

The Blogger's Ultimate Guide to

AFFILIATE MARKETING

The Easiset Way to Monetize Your Blog

Welcome Message

Did you know, **the average affiliate marketer can earn over \$50,000 a year**? Some of the most successful marketers have even been known to hit six figures with their affiliate marketing efforts.

How is this possible you ask? The most powerful money-making tool for affiliate marketers is: managing a blog.

Blogging can be so much more than a passion project. In fact, it can provide you with a passive income. Whether that income results from a full-time commitment or merely a side hustle is entirely up to you.

That's one of the many benefits of affiliate marketing – you're in complete control over how much time and effort you want to spend managing this online business venture. But just so you know, the more dedicated you are, the better chance you'll have at being successful.

The good news is, whether you're new to the blogging world or you're looking to monetize your existing blog, affiliate marketing is one of the best ways to earn money for doing what you already do best – delivering reliable, relevant, and fresh content to your audience on a consistent basis.

In this guide, we're here to help you find success in your blogging endeavors and provide a few tips on how to make money online. We'll start by covering some of the basics of affiliate marketing, including how the process works and everyone involved. Then, we'll move on to cover a few must-have tools to get your affiliate marketing blog up and running.

After learning the fundamentals, then the real fun begins! Next is all about personalizing your affiliate marketing business, determining what niche you'll be working with and where you can find great affiliate products to promote. Last but not least, we'll introduce a few more popular marketing methods you can practice in addition to blog writing to help increase your affiliate sales.

Are you ready to venture into affiliate marketing and start earning easy money with your blog?

Then let's get started!

Blair Williams ThirstyAffiliates CEO

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What is Affiliate Marketing?

What Is Affiliate Marketing?

In short, affiliate marketing is a strategy in which a brand pays a commission to an individual (an affiliate) based on sales generated through their referrals.

In a nutshell, if you're an affiliate (also referred to as a publisher), you use your skills as an online marketer to refer your audience to a product. When someone in your audience decides to buy a product or take an action based on your recommendation, you get a commission.

Who are Affiliates?

An affiliate can be an individual or a company. Most of the time, affiliates are bloggers or other content producers. They usually work in industries that are the same or closely related to that of the company whose products they're promoting.

Affiliates are individuals who help promote a product or service by writing posts, making videos, and conducting other marketing efforts. When an affiliate's visitor makes a purchase or submits a lead form on the affiliate company's website, the affiliate gets paid.

How much and for what (lead or purchase) the affiliate gets paid for depends on the affiliate program terms. Generally speaking, the commission is often based on a fixed percentage of the product in question. It can also be another amount agreed upon between the advertiser and publisher.

Who are the Companies?

An affiliate company (also known as a merchant, advertiser, retailer, or brand) is any company willing to pay commissions to affiliates who promote their products.

Affiliate companies pay their affiliates for helping them increase traffic and sales. Payments are usually determined on a pay-per-click, pay-per-lead, or pay-per-sale basis (more on these later). This structure is sometimes referred to as performance marketing.

As of 2021, more than <u>84% of companies</u> in the U.S offer an affiliate marketing program to help raise brand awareness, encourage customer engagement, and increase online sales.

What are Affiliate Links?

After signing up with an affiliate program, you'll get an affiliate link. This is a special URL that contains your affiliate username or ID. You'll use this link whenever you mention the advertiser's product on your website or in other marketing efforts, such as in a blog post or on social media.

How Do Affiliates Get Paid?

As an affiliate, you're paid for performance. Following are the three types of performancebased models common in affiliate marketing:

- **Pay-Per-Click** (**PPC**): An affiliate gets paid for all the valid clicks generated, regardless of whether these clicks result in sales or leads.
- **Pay-Per-Lead** (**PPL**): Companies pay a fixed commission for every qualified action a click generates. This action might include things like installation of an app, online form submission, free trial sign-up, or completion of a short survey.
- **Pay-Per-Sale** (**PPS**): Companies pay a percentage of all qualified sales. This percentage is agreed upon by the company and its affiliate. Among the most common PPS programs is Amazon Associates, where a publisher can earn up to 15% depending on the products sold.

Commission payouts usually occur on a monthly basis. But this varies depending on the terms of the affiliate program. Affiliate marketers can get paid in many different ways, including monetary commission, credit commission, and discount commission.

Monetary Commission

The most common and popular way affiliates are paid is through monetary commission. When an affiliate generates a sale and earns a commission, the business pays them with actual money. Popular online payment processing systems include <u>PayPal</u>, <u>Stripe</u>, <u>Skrill</u>, and <u>Venmo</u>.

Credit Commission

Some affiliate programs also allow affiliates to use their affiliate earnings as credit toward that online business' products or services. For example, if a publisher has a subscription with a stock photo site, their affiliate earnings may be used as credit toward subscription renewal. This type of payment is favorable to some affiliates because it helps save money on subscriptions and business expenses.

Discount Commission

Some programs offer discounts to affiliates who create enough referrals. This type of payout is popular with retail and health-related affiliate programs. After a certain number of sales and conversions, the publisher's discounts can increase, which gives them more buying power on products they love from companies they trust.

The Affiliate Marketing Process

Here's a visual to help you see how the affiliate marketing process plays out between an affiliate marketer and a company:



Does it Cost to Join an Affiliate Program?

Most affiliate programs are free to join. However, some promotion strategies will cost if you choose to use them. For example, while your blog won't cost you anything but your time, pay-per-click marketing, email campaigns, and social media ads will require an investment.

What are the Qualifications to Become an Affiliate Marketer?

Anyone can become an affiliate marketer. There are no standard qualifications.

However, knowing how to write a blog post, string a great review together, or do video are all a big plus because they mean you don't have to pay for content in the beginning. Also, any existing marketing knowledge you have will be a great advantage to you.

Wrapping Up

Affiliate marketing is a great way to make money passively for individuals and an excellent means of marketing for businesses. It's what we call a win-win scenario!

Next, let's go over how to prepare your blog for affiliate marketing.

Must-Have Tools for Your Affiliate Marketing Blog

In order to incorporate affiliate marketing into your blog and start making money, you need to set up a strong foundation. This starts with building a website for your blog.

You should think of your website as the backbone of your affiliate marketing business. In that case, it's important to choose powerful tools that will support both your current and future needs.

Here's a list of must-have tools every affiliate marketer needs to begin building and monetizing their blog.

A Reliable Web Hosting Service

The first step to building any type of website is choosing a web hosting service. A web host allows your site to be accessible on the internet.

Free web hosts such as WordPress.com, Wix, and Tumbler are great options for beginners. But keep in mind, free platforms have restrictions and limitations as to what types of advertising you can do.

Connecting with a reputable hosting service such as <u>Bluehost</u>, <u>InMotion Hosting</u>, <u>DreamHost</u>, <u>SiteGround</u>, or <u>Cloudways</u> is the smarter investment for affiliate marketing. Each of these platforms is extremely affordable and will allow you to practice more marketing techniques.

An Organized Content Management System

Before you can start uploading content to your site, next you're going to need a content management system (CMS). A CMS allows site owners to create, manage, post, and store content on their website without the need for extreme technical skills – like coding.

WordPress is the most popular CMS on the market. As a matter of fact, WordPress powers over 43% of the websites you find online today. There are many benefits to using WordPress as your choice of CMS, including:

- It's FREE!
- Easy to use
- Customizable design themes
- Search engine optimization friendly
- Over 55,000 plugins for added functionality
- and so much more!

Most importantly, you will need to operate WordPress on your site in order to use our ThirstyAffiliates plugin.

Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimization (SEO) can easily be considered the most critical step in your content marketing strategy. Without it, your website could easily go unnoticed by search engines; therefore, sending zero traffic to your site.

Because there are so many different SEO strategies, it's easy to get overwhelmed at times – especially for beginners. The great news is, there are endless tools and guides out there that can help you better understand how SEO works and how to incorporate it into your content strategy.

To learn more, check out these great guides on SEO:

- The Beginner's Guide to SEO by Moz
- <u>The Complete SEO Guide for Beginners</u> by Mangools
- SEO Basics: Beginner's Guide to SEO Success by Ahrefs

As for great SEO tools and plugins, here are some of our top picks you should consider adding to your site:

- <u>SEMrsuh</u>
- Yoast SEO
- <u>All in One SEO</u> (AIOSEO)
- Google Search Console
- <u>Ahrefs</u>
- <u>KWFinder</u>

Becoming familiar with basic SEO practices will guide you to determine which tools you'll want to use on your website. Then, as your content grows, you can add new strategies to continually boost your online presence.

Affiliate Link Management Tool

If you're serious about affiliate marketing, then we seriously recommend a link management tool. As you'll soon find out, there are many ways you can promote your affiliate links. With that being said, you'll need a tool that will keep track of, manage, and ultimately upgrade your affiliate marketing efforts.

Of course, we're going to recommend our ThirstyAffiliates plugin for all your link management needs. With it, you can:

- Manage all your affiliate links from a single dashboard
- Shorten and cloak affiliate links for better brand awareness
- Protect your commissions with 301, 302, or 307 redirects

- Track and report affiliate link performance
- and so much more!

Nearly all successful affiliate marketers use tools like ours to leverage their time and make their affiliate marketing more effective.

Wrapping Up

Learning how to create an affiliate website can be an incredibly rewarding journey. And having the right tools and software can help ease the work you have to do, allowing you to spend more time on your more important affiliate marketing matters.

Now with the basics out of the way, let's explore the endless pool of affiliate marketing niches and discover which one is a perfect match for your blogging business.

How to Find Your Affiliate Marketing Niche

You probably have a general idea of what type of products (or services) you want to promote on your affiliate blog. But, before you get too ahead of yourself, you should know that one of the biggest mistakes most affiliate marketers make in their first year is promoting the wrong products.

Just because affiliate marketing is a great opportunity to make money online, doesn't mean you should just jump right in with a blog and start promoting products at random. Without deciding on a niche first, your affiliate marketing efforts will go without direction, focus, or purpose.

What is a Niche?

Simply put, a niche is a specific topic within an industry. Another sister product of ours, <u>Easy</u> <u>Affiliate</u>, put together a list of the top four <u>most profitable niches</u>, including: lifestyle and wellness, technology, finance, and pet care. Although, there are hundreds of different niche markets to choose from.

You should also check out this hand-curated list of <u>90+ affiliate marketing niches</u> by Authority Hacker.

Your niche will ultimately determine what products to promote, who you'll promote to, and which advertising methods you'll use to promote them appropriately.

There are many factors you'll need to consider when it comes to choosing your niche, such as audience, popularity, competition, profit, growth opportunities, and more. Most importantly, you want to find the perfect fit for you, your business, and the needs of your customers.

To help you identify what affiliate marketing niche is the best one for you, we'll go over a few considerations you should keep in mind.

Know Your Audience

What products you promote largely depends on your target audience. The more you know about your target audience, the better you'll identify their issues and problems. This, in turn, will help you offer solutions that are best for their specific needs.

Prepare for Competition

No matter what affiliate marketing niche you chose, there's going to be competition. You'll need to determine whether you can beat your competition with content that will convert even the most committed customers.

Discover Growth Opportunities

Within even the smallest of niches are sub-niches. Sub-niches are basically niches within niches (within niches) that provide additional product marketing opportunities. The more sub-niches there are within a niche can mean more product promotion ideas for your business.

Determine Profitability

The worth of any affiliate program is determined by the amount of effort put into the marketing strategy. Although, it's also true that some niches can be more profitable than others. It all comes down to supply and demand.

Not only do you need to be able to create great marketing content, but you'll also want to make sure there is a high enough demand for it in the first place.

Follow Your Passion

The most successful affiliate marketer will have found a niche that offers products that he or she is truly passionate about. Picking products and services that you're interested in will make the whole process a lot more enjoyable

Wrapping Up

Finding the right niche for your affiliate marketing blog can take a bit of time, but it's very much worth it. By narrowing your focus, you can ensure you're marketing to a targeted audience and promoting products you believe in.

Speaking of products, now it's time to search the web and learn how to find the best affiliate products to promote on your blog.

Where to Find Great Affiliate Products

Now that you've decided on which niche market you want to work in, it's time to start looking for actual products to promote.

ThirstyAffiliates is proud to have put together the <u>Best Affiliate Program Guide</u> available online. In it, we've listed over 100 companies that offer affiliate partnerships. Learn more on how to connect with world-renowned brands like Nordstrom, Sephora, Trip Advisor, Apple, Microsoft, Under Armour, Weight Watchers, and so many more!

→ Click here to check out our full guide.

Or, if you're looking for more of an all-in-one affiliate product platform, here are some of the most trusted names in affiliate programs.

Amazon

<u>Amazon</u> is easily one of the biggest independent affiliate networks in the world with an inventory of nearly 12 million items across various categories and services – from automotive, home, electronics, you name it! You're sure to find several products in your niche using this platform alone.

Here are a few more reasons to check out the Amazon affiliate program (also known as <u>Amazon Associates</u>):

- **They're trusted by many people.** People confidently buy from Amazon because they know the company can deliver.
- They have an awesome ability to upsell. Upselling simply means recommending items that are related to the product of interest during the purchasing process. This typically leads to big commissions!
- You are rewarded for selling more. Amazon commission levels start around 4-5%, which isn't a lot. But the more sales you make, the higher your commission rate. You can earn around 10%, which can really add up on higher ticket items.

WARNING: Amazon doesn't take kindly to cloaking affiliate links. If you do cloak your links and they find out, it can result in expulsion from their affiliate program. Make sure you make use of the uncloaking feature in our ThirstyAffiliates plugin. It lets you track and manage all your Amazon affiliate links but still satisfies the program's stricter terms of service surrounding link cloaking.

ClickBank

<u>ClickBank</u> is another reputable affiliate program and a preferred choice by more than 500,000 affiliate marketers. ClickBank's major source is digital sales and information products like ebooks. However, they do offer some opportunities for physical sales.

ShareASale

<u>ShareASale</u> offers an impressive affiliate program with popular products from several different categories and services. As a ShareASale affiliate, you'll have access to affiliate marketing training videos and a robust tracking system. One downside to this program is, you will have to pay a sign-up fee as well as fees for each affiliate sale you make.

eBay

The <u>eBay Partner Network</u> has over five million sellers catering to more than 162 million shoppers. This makes it a one-stop shop for fantastic affiliate products you may not find anywhere else. Also, their affiliate program is open to 13 countries across the globe, making it more friendly to sellers outside of the US.

Wrapping Up

Again, for more options on how to find great affiliate products to promote, be sure and check out our <u>Best Affiliate Programs Guide.</u>

Now, let's get to the actual "marketing" in affiliate marketing and learn the best techniques (other than blogging) to help market and promote your affiliate products.

How to Promote Your Affiliate Products (6 Ways)

Now that we've arrived at the final pages of our guide, it's time to take everything you've learned so far and apply it to your first affiliate product promotion.

As we've said before, blogging is the most basic but beneficial way to promote affiliate links. Not to mention, you have the freedom to write as much as you want and as freely as you wish.

However, there are several other marketing methods that can also help increase click-through rates, generate sales, and bring success to your affiliate marketing career.

Here are six more ways to advertise your affiliate links in addition to your blog content marketing.

1. Email Marketing

Email marketing is one of the most effective online marketing strategies there is. When it comes to communicating with your customers, it's important to do so on a consistent basis. That means meeting up with them where they spend most of their time online: in their email account.

An email marketing service can be of major assistance to ensure constant communication with your customers. With the help of pre-made templates, audience segmentation, and automation features, you can run successful email marketing campaigns effortlessly.

Whether you're sending out weekly newsletters, blog post updates, announcing an upcoming event, or whatever, here's a list of email providers that can provide everything you'll need:

- <u>ActiveCampaign</u>
- <u>ConvertKit</u>
- Get Response
- MailChimp

Once you have a list of subscribers, you can use email messaging to promote your links and special incentives. Sending out monthly emails is also a great way to keep people engaged with your blog site and to let them know when you're promoting new products.

2. Social Media Marketing

Social media is another must for affiliate marketing. For some affiliate marketers, social media is the only platform they'll use to promote affiliate products. While we highly recommend that you go full-force with your affiliate marketing efforts by starting a blog; in the meantime, you can always write up a quick post to share your links.

Popular platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube are great places to drop affiliate links and potentially reach billions of people. Always be sure to follow the rules and restrictions of these sites when it comes to posting affiliate links (as you technically don't own your accounts).

3. Create Videos

Speaking of YouTube, videos have become a rising trend in the affiliate marketing world. As a matter of fact, many consumers say videos help give a better review of the product when they can see it in action.

Product demonstrations, tutorials, and unboxing videos are all great ways to unleash your creativity and really stand out from the competition.

Of course, you'll want to keep your videos relevant to the products or services you're promoting. Then simply place your links in the description section along with your affiliate disclosure letting viewers know you're promoting affiliate links.

4. Add Banners and Buttons to Your Site

Using banners and buy now buttons can do wonders for your click-through rate. As long as you place them appropriately and don't overload your site (this can reduce their effectiveness).

The key with banners is to make them feel like they are clickable. One of the biggest mistakes people make with placing banners or ads on their site is that they don't make them appear clickable.

5.Offer Promos, Incentives, Coupons, or Loyalty Rewards

Customers are always on the hunt for great bargains and discounts. That's why offering promos, coupons, incentives, and loyalty rewards to your audience is such an effective way to promote your affiliate products. Not only are they a great way to boost sales, but promos also tend to get lots of shares and engagement on social media, giving you even more bang for your buck.

6. Search Engine Optimization

We are also going to hit on search engine optimization (SEO) once more, simply due to the level of importance it plays in your content marketing strategy. SEO will be an ongoing process

to continuously increase your visibility online by ranking high in search engine result pages (SERP).

Keep in mind, although SEO won't show immediate results, good techniques will deliver long-term benefits that are invaluable to your business.

Wrapping Up

Every niche and every affiliate site is different. Some of these techniques will get you fast results, while others won't.

Try each of them at least once and from there you'll be in a position to see what worked and what didn't for your audience. Make adjustments to your promotional mix and take note of which techniques work best for you.

BONUS 9 Affiliate Marketing Blog You Should Definitely Follow

Before we let you go off on your own into the affiliate marketing world, we want to share a few real-world affiliate marketing blog examples.

In this final bonus section, we'll introduce nine blogs every affiliate marketer should read. Each one offers unique observations and perspectives within the industry. Whether you're interested in learning more about SEO topics, linking tactics, website tips, or a combination of all things affiliate marketing, these resources are definitely worth checking out.

1. Smart Passive Income



Pat Flynn, creator of Smart Passive Income, didn't start out as a blogger. He graduated from college and got a job with an architectural firm. His story from architecture to becoming an independent, wealthy guru of passive income is full of lessons learned and a gritty determination to succeed.

Pat carved out a means to provide for his family and was never afraid to venture into new territories of online business. On his website, he shares his knowledge about it all, including affiliate marketing, blogging, publishing, course creation, podcasting, and more.

2. Niche Pursuits



Spencer Haws has been excavating marketing niches since 2006. He'll be the first to tell you he had some painful failures along the way. However, he learned from them. About five years into his endeavors, his monthly income hit \$10,000, so he quit his job.

If you're interested in growing a niche website that will produce a healthy income, Niche Pursuits will help you from the ground up. You'll learn how to identify promising areas and develop your ideas into income. Along with the blog, Niche Pursuits offers instructive case studies, helpful tools, and other resources.

3. Neil Patel



Neil Patel is a Forbes top ten marketer and a New York Times bestselling author. He's also a co-founder of <u>Crazy Egg</u> and <u>Kissmetrics</u>. Neil's blog posts are easy to follow, and he stacks them with plenty of real-world examples, interesting statistics, and practical how-tos.

If you're trying to figure out search engine optimization (SEO) and learn how to get more traffic, then this is the blog for you.

4. AuthorityHacker



Featured on top-notch marketing sites such as HubSpot, Ahrefs, and Entrepreneur, AuthorityHacker publishes fresh and relevant information about the best practices of content marketing. Its blog articles get down to business, providing up-to-date information on the techniques and tools to use for success online. The site also offers online courses that have helped over 6,000 people develop their online businesses.

This blog feels like a multi-purpose tool in your kit, empowering you to generate content and drive traffic to your website. Check back regularly to find content geared toward multiple aspects of growing your affiliate marketing business online, including practical tips on how to put yourself ahead of your competition.

5. Matthew Woodward



Matthew Woodward started building websites before Google existed. He tinkered around with creating sites as a kid, and that curiosity and eventual bank of knowledge landed him a job in digital marketing. He's helped develop multi-billion-dollar brands, and now he's helping people like you find success online as well.

When trying to establish yourself within a marketing niche, it's easy to feel like you need a better strategy. If that's the case, Matthew Woodward's content may be exactly what you're looking for. It can help you learn the nuts and bolts of SEO, building a successful blog, email marketing, and more.

7. MemberPress



If you're wondering why a membership website plugin is on the list for affiliate marketing blogs, the answer is simple: MemberPress. MemberPress is all about building and growing your business online. It recently launched a new feature that enables website owners to build a learning management system (LMS) on their sites – an incredible revenue booster.

<u>MemberPress blog</u> topics hit on essentials such as social media, online courses, and writing skills. Plus, if you're ready to take the next step and create your own membership site, or if that's on your list of long-term goals, this resource will equip you with everything you need to know.

8. Easy Affiliate



Easy Affiliate is an all-in-one affiliate marketing management tool. Unsurprisingly, its blog serves as a well of information and tips for starting and running an affiliate program.

One of the aspects we like best about <u>this blog</u> is, there is advice for both affiliate marketers and publishers. Even if you don't use the plugin yourself, you're still guaranteed to find useful content that helps you succeed and grow within your niche, especially if you're just starting out.

9. ThirstyAffiliates



Of course, we might be a bit biased with this last entry. But we wanted to add that our ThirstyAffiliates brand is much more than a link management plugin. We are here to help you manage every aspect of your business.

Our <u>ThirstyAffiliates blog</u> is packed with articles, regularly covering affiliate marketing-related topics such as SEO, website tips, and email marketing. Plus, we share the secrets of unlocking higher revenue from the content and links on your site. If you want to get more out of your site by working smarter (not harder), our posts can help guide you!

Click Here to Get the ThirstyAffiliates Plugin!