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Introduction

Being an affiliate involves selling products for other people and making a commission off that product. These products can range from ebooks to shampoo to adult toys. Most affiliates sell multivitamins and other simple products that all but sell themselves. These programs are sanctioned by larger companies that want to sell their products in a less traditional manner.

In order for the individual to make any money on the affiliate programs, he or she has to be a sales person and there must a drive. There are many people who will say that affiliate programs are simple money, but these individuals are more than likely making their sales in unethical methods. Through hard work, people are able to escape the bounds of traditional work and become their own boss and run their own store. This takes time, it takes dedication and it takes work.

The affiliate program can get easier as the person engages in it. This is because once the program is on the market and people become aware of it, they are more likely to pay attention to it. There will be return customers and they will spread the news about the program to those that they know and these people will buy the products that the affiliate offers to them. These satisfied customers then in turn spread more word about the products.

The affiliate program often does take some start up money to begin with. While the phrase “You don’t spend money to make money” is typically true, in the affiliate program this is not the case. It is often necessary to build some stock and have sample products for people to try before they make a purchase (especially when you are selling products offline).

There is a science to being an affiliate. This science involves finding an affiliate program which pays well and which offers a viable product. From there, you must decide how best to market that product. Keeping track of the income and the

sales is also very important for tax purposes. All of this can make or break a person who wants to start his or her own small business using existing affiliate programs. By paying attention to the guidelines explained here, you can maximize your chances of doing well as an affiliate.

Finding A Product

Most people would assume that finding the product to sell as an affiliate would be the easy part. This is not always the case, though. There are many thousands of different products on the Internet that are good choices for an affiliate to sell. Not all of these products are profitable and not all profitable products are worth selling as an affiliate.

When thinking about a product to sell as an affiliate, consider first the products you have personally tested and enjoyed (or for which you have good evidence that they are high-quality). This is the process of finding products you actually believe in and can support. This will help to ensure that the product is of good quality and something that people actually want. In addition, if the product is something that someone believes in, it makes it easier to sell.

There are many affiliate programs that can be found online. Deciding which one to use is a matter of preference and belief in the product. Each of these different programs will have different commission rates for sales and different starting costs.

One of the best ways to find the right affiliate program is to use an affiliate directory website. One of the best affiliate directories on the Internet is the website <http://www.AffiliatePrograms.com>. Other good alternatives including <http://www.commissionjunction.com> and <http://www.clickbank.com>. These sites provide the information about a variety of different types of affiliate programs, including commission rates and product popularity. There are programs for retail products all the way to travel and website services. The programs are listed in alphabetical order on the front page and they are sorted by category.

To use this website, simply click on type of affiliate program that one is interested in starting and then read the information about the affiliate program itself. This

information is updated regularly. To choose an affiliate program, simply click on the title of the interesting program and it will take you to the website. This will then allow you to obtain an affiliate ID and corresponding affiliate links, which you can use to sell the product.

Another way to find the right affiliate program is to attend “parties” where a product is being sold. If the individual finds a product that he or she likes and wants to sell, approach the seller and discuss becoming an affiliate. The most common parties include purse parties, jewelry parties, and make up parties. Most of these parties are run by women, although men are free to become affiliates as well. Avon, Mary Kay, and Pampered Chef are the most common parties that people experience.

What To Look For When Promoting a Product

- You will want to look for a program that is of high quality. For instance, look for one that is associated with many experts in that particular industry. This way, you can be assured of the standard of the program you will be joining.
- Look for the ones that offer real and viable products. How do you know this? Do some initial research. If possible, track down some of the members and customers to give you testimonial on the credibility of the program.
- Does the program cater to a growing target market? This will ensure you that there will be a continuous demand for your referrals. Do a little research and make inquiries. If there are forums and discussions groups related to the product topic participate and look for reliable feedback.

- A program with a compensation plan that pays out a residual income and a payout of 30% or more would be a great choice.
- There are programs offering this kind of compensation. You just have to look closely for one. Don't waste your time with programs that do not reward substantially for your efforts.
- Be aware of any minimum quotas that you must fulfill. Some affiliate programs impose pre-requisites before you get your commissions. For instance you may have to make more than a \$100.00 or make ten sales before you receive your paycheck. If the sales target is too hard to achieve you may want to rethink joining.
- Select programs that have plenty of pre made tools and resources that can help you grow the business in the shortest possible time. Not all affiliate programs have these capacities.
- Check out whether or not the program has an automated system that allows you to check your referral statistics and compensation at any time.
- Does the program offer strong incentives for customers to make additional purchases or for members to renew their memberships. Affiliate programs that provide continuous help and upgrades for its products have the tendency to retain more customers. These things can assure the growth of your business.

Marketing A Product

Even the best products on the market need some advertising. Without advertising and marketing, the public will not know that the product exists. What is even more important for an affiliate program is the advertising of the program and the store. This combination of advertising a product and the store will help to draw more people onto the sales floor and this will result in more sales.

There are no set rules for how to market a product. Instead there are suggestions that can help a person market the product, the store, and themselves. This can result in more sales and therefore more money. These methods are not free, but the end result can easily pay for the money that is put into the marketing process.

In some cases, it might be best to hire a professional through a site like <http://www.elance.com> to find talented people who can market the product you're promoting.

Article marketing is a great form of free traffic to market any product, including affiliate products. All you need is a 350-500 word article written and submit it to article directories like goarticles.com, articlecity.com and many more. There are literally hundreds of articles sites you can distribute your article to. You'll gain lots of exposure this way. If you're not a big fan of writing, you can hire writers to write articles for you. Many freelance sites like elance.com and guru.com offer these services.

Website Use

More people shop online now than ever before. There are many stores that have closed their brick-and-mortar storefronts and now function only online. There are a lot of reasons why websites tend to do better than traditional stores. The most realistic reason is that the prices can be kept lower because there is less overhead. The brick store front requires the person to actually rent a place for several hundred a month, hire an employee to man the store, pay utilities and insurance and other costs of business. The only way to cover these expenses is to charge a significant mark up on the products sold in the store.

Internet-based businesses have a much lower overhead than the traditional store. A website is cheap, and in some cases free, to host. Most websites are no more than \$50 dollars a month to host. Websites like VistaPrint.com even allow for free website hosting for a month and then cheap monthly costs. Other sites like Weebly.com offer free website hosting for a weebly.com website and low costs for a true .com domain name.

These websites do not need to be built by a designer. These websites are easy for anyone with minor computer skills to build and most have step-by-step directions. They are simple point and click websites that offer customer service representatives if the person building the site gets stuck. For those who want a very professional and stand out website, these companies offer to have the sites built by a professional for a set fee. The success of the site is then guaranteed.

Just having a website is not enough marketing to do in order to ensure that people see the website. The website needs to be advertised and it needs to be optimized for search engine optimization. This can be done by adding a blog and constantly updating its content. Additionally, you might consider tagging specific search words and by running AdWords campaigns to advertise the site.

Pictures and videos are also big draws for the websites and can help to generate traffic to the website. The more traffic the website receives, the better the chances of a person making a purchase from the website. It is a good idea to offer a lot of pictures and some videos of the affiliate receiving reviews or telling people about the products offered on the website. This can help to increase the draw considerably and ensure that the people who reach the website are educated on the products themselves.

It is important to remember that just because the affiliate is a good sales person and that he may be capable of building a website, he may need help creating blogs or copy write material for advertising purposes. SEO, or search engine optimization can also be very difficult and he may need assistance. It is best that he uses a professional writing—such as the ones on Elance.com—to ensure that the writing and content is professional and effective for advertising purposes.

Store Displays

Another good idea is to talk with the small businesses and stores in the local vicinity about hosting the products on their shelves. This works by selling the products at a discounted price to the store and allowing them to sell the products at a full price. This helps to provide the products to a public that prefers to shop at a traditional store rather than an online one.

This also helps to decrease the overhead because the store owner would be covering the costs of advertising for the product. He or she would also be covering the costs associated with running a brick store, including the personal needed to run the store. This can mean more profits for the affiliate even though the products were sold at a cheaper rate than normal. It is important to use this discounted rate for the store since the store will buy more products and the store will also need to make a profit otherwise the store will discontinue the product on their shelves.

When approaching a store about hosting a display about your product it is important to remember that some stores actually have mother stores that do not allow this. Even if the store owner gets rude, do not follow suite. Instead, calmly thank them for their time and walk away. Always be a professional. Another good idea is to carry a small sample of the products into the store. This will help to sell the product to the store owner.

If the store owner allows the affiliate to set up a display, be sure not to make it too big or overly obnoxious. By having a smaller and professional looking display, the store owner will be more likely to allow it to remain in place and people will pay more attention to something that does not hurt their eyes to look upon.

If the store owner allows the product to be displayed on the shelves with the other products, attach place cards to the shelf that describe what the product is

and why it is so effective. This will educate the public and it will help to drive sales. This is for the affiliate's and the store owner's benefit if the public is more interested in the products.

Word of Mouth

Word of mouth is one of the most effective advertising methods out there. This is can work both ways though, and this is why it is so important to provide a product that is of high quality rather than one that is cheap and does not perform. Word of mouth is free advertising and it helps to reach thousands of people every day, one person at a time.

Most people talk about products that they enjoy and that they like. The better the product, the more people will talk about using it. They will express how easy it is to use, how affordable it is, the quality and why their friends should all get one. The word of mouth is most often more accepted by a wider number of people than any other means of communication about a product.

The downside to word of mouth is that if people do not like the product, they will be very clear about this as well. This is why it is very important to only offer products that are high quality and worth the money that the people are putting down for it. Now, there will always be those individuals who feel that they did not get their money out of a product. There is no help for this, but if the percentage of these people is low, then the word of mouth advertisement method can be very effective.

Word of mouth can also be used on the website through a process called reviewing. These reviews are people's testaments as to how the product worked for them. There are some websites that will fabricate testimonials, but these are unethical websites and people are often able to tell if the testimony is false or true by the way it is worded and written. Everyone has a unique writing style, and trying to create fake testimonies means that the different customers will have the same tone and writing style.

Word of mouth is considered a passive advertising method because it is not actually done by the affiliate. The affiliate simply sits back and waits for the customers to tell their friends and neighbors about the product, resulting in new sales and new customers. This should not be the only means of advertising that the affiliate uses to push sales. It is unreliable.

Advertising

There are other methods of advertising that should be mentioned as they are extremely effective, although more traditional. The first is flyer advertisements. The second is business card advertisements. Billboard and mass transit advertisement is also available for use.

These methods of advertising help to allow the public to see the advertising in a real life setting. The flyers can be sent directly to their mail box and they can help to educate and interest the public to visiting the store or website where the products are sold. The business card advertisements are similar but they are left those areas where there is a lot of traffic and they are often found by potential customers who have their interest peaked by the sight of the card. Both of these methods can be handled by marketing sites such as VistaPrint.com.

Billboards and mass transit advertising are both fairly expensive modes of advertising, although they do strike quite a few people. These methods have the downside of not being able to be seen in the home where the people have access to the internet. This means that people may not necessarily act on the advertising that they see, despite being immediately interested by it.

Television and radio advertisements are also traditional methods of advertising. Unfortunately, these methods tend to be very expensive. It is recommended that affiliates do not use this method unless they are already experiencing success and can afford the expense. This can be very effective as more people are using the computer as they watch television or listen to the radio.

Online advertising is a far better approach of advertising since it's cheap and easy to setup. You can get started using pay-per-click services like Google AdWords to advertise quickly and easily. You simply pay when ever someone clicks on your ad.

Keeping Track of Sales

In terms of tracking online affiliate sales, most merchants like Clickbank.com have their own built-in sales statistics so that you can see how many sales you made, who bought what and so on. When you sign up for affiliate programs, you're normally given details on where and how to login to check your stats. This would be a great resource to track your sales.

It's always a good idea to know your metrics so that you know if your efforts are giving the results you want. Your metrics are your conversion rates. How many people clicked on your link? Out of those people who clicked, how many bought the product? Where did the source come from? These are important details you should know.

Conclusion

Starting a business that sells affiliate products can be very exciting and very profitable—whether you sell primarily offline products or primarily electronic products. However, the process is not as simple as signing up and watching the money roll in. There is a lot that needs to be done in order to ensure that the products reach the customers, that the product is found by customers and that the necessary tax information is maintained. Every aspect of running this business requires the talents and attention of the affiliate individual.

If thinking about joining an affiliate program, talk to others who are already members of that affiliate program. See what they are doing and how they are doing. Determine if others are successful in the program and find a business plan that works best for one's specific needs, financially and time wise. This can help to improve the satisfaction of being an affiliate member and one's overall enjoyment of life.

Using the affiliate programs, one can truly become his or her own boss. It is only through the correct and dedicated use of the marketing program that this can truly occur and people can enjoy the life that is then offered. Once the initial leg work is done, it can be possible to make thousands of dollars a month using the affiliate programs like they advertise. Enjoy it, work hard at it, and it will pay off.