

[Building Link Targeted Content that Works](#)

There's no doubt that creating a valuable piece of content is a great way - and maybe even the best way- to attract links. A solid, well researched article, a newsworthy blog post, a useful tool or something similar will attract relevant, natural links over time. In this guide I'll try to show you how everyone can come up with great ideas, can turn the idea into a piece of killer content and can make that piece attract great links.

Start Close

While it usually is best to enter a brainstorming session with a blank mindset, it's even better to check what you've got first. Good ideas are often closer than you think.



Things can be closer than you think, by [Pictophilia](#)

- Your own website

If your website isn't a brand new one, you probably have at least a few pages that managed to attract a few or more good links. You can either investigate why these pages got mentioned elsewhere (and use that info for a new article), or find your best one, [improve it and launch V2](#).

- Your own head

What kind of resources are you missing in your niche? What kind of tool have you always wanted to use but couldn't find? What kind of content would make you 'WOW'? Build it!

Brainstorming for Ideas

The great thing about brainstorming is that you can't brainstorm the wrong way. Of course, there are guidelines you can follow and [techniques](#) you can use, but in theory, every method you use to come up with new ideas would be considered brainstorming. *Effective* brainstorming, however...

Brainstorming, by [faroekat](#)

Like I said earlier, it can be quite effective to start a brainstorming session with an empty mind. Because your link targeted mind probably even rattles on in your sleep, it might be useful to invite someone that isn't that much into links as you are. Some people always invite the client they're working for, but I don't think that's best in every situation. No matter how hard you try, for some types of personality, tunnel vision is an almost certainty. On the other hand, bringing in the knowledge of your client does add extra value.

More tips for your brainstorming session:

- Appoint one person to lead the discussion and to write down all ideas.
- Record everything to make sure that you don't miss anything. And to be able to provide evidence to the client that you haven't been drinking all afternoon, of course 😊
- Encouraging your fellow brainstormers to participate, encouraging great ideas and encouraging to shout out everything that comes up is key to a harmonized brainstorm session.
- More suggested reads; [JPB's creative pages](#), [MindTools brainstorming](#) and [Brainstorming.co.uk](#).

Furthermore, one of the most important things to keep in mind during a brainstorming session is that [you shouldn't settle for the first reasonably good idea you come up with](#). Good ideas arise pretty quickly, great ideas need time to grow. The best tip I can probably give you is to just start a session. Brainstorm with a few colleagues about a simple item, such as what you'll be having for lunch or how you can improve your working conditions. You could even be brainstorming about how to brainstorm. Evaluate that session afterwards and learn from it. Experience will lead to inspiration.

Researching for Inspiration

After your brainstorming session, where you've probably generated over a few dozen ideas, you might be tempted to drill the list down to the most useful ideas straight away. In stead, letting these ideas soak for a short while and researching ideas that have worked in the past, researching ideas that have failed in the past and researching your niche might be a better solution. Don't take a short cut by copying the ideas you come across, but use them as inspiring input.



Doing research, by [revlimit](#)

Think Social

The voice of the community will show you what might work.

- Use Digg's search function

Look for relevant articles, posts or pages that have made it to [Digg's](#) front page in the past by entering a relevant keyword in the search box. This might give you some inspiration and it should give you an idea of what might work in your niche.

- Stumble upon related pages

Use [StumbleUpon](#) to find pages that are related to the content you want to promote. Check what kind of pages receive lots of thumbs up and positive research. You'll not only come across at least a few great pages you've never seen before, but you'll also get an impression of popular stuff in your area.

- Del.icio.us popular

One way to use Del.icio.us, is to use the 'popular' section to see what's hot in your niche, for example [popular in link building](#). If you can't find popular posts in your niche, you can always [broaden your search query](#) or use the [regular tag function](#).

- Your favorite news site

That news website you visit every day (whether it's a big news site or just a local one) has historical data of what kind of related articles or posts have made it to the front page. Do a [site query](#) to find relevant news articles that got mentioned on the news site earlier.

- Social Niche sites

Is it difficult to find related stuff on one of the big social media websites, or are you looking for more targeted traffic? There's a [social media website for nearly every niche](#), so don't just refrain yourself to the mainstream sites.

Think Niche

Only here will history, relevance **and** authority show up.

- Your competitor

Some people can't stand it when a competitor gets mentioned on a popular news or niche website. In stead of enviously watching how they get all the attention, you could also see this as an opportunity and investigate *why* they got mentioned. If you don't follow your competitors on a regular basis (which I can't imagine), use a nifty tool like [LinkDiagnosis](#) to research which page on your competitor's website has the most incoming links. Investigate why this page managed to do this and use that info in your advantage.

- Research your ultimate link target

You probably have at least one website in mind that you're dying to get a link from. You know, that popular blogger or that portal that everybody in your niche visits daily. If you can find out which pages on this website have attracted a lot of links or managed to create a lot of buzz,

- Research your ultimate link target's competitor

If there are multiple large targets in your niche, you can use the best features of both sites to get links to your own. Find out what the most popular/ interesting/ valuable page of link target 1 is and offer to make a better version of that page to target 2. Now find an interesting tool or feature on target 2 and offer to make something similar to target 1. Don't forget to mention your own website as the source or author, of course.

- Respond to your ultimate link target

Did the website you're after just release a great post or did it fire up a heated conversation? Respond to it. Whether you agree or not, responding to a news item or adding something to a discussion can be a great way to attract links from the initiator, participants and/ or other related sites.

- Contact your ultimate link target

It doesn't get more simple than this. Contact the website you want to get a link from and ask them what kind of content they've always been looking for. Build it, let them know where it is (or you could even offer your link target to let them host the entire piece of content) and you'll get the link you were after. Keep in mind that this kind of target bait is only worth it in a few occasions, but you'll probably know when 😊

Selecting the Right Idea

After you've gathered dozens of great ideas, it's not important to choose the idea that you'll be working on, but it's important to choose the idea you'll be working on *first*. It would be a sin to leave the rest of the ideas untouched, wouldn't it?



Picking the right one, by [Maria Dipshit](#)

Selecting the right idea is nothing more than determining which one of the options will probably help you to reach your [end goal](#) -whether that's just lots of links, links with specific relevance, traffic or anything else.

You've checked your own site, you came up with dozens of creative ideas and did research on what works (and what probably won't), so you've got enough data. Your client has enough knowledge of the niche and you have enough knowledge of SEO to be able to come up with the best option together. In the end, you'll find out that the final choice will be one that's made by feeling.

Oh, and a little tip here; make sure that -if you work for one- your client makes the final choice. If you think he might choose for the wrong option, give him better directions. This ensures a better relationship in the future, no matter what the outcome is.

Use the Results

Now that you've done a great deal of research -and hopefully have a ship load of ideas-, it's important not to forget your research data as well. You just found out that both industry blogger X and related website Y have both linked to that press release that your competitor sent out earlier. Since they're both linking to this page, it might be useful to include blogger X and website Y in the list of websites you'll be contacting when you announce your great piece of content. More about this in part two, but don't forget to save the data you've collected. Having to do things twice can be a real pain...

After you've carefully selected the idea of your choice, it's time to prepare yourself thoroughly and to turn that idea into a content page that's capable of reaching the audience that you've always wanted to target.

Creating Killer Content

There are many characteristics of killer content, most of which are important enough to make or break your launch. Misuse of images, boring pages, bad language or other distracting factors can lead to failure. Remember that a even a [flagship](#) is as strong as its weakest link.



Your flagship does not necessarily have to be a boat, by [DC3-Detroit](#)

Headline

A superb headline can create a massive amount of attention for just a mediocre article, but a bad headline can result in a killer peace of content that doesn't get noticed. Make sure to give your content the [headline that it deserves](#), but [don't overdo it](#).

Also, don't forget to try to get a related keyword into your headline. Because a part of the webmasters that link to your page will use the original title as anchor text, this will increase the possibility that you'll end up ranking for those keywords. Don't force in a keyword, though. A good headline prevails over a keyword rich headline.

First paragraph

Although you may choose to submit your own piece of content to Digg and StumbleUpon (or let someone submit it for you), you'll probably -and hopefully- won't submit it to every social media platform out there. If you want to increase the chance of hitting the frontpage of social news sites that you don't even know exist, you'll have to make sure that the first paragraph is a great one. People who submit stuff to social media websites regularly -me included-, often use the first (or one of the first) lines of text and use it as the description of the submission. Make it easier for them AND make it more likely to hit the front page by creating your own description that's disguised as an opening paragraph.

Content

The appearance of a page can either be **informational** (mostly text), it can be **visual** (images all over the place), or it can be **usable** (a tool, or movable objects). Of course, a page can be a mix of the above, but usually, only one will be the upper hand. Make sure

Informational page

If you've created an information page, it doesn't mean that you shouldn't use images, but use them wisely. The text is the most important of the page, so make sure that the images you use don't distract your readers. In stead, you could spice it up a notch with [graphical text images](#), a [great header](#), or [interesting charts](#) for example. The images must serve the rest of the content. Oh, and don't forget to use that [spell check](#).

Visual page

If you're building a page that's mostly visual, it's tempting to stuff it with as many images and as many different colors as possible. However, using too many images, a lot of different colors, or even mixing up different styles can make your page look cluttered and unclear. If you focus on [a single \(or just a few\) images](#) in stead, take your time when [selecting colors](#) and try to keep the page in a single style, it'll be much easier to 'understand' and to digest. Try to avoid [the most common stock images](#), though, or try to make them [look differently](#) in stead.

Usable page

The fact that you're creating a page that's meant to be 'used', doesn't mean that it shouldn't be interesting to look at. While the focus should be on clarity, ease of use and the end result, attractiveness definitely shouldn't be neglected.

About page

Nothing is worse than reading a great post on a blog or a great article on a website, and you can't find the name of the author anywhere. Or his or her email address.

Provide as much information as possible. This will not only look much more professional, but it'll also help you to build a personal brand and it increases the chance of someone actually contacting you. You might provide a contact button, but if I can't find out who to contact, I probably won't give it a try.

Ask for help

I don't consider myself to be a very good writer and I really suck at programming. Although I'm trying to improve it, I also can't design very well. Just like me, you probably don't own *all* of these skills as well, so that's why you'll have to get some help from time to time.

The relationship between the quality of content and the amount of attention is an exponential one. A slight increase in quality (the difference between your design skills and those of your friend/ colleague/ business partner) can cause a massive increase in attention. Don't be afraid to ask for help, you can't be the best in everything.

Besides increasing the possibility of success, asking help also saves you time and it can improve your business network as well.

Preparation

Unlike some seem to think, preparation does not start one day before the planned launch. Preparation starts on the day that you decide what you're going to build, it's more time consuming than most people think and it's a key factor in any launch.



Good preparation ensures a save flight, by [The Library of Congress](#)

Network like a pro

Networking does not start after your product launch, press release or whatever you're distributing. It starts weeks before that. **Contact journalists and try building up a relationship.** This does not only benefit you now, but it will be an advantage when you're trying to reach that bigger audience next time as well. A PR pitch has more effect if you know the one you're sending the pitch to, even if you happen to know this person for just a short while yet.

Try to **create a [powerful social online profile](#)**, such as a Digg or StumbleUpon profile. You'll need all the luck of the world if you try to reach Digg's front page with a profile that you've created just ten minutes ago.

Use the **people you know**. Friends, family members or other people in your personal network that happen to know someone that owns a related website or that participates online in any way, might be able to help you promoting your piece as well. Don't spam them for every thing you publish, though, or don't look surprised if you have difficulties reaching them again if you do...

Preparing your target list

You've already done research in your niche and you've probably kept track of your competitors as well. Hopefully, you've saved all this data, because this data can jump start your target press list.

Check out which news websites, bloggers and portals have linked to related stories that went hot in the past and you'll end up with a list of targets that are both interested in the subject and capable of making your launch a success.

Preparation Checklist

Although some of these points may seem silly, there are several things you shouldn't forget to check. You wouldn't be the first one that *almost* launched a very successful campaign, but ended up in a 'Top 10 Stupid Marketing Mistakes of the Year' list in stead...

bandwidth

- do you have sufficient bandwidth or do you have shared hosting?

email usage & contact info

- is important info, such as your email address, correctly displayed on your website and does it work?

double check the page

- double check for things like layout and multiple browser compatibilities. Let a friend check it out, for example.

statistics

- don't forget to include your analytics code on the content page.

misspellings

- re-read the entire page word for word to make sure that everything is spelled out correctly.

Awesome piece of content? Check. Solid preparation? Check. Well, let's move on then!

The Launch

If your aim is slightly off, or when not all engines light up at the same time, the launch will still proceed, but the target will be missed. No matter how good your missile is. As soon as you hit the launch button, there is no way back.



Launch controller, by [Vernk](#)

Timing is important

The timing is an important factor during every launch. However, there is no 'ideal' time during the day for hitting the launch button. Although there are some [excellent studies on what time might be best to submit your stories to Digg](#), this still depends on factors like the language of your website, the countries where most of your link targets live, the subject of your content and the market segment you're targeting. For example, an official newsworthy press release can be more successful in the morning, while an entertaining blog post might work better in the evening. Testing helps to determine what might work best in your situation.

Submitting ain't that easy

When you submit (or let someone else submit) your piece of content to social media sites, such as Digg, there are several things that can either make or break your submission. The title of the submission, the description, the category where you submit the story to and the visibility of the submitter all play part in the process of reaching the front page. The only problem here is that you need to pass every possible pitfall

without falling, one single miss will result in an overall FAIL. Both [Marshall Kirkpatrick](#) and [David Wallace](#) have written excellent posts about how to submit your story properly.

Pitching pitfalls

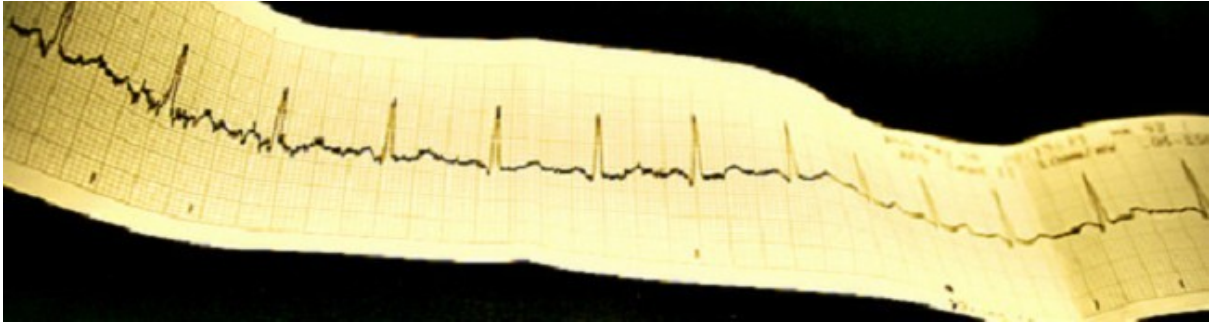
Besides hitting the front pages of several social media websites, you also want to reach as many a-list bloggers in your niche as possible. Some of these bloggers might find your content through your social media efforts, but a good pitch to the right bloggers and journalists will result in additional coverage and links as well. Hopefully, after reading [part one](#), you've gathered the contact information of several influencing, relevant webmasters and bloggers. When you're contacting these people, be **personal, interested** and **honest**. There are several things you [really have to avoid](#) and several things you [really have to consider](#) while contacting bloggers, but in my opinion, it bears down to those three factors.

Use your network wisely

A good network is one of the most important tools of a successful marketer. In stead of doing everything by yourself, you can ask friends, relatives or even friends of friends to do stuff for you or to help you out with something. In stead of being alone, you can have a huge team of specialists working together on *your* piece of content, if you manage to use your network the right way. Imagine yourself what a [master of headlines](#), a [social media power user](#) and an expert in the field of your choice can accomplish together. At first, you might think that spending several hours a week helping out other people, or chatting, Twittering, discussing and emailing with them is a waste of time, but this can really pay off in the long run. A good network is worth quite a few bucks...

Monitoring

Like I said before, as soon as you hit the launch button, there's no way back. It is, however, still possible to adjust the path slightly or to avoid obstacles that suddenly appear. In order to do this, you have to monitor everything, because you'll have to react quickly.



An ambulance pulse monitor, by [Vitiis](#)

Be on top of your stats

Your website statistics can provide excellent data of where your content gets picked up. Use this data to monitor your new backlinks, the traffic every link sends and the average time spent on your site per referrer. You might want to check out websites that send lots of traffic or sites that provide visitors who click through more often, to see what the post or link looks like. If necessary, contact the owner of the site, for example to provide additional info, to request a slightly different anchor text or just to send him or her a thank you note.

Join discussions

Besides bloggers and journalists, you might see several others discuss your brand, product or content as well, for example in blog comments or forum threads. If you only have the slightest idea that it's a legit website, don't hesitate to join these discussions. By leaving additional information (or dropping a link to a relevant web page or site), answering questions or -again- just by simply thanking others for the attention and/ or compliments, you'll show commitment. And commitment builds brands.

Besides your website statistics, there are several other tools that you can use to track these discussions. [Google Alerts](#) and [Technorati](#) will lead you to the majority of the pages where your piece of content gets mentioned.

After care

The launch was successful and the traffic seems to be over its peak. Now is the time to turn the campaign into a *real* success, by directing the link juice, expanding your network and planning the follow-up.



Even more beauty awaits after the storm, by [ladyinpurple](#)

Directing the link juice

The main goal of link targeted content is -obviously- attracting links. Once you've obtained multiple links, whether it's 5 or 50,000 links, it's quite important to use the power of these links optimally. Attracting links is one thing, but leveraging the juice of these links the right way looks like [a whole different ball game](#) for some.

For example, the brilliant (Dutch) [Hema viral campaign](#) for Hema gathered nearly 30,000 links. The only problem is that there isn't a single link on that page that can pour link juice over the rest of the website...

There are several things that you can do to avoid situations like this, and to let your entire website enjoy the taste of link juice;

- Use in-content links to other important pages on your website. Adding these links to the content page, after the first traffic- and link peak is over, works perfectly fine.
- Slap a nofollow tag on links to pages that aren't that important, or remove some navigational links on your link bait page.
- Afterwards alterings. Make small changes to the page you've promoted, such as a slightly improved title or by adding a few relevant keywords and/ or links.
- 301-redirect the page to a different URL as soon as the traffic slows down. I personally [wouldn't recommend 301-ing](#) in most situations, though. And I'm certainly [not the only one](#) (exact same example, btw).

Maintain your new network

You've attracted lots of links, both your RSS subscriber number and the amount of [Twitter](#) followers have skyrocketed, you've participated in several interesting discussions, left numerous comments on other blogs and collected a few email addresses of influential linkerati. Say hello to your new, expanded network. If you can maintain your entire network

with care, you'll make the process launching another piece of content in the future much, much easier.

Follow up

In stead of preparing a single piece of content, make sure to have several more great posts, articles, videos or other material waiting in the queue to get published. It's much easier to attract additional links when you're still enjoying your first flow of attention, than when possible linkers have already moved on. The linkerati you managed to get in touch with will also be more likely to link to another one of your pages, when your website's name is still fresh in their memory. A good follow up strategy builds you a more solid name, it makes sure that you won't lose subscribers and it avoids the risk of looking like (or becoming) a one day fly.

Conclusion

While some seem to think that a campaign -whether it's a viral, a link marketing, or any other campaign- is over as soon as you hit the launch button, that's just one of the several steps during the journey. Monitoring the campaign thoroughly and optimizing the results with care can make or break the outcome. Preparing a solid follow up can make life a lot more easy in the future.

The most important factors of a successful campaign, however, are planning and dedication. If you can manage to think one step ahead, you'll manage to stay ahead of your competition as well. And sure, you might have success with something that you made in just five minutes, or with something that accidentally came across your path, but you'll only reach maximum effect if you're dedicated enough to walk through all steps.

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