

# SEO has moved on. It's time to rethink link-building.

Content is still definitely king – but in a very different way.

**SEO is heading in a new direction.** Many of the methods that worked three years ago, that probably still form a part of many a company's strategy, haven't only stopped working - they're now actively **damaging that site's SEO**.

Read on for our insight into the latest developments, and advice on how you can adapt your online strategy to avoid penalisation, and perhaps even benefit from the oversight of your competitors, many of whom won't be as well-prepared or informed as you will after reading the next few pages.

Don't lose your way - let us show you how to put your website in the fast lane.

## Where we are now

Google's head of Webspam, Matt Cutts, announced the next phase of the search engine's plans to crack down on manipulative, artificial optimisation tactics in mid-January.

This latest update to the ever complex Google algorithm targets established link-building methods by negating the value of off-site links generated through the publication of self-promotional press releases, intensive guest posting, and attaching links to anchor text in a false way.

Google's capacity to both identify and devalue the benefits of links which provide no value to real web users has increased myriad-fold in the last 12 months. It is well-recognised that specific Google algorithm updates, especially Penguin, delivered damaging hits to a number of sites as a result of links whose value was either seriously diminished or entirely nullified.

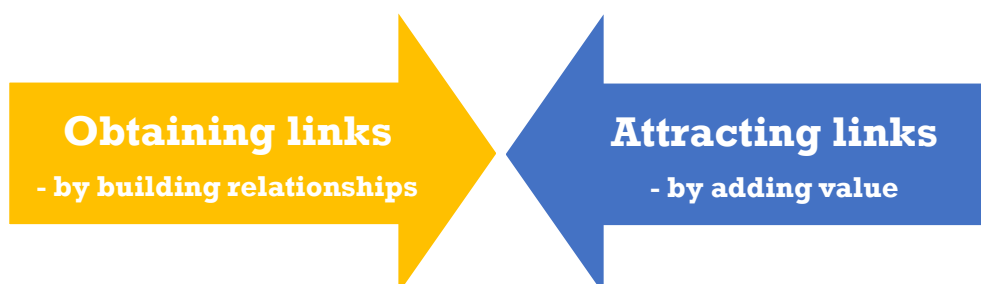
There are two key details that have transformed the online search landscape:

- **Low-quality links are found faster and devalued more**
- **Social Signals are increasingly used to value content**

The important thing to understand here is that the process of identifying and deadening these links is ongoing. Google's utopian web world would have the most valuable links in terms of SEO be the ones that mean most in the real world – i.e. references from reputable sources, be they formal websites or community influencers in their industry.

Staying ahead of the competition means keeping an eye on the horizon to see what's coming. Google and the other search engines are stepping up their efforts to deliver the most relevant results, combatting old, manipulative tactics while enhancing end-user experience. This means a new attitude to search optimisation, which prioritises user engagement and quality over quantity.

**We like to think of it as *link-earning***



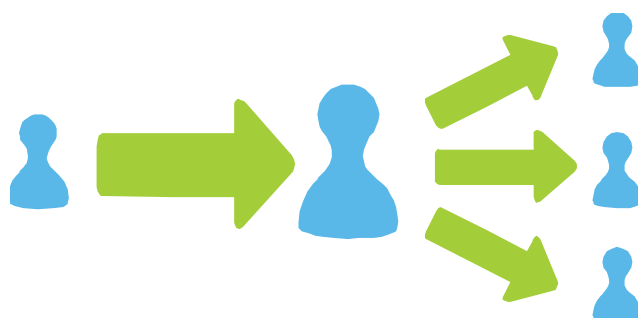
## Press Releases

Press releases were for some time a part of the bread and butter of link-building activity – but this crackdown should come as no surprise to those who keep track of search industry developments and Google updates in particular. Self-promotional articles have long been overused as a link-building method, and although press releases still hold value in the traditional sense, they shouldn't be used to try to improve your rankings, because Google sees this as deceptive.

Don't stop writing them altogether, but bear these guidelines in mind:

- ≡ Ensure that any links from press releases you do have published are *nofollow*.
- ≡ Work hard to ensure that your stories are newsworthy, fresh, and relevant
- ≡ Use sparingly – issuing weekly press releases will dilute the impact of any real news you have to share.

Tell a captivating story, and it will be more likely to spread in a completely natural and social way that both your audience and search engines will love. How 2014 of you.



## Guest Authoring

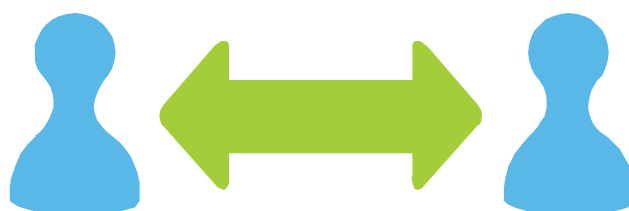
For the last few years, guest posting on other sites was a good way to gain inbound links to your website and wider coverage for your message. However, publication of a guest post or article is no guarantee that it is content people actually want to read – only the audience behaviour can tell us that. Google's penalisation of this tactic is all part of its objective to deliver the most relevant pages in its search results.

**If you're using guest blogging as a way to gain links in 2014, you should probably stop.** Matt Cutts, Head of Google Webspam

Don't throw this out entirely as a tactic, however – instead focus on building genuine mutually beneficial relationships with people and organisation who:

- ≡ Are active online
- ≡ Have influence over your target audience
- ≡ Have authority

You probably already have relationships like this, but you simply aren't making full use of them. Share the high quality, engaging content your influential contacts produce and they will be inclined to reciprocate. Many publications have a featured expert or Q&A, and these are still valuable. Just don't obsess over the "link".

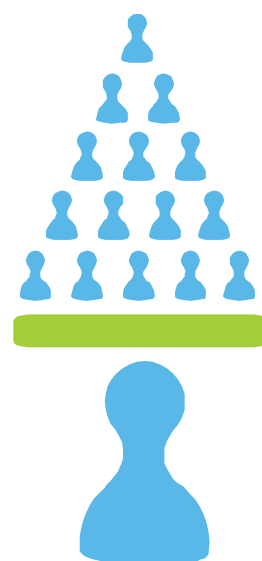


## Own Your Content

SEO is now taking a more direct route. The rise of interconnected devices, the prominence of social media, and advances in technology all mean one crucial thing: your cross-channel efforts are more important than ever. It's time to start being transparent about the source of every piece of content you create. That means no half-hearted guest blogging: unless you have something truly interesting to say and you'd be happy to attach your brand to it, *leave it to the experts. Alternatively, become one.*

Build trust in your brand and reputation by signalling to search engines and your target audience that you are open and confident in standing behind your writing.

- ≡ Use the rel="author" tag in blog posts and news articles
- ≡ Create a short bio to use in the byline of articles you publish
- ≡ Link to your Google+ page from your author page on a site, using the rel="me" tag
- ≡ Link to other Social Media profiles such as LinkedIn and Twitter from your bio



This is also part of creating truly authentic content – being yourself, and writing about the subjects you have expertise in carries much more value than writing ill-informed posts about something you think everyone wants to know.

Finding that niche will mean that your content answers the questions people are already looking online for answers to, and that haven't already been covered ad infinitum by every wannabe guru out there.

*Be original. Be authentic. Be connected.*

There's no room for pseudonyms in this town. If you're not willing to put your name to the content you're creating, ask yourself why.

## Anchor Text

We've got into the habit of freely adding links to keywords within text, and of shoehorning these links in where it wasn't always appropriate. To avoid getting your wrist slapped, only add links where they are truly relevant, and where you would expect them as a reader. Aim to add value, and you won't go far wrong.

As well as avoiding over-optimisation penalties, one growing ranking factor is *co-citation* – the words that your brand name is mentioned close to. With this in mind, you can be more user experience-focused in your link placement.

Take a keyword like *cheap shoes online*. This isn't a natural phrase: people search with unusual language, which can be difficult to insert into your copy in a natural way.

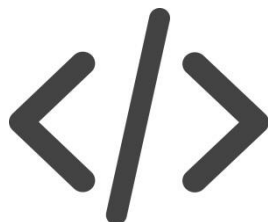
Avoid:

Buy [cheap shoes online](#) today!

Instead, use:

[Amazing Shoe Store](#)<sup>™</sup> sells affordable shoes online.

- ≡ Too many keyword-rich links can damage a website. It's somewhat important that any links you do build are close to relevant terms, but the relevance of the page is just as prominent a factor. Don't overthink your keywords.



Here are our top tips on how to find your way through the new SEO landscape:



**Build lasting relationships** with great people in your industry, and find out how you can work together so that you all benefit.



**Develop innovative and eye-catching shareable content**, and distribute it through expertly managed channels – social, email marketing and blogger outreach.



Write in a natural way – by all means use your target keywords as a starting point and guide the focus of your content, but then ignore them and **write like a human for humans**.



**Participate actively** in your industry's community on social media, in discussion areas and with helpful, thought-leading articles.

# We can help.

If recent developments have left your strategy at a bit of a dead end, we can set you on the right road.

## SEO & Related Services

### Keyword Research

Keywords are the start of an online marketing strategy. They inform both organic and paid search tactics and give you valuable insight into your target audience's priorities. Our range of keyword research packages is available in all our serviced languages and uses in-country search knowledge to draw conclusions about next steps.

### Landing Page Optimisation

We work closely with native, experienced linguists to develop the on-page optimisation of key landing pages on your site. We integrate your target keywords in natural ways which match your brand's identity, as well as suggesting other tweaks to improve the page's performance.

### Blogging

We'll set up a blog, integrate it with your existing site, and make sure it's optimised for conversions and search rankings. Then, we create language-specific content using a range of knowledge sources to craft an engaging user experience which remains accurate and on-brand.

### Off-site Link Earning

We build relationships with key influencers in your industry and work out ways that co-operation can spill traffic and demonstrate a relationship of trust between your site and a highly respected source of information.

## Other Marketing Channels

### Social Media

Our team of experienced linguists will be trained to understand your brand's identity and content guidelines, and set up social media profiles according to your needs. We then use these profiles to communicate with members of your community and tangential interest groups, as well as delivering conversion-centric campaigns using content from your blog.

### Email Marketing

We work with you to create subscriber capture methods integrated into your website, then deliver tailored and segmented campaigns with content from your blog and other specially-created foreign-language email campaigns.

### PPC

We manage and optimise paid search campaigns in a range of European languages. Our linguists will translate and localise ad text and work with us to ensure that your landing pages are optimised for quality. We then manage your spend to achieve the best possible ROI.