

# 10 Critical Things to Look For in an Affiliate Program

By Leo Bergen

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If you're considering the possibility of making money on the Internet through affiliate programs, here are 10 important points to consider before you invest your time and money in any affiliate program.

### 1. Is the Merchant Hiding from You?

When you participate in any affiliate program you should make sure that the merchant's company name, address and telephone number appears somewhere on his or her website. Once you have found the contact information make a hardcopy of it and put it away for future reference.

If the only form of contact you have with the merchant is by e-mail, and the merchant's website disappears, your commission checks could be gone too.

Personal Tip: Whenever I invest my time and money in any business venture I always think worst case scenario. What is worst thing that can possibly go wrong in this business venture? If I can live with that problem I will move on.

I want you to think for a minute.

How many brick and mortar businesses have you seen or heard of that don't have a phone number and mailing address. In my lifetime I have not yet seen or heard of any brick and mortar business without a phone number and mailing address.

By not placing their mailing address and telephone number on their website this should tell you that they are not taking their web business seriously.

It is a wise thing to do a support test and email the company before you start promoting their program to see if they reply to your email.

Here is one e-book everybody should read it is called "Kickin' Butt and Takin' Names" and after you've finished reading this e-book you will know why it's important to have your company name address and telephone number on your website. This e-book comes free when you purchase a one year subscription to this very informative ezine called The iCop Rap sheet. Click here for more details. <http://www.affiliateprogramsreview.com/icop.htm>

### 2. Maximize Your Monthly Income

Let's say you want to earn \$1000 per month, let's say the product you are selling is a broom, each broom sells for \$40.00 each. And you get a 25% commission for selling each broom, which comes to \$10.00 in commission per sale. So you have to sell 100 brooms in order to make \$1000.00 per month.

Now compare that to \$20.00 broom at 25% commission. You will make \$5.00 per sale. So you have to sell 200 brooms in order to make \$1000.00 per month in sales.

Believe it or not, it takes the same amount of effort to market the cheaper broom as the more expensive one.

Whenever I am buying a product over the Internet or looking for an affiliate program to promote, I look to see if the merchant has testimonials from satisfied customers on their website. I feel more at ease doing business with a merchant knowing that there are other people out there who are satisfied with this company's products.

Did you know that many affiliates don't believe this but one of the best ways for you to sell an affiliate product is to buy the product use it and then provide a personal endorsement?

### 3. Are You Losing Sales

The more payment options the merchant offers for its product the more money you will make in commissions. Not everybody has a credit card and some people think it's not safe to use their credit card over the Internet. So if the only payment option is by credit card this could cost you sales.

### 4. When Will You be Paid?

Look for programs that have monthly payment schedules. Some merchants only pay their affiliates every 3 months. If you are like most people you have monthly bills to pay. So it is wise to look for affiliate programs that will pay you on a monthly basis.

I don't imagine that you want to wait 3 months to get paid for your efforts. In most cases quarterly payments are just a sign of laziness and ignorance from the merchant's end.

Only accept a clear pay structure. Any legitimate affiliate program should be written up so that it clearly states what you will receive for your effort. This sounds simple enough, however there are many affiliate programs that offer very vague pay rates. If does not clearly state in the affiliate agreement what you will receive for your efforts avoid them.

Not so long ago I researched an affiliate program that promised you a percentage of nothing. The merchant stated the rate of commission but they did not state the cost of the product. Any affiliate who signs up for a program like that is setting himself up to be ripped off.

### 5. Are Your Affiliate Sales Going Untracked?

Many affiliate programs use cookies to track your affiliate sales. This is a good method of tracking but this system has a few flaws in it.

Here are a few things you should be aware of:

- 1 .If a person buys from you and has cookies turned off that sale will go untracked and you will not get paid for that sale.

There is a solution to that problem. Some merchants have it setup so you cannot access some of their WebPages unless cookies are turned on.

Just to give you one example Topicia is one such company. A webpage pops up stating that you cannot access this webpage unless cookies are turned on.

2. The area on your computer where cookies are stored can fill up so that others won't be stored.

The so-called professionals claim that not more than 5% of cookies are lost in these ways

Make sure you have your cookies on your computer turned on. And remember what comes around goes around.

To learn more about different methods of affiliate link tracking see the article, "How does affiliate tracking work: A 'not-too-technical' overview!" <http://www.affiliatemarketing.co.uk/howitworks.htm>

## 6. A Common Mistake Most Affiliates Make

One of the most common mistakes affiliates make is that they link directly to a company's index page or homepage. The one way to increase your affiliate sales is to take your visitor to one page with one specific offer. Conversion rates always go up if the visitor is only given one specific offer. If your visitor is given multiple choices they usually choose to not do anything at all.

## 7. Does the Merchant Give You a Helping Hand?

Many of the affiliate programs that I have researched the only marketing material that they provide you with is banners and links .The amount of marketing support you get from these companys is pretty much zero. It is in the merchant's best interest to help you the affiliate succeed.

Luckily there are some affiliate programs that do offer marketing support. Look for programs that provide you with a wide variety of marketing tools to help you succeed.

## 8. Does the Merchant Plan to Expand its Product Line?

When you are looking for a new affiliate program to market look for an affiliate program where the merchant is constantly adding new products to its product line.

This will increase your income potential plus your customers will keep coming back to see what's new and exciting.

When you decide to join an affiliate program where the merchant is constantly expanding its product line, make sure the merchant supplies you with a website.

If the merchant doesn't supply you with a website what will often happen is that the customer will often bypass you and go directly to the merchant the next time they want to buy something.

## 9. Look For Community Support

Look for affiliate programs that offer you community support. It is in the merchant's best interest to help you succeed but very few affiliate programs offer you community support. A community forum tends to encourage information exchange between affiliates and usually offers news and expert advice.

## 10. Read it or Weep

Many of the affiliates don't bother reading over the affiliate agreement before they sign up. Please do me a favor and read over the affiliate agreement before you sign up. I know these agreements are boring to read, but some day you will be glad you did. Some affiliate agreements have an exclusivity clause meaning that you cannot sell similar products for another merchant while selling this merchant's products.

Not to long ago I researched affiliate program where the merchant was using the product terms of service as an affiliate agreement. This merchant might have good intentions in paying you but good intentions don't pay the bills.

Wishing You Success,

Leo Bergen

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