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Backlinks: The Relevant Way to Rank Your Practice Online

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Every time Google makes another change to its search results [ranking algorithm](#), it can affect your hard-earned time spent ranking your practice. Fortunately, there is a way to backlink to your website to maintain those all-important rankings. The following tips can help you secure your rankings with the search engines against any future "animal" changes - Panda, Penguin or otherwise.

How do you secure your website ranking? The way the fortune 500 companies are preserving their online presence is by building relevant backlinks. You might be thinking, "Stephanie, I'm not a Fortune 500 company; I'm not even a company of 5." But let's adapt your mindset a bit. When you look for a mentor, teacher or advisor, whom do you typically want to choose? Most want someone who has experience, knowledge and success achieving what you hope to achieve. So, why not learn what the Fortune 500 companies are doing and mirror a strategy for your own practice?

One of many things I have learned in 15-plus years of working with health care business owners is that you have one common need: to get more customers coming through the door. However, the majority have no way of knowing how to make that happen. I have heard of strategies such as lighting a candle and saying a prayer, word of mouth, postcard mailing, handing out flyers, running ads, and more. Those may have worked the best in previous years, and by all means continue them if they are working, but online is where your new customers are spending time these days. Understanding what to look for and how to use the online tools will mean greater potential for success.



Backlink Basics

Backlinks can also be called incoming links, inbound links, in-links or inward links. A backlink is an incoming link to a website or webpage. Today, backlinks are significant in [search-engine optimization](#) (SEO) because the number of backlinks is one indication of the popularity or importance of that website or page. Search engines often use the backlinks as indicators for determining a website or webpage's ranking, popularity and importance. Since the SEO companies figured out ways to "game the system," known to some as linkspam, search engines continue to adapt their systems for ranking. Therefore, you need to make sure your backlinks are relevant to your target audience when you are using them to build your practice.

A backlink may look like an image, a piece of text such as "CLICK Here" or a URL. Backlinks can also be embedded in videos or infographics. To make this easy, a backlink can pretty much be anything you can click and be taken to another website or webpage. In order to have relevant backlinks, you need to find sites that have authority and of course, are relevant to your website or webpage.

Where do you find relevant backlinks? The best places to get backlinks are from sites like [Squidoo](#), [Wikipedia](#), governmental sites, forums, blogs and educational sites. Another great way to build powerful backlinks is by guest posting. Guest postings can be a powerful tool to backlink to your website if done properly. (Honestly, how to guest post could be a whole other article, so I'm going to provide the basics here.)

Guest Postings

Guest postings, such as guest blogging or published articles, establish you as an authority in a specific market. Guest postings can be articles you have written and have published in other communities to drive more traffic to your website. Guest postings such as writing articles or guest

blogging are some of the highest-quality backlinks in a search engine's eyes.

The biggest rule to remember is to [target a specific audience](#). Get engaged in those communities and figure out if the forum, blog site or article publication site is a good fit for your practice. When you find a forum that offers the target audience you desire, one of the first things you will need to do is to create a forum profile. You want people to engage with you; therefore, you will need to optimize your profile to get the best benefit. Key points to keep in mind when creating a profile on a forum are:

- Upload a photo or avatar of yourself so the people on the forum can see your personality and what type of person you are.
- Enter your home page URL on your profile.
- Include an instant messenger, Skype or other social media information you have on your profile.
- Add interests that relate to the other people on the forum.
- Include all relevant information such as address, phone and e-mail, exactly how it is listed on your website.

The point is to complete as much information as can on your profile for the forums. Another special note that most miss is the signature box. The signature box is how you will be identified when you make a post to a thread. Include your website URL in this signature box. That way, every time you post on a thread, your website URL will appear in your signature automatically. You can also hyperlink the name of your website back to your website or blog to build subscribers.

[pb]Finally, when you are commenting on the forum, remember that it isn't a place for you to constantly promote your services. Be sure to provide helpful solutions to community members so you drive traffic to your website. Think of it as being at a social event: You wouldn't constantly be joining a conversation by saying how wonderful your massages are and offering to book them an appointment, would you? Of course you wouldn't, so don't do that here (or on any social network, for that manner).

Read through the threads (conversations) and make a point to add to the conversation or, better yet, answer questions. Remember that when you answer questions, your website URL will automatically be in your signature, so if you provide valuable and relevant information, people will automatically click through to your website to learn more about you.

When guest blogging and writing articles, contact the blog owner or editor directly. Usually they have a "write for us" invitation or "contact us" button on their website. Complete the form. Enter your name, e-mail and website URL, fill in every box you can, and enter your subject or blog title, or what topics you are interested in guest blogging about. If you have created a post, go ahead and include it. The same goes for submitting an article.

If you don't have space to include the entire post or article, include three ideas you would like to discuss on the site. You can also include your expertise and why you are qualified to be guest blogging or writing. If you find it difficult to come up with a title or topic, ask what topics their followers are most interested in.

When commenting on blogs, the most important step is to get your comment approved. If the owner of the blog feels you are "spamming" or advertising your products or services only, it will most likely never get approved. Here are some key points to create a proper blog comment so it gets approved every time. If you follow these quick tips, you should be well on your way to guest blogging and writing articles online soon!

- Review the webpage of the blog and read through the content so you understand the topic.
- Enter all information in the comment box and include your website URL.
- Agree, disagree (politely) or compliment what you liked best about the points in the articles. Express your opinion.
- Check the notified box; this is usually optional and some blogs may not have them. But if they do, I like to check them. It e-mails you any time a response or comment is added.

This really helps to keep you engaged in the community you are writing to, especially on those blog posts you have participated in. (You don't want to be known as a drive-by poster.)

Squidoo Backlinks

Squidoo backlinks are powerful because they are safe, legal and built upon theme-related sites. What's more, links from Squidoo are not usually pounded with a bunch of comments or spam. An item to pay attention to here is when adding your link to the "post your link" box, be sure you provide the URL they are asking for. Some want a [YouTube URL](#), and sometimes they ask for a website URL or blog link; be sure to provide the correct information.

Wikipedia and Similar Sites

Wikipedia is considered an authority website; you are allowed to post links that are relevant to the Wikipedia page. Make sure the backlink you create is relevant to your niche and you will receive referred traffic from all the visitors viewing the page. Why are educational and government sites so important? These sites increase your authority, award you higher rankings and give you more targeted traffic to your website when used effectively.

I'm not suggesting you have to add relevant backlinks from all these sources; if you choose just one, consider how powerful it can be, especially when the sources are relevant to your target audience. Remember, if your website content addresses multiple target audiences, you will need more backlinks to support the relevance in the eyes of the search engines. If you build the link properly and the potential customer clicks the backlink to your page, but the page doesn't address their issue, or your content and wording isn't relating directly to their needs, they will most likely immediately leave. The search engines will record this as irrelevant backlink or spam - not your desired outcome.

Be very clear as to whom your target audience is, and make sure your message and content on your website relate to that target audience. This is one of the best assurances that you will maintaining your ranking. If you want examples or suggestions with finding relevant backlinks to one of these sources, e-mail me your target audience and which source you need assistance with, and I will e-mail you one to three examples.