Internet marketing, the word "backlink" doesn't automatically come to mind. In fact, most people who aren't involved with a website would not even know what a backlink means. To put it simply, a backlink is any URL link from another website that will take web surfers directly to your website. So, a backlink is like a business card (in the form of an Internet address) that you gave to someone who then refers other people back to you. Using this metaphor, one can see that the more backlinks you

get the more business you get too. However, that's not the sole reason why backlinks are important in Internet marketing.

While a backlink is a type of referral, it also can be a measure of your website's reputation. This is why major search engines use backlinks in their search algorithms. They catalogue the number of backlinks and the strength of the people who are backlinking to your site and use this in their algorithm to determine how well you rank amongst other sites that deal with your website niche. Using backlinks you can raise the visibility of your site by getting your site highly ranked in the search engine. This, in turn, will lead to more people visiting your site and thus more business.

As if that weren't enough, the backlinks are also used to determine the worth of the website should you decide to sell the domain later. So, backlinks can turn into dollar signs, even if your site happens to be a blog, instead of a full website. That's how powerful backlinks are!

NOT ALL BACKLINKS ARE THE SAME

Being the Internet, of course, nothing is as straightforward as it seems. It's simplistic to suggest that anything that is a backlink will enhance your site's value or search engine ranking. Tech wizards invented the Internet, and many of those geek geniuses ended up in search engine companies. So, even though a standard HTML URL is easy enough to understand (once you get the hang of it), search engine optimization is quite intricate and often a very secretive business. After all, if we knew exactly the algorithms that major companies use to rank the sites in their listings, than anyone could fool a search engine and the entire industry would collapse overnight. So, while you can learn as much as you want about how to code a backlink, you probably won't get the finer points of which backlinks are worth more than others to your website, unless you read this eBook.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

In these pages, you will find out what specific aspects of a backlink are important in **Chapter 2**. We will discuss the importance of the anchor text that is linking back to you and the types of sites that link to you. This is just one of the elements that can affect your search ranking, but it appears to be a strong criterion in how you rank, at least in the Google search engine.

You will also learn how the context and positioning of a backlink has a great effect on how useful it is to improve your page rank in search engines. Of course, you will want to get backlinks from sites with good page rank, as they will be weighted more. The higher up you are in the page listing (home page being the best page), the more the backlink is weighted. You will learn why link referral pages are no longer as good a strategy as getting your link on relevant pages with few other backlinks. Also, it may surprise you to learn that where the link appears on the page (top, middle, and bottom) can also influence how strong a backlink it is perceived to be by the search engine-ranking algorithm.

BUYING BACKLINKS: PROS AND CONS

Once you understand the dynamics of a sound backlink, you still have to figure out how to persuade the right people to backlink to your site. You can spend an inordinate amount of time locating sites of similar content to your own and emailing webmasters for reciprocal links, but you will quickly find that you do not get many replies. The process is also time-consuming. So, you may find yourself somewhat stymied about how to generate backlinks without having to do too much upfront work.

If you can pay someone to create your site, you may reason, why can't you pay someone to backlink to your site? And, the answer is that you can! There are search engine optimization companies that can help you establish sufficient backlinks to raise your page rank for a minimal expense. There are risks involved, however, as Google doesn't like the practice of rigging your site to look good in search engines. And, since the algorithms are kept secret, you can inadvertently

trip a red flag that sends your site automatically to the bottom of the heap if you end up paying to be included in link farm pages.

Despite this risk, many people do use companies to help them change the ranking of their site by buying backlinks.

CHAPTER 2:
BACKLINK BASICS

A BREIF HISTORY

Backlinks have always had some bearing on how well a site ranked in search engine result pages (SERPs). However, in the past, the algorithms were not designed to take into account people trying to cheat the system by loading up on backlinks from sites that had nothing but links on them, no content of any real relevance. These sites quickly became known as "link farms" and were used by webmasters to increase the ranking of their multiple sites.

In addition to this practice, webmasters often created one web page specifically to house reciprocal links called a links page. It was used by people building reciprocal links to better leverage their site in search engine results but provided no real content. Sometimes, reciprocal links were even exchange between sites that had no direct relevance to each other too. So, in a links page you might find a link to a toy site when the website hosting the link had to do with the elderly. It obviously made no sense to reward this type of behind the scenes ranking manipulations!

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

Google was one of the first major search engines to start looking at how to reward good quality links that had relevance and added content to a site instead of rewarding savvy, but somewhat unscrupulous practices of cheating the search engine results with backroom deals and black hat tricks. They kept using backlinks as a determinant of reputation, but also strengthened the algorithm to look for specific quality links and penalizing link farms and other black hat maneuvers.

CODING YOUR HTML

First off, you will want to understand the basics of building a link and then we will explain how these links are analyzed to determine what is a quality backlink and what might cause you problems with the search engine.

To build an HTML link to any site, the code uses an anchor text link. An example of this is the following:

description of url

Here the URL address www.yoururl.com is hidden in an anchor tag and some words describing the url will be viewed by the surfer instead. These descriptive words, which are coded where you see "description of url," are what is defined as anchor text.

This HTML code is used whether you are coding a link to someone else's page or they are coding a backlink to you. So, while your domain name may be very descriptive of your business it may not even be viewed by a reader until after the anchor text is clicked upon, if even then. Yet, anchor text is becoming more and more relevant to how a search engine ranks your backlinks.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

WHAT MAKES A QUALITY BACKLINK

Now, that you understand how a backlink is coded and some of the history behind why the search engine ranking algorithms were changed, you are in a better position to see how your website might be analyzed for quality links. Obviously, you don't want to add your link to websites that are link farms as this will now penalize, rather than enhance your search engine ranking.

And, you know that search engine optimization is interested in the relevance of your site compared to the content of your site. Understanding this makes it easier to understand that when your backlinks are analyzed, they aren't just done so based on their isolated coding, they are done with respect to the environment too. This environment includes, the page rank of the site that is linking to you, your own website's content, and the page environment and content that the backlink springs from.

- **PageRank (PR)**
  The best types of quality links come from sites that have a high page rank in Google's search engine. Page rank ranges on a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest page rank. This is a measure of the referral site's reputation and will give the search engine an idea of how reliable this source is about giving out links that are not relevant or within their own content stream. If you don't know a site's PageRank (PR), you can download the Google toolbar and it will tell you what it is. It takes time to develop page rank and you should try to link to sites with a slightly higher page rank than your own, thus building up your own site's reputation.

- **Website Content Matching**
  Ideally, you would want to get a backlink from a site that not only has a higher page rank than you do, but also that has something to do with the content of your site. If your site is about dating, you may want to be included in a site that

reviews dating sites. If you just get a backlink from someone who is selling Bibles, it's likely to be ignored as a good quality backlink.

- **Page Positioning**

  A link that shows up near the top of the referrer's page is worth more than one at the bottom. This may seem odd, but you have to remember that paid links are often placed nearer the bottom or out of the way of the relevant content. Paid text links are now not considered good quality links by Google, but how that algorithm is determined, it's anyone's guess. They appear to make page positioning an indicator of whether a text link is paid or not.

- **Page Hierarchy**

  Within any website, there is a directory tree that leads people deeper and deeper into the site. The higher a web page is in the directory structure the more value it has to you as a potential host for your backlink. The home page of a site with good ranking is an excellent place to get a backlink because this is the prime real estate for websites that everyone is sure to visit.

- **Anchor Text**

  The anchor text used by the linking site is becoming more important. If you have a site that sells shoes and the anchor text that backlinks to you is "pretty wear" then it won't be as efficient as one that clearly describes your offerings like "quality top-brand shoes." This effect appears to be evaluated across the board with the more backlinks using quality anchor text, the higher your page ranking in the results pages becomes.

THE TYPES OF BACKLINKS

There are three types of links, even if they're all coded the same: a reciprocal link, an outbound link, and a one-way inbound link. In the past, people would join link exchange sites to get reciprocal links. Now, the newer algorithms actually discount

reciprocal links in favor of one-way inbound links. The trick then isn't just to get an inbound link that will count as a backlink (since a reciprocal link would then qualify), but to get an inbound link that is **one-way** only.

Good Neighbor/Bad Neighbor

To be clear, the algorithms used to determine good SERPs are not published. The information that is being presented is based on things that people tweaked and then used in a trial and error fashion to try to get good page ranking. If the algorithms were published, it would be a simple matter to fool the search engines and thus they would automatically lose their value.

So, the best way to understand the way the new algorithms work is to think of your site as a piece of real estate. On the Internet, you can buy a piece of real estate in cyberspace and it doesn't have an address until you have a domain name. This domain name is used to determine some of your page ranking and it also is important in identifying where you live and what you do. However, even if we know that you live at www.myurl.com we still don't know anything else about you. We're thinking of doing business with you and maybe the sign on your door (your domain name) tells us what you sell, but it doesn't really tell us what kind of quality to expect from your business. The first thing we might do then, in this case, is to simply drive by your place of business and see what the neighborhood looks like and speaking to the neighbors.

In cyberspace, your neighbors are the people who backlink to you. Their PageRank is what the search engine already knows about your neighbors. The spider that crawls their sites begins to get an idea of who you are based on what your neighbors are saying about you on their web pages. If they are quality people who are have something to do with the niche your business is in, then they are expected to be expert appraisers of your reputation. After they start talking about you, the way they promote you and what they say will determine whether we end up

thinking your place of business is in a good neighborhood or whether you might be in a less desirable place of town.

THINK QUALITY, NOT VOLUME

Understanding this analogy, you begin to see that it isn't the number of neighbors you have, but the type of people you cultivate in your inner circle that makes the different. This can be confusing for new webmasters who think that they are given PageRank based on the number of links that come into their site. That's really not correct. They attain a higher ranking based on the quality of the people they associate with and the neighborhood they frequent. So, a site with fewer backlinks can still beat one with a larger number of backlinks – if those links are the right type of link.

In a way, this can make your job easier. You don't have to fret about whether you have fifty or five hundred links, as long as you are getting links that are raising your reputation by default. Eventually, those people tell their friends and your reputation begins to grow – and, in the right neighborhood!

WHAT ABOUT TRAFFIC?

You might be wondering how that affects your traffic. With less backlinks, you'd expect to get less traffic. Again, if you get listed higher in the SERPs then you will cultivate larger streams of traffic from there. And, if you are only being listed on link farms, odds are people are trying to get away from your pages, not trying to go deeper into your site. While search engines might be programmed algorithms, people are not. It only takes a few minutes for them to form their own idea of exactly what reputation your site has, especially if they get directed there from an obvious link farm.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

BACKLINKS AND SEARCH ENGINES

With all this talk about Google, you might think it's the only major search engine around. Actually, there are various search engines around, but Google with its Adwords campaign of advertising is the most influential one for advertisers. Many advertisers and website owners make significant income from Adwords. When such a company threatens to ban you, it isn't just about losing a few backlinks, it can also mean the loss of significant revenue from Adwords, which is a pay-per-click scheme.

There is a whole culture built around Google's search engine policies with some practices being labeled "black hat" for evil marketing practices that allow people to pay their way into a top search engine ranking and "white hat" practices that are deemed more natural estimates of a site's reputation. In the grand scheme of things, there are many gray areas, and "gray hat" practices that can be allowed even though they may be commercially motivated and that's hard for any search engine to spot.

However, Google does try to keep people from buying their way into top rankings as this would make their search engine ineffective and help them to lose market share. Then, someone else might be cleverer in delivering search engine pages that match a higher level of integrity in search matching that isn't influenced by commercial interests. That's why when Google decides to penalize people for tricks (whether black or white hat) that help them to place better in SERPs, there are many cries of dismay when the rules change. They mean serious business and won't be upset if you lose your livelihood in order for them to keep their business alive.

However, no matter what rules Google puts in place, Yahoo! and MSN are their own separate search engines. Their rules may be different. And, the myriad of other smaller search engines too may not be following the same standards that Google tries to enforce on the Internet. So, despite the fact that Google is a major player

right now, it doesn't mean they will forever dominate the Internet search engine business.

Try to follow Google's rules as best as you can without alienating potentially other profitable ways to do business on the web such as gray or white hat tricks of the trade. Google might penalize your for a paid backlink or review, while Yahoo! and MSN couldn't care less. They are just one player in a very large, and dynamic, environment that is constantly changing. Who knows if Google will be there tomorrow or not? Hopefully, your focus is on keeping yourself alive on the Internet and making sure your business is healthy while not tripping any live wires out there that other Internet entities rig for their benefit.

CHAPTER 3:
BUYING BACKLINKS CAN HELP
OR HURT

There is a great controversy over purchasing backlinks. Google, for one, really frowns on this practice because it makes their ranking system hard to administer fairly. Google did put the word out that they would be "punishing" people who have bought backlinks but the fact is it will be very difficult to tell in the long run which links are natural and which are sold.

There may be a few ways for them to tell based on the domain of the person backlinking to you, but then again, that's about the same as avoiding link farms. So, it doesn't exactly isolate the fact that one link is paid and another is natural. However, there is more and more controversy over this practice as Google tries to get a handle on improving their algorithm yet again.

Google, though, is not the only search engine and many people are not trying to optimize their site for search engines as much as make money from their sites. Yes, quality backlinks can translate into money, a higher PageRank, and more visitors but bought backlinks can also generate traffic. If your purpose is to bring traffic, many of the sites that fell in rank after Google shifted its algorithm didn't report a loss in traffic. So, it's debatable whether it really hurts you to buy links or not.

It also appears that buying links to be listed in directories does not seem to be weighted as poorly as buying links from major sites selling them. You do want to be listed in the major directories under your relevant category and that's something many search engine optimization companies will do for you, if you pay them. This also provides relevant backlinks to your site.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

PROS

- Numerous backlinks added quickly,
- Less time-consuming for webmaster,
- Can build PageRank very efficiently,
- Brings in traffic to your site.

CONS

- Can cause you to be banned and de-indexed by Google,
- Might dilute the quality of your neighborhood,
- Costs money,
- No guarantees you get the results you want.

Obviously, when you choose to go the link buying route, you will need to gauge the reputation of the company selling links. If they are someone that Google has blacklisted, it could mean that you also would be blacklisted if your links were found to originate from them.

CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE YOU BUY

It's really a personal decision whether you choose to buy links or not. Despite Google's obvious distaste for this practice, many webmasters do use paid links as part of their marketing strategy. However, there are some things to consider before you buy.

- **Timeframe**
  Usually, you can buy links based on the number of links and/or a timeframe. You may have to decide on being in a six-month program if your site is relatively new and has little exposure. Otherwise, you

probably won't see any lasting effect from a one-shot deal.

- **Budget**

  How much are the links and do you have the money to spend on them? Include the timeframe in your budget estimations.

- **Featured Areas**

  As mentioned earlier, you want to get a backlink in a very visible area of the page that is referring you. Putting it near the top, highlighting it in some way, or paying to be a featured link can do this.

- **Relevant Links**

  The content of your referrer should have some relevance to your own website. Don't buy links just to link farms because that's just going to get you penalized.

- **Neighborhood**

  Are you paying to get into a great neighborhood or a slum? The PageRank of your referrers will tell the story there.

- **Ratio of Natural to Paid Links**

  If you have only sponsored or bought links, it will quickly become apparent that you are paying for promotion. One way to keep this from being obvious is to have some percentage of your links as natural free links so the paid links get lost in the crowd.

- **Choosing Anchor Text**

  See if you have the option to customize the anchor text. This can greatly benefit the value of the backlink. Be sure to vary the anchor text but keep it closely matching the content of the page you want backlinks to.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

- **One-way**

  The links you buy should be one-way links to make them appear more natural and count more.

- **Edu sites**

  There is some indication that the credibility rating might have something to do with the extension, particularly .edu sites. If you can buy a backlink from an .edu site, it could increase your PageRank significantly.

BUYING LINKS DIRECTLY

The safest way to buy links discretely is one by one directly from webmasters or bloggers. These would be near impossible to trace for a search engine unless they were clearly labeled in a sponsors category. This is also the most time-intensive way to buy links and maybe the most expensive. However, it can be a very worthwhile endeavor as you have the most control of who is posting your link, what it says, and whether a search engine will be able to detect it as a paid link and ignore it.

If you do want to buy links directly, you will need to identify sites that are worth the effort of contacting individual webmasters or bloggers. These sites should have a high PR value and original content. They should not be too obvious about the paid links that are sponsoring them, as that might cause search engines to blacklist the entire blog. You should try not to be lumped in a grouping of links or a links page as this can affect your backlink credit and trigger the search engine to ignore your link. You should be able to ask for the anchor text that you want and the placement of your choice (within reasons).

Keep in mind that just because you are willing to buy a link directly from a blogger or website doesn't mean they have to sell it to you. Many bloggers follow some

ethical guidelines and might have trouble taking links from profitable sellers of payday loans or subprime lending, based on principle alone. Don't take offense if that reason comes up. This is part of doing business on the WWW, where the rules of business become more independently managed and at the discretion of the owner of the site. Instead, see if you can offer the webmaster or site owner some compromise that will help you get your link while keeping their principles intact.

CHAPTER 4:
FINDING FREE BACKLINKS

If you are relatively new to the Internet community, it may seem a daunting task to get free, natural, backlinks to your site. You may understand now how important natural backlinks are towards establishing a solid reputation with search engines, but you are caught in the dilemma of the first-time job seeker. You don't have the qualifications to attract someone who is interested in you, but the only way to gain those qualifications is to have the working reputation (backlinks) already in place. So, what do you do? If you were in a tight job market looking only for experienced people and you had no such qualifications, then you might consider getting your experience by volunteering or doing an internship. This is not much different than what you are going to have to do to start generating some viable backlinks that count towards your Internet resume. You will have to do a little upfront work and scout down the backlinks just like you were an eager job seeker with the quandary of having no experience in a job market where all the employers want higher qualifications.

AN EASY WAY TO SPOT A BACKLINK LEAD

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

As we mentioned earlier, there is a special attribute that can tell search engines to ignore a link. In fact, search engines and blog communities like WordPress are so afraid of backlink spamming that they automatically put the attribute of rel=nofollow in their templates. This keeps commentators from spamming for the sake of a backlink.

The problem with that approach is that it also keeps genuine people who are marketing their sites from commenting too. So, many community based forums find that the lesser of two evils for them is to switch the nofollow attribute back to a dofollow attribute. Then, they have someone clean up the spam. This allows those commentators with substantial entries that contribute to the community to have their backlink. They are generally called "dofollow" sites, in comparison to nofollow sites.

WHERE DO YOU GO?

Yet, knowing that some people are willing to give you a break in the backlink seeking market doesn't tell you where to go since they are unlikely to advertise this and thus attract spammers. Understanding this predicament, you will have to do some research on the types of websites that might give you some credit with a little work on your end. Luckily, you bought this eBook, and half that battle is done. You will have a leg up from other first-time backlink scouts because we will tell you where to look and how to present yourself to get a decent backlink in less time. Otherwise, you might have ended up getting the door slammed in your face or wasting valuable time.

In the same way that you would not go to an employer that is not hiring and spend inordinate amounts of time trying to get their attention, you will want to focus on websites that basically are ready to work with you. These are the ones that can offer you some backlinks for just a small amount of effort on your part. These are basically those that have established a dofollow capability back into their community forums and websites.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

If you were having to actually walk your way towards every referral and ask them if they were a dofollow site, it would take too long to get a list together. However, the power of the Internet is that it allows you to network your way into multiple referrals in a fraction of the time. Bulletin boards and forums are great ways to find information on websites that will give you credit for commenting or contributing to a community. They often post lists of sites and forums that are dofollow and can provide you with an instant marketing contact referral list.

DIGITALPOINT

This large webmaster forum is can be an excellent resource for dofollow list of sites. Keep in mind that the forum has grown tremendously and information changes very quickly on the Internet. As more people become aware of digital point, it can become diluted and start offering less quality information and more trade/sell/buy marketplace transactions.

However, registration is free and the entire site is set up to allow you to build a reputation through commenting in the forums. If you want to get a signature for backlink purposes, currently you need to have at least made 10 comments/posts to the forums and been a member for seven days. Other types of restrictions for buying and selling also are in place. The site does allow revenue sharing after you've established yourself as a contributing member with at least 50 posts to your credit. Digitalpoint is also a dofollow forum as well as posting information on other dofollow sites.

SearcH Engines, SCRIPTS, SOFTWARE, ETc.

Aside from logging into webmaster blogs and forums to locate dofollow lists, you can also find information on downloading free or paid scripts and software to create

your own dofollow lists. As search engines get more sophisticated and marketers become savvy about dofollow, you can expect that people with nofollow in their attribute might get less spam, but also less commenting and community contributions. It's definitely a double-edged sword for sites, but for you it's a no-brainer. Dofollow sites give you a backlink.

Here are some great places to locate information for free on dofollow sites:

- **CommentHunt.com**
  This is a search engine that locates high ranking blogs on specific topics that you are searching and that are dofollow sites.

- **CommentKahuna.com**
  Free software for registering to locate dofollow sites.

- **DofollowBlogs.com**
  A directory listing of sites, separated by relevant categories that are recognized as dofollow sites.

Why do some people give away this valuable software for free? Obviously, the answer is that it is not free; they get something from offering it for free: a backlink. Anyone that creates a valuable piece of software that becomes instantly popular has just hit the gold mine for backlinks. This is an area that webmasters consistently scout for resources and they are the most proficient networkers on the Internet. Thus, software to help others get backlinks is a popular way to actually obtain backlinks for you too.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

CHAPTER 5:

CREATE YOUR OWN SOFTWARE

Just the title of this chapter probably has you sweating profusely. How will you be able to do that when you are just starting out trying to figure out how to get a few backlinks to your site? Not to worry, you will be able to do this and much more once you understand that your role is marketing, not software development. You may need to know some basic ways to configure, how to mass distribute and offer a script or software program, but you don't have to know anything in-depth like a full-time programmer. Instead, shareware for creating special files called PAD files makes even the distribution of your coding easier. Then, you just have to know where to get freelance programmers who can quote you a price on the type of software or script you desire and then buy all the rights to that product or choose PLR (Private Label Rights) software. When all is said and done, distribution of any software should get you listed in multiple software directories that will offer an automatic backlink for listing your application.

Creating Your Own Software

Of course, if the thrill of learning a new technical skill excites you, there's no reason you can't do this on your own. The learning curve can be as steep or as shallow as you'd like it to be. Software development these days is getting easier with tools that make it much faster to come up to speed on developing new products. If you already have some experience in some programming language, it might easy enough for you to code your own from scratch. At the very least, locating tools that can make the job easy will be your number one priority when you code your own.

Here are some examples of types of applications that you can create with a little research:

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

- **Screensavers**

  There are easy tools to be able to make custom slideshow screensavers using your own photos or images. Even if you don't know anything about coding, you probably know how to take digital pictures and download them to your hard drive. There is free and for pay software that can help you create screensavers that appeal to your audience, even adding music or video shots to it too. ScreensaverFactory 4 is one that costs between $40 and $80.

- **Ebooks**

  Creating an informative eBook on a topic relevant to your site can get you multiple backlinks from other similar content sites. You can even submit the eBook to large online retailers of online books or directories of free articles and eBooks for more exposure.

- **Community Toolbars**

  If you have a site that appeals to community participation, you can use conduit.com to create a community toolbar. This can be advertised and used to build interest in your site.

- **Custom Feed Readers**

  Having an RSS Feed is important, and now you can create your own at CustomReader.com. You can use this application to help distribute feeds to all your subscribers automatically.

- **Templates**

  If you are at whiz at Wordpress templates or some other popular program, you can create and distribute templates for any number of popular software applications that exist on the market.

- **Music downloads**

  Have a way with the violin? Know someone who doesn't mind giving you rights

to their music? Music downloads can be very popular, especially in these days of Ipod mania.

- **Video downloads**
  Make a short, funny, video and use it for a viral marketing campaign. You never know what will become the next hit of YouTube and this can help you gain valuable exposure. Tutorials are also highly sought after in the video communities.

- **Graphics downloads**
  Whether you are a graphic artist that uses powerful software programs to create your art, or just someone with a digital camera that photographs their creations, you can still download them and distribute them on your website. Link in to popular portals for artists and you can indeed get great backlinking.

- **Scripts**
  Handy with a computer language? You can always upload scripts that enhance other products, instead of building a full application.

PLR VS. CUSTOM APPLICATIONS

If you are not interested in coding your own, it shouldn't stop you from having an application that you can use to generate backlinks. Of course, you never want to take someone else's creation and pass it off as your own. This will surely reap you bad karma, if not a lawsuit. In addition, the audience of webmasters who spend inordinate amounts of time creating their own applications frown heavily when any one of their fold is plagiarized. These are the people you are trying to impress and to get them to give you a backlink that increases your reputation. All webmasters are highly knowledgeable about how PageRank works, so you want to stay on their good side and follow the rules.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

Luckily, following the rules is still easy without having to be an egghead programmer. You can still get quality software applications that have been created in the past that are either custom designed for you or not copyrighted, but distributed freely on the public domain. To get a custom program, you will have to hire a freelance programmer to help create the application you want to distribute and purchase all the rights to the program. This can be an expensive proposition and there are additional issues with this like fixing bugs, updating for new software environments, and support to your end users. However, if you get some good contract programmers, there is no reason you can't get a quality product and hire people to help with updates and bug fixes as it becomes more popular.

Here are a few places where you can locate freelance programmers to help you with any creative ideas for software that you might want to get developed:

- **Elance.com**
  This is one of the largest freelance sites online. It hosts numerous freelance professionals from writers to coders. The largest category is "Web and Programming." You can post a job for free and view feedback on any bidders. Decide based on the budget but also the quality of the person bidding on your job.

- **Vworker.com**
  This site is specifically for software freelancers and buyers. Posting is also free here. Payment is put in escrow while the work is being completed. After you approve the work, the payment is released and you are allowed to rate the coder.

Another way to do this is to get PLR (Private Label Rights) software instead. This has the advantage of being much less expensive. Many online merchants will take public domain applications and let you buy them and modify them slightly. They are referred to as Private Label Rights because once customized, it is like putting your private label on a generic product. Then, it becomes yours to claim as your special

brand. However, that's not the same as having full rights to the product. You have to realize that anyone can buy a PLR software program and modify it and give it away or resell it. Some can even get it and copyright the modifications and sell it, but the original generic public domain software still is available for anyone else to buy or use.

So, it's not the same as buying custom software because you don't have the full rights to the original software. Instead, you must modify some part of the information in the application to be able to turn around and sell it under your private label. Then, you can claim this as your own once the modification has been completed. Thus, you should be aware that other people will also be using the same original PLR software to submit to software directories, making your entry stand out less.

It's really up to you how you decide to get software to distribute: creating your own, hiring freelancers, or using PLR. There are advantages and disadvantages to each method. The learning curve is steeper when you create your own. It can be time consuming. On the other hand, you can make it quite original and specific to your site's content.

When you hire freelancers, you are going the most expensive route. There are no guarantees that the software is tested fully and bugs always exist. You will need to plan for the eventuality of software upgrades or even customer support, should your software become an instant hit. PLR is the least time consuming option and doesn't cost much. Even though you will be modifying it slightly to allow you to slap on your private label, it may be lost in the many other similar products produced by people using PLR software. It all depends on how ingenious you are about modifying the software as to whether you can make it seem truly original.

PADDLE DOWNSTREAM TO DISTRIBUTE

Software may seem difficult to distribute because it has to work with specific environments. You can't just put up a video and assume that it works with any browser. There are so many different music formats available that work with a variety of different applications that the person downloading has to have the requirements necessary to run the software. If not, usually, what happens is they are frustrated downloading it, running it, or it experiences glitches that can infuriate the person using it. This can all be avoided by clearly indicating the basic requirements needed for your file to operate and any other instructions necessary to run your program.

If software never changed, this would be a fairly simple thing to do. However, software and applications development has one of the fastest growth cycles out there. No sooner is one application done than the entire environment for computers, hardware, and operating programs can change overnight. And, not everyone upgrades at the same time. This makes software applications have a much different type of distribution and implementation cycle than something like a paperback book that is usable no matter who reads it, when they read, or where they happen to be reading it.

In the software world, your computer environment (both hardware and software) and your own computer savvy can affect how well the application performs and how satisfied you are as a consumer of that software. In the end, you want powerful backlinks from people who are giving you a great reputation, not one that complains about the quality of your products, and by inference, your website.

Thus, it is to your benefit that you inform the people who visit your site about the basic requirements to run the application and subsequent changes in different versions of the same application. This you can do with something called a PAD (Portable Application Descriptions) file. The PAD file is an XML file that has been standardized by the shareware community to help describe any applications submitted for easy downloads.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

Now, instead of people contacting the author to send them the latest update of the description of the software and its requirements, an application programmer can simply create a PAD file and post it to their website. Most software directories are now requesting that programmers include a PAD file with their software submission too.

The software to create a PAD file is free. It is offered by the Association of Shareware Professionals and has standardized the submission of software applications in a way that has made it much easier for everyone. The software to create a PAD file is called PADGen 3 and is available here:
http://www.asp-shareware.org/pad/padgen.php/
The PAD file should be posted to your website and also within any zip files that are used to distribute your software.

Some additional notes on PAD files:

- **Fill in all fields**
  If a field is not filled in then people who get your file will see it as incomplete information. This can generate questions and keep them from using your software. To avoid this miscommunication, simply fill in on all the fields in the PAD generation software.

- **Verify the PAD file**
  Before distributing or posting the PAD file be sure to validate it. You can do this by using the following online PAD Validator tool located at http://www.avangate.com/pad-validator/.

- **Submit to software directories**
  Once you have created the software and verified the PAD file, it's time to submit to the software directories. You can do this one by one, but it is time consuming. There is freeware out there to submit your PAD files to multiple sites at one

time. PAD-Publisher is one such software. It is located here:

http://www.albartus.com/pad/.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

CHAPTER 6:
ARTICLE WRITING FOR
BACKLINKS

This is the most natural and most effective way to get backlinks to your site. Write a great article and people are bound to talk about it and link to it. So, in terms of search engine practices, you won't be penalized for getting a backlink to a great article. In addition, most people linking back to your articles tend to add their own descriptive anchor text to the page. This can help by increasing the variability of the anchor text associated with that article and web page. You can write articles and post them on your own site, but then you will have to figure out a way to publish them for maximum exposure. If you don't have the audience to attract a large following, you will have to find other areas that do have large audiences and try to post content there.

DUPLICATE CONTENT

Search engines are becoming very strict about duplicate content. The whole idea behind having a great site that ranks well is that your content is fresh and original. If you are duplicating content from either your own or someone else's website, Google will penalize your site for it. It will fall in Page Rank or it can be removed from the Google index, a practice called "sandboxing." If you land in Google's sandbox, you are pretty much an Internet non-person. No one will see your listing in the search engines and that's very bad news. It doesn't even matter if they search for you by exact domain name, if you are in the sandbox, you are not visible or very far down the list of SERPs.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

For this reason, it is not advisable to take content off your site and submit it to article directories as a free article. What will happen is that the original content on your site will get spammed all over the Internet and your PageRank will drop. If you are backlinking to your original content from comments in other areas, then this won't cause you to be copying your own work. Use new, fresh, content for free article submissions to article directories and don't duplicate it on your site. Let them worry about how often it is copied elsewhere because it is a free article.

FREE ARTICLES

The idea behind a free article is the same as a free software application. You are creating something of value to surfers of the web who will hopefully go back to your site from the backlink you put into the free article. If your article is really good, they may even backlink to it or to your site. You will be submitting to multiple article directories, and these can all have the same article. As long as that article is not on your website, you won't be penalized on your site for duplicate content.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. **Use text format**
   If you try to use Microsoft Word and then cut-and-paste into submission areas, you may find it adds extraneous characters. To resolve that problem, use a text editor when creating the article. Notepad works great.

2. **Keep it short**
   Most people on the Internet are swiftly browsing and longer articles will not keep their attention. Try to stay within 300 to 700 words in length.

3. **Follow the writer's guidelines**
   Make sure you understand the guidelines before submitting an article.

<div align="center">

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

</div>

4. **Stay on topic**

   If your site is about dating, then write dating articles. Don't write about food unless it has something to do with dating. This makes you the expert on your chosen topic and can help you cultivate traffic by directing them to your dating website.

5. **Use your resource box smartly**

   Don't just give your name and no further information. Instead, this is the area to sell your services, add your backlink, and entice the reader to your website. Within this area, you can promote something special on your site like more free writings or special offers.

6. **Use multiple backlinks**

   Some article directories will allow the resource box to have more than one link. You can put two or three there, but don't just include a listing of all your websites. It has to be relevant, not silly.

7. **Use anchor text**

   The resource box can vary at each article directory. So, here's your chance to mix and match the anchor text for the keywords you are trying to score in the search engines.

8. **Check spelling and grammar**

   You want your article to be professional and reflect a good command of the English language.

9. **Show, don't tell**

   This was a basic rule in English class and it still applies on the Internet. Any writing that engages the reader and makes them want more will help you get more backlinks.

10. **Make it easy on the eyes**

Unlike text in a paperback book, the Internet demands a more calculated use of white space, bolding, and other highlighting features. Try to make it easy to view the article on a computer monitor without squinting.

THINGS TO AvoID

1. **Spamming**

This means you don't want to send in an article with irrelevant content or one that just tries to promote your business alone. Article directories are not free advertising sites and spamming will get you banned.

2. **Foul language**

If you are trying to make a point, avoid the foul language. It may be expressive and capture attention, but it probably won't pass some filters either.

3. **Linking to your affiliates**

If you add hyperlinks in the body of the article, don't add your affiliate information there. These links are meant to point to relevant sites that contribute to the knowledge of the article, not to your pocketbook. It can also get you banned.

REDUCING THE WORKLOAD

While this is a very good strategy for getting backlinks, you are probably not too thrilled with the workload. Who has time to build a website, promote it, lay out and implement a marketing strategy, and write multiple articles? Not that many entrepreneurs will have that kind of time. So, it's important to locate resources to help you establish the backlinks that you need. This can take the form of hiring people on your team to help you build or re-write PLR articles or to help with article submission to different directories. Also, you might want to consider article

submission software to help automate the process and reduce your workload. We discuss all three options below.

CONTRACT OTHERS TO WRITE FOR YOU

Like software developers there are plenty of writing professionals who are willing to write custom articles for you. You can find some at **exquisitewriting.com, Elance.com, Guru.com** or at **RentAWriter.com**. **DigitalPoint.com** also offers forums for people looking to hire writers. **Craigslist.com** can give you access to local writers in your area, if that's important to you. You will have to buy the full rights in order to use them in the article directories.

In large bulk orders, you might be able to get away with $5-10 an article ranging within the 300 to 700 word range. While there are people willing to offer articles at very low prices, you may find that the quality isn't what you desire. It's important that you get ghost writers that will create unique, quality, articles as you will eventually be claiming them as your own. They will represent your personal and professional reputation on the Web.

For high quality ghost writers, you can expect to pay between $10 to $45 for articles ranging between 300 and 700 words, depending on the quantity you buy. The higher the volume you request, the more likely a ghost writer will cut you a deal. Repeat business is also a way to establish a sound relationship with writers who can offer better prices to you.

ARTICLE SUBMISSION

With so many different article directories out there, you will need to find directories that will post your article and give you a backlink that counts. Here is a good list to get you started:

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

- GoArticles - http://www.goarticles.com

- Ezine Articles.com - http://www.ezinearticles.com

- Article Beach – http://www.articlebeach.com

- Article-Buzz - http://www.article-buzz.com/

- Site Reference - http://www.site-reference.com/submit.php

- Web Pro News - http://www.webpronews.com/submit

- Article Warehouse - http://www.articlewarehouse.com/

- Article Dashboard - http://www.articledashboard.com

- Articles Base Directory - http://www.articlesbase.com

- SimplySearch4It - http://articles.simplysearch4it.com/articlesub.php

- Small Biz Articles - http://www.smallbizarticles.com/

- Just Articles - http://www.JustArticles.com/

- Article Snatch - http://www.articlesnatch.com

- SimplySearch4It - http://articles.simplysearch4it.com/articlesub.php

- I Need Content - http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/I_Need_Content/

- Free Articles for Reprinting - http://www.articles-hub.com

- Article Rich.com - http://www.articlerich.com

- Directory Gold Article Directory –
  http://articles.directorygold.com/signup.php

- Article Cafe - http://www.articlecafe.net

- Article Friendly - http://www.articlefriendly.com

- The Add Articles Directory - http://www.add-articles.com

- Submit Your New Article - http://www.submityournewarticle.com

- 1Article World - http://www.1articleworld.com

- Article Rich.com - http://www.articlerich.com

- Free Reprint Articles - http://groups.yahoo.com/group/free-reprint-articles/

- eArticlesOnline.com - http://www.earticlesonline.com

- ABC Article Directory - http://www.abcarticledirectory.com

You can do a search to locate more article directories to submit. There are literally hundreds out there.

Since there are so many and the guidelines may be different for each site, there are companies that specialize in helping you to get your articles ready for submission to multiple sites. They will not only help proofread your articles, but help to tweak your resource box for the type of anchor text you prefer that will give your

backlinks more weight. If you really don't want to spend too much time doing these, you can pay someone else to do it for you.

ARTICLE SUBMISSION SOFTWARE AND SERVICES

Software is helpful for the do-it-yourselfer that plans on doing multiple article marketing campaigns. It's definitely not cheap, but saves you time and keeps the entire process under your control. Here are two that people have found work well:

- **ArticleSubmitterPro.com**
  This software has the ability to store multiple logins for your article submission sites. So, if this has kept you off specific sites that publish free articles, buying the software can get you back on in little time. It formats your article to correspond to the submission guidelines for that site too. It will submit to over 1200 sites in one shot. Cost: $167.00. However, you can trade in the receipt from a different article submission package you bought and get a $70 discount.

- **ArticleAnnouncer.com**
  This has a lot of hype on the selling page, but a good reputation amongst article marketers. It shows you how to write great, in demand articles, and how to submit them with 21 step-by-step tutorials. It comes with scripts to automate the processes important in article submission. It does come with a 3-month guarantee. Cost: $379.00

If you just want to try this out and don't want the hassle of learning new software, then a monthly article marketing service might be right for you. Here are a couple that have a good reputation:

- **Submityourarticles.com**

  This claims to be the first Internet site to offer an article submission service. It is 100% automated on their side and relieves you have having to put too much effort into submitting your articles. The price can be steep, even on a monthly basis. The very basic allows you to submit 4 articles a month to directories for $37.00.

- **ArticleMarketer.com**

  This site offers unlimited submissions and also access to courses on article marketing. Cost: $39.95 per quarter or $159.80 per year.

A WORD ON PLAGIARISM

Article writing is a very profitable business and there are unscrupulous people in this business too. To protect yourself from buying plagiarized content and getting penalized by search engines for duplicate content (through no fault of your own), you will want to make sure that you do not buy plagiarized material.

In academic terms, plagiarism included the copying of another author's ideas, theories, or opinions without properly referencing the original source. Obviously, on the Internet (where article re-writing is rampant and marketing is the sole purpose), you can't define plagiarism in such strict terms if you are marketing just another acne medication. The ideas behind why your acne medication is better will probably resound in very familiar echoes across the web: it clears zits, it reduces scarring, and it works fast. So, plagiarism for marketing copy would not have the same standard as academic copy. However, we can say that you aren't supposed to grab someone else's great one-liner and make it your own either. And, this is one thing that can be easily identified by comparing two copies of an article on the Web. So, for search engine purposes, a plagiarized article will set off a search engine's algorithms when it has eight consecutive words in a row identical to another article elsewhere on the Web, under a different author's name. Realize too, that you can plagiarize yourself (in search engine terms) if you submit under different pseudonyms across the Web.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

There are services offered to help you detect plagiarism from any of the writers that you hire. Copyscape.com is the search engine that can help you review submitted articles for plagiarism before they are posted to your site. You will have to find an area that is not on the site you are marketing, but that is online to post the articles while you check them out for plagiarism. Then, submit the URL for that article into the Copyscape search engine to see if it finds duplicate content on the web. If you were sold original, one-of-a-kind, articles then they should not have any other copies on the Internet. The original service is free, but limited. You will need to sign up for the premium plan to get unlimited searches for $0.05 a search.

7

REVIEWS FOR BACKLINKS

Wouldn't it be great if you wrote such excellent copy on your site that everyone would knock on your door just to give you a review? Well, life doesn't happen that way, but you can rig the popularity contest a bit by paying other people to review your site. Granted, there are places that will review your site for free, like **BlogRaters.com**, but they decide whom they review and when.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

If your site isn't in their top 10 or 25 most popular categories to review, you probably won't be reviewed. It doesn't mean you shouldn't try to get your site reviewed in free sites, just don't expect them to bust down your door with free advertising. The advantage is that they don't cost you anything to try and get that one-way backlink, other than some sweat equity. So, we will discuss ways to get free reviews and also where to buy paid reviews for your site.

You can also have a site that reviews other sites, like BlogRaters.com. This strategy will get you backlinks, but they won't be one-way backlinks. The disadvantage is that most likely they will be reciprocal backlinks. You write a review and link to the site you are reviewing, and they link back to you if you gave them a favorable review. Other sites might link to you if they are consumer watchdogs and you hand out a bad review. Either way, the backlinks are somewhat reciprocal and won't count as much as if you paid someone to review you and gave them no backlink also. Yet, if your website can afford to do a niche this way, it can drive traffic to your site even if it doesn't have as much impact on your PageRank.

Don't forget that anything can be the source of a review. It doesn't have to be a witty article. The same places you submit your software offerings to will also review that software. Anything that you are selling, producing, or offering can be the source of a review. If you are the first on the Internet to sell some clever widget, you can get it reviewed on a top-rated site. For instance, download.com is a PR8 and is always looking for new things to review. So, don't think you are limited because you don't have anything to review. Even your website, as a whole, can be reviewed.

WHERE TO GET FREE REVIEWS

Social networking sites are some of the best places to get free reviews. People there are talking about other people all the time. Of course, they take a bit more legwork than other sites because you will need to participate in the community and establish a presence before you can ask other people for reviews. A different way

would be to have something to review, other then your great personality and back linked website.

Whether you are selling art, as in Deviantart.com, or just trying to get your site linked up on StumbleUpon.com and reviewed, it will create some nice backlinks back to your main site. You can even submit reviews to places that are constantly looking for reviews for new products – even if it's not one you are selling! If you are one of the first people to review a product, you will be at the top of the heap and that backlink will generate good traffic as well as help your PR. If you have a unique product you are trying to sell, g this product for a review? If it happens to fit in an envelope, think about mass mailing it to webmasters in your niche and requesting a review of your product. Even better, offer the product up for sale on places that allow you to link back to your site, like Craigslist.com.

There are sites that review websites as part of their sole purpose in life. You can submit your website to be reviewed and get a valuable backlink. The only problem here is that you are not guaranteeing a positive review. If they think your layout sucks, they'll probably say so. So, you might get a one-way backlink, but it might not be favorable. That's the risk you take in submitting to the website domain review sites.

Blogs are also a great source of free reviews, but you will most likely have to exchange with the blogger for a review of their own too. There are several ways to do this and you will have to give tit for tat with most bloggers. So, you will probably have to establish your own blog under your domain in order to take advantage of the social networking within blog communities. However, a blog is an excellent way to generate free backlinks.

Here are some ways to generate free reviews and backlinks from the blogging community:

- **Exchange reviews with single bloggers**

  Many bloggers are willing to exchange reviews on each other's site to help establish more backlinks. This isn't necessarily the best way to get a free backlink, as it is reciprocal. However, it plugs you into the blogging community fairly quickly.

- **Sign up for a review exchange for multiple bloggers Reveiwback.com**
  is one such site that gives you the ability to contact multiple bloggers and exchange reviews without having to scout all over the Internet.

- **Have a review contest**

  Bloggers will often sponsor a contest offering some incentive to post a quality review of their site. This way, they do get many reviews, but not all of them are paid. Only the one that wins is paid, and the rest are free.

- **Host a blog carnival**

  Generally, you can host a carnival on any topic and invite noted bloggers to contribute to the carnival in exchange for links. They link to your site when they post their submission and you link back to them to show who submitted.

- **Link bait a blog post**

  This is a strategy where you find some blog with a high PR and then post a review of some post they did either attacking, being contrary, or bringing some humorous angle to the post. Then, go back to the original blog posting and comment on why you have an opposing view or what you think is funny about the blogger's post. Either way, you are likely to get some quick attention this way. This strategy can backfire if you come off as a frequent troll instead of someone with an opposing view.

- **Look for trophies**

  Do you think your blog could win awards? Maybe you should submit it to

award sites and see if you can collect a few backlinks while you're at it. This strategy can even work with websites too, not just blogs.

WHERE TO GET PAID REVIEWS

If you want a little more control over the process of getting reviews and the cash in hand, it can do your website a lot of good to pay for reviews. There are significant advantages to paying for reviews by controlling what it is that people on the Internet are saying about you. Exactly how much control you have depends on whether you hire the review yourself or whether you go through a third-party that links you with people who will review sites for pay.

In the second instance, you may not get a favorable review. This is because third parties that hire bloggers, like **ReviewMe.com**, do not guarantee a positive review and bloggers deem themselves independent contractors. They feel they are being paid to review a site (not to offer positive feedback), and this group is particularly sensitive to rigging the Internet to favor people with money. So, that is a question of "buyer beware" and you should check the postings that you paid for reviews to see if they are worth the money you spent.

If you want to be sure what level of control you have on the review, be sure to read the terms of the agreement thoroughly before signing up for a third party networker package of paid reviews. **ReviewMe.com** does offer a separate package where you can sign up an "advertorial" which is a review that is sponsored to be positive with a message that you control. It costs more to do this, however, but might be worth the extra cost.

Another excellent place to post job bids for reviews is called **PayPerPost.com**. They offer the ability to post jobs that are either buzz, review, or opinions. Buzz would be used for a new product or feature that you want to stir up some interest for on the Web. Review is for a honest review of an offering on your site. The

difference is that advertisers can ban or bench bloggers that they find are not meeting the standards they need from the advertising dollars they paid. These bloggers will not be allowed to take a job opportunity that you post. When banning, they will never be allowed to take your job bids and benching just puts them on the sidelines for a while. If an advertiser likes a blogger but finds they need a wider audience, they might bench them instead of banning them. This will make them inactive to bid on that advertiser's jobs for a period of time.

SponsoredReviews.com will allow you to hire reviewers for your copy. The difference here is that they offer the advertiser to search for bloggers that meet their criteria and/or just post the job and let them find the advertiser. You won't have the level of control on reviews here as you might with ReviewMe's advertorials, but if you have a good product/service it really doesn't matter.

WHAT REVIEWS COST

Reviews are expensive to buy, in comparison to other ways to get backlinks. A single review can cost up to $100. If you try to obtain independent bloggers to review your products, you will probably be paying top dollar. The network of bloggers that other third party companies use will rely on the PageRank rating and other publicity factors to choose their bloggers. They might be able to get you a better deal, but it will still be costly in comparison to other ways to generate backlinks. Generally, the more control you want over the message, the more you will end up paying for the review. Some third party companies, like SponsoredReviews.com, take a percentage of the total price of the review off the top and that's how they get their cut.

If you decide to go the paid review route, just be aware that this is a highly controversial area for everyone involved: advertisers, publishers, and search engine designers. What works one day may get you penalized the next day. Of course, if you are managing your backlinks and PageRank actively that's just par for the course. There is no area of the Internet that is stagnant from one minute to the

next. The key is to constantly monitor your marketing strategy and adapt to the changing environment to best optimize your chances at making money down the road.

CHAPTER 8:

AFFILIATE BACKLINKS

What could be better than selling something for cash and also getting a backlink from it? Make a little moolah now and a little moolah later too. This is something you can do with your own affiliate marketing program. Mimic the big players like Amazon.com by creating your own affiliate program and having people backlink to your site for a commission. Setting up the program may cost you some time and money, but once it is in place you don't have to pay unless you make a sale. If you don't make a sale, the backlink is essentially free (not counting startup costs).

Sold on the idea, yet? Well, there is quite a bit to an affiliate program. You have to have a product or service that you can sell and then you have to have the capability to collect payment and track affiliates who are selling your products on other websites. If you thought developing a backlink marketing strategy was time-consuming, an affiliate program needs to be micromanaged to produce not only income, but to reward your high-performing affiliates. Getting backlinks is just the side benefit that comes from your marketing activity. After all, if you don't have an affiliate program that attracts affiliates, then you have no sales and no backlinks either.

The best way to get quality backlinks using an affiliate program is to offer something of quality on your site and to help your affiliates make money, thus keeping them happy. To do that concentrate you will concentrate on the affiliate program and not the associated backlinks. There are still some technical issues you will need to ascertain work in your favor with backlinks coming from your affiliate program, but a long-lasting program focuses on sales first (for you and your affiliates) and backlinks second.

WHAT SHOULD YOU SELL?

Just about anything can be sold on the Internet. There are laws that prohibit the sales of some items like alcohol, drugs, and other regulated industries. You will want to make sure that what you are selling is legal and that it can be sold on the Internet.

You also want to keep away from items that just don't sell well on cyberspace. Large items that take a lot of money to ship may eat into your profits when shipping costs increase. Or they may simply be unwieldy or too fragile to send via snail mail. Other items that consumers like to touch and feel before they buy might also not make good candidates for an affiliate program.

PHYSICAL ITEMS

If you decide to sell something that needs to be shipped out in physical form, you will have to start an inventory management system to track your products and deliver them on time. You may have to deal with irate customers who might end up with defective products or that receive products that get damaged along the way. You will also need to determine when an order comes in and how to process it so it gets delivered on time, regardless of whether there are problems with weather, the postal service, or your inventory.

If you don't have experience ever managing an inventory of products and shipping things via the postal service, it will be a steep learning curve. You will have to learn how to properly package your item. You will have to figure out where to buy packaging and include that in the cost of your item. You have to figure out how to get the best rates for mailing and include those in your quotes for shipping.

Changes in the cost of your products, packaging, and shipping can make you less competitive in the market and eat into your sales. In addition, you will also have to

take into account the labor involved in processing orders for physical items that have to be shipped via the postal service. By the time, you are done, you may have less time to really do much Web marketing with those backlinks you generated or you will have to hire someone to take control of that area of your business. The focus will be on your product, and not generating money through other less intensive Internet advertising strategies.

DIGITAL MEDIA

Fortunately, you are trying to sell items in an affiliate program that is on the Internet. That means you can also pick something that you can deliver over the Internet and skip shipping costs all together (like digital media). This is the ideal way to do business on the Internet, if your affiliate program is being put forward as a way to harvest backlinks. You don't want to spend too much time becoming a retailer of products as much as finding ways to make money online without having to ship things to Timbucktoo.

Examples of products and services that can be done over long distances or in cyberspace are: eBooks, ghost written articles, freelance graphics design, courses, fortune telling, consulting services, coaching, business reports, music clips, art clips, online seminars and workshops, useful computer scripts, applications, software, advertising, hosting services, and much more! As long as you can provide a product or service in virtual cyberspace that doesn't involve you in extra inventory delivery headaches, you've got it made.

HOW TO ESTABLISH AN AFFILIATE PROGRAM

There are three different ways you can establish an affiliate program. One, you can go to an affiliate network and hire someone who manages programs and who will sign you up as an advertiser. Secondly, you can find some an Application Service Providers (ASPs) who will set up an affiliate program on their servers and change

you to host the system. Finally, you can create your own affiliate networking program by using software that plugs into your own existing website and manage the entire thing yourself. We will go over each option below.

AFFILIATE NETWORKS

These offer the least amount of control, but the quickest way to link up to people willing to try your affiliate program to make money. It does cost you money to sign up and also on a rotating basis to keep the program alive. You do not get to work with your affiliates directly. So, in essence you are locked into a particular network, you pay a lot of money upfront and then you have to keep paying to keep the programs going. If you are doing this for the long run, this is the most expensive method and you are tied into the program if you want to keep particular affiliates. If you decide to try a different affiliate network, you have to start over from square one in attracting new affiliates. They do not transfer over to a different network.

Another thing to consider for affiliate networks is that they might not end up giving you backlink credit. Places like Commission Junction, **cj.com**, have excellent affiliate programs, but some people say they have trouble getting backlink credit from the affiliate links. This is due to the way the servers track the links and in some cases, they aren't set up to offer backlinks. However, if an affiliate really likes your products, they might do a review and then you get a backlink that way. Other network affiliates, like **LinkConnector.com**, is said to have programming to allow the backlink to give affiliate PR credit. If, however, any major search engine begins to penalize advertising companies for allowing this practice, you can be sure the affiliate networks will drop this feature rather than lose their affiliate referral programs. They are more interested in the programs than backlinks.

APPLICATION SERVICE PROVIDERS

Here, the hosting company of the affiliate program is only providing the hosting and the application hosted. They do not provide the network and it is up to you to sign up your affiliates. The costs are much less than affiliate networks, but there is no instant affiliate waiting to sign up either. If you already have a wide audience and have marketed backlinks in other forums, you can use this as a new promotional feature for your website. As long as your products are sound and you are intent on providing value to your affiliates who want to make money, the easier time you will have signing people up.

The beauty here is that you get to keep any affiliate you sign up if you decide to change platforms later to another service provider or a software program. You signed them up, so they are your affiliate. That's much better than relying on a network where the rights to the affiliates that sign up to your program are owned by the portal. This can also help you to determine if the backlinks produced by the program are going in areas that produce a rise in PageRank from valuable sponsors or not. Since you will be the person approving the affiliate, you know whether you are attracting quality retailers or not. And, you do not have to approve all affiliates who apply, but that's a personal choice.

AFFILIATE SOFTWARE

There is a variety of software out there to help you create your own affiliate program hosted on your domain. If you don't know how to set one up, you will probably need to hire a programmer at the previously listed freelance sites. There are a number of complications with software that require an expert to sort through. Just because software comes in a box, doesn't mean you can easily update a Web server with it. You will want to get someone who understands what platform your web server host is on, what rights you have to modify directories and pages, and how to successfully install a software product for the Web.

Despite this, software can be relatively inexpensive to purchase. There are many freelancers willing to install the products for a reasonable cost too. Once you buy a software package you can use it on as many sites you like without additional costs (unless there are licensing restrictions), unlike the other two options. You will have both the affiliate program and your website hosted on the same domain name, safeguarding against multiple hosting problems from two different servers. You have total control of the software package and you can have it customized to fit your needs exactly. The only thing that really stands in your way of doing this option is being able to implement the program on your server in a secure fashion. This does require some expertise.

There is one additional warning you should take with you when you make your decision to buy software: understand the level and quality of support offered on the package. If a software creator won't support the product, the first time an affiliate discovers a glitch, you are on your own. This can produce more ill will than good will amongst people whom you are depending on to provide valuable backlinks. So, check to see how well a product is supported before you buy it.

Two examples of software that allows you to get backlink PR passed back to your own pages are: **Ultralinks and MyAP**.

Ultralinks is created by Fusion Quest. It is available here: http://www.ultra-affiliate-software.com/?fusion . MyAP is created by Kowbunga and can be located here: http://www.myaffiliateprogram.com/. MyAP also gives you the ability to tie into Kowbunga's affiliate network while hosting the affiliate program on your own website. They do this as a value-added service with no extra charge. The thing to look for is the ability to direct link from your affiliate back to your site. If they go through a third party server, you most likely won't get the backlink credit. If you're not sure, you should have someone knowledgeable check your affiliate links to see if they are actually helping your PR or not.

CHAPTER 9:
WHY YOU NEED .EDU & .GOV

Remember at the beginning of this eBook we told you that some backlinks from pages with higher PageRank were worth more than many backlinks from those with a zero PR? If you understand that, then it will probably come as no surprise to you that getting just a few backlinks on .edu or .gov sites can also boost your PR considerably more than other sites. Here we will go into depth on how to obtain backlinks on .edu sites. You can use some of the same information to scout out information on .gov sites as well.

So, why are these links so valuable? The reasoning is that a .edu extension, by nature, implies an educational institution. What education institution is going to link to sources that aren't credible? The same is true for .gov sites, which are typically governmental institutions. It would only cause them to ruin their own reputation to link to frivolous sites. For .edu, if too many poorly researched sites turned up this in turn would keep students from applying to their programs. Google, in particular, heavily weights backlinks from educational institutions and governmental institutions and trusts them significantly more than other WWW extensions.

HOW TO ADD BACKLINKS TO .EDU

There are a couple of different ways you can get links on a .edu site. You can be a student at an educational institution that posts student papers online. This is a good way to get a backlink back to you, if the webmasters allow it. It makes you look very credible and gives you the blessing of your alma mater.

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

A different way to get backlinks to .edu sites is to look for students, professors, or anyone that keeps a blog on an .edu university or college site and see if you can comment on it. You will have to locate these sites and then see if you have anything relevant to say. Never post spam or extraneous information these sites or you could get banned from them. At the very least, your comments will be deleted and all your hard work will be for naught. So, respect the sites as valuable partners in your bid to build PageRank by contributing something back when you post.

Finally, there are a variety of places on a .edu site that are set up to take job postings for the local community or offer services to students and faculty. If you can get in on some of these pages, they can also offer a link to an .edu page.

HANG OUT WITH THE FRESHMEN & Graduates

Well, it could be any grade level really, but you want to hang out with students, whether you are one too or not. Many universities and colleges offer their students an area under their .edu domain to post student pages. If the student is in engineering, computer science, or some other technical or graphic design field, the odds increase that they have a student page. Many of these student pages also include contact information for the student.

The next step is to offer some type of information, product, or service that students would be interested in knowing about. Post that on your website. Then, simply get a list of email links and offer to send the information for free in exchange for a link on their student page with some copy of your choice. Most students are not earning much income and will like the idea of getting what they perceive to be a free deal. Of course, you should get some good juice from the link to make it worth your while. Check out the PR of the .edu links before you engage in this type of mass backlink campaign. Once the student leaves the university, the pages are often archived or deleted. Some student pages are only access through security and

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

those are useless for backlinks. Look for some with student pages that are visible to all and that have a good PageRank.

Don't forget to add your own student page up, if you have a university account or an alma mater with an alumni area. This is available to you when you enrolled and sometimes after you leave too. Many universities and college want to hear back from their alumni. While they may not have student pages for everyone, they will be glad to include you in an alumni directory.

Don't just leave it at a single link. Network with the students who are still in school and also have them link back to you and you to their sites. This way, you all get a little extra boost from the .edu love juice. And, since you certainly paid enough to be enrolled, it's nice the school can actually give something back besides just a little piece of paper (diploma).

Join the alumni organizations and keep your information updated. When you publish a book or have some business success, don't forget to advertise it with a link to a press release on your site. This is another great way to get a backlink from a recognized .edu site and patronize your alma mater too.

ACADEMIC BLOGS

Another great source of backlinks at .edu sites is open blogs. Professors, speakers, and even some students, are engaged in blogging in the academic world. You can get a link back by either writing a guest post (if you happen to also run in academic circles and have something to say) or you can follow the easier route of just commenting on the blog with a backlink added.

However, if you've ever tried to find a particular page on a .edu site, you will quickly realize how much time that can take. Universities and colleges host huge sites and finding the one page that happens to be an academic blog that also allows you to post a comment would be very tedious (if you had to do it manually).

Fortunately, you can use the power of Google to quickly locate open academic blogs that are in your area of interest and that allow you to post comments, without needing to log in.

To locate all the blogs on the Internet which are located on .edu sites, you want to type into the Google search engine the following syntax:

Site:.edu inurl:blog

This will bring up a listing of blogs on the Web that are under .edu domains. You can do the same for .gov sites by replacing the .edu with .gov in the search terms. You will probably start to notice that many blogs don't allow you to comment. To find the one's that do let you comment and avoid those that are closed, you can refine the search term further by typing in the following:
Site:.edu inurl:blog "post a comment" –"comments closed"

This will narrow the list down significantly. As you are searching, if you see any items you want to exclude from your list, all you have to do is put a minus sign (dash) next the phrase in quotations to exclude it. So, if you wanted to exclude sites that ask you to log in, you can add a –"you must be logged in" or some other phrase that similarly represents a blog with security.

Anything that does not have a minus sign (dash) next to it is included in the search terms. So, if you want to find only blogs that deal with pets, then you might try the words: dog, veterinary, or animals. Don't forget that if you have two or more words together that you are searching you need to add them in quotes.

After putting this final customized phrase into the Google search engine, it will come up with the relevant blogs and you can start adding comments with a backlink. Remember to avoid duplicate content and to change your anchor text to vary it. You can write one generic post comment and cut and paste that, simply modifying it somewhat once you have a new blog comment added. This way you

can get multiple blog comments done fairly quickly. Once you have a reputable list of good PR ranking blogs to post in, you can keep doing it to get more and more links under different blog entries.

OTHER AREAS UNDER A .EDU DOMAIN

Don't think that you are limited to only putting up blog postings or signing up for as a student to get access to student pages. There are many different areas under a .edu domain where you can find a sneaky way to add your backlink. Just be sure not to abuse these areas or you will quickly be targeted by the webmasters as a troll and be banned.

Other areas that you might find are open and available for posting under a .edu domain are:

- **Employment**
  While these aren't permanent links, they can get you good placement in the SERPs. If you want to hire a student to do something and the university has an open job board, this is an excellent place to list your offering and put in a backlink to your website.

- **Discount programs**
  Are you offering a product or service that you can give discounted to the school's student body? They will often give business people a link back to the website if they offer a discount for students on goods and services. You might even try giving them an affiliate link that is direct to help provide the school with money off your offerings while giving the student's a discount.

- **Student announcements**
  Are some of the people who do work on your site also university students? Maybe you want to feature the good work that they do and how valuable an

employee they are and notify the school so they can also show off their top students.

- **Interview academics**
  If someone in the university fits in your niche of services, by promoting them you might get a backlink back from their .edu pages.

- **Profile the school**
  Is there something in particular about the school that you find noteworthy and relevant to your website niche? If so, you might want to profile them and send a copy to the school's publicity director.

- **Open forums**
  Besides student pages, the university might host open community forums. You can find these by searching for the following search phrase: site:edu inurl:forums. You can also add a word or words at the end to narrow the search to a specific topic of interest.

- **Attend university conferences**
  Sometimes the listing of attendees at important conferences are published on the web, especially if you are a guest speaker or involved in it in some way.

DESPERATE FOR A .EDU DOMAIN BACKLINK?

You can always set up a .edu domain of your own and try to market into a viable online school. This is not as easy as it sounds and takes a lot of effort. The backlinks are only good if the PageRank is good, so a newly started site starts off with zero PageRank and zero credibility. However, if you are the type of person with multiple contacts and people who are dying to start some form of online venture, an educational institute can be something to think about. Whoever comes on board,

Compliments : The Internet Intern
Help Without The Hype

especially if they are already located in academia, will look to you – especially if you let them do workshops and courses at your school.