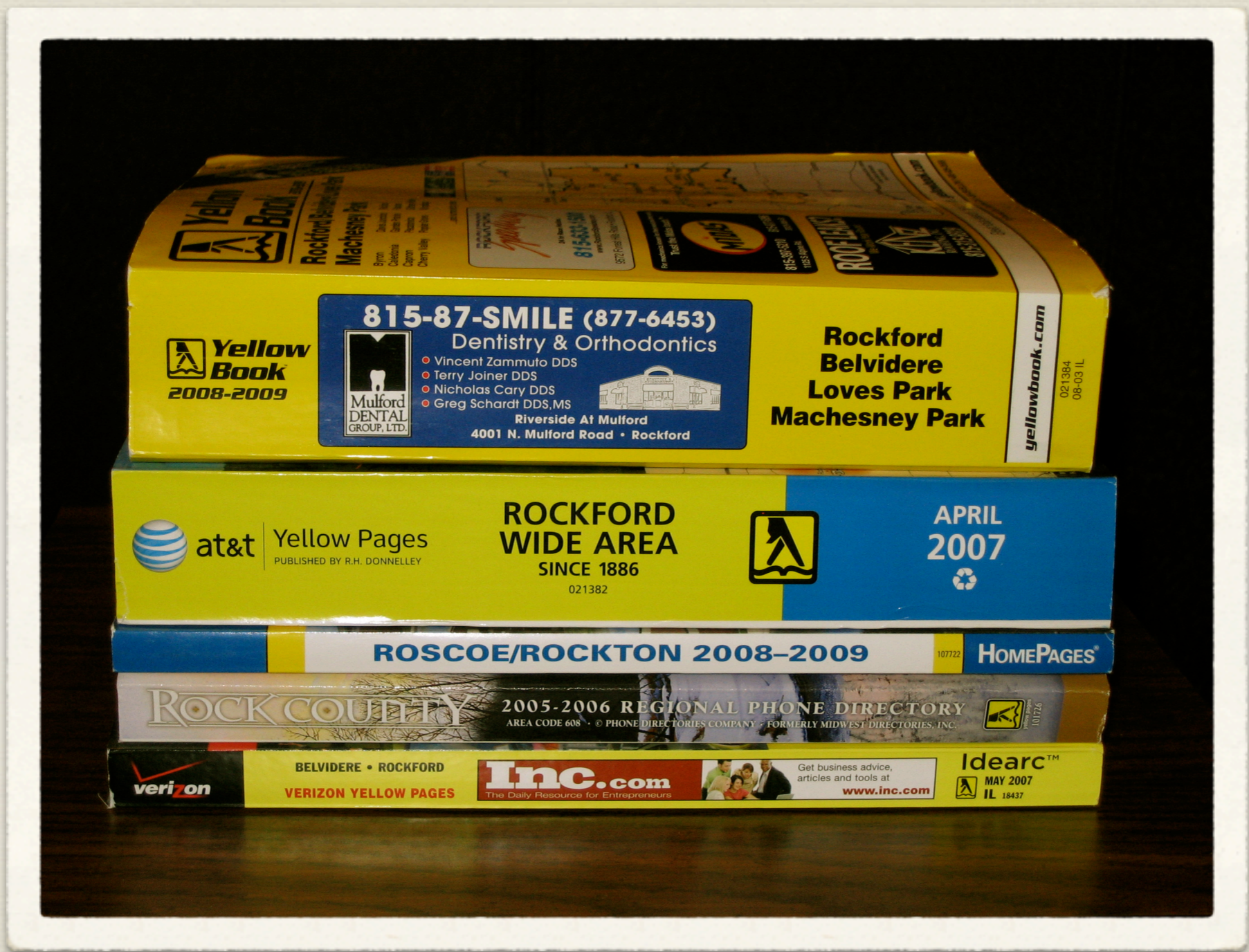


SIMPLE TIPS

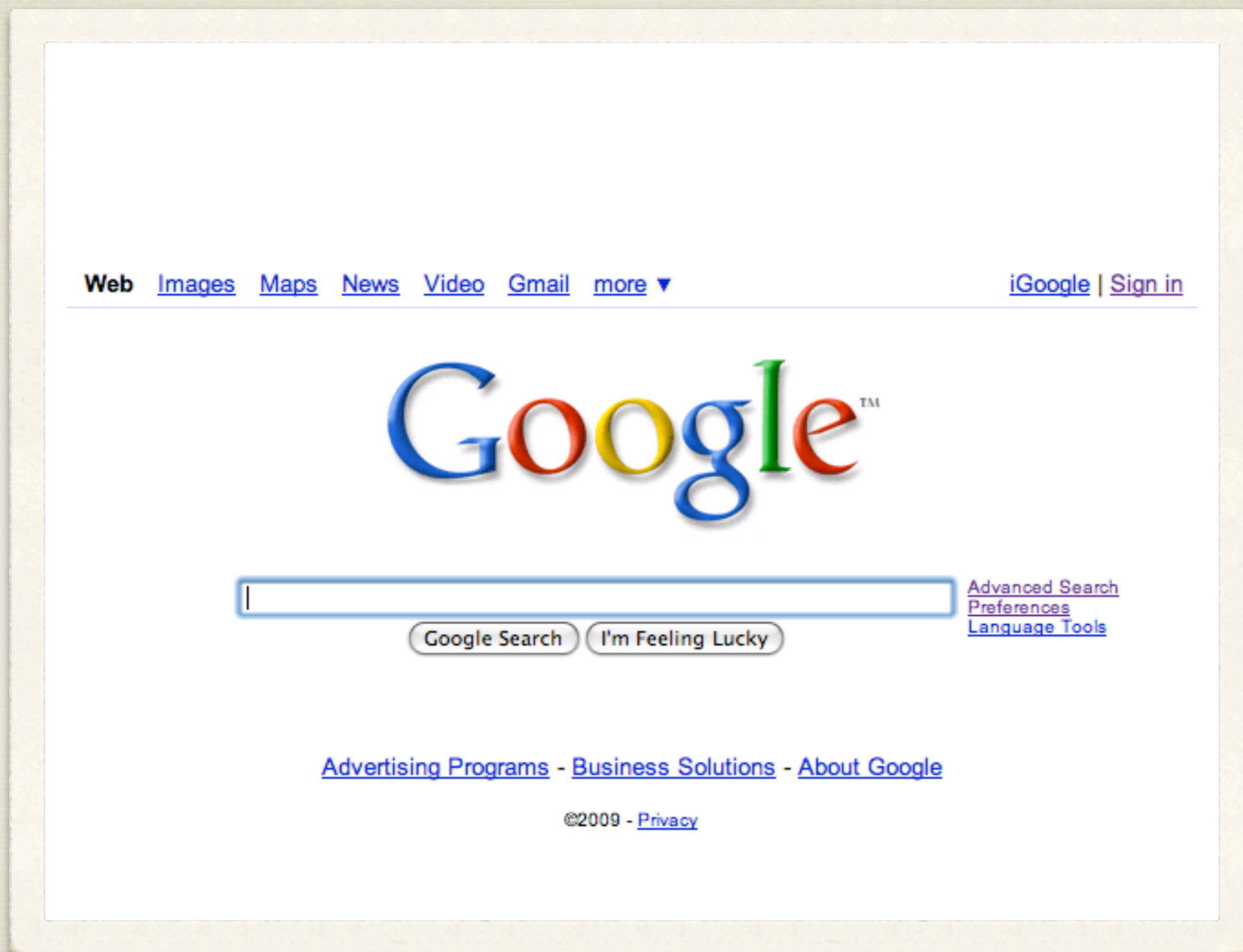
to Attract and Keep
More Web Traffic

By Doug Smith for the donor.com 2009 Community Conference. dougs@donor.com

Yellow pages introduction story before next slide.

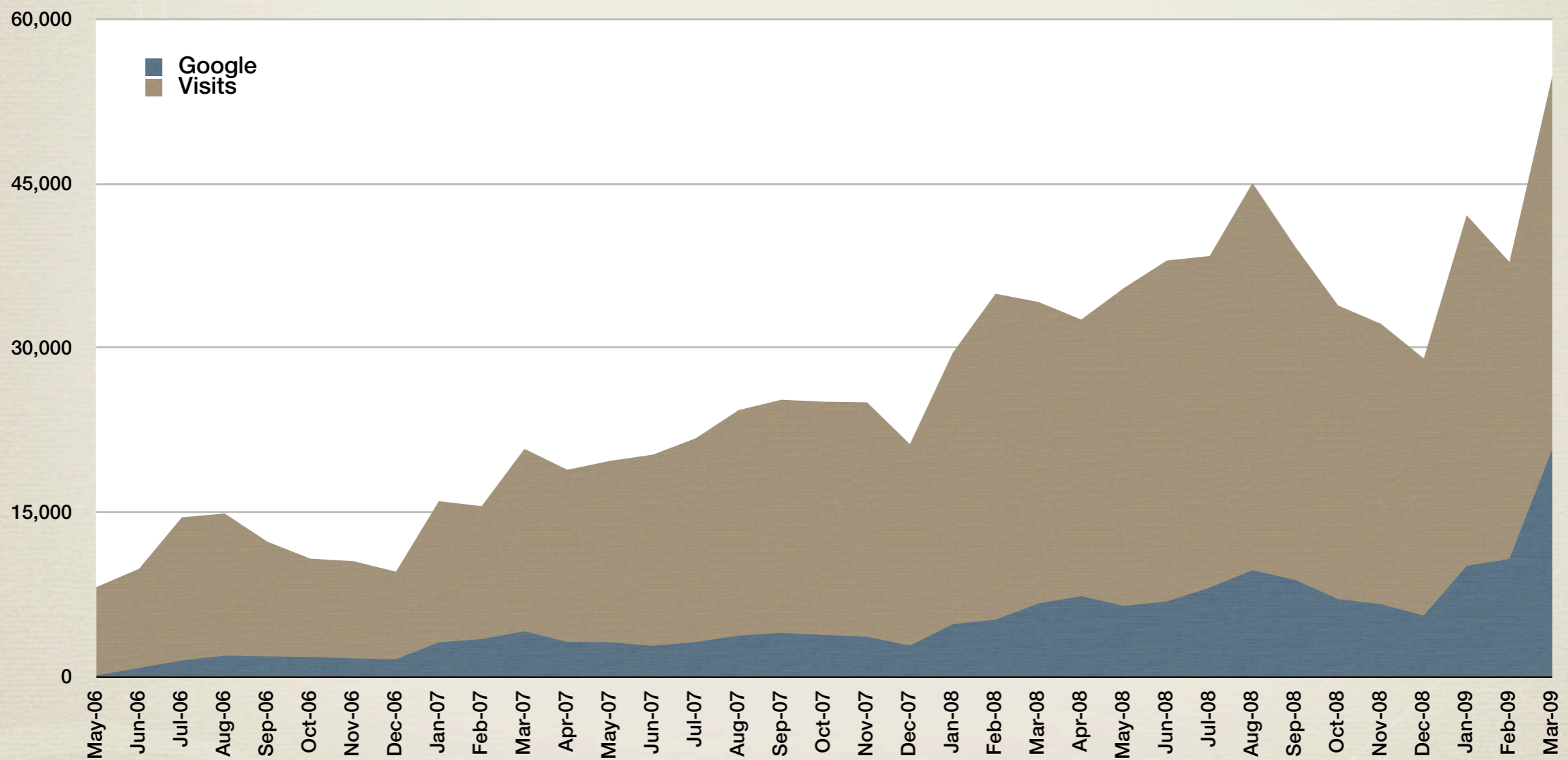


Many no longer use Yellow Pages.



Yellow Pages has been replaced by Google. To illustrate the importance of this, let's look at a chart from a medium size site.

Google Visits vs Total Visits



10%–20% after first established. More than 25% later. 37% at peak.

So we will be talking about how to grow your traffic from Google and other search. The things that we are discussing may not apply so much to your landing pages where you are specifically sending traffic. This is about being discoverable by those who are searching.

I hope to give you some simple tips that most of you can put to use immediately, starting with your content creators. The geek factor is fairly low on most of them and we can help you with the others.

So what does Google want?...

TRUST, AUTHORITY, REPUTATION, & CLARITY

Trust = Do they trust the information you present as being a good answer to the search query.

Authority = Does your site appear to be an authority on the topic.

Reputation = Does your site feel spammy? How are you regarded by others.

Clarity = Can the information be extracted in a meaningful way?

Fortunately, improving these things is good for your human visitors too. We never want to exclude the human in favor of machine use. And we don't have to.

So our goal is to build up as many signals of clarity, trust, reputation, and authority as possible.

HOW DO THEY KNOW?

Three main ways...

1. Links and external factors. Links are the currency of the Web. Links from other trusted sites show your site to have merit. The terms others use when referring to your site or brand and social media buzz all contribute to your reputation.

Links require others to participate and you may have to convince them to do so. But there is no point in going on a big linking campaign if your site is not in order. If your content is not link-worthy or difficult to understand (in a computer sense) then those efforts would likely end up wasting time and money.

2. Non-content factors. These are things you can control other than your site content. Unlike links, you don't have to convince others to participate. I'll explain what I mean by that a bit later.

3. Content. These include all sorts of things you can control, such as how your pages are constructed, links within the site, the content itself, etc.

NON-CONTENT FACTORS

There are a few easy things you can do outside of your content so let's take care of those first...

Domain Name

1. How many years is your domain registered? Spammers and other fly-by-nights register domains for the shortest possible time because they will be shut down quickly. A long registration is a trust factor. They're cheap so go for five years or more. If you go even longer you won't have to think about it every year.

2. How old is your domain name? This is a measure of trust for the same reason. Think carefully about launching a mini-site on a new domain vs your main site. Maybe use the new domain and do a permanent redirect to the main site to convey that longevity trust factor.

URLs

1. Make your URLs descriptive. Include pertinent keywords but leave out conjunctions, etc.
2. Separate your keywords with dashes, not underlines or other characters. Dashes are interpreted as word separators just like a space. Underlines are not.

Example...

* <http://website.com/2009-community-conference>

* <http://website.com/?s=43&article=7320>

Here's a totally fictitious example. Which describes content? Which is easier to remember, write, speak, or share?

Webmaster Tools

google.com/webmasters/tools

Register for Google's Webmaster tools. It's free and helps you work with Google more effectively. Here are a few ways you can use it to your benefit...

Sitemap File

Use a sitemap file. This is file in a special format that lists the pages on your site along with some information about each page. You register it with Google to make sure they can find everything. Then you ping them every time you make a change. It's like ringing the dinner bell. This can all be automated.

I've seen content noticed by Google in hours instead of weeks. See sitemap.org for specs.

www or not

Do you prefer your site with or without the www? Did you know that it's possible to have traffic to both and have Google see your popularity for each one separately? That dilution means you are less likely to show up in searches.

Pick your favorite version and do a permanent redirect from the other. Then go tell Google Webmaster Tools what your preference is.

Crawl Errors

Regularly check Webmaster Tools for errors they see while trying to crawl through your site. Fix the problems or tell Google those pages are gone. Broken links indicate a site not cared for and not kept up to date. That diminishes your trust.

If you delete a page, redirect it to somewhere relevant.

Structure & Speed

If your site loads quickly, Google knows they can send you more traffic. Optimizing size is still a good thing in a broadband world.

Don't use tables for layout. It loads slower and is harder for software to extract the content.

Move inline css and javascript to external files when possible for cleaner code and faster load.

Validate your HTML and CSS.

Openness

Make your privacy policy and contact info easy to find. You gain trust if you don't look like you have something to hide.

Encourage Sharing

Use social media. We'll talk about that in the next session.

Consider using a share this button. Examples...

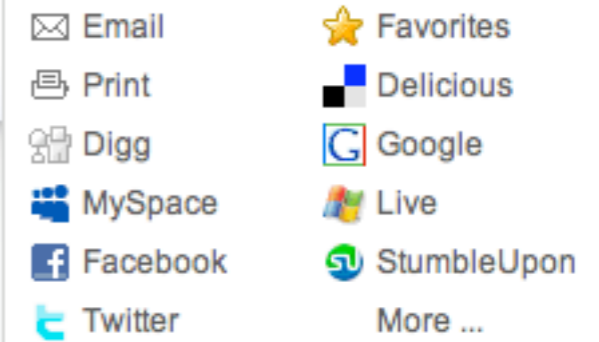
share

BOOKMARKS EMAIL MY COMPUTER PRINTER

Bookmarks



Bookmark & Share



What's this? AddThis SHARE



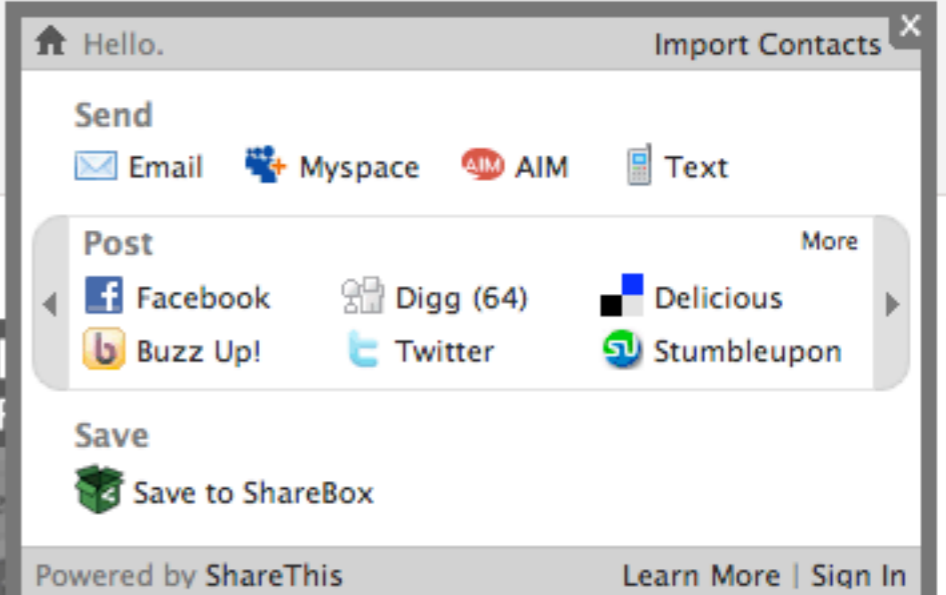
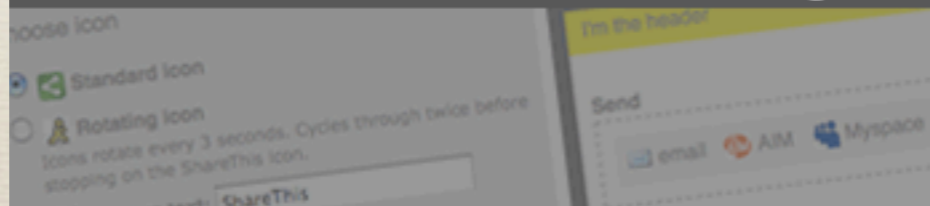
ShareThis makes sharing easy!

Try it now. ShareThis

For Publishers (FAQ for Updated Widget)

The Button

Customize the Button and enable sharing.



Powered by ShareThis Learn More | Sign In

Ask your visitors to share your content and they will.

Use <http://ibegin.com/labs/share>, <http://addthis.com>, or <http://sharethis.com> to make it easy for them.

CONTENT

Let's look at how your content can attract traffic.

Quality & Quantity

This may be overly obvious, but write lots of great content. If your content isn't compelling then there is no reason to link to it. Also, the more text you have, the more Google has to chew on. That increases the chances of matching something someone searches on.

Have a blog. Call it news or something if you prefer.

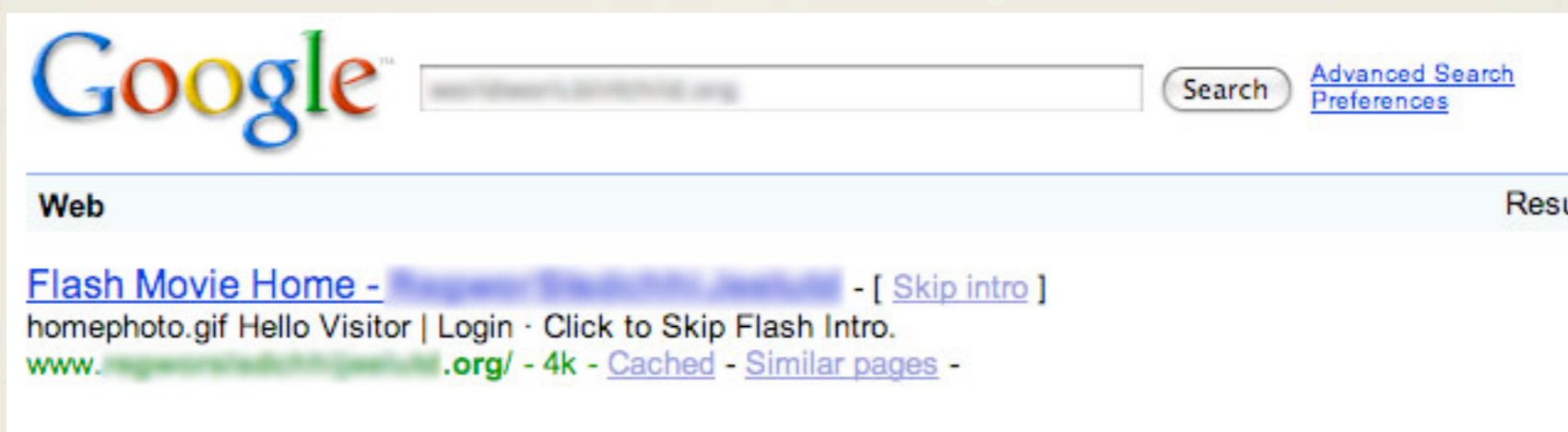
Consider keeping an archive of newsletter articles if they're still relevant.

If you regularly delete content, you might reconsider that practice. Historical content is okay as long as it is presented as such. Maybe you could update outdated pages with a short blurb and links to newer articles. It's a great method of follow-up and shows accountability.

Home Page

Include summary text about your organization. The home page holds more importance to Google as to what your site is about. If there is no meaningful summary text there about what you do then you are missing out on traffic.

Think twice about having a splash page. Most have a “skip intro” button. If your content is so skippable then maybe you should skip it. (Show flash example.)



Here's an example Google listing of a non-profit organization's site that has a Flash home page. There is little other content on the page. This is what Google sees.

Front Loaded Copy

Front-load the page by including a summary at the beginning. Make sure your important key words and phrases are there. This helps visitors quickly decide whether the page is relevant to them. It also helps Google figure out what your page is about so they can send you relevant traffic. Ideally, front-load each paragraph so that the main idea is first. That makes skimming and comprehension easier. Busy visitors tend to skim.

Break Long Text

Break up your text with meaningful headings and sub-headings. That's also good for skimmers. Use proper heading tags in order (<h1>, <h2>, etc.). Don't just make them bold and bigger because that doesn't describe them as important headings.

Headings have more weight than other text in describing the topics of the page. So headings should be descriptive rather than clever.

Can some long text be broken into bullet lists?

Link Text

Google assigns more importance to text in a link as an important clue as to what the linked page is about. A link should indicate what the user will find when clicking on it. Link text should help the user decide whether or not to follow a link.

So link with meaningful words, not "click here" or "read more". Google scans pages for links. Visitors often visually scan a page for links. Audible screen readers often present a list of links on a page. What do your links communicate if pulled out of their page context?

Example...

- * To see how you can improve your hypertext today,
`click here`.
- * `See how you can improve your hypertext today!`
- * `Click here to see how you can improve your hypertext today!`

Examples. The last one is if your testing (or organizational politics) dictate the “click here” signpost words are needed—include it as part of the larger description.

Linking

Link within your site using key words. It helps describe your pages in topical context. Maybe add a related articles block if you don't have one.

Link to other relevant sites and articles. Don't link to irrelevant ones. It helps categorize you. In a way you are "Guilty by association." e.g., link to Wikipedia city and country pages if your page is about work in that country. Don't link to something like the weather if you're not about the weather.

Don't be afraid to link out. If your site is compelling they'll come back. If not, you didn't have them anyway.

Nofollow unnecessary links if they must appear for political reasons.

Title Tag

Each page should have a different title tag describing the content. This is an important content indicator for Google. Most sites have the name of the site followed by something about the page. Or worse yet, the same title on every page.

Reverse that except on the home page. Start with a page description then site name. That front loads your important keywords for that page. 70 characters or less is best. Use | > – as separators. Don't use underlines.

WebGUI can be configured to do some of this for you.

Meta Description

Use a custom meta description for each page. This hidden tag heavily influences what Google shows on results. The Official Google Webmaster Central Blog explains:

The quality of your snippet — the short text preview we display for each web result — can have a direct impact on the chances of your site being clicked (i.e. the amount of traffic Google sends your way). We use a number of strategies for selecting snippets, and you can control one of them by writing an informative meta description for each URL.

Try to summarize the content rather than repeat the title. Imagine a friend asked you about the page. How would you describe it to them? It's important to have your important keywords in the meta description. If those words match then the search words get bolded, which can make a huge difference in visibility and clicks.

Example...

Google [Advanced Search](#)
[Preferences](#)

[Web](#) [Maps](#) [News](#) Result

[Rescue Mission - Syracuse & Central New York](#)
It's our **mission** to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe and care for the needy. Since 1887, the **Rescue Mission** has reached out to our neighbors in ...
www.rmsyr.org/ - 12k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[The Rescue Mission, Roanoke, VA](#)
The **Rescue Mission** has a 60 year history of serving all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age or religious belief. ...
www.rescuemission.net/core.html - 2k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[Orange County Rescue Mission](#)
The Orange County **Rescue Mission** serves the homeless by providing services such as residential housing for up to two years, medical and dental care, meals, ...
www.rescuemission.org/ - 29k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

Note how the words “rescue” and “mission” get bolded in the search results.

Images

Be sure key content is in text not images or flash. Google can't read text in an image. Use replacement techniques if necessary. (CSS to show images in place of existing text.)

Images should have an alt element describing what it shows. I've often been surprised looking through site stats to see how many times an image search brought traffic. The exception is decorative only images or those that would harm your focus with Google but have to be shown for political reasons. Give them a blank alt element to avoid dilution of purpose.

Image file names should be descriptive. Use keywords separated by dashes if possible.

Dump unnecessary widgets such as weather that distract from content focus.

Define Terms

Use definition lists, abbreviation, and acronym tags to define key terms and jargon. Use Google's `define:word` to test. Are there relevant words or phrases not defined. Define them so you get the search result. You can also style some of those in a nice way for your visitor's benefit.

LOCAL

There are some specific techniques for local organizations to show in search results in their area.


Google™ rescue mission Search [Advanced Search](#) [Preferences](#)

Web [Maps](#) Results 1 - 10 of about 9,450,000 for [rescue](#)

[Rescue Mission - Syracuse & Central New York](#)
 It's our **mission** to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe and care for the needy. Since 1887, the **Rescue Mission** has reached out to our neighbors in ...
www.rmsyr.org/ - 12k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[The Rescue Mission, Roanoke, VA](#)
 The **Rescue Mission** has a 60 year history of serving all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age or religious belief. ...
www.rescuemission.net/core.html - 2k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[Orange County Rescue Mission](#)
 The Orange County **Rescue Mission** serves the homeless by providing services such as residential housing for up to two years, medical and dental care, meals, ...
www.rescuemission.org/ - 29k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[Atlanta City Baptist Rescue Mission](#)
 316 Peters St SW Atlanta, GA 30313 - (404) 577-3409
[Directions and more »](#)
maps.google.com
Map data ©2009 Tele Atlas

[Home - Union Rescue Mission -](#)
 Los Angeles. Providing emergency shelter, meals, health and dental care, legal clinic, recovery program and transitional housing program.
www.urm.org/ - 46k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[Rescue Mission Alliance](#)
 The **Rescue Mission Alliance** is a Christian Non-Profit organization ministering to the needs of the less fortunate in Southern California through emergency ...
www.erescuemission.org/ - 31k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[Rescue Mission of Trenton](#)
 With the help of Trenton's **Rescue Mission** on Carroll Street, the 57-year-old Gaines is now the director of Support Services and Facility for the **Mission**. ...

Notice we're in Atlanta doing this search and the Atlanta result shows more prominently with the map and address. This can be influenced.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plumber - 34k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[Find Local Plumbers | #1 Plumber Directory | Get Plumbing Quotes](#)

Need a **Plumber**? Search the Nation's #1 Directory of Local **Plumbers**. It's Fast, Free and Easy to Use. Get a Quote from a Local **Plumber** Today!

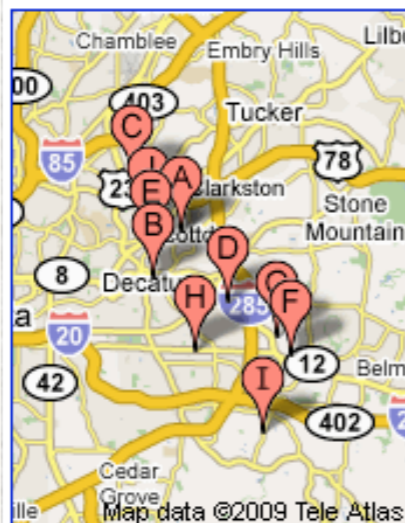
www.elocalplumbers.com/ - 12k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[RotoRooter Plumbers](#)

Roto-Rooter provides 24-hour emergency plumbing and drain cleaning services for home owners and businesses. Call 1-800-GET-ROTO or Schedule Online.

www.rotorooter.com/ - 29k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[Local business results for plumber near Decatur, GA](#) - [Change location](#)



- A. [Roto-Rooter Plumbing & Drain](#) - maps.google.com - (404) 974-9039 - [3 reviews](#)
- B. [Frazier Plumbing Service](#) - www.wewanttobeyourplumber.com - (770) 841-2506 - [2 reviews](#)
- C. [Plumbing Zone Inc](#) - plumbingzone.net - (404) 235-0430 - [1 review](#)
- D. [Pam the Plumber](#) - www.pattheplumber.com - (404) 217-7539 - [1 review](#)
- E. [M Cary & Daughters Plumbing Contractor](#) - maps.google.com - (404) 370-0999 - [8 reviews](#)
- F. [Global Plumbing Inc](#) - www.globalplumbing.net - (770) 322-1611 - [More](#)
- G. [Midway Plumbing Co](#) - www.midwayplumb.com - (404) 289-0661 - [More](#)
- H. [Decatur Handy Man](#) - www.decaturhandyman.com - (404) 534-0781 - [10 reviews](#)
- I. [Frazier Plumbing Service](#) - www.wewanttobeyourplumber.com - (770) 841-2506 - [More](#)
- J. [MM Nicholson Plumbing](#) - maps.google.com - (404) 633-5424 - [2 reviews](#)

[More results near Decatur, GA »](#)

[Find A Plumber - America's #1 Plumbers Directory Since 2000 - Find ...](#)

Find A **Plumber** - extensive database of **plumbers** in the United States to make it the fastest search by local zip code and most reliable way for you to locate ...

www.findaplumber.com/ - 14k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

[Pinelavers](#) [Plumbers](#) [Pipefitters](#) and [Steamfitters](#)

For example, look how a search for “plumber” shows so many local results.

Address

Write out your address and area in `<address>` tags. Maybe put it on the footer of most pages. Mention surrounding cities, county, other names for the area (i.e., "stateline", "quad cities").

Also specify your address with local meta tags.

Register Yourself

Register your location with Google webmaster tools. They'll favor you in local searches.

Register with local Web directories or chambers of commerce. Get local businesses to link to you.

Register with sites like showmelocal.com and local.yahoo.com.

Register with Google maps and add photos.

TOOLS & RESOURCES

Here are a few tools that might be useful.

Keyword Tools

- * <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>
- * <http://freekeywords.wordtracker.com/>
- * <http://spyfu.com/>

These tools can help you figure out what keywords get searched. They can also help you think of keywords you haven't considered. You can then target your content to better relate to some of them.

Resources

* <http://websitegrader.com>

* <http://www.copyblogger.com/copywriting-101/>

Websitegrader: Examines your site and scores its marketing effectiveness based on key indicators. It's fun to improve and compare your score.

Copyblogger: Mostly business oriented but some great tips that apply to non-profits as well. Good articles on writing copy and headlines that attract attention and get read.