

Making Money Online With or Without a Product

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When looking to the Internet for ways to make money online, it doesn't take too long before you realize what a vast array of choices there are. Blogging for profit, pay per click advertising, article marketing as an affiliate, and CPA offers are only just a few business models out there for you to choose from.

How do you sort through it all? Where do you begin? It's overwhelming - even for the most focused individual.

Yet for those who are determined and have an entrepreneurial spirit, the Internet is wide open. All you really need is a product to promote in a niche with a demographic that's willing to pay for their consumables. The great thing is that you don't need to have your own product to make a very nice living online.

You do this through affiliate marketing programs. With affiliate marketing, you can choose from a vast array of products to promote online - all with a sales page already set up for you. All you need to do is find a way to drive traffic to that site using a specific hyperlink that gives you credit for a commission.

Affiliate Marketing - Explained

Affiliate marketing is when you generate targeted traffic to a particular website selling a product for which you get commission on each and every sale. You don't own the product (although later we'll discuss creating your own product or service and recruiting affiliates to sell for you), but you come up with creative ways to connect a prospective customer to the landing page.

Here's an example of how affiliate marketing works:

Joe Marketer decides to sell a popular “how to get a girl” info product. He heads to the Internet, goes to the ClickBank Marketplace and looks up the dating topic. There, he is presented with a choice of maybe a dozen different products to sell and decides on one whose sales page and statistics prove it converts well.

He clicks “get hop link,” which incorporates his own unique ClickBank ID into the URL. He can then take the new URL and includes it somewhere in his sales funnel. When someone reads his sales material (an article, a pay per click ad, a YouTube video which pre-sells the product), and they click through to the sales page and buys it, Joe gets the affiliate commission – usually 50-80% of the price of the product.

Of course, Joe wasn't limited to selling products from ClickBank. There are other affiliate marketing programs out there. Commission Junction, PayDotCom.com and Share-a-Sale are just three of the many other companies that have an affiliate marketplace.

Large websites like Amazon.com and Wal-Mart and others have affiliate programs, too. Just about anything you can think of is available through an affiliate program, including:

- Thousands of eBooks and e-courses on hundreds of different subjects
- Software
- Internet services like autoresponders, keyword tools and hosting companies
- Membership sites
- Video rental (think Netflix)
- Tangible books, videos and music
- Electronics and computers
- Health and beauty items...and more

As you can see, affiliate sales offer an amazing opportunity for both the new and the seasoned Internet marketer alike.

Why Is Affiliate Marketing a Profitable Business?

Affiliate marketing has amazing profit potential. Think about it this way: everything is already set up for you – a great product with enormous profit potential. If you want to sell exercise equipment, you can earn a nice commission from Amazon.com or even Wal-Mart. That can add up very fast, depending on how you drive traffic to the main site.

There is plenty of opportunity to profit during the holiday time. You can take advantage of the shopper's need to find toys and other gifts by promoting them through a website or small ad. The customer gets what they want – convenient shopping - and you get what you want – a commission for leading them to the sale.

As discussed earlier, info products have great profit potential, because most affiliate programs pay upwards of 50 to 80% on the total sale. The average ClickBank product, for example, pays more than \$25 per sale.

The beauty of info products is that they're digital and are easily downloaded within minutes - which is something that's very appealing to your potential customer - instant gratification. The sooner they can have the product, the more likely they are to spend money for the information.

Are you into the multi-billion dollar health niche? You can find just about any vitamin, supplement or tonic that fits. You know that the Internet Marketing niche is hot, but you're wondering how to break into it and grab a piece of the pie.

There are literally hundreds of top selling affiliate marketing programs on ClickBank. All you have to do is pick one and find a way to promote it. You don't have to be the guru people turn to in order to learn about Internet marketing – you can just provide links to solutions that would solve their problems.

What Does a Good Affiliate Program Offer You?

Affiliate marketing is ideal when you really want to get into a niche and start making profits sooner than it might take you to put together your own product and subsequently come up with sales copy. With affiliate marketing, the meaty part of the sales funnel is already mostly set up for you.

By sales funnel, I mean this: Starting from the time your potential customer finds your site via the search engines or through browsing the 'net - until he or she clicks the order button.

It looks something like this:

The customer types in his search terms in search engine (or is browsing and sees an ad) and clicks through. In the case of the search engine, this brings up a page of top-ranking pages for the terms as well as paid for ads (PPC). The customer clicks on one or more of the choices until they find what they need.

In the case of an ad, he clicks through and he lands on either your squeeze page and signs up on your email list - or he lands on one of the other online pages you've set up to facilitate a sale.

From here, he may choose to click on any one of several affiliate links leading to the sales page. He decides to buy - you get a commission - he gets his product.

That is a rather general sales funnel. As you can see, with affiliate marketing, at the very least there is the sales page and product ready to fit into your plans. Those are two of the biggest hurdles for a marketer to face, and this part is done for you.

One of the most daunting tasks for an infopreneur is writing a cash-pulling sales letter. Creating a sales page is an art - and a well written one can make its owner thousands of dollars over its lifetime or in a single day.

They can cost many hundreds (if not thousands) of dollars to have written for you by someone who is an expert copywriter. That can be intimidating at best for some.

That fact, plus the task of coming up with a desirable product, is a big mountain to face. Creating an infoproduct is both a simple process and a huge responsibility. Writing may not be your first and best talent.

You might know that a particular niche is a great source of income, but don't want to take the time, right now, to put together a full-blown report. A good info product with staying power in the marketplace has been well-researched and is thorough in its content.

With affiliate marketing, that issues is solved. Your only job is to complete the first part of the sales funnel (generating traffic) with one or more of the following steps:

- Capture the traffic through PPC advertising
- SEO optimized articles on ezine directories, Squidoo, Hub Pages, and other web 2.0 properties
- Classified ads
- Banner ads
- Blog posts
- Forum marketing

Then send the traffic to a squeeze page where you offer a nice 5–7-page report for free on the topic of your niche in exchange for their name and email address. This ensures you'll be able to market to them after the initial sale.

Or, you can send them to your website or blog where they can learn more about what you're selling if you feel they may need a more intense pre-sell regimen. This is often the case if you find a great product to

promote as an affiliate, but the product owner's sales copy is weaker than expected.

As an affiliate marketer, your main focus is on getting the sales copy in front of the prospect's eyes. You have to get inside your potential buyer's mind and thinking process – what actually motivates them to seek your product in the first place? What words or phrases do they use in their search engine journey to find the information they need?

A good affiliate program has the materials provided by the owner of the product or service to make your job easier. It will have many of the pieces ready to fit into the marketing funnel – including pre-made banner ads, a list of suggested keywords, a short report to offer as a viral freebie, PLR articles and a pack of ready to use email messages.

What You Need to Know to Begin Affiliate Marketing

While affiliate marketing *does* offer a shorter sales process for you, there are still some things you need to know before you can just slap up some site, drive traffic and get decent conversions.

For one, you need to know how to pick products. You'll need to do some homework. That involves deciding on the niche you wish to pursue and then researching where to find the product or service that you want to promote within the niche. Some do it in reverse and will look for a hot selling product and then find ways to get a piece of the niche profits.

A good affiliate marketer knows his or her market - and part of the way they get to know them is through visiting the niche forums and paying attention to the questions that keep coming up.

At some point, you'll want to do some keyword research, too. Get inside your prospect's mind so that you know what terms to focus your campaign on. A good affiliate program may have these listed for you to help make your job easier, but you can find words and phrases other affiliates aren't using and rank very high for those in search engines like Google.

Then, once you've chosen your product, you need to be signed up in the affiliate program. This is fairly simple for some companies like ClickBank or Amazon, but others have a more involved sign-up process.

Next, you'll want to grab your unique affiliate hyperlink for the product, which ensures that you get paid on any sales made through your referrals.

Now the fun part - getting targeted traffic to the affiliate sales page! This involves writing articles to publish on ezine directories or Squidoo or having pay per click ads pointing people directly to the main sales site.

For products or services that lend themselves well to ongoing sales, like weight loss, dating, make money online, etc., you'll certainly want to set up an email capture page (squeeze page) which will involve you getting an autoresponder service like Aweber set up.

There are so many ways to catch and drive traffic that are beyond the scope of this report, so do your homework. With so many choices, you're sure to find the perfect product to promote – and the best traffic tactic to use with your niche prospects.

Would you like to be on the other side of the coin? A product owner who has an army of affiliates working to funnel traffic to you in exchange for a percentage of the sale? It's easy, once you know how.

Affiliate Marketing and Your Own Product

There are two sides to affiliate marketing: being an affiliate marketer as we have just discussed and selling a product that others can promote as affiliates for you.

You become the product creator.

You come up with a sales page.

You design an affiliate program that makes selling your product profitable to others.

Aside from having a top quality info product that caters to a hungry market, you also need to invest time or money into creating a sales letter that makes it impossible for visitors to pass by.

There is a two-fold benefit to having your own product: you profit from initial sales, plus you profit on the commissions from affiliate links strategically placed inside your own product.

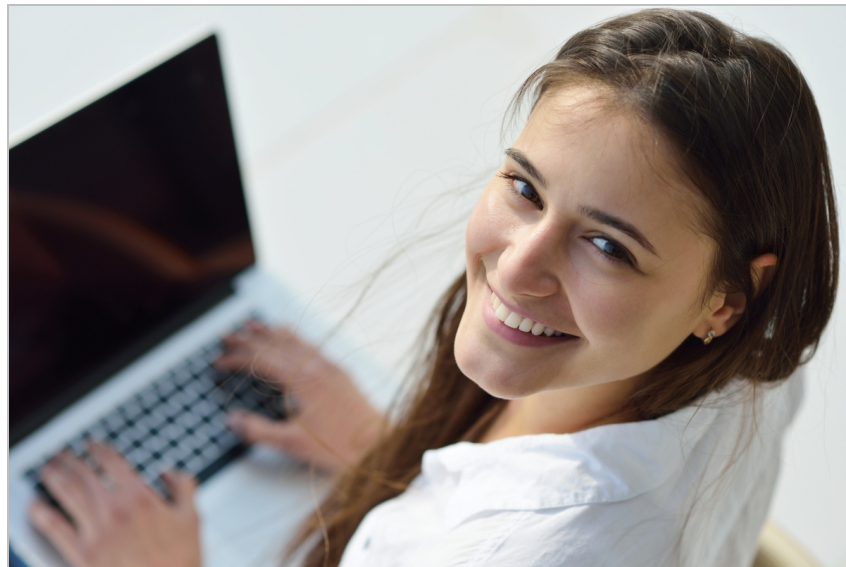
If you want to make your affiliate program really shine and make it enticing for affiliates, then you need to offer the following:

- Review copy of the product
- Sales letter that you're testing, tracking and tweaking
- Banner ads of various sizes and color schemes
- Text link ads for them to embed on their blog or website
- Free viral report they can use to attract prospects for you
- A week's worth or more of autoresponder messages they can use to email their list
- Five or more articles that fit the niche and are ready to use in article directories and other hot spots online
- PPC ads that are ready for them to go live with
- Regular interaction and encouragement with affiliate marketers, including contests that offer prizes to top affiliates.

Also, when you price your product, make sure you set the commission so that it's generous to affiliates. Many affiliates are looking for at least a \$20 affiliate commission. The higher the price point of the product, the lower the percentage you can offer to affiliates. For instance, they would love 10% of a \$1,000 product (\$100) over 50% of a \$100 product (\$50).

Affiliate marketing is a great way for online entrepreneurs to make a great income without shouldering the full burden of a marketer. It may take a

little homework to find the right niche and the right product, but add to that your own determination to make it work and affiliate marketing could be the answer to putting your day job to rest – once and for all.



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