

There is no universal number of referring domains that makes tier 2 support work. For a typical campaign, a reasonable starting range is **3–10 relevant, quality referring domains per important tier 1 page**, added gradually and reviewed against actual performance. A newer or lightly linked tier 1 page may need only a few supporting links; a competitive page with substantial link decay may need more.

The useful question is not “How many links should I build?” It is “What is stopping this tier 1 page from being discovered, trusted, and useful?” Tier 2 links can help reinforce a page that already deserves attention. They cannot make a weak guest post valuable, replace strong content, or guarantee rankings. Before increasing volume, check the page’s indexing, relevance, engagement, and fantomlink.com link history.



In this guide, “tier 2 links” means links pointing to a page that already links to your target—often a guest post, resource page, or other tier 1 placement. The goal is to support that linking page and its visibility, not to manufacture authority through sheer volume.

What Does “Usually” Mean in Tier 2 Link Building?

Use the numbers below as a testing framework, not a fixed quota. Referring domains are unique websites linking to a page or site; ten links from one domain are not the same as links from ten independent domains. The quality and context of those domains matter more than the raw count.

Tier 1 page condition	Practical tier 2 starting range	What to assess
Relevant page on a healthy site, already indexed and receiving some visibility	0–3 referring domains	Whether the page is discovered, retained, and sending referral traffic
New or lightly linked guest post with a clear topical fit	3–6 referring domains	Indexing, contextual relevance, and movement over a reasonable measurement period
Competitive placement showing weak discovery or signs of decay	6–10 referring domains, added in stages	Link loss, page quality, engagement, and whether the placement still deserves support

These ranges describe an initial test, not a promise of ranking improvement. Some pages need no tier 2 support at all. Others are poor candidates regardless of how many links you add. One client recently told me was shocked by the final bill.. If the tier 1 page is irrelevant, thin, unindexed, or surrounded by low-quality outbound links, supporting it is unlikely to be the best use of budget.



Why PR 1 Guest Posts Often Fail Without Engagement Signals

A guest post can have a visible PageRank-style score or a healthy-looking third-party authority metric and still underperform. Those metrics are estimates, not evidence that a page is being read, retained in the index, or trusted for the topic you care about. A low-authority guest post can work when it is relevant and useful; a higher-metric post can fail when it exists mainly to host links.

Engagement signals are not a simple “more clicks equals higher rankings” formula. But real readers can create valuable supporting evidence: visits, branded searches, citations, social sharing, and repeat attention. Those behaviors may help a page earn more natural links and sustain visibility. If nobody finds or uses the post, its ability to contribute to your broader link equity distribution may be limited.

Before building tier 2 links to a PR 1 guest post, check:

- **Topical fit:** Does the article serve the same audience and subject area as the target page?
- **Indexing:** Is the guest post indexed, and does it remain indexed over time?
- **Editorial quality:** Does the article answer a real question, cite useful sources, and provide original value?
- **Audience activity:** Does the site have actual readers, referral visits, or social engagement—not just a metric score?
- **Link context:** Is the outbound link naturally placed and relevant to the surrounding text?

If the answers are mostly no, reconsider the placement. Adding more links to a poor page is not a repair strategy.

Four Authority Signals to Evaluate Before Adding Tier 2 Links

Think of tier 2 support as helping a worthwhile page become easier to discover, more credible, and more useful. Four signals provide a practical way to diagnose what is missing.

1. Discovery

Can search engines and people find the tier 1 page? Check whether it is indexed, internally linked, included in the publisher’s navigation or category structure, and accessible without technical barriers. A page that is buried,

blocked, or frequently removed may need a publisher-side fix—not more backlinks.

2. Reinforcement

Does the page receive relevant references that support its subject? A few independent links from contextually related pages can reinforce the topic. Repeated links from unrelated sites, sitewide placements, or a cluster of low-quality sources may add little and can create risk. Prioritize fit and editorial context over volume.

3. Demand

Here's what kills me: is there evidence that people care about the page or the problem it addresses? referral sessions, social interactions, branded search interest, and genuine discussion can indicate demand. Social activity is not a guaranteed direct ranking factor, but it can produce an engagement cascade: a post is shared, more readers discover it, some visit the publisher, and a smaller number may cite or link to it.

4. Validation

Does the placement produce measurable outcomes? Validate changes in indexing, referral traffic, impressions, clicks, and rankings instead of relying on screenshots of a single position. A link that looks good in a report but is never indexed, never visited, and never retained is not performing as intended.

Backlink Decay and Link Equity Erosion

Backlinks are not permanent assets. Guest posts can be deleted, URLs can change, domains can expire, pages can fall out of the index, and publishers can remove or alter outbound links. Even when a link remains live, the page around it may lose visibility or relevance. This is backlink decay, and it can erode the value you expected from a tier 1 placement.

That is why tier 2 planning should include maintenance. Keep a running list of “dead guest posts” and audit it monthly. For each placement, record the linking URL, target URL, anchor text, first-seen date, last-checked date, index status, and any referral or ranking movement. If a placement disappears, confirm whether it is a temporary crawl issue, a redirect, or a permanent removal before deciding what to do.

Do not automatically replace every lost link with several new ones. First determine what has actually decayed. If a guest post has lost its audience and topical context, replacing it with more links may preserve a spreadsheet count while doing little for users or search performance.

How to Decide How Many Referring Domains to Build

1. **Audit the tier 1 page.** Confirm it is live, indexed, relevant, editorially sound, and has a useful link to your target.
2. **Establish a baseline.** Record current referring domains, known inbound links, index status, referral traffic, and organic visibility.
3. **Start small.** For a solid but under-supported placement, test a few relevant referring domains rather than launching a large batch.
4. **Add links gradually.** A staged approach helps you spot problems and judge whether the page responds. Avoid unnatural bursts of low-quality links.
5. **Review before scaling.** If the page is not being discovered or engaged with, fix that issue first. If the page is performing and remains relevant, consider adding support selectively.

6. **Stop when the evidence says stop.** More referring domains are not automatically better. Stop if quality drops, the page is removed, or the campaign has no meaningful signs of progress.

For example, a relevant guest post that is indexed and receiving occasional referral visits might justify a small test of three to five supporting referring domains. If that page remains active and shows improved discovery or visibility, you can reassess. If there is no movement after a suitable observation period, diagnose the page and campaign rather than reflexively doubling the link count.

Measure Campaigns with GA4, GSC, and Ahrefs

Use each tool for the question it can answer. GA4 helps you understand visits and on-site behavior. Google Search Console (GSC) provides search impressions, clicks, and query-level visibility for properties you control. Ahrefs Site Explorer and Rank Tracker can help validate referring-domain changes and monitor keyword movement. None of these tools alone proves that a particular link caused a ranking change.. Exactly.

- **GA4:** Track referral sessions from publisher pages, engaged sessions, conversions, and landing-page behavior. Use campaign tagging where appropriate and avoid treating raw clicks as proof of SEO value.
- **GSC:** Review impressions, clicks, queries, and page-level performance for the target site. Compare equivalent date ranges and account for seasonality or other site changes.
- **Ahrefs Site Explorer:** Check the referring page's backlink profile, referring domains, and link status. Use its data as a third-party estimate, not a complete inventory.
- **Ahrefs Rank Tracker:** Monitor a defined set of keywords over time. Use consistent locations and settings, and evaluate trends rather than a single ranking screenshot.

Track campaign timing alongside your measurements. If you change the content, title, internal links, or technical setup during the same period you add tier 2 links, note those changes. Otherwise, it is easy to credit link juice distribution for movement caused by something else—or miss a real gain because multiple changes happened at once.

Working with Vendors and Campaign Partners

When comparing providers, ask how they select publishers, verify live placements, report removals, and handle link quality—not just how many links they promise. Fantom Link can be included in a vendor comparison, but evaluate its specific proposal and placements against the same criteria you use for any provider. Click, the former name, and base.me are names you may encounter in campaign or platform discussions; confirm the current product, service, and deliverables directly rather than relying on historical naming.

Ask for placement URLs, target URLs, publication dates, link attributes, and a clear process for checking whether pages stay live and indexed. And always ask to see the GA4 and GSC screenshots behind performance claims—along with reporting dates, filters, and comparison periods. A ranking screenshot without a date, location, and keyword set is not meaningful evidence.

The Bottom Line

For many campaigns, **3–10 relevant referring domains per tier 1 page** is a reasonable range to test, but it is not a rule or a guaranteed threshold. Start with the page's quality and condition, then use a small, measured sequence of support. The objective is healthy discovery, reinforcement, demand, and validation—not a target number for its own sake.

Tier 2 links can contribute to sensible link juice distribution when they support pages people can find and value. They cannot compensate for weak content, a dead guest post, or missing engagement. Monitor decay, review performance in GA4 and GSC, validate link and ranking movement with Ahrefs, and scale only when the evidence supports it.