MOZCON
2012
Build links without doing anything
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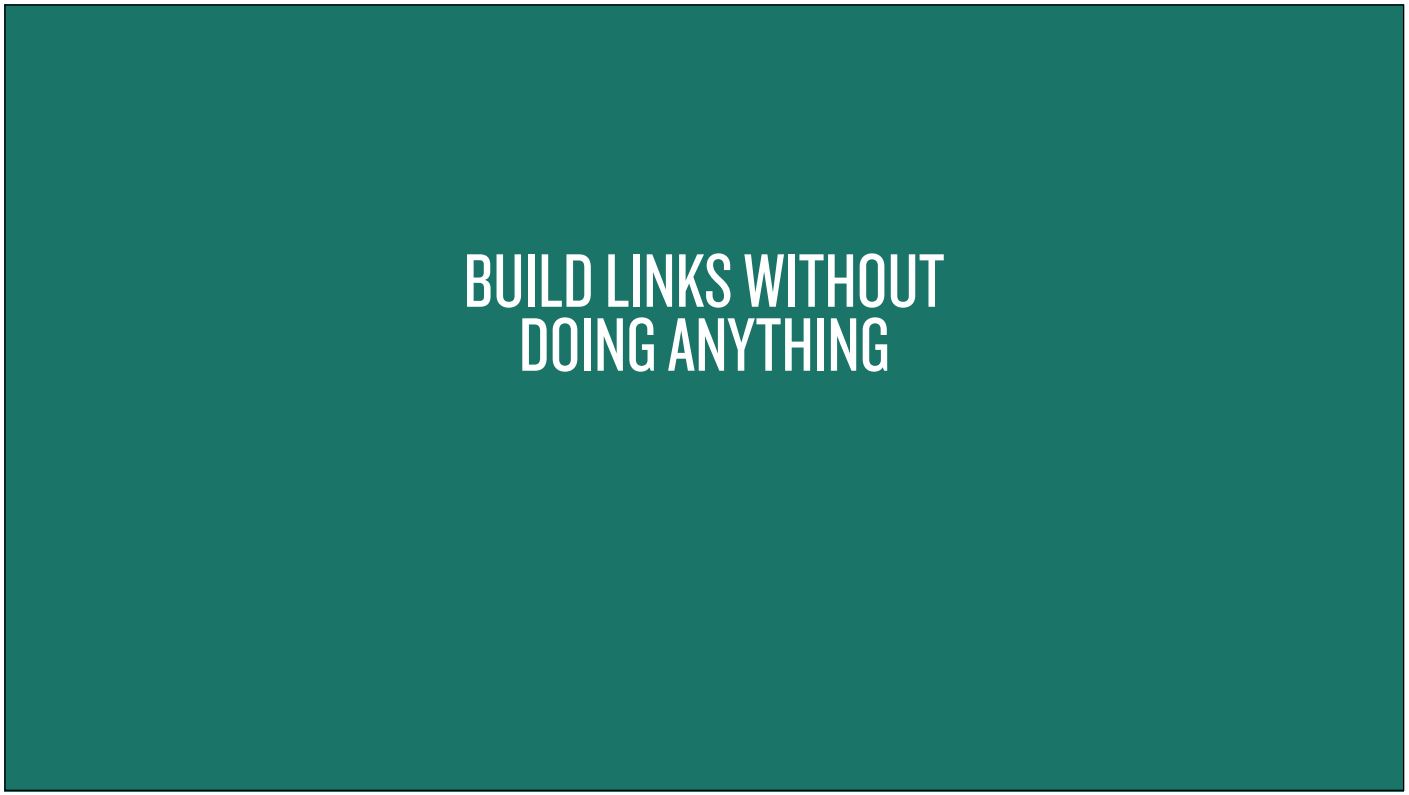


K, so, this isn't really possible, is it? I spent a lot of time trying to figure out what the hell I was going to say.

I went to this for a while.

I ended up here. Because sometimes the way to win with something is to stop trying so goddamned hard.

Right now your link campaigns look like my social life, in, say, the early 1990s.

You’re trying way too hard, and you think that you look pretty damned cool.

But to be honest, you're not as sexy as you think.

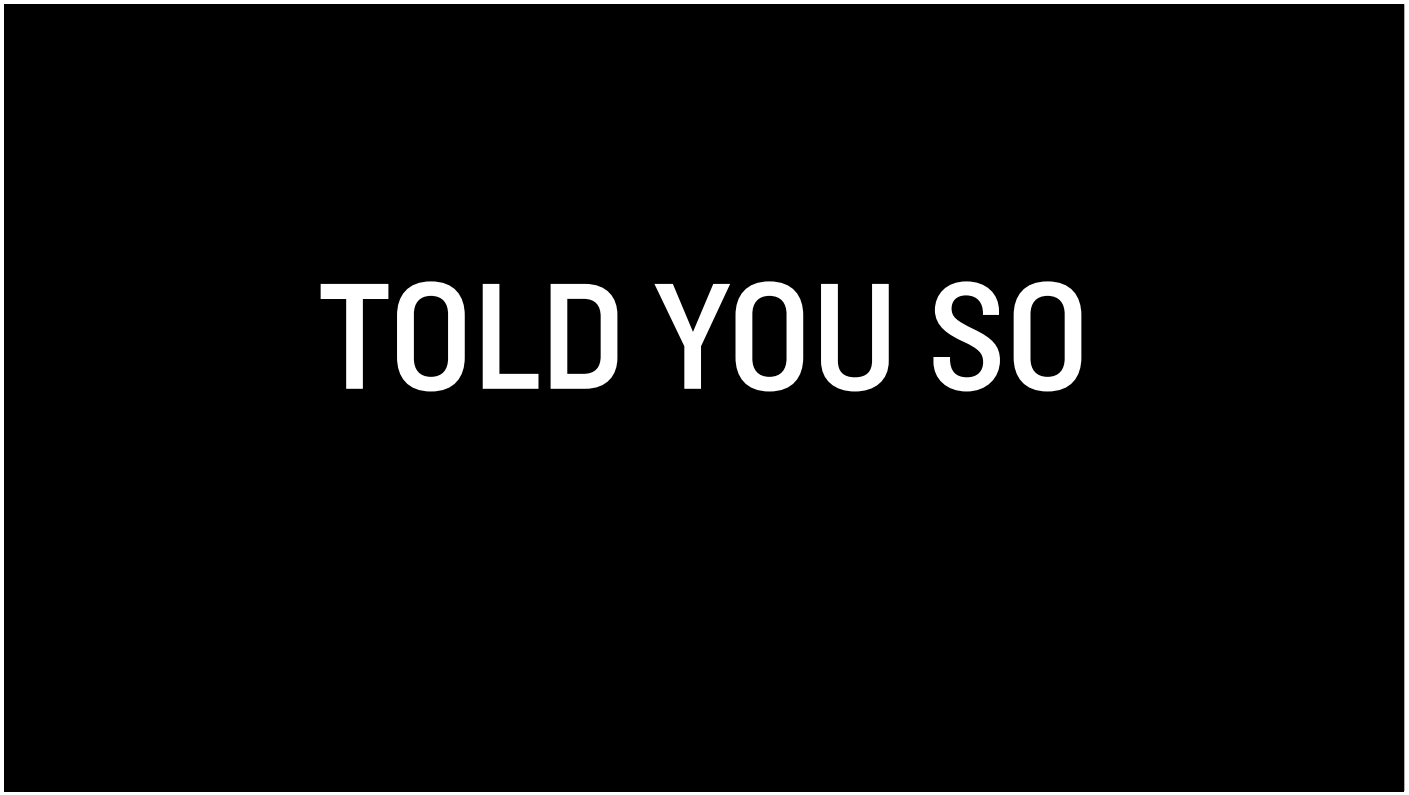
And your approach is pretty ineffective. You're throwing yourselves at people, grubbing for links like a nerdy bachelor w/ bad skin who's pushing 30 grubbing for a date.

Just stop it. STOP IT. It’s not working. It’s worthless. It’s a waste of everyone’s time.

The time we all knew would arrive has come: The Penguinopalypse. The End Of All Things Link Building.

Link building has failed as a long term marketing strategy. I know – you had a nice ride for 5-6 years. But in real business, 5-6 years **is nothing**. Coca-Cola? 100+ years. Ford? 109. **That's** success. 5 years in the rankings? The real winners laugh at the idea.

Before I get into the meat of the discussion, though, I gotta get something out of my system. It's not nice to say it, so I'll only say it once. K?

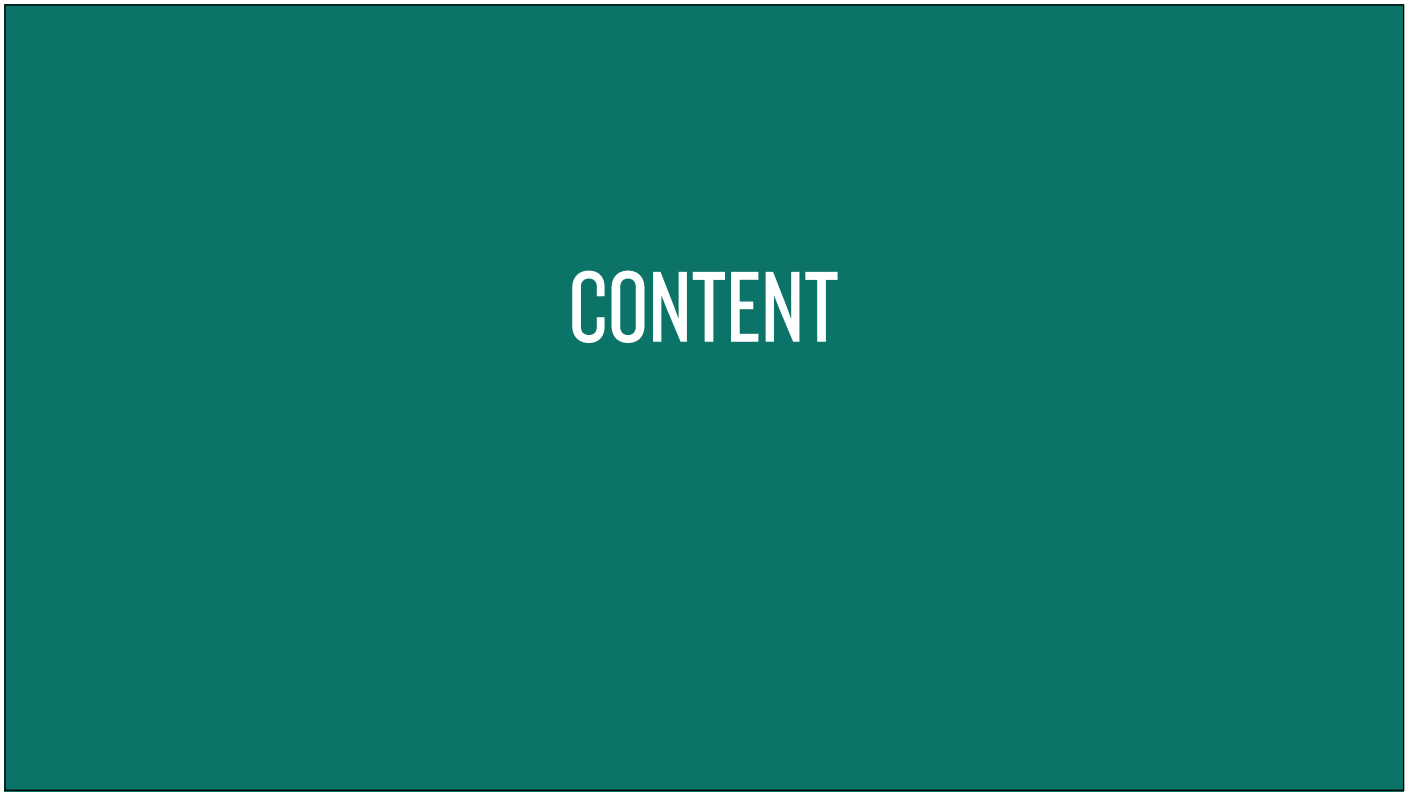


Yes, I did. For years. Now you've got no choice. Phbbbt.

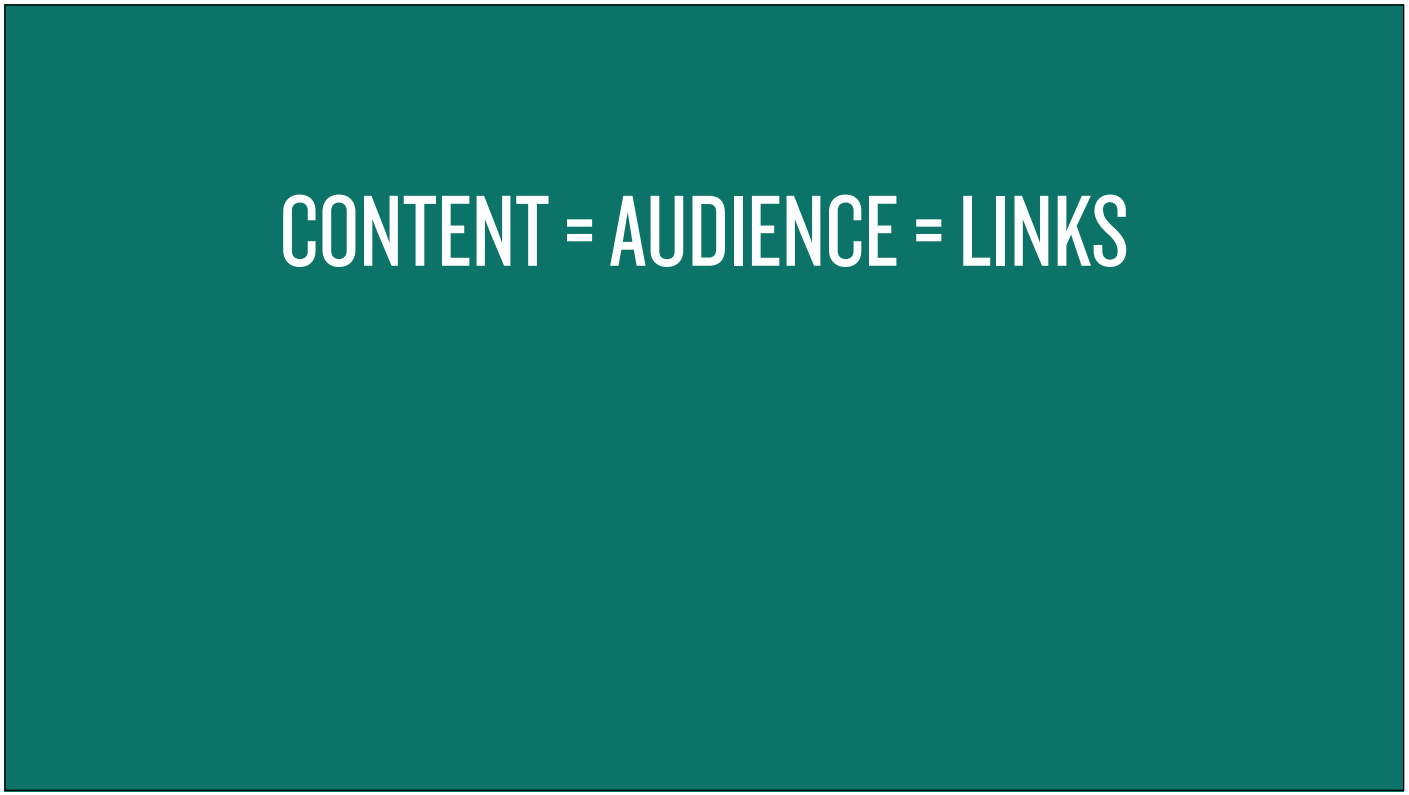
Wil and Mike touched on this yesterday – the mistake you're making is doing **link building** at all. This isn't about link building.

This is about audience building. Audience building leads to links & shares. That's what I'm going to talk about today.

Link building isn't a tactic. It's a **result** – one result of good audience building.



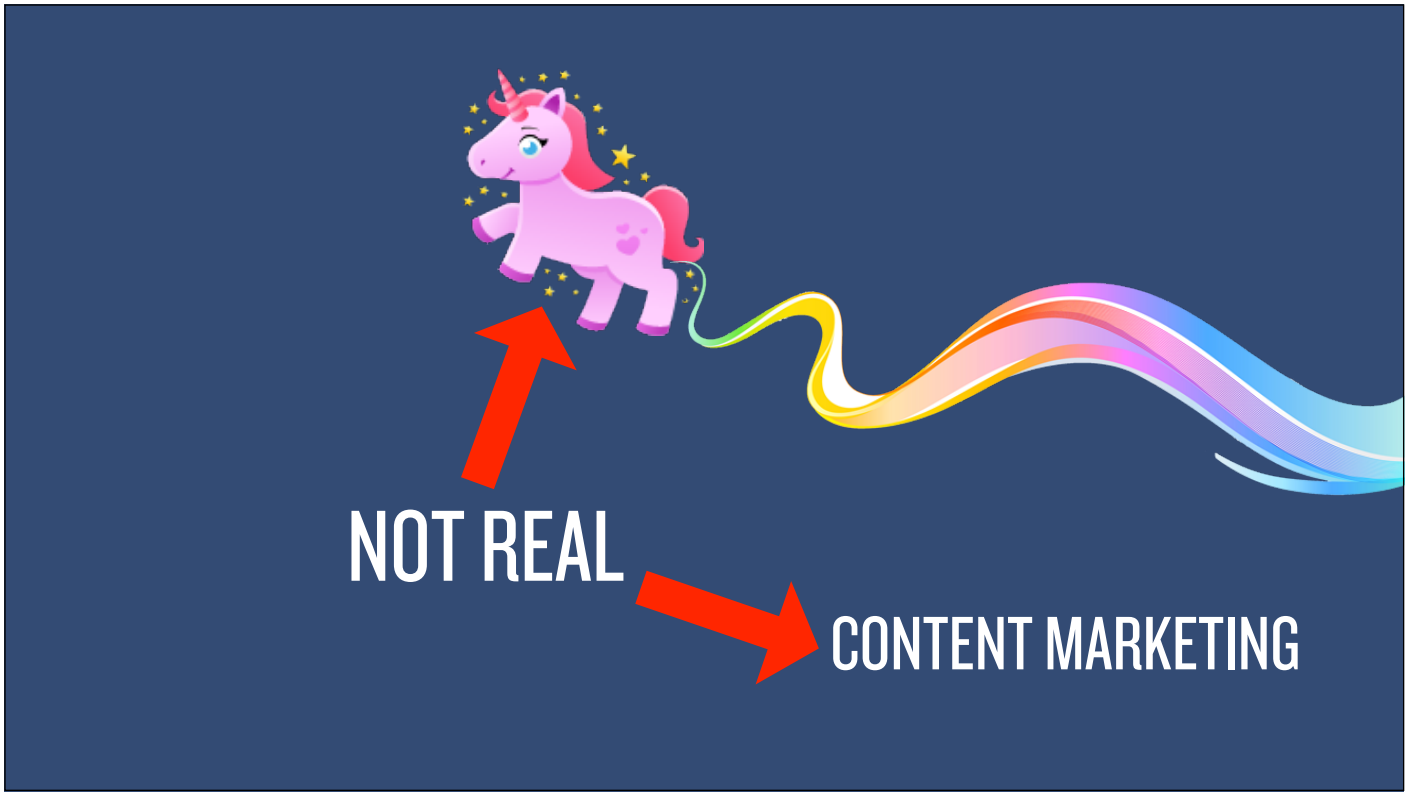
You do that with **content**. I know what you're saying: "I thought this presentation was about link building, and here goes Ian about content again. Dammit."



Don’t worry. This **is about getting links**. This is about appealing to and reaching an audience who’ll give you those links.

Of course, everyone now thinks I'm going to start talking about content marketing.

No, I'm not. I'm going to point something out: **There is no such thing as 'content marketing'.** Please, god, delete the term from every marketing dictionary. Delete it from my own blog.



Get serious. ‘Content marketing’ is like ‘link building’. It’s not a tactic, either. It’s a result.

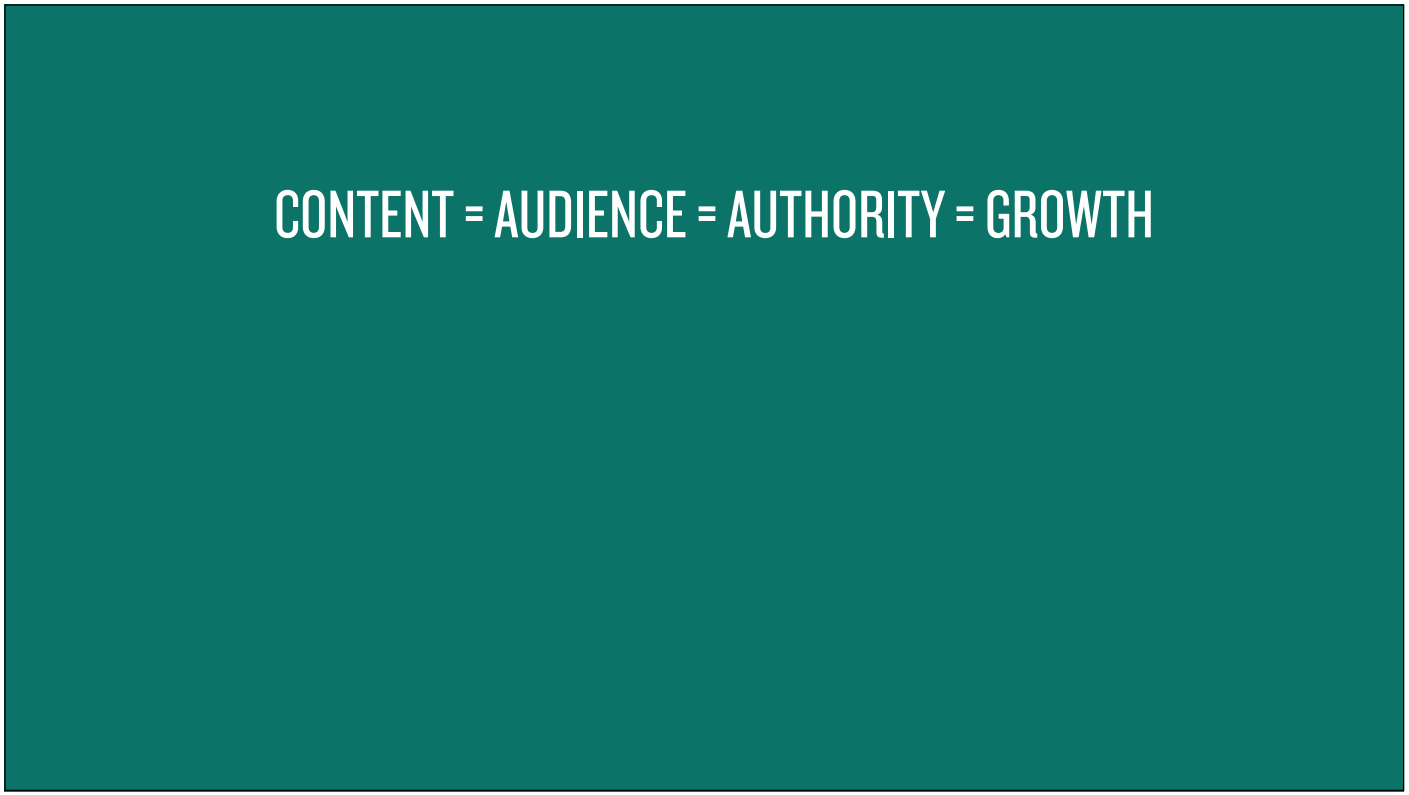
THERE IS NO SUCH THING. Content marketing lives in the same realm as rainbow-farting unicorns: Make-believe.

Great content is the **result**. It's the outcome.

Like link building, content marketing is a result. It's really 'marketable content'.

We'll all do a lot better to refer to it this way. Because right now CEOs look at us and hear us say 'content marketing' and think we're bonkers. It's part of why folks don't want to pay for it. "I don't want content marketing. I want **me** marketing. Sell my stuff. Not content."

Give me marketable content. Give me content that markets **me**.



This is how you talk to CMO's and VPs and CEOs and whatever. Content builds audience, which builds authority across **all** channels, including links and such. That builds brand and visibility, and that builds growth.

But Ian, you say, “Sure we’re believers. But our clients don’t let us do it. They say content doesn’t work. No one reads it.”

With all due respect, the real problem here is that **THEIR** content isn't working. And that **not all content works**.

Here's the key – the point that I want you guys to walk out of here knowing, 100%:

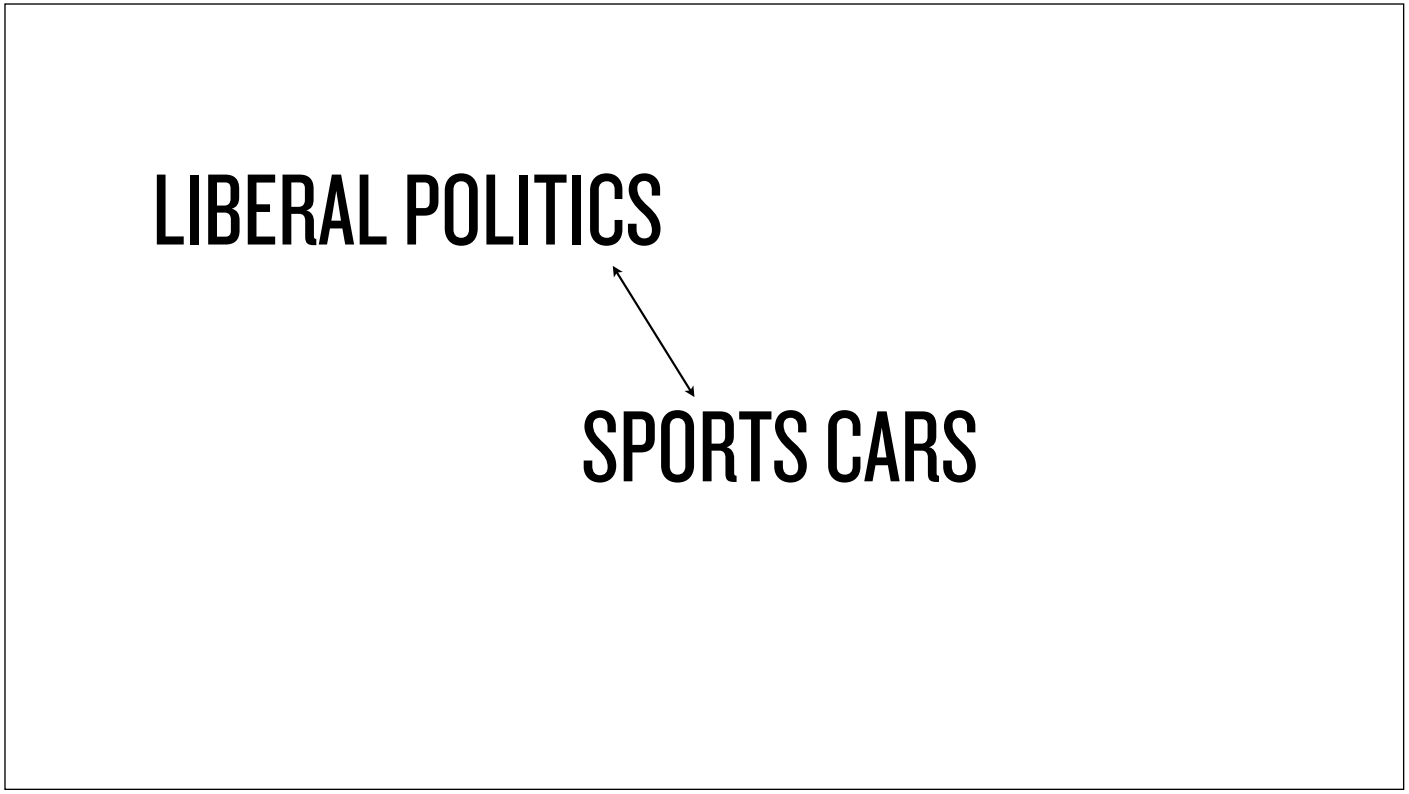
You want your content to work more often? You need to talk about stuff potential linkers and sharers and customers will love **now**. Tell them about what matters **now**. Talk about what they need **now**, what they want **now**. Not what **you** want them to do right now.

Great, Ian. WTF does that mean? Time for examples, and tools, and how this'll work.

First example: Me

Remember this guy? Actually, this wasn't me. I was out there as the 'nice guy'. "You know, I have a job and a house." Yeah thanks but I want someone who knows how to dance.

I was pushing a product they didn't want yet.

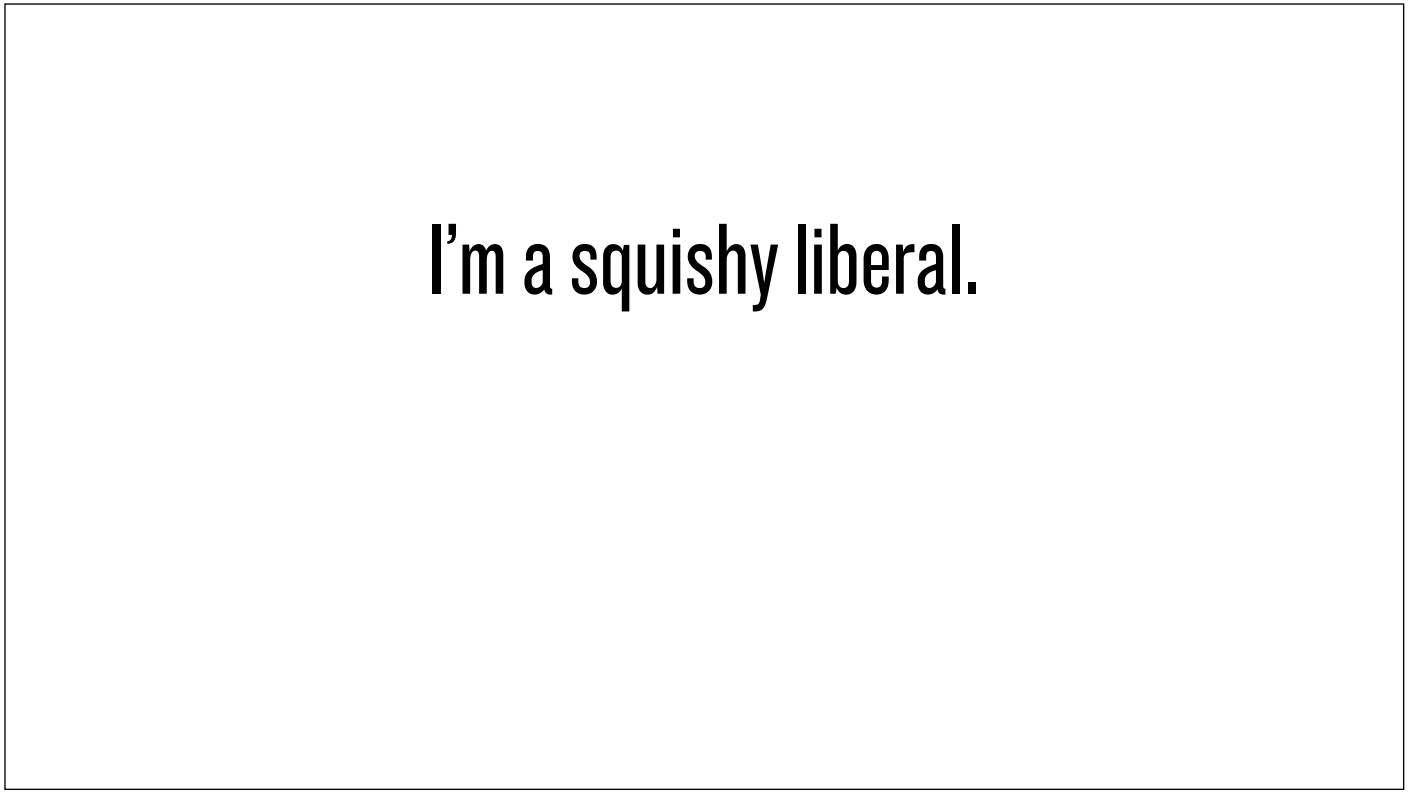


You want to reach the folks who will link to you? The folks who'll share your stuff (which is everyone)? The key a lot of the time is matching up topics that don't appear to match up. Tying what matters to me **now** to what you have that'll matter to me later.

Think about life insurance. I just bought a new policy. It's funny - no one sells life insurance by saying "You're GOING TO DIE IAN". They talk about peace of mind - that's what matters now.

They've made that connection. You can, too, but you have to embrace one principle:

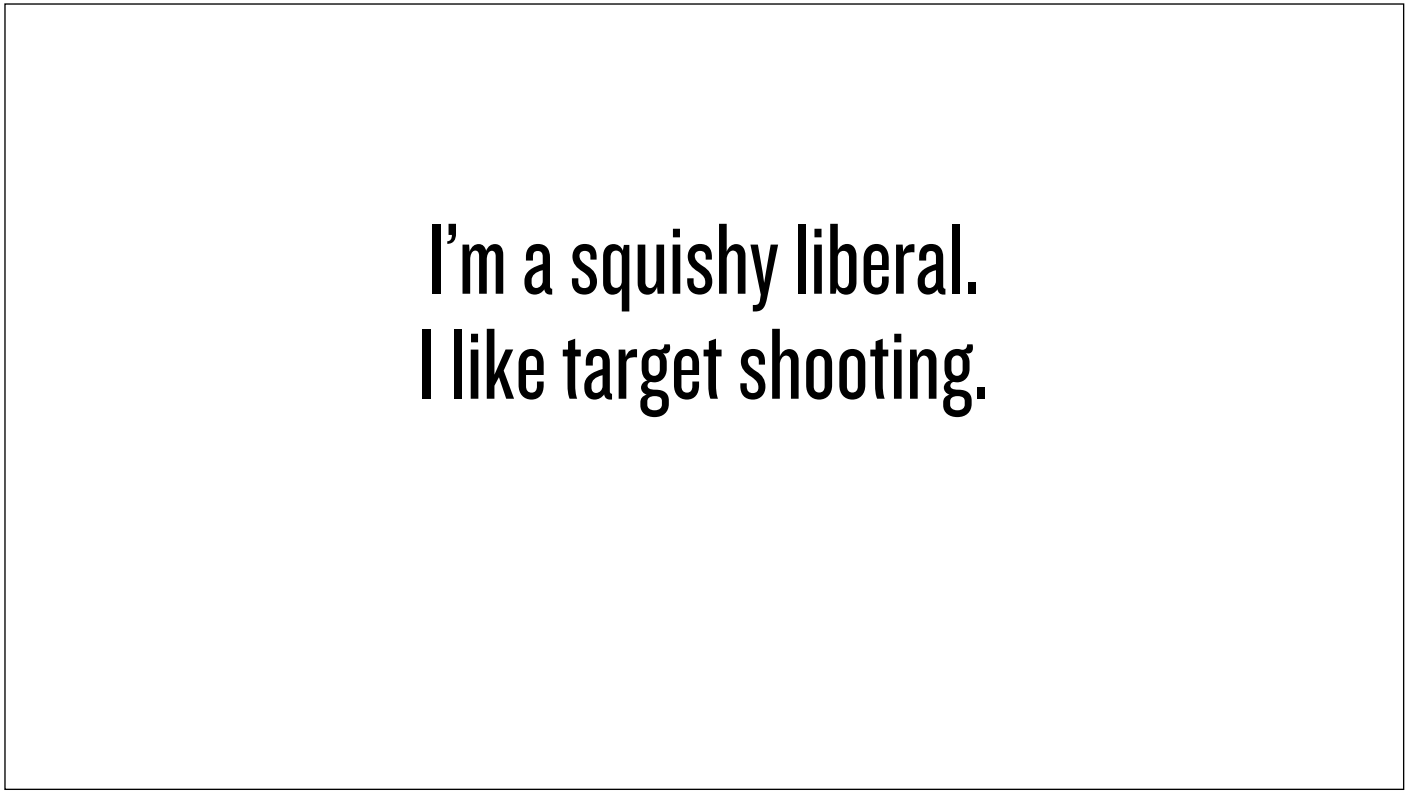
To do that, you have to understand is that random is the new normal. Actually, random has always been normal.



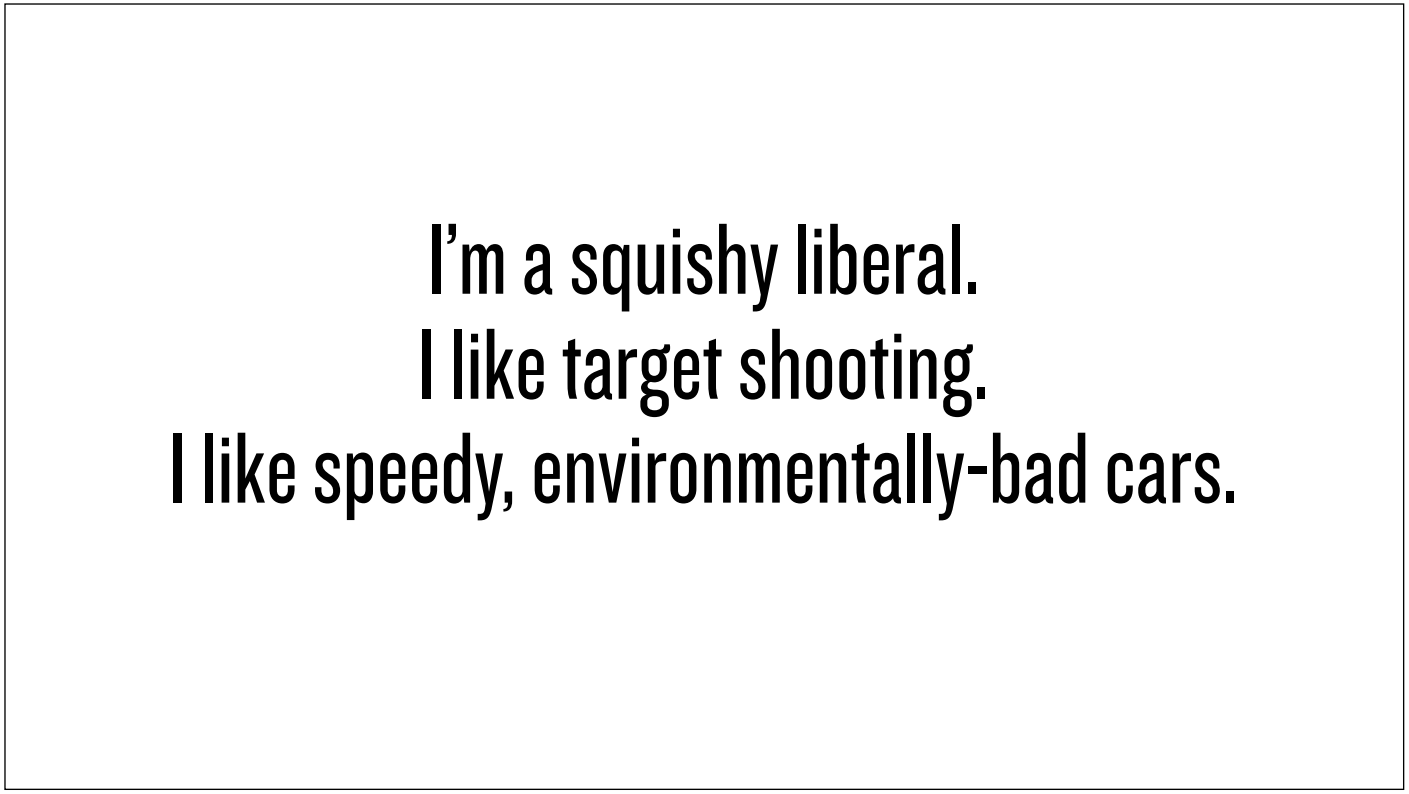
Here's an example. I'm what someone once called a 'squishy liberal'. I believe in all sorts of craziness, like health care, and education.

But I'm pretty burnt out on politics. E-mail me more crap about my taxes and I'm going to punch you in the fucking face, no matter which party you're from.

But you have to reach me. You want me to vote. To donate $$.



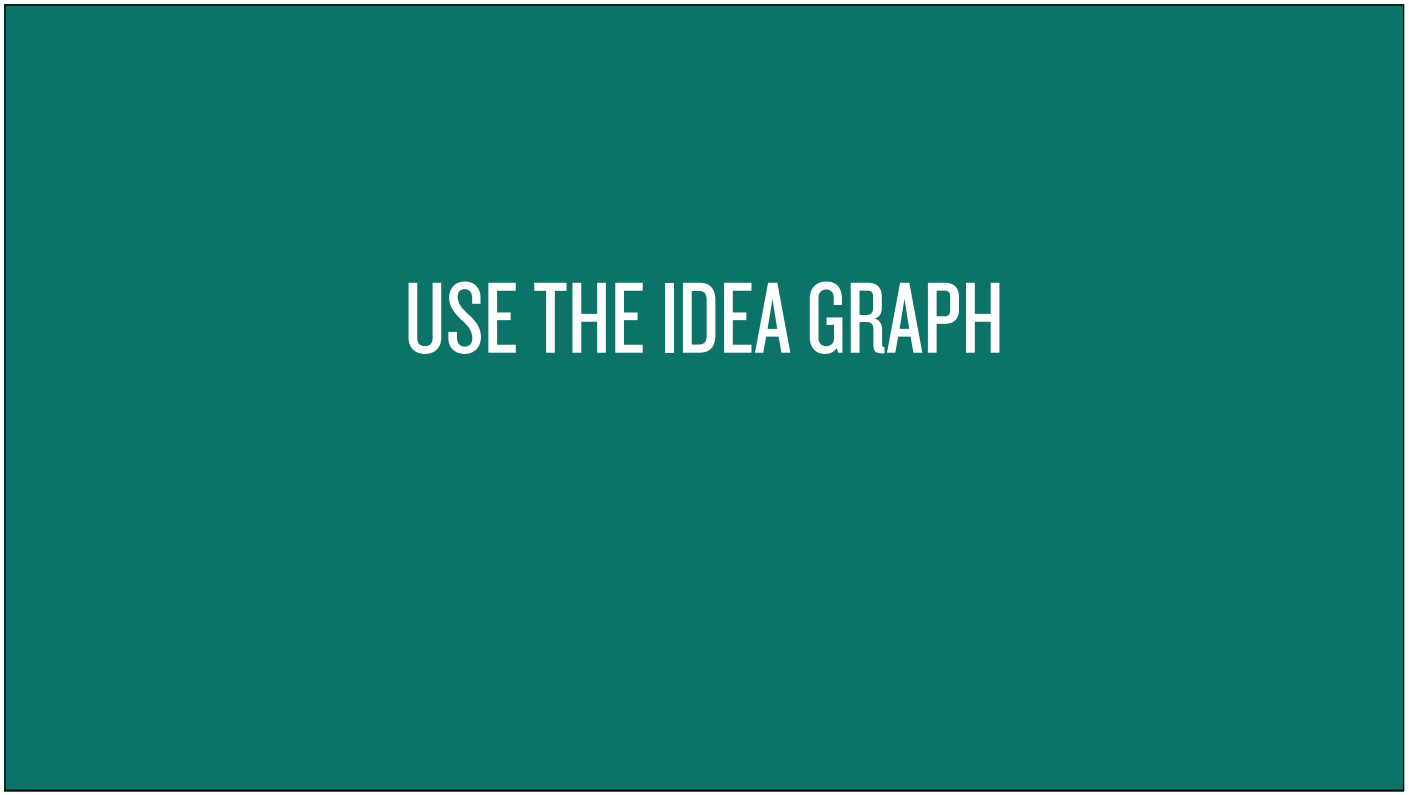
I like to point large-caliber handguns at targets and pull the trigger.



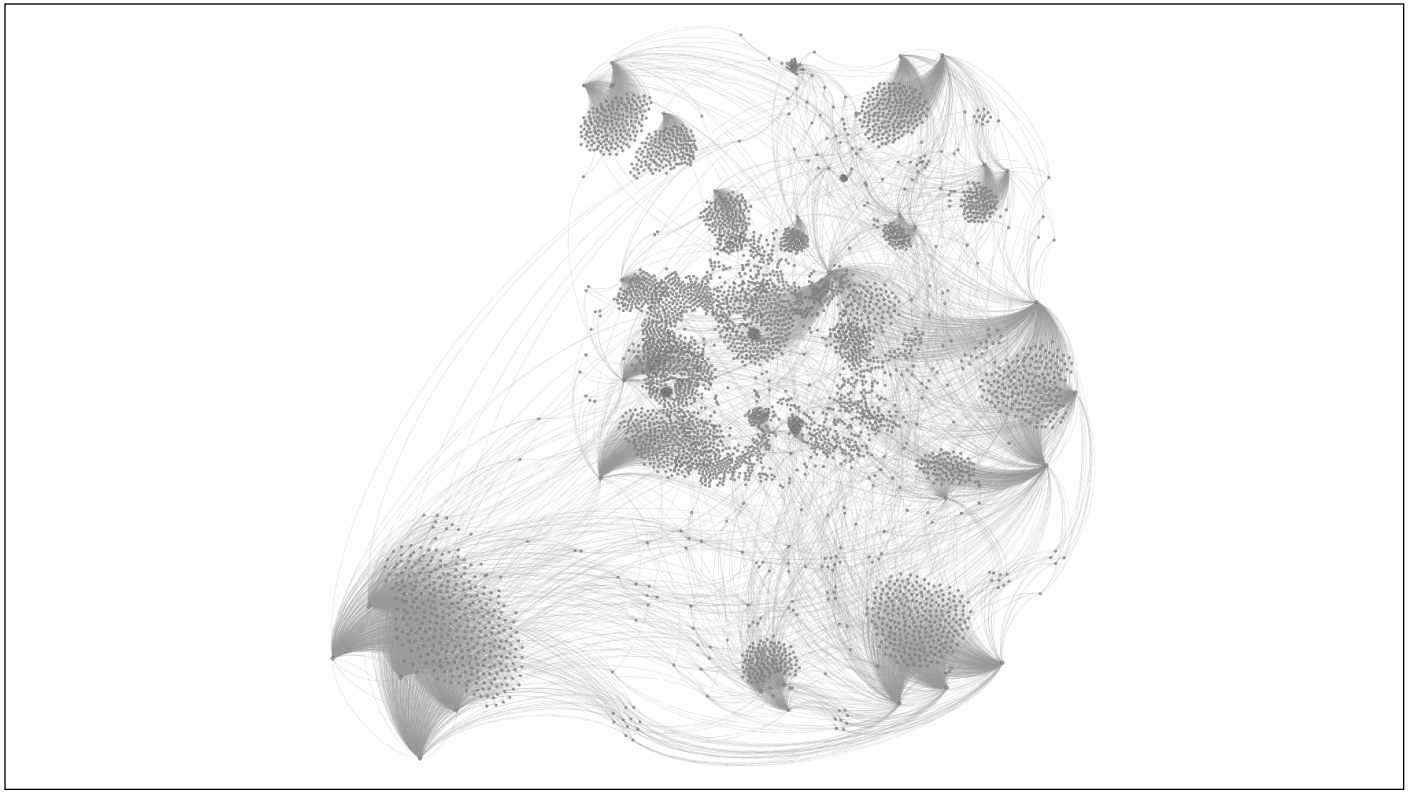
And I drive a car that's probably terrible for the environment. I'm justifying that because I'm getting rid of oil faster, by the way.

Don't want me to punch you? Talk to me about the cars candidates own. Get me coming back to your site, and get a link. Send me a video of Barack Obama skeet shooting (hee hee).

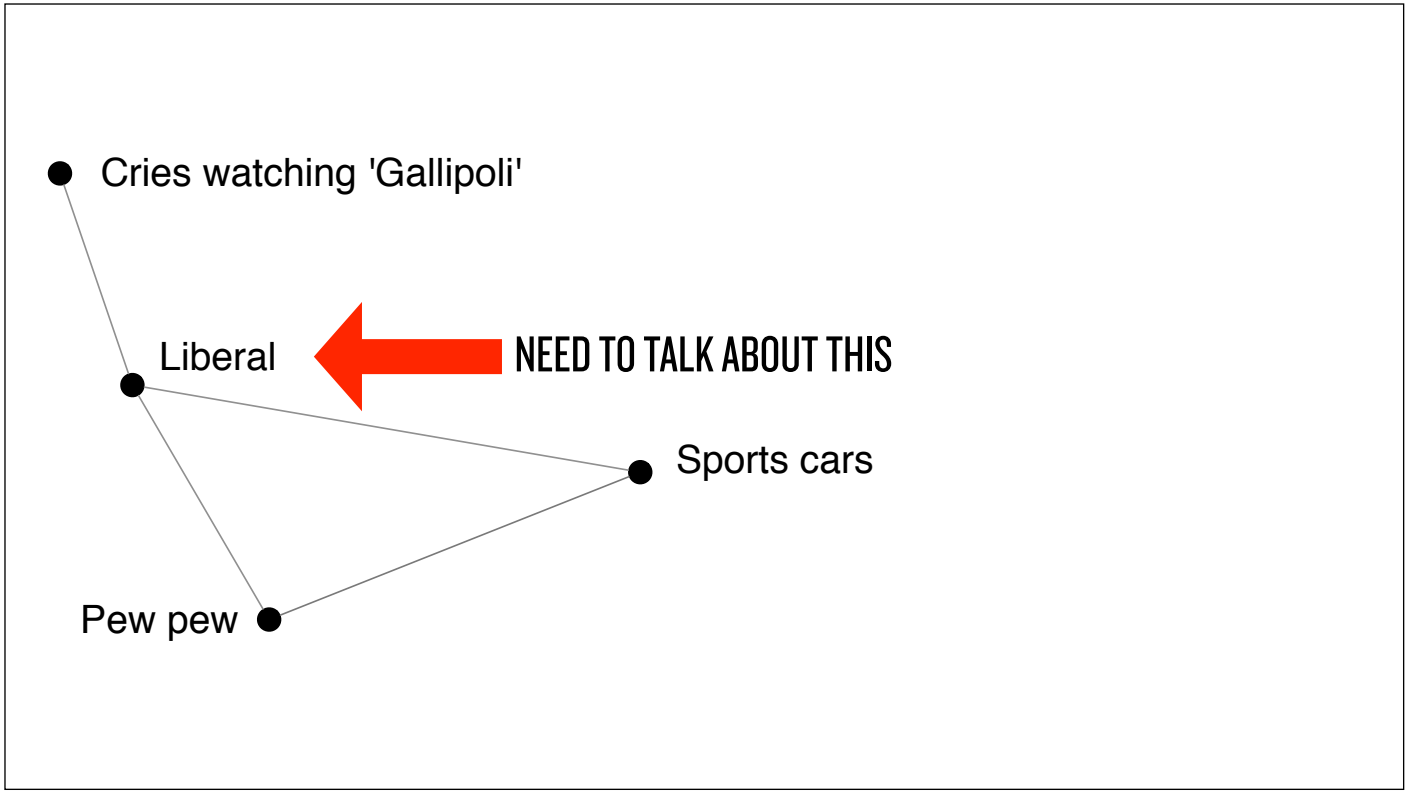
So how do you learn this?



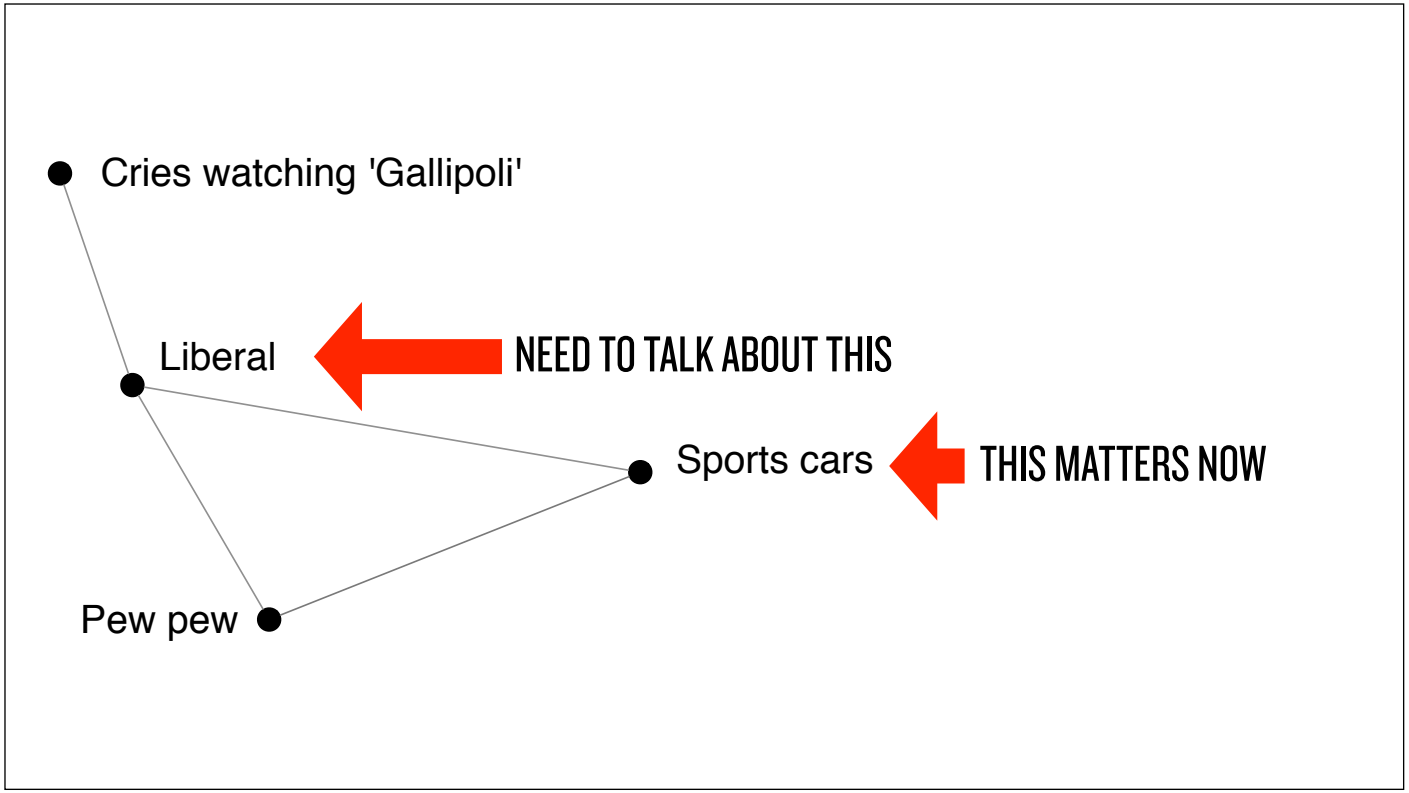
Here's how you can figure out what matters now. Use the idea graph. Find the patterns.



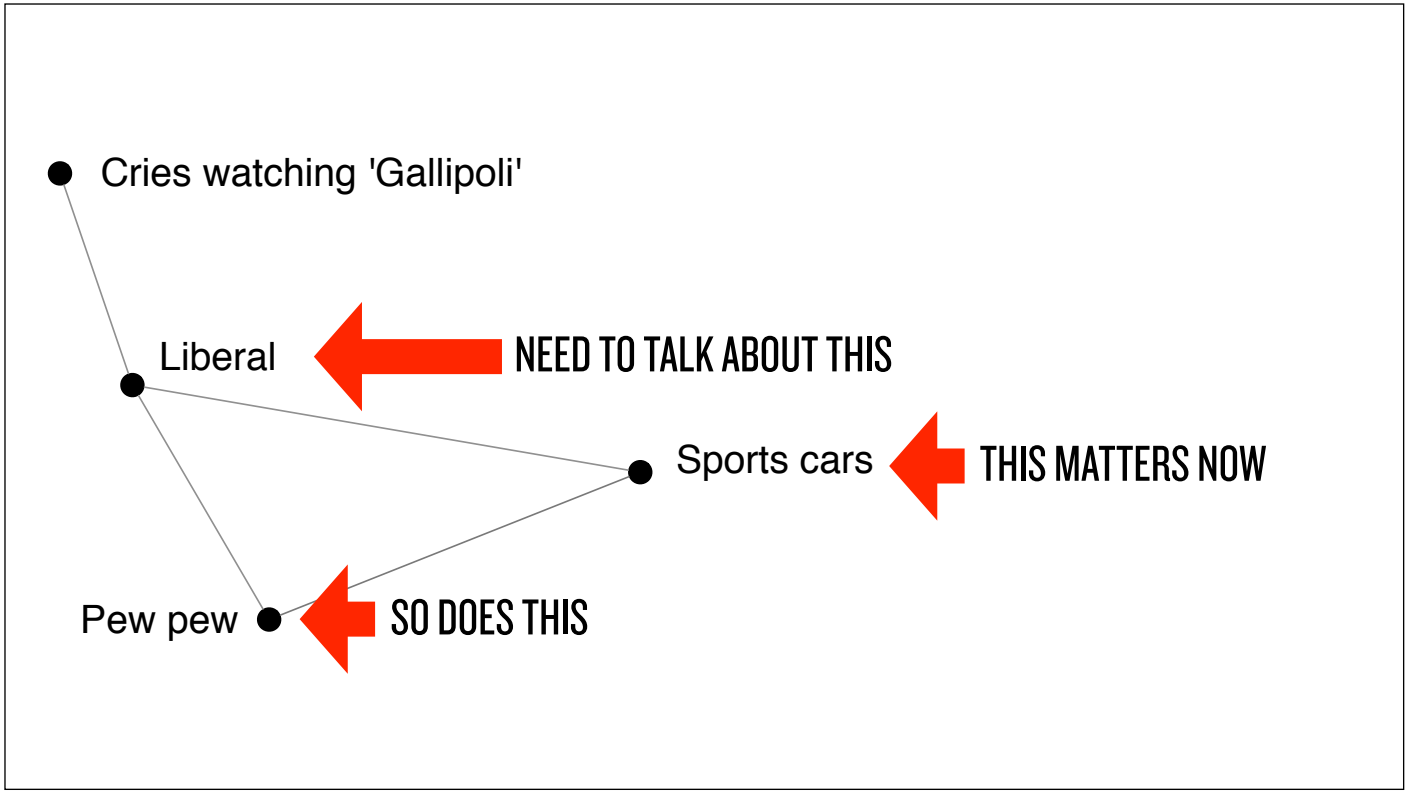
The idea graph is this universe of topics that relate to each other, the same way people on the social graph do. It reveals all sorts of crazy stuff.



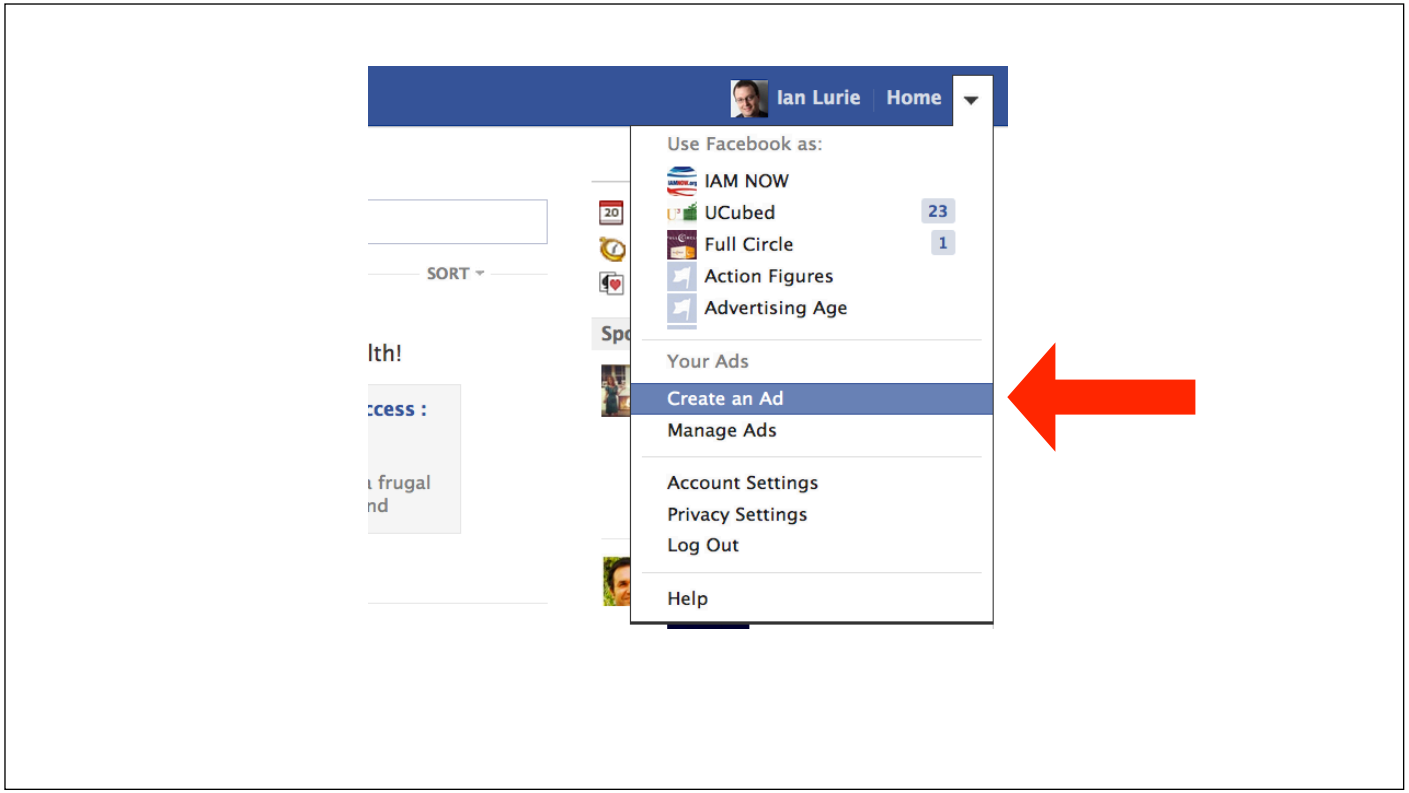
Going back to my previous example. What if I'm not the only gun-shooting, sports-car-driving liberal? What if it's a common combination?



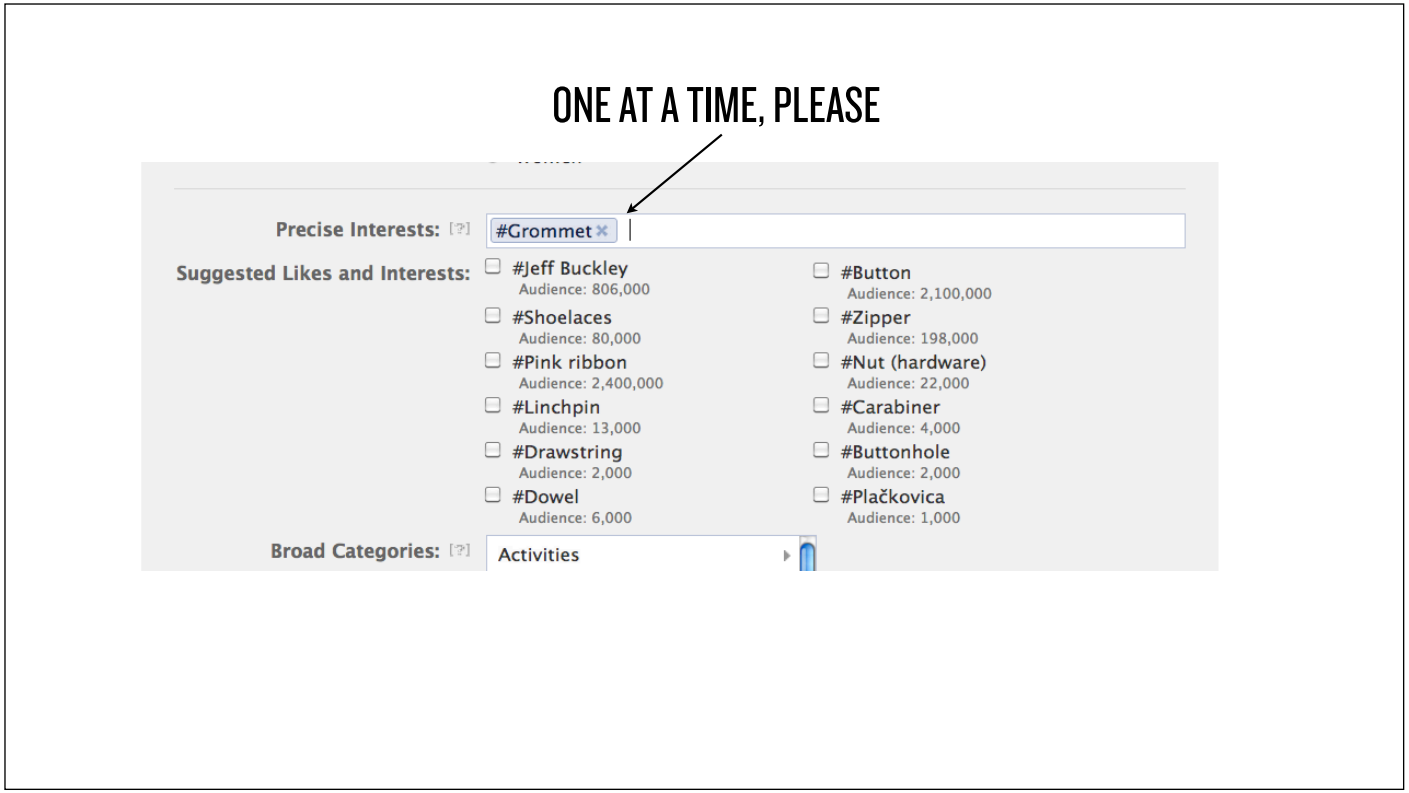
The idea graph can help reveal that.



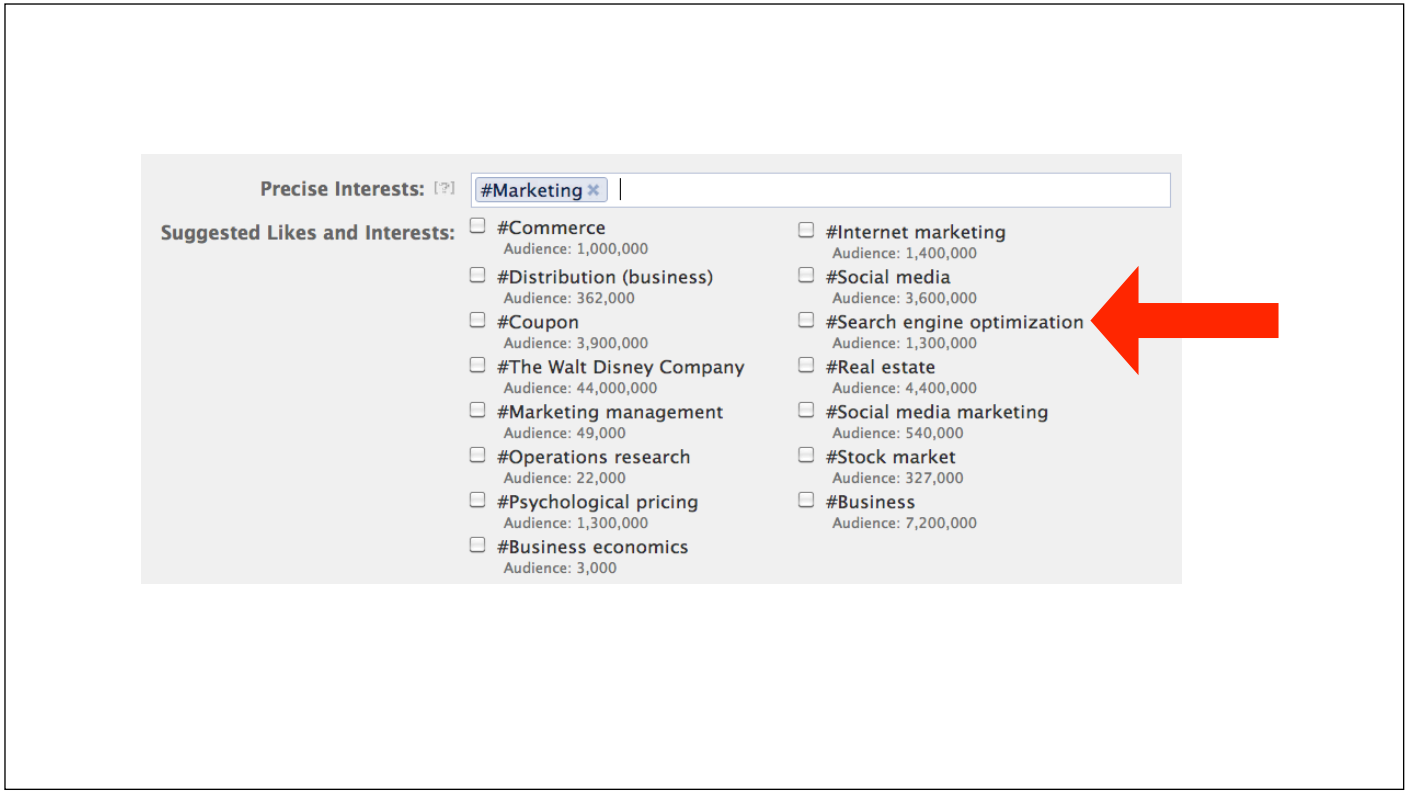
And give you insight into how you can matter **now**.



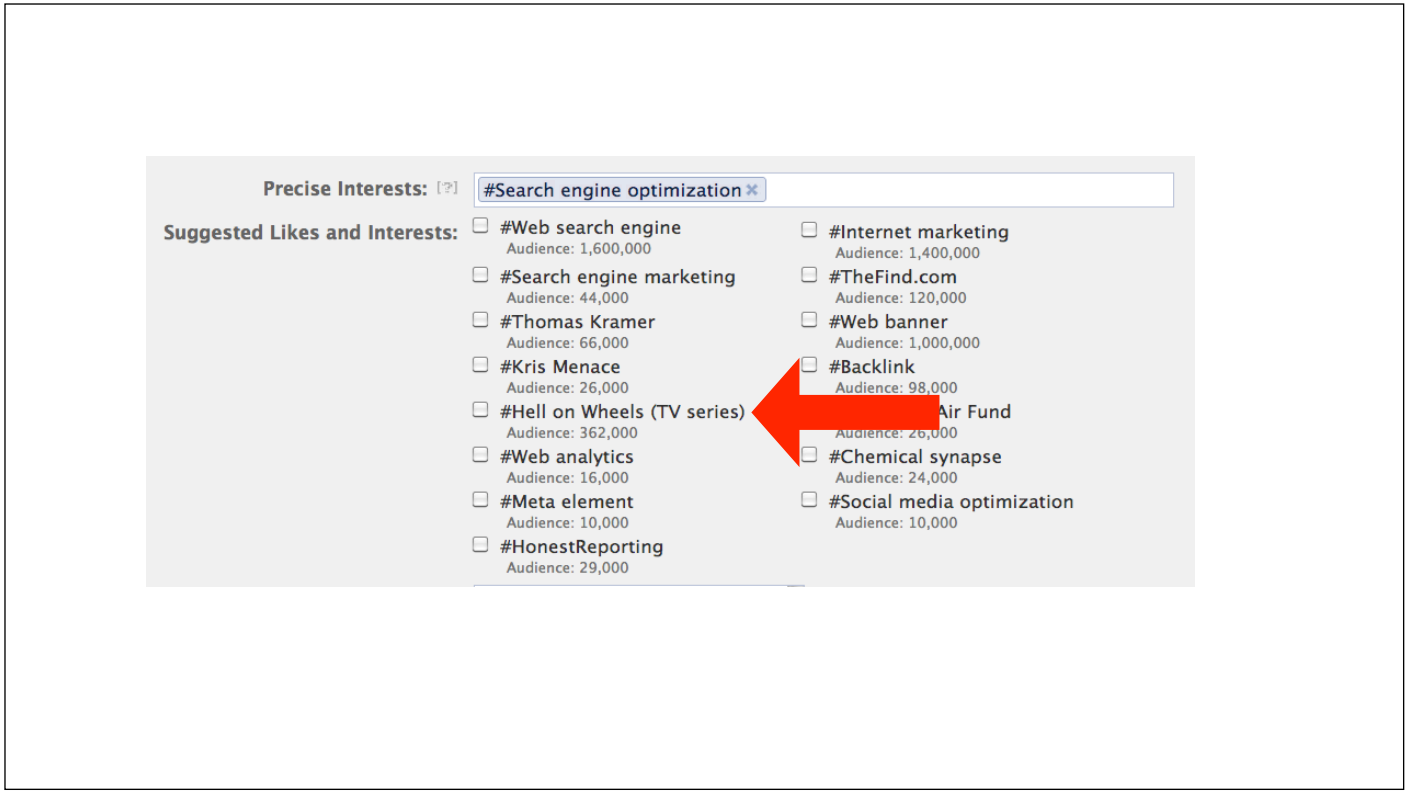
Want a peek inside the graph? Use the Facebook ads tool.



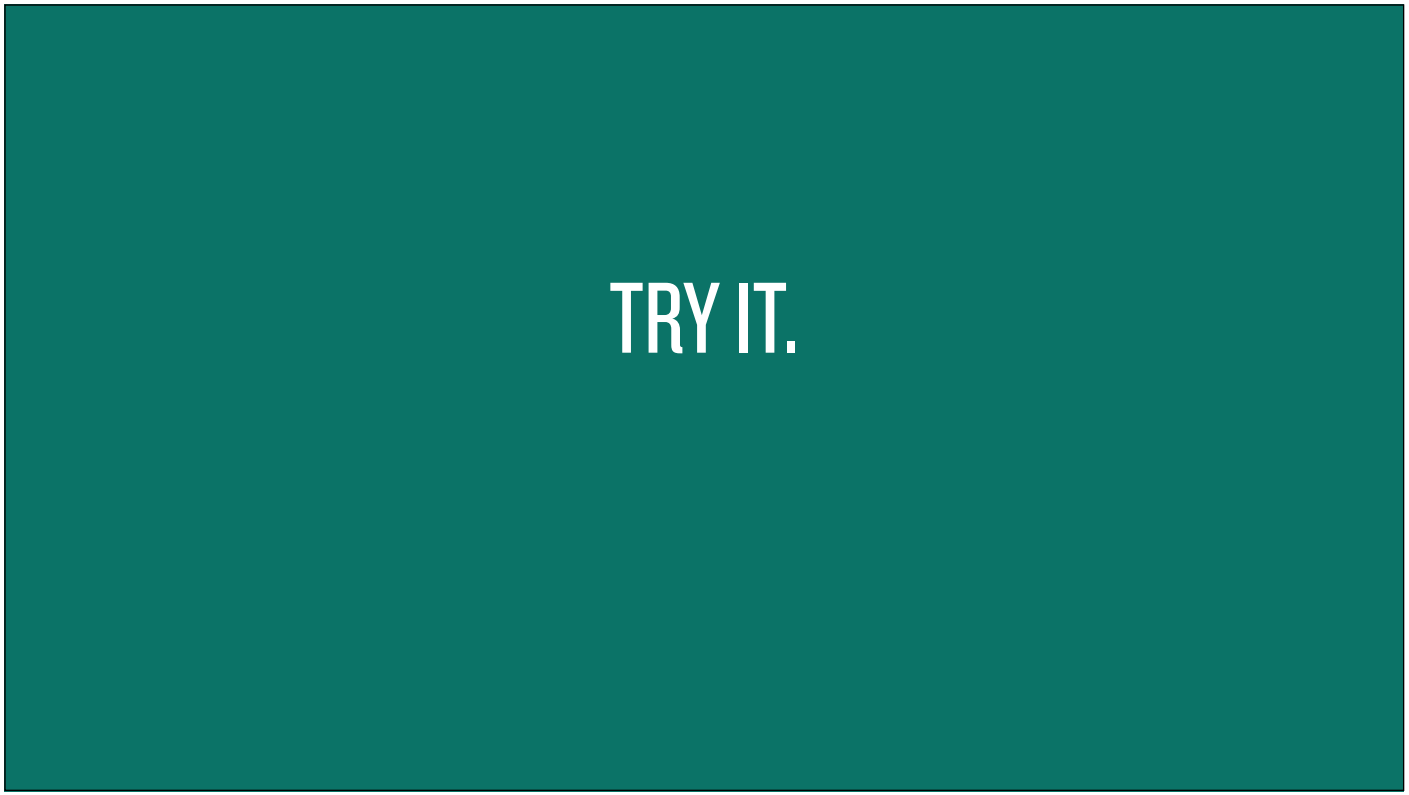
Gotta write about rubber grommets? Bummer. Go type it into the Precise Interests field. Hmmm. Not exactly a field day, but you've got carabiners. That's cool.



Oh, god. Gotta write about SEO? Booorrrrinnnggg.


Precise Interests: [?]
#Search engine optimization
Suggested Likes and Interests:
#Web search engine
Audience: 1,600,000
#Search engine marketing
Audience: 44,000
#Thomas Kramer
Audience: 66,000
#Kris Menace
Audience: 26,000
#Hell on Wheels (TV series)
Audience: 362,000
#Web analytics
Audience: 16,000
#Meta element
Audience: 10,000
#HonestReporting
Audience: 29,000
#Internet marketing
Audience: 1,400,000
#TheFind.com
Audience: 120,000
#Web banner
Audience: 1,000,000
#Backlink
Audience: 98,000
Air Fund
Audience: 26,000
#Chemical synapse
Audience: 24,000
#Social media optimization
Audience: 10,000

Okaaayyyy.

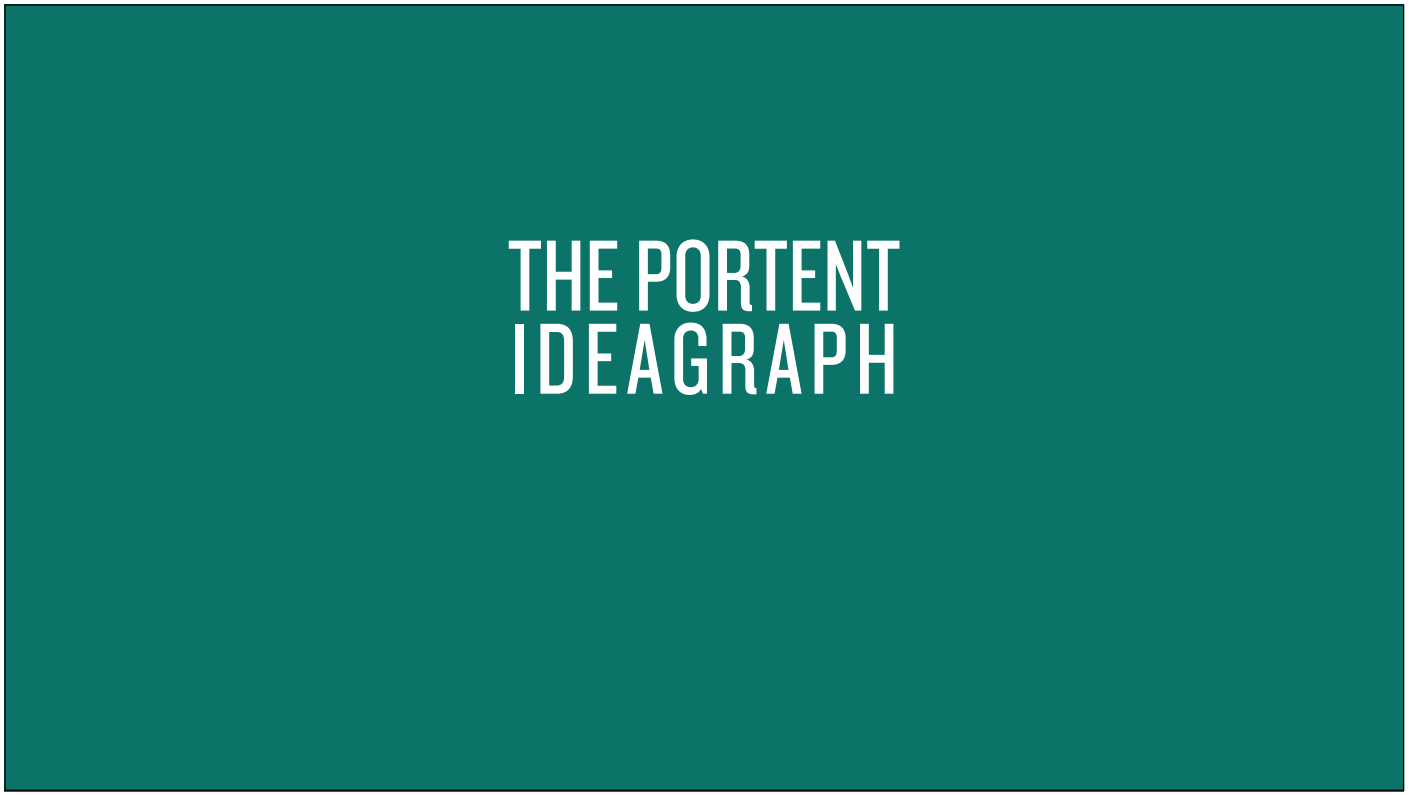


Yeah, pretty random. But try it! It beats sitting around whining. You got something better to do? Like removing the 12,000 crappy links you bought over the last 3 years by hand?

Remember, this is about audience building.

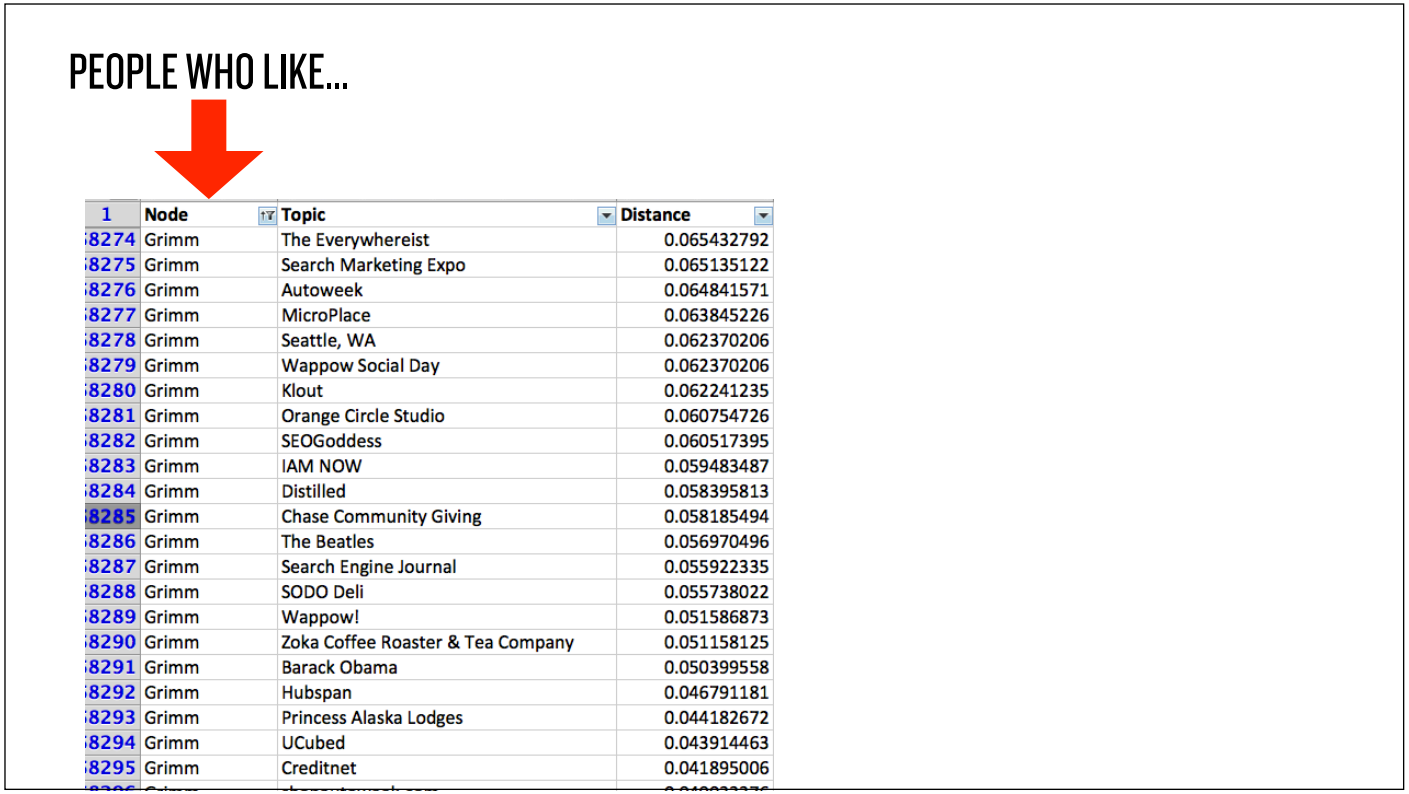
Not the idea graph. COOL TOOLS DO NOT GET ME WRONG. But these are related themes and topics. Chances are, if the main topic doesn't matter now, these won't either.

You want better data? Ah, have I got the thing for you.



You want better data? Ah, have I got the thing for you.

PEOPLE WHO LIKE...



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8274	Grimm	The Everywhereist	0.065432792
8275	Grimm	Search Marketing Expo	0.065135122
8276	Grimm	Autoweek	0.064841571
8277	Grimm	MicroPlace	0.063845226
8278	Grimm	Seattle, WA	0.062370206
8279	Grimm	Wappow Social Day	0.062370206
8280	Grimm	Klout	0.062241235
8281	Grimm	Orange Circle Studio	0.060754726
8282	Grimm	SEOGoddess	0.060517395
8283	Grimm	IAM NOW	0.059483487
8284	Grimm	Distilled	0.058395813
8285	Grimm	Chase Community Giving	0.058185494
8286	Grimm	The Beatles	0.056970496
8287	Grimm	Search Engine Journal	0.055922335
8288	Grimm	SODO Deli	0.055738022
8289	Grimm	Wappow!	0.051586873
8290	Grimm	Zoka Coffee Roaster & Tea Company	0.051158125
8291	Grimm	Barack Obama	0.050399558
8292	Grimm	Hubspan	0.046791181
8293	Grimm	Princess Alaska Lodges	0.044182672
8294	Grimm	UCubed	0.043914463
8295	Grimm	Creditnet	0.041895006

A lot of you probably saw my blog post and tweet asking folks to help out with the IdeaGraph. Here's some data from it (which you can download via the Bitly bundle)

PEOPLE WHO LIKE...

ALSO LIKE...

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8275	Grimm	Search Marketing Expo	0.065135122
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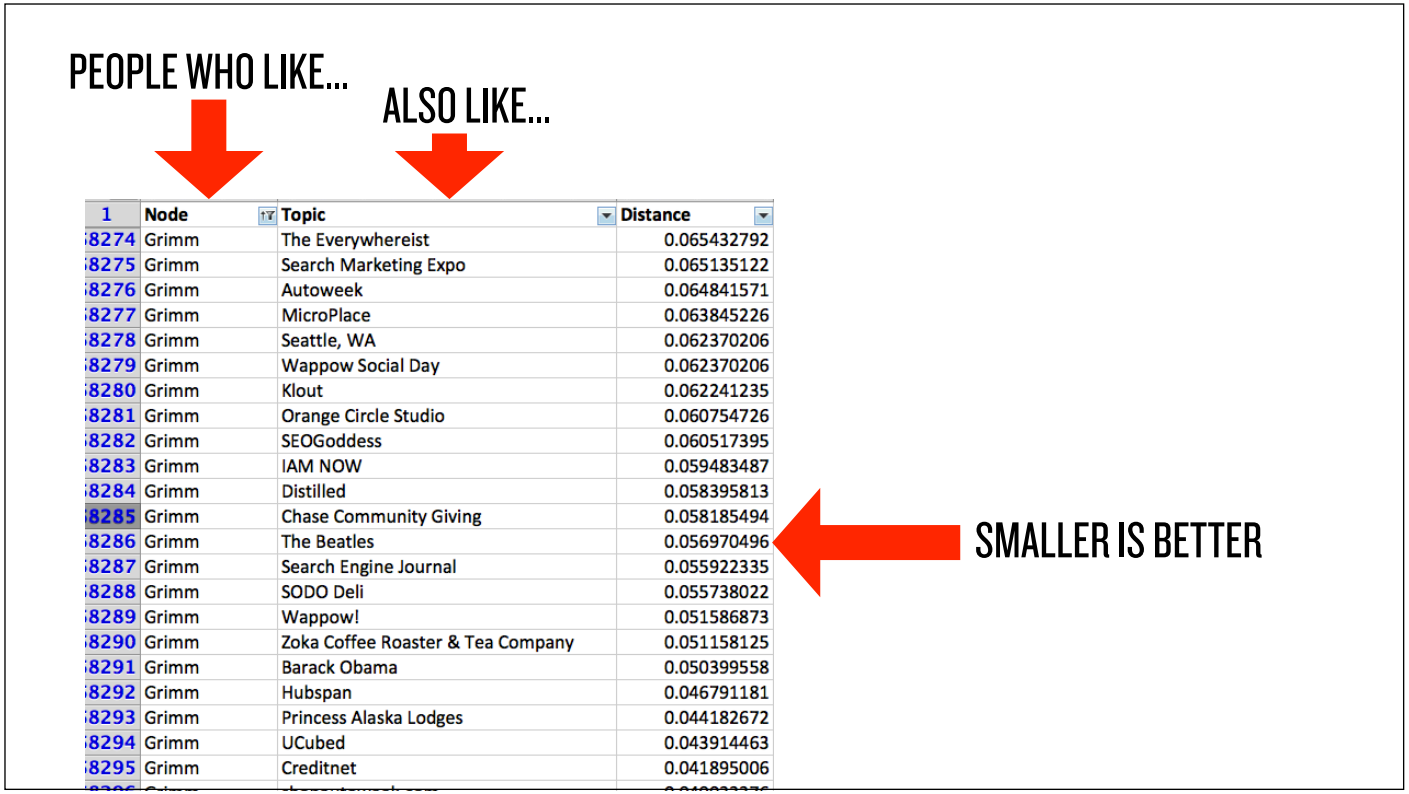

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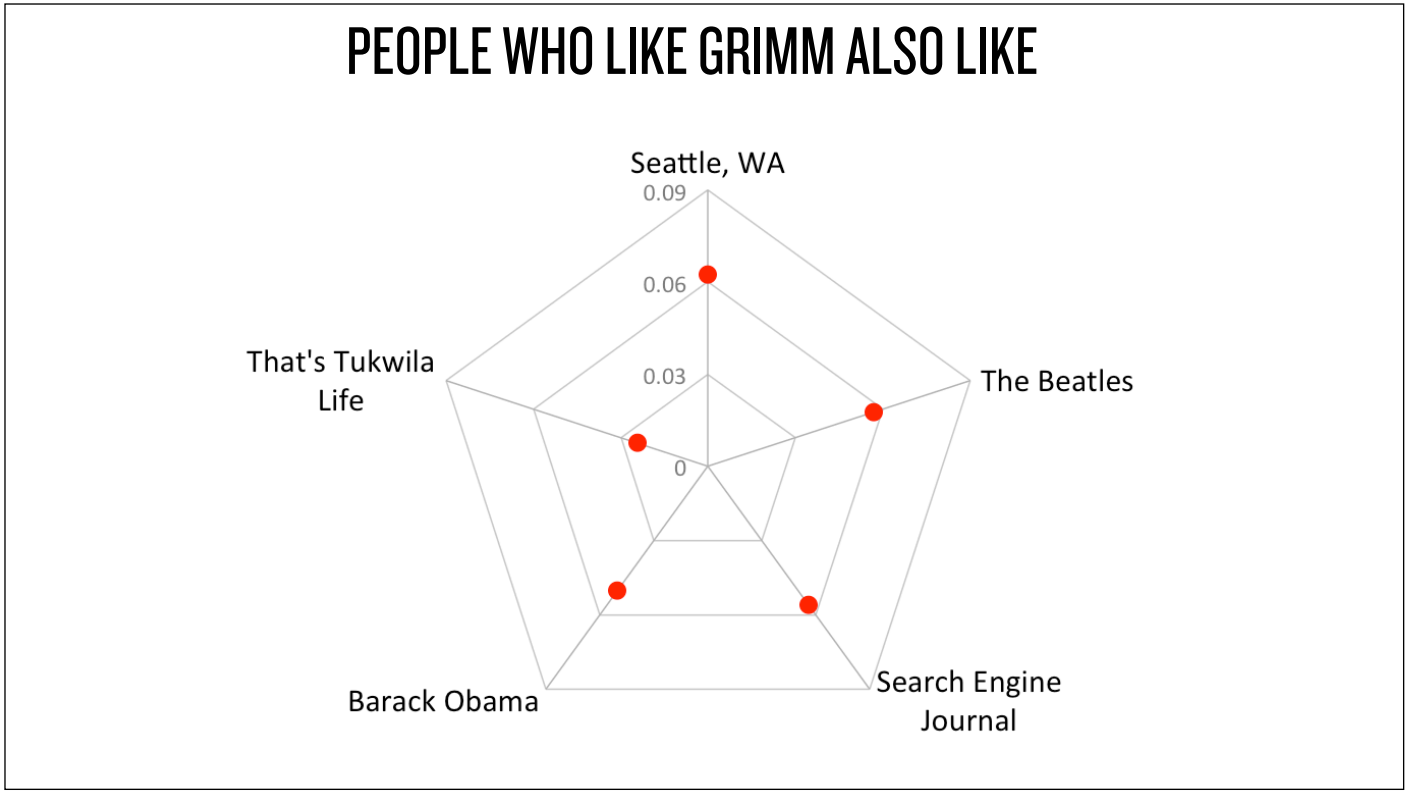
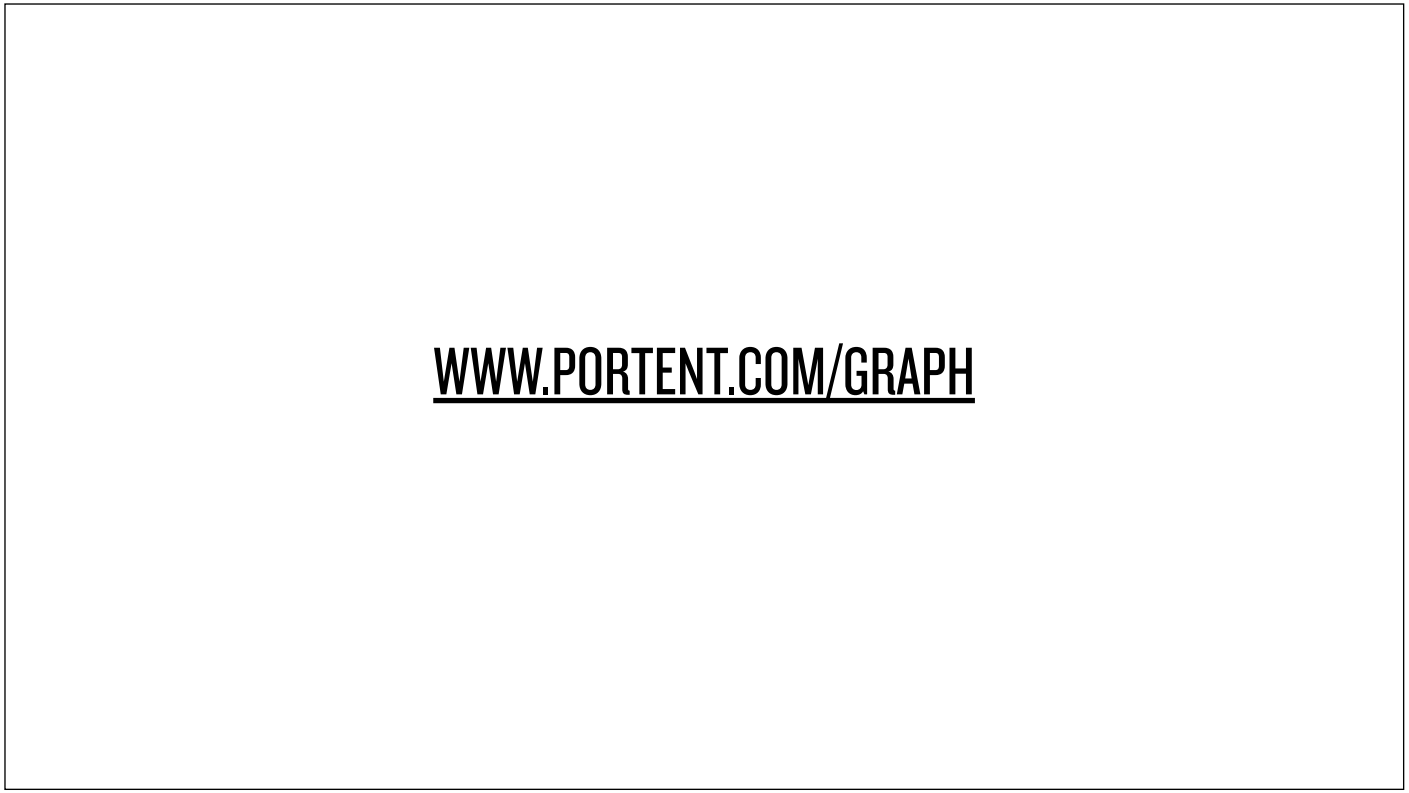
8295	Grimm	Creditnet	0.041895006

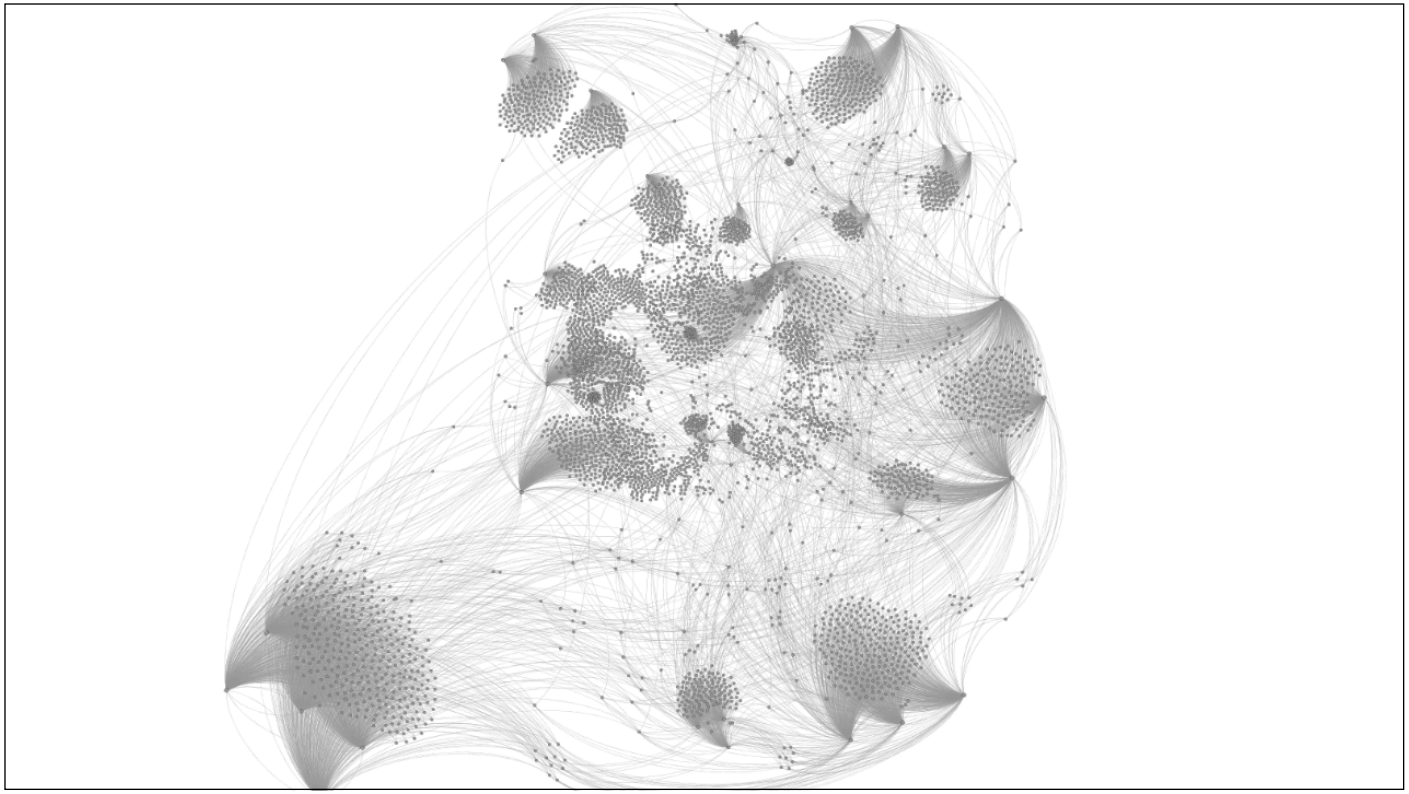
Check this out.



You can chart it. Tukwila? Must be because it's another horror story.



Go get the data. But it’s in the bit.ly bundle, too.



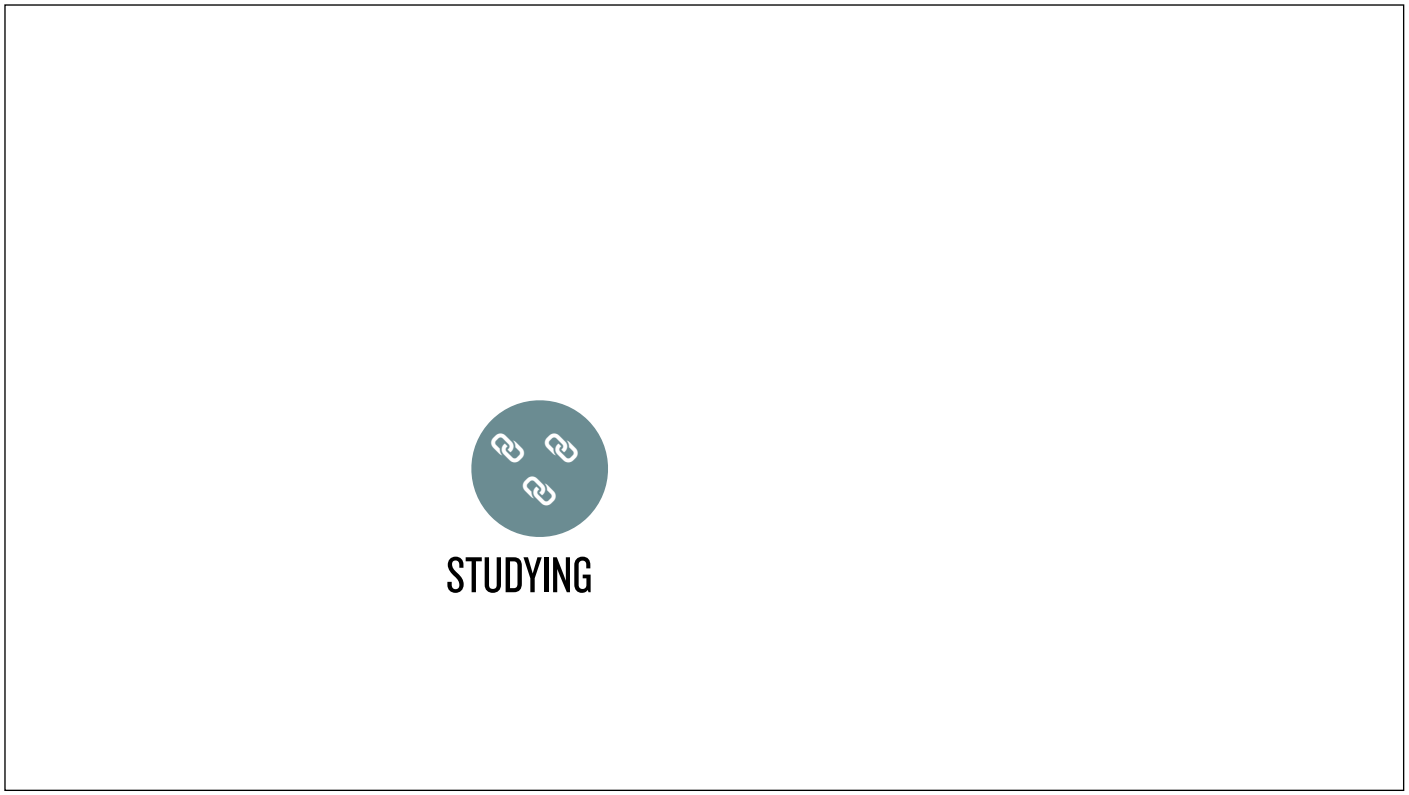
And you can create cool diagrams like this. This is worthless, of course, but when some guy says “I don’t see any proof that this marketing stuff will work”...

you can throw this down on the desk and say **here's your science mother@#$@#.**

Even that example was about saying what matters. Some dunderhead wants you to prove that you're not selling to people – you're actually selling to robots. You can't do that, but you know he wants to see that you've got data backing you up. Show him the data.

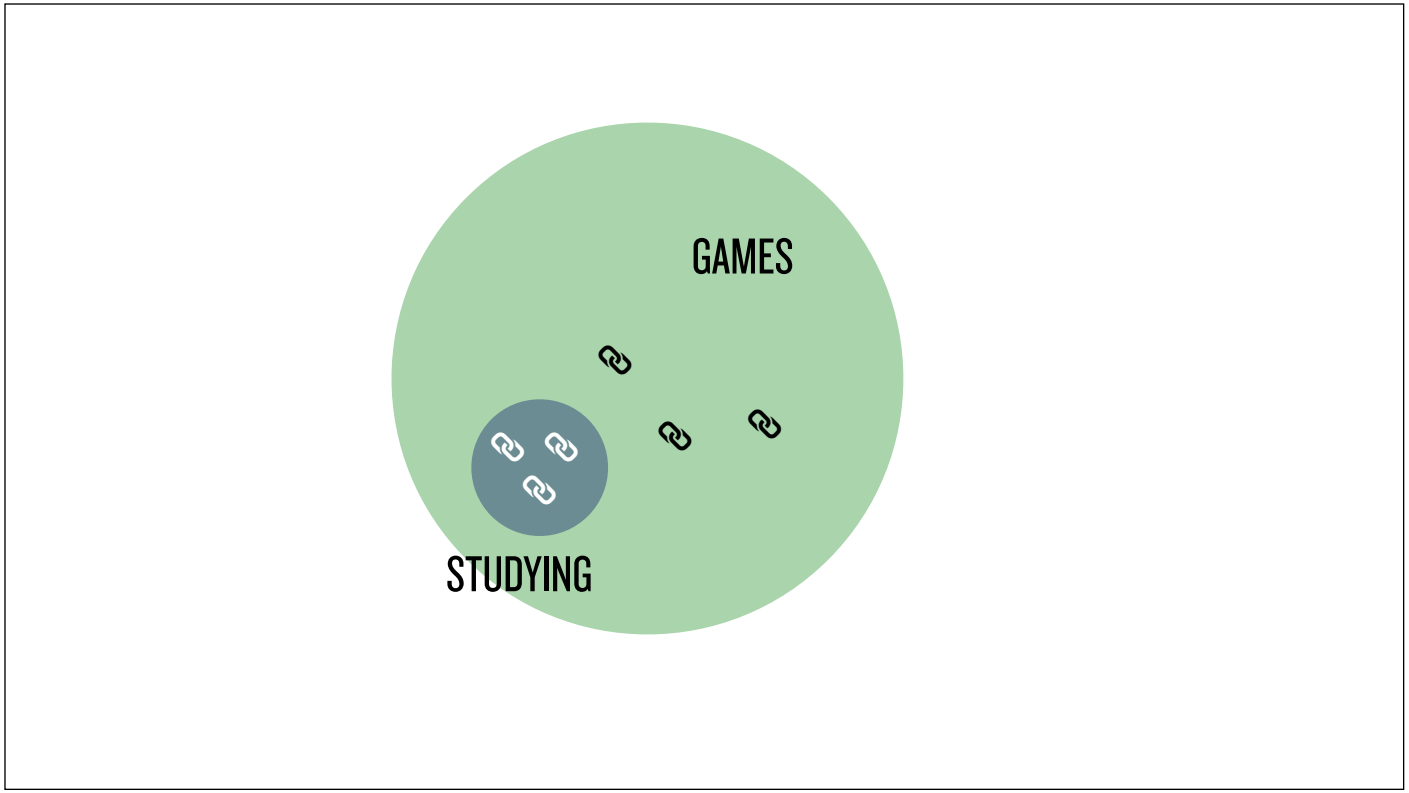
GRAPH TO A BIGGER AUDIENCE

Here's a few examples.



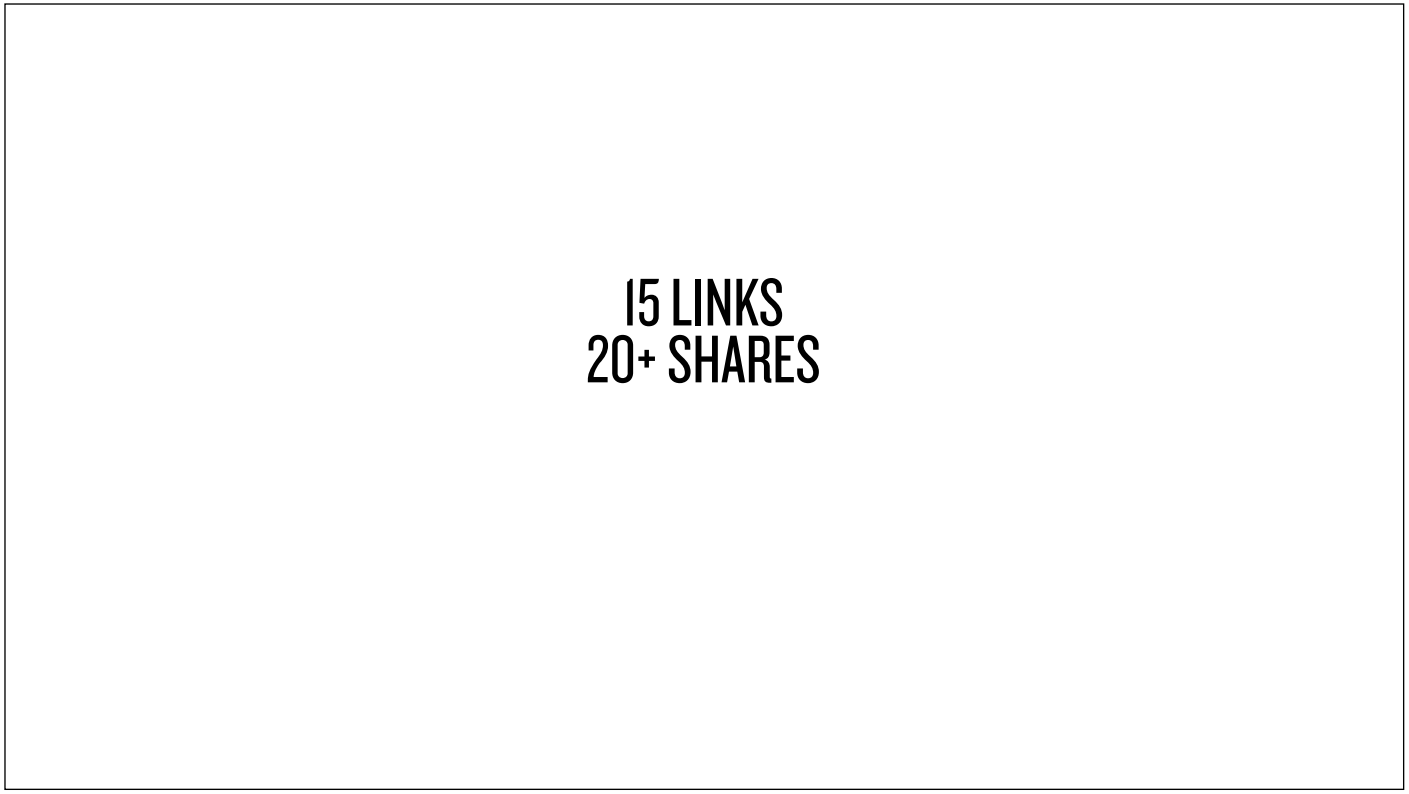
Lots of stuff to write about, right? But it’s been done to death.

K, let’s do a game.



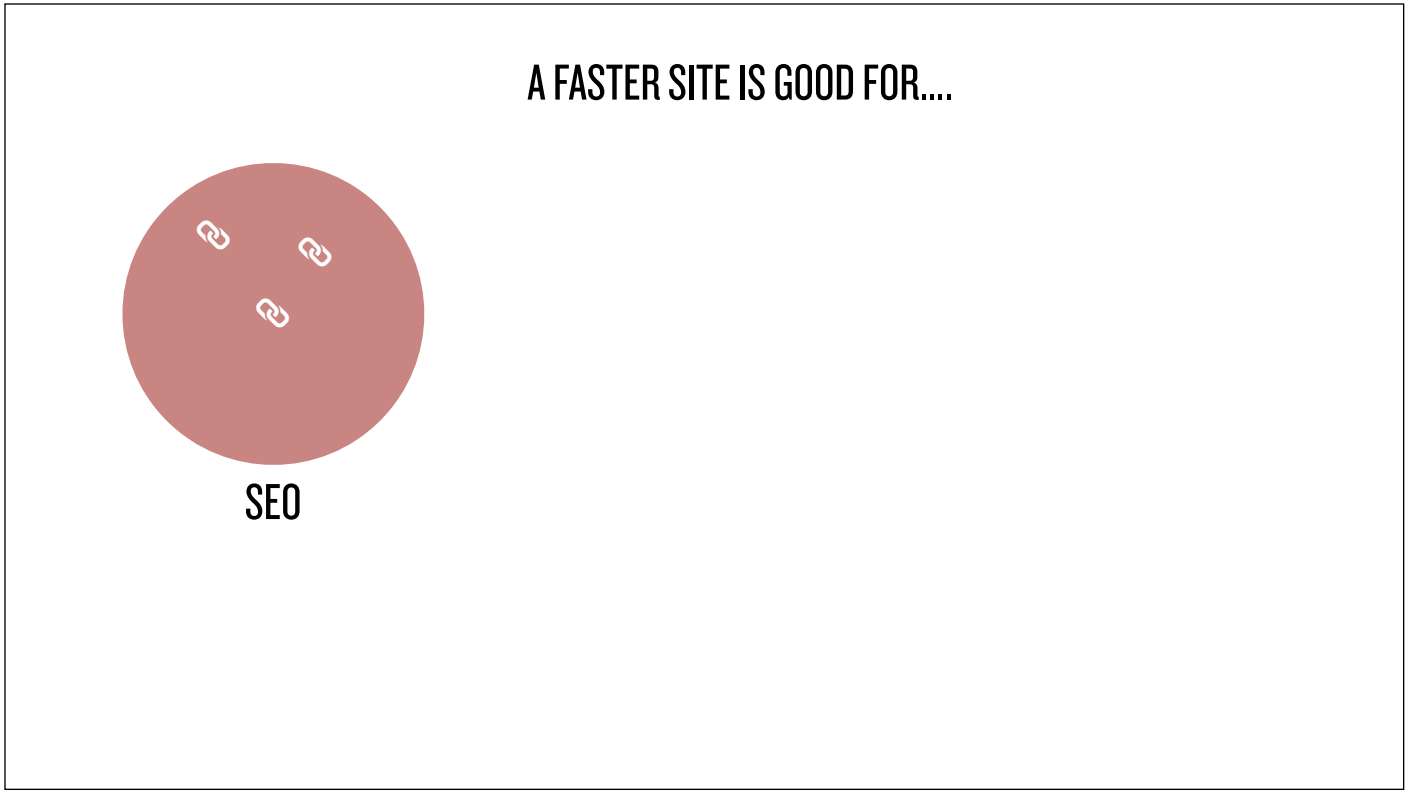
That puts you in front of a lot more people. Suddenly, you've got more links. Because even though these people aren't thinking about our client until they need it, they're **always looking for games to play**. And that's the key here.

To this audience, games matter now. So does the show Dexter (awesome show).

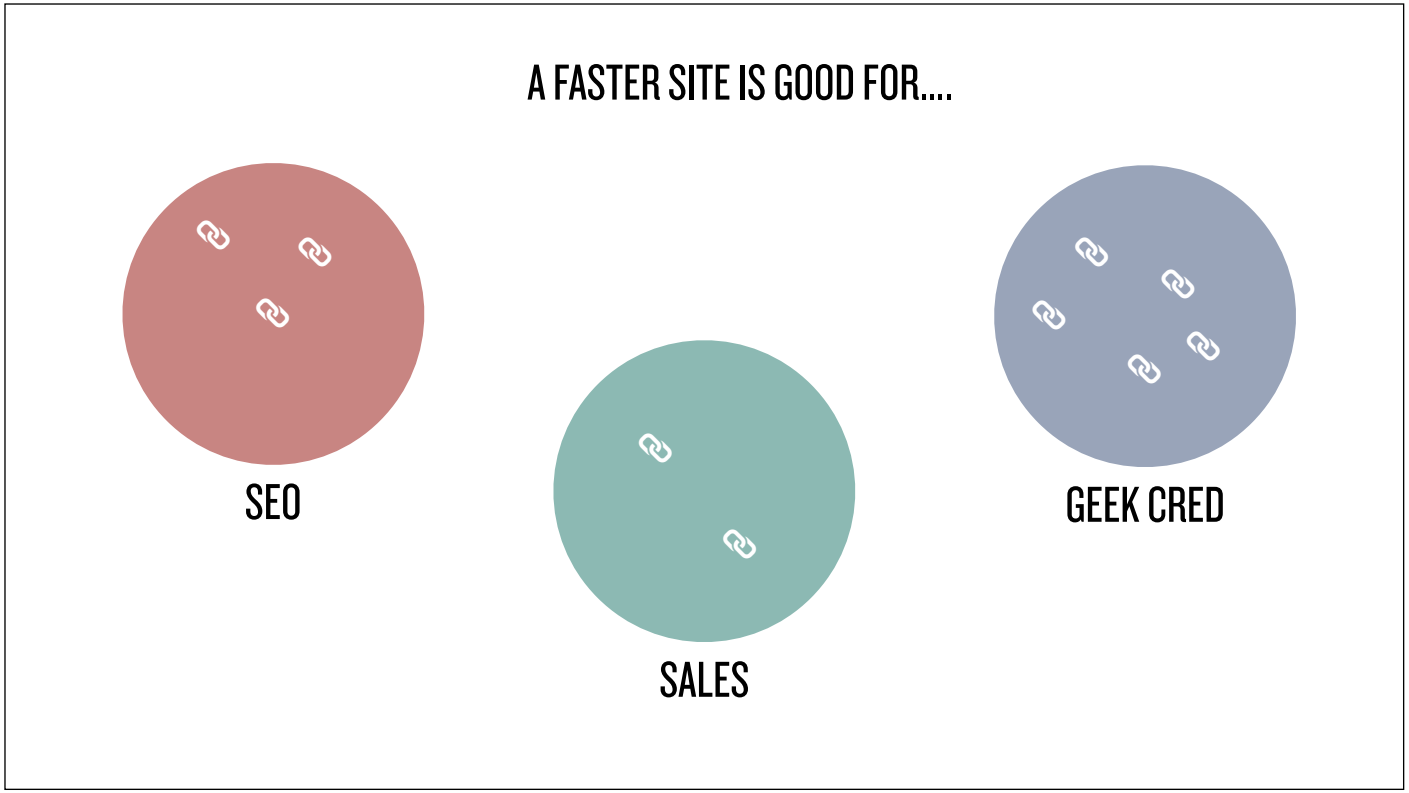


Not fantastic or amazing, but hell, it worked, it was cheap, it took like a day to make. Beats a stick in the eye.

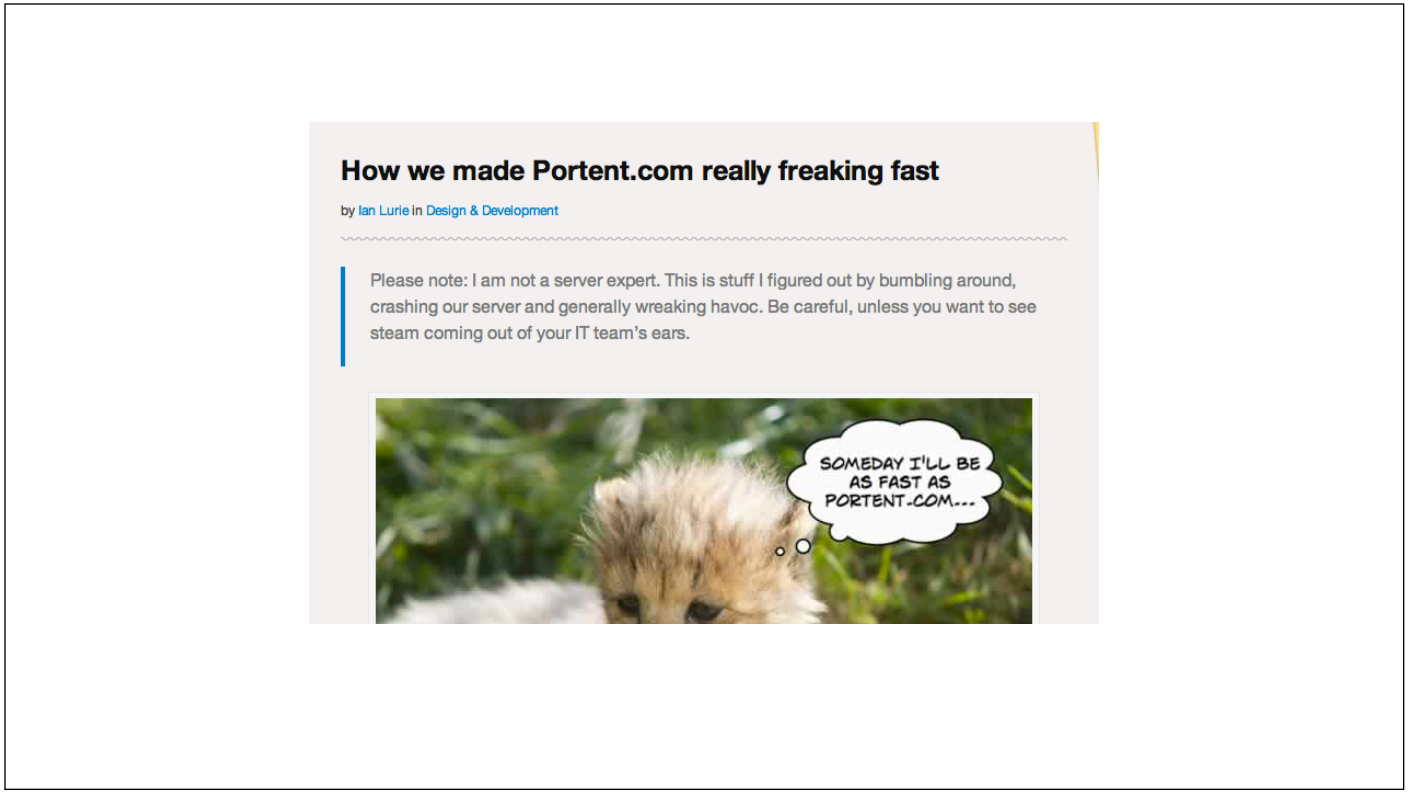
GRAPH TO OTHER INTERESTS



Say I’m gonna write about speeding up sites. Previous posts drew nothing - no links, no audience, no shares, no follows. Nothing.



The community doesn't give a crap about more articles on speeding up sites. But marketers are **always** looking to improve sales. And geeks are **always** looking to improve their credibility.



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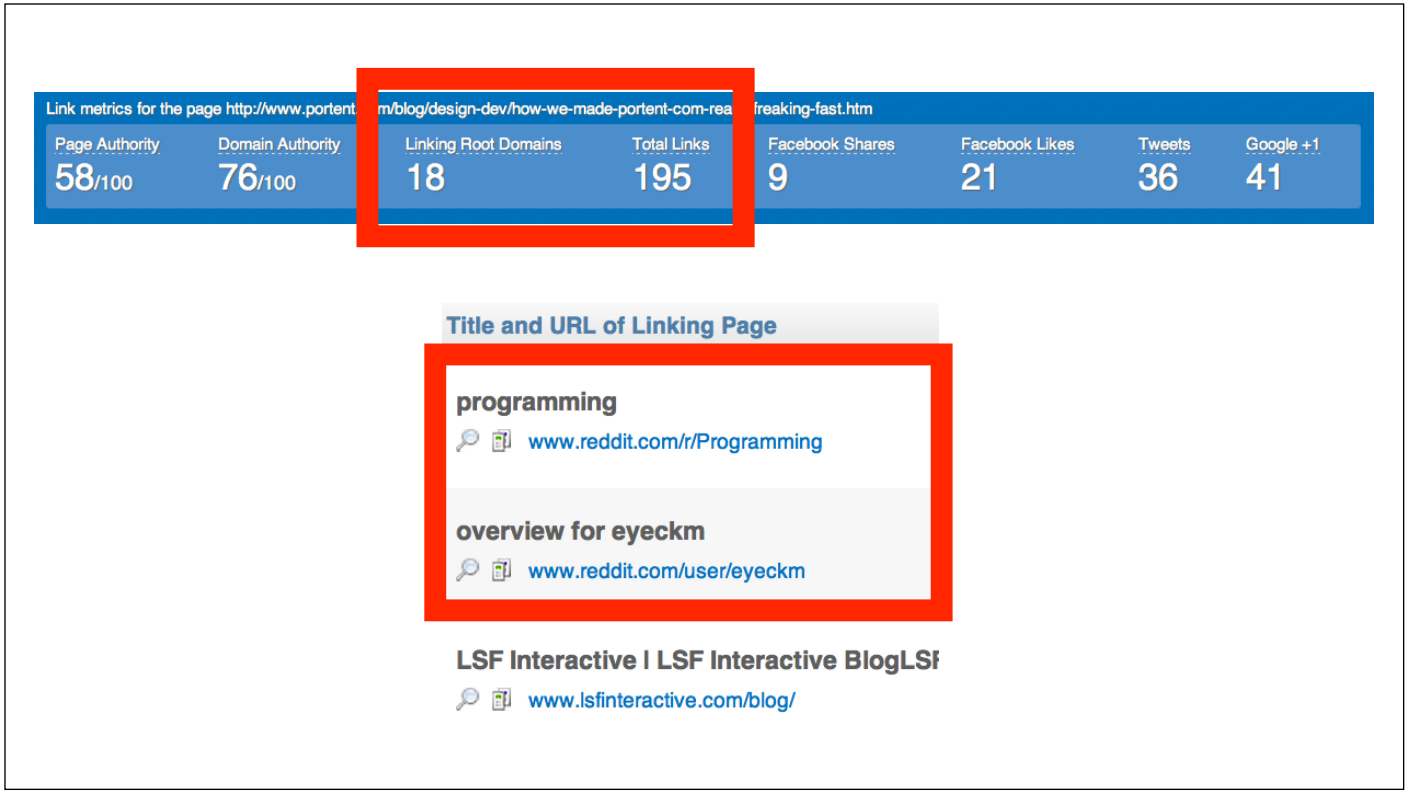
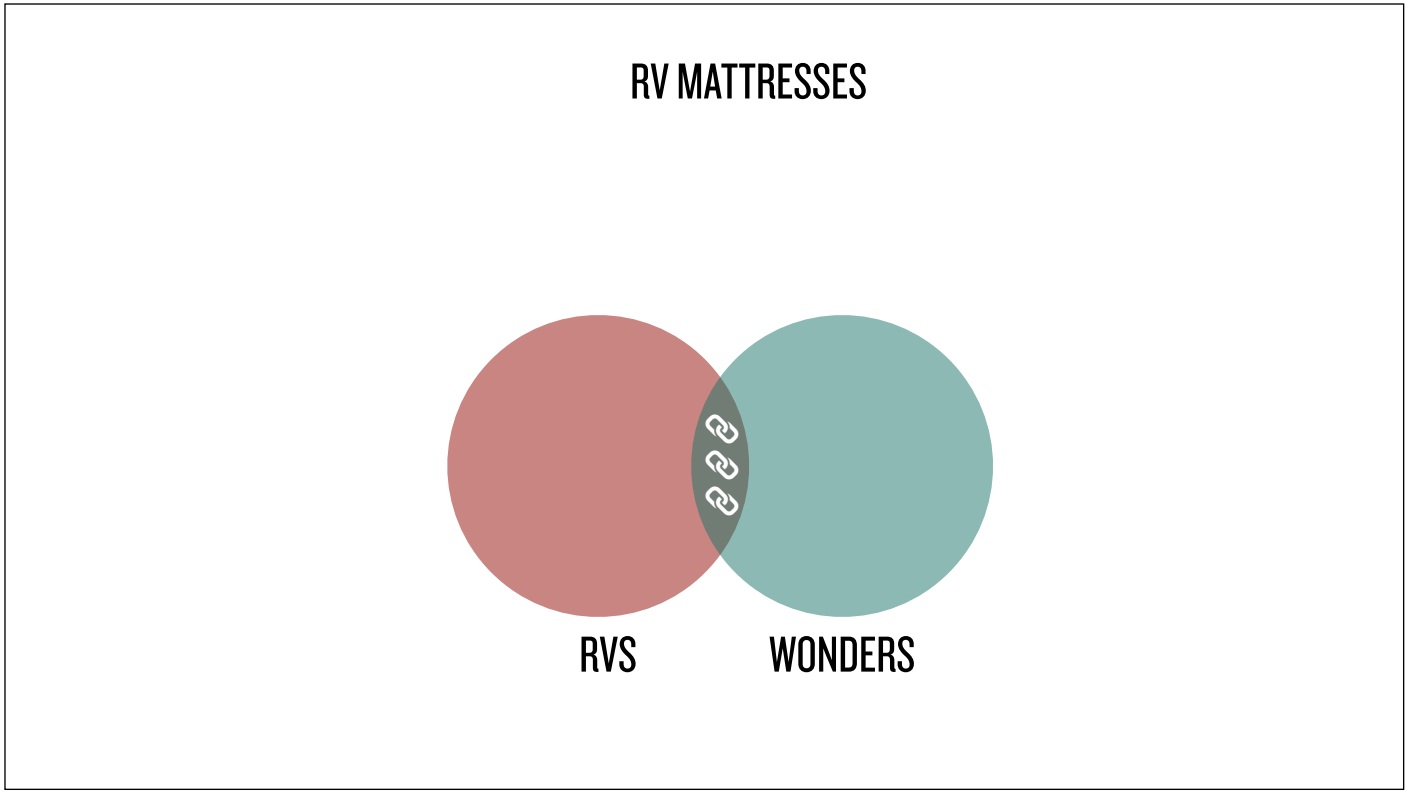


Hell yeah. And I didn't even have to embarrass myself.

THE HAIL MARY GRAPH


RV MATTRESSES
RVS
WONDERS

7 WONDERS OF THE RV WORLD

Excel Distributors Showcases 7 Wonders of the RV World

To honor RV road warriors, Excel Distributors, the purveyor of aftermarket RV mattresses, has created the 7 Wonders of the RV World, a list of the kookiest, most creative and completely sensational roadside attractions for roadtrippers to seek out.

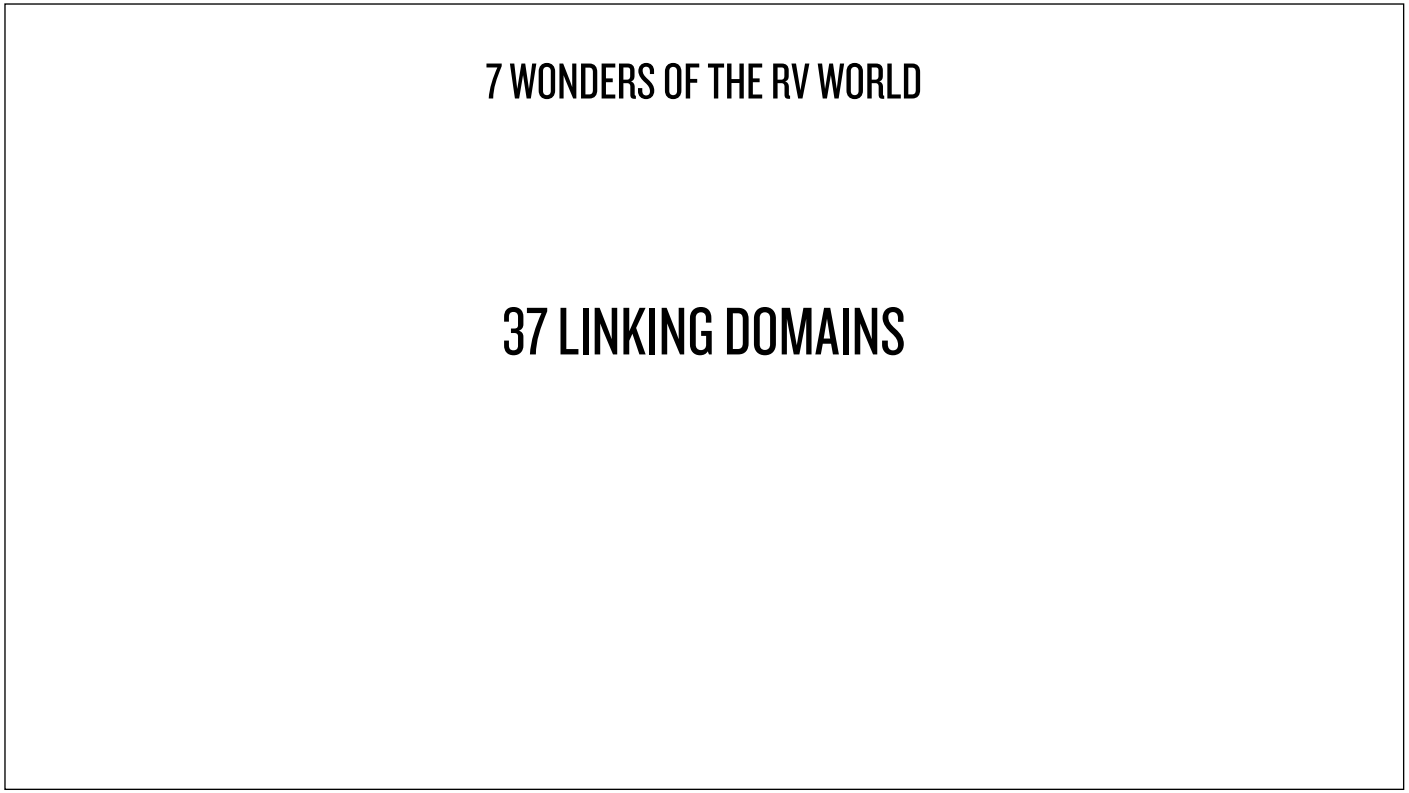
Portland, OR (PRWEB) July 8, 2010

Tweet Like +1 Share EMAIL

Roadside attractions are hardly recognized at the worldwide level. It takes a special person to seek out the giant balls of twine and enormous fiber glass animals that grace the highways of the United States. To honor these road warriors, Excel Distributors, the purveyor of aftermarket RV mattresses, has created the 7 Wonders of the RV World, a list of the kookiest, most creative and completely sensational roadside attractions for roadtrippers to visit.

"In 2001, Bernard Weber fronted the campaign for the New 7 Wonders of the World to highlight the significant cultural feats of the contemporary world. We loved his vision and decided to spotlight some quirky wonders that didn't quite make it into his New 7 Wonders," explains Scott Oster, General Manager of Excel Distributors. "These are the wonders of the road."

Airstream Ranch in Dover, Florida is the first of Excel's 7



Not much, you say? Have you gotten 37 linking domains that aren't on blogspot.com recently?

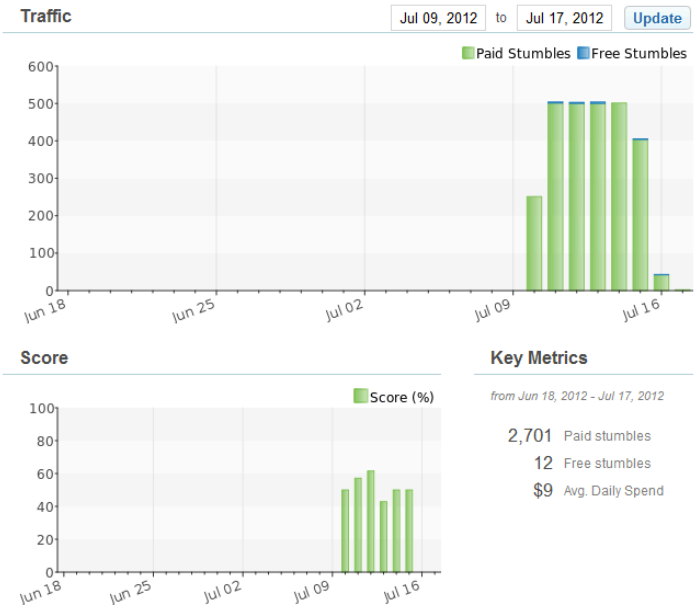
SAY WHAT
MATTERS

Obviously, do all of the stuff other folks tell you to do: Build relationships, make connections. Use content as part of a larger process. But there are some easier things you should do, too: Trade time for money.

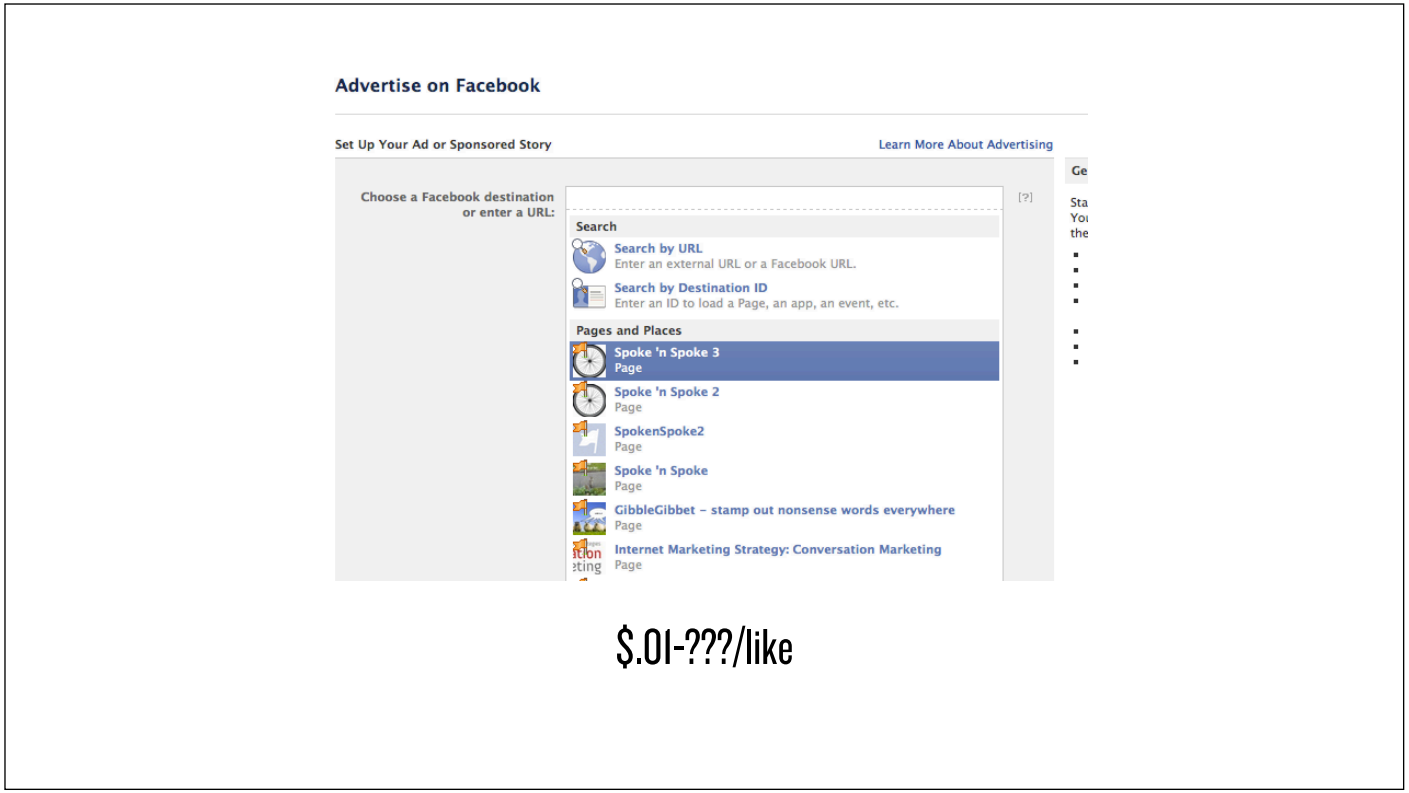
Best kept secret. It’s SO CHEAP. You think it won’t work?!!!! JUST TRY IT OH MY GOD WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO LOSE?!!!

$27 FOR 2700 PAGEVIEWS

2-3 LINKS



LOOK AT THE NUMBERS DAMMIT



We average $.18 per like. Let's just say that 2/3 of those are crap (they're not). DO IT.

Howdy Flavorpill,

I have been a Flavorwire follower for quite some time now and constantly on the lookout for something witty, wry and generally hip enough to make it on the feed.

I think I found it.

One of my clients, Sterling Satellite, produced this gem of an illustration: the 9 Circles of Mel.

http://www.sterlingsatellite.com/info/the-9-circles-of-mel.html

Watch as Mel Gibson goes down down down to his demise. "I AM THE LETHAL WEAPON!"

Hope you enjoy it, and I hope it's a good fit for Flavorwire.

And yes, reach out to folks. But again, **say what matters now.**

SAY. WHAT. MATTERS.

Don’t tell me ‘oh it never works’. GO DO IT. Do it for 2 years. THEN tell me it doesn’t work.

USE THE IDEA GRAPH
PROMOTE YOUR CONTENT
EXECUTE

IT'S STILL WORK

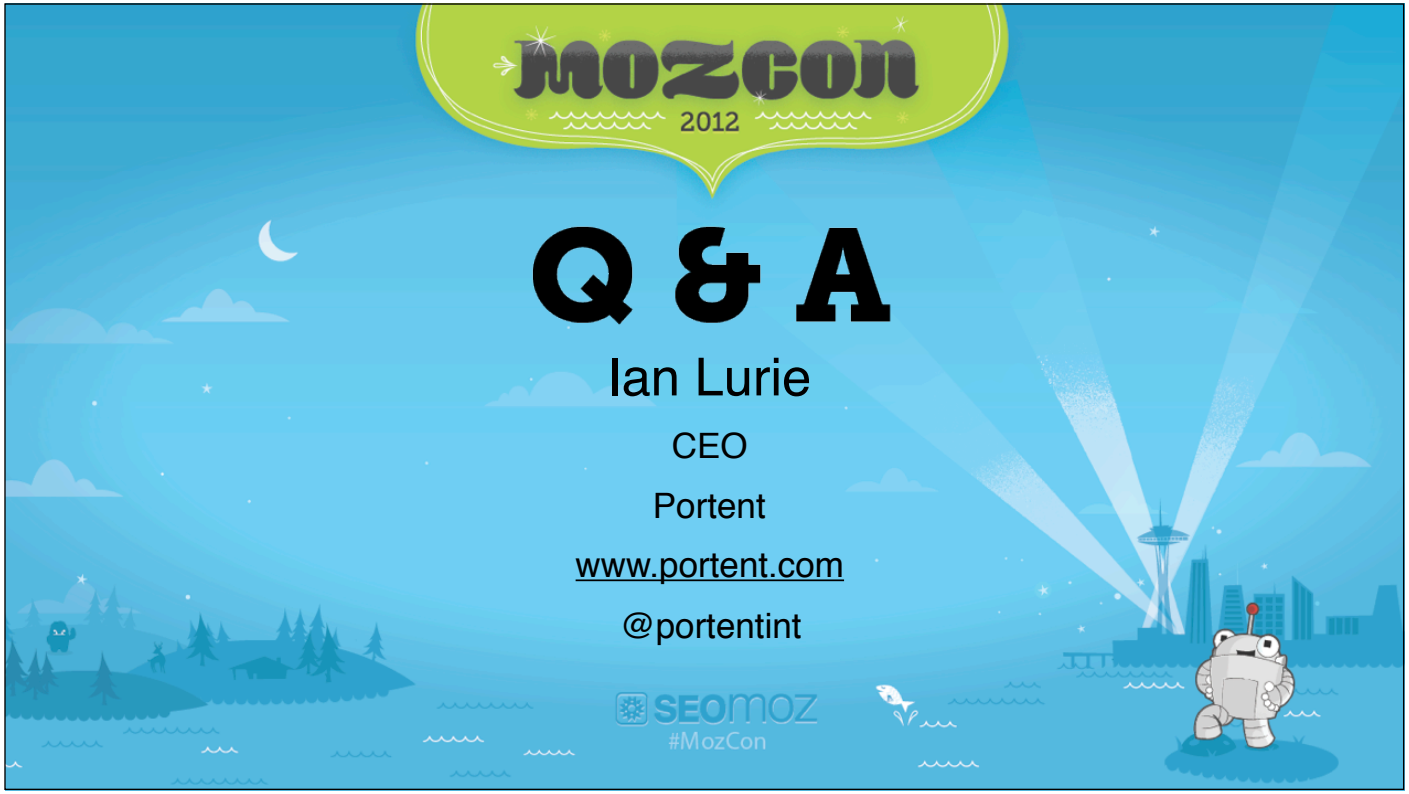
But it beats the hell out of doing this.

BTW – I finally met the woman of my dreams when I stopped trying so damned hard and pointed out binary star systems. Go figure?

I’m married to her now.

SAY WHAT
MATTERS

portent.co/ideagraph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