

Achieving Success with Affiliate Programs

By Angela Wu

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No product... not even a product idea. What's a would-be online entrepreneur to do?

For many beginners, affiliate programs seem like a dream come true: earn a commission selling another company's products or services. No need to create one of your own! What's even better is that you only have to place a couple of banners or links on your website, and this hot product will sell itself! Right?

No. Just like with any other online business, earning money from affiliate programs requires education and experience with Internet marketing. Affiliate programs are a great way to learn the basics of marketing online. Although it's the rare person who makes a significant full-time income from them, many people find that they provide an excellent supplementary income stream.

Many newbies to the 'net are so eager to get started that they sign up with every affiliate program that looks good to them. They advertise like crazy, often spend hundreds of dollars -- only to be disappointed at their complete lack of sales.

So what does it take to make money with an affiliate program? Here are a few key tips ...

___Make Smart Choices.

To get started, choose only one or two high-quality programs that are a good fit with your website audience. For example, if you're running a crafts website, don't advertise technical software.

One or two programs will provide you with plenty of work

to begin with. More than that and you may find yourself frantically trying to promote too many and having little success. It's better to start earning money with a couple of good programs first, then gradually add additional income streams later on.

You may also find, over time, that your audience responds to a certain type of product and not to others. Test different offers to see which ones your audience like best.

__Don't Rely on Your Downline.

2-tier affiliate programs offer additional commissions everytime someone in your 'downline' makes a sale. Your 'downline' are those people you refer to the program who also become affiliates.

Don't become obsessed about recruiting subaffiliates. Remember that you can only control your own efforts; you can't control what other people do. Concentrate on making your own sales... and if your subaffiliates make sales too, consider it a nice bonus!

__Hard Work, Determination, and a Willingness to Learn

Don't let anyone tell you different: Internet marketing is hard work. It does *not* consist of slapping up a few banners, blasting out a few ads, or - heaven forbid - spamming millions of people.

You'll need the determination to keep you going through the 'tough' periods. People tend to expect instant results on the Internet. Unless you're a marketing genius or already have a targeted, high-traffic site, chances are you won't see immediate results. Keep in mind that everyone's different - some people will see profits in a few weeks, others in a few months.

__Experimentation and Adaptability

One day, after plenty of hard work, you may finally see the coveted 'You've made a sale!' notification. That's wonderful! Now HOW and WHY did you make that sale?

Don't be afraid to experiment with different marketing methods. If one thing doesn't work, try another. If something works, keep using it or even try to improve upon it.

For all of this experimentation to be successful you must track the results of each marketing campaign. This is the only way to truly determine which methods are bringing in profits, and which ones should be replaced with something more effective.

While it's true that most people never make money from affiliate programs, it doesn't have to be true for you. Only you can determine the outcome!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Angela is the editor of Online Business Basics, a practical guide to building an Internet business on a shoestring budget. If you're tired of hype and just want solid, down-to-earth information, then visit us today -- and in moments you can have access to loads of instantly useable tips, specifically chosen for beginners!

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