

Time Is Money -- Stop Wasting It

By Mike McBride

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A while back I was mentoring a woman who happened to be on my first level in a multi-tier affiliate program. She was a single mom with a low-paying job, trying to earn some money online to make ends meet, so I was giving her a little extra time and attention. After reworking an ad for her and sending her some suggestions as to how and where to use it, I didn't hear from her for several days. I emailed her again to see how the reworked ad was working. Her reply? She hadn't even opened the first email because she was buried in emails from the various "paid to read" email programs she belonged to. She was spending so much time reading emails for pennies (or less) each, that she had no time left to make any real money! When she said that she didn't want to give up on those programs, she no longer had a mentor either.

Reading countless emails for pennies is not the only way to waste time *not* earning decent money online. Here are a few more things to avoid.

1) Joining *too many* affiliate programs

There are lots of good affiliate programs out there, with many excellent products and services to promote. Many people earn a healthy full-time or supplemental income doing nothing but promoting affiliate programs. So why do most people fail to make any real money at it? Because they join practically every affiliate program they come across, and then dilute their efforts by trying to promote them all, or become paralyzed by the sheer number of choices and don't work any (or most) of them.

The cure: limit yourself to no more than a handful of programs, at least to start. Of those, pick one to start with. Focus your efforts on promoting that product or service until you begin to

see results -- sales, signups, whatever produces income in that program. Then repeat the process with the next program you chose, and then the next, and so on. Pretty soon, you're an affiliate earning machine! (Forgive me.)

2) Using "canned" ads

Practically every affiliate program comes with a supply of pre-written ads for affiliates to use, and practically every affiliate uses them. The result? Repeated viewing of the same ads over and over again causes potential prospects to become immune to the offering. Heck, they become so immune to them that after a while they don't even see them. (And to be honest, some of the canned ads are so *bad* that even on first viewing, potential prospects don't respond to them anyway.) You can waste your time posting them, but few people will waste *their* time reading them.

The cure: write your own ads. (Forget the "I can't write" excuse. If you can talk, you can write - period. Get over it.) There are plenty of resources online to teach you how to write effective ads, and many of them are free. Another free way to learn to write ads is to read and study ads written by the pros. (Most advertisers and copywriters keep a "swipe file" of profit-pulling ads written by others. They don't copy them, but simply refer to them when they are in need of ideas or inspiration.)

How to write ads is beyond the scope of this article, so I'll just say this: Be bold, be different, and be honest. And then test, test, and test some more. And if you really, really, really can't do it yourself, then hire someone to do it for you. You're in business, right? So invest a little in your success. (Note: some affiliate programs require you to submit your original ads to them for approval before running them, so check your affiliate agreement first.)

3) Promoting "company" or "replicated" web pages.

Most programs provide their affiliates with their own company web page or affiliate url to promote. And most (unsuccessful) affiliates rush to promote these urls to their safelists (ugh) and post these company web pages on the hit exchanges like No More Hits, StartBlaze and the like. And just as with the canned ads, web surfers see these same pages over and over so often that they become immune to them. Yup, BuildReferrals again. CashEvolution. MoneyMailer. Again and again, ad-nauseum. Look, company-supplied web pages have their place, but advertising isn't it, so stop wasting your time humping them.

The cure: Create your own web page to promote the affiliate program. As Dr. Ken Evoy (of the acclaimed 5 Pillar Affiliate Program, SiteBuildIt!, Make Your Site Sell, etc.) teaches so well, your job as an affiliate is to *pre-sell* your prospects

on the product or service you're promoting, and then passing them on to the company site for them to "close the sale." Everything you need to know about this process is covered extensively in the "Affiliate Masters" ebook provided as a bonus for subscribing to Marketing-Mentor. Enough said.

4) Using "rotator" pages to promote multiple programs.

You've seen, and maybe even used, "rotator" pages -- those programs that *let* you to promote one url and have maybe 3, 5 or even 10 different web pages shown in rotation. Never mind that you're giving up prime real estate at the top of the web page, where the rotator company puts their logo and their info and their ad to get people to their business. You're also diluting your efforts by promoting too many programs at once. You can't use ezine or other classified advertising, because you don't know which page will come up when someone clicks the rotator link in an ad. You're left with something like, "Come play rotator-roulette; click this link and see which of my businesses comes up!"

Most people load their rotators and put them on the hit exchanges, then wonder why they don't make any sales or get anyone to join their programs. At the very least, my friend, it's a numbers game, and the numbers are stacked against you. (See number 3 above.) We've seen those pages a thousand times. Number 1001 is not the charm.

The cure: Dump the rotator pages. If you can't decide which program to concentrate on, sit down and breathe deeply until your head clears. Then make a decision, follow the above advice, and stick with it.

5) Relying on "hit exchanges" to do your marketing for you

As I touched on above, most people throw their affiliate or company web page on the hit exchanges and then expect the money to come rolling in. When that doesn't work, they figure the affiliate program is at fault, so they join a different one and put *that* page up instead. After a few such cycles, they conclude that hit exchanges don't work, and they either give up the ghost, or they look for different ways to get people to their "me-too" website.

The cure: Hit exchanges can be useful, but not as places to post yet another "BuildReferrals" or "CashEvolution" website. (I don't mean to pick on either of those programs; they are just among the most over-exposed sites on the exchanges.) You should be using the hit exchanges for one purpose only -- to build an opt-in email list that can be promoted to over and over again. Whether you're promoting an ezine or newsletter, a special report or training series, a free ebook, whatever, the goal is to have the viewer willingly and knowingly give you their name

and email address (at the very least, their email address) in exchange for what you are offering.

You've probably heard it before, but it's worth repeating -- your opt-in list is gold. Concentrate on building your list, and your list will build your business -- and your income.

6) Posting to FFA's and Safelists

There was a time in ancient Internet history (2-3 years ago) when you could get modest results posting to Free For All pages and Safelists. No more. These days all you get from them are dozens, even hundreds, of ads that (admit it) you don't read. So what makes you think anyone is reading your ads? Why do you think that even the owners/promoters of FFA services and many Safelists caution their members that they should open a "throw-away" or "junk" email account, because they're going to get a *lot* of email coming back at them?

Many FFA services try to tell you that having your own FFA account is far better than just posting to FFA's, because then you get to send a confirmation email (usually containing your ad) to each person who posts to your FFA page. Of course, your replies are going straight to the poster's junk mail account, where it is usually deleted without even being opened. Face it, the only one's making money off FFA's are the FFA owners selling you their "service." Fuggedaboutit.

Safelists are only slightly better, as *some* people (mainly newcomers) do read *some* ads they receive. But for the most part, people join Safelists to post *their* ads, not read *your* ads. Most Safelist ads suffer the same fate as FFA posts -- straight into the junk email account, from which they get deleted without being opened.

The cure: Forget the FFA's and Safelists. Spend a few bucks and place that ad you've worked so hard on in an ezine or newsletter aimed at your target market. Write articles your potential customers might find useful, and submit them to ezines those prospects might read. Work on your search engine positioning. Tweak your pay-per-click ads. You get the idea -- do something USEFUL.

There you have it -- some of the biggest time and money wasters you should avoid if you want to succeed online, along with ways to spend that time wisely. Don't waste another minute -- get started today.

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Mike McBride is the publisher of Marketing-Mentor ezine, a free bi-weekly that provides personalized marketing instruction and advice. Subscribe today at <http://marketing-mentor.com> , or send a blank email to <mailto:subscribe@followupmarketer.com?subject=mm>

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