

SEO AND TECHNOLOGY

Links are a large part of the Web experience and are important to websites. Search engines can determine a lot about a site based on looking at links. Search engine spiders look at both the site itself as well as the links within sites. Why do they do this? Isn't looking at the contents of the site enough to determine how good the site is and how the site should be ranked?

Links serve two purposes online. First, they quickly and easily link users to different and useful information based on topic. Users can choose to click on links if they want to in order to find out more information. On the other hand, links act as a popularity index of all sites online. Take, for example, a very popular online site like Google, Yahoo!, or Amazon. Each of these sites has millions of daily visitors from all around the world. Imagine the number of links to these pages that exists. The more popular a site, the more links there will be to that site on other sites.

Part of Google's page ranking system depends on the number of links to a page. In general, the more links to a page, the more popular the page is and thus the higher the page rank is. The fewer links, the lower the rating. There are some exceptions to that rule. For example, linking to known deceptive or spam pages, pages that have been banned by search engines, can cause a decrease in page rank. If these pages link to a website, that can also decrease ranking. For more on this subject, see the section on "Black Hat SEO."

The temptation for website owners becomes to find places to link to their site in order to increase ranking. There are several services that offer to increase a site's page rank by including links to the page on so-called "link farm" pages. These pages exist only to display links for the purpose of increasing page rank. Link farms are not for visitors, which is why these pages are often problematic for search engines. Being linked in a link farm can cause a site to lose rank, despite the original intention to do otherwise. Over time, websites can find legitimate sites that are willing to link to their site, which will, over time, increase the site's rank.

About the Author

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