

Is Your Anchor Text Diversified?

How to Evaluate Your Anchor Text Profile

Google’s latest algorithmic update, dubbed “Penguin,” is carefully evaluating anchor text diversification when determining website rankings. In this article, we will demonstrate how to evaluate your anchor text profile. We use www.barnesandnoble.com as a sample website throughout this example.

Historically, if Google saw an external followed link with the text “online book seller” they would logically associate the URL address in that link with a book store website. Consequently, after building a link with the aforementioned anchor text, your site would have a better chance of ranking when users searched on keywords related to buying books online. With Penguin, however, Google is checking to make sure the diversification of a website’s anchor text is “reasonable.” In other words, a website should have a certain percentage (at least 40% by Google’s standard) of non-commercial or branded anchor text. For example, Barnes and Noble should have many links with anchor text reading “www.barnesandnoble.com” and “Barnes & Noble.” This non-commercial anchor text is juxtaposed to keyword rich anchor text such as “online book store,” “buy books online,” etc. This entire process is Google’s way of cracking down on engineered (artificial) keyword-targeted link building strategies.

To make sure our clients are in compliance with Google’s new policies, we follow a simple approach that utilizes two widely available tools—a link analysis software (such as opensiteexplorer.org) and Excel.

The first step is downloading a sample of your link profile from Open Site Explorer. If your link profile is small enough, we recommend downloading the entire profile. For Barnes and Noble, we are filtering the linking profile by “followed” links from “external” sources on all pages across the barnesandnoble.com root domain:

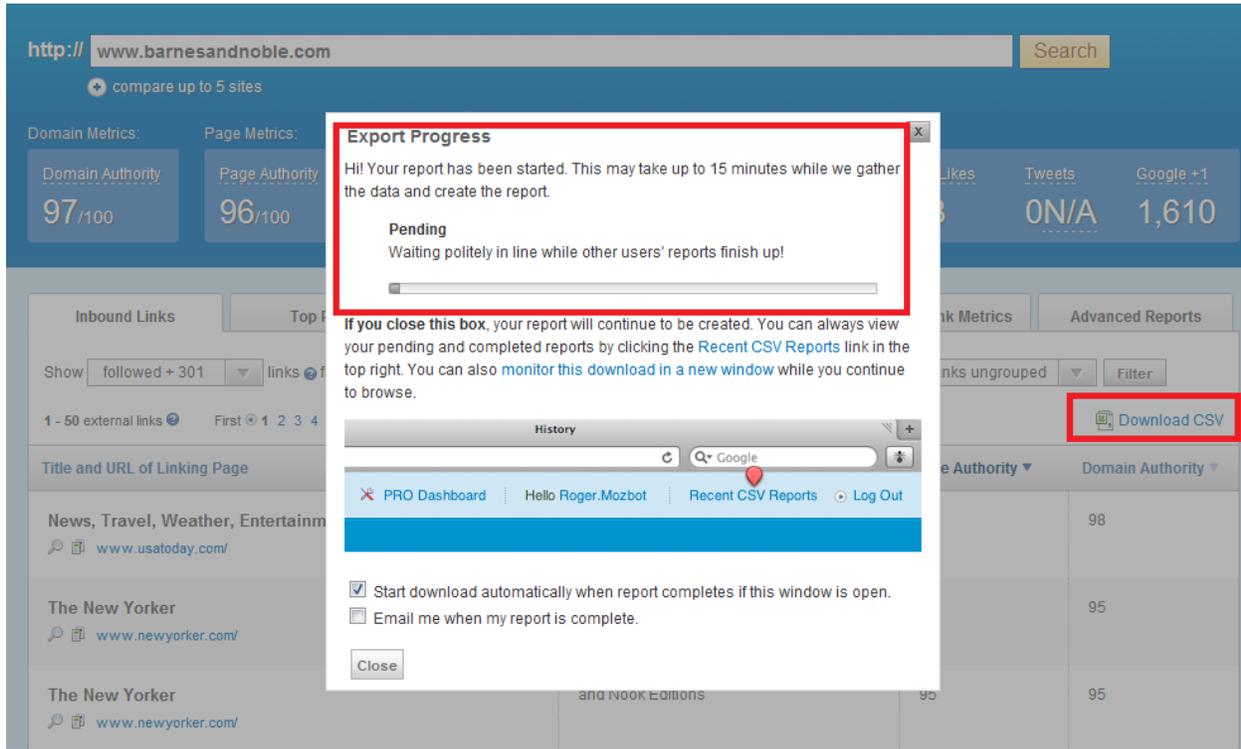
The screenshot shows the Open Site Explorer interface for www.barnesandnoble.com. The top navigation bar includes a search box and a 'Search' button. Below the search bar, there are two sections: 'Domain Metrics' and 'Page Metrics'. The 'Domain Metrics' section shows 'Domain Authority' as 97/100. The 'Page Metrics' section shows 'Page Authority' as 96/100, 'Linking Root Domains' as 33,933, 'Total Links' as 256k, 'Facebook Shares' as 23,400, 'Facebook Likes' as 7,388, 'Tweets' as 0N/A, and 'Google +1' as 1,610.

Below the metrics, there are several tabs: 'Inbound Links', 'Top Pages', 'Linking Domains', 'Anchor Text', 'Compare Link Metrics', and 'Advanced Reports'. The 'Inbound Links' tab is selected. Below the tabs, there is a search filter section with a red box around it. The filter is set to 'Show followed + 301 links from only external pages to pages on this root domain'. There is also a 'Filter' button and a 'Download CSV' link.

Below the filter, there is a table of inbound links. The table has four columns: 'Title and URL of Linking Page', 'Link Anchor Text', 'Page Authority', and 'Domain Authority'. The table shows the following data:

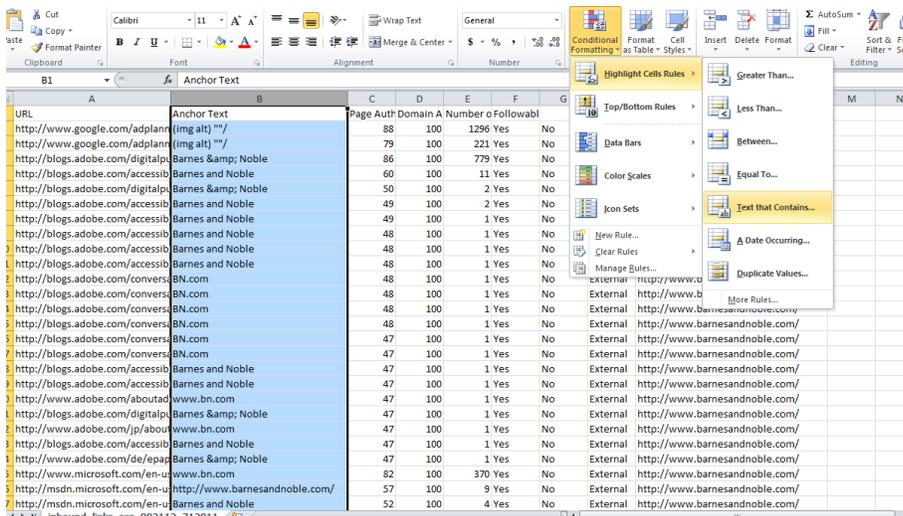
Title and URL of Linking Page	Link Anchor Text	Page Authority	Domain Authority
News, Travel, Weather, Entertainment, Sports, T... www.usatoday.com/	USA TODAY on Nook	96	98
The New Yorker www.newyorker.com/	and Nook Editions	95	95
The New Yorker www.newyorker.com/	and Nook Editions	95	95
Seth's Blog	Barnes & Noble	94	96

Once our results load, we can download the report into a CSV file for Excel.

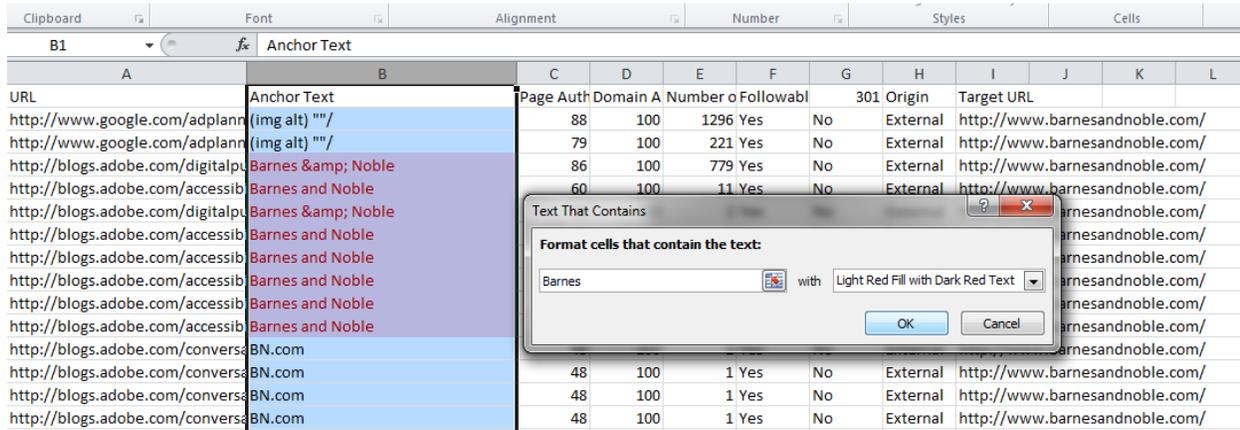


Open Site Explorer limits linking profile downloads to only twenty-five links per linking root domain and a maximum of 10,000 total links. Since Barnes and Noble has a total of 211,000 total external followed links, we need to understand that our link sample represents just 5% of the total link population; consequently, this test should be viewed as a basic *indicator* and not conclusive results.

Once our report is in Excel we can highlight the “anchor text” column and navigate to the “Home” tab in Excel. The Conditional Formatting button should be clicked and the “Highlight Cells→Text Contains” rule should be chosen as follows:

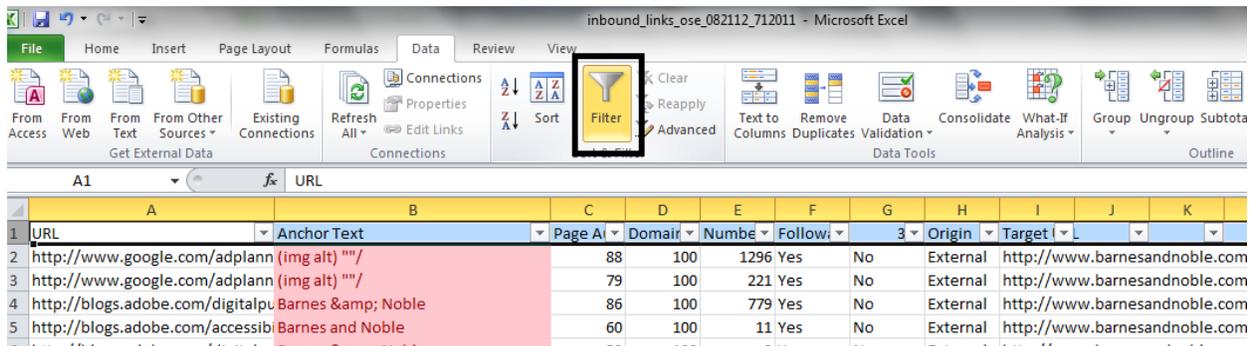


By using conditional formatting we can effectively sort out all of the non-commercial (branded anchor text). Our first rule will be used to highlight all cells that contain the word “Barnes.”

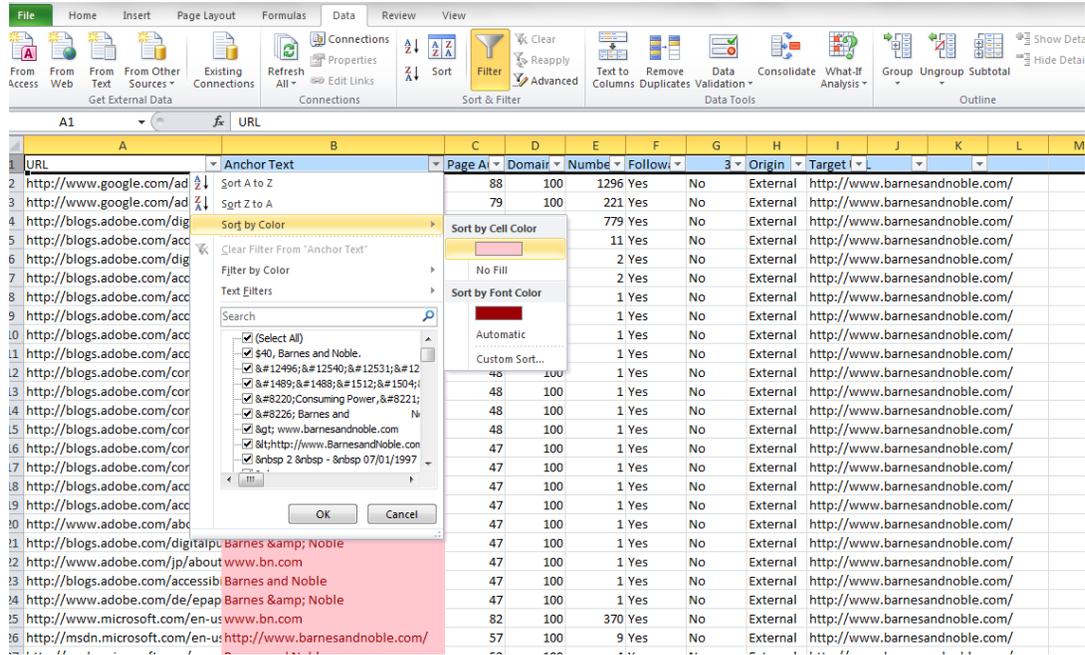


This step should be repeated for every foreseeable iteration of non-commercial anchor text (i.e. “www.,” “Noble,” “BN,” “bn.com,” “(img alt),” etc. After all non-commercial anchor text is identified, we can sort our anchor text by cell color. This will separate all non-commercial anchor text from the commercial anchor text in our link profile.

Highlight the first row of data and navigate to the “Data” tab in Excel. Then click the “Filter” button.



Now click the drop down arrow on the “Anchor Text” column and sort by cell color.



Now count the total amount of entries in your Anchor Text column. Since Barnes and Noble has more than 10,000 total links, our report maxed out at 10,000 entries.

Finally count the amount of links highlighted (8,667) and the amount of links un-highlighted (1,333) to determine your anchor text diversification.

Anchor Text Type	Percentage
Non-Commercial (Branded)	87%
Commercial (Keyword-Rich)	13%

Based on our analysis, there is adequate anchor text diversification to prevent Barnes & Noble from incurring any penalties from Google.

This analysis can and should be performed on individual inner pages as well to verify that anchor text is sufficiently diversified across the site.

Ultimately, this simple diagnostic exercise is extremely valuable in helping monitor link building efforts and preventing your site from incurring any undue penalties associated with artificial link-building campaigns. For more information contact Synapse SEM, LLC at info@synapsesem.com.