

London Search Engine Strategies Conference 2009 Review

Mon, Feb 23, 2009 | Posted by [Jonathan Stewart](#)

So last week, the [London Search Engine Strategies Conference 2009](#) was in full swing at the Business Design Centre in Islington. Some of the iCrossing Natural Search team were in attendance, and myself and David Hughes were both presenting there ? David on the ?Search Term Research and Targeting? panel, while I spoke on the ?Link Building Basics? panel. Our respective presentations can be found [here](#), and [here](#). Natural Search Analysts Owen Powis, Caroline O'Donoghue, Magico Martinez, and David Peiris all attended the conference, and wrote up the following reviews of some of the panels:

Linkbaiting ? How to attract media links?

Well, you really need to target key journalists. Key journalists will help you spread the word and they will make sure that your message gets to the right people.

There are various ways to gather information about these journalists, but it is almost essential that you create a database where you can introduce the contact details of the journalists you find, as well as their area of expertise. Then you will be able to refer to this database any time you have to contact someone. Finding the right people may be a bit more difficult. A good start is to set up a google alert for the keyword you are targeting, and when any news come up, just get the contact details of the journalist. Utility searching will help you a lot too. Just try to search for your keyword in google news.

Another good way to find journalists is to refer to pages like [mediaontwitter.pbwiki.com](#), [blogcatalog.journalism.co.uk](#), or [cyberjournalists](#)

. And, of course, if what you are trying to promote pertains to a niche, then look for distribution services within that niche. You will be surprised of how many niche distribution services there are out there. Once you have the journalist. Remember to send a good and focused press release. All effort will be a waste if you just send a useless press release. Add factual information! Journalists love facts, and it will help your business.

Another great way to get links are blogs. This may be a very obvious statement, but let's look at them from a different perspective. Instead of trying to spread your news through blogs, what about guest blogging? Guest blogging is a great and very unused tool. People will actually want you to write in their blogs, and you can plug your views and your links. Just do a quick search in google: ?guest blogging? + keyword. Try with different combinations such as ?looking for writers?, ?submit an article?, ?contribute content?.

But if what you want is to get links from authority sites such as amazon, then nothing works better than approaching top reviewers. Offer your product for free to reviewers if they agree to review it. You will get a mention in this authority sites and because these people are very well connected, they will spread the word within the niche. Once that you have a good review from someone important, you can even write a press release about it and create more buzz!!

SEO Through Blogs & Feeds

There were a few really interesting points from this session. Everyone agreed that Wordpress was the best blogging platform to use for the vast majority of people. It shouldn't however be treated like a complex CMS system capable of dealing with millions of pages for clients. Security was an issue that was repeatedly brought up - make sure your Wordpress system is up-to-date and all the usual checks are in place to prevent it being hacked. Care should be taken when installing new plugins, and it's always best to open the plugin itself to see what it does. [Dave Naylor](#) mentions that he's seen plugins that can boot you out of the admin screen, plugins that reskin and rebrand the admin panel and plugins that can inject malicious code into footers so you should always check before you activate it.

Consider the different uses of having your blog on a subdomain compared to in a folder. Having the blog in [www.example.com/blog](#) allows all of the link authority to flow into the domain as normal if people link to the blog. However, if you have the blog on a subdomain such as [blog.example.com](#), and have that subdomain on a separate IP address then Google will treat it like an external site. All of your internal links from this subdomain to the main domain suddenly count as external links (and vice-versa) and because it's treated like a different site you're able to have more than just the regular two listings on the front page of the search engine listings. Having separate domains like [blog.example.com](#), [tools.example.com](#) and [news.example.com](#) can help your reputation management enormously.

A question was asked of Maila from Google, asking why Google treated subdomains like this - would it not be better to make subdomains appear as site links underneath the main domain. Dave Naylor agreed with this, although both Dave and Maila admitted that there would be issues for massive sites that have a huge number of subdomains, such as Wordpress, Blogger, Craigslist and EBay. In terms of RSS, Dave Naylor mentioned ensuring that your RSS feed has a link back to your site on it along with a copyright on it. If CNN picks up your content and doesn't link back to you, if you've got a copyright notice on your feed you should contact them and ask them to remove it - never, ever feed the people above you.

Dave Naylor suggested removing the timestamp from your posts after 2 weeks to improve your click-through rate on older posts, along with preventing people from automatically leaving if they arrive on an outdated post. There may also be QDF (query deserves freshness) implications, although that's very difficult to test. A worrying implication of registering your blog with Google Blogsearch is that, one day, Google may decide to remove all blogs from the regular index and only allow them to be searched through the separate section. It's certainly possible if Google ever wish to push Google Blogsearch and it was interesting seeing Dave Naylor and Maila from Google having a slight disagreement away from the microphone on this issue.

Link Building Basics

The interesting part of this session was the different techniques used by the panel to get links. [Debra Mastaler](#) and our own [Jonathan Stewart](#)

agreed on similar link building techniques - directories shouldn't be focused on much but are still a solution that works as long as the directories are high quality. Anchor text is as important as ever, as demonstrated by Adobe ranking for "click here". Jonathan suggested link reconfiguration as a good strategy, contacting people that already link to your site to encourage them to change the link to be optimised. It works best when you give them a reason to change the link, such as how you've rebranded or had a re

design, so it would be more beneficial to their visitors if they change the link. Useful tools include [Yahoo's Site Explorer](#) and [SEOMoz's Linkscape](#).

[Peter Van De Graaf](#) is known for having a different approach to linkbuilding. He mentions identifying a website you'd like a link from and creating a micro site purely built towards getting a link from that site. You can then link to your site from this, 301 the site over after a time period or (as he's done in the past) cloak the 301 to Google. Understand the content that the target site links to, and recreate similar or more innovative content. Completely debrand the micro site, make sure no-one knows that it's done to get a link. It should appear to be from a completely independent source. Distributing the linkbait is important, getting the right people to see it is an art form - it involves contacting different people. A key that is often missed is then continuing the relationship even after they've linked; you'll never know when you'll need another link from them again. Getting people to link is a trade off - the linker needs to get something out of it too, whether it's because you're supporting them with evidence that they're right, boosting their ego, giving their visitors a discount if they click on the link, authoritative information, contributing to their site, a testimonial or providing must-see content (something shocking, funny or a hot topic) - there needs to be something in the linkbait that would benefit the target site if they link to it.

Universal and Blended Search

Introduction

This talk looked at Universal Search and how it can be integrated into an SEO campaign. There were 4 speakers who each addressed a different aspect of what it is and how to utilise it.

Key Points:

The SEO as a manager

Lisa Ditlefsen, Director, Verve Search & Founder, SEO Chicks

- The SEO will have to act as a manager not just an implementation specialist in order to deal with the different media necessary in Universal Search
- Universal search will push boundaries within agencies, as departments will have to work more closely together. Video and Image will have to become part of SEO, so the departments that deal with this media will have to work as one.-

New systems will need to be put in place to utilise Universal search, which will become a major part of the SERPs and SEO

- Best practice docs
- Training
- Identification of KPI's

Blended results

Luisella Mazza, Search Quality Senior Analyst, Google Search Quality

- Google is aiming to bring as much content together as possible, no matter what the format
- Images are key, these have 'longtail explicit triggering' (which makes no sense and I guess she was tr

ying to say images will come up a lot on long tail searches but in a way that made her sound more important). I disagree with this point as well.

- Google loves local, the more information you provide Google with about your business the more it has to pull into the search results.

Domination!

Amanda Watlington, Owner, Searching for Profit

- We now have the chance to ?Dominate? the results, you can get in image, video etc and push out companies on their own brand terms!
- More time is spent on page, eyetracking suveys have found that viewing is spread across the page.
- Video results are show according to both viewing numbers and ratings.
- It is possible to filter your analytics to provide specific tracking for Universal Search results.

Technical + Stats

Horst Joepen, CEO, Searchmetrics

- You tube dominates the videos shown in universal, unfortunately he didn?t touch on whether th is is because it is just the largest source or is actively proffered.
- From their own stats they have found that a single video result can take 10 ? 30% of page 1 tr affic.
- Use the tools available, such as a Video, Image, News sitemap. Use the right tools for the job when dealing with all these different forms of media.

Conclusion:

The true scale and impact of universal search has yet to be realised. There is masses of content out there and Google may choose to include more formats than just image and video in the SERPs. Whilst text results will always play a part, this will be an ever decreasing part. We need to be prepared for this and to be taking pro active steps to change the way we think about SEO.