

A comprenhensive gide to SAFE AND EFFECTIVE LINK EARNING



CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Summary	3
Preparation	5
Chrome Extensions	
Develop your Content Assets	8
Types of Content	9
Owned vs Hosted Content	9
Define your Link Strategy	11
The Outreach Process	13
Find Sites to Reach out to	13
Track Keywords with Trello	15
Create a spreadsheet with potential link opportunities	16
Find Contact Information	17
Write Pitch Letters	18
Start Outreach	21
Setting up Streak	21
Customize your Streak Stages	22
Send out Emails	25
Respond to Emails	26
Label your Emails	26
Streak your Emails	27
Streak Stages	30
Send Topic Ideas	30
ORDER CONTENT	33
Edit Content	36
Submit Edited Content	36

Why Link Earning Works	43
What to do diter a link goes live	
What to do after a link goes live	39
Follow Up	38
What to Expect	37

INTRODUCTION

Let's face it: organic rankings are still a monarchy, with links both king and queen. Links are still the most important aspect of the Google algorithm, combined with onsite optimization, content quality, and user engagement.

Even though links are required to rank, Google discourages webmasters to actively build links. Most forms of link building, such as low quality guest blogging, paid links, article marketing or directory submissions, result in penalties.

The truth is that Google always intended their link-based algorithm to reward sites that earn links by the astounding quality of their content. A combination of compelling, **link-worthy content with blogger outreach** is what results in today's safe, high quality links.

In this article, we're going to take you through a comprehensive, step-by-step guide to use outreach in order to EARN links on the basis of high quality, unique, authoritative content.

SUMMARY

Before we begin, let's lay out a roadmap of the process, from beginning to end:

- **1. Create compelling content:** Start by performing in-depth research to identify ideas for "linkable" content assets.
- **2. Contact people who have shared similar content:** Use <u>search operators</u> to find sites that might be interested in sharing or hearing more about your content, and let them know about it.
- **3. Keep track of your emails:** Use a variety of online apps and extensions to categorize/organize all conversations, keep track of every discussion thread, and maintain a clean inbox at all times.

- **4. Submit a request for articles to your writers:** Using a tool like Podio, submit article requests to your team of writers and track the status of every article, as well as where it will be submitted. Links should be included editorially into the body of the articles using brand or noise terms.
- **5. Send out the content and follow up:** After sending out the completed articles to the target site, track the progress and continue building a contributor relationship to keep earning links to your site.

And VOILA! It seems like a simple process, but to accomplish this effectively in an organized manner, without forgetting specific conversations or articles, you need a structured methodology using a variety of tools.

Understanding the overall process will help you stay focused as you get into the details and minutiae of the process.

PREPARATION

Before we start the process, there are a few tools that you'll need to set up to prepare for the outreach process.

CHROME EXTENSIONS

We work on the **Google Chrome browser** because it allows us to install and implement a variety of extensions that assist us in the process. The extensions you'll require for this process are:

Moz Chrome Extension:

https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/mozbar/eakacpaijcpapndcfffdgphdiccmpknp?hl=en

Majestic Analyzer:

https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/majestic-backlink-analyze/pnmjaflneibolacpepklokkjnakmikmg

SEO Quake

https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/seoquake/akdgnmcogleenhbclghghlkkdndkidic?hl=en_

Streak

https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/streak-for-gmail/pnnfemgpilpdaojpnkjdgfgbnnjoj fik?hl=en-US

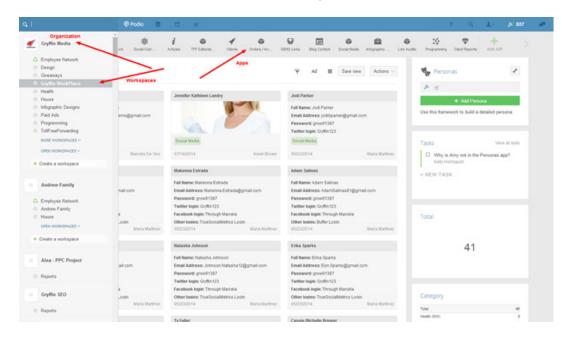
Podio

Podio is a project management tool that offers tremendous flexibility. We use it during the article creation process to manage the process between assigning content to writers, editing

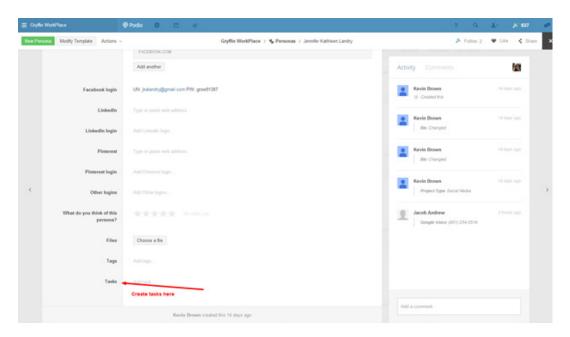
content, sending content out to websites, and making sure content isn't lost or forgotten.

Not only can you store/track documents, but with Podio's ability to create tasks for individuals and to filter by fields, you can effectively track collaborative projects.

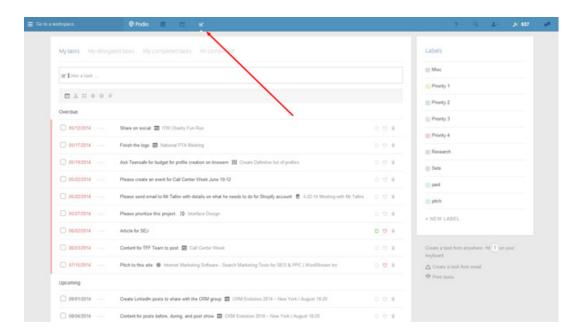
Podio is organized in a hierarchy of Organization, Workspace, App, Item, and Tasks. An Organization can have many Workspaces, a Workspace can have many Apps, and within each App you create Items, and each Item can have many related Tasks.



Depending on the user's preferences, once a task is created, the person assigned to the task will immediately receive an email notification, as well as a pop-up notification within Podio.



Tasks assigned to you can be seen by clicking on your task list:



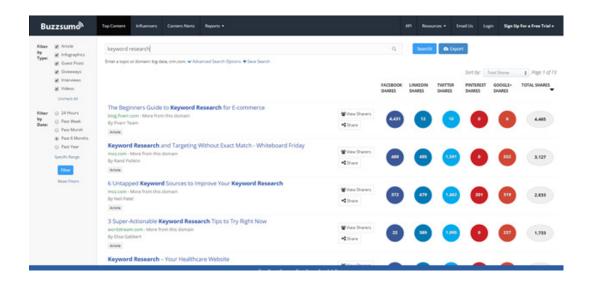
DEVELOP YOUR CONTENT ASSETS

The first stage of link building is to create linkable assets. People are not gratuitous with links, and will generally only link to other sites if there's a resource that is highly informative, entertaining, or worthy of being linked.

Before writing a single word, we start by researching ideas for compelling content.

Buzzsumo is a fabulous place to start this research, as it sorts content by social media shares.

In the example below, we typed "Keyword Research" into Buzzsumo, and got a list of the top articles with high social shares from these terms:



What's great about Buzzsumo is that it shows you what PEOPLE enjoyed sharing, not what GOOGLE algorithmically determines as valuable.

Consider searching deeper on sites like Slideshare.net, Visual.ly and even YouTube videos to discover content that was highly well-regarded and shared.

The key is to use forensic analysis to find content that has already performed well. Your goal will then be to IMPROVE this content and create a better, more comprehensive, improved version.

You'll need an account with Podio, and the extensions mentioned above to prepare for the process of outreach. Once you're familiar with these tools, let's move on to the next stage: creating content assets.

TYPES OF CONTENT

Stop thinking in terms of just text. When creating linkable assets, think of other ways of presenting the data. Some of our top ways of creating high quality content are:

- Infographics
- Interview videos
- Tutorial videos
- Presentations

All of these can still be constituted as linkable assets. Simply taking the content from a highly shared article and representing it visually in an infographic can be a powerful content creation method. Of course, you'll cite the source of the content, and generally, people love seeing their content and statistics shared visually.

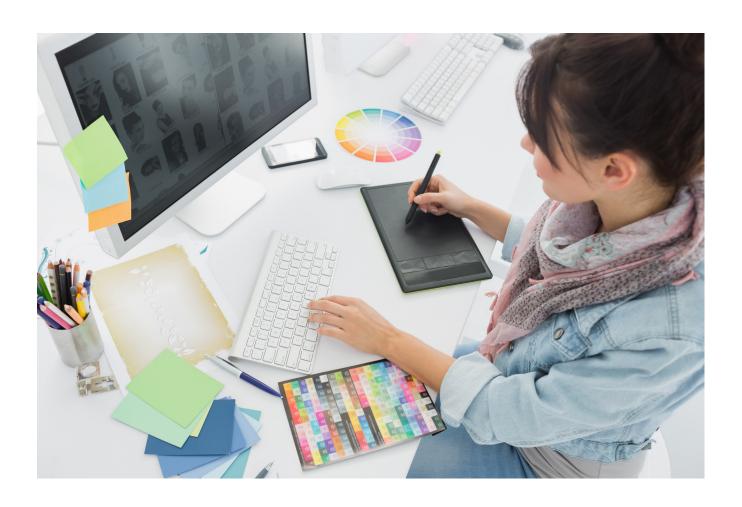
OWNED VS HOSTED CONTENT

Most people create content on their blog and try to attract links to that content, which can be very difficult. For this method, we create two high value pieces for every link we're trying to attract. One will be a piece that you give away to the site hosting the link, the other will be a high value content asset hosted on your own site.

For example, let's say we are using an infographic about the show Shark Tank to attract links. On our own site, we may write an article covering something like "12 Lessons Entrepreneurs Can Learn from Shark Tank." Then, using search operators and relevant keywords, we contact other sites that might be interested in hosting it.

Within the unique introduction to the infographic that we submit to the target site, we can state that there are <u>valuable lessons</u> to be learned from this show. This method helps ensure links are retained when sending out content to other websites.

By the end of the content creation stage, you should have a variety of high value content pieces that can be used both for outreach and to be hosted on your own site to attract links.



DEFINE YOUR LINK STRATEGY



Now that you have a clear understanding of your content assets, let's discuss HOW you want to link to your content assets.

There are two main parts of a link to pay attention to:

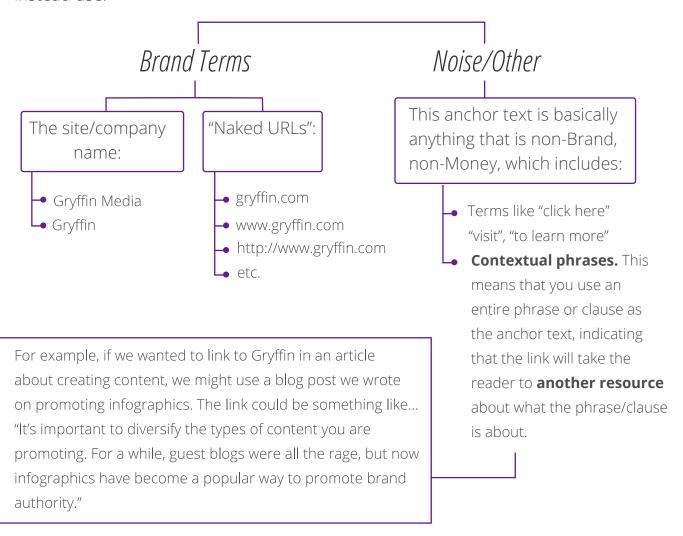
TARGET URL

This is the URL/page that you'll be linking to. Where would you like to link?

Home Page Internal Pages Mixed Links
(including product pages, blog posts, etc.) (a mix of links to the home

ANCHOR TEXT

Anchor text is just as important as the link. In the past, people would link using their money keywords in anchor text. In today's penalty-heavy world, we recommend staying away from money keywords in anchor text, and instead use:



So in the preparatory stage, you created your linking strategy, installed the necessary extensions on your browser, and created an account with Podio. Next you researched ideas for content, created your content assets, and determined your linking strategy. Now you're ready to start with outreach!

THE OUTREACH PROCESS

Outreach and content are like two wings of a bird. Unless you already have a wildly popular site, in which case you'd be naturally attracting links, you'll need to **use both outreach and content** to fly through the world of link earning.

Even if you create the most amazing content, without an audience, you won't have much of an opportunity to earn links unless it's being seen by others. Outreach is a method to EARN the links that will improve your Google organic rankings enough to help you build organic traffic.

FIND SITES TO REACH OUT TO

The first step is to create a list of potential sites to reach out to. We'll go through a few methods for creating this list.

Use sites from your content research

During your content research, you came across many sites that discussed relevant topics about your industry. In addition to adding all of these sites into your list of potential target sites, utilize Buzzsumo to further expand that list.

Using Search Operators to find sites in Google

The goal here is to uncover sites that have shared similar content in the past. To do so, you want to use search operators to build queries that will uncover the types of sites you need.

For example, for a site that offers online degrees, you could start off with broad keywords like "education", "college", and "online universities." You'll then want to qualify those terms by adding search operators, such as "education" + "infographics".

Understanding search operator can take time, which is why we wrote a guide dedicated to just this topic:

A Comprehensive Guide to Google Search Operators

Knowing how to search will greatly impact the effectiveness of your outreach campaign,

so it's definitely worth spending the time to gain more in-depth knowledge on how to use search operators.

Now we need to talk about how to use these search operators to turn up great outreach opportunities:

- Quotation marks ("...") for exact-match searches. We do this for multiple-word keywords, as well as adding these phrases to each search:
 - » "guest blog"
 - » "guest post"
 - » "guest writer"
 - » "guest author"
 - » "write for us"
 - » "submit"
 - » And MANY other similar terms, which help ensure that the sites we are contacting are interested in and/or have accepted guest posts in the past
- The tilde (~...) before a word to generate similar topics and ideas
- You can also use **phrase search operators**, which can be found here: inurl:guest-___ tends to yield good results, as many sites put "Guest Post/Blog/Writer/etc" in the title of the post, which ends up appearing in the URL.

So, using an online degree client as an example, our full search terms might come out looking like:

- "guest post" "online education"
- "write for us" adult education ~college
- "mooc" inurl:guest-post
- ~college tuition "guest blog"

At Gryffin, we created a tool to help you come up with potential ideas:

http://www.gryffin.com/footprints

Now that you know how to find keywords, it's time to start using them!

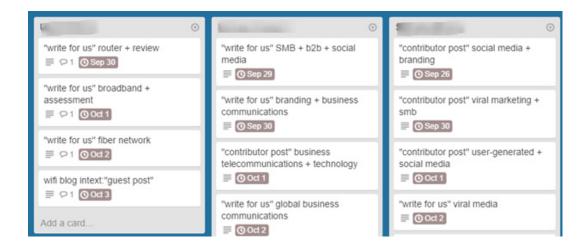
TRACK KEYWORDS WITH TRELLO

We use Trello to keep a record of keywords used when searching for potential opportunities. We can give each keyword a due date, and then go back to explore what keywords we've used in the past.

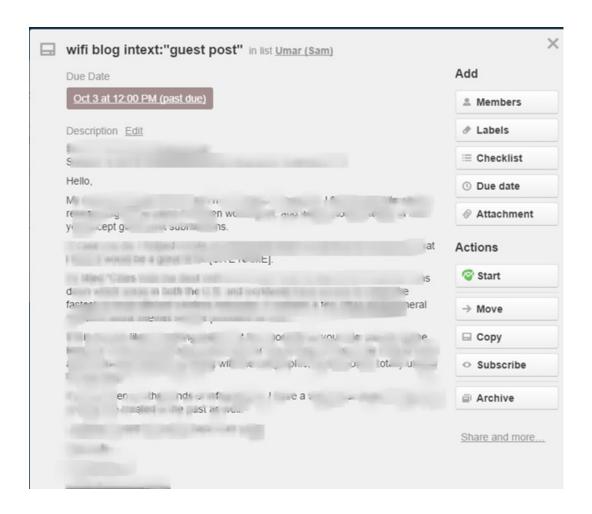
The reason **we use Trello and not Excel** is because we work collaboratively and often have many people using similar terms. Trello allows us to have multiple people viewing the same board and tracking what everyone is using to search.

It also allows us to copy and paste the pitch letter to be used for each keyword. The overall layout is much easier to work with than Excel or Google Drive.

Here's an example of what it looks like:



If you click on one of the boxes, it opens up to a details page that looks like this:



You can archive cards and later go back to review all past work.

CREATE A SPREADSHEET WITH POTENTIAL LINK OPPORTUNITIES

By using Buzzsumo and searching Google with search operators, you'll be able to create a list of potential sites to reach out to and pitch your content. Once you have collected and added them all to a spreadsheet, your next step will be to verify the quality of these sites to ensure that they have strong authority metrics. You want to look at:

- Mozrank: A link popularity score similar to Pagerank
- **Domain Authority:** Moz's metric for how well a given domain is likely to rank in Google search

- **Trust Flow:** A number predicting how trustworthy a page is based on how trustworthy sites tend to link to trustworthy neighbors
- **Citation Flow:** A number predicting how influential a URL might be based on how many sites link to it
- **SEMrush Rankings:** How many keywords a site ranks for in SEMrush
- **PageRank:** Google's metric for link popularity

PageRank is a deprecated metric that we pay little attention to, but for now, we'll leave it in the mix. The other metrics give you insights into the overall health and quality of the target site.

If you don't check these metrics, you may waste valuable time and resources contacting and writing for sites that won't help your link profile.

A tool like **LinkResearchTools.com** will aggregate all of this data into a report, or if you have the time, you can check each of the sites manually using the toolbars that you installed to Chrome.

FIND CONTACT INFORMATION

Now that you've added the metrics and have modified your list of target sites to make sure they are qualified, you'll want to look for contact information. Don't stop by going to the "Contact Us" page. Look for other contact info such as direct email addresses, social media profiles, and possibly even WHOIS info.

You have to be very thorough in this step.

Sending an email to the main site's contact form may mean that your request ends up in the customer service department, or worse, their spam folders, where it doesn't' get forwarded to the right people.

Without trying to spend too much time navigating around the site, look carefully for their contributor guidelines and add the URL to your spreadsheet for tracking purposes. For example, there may not be a page for contributors, but perhaps the Twitter profile for the

editor may be listed on the site, so you can use Twitter to contact the editor directly. Now your sheet should have the target site's URL, metrics, and contact information. Let's move on to the next step.

WRITE PITCH LETTERS

People receive a lot of junk in their email, and many sites are constantly receiving requests for guest posting, from humans and spambots alike. For this reason, it's crucial that your pitch letters stand out and showcase transparency.

After sending out hundreds of thousands of pitch letters, we've found the following elements that have resulted in higher response ratios:

- Try to keep your letter **BRIEF** and **EASY TO READ / SCAN**
- **PERSONALIZE** the letter wherever possible
- Be **FRIENDLY** and approachable small talk goes a **LONG** way. People want to know you're a real person, not a robot sending auto-generated emails
- Use **PERFECT grammar** you can't offer to contribute to other sites and use poor grammar. Double and triple check your grammar!
- Explain why you are an **AUTHORITY** in the topic you're discussing
- Link to **Examples** of your work, preferably articles posted on authoritative domains.

Now let's discuss the letter itself:

FROM: Use a personal email address. We generally find that using company email addresses makes them feel that it's an advertorial, and it may turn them off before you even have chance to connect with them. We use Gmail accounts for outreach.

SUBJECT: Try to ALWAYS include the target site's URL in the subject of the email. This level of personalization helps people to understand that this email is relevant.

BODY: Now you need to mix all of the elements discussed above into the email:

Hello [Contact Name],

I hope you're having a great day! I'm writing to find out how one goes about becoming a contributor to your blog.

I came across your site while researching [Keyword] and really enjoyed your content. Is there an appropriate representative I can talk to about submitting some of my work? I have worked in the [Category] industry for many years and am confident I can contribute something of value to your blog.

You can see some of my published work here:

Examplesite.com/article1

Examplesite2.com/article2

Examplesite3.com/article3

I'm not looking for any compensation nor am I marketing anything, I'm simply just a fan who would love to become a regular contributor.

Thank you SO much for your time and consideration, and I hope you have a lovely day. Best wishes,

[Your Name]

[Social Profiles]

Here's another example:

Hello,

My name is [Your Name] and I recently visited [SITE NAME] while doing some research on [Keyword]. I spent a bit of time checking out the site, and first off I'd like to compliment you on putting together really outstanding content.

Secondly, I wanted to inquire whether you ever allow guest authors to contribute content? If you're open to the idea, I would really like to pitch you some topics for possible articles, or hear any suggestions for content that you may have.

As for qualifications go, I am currently a [Relevant Experience], and also have experience in [Category]. In my free time, I've been producing blogs and infographics regarding a plethora of [Category] topics, samples of which you can find links to at the bottom of this email.

I'm not looking for any sort of monetary compensation, only to be credited for the work that I submit should it be published.

Thank you so much for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Have a great rest of the day!

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Resume Site]

[Social Profiles]

In these letters we use different tactics, both of which see different results at different times and for different niches. You'll have to see what gets you the best response and build upon that.



START OUTREACH

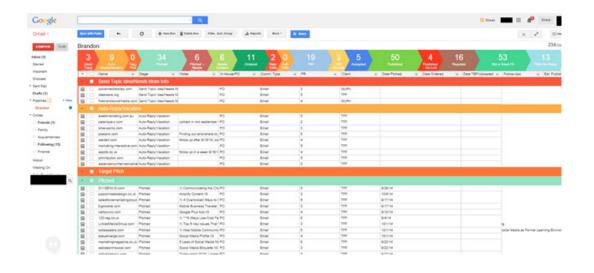
Now you're almost ready to start sending out emails. One mistake that many people make is to use email marketing tools to send out outreach requests. After testing many of these systems, we've found that time-and-again, that they often get filtered out, or that people don't trust them when they notice that the email was sent through an email marketing system. In the end, we've concluded that a **combination of Gmail with a tool called**Streak is the most powerful methodology for outreach.

Streak is a chrome extension that can be adapted to various processes. In this case, we modify it so it functions like a CRM system. You can have "Pipelines" and "Boxes", all used to organize your inbox.

SETTING UP STREAK

First let's talk about how to set-up Streak in your inbox. In its most basic form, Streak creates a **"Box"** for an email, to which you can then link all subsequent emails from that same person. There are several details you can add to each box, as well as the **"Stage"**, which tells you at which stage of the content publishing process the email correspondence is at.

Here's a quick overview of how it looks like:



Each email is treated as a potential contact, and you nurture that relationship by taking it through several stages. At each stage, you have to track the status of the relationship, and make sure you stay on top of the process so no leads are lost/forgotten.

In this article, you can learn how to install streak and create your first pipeline. Use the default CRM option:

http://support.streak.com/customer/portal/articles/310048-step-by-step-guide-to-getting-started

CUSTOMIZE YOUR STREAK STAGES

After you create your pipeline, you'll want to modify the stages. The stages that we use for outreach are:

Send Topic Ideas/Needs More Info: When a target site replies to a pitch with an initial reply yes OR if the target site would like more details about you, such as published links, social profiles, etc.

Auto Response: Vacation: When a target site responds with an auto response due to a holiday/vacation/etc. Make a note in the "Notes" section of when the target site will be returning, and set a reminder to follow-up with the target site upon return.

This status excludes general auto responses, such as the one below:

"Your email has been received and is being reviewed by our staff. To add additional comments, reply to this email."

You can delete these types of auto responses..

Pitched: You've sent them a pitch/topics, and are waiting to hear if they like your ideas. Set a reminder to follow-up once a week for three weeks. If the target site does not respond, make a note and change the status to "Pitch No Reply".

Pitched Needs Attn: If the target site replies to a pitch, but does not like the pitch ideas, change the status to "Pitched Needs Attention" and set a reminder to send new topic ideas asap. This status could also be used if the target site likes your ideas, but would like to discuss them further. Some sites may just require an outline, while others may require a phone call to confirm your identity (that you are, in fact, a real human).

Needs Content: When the target site accepts the pitch. This means that you're ready to order this to your writers. Keep all of the original pitch ideas in the Notes section (see below). Use a special marker, such as "***title of article site wants***" if you have pitched more than one article title.

Ordered: When the content is ordered for the target site. Be sure to make a note of the due date of the article. If you'd like, you can add a link to the order in Podio in the notes section (more on this below).

TBP: When the article is sent to the target site. Set a reminder to follow-up with the site once a week for three weeks. If the target site does not reply, change the status to "Rejected" and make a note, like "Site did not respond after three weeks following submission". Be sure to also go into Podio and mark the article as available.

TBP Re-edit: When the target site comes back with requests for edits. These usually tend to be time-sensitive, so be sure to get the edits done as quickly as possible. However, if you find that the edits are too lengthy or the piece will require an entire rewrite, change the status to "Not a Good Fit", and be sure to make a note. The article will then become available in Podio.

Accepted: When the target site provides an estimated publish date. There are some situations where a target site will say they love the article and want to publish it, but they will not supply a publish date. Set a reminder to follow-up with that site once a week for three weeks, or until you get a publish date or live link from the target site. After three weeks, change the status to "Rejected" and make a note. Update the status of the order in Podio.

Published: When an article goes live and includes a link to your site site. Copy/Paste the live link and publish date in the proper fields and update in Podio.

Published No Link: When an article goes live, but does not include a live link to the target site. Update the status in Podio, then follow-up with the target site and politely ask them if they can include the link in the content. If it's an article, request it to be added back in OR within the author bio. If the link was intended to be in the introduction of an infographic, request it to be added back or to be added at the bottom of the infographic as an attribution. Set a reminder to follow-up for three weeks. If the target site does not change the link or refuses to, the status will remain "Published No Link".

Rejected: When a target site rejects an article/introduction, or after following up after it was in TBP for three weeks.

Pitch No Reply: When a target site does not respond to a pitch after three weeks.

Not a Good Fit: When a target site decides not to continue the conversation. This is not the same as "Pitch No Reply". You can also use this status after following up with an "Auto Response: Vacation" after three times.

You can also modify the box details. The following are the boxes we use:

Box Details:

Name (URL)

Stage

Notes

PR/DA

Client

Date Pitched

Date Ordered

Date Sent TBP/Uploaded

Follow Up

Est. Publish Date

Date Published

Live Link



With streak up and running in your gmail account, your list prepared and filtered, and pitch letters in hand, it's time to start emailing away!

SEND OUT EMAILS

Simply go to Gmail and start sending out letters to the sites in your list of potential targets. Make sure you update your spreadsheet with the date you sent out the emails, as you'll want to know which sites were already contacted and when. You should also keep track of these details in your Streak boxes.



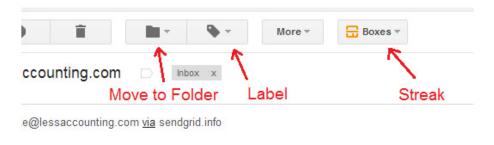
RESPOND TO EMAILS

Soon after you start sending out emails, you should start getting responses in your inbox. Before you know it, the whole process can become very chaotic, with a ton of emails all requiring different actions. Extreme, methodical organization is key to this stage of the process.

LABEL YOUR EMAILS

When a response to an outreach letter comes in, the first step is to sort the emails. For all initial responses, there are usually three main replies:

- 1. Interested; LABEL it Initial Reply/Yes
- 2. Not Interested; MOVE it to the Initial Reply/No Folder
- **3.** They charge to post; **MOVE it** to **Pay to Post** Folder



hind out. Please email me directly at annette@lessaccounting.com with some topics that y

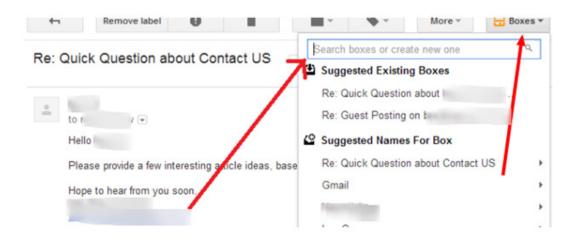
The No and Pay to Post simply sit in the folder and require no further action. We suggest keeping those sites in your inbox so you can search for them in the future in case the need arises.

Most of the work will happen with the emails where people reply back saying they are interested and either want to learn more or are ready for you to send them ideas for a topic.

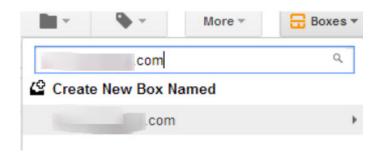
STREAK YOUR EMAILS

All of the emails labeled "Initial Reply/Yes" need to be streaked and added to a box, with the relevant stage.

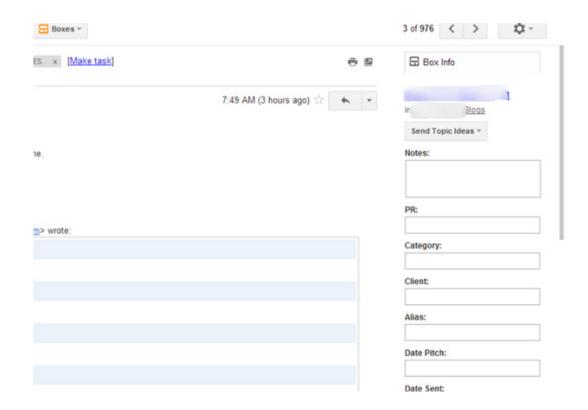
To **Streak an email**, you'll click on the **"Boxes"** icon at the top of the email. This will expand a menu which will give you the option to add it to an existing box, or create a new one. For an Initial Reply/YES, you will always create a new box. Type the name of the website, sans the "http://" and "www" into the text field.



You will then create the new **Box**:

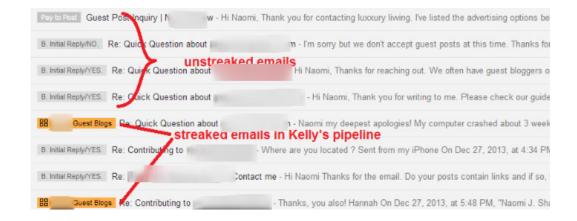


Once the email has been added to both a box and a Pipeline, you will now see the Streak info in the right column.

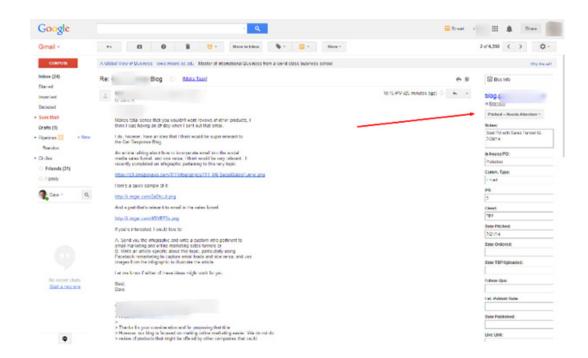


Fill in this detail as much as possible, which should be up to "Date Pitched". "Date Sent" and the rest of the information will be filled in once the content has been created and is sent to the target site.

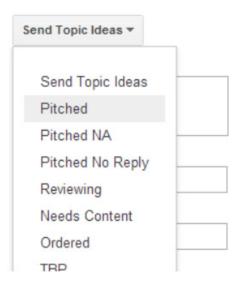
Once you've started streaking emails, your inbox will begin to look like this:



As you streak emails, you can update the **stage** based on people's responses:



When you click on the button, it expands and you can choose the different stages:



Now that you've labeled and streaked everything, you need to actually take the actions required for sites in each stage of the conversation. These stages will require sending topic ideas, ordering content, and sending out follow-up emails.

STREAK STAGES

In your Streak stages view inside Gmail, you'll have to go through each stage and make sure you've taken the necessary actions for sites in each stage. The main actions are:

SEND TOPIC IDEAS

As soon as they respond to the outreach email, your job is cultivate a relationship with this target site in order to better increase the chances of a link going live.

Even though you may have predetermined content assets, the type of content you share with the site will be based on the site's theme and readership. You may be promoting an article about keyword research, but does the target site have an advanced audience? Newbies? You'll need to understand the site so you can pitch a title that will be unique to them, interesting, and appealing to their demographic.

There are three basic steps to pitching topic ideas:

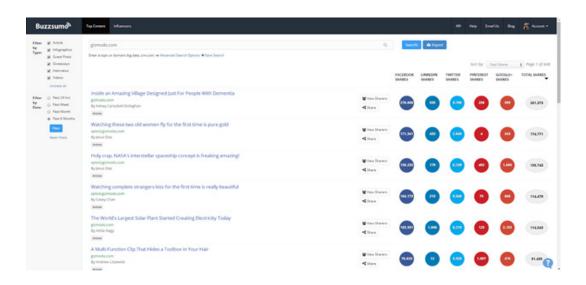
- **1.** Take a look at the website and become familiar with the topics they cover. Also judge how they use links--sparingly, not at all, only in author bios, etc. This will be important.
- 2. Decide the best linkable content asset to use
- **3.** Come up with an interesting article idea that will be a good fit for the target site, and that will also in some way connect to the client, allowing you to link to the client in the article.

The article topic that you come up with doesn't always have to deal directly with your site's product or service. Think instead of building domain authority by earning links to the entire domain.

Using Buzzsumo and Feedly to come up with Interesting Topic Ideas

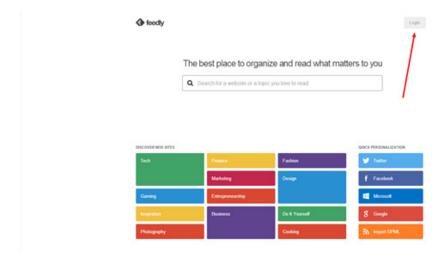
We've already mentioned Buzzsumo for coming up with content assets for your own site, as well as to find sites to pitch to. Now you'll use Buzzsumo to help you to come up with topics to pitch to the target sites.

For example, if you are pitching a tech blog, you could enter in gizmodo.com You then want to go to "filber by dates" and choose "Past 6 months":



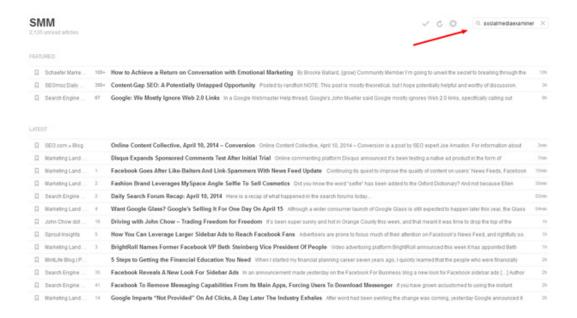
Buzzsumo will automatically sort the articles by total shares, which will help you figure out the most interesting content. You can then use these topics as inspiration. You can search Buzzsumo by site, or by keyword.

Using Feedly to come up with Ideas for Pitches

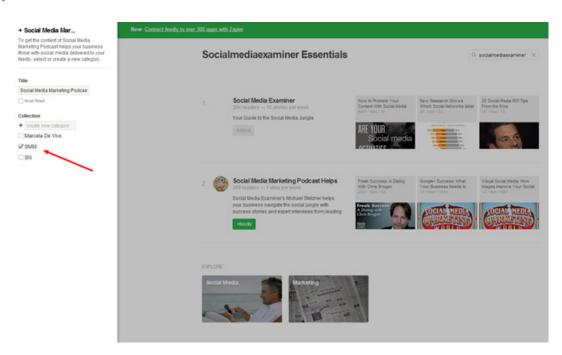


Feedly is an RSS reader with social integration. Anyone with a Google account can instantly create a Feedly account. Simply go to Feedly.com and click "login." Then click "login with Google." From there, you'll be taken to your own personal Feedly profile, ready for customization.

Next, do some research to find some popular sites in the niche, and add them to Feedly by adding the blog URL on the top right bar.

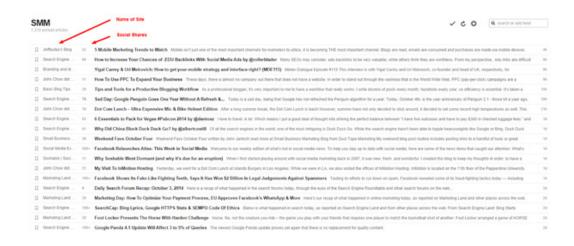


Once you've added the blog to the search bar, make sure you have it in the appropriate category, and click on "add".



Feedly also has a search bar, allowing you to search within the platform. From past experience, the search capacity is subpar and doesn't pull up everything that you might find doing a web search on your own. For the purpose of discovering very popular content though, it's worth using.

When setting up your Feedly, categorize your blogs very carefully, this way you can easily track the different types of content. You may have a category called "Most Popular" and if you are pitching a generic site, this may be the only category you read. You can have categories for different niches, and when you need ideas for titles, drill in by categories.



When you need a topic idea, you can quickly scan feedly and look at the social shares to see what articles had traction, and use that for inspiration.

ORDER CONTENT

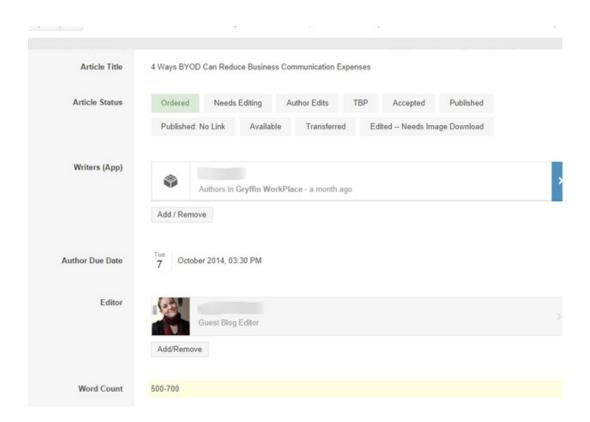
Once you have received a positive response, made your pitch, and gotten another "go ahead", it's time to order the content. We've found the most organized way to order content and keep track of it is through Podio.

First of all, you'll need to create an app in Podio that contains the the following elements:

- Article Title
- Article Status
- Name of Author
- Author Due Date

- Editor
- Word Count
- Article Description
- Target Site
- Document URL
- Live URL
- Date Published
- Days To Be Published
- Target Site Email
- Paid
- Transaction ID

Here's what this looks like in Podio:



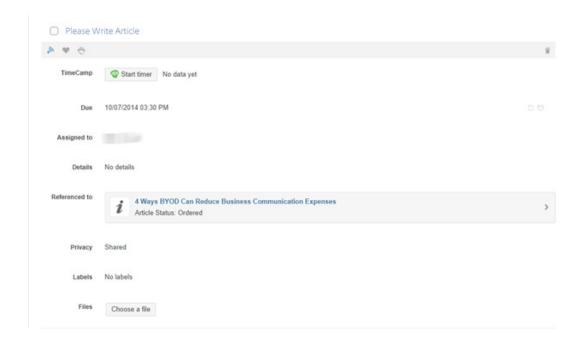
- Article Title: Make sure your title is COMPELLING!
- Article Status: This is THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT field, as it will help us determine what's happening with this article.
 - » When you first order, the status should be "Ordered".

- » Then, the writer will write and submit the article, and change the status to "Needs Editing".
- » If the article needs to be revised by the writer, the status changes to "Author edits".
- » When the article is edited and ready to submit, the status is Edited if there's something pending, or Ready to Submit.
- » TBP means the article has been sent to the target site
- » Accepted is when you have heard confirmation from the target site and have been given a publication date
- » Published means the article has been published on the target site and is now live!
- Author: Who will be writing this piece?
- Due Date
- Editor: yourself
- Word Count: Most often will be 700 1000 unless the target site requests otherwise
- Target Site: The URL of the site you're submitting to
- Document URL: Create a google account for all of your writers to use, create a blank document for them, and add the link to this document in the document URL field. By using your OWN google drive account you'll always have access to the documents and will retain ownership.

After the article goes live, you need to come back and update the status, as well as the following fields:

- Live URL: Add the Live URL here when the article goes live
- Days TBP: Find out when the article was sent, and figure out how long it took for the article to go live
- Paid: This will help you keep track of payments to your writers, just mark yes or no
- Transaction ID: Add the check number or paypal transaction id
- Notes (Any particular notes, such as a date or specific submission requirements of the target site)

Once you've created the item and saved it, then go back to the item and create a task for your writer to create this article, and give them a due date.



By creating a task for your writer, they'll be notified that they have an order waiting for them, so this step is important if you want a quick turnaround.

EDIT CONTENT

When your writer completes the article, they should change the status to "Needs Editing" and create a task for you to edit the content. During the editing process, you can add the link to the content asset that you're targeting, and look for grammar errors, readability, sentence structure, etc.

If the author didn't already do so, add images as every article should have visuals to enhance the content.

SUBMIT EDITED CONTENT

Once you have accepted a piece of content and it is ready to submit to the target site, you will go through the following steps:

• Download the document as a Word doc.

- Go into your email and attach the Word doc to a reply email.
- Attach your image files separately to the email (the images should be inside the Word doc as well as attached separately for the convenience of the target site).
- Write a nice message to the target site contact informing them that the article draft is ready for review, attached to this email as a Word doc along with image files. Thank them for the opportunity, answer any questions they have and let them know to let you know if they need anything else.
- Update Streak with date sent TBP. Also move the box from the Ordered Pipeline to TBP pipeline.
- Follow up with the article within 6-7 days of not hearing back or the article not getting posted.
- Next it's time to send out the content. You'll mark the article "TBP" in Podio, and go to your inbox. Find the relevant box in Streak, and send out the article to your contact. Mark the status as TBP in STREAK as well these two have to sync up.
- Voila! You've now got the article in the publishing pipeline, and all the relevant areas have been updated appropriately.

WHAT TO EXPECT

When you send articles TBP, we don't always hear an immediate response--in fact, sometimes you never hear back at all. If this is the case, **every week for three weeks**, consider sending follow-up emails asking if the target site received and/or had a chance to look at the content.

If you never hear back, check the site - perhaps they published but forgot to notify you. If the article wasn't published and they never replied to you, change the status in streak to "Not a Good Fit" and go back to Podio to **change the status of the article** from **"TBP"** to

"Available", with a note to the effect of "No Response after 3 follow-ups, marked Available."

If you do hear back, it is usually one of five responses:

- 1. Great, thanks.
- **2.** Thanks, but we have some suggestions to make...
- **3.** This wasn't what we were looking for, thanks though.
- 4. We love it! It will be posted soon or on such-and-such date
- **5.** It's live!

To which we...

- **1.** Follow-up immediately asking if they know when it will be published so you can mark it down on your calendar. Change the status on Streak and Podio to Accepted.
- **2.** Unless the edits are outrageous, make them. If they are minor, you can do it yourself quickly; if they might take more time, contact the writer to make them. You can either keep the article in the "TBP" status and add the edits made in the "Notes" column, or you can change it to "Reviewing" until the edits are made, and it's been sent again.
- **3.** Re-pitch to them, but mark the article as "Available".
- **4.** Update Streak and Podio with the status Accepted"
- 5. Update Streak and Podio with the status "Live" and add the published URL

FOLLOW UP

We've mentioned several times that it's important to follow up with target sites. Sometimes they go on vacation, forget about your article, or it just gets lost in the process. Through Streak, you can set reminders for when you should send out follow up emails to your target site.

Our policy is to follow up 3 times with sites at each stage. Every time we follow up, we set a reminder for the date of the next follow up and make a note of what number follow up this is. If we don't hear back after 3 emails, we move that box to the appropriate stage such as "Pitch No Response" or "Not a Good Fit."

You'd be surprised how many relationships we save by following up. People get very busy, and since this isn't a monetary transaction, they may simply not have the time/energy to follow through. Nice, friendly reminders can substantially increase the chances of your content making it into their site.

WHAT TO DO AFTER A LINK GOES LIVE

Congratulations! You went through ALL of these steps and finally got an article published with links to your site. It's an arduous process, but getting editorial placements with high quality sites will be worth it in the end.

Now you have to make sure you've updated everything to reflect that the article has been published:

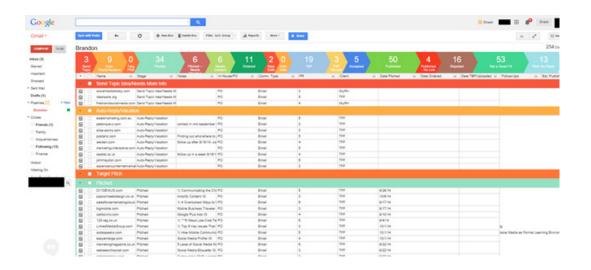
- 1. In Streak, change the status to Published
- **2.** Go into your Podio order and **change the article status** to Published.
- **3. Input a number in Days TBP.** This number is the amount of days the article spent in between being sent for publication and actually being published. How many days did the article take to publish?
- **4. Fill in the rest of the info:** Live URL, Date Published, Target site email, type of pitch, notes.
- **5. Check the item!** Scroll up and down, through the article order. Make sure you've filled it out as completely and accurately as possible. Did you fill in Target Site Email? Transaction details? Etc.?

LET'S SUMMARIZE THE PROCESS

Now that you've seen the entire process in detail, let's go through the whole process:

- 1. Create Content Assets
- **2.** Determine a link strategy
- **3.** Choose Keywords and Update your <u>Trello Board</u>, including your pitch letters
- **4.** Create a list of potential sites to target
- **5.** Send out pitch letters using Gmail

- 6. Label emails in Gmail
 - » Initial Reply / Yes
 - » Initial Reply / No
 - » Pay to Post
- 7. Finish cleaning the inbox by deleting auto replies and ads.
- 8. Streak the "Yes" emails and update the status.
- 9. If the email has pre-existing correspondence, find the correct Streak box.
- **10.** If the email is new and does not have a pre-existing streak box, create a new box.
- **11.** Fill out all fields in the streak drop down box on the right hand side (will appear once the box is made).
- **12.** Once everything is streaked, go into your Pipeline and take care of the items in each status:



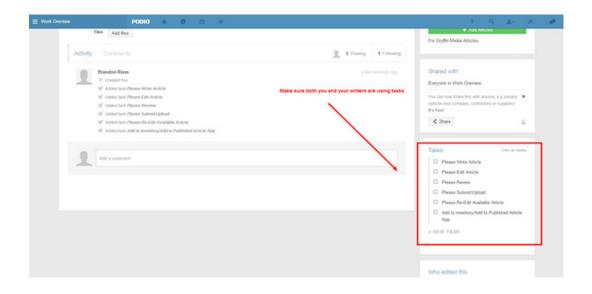
During this process, you will:

- **Pitch:** Send 2-3 topic pitches to any email marked "Send Topic Ideas." After the pitch is sent, mark email as "Pitched."
- Order Content: In Podio, go to your "Articles" app, and hit the green button on the right hand side called "Create new Article."
 - » Fill out fields in create new article accordingly, including title, status, description, author, editor (most likely yourself), due date/time, etc.
 - » Create a Google Drive Document, share it with the writer, and add it to the Podio item.
 - » Save the article order in Podio.

» Task writer to write article and give them specific due date/due time. **When ordering, filter by writer and future due date so you can determine what your writer has due, when, and prioritize articles.

• Editing:

- » Your writer should task you to edit when an article has been completed. If they have exceeded their deadline, contact them via email or Podio
- » private chat.
- » Once a "Please Edit Article" task has been received, click on the task and go to the article.
- » Edit the article (make sure it is formatted correctly, has pictures from a creative commons source with proper attribution, has an author bio, has 1-2 authoritative links (unless target site says otherwise), and **MOST IMPORTANTLY** your site's link in the body of the article.
- » If the article requires edits, make comments within the Google Doc, mark the article as "Author Edits" in Article Status, and task the writer with a new due date/due time. Be sure to also make a note in the target site's Streak box of the article's status.



Submit Articles:

- » When the article is ready to be sent, go back to the Gmail persona inbox and send the email to the target site
- » Mark the article as "TBP" in streak and Podio

• Follow Up:

- » If an article has not gone live within 5-6 days after sending it, follow up with the target site. Make sure to ask if they:
- a.) Have received the article
- b.) Need you to re-send the article
- c.) Need any additional information (like a headshot)
- » Make sure to thank them for their time, offer to make edits if need be and tell them that you would really appreciate an update.
- » Once an article has been accepted by the target site, mark the email as "Accepted" in Streak and Podio.

Live Link Procedure

- » Make sure to check the target site for the link on a daily basis, as NOT ALL target sites will be courteous enough to send you a URL to your GB/IG live link.
- » Once the live link has either been sent to you or found on the target site, send a thank-you to the target site representative with whom you've had correspondence with.
- » Check to make sure that the link is actually there on the site (check to make sure the anchor text is ok, the URL doesn't redirect, and that the landing page is ok).
- » If the link is live and does not need any changes, place the live link in the "Live URL" field in the streak box and change the status of the article to "Published."
- » Go back to the article in the Articles app.
- » Mark the article status as "Published" and place the live link in the "Live URL" space. Also fill in "Days TBP," and other relevant fields.

Every time you work on a particular contact, be sure to update the status on Streak as well as Podio (the article status etc).

WHY LINK EARNING WORKS

As you can see, these links are earned with an incredibly laborious process. Every single step requires attention to detail. If you are organized and can follow through these stages, keeping track of conversations every step of the way, you will be successful.

We can't emphasize enough how important it is to create incredibly high quality content. None of this will work unless you have amazing content that people WANT to share and link to. Content is the foundation of this entire process, and the rest is simply process and organization.

Using this methodology, we've been able to earn links from very high profile sites, including Forbes, Entrepreneur, and Clickz. In Google's Organic kingdom, these high quality links are gold and whoever can commit to this process for the long term, will reap the rewards.





LEARN MORE WITH CONTENT KARMA

Reach out to speak with one of our SEO consultants or to learn more about our Link Earning services.

(855) 479-3346 info@contentkarma.com www.CONTENTKARMA.com