# How to launch a link building campaign for your existing content

**Last Updated / Reviewed:** April 1st, 2020
**Execution Time:** *3-4 hours/campaign*

**Goal:** Establish a process to find link opportunities by reverse-engineering links to competing websites, and reach out to the respective site owners and/or editors.

**Ideal Outcome:** You're able to consistently build high-quality, not spammy, contextual backlinks to your site without the need to create new content (guest posts, infographics, etc).

**Prerequisites or requirements:** You'll need to be familiar with how to perform keyword research and possibly have a keyword strategy already. Check out SOP 011 to learn how to do that.

**Why this is important:** Link building is an essential element of SEO. If you want to rank for competitive queries, you will need to build links.

**Where this is done:** In your Chrome browser (using the Chrome extensions described in the SOP), in [ahrefs](), and in [BuzzStream]() (optional but recommended).

**When this is done:** Whenever you want to build links to your site.

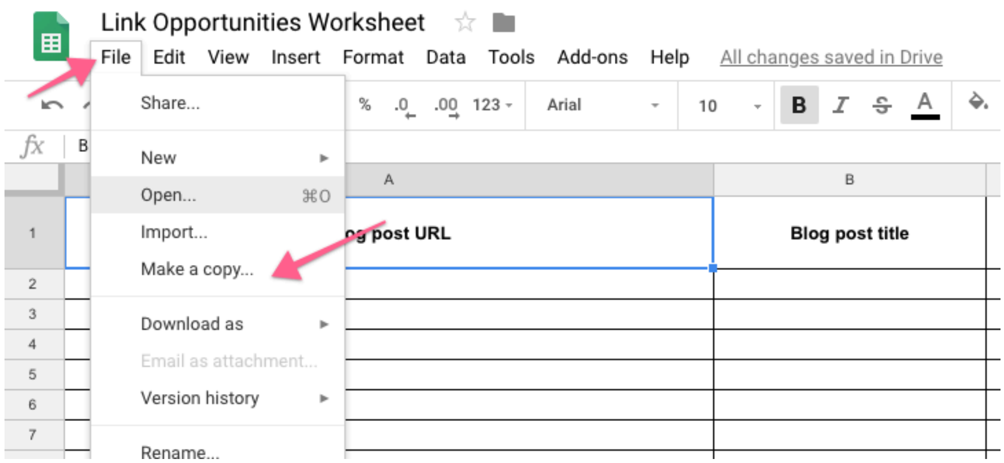
**Who does this:** The person in charge of SEO / link building for your site. You can also outsource some of these tasks to a virtual assistant or freelancer.

## ☐ Environment setup

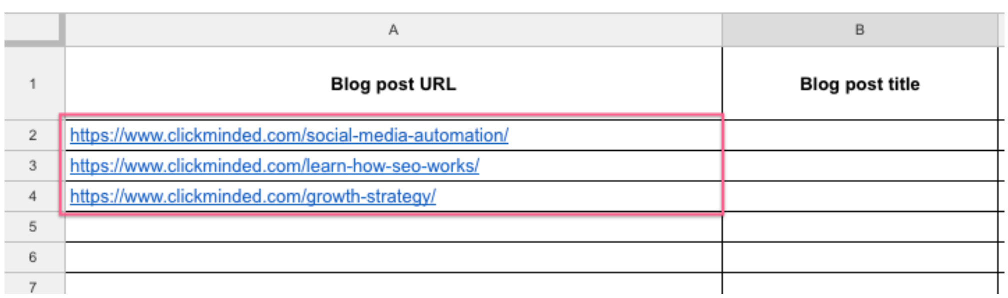
1. Install the Hunter Chrome extension and set up an account.
2. Get an ahrefs account.
3. (Optional but recommended) Create a Buzzstream account. We recommend the **Group** plan since it allows you to send bulk email campaigns.

## ☐ Perform keyword research and find competing content

1. Open the "Link Building Opportunities Worksheet" document, go to "File → Make a copy" to create your own copy of the worksheet.




2. Determine the blog posts or pages on your site that you wish to build links to. Add the URL to each of those to column A of the "Research" sheet.



3. Write the title of each page / post in column B of the “Research” sheet.

| | A | B |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Blog post URL | Blog post title |
| 2 | https://www.clickminded.com/social-media-automation/ | The Social Media Automation Gui |
| 3 | https://www.clickminded.com/learn-how-seo-works/ | The 2018 SEO Tutorial for Compl |
| 4 | https://www.clickminded.com/growth-strategy/ | How to Create a Digital Marketing |
| 5 | | |
| 6 | | |

4. Determine the topic / searcher intent that you want to build links around for each of those blog posts or pages. If you are not sure about how to perform this step, [you should read SOP 011]().

   For example:
   a. “Who creates emojis” and “unicode consortium” have a similar searcher intent.
   b. “Who creates emojis” and “emoji chrome extension” have different searcher intents.

5. Write the target keyword for each post in column C of the “Research” sheet.

| | A | B | C |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Blog post URL | Blog post title | Keyword |
| 2 | https://www.clickminded.com/social-media-automation/ | The Social Media Automation Gui | social media automation |
| 3 | https://www.clickminded.com/learn-how-seo-works/ | The 2018 SEO Tutorial for Compl | what is seo and how it works |
| 4 | https://www.clickminded.com/growth-strategy/ | How to Create a Digital Marketing | growth strategy |

6. Using Google Chrome, open an incognito window (Ctrl+Shift+N if you use PC, or Cmd+Shift+N if you use Mac), and perform a Google search for each of the target keywords—this will show you the best-ranking content for your target keyword or, in other words, the content you’re competing against.

7. Open each of the organic search results (those below the ads) in the first page. You job will be to determine whether your content is better than the one provided by the competitor and why:

   a. If you have better content: this means that it’s likely that people who linked to competing content will want to link to *your* content too (or instead). If this is the case, write down the URL of the competing content in column D of the “Research” sheet (add rows if necessary). Next, write the rationale for ***why*** your content is better in column F.

| | B | C | D | E | F |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Blog post title | Keyword | What are people linking to? | Backlinks to competing posts (don't modify the formula on this column) | Rationale (why should people who are linking to this should link to us?) |
| 2 | | | [illegible]/insights/social-media-automation/ | https://ahrefs.com/site-expl | this post is not that actionable. Our blog post covers EXACTLY how to automate social media publishing for FREE |
| 3 | The Social Media Automation Gui | social media automation | [illegible]/11-best-social-media-automation-tools-smart-content-marketers/ | https://ahrefs.com/site-expl | this post only lists tools, while our post explains HOW to do it for FREE |
| 4 | | | [illegible]/social-media-automation/ | https://ahrefs.com/site-expl | this post only lists tools, while our post explains HOW to do it for FREE |
| 5 | | | [illegible]/social-media-automation-tools/ | https://ahrefs.com/site-expl | this post doesn't cover Zapier (the most powerful automation tool out there) and doesn't explain exactly how to automate stuff |
| 6 | The 2018 SEO Tutorial for Compl | what is seo and how it works | | No data yet | |
| 7 | How to Create a Digital Marketing | growth strategy | | No data yet | |
| 8 | | | | No data yet | |

b. If you don't have better content: it's unlikely that people will link to your post instead of the competing content. Either improve your content or skip this opportunity.

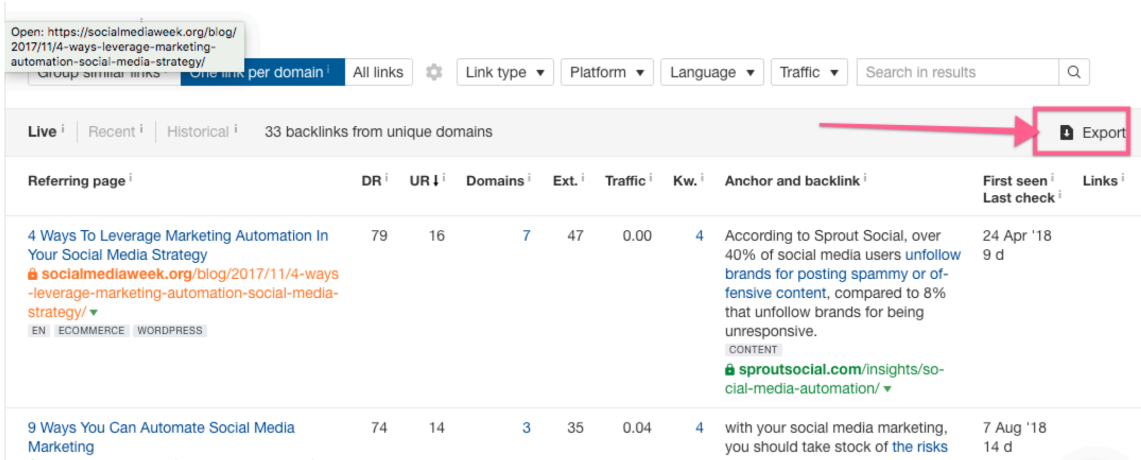
8. Repeat steps 6 and 7 for all of the blog posts / pages from column A that you wish to build links to.

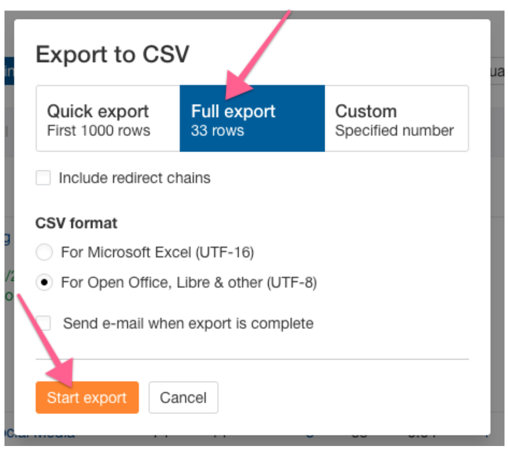
## ☐ Find link opportunities (prospecting)

**Note**: If you can afford it, we recommend that you hire a freelancer or virtual assistant to perform this step for you as it can be very time-consuming.

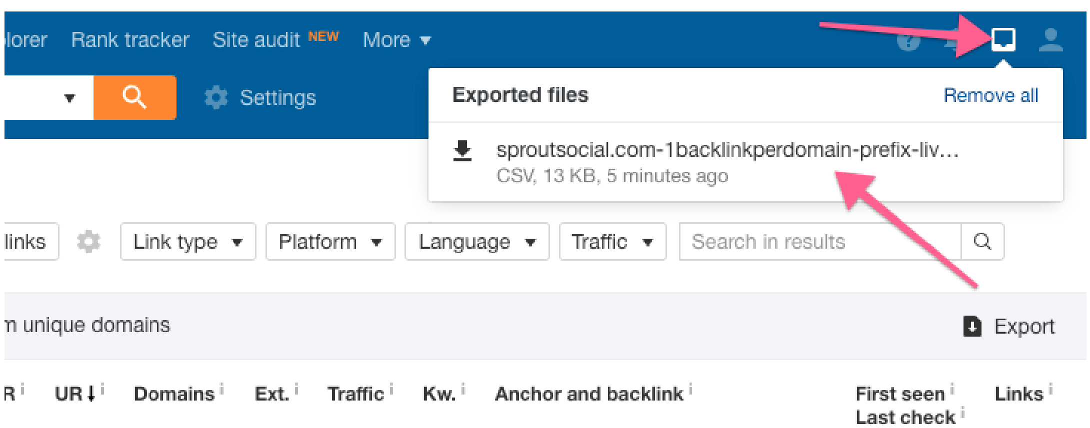
1. Log into your ahrefs account.
2. Open your copy of the "Link Opportunities Worksheet" on the "Research" sheet.
3. Open the links in column E, this will bring up the ahrefs page for all pages linking to each competitor (one page per domain)

4. Click “Export”, select “Full Export”, and click “Start Export”

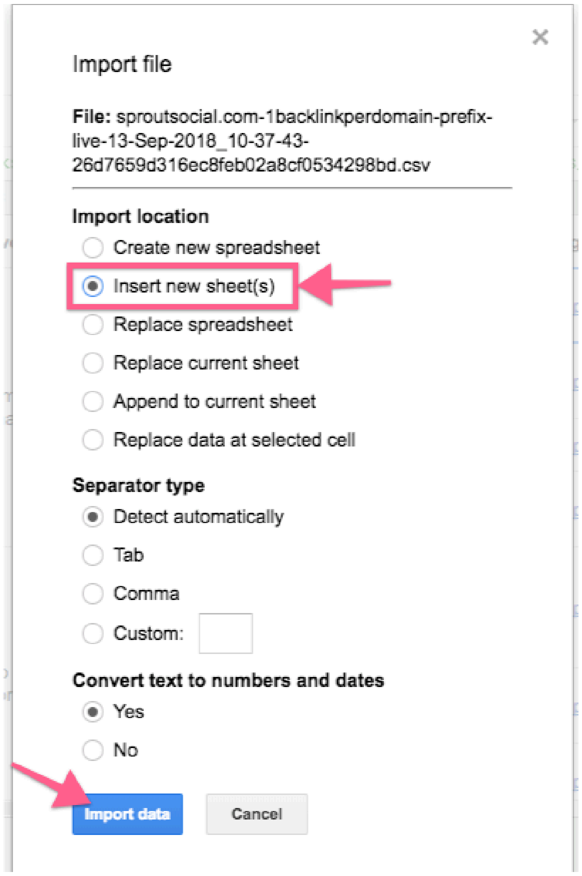


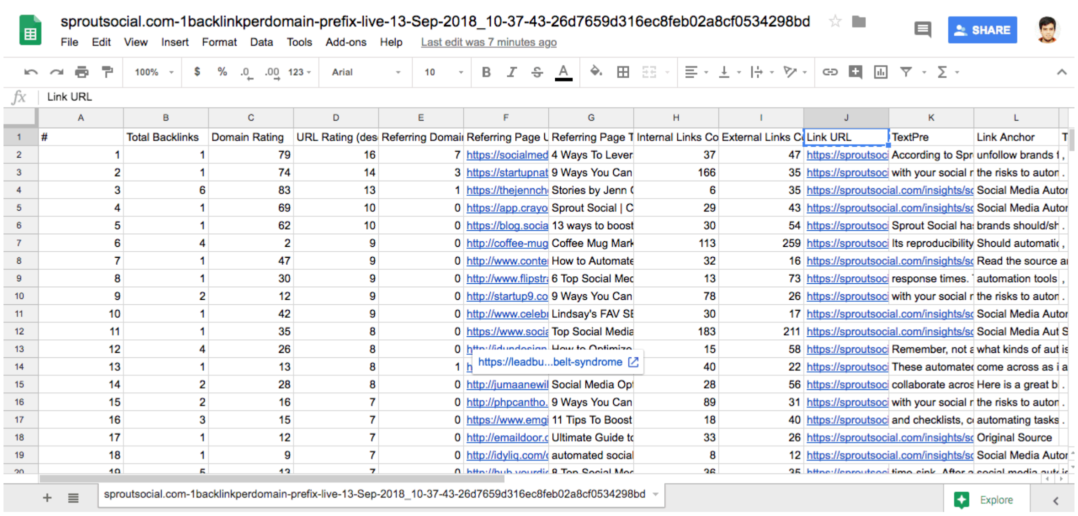

5. After a few seconds, the export will be ready on the small tray icon on the top right. You can click on it to download:



6. Go back to the “Link Opportunities” spreadsheet, click File > Import, upload the CSV you just downloaded from ahrefs, under “Import Location”, pick “Insert new sheet” and click on “Import data”

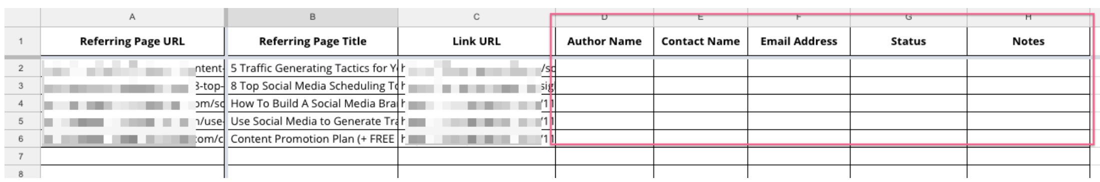



7. Open the new sheet you just imported and keep only the “Referring Page URL”, “Referring Page Title”, and “Link URL” columns—delete the rest.



8. Update the name of the sheet by changing it to “Link Opportunities - [Target keyword]” with the target keyword you selected for the campaign (column C of the “Research” sheet).


9. Add columns titled “Author name”, “Contact name”, “Email address”, “Status”, and “Notes”




10. Open each of the URLs in column A of the “Link targets” sheet.

11. Make sure it makes sense for you to ask them for a link. For example:

    a. If it’s an automated digest like this one or this one, it probably won’t make sense
    b. If the page belongs to a competitor, it probably won’t make sense

12. Write down the name of the author of the post in column D.

13. Try to find contact information for the webmaster or content manager:

    a. Look for a “Contact us”, “Contribute to our blog”, or similar link in the top navigation, sidebar, or footer of the site.
    b. If you find the name of the website owner / editor, try looking for their Twitter profile and check if they have an email listed on their profile.
    c. Use the Hunter Chrome extension. If you are using the free version of Email Hunter, only use this as your last option since you get only 150 requests per month.
        i. You might get contact information for the author, but sometimes it will be someone in the company’s marketing team or the website’s webmaster.

ii. Always try to reach out to an actual person instead of a catchall email address (e.g. info@domain.com, marketing@domain.com, hello@domain.com)

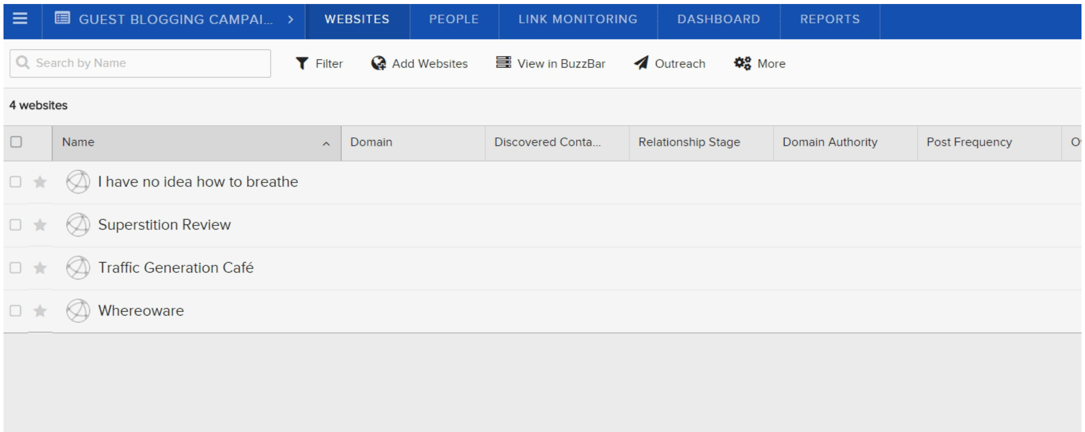
iii. If there are several contacts, default to the one in which hunter shows the most sources

14. Add the contact name and email address to columns E and F the “Link targets” sheet, respectively.

15. Repeat steps 10-14 for each URL in column A.

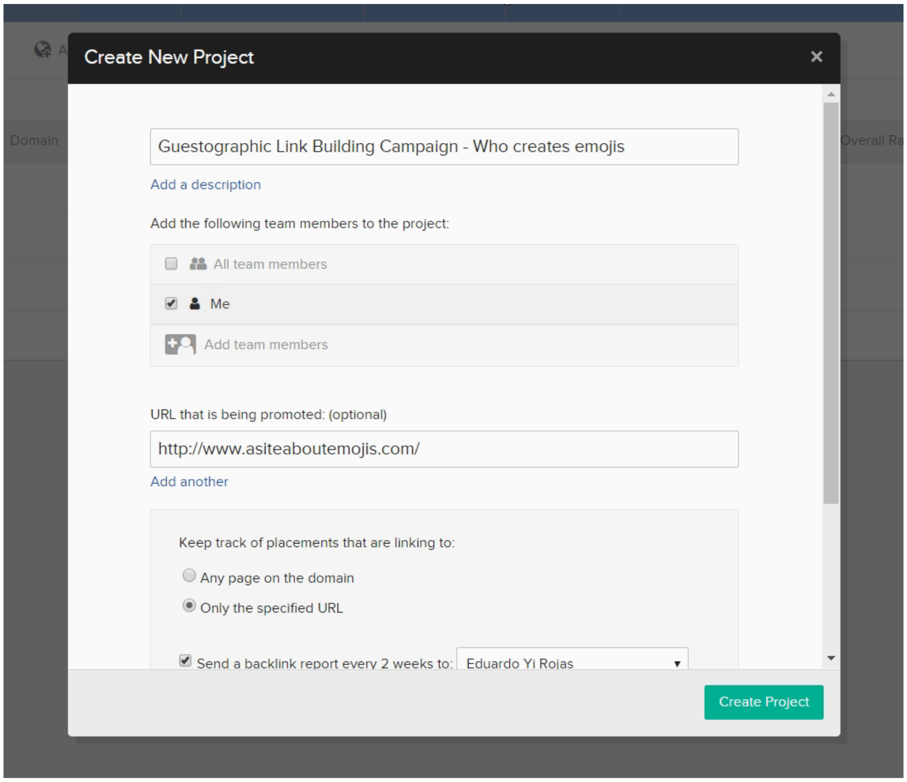
## ☐ Launch your outreach campaign

1. Open Buzzstream and create a new project




2. Set up your project:
    a. Name of your project: Use the following nomenclature “Link Building Campaign - [target keyword]”
    b. Select the team members for the project:
        i. If someone else will be helping you perform outreach, you can choose to share the project with them (you can also add them later.)
        ii. If you are performing outreach yourself, you can just leave the default option selected.
    c. Add the URL you are building links to.
    d. Choose to track links only to the specified URL.
    **Note**: *This is the preferred option for this type of campaign because you will be building links to just this specific URL.*

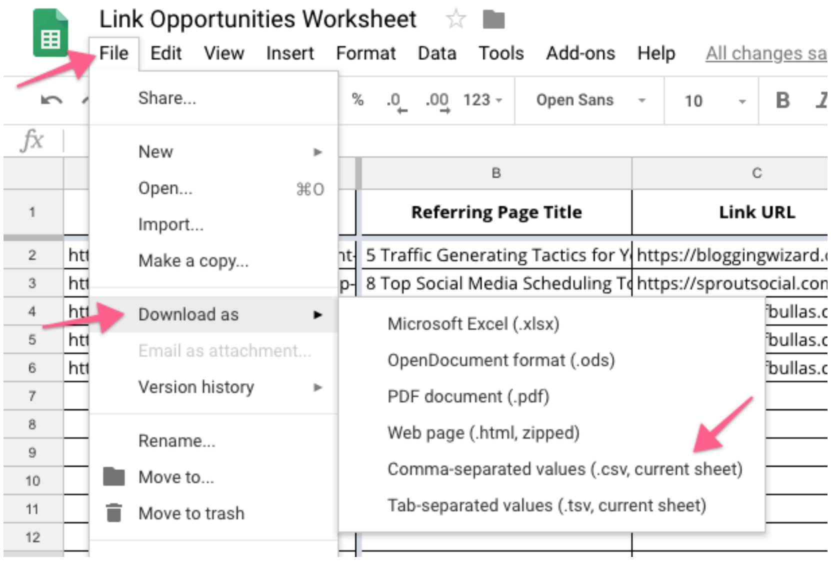
e. Make sure that the option to receive a backlink report is selected.



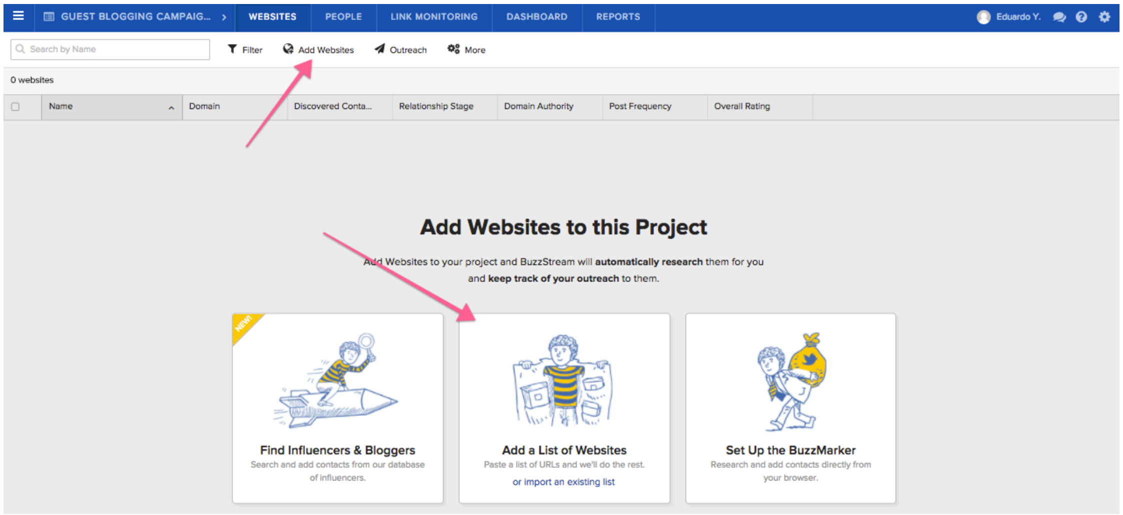

3. Click on “Create Project”

4. Go back to the “Link Opportunities Worksheet”, navigate to the “Link targets” sheet, and click on “File → Download as → Comma-separated values (.csv, current sheet)” to

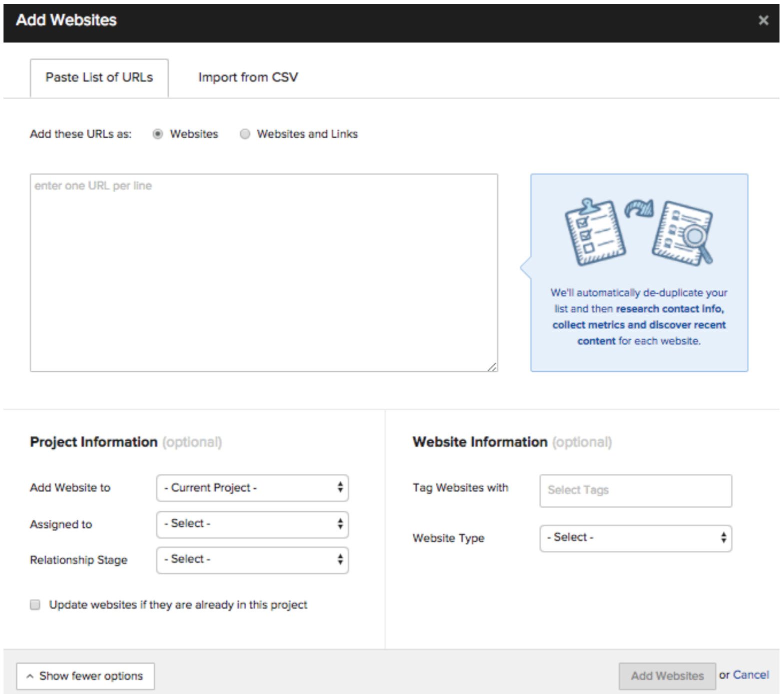
download a .csv file.



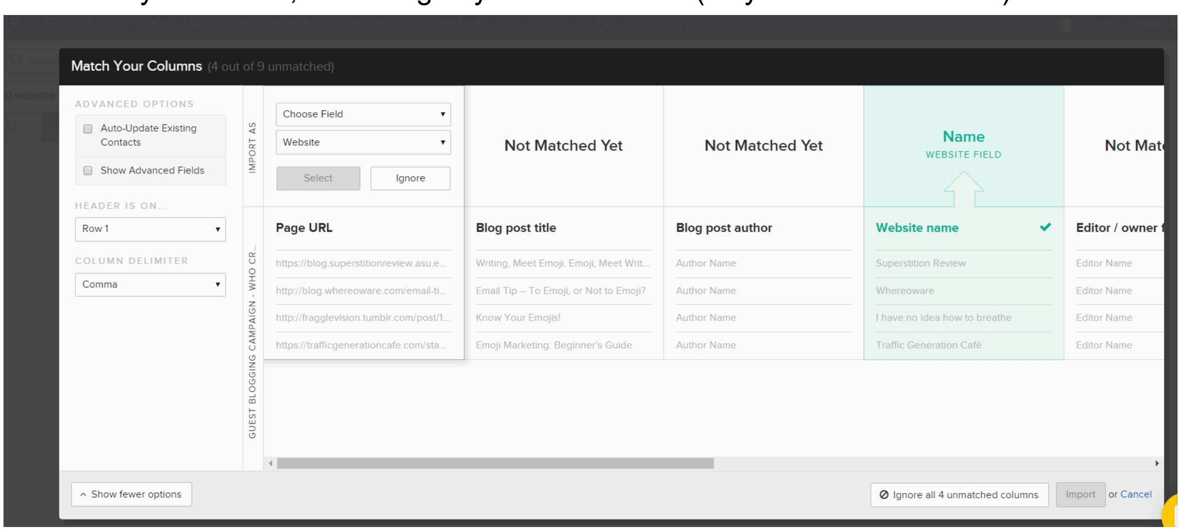

5. Go back to Buzzstream and click on “Add Websites.”



6. Choose to upload a CSV and select the “Match My CSV” option.

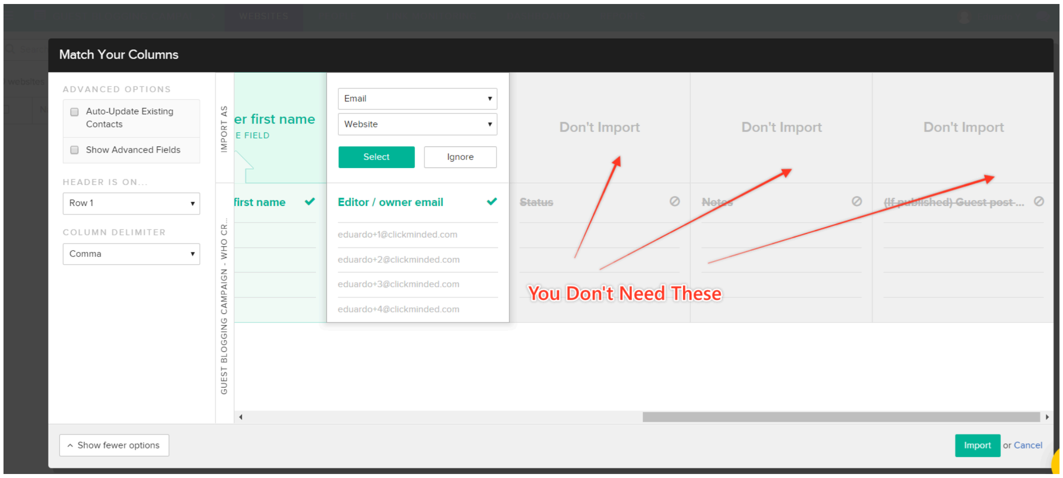



7. Once you have uploaded the .csv file, you will have to match your columns with the content in each of them. This allows BuzzStream to pick up the information and use it to customize your emails, according to your instructions (as you will later on see).



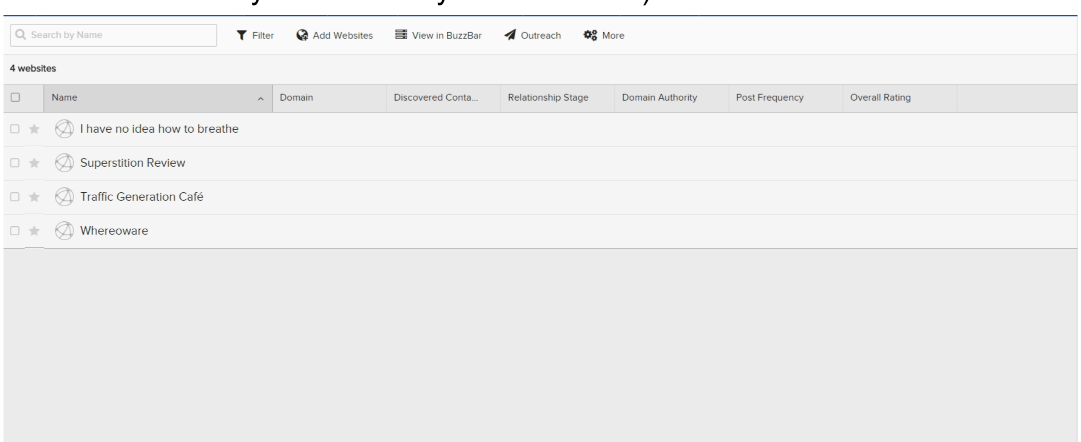

a. Except for the columns that are already matched 100%, you will most likely have to choose “-New Field-” for each of the other columns.

b. Furthermore, you will most probably not need the last two columns (“Status” and “Notes”), so you can just ignore them.

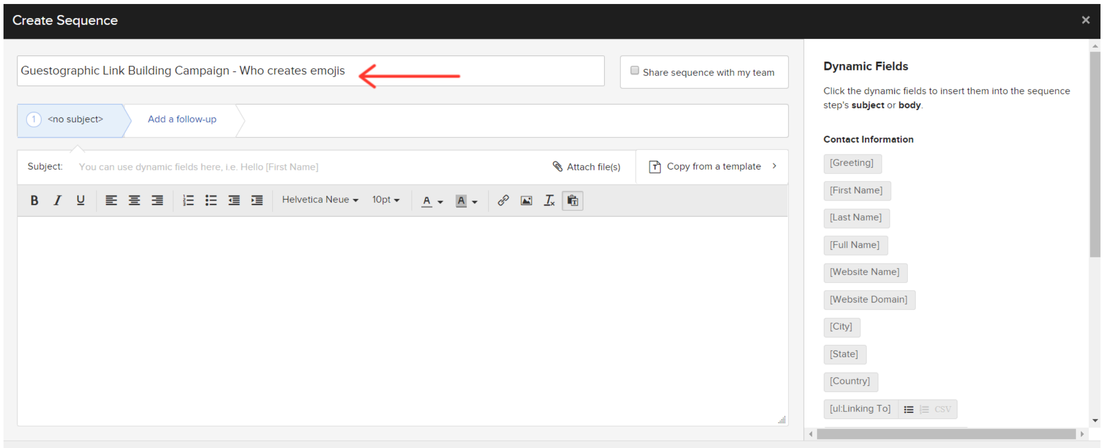



c. To import your data into BuzzStream, click the “Import” button in the bottom right side of the screen.

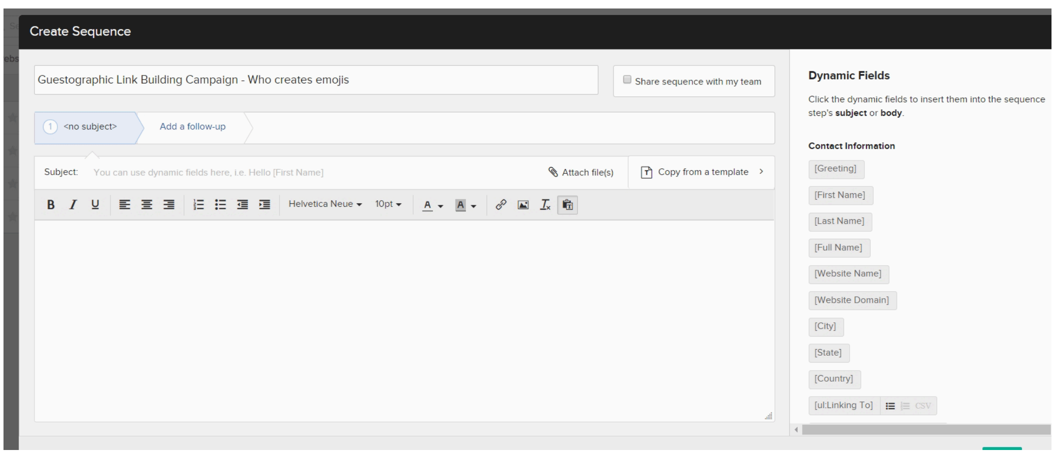
8. When your data is imported, you can move on to creating a sequence of emails that will be sent according to the aforementioned data and your specific instructions.
   - Go to Outreach -> Manage Outreach -> Create New Sequence (if you don’t have one which is already created and you want to use).

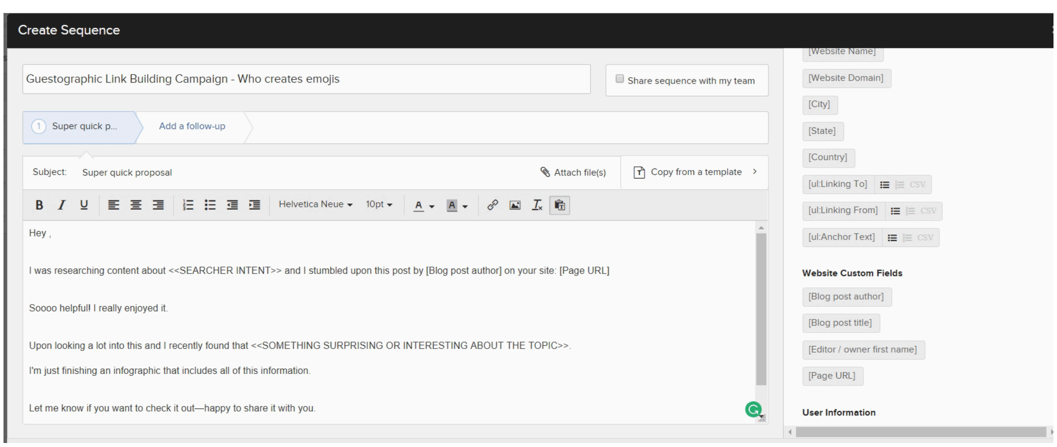



9. Name your sequence. Our suggestion is that you name it: **“Link Building Campaign” + target keyword** (e.g., in our example, this became “Link Building Campaign - social media automation”).




10. On the right side of the screen, you will see the dynamic fields BuzzStream provides. You can use these fields in your email templates to automatically add data you imported with your .csv file (e.g. the names of the editors).



- In the example above, you can see how we added the the "[Contact name]" dynamic field into the email template.
- **Pay attention**: the template we used is a general example. Our advice is for you to create a template of your own with each email outreach campaign. Doing this will add a unique voice to your emails, making them more personal (and thus, more likely to receive a reply). However, if you need inspiration, here's the template we created for our example:

  *"Subject line: Quick Question*

  *Hey there,*

  *I was looking for some information on [topic] this morning when I found something pretty awesome you created: [URL]*

  *This is great, thank you for putting it together!*

  *Just a heads up, you're linking to something that [was a bit outdated / could be better / could be more actionable].*

  *It was this post by [name of the site they're linking to].*

  *We recently created a resource that, unlike the post above, [rationale]. Here's the link to it: [URL of your post]*

  *If you think this would be useful for your users, feel free to add a link to it in your post. If not, no worries at all. Just wanted to make a suggestion that your users might find helpful :)*

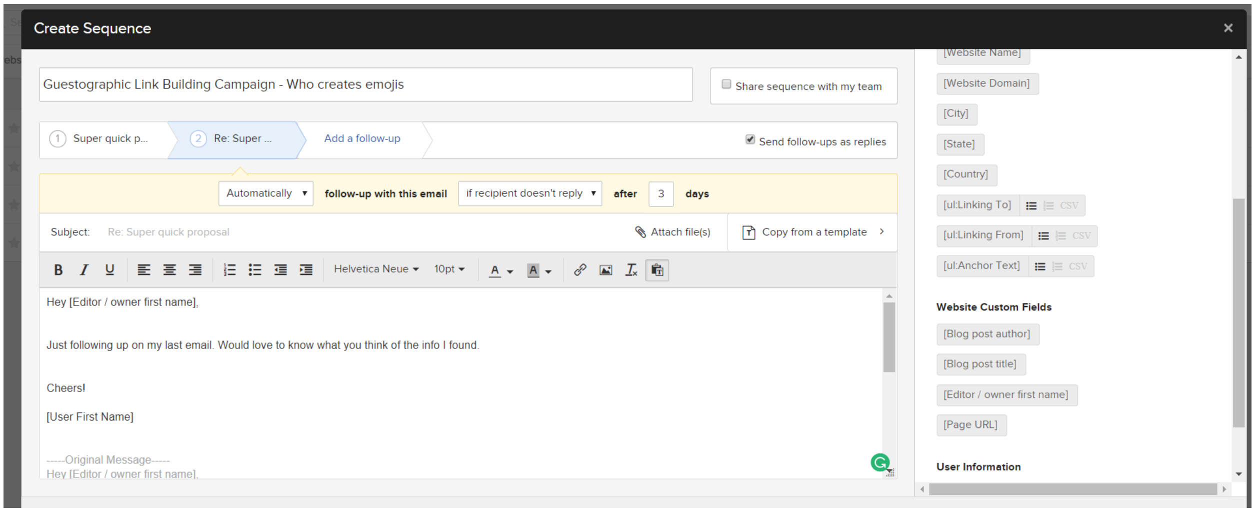
  *Thanks,*

  *[User First Name]"*

- Furthermore, in the given example, you will see text marked with "[ ]". That is where *you* should enter the necessary details, according to your particular data (e.g. in our example, the "[topic]" was replaced with "social media automation")

- Also, you should keep in mind to use the [User First Name] dynamic field as a signature, especially if there are multiple people using the same BuzzStream account. Doing this will allow everyone on your team to use the same template and still have them customized with their name when they have to run an outreach campaign.

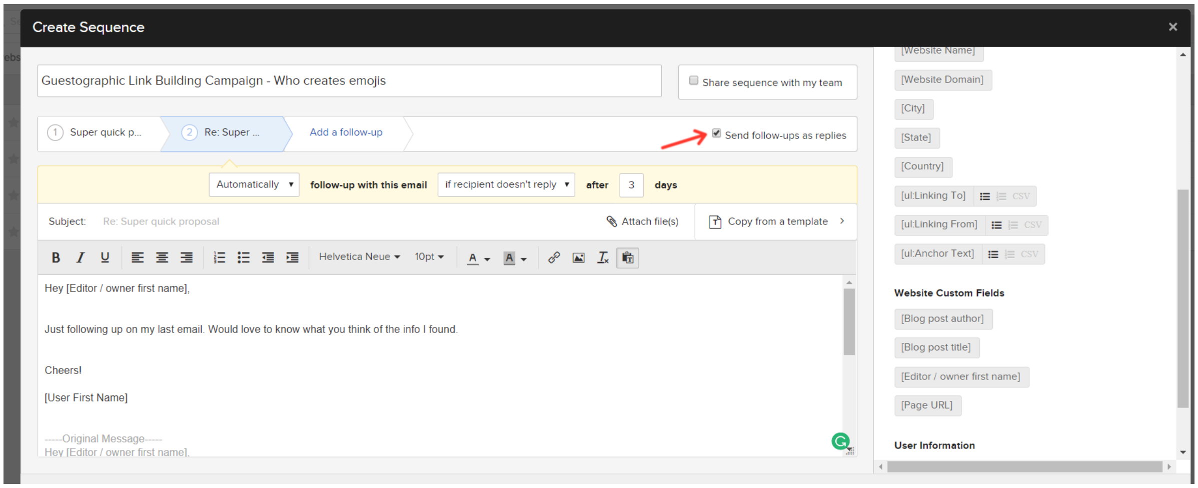
11. Once done with the first email, you should add a follow-up email as well. BuzzStream allows you to do this easily and even set up very precise parameters (e.g. sending the first follow-up email if the recipient doesn't reply in 3 days).




12. The process stays the same as with the first outreach email, but the text should change, so that it's adapted to the situation. Following, you will see the texts we used. Again, same as with the original email, our suggestion is that you use texts created by yourself, as this will make the entire campaign more credible.

> *"Hey [name],*
>
> *Just following up on my last message.*
>
> *I found this great post on your site and noticed you linked to a resource that's [a bit outdated / could be better / could be more actionable].*
>
> *If you think this would be useful for your users, we just created a resource you could link to that, unlike the post above, [rationale]. Here's the link to it: [URL of your post]*
>
> *Thanks,*
>
> *[User First Name]"*

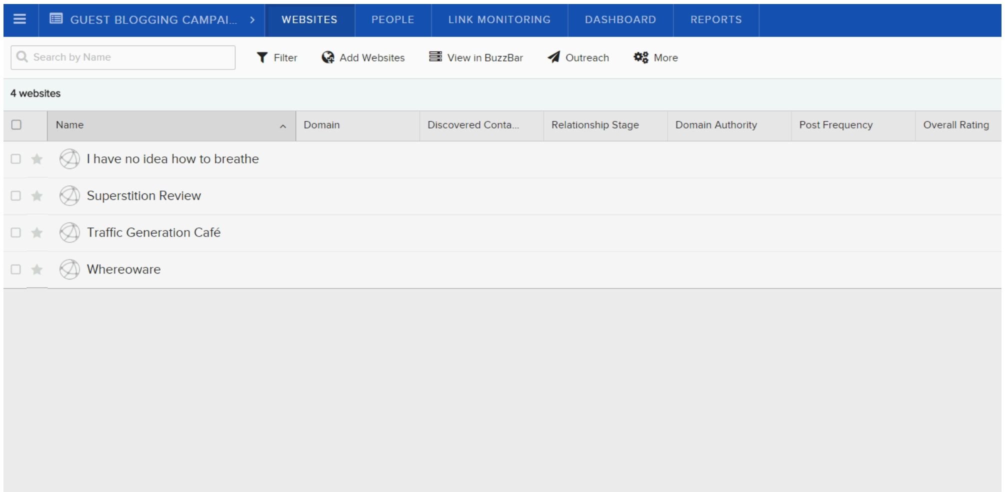
- Make sure the “Send follow-ups as replies” box is ticked because this will make your emails look more natural (and thus, it will make editors and site owners trust you more).




13. When your email templates are all set up, it is time for you to begin the actual outreach. You can do this two ways:

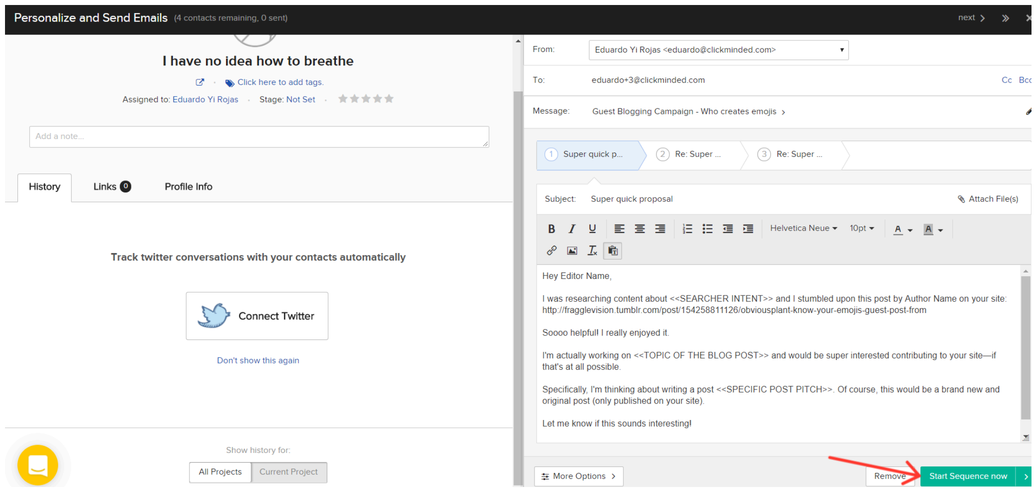
    a. Send Individually. This is the recommended option if you are using this outreach campaign for the first time (or if you are using BuzzStream for the first time, for that matter). To do it, follow these steps:

        i. Select the sites you want to outreach to.
        ii. Click on Outreach -> Send Individually
        iii. Click on Start Outreach.




        iv. Check to see if all the details and the text are correct.

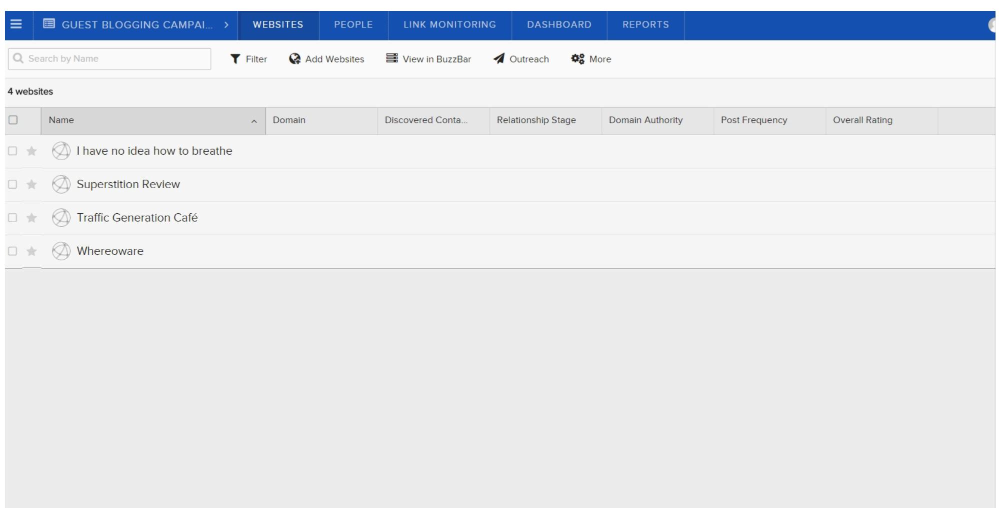
v. Click on Start sequence now.



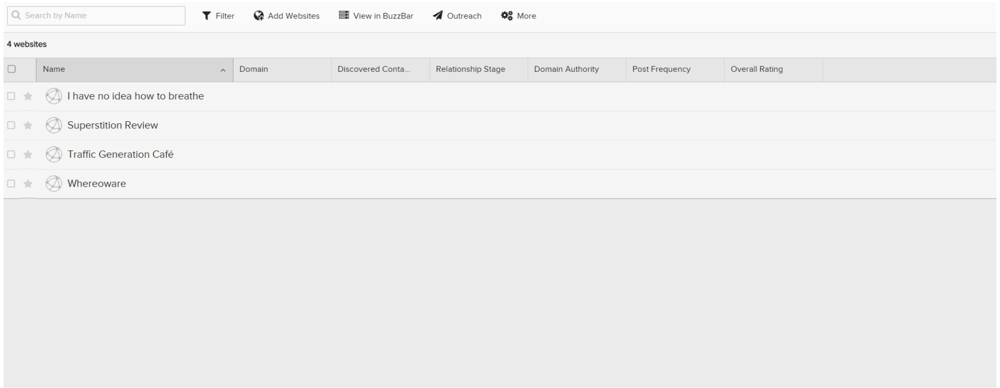

vi. Repeat the same process with all the websites on your list.

b. Bulk Send. This is an easier, less time-consuming method, but it is generally recommended if you are already familiar with your campaign and/or BuzzStream. To go on this path, follow these steps:

i. Click on Outreach -> Bulk Send.



ii. Choose a sequence or template.




iii. Check to see if everything is correct.
iv. Click on Next: Review.
v. Check again to see if everything is correct.
vi. Click on Next: Confirm.
vii. Check to see if the settings are correct (in case you modified anything in the previous steps). And yes, this is the last check - we can see the eye rolls from here! :)
viii. Click Send Now.

## ☐ Replying to emails

Simply launching an outreach campaign will not do anything— you have to make sure to *actually* get your links on other, high-ranking websites.

So, once your outreach emails are sent, you should be ready to reply to whatever replies you get. Here are the steps to follow if you want to make the most out of this stage of the link-building stage:

1. Reply to emails as soon as you receive them. You want to show editors and site owners you are genuinely interested in working with them. Plus, leaving these emails “for later” can be quite risky—chances are they’ll soon get lost in a sea of random newsletters and chain emails.

2. Most of the times, the replies you receive will fall into one of the following categories:

    a. Positive reply: your outreach email recipients replies saying they would like to link to your content. This is the best-case scenario. All you need to do is follow-up to make sure that they actually added the link.

   b. Negative reply: one of your targeted site editors or site owners replies with a negative answer.

   c. Charging you: your recipients want to charge you for adding a link, politely turn down their offer (this goes against Google's terms of service and the risk is usually not worth it)

   d. No reply: If your outreach email recipients don't reply, they will receive a follow-up email via BuzzStream, according to the sequence you created and the settings you chose for your campaign.

3. Update the "Link Opportunities Worksheet" with their replies as the campaign progresses (the "Status" and "Notes" columns in your "Link targets" sheet.)

That's it! Using this technique, you will be able to consistently attract backlinks to your website.