

A Theme-Based Website, Part 3- Choosing Affiliate Programs

By Julie Georg

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In parts 1 & 2 , I determined that developing a theme-based site is a great way to generate income. It's going to be a WINning situation for the search engines, my visitors, my merchants and ME. I've chosen a theme that I know (or can find out about) and love. I've found lots of keywords that are related to my theme and have lots of ideas for good content to offer my visitors. Now I need to find merchants who sell products, programs or services that are appropriate for my site and will fit with my content.

Once again, I'm going to look at my list of keywords. Since people are going to use these words to search and I've used them to write my "keyword focused" content for each page of my site... it only makes sense that the products and services I want to represent should also be related to these keywords. That will help me to seamlessly recommend the product within my content and really use my content to presell.

There are several ways to find merchants.

Technique 1: I'll do a search on my keywords at several of the engines - Google, AltaVista, Overture, or any of the others. Then I'll have a quick look at the first ten or twenty listings. If I use SiteBuildIt!, the Manager will automatically show me ten related sites for each keyword. (You can take the quick tour of SBI! at... <http://quicktour.sitesell.com/assist3.html>) Wherever you get the listings, some will be merchants, while other are content sites. (Of course some are always irrelevant. Lots of room for my theme-based site!) I'm going to take a look at the merchants' sites and see if they have something I'd like to offer my visitors and if they have an affiliate program. If so, great. They go on my "keep in mind" merchant list for that keyword. Next I can explore the content sites. Maybe I'll find ideas for content, but I'm mainly here to see if THEY link to any merchants. If so, I can click through and see what I find. Can you see the beauty of this? I'm going to have content ideas and possible merchants all organized by keyword. That's going to make things pretty easy when I go to build my "keyword focused" pages, no?

Technique 2: I'll do a search for each of my keywords, plus the word "affiliate", like this... +Italian wine +affiliate. Or I can try this... affiliate wine. What will come up are either merchants with affiliate programs or content sites that are affiliates. Again, for the merchants, I'll see if I like their product and affiliate program. For the content sights, I'll check their links.

Technique 3: Now I'm going to check the directories. There are a lot of affiliate program directories out there. I'll check with a few of the best, like AssociatePrograms.com, Refer-It.com, CashPile.com and Associate-It.com. The directories list programs by category, so I'll go right to the categories that fit my site theme and see if there is any program I like. They often have reviews as well, which I'll check.

Technique 4: One more thing I could do is to join affiliate networks. These networks provide merchants with affiliates and vice-versa. It's a good place to get exposure to a wide variety of merchants. I'm sure to find some I haven't run across already, so I'll check to see if any programs are featured that will work for me. I can join Commission Junction, BeFree, LinkShare, and/or ClickTrade.

That took a bit of work, but now I'm ready to narrow down my choices and weed out merchants with less than great

products, or poor affiliate programs. I'm going to be pretty particular. The products I choose to represent will reflect on me. And the quality of the affiliate program will be reflected in my commission checks. I want my visitors to be happy and come back to my site. And I want fair compensation for delivering such valuable, presold customers to my merchants' sites.

In part 4 of this series, I'll explain how best to build a theme-based site. Questions?
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About the author:

Julie Georg is a consultant to individuals and small businesses interested in establishing a web presence. Step-by-step directions for building a theme-based site can be found in the excellent, free Affiliate Masters course. Blank email mailto:tamsassist3@sitesell.net

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