

# Expanding Your Products With Affiliate Programs

By Ramona Creel

Expanding Your Products With Affiliate Programs

Ramona Creel  
ramona@onlineorganizing.com

OnlineOrganizing.com <http://www.onlineorganizing.com>

Many people think that they can only get involved in e-commerce if they have a product or service of their own to sell -- or a lot of products and services to sell. But this simply isn't true. You can jump on the band wagons for many large companies who already have an amazing array of products available to the general public -- but are looking for ways to increase their exposure. And one of the easiest ways for them to do this is by offering an AFFILIATE program.

## HOW AFFILIATE PROGRAMS WORK

Affiliate programs provide you with a text or graphic LINK that you place on your website, leading back to the original company's site. You are given a unique URL -- one that has some code in it identifying the link as belonging to your website. When a customer clicks through that link and is taken to the other company's website, their system keeps track of where that customer came from. And if that person buys something from the other website, it rewards you with a COMMISSION -- either a flat fee or a percentage of the sale.

## WHY SEND TRAFFIC TO ANOTHER SITE

It might seem at first that affiliate links are antithetical to running a website -- that you are sending your traffic somewhere else. But what you are really doing is providing an additional RESOURCE for your clients -- a reason for them to come back again and again. The goal behind a website -- even one that is designed to promote your company -- is to give your visitors VALUE. So by directing them toward the products or services they might need -- that you don't provide yourself -- you are building credibility and customer loyalty. And, you are making a bit of profit along the way.

## E-COMMERCE ON THE CHEAP

Setting up an e-commerce website can be very EXPENSIVE -- between the shopping cart program, the secure certificate for accepting credit cards, the merchant account fees, and site maintenance, you can go broke in a hurry if your site doesn't grow quickly. However, affiliate programs make e-commerce easy and affordable. You can offer your customers the opportunity to purchase the products that they need on the internet, without having to set the system up yourself. They get the ease of shopping online with a credit card -- and the VALUE of not having to search on the web for the products they desire (because you've been kind enough to point them in the right direction!) -- and you get a satisfied customer base and a nice check from the businesses you support.

Best of all, the other company takes care of all of the sales-related RESPONSIBILITIES of running

an e-commerce site -- processing orders, customer service, after sales support, etc. You don't have to stock inventory, deal with sales tax, handle complaints, or manage the bookkeeping. All you do is put up the link. It's as close to a WIN-WIN situation as you will find in business today.

## OFFERING A QUALITY LINK

However, joining affiliate programs is just like being involved in any other marketing or business opportunities -- you need to be DISCRIMINATING. You don't want to link to a website that has questionable business practices, sells a shoddy product, or does not represent your company well. You put your REPUTATION on the line when you link to a site -- just as you would if you gave your customer a referral to another local business -- and you want to make sure that you are doing your customers a real service with every link you provide. Only link to those companies you believe in and would shop from yourself.

## HOW TO CHOOSE A GOOD AFFILIATE PROGRAM

Start off by selecting an affiliate program that provides content that COMPLEMENTS your website. If you provide interior decorating services, appropriate web links might include home décor, professional organizing, Feng Shui, or even housecleaning. However, you probably wouldn't want to link to a pizza joint's website, as this really has nothing to do with your services.

Also look for a website that provides QUALITY services, products, and information. Your visitors will appreciate being sent to a site that provides both valuable content and useful products, rather than one that tries to hard-sell them from the very start. And the key to being a successful affiliate is VARIETY -- try to offer a lot of different options for visitors, either by linking to a comprehensive site that provides many different features, or by linking to several "niche" sites.

## THE BENEFITS OF BEING AN AFFILIATE

Affiliate programs really are the AFFORDABLE way to build your business. When you think about it, launching a new line of products or services the traditional way requires a lot of time, energy, and money. But with an affiliate program, it simply involves cutting and pasting a link onto your site -- no capital outlay and no real RISK. If it doesn't end up generating the income you thought it would, you haven't lost anything.

Another nice aspect of being an affiliate is the time frame within which you can start earning commissions. With most business expansion efforts, there will often be a substantial "wait" period between launch and that first check. But with affiliate programs, you can begin earning money the very first day you put the link up.

## HOW TO SUCCEED AT AFFILIATE PROGRAMS

Most affiliate programs will provide you with graphics and text to include on your site -- but that is only the first step to really marketing your affiliate links. The first rule to remember is that the MORE links you have to a company, the more potential sales and affiliate commissions you will generate. And don't just put a link on some arbitrary page with no explanation of why it is there. Try to WEAVE it into a part of your site that makes some sense -- and describe to your visitor why the link is valuable to them. For example, one affiliate of our website ([www.onlineorganizing.com](http://www.onlineorganizing.com)) includes little blurbs in her content and articles describing related companies and how they can be of benefit to her visitors. She has included our link in over 50 different places on her site -- always with a bit of text talking about a specific product or service we offer that is relevant to the topic at hand -- and she gets a tremendous number of sales as a result.

Also try to create PRODUCT-SPECIFIC or EVENT-RELATED links. At our site, we send out monthly notifications of sales, special events, organizing holidays, etc. And our most successful affiliates are the ones who include a new link each month describing the offers and activities going on at our site -- giving people a real reason to visit. We also have seen affiliates create entire product pages on their sites that essentially look like their own shopping carts. They include pictures and descriptions of products we offer, and set up the link to take the customer directly to the page on our site where they can buy the recommended item. With the right web design, this kind of link can really enhance your site -- making it appear as though you have a wide variety of products to offer yourself.

As you can see, joining affiliate programs can be a terrific way to create an entirely new income stream for your company – with very little investment or effort on your part. If you are interested in joining the OnlineOrganizing.com affiliate program, please visit [http://www.onlineorganizing.com/Affiliate\\_Program.htm](http://www.onlineorganizing.com/Affiliate_Program.htm) -- and if you would like to set up a creative organizing product page on your site and need some help, please contact me directly at [ramona@onlineorganizing.com](mailto:ramona@onlineorganizing.com). Good luck!

You must include the following resource box when publishing this article:

Ramona Creel is a Professional Organizer and the founder of OnlineOrganizing.com -- a web-based one-stop shop offering everything that you need to get organized at home or at work. At OnlineOrganizing.com, you may get a referral to an organizer near you, shop for the latest organizing products, get tons of free tips, and even learn how to become a professional organizer or build your existing organizing business. And if you would like to read more articles about organizing your life or building your business, get a free subscription to the "Get Organized" and "Organized For A Living" newsletters. Please visit <http://www.onlineorganizing.com> or contact Ramona directly at <mailto:ramona@onlineorganizing.com> for more information.

[Get-Articles.com : 1000's of reprintable business and internet marketing-related articles.](#)

[Submit your article for reprint.](#)