

Backward and Outward Links

The Importance of understanding Backward Links

The underlying rationale of how the Google search engine algorithm works is very important for to understand why backward links to a website is central to a natural search engine indexation strategy.

What is PageRank?

The Google founders, Sergey Brin and Larry Page formulated their search engine algorithm that shifted the ranking weight to off-page factors. They evolved a formula called PageRank (named after its founder Larry Page) where the algorithm would score out of ten the "value" of each website in comparison to other websites on the Internet. It is based on two primary factors; the number of links you have pointing to your website and the value of the links pointing to your website. The value is calculated based on the PageRank of the page linking to your website and debatably the relevancy of the page linking to you (there is no hard evidence to back up the relevancy factor in regards to PageRank that seen, however it definitely is a factor in the website overall ranking).

The below screen capture illustrates the Google PageRank is located on the Google Toolbar – available from www.google.com/toolbar.



In order to do this, you should begin by understanding Google's PageRank. Although Google PageRank is the heart of the Google algorithm, it is not the absolute consideration in determining the most relevant website and hence the highest listing in the search engine results pages. A definition of PageRank as provided by Google is included below:

Definition of Google PageRank

"PageRank relies on the uniquely democratic nature of the web by using its vast link structure as an indicator of an individual page's value. In essence, Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote, by page A, for page B. But, Google looks at more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; it also analyzes the page that casts the vote.

Votes cast by pages that are themselves "important" weigh more heavily and help to make other pages "important." Importantly, high quality sites receive a higher PageRank, which Google remembers each time it conducts a search. Of course, important pages mean nothing to you if they don't match your query.

So, Google combines PageRank with sophisticated text matching techniques to find pages that are both important and relevant to your search. Google goes far beyond the number of times a term appears on a page and examines all aspects of the page's content (and the content of the pages linking to it) to determine if it's a good match for your query."

PageRank of the Linking Page

Firstly, PageRank of the linking page is one of the most important factors as it determines how much value of importance is passed on to your web page. The higher the PageRank of the linking page, the higher the value your website will receive.

Identifying Total Number of Links on the Link Page

The value your website receives from a linking page is equal to the total PageRank value of that page divided by the total number of outgoing links on that page. Getting a link from a PageRank 4 page that has only 20 outgoing links is much better than receiving a link from a PageRank4 page that has 60 outgoing links.

With the same philosophy, it is better to receive a link from a PageRank2 link page that has only 10 outgoing links than getting a link from a PageRank4 page that has over 100 outgoing links.

It is therefore as important for you to evaluate the total number of outgoing links on a links page, as it is, to evaluate the PageRank of the linking page.

CAUTION: This is where many websites fail, as they insist on getting a link from a high PageRank page, but if that page has 100 outgoing links, your page would only get 1/100th of that value.

Updates to Google PageRank

Google is currently updating PageRank. Each update needs to be carefully considered by Figtree Systems in considering the requirements to remain at the top of the Google Rankings.

The most current PageRank update has resulted in many websites showing a drop in their visible PageRank while at the same time showing significant increases in their backward links. This fact reveals that one of three things has occurred in this latest update:

1. Google has raised the bar on PageRank, making it more difficult to attain a high level, or
2. The way Google are displaying their backward links has changed, or
3. The way Google calculate the value of an incoming link has changed.

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