Fishing with Flattery: A Guide to Ego Bait

2nd Edition
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What is ego bait?

Ego bait is actually quite an honest link building and traffic generation technique which I think suffers from an unfortunate name. It sounds quite deceitful doesn’t it? In fact, it’s probably one of the most open and genuine outreach methods you can use to get links and new visitors to your site.

The fundamental principle of ego bait is to feature industry influencers and other relevant businesses/websites on your website or blog (in a positive light of course), giving them a reason to promote and link to your site. In essence, you’re appealing to someone’s ego to acquire promotion.

Negative connotations of the name aside, ego bait actually benefits all parties involved:

- The visitor benefits from the additional helpful, relevant content.
- The influencer/contributor benefits from exposure as well as a link.
- You as the webmaster benefit from more content, links and exposure to a new (and probably bigger) audience.

There are multiple types of ego bait which I will discuss individually later on in this book, but the basic process remains the same for all (though could happen in a slightly different order to below:

1. Research - find appropriate contributor(s) to feature on your site
2. Post - Publish content featuring said contributor(s)
3. Outreach - Contact the person(s) whom you have featured, show them what you have posted and suggest they may want to share!
4. Follow up - Make the most out of this new contact and try for future collaborations.

Clearly this is not a technique from which you will gain huge numbers of links at a time but we’re talking quality, not quantity. Ego baiting (it sounds even worse when it’s a verb doesn’t it?!) is highly unlikely to see you getting hit with a search engine penalty a few months down the line. It’s about long-term benefits as opposed to short-term gains.

You can, of course, increase the volume of links ego baiting acquires. You
could employ it as a regular tactic, perhaps make a monthly feature on your site. There are also a couple of particular methods which can greatly increase the number of links you’ll get from one piece of ego bait; lists and round-ups/group interviews.

Another benefit of genuine link-building strategies like ego bait is improving your website or blog’s user experience. You can work towards gaining loyal customers who are likely to return, trust your content, and even recommend to friends.
Types of ego bait

The most straightforward method of ego baiting is to simply mention an individual, company, or perhaps a product on your site. This would usually be in the form of a recommendation to your audience. There are several, slightly more complex tactics which you could try. I will discuss some of these methods throughout this chapter. Those featured will be as follows:

- Lists
- Guest Posts
- Interviews

Lists

The lists to which I am referring are top ranking lists; the 50 best of this, the 100 most that... etc.

A couple of examples of these, which you will probably recognise, are as follows:

- 100 Best Places to Work by Fortune & Great Place to Work
- Top 50 UK Blogs by Vuelio

You can pretty much guarantee that the majority of blogs and business websites featured in these lists will link back to it.

How to do it, step by step

This is a relatively simple method to undertake. All that’s required is some research on your chosen topic so you can start to compile a selection of your most suitable options. Think of something relevant to your website’s niche or industry and find the best examples of it.

Clearly this won’t work with everyone or every business. It would depend on your reputation and exposure as well as theirs. For example, you wouldn’t write a list of the 100 fittest celebrities on your sports nutrition blog and expect them to promote this. If you were a big brand such as Protein World then sure, they’re likely to retweet or share, but a relatively unknown site
would not have the same effect on people with this level of exposure.

Instead, you would need to choose targets whom might be looking for a little extra attention. So, sticking with the sports nutrition blog as an example, you could compile a list of the 10 best homemade protein shake recipes from other blogs, social media accounts or similar.

Once posted, you could contact the writers of these blogs and tell them that you enjoyed their recipe so much, you have decided to include it in your top 5. Remember to hint that they may like to link to the article, perhaps share it on their social pages.

**Guest posts**

No doubt you are already aware of what a guest post is and how it works, but have you considered all the ways in which your site could benefit from this technique?

Not only can you reach a new audience and broaden your reach but, as with all ego bait methods, you can gain backlinks to your site. Whether you take the role of guest or host the benefits are undeniable.

As we’re discussing appealing to the ego, it may first be best to offer others the chance to post on your website. You’re essentially telling them that you think their content is great and will provide a new platform on which they can extend their reach. Hopefully one day they will return the favour when you provide some of your own content for them to host.

**How to do it, step by step**

You first need to find a suitable guest blogger, ideally a blogger themselves who has a good social following but may be looking for a little extra exposure.

Before even approaching your chosen webmaster/blogger there’s some really beneficial preliminary work to be done; start interacting on their site, comment on posts, share via your social channels etc. Don’t do this all in one go of course, maybe over a couple of weeks.
Now it’s time to reach out. Send a polite email advising of your interest in their content and offering the opportunity to guest post on your site. Reinforce - in a polite manner - how it would benefit the both of you.

Once you have received the content you obviously need to post it on your site. With it you should add a small bio about the author and link to their own website or blog. Also, make sure you promote the post in every way you do with your own posts.

It’s now important to maintain this relationship. Don’t make the fatal mistake of thinking it’s over now the post is up! Keep in talks with your guest blogger, perhaps suggest that they could link to their guest post via socials (if they haven’t yet already) or even ask if they plan to post about their guest post, linking to your site from theirs.

**Becoming the Guest Blogger**

Now that you have a new acquaintance in the industry and have continued a friendly relationship, you could try sending your own content to see if they would like to return the favour by publishing/placing it on their site.

Think carefully about the content you choose to send to be hosted on another’s site. Consider the following:

It should be your best work, not content which you have deemed to be inadequate for your own site. It’s probably worth noting at this point that you should review the quality of content on your own site. If they’re going to be linking to it they need to know it’s up to scratch!

This is not an opportunity to sell - not affiliate products, not your own website. Concentrate on (yes I’m going to say it even though I know you’ve heard it a million times before...) adding value with genuine, helpful content.

Remember that you’re writing for their site, not for you own. Do a little research so you can consider their style and also be sure that you’re not covering a topic already present on their site.

Better your host’s opinion of you with little extras; add links within your arti-
cle to other pages within their website, copy the format of their articles and even provide both plain text and html versions of the post.

Should you succeed and get your content added to their site don’t stop there… there’s still work to be done! Make sure you keep track of any comments so that you are able to reply, proving that you’re a conscientious blogger who people will want to work with going forward. Remember also to promote this post as you would any on your own site.

**Interview**

Yes, this is a fairly self-explanatory type of ego bait; ask a series of questions to a third party within your niche and publish their responses on your website. Easy.

The idea again is that your target will be so flattered to have been considered worthy of an interview they will be eager to promote it.

If you can secure the extra participants then you could take this method one step further and perform a group interview. The obvious bonus of this is that you have multiple people linking to, and promoting your site.

Another positive of a group interview which you may not have considered, is that more participants could allow you to ask fewer questions. Afterall, you don’t want your post to be too long! Fewer questions means it will be a quicker job for each participant and thus they’re more likely to take part.

**How to do it, step by step**

As before, your first step is to find your participant(s). Again, these should have authority in your niche but not so much that they won’t give you the time of day.

This next step is optional. You would have to decide what works best for you and to what you think your targets would respond well. Make initial contact with whom you would like to interview. Let them know why you have chosen them (because they’re awesome!) and say a little about what topics
you would like to cover.

Alternatively you could immediately get started on your research and include your questions in your first email to your chosen participant(s). You need to identify questions for which your audience will want answers whilst also making sure that your participant(s) has/have not answered them previously.

Find all the interviews you can for said participant(s) and read them. Make your interview a little different, interviewees are more likely to show interest and also know that you have done the appropriate research.

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**Research or Reach-Out First?**

I have given you two options here but only you will know which is more likely to work. It may be that you test both methods with different targets to see which gets most responses.

**Pros of reaching out before drafting questions:**

- This is less presumptuous so may appear a little more polite
- If the recipient does decline you haven’t yet wasted all that time researching them and reading previous interviews

**Pros of sending the questions in your first contact:**

- It’s more difficult for the recipient to ignore your contact when you have obviously already put the work in
- If you draft some interesting questions they could potentially be intrigued by this and are more likely to answer.

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Once you have completed your research and drafted your questions the next step is simply to send to your participant(s) and wait for responses. It’s a good idea to give a deadline for this or it will be put directly to the bottom of their priority list. Make sure you still give them plenty of time. Asking
3 days in advance is not acceptable!

As with most methods of ego baiting, the final few steps are the same; post the content, promote via all your usual methods and finally, follow-up with your participant(s) to encourage them to link.
Choosing your participants

The success of your ego bait campaign could hang on those with whom you have opted to work. The main challenge facing you at this point is that you must ensure to balance the worth of the participant’s content with the likelihood of them linking back to your site.

You should always select participants in whom you actually believe. The moment you start to select them solely on how likely they are to link to or promote your site, the whole process starts to become dishonest (and there are already plenty of dishonest link building methods)!

That being said, you do need to remember why you’re doing this in the first place. So how do you find a balance? I suggest compiling a big list of suitable recipients whom you genuinely think do a great job you can then start to filter this down by looking at the following:

- Do they have a relatively good social following compared to yours?
- Are they actively posting on their socials and their site?
- Can you see any previous guest posts, interviews etc in which they have taken part? (not essential but certainly more encouraging)

Obviously it’s vital that your selected participants are relevant to your niche and that your audience will find their content beneficial. Do be sure however, not to promote your competition!

Ideally you want to find participants who blog regularly, preferably about themselves. These people are more likely to blog about their interview, guest post, inclusion in your list etc. Thus you get your desired backlink. Of course, social shares are beneficial for driving traffic but your ultimate goal is to get that authoritative backlink.

Finally, when you have chosen your desired participants remember to be polite and complimentary but don’t be a sycophant! Most people see right through this and will not be the least bit interested.
Examples

I thought it would be helpful to include some great examples of ego bait. I have even included some from our resident ‘Amateur Chef’ Martyn Slack.

Lists

Martyn wrote a guide to some of Nottingham’s best places to eat and managed to get some tweets from the restaurants themselves.

As mentioned previously, one of the most well known and successful ego bait lists is Fortune’s Best Companies to Work For. As expected, this results in a plethora of inbound links from those featured on the list. Check out just some of them below:

Four Seasons

For 18 years in a row, Four Seasons has been named by its employees to FORTUNE Magazine’s list of the “100 Best Companies to Work For,” ranking 47th. Four Seasons is one of just 12 organizations to have the distinction of being recognized every year since the list began.

The Cheesecake Factory
As well as linking on site, the subjects also took to Twitter. Take a look at the Great Place To Work twitter page and see how many influential companies you can see promoting Fortune! For example:
Guest post

Simply by searching for “my posts on other blogs” I found a perfect example to show how you can gain a link to your site whether you’re the guest or the host.

First, I found the guest’s blog, linking to those on which she has posted:

OTHER PLACES TO FIND ME

Part-Time Monster

Though most of my blogging is done here at the Monster, I’ve been lucky enough to guest post on several different blogs, and I am always open to new collaborations with bloggers and friends. Below, you’ll find an alphabetical list of blogs I’ve guest posted for, as well as the posts I’ve written for each blog.

I clicked on one of her links to her guest posts:

Confessions of a Broccoli Addict
Monday Inspirations: To Kill a Mockingbird and the Small-Town South
Monday Inspirations: On Re-Reading Old Favorites

Confessions of a Broccoli Addict link back to her site too, with a short profile which was posted with her article:

DIANA IS A NATIVE MISSISSIPPIAN, A NERD, A BOOKWORM, A FEMINIST, A MOTHER, A TEACHER, A WORRIER, AND A SOCIAL MEDIA JUNKIE. SHE IS THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE BLOG PART TIME MONSTER, AND YOU CAN FOLLOW HER ON TWITTER @PARTTIMEMONSTER OR FIND HER ON FACEBOOK AT FACEBOOK.COM/PARTTIMEMONSTER. SHE LIVES IN NEW ORLEANS WITH HER SON, HER HUSBAND, AND ONE VERY ENERGETIC TERRIER.

By the way, make sure you check out my guest post about Dola over at Part Time Monster later today.

Notice the ‘by the way...’ underneath? It seems these two bloggers are making the most of their relationship and mutually helping one another out. Perfect.
Interviews

Martyn had great success with interviews on his Amateur Chef blog. He managed to secure interviews with last year’s MasterChef finalists.

**Andi Walker MasterChef 2015 Finalist**

February 17, 2016 By Martyn  —  Leave a Comment

Andi Walker did an incredible job on MasterChef the Professionals, and should be proud of what he achieved on the show. I was reading about what inspired him to enter and to be honest did make me a little emotional. His grandmother sparked his love of cooking and has recently become ill with dementia...

**Chef Interview – Dean Westcar**

January 28, 2016 By Martyn  —  1 Comment

I was watching Masterchef the professionals 2015 and was in awe at the dishes being made, I cannot remember which week it was but Dean made a white chocolate dessert with raspberries and it looked incredible. As soon as I saw it I took to twitter to tell him what a great job he did...
This resulted in a few tweets from the participants, such as Dean Westcar:

...and a huge spike in traffic:

Interviews and lists are now regular features on Martyn's blog. He now intends to try out some guest blogging.

What will you try first?!