



Build links without doing anything

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portent.co/ideagraph



**BUILD LINKS WITHOUT
DOING ANYTHING**

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.

BUILD LINKS WITHOUT
EMBARRASSING
YOURSELF

I went to this for a while.

STOP LINK BUILDING

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

YOUR **LINK BUILDING** CAMPAIGN
LOOKS LIKE MY SOCIAL LIFE **c. 1994**

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.



STOP IT

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 Penguinopolypse. The End Of All Things Link Building.

LINK BUILDING HAS FAILED

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?

TOLD YOU SO

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

IT'S NOT LINK BUILDING.

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

IT'S AUDIENCE 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.

CONTENT

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."

CONTENT = AUDIENCE = LINKS

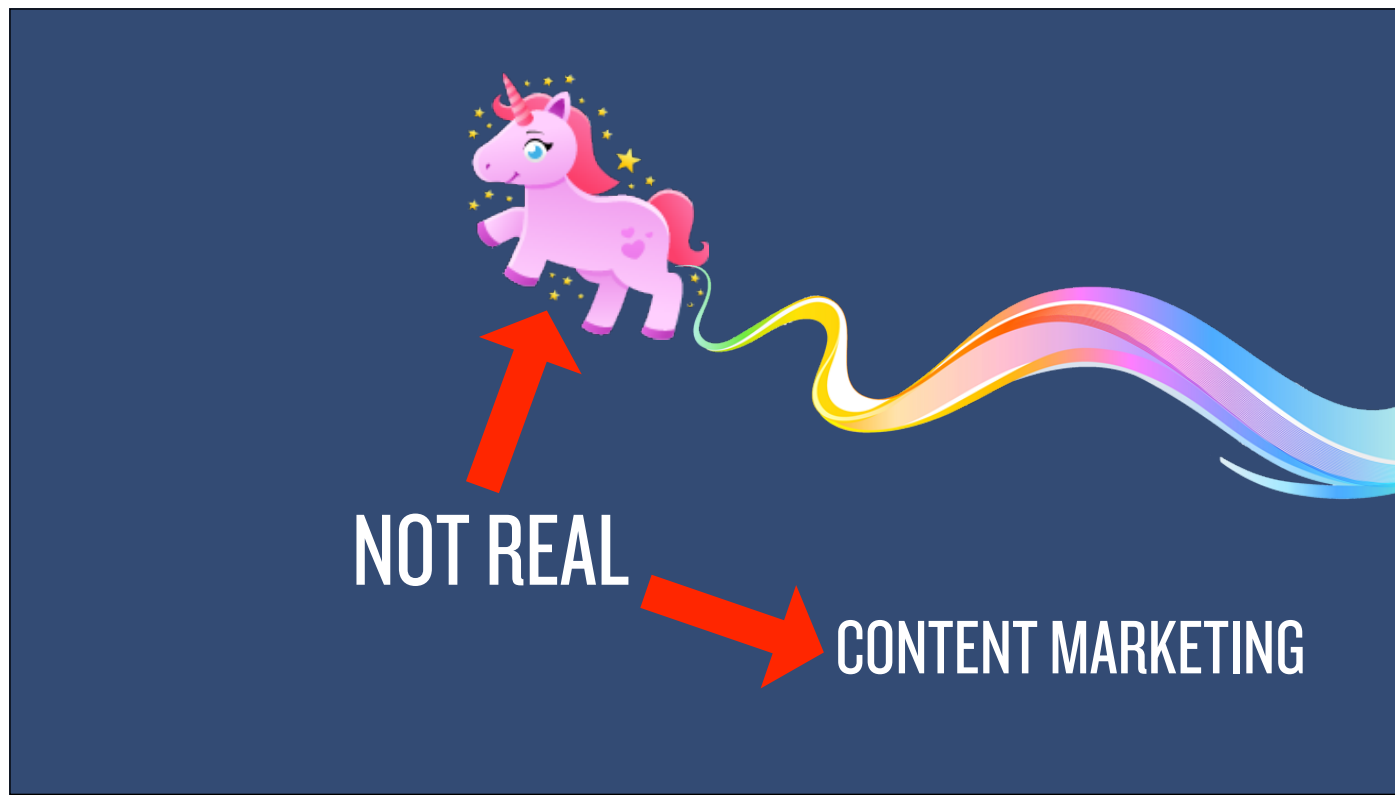
Don't worry. This **is about getting links**. This is about appealing to and reaching an audience who'll give you those links.

CONTENT MARKETING

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

THERE IS NO 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.

MARKETABLE CONTENT
~~CONTENT MARKETING~~
**IS THE RESULT OF
GREAT MARKETING.**

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**.

CONTENT = AUDIENCE = AUTHORITY = GROWTH

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.

“CONTENT DOESN’T WORK”

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.”

YOUR CONTENT DOESN'T WORK

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

SAY WHAT MATTERS

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.

LIBERAL POLITICS



SPORTS CARS

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:

RANDOM IS THE NEW NORMAL

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

I'm a squishy liberal.

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'm a squishy liberal.
I like target shooting.**

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

I'm a squishy liberal.
I like target shooting.
I like speedy, environmentally-bad cars.

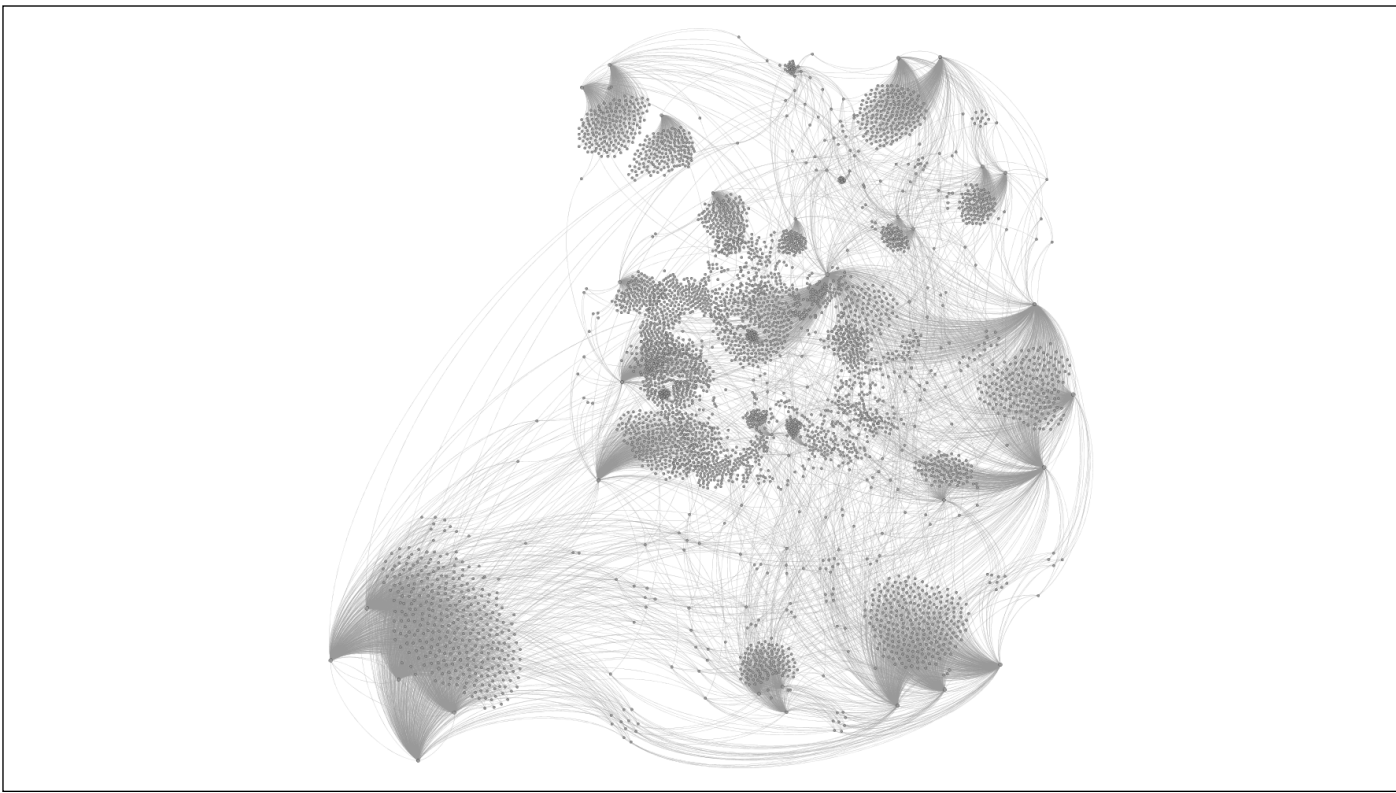
And I drive a car that's probably terrible for the environment. I'm justifying that because I'm getting rid of oil faster, by the way.

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).

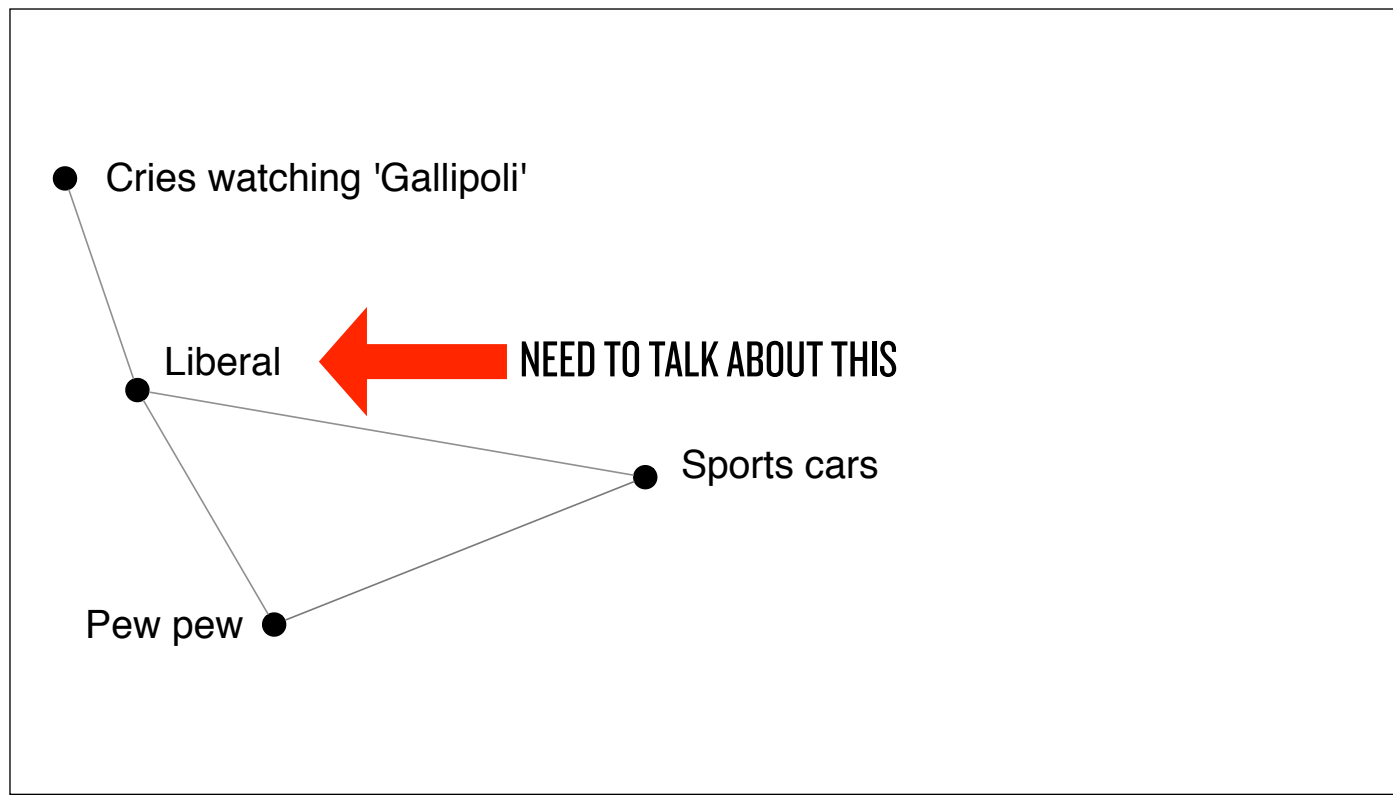
So how do you learn this?

USE THE IDEA GRAPH

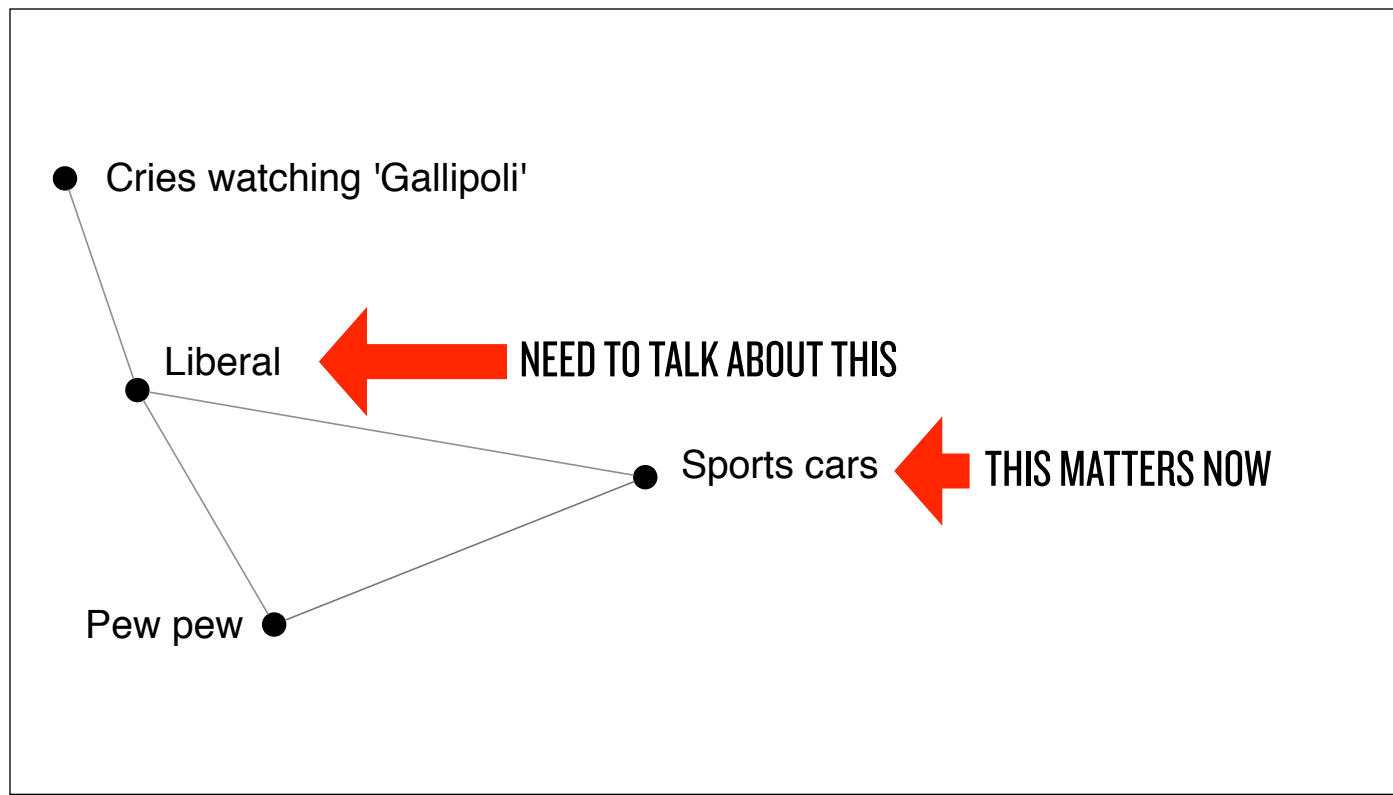
Here's how you can figure out what matters now. Use the idea graph. Find the patterns.



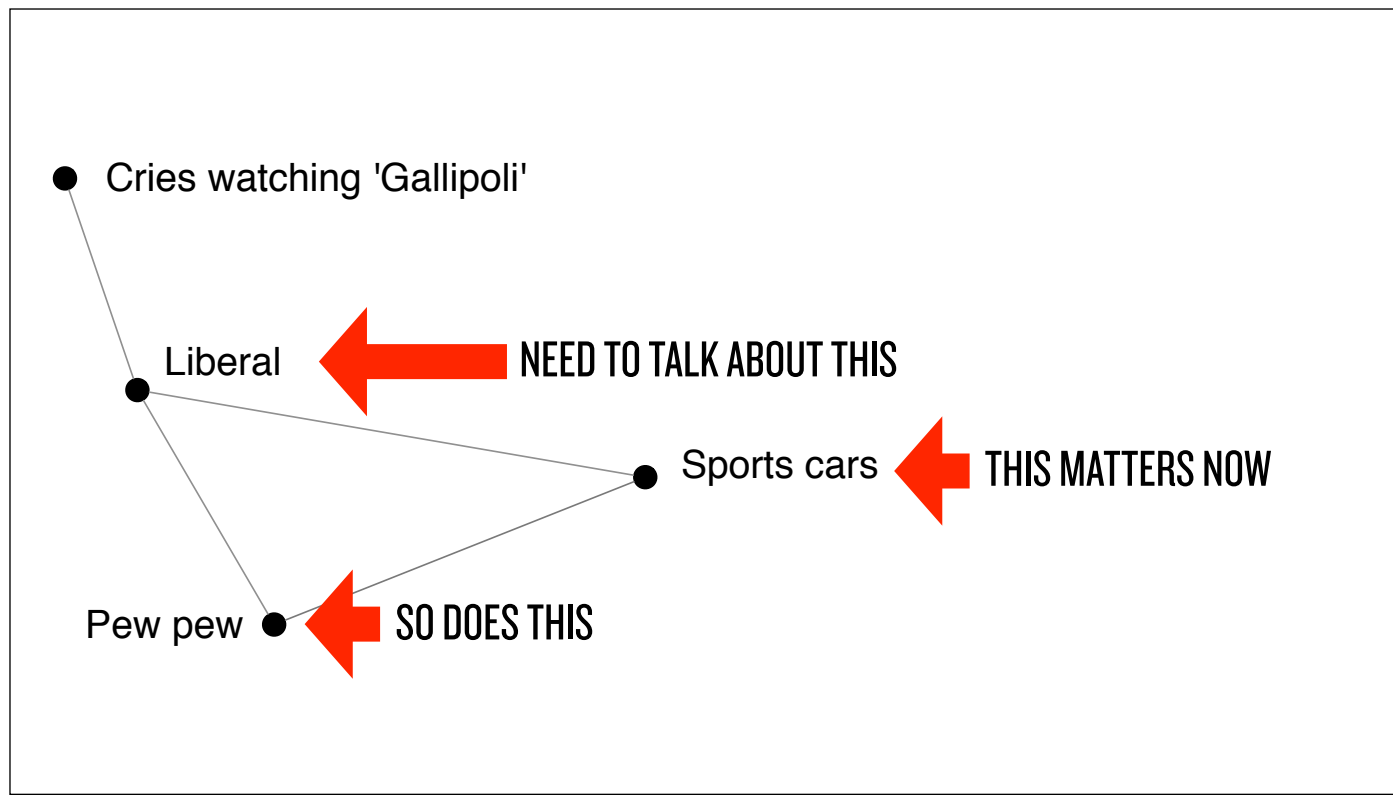
The idea graph is this universe of topics that relate to each other, the same way people on the social graph do. It reveals all sorts of crazy stuff.



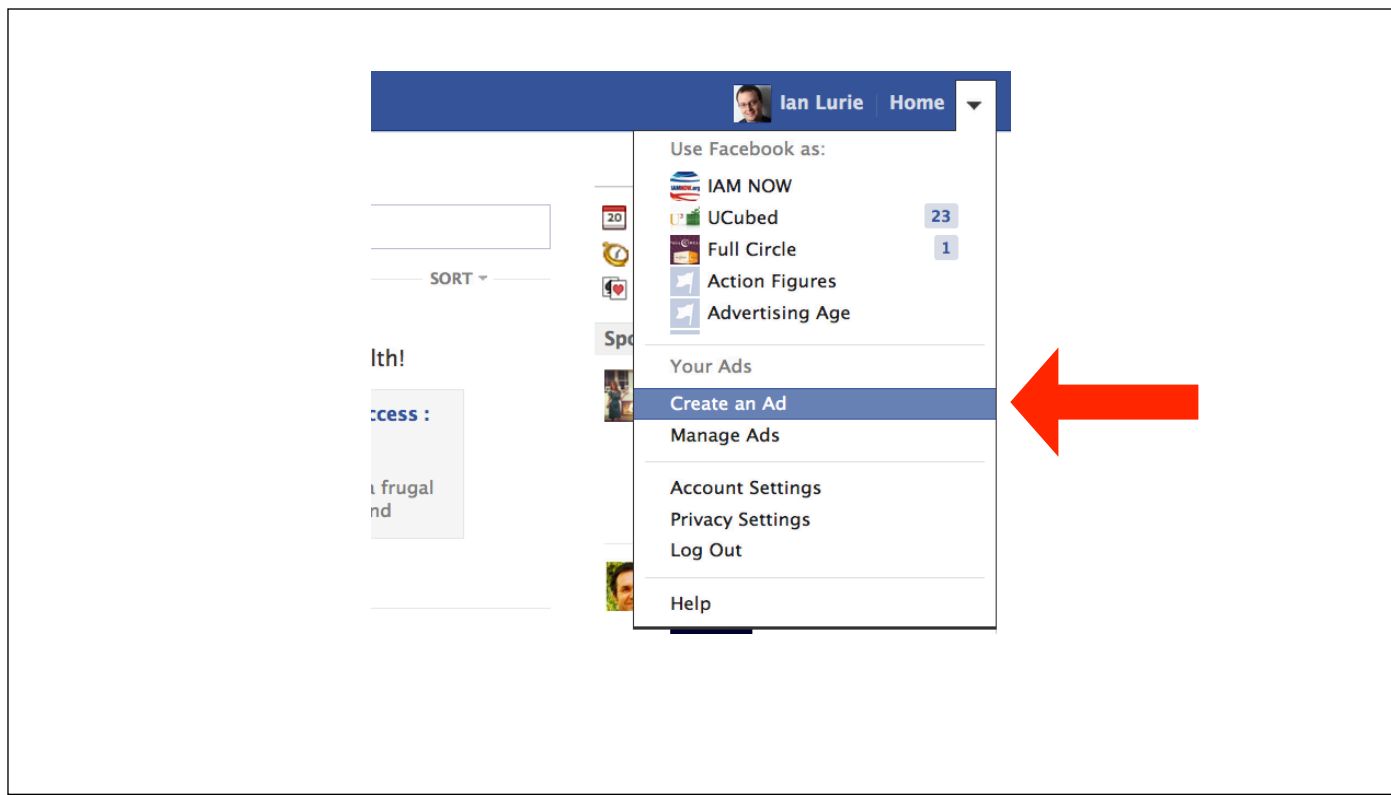
Going back to my previous example. What if I'm not the only gun-shooting, sports-car-driving liberal? What if it's a common combination?



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.

ONE AT A TIME, PLEASE

The screenshot shows a Facebook targeting interface. At the top, the text 'ONE AT A TIME, PLEASE' has an arrow pointing to the 'Precise Interests' field. The 'Precise Interests' field contains the text '#Grommet' with a small 'x' icon to its right. Below this field, there is a section titled 'Suggested Likes and Interests' which lists various interests with checkboxes and audience sizes. The interests are arranged in two columns. The first column includes: '#Jeff Buckley' (Audience: 806,000), '#Shoelaces' (Audience: 80,000), '#Pink ribbon' (Audience: 2,400,000), '#Linchpin' (Audience: 13,000), '#Drawstring' (Audience: 2,000), and '#Dowel' (Audience: 6,000). The second column includes: '#Button' (Audience: 2,100,000), '#Zipper' (Audience: 198,000), '#Nut (hardware)' (Audience: 22,000), '#Carabiner' (Audience: 4,000), '#Buttonhole' (Audience: 2,000), and '#Plačkovica' (Audience: 1,000). At the bottom of the interface, there is a 'Broad Categories' field with the text 'Activities' and a small blue icon to its right.

Precise Interests: [?] #Grommet x

Suggested Likes and Interests:

- ☐ #Jeff Buckley Audience: 806,000
- ☐ #Shoelaces Audience: 80,000
- ☐ #Pink ribbon Audience: 2,400,000
- ☐ #Linchpin Audience: 13,000
- ☐ #Drawstring Audience: 2,000
- ☐ #Dowel Audience: 6,000
- ☐ #Button Audience: 2,100,000
- ☐ #Zipper Audience: 198,000
- ☐ #Nut (hardware) Audience: 22,000
- ☐ #Carabiner Audience: 4,000
- ☐ #Buttonhole Audience: 2,000
- ☐ #Plačkovica Audience: 1,000

Broad Categories: [?] Activities

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.

Precise Interests: [?]

Suggested Likes and Interests:

<input type="checkbox"/> #Commerce Audience: 1,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #Internet marketing Audience: 1,400,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #Distribution (business) Audience: 362,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #Social media Audience: 3,600,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #Coupon Audience: 3,900,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #Search engine optimization Audience: 1,300,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #The Walt Disney Company Audience: 44,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #Real estate Audience: 4,400,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #Marketing management Audience: 49,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #Social media marketing Audience: 540,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #Operations research Audience: 22,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #Stock market Audience: 327,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #Psychological pricing Audience: 1,300,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #Business Audience: 7,200,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #Business economics Audience: 3,000	

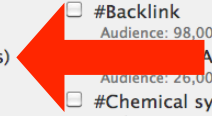


Oh, god. Gotta write about SEO? Booorrnnnnnggg.

Precise Interests: [?]

Suggested Likes and Interests:

<input type="checkbox"/> #Web search engine Audience: 1,600,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #Internet marketing Audience: 1,400,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #Search engine marketing Audience: 44,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #TheFind.com Audience: 120,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #Thomas Kramer Audience: 66,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #Web banner Audience: 1,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #Kris Menace Audience: 26,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #Backlink Audience: 98,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #Hell on Wheels (TV series) Audience: 362,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #Air Fund Audience: 26,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #Web analytics Audience: 16,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #Chemical synapse Audience: 24,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #Meta element Audience: 10,000	<input type="checkbox"/> #Social media optimization Audience: 10,000
<input type="checkbox"/> #HonestReporting Audience: 29,000	



Okaaaayyyy.



TRY IT.

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.



squishy liberal|

squishy liberals
squishy liberal **friends**
jerry trooien squishy liberals

Google Search I'm Feeling Lucky

Searches related to **liberal politics**

[liberal political blogs](#) [define liberal politics](#)
[liberal obama](#) [liberal politics books](#)
[liberal political views](#) [what does liberal politics mean](#)
[liberal politics definition](#) [liberal politics tumblr](#)

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.

TRY THE COOL DATA

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

THE PORTENT IDEAGRAPH

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

PEOPLE WHO LIKE...



1	Node	Topic	Distance
.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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8293	Grimm	Princess Alaska Lodges	0.044182672
8294	Grimm	UCubed	0.043914463
8295	Grimm	Creditnet	0.041895006
8296	Grimm	Abacus	0.040000000

PEOPLE WHO LIKE...



ALSO LIKE...



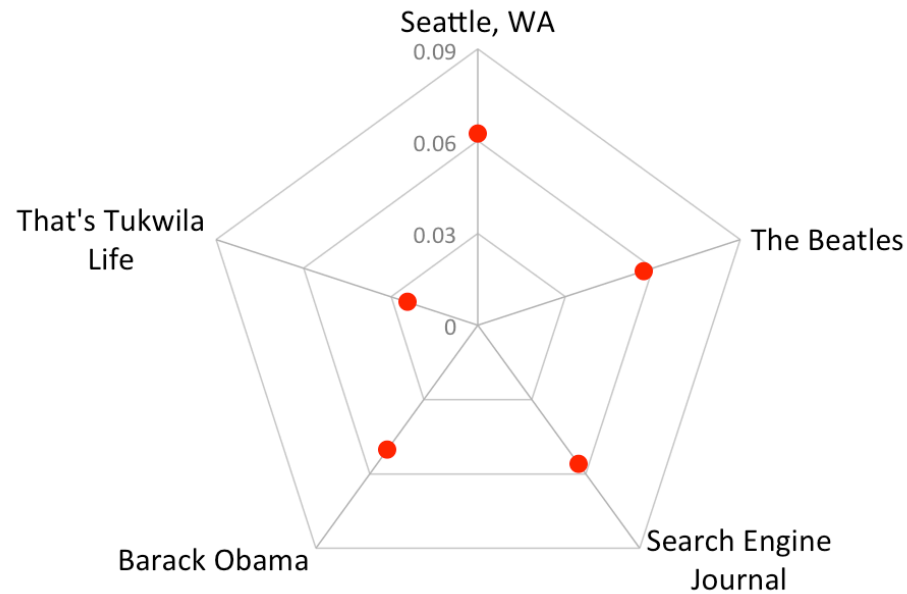
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.8295	Grimm	Creditnet	0.041895006



SMALLER IS BETTER

Check this out.

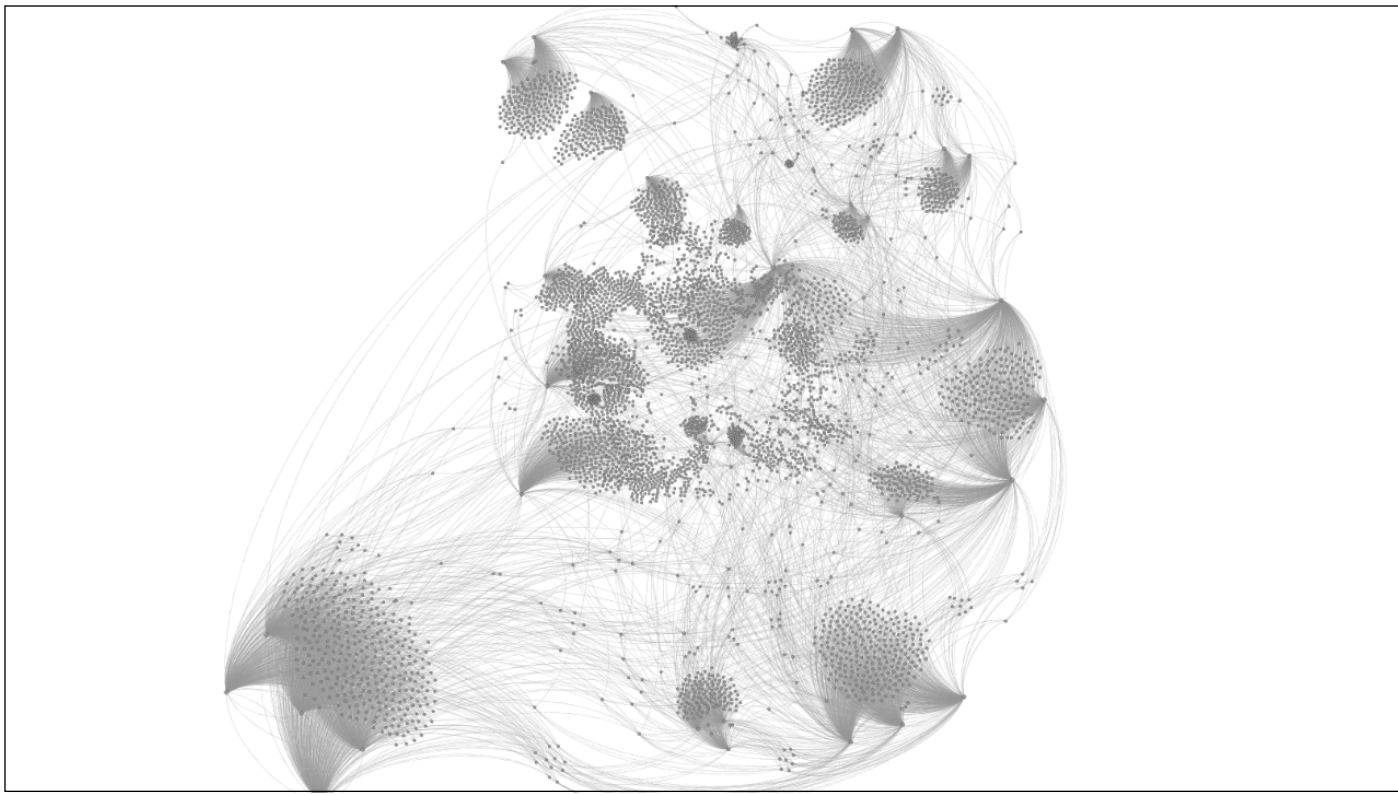
PEOPLE WHO LIKE GRIMM ALSO LIKE



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

WWW.PORTENT.COM/GRAPH

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”...



**THERE'S YOUR SCIENCE
MOTHER\$##@ER!!!!!!**

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

SAY WHAT MATTERS!!!!!!

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.

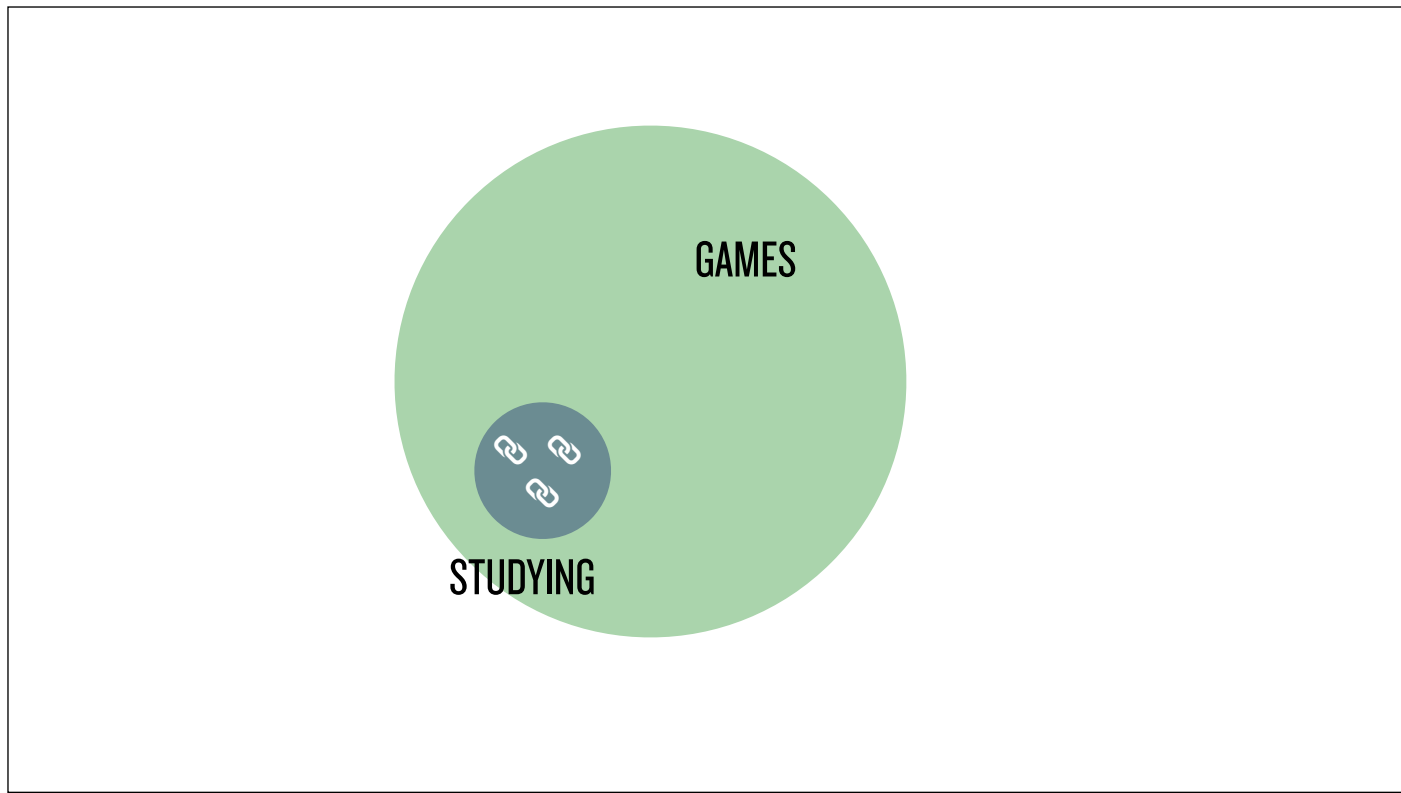
GRAPH TO A BIGGER AUDIENCE

Here's a few examples.

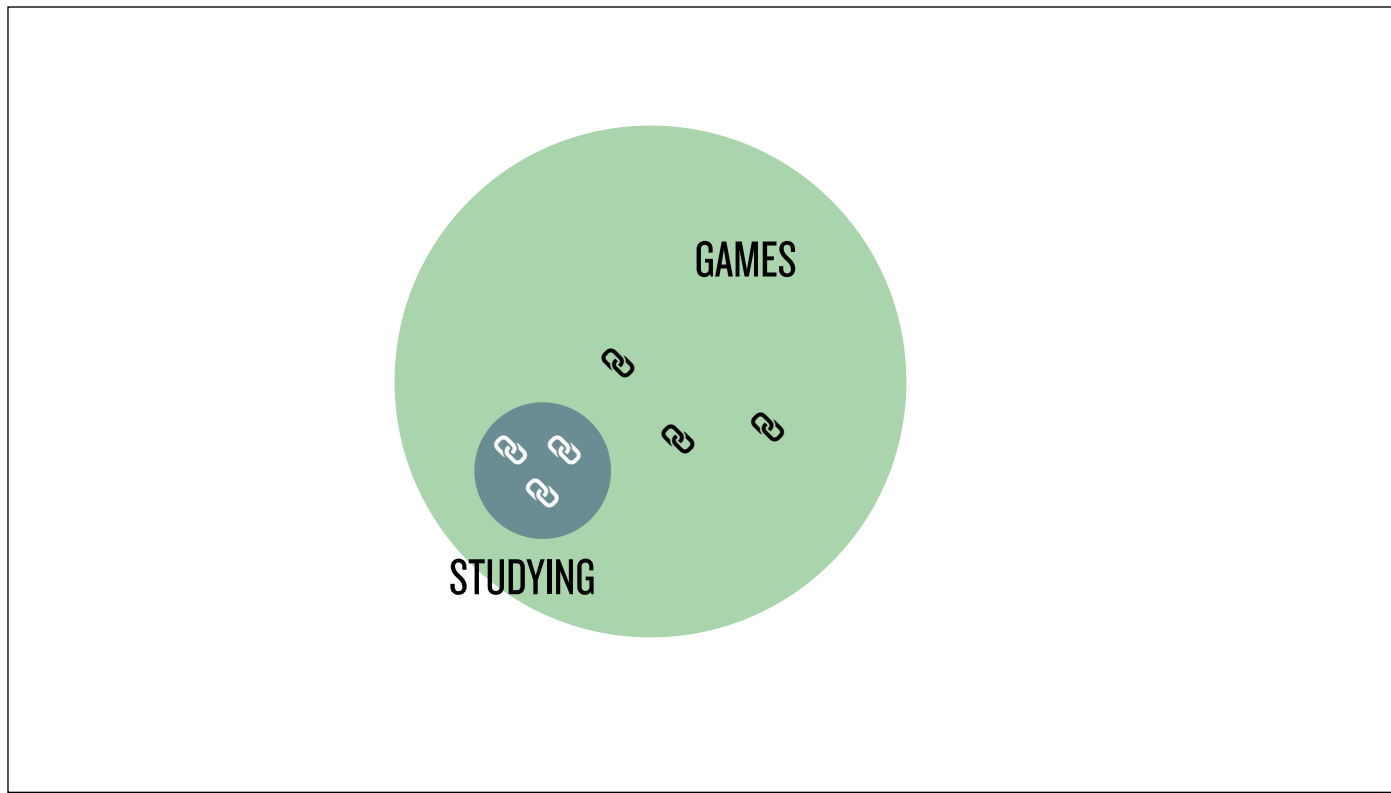


STUDYING

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



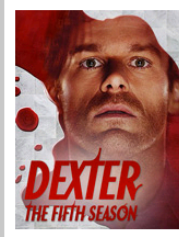
K, let's do a game.



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.

Match the Dexter season with his number of kills

Match the Dexter season with his number of kills. Be careful, the answers are on-screen kills only. Just click and drag the kill value under the respective season, then Submit and see how closely you have followed Dexter's blood trail.



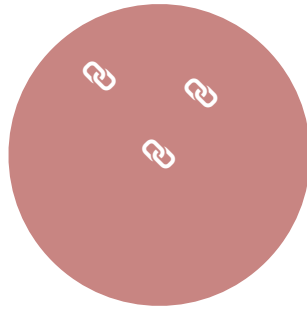
To this audience, games matter now. So does the show Dexter (awesome show).

15 LINKS
20+ SHARES

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

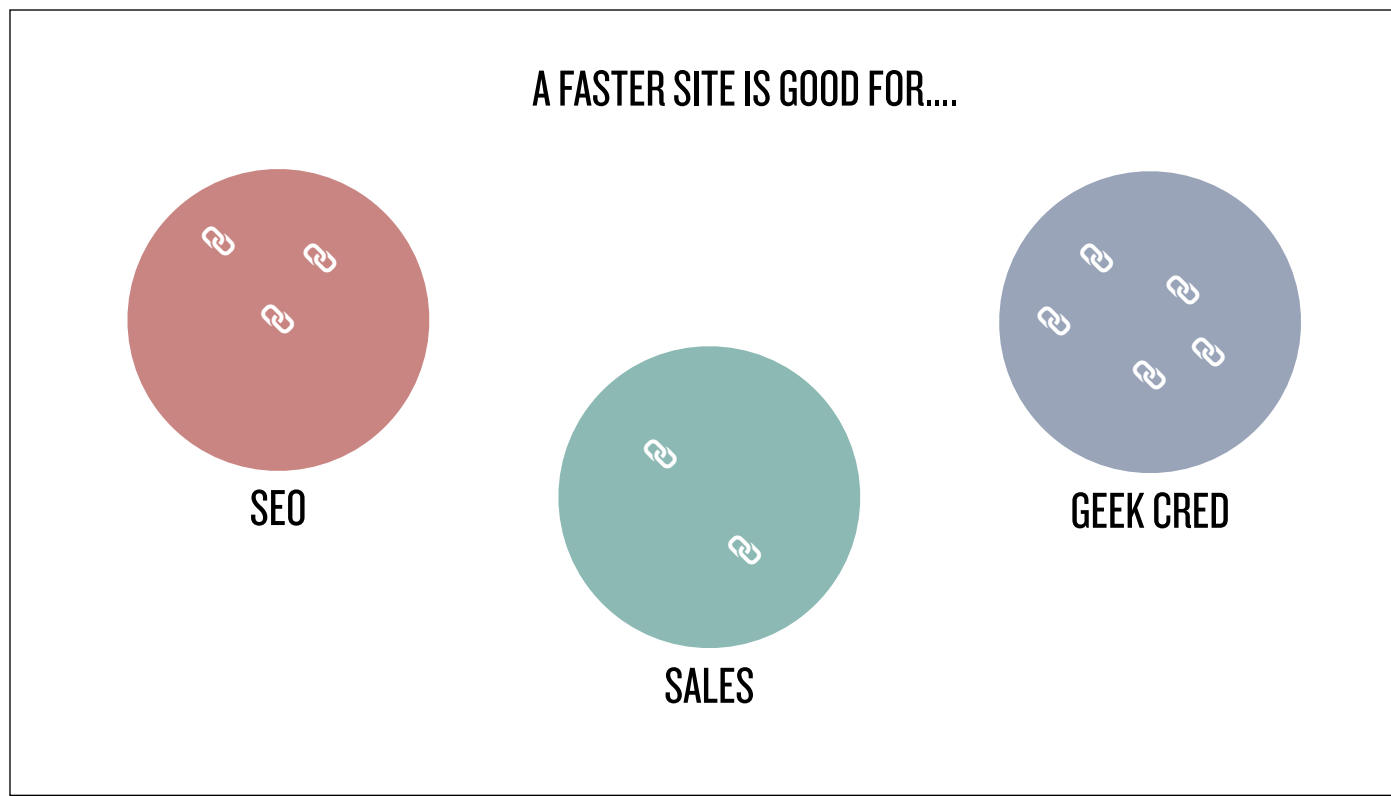
GRAPH TO OTHER INTERESTS

A FASTER SITE IS GOOD FOR....



SEO

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.

How we made Portent.com really freaking fast

by Ian Lurie in Design & Development

Please note: I am not a server expert. This is stuff I figured out by bumbling around, crashing our server and generally wreaking havoc. Be careful, unless you want to see steam coming out of your IT team's ears.



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.

Link metrics for the page <http://www.portent.com/blog/design-dev/how-we-made-portent-com-real-time-breaking-fast.htm>

Page Authority	Domain Authority	Linking Root Domains	Total Links	Facebook Shares	Facebook Likes	Tweets	Google +1
58/100	76/100	18	195	9	21	36	41

Title and URL of Linking Page

programming

  www.reddit.com/r/Programming

overview for eyeckm

  www.reddit.com/user/eyeckm

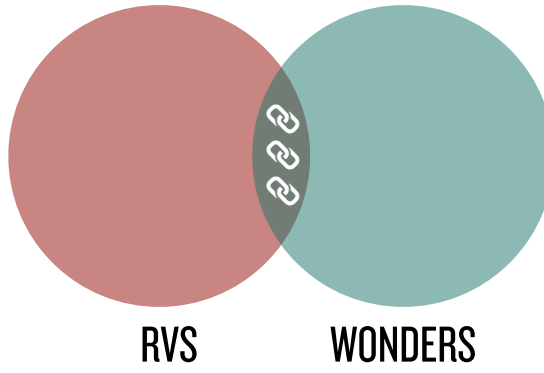
LSF Interactive | LSF Interactive BlogLSF

  www.lsfinteractive.com/blog/

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

THE HAIL MARY GRAPH

RV MATTRESSES



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 Wonders of the RV World.

7 WONDERS OF THE RV WORLD

37 LINKING DOMAINS

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

**SAY WHAT
MATTERS**

PROMOTE YOUR CONTENT

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.

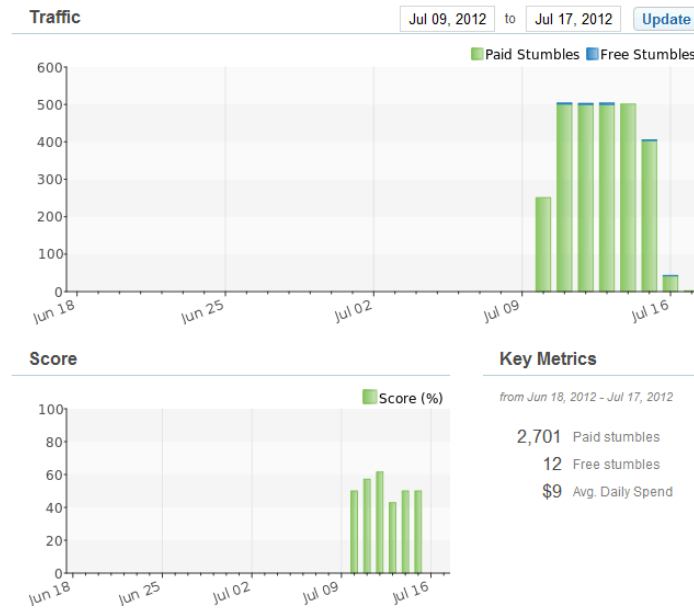


\$.05-\$.25/pageview

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

Advertise on Facebook

Set Up Your Ad or Sponsored Story

[Learn More About Advertising](#)

Choose a Facebook destination
or enter a URL:

Search

Search by URL
Enter an external URL or a Facebook URL.

Search by Destination ID
Enter an ID to load a Page, an app, an event, etc.

Pages and Places

- Spoke 'n Spoke 3**
Page
- Spoke 'n Spoke 2
Page
- SpokenSpoke2
Page
- Spoke 'n Spoke
Page
- GibbleGibbet - stamp out nonsense words everywhere
Page
- Internet Marketing Strategy: Conversation Marketing
Page

Ge

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You
the

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\$.01-??/like

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.



DO THE WORK

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





Q & A

Ian Lurie

CEO

Portent

www.portent.com

@portentint

 **SEOMoz**
#MozCon

