



**The Shopzilla
Publisher Affiliate
Opportunity
*A Closer Look at a
Quality Alternative to
Amazon Associates***
By James L. Paris

As many of you are no doubt aware, the Amazon Associates affiliate program has been undergoing some reconfiguration in the wake of more and more states attempting to impose a sales tax on Amazon. Many states are taking the position that if Amazon has an affiliate in that state...even one single affiliate...that it constitutes a physical presence in that state, and, as a result, sales tax has to be collected. Well, Amazon doesn't want to collect sales taxes; that's one of the great advantages they have over their "bricks and mortar" competitors like Walmart and so many others.

We're not sure exactly how all of this is going to work out. Some people are persuaded that, as time goes on, the Internet sellers are going to have to collect sales tax no matter what. I don't know about that one way or the other, but the real-life ramifications of this for those of us that are in the business

Continued on page 6

Creating the Sales Letter (Part 2)
*Breaking Down This Essential Tool to
Realizing Substantial Sales*
By Robert G. Yetman, Jr.

We want to continue this month with our discussion of sales letters. In last month's issue, we looked closely at the specific components of the sales letter, and also engaged in a rather in-depth discussion of how the headline should be constructed. This month, we want to finish our overview by looking at a variety of different aspects of the sales letter, including whether your sales letter should feature a product guarantee, the use of the postscript, along with the questions your sales letter should answer.

The Importance of a Strong First Paragraph

Let's begin this month by examining the first paragraph that your reader will encounter in the sales letter. I'm not talking about the very first part of the sales letter, because that will be the headline, or even the greeting; the initial paragraph will be the first part of your sales letter that the reader cannot consume from a quick glance, and, because of that, the first paragraph has to be very compelling and keep the reader's interest that was presumably generated from the headline and initial greeting. You have to remember that your sales letter will be read all the way through only by those people who like each part of it well enough to keep going to the next part. Each portion of the sales letter is like a link, and should the reader encounter a weak link as he is reading, there's a great chance that he will *stop* reading and move on to something else. You can have a catchy headline and a compelling greeting, but that will get your reader only as far as the first paragraph. The first paragraph's job

Continued on page 2

Creating the Sales Letter (Part 2) (Cont. from page 1)

is to draw the reader into the “meat” of the letter in a big way, as well as sustain the interest from the headline and make the reader want to go further into the body of the letter after the first paragraph.

Get to the point right away. While your sales letter can tell a story, I would advise not to get too cute with that approach. Tell your story, but be sure your opening paragraph clarifies what your product is and what it is about.

Keep it “theatrical” and interesting. What I mean here is that your opening paragraph should have some flair associated with it. Remember that you are creating a marketing piece, so it has to be interesting, and not simply informative.

Write in the first person to solidify a one-on-one rapport with your reader. This speaks to the difference between a sales letter and a general advertisement. General advertisements do not “speak” in the first person. An advertisement for Chevy trucks that you might see on TV or in a magazine is not constructed as though it is a one-on-one conversation from the ad narrator to you. Part of the reason a product like that doesn’t typically ever use a sales letter approach is because the sales letter is a specialized tool that’s most helpful when what is being marketed is something on behalf of which it might take a little convincing for the target to really develop a strong interest, or if it is a product that is not readily understood right away by the prospective buyer. Chevy

trucks are easy to comprehend, and the viewer/read of an ad for them will know right away if he’s an interested party or not. Accordingly, Chevy does not have to take the prospect on any kind of “journey” before making the pitch. However, if what’s being pitched is some type of system for selecting winning stocks, that’s a bit more nebulous of a product, and so something like that would benefit greatly from the use of the sales letter tool and particularly the one-on-one communication. Granted, the one-on-one technique is important *throughout* the sales letter, but should be used more heavily (“I,” “you,” etc.) in the first paragraph when it’s so important to continue the process of drawing the reader in that was initiated by the headline and greeting.

Use “you” to engage the prospect. This is partly a continuation of the previous point. “I want to show *you* how to...” or “I want to help *you* to become a better...” are examples of the use of “you” that very much speak to the reader. This is another good example of a technique that works well even when the person exposed to it knows what’s going on; one still can’t help but to become drawn in.

Keep your paragraphs and sentences concise. Say as much as you have to, but as efficiently as possible. You’re walking sort of a fine line with sales letters, in that you want to tell a bit of a story, but you have to be careful not to lose your reader before the end point. Again, this is important throughout the sales letter, but it’s more important in the first paragraph. If you start to get a little wordy

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Creating the Sales Letter (Part 2)

(Cont. from page 2)

further on, you probably have less of a risk of losing your reader because he's made it that far, and will now be more interested in reading about the payoff that's coming.

Keep your words short. The words you use should be understandable. Do not use jargon; that tends to put off people rather quickly. Just as your paragraphs and sentences should be concise, the words you use should also be concise.

What about the PS – Is It Necessary?

A lot of sales letters like using the postscript, abbreviated "P.S." or "PS" at the end, to help effect the sale. If you've seen many sales letters, you will have come across this component in many of them. A few things to note:

The PS is second only to the headline in readership priority. The goal with your sales letter (besides making the sale, of course) is for the person who begins reading it to make it all the way through, and so a big part of on what you have to focus is creating a sales letter that keeps the reader's interest from beginning to end. That said, we know that many folks have a tendency to skip through things and actually read only select portions of a piece. So what are *those* people reading in the sales letter? Typically, they're reading the very beginning and the very end. Obviously, a PS that's not a part of a sales letter isn't being read, but the PS can be a useful tool as a last-ditch effort at preventing the reader from walking away without making a purchase.

So what makes the ideal postscript? What should your postscript actually say? Basically, the postscript should do the following

things: Be no more than three to four sentences in length so as to sum up the offer; reiterate the deadline or other tool of urgency you're including to prompt people to buy right away; and echo the call for action. In other words, the postscript should not give the reader something new to think about, but rather, take one more swipe at driving the point home. Here's a quality sample postscript, excerpted from a sales letter at the website www.streetselfdefense.com that principally sells a set of self defense videos:

"PS 90 % of the skills you are learning at your dojo (dojang) are great for sport sparing, conditioning, art form and self discipline. These are all great and I teach them too. But, if you really want to learn how to defend yourself in a real street fight you need my videos!"

Great last line: "...if you really want to learn how to defend yourself in a real street fight you need my videos." It basically echoes/restates the headline in a bottom-line sort of way.

Must You Offer Guarantees?

Guarantees will always jump right off the page of a sales letter. However, before you decide to include a guarantee in your sales letter, you really have to first decide if you want to include the guarantee as a part of your product, so our discussion here will be of guarantees, more generally, as well as in terms of your sales letter.

If you feel comfortable offering a guarantee on behalf of your product, then do so. It has been shown time and time again that guarantees absolutely boost sales of a given product. My position on a guarantee is that if

Creating the Sales Letter (Part 2)

(Cont. from page 3)

what you're offering is a good product, and you stand by what you're selling (which you should), then a guarantee should be easy for you to make available, because you have little downside; that is, if you're selling quality, then very few buyers will come back to ask for a refund.

Where the decision to offer a guarantee can be a little dicey is in the area of digital-only products. The problem with offering guarantees on digitally-delivered products is that once the initial sales transaction is complete, it's impractical to undo it in the way it can be undone with a traditional product. If you sell someone a TV set, and the buyer brings it home and decides he doesn't like it, he can bring it back to you for a refund – in that case, he gets a return of his money, and does not, of course, get to keep the TV. However, with most digital products, once they are transmitted to the buyer, they cannot be returned to the seller. This means that if you refund the buyer, he gets to keep both his money and the product, which is hardly a reasonable outcome for you as a merchant. In cases like that, what I suggest is not offering a guarantee, but instead making the price of your product so competitive that even a buyer who decides that he is less-than-thrilled with it after the sale can't be upset because he paid so (relatively) little for the good information.

That said, if your product *does* lend itself to offering a guarantee, or you just want to make one available, then do so. If you do offer one, here are a couple of things to keep in mind:

Make the guarantee easy and unqualified.

As a consumer, I'm attracted to guarantees that appear to be very simple and straightforward.

For example, "If you aren't satisfied with this product for any reason, return it anytime in the next 30 days for a full refund." Not only is that a great, unambiguous guarantee that will help me feel better about making the purchase in the first place, but, from a sales letter perspective, a statement like that in your piece will really stand out.

React quickly if your customer asks you to make good on your guarantee. In this day and age, it's very easy for bad news to travel fast...*very* fast. If you're going to offer a guarantee, don't mess around; keep it simple and easy for your buyer to utilize, and if he does so, honor it right away and without any hooks.

Questions Your Sales Letter Should Answer Before You Are Ready to Publish It

When you complete a first draft of your sales letter, you will want to review it to be sure it answers some key questions, questions that *all* sales letters should answer when they are in their final forms.

Who are Your Prospective Customers? It's important that your sales letter addresses the right people. Is it composed in such a way that it will resonate particularly well with those people who are most inclined to be interested in what you have to offer? If you finish reading and re-reading your sales letter and cannot answer that question with a resounding "yes," then you'll want to try again.

How is Your Product or Service Different?

Have you clarified what makes your product or offer better than those of your competitors? If not, then you should do that before publishing your letter. One of the most compelling sales tools is to "call out" the prod-

Creating the Sales Letter (Part 2)

(Cont. from page 4)

ucts of competitors and explain why yours is superior. Is there something your product has that no competitor offers? If so, make sure it's mentioned in your sales letter. You can do that either explicitly or implicitly, but the point is that you want to be sure it gets done.

Why Should the Prospect Have Faith?

With all of the products and services out there that overpromise and underdeliver, skepticism is something that can set in pretty quickly nowadays. Your sales letter can address that in a number of ways. One way is to include testimonials from happy customers. Testimonials often appear in sales letters, and they are *very* effective. If *you're* raving about it, that's fine, but it's not as good as hearing all of the great things from someone who actually paid money for the product. Another way to help the prospect have faith in what he's buying is to offer a guarantee, which is something we spoke about a few minutes ago.

What Are All the Benefits Your Product or Service Offers to the Consumer?

It might not be a bad idea to separately list the benefits on a sheet of paper, and be sure they're all mentioned in your sales letter in one place or another. Your sales letter should most definitely overwhelm your prospects, as much as possible, with good information about everything your product can do for them.

On What Basis Might Your Prospect Reject Your Offer?

What I'm talking about here is both *anticipating* and *overcoming* any principal objections that you can reasonably foresee someone having. Obviously, it is impossible to anticipate everything, and it would be silly to try, but as you're evaluating your

product, try to get an idea about what might keep someone from buying. One good way to help yourself with this is to put your product in front of friends and acquaintances and get their input. Is it possible that price might be an issue? If so, you can announce an especially good deal for people who act quickly. Are you concerned that not enough people will clearly see the benefit or usefulness of the product? If that's the case, you might need to go back to your sales letter and further address *all* of the people who might benefit from you product, and why.

Why Should Your Prospect Act Now?

It's not enough that you have prospects that find your product appealing in some way and may well buy eventually; you want them to buy *now*. What we're talking about here is building urgency. One of the best motivators will always be price. Perhaps your letter can advertise a special deal for people who act quickly...lower price, two-for-one, anything like that. Another great motivator is product scarcity; "quantities are limited," that sort of thing. However, if you go the product scarcity route, you'll want to say more than just that, that quantities are limited. Instead, you can say that you are selling only a finite number of your product, and once you've reached that number, they're gone.

We will surely examine sales letters again in the future, from other perspectives and with other ideas in mind, but you should now have a better idea of both what the essential components to a sales letter are, as well as how to improve those components so that your letter is as compelling to your reader as you can make it. The sales letter can be a terrifically effective mechanism, and I encourage you to utilize it on behalf of as many of your products as appropriate.

Shopzilla (Cont. from page 1)

of Internet marketing is that if you are an Amazon Associate and you live in a state where Amazon is now required to pay sales tax, then you cannot enroll in the terrific Amazon Associates affiliate program.

If you happen to live in a state where Amazon can still operate as it always has, then you don't have to worry (at least right now) about the Amazon Associates program being inaccessible to you. For those that *are* in the position of being excluded, some folks are coming up with creative ways to try to beat the system and stay eligible. For example, some are opening up post office boxes in states where the program is still viable. If you want to do that, that's up to you, but it's not something we're recommending. Instead, we've come up with what we think is a much better option than engaging in any sort of cleverness: Shopzilla. Shopzilla is a great alternative to the Amazon Associates program, and one of the reasons that Shopzilla has dodged the bullet of the sales tax issue is by remaining an affiliate program that does not pay a commission *on the sales of products*. When you put Shopzilla products on your website, you do *not* get paid a percentage of the sale; the way you're paid is via the popular pay-per-click mechanism that you may know well if you're familiar with the Google AdSense program. The bottom line is that you're still making money, but what Shopzilla is paying on is not the sale, but rather for the *lead*. Because Shopzilla is based on pay-per-click and not on pay-per-sale, this legal concept where states can demand that Amazon collect sales taxes does not apply to Shopzilla.

Before we go too far, it is important to emphasize that anyone can enroll in Shopzilla. That is, the purpose of Shopzilla is not solely

to serve as a "go-to" option for people who find themselves without the choice to participate in the Amazon program. Shopzilla is, in and of itself, a very viable, well-received shopping mechanism that also happens to include a popular affiliate program.

So...Which is Better?

One of the questions that comes up a lot has to do with which of the programs...Amazon Affiliates or Shopzilla...will provide the greatest financial benefit to the Internet marketer. The short answer is that I don't know. Here's the longer answer: In my experience, I have found that the greatest impediment to Internet marketers benefitting at all from any of these programs is an unwillingness to properly promote their sites. Let's just be honest about that. I am often surprised at all of the effort people will make to assemble quality sites, complete with numerous affiliate and sales opportunities in which they've enrolled, only to then do very little to actually market them on a consistent basis. What I'm saying is that *both* programs are very viable; the issue of making money is going to come down to a matter of determining if you have a better ratio of "buyers" or "clickers," but, again, the programs are by no means mutually exclusive (unless you're now prevented from keeping an Amazon Associates account for the reasons outlined earlier).

It's important to know that Shopzilla does not approve everyone who applies to have an affiliate account with them. If you have a website that's under construction, or if you have a one-page website, you don't want to apply – you won't be approved. If you have a fully-built site, you should be approved without issue. I point this out because many of the new students in our Internet Coaching

Shopzilla (Cont. from page 6)

program will apply to be Shopzilla affiliates before they even have websites, and are surprised to see that they're turned down. Now, if you happen to be turned down and you feel that your website is already substantial enough for approval, you'll want to try to get to the bottom of that with Shopzilla. Alternatively, if you're a part of our Internet coaching program, you can bring your turn-down to our attention and we will see if we can help you to figure out what went wrong, as well as how it can be remedied.

How to Become a Shopzilla Publisher

To get started with the process of becoming a Shopzilla *Publisher* (their proprietary term for affiliates), head on over to www.shopzilla.com and look for the "Affiliates" button at the bottom of the home page. Click on that, and you will be taken to a log-in screen that gives you the option of registering for a new account. All of that should be self-explanatory, but at that same log-in screen, take a closer look at the small link located at the bottom that reads "Blog." It's really not a bad idea to click there first before you do anything else, because when you do, you'll be taken to a page that provides a lot of good information about Shopzilla and how it works from the affiliate side of things.

One of the questions that you may have right off the bat is, "How do I get the ads on to my website?" You do so in the same way that you accomplish this for any of the affiliate programs. You will be able to go into your

account control panel and select products/product categories, and once you have made the appropriate selections, HTML code will be produced that you will copy and paste into your website. Again, as I always mention when writing about these topics, if you're a member of our Internet coaching program, you may obtain assistance with this as a part of your membership, but if you are *not* a member, you should find this to be a very manageable task just the same.

The Shopzilla Publisher Program and Those Living Outside the U.S.

Another issue that frequently comes up has to do with people who happen to live outside of the United States. Again, one of the great features of Internet marketing is that it's something that can be practiced from anywhere in the world. Still, there are times when overseas-based Internet marketers have a few more considerations than do those in America. Regarding Shopzilla, the thing to remember is that the company really wants U.S.-based consumer traffic. If you happen to live in Australia, for example, you can indeed join this affiliate opportunity, but if your website is specifically geared to people from a foreign country (meaning foreign from the U.S.), you will probably want to stay away *from* Shopzilla, because their products are available only in the United States...with three exceptions: the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. If you live in one of these three countries, there is a special Publisher (affiliate) program available to you. Ultimately, what counts is not where

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Shopzilla (Cont. from page 7)

you are, but from where the traffic to your site principally originates.

You can put the Shopzilla mechanism on to multiple websites and/or blogs; if you have five websites, you can put Shopzilla on all five. Also, to clarify what you may have missed at the beginning of this article, you can absolutely be a part of Shopzilla *and* any of the wide variety of other affiliate opportunities simultaneously. I want to stress again that Shopzilla should not be interpreted as solely an alternative for those who find themselves on the outside looking in with respect to the Amazon Affiliates program. It is a quality, very viable affiliate program in which you can enroll without regard to any other affiliate arrangements you may have currently.

As for getting paid from Shopzilla, they pay by check. That's one feature of the program I'm *not* enamored with, because I, like I'm sure a lot of people with other, alternative affiliate arrangements, like the ease of the automatic deposit mechanism. Shopzilla pays once you have reached a minimum earnings threshold of \$50, and their pay cycle is such that you're paid within 45 days of the end of a given month.

One last thing: As with any of the available pay-per-click affiliate programs that are out there, Shopzilla Publisher has a quality control set-up that monitors the activity relevant to their program. This means that if there are a bunch of clicks on Shopzilla ads at your site that are "insincere," meaning that the clicks are being initiated by you or someone else for the purpose of falsely enhancing revenue, you will ultimately find yourself kicked out of the program. I've talked about this before with respect to Google AdSense,

and I want you to be sure that it's an issue here, as well.

I wanted to discuss Shopzilla with you now because we'd not really done it to any great degree previously. It's a good program, one that's certainly worth a look, and if you're someone who no longer has access to Amazon Affiliates, it's probably worth a *hard* look. Ultimately, your earnings from *any* of these programs are going to be dictated most of all by the amount of traffic to your site that you can generate, so regardless of in which or how many programs you participate, remember that traffic flow is going to be the biggest determinant of earnings, overall.

Internet Insider Quick Tip of the Month

If you want to sell effectively on your site (or anywhere, for that matter), you want to become a master of the "bullet point tease." So, what's the bullet point tease? The bullet point tease refers to bullet points that are provocatively and dramatically worded to capture the reader *immediately*. These are not simple, boring lists of features or ideas, but short, dynamic "shout-outs" to your reader. They should be emboldened and use, as appropriate, exclamation points to visually jump off of the page and right into the readers' eyes.

As for buzzwords to use, think of words like "secret," as in : "This video reveals the SECRET to getting every job you want." Another? "How to's" are always great: "HOW TO meet the man/woman of your dreams." There are lots more, but you get the idea; use effective, exciting words that tell your reader you have the magic bullet for whatever "ails" him, and watch your sales skyrocket.