

How to Tell If an Affiliate Program is Any Good

By Clay Mabbitt

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The wide variety and flexibility of money making opportunities available on line means there is no concrete list of attributes a program should or should not have. This makes it extremely difficult for inexperienced entrepreneurs to make heads or tails of all the programs out there.

How can you be sure that you aren't spending months of your life building a downline in a program that will fold within the next year? Unfortunately, there are too many variables for anyone to be 100% certain that a company will stand the test of time, but there are certain clues that will increase your odds of being right.

Here are things to look for (and lookout for!) in some of the major categories of online opportunities to help you identify which businesses are most likely to succeed.

Product Resale/Referral

The first thing to examine is the product. Does this product fill a need that more than a few isolated people have? Is the price of the product reasonable (even to someone who isn't participating in the program)? Would you buy the product if you weren't in the program? If the answers to these questions aren't

satisfactory, than the business won't be around long. Move on.

The second thing to examine is the compensation plan. How likely is it you will make money in this program? Is the program structured so that most people can make several hundred to several thousand dollars a month, or is it set up so a few heavy-hitters make absurd

amounts of money that the company can use in its marketing literature while members with less than several thousand referrals in their downline struggle to break even? If it isn't possible to break even by filling the first level or two of the program, the majority of the people who join the program will lose money.

Traffic Generation

There are two successful approaches to traffic generation. The first is winning the numbers games. By that I mean if you get a ridiculously large number of random people to visit your site, odds are at least a few of them will be interested in what you have to offer. The visitors who are interested might be a tiny fraction of your total, but if you bring enough traffic, a small percent can mean quite a few bites. Good examples of these programs will allow you unlimited downlines for multiple levels. The programs should be free (or it will take more effort than it is worth getting people to join). The website for the program should be very professional and convincing, as this site is going to be closing the deal for you when potential referrals click your link.

The second approach to traffic generation is targeting. Targeting traffic is the practice of pursuing the people who are most likely to be interested in your offer. If you have a hardware site, you are trying to get contractors and handymen to visit. Instead of focusing on a large number of visitors, you pursue the select group who is most likely to be interested in your site. The value of these programs depends largely on their categories. These programs will segment traffic into different categories. The visitors you receive are directed to your site by the program because they are interested in whatever category you chose for your program. So if there is a category that very accurately describes your area, you will experience better results. If you run an investment banking web site, then you would want to find a program that will bring you traffic under the category Investment Banking. Not quite as good would be a category of Finance. If the traffic sent to you is under the category Business, then you're still getting better than untargeted traffic, but not by much.

Note: Many traffic generation programs will use a combination of both of the above approaches.

Paid Email/Surfing

A good paid email/surfing program is one that actually sends out payments. These companies make their money

(some of which is passed onto you) from advertisers. Some programs have difficulty collecting payments from their advertisers. As a result they don't have money to pay the members who are spending their free time reading ads for vitamins and discount vacations.

The question then becomes how do you know a program can collect from the advertisers. The simplest indicator is often time. How long has the program been around? Another good indication is the quality of their offers. If the offers of their advertisers are at least moderately interesting, then it's more likely some of the people viewing these offers are signing up for them. Advertisers are sure to pay (and continue to pay) for marketing methods that get results.

Internet Marketing

If you want to create an Internet scam, masquerading as an Internet marketing program is one of the easiest ways to go about it. Even in legitimate marketing programs, the product being sold is information. Inherent to the sale of information is the fact no one can check out the product until they've paid for it, however, that does not mean that you can't check out the company.

Newsgroups are crawling with the tales of people who have been scammed. Do a search on the program name, and you will quickly discover how many people have been burned. Having said that, you should realize that even the best programs will have a few negative comments in the newsgroups. There are always people who signed up for a program and simply waited for the cash to start rolling in instead of putting effort into building an income. When these lazy folks didn't magically become wealthy, they decided to shout from the rooftops (or message boards) how their program was full of empty promises. Be sure to read through the messages and get a feel for how much effort the poster really put into trying to make the program work. You can get a better picture of the quality of the program by looking for posts in different places from different people.

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