

## ONLINE SOLUTIONS

# 'LINK Journalism'

Links make sites useful, provide value and depth to your readers

BY JACK LAIL

Everybody needs more, more, more for their Web site. Shrinking staffs make it extra challenging.

I've got one solution: Just link to more content.

Sending people off your site to the content of others results in increased traffic for your site. I neither discovered nor invented this. Google didn't either, but it does it better than anyone every second, probably every millisecond. And it has grown to become the behemoth of the Internet.

Where Google has an algorithm, you have brains and expertise.

There's even a name for this: "Link Journalism." The concept has been popularized in blog posts and articles by Scott Karp, who founded a Web startup, Publish2 (www.publish2.com) based around the concept.

At *The Knoxville News Sentinel*, we've been experimenting with link journalism and Publish2's tools for several months. One of the most effective areas to use it is in sports.

On our college sports site, GoVolsXtra.com, some "articles" aren't much more than links – hand-picked by a human – to the content of other sites. But they are consistently among our top reads of the day.

Why this works with sports is because fans are passionate and can't get enough information on their teams and games. And there is plenty of external coverage from other media, some thousands of miles away, to local bloggers looking to build up their audience. And don't overlook YouTube and flickr as content sources as well.

Controversial news topics also work well, but here's how it works with college football.

We plug in the names of the two teams playing into Google's



On GoVolsXtra.com, some "articles" that aren't much more than links to the content of other sites are consistently among the top reads of the day.

blog search (blog search.google.com), then into Google News (news.google.com), then into our own blog network (blognetwork.knoxnews.com) and see what comes up. When we get to a Web page we want to include, we use Publish2 to tag and save the link (this could be done with other tools as well). If some of the sites we know are popular don't show up in the scans, we'll browse to them to check for new content.

Each tag in Publish2 has its own search results page and we transform the RSS feed to that page into a bulleted list of links. Write a couple of intro paragraphs, a good Web hed, and you've got new content that's a strong traffic driver.

Why does it work? It's about being useful and providing value to the reader by making editorial choices. Matt Drudge, Glenn Reynolds at Instapundit and others learned the power of well-selected links long ago. Don't let competitive rivalry or fears about sending readers away keep you from trying this. Do it a few times and I think you'll see you're creating destination pages, not exit points.

– Jack Lail is News Director of Innovation for *The Knoxville News Sentinel* and is an adviser to Publish2. He blogs at [www.jacklail.com](http://www.jacklail.com)