

# You are Being Lied To About Reciprocal Links!

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Exchanging links has been an important part of generating traffic since the concept of Internet marketing was first established, but at least 90% of people looking to trade links don't understand the real benefits and, therefore, fail to make the most of them.

The vast majority of web site owners think that exchanging links is only helpful because it can boost their rankings in search engines such as Google.com. They are however, useful for this purpose since the number of links back to a site is figured into ranking calculations. But according to WebSideStory's StatMarket Web site optimization service, search engines account for only little more than 13% of an average web site's traffic.

The most important benefit of a link exchange is the traffic resulting directly from these links. That same StatMarket research found that 21% of site visitors get there via links which means the links themselves are more useful than the search engine listings!

Search engines are highly unpredictable. They keep changing their algorithms every now and then. Your site is on the top 10 results today but it may not be so tomorrow.

I don't say you should neglect search engines. However, your main concern should be getting traffic from direct links. Search engine ranking should be your secondary concern.

Furthermore, your links page can serve as an excellent resource for your visitors. As any Internet marketer will tell you, it's the content that makes a successful site. When you provide useful links for your visitors, your site becomes more credible, more helpful, more likely to be bookmarked for future visits. All of which adds up to a steady stream of traffic.

So how do you identify sites that can send you more of direct traffic? Here are some pointers to consider while exchanging links:

- 1) Look out for sites that have good content.

Content is the #1 reason people go online. If a site has good content, more number of repeat visitors it'll have.

2) Look out for sites that display a prominent link to their links page on their home page as well as on the rest of the pages.

When I say prominent, I don't mean a link with h1 font size! What I mean is that the link should not be less prominent than the rest of links on the site.

Many web masters, particularly those who want links to help only their search engine ranking, will hide their links page or place it only on their home page, some where at the bottom with a -1 font size. The most common reason for doing this is a fear of losing visitors, but that fear is absolutely unfounded when you really understand how the Internet works.

Say your web site has a 1% conversion ratio. That means for every 100 visitors that visit your site, you make one sale. Now what about the rest 99. They are looking for something else, isn't it? So what do they do? They have 3 options:

a) Go back to the previous site.

b) Visit your links page (if you have one), hoping that they would find the information on sites listed there.

c) End their browsing session.

So which do you think is the best option? I would definitely want my visitors to go to my links page and visit my link partners rather than go back. Because I know that my link partners would send some visitors in the same way to my site.

Now this exchange would only happen if we had a prominent link to our links page on all the pages of our site, should our visitors decide to leave us any time.

-----Side Bar-----

There are some sites that have their links page designed for link partners rather than for their visitors!

They'll use the following texts to link to their links page: "Let's Trade Links", "Trade Links" and so on... Such sites are more interested in finding link partners than providing information to their visitors. The end result is link partners visiting each other's site.

-----Side Bar-----

3) Look out for sites that have tightly themed and categorized links page.

Sites that trade links solely for search engine rankings have links to sites on almost all the subjects on their links page. Typically ranging to hundreds of them on a single page. These pages are never going to be visited by those looking for additional information.

Whereas sites that have their links categorized are more user friendly and are more likely to attract visitors.

Conclusion

There is no point in looking for quality sites when YOUR links page is designed without keeping the interests of your visitors in mind. Only when we start thinking of our links page as a service to our visitors rather than a tool for higher search engine ranking, we'll be able to make the most from reciprocal links.

## About The Author

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