

Ross Dunn Answers SEO Questions - #3

By [Ross Dunn](#), CEO, [StepForth Search Engine Placement Inc.](#)

If you have a question you would like to ask please send it over. Please keep in mind, however, that I do not have the time to review websites free of charge but I will do my best to answer pointed questions like the ones shown below. Please submit your [SEO questions here](#).

Question: "Supplementary Results"

Hey, I have been searching around forums and such, trying to get an answer and can't seem to find one. What determines whether pages get sent to the supplemental or omitted results section of Google? The closest info I could find is that means that there is duplicate content. However, on my reciprocal links pages, there is no unique content as I'm sure those links are posted on many hundreds of other websites duplicated across the web. What can I do to get my currently "omitted results" pages into the main index section of Google? Thanks in advance for your help.

Answer:

This is a great question and one that, astonishingly, I have never been asked which made it even more fun to answer. First, however, I want to provide a little background for readers that may not be familiar with this topic.

What is a Supplemental Result?

Supplemental results are generally pages that Google has determined to be secondary to other, more relevant pages that Google has indexed on your website. In effect, supplementary results are actually a secondary database of results that are only called upon when the most obscure queries force Google to check all its indexed resources.

What is an Omitted Result?

Omitted results are supplemental results that are not listed within your search results because they are even less relevant than the supplemental results shown.

Does Your Site Have Supplemental Results?

If your site has more than a few pages it is very likely you do have supplemental pages in Google. To find out if you do just go to Google and type in the query shown in red (including the asterisks): **site:www.yourdomain.com *****

This search will provide you with a listing of all supplemental and omitted results for your website.

What Determines if a Page Will Become a Supplemental Result?

An indexed page becomes a supplementary result when it is less relevant than other page(s) in your website. As a result, the best way to avoid supplemental pages is by ensuring that every page within your site uses unique content and provides excellent and relevant information. This way you will have a better chance of having Google determine that your pages are second to none. Note that this does, by no means, guarantee you will not have supplemental pages. After all, you may have a page with "A+" content and a page devoted to a similar topic with "A" content. In this case the lesser page may still become supplemental because no matter how good it is, it is still second to the better one.

Should You Consider Supplementary Results Bad?

In general supplementary results should be avoided because they are pages less likely to be found in a search engine. If, however, your website has been finely crafted and you can see that your supplementary results still represent good

quality pages you may simply be a victim of Google's need to perform content triage; picking only the best content and leaving the others to fade into supplementary purgatory.

Additional Information

If you want to look into this further here are some links to more information on Supplementary Results:

- ? <http://searchenginewatch.com/showPage.html?page=3071371>
- ? <http://forums.digitalpoint.com/showthread.php?t=141198>

Question: "Good URLs, Session Variables and Backlinks"

Ross,

I really liked your September 7th, 2006 article on Search Engine Strategies for Webmasters. It broke down the important design pitfalls and solutions in a simple but thorough article. I do have a couple of questions, that it would please me if you answered.

- 1) Is it ok to have .php extensions in the URL as long as you substitute the "?", "=", and "@" characters in the addresses with "/"?
- 2) Are SESSION variables and POST variables friendly to search engines?
- 3) Do you need to pay to get top 10 or top 20 rankings?
- 4) How much relevance is added by having links from other domains to your website?

Thanks again for the great article,
Jim

Answer:

Hi Jim, thank you for the accolades, I assume you are thanking me for my "[Is Your Website Search Engine Friendly? Your Personal Checklist](#)" article. I know it got published in some places on September 7. I have answered your questions below:

- 1) Is it ok to have .php extensions in the URL as long as you substitute the "?", "=", and "@" characters in the addresses with "/"?

In general your statement is correct. If you replace the extraneous characters (?, &, =) with brackets you will improve the search engine friendliness of your website. But be sure that you do not have too many directories appearing within your URL's because Google has been known to stop indexing sites that have lengthy directory structures. This [video from Google Engineer Matt Cutts](#) describes this very issue.

For samples and more tips on improving your URL's please go to the second half of my SEO Answers article from August 2nd where I discuss "[What Are Good and Bad URL's and How to Fix the Bad Ones](#)".

- 2) Are SESSION variables and POST variables friendly to search engines?

Session variables are not used by search engines so if your site requires them you are effectively shutting the door on search engine indexing. As for post variables, I would need more information before I could answer

this question. Generally POST variables are passed when a user interacts using a form so the search engine would not encounter this issue – making it a moot point.

3) Do you need to pay to get top 10 or top 20 rankings?

There are two answers to this question:

- a) Do you mean can the top positions be purchased? In effect you can't technically pay to get a top ranking because those rankings are 'organic'; they are created not by humans but rather by software based solely on the relevancy and popularity of the pages that the search engine spiders have found.
- b) If you mean do you have to pay an SEO to get top organic rankings? No you certainly do not have to pay for top rankings on the search engines. That said, there are many situations where it may be a smarter move for you to outsource your search engine optimization needs. For example, are you trying to attain a ranking in a competitive market area? In this case obtaining a top ranking may require a level of SEO knowledge that you don't have the time to attain. Your time may also be better spent doing what you are best at; making your business more profitable.

If you do not want to outsource your SEO needs then there are plenty of online forums and websites designed to provide you with the knowledge required to conduct your own SEO. Here is a short list:

- www.searchengineguide.com
- www.searchenginewatch.com
- www.webmasterworld.com

and of course, StepForth's SEO blog at news.stepforth.com

If you are looking to find the right tools I have a page that is meant to help you which is devoted to [recommended SEO tools](#).

4) How much relevance is added by having links from other domains to your website?

First, let me set the scene here. The links you are discussing are called "backlinks" and the resulting benefit is called "link popularity". So, to restate the question: "how important is link popularity to the overall relevance of your website as perceived by the search engines?" Link popularity is extremely important because search engines partially determine how authoritative a website is by how many other **related** websites have linked to it; they are considered votes of confidence. Note that I bolded 'related', this is a crucial point because backlinks from websites that are not related to yours can be worthless. For example, the search engines do not consider a link from a hair salon website to a ski tour company's website as a very powerful vote of confidence because there is no obvious relation between the two topics.

To top off my answers I want to also note something important related to link building: do not sign up for a link building program (free or not) that offers you hundreds or more links within no time at all. The fact is that these backlinks are not likely to be very relevant to your website AND, most importantly if Google sees that your website has gained a ton of backlinks in very little time they will be suspicious. It is not unheard of for a website to be punished by Google if they appear to have gotten a great many backlinks in a short period. Google does not enjoy being 'gamed' so tread softly and build your backlinks slowly but methodically and pay attention to the best links. In my August SEO Answers article I provided more backlink tips in the response titled: [What Exactly Are Good Backlinks?](#)