

Affiliate Classroom

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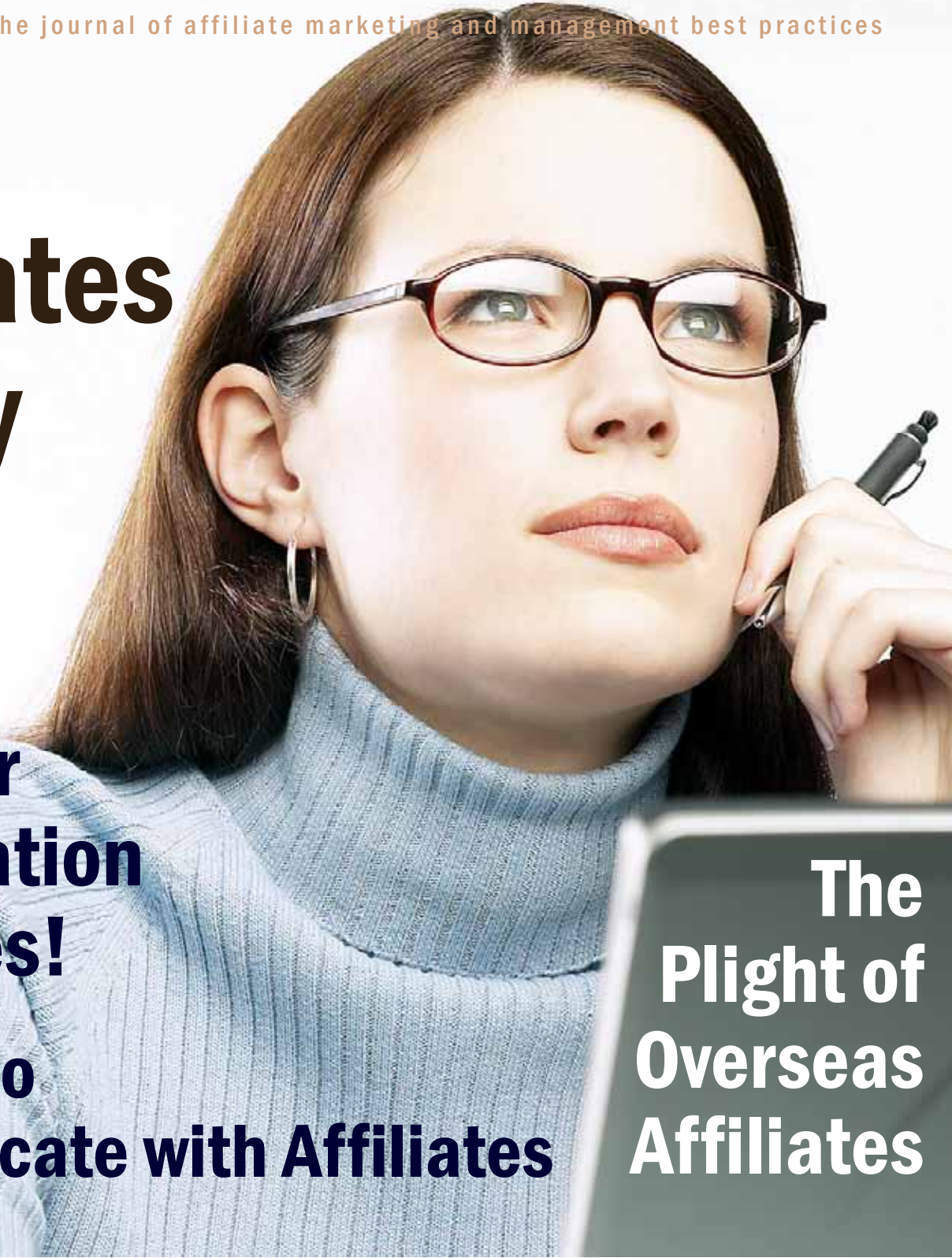
The journal of affiliate marketing and management best practices

**What
Affiliates
Really
Want**

**Affiliate
Manager
Certification
Launches!**

**10 Ways to
Communicate with Affiliates**

**The
Plight of
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PRODUCT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Top 5 Affiliate Programs

Sponsored By AffiliatePrograms.com



AffiliatePrograms.com



Featured Program

Microsoft adCenter

<http://www.microsoftaffiliates.net/adcenter.asp>

Join the Microsoft Affiliate Network now to participate in the Microsoft adCenter program. For each new U.S.-based adCenter customer you generate, you'll receive a cash reward. Microsoft adCenter is the advertising platform that enables businesses to create, manage, and optimize search marketing campaigns to 97 million search users on the MSN and Live Search Network. As an added incentive for your audience, new adCenter customers will receive a credit for free advertising clicks.

Top 5 Programs for February 2008

expresscopy.com

<http://www.expresscopy.com/affiliate-partner-programs.php>

Partnering with expresscopy.com through Commission Junction (CJ) allows you to earn easy revenue with your online website or blog. Commission Junction affiliates benefit from a wide variety of text links, banners, and graphics. These promotions are great to drive more traffic and first-time customers to order. As an affiliate, you will receive 20% net sales for any new customer order, or \$2.00 flat fee for any existing customer order. Expresscopy.com offers a valuable, year-round direct mail product line perfect for both business and personal projects.



Poker Affiliate World

<http://www.pokeraffiliateworld.com/signup/index.html?ref=CAP>

Poker Affiliate World has taken the industry by storm and revolutionized the way poker affiliates do their everyday business. As the largest poker affiliate resource and community in the world, affiliates have access to premium deals with the world's top online poker brands, exclusive free rolls, and the ability to check all their stats and cash out from one simple integrated platform. For the simplicity and convenience at your fingertips, the Poker Affiliate World network has the choices to suit any of your poker affiliate marketing needs!

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

NicePrice USA

<http://www.affiliateprograms.com/WebsiteRedirect.aspx?lid=NicePriceUSA>

If you already own a domain name, your cost to join this program is **zero**. With your domain name, you will be given a complete clone of the NicePrice USA website featuring every product that they offer for sale. Every step of the order process will be handled by NicePrice including free gift wrapping on select products! Commissions are paid monthly, and rates range from 15% to 50%. With average orders on the site at \$100.00, your commissions will add up quickly.

PsPrint

https://signup.cj.com/member/brandedPublisherSignUp.do?air_refmerchantid=

PsPrint offers great quality printing and lighting fast turnaround on their products and their affiliate payments. As an affiliate you will earn a 15% starting commission on everything sold, including initial and recurring sales. Once you surpass \$15,000 in sales for the month, your commission rate will raise to 20%. PsPrint will help you earn money by providing a new creative each month, assigning you a dedicated account manager and setting cookies to 90 days to make sure you get your credit for sales.

Secure A Quote

<http://affiliate.securequote.com/join.asp>

With the highest payout in the industry, Secure A Quote offers one of the most lucrative affiliate programs. All of Secure A Quote's affiliates are on a CPA basis, which will pay a one-time cost per acquisition for each prospect who fills out their lead form. You earn up to \$8.00 for each submission on both health and life insurance leads. You will be earning money while helping others save!

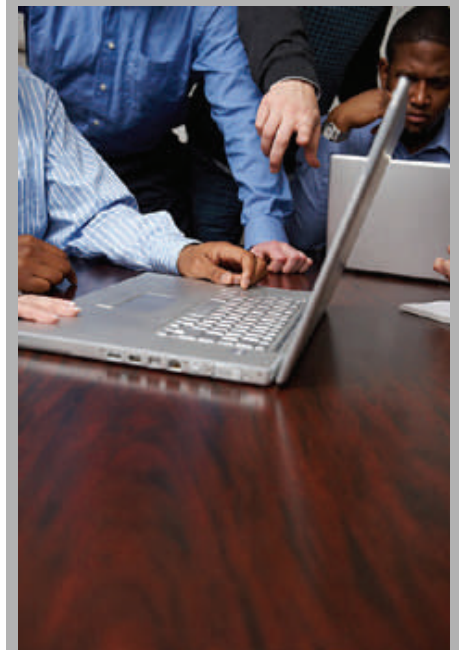
Until next time...

Check us out in our Industry Watch Newsletter Check us out in our Industry Watch Newsletter:

http://www.affiliateprograms.com/newsletter_archive.aspx

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 to reach your full potential.

The most important reason why you should interact with other affiliates is the mutual sharing of knowledge. This doesn't mean sharing your successful niches or all your secrets with others, but rather the sharing of general tactics and techniques .



COVER STORY

Affiliate Friendly Programs: What Affiliates Really Want

by Evelyn Grazini

<http://www.bestaffiliateniche.com>



I'm not exactly sure who invented affiliate marketing. I am sure that for merchants, it was like a dream come true. Imagine, if you will, an entire sales force just waiting for new products to promote. And better yet, this sales force asks for payment only when they actually sell something.

For the merchant, there are reduced advertising costs, no employee benefits to pay, no sales meetings, etc. All they have to do is offer some commission, and affiliates will swarm to their site in eager anticipation of marketing products in exchange.

Well, that's enough imagining for now! Maybe that's how it used to be. But now there are many more merchants willing to "let" affiliates market their products. As a result, affiliates can be more selective on what products they will promote — and how much they are willing to work for.

Both affiliates and merchants have big decisions to make. Merchants must decide what commission levels will entice affiliates to promote their products. Affiliates must decide if the commission is enough to profit after they pay their advertising and other expenses.

So, what makes a program "affiliate friendly?" Here are a few things that merchants should consider when deciding if affiliates are a good fit for their product. Put another way, ***here is what affiliates really want!***

High Payouts

It's probably no surprise to anyone that high payouts are very important in an affiliate's decision. After all, the affiliate must pay for the landing page website, and advertising to send traffic to that site. There has to be enough money left over after expenses to make it worth the time of the affiliate.

High payouts can actually be accomplished by merchants in two ways.

1. Higher commission percentage
2. Higher priced product/high average sale

For example, if a merchant has a product that sells for \$59.00 and offers a 5 percent commission, the affiliate will only make \$2.95 for each sale. Merchants probably will not get many affiliates who would be willing to work for this small amount. For a low-priced product, if it's feasible, offer a larger commission. Affiliates will be more apt to sell this product for a 20 percent commission where they make over \$10.00 per sale.

There are many more merchants willing to "let" affiliates market their products. As a result, affiliates can be more selective on what products they will promote — and how much they are willing to work for.

COVER STORY

A 5 percent commission might be fine if the selling price is \$599.00. The same holds true if the average sale is \$599. An affiliate can expect to make about \$30 per sale in this case.

Merchants should consider the lifetime value of the customer and pay the affiliate accordingly. The hardest part of product sales is getting that first sale. If the customer has a good experience with the first purchase, they are much more likely to come back. And remain loyal.

If you have a membership site or club that requires dues each month, you are more likely to get affiliates to participate if you pay them a piece of the recurring membership fee. Affiliates are trying to build a sustainable business. Monthly recurring income is a highly sought-after benefit of affiliate marketing.

Merchant's Ability to Convert the Sale

It is the affiliate's job to pre-sell the customer and get them to click through to the merchant's site. However, the merchant has the ultimate responsibility for capturing sales from these customers. Merchants should track the number of sales made versus the number of visitors. Savvy affiliates and top producers will always contact the merchant's affiliate manager and ask for the sales conversion rate.

A high conversion rate also means the affiliate will make more money. This goes back to the idea of having high payouts — it is another thing that can greatly increase the merchant's chances of getting selected by top producers. Most super affiliates can just look at a merchant's landing page to tell whether it will do well or not. Be sure your sales page makes a good first impression, and that your program has a tolerable conversion rate.

Make it easy for the affiliate to do a good job with the pre-sell by providing good graphics and text links. Always provide adequate marketing support. A wide selection of products to sell as well as continuously updated and fresh offers will go a long way towards increasing sales and retaining affiliates.

It's also a good idea to have a dedicated affiliate manager for your program, particularly one who can create long-term relationships with your affiliates. Affiliates don't want to be treated like "just" sales people. They want to be treated like a true business partner.

Exclusive Offers/Networks

There are a lot of networks available for merchants and affiliates today. Some merchants can afford to be in more than one network (such as Commission Junction and ShareASale, for instance). But this is not always a good thing. Affiliates will often look for offers that are only being promoted on one network. Why? Less competition, of course!

Super affiliates can often tell by looking at a merchant's landing page if it will do well or not. Be sure your sales page makes a good first impression, and that your program has a tolerable conversion rate.



COVER STORY



Not all affiliates will sign up with every network. Most new affiliates sign up with the larger networks and have an adequate number of products to market within their chosen network. However, super affiliates are much more selective. If a merchant is in several networks, that may mean MORE competition for the affiliate. And more competition means less individual sales for each affiliate.

Customers will always shop around before making a purchase. When there are thousands of affiliates and stores selling the same item, customers will bargain shop for the best prices. While this is not a bad thing, we know that different networks have different payment structures. If one network charges more commission on sales, the merchant may have to offer affiliates a lower commission through that network to make up the difference.

It's not uncommon to see a merchant promote in Network A at a 30% commission and in Network B at a 20% commission. And sometimes the affiliates in Network B will be given special coupons and creatives that affiliates in Network A don't get - or vice versa. But in the end, the affiliate spends time making a decision between networks, instead of using that time to get a productive campaign up and running.

If an affiliate has been marketing the product for some time, then notices that other affiliates are offering a lower price, you may lose that affiliate forever. Affiliates have links to products everywhere. Switching out links to the lower priced product in a different network is just not feasible in most cases.

If there is only one place to buy, prices will all be the same. Customers will eventually purchase from the affiliate who gives the best pre-sell for the product, or who has the best marketing technique.

Limiting the number of affiliates you accept is also an option. If you have some very good affiliates marketing your products, you might not want to give them extra competition by hugely expanding your affiliate team. Merchants do not need to disclose the number of affiliates they have in their program. Smart affiliates, however, always check on the competition before they decide to market any program.

Remember, for savvy affiliates, competition numbers are not that hard to figure out. Most of the time, they can be determined with just a few search queries and a few minutes of digging.

Tracking Visitor Behavior

Merchants should have a good reporting structure in place so affiliates can track how the visitor arrived at their site. It's beneficial if you can tell an affiliate what keywords convert the best, and if there is a difference between conversion rates on Yahoo!, Google, or other advertising sources. This saves the affiliate precious time. If they are doing Pay Per Click (PPC) marketing, it helps them get their advertising set up quickly.

While merchants do not need to disclose the number of affiliates in their program, smart affiliates always check on the competition before they decide to market any program. Competition numbers can be determined in very little time with just a few search queries.

COVER STORY

A good PPC campaign requires diligent tracking. Google's AdWords process will generate a tracking code that lets affiliates know which keywords are converting. This tracking code must be placed on the sales page of the product being sold. But most merchants are not going to edit their shopping carts to accommodate tracking individual affiliates conversion codes.

However, most networks offer SUB-IDs that affiliates can use to track click-to-conversion stats for specific placements. They work a lot like a special landing page URL, tracking just the traffic that comes through that link, and reporting on it separately.

Intuitive Shopping Cart System

Customers need to actually be able to **complete** the sale. This should be a well-known fact to most, but maybe not. I have had a few experiences where I have shopped at a site and have a few things in my shopping cart. Then when I'm ready to buy, I can't figure out how to check out. And I'm Internet savvy!

You must first have a way for customers to easily select items they want to purchase. Secondly, they must be able to complete the sale in as few steps as possible. No merchant would intentionally hide the final check-out page. Just watch your colors and images so that the order links do not get lost in clutter and become almost invisible to the customer.

Low Shopping Cart Abandon Rates

MarketingSherpa does consistent studies on shopping cart abandon rates. They have interviewed dozens of top ecommerce marketers over the years. Their previous conclusion was that the shopping cart abandon rate was around 20–30%. Then they performed an actual survey. What they found surprised even them! The abandon rate was closer to an average of 59.8%. That's right — nearly **60%** of online shoppers put something in a cart, and then do not make the purchase.

The two primary reasons potential buyers abandon the cart are:

- They experience problems with the order form.
- They experience problems with the payment processing system.

Both the merchant and the affiliate would be much happier if this didn't happen. If you want to retain affiliates, make sure your abandon rate is a LOT lower than 60%.

That's all that affiliates really want. Some affiliates may be a little more demanding than an actual employee would be. But remember, as a merchant it's still nice to only have to pay a marketer when they actually make a sale.

About the Author

Evelyn Grazini is an affiliate marketer and writer on a variety of subjects. She has been involved in Internet Marketing for over 5 years, and has been marketing as an affiliate for over two years. Find her Blog on affiliate niche marketing resources at: <http://www.bestaffiliateniche.com> and her GoldenCan Data Feed Gift Site at: <http://www.heartfulofgifts.com>

Nearly 60% of online shoppers put something in a cart, and then do not make the purchase.

If you want to retain affiliates, make sure your abandon rate is a LOT lower than 60%.



FEATURE STORY

The Next Big Thing In Affiliate Marketing

Introducing AC Certified Affiliate Manager Training and Certification

by Rachel Honoway



Up-to-date information about AC Certified can be found at:

www.ACCertified.com/blog

Join us for our live launch on February 23 at the Rio in Las Vegas. Details are at:

www.AffiliateClassroomLIVE.com

As I reflect on my almost 10 years in the affiliate marketing space, I realize that there has always been a sense of anticipation in the air around us. We all feel like the next big thing is waiting just around the corner, and we work hard to reach it.

But, unlike other industries that reach their pinnacles and rest easy on their success as a platform, affiliate marketers celebrate only for a moment before getting back to work, using success as a stepping stone to help us reach the “next” next big thing.

Right now, that sense of anticipation and that drive to make it around the corner is all but consuming me.

For years, I have struggled with the shortage of affiliate managers in this space. And I’m not alone. So few people actually understand affiliate marketing, and so many companies are looking to get into affiliate marketing, or grow their current programs.

This struggle is about to end, as we round the corner on February 23 and launch our AC Certified Affiliate Manager Training and Certification program. If you haven’t heard the buzz about this program yet, let me give you a quick introduction. The program is made up of three components:

1. Training

The foundation of the AC Certified program is an automated, online training course. It includes volumes of text, illustrations, downloadable resources, and video presentations. The course offers instruction on a broad range of affiliate program management topics, such as how to launch an affiliate program, creating a fair commission structure, and how to recruit, train, and communicate with affiliates.

2. Certification

At the end of the course, individuals are presented with a final exam. When they achieve a passing grade on the exam, they are awarded their official Affiliate Manager Certification. AC Certified Affiliate Managers receive a digital certificate logo to place on their website, and their names are listed on the ACCertified.com website.

3. Careers

The program is rounded out with a career center designed to join affiliate managers with the merchants, networks, and agencies that are looking to hire them. Certified affiliate managers can list themselves and search through open positions. Likewise, employers can post their open positions and search for prequalified, certified affiliate managers and certified outsourced program management agencies.

As the anticipation builds towards February 23, I remember that this “next big thing” is just a stepping stone to the “next” next big thing. I wonder what that will be...

About the Author

Ms. Honoway has a long history of experience in the affiliate marketing and interactive marketing space dating back to 1997 when she began working as an intern for KowaBunga! Technologies, maker of the MyAffiliateProgram (myAP) affiliate tracking and management platform. Immediately after graduating from Eastern Michigan University with a marketing-focused BBA, she launched her full time career as KowaBunga’s Director of Marketing. Throughout the 8 years that followed, she held the positions of VP of sales and marketing and general VP. A year after the company’s acquisition in 2005 by Think Partnership Inc., she was promoted to the corporate level and served as the company’s VP of marketing and later as its VP of marketing and client services. Talk to Rachel about your Affiliate Management needs. Email her at Rachel@affiliateclassroom.com.

Ten Ways To Communicate With Your Affiliates

by Kathy Jackson

<http://www.income-academy.com>



Affiliate managers must stay in constant contact with affiliates because those affiliates have so many other choices. If you aren't in contact with your affiliates, keeping them motivated to sell your product, another affiliate manager will soon be in contact with them.



Communicating with people has never been easier than it is today. The Internet has opened up so many avenues of communication that one really has no excuse for not staying in touch with family, friends, and coworkers. This is also true in the world of affiliate marketing, and successful affiliate managers are now using modern forms of communication.

Communication between affiliate managers and affiliates is incredibly important. Today, affiliate managers absolutely must stay in constant contact with their affiliates because affiliates have so many other choices. In other words, if you aren't in contact with your affiliates, keeping them motivated to sell your product, another affiliate manager will soon be in contact with them. Just as good affiliates vie for customers, good affiliate managers vie for good affiliates.

With that said, let's look at the various ways that an affiliate manager can keep the lines of communication open with his or her affiliates.

Method #1: Email

Email is definitely the oldest form of our new communication methods. Email does have its ups and downs, and as a marketer, you probably know what these ups and downs are. There is always the chance that your email will never be seen, because the spam filters catch it. There is also the possibility that your affiliates won't realize that your email is important to them, and it could be deleted without being read.

It is important that you make it clear to your affiliates, when they sign up, that any email that you send them is important and relates to their success in your program. After you've stated this, you have to be willing to use email to communicate with your affiliates in a responsible fashion. You don't want to swamp them with email. Use this form of communication only when you really have something to say to them — concerning your products, about your affiliate program in general, or when you want to introduce them to new marketing methods that may help them to realize greater success.

For the purpose of saving time, it is wise to use an autoresponder for communication with your affiliates. When they sign up for your program, have them sign up for email notifications from you as well. Don't confuse email contact with sending a newsletter — even though both methods use autoresponder services. When you send email to your affiliates, this should be a freshly written personal communication from you, to them. Also, make sure that you use a subject line that lets the affiliate know that this information is important and must be read.

Method #2: Regular Newsletters

A newsletter is not a personal email, but this is an excellent method for keeping your affiliates up to date. Your newsletter could be used to acknowledge top affiliates, to

COMMUNICATE WITH AFFILIATES CONTINUED....

announce contest winners, to let affiliates know what is going on with your company, and even to introduce new product launches and promotions.

While the newsletter is not a personal email, it could be written as such. It could also be written in the form of a true newsletter, using HTML. If you are already keeping in touch with your affiliates using email, you could still send out a newsletter — whether weekly, biweekly, or monthly — to summarize all of the news for that period of time.

As with email contact, you should use your autoresponder to send newsletters out to your affiliates. When using this method or the email method, make sure that you run your message through a spam checker, and fix any potential problems that could keep your email from being read or even received. Overall, for my money, the best autoresponder system to use is AWeber, at <http://www.aweber.com>.

Method #3: Blogs

Blogs have become increasingly popular, and with good reason. People like to read them, and they like to take part in the process by leaving comments and trackbacks. Blogs can be open, or private, which makes it easy to communicate with your affiliates, without worrying about other people seeing what you have to say to them.

Setting up a blog on your website is easy and inexpensive. Overall, the best blog system to work with is WordPress, at <http://www.wordpress.com>, which is available for free and has an amazing amount of possible plug-ins that can be used to make your blog more dynamic and more interesting to your affiliates.

Your blog can be used to keep affiliates up to date on product changes and company changes that affect them. Your affiliates have the opportunity to register for your blog and leave comments as well, which can also be highly useful to you, them, and other affiliates, as it allows them to address problems or offer new ideas. This is also an excellent way to attract new affiliates. Ideally, you should update your blog at least once each week, if not more often.

Method #4: Private Forum

Private forums work very well for affiliates. Not only does it give you the opportunity to communicate with your affiliates, it also gives them the ability to communicate with each other, and to share ideas.

Forums can easily be set up on your website, and if you use a web hosting company that offers the Cpanel, with Fantastico, getting the forum set up is not only free, it is also incredibly easy, and can be done with a few clicks of the mouse.

You need to moderate your forum, and make sure that no spam accumulates. Otherwise, this will not be a useful forum for your affiliates. Affiliates should be required to register before they can post, and you can also change the settings so that only those who are registered can read the posts.

To really get your forum going, ask your top affiliates to start posting right away, and make sure that you are posting as well. Also, make sure that your forum is well organized, and divided into various topic categories, so that affiliates know the proper place in which to post their information or question.



When communicating via either newsletter or regular email, make sure that you run your message through a spam checker, and fix any potential problems that could keep your email from being read or even received.

COMMUNICATE WITH AFFILIATES CONTINUED....



The telephone is far from dead as a communication tool. Take advantage of it, and use it as a method for keeping your affiliates fired up. Use a long distance service that offers a flat rate, with unlimited long distance, and schedule calls to specific affiliates on a regular basis.

Method #5: A Support System

Support ticket systems have always been reserved for communication with customers, but some of the nicer systems are also viable alternatives for communicating with affiliates. Many people equate support systems with forums, but there is a huge difference.

With a support system, you can actually build a knowledge base, which your affiliates will find very useful. Furthermore, you have the opportunity to help individual affiliates with individual problems or questions, instead of trying to guess at the information that your affiliates want and need from you. Support systems also allow you to communicate with affiliates one-on-one.

There are many free support systems available, but the best one is not free. The most useful support system that many marketers are using today is Kayako, at <http://www.kayako.com>. Make sure that you monitor your affiliate support system, and that you answer all questions in a timely manner.

Method #6: Personal Phone Calls

The telephone is far from dead as a communication tool. You should definitely take advantage of it and use it as a method for keeping your affiliates fired up.

Obviously, most affiliate managers don't use this method of communication because it can be time consuming, and costs can add up. The trick here is to use a long distance service that offers you a flat rate, with unlimited long distance, and to schedule calls to specific affiliates on a regular basis.

For example, if five of your affiliates have a great month, call and congratulate them. Calling all five of them can take less than an hour of your time. If you have an affiliate who was once doing well, but has slacked off, give him a call and find out what the problem is. You may be surprised at how effective just one phone call can be, and how greatly it improves your bottom line.

Method #7: Snail Mail

Although snail mail is hardly ever used these days, this may be exactly why you want to use it. The only drawback of snail mail is the greater expense associated with it. If you have 500 affiliates, at the new rate of 41 cents per stamp, it will cost you \$205 to send out one letter to all of your affiliates.

Obviously, this isn't something that you want to do often, because of the high cost, but it is something that you should consider doing, perhaps on a quarterly basis. Some of the highest rated affiliate programs send out welcome packets to their new affiliates, and it seems to make a very good impression.

Method #8: Live Conventions

If you're really doing well, holding a live convention or seminar for your affiliates is a great idea, although there is a great deal of cost involved. Live conventions are actually still quite unique in the world of affiliate marketing, and again, this is exactly why you should be using this method of communication.

A convention will give your affiliates the opportunity to meet you and each other in person. Costs can be lowered by requiring your affiliates to cover their own hotel and

COMMUNICATE WITH AFFILIATES CONTINUED....

travel costs, and most of their meals. This leaves the cost of the convention venue, and maybe one or two meals, for you to pay. An alternative is to invite your top performers to meet you at an event like Affiliate Summit, where you can take them out for dinner or host a cocktail hour for them.

Method #9: Instant Messenger Systems

Instant messaging may seem a bit outdated, and unprofessional, but it really isn't. You can equate instant messaging with a cheaper form of a personal telephone call. The chances are very good that every single one of your affiliates will have one or more instant messenger systems installed on their machines, so why wouldn't you take advantage of this?

While there is no cost involved with instant messaging, it can be time-consuming — which is why most affiliate managers don't use this form of communication with their affiliates. However, it can be manageable if you make yourself available only during certain times of the day, or even just one day each week. This will give your affiliates a true sense of being connected with you, and they will be motivated to do more for your product.

Method #10: Teleseminars

Teleseminars have numerous uses, and communicating effectively with your affiliates is just one of them. Hosting a teleseminar is not hard, it is not expensive at all, and your affiliates will actually look forward to the teleseminars that you host. Really good affiliates will even hold their own teleseminars and ask you to be a guest speaker.

Teleseminars may not cost you a single dime. If you have 100 or fewer people whom you need on the call, there are many free bridge line services out there, such as www.freeconference.com. If you want the call recorded, however, there will be a fee.

Simply use your autoresponder to notify your affiliates about an upcoming call, and ask them to pre-register for the call. They will be directed to a signup form, which goes back to your autoresponder. You can then use that list that you set up to notify them of the date and call-in information for the teleseminar.

The key to a successful teleseminar is to make it interesting for the callers, and to give them vital information that they can use for their success. You can opt to be the only speaker on the call, or invite guest speakers who have truly beneficial information for your affiliates.

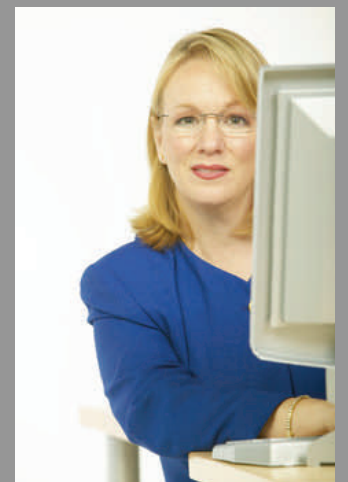
As mentioned earlier, if you aren't willing to take the time to open those lines of communications with your affiliates, another affiliate manager will.

Communication is vital, as it keeps your affiliates up to date with your product changes, as well as new products that you are offering. It also keeps them motivated to continue pushing your product to their customers, and it even helps those who are new to affiliate marketing to get off on the right foot. If you want true success as an affiliate manager, open up those lines of communication today

About the Author

Kathy Jackson is a Texas Rancher and freelance writer. She is also a contributing author for several farm and ranch publications. Internet marketing is one of Kathy's burning interests and she is just "tickled pink" to write for AC Magazine and Anik Singal, her marketing hero. On the Affiliate Classroom Blog (<http://blog.affiliateclassroom.com/>), you will find several articles by Kathy on various aspects of affiliate marketing. See: <http://www.income-academy.com>

If you are really doing well and want to continue to do well, consider holding a live convention or seminar. Your affiliates will definitely appreciate you for it, because you can use the convention to show your appreciation of them.



The Current Plight Of International Affiliates

by Mark Thompson

<http://www.income-academy.com>



It's quite difficult to understand the reasons for the negative attitudes toward international affiliates. Maybe it's because there are perceived problems with payments, location of websites, of quality of content. Maybe it's just a lack of foresight.



This article is a plea to all affiliate program managers and affiliate network managers to consider their program policies with regards to people who live outside the United States or the United Kingdom. First, let me tell you a story.

Necessity Is the Mother of Invention?

Four months ago, I wanted to promote a certain product through one of my websites. I applied to the affiliate network through which the merchant operated and got turned down immediately with no explanation. This wasn't the first time it had happened; in fact, it was rapidly becoming the norm.

Later the same day, I spoke to a friend of mine in the United States and I mentioned how frustrated I was becoming at being unable to promote many products that I wanted to promote. I explained what happened earlier in the day and gave her the details of the network concerned. She then asked her mother to try to join the network.

My friend's mother phoned up the network and asked to join. When asked what her website address was, she told them she didn't have one yet. When asked what she wanted to promote, she replied that she didn't know yet. The network accepted her and gave her account details immediately.

So what was the difference here? On the one hand, we had a grandmother with no experience getting accepted, and on the other, a full-time Internet marketer who recently sold almost \$200,000 worth of products through one network getting turned down. Well, the difference was that I choose to live in Spain.

Why Should Location Matter with Online Real Estate?

It seems that many networks and vendors don't consider the big picture when it comes to overseas affiliates. Many are losing out as a result. I am quite lucky in that I signed up for several networks when I lived the UK. However, I normally need to write to the affiliate managers of the vendors I want to promote and ask them to reconsider my application, as since changing my address to a Spanish one, I usually get my application declined.

It's quite difficult to understand the reasons for the negative attitudes toward international affiliates. Maybe it's because there are perceived problems with payments, location of websites, or quality of content. Maybe it's just a lack of foresight.

Affiliate marketing is a global business. My servers are located in the U.S. and in

INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATES CONTINUED....

the UK, as are the majority of hosting accounts used by international affiliates. Despite the fact that my local currency is the Euro, I am happy to work and get paid in dollars, and actually use dollars as my day-to-day currency. Some networks pay me by direct debit into my local bank, while others send me checks in U.S. dollars, which I then pay into my bank.

I am a native English speaker, but a very large percentage of Europeans speak and write English to a very high standard, so concerns about the quality of content shouldn't be an issue. But the issue isn't just with European countries; many Internet marketers from Asia have real problems getting accounts. This is extremely ironic, as several of the world's top Internet marketers are based in Asia.

Much of the problem probably stems from a basic misunderstanding about how Internet marketers and affiliates actually operate. The perception seems to be that we target our local region, so that an American insurance company who bases their campaigns on U.S. zip codes will automatically disallow any non-U.S. affiliates. Unfortunately, this perception is incorrect.

Affiliates will always target the largest, most profitable market available; then, if the campaign is successful, they will expand to other areas. If the program that they are promoting deals only with U.S. zip codes, then they will only target these areas. We are in business to make money, not waste it!

This actually brings me to another pet peeve of international affiliates. If we finally do manage to get accepted for a program, and we try to look at the page to which the customer is sent from the creatives we use, we usually get a message saying, "Sorry, this offer is not available in your area." Why not add a link so that we can actually see the landing page without having to use a web proxy?

A Funny Thing Happened While Writing...

A funny thing has happened during the writing of this article. I run a forum and made a post about this article and asked for any feedback and pet peeves that members had about affiliate networks. I expected one or two people to reply, but I was overwhelmed with replies. The surprising thing is, a number of members who are based in the U.S. are also suffering from a plague of automatic rejections.

Below are some replies I received to the question, "Do you have any problems with Affiliate Networks?"

"[This network] is much more user friendly. They have some great features to build links to specific products, as well as entire catalogs. However, they take forever to update product links and feeds, resulting in invalid links. Who knows if any commissions are lost?"

"Their aff links are a mess, too darn long and obvious."

"They are also extremely slow to remove merchants who have dropped out. I've noticed that quite a few vendors have gone over to [another network]."



The majority of networks and vendors seem to scare away new affiliates. Some of these new affiliates are the very people who will go on to earn hundreds of thousands of dollars in the years to come.

INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATES CONTINUED . . .

So come on, affiliate networks and affiliate managers — look at the big picture, and welcome international and new affiliates with open arms. They are going to be a large part of your future.

“[The network’s] interface is clunky and hard to drill down for information on both the affiliate level and the merchant product level. . . . You need a degree to master their system.”

“It’s too hard to create links for single products, if at all possible.”

“I hate having to wait for approval. I hate automatic rejection even more.”

“Another antiquated affiliate interface and no direct deposit.”

“Some of the systems just seem so darn complicated, or maybe I am stupid.”

“I really do not like [network name]. It is so hard to get approved, I have stopped trying.”

The posts above represent just a small sample, but the rest of the posts echo the same points.

Some of the network interfaces are just too slow and complicated.

It is too hard to get approved.

All of these issues can be easily rectified over a period of time. As it stands at present, the majority of networks and vendors seem to scare away new affiliates. Some of these new affiliates are the very people who will go on to earn hundreds of thousands of dollars income in the years to come.

As I pointed out earlier in this article, I made around \$200,000 worth of sales for a vendor in the past two months, a vendor that accepted me about two years ago. Since then, I have been turned down by 20 or 30 other vendors whose products I could be promoting. It may be that if I applied to those vendors now, I would be accepted — but that’s not going to happen!

Many of the affiliates who have been turned down or scared away by the networks’ interfaces go on to promote other types of affiliate products, usually in the form of digital products via vendors like ClickBank. Many of these will go on to become successful super affiliates and turn their backs on affiliate networks forever.

So come on, affiliate networks and affiliate managers — look at the big picture, and welcome international and new affiliates with open arms. They are going to be a large part of your future. Why not make it easier for them? Networks, indicate those vendors who will happily accept them, and make the approval criteria more transparent. To the outsider, it really does appear that you haven’t kept up with trend toward internationalism in Internet marketing in the past five years!

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 of online ventures. See: <http://www.income-academy.com>

