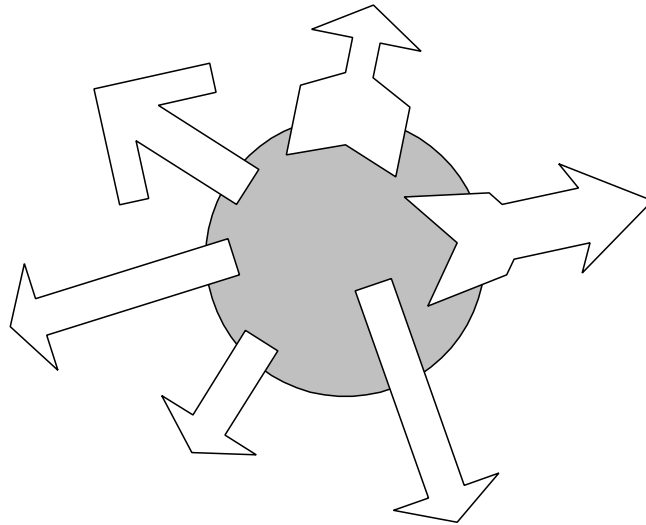


Establish Credibility by Offering Outbound Links



BACKGROUND |

People may be suspicious of you

Many visitors do not know you, your organization, or your qualifications. They wonder if you are hiding something from them, if you are reliable, or if you are part of a larger community they trust. Oddly, you can increase your credibility by linking to other sites on the Web.

“Not being afraid to link to other sites is a sign of confidence,” Nielsen says (1999a), because the other sites are seen as giving you credibility. Plus, as one test subject told Nielsen and Morke, “Links are good information. They help you judge whether what the author is saying is true.”

Presenting different points of view through links shows that you are not afraid to be compared with the other sites, and that you believe they will back you up. Refusing to link out of your own site makes you look selfish, withdrawn, and a bit paranoid.

Hyperlinks subvert hierarchy.

—Rick Levine, Christopher Locke,
Doc Searles, and
David Weinberger,
The Cluetrain Manifesto

We are concerned with whether people can author and construct text that allows rich multiple paths that are sufficiently well ordered and comprehensible. We are concerned about whether the protocol of reading from a text that tempts users to go off in many diverse directions at multiple points will be a well functioning cognitive tool.

—Thomas Landauer, Dennis Egan, Joel Remde, Michael Lesk, Carol Lochbaum, and Daniel Ketchum, *Enhancing the Usability of Text Through Computer Delivery and Formative Evaluation: the SuperBook Project*, in McKnight, Dillon and Richardson (editors), *Hypertext: A Psychological Perspective*

The Web spirit is **openness**. By linking to the rest of the Web, you show that you have some trust in those other sites, and suggest that your own site is trustworthy.

Link to reviews

Don't retype someone's review of your product and post it on your own site. Link to the actual review. That way users know that you haven't doctored the text like a movie ad.

A few hyperlinks to other sites with supporting information increase the credibility of your pages. If at all possible, link quotes from magazine reviews and other articles to the source. (Sun, 2000)

Just as footnotes allow a scholar to make sure you aren't distorting the original author's meaning or research, these outbound links show your confidence that the target pages will make you look good.

Outbound links add value

Links are information. Sometimes all a user wants is a list of links. When you provide real links to substantial information, you are being generous, and people appreciate that.

Of course, the more links, the more maintenance you face. Link rot can set in, and you may begin to get e-mail from frustrated users. So run a link checker regularly.

EXAMPLES

Before

Our JuicyJuicer has won critical acclaim around the world. One article comparing juicers awarded us the palm for "the simplest setup by far." Another called the JuicyJuicer "the fastest and most powerful" juicer around.

After

Critics love the JuicyJuicer:

- "The simplest setup by far"
—[Consumer Reports](#)
- "The fastest, and most powerful"
—[Veggie Times](#)

Before

For many of us, the current rapid-application tools automate the creation of the user interface, plus some code connecting that to an underlying relational database through SQL operations. But as soon as we want to conduct business, not just access data, we run into a problem. How do we create the business logic and rules that determine exactly how we process the data, and handle transactions? Yes, upper-CASE tools help us create exact requirements, define entities and relationships, and even figure out the business rules. But then what? None of these tools, until recently, have been able to turn those rules into code.

What we need is an environment in which we can build a business model in the abstract, and have it turned into business rules that then control the actual definition of objects and their methods. A number of vendors of object-oriented development tools now claim to offer this capability. In this white paper, we will analyze three leaders in the field—Ellipse, from [Price Information Systems](#), Force from [Force Software](#), and Toby Vision from [Toby](#). In our [appendix](#) we describe all the other competitors in this emerging market.

Summary of Before's outbound links:

- [Price Information Systems home page](#)
- [Force Software home page](#)
- [Toby home page](#)
- [List of competitors, with links to home pages](#)

After

For many of us, the [current rapid-application tools](#) automate the creation of the user interface, plus some code connecting that to an underlying relational database through SQL operations. But as soon as we want to conduct business, not just access data, we run into a problem. How do we create the business logic and rules that determine exactly how we process the data, and handle transactions? Recent articles in [Datamation](#), [Re-engineering](#), and [DBMS](#) all point to the difficulties that programmers experience when they face this question.

Yes, [upper-CASE tools](#) help us create exact requirements, define entities and relationships, and even figure out the business rules. But then what? As pointed out in reviews in [KM](#), [DBMS](#), and [Re-Engineering](#), none of these tools, until recently, have been able to turn those rules into code.

What we need is an environment in which we can build a business model in the abstract, and have it turned into business rules that then control the actual definition of objects and their methods. A number of vendors of object-oriented development tools now claim to offer this capability. In this white paper, we will analyze three leaders in the field—Ellipse, from [Price Information Systems](#), Force from [Force Software](#), and Toby Vision from [Toby](#). In an [appendix](#) we describe all the other competitors in this emerging market.

Summary of After's outbound links:

- [List of all current rapid-application tools. Each tool is linked to its vendor's home page \(In appendix\).](#)

- *Datamation* article by David Baum
- *Re-Engineering* article by George Popadopolos
- *DBMS* article by Rich Coulombre
- Review in *KM*
- Survey review in *DBMS*
- Omnibus review in *Re-Engineering*
- List of all current upper-CASE tools linked to vendors' home page
- Price Information Systems home page
- Force Software home page
- Toby home page

AUDIENCE FIT

If visitors want this...

TO HAVE FUN

How well does this guideline apply?

If you can stand letting go of your visitors, you'll earn a return visit. Outbound links amuse the game players, tease the serious, and build your street credibility.

TO LEARN

If the other sites have significant information, go for it.

TO ACT

Not always relevant, in a call to action, or a FAQ about your own site. But if you need some credibility, include links to places that vouch for your privacy policy, honesty, or customer ratings.

TO BE AWARE

Yes, be an honest broker, and link to related sites even if you don't agree with everything they say.

TO GET CLOSE TO PEOPLE

Part of sharing is posting links. Just make sure that you copy the URL completely, so it works.

See: America Online (2001), Berners-Lee (1995), Levine et al (1999), Lynch (2000), NCSA (1996), Nielsen (1999a), Nielsen & Morkes (1997), Spyridakis (2000), Sun (2000).

For your review only.

Excerpt from *Hot Text: Web Writing that Works*.
(New Riders).

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