

PRACTICAL SEO

* Vol. 7 *

icba.org/mrc | ICBA Guidebook Series

Building Your Bank's Linking Strategy



Practical SEO Overview



Welcome to our SEO guidebook series tailored for community banks.

We've worked with marketing experts and long-established search specialists to develop custom guidance to help community banks succeed in our specialized industry.

Our biggest goal was to fine-tune the most important parts of a basic program that allows you to implement the most crucial tactics first and start seeing gains fast.

We understand that SEO can seem complex, especially if you're not a tech expert. Don't worry - we've designed this guidebook series to be easy to understand and implement, even for those with no prior SEO experience.

The series is organized into short guidebooks that allow you to use as needed and at your own pace.

The goal is to help you improve your community bank's online visibility without overwhelming you with technical jargon or long processes.

We'll even show you how to set up some simple tracking reports that allow you to show the results of your work.

And through it all, you'll learn that search engine optimization is simply an iterative process that you or multiple teammates can work through together.





Why Linking Matters

In the online world, links are the pathways that connect different parts of the internet. For your community bank, effective linking strategies can significantly improve your online visibility and user experience. This guidebook will cover two types of links: internal links (within your website) and *backlinks* (from other websites to yours).

What You'll Learn

By the time we're done, you'll be able to:

- Understand the reasons for links and backlinks
- Use effective internal linking strategies on your website
- Develop strategies to earn quality backlinks from others
- Avoid common linking mistakes

Let's get started!





Internal Linking

Internal links are connections between different pages on your website. They not only help visitors navigate your site, but search engines use them to determine what you consider to be your most important pages you publish or even to find new pages.



Key points:

- Use descriptive anchor text (the clickable text in a link)
- Link to relevant, valuable content on your site
- Avoid orphan pages by ensuring that every page is accessible through at least one internal link.
- Create a logical site structure
- Remember that any page on your site can link to any other



Internal Linking Strategies



Create a clear site structure: Organize your content into main categories and subcategories.

Use your navigation menu effectively by including links to your most important pages.

Add contextual links: Within your content, link to related pages on your site.

Remember that links can be pictures, buttons, or other rich media, not just text.

Implement a “related posts” section so that blog posts and news articles show links to similar content.

If you have a lot of content on one topic, make an overview page and use that page to link to the content.





Backlinks

Backlinks are links from other websites to yours. They act as third-party votes of confidence for your site, signaling to search engines that your content is valuable and trustworthy. Google even refers to you linking to other sites as “citing your sources.”



Key points:

- Focus on links from high quality websites
- Relevance is most important
- Links from partner or complementary organizations are great
- Your website can be penalized for purchasing or trading non-relevant links
- Create link-worthy content to attract natural backlinks



Internal Linking Strategies



Create valuable, shareable content: Produce informative articles, guides, or tools that others will want to reference.

Implement a “related posts” section so that blog posts and news articles show links to similar content.

Leverage partnerships: Collaborate with local businesses or financial advisors and cross-promote each other’s content.

Write articles for reputable local news websites, that include a link back to your site where relevant

Focus on natural link building. Instead of aggressively pursuing links, concentrate on creating valuable content and fostering genuine relationships. This approach leads to more sustainable, high-quality backlinks over time.

Participate in local events and sponsor community initiatives to earn mentions and links from local organizations.



Common Linking Mistakes to Avoid

✘ Creating too many links to your homepage.

✘ Neglecting to update or remove broken links.

✘ Overusing exact-match anchor text: Use natural language like “new and used car loans” not full sentences. Using too many exact-match anchor texts where the link text precisely matches your target keyword can appear unnatural to search engines and may be seen as manipulative.

✘ Participating in link exchanges or buying links.

✘ Ignoring the relevance of linking pages or websites.

Practical Exercise

#1

Review a service page on your website and identify opportunities to add relevant internal links to other important pages.


#2

Create a list of 2-3 local organizations or businesses that might be interested in linking to your financial resources or community initiatives.

#3

Check your website and fix any broken links using the free tool at <https://ahrefs.com/broken-link-checker>

Wrap Up



Effective linking is an ongoing process. A 2024 study showed 25% of links posted over the last 10 years were no longer working.

Regularly review and update your internal links and continue to create valuable content that naturally attracts backlinks from other websites. This will help improve your website's visibility and authority over time.





For the complete Practical SEO Guidebook Series,
or to learn more about how to help your
community bank flourish, visit:

icba.org/mrc

icba.org | 866-843-4222 | info@icba.org