

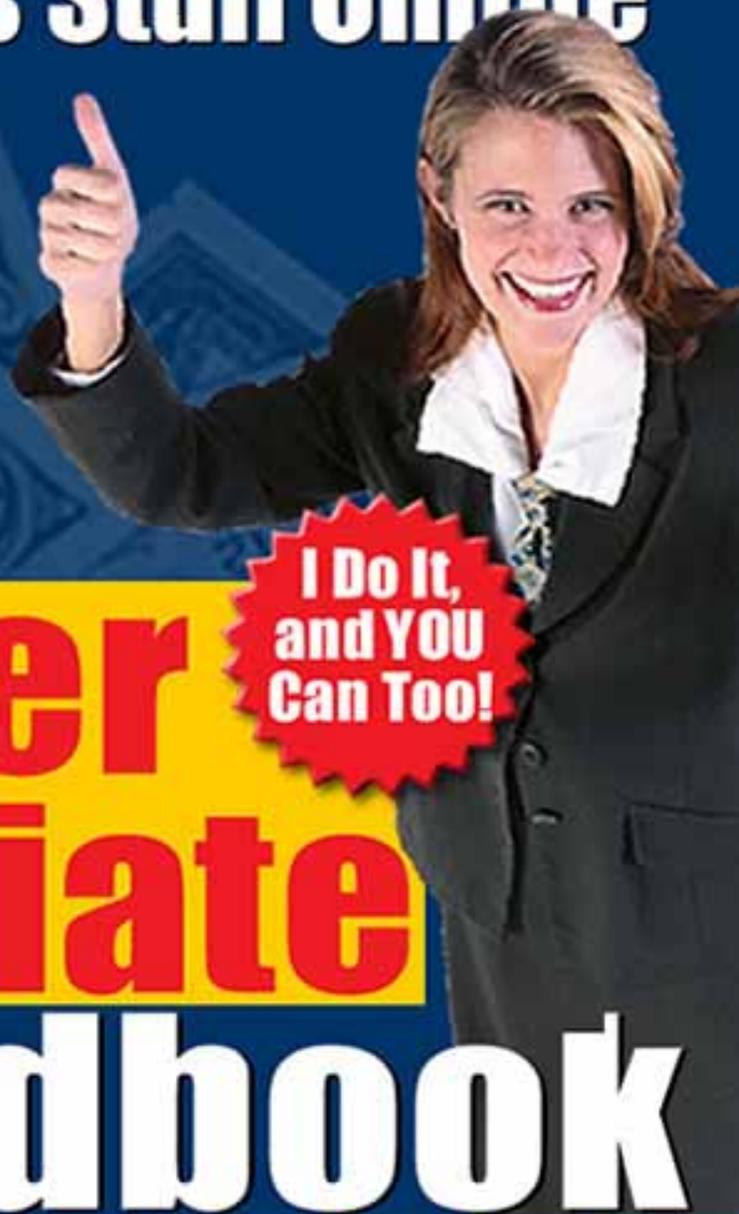
How I Made **\$436,797**
Last Year Selling Other
People's Stuff Online

The

**Super
Affiliate**

Handbook

by **Rosalind Gardner**



The Super Affiliate Handbook:

How I Made \$436,797 Last Year Selling
Other People's Stuff Online

By Rosalind Gardner, Super Affiliate

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Introduction

Thank You & Congratulations

Thank you for buying the "Super Affiliate Handbook", and Congratulations! for taking a positive step towards your future as an affiliate marketer.

Before reading any further, please be sure to sign up to receive the '**Net Profits Coach**' newsletter. Reading it regularly will keep you up to date on Internet and Affiliate marketing changes and developments.

Get it at:

<http://rosalindgardner.com/>

Back to the Handbook... I know you'll find it a valuable resource that you return to again and again as you build your affiliate marketing business.

Affiliate marketing has been very good to me. My Internet business success has allowed me to quit my job, and pursue a lifestyle I could only dream about just a few years ago.

I attribute my good fortune to a combination of hard work, perseverance and large doses of luck.

As someone once said, 'the harder I work, the luckier I get'. So true, and yet I still feel incredibly lucky to be where I am.

Now I'm going to share my 'lucky secret' with you.

Affiliate marketing on the Internet is here to stay, and merchants want YOU!

I urge you to take advantage of this incredible opportunity as soon as possible. Part of what makes this so special is that you can start an Internet business part-time while you enjoy the security of your full-time job.

Happy reading! I wish you health, happiness and much prosperity!

Make No Promises, Tell No Lies (Disclaimer)

As much as I'd love to think that everyone who follows the advice in the "Super Affiliate Handbook" (SAH) will become fabulously wealthy by result, the truth is that I can't promise that will happen for you.

I can't guarantee that you will actually read the book, follow my suggestions to the letter and write copy that will entice your site visitors to buy vast amounts of your merchant partners' products.

I wish I could, but I can't.

So here's the nitty gritty legal statement.

Legal Notices and Disclaimer

THE FOLLOWING TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY:

While all attempts have been made to verify information provided, neither myself, nor any ancillary party, assumes any responsibility for errors, omissions, or contradictory interpretation of the subject matter herein.

Any perceived slights of specific people or organizations are unintentional.

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NOTE: Many of the links in this ebook are affiliate links, which means that I may earn a commission if you choose to buy a product after visiting the merchant's site through that link. This is an example of affiliate marketing in action - and the subject of this ebook.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I'd like to thank Corey Rudl of the Internet Marketing Center. By profiling my affiliate business on his "Secrets to Their Success" site, Corey proved to me that successful affiliate marketing is a subject of interest to thousands of aspiring netpreneurs.

I also wish to thank Allan Gardyne of AssociatePrograms.com. In publishing information about my 'Secrets to Their Success' interview in his newsletter, my site received many more visitors who were interested in affiliate marketing.

Both gentlemen helped me realize that I had valuable information to share with others.

Next, I have to thank everyone who ever asked me a question about doing business online. Every question asked was another great reason to write "The Super Affiliate Handbook".

Last, but not least, I am grateful to you, Dear Reader, for making time to read this ebook. I hope it proves enormously beneficial to you in all of your online moneymaking ventures!

With Best Wishes for YOUR Success,

Rosalind

About the Author

Rosalind Gardner's success with affiliate marketing on the Internet is positive proof that ANYONE can succeed in an Internet business.

She'd been working as an air traffic controller for almost twenty years, and the crazy schedules had started to seriously affect her health. She knew she had to leave the job before it killed her.

In 1997 after seeing a banner ad for the One and Only dating service offering webmasters a chance to make money with their web sites, she KNEW she had to give it a try.

The rest, as they say, is history. In 2000, well supported by her various online businesses, she left her job.

With nothing other than an intense desire to leave her job, she proved that business or web design experience weren't necessary to succeed on the 'Net.

Her interviews appear in Corey Rudl's *'Secrets to Their Success'*, Jason Alexander's *'Achieve Net Profits'* as well as in glossy magazines such as *Six Figure Income Magazine* and *Small Business Opportunities*. Many of her Internet marketing colleagues have written about her success, as has Allan Gardyne of *'AssociatePrograms.com'*.

This is an excerpt from Allan's article:

"A perfect example is Rosalind Gardner, who earns \$30,000 to \$50,000 a month in affiliate commissions, with a very nice 40% to 50% profit margin. ...and... She explains how she attracts more than 4,500 unique visitors a day and has sales conversions that are 3 to 5 times higher than those of the average affiliate. ...and... This isn't vague theory or book learning, it's real-life, down-to-earth advice from real people like Rosalind."

Since learning how relatively simple it is to make money online, Rosalind has been writing and consulting in the field of affiliate and Internet marketing to encourage friends, colleagues and anyone who is interested, to join her on the path to Internet riches.

Her articles appear all over the 'Net, and are available to subscribers of the *Net Profits Coach* newsletter as free content for their sites.

You too can enjoy financial freedom with an online business. Whether you are just starting out or want to improve an existing site, Rosalind can help you achieve your dream.

➔ **Six Figure Income Magazine**

<http://www.quickinfo247.com/1289465>

➔ **Secrets to Their Success**

<http://secretstotheirsuccess.com>

How to Get the Most from the “HandBook”

You are reading this because you want to learn how to make money with affiliate programs. And you want to do it without having to read an encyclopedia, AND without spending a lot of money.

So, I've kept things simple. In “The Super Affiliate Handbook”, you'll learn how to start your own affiliate marketing business quickly, easily and inexpensively.

Simple as that.

By the time you've finished this ebook, you will have all the information you need to start your own profitable affiliate marketing eBusiness.

In order to get the most out of the Handbook, please read **and follow** the advice provided in the next section.

Read the whole ebook before launching into a project. I know that the prospect of starting your own business is really exciting. But before you open an HTML editor or sign up for a bunch of affiliate programs, read "The Super Affiliate Handbook" in its entirety first.

By doing so, you will avoid the possibility of missing essential information and wasting both your time and money.

I've done my best to make the Handbook straightforward and direct, keeping the words to a minimum so reading it through won't take that much time.

Stay connected to the Internet while reading “*The Super Affiliate Handbook*”. There are many links to useful resources in the Handbook. To take advantage of them, you'll have to be connected to the Internet when you read the book.

If you'd rather read “*The Super Affiliate Handbook*” while relaxing on your couch, that's OK too! Simply make note of links in the book that you want to visit later.

Make a commitment and take action. A goal without a deadline is nothing more than a wish. If you truly desire success, you must set highly specific goals with target completion dates, develop a plan to meet those goals and then put the plan into action. Read the Handbook completely, then start acting on your plan! By approaching your work in bite-sized chunks as described in the manual, you'll find that your project becomes easily manageable.

Continue your education. Change is happening faster and faster all the time. This is especially true where technology and the Internet are concerned. Successful Internet marketing entrepreneurs realize that they need to stay abreast of the industry, or get left in the dust. This entails reading relevant newsletters, keeping an eye on your competitors and making regular investments in educational materials.

Let's Talk Business

Debunking the 6 Biggest Internet Marketing Myths

In every myth there is an element of truth. Read the sections below to discover the grain of truth in all of these Internet marketing myths.

Myth #1: Internet Marketing is EASY

Nothing worth doing in life or in business is ever 'easy'. Internet marketing takes time and effort, and anyone who suggests otherwise is selling fluff.

Having said that, relative to building a brick and mortar business, starting an Internet marketing business IS comparatively 'easy'. With an affiliate marketing business there's no inventory to carry, no shipping of goods and virtually no overhead. Affiliate marketing eliminates the cost of production, construction and employees.

So, while there is work involved in building and marketing an Internet business, doing business just doesn't get much easier than doing it online.

Myth #2: ANYONE Can Make Money Online

Nope. Simply not true.

Someone who never gets off the couch to learn anything about Internet marketing will not make money on the Web. Nor will the individual who reads the entire Internet marketing encyclopedia but never puts a viable plan into action.

This myth becomes reality if you add the word 'almost' to the front of that statement.

For example, I never would have started a business had it not been for the 'Net. Because I could see that starting an online business would be relatively simple and inexpensive, I decided to give it a try. Many thousands of others have done the same for the same reasons. As such, many people who otherwise would NOT be in business at all, ARE doing business on the 'Net.

Myth #3: You Can "GET RICH QUICK" On the Net!

Other than by lottery or inheritance, there is no such thing as 'get rich quick'.

Once again however, relative to a typical offline business, you can be making good money online in surprisingly little time. It just won't happen overnight as some unscrupulous marketers promise.

By the way, chasing 'get rich quick' schemes is almost always a waste of time and money.

Concentrate instead on building a business that gives your customers what they want and need. By focusing on customer satisfaction, you will build a solid reputation and an enduring, successful business that allows you to pursue the lifestyle of your dreams.

Myth #4: It's FREE to Do Business Online

How I wish that were true!

If we changed the statement to read, "It doesn't cost MUCH to do business online', it would be completely accurate.

Compared with building a warehouse or leasing office space in downtown New York, Internet business start-up and maintenance costs are incredibly low. Once setup is complete, the only ongoing costs you'll have are your Internet connection, continuing education, and advertising costs.

Myth #5: It's TOO LATE to Start an Internet Business

I often hear the following questions from skeptics, 'Isn't it too late to start an Internet business?' and 'Hasn't it already been done'?

The less-than-patient part of me wants to answer, "Yup, it's too late. Anyone and everyone with thoughts of starting an Internet business should just pack up, go home and forget it. Come back again after all the current netpreneurs have retired."

You won't hear me complain about having less competition!

The truth however is that it's rarely, if ever, too late to start anything.

Think about it. Has every song been sung? Have all the books been written? There are millions of restaurants, clothing stores and gift shops in the world. Is it too late to open another?

What you need to figure out is whether there is a market for your product. And where markets are concerned, there is no place like the Internet.

Take a look at some of the results from a research report by eTForecasts:

- **The number of Internet users surpassed 530 million in 2001** and will continue to grow strongly in the next five years.
- By the end of 2005 the number of worldwide Internet users will double to 1.12 BILLION people. That is one **HUGE marketplace** and it's getting bigger every day!
- Online sales amounted to twenty billion dollars in each of the first two quarters of 2002.
- In 2002, online sales grew **52%** over 2001 to \$78 billion.
- The Online Publishers Associate reported consumer spending on online content in the US totaled USD1.3 billion in 2002, marking an increase of 95 percent compared with 2001. **The Personals/Dating category surpassed both Business/Investments and Entertainment/Lifestyles to become the largest paid content category in 2002** with USD302 million in revenues, up from USD72 million in 2001.
- eCommerce sales in **Q1 2003 reached \$24 billion**, a 20% jump over Q1 2002 sales of \$20 billion - despite the shaky retail climate.
- Forrester research predicts **2003 sales to grow by at least 25% over 2002**.

Although 'most' people are still hesitant to give their credit card numbers online, as Internet shopping becomes commonplace, more and more people will be clicking 'Buy it Now!' buttons.

Forrester research predicts online sales to stay strong in 2003 because 6.8 million US households will shop online for the first time this year and free shipping offers percentage-off deals will keep motivating consumers to buy from online merchants.

The reality is that anyone with a product that is marketable online should start an Internet business...today!

Myth #6: The BIG Money Talk is JUST HYPE

Hype? Sure, there's plenty of hype out there!

I look at it this way, though. Wherever there's hype, there's an element of truth. You just need to uncover the truth behind the incredible claims, and get to work digging it up.

'Big money' is entirely possible. These are a few of my deposit amounts to just ONE of my US dollar business accounts.

2001 - December	\$34,414.79
2002 - January	\$56,719.56
2002 - February	\$35,045.09
2002 - March	\$34,924.18
2002 - April	\$29,527.96

If you are willing to take the necessary action to make 'big money' happen for you - it will.

Or you can criticize and be skeptical and sure that 'big money' can't happen for you - and it won't.

To summarize, while the 'Net is rife with many mythical tales of fame and fortune, the truth of the matter is that the stories aren't that far-fetched. Inject just a little common sense into the equation and you might see an opportunity to find your pot of gold.

Profile of an Entrepreneur

Just a few short years ago I worked as an air traffic controller. Although I loved the job, I hated 'the establishment'. I was perpetually unhappy with the way everything from remuneration, scheduling and the operation itself was managed.

My disgruntlement continued for 20 years.

Had I stopped to consider the true source of my disgruntlement, I might have recognized that my personality isn't suited to working in an organizational setting.

It wasn't until after my Internet business became successful and I'd already quit my job, that I realized that I had always been an entrepreneur at heart.

More importantly, I only became truly happy when I honored my spirit and followed my path.

If you've been thinking about starting your own home-based Internet business, but aren't sure that you have the right qualifications to become an entrepreneur, read on.

In recent years business professionals have learned a lot about what it takes to become a successful entrepreneur. Although there is no 'perfect' combination, most successful entrepreneurs share very similar characteristics.

In the sections that follow, those characteristics are detailed for you to consider and compared with your own personal profile.

You may discover that the profile fits you like a glove. On the other hand, you may find that you prefer instead to work for those who blaze the entrepreneurial trail. In either case, you owe it to yourself to discover your true path.

Entrepreneurs are:

1. **Healthy and Energetic** - Starting a business takes an enormous amount of time and energy. Working long hours is easier to do when you are healthy and fit for the task. It's no surprise therefore that entrepreneurs pursue healthy sporting activities in their spare time rather than lounging on the couch in front of the TV.
2. **Self-Aware** - Entrepreneurs who become successful know who they are, what they are good at and what they like to do. They choose businesses that are based on their fields of expertise or in areas that they particularly enjoy.
3. **Knowledgeable** - Knowledge is power. To succeed in a particular business you must know all aspects of that business, including your competition and trends for growth or decline. Smart entrepreneurs get smarter by regularly investing time and money in advanced

education.

4. **Goal-Oriented and Ambitious** - Entrepreneurs love to set highly specific, challenging goals for themselves and then take action to achieve them. They feel at 'loose ends' when they don't have a project to work on.
5. **Excellent Planners** - Entrepreneurs create and follow plans to reach their goals. They know that 'failing to plan is planning to fail'.
6. **Highly Focused and Self-Motivated** - No one needs to tell an entrepreneur what the task is, or that they need to get going on a job.
7. **Independent and Self-Confident** - Entrepreneurial spirits are discontent when working in large organizations, especially where their authority and control over production is minimal. They generally believe that they can achieve a better result if they are personally in control of the production process.
8. **Realistic and Positive** - Entrepreneurs accept that life isn't perfect. When life gives an entrepreneur lemons, he or she makes lemonade. They feel challenged rather than discouraged by setbacks and failures.
9. **Willing to take Moderate Risks** - A common myth about entrepreneurs is their tendency to engage in risky behavior. Nothing is further from the truth. Successful entrepreneurs carefully evaluate risk in terms of the potential rewards and the realistic odds of realizing those rewards.
10. **Perseverance** - Small business success is 90% due to perseverance. Desire and determination fuels an entrepreneur's ability to tough out the early days when large investments of time, money and energy bring minimal return. Perseverance is the characteristic that ensures survival during bad times and keeps entrepreneurs focused on the road to success.

Although this is not an extensive profile of the successful entrepreneur, it does provide some insight into the traits and characteristics that these individuals have in common.

So... are you an entrepreneur?

Quiz: Are YOU an Entrepreneur?

This is a quiz to determine whether or not you might become a successful entrepreneur.

True home-based entrepreneurs would put a check mark beside most of the statements below. Determine whether each statement describing a successful home business owner also describes YOU:

- I have a strong desire to be successful in my own home-based business.
- I set realistic goals.
- I enjoy planning for my future, and working to make it happen.
- I am well organized.
- I pay attention to detail.
- I regularly review my priorities.
- I continue to work toward long-term goals despite setbacks.
- I take responsibility for my actions and fix mistakes easily and quickly.
- I have specific expertise in the business I want to start.
- I ask questions to learn what I need to know to succeed
- I keep legible notes.
- I can obtain the money I need without getting into cash flow problems.
- I have sound financial knowledge of how a business operates.
- I know the difference between gross and net profits.
- I read the financial and business sections of the newspaper on a regular basis
- I keep up with current affairs.
- I know how to find my niche in the market and how to identify my customers.
- I have faith in my ability to choose an excellent product and/or service to promote.
- I know how to present information in a convincing manner
- I am imaginative and use innovative techniques to achieve my goals.
- I am self-motivated.
- I am willing to handle tasks I don't particularly enjoy.
- I relate well to people on all levels.
- My assessments of people and situations are almost always accurate.
- I easily develop associations for professional support.
- I can converse easily with most people.
- I express myself well in writing.
- I can express myself in a way that others are interested in what I have to say.
- I can ask a direct question in an uncomfortable situation.
- I start each day in a positive way.
- I like myself and who I am.
- I handle stressful situations with a positive and realistic attitude.
- I embrace the unknown and enjoy new challenges.
- I am not afraid of hard work and can handle complex tasks.

- I am not easily sidetracked.
- I maintain a sense of humor when plans fall through.
- I express ideas and feelings logically, both orally and in writing.
- I tackle work with enthusiasm and a high energy level.
- I enjoy working hard and the resulting fruits of my labor.
- I have six months savings as a cushion to support my business startup.
- My family and friends support my decision to start a home business.
- I am in good physical health and able to endure long hours.
- I work to maintain and enhance my health and fitness.
- I can take initiative and work without direction.
- I can work alone for long periods of time.
- I am willing to hire household / childcare help so I can focus on my home business.
- Rejection or criticism doesn't depress me.
- I am willing to work long, hard hours.
- I am prepared to wait a few months before making a profit.

How did you do? Did you answer 'yes' to all or most of the questions above?

If so, GREAT! You have what it takes to become a successful entrepreneur!

If you couldn't agree with many of the questions, don't despair. Perhaps you might consider finding a complementary partner for your business that can support your goals and assume the responsibilities for which you are not suited.

As they say, where there's a will, there's a way.

Can You Handle the Lifestyle?

Affiliate marketers' lifestyles differ vastly from those who spend their lives working for wages. Take a look at the following two scenarios and decide which you prefer. The difference could prove just the impetus you need to jump-start your new business.

Working for 'the Company'

Does any part of the following scenario describe your average workday?

You are **frightened awake** at some time between 4 and 8 am. (There's a reason they're called 'alarm' clocks.)

On gaining consciousness, you feel disappointed when you realize that this is another workday. Somewhat grudgingly, you get out of bed, perform your daily ablutions, and try to swallow a piece of burnt toast. You then kiss the family goodbye and head out the door.

You struggle against horrendous vehicular traffic on the highway, or humans on public transit, and feel **totally frazzled** long before you arrive at your place of work.

You toil between 35 and 70 hours a week. Your boss seems to think that a pat on the back is for pets. You are paid less than your work is worth. **Paltry remuneration** in hand, you share the highway on your way home with likewise disgruntled motorists.

Over dinner, you and your spouse share similar tales of **working woe**. Most of the time you are too tired after work to do anything but watch TV. Fun is reserved for weekends.

After too few hours of relaxation in the evening, it is time to prepare for the following day's work. You make a lunch, lay out your clothes, and head for bed.

You hope to beat the odds of company downsizing and rapidly advancing technology, so that you can repeat this working day scenario for decades to come.

After thirty-five years, someone will thank you for your contribution, shake your hand, then show you the door.

To reward your lifetime of effort, you'll continue to receive regular income. However, if your income was small, your retirement check will be even more meager. You now have more time on your hands, more hobbies to pursue and less money to pursue them with.

It's also unlikely that your retirement income will cover even basic necessities in ten or twenty years unless it has been indexed for inflation.

Put like that, working for 'the company' seems like a sad prospect, doesn't it?

It doesn't have to be that way. Your day could look more like the following scenario.

When You're the Boss

You awake to the sensation of the warm morning sun on your face. **Smiling** at the prospect of a new day, you open your eyes and share a happy morning greeting with your spouse.

You don exercise gear. After **savoring** a glass of juice and stretching your muscles to warm them up, you head out the door for your **regular morning run**. You soak in the beautiful vistas and fresh air.

After a run and a shower, you sit down to a **healthy breakfast** with your partner. You're both happy with the prospect of a productive day ahead.

After breakfast, you **eagerly** head to your home office. The commute takes 20 seconds, two minutes if you stop for coffee.

You take between 5 and 30 minutes to check and reply to your email. After that you check your overnight income statistics, and see that you made about a thousand dollars while getting your **beauty sleep**.

Depending on your plan and desire for the day, you might at this point decide to work on a project, or **call it a day**.

Choosing the former, you spend an hour writing an endorsement for a product that you know will add between fifty and a **few hundred dollars per day** to your income.

Around mid-day a friend calls to invite you to join her for lunch. After a two-hour friendly gab session, you return home and decide to work for an hour or two on your latest ebook.

You spend the evening dining at a new restaurant that has received rave reviews, and attending a play with similar media coverage.

Granted, as an entrepreneur, there won't be anyone to shake your hand and show you the door in thirty-five years.

However, based on the incomes of successful Internet marketing entrepreneurs, you probably **won't have to work for thirty-five years**. With careful planning, I'd be surprised if it took more than **five or ten years** for you to build a **VERY comfortable retirement fund**. Chances are however, that you'll be **having too much fun too stop** working even after you've achieved that goal.

All in all, you think this has been a banner day. Generally speaking, whether challenging or fun-filled, you feel very good about how most of your days go.

Lifestyle and freedom of choice, not money, is what being self-employed is really all about. I hope I've done justice to the average affiliate marketer's lifestyle portrait. From my perspective, it is 99% accurate. My commute is just a little shorter.

Affiliate Business Basics

If you want to earn revenue on the Web, but don't have a product of your own to sell, affiliate programs are just the solution.

I started my Internet business with affiliate programs, and they still represent the bulk of my income.

I highly recommend them as a quick and relatively easy way to start your own online business. Done right, you can generate an extraordinary income using affiliate programs alone.

How Do Affiliate Programs Work?

An affiliate program is a partnership with an online merchant - that is, a Web site that sells goods and/or services. Also known as associate, referral and bounty programs; these programs pay their affiliates for referring customers to their business. Most affiliate programs are free and easy to join.

From the merchants' perspective, by partnering with affiliates they are able to increase sales, drive traffic, generate qualified leads and extend brand reach through a low cost marketing strategy.

Affiliating is a win-win situation for both merchants and affiliates.

There are essentially three types of affiliate programs.

1. The first are **Pay-Per-Sale** programs, which are also known as **Partnership** and **Percentage Partners** programs. These programs pay either a fixed dollar amount or a percentage of sales generated by your links.
2. In **Pay-Per-Lead** programs, you earn a set amount whenever your customer fills out a survey or requests a quote or information.
3. **Pay-Per-Click** affiliate programs are similar to Pay-Per-Lead. Essentially you are paid each time one of your visitors clicks on the link through to that programs site.

As an affiliate, you join merchants' programs, and place their advertising on your Web site.

When someone clicks on one of those ads and fills out a form or buys a product, you get a commission for that referral or sale, depending on that advertiser's payout structure.

In a nutshell, it's as easy as 1 - 2 - 3:

1. You join the affiliate program and place links on your site, or in your newsletter.
2. Your visitor clicks that link **and** buys a product, service or fills out a form.
3. You receive a commission for the sale.

How does the Merchant know that the visitor came from MY site?

Excellent question!

Affiliates are assigned a **special link**, or URL, that is coded with an ID that is unique to that affiliate. Software on the merchant's site tracks visitors that arrive via that unique affiliate link. All sales generated by those visitors are also tracked.

For example, Amazon's homepage URL is:

<http://www.amazon.com>.

However, as an Amazon.com affiliate, my affiliate ID is 'byebye925-20'. My link to the Amazon.com homepage therefore looks like this:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/redirect-home/byebye925-20>

By attaching your affiliate link to a banner ad, small graphic or a text link you earn a referral fee from sale generated through that link.

These links come in the form of banners, text links, and a number of other more sophisticated types of links. If the links require special coding, the online merchant usually supplies the code.

15 Reasons to Become an Affiliate Marketer

There are HUGE benefits to promoting affiliate programs with your own home-based Internet business...

1. No Production Costs
2. Low Cost Set-up
3. No Fees to Join or Licenses to Buy
4. Wide Variety of Products and Services
5. No Sales Experience Required
6. No Employees
7. No Merchant Account Needed
8. No Inventory to Carry
9. No Order Processing
10. No Product Shipping
11. No Customer Service Concerns
12. 24/7 Business – Make Money While You Sleep
13. The World at Your Doorstep
14. Minimal Risk
15. Huge Income Potential

Let's look at each point separately.

1. **No Production Costs** - The cost to develop and produce a new product is prohibitive for almost anyone who wants to start a home-based business. With affiliate programs, production costs aren't an issue. The product has been developed and proven - all on the merchant's nickel.
2. **Low Cost Set-up** - Compared with building a brick and mortar store, starting a home-based Internet business is relatively cheap. You probably already have a desk, Internet-connected computer and word-processing software, which is all the equipment you may need.
3. **No Fees for Joining or Licenses to Buy** - I often compare doing business as an affiliate, with distributing a line of products in the real world. The biggest difference is that the distributor must often pay for a license to distribute products within a limited geographic region. Affiliate programs, on the other hand, are usually free to join, and geographic market reach is limited only by the affiliate's ability to promote his web site.
4. **Choose From Thousands of Products and Services** - What isn't sold online? That list must be shorter than the one describing all that IS sold online. There are thousands and thousands of affiliate programs selling every product under the sun. That makes it easy to find products related to your current or planned web site.
5. **No Sales Experience Needed** - When I started my affiliate business, I had absolutely no sales experience. That wasn't a problem, however. The companies I affiliated with

provided excellent marketing material. Using their sales copy, I was able to get my first affiliate site up in less than a day.

6. **No Employees** - The largest expense of most businesses is employee salaries. Although there might be times when you need or want someone to work for you as an affiliate, it's doubtful you'll ever have to worry about hiring full or part-time employees. When you have a project you want to hire out, it is easy to find specialists in every computer-related field who can work for you from the comfort of THEIR own homes. You pay only for the project, and never have to worry about ongoing employee-related benefits and deductions.
7. **No Expensive Merchant Accounts Needed** - Setting up a merchant account for any business is a time-consuming and costly business. It's even more tedious for Internet businesses. However, merchant accounts aren't a concern when you're an affiliate. The merchant bears that cost and handles all processing of payments. You never have to lose sleep over potential chargebacks, fraud or losing your merchant account when you're an affiliate.
8. **No Inventory to Carry** - Even if you live in a small one-bedroom apartment, as an affiliate you can sell large items without storage concerns.
9. **No Order-Processing** - Forget the problems associated with collecting and storing names, addresses, credit card numbers, etc. The merchant does all that!
10. **No Product Shipping** - The cost and hassle to prepare and ship products to customers worldwide could be staggering. Affiliates never have to worry about packaging supplies or postal rates.
11. **No Customer Service Concerns** - Do you hate the prospect of dealing with nasty people or customer complaints? Don't worry about it! The merchant handles the snivelers.
12. **Make Money While You Sleep** - What other business allows you as a sole proprietor to keep your doors open and keep making money even when you take breaks or after you go home for the night?
13. **The World at Your Doorstep** - The Internet is the world's largest marketplace. You can drive more visitors to your online store in a day, than many small-town merchants sees in his or her brick and mortar business in a year.
14. **Minimal Risk** - The product you chose isn't making money? Dump it. Take down your links and promote another! It's that easy. There are no long-term contracts binding you to products that don't sell.
15. **High Income Potential** - If you have a job, your salary or hourly wage is probably pre-determined. Maybe there's not much, other than working overtime, that you can do to increase your income. With your own affiliate business on the Internet your income potential is limited only by your desire, effort and imagination.

What is a Super-Affiliate?

It has been reported many times that 2% of all affiliates are responsible for generating 90% of all affiliate program sales.

Why is that?

Well, here are the predominant factors that set Super Affiliates apart from their less productive counterparts.

1. **Super Affiliates treat their affiliate marketing businesses like BUSINESSES.** They don't just slap up a site with a couple of banner ads. They invest in their businesses with time, money and effort. They are determined and persistent.
2. **Super Affiliates don't try to be all things to all people.** They find a niche with a huge market. They research, understand and sell to that market.
3. **Super Affiliates are Super Communicators.** They know and understand their merchants' products, and know how to endorse the benefits of those products to their visitors.
4. **Super Affiliates grow their businesses.** After building one successful affiliate site, they look for opportunities to build new streams of income with affiliate programs.
5. **Super Affiliates are constantly learning.** They stay current with industry trends to stay on top of what they need to know about how to do business successfully. In other words, they educate themselves, just as you are doing now... you, the aspiring Super Affiliate!

Those are the basics of what it takes to be a Super Affiliate. Throughout the rest of the manual, you'll learn how a Super Affiliate approaches each aspect of affiliate marketing.

A Brief History of Affiliate Marketing

According to Amazon.com, theirs was the original affiliate program. The following statement is taken directly from Amazon's Associate Programs FAQ page. "Our Associates Program, the first on the Web, started in July 1996."

That statement is generally accepted as gospel truth.

However, if you thumb through Daniel Gray's Top 100 Directory in his "The Complete Guide to Associate and Affiliate Programs", you'll learn that there were a number of sites that operated affiliate programs years before Amazon.com entered the fray.

Among the first were PC Flowers & Gifts launched in 1994, AutoWeb.com in 1995, and KB Toys in early 1996. IOwn.com and ArtToday.com were both established in 1996.

How are those early players doing today?

Well, PC Flowers & Gifts no longer exists as an online business. KB Toys and AutoWeb.com, which used to manage their own affiliate programs in-house, now have Commission Junction administer the program. My browser times-out searching for IOwn.com. It seems that of the originators, only ArtToday and Amazon are left standing with their own in-house affiliate programs.

So, Amazon.com's program may not have been the original, but it is one of the most successful in terms of affiliate numbers and duration.

Then again, does it really matter who launched the first affiliate program?

I think not.

What DOES matter is that some very smart person contrived of a scenario that allows the 'little' people (us) to share in big profits, without having to buy shares in the merchant's company.

As Martha Stewart would say, 'It's a GOOD thing'.

Affiliating vs. Reselling

Many new Internet marketers mistakenly use the terms 'affiliate' and 'reseller' interchangeably.

The table below compares and contrasts the two different ways of doing business on the 'Net.

Affiliating	Reselling
Affiliate programs are FREE to join.	As a reseller, you must BUY the product before you can sell it.
Earn a percentage of the sale price.	Keep 100% of the proceeds from the sale of the product.
The merchant handles product fulfillment.	Resellers do all product fulfillment - carry inventory, order processing and shipping.
Each affiliate sells the product for the same price.	Resellers can often offer products for the price of their choosing. Competitors can undermine efforts by offering the same product for a lower price.
Although affiliates can collect names and email addresses from visitors to their sites, the affiliate rarely knows exactly who buys their affiliated merchants' products.	As resellers handle product fulfillment themselves, they collect names and email addresses from those who buy their products, in addition to those who sign up for their opt-in lists on their sites. This benefits the reseller in that they can do follow-up or 'back-end' sales to existing customers.

As you can see from the table above, there are advantages and disadvantages to both types of Internet marketing. I personally know that both methods are worth the effort and can yield decent profits.

If you would like further information about reselling or buying reprint rights, visit the sites listed below. I joined eBookWholesalers, as I think that Tom Hua, the owner, offers quality products at reasonable prices.

➔ **EbookWholesaler**

<http://superaffiliatehandbook.com/ebw.html>

How to Become an Affiliate

Becoming an affiliate is simple.

You can go to an individual merchant's site, or an affiliate program network, like Commission Junction, and fill out an online application.

The application will ask for some personal information about you, including your name, address, and preferred payment method. You will also be asked for information about your site, such as its URL, name, and a description of the type of content you offer. You will also probably be asked to confirm your acceptances with the terms of agreement posted on the site.

Approval into a program may or may not be immediate. Some affiliate program managers will want to review your site prior to accepting you into their program.

Once your application is approved, you are ready to start marketing as an affiliate. Many merchants will supply you with all you need in terms of marketing material, such as text and graphic links.

→ Commission Junction

<http://cj.com>

Overview of the Business-Building Process

It's always easier to tackle a big project, when you break it down into manageable chunks.

Here are the 10 'chunks' involved in building an affiliate business. Each chunk is comprised of several smaller steps.

Chunk by chunk and step-by-step, you'll soon find that you're making money on the Web!

Let's look at a brief description of each 'chunk' in the process of building an affiliate business.

1. Choose a Topic or Two
2. Assess Topic Profitability
3. Find Related Products and Services with Affiliate Programs
4. Choose Domain and Web Host
5. Create Site Outline
6. Write Product Endorsements
7. Create Site
8. Sign up for Affiliate Programs
9. Promote Site
10. Repeat the Process with a New Topic... or Ten

1. **Choose a Topic or Two** - What will your site be about? The best way to choose a topic is to pick something that interests you. Spending hours and hours everyday working on a topic you have no interest in or that bores you is hard to do. Choose something that excites you and the work will be fun. Write down a list of potential topics in a notebook or MSWord.
2. **Assess Demand, Supply & Profitability** - The basic rule for determining profitability is to see whether your chosen topic has an audience and how crowded the market is. This is a 2-step process. The first step is to see how many people search on the keywords applicable to your topic. The second step is to visit Google or AltaVista and determine how many sites relating to that topic are already online. With this knowledge, and a formula given later in the Handbook, we will determine the potential for profit in your chosen market.
3. **Find Related Products and Services with Affiliate Programs** – Once you know that your idea is potentially profitable, you need to find out whether there are merchants offering products and services of interest to your customers through affiliate programs. We research the programs we locate to determine product quality.
4. **Choose Your Domain Name and Web Host** - Now that we know your topic idea is potentially profitable and supported by affiliate programs, it's time to register a domain name and web hosting for your site.
5. **Create Site Outline** – This is an essential step that many people forget. An outline gives you a plan to work from and makes the project proceed quickly and easily.

6. **Write Product Endorsements** - Using word-processing software like Microsoft Word, write product endorsements for two or three of the products and services you plan to sell. Although it may seem strange to write a product endorsement before you've joined the corresponding affiliate program, this is one thing that sets super affiliates apart from other affiliates. Affiliate managers will see the work you've done and are more likely to accept your program application.
7. **Build and Upload Web Site to the Hosting Service** - Either design a site yourself, or input the sales copy into a purchased template, then place it on the web for all to see and enjoy.
8. **Sign up for Affiliate Programs** - Only now do we apply to join affiliate programs.
9. **Promote Site** – Get the word out and draw huge numbers of surfers to your site. Have them sign up for your newsletter and build a huge opt-in list. Watch your visitors buy copious amounts of your affiliate products and services. Deposit numerous checks in large amounts into your checking account. Contact newsletter subscribers with new offers and deposit more checks into your bank account.
10. **Repeat Steps 1 through 9** - In Step 1 above we talked about coming up with multiple ideas for site topics. After your first site is online and making money, you will repeat the process all over again with Topic Number 2.

That's it in a nutshell. Ten steps to building your own prosperous affiliate business. Let's get started!

Setting Up Shop

Basic Knowledge

Are you feeling a little overwhelmed by all that you need to learn?

Fear not!

Affiliate marketing on the Internet isn't rocket science. You don't need an MBA or other degree to succeed in an online business.

If you know how to **access the Web**, as well as **send and receive email**, you've already mastered the two activities you'll perform most frequently.

It's also helpful if you have fundamental computer skills including a grasp of **basic macros** and **file management**.

Don't worry about knowing HTML (Hypertext Markup Language - the code to write web page) at this, or any other point in the process. Although I strongly recommend that you learn a little HTML later, it's not absolutely necessary for success.

At this point we are only dealing with the things that will help you maneuver around your computer more easily. Building a web site will come later.

Computer Codes and Macros

A macro is a way to automate a task that you perform repeatedly or on a regular basis.

It is a series of commands and actions that can be stored and run whenever you need to perform the task. Tasks performed by macros are typically repetitive in nature allowing significant savings in time by executing the macro instead of manually repeating the commands.

The following macros or computer codes are common across most Windows platforms and are worth memorizing for the time they can save during your daily tasks.

Ctrl-A	Select All
Ctrl-B	Bold
Ctrl-C	Copy
Ctrl-D	Fill Down
Ctrl-E	Center
Ctrl-F	Find
Ctrl-G	Goto
Ctrl-H	Replace
Ctrl-I	Italicize
Ctrl-J	Full Justify
Ctrl-K	Hyperlink
Ctrl-M	Increase Indent
Ctrl-N	New Document
Ctrl-O	Open Document
Ctrl-P	Print
Ctrl-R	Right Justify
Ctrl-S	Save
Ctrl-T	Tab
Ctrl-U	Underline
Ctrl-V	Paste
Ctrl-W	Close Document
Ctrl-X	Cut
Ctrl-Y	Redo/Repeat Last Action
Ctrl-Z	Undo

Learning the simple shortcuts above will save you thousands and thousands of keystrokes in the long run.

File Management

Staying organized is a great way to save time and keep your sanity.

I know a webmaster who indiscriminately bookmarks every 'great' site he ever comes across, without organizing those bookmarks into categorized folders.

I've waited 5 - 10 minutes for him to find just one of those sites amongst the hundreds of others he has stored in his list of 'greats'.

None of the sites we waited to see were so great as to be worth the wait. The frustration caused by several of these delays may have colored my perception somewhat however.

My friend wastes valuable time (time = life) every day looking for bookmarks, files and other records essential to his web business.

Do you want to spend you time (life) like that? Wouldn't you rather spend it making money? Or playing with your kids?

If so, learn to establish categories within your email program and file folders containing all documents relevant to your web business.

Some examples of categories are; Accounting, Merchant Partners, Correspondence, JV's and Newsletter.

Top-level categories are then broken down into more specific categories. I personally store all my web pages in folders named for their domains, i.e. Sage-Hearts.com, SuperAffiliateHandbook.com and RosalindGardner.com. All files belonging to those domains are stored in their appropriate folder.

In summary, the small effort you make to learn basic codes and organize your files will pay off handsomely in saved time and increased profits.

Basic Hardware & Services

To start a part or full-time business on the Internet you'll need some very basic equipment, or 'hardware', as well as services that allow you to connect to the 'Net.

Computer

It's unlikely that your local library will permit you to spend several hours a day building your Internet business on their computers. Having ready access to a computer is absolutely essential for this endeavor.

Unless you back up everything all of your work to CD all of the time, I highly recommend that access to your business computer be strictly limited. It's amazing what damage kids and even some adults can unintentionally inflict on files.

If that point causes you to rethink the 'family' computer and invest in one of your own, I highly recommend Dell. I have two of them and have been absolutely delighted with their products since 1998.

Compared with my experiences with some other computer manufacturers, Dell's online shopping and customer service is free of frustration. I especially liked selecting all my own components, clicking the 'Buy Now' button and seeing the computer arrive on my doorstep 3 to 4 days later.

If you're in the market for a new computer, visit the sites below to compare prices online.

→ **Dell**

<http://dell.com>

→ **PCMall**

<http://pcmall.com>

→ **MacMall**

<http://macmall.com>

Internet Connection

To do business on the Web, you need to be connected to the Web.

Your Internet connection options may include telephone or cable modem, or DSL. The latter two are faster and therefore preferable to the first. Cut costs elsewhere if you must, but get the very fastest connection service that you can afford.

Why?

The slower your connection, the slower your work progresses. It takes longer to download your email, and longer to upload pages to your site, and time IS money.

Here's an example of how much a poor connection could cost you.

For years I've watched my friend toil on his Web business with a slow-as-molasses 36.6K modem. He works about 8 hours per day, six days a week, and uses that connection for about 50% of his work, or for 24 hours per week.

By contrast, I estimate that my cable connection is at least 5 times faster than his telephone connection. That means that I can accomplish in 12 minutes what it takes my friend an hour to do. To do exactly the same amount of work using our Internet connections, I will work 4.8 hours to his twenty-four, or 19.2 hours LESS.

In financial terms, it takes my friend 5 hours to earn what I earn in an hour, relative to our use of the Internet for uploading, downloading and research.

This calculation is a striking example of what it means to be 'Penny Wise and Pound Foolish'.

Get the fastest Internet connection available in your area, and don't let \$20 or \$40 per month limit your earnings potential.

In fact, I recommend that you get TWO Internet connections - one cable or ADSL connection as well as a dial-up service backup connection. That way, if your fast connection ever fails for an hour ... or a week... you won't have to go to the local Internet café to check your email.

→ **Earthlink**

<http://earthlink.net>

→ **Juno Platinum**

<http://my.juno.com>

→ **NetZero Platinum**

<http://my.netzero.net>

Telephone

In rare cases, cable and/or DSL Internet connections won't be available in your area. You will then have to connect to the Internet through a telephone modem.

Telephone service is also necessary when you want to call all your friends and tell them that you've received your first affiliate check for five whole bucks.

Think I'm kidding? Just wait until you find out how good that feels! ☺

Printer

Nice to have, but not absolutely necessary, a printer is very handy for printing out proofs of purchase, drafts of your articles and other work.

Router

Only necessary if you are using a broadband connection like a cable modem or DSL, a router protects your PC(s) from outside intruders. A router is much like a firewall, which is discussed in the 'Software' section below. Although I've indicated the router as being optional, I highly recommend that you install either a router or a firewall if your connection is broadband.

→ **Etronics**

<http://etronics.com>

→ **PCMall**

<http://pcmall.com>

→ **MacMall**

<http://macmall.com>

Once you are set up with an Internet connected computer, it's time to find out what software you will need to run your eBusiness.

Basic Software

In this section you will learn about software that allows you to surf the web and do research, programs that help you with communication and accounting, and utilities to protect your computer from viruses and hackers. The good news is that most of it is FREE!

While some of the software I've listed below is optional, most of it is basic to operating an Internet business.

Don't worry about breaking your budget to buy all this software. You probably already have much of it installed on your computer, and if not, many of the programs can be downloaded free of charge.

AntiVirus Software

Whether or not you intend to run an Internet business, if you are connected to the net, and are downloading email or software programs to your computer, you really should have antivirus software installed.

Here are a couple of experiences that I had with computer viruses, which should convince you to start using antivirus software if you don't already.

Although I had installed McAfee's antivirus program on my machine, I didn't do the required updates or scan for viruses, until ... you guessed it ... it was too late.

My system picked up an insidious virus that killed all my software programs over a period of two weeks. At the end of that time, the computer simply failed to start.

I was LUCKY, however! The local geeks were able to remove the virus and all my programs and files remained fully functional. (Note: it's OK, I call the local technicians 'geeks' to their faces, so they won't be offended by seeing it here. ☺)

During the second instance, again I had antivirus software on my machine that was set to update automatically.

Unfortunately, my email program, Eudora, was also set to download immediately on opening.

It would appear that the email program was faster to download than the antivirus program was to update itself, and the computer picked up a couple of deadly worms. Although it took some time for them to do their damage, the damage was significant.

For weeks my computer operated in strange ways. Certain programs that were previously flawless would hang (crash - not work), while others would simply close without warning. The status bar on my Explorer windows would disappear. I had to input passwords that were automatically filled in before the problems began.

Start up and shut down got to be a grind - truly. The processor would take 5 minutes, grinding away, during the start up and shut down phases.

At that point, I took my computer to the local technicians, and crossed my fingers that all would be well.

Once again, I was fortunate. My favorite local geeks were able isolate the problem and back up all of my data. However, due to the nature of the worm infestation, we opted to reformat my hard drive.

If you've never been through this process - it's NOT fun! Every program needs to be re-installed, and all your personal options will need to be reset.

For this reason alone, it's a great idea to keep and print a copy of all your product registration codes. I had misplaced (lost) a couple of codes, and without them the programs wouldn't function. So, in addition to the computer repair expenses, I also ended up buying a few new programs.

Live and learn. Set your email program to download only at times of your choosing, and not automatically on start-up.

I know many other webmasters who have not been so lucky and have lost all the data on their computers to viruses.

Losing data, time and money due to computer viruses is a total waste. It is also completely unnecessary.

I currently use **Norton AntiVirus**, although **McAfee** is also a good choice.

I also like to use **Trend Micro's** and **McAfee's** free online virus scanning from time to time. More virus scanning is better than less.

So, take your pick of software, but do protect your investment by installing an antivirus program.

→ **McAfee**

<http://us.mcafee.com/>

→ **Norton AntiVirus**

<http://symantec.com>

→ **Trend Micro**

<http://de.trendmicro-europe.com>

Browsers

A web browser is a software program that lets you view web pages and navigate the Internet.

The most popular browser is Microsoft's Internet Explorer. Recent reports show that 90 to 95% of web surfers access the Internet with IE (Internet Explorer).

Netscape Communicator/Navigator is the other major browser currently being used on the World-Wide-Web, made by Netscape Communications.

To see which browser you are using, look at the upper right-hand portion of the title bar of your current browser window. Internet Explorer will have the 4-color Microsoft 'flag', and Netscape's logo is an 'N'.

You should have both browsers installed on your computer, so you can make sure that your web pages can be read in both. While fewer than 10% of surfers use Netscape to surf the Net, 10% of a hundred, thousand or ten thousand dollar advertising budget is a lot of money to throw out the window if folks can't see your page.

To download the latest versions of Internet Explorer and Netscape, visit the links below.

➔ **Microsoft Internet Explorer**

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/default.asp>

➔ **Netscape Communications - Navigator**

<http://channels.netscape.com/ns/browsers/download.jsp>

Compression/Extraction Utility

If you've ever downloaded software or a large ebook, you've probably downloaded a 'zip' file. These are files that are compressed to take up less space and bandwidth. To extract zipped files, you need an extraction utility.

WinZip - One of the most popular extraction utilities is WinZip. WinZip compresses and decompresses files using the zip format. This is the most common format used on the Internet for compressing Windows files. Files compressed in this way are identified with the extension .zip.

Once you install WinZip, it will start automatically when you click a .zip file in your browser window or on your hard drive. It will show you the contents of the .zip file, and by clicking the **Extract** button, you can decompress and save the final product.

Be sure to note which folder you save files to, so that you can find them again, either to run the program, or to delete it if you do not want to keep it.

WinZip can be downloaded FREE from any of the following Web sites.

→ **Tucows**

<http://www.tucows.com>

→ **Shareware.com**

<http://www.shareware.com>

→ **Download.com**

<http://www.download.com>

Stuffit Expander - Like WinZip, Stuffit Expander is a utility that will decode and extract Macintosh files downloaded from the Internet.

Unlike Windows downloads, which must be decompressed, Macintosh downloads must be decompressed and decoded before they can be used. Fortunately, Stuffit Expander combines both these steps.

Macintosh downloadable files are encoded using either the BinHex or Macbinary formats. BinHex files have the extension **.hqx**, and Macbinary files have the extension **.bin**. Stuffit Expander can decode both kinds of files.

When you download a **.hqx** or **.bin** file, follow these steps.

11. After the file is downloaded, Stuffit Expander will automatically start and will first decode the file, creating a compressed file with the extension **.sit**. Stuffit Expander will then decompress the **.sit** file; usually creating a folder that holds the final product.
- 12.
13. Make a note of the folder so that you can find it again, either to run the program, or to delete it if you do not want to keep it.
- 14.
15. Open the new folder, print or read the Read Me file, and follow the instructions.
- 16.
17. You can then delete the **.sit** file and the **.hqx** or **.bin** file.

Stuffit Expander can be downloaded from the following site.

→ **Stuffit Expander**

<http://www.stuffit.com/expander/index.html>

Email Software

Internet business is about communicating. To do the job done right, you need an email client capable of filtering, redirecting and handling a huge load of messages. I believe that Eudora does this better than any other email client.

Years ago I switched from Outlook to Eudora to handle all my email. I prefer it to MSware for email for a number of safety and data management reasons.

Outlook's AutoPreview only lets you see the first three lines of any message, leaving your computer susceptible to malicious code in HTML email messages. Although there are 'fixes' for this problem in Outlook, I prefer to use Eudora because the problem doesn't exist in its software.

Eudora makes it easy to organize messages and manage email accounts with thousands of filter action combinations. For example, with an email from one of my merchant partners selected, I can quickly and easily make a filter that sends all future email from that merchant to a specified folder within the program, by using Eudora's 'Make Filter' command.

Do you have more than one domain? Eudora makes it easy to create, edit and delete email accounts or personalities and to check mail for one or more personalities. When composing messages, the account from which you want to send can be selected right in the 'From' field of the message.

Almost every day I need to try and find a specific email, amongst the thousands I have saved. No problem! Eudora's search feature permits you to specify multiple search criteria and specific folders and mailboxes to be searched, and searches thousands of messages in seconds. Results are displayed in a single window where selected messages can be reviewed, sorted, transferred or deleted.

Also, using Eudora's filters will help you keep spam to a minimum without having to buy spam-stopping software. Simply set your filters to catch specific words, phrases or email addresses and have spam sent directly to the trash - where it belongs.

Those are just a few of the many excellent features that Eudora offers. Best of all, they offer a **free 'Light' version** of the product.

Give it a try. I know you'll like Eudora's features.

→ **Eudora**

<http://www.eudora.com>

Accounting Software

Running any business requires good bookkeeping. Although accounting software is entirely optional, if you dislike bookkeeping as much as I do, Quicken might be just the right answer for you.

Unlike some other accounting programs, Quicken is very easy to learn. Making entries is like using a checkbook. Even better, you can save time and energy by downloading information from your business bank account directly into the program.

Save money on bookkeeping. Buy Quicken or any other good accounting program to keep track of your business.

→ Quicken Accounting Software

<http://superaffiliatehandbook.com/quicken.html>

File Transfer Protocol (FTP)

FTP, or 'file transfer protocol' software is necessary for transferring your web pages, files and folders to and from your web site's server or host.

Some HTML editors have FTP features built right into their software.

If yours does not, you can download FTP software for free at **Tucows**.

My personal choice for FTP software is **WS-FTP PRO from Ipswitch**. It has millions of users worldwide, and is available in six languages: English, French, German, Japanese, Korean and Spanish.

WS-FTP PRO offers a high level of security, protecting data with the highest commercially available data encryption level.

→ Tucows

<http://tucows.com>

→ WS-FTP

<http://www.ipswitch.com>

Firewall

Anyone who has surfed the 'Net from work, has probably found that there are sites that they cannot get into. This is usually because there is a firewall preventing access to that particular site.

Firewalls are available for your home network as well. That's because home systems have security issues similar to those of the large corporate networks. If you connect to the Internet from home using a fast DSL or cable modem connection, that is especially true.

Firewalls are used to protect computer systems from offensive Web sites and potential hackers. The firewall filters the information coming through the Internet connection into your computer system. If the filters flag an incoming packet of information, it is not allowed through.

I learned about firewalls only after friends of mine had their computer hacked through their cable connection. **They lost all of their Quicken data...** and I do mean ALL.

Don't let that happen to you! Protect your valuable and private data. Install a firewall, such as **ZoneAlarm**, **Norton** or **Black Ice** installed on the 'gateway' computer in your home. That's the one with the Internet connection.

→ **Tucows**
<http://tucows.com>

PDF Reader

A **Portable Document Format (PDF)** file is a self-contained cross-platform document. In other words, it is a file that will look the same on the screen and in print, regardless of what kind of computer or printer someone is using and regardless of what software package was originally used to create it.

Although they contain the complete formatting of the original document, including fonts and images, PDF files are highly compressed, allowing complex information to be downloaded efficiently.

Virtually anyone - including Windows, DOS, Macintosh and UNIX system users - can view and print a PDF file using the free **Acrobat Reader**, which can be installed and configured to work seamlessly within your Internet browser.

The Adobe Acrobat Reader is free software for viewing and printing Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files on all major hardware and operating system platforms. You can even take your Adobe PDF files with you and view them on the go with Acrobat Reader for mobile devices.

To download the free Adobe Acrobat Reader, go to:

→ **Adobe**
<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

Spreadsheet Software

A spreadsheet is basically a computerized ledger, and the best way I know of to keep track of many aspects of your Internet business.

Instead of buying expensive software to keep track of your affiliate programs, you can use spreadsheet software to keep track of the affiliate programs you join. List names, broker and affiliate links, as well as amounts of money that they owe you each month.

Use a spreadsheet to create lists of keywords for submission to your pay per click search engine campaigns. As a matter of fact, most of the PPC's give you a spreadsheet to download if you plan to make a large submission of keyword listings.

You can even do complex calculations on your sales conversion rates and returns on your advertising investments with simple formulae and the push of an 'enter' key.

My personal choice is Microsoft Excel, simply because my Dell computer arrived with Microsoft Office installed, and Excel is bundled in the Office software package.

If you don't have Excel installed on your computer, you might want to look into EasyOffice 5.1 which is available as freeware through Tucows. I haven't tried the software myself, but Tucows gives it a '5 Cow' rating. Visit the site and do a search for 'spreadsheet'.

→ **Tucows**

<http://tucows.com>

Text Editor

NotePad is a nice simple text editor, and is probably installed on your computer if you are running Windows.

Text editors don't have all the features of more robust word-processing software, but they are extremely handy for making quick notes. I used NotePad to create my web pages when I first started designing pages. It was an excellent way to learn HTML.

Text editors eliminate many of the 'formatting characters' that are embedded by more sophisticated word-processing programs. These 'formatting characters' can sometimes cause havoc with the appearance of email messages, so using a simple text editor eliminates the worry about sending messages that look like a bunch of gobbledy-gook.

Keep a Notepad or other text editor shortcut on your desktop for easy access. Think of it as a computer sticky note.

Summary of Software Requirements

Equipped with most or all of the basic software tools discussed above, you will be ready to do business on the web.

Business Expenses

Contrary to what so many unscrupulous Internet marketers will tell you, starting a business online is not free.

HOWEVER, compared with starting a business offline, an Internet business IS incredibly inexpensive to start.

Here are two lists of some the recurring and fixed expenses you'll have as an affiliate marketer. I haven't listed specific costs, as prices do change.

Fixed Costs

- Computer
- Computer Peripherals
- Directory Listings
- Educational Materials, Seminars & Conferences
- Incorporation Costs & Business Licenses
- Domain Name Registration
- Office Furniture
- Software

Recurring Expenses

- Advertising
- Autoresponder Service
- Web Hosting
- Domain Name Renewals
- Internet Connection(s)
- Office Supplies
- Telephone Service
- Yahoo! Listing Fees

Not all the expenses listed above are set in stone. You may not want to pay \$299 per year to list your commercial site at Yahoo! - and you don't have to.

On the other hand, you may opt to hire an accountant, web designer or expert copywriter to help you with your site, each of whom needs to be paid for his or her services.

So, your business can be 'no frills', or as full of bells and whistles as you can afford and choose to make it.

It's just nice to know that you have the option.

Research Profitable Ideas

What's Your Passion?

The questions I hear almost as often as ‘How do I start an online business?’ are, ‘WHAT should I sell online and WHERE do I find products to sell?’

In response, I always recommend that before you start looking for products, you need to determine your niche. Your niche is a topic about which you are, or can be, passionate.

If you don't love what you do, it's almost a sure bet that you won't prosper as much as when you follow your heart and do what you love to do.

A typical mistake made by new webmasters is to try and market a product they know nothing about to a group of people they also know nothing about.

For example, too many starry-eyed webmasters try to sell educational programs about Internet marketing on the first web site they build - because they've heard that these products ‘sell well’.

They're right. Educational material about doing business on the Internet DOES sell well – when sold by experienced and SUCCESSFUL Internet marketers. Successful Internet marketers were once in their customer's shoes, and they bought all the products along their own road to success. They KNOW what works, what does NOT work, and why. They know and understand the information their customers need and want.

Those lacking in experience cannot make honest recommendations, and it shows in low sales and poor conversion rates.

There is an old saying – ‘**Do what you love and the money will follow**’, which seems to hold true on the Net.

Whenever I've spoken with very successful people about their careers, they always mention how much they love the work they do. Making good money was a bonus that added to the enjoyment they got from doing what they did for a living.

To me, that means they made more than just a living, they made a life for themselves.

So it's important to build your site around a product or a service that you can get excited about. Choose a product or subject that you understand well, or are willing to learn about, so that you may serve your customers honestly and with integrity. Your efforts will be justly rewarded. Your excitement will shine through in your endorsements, and will help skyrocket your sales.

Brainstorming Topics

If you don't already have some very specific ideas about what you would like to sell, consider the following questions and suggestions carefully. It will soon become clear that you are more inclined towards some avenues than others.

- Do you feel especially **passionate** about any subject in particular?
- Are you an expert in anything?
- Do you have **hobbies or interests** that you pursue regularly?
- Are you active in a **sport**?
- Ask your **friends and family** what they think you might be especially good at doing.
- **What have you learned from your jobs, hobbies and general life experience?** Do a skills and knowledge assessment.
- **What problems have you solved in the past?**

Brainstorm as many ideas as you can. Look at the following list. **Are you knowledgeable in one or more of the following subjects?**

- Accounting
- Arts and Crafts
- Auto Buying
- Auto Mechanics
- Canning
- Carpentry
- Catering
- Child
- Development
- Computers
- Coaching
- Cooking
- Dating
- Decorating
- Divorce
- Dog Training
- Ebooks
- Ezines
- Fitness
- Gardening
- Health and Fitness
- Home Business
- Home Buying
- Home Finances
- Home Maintenance
- Home Remodeling
- Internet Business
- Makeup Application
- Marketing
- Pet Care
- Pet Grooming
- Pet Shows
- Plumbing
- Program Scripting
- Recipes
- Relationships
- Romance
- Self Improvement
- Sewing Tips
- Single Parenting
- Skin Care
- Small Appliance Repair
- Software Design
- Teenagers
- Travelling
- Web Design
- Weight Loss

Did that list spark any ideas?

Here's another list. It's **Commission Junction's** Advertiser, or merchant category list. There are products and services in each of the categories that can be sold by affiliates.

Accessories

Cosmetics/Fragrance - Handbags - Jewelry - Shoes

Art/Photo/Music

Art - Music - Photo

Automotive

Cars & Trucks - Motorcycles - Parts & Accessories - Rentals - Tools and Supplies

Books/Media

Audio Books - Books - Magazines - News - Television - Videos/Movies

Business

Business-To-Business - Marketing - Office - Productivity Tools - Travel

Careers

Employment - Military

Clothing/Apparel

Children's - Malls - Men's - Women's

Commerce

Auction - Classifieds - E-commerce solutions/providers - New/Used Goods - Telephone services
- Utilities

Computer & Electronics

Computer HW - Computer Support - Computer SW - Consumer Electronics - Peripherals

Education

Children - College - Languages - Professional

Entertainment

Memorabilia

Family

Babies - Children - Entertainment - Teens - Weddings

Financial services

Banking/Trading - Credit Cards - Investment - Loans - Real Estate Services

Food & Drinks

Gourmet - Groceries - Restaurants - Tobacco - Wine & Spirits

Games & Toys

Electronic Toys - Games - Toys

Gifts & Flowers

Care Packages - Collectibles - Flowers - Gifts - Greeting Cards

Health & Beauty

Bath & Body - Cosmetics - Health Food - Nutritional Supplements - Pharmaceuticals - Self Help
- Vision Care - Wellness

Home & Garden

Bed & Bath - Construction - Furniture - Garden - Home Appliances - Kitchen - Pets - Real Estate
- Utilities

Insurance

Commercial - Personal Insurance

Legal

Services

Marketing

Business to business - Network Marketing

Medical

Equipment

Phonecard Services

Online/Wireless

Recreation & Leisure

Astrology - Betting/Gaming - Communities - Events - Matchmaking - New Age - Outdoors -
Party Goods

Shops/Malls

Virtual Malls

Sports & Fitness

Exercise & Health - Professional Sports Organizations - Sports - WaterSports

Travel

Accessories - Air - Car - Hotel - Luggage - Vacation

Web Services

Advice - Banner ads - Domain Registrations - Email Marketing - Internet Service Providers -
Intranets - Search Engine - Web Design - Web Hosting/Servers - Web Tools

If you are serious about going into business - any business - even an affiliate marketing business, you will spend many, many hours to develop, nurture and maintain it. It's therefore a good idea to choose a subject that you are keen to pursue if you want to succeed.

Make a list of all the topics or products that make you smile or cause your heart to beat quicker when you think about them.

Don't worry at this point whether or not there's a market for your topic, just make your list.

For example, your list of 'possibilities' may look like this:

- Wine and wine making
- Investing
- Web site design
- Making money on the Internet
- Running
- Gambling & online casinos
- Cooking
- Travel
- Cats
- Aging parents
- Retirement
- etc.

In the following sections, we'll find out how many people are looking for information online about the topics you chose above, and whether any or all of your ideas might be profitable.

Targeting a Market

Now that you have an idea of the topics you'd like to pursue, it's time to find out whether there's a market for your idea.

In this section, we'll look at tools and techniques to help you assess demand, supply (competition), and the profit potential of your site.

A serious miscalculation many entrepreneurs make is to assume that because they and their family think their idea is fabulous, that other consumers will feel likewise.

Unfortunately, it rarely works that way.

As an entrepreneur exploring the potential of a new venture you must answer the following question:

"Can my new venture make money?"

A market assessment will help you answer this question as well as assist you in transforming your idea into a successful business. Assessing the market potential of your business idea is a critical step in planning any new business.

Through market research, you will gather information about:

- Customers
- Market Size
- Industry Trends
- Competition
- Potential Profitability

Yes, even when marketing affiliate programs, it pays to do your homework. Avoid this step and your venture could **cost you time and money**. Spending money for nothing is not a desirable outcome when **the objective is to MAKE money!**

Market Research Tools

Before you start to research your potential market and competitors, it's helpful to know what tools are available to make the job easier.

I use the following tools and sites to save time and effort during my own research:

- Spreadsheet
- WordTracker
- Overture Keyword Suggestion Tool
- Google Search Engine
- Google Toolbar
- Alexa Toolbar
- Pay Per Click Search Engines

As soon as I begin research into a topic to determine its potential for profit, I open up MS-Excel, my spreadsheet software.

I open a new file, give it a name like 'Wine_Research' and save it to the folder on my computer where I keep all my other research files.

I then label columns as follows:

Keywords	Demand	Supply	S/D Ratio	Overture Cost	Findwhat Cost	Remarks
----------	--------	--------	-----------	---------------	---------------	---------

I use the spreadsheet to make an extensive list of all, and I do mean ALL the keywords and phrases that I find that are related to my topic of interest. In another column I list the number of searches each keyword and phrase receives per month (Demand) as indicated by results I find while using Overture's keyword suggestion tool.

I also enter current bid prices for those keywords from various pay per click search engines, along with URL's from some of the competing sites. In addition, I make note of possible products and merchant partners with appropriate potential affiliate programs.

By the time my research is complete, my spreadsheet is a well-organized, comprehensive source of information that will tell me at a glance all I need to know about my topic and its market.

You can accomplish the same task by using tables in word-processing software, but the job will not be as easy as when you use a spreadsheet.

Keyword Research Tools

Keyword research serves two purposes.

The first is to develop a list of keywords and phrases relevant to your topic. These keywords are used to compose the meta tags and text within your pages, and will therefore act as 'magnets' to attract the search engines.

Another benefit of thorough keyword research, is the ability to assess demand for products and services on the Net. Certain tools allow us to see exactly how many times surfers enter a particular phrase or keyword over a period of time. Using those numbers we may judge them sufficient to build a site around that topic.

Below are the tools I use to do keyword research for my affiliate sites.

WordTracker

Wordtracker.com is perhaps the best tool available to search for keywords and phrases relevant to your topic, as well as related keywords and phrases.

Wordtracker's free weekly Keyword Reports are also a great way to keep an eye on keyword search trends that indicate new and emerging topics of public interest.

Wordtracker is an online keyword generator that builds lists of similar search terms from keywords entered by Internet users. The database is updated on a continuous basis for new search expressions and it contains more than 340 million search queries. As such, Wordtracker can be a valuable tool to gain insight into the public's most commonly used search phrases.

With permission from the nice folks at Wordtracker, I've included two samples of Wordtracker keyword reports below - the **Top 300 Surge Report** and the **Top 200 Long Term Keyword Report**, 500 keywords in all.

The Top 300 includes the top 300 queries from the 24 hours prior to the report's issuance, and the Top 200 includes the top 200 complete queries from the largest Metacrawlers on the web (Metacrawler/Dogpile etc...) for the last 60 days (2 months).

You can scan through both lists to discover what's on surfers' minds.

Do any of the words and phrases strike a chord with you? Are any of the search terms also on your list of potential site topics?

List those phrases and terms that you are particularly interested in. You will later compare this new list against the list of potential topics that you made earlier.

Top 300 Searches Over 24 Hours

WordTracker's Top 300 Surge Report - These are the top 300 queries from the 24 hours prior to the report's issuance, and taken from 5,587,112 queries, which represents the complete queries from the largest Metacrawlers on the web (Metacrawler /Dogpile etc.) for the last 24 hours.

Legend		
Nos.: Position according to popularity		
Count: Number of sightings of keyword in database.		
Keyword : The keyword itself		
Nos.	Count	Keyword
1	4838	travel
2	4448	autos
3	2397	hotels
4	1764	ebay
5	1738	health
6	1727	google
7	1691	jokes
8	1474	yahoo
9	1442	mortgages
10	1221	lyrics
11	1170	joe millionaire
12	1161	insurance quotes
13	1156	dictionary
14	1150	books
15	1068	cars
16	1055	hotmail
17	1002	news
18	938	jobs
19	927	yahoo.com
20	895	song lyrics
21	884	People Finder
22	852	hotmail.com
23	843	maps
24	841	mapquest
25	840	prom dresses
26	837	Used Cars
27	818	search engines
28	755	games
29	752	palm
30	734	ricin
31	682	parent
32	673	Addresses
33	662	baby names

34	659	milf
35	656	atkins diet
36	652	white pages
37	648	science fair projects
38	638	detroit auto show
39	634	kazaa
40	623	weather
41	620	ask jeeves
42	617	dogs
43	610	recipes
44	595	southwest airlines
45	579	www.yahoo.com
46	568	lord of the rings
47	565	yellow pages
48	548	april fools
49	546	music
50	542	airline tickets
51	525	amazon.com
52	514	free clip art
53	507	author
54	504	wallpaper
55	499	ebay.com
56	498	kelly blue book
57	492	quotes
58	485	google.com
59	473	www.hotmail.com
60	472	Used Car Prices
61	468	clip art
62	460	job search
63	459	hairstyles
64	459	orlando bloom
65	453	poems
66	452	zip codes
67	451	ps2 cheats
68	448	free clipart
69	421	People Locator
70	419	winzip
71	418	home depot
72	418	pregnancy
73	414	Free Download Music
74	414	literotica.com
75	413	furniture
76	411	mortgage calculator
77	408	used cars
78	407	cnn
79	404	american airlines
80	403	Free People Finder
81	400	poetry
82	393	area codes
83	393	movies
84	391	free music downloads
85	391	house plans

86	387	clipart
87	385	united airlines
88	384	online dictionary
89	379	free ringtones
90	376	msn
91	373	Yahoo Mail
92	368	amazon
93	365	aol.com
94	364	las vegas
95	358	Yahoo. Com
96	352	Telephone Directory
97	352	free games
98	351	hair styles
99	349	pictures
100	348	New Car
101	348	warez
102	346	dodge tomahawk
103	341	Peoplesearch
104	340	mp3
105	337	www.google.com
106	332	cloning
107	327	freeones
108	326	harry potter
109	323	marijuana
110	323	sears
111	322	Free Clip Art
112	322	White
113	322	eminem
114	322	kazaa lite
115	320	msn.com
116	318	holiday inn
117	317	tattoos
118	316	buddy icons
119	315	airlines
120	314	Free Clipart
121	314	People Search
122	313	consumer reports
123	312	driving directions
124	312	online games
125	311	birthdays
126	310	sublime directory
127	307	People
128	307	guitar tabs
129	307	horoscopes
130	303	monster.com
131	302	aol
132	302	free screensavers
133	296	Joe Millionaire
134	296	free greeting cards
135	296	richards realm
136	296	textbooks
137	294	Person Finder

138	294	sublimedirectory.com
139	291	Locating People
140	291	walmart
141	289	Online Dictionary
142	288	currency converter
143	285	cheat codes
144	285	www.ebay.com
145	281	Free Mp3 Downloads
146	281	free fonts
147	280	Song Lyrics
148	279	Free Greeting Cards
149	279	irs
150	278	Free Diet Plans
151	278	auto
152	278	science projects
153	275	diabetes
154	274	avril lavigne
155	272	free wallpaper
156	272	snes roms
157	268	Finding People
158	267	flowers
159	267	yahoo mail
160	264	Orlando Bloom
161	263	anna nicole smith
162	262	best buy
163	258	kids
164	258	weight watchers
165	256	Plane Ticket
166	256	employment
167	256	free screen savers
168	255	refinancing equity loans
169	254	Free Desktop Wallpaper
170	254	Free Mp3 Music Download
171	254	travelocity
172	253	Ebay .com
173	253	Job Search
174	252	cheap airline tickets
175	252	wedding invitations
176	252	world map
177	251	e-cards
178	250	famous quotes
179	250	map quest
180	247	ecards
181	247	lowes
182	246	cheap flights
183	245	DeCSS
184	245	The Atkins Diet
185	245	dogpile
186	244	paintball
187	240	digital cameras
188	240	expedia
189	239	scholarships

190	238	education
191	237	cheats
192	237	love poems
193	237	tires
194	234	abortion
195	234	amtrak
196	233	free music
197	233	music downloads
198	233	music lyrics
199	233	thongs
200	232	ups
201	231	barnes and noble
202	230	Job Listings
203	230	free ring tones
204	230	posters
205	230	quotations
206	230	xbox cheats
207	229	screensavers
208	228	Science Fair Projects
209	228	anime
210	227	Cheap Airline Tickets
211	227	mexico
212	226	calendar
213	226	fafsa
214	225	auctions
215	224	cnn.com
216	224	mortgage rates
217	223	Martin Luther King Jr.
218	223	apartments
219	223	bangbus
220	223	greeting cards
221	222	circuit city
222	222	desktop themes
223	222	resume
224	221	screen savers
225	220	Free E Cards
226	220	computers
227	220	nissan
228	219	wifelovers
229	218	Goggle Search Engine
230	217	Science Fair Ideas
231	217	Science Fair Project Ideas
232	217	mp3 midi
233	217	periodic table
234	217	playstation 2 cheats
235	215	social security
236	215	wedding dresses
237	214	blue book
238	214	free e-cards
239	213	Free Email Greeting Cards
240	213	game cheats
241	213	nanotechnology

242	213	reverse lookup
243	211	funny pictures
244	211	human genetics
245	210	cheap airfare
246	210	dell
247	209	Funny Jokes
248	209	checks
249	208	airfares
250	207	cd covers
251	207	time zones
252	206	cartoons
253	204	free email
254	203	desktop wallpaper
255	203	expedia.com
256	203	solar system
257	202	the huns yellow pages
258	200	Hotels Search
259	200	health insurance
260	200	used books
261	199	Free Ecards
262	199	love quotes
263	198	sublimedirectory
264	198	verizon
265	197	depression
266	196	Southwest Airlines
267	196	calorie counter
268	196	credit report
269	192	Detroit Auto Show
270	192	auto parts
271	192	cruises
272	192	delta airlines
273	192	freeware
274	191	calendars
275	190	Tattoo Pictures
276	190	e cards
277	190	free online games
278	190	real estate
279	189	encyclopedia
280	189	used textbooks
281	188	Free Online Greeting Cards
282	188	free downloads
283	188	orbitz
284	187	body mass index
285	187	radio shack
286	186	Person Search
287	186	kazza
288	186	mapquest.com
289	185	chat
290	185	continental airlines
291	185	free credit report
292	185	jennifer lopez
293	185	ticketmaster

294	185	weight loss
295	184	car rental
296	184	holocaust
297	184	thong
298	183	lesson plans
299	183	www.aol.com
300	182	free nokia ringtones

Top 200 Searches in 60 Days

The Top 200 Long-Term Keyword Report

Wordtracker's current database size is 335,789,918 search terms which represents the complete queries from the largest Metacrawlers on the web (Metacrawler/Dogpile etc..) for the last 60 days (2 months).

1	154156	people search
2	141388	google
3	133130	yahoo
4	124905	travel
5	117132	ebay
6	114093	jokes
7	99715	autos
8	98918	hotels
9	98153	red cardinal
10	95624	health
11	89116	yahoo.com
12	85763	lyrics
13	83807	hotmail
14	79080	games
15	77025	hotmail.com
16	70126	dictionary
17	69365	blank
18	66926	maps
19	63001	mapquest
20	60552	www.yahoo.com
21	60327	song lyrics
22	58026	Pictures
23	57017	weather
24	56595	www.hotmail.com
25	54524	Weight Loss
26	54351	music
27	54023	recipes
28	53386	search engines
29	51428	kazaa
30	49072	cars
31	45983	jobs

32	42954	books
33	42834	news
34	42353	white pages
35	41841	ask jeeves
36	40790	parent
37	40706	clip art
38	40139	wallpaper
39	39792	Yahoo Mail
40	39253	mortgages
41	38952	-
42	38694	snes roms
43	38278	quotes
44	38124	april fools
45	36851	free clip art
46	36522	google.com
47	36141	mp3
48	35832	baby names
49	35749	movies
50	35697	msn
51	35453	halloween costumes
52	34987	People Finder
53	34710	free games
54	34517	yellow pages
55	33828	ebay.com
56	32550	www.google.com
57	32221	clipart
58	31888	amazon.com
59	31696	free clipart
60	31637	dogs
61	31515	Free Clip Art
62	31423	Used Cars
63	31368	Free Download Music
64	30892	free music downloads
65	30584	zip codes
66	30491	kelly blue book
67	30295	home depot
68	30116	aol.com
69	29781	free ringtones
70	29472	msn.com
71	29183	used cars
72	28883	airline tickets
73	28632	chat
74	28530	winzip
75	28458	birthdays
76	28428	greeting cards
77	28135	southwest airlines
78	26833	walmart
79	26792	author
80	26639	palm
81	26524	pictures
82	26253	insurance quotes
83	26171	e-cards

84	26094	warez
85	26074	driving directions
86	25566	poems
87	25138	hair styles
88	25118	Free Greeting Cards
89	25055	sublime directory
90	25034	Online Dictionary
91	24945	sears
92	24745	free greeting cards
93	24450	halloween
94	24447	pregnancy
95	24354	Song Lyrics
96	24345	eminem
97	24051	aol
98	23995	lord of the rings
99	23863	kids
100	23846	screensavers
101	23835	ecards
102	23704	Ebay .com
103	23703	hairstyles
104	23492	milf
105	23445	Yahoo
106	23230	online games
107	23057	literotica.com
108	23041	Free Clipart
109	22779	harry potter
110	22711	Free Mp3 Downloads
111	22520	People
112	22391	guitar tabs
113	22344	best buy
114	22265	buddy icons
115	22146	free e-cards
116	22092	consumer reports
117	21942	sublimedirectory.com
118	21860	car
119	21815	horoscopes
120	21753	music downloads
121	21528	online dictionary
122	21441	cnn
123	21416	desktop themes
124	21381	W3schools
125	21140	free music
126	21032	mortgage calculator
127	20980	area codes
128	20926	Free Desktop Wallpaper
129	20692	online casino
130	20504	cheats
131	20401	tattoos
132	20337	digital cameras
133	20306	education
134	20267	job search
135	20183	free fonts

136	20017	flowers
137	19934	screen savers
138	19915	anime
139	19613	furniture
140	19597	www.ebay.com
141	19482	richards realm
142	19399	Job Search
143	19296	yahoo mail
144	18911	amazon
145	18711	free screensavers
146	18702	ps2 cheats
147	18652	house plans
148	18527	chat rooms
149	18514	funny pictures
150	18511	Maps
151	18501	www.aol.com
152	18478	map quest
153	18425	famous quotes
154	18421	pogo.com
155	18096	cheat codes
156	18017	Yahoo. Com
157	17867	People Locator
158	17865	freeones
159	17862	poetry
160	17860	britney spears
161	17843	christmas
162	17655	free ecards
163	17578	Hotmail
164	17479	american airlines
165	17472	circuit city
166	17369	Hainan Island
167	17101	dogpile
168	17067	love poems
169	16961	Telephone Directory
170	16917	airlines
171	16788	marijuana
172	16758	Lyrics
173	16733	White Pages
174	16494	posters
175	16475	monster.com
176	16470	backgrounds
177	16423	holiday inn
178	16399	free online games
179	16381	freeware
180	16254	Online Games
181	16208	west Nile virus
182	16091	thongs
183	15970	Free
184	15815	game cheats
185	15776	lesson plans
186	15765	tires
187	15741	Addresses

188	15624	cd covers
189	15595	toys r us
190	15576	free email
191	15569	american idol
192	15496	Free Music
193	15472	cat
194	15386	kazaa lite
195	15332	e cards
196	15311	powerball
197	15296	lowes
198	15262	morpheus
199	15240	cnn.com
200	15239	free ring tones

Surprised? Get any ideas? It would be almost impossible NOT to get ideas from those incredible lists.

Unfortunately, by the time you read the 'Super Affiliate Handbook', the 24-hour and 60-day Reports above will no longer be completely accurate.

It's therefore a good plan for you to sign up for the Wordtracker free trial so you can get updated keyword reports on a regular basis.

Wordtracker will send you both reports, including the top 500 frequently searched words on the Internet, free of charge every week. The Wordtracker Keyword Report is published each Saturday and distributed to over 100,000 webmasters.

The WordTracker keyword reports are an invaluable tool in my affiliate marketing business.

I use them to:

- Identify market size
- Define a specific target/niche market
- Spot trends and surges of interest
- Improve search engine positions through enhanced meta tags

Sign up for WordTracker's free trial at the link below:

→ **WordTracker**

<http://wordtracker.com>

Overture's Search Term Suggestion Tool

To assist its over 80,000 advertisers choose keywords and phrases relevant to their sites and businesses, Overture provides a 'Search Term Suggestion Tool'.

You simply enter a term related to your site and the tool returns related searches that include the term you placed in the search box. The results also include the number of times that term was searched for during the previous month.

I've noticed that it usually takes until the middle of the following month for the previous month's results to start appearing in the suggestion tool results. If it's really important to you which month the results are from, be sure to check near the top of the box for the phrase "Searches done in 'month' 2003".

As a pay per click search engine, Overture.com claims to reach more than 80% of active U.S. Internet users through its own engine and those of its partners; CNN.com, Altavista, Yahoo! Msn, Lycos, InfoSpace, ESPN and Netscape.

This makes it an especially valuable resource for information about what your potential customers may want to buy!

➔ **Overture's Search Suggestion Tool**

<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>

WordTracker vs. Overture Search Tool

You may be wondering why I recommend WordTracker, which although it has a free trial, is a paid service, when Overture's keyword suggestion tool is free to use.

Well, actually, Overture's tool is supposed to only be available to paying advertisers. Considering it costs a minimum of \$20 per month to maintain an Overture account, that means Overture's tool isn't really free either.

However, because I know the URL, and Overture does nothing to password protect it, I can offer it here. They may wise up in time and make it impossible to use without an account, but in the meantime, enjoy it.

That said, back to my point about recommending Wordtracker in addition to Overture's free service.

Unlike Overture, which lumps pluralised, hyphenated, misspellings and other terms together to give one result for the number of searches in a month, Wordtracker shows numbers for all the variables.

For example, although thousands of people will morph the term 'wine making', into 'wine-making', 'winemaking' or even 'wine making', Overture will return results only for 'wine making'. Wordtracker on the other hand, will give you numbers for all of the variations.

This is especially beneficial when submitting terms and listings to pay per click search engines like FindWhat.com, which requires that advertisers provide the exact term that a surfer enters in the search box to get listed in its search results.

Granted, Overture's method is much simpler for advertisers who need not research all the various permutations and derivations, but in order to cover all your bases, you'll want the widest selection of keyword search terms used, and that's what Wordtracker will give you.

Search Toolbars

I've included a lot of information below about what makes each of these tools valuable. If you're in a big hurry and simply want to get the tools so that you can start, I suggest that you download both the Google and Alexa toolbars at the links below.

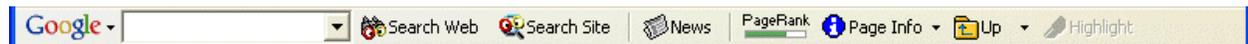
→ Google Toolbar

<http://toolbar.google.com/>

→ Alexa Toolbar

<http://download.alexa.com/>

Google Toolbar



I mention the Google Toolbar first because it will save you time. It allows you to search the web from any website location, without returning to the Google home page to start another search.

This Toolbar is free of charge, takes only a few seconds to install on your computer, and is available in a variety of languages, including 'Elmer Fudd' and 'Pig Latin'. Once installed, the Google Toolbar appears along with the Internet Explorer toolbar.

These features are included with the Google Toolbar:

- **Google Search:** Search Google from any web page.
- **Search Site:** Search only the pages of the site you're visiting.
- **PageRank:** Google's ranking of the current page.
- **Page Info:** Access to similar pages, linking pages, and cached snapshots.
- **Highlight:** Highlight your search terms on a page - each word in its own color.
- **Word Find:** Find your search terms wherever they appear on the page.

→ Google Toolbar

<http://toolbar.google.com/>

Alexa Toolbar



Next, I suggest you install the Alexa Toolbar to get detailed site statistics and information with a click of the mouse. The Alexa Toolbar gives you access to site owners' contact information, site stats and user reviews of web sites.

For example, when visiting the Amazon.com homepage, the Alexa toolbar shows Amazon's rank at '16'. That's the 16th most-visited site on the web. When I click the number 16 on the Alexa Toolbar, I am taken to a page on the Alexa site that provides much more detail about Amazon.com.

For example, here's is a small sample of the information that can be learned about Amazon.com by using the Alexa toolbar.

People who visit this page also visit:

- [American Red Cross National Disaster Relief Fund](#) (paypal)
- [E-bay](#) www.ebay.com
- [Cdnnow](#) www.cdnnow.com/cgi-bin/mserver/redirect/leaf=
- [Powell's Books](#) www.powells.com
- [Borders](#) www.borders.com
- [Barnes And Noble](#) www.barnesandnoble.com
- [Alibris](#) alibris.com
- [Cd Now](#) www.cdnnow.com
- [800.com](#) www.800.com
- [Wooden Horse Books](#) www.woodenhorsebooks.com

Site Stats for amazon.com:

- **Traffic Rank for amazon.com:** 16
- **Other sites that link to this site:** 135,818
- **Online Since:** 01-Nov-94

Contact Info for amazon.com:

Amazon.com Stock: AMZN
 P.O. Box 81226
 Seattle, WA 98108 US
 Tel: unlisted
 Email: info@amazon.com

There are **67 reviews** submitted by Alexa visitors, and you are invited to submit your own review. The review process is simple and doesn't require registration with the site.

Lower down the page, there is a list of 'Other Sites that Link to Amazon', along with a link to '**See all 135,818 sites that link to Amazon.com...**'. You can find out the URL of each and every site that links to the site you are interested in... 10 links at a time.

By clicking on '**See Traffic Detail**', you get the '**Daily Traffic Rank Trend**' for 3 months, 6 months and 1 year, in graph form. Rank is based on 3 months of traffic data from millions of Alexa Toolbar users and is a combined measure of page views and users.

Further down the traffic page, you can compare the site currently being researched, with any other site. Simply input the URL of the second site, and the traffic graph is redrawn showing the original site with a blue line, and the second one in red.

All in all, the Alexa toolbar is a very powerful tool for getting lots of good information FAST!

If you don't run Windows, or Internet Explorer, both of which are required to install the Alexa (and the Google) Toolbar, you can still get Alexa's information by visiting Alexa.com, and searching directly from that site.

→ **Alexa Homepage**

<http://www.alex.com>

→ **Alexa Toolbar Download**

<http://download.alex.com/>

Google Search Engine

Consistently relevant search results were hard to find ... UNTIL Google came along.

Both the Alexa and Google Toolbars use Google search technology. If you don't or can't install either, I recommend using the Google search engine to do research on the Internet.

Google's search is an easy and objective way to find high-quality Web sites with information relevant to your search.

Google's '**PageRank**' technology, credits a site based on the number of sites that 'link in' to that site. It also analyzes the importance of the sites 'linking in'. If the second site is rated to be of high importance, the site it links to also increases in 'importance', and it's PageRank increases. Furthermore, unlike many other search engines that can be 'fooled' into displaying irrelevant results, Google's technology makes human tampering with their search results extremely difficult.

In addition to providing highly relevant search results, Google is also useful if you want to find out how many potential competitors you have. Near the top right-hand corner of the results page, on a blue colored bar, Google shows the **number of results returned with your query**.

For example, if I search on the word 'golf', I see that there are 29+ million results returned, whereas 'golf instruction' only (ONLY?) returned 547,000 results.

This feature and the information it provides will come in very handy when you begin to research the profit potential of your ideas.

→ **Google.com**

<http://google.com>

Pay Per Click Search Engines

Pay per click search engines are another indispensable tool for doing market research on the Internet.

Pay per click search engines, such as Overture.com, allow you to generate instant traffic to your Web site by paying a small amount for each visitor click.

By researching the cost per click that advertisers pay per keyword or keyword phrase, you can get a very quick and accurate picture of the value of a particular topic.

When I want to be very thorough, I use all four of following pay per click search engines to do my research. When I'm in a hurry or feeling somewhat lazy, I just use the top two that are listed.

- Overture
- FindWhat
- 7Search
- Kanoodle

Let's take a sneak peek at how it works.

At the time of writing, the top bids for the popular keyword 'casino' in USD\$ are:

Overture	\$18.02
FindWhat	\$ 1.12
7Search	\$0.70
Kanoodle	\$0.32

Yikes! Eighteen dollars PER CLICK! That's rich. You can see that doing research at the PPC's may help you quickly eliminate certain topics if you plan to market your site using pay per click search engines in a big way.

By the way, if you plan to try this out before reading the following sections, you should know that Overture masks its advertisers' bids. It's easy enough to find out what they are however. Simply click on the link labeled '**View Advertisers Max Bids**' near the top right hand corner of the search results page. That action pops a new window in which you'll be asked to enter the code you see next to the input box. Do that, and you're in!

Don't worry though. You won't have to enter the 'magic code' each and every time. Once you're there, you can use the search within the new window to do further maximum bid research.

Note too that those are the advertisers' maximum bids and not necessarily the price they are paying per click.

Now that you are familiar with the tools you will use to research your topic, let's begin the research.

Market Research Begins

What are the Trends for this Industry?

To properly assess the market potential of your new venture, you must identify the trends that may affect your market in the future. By doing this you will have a sense of your project's long-term viability, strategic opportunities the market presents, and how you must respond to the changing behaviors of the customers.

Don't get caught trying to sell what became obsolete or out-of-style yesterday. Keep current by subscribing to relevant online newsletters, magazines and reading the newspaper. Stay informed and abreast of this rapidly changing world, and you'll stay in business.

Is there Sufficient Demand?

This is when you put Overture's Search Term Suggestion Tool and a spreadsheet to work, and build a list of keywords and phrases relevant to your proposed topic.

Building an extensive keyword list is crucial to your site's success. More than 'extensive', your list should also be 'exhaustive'. Leave no stone unturned in your search for phrases that surfers might use to find your site.

By way of example, when I created my dating site back in 1998, and started advertising with pay per click search engines, I built a spreadsheet consisting of a couple of thousand search terms related to my site.

Five years later I'm still the only advertiser listed under many of those keywords and phrases. Those terms are currently grandfathered at 5 cents per click at Overture.com, and some of them receive literally thousands of searches and clickthroughs to my site each month.

It therefore pays, and sometimes pays BIG, to spend time and effort to do this part of your research in a very thorough manner.

Taking your list of 'Passion Topics' above, I did a search on the term 'wine' using Overture's Search Term Suggestion Tool and included the results below.

Because of my personal success with dating sites, I often gauge a topic's potential by comparing its primary keyword against the keyword 'dating'. 'Dating' usually receives around three hundred thousand searches per month at Overture and its partners. Checking the results below, there were over 221 thousand searches for the term 'wine' and related phrases in just one month.

If I were a wine enthusiast or winemaking expert, I would feel very positive about the potential for my topic at this point.

Let's look at the keywords and phrases that were returned by the Overture search for 'wine'.

221500	wine
49940	german wine
48098	italian wine
36554	oregon wine
32852	wine rack
26780	french wine
17769	wine making
17704	california wine
14904	washington wine
14789	wine spectator
12791	wine cellar
11874	food and wine
10665	wine country
10381	wine australia
10024	wine cooler
9868	wine france
9829	white wine
9718	wine glasses
8321	wine label
7788	wine accessory
7640	wine bag
7467	wine glass
7464	wine charm
7297	wine bottle
6874	red wine
6306	wine tasting
6306	wine gift
6249	wine club
6202	wine online
5937	wine recipe
5910	california red wine
5828	wine enthusiast
5260	wine tour
5244	california white wine
5228	wine retailer
5139	wine rating
5002	wine storage
4880	wine review
4470	wine gift basket
4419	wine country california
4333	wine refrigerator
4084	wine storage rack
4023	wine distributor
4015	april wine
4003	wine making supply
3947	wine country tour
3873	australian wine
3822	cheese and wine
3778	strawberry wine
3772	wine cabinet
3753	food and wine magazine

3711	california wine tour
3506	wine glass rack
3463	napa wine tour
3214	wine basket
3199	sonoma wine tasting
3178	fine wine
3139	charles shaw wine
2997	wine tasting tour
2962	master of wine
2908	napa valley wine tasting
2895	wine grape
2889	wine of the month club
2851	bay area wine tour
2846	sonoma wine tour
2839	wine glass charm
2828	wine tasting tour and sonoma county
2803	napa valley wine tasting tour
2795	sonoma valley wine tour
2787	wine analysis
2781	wine store
2776	california wine tasting tour
2722	limousine wine tour
2720	make wine
2700	wine stopper
2700	avanti wine cooler
2689	linux wine
2648	buy wine
2425	wine sale
2398	wine list
2345	home wine making
2323	southern wine and spirits
2315	ice wine
2304	wine guide
2286	port wine
2246	napa valley wine train
2207	wine price
2185	red red wine
2181	wine making kit
2180	napa valley wine tour
2175	wine shop
2174	buy wine online
2156	wine box
2123	pairing wine and food
2122	type of wine
2094	wooden wine rack
2059	wine opener
2043	wine auction
1984	personalized wine bottle
1937	wall mounted wine rack

Many webmasters don't realize that you can click on any of the keywords that are returned by the suggestion tool, and get a list of all the phrases that include the words you selected.

For example, after looking at the results for the search on 'wine' above, I clicked on the term 'wine making' and got the following list. Again, you could then click on the term 'wine making supply' and all the searches that included the words 'wine' 'making' and 'supply' would be returned.

And so on and so forth.

17769	wine making
4003	wine making supply
2345	home wine making
2181	wine making kit
1035	wine making equipment
797	wine making recipe
527	wine making canada
488	canadian wine making
439	making rack wine
423	wine making process
315	home wine making supply
283	making region wine
202	history of wine making
163	wine making label
157	making homemade wine
143	beer and wine making supply
124	chiller making wine
119	wine making accessory
119	fruit wine making
116	beer wine making
114	making vinegar wine
111	wine making grape
110	making making wine wine
110	wine making tip
99	home wine making recipe
92	home wine making kit
90	making red wine
86	chemistry of wine making
82	industry making wine
81	wine making instructions
77	making manufacturing wine
70	advanced making technique wine
70	making port wine
69	making wine concentrate
66	making store wine
61	home made wine making
60	the technology of wine making
58	making wine charm
57	wine making book
55	making steps wine
52	making wine yeast
52	wine making direction
52	making red vinegar wine
50	commercial equipment making wine
49	wine making juice
49	equipment making used wine

49	making school wine
48	beer equipment making wine
48	making white wine
47	french making wine
47	wine making supplys
45	making picture wine
45	home wine making equipment
43	making rice wine
42	consultant hands making northwest wine
42	amateur wine making
40	wine making bottle
39	wine making information
39	home brewing and wine making
39	cellar making wine
39	ancient making wine
37	making dandelion wine
37	italian making wine
37	making store supply wine
37	fermentation in making wine
37	magazine making wine
37	fruit making recipe wine
37	atlanta making supply wine
36	easy making wine
36	france in making wine
35	cheap home making wine
35	chablis making wine
34	class making wine
34	making uk wine
33	making own wine
33	making science wine
33	apple making wine
32	canada kit making wine
32	wine making technique
32	wine making catalog
31	wine making product
31	home wine and beer making supply
31	factory grape in making wine
30	wine making course
30	made making wine wine
30	wine making ingredient
30	commercial making wine
29	biotechnologies making wine
28	making supply vine wine wine
28	making strawberry wine
27	grape juice making wine
27	live making wine
27	forum making wine
25	fermentation making wine
25	making problem wine
25	cost making wine

Although Overture doesn't permit advertisers to place listings for keywords and phrases that receive fewer than 100 searches per month, I left those terms in the above list for their research value.

Recognize too that the number of searches will fluctuate from month to month, especially with seasonal topics, so it's best not to hastily exclude any possibilities during the research process. Certain keywords may not be accepted for pay per click listings this month or next, but perhaps they will be accepted three or four months from now.

It's better to add to your research base, than to subtract from it.

The beauty of doing this type of research is that it should help you formulate a richer plan of action for your Web site.

For example, after looking at the search results above, your 'how-to-make-wine' site plan might begin to 'flesh out' somewhat to include the following sections:

- Wine making techniques
- Types of wine
- Recommended wine-related books & magazines
- Online wine forums
- Wine making supplies & accessories

As you start to fine-tune your ideas about what you will offer at your Web site, you can also start to fine-tune your keywords.

After sorting through all the keywords revealed during your research, and deleting those pertaining to specific wine regions, retailers, music groups (e.g. April Wine) and other terms that are irrelevant to your topic, your spreadsheet might look something like this:

Keywords	Demand	Supply	S/D Ratio	OV Cost	FW Cost	Remarks
wine	221500					
wine rack	32852					
french wine	26780					
wine making	17769					
wine cooler	10024					
white wine	9829					
wine glasses	9718					
wine label	8321					
wine accessory	7788					
wine bag	7640					
wine glass	7467					
wine charm	7464					
wine bottle	7297					
red wine	6874					
wine tasting	6306					
wine gift	6306					
wine online	6202					
wine recipe	5937					
wine enthusiast	5828					
wine storage	5002					

wine gift basket	4470					
wine refrigerator	4333					
wine storage rack	4084					
wine making supply	4003					
strawberry wine	3778					
wine cabinet	3772					
food and wine magazine	3753					
california wine tour	3711					
wine glass rack	3506					
wine basket	3214					
wine grape	2895					
wine glass charm	2839					
wine analysis	2787					
wine store	2781					
make wine	2720					
wine stopper	2700					
home wine making	2345					
port wine	2286					
wine making kit	2181					
buy wine online	2174					
wine box	2156					
pairing wine and food	2123					
type of wine	2122					
wooden wine rack	2094					
wine opener	2059					
personalized wine bottle	1984					
wall mounted wine rack	1937					
wine making equipment	1035					
wine making recipe	797					
making rack wine	439					
wine making process	423					
home wine making supply	315					
wine making label	163					
making homemade wine	157					
wine making accessory	119					
fruit wine making	119					
making vinegar wine	114					
wine making grape	111					
wine making tip	110					

→ **Overture Search Term Suggestion Tool**

<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion>

How Much Competition Are You Up Against?

Finding Basic Demand and Supply

To research the existing competition or current 'supply' requires using a search engine such as Google or AltaVista.

→ Google

<http://google.com>

→ AltaVista

<http://altavista.com>

Staying with the topics of 'wine' and 'wine making', a search at Google returns "**Results 1 - 10 of about 15,600,000**" for 'wine', while 800,000 results are returned for 'wine making'.

You can see these results near the upper right hand corner of the results page. (Note: if you do a search right now for the keywords 'wine' and 'wine making', the results will undoubtedly have changed as new sites are added and others dropped from the Google search engine.)

The same searches at AltaVista display "**AltaVista found 4,694,069 results**" for 'wine', and then 767,434 for the term 'wine making'. To see these figures at AltaVista, you have to look further down the page, past the first four 'Sponsored Matches'.

I generally elect to use one or the other of these search engines (usually Google), but not both. I do this to make sure that my research is consistent.

You may however prefer to use AltaVista, as their returns also show a number of related keywords and phrases on the results page.

For example, in a later search for '**wine making**' at AltaVista, the following phrases are returned at the top of the page linked to their respective pages:

- Home Wine
- Making Wine
- Wine Kits
- Wine Making Supplies
- Grapes
- Vineyards
- Wineries

Now, before you go to all the trouble of researching and noting the number of competing sites on your spreadsheet for each of your keywords, please read the following.

Competition can be a GOOD thing.

Generally speaking, the more competition there is, the larger the existing market.

Some researchers go crazy analyzing the supply/demand ratio, or 'demand satisfaction ratio', for each and every keyword, but it really isn't necessary.

While it is interesting to note how many sites already have a topic similar to your intended site, it's really only the first 10 to 40 sites, or the first page or two of search engine listing results that will be your competition.

Why is that?

Because your primary method of promotion will be through the pay per click search engines which will normally allow you to place your link(s) near the top of each SE results page.

So in effect, placing your links on the first page of search results makes the other 1,387,988 sites irrelevant, as surfers rarely look beyond the first page or two of results.

The main reason for making note of the total number of competitors is to see if you can come up with a true niche topic.

For example, if you find a keyword that has 2,000 searches per month and fewer than ten competitors, the supply/demand ratio equals .005, or 1/500th of a percent. There is a pretty good chance that your site will be easily found when you're playing with those odds, **regardless of whether you pay to advertise.**

Here is a short sample of how your market/keyword research spreadsheet might look at this point.

Keywords	Demand	Supply	S/D Ratio	OV Cost	FW Cost	Remarks
wine	221500	15,600,000	70.429			
wine rack	32852	392,000	11.932			
wine making	17769	1,800,000	101.300			
white wine	9829	2,320,000	236.036			
wine glasses	9718	641,000	65.960			
wine label	8321	527,000	63.334			
wine accessory	7788	114,000	14.638			
wine bag	7640	305,000	39.921			
wine glass	7467	1,660,000	222.312			
wine charm	7464	371,000	49.705			

The lower the supply/demand ratio - the better your chances of finding a profitable market.

For example, with a supply to demand ratio of just 11.932, it looks like it might be a good idea to find a merchant partner who sells wine racks and has an affiliate program.

With an S/D ratio of 14.638, 'wine accessory' also looks like a good topic to go after.

However, if you think about it, anyone searching for a wine accessory, is more likely to type 'wine accessories' into the search box. When we search on that term at Google, we see that there are about 1,230,000 results. The supply/demand ratio has now just risen to 157.935. So, that one may not be such a good idea after all.

But don't discount 'wine accessories' too quickly. As mentioned above, the supply/demand ratio (or current demand satisfaction) is just a guide. Furthermore, wine accessory is a very broad term. You need to research your topic much more thoroughly before making a decision as to its potential for profit. You may discover that the wine accessories section on your site is the site's most profitable area, when you target each of the specific product possibilities within that term.

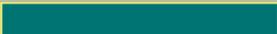
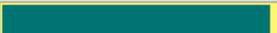
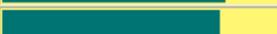
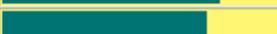
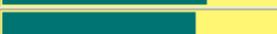
Niche Finder Software

I recently discovered a very neat piece of software that makes this whole process much, MUCH simpler.

The software is called 'Niche Finder'. I plugged in the term 'wine making' and in less than five minutes the software had generated a **big list of related key phrases**, which were found on the most relevant pages on the Internet. A list typically consists of **over 200 new key phrases**, and each of them may give you a valuable business idea, a possible product name, target market, or at least a good keyword for your web page. And a good business idea can make a fortune for you!

Here is an image of a portion of the results from Niche Finder that includes a graphic representation of the relevance, i.e. the green bar on the right.

Relevance chart:

No.	Key Phrase		Relevance
1	wine making	100	
2	wine making equipment	74	
3	wine making process	72	
4	home wine making	71	
5	wine making supply	63	
6	wine making kit	60	
7	history of wine making	59	
8	beer wine making	55	
9	wine making accessory	52	

Next is the full list of detailed statistics, sorted by relevance to the original 'wine making' keyword query.

Super Affiliate Handbook

No.	Key Phrase	Supply		Demand		Relevance	Potentia I	Demand -to- Supply
		raw	nice	raw	nice			
1	wine making	111000	50	15338	42	100	347	83
2	wine making equipment	5650	38	755	29	74	221	77
3	wine making process	4370	36	403	26	72	186	72
4	home wine making	3690	36	2022	33	71	306	93
5	wine making supply	1520	32	3143	35	63	384	110
6	wine making kit	1110	30	1655	32	60	340	106
7	history of wine making	945	30	157	22	59	162	74
8	beer wine making	617	28	75	19	55	126	67
9	wine making accessory	424	26	44	16	52	103	63
10	wine making grape	290	25	98	20	49	161	81
11	beer and wine making supply	191	23	61	18	45	140	78
12	wine making recipe	154	22	745	29	43	377	131
13	home wine making kit	113	21	85	19	41	181	94
14	making homemade wine	304	25	109	20	40	167	82
15	home wine making supply	98	20	207	23	39	269	116
16	fruit wine making	93	20	64	18	39	166	92
17	making red wine	310	25	75	19	36	141	75
18	wine making instructions	63	18	86	19	36	208	108
19	home wine making recipe	62	18	77	19	36	199	105
20	chemistry of wine making	61	18	55	17	35	170	97
21	wine making canada	50	17	41	16	34	153	95
22	home made wine making	29	15	82	19	29	250	131
23	wine making juice	22	13	38	16	27	186	118
24	wine making label	20	13	107	20	26	317	156
25	wine making product	20	13	41	16	26	200	124
26	making dandelion wine	78	19	100	20	22	211	106
27	wine making tip	12	11	71	19	21	318	172
28	wine making bottle	10	10	37	16	20	246	157
29	making port wine	30	15	105	20	14	277	137
30	making vinegar wine	13	11	71	19	14	308	166
31	making store wine	7	8	68	18	14	397	217
32	making uk wine	5	7	50	17	9	413	243
33	making rack wine	5	7	37	16	9	352	224
34	italian making wine	4	6	52	17	6	489	285
35	making wine yeast	3	5	41	16	6	545	338
36	in involved making	0	0	180	23	0	226	2255
37	making permit wine	0	0	91	20	0	196	1959
38	making picture wine	0	0	66	18	0	182	1820
39	making wholesale wine	0	0	55	17	0	174	1740
40	making school wine	1	0	51	17	0	171	1708
41	carrot making wine	0	0	47	17	0	167	1672
42	making strawberry wine	5	7	47	17	0	400	239
43	commercial making wine	0	0	43	16	0	163	1633
44	country making wholesale wine	0	0	43	16	0	163	1633
45	making video wine	1	0	43	16	0	163	1633
46	making red vinegar wine	0	0	40	16	0	160	1602
47	equipment making sale wine	0	0	39	16	0	159	1591
48	making wine charm	13	11	38	16	0	224	142

Using this software was simply amazing. Doing all that research by hand would normally take a few hours at least, and yet in just under five minutes, the software calculated the real **potential** of my business idea.

The Niche Finder software can generate the following 10 charts:

- Relevance Chart
- Detailed Statistics sorted by Relevance
- Potential Chart
- Detailed Statistics sorted by Potential
- Demand-to-Supply Chart
- Detailed Statistics sorted by Demand-to-Supply
- Supply Chart
- Detailed Statistics sorted by Supply
- Demand Chart
- Detailed Statistics sorted by Demand

I highly recommend that you take a closer look at the Niche Finder software. As I'm apt to say, "Time is Money" and this little gem is going to save you a ton of time in research.

→ **Niche Finder**

<http://nichemarketresearch.com>

Let's now take a look at your competition's most telling activity, advertising, and the specific amounts they are willing to pay to bring visitors to their sites.

How Much Does it Cost to Advertise?

Before you go scooting past this section because you don't plan to advertise, STOP!

Research into how much other sites pay for advertising will tell you a LOT about your competition and the market for your product.

Merchants and affiliates that pay to advertise are serious about their business, so they are the perfect competitors from whom to learn.

I do this part of my research at Overture.com and Findwhat.com, my favorite pay per click search engines, because they deliver the most traffic. It doesn't hurt to also use others like Kanoodle.com and 7Search.com. However you'll usually find that the bids at those services are lower, which is a reflection of their lower traffic volumes.

Just because I don't do research at the lower volume PPC's, does not mean that I don't use them to promote my sites!

I most assuredly do use them.

However, they aren't that necessary for market research purposes. Overture and Findwhat do the trick very nicely for that.

OK, just in case I haven't made my case strongly enough, this part of the research is quite often what I do before anything else.

If, by checking Overture for the word 'casino', I see a top bid of \$18.02 per click, I know that chances are pretty good that I'll pass on that topic. Regardless, I will scroll to the bottom of the page to see if I can place a listing there for 10 cents. Sometimes you'll be surprised at how sharply the prices drop from the top bid to the one at the bottom of the page. In such extreme bid variance cases, it would appear that you've got a high demand keyword - one that might be worth a lower bid with a lower listing placement.

Or you've got a mentally deranged high bidder!

So, let's look at what it would cost to advertise the keywords related to 'wine' and 'wine making' at Overture and Findwhat.

When doing this research, I like to shrink both my browser and spreadsheet windows to half-size, so that I may see them together, side-by-side. This makes the cut and paste process go much more quickly.

Keywords	Demand	OV Cost	FW Demand	FW Cost	Remarks
wine	221500	0.69	193898	0.29	p56 p40 = .14
wine rack	32852	0.56	23978	0.56	p32
wine making	17769	1.20	3626	0.14	p11
white wine	9829	0.50	1781	0.14	p15
wine label	8321	0.31	2377	0.08	p10
wine accessory	7788	0.97	9864	0.29	p33
wine bag	7640	0.40	120	0.06	p10
wine glass	7467	0.33	3023	0.26	p27
wine charm	7464	0.70	947	0.15	p18
wine recipe	5937	0.25	562	0.03	p5
wine enthusiast	5828	0.59	1098	0.43	p9
wine making supply	4003	1.21	342	0.10	p9
home wine making	2345	0.85	149	0.10	p7
wine making kit	2181	1.31	117	0.10	p6
wine making equipment	1035	0.65	44	0.12	p6
wine making recipe	797	0.10	15	0.05	p2
making rack wine	439	0.10	2	0.01	p2
wine making process	423	0.10	10	0.01	p1
home wine making supply	315	0.10	0	0.01	p1
wine making label	163	0.10	6	0.01	p2
making homemade wine	157	0.10	1	0.09	p3
wine making accessory	119	0.10	3	0.01	p1
fruit wine making	119	0.10	2	0.01	p1
wine making grape	111	0.10	0	0.01	p1

At this point, you might be thinking to yourself, "WOW! 69 cents for the keyword 'wine' and \$1.20 for 'wine making'. That's way TOO expensive."

Well, just wait a second. You might be pleasantly surprised if you follow through to conclusion with the research process.

That's the point of doing the research. You could learn something that may save you time, effort and money in the long run. So, don't give up too soon.

In the 'Remarks' column, you'll have noticed numbers preceded by the letter 'p'. I use these to indicate what position/rank you would be in if you bid at Overture's current minimum bid of 10 cents. Assuming 40 listings per page, 'wine' was the only keyword that would put you on the second page of results at 10 cents, so I included the cost (14 cents) to get onto the first page.

My initial findings on the topic of 'wine making' were that bid amounts are usually relatively steep in the top three positions, but then drop off quite rapidly.

That's OK. Barring the opportunity to place your ad in the top three listings, a rapid drop in maximum bids is definitely to your advantage.

Although all the pay per click search engines will tell you that you need to be in the top three positions to get the most traffic, you can still get plenty of traffic from the lower listings.

Those lower listings often deliver more qualified traffic as well. That's because the surfer who spends more time reading listings will click through to your lower-ranked site because they like what you had to say and want to learn more, and not simply because yours was the first listing on the page.

WHO is Your Competition?

While I am at Overture researching how much advertisers within my category are willing to pay for keywords, I also take the time to visit the top ten, twenty and sometimes all forty sites that come up on that first page of search results.

I also search at Google and some of the other major search engines.

Note: Google's advertisers are found at the top and along the right side of the results page. All sponsored listings are placed inside colored boxes and are marked as 'sponsored link'.

When I do this type of thorough investigation, I learn WHO is willing to pay to play.

By visiting the sites that advertise, you'll discover that there are two (2) different types of sites that pay for keyword advertising in your category. They are:

- Irrelevant Sites
- Competing Merchant and Affiliate Sites

Irrelevant Sites

You may discount the irrelevant, non-competing sites entirely, and be glad that they don't pose a possible threat.

However, if you discover through research that a site is completely irrelevant to the search term that it showed up under, it is well worth your while to drop the editors at Overture or Google a note about your findings. Sites that pay to advertise under irrelevant terms push everyone else's prices up.

Say for example that the site that has the first listing under the keyword 'wine bag' is bidding 25 cents to hold that spot. If you plan to sell wine bags and compete with this fellow on Overture, you'd have to pay 26 cents to claim the top listing.

You shouldn't have to compete with an advertiser that doesn't deliver what they falsely promise. Overture's listing guidelines are very stringent about relevancy, and you'll have no problem getting this fellow de-listed from that keyword. Not only will you save money by writing that note to Overture, but you will also save Overture's users time when they don't have to visit useless sites.

Competing Affiliate & Merchant Sites

The other sites that you visit will be either merchant or affiliate sites.

Consider the following questions as you review each site, and make notes in the remarks section of your spreadsheet.

- What is the site's name and URL?
- Is this a merchant or an affiliate site?
- What products do they offer?
- Do they sell quality products that I'd like to offer on my site?
- What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the site?
- What kind of quality and service do they provide?
- What can I do differently so customers purchase through my affiliate store rather than at my competitors?

You can probably see from the questions above, that the primary value in reviewing these sites is to find merchants with great products and affiliate programs, as well as good ideas for your site.

To determine whether the site is an affiliate or merchant site, 'cursor over' the links and check your browser's status bar to see if the links are affiliate product links.

Most of the links through the affiliate networks are readily identifiable as such.

For example, Commission Junctions links all begin with "http://www.qksrv.net/click-" and Linkshare's start out with "http://click.linksynergy.com". Clickbank links are generally configured as "**http://hop.clickbank.net/?affiliateID/sellerID**" and BeFree/Reporting.net's links start with "**http://service.bfast.com**".

However, many affiliates now use affiliate-cloaking software or 'mouseover' scripts to hide and protect their affiliate links from commission theft, but you can easily determine whether or not they are affiliates. Simply click through on the product links. If clicking takes you to a new site or domain, then the site is likely an affiliate site.

On the other hand, if you click on a link and the resulting page comes up on the original domain, then it is probably a merchant site. I say 'probably', because the cloaking software that I use makes it look like the resulting page comes up on the domain you started out on.

For example, if my product link for "**33 Days to Online Profits**" is <http://rosalinds.com/33days.html> and someone clicks on that link, the new page that is displayed in the browser's address bar using my cloaking software would still be <http://rosalinds.com/33days.html>.

So, to anyone judging product ownership based solely on domain or URL displayed, it certainly looks like '**33 Days to Online Profits**' is my own, because it seems to reside at "rosalinds.com" because of the cloaking software.

Of course, you have to look farther than just the address bar. Look for product or manufacturer's names, and 'buy now' links. Keep searching until you discover the truth.

When you arrive at a merchant site with great products, start looking for links to their affiliate program. **If an affiliate network like Commission Junction or Linkshare administers the program, don't sign up for the program through the merchant's site.**

If you sign up at the merchant's site directly, you could end up opening a new Commission Junction or Linkshare account that you don't need. Pay a visit to the applicable affiliate network, and search for the merchant's name from within your account.

If the merchant has excellent products that you'd like to offer, but doesn't have an affiliate program, that's OK. There are ways to encourage merchants to offer their products through affiliate programs. These are covered later in the Super Affiliate Handbook.

I have been delighted on occasion to discover that sites paying the most to advertise were poorly designed or didn't offer a very wide range of products within the topic I was researching.

In those cases, if I build a well-designed Web site that gives the surfer exactly what they want, I should be able to achieve a fairly good degree of success, even if I don't list my site in a top spot on the pay per click search engines.

Don't overlook this step in your affiliate business-building process. You'll be surprised what researching the competition will tell you. In many cases you too will be delighted to see how little competition there is, and how much room the market holds - just for you.

Will Your Niche be Profitable?

After all of the variables including keywords, demand, supply, and pay per click costs have been collected and copied into your spreadsheet, you can finally put some formulae to work and make some educated assumptions about how profitable your chosen topic might be.

The assumptions made below about sales and conversion rates are based on industry averages. Your own results may be much higher. Let's hope so, because I think assuming a one percent conversion from clickthrough to sales is very low, based on my own experience.

Here are explanations of how the calculations in the following table were made.

- **Keywords** - Self-explanatory
- **Demand** - Equals the number of searches at both Overture and Findwhat for the month, for that term.
- **Clicks** - Based on an average 1.5% clickthrough rate from pay per click listing. I believe this number might be low, based on the relatively low number of advertisers for many of the keywords below. My own clickthrough rates vary from a low of .01% for keywords positioned very low in the listings to a high of 30% for a keyword that isn't even in the top three listings. Time and tweaking of your own campaigns should produce a better than 1.5 percent average.
Formula: - Demand x .015 = Clickthroughs
- **Sales** - I'm assuming an average 1-percent conversion rate from clickthroughs to sales. Again, I feel that this number is lower than it should be, however, it is a fairly typical conversion rate for affiliates. Super affiliates do MUCH better than one percent however. I'll discuss how to improve your conversions to sales in a later section.
Formula: - Clickthroughs x .010 = Number of Sales
- **Commission** - The number of sales x \$20.00 per sale. I am basing this on my own average commission per sales figures. At this point in our research, that number is still hypothetical. We'll find out later when we do research into affiliate programs and products how much average commission amounts are likely to be.
Formula: - Number of Sales x \$20.00 = Commission
- **PPC Cost** - The number of clickthroughs multiplied by 6 cents. This average cost per click is an arbitrary number based on my own experience with PPC's, and is a cost per click averaged across multiple pay per click search engine advertising campaigns.
Formula: - Clickthroughs x \$0.06 = PPC Cost
- **Net Profit** - The amount you can take to the bank.
Formula: Commission - PPC Cost = Net Profit

Keywords	Demand	Clicks	Sales	Commission	PPC Cost	Net Profit
wine	415398	6231	62.31	\$1,246.19	373.86	\$872.34
wine rack	56830	852	8.52	\$170.49	51.15	\$119.34
wine making	21395	321	3.21	\$64.19	19.26	\$44.93
white wine	11610	174	1.74	\$34.83	10.45	\$24.38
wine label	10698	160	1.60	\$32.09	9.63	\$22.47
wine accessory	17652	265	2.65	\$52.96	15.89	\$37.07
wine bag	7760	116	1.16	\$23.28	6.98	\$16.30
wine glass	10490	157	1.57	\$31.47	9.44	\$22.03
wine charm	8411	126	1.26	\$25.23	7.57	\$17.66
wine recipe	6499	97	0.97	\$19.50	5.85	\$13.65
wine enthusiast	6926	104	1.04	\$20.78	6.23	\$14.54
wine making supply	4345	65	0.65	\$13.04	3.91	\$9.12
home wine making	2494	37	0.37	\$7.48	2.24	\$5.24
wine making kit	2298	34	0.34	\$6.89	2.07	\$4.83
wine making equipment	1079	16	0.16	\$3.11	0.93	\$2.17
wine making recipe	812	12	0.12	\$2.39	0.72	\$1.67
making rack wine	441	7	0.07	\$1.32	0.40	\$0.92
wine making process	433	6	0.06	\$1.27	0.38	\$0.89
home wine making supply	315	5	0.05	\$0.95	0.28	\$0.66
wine making label	169	2	0.02	\$0.49	0.15	\$0.34
making homemade wine	158	2	0.02	\$0.47	0.14	\$0.33
wine making accessory	122	2	0.02	\$0.36	0.11	\$0.25
fruit wine making	121	2	0.02	\$0.36	0.11	\$0.25
wine making grape	111	2	0.02	\$0.33	0.10	\$0.23
Total	586567	8437	84	\$1,687.43	506.23	\$1,181.20

Based on a very narrow selection of keyword and keyword phrases, our hypothetical net profit for the month amounts to \$1,181.20. That's not bad at all, for one little site about wine making. Imagine repeating the process with nine more topics and having more than ten thousand dollars to play with every month.

As mentioned above, I felt that both the PPC clickthrough and conversion to sales rates were low. What happens if we increase these numbers?

Assuming a PPC clickthrough rate of 3%, we would come up with the following results:

Keywords	Demand	Clickthroughs	Sales	Commission	PPC Cost	Net Profit
Total	586567	17597	175	\$3,519.40	1,055.82	\$2,463.58

Staying with our PPC clickthrough rate of 3%, let's see what happens if we work really hard to improve our conversion rate to 3%.

Keywords	Demand	Clickthroughs	Sales	Commission	PPC Cost	Net Profit
Total	586567	17597	527	\$10,558.21	1,055.82	\$9,502.39

Even if we reduce our expectation of traffic delivery from the pay per click search engines back down to 1.5%, the net profit results are still astonishing.

Keywords	Demand	Clicks	Sales	Commission	PPC Cost	Net Profit
Total	586567	8799	263	\$5,279.10	527.91	\$4,751.19

Pretty respectable, all in all.

Please remember that the example above does NOT include all the keyword possibilities I would use for this site. Nor does it take into account the traffic you will get from free sources which would skew those final dollar amounts upwards, provided the sales conversion rates remain the same.

Also remember that at this point, we are considering only profit POTENTIAL. There are no guarantees that our actual results will be as successful. They may in fact be MORE successful.

Only real-world testing of all we know and learn will tell us if our hypothesis was realistic.

You can also get some help from the following software...

Adwords Analyzer

Just as I was about to do substantial keyword research for some new sites this recently, I was introduced to Adwords Analyzer software that made my work SO much easier and less time-consuming.

Normally I use Wordtracker and Overture's Search Term Suggestion Tool to ferret out as many related keywords and phrases as I can... and I did that still.

Then I transfer all that data into an Excel spreadsheet and write titles and descriptions for my pay-per-click advertising campaigns.

Well, Adwords Analyzer showed me exactly on which keywords I should focus my time and attention.

In addition to displaying the number of searches conducted at Overture during the previous month for all permutations of the keyword entered, Adwords Analyzer also shows the number of web sites returned for each keyword and the 'results to search' ratio.

The interface ALSO displays the number of campaigns currently being run at both Overture and Google for each keyword and keyword phrase.

Hallelujah.

That shows me both where I need not waste my time, and more importantly, which phrases currently have few or no advertisers.

That's the perfect scenario in the online world. A keyword or phrase for which there are tons of searches, no competitors and the bid price is cheap. The info is priceless and the software is very inexpensive.

→ <http://www.adwordanalyzer.com/>

Where to Find Products & Services to Sell Online

Now that you know the market niche that you want to target, you'll have to find merchants who sell related products and services through their affiliate programs.

Fortunately, a small industry has sprung up to assist and promote these merchants to their potential affiliates. You'll be able to find products and services to sell through affiliate networks, merchant Web sites and affiliate program directories.

Let's look at each of these methods separately.

Affiliate Networks

As online advertising gets more competitive and expensive, web merchants are increasingly promoting their products through affiliate networks.

An affiliate network company is one that acts as a third-party “honest broker” and functions as a middleman between merchants and affiliates. It's a centralized service where merchants can list their products and the details of their affiliate programs, and affiliates can peruse the various programs available and then sign-up for the ones they choose. The affiliate network company looks after all of the sales tracking statistics, provision of marketing tools, and the issue of commission checks to affiliates.

For merchants, joining an affiliate network places thousands of eager affiliates right on their doorsteps. The marketing value and the simplicity of having another company administer their affiliate program is worth the (sometimes) hefty prices levied by the networks.

Joining an affiliate network as an affiliate is equally beneficial. Joining is free, and the whole process of finding and selecting programs is simplified through categorical search facilities. Because merchants pay top-dollar for a good network's management services, affiliate networks in general tend to offer higher-quality programs.

At most of the networks, you enter all your contact and payment details (name, address, phone number, etc.) just once. After being accepted into the network, you then apply to each merchant's program separately. In some instances, approval is immediate, and in others you may have to wait a day (or seven) for the merchant to get back to you.

Once accepted, marketing material for each merchant is readily available, and HTML code for banners and text links is usually generated with a single mouse click. You simply cut and paste the code into your Web site pages. The banners are hosted on the affiliate network servers, which will save you bandwidth charges.

As an affiliate member of a network, you will receive notification when new merchants join the network. Some networks will send only notices of merchants that are relevant to your site, which saves time when sorting through your email.

Some networks even let you know which merchant programs are low on funds and therefore may not be a good idea to promote at a given time.

Most, but not all networks consolidate your earnings from each of your affiliated merchants into a single monthly paycheck. That, along with being able to access your statistics in a centralized interface instead of visiting each merchant's site separately are perhaps the best aspects of joining a network.

Each affiliate network is set-up and operates differently. So in the section below I give you an overview of the application and payment processes, affiliate interface, marketing tools and more at the 'Net's top affiliate networks.

For each network I've included a list of the type of merchant offerings available. The codes are as follows:

- CPA (cost-per-action/lead generation)
- CPC (cost-per-click)
- CPS (cost per sale)
- CPM (cost per impression)

I have concentrated on listing those networks that offer CPA, CPC and CPS. I have left the primarily CPM networks out of the equation because I don't personally promote such offers. CPM campaigns are usually low-paying sweepstakes or other 'freebie' types of offers that simply want to collect email addresses so that they can send out more promotional material, that you won't get paid for.

I highly recommend that you visit each and every one of the following affiliate networks.

Affiliate Fuel

Signup Restrictions - Site must receive 2000 unique visitors per day minimum, and only Canadian and U.S. are accepted. Consideration will be given to Western European and Australian sites with a 90% Canadian/U.S. audience. Your site must be a top-level '.com' domain.

Programs - CPC, CPA

Minimum Payout - \$25

Payments - Officially, they pay NET 60 days. However, they say that in practice they've always paid out NET 35 days.

Real-time Tracking - Yes

Multi-Tier - 2-tier 5% commission, as well as a flat bounty of \$2.00/referral.

The one page signup process is fairly easy with all the standard questions. I'm always grateful to see that they want to know where to send my checks! ☺ It was nice to see that they include a 'comments' section with a 'How can we help you?' request.

It was a little disappointing however to finish the application process and receive a message telling me to **expect a reply to my application within 3 to 10 days**. Three days I can understand. As my first encounter with a company, if I had to wait ten days for my application to be approved, I'd be reluctant to do business with them. As it turned out, it took 4 full business days for my application to be approved, which is marginal. Delays during the application process don't build my trust in their ability to respond quickly to questions that I may have down the road.

On further examination however, in the 'Attendant' section I discover that 'Affiliate Fuel is available to help you with offer placement or any other issues M-F from 8AM-5PM PST' and that 'Affiliate Fuel replies to all questions promptly and efficiently'. That's excellent, but they could be losing good potential partners, as that information is not stated clearly front and center.

On a very positive note, Affiliate Fuel is the ONLY affiliate network that ever sent me a 'We Appreciate Your Business' card. Very nice touch, indeed!

Affiliate Fuel has a really attractive user interface, based on a "service station" theme. However, you have to get past the 'cutesy' navigation labels. Without the flyout explanations, terms such as 'Drive In', 'Fill Up', 'Under the Hood', 'Tune Up' or 'Checkout' can be confusing.

Affiliate Fuel is one of the few networks that posts whether an advertiser's account is properly funded. In keeping with the fifties scheme service station scheme, this is depicted through graphic 'gauges'. The gauge displays the amount of money left in the account. If the account is more than 1/2 full, all advertising creatives (banners, etc.) are available and all affiliates can run an offer. If your account is low, you are limited to running the offer only through banners and not through emails or newsletters. If the account gauge displays as empty, the offer is being 'refueled' and isn't available until the advertiser has made a deposit to their account.

I really like their fair anti-spam policy. Too many companies have an 'ask no questions, fire the affiliate' approach to spam complaints. Affiliate Fuel on the other hand appears to have a more democratic approach, as follows:

"Should a spam complaint arise from a user against an affiliate, we require that the affiliate be able to furnish the date and IP address in which the user subscribed to their list. We also require that the user be removed from the affiliate's database prior to any further promotion of our offers."

At the time of writing, Affiliate Fuel had **71 merchant offers**. DO take the time to visit the site despite the low number of offers. Based on information posted on the site, as well as testimonials, it looks like these guys are in the business for the long haul, and will become a much bigger player among the affiliate networks.

A few of Affiliate Fuel's merchant client's include:

- Time Magazine
- Entertainment Weekly
- Fast Company
- Barron's
- Wall Street Journal
- Reader's Digest
- National Enquirer
- Columbia House
- TV Guide

→ **Affiliate Fuel**

<http://affiliatefuel.com/>

BeFree/Reporting.net

Programs - CPC, CPA, CPS

Minimum Payout - Varies according to merchant.

Payments - Payments are made by the individual merchants. Timeframes also vary.

Real-time Tracking - No

Multi-Tier - No

Email Marketing Permitted – Depending on individual merchant specifications.

One of the BIG 3 affiliate networks, (i.e. BeFree, Linkshare and Commission Junction), BeFree's information page for new affiliates advises that BeFree merchants have paid out more than 220 million dollars in affiliate commission. My guess is that this comment was made quite some time ago, and that the amount is now substantially larger.

Their application process has two (2) tracks. You can either select a number of merchants whose programs you wish to join and then fill out the application form, or go straight to the one-page form. Either way, it's a fairly easy process.

There is one significant drawback to the BeFree program. While Commission Junction (CJ) will cut you a check as long as you generate \$25 in total commissions across all the affiliate programs you've joined through their network, each BeFree merchant sets their own minimums and payout protocols. That means you need to read each and every affiliate agreement in detail to make sure that you think that their payment terms and conditions are acceptable before you join their program. For example, I joined a BeFree merchant program and later realized that the minimum payout was \$300.

I've seen comments on the forums that indicate that BeFree is looking into the possibility of consolidating payments. IMHO, (in my humble opinion), as far as I am concerned, that can't happen soon enough.

BeFree does have one nice search option that should be implemented on the other networks as well. It allows you to exclude specific merchants from the search if that merchant is dominating the results.

For example, a 'general' category advertiser might show up in all your searches. After seeing their listing two, three or four times, you don't need to be reminded that they are in fact a BeFree advertiser, so you can exclude them from future search results.

BeFree is one of the few affiliate networks that does not pay for affiliate or merchant referrals. While I appreciate that they get enough word-of-mouth advertising not to need to pay for affiliate referrals, I think they are losing out on not paying a commission for merchant referrals. Oh well, the next time you get asked about starting an affiliate program through a network, you can send the requestor to an affiliate network that will pay for your referral.

BeFree's homepage for the affiliate interface, called the Partner Gateway has a number of design and display problems. It is mis-aligned, forcing users to scroll a page width to the right to access the logon portion of the screen. There is also a section with black text on a purple background that is impossible to read. Within the interface itself, the left navigation covers text that rightfully belongs in the middle of the page. Considering BeFree's huge revenues, and the amount they save on not paying for referrals, they might want to pay a designer to fix those long-standing problems.

Other than those few issues, I quite like BeFree's overall interface, and find it easier than some others to use. It's particularly nice to have fast and easy one-click access to a full list of your own merchant partners. Some of the other networks put that list a click or two further away.

In September 2001, BeFree launched its Acclaim Program to reward those merchant programs that provide their affiliate partners with a truly exemplary experience. The Acclaim Program identifies programs that meet partner-friendly criteria such as monthly payment cycles and timely payment within each cycle. Acclaimed merchants are reviewed once each quarter.

Acclaim Program - Required Criteria:

- Provide monthly payments to partners.
- Send payments to partners within 35 days of the payment period end date.
- Provide partners with 14 days advance notice of compensation changes.
- Provide BeFree with timely and accurate transactions information.
- Post an e-mail address for support inquiries on Reporting.net and respond to inquiries within five business days.
- Be in good standing with BeFree.

We can only hope that this sets an example for other networks and even independent merchants to eventually accept these guidelines as standard and fair industry practices.

BeFree also has a feature that they call 'FlexTrack'. It's a feature that allows you to track sales and earnings to the sub-affiliate level, so that payments can be credited back to the end-customer, designated charities, and other third parties.

To benefit from FlexTrack, affiliates must either: qualify as 'master affiliates', be partners that have a large number of sub-affiliate partners, or work with charity sites and/or loyalty programs that offer points or cash-back rewards to customers.

The BeFree network is a MUST to join. Just take a look at the list of clients below. Forgive me, but I just had to include the FULL client list because the number of brand name merchants is so impressive. It includes:

- Accor Hotels - US
- Adidas America
- Advanta
- AllergyBuyersClub.com
- Ancestry.com Affiliate Program
- Answer Financial
- Aquarelle - FR
- Ashford.com
- AutoTitleGuard.com
- BabyCenter, L.L.C.
- BabyUniverse
- barnesandnoble.com
- Bass Pro Shops
- BestBuy.com
- BestRate.com
- Bird Dog Associates
- Blue Nile
- Bluefly.com
- BMG Direct
- BoatersWorld
- Booksonline.com
- Boscov's Department Stores
- Bowman International Sportsbook and Casino
- Brookstone
- Callwave
- CameraWorld (A Ritz Interactive Company)
- Cashcade - BarbaryOnline.com
- Casino On Net
- Checks Unlimited
- Circuit City
- CitiFinancial
- CitiFinancial Canada
- Codecasino.com
- Collectibles Today
- Commit/Nicorette/NicoDerm CQ
- ComputerGeeks.com
- ConsumerInfo.Com
- Crane Paper Company
- Cross.com

- Crossings
- Datapipe
- DealTime
- Dell Business
- DellHost
- Diamond.com
- Dick's Sporting Goods
- Discovery Channel Store
- DVDPlanet
- eBags
- ebates.com
- eBay
- Eddie Bauer
- eFastAdvance
- eHealth PPS
- eHealthinsurance.com
- EMusic.com
- Entertainment Publications, Inc.
- Entertainment Weekly
- Equifax Consumer Services
- Expedia.com
- Experian Automotive
- Experian CreditExpert
- ExpressGoldCard.com
- ez2buy
- Figleaves
- Figleaves US
- Finish Line, Inc.
- Fleurop-Interflora
- Fleurop-Interflora - DE
- Fogdog Sports
- FreeColorPrinters.com
- gamestop.com
- gap.com
- Gateway
- Giardinelli Music
- GiftCertificates.com
- GiveAnything.com Gift Certificates
- GoodGuys.com
- GoToMyPC
- Government Liquidation
- Hammacher Schlemmer
- Hammocks.com/Backyard-Mall.com
- Home Shopping Network
- HomeBets.com
- HomeGain
- Homestead Technologies

- Hotelguide.com AG
- iDine
- InkJetUSA
- InkSell
- John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Joi Internet - Hawk Communications
- Lastminute.com
- Lensmart
- Lids
- Liquidation.com
- LoanWeb.com / 4Insurance.com
- LoveAccess.com
- LuxRes.com
- M&M's® Colorworks®
- Maidenform
- Matchmaker
- MBCash.com
- Micro Warehouse, Inc.
- MobileShop
- Monster
- MortgageSelect.com
- MotherNature.com
- MoveDirect.net
- Musician's Friend
- MusicSpace.com
- Nascar
- Neckermann
- NetFlix
- NewWayRx.com - Medical Web Service
- NoMonthlyFees.com
- NothingButSoftware.com
- oldnavy.com
- One Step Ahead / Leaps and Bounds
- OneTravel
- Onlineshoes.com
- Orvis UK
- Pacific Poker
- Pagoo
- Payless ShoeSource
- Personal Names
- PETsMART.com
- PhotoAlley
- priceline.com
- PrintPal
- Proflowers.com
- RadioShack
- Rand McNally

- Reflect.com
- ReturnBuy
- Ritz Camera
- Rosetta Stone
- SBC Communications
- Scholastic At Home
- Shari's Berries
- Shoebuy.com
- ShoeLine
- ShopNBC
- Silver Vision
- SimpleTech Inc.
- SmartBargains
- SMARTpages.com
- SOCCER.COM & LACROSSE.COM
- Sony ImageStation
- Sony Style Stores
- Sporting News
- SportingbetUSA.com
- Sportsinteraction.com
- Stamps.com
- Staples.com
- Superbook
- T-Mobile
- Tan Thru Suits by Lifestyles Direct
- TechnoScout.com
- Terra Lycos
- The Tire Rack
- TheHartford.com
- TigerDirect.com
- TimeLife - Germany
- TimeLife.com
- Totaljobs.com
- Travelocity Canada
- Travelocity.com
- Travelselect.com - UK
- TrueCredit.com & FreeCreditProfile.com
- TXU Energy Services
- United Online
- uSubscribe.com
- VANS, Inc.
- Verandafleurs.com
- Verizon/SuperPages.com
- VerizonWireless.com
- Vermont Country Store
- VistaPrint.com
- Warrantybynet

- WearGuard
- Wolf Camera
- WorldCom Conferencing
- WorldofWatches.com
- Yankee Candle

→ BeFree

<http://reporting.net>

Casino Coins Network

Programs - CPS

Minimum Payout - \$200.

Payments - Checks are mailed around the 10th of each month.

Real-time Tracking - Clicks and Game downloads are updated approximately once every two seconds, while your balance is updated approximately once daily.

Multi-Tier - Yes. You get paid a 5% commission bonus for the "Real Players" that your webmaster referrals bring in to the casinos. "Real Players" are those who make real-money purchases at the casino.

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

Applications to Casino Coins are generally reviewed and approved within 24 hours.

Commission structures are the same across the board for each of the sponsored casinos, so I can report them here. When you generate Real Players, you can earn up to 35% commission. For every five (5) additional Real Players you bring in, you will receive \$25. Casino Coins reports that webmaster earnings range anywhere from \$100 to \$12,000 per month, and on average, they make approximately \$1,000 per month.

Their interface is functional and easy to use. The marketing materials include banners, ad copy, pop ups, exit windows, HTML promo, promo calendars, scrollers, progressive tickers, splash pages and affiliate banners.

A word of caution about promoting online casinos and Internet gambling. If your client wins the jackpot, your account will show a negative balance until you've generated enough revenue from other players to bring yourself back out of the hole. Don't worry, you won't have to pay anything, but it is a possibility you should consider. Note: 'Casino Rewards' casino network 'zero balances' affiliate accounts that are in the hole at the end of every month.

Casino Coins' sponsor casinos include:

- English Harbour Casino
- Caribbean Gold Casino
- Silver Dollar Casino
- SuperSlots Casino
- Millionaire Casino
- All Poker Casino

- Aposte Casino
- Casino Bleu Blanc Rouge
- Gambling Inc.

→ **Casino Coins**

<http://casinocoins.com>

Casino Rewards

Programs - Primarily CPA, CPC, CPS

Minimum Payout - \$200.

Payments - Check or wire, sent by the 7th of each month.

Real-time Tracking - Yes

Multi-Tier - Yes, 5% of the paycheck of every webmaster you refer.

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

The Casino Rewards program has a quick signup process, with few restrictions other than that you agree not to spam. **They claim that their top-earning affiliates are raking in over \$50,000 per month!**

The interface is clean and easy to use, and they offer a plethora of marketing materials including games and raffles that you can place on your site for your visitors' enjoyment.

One thing that Casino Rewards does differently from other casino affiliate programs is that all negative balances are zeroed out each month, plus a negative balance in one casino will not take away from the positive balance in another. This is a HUGE benefit to the affiliate who would otherwise need to generate enough new business to crawl their way out of the hole if one of their referred visitors won big money.

Casino Rewards partners include:

- BlackJack Ballroom
- Strike It Lucky
- Golden Tiger Casino
- Virtual City Casino
- Zodiac Lucky
- Golden Tiger Poker
- Virtual City Poker

→ **Casino Rewards**

<http://affiliate.casinorewards.com/>

ClickBank

Programs - Primarily CPS

Minimum Payout - \$10, adjustable upwards. A \$2.50 accounting fee is deducted from each check issued, so you may want to adjust your minimum payment upwards if your two-week earnings are low.

Payments - Checks are mailed within 15 days after the end of each pay period, and pay periods end at 12:00:01am on the 1st and 16th of each month. Checks over \$5,000 are sent at Clickbank's expense by US Priority Mail (US) or Global Priority Mail (Europe, Canada, Australia, etc) wherever possible. Payment is by check only.

Real-time Tracking - Yes

Multi-Tier - Yes

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

ClickBank distributes over 10,000 digital products and services through a network of over 100,000 affiliates. I use Clickbank's services both as an affiliate and as a merchant, and I can attest to the fact that the checks arrive like clockwork.

Their one-page application process is the shortest I've seen yet and the only restriction of note was the one against spam.

The Clickbank Marketplace lists all of their merchants' products ranked in order of product popularity. There is no waiting for acceptance from individual merchants. Simply browse the marketplace, get and post your link, and start making money.

Creating links is super-easy. Simply click on the commission percentage link located next to the product's title, up pops a little window into which you enter your Clickbank ID and your link is automatically generated. Their links are super short and therefore easy to promote within email campaigns.

ClickBank withholds back 10% from each check to cover their risk of future returns. The holdbacks are credited back to your account after about 90 days.

Any account with a positive balance that remains dormant for 90 days will be assessed a charge of \$1 per pay period, and if the account remains dormant for 365 days, the charge is raised to \$10.

ClickBank's clients and products include:

- Spyware Detection & Removal Software
- Yanik Silver and Jeff Ball's 'Get Fit While You Sit'
- The Negative Calorie Diet™
- Smart Page Generator
- Learn How Buy Real Estate with No Credit
- How to Write Your Own eBook in 7 Days
- Double the Speed of Your PC
- Auction Sources Exposed
- Turn Words into Traffic
- \$1.10 Printer Cartridge Wholesale Guide

Discover what Clickbank has to offer both merchants and affiliates through the links below.

→ **ClickBank SignUp**

<http://clickbank.com>

→ **ClickBank MarketPlace**

<http://clickbank.com/marketplace/>

ClickxChange

Programs - CPA, CPC, CPM, CPS

Minimum Payout - Payments less than \$50 are subject to a \$2 handling fee.

Payments - Assessed on the 15th of the month, checks are mailed 14 days later. Payments can also be made by PayPal. Wire transfers are not currently available.

Real-time Tracking - Yes

Multi-Tier - Earn 50% access fee for advertiser referrals and 5% earnings on affiliate referrals for life! Plus as an added bonus, ClickXChange will pay you an additional \$5. for every affiliate that you refer that earns at least \$5.

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

ClickxChange's interface is very similar to Commission Junction's interface, making it easy and a pleasure to use. (see Commission Junction below).

ClickxChange also publishes the number of affiliates in each program. However, before you reject a program based on its low affiliate numbers, be sure to check how long the program has been online. It might be brand new and quite good. You don't want to walk away from a good potential revenue stream.

There are **227 advertisers** listed in the ClickxChange directory.

Among the more popular merchants are:

- eFax.com
- GotoMyPC.com
- x10.com

→ **ClickxChange**

<http://clickxchange.com>

clixGalore

Programs - CPA, CPC, CPS

Minimum Payout - \$50US, AUD\$100, UK£35 or €60

Payments - Monthly by check.

Real-time Tracking -

Multi-Tier - Yes

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

clixGalore has over 1400 merchants and tens of thousands of affiliates across its three networks in the USA, UK and Australia.

I can't say that I'm thrilled with the clixGalore interface. When doing a search by category for merchants, the results come up in search engine format with 5 'featured' merchant banners at the top of each page. It seems obvious that these merchants have paid for advertising within the network. The listings below those featured are one to three-line descriptions of the program and product, with the commission amount offer and a link to join the program.

The only search function that produced good comparative results was from a link on the homepage labeled 'Search Top Performing Programs'. That returned a table with columns listing product titles, commission rates, numbers of banners, and approved, pending and declined application requests. Each row includes a join link.

Some notable clixGalore clients are:

- Big Fish Games
- Foot.com
- NeoSearch.com

➔ **clixGalore**

<http://clixgalore.com>

Commission Junction

Programs - CPA, CPC, CPS

Minimum Payout - \$25/up to \$75

Payments - Payments are made on the 20th of the month to Canadian and American publishers (i.e. CJ's name for affiliates), and on the last day of the month to publishers outside those countries. Advertiser payments are available in 16 different currencies and are consolidated into one monthly check. Direct bank deposits are available.

Real-time Tracking - Yes

Multi-Tier - Yes, with restrictions. They allow only U.S. and U.K. publishers to earn commissions from introducing new publishers to their service. What's up with THAT? I've contacted them regarding this seeming discriminatory practice, however I've received no acceptable (IMHO) explanation for the policy.

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

When you first arrive at CJ it will be confusing if you don't remember that the CJ term for affiliates is 'publishers'.

Their application is one page long and very straightforward. There are no signup restrictions other than the usual non-acceptance of sites that contain or link to sites that are libelous, defamatory, obscene, abusive, violent, bigoted, hate-oriented, illegal, cracking, hacking or warez, or offers any illegal goods or services. Turnaround time on the application is very quick.

Here are 12 reasons why Commission Junction is my favorite affiliate network...despite the fact that they discriminate against Canadians in their referral program.

1. **Commission Junction claims that 64% of top 50 Web properties are CJ clients.** I believe this. While CJ wasn't the first affiliate network, it certainly took the lead to become the best in terms of both quality and quantity.

Thousands of BIG name-brand companies use Commission Junction to administer their affiliate programs. Dell, eBay and Sprinks are just 3 of hundreds of brand name merchants affiliated with Commission Junction. Buying online still presents a problem for many folks, but if they can buy from a brand name company that they trust, they're much more likely to part with their money.

2. **The CJ interface is intuitive and easy-on-the-eyes.** Unlike some other affiliate network interfaces, CJ's designers did a great job of making the interface easy to navigate and free of eyestrain.
3. **Finding programs at CJ is much easier and faster.** In most cases you do a simple search for an advertiser, link, or product, by entering a keyword into a search blank. All **relevant merchants** are then returned. At too many of the smaller networks, merchants are allowed to place themselves in irrelevant categories which makes finding appropriate advertisers that much more difficult.
4. **Selecting PROVEN programs is easy at CJ.**

Statistics showing how well each merchant converts site visitors into sales are given for a 3-month period. You can also see the average commissions paid to affiliates for every 100 clicks for the previous seven days. Using CJ's 'dollar sign' rating system, you can see the volume of commissions paid by a particular advertiser, relative to the rest of CJ's network.

The dollar sign rankings are as follows:

- \$\$\$\$=95th percentile and above
- \$\$\$=80-94th percentile
- \$\$=60-79th percentile
- \$=40-59th percentile
- =39th percentile and below
- Blank=No commissions earned

5. **At CJ, you never have to search for commission rates.** Commission percentage or dollar value per sale/lead, are prominently displayed alongside each Advertiser's listing.
6. **More information is always available at CJ.** Clicking on the Advertiser's name takes you to a page giving a written description of the company, their product and the affiliate program. Below the description is a 'more information' link, and below that, a contact link.
7. **CJ and its merchants won't spam you with thousands of offers daily.** You can choose not to receive email from merchants whose programs you have joined. That email is then delivered to your mailbox on CJ's system.
8. **Contacting CJ merchants is super easy.** Within the CJ mail system there is a drop-down box listing all the companies you are currently affiliated with. Simply choose the appropriate one, write your message in the accompanying box and send it. Certainly beats fishing through your own email program and trying to dig up an address that will actually get to the affiliate program manager.
9. **Getting linking codes and graphics at CJ is SO easy!** Simply click the 'get links' link, choose from the wide assortment of text and graphic links returned, and then copy and paste the code that pops up. No saving images to your computer. All the graphics are stored on, and called from, Commission Junction's servers. I like saving bandwidth!

You can also create your own 'SmartZones', which are collections of rotating links that may contain links from the same, or many different advertisers. Each link within the SmartZone is assigned a "weight" that determines how often it will display in relation to the other links within the SmartZone. You get one small snippet of javascript to place on your page, and then when you want to add or remove banners, you do so through the CJ interface. Nice and easy!

10. **Excellent capability for researching your statistics at CJ.** You can access more than 100 customizable reports with real-time data through the CJ Account Manager. Publishers can generate reports on their individual links, transactions, and their individual merchants, or "advertiser partners".
11. **Ask for help at CJ and you shall receive it.** The help system can be searched by index, glossary, contents, or a simple search. If you still can't find the answer you are looking for, simply send the CJ rep an email. My experience is that they always respond within the same day.
12. **CJ commissions are consolidated into one payment.** That makes filling out your deposit slips much faster! If you don't want to bother with deposit slips, direct deposit is an available option.

If you join no other affiliate networks, be sure to join Commission Junction. Their client list is equally, if not more, impressive than BeFree's list.

A few of Commission Junction's merchant clients include:

- Coffee Cup Software
- eBay
- Etronics
- Frederick's of Hollywood
- NetZero Platinum
- Overture
- Yahoo! Personals

→ **Commission Junction**

<http://cj.com>

Commission Soup

Programs - CPA, CPS

Minimum Payout - \$35

Payments - Monthly consolidated check.

Real-time Tracking - Yes

Multi-Tier - Yes

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes, with restrictions.

Commission Soup and Credit Soup are part of the same affiliate network that specializes in offering financial related products.

One of the beefs I have with some stand-alone programs, as well as with some affiliate networks, is their requirement that affiliates be U.S. citizens or operate sites that promote products only to other U.S. citizens. I've always wondered why it matters where a site is based if I can direct U.S. citizens to their site.

Fortunately, companies like Commission Soup understand that Internet marketing is a worldwide activity. Commission Soup is a network that sells credit card offers exclusively to U.S. citizens, but it doesn't discriminate against non-US webmasters who want to promote its products as affiliates as do some other networks. In fact, Commission Soup accepts affiliates from all over the world, with the stipulation that, "All of our programs (U.S. credit card offers) are only available to U.S. citizens, so you will need to have a site that markets to the U.S." Hurray! A site where sanity prevails.

Commission Soup has very strict guidelines when it comes to email marketing. So strict in fact, I wouldn't bother going the email route with them unless I had a lot of time to spare.

Here's the blurb from their site:

Guidelines for Approved Opt-In Email Lists

Prior to starting any type of email, enewsletter, etc. campaign, you **MUST** email us at customerservice@Commissionsoup.com with the dates of the drop. Include the number being sent and type of campaign with an attachment of what is being sent (approved text only).

Making contact when necessary is quick and easy with their 1-800 number.

Signup restrictions are minimal, including the rights not to accept sites that are international marketing sites, poorly designed, poor quality sites, adult sites that promote pornography or sexual material of a lewd, lecherous or obscene in nature or intent.

High profile clients include:

- Advanta
- Chase
- Discover
- HouseHold Bank
- Orchard Bank

→ Commission Soup

<http://commissionsoup.com>

Dark Blue Affiliate Network

Programs - CPA, CPS

Minimum Payout - \$30

Payments - Funds are deposited into the Affiliate's PayPal Account within fourteen (14) days after the end of each calendar month for all commissions earned during the prior month.

Real-time Tracking - Yes

Multi-Tier - No

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

Dark Blue's application is an easy step-by-step guided process. You are first asked for your email address, and by the time you've finished entering your details, your Dark Blue program key will have arrived in your email. Simply enter the key and get to work promoting their merchants' offers!

The approval process may be automatic, but Dark Blue still has its standards. Your website must not contain or link to material or content that is adult in nature, obscene, hateful or offensive on racial, ethnic, sexual or any other grounds; or is defamatory, libelous, or invades another person's privacy or proprietary rights or is otherwise illegal.

They've also stipulated that you must not place any statements on or near the Dark Blue advertising banners requesting or insisting that visitors to your website "click" on the banner. Phrases that are banned include, "Click here to visit our sponsor", "Please support our sponsor", "To visit our sponsor, click here", and "Please visit our Advertiser".

Dark Blue has a very attractive and relatively easy to use interface. I'm not totally thrilled with their system for locating advertisers, however. The category navigation that first pops up after clicking on 'Get Advertisement' appears to be ordered according to market popularity. Although travel and health & fitness products may be the most sought after on the Net, I find it much easier to find what I'm looking for in an alphabetical arrangement.

They are also very secretive with their contact information for some reason. I had to scroll halfway down the Help page to find an email address. Granted, their contact information is all spelled out in the welcome email. However why would I want to go back to my email program when I'm already on the site with a question?

After I did find their email address, I dropped them one and was impressed with the very quick response. Basically, I sent the email, went upstairs to make a coffee and by the time I got back to my desk I had my reply.

A sampling of Dark Blue's merchant clients:

- Date.com
- ePersonals.com
- MagMall.com
- Roar.com

→ **Dark Blue Affiliate Network**

<http://darkblue.com>

FineClicks.com

Programs - CPA, CPC, CPS, Hybrid

Minimum Payout -

Payments - FineClicks.com pays on the 20th of each month for the previous month's revenue.

Real-time Tracking - Yes

Multi-Tier - Receive \$5 for each new affiliate referral plus 5% of their earnings for life.

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

FineClicks.com is a division of Shareasale.com, Inc., an affiliate network detailed later in this chapter.

Their application form is short, and approval is automatic upon replying to the confirmation email they send.

The interface is FAST and very easy to use. I especially like the 'Revenue Bar' at the top of the page, that give current stats for Own Revenue, Referral Revenue, Carry Over, YTD, and Referral Clicks. Commission Junction has something similar, that is actually more descriptive, but being on the right side of the page, seems slightly less apparent.

When searching for new offers, one column in the results is called "Funding" and appears as colored bar with variations of blue, red and white. The graduations indicate whether an offer is well funded, or is about to be suspended, and everything in between.

The interface shows average earnings per click and conversion rates, and can be sorted by any of the columns from highest to lowest, or vice versa. All of these features make it much easier to choose the right offer for your site's audience.

Clicking on an offer's link from within the search results opens a new window where you can view more detail about the product and company, and apply to join the program.

I particularly like how easy it is to use their email system. In some affiliate network interfaces, you have to turn off email notifications for each individual merchant that you have an alliance with. With FineClicks.com, 3 clicks and you're done!

All in all, FineClick's interface is very similar in functionality to that of Commission Junction.

The only real drawback I've seen at FineClicks is their relatively small number of offers and brand name merchants. That will hopefully change in time.

At the time of writing, I counted **117 merchant offers**.

FineClick's clients include:

- MyFreePhoneCards.com
- TopFreebies.com

→ **FineClicks Affiliate SignUp**

<http://fineclicks.com>

→ **FineClicks Merchant SignUp**

<http://fineclicks.com>

LeadHound

Programs - CPC, CPA, CPS

Minimum Payout - \$50.

Payments - Commission payments are paid in US Dollars, Euro, Japanese Yen, or UK Pounds via PayPal on the 15th of each month for the previous month's revenue.

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

Real-time Tracking - Yes

Multi-Tier - Earn a 5% monthly bonus for all new affiliates and merchants you bring to Leadhound.

LeadHound's three-part signup process isn't too painful, although the programmers forgot that Canada has provinces, so Canadians like me are forced to include their province in the 'City' entry box. I consider this to be poor forms design and/or lousy knowledge of geography, at best.

LeadHound's interface is attractive but not very intuitive. Once logged into the affiliate members area, the main navigation is on the right side of the page. Those links are black and not underlined. After clicking the 'Campaigns' link, you arrive at a page of instructions on how to navigate and use the section. Unfortunately, the titles underlined in black, in this section aren't links. To navigate the section, you have to use the tiny white links on the left side of the page. This could use a redesign.

Because the navigation is split, part of the right side of the page disappears when you open a page consisting of merchant banners. The 468 x 60 banners are wide enough to push the right-side navigation off the page on a 1024 x 768-display size. I can't imagine having to navigate this site from a 600-wide display. It wouldn't be fun.

A feature I do like is that the Campaigns page list includes the average revenue per click for each product listed. Having that information makes it much easier to know how much you can spend on a pay-per-click advertising campaign for a particular product.

Checking statistics at LeadHound is simple and available in real-time. The display is nice and easy to use, and all the functions are self-explanatory.

At the time of writing, **LeadHound has 65 merchants with 102 campaign offerings.**

LeadHound merchants include:

- BrainFox Media Services
- DogFriendly.com, Inc.
- goClick.com
- Python Media
- Webspotting.co.uk
- Xuppa.com
- Zing Wireless, Inc.

➔ **LeadHound Affiliate Signup**

<http://leadhound.com>

➔ **LeadHound Merchant SignUp**

<http://leadhound.com>

Linkshare

Programs - CPA, CPC, CPS

Minimum Payout - Variable

Payments - Variable

Real-time Tracking - Yes

Multi-Tier - Yes

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

LinkShare reports over 10 million partnerships in the network and claims to be the most successful pay for performance (affiliate) network of its kind.

I find their user interface quite intuitive and easy to use. I especially like the 'Create Links' link that takes you immediately to a list of all your current merchant partners in the Linkshare network. This is a step up from Commission Junction's interface where it takes a couple of more clicks to get to the same place.

Within the "Your Account", "Program Controls" section, it's really simple to get all the information you need about an individual merchant and their program, including contact and commission information. It also allows you to quickly see if any of your joined programs have been put on hold or discontinued.

Linkshare's affiliate links are really long and ugly. Here's the link for their referral program.

<http://click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/stat?id=PvjioY3I0VU&offerid=7097.10000024&type=1&subid=0>

Compare that with the one I have for Commission Junction's affiliate referral program.

<http://www.qksrv.net/click-211898-7282777>

Short links are much better for use in email campaigns. If a link is too long, it 'breaks' and goes nowhere when your subscriber clicks on the first part of the link. Linkshare's long links almost demand that you utilize link redirects. For this, you could use the Affiliate Link Cloaker software and get shorter links, as well as some protection from commission theft.

Like BeFree, each of Linkshare's merchants has their own minimum payout, payment timeframe, and method of delivery. I hope they plan to change to a consolidated payment plan sometime in the near future. Right now, LinkShare is responsible for mailing your commission payment for only some of the merchants. In other cases, the merchant is responsible for mailing your commission payment.

Similar to BeFree's Acclaim Program, Linkshare established their Premium Partner Program to spotlight merchants that satisfy specific criteria. A Premium Partner is a merchant program that:

- Uses LinkShare's check-cutting service.
- Pays affiliates on a monthly basis.
- Pays affiliates based on a maximum \$25 threshold.
- Promptly authorizes affiliate payments so affiliates are paid at the end of the following month.
- Allows seven or more return days (does not apply to merchants with pay per click programs).
- Has supplied valid and complete contact information in their profile.
- Is active and in good standing.
- Makes timely payment to its affiliates

Linkshare's statistics reporting is quite nice to use, and the different types of reports that can be generated are impressive.

Linkshare's clients include:

- Coldwater Creek
- Delta Airlines
- FTD.com
- Hallmark
- Hickory Farms
- Overstock.com
- PitneyBowes
- REI
- Sharper Image

→ **Linkshare**

<http://linkshare.com>

Quinstreet

Programs - CPA, CPS

Minimum Payout - \$5

Payments - We pay commissions monthly, 30 days after the end of the month.

Real-time Tracking - Almost (2 hour delay)

Multi-Tier - Yes

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

Quinstreet gets points from me for their lovely design.

The signup form is really short - it doesn't even ask for your address. But don't worry, you get a chance to tell them where to send the check after you've set up your username.

Based on my experience with Quinstreet's system, it would seem that all merchants are set up to automatically approve applications.

It's easy to get information about each merchant's commission structure. You just click the link and the full list of merchants appears. When their list of merchants increases considerably, they'll have to rethink that approach. Although Quinstreet has very few clients, they do have some that are noteworthy. Among them are:

- ADT Security
- Red Cross
- Save the Children Fund
- University of Phoenix

→ **Quinstreet**

<http://members.quinstreet.com>

ReferBack

Programs - CPA, CPS

Minimum Payout - \$20 for check payments, and \$50 for ACH (electronic funds transfer).

Payments - Payments are made by check, Infinia and ACH.

Real-time Tracking - Visits and downloads are made in real-time. All other aspects are updated every three hours.

Multi-Tier - Yes. Earn 2% of your referral's profits.

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

ReferBack is an affiliate network for online casinos. Signup is quick and easy.

Their signup does not allow adult or adult-oriented sites. Spam techniques will get you ousted quickly.

I honestly don't think that I've seen another network that goes as far as ReferBack does to help its affiliates succeed. The interface is very easy to use, and marketing tools include an impressive array of banners, rotating banners, Flash banners, progressive tickers, HTML emails, text emails, active scrollers, popup windows, text links, newsletters and site reviews.

In the Resource Center, affiliates at the beginner, intermediate and advanced levels can all benefit from instruction in site building and promotion. Free resources include casino/gambling-related graphics and web site templates.

Contact is made easy with 800 numbers listed for the U.S., Canada and the U.K.

Referback's casino clients include:

- Aces High
- Capital
- Gaming Club
- Home
- Jackpot City
- Lucky Nugget
- RiverBelle
- Showdown

→ **ReferBack**

<http://referback.com>

ShareaSale

Programs - CPA, CPC, CPS

Minimum Payout - \$50

Payments - One consolidated monthly check. ShareaSale issues payments via check and PayPal on the 20th of each month for those affiliates who reach the \$50 minimum before then end of the previous month.

Real-time Tracking - Yes

Multi-Tier - \$1 per signup as an affiliate, and 5% of their future earnings.

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

There were no real restrictions in the application process, other than having a valid web site address, and valid email address. They also suggest that affiliates could differentiate themselves by having a top-level-domain name.

It took only a day to have my application approved, and once into the interface, I was informed that my membership level was 'limited', and that I could only apply to pay-per-lead and pay-per-sale program until I'd generated at least one pay-per-sale transaction or \$20 worth of valid CPA transactions. I guess that helps them weed out the very impatient spammers.

Honestly, I find ShareaSale's interface very hard to look at. Yellow links on a white background tend to give me eyestrain followed by headaches. It's definitely not an interface to be mulled over for long periods of time.

The simple search for merchants is a little slow and clunky. Clicking on a category name like 'Business' returns fifteen merchants per page. Some merchants' descriptions are more than one-screen high and that makes for an incredibly long page with lots of big graphics. The paragraph description below each company's logo is way too small and impossible to read. I don't believe surfers should have to change the font size displayed in their browser window to suit designers. It should be the other way round. Consequently, I scroll the page looking only at logos. I'm probably not alone in this method of searching, so merchants choosing to use ShareaSale should make sure that their logos are VERY eye-catching.

Generating banners and text links produces a similarly unwieldy page.

ShareaSale had **545 merchant** offerings at the time of writing.

Some Notable clients are:

- Avitan Technologies Corp.
- Bonsai Boy of New York

→ **ShareaSale.com**

<http://shareasale.com>

WebSponsors

Programs - Primarily CPA

Minimum Payout - \$15

Payments - Monthly electronic transfer payments (ACH) to your bank account on a Net 30 days payment basis.

Real-time Tracking – No. 24-hour delay

Multi-Tier - You will earn 10% of whatever revenue the referred site makes each and every month.

Email Marketing Permitted - Yes

WebSponsors' application process is short, sweet and pretty much automatic. You simply click the link in the email they send you to confirm your request to join their advertising Network. They have the usual caveat about having read and agreed to their rules as a condition of acceptance, but they go one better and require confirmation that your site has a Privacy Policy in place.

Everything about WebSponsors' interface is easy to use. Their 'Creative Rotation Manager' allows you to add rotating banners to your site that are specific to profiles that you create. This helps with your ad tracking. While other networks offer the same feature, WebSponsors interface is just quicker and easier to use.

One very cool feature that WebSponsors offers is their 'co-branding' tool. It allows you to build a subdomain of their Free2Try.com and TrialOffers.com. The tool provides an interface with which you can add a logo and header to your subdomain, as well as choose colors for the text, links and background. Just for fun, I tried out the interface and added my header from finditat.rosalinds.com to co-brand both subdomains. Here are the results:

→ <http://webvista.trialoffers.com/>

→ <http://webvista.free2try.com/>

Although those aren't the types of sites that I would typically promote, they do give me very quick access to my link codes. As you can see when you cursor over any of the links on either of those sites, my affiliate ID has been embedded into each of the links.

If I want to promote any one of those offers separately on another site, it's really easy for me to right-click on the link I want and add it to the new page that I'm creating. The only downside to using those links is that the subdomains are dynamically generated and the links are changing all the time. If you hard-code a link into another page, you could find out later that the offer has expired and that you've been sending your visitors to a broken link. And that's never good.

The Websponsor folks care enough about their affiliate partners to have built a nice little webmaster resource section that includes a Web site submission engine, scripting tools and webmaster tips.

Here is a sample of some of WebSponsors' past and present clients.

- TV Guide
- The New York Times
- Time
- Sports Illustrated
- People
- Time
- Money
- Fortune
- eCompany
- Entertainment Weekly
- Wall Street Journal

- USA Today
- MTV
- Sony
- Seventeen
- Rolling Stone
- Forbes Magazine

→ **WebSponsors**

<http://websponsors.com>

Affiliate Networks - Quick List

To conclude this section, here's a quick click list of links to each of the services covered.

→ **Affiliate Fuel**

<http://affiliatefuel.com/>

→ **BeFree**

<http://reporting.net>

→ **Casino Coins**

<http://casinocoins.com>

→ **Casino Rewards**

<http://affiliate.casinorewards.com/>

→ **ClickBank**

<http://clickbank.com>

→ **ClickxChange**

<http://clickxchange.com>

→ **clixGalore**

<http://clixgalore.com>

→ **Commission Junction**

<http://cj.com>

→ **Commission Soup**

<http://commissionsoup.com>

→ **DarkBlue**

<http://darkblue.com>

→ **FineClicks**

<http://fineclicks.com>

→ **LeadHound**

<http://leadhound.com>

→ **Linkshare**

<http://linkshare.com>

→ **Quinstreet**

<http://members.quinstreet.com>

→ **ReferBack**

<http://referback.com>

→ **ShareaSale.com**

<http://shareasale.com>

→ **WebSponsors**

<http://websponsors.com>

How To Search the 'Net for Merchant Sites

Can't find a merchant that sells Barbie doll supplies and accessories through an affiliate program? Looked at the affiliate networks and directories and still no luck?

Here's a search technique that will help you locate exactly what you are looking for.

In this case, go to Google and type "+**Barbie +doll +affiliate**" into the search box. Don't include the quotes, but do include the plus signs. The plus signs ensure that each word entered appears on the pages returned in the search results.

However, the pages returned aren't guaranteed to have a Barbie doll accessories affiliate program. Some of the sites may be affiliates themselves, but looking around their site should give you clues as to the identity of the merchant.

Other sites that are returned by your search will in fact be merchant sites.

While reviewing individual sites and pages, look for links on the site that say, "Webmasters", "Make Money", "Affiliate (or Associate) Program", "Partners", "Earn \$" and other phrases that indicate that the company has an affiliate program.

Affiliate Program Directories

Affiliate Program Directories are Web sites that contain lists of links to affiliate programs that have been compiled and organized by various webmasters. They usually categorize the listed programs by type of products sold (e.g. educational, business, etc.) and include brief summaries of each program with sufficient information to allow directory users to choose which programs they would like to join. Some also provide program ratings as supplied by program users.

Affiliate program directories are best used to find merchants that have stand-alone or 'in house' programs which are therefore not associated with the big affiliate networks.

However, when searching through the directories, you'll discover that many of the merchants listed ARE also affiliated with networks. It therefore saves time to research the networks first, because in all likelihood, you'll be redirected back to them anyway to sign up for many of the programs.

Although there are hundreds of affiliate program directories, here are the two most worth visiting:

AssociatePrograms.com

Approaching 6,000 program listings, AssociatePrograms.com offers the most comprehensive list of affiliate programs anywhere on the Net. The site is easy to use, and listings appear alphabetically in the search results, making it easier to locate programs again later. Listings are kept brief, with only salient points like commission structure and product descriptions. If you have first-hand experience with any of the programs listed, you are invited to share your 2-cents worth and rate the program. The site's owner, Allan Gardyne, writes excellent articles about making the most from referral programs. I highly recommend that you browse his directory and sign up for his newsletter. Allan also owns the affiliate program directory, LifetimeCommissions.com, that lists only affiliate programs offering - you guessed it - lifetime commissions.

→ AssociatePrograms.com

<http://www.associateprograms.com/search/index.shtml>

Refer-it.com

A division of Internet.com, I really like the associate program rating structure and criteria offered by Refer-it.com. The listings are perhaps a little more detailed than at AssociatePrograms.com and include the launch date and number of affiliates. Take the latter number with a huge grain of salt however, as the chances that those numbers get updated at all is akin to a snowball's in Jamaica.

→ Refer-it.com

<http://refer-it.com>

For a more comprehensive list of affiliate program directories, go to:

→ <http://www.partnerindustry.com/adirectories.htm>

"Ready-Made" Affiliate Marketing Business

Here are two emails that I received just recently...

Dear Rosalind:

Is there any affiliate work you can start without having a web site and just a url, or do you need a web page first? (I received some advice that you could be an affiliate without an actual web page)

Thank you,
Vaughn Kauffman

Hello,

I enjoy your newsletters and your very helpful website. I am dead set on making it in Internet business but I don't know any HTML code. Is that necessary for setting up an affiliate program?

I appreciate your help!

Best Regards,
Steve Neville

Well, like Vaughn and Steve, I'm always on the lookout for new income streams that can generate profits without a lot of work.

Unfortunately, most of the 'ready-made' business sites that I've come across to date haven't impressed me as being particularly user- or visitor-friendly. Most are also much too expensive for what was being offered.

There is one 'pre-fab' affiliate marketing business that I CAN recommend however, and that business is CBMall.

Most programs have only one way you make money. You send them traffic, and they close the sale (hopefully). The best of them will add another stream with some follow-up emails which is much better.

But CBmall actually has 15 different ways to make you money and CBmall does virtually all the work. All you need to do is drive traffic to your URL.

The 'CB' in CBmall stands for ClickBank, and I love Clickbank! It sells nothing but digitally downloadable information products, which are the hottest selling products on the 'Net!

CBmall offers thousands of the top-selling, most popular products from the ClickBank network. These are the best of the best, and they got there because they convert browsers into buyers.

Clickbank's own Marketplace is quite difficult to sift through if you are looking for good products to sell. The beauty and brilliance of CBMall therefore, is that CBMAll makes all the best of Clickbank's products easy accesible in one place.

Here are some examples CBmall's ease-of-use, automation and support:

- * You don't need a web site
- * No HTML required
- * Plenty of marketing ideas and bonuses
- * Built-in affiliate program
- * ClickBank handles all the credit card processing
- * Jeff Mulligan offers TONS of fast and friendly support
- * Newsletters and eCourses that make YOU money
- * Automated income streams all over the place

To learn more CBMall, sign up for Jeff's free eCourse called: **15 Powerful Ways CBmall Makes You Money**. The course details the power and sophistication behind CBmall. Understand this, and you'll see why CBmall represents a new trend in affiliate programs.

You'll also see some major names in Internet Marketing on the testimonial page at CBmall. Terry Dean called CBmall, "the perfect second stream of income", which is pretty high praise.

As a **FIRST** stream of Internet income, CBMall could help you make some cash while you learn all about the affiliate marketing business.

<http://www.CBmall.com/>

Great Product - No Program - Now What?

I am amazed by the number of Internet merchants who haven't yet heard about, or taken advantage of affiliate programs to market their products.

If you find a great product that doesn't appear to be supported by an affiliate program, it's time to put your knowledge of affiliate marketing to work.

Either email or phone the merchant, tell them how much you love their product and ask if they have an affiliate program. If they say that they don't, or don't know what affiliate programs are, you'll have to explain the concept and process to them.

Here are some sample emails. Feel free to adjust the wording to your needs.

Dear Merchant Name,

I just visited <http://thewinestore.com> and am completely impressed with The Wine Store's embroidered wine bags. I would love the opportunity to sell them at my wine supply site, The Wine Supply, at <http://thewinesupply.com>.

I wasn't able to locate affiliate program information at The Wine Store. Is there one in place?

If not, would you be interested in an affiliate partnership with The Wine Supply? Our site receives 5,000 unique visitors a day; all of them interested in wine-related goods. I know they'd also love The Wine Store's exquisite wine bags.

If you are interested, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about how to start an affiliate program for The Wine Store. I have personal experience in with affiliate programs and can probably help save you some time and money in the set-up.

Thanks kindly for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Rosalind

Rosalind Gardner
The Wine Supply
<http://thewinesupply.com>

Provided that the good people at The Wine Store don't have an affiliate program, and reply to you that they ARE in fact interested in an affiliate partnership, you might consider sending them another email similar to the one below.

Dear Merchant Name,

I am SO pleased that you're interested in an affiliate alliance with The Wine Supply to promote The Wine Store's products. I know you'll be thrilled with how affiliate marketing will increase your sales.

There are primarily 3 different ways to set up an affiliate program for your site.

- 1) Join an affiliate network that handles almost all of the work associated with the program, including processing orders and affiliate payments.
- 2) Sign up with a shopping cart service that includes affiliate-tracking software.
- 3) Buy and install affiliate program software on your own server.

Each method has its benefits and disadvantages. The affiliate network option is perhaps the most costly, but the least work. Signing up with a large affiliate network will also put The Wine Store in front of thousands of affiliates, eager to sell your product.

The second option is less expensive, and slightly more work in that you'll need to advertise the program to gain more affiliates.

The third option is the least expensive with a one-time purchase of software, but the most time-consuming to administer in terms of keeping track of affiliate sales and payment handling.

I recommend that you take a look at the following options to compare service and prices.

Commission Junction Affiliate Network

<http://cj.com>

1ShoppingCart

<http://1shoppingcart.com>

My Affiliate Program

<http://MyAffiliateProgram.com>

If after reviewing those sites you have questions, please feel free to contact me.

I look forward to doing business with you!

Sincerely,

Rosalind

Rosalind Gardner
The Wine Supply
<http://thewinesupply.com>

You would of course enter your own affiliate ID codes into the links for whatever sites you decide to recommend.

Note that I've used 'cloaking links' because this was to be sent as an email. The affiliate links given by 1ShoppingCart and MyAffiliateProgram are so long that they may be broken by the time they get to the recipient.

For example, my 1ShoppingCart affiliate link is:

<http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/default.asp?pr=1&id=40906>

Some email programs would break that up and it would arrive looking like:

<http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/default.asp?pr=1&id=40906>

The recipient clicks on the first part of the link and gets nothing but a 'Page Cannot be Found' error, which diminishes their trust in you immediately. It also loses the sale for you. So invest in link cloaking software to shorten up those long affiliate links. It'll also help protect your commissions. I use, and personally recommend, Affiliate Link Cloaker.

Here's what that same link looks like using Affiliate Link Cloaker:

➔ <http://superaffiliatehandbook.com/cloaker.html>

How to Choose Products & Programs

5 Ways to Assess a Product or Service

This is the most important aspect of the process. There's no point in examining affiliate program details until you find a product that you know your visitors will love.

1. Is the product or service relevant to your site or page?

Dating service banners on a cooking site look out of place. I've 'extended' the range of services on my niche sites a number of times, and it has been a mistake each and every time. Those 'added features' serve only to detract from your site's main focus.

2. Is the company's site attractive and functional?

Would *you* buy from a site that looked unprofessional, had broken links or was a hassle to navigate? Don't send your visitors to tacky sites. Your reputation is at stake.

3. Does the program offer great products and/or services at reasonable prices?

Would YOU buy the product you plan to sell? To sell effectively, you must believe in the products and services you carry. Listing products you aren't enthusiastic about shows in what you say about them.

4. Have you bought and tested the product?

I've purchased most of the products I promote. Having first-hand knowledge about an item gives me an edge over other affiliates selling the same product. If the commission is 50%, you will only need to make 2 sales to get your money back.

5. Does the company provide excellent customer service?

This is essential. I occasionally get email from affiliate program customers because the company is not responding to them. Unfortunately, there is usually very little I can do, except use the contact number or email address given only to affiliates, and pass the request along. If you are successful in getting their concerns resolved, Bravo! That reflects well on you.

Once you are confident that you've found an excellent product or service, you need to confirm that the affiliate program is also excellent. You'll learn how to do just that in the next section.

How to Choose an Affiliate Program

Listed below are the key questions I ask before I join any affiliate program.

As you search for your own programs, try to ferret out answers to each of those questions. If you can't find an answer on the merchant's site, phone or email them. If contact information isn't readily apparent on their Web site, don't waste more of your time on that merchant. Find another program.

If you don't get a response within a reasonable time frame, say 24 to 48 hours, I suggest that you pass on the program. They may be more responsive to their customers or current affiliates, but how would you know? Finding out that they are LESS responsive when you have a real problem is a bigger problem still.

On the flip side, be sure that the answer to your question is NOT included in the affiliate package before contacting the program manager. They're busy people, and answering questions that have been covered elsewhere, is a waste of their time. That makes for a lousy first impression.

OK, here are my questions.

Let's Play 20 Questions

1. Is the Company Reputable?
2. Is there an Affiliate Agreement?
3. What are the Conditions of the Agreement?
4. May I Terminate the Agreement? How?
5. Is My Site Eligible for this Program?
6. Is there a Fee to Join the Program?
7. Does the Program Require Exclusivity?
8. What is the Program Type?
9. How Much is the Commission?
10. Do You Get Credit for Recurring Sales?
11. Does the Program Pay Lifetime Commissions?
12. Is the Program 2-Tier?
13. Are Cookies Used to Track Sales?
14. Are Sales Statistics Reported in Real Time?
15. Are Sales Tools Offered?
16. Is Co-Branding Available?
17. How Do I Get Paid? In Cash? Credit? Food Stamps?
18. When Do I Get Paid?
19. Does the Merchant use Third Party Billing?
20. Is There a Minimum Payout Amount?

Is the Company Reputable?

Most merchants are reputable operators but just because someone has a Web site doesn't mean that they're legitimate and/or trustworthy.

Obviously, you don't have to ask Dell or eBay how long they've been in business. The concern here is about promoting an **unknown merchant** that may turn out to be a **fly-by-night or dishonest** operator.

A few years ago, I was robbed by just such an operator to the tune of more than \$700! Despite many email and telephone messages demanding payment, I heard and received nothing.

That bad experience could have been avoided with just a little research.

Commission Junction posts the date that merchants join their affiliate network. When I see that the company has been associated with Commission Junction for a year or more, I feel confident that they are in business to do business.

Alternatively, you can see if either AssociatePrograms.com or Refer-it.com has reviewed the program. I've noticed that programs I've ended up having problems with turn out NOT to be listed at either site. (Lesson - check Allan's and Joe's directories FIRST!)

Another way to learn about a company that isn't part of an affiliate network or listed in an affiliate directory, is to determine how many links point to their site. If the company has thousands upon thousands of affiliates promoting its products, you may safely assume that the program is reputable.

To find out how many 'links in' a site has, go to AltaVista, <http://altavista.com>, and type 'link:' followed by the merchant's URL.

For example, type, '**link:http://friendfinder.com**' into the AltaVista search box. Doing that today I see that '**AltaVista found 51,112 results**' listed near the top of the page, just before the search results.

It was only after it was obvious that I'd been cheated out of my money in the case above that I used the 'link:' method to search for other affiliates promoting that product. I hoped to find other affiliates who HAD been paid or had better luck getting in touch with the owner. What I found instead was that my site was the ONLY one linking to his pages! At that point I knew I could kiss my money goodbye.

Using the link method on that site again today, I see that 'AltaVista found **172** results'.

Although it's cold comfort after being ripped off, I'm relieved to see that his affiliate program isn't exactly thriving. It IS good to see that he's cleaned up his act and is now using a third-party billing company to process both customer and affiliate payments. At least no more affiliates will get ripped off.

Is there an Affiliate Agreement?

Most affiliate programs have agreements in place, primarily to cover their butts. However, these agreements should also cover yours.

If the program you are considering doesn't have an agreement published on the site, move on. Without an agreement, it's much too easy for them to shaft you for money you've earned.

What are the Conditions of the Agreement?

Affiliate agreements are usually lengthy and peppered with long-winded legalese. It doesn't matter. You should read them completely and carefully or you could be in for a nasty surprise.

Say for example, you invest several hundred dollars in PPC advertising to promote a particular product. In return, you earn a thousand or two from that program during the first month of promotion. It would then be a very unpleasant surprise to discover that the company only **pays quarterly**.

I don't know about you, but I don't want to **invest several hundreds or thousands** of dollars to promote a company that won't invest five or ten bucks to write me a check every month.

If you end up in a serious dispute with a company, agreements are usually interpreted under the laws of the state, province or country in which the company is located. Likewise, agreements generally stipulate that disputes will be resolved by binding arbitration in the same state, province or country.

Would it be worth travelling from Rhode Island to California to argue over a couple hundred bucks? Probably not.

So, protect yourself against nasty surprises by reading affiliate agreements in full.

May I Terminate the Agreement? How?

Most agreements contain a 'termination clause' that outlines the terms under which either you or the company can end the affiliation.

In most cases either the affiliate or the company may choose to cancel an agreement at any time without written notice of cancellation to the other. As an affiliate, you'd simply take down your links and that would be that.

Do make sure that is the case however.

Way back when affiliate programs were new, I was required to sign and return a paper agreement that bound me to a 2-year contract with a merchant. I felt somewhat uncomfortable

about agreeing to such a stipulation without proof that their product would convert well to sales, or that they would pay on time.

As always, I should have trusted my intuition. The company, based in Tel Aviv, was excruciatingly slow to pay. I got very tired of hearing ‘the check is in the mail’. Furthermore, the checks never jibed with their own onsite statistics reporting.

Frustrated with the situation, I removed all their links from my site. As such I effectively ended the agreement, about one year before it expired. Fortunately, the company did not take me to task on this point, and it all came out in the wash eventually.

After an inexcusable delay, they finally coughed up all that was owed to me.

Learn from that. **Don’t sign an agreement that binds you to a company for a specified period of time.** Your luck with terminating the contract may not be as good as mine.

Actually, there are plenty of programs that do not require signed agreements. Simply try to avoid those that do.

Is My Site Eligible for this Program?

Pay particular attention to any criteria that have been set for affiliate acceptance into the program.

For example, the following excerpt is from the advertiser detail section at Commission Junction for its own recruiter program:

Publishers will be accepted into the program based on the following criteria:

- *Quality and appropriateness of site(s)*
- *Volume of traffic*
- *At least a one-dollar sign ranking in the Commission Junction network*
- *Own domain name*
- *Compliant with the Commission Junction publisher service agreement*
- *Directly related to performance marketing*

As my site met all the criteria, I applied, only to have my application rejected. I wrote to question their decision and ask for reconsideration.

In response, I received the following:

*In addition, **publishers must be based in either the U.S. or U.K.** and have at least a one-dollar sign CJ ranking, their own domain name, and a Web site that is compliant with the Commission Junction publisher service agreement and directly related to pay-for-performance advertising. Preferred publishers will have at least a one-star or higher Alexa rating.*

My site met all of the other 'additional' criteria, except that I am located in Canada. As I know of many sites promoting the CJ publisher program that aren't based in the U.S. or the U.K., this geographic restriction made no sense to me. I wrote again to question this point. CJ's subsequent responses were simply verbatim repeats of the previous paragraph.

So, be forewarned, read and understand ALL the criteria thoroughly. If something doesn't make sense, ask about it. The response may not be fair or make sense, but at least you'll have done your homework thoroughly.

Is there a Fee to Join the Program?

Ninety-nine point nine percent (99.9%) of merchants don't charge a fee to join their affiliate programs. If they do, watch out! It's not an affiliate program – it's MLM, or a Multi-Level Marketing scheme.

An example of an MLM network marketing 'affiliate program' is:

Six Figure Income – Help and inspirational materials for home-based entrepreneurs. (Yes, it's true. I was featured as a member of the SFI \$100,000 Club in the April 2002 issue of the Six Figure Income magazine. I am also a panel member in their 'Ask the Experts' section, and a member of the IAHBE, which stands for the International Association of Home Business Entrepreneurs. It is an organization that champions the home-business lifestyle and provides its members with a multitude of resources designed to achieve maximum home-business success.)

→ Six Figure Income

<http://www.quickinfo247.com/1289465>

In order to earn income with the SFI, you must purchase some of the company's products each and every month to 'qualify' for sales earnings that you've generated within a month.

That's MLM.

Many people do very well with this sort of earnings scheme. Many do not.

My thoughts on the subject are that MLM (network marketing) programs should refer to themselves as such, and leave the term 'affiliate program' for those that are free to join.

Does the Program Require Exclusivity?

An exclusivity clause is one that says you can only sell the products of a particular merchant and cannot partner with merchants selling similar products.

When Barnes and Noble started its affiliate program, it had an exclusivity clause. Now if you want to sign up with them, you'll notice that is no longer the case. Was that clause detracting from their share of the affiliate market?

It had to be!

Exclusivity in an affiliate program is exactly what it sounds like. In most cases, it means that if you sign up with one company, you promise not to partner with another provider of a similar service.

Even if that company was the only provider of its type of service on the 'Net, I wouldn't promise exclusivity to it or any other program.

You can be sure that the moment you agree to be exclusive, a better product or service will come along, and you'll be stuck with a bad agreement.

This is your business, not your marriage. Keep your options open.

Fortunately, not many affiliate programs have such clauses nowadays. But do be aware that they exist, and keep your eyes open for them.

What is the Program Type?

There are essentially three types of affiliate programs: pay-per-sale, pay-per-lead, and pay-per-click.

Pay-Per-Sale programs are also known as **Partnership** and **Percentage Partners** programs. These programs pay either a fixed dollar amount or a percentage of sales generated by your links.

In **Pay-Per-Lead** programs, you earn a set amount whenever your customer fills out a survey or requests a quote or some information.

Pay-Per-Click affiliate programs are similar to Pay-Per-Lead. Essentially you are paid each time one of your visitors clicks on the link through to that program's site.

As Pay-Per-Lead and Pay-Per-Click programs require huge volumes of traffic to generate serious revenue, **I prefer Pay-Per-Sale programs because they are performance based.** I believe that doing business as an affiliate is about adding value, and I see little value in generating tons of traffic to a merchant's site so that they can collect email addresses to spam large groups of people.

On the other hand, if you target a market effectively and give them what they want, you'll be rewarded handsomely!

How Much is the Commission?

This is a VERY important question! It's not the MOST important, but it's close! ☺

It's absolutely essential that you understand commission structures and compare the payout rates between the affiliate programs that you plan join. This will affect how and to what extent you promote individual products.

Let's look at some real examples. Imagine that you want to build a site promoting online credit card applications.

I visited Commission Junction and saw that they currently have 28 advertisers in the 'Credit Cards' category.

By selecting 'Lead' within the CJ interface, advertisers are sorted according to **payout per lead**, from highest to lowest amounts. When you click on 'Sale', advertisers are sorted according to **payout per sale**, from highest to lowest.

In the table below, I chose to view the advertisers according to highest payout per lead.

Please note that if you plan to visit Commission Junction and do the same search, that not all advertisers in this category offer credit cards. There were debt consolidation and credit card report services included in the category. I took my time and clicked on each advertiser's name to learn more about the products they offer, and removed those not applicable from the table below.

Program	Sale	Lead
U.S. Bank "Banking & Credit Card" Program U. S. Bank will pay you \$20.00 USD for every visitor to our site referred through your affiliate link that is approved for a Harley-Davidson Visa Card. Cookie Duration: 90 days	100.00%	\$10.00
Morgan Stanley Credit Card \$6.50(GBP 4.20) per submitted application for a Morgan Stanley Credit Card. Partner sites need to operate in the UK. Cookie Duration: 45 days	N/A	\$6.50
Barclaycard is the UK's favorite credit card, so do not miss out this great opportunity earn GBP 4.00 (USD \$6.20) for every COMPLETED APPLICATION generated from a link on your website. Cookie Duration: 14 days	N/A	\$ 6.20
Accucard pays affiliates \$50 per applicant instantly provisionally accepted, and \$5 per applicant requiring further manual checks. Cookie Duration: 365 days	\$50.00	\$5.00
Capital One UK - Cookie Duration: 45 days	N/A	\$4.00

<p>Bank of Scotland - A Hybrid Program with \$4 per application and \$30 per approved card - Credit for both on and offline sales. Cookie Duration: 45 days</p>	<p>\$30.00</p>	<p>\$4.00</p>
<p>marbles.com - Earn money for each person who applies via your website. Cookie Duration: 14 days</p>	<p>\$22.50</p>	<p>\$3.75</p>
<p>Discover Card \$25 per approved Platinum Card Account referred from your site \$15 per approved Student Card Account referred from your site. Cookie duration: 1 day</p>	<p>100.00%</p>	<p>N/A</p>

What a variety of commission structures and payout amounts amongst these merchants!

As you can see, it's very important to investigate each merchant's program very carefully before applying to join.

It would be a real disappointment to heavily promote the **U.S. Bank "Banking & Credit Card" Program** above, thinking that you are paid **\$10.00 per application**, when in fact the applicant has to be **approved** before you are credited with the lead.

As a rough guideline, **look first** for companies that pay the highest per sale and per lead commissions in your category of interest. Once you've established a short list, then you can start weeding out those that don't make your grade from the top down.

Next we look at another important aspect of affiliate earnings – recurring commissions.

Do I Get Credit for Recurring Sales?

What would happen if you stopped promoting your affiliate links?

In most cases, you'd simply stop earning. Your income would stop.... and the checks would stop coming. Your income is limited by the number of customers you bring to the merchant in a given month.

That means you have to keep marketing your site to bring in new customers. Over, and over, and over again.

Make a sale, get paid and that's it. Your customer may buy more of the same product from your merchant partner, but you only get credit for the first sale.

The merchant benefits indefinitely from your introduction of the customer to the product, and you get only one credit?

Does that sound fair?

You bet it's not!

However, there ARE affiliate programs that **pay commissions on all recurring charges**, such as monthly newsletter subscriptions and web hosting packages. As long as your customer keeps ordering the product, you get **residual commissions** that keep coming in month after month, after you made the initial sale.

So, here's the bottom line. If the affiliate program doesn't pay residual commissions on recurring charges, **you're losing money.**

Does the Program Pay Lifetime Commissions?

I make a distinction between 'recurring' or 'residual' commissions, and 'lifetime' commissions.

An affiliate program paying **residual commissions** pays you every time the customer renews their subscription to a specific product, not just for the first purchase.

An affiliate program paying **lifetime commissions** pays the affiliate a commission for each and every product that the customer buys from that merchant, including residual commissions, if applicable.

For example, let's say that you are earning recurring commissions on Mr. Samson's web hosting subscription at *Best Host Company*.

If the company doesn't offer 'lifetime commissions' and Mr. Samson upgrades to his own dedicated server at *Best Host Company*; you won't get paid commissions on his monthly server fees because it's a different product.

If XYZ Company offers 'lifetime' commissions however, the customer you refer to them is "yours" for life, regardless of which of *Best Host Company*'s products they buy. In the scenario above, you would now be paid a monthly commission on the dedicated server fees for as long as Mr. Brown remains a subscriber.

The value of both residual and lifetime commissions increase over time. As the number of your sales grows, your residual commissions will continue to increase.

Joining programs that offer residual or lifetime commissions is an excellent way to build a steadily increasing income. Once you make a referral, the checks keep coming in. So even when

you take a vacation from your affiliate business, the checks for your residuals, will keep coming in.

How many other businesses pay you to take a vacation?

Is the Program 2-Tier?

Another way to increase your affiliate income is to take advantage of ‘2-tier’ affiliate programs.

A "two-tier" program is one that offers two sources of income, the first for bringing in business, and the second for recommending new affiliates. Some programs pay a fee for each new affiliate that joins the program, while some others pay a percentage of the 2nd tier affiliate's earnings. Other programs pay in both situations.

When the subject of 2-tier programs comes up, the question often arises as to whether two-tier affiliate programs are MLM - multi-level marketing schemes.

Well, let's take a look at a definition of ‘MLM’.

Also known as network marketing, MLM is essentially any business where payouts occur at two or more levels. For example, any company that compensates you for the sales you make, and also pays you a small percentage of the sales made by those you've recruited as sellers, is an MLM company.

According to that definition, 2-tier affiliate programs are MLM programs.

Does it matter? Should it matter?

Don't let the MLM association scare you or put you off. There are many reputable MLM organizations including Avon, Mary Kay Cosmetics and PartyLite Gifts, Inc.

MLM gets its bad reputation from companies that focus only on recruiting new members and downline-building. Essentially the only ‘products’ these companies sell are memberships, which you must purchase in order to be eligible to build your own downline of members.

Your primary concern is whether the company you sign up with is selling real goods and/or services that benefit its customers. Focus first on marketing the product, and **secondly** on recruiting affiliates. That's why it's called **2-tier**.

Are Cookies Used to Track Sales?

A cookie is coded piece of information, stored on a computer that identifies that computer during the current and subsequent visits to a web site.

You've may have heard that it takes 7 exposures to a product before people feel comfortable to buy that product. So what happens if a visitor from your site clicks through to your affiliated merchant site today but doesn't buy anything until a week later? Will you still get credit for the sale?

Well, that depends on the duration of the 'cookies'.

Cookies are text files that cannot be used in any way to harm you or your computer. Some people worry about viruses and such, while there is no need with cookies!

You can take a look at the cookies stored on your own computer.

For example, if you visit <http://iwantu.com> from my dating service review site at <http://sage-hearts.com>, and you have a PC, the cookie stored on your computer will be called *yourname@dating.iwantu.txt* and look something like this:

```
BIGipServerhttp_pool#855746752.20480.0000#dating.iwantu.com/#1024#1701857920  
29540480#1283039984#29540196#*
```

Coding in each cookie includes:

- The use of the cookie.
- Specific data *e.g.* affiliate ID or banner image filename.
- Where the cookie can be read from.

How does a cookie affect whether or not you get credit for a sale?

Well, cookies are coded to expire after a set amount of time. So, if the merchant gives cookies that last for 90 days, you get credit if a visitor from your site returns to the merchant and makes the purchase within 90 days.

If your visitor purchases the product after the 90 days, and the cookie has expired, you're out of luck. You won't get credit for the sale.

You may have noticed in the 'How Much is the Commission' section above, that cookie duration was detailed for each of the credit card offers on the page. The U.S. Bank "Banking & Credit Card" Program had 90-day cookies, while the Discover cards were set to last for only 1 day! In my humble opinion, you'd be crazy to promote the Discover card. To me, that's a clear-cut example of a merchant that is taking advantage of its affiliates.

So it literally **pays you to look for long-lasting cookies** when choosing affiliate programs.

Are Sales Statistics Reported in Real Time?

Can you imagine waiting a month to find out if you made a sale for a particular program?

Suppose you were spending money to advertise a program and it took a month to assess the success of your promotional efforts.

Would you join that program?

No?

Good!

When signing up for an affiliate program, be sure that it offers real-time sales tracking, or something fairly close to 'real-time'. Real-time actually means immediate, within seconds. Some sites have statistics that are delayed by 20 minutes or an hour. That's acceptable. We can live with that.

Real-time sales reporting is another good reason to affiliate with merchants in affiliate networks like Commission Junction.

To be competitive, most of the affiliate networks provide real-time reporting to their merchants and affiliates. Being part of the network means you don't have to hunt around to find out whether real-time reporting is a feature of the program that you want to join.

Are Sales Tools Offered?

Many, if not most, merchants offer their affiliates advertising copy and banner ads for placement on their sites.

In many cases, you will have a selection of advertising graphics and text to choose from and the code will be automatically generated with the click of a button. Then you will just have to paste it on your Web site or in your e-mail, wherever you plan to use it.

Many merchants also host the banners from their own sites, saving you the trouble of downloading and saving the graphic to your computer, and uploading it to your server.

Carefully investigate your merchants' sites looking for any and all of the following types of sales tools.

Banners

Banners are graphic images that come in a variety of different sizes. The most popular sizes are 468 x 60 pixels, 125 x 125, 234 x 60, 120 x 60, 120 x 90, and 88 x 31. 'Skyscrapers' are generally 120 x 600, which is the average window height of a computer display. Some companies have half page banners that are about 480 x 480 pixels in size. I've seen others that are a full page with numerous graphics and text and come as a zipped file that you extract to a file on your computer.

Interstitial (PopuP) Banners

An interstitial banner ad is advertisement that appears in a separate pop-up browser window while the main page is still loading, forcing exposure to the advertisement before visitors can see the main content.

Be careful if you choose to use this type of advertising. While the response rates may be higher, many more Internet users are installing 'popup killers' on their computers, so they won't see your ad. They also may not be able to move forward within your site if they're using the popup-stopping software.

Because they interrupt the surfing flow, popups also breed resentment. I stopped visiting About.com for a very long time due to their extremely annoying use of interstitials. They've ceased their use of 'instertials', but still use popups far too frequently for my liking.

Text Links

These are usually a one line description of the merchant property that includes the HTML. For example, this is a snippet of code that I got from Commission Junction when looking for links for Yahoo! personals.

```
<a href="http://www.qksrv.net/click-168978-10278403" target="_top" >Find romance  
at Yahoo! Personals</a>
```

All I do is cut and paste HTML code into my Web page, and my visitors see the text 'Find romance at Yahoo! Personals'.

Email Promotions

Easier than creating a page for your site with banners and text is sending a promotional email to your list of subscribers. Easier still is not having to write it yourself! Really smart merchants write their own "advertorials" and format them both in HTML and in plain text for distribution via email. Really smart affiliates customize these emails and give it their own 'voice'. They recognize that hundreds of other affiliates will be using this material in their own campaigns, and that it makes their efforts look somewhat cheesy if they're caught trying to pass off someone else's material as their own.

Classified Ads

Shorter than advertorials, classified ads are presented in plain text to be 'copied and pasted' into your newsletter. The following is a classified ad for Corey Rudl's affiliates to promote his 'Internet Marketing Tips' package. Because it sounds like a personal endorsement of his product, your subscribers will never know that Corey's team of professional copywriters actually wrote it...unless of course they subscribe to a number of other Internet marketers' newsletters who recently used the same ad.

=====
Over 1,000+ PAGES of the Hottest, Proven Profitable Internet
Business Secrets Broken Down Into An EASY-TO-DUPLICATE
System.

Corey Rudl is the owner of four highly successful online
businesses that attract more than 1,800,000 visitors each month and
generate over \$6.6 million each year. He is also the author of the #1
best-selling Internet Marketing course online.

To check out his site that's jam-packed with THE EXACT
INFORMATION YOU NEED to start, build, and grow your very
own, profitable Internet business, I highly recommend
visiting:

<http://www.marketingtips.com/t.cgi/3885>

This guy really knows what he's talking about!

=====

The Interview

I've seen very few online marketers use this technique, but I think it's absolutely brilliant. Affiliates are allowed to publish interviews that the merchant marketers have given. The interviews tend to have great conversion rates because it appears that more information is being shared with the reader than through typical product advertising. Think of the 'infomercials' that you've seen in which the creator of some miracle gel extols its benefits in response to an interviewer's questions. It's the same principle, and it sells products like crazy!

Periodic Articles

Unlike the interview and email advertorials that get stale from overuse after a period of time, periodic articles are always new and fresh. Jim Edwards is especially good at offering his affiliates up-to-date topical articles to help promote his line of Internet marketing products. This is helpful if you send out a weekly newsletter to your subscribers and don't have an idea for this week's feature article.

eCourses

How many 5 or 7-day email courses have you signed up for? Five, 10, 20? If you've been searching for money-making opportunities on the Net for any length of time, I'm willing to bet that you've signed up for a few. They're enticing, and they all include links to sales pages or affiliate products. But do you really want to do all the writing that goes into preparing a 7-part ecourse? Probably not. That's why it surprises me that so few marketers give their affiliates ecourses to offer their visitors. A few do, but the rest are missing out on sales. If you have a one-page advertorial for a specific product that actually does have an ecourse for its affiliates - use it! They're great money-makers.

Sales tools make an affiliate's job easier. In the section on promotion we'll look closely at how these tools are best put to use.

Is Co-Branding Available?

Co-branding is a form of customization, whereby the affiliate program permits you, their affiliate, to "brand" a copy of the landing page on their site, with your logo and/or your site's "look and feel".

This method gives your visitors the impression that they are still on your Web site which can improve visitor trust in 'your' products and result in increased sales.

Many merchants offered co-branding when affiliate marketing first began on the 'Net.

However, very few merchants offer co-branding nowadays. It's simply too much work for them to approve each and every affiliate's logo graphic. For sites that allowed affiliates to automatically upload logos, there was always the potential that the logo was totally inappropriate and not in keeping with the image they wanted to promote. Also, most affiliates aren't graphic artists. Who wants to have someone's tacky logo in the upper-right or left-hand corner of a site that just cost you a fortune to develop?

I did recently come across a co-branding opportunity and you can see the results at:

<http://webvista.free2try.com>

Note how the Web address is a subdomain of Free2Try.com which is owned by the Websponsors affiliate network. 'Webvista' is one of my 'profiles' on their network, and they allowed me to create the subdomain with that profile. If you visit that link, you can see that I've used the header graphic from my finditat.rosalind.com domain, making it look like a part of that site, rather than the Websponsors site. BTW, this isn't a page I promote, but simply something I wanted you to take a look at to see a sample of co-branding.

When Do I Get Paid?

Compensation plans vary from merchant to merchant and program to program. Be sure you know what the payment plan is, or you could be in for a nasty surprise!

Payment schedules vary depending on the program. I'm affiliated with programs that pay **weekly, biweekly, monthly and quarterly.**

How Do I Get Paid? In Cash? Credit? Food Stamps?

Payments are usually by check or direct deposit, although some companies pay in merchandise or service credits.

A BIG bonus for those residing outside the United States is that almost all Internet companies do business in **US Dollars!** Woohoo!

Be sure to confirm the currency that the company deals in however. For example, Ken Evoy's company, and his 5 Pillar Affiliate program are based in Canada. You will automatically be paid in Canadian dollars if you live in Canada, and American dollars if you live anywhere else in the world. His program allows you to change that option if you are a Canadian who prefers to be paid in US Dollars. Oh, yes please!

Does the Merchant use Third Party Billing?

One of the nice things about associating with merchants that are part of bigger affiliate networks is that you can count on the affiliate network to make sure that the merchant has put enough money on account to pay your commissions.

Some networks go so far as to indicate how well each merchant's account is funded, allowing you to choose whether or not you should promote their products. Other networks will suspend or put the merchant's account on hold until such time as they've deposited sufficient funds.

You don't get any of that security when you sign up for a stand-alone program - a program that is administered by the company itself. While you don't need to worry about Amazon or Match.com, it's sometimes hard to be sure about the smaller unknown companies

One way to gain some security in that regard is to find out whether the company uses third-party billing to process their payments and handle affiliate commissions. The third-party processor takes in the money from the customers, and makes sure that the affiliates receive what is due to them. Depending on the affiliate agreement, you may end up splitting the payment processing costs with the merchant.

For example, one of the dating sites that I promote and that uses CCBill for payment processing, offers a 50/50 commission split. That fifty percent turns into 42.5 percent after the 15% CCBill fee is also split.

Is There a Minimum Payout Amount?

Many programs require that you earn a minimum amount before they will issue you a check.

For example, some set their minimum payouts at \$50 or \$100. This makes sense (cents?) if your earnings for the month are \$2.00 and it costs the merchant five dollars to cut you a check.

In summary, protect yourself from being cheated out of your hard-earned commissions by making sure that the programs you sign up for are solid, good-paying corporate citizens by asking all of the questions above before joining their programs.

Eeny, Meeny, Miney, Moe ... Choosing Between Affiliate Programs

If you are having a hard time choosing between two similar products, the amount of commission that the company pays and/or the brand name of the product, can become the deciding factors.

Commission Rates

If all else is equal – the product, site, program, etc. – I shouldn't have to tell you to pick the program with the higher commission.

For example, if you promote a review site that compares several similar products and services, you should carefully evaluate commissions on each different product to determine which product or service should be most actively promoted.

Sometimes it's a little tricky to compare potential income between two or more programs when the commission structures are different, even if only slightly.

Here are examples from two of the dating services that I promote.

Yahoo! Personals

- \$10 - 1 month subscription
- \$20 - 3 month subscription
- \$40 - 12 month subscription

Match.com

- \$10 - New 1 month subscriptions
- \$20 - New 3 month subscriptions
- \$30 - New 6 month subscriptions
- \$40 - New 12 month subscriptions

Commission rates are pretty even between these 2 services. The additional 6 month membership option would immediately put Match.com slightly ahead of Yahoo! in my book, as it broadens the options for my visitors.

However, as we research the compensation plans, we discover that both companies have **performance incentive bonuses**.

At Yahoo!, if you generate **30 subscriptions** within a month, you'll earn an additional 75% on all subsequent sales. So, for subscriptions number 31 and up, Yahoo! pays the following amounts:

- \$17.50 - 1 month Subscription
- \$35.00 - 3 month subscription
- \$70.00 - 12 month subscription

At Match.com, generating more than **50 new paid subscriptions** in a particular month also earns a 75% bonus - on each new paid subscription generated in that month. Top Performers are therefore paid:

- \$17.50 - New 1 month subscription
- \$35.00 - New 3 month subscription
- \$52.50 - New 6 month subscription
- \$70.00 - New 12 month subscription

It now looks like it would pay more to promote Yahoo!, because you only need to generate 30 subscription sales to make their bonus.

But, let's read the fine print again.

Yahoo!'s bonus is paid on **all subsequent sales past 30 subscriptions**, whereas at Match.com, the bonus is applied to **each new paid subscription generated in that month** if you make 50 sales.

So, do you know yet which one you'd promote more actively? Let's do the math.

Let's assume you make 50 one-month subscription sales at both services in a particular month.

At Yahoo! you would have earned:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 30 \times \$10 \quad = \$300.00 \\
 20 \times \$17.50 \quad = \underline{\$350.00} \\
 \text{TOTAL SALES} = \$750.00
 \end{array}$$

At Match.com you would have earned:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 50 \times \$17.50 \quad = \$875.00 \\
 \text{TOTAL SALES} = \$875.00
 \end{array}$$

Match.com's program is the clear winner in this case, proving that doing a couple minutes of math is worth \$125.

Brand Name Products

By now you've probably heard that it takes 7 exposures before people are willing to buy a certain product.

By offering brand name products, the exposure and trust in a product has been accomplished for you, so that you don't have to bring the visitor back to your site up to seven times, before they are ready to buy.

All other factors being equal, if you are given the choice between a totally unknown product, and a nationally-known brand name, it's usually prudent to choose the brand name.

Should You Affiliate with Bookstores?

Adding books to your site that are relevant to your topic would seem like a smart thing to do. Most folks are online looking for information or entertainment, and what is more informative and entertaining than a book?

It's a good plan, but there are drawbacks.

I've personally made very little money selling books on my various sites. Amazon's top commission is 15% of the sale. That amount is reduced to 5%, if your visitor arrives at Amazon from a specific product link on your site, but then buys a different product.

Five percent of ten bucks is fifty cents. Granted, if you sell thousands of books, that'll definitely amount to a nice chunk of change, but if the books on your site are an 'additional' offering, it's unlikely you'll ever make a significant sum of money selling books through an affiliate program.

True, every little bit counts. However, if your main product pays you a commission of twenty dollars per sale, and your book links draw attention away from the main focus of your site, having an onsite library may actually diminish your total income.

All things considered, if you still choose to sell a book or two on your site, you may want to use a program called 'Foundation Anaconda'.

Foundation Anaconda is a useful addition to any website's Associate Program bookstore. It allows your website's users to perform keyword searching of ANY Amazon shopping category with the search results presented on your website. The biggest benefit to using Anaconda is that it replaces all product links with affiliate hardlinks so that you receive maximum commission for each sale you make through Amazon.

The downside is that this software is relatively expensive, so you'd have to sell MANY books to recoup your purchase cost before you start to benefit from the increased Amazon commissions.

➔ **Anaconda Software**

<http://www.anaconda.net>

Sorry, Your Application was Rejected

A letter like the one below is very disappointing to receive.

From: Overture Services
Subject: Sorry, your application was not approved
Date: 2003-01-16 12:31:05.0
Message

Dear Rosalind Gardner,

Thank you for applying to Overture Services. We regret to inform you that your application was not approved for this program. This is not intended as disapproval of the quality or value of your Web site. Each advertiser determines how many and what types of publishers they will accept in their program for various reasons. You are welcome to apply to other advertiser programs in the Commission Junction network at any time. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you.

For assistance, please use the "Support" drop-down menu at the top of this page.

Best regards,

Client Services
Commission Junction

To avoid receiving such a letter, be sure to read and understand all the ins and outs of the program you wish to join. Then dot your 'I's' and cross your 'T's' when submitting your application.

Of course, even affiliate managers make mistakes sometimes. If you think you've received a letter like the one above in error, contact the affiliate program manager and very politely ask why your site was rejected. It's also a good idea to state why you feel your site is a good match for the program.

And now for the good news – I phoned Overture after receiving the above letter, and their program manager immediately reversed the decision.

Although she didn't give much credence to the fact that I spend a ton o' cash with Overture every month, she DID like the promotional methods I planned for their program.

Hey, whatever works.

You're Fired!

Not getting accepted into an affiliate program, for whatever reason, is hard enough to take, but getting terminated once you're 'in' is even worse.

Dear Rosalind Gardner,

We regret to inform you that you have been dropped from the First PREMIER Bank advertiser program, and you will no longer be affiliated with this advertiser as of 1/23/03. This is not intended as disapproval of the quality or value of your Web site. Each CJ advertiser has the option to determine how many and what types of publishers they will approve to their program, and they may also make changes to their program which warrant removing some of their publishers. In this case, the advertiser has supplied the following reason for removal:

Website volume does not meet minimum requirement of 10,000 visitors/month.

You must remove any banners or links you are hosting on your Web site for this program at your earliest convenience. You are welcome to apply to and to host links from other Commission Junction advertisers at any time. Login to the member area at <http://www.cj.com/login.jsp> to find our current advertiser programs and to retrieve their links. Commission Junction values your participation in the CJ Network and we apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you.

Please be aware that this decision was not made by Commission Junction but by the advertiser. For assistance, please use the "Support" drop-down menu at the top of the Account Manager.

Best Regards,

Client Services
Commission Junction

OUCH! That's what happens when you **join an affiliate program too soon.**

When setting up my credit card offers site, I applied early to the best merchants.

As luck would have it, Christmas, New Year's and life got in the way, and I did no work at all on the site for almost two months.

First PREMIER Bank saw no traffic coming from my site to theirs, so their program dropped me.

To avoid having this happen to you, get 90% of your site together before applying to programs. In fact, I recommend that **BEFORE** applying to a program, write descriptions and endorsements for the products you plan to promote.

Once accepted, all you'll have to do is add your links and use a pay per click to drive traffic to your site right away. Not only will you build revenue faster, you'll prevent nasty occurrences such as the one above.

A Good Program to Join

Below is an example of an excellent affiliate program welcome letter. It first of all thanks me for becoming an affiliate, then goes on to give me the information I need to: assess my affiliate statistics, link to the product, and contact the company should I require further help or information.

This beats the heck out of the affiliate program that sent me a welcome letter without telling me how to access the affiliate statistics interface and which posted email address bounced when I wrote to ask them about it. Their contact form was also broken! Needless to say, I'm not promoting that product. The trouble is, I can't cancel the account either. Dumb.

Anyway, here's an example of a GREAT affiliate program welcome letter, and a promising start to an affiliate relationship.

Hi Rosalind,

Thank you for becoming a Connected Satellite Associate.

The Associates Referral Program has become a great success and has proven to be a steady source of income for all of our participants. This is a fairly long email, but PLEASE take the time to READ IT ALL. The information and tips will explain exactly how everything works and the different ways to earn referral fees. Taking the time to read everything in its entirety will pay off in the extra referral fees you get by setting everything up *right* the first time. You are getting this e-mail because you are a member of the Connected Satellite Affiliate program. Feel free to visit the ConnectedSatellite.com Affiliate Log-In page at any time. You can access it by clicking here:

<http://www.connectedsatellite.com/associates/index.html>

Your affiliate id is: *t*3*j*

Your password is: *****

Your specialized affiliate web URL is:

[http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/aftrack.asp?AFID=***](http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/aftrack.asp?AFID=*****)**

The address above is specific to your site. In other words, it puts a hidden code in the site to track how many visitors have linked from your site and how many of those have ordered. To view how many people have traveled from your site to ours or to see how many have ordered, go to the following site at anytime:

<http://www.connectedsatellite.com/associates/index.html>

Please do not get the 'reports' URL confused with the URL that you are to use as a link to us. It would be very embarrassing to yourself if you were to accidentally link a banner (or text link) from your site to a 'reports' site (that shows how many visitors have linked through and how many have ordered) instead of our site. This 'reports' URL above is only for your personal use to see how many visitors have clicked through and how many have ordered (so you can see how much you are earning in real-time).

===== First Thing To Do =====

First you must decide how you want to incorporate Connected Satellite into your website.

You can do one of two things (or both):

- #1) Text links
- #2) Banner links

Many sites use BOTH types of links for their website. In other words, they have multiple areas on their site that they link to Connected Satellite and they use both text links and banners. Don't hesitate to link Connected Satellite from multiple areas in your website. Remember, the more people that see Connected Satellite links... the more people that link... the more people that order... the more referral fees you get. Keep in mind that a variety of banners is available on your online reports link.

===== Text Links =====

We recommend that you link to us on your main page because of the exposure. You can have one of our banners on your site as the link to one of our products OR you can have a text link to us directly from your main page, your 'other links' page, or wherever you deem appropriate at your website. For example, if your site has a 'main menu' format on your home Page; you could have us listed in your main menu (if applicable). We recommend the main page because it has the highest exposure to your visitors, and of course, the more people that link to Connected Satellite webpage, the more people that buy, and the more money you make.

===== Banner Links =====

This is by far THE MOST COMMON WAY PEOPLE LINK TO US.

Most associate members have a banner on their main page and then on a few other sub-pages at their website. On the main page we recommend that you list us as high on the page as possible OR close to the links that go to other parts of your site; as that is where your visitors are looking and will see the link. No matter how you integrate it into your website, we give you complete control. You can find all banners, as well as complete and thorough examples on text and banner linking by visiting:

<http://www.connectedsatellite.com/associates/index.html>

===== WARNING: NOTE ON SPAM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES =====

Associates sending unsolicited commercial email or posting to 'inappropriate' newsgroups has become more of a problem lately. It is against your associates agreement to advertise our web site via unsolicited email. Some people think that dealer 'Spam' email originated from us, damaging our reputation and causing us many administrative problems.

DO NOT send unsolicited email to promote us, or you will be in violation of your associates agreement and your account will be

terminated, forfeiting all outstanding referral fees. Your cooperation and understanding is appreciated. However, do not get this confused with PROPER WAYS to promote our products. Please recommend the course in your autoresponders, in a personal email to your clientele base, your lead lists, people that contact you and you stay in touch with, a newsletter list, at your website, even in appropriate email discussion list, etc. This is not spamming.

===== General Information =====

If there is any confusion, please email our customer service department at **affiliate_info@connectedsatellite.com**.

Our mailing address if you need it is:

Connected Satellite
4801 E. Indian School Road
Suite 2
Phoenix, Arizona
85018
602.957.7850 (within Arizona)
888.251.0055 (nationwide toll free)

Take care and best of luck, Ira Feuerstein President - Connected Satellite

Enough for now. Tomorrow I will send some information about banner and text advertising.

That letter provides ALL the information that I need to start promoting Connected Satellite. Merchants should all be so thorough in their affiliate welcome letters. Building rapport early in the game increases everyone's chances for success.

➔ Connected Satellite
<http://connectedsatellite.com>

A Program to Avoid

As an affiliate marketer of Internet dating services, I'm always on the lookout for good quality dating sites and products to offer my single visitors.

Merchants help me out when they let me know about their new products and affiliate programs.

I was therefore thrilled when one of my friendly affiliate competitors got in touch to tell me that he'd started his own Internet dating service and affiliate program.

Having launched a community membership site myself, I could fully appreciate the huge amount of time and money my friend had invested to develop this new site. He was justifiably proud of his accomplishment and I was excited by the prospect of having a product to promote that would benefit everyone - my customers, my friend and me.

Unfortunately, it didn't quite work out that way.

The first stumbling block was the low commission he offered. His top rate was 30%, with no commissions on recurring sales.

This puzzled me. As an affiliate marketer of dating programs, he should have been aware that new sites offer at least 50% on new and recurring sales to entice good affiliates to sign up. If commissions on recurring sales are not offered, then the rates on new sales should be increased to between 70 and 100 percent.

In most cases, his affiliate program would have struck out for me at that point.

However, as this was my friend's site, it occurred to me that perhaps his product was so unique that the potential for high volume sales might offset the lower commission. Hoping for the best, I continued my review.

When I arrived at the site, the first thing I noticed was '6 registered members' prominently displayed at the top of the homepage. That normally wouldn't be a problem, except for the fact that my customers are looking for friends and soul mates. If I send them to a site where there are only six people to meet, they'll likely be disappointed. Worse, by wasting their time, they lose trust in my judgement and then I will lose them as customers.

That's not good. My customers are literally my bread and butter. Giving them what they want and expect is how I stay in business. Paying for traffic that I send to a merchant site where there is nothing to buy, will put me out of business.

(This is how a membership site should be structured. When starting a dating service, the merchant pays for advertising to bring people to their site. To entice visitors to sign up as members, he will initially offer his services for free. When the database is large enough to attract paying customers, the affiliate program manager then invites potential affiliates to join their program.)

Even though my friend's program had already struck out for my customers and me, I was still curious, so I kept on looking.

I clicked next on a link labeled 'Dating Resources'. **Expecting to find Internet dating tips and advice, I found links and banners pointing to Lavalife, FriendFinder and other affiliated dating sites instead.** When I asked him about placing affiliate programs on his site, my friend said he simply wanted to supplement his income until the dating service got *rolling*. I can understand his motivation. However, what he doesn't understand is the concept of customer 'hijacking'.

As an affiliate, you pay good money to get visitors to your site. You presell your merchants' products and expect the merchant to honor their end of the bargain by making the sale and sending your commission check. **You don't pay for the merchant to send YOUR customers to THEIR affiliated merchants.**

I didn't need to look any further. I told my friend that I'd wait to sign up for his program and my reasons for holding off. Fortunately, he understood my concerns and quickly alleviated some of the problems I mentioned.

Knowing when NOT to sign up for an affiliate program can sometimes be a tough call.

However, you can simplify the process considerably. Put yourself inside your customer's head. If the product doesn't benefit them, the program strikes out. It's simple as that.

Programs to Drop

Sometimes you can't tell until after you've joined a program that it's not going to work out. Here are a couple of experiences I've had that have convinced me to drop or stop promoting certain affiliate programs.

Spammers

After signing up for a program that promotes a number of different credit cards and financial services, I started getting a ton of spam directed to the email address I'd set up specifically for this company.

I wrote the affiliate manager and advised him that I was aware my email address had been 'sold' by their company to outside companies, and that I wasn't impressed by having my trust betrayed in that manner.

Not only did I not receive a response, soon afterwards I started receiving offers to join their affiliate program (the one I had already joined) directed to ANOTHER of my email addresses - the one I use only for domain registrations at GoDaddy.com.

What that means, is that the affiliate manager, or someone in his company, uses a WhoIs service, or specialized software, to search for sites that would make good affiliate candidates.

I emailed the affiliate manager again to let him know that I was aware of this practice, and that I would prefer to receive better ad copy to help me promote their products, as opposed to spamming me to join a program that I was already affiliated with.

I still got no response.

Guess what? One more spam email and I dropped their program. Their loss entirely. I don't affiliate with spammers, and I highly recommend that you avoid them as well.

Inconsiderate Affiliate Managers

Here are some examples of notices that arrive too late to be of use, or at such a time as to cause significant grief.

Hello Rosalind,

The site is back to 100% normal capacity and fully operational. If you stopped sending traffic you can begin sending it heavily again! Thanks tremendously!

CHEERS TO MORE TRAFFIC AND MORE SUCCESS!

Thanks,
CEO XYZSite.com

Back to normal? Stopped sending traffic? Huh? There was NO prior notification sent to affiliates that any trouble existed with the site.

It would be better NOT to send the 'update' at all in this case, as it only served to make affiliates question how long the site had been down and how much revenue they'd lost during the outage.

Here's another one.

This one really made me wonder if the affiliate manager had a clue. It arrived with the subject line: URGENT: Change your links on August 29! The email was received on August 28th, 2001.

Dear XYZ Associate,

We're about to reveal some very exciting changes this week that will make it easier than ever for you to earn commissions with us! **To take advantage of these changes, you must change all the XYZ links on your site on August 29, 2001.** Please read below for details..

What's going on? We're updating our look and changing our name to better reflect the fun and excitement we know singles are looking for. On August 29, we will become XYZ2.com™!

What's " XYZ2.com™"? XYZ2.com™ will be everything that XYZ.com™ is, but better. We've improved our functionality and made the sign up process even easier. We believe these changes will encourage more of your visitors to become members...and that means higher commissions for you!

What do you have to do? You *MUST* change your banners, tiles and links on August 29, 2001. We will not be able to track or compensate you for members that are generated through old links after that date. Please visit our Associates area now at <http://associates.XYZ2.com> and choose from the great new selection of banners, tiles and linking options.

Want to make the most of this exciting change? Since you're changing those old links anyway, we encourage you to review how and where you promote XYZ.com on your site. You may want to consider including news about the exciting upgrade from XYZ.com to XYZ2.com in any newsletters or on your website. This is just the kind of change that gets people interested,

and that could translate into increased commissions for you!

Click below to log in to the Associates Program to choose your new links,
but please note they will not be functional until August 29th!

See you soon!
XYZ2.com Associates Program.

So, in effect they wanted their affiliates to change and upload all their new links at exactly midnight on August 29th, 2001.

Let's see... August. No one goes on vacation during August, right? No, of course not! Especially NOT in the Northern Hemisphere where this merchant is based. So, there was absolutely NO chance that affiliates might return from a week-long holiday to discover that they'd paid to get traffic to a site on which dozens of links to XYZ.com were no longer valid. No, not a chance.

I find it absolutely unbelievable that anyone, especially a businessperson, could be so thoughtless and inconsiderate.

Although the company apologized for their 'oversight', they didn't offer to compensate those affiliates who lost out when they couldn't change their links in the nick of time.

I was fortunate in that I was handy to my site and could change my links immediately, but I've severely curtailed my promotional efforts for this company until they prove themselves capable of showing respect and consideration for their affiliates.

Two years later and I'm still waiting.

Customer Complaints

Do you get repeated complaints about a specific product or service? If you have a good relationship with the Affiliate Program manager, pass your visitors comments along. If you don't have the time, you just might want to drop the program.

Slow Payments

Keep track of your affiliate program earning and the checks as they arrive. If a check is slow to arrive, contact the affiliate program manager and let them know. If the payments are often slow to arrive, it may be best to drop the program.

I've joined, then dropped and later re-joined a program after improvements were made to either the product or the program.

Don't hesitate to do the same. It's YOUR money!

Domain Issues

Free Domains - Worth about that Much

Here's a lesson that too many webmasters have learned the hard way. Free domain names and Web site hosts are worth precisely what you pay for them.

Several years ago, I placed a recently completed site on the latest and greatest free web host. While I disliked the banner ads above and below my pages, I understood that was how the company made their money and the price I paid for the space.

So, my new site is up and I'm submitting it to the search engines to bring in some traffic. My efforts start to pay off and pretty soon the money is rolling in. Cool! I start working on new projects.

Time goes by and one day I notice that the site has stopped generating revenue.

I check to see whether the site is offline or if perhaps the sales links are broken.

I type in my URL and in the browser I see a different site. Thinking I've entered the address incorrectly, I type it in again. The same strange page comes up instead of mine. So I try it again... and again.

Nope, right URL, DIFFERENT site. **My site was gone.** In its place was a full page of advertising.

Why was this done? Well, of course I never found out, no one responded to my queries. Granted, this was a scam of the worst kind. Get suckers like me to build a site and bring in visitors, then steal their traffic.

Although the established free hosts like Geocities and Hypermart wouldn't pull such a stunt, here are six more drawbacks to hosting your site on free servers.

- **Lose Credibility** – Would YOU buy from a business that can't afford \$7.95 per month to host its own web site? I wouldn't. My impression of businesses on free servers is akin to street vending. I might buy an inexpensive little trinket, but never anything of value.
- **Banner Advertising on Your Pages** – Nothing is really free. In exchange for space on their servers, the host places their own banner advertising on your pages. Their banners detract from your business.

- **Funky Long Address** – Which address will your visitors remember?
<http://members.atsomefreeserver.com/~johnsbusiness/> or <http://johnbusiness.com>?
- **Lack of Features** – Free hosts generally restrict the amount of space you can take up on their servers. The sites offer few, if any, of the most basic features necessary to run an ecommerce site, e.g. cgi-bins and shopping carts.
- **Slow Loading Pages** – Most free server pages load very slowly. Slow loading pages are the primary reason people cite for failing to complete online order placement. Let's not chase our visitors away before they have a chance to become customers.
- **Customer Service** – Non-existent. Your site is down? Tough luck!

Although mine was a highly unusual circumstance, I learned a valuable lesson. You get what you pay for.

So I pass the lesson on to you. Register your own domain name and pay for a good hosting service. Both are relatively inexpensive, and they put your business on the right track from the start.

In the section below, "Web Hosting - A Home for Your Domain", I recommend several good web hosts for you to consider.

How to Choose a Domain Name

Your domain name is your business name on the web. It represents both you and your business, therefore think it through carefully.

Here are 6 things to consider when choosing your domain name.

- **Make it DOT COM** - Although there are a number of domain name extensions to choose from, including .com, .net, and .biz amongst many others, choose .COM.

The '.com' extension is the one people think of first when they think of web addresses, so go with it. You wouldn't want your potential customers to head off to 'thepuppytrainer.com' if your site is registered as 'thepuppytrainer.net', would you?

- **Make it Relevant** - The next rule of thumb is to include at least one, preferably two, of your important 'keywords' in your name.

Let's assume that your site is about dog training. So which keywords work best? Dog, puppy, pooch? Train, training or trainer?

One way to decide, is to find out which of those keywords or keyword combinations is searched for most often.

To do that, go to WordTracker.com. You can use their free trial to establish which of your keywords is the most popular. Using the keywords we chose above, WordTracker shows us that the keyword 'dogs' outstrips the word 'puppy' by about 34,000 searches in a period of 60 days. Knowing that should make your decision just a little easier.

- **Make it Memorable** - Which of the following names will you remember a week from now? DogTraining.com, DoggyU.com or DogCollege.com? Shorter names are also easier to remember.
- **Try to Avoid hyphens** - One of the bigger mistakes I made when registering my first domain, was to hyphenate the name. Sometime later I discovered a site using the non-hyphenated (hmm... that LOOKS like an oxymoron) version of my domain name - and he was promoting the same products as I had on my site.

This webmaster is STILL capitalizing on my oversight and selling to my visitors who forget the hyphen in my domain name.

- **Avoid a name that you need to spell out.** - Take for example my site, byebye925.com.

The first time you hear it, you might think it is spelled 'bybynine2five.com', 'byebyenetofive.com' or a number of other ways.

For that reason, I have to spell it out each and every time I say it. Adding numbers into

the fray adds to the inconvenience. Imagine having to say, '*B-Y-E-B-Y-E, number 9, number 2, number 5 DOT COM*' several times a day.

- **Take care not to infringe on a trademark** - A trademark is a name or symbol is officially registered to a third party, and unless otherwise specified, the trademark owner is the only party that can legally make use of a trademarked name. As a result, when purchasing a domain name, be forewarned that buying a domain containing a trademark could result in a legal battle, and the registrar will likely side with the trademark owner. VeriSign's dispute policy, for example, reads: "It is your responsibility to determine whether your domain name registration infringes or violates someone else's rights." A court order could have your site shut down quickly. So before buying that name, do some research to make sure you won't run into trouble later. Trademark research and information can be obtained at:

→ **Nameprotect**

<http://nameprotect.com>

→ **The Trademark Association**

<http://www.inta.org>

Have fun! Get out your dictionary and thesaurus and play with words. Brainstorm a long list of possibilities and you'll come up with something that is uniquely you.

Register Your Own Domain Name

Is your domain name available? Plan to spend some time searching, as most of the short domain names are long gone. Don't worry though, there are still millions of excellent word combinations available.

While there are a huge variety of domain registration services available, I'll keep it brief and suggest that you register at **GoDaddy.com**.

Why spend \$20 or \$30 bucks more when you don't have to?

I recommend GoDaddy.com as their registration services is the **least expensive** I have found. It is certainly cheaper than Network Solutions/Verisign, which was the original domain name registrar. At the time of writing, GoDaddy.com is \$8.95, while Verisign charges \$35 per year.

You can save even more when you register for longer periods of time. For example, you can register a .com address for ten years for \$69.50. That's only \$6.95 per year!

Their excellent pricing probably explains why, according to SnapNames.com's State of the Domain Report for Q3 2002, Go Daddy continues to rise in the rankings of top registrars by market share, and that it **AGAIN** ranks #1 in net increase in number of registrations during the quarter. GoDaddy's reseller operation, Wild West Domains, increased from #0 to #60 with the addition of 22,000 names in the same quarter.

The first time you register a domain with GoDaddy.com, you will also create an account with them. This simplifies the registration process by eliminating the need to fill in all your contact information when you register subsequent domains with them.

After finalizing your choice of domain name, GoDaddy.com will offer you many additional options.

I recommend that you forgo their hosting options and select 'I would like to park this domain at Go Daddy Software for free'. In the next chapter, I will give you my 'best of the web' hosting solutions.

There you have it. It's that simple, so go get your name!

➔ **GoDaddy.com**

<http://godaddy.com>

Web Hosting - How to Choose A Home for Your Domain

A Web host is typically a service company which actually stores, or hosts, your Web site pages on its servers (computers) so others on the Web can have access to your material 24/7.

Choosing a web host service might be the most confusing thing you have to do with regard to setting up your affiliate marketing business. Let's hope so, because it really isn't all that hard when you know what to look for.

Key Hosting Features

- **Storage** - How many megabytes (MB's) of storage space are offered to house your Web site and pages?
- **POP3 email accounts** - How many do you get?
- **Transfer** - How many gigabytes (GB's) of data transfer are allowed?
- **FrontPage extensions** - If you use FrontPage to design your site, you'll need these.
- **WebStats** - Can you access your Web site's log files and server statistics?
- **CGI-Bin** - Needed if you plan to run CGI scripts. Also helpful if the host includes a library of scripts, e.g. guestbook and counters.
- **PHP Support** - Another programming language that requires host support if you plan to run it.
- **Server Side Includes** - allow you to dynamically include data in your Web pages
- **MySQL** - Needed if you run the SQL database program on your site.
- **Stated 'uptime'?** – The percentage of time their server is up and running. This shouldn't be less than 99.7%.
- **Browser Based Email** - Allows access to your email accounts through your Web browser from anywhere, as long as you have Internet access..

- **Interface or Control Panel:** Is the account managed through an easy-to-use administrative interface?
- **Scalability:** Is the account easily upgraded with the growth of your business? Whether you need to add email accounts, more space or more traffic, it should be as easy as simply sending an email or making a phone call.

Support

- **Helpful technical support:** You want a technical support team that always tries to solve your problems and answer your web hosting questions quickly and in a friendly manner.
- **Technical support contact:** Is support available by phone or only by an email ‘ticket system’?
- **Quick response to e-mails:** Technical support via ‘ticket systems’ works very well when response time is lightning fast.
- **24/7 Monitoring:** Do real people monitor the company’s servers and network 24 hours a day, 365 days a year?
- **Online Community:** Is there a community forum set up for discussion among other users of the service?

Value

- **Best value for your money:** Compare prices on 3 to 4 services to make sure you are getting the best value for your money.
- **Volume discount:** Do you get a discount if you sign up for a full year?
- **Upgrade charges:** Does the company charge setup fees for upgrades? (Note: If they do, continue your search for a hosting service that doesn't charge for upgrades. Any company that already has your business shouldn't penalize you for wanting to spend more money on their service!)
- **Bonus Software and Webmaster Resource Center:** Do they offer free shopping cart software? Are additional tools such as guestbooks, form mail and other cgi scripts provided for free?

- **Satisfaction Guarantee:** Is there an unconditional money back guarantee? If so, how long is it good for?

Recommended Hosting Services

You don't have to look far for excellent Web hosts that provide great service and won't break your budget.

I highly recommend the following hosting services:

iPowerWeb

\$7.95 per month includes 500 Megs of space Stats, CGI, PHP, SSI, Frontpage, SSL, Manager Console, Free Domain transfer, FREE Setup and MORE. iPowerWeb's hosting solutions are powered by the most advanced hosting platform available. Their high performance servers provide you with unparalleled performance, security, and control. You can be assured that you are receiving the best hosting services available and their award winning customer support.

→ **iPowerWeb**

<http://ipowerweb.com>

HostRocket

Web Hosting for only \$9.95/month with no contracts. 500MB storage, 27GB transfer, PHP4, MYSQL, CGI, SSH all included.

→ **HostRocket**

<http://hostrocket.com>

Host4Profit

At \$24.95 per month, you may think Host4Profit a little pricey. However, if you get 3 more people to sign up for hosting through your affiliate link, your hosting will be free, PLUS you'll have made a little profit. Actually, your credit card will still be charged \$24.95, but you'll also receive a check for **\$30**.

In addition to a good hosting service, when you sign up for hosting with Host4Profit you also receive a lifetime membership in **The Warrior Group**. The Warrior Group is a private marketing association with 30,000 members worldwide. Some of the biggest names in Internet

marketing are members, people like: **Jonathan Mizel, Carl Galetti, Mark Joyner, Anthony Blake, Ken Varga, Paul Hartunian** and many more.

Check them out, and I'm sure you'll be delighted with all the features and bonuses that Host4Profit offers.

➔ **Host4Profit**

<http://host4profit.com>

➔ **The Warrior Group**

<http://www.WarriorPro.com/>

In summary, visit the Web hosting services recommended above and check out the recommendations of others. Research each one thoroughly before making a decision. Those of us with more than a few years of Internet marketing experience have usually tried and cast aside more bad hosting services than we care to remember.

Trust me, you want to choose the right service the first time, because switching hosts is costly, time consuming and not a lot of fun.

Plan Your Web Site

Don't Build a Mall... Build a Theme Park!

Why do *you* surf the 'Net?

Do you turn on your computer, open your browser, then scratch your head and think to yourself, "Hmm... wonder what I should look for today?"

Chances are that your approach isn't so haphazard.

If you are like most Internet users, you know **exactly** what you are looking for **before** you start surfing.

Think about it. When you started investigating ways to make money with affiliate programs, you probably went to your favorite search engine and typed in a variety of words and phrases related to making money online.

You typed in phrases such as 'make money', 'make money online' and 'affiliate programs' amongst others.

Now think about the listing results that were produced by your search.

Were any of those mall sites, consisting of a mish mash of unrelated subjects?

Probably not. Almost assuredly not!

That's the beauty of using the better search engines like Google and pay per click search engines like Overture. The results returned are highly relevant to your search, and that saves you time, effort and frustration.

Now put yourself in your customers' shoes, or frame of mind. Do you think that they are any different than you in their approach to surfing the Web?

Well, they're not. They too want to save their time and effort and get highly relevant results when they're surfing.

For various reasons, many beginner Webmasters think that building an all-purpose super mall will bring them online fame and fortune. I'm afraid it doesn't work that way.

Do these types of super mall sites constitute as 'highly relevant'?

Not at all!

Yet, many newbies (i.e. Internet beginners) still persist in building them. Perhaps they believe that taking a broad-brush approach to web store building will save them time and money in the long run. They'll save time and money by having to register and host only one domain. They'll need only one template for the entire site, saving time and effort in the design process. Perhaps they feel that a mall saves their visitors time by giving them a one-stop shopping experience.

The only part of that thinking that holds water is about saving money on domain registration and Web hosting. Everything else is a pipe dream.

To build a mall site with universal appeal and umpteen hundred categories, requires that you have umpteen hundred pages each about a specific topic. That takes time - lots and LOTS of time.

As for saving time by having to build only one template for the entire site, there is no reason why the same template can't be used across multiple domains, changing only the main logo from site to site.

So, please! Unless you really want to waste your time and money, forget the mall approach.

One Topic - Multiple Domains?

The opposite of the mall approach is having a plethora of sites, all around the same theme or topic.

For affiliate marketing purposes, this approach too is a waste of time, effort and money.

First of all, as a user of pay per click advertising services, you'll soon discover that you may advertise under any given keyword or keyword phrase only once with the same service.

For example, if you have 10 sites focused around dating services affiliate programs, you may still only advertise the keyword 'dating' only once. So, to which site would you choose to send your traffic?

Also, the more sites you have, the more work you have to do to get your sites listed. You might as well concentrate your efforts on getting traffic to only one main site, than duplicate your efforts several times over trying to get traffic to several different domains with the same topic.

The only circumstance under which this works is if you can make some clear distinction between the affiliate programs or their topics.

For example, I do this with my dating service review sites, by having three domains to offer three different categories of service, that I offer: mild, medium, and hot - or in other words, non-adult, mixed, and mature.

It's then easier to make keyword distinctions among sites that offer similar services within different categories.

However, building three different domains to offer the exact same affiliate programs on each site doesn't make sense and is more trouble than it's worth.

Site Structure - 'Micro' or Content?

Have you heard about 'micro' sites? How about BBL, "Buy, Bookmark or Leave" sites? The concept seems simple enough to execute, doesn't it?

Build a one or two page 'micro' site, put the marketing in motion, and then move onto the next 'micro' site topic.

It IS easy.

Unfortunately, the 'micro' or BBL site structure isn't really an option for affiliate marketers. 'Micro' sites are most effective when they focus entirely on the sale of one specific product or service.

You can't compare and contrast a wide range of products in a particular category on a one page 'micro' site, and our job is to add value to our merchants' products.

We do that by sharing lots of free information with our visitors. We understand that the 'Net is a huge marketplace and that shopping online and product selection can be a confusing and frustrating experience for consumers. As affiliates, we can help them sift through the clutter to find the best product for their needs by writing honest and sincere product endorsements.

To really help your visitors, you need to build a content-rich site focused on one particular theme.

While building a fifty or hundred-page content site may seem like a lot of work, it's not as much work as building fifty one-page mini sites. Furthermore, larger content sites are much more attractive to the search engines than their mini counterparts.

Think of your site as being a book, one that you can write chapter by chapter.

The homepage is the introductory page, or the table of contents. It leads to 'chapters' or main categories, and the chapters lead to the individual product pages. It 'flows' naturally from abstract concepts to concrete facts, and your visitor, appreciative of all your good information, goes with the flow. The longer he or she sticks around, the more likely they are to buy.

So, build a content-rich theme-based site, and give your visitors more reason to stick around and buy.

Develop a Site Plan

Success truly is '90% planning and 10% execution'.

Don't you just love those sites that have a great looking homepage with links that look like they go to interesting information, but in fact end up at 'under construction' pages?

Those sites were built backwards, without a plan.

In their excitement to get online and start making money, many new webmasters omit the planning process as time-wasting, unnecessary work. They concentrate instead on designing fancy navigation buttons and flashy banners for their homepage, and hope to entice visitors to return with a promise of more to come.

Unfortunately, these webmasters haven't established a clear picture of how their site will be arranged, and the lack of focus and planning is sadly evident in the resulting product.

For sites like that, I wish there were an 'un-bookmark' feature. It would ensure that I never subjected myself to the site again.

If you want to join the elite 2 percent of affiliate marketers who make very large incomes from their efforts, you simply MUST start with a plan or site outline.

A site outline breaks down the parts of your work into a clear hierarchy of doable tasks. It is helpful in organizing your thoughts and presenting the material in a logical form. If your outline is good, your site content will be easier and much faster to write.

To do the job right, a site map gets built before work begins on the first page.

Here is a guide to help you understand the planning process. Even the planning process has a plan!

- **Theme:** Be very clear about your site's theme. You should be able to state it in 4 words or less, e.g. "How to make wine", "Dog training" or "Internet dating services reviewed".
- **Brainstorm:** List all the ideas that you want to include in your site.
- **Organize:** Group related ideas together.
- **Order:** Arrange material in subsections from general to specific or from abstract to concrete.
- **Label:** Create main and sub headings.

Suppose you want to build a site for beginner runners about training for a 5K run. Let's take a look at how the site might be ordered logically into categories and headings.

Brainstorm

During this part of the process, you simply write down all the topics you think you will cover on your site.

- run
- pain
- shoes
- pain
- socks
- pain
- gravel
- pavement
- other surfaces
- 5k
- treadmills
- rain
- snow
- cold weather
- keep a journal
- blisters
- clothes
- tops
- shorts
- race locations
- warm up
- cool down
- speed training
- injuries
- online information
- stretching
- staying motivated
- magazines
- books
- pain
- pain
- pain ☺

Organize

From the list above, it's fairly obvious that there are main categories under which each topic falls. When I've put the list items under headings and sub headings, I get a clear picture of how the site will be organized.

Order

Also note how the list gets logically 'ordered'. For example, the 'Clothing & Accessories' list below gets ordered from head to toe; a natural flow or progression. Another possibility for that list would be alphabetical.

Although people don't take active note of such order, they WILL sense something amiss if the order isn't logical, i.e. if 'cool down' gets placed before 'warm up' which is an impossible flow.

Clothing

- Hats
- Sunglasses
- Tops
- Shorts
- Socks
- Shoes

Label

In labeling, the list starts to 'take shape' with main and sub headings.

Note too that some items have been added to the lists. When you begin to 'see' the site plan taking form, other topics will naturally come to you that may have been overlooked during the brainstorming process.

On the other hand, some topics from the list above are absent from the list below. You may realize during the planning process that you've bitten off more than you feel comfortable chewing, or that something is no longer relevant.

In this case, you'll see that I eliminated 'blisters', as I realized that topic opened the whole subject of injury treatment, about which I am unqualified to make recommendations. I make a note to add a comment about consulting a health professional in the case of injury.

Training Tips

Get Motivated
The 5K Training Plan
Nutrition

- Hydration
- Weight Loss
- Supplements

Injury Prevention

- Warm-up
- Cool down

Trail Conditions

- Gravel
- Pavement
- Hilly Terrain

Climate

- Heat
- Cold
- Precipitation

Race Day Tips

Shop

Bookstore

Gear & Clothing

- Hats
- Sunglasses
- Tops
- Shorts
- Socks
- Shoes

Training Aids

- Heart Rate Monitors
- Treadmills

Through this process it becomes apparent that there are at least 3 main topics for the case we're looking at: training tips, shop, training aids. Under these there can be up to three different levels of information (i.e. Training Tips / Nutrition / Hydration). Each level of information may represent a page, or 'chapter' within your site.

Use this breakdown to establish your site navigation.

For example, using the list above, the top two levels would appear as navigation buttons/links throughout the site, whereas third level items such as specific pieces of clothing would be accessed through 'Clothing' at the page level.

Once you have each topic sorted according to category, you can begin work on constructing the individual pages. Despite having a clear picture of the final site navigation, do not add navigation links to the main page until the destination page is fully complete.

I personally find planning a somewhat difficult and tedious task. Choosing a specific top-level category for some topics can be confusing, and discovering that some categories just won't fit into the plan at all can be frustrating and disappointing.

Regardless, planning IS crucial.

It's a little like building a house. While it may be possible to do it without a blueprint, why would you choose to make the process so difficult and the results so ugly?

Build Your Site

4 Site Building Options

Building your Web site can be a quick, cheap and simple process. It can also be a time-consuming, very expensive, and frustrating undertaking. It all depends on how much time, money and energy you are willing to spend.

From doing it all yourself to having it all done for you, each option has advantages and disadvantages you should consider.

These are the 4 basic web site building options:

1. Do it Yourself
2. Pre-Made Web Site Templates
3. Complete Web Site / eCommerce Package Deals
4. Hire a Designer, Programmer, or Web Developer

Summaries of each option follows.

Do it Yourself

Building your own web site is usually the least expensive option.

On the other hand, the cost of designing and building your own site can become fairly hefty if you buy the most expensive graphic design programs and HTML editors. It can also be the most time-consuming way to build a site when you are new to the game.

However, once you learn a little HTML and have one or two pages under your belt, you'll find that knocking pages off takes just a matter of minutes.

Use a Template

I am very impressed by the attractiveness, quality and value of Web site templates currently available. For a very small fee, most template designers offer to make changes to their designs, or add information as per your instructions.

I highly recommend that you take a look at the templates at the following sites.

→ 4 Templates<http://4templates.com>**→ Dollar Templates**<http://dollartemplates.com>

Get A Web Site Package Deal

One web site building option that eliminates the need to learn HTML and incorporates most of the features any Super Affiliate would ever need in a Web site, is Ken Evoy's 'Site Build It!'

As a developer with reasonably good knowledge of HTML and graphic design, I personally find the SBI! interface a little clunky and frustrating to use. However, I can overlook this downside to take advantage of the amazing topic research and search engine optimization tools that SBI! offers.

Honestly, I have been amazed by the search engine rankings achieved by newbie webmasters using SBI! **And I do mean TOTAL newbies.**

Without a penny paid for pay per click advertising (I love alliteration, don't you?), these ecommerce neophytes are getting excellent traffic to their sites in a very short period of time, and generating good sales results.

Although the initial outlay may seem rather steep, when you look at all the features that SBI! offers and start doing price comparisons, it's easy to see that you couldn't possibly buy all the components you need for an Internet business site separately for the amount that SBI! Sells for. Its value gets even better in the second year when the price goes down.

Even if you could arrange domain registration, Web hosting, autoresponders, HTML editors, etc., etc., to the tune of \$25 or \$30 per month, you still wouldn't enjoy the benefits of having all those utilities available through a single interface such as SBI! Offers.

More importantly, you wouldn't be getting all the site research and analysis features that make SBI! the traffic building, sales generating machine that it is.

Not only is an excellent business-building system for newcomers to affiliate marketing, but the SBI ecommerce package will serve you well as you grow your business to include your own products.

Here's what you get with SBI!

- Domain name registration
- Web site hosting
- Site topic brainstorming and researching
- Powerful graphic tools (LogoCreator and NavBar Maker)
- Point-and-click site-building
- Easy web logging

- Search engine optimization
- Automatic search engine submission and re-submission
- Pay-per-click search engine research and mass-bidding
- Traffic statistics and analysis
- Ezine subscription and delivery
- SpamCheck!
- Step-by-step action guide
- Site Build It! Newsletter
- The 4 traffic HQs
- Tips 'n techniques
- Link exchange assistance
- SBI! e-goods

Site Build It! is the perfect option for someone who wants to save time and money by buying all the website building necessities in a neatly packaged bundle.

Want to get the full "insider's view?" I have arranged with SiteSell.com for you to download a free PDF-formatted copy of "Make Your Content PREsell!" It's the actual guide that SBI! owners use. You'll get a clear picture of how quick-and-easy SBI! makes it to execute all the profitable traffic-building and sales-generating strategies outlined in the guide... freeing you up to focus on your business!

Take advantage of the free download. See first-hand how the SBI! Total System works. Skim through the Guide and then decide.

Zero downside, terrific upside. My kind of risk/reward ratio!

→ **Download the SBI! Action Guide**

<http://superaffiliatehandbook.com/SBI-AG.zip>

→ **Site Build iT! Web Site**

<http://buildit.sitesell.com/webvista.html>

Hire a Designer

Unless you personally know a Web site designer and are totally confident in his or her work, this option is mostly a crapshoot.

It could easily cost \$3,000 to have a 2 or 3 page mini site built. Due to differences in artistic interpretation, there are no guarantees that you will be thrilled with the design.

My partners and I hired programmers to develop proprietary 'matchmaking' software - like that used by Match.com and Date.com. The final product was more than a year overdue, and although all aspects of the program's functionality were carefully articulated in a thick contract, it took many more months to 'tweak' the site to perfection.

Don't get me wrong. We love the work they did for us, and the price was definitely right. I just want make the point that even 2 strong teams of articulate Web professionals can incur weighty cost overruns and production delays.

If time and money aren't issues for you, then a great place to find a designer for your site is at Elance. You post a description of your project, which designers then bid on. Elance has a skill rating system that you are free to review before agreeing to hire anyone. I've used this service a few times to hire programmers to write scripts for my site and have always been very satisfied with the work.

To find a designer, programmer, or Web developer at Elance, visit the link below.

→ **Elance**

<http://elance.com>

Regardless of the option you choose, I highly recommend that you make the time to learn some basic HTML coding. Waiting for someone else to make changes to your site can be frustrating and costly. It's much better that you maintain control over all aspects of your affiliate business.

Design Software

Graphics Software

At one tenth the price of Adobe Photo Shop, Jasc's Paint Shop Pro sports nearly all Photo Shop's features.

It is also extremely easy to use and is a much lighter program to load and run. The latter attribute is critical, as I need to have my HTML editor, FTP program, several browser windows and Paint Shop Pro open all at the same time. Paint Shop Pro is therefore my graphics program of choice.

→ **Paint Shop Pro**

<http://superaffiliatehandbook.com/psp.html>

HTML Editor

Homesite is my HTML editor of choice, and has been for years, although I have tried many others.

Learning the program is super simple, and the features list is exhaustive.

Homesite is also much less costly than the Macromedia Studio MX.

It is the perfect choice for anyone who needs an easy-to-use HTML editor at an affordable price.

Note: You can't get Homesite 5.0 through the Macromedia site because Macromedia MX now comes bundled with Homesite. So, if you're interested in this product, visit the link below which will take you to the software at Amazon.

→ **Homesite**

<http://superaffiliatehandbook.com/homesite.html>

HTML/Graphics Combination Software

If you enjoy Web design and want to crank your creativity up a notch, Macromedia Studio MX is the ideal bundle for professional and wannabe professional Web designers.

It brings together Dreamweaver MX for page design, Flash MX for animation and interactivity, and Fireworks MX for editing and optimizing graphics. Users also receive FreeHand 10, a full-featured vector image editor, as well as ColdFusion MX.

→ **Macromedia Studio MX**

<http://superaffiliatehandbook.com/studiomx.html>

Web Site Essentials

Every page on your site should either display or have links to the following site elements.

Logo

You need a unique business logo.

Whether your logo is simply your URL done in a fancy font and neat color on a graphic image as I've done at sage-hearts.com, or a professionally designed logo - your site needs a unique logo.

It sets your site apart and makes it memorable.

Certainly more memorable than those sites that simply enlarge and bold the font on their URL in the top left-hand corner of their homepage without seeing, or ignoring, the fact that the font is ragged, jagged and UGLY!

Honestly, for the price of one or two month's hosting, a professionally designed graphic logo is a great investment in the future of your site.

GotLogos.com - The work these folks do is professional, very attractive and lightning fast - and inexpensive. They've done two logos for me and I've been very satisfied on both occasions.

→ <http://gotlogos.com>

LaughingBird Software - This is **do-it-yourself** logo creation software, and I was amazed at the gorgeous templates available! Simply pop in your text and you're ready to go!

→ <http://thelogocreator.com>

TAG line / Slogan

Develop a Tag line or slogan for your site to place directly beneath your site's logo or name. It's another way to make your site more memorable.

The tag line should be short - no more than four or five words - and catchy. It should also say exactly what your site is about.

People2People.com's tag line is "Because two is always better than one".

I don't necessarily agree - consider blisters for example, but when you understand that People2People.com is an Internet dating site, then their tag line makes good sense.

Privacy Statement

Every commercial web site should have a privacy/security statement. Inclusion of these statements will achieve a number of things for you. They will differentiate you from your competitors, instill user confidence and trust, reduce liability, and increase your web site's conversion rate.

A privacy and security statement explains what information is being collected by your site, how it's being collected and safeguarded, and how it will be used. It is a legal, binding document, an explicit statement made on behalf of the site owner to the site user.

I've included below the template I use for the privacy statements on my sites.

Feel free to use it on your site. Simply replace **YourSite.com** with your site's name or URL, fill in the blanks where appropriate, and replace the words 'by clicking here' with the link to the contact page on your site.

Privacy Statement for YourSite.com

YourSite.com has created this privacy statement in order to demonstrate our firm commitment to privacy. The following discloses our information gathering and dissemination practices for this website: **YourSite.com**.

We use your IP address to help diagnose problems with our server, and to administer our Web site.

This site contains links to other sites. **YourSite.com** is not responsible for the privacy practices or the content of such Web sites.

YourSite.com employs the services of _____ for the **YourSite.com** Newsletter. _____ and **YourSite.com** agree not to sell or rent the email addresses of any YourSite.com Newsletter subscriber to any third party.

Public Forums

This site may make chat rooms, forums, message boards, and/or news groups available to its users. Please remember that any information that is disclosed in these areas becomes public information and you should exercise caution when deciding to disclose your personal information.

Choice/Opt-Out

This site gives users the following options for removing their information from our mailing list database to not receive future communications or to no longer receive our service. You can send email to **YourSite.com** by clicking here.

Correct/Update

This site gives users the following options for changing and modifying information previously provided. Change or modify information by clicking here.

Contacting the Web Site

If you have any questions about this privacy statement, the practices of this site, or your dealings with this Web site, feel free to contact us by clicking here.

Contact Information

The number of affiliate webmasters who don't provide onsite contact information and force their visitors to look elsewhere for answers to their questions is appalling. Please don't even consider putting up an affiliate site that doesn't allow your visitors to contact you directly.

The point of any ecommerce site should be to help the people that come to it, and if a webmaster can't take the time to answer a few questions from his or her site visitors every day, then they shouldn't be in business.

If someone has taken the time to email a question, that is a guarantee that they are interested in one or another of the products on your site. Common courtesy demands that their question be answered in a reasonable period of time. Extending the simple courtesy of a timely response will probably result in a sale.

Instead of using clickable email links, I recommend that you use contact forms on your site(s) for two reasons.

They eliminate a lot of the spam that you would otherwise get from those who use email address harvesters, AND, your visitors email software won't be popping open just when they least expect it.

I believe that using forms instead of email links probably does stop some folks from making the effort to write. I've actually had folks use the form to ask me for my email address so that they could get in touch with me.

Hmmm...

Anyway, if the form deters someone from writing, so be it. It's a small price to pay for avoiding copious amounts of spam.

Besides, the more webmasters use forms, the more people become accustomed to them, and in time forms will become the norm.

'About Us' Page

An 'About Us' page instills trust. People like to put a name and a face to what they are reading. I can't blame them. I do as well.

It's a human trait. We like to know who we're dealing with. If we feel that someone is hiding their face, then we're less likely to trust them.

Another thing to add to your 'About Us' page is your qualifications for creating your Web site. When people read that you started your 'Go Fishing' site because you are a fishing guide in the Adirondack Mountains, they'll likely put more faith and trust in your site.

In that particular case, that information would probably be included elsewhere on the site, but also be sure to include it in the 'About Us' section for those who might miss it elsewhere.

Ezine/Newsletter Sign-Up on Every Page

A signup form for your opt-in mailing list or newsletter should be placed on each and every page of your site.

Did you know that just about every page on your Web site is a possible initial landing/entry page for your visitors? That's right, visitors from the pay per clicks and other search engines will often land on pages other than your homepage. So, be sure to offer them the same opportunity to join your newsletter for free site updates, as those who start out on your homepage.

There you have the 6 essential Web site elements... Logo and a tag line, Privacy statement, contact information link, an ezine signup form and an 'About Us' page. Those are the basic elements that should be included on every Web site you build. Don't do business without them.

Design Rules-of-Thumb

While it is not within the scope of the Super Affiliate Handbook to give detailed instruction on Web design, I believe there are some basic design rules that must be followed by those who wish to become Super Affiliates.

Font Face, Color & Size

You may love the appearance of an unusual font, however there are a couple of problems with using fonts that aren't common to everyone's computer.

If the font you chose isn't on your visitor's computer, your text won't appear as you intended it.

Can you tell what the second problem is?

Legibility! Script and unusual fonts should be used very sparingly and in a larger size, so as to be legible. Use them in quantity and you'll lose your readers in no time flat.

The standard and best fonts for use on a web page are **Arial**, **Verdana** and **Tahoma**.

Font size should also be large enough to read without the surfer having to adjust the font size display in their browser. Because they won't bother. They'll just leave, because they can find the information elsewhere without the hassle.

Text should always be dark on a light background.

I broke this rule for the first couple of years that my sites were online with white text on a black background. I received a couple of complaints and comments about how difficult the pages were to read but did nothing about it for the longest time. Sales were good and the site looked 'cool', so why should I bother to change things?

"Why bother?" indeed!

As soon as I changed over to black on white, my sales went up... way up!

There are two lessons here. The first is that if one person actually makes the time to write and complain, it's likely that one hundred more people feel the same way. Secondly, there are reasons for practices becoming 'tried and true'.

Links Should Look Like Links

Unvisited links should conform to the standard colors and practice of being underlined.

Standard link colors are:

- [Underlined Blue](#) - unvisited
- [Red](#) - active or hover
- [Purple](#) - visited

I discovered the value of keeping links standard by way of a test I did some time ago. The link colors at sage-hearts.com had been more in keeping with my red and yellow color scheme. **As an experiment, I changed the link colors to the standard colors listed above.** It didn't take long before I saw my conversion rates go up.

Needless to say, I didn't change them back to their original colors!

By the way, changing all the link colors was super-simple to accomplish, because I use 'cascading style sheets' or 'CSS'.

Using CSS eliminates the need to hard code the font face, size and color every time I wish to make a change to a word's appearance. Instead, all the different parameters are listed within a single file, or the cascading style sheet. Then each page on the site has a link that points to the style sheet and draws its information from that.

CSS has the additional benefit of reducing page size by eliminating all that font coding.

Color Scheme

Different colors have different meanings and connotations. What would you think of if you saw a men's' site with pink as the primary color? Might it turn the average heterosexual guy off? You bet it would! They're terrified of pink.

I also can't imagine a health and fitness site succeeding with watery lavender and sickly olive green combination as well as it might with vibrant 'standard' colors.

Again, it's good to stick with the tried and true.

White Space

White space, or negative space, describes open space between design elements.

White space is an important layout technique often overlooked by inexperienced designers. Visually appealing design is easy on the eyes. Without adequate white space, text would be unreadable, graphics would lose their emphasis, and there would be no balance between the elements on a page.

White space takes on added importance on the Web because more of a strain is placed on the eyes than when reading printed material. White space gives our brains a break.

Treat white space as more than just a background. Treat it as an integral part to your page design.

Page Width

Having to scroll right to see all the text on a page is a symptom of poor design, or lack of knowledge of standard display sizes.

Standard screen resolutions are 1024 X 768 pixels - for those with good eyesight. However, many, many folks still use 800 X 600.

Given that knowledge, you have to design to the common denominator, which in this case is 800 X 600, and make your pages no more than 800 pixels wide. That means that the 800, 1024, 1152, AND the 1280 pixel wide people can all see the whole page on their display.

You can also use percentage widths, i.e. width="100%", which then widens or narrows the page according to each surfer's screen resolution. However, this HTML coding technique leads to your pages being viewed differently on different computer displays and in different browsers. It's better therefore to design your pages so that they are consistent across various platforms and hard-code specific widths for your HTML pages.

Page Backgrounds

I continue to be amazed by those who think that their visitors will waste time squinting to read text on a floral, striped or otherwise 'busy' background.

It gives me a headache just to think about it!

Do the designers think those backgrounds are pretty?

Well they're half right.

Those busy backgrounds are pretty ugly!

Consistent Navigation

It's really easy to keep your site elements consistent when you use the same template for every page on your site.

Essentially, consistency is about making it easy for your visitors to find what they want. That means keeping your **navigation, logo, ezine sign-up form**, and all other elements that repeat from page to page, in the same place on every page.

Each page should be clearly identified with a headline, and headline fonts should be consistent in color and size from page to page.

As readers become accustomed to a consistent site layout, they can move more quickly and easily through your site which makes their experience more enjoyable.

Bandwidth Hogs

Bandwidth is an electronic resource that gets used up every time characters of information are downloaded from, or uploaded to, your Web site. The more bandwidth resources used, the slower the transmission of data and information.

Surfers have very short attention spans, and the majority do not yet have cable or fast ADSL connections. So, page elements that hog bandwidth and slow your page download times may be reducing your income.

Graphic images are large and complex and therefore tend to gobble up bandwidth. So, when you're considering adding 'heavy' bandwidth hogging graphics to your site, stop first and ask what, if anything, will that particular element contribute to your conversion rates.

In most cases, if you answer honestly, the reply will be 'nothing'.

If the answer is 'nothing', then don't add it.

Bandwidth hogs include large or animated graphics, Flash, and sound of any kind. If you need graphics on your pages, make sure they are compressed to their smallest size without affecting their appearance.

Keep your site as simple and fast loading as you possibly can.

Use of Pop-Ups

For the most part, I really dislike pop-ups. I don't appreciate being on the receiving end of them, so in keeping with my 'do unto others' approach; I try to limit my use of them as much as possible.

Here's my most infamous pop-up tale.

One day I left the house for about an hour. On returning to my office, **I was shocked to see about FIFTY browser windows open on my computer display.**

How could that happen?

Well, some unthinking and unkind webmaster programmed a pop-up script unto a page of his that I'd visited (and left open) that in turn opened a new browser window every minute or so. Each and every page was exactly the same.

What purpose did that serve other than to make me despise the dufus? Absolutely none!

Well, actually, his unscrupulous ways gave me a story to tell you.

That said, using pop-ups might increase your conversion rates.

Exit pops with your mailing list or newsletter subscription form are particularly effective.

Here's an experiment I did relating to pop-up windows.

Thinking that everyone hated pop-up windows as much as I do, I changed all of the links at Sage-Hearts.com so that they would no longer open new windows when clicked upon. The new pages simply opened up in the same browser window, as most surfers would hope and expect when clicking on a link. I didn't really notice too much of a difference in my conversion rate, and thought I'd done my visitors a favor.

However, a few months later, in another conversion rate experiment, I changed all the links so that they would open "new" windows when clicked. My conversions went up almost immediately.

In this instance however, I added the following warning to each page of the site.

*Please note that links that leave Sage-Hearts.com **will open a new window**. That allows you to check out the service and come back to see more in the category.*

It seems to work.

Music/Noise

Under no circumstances should a site broadcast noise and/or music without its visitors' permission.

Have you ever clicked through to a Web site and had your eardrums immediately assaulted by some Webmaster's "idea" of great music? Or how about one that starts off with a voice-over monologue by the Webmaster when you arrive?

In my opinion, this is always unacceptable.

Even if your site is about music, your visitors should have the option as to what they want to hear, and when they want to hear it.

That's just basic courtesy.

The Internet isn't TV. It's where we go to do research. Surprising me with loud ugly noises won't earn my respect.

On the contrary, giving me cause to fall out of my chair and hold my heart in fear will only hurt your Web site because I will caution others against visiting your site.

By the way, BEWARE when you visit any of Marlon Sanders' sites. To emphasize his slogan 'Marketing that Roars', his visitors are greeted with a lion's roar upon opening any of his pages. ('Greeted'. I use that term very loosely in this case.) He offers excellent products, but the roar is unnecessary and disrespectful.

Consider the possibility that your visitors may be in an office or library environment, or they may have their stereo playing softly in the background while quietly surfing the 'Net. Any sudden unsolicited noise is likely to disrupt them from whatever they're doing and they are likely to retreat from your site in great haste.

That's bad for business.

If you were thinking about the possibility of adding music or other noise to your site - do your visitors a favor - Don't!

Frames

Frames - Pretty cool, eh? NOT!

I became obsessed with creating frames on one of my sites, and am pleased that my obsession was limited to only one site.

(One webmaster friend refers to me as a recovering "frameaholic!").

Frames have one main page, and several 'secondary' pages. That feature saves the Web developer from having to add navigation to every page on the site.

What it doesn't do however, is allow you to link to individual pages and have your site design or layout appear on the framed page.

Also, if someone wants to link to a specific page on your site, they can't. The URL that appears in their browser's address bar remains the same the entire time they navigate your site. So if they choose to bookmark a page, what they are bookmarking is actually the main, or homepage - and NOT the page they expected and/or wanted to bookmark.

The biggest problem with frames is that search engine robots have hard time spidering sites that are built in frames. Although there are ways to optimize your framed site to be attractive to search engines, the reasons above should quickly negate any compulsion you feel to use frames.

Keep it Fresh

Because research has shown that it takes anywhere between 4 and 7 exposures to a product or a site before a visitor will buy from you, “freshness” is the order of the day.

Give your visitors a reason to come back to your site by providing tons of interesting, original, and fresh content.

Web Site Building Primers & Help

HTML Goodies - Ignore the name. HTMLGoodies.com may have started the site with just HTML tutorials, but now they offer 'primers' in ASP, CGI, Javascript and Perl to name just a few. The very best site I can suggest for anyone wanting to learn how to build his or her own Web site.

→ <http://www.htmlgoodies.com/primers/basics.html>

Hex and Word Colors Codes - Aquamarine and dark olive green should never together be seen. YUK! The colors AND my poetry. Visit the color code chart to find colors that pair nicely.

→ <http://www.htmlgoodies.com/tutors/colors.html>

WebDeveloper.com Forums - This is the site you visit when you have a programming question that your kids don't know the answer to.

→ <http://forums.webdeveloper.com>

Websites that Suck - I absolutely love Vincent Flanders' site '**Websites That Suck - It's where you learn good Web design by looking at bad Web design.**' With an incredibly fine sense of humor, Mr. Flanders demonstrates by example all the evils of bad web design. It's a fun way to learn!

→ <http://websites thatsuck.com>

Follow the foregoing basic rules of Web site design and you'll give your visitors an enjoyable site experience. You'll also enjoy the experience of improved conversion and more sales.

9 Ways to Make Your Pages Search Engine Friendly

Optimizing your pages for the search engines is absolutely essential if you want them to appear in the top 10 - 30 positions of results.

High-ranking pages are even more critical if you'll be starting your affiliate business with a very small or non-existent promotional budget and won't be using pay-per-clicks and other forms of advertising.

How do you get your pages to rank high in the search engine results?

Here is a list of tips to help you.

Keyword-Rich Pages

In the past you had to be extremely careful not to overuse your keyword phrases for fear that the search engines would consider you an engine spammer and penalize you. Six per page was the maximum number of repetitions suggested.

It would now seem that the opposite is true.

Allan Gardyne's assistant, Rupert Farrow, recently published <http://cheap-computers-guide.com>, his second site built using SBI!

SBI! is renowned for its emphasis on attaining great search engine rankings, so I thought I would test Rupert's site for placement. Based on the site's name, I did a search on 'cheap computers'. Sure enough, the site came up first in the results at Google.

Excellent!

Next I checked the 'keyword density' on his homepage, or the number of times he repeated the use of the phrases 'cheap computers' and 'cheap computer'. The results were 7 and 27 respectively. (No, I didn't count the phrases manually... I used the 'global find' feature in my word processor.)

Well, that should demonstrate that maximizing your keyword use on your homepage is a very GOOD thing to do.

Keyword-Rich Page Names

Name your pages using keywords relevant to the product sold on that page, or the most relevant content.

For example, if my page were about Proform Treadmills, I would call the page exactly that - 'proform-treadmills.html'.

Site Map

Offer your visitors a site map with links that point to all the important pages and sections of your site. If your site consists of one hundred or more pages, you may wish to break the site map up into separate pages.

Relevant Content

Jill Whalen, a well-known search engine (SE) expert advises that you should work with at least 250 words on a page for search engine optimization purposes. More or less words will also work, but she makes the point that you need at least 250 words so that you can repeat your keyword phrases a number of times throughout the page without seeming 'dopey'.

Eliminate Clutter

Search engines don't read graphics or javascript, and they get confused when they encounter nested tables. If all that stuff precedes the first most important keyword phrases on your page, your ranking may be lowered as the SE considers that phrase less relevant, due to its low placement on the page.

Hint: I place my primary navigation on the right side of my pages so that the spiders can get to their 'food' more quickly. They prefer HTML text, loaded with keywords, placed 'high' on the page, and the left side is 'read' before the right side.

While I've never been overly keen on the aesthetics of the SBI! templates, I've always believed that their design was purposely simple so as to be attractive to the search engines.

If you visited Rupert's site above, you'll have noticed that its design is also very simple. In fact, Rupert has chosen to eliminate the left-side navigation typical of the SBI! sites, which I believe has enhanced his site's search engine standings even more. Smart dude!

Meta Tags

If we continue our 'snooping', I mean 'research' at Rupert's site, one step farther by doing a 'View Source' on his homepage, we discover that he's made excellent use of his keywords in his Meta Tags.

The 2 Meta Tags that you need to be most concerned about are the Title and Description tags.

Title Tags - The title tag is perhaps one of the most crucial factors in how a search engine will rank your site. The text you use in the title tag must include your most relevant keyword phrases. It must also make sense, as the title tag text is the wording that appears in the reverse bar of your browser. That's the blue bar right across the top of your browser window. It is also what the text

that most of the search engines will display as the title for your listing.

Description Tag - Some search engines will use the text contained in your meta description tag as your listing description. The meta description tag also influences your site's ranking in the engines, so you should repeat your primary keyword phrase once or twice in the description.

Note about Keyword Tags - I remember a time when we all 'stuffed' our keyword meta tags with every keyword relevant to our sites - and then added some more. Nowadays only Inktomi, and perhaps Teoma, apparently index sites using the keyword meta tag. Most search engine experts advise that the keyword meta tag is no longer worth your time or trouble. I don't think that adding a couple of keywords to a meta tag is any trouble at all, so I continue to add them to my pages.

Here is an example of how I would structure the Meta Tags for the page selling Proform Treadmills.

```
<title>Proform Treadmills: Shop For Proform Brand Treadmills Online</title>
<meta name="description" CONTENT="Proform Treadmills. Shop For Proform
treadmills and online">
<meta name="keywords" CONTENT="proform treadmills, proform, treadmills,
treadmill, proform treadmill">
```

ALT Tags - The ALT tag, which stands for 'alternative text', is primarily for use when the image is **not** being displayed. They were intended to make your site more accessible to visually impaired folks using text readers.

Furthermore, as search engines don't index images, any text on your site that is presented in image format won't get indexed. To solve this problem, you can enter the image description in the ALT tag. To be sure that the search engines recognize all the content on your site, always fill in your ALT tags filled with keywords. This boosts your keyword frequency and will help your site get a better ranking.

Dynamic Pages

Dynamic pages, which deliver content based on user input or other variables, can be more useful and responsive to visitor needs than regular static HTML pages. However, if while indexing a search engine encounters a dynamically generated page, as distinguished by a question mark (?) in the URL, the SE stops indexing the site at that point. Here are a few tips to get your dynamic pages indexed.

The simplest and cheapest method to get your dynamic pages indexed is to link to them from a static page, preferably your site map. Although the SE can't index the whole page, it will index the majority of its content.

The other solutions involve software and scripting fixes that let search engines index their dynamic content. To learn more about these reconfigurations and rewrites, please consult your usual sources of information on the specific programming language. Dynamic pages, which

deliver content based on user input or other variables, can be more useful and responsive to visitor needs than regular static HTML pages.

Avoid Tricks and Deception

Google makes similar site quality recommendations to those below to help you avoid having your site removed from their index. Once a site has been removed, it won't show up in Google.com or on Google's partner sites. The same suggestions hold true for all the major engines.

- **Don't deceive your users by presenting different content to search engines than is displayed on your pages.** A common trick in the past was to include highly popular but irrelevant keywords in meta tags to get 'the click'. While that brought traffic to the site, the visitor was disappointed by results that had nothing to do with their search, and the engines appeared not to be able to produce relevant results. The search engines now pay attention to such tactics and will remove those using deceptive practices from their index.
- **Avoid tricks intended to improve search engine rankings.** This includes using hidden text or links, sneaky redirects; pages loaded with irrelevant keywords and the use of 'doorway' pages. Google also recommends against creating subdomains and domains with essentially duplicate content.

Those who concentrate their energy on giving their visitors a good experience through honest and fair practices, will be better rewarded than those who spend all their time trying to dupe both the engines and their visitors, just to get the clicks. They'll also sleep better at night than their deceptive webmaster counterparts.

Following the above guidelines will help the search engines find, index, and rank your site, which is the best way to ensure that you'll be included in the results of the major engines.

Turn Clicks into Customers

"While it is true that millions of computer owners are now online, it simply isn't true they are just sitting there eagerly waiting to send you money the moment you contact them (in fact it is harder to get someone to buy on the Internet than in a normal business environment)."

Corey Rudl, President
The Internet Marketing Center

The average visitor-to-sales conversion for a good affiliate program is between half and one percent.

In other words, you are achieving an average 'conversion rate' if you make 1 sale for every hundred visitors you send to a merchant's site.

Quite frankly, I think that's dismal.

You CAN do much better than that. My conversion rates average between 2.5 and 6 percent, and many are much higher depending on the type of product sold.

What're my secrets?

To start with, I consistently follow my own rules in 'How to Choose Affiliate Programs' above.

I always give the product or service 'added value' by creating content around it. I tell my customers exactly why I think it's a good product or service. If it has a few drawbacks, but I still think it's a good buy, I'll tell them that too.

As I mentioned above, I often purchase and test products before offering them to my visitors. I do this after I've joined the program, and when I can, I use my own affiliate link to buy the item. The price is then reduced by the amount of commission I receive from the sale. The cost is also a business write-off.

As a consumer, I give my customers enough information about the product to help them decide whether or not it is right for them, which gives me a big leg up on the competition.

How to Write Compelling Product Endorsements

Don't you hate being on the receiving end of a sales pitch? You're not alone. Most people do.

That's why the best way to promote your affiliate program products is to endorse them, honestly and sincerely.

In order for your endorsement to be persuasive, you should have personal experience with the product and be enthusiastic about it. Given those two factors, writing the endorsement then becomes easy.

That's why super affiliates almost always buy the products they sell. They study the product or service inside and out, backwards and forwards. They note all the features, both good and bad.

Writing the recommendation takes time and care. You need to carefully consider all you want to say and anticipate your readers' reactions. When you anticipate your visitors' concerns, you are able to address them BEFORE they become unanswered questions that cause them to click away.

The primary ingredient in a compelling personal testimonial is an explanation of how you **benefited** from use of the product or service.

The product feature list is secondary.

People want to know how the product will improve their lives.

For example, if you are promoting the latest health regime, emphasizing the point that it contains coral calcium is unlikely to convince anyone of its worth. What the heck is coral calcium?

Tell your visitors sincerely how it made you feel more fit and energetic and that will get them interested.

If you want to see examples of product endorsements in action, watch TV infomercials. Their writers are kings of the 'compelling'. Listen to them and learn.

Learn the Art of Copywriting

By now you've realized that the vast majority of an affiliate's work is about communicating, and ninety-nine percent of that communication happens in writing.

As an affiliate, your job is NOT about selling. It is all about 'pre-selling' as Internet guru Ken Evoy refers to it. To pre-sell effectively you have to use your words to capture and keep your visitors interest in the products you offer.

Not only will you be writing product endorsements for your site; you will be writing ads and sales copy for ezines and pay per click listings to entice folks to come to your site. You should also be writing articles about the benefits of those products for your own and others' newsletters.

If the prospect of all that writing sounds a little daunting, I understand completely. Thinking about millions of eyes judging all of my words was pretty scary when I started out.

Then I figured out that it really doesn't work that way.

When you realize that each set of eyes belongs to one individual who is interested in your product and what you have to say, the job of writing gets a lot easier. The process then seems more like talking to a friend about something you really believe in and care about.

That's what it should be about IF you've followed my advice up to this point and picked a topic and products about which you are passionate. 😊

Basically, you must write in a way that speaks directly to people and tell them how the products you sell will make their lives better. It's as simple as that.

There are some templates and rules-of-thumb for writing copy that can make your job even simpler.

If you have no previous copywriting experience, or you want to brush up on your skills, here are a few of the books and tools that have helped me along the way. Read one, read them all, but read as much as you can on the subject, because the better you get at conveying yourself in writing, the better your conversions will be.

Amazing Ad Copy Secrets - by **Marlon Sanders**, one of the kings of copy writing. (Just beware the of the audible 'roar' that greets you as you enter his site... and don't say I didn't warn you.) Marlon's style is assertive... some would say 'aggressive'. I look past his gruff, straightforward style and appreciate that Marlon really knows what he's talking about. **This is a guy who gets paid \$750 PER PAGE to write sales copy for other people.** In '**Amazing Ad Copy Secrets**' Marlon covers all the angles of how to write copy that pulls readers in, helps overcome their skepticism and gets them to take action.

→ <http://amazingformula.com>

Headline Creator Pro - This very cool software is by **Scott Britner**, and 100% of the proceeds will go to buy new hearing aids for his kids, Destiny and Tyler. Enough heartstring pulling, Scott's software really is an extremely effective tool for generating fabulous, eye-catching headlines in minimal time, and headlines ARE what your visitors see first. If your headlines don't grab their attention it won't matter how great the rest of your copy is, it won't get read. The software is based on the best headlines ever written. Give the **Headline Creator Pro** a whirl. You can't lose with Scott's 'over the top' 100% money-back guarantee.

→ <http://headlinecreatorpro.com>

Instant Sales Letters - by Yanik Silver. Forget knocking yourself out trying to come up with just the right words to write a sales letter. With Yanik's **Instant Sales Letter templates**, you can have an entire collection of profit-generating sales letters for your business, available to you exactly when you need them. Simply fill in the blanks and in just 2 ½ minutes you'll have professional sales copy ready for your site or your newsletter.

→ <http://www.instantsalesletters.com/>

Make Your Words Sell - by **Ken Evoy** and **Joe Robson**. **'Make Your Words Sell'** is one of the most popular ebooks about writing that I offer on my site. Anyone I know who is familiar with either of these gentlemen's work loves their easy-going style and readily apparent generosity of spirit. Don't think you're a writer? Well you are, and these are the guys who will prove it to you.

→ <http://myws.sitesell.com/webvista.html>

Net Writing Masters Course - by **Ken Evoy**. The **'Net Writing Masters Course'** is a **FREE** email course, that will show you how to become an effective 'e-persuader', as Ken calls it. Click the link to send a blank email and get the course now. What have you got to lose?

→ <mailto:twmswebvista@sitesell.net?subject=MASTERS>

Use these tools to become comfortable and skilled at the art of writing good copy. Your investment will pay off handsomely.

Credibility Pays

The biggest obstacle to selling online is lack of consumer trust, and judging by the amount of spam and scams flying about cyberspace, surfers are right to be wary.

Savvy online shoppers, however, know how to determine a merchant's credibility by assessing onsite information and asking pertinent questions.

Online merchants and their super affiliates anticipate their visitors' concerns and address questions before they arise, and in return are rewarded with sales and conversion rates much higher than their counterparts whose focus is elsewhere.

Here are 10 ways you can increase your conversion rates by building trust in your sites.

1. **Honesty:** Visitors should know exactly what to expect before they get to your site. Dishonest advertising wastes their time and your money. They'll leave without buying, and won't be returning any time soon.
2. **Superior Knowledge:** Affiliates with high conversion rates usually own the products they sell. First-hand knowledge lends credibility to their personal reviews and sets them apart from the crowd.
3. **Invite Feedback:** Testimonials from happy customers are an excellent way to build trust in your product reviews.
4. **Promote Only Quality Products:** Complaints, refunds and charge-backs hurt your reputation, as well as your revenue levels. Sell only high-quality products.
5. **Keep Design Simple:** Gratuitous animated graphics scream "Webmaster Kindergarten". Focus on your products, not fancy gimmicks.
6. **Show Respect:** Broken links, graphics and forms are frustrating. Pop-ups, music and noise are maddening. Respect your visitors' time and space. Make sure your site is free of errors and other annoyances.
7. **Be Available:** Make it easy for visitors to get in touch with you. A highly visible contact link on every page is usually enough to let visitors know that you are readily available.
8. **Expose Yourself:** It's a psychological fact that trust increases with exposure. Stay in touch with your visitors by sending them useful information through your mailing list.
9. **Go Beyond Expectations:** Affiliates often receive emails better handled by the merchant partner. Don't ignore those emails. Relaying the message promptly brands you as a professional with both the customer and your partner.

10. **Give Something Away:** Freebies are like samples at a chocolate shop. Few folks will turn them down, and your reputation goes up when they're good.

As you can see, gaining your visitors' trust is simple. Simply be trustworthy.

29 Ways to Promote Your Affiliate Business

Unfortunately, **'Build it and They Will Come'** doesn't work on the web. You have to actively market your site to get the word out and attract visitors.

Below is the list of methods that I use to market my affiliate sites. Each method is discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

- Google Adwords
- Pay Per Click Search Engines
- Paid Yahoo! Listing
- Google Premium Sponsorships
- Ezine Advertising
- Build an Opt-In Mailing List
- Publish an Electronic Newsletter
- Use Auctions to Promote Your Affiliate Products
- Site Submission Services & Software
- Joint Ventures
- Free Directory Listings
- Write Ezine Articles
- Search Engine Listings
- Group and Forum Postings
- Link Trading & Posting
- Use an Email Signature
- Start Page Traffic Network
- Refer-a-Friend
- Car Decals
- Business Cards
- Personalized Stationery
- Speaking Engagements
- Classified Ads
- Press Releases
- Trade Publications
- Wear Your URL
- Promotional Items
- Tell Your Friends and Family
- Happy Customers

9 Ways to Get Traffic Fast

Google AdWords

The fastest way to get exposure online is by advertising with Google Adwords. Ads start running within minutes after you submit your billing information.

With more than **150 million searches** on Google each day and millions more on Google's partner sites, Google is the #1 search engine used by surfers, and more importantly – online shoppers.

With that much market reach, you'd do well to take advantage of one of Google's two advertising options, **Google AdWords**. (The other option is Google's **Premium Sponsorships**, which is covered in a later section.)

Google Adwords are the ads you see displayed in small rectangle boxes running down the right side of the Google search results page.

Your ads may be shown on search results pages for Google, Google Directory, Google Groups, and Google's partner sites, including their partners' directory results pages. You may choose to have yours ads shown only for search results on Google, if you don't want to participate in the syndication program.

Google's current syndication partners include:

- America Online, Inc.
- CompuServe
- Netscape
- AT&T Worldnet
- EarthLink, Inc.
- Sympatico Inc.

Google Adwords has already attracted tens of thousands of advertisers, and for good reason. It is a quick and simple way to purchase highly targeted cost-per-click (CPC) advertising, regardless of your budget.

To create a Google AdWords ad, you write a description, choose keywords that are relevant to the listing, and specify the maximum amount you're willing to pay for each click. You only pay when someone clicks on your ad.

To save money, the **AdWords Discounter** automatically reduces the actual cost-per-click you pay to the lowest cost needed to maintain your ad's position on the results page.

Unlike Overture, there's **no minimum monthly charge for Google Adwords**, just a **\$5**

activation fee. You can easily keep track of your ad performance using the reports in your online account Control Center.

But AdWords Select's best feature is how it **rewards advertisers** who draw clicks by giving them **better positioning**. Your ad's position on the page depends in part on how often the ad is clicked on by users. So, the better the ad, the higher up on the page it appears.

Google Adwords also drops underperformers. If an ad gets less than a 0.5 percent clickthrough rate, Google sends the advertiser an email suggesting that the ad's wording be changed to improve its performance.

The Google Adwords campaign system is highly flexible. At the campaign level, you choose your daily budget, geo-targeting, syndication preference, and start and end dates.

For each campaign, there is the Ad Group level, at which you create ads and choose keywords. You can create multiple ads in an Ad Group that will rotate evenly when users search on those keywords. You can select a maximum cost-per-click for the entire Ad Group or for individual keywords.

I highly recommend adding Google Adwords to your pay-per-click/cost-per-click advertising arsenal.

→ **Google Adwords**

<http://www.google.com/ads>

→ **Google Groups**

<http://www.google.com/grphp>

Pay Per Click Search Engines

The second fastest way to gain exposure on the Internet is to buy keyword listings on Pay Per Click Search Engines.

How does pay per click advertising work?

Advertisers bid on relevant keywords and pay the bid amount each time someone clicks on the link through to their site.

The grand-daddy of pay-per-click search engines, Overture and its partners, reach 80% to 85% of all Internet users, receive more than 2 billion search queries per month, and appear on the Web's leading search sites including; Yahoo, MSN, Lycos, AltaVista, and InfoSpace.

Overture's minimum bid is \$0.10 and monthly minimum spend is \$20.00.

It always surprises me when I hear a newbie Internet marketer tell me that they haven't yet opened up a pay per click account, but are waiting for their site to get listed by the free search engines.

That approach worked several years ago, but it doesn't work nearly as well in 2003.

When I started my first online business, advertising online was free, easy and accomplished through the search engines. You submitted your site to AltaVista, HotBot and Excite, and 2 days later you saw your homepage on their first page of results. Traffic started flowing in, and so did the sales. It was wonderful!

But gone are those days, I'm afraid to say. You can now wait months for your site to get spidered by the free search engines, and end up 425th or 2,307th in the search listings. Even showing up 50th, won't bring you enough traffic in a week to buy lunch.

Do you see an option here? I don't! Except for pay-per-clicks, of course.

Pay per click advertising needs to top your list of marketing strategies. Only after you start getting copious amounts of traffic to your site, and making similar amounts of money, should you even think about spending time 'tweaking' your meta tags for better search engine placement.

There are now almost 500 pay-per-click search engines. I recommend that you sign up first for accounts at Overture, Findwhat and Kanoodle. These are the top 3 pay per click search engines in terms of traffic volume. Respectively, they enjoy Alexa rankings of 92, 1294, and 1,337.

Do it now. Open a pay per click bidding account at one of the ppc's listed below, and hear your site go Ka-Ching!

The engines that will bring you the highest volume of targeted traffic at reasonable prices are (in alphabetical order):

7Search

<http://7search.com/>

ah-ha.com

<http://ah-ha.com>

FindWhat.com

<http://findwhat.com>

Kanoodle

<http://kanoodle.com>

Overture

<http://overture.com>

Search123

<http://search123.com>

SearchFeed

<http://searchfeed.com>

Turbo10

<http://turbo10.com>

Xuppa

<http://xuppa.com>

Pay for a Yahoo! Listing

Are you surprised? Did you think Yahoo! listings were free? Well, they were, but are no longer. Commercial sites must now pay for their listings at Yahoo!

I think you'll find that **it's a small price to pay for the amount of traffic** a Yahoo! listing generates as the web's most-visited directory.

As the time of writing, Yahoo! charges \$299 (non-refundable) for their 'Yahoo! Express' expedited listing service, and \$600 for adult-oriented sites.

Payment does not guarantee inclusion in the directory. Payment guarantees that a member of Yahoo!'s editorial staff will look at your site, consider your suggestion to include the site in the directory, and respond to you within seven business days from the date that you submit your site for consideration. Payment also guarantees that Yahoo! will respond to your suggestion within seven business days, by either adding or denying the site.

If your listing is denied, you have the right to appeal and/or make changes to your site within a certain amount of time and re-submit without making an additional payment.

If your site is accepted, you'll be charged \$299 the following year to maintain the listing.

The expensive downside covered, it is well worth the money to list your site with Yahoo!

Why?

Yahoo! still has the Number 1 Alexa ranking. It's Top Dog.

That means it gets more traffic than any other site on the Web. THAT's the biggest reason 'why'.

Being listed in Yahoo's handpicked, human-compiled directory is one of the best ways to make sure that Google's (Alexa rating = 5) crawls and picks up your home page quickly. A link from Yahoo! will also improve your Google page rank. Even without the Yahoo! link, Google will find your page eventually, but if you are looking for lots of traffic fast, a Yahoo! listing is where it's at.

→ Yahoo!

<http://yahoo.com>

Google's Premium Sponsorships

Google's Premium Sponsorships are truly 'premium'. The current minimum investment is \$15,000 over a 3-month campaign.

If your advertising budget permits, **Google's Premium Sponsorships** allow you to purchase highly targeted advertising on the most relevant search engine on the Web. **No more than two enhanced text links appear at the top of the Google results page** whenever the keywords or phrases you have purchased are searched for by a Google user.

Google's Premium Sponsorships are charged at CPM, or cost per thousand IMPRESSIONS, and while some keywords can still be had for \$15 CPM, \$50 to \$75 CPM is much more common.

Assuming a clickthrough ratio (CTR) of 15%, at say, \$40 CPM, your cost just to get the customer to your site, is 26.6 cents per visitor. At \$75 CPM, it goes up to 50 cents per visitor based on a CTR of fifteen percent.

Depending on your average conversion rate and the price of your product, that could prove worthwhile... or not! You do the math.

→ **Google.com**

<http://google.com>

Ezine Advertising

There are hundreds of thousands of ezines published on the Internet. Placing advertising in ezines is a low-cost and extremely effective way to bring qualified traffic to your site.

Chances are excellent that there are many ezines published on a topic relevant to your site.

The **Directory of Ezines** is an excellent resource for quickly finding ezines targeted to your audience.

For a wealth of information about email advertising and to access targeted opt-in email lists where you can place your ads, check out the following sites:

→ **BestEzines.com**

<http://www.bestezines.com>

→ **Directory of Ezines**

<http://directoryofezines.com>

→ **E-zineZ.com**

<http://www.e-zinez.com>

→ **LifeStylesPub.com**

<http://www.lifestylespub.com>

Build an Opt-In Subscriber List

Permission email marketing works! Building an opt-in list is the most cost-effective and valuable method of marketing on the Internet.

This is what is known as ‘permission-based’ marketing. Because your subscriber has voluntarily signed- up or “opted-in” to receive your information, it allows you to:

- Offer products and services for sale to that subscriber
- Survey subscribers to gather information for new products
- Build a rapport with the subscribers

Studies have shown that permission email yields response rates that are ten times better than banners.

Once you have built a list of a few hundred subscribers, keeping that list up-to-date on an ongoing basis can be a complicated and time-consuming process. So, it is recommended that you use a professional “mailing list service” to keep on top of your list(s) for you. These services automatically handle all your signups, unsubscriptions, and bounces.

The biggest advantage to having a professional service maintain your mailing list is that it **protects you from spam complaints**. Most affiliate networks that permit email marketing of their merchants' offerings insist that you be able to produce evidence of subscriber opt-in.

Here are the two clauses from the affiliate network, Websponsors, 'Network Rules' relating to the subject of customer spam complaints and their Publishers responsibilities in that regard.

2.9 If Publisher conducts e-mail campaigns to its users, Publisher must, if requested, be able to supply the name, date, time and IP address where the consumer signed-up and/or gave permission to the Publisher to conduct such e-mail campaign. Publisher is solely responsible for all consumer complaints relating to e-mail campaigns conducted by Publisher. Publisher will respond to all consumer complaints in a timely fashion and shall immediately remove any person from its database who makes such request for removal. In addition, all e-mail must contain a functioning unsubscribe link which, when activated by a user, actually and permanently removes the user's e-mail address from the publisher's database.

2.10 ALL E-MAIL CAMPAIGNS MUST ONLY BE CONDUCTED TO PERSONS WHO HAVE GIVEN PRIOR PERMISSION! FAILURE TO FOLLOW THIS RULE IS A VIOLATION OF THIS AGREEMENT AND MAY RESULT IN FORFEITURE OF ALL PAYMENT DUE. REPEAT OFFENDERS MAY BE REMOVED FROM THE NETWORK. BY CONDUCTING AN e-mail CAMPAIGN WITH ADVERTISEMENTS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE COMPANY NETWORK, PUBLISHER REPRESENTS AND WARRANTS THAT SUCH CAMPAIGN IS CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRIVACY POLICY SET FOR ON PUBLISHER'S WEB SITE AND IN

ACCORDANCE WITH STATE AND FEDERAL LAW.

That type of clause is becoming standard practice throughout the industry, and right that it should! I detest receiving daily offers for Viagra, 'incredible' business opportunities and other topics, in which I have no interest, don't you? It's garbage pure and simple and wastes time and energy to click into the trash. The 'do unto others' rule is a good one to follow when contemplating the use of unsolicited email. The clauses above make it possible to lose your source of income, which should be really good incentive to play by the rules.

Having a mailing list service will also prevent having your ISP close your account down because you sucked up too much of their bandwidth by sending 30,000 emails to your subscribers.

To set up your opt-in mailing list, I highly recommend that you try out one of the following autoresponder and mailing list services listed below. They are inexpensive and will save you tons of manual labor.

Many affiliate marketers neglect to build their own mailing list, and are losing out in a big way. Don't be one of them. Super Affiliates ALL build their own mailing lists.

→ **Aweber**

<http://aweber.com>

→ **Get Response**

<http://getresponse.com>

→ **ProAutoresponder**

<http://rosalind.proautoresponder.com>

Publish an Ezine, eCourse or Both

Many Internet marketers invite visitors to join their mailing lists by offering a free newsletter.

Published regularly, a good newsletter brings visitors back to your site over and over again, exposing them to all the wonderful products and services you have to offer.

Use your newsletter to notify your subscribers about special promotions and sales held by your merchant partners.

It's best to link from your newsletter to a special 'sales' page on your site, as opposed to sending them directly to the merchant's site. That way you can test the effectiveness of your offers by keeping track of the number of visitors who visit that page via your newsletter.

I personally have my mailing lists set up to deliver a set number of messages after someone subscribes to my list(s). The 'pre-programmed messages' are a series of autoresponder messages that get sent to subscribers at specific intervals.

For example, my 'Singles eScene' opt-in list delivers a series of pre-programmed messages related to Internet dating. The first is delivered immediately after sign-up, and then another message in the series gets sent to the subscriber every ten days for the following fifty days.

What happens after the fifty days is up?

Well, I can also 'broadcast' messages to my list of subscribers at times and intervals of my choosing. So, if Match.com comes up with a great offer that my subscribers should hear about, I just blast a message to them at any time.

With 70,000 subscribers on that list, the effect is fairly immediate and always positive.

People rush off to the site to take advantage of the offer, and I just got a nice little bonus for doing not a whole lot of work.

Yes, you must build an opt-in subscriber list! Then you have to do something with it. Publish a newsletter, develop an 'ecourse' or do both.

Not building a mailing list, or allowing it to languish is allowing money to slip out of your hands.

Think about this...

Say you have 5,000 unique visitors come to your Web site in an average week. Even though they had an initial interest in your site's subject, the vast majority of these people will never be back, just because they will forget you at a later date, or won't remember how to get there.

Now imagine, if you had a free newsletter or course to offer them in exchange for their opt-in name and email address. At a sign-up rate of 10% you'd be getting 500 new opt-in subscribers per week, or 6,000 per year!

These are people who are giving you permission to send emails to them over and over again in the future.

Don't miss out on this powerful marketing opportunity!

How to Use Auctions to Sell Affiliate Products

Would you like to expose your products to 22 million people in over 100 countries? Yes? Then think 'eBay'!

Since 1995, eBay has hosted over 2 billion auctions. The site receives over 1.8 billion page views per week, has products selling in over 7,800 categories and over 40 million registered users. About 10 million eBay users visit eBay at least once per week.

That is a PHENOMENAL market, and one that a growing number of affiliates are accessing to promote their products.

But wait! Here's a word of warning before you rush off to start listing your affiliate products on eBay.

Affiliate products may NOT be sold directly on eBay's site. Be sure to understand the auction site's rules and regulations completely before you start to place listings.

This is directly from eBay's **Links Policy**.

Links from your About Me Page

You may link to your own Web store or Web site. However, you may not directly offer any non-eBay merchandise on the About Me page itself.

eBay does not permit its users to place the following types of links on your About Me pages:

- *Links that directly offer any non-eBay listing or merchandise on the About Me page itself.*
- *Links to other online trading sites or pages, including auctions and fixed-price formats. Learn more*
- *Links to sites offering the same merchandise for the same or lower price (including the Buy It Now prices).*
- *Links to sites offering merchandise or information not permitted on eBay*

On your About Me page, you may link to your own Web site or individual Internet store where you are offering to trade, sell or purchase your goods or services. However, you may not link to any page within online trading sites that offer goods from multiple sellers either in a fixed price or auction format.

About Me pages that do not meet this policy may be removed.

Despite the caution above, there ARE ways to use eBay's incredible market reach to promote your affiliate business.

For example, let's say that you sell health and fitness products as an affiliate. Obviously, you know a great deal about this subject, because you are a high-caliber, 'expert' affiliate who knows how to add significant value to all of your merchants' products.

So, you use some of your expert knowledge about fitness to write a report called '3 Steps to the Perfect Tush'. Within that report you've included your affiliate links and links to your main site.

Let's say that your digitally downloadable report sells hundreds of times at a dollar or two per copy. After paying the insertion, final sale and/or eBay store subscription fees, you still enjoy a profit.

With each sale you capture the buyer's email address and add them to your opt-in list or newsletter.

Within your well written report, your endorsements and affiliate product links continue to generate even more revenue for a long time to come.

Do just a little bit of work to write that report and you too can use auctions to increase your affiliate income.

Register to become a seller at any or all of the online auction sites listed below:

→ **Bidz.com**

<http://www.qksrv.net/click-1226911-4003868>

→ **eBay.com.au (Australia)**

<http://www.qksrv.net/click-1226911-5527089>

→ **eBay.ca (Canada)**

<http://www.qksrv.net/click-1226911-5462673>

→ **eBay.co.uk (U.K.)**

<http://www.qksrv.net/click-1226911-8318022>

→ **eBay.com (U.S.)**

<http://www.qksrv.net/click-1226911-5377629>

→ **uBid**

<http://www.qksrv.net/click-1226911-5590883>

→ **Yahoo!**

<http://auctions.shopping.yahoo.com>

Learn more about eBay and other Internet auctions from Ken Evoy, MD and Sydney Johnston through their **Make Your Net Auction Sell!** and their **Net Auction Masters Course**. The latter is an intensive 5-Day e-mail course that shows you how to start your own profitable auction business... and how to grow it super-big AFTER you empty your attic and basement.

→ **Make Your Net Auction Sell!**

<http://superaffiliatehandbook.com/mynas.html>

→ **Net Auction Masters Course**

<mailto:tnamswebvista@sitesell.net?subject=MASTERS>

Site Submission Services & Software

A keyword search on 'website submission' or 'submission services' at Google or Yahoo yields hundreds of companies offering to submit your site to the search engines for a fee. Many of these services say they'll hand-submit your site to hundreds of engines all for the unbelievably low price of \$9 - or for incredibly good value at \$999.

Who do you believe?

First of all, did you know that there are only a handful of important search engines, and that you can submit to these yourself for free? You will however need to submit regularly as search engines drop your site after a period of time unless re-submitted.

I've used **WebPosition Gold** for years. It is software that automates all my submissions. You buy it once and save yourself thousands of dollars in submission service costs over the long haul.

I recently came across the following warning on Google's site:

*"Don't use unauthorized computer programs to submit pages, check rankings, etc. Such programs consume computing resources and violate our terms of service. Google does not recommend the use of products such as **WebPosition Gold**TM that send automatic or programmatic queries to Google."*

Don't let that scare you. YOU choose when and to which engines **WebPosition Gold**TM submits your site. Moreover, the software does much more than just submissions. It generates HTML pages, analyzes your existing Web pages and gives advice on how to improve them for better search engine ranking. The software reports your positions on each search engine for each keyword you are targeting, tracks the number of visitors to your site, what keywords they used to find you and where they came from.

The software is still highly recommended by the experts at SearchEngineWatch.com, and these guys are the best of the best in search engine research and knowledge.

I suggest that you visit **WebPosition Gold's** site, check out all of the features and take advantage of the **FREE trial**.

→ **WebPosition Gold** <http://webposition.com>

You may also submit your site via the engines directly for a fee.

Inktomi® Search SubmitTM allows you to submit up to 1,000 pages for search engine inclusion. For a per-page subscription fee, Inktomi adds your content to its search index and refreshes it every 48 hours.

Alternatively, submit URLs for inclusion into the FAST AND Inktomi <http://www.inktomi.com> web catalogs through Lycos (<http://insite.lycos.com/searchservices>). Reach searchers on Lycos and HotBot plus all of the search engines that display FAST and Inktomi web results. Includes powerful online reporting tools to measure and optimize your campaign.

9 Ways To Get Traffic To Your Site For Free

Joint Ventures

Not until after I published and started marketing the first edition of the Super Affiliate Handbook, did I fully appreciate the value of joint venture marketing on the web.

To get the word out about my new book, I contacted folks like Allan Gardyne of associateprograms.com, who have huge lists of newsletter subscribers who are specifically interested in affiliate marketing.

After reading the Super Affiliate Handbook, Allan signed up as my affiliate, sent his readers a review of the book, and posted a short promotion on his homepage. Now every time someone buys one of my books through his link, we split the revenue 50/50.

That's a joint venture. I asked, he agreed, and we jointly share the benefit of our venture.

Actually, my joint venture partners (affiliates) sell far more books than I do on my own... which is the second benefit. These joint venture partners reach out to others who are interested in affiliate marketing, who in turn become partners and affiliates who sell more books, and reach more potential partners, and so on.

The whole process has a lovely 'viral' effect.

On the other side of the coin, I starting getting many joint venture requests each and every day since the release of my book. So many in fact, that I barely have the time to respond to them all, let alone investigate and act on those in which I am interested.

Realizing this as an overwhelming problem faced by Internet marketers everywhere, Ken McArthur and Sid Hale came out with an excellent solution called [jvAlert](#).

It is a private and exclusive group of top-level Internet marketers that are using this system. Imagine working directly with Jim Daniels, Yanik Silver, Marty Foley, Neil Shearing, Phil Whiley, Peter Twist, Charlie Page or Lee Benson on YOUR projects!

The quality of this group is what makes it so special, so members are only allowed in by invitation from another member. After being invited by Gary Knuckles, I signed up in a heartbeat. Within a few days of joining, Peter Twist contacted me to ask for an interview on his online radio show. Wow! Like Peter Twist wouldn't have known me from Eve before I joined [jvAlert](#). What a huge opportunity to promote my sites!

As an owner of the Super Affiliate Handbook, and therefore someone who is serious about making a living from the Internet, I'd like to invite you to join jvAlert. After seeing how easy and effective this system is, I think you'll agree with me - that jvAlert is the only way you'll do JV's. Visit the site and take the free joint venture email course through the following links.

jvAlert

→ <http://www.jvAlert.com>

jvAlert eMail Course

→ <http://www.jvalert.com/jvcourse.aspx?id=129>

Write Ezine Articles

If you don't have much money to spend advertising your online business, writing ezine articles is one of the most effective and least costly way to attract visitors to your site.

More people are using the Internet everyday to find information. To satisfy this growing quest, ezine owners who don't have time to write their own material are always looking for fresh articles to publish in their newsletters.

You may be cringing at the idea of writing articles, or writing - period.

However, writing a short “how-to” or “tips” article on a topic relevant to your Web site theme is no more difficult than writing a letter, or talking to a friend. Simply share good information that demonstrates your enthusiasm for the subject and encourages the reader to learn more.

The most compelling reason to write articles for submission to ezines is the amount you save in advertising. A single ezine ad can cost anywhere from a few dollars to thousands of dollars.

However, ezine article submissions are free. In fact, it actually pays for you to write and submit articles to ezines and newsletters!

You can add your byline at the end of each article, along with your personal bio and your site's clickable URL. Publishers who use your article are obliged to publish all of your information as submitted. Now, that's powerful free advertising for you.

Furthermore, the author's resource box, in which your byline is placed, is usually the size of a typical ezine advertisement. Better yet, your article is ten times that size. So, you've saved advertising dollars and earned ten times the coverage. That's great value for an investment that only cost an hour or two of your time.

Depending on the subscriber base of the ezine that picks up your article, the potential for new visitors to your site could be enormous.

For example, I wrote an article entitled '**10 Ways to Gain Visitor Trust and Increase Your**

Conversion Rates' for Allan Gardyne's Associate Programs Newsletter in October 2002. The appearance of that article in Allan's newsletter doubled traffic to my site for the next week. Because Allan archives the newsletters on his Web site, that article is *STILL* sending me traffic!

Onsite archiving has an additional benefit. As more of your articles and links to your site appear on more and more pages, your link popularity increases tremendously.

With the increased exposure and link popularity, your name becomes better known and your credibility as an expert in your field grows.

This effect becomes cumulative, as 'experts' are frequently interviewed for other publications which again increases their popularity.

More important than popularity in many ways, is the goodwill that you build by teaching and sharing your experiences freely with your readers. You also invariably learn more about any topic you write about, and knowledge is power - earning power.

Taking this proactive type of approach to the promotion of your site builds traffic faster, and beats waiting for the search engines to spider your site.

When your articles are published in ezines relevant to your site's topic, people who are interested in your subject matter read them. With your skilled and informative approach, interested readers become interested visitors, who in turn become motivated purchasers, and then repeat buyers.

Not bad, all in all, for an hour or two of work and nothing out of pocket.

Here is a list of ezine article submission sites to help get you started:

→ **Yahoo Groups**

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/article_announce
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/free-content>

→ **Idea Marketers**

<http://www.ideamarketers.com>

→ **Making Profit**

<http://www.makingprofit.com>

→ **Marketing Seek**

<http://www.marketing-seek.com>

Free Directory Listings

Look for directories that include categories relevant to your site's topic. Some may require a reciprocal link in exchange for your listing, while those that are still building their databases may list it for free. By all means, submit your site to the **Open Directory Project**, which bills itself as the largest 'human-edited directory' on the Web.

The other large Internet directories, Yahoo! and Looksmart, do not accept free listings in their commercial categories, so your affiliate site will not be eligible for a free listing at either.

→ **Open Directory Project**

<http://dmoz.org/add.html>

Search Engine & Crawler Listings

Search engine crawlers visit sites and automatically build listings, generally without the need to submit your site. To get picked up by the crawlers, you need to have good links pointing to your site. As mentioned earlier, the best link to get is a paid listing in the Yahoo! directory. Having that Yahoo! link, will almost guarantee you a visit from Google's spider, and a free Google listing by result.

Getting found on the major engines is important. In order to do this, your pages must be optimized and submitted individually. Page optimization and submissions are dealt with in more detail in an earlier section.

In either case, you may want to visit the following sites to submit your pages, or to learn more about search engine listings.

→ **AltaVista**

<http://addurl.altavista.com>

→ **AlltheWeb**

http://www.alltheweb.com/add_url.php

→ **Google**

<http://www.google.com/addurl.html>

→ **Inktomi**

<http://www.inktomi.com>

→ **Lycos**

<http://home.lycos.com/addasite.html>

→ **Teoma**

<http://www.teoma.com>

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Group and Forum Postings

Yahoo, Google, MSN and other major portal sites have discussion groups and clubs to which you can post messages.

I recommend taking time to research the groups you are interested in before posting. When you do post, make sure your message is not a blatant advertisement for your site.

Responding to another group member's question with valuable information is the best way to gain respect and credibility in the groups. If members want to learn more about you and your business, let them find you through your signature line that links to your website.

Watch Your Forum P's and Q's

Many newbies 'lurk' in forums, afraid to post their thoughts and questions.

That's SO sad and totally unnecessary. No one is going to bite, provided the forum rules are followed. Even if by accident you break one of the rules, chances are that you'll be politely reminded of the rules, asked to follow them in future, and given another chance to participate.

It's easy to enjoy most forums without undue embarrassment. Simply be sure to read and understand the rules of the forum in which you want to participate.

Below are some general guidelines that will help you from being banned from most forums.

Ensure that your topics are in the correct forum.

- Many forums have many different topic sections. Be sure to post your messages and questions in the right section.

Do not post:

- Questions or answers which have already been answered numerous times;
- Negative or aggressive remarks (i.e. Flames) directed towards other users;
- Anything not relating to the original topic;
- Any derogatory comments based on age, gender, race, ethnicity or nationality.

Have something to say:

- A message such as, "anyone in here?" wastes time when the number of viewers who read the post is taken into consideration. Make intelligent posts that have a purpose.

Obey copyright rules:

- Respect the law and do not post copyrighted work unless you have written permission from its owner.

Do not promote your own site, unless:

- It is specifically permitted by the forum rules;

Do not post spam:

- Spam includes advertisements, content deemed inappropriate or illegal, and flooding of the boards (repeated and/or multiple - read "unnecessary" - postings);

Ensure that your signature file:

- Remains a reasonable size;
- Does not contain excessively large images or annoying animations;
- Follows all the rules applying to the posts themselves.

Don't invade others' privacy:

- Don't post private addresses or phone numbers, including your own.

Do not make needless use of:

- Emoticons;
- Line breaks or ALL-CAPS;
- Nested quotes;
- Giant fonts;
- Swearing, derogatory terms, hate-speech, obscene or vulgar comments. (Probably the most effective way to receive a permanent or temporary ban).

Enjoy the Forums!

- If you have any problems, just make a post in the appropriate forum, and somebody will almost certainly be glad to help you.

There you have them. Fairly simple, easy-to-follow forum guidelines. So, get out there and participate. That's the fastest way to learn what you want to know.

A list of useful Internet and affiliate marketing forums is provided for you in the "Resources" section, later in the book.

Link Trading, FFA's & Banner Exchanges

Link trading, link exchange, or reciprocal linking is a web promotion strategy used by webmasters and site owners to increase "link popularity" as well as qualified traffic to their sites.

Page ranking in search engines is influenced by the link "popularity" of your site. The numbers of sites that link to yours, as well as the popularity of those sites determine link popularity. This is a relatively important factor as far as search engine placement is concerned.

You've probably seen sites with pages labeled 'Links'. These webmasters have listed links to their link trade partners, and the other webmasters have done likewise on their sites.

Links 'in' to your page from another site should include your site's name or primary keyword in the link, for better popularity.

Link popularity is improved when sites with a high page rank link to your site. A link from a site with a topic related to yours is more valuable than a link from an unrelated site. Your link popularity can actually be diminished if you trade links with sites that don't complement yours, or that have low page ranks or poor traffic numbers.

Having extolled the virtues of link trading, I'm now going to tell you about the disadvantages, which I see as being greater than the advantages.

A 'Links' page is an invitation for your visitors to leave your site without buying. Basically you are asking your visitors to go and buy at your competitors' sites.

Why would you want to do that?

I've rarely participated in a link exchange that actually brought worthwhile traffic to my site. Here are a few link exchange programs of which you should be aware.

Link Trading

Before pay per click came on the scene, link trading and links directories were all the rage. I used to spend hours writing and sending emails to complementary sites asking for link trades. I got my site listed in numerous dating link directories in exchange for placing their graphic on my site. Some insisted that I place their graphic on my homepage.

Note: Please don't mistake the links directories that are being discussed here for 'real' directories like the ODP, the Online Directory Project. The ODP doesn't require a reciprocal link to get your site listed, whereas these 'links' sites are in the business of trading links.

You will still see many sites on which the bottom half of the page is a blinking mass (mess) of reciprocal links graphics to links directories. **Tacky!**

Who benefits from these trades?

It's not the individual site owner, to be sure. Their site can't be located amidst the thousands of other affiliate sites listed in the directory.

Generally, the directory owner is also an affiliate of all the same programs that you are, and you can be sure that their affiliate links are encoded in the banners at the top, middle and bottom of their pages. Let's not forget the buttons on the side, or the 'Superior' listings on their site.

Some of these 'link exchange' directories have proven to be complete scams.

The worst of these in the Internet dating realm was a site called Cupidnet.com. They built a directory and got thousands of webmasters to link to their site in exchange for directory listings. At some point, and without informing any of their link trade partners, the site became an affiliate of American Singles, and the directory disappeared.

It really makes me wonder how many of those webmasters are STILL sending traffic to Cupidnet.com, thinking that they are getting traffic back from them in exchange.

FFA's

In your quest for traffic, you'll probably come across FFA, or Free For All, sites as well. They look OH so promising - 'Submit your URL to have your site appear on THOUSANDS of pages across our Network".

Webmasters list their URL's on the FFA page in hopes of generating traffic to their site. However, when you post to an FFA site, you get one line or a couple hundred characters to describe your site. Chances are good that your link will never be seen.

Don't get sucked in.

FFA's are nothing more than rotating lists of links.

Each and every time a site is submitted, the FFA site owner sends a confirmation email to the contact address provided by the listing webmaster.

THAT is the real purpose of the FFA site. The FFA owner collects email addresses so he can send out his advertising message. He already knows that you, the listing webmaster, are interested in getting traffic to your web site, so he targets his message in that direction.

In most cases, he'll offer to sell you a service that promises to submit your site to THOUSANDS of FFA posting sites and search engines... and all for the low, low price of \$59. Wow! In return, you'll receive THOUSANDS more confirmation emails from all those other FFA site owners.

Talk about being sucked into a vortex.

Go ahead; give it a try, if you still want to. Just be sure you don't use your best email address. Here's a warning to that effect that I found posted on an FFA site. That should tell you something.

Warning! Please do NOT use your primary email address for this posting - you will receive many confirmation emails, and be added to many email lists (you will be posting to the entire network!). We suggest using a "backup" email address, or a spare free email address for posting, so you won't affect your daily email use.

For an example of an FFA site, visit the link below. If you can decipher any of the listing titles despite that horrible font, my hat is off to you.

→ <http://www.free-for-all-links.com/>

Banner Exchanges

As the name implies a banner exchange allows you to display your advertising banners on member Web sites in exchange for allowing them to display their banner on your Web site.

But there's a catch. You must display two banners on your site so just one of your banners will be displayed on another member's Web site.

Hmm... what happens to the other fifty percent? Those would be used by the banner exchange service to display their own advertising.

There are 5 big drawbacks to the banner exchange scheme for traffic generation.

- Banner exchanges don't generate significant traffic.
- You have no control over the appearance of the other members' banners.
- You end up with unrelated material appearing on your site.
- Banners suck up good bandwidth and slow your pages down.
- Banners rarely get clicked on and their conversion rates are terrible.

My advice - don't even think about it. Banner exchanges are another waste of good time and effort.

New Hope for Link Exchanging

Ken Evoy has just come up with a scam-free way to make link exchanging work without the hassle of putting hours of work into email requests.

It's call the "**Value Exchange**".

You register your site as one that is willing to trade links with other relevant sites.

The **Value Exchange** then searches for other registered sites that relate to yours.

Ken's team keeps the "Exchange" free from low quality and questionable content Web sites.

Value Exchange is brand new, so the jury is still out on it's effectiveness.

Because the search engines love links between related sites, let's hope that Ken's **Value Exchange** truly gives us value for a long time to come.

➔ Value Exchange

<http://value-exchange.sitesell.com/webvista.html>

Rosalind's Rules for Linking

Essentially, try to keep all the links on your site productive. By 'productive', I mean that any link that leaves your site should be a revenue-generating affiliate link.

I can think of only a few circumstances when adding an unprofitable link to your site is warranted.

Here's one example. When I started my Internet dating review site, Internet dating was in its infancy. People were afraid to try it, and horror stories about dates gone bad offline were freely bandied about. To counter the bad press, I directed my visitors to one of the first online sites specializing in background checks - Whoishe.com. They didn't have an affiliate program, (and still don't!) so I didn't earn a commission for the referral if my visitors bought their product.

However, my rationale for putting up the 'leaky' link, was that if my visitors invested in a background check after coming to my site, they'd probably met someone through one of the dating services that I promote.

Basically, the only time you should put up a non-affiliate link, is if you consider the other site's information absolutely integral to your own. But keep looking for affiliate program products to replace that 'leaky' link as soon as possible!

In a nutshell - Links 'in' are good. Unpaid links 'out' are bad.

Use an Email Signature

Cheap but effective, an email signature line gets your message out every time you send an email.

My Sage-Hearts.com signature looks like this:

```
*****  
Rosalind Gardner – Sage-Hearts.com  
Online Dating for Savvy Singles  
http://sage-hearts.com  
*****
```

How to create a signature file in Microsoft Outlook:

18. Open Outlook.
19. Under the "Tools" menu, click on "Options."
20. Click the "Mail Format" tab.
21. Click "Signature Picker" at the bottom of the screen.
22. Choose "New" and follow the prompts to name your signature file.
23. Once you make the new signature file the default, it will be inserted automatically at the end of every email you send, thus generating referral fees without any further work on your part.

How to create a signature file in Eudora:

24. Open Eudora.
25. Under “Tools”, click on “Signatures”. This will open the Signatures box on the left side of your screen.
26. Right-click in the box, and select “New”.
27. A box pops open titled ‘Create New Signature’ and prompts you to “Enter Signature Name” in the form. Choose a name for your new signature, and then click ‘OK’.
28. A blank page opens. Type your promotional message and URL in this space. You have the option to be creative with font colors, sizes and types. When finished, click “File”, and then “Save” to save your new signature.
29. To set your new signature as the default signature, choose “Options” under the “Tools” menu, then “Composing Mail”. In the drop down box beside “Signature:” pick the name you chose for your new signature.

That’s it! Now every time you send out an email, your URL and promotional message will be included.

Start or HomePage Traffic Networks

If every hit counts, then you might want to consider start page networks as a way to get free traffic to your site.

Here's a quick run down of how these products work:

This explanation is not clear. What happens when we open our browsers? What do we see?

Sign-up and enter some basic information about the page that you want to promote. Set the Traffic Swarm code as your home page. **Earn hits** when you open your browser. **Earn more hits** when your friends sign up and open their browsers.

The more hits you have, the more times your site will show up on other members’ browsers. Your links are then displayed all over the network - consisting of **1000s of other webmasters and 1000s of other sites** like yours - and with Traffic Swarm, your site is also automatically included in the TrafficSwarm Search Engine.

Specifically, your links are displayed when other network users open their web browser, and when visitors leave THEIR website(s) via an exit "pop-under" window.

Sign up for an account at Traffic Swarm.

→ Traffic Swarm

<http://superaffiliatehandbook.com/trafficswarm.html>

Refer-a-Friend Scripts

You've probably seen these. You enter both your name and email address, as well as those of a number of your friends. Push the 'SUBMIT' button and a message gets sent to all of those friends telling them what a great site you just found.

How effective are these scripts? All in all, probably not worth the time it takes to put up on your site.

I had one on one of my sites, and over a period of 4 months, only 2 folks used the form. I like to believe it's because they were too busy enjoying the site otherwise.

11 Ways to Market Your Site Offline

I think that offline marketing methods for affiliate sites are for the most part a waste of time, and time IS money. However, if you have lots of both to spare, you may want to consider the following ways to go ‘al fresco’ with your site.

Car decals

No doubt you’ve seen many cars plastered with Dot Com decals, and made a mental note to yourself to check out the web site when you got home or to your office. How many times did you actually look it up? If you’re like me, the answer is ‘never’, which speaks to the effectiveness of ruining your Mercedes’ paint job with a Dot Com decal.

Business cards

These are highly effective marketing tools when you remember to put them in your wallet.

Personalized Stationery

Although it’s unlikely that you will need to have business stationery printed as an affiliate marketer, I do recommend that you include your URL on any and all letters that you write.

For example, your return address might look like this:

My Company Name
68 Someplace Avenue
Anywhere, State
USA 12345
(555) 444-2222
<http://myURL.com>

Speaking Engagements

Offer to share your knowledge by speaking about your area of specialization at seminars and clubs.

Classified Ads

Advertise your site in the classifieds section of local and regional newspapers. Do a small test first to see whether the return on investment (ROI) will be worthwhile.

Press Releases

Do you have an event scheduled or breaking news related to your site's topic? Send out a press release to announce it to the world! For example, a dating site might send out a press release about the numbers of singles who use the Internet to meet just prior to Valentine's Day. A well-written release can dramatically increase your sales, expose your company to the masses, and greatly enhance the image of your business or products.

Trade Publications

The cost to advertise in a trade publication or journal can be prohibitive if you are starting a home-based affiliate marketing business on a budget. But it might still be worth your consideration.

TradePub.com offers free magazine trials in the following subject areas:

- Biopharmaceutical
- Business/Finance
- Computers
- Construction
- Education
- Engineering Design
- Farming & Agriculture
- Food & Beverage
- Government & Military
- Graphic Arts
- Healthcare
- Human Resources
- Industrial & Manufacturing
- Information Technology
- Insurance
- Internet
- Mechanical / Machine
- Meetings & Travel
- Multimedia Design
- Network / Communications
- Purchasing & Procurement
- Retail Sales & Marketing
- Telecom & Wireless
- Trade/Professional Services
- Transportation & Logistics
- Utility & Energy

Browse through their extensive list of trade publications by industry, title, key word or geographic eligibility to find the titles that best match your interests. Simply complete the application form and submit it.

There is no purchase necessary. Publications are absolutely free to those who qualify.

You can't lose!

→ **TradePub.com**

<http://tradepub.com>

Wear Your URL

Have some hats or t-shirts printed with your URL and logo and wear them proudly. Give them away so others may do the same. There is a slight chance someone will see and remember your site's URL until they get home to their computer.

If not, don't despair. Wearing your domain name proudly on your chest may have the beneficial side effect of helping to improve your posture.

Promotional items

Become a sponsor at a conference related to your industry. Hundreds, if not thousands, of targeted consumers will be looking at your URL every time they pick up your pen or look at your mouse pad.

Tell Your Friends and Family

This method works really well...not.

I spent 2 years working on a major joint venture project. The day the site opened, I emailed homepage links to some of my friends and invited them to check out our wonderful new site.

Some visited immediately and we were soon the proud recipients of several rave reviews. Months later however, many still hadn't even seen the homepage.

While this method rates a 1 out of 10 in marketing terms, more often than not it ranks 1st in the 'ego boosting' department. By all means, share your accomplishments with your friends and family. With luck, they'll 'pass it on'.

Happy Customers

This is one way to market offline that is worth its weight in gold. Happy customers spreading the word about your site is always a good thing – online, offline or via ESP.

Marketing Summary

Here's my recommendation in a nutshell.

Bite the bullet and put some money into pay-per-click advertising to get the ball rolling. Then start writing. Write articles, and more articles. Put them in your ezine, and send them to other ezine publishers.

Think 'income' and 'profit', and then use the tools above to help you achieve both.

Manage Your Affiliate Business

How to Get & Stay Organized

Whether you have one site with five affiliate programs or ten sites and 50 affiliations, you need a way to keep track of your affiliate information.

Keeping track of programs joined through an affiliate network is easy, as you will have only one username and password to remember. Once you've logged into the interface you can access statistics and get banners and ad copy for all the merchants associated with that network.

On the other hand, most of the 'stand-alone' programs you join will have different login information. If you've got a good memory, perhaps you can memorize all that data, but the rest of us usually need assistance to keep track of all that information.

There are a few ways to accomplish this task.

I'm aware of only two software programs that are designed specifically for the purpose of helping affiliates keep track of all the information related to their business. I'll discuss those 2 programs first and conclude with the method I personally use to keep track of all my affiliate information.

My Affiliate Program 2000™

My Affiliate Program 2000™ is available as freeware from Pathfinder Software. After downloading, installing and opening the program you are presented with the 'My Affiliate Program 2000™ Affiliate File' window, which is already pre-filled with a number of affiliate programs. If you are already an affiliate of any of these programs, you can hit the 'Post to My Affiliate List' button and the information will be transferred to your own database of affiliate programs.

That's essentially what MAP 2000™ is, a database of information that you create by entering information pertinent to each program that you join. The program asks you to fill in the following blanks:

- Program Name
- Date Joined
- Contact
- URL
- Email Address
- My ID (username)
- Password

- 1st Tier Percent
- 1st Tier Sale \$ Amount
- 2nd Tier Percent
- 2nd Tier Dollar Amount
- Total Income So Far
- Notes

Once the program information has been entered, then you can add information about individual sales made and checks received. The program then keeps track of sales to date, amount collected and receivables.

I find the software just a little clunky to use, and the presentation doesn't give me the ability to add all the information I'd like to see. For example, I like to list and have easy access to a variety of affiliate links, as well as the cloaking URL's that I've set up for each program. Although I can use the "Notes" section within MAP 2000[™] to accomplish this, I'd prefer to have designated columns just for this purpose.

Also, I would never use the program to post my sales data because I already use accounting software that is compatible with my accountant's software. It would be a waste of time to post once to MAP 2000[™] and then again to Quicken.

Although this is little piece of software might serve you well; it's not my first choice. It doesn't hurt to look however, and it's a free download. You can get it at:

→ **My Affiliate Program 2000[™]**
<http://www.pathfindersoftware.com>

Affiliate Assistant 1.0

Similar in functionality to MAP 2000[™], Affiliate Assistant allows you to stay organized by storing contact information, affiliate numbers, passwords, URLs and more. It too will let you track payment history and payments due.

Affiliate Assistant, however, goes one step further with functionality that lets you compare and analyze your advertising campaigns. If you take the time to input collected data about clicks, sales, and page views, impressions, emails sent etc. from your various ad campaigns and enter all of it into the campaign manager, Affiliate Assistant will show you:

- Click to Sale Ratios
- Impression to Sale Ratios
- Amount Earned Per Impression
- Amount Earned Per Click

If you've never tracked your sales and ad campaigns before, this feature alone might be worth the \$27 that Affiliate Assistant would cost you.

But before you go rushing off to buy it, please note that the sales page has been seriously out of date for a very long time now. Right at the top you'll notice 'for Windows 95/98/NT/2000' in brackets. So, will it work with XP?

Another dated comment that has been on the site for ages is '**Just one simple use of this feature earned Chuck McCullough an extra \$765 this month.**' This month?! Does he earn an extra \$765 every month? And here's another one... '**Order by 19 November and get a free upgrade to 2.0 when it is released.**'

That's six months from the time of this writing! Then again, maybe they meant last November? Or November, 2001? I'd send an email first to see if anyone's still there?

If those peculiarities don't bother you, visit Affiliate Assistant's homepage at:

→ **Affiliate Assistant**

<http://affiliateassistant.com>

The Trusty Excel Spreadsheet

MS-Excel to the rescue AGAIN!

Really, by using a spreadsheet you can organize your data exactly in a way that makes sense to you. Add a column, delete a column or widen and narrow the columns. Add as many parameters as you like. Make the fonts any size and color that you see fit. Link your affiliate information spreadsheet to your conversion rate information spreadsheet and access either with a single click.

Here are the columns that I have labeled on my affiliate information spreadsheet.

- Program/Company Name (linked to the homepage)
- Username
- Password
- URL
- Broker URL (the URL used to refer other affiliates to the program.)
- Affiliate Interface (linked to the affiliate login page)
- Contact Name/Email/Phone
- Commission Info
- Remarks

I keep a link to this spreadsheet on my desktop and usually access it a few times a day.

The biggest trick is to remember to enter new data about stand-alone programs as soon as I join them. After you forget to make the entry a few times and have to search your email program for the data, entering it immediately into the spreadsheet will start to become a habit.

There you go. I saved the best for last. The scenario that gives you the most latitude and it's free if you have MS-Office or equivalent. How can you beat that?

Regular Tasks

To keep your business on track, there are a number of tasks that need to be performed on a daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly basis. Use the following suggestions as a guideline for creating your own maintenance schedule.

Daily Tasks

Email - As an affiliate marketer you won't get that much email related to your business.

Merchant partners may send out the occasional affiliate newsletter, but in my experience most don't communicate with affiliates other than to advise of new offers. Likewise is true of the affiliate networks, which will notify you of new merchants and those that have left the network. Keep your eyes open for emails with the subject line: 'Check Your Merchant Status'.

You won't receive much email from customers, as most of those will be directed to the merchant.

However, if you DO receive email queries about products or services offered on your site, respond promptly with either the answer, or an offer to redirect their question as appropriate. Both the customer and the merchant will recognize and appreciate your effort. Because the customer asked YOU the question, it means that she trusts your site, and is probably planning to buy the product.

If you have an opt-in email list (as you should), you'll likely receive 'remove' requests from subscribers via email, despite the opt-out link within your newsletters. Don't respond personally to the correspondent. Just quickly remove their email address from the list. Justified or not, spam complaints are something you don't ever want to get.

Site Monitoring - Is your site online? On a Daily basis type your URL into your browser's address bar, refresh the page and find out!

The danger in not knowing that your site is down comes when you are running a pay per click advertising campaign. The click costs add up whether your site is functional or not. If your site is down, you are paying for advertising, but no one is buying.

If that thought scares you, NetMechanic is a service that will check to see whether your site is online, every fifteen minutes, 24 hours a day. If your site is down, they'll notify you by numeric pager, alphanumeric pager, or email, so you can resolve your downtime problems immediately. Check out their free trial, which will check your site every fifteen minutes for 8 hours so you can see how their service works.

→ **NetMechanic**

<http://rosalinds.com/netmechanic.html>

Link Checks - Broken sales links are the bane of any affiliate marketer's existence. It's easy enough to make sure your links are working by regularly using one of the following tools. In many cases your HTML editor will have a built-in link checker.

→ **NetMechanic**

<http://rosalinds.com/netmechanic.html>

→ **Site Owner**

<http://www.siteowner.com/system/linkcheck.asp>

Check Statistics - When I first started out, I checked my stats hourly, and sometimes more often. Because I'm now so familiar with the income 'trends', I check only 'key partner sites' daily to give me an indication of how my business as a whole is performing. I recommend that you check your statistics daily until you've been at it long enough to know what to expect day by day and week by week. Simply visit the statistics interface for each network and individual affiliate partner and input your total revenues into Quicken or other accounting software. Using Quicken frequently will also keep you informed as to whether certain checks have become overdue.

Make Time for Yourself - I list this last in the 'daily' section, but it really belongs at the top of the list. A business that involves sitting at your computer for lengthy periods of time can lead to weight gain and repetitive strain injury if you don't take proper care of yourself.

I personally try to get my daily exercise out of the way before I turn on my computer in the morning. It's the easiest way I know to prevent getting 'side-tracked' by my business interests.

Weekly Tasks

Add & Submit New Pages - Add a new page of content to your site every week to keep it fresh. This will encourage your visitors to keep coming back. Be sure to submit your new pages to the major search engines.

Add & Submit Keywords - Always be on the lookout for new keywords and keyword phrases to add to your pay per click advertising campaigns. Jot down your ideas and then add them to your Overture, Findwhat and other campaigns on a weekly basis.

Research - Spend some time every week reviewing and researching the news in your industry as well as Internet marketing news. Learning about new methods and tools for doing business can save you time and money down the road.

Monthly Tasks

Publish Newsletter - Stay in touch with your site's visitors by dropping them a note or newsletter at least once a month. Share news and give them yet another reason to return to your site.

End of Month Statistics - Tally your income and expenses once a month to stay on top of your overall business picture. Enter data into your spreadsheets to see which direction your traffic and sales conversions are taking.

Quarterly Tasks

Launch a New Site - Diversification is the best way to hedge your bets against significant market upheavals. Events in recent years such as 9-11, the war in Iraq and the outbreak of SARS have impacted businesses online and off. When your business is diversified, you'll see that while some sales plummet during times of crisis, others will in fact increase.

For example, despite my fears of very poor sales following the events of 9-11 in New York, I was surprised to see that my sales of dating service memberships actually increased. I later understood this as peoples' need to connect and share their feelings about this horrific tragedy with others.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Always be on the lookout for profitable markets and great merchants with affiliate programs. Plan to launch a new affiliate site at least once every quarter to protect yourself against the vagaries of an increasingly unstable market.

Evaluate Your Site's Performance

It's a great feeling to collect affiliate commission checks from your mailbox and deposit them in the bank on a regular basis. Unfortunately, alongside those checks you'll find credit card statements and other bills for your business expenses.

You have to keep track that the amount of those checks always exceeds the bills, or no one will be happy - not you, or your creditors.

To stay on top of your balance sheet and make sure your affiliate marketing business stays in the black; you must pay attention to a number of different statistics.

To learn exactly how well your business is doing and track its trends, you will need your **Web site statistics** and **affiliate sales figures**.

Once you've collected and recorded all the relevant data, the numbers then get crunched and analyzed. In the final analysis you will learn exactly where your site is, and where it tends to be headed.

Stats to Track & Numbers to Crunch

Before you start recording and analyzing data, it's worthwhile to know what statistics you're trying to calculate - and why.

Here are the 4 questions that you want answered during your research.

1. What percentage of my visitors become customers?
2. What percentage of my sales are new or renewals?
3. What is my average revenue per visitor?
4. What is my average revenue per sale?

For many of the questions above, we also assess whether there has been improvement or declines in the figures compared with the previous month.

Let's deal with each question / formula in turn.

1. What percentage of visitors to my site become customers?

This percentage is known as the **visitor-to-customer conversion rate**, or simply, your **conversion rate**. When you hear other webmasters speak of their '**conversions**' or say something like, "That program converts at 1.5 percent", they are talking about their visitor-

to-customer conversion rate.

This is probably the **most important number** you will ever deal with in your affiliate business. It tells you exactly how well you convince your visitors to buy your affiliate merchants' products.

Average conversion ratios for affiliate programs range between .5 and 1.5 percent. Super affiliates often convert their traffic by much higher percentages. I promote several programs that convert at rates between 3 and 6 percent.

In the following example, let's say your site receives **30,000** visitors in a month, and **375** of those visitors became new customers.

$\frac{\text{\# of New Sales}}{\text{\# of Unique Visitors}}$	X 100	= Conversion Rate
$\frac{375}{30,000}$	X 100	= 1.25%

2. What is the conversion rate for each Affiliate Program?

This calculation is similar to the one above. The only difference is that we use the commission and traffic statistics gathered from the individual affiliate programs, instead of totals for the site.

Knowing how conversion rates compare between programs is useful when deciding how to direct your promotional efforts.

For example, if you discover that Program 'A' converts at 2% and Program 'B' converts at 2.5%, it might be time to spend more time and effort to promote Program 'A'.

$\frac{\text{\# of New Sales}}{\text{\# of Uniques to Affiliate Site}}$	X 100	= Program Conversion Rate
$\frac{375}{30,000}$	X 100	= 1.25%

3. How much is each visitor worth?

Understanding how much your site earns per visitor will help you determine how much you can spend on advertising to acquire new customers.

To learn how much revenue you earn per visitor, you need to know your affiliate commission amounts. Collect this data from each one of your affiliate merchant partners at the end of the month.

Recording the amount of commission you expect from each merchant also makes it easier to see if amounts are correct when your checks arrive.

<u>Commission Earned</u> # of Unique Visitors	= Revenue Per Visitor
<u>\$7,000.00</u> 30,000	= \$0.23

4. How much does it cost to bring a new visitor to your site?

This calculation determines your '**cost per visitor**'. To get your '**net revenue per visitor**' simply subtract the results of this calculation from your 'revenue per visitor'.

<u>Advertising Costs</u> # of Unique Visitors	= Cost Per Visitor
<u>\$2500.00</u> 30,000	= \$0.083

Collecting Data

Web Site Statistics

Each time a surfer requests one of your Web pages, all the details and files associated with that page are recorded in what is called the **server log**, which is stored on your host's server.

To access this information, your host may provide full web site statistics reporting, or just the raw logs. If all you get is raw server logs, then you'll probably want to use log analyzer software, as raw logs are very difficult to make sense of otherwise.

Here is some of the information you can derive from analyzing your Web site's server logs:

- Traffic data including **unique visitors**, **number of visits**, pages viewed, hits, bytes. These numbers will be broken down on a **monthly**, **daily** and **hourly** basis.
- Number of visitors by country of origin.
- Numbers of spider/robot visits.
- Traffic source IP addresses.
- The number of times each page on your site was viewed.
- Which pages are used as entry and exit pages.
- The number and percentage of hits by file type.
- The number and percentage of hits by browser type.
- The number and percentage of hits by operating system type.
- Whether visits originated from bookmarks, search engine, newsgroup, links from external sites (other than search engines)

Most good Web hosts give you access to your server logs. If you don't know how to find your server logs, consult your host's help files or contact them and ask.

If your host offers only raw logs, I've provided both free and paid log analysis (tracking) software solutions below.

Free Tracking Software

Many online companies offer free statistics tracking.

The downside to free trackers is that you must place code on each one of your pages to get complete data about your site. Within this code is usually a small, but noticeable, graphic that shows up on every page of your site. Many webmasters who use these free trackers add copious linefeeds to place the graphic far down at the bottom of the page, but the scroll bar tells all, and any surfer who has spent more than a few hours online, knows when they've reached the end of the page.

Curious surfers will scroll all the way down the page and click on the graphic just because there seems to have been an attempt to hide it. Unfortunately, many of these graphic links go directly to your statistics, so knowledgeable competitors will clickthrough to learn how much traffic your site gets, where your visitors come from and which keywords are being used to find your site.

Across the Web, there are many free page counters and Web site tracking services available. These range from simple hit counters to more sophisticated services that provide you with very extensive data.

Here are a few sites that offer good free statistics tracking:

HitBoxCentral - In exchange for placing a 468x60 or 125x125 pixel ad on your Web site, HitBox will provide you with their web traffic analysis service at no cost to you.

The statistics include:

- **Traffic** Hourly, daily, monthly and annual statistics for page views and unique visitors
- **Referrers** Learn what sites link to you and how much traffic they send, the search engines and keywords users search to find your site, and total traffic from bookmarks
- **Visitor Paths** See how visitors navigate through your site
- **Visitor System Information** Find out the browsers, operating systems and screen settings that your audience uses and their language, country, and domain

A paid version is also available.

→ **HitBoxCentral**

<http://www.hitboxcentral.com>

Extreme Tracking - This JavaScript-enhanced tracking service, based in Netherlands, provides every statistic about your site that you could possibly want, broken down by category, and offered up in a nice display.

Before moving to the server on which my sites are now hosted, I used **Extreme's free and paid services**, and was very satisfied with both. The only drawback to Extreme's free service is that your stats may be accessed by anyone.

You get:

- **Uniques** - Daily, weekly and monthly uniques, with highest numbers also reported for hours of the day, and days of the week.
- **Geo Tracking** - by domains, countries and continents
- **System Tracking** - by browsers, whether javascript enabled, operating systems, screen resolutions and screen color
- **Referrer Tracing** - source of last 20 visitors and last 20 by email, search engines, from usenet and harddisk.
- **Totals by Source** - website, search engine, email, usenet and harddisk
- **Totals by Search engine** and all **Keywords** used to find your site

→ Extreme Tracking

<http://www.extreme-dm.com/tracking/?home>

Tracking Software to Buy

If the prospect of placing advertising on your site, or having your stats available for the whole world to see doesn't thrill you, you can purchase tracking software that eliminates the ads and keeps your business private.

In addition to the paid versions of **HitBox** and **Extreme** suggested above, I also recommend that you take a look at:

WebTrends Log Analyzer - This is the premier entry-level traffic analysis solution for single-server web sites.

To run WebTrends you only need access to the log files that are created by your web server. You can run WebTrends on your computer accessing the remote log files.

Log Analyzer offers a broad range of features and capabilities including:

- **General statistics** - uniques, hits, page views.
- **Resources Accessed** - top pages, top documents, dynamic ages, & forms, top entry pages, top entry files, top paths through site
- **Advertising** - views and clicks
- **Visitors and Demographics** - by number of visits, new vs. returning visitors, top geographic regions, most active countries, North American states and provinces, most active cities
- **Activity Statistics** - summary for report periods by time increment, by day of the week, by hour of the day, by length of visit, by number of views
- **Technical Statistics** - forms errors, redirects, 404 errors, server errors and server error detail
- **Referrers and Keywords** - top referring sites, URL's, search engines, phrases and keywords
- **Browsers and Platforms** - top browsers, platforms and visiting spiders

There are many more free and paid web site statistics tracking software options available. Many of the paid options offer free trials.

Whichever you select, be sure that it gives you sufficient data in a format that you will find easy to use, because you'll be using it often!

→ WebTrends Log Analyzer

<http://www.netiq.com/products/log>

Affiliate Program Sales Data

In addition to information about your site's traffic, you'll need to collect information about each of the affiliate program products that you sell on your site.

You should already be checking your sales and commission information on a regular basis. In addition to number of sales and commission earned, now you'll also need to determine the number of unique visitors you send to the merchant's site.

If the statistics about the product that you sell is found through an affiliate network, like Commission Junction, be sure you gather information about the individual product, and not your collective Commission Junction statistics.

Recording Data

I use Excel to compile and record my site's financial performance data.

I use it because once I've input formulae to calculate monthly totals, increases and declines, and conversion rates, I never have to do that math again. After that, I simply enter the raw data, and the spreadsheet does the calculations.

You may use any spreadsheet you are comfortable with, or you might prefer to use a calculator to do the math instead. That's up to you.

To help you understand and visualize the statistics recording and analyzing tasks, I've included tables below with statistical data from 3 products that I sell on one of my affiliate sites.

The first step is to **record your web site statistics**.

Web Site Traffic

In the table below, I've input the total number of unique visitors to the site, and calculated the average unique visitors per day and per month, as well as the increase or decrease from the previous month.

Note: Changes from the previous month are not indicated for the month of January, as I haven't entered data for December.

To make these calculations more accurate and fair, I've divided the number of unique visitors by the number of days in the month to arrive at the averages. If I didn't do this, February might always appear to be a dismal month for sales, being between 8 and 10% shorter than the other months of the year.

To calculate percentage of change from one month to another, simply divide the second month's uniques by the preceding month's uniques.

For example: Feb **27626** / Jan **23839** = 1.16%

Note: When calculating affiliate product performance (detailed below), do NOT average out the traffic figures. In that case, February's lower traffic will usually be reflected in a similar decrease in the number of sales. Averaging the traffic out in that case would make February look VERY dismal indeed!

WebServer Stats	Jan	Feb	Mar
Unique Visitors	24634	25784	27907
Days in Month	31	28	31
Avg. Uniques/Day	795	921	900
Avg. Uniques/ Avg. Month (Avg./Day x 30)	23839	27626	27007
Increase/Decrease from Previous Month		3786	-619
% Change from Previous Month		1.16%	0.98%

Individual Product Performance

First we collect and record data from individual products to see how they perform from month to month.

Once your Excel spreadsheet is set up with the correct formulae, this becomes as easy as inputting 3 numbers only:

- **Clickthroughs**
- **Number of Sales**
- **Commission Amounts**

All the other figures are then calculated based on the numbers we enter in the form.

Below are examples of 3 different products for which I've collected and recorded clickthrough and sales figures.

Product #1	Jan	Feb	Mar	Totals
ClickThroughs	8768	7548	7209	23525
Change from previous month		(1220)	(339)	
Sales	147	121	112	380
Change from previous month		(26)	(9)	
Commission	2,698.22	2,187.49	1,993.89	\$6,879.60
Change from previous month		(510.73)	(193.60)	
Conversion Rate	1.68%	1.60%	1.55%	1.62%
Change from previous month		-0.07%	-0.05%	

Avg. Revenue/Sale	18.36	18.08	17.80	18.10
Change from previous month		-0.28	-0.28	
Avg. Revenue/Unique	0.31	0.29	0.28	0.29
Change from previous month		(\$0.02)	(\$0.01)	

Product #2	Jan	Feb	Mar	Totals
ClickThroughs	4647	7197	7328	19172
Change from previous month		2550	131	
Sales	34	42	45	121
Change from previous month		8	3	
Commission	988.17	1,712.60	2,302.02	\$5,002.79
Change from previous month		724.43	589.42	
Conversion Rate	0.73%	0.58%	0.61%	0.63%
Change from previous month		-0.15%	0.03%	
Avg. Revenue/Sale	29.06	40.78	51.16	41.35
Change from previous month		11.71	10.38	
Avg. Revenue/Unique	0.21	0.24	0.31	0.26
Change from previous month		0.03	0.08	

Product #3	Jan	Feb	Mar	Totals
ClickThroughs	6690	6791	7827	21308
Change from previous month		101	1036	
Sales	40	48	50	138
Change from previous month		8	2	
Commission	1,018.89	1,049.70	1,248.87	\$3,317.46
Change from previous month		30.81	199.17	
Conversion Rate	0.60%	0.71%	0.64%	0.65%
Change from previous month		0.11%	-0.07%	
Avg. Revenue/Sale	25.47	21.87	24.98	24.04
Change from previous month		-\$3.60	\$3.11	
Avg. Revenue/Unique	0.15	0.15	0.16	0.16
Change from previous month		\$0.00	\$0.00	

Comparing Product Performance

After evaluating how individual products perform from month to month, the products are placed side-by-side and their performance is compared.

This makes it easy to see that Product #1 is the best producer, not only in terms of commission earned, but also by its conversion rate and average revenue per visitor.

January	Product #1	Product #2	Product #3	Totals
ClickThroughs	8768	4647	6690	20105

Sales	147	34	40	221
Commission	2,698.22	988.17	1,018.89	\$4,705.28
Conversion Rate	1.68%	0.73%	0.60%	1.10%
Avg. Revenue/Sale	18.36	29.06	25.47	\$21.29
Avg. Revenue/Unique	0.31	0.21	0.15	\$0.23

February	Product #1	Product #2	Product #3	Totals
ClickThroughs	7458	7197	6791	21446
Sales	121	42	48	211
Commission	2,187.49	1,712.60	1,049.70	\$4,949.79
Conversion Rate	1.62%	0.58%	0.71%	0.98%
Avg. Revenue/Sale	18.08	40.78	21.87	23.46
Avg. Revenue/Unique	0.29	0.24	0.15	0.23

March	Product #1	Product #2	Product #3	Totals
ClickThroughs	7209	7328	7827	22364
Sales	112	45	50	207
Commission	1,993.89	2,302.02	1,248.87	\$5,544.78
Conversion Rate	1.55%	0.61%	0.64%	0.93%
Avg. Revenue/Sale	17.80	51.16	24.98	26.79
Avg. Revenue/Unique	0.28	0.31	0.16	0.25

Evaluating Month-to-Month Trends

In the following table, the total commission and traffic amounts of all products are added together, and the site's performance is compared from month-to-month.

Total commissions and traffic for the year-to-date are added up, and average revenues per sale and per visitor is calculated.

Given this information, we can see that although the actual number of sales decreased between February and March, as did the conversion rate, the site's overall performance is improving with increased traffic, commission and earnings per visitors.

We're definitely heading in the right direction!

Totals	Jan	Feb	Mar	Year to Date
Unique Visitors	24634	25784	27907	78325
Change from previous month		1150	2123	
ClickThroughs	20105	21446	22364	63915
Change from previous month		1341	918	
ClickThroughs/Unique (%)	81.61%	83.18%	80.14%	81.60%
Sales	221	226	207	654
Change from previous month		5	(19)	
Commission	\$4,705.28	\$4,949.79	\$5,544.78	\$15,199.85
Change from previous month		244.51	594.99	
Conversion Rate	1.10%	1.05%	0.93%	1.02%
Change from previous month		-0.05%	-0.13%	
Avg. Revenue/Sale	\$21.29	\$21.90	\$26.79	\$23.24
Change from previous month		\$0.61	\$4.88	
Avg. Revenue/Visitor	\$0.23	\$0.23	\$0.25	\$0.24
Change from previous month		(\$0.00)	\$0.02	

Calculating Expenses

In the table below, I've added up the site's expenses.

Advertising costs are added and totaled separately, then added to other costs such as our hosting and Internet connection, to give totals for the month.

Advertising/PPC Costs	Jan	Feb	Mar	Totals
FindWhat	235.55	217.34	198.36	\$651.35
Kanoodle	114.62	97.22	158.43	\$370.27
Overture	932.81	1018.33	1037.24	\$2,988.38
Total PPC Costs	1282.98	1332.89	1394.13	\$4,010.00
Expenses	Jan	Feb	Mar	Totals
Advertising/PPC	1282.98	1332.89	1394.13	\$4,010.00
Hosting	9.95	9.95	9.95	\$29.85
Autoresponder Service	10.50	10.50	10.50	\$31.50
Cable Modem	29.95	29.95	29.95	\$89.85
Total Expenses	1,333.38	1,383.29	1,444.53	\$4,161.20

Calculating Net Income

Once both income and expenses are calculated, net income, or actual earnings from the site can be determined.

This is the amount leftover that you can use to spend on that new Mercedes, um, AFTER you pay your taxes!

Net Income	Jan	Feb	Mar	Year to Date
Total Revenues	\$4,705.28	\$4,949.79	\$5,544.78	\$15,199.85
Total Expenses	\$1,333.38	\$1,383.29	\$1,444.53	\$4,161.20
Net Income	\$3,371.90	\$3,566.50	\$4,100.25	\$11,038.65
% Return on Investment	352.88%	357.83%	383.85%	365.28%
Unique Visitors	24634	25784	27907	78325
Net Income/Visitor	\$0.14	\$0.14	\$0.15	\$0.14
ClickThroughs	20105	21446	22364	63915
Net Income/Clickthrough	\$0.17	\$0.17	\$0.18	\$0.17

Summary

Pay close attention to make sure the programs you promote are turning a profit.

Don't hesitate to drop a program if you find that the conversion rates are low or have suddenly dropped. The company may have made changes to their site, or the affiliate program. Go and check.

While this may seem like a lot of work to go through to track your site's performance, it really is a worthwhile endeavor.

Once all your formulae are set up on your spreadsheets, and you've done the inputs a few times, you'll be surprised at how simple it becomes. In fact, you may find that eventually you look forward to 'adding things up' at the end of the month to get a clear picture of where your site stands.

It's the only way to really know in which direction you've gone, and in which direction you should turn to pursue a correct and worthwhile course.

How to Prevent Commission Theft

I used to lose a fairly hefty amount of my sales commissions to affiliate link hijacking.

How do I know it's a 'hefty' amount? Well, ANY money that is stolen from me qualifies as 'hefty'.

There are two types of commission thieves, consumers and other affiliates.

Consumers steal affiliate commissions by removing an affiliate's ID from the URL prior to clicking through to the site.

It baffles (and cheeses) me that consumers would deprive the affiliate of their rightful commission. As it costs them no more money to buy through the affiliate, I must assume that these folks are inherently mean-spirited.

How do they change the URL to cheat the affiliate?

Well, for example, my affiliate URL for the One and Only Relationship Network is:

<http://www.one-and-only.com/index.htm?AssociateID=6486>

A savvy, but mean-spirited consumer will see that URL in their browser status bar when their cursor is placed over the link.

To prevent credit going to my link, they could either type One and Only's main URL, <http://one-and-only.com> directly into their browser's address window. They could also right-click the link and then copy and paste it into the address window and then remove the AssociateID=6486 portion of the link before they clickthrough to the site.

Affiliates, who discover a product that they like through your affiliate link, will use the same techniques. However, they swap your affiliate ID for their own to get the commission when they buy the product. In effect, they are discounting their own purchase.

Responsible merchants have systems in place that don't allow this to happen, making sure that credit is given where credit is due.

However, most merchants do not, so it's up to you as an affiliate to protect your commissions.

To overcome affiliate commission theft, there are various methods you can use to try and beat the cheats.

Method #1 - 'onMouseOver'

The first method is to use an 'onMouseOver' script in your affiliate links. What this does is to show text of your choosing in the status bar when someone places his or her cursor over your link.

Here's an example of the HTML:

```
<a href="http://www.one-and-
only.com/index.htm?AssociateID=6486"
onMouseOver="window.status='One and Only'; return true "
onMouseOut="window.status=''; return true ">One and
Only</a>
```

In this case, when the cursor is over my One and Only link, the status bar window displays 'One and Only'.

Unfortunately, your affiliate link can still be seen when it's right-clicked.

Method #2 - Disable Right-Click

Here's the script that that pops a message when someone uses right-click to try and see your link coding.

Put the following script in the Head of your page:

```
<script language="Javascript1.2">

// Set the message for the alert box
am = "This function is disabled!";

// do not edit below this line
// =====
bV = parseInt(navigator.appVersion)
bNS = navigator.appName=="Netscape"
bIE = navigator.appName=="Microsoft Internet Explorer"

function nrc(e) {
  if (bNS && e.which > 1){
    alert(am)
    return false
  } else if (bIE && (event.button >1)) {
    alert(am)
    return false;
  }
}
document.onmousedown = nrc;
if (document.layers) window.captureEvents(Event.MOUSEDOWN);
if (bNS && bV<5) window.onmousedown = nrc;

</script>
```

To change the message "This function is disabled!", simply replace it with whatever text you prefer in the script above.

Once again, this isn't a perfect method. To see the link coding on a right-click disabled page, all one needs to do is use "View Source" and look at the HTML page source.

Method #3 - Affiliate Link Cloaking Software

None of these was foolproof however. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to find the links hidden by redirection scripts or right-click disablers.

However, the solution is finally at hand!

Within 5 minutes of buying and trying this new software, I was so pleased to finally have the problem beat that I was pretty much jumping up and down in my seat.

It is extremely easy to use.

You simply input the affiliate link that you want to hide, name and save the page (i.e. cloaker.html), and then upload it to your server.

Furthermore, when using other methods to try and hide affiliate links, your affiliate ID may still show up in the address window of the browser. With this software, it looks like you sent your visitor to a page on your site.

This software is extremely good value for the money. You could easily recoup the cost of this program in less than a day. Think how much more money you'll have in a week, a month or a year by preventing commission theft.

Don't kid yourself, if you are making affiliate sales, someone is stealing your money. And now you CAN stop them.

Check out the best solution now at:

➔ **Affiliate Link Cloaker**

<http://affiliatelinkcloaker.com>

25 Avoidable Mistakes

We all make mistakes, which is nothing to be ashamed of or worried about. But many mistakes can easily be avoided when we learn from the mistakes of others.

Each of the examples below has been repeated many, many times by new and experienced marketers. Super affiliates have learned NOT to make the mistake of repeating the following errors.

1. **Spam** - Spam is unsolicited email. As well as not asking to receive it, the recipient has every right to contact your ISP or the merchant involved in the offer, both of which will likely terminate their association with you immediately. Watch out for unrealistic email promotions that offer deals for 'leads', i.e. \$99.95 for 500M emails. Sending email to those addresses is spamming pure and simple.
2. **Posting Ads on Forums** - Akin to spamming, posting advertising on message boards gets the poster banned. Forums are excellent sources of valuable information about Internet and affiliate marketing. Avoid acting in ways that upset the board owners.
3. **No Market Research** - As pretty and informative as a site might be, trying to sell products that people don't want is a futile endeavor. Test the waters before investing time and money into a new project.
4. **Using Merchant Advertising Copy** - Successful affiliates set themselves apart from other affiliates promoting the same products. When you use advertising copy prepared by the merchants you're not giving your visitors any new information.
5. **Copyright Infringement** - How would you feel if you found an exact copy of your site on someone else's domain? All of your hard work, and they're profiting from its theft. No doubt you'd be angry and wanting to put them out of business post haste. With that in mind, treat others' work with the same respect. Always ask permission to use graphic images or text found on another site.
6. **Submitting to FFA's** - There are several primary drawbacks to submitting sites to Free For All sites. Your site will never get seen, so taking the time to post is a waste of time. Worse, because most FFA's have such low rankings, it will drag your ranking down with it by association. Bad move.
7. **SHOUTING** - Other than using caps to give emphasis to a few words within an email or on a web page, refrain from overuse of caps. Using all capital letters in text or correspondence is symbolic of shouting, and shouting at people just makes them leave. Besides, you'll definitely look like a newbie.
8. **Slow or No Response to Visitor eMails** - If a visitor takes the time to send a question by email to an affiliate, and that affiliate doesn't reply in a timely manner, the visitor will likely go somewhere else for their answer and will become someone else's customer.

9. **Overuse of Pop-Ups** - Getting hit by multiple pop-ups is annoying. Many surfers will choose to close their browser completely rather than click 'x' 20 times. No browser - no sale.
10. **Using Free Webhosts & Free Email Accounts** - How confident do you feel buying products from someone who won't pay \$6.95 to register their own domain? Using free hosts and email accounts looks cheesy and loses sales.
11. **No Site Outline** - As the old saying goes, 'Fail to plan, plan to fail'. Without a map the journey into unknown territory will take much longer, cost more money and may end elsewhere than intended. Simplify the project by having a plan.
12. **No Opt-in Newsletter** - Without an opt-in list, your visitors come, and then they go. You have no way to contact them again. Those who sign up to receive your newsletters or ads are telling you that they're interested in the products you offer. That's like having a license to print money!
13. **Keeping Poor or No Records** - Did that check from XYZ Company arrive? Was the amount correct? If record keeping is less than accurate, you might never know. Don't get cheated - keep track of all your business activities.
14. **Building a Mall** - A 'mall' site is best used as a central hub to send visitors to your other themed domains. As a main or only site, unfocused mall sites don't get traffic from the engines, and they don't convert well to sales. Highly focused theme sites attract traffic AND sales.
15. **Pay to Advertise Offline** - Generally a waste of money. Most people don't jump off the couch and run to their computer to type in a URL that they've seen in the newspaper or magazine they were reading.
16. **Banner Ads Farming** - Informative text results in purchases. Lengthy pages of animated graphic banners ads simply soak up bandwidth.
17. **Competition Bashing** - Speaking ill of others only gives the basher a bad reputation. Mind your own business and do your own business.
18. **Advertising Product Prices** - Prices change all the time. With the exception of including prices within an ezine or newsletter, product prices do not belong on your site. If the price has changed, the inconsistency will cause the visitor to question everything else that he or she reads about the product.
19. **Time Sensitive Advertising** - Banners or text links that expire are guaranteed to eventually send your visitor to a broken link or show a broken graphic on your page. Time sensitive advertising is best used only in email advertising campaigns.
20. **'Leaky' Links** - Do you just take money out of your wallet and throw it into the wind? That's exactly what you are if doing if you pay to bring visitors to your site, then send them to another site through anything other than an affiliate link that pays.

21. **Affiliate Links on the Homepage** - It's like showing visitors in the front door and immediately out the back. Give them a chance to browse, sign up for your newsletter and decide that they'd like to come back to your place before introducing them to your very attractive friends.
22. **Doing it All Yourself** - Jack of all trades and master of none. Save time and avoid frustration in areas that don't interest you by hiring someone who is an expert.
23. **Not Investing in Education** - Technology changes with amazing speed. To keep up on this rapidly evolving industry, you must invest time and money in research. The investment is a tax write-off, and will pay you back many times over in additional revenue.
24. **Failing to Act** - What doesn't get started, doesn't get done. It's true that the first step is the hardest, but if you never act, you'll never know and enjoy the incredible rewards waiting just for you!
25. **No Persistence** - As Rome wasn't build in a day, don't expect overnight riches from the Net. Enjoy the process, know that some days will be more challenging than others and keep at it. Persistence is the single most important factor in determining success online or off. Be persistent and be successful!

Grow Your Business

How Much is Your Effort Worth?

It's a sad fact that as your advertising costs and other Internet business expenses go up, your net profit on affiliate program commissions will unfortunately, and invariably, go down.

That is, unless you do something about it.

Simply because a 15 or 20% commission rate is posted on the affiliate section of a site, doesn't mean that rate is written in stone.

This is where it pays to have a personal relationship with the affiliate manager. If you've proven yourself as a valuable affiliate who sends LOTS of traffic and generates LOTS of revenue, with whom the merchant partner likes to do business, most often they will be willing to negotiate a higher commission structure for you.

Affiliate program management software allows merchants to set individual commissions. Here are a few ways to entice managers to get in there and tweak yours up a notch or five.

Ask and You Shall Receive

Dating service affiliate managers often email and ask me to review and list their services on my dating service review sites.

When I receive these requests, I immediately visit the site and quickly look over the site to make sure that it appears professional, attractive, and suitable for my audience.

My next step is to visit their affiliate home page to check their commission rates and program specifications. Unfortunately, more often than not, I find that the commission rates are simply too low for me to bother listing their site.

However, I don't just click away and forget the site.

Regardless of whether or not I liked the site, the product or the program, I will respond, provided that their email was personalized.

If I liked both the site and the product, I tell the owner or affiliate manager that I think they've got an excellent service that might be eligible for inclusion on my site, if they are willing to raise

their commission rates. I then specify the minimum terms that I am willing to accept and leave the ball in their court.

Half the time, I don't hear back from them.

On the other hand, those who understand that earning fifty percent of my sale is better than 90 percent of nothing are usually very happy to accept my terms.

From that point, we're well on our way to building a happy, hopefully long-term, relationship.

Making Amends

I recently had a call from a merchant partner asking me to send more traffic to one of their niche dating sites.

She cited that my conversions from unique visitor to free member signup for that site were in the 40 percent range, which is a very high conversion rate, and that we would both benefit from increased traffic.

However, despite the high conversion rate, I didn't want to make much more effort with this program as it pays per free member signup, rather than a percentage of actual sales. I usually don't sign up for 'per lead' programs, but the company didn't offer a percentage of sales option. I signed up for it only because it was one of very few in that specific niche. I use the program as inducement to get folks to my site, but once there, I try to direct my visitors' attention to my more profitable options.

During our conversation, the affiliate manager pointed out that at 20 percent, my free-to-paid member conversions were also very high, and that I should consider joining their percentage program.

I was shocked. That was the first time I'd heard that they even offered a percentage of sales option for that program. I asked when they made that change, and was told that it had been in place for a few months. I asked why the affiliates hadn't been informed of this improvement. She told me that no notice had been sent because they were busy and under-staffed.

I did a quick scan of my sales statistics while we were still on the phone, and saw that my commissions were more than \$600 less than they would have been, had I been signed up for the percentage program.

Now I was choked. How can a company cheat me out of money then ask me to send them more traffic?

I may be blonde, but I'm not dumb.

I bluntly told the manager that it wasn't fair to use their staffing situation as an excuse to cheat their affiliates out of commissions, and that I would stop sending traffic to the program altogether, unless amends were made.

Sure enough, she agreed to switch me over to the percentage program immediately, and to send me a check for the more than \$600 commission shortfall.

Being honest and stating exactly how their actions had affected me was a risk, but it proved to be a risk worth taking.

I'm now happy to send them all the traffic I can deliver.

Prove Yourself First

If you find an excellent product that you know you can sell, it sometimes makes good sense to sign up for the affiliate program despite low commission rates in the hope that your performance will lead to a higher rate.

You would promote the product for a few months, and during that time establish a friendly working relationship with the affiliate manager.

After proving yourself as a webmaster who knows how to drive high traffic volume and convert visitors to sales, ask the affiliate program manager to raise your commission rates. Be specific, and ask for a set dollar amount or percentage of the sale.

The worst that can happen is that the manager denies your request, in which case you may choose to drop the program, or seriously restrict traffic to their site.

In many cases, when valued affiliates drop programs or restrict traffic, affiliate managers quickly respond by negotiating better deals for those affiliates.

The key here is to prove your value as an affiliate first, then ask the company to acknowledge that value in monetary terms. It's called building leverage.

The good companies always will compensate properly, and well, there are enough good companies that you don't need to deal with those that don't value your true worth.

Summary

Strive for excellence in all your affiliate endeavors, and demand that you be compensated appropriately for your efforts.

It also pays to have your figures handy so that you can do the math quickly while having important discussions with affiliate program managers.

Forums: Participate & Learn

Forums are an area of the Internet where particular topics are discussed. This is typically a message board where members post messages for the entire group to read.

While there are thousands of forums related to affiliate and Internet marketing on the Web, only a few are posted to daily on relevant topics. I've listed those that I find most useful below in alphabetical order.

The number in brackets beside each name (i.e. (1230)) is the Alexa rating taken in February 2003. Where no Alexa rating is mentioned, the site uses a service like Network 54 to host their forum. Alexa ratings on these sites apply to traffic received by the overall service, not the individual forums, so I left them out.

Most forums require that you agree to their rules and register as a member before they'll allow you to post. Don't restrict yourself to just the forums listed below.

If and when you find a new forum that looks interesting, be sure to check the dates of the latest postings, the number of responses to each posting and for the general absence of advertising material within the posts themselves.

Recent posting dates and numerous responses indicate an active community, and good forums use moderators to prevent blatant advertising by forum members.

Affiliate-Talk (9638)

Discussions on how to profit from affiliate programs. I've seen Phil Wiley, Jason Anderson, and Honor Hart amongst others participating on this one.

→ <http://www.ozemedia.com/bbs>

Anthony Blake Online - Entrepreneurial Success Forum (2672)

Variety of entrepreneurial topics in a continuous thread presentation from the homepage. Search options available and preferences can be set.

→ <http://www.ablake.net/forum>

Associate Programs Forum (3774)

A good source of information about affiliate programs from those who use them. This is Allan Gardyne's (associateprograms.com) forum. The only downside I found is that the Discus forum software doesn't attach the year in which a posting was made on the main page, nor the number of responses to each post. On the upside, Allan frequently shares sound advice in his own inimitable, levelheaded style.

→ <http://associateprograms.com/discus>

CyberMarketing InfoBoard

Jim Daniel's BizWeb2000.com forums. Post questions about marketing online and assist other businesses in need of help.

→ <http://www.network54.com/Hide/Forum/184615>

Direct Marketing Review (16937)

Klaus Dahl's discussion board on how to start and run a home-based information products business by creating and self-publishing your own information products - both off-line and online.

→ <http://www.klausdahl.com/forum>

GeekTalk (4707)

A friendly Community where "newbies" and "experts" share tips, ask questions, and network.

→ [GeekTalk](#)

JimWorld (8393)

Well-organized, nicely presented forums. 30,000 members actively discuss the issues surrounding every aspect of search engine marketing, Internet advertising and website promotion, programming, and all webmaster related subjects.

→ <http://jimworld.com/forums/index.html>

ReveNews (42,625)

ReveNews Opinion is the place for sharing your experiences in the affiliate program trenches and to learn from the experience of others. Well, it USED to be. As you can see by the Alexa rating, ReveNews has taken a big traffic dive of late. Still, there are recent and fairly regular posts being made. The site also has a selection of excellent articles related to affiliate marketing.

→ <http://www.revenews.com/opinion/discuss.cgi>

Web Marketing & E-Commerce Forum (6227)

Not too busy on the affiliate program side of the forum, but a great overall resource for web marketers by Ralph Wilson of Wilsonweb.com

→ <http://www.wilsonweb.com/cgi-bin/ubb/ultimatebb.cgi>

Forums are excellent places to learn about affiliate and Internet marketing from others and to share your own knowledge. So, get in there, ask questions and speak up!

Resources

Glossary of Terms

The Internet brings with it a language all its own. This glossary explains the meaning of the terms most commonly used. Many of these definitions rely on other terms for their explanation. Terms defined elsewhere are in italics.

A

Above the Fold: Once a web page has loaded, the part that is visible is said to be ‘above the fold’.

Adware: Also known as "spyware", a program hidden within free downloaded software that transmits user information via the Internet to advertisers.

Affiliate: A web site owner that promotes a merchant’s products and/or services, earns a commission for referring clicks, leads, or sales.

Affiliate Agreement: Terms that govern the relationship between a merchant and an affiliate.

Affiliate Program: Any arrangement through which a merchant pays a commission to an affiliate for generating clicks, leads, or sales from links located on the affiliate's site. Also known as associate, partner, referral, and revenue sharing programs.

Affiliate Program Directory: Information about a collection of affiliate programs. May include information about commission rate, number of affiliates, and commission structure.

Affiliate Program Manager: The person responsible for administering an affiliate program. Duties should include maintaining regular contact with affiliates, program marketing and responding to queries about the program.

Affiliate Solution Provider: Company that provides the software and services to administer an affiliate program.

Affiliate URL or Link: Special code in a graphic or text link that identifies a visitor as having arrived from a specific affiliate site.

American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII): The standard for the code numbers used by computers to represent all the upper and lower-case Latin letters, numbers, punctuation, etc. There are 128 standard ASCII codes, each of which can be represented by a 7 digit binary number: 0000000 through 1111111.

Applet: A small Java program embedded in an HTML page.

Associate: Synonym for affiliate.

Autoresponder: An email robot that sends replies automatically, without human intervention. For example, if you had a page of marketing information, you could ask prospects to send email to "info@yourname.com," the address of your autoresponder. The autoresponder will automatically email the person your information document. Many autoresponders will, at the same time, send an email to you, listing the requester's address and the document they requested. This is an important tool for conducting online commerce.

B

Bandwidth: How many bits-per-second are sent through a connection. A full page of text is about 16,000 bits.

Banner Ad: Advertising in the form of a graphic image.

Bit (Binary DigIT): A bit is the smallest unit of computerized data. It is a single digit number, either a 1 or a zero.

Bits-Per-Second (bps): A measurement of how fast data is moved from one place to another. A 56.6 modem can move 56,600 bits per second...but usually doesn't!

Browser: A program that allows you to access and read hypertext documents on the World Wide Web.

C

CGI: Common Gateway Interface programs that perform certain functions in connection with your HTML documents. For example, a common CGI script is a counter, which keeps track of the number of people who access your home page. Many CGI scripts are available for free use on the World Wide Web. Always check with your webmaster before using a new CGI script. You can often see that a CGI script is being used when you see "cgi-bin" in the URL.

Cgi-bin: A directory on a web server in which CGI programs are stored.

Charge Back: An incomplete or invalid sales transaction that results in an affiliate commission deduction.

Click through: When a user clicks on a link and arrives at a Web site.

Click-Through Ratio (CTR): Percentage of visitors who clickthrough to a merchant's Web site.

Client: A software program used to contact and obtain data from a software program on another computer. For example, the email program Eudora is an email 'client'.

Cloaking: Hiding of page code content.

Commission: Also known as a bounty or referral fee, the income an affiliate is paid for generating a sale, lead or click-through to a merchant's web site.

Co-branding: Where affiliates are able include their own logo and/or colors on the merchant's site.

Contextual Link: Placement of affiliate links within related text.

Conversion: When one of your visitors makes a purchase on the merchant's site... i.e. converts from 'visitor' to 'buyer'.

Conversion Rate: The percentage of visits to your site that convert to a sale. I.e. If 1 person in every hundred visitors to your site makes a purchase, then your conversion rate is 1:100 or 1 percent.

Comment Code: HTML tags used to hide text and code scripting from browsers.

Cookie: A cookie is a piece of information sent by a Web Server to a Web Browser that the Browser software is expected to save and to send back to the Server whenever the browser makes additional requests from the Server. You may set your browser to either accept or not accept cookies. Cookies can contain user preferences, login or registration information, and/or "shopping cart" information. When a cookie browser sends a request to a Server, the Server uses the information to return customized information.

Cost per Acquisition (CPA): The amount you pay to acquire a customer.

Cost per Click (CPC): The amount you pay when a surfer clicks on one of your listings.

Cost Per Thousand (CPM): The amount you pay per 1,000 impressions of a banner or button.

Creative - The promotional tools advertisers use to draw in users. Examples are text links, towers, buttons, badges, email copy, pop-ups, etc.

Cyberspace: William Gibson coined the term in his book, "Neuromancer". Cyberspace now describes the whole range of data available through computer networks.

D

Demographics – The physical characteristics of a population such as age, sex, marital status, family size, education, geographic location, and occupation.

Digital Subscriber Line (DSL): A much faster way to move data over phone lines.

Disclaimer - A disclaimer states the terms under which the site or work may be used and gives information relating to what the copyright owner believes to be a breach of his/her/their copyright.

In some cases you may wish to permit certain activities, in others you may wish to withhold all rights, or require the user to apply for a license to carry out certain actions.

Domain Name: The unique name that identifies an Internet site; comprised of two or more parts and separated by dots.

Doorway Page: See Gateway page.

Download: Transferring a file from another computer to your own.

E

Email: Electronic mail, a message sent to another Internet user across the Internet. An email address looks like this jimsmith@bubblee.com, whereas, "jimsmith" is your user name, your unique identifier; "@" stands for "at"; " bubblee.com" is the name of your Internet Service Provider.

Email Link: An affiliate link to a merchant site contained in an email newsletter or signature file.

Email Signature (Sig File): A brief message embedded at the end of every email that a person sends.

EPC - This is your average earnings per click. This number is given by dividing your revenue earned by the number of clicks you sent to the offer. For example, if you send an offer 100 clicks and earn \$5.00 then your EPC would be \$0.05

eZine: Short for 'electronic magazine'.

F

File Transfer Protocol (FTP): The most common method for moving files between computers, servers and Internet sites.

Fire Wall: Hardware and/or software used to separate a LAN into two or more parts for security purposes.

Flame: Derogatory comment.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Lists and answers the most common questions asked on a particular subject. Generally posted to avoid having to answer the same question repeatedly.

G

Gateway: See Internet Service Provider.

Gateway Page: Also known as bridge pages, doorway page, entry pages, portals or portal pages, these pages are used to improve search engine placement. Caution: some search engines will drop a site entirely if the existence of doorway/gateway pages is detected.

Graphic Interchange Format (GIF): An image file format, suitable for simple files. A JPEG is the preferred format for storing photographs.

H

Hit: A hit is a single request from for a single item on a web server. To load a page with 5 graphics would count as 6 'hits', 1 for the page plus 1 for each of the graphics. Hits therefore are not a very good measurement of traffic to a website.

Home Page: Your primary HTML page, the first page anyone would see in your Web site. Also called a "landing page".

Hybrid Model: A commission model that combines different payment methods.

Hype (Hyperbole): A deliberate exaggeration for emotional effect. The addressee is not expected to have a literal understanding of the expression.

Hypertext Markup Language (HTML): The primary "language" that World Wide Web documents are created in.

Hypertext: A hypertext document has references to other documents sprinkled throughout. If you click on one of these references, you are transferred to an entirely different document. For example, if this report was a hypertext document, you could click on any italicized word, and you'd instantly be transported to the definition of that word.

I

Impression: An advertising metric that indicates how many times an advertising link is displayed.

In-house: Merchant that administers its own affiliate program.

Internet: Inter-connected networks that use TCP/IP protocols.

Intranet: A company or organization's private network that uses the same type of software found on the Internet, but that is only for internal use.

Internet Service Provider (ISP): The company you call from your computer to gain access to the Internet.

IP Address: A unique number consisting of 4 parts separated by dots, e.g. 165.115.245.2. Every machine on the Internet has a unique IP address.

J

Javascript: A programming language developed by Sun Microsystems designed for writing programs that can be safely downloaded to your computer through the Internet and immediately run without fear of viruses or other harm to your computer or files. Java requires a browser compatible with Java. Using small Java programs, Web pages can include animations, calculators, and other features.

Joint Venture - A general partnership typically formed to undertake a particular business transaction or project rather than one intended to continue indefinitely.

K

Keyword: The search term that a user may enter at a search engine. For example, someone who wants to find a site that sells printer paper might enter 'printer paper' at a search engine.

Keyword Density: The ratio between the keyword being searched for and the total number of words appearing on your web page. If your keyword only occurs, say, once, in a page that has a twenty thousand words, then it has a density of 0.005 percent.

L

Lifetime Value: The total amount that a customer will spend with a particular company during his or her lifetime.

Link - A link is a "clickable" object that, when clicked, will take the viewer to a particular page, place on a page, or start a new e-mail with an address you specify.

Link Popularity: The total number of qualified Web sites linking to your Web site.

Local Area Network (LAN): Computers linked together in a central location, such as a business or government organization.

M

Manual Approval: Process where all applicants for an affiliate program are reviewed individually and manually approved.

Media Metrix: Measures traffic counts on all the web sites on the Net. They publish the Top 50 sites in the US, the Global Top 50, and the Media Metrix Top 500 web sites.

Merchant: A business that markets and sells goods or services.

Merchant Account - A commercial bank account established by contractual agreement between your business and a bank. A merchant account enables your business to accept credit card payments from your customers.

Meta Tags: Information placed in the header of an HTML page, which is not visible to site visitors.

Mini-site: A one or two page Web site that focuses on a single product, service or theme.

Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (MIME): Allows an email message to contain non-text data, such as audio and video files.

Modulator/Demodulator (MODEM): The card that allows your computer to connect to the phone line and communicate with other computers.

Mosaic: The first major browser program.

Multi-Level Marketing (MLM) – Also known as Network Marketing, MLM involves the sale of products through a group of independent distributors who buy wholesale, sell retail, and sponsor other people to do the same.

N

Newsgroup - A newsgroup is a discussion that takes place online, devoted to a particular topic. The discussion takes the form of electronic messages called "postings" that anyone with a newsreader (standard with most browsers) can post or read.

Netscape: Makers of the Netscape Navigator browser.

Newbie: Someone who is new to the Internet.

P

Pay-Per-Sale (PPS): A program where an affiliate receives a commission for each sale of a product or service that they refer to a merchant's web site.

Pay-Per-Lead (PPL): An affiliate program where an affiliate receives a commission for each sales lead that they generate for a merchant web site. Examples include completed surveys, contest or sweepstakes entries, downloaded software demos, or free trials.

Pay-Per-Click (PPC): An advertising payment model where the advertiser pays only when the advertisement is actually clicked. Also, an affiliate program where an affiliate receives a commission for each click (visitor) they refer to a merchant's web site.

Politeness Window: Most search engine spiders will not crawl an entire site in one session. Instead, they crawl a couple of pages and return after a day or two to crawl a couple more and so on until they have indexed the entire site. This is a self-imposed limit in order not to overburden a server. The time period between sessions are known as the politeness window.

Portable Document Format (PDF) – PDF stands for Portable Document Format. It's a distribution format developed by Adobe Corporation to allow electronic information to be

transferred between various types of computers. The software that allows this transfer is called Acrobat.

Post Office Protocol (POP): Refers to the way email software such as Eudora gets mail from a mail server.

Profit: The amount of money you earn from your sales. For example, if you sell 10 videos at \$47.00 each, and each costs \$10 to produce and ship, your profit would be \$37.00 per video or \$370.00 total.

Plug-in: A small piece of software that adds features to a larger piece of software.

Portal: A term used to describe a Web site that is intended to be used as a main "point of entry" to the Web. I.e. MSN.com is a portal site.

Posting: A message entered into a newsgroup or message board.

Privacy Policy – A privacy policy establishes how a company collects and uses information about its customers' accounts and transactions.

Protocol: A method or language of communication.

Proxy Server: Computers, such as those belonging to Internet service providers, that act as agents for multiple users, resulting in many users only having one IP address.

R

Referring URL: The URL a user came from to reach your site.

Residual Earnings: Programs that pay affiliates for each sale a shopper from their sites makes at the merchant's site over the life of the customer.

Return on Advertising Spend (ROAS): How much revenue is generated per amount spent on an advertising method.

Return on Investment (ROI): This is the amount derived from subtracting your net revenues from your total costs.

Revenue: Total income for your sales. For example, if you sell 50 ebooks at \$27.00 each, your revenue would be \$1350.00.

Robots: Any browser program not directly under human control that follows hypertext links and accesses Web pages. A search engine spider is a 'robot'.

S

Scumware - Software that contains additional 'features' for the purpose of displaying advertisements. This software will modify webpages from their original content to put ads on the user's computer screen. Examples of scumware propagators included: Gator, Ezula, Surf+ and Imesh.

Search Term Suggestion Tool: Displays how many times a certain keyword was searched for at Overture during a given month.

Secure Server – A secure server allows a connection between itself and another secure server. Secured connections provide three essential things where online transactions are concerned: privacy, authentication, & message integrity. When viewing Web pages or posting information to a secure server, you'll notice that the "http://" that usually appears in the Web address bar changes to "https://." Also, on most Web browsers, the symbol of a closed padlock should appear somewhere in the browser's frame as an indicator that you are using a secure connection.

Server: The computer hardware that stores your homepage, and sends and receives information through the World Wide Web.

Server Logs: Each time a user accesses a Web page, information is recorded on the server logs. Server logs contain information about what pages were accessed, along with the date and time and computer's IP Address. Other statistics can also be tracked, including username, browser type, previous page, etc.

Shockwave: Co-developed by Netscape and Macromedia, software that allows animations and interactive programs to be embedded into HTML pages.

Sig (Signature File or Sig Line): Your signature at the end of an email or Usenet posting. Commonly consist of your email address and other contact information, very brief information about your business, and perhaps a favorite quotation or funny phrase.

SPAM: The term "spam" is Internet slang that refers to unsolicited commercial e-mail (UCE) or unsolicited bulk e-mail (UBE). Some people refer to this kind of communication as junk e-mail to equate it with the paper junk mail that comes through the US Mail. Unsolicited e-mail is e-mail that you did not request; it most often contains advertisements for services or products.

Spyware - Also known as "adware", a program hidden within free downloaded software that transmits user information via the Internet to advertisers.

SQL (Structured Query Language): A programming language for sending queries to databases.

SSL (Secure Sockets Layer): A protocol used to enable encrypted, authenticated communications across the Internet. URL's that begin with "https" indicate that an SSL connection will be used.

Storefront: A storefront is a prefabricated set of web pages containing information about a business or company.

Super Affiliates: The top 1 or 2% of affiliates that generate approximately 90% of any affiliate programs earnings.

T

Targeted Marketing: The process of distinguishing the different groups that make up a market, and developing appropriate products and marketing mixes for each target market involved.

Text Link: A link not accompanied by a graphical image.

Third Party Credit Card Processing - A 'third party credit card processor' is, a company that accepts credit card orders on behalf of another company, making a merchant account unnecessary.

Third Party Tracking Software: Software located on a server other than your own, that tracks and records visits to your Web site.

Tracking Method: The way an affiliate program tracks referred sales, leads or clicks.

Tracking URL: A web site URL, <http://www.awebsite.com>, with your special code attached to it, i.e. <http://www.awebsite.com/?myID>. Visitors arriving at the site are tracked back to you through your special code, or ID.

Transmission Control Protocol and Internet Protocol (TCP/IP): Software that allows your computer to communicate on the Internet.

Two-tier: Affiliate program structure whereby affiliates earn commissions on their conversions as well as conversions of webmasters they refer to the program.

U

Unique User: A unique visitor to your Web site. Probably the best indicator of site traffic.

Upload: Transferring a file from your computer to another computer.

Uniform Resource Locator (URL): The address of a site on the World Wide Web. Here's an example URL: <http://www.byebye925.com/articles/index.html> The "http" stands for "hypertext transfer protocol"; "://" signals the beginning of the address; "www.byebye925.com" is the domain name; "/articles" is the directory; and "index.html" is the name of the HTML file.

User Session: The session of activity for one user on a Web site.

V

Viral Marketing - Describes any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence. Like viruses, such strategies take advantage of rapid multiplication to explode the message to thousands, and even millions.

Virtual Reality Markup Language (VRML): A language developed as a replacement for HTML. At a VRML website, one can explore environments in three dimensions, and can interact with other people who are visiting the same site. VRML requires a special browser.

Virus – A computer virus is defined as a set of commands, created intentionally, that will do some level of damage to a computer. A computer virus does not float around in cyberspace, but is always attached to something. That 'something' could be a text file (MSWord document), an email, a photo, a music clip or a video clip. Your computer must receive one of these 'carriers' in order to get a computer virus.

W

Webmaster: The person at your Internet Service Provider who is responsible for maintaining the server. Also, any person who maintains a Web site.

Web site: A collection of HTML pages.

Wide Area Network (WAN): Large computers linked together over a long distance via phone or wireless communication.

World Wide Web (WWW, or Web): A section of the Internet containing "pages" of information, including text, photos, graphics, audio, and video. You can search for documents by using one of the many search databases. To access the Web, you must use a browser.

Y

Yahoo: The most popular and (perhaps) the most comprehensive of all search index databases on the World Wide Web. Yahoo's URL is <http://www.yahoo.com>.

Rosalind's Directory of Goodies

I keep an ever-growing database of useful tools and services at:

<http://rosalindgardner.com/resources/>

Every time I find a new product that I feel is of value, I tell the Net Profits Coach newsletter subscribers about it first, then post it to that site.

Here is a sample of its contents:

- 3rd Party Payment Processors**
- Affiliate Networks**
- Affiliate Program/Management Software**
- Auction Sites**
- Autoresponders**
- ClipArt**
- Computers**
- Credit Cards**
- Domain/Web Hosting**
- Dropshippers**
- eBook Compilers**
- eBook Covers**
- Education & Consulting**
- Freebies**
- HTML Tutorials**
- Keyword Tools**
- Merchant Accounts**
- Office Supplies**
- PPC Bid Monitoring Tools**
- Products to Sell**
- Research Tools**
- Site Design Software, Templates & Tutorials**
- Software**
- Supplies & Services**
- Traffic Generation Tools**
- Tutorials**

A Few of My Favorite Affiliate Programs

The programs below all have the following elements in common:

- Excellent products and services offered on attractive sites.
- High commissions and a fair revenue-sharing structure.
- No outside links that 'steal' customers and commissions.
- Approachable and reasonable affiliate managers who are willing to discuss program and commission improvements.

In alphabetical order, a few of my favorite affiliate programs include:

Cashring - (Hosting & Matchmaking Services) - I've done business with Montreal-based Cashring almost since the day I started marketing online. Their products include the dating site, IwantU Select Clubs and WISOL, their hosting services. The **2-tier** program pays **recurring** commissions up to **50%**.

→ <http://www.cashring.com>

Commission Junction - OK, not an affiliate program, but an affiliate network, Commission Junction just makes my life SO much easier, by making it easy to find great merchant partners.

→ <http://cj.com>

eBay.com (Auctions) - Part of the **Commission Junction** network, eBay pays **\$5.00 per lead** and **.05 per bid**. Performance incentives up to an **80% commission increase** are awarded to affiliates with large numbers of transactions. You'd be AMAZED at how quickly those nickels add up!

→ <http://ebay.com>

FriendFinder.com (Dating) – Friendfinder is just one in a vast & popular network of dating sites serving adult, alternative, Asian, religious, Korean, French, German and other communities. Their commissions vary according to whether you sign up as a percentage or clickthrough partner.

→ <http://friendfinder.com/>

GetResponse (Autoresponders) - Simply one of the best, full-feature autoresponder/ mailing list services available, the **2-tier** program pays **30%** payout on direct sales, 10% on affiliate sales and are **recurring**.

→ <http://www.getresponse.com/>

Host4Profit.com (Hosting Services) - No reselling. Just refer your customers to Host4Profit.com and earn **\$10 per account - per month**.

→ <http://www.host4profit.com/>

Internet Marketing Center (Internet Marketing) – If you promote Internet marketing educational products and want to help your customers, send them to IMC first.

→ <http://www.marketingtips.com>

Match.com / One and Only (Dating Services) - Dating/Matchmaking sites owned by Ticketmaster. One and Only was the first program I ever joined, and is still one of my best-selling products.

→ <http://match.com>

SiteSell.com / 5Pillar Program (Internet Marketing) - Ken Evoy of SiteSell has a whole host of free and very reasonably priced, excellent quality products for those interested in Internet marketing.

→ <http://sitesell.com/webvista.html>

Recommended Reading

If you enjoyed the Super Affiliate Handbook, I highly recommend any and all of the following ebooks and courses. Please note the FREE email courses from Ken Evoy & Corey Rudl's FREE "Secrets to Their Success".

33 Days to Online Profits

<http://rosalinds.com/33days.html>

Insider's Secrets to Marketing Your Business on the Internet

<http://www.marketingtips.com/t.cgi/3885/>

Lazy Man's Guide to Online Business

<http://hop.clickbank.net/?webvista2/efbook>

Secrets to Their Success

<http://dynamic.secretstotheirsuccess.com/t.cgi/3885>

Secrets to Their Success - Free Trial

<http://dynamic.secretstotheirsuccess.com/t.cgi/3885/free>

AfterWord

You made it! Congratulations! and Welcome to a 'New Beginning'.

Assuming that you read the whole 'Super Affiliate Handbook', you're now ready to begin your own affiliate marketing story.

As the Nike slogan says, 'Just Do It!'

Take it one step at a time and soon you'll have forged a new path in your life - the path to Internet riches.

Whatever you choose to do, I wish you Health, Happiness and great Success always!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rosalind Gardner', written in a cursive style.

Rosalind Gardner