

Slam Dunk

By Bob Osgoodby

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No we're not talking about an easy shot in the game of basketball, but an opportunity that needs to be investigated.

Every time you turn around it seems you see another affiliate program which promises you vast riches. They give you all the sales material you need and even throw in a free web page. How can I loose, one might think. Everything is all set up for me, and all I need is get a bigger PO Box to handle all the checks that will roll in. Your web site will be carried by the search engines, you have the "pre-written" ads ready to go - how can you loose?

A few ads are placed here and there, and the responses "trickle in" but there are few, if any sales. Time for a reality check. If you have seen one affiliate web site for a particular product, service or opportunity, you have seen them all. There are a number of affiliate programs, which have thousands of people who have bit. Why should a person go to your site when they know from the URL (address of your web page) what it is already?

They won't. Am I saying that affiliate program don't work? No - I am saying that the tools they provide "don't cut the mustard". It is a proven marketing fact that it takes 5-7 exposures to your ad before someone might purchase from you. If you have a "canned" web site, what are the odds of them coming back to you to buy? Slim to none.

So how does a person who is serious about marketing an affiliate program get you to buy from them? First, they "deep six" the affiliate web site as their primary web contact, and create their own. On their web site they provide content which is interesting for anyone who stops by. They also change the content on a regular basis to keep them coming back, and let them know when it does change. They also provide a link to their affiliate web site.

The next step is to try to get a listing on the search engines. Now, think about this. There are most likely several thousand people who have an identical web site to the one you get as an affiliate. What do you think the odds are of someone "stumbling across" your site when surfing the web? Again - slim to none. But if you have your own site, your chances take a giant leap forward. The link to your affiliate site is a minor part of your web site, even though it is where you want them to eventually wind up.

Now - can you use a site that is not your own domain? While not the preferred route to take, it is "head and shoulders" above the link you get from the affiliate program. Most ISP's give you web space free. Learn a little HTML code and you're in business. Or, if push comes to shove, hire someone to do it for you. Let's face it, if I see a URL that I recognize as an affiliate program, and I've been there before, I will simply "click away".

The old saying, that if a "salesperson sells themselves first, the sale of their product or service follows shortly thereafter" is certainly true. Establish yourself on the web and in the newsletters/ezines as someone who can be trusted, and is knowledgeable in their field. If people get to know and trust you, your recommendation to join your affiliate program will carry a lot more weight.

Now that you have control over your web page, you should have a guest book that visitors can sign. Now you have their email address. Folks, these are literally worth their weight in gold. You can now send them email about upcoming events on your web site, and not be accused of spamming.

Run a contest on your web site - the prizes don't have to be off the wall. An ebook (and there a number available free) can be your prize - and again more email address. Write a free newsletter/ezine and publish it on a regular basis - even more email addresses. As long as there is content of interest, they won't mind a gentle reminder to visit your web site.

Consider a "non-competing" partner to help you with the site or to write articles for the ezine. It makes no difference to you if there is another link to another affiliate program on your site. If they are willing to share the work in return for the link, it is to your advantage. The key here is "non-competing".

So - are affiliate programs a "Slam Dunk"? If you simply join and sit back waiting for the money to flow, no. If you are a "take charge" type of person and are willing to work a little, it can be a great opportunity. -----

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