

What the Heck is Hotel Website PageRank, Anyway? A Hotel Marketers Guide to Understanding Website PageRank - By Neil Salerno

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Among the many terms often mentioned among web site knowledgeable people is PageRank. In reality, it has great importance, although I don't think there is a popular consensus for why it is so important to a web site, nor how it functions.

I thought it might be helpful to provide a marketer's view, rather than a pure technical view, of PageRank, what it is, why it's important, and what you can do to improve it. Some of the technical portions of this article have been redacted from various technical sources.

It is interesting to note that PageRank was developed at Stanford University by Larry Page (hence the name Page-Rank) and later by Sergey Brin as part of a research project involving his new search engine. In 1998, Page and Brin founded Google, which became the most popular search engine ever developed.

There are several definitions of PageRank, some more technical than others. Since I prefer simple to technical, here is the best I've found.

PageRank is a numeric value that represents how important a page is on the web. Google considers that when one page links to another page, it is effectively casting a vote for the other page. Google feels the more votes that are cast for a page, the more important that page must be. Also, the importance of the page that is casting the vote determines how important the vote itself is. Google calculates a page's importance from the quantity and quality of the votes cast for it.

I'd like to add, at this point, that there are unscrupulous site developers and marketers who prefer to find ways to fool or trick search spiders or searchbots rather than to follow search engine guidelines to improve site results. In its wisdom, Google is coming down hard on unprincipled site developers and marketers who would sacrifice the rules, in favor of creative design. Be sure that you are not working with one of these individuals.

PageRank points-out the importance of links or 'votes' for a web page. There are three basic types of links to consider: Dangling Links, Out-Bound Links, and In-Bound Links. Google also considers 'relevancy' to be very important to evaluating links for PageRank.

Dangling Links

A Dangling link is a link to a page that has no links going from it, or a link to a page that Google hasn't indexed. In both cases, Google removes the links shortly after the start of its calculations and reinstates them shortly before the calculations are finished. In this way, their affect on the PageRank of other pages is minimal.

Although it may be functionally acceptable to link to pages within the site without those pages linking out again, it is bad for PageRank. It is pointless wasting PageRank unnecessarily, so always make sure that every page in the site links out to at least one other page in the site.

You have all experienced dangling links, ever get to a page with no way to leave without the back button or closing the page? Don't let your booking engine create a dangling link on your site. Since a booking engine is an out-Bound link, never place the booking engine search on your home page, no matter how great the idea may sound.

In-Bound Links

In-Bound links are the golden objectives to build your site's PageRank. In-Bound links, (links into the site from the outside) are one way to increase a site's total PageRank. Where the links come from doesn't matter.

The linking page's PageRank, however, is important, but so is the number of links going from that page. For instance, if you are the only link from a page that has a low PageRank, you will receive little benefit, whereas a link from a high ranking page, with another 99 links from it, it will increase your page's ranking substantially.

Link relevancy is also very important when choosing In-Bound links. Only choose travel or hospitality related links to your hotel web site. Link 'farms' and otherwise paid links can be considered spamdexing and your site could be banned by search engines as a result. When choosing a marketing partner for your site, make them provide all the details of their link program.

Out-Bound Links

Out-Bound links are a drain on a site's total PageRank. They leak PageRank. To counter the drain, make sure that these links are reciprocated. Take care when choosing where to exchange links. It is important to note that outbound links should never be placed on a page on which you would like to build PageRank (e.g. home page).

PageRank is very important to the popularity and performance of your site. If your site has been online for more than 120 days and is unranked, or has a ranking of less than 4/10, your site needs work.

Links are the key to good PageRank. Every hotel web site needs to develop a good link strategy.

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