

Are You Giving Away Your Digital Products For Free?

By Mark Idzik

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If you sell any kind of digital product online, chances are you are giving them away for free. Now, you may not be aware of that, but it's true.

When you created your site, you undoubtedly also created a "thank you" page that thanks your customer for the purchase and allows them to download your product. This is most often the case if you use the popular ClickBank or PayPal systems to process your digital orders.

Is that page secure, or is available to anyone to find and download your product for free?

Imagine this. You are searching for information about a product you are interested in, and you happen across a link directly to that product's download page. Not only that, you find that there are other links, prominently displaying other marketer's products .. all pointing to their download pages. No security, just visit and download the products for free!

Now you may think this isn't possible, is it? This can't happen to me, can it?

After searching for less than 5 minutes using my favorite search engine, I found no less than 5 product thank you and download pages with links to digital products! If I had wanted to, I could have downloaded all 5 products .. and not paid one thin dime!

A subscriber recently emailed to tell me she had also experienced the same thing, except it was her page she found. She was horrified to find her product thank you page listed in a popular search engine, available for anyone to download. And yes, of course the page was ranked well since it had all her product keywords listed. This is not the time you want your pages ranked well in a search engine!

If your product was available in these results, and only 1 person a day would download your product without paying, how much would you be losing every month ... every year? How would this affect your bottom line?

WHY?

Here's why this happens and how you can stop giving away your products.

Search engines regularly crawl through web sites looking for pages to add to their indexes. If they run across your product "thank you" page, more than likely it will eventually show up in that search engine's index ... along with your download links completely exposed.

Also, sometimes unscrupulous individuals pass around your thank you page URL to anyone they know or post it on newsgroups or discussion boards. Illegal? Yes. But it's hard to stop the spread of your URL once it's out.

HOW TO STOP THE THEFT

There are several ways to stop this theft, all with different degrees of difficulty and effectiveness, but the main idea is that you need to protect your thank you page and ensure that anyone visiting that page has actually purchased your product. Here are a few ways you can do this:

1. Add a meta tag to your thank you page to direct robots to stay away. This should stop robots from crawling your pages, but is not completely effective, and cannot remove any page you currently have listed in a search engine. Here's an example of a META tag your could add between the HEAD and /HEAD tags of your product download page:

```
META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOINDEX"
```

(tells the search engine not to index this page)

```
META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOFOLLOW"
```

(tells the search engine not to follow any links on this page)

2. If you use ClickBank to process your digital product sales, use their advanced security system. This allows you to create a "seed" that automatically is sent to ClickBank with every purchase, is encrypted, and then a special script checks to see if that seed is available on your thank you page to "authenticate" the purchase. If the "seed" is not found or doesn't match, the visitor is not allowed to view the page.

This protection works very well, but the installation and setup requires advanced technical skills, or hiring a programmer to implement it for every product your sell. There is no support or help files available for this protection feature.

3. Change the name of your thank you page every week. This would slow down the theft. If your URL is passed around, chances are you've already changed the name.

This works, but you have to manually change the name of your thank you page and the page URL in your payment system (ClickBank) on a regular basis.

4. Create your own protection system. This could involve setting up systems that email the product download links manually, or automatically, set up automatically generated passwords to access your product download page, just process your orders manually (I don't recommend this!), or a similar protection function.

If you are a programmer, this option may be for you.

5. Use a product that helps you protect your products like Digital Order Guard or Protection Generator. This type of software automatically creates code "snippets" that you add to your existing sales and thank you pages and automatically protects them from unauthorized access.

Even if someone does find your pages in a search engine or any other method, if they did not

purchase your product through your payment system (either ClickBank or PayPal) they would be automatically re-directed to a page of your choice, keeping your download pages protected.

If you sell using ClickBank or PayPal and want a quick, easy solution to secure your digital products, this may be for you.

Regardless of how you do it, if you don't want to give your products and profits away, don't "leave them on your front porch for anyone walking by to pick them up" and keep them protected.

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Mark Idzik is an online product developer and marketer. He is the creator of Digital Order Guard, a system that protects digital product downloads. To get more information, visit his site at: <http://www.digitalorderguard.com>
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