

Linking to the Blogosphere

One of the fastest, most dependable ways to build traffic to your blog is to get other blogs and web sites to link to your content. Readers of a blog that links to yours will discover your blog, and could become regulars. More importantly, Google and other search engines see the number of links to your blog as a measure of quality. The more links to your blog, the higher your blog will rise on search engine results pages. [If the blogs that link to yours rank highly themselves, so much the better.]

Getting Others to Link to Your Blog

1. Ask other bloggers you already know, friends, colleagues, family members, to add your blog to their blogroll if appropriate. [A blogroll is a list of links to related blogs that usually appears on a blog's sidebar.] This is an easy start.
2. Begin to develop relationships with bloggers who cover similar topics, are in your geographic area or who otherwise may have a readership you'd like to attract. Several tactics:
 - Target three blogs. Choose smaller, well-targeted blogs rather than the huge ones with many thousands of readers. It's essential they be high-quality blogs whose content you believe your readers will value. In the blogosphere, you will be judged by the company you keep.
 - Read those three blogs regularly and begin to make comments on them as a reader.
 - Use the comments to show yourself as a well-informed, trustworthy and generous member of the community.
 - Add the blogs to your blogroll.
 - Link to those blogs' entries if appropriate. But don't force it. Link only when you believe your readers will want to read what you're linking to.
 - After you've established yourself as a member of a blog's community, drop a note to the author, describe yourself as a reader and admirer, and tell him or her about your blog. Tell the author you've linked to his or her blog.
 - At this point, or in a later communication, ask the author for a link on their blogroll.
 - Repeat for all three blogs. Then pick five more and start again.

The steps above sound deliberate, but they often happen quickly and casually. You may find that as soon as you comment on someone's blog the author will drop you a note, thank you for the link and ask if you'd like one in return.

Why start with three blogs and then add five more? Spreading your attention across too many blogs at once will be less effective. You need to focus your energies.

Be aware that links to your specific content are more valuable than links to your blog as a whole. Once you develop relationships with others in the blogosphere they'll become readers of your blog—and likely will begin linking to your content.

When you write a particularly worthwhile post, let those other bloggers know about it. Sometimes they'll link to it.

Remember: The better and more original and useful your content, the more incoming links you'll get. This is one way in which search engines really do reward quality.

Things to Keep in Mind

- Treat other bloggers and readers with respect, and they'll return the favor.
- NEVER ask to trade links with a blogger you haven't corresponded with before.
- NEVER agree to publish a link to another blog for the sole purpose of helping that blog build traffic.
- Your first duty is always to your readers. Don't write or link to anything that doesn't serve them well.

Useful links

PBS's Mark Glaser, author of the MediaShift blog, reports on what he's learned about making his own blog comply with traffic-building best practices:

http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2008/04/digging_deeper9_tips_to_improv.html

For more background and detail, here's an excellent beginners' guide to search engine optimization from from the industry blog SEOMoz: <http://www.seomoz.org/article/beginners-guide-to-search-engine-optimization>