

Affiliate Classroom

The journal of affiliate marketing and management best practices

All I Want Is The...

Perfect Affiliate

A Manager Speaks Out

The Year's
Top Web 2.0
Marketing Tips

Look! It's Our
Two-Year
Anniversary!

Products That
Changed The
Industry

Volume 2, Number 12
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AffiliateClassroom.com

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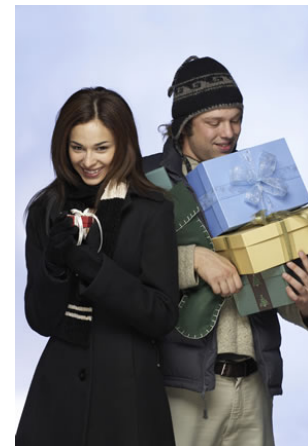
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About Affiliate Classroom Magazine

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Article submissions should be 1250-2000 words, on one affiliate marketing subject. No general marketing articles. We reserve the right to edit all articles. Send articles or letters to editor@affiliateclassroom.com with the words AC MAGAZINE LETTER in the subject line.

Affiliate Classroom, Inc.™
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College Park, MD 20742

Top 5 Affiliate Programs



AffiliatePrograms.com

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Featured Program – **CallingCards.com**

http://www.callingcards.com/ap/t_entry.asp?AffID=2734&text_id=3&sub_id=0&DIRECT

At CallingCards.com they understand that conversions, not just commissions, are what drive business. If you are looking to join one of the largest online wholesalers and master distributors in prepaid then check out CallingCards.com.

With CallingCards.com you receive access to their vast inventory of first class global calling cards and become a part of their Customer For Life program. In their program, you not only get paid with every customer that comes from your website, but you also get paid a 10 % commission for each time they buy from CallingCards.com! You get paid regardless of where or when they purchase, for the rest of their lives!

Top 5 Programs: December 2006

BookingWiz

<http://www.bookingwiz.com/affiliate.asp>

Do you love to travel? Then earn some extra cash with your travel traffic. BookingWiz will turn 85% - 100% of your travel traffic into cold hard cash. Your users can use BookingWiz to compare air, hotel and car rental prices from the best online travel agencies while you make money! It can't get any easier because it's not pay-per-booking, it's pay-per- search.

With pay-per-search you will make 5-6 times more! Installation onto your website is fast and easy with only one line of copy-and-paste code. Don't forget to ask about your AffiliateProgram.com signing bonus!

Absinthe Affiliate Program

<http://www.absinthe.bz/affiliates/index.html>

A great way to make money is by selling specialty liqueurs that are rarely sold in local liquor stores. By signing up for the Absinthesupply.net affiliate program you can take advantage of a market that is in high demand. Add them to your site and get paid generous payouts, up to 20% commission on every sale!

Not only are their payouts extreme, their site has a very high order value. Join their profitable affiliate program and add extra value to your already successful website. Absinthesupply.net always provides their affiliates with the freshest banners, monthly specials and promotions that will defiantly optimize your revenues and help you seal the deal.

Fast Transact

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

EcomAffiliates is a division of Fast Transact with an extraordinary two-tier affiliate program. They reward their affiliates with an extra 5% residual override of their sub-affiliates qualified merchants. In other words, the more merchants you refer to FAST TRANSACT, the more money you make!

Monthly residuals are based on referral volume, which means you can earn anywhere from 15-50% or a one-time \$50 commission! There are very few programs that offer payouts this high so take advantage of this unique opportunity today!

Lunar Pages

<http://www.lunarpages.com/affiliate.php?id=affprogs>

Are you tired of referring people to a web hosting company that treats their clients like a number? This is why veteran affiliates highly recommend lunarpages web hosting because they are simply the best in the industry! lunarpages is incredibly responsive to the needs of their customers as well as their affiliates!

lunarpages' phenomenal service, outstanding support, and high retention rate assures an affiliate continued commissions. Their affiliate program pays a very generous \$65 commission per referral and an additional \$5 for every sale that a second-tier affiliate generates.

Why stop there? lunarpages is so confident they are the best host for your referrals they are willing to negotiate higher commission rates to qualified affiliates as well! They have already paid over \$2,000,000 in commissions over the past few years. Join today and start earning the money you deserve!

Direct Track

<http://partners.directresponse.com/z/2185/P726/>

Check out DirectTrack. They are one of the leading affiliate network providers out there. They power over 200 major affiliate networks and several hundred merchant affiliate programs world-wide. They have a state of the art affiliate reporting system, dependable customer support, keyword tracking, and an excellent fraud meter. With DirectTrack you don't have to worry about not being paid on time because their software is constantly updated. Affiliates and merchants are connected in perfect sync, which eliminates any confusion. They are a network provider worth finding out more about.

Until next time...

Check us out in our [Industry Watch Newsletter](http://www.affiliateprograms.com/industry_newsletter/10-17.htm)
(http://www.affiliateprograms.com/industry_newsletter/10-17.htm)

In our newsletter you can find all the latest industry news, tips, and tools. Communicate with our team of experts through in-depth articles and free online resources. These resources will help you to dramatically, increase your knowledge of affiliate marketing. Here is a place where you can receive the guidance and support you need

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All I Want For Christmas Is the Perfect Affiliate!

7 Rules for Being that Perfect Gift to Your Program Manager!

by Debra Rabin

<http://www.AmericanLifeDirect.com>



If we sat an advertiser or affiliate manager on Santa's lap, that is what they would tell us!

It's the holiday season in the affiliate marketing world and Santa isn't the only one making his list and checking it twice. Networks and merchants all over the Internet are busy making their lists as well.

All they want for Christmas, oh heck, all they want *everyday* is the perfect affiliate. Let's explore the qualities that an affiliate needs in order to achieve perfection. After all, as an affiliate you want to be very successful; you want to be viewed as a perfect affiliate by someone.

In the world of affiliate marketing, there are advertisers and affiliates. Ideally, these two groups treat each other as trusted partners. The performance marketing world requires that for this model to work.

Networks and merchants all over the Internet are busy making their lists. All they want for Christmas, oh heck, all they want *everyday* is the perfect affiliate.

A merchant or advertiser is someone with a great product or service and a wonderful website (at least in their eyes). They would like to drive more traffic to buy their products or services. An affiliate or publisher knows how to bring traffic to the advertiser's site.

A network is like a match maker. It finds both affiliates and advertisers and sets them up on dates where the affiliate and advertiser find companionship. They continue courting other partners in the never-ending search for a profitable relationship.

Developing The Rules: A Failed Path

While researching for this article, I typed in the phrase 'perfect affiliate' into my favorite search engine. I then searched the same terms on several of the top search engines. It was very enlightening.

Instead of finding a perfect affiliate, the results all uniformly offer tips for finding the perfect affiliate program. Apparently, this is a very one-sided marketplace, where affiliates are free to seek perfect programs but advertisers and networks have never publicly sought a perfect affiliate.

There were so many articles written about the perfect affiliate program that I decided I might learn something by reading a few of them. The articles all seemed to contain a laundry list of

what the authors regarded as good reasons for choosing a (hopefully perfect) program to become an affiliate for. But none of them contained advice that might make an affiliate a perfect affiliate.

Developing The Rules, The Key!

After interviewing several network affiliate managers — and a few near perfect affiliates as well — I've come up with my own criteria for what makes an affiliate perfect. It's deceptively simple: the perfect affiliate makes money for both themselves and their advertiser (and their network, if they're in the picture).

The perfect affiliate makes money for both themselves and their advertiser (and their network). Successful production is what puts that affiliate in the "perfect" category every time!

Even if the perfect affiliate never takes a shower or brushes his or her teeth, successful production is what puts that affiliate in the "perfect" category every time! Ok, that's very simple, but it's also the first rule of being the perfect affiliate.

Rule #1 – Perfect Affiliates Are Profitable!

Affiliates choose the programs they get involved in, and that to a great extent determines their success or failure. Selecting a program that works with your strengths is an important first step toward being perfect. If the program you select has great tools, and the product is one you understand, you're half-way to perfection.

If you are willing to re-work your strategy to make an offer profitable, you're getting closer to perfect.

If you use email marketing — and you certainly should — don't send the wrong message. If your lists really buy every mortgage, credit card, and financial service you send them, it may be a big mistake to send them a ring tone offer.

If you're a search guru, and the keywords you already purchase are generating related leads, expanding your business in related ways can help make you perfect. For example, health leads might easily tie you into beauty or fitness.

Rule #2 – Perfect Affiliates Pick Programs For Success!

If you find you don't choose well for yourself, make sure you hook up with a great network. Get friendly with their affiliate manager. They can help you select offers to run.

The product or program that an affiliate is evaluating needs to have a lot going for it. For one thing, the product or program needs to be legitimate! Some crucial questions to ask are: Is the offer legal? Does the advertiser have a good reputation in the market? Do they pay their affiliates on time, or will you be constantly struggling to get paid?

So, the product or program you select should hit your target audience, be legitimate and pay out without problems. Not every offer will make money for you the first month or two. If you believe in it, and are willing to re-work your strategy to make the offer profitable, you're getting closer to perfect.

Rule #3 – Perfect Affiliates Do Their Homework

Doug Garfinkel, the Director of Business Development with RocketProfit.com (rocketprofit.com) affiliate program sums it up this way "The best affiliates are the ones that really understand the process, from click to conversion, and know that it takes work on their part. Many new affiliates expect every offer to work and if they see results lower than expected, give up too easily. The more experienced affiliates know they have to test different offers and different media to find what works best for them."

Check conversion rates, measure and understand your data, and constantly check that the results are profitable for you and the advertiser.

Rule #4 – Perfect Affiliates Form Trusting Relationships

Trust is a big issue between advertisers, networks, and affiliates. An advertiser or network has to trust that their affiliate will conform to CAN SPAM and other DMA (Direct Marketing Association) best practices to ensure that their brand is never injured by an affiliate's actions.

Affiliates need to be able to trust their advertiser or network, and know that they are looking out for

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them as well. A great affiliate manager at a network or advertiser can steer perfect affiliates toward gems and away from troubled offers

Danay Escanaverino, Director of Marketing at Filinet.com, (www.filinet.com/home.aspx)

put it this way, "There are quite a few affiliate managers who work hard on their affiliates behalf acting as an advocate to ensure that they are compensated fairly for their hard work by advertisers. There is definitely a big opportunity for mutual trust. While it is up to AMs to cultivate that, it is certainly great when an affiliate for whom you fought and worked to help recognizes the effort and allows you to do your thing on their behalf."

"The best affiliates are the ones that really understand the process, from click to conversion, and know that it takes work on their part."

Doug Garfinkel, Director at RocketProfit.com

Rule #5 - Perfect Affiliates Respect Terms and Conditions

Intimately tied to trust is respect, for both rules and the people who make them. The perfect affiliate respects the offers and abides by the rules associated with the offers. Keeping current on creatives and more importantly keeping current on suppression lists are just two examples.

Following the program guidelines will keep you out of trouble with the advertiser or network you're working with. Shawn Schaefer, marketing Director for AmericanLifeDirect.com (www.americanlifedirect.com) advises. "Don't cut corners, if an offer's terms and conditions stipulate 'no co-registration' then don't do that!" Constantly abiding by stated rules is one of the hallmarks of perfect behavior.

Rule #6 - Perfect Affiliates Offer Actionable Feedback

As an affiliate marketer you are part of a team. You are the virtual sales force for every product or service that you promote. You are down in the trenches of marketing, getting the product out to the consumers. You are often in the best possible place to provide valuable feedback to the advertiser who owns the offer. Advertisers and affiliate managers aren't mind readers!

A smart advertiser will listen to your suggestions and make necessary changes. Is the creative getting tired? Let them know. Are your conversions dropping? Let them know! Give your feedback in detail and freely, because the improvements a smart advertiser makes will improve your payouts.

Rule #7 - Communicate

Perhaps the most important rule for perfect affiliates is: communicate! Robert Dedich, Email Marketing Coordinator at Spectrum Direct says "The perfect affiliate is proactive." That means they stay in contact and ask what offers do well and what creative works.

The perfect affiliate doesn't just make calls. They return them and they are forthcoming with information on their calls. The feedback an affiliate provides to an advertiser often helps the

advertiser improve their program, sometimes leading to increased payouts for the affiliate. Annie Coryat, President of Gracie Media says “The perfect affiliate is on top of his or her game and pays attention to the details of the offer. They stay in communication, check back in, and give feedback.” Annie has told a few less-than-perfect affiliates “I think we need to see other people” when it became obvious that they weren’t working out.

“The perfect affiliate is proactive.”

Robert Dedich, Email Marketing Coordinator at Spectrum Direct

“The perfect affiliate is on top of his or her game and pays attention to the details of the offer.”

Annie Coryat, President of Gracie Media

Summing Up

To conclude, I’ve determined that perfect affiliates are more frequently affiliates that have been with an advertiser for a while. Like a good marriage, they’ve grown to trust and benefit from open communications.

Perfect affiliates do not grow on trees. If they did no one would be crowding the halls at AdTech or Affiliate Summit and other gatherings where advertisers go to broadcast how great their offers are.

If perfect affiliates could be ordered online at eBay, and arrived via FedEx, the face of the performance marketing world would be quite different. We’d all have one or two of them under the tree this year. Wouldn’t that be the perfect gift?

About the author

Debra Rabin is in charge of Business Development for Spectrum Direct Insurance Services, Inc., a life insurance sales and marketing organization and the largest seller of E-Commerce Life Insurance in the United States through its www.AmericanLifeDirect.com , www.LibertyDirect.com and www.SpectrumDirect.com websites.

Ms. Rabin is responsible for developing relationships with affiliate marketers who drive the majority of sales on these websites. She can be contacted (949) 600-7912 or at drabin@spectrumdirect.com.

Happy Holidays From Affiliate Classroom

May the coming year be filled with prosperity, friendship, good health, and happiness for all of our students, affiliates, partners, merchants, faculty, volunteers, and advertisers. Cheers!

Anik Singal, Founder, and CEO, Affiliate Classroom, Inc.



Two Years of AC Magazine: Looking Back

by Helen Swann Montgomery
Managing Editor, [Affiliate Classroom Magazine](#)



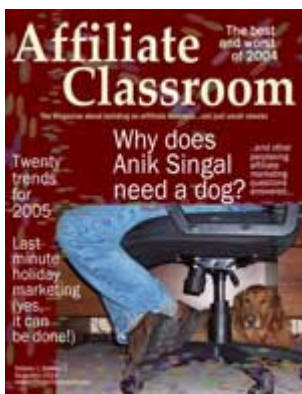
This issue marks [Affiliate Classroom's](#) two-year anniversary, and with it the anniversary of this online magazine. We published our first issue in December, 2004.

Since then, we've grown and changed according to feedback from you, our loyal readers. And no matter what the ups and downs in our industry, we've attempted to keep you informed, enlightened, and challenged every month.

Looking back over the past two years, I'm struck by how much has happened to all the players in the pay-per-performance marketing world. I'm proud that this magazine has brought you advance notice of trends, often before those ideas hit the mainstream.

Most of all, I'm gratified by all the readers who have thanked [Affiliate Classroom](#) for the no-cost education this magazine has offered to affiliates at all levels of experience. We've had many of you tell us that this magazine, coupled with your [Affiliate Classroom](#) membership, literally taught you to become super affiliates. No editor could hope for higher praise than that.

Let's look at some of the highlights of those first two years.



December 2004 – 20 Trends for 2005

In the first issue, December, 2004, we focused on "Twenty Trends for 2005." Here are just a few of our predictions that came true - at least somewhat! **Content Management Meets Marketing**

"With so many good, free content management scripts, a few brilliant marketers will figure out that organized, database driven content can actually SELL."

Goodbye Pops?

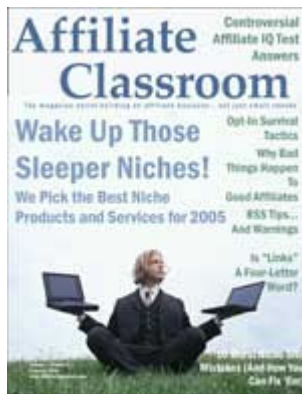
"In 2005 we expect to see fewer and fewer popups, popunders, fly-ins, and all their variations. Notice we said we'll SEE fewer of them — heck, the pops might be all over the place, but we'd never know it. Blockers built into some of the best alternative browsers are powerful, sophisticated, and WORK on all but the most annoying animated fly-ins."

(Editor's Note: If there's one trend we hope to see continue in 2007, it's the trend towards elegantly designed and unobtrusive pops that blend in well with site design. It prove that popups don't have to be annoying to be effective!)

Better Site Builders

“Someday, somebody will finally invent an easy-to-use site building tool that combines elegant design with SEO and a built-in content engine based on a MySQL database.” (Editor’s Note: We may be getting close to this one! Advances in WordPress make it as much content management system as Blogger platform, and we expect to see marketers take more and more advantage of the endless customization options offered by Drupal, Joomla, and other CMS.)

That’s only three out of 20 trends, but throughout the past two years we’ve tried to point out trends while covering the basics. We covered Niche Marketing in February, 2005; Affiliate Merchants and Products in May, 2005; Getting Links in November 2005; Email Marketing in March, 2006; and many more.



February, 2005 - Niche Marketing

Wake Up These Sleeper Niches In 2005!

By Anik Singal, Founder and CEO, [Affiliate Classroom, Inc.](#)

Hot Niche #1 - Pets

“The pet products industry is booming, with annual sales of \$31 billion. That’s more than the human toy industry or the candy industry! It’s estimated that 65 million dogs reside in the U.S., and 62% of all U.S. households own a pet. With numbers like that, it’s no wonder that pet-related merchants are courting affiliates like never before with rising commissions and incentive programs.

The trick will be targeting the right pet niches, then offering a specialized shopping experience that boosts your average order. The hottest affiliate sites will target small exotics and designer pets.”

Hot Niche #4 - The Past

“If you think that the only way to make a lavish affiliate income is to jump on what’s new and trendy, think again. In the last couple of years, the number of web sites about history, memorabilia, genealogy, and retro themes has skyrocketed.

Suddenly anything to do with the past is very, very ‘in.’ I mean, who would have thought you could start a non-cable, mainstream TV network that features reruns from the 50’s, 60’s, 70’s, and 80’s? Yet ME-TV is not just successful. It’s attracting both aging baby boomers and a younger crowd that’s apparently fascinated by Archie Bunker and The A Team.”

Hot Niche #9 - EBay Support Services

“eBay... it’s everywhere. You’ve probably already seen eBay drop shops. They run the gamut from very simple packaging and shipping stores, to elaborate centers where you can run your auction, place bids on a high-speed Internet connection, even photograph your products and upload images.”



May, 2005 - Assessing affiliate merchants and products

Uncovering the Pros and Cons of Affiliate Programs

Letter/Question received by current Affiliate Classroom Member:

“Q: As a member of The Affiliate Classroom, I use the monthly niche affiliate program profiles as a guide in building a few mini-sites each month. But are there any tricks to the way you brainstorm niche site ideas and assess the pros and cons of merchants? I’ve found some programs I’m really interested in, but it’s hard to decide whether to move ahead. - Ryan

A: Your question actually has a lot to do with choosing a niche, so your first step is to choose an affiliate product and research it. Is the merchant reliable? Are the commissions fair, is the minimum payout achievable (\$100 or under is best), and does the merchant support you with sales tools? If you’re going for income from contextual advertising, are there sufficient advertisers and are their PPC bids are fairly high?. If the answer appears to be “yes” to all these questions, you’re already halfway towards a profitable site.”

[Editor’s Note: The full Article has explanations of each, and how you can avoid falling into these traps.]

November 2005 – Links!

My Top Tips For Using Links To Maximize PageRank - Plus Tips For Staying Out Of Google’s Sandbox

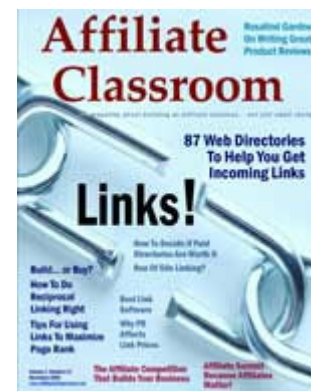
By Anik Singal, Founder and CEO, [Affiliate Classroom, Inc.](#)

“SEO is as much art as science. And for those without access to Google’s PageRank algorithms, some would say it’s a black art! But if you’re fascinated by search engines the way I am, you study and analyze them - both the dark side and the squeaky clean side.

And eventually you discover that there really are some proven strategies that can help affiliates improve their position on SERPs (Search Engine Result Pages).

The good news is, those strategies don’t have to be “black hat.” In the process of developing the training materials we use in The Affiliate Classroom, I’ve met and talked with a lot of SEOs who really know their stuff. In every conversation, the topic of PageRank inevitably comes up. Believe it or not, most SEO experts agree on the best ways to raise your Google PageRank. These 8 tips for maximizing PageRank through proper link tactics are based on my own observations and analysis, discussions...”

[Editor’s Note: The tips in this article have stood the test of time.]





March, 2006 - Email Marketing Today

Why Even SEO Experts Need Email Marketing

By Brad Callen, Professional SEO, www.seoelite.com

Q: Brad, I just made a bet with my best friend and only you can settle it. My friend claims that email marketing is dead and that SEO experts rely almost entirely on traffic from organic search listings.

But I have a different opinion – that SEO experts have a big ADVANTAGE in knowing how to get lots of free traffic from search engines, but that they also use other ways to get traffic, including opt-in marketing. You probably can't settle this issue for ALL SEO experts, but could you tell us whether YOU use other marketing methods besides SEO?

A: Tell your friend he (or she) has lost the bet! In my case, I use a variety of marketing methods besides SEO, and I would not advise ANYONE to rely 100% on organic search placement - it's too risky. You should never put all your marketing eggs in one basket, but diversify so your traffic comes from many different channels, including PPC, article marketing, content marketing, and yes, email marketing.

I use email marketing in my own business, and I would advise every serious affiliate marketer to build one or more opt-in lists as a way of getting targeted traffic that is interested in your products.”

April, 2006 - Pay Per Click (PPC)

How to Make PPC Work for You

by Pamela Neely, www.CityDifferentMarketing.com

“As a marketing medium goes, pay-per-click is very nearly the best thing since sliced bread. You pay only when people respond to your ad, you decide how much you want to pay, and you can laser-hone the advertising so it appears in front of only the most likely of buyers. In the spectrum of advertising, pay-per-click is the polar opposite of a 20 million dollar Super Bowl ad that may never be directly tied to a sale.



So what does that mean to you and your business? A lot. If you use PPC in a smart way, you'll be able to attract and convert customers with vastly more efficiency than a large brand advertiser would. In this article I'll take a look at a few of the top pay-per-click ad networks, discuss how to spot a bargain, and show you how to set up and measure a new program. I'll even direct you to a few offers where you can test the waters for free.

Whether you are spending \$1,000 a month or haven't even started with PPC, this article will help you bring the right visitors into your site for the right price, and show you how to get your money's worth from them after they've arrived...”

July, 2006 – The Art of the Article

Article Marketing 102

by Jeffrey Perren, Associate Editor

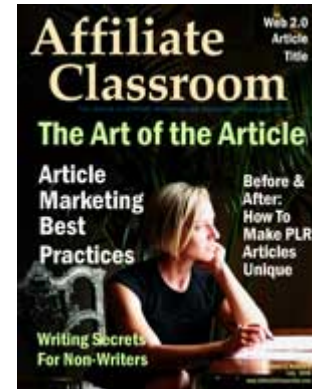
“Writing articles can be difficult and time consuming. And it can often feel like “uncompensated” work. But experienced marketers know that the old saying “content is king” is more than true. Content is a royal family.

Fresh, original content is one of the most efficient and long-lasting methods for generating traffic. Search engines in essence provide free advertising in organic results. Spiders seek out and rank URLs not only by the number of links referencing a page, but according to many factors appearing on the page itself.

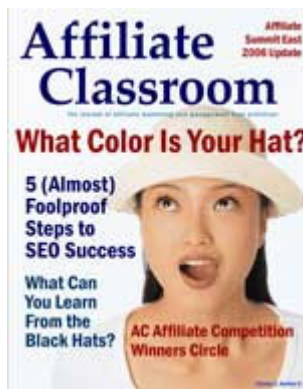
Good content helps generate those results in two reinforcing ways. Good content gets linked to more often, helping to raise page rank. Original content also helps avoid being penalized — since engines check to ensure that a site is not merely duplicating content seen a thousand times over elsewhere. Both those help get you listed on the first few pages; and if you're not on the first three pages, the odds are less than 4% that you'll be seen at all. Apart from encouraging the traffic it's essential to generating sales.

Warnings

In order to gain those benefits, you have to satisfy a few basic criteria when creating content: originality, competence, relevance, and frequency. Beyond the ethics of plagiarism, the practical fact is that if your content isn't original it won't be a good traffic generator. It won't help you rank high, nor will it help your reputation. If visitors have read it before, they have no reason to read it from you.”



August, 2006 – What Color Is YOUR SEO Hat?



5 (Almost) Foolproof Steps Great SEOz

By Brad Callen, seoelite.com

“The big secret about search engine optimization / marketing, or SEO/SEM, is that there are no special tricks or hidden magic involved, just common sense. In fact, in SEO there are NO secrets — only simple, easy to understand steps that if you follow, will give you high search engine rankings, as sure as clockwork.” [Editor’s Note: And here’s the end of the article...]

“Here are some basic tips for building a sustainable promotion system:

Focus on creating linkable content, i.e. [linkbait](#). This is a skill that you can only learn with time and practice. And as you get better at it, you will find link building to get easier and easier.

Network in your niche. Participate in forums if you have the time, otherwise contact and stay in touch with lead bloggers and site owners in your niche. This will not only get you links, but will also allow you to stay in touch with the latest developments in your niche.

Learn to ask nicely. A well-written link request (that invites the recipient to read something interesting that might also be valuable for their readers) works much better than a link request which directly asks for a link exchange.

Find the right links. You want links from “trusted”, “authority” and “related” sources. This means that you will have to learn how to seek out these potential links, and then learn how to get them.”

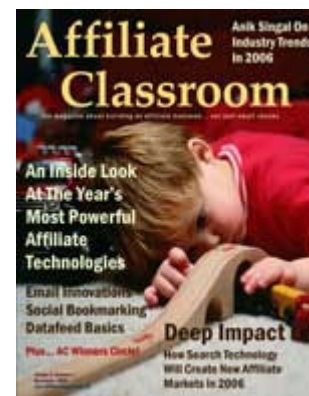
December 2005 – Industry Trends in 2006

Future Shock Top Issues and Trends in Affiliate Marketing for 2006

By Anik Singal, Founder and CEO, [Affiliate Classroom, Inc.](#)

(Editor's Note: Here are a few of Anik's top predictions. Do any of them ring bells?)

1. Meaningful, real-time relationships between merchants and affiliates... with (or in spite of) networks.
2. New affiliates getting more help from merchants.
3. Merchants need to protect their investment in affiliates.
4. 2006, the year of big crackdowns on spyware.
5. No more arbitrary rejections [Editor's Note: Such as rejections of affiliates simply because their site is new and has not developed an audience.]



Final Thoughts

No publication can take credit for all of the advances in our industry and the positive changes that have occurred between affiliates and merchants in the past two years. The progress and growth in the pay-per-performance world are fueled by the hard work of affiliates, forward-thinking managers, innovative merchants, and the expanding online marketplace.

So our goals here at AC Magazine for the future are modest: to watch affiliates' backs, and to encourage best practices by everyone, from the newest of the newbie to the biggest and most powerful players.

[Editors Note: To find back issues of Affiliate Classroom magazine, just [click here](#).

Three Market-Changing Products of 2006

by Mark Thompson
<http://www.give-me-articles.com>



In a year that seemed destined to be dominated by million dollar Internet marketing launches, affiliate marketers finished off the year with much to celebrate. As we prepare to say goodbye to 2006 and welcome in 2007, the affiliate marketing sector has never been in such a strong position. We had major product launches, two of what are probably the most successful eBooks ever, and a major shakeup in how people think about affiliate marketing.

The year started with Internet marketers launching a host of high-priced products aimed at other Internet marketers. Following the success of Butterfly Marketing it suddenly felt like every Internet marketer had a high priced product to launch. It seemed that not a week passed without some major new launch. At times, it even appeared that affiliate marketing had been forgotten. Then mid-way through the year the first major affiliate related product appeared.

Rather than review a wide variety of products and programs that appeared over the year, I'll just look at three major products that have had a huge impact on affiliate marketing. Between them each of these three contributed to what has undoubtedly been a great year for affiliate marketing. In fact, I'm tempted to say it was a vintage year. The three diverse products may shape affiliate marketing for years to come.

"The Affiliate Manager" showed people how to create a successful affiliate program and, more importantly, how to manage their affiliates.

The Affiliate Manager

In June, [Affiliate Classroom](#) launched "[The Affiliate Manager](#)". This product put affiliate programs back in the forefront of people's minds. "The Affiliate Manager" showed people how to create a successful affiliate program and, more importantly, how to manage their affiliates. The benefits were quickly felt as more and more well managed programs started to appear. The long term effects of products such as this should not be underestimated.

In addition to helping program owners to create good quality affiliate programs it also had benefits for many affiliates. By giving affiliates the chance to learn how to create their own affiliate products it gave them a way to progress further.

With this "career path" starting to appear people could consider being an affiliate a good career choice. For possibly the first time affiliates could see a way to progress. They had goals they could attain which didn't include a purely monetary value.

Affiliate Project X

The next major impact on the affiliate world was made by an eBook called "[Affiliate Project X](#)." [Affiliate Project X](#) (APX) was released to almost universal praise. It presented many methods of making affiliate sales, some of them new to many except the most seasoned marketers.. Once again its effects were almost immediate. Within a day or two of its release it was possible to find many articles and AdWords adverts that were using the principles from the book.

Affiliate Project X was an aggressive look at what super affiliates do that is different from normal affiliates. It laid bare many of the tactics and methods they use and provides all the information needed to get started, especially if Clickbank is your preferred marketplace.

[Affiliate Project X](#) was an aggressive look at what super affiliates (those affiliates who make many thousands of dollars each month) do that is different from normal affiliates. It laid bare many of the tactics and methods they use and provides all the information needed to get started, especially if Clickbank is your preferred marketplace. Unlike many eBooks, [Affiliate Project X](#) has been updated since its first release with new methods and information.

It would be foolish to think of [APX](#) as just an eBook. It would probably be more realistic to consider it a highly focused PPC system. To help users get started, it includes an offer for an affiliate website promoting [APX](#), as well as advertising vouchers for Yahoo! and AdWords.

Within a week of its release I personally knew of over 10 people who had read the eBook and had put some of the methods into practice. Within two weeks all but one had made at least one sale. When I last spoke to them seven of them were still using the methods outlined and still making money. I really can't remember an eBook release over the past few years which had such an effect.

CPA Programs

The third event of the year is probably the one that will have the most impact, both this year and in the future: CPA. CPA (cost per action) programs have been around for a long time. A number of knowledgeable affiliates have been using them and quietly earning a lot of money for a number of years. A few months ago an eBook was launched that has probably changed the face of affiliate marketing forever.

The launch of an eBook called "AdSense Is Dead" took the whole Internet marketing world by storm. Indeed, it managed to polarize the marketing world with people either agreeing with it or disagreeing with it. Forums were full of discussions about it and some grew rather heated. No matter what people believed one thing they all agreed with was that the marketing of the eBook was a stroke of genius. The writers paid 50 cents per referral that downloaded the free book. Within a few days it had been downloaded over 25,000 times.

Because there was no sales pitch within the eBook, people were naturally confused. Many went on record as saying that the big sell would come in the next eBook due to be released a few weeks later. The follow up eBook was called "Life after AdSense." They were confounded to find that there was no big sell in this either. Instead, there was only a request to complete a survey that asked what type of related products would people like.

“AdSense is Dead” claimed that AdSense was dead and the future was in cost per action and pay per lead products. CPA is most definitely flavor of the month and big things are expected over the coming year.

The results of these surveys have been turned into a number of products aimed at experienced and not-so-experienced marketers. Without a doubt the \$12,500 paid out in lead payouts has been recouped many times over. So what was so great about the eBook, such that it will probably have such a big impact on affiliate marketing?

The eBook claimed that AdSense was dead and the future was in cost per action and pay per lead products. Many readers of the eBook sat up and paid attention to this. Not just affiliates but also companies, some of whom have since created CPA campaigns. A large number of AdSense publishers have started to create either new CPA sites or convert older AdSense sites to CPA. CPA is most definitely flavor of the month and big things are expected over the coming year.

The Future

Affiliate marketing has never been in such a healthy position. There are more people becoming affiliates every day. There are more products for affiliates to sell and many more effective selling techniques being used. The three products I looked at above have all contributed to this healthy state of affairs. There are very few affiliates today who have not felt the effects of at least one of them.

No look back at the year would be complete with out a look into a crystal ball and a consideration of what may be ahead in the year to come. The first thing to expect is a selection of products aimed at making CPA campaigns easier to implement. This has already happened with a product called Pay Per Lead Ads. So, expect many more similar products over the coming months.

Also, expect a number of CPA membership sites and eBooks detailing more methods of increasing your income through CPA. I also wouldn't be surprised to see some of the AdSense "gurus" suddenly reveal how they have been making fortunes for years with CPA adverts! This year has only touched the tip of the iceberg with CPA. I fully expect many more related eBooks and courses to appear over the coming months.

Watch for a rebirth of websites offering incentives for people to perform an action. For example, one might be "refer 50 people who complete a survey and get a free Xbox 360." There have been a number of these sites around and making money for affiliates for years. However, with the recent rise in CPA campaigns there will be a lot more launched allowing affiliates to offer incentives.

About the author

Mark Thompson spent many years working in IT consultancy in London. Following a re-evaluation of his goals and lifestyle in 2004 he sold everything he couldn't fit into the family car and moved to rural Spain where he now pursues a variety on online ventures.

See: <http://www.give-me-articles.com>

The Year's Top 10 Tips to "Socialize" Your Affiliate Business

by Katalin Torok, <http://mktg.idared.net>



In 2006, Web 2.0 went mainstream. From the launch of hundreds of increasingly consumer-oriented web apps, to the biggest web properties adding more and more social features the Web 2.0 concept is all grown up. Google's high-profile acquisitions of popular Web 2.0 companies, such as YouTube, was the latest stamp of approval. As an affiliate marketer keeping up with the dynamics of the marketplace, it is increasingly difficult to ignore the trend.

If you have been following our Web 2.0 articles this year, you are now familiar with many of the key ideas. But, you might not have taken the plunge just yet. Now is the time to do it! To help you get started, we have compiled our top 10 tips for Web 2.0ifying your affiliate business, based on our article series. Some of these tips take just about an hour to implement, others are more ambitious projects. Together they make up a blueprint for starting the year as a well-equipped Web 2.0 affiliate site.

Tip #1 Blog and Syndicate

Blogs and RSS are the stepping stones into the new social web. Blogs come in all shapes and forms, and they bring the most benefits if the blog is tailored to your specific business and audience. If you have a deals site, start a deal blog where you post your top deals often (daily or at least a few times a week).

If you have a content site, create a blog where you post articles as blog posts, or simply link to what's new on your site whenever you update your main content.

If you have a content site, create a blog where you post articles as blog posts, or simply link to what's new on your site whenever you update your main content. Set up RSS feeds of your content for syndicating your content around the web, and to enable readers to keep up with your new posts.

Tools: WordPress www.wordpress.org ; Feedburner www.feedburner.com

Tip #2 Let Your Users Contribute

User-generated content was one of the hottest buzzwords of the year. Is your site set up to leverage user activity? Does your site have features that allow sharing and participation? Do you allow visitors to share their views and comment on your content? Do you have a blog with an RSS feed to initiate a conversation with your visitors? Can your users build their own version of your offerings to share with their peers? Think of ways your audience might contribute to your site.

Tools: Add comments and trackback to any website: www.haloscan.com/

Tip #3 Leverage Free Content

The other side of user-generated content and easy syndication is that the web is now a repository of content up for grabs. From social bookmarks to photos and video, you can enhance your site with all kinds of syndicated content created by users on other sites.

Pick a few relevant RSS feeds from blogs and Flickr and you have a constantly updated sidebar that helps keep your site fresh and interesting even on days when you don't update with new content.

Tools: News Feed Finder www.newsfeedfinder.com; Flickr www.flickr.com

By using this tactic, every page will encourage users to save and share your site, resulting in free viral traffic from these increasingly popular services.

Tip #4 Add Social Bookmarking

Social bookmarking is one of the easiest springboards into Web 2.0. There are plug-ins for most CMS tools that display an "Add to" link on each page of your site, enabling users to quickly save your link as a bookmark on their chosen online bookmark manager. By using this tactic, every page will encourage users to save and share your site, hopefully resulting in free viral traffic from these increasingly popular services.

Tools:

del.icio.us del.icio.us/help/forpublishers - (How to add "Save to del.icio.us links" to your site.)

Push cx push.cx/sociable - (Sociable plug-in for WordPress; supports 25 social bookmarking sites.)

iFeedReaders www.ifeedreaders.com/social-creator - (Social bookmark link creator.)

Tip #5 Implement White Hat Tag and Ping

Tagging, the organizing principle behind most of the user-generated content sites of Web 2.0, is one of the building blocks of social media. It is also very simple to implement on your website, and the results can be impressive. Content aggregators like blog search engine Technorati will pick up your content more easily and display it when users browse or search for the given tag.

Unlike old-school directory submissions and categorization, the process can be automated. (Take a look at our in-depth article on implementing this tip the "white hat" way in the August 2006 issue of AC magazine.)

A quick recap on best practices:

- ... Keep tags relevant to your content! (Add a tag because it describes your content and not if your sole justification is to market it under that keyword.)
- ... Only tag and submit actual content worthy of submitting! (Would you want to read it if you were a member of the community?)
- ... Do not ping and save excessively! (Ping and save when you updated the site with something worthy of submitting.)

... Do not register multiple accounts for submitting your links. (Never! You will get caught and banned sooner than you can imagine.)

Tools: Technorati www.technorati.com; del.icio.us del.icio.us; Furl www.furl.net

Tip #6 Embrace Social Search

After bookmarks, networking, and shopping, search became social this year as well! New custom search engines can be built on top of the big engine's indexes. Anyone can handpick sites relevant to a certain topic and have their own specialized Google engine. What does that mean to you, the webmaster?

..In order to be picked as a "social search worthy" site by those building custom engines, or to be rated well in a user-tweaked search engine there is a golden rule: build a quality site.

..Explore custom search engines relevant to your business and niche and submit your site to them.

..Adapt tagging if you haven't done so until now. (See Tip #5 above.) Social search sites are frequently bundled with social bookmarking and aggregate tagged websites from similar services. By being present in social bookmarking sites and having your content properly tagged, you increase your chances of being picked up by these search engines and their users.

..Build your own search engine to enhance your site.

Tools: Eurekster www.eurekster.com; Google Co-Op www.google.com/coop/cse

Tip #7 Build a Wiki

Building a community of users around your chosen niche brings many benefits, and it has never been easier to accomplish - at least on the technical side of things. In a thriving community your users will generate quality content that the search engines will gladly index, helping your SEO efforts.

In addition, your loyal users will refer others to your site if they find it noteworthy. (For that to work you need to enable them to do that - see the previous tips on that.) One of the community-building tools available in the Web 2.0 era are wikis. We covered how to build a niche site using wikis in our September issue.

Tip #8 Datafeed 2.0: Try a Mashup

It has never been a better time to get into datafeeds. Affiliate networks have launched APIs that allow easier, continuous and more customized access to product data. Not only that, but you can complement your merchants' product feeds with free data from other services to build up a content-rich site. (See Tip #3 on leveraging free content above.)

Think of your niche. What kinds of data are useful for **your** customers? How can you combine this data with affiliate feeds to make it even more useful for them? How can you twist the data and combine it with affiliate links to convert more visitors into shoppers?

Tools: Programmable Web programmableweb.com; CJ Web Services webservices.cj.com; Amazon Web Services aws.amazon.com

Tip #9 Redesign with Web 2.0 in Mind

Clear design is good design, and it is now the standard, literally. Building sites using current web standards (using XHTML and CSS) brings many benefits, and fewer headaches about cross-platform compliance and accessibility.

Clever uses of new techniques (e.g. AJAX) make websites more responsive, easier to use, faster and sleeker than their Web 1.0 predecessors. The clean and polished look of current web design trends accentuates the things that create the real value of a website: the content or service it offers. That results in a better user experience.

- ... Learn more about web standards and use them to speed up your site and make it more accessible to wide variety of browsers and platforms.

- ... Use freely available AJAX scripts (see Lightbox link below) to enhance your site.

Tools: Web Standards Project www.webstandards.org/learn/

Lightbox www.huddletogether.com/projects/lightbox2/

Tip #10 Research the Expected Trends of 2007

Finally, looking ahead into the new year, use the new social web as your market research playground. User-generated content is, by definition, a gold-mine for researching what your audience is interested in and what they say about those topics.

- ... Watch for tags that begin to pick up a larger volume of content, tags that appear on the "popular" pages of social sites.

- ... Find your next niche by browsing "related" tags on social bookmarking sites for unique combinations.

- ... See what's most popular on the "popular" pages of sites like Digg.com, or Technorati.

- ... Research international markets by exploring local social bookmarking and networking sites. See if there is a rising search interest for your topic in a different market. You can get ahead of local competitors by being the first to localize your established niche site in new markets where that niche is only just gaining ground.

Wrapped for Xmas

Implement one or all of these tips and you will be well equipped for the new year. In 2006, Web 2.0 matured. Close the year by leveraging all that it can offer for affiliates, to be ready for what 2007 may bring!

About the author

Katalin Torok is an independent marketing consultant with a focus on Web 2.0. Her website and blog contains many helpful tips at: <http://mktg.idared.net>

Thanks for reading! In 2007, our theme is Affiliate Marketing Fundamentals. January's topic is all about merchant and product selection ... plus don't miss our Product of the Year!

[Get it here!](#)