

# Stop Thieves Who Steal Your Affiliate Commissions

By Vickie Bennett

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In his article "How To Protect Yourself Online -- Are You Safe?" Ellery Coleman, ClickBankGuard.com, wrote that he lost 25% of his sales to thieves -- until he secured his affiliate links.

In their May 2002 newsletters Neil Durrant, AffiliateMarketing.co.uk. and Allan Gardyne, AssociatePrograms.com, busted Morpheus file-sharing software that overwrote affiliate links, a "problem" the new version corrects.

According to NameStick.com, domain name forwarding, as much as 43% of affiliate commissions are not tracked.

Jim Edwards, AffiliateLinkCloaker.com, estimates 10-30% of affiliate commissions are stolen, but his product offers limited security, 70-80%.

In fact, it's so simple to alter affiliate links and codes that anyone can.

These Click Bank and PayPal examples are from Ellery Coleman, ClickBankGuard.com.

Test this ClickBank affiliate link:

<http://hop.clickbank.net/?gra27/salesguide>

Right Click on the Web Page, then click View Source.

You've accessed the HTML code and can make changes.

A thief could substitute his ClickBank account ID for the affiliate's. He pays half price for the book and bypasses the 50% commission.

PayPal affiliate links are just as easy to change.

Test this link: <http://www.instantdough.com> .

Right Click, View Source for the HTML code. Use

Search, Find to go to this line:

```
input type="hidden" name="return"
```

```
value="http://www.instantdough.com/thankxyz.html"
```

The thief could copy and paste the code into his

browser and click Enter. He sees, "Thank you for paying your sponsor, etc." But He bypassed the \$20.00 sponsor commission and pays \$9.00 for the membership.

In contrast, look at:

<http://AutomaticBanking.com/pa/main.cgi?TopTen>

Right Click, View Source and use Search, Find to look for this line:

```
input type="hidden" name="return"
```

```
value="http://www.automaticbanking.com/cgi-bin/autoforward.cgi?lock=protect"
```

This merchant changed the HTML code that PayPal provided. A thief can't bypass the affiliate code. If he tries to copy and paste this URL into his browser -- he's busted!

Redirect pages don't protect affiliate links either. The thief could substitute his ID for "ThiefCode."

```
https://secure.clickbank.net/cgi/sgspay/1.cgi?i=3c5060e85tmybxfl
```

```
.ThiefCode.wahgold.003.4777&&t=Instant_Internet_Empires
```

I tested AffiliateLinkCloaker.com, from Jim Edwards, which promises limited security for affiliate links. Go to his web site: <http://affiliatelinkcloaker.com>

and...

Test his unprotected link:

<http://hop.clickbank.net/?ebookfire/ebksecrets>

Test his cloaked link:

<http://www.affiliatelinkcloaker.com/ese.html>

I could still access it on the product page and ClickBank order form. I did not see the hexadecimal code that is supposed to encrypt and protect his ClickBank affiliate ID code, "ebookfire."

Go to the ClickBank Secure Order Form, Right Click, View Source. Go to this line:

```
input type=hidden name=i value="3d386f37689keg74.ebookfire.ebksecrets.001.4900"
```

I asked Jim Edwards if I (or a thief) could change "ebookfire" to another ClickBank ID and bypass his commissions.

He responded, in part:

"ClickBank ... nobody can defend against the last ditch hijack of someone replacing the ClickBank affiliate ID in their browser address bar (that 20% we mention on the web site).

An alternative is for the merchant to not pop a new window to the order page on ClickBank, ... you could lose sales because the buyers don't think it's a secure transaction."

I asked Ellery Coleman if I used ClickBankGuard.com, could a thief go to the ClickBank order form and steal my commissions. He responded:

"Changing the (ClickBank) affiliate ID will not change the original affiliate, who is credited for the commission.

We are working with ClickBank and hope that soon you will not be able to right click on their order page anymore so as to avoid this confusion."

ClickBankGuard creates a secure page added to your web site for each affiliate link. You promote your business with your domain name, not the affiliate link. Thieves (and innocent prospects) never see your affiliate URL in their

browser.

Test ClickBankGuard at:

<http://TopTenMarketing.com>

His response made me feel much better. But...

Affiliate links create other problems for my business -- and yours.

1. Search engine spiders that rank web sites don't rank affiliate URLs high.
2. Prospects are suspicious of long affiliate URLs. They shorten them to find the big company, rather than deal with the affiliate, the "little guy." (NameStick.com claims a short domain name can increase your sales up to 327%.)
3. Redirect pages also cost extra time and identify you as an affiliate.
4. Long URLs are unreliable. Impatient prospects won't copy and paste a broken link into their browsers.
5. Affiliate companies promote their domain name in your affiliate links to build their businesses. You lose name recognition and credibility.
6. Some ad or link trackers also require you to use their domain name in your links. It's free advertising for them, but you lose business.

Fortunately, we can take charge. We can secure our affiliate links and commissions. We can learn to promote our businesses, not the other guy's.

1. Test your affiliate links to see which are vulnerable to thieves.
2. Know what security your affiliate companies use to protect your links and commissions. Don't promote programs that are vulnerable.
3. Verify that your PayPal merchants modify their HTML code to lock=protect your affiliate links.
4. Promote programs that offer their affiliate programs after the customer purchases a product or service.
5. Don't put your download page in your main directory or name it thankyou.html, thanks.html, or other code that's easy for thieves to guess.
6. Don't rely on redirect pages, ad or link trackers, domain name forwarding, or affiliate link cloaking for security.
7. Find alternatives to affiliate links. Write free reports and e-mail courses to pre-sell your products and services. Start a newsletter. Write ebooks that include your links.
8. Make internet security a top priority. Research hackers, scammers, thieves and other crooks.
9. Educate your affiliate program managers, affiliates, customers and prospects. (You may reprint this article. Please keep the resource box intact.)
10. Use a security product or service to protect your affiliate links and commissions.

Thieves, hackers, scammers and other low-life scum will always be with us. But if we work together, we'll have a better opportunity to succeed.

ClickBankGuard secures your links and commissions.

AdTrackZ tracks your promotions. Use your domain name and earn 50% commissions. Vickie Bennett, <http://TopTenMarketing.com> , or Contact me at: TopTenMarketing@aol.com

(NOTE TO PUBLISHER: 996 words. If you are already an affiliate of ClickBankGuard and AdTrackZ, or if you join from TopTenMarketing, you may substitute your response box for mine.

Please include my contact information as follows:

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Thank you.)

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