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## *AffCon 2010—Miami: The Affiliate Marketing Conference*

By James L. Paris

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One of the things about Internet marketing on which I constantly harp is the matter of looking outside of yourself to gain as much knowledge as you can. Remember that the Internet, and, by consequence, Internet marketing, are both so relatively new that innovations and ideas continue to evolve at a very rapid pace. It just isn't the case that all of the same information that might have been good, say, four years ago, is still as good today. Certainly some of it is, but the reality is that unlike many other facets of life and business where there is simply a finite number of components and once those components are realized, that's it, the Internet and Internet marketing are still in the phase where the possible number and type of evolutions that are available seems limitless. This is why it is so important that we all do everything we can to tap as many good outside resources as possible in order to be able to stay on the cutting edge of making money at this. It is with this idea in mind that I decided to attend the AffCon 2010 conference that was held in Miami, Florida this past December. AffCon 2010 is one of the largest affiliate marketing tradeshows and conferences that's regularly held in the U.S. It is a multi-day event that features a lot of good information, presented live by a large number of expert speakers, each of whom is known throughout the world for his or her respective expertise in a particular area of Internet marketing.

One of the things of which we need remain mindful as we gather information for our

business efforts is that sometimes we have to make that extra push to learn more than we already know about this. One of the components to growing your business includes making the time to work *on* your business, as well as *in* your business. What this means is that in addition to writing your blogs, creating and posting videos, publishing newsletters, etc., you must constantly look for mechanisms through which to improve the ways in which you do all of those things so that you may enhance your bottom line. Not making the effort to find ways to build a better mousetrap, as it were, can prove to be a significant obstacle to achieving great success at Internet marketing. If you're not doing this, it does not matter how great or insightful your posts and other materials are; if your competition is making these efforts, and you are not, you may wonder why you're not getting even 20% of the attention a competitor is, even though what they offer in terms of information and products is not nearly as good as yours.

### **Event Overview**

The AffCon event is basically divided up into two portions. There is an expo presentation, where you will find exhibitors who are advertising their Internet marketing wares. This is no different than any other kind of expo with which you may be familiar—if you have been to a bridal show expo, there are exhibitors who specialize in creating wedding dresses, some who make wedding

## *AffCon 2010—Miami: The Affiliate Marketing Conference* (cont. from Page 1)

cakes, others who pitch their limousine services, still others who are DJs who are trying to sell *their* services, and so on and so forth. That's the sort of thing that goes on at this expo, with the obvious difference that the services being promoted are related to Internet marketing.

Most of the exhibitors at this year's event were what you might consider to be competitors to Commission Junction...that is, they were affiliate networks. Some of the exhibitors had some particularly good information, I thought. One of these is a company called Clickbooth ([www.clickbooth.com](http://www.clickbooth.com)), and another is called Pepperjam ([www.pepperjam.com](http://www.pepperjam.com)). Another exhibitor...which was NOT an affiliate network, at least primarily...is one called Distribute Your Articles ([www.distributeyourarticles.com](http://www.distributeyourarticles.com)). Distribute Your Articles is an article aggregating service that boasts of doing things that other, similar sites don't do. Specifically, beginning at a price point of \$35 per month, Distribute Your Articles will help to leverage the work your doing in the realm of article marketing to promote yourself by putting your articles on the sites of multiple article aggregators. Now, when I was interacting with the Distribute Your Articles representatives who were at AffCon, we got into a discussion about the subject of duplicate content. One of the questions I had for these folks, specifically, was if I give this site an article to distribute, and they install the article at the well-known and popular Ezine Articles ([www.ezinearticles.com](http://www.ezinearticles.com)), as well as at twenty other sites similar to Ezine, is that an

example of distributing duplicate content, which is considered to be a big violation in the world of Internet article marketing.

As it turns out, the short answer is, "No, that's not duplicate content." It's not duplicate content any more than if you were to write a syndicated article that appeared in 100 different newspapers that were all online. The reason it's *not* duplicate content is perhaps a bit difficult to process at first blush, but, when you think it through, duplicate content doesn't simply mean that there's an article that appears on more than one website, but that an article that's specifically intended to be a single, organic piece designed for a single periodical is being submitted to other periodicals under that same presumed basis. However, the idea of one article appearing on multiple Ezine-type sites is totally acceptable and is not a problem whatsoever.

This was something that was learned that is actually very important. To be honest, I was not sure what would happen if you posted the same article at more than one article aggregating site. A lot of people say that if you're going to do that, that you should engage in article "spinning," which is to change the words of the article in such a way so as to end up with essentially the same article, but reconstituted with synonyms of the words used to create the original. Here's a quick example of spinning: Instead of saying, "The dog walked up the hill," you might say instead, "The canine ambled up the incline." You can spin your article manually, or you can use software programs like Mass Article

*Jim Paris Internet Insider* is published monthly by Premier Financial Communications, Inc. Known office of publication is 138 Palm Coast Pkwy NE, # 223, Palm Coast, FL 32137. Periodicals postage paid at Sanford, FL and other mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **Jim Paris Internet Insider**, 138 Palm Coast Pkwy NE, # 223, Palm Coast, FL 32137.

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## *AffCon 2010—Miami: The Affiliate Marketing Conference* (cont. from Page 2)

Control to do it for you. The overriding point, however, is that it appears there's no real need to do any of that.

These people at Distribute Your Articles not only did a great job in speaking with me individually at the conference and answering the questions that I had, but they also made their own conference presentation to a large audience, and it was very, very good. In a future edition of the newsletter we're going to discuss Distribute Your Articles in greater depth, and illustrate the nuts and bolts about how you can go ahead and get started with them. By the way, let me say upfront that we are not affiliates for them or anything like that; this is not a situation where we're recommending them in part because we are part of their affiliate program (which they do have, by the way) or anything like that. We're suggesting you give them a serious look because it's a great tool for you to use in order to greatly leverage yourself in the area of article marketing. This is especially worthwhile to consider for those of our students who already have a lot of articles written. What those students can do is take all of those articles and turn them over to this company, and actually get those articles on a lot of different article aggregator websites automatically.

Note, too, that Distribute Your Articles is not a duplication of some of that "cheesy" software that you sometimes see that supposedly does all of this automatically; Distribute Your Articles uses real people at all levels of their operation to get your articles placed. One of the benefits of that is that their operation can resolve problems like the placement of an article being initially discarded as "spam" by an aggregator, which is not an ability that a purely-automated process can

always, or even often, overcome. As a matter of fact, the article aggregators are now coming to Distribute Your Articles and soliciting content from *them*.

There was also a lot of discussion at the conference on the subject of search engine optimization, which is something you would probably expect; for obvious reasons, the subject of how to get one's website or blog ranked as highly as possible remains perhaps the most important one for all Internet marketers, and so it is a topic that basically permeates all aspects of a conference like this one. That said, I can tell you that there wasn't any sort of groundbreaking information on the topic related at the conference, other than perhaps something related to domain names which I'll get to in a bit. The overriding discussion about SEO this time around centered on the importance of inbound links, and how one of the best ways to get high-quality inbound links is to do a press release, which is something we've discussed in here previously. By the way, their opinion in the battle between free press releases vs. those you pay for is that paid-for press releases are the only way to go. I know that Bob Yetman has talked about this before and said that, in his experience, the free press releases don't seem to offer anywhere near the returns of the paid-for releases, and so what we heard at the conference seemed to be further validation of that opinion.

It should be mentioned, too, that one of the speakers was a real big advocate of hiring bloggers to write articles about your website. A lot of you may be familiar with the Pay-PerPost, Review Me, and other similar kinds of sites, from our previous discussions about them. However, note that when we've talked about them in the past, we've principally

## *AffCon 2010—Miami: The Affiliate Marketing Conference* (cont. from Page 3)

done so in terms of *you* being the one to go to these sites, writing the review articles, and getting the money. What we're talking about in this case is you paying other people to write about your website and put a link to it, which can be done for as little as \$10.

### **Domain Names**

On this whole issue of domain names, one of the things into which I've been looking for a few years now is investigating more fully the effects, for better or worse, of putting a dash in a domain name. This comes up when people are disappointed to find that a domain name they want is already taken, and they speculate on ways to capture the same domain name in a slightly variant format. Let's say that [www.christianmoney.com](http://www.christianmoney.com) was already taken when I wanted to claim it. Would I have been at a disadvantage to claim [www.christian-money.com](http://www.christian-money.com), or would it have made no difference? This is a question I've had for some time, and there have been different answers posed that made me unclear as to how such a variation really matters.

The good news is that as far as the search engines are concerned, having a dash in a domain name, like the example I contrived above, makes NO difference to how that domain name will rank as a keyword phrase, and that's the most important point here. Of secondary importance in this is how easy your domain is to remember; I say that's secondary because, again, going back to your appropriate thought process when it comes to selecting a domain name, you want to select a domain name that represents an ideal keyword phrase. Using the example above, I wanted to capture the phrase, "Christian money," because it was my belief many years ago that Christians would perform

searches using that simple word pairing. Now, in the case of my domain, I was able to capture that domain in its most perfect state, if you will, but it's good to know that if there was a hyphen separating "Christian" and "money" in the domain, that the domain's ranking would be unaffected by the hyphen. I asked several different search engine experts at AffCon, and they all said exactly the same thing. They went on to point out, as well, that it's a lot easier to get a quality domain name if you are willing to put a hyphen in it, which we probably all know intuitively, but the point is that now that we know that having the hyphen in no way detracts from the optimization of that domain name from the standpoint of the search engines, that fact bears repeating.

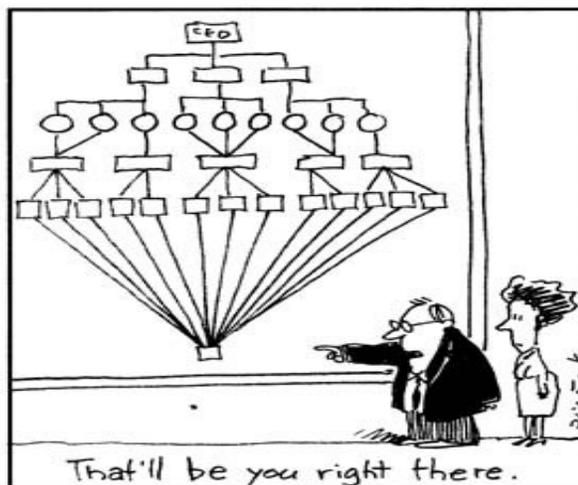
We also discussed the issue of extensions; ".com," ".net," ".us," etc. As with the discussion of hyphenated domains, the issue up for discussion here was whether one is at a marked advantage or disadvantage having one type of domain extension as opposed to another. Again, good news, as far as the search engines are concerned: the extension does not make any difference to the search algorithm. I specifically inquired about ".us," because I use that particular extension quite a bit as an alternate extension to ".com," and one of the experts to whom I was speaking actually said that he loved ".us" and used it often himself.

The only disadvantage that you have when using an alternate extension (that is, something other than ".com") is that there is a perception on the part of the person surfing the Internet that the ".com" extension implies that the website to which it's associated is a better website. So, if someone is reviewing a given set of search results and they see that

## *AffCon 2010—Miami: The Affiliate Marketing Conference* (cont. from Page 4)

the highest-returned result is [www.christianmoney.us](http://www.christianmoney.us), and the second-highest result is [www.christianmoney.com](http://www.christianmoney.com), that person might actually gravitate toward the [christianmoney.com](http://christianmoney.com) result first, because of the perception that a “.com” site is a more authoritative site. However, those kinds of issues are infinitely easier to overcome than the inability of your site to come up high in the search rankings to begin with. In other words, if you have the “problem” of having a domain name with an alternate extension ranking high in the search results, that’s a far better one to have than a host of the others you *could* have.

So, the upshot of all of this is that we see from the folks at AffCon that the world of “domaining” is far larger than that which you might have otherwise considered it to be. If you have an ideal domain name, you need not be put off by the fact that it is available only with an extension other than a “.com,” or that you can capture it only with the help of a hyphen, or even *multiple* hyphens. As a matter of fact, one of the fellows who made a presentation on domains and who happens to own, if you can believe it, over *100,000* separate domains, spent some time speaking about “long-tail” keyword phrases, and how because there are so many keyword phrases that are several words long, it would be wise to capture those keyword phrases *in full* in the form of domains (assuming, of course, those phrases are relevant to you). We’ve discussed this before, but it’s always helpful when you get additional confirmation from another source that has a great deal of expertise in the area himself. Anyway, the point is that when selecting a domain, as long as you are able to capture the actual keyword phrase that’s best and most relevant to you in the form of the domain, it really doesn’t matter,



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**We’ve all had this feeling at one time or another.  
How nice that becoming a self-employed Internet  
marketer gives us a way out...**

from a search engine perspective, if the phrase is augmented with a hyphen, or if the domain can be had only as one with an alternate extension.

By the way, let me say a bit more about the guy who owns over 100,000 domain names. He is, like a lot of people, getting into the business of buying and selling domains as a way to make money. That is, rather than looking at domains solely as addresses for a particular Internet business in which he wants to work, he looks at the domains themselves as opportunities. There are domains that have great value, based on the popularity of the keywords that comprise them. For example, we all know that [cars.com](http://cars.com) is a site dedicated to car shopping, but what if you had the good fortune and foresight to claim that domain many years ago, before the Internet became what we now know it to be? Even if you had no interest in applying that domain on behalf of a business in which you wanted to work, and instead held on to it as though it was a piece of real estate, imagine how much you could get for it today.

## *AffCon 2010—Miami: The Affiliate Marketing Conference* (cont. from Page 5)

Well, the buying and selling of domains as a way to make money is indeed a viable business opportunity. The gentleman with whom I was speaking takes it very seriously, as you can see by the number of domains he owns...but the number of domains aside, you can also see how serious he is by the amount he's willing to spend on some of them. We spoke about his acquisition of computer.com, which he picked up at auction for the princely sum of \$2 million. \$2 million for a domain name. This transaction tells you two things: that the person or entity selling it was able to generate \$2 million simply from the sale of a domain, and that the person who bought it felt it was a good enough deal at \$2 million to pay that amount for it.

You may not currently own a domain worth \$2 million, and you also may not be willing to pay \$2 million yourself for a domain name, but if you want to learn more about this side of the Internet business and would like to follow the buying and selling of domain names, make a note of *DN Journal*, which can be found at [www.dnjournal.com](http://www.dnjournal.com). You can take a peek into it and look at the sales—see what people are bidding, and what's being bought and sold. We may get into this practice more exclusively in the future, but go ahead and check out *DN Journal* when you get a chance.

In my discussion about domains, there was talk about people who go on the Internet, purchase a domain name, and then turn right around and put it up for sale. So, if they buy a domain for, say, \$10, and are able to sell it

for \$100, they've made a 1000% return on their initial investment. Obviously, like with any "investment" that you make, where you buy something with the belief that it is undervalued at its present price, or believe that while its present price might be reasonable now, the value will substantially increase in the short term, domains can be transacted in that way, and that's what this whole sub-area of Internet business is all about. Clearly there are people who take it to the extreme of owning a large portfolio of domains...like 100,000...which involves a total expenditure of millions of dollars, but people like that might be considered to domain investing what someone like Donald Trump is to real estate investing. The point is that not only is making money this way regarded as viable, it's something where *a lot* of money can be made if you come to know well what you are doing. As a matter of fact, if you go over to ClickBank ([www.clickbank.com](http://www.clickbank.com)) and type in the word "domain" in the "Marketplace" section of ClickBank, you'll see a lot of products that have been developed on this idea of buying and selling domains, "flipping" websites, this sort of thing.

Moving on, I met a guy at AffCon who has over 100 auto-blogs, like the auto-content blogs that we offer for sale. This fellow is making his entire full-time living from his 100 auto-blogs. Honestly, this is something that Bob Yetman and I have talked about doing more seriously in the near future...having a bunch of our own auto-content sites that we maintain for our own personal benefit, as opposed to building them solely for the purpose

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***AffCon 2010—Miami: The Affiliate Marketing Conference***  
*(cont. from Page 6)*

of making them available to others.

It's worth noting, too, that this idea of auto-blogs, or auto-content sites, is not yet particularly well known, even within the Internet marketing community. There was a panel of speakers at one of the seminars at AffCon, and the above-referenced gentleman stood up to talk about his auto-blogs and what he's been doing with those, and the members of the panel first thought that he was talking about having blogs that are about the topic of *cars*. He then had to quickly explain to them just what an auto-blog is, and then after he was finished speaking, I took over the microphone and explained to the panel what *we're* doing with the auto-content stuff.

Additionally, while I was there, I met a guy named Jay Berkowitz, who has a podcast called the *Ten Golden Rules Internet Marketing Podcast*. He has a few proprietary websites that highlight his work in the realm of Internet marketing, including [www.jayberkowitz.com](http://www.jayberkowitz.com) and [www.tengoldenrules.com](http://www.tengoldenrules.com), and I invite you to take a look at those. Anyway, Jay Berkowitz is the fellow who designed the University of San Francisco online marketing course, which has become a well-know course in training and certifying Internet marketers. Now Jay is a very bright guy in the realm of Internet marketing, to be sure, but let me mention something about that course: it is a six-month training that goes for the princely sum of \$6,000 if you want to take it. Let me also say this: what you would learn there is essentially nothing more or better than what you can learn in the course that we offer at Christian Internet Income. I must admit that I marvel at that price point, and I guess that's what happens when you can essentially affix

the official "stamp" of an accredited college or university to what you're teaching. That said, I do not believe that anything you learn at that course actually counts as college credits toward a standard degree; what you receive is basically a certificate of completion. How the curriculum works is that three courses are offered—each course is eight weeks in length, which makes the entire course about six months long. The cost of each course is \$2,000, and so, with three of them, that brings the *total* cost to \$6,000.

Let me take this opportunity to say that I am in no way saying that the University of San Francisco's training "shouldn't" be \$6,000, or anything like that. We live in a free market society (for the most part, anyway), and at my core, I believe that as long as people do what they say they're going to do, other people can decide how much they want to pay for whatever the offered product or service is. If someone is willing to pay \$6,000 for the Internet marketing training offered by USF, no problem. That said, in keeping with the title of this article, I want to be able to pass along what I saw at the AffCon event, including what I *think* about what I saw, and so that's what I'm doing here.

Moving on...there were a lot of people talking at the conference about *foursquare* and *Groupon*. As for *foursquare* ([www.foursquare.com](http://www.foursquare.com)), it is something that I'm just learning about, and I've only recently established my own *foursquare* account. *Foursquare* is sort of like a mobile version of Facebook. You join the network, and you can get "friends," like you can with all of the other social media sites, but unlike the other sites, the emphasis is not on what you are doing, but rather, on where you are at. With your mobile application on your

## *AffCon 2010—Miami: The Affiliate Marketing Conference* (cont. from Page 7)

iPhone or cell phone or whatever, with a browser, it uses the GPS and it knows where you're at. You can choose to notify all of your foursquare friends where you are. You have the ability to comment on where you are ("The pizza here is really good."). You can get valuable coupons from the companies that are promoting to foursquare users. As near as I can tell, this will probably be as big as any of the other social networks, so you may want to look into getting this going.

As for Groupon, that's something that's getting a lot of buzz right now. One of the big reasons for that is that Google offered to buy Groupon outright, even though it has been around for only about a year or so. It should be noted, though, that a big part of the buzz has had to do with how much Google offered to pay for Groupon: \$6 billion. What's more...Groupon turned them *down*. Groupon may be the best example of someone who's using social media marketing with physical businesses in an effort to do something really exciting. The idea at play here is the "group coupon" concept. Here's a quick illustration of how it might work.

In my case, my closest city is Jacksonville, Florida. So I would go to the Groupon site for my most relevant city, which is Jacksonville, and type in my email ( I am a already a member). By doing that, it will present me with what today's "Deal of the Day" is. Today, for example, the featured deal is a 30 minute massage for \$35. Pretty cool. However, in order for the deal to actually come to life and be valid, a certain minimum number of people have to buy the coupon within a given period of time. That's the "social" component to this. In other words, from the offering merchant's perspective, they're trying to encourage as many sales as possible

by incorporating a group dynamic; if a certain minimum number of people do not get in on the deal, then no one can have the deal. It's somewhat analogous to the idea of the group rate; if you called a restaurant in advance and said that you wanted to come in with a party of 30 people, the restaurant would be inclined to offer you a discount that they would not offer to an individual patron.

What's interesting is that the latest "word" about Groupon is that they will be opening physical stores around the country, and each day, at these stores, there will be one "Deal of the Day;" in other words, in that store, there will be one product that represents the special deal that day. You might get an email that says that Groupon's "Deal of the Day" is a special price on large-screen TVs, and if you go down and buy that day, you'll get the special deal.

There's no money-making opportunity, per se, for you with Groupon or foursquare, but they are becoming compelling players in the social media universe, so you never know where opportunities like these might lead—just more examples of what was "hot" at Aff-Con 2010.

A lot of the topics that were discussed at Aff-Con 2010 are things that we will likely delve into more specifically on an individual basis as the year goes on, but I wanted to share my overall experiences with you in this edition of the newsletter. The AffCon convention is an annual event; I don't know if I'll be heading back this year or not, but if I do, you can bet that I will bring home another update. In the end, attending events like AffCon is but one of the many ways that we should all seek to broaden our knowledge of what's evolving in the realm of Internet marketing.