

Outbound Links

Common misconceptions & how links can help

Outbound Links

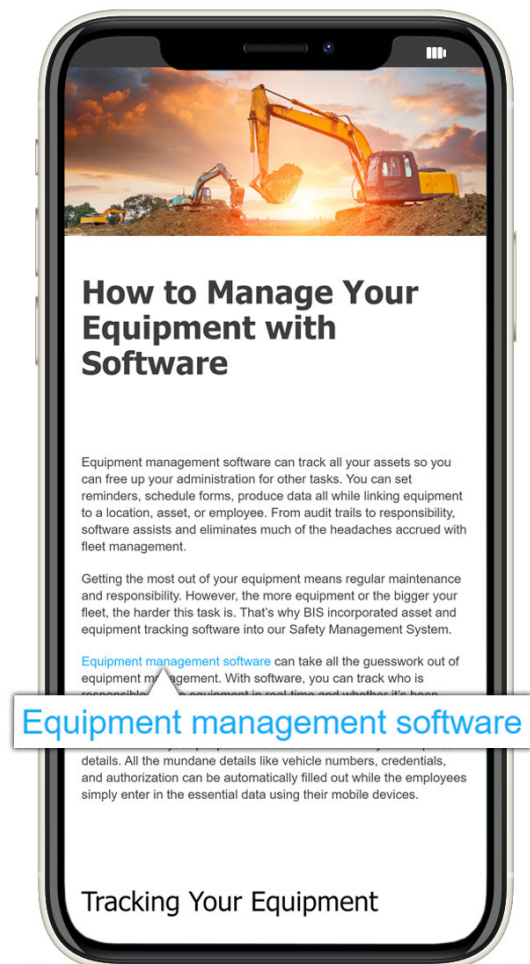
Outbound links are links on your website that reach out to another website. They are often used to link to additional sources of information from your web content and articles. For instance, let's say you were speaking about WHMIS in a blog, and you mention Global Harmonized System, but it wasn't the main talking point. Instead of digressing and looping all your readers into legalese, you can simply link to a more thorough [explanation of GHS](#) on an authoritative website and continue with your article.

Outbound links are probably the most controversial of all the links and for some have had a bad rap in the past decade. However, many of the myths surrounding them have been disproved by both skeptics and google employees themselves.

Topical Strength Signals

Becoming a domain authority seems like an art form, yet there are certain constants. One of those constants is topical signals. They are the way Google measures your site's relevance and 'authority' in the field you're eager to rank for. Frankly the more topical strength you have the more authority you'll get in the long run, meaning you'll rise in the Search Engine Results Page (SERP).

Outbound links are a great way to signal domain authority. A good example would be if you're talking about courses, but you don't sell software that tracks training records or certificates. You could write something like, "If you have more certificates than you can keep track of you may want to consider **Training Record Management software.**" The bolded text would be the best text to link because it is topical. Google will then hopefully correlate your courses with other common industry keywords or nomenclature. They will then increase your domain authority because you are reaching out to something still related to your field but isn't your immediate specialty.



The Value of Outbound Links

Outbound links can provide a tremendous amount of value to your site. Each link may not improve your rankings by itself, but over the long-term your site as a whole will perform better in search rankings if you are regularly linking to outside sources. I don't think I could say it better than John Mueller from Google, so without further ado:

“Linking to other websites is a great way to provide value to your users. Often, links help users to find out more, to check out your sources and to better understand how your content is relevant to the questions that they have.”

— John Mueller, Google

We should always feel good about linking to content that brings more value to our clients/visitors but doesn't fit the goal of the article. As an aside, it is always best to link to original content like a government stats website rather than another website quoting those same stats.

Things to Avoid

It is best to avoid unnatural links and linking to your exact topic. Google does penalize those websites that have unnatural links or are [‘link farms.’](#)

Unnatural links would be a page that links out to unrelated content or is just a series of links with no relevant content or text. In our business, it's hard to be penalized for this considering we don't link out unless we feel there's more value for our customers. So, avoid creating link farms on your site and avoid linking to other websites that are set up as link farms. Just ask yourself, “would someone want to read more on this topic?” If so, then google will probably give you credit for linking to additional resources.

Avoid linking to competitors who broach the very subject you'd like to rank for. If you're writing a similar article, or even paraphrasing one you'd like to compete with, then don't link to it. Keep in mind Google will always look for the original source, so if your article contains no new information then google will potentially penalize you as duplicate content and credit whoever wrote the valuable information in the first place.

Summary

Google has built its business on an interconnected internet. They want to promote backlinks and outbound links in order to give their users everything they are looking for. Your website should cater to this goal, and outbound links are a great way to achieve this.

If you'd like to learn more about this subject, some of the information provided in this article was summarized from Erika Varagouli's thorough article: [Outbound Links: Do They Affect SEO?](#) Likewise, if you'd like to find out whether to add a 'follow' or 'no follow' tag then read [this article](#).

Remember you can cheat Google in the short-term, but it's much better for your business' long-term health to focus on what your site visitors want, for that is more in line with what Google wants.

