

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a city street intersection at night. The scene is illuminated by streetlights and the lights of buildings and cars. A large, dark blue semi-transparent rectangle is overlaid on the upper half of the image, containing the text 'SEO Fingal'.

SEO Fingal

Compiled by Michael Keogh

Why every content SEO strategy should start with keyword research • Yoast

The effectiveness of every content SEO strategy largely depends on the quality of the keyword research that has been executed. If you optimize for words that nobody searches for, you won't be found. If you optimize for terms that are much too competitive to rank for, you won't be found either. In this post, I explain *why* you should start with keyword research and *how* you can make sure your keyword research generates optimal results.

Optimizing for the right words

Every audience uses specific search terms. It'll make quite the difference whether you're selling hair products for teenagers or for middle aged housewives. These two target audiences are likely to use different words to search the internet.

Sometimes a marketing department decides to give their products a certain name. That can be a smart marketing decision. It can be a way to make people remember your product. For example, you don't sell wine but you sell 'adult grape juice'. Or, you don't rent out vacation homes, but 'vacation cottages'. Be aware that very few people search for 'adult grape juice' or 'vacation cottages'. If you optimize your text for these terms, you'll probably rank well on these specific terms. However, you won't generate a lot of traffic with these terms and you'll miss a large part of your potential audience.

For SEO purposes, you should always optimize a text for the words that are used most often by your audience. You'll have to get into people's heads for that. Use tools like Google Trends to find out what people are searching for (and which terms they are *not* using).

[Read more: 'Keyword research: the ultimate guide' »](#)

Why every content SEO strategy should start with keyword research • Yoast

Be realistic

You'll never instantly rank in niches you're no expert in. When you're just starting out in a certain field, optimizing for the most highly competitive keywords is not going to work. You won't be able to rank on those terms.

If you've just launched a site with beautiful new vacation homes in the South of Spain, you shouldn't aim to rank for 'vacation Spain' at first. Find your niche and go for less competitive (and more long tail) search terms like: 'luxurious vacation home Costa Blanca'. Once you've started ranking and attracting traffic on these long tail keywords, you'll be able to aim for some more head terms as well.

[Keep reading: 'Long tail keywords: why they deserve your focus!' »](#)

Green bullet?

Yoast SEO helps you to optimize your content for a specific focus keyword. In [Yoast SEO](#) you can enter a keyword and if you optimize your post or page well, you get rewarded with a [green bullet](#). Whether you're going to generate traffic to your site largely depends on the focus keyword you choose. Words that aren't used by your audience will perhaps be easy to rank for, but won't generate a lot of traffic. On the other hand, choosing very popular keywords and trying to rank in a highly competitive niche is hard. You don't just get there by getting a green bullet in Yoast SEO.

Why every content SEO strategy should start with keyword research • Yoast

Sadly, a green bullet in the SEO analysis of Yoast SEO doesn't guarantee traffic. If your focus keyword is badly chosen, you probably won't generate that much traffic with it. That's why the most important step in your content SEO strategy is to execute proper keyword research and to make smart decisions on which keyword to tackle first.

Yoast Insights

At Yoast, we're currently developing new metrics to better assess the readability and the SEO score of your text. In the latest update of [Yoast SEO Premium](#), you'll find [Yoast Insights](#). You can see which words are most prominent in your blog post. These words can be a great source of inspiration for your keyword research. Perhaps you could write another post about one of these key phrases. Perhaps you could try and optimize this current post, adding one of these phrases to our [multiple focus keyword](#) functionality box. As long as you won't forget to start with keyword research and focus on the words you want to be found for most, Yoast Insights can provide useful additions to your keyword strategy.

Why every content SEO strategy should start with keyword research • Yoast

Insights

Prominent words

The following words and word combinations occur the most in the content. These give an indication of what your content focuses on. If the words differ a lot from your topic, you might want to rewrite your content accordingly.

1. keyword research
2. start with keyword research
3. keyword research the ultimate guide
4. execute proper keyword research
5. keyword

Read our [ultimate guide to keyword research](#) to learn more about keyword research and keyword strategy.

Get help to start with keyword research!

At Yoast, we do our very best to help you optimize your site for the search engines. Keyword research, however, is something you'll have to do yourself. But we can help you to start with keyword research!

Our [SEO copywriting training](#), contains a module about keyword research. In this module, you'll learn how to execute proper keyword research. As part of this module, you'll have to complete an assignment in which you'll execute your very own keyword research. You'll receive personal feedback afterwards. From now on we'll offer this module (including the assignment, and some extra material) as a separate course as well! Check out our [Keyword research training](#) for more information.

Keyword research: The ultimate guide

Before writing content, you'll have to decide what terms you want to be found for. You'll have to get inside people's heads and find out what words they use while searching. Eventually, you can use exactly these terms in your content and make sure you start ranking for them. Keyword research is the first step in SEO copywriting and an essential part of any SEO strategy. In this ultimate guide, I'll guide you through the many steps in keyword research.

- [What is keyword research?](#)
- [Why is keyword research important?](#)
- [Executing keyword research](#)
- [Step 1: what is your mission?](#)
- [Step 2: make a list of keywords](#)
 - [Tools you can use](#)
- [Step 3: construct landing pages](#)
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 - [Ad hoc keyword research strategies](#)
- [The importance of long tail keyword strategy](#)
- [Multiple focus keywords](#)
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What is keyword research?

Before we start explaining the process of keyword research, we'll explain the most important concepts of keyword research.

Keyword research can be defined as the activity you undertake in order to come up with an extensive list of keywords you would like to rank for.

Keyword strategy can be defined as all the decisions you make on the basis of that keyword research.

Keyword research: The ultimate guide

Key phrases are keywords consisting of multiple words. We tend to use the word keyword all the time, but we don't necessarily mean it's only one word. 'WordPress SEO' is a keyword, as is 'Google Analytics plugin'. Keywords can contain multiple words! We will refer to these key phrases as keywords throughout this guide.

Long tail keywords are more specific and less common. They focus more on a niche. The longer (and more specific) search terms are, the easier it will be to rank for the term. Keywords that are more specific (and often longer) are usually referred to as long tail keywords.

Focus keyword is the keyword or the key phrase you would like your page to be found for. You insert a focus keyword in the metabox of the [Yoast SEO plugin](#).

Why is keyword research important?

Proper keyword research will make clear what search terms are used by your audience. And this is of great importance. At Yoast, we regularly encounter clients that have a specific set of words they use when referencing their products, while their target group uses a completely different set of words. These clients' sites aren't found because of a mismatch in word use.

Optimizing for words that people don't use doesn't make any sense. Doing good keyword research makes sure that you use the words your target audience uses and therefore makes the whole effort of optimizing your website worthwhile.

[Read more: 'The basis of keyword research' »](#)

Executing keyword research

Keyword research: The ultimate guide

In our view, keyword research has three steps. First, you write down the mission of your business. Next, you make a list of all the keywords you want to be found for. Finally, you create landing pages for all keywords. In this ultimate guide, we will take you through these three steps in much more detail.

We'll guide you through the entire process of executing keyword research step by step. We'll give practical tips to easily start your own keyword research.

Step 1: what is your mission?

Before starting anything, you'll have to think about your mission. You have to think about questions like: who are you? What is your website about? What makes it special? And what promise do you make on your website?

[Keep reading: 'What is the mission of your website' »](#)

A lot of people can't answer these questions effectively at first. You have to figure out what makes you stand out from the rest. So take your time and literally write down your mission on a piece of paper. A computer or an iPad will do as well of course. Once you're able to answer these questions in detail, you have taken the first and most important step in your keyword strategy.

Step 2: make a list of keywords

The second step of executing your keyword research is creating a list of keywords. With your mission in mind, you should try to get into the heads of your potential buyers. What will these people be looking for? What kind of search terms could they be using while looking for your amazing service or product? Ask yourself these questions and write down as many answers as you possibly can.

Keyword research: The ultimate guide

If your mission is clear, you will have a rather clear image of your niche and your unique selling points (the things that set your business apart from others). These will be the terms you want to be found for.

Tools you can use

Making a list of possible search terms remains hard. And up until a few years ago, doing your keyword research was much easier. You could simply check Google Analytics to see with which terms people found your website. Unfortunately, that is no longer possible. So you're pretty much left in the dark about the terms people use in search engines to end up at your website. Luckily, there are still some other tools which make your keyword research a bit easier. Read our post about tools you can use in your keyword research for more tips and tricks.

Step 3: construct landing pages

The third step towards a long term keyword strategy is to create awesome landing pages for all the keywords you want to be found for. We would advise you to do that in a well structured manner. Start by putting the list of keywords you have made in a table. A table (use for instance Excel or Google Docs /Sheets to set one up) forces you to set up a structure and to make a landing page for all the search terms you came up with. Put the search terms in the first column and add columns in which you put the different levels of your site's structure.

Construct a landing page for every search term you came up with. You do not have to create all these pages immediately. This could very well be a long term thing. The more specific your search term is, the further down into your site structure this term's landing page belongs.

[Read on: 'How to clean up your site structure' »](#)

Keyword research: The ultimate guide

After completing your keyword research, you should have a clear overview of the terms people use and the terms you want the pages on your site to be found for. This overview should function as a guidance for writing content on your website.

Long term keyword strategy

No website should rely on one single keyword or one keyphrase for its traffic. You should use your mission as a starting point, take our three steps in doing proper keyword research and work towards a solid base: a keyword strategy. In this section of our ultimate guide, we will explain why it's important to have a long term keyword strategy.

How many keywords?

It is very hard to give an exact number of keywords you should focus on. And then again, it's very simple. You just have to have a large number, as large a number that is feasible for you. More than a 1000 keywords is probably more than you can chew off.

Even if you're a reasonably small business, you'll probably end up with a couple hundred keywords. But you don't have to have pages for all of these immediately. The great thing about having a Content Management System (CMS) like WordPress is that you can incrementally add content. Think about what keywords you would like to rank for now, and which ones aren't that important (yet). Make some kind of priority and plan the creation of your content.

[Read more: 'How to clean up your site structure' »](#)

Ad hoc keyword research strategies

Keyword research: The ultimate guide

In an ideal world, you would do your keyword research, make a beautiful table and create landing pages. Your site structure would be flawless and you would blog and write every day making your site rank higher and higher in Google. Unfortunately, we live in the real world.

Of course, your keyword research will not always be as extensive. And some posts or articles aren't written as part of an awesome strategy, but just because the topic was in the news or you had some inspiration. That's just how these things work. But that doesn't have to be a problem.

If you're writing something that does not fit your strategy (exactly), this doesn't mean you should not aim at making that content rank. Perhaps you can use it to rank on something which remotely relates to the terms in the list of your keyword strategy. Use tools like Google Trends to choose which keyword you'd like to rank for. At least take some time to think about how to fit your article or blog in your strategy. After all, if you are writing valuable content, you might as well make it rank!

The importance of long tail keyword strategy

Focusing on long tail keywords should be an important part of a long term keyword research strategy. Long tail keywords are keywords or key phrases that are more specific (and usually longer) than more common "head" keywords. Long tail keywords get less search traffic, but will usually have a higher conversion value, as they focus on a more specific product or topic. Read [our post about the importance of long tail keywords](#) if you want to know why you should focus on long tail keywords when optimizing your site.

[Keep reading: 'Befriend the long tail' »](#)

Multiple focus keywords

Keyword research: The ultimate guide

In Yoast SEO Premium you're able to focus on multiple keywords. If you use our tool correctly, your text can be optimized for up to five keywords. In our post [about multiple focus keywords](#) , we explain to you why it's important to use the multiple focus keyword functionality while optimizing your text.

[Read on: 'How to choose the perfect focus keyword' »](#)

Conclusion on keyword research

Doing keyword research should be the start of any sustainable SEO strategy. The result of keyword research will be an extensive list of keywords for which you'd like to be found. The hardest part is yet to begin: the content writing. You should write articles and blogpost on every single keyword you would like to be found for. That'll be quite a challenge!

7 keyword research mistakes you should avoid • Yoast

Keyword research should be the first step of every SEO strategy. Thinking about the words you want to rank for is really the first and foremost step you need to take. Still, keyword research can be quite daunting. So, which keyword research mistakes should you avoid at all times? In this post, I'll talk you through the most common keyword research mistakes people seem to be making. Avoiding these mistakes will help you to set up a successful keyword research strategy.

1. Not executing your keyword research correctly

Doing proper keyword research can be a tough job. Perhaps you think that you don't need to do it very extensively. You just *know* what your audience will search for, right? Do not make that mistake! Take some time to really dive into the language of your audience. Which words do they use? What terms do they search for?

The result of your keyword research should be an extensive list of keywords you would like to rank for. Make sure to update your keyword research regularly. Your audience may change, as may your business focus and business needs. That could have implications for your keyword strategy as well.

[Read more: 'Keyword research: the ultimate guide' »](#)

2. Aiming at unrealistic keywords

Make sure to aim for realistic keywords. Some niches are very competitive. Ranking in competitive niches is hard if you're just starting your website or business. If you're just starting out, you shouldn't aim on the competitive 'head' keywords (yet). Instead, you should focus on long tail keywords (which are easier to rank for and have a higher chance to convert).

7 keyword research mistakes you should avoid • Yoast

For instance, if you start a blog about fitness it will be too hard to start ranking for the term ‘fitness’. Find out which aspects of your blog are unique and try ranking for those terms. Perhaps you are writing about fitness exercises for retired people. Aiming to rank for ‘fitness for retired people’ could be a good strategy. In that case, you should also aim for ‘fitness for seniors’, ‘fitness for older adults’ and so on.

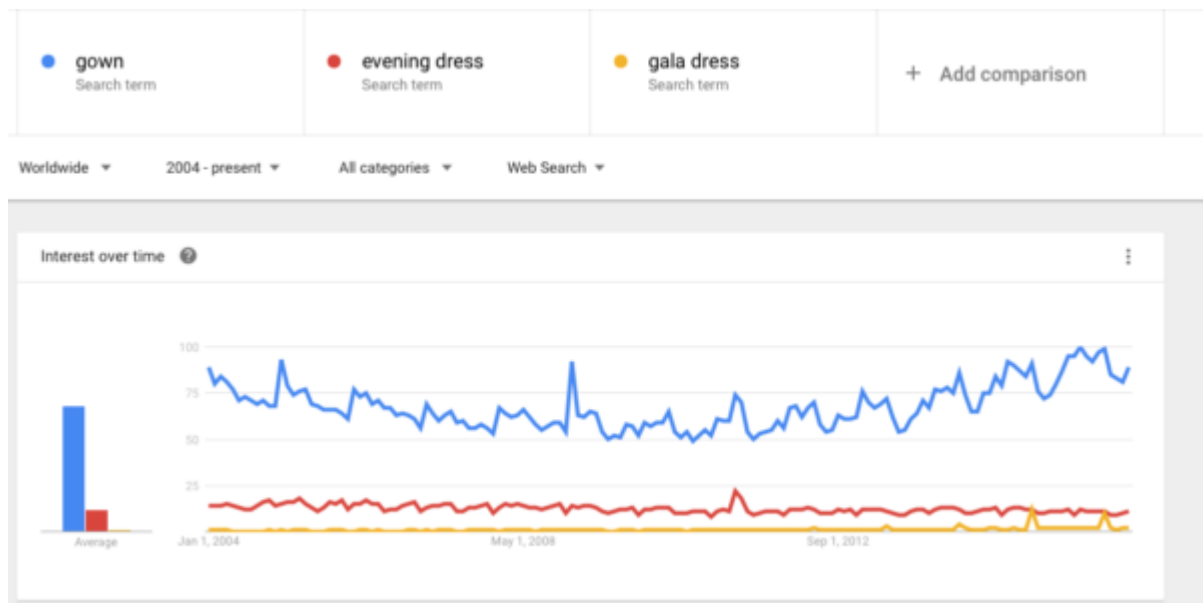
If you have been around in your niche for a little longer and you’re succeeding in ranking on long tail keywords, you could aim to rank for more head terms as well. Ranking for competitive keywords should be part of a long-term successful keyword research strategy.

[Keep reading: ‘Long tail keywords: why they deserve your focus’ »](#)

3. Using irrelevant keywords

The keywords you are aiming to rank for should be the same words your customers use. You should always use the language of your audience. Imagine yourself selling dresses for gala events. In your marketing, you refer to these dresses as gala dresses. However, people do not search for gala dresses. They search for ‘gown’ or ‘evening dress’. You won’t get much traffic for the search term ‘gala dress’ compared to the search terms ‘gown’ or ‘evening dress’.

7 keyword research mistakes you should avoid • Yoast



4. Focusing on singular instead of plural

Always check whether you should use the plural or the singular form of a specific keyword. Should you aim to rank for 'ballet shoe' or for 'ballet shoes'? Do people search for 'holiday home' or 'holiday homes'. Always check whether you should use singular or plural with [Google Trends](#). Whether you should use a singular or a plural depends on your specific keyword.

5. Aiming for keywords without traffic

Long tail keywords are a great way to start your keyword strategy. These words gain less traffic, but you'll have a higher chance to convert your visitors into buyers or returning visitors. People that use specific terms to search for exactly that thing you're writing about are just a very good match. However, if your keyword is too specific and doesn't get any traffic, it won't help your SEO. So make sure to aim for those long tail keywords that actually have some traffic!

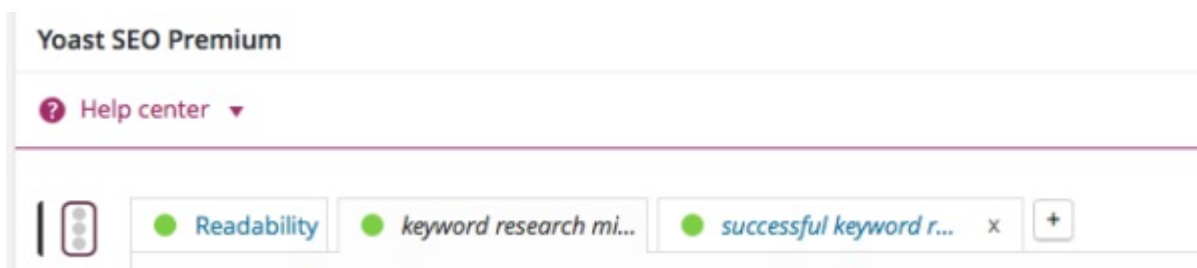
6. Forgetting to evaluate

7 keyword research mistakes you should avoid • Yoast

If you're aiming to rank for certain terms, make sure to check whether you succeed. You need to evaluate regularly if people actually find your articles. In order to do so, you should definitely google your proposed focus keyword every now and then. Just check if your article turns up in the results. If you forget to evaluate, you don't know whether you could aim for more competitive keywords or you should focus on long tail variants.

7. Focusing on only one keyword per post

If you write a decent blog post, you could aim to rank for more than one search term. If you're able to do that (without just stretching it), you should definitely do so. For this blog post about keyword research mistakes, for instance, I am aiming to rank for 'keyword research mistakes' and on 'successful keyword research strategy'. Our [Yoast SEO premium plugin](#) helps you to optimize your post for more than one focus keyword.



Conclusion: avoid these mistakes and have a successful keyword research strategy

Executing keyword research takes a lot of time. It's important that you take that time and really think about the terms you want to rank for. Read [Keyword research: the ultimate guide](#) for lots of practical tips that'll help you to set up a successful keyword research strategy.

How to Manually Submit Your Site to the Search Engines

[Home](#) » [Web Marketing](#) » [Search Engine Optimization](#) » How to Submit Your Site to the Search Engines

We highly recommend manually submitting your website pages to the search engines. That said, the search engines give no guarantee of ranking your page because you have manually submitted it. It is a tool that we use to let the search engines know that we have new information to share.

We suggest manual submission of your site's pages to Google, Yahoo! and Bing because they have made it apparent that it is what they prefer. The search engines have implemented manual submission as a best practice to protect themselves from extreme levels of spam.

It is important to submit your site's pages to all of the major search engines (Google, Yahoo!, Bing) because even though the other engines have less traffic than Google, they still have millions of users. When you submit a URL or domain name to the search engines, it could take anywhere from two to four weeks to get indexed. Sometimes your page will not get indexed after you submit it, if that occurs, wait four weeks and then resubmit the page again.

If you are unhappy with your web page's ranking results, take a look at what your competition is doing. Make sure you are following the basic rules of search engine optimization. Make changes to the page and resubmit it to the search engines. You can submit your pages a maximum of two times per month until you are listed in the major search engines' results.

Submit Site to Google

Google's URL submit is very quick and easy. Just go to [Google's web page for URL submitting](#), type in your URL, type in the message that ensures Google you are an individual not a software robot and click "add URL."

How to Manually Submit Your Site to the Search Engines

You can also submit your site map to Google via their [Webmaster Tools](#).

Submit Site to Yahoo!

Since 2010, Yahoo search has been powered by Microsoft's Bing search engine. When you submit your site to Bing you will also show up in Yahoo's search results. See below on how to submit your site to Bing. Yahoo! had a paid submission process in the past, although Yahoo! Directory is no longer available.

Submit Site to Bing

Bing allows you to submit your URL, just like Google. You will first need to have a Bing login, then go to Bing's [Webmaster Tools](#) page. Once logged in simply type in the URL of your homepage and press "submit". You will also want to have the URL for the .xml version of your sitemap readily available, as it will ask for this in the first step of submitting your domain. After submitting you will have to verify ownership of the domain. This can be a little tricky if you are not savvy with HTML, as you will need to add a small snippet of code to the header of your site in order to pass this verification process. Once verified, you are finished!

Submit Site to Ask

Ask no longer allows you to submit your sitemap. This was a feature they disabled, and now solely crawl sites.

How to Manually Submit Your Site to the Search Engines

At Smart Solutions, we add all of our clients' sitemaps to the auto-discovery directive, robots.txt. This ensures that all of the search engines automatically know about your sitemap. It does not hurt to manually submit your sitemaps, for the search engines that allow it.



All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations

In 1997, Google's founders created an [algorithmic method](#) to determine importance and popularity based on several key principles:

- Links on the web can be interpreted as votes that are cast by the source for the target
- All votes are, initially, considered equal
- Over the course of executing the algorithm on a link graph, pages which receive more votes become more important
- More important pages cast more important votes
- The votes a page can cast are a function of that page's importance, divided by the number of votes/links it casts

That algorithm, of course, was PageRank, and it changed the course of web search, providing tremendous value to Google's early efforts around quality and relevancy in results. As knowledge of PageRank spread, those with a vested interest in influencing the search rankings (SEOs) found ways to leverage this information for their websites and pages.

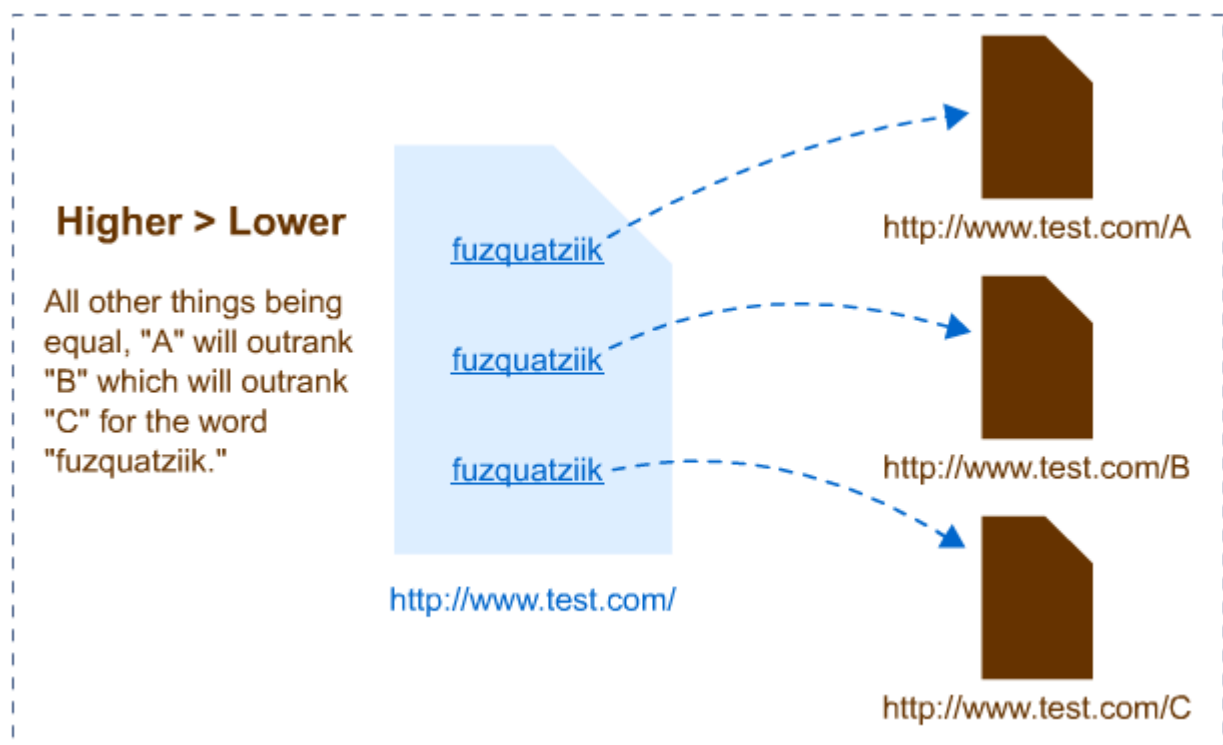
But, Google didn't stand still or rest on their laurels in the field of link analysis. They innovated, leveraging signals like anchor text, trust, hubs & authorities, topic modeling and even human activity to influence the weight a link might carry. Yet, unfortunately, many in the SEO field are still unaware of these changes and how they impact external marketing and link acquisition best practices.

In this post, I'm going to walk through ten principles of link valuation that can be observed, tested and, in some cases, have been patented. I'd like to extend special thanks to Bill Slawski from [SEO By the Sea](#), whose recent posts on [Google's Reasonable Surfer Model](#) and [What Makes a Good Seed Site for Search Engine Web Crawls?](#) were catalysts (and sources) for this post.

All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations

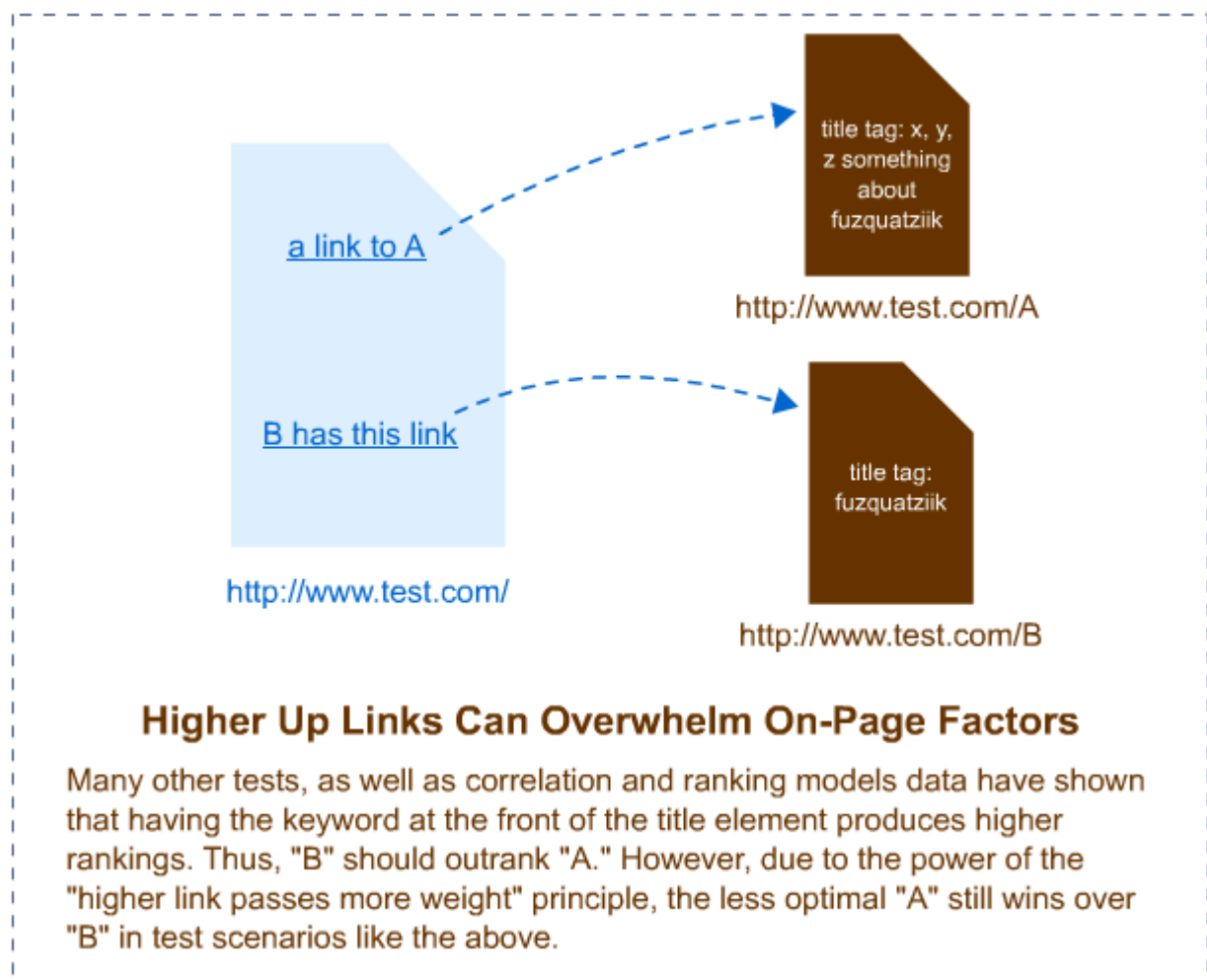
As you read through the following 10 issues, please note that these are not hard and fast rules. They are, from our perspective, accurate based on our experiences, testing and observation, but as with all things in SEO, this is opinion. We invite and strongly encourage readers to test these themselves. Nothing is better for learning SEO than going out and experimenting in the wild.

#1 - Links Higher Up in HTML Code Cast More Powerful Votes



All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations

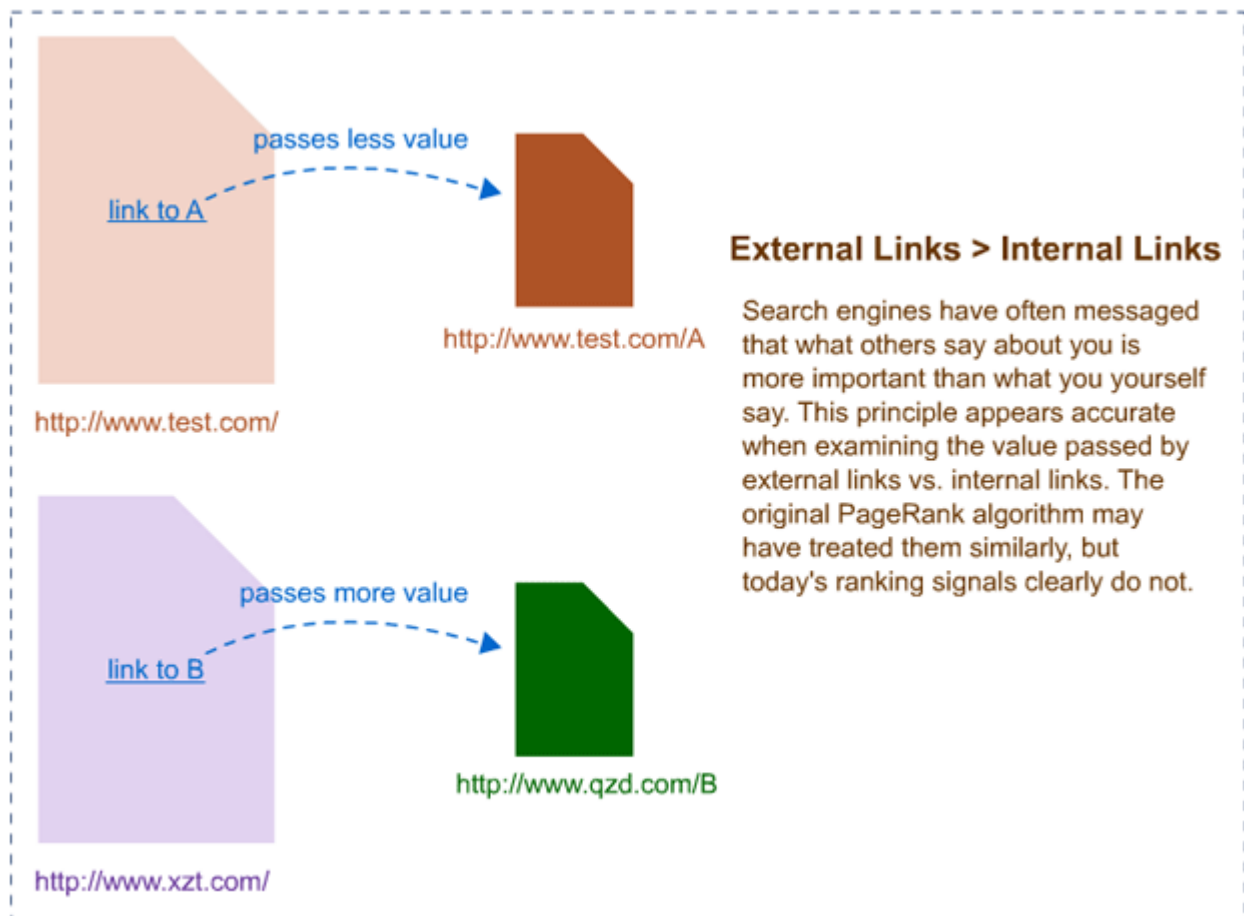
Whenever we (or many other SEOs we've talked to) conduct tests of page or link features in (hopefully) controlled environments on the web, we/they find that links higher up in the HTML code of a page seem to pass more ranking ability/value than those lower down. This certainly fits with the recently granted Google patent application - [Ranking Documents Based on User Behavior and/or Feature Data](#), which suggested a number of items that may be considered in the way that link metrics are passed.



Those who've leveraged testing environments also often struggle against the power of the "higher link wins" phenomenon, and it can take a surprising amount of on-page optimization to overcome the power the higher link carries.

All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations

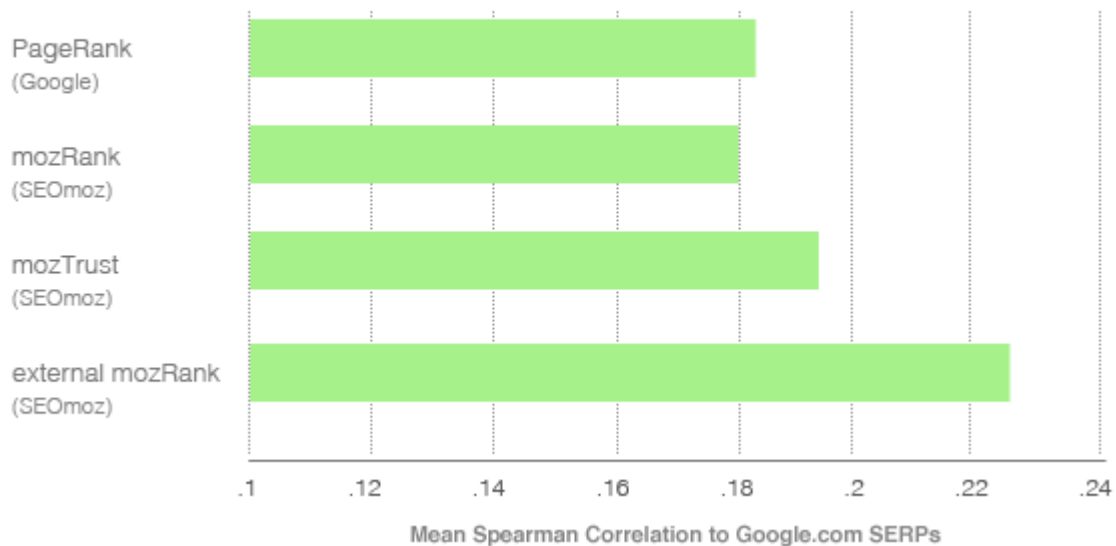
#2 - External Links are More Influential than Internal Links



There's little surprise here, but if you recall, the original PageRank concept makes no mention of external vs. internal links counting differently. It's quite likely that other, more recently created metrics (post-1997) do reward external links over internal links. You can see this in the [correlation data from our post](#) a few weeks back noting that external mozRank (the "PageRank" sent from external pages) had a much higher correlation with rankings than standard mozRank (PageRank):

All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations

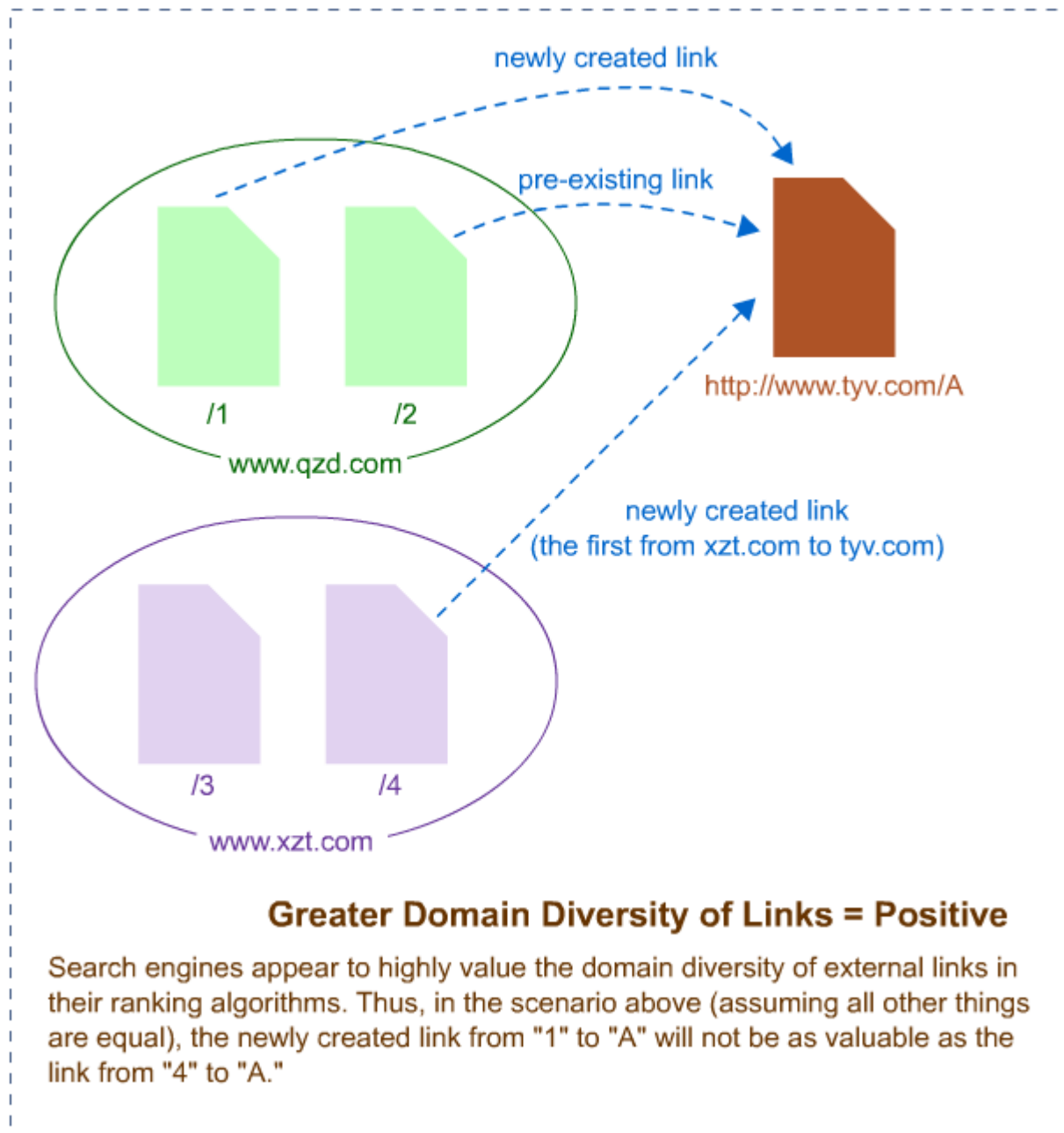
● Iterative PR Like Algorithms



I don't think it's a stretch to imagine Google separately calculating/parsing out external PageRank vs. Internal PageRank and potentially using them in different ways for page valuation in the rankings.

#3 - Links from Unique Domains Matter More than Links from Previously Linking Sites

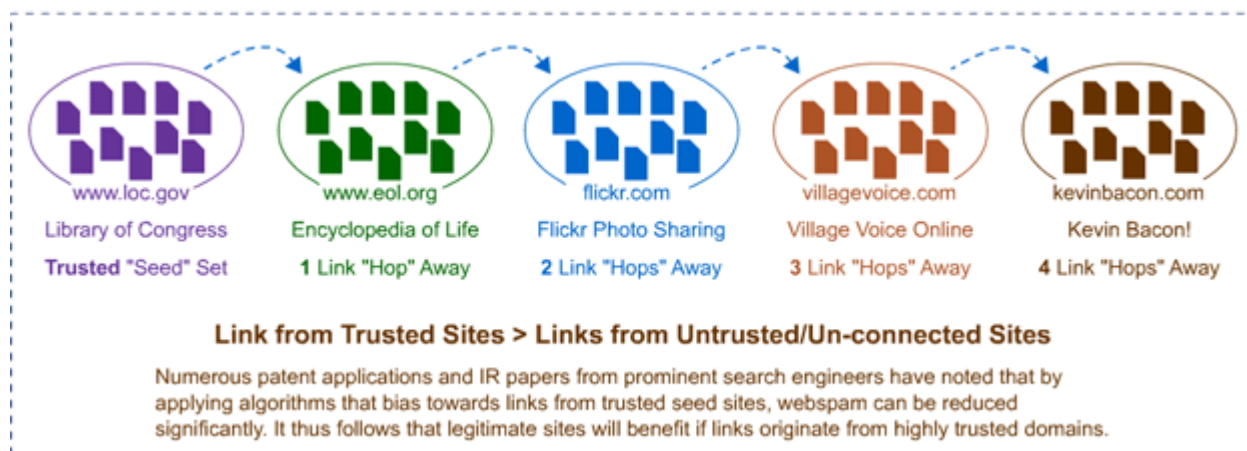
All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations



All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations

Speaking of correlation data, no single, simple metric is better correlated with rankings in Google's results than the number of unique domains containing an external link to a given page. This strongly suggests that a diversity component is at play in the ranking systems and that it's better to have 50 links from 50 different domains than to have 500 more links from a site that already links to you. Curiously again, the original PageRank algorithm makes no provision for this, which could be one reason sitewide links from domains with many high-PageRank pages worked so well in those early years after Google's launch.

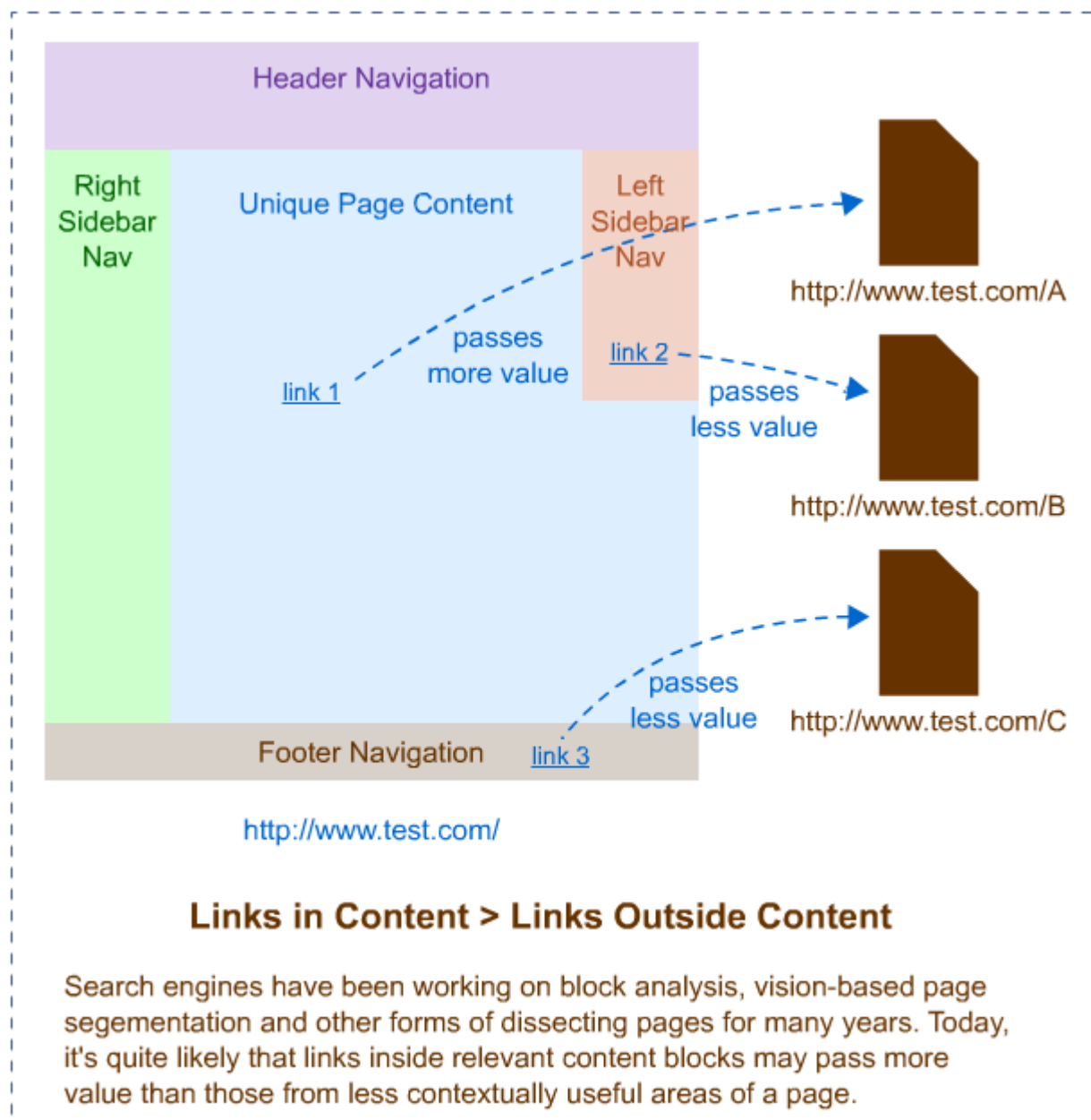
#4 - Links from Sites Closer to a Trusted Seed Set Pass More Value



We've [talked previously about TrustRank](#) on SEOmoz and have generally reference the Yahoo! research paper - [Combating Webspam with TrustRank](#). However, Google's certainly done plenty on this front as well (as [Bill covers here](#)) and this [patent application on selecting trusted seed sites](#) certainly speaks to the ongoing need and value of this methodology. Linkscape's own [mozTrust score](#) functions in precisely this way, using a PageRank-like algorithm that's biased to only flow link juice from trusted seed sites rather than equally from across the web.

All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations

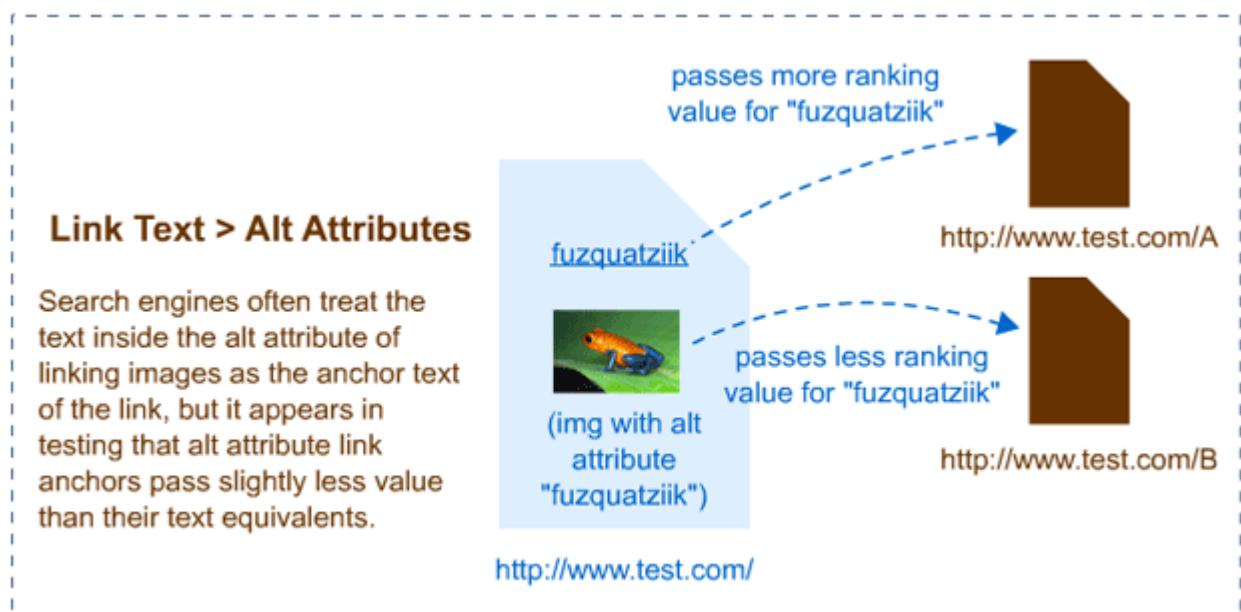
#5 - Links from "Inside" Unique Content Pass More Value than Those from Footers/Sidebar/Navigation



All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations

Papers like [Microsoft's VIPS](#) (Vision Based Page Segmentation), Google's [Document Ranking Based on Semantic Distance](#), and the recent [Reasonable Surfer stuff](#) all suggest that valuing links from content more highly than those in sidebars or footers can have net positive impacts on avoiding spam and manipulation. As webmasters and SEOs, we can certainly attest to the fact that a lot of paid links exist in these sections of sites and that getting non-natural links from inside content is much more difficult.

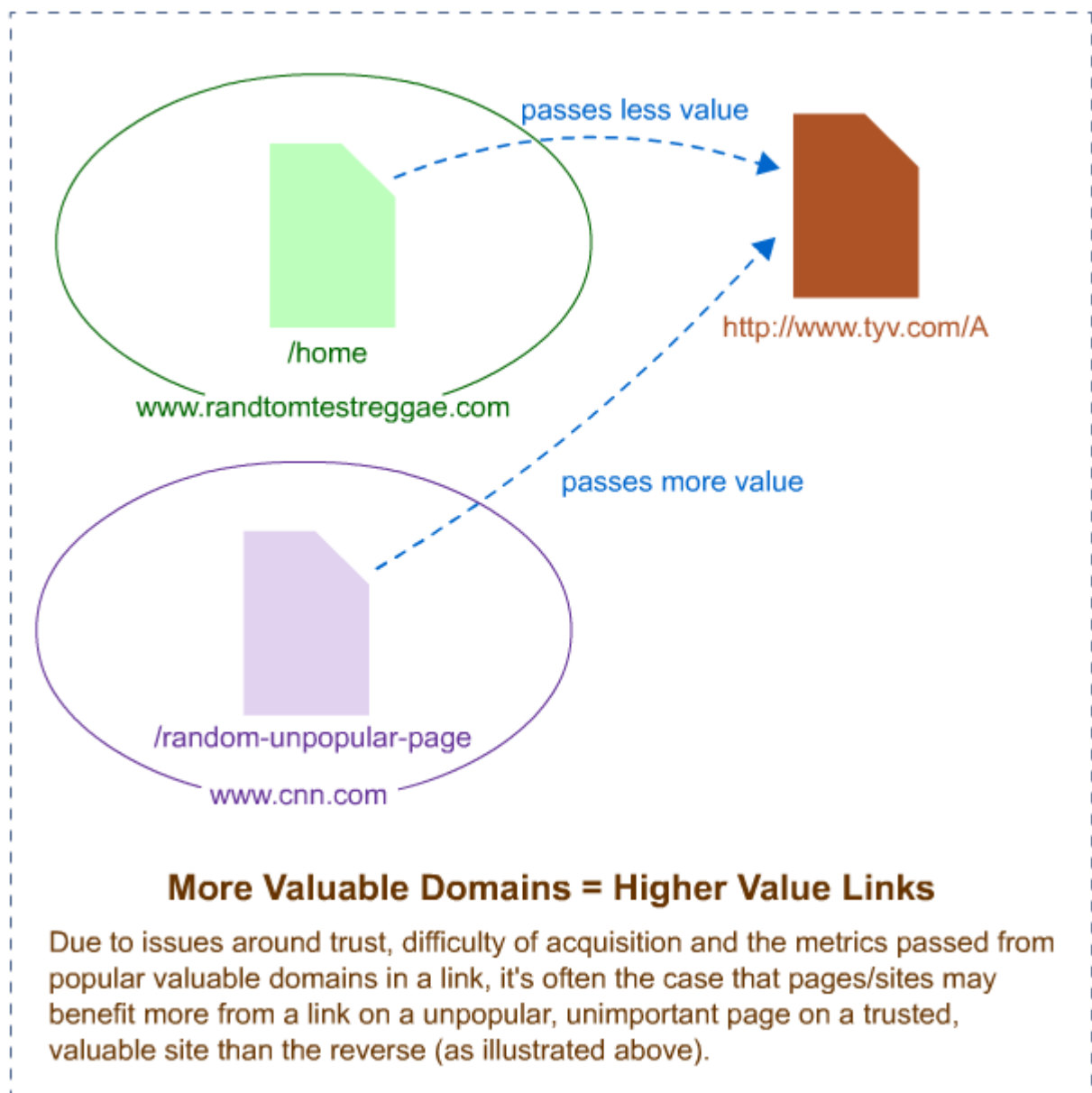
#6 - Keywords in HTML Text Pass More Value than those in Alt Attributes of Linked Images



This one isn't covered in any papers or patents (to my knowledge), but our testing has shown (and testing from others supports) that anchor text carried through HTML is somehow more potent or valued than that from alt attributes in image links. That's not to say we should run out and ditch image links, badges or the alt attributes they carry. It's just good to be aware that Google seems to have this bias (perhaps it will be temporary).

All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations

#7 - Links from More Important, Popular, Trusted Sites Pass More Value (even from less important pages)



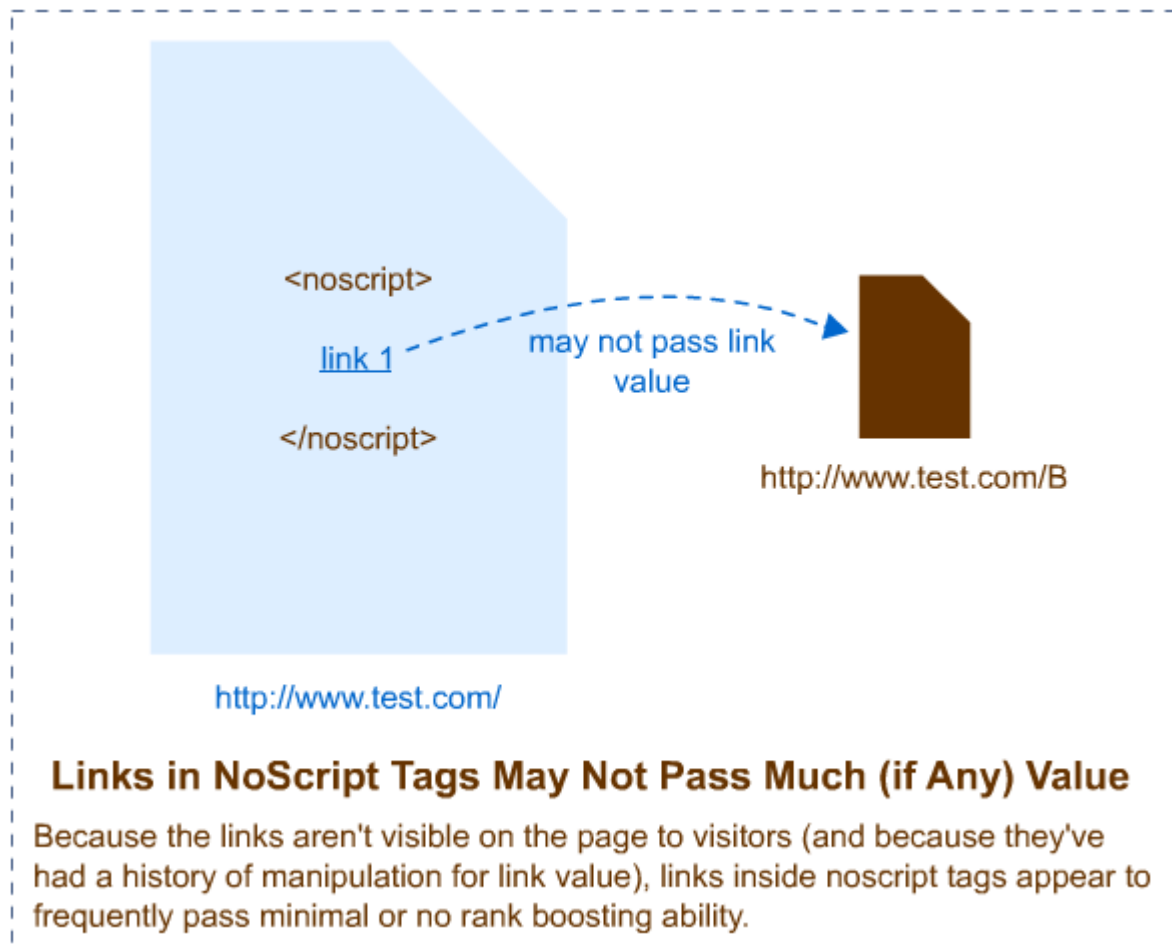
All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations

We've likely all experienced the sinking feeling of seeing a competitor with fewer and what appear to be links from less powerful pages outranking us. This may be somewhat explained by the value of a domain to pass along value via a link that may not be fully reflected in page-level metrics. It can also help search engines to combat spam and provide more trusted results in general. If links from sites that rarely link to junk pass significantly more than those whose link practices and impact on the web overall may be questionable, they can much better control quality.

NOTE: Having trouble digging up the papers/patents on this one; I'll try to revisit and find them tomorrow.

#8 - Links Contained Within NoScript Tags Pass Lower (and Possibly No) Value

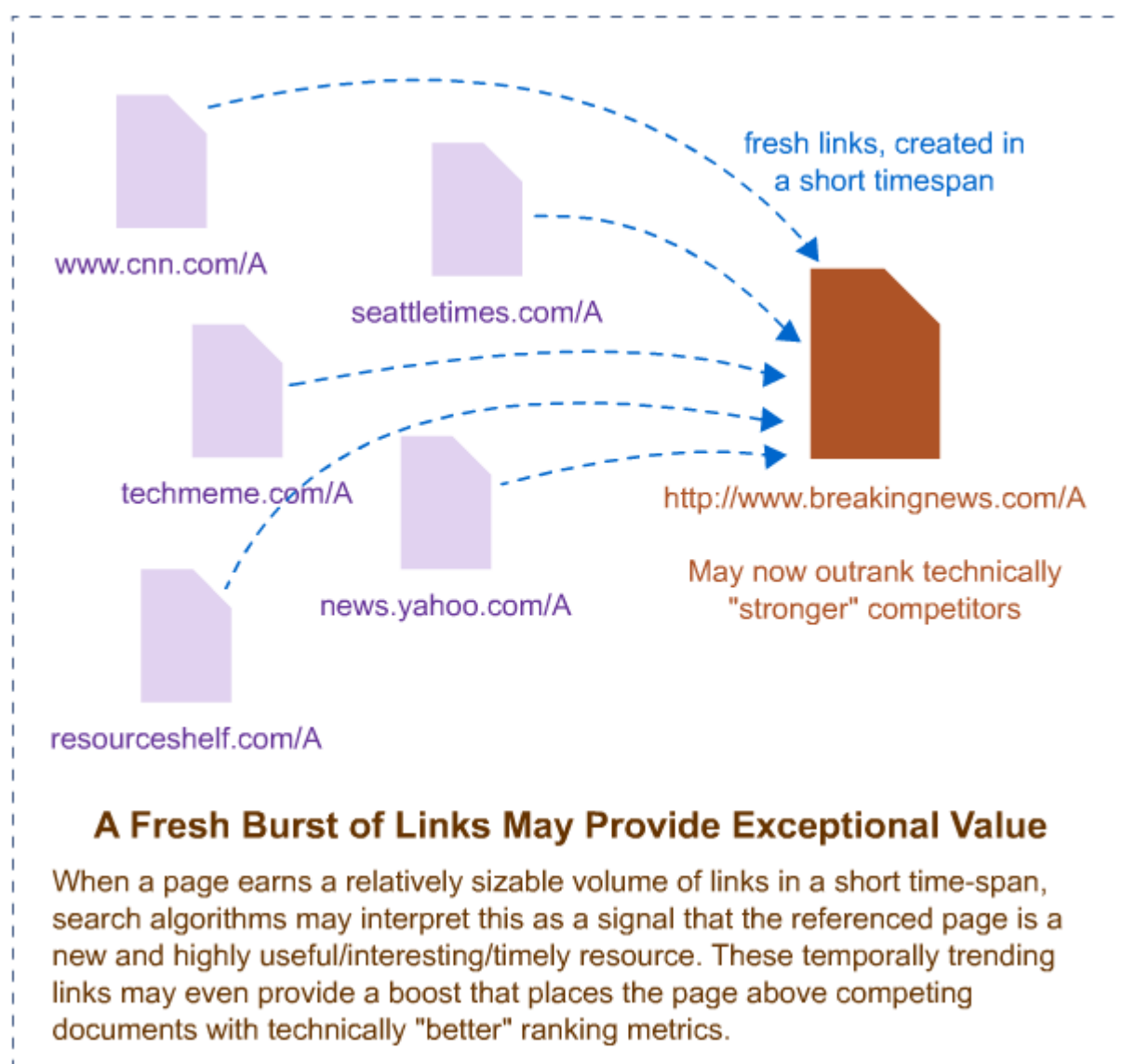
All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations



Over the years, this phenomenon has been reported and contradicted numerous times. Our testing certainly suggested that noscript links don't pass value, but that may not be true in every case. It is why we included the ability to filter noscript in Linkscope, but the quantity of links overall on the web inside this tag is quite small.

#9 - A Burst of New Links May Enable a Document to Overcome "Stronger" Competition Temporarily (or in Perpetuity)

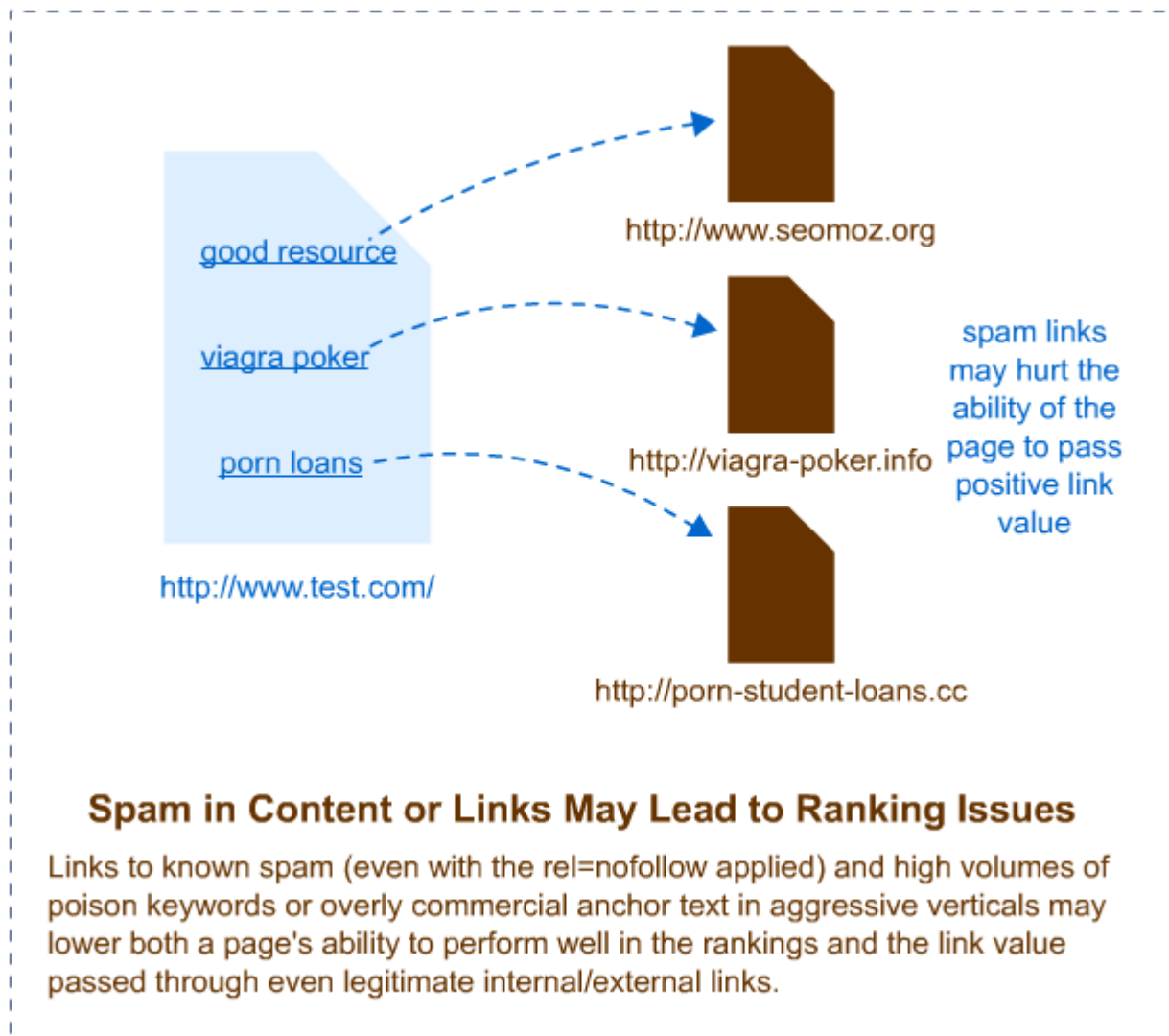
All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations



Apart from even [Google's QDF](#) (Query Deserves Freshness) algorithm, which may value more recently created and linked-to content in certain "trending" searches, it appears that the engine also uses temporal signals around linking to both evaluate spam/manipulation and reward pages that earn a large number of references in a short period of time. Google's patent on [Information Retrieval Based on Historical Data](#) first suggested the use of temporal data, but the model has likely seen revision and refinement since that time.

All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations

#10 - Pages that Link to WebSpam May Devalue the Other Links they Host



All Links are Not Created Equal: 10 Illustrations

I was fascinated to see Richard Baxter's own experiments on this in his post - [Google Page Level Penalty for Comment Spam](#). Since then, I've been keeping an eye on some popular, valuable blog posts that have received similarly overwhelming spam and, low and behold, the pattern seems verifiable. Webmasters would be wise to keep up to date on their spam removal to avoid arousing potential ranking penalties from Google (and the possible loss of link value).

But what about classic "PageRank" - the score of which we get a tiny inkling from the Google toolbar's green pixels? I'd actually surmise that while many (possibly all) of the features about links discussed above make their way into the ranking process, PR has stayed relatively unchanged from its classic concept. My reasoning? SEOmoz's own mozRank, which correlates remarkably well with toolbar PR (off on avg. by 0.42 w/ 0.25 being "perfect" due to the 2 extra significant digits we display) and is calculated with very similar intuition to that of the original PageRank paper. If I had to guess (and I really am guessing), I'd say that Google's maintained classic PR because they find the simple heuristic useful for some tasks (likely including crawling/indexation priority), and have adopted many more metrics to fit into the algorithmic pie.

As always, we're looking forward to your feedback and hope that some of you will take up the challenge to test these on your own sites or inside test environments and report back with your findings.

p.s. I finished this post at nearly 3am (and have a board meeting tomorrow), so please excuse the odd typo or missed link. Hopefully Jen will take a red pen to this in the morning!

Domains - SEO Best Practices

Domain names are the human-readable Internet addresses of websites. Root domains, which are identified by their domain names, have extensions such as .com, .org, .net, etc. (Ex. <http://www.example.com>) Subdomains are a lower-level component of a root domain and precede the domain name. (Ex. <http://subdomain.domain.com>)

Top Tips

- **Word Separators** Avoid hyphens. Hyphens detract from credibility and can act as a spam indicator.
- **Top-Level Domain (TLD)** Top-level domains (like .com) are the extensions associated with domain names. For best ranking results, avoid uncommon top-level domains (TLDs). Like hyphens, TLDs such as .info, .cc, .ws, and .name are spam indicators.
- **Length** Avoid domain names longer than 15 characters. Short domain names are easier to remember, easier to share, and have a smaller chance of resulting in typos.

What are Domains?

Root Domains

A root domain is the top level hierarchy of a domain. Root domains are purchased from registrars. The following are examples of root domains:

- *.example.org
- *.moz.com
- *.blogspot.com

Subdomains

A subdomain is a "third level" domain name that is part of a larger, top-level domain. For example, "blog.example.com" and "english.example.com" are both subdomains of the ".example.com" root domain. Subdomains are free to create under any root domain that a webmaster controls.

Domains - SEO Best Practices

The two most common subdomain choices are:

- <http://www.example.com> (www is the subdomain)
- <http://example.com> (has no subdomain)

These are also the subdomains that commonly result in canonicalization errors.

SEO Best Practice

To maximize search engine-referred traffic, it is important to keep each of the following elements in mind:

1. Domain Name Memorability

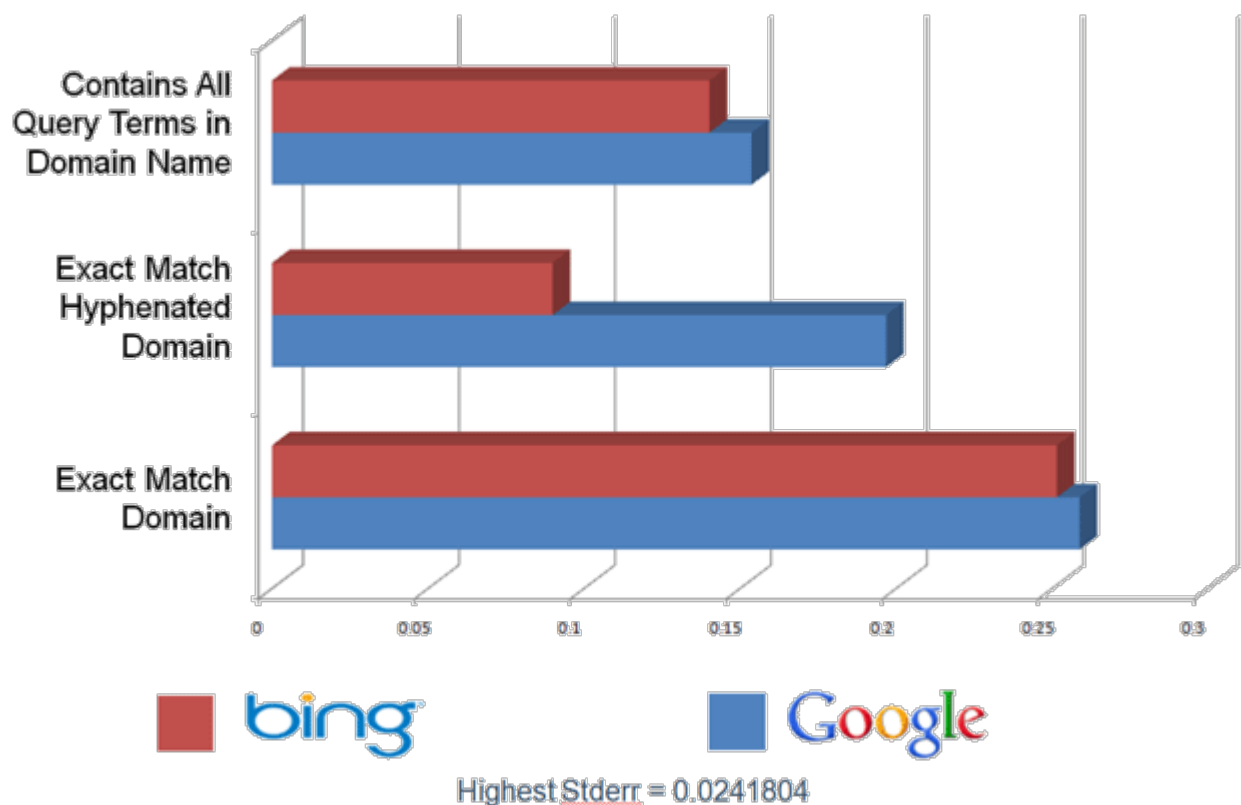
There are a number of considerations when selecting a domain name. Among them are making the name short, easy to remember, and easy to type. It is also important that the name be easy to type into a browser. This is especially true for websites that rely on word-of-mouth advertising, which forces people to type domain names they might not be familiar with into their web browser.

2. Keyword-rich domains

Ideally, webmasters should strike a balance between finding a catchy, unique, brand-friendly domain name and having a domain that contains [keywords they are trying to target](#). The benefit of a keyword-rich domain is two-fold. First, the domain name itself is a ranking factor that the engines consider when calculating ranking order. Second, having relevant keywords in a domain name is beneficial because the domain name is the text that other Internet users will use as [anchor text](#) when linking. Since keywords in anchor text are an important ranking factor, having these keywords in a domain name can have a positive impact on ranking.

Domains - SEO Best Practices

In recent years Google has made several changes that have de-prioritized sites with keyword-rich domains that aren't otherwise high-quality. Having a keyword in your domain can still be beneficial, but it can also lead to closer scrutiny and a possible negative ranking effect from search engines—so tread carefully. For more on this topic, read [The Exact Match Domain Playbook: A Guide and Best Practices for EMDs](#).



From: [Are Exact Match Domains Too Powerful?](#)

3. Hyphens

If your domain name is two words (like [www.examplesite.com](#)), you may want to separate the words with a hyphen for readability: [www.example-site.com](#). That said, use of hyphens also correlates highly with spammy behavior—and more than one hyphen should not be used in a domain name. For this reason, it's generally better to stick to domain names containing only one or two words.

4. Non-.com Top-Level Domains (TLDs)

Domains - SEO Best Practices

When a webmaster registers a domain name, they will be given the option to buy additional TLDs. In order to maximize the direct traffic to a domain, it is advised that webmasters should only buy a domain if the .com version is available. Additionally, it is not recommend that SEO-conscious webmasters purchase low quality TLDs such as .biz, .info, .ws, .name, etc. as a means of increasing traffic.

5. Subdomains or Sub-folders

Since search engines keep different metrics for domains than they do subdomains, it is recommended that webmasters place link-worthy content like blogs in subfolders rather than subdomains. (i.e. www.example.com/blog/ rather than blog.example.com) The notable exceptions to this are language-specific websites. (i.e., en.example.com for the English version of the website).

6. Buying & Redirecting Domains

Buying web pages for their links and redirecting them to another site has long been a practice employed by SEOs. Though this has been effective in the past, industry leaders such as Search Engine Land's Danny Sullivan have posted about [buying domains](#). They suggest that Google largely devalues links from sites once they are expired or when ownership changes.

7. Domain Registration Length

The notion that domain registration length matters as an SEO factor is a myth. When asked about domain registration length, Google's Matt Cutts said, "To the best of my knowledge, no search engine has ever confirmed that they use length of registration as a factor in scoring. If a company is asserting that as a fact, that would be troubling. The primary reason to renew a domain would be if it's your main domain, you plan to keep it for a while, or you'd prefer the convenience of renewing so that you don't need to stress about your domain expiring."

8. Moving Domains

Domains - SEO Best Practices

If a webmaster needs to move one domain to another, there are several critical factors to consider. It's also important to set up the redirects on a page-to-page basis such that sub-folders and deep content pages are redirected to corresponding sub-folders and deep content pages on the new domain. SEOs should avoid redirecting all pages from one domain to the homepage of another domain. For more information, see [Achieving an SEO-Friendly Domain Migration: The Infographic](#).

How to properly delete a page from your site • Yoast

When you delete a page (or post) from your site, you delete one or more URLs too. That old URL, when visited, will usually return a 404 not found error. But is that what you wanted? Maybe that page should be redirected somewhere. If not, and you deliberately deleted that content, serving a 410 header would actually be a better idea. This post explains the choices you have and how to make them.



Redirect or delete a page completely?

The first choice you have to make is whether or not the content you deleted has a proper equivalent on your site. Think of it this way: if I clicked on a link to the page you deleted, would there be another page on your site that gives me the information I was expecting? If that's true for a specific page on your site for a majority of the people clicking on that link, you should redirect the deleted URL to that page.

How to properly delete a page from your site • Yoast

In general, I'd advise you to redirect a page even when only a smaller portion of the visitors would benefit from that redirect. The reasoning is simple: if the other option is for *all* your visitors to get a page saying "content not found", that's not really a good alternative either...

Create a redirect

When you redirect that deleted page URL to another URL, make sure the redirect you use is a so-called [301 redirect](#). There are several types of redirects, but a 301 redirect is what's called a permanent redirect. In doing so, Google and other search engines will assign the link value of the old URL to the URL you redirected the visitors too.

Delete a page completely (?)

If there is no page on your site with that information, you need to ask yourself the question: should I really be deleting that page? Or should I just make it better? If you decide to delete it nonetheless, make sure you send the proper HTTP header: a 410 content deleted header.

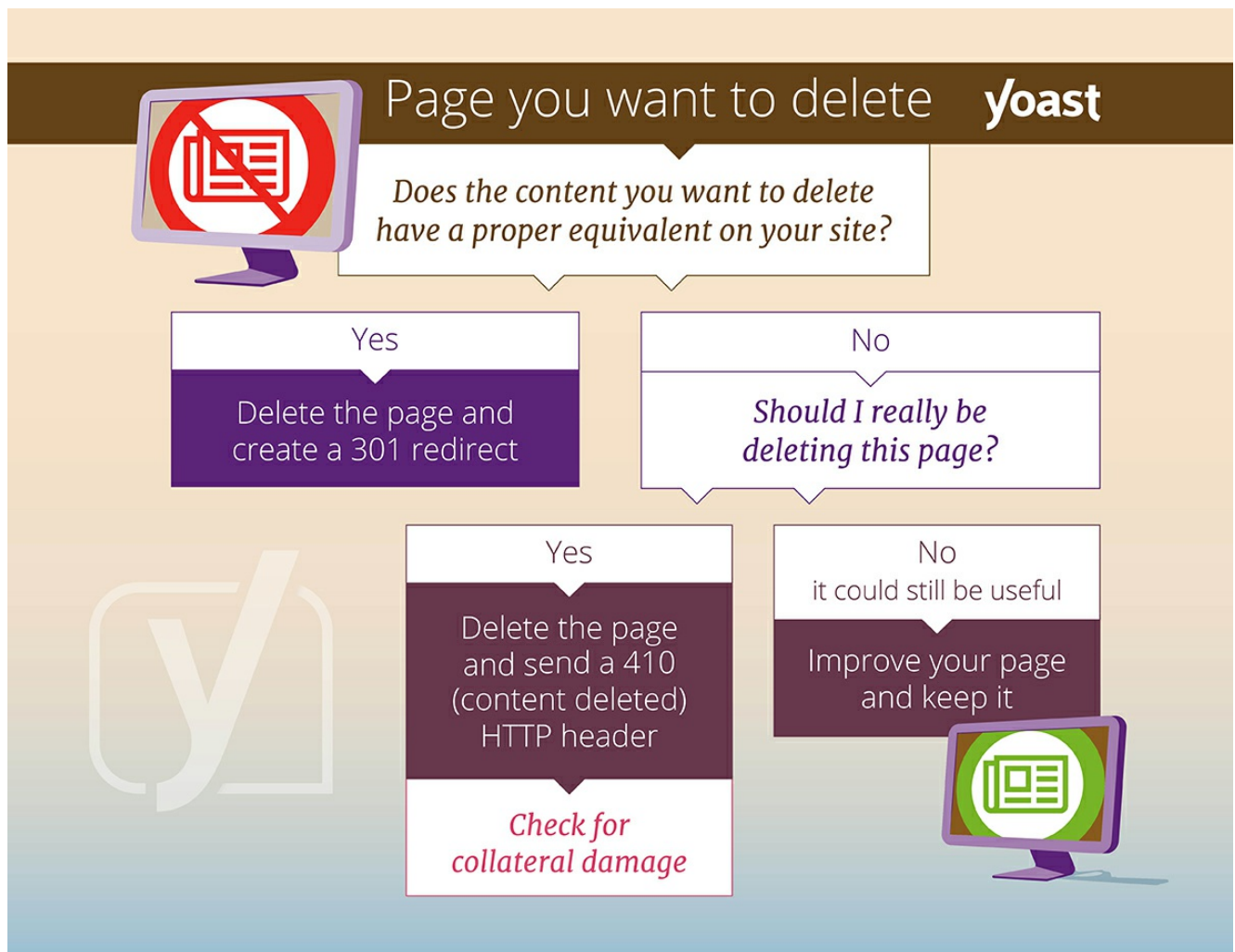
404 and 410 HTTP headers

The difference between a 404 and a 410 header is simple: 404 means "content not found", 410 means "content deleted" and is thus more specific. If a URL returns a 410, Google is far more certain you removed the URL on purpose and it should thus remove that URL from its index. This means it will do so much quicker.

If you're using WordPress and our [Yoast SEO Premium](#) plugin, the redirects module in this plugin is capable of serving 410 headers. We'll make that easier to do when you delete a post or page in an upcoming release.

How to properly delete a page from your site • Yoast

The problem with serving 410 content deleted headers is that Google's support for it is incomplete. It will delete pages that serve a 410 from its index faster. Yet, in Google Search Console, Google will report 410s under "Not found" crawl errors, just like 404s. I've complained to Google about this several times but unfortunately they have yet to fix it.



Collateral damage when deleting a page

How to properly delete a page from your site • Yoast

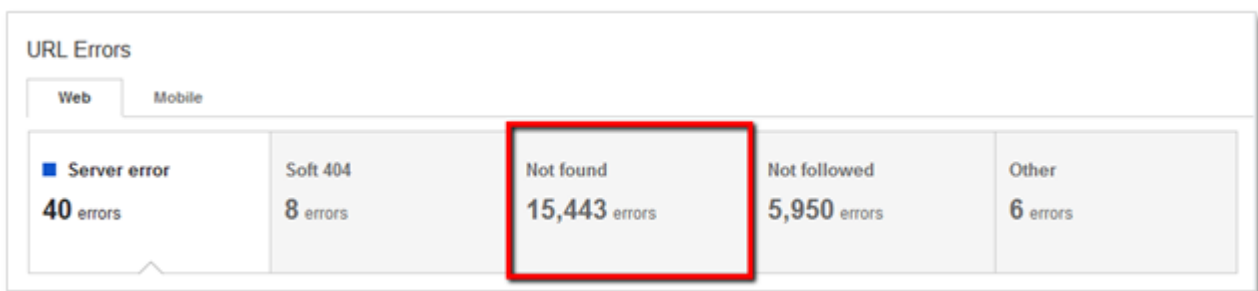
When you delete one or more posts or pages from your site, there's often collateral damage. Say you deleted all the posts on your site that have a specific tag. That tag now being empty, its archive's URL will also give a 404. Even when you handle all the URLs of those posts you deleted properly (by redirecting or 410ing them) the tag archive will still give a 404, so you should make sure to deal with that URL too.

Even when you didn't delete all the posts in a tag, the tag archive might now have 5 instead of 12 posts. If you display 10 posts per page in your archives, page 2 of that archive will now no longer exist, and thus give a 404 error. These aren't the biggest problems in the world when you delete one or two posts, but if you're dealing with a [Google Panda](#) problem and because of that deleting *lots* of poor content, creating a lot of 404s like this can take your site down even further, so proceed with care!

How Should You Handle Expired Content?

Introduction

Handling expired content can be an overwhelming experience for any SEO in charge of a dynamic website, whether it be an e-commerce, a classified (example: job search, real estate listings), or a seasonal/promotional (example: New York Fashion Week) site. Even something as fundamental as glancing at the Google Webmaster Tools account for the site can evoke gut-wrenching emotions, especially if the site has amassed tens of thousands of 404 errors. How are you supposed to come up with a process to manage this? What should the process even look like?



What Qualifies as Expired Content?

There are a number of examples that would be considered "expired" content. [Expired content](#) is content on a website that is only relevant for a limited period of time. Below are examples of different scenarios that would need to be considered expired content.

Job Search/Real Estate Listings: Job listings routinely expire, especially when positions become filled. The same is true for real estate when property is sold.

1. What is the best way to handle expired listings, especially if the content is only available for a very limited amount of time?

How Should You Handle Expired Content?

E-commerce: Expired products can occur when products that are sold on the site routinely change for one reason or another, such as:

1. What happens when the site no longer sells a product?
2. What happens if the product becomes temporarily out-of-stock?
3. What about seasonal products that are only sold during limited times of the year?

Perhaps most importantly, sites that have to worry about expired content tend to be enormous - often comprised of hundreds of thousands of pages. Thus, recommendations need to be manageable and clear. Taking an individual look at all expired and out-of-stock products is unrealistic. Start thinking, is there a way we can build a process for these type of changes?

The Options

Like most SEO solutions, there isn't necessarily one right answer. We need to take a look at each individual situation on a case-by-case basis and take into consideration the current back-end of the site, as well as the resources and the technological capabilities of the site's team. There is a time and a place to use each of these options for expired content. Identifying the right scenario for each situation is very powerful.

I. The 404 Error

It makes sense for webmasters to think that 404ing expired content on the site is the approach to take. After all, isn't that the very definition of a [404 page](#)?

How Should You Handle Expired Content?



(Distilled's 404 Page)

In most situations, a page on the site should not be 404ed. Why?

Disadvantages of 404 pages

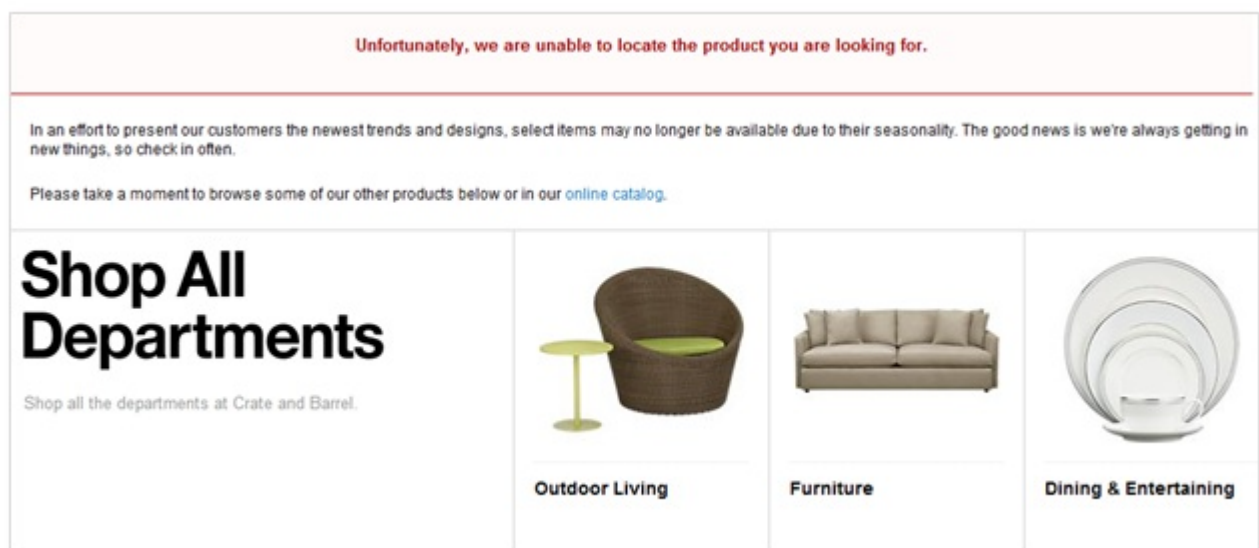
404ing pages that used to be live on the site is just not beneficial for SEO because it alerts search engines that there are errors on the site. Essentially, you're wasting the site's crawl allowance on crawling/indexing pages that no longer exist.

How Should You Handle Expired Content?

Also another issue with 404 pages is that they tend to bounce - users land on the page, see that the page no longer exists, and quickly leave. Users are vital to the site and our goal as SEOs is to not only ensure that the site gains organic traffic, but that the users stay, browse through the site, and ultimately, convert.

Custom 404 Page

If you must 404 pages for one reason or another, consider creating a [custom 404 page](#), so that in the chance that a visitor lands on the page, there is an opportunity for them to convert. A custom 404 page can also include keyword-rich links to other pages on the site (for instance: see [Crate and Barrel's](#) 404 page).



Determining the Right Approach for Expired Content

Now that we know the disadvantages of 404ing pages, what is the right approach in dealing with expired content? To determine this, multiple considerations need to be taken into account, such as:

How Should You Handle Expired Content?

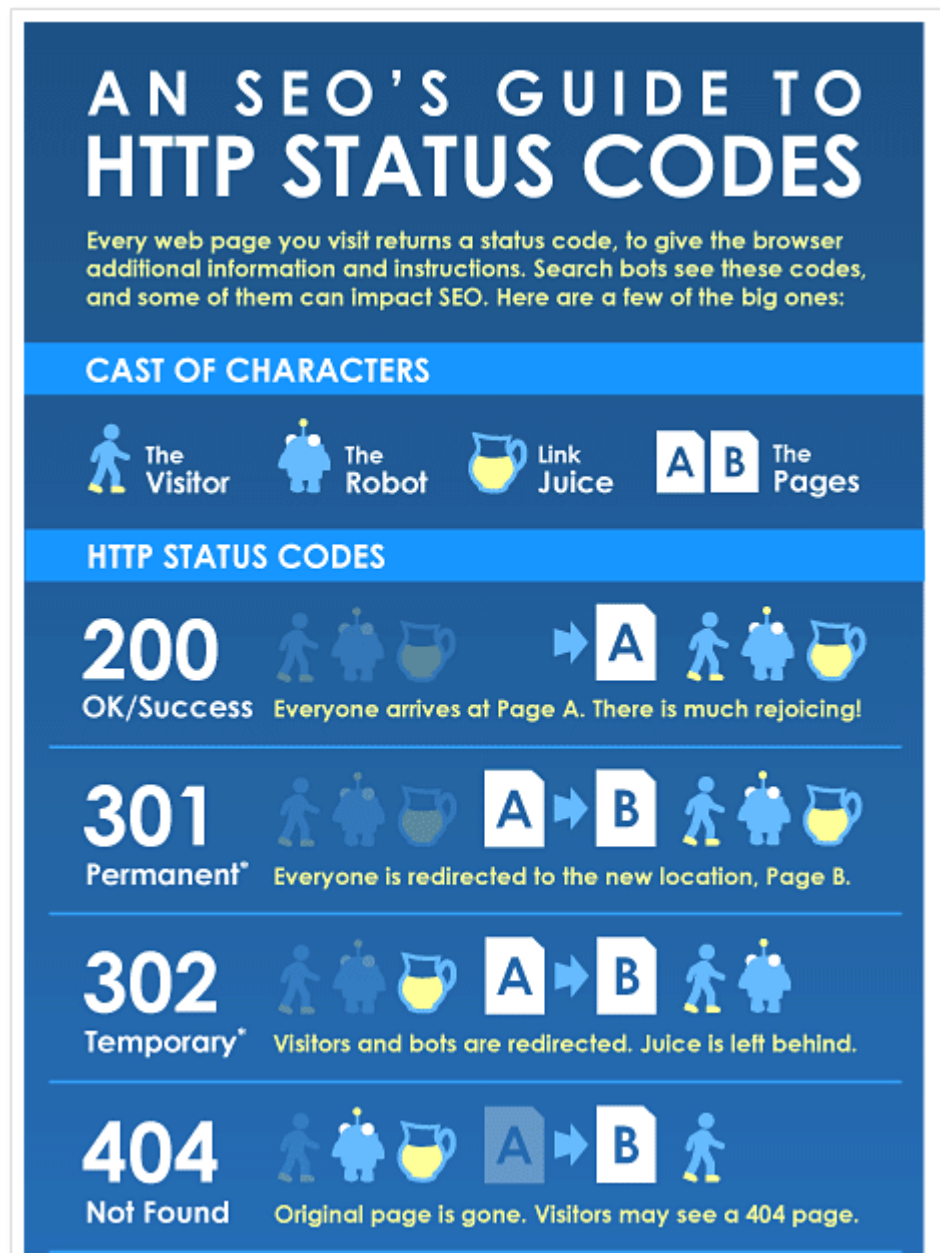
1. Was there significant traffic (and not just organic, but also consider direct) coming to this page?
2. How can we provide the best user experience?
3. Has this page received external links? How is this page currently internally linked to?
4. Is there content/resources on the page that users would still find useful?

II. The 301 Permanent Redirect

Advantages of 301 Redirects

For the vast majority of scenarios, I'd suggest 301 redirecting your expired content to another page. This is usually the best option for SEO and can also be customized to enhance the user experience via dynamically-generated messages. For instance, if a product page had garnered external links, you're able to retain most of the [link equity](#) from those links via a 301 redirect (whereas with a 404, that link equity is lost). Why would you want to lose the link equity that you had worked so hard to obtain? Furthermore, it demonstrates to search engines that your site is well-maintained and up-to-date or "fresh".

How Should You Handle Expired Content?



(screenshot of infographic from Dr. Pete's epic [status code post](#))

Where should you 301 redirect these pages?

How Should You Handle Expired Content?

Consider what would result in the best user experience. You want to redirect these pages to the most relevant page. A suggestion is to take a look at the breadcrumbs and redirect the page based on the internal navigation of the site. For instance, the product page can be redirected to the most relevant sub-category page. You want to be careful that you're redirecting the page to another page that is likely to stay on the site in the foreseeable future, otherwise you run the risk of having to deal with this issue again (not to mention that having a [301 redirect lead to another 301 redirect](#) to another 301 redirect is not considered good SEO practice). A safe bet is to redirect these pages to the most relevant category page, as these are pages on the site that are least likely to change.

Dynamically-Generated Messages

You can customize and improve the user experience by implementing a dynamically-generated message via cookies during a 301 redirect. This would result in users who have landed on expired products receiving a message letting them know that the original product they were seeking is no longer available. This enhances the user experience because it informs users on why they are being redirected.

Disadvantages of 301 Redirects

How Should You Handle Expired Content?

For some sites, implementing multiple 301 redirects might affect server performance (though for a well-designed site, this should not be an issue). However, if it is true for your site, knowing that [site speed](#) is a search engine ranking factor, we want to be wary of the impact we may have by implementing this strategy. If this is the case for your site, consider only 301 redirecting the pages that have gained external links or have received significant amounts of traffic and directing the remaining pages to a customized 404 page. Please bear in mind that this is not an ideal scenario and is just a workaround.

III. Leave the Page on the Site

Advantages of Leaving the Page As Is

Sometimes product pages still garner significant amounts of traffic or are rich in unique content and contain information that is still useful to visitors. It would be worth leaving the original product there, especially if the page has unique, high-quality, evergreen content, but have a message that the product has been discontinued. This will likely provide the best user experience as it will provide a strong call-to-action.

How Could You Set Up the Message?

Implement a JS overlay that would include similar products as the one that has been discontinued and drive users to those new products. Consider incorporating keyword-targeted internal links to drive traffic to those sites. This provides a positive user experience and is especially important for repeat customers.

Example: Real Estate

How Should You Handle Expired Content?

For this niche, expired listings bring tons of traffic since people are curious about what has been sold and what the market looks like. Thus, consider leaving these pages on the site, but include additional information on the top of the page, such as "[contact us to see similar listings](#)" or "[here are some other houses in the area that have similar selling prices.](#)"

Disadvantages of Leaving the Page As Is

You want to be wary of the practice of leaving old pages, especially if they aren't enhancing the value of the site. Why? Because this will require more bandwidth from search engine bots to crawl your site as you continue to add new product pages to the site. You don't want to risk wasting your crawl allowance having bots crawl pages that are thin in unique content and value. Also, having search engines crawl such pages indicates to them that the site is not "fresh."



Also often times, new products contain the same content as an older variation of the product. For instance, the names of new products may vary only slightly to their previous version and the product description can be a close duplicate. Having all these pages live on the site can result in massive duplicate content issues.

How to Deal with Out-of-Stock Products

How Should You Handle Expired Content?

If a product is out-of-stock and is expected to be restocked, the page should remain on the site, but an out-of-stock notice should be implemented on the page. However, please bear in mind that out-of-stock pages do tend to generate high bounce rates. To confront high bounce rates issues and improve the overall user experience, consider ensuring that users know similar products are still sold on the site or have users sign-up to be notified when the product becomes available again.

How to Deal with Seasonal Products - at the Category/Sub-Category Level

If a product is seasonal, such as the case for fashion products (example: swimsuits), you might want to leave the page on the site permanently. Why? Because overtime, these pages can retain their link equity year-after-year. If the swimsuit page garnered 3 links this year and 5 links the next, you can continue to accumulate those links. Overtime, you've developed a page that has retained a significant amount of link equity making it much more difficult for competitors to keep up. Thus, giving your site a huge advantage.

And if you don't want the page to be indexed in the off-season, add a meta tag to noindex/follow the page. Users will no longer be able to get to that link from search results (and hopefully from internal results as well), but only through direct links or bookmarks. Once the season starts again, remove the noindex/follow meta tag to an index/follow.

Building Processes/Checklists

Based on the specific needs of your site, it would be helpful to develop a checklist for your technical team. For example, if my site had seasonal products, I would compile a checklist that would include the following:

How Should You Handle Expired Content?

1. Remove noindex/follow tag from the [products] page in [month]
2. Update and resubmit XML site map
3. Submit this page to "Fetch as Googlebot" in Google Webmaster Tools

Consider creating separate checklists for the steps that you, as an SEO, would need to take to determine which pages to 301 redirect, which ones you need to 404 (if you absolutely need to), and which ones to leave as is. Checklists should also be created to help develop the framework for how your technical team would implement these changes. After awhile, an overall framework should emerge on how your site handles its expired content, which will help make the entire process run much more smoothly.

Disclaimer

The above content was compiled from the following sources...

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