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Making Money with Affiliate Programs - Part II

By Nowshade Kabir

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In this holiday season online shopping is hotter than ever! According to US Commerce Department online sales continue to grow with a robust 25–27 percent this year over 1992. Online holiday shopping at a rate of 10 percent is also considerably outpacing the 5.7 percent growth of overall retail sales. Goldman Sachs predicts 23 percent of all gift–buying this holiday season will take place online!

So, if you don't have a product of your own to sell online, how can you profit from this exciting trend?

One of the finest ways of making money online is to promote other people's products or services by becoming their affiliates. Affiliate is a term used for a website that drives traffic to another website in exchange for a predetermined commission.

Thanks to the success of several affiliate programs in the early days of online business, most merchant websites, today, use some kind of affiliate programs to promote their sites and generate sales.

Considering the sheer numbers of affiliate programs available on the Internet, you may feel overwhelmed. However, if you set some basic criteria, it would be lot easier to find a good program that suits your need.

Free sign up

The affiliate program that you are planning to join must be absolutely free. There are way too many good programs available for free, why should you pay for one? Moreover, the programs that require payments to join are mostly multi Level Marketing (MLM) programs. Although, there may be many good MLM programs existing on the Internet, I don't think it's a viable option for an average person.

Good commission

You deserve handsome compensation for all your hard work! No matter, how you look into it, in most of the cases,

promoting a product or service is not an easy job. Since you are doing the uphill struggle of bringing the client to the merchant's door, your commission should be real good one. What is an acceptable commission anyway? If you are promoting an information product, don't go for less than 50 percent. For more tangible products and services your bare minimum commission should be 15 percent of the sale. If you are promoting monthly subscription, choose a program that pays a portion of subscription fee as recurring commission to you as long as the client referred by you stays subscribed.

Two-tier affiliate program

An affiliate program which pays certain percent as a commission from the sale for bringing in a client and another if that client brings in other clients. Two-tier affiliate programs are more preferable since once a client base is built, it becomes a great source of residual income.

Quality affiliate tracking system

The merchant should have a very good and well-organized affiliate sales tracking management software system. You have to be absolutely comfortable with the statistics generated by the affiliate program. The program should show such important aspects as repurchase, if any, by the client referred by you, your second tier affiliates, activities by your second tier clients, etc. If you do not feel comfortable with the tracking system provided by a merchant, better stick to the merchants, who use third party affiliate managing system. At least, you will know that a

dishonest merchant won't be able to defraud you.

Efficient customer support

You should feel satisfied with the service and support you get from your affiliate program owner. A good program highly values its affiliates and gives priority to its customer support system. As the clients that you are sending to the merchant are primarily your site's visitors, you should be extremely picky about the quality of customer service the program renders. After all, your own site's reputation is also at stake here!

Promotional materials

If you are planning to promote an affiliate program, you will need more materials than mere banners. Unfortunately,

even many high-end affiliate programs do not carry enough promotional materials to satisfy the need of the affiliates.

Promotional material should include: contents to build mini-sites, various ad articles, different kind of text links, product brochures or presentation, etc.

Commission payment policy

The affiliate program should have a sort of minimum payment policy, where you can receive commissions if even you have made just one or two sales. A reasonable amount is US \$25. Less than that is not viable due to processing costs.

Commission should be paid each month. If you are located outside of US, see if the merchant makes payment through Paypal or other similar services or not. For most of the countries checks issued in other countries are not a good option.

If an affiliate program meets all these above mentioned criteria, you can consider joining in this program. However, to get best result from your efforts, before signing up, you should also consider the following rules:

You have to like the product you are promoting
Any salesman will confirm you that this is one of the fundamental rules of selling. If you are selling a product or service you must have confidence in it. If you like the

product and will use it yourself gladly, you found a product to promote! Don't waste your time with a product that is not up to your taste!

Promote a product or service consistent to your website's subject matter. If your site is all about soccer, you will be better off with products and service related to soccer. If this same site promotes, for example: pesticides, no matter how hard you try your success will be very limited! Before joining in any affiliate program first you should identify who your visitors are, what do they like and which products they will probably buy online. Once you know your niche market it's a lot easier to find products or services for it.

Many webmasters think that in order to make money through affiliate programs, all you have to do is to come up with a site and fill up the site with affiliate links. Sooner or later people will click on them. Unfortunately this does not work! Making money through affiliate programs is also a business and like any business you have to have a proper business plan. Only a well prepared business plan followed by its meticulous implementation can bring success to

your affiliate endeavor.

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'Take Dead Aim' with Affiliate Programs

By David McKenzie

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One of the key success secrets for those that are successful with affiliate programs is to focus. You must take dead aim.

There are many thousands of affiliate programs you can join. Yet to succeed you must ignore 99% of them. You must select a subject area and stick to it.

The days of taking the scattergun approach with affiliate programs are long gone. Once upon a time this was a good method for making money with affiliate programs but now the

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opportunities in this area are all but gone.

Today, you need to be a sniper and sniff out the best affiliate programs around. You need to take a shotgun approach. Do some affiliate marketing research by reading as many articles on a subject as possible. Pick an area you are good at and know something about.

Then pick 3 affiliate programs in this area to join. That's right, just 3!

This way you will focus. You will force yourself to concentrate on fewer areas and fewer affiliate programs.

If you focus and find your own niche you will stand a much better chance of making decent money with affiliate programs.

You see, one of the biggest problems with affiliate programs is there are just TOO MANY opportunities. The irony is that by ignoring most of the opportunities you will actually do well.

The real key to success is not which affiliate program you chose but the affiliate marketing strategies you choose to implement. With 3 affiliate programs you are able to focus more energy and effort into these products. You may even be considered an expert in this particular area because of your knowledge.

Taking dead aim means becoming a specialist. The internet is a great place to specialize and affiliate programs make it just that much easier. The new breed of affiliate that focuses on particular products or services is succeeding now. They are spending all their time on affiliate marketing because that is what differentiates the successful affiliates from the rest.

Take aim with your affiliate programs. Pick just a few.

Concentrate all of your time into marketing these programs – because you are so knowledgeable about the product or service you are selling, you will automatically drive more targeted prospects to what you are selling.

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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