

HOW TO

# Build Quality Backlinks

THAT

# Impact *Organic* Visibility

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What is the impact of building relevant and authoritative backlinks? Read this guide to understand why links are crucial for ranking #1 on Google.

FREE GUIDE DEVELOPED BY

investisdigital.

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# Introduction

There have never been more eyes on computer screens than there are right now. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed life as we know it, and if you didn't completely buy in on the importance of digital marketing up to this point, now is the time.

In April 2020, CEO of Conductor Seth Besmertnik published results from a "[Impact of COVID on Marketing Study](#)," which found that 63% of marketers expect search engine optimization to become more important during the pandemic. Besmertnik makes a compelling argument on SEO as a long-term investment:

*“Most media investments are fleeting. You buy an impression, you get an impression. You buy a click, you get a click. In great times, it's viable to deploy large amounts of capital using media campaigns. But this is expensive and inefficient... so when consumer demand (and budgets) decrease, it's hard to rationalize these investments.*

*Your content and SEO are like bonds (high-yield/low-risk ones). You invest today. You begin to get yield today. If you execute well, you continue to drive value for many years – without making any further investments.”*

There is no doubt that search engines have seen an influx of [visitors looking for useful information](#) over the past couple months. Organic search has been and will continue to be one of the best sources of reliable information across the globe. Backlinks are at the core of how search engines operate, and while there are many other factors to consider when influencing a site to rank organically, links have continually proven as a vital ranking factor for search.

Link development has changed significantly over the past 10 years, shifting from secretive communication and “black hat” tactics to a blend of email marketing, PR and SEO all in one. With a proper link development strategy of relevancy, authority and diversity, businesses can reach new audiences, drive qualified traffic and ultimately increase a website’s organic visibility and lead volume.

As our data study from 2019 called out, the key to ongoing backlink and organic success is linkable content. Not just any content, but content that is relevant, useful and timely. While content production is not the only way to build backlinks, it is the most efficient and impactful way to improve rankings for a domain.

The goal of this guide is to help website owners understand why links are important, what successful link building looks like and the impact of backlinks on a website. These are the million-dollar questions for businesses owners and marketing managers.

**In this guide, we cover:**

- **What Google says about links and what data tells us about the impact of backlinks**
- **Investis Digital’s link development performance from 2018 to present**
- **The importance of linkable content**

One of the top concerns for a business owner before engaging in link development is the ROI. This first part of the guide walks through how Google and the digital marketing industry view the importance of backlinks and the impact they have on a website’s organic visibility.

01.

# *The Impact of Backlinks* **on Organic Search**

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## What has Google said about the value of links?

In short, not a lot. While link building is one of the most talked about areas of SEO, Google is careful to protect their proprietary algorithm outside of what they state within their [Webmaster Guidelines](#). Most information from Google on the value of backlinks has been from brief statements that senior data scientists such as [Greg Corrado](#) and [Andrey Lipattsev](#) have made over the past few years.

John Mueller, senior webmaster trends analyst at Google, will often talk about link building tactics he finds to be ineffective, but he typically won't reveal specifics on the value they bring to a site.

In late 2019, Mueller offered his opinion on “good” links and their potential impact during a [webmaster hangout](#):

*“A good link... so I mean the traditional good link is someone who comes across your website and thinks it's a fantastic website and recommends it to other people with a link. So basically on the one hand that involves some amount of self-promotion from your side like you have to get some people to come and visit your website somehow so that they can recognize that this is actually a good website. And there are lots of ways that you can do that. And then that also involves one of those people or some of those people going well, this is a really fantastic website and I have another website that I can link, from where I can link to your website. So it's not the case that every visitor coming to your website will say it's a fantastic website and I also have a website and let me link to your website from my website, but some of these people they can. Links are really important for use to find content initially. So it's like if nobody links to your website ever then we're going to have a hard time recognizing that it even exists.”*



John Mueller



While this does not give us a lot of actionable information, it does show that Google still highly values the importance of links as part of their algorithm for identifying important pages.

Our team's approach very much aligns with what Mueller describes above as a "traditional good link" by reaching out to relevant organizations and sharing our client's content with them. Ultimately, it is up to webmasters and their organization if they want to link out to our client's website.

Therefore, we consider our methods at Investis Digital not only natural but "**algorithm-proof.**" We were ecstatic to hear Muller endorse this same approach, as well as the overall importance that backlinks have on Google's algorithm.

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## What does industry data show us about the importance of links?

Our team pays close attention to this area, and it is one of the major advantages of working in an agency setting. Our teams are constantly sharing and discussing new studies and applying them to our overall link building strategy for our clients.

Three data studies have been released over the past couple years, on which we base much of our overall philosophy:

- [SEMRush Ranking Factors Study 2.0](#)
- [Backlinko Search Engine Ranking Study](#)
- Rand Fishkin's [Google Ranking Factors 2019: Opinions from 1,500+ Professional SEOs](#)

On the following pages, we'll show the takeaways from each study, further demonstrating that the data supports the importance of quality link building.

## SEMRUSH RANKING FACTORS STUDY 2.0

For this study, SEMrush looked at 600,000+ keywords to get a better understanding of what specifically affects search results. This study is best summed up with this chart (right) that lists each ranking factor in order of importance.

Out of all the different ranking factors that SEMrush looked at, **the number of referring domains had the highest off-page impact for position 1 rankings.** Additionally, “time on site,” “pages per session” and “bounce rate” are key user-engagement metrics that point to the importance of quality content.

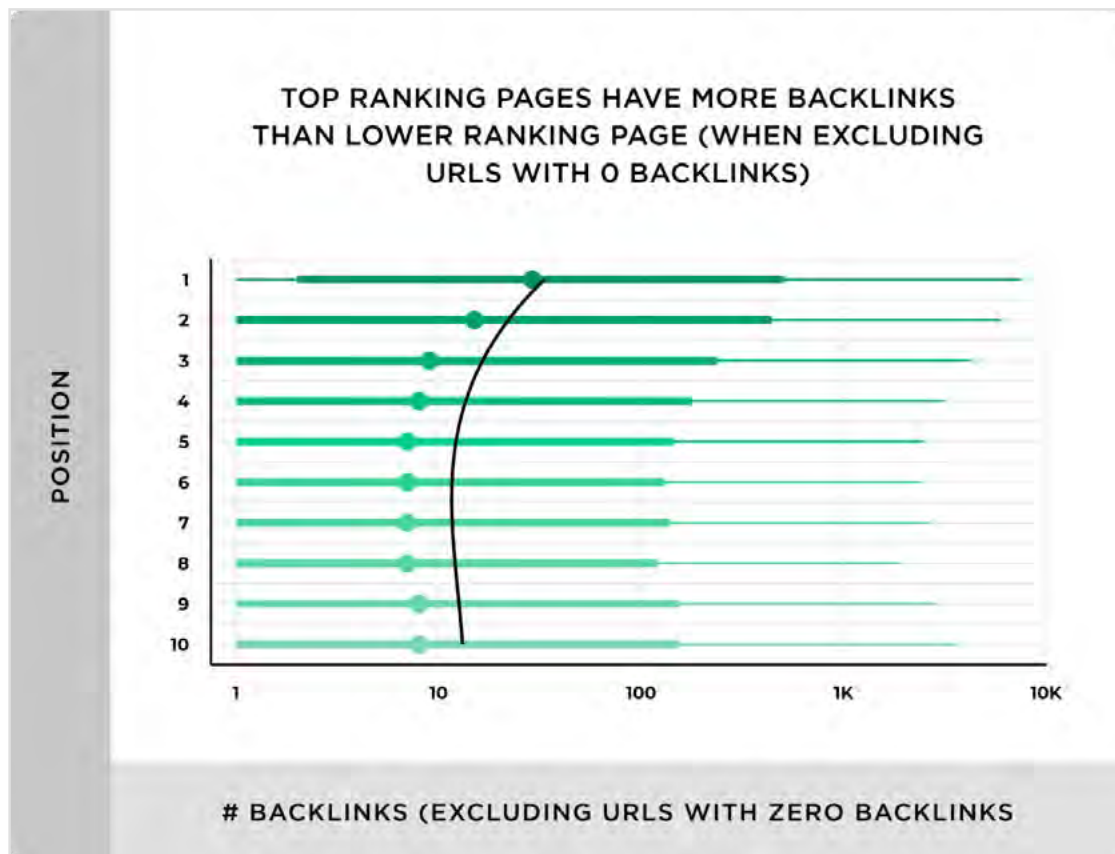
An interesting finding from this study regards content length. SEMrush found that there was a 45% difference in content length between results ranking in the top 3 vs results in the 20th position. While there is no magic length for content, it is vital to provide thorough and well-researched information for any targeted keyword. When we research our initial link development strategy, one of the most common findings is that clients do an excellent job targeting keywords and creating compelling meta data. However, clients often do a poor job at providing value within the content itself. If the content is thin, branded and provides little overall value to an audience, it's more difficult for our team to be successful with acquiring links. Content remains supremely important, and that idea is highlighted by this data study.



## BACKLINKO SEARCH ENGINE RANKING STUDY

In April 2020, [Backlinko](#), partnered with [Ahrefs](#), published a study that examined 11.8 million Google search results to better understand which factors correlate with first page search engine rankings. In their summary of key findings, Backlinko found that the, **“#1 result in Google has 3.2X more referring domains than positions #2-#10.”** While relevancy is always more important than quantity, this finding points to how critical it is for websites to earn links from a diverse set of domains.

Additionally, the study found that, **“Websites with above-average ‘time on site’ tend to rank higher in Google”**. In fact, Backlinkco found that increasing time on site by 3 seconds correlated to a single position higher in the search results. Like the findings in the SEMRush data study, this points to the importance of not only building diverse links, but also publishing in-depth, useful content.



Source: [backlinko.com/search-engine-ranking](https://backlinko.com/search-engine-ranking)

## SPARKTORO SURVEY STUDY BY RAND FISHKIN

The founder of Moz, Rand Fishkin, recently started a market research startup called SparkToro. In late 2019, Rand published a study titled, “Google Ranking Factors 2019: Opinions from 1,500+ Professional SEOs” that reviewed a number of questions and responses from highly qualified professionals in the SEO industry – many of whom run their own respective data studies with their own clients. The survey asked respondents to rank 26 factors on a scale from 0-10. Check out the results in the graphic below.

The SparkToro study pointed to the importance of content as the number 1 ranking factor. However, “quality of linking sites and pages” (2), “domain’s perceived expertise, authority, and trust” (4), “quantity and diversity of linking websites” (7), “link authority of host domain” (9), “page’s perceived expertise, authority, and trust” (10) were all considered to be some of the most important backlink-related factors for the SEO community.

These studies help craft our team’s overall approach, and we continue to keep a close eye on industry data studies to inform our decision making on behalf of our clients. Link building should always be done with data-backed decision making.



Source: [sparktoro.com/blog/resources/google-ranking-factors-2019/](https://sparktoro.com/blog/resources/google-ranking-factors-2019/)

## What does our own data tell us about the importance of links?

At the start of 2018, our team launched 5 new lead generation sites within 5 verticals in the higher education industry. This was a unique project, because these websites were created from scratch, so we were able to test and measure each of the changes we made throughout the development of the site.

Here are the steps that we took to turn each of these sites into conversion machines:

### STEP 1: CREATE LINKABLE ASSETS

One of the most crucial initial stages for creating a website that ranks well organically is content creation. Our team focused on this effort for the first year of this project, and doing so played a vital role in earning the quality and quantity of links we needed to be successful.

#### **What is a Linkable Asset?**

Companies such as Facebook, Google and even Activision (see this recent example with Warzone) have discovered that when you provide users with valuable, free content, there is typically a way to monetize it. The same holds true for linkable content. This “monetization” often comes via non-branded keyword visibility, assisted conversions, trust established from creating authoritative content and/or by receiving contact information for lead nurturing down the road.

<b>Non-promotional</b>	<b>In-depth</b>	<b>Useful</b>
<i>Usually</i> <b>Top-of-funnel</b>	<b>Evergreen</b>	<b>Timely</b>

On the next two pages, we will show two of our favorite linkable assets  
(Note: we have no affiliation with this content or organizations).

## 1. [Women in Computer Science: Getting Involved in STEM](#)

369 Referring Domains

This piece provides valuable information to any woman looking to enter the field of computer science. It provides statistics, career resources, links to free educational programs and much more.

### WOMEN IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

KEYWORD	POS	VOLUME
women in computer science	1	1,000
girls in computer science	1	140
percentage of female computer science majors 2019	1	90
women in computing	7	480
women in computer engineering	1	40
scholarships for women in computer science	7	390
female computer scientists	4	210

#### WHAT ARE SOME OTHER REASONS FOR WOMEN TO CONSIDER ENTERING THE TECH FIELD?

In addition to the reasons mentioned above, many tech and computer science companies are at the forefront of progressive workplace policies. Some of the most innovative tech company benefits are included below.



Apple also offers [excellent maternity benefits](#), including 18 weeks of paid maternity leave and nine weeks of unpaid maternity leave. This is higher than the industry average, which is 11 weeks of paid maternity leave and nine weeks of unpaid maternity leave.

#### WORK/LIFE BALANCE

In a report by the [New York City Economic Development Corporation](#), researchers found that women working in tech companies -- particularly start-ups -- are much more likely to have a healthy work-life balance. Many tech companies support non-traditional work procedures, including videoconferencing and working from home. Furthermore, many of these companies offer flexible hours, allowing employees to work around their personal schedules to complete projects.



It's no secret that Google is a trendsetter in the tech community. When it comes to paid maternity leave, they set the bar high. [Google offers](#) mothers 22 weeks of paid maternity leave. Parents also receive a cash gift after having a child.

#### MATERNITY LEAVE AND CHILDCARE

While the average length of maternity leave in America for salaried employees is six weeks, many technology companies provide substantial paid-leave policies for new parents. Some of the best examples of parental leave policies as included below.

SAS offers benefits for both birth and adoptive mothers. [SAS employees](#) receive 12 weeks of paid maternity leave and eight weeks of paid adoption leave. SAS believes in providing mothers with time to bond with new children.

#### facebook

Facebook continually strives toward creating a better work environment for its employees. Facebook allows employees [six weeks of paid leave](#) to care for sick children and family members, which benefits women because they are often the ones who take on this role. Facebook also offers four months of paid maternity leave.

## 2. Computer Programming Languages

### 206 Referring Domains


This piece provides valuable information to anyone looking to enter the field of computer programming. For each programming language, there is information about who uses it, why it is important and where it started, along with websites to get a jump start on learning the language of your choice. These pieces include valuable external links, which creates a more authentic experience for users.

While the main purpose of these pieces is to earn qualified leads, computerscience.org does it in a natural way. The visitor doesn't feel like they are being forced through a sales funnel. They provide interesting, useful content and in turn, they are rewarded with some awesome non-branded keyword visibility, noted below.

### COMPUTER PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES

KEYWORD	POS	VOLUME
programming languages	3	18,100
computer programming languages	1	1,300
coding languages	5	9,900
computer languages list	1	720
computer languages list	7	5,400
programming languages list	3	1,900
computer science languages	1	320

### Python



Python is an advanced programming language that is interpreted, object-oriented and built on flexible and robust semantics.

**WHO USES IT?**

- **Professions and Industries:**
  - Python developers, software engineers, back end developers, Python programmers
  - Used by employers in information technology, engineering, professional services and design
- **Major Organizations:** Google, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube, DropBox, NASA, ESRI
- **Specializations and Industries:** Web and Internet development (frameworks, micro-frameworks and advanced content management systems); scientific and numeric computing; desktop graphical user interfaces (GUIs)

**WHAT MAKES LEARNING IT IMPORTANT?**

Python lets you work quickly to integrate systems as a scripting or glue language. It's also suited for Rapid Application Develop (RAD).

- The game Civilization 4 has all its inner logic, including AI, implemented in Python.
- NASA uses Python in its Integrated Planning System as a standard scripting language.
- **Features:**
  - Simple to learn and easily read
  - Associated web frameworks for developing web-based applications
  - Free interpreter and standard library available in source or binary on major platforms

**WHERE DID IT START?**

Python was developed in the late 1980s at CWI in the Netherlands and first released to the public in 1991.

**FORUMS**

- [Stack Overflow](#)
- [Python community](#)
- [Devshed Network \(Python Programming Forum\)](#)

**TRY IT OUT!**

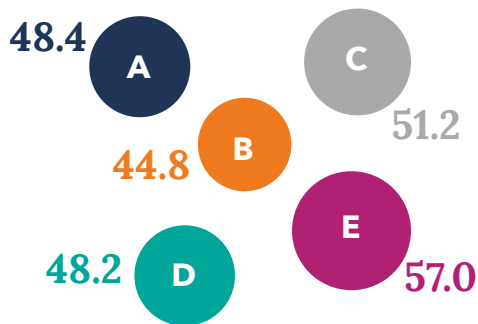
Create a dice rolling simulator at

[KNIGHTLAB](#)

## STEP 2: BUILD QUALITY BACKLINKS

Once we created the necessary linkable content, our team jumped right in with our link development process. The challenge we faced here was the lack of brand recognition we typically have when sending outreach on behalf of our clients. Linking opportunities that we lost out on include unlinked mentions of the brand, local links, and partnership links. However, since the content was so thoughtfully created, it made the value proposition from our emails much stronger.

### Average DA of Links Built



Question from the audience:

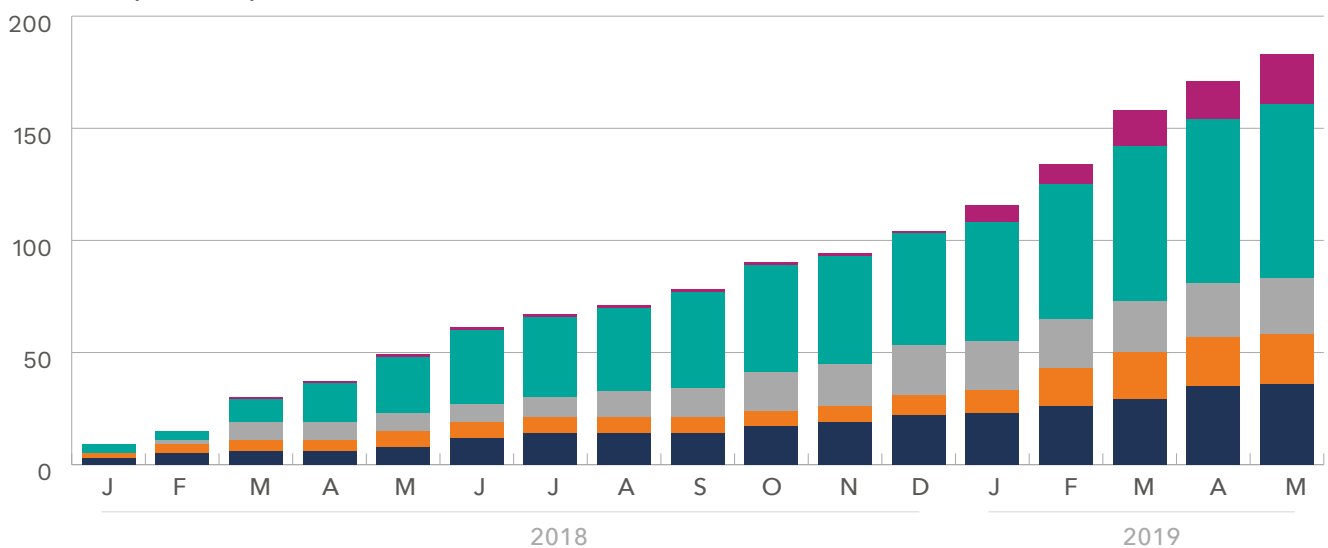
### Were most of these links built to products/services pages?

Answer:

NO! In fact, 10% of the links we built were pointed toward our product pages. This is because we were only reaching out with these pages when our team identified a relevant opportunity to do so. Of the 1,262 page 1 rankings we were able to secure across all five sites, over 30% of those rankings were for our product pages, showing the importance of logical site architecture and useful internal linking to improve the visibility of pages that are harder to earn links to.

## Total Links Built

January 2018 - May 2019



### STEP 3: MEASURE DOMAIN AUTHORITY GROWTH

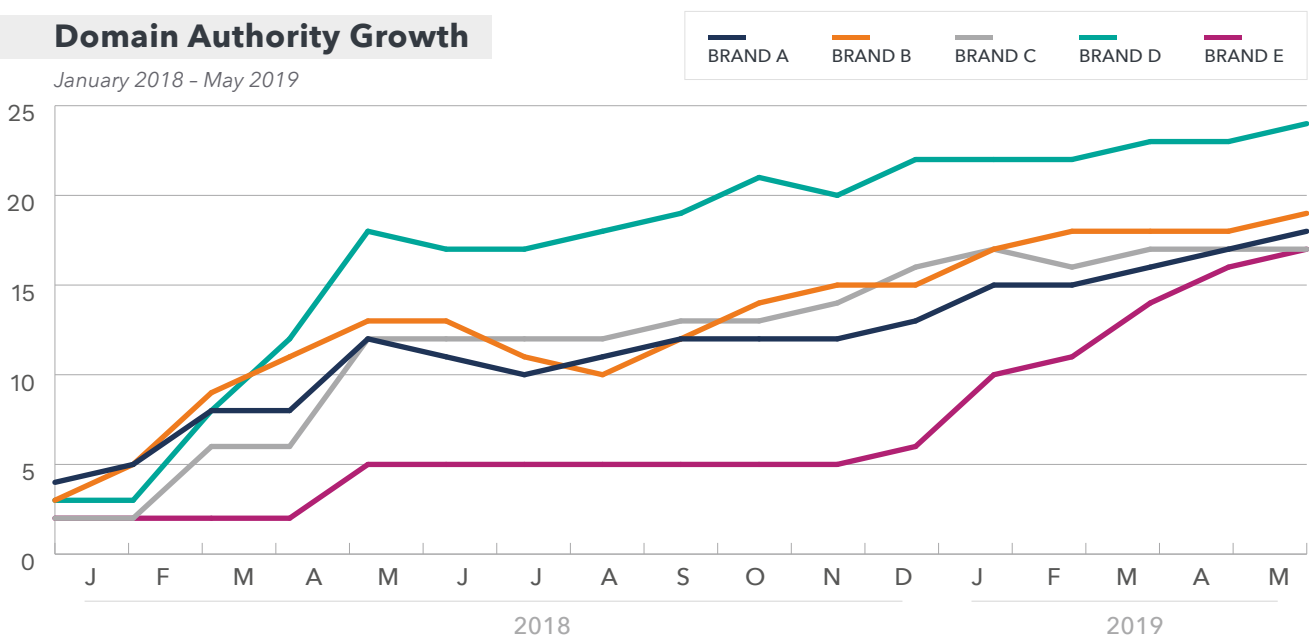
In our data study from 2019, we suspected that the new Domain Authority 2.0 was created to fix the artificially high growth that Link Explorer was showing from May 2018–March 2019. Domain Authority has been relatively flat for most of our clients since the roll-out of 2.0 at the start of 2019. In fact, looking at all of our link development clients combined, the average Domain Authority growth since the launch of Domain Authority 2.0 has been +0.53 – quite the contrast from what we saw from May 2018 through March 2019, when across the board, our clients saw an average growth of +6 DA points.

Despite this, Domain Authority is still a great metric for observing the potential of newer websites before organic traffic starts to take off – and that is exactly what we saw with our data.

We recommend using Domain Authority for looking at the growth for new websites, competitor analysis, as well as for prospecting linking opportunities. However, if you manage a site that has been around for some time, we recommend using organic traffic as a key indicator of site performance.

#### Domain Authority Growth

January 2018 - May 2019

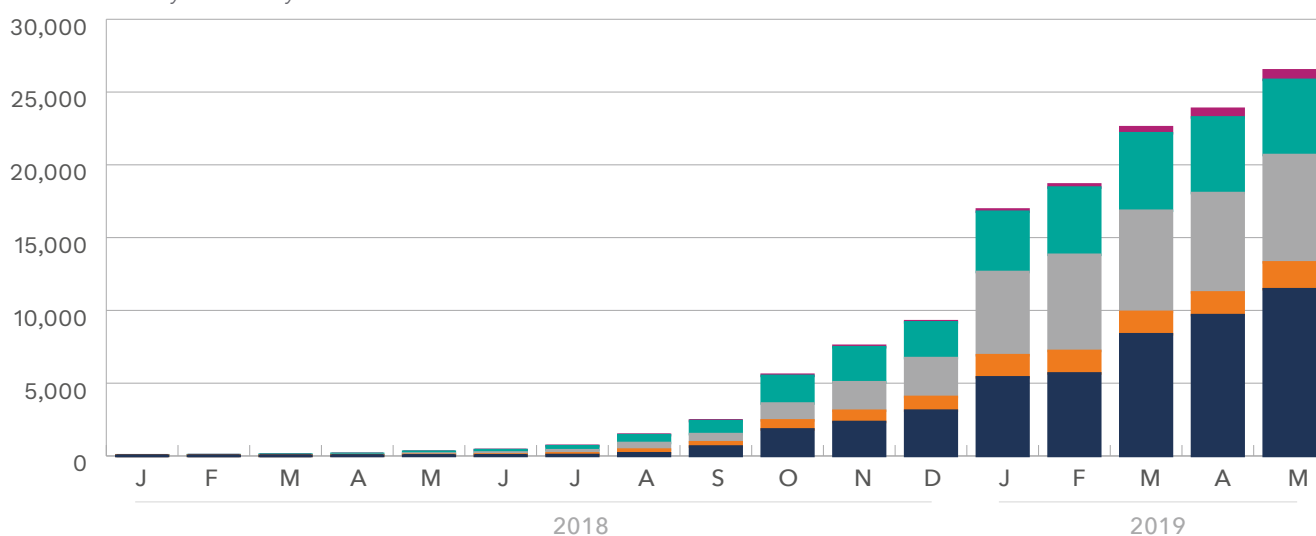
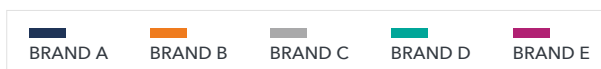


## STEP 4: MEASURE ORGANIC TRAFFIC GROWTH

It took a full 9 months of content creation and link building until we started to see an uptick of organic traffic. There were some situations (as with site E) where we reduced our focus because we were seeing a low return with DA growth, and subsequently, traffic. However, by early 2019 we were seeing consistent growth. All sites were ranking for a wide variety of non-branded, high-volume, competitive terms.

### Monthly Organic Traffic Growth

January 2018 - May 2019

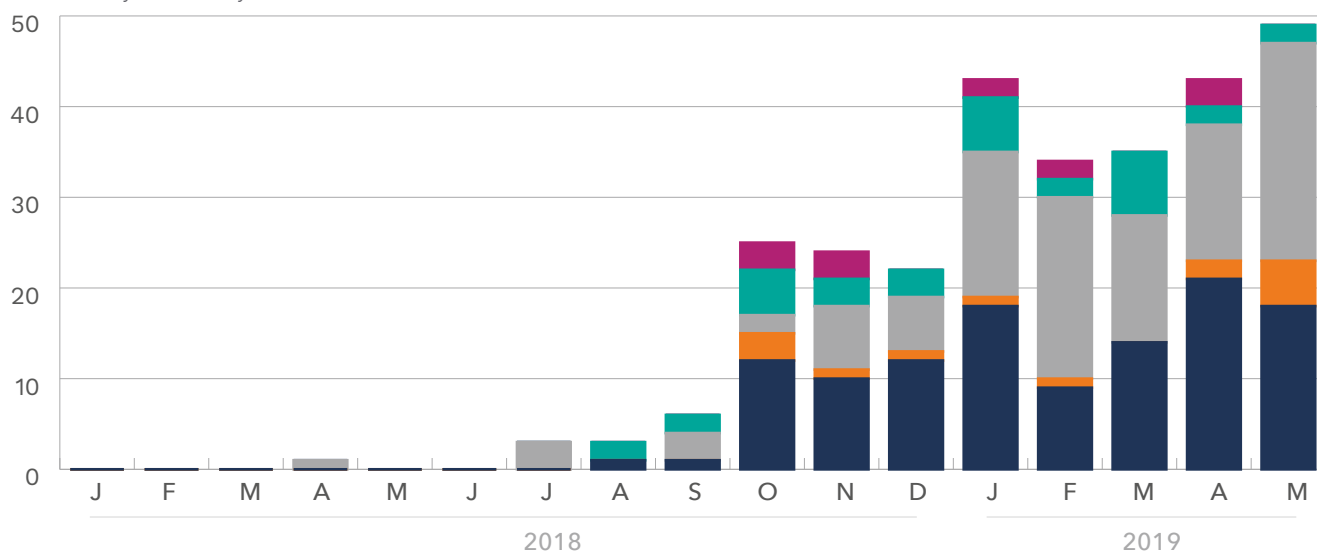
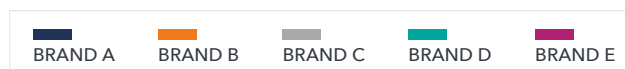


## STEP 5: MEASURE LEAD GROWTH

Finally, in Q4 2018, we start to see lead volume increase substantially across all the sites. We observed this trend well into 2019, which speaks to the solid foundation that we put in place through hundreds of hours of testing and improving.

### Monthly Lead Growth

January 2018 - May 2019



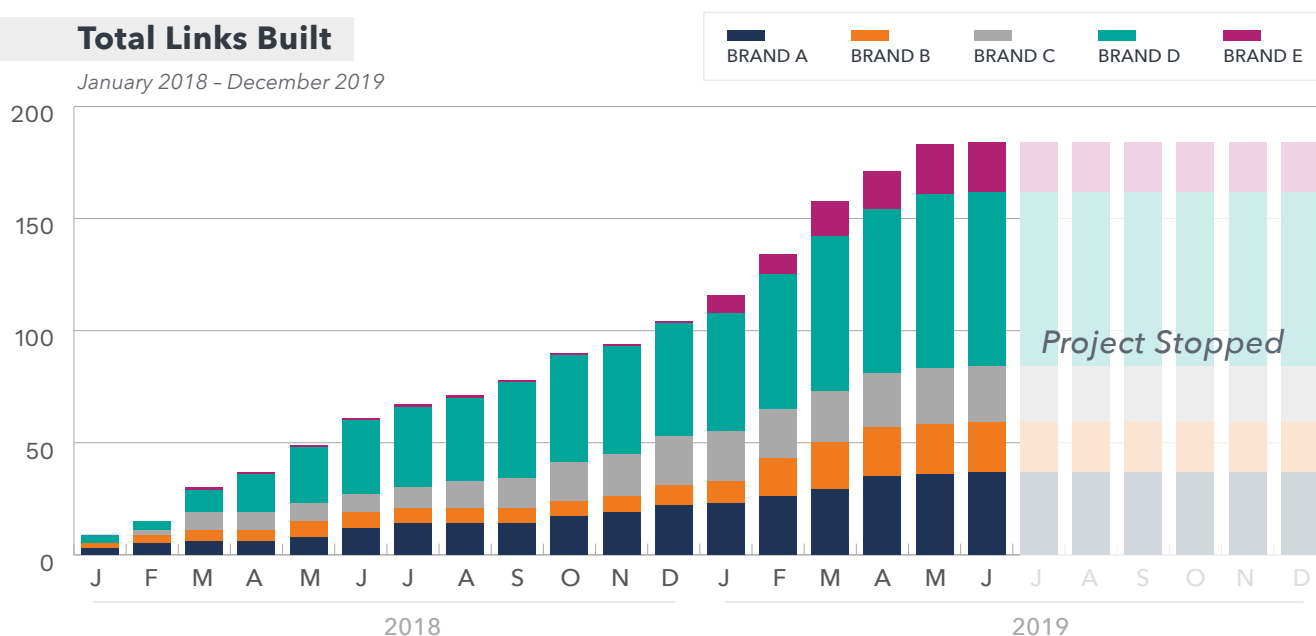
## WHY IS THE LAST REPORTING DATE MAY 2019?

It's not! At the end of May 2019, our team made the decision to halt work on all five websites. We put a tremendous amount of resources into them and they were performing to the point where they had become lead generation machines, which was our goal.

However, once we made the decision to stop building links, we continued to measure each site's activity. What we found over the course of the remainder of 2019 was astounding:

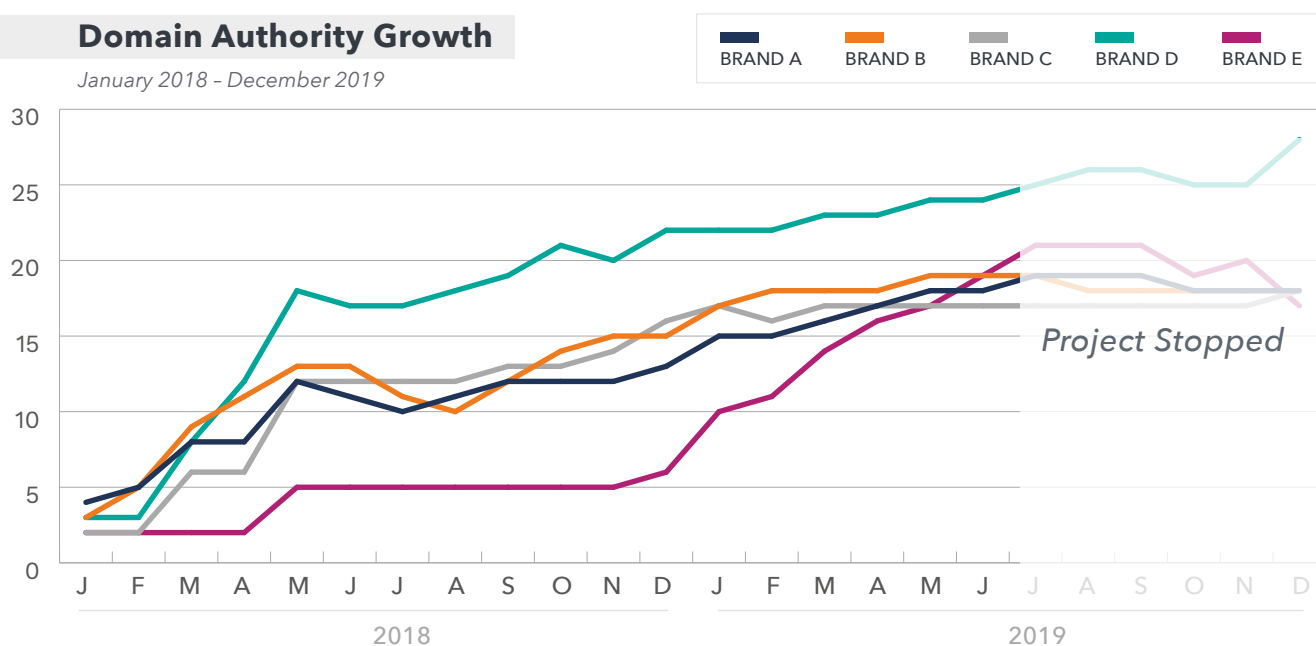
### Total Links Built

January 2018 - December 2019



### Domain Authority Growth

January 2018 - December 2019



**AVERAGE MONTHLY ORGANIC TRAFFIC GROWTH**

with active link building

**90%**

without active link building

**-2%**

**AVERAGE MONTHLY LEAD GROWTH**

with active link building

**54%**

without active link building

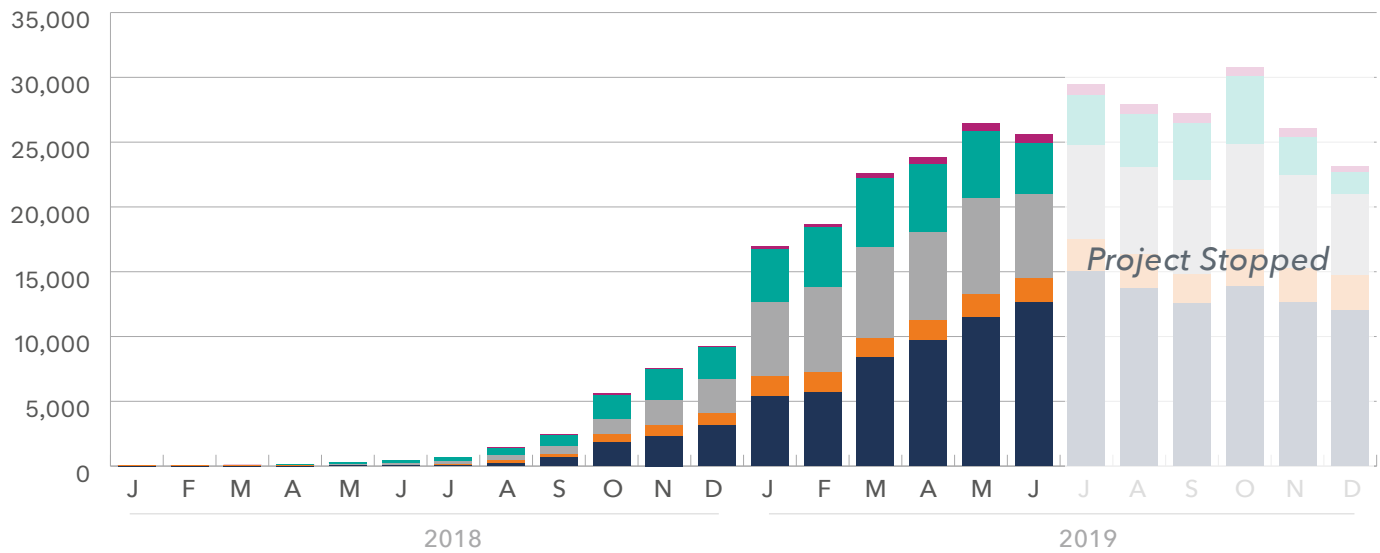
**13%**

As you can see from these graphs, link building and content creation have a major impact on organic growth (and subsequently lead growth) for a website. **When we stopped ongoing work across each of these sites, both the organic traffic and lead volume leveled out.**

In a time where businesses are looking to reduce their digital marketing budget, we believe this information is critical for digital marketing managers to see. **Do organic traffic and leads matter for the success of your business?** That is a rhetorical question – we know they do, and it is crucial to continue organic efforts to continue to drive both and stay ahead of the competition.

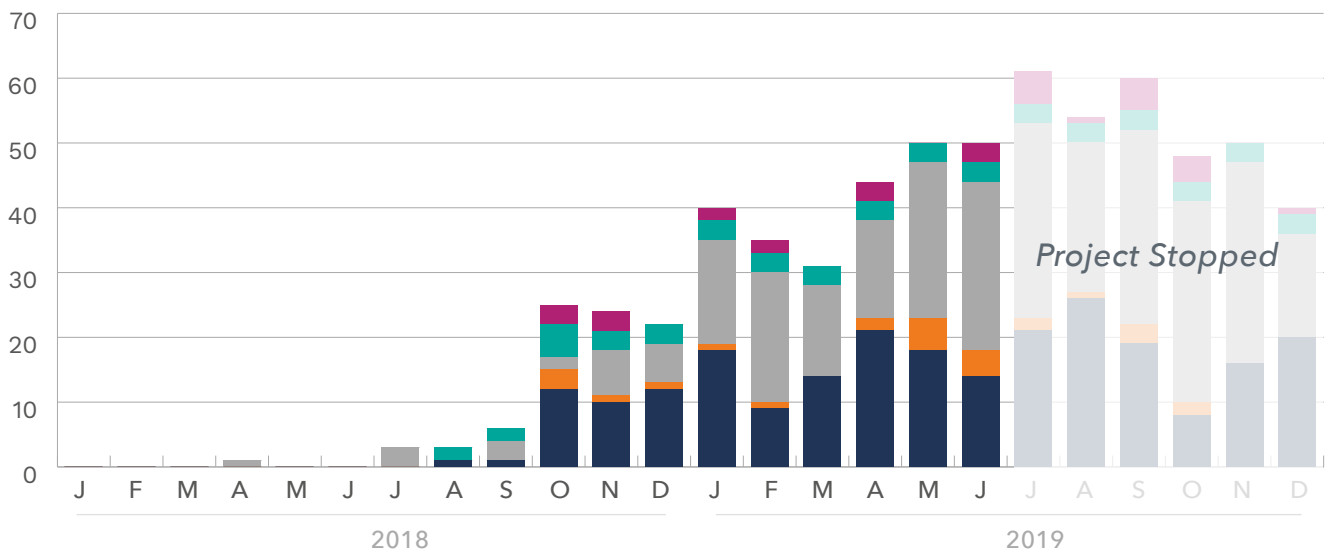
**Monthly Organic Traffic Growth**

January 2018 - December 2019



**Monthly Lead Growth**

January 2018 - December 2019 (total)



02.

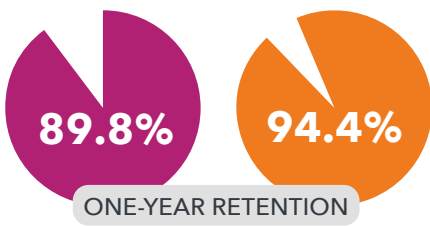
# *Our Results for* **2018 and 2019**

This past year, the Investis Digital link development team continued to push quality standards for the link development industry by phasing out tactics we no longer see as impactful. We also shifted to place a stronger emphasis on KPIs we think are important for all websites to track.

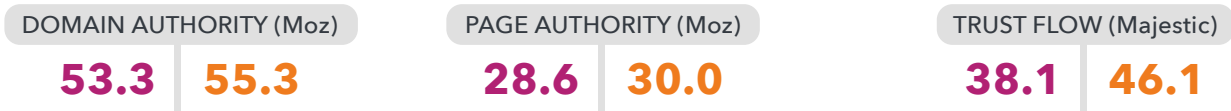
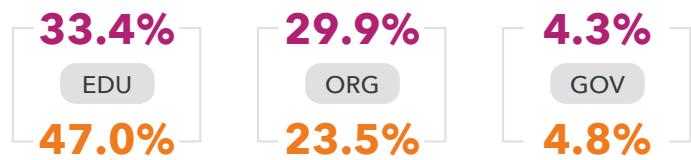
Our team built thousands of backlinks from thousands of unique domains in 2019. We saw an increase of 15.5% for the quantity of backlinks built and an increase of 18.1% for unique referring domains YoY from 2018 to 2019. We were excited to see that our percentage of unique domains increased at a faster rate than our increase of total backlinks built. This indicates that we held true to our philosophy of earning backlinks from relevant, unique domains for our clients.

Overall

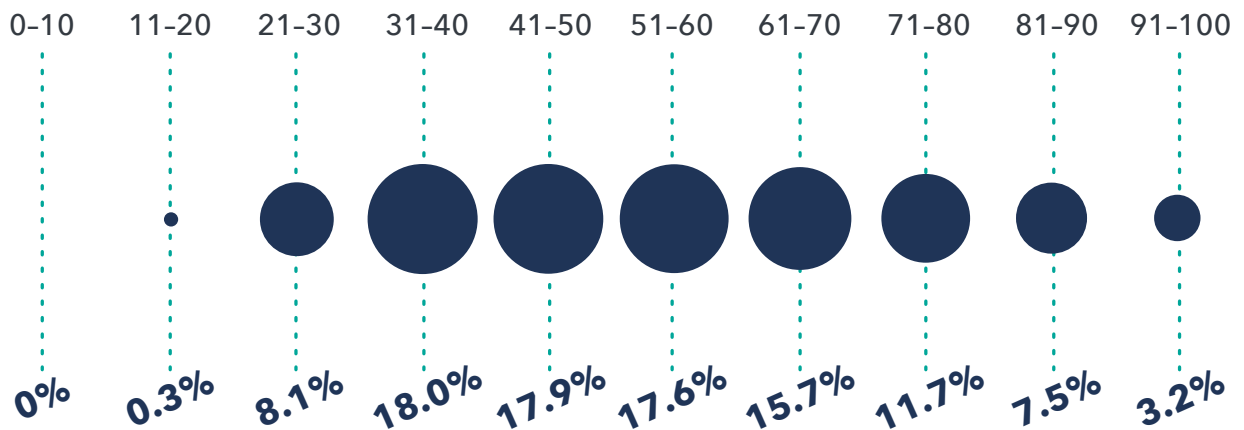
# Links Acquired: 2018 vs 2019



PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF TOP LEVEL DOMAINS



## Domain Authority Distribution of Acquired Referring Domains



## Retention Rate

The metric we are most proud of is retention rate. Yes, the average Domain Authority, Page Authority and Trust Flow are excellent, but retention rate is a rarely discussed metric in the link building world. **We believe retention rate should be a focus for businesses making sizable investments in link building.**

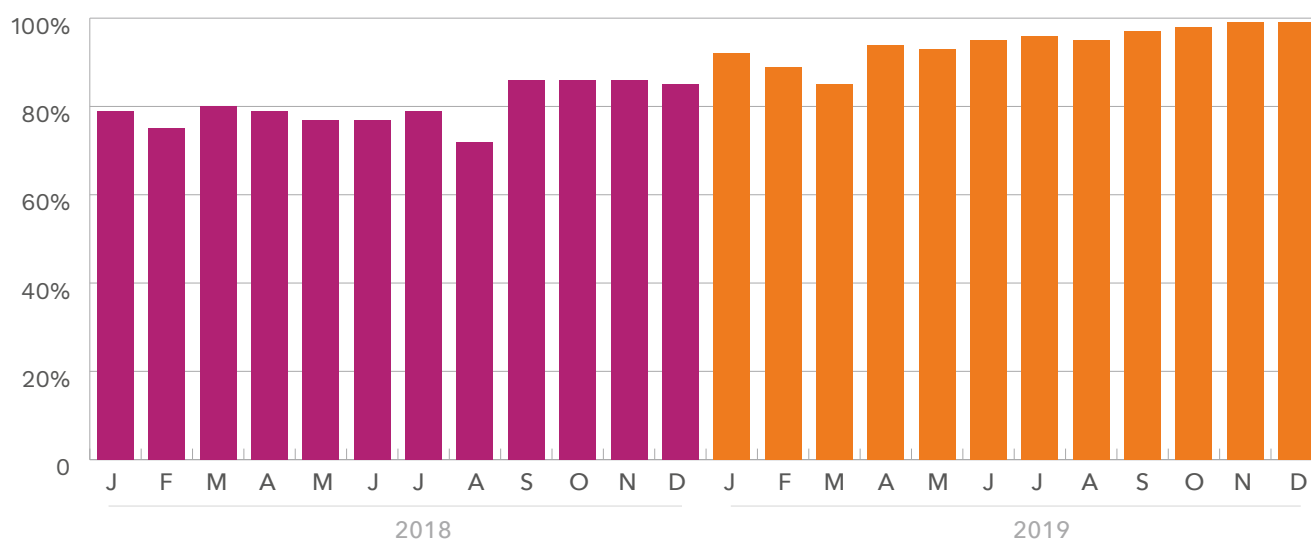
At the end of 2019, we audited backlinks from a few different agencies on behalf of a client. The findings were alarming. After just one year of link building, these agencies had a retention rate of roughly 70%. Compare that to our retention rate of 94.4% – that is almost a 25% difference. **Those businesses that engaged with these agencies lost a quarter of their entire investment after just one year.**

The above chart is what it looks like when links naturally fall off over time, with a two-year retention rate of 79.3% for all links built in 2018. You should never see massive spikes from month to month. If you are doing large-scale guest posting campaigns with just a handful of websites, this chart could look very different.



### Retention Rate

January 2018-December 2019



## Top-level Domains

Another important metric we emphasize is the percentage of GOV, EDU and ORG links that we earn. In 2019, over half of all backlinks we earned came from these top-level domains (TLDs). These domains typically have a higher level of trust from Google, due to the strict application process (GOV, EDU). Additionally, the Domain Authority tends to be higher from these TLDs. In 2019, the average GOV link we earned was a 64DA and the average EDU was a 68.

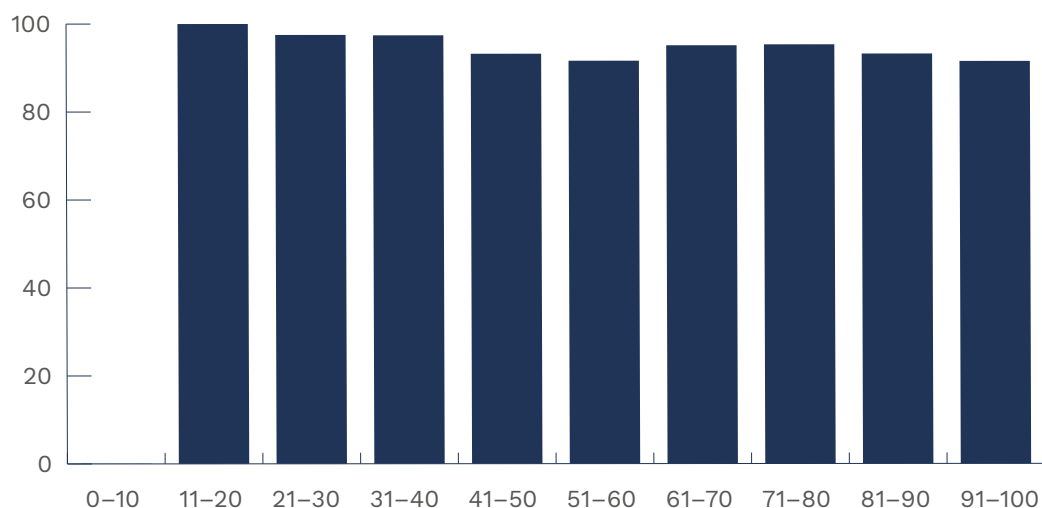
### QUALITY BY TOP-LEVEL DOMAIN

	DOMAIN AUTHORITY	PAGE AUTHORITY	TRUST FLOW	RETENTION
.EDU	67.6	34.4	61.8	93%
.GOV	63.7	33.2	57.7	94%
.ORG	40.9	24.3	31.2	95%

### WHY NOT JUST TARGET GOV, ORG, AND EDU TLDs?

So why shouldn't we only target these higher-quality TLDs? The answer is simple; the number one target should be relevancy. While we prioritize higher authority sites, we know that you should only pursue opportunities that are 100% topically relevant to your domain and audience. In fact, our retention rate was in fact the highest for sites between 11-40DA. This is most likely because those lower DA opportunities were extremely relevant, while larger sites are more likely to restructure pages or update external links.

### Retention Rate by Domain Authority



## Local Link Building

Local link building is extremely important for businesses with multiple locations. However, local link building can also be one of the toughest areas of link development, because of the types of available opportunities. Typically, local link building entails reaching out to smaller, less authoritative organizations that may not update their websites as frequently. It is perfectly fine to go after domains with a lower Domain Authority, as long as those sites are relevant and authentic.

Some great tactics include:

### 01

#### COMPETITOR BACKLINKS

Look at where the competition's location pages are earning links

### 02

#### LOCALIZED CONTENT

Create content that appeals to a local audience (ie. digital marketing events coming to Boston in 2020)

### 03

#### CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Get listed on trusted sites such as chambers of commerce

### 04

#### GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Reach out to local libraries, schools and applicable government branches

### 05

#### PARTNER LINKING

Ask partners to include a hyperlink if they mention your business or use your company logo

### 06

#### GUEST POSTING

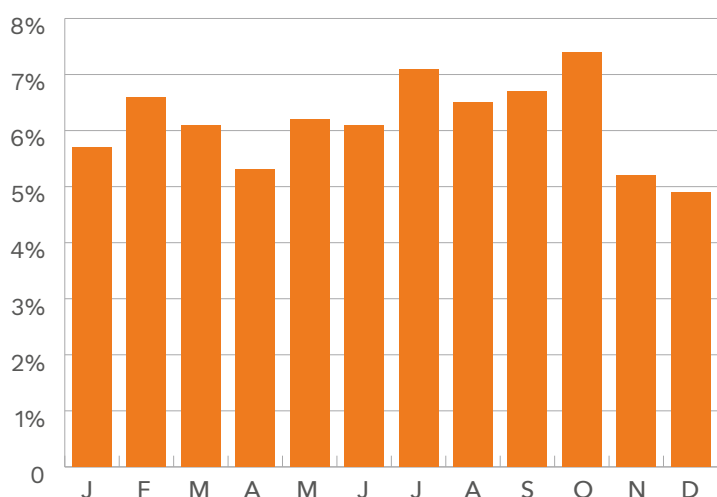
Is someone from your business willing to author a post on an external website? This is an excellent approach to local link building, because it closely aligns with Google's [E-A-T guidelines](#).

*Whatever your approach, local link building is a great way for smaller organizations to gain organic visibility by creating relevant backlinks.*

## Seasonality

Clients often ask us if acquisition rates are affected by seasonality. The answer is yes, but typically, there's only a couple percentage points difference between our best and worst months. Our best month for 2019 was October at 7.4%, and our worst was December at 4.9%. Our team struggles most during the holiday season (November through January), which makes sense since many organizations are closed or have limited hours during this time.

### 2019 Monthly Acquisition Rate



### What is the best day of the week to send outreach?

MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI
16%	24%	21%	20%	17%

We found that webmasters are most likely to respond Tuesday to Thursday during the week; our lowest success rates are on Monday and Friday. Over the years, we've found that conducting research and drafting emails on Monday and Friday and then sending them on a different day, when conversion rates are higher, is the best tactic.

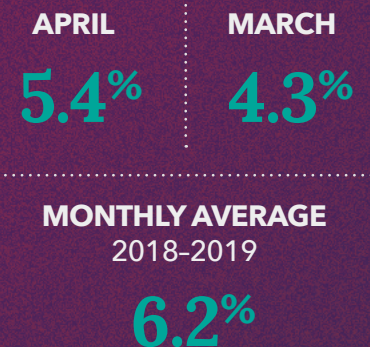
### What is the best week of the month to send outreach?

WEEK 1	2.5%
WEEK 2	3.2%
WEEK 3	3.1%
WEEK 4	★ 3.8%

We have a higher success rate toward the end of the month. This could, however, reflect our own team's monthly

reporting and scoping process, as well as the fact that the beginning of the month is typically full of researching prospective sites. We also rely heavily on tools for identifying links that have gone live, and we do this at the end of each month – which could also be a contributing factor to the month-end success rate.

## COVID-19 IMPACT ON CONVERSION RATES



### THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

While COVID-19 had an impact on our team's success in March 2020, our conversion rate was 4.3% – similar to what we see in December. This rate is still high, because we collaborated as a team to determine which types of content, across all our clients, would be the most beneficial to visitors during this time. In the instances where we did not have the right content, we collaborated with our content team to create new, timely linkable content that provided value to prospective audiences. This approach improved our results significantly in one of our most difficult months on record.

We saw a strong bounce back in April 2020, with conversion rates rising to 5.4%, even with the volume of outreach decreasing by 1% compared to March.

Additionally, we observed a 35.7% increase in ORG links, 28.2% increase in EDU links and 8% Increase for COM links for April compared to March. These numbers represent a big turnaround from the previous month and showed us that the online community is starting to adjust to the “new normal” that COVID-19 has created.



03.

# *The Importance of Linkable Content*

## What is a Linkable Asset?

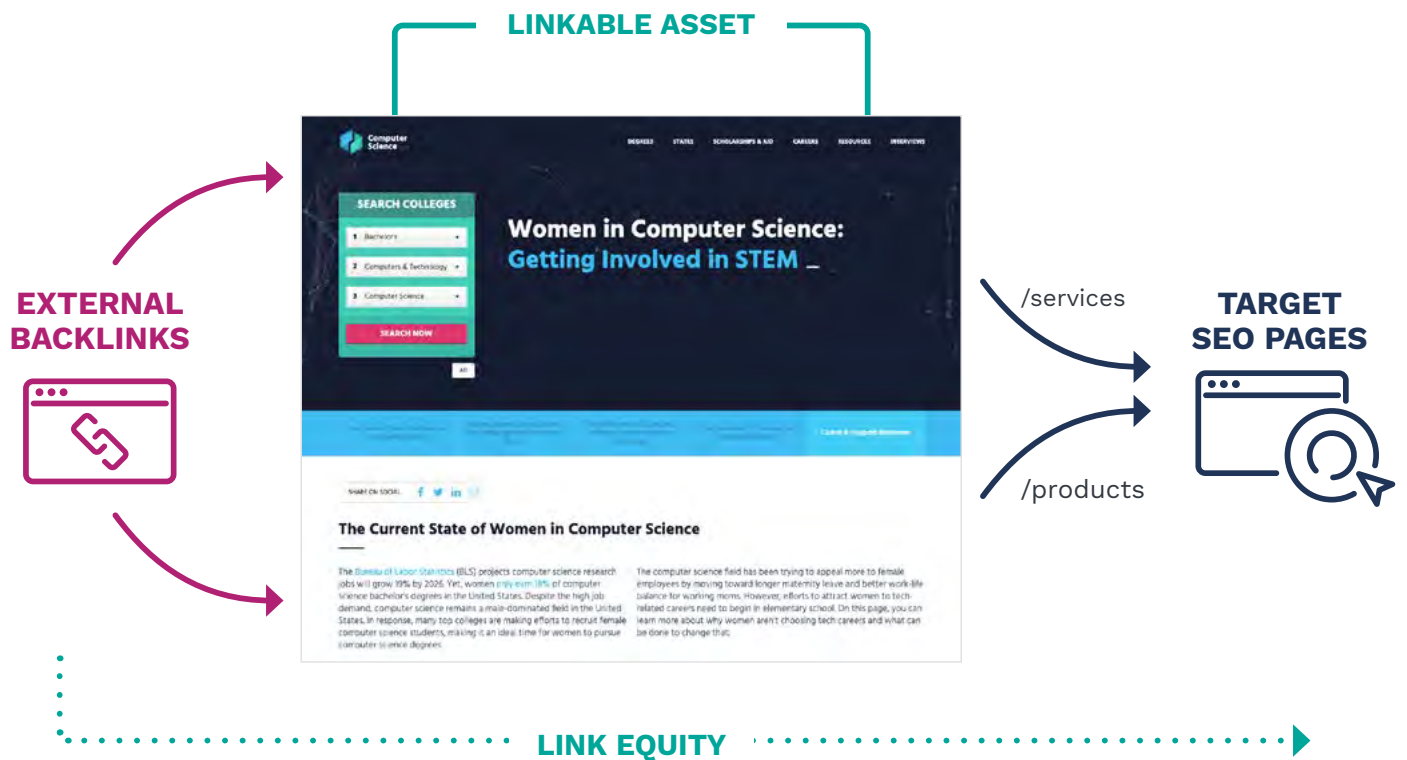
In 2019, 73.7% of our successfully placed links went to linkable assets, which shows how important they are for a successful link building campaign. Most of the remaining links we earned either went to product pages, location pages or the homepage.

Why are we not driving more links directly to product pages? The answer is simple – for branded content such as product pages, location pages and/or homepages, **there is a finite amount of relevant linking opportunities.** This is because webmasters are much less likely to link out to content that seems promotional. Furthermore, webmasters are looking for ways to provide additional useful information on their website, and external content is a great way to do that.

We often see a disconnect between SEO and link development teams (both in-house and agency) where the SEO team will give a directive that says, “**We want 20 links to these product pages only.**” This strategy is backwards and creates numerous inefficiencies. A professionally trained link development team will be able to clearly identify which pages are relevant to any domain for which we build backlinks. While we do recommend prioritizing specific pages and folders first, we never recommend limiting URLs to which link development teams can build relevant links. Remember, it is unique referring domains that we are trying to achieve for our client’s website. It is important to work closely with SEO teams to establish strong site architecture and internal linking that allows for the appropriate passing of link equity.



This is why guest posting is such a popular approach with many in the SEO community – it’s usually the easiest way to achieve their goals. While the page relevancy for a guest post might be high, the overall site’s relevancy drops from a mix of unrelated keywords and branded terms. Google has started to crack down on this approach, and **we recommend engaging with guest posting only if it is with a legitimate website.** This website would ideally rank for keywords that share the same semantic relationship with an audience.



## Our Top 10 Linkable Assets of 2019

Here are some KPIs from our top 10 linkable assets for 2019:

	CONTENT LENGTH	LINKS		INFO-GRAPHIC?	AVERAGE			LIFETIME RETENTION RATE	EDU	GOV	ORG
		INTERNAL	EXTERNAL		DA	PA	TF				
#1	3609	2	0	Yes	61	31	54	96.3%	59%	2%	12%
#2	2687	3	8	No	46	26	41	96.3%	11%	9%	37%
#3	1392	3	5	No	61	33	57	100.0%	62%	2%	10%
#4	1283	4	5	Yes	55	29	48	97.8%	54%	0%	15%
#5	2247	3	45	No	60	31	53	100.0%	50%	11%	16%
#6	2006	4	15	No	48	27	42	93.0%	12%	12%	49%
#7	3139	4	30	No	60	31	54	100.0%	50%	15%	3%
#8	2635	3	9	No	58	30	47	92.9%	54%	0%	29%
#9	3299	3	0	No	54	29	46	96.0%	24%	4%	28%
#10	1982	1	0	No	49	30	43	100.0%	9%	17%	39%

## What is a linkable asset lifecycle?

This year, our team took a closer look at the typical linkable asset lifecycle. There comes a time that every linkable asset hits diminishing returns, based on the amount of relevant linking opportunities and competitor content. This is part of the reason why it is so important to have a solid content calendar in place, as well as a link development strategy that identifies what topics and formats have the best chance for success.

As you can see from the trends across our top linkable assets, it is important to add new, linkable content to a website every 4-6 months at minimum. At the end of every month, our team will ideate new linkable asset ideas, or ideas on how to improve existing linkable assets, for every single one of our clients. This process is crucial to our success and ensures that our team doesn't lose momentum.

### Linkable Asset Lifecycle

Top 10 Linkable Assets



04.

# *The First Step to Building a Strong Link Building Partnership*

In a time where audiences are looking for useful content to make informed purchasing decisions, building a solid organic strategy should be at the forefront of every business owner's mind. While it takes time and effort to start seeing results, executing a sound SEO strategy, creating useful content, building quality links, and constantly improving a website through CRO are investments that pay dividends for years.

Compare their answers to the advice given in this report, and don't be afraid to ask for data that supports their claims. Any reputable agency or potential employee would be proud to explain their link development strategy and demonstrate their success with numbers.

A strong backlink profile is one of the most important factors Google uses to rank your site. We hope this report helps you understand what successful link building looks like and guides you to ongoing backlink and organic success.

Interested in working with a link development agency or hiring an in-house SEO?

Ask **these questions** at the very start:

• • • • •

**What is your strategy for driving links to product and services pages?**

Follow-up with... Is this mostly executed through guest posting?

• • • • •

**What is your annual retention rate for the links built?**

Follow-up with... How does this rate look MoM during this period?

• • • • •

**What is the average Domain Authority of the links acquired?**

Follow-up with... How does this distribution look from 1-100?

• • • • •

**Do you guarantee a quantity of links to specific target URLs?**

If yes, stop conversation here and find another partner.

## Contact Investis Digital for Further Help

Need more guidance on the best approach for organic search? Investis Digital helps hundreds of clients drive traffic, generate leads and build trust. Contact us to learn how we can help you develop a robust backlink portfolio and improve your presence in search. [Contact our team of digital marketing experts today.](#)

The background features a gradient of warm colors, transitioning from a light orange at the top to a deep red in the middle, and finally to a dark teal at the bottom. The composition is divided into several large, angular, overlapping shapes that create a sense of depth and movement. The text 'investisdigital.' is positioned in the lower right quadrant, set against the dark teal background.

investisdigital.