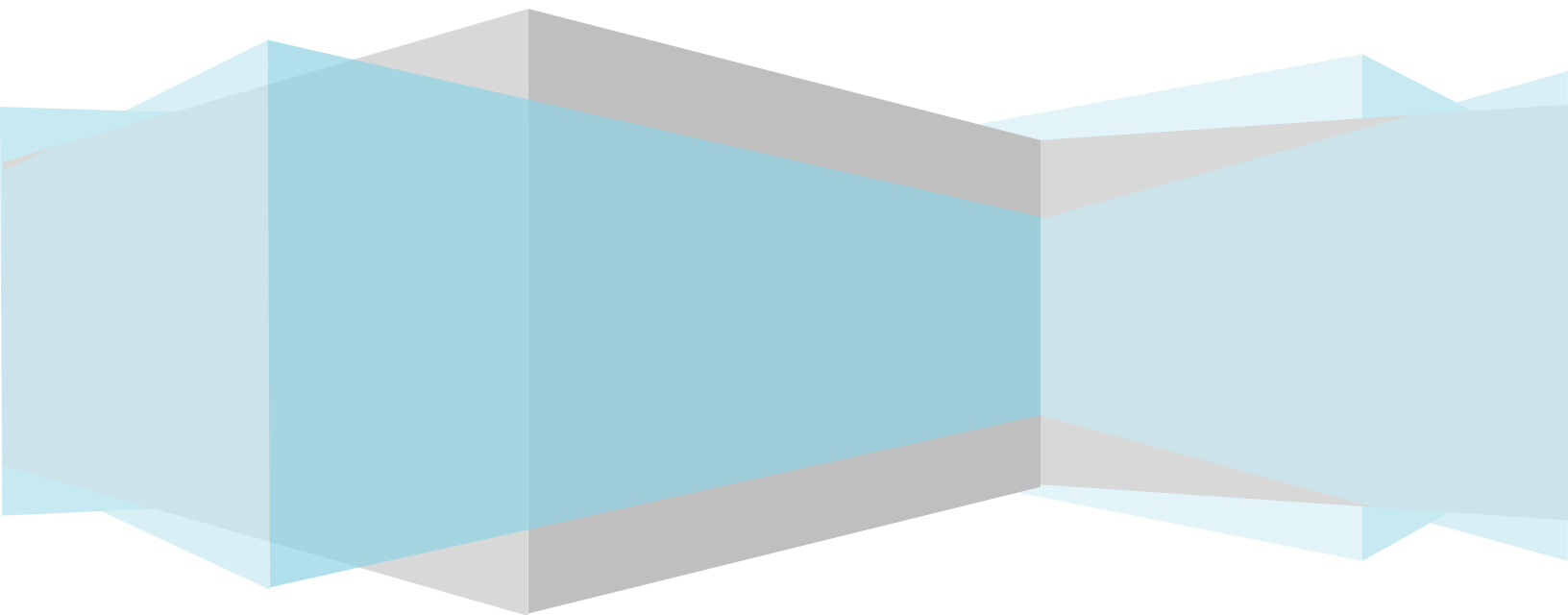


hkseo.us presents:

Quick Start Guide: Building Blog Networks

A Primer to Creating a Safe and Effective PBN

[Justin Anderson](#)



If you build it, rankings will come.

The promise of private blog networks (PBN) echo around the internet marketing/SEO forums as the way to beat the big bad Google. And they're right.

PBNs are like gold when it comes to ranking your site. Sometimes as few as 10 links are enough to make your site hit the front page. It's like printing money.

Unfortunately, the cost and effort it takes to build a PBN drives most SEOs away:

- Maybe I can buy this fancy SEO package that claims to be Google-safe?
- How about the latest Russian blog network?
- Or just buy a bunch of Fiverr gigs!

But if you're reading this, you realize that saving a few bucks up front isn't worth the risk of earning a Google penalty. PBNs are as safe as you can be doing SEO, given that you control all of the links, and are the best way for "real" businesses to do SEO

The rest of this document will give a good overview of the steps that are needed to set up your own PBN and take control back from Google.

As always, if you have questions or need help, just shoot an email.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Justin Anderson
HKSEO.us

What is a PBN

Back in the super old days of 2011, it was really easy to rank a web site. In fact, you could just buy 10,000 forum profile backlinks for \$5, use only your exact match keywords, and rank in around a week.

It was like magic!

But Google has stepped up their game and the process is quite a bit more involved now. You see, Google has increased the number of penalties it has given out and has made its ranking algorithms much more sensitive to spammy link building efforts.

So given the risk of earning penalties by doing link building, as marketers we need to take steps to remove that risk. And the best way to do that is to control all of the links that you're building for your SEO efforts.

The solution is building your own personal Private Blog Network.

When you own an entire network of sites – whether it's 20 sites or 2000 sites – you can completely control the links pointing to your site(s) and pages. If a penalty ever happens, you can remove the links in a couple of clicks. If you roll out a new product and want to rank that, another couple of links on your PBN can do it. A friend comes to you wanting to rank their web site - piece of cake!

Typically, PBN sites are meant for ranking your money site/YouTube video/Amazon product, etc. These sites are not meant to rank themselves, but exist solely to prop up your money site. By building sites this way, you can save half of the money you'd be spending on high quality content for a more "real" site that ranks alongside your money site.

Choosing domains

Authority (Good PR/DA)

In our experience, the single most important factor in the strength of your PBN is the strength of the individual sites that comprise it. There are primarily two measures of quality that we use when measuring this strength – Google PageRank(PR) and Moz Domain Authority (DA).

PageRank is a long-used term coined by Google that is a direct measure of the strength of a web site. This value is infrequently updated by Google (typically a couple of times a year) and many SEOs discount the value totally. But in our experience it's the single best signal for a site's authority simply because it is assigned by Google. You should *always* look for PR2 or greater when buying a domain.

Domain Authority is a value given by Moz that roughly correlates with PageRank. It also measures the domain's strength and is important when buying a domain. You should look for a DA of at least 15 when buying a domain.

Both of these authority metrics are able to be faked, so it's important to check with trusted people to confirm the values before you make any significant purchase. A very large number of domains for sale on sites like Flippa or Black Hat World have faked values and have low prices. Like mom said, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!

Over the past few years the prices on the secondary market for buying domains has remained relatively consistent. A PR2 domain is \$20-30, a PR3 domain will run \$30-50, and a PR4 domain will cost around \$100. When you start hitting PR5 or greater, the sites tend to be large/real and prices can range greatly.

Aged

A second important metric used when buying domains is the age of a domain. One of the ranking factors Google uses when determining how important a site is is how long the domain has been around.

The logic behind this is sound - if a site has lasted 5 years, it's probably more likely to be a good resource than a site that was launched just this year.

Accompanying the age of a domain is the registration length of the domain. Registrars allow you to pay for a domain for several years in advance, and Google is rumored to notice this and figure it in as a ranking factor. This also makes sense because if someone really is committed to a site, they will register it for several years instead of just one year.

Niche

A final way to buy/build domains is by the niche of the site. For example, if you have a real estate site, it makes more sense to have links coming from real estate sites than diet sites.

In the past, this factor has not mattered at all. However, as time goes on Google seems to be figuring this into the ranking algorithm more and more. So if you have a choice, be sure to get a domain that is in your niche as it'll help future-proof your money site from algorithm changes.

Of course if you have the option, you'll want an aged site in your niche that has PR! But if that's not an option, you should try to find a site based on these three criteria in order.

We've made a post over at the Visit Metrix site about [buying good domains](#), so you can find out more details on how that process should work over there.

Hosting domains

After you've identified which domains that you want to add to your network, now is the difficult task of correctly launching your sites.

Any footprint – or identifiable pattern – puts your entire network at risk. This means you have to be super careful not to have anything that ties your sites easily together.

Registration

When you buy a domain – no matter through a new registration or buying a domain from the secondary market - you must provide valid registration data. This information includes your name, address, and email address.

Unfortunately, this information also allows anyone direct insight into which sites you own and ties them all together.

To get around this, we have two options:

- Private registration. Every domain registrar lets you register a domain anonymously and they'll forward any contact requests through to you.
- Unique registration. For every domain or two that you buy, use a different identity. This could be you, your mother, your second cousin's best friend, etc.

Either way, this is a very easy step that has caused more than one network to get unraveled so avoid it!

Hosting

Next on the list of properly getting a site set up is getting good hosting. Google loves it when your backlinks come from multiple places, so this means that your web sites need to all live in different places. In geek-speak, this is referred to as having unique "Class C IP addresses".

When you set up an inexpensive hosting account with a common provider like GoDaddy, 1 and 1, or Hostwinds, you'll be thrown on a random IP address with dozens or hundreds of other sites. This is typically a very good thing – but not so good if all of your PBN sites are put together.

Some hosting companies have put together "SEO Hosting" packages, but you should ALWAYS stay away from them. In these cases, the hosting companies grouped together all of the SEOs on unique class C IP address (a good thing), but didn't group them with other real sites (a very bad thing). There has been more than one mass

deindexing of sites just because of the neighborhood (IP address or name server) that a PBN site was in. Again, stay away from typical SEO hosting!

To set up your own network properly, you'll want to get shared hosting accounts with several of the top hosting companies and put a single web site on them. By doing this your sites will be in the same place with hundreds of valid sites and none of your other sites. *You'll be hidden in plain sight.*

Name servers (public and shared, not dedicated or private)

Something else to look out for is the name servers that your hosting company provides you. Name servers are what translate your domain name to the server that hosts your web site.

Typically a hosting company will put you on a shared name server, which is a good thing. But if you're "SEO Hosted" or have all of your domains with just a couple of providers, all of your sites will share name servers. You want to have your sites lost in a mass of more legitimate domains and not crowding around with other PBN sites, so this is to be avoided at all costs.

Assuming you're putting your sites all at unique hosting companies, this won't be an issue. But if for some reason you are, be careful.

Cloak Hosting

Every now and then I'll drop an affiliate link for a great service that I know and use and trust, and now is one of those times.

Cloak Hosting is a company that removes ALL of the hassle of setting up accounts with multiple providers. If you want a 25 site network, you pay them a low monthly fee and they'll set up accounts with a dozen or more different hosting companies. Using their admin panel you can administrate your sites in a single place. It's so easy to use and simplifies management of multiple accounts and I can't recommend it enough.

You'll need to link your Facebook account (to prove who you are) and be recommended in to set up an account. So when you're ready, apply at their site and let me know your user ID so I can vouch that you're an SEO.

You can hit them with our link: <http://visitmetrix.com/cloakhosting>.

Building Domains

Now that you've bought, registered, and set up hosting for the domains in your PBN, now comes the time to actually build the sites. This is a fairly straightforward process that can be done with a bit of time and effort.

WordPress

The standard platform that powers a very, very large portion of web sites today is the blog engine called WordPress. Sites powered by WordPress are easy to edit for the non-techie, have great functionality options through plugins, and are an overall well rounded option.

When building your WordPress sites, you need to make sure you account for the following points:

- a. Articles (5+ of at least 500 words). Ideally original, otherwise copied. I'm not a fan of spun articles.
- b. Links to authority sites on every page. Google likes when sites link to authorities so that makes your site/page stronger.
- c. Contact form, privacy policy, terms and conditions, etc. Again, to help look legitimate.
- d. Unique theme/design. Don't have all of your sites look alike.
- e. News or other fresh content on home page. Google loves sites that have fresh information.
- f. Map, reviews, weather, or other unique content bucket. Again, to help look unique and different.

We've also done a good blog post talking a bit more about how to set up a network at our [Visit Metrix blog post](#), so check it out if you want more details.

Linking and SEO

All the hard work is done! You've found, bought, hosted, and built the sites. All you need to do now is use them to rank your money site. Let's run down the basics of how to use them properly.

This isn't rocket science and you don't need to overcomplicate it!

Don't interlink your sites

Again, you want to avoid footprints at all costs. It's very tempting to interlink your PBN sites so that they help boost each other up, but you'll want to avoid this. As you get more sites, you should also consider not pointing all of your PBN sites to link to the same money sites/pages. After all, if 200 sites all point to the 3 you're trying to optimize for, that can raise a red flag.

Use Exact Match Anchors

Private blog networks provide the strength that you need to rank your site. So when you have links coming from your PBN, be sure to use your ideal keywords. You only have as many links as you have sites, so it's not going to be too many. You can use your other link building to balance out your anchor diversity.

One more thing to remember is that you only need to place one link on the home page per site you're trying to rank. If you have multiple links between your pages, Google will only count one.

Anchor Text Ratios

Google has really attacked keyword anchors in their recent updates. Because of this, you need to be natural and split the anchors you build like a typical site would. This ratio has changed as Google has made their updates and the current best-practice link building has:

- 80% brand: www.yoursite.com, yoursite.com, Your Site
- 10% KW: blue widgets, buy blue widgets, buy widgets
- 10% long tail and nonsense: best discount blue widgets, best widgets online for sale, click here, learn more, visit now

Professional Services

At HKSEO, we have extensive experience building blog networks ranging from 20 sites to our largest network that's over 2,000 sites. We've seen (and made) many of the mistakes outlined here and learned through experience what works and doesn't.

A network typically runs around \$250 per site to build, so it's a significant investment. If you need help, just send us an email to support@hkseo.us and we'll be happy to get you started.

Good luck in your ranking efforts and I hope you have great success online!