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Affiliate Programs – A Manufacturers Perspective

By Mike Glanville

When Google recently hiked the cost of their Pay per Click program, our company faced spiralling advertising costs, so we began to consider other advertising methods to increase consumer awareness. We like the user interface of Adwords, but are less impressed with the spiralling costs involved. We liked the way we can turn the campaigns on and off, compared to other systems.

Reaction International Ltd is a small company; we manufacture small 3-seater Hovercraft for leisure and commercial applications. see

www.hovpod.com

Like everyone else, we have tried hard to make our website

www.hovpod.com

reach a high position in

the search engines; our main search word objective is Hovercraft. Our web-site designer encouraged us to use Macromedia program `Contribute' to optimise our website for the search word Hovercraft. The Contribute program provides us flexibility to keep the site up to date; we don't need to bother our website designer with day-to-day changes to the content.

The small hovercraft market is growing by leaps and bounds. Historically, hovercraft development has been driven by racing and enthusiasts who prefer to make their own craft out of bits of plywood, from plans supplied by a number of companies. Schools often like to build a hovercraft as part of a science project, the concept of travel on a cushion of air has appealed since its inception. Our company identified a niche market, and set about designing and manufacturing small hovercraft for the Maine Leisure market, dominated by Personal Water Craft (Jet Skis etc). In hovercraft design, it is important to keep weight down to a minimum for best performance, so in the past, the racing and self-build fraternity have not placed durable construction high on their design list priority sheet, whereas marine

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leisure customers demand durability and safety, so the Hov Pod is designed for a new type of market. Typically, Hov Pod customers are people who didn't necessarily know that they were interested in purchasing a Hovercraft; our product appeals to boat owners, Jet Skiers, all-terrain enthusiasts, fishermen, helicopter pilots, rental operators, event organisers, plus it is of interest to bridge builders, environmental scientists and rescue organisations. Google Adwords is great for creating campaigns with distinct adverts that appeal to different market sectors, but costs soared.

Our first marketing attempts were through attendance at expensive Boat Shows, but by routing this expense through Internet marketing, we reach customers from all over the world (Googleland). We like to measure the effectiveness of all advertising methods. In days gone by, our sales and marketing manager promoted other products through trade magazine advertising, and developed a bangs per buck approach, to record how many sales leads he received per advertisement. (Numbers alone are not important, it is also important to measure the quality of the sales leads and measure the conversion rate). Through measurement, he discovered that quarter page adverts, surrounded by editorial content are better than full page ads, and black and white ads are better than colour, as colour ads costs twice as much. This approach originally started when he paid \$3500 for a full-page colour ad in a computer magazine and received one sales lead! That sales lead cost \$3500 - how much as the other leads costing!

To measure effectiveness of this or that approach, you need a yardstick to measure by. The problem is, clicks are not necessarily sales - the question we have to ask is if someone looking specifically for a product, e.g. hovercraft, more likely to buy that product than someone looking for a Jet Ski?

We created an affiliate program that rewards individuals in various locations around the world. Instead of attracting just sales leads at one location with a boat show, to get the product quickly exported around the world, to maintain our unique product advantage, we wanted to find resellers in all areas. The Hov Pod enjoys great appeal, and has no close competitors. We could afford to offer generous affiliate rewards, since typically boat dealers expect attractive commission incentives, and the Hov Pod is fairly easy to maintain. Plus we ship to every country in the world.

We looked at all sorts of affiliate software programs, but chose to develop our own software for recording who sent what sales lead. The reason for this was that we use a CRM database program Goldmine, (see

<http://www.prior-analytics.com/>

) and feared that affiliate software programs would

introduce additional databases, which would require data import from one to other. Our web designer fashioned a auto-capture form, that automatically completes an entry in Goldmine (saves all that writing and getting email addresses wrong). We purchased a inexpensive software from

<http://www.bizpep.com/>

to automate the process.

In our experience todate, our growing band of affiliates are doing a splendid job of getting our name out there, and paying affiliate commission is cost effective, so everyone is happy. Goldmine tracks who has sold what, and we can pay commission on time without any problems. The big question for any affiliate is Will I get paid? so it is fundamentally important that you operate with 100% integrity and pay on time. As more resellers are appointed, so they contribute to paying affiliate commission on sales that originate from affiliate promotions. As manufacturer, we are responsible for making sure this happens, so we pay commissions first, and claim contributions back from our resellers, to manage a harmonious programme, where everyone wins.

Google have now agreed to help us optimise our Adwords campaign, so we hope to maintain a pay per click presence, since after measurement, we still find that PPC meets our advertising objectives. We remain very happy with the affiliate program though.

For further information about our affiliate programme, please visit

www.hovpod.com

Reaction International Ltd manufacture the Hov Pod Hovercraft, see

www.hovpod.com

7 Tips to Choosing a Successful Affiliate Program

By David McKenzie

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When selecting an affiliate program to join you need to know how to choose a successful affiliate program.

Look in the wrong place and you might find a dud but look in the right place and you might be on to a winner.

Here are 7 tips to help you choose a successful affiliate program to join:

1. Look at associateprograms.com This is the affiliate central' of affiliate programs. You can virtually guarantee to find a successful program here and you can choose from tons of subject areas.
2. Look at clickbank.com Nearly every product they have for sale has an affiliate program. Many of them are extremely good and most pay very high commissions. (some over 50%)
3. Affiliate resource sites usually offer their best affiliate programs. As affiliate resources sites are

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specialists in affiliate programs you can be pretty sure of choosing a successful affiliate program from them.

4. Look for affiliate programs that are offered through any ezines you receive. Chances are the ezine owner has an affiliate program and if they have a good ezine they probably will have a good affiliate program.

5. Think of things that ALWAYS sell. Like web site design, ebooks, music and travel. Stick to proven online sellers and the affiliate program will have a much greater chance of being successful.

6. Seek out articles on affiliate programs. There are many good writers out there who have been successful with affiliate programs. Try to find articles they have written to see what has worked for them.

7. Take courses. Many sites offer free online email courses for affiliates. Take some of these courses to learn more about what it takes to be a successful affiliate.

Affiliate programs are a great way to make money but one of the secrets to affiliate success is to choose the right program in the first place. Use these 7 tips to help you succeed.

David McKenzie is offering a Free Email Course "5 Tips to Being Successful with Affiliate Programs"==> <http://www.1sthomebasedbusiness.com> Click now for your FREE course!



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