

CASE STUDY

How we helped an e-commerce brand in a highly regulated industry outrank an exact match domain

INDUSTRY:
E-commerce

LINKS BUILT:
400 and counting

**AVERAGE DOMAIN
RANK (DR) OF LINKS BUILT:**
52

DURATION:
Still going

Background

An e-commerce client in a highly regulated industry came to us looking for guidance on link building.

There are several industries that face unique marketing challenges because certain platforms prohibit them from paid advertising. For example, cannabis is still illegal at the federal level in the United States, but it has been legalized in some states for recreational and medical purposes. Such industries invest heavily in SEO because other typical marketing channels like PPC or paid social media advertisements are not available to them.

Despite being the largest manufacturer in their industry, they had not yet cracked the top two positions for any of their most valuable keywords. They were already working with an SEO agency for content creation, but link building had not been a major focus of their strategy.

Link Building Strategy

We first completed an audit of the site to look for quick-win opportunities. We also put together a comprehensive plan to build links to their most important category pages.

It became clear during the audit that one of the biggest obstacles standing in the way of top rankings was the fact that their competitor had an exact match keyword domain. Essentially, the competitor's domain name contained the keyword they were trying to rank for.

Keyword-rich domains are highly effective for capturing SEO traffic. Companies that do not have their target keyword in their domain name must build high quality backlinks to give themselves a fighting chance at ranking.

For e-commerce clients, it is considered best practice to build links to category pages as opposed to product pages. Individual product SKUs come and go, but category pages usually remain fixed. Because category pages typically link to product pages, some of the authority gained by the category page gets transferred to the product pages.

Some e-commerce brands build blogs to capture top of funnel traffic. While this can be an effective strategy for raising brand awareness, we always begin by building links to the source so clients can start seeing an immediate impact on revenue.

Results

- Built over 400 contextually relevant links with an average DR of 52
- Achieved top 2 ranking for several important keywords
- 100% increase in total number of keywords



The client was pleased with the results of the campaign and decided to increase their budget for link building at the 8-month mark. They also hired us to perform the same analysis and outreach for one of their newer sister sites.

Takeaways

- **Build links to category pages first.** This is critical for e-commerce sites. Although blog content may be appealing because of keywords with large search volumes, category-focused keywords tend to have stronger search intent.
- **High-quality backlinks are necessary to defeat exact match keyword domains.** If your competitor has an exact match domain name, you must build quality links to demonstrate to search engines that your site is the most authoritative.
- **SEO is a channel that requires a significant investment.** It's typical (and sensible) for companies to invest in multiple marketing channels for diversification purposes—if one channel is compromised, you have the others to prop you up. However, gradual investment is not recommended if you want to see the best results possible. For companies in restricted industries, being forced to invest heavily in SEO ends up being a blessing in disguise because the lag effect is minimized.