

Little Blue link building BOOK

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We Want Your Feedback!

This is just the 1.0 version of "*Little Blue Link Building Book*" and we'd like to update it in future.

That's why your feedback is very important to us. Or maybe you're willing to contribute? :)

Feel free to send your thoughts to Tim Soulo at timsoulo@ahrefs.com

Introduction

Here at *Ahrefs* we believe that link building is, and will continue to be, one of the key elements of modern SEO.

We also believe however, that as Google's ability to detect manipulative link building improves, it is vital that your efforts are focused on methods of attracting links that will ensure your site is safe from penalties – both algorithmic and manual.

More importantly, focusing on these same methods will allow you to build the kind of powerful, editorial links, that Google loves to see. The kind that will quickly see your site shoot up the rankings, and your traffic and sales grow on a monthly basis.

We're sure that these are the type of links you want to be building, but...

...we also know that link building can be a bit of an informational minefield.

To help you navigate safely through it, we created this detailed guide to modern, white hat link building. A guide we like to call our '**little blue link building book**'.

There are currently 12 parts to the book (although we expect it to grow), and in each section we detail specific white hat link building methods (with examples), while also providing links to further reading/tools that will assist you when implementing the strategies on your own site(s).

But before we dive into the methods, let's start by defining exactly what it is that makes a link white hat.

What makes a link white hat?

First, an important point...

Google is not against all link building and not all link building is 'bad'. We can quote Matt Cutts directly on that from [this 2013 interview](#) with Eric Enge of Stone Temple Consulting.

“No, not all link building is bad. The philosophy that we’ve always had is if you make something that’s compelling then it would be much easier to get people to write about it and to link to it. And so a lot of people approach it from a direction that’s backwards.”

Indeed, Matt has pretty much defined for us the ethos of white hat link building – that links should be earned - not bought, or automatically created through manipulating loopholes.

With every method included in this guide (save perhaps some social sharing), the editorial control remains with the linking website (either to approve the link, or to add it) and it is this editorial control that makes a link 'white hat'.

But that's not to say we can't be clever too...

Ok, let's get started.

Part 1: Creating Custom Visuals

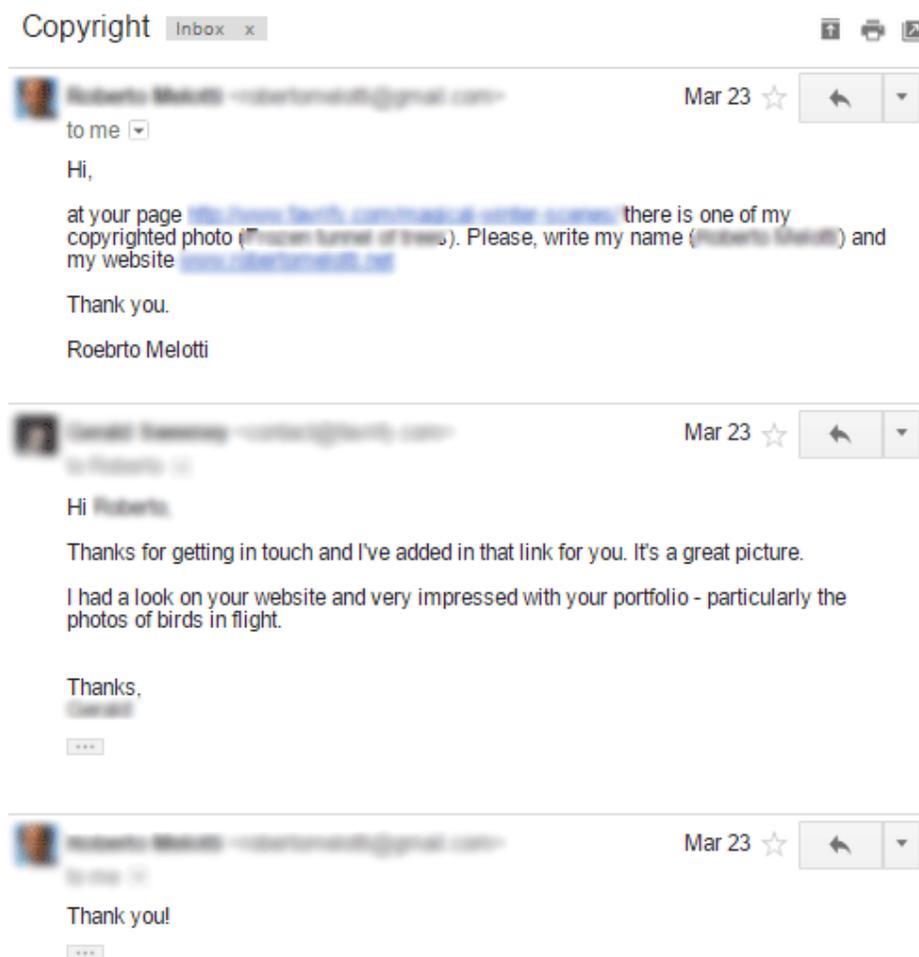
With the huge growth of viral media sites such as buzzfeed, and content sharing communities (like reddit), the line between fair use and copyright has become a little blurred to say the least.

If you create and publish a high quality image - be that a photo, or a custom visual – there is a fair chance that it will be 'borrowed' at some point by another website; generally with loose attribution, or often with no credit at all.

Fortunately, as a smart marketer, this is something you can leverage to your advantage.

Each unattributed use of your original work is a link opportunity, and one in which you are in the rare position of holding the upper hand. Reach out to those who have swiped your images, thank them for using them, and ask for a link.

Here is a real world example of someone doing just that (a site I am involved with had inadvertently used an image without attribution).



Pretty painless right?

The above example was a photograph, but it could just as easily been a chart, or other custom visual.

What to do

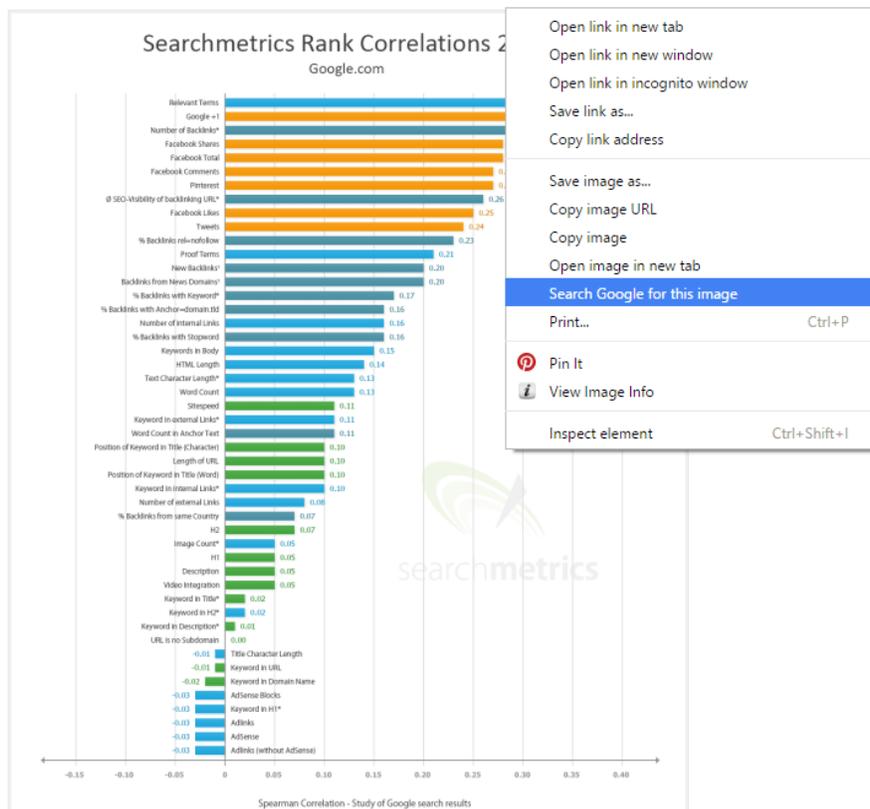
Take the time to create high quality, custom visuals for your content, then actively encourage other webmasters to share them (with attribution). If you find another site has re-posted your visual without credit, send a short, friendly, email similar to the above.

How to find other sites using your images

Example: if you are using chrome, Google makes this pretty easy.

Searchmetrics [Rank Correlations 2014 post](#) features a very useful chart that has been shared a number of times across the web.

If we right click on the image in chrome, we have an option to 'Search Google for this image'.



Clicking on that will bring us to a Google image search page, which lists other URLs using the image.

Pages that include matching images

SearchMetrics Released SEO Ranking Factors For 2014 ...



searchengineland.com/searchmetrics-released-seo-ranking-fac... ▼
985 × 1093 - 8 Sep 2014 - **SearchMetrics** announced their **2014 SEO ranking factors** study is now ready for download. Every year, **SearchMetrics** releases the study but ...

2014 Rank Correlation Analysis and SEO Ranking Factors



blog.searchmetrics.com/.../the-2014-rank-correlation-analysis... ▼
1221 × 1565 - 7 Sep 2014 - Rank Correlations And SEO Ranking Factors Google U.S. 2014. We have greatly ... **Searchmetrics Ranking Factors - SERP 1to3** We have ...

Searchmetrics Ranking Factors 2014 and How it Relates to ...



dwellinbound.com/.../searchmetrics-ranking-factors-2014-an... ▼
985 × 1093 - 26 Feb 2015 - **Rank factors** are defined by many data points. Find what **Searchmetrics** learned this year and how it relates to SEO for Real Estate.

Searchmetrics' Ranking Factor Study 2014 - XEN Systems



xen.com.au/look-searchmetrics-ranking-factor-study-2014/ ▼
550 × 704 - 23 Sep 2014 - It's that time of the year again when **Searchmetrics** releases its annual ranking factors study. Once again, content quality is a key factor.

SEO Ranking Factors 2014 Study Released By SearchMetrics



www.dynamicsdigital.co.uk/.../seo-ranking-factors-2014-stud... ▼
985 × 1093 - 9 Sep 2014 - **SearchMetrics** have released their in depth study of the **ranking factors** that lead to strong SEO performance in 2014's Search Engine Results ...



If you find a site using one of your images without attribution, go ahead and reach out and pick up that link!

Further Reading

- [Easy Link Building With Images](#) (*Matthew Barby*)
- [10 Ways To Use Images For Link Building](#) (*Kaiser The Sage*)
- [A Visual Asset is Worth 1000 Words](#) (*Gregory Ciotti*)
- [Why Visual Assets > Infographics](#) (*Moz*)

Recommended Tools

- [Piktochart](#) (create infographics, charts & presentations)
- [Statista](#) (statistics portal)

Part 2: Spying On Your Competitors

It goes without saying (although I realise I have just said it) that with most link building campaigns, the primary objective will be to improve your site's organic search rankings.

By extension this of course means that you are aiming to gain ground on (and ultimately overtake) the rankings of your competitors. After all, if you are aiming to claim the number 1 position for a certain key phrase, it follows that the incumbent site is going to have to lose that same position.

With this in mind, the backlink profiles of your competitors are a great place to start looking for link opportunities.

What to look for

Over time you will develop a sixth sense for picking out the golden nuggets in a competitor's link profile, but when starting out you can use indicators such as: -

- Domain Rating (Ahrefs)
- Domain Authority (Moz)
- Trust Flow & Citation Flow (Majestic)
- Pagerank (although this hasn't been updated for a long time, so take it with a heavy dose of salt)

When you find a high quality link, you'll want to reverse engineer the strategy that was used to acquire that particular placement (this ties in with several other tactics in this guide).

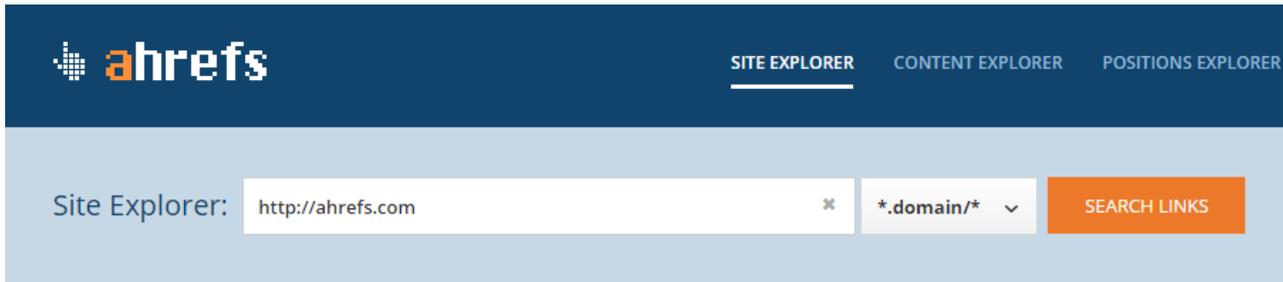
For example, the link might be a guest post, or perhaps on a links/resources page. These should be relatively easy to replicate.

Pick off the low hanging fruit!

Pro tip: Look for hubs, i.e. sites that are linking to 2/3 of your competitors. These should be fertile ground for link building.

Using Ahrefs to export competitor links

Log in to your *Ahrefs* account and type the URL of the domain you wish to explore into Site Explorer. Click on 'SEARCH LINKS'.



Click on the 'Links' button under 'Inbound Links' on the left menu and then choose 'Export'.

EDUCATIONAL	EDUCATIONAL	NOTSITEWIDE	NOFOLLOW	SITEWIDE
	289,145	5,167,875	4,484,914	389

1 - 50 of 5,168,264 backlinks found | [Export](#) | [Settings](#)

	DR	UR	Int Ext	Link URL Link Anchor	First Seen Last Check
8+ 86 897 4.7K 3.6K	62	80	331 8	ahrefs.com/	25 Oct '13 4 d
8+ 55	60	53	6	ahrefs.com/robot/	8 Aug '13

This will produce a CSV file containing all the information you need to mine your competitor's links. To make it easier to find the strong links, I would recommend sorting the spreadsheet first by Domain Rating, then referring page URL.

	A	B	C	
1	#	URL Rating (desc)	Domain Rating	Referring Page URL
2	865	18	95	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjAZrBnLo20
3	511	21	94	https://plus.google.com/+AhrefsCom
4	512	21	94	https://plus.google.com/+AhrefsCom
5	513	21	94	https://plus.google.com/+AhrefsCom
6	514	21	94	https://plus.google.com/+AhrefsCom
7	515	21	94	https://plus.google.com/+AhrefsCom
8	516	21	94	https://plus.google.com/+AhrefsCom
9	517	21	94	https://plus.google.com/+AhrefsCom
10	518	21	94	https://plus.google.com/+AhrefsCom
11	519	21	94	https://plus.google.com/+AhrefsCom
12	520	21	94	https://plus.google.com/+AhrefsCom
13	304	22	94	https://plus.google.com/+BrianZippin
14	994	18	94	https://plus.google.com/+HalfdanTimm
15	676	19	94	https://plus.google.com/+JosephGojoCruz
16	289	22	94	https://plus.google.com/+KristiHines
17	613	20	94	https://plus.google.com/+KristiHines/about

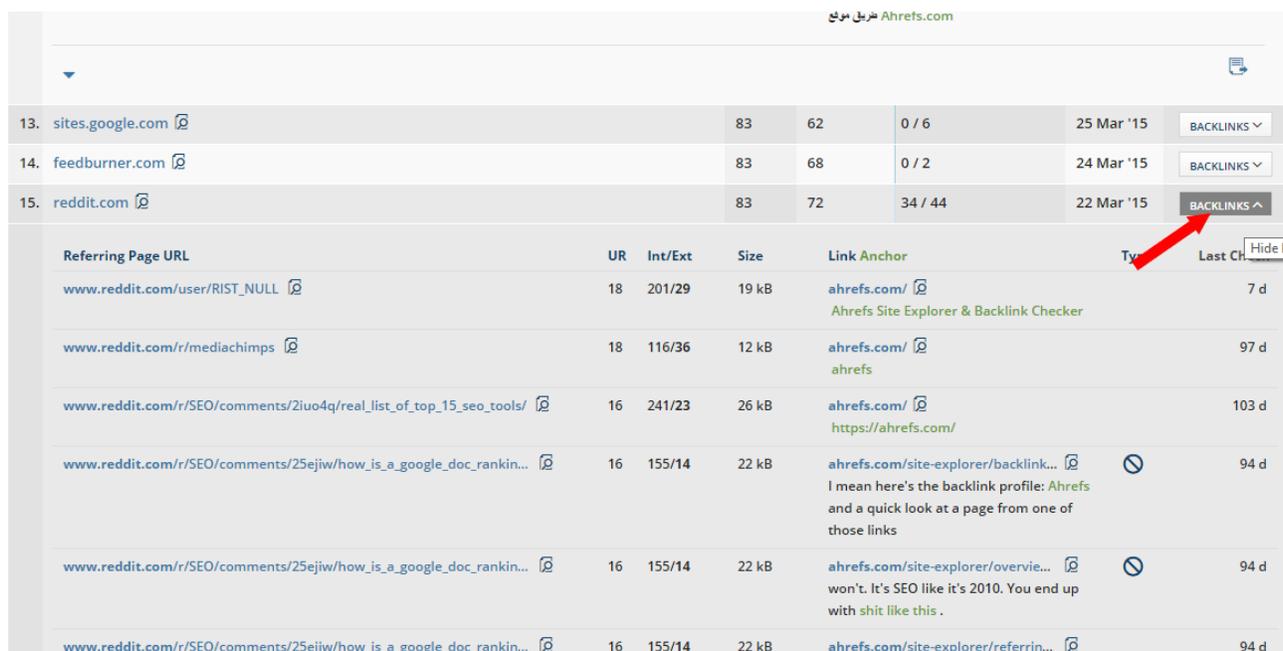
Alternative method

If your competitor doesn't have a huge link profile, you might want to work directly in *Ahrefs* to find opportunities. I would recommend browsing by 'Referring Domains' and sorting the data by DR.

- Top Content
- Top Referring Content
- Near-Duplicates BETA
- INBOUND LINKS**
- Links
 - New / Lost
 - Broken Backlinks
 - Anchors
 - Referring Domains**
 - New / Lost
 - Referring IPs
- OUTGOING LINKS
 - Linked Domains
 - Anchors
 - Broken Links
- EXPORT
 - CSV
 - PDF

#	Referring Domain	DR	Ahrefs Rank	DA
1.	youtube.com	95	3	0 /
2.	wordpress.org	94	4	0 /
3.	plus.google.com	94	5	12
4.	pinterest.com	91	10	0 /
5.	en.wikipedia.org	89	14	0 /
6.	w3.org	88	17	0 /
7.	goo.gl	87	24	0 /
8.	bit.ly	85	37	0 /
9.	joomla.org	84	52	7 /
10.	sina.com.cn	84	54	1 /
11.	ameblo.jp	84	55	4 /

When you spot a promising domain, you can click on 'Backlinks' to get the actual linking URLs.



Referring Page URL	UR	Int/Ext	Size	Link Anchor	Type	Last Ch	Hide t
www.reddit.com/user/RIST_NULL	18	201/29	19 kB	ahrefs.com/ Ahrefs Site Explorer & Backlink Checker		7 d	
www.reddit.com/r/mediachimps	18	116/36	12 kB	ahrefs.com/ ahrefs		97 d	
www.reddit.com/r/SEO/comments/2iwo4q/real_list_of_top_15_seo_tools/	16	241/23	26 kB	ahrefs.com/ https://ahrefs.com/		103 d	
www.reddit.com/r/SEO/comments/25ejw/how_is_a_google_doc_rankin...	16	155/14	22 kB	ahrefs.com/site-explorer/backlink... I mean here's the backlink profile: Ahrefs and a quick look at a page from one of those links	⊘	94 d	
www.reddit.com/r/SEO/comments/25ejw/how_is_a_google_doc_rankin...	16	155/14	22 kB	ahrefs.com/site-explorer/overvie... won't. It's SEO like it's 2010. You end up with shit like this .	⊘	94 d	
www.reddit.com/r/SEO/comments/25ejw/how_is_a_google_doc_rankin...	16	155/14	22 kB	ahrefs.com/site-explorer/referrin...		94 d	

So go ahead and get those links!

Further Reading

- [Filling the Gaps in Your Link Profile with Ahrefs Competitor Backlink Analysis](#) (Ahrefs)
- [How to steal your competitor's backlinks, rankings & traffic](#) (Robbie Richards)
- [The Ultimate Guide to Reverse Engineering Your Competitor's Backlinks](#) (Brian Dean/Ahrefs)

Recommended Tools

- [Ahrefs](#) (analyse & export competitor backlinks)
- [Open Office](#) (for analysis/sorting of exported links)
- [Moz](#) (analyse competitor backlinks)
- [Majestic](#) (analyse competitor backlinks, find hubs)

Part 3: Putting yourself out there

While there may be plenty of products (particularly on the Warrior Forum) that promise you can sit back in your room, put up some spun content, automate some link building and watch the visitors (and cash) roll in, to truly succeed with marketing any business online you have to get involved.

You have to make connections and, as the title of this section says, you have to put yourself out there!

You want your name, and your website, to be synonymous with the niche you are in; anywhere people are talking about your industry, you want to be there - in fact, you've got to be there.

You'll be building your brand, building trust (which will aid conversions), and even better... picking up some nice links along the way. What's not to like?

So what sort of places do you want to look out for?

Top blogs in the industry

This one is a no-brainer.

You'll probably already know who the influencers are in your niche, and the quickest way to get yourself on their radar is to simply become an active commenter on their blog.

You will generally get to leave a link back to your own site, and if you take the time to leave insightful comments, or questions, then you will find that other visitors (often including the site owner) will click through to find out more about you.

While the links will generally be nofollow, they are great to have as part of your overall link profile.

As a regular commenter you are also starting to build a relationship with the influencer, which will help with any future outreach.

Industry forums

Most industries will have at least one active forum (if yours doesn't then create one yourself!), and that's definitely somewhere you want to be hanging out.

Remember though, this is all about building your reputation and networking, not easy link dropping.

Answer questions, get involved in threads and be an active member of the community. Only include a link to your content, where it genuinely adds value to a conversation.

If the forum allows you to add a link in your signature, then you'll want to do that, but don't be pushy or overly promotional.

One caveat to the above...

Sometimes you might have created some content that crosses into another niche outside of your regular industry. Forums can be a good place to promote this content, but if you are doing so, then be completely transparent.

Here is an example of a thread I started in a history forum, promoting a piece of content on my own site. I was completely honest - I was the creator of the content, and I thought that it would be of interest to the members.

The link was well received and brought some nice referral traffic.

January 31st, 2015, 11:46 AM #1

surround3
Citizen
Joined: Jan 2015
From: Glasgow
Posts: 4

Timeline of the new york skyline over 100 years

Thought you guys might like this. I put it together last week (took quite a while) and tried to [link](#) all the major additions to the skyline over the last 100 years. There's over 150 [link](#) with some really interesting old shots.

[100 Years Of New York Skyline \(1915 - 2015\)](#)

January 31st, 2015, 02:35 PM #2

Fire_Raven
Historian
Joined: Jul 2010
From: Oregon
Posts: 2,395

Very nice work. I love looking at old photographs.

January 31st, 2015, 10:52 PM #4

M82A1A
Academician
Joined: Nov 2010
From: Phoenix, AZ
Posts: 78

Thanks for sharing this! Every time I see pictures of skyscraper construction in the 20s and 30s, I am amazed at the seemingly calm appearance of construction workers high atop the steel frames.

February 1st, 2015, 07:31 AM #5

surround3
Citizen
Joined: Jan 2015
From: Glasgow
Posts: 4

Yeah, the bravery of the construction workers is quite incredible. As someone who suffers from vertigo badly it staggers me that they can just sit there.

Sorry about the chinesewomendate... google [link](#) can be a odd at time!

Notice that I didn't just link drop and go. I checked back and got involved in the thread I had started.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

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- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

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