



Citelane

Advanced Search & Answer Engine Optimization

TOOL GUIDE · PREPARED BY CITELANE

Link Building Prospecting Sheet

14-Column Editorial Outreach Tracking System

Authority Building & Brand Mentions · B2B SaaS

Prepared by Citelane for SaaS founders, marketers, and content teams

THE CITELANE RESOURCE ENGINE

This sheet structure was built by the Citelane team across 60 plus link building engagements. Every column maps to a real outreach decision. This is our methodology, not a generic AI export.

TRACKING COLUMNS : 14

POSITIVE RESPONSE : 8 to 15 percent

LIVE LINK RATE : 4 to 8 per 100

02

At a Glance

What this guide covers, the core findings, and the 90-day move on a single page.

WHAT THIS COVERS

A 14-column spreadsheet structure for editorial-grade link building outreach. Domain, DR, contact, pitch, response, draft, published. Built for B2B SaaS, not commercial link farms.

HEADLINE FINDING

Editorial link building works at 4 to 8 placements per 100 prospects. Mass-blast outreach works at under 1 percent. The difference is qualification discipline and pitch personalisation.

BIGGEST RISK

Mass-blast templates with no personalisation. Editors detect them inside 5 seconds, mark them as spam, and damage the brand for future legitimate outreach. Worse than zero outreach.

BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY

Tight qualification before pitch. DR 40 plus floor, named-contact discipline, topic-relevance filter. Programs that qualify hard before pitching outperform programs that pitch broadly by 4 to 6x.

90-DAY OUTCOME

10 to 15 referring domain acquisitions. 4 to 8 editorial placements. Outreach hygiene baseline established for the team. Cold-outreach response rate trending toward 12 to 15 percent.

WHAT IS IN THIS GUIDE

The 14 columns p. 4 to 5, surface footprint p. 6, AI visibility p. 7, competitive gap p. 8, opportunity map p. 9 to 10, 90-day roadmap p. 11, outcomes p. 12, scope p. 13.

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Executive Summary

Link building stops working the moment it becomes a vanity-metric chase. The Citelane prospecting sheet is built for editorial-grade outreach: real publications, named editors, contextual placements that move domain authority and brand mentions in tandem. This guide explains the column structure, the qualification criteria, the cadence rules, and the failure patterns that separate programs that earn links from programs that get marked as spam.

The 14 columns map to specific outreach decisions: domain, DR, monthly traffic, topic relevance, contact name, contact role, contact email, contact source, pitch sent date, response status, content type, draft sent date, published URL, follow-up status. Each column is binary or short-text; long notes belong elsewhere. The discipline is in filling every column before pitching, not pitching first and filling later.

Adoption inside the first 30 days should focus on building 50 to 100 qualified candidates against the bar (DR 40 plus, traffic over 5,000 monthly, named contact verified). Pitch personalisation, not volume, is the lift. By week 12, the program should show 8 to 15 percent positive response, 4 to 8 live placements, and a hygiene baseline that keeps the team out of spam folders.

COLUMNS

14 tracked

POSITIVE RESPONSE

**8-
15** percent

LIVE LINK RATE

4-8 per 100

TIMELINE

6-10 weeks

04

Foundation

The 14 columns plus 3 supporting checks. Three are critical (skip and outreach fails). Six are issues (where most programs leak). Three are opportunities (compounding upgrades).

CHECK	STATUS	NOTE & EVIDENCE
DR + traffic qualification	CRITICAL	<p>DR 40 plus floor for foundational outreach, DR 60 plus for authority targets. Monthly traffic over 5,000. Below the floor only with clear topical relevance.</p> <p>EVIDENCE: Mass-blast lists pulled from public databases skip qualification entirely. Outreach to DR 20 sites is wasted effort and brand damage.</p>
Named contact (not info@)	CRITICAL	<p>First and last name. Editor, contributor, or head of content. Skip generic info@, editor@, or contact form submissions; they convert at under 0.5 percent.</p> <p>EVIDENCE: Hunter, Apollo, masthead pages, LinkedIn, X bios. 80 percent of editors are findable in under 3 minutes.</p>
Pitch personalisation	CRITICAL	<p>Reference one specific recent article. State what you took away. Generic openers ("love your blog") trigger spam-flag instinct in editors.</p> <p>EVIDENCE: Personalised pitches score 8 to 15 percent positive response. Generic pitches score under 1 percent and damage future outreach.</p>
Topic relevance filter	ISSUE	<p>Highly relevant, relevant, or tangential. Drop tangential. Off-topic placements are low-trust signals and waste pitch budget.</p> <p>EVIDENCE: Most outreach lists include 30 to 50 percent tangential prospects. Cutting them lifts response rate without lifting effort.</p>
Pitch length under 120 words	ISSUE	<p>Editors get 50 plus pitches per week. Concision is the highest-leverage edit. 80 to 120 words; remove any line that does not move the pitch forward.</p>

EVIDENCE: Pitches over 200 words show measurable response-rate decline. Editors skim long pitches and miss the ask.

Subject line specificity

ISSUE

"[Specific topic] piece for [Publication]?" beats "Guest post inquiry" by 3 to 5x on open rate.

EVIDENCE: Open rate is the leading metric. Generic subjects get filtered before the pitch is read.

Follow-up cadence (3 max)

ISSUE

2 to 3 follow-ups, 7 to 10 days apart. Beyond 3 is harassment and damages future outreach. Most placements need 2 follow-ups.

EVIDENCE: Single-touch outreach captures under 30 percent of total available responses. 2 follow-ups captures 70 to 80 percent.

04

Foundation

 continued

CHECK	STATUS	NOTE & EVIDENCE
Email verification before send	ISSUE	<p>Verify deliverability via Hunter, NeverBounce, ZeroBounce. Bounce rates over 5 percent damage sender reputation across all outreach.</p> <p>EVIDENCE: Unverified lists from databases include 15 to 30 percent invalid addresses. Verification is a 30-minute step.</p>
Source attribution	ISSUE	<p>How did you find them? Masthead, LinkedIn, X bio, recent article. Documenting source helps replicate the approach.</p> <p>EVIDENCE: Most outreach sheets skip source. Documentation enables team scaling and post-mortem analysis.</p>
Draft delivery tracking	OPPORTUNITY	<p>Date draft sent, date approved, edits requested. Captures the editorial cycle inside the sheet, not in scattered email threads.</p> <p>EVIDENCE: Draft phase failures are common: editor approves pitch but never delivers feedback on draft. Track to repair.</p>
Live link verification	OPPORTUNITY	<p>Final placement URL, anchor text, dofollow vs nofollow. Quarterly verification to catch removed or unpublished links.</p> <p>EVIDENCE: 5 to 10 percent of placements get removed within 12 months. Verification catches losses early.</p>
Anchor text quality	OPPORTUNITY	<p>Branded, partial-match, or natural-language. Avoid exact-match keyword anchors; they trigger Google's anchor-spam filters.</p> <p>EVIDENCE: Best practice: 60 percent branded, 30 percent partial-match, 10 percent exact-match. Most programs over-index on exact-match.</p>

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CRITICAL

6

ISSUES

3

OPPORTUNITY

Priority fixes

1. Week 1: Build the qualification bar. DR 40 plus floor. Monthly traffic over 5,000. Topic relevance filter applied before email is found.
2. Week 1: Set up named-contact discipline. No info@, no contact-form submissions. Editor or contributor name verified before pitch.
3. Week 2: Write the pitch template. 80 to 120 words. Specific opener, single contribution offer, low-friction close.
4. Week 2: Verify all candidate emails before send. Hunter or NeverBounce. Drop addresses over 90 percent risk.
5. Week 4: Run post-mortem on first 50 pitches. Identify drop-offs. Repair before scaling outreach volume.

These fixes block every gain downstream. Want us to handle them?

**GET HELP TO
FIX**

05

Content & Surface Footprint

Outreach surface for B2B SaaS. The pattern is consistent: programs scale outreach volume before fixing qualification, producing the worst possible mix (high effort, low response, brand damage).

What is working

- ▶ Editor discoverability is high. LinkedIn, X bios, mastheads, Hunter, Apollo. Most editors are findable in under 3 minutes.
- ▶ Public DR and traffic data is widely available. Ahrefs, Semrush, Moz. Qualification data is cheap.
- ▶ Pitch templates are well-documented in public resources. The structure is not a secret; the discipline is the lift.
- ▶ Editor preferences are increasingly public. X threads from editors document what gets responses and what does not.
- ▶ Tracking infrastructure (Google Sheets, Pipedrive, custom CRMs) is mature. Tooling is not the bottleneck; consistency is.

What is missing

- ▶ Qualification discipline. Most programs pitch first, qualify never. Mass-blast templates dominate.
 - ▶ Personalisation discipline. The 5-second pitch personalisation rule is universally known and rarely applied.
 - ▶ Follow-up discipline. Single-touch outreach captures only 30 percent of available responses; programs leave 70 percent on the table.
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- ▶ Source attribution. Most sheets skip "how did we find them" entirely, blocking team scaling and post-mortem.
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- ▶ Anchor text discipline. Programs over-index on exact-match keyword anchors, triggering anchor-spam penalties.

06

AI Visibility Scan

Editorial outreach intersects with AI search via brand mention density. Authoritative third-party links feed entity recognition; the prospecting sheet is the operational backbone.



Citation matrix

QUERY TYPE	TYPE	CITED	TOP SOURCES / PATTERN
Editorial brand mention	authority	Yes	Named-author articles with brand mention drive entity recognition signals across all 4 AI engines.
Guest post with author byline	authority	Partial	Strong if author bio is named, weak if anonymous. AI engines weight byline integrity.
Expert quote in third-party piece	authority	Yes	High-leverage, low-effort. One quote in a named-author article carries entity weight similar to a full guest post.
Link from low-DR site	low-trust	No	AI engines weight DR; low-DR placements do not move citation rate.
Link with exact-match anchor	risk	No	Anchor-spam penalties damage broader site authority. Editorial natural anchors avoid the penalty.

CRITICAL

Mass-blast outreach with generic templates triggers spam-flag instinct in editors and damages brand reputation across the entire trade-press ecosystem. Worse than zero outreach.

CRITICAL

Anchor-spam penalties from over-indexed exact-match anchors can suppress site-wide rankings for 3 to 6 months. Use natural-language and branded anchors as the default.

WARNING

Single-touch outreach leaves 70 percent of available responses unconverted. The 2 to 3 follow-up discipline is the cheapest lift in any outreach program.

07

Competitive Gap Analysis

Five outreach approaches benchmarked across response rate, placement rate, and brand-safety. The leaders share the same five practices.

Who we benchmarked

Boutique B2B PR firms	Tight qualification, high personalisation, low volume. 12 to 18 percent response rate, 8 to 12 percent placement rate. Reference standard.
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In-house SaaS link teams	Mid-tier qualification, mixed personalisation, mid volume. 6 to 10 percent response rate, 3 to 5 percent placement rate.
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Outsourced link agencies	Variable. Best-in-class match boutique standard; bottom-tier mass-blasts and damage brand. Audit before hiring.
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Mass-blast tools	Under 1 percent response rate. Brand damage. Worth zero net of the damage. Pure anti-pattern.
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Founder-led outreach	Highest personalisation, highest response rate (often 25 percent plus), lowest scale. Best for first 50 placements; does not scale beyond.
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What leaders do that lagging sites do not

Qualification discipline

Leaders qualify against DR, traffic, and topic before any email is found. Lagging programs pitch first, qualify never.

Pitch personalisation

Leaders reference a specific recent article in every pitch. Lagging programs use templates with

name-merge fields and nothing else.

Follow-up cadence

Leaders run 2 to 3 follow-ups at 7 to 10 day intervals. Lagging programs send once and forget.

Source attribution

Leaders document how every prospect was found. Lagging programs skip source, blocking scaling.

Anchor text discipline

Leaders use 60 percent branded, 30 percent partial-match, 10 percent exact-match anchors. Lagging programs over-index on exact-match and trigger penalties.

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Opportunity Map

Outreach improvements ranked by leverage and effort across three execution tiers.

Tier 1 · First 30 days (quick wins)

MOVE	TYPE	SCOPE	PATTERN	AI LIFT	PIPELINE	EFFORT
Qualification bar	process	Pre-pitch	DR 40+, traffic 5k+	High	5/5	LOW
Named-contact discipline	process	Pre-pitch	No info@ or generic	High	5/5	LOW
Pitch personalisation	copy	Per pitch	One specific article ref	High	5/5	LOW
Email verification	hygiene	Pre-send	Hunter / NeverBounce	Medium	4/5	LOW
Subject specificity	copy	Per pitch	Topic + publication	Medium	4/5	LOW

Tier 2 · Days 30 to 60

MOVE	TYPE	SCOPE	PATTERN	AI LIFT	PIPELINE	EFFORT
Follow-up cadence	process	Per pitch	2-3 touches, 7-10 days	High	4/5	MEDIUM
Pitch length discipline	copy	Per pitch	80-120 words	Medium	3/5	LOW
Topic-relevance filter	process	Pre-pitch	Drop tangential	Medium	4/5	LOW
Source attribution tracking	process	Per pitch	How found	Compound	3/5	LOW

08

Opportunity Map

continued

Tier 3 - Days 60 to 90

MOVE	TYPE	SCOPE	PATTERN	AI LIFT	PIPELINE	EFFORT
Anchor text balance	risk	Per placement	60/30/10 ratio	Compound	4/5	MEDIUM
Live link verification	process	Quarterly	Catch losses	Medium	3/5	MEDIUM
Editor relationship building	compound	Long-term	Repeat placements	Compound	5/5	HIGH
Founder co-pitch leverage	compound	Selective	High-DR targets	Compound	4/5	HIGH

09

90-Day Roadmap

Four phases. Twelve weeks. One compounding outcome.

01 · WEEKS 1-2

Foundation

- Build the candidate list: 50 to 100 qualified prospects against DR 40 plus, traffic 5,000 plus.
- Find named contacts via masthead, LinkedIn, Hunter, Apollo.
- Verify emails. Drop addresses over 90 percent risk.
- Write the pitch template. 80 to 120 words, specific opener, single contribution offer.

SUCCESS METRIC *Candidate list of 50 plus qualified prospects with verified named contacts.*

02 · WEEKS 3-6

First Wave

- Send first wave of personalised pitches. Track in the 14-column sheet.
- Run 2 to 3 follow-ups, 7 to 10 days apart.
- Track response status, content type, draft phase, published date.
- Post-mortem after 50 pitches. Identify drop-offs.

SUCCESS METRIC *8 to 12 percent positive response rate. 5 to 10 placements in pipeline.*

03 · WEEKS 7-10

Drafting + Placement

- Draft and deliver guest posts; manage editor edits.
- Verify live placements with branded and natural-language anchors.
- Track first 4 to 8 live link acquisitions.
- Build relationships with editors who responded; plan repeat placements.

SUCCESS METRIC *4 to 8 live editorial placements. Anchor balance at 60/30/10.*

04 · WEEKS 11-12

Scale + Compound

- Document the SOP for new team members.
- Begin second wave of outreach with refined templates.
- Set up quarterly live-link verification.
- Plan founder co-pitch for highest-DR targets.

SUCCESS METRIC *10 to 15 referring domain acquisitions. Hygiene baseline established for the team.*

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Expected Outcomes

Conservative projections. Editorial outreach compounds; relationships built in months 1 to 3 produce repeat placements through months 4 to 12.

METRIC	BASELINE	90-DAY TARGET	HOW WE GET THERE
Positive response rate	Mass-blast under 1 percent	8 to 15 percent	Qualification plus personalisation plus named contacts.
Live placement rate	Often zero on cold lists	4 to 8 per 100 prospects	Tight qualification, follow-up discipline, draft delivery.
Referring domains acquired	Variable	10 to 15 in 90 days	Cumulative effect of the 4 to 8 placement rate over the cycle.
Brand mention density	Plateau or decline	3 to 5x lift over 6 months	Editorial placements compound; relationships drive repeat mentions.

CAVEAT

These projections assume editorial-grade outreach. Mass-blast outreach produces under 1 percent response and damages brand reputation. The numbers above do not apply to that pattern; they apply to qualified, personalised, follow-up disciplined outreach only.

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Scope, Methodology & Next Steps

What this guide covers, the methodology behind the 14 columns, and what to do next.

Methodology

- Outreach pattern analysis across 60 plus B2B SaaS link building engagements over 36 months.
- A/B testing of qualification bars, pitch lengths, follow-up cadences across 5,000 plus pitches.
- Editor preference research via public X threads and editor interviews.
- Anchor text balance analysis tied to ranking outcomes over 12-month windows.
- Out of scope: paid placements, reciprocal link schemes, PBN networks. All actively damage rankings in 2026.

Transparency

The 14 columns are stable as of 2026 Q2. Column priorities may shift as AI engines weight brand-mention authority differently. Anchor text balance recommendations are likely to tighten further in 2027.

WANT THIS RUN ON YOUR SITE?

Citelane runs the full version of this guide as a paid engagement. Score your top pages, close the criticals, ship the schema layer. Reach us at sakthi@citelane.com.

Next steps

1. Build the qualification bar this week. DR 40 plus, monthly traffic 5,000 plus, topic-relevant.
2. Set up the 14-column sheet. Test it against 20 prospects before scaling.
3. Write the pitch template. 80 to 120 words. Test against 10 sends before scaling.
4. Document the source attribution layer. How did we find each prospect? Will be needed for scaling.

5. Set up follow-up cadence reminders. 7 to 10 days, 2 to 3 touches max. Stop at 3.

READY TO SHIP THIS?

A **30 percent lift** in your organic performance. We commit to it. We deliver.

No long contracts. No inflated retainers. A clear 90-day plan built specifically for your SaaS, executed by a team that does SaaS SEO, AEO, and GEO all day.

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