SEO Link Audits - Method 1

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Related Categories: SEO

With the recent Penguin 2.0 update your inbound links have come under close scrutiny by Google. Many people saw their traffic instantly dry up because they had poor quality links driving their rankings up. Although not a single one of our clients took a hit of more than 10% traffic (because we do not do low-quality links), we are still reviewing and fixing any link issues our clients might have from the nefarious link building tactics of their previous SEOs.

So how do you find the links to your site?

One way is to go into Webmaster Tools, select the website you want to work with, then under "Search Traffic" you will see "Links to your site". Click on that.

There you will see "Who Links the Most" with a small number of linking sites. Below that you will see "more". Click that.

Once you click on MORE you have a list of links from Google's perspective. You can download the table (link is at the top) and then pull it into Excel for more flexibility and to keep notes on any of the linking domains.

But, if you can get more data by using different sources in addition to WMT, it's a good idea.

Head over to Open Site Explorer (you must register if you haven't already, it's free) and run a report on your domain name. Once your list pops up, use the drop downs at the top to filter your data. For the 2nd drop down (Links From) select "Only External". For the 3rd drop down select "Pages on this Root Domain". Then at mid-right select Export to CSV.

From there you can export a CSV which you can also pull up in Excel.

Since neither of these sources spits out the same CSV, let's do this:

Create a new spreadsheet and copy only the URLs from the other two spreadsheets and paste them in (all in one column). Then go to the "DATA" tab (Excel 2007) and click on the Remove Duplicates button. It should have Column A selected so just hit OK if that's the case. It'll then tell you how many were dupes and removed.

Now, copy the first 200 URL's, head over to SEO Gadget , type your domain name in and paste these 200 URL's into the 2nd box...hit "TEST".

This report will give you a lot of useful information about those links, such as Page and Domain Authority and whether SEO Gadget thinks those links are 'safe' or not.

Don't take this 'safe' metric as gospel though, I only use it as a guide. You must actually visit every link by hand to see if it meets certain quality guidelines.

What those guidelines are is not made 100% clear since Google doesn't exactly want to tell you in detail. But as a rule of thumb, if it's a spammy page that is not relevant to your site, it should be scrutinized.

Another big deal is the 'anchor text' of that link. A good guideline for that is focus mostly on the branding of your site (so the link actually says "My Company Name or Domain Name") about 80% of the time. The rest of the time divide it up: a 5% smattering of "Click Here" and the rest using different keyword usage. For example, since we are an SEO company in Los Angeles, here and there we do a direct match anchor text for "Los Angeles SEO Company", but we

change it up to things like "SEO Los Angeles" on others. But it still needs to be relevant - you can't spam it up. If you use this direct match anchor text too much, you will be penalized by Google for those exact keywords!!! And that's not what you're after, right?! For some people, that sort of link spam is actually working for them, but you know Google will get around to finding them. We've seen some pretty great results just from changing exact match text to simply 'branded'.