How to Find a Community of People to Link to Your Law Blog

I [wrote recently](#) that most law firm blogs fail because the bloggers don't ask the right questions before they start. Specifically, you should ask yourself:

1. Whether there is a linking community that will bring visibility to your site; and
2. Whether there are enough clients in your geographic area to make your efforts worthwhile.

This post focuses on the first of these questions: How to tell if there is a community of people that will link to your law firm blog.

A Quick Review

As I wrote in the [first installment of my link-building guide,](#) inbound links are the primary way that search engines determine relevancy (and, correspondingly, whether you deserve that top ranking). If you are blogging in hopes of being found on search engines, you can't afford to ignore links.

Search engines prefer that you acquire links naturally. Search engine algorithms rely on the assumption that links are the product of sincere interest by the third-party site that links to your blog. Because manual link-building erodes the foundation of that theory, search engines discourage you from doing anything extra to [help your content along](#).

This post is about how to tell whether the search engine's assumption that links will occur naturally is reasonable. This is important. **The failure of most law firm blogs to achieve search visibility is due to the lack of a linking community—the group of bloggers or other website owners that will <u>naturally</u> add links to your content.**

How to Locate a Linking Community Using Competitor Analysis

If your competitors can attract natural links, you can too. So start by taking a look at your top competitors' link profiles.

It's hard to beat SEOmoz's [Open Site Explorer](#) for competitor analysis. This tool allows you to check backlinks based on data from SEOmoz's Linkscape index (which currently includes 36 billion URLs and 9.2 trillion links).

To use the tool, simply enter your topic in your favorite search engine. Identify the top several sites that appear to be closest to your blog topic. Then, go to Open Site Explorer. Click the "Compare Pages" button beneath the search box.

Drop these sites into OSE and click Search. On the results page, scroll down to the root domain metrics and take a look at the data.


The number of linking root domains will usually tell you more than the sheer number of links. You may notice that, in some cases, one site has far more links than the other even though the linking root domains are more/less the same. This is often an indication that the links for that domain did not occur naturally. If most of your competitors are using manual link-building strategies, you should be prepared to do the same.

Once you have compared your competitors' sites, it's time to drill down to the individual sites to get a better understanding of their link profile. Enter the competitor's URL in OSE, then us the filters to narrow the results down to links from "only external" pages to "pages on this root domain." Then, use the Export to CSV function to download the data into an Excel spreadsheet. You can then use Excel's Filter and Sort functions or manually comb through the data to identify linking strategies. Check out this post for useful ways to parse OSE data.

How to Locate a Linking Community by Listening

Competitor analysis is a good place to start, but don't stop there. It could be that there are opportunities out there that your competitors haven't discovered. The best way to identify these opportunities is simply to *listen* to what people are talking about over the internet.

Google reader is a great tool for tapping into what's going on in the blogosphere. Simply go to your Google Reader account, click "Subscribe," type in your keyword, and click "Add."
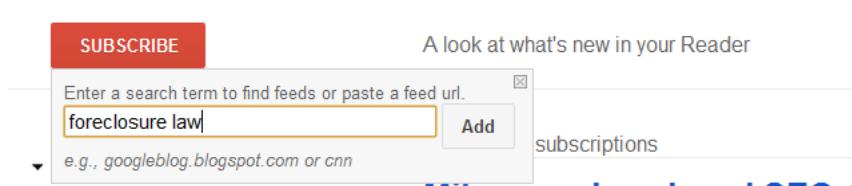
Then review the results to find blogs and other feeds that are talking about your topic. If the blog itself is about the topic (as opposed to a single page about the topic on a more diverse blog), check out the subscriber numbers. If you find healthy subscriber stats on a blog that deals with your area of law, you can rest assured that there are people out there that will link to it.

Topsy.com is another great listening tool. Instead of being limited to blogs, it allows you to search the entire social web. Just enter your topic into the search box and find out who is taking about it.

The stats box on the left sidebar gives a quick reference to the popularity of the topic, and the results list gives you insight into real-time discussions of the topic.

Using these tools should help you easily identify whether there is a community of people to naturally link to your blog. If not, you may need to either adjust your blog strategy to include a broader topic or be prepared for manual link-building.

A final caveat: Remember that link-building (and the corresponding site visibility) is only part of the equation. It is important to also be sure that there are enough potential clients looking for your services to justify your efforts. We will deal with that in the next post.

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Link O' The Month – Get a monthly e-mail that gives you one place to obtain a valuable link to your law firm website.

Monthly Roundup of SEO Tips and Tricks - A monthly newsletter full of practical and actionable information to help you get your law firm in front of prospective clients.

Deals on Valuable Resources – Good deals on tools to help promote your website.

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