



You're an Affiliate; Now What?

By James L. Paris

I want to spend some time in this issue “talking” about affiliate marketing, but I want to do so on the assumption that you have signed up for one or more of the programs like Amazon Affiliates, or Commission Junction, or the new ClickBank opportunity about which we’ve spent so much time talking recently, and you’re looking to move on from there. I receive queries all the time from people who will say that they have enrolled into one or more of these programs, but now that they have done so, aren’t sure about what to do next. What I’m going to speak about in this article I have covered before, but I’ve done it more in the form of one topic at a time. Today, I’m going to present all of it together, and hopefully do a good job of helping you to see the landscape of all of this.

Fairly often, I will receive an email from someone that basically says the following: “I’ve joined the “XYZ” affiliate program, and I haven’t had any sales, and I’m very frustrated, and I’m ready to just give up.” I receive emails like that pretty regularly, and what I’ll do in those cases, to sort of test the waters, I’ll usually reply back to a person like that by asking him to outline for me what he’s doing to promote that product. The reply I often get back from *my* initial response? The member will admit that he’s not been doing anything, and says that he’s not doing anything because he doesn’t know what to do to promote the product. Given that, I want to spend some time here going through a bunch of different ways that you

can promote an affiliate product. Again, whether it’s a ClickBank product, or a product through the Amazon Associates program, or perhaps Commission Junction...whether you even have a website or not...there are strategies here that you can use to help along your affiliate promotion efforts.

One thing you can do is simply pick out a product, and then build a website around that product, for the sole purpose of promoting that one thing. People will literally do this—they will pick out a product...whether it’s something that’s available through ClickBank, whether it’s something they find at Commission Junction or maybe through Amazon...and they will literally develop an entire website or an entire blog on that product, and you can do that as soon as today, very easily, with a Website Tonight basic plan for just over four bucks a month. For example, at Christian Money.com, we promote a product called My Porn Blocker, which is a porn-blocking software designed to keep pornographic sites off of your computer; someone could develop an entire website around the promotion of that product—that person could come up with a domain like www.howtoblockporn.com or something like that (disclaimer: I’m citing that domain as an example, and I have no idea if it exists already or what it might lead to), and make an entire online commitment, be it a website or blog, to that concept, and specifically to that product. Now, some of you may not want to go that far, and as an alternative to creating an entire website or blog around a

You're an Affiliate; Now What?

(cont. from Page 1)

product, you might want to dedicate a *single page* of your website or blog to that product. We've talked before about search engine optimization, and while the home page of your site is the most important in that regard, you can also search engine optimize *internal* pages, as well, which means you could have an internal page that's dedicated to a product. Along the same lines, you could write a blog post about the product, as well. Also, there are free website and blog products you can utilize, and while I do not recommend those for the purpose of building your primary online presence, you can use these sort of "throwaway" sites to write a short article and gain Internet exposure for it. The bottom line is that there is definitely a lot of different ways by which you can dedicate a single page, in some form or fashion, to the promotion of a given product on behalf of which you're acting as an affiliate salesperson.

Let's talk for a moment about classified ads. Honestly, I don't really know how many classified ads websites there really are out there. Of course, we all know about Craig's List, but if you just go into Google and you type in the words "classified ads," you will find tens of thousands of places where you can run classified ads for free on the Internet. Going the classified ad route, you're going to write a short ad about your product (many of these products will themselves provide you with the text for that short ad), and you'll place that online. Simple.

Realize that any one of these strategies that we're speaking about here could be all that you do. For example, someone could just take an hour or two each day and place classified ads for his product...and maybe that's the only thing he does on behalf of promoting that particular product. Alternatively,



you could focus on promoting the product through a blog, and you could write one blog post each day about the product. The point is that you don't have to engage all of these ideas, which may be a bit overwhelming an idea to consider at first, especially if you're just starting out and already have a commitment to a full-time job (as well as to a family). However, the even bigger point is that you do have to make a regular commitment to doing *something* each day in order for this to work in the long run like you want it to; if the truth is that you're not spending much time implementing any of these marketing mechanisms, it's going to be unlikely that you will see the results you presumably desire to achieve.

Let's move on to another strategy, one that centers around making comments on other people's blogs as a means by which to promote your chosen product. You begin this by going into Google and doing a search on your topic, and then clicking on the "Blogs" tab that appears on the search results page (which filters the results on the basis of those

You're an Affiliate; Now What?

(cont. from Page 2)

blogs on that topic). One of the features that's unique to blogs (as compared to a typical website) is that blogs have a comment area where readers may make comments about the blog and where the comments can be seen by all readers of the blog. Therefore, you can, as one of your strategies, simply search for blogs that are related to your topic, and make comments on those blogs where your comments include a link back to your proprietary website. As a matter of fact, in keeping with what I was speaking about just a minute ago with regard to dedicating yourself to just *one* of these strategies, if *all you did* was to dedicate an hour each day to making comments on other people's blogs, you would likely see a substantial uptick in traffic in as little as 30 days...and likely in less time than that.

Again, this takes some discipline, and developing the mechanical discipline about all of this is the greatest challenge at the outset. It's not unlike a person who, with the best of intentions, declares that he is going to begin working out to get into better physical condition. I can tell you that the actual "working out" is not nearly as challenging as incorporating the discipline required to be at the gym each day. It's the same thing here; doing these various tasks is generally a lot of fun, so it's not the work associated with any of these strategies that will hold you back. Rather, it's getting yourself to the point where you actually take time out of the rest of your day to sit in front of your computer for an hour to do these things. Once you've conquered that obstacle, you will be surprised how easily the rest of it falls into place.

Another helpful strategy you can incorporate to help you market, and one that's super-easy

to do, is simply get yourself an email signature. Every email program with which I'm familiar offers you the option of going into its "Help" section and typing in the word "signature" and it will show you how to set up a signature; an email signature is a "pre-fab" type of signatory you choose to create that will be inserted at the bottom of every email you send. In my case, I include my photo, an actual signature, as well as my printed name and links to some of my proprietary websites. You may not want to get as fancy as having your photo or an actual representation of your real signature as a part of your *email* "signature," but clearly you could create one that promotes whatever the specific product is that you want to promote, and that way, everyone that receives an email from you would see that under your name.

One of the things to remember about a strategy like this is how easy it is to leverage yourself by doing something like this. For example, even if you are no more than a casual user of the Internet, you still probably send out dozens of emails each week. If each one of those emails has your specially-created signature, to include a relevant link back to wherever you are actually facilitating the sale of this product, you are getting your product out there in a way that is difficult to duplicate as easily using any other strategy.

Next, I want to talk about the use of something called EzineArticles, which is a site that can be found at www.ezinearticles.com. As with the other strategies we're mentioning, we've spoken about EzineArticles before, but it's a good idea to mention it again here as one of our strategies. Beyond Ezine itself, there are hundreds of article aggregating websites out there, and you could take the same article and reconfigure it enough for

You're an Affiliate; Now What?

(cont. from Page 3)

use with each of the ones (aggregators) you want to utilize (it's considered bad form to use the exact same article repeatedly with different aggregators, and, in some cases, doing so is an over violation of terms of service). As with the other strategies we're discussing, this could be the only thing you do...posting articles to Ezine as well as to other online article aggregators. On that note, let me tell you briefly about a guy named Sean Mize. Sean Mize is an Internet marketing entrepreneur himself who is EzineArticle's number one article poster, in terms of sheer number of published articles. At this writing, he has over 23,000 articles that he's written and published through Ezine. Yes, you read that write; 23,000. Think that guy gets any traffic?

Keep in that we're not talking about writing pieces that are thousands of words in length. Sean Mize, the guy I just mentioned? Many of his articles are barely over 250 words, which is about the length of a solid paragraph. You can write an article that talks about something related to the product you're pitching (don't use the article to pitch the product directly; the article should be

used to talk about an aspect of the product's general realm that provides objective information—for example, if you want to pitch porn blocking software, you might write an article about the growth of the online porn industry), and at the end of the article, you're permitted to publish an author's box that describes who you are, what you're selling, and details your online address.

The use of YouTube, the well-known video-sharing website, as a mechanism by which to market can be a terrific idea. The truth is that we are highly-visual beings, and our world, with all of the advances that have been made in terms of video production and reproduction, has become a far more graphically-centered place. The reality of that means that as many people as there are who might prefer to read a blog or article, there are a bunch more who would prefer to receive their information via visual media. YouTube may be the best resource for the average person to reach out to the masses via the mechanism of video, and it's something you would do well to incorporate in your affiliate marketing efforts.

If you're not terribly familiar with the whole idea of creating quality videos and putting them online, you might think that you need to spend a lot of time and money creating an in-house studio or something like that in order to achieve any worthwhile results. That's just not the case. You can take a little \$20 camera that clips to the top of your computer screen and is connected to your actual computer, and you can just look at the screen and talk about whatever your topic of interest might be. I find that very few of our students are using YouTube as a means by which to promote their websites, blogs, or affiliate products, and I think that's a big mistake.



You're an Affiliate; Now What?

(cont. from Page 4)

The thirst for online video is only growing, and it would be a shame for you to miss out on a whole wave of access you might not heretofore have considered engaging. It's important to recognize that people have different preferences regarding how they consume information. Although I am a reader, by nature, and I come from a generation where there was still a high priority put on reading, as an entrepreneur who is trying to engender sales, you have to be astute enough to recognize that a large number of people may not be readers, by nature, either because that's just not an activity of preference for them, and/or because they are from a more recent generation in which learning and gaining information from graphical representations is more in vogue and has become more acceptable. Remember to cater to different audiences.

Let's talk now about Facebook. Some of my friends who are not Internet "people," if you will...they don't have a website, they're not people who are involved with Internet marketing at all, they're just regular people who have Facebook accounts...have well over 1,000 Facebook "friends." That's a great base of people from a marketing standpoint, but then when you consider all of the people they know, and you realize there's a huge number of people from which you are essentially just one degree removed, then the consideration of Facebook as a marketing tool takes on even greater significance. Think about that; let's say each one of the 1,000 friends has even as few as 100 friends of their own...that means that you are basically one step away from a potential audience of 100,000 or so people. As for the actual use of Facebook, you can, of course, make posts to your Facebook account about the product you're desiring to market; talk about how

you're benefitting from it, encourage people to take a look at it, put a link in your post(s), etc. This is, again, an example of something that is very easy and can be very effective, and yet I don't hear much about people in our training actually doing it.

Twitter is another place where people are, with much greater frequency these days, now using the Twitter search tool, and Google has really integrated in full with Twitter, so people are searching Google and finding Twitter posts. This means that if you take your keyword phrase..."how to block porn," for example...you could make several posts each day about the product that you're promoting. You could write the words, "How to block porn" as the beginning of your post, and include a link to your site or to the sales page.

It's important that you recognize as an affiliate that you have to do more than merely "have" the product. Too many people are under the impression that all they need to do is simply make the purchase of the affiliate product rights, and money will simply flow in from that. It doesn't work that way. All you have really purchased at that point is the right to sell the product as an affiliate. You absolutely have to do more. I can tell you that we have students who've been very successful in their Internet marketing efforts, but each of those folks has been very dedicated to making this work. The most successful of those are the ones who spend multiple hours each day really working at these different strategies and incorporating all of them. Again, you don't necessarily have to do that if you're seeking just a modest amount of money from all of this, but if you really want to one day make a full-time living from Internet marketing, you must dedicate yourself to these things.

Inbound Links

By James L. Paris

Let's spend some time talking about inbound links and how to get them. Inbound links, also known as *backlinks*, are incoming links to a website or page. Their significance these days lies chiefly in the realm of search engine optimization, where the various search engines will look to the number of inbound links a given site has as one of the determinants for establishing how highly that website should rank. One resource of which to make note is www.backlinkwatch.com. This site will let you know how many links you have currently, and also provide some idea as to their quality.

Let's talk about how to gain inbound links by posting to blogs. As we know, just about every blog to which you go (as well as your own) will give the reader the opportunity to leave comments. When you leave a comment, you can also insert a link back to your own proprietary website or blog. For example, recently I did a Google search under "taxes," and filtered the results on the basis of blogs. The very first blog that came up was entitled, "Reduce Your Income Taxes with These Common Loans," which is a blog about the tax deductibility of certain loans. Anyway, given that I am the Editor-In-Chief of Christian Money.com, you know that my realm is personal finance. Accordingly, it is perfectly natural and appropriate for me to think that any blog that deals with any given topic of personal/consumer finance is going to have relevance, in some form or fashion, to much of what is contained at Christian Money.com. So, if I make a comment, to include an inbound link, on a blog about taxes, it is reasonable for me to assume that readers of a blog about taxes will be interested in heading over to *my* website. Note that your comments that serve as the "platform" for leaving behind your link need

not be substantial. For example, here is the comment, in full, that I left behind on the blog I just mentioned: "A very good article. Most people don't realize all of the deductions they can benefit from when borrowing money. I teach on this in some of my own articles at <http://www.christianmoney.com>." That's it; your comment need not be anything more involved than a couple of sentences. All you're trying to do, in this case, is simply find an inoffensive way to leave your link behind. That said, let me reiterate that while your comment need not be substantial in length or particularly profound, it should still be a quality comment. For example, I would never leave the following as a comment to a blog: "Come check out my site at <http://www.christianmoney.com>." Not only would I not do it because it's poor form to comment on someone else's blog solely in the fashion of marketing oneself, but it will be of little use to you *as* a marketing effort; those who are reading the blog to which you are commenting will simply dismiss such a note out of hand as being pure advertising, and it will have been a wasted effort.

This simple activity can drive a lot of traffic to your site. If you did only this quick exercise five times each day, you would end the year with almost 2,000 inbound links.

OK, let's talk a bit about directories. Go to Google, type in your keyword, and then either the words "directory" or "directories." If your website is about gardening, for example, I would go into Google and type in either "gardening directory" or "gardening directories." Doing this will take you to websites that are directories on which you can almost always list yourself for free. This is a very easy thing to do, and what makes it especially easy is the fact that, unlike blogs,

Inbound Links (cont. from Page 6)

there is no post you have to read and to which you have to formulate a response in order to establish a basis for providing your link. You don't have to come up with something pithy to say or otherwise try to be at all clever, so posting to directories may be about the easiest way in the world to lay down some inbound links.

Forums can be another good place at which you can leave your link(s) behind. In order to find appropriate forums, you will search for those in much the same way that you search for directories. Let's say that your website or blog is about dog training; you will do a search for "dog training forum" and/or "dog training forums," and you'll find hundreds, if not thousands, of places where you can gain an inbound link. Again, this is very easy to do, so there's really no legitimate excuse for not doing it.

OK...now, let's talk about that I think is perhaps the *best* way of getting links: giving something away. I can tell you that this method of gaining links is very powerful. You can do something like write a little ebook, or come up with a calculator of some kind, or a worksheet, or something else enticing as a free giveaway. You might be shocked at how many people contact me every day for a copy of my "cease communication" letter for use with debt collection agencies; I've been thinking about making that a free download and mentioning its availability when I leave links behind at different places. There's a lot you can do in this regard to attract attention. I think the calculator idea is especially good. Some of you might hear that and be thinking, "Great idea, but how do I come to possess a free digital calculator of some sort that I can use in this way?" Well, one thing you can do is to head

on over to Elance (www.elance.com) and hire a programmer to make it for you for less than 100 bucks. You could create something like a *Stay at Home with My Kids Calculator*, wherein people put in all of their personal information and the calculator could determine if it's financially possible presently for one spouse to stay home with the kids. Alternatively, you could offer a budget calculator, something that tells people how much they can save if they cut out this or that expense. Now, there wouldn't be much point to offering a regular calculator mechanism like the kind that everyone already has at their fingertips these days via their cell phones and other portable electronic devices, but a calculator that is designed to have a clever, consumer-oriented theme to it will absolutely garner some interest.

By the way, if you *do* give something away, issue a press release with a link to that page. We're going to talk more about press releases here shortly, but here's specifically why I mention this now: website developers, bloggers...people, in general, I guess...are lazy, and they like to sort of "co-opt" what you're offering as their own, so if you are offering a free ebook, many will very possibly (and likely) link to you, because it sort of looks to their own followers like *they're* the ones giving the free item away. Of course, they're really not, and the bottom line is that the traffic still flows to you in those circumstances, but the point is that by issuing a press release as a way to announce a free giveaway can result in a lot of traffic on a variety of bases.

OK...EzineArticles; we've discussed EzineArticles (www.ezinearticles.com) earlier in this issue, and many of you will be familiar with this article aggregator from your own

Inbound Links *(cont. from Page 7)*

efforts at posting articles through it.

Hub Pages (www.hubpages.com) and Squidoo (www.squidoo.com) are places where users can create simple (and free) web pages about anything that interests them. I have spoken for a long time about the benefits of having a large presence on sites like these. The relevance of these sites to what we're speaking about here is that you can deposit links throughout your sites that you create.

Let's talk now about social bookmarking. First of all, what *is* social bookmarking? In its simplest form, social bookmarking is just a way for people to save their favorite web pages online. You can then access your bookmarks from any computer, and you can share them with others. In terms of building traffic to your own site, social bookmarking can be very useful. You could submit your articles one at a time to these various sites, but that can take a lot of time (plus, submitting your own content directly is considered poor form). Examples of popular (and useful) social bookmarking sites include Delicious (www.delicious.com), Digg (www.digg.com), and Technorati (www.technorati.com).

The way to best use social bookmarking sites is to add social bookmark buttons to each article you write. A good idea is to add the buttons to your site that will submit it to the various bookmarking sites, and there are several scripts to which you can subscribe that will handle that for you. There is one called Add This (www.addthis.com), which I especially like because it offers an analytics tab that allows you to track how many people are linking to you from social sites.

Let's talk briefly about the issue of purchas-

ing links. The purchasing of links is generally frowned upon by the search engines, because it's viewed as an exercise in cheating in order to get yourself moved up, but there are three sites from which the search engines don't mind if you buy: Yahoo Directory, Best of the Web Directory, and Business.com directory, and it should cost you no more than about \$300 per year if you want to get in on all three of these (if you had to pick one, I would absolutely get in on the Yahoo Directory). Three others that are effective, but *not* necessarily OK with the search engines, are textlinkbrokers.com, text-link-ads.com, and purchase-links.com.

You can also look to press releases as a way to gain inbound links. We like Christian Newswire (www.christiannewswire.com); the press releases are about \$65 each, and you get very good coverage. Remember that when you're submitting your press release, you want to be sure to get an actual link in the release, one on which a reader can directly click and be sent to your site. That does two things: first, it sends people straight to your site, but also, that link will stay with that press release website for months or years, and that press release site is a highly-ranked site that's going to be carrying a link to your web page for a long time. Note, too, that this is sort of another way of getting a paid link that's not frowned on by the search engines, because while you're technically paying for the link, you're not doing so in the explicit fashion the search engines dislike.

If you create a systematic approach to using some or all of these different methods in developing a wealth of inbound links, you'll be astounded at the increase in traffic you realize over the course of a few short months...*but you have to do the work.*