Discover Easy Ways to Instantly Improve Your Affiliate Program

Brought to you by: **http://www.Affiliate-Manager-Advice.com**
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A Complete Affiliate Manager Training Resource

Forward

Hello, my name is Chris Chapman. First and foremost, I want to thank you for taking the time to check out my book "Simple tips for affiliate managers".

The reason for this book is simple: To educate affiliate managers about how they can improve their affiliate programs.

After being an affiliate for literally hundreds of programs over the last 6 years, I have seen my share of good, bad, and ugly affiliate programs and affiliate managers.

I have always been disappointed in the overall quality of most affiliate programs and affiliate managers. I've always wondered why affiliate managers seem to be running their affiliate programs from the hip, so to speak.

Then I realized that this young affiliate marketing industry was not equipping its' people with the tools, resources, and information they need to succeed.

So I set out on a mission to fill that gap. My goal, therefore, is to educate and empower affiliate managers through a variety of ways, the first of which is this e-book.

We will be doing some exciting things for affiliate managers, so stay tuned to what's going on with us, but more important than that, get involved with us.

And I don't mean just buying our e-books. I mean we really want to get to know you. We want to know your struggles and your concerns in the affiliate marketing industry.

If we pull together, we can do great things for this industry. We can do much, much more together than any of us could on our own.

So let's pull together and improve the affiliate marketing industry one affiliate, one affiliate program, and one affiliate manager at a time.

So now, without further adieu, here are your
"Simple tips for affiliate managers"

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KEY BENEFITS OF AFFILIATE MARKETING

The biggest and most obvious benefit of an affiliate program is its' tremendous return on investment potential. When compared to other types of advertising, the cost of acquiring customers vs. the amount of revenue generated for every dollar spent is incredible.

This table shows the cost of acquiring a new customer via each type of media. The results are simply amazing.

Medium	Cost of Acquisition	Revenue Generated per $1 spent
Radio	$1457	$0.07
Print	$ 958	$0.10
Public Relations	$ 82	$1.16
Email	$ 24	$2.54
Online Ads	$ 21	$4.61
Affiliates	**$ 9**	**$7.15**

One of the major reasons affiliate programs are so valuable is because every time you spend the time, money, and resources to acquire a new affiliate, you get not only a potential customer, but also someone who will be advertising for your company for a long time, on a strictly commission bases.

Affiliates have huge lifetime value, because they keep advertising for you on a straight commission basis. This means they keep working for you, but you only pay for results.

I often wonder why many companies are spending huge amounts of money on print, TV, radio and banner ads, instead of investing in the human resources needed to effectively manage their affiliate programs.

I really don't know. All I know is that those who invest significant resources into running their affiliate programs get results. Those that don't, won't. It's that simple. And remember, it's not how many affiliates you have, it's how powerful the ones you have are. That's the new gold standard in affiliate marketing.

From a survey of 47 marketing managers, affiliate marketing ranked equal with email marketing in effectiveness.

With some sites now reporting over 60% of net profits being generated from affiliate marketing, perhaps you ought to consider harnessing the power of this marketing method.

Check out the table below to help you understand what so many people are missing. Now, keep in mind that it is not good enough just to have an affiliate program. You need to be actively working and promoting it too.

Advertising methods usage and effectiveness at getting paying customers

Rank	Method	Usage	Effectiveness
1	**Affiliate Marketing**	**17%**	**4.3**
2	Customer Email	77%	4.3
3	Public Relations	45%	4.1
4	Television	30%	4.0
5	Outdoor	17%	3.7
6	Email (opt-in)	23%	3.5
7	Magazines	34%	3.4
8	Radio	32%	3.4
9	Direct Mail	30%	3.4
10	Sponsorships	34%	3.3
11	Buttons	55%	2.8
12	Banners	89%	2.8

But there are even more benefits to having an affiliate program. Let me rephrase that; there are even more benefits to having a successful affiliate program. Just having one isn't good enough anymore.

The 7 main benefits of affiliate marketing

1. It is the most risk-free form of advertising
2. It is the most cost effective type of advertising
3. It is performance based (only pay for results)
4. It will increase your brand recognition
5. It offers direct targeting
6. It is versatile
7. It offers unsurpassed longevity

A more detailed look at some of the benefits of having an affiliate program

1. An affiliate program is a very efficient form of advertising

2. It is versatile (just about every business can implement affiliate marketing)
Almost any company or organization on the planet can use affiliate marketing

3. An affiliate program increases your brand recognition
When web surfers see your name, your products, and your logos pop up everywhere they look – your brand will become more and more prominent, solid, and trusted in their minds.

4. Most risk-free form of advertising
Affiliate marketing lets you do what no other marketing vehicle allows – try out your promotional material on your target audience and pay for it only if it works. Simply create a new banner ad, sales letter, or other type of ad, and let your affiliates test it. If it doesn't produce results, you don't pay. If it does, you'll be rewarded with more customers, and your affiliates will be rewarded with higher commissions.

5. It is more cost effective than other forms of online marketing
Banner advertising can cost you anywhere from a few cents to a few dollars for every click-through to your site or every impression your banner receives on the advertiser's site. Opt-In Ezine advertising can cost you between $10 and $500 per thousand subscribers just to place your ad. In contrast, with affiliate marketing, you don't have to pay anything until your placements result in a sale, or any other action you desire.

6. It offers direct targeting
With affiliate marketing, you can effectively reach your target market time after time. Why? Because your affiliates will be individuals, companies, and organizations that are already reaching their target market.

7. Its "performance based" aspect generates motivation
Since affiliate marketing is performance-based marketing, your affiliates will be motivated to perform well so that they'll be compensated well. Remember, we're talking about affiliates

not advertisers. Unlike advertisers, affiliates will try to find the best possible placements for your ads and promotional materials because they know that the better the placement, the better their rewards.

8. Its "performance based" aspect means you pay only for results
The "performance based" aspect of affiliate marketing is pretty big – big enough to be a part of two key benefits! Since affiliate marketing is performance based, you only have to pay when your affiliates perform. You don't have to pay when they place an ad, and you don't have to pay when they refer you a visitor. You pay when, and only when, that visitor turns into a customer, a qualified lead, or a subscriber. You only pay for RESULTS. What other kind of marketing tool gives you that type of opportunity?

9. It allows you to pay for any action you desire
Affiliate marketing also gives you the opportunity to pay for any desired action. This means that you can pay an affiliate when they refer a sale, when they refer a subscriber, when they refer a qualified lead, or any other action you choose.

10. It offers unsurpassed longevity
Affiliate marketing offers a level of "longevity" that you'll find nowhere else. When you are paying a website owner to display your banner for one month, they will display your banner for one month. In contrast, if you send your affiliate a check for $200 for the sales he sent you last month from the banner on his site, do you think he'll take the banner down this month? Probably not, since it's worth $200 to him again next month. He'll probably leave it there for a series of months and may even increase its exposure, add a testimonial next to it or otherwise spotlight it in hopes of increasing his next affiliate check.

11. You can use your affiliate program as an ad tracker to track advertising purchases
Affiliate marketing is based on several different tracking features. It is meant to track leads, sales, click-throughs, impressions, page views, and so on. So even though it is mainly used to track affiliate activity, it can also be used to track your CPM buys.

This means that you can track the effectiveness of the banner ads, ezine ads, directory ads and other paid-for placements you have purchased. Your affiliate tracking mechanisms will help you determine how effective your placements are – or aren't.

A few things to think about

32% of affiliate merchants don't produce an affiliate newsletter

41% of the respondents had NOT read a book on affiliate marketing!

Over 60% of web sites allocated $500 or less to advertise their affiliate program

Affiliate managers are not getting proper training

I think this is probably the biggest area of opportunity in the affiliate industry. There is very little training material out there for the guys who are running this huge industry.

In 2006, affiliate marketing will be a several billion-dollar industry, and yet there are less than 5 sites dedicated to helping affiliate managers on the entire web.

That seems quite amazing to me. It's no wonder so many affiliate programs out there have so many problems. On second thought, let's call them opportunities.

Start thinking outside the box

I think many affiliate managers are not always challenging themselves to think creatively.

We sometimes get wrapped up in our comfort zones and rarely venture out of them. For some, the comfort zone is watching what others do and applying that to our own programs or sites, which is (I guess I should say "usually") just fine.

For others, the comfort zone is a bit larger, asking thoughtful questions and looking at different matrices, but yet not going that extra step to think about things in totally new ways or putting new ideas out there.

I think most of us are stuck in our own little comfort zone, and we are unwilling to step outside of it and take some risks.

It seems as though this industry is, in large part, stuck in a big rut. The entire industry has a “that is not the way we do it here” attitude, which has, unfortunately, killed many businesses in the past.

Sadly, someone may ask a good question, or think of something in a totally new way, only to have their creative voice drowned out in a sea of "that's not how we do it now, we do it this way, and that's that."

Internet marketing in general, and especially affiliate marketing, should strive to be a fluid, ever-changing, every-advancing industry. The only way we're going to get there is to allow each other and ourselves the freedom to think creatively.

Sometimes creativity means that we'll occasionally hear something that we don't agree with, and yes, some ideas will be bad. But let's encourage each other to keep on thinking and foster a community that celebrates new ideas.

Improve affiliate support

We will be discussing this topic in greater detail later in the book, but it’s so important I think it’s worth an extra mention.

Basically the bottom line is that affiliate managers could be making a lot more money, very easily, if they were giving their affiliates the proper support.

In today’s world, with all the automation and technology, there really is no excuse for not training and supporting your affiliates.

When I say affiliate managers should focus on increasing their support for existing affiliates, I am talking about all areas of support. Affiliates need help in a variety of ways including:

Basic marketing knowledge
Specific product knowledge about your products
Custom linking methods

My point is that if you help, your affiliates help you, you will be rewarded for it. I’m going to get off my soapbox now, but this issue is so important, we will be coming back to it later in the book.

What affiliates are saying to affiliate managers

Let me just start with this thought: You are in competition for quality affiliates to promote your site(s) and products, just as much, if not more, as you are in competition to try to win the hearts and minds of customers.

A loyal, productive affiliate network can be a great, cost-effective, competitive advantage. However, ultimately it will only be successful if you satisfy not only your customers, but also the sites that make up your affiliate network.

Some merchants and service providers are already on the cutting edge, offering benefits and advantages above average in nature to their affiliates. Not coincidentally, these are also generally some of the most successful programs.

Most programs fit into a middle group, offering the standard affiliate program benefits, but few if any that really makes them stand out. And, of course, their are the laggards, those merchants behind the times, many which think that simply setting up a program, no matter what the quality, will lead them to success.

Anyways, here are just a few of the things affiliates are saying to affiliate managers.

45% of affiliates say they won't promote a program if cookies aren't set for at least 30 days. And 76% of affiliates say they would like to see cookies that last at least 90 days.

68% of affiliates say they want to be paid monthly, and that they will not promote a program if it doesn't pay monthly.

86% of affiliates say they want a payment threshold of $25 or less, with 56% believing $25 should be the payment threshold.

81% of affiliates say they want to be contacted by affiliate managers at least once a month with 35% believing weekly updates are appropriate.

63% of affiliates use the message boards.

37% of these use abestweb.com
21% of these use associateprograms.com
16% of these use webmasterworld.com

So what else do your affiliates feel is important?

Opportunity for follow-up business

The affiliate program method has been proven to be one of the most cost effective ways for Internet merchants and service providers to attract new business to their web site. In many cases, affiliate networks have exceeded the performance that other forms of web promotion are able to provide.

The main reason for this is that with most affiliate programs, the initial commission paid on a referred purchase can simply be considered a cost of acquisition for a customer. **Who is potentially, a lifetime customer**.

2 things today's affiliates are looking for specifically:

1. An opportunity for follow-up business.

2. A more professionally designed merchant site and sales process that converts visitors to buyers.

With most programs, the affiliate only receives credit for a sale if and when a visitor follows a link to the merchant's site and makes a purchase.

With many affiliate programs, affiliates don't get credit for the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th sale because the customer didn't follow the affiliate's links. Obviously, this model does not meet the expectations of most affiliates. The only way they can stay profitable long-term would be to send a constant stream of new visitors to the merchant's site.

An outstanding improvement to many programs, and the affiliate network model in general, would be for the affiliates to be able to earn follow-up commissions on purchases those new customers that they refer make in the future. It is true that this type of 'residual' cost may eat into the profit margins of merchants, but a variety of alternatives could be developed that meet both the merchant's and affiliate's needs.

The method affiliates would most prefer is that they earn, say, a 15% commission on the initial referred sale, and a follow-up 15% commission on all subsequent sales by the customer. If, for some reason, this is not feasible, perhaps because of the increased costs of the program or the low margins on a particular type of product, a reduced commission schedule could be used. For example, 15% on the initial sale, and 3-5% on follow-up sales.

Almost all online merchants would be able to absorb these follow-up costs, while, at the same time, GREATLY enhance the value of the program for their affiliates. This would ensure not only a loyal following, but also productive promotion by affiliates on the merchant's behalf.

More professional site design and ordering processes

One of the many factors I evaluate when reviewing a particular affiliate program is the professional appearance of the merchant's site, and the ease of ordering from the viewpoint of the customer. This also includes such factors as name brand, since many online shoppers are becoming familiar with, and trusting in, strongly branded Internet retailers.

This is a very important aspect of an affiliate program, and one that is often overlooked. In the end, it doesn't matter how well a program is designed, what commissions it provides, or what extra benefits it offers, because if the customer doesn't feel comfortable making a purchase with the vendor, a sale will not be made, and no commission will be earned.

Although not every site has the same design abilities, or the same budget for that matter, a professional, clean, and well-designed site can be had for minimal cost. It is a must if the merchant wants to attract not only paying customers, but also a strong affiliate network.

If your site doesn’t convert visitors into buyers, your affiliate program will fail quickly, and more importantly, so will your Internet business.

Other things affiliates care about

A more involved and active affiliate manager

Improved tracking of sales

Increased protection against spy ware and trojan horse companies

Residual income

Better affiliate support

800 number orders should be tracked

Increased conversion rates for your sites

Who are your affiliates?

Now that you have heard what affiliates want from an affiliate program, and from their affiliate managers, let's find out a little bit more about the affiliates themselves.

Understanding who your affiliates are will help you manage them better. In just the same way, understanding who your customers are will help you build and develop products and services to better suite their needs.

You have 5 types of affiliates in your affiliate program

- The super affiliate
- The up and coming affiliate
- The one sale every now and then guy
- The "get rich quick" guy
- The totally inactive guy

So what are affiliates? Are they one big mass of people that have the same kind of site, same kind of visitors, and the same needs and deserve the same commission?

No, of course not. However, if you think about it, that's how most affiliate programs treat their affiliates. They give all affiliates the same commissions, the same linking methods, the same incentives, same, same, same!

What they often fail to recognize is that affiliates have a variety of needs, diverse reasons for joining, different marketing styles, and varying degrees of interest in making a sale, in addition to attracting visitors from all walks of life.

The hardest part of administrating an affiliate program is deciding what your affiliates need to help them make the sale. However, by carefully categorizing your affiliates, you can easily determine what their needs are and how to accurately meet them.

The 5 categories of affiliates

The super affiliate

The backbone of your program is probably made up from just the top few percent of your program; your super affiliates will drive 99% of your revenues. The super affiliate will have a highly trafficked site attracting your customer base, and they know how to effectively market your program. In fact, they can provide you with valuable ideas and tips you can then pass on to your other affiliates - if you stay in touch and communicate with them!

The super affiliate qualifies for special attention to maintain their loyalty. It's best to keep in touch personally, further your relationship by phone, and offer special terms and incentives.

The up-and-coming affiliate

Although not making the ranks of super affiliate, the up-and-coming affiliates show the potential. They have original content or high traffic levels of your potential customer base.

The up-and-coming affiliate may possibly be lacking in merchandising skills and need educating in how to best promote your program. Or, perhaps they need general marketing tips to help build their traffic levels.

The one sale every now and then affiliate

In addition, you've got a large segment of “Onesies” (a Shawn Collins term). Low-traffic and low-revenue sites that will earn one check (maybe) from you per quarter or per year, hence their name.

These guys are putting forth the effort to make sales. For the most part, these are the people that will become your up-and-coming affiliates. However, they will only progress to the next level if you help them.

The get rich quick affiliate

These guys are just grabbing for stars. They typically use free web hosts, no original content, and they often fall for the latest marketing schemes, which are usually just a waste of time, money, and effort.

The majority of these guys felt making money as an affiliate was going to be easy, and when they find out it ‘s not easy, they’ll likely just give up. But with the proper follow-up, some of these guys will possibly move up the ranks to the “one sale every now and then affiliate”.

The totally inactive affiliate

These are the guys who signup, but never really try anything to promote your program. They don’t put up your link, they never sign in to their affiliate account, and in most cases, and they don’t even click on their own link to see what happens.

You shouldn’t waste much time on these guys. With the automation we have available now, it is worth it to send a few follow-up motivational e-mails. Maybe they will get involved, and start learning how to be a productive affiliate.

But don’t waste much personal time on these guys with phone calls and stuff. They aren’t showing they have the willingness to succeed, so don’t waste your time.

Getting more affiliates

The invisible affiliate program

If an affiliate program was launched, but nobody ever heard about it, could it succeed? Not likely. It's imperative that you create an awareness of your program in order to attract affiliates. There are several methods for recruiting new affiliates. Here are just a few of the most effective methods that work.

Affiliate directories

List your affiliate program in the affiliate program directories - you will get more affiliates into your program just by having your program listed in these directories. You could submit to all the directories by hand, but I recommend you use the affiliate directory submission services we'll be discussing in a few minutes to help you get your program listed in these directories.

How do affiliates find affiliate programs to promote?

19% affiliate directories

17% active affiliate manager on the message boards

19% direct contact from an affiliate manager

18% google.com

In total, 73% of affiliates join programs from these 4 methods.

Advertise on some of the affiliate directory sites

Many of the affiliate directories offer advertising either on their site or in their newsletter. You should seriously consider doing some of this.

Submit your affiliate details page to search engines

Just like your homepage, you should submit your affiliate details page to the major search engines.

Use a 2-tier affiliate system

2-tier programs encourage affiliates to recruit other affiliates. If your program doesn't have a 2-tier system, consider adding one. 2-tier programs are one of the best, easiest, cheapest, and most automated ways of recruiting more affiliates.

Affiliate message boards and forums

You can gain a lot of active affiliates by becoming an active member of affiliate message boards. One great thing about the affiliates you get from the message boards is that at least you know they are putting in some effort to be successful.

Use pay-per-click search engines to recruit affiliates

PPC search engines may be the best way to add a lot of affiliates to your program quickly. This method will cost you a good deal, but I think it is worth it for most affiliate programs.

Use cross promotion

Many times you can contact affiliate managers of products that are not in direct competition with yours, but sell complimentary or supplementary products. You may be able to work out a deal to let your affiliates know about their program, and in return, they will let their affiliates know about your program with a link in their affiliate newsletter.

Instead of bidding on "affiliate programs", try bidding on "(your keyword) affiliate program". For example, if you have an online shoe store, try bidding on "shoe affiliate program". You won't get as many affiliates as quickly, but your cost will be drastically reduced, and you will get more target affiliates.

Find existing super affiliates

Basically, if you are selling widgets, and you want to recruit affiliates to sell your widgets for you, who better to recruit to sell your widgets than someone who is already selling widgets for someone else? You simply need to find who these people are and make them a better offer. We will talk about some software applications to help you with this in just a moment.

Who should you actively recruit on a one-to-one basis?

Once again, recruiting affiliates may not bring you quantity, but it sure will bring you **quality**! Here are a few places to start within your recruiting efforts:

"Complementary" sites

"Complementary" sites are a perfect place to find excellent affiliates. If you sell "gardening tools", a site that sells books on "gardening tips" would be a complementary site, and a great affiliate. If you sell software, try looking for sites that sell computers or computer parts, or computer manuals. The goal is to find sites that attract your target market and those who can benefit from recommending your product or service to their visitors.

Content-oriented, interest-related sites

Many netepreneurs have started content-oriented websites that earn money from advertising dollars alone. They may not directly sell any products on these sites, but instead promote an idea, belief, or study.

For example, a parenting site: This “mommy” oriented area may not have a product to sell, but instead attracts traffic from mothers who want to “chat” or leave messages about advice, ideas, and entertainment. If you are selling anything related to parenting, family, children, cooking, toys, or household goods, this is a perfect affiliate for you!

Chances are, there is a content-oriented site or two that relates to your industry. Offer these site owners a chance to become your affiliate. As an affiliate, they can earn money to help keep their website online.

How to contact potential affiliates ?

Keys to contacting potential affiliates

- Be specific
- Give them praise
- Let them know how you have used their site
- Emphasize how much money they can make
- Keep it simple
- Use a personal touch
- Join their mailing list
- Buy their product
- Make a sale as their affiliate
- Do something extra ordinary to get noticed

Over the past few years, we’ve been conditioned to think that non-permission based marketing is unacceptable, wrong, and a great big “no-no”.

This is true when it comes to marketing a product or service to the masses. However, if you have a specific offer to present to a specific company/individual, you can do it without breaking the rules if you take some time and do it right!

First, do your homework! Check the company out – what organizations do they belong to, what products do they sell, who are their customers, and where are they located? You might find that you have a common bond with the company beyond your industry that may help give you an edge in contacting them.

Check their site for advertising information to find out how much they charge for banner ads, email advertisements, and other promotional listings. Translate that amount into the number of sales they would need to generate with your affiliate program to earn that amount.

With this information, you’ll be able to show them how joining your affiliate program would be more beneficial to them in the long run than if you had simply paid for a placement. Why wouldn’t you just pay for an ad if you’d pay them more with your affiliate program?

The long-term benefits are greater for you if they become an affiliate. You'll have better chances for increased exposure on their site, better placements than regular advertisers, longer running ads than standard placements, etc. Without this, the long-term opportunity to make more sales is lost.

When you contact the company, be professional! Do not send a generic form letter. Write them a letter introducing yourself and presenting your offer as it relates to them **specifically**.

Let them know that you'll keep in contact with them and tell them to let you know if they would rather not participate so that you know not to contact them again. Follow up the email with a phone call from you or your affiliate manager to check and see if the proper person or department received the email and to check if they have any questions.

Keep it simple

Do not try to devise a plan or a master form letter that will allow you to reach large numbers of potential affiliates. Stick to one-on-one personal contact with the companies.

Use a personal touch

Unless your letter is extremely customized and directed to the company, it will be considered SPAM. Be sure to also add information about each site and notes on what you could offer them specifically.

Two-Tier affiliate programs recruit affiliates automatically

A two-tier program will not only help you offer greater incentives to your affiliates, but it will also help you build your affiliate memberships. You've already acknowledged the power an affiliate has to reach potential customers – **why not consider letting them reach your potential affiliates as well.**

The majority of website owners with affiliate programs choose to offer their affiliates a two-tier structure. They realize the benefit in having their existing affiliates recruit new affiliates. They also realize that many prospective affiliates pass up programs with only one tier.

Remember: Your affiliates will be working hard to send you traffic. Reward them for their efforts and they'll be a happy, motivated, prosperous bunch!

The idea of a two-tier structure is to give your affiliates incentive to attract new affiliates, not necessarily to build a "down-line". Your affiliates should be rewarded for attracting new, performing affiliates, but their focus should be on selling your products and services.

There are several different takes on the idea of extending past the second tier. We suggest that you do not attempt to create a program with more than two-tiers. By adding even one more tier, you'll change your affiliate program into a Multi Level Marketing Scheme (MLM). MLM can be a dangerous legal game to play with your business and carries with it a negative stigma.

Affiliate directory submission services

For those of you who are really serious about getting your affiliate program going and who realize the need to be listed in the affiliate directories, you just can't beat these services. I suggest you go with one of these options. Let them do what they do best, and you do what you do best. Let's discuss the options you have for an affiliate directory submission service.

Affiliatefirst.com –
http://www.affiliatefirst.com/cgi-bin/page.cgi?p=services&d=1

Basically, this is the budget affiliate directory submission service. It only costs $59, but you are responsible for getting your site ready to submit, and you write the short ad copy that potential affiliates will see on the various affiliate directories.

Basically, you are paying them to go to each affiliate directory and enter your information. They do this very well, and they already have a list of the affiliate directories. So, essentially, spending this $59 will save you hours of time.

Richard, who owns affiliatefirst.com, will also take a quick look at the info you want to use, and make sure everything is ready to submit.

This is a great service for those on a budget. I used this service several times when I was first starting out. Now I use the next solution, but it is a bit pricier.

Affiliate-Announce.com –
http://www.affiliate-announce.com/affiliate-directory-submission.php

These guys do it all. They do a full evaluation of your affiliate program, and help you get it ready to be submitted to the affiliate directories.

These guys offer a premier service with premier support that you simply can't get anywhere else. The affiliate-announce.com team also offers several other services to help you get the word out about your affiliate program.

The only problem with them at all is that their service is a bit pricey, but the bottom line is, you really need to check these guys out. If you are serious about your affiliate program, these are the folks that can help you achieve success.

Software to help recruit affiliates

What better way to find good affiliates than to find out who your competitor's affiliates are, and simply try to recruit them to your program by making them a better offer?

There are 4 main software programs out there to help affiliate managers identify and recruit productive affiliates. These software applications use reverse linking techniques to identify what sites are linking to your competitors.

The idea is that sites that link to your competitors are there productive affiliates. All of these applications use the Google PR system and the Alexa.com ranking system to rank the highest value sites first in your results.

What that means to you is that the first results you get from these applications will likely be the top performing affiliates for you competitors.

Once you know who these affiliates are, you just have to make them a better offer to promote your site and products.

At the very least, I encourage you to check them out. I am 100% sure that if you begin using one of these applications you will increase the strength of your affiliate program.

Personally, I dedicate about an hour a day to using one of these software applications. You can spend more or less time, but the more you use it, the more affiliates you will get. These applications are great tools to help you recruit more affiliates. I wouldn't run an affiliate program without one of these software applications.

I was completely blown away how easy all of these applications are to use, and how much they can do for you. Just look at what they can do.

Easily track down super affiliates that will promote your products
Recruit affiliates with "proven", pre-written email templates
Build an instant army of affiliates ready to promote your product
Gain highly targeted website traffic
Spy on your competition and find out who's linking to them
Increase your link popularity
Increase ranking in the search engines

These applications will not only find potential super affiliates for you, but in most cases it will also give you the contact information for these super affiliates.

The smart marketer understands that business is all about relationships and communication. These applications make it easy to build more relationships and an instant army of affiliates ready to promote your product!

The bottom line is your competition is using these applications, and you should be to. Here are the links to the top 4 software solutions. Check them out for yourself.

http://www.AffiliateFinderPro.com

http://www.Superaffiliatetracker.com

http://www.scamfreezone.com/spider/

http://www.Makelinks.com

Where to advertise

Affiliate directories

Several affiliate directories offer advertising opportunities.

Ezines

Lots of ezines that relate to Internet marketing have large numbers of affiliates that are subscribers. These are a perfect place to promote your affiliate program, and find qualified affiliates.

A great resource to find ezines to advertise in is the http://www.directoryofezines.com .

Pay-Per-Click search engines

PPC search engines are another great place to find affiliates.

One quick tip is to use more specific keywords, rather than just bidding on "affiliate". Try bidding on "printer ink affiliate program". You will get fewer clicks, and fewer affiliates, but you will be getting a much more targeted group of potential affiliates.

Affiliate message boards

We already discussed the fact that many affiliates are active on the message boards, so it only makes sense that you might want to advertise here.

Using affiliate recruiting services

Partnerific.com- In regards to affiliate recruiting services, I have only found one worth mentioning. These guys are good, and they do their job very well. They are pricey, but it is well worth it if you're serious about growing your affiliate program.

Super Affiliates

You will need to pro-actively finding and recruit super affiliates, because they won't find you.

Finding super affiliates is probably the hardest part of running an affiliate program. There is no quick and easy way to do this. It simply requires work.

If you are unable to attract super affiliates and form key strategic alliances, then you're unlikely to benefit from many of the rewards an affiliate program can bring.

There are a lot of aspects to finding and recruiting these super affiliates. While it's not an exact science, there are some proven methods and techniques that you should know about before you begin your super affiliate recruiting campaign.

Misconceptions about super affiliates

By Wayne Porter, V.P. Product Development
http://www.afftrack.com

What is important to super affiliates?

1. **Making money** everything else comes 2nd
2. **A high converting site** so they don't waste their effort
3. **Personal attention**

1. Large affiliates work with brand names or big merchants. **Not true.** While it is certainly more common for affiliate super powers to work with established brands, many will look for niche merchants to "fill-in" their inventory mix. Sometimes unique digital products, hand-made products, and other high margin items can be a perfect match for the giant affiliate. If you're small you aren't necessarily out, but you will have to work a lot harder to get placement. You may have to pay upfront fees or guarantee commissions in some cases.

2. Commission is more important than customer value proposition. **Not true.** Naturally large commissions are important, but in many cases super affiliates would rather have a fair commission and pass along a unique deal, coupon, or special offer to their client base. We have all heard the call "Use our program and add value to your site." Seasoned affiliates scoff at this recruiting rhetoric. However, if merchants are willing to really give affiliates something special in the way of promotion, they are indirectly adding value to their site.

Don't be fooled into thinking the commission is the bottom line. The tools and value propositions you give affiliates to sell with are just as, if not more, important than the commission.

3. Large affiliates prefer to do business via e-mail. **This is absolutely not true.** One of the largest and most common complaints among super affiliates is the overwhelming number of

pitches they receive. Unless you know them, or know someone who knows them, the majority of your pitches will be ignored.

In many cases, you are better off working with a consulting firm or agency that has regular direct contact with super affiliates. They can filter deals and can tailor them to their liking. If you are on a network, you might consider using their client services to fast track your deals to the big players. You might also consider advertising on prominent affiliate properties so they are "aware" of your name before you contact them.

4. Large affiliate properties only work with the major networks. **Not true.** It is no secret that super affiliates run a lot of relationships through the top aggregators: LinkShare, BeFree, CJ and Performics. While this makes it easier, it is not mandatory. A lot of extra work has to go on to do things independently, but super affiliates will consider independent deals.

5. Big affiliates prefer cost-per-sale models only. **Not true.** At AffTrack, we see a broad range of deal structures. Successful merchants must tailor their offers to adapt to the desires of large affiliates. The preferred formats are CPM/CPS hybrids, non-conditional CPA campaigns, and CPC.

Many super affiliates will charge a "slotting fee", or ask for some form of payment guarantee upfront. Many merchants question the upfront charges, but if you are confident your product will sell, and the site is a quality site, there is nothing wrong with this.

Always remember that when comparing two merchants within a category, a powerhouse is going to take the offer that offers the most advantageous commission coupled with the best value proposition to their customer base.

Armed with this basic information, you are primed to start doing deals with bigger players.

Remember that one super affiliate relationship can mean the difference between languishing on the sidelines and reaping the bounty of massive online sales.

Example super affiliate recruiting email

Contact these potential partners in several ways.

Use email, phone calls, and direct mail

This will show you are serious.

It is no secret that recruiting super affiliates and getting joint ventures is probably the fastest, easiest, and most cost effective way to get more targeted traffic to your site.

But recruiting these coveted partners is not easy. We have already spent some time talking about how to find them, and what they look for in potential partners, so now let's look at exactly how you should contact them

In your initial email, you need to remember to keep it fairly short, and be sure to give specifics about your potential partnerships. Also let them know that you are open to ideas and suggestions.

Sample letter to joint venture potential super affiliates

I know you are busy, so I won't take up much of your time.

I have created a new product that basically attaches an un-blockable popup to affiliate links. You can see a demo at http://www.affiliate-wizard.com/googledemo.html

Since the system is designed to work for affiliate links, the market is huge. Virtually every affiliate can use it.

We have done only a small amount of ezine ad testing, but so far we are seeing conversion rates between 1.3% - 9.5%, with an average of about 2.8%. Now obviously, the conversion rate can vary tremendously on quality of traffic, but I don't have to tell you that.

I would like to offer you 70% commission on your sales, and 30% on 2nd tier sales. The product sells for $67, so you would earn $46.90 on your sales and $20.10 on 2nd tier sales. We are using 1shoppingcart.com to track all sales.

You can check out the site at. http://www.affiliate-wizard.com

That is a squeeze page, the sales letters in as http://www.affiliate-wizard.com/index2.html

But of course you will earn commissions on those who signup for the demo version and later upgrade to the professional version.

You can get the demo version at http://www.affiliate-wizard.com/dl/affwiz.exe The demo version is the same as the pro version, but the demo version puts the ad at the top of the pages. If you want to see the pro version just shoot me an email, and I will give you the unlock code.

If you chose to join me in this joint venture, just go ahead and sign-up for our affiliate program at our site, and email me so I can go in and change your commission rate.

http://www.affiliate-wizard.com/affiliates/signup.html

Please let me know if you have any questions. You can contact me at:

Chris Chapman
Chris@affiliate-wizard.com (I prefer email communication)
xxx-xxx-xxx(Call here 1st - my cell) Please don't give it out
1-800-425-0659 our toll free number

Simple tips for dealing with super affiliates

- Pat them on the back. We all like to hear how good we are every now and then. So praise their site or them personally. **There is no faster way to get someone's attention than with a compliment.**

- You need to call potential affiliates. Many of the affiliates you really want, (the super affiliates), get all kinds of email offers. A phone call shows you are more serious.

- Use some direct mail. I am not saying start a direct mail business. However, when you have a person you really think should be an affiliate for you, and you can make a convincing case to him that he would benefit from joining your program, in such a case, send some direct mail.

- Send out a letter explaining your position and your offer, along with a little about your business. Just as with the phone call, this will show them you are more serious, and I am sure you will get some positive results.

Train, Motivate, and Empower Your Affiliates

Not sure if you really need to focus on training your affiliates?

Check out these facts:

92% of affiliates are dead (never generate more than 5 clicks per year)

71% of affiliates never even click on their own link

79% of affiliates never make one sale

Only 3% of affiliates make even a part-time living online

More than 60% of affiliates say they would spend at least 10 hours a week building their online business, if they could get straight answers on how to do it

Over 48% of affiliates say they just give up on an affiliate program after they receive little or no help from their affiliate manager

The bulk of an affiliate manager's time will be spent on new affiliates. These affiliates require attention to keep them interested. They will have a number of questions, and need to be properly trained to best promote your products and services.

New affiliates need a great deal of information about your products and services. They also may need a great deal of information about affiliate marketing and Internet marketing in general. You should have a plan for delivering information to your new affiliates about your products and services, and marketing them.

What they need to know

There are several things that new affiliates will need to know to become a performing affiliate. Here are things that you should be prepared to offer your affiliates:

- **Information about your program**

  Yes, they did read about it before signing up, and they did get to see your "Thank You" page and emails, and they are getting your follow ups.

  However, I can guarantee that they skipped over or already forget a lot of what you told them. So it's better to have all of the details, agreements and information about your program ready when your affiliates realize they may have missed something important and come running to you for answers.

- **Information about your products and services**

Remember, your affiliates are a group of people that are marketing your products and services without the professional training you had or that you've given your employees. They need to know what they are marketing, the benefits of your offerings, the drawbacks of your offerings, the price of your offerings, what the competition is selling and where, and how their contacts can purchase your products and services.

- **Information about online marketing**

Though affiliates have become a wiser, more tech-savvy bunch in the last year, you still may get a new affiliate that doesn't have a website, doesn't know how to use FTP, or doesn't have the slightest idea how to create, or edit, a web page. For these affiliates, and even for those who know what they're doing, but still enjoy learning something new, be ready with links, resources and information about online marketing.

Your responsibility to new affiliates

Every program manager soon realizes that the vast majority of their affiliates do little or nothing to drive traffic and sales through their program. If you are about to launch your own program, the figures may surprise you. It's likely that only a few percent of your affiliates will actually be active, leaving you with hundreds, maybe thousands, of non-performers. **Ultimately its quality, not quantity, which really counts.**

So what about all those inactive affiliates? 97% of your affiliates that joined with good intentions are earning nothing for you or themselves. What can you do to re-activate these affiliates? What tools and incentives can you provide to help? How far do you extend your responsibilities to help the up and coming "webmaster" that needs that extra help to find their ground?

When they joined, each affiliate was excited about your program, eager to get started, and most importantly, expected to earn revenue from your program. So what happened and how can you recapture that excitement?

How an affiliate manager should train and motivate affiliates

There are a number of ideas you can implement to start helping your affiliates increase their revenues. Each concept needs to be refined and tested to compliment your unique program, but let's examine some ideas that include:

- Activating affiliates not yet linking to your program
- Developing Quick start email guide or PDF report
- Publishing an affiliate newsletter (usually monthly)
- Trying to build an Affiliate community to exchange ideas
- Providing resources to help train and educate your affiliates

Make it easy for your affiliates to succeed, and they will make it easy for you to succeed

In just a minute, we will talk about specific action steps to take to begin training, motivating, and empowering your affiliates.

Activating non-linking sites

Why do so many affiliates join a program and not set up their links? I don't claim to know all the answers ;-), but here are some thoughts:

Many affiliates will put the task of adding your links to one side until they have 'more time'. Regular, carefully constructed communications such as your newsletter, or a quick start email guide, will help to remind your affiliates.

I strongly recommend you set aside a time each month to communicate with your affiliates that haven't yet established their links. Send out a special email; don't just include it in your newsletter.

When sending this “activation email”, please remember there is a real person reading your email. Write to them as an individual; don't just send out a corporate, hyped email telling them what to do. Offer help and advice as to the best placement of your links, and invite them to get in touch if they need help.

Keep it personal. Don't just sign off as 'the affiliate team', but instead, use your name. Finally, as a courtesy, it's polite to offer an opt-out of further communications.

Take the time to word your communications carefully, and you will resurrect some otherwise dormant affiliates.

Exactly how to begin training, motivating, and empowering your affiliates today

Your affiliates are eager to help you be successful online; they just need a little help. **If you provide them with that help, in time, they will reward you with more sales.**

Now, you know you need to provide some help to your affiliates, but how? I know what your thinking, "It sounds like a lot of work to spend my time working with affiliates that might not ever become productive." And you are right.

But don't give up on all your "dead" affiliates just yet. There are a few simple things you can do to train some of those non-producing affiliates and turn them into affiliates that consistently produce at least a few sales?

Just think what would happen if you got just 10% of your dead affiliates to start producing a couple of sales next month? That would add a nice bit of cash to your bottom line.

The good news is that getting 10% more of your affiliates to produce sales is not really as hard as you think it is. They just need some good sound advice about how to make sales for you.

It is not enough to just say here is your affiliate link, now go make me some money. That simply won't work very well. Sure a few affiliates will make sales for you, but the majority of affiliates need more help than that.

Most affiliates just don't know enough about Internet marketing or building a business online to do it all for themselves. **They need help...Your help**.

To this day, I don't understand why affiliate mangers don't properly train their affiliates. Think about it for a second.

These people took the time to fill out a job application asking for the opportunity to sell your product on a strictly commission basis, and you don't take the time to offer them any advice or help at all.

I could understand if there were no ways to automate the training process, but with all the automation tools available today, there is just no excuse.

Let's talk for just a second about exactly how you should go about training and motivating your affiliates. The first thing you need to understand is these "dead" affiliates need 2 kinds of training.

The first kind of training they need is basic Internet marketing and Internet business training.

This is the type of stuff you will more than likely want to outsource. You don't need or want to get into the business of training each affiliate about everything from basic html, to using an autoresponder.

You need to focus on your business. So I suggest you recommend a few resources to your affiliates, and tell them "here are a few places to get the Internet marketing help you need."

Take advantage of the free affiliate training resources provided by Affiliate-Answers.com

Just send your affiliates to
http://www.affiliate-answers.com

Or have them send a blank email to:

mailto:subscribe@affiliate-answers.com

That will automatically subscribe them to the "Secrets of Successful Affiliates" newsletter.

One such resource is provided by our sister site http://www.Affiliate-Answers.com. They use an email newsletter, as well as several other tools to train affiliates about everything related to making money online as an affiliate.

This is the fastest, easiest, and most cost effective way to get your affiliates the help they need, want, and deserve.

The second type of training your affiliates need is about your specific affiliate program. You really need to do more than just send them their affiliate link.

You need to advise your affiliates about how to target your customers better. Give them some ideas about how to advertise your program. Remember, your advice is going to many affiliates, and **the easier you make things for them, the more they will do for you**.

How long would it take you to put together a decent list of keywords, a short description, and a title that your affiliates could use to advertise in the pay per click search engines? Think about it that way.

If you do this bit of work once and send it to all your affiliates, many of them will use it to advertise on the PPC search engines.

That is just one idea of how you can make things easier for your affiliates. The easier you make it for them the more active they will be, and the more sales they will drive to your site.

You need to consider that if you put together a little bit of the work, and then send it to all of your affiliates, they all benefit. And what's more, they will all be more inclined to work harder to promote you.

The bottom line is you need to make things as easy as possible for your affiliates.

Final thoughts about training your affiliates

Training your affiliates is the easiest, quickest, and cheapest way to get more sales from your affiliate program.

If I were you, I would let http://www.Affiliate-Answers.com do the basic training of my affiliates. It is the simplest way to get your "dead" affiliates most of the help they so desperately need and want.

The great part about this system is that it is easy to setup, and once you get it setup, you don't have to think about it anymore. The professional people at http://www.Affiliate-Answers.com will do all the work for you. And what's more, you will end up with more qualified affiliates.

You can find out more details about the http://www.Affiliate-Answers.com affiliate training system by visiting the following link.

http://www.affiliate-manager-advice.com/affiliate-training-service/

You never know how much money you could be leaving on the table by not training your affiliates

Teach your affiliates to pre-sell

Pre-selling is a vital skill all affiliates must have, and it is your job to help them learn to do it. OK, maybe it's quite not your job, but it will help you make more money, so do it!

As a merchant, you need to educate your affiliates about their role in the sales process. It is your responsibility to make them understand the value of pre-selling.

If you can get your affiliates to understand and use pre-selling techniques, it will greatly benefit them, because they will make more sales.

But more importantly it will benefit you, the merchant or affiliate manager, because you will be making more sales, and your affiliates will be more loyal to your program for one simple reason: They are making money promoting your site.

You need to teach your affiliates that pre-selling is simply warming up website visitors, and getting them in a ready-to-buy frame of mind before they send them to you, the merchant.

Unfortunately for affiliates, pre-selling is also one of the most misunderstood and underestimated skills. You need to educate your affiliates and be sure they understand it is their responsibility to pre-sell, and it is your responsibility to make the sale.

You should be educating and encouraging your affiliates to learn how to connect with their visitors. Teach them that the actual words on the page are the most important thing in pre-selling effectively.

You need to encourage your affiliates to build relationships with their visitors. Teach them that people like buying from people they know, like and trust.

Send out an email telling your affiliates how valuable the skill of learning to pre-sell is. And let them know where they can get more help about pre-selling.

Give all of your affiliates this link **http://mycps.sitesell.com/sitesell935.html**

Pre-selling is a skill your affiliates can learn. But they will likely need your help.

You really have 2 options; you could spend a good deal of time putting together some information about this for your affiliate, or you could just let your affiliates know about Ken Evoy's book.

My friend Ken has written a truly superb book explaining how affiliates can develop their pre-selling skills. Ken's "Make Your Content PRE-sell!" is the only book of its kind.

It will help your affiliates learn:

How to write to COMMUNICATE

How to develop your own "voice" with flair and substance

How to spin your site/biz/SELF into a unique position

How to HONESTLY convince people to trust and like you.

I would really suggest just letting your affiliates know about this resource. That way your not going to do much work, but you will be helping those affiliate that want to help themselves.

Just send your affiliates to the following link
http://mycps.sitesell.com/sitesell935.html

Keeping your affiliates loyal

- (This one is important) Help your affiliates. Give them all the tools they need to succeed. Provide lots of precise, detailed, "how-to" marketing information online. Keep them enthusiastic and excited.

- Ask your customers to become affiliates. This is another simple, yet effective way to get affiliates. Your customers already have a good business relationship with you, so go ahead and ask them to become affiliates.

- Show your affiliates how your top affiliates achieve sales. Give your affiliates concrete examples. Show them step-by-step, with all the precise details they need, how your top affiliates earn a good living.

- Pour special recognition on your high-earning affiliates. Send them flowers, champagne or chocolates. Horrified at the thought of the cost? You'll spend a LOT more finding new super affiliates.

- Create friendships and win enthusiastic supporters. Phone calls can turn business relationships into lasting friendships. Turn your top affiliates into loyal friends. Remember, you don't just want a collection of affiliates. You want enthusiastic supporters.

- Encourage your affiliates to speak up. You'll learn what they really think about your program, and you'll learn how to make it better.

- Set those cookies fairly. If a customer returns the next day, the next week, or even a year later and makes a purchase, the affiliate should receive a commission. Track your customers in every way possible to make sure the affiliate receives the commission.

- Pay your top affiliates bonuses. I received a pleasant surprise when veteran marketer Jim Daniels sent me $250 for being his top-earning affiliate one month. That helped him retain me as a loyal affiliate.

- Pay special affiliates a special high commission. You know that key affiliates in key positions of influence are very valuable. Pay them accordingly. Don't embarrass them by forcing them to ask for the special rate that they deserve.

- (This one is important) Make things easy for your affiliates. They get discouraged fast. Some things are just too darn complicated for many affiliates.

- Learn from your best affiliates. You'll probably receive a far more useful response if you ask your loyal super affiliates how to improve your program. Many of these winners will know the best features of the best affiliate programs on the Net. They'll be happy to give you useful tips on how to improve your program.

Study what your top affiliates do. You'll probably find that they're earning money in all sorts of creative ways you've never thought of. Their knowledge can help your affiliates earn more.

- Visit your affiliates' sites. Get involved with them. When an affiliate shows effort, you should show effort in them. Maybe you can make suggestions about their site that will benefit them and you in the long run. Take the five minutes to visit an affiliate site and see what they are up to.

  You will also find that you understand the problems they face better.

- Pay them monthly. Don't make your affiliates wait three months for a check. Pay them monthly, or even twice a month for you super affiliates.

- Pay them promptly. After the end of the month, pay your affiliates as quickly as you possibly can. Imagine the powerful impression you'll make if your check is the first one an affiliate receives after the end of the reporting period. Paying fast shows you care about your affiliates.

- Be sure to double check the affiliate links you send them, use a spell checker, and make sure the pages they are sending traffic to exist.

- (This one is important) Treat your affiliates as business associates. Respect them or they'll switch to someone who does. Don't siphon off some of the traffic they send you to products on which they don't earn a commission. When referred customers arrive at your site, all money-earning links on that page should earn a commission for your affiliate.

- Provide real-time statistics. Serious affiliates need to know immediately whether their promotions are achieving results so they can test repeatedly, fix mistakes and maximize their sales.

* Many of the tips in this section were written by **Allan Gardyne**, CEO of **http://www.associateprograms.com**

Understanding linking methods

Affiliates today are sophisticated, driven and ready to sell! They need and want more than banner ads. As a merchant, you have to be ready to give them more. You have to be ready with an arsenal of linking methods.

What linking methods should you make available

- **Banners –** Of course you need to have the good old banner ads available. They are just too popular. They can come in any size really, but here is a list of the most popular sizes.

Banner type	Banner size
Leader board	728 x 90
Full Banner (most popular)	468 x 60
Half Banner	234 x 60
Square Button	125 x 125
Small Button	120 x 60
Micro Bar	88 x 31
Skyscraper	120 x 600

- **Rotating banners –** These are just banner ads, but with a twist. We will talk more about them later.

- **Testimonials –** This is probably the most underused linking method, yet it is one of the best at converting.

- **Ezine ads –** These are simple 2,3,5, and 7 line ads that are pre-written, and pre-formatted to go in an ezine.

- **Solo ads –** Basically, these are just long ezine ads that are usually about 30-90 lines. They are usually sent out to an ezine list as the only thing the reader receives.

- **Signup forms –** This is an advanced linking method that involves building email capture forms that also tag subscribers with an affiliate's id tag. We will discuss more about how to do this later.

- **Text links -** These are actually one of the best performing types of linking methods. These are just simple blocks of text that are hyperlinked to a merchant site via an affiliate link.

- **Autoresponder email address –** This one is a bit harder to implement, and will require some custom programming. However the rewards may be worth it. Ken Evoy at SiteSell.com has developed marvelous uses for autoresponder affiliate links.

- **Affiliate recruiting (2nd tier) –** If you run a 2 tier program, you should make it very easy and obvious for your current affiliates to find links that will drive traffic straight to your affiliate information or signup page. This will make them more likely to refer more affiliates to your program…thus growing your program.

- **Articles –** Several people have used these for sometime now. They are simple full-length articles between 300 and 700 words that have affiliate links in them. By pre-writing some of these articles, your affiliates will be more likely to post them on their site, or distribute them through the Internet for you.

- **Signature files –** This is another one of those linking types that have been around for a while. For some reason, many affiliate managers don't take the few minutes necessary to endorse this linking method. It is just a few lines (2-3) about your program with an affiliate link. Your affiliates will place it as their sig. file in the email program.

- **Product links –** Individual product links are fast becoming one of the most used and effective linking methods. Rather than send a "cold" visitor to the first page of a merchant's site, affiliates are now learning to warm up their visitors (pre-sell), and then send them directly to the product they have been pre-selling.

A detailed discussion of several methods

Text links

Text links are indeed unglamorous, but they are perhaps the most overlooked method of promoting affiliate programs. Although text links could be as simple as adding links where banners would otherwise be placed, there are much more effective ways to generate revenue.

One of the most beneficial strategies is including text links inside an article on a particular subject. When writing an article about a particular subject, such as pay-per-click networks, I usually make sure to link directly to the reviews of some of the programs that are rated the highest.

Your visitors can quickly follow your affiliate links if they are interested in learning more about the product or service.

Testimonials

A very effective means for promoting affiliate programs through text links is the personalized testimonial. Generally, this would be some type of recommendation of a particular product that you endorse. It is important here to only endorse products or services you are familiar with, and those you have actually used and are satisfied with. Endorsing products that result in negative feedback from your visitors is a guaranteed way to lose their trust and interest in returning to your site.

Articles

Writing an insightful article about your industry and tying in your product is a great way to offer readers information they want, while showing the benefits of your product as well. Let your affiliates use any articles you write on their sites, email messages, and newsletters. Your affiliates can use the article to add content to their site or newsletter ***and*** promote your products and services.

Signature files

Though they are quick, little blurbs, signature files can be difficult to write. Trying to fit all of the great features and benefits of your product into a few lines is harder than it looks. So, make it easy on your affiliates and give them a few signature files to choose from.

Email advertisements

With the ever-growing number of topic-oriented newsletters emerging on the Internet every day, your affiliates have (or will soon have) the opportunity to reach thousands of readers through email advertisements. Much like signature files, email advertisements can be difficult to write because of the size constraint. So once again, try writing a few ads in a variety of sizes that your affiliates can choose from.

Product-specific images

If your site markets a wide variety of products for a wide variety of interests, you may want to narrow down a few key products for your affiliates to market instead of your entire store. For example: If you have an online office supply store, you may consider creating an image to market general office supplies, one to promote electronics, and another to promote office furniture. Your affiliates can choose a banner for their site based on the interests of their visitors.

Product links

Product-specific links serve a very valuable purpose, as witnessed by LinkShare's results: Conversion rate nearly double for banner links. The benefit product links provide is that they allow you to better control what your visitor's see before clicking through to the merchant's web site.

Product links allow you to send visitors to the merchant site with a specific interest or goal in mind. Then, once they get there, the visitor is much more likely to make a purchase because you have already helped them find what they were looking for. There is no need for them to wade through menus, or dozens of web pages, to find the product they want.

Of course, the trade off is that product links require more time from you to set up. Instead of one generic link to the home page, or simply plopping down a banner on the top of your page, product links will take some planning, and a little extra HTML work.

Selecting which products to link to will be the most important factor for success. Be sure to match product selection closely to your visitor's interests and needs. The next step will be to carefully place links where they are most likely to catch your visitor's interest.

What are your affiliates doing?

It is important to know what linking methods most affiliates are using. Of course, the numbers in your program may be a little different, but here is how most affiliates are linking to their merchant's site:

When we asked affiliates "What method do you ***primarily*** use to promote affiliate programs?" We got the following answers:

54% Banner Advertisements
23% Text Links
12% Personal Testimonials
8% Email Newsletters
4% Links integrated into entire web site

What works?

Ok, now that we know how the majority of affiliates are linking to your site, let's talk about what linking methods work best.

These are the conversion rates for various types of linking methods:

Text Links: 1.80%
Storefront Links: 1.43%
Email Links: 1.41%
Product Links: 2.18%
Banner Links: 1.12%
Search Box Links: 1.22%

From this study, we find two methods in particular that stand out: Text links and product specific links.

Instead of placing a banner on their site, you should encourage your affiliates to use a linking method that has a better conversion rate.

.

By giving them an email advertisement, you give them the idea to place an ad in their favorite email newsletter -- **where they may have never thought to advertise before**.

As it stands now, click through rates for banners are hovering below a half of a percent. That is often for a decent promotion, but branding banners... fuh-geda-bout-it!

So as it stands, most affiliates use banner ads, and banner ads, for the most part, are a very weak linking method when it comes to generating click throughs and sales. However, let's look at a few things we can do to help you get more out of your banner ads.

Getting the most from your banner ads

By Greg Shepard, CEO of http://www.Affiliate-Announce.com

We know many affiliate still choose to link to our affiliate program via a banner. So how can we make the most out of this "bad" situation?

We need to go over several ways to design high quality banners that will not only catch a visitor's attention, but will generate the highest possible click through rates. And of course we also want to consider not just click through rates, but sales conversion rates.

Affiliate marketing is dependent on several factors in order to be successful. The success of an experienced affiliate can be measured mainly by how often a visitor clicks on the merchant's banner or text link that they have placed on their site with the intended goal of referring traffic.

Many factors are involved in contributing to this success and in so doing, squeezing the highest conversions out of an ad campaign.

The most difficult aspect to designing a banner ad is using your given space wisely. If an advertisement is too vague, it is unlikely to convert. On the contrary, if it is crammed with information, it will not attract the attention of the visitor.

One must strike a delicate balance between providing sufficient information for the visitor to recognize the offer, while at the same time avoiding a cluttered appearance. It is also important to leave some information untold in order to entice the visitor to click on the ad.

A simple way to determine what information to include on a banner is to use “who, what, why and when” as a guideline. The “Who” question, refers to the demographic to which your ad is targeted.

Frequently, this information is provided simply by including a picture. For example, an advertisement for a multi-vitamin for the elderly may include a smiling, healthy-looking older woman; where as, an ad for a fitness supplement may show a professional cyclist. The “What” question refers to the product being offered.

By providing the visitor with this information, one can ensure a higher conversion rate, because the visitor knows precisely what the advertisement is offering, and will therefore be more likely to purchase after the click.

Also, it is advisable to provide the features and benefits of the product or service being offered. This creates a clear sense of advantage over competing products. “Why” tells the visitor precisely why they must try this product or service.

This can be supported by testimonials, guarantees, and other facts that add to the validity and value of the product or service. “When” is simply a call to action, such as “click here,” and can also include a sense of urgency, such as “while supplies last” or an expiration date for the offer.

The most difficult part of including all or most of this information is creating a design that will not clutter the given space while also maintaining eye appeal and visibility. One way in which to do this is to separate unrelated text as much as possible. This can be done by sectioning off the creative with an image, or by changing the color of the text and its background color.

Banner design may seem simple in nature, but can become complicated when one is trying to include all of the pertinent information in one advertisement. This difficulty arises when deciding what information to include on the banner, and what information to reserve for the landing page.

If it is impossible to include enough information, or if one desires to catch the visitors’ attention more thoroughly, animation may be used to present additional information.

However, one must beware! Animation has the potential to sabotage your click conversion if it is implemented improperly. Use the animation for two purposes only: To either capture the visitor’s attention, or to provide supporting features and benefits.

At any given time, the visitor should be able to see the “who, what, why and when.” Animation should be used solely for additional benefits that will add validity or value to the offer. This ensures that the visitor will understand the offer even when viewing only part of the animation and will still be likely to click on the advertisement.

One should, at all times, avoid using rapid animation or continuously looping banners that do not have a pause of four seconds or more between cycles. Not only can these banners be annoying to the visitor, but affiliates are also less likely to deploy them.

Though the preceding guidelines are rather simple, they are of the utmost importance for producing advertisements that convert well. Even the most experienced designers can take this advice into consideration and should cross-reference all of their banner work with this simple advice.

Are long affiliate links costing you sales?

Did you know only 29% of affiliates cloak or protect their link

The average affiliate link can be a beast of a URL. Typically, long and unwieldy affiliate links draws attention to themselves for all the wrong reasons, causing a number of potential problems:

- In email, a long affiliate link often spans two or more lines, making it 'un-clickable'.
- An affiliate URL that is immediately obvious can affect a users perception of your recommendation.
- They certainly raise a moderator's red flag if used in a discussion forum, however helpful your post may be!
- There's always a chance that a user can alter the code and circumvent the tracking.
- They're impractical for off-line marketing initiatives or for telephone referrals.
- Of course, commission theft is a known problem as well.

In our newsletter, we will be examining several different potential solutions to the long affiliate URL problem.

It is time for us affiliate managers to step up and solve the problem from our end, instead of leaving this problem up to each affiliate to handle on his own.

This goes back to one of my main points throughout this entire book: Make things easy for your affiliates to make you money.

Why depend on each of them to do something we can handle with relative easy from our end?

Affiliates, marketers wrestle over trademark use under new Google ad policy

By Mary Wagner

When asked if they let affiliates bid on their companies trademarked words or phrases we got the following results:

25% said they do allow it
56% said they don't allow it
9% don't know
10% replied other (was this question confusing LOL)

An ongoing debate about whether online marketers should allow affiliates to bid for search engine positions on the marketer's trademarked names has resurfaced, with Google's announcement in January of a new policy under which it shows only one paid ad per search query for affiliates and marketers displaying the same URL.

Under the new policy, if multiple ads compete for the top keyword position under the same URL, Google shows only the ad with the highest AdRank. The AdRank is based on the ads cost per click rate and the click-through rate on the ad.

Most of the controversy swirls around the use of trademarks--the difference between a search for "diapers" and a search for "Pampers diapers," for example. It's the AdRank that determines which bidder gets the placement, upping by a notch some marketers` worries about being outbid by their own affiliates for a spot higher up in search results.

Shut out entirely

Only now, since there's only one paid spot per keyword per URL available on Google, instead of just having to put up with a lower spot in multiple paid ad listings, they face the prospect of not showing up in results at all.

That means a marketer could be shut out entirely on some paid keywords, depending on how much the company is--or is not--willing to pay for the spot, and it's more than just a possibility.

Search engine marketing company Did-it.com executive chairman Kevin Lee cites one example in which retailer Brooks Brothers had the number two spot on AdWords, behind an affiliate, under a particular keyword for an item on BrooksBrothers.com. After Google's policy change, only the affiliate's AdWord listing remained.

Underlying the buzz around Google's new policy is the larger issue that really concerns some marketers: that is, Who controls how the brand is presented in search marketing? The question of whether being outbid by an affiliate for the top spot in paid search listings is necessarily bad for marketers is just the latest phase in that long-running discussion.

Opinions on the topic fall along a continuum that ranges from that of seeing affiliates outbidding marketers on trademarks as a threat to the brand or a bid for undeserved commissions to seeing it as a route to better online sales.

A spectrum

At one end of the spectrum are marketers who want to retain control, and on the issue of bidding on trademarks, they appear to constitute a majority. According to Shawn Collins, an affiliate marketing consultant and author of the annual AffStat report on affiliate marketing, 56% of marketers polled in AffStat 2005 don't allow affiliates to bid on trademark names in pay-per-click search engines. "They see this practice as a matter of grabbing the low-hanging fruit, which should be their domain," says Collins.

A slightly more liberal position is taken by companies that permit trademark bidding for a select few affiliates. "I tend to side with that scenario," Collins says. "It aids in pushing down ads from competing companies that are bidding on the brand."

At the other end of the spectrum are opinions like that of affiliate network provider LinkShare Inc.`s CEO Stephen Messer, who believes that attempts to control every aspect of how affiliates present the brand on search engines is a mistake on marketers` part. "Growth is all about ceding partial control," argues Messer, who points out that brand marketers have already been trusting representation of their brand to third party experts--ad agencies--for years.

"To grow, you look for someone who can provide a core competency that you don't have for part of your business," he says. "The challenge is that online is still so new that companies still think they should manage everything themselves. But this is a lot more complicated than it looks."

Messer adds that Google's new policy of limiting ads per keyword per URL to one--whether it's the marketer's own ad or the affiliate's listing--has had little impact on affiliates and marketers in LinkShare`s network.

Google's stated aim was to clean up redundant multiple listings from affiliates who don't even put up a landing page but simply put up code that redirects searchers to marketers` page through their own link, for the sole purpose of collecting a commission from the marketers that exceeds what they paid for the keyword position.

It's a practice the industry has dubbed "keyword arbitrage," and LinkShare doesn't encourage participation from such affiliates, Messer says. "Our entire message to our partners has been, they have to add value, so they probably weren't working with us," he says.

The driver's seat

If the new ad policy does address marketers` complaints about having to pay commissions to valueless affiliates by effectively cutting these affiliates out of the bidding, it doesn't tackle another of marketers` worries about affiliates and search engines.

Affiliates that do provide content beyond a simple redirect are still competing with marketers for top spots on AdWords, and the marketers don't control the brand messaging on those affiliate sites.

"Google tends to give a higher AdRank within the paid environment to very compelling ads," observes Lee. "So the affiliate could actually bump the marketer out by using creative that the marketer might never approve itself. My opinion, based on data from our clients, is that as a merchant you really must take total control."

But not every merchant agrees. BackCountry.com has severed ties with affiliates it deemed "not a good fit," but if the affiliate is producing sales within practices BackCountry finds acceptable, it leaves the details of how the affiliate markets the brand on search engines to the affiliate.

In fact, it does more than that; it supports the affiliate with whatever the affiliate needs--within reason--to do the job. Vice president of business development John Bresee doesn't see a struggle for control of search marketing between marketers and affiliates; he believes good affiliates are already in the driver's seat.

"Retailers believe they're in the power situation because they are writing the check. But truth is, it's the affiliate, so you need to treat that affiliate as you would anyone in the power situation," Bresee says. "Treat them with kid gloves, and make sure they're happy."

Know the reasons

Depending on their experience with individual affiliates and use of affiliate marketing overall, marketers` views are widely dispersed on the power balance between their affiliates and themselves in general, and the issue surrounding competition for AdWord positions in particular.

While marketers and service providers such as Bresee and Messer make some thought-provoking arguments for giving affiliates a freer hand in search marketing, the comments of others like Collins and Lee--and the 56% of marketers in the AffStat Report that don't allow affiliates to bid on trademarks--show plenty of marketers believe they have reason to keep a tighter grip on how affiliates market their brands on search engines.

For marketers on the fence, Stuart Larkin, vice president of partner services at online marketing company Performics Inc., lists some points to consider. In answering the question for themselves of how to balance control of search marketing with affiliates, marketers first need to determine how sensitive they are about their own brand, and whether they are looking to search marketing for maximum exposure or a more controlled reach.

That should help guide such decisions as whether they want to manage their own trademark keywords, allow affiliates to use some or all of them, or even limit the use of search marketing by affiliates entirely, according to Larkin.

Monitoring
A final set of considerations for marketers once they have those decisions lined up is how they'll back them up. "How do you intend to monitor and police it?" says Larkin. "How do you intend to communicate your policy to affiliates, and what do you intend to do if you catch an affiliate or reseller violating your policy?"

As to the long-term effect of Google's new policy on affiliate marketing, Larkin says it`s too soon to tell. "We'll have to let it shake out a little longer," he says. "The only thing I have heard from marketers so far is that they've found the search experience on Google to be cleaner. If that's what Google was looking for, they got it."

The can spam act and your affiliate program

You can view a complete copy of the law at:
http://www.affiliatemanager.net/canspamact.pdf

I know this "can spam act" was passed a couple of years ago, but the truth is that many affiliate managers have not yet attempted to deal with the problem.

According to Shawn Collin's survey, only about **65%** of affiliate managers had even read the new can spam act.

To my surprise, the survey revealed that over **53%** of affiliate managers had done nothing to educate their affiliates about the new law.

That is just awful. Although most of us don't really think it will help reduce spam, it is a law, and it does pertain to us and every one of our affiliates. It does require your affiliates who use email newsletters and such to take some step to become can spam act compliant.

Another fact that I found interesting was that about **60%** of affiliate managers don't even try to monitor the newsletters their affiliates put out.

Since these affiliate are advertising for your business, they are representatives of your company whether you like it or not, including whether or not you agree with their tactics.

Of course, you can remove them from your program, but if you aren't monitoring them for spam issues as well as other things, how are you ever going to know they are giving your company a bad rap.

71% of affiliate managers don't feel they should be responsible for the actions of their affiliates when they are promoting their companies. Well, that sounds good, but the truth is that it is not only in your best interest to keep tabs on your affiliate's actions, it is the law.

So what does all this mean to you?

Well, the bottom line is that it is actually legally possible for the government to hold you, the affiliate manager or affiliate program owner, responsible for the actions of your affiliates.

The reality is that it's not very likely, but why take a chance? In order for them to prosecute you, as well as the affiliate, they would have to show proof that you did nothing to stop the illegal spamming by one or more of you affiliates.

So for now, legally you're responsible, but practically, if you try to prevent affiliates from spamming, you are probably going to be ok.

How does affiliate tracking work: A 'not-too-technical' overview!

By Todd Farmer and Jeff Doak

I think it is very important for you to understand how your affiliate software works. You don't necessarily need to be able to program one yourself, but understanding how your program tracks sales and leads will help you better assist you affiliates.

You will be able to "push" you affiliate program to do things you might not even realize it can do now, or you might have an idea for a creative linking solution that seems possible given the way the system works.

The bottom line is you should at least become vaguely, if not very familiar with the tracking solution you are using, how it works, and how other solutions work.

Affiliate Managers and other web marketers have employed a variety of tracking technologies and strategies, over the last few years, in their quest for accurately accounting for referred customers. Tracking customers "from click through to sale" can be accomplished with various tracking methods, such as:

- Simple Direct URL Links CGI/URL Tracking Cookie Tracking Self Replicated Pages Sub Domain Tracking
- Database Record Match Tracking

As you'll read in the next few paragraphs, each of these methods has strengths, and each has weaknesses. However, you'll see that Cookie Tracking is the clear winner as the preferred single tracking method when it comes to reliable, flexible, and convenient tracking. When exploring the different tracking methods, an affiliate manager must consider:

- How flexible is the method? (Can I track everything that I want to track and will it work with my shopping cart or ordering system?) How easy is the tracking method to administer? (Must I exert much effort re-designing and maintaining my website to work with the tracking method)? How reliable is the tracking method? How easily can an affiliate defeat the tracking method?
- Does this tracking method affect the performance of my website or web server?

Simple Direct URL Links

A Simple, Direct URL Link is the most basic, and most limited form of referral tracking technology. The affiliate ID is visible to the customer in the URL with this method, because it passes the referring affiliate's ID directly to the URL of a specific page (which must be equipped with an order form).

This specific page is coded with a script, which reads the referring affiliate's ID in the URL, and passes it into a "hidden field" in the order form on the page or to a visible "reference number", that can be printed or reported by the customer. While this simple method sufficiently tracks immediate sales on a single-page sales site, it cannot track the affiliate ID if the customer leaves this page and returns later.

Since the affiliate ID is visible in the URL, customers can easily defeat the tracking by simply removing the affiliate ID from the URL.

CGI/URL Tracking

CGI/URL Tracking is a relatively effective, yet clumsy, tracking method that passes the affiliate ID throughout the merchant's entire website. The affiliate ID is visible in the URL in this method, too, and "follows" the visitor until she reaches the ordering system, where the ID is detected from the URL string.

"Following" the customer throughout the site is accomplished, in most cases, by processing all internal site links through a Perl script or JavaScript which:

1. reads the current URL grabs the affiliate ID
2. appends it to the URL of the next page.

This method, though fairly effective, is a bit fragile and cumbersome, as it requires careful design of the website and maintenance of every link within the merchant's site. Moreover, under heavy traffic, the script can become a "bottleneck" to the merchant's web site. Furthermore, if the script ever fails, the merchant's site will fail.

The CGI/URL Tracking method is usually used in conjunction with "cookie tracking". This combination allows for the tracking of customers who have disabled their cookies. CGI/URL Tracking, however, is losing its popularity as a backup mechanism because in most circumstances, Internet users who are security-conscious enough to disable cookies, are also savvy enough to circumvent the CGI/URL method.

Customers can easily disable the tracking by simply removing the affiliate ID from the URL and re-entering the site.

Cookie Tracking

Cookie Tracking is the most popular method to track customers "from click through to order", because it is simple to implement & use, requires no significant web design considerations, nor does it impact the performance of the web site or web server. This method works by writing a small text file, a "cookie", to a user's browser when they click on an affiliate link. This cookie holds the referring affiliate's ID, which can be identified at the merchant's order page to credit affiliates for referred sales.

Cookies make tracking affiliate-referred-sales very convenient. The cookie can be read and used on any page or on any form, and can be used in conjunction with almost any ordering system. Plus, the cookie that records the affiliate's ID can "live" for as long as the merchant desires, allowing affiliates to get credit for customers who clicked on a link weeks, or months, before finally purchasing or making a repeat purchase. Cookie Tracking is essentially invisible to the user, because cookies are written and read "behind the scenes". Unlike the other methods, the merchant's URL does not need to display the affiliate ID.

The only drawback with cookies, is that a small number of web users intentionally "disable" cookies, and therefore, they cannot be tracked. The number of Cookie Enabled browsers is growing, because a majority of web surfers' favorite sites require cookie use; plus, the option to disable cookies is not obvious in the two major browsers. Those users who take the trouble to disable cookies are, oftentimes, the same users who will probably be wary of other tracking methods and have learned to intentionally bypass those as well.

Self Replicated Pages

Self Replicated Pages (or SRP's for short), offer affiliates a template based web page, or multiple web pages, that is found in their own directory at the merchant's website. SRP's are an effective and reliable form of affiliate tracking, but their use requires careful planning, the creation of template web pages, and ongoing maintenance.

With SRP's, the affiliate receives one or more pages at the merchant's website, exclusively used for that affiliate's referred web visitors. Since the affiliate's website is designated by a directory name, the affiliate's ID is found within the URL. As a result, customers who do not wish to be tracked can defeat this tracking method by removing the affiliate directory from the URL, and re-entering the site.

For maximum benefit, SRP's are oftentimes used in conjunction with cookie tracking: the SRP provides the affiliate with a URL to which he can point his customers, and the cookie tracking takes over from there.

Sub Domain Tracking

Sub Domain Tracking is very similar to Self Replicated Pages, in that it provides an affiliate with a full URL to which the affiliate can direct customers. Unlike Self Replicated Pages, though, this method gives affiliates an actual sub domain at the merchant's site, not a simple directory path found at the merchant's main domain. Sub Domain process is one of the more administratively demanding tracking methods. The process requires that:

- DNS is configured to point this new sub domain to the appropriate web services on the web server web services are created for this new sub domain
- the web services point to the appropriate files for viewing by web surfers to the sub domain. The web files must either be created (just like SRP's), or the web service must point to a predefined root directory.

When merchants employ this tracking method, customers are able to see some form of affiliate identification, because the affiliate ID is shown in the URL as the sub domain. Although customers can see this identification in the URL, since the sub domain is part of the URL, attempts to defeat the system by removing the sub domain from the URL and entering the site with no sub domain is less likely than with other URL Visible affiliate tracking methods.

The Sub Domain Tracking method is relatively server intensive, since web services must be created for each and every sub domain used, and it may require additional hard drive space to be wasted. The website may need extensive re-design and maintenance to handle sub domain tracking. Furthermore, this method requires the intervention of a web server and DNS administrator, or expensive scripting that can automate the process. When considering the use of this method, affiliate managers must carefully plan the ordering system and its integration with the sub domain option, and cookie tracking should be used as a backup.

Database Record Matching

Database record matching (also called "lifetime affiliate tracking") is the least used of the methods because it is difficult to operate and maintain, and must be used in conjunction with at least one of the other tracking methods; it cannot be used alone. Database Record Matching rewards affiliates for returning customers, not new customers.

The initial sale must employ some other form of referral tracking, and then store unique contact information about each customer (their email address, name and address, credit card number, etc), along with the referring affiliate's ID. When that customer returns and buys again in the future, the customer database can be searched to find that the customer is "owned" by an affiliate. This affiliate will receive commissions on that customer's repeat purchases for the life of the system

Todd Farmer & Jeff Doak
Kowabunga Technologies
Producers of 'My Affiliate Program'

Choosing the technology that will power your affiliate program

Choose a tracking and management solution

One of the first things you'll want to consider when starting your affiliate program is the tracking and management solution you'll use to run your program. Your tracking and management solution will be the core "structure" of your affiliate program handling aspects like affiliate communications, commission structures, linking materials, reporting and activity tracking. If you've searched for affiliate tracking and management solutions, you'll find that there is a wide range of titles to choose from. Before you look at the features that are included, the prices of each package, the customization available or anything else, you need to make one important decision:

Check out Ralph Wilson's book on choosing an affiliate management solution. It was just updated for 2005. Check it out at **http://www.wilsonweb.com/a/go.to/owslaw/9**

Do you want a software solution or a network solution?

Without beating around the bush, **I'm going to come right out and say that if you want a true affiliate program - you want a software solution, not a network**. I'll tell you why:

With a software solution – *you* are in control. You control *your* affiliates, *your* linking methods, *your* commissions, *your* affiliate communications, and anything else related to *your* affiliate program. With a network solution – the network controls your affiliate program and "owns" the affiliate relationship.

So, why do people still choose affiliate networks?

Affiliate networks promote their solutions with proud claims of thousands of affiliates "waiting to join your program" and marketing specialists constantly combing the web for new affiliates.

What they fail to boast about is the fact that the affiliates are shared by the other hundreds of thousands of merchants in the network. In fact, Todd Crawford of the Commission Junction Affiliate Network says, *"…the average Affiliate in the CJ Network belongs to at least 14 programs."*

In a network, not only do you have to find the affiliates in the bunch that are interested in promoting your products and services, you have to find those that are willing to leave the programs they have already joined, or consider adding yours to their offerings.

Plus, if you take on the initiative to go out there and find your own affiliates, you'll have to keep in mind that the affiliates are joining the network, not your program. Sure, they can promote your program through the Network, but the relationship belongs to the Network, not you.

What could this loss of "ownership" and control mean to my program?

I can't say it enough times: With a network solution, the network owns the affiliate relationship. This means that, in many cases, you don't have:

- **Direct contact with your affiliates**. The only way you can reach your affiliates is using the network's online email program. So basically, affiliates have to login to their account and check their inbox in order to get your message. The network is the only one that can contact them by actually sending them an email. The only other way is to pay the network for access to your affiliate's contact information. If you owned the relationship, you could contact them whenever you wanted, however you wanted. You could send them an email, call them, or send them a postal mailing.

- **Control over what your affiliates see**. The network controls the banners, links, logos and other advertising media your affiliates see on their affiliate administration page. The network can advertise anything they'd like to your affiliates. This can be paid advertisements, information about other programs in the network, or anything else they choose. So, you're also giving up the opportunity to create additional streams of revenue through your affiliate channel. The network will be receiving payments from advertisers and affiliate programs they belong to. If you owned the relationship, you could be collecting advertising fees and affiliate commissions.

- **Control over the other programs that are offered to them**. The network can *and will* offer other programs to your affiliates. The network is in business to make money, right? So what programs do you think they are going to push? Those that earn them $100 per month, or those that pay them $10,000 each month? Plus, if it is the network promoting additional programs to the affiliates instead of you, you're losing out on second tier commissions! If you owned the relationship, you'd be able to tell them about any affiliate program you'd like, or none at all. If you decided to promote a program or two, you would earn the second tier commissions.

The ownership part makes sense – but what about the features and the price?

Let's start with features. The tracking and management solutions that networks put in place are designed to fit general affiliate marketing needs. But, as we all know, every merchant needs and expects something different from their tracking and management solution.

Most software solutions offer merchants the ability to customize the program to fit their needs. In fact, many software solutions allow users to setup a tailored solution for themselves by simply entering their unique information and requirements into the software.

Many software solutions also offer custom programming options that allow the user to add features and functionality to the software that goes above and beyond the affiliate marketing scope.

When it comes to price, there're a few things to look at: Setup costs, monthly fees and commissions. Setup costs range from hundreds of dollars to thousands of dollars for both network and software solutions. The monthly or annual fees charged by the providers vary from the hundreds to the thousands as well.

The real difference in price is in monthly commissions. Networks will charge you a percentage of your commission payout each month. This can be anywhere from 20% to 50% of your total payout. So, if you pay your affiliates $1,000 in commissions – you'll owe the network $200 - $500. Plus, many networks charge a minimum commission amount starting at $250. This means that if you pay your Affiliates only $100 in commissions one month, you'll owe the network $250 for that month.

The Five Myths of the Networks - and the Truth

By Linda Woods

Myth # 1
We have hundreds of thousands of affiliates just waiting to join your program and make lots of money for you.

Truth
This is the biggest MYTH of them all. Just because you join a network and get thousands of affiliates in a few weeks is absolutely NO guarantee that you will ever make a sale. I hear it over and over again; "I've gotten 5000 affiliates since I joined, but I've only made 4 sales." Or, "I have over 10,000 affiliates, but we write only about 50 checks a month".

Listen to me! It is far more powerful and profitable to exert considerable effort in locating and recruiting the kinds of sites that are most likely to be able to send you qualified, highly targeted prospects and then compensate that site lavishly than to join a network; than to sit back and wait for sales from the 1% of sites that join your program. I'd rather have 20 to 50 active, sales or lead producing hand picked affiliate partners over 10,000 primarily non-productive mass affiliates any day.

Myth # 2
In order to get a good tracking, stats, tools and resources, you'll need to make a significant

investment with a big name network in order to be able to implement a successful affiliate marketing program.

Truth
Frankly, the networks are quickly pricing themselves out of the market. They all provide a comprehensive tracking solution, and in some cases, automated payments and stats. That's it, just a tool. Nothing more. The real "magic" of a program is the effort involved in making the program successful. Ain't none of them gonna help you with that.

You have to do it yourself. There is absolutely no need to sink from $1300 - $10,000+ for up front costs plus sizeable monthly per transaction fees into a network that has very little to do with making you successful at affiliate marketing. There are less expensive and just as feature packed software options at every price level to do the job. It's not the software that makes you successful, it's the expertise you have in implementing this sales channel.

Myth #3
We have trusted "3rd party status" with your affiliates.

Truth
This has really become a joke. There is a huge amount of distrust by both merchants and affiliates about the fairness and reliability of their network. Some like Linkshare and BeFree offer virtually no assistance in helping affiliates get paid by unscrupulous or dead merchants. Steve Messer of Linkshare recently assured concerned affiliates that they are implementing improvements that will help get affiliates paid. That's great but I'm sure that's no solace to the thousands who have already been screwed by non-payment. Not getting paid tends to undermine trust.

CJ does aggregate commissions earned and will pay affiliates even if the merchant is questionable, but with the exodus of over 700 merchants in the past few months, there will be plenty of disputes over what commissions were earned before a merchant was deactivated. Plus, what kind of trust can you have if you have no idea from day to day whether or not the merchants you have selected will even be in the program tomorrow? If affiliates basically feel like there's no reason to trust any network when it comes to getting paid - then why rely on that system at all.

My point is as an affiliate you must select your merchant partners carefully, ask them detailed questions about their programs and financial health and form a personal relationship. Don't just stick up a banner. Become a valued salesperson, not just another URL on a list of statistics. That makes you easy to forget, screw or cheat.

Myth #4
Our Free Check Writing or Payment Facilitation Option is a huge time saver and benefit to your company.

Truth
Sure it's nice when any company offers to do work for you. But, what is it really worth to your

bottom line? Those of you with thousands of affiliates - how many checks are you really cutting? Is it worth giving up control of the accounting and the delays in accounting as another layer sorts out the "approved" payments? Is it really worth the extra fees LS charges?

Is it worth the extra 30% per transaction that CJ is charging you to have this included? Why not use a direct deposit service like PayPal and import the accounting directly from your tracking solution into your main accounting program (like Quickbooks). Plus, one more added benefit when you write and send your own checks; you get to give your affiliate a personal message (thanks, incentive, sales, promotion, whatever) while they are holding MONEY in their hands. It's a pretty compelling way to make them remember you.

Myth # 5
We have great Customer Service to help your program succeed.

Truth
Most of the account reps at the networks are not really very expert at what makes an affiliate marketing program successful. They know what their program does (most of the time), but few of them have ever managed a program and many of them aren't even that expert at how their own programs operate.

The worst offense is that because of the staffing cutbacks that all of the networks have made, unless you are one of their Top 10 clients, forget about getting a phone call or email returned. They point you to their FAQ's, or their Resource areas for help, but they often do not really KNOW what would help your program succeed.

And, unless you pay exorbitant monthly fees, you don't even have a dedicated Account Rep to turn to when you have questions. Even this high priced help isn't even very helpful. None of the networks give adequate training in how to use their interfaces. So, you get this fancy system and have to basically figure it out for yourself.

But remember, the real work of affiliate marketing will always be on the shoulders of the business person to manage and market and innovate using the best tools, not reliance on a 3rd party network.

Final thoughts

So, what's a company to do? Do your homework and make sure you aren't "wooed" by a big marketing budget or the "everyone else uses it" argument.

In closing, just remember that every company has its strengths and weaknesses, so be sure you select the one that matches your target audiences needs AND meets your companies' requirements and budget. Do your homework, and pick your business partners carefully, just as you would in the "offline" world.

Basically, if you are serious about your affiliate program, you will want to use your own software solution, not the networks.

Some companies have done well using a combination of the two, basically using the affiliate network to help find and recruit affiliates, then they attempt to move producing affiliates to their in-house program. This model works well, but it does require a lot more work.

The bottom line is that you really need to do your homework. This is a decision you will live with for a long time to come, so spend a little extra time to evaluate your options.

Choosing the right solution will give your program a much better chance of success.

Hiring an affiliate manager

Now that you have a better idea of what software will power your affiliate program, it is time to think about the human aspect of running your affiliate program.

Hiring an affiliate manager is tricky. The problem is that in order to be a great or even a good affiliate manager, you need to be able to wear many hats. That just means the guy who runs your affiliate program needs to have a lot of different skills.

Some of the most important skills are:

- You want a people person. You want someone who can sell prospective super affiliates on your business.
- You want someone who is good at math. Internet marketing is largely a numbers game (Conversion rates of all kinds)
- You want someone who can take raw data (number) and turn it into something that make sense.
- Multi-tasking
- Prioritize
- **Most importantly**. The ability to seek out and nurture strategic partnerships.

Where to go to find potential affiliate manager candidates.

- The affiliatemanager.net forum
- The abestweb.com forum
- Job sites (hotjobs.com, monster.com, and several others)
- You could also try to recruit the affiliate manager of a competitor as well.

Then of course, if you can not find a suitable candidate, you should definitely consider outsourcing your affiliate program management needs.

For most sites, I would not consider outsourcing a long-term solution, but it is a great way to take care of your affiliate management needs for a relatively short time, until you can find a permanent affiliate manager.

OUTSOURCING - THE NEXT WAVE IN AFFILIATE MARKETING?

By Linda Woods

In the new age of dot-com belt tightening, one option that is definitely on the rise is outsourcing. Whether it's high tech code junkies or e-commerce gurus, it seems every company has a few consultants lurking about these days.

So what about the affiliate marketing industry? Is there a need for outside help in establishing successful affiliate programs for the multitudes of online retailers? Has this relatively new industry even produced any "wiz kids" yet who are able to share their experience in a meaningful way to company's seeking good program management?

It seems the answer is definitely "yes" and here's why. The last few years have been good for the affiliate marketing niche. In less than 5 years, it went from the legendary Jeff Bezos cocktail napkin idea to a ubiquitous button on just about every retailer's site.

It still requires plenty of long-winded explanations when you're trying to tell someone at a party what it is you do, but at least in the comfy quarters of your internet life, everyone knows what affiliate marketing is.

However, the problem is, not everyone knows HOW to do it, and even fewer know how to do it right. As many companies have seen, it isn't good enough to simply throw up an affiliate program and watch your sales soar. It takes constant and innovative management to keep up with and motivate the changing moods and fortunes of hundreds of thousands of potentially successful webmasters.

How does one tap into these masses so that they will recognize that your products or services are exactly what their site visitors will want? How do you find them? How do you communicate with them so that you aren't "spamming" your own sales force? How do you decide what motivates or what repels them? How do you decide the eternal question of just whose customer is it? Is it better to start your own program or use a 3rd party solution provider? And the biggest question of all.....does anyone make any money running affiliate programs?

These questions and more need to be evaluated very seriously for any program to work well. I've seen lots of companies pulling the plugs on their programs in order to take a couple of steps back, hire someone who knows what they are doing in this niche and then revamp and re-launch the whole program.

This is happening more and more, and with good reason. Because the answer to that last question is "YES", there is money to made with affiliate programs and there are people who know what needs to be done. But like any other department in a company, there must be a good plan, a well thought out strategy and experience in an area that didn't exist 5 years ago.

That's where outsourcing can be a lifesaver to an e-retailer. Most online retailers are in 1 of 3 places right now. They either-

1) don't have an affiliate marketing program and need one,
2) have an existing program but it isn't performing as well as they'd like, or
3) they have an active, vibrant program and are thrilled with the progress.

I'm going to focus on what a "paid gun" consultant could do for situations one and two.

Starting a Program

The time is now. For every month spent evaluating options, making comparative matrixes and deciding on who to hire, a significant sales channel is being totally neglected. According to a quote that everyone likes to tout, some sites are making 40% of their revenue from affiliate sales. So, we'd all like to know who that is, but even if a realistic figure is 10-15% of total sales, who wouldn't like to have 15% more sales right now?

A consultant can help get a company up and running quickly by knowing exactly where to announce the new program, how to promote it, what to offer to get new affiliates excited and how to generate buzz around the launch.

The last thing a company needs is a staff person whose new job is to evaluate all the options, make a recommendation and then wait for implementation and pray for success so they can keep their jobs. Get someone who knows how it's done and get it started immediately. Save running it for an on staff manager who is smart and can be trained to keep it going.

Jumpstarting an Existing Program

Lots of sites have them. Ho-hum affiliate programs with thousands of non-performing, even primarily defunct website affiliates. Little 2-way communication, low overall commissions, disappointed maybe even hostile affiliates and worst of all, very low sales.

Close it down and rethink the whole program with someone who really understands the trends, what has worked and what hasn't, how the company's goals may or may not differ from their sought after affiliates and why the site was performing poorly.

Come up with a strong set of new guidelines for what the affiliate program must accomplish before re-launching. Is it more traffic? Offer to pay for clicks. Is it loyal return customers? Build community and offer residual or 2-tier commissions. Is it branding? Give away something valuable.

There are lots of ways to identify the overall reason for a program to exist and then match the payouts, contract and relationships with those goals.

Carrying the Vision

Once the new strategy has been implemented and the new program launched, again an onsite manager can be found to maintain and grow the program. And here's the last problem that can be solved by the outsourced consultant. Who to hire to do this day-to-day management?

There's no shortage of smart, talented people in the Internet world these days, the problem is a lack of experienced affiliate program managers. Most started doing it as an offshoot of a part of their "real" job in the marketing or web design department. But in terms of a large labor pool with "Affiliate Program Manager" listed on their resumes as the title of their last position, that's not too prevalent.

So, it's going to take training. Take a smart, motivated employee from the sales or marketing department and teach them about how to run an effective program and where to go to continue to learn and grow from those "in the trenches".

A company could utilize the consultant's expertise to train the new manager, map out the strategy, and then arm them with tons of resources of where to find help, and what problems to look for when things get a little shaky. Much of this is so new that the entire body of knowledge is relatively small, so sharing wisdom on this topic is not likely to take very long. But, without someone on the job knowing the wisdom that is out there, the learning curve can be long and painful for the company counting on affiliate sales being 40%.

A few of us affiliate marketing consultants have actually been out there long enough to remember when there wasn't a Commission Junction or a VStore, when no one had thought of 2-tiered commission structure, when contextual selling was unheard of and when the technology of tracking just didn't exist outside of Amazon.

The main thing is, affiliate marketing works. And companies that aren't fully utilizing the vast potential of this sales channel are missing the boat. Affiliates can provide the sales shelves, the sales people, the branding and the traffic that no site can afford to ignore. So the only logical step is to do it and do it well. Hire a professional.

Fraud in your affiliate program

Types of Fraud

Be aware that fraud is out there, and keep up with the forums we talk about in a minute to find out the latest news and fraud trends.

Fraudulent and Fake Transactions

A few fraudsters create scripts to generate bogus clicks, leads, or transactions. Others sign up as affiliates and then make large purchases using a stolen credit card. The merchant will eventually learn of the fraudulent transaction but may let slip payment of the affiliate commission due for the purchase.

Parasites

Some ad-ware that is inadvertently installed on a person's computer is designed to steal traffic from legitimate affiliates by replacing their links with new ones. Legitimate affiliates don't get paid and eventually move on.

Typo-squatting

Typo-squatters register several variations of a well known, high traffic domain names then sign up for that same merchant's affiliate program to sell them what should have been their own traffic.

Copycats

Copycats are sites that look exactly like your site due to stealing of the your site's graphics and content. A copycat then signs up for an affiliate program with a site that looks like a legitimate, popular site with good content. A good way to catch a copycat is to follow several links on the site. Upon closer inspection, many of these sites are frequently only two levels deep, and then you simply get error pages after clicking on links.

Spammers

Affiliates who send unsolicited e-mails featuring a merchant's brand can tarnish the brand, making many merchants nervous about affiliates who e-mail. Spammers also make it difficult for the legitimate e-mailers to separate themselves in an industry where almost any e-mail promoting an offer is considered SPAM. Complaints can get the merchant's domain on blacklists.

Identifying fraudulent affiliates

Luckily most fraudsters are not terribly intelligent and make the same mistakes. Here are just a few common things to look for to help identify fraudulent affiliates.

- Mismatched IP's and addresses
- Obviously fraudulent names / addresses
- Inconsistent company information
- Dead phone numbers
- Affiliates who go active near the end of the month
- Change their banking information just after the commission period closes
- Abnormally high click to sale or lead conversion rate
- Correct email syntax
- Lead programs are especially susceptible to affiliate fraud, as the commissionable action does not require any purchase or stringent verification.

Fighting fraud in your affiliate program

The best strategy for fighting fraudulent affiliates is one of prevention, monitoring and communication. You will need to be diligent about this, or risk loosing a substantial amount of money.

You should use personal inspection of affiliates sites and information to help keep your affiliate program fraud free.

I would suggest doing a thorough inspection of any new affiliate that you issue a check to each month. Then once you have cleared an affiliate, you don't need to watch that particular affiliate as closely.

One easy thing to check for is what URL the affiliate sale came from. You should be able to spot check this each month relatively quickly.

Obviously, pay-per-sale or revenue sharing programs are much harder to cheat than pay-per-click or pay-per-lead programs.

Nearly all cases of credit card fraud by the affiliate, in an effort to earn a commission, are very easy to spot. There will be low numbers of orders and low numbers of clicks for example. 2 clicks, 1 fraudulent sale, that's more likely to be an affiliate issue... 30,000 clicks, 500 valid sales, and 1 fraudulent sale, that's much less likely to be anything affiliate related...

Resources to find more information on fraud in affiliate programs

Finally, stay in touch with other affiliate managers to learn how they handle unwanted affiliate behaviors. Some resources include:

ABestWeb Parasiteware Forum - It is helpful to keep abreast of anything and everything about known parasites.

You will need to fill out the short registration form, but trust me, this is one online forum community you need to be a part of. You can check out their home page at http://www.abestweb.com to see all the different forums they have about affiliate marketing.

AffiliateManager.net Fraud Fighters Forum - Affiliate managers convene here to share war stories of fraud breaches and to warn each other.

You really need to get involved with these forums and keep up with what affiliates and other affiliate mangers are saying about fraud in the affiliate marketing industry. Being involved in the forums will also help you in many other ways as well.

Silly mistakes affiliate merchants make

In a crazy rush to launch affiliate programs, merchants are making all sorts of mistakes. As a result, they're looking bad to the people they need to impress most - potential affiliates.

- You must have an affiliate agreement. We will talk more about this later, and even give you a few examples of some good affiliate agreements.

- Be sure all the information on your site about your affiliate program is consistent. I know sometimes things change, but as the affiliate manager, you must make sure the information your affiliate receive is consistent.

- Spelling and grammatical errors must be checked. I know this seems silly to even talk about, but nothing says I don't really care about my business as much as not even using a spell check program.

- Be sure to provide a link to your affiliate program from your site. Once again, this a common sense thing, but remember you are reading the "silly mistakes" section.

- You will need and FAQ (frequently asked questions) page for affiliates. This is another thing we will discuss more latter. We will even give you several of the most common questions to include in your affiliate FAQ page. Not only will it help your affiliates, it will save you time.

- Poor contact information - If you forget, or aren't willing, to publish your name and physical address on your site, don't expect people to trust you. They will wonder what you have to hide.

- Poor converting site - Spend the time, effort, and resources to get your site into shape. There is nothing that will kill an affiliate program faster than a site that doesn't look professional, and doesn't convert visitor into buyers.

- It's a good idea to iron out the bugs by beta testing your program with a handful of webmasters. That way, only a handful of friends see your mistakes instead of 1,000 affiliates.

Don't rush to launch – slow down, and take a couple of days after you think you're ready. I bet you find several things that you can improve on.

Using entry pages with your affiliate program

You need to determine what page on your site you would like visitors to enter on. This page is fittingly called an “entry page”. Sometimes they are also known as “splash” pages or “landing” pages.

Focus on one objective

Your entry page is going to be the place where you truly carry out your objectives. Your entry page should either focus on making a sale or generating a lead so you can follow-up with visitors, and make sales in the near future.

Think about your objective – make it the focus of your entry page.

What to include on your entry page
The first sacred rule of an entry page is direct…don’t distract.

Your entry page is the first page that visitors will see when they enter your site. So you’ll want to keep them clean, impressive and action-oriented. Each entry page you create should *list one or maybe 2 actions that your visitors can take. For example:*

- Order Now
- Fill out this form
- Call Now
- Learn More
- Download the demo
- Request free report
- Contact us
- Subscribe to our newsletter
- Email us
- Take the tour
- Request Product Information
- Members only – click here

Multiple entry pages

Allowing affiliates to link to specific entry pages is also a great linking technique. If you’ve written an article or created an image for a specific product, service, sale or feature, be sure the link points directly to that section of your site.

Using different entry pages for different purposes can help you close more sales for your affiliates by minimizing the amount of clicks it takes to show visitors what they came for.

Instead of always linking to your index page, consider linking a “Buy Now” banner to your order page; an article about “Features you’ll find nowhere else” to your features page; or an email ad about your “Service Guarantee” directly to your guarantee policy page.

The point is that if you allow your affiliates to link directly to action oriented pages, you and your affiliates will have more success.

The art of the affiliate newsletter

There are a number of program managers out their getting it 'right', people like Declan Dunn of ActiveMarketplace, Ken Evoy of Sitesell, and Shawn Collins of Clubmom. You don't have to copy these people, but take a look at the successful programs, see what they are doing right, how they are inspiring their network and what ideas you can adapt to help improve your program.

Why have one

Most programs have 10 to 20 percent active affiliates. That's a shame. Not the fact that there are so few active affiliates, but because 80 to 90 percent are not being worked for the results, however small, that may be squeezed out of them. Put the code right in their newsletter, and therefore right in their inbox, because these inactive people have probably never logged in to their account.

What to put in it

An editorial welcome

Make yourself and your company seem “real” by starting your newsletter off with a personal message from a “real” person.

A list top affiliate earnings

What better motivational item than showing what can be earned through your program?

An update on what’s new at your company and in your affiliate program

Remember: affiliates are part of your company. Let them know what’s new and what’s up and coming. Also, keep them up to date on any changes you’ve made to your program, your agreement, commission structure, and so on.

An article or a highlighted topic

Give your affiliates some advice about promoting their sites and your links. Try writing a quick tip or answering a question posed by an affiliate.

Linking methods

Keep your affiliates interested by introducing a new linking method or two in each newsletter. Show them the link and give them the benefits they can expect by using the link.

Promotion information

If you're running a special promotion (discussed below) tell your affiliates about it in your newsletter. Let them know how to participate, what they'll "win", and how the top producers are doing.

Contact Information

Always encourage your affiliates to contact you and give them every opportunity to find you. Use your regular newsletter to keep your email address and phone number in their reach at all times.

Humor

Keep it light and personal. Make your affiliates feel like old friends. Here is an idea of what you may write in your affiliate marketing strategy about an affiliate newsletter:

When to send affiliate follow-up messages, and what to put in them

Following up with your affiliates during the first few weeks they belong to your program is the most important, and most often forgotten, step in increasing your activation rate and resulting traffic and sales. Put together a series of letters that walk your new affiliate through posting a banner, advertising your links, and communicating with you.

Here is a sample schedule of letters:

Day 1 - (The first day after the affiliate signed up for your program): Thank the affiliate once again for signing up. Remind him that you sent him linking code yesterday and ask him where he posted the link. Tell him if he needs help posting the link, he can reach you at 111-222-3333, or your@address.com.

Day 5 - Let your new affiliate know about other linking methods you have available. List the linking methods and tell her where she can put them into place (ie – widget article: Use this on your website or in your next newsletter).

Day 9 - Tell your affiliate that you are able to create custom linking options for him. Ask him what kinds of linking methods appeal to him and what kind of links he'd like to see in the future.

Day 13 - Remind your affiliate that he or she can earn second tier commissions by referring new affiliates. Explain how second tier commissions work and how much he'll or she'll earn each time a referred affiliate makes a sale.

Day 17 - Give your affiliate a list of resourceful books, sites, products, services or newsletters that he can use to learn how to better promote his site and your links. Sign up for a few affiliate programs and use this opportunity to earn commissions when your affiliates purchase a book, a tool or a service.

Sample affiliate newsletters

Rather than posting a bunch of long newsletters in this book, I am just going to point you to a place where you can find about 100 or so good affiliate newsletters that you can get ideas from.

I encourage you to take a few minutes and look over several of these and right down some of their ideas. I am sure you will have more than enough ideas to start your very own newsletter for your affiliates.

You can find this list of affiliate newsletters at:
http://www.partnercentric.com/newsletters.shtml

Your affiliate FAQ page

One component of your program that can serve as a great efficiency tool is your Affiliate Frequently Asked Question page. Your FAQ should be comprehensive.

It should provide an overview of your program, information on commission payments, basic instructions on setting up links, and maintaining the affiliate account, marketing and promotion policies, and any other relevant questions that affiliates ask affiliate managers.

NOTICE You should always be adding new things to your affiliate FAQ page. Keep a listing of what affiliates are asking you when they email you, and include your answers in your FAQ page.

Your FAQ should act as a common-language version of your affiliate agreement.

What questions to answer?

1. What is an affiliate program?
2. How do I get started with your affiliate program?
3. Why do I have to provide my social security number?
4. Does my web site qualify for you program?
5. I don't have a web site yet; can I still apply to be an affiliate?
6. How I do track sales coming from my site?
7. Can I view my stats online?
8. How much will I earn per sale/lead/click?
9. When do I get paid?
10. How will I be paid?
11. How long do your cookies last?
12. Where will I find banner, buttons, text links, and other creatives?
13. How can I download graphics from your site to use as promotional material?
14. May I link to your site from more than one web site?
15. How can I promote your program?
16. How can I change my affiliate account information?
17. Can I change or personalize the images provided by you?
18. Can I use (your site name) in my URL or in the name of my site?
19. What kind of advertising can I do?

How to get affiliates to use it

You should encourage your affiliates to use your affiliate FAQ page. It will not only save your time and effort, but it will also help your affiliates succeed with your affiliate program.

You should be sure to provide a link to your affiliate FAQ page in every email to your affiliates.

Your affiliate promotional page

You'll need a promotional web page that gives details about your affiliate program. This will be the page that your site visitors will click on to learn more about your affiliate program.

One thing just about every web site owner does is submit their home page to the major search engines. This is defiantly another page that you need to be submitting to the search engines.

The lifetime value of a good affiliate is several times the lifetime value of a good customer, and we all know how much a good, loyal customer is worth.

So be sure to submit this page to the search engines and begin using it to recruit active affiliates with it.

Here are some things you should include on your promotional page:

- **Commission amounts -** Let your prospective affiliates know what they'll earn in the first and the second tiers. If you are paying a percentage of a sale, give them an idea of what that percentage comes out to in dollars (i.e. You'll earn 25%, or $50, on each sale!)

- **Types of linking methods you offer -** Tell the prospective affiliate about your linking methods. Many will want to know if you offer more than banners, if they can link to you using a text link, and if you will help them create custom linking methods for their sites.

- **When commissions are paid -** Let your affiliates know when you pay commissions, once a month, four times a year, etc. Also be sure to let them know if they have to meet a certain dollar amount before you'll issue them a check.

- **Exactly what they have to do to earn a commission -** Before new affiliates will sign up for your program, they need to know what they and their visitors have to do in order to earn a commission. Do they have to send a sale, do their visitors have to fill out a lead generation form, do their visitors have to buy on the first day, or will you be tracking them after the first visit?

- **What tracking and management solution you are using -** Let prospective affiliates know what solution you've chosen to track their click-throughs, impressions, sales and other activities and how that solution will help them.

- **Application process -** Let your prospective affiliates know what they have to do to sign up for your program. Do they fill out a form, or do they email you? Will it be easy to sign up? Will they be automatically accepted, or will you be evaluating their information first? Tell them what to expect after they click your "sign up now" link.

- **Information about your company and your products -** Be sure to tell prospective affiliates about your company and your products. Show them why they should trust you and your brand to deliver your promises and impress the referrals they send your way.

If you think this is too much information for one page, you may want to create a "promotional area" instead of a "promotional page". The more information you give and the more professionally you present it, the better your chances are to turn prospective affiliates into new affiliates. Take a few seconds to think about the kind of information you'll be presenting on your promotional page(s), and add some text to your affiliate marketing strategy.

Example affiliate promotional pages

Here is a link to just a few affiliate promotional pages.

http://www.affiliate-wizard.com/afffiliates

Your affiliate agreement

Your affiliate agreement may be the most important part of your affiliate program. It is, however, one of those things you really never think about, until you need to use it

77% of affiliates **DO** read the terms of service agreements for your program

Your agreement should include information pertaining to paying commissions and the relationship you are creating like: commission amounts, when they are paid, termination procedures and reasons, policies for returns and any maximum or minimum payout amounts. Since every business and every industry is different, consult with your legal team for the laws and regulations that apply to you.

Rather than include a huge bunch of sample affiliate agreements in the book, I decided to provide you a link to a web page that has a huge sample of affiliate agreements for the entire Internet.

Since we're not lawyers and we're not familiar with each and every industry, locality and business, we have to mention that the examples we provide are only examples and not legal advice. We suggest that you consult with your legal team to create the agreement that is right for you.

NOTICE

Here is the link to find several sample affiliate agreements.
http://www.affiliate-manager-advice.com/ebook/agreement.html

The Sample Agreements

This sample agreement found at the link above includes terms that should be included in just about every affiliate agreement: Term, Modification, Limitation of Liability, Independent Investigation, Anti-SPAM and Miscellaneous terms that relate all governing laws to a state or local legislature.

Clauses you should include in your affiliate agreement

Here are some sample clauses that you may or may not want to consider adding to your agreement. Before adding any clauses, be sure that they truly fit your business and you're not adding them just to add them. Your affiliates will want to know "why" you're imposing the rules you are, so don't scare them off with unnecessary legalities.

Samples of these clauses can be found at:
http://www.affiliate-manager-advice.com/ebook/agreement.html

Paying Commissions

One of the most sensitive areas in the merchant-affiliate relationship is in the payment of commissions. Affiliates want to know what they'll be paid for, when they'll be paid and how their commissions will be calculated. Here are three sample clauses that discuss the payment of commissions.

Linking

There are a growing number of companies that are regulating the linking methods that affiliates can use. In some ways, this can help protect you with the assurance that the information that is displayed by your affiliates is presented accurately and professionally. However, it may be a turn-off for a prospective affiliate that wants to create their own unique marketing material directed at their unique contacts and visitors. Here is a clause used by Priceline.com in their affiliate agreement. It lets prospective affiliates know what they should and shouldn't do with the Priceline.com logos and linking methods.

Tracking

Letting your affiliates know how you'll be tracking their incoming click-throughs and referrals is a great idea. This will show them exactly what happens when a visitor leaves their site and clicks-through to yours. It will also help explain how important it is that they follow your instructions for setting up and updating their links. Here are a few examples of clauses that discuss how the company tracks affiliate activity:

Relationships and Responsibilities

Since the affiliate/merchant relationship has some legal and financial ties, it's a good idea to define the relationship you are creating and present it to your affiliates so that they understand how your companies will be working together. When defining your relationship, you'll be able to determine your responsibilities as the merchant and your affiliates responsibilities as a representative of your company.

Exclusivity

Several affiliate merchants in very competitive industries use exclusivity. This clause tells affiliates that they can't sign up for programs and promote other companies that directly (and sometimes indirectly) compete with their company. It is a tricky subject and can be a turn-off to some affiliates. Before placing an "exclusivity" clause in your affiliate agreement, be sure that it won't stop many prospective affiliates from signing up for your program. There are several affiliates that won't sign up for an exclusive program for fear that the merchant will use the exclusivity clause as a loop-hole to not pay commissions in the future. Also, be sure that you have a way to monitor and enforce the policy. Here are a few exclusivity clauses that have been used by other companies:

NOTICE

Here is the link to find several sample affiliate agreements.

http://www.affiliate-manager-advice.com/ebook/agreement.html

Glossary of affiliate marketing terms

- **Above the Fold**: Describes the part of an email message or web page that is visible without scrolling down the page. This term is important because all content above the fold is assumed to be more valuable to the reader as they see it first. The size of the "above the fold" area will depend on the resolution of the users computer monitor and the number of pixels their monitor displays.
- **Advertiser**: The person selling the goods or service; also known as the merchant. The advertiser or merchant pays affiliates for sending traffic to the merchant's web site after a product or service is purchased.
- **Affiliate**: A Web site owner that earns a commission or finders-fee for referring clicks, leads, or sales to a merchant.
- **Affiliate Agreement**: terms between a merchant and an affiliate that govern the relationship. This includes the terms on which the affiliate will be rewarded for the traffic sent to the merchant's web site.
- **Affiliate Information Page**: A page on your web site that explains the terms of your affiliate program including your commission rates, affiliate agreement, a link for existing affiliates to login, as well as a link to the signup page for new affiliates.
- **Affiliate Link**: A URL tracking link that identifies the affiliate and sends traffic to the merchant's web site. For example, a link might look like http://www.yourdomain.com/yourpage.asp?AffiliateID=5999
- These links are unique in order to track the traffic coming from the Affiliate site. Typically these links can be simple text links, images, product links, etc.
- **Affiliate Manager**: The person responsible for running the merchant's affiliate program. This includes recruiting affiliates, establishing incentive programs, creating media for the affiliates, reporting on sales and paying affiliates.
- **Affiliate Program** Can also be called an Associate Program, Partner, Referral or Revenue sharing program. In such a program the merchant rewards the affiliate for web traffic, sales or leads on a pay-per-click, pay-per-sale, or pay-per-lead basis.
- **Affiliate Program Directory**: A comprehensive listing of merchants' affiliate programs. The directories are typically categorized by industry and include the typical payout or commission rates. Click here for a sample list of affiliate program directories.
- **Affiliate Software**: A software program such as Affiliate Wiz for running and

managing an affiliate program. This typically includes signing up affiliates, managing links, tracking impressions, clicks, sales, leads. This also includes paying affiliates, etc.

- **Affiliate Solution Provider**: 3rd party company that provides an affiliate tracking solution on a hosted basis. Typically, an affiliate software solution is hosted by you, with your web site. With an affiliate solution provider, they provide the hosting for you.
- **Affiliate Tracking**: The process of tracking a link uniquely by affiliate using an affiliate Link.
- **Associate**: Synonym for **affiliate**.
- **Auto-Approve**: Affiliate application process whereby all application are immediately accepted/approved upon submittal by the affiliate. This term can also be used to describe the process of automatically accepting all sales recorded by affiliates.
- **Banner Ad**: An electronic advertisement or billboard such as an animated GIF, Flash Movie, JPEG that advertisers a product, service, or web site.
- **Browser**: A client program (software), such as Internet Explorer, Netscape, or Opera, that is used to look at various kinds of Internet resources.
- **Charge Back**: An invalid sale that results in the affiliate's commission being forfeited.
- **Click-through**: The action when a user clicks on a link and follows through to the merchant's web site.
- **Click-Through Ratio** (CTR): percentage of visitors who click-through on a link to visit the merchant's web site.
- **Co-branding**: situation where affiliates are able include their own logo and branding on the pages to which they send visitors through affiliate links.
- **Commission**: Income an affiliate earns for generating a sale, lead or click-through to a merchant's web site. Sometimes called a referral fee, a finder's fee or a bounty.
- **Cookies**: small text files stored on the visitor's computer, which record information that is of interest to the merchant site. In affiliate software, cookies are utilized to track which affiliate the web visitor came from and which banner or link they clicked. They can also store the date/time of the click for purposes of tracking the time elapsed between a click and a conversion to a sale or lead.
- **Cookie Expiration/Cookie Retention**: When a cookie is planted on a web browser, a date when the cookie expires is defined. This date is important because affiliate sales can only be recorded before the cookie expiration date. This period will also determine if repeat sales will be recorded.
- **Conversion Rate**: Percentage of clicks that result in a commissionable activity (sale or lead).
- **CPA** (Cost Per Action): The amount of cost for a conversion such as a sale or lead.
- **CPC** (Cost Per Click): Cost of an individual click when paying on a per click basis.
- **CPM** (Cost Per Thousand): The cost of 1000 banner impressions.
- **CPO** (Cost Per Order): Same as CPA but refers specifically to sales.
- **Customer Bounty**: Pays the affiliate partner for every new customer that they direct to a merchant.
- **E-mail Link**: An affiliate link to a merchant site in an e-mail newsletter, signature, or a dedicated e-mail blast.
- EPC (Earnings Per click): Average earnings per 100 clicks. A relative rating that

describes the ability to turn clicks into commissions.

- **HTML code**: Refers to the lines of code that an affiliate places on their web page(s) for linking to the merchant's site. This HTML code contains the unique identifier that identifies the traffic as coming from the affiliate's web site.
- **Impression**: How many times a banner advertisement was displayed or viewed.
- **In-house**: alternative to using an **affiliate** solution provider; building and managing your own affiliate program internal to your company. Typically this is accomplished by purchasing a 3rd-party product such as Affiliate Wiz.
- **Manual Approval**: Refers to the process of validating an affiliate application and then approving them after validation. This can also refer to the process of approving sales after they have been validated.
- **Merchant**: The person selling the goods or service is referred to as the merchant. The merchant pays affiliates for sending traffic to the merchant's web site after a product or service is purchased.
- **P3P Privacy Policy** - **Platform for Privacy Preferences (P3P)**: A protocol for sharing private information over the Internet from the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). A Web site's privacy policy is defined by the Webmaster answering a standard set of multiple-choice questions, which result in tags embedded in the Web site's home page. Users also define their privacy requirements in their P3P-enabled browsers; for example, whether they allow their names disclosed to third parties. If the Web site policy and user preferences are not the same, the browser alerts the user.
- P3P also assists with online sales. It lets users decide what specific data they are willing to divulge automatically to the site, such as shipping address and credit card number. If the site requests more data, the browser alerts the user, who can then decide whether to share it or not. For more information, visit www.w3.org/P3P.
- **Pay-Per-Sale**: An affiliate marketing program that rewards affiliates based on each conversion to a sale such as when purchasing a product or service from the merchant's web site. Pay-per-sale programs usually offer the highest commissions but tend to have the lowest conversion rates.
- **Pay-Per-Lead**: Affiliate program that rewards affiliates for conversions to leads. A lead might include a signup form, software download, survey, contest or sweepstakes entry, signup for a trial, etc. Pay-per-lead generally offers midrange commissions and midrange to high conversion ratios.
- **Pay-Per-Click**: Rewards an affiliate for each unique click to the merchant's web site. This type of affiliate program is uncommon because of click fraud or fake clicks.
- **Performance-Based Marketing**: Marketing in which the merchant only pays commissions for results such as conversions to sales or leads.
- **Recurring Commissions**: The process of rewarding an affiliate on a recurring basis whenever the merchant charges a customer a recurring fee. For example, a web host that charges customers on a monthly basis might reward the affiliate a percentage of each month's payment from the customer.
- **Residual Earnings**: Programs that pay affiliates not just for the first sale a shopper form their sites makes, but all additional sales made at the merchant's site over the life of the customer.
- **ROAS**: stands for 'Return on Advertising Spending'. This is the amount of revenue

generated for every dollar spent on advertising. For instance, a ROAS of $1 means you're generating $1 in sales for every $1 in advertising spend, and a ROAS of $5 means you generate $5 in sales for every $1 in spending.

- **ROI**: stands for 'Return on Investment'. This is what all marketing managers want to see from the money they spend on their marketing and advertising campaigns. The higher the sales, the large the number of shoppers and the greater the profit margin generated by sales – the better the ROI.
- **Spider Detection**: The process of detecting and ignoring automated spiders or bots such as search engines like Google/Googlebot.
- **Super Affiliates**: The highest performing affiliates. Typically less than 1% of affiliates are super affiliates yet that 1% typically will bring more than 90% of your sales.
- **Targeted Marketing**: Offering the right offer to the right customer at the right time.
- **Tracking Method**: the way that a program tracks referred sales, leads or clicks. The most common are by using a unique web address (URL) for each affiliate, or by embedding an affiliate ID number into the link that is processed by the merchant's software. Some programs also use cookies for tracking.
- **Text Link**: link that is not accompanied by a graphical image.
- **Tracking Code**: Refers to the hidden 1X1 pixel tracking code that is placed on the confirmation page of your store for tracking sales conversions.
- **Two-tier**: **Affiliate marketing** model that allows affiliates to sign up additional affiliates below themselves, so that when the second tier affiliates earn a commission, the affiliate above them also receives a commission. Two-tier affiliate marketing is also known as MLM (Multilevel Marketing).
- **Unique Click**: The process of only counting unique clicks from each web visitor. Unique clicks are typically tracked by recording the IP address and browser header.
- **Viral Marketing**: the rapid adoption of a product or passing on of an offer to friends and family through word-of-mouth (or word-of-email) networks. Any advertising that propagates itself the way viruses do.

Resources for affiliate managers

http://www.Affiliate-Manager-Advice.com – The site you got this book from remember. We will be adding lots of other information for affiliate managers to our site in the very near future, so keep in touch.

We offer help and advice to affiliate managers in a wide variety of ways. We have this report, a monthly newsletter, periodic conference calls, a few online web conference training sessions, one-on-one individual consulting services, and many other ways.

http://www.Affiliate-Answers.com – This is our sister site, and it offers a free training program for affiliates called "secrets of successful affiliates".

This free weekly newsletter is one of the main tools we use to train your affiliates for you (if you choose to allow us to train them). We run this site in a very professional manner, and we do hope you decide to allow us to train your affiliates for you. Everybody wins that way.

We strongly believe we can do you a great service by training, motivating, and empowering your affiliates through our free newsletter and several other training vehicles we use.

http://www.AffiliateManager.net – This is Shawn Collins site, and it is the best resource currently available to affiliate managers.

It also has a great forum for affiliate managers that you need to be a part of.

http://www.Partnercentric.com – This is another great resource for affiliate managers. It is run by Linda Woods, also known as "the Affiliate Goddess".

If you're an affiliate manager and you have not explored her site, you really need to take a few moments to check it out. I promise, you will learn something.

http://www.Affiliate-Announce.com – This site is run by a company called nettraction.com.

They offer several services to help you run your affiliate program. They have what I think is the best affiliate directory service. But the also offer many other service to help you recruit affiliates.

http://www.Affstat.com – this is a great report put out by Shawn Collins. This report is basically a survey of about 140 affiliate managers. You get to find out how other affiliate managers are doing, and how they are dealing with many of the same problems you are facing. **This is a must have for and serious affiliate manager**.

http://www.Theaffiliateguy.com – this is Paul Colligan's site. He has an affiliate manager tips newsletter that you really need to subscribe to.

AffiliateFirst.com Directory Submission Service –
http://www.affiliatefirst.com/cgi-bin/page.cgi?p=services&d=1
This is a service that submits your affiliate program to the top 50 affiliate program directories. This submission process is all done by hand, so the results are very good. You simply can't afford not to get listed in the major affiliate program directories.

http://www.theaffiliatelist.com – This is simply a list of the top 200 or so performing affiliates on the Internet. It is an interesting service, and maybe worth a look for many of you.

http://www.affiliatesummit.com – This is the premier training (certification) site for affiliate managers, and Shawn Collins runs it. Every affiliate manager needs to check them out, and get on their email list.

http://www.partnerific.com – This is an affiliate recruitment service. For a few hundred a month they take over the task of trying to find good affiliate partners for your site.

Ralph Wilson's book – a report on affiliate management solutions.
http://www.wilsonweb.com/ebooks/affilisoft.htm

Software to help you find affiliates

http://www.Affiliatefinderpro.com

http://www.Makelinks.com – by Roy Oron. This is the most expensive solution, but it is the best. It is the one I use myself several time a week.

"Internet success spider" – by Neil Shearing. http://www.scamfreezone.com/spider/ - This software was just re-done a few months ago, and to be honest, I have not tried the new version. But the old one was good, so I would expect it to be better now.

http://www.SuperAffiliateTracker.com – Another affiliate finder software that is worth taking a look at.

Software to start an affiliate program

http://www.quickpaypro.com - Automate almost your entire Internet business in just 57 minutes flat — **guaranteed!** Yes, you read that right: *Under an hour.* Because we did all the hard work, all you have to do is plug it in. It's as simple as that.

When you install QuickPayPro,™ you get the tools that the big guns use, the peace of mind of knowing you're doing all that you can, and the ability to do even more — a lot more! To recap, you get...

* Ad tracking
* Affiliate program management
* Email and follow-up system
* Real-time order processing with integrated shopping cart
* Instant back-end selling
* A secure digital delivery module
* Powerful marketing an reporting tools

Affiliate manger consulting services

http://www.affiliate-manager-advice.com/links/amconsult.html - I charge just $250 per hour to pick my brain about affiliate marketing and managing a profitable affiliate program. I can answer questions about almost anything relating to managing an affiliate program. Check it out; it may just be the best $250 you ever spend on your affiliate program. I am sure I can offer some good advice about how to improve your program.

http://www.Shawncollinsconsulting.com – Shawn is the leading authority for affiliate managers. He offers a consulting service that is pricy, but I am sure it is worth every penny.

AMWSO - **http://www.amwso.com/index.php** - This company offer several consulting services, and management services to affiliate managers and their affiliate programs. It is also a good portal type site for information on affiliate marketing.

http://pepperjammangement.com - Another big name in the affiliate program consulting business.

A few simple tips

I want to take just a second here to talk about how you look at your affiliate program.

The number one reason people start an affiliate program is obviously to get sales and leads. But I want you to understand that this is also why so many affiliate programs are struggling, or at least not doing nearly as good as they could.

I know that last statement sounded weird, so let me explain before you start thinking I have no idea what I am talking about.

My point is that most affiliate managers, and site that run affiliate programs, are focused on the numbers (leads and sales), and not the real people who are behind those numbers.

To many programs today are focusing on numbers and not customers. If you take a step back, and look at your entire sales process including your affiliate program, I am sure you will find areas of opportunity.

You may find that you could make some simple changes to your linking methods, your tracking solution, your landing page, or your shopping cart system that would drastically increase your customers experience.

And we know that happy, satisfied customers buy more than unhappy ones. So be sure that in everything you do that relates to your affiliate program, you focus on what impact your decisions will have on your potential customers.

Think like an affiliate

(This is very important) - Imagine you're an affiliate. See things from the affiliates' point of view. Visit the http://www.AssociatePrograms.com Message Board and read what affiliates complain about. They're worried about lack of response to e-mails, late payments, bait-and-switch tactics, high payment thresholds, and low payouts. Do whatever you can to avoid those mistakes, or your affiliates will dump you fast.

Don’t send them junk. Every time you contact your affiliates, send them something useful, such as new artwork, a search box, top-performing links, search engine hints, and other tips on how to maximize their earnings.

Now that you're imagining you're an affiliate, have another look at your affiliate agreement. Is it fair? Would you want to sign a contract like that?

The bottom line is that if you quit thinking about the number of leads and sales, and start thinking about your affiliates and your customers, the numbers will take care of themselves.

Affiliate program checklist

Use the checklist below to take a look at the things that might be "wrong" with your perfect affiliate program. Seriously look for the broken, old items, and the areas in need of repair. This will give you a great "to-do" list in making your affiliate program the perfect, revenue-generating machine you're looking for.

HERE'S WHAT'S WRONG:

___ We are not actively involved in the affiliate marketing forums
___ We do not regularly attend various affiliate marketing conferences
___ We don't have a strategy for how our affiliate program fits into our overall marketing plan
___ Our affiliate tracking system only tracks sales, not impressions, clicks, or leads
___ We don't follow up with our new affiliates
___ We don't have landing pages specifically designed for our affiliates to send traffic to
___ We focus on sales and not customer service
___ Our site has not been redesigned in some time, and it may be out-dated
___ Our conversion rate is lower than our competition (this will kill your program fast)
___ We don't have a toll free number on our site. (Research it – it is cheaper than you think)
___ We don't list specific contact information for our affiliate manager
___ We don't have a promotional page that "sells" prospective affiliates on our program
___ Our affiliate promotional page doesn't have all the elements we listed earlier (look back)
___ We don't publish ready to use marketing material for our affiliates, we just publish a link
___ We never customized our affiliate agreement. (Get this right – it can cost you big time)
___ We offer little or no training for our new affiliates
___ we are paying on only 1 tier
___ We are paying on more than 2 tiers (you're an MLM – that is bad)
___ We have never signed up for our competitors affiliate program
(Keep your friends close, but keep your enemy's closer)
___ We are not an affiliate ourselves. (Walk in the shoes of an affiliate for a few days)
___ We know our competitor have a better conversion rate
___ We know our competitor have a higher commission rate
___ We know our competitors offer a longer "cookie" expiration time
___ We don't send a regular affiliate newsletter
___ We never take surveys of our affiliates about how we can do better
___ We don't offer special contest or promotions to our affiliates (this helps a lot)
___ We haven't reviewed our marketing material in quite some time
___ We still offer marketing material that has old info, prices and content
___ We don't offer specific product links
___ We are not actively seeking out affiliates and inviting them to join our program
___ We don't know how to actively seek out new affiliates
___ Our affiliate recruitment plan is based on getting "more" affiliates instead of more
Targeted, Productive affiliates
___ We haven't gotten our program listed in Affiliate Program directories
___ We haven't submitted our Affiliate Program promo pages to the search engines

Keys to long-term success as an affiliate manager

These are the things I focus on with every affiliate program I manage. If you focus your attention on these fundamental things you will create a stronger affiliate program for your Internet business.

These are not break-through ideas, rather just good business ideas applied to managing your affiliate program. I am going to quickly go over the main points here.

Focus on several different (mostly automated) methods to train, motivate, and empower your affiliates to succeed. – This is probably the biggest thing affiliate managers fail to do, and it is cost us thousands of dollars in lost sales.

Always continue to focus on recruiting affiliates - Affiliate are like money (you can never real have enough). Remember the lifetime value of a decent affiliate is several times that of a good customer.

If you have a proper training system in place, you will find that a bigger percentage of your affiliates are getting checks each month, which makes them happy, but more importantly, it makes you happy.

Always be on the lookout for super affiliates – These guys are in more place than you know, and there are more out there than you realize.

Stay involved with the affiliate marketing industry. This is another one we fall very short on. We don't interact with other affiliate managers as much as we could. We all spend hours on the Internet each day, and with email and IM out there, why don't we communicate our success, our failures, and lessons learned to each other.

The message boards are also a great place to interact with other affiliate managers. Not only are they a great place to network, but they will keep you up-to-date on the pressing issues that relate to affiliate marketing.

Your step-by-step action plan

Just start at the top of this list, and go through each step as time permits.
Doing these things will make you more money.

1. The first thing I want you to do is get in contact with us. People and businesses on the Internet don't focus enough one-on-one contact anymore. I want to become your personal affiliate manager trainer. I am confident that if we work together, we can both make more money. And that is what we are all doing this for, isn't it?

Your first assignment is to contact me. For those of you in North America, I would love a phone call. You can call me toll free at 1-800-425-0659. For the rest of you, and for those of you who don't like the phone call idea, at least contact me via email.

Since I do offer a consulting service, which by the way is only $250/hr (Shawn Collins charge $400/hr). I can't spend a great deal of time with each person, but I want you to see there is a real person behind this business who cares about your success as an affiliate manager.

Here is exactly how to contact me (Chris Chapman):

Toll Free Phone 1-800-425-0659
(Please leave a message if I don't answer and I will return your call promptly)

By email at mailto:Chris@Affiliate-Manager-Advice.com

2. You need to get a way to train your affiliates. I suggest you use the free system we have put together in conjunction with http://www.Affiliate-Answers.com

Go check out the affiliate training program we have put together for your affiliates.
http://www.affiliate-manager-advice.com/affiliate-training-service/

Go ahead and register for the free service.

Check your email, and get your login information.

In your email you will find links to 3 action plans, you need to follow Action Plan 2

Follow the instructions in Action Plan 2. We have made it very easy for you.

Don't wait one second, you need to go ahead and put the links into your web pages, and get the links into your default email messages to your affiliates right now.

NOTICE If you need our help on this, don't hesitate to let us know. That is what we are here for.

Our training program was designed for you to be able to set it and forget it. Once you get

these links into place, you just site back, and we work to train your affiliates for you.

3. Go over the checklist for a successful affiliate program that we provided.

We provided you with that checklist to help you evaluate areas of opportunity in your affiliate program. We highly suggest you not only check things off the list, but seriously take the time to think about each item, and see if maybe you are not doing as much as you could in any area.

Each of the items we list on the checklist is discussed in greater detail throughout the book, so if you need ideas on how to improve a particular issues, just look back in the book.

I would also encourage you to site down for a few minutes and go through this book diligently. While you are reading it, make notes about how the topics apply to your program, and I am sure you will find at least a few things you can improve on.

One big thing to remember is that when managing an affiliate program with hundreds r or thousands of affiliates, even small changes can have a dramatic impact on your bottom line.

4. You need to evaluate and plan your affiliate recruiting campaign

Recruiting affiliates is an on-going thing, so I suggest you get yourself a small binder or folder to keep track of your affiliate recruiting efforts. This will help you stay on task, and keep you from doing the same things twice.

No need to lookup which directories offer advertising two times. Do it once and put it in your folder.

Go over the various methods of recruiting affiliates we discussed earlier.

Write down which ones you plan to implement. Start with the easiest one first, and do them as soon as possible.

5. Get one of the four affiliate locating applications we discussed earlier, and use it.

As an affiliate manager, one of your key jobs is to find key strategic affiliate partners, these in-expensive software applications will help you do just that.

6. Get involved in helping to improve the affiliate marketing industry.

I challenge you today to get involved in the message boards, and get subscribed to the few affiliate manager newsletters available.

You will not only be able to help less experienced affiliate managers, but I am sure you will learn new things that will help you as well.

And if you get and stay involved, affiliates will flock to you because they will know they can trust you to run a fair and profitable affiliate program for both you and them.

In conclusion

What better time to start improving your affiliate program than right now. I want to challenge you to get involved in the affiliate marketing industry. I want to challenge you to do your part to help make it a better, cleaner, and more efficient form of advertising.

I think it is appalling that only about 130 or so affiliate managers participated in the http://www.affstat.com stat. report. You can help improve the affiliate marketing industry as a whole just by spending a few moments filling out a few survey questions.

Then we can all look at what problems (opportunities) most affiliate programs face, because we all know that knowing about a problem make it a lot easier to solve.

Think about it for a second. A few years ago most of us didn't realize affiliate commission theft was a problem, until several people starting talking about.

Just by putting in your comments and answering a few simple questions you can help improve the affiliate marketing industry for everyone.

Here is the link to fill out the survey for 2006.
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=409231522368

Lack of action is one of the biggest reasons people don't reach their full money making potential online. Don't let that be your excuse.

One final thought: Help us to help you

We'd like to hear from you! We're interested in knowing what sort of problems you face on a day-to-day basis in running your affiliate program.

The goal in this for us is to essentially create solutions that solve those problems, and help to make your business run easier.

So let us know by contacting us at
http://www.affiliate-manager-advice.com/contacting-us.html