

**A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO**

# **AFFILIATE MARKETING**



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# WHAT IS AFFILIATE MARKETING?



Affiliate marketing is a billion-dollar industry. It's *huge* and growing.

Essentially, you promote products on your website, YouTube channel, social media profile, etc. If one of your readers/viewers/followers clicks the link and makes a purchase, you make a commission. It's a very simple concept but it's not necessarily easy to be successful.

First, you have to have a website, YouTube channel, or social media following. Then you'll need quality content to attract visitors to your site, channel, or profile.

And, in order to make any of that work, you'll need to know your target audience, pick a niche, and drive traffic to your links.

Overwhelmed? Don't be.

This book will break down everything you need to know to be successful *and* profitable using affiliate marketing.



# HOW DOES AFFILIATE MARKETING WORK?



According to [Statista](#), affiliate marketing spending in the United States alone exceeds [7 billion dollars](#). So there is certainly money to be made in the affiliate marketing space.

The only way you can grab your share of that market is by knowing exactly how affiliate marketing works and how you can position yourself to get maximum results.

**Affiliate marketing is really a simple process:**

- You show an ad or provide a link to a product sold by a store/brand.
- A customer clicks on your link (which is unique to you so the brand knows who to send the commission to.)
- The customer makes a purchase using the link.
- The affiliate network records the transaction.
- The purchase is confirmed by the brand.
- You get paid a commission.

**Commissions can range from 5% to 50% depending on the site and the product. Some companies will offer a flat rate.**

As with any business, affiliate marketing requires hard work and dedication. The more work you put in, the more you're likely to get in terms of profits. There are many people taking advantage of affiliate marketing who are making five figures per month.

But there are also those making less than \$100 per month. Your dedication will determine your income level.





# IS AFFILIATE MARKETING WORTH IT?



So many people make the decision to try affiliate marketing, only to never quite reach the level of income they'd hoped for. This is mainly because they don't take the time to fully understand how it works and the level of commitment it takes to be successful.

The truth is that affiliate marketing is worth it but you have to be willing to invest in educating yourself.

Why is it worth it? **Here are a few reasons:**

- **You don't have to create a product.** Creating products is risky and time-consuming. You have the advantage as an affiliate of choosing products that you know work, that you believe in, and/or match up with your values.
- **You don't have to pay any fees.** There are generally no fees associated with becoming an affiliate and you have virtually no overhead, so what you make is what you keep.

- **You don't have to deal with customers.** Some of your followers may ask a question here or there but generally, you don't have to deal with any customer-related issues.
- **It's fast.** You don't have to spend weeks or even months creating a product to market and sell. You can simply post to social media, write a blog post, or send an email. Just be sure to include your affiliate links.
- **It's profitable.** If you create your own product, you have a set amount of overhead costs, like product development, marketing, and so forth. With affiliate marketing, you get to keep everything you make.
- **Work when you want.** You aren't beholden to any clients. All you have to do is create content with those affiliate links.



# HOW TO GET STARTED WITH AFFILIATE MARKETING



If you choose to start affiliate marketing, the best approach you can take is to treat it like a business right from the beginning. Learn as much as you can and do the research. Successful affiliate marketers don't take shortcuts or skip steps.

Manage your expectations. Affiliate marketing is a simple concept but it does require that you spend some time learning exactly how it works and what you need to do to be successful.

**The really great part about starting this type of online business model is that there is no product to develop, no employees to hire, and virtually no start-up costs. But you do need to prepare yourself so you're in the best possible position to be successful.**

The most important step is knowing where to start. You can save yourself a lot of time and frustration by putting the work in on the front end doing research and having a solid strategy in place before you start.

Take a look at some of the important topics you'll need to consider before starting your affiliate marketing business.

## – PICK A NICHE –

**Choosing a niche is a crucial first step in starting your affiliate marketing business.** If you try to sell to everyone, you'll end up selling to no one. Finding the right niche for you makes it so much easier to sell, create relevant content, and connect with your audience.

Not to mention, there could be a fair amount of competition for those affiliate dollars, and the best way to carve out your stake is to niche down. So, if you have a food blog, for example, *food* is a pretty big category. **You can niche down within that category to maybe *gluten-free desserts* or *food you can cook on your grill*.**

Pick what interests *you*. **The best way for you to engage readers and be successful with an affiliate marketing strategy is for you to be**

**passionate about your topic.** If you enjoy your niche that will come through in your content.

Many people simply Google *profitable niches for affiliate marketing* in order to choose their niche. This results in boring, inconsistent content and visitors who bounce from your site and give affiliate commissions to your competition.

Quality content leads to higher search engine rankings, more traffic, engaged visitors, and more affiliate sales.

**If you're struggling with finding your niche, ask yourself these questions:**

- What topics do I love learning/researching about?
- What am I passionate about?
- Are people searching for the niche I'm interested in?
- Will there be a consistent demand for this niche?

- What's the competition like within this niche?
- Are there affiliate programs within my niche?

Asking yourself these questions will give you a jumping-off point for picking your niche and the affiliate programs you may want to promote.

## – CHOOSE A PLATFORM –

Theoretically, affiliate marketing works on pretty much any platform. However, it's much easier to build an audience and increase sales with blogs and YouTube.

**Starting a blog is relatively easy and cheap.** You can get started for just a few dollars a month and the internet has many guides and tutorials to help you get started.

Once you have your site up and running, you can optimize it for search engines so you have



the best chance of ranking in the search results. This will help your audience find your content faster. From there, you can add your affiliate links and you're off to the races.

**Another great platform is YouTube.** It's relatively easy to start a channel and it's completely free. You can optimize your videos for SEO and add affiliate links in the description of the video.

Whichever platform you choose, it's important that your site or videos be professional and visually pleasing. If your site seems chaotic, busy, hard to read, or otherwise hard to follow, you could have a hard time keeping visitors there long enough to find your affiliate links.

**Keep in mind that the FTC (Federal Trade Commission) requires that you disclose to your visitors that you're promoting affiliate links.**

## — FIND AFFILIATE PROGRAMS —

There are essentially three types of affiliate programs.

### 1. High Commission, Low Volume Affiliates

These affiliate programs offer a higher payout for commissions but they tend to not move as many of their products because they are at a higher price point.

**These affiliate programs also tend to have more competition so you may have to work a bit harder for your sales.**

These types of affiliate programs are often what you'll find with software products, business-to-business products, and coaching/mentoring programs.

### 2. Low Commission, High Volume Affiliates

These programs don't offer a huge commission but you may get more clicks and sales. They tend to have a broader market appeal.

**These types of affiliates are ideal for beginners. However, because the payout is smaller, you'll need more traffic to make it worth your while.**

One perk to these types of affiliate programs is that many times you'll get a commission on the entire purchase, not just the one product you linked to in your content. For example, with Amazon Affiliates, if you use an affiliate link for a rug, but also end up buying a lamp and extension cord, you'll get commission on the entire purchase, not just the rug.

### **3. High Commission, High Volume Affiliates**

These programs appeal to a large number of consumers *and* they pay high commission rates.

Credit cards are a prime example of this type of affiliate because everyone uses credit cards and they will likely stay with credit card companies for years, making the credit card company loads of money.

The downside to this type of affiliate is the competition. There is a lot of money to be made in these programs, which attracts affiliate marketers with lots of experience and resources. Some may even use tactics that you simply can't compete with.

## **Deciding Which Affiliate Program to Join**

**The affiliate program you choose depends largely on your niche and level of expertise.** If the primary visitors to your site/channel are consumers, you'll probably have the most success with a program that offers lower commission but higher volume.

However, if your target audience is more likely to be businesses, you may have more luck with a high commission, low volume program.

You may be wondering how to find an affiliate program to join. A simple Google search will net you thousands of results of affiliates to choose from.

**You can also try an affiliate marketplace, which works as a middle man, bringing affiliates and marketers together for mutual benefit.** Some to check out would be Clickbank, Affiliate Future, or Flex Offers.

You can also try going directly to a business that you'd like to work with and see if they have an affiliate program in place. You can usually find this information on their site map.

## — CREATE AWESOME CONTENT —

Content is King.

You'll see this phrase over and over as you research having a successful blog or website. There's a reason for that - it's true. **The real**

**way to the customer's heart is by providing *value*.**

In the content world, providing value simply means giving prospects what they need or want for free, with no tricks and no hidden agendas. By doing this, you will create trust with your readers and you will become their trusted source for information in your niche.

Quality, consistent content is an absolute must for any online endeavor, but especially for affiliate marketing. Try putting yourself in the position of the customer you're trying to reach. If they're looking for information about something and they click on your blog but don't find any good content there, they're going to bounce right off your page.

**By providing good content, you do two things:**

- You keep the reader on your page long enough to find your affiliate links.

- You build trust that the product you're promoting is good and worth purchasing.

What types of content will best reach your audience and create value for them? There are several that are usually top performers for affiliate marketing. Some of these suggestions may not really fit your particular niche so be sure to keep that in mind when choosing.

If you can't authentically connect with your audience through your content, you're going to have a hard time converting them to sales.

## **Product Reviews**

Writing reviews for different products and services is a very effective content strategy. Brands are always looking for reviews that convert customers so this is usually a great place to drop some affiliate links.

## **Blog Posts**

Blogging is a great way to build your audience and establish yourself as a trusted source in your niche.

By addressing common problems and questions that consumers have, you can position yourself as a trusted source for information and recommendations.

The key to blogging is consistency. You have to be willing to consistently produce quality content in order to get the traffic you need to make money from your links and ads. This is probably the biggest stumbling block new bloggers face.

## **Ebooks, Emails and Webinars**

Another great form of content to focus your efforts on is an information product. These include guides like ebooks, emails, and webinars. Guides are an ideal *hook* you can use to get people interested in what you have to say.



As long as the guide is helpful and accurate, it will build trust with your reader and provide the value that everyone is looking for.

## **– DRIVE TRAFFIC TO YOUR LINKS –**

Now that you've created fantastic content and provided loads of value for potential visitors, you need to get them to your site. There are a few strategies to consider when trying to drive traffic to your links.

### **SEO - Search Engine Optimization**

In its simplest form, SEO is simply the process of making your website more visible when people are searching for products, services, or information related to your business. The higher you rank in search results, the more likely people are to click on your page.

When you do a Google search, do you choose a website on page 8 or do you choose one of the

ones on page 1 to click on first? It's almost guaranteed that the sites on page one have been optimized so that you can find them easier.

**In a nutshell, SEO is about:**

- Understanding your target audience, understanding what their problems are, and knowing what they are looking for
- Creating content (blog posts, product reviews, etc.) based on what your target audience is looking for
- Pushing these pages to rank higher in search engines by doing technical things like adding keywords and link building

There is a large amount of free content on the web that you can use to learn how to be successful with SEO and all of the tricks you can implement to make your content more visible.

## **Build an Email List**

If you have a solid email list, you can communicate with your readers anytime, keep them updated on new content you're putting out, and keep them coming back to your site. **You can also put your affiliate links right in your emails.**

And if you don't have an email list, you can build one easily by offering your readers something of value for free in exchange for their email address. You can simply include a fillable form or pop-up on your blog posts or other content asking for their email address.

Some examples of things you can offer in exchange are ebooks, webinars, printables, a newsletter, etc. The possibilities are endless.

## **Paid Traffic**

You can increase traffic to your site by using PPC ads. PPC stands for Pay-Per-Click and these types of ads are usually run on search

engines or social media sites. You run the ad and every time someone clicks on it, you pay a small fee. You can usually put a cap on what you spend on any given day to keep your costs down.

There are some downsides to using paid traffic. The first one is that you have to pay for it. **Depending on what your commission is, it may not make financial sense to pay for traffic, especially when there are so many ways to drive traffic that are free.**

Once you start using PPC your traffic will increase but conversely, once you stop using PPC your traffic will stop. So, if you're new to affiliate marketing or are working with lower commission affiliates, this may not be a good choice for your business.

## – GET THE CLICKS –

Creating quality content is a huge first step in creating a solid affiliate marketing business, but

there are some other things to consider. You still have to get the reader to click on your links.

**Here are a few things to consider about link placement:**

- **Balance your link placement.** If you put the link at the bottom of a page, you're not going to see good results because people rarely scroll all the way to the bottom of the page. Also, if every third word of your content is a link, your content will look "scammy" which will create distrust and cause people to leave the page.
- **Create links that make sense.** Link the product names or descriptions not just random words in your post. You want your links to look legit, not random.
- **Using a callout can be a great option.** Boxes, tables, and buttons can be a great way to draw attention to your links and will make your article more skimmable

for customers that are just looking for the main points of the content.

Again, try to put yourself in the place of the consumer to determine what link placement will draw your customers to click.

## — CONVERT CLICKS TO SALES —

When a customer does what you want them to do, it's called a conversion. Conversions can be making a sale, signing up for a newsletter, clicking a link, or any other thing that *you want them to do*.

**There are two conversions that you want to happen in your affiliate marketing business.** The first conversion will happen when the customer clicks on your link. You are completely in control of this conversion and by using some of the aforementioned strategies, you can be successful.

If you're not getting conversions from your content, make some changes and see if there's an improvement. Just be sure you're giving the changes enough time to work. Constantly changing things is going to make you look like you don't know what you're doing and customers will leave.

The second conversion happens when the customer makes a purchase, and this is not in your control. It will be to your advantage to choose affiliates with good conversion rates.

**There are a few ways to determine if an affiliate has good conversion rates:**

- **Investigate** how much other affiliate marketers are making from any given affiliate. This information is pretty easy to find on Google by searching for *affiliate income reports*. Many bloggers will publicly disclose their income from the affiliates they work with.

- **Ask the affiliate** directly what their conversion rates are and what the average income is for people promoting their products.
- **Go with your gut.** If you don't feel good about a product or would have a hard time recommending it to a friend or family member then it may be worth skipping.





**IF YOU WANT TO BE  
REALLY SUCCESSFUL**



There are a few fundamentals to affiliate marketing that are necessary for success. Unfortunately, many people overlook them because they don't seem important, they take too much time, or they don't feel there is any benefit to the effort.

These fundamentals are the key to being really successful with affiliate marketing.

## – KNOW YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE –

Your target audience is not simply people who are interested in buying your product. There's a little more to it than that. Knowing exactly who you are marketing to is critical to not only your success, but also determines the amount of effort you're going to have to put in.

**It may be helpful to create an avatar of your ideal customers.** For example, if your blog is about sport fishing in Mexico and your affiliate marketing is all products related to sport

fishing in Mexico, then you need to know who exactly is going sport fishing in Mexico.

**You may do some research and find out that the people who are sport fishing in Mexico are:**

- Men
- Between the ages of 45-60
- Married
- Outdoor enthusiasts
- Middle-class income

Once you have this information, you can write content that this person would read and enjoy, post in social media groups where they might hang out, and make an overall plan to convert them.

## **— BUILD AN EMAIL LIST —**

Having an email list is a great way to keep in touch with your customers, let them know what's happening over at your site, and keep them coming back to check it out.

**Building an email list may seem daunting but it's actually quite easy.** As we noted, the key is offering prospects value in exchange for their email address.

The thing of value could be a newsletter that you send out monthly or weekly, an ebook, or a webinar that has information that would be valuable. All that matters is that it's valuable to prospects to the point where they'll give you their email address in exchange for it.

The great thing is that even if you're giving away an ebook or webinar, you only have to create that content once and then you can give it away over and over again. It's very little effort in exchange for a lot of email addresses.

## **– DON'T RELY SOLELY ON ORGANIC SEARCH TRAFFIC –**

If you plan on relying solely on organic search traffic, you may be disappointed with your results. At least in the beginning. **It takes a while**

**to build up your rankings on search engines, and if you're not putting out quality content on a consistent basis, it can take even longer.**

This is another reason building an email list can be a huge help. It can really help get the ball rolling with traffic.

## **– ANALYTICS –**

Learn how to use analytics to track your successes and failures. It is incredibly helpful to know what's working so you can make adjustments and fine-tune your processes.

Everyone's approach is a little different and what works for someone else may not work for you when it comes to marketing. There is no one size fits all.

**Google Analytics is a great, free way to track your results and there are a ton of resources online to teach you how to use it.**

## – HONOR YOUR BRAND –

You can't promote every high commission affiliate you come across. If you just choose affiliates based on the commission, you're not going to be perceived as authentic by your customers.

Authenticity is one of the huge keys to your success in affiliate marketing. Honor your brand by choosing affiliates within your niche.

## – DO THE WORK –

*“I'm a great believer in luck and I find the harder I work, the more of it I have.”*

*Thomas Jefferson*

Affiliate marketing has grown into a seven billion dollar industry world wide, but it is in no way an easy, get rich quick path. If it was, everyone would be doing it. The truth is that it's

a lot of work, and in the beginning there's not a lot of return on your effort.

If you want to be successful in affiliate marketing don't try to take short cuts or ignore proven models. In the end, this will probably end up costing you time and money.

### **So, what is the proven model?**

- Know your target audience and what their needs are
- Promote products that satisfy the needs of *your* target audience
- Create a content marketing funnel so you have a plan for success
- Optimize your site for conversions
- Use opt-ins, lead magnets, and auto responders
- Drive traffic to your lead magnets with ads (if you have the budget for it)

- Use analytics to make changes in your funnel as needed

If you're consistent and follow some of the tips laid out here, you will see results that will make it all worthwhile.





# MYTHS YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF



There are a lot of myths out there about affiliate marketing. Here are some of the top myths, debunked.

## – AFFILIATE MARKETING IS EASY AND OFFERS QUICK RETURNS –

Affiliate marketing is a very simple concept, but is not easy to execute. Most people seriously underestimate the amount of time it will take for them to be successful and also the amount of work they will have to put into having a successful affiliate marketing business.

**In order to be successful, you will have to frequently and consistently work on your affiliate marketing business.** It may take 6-12 months to build an audience large enough to make any money and then it may not be much at first.

Affiliate marketing is a serious business and can earn you a serious income but it's not an easy way to make a quick buck.

## – ONLY CERTAIN NICHE ARE PROFITABLE –

This is a really popular myth that just simply isn't true. There are thousands of niches and new ones emerge everyday as consumers' needs and interests change and evolve.

**But, you do have to take the time and do the research when choosing your niche.**

Probably one of the top reasons affiliate marketers fail is due to poor niche selection. If you choose a niche that customers don't spend any money on or only seek free information, the most quality content in the world won't compel them to buy.

Also, if your niche is too broad or too narrow, it will be hard to develop a target audience to market to.

Pick a niche that interests you. You're going to be putting a lot of time and effort into building

this business. Wouldn't it be nice if it didn't bore you to tears?

Another common myth about niches is that people think that the profitable niches are so saturated that they could never make any money in them.

**Consider these facts before deciding whether a niche is too saturated:**

- **Internet usage is exploding globally.** More and more customers are getting on the internet or using the internet for shopping and researching products. And, it's *always growing*.
- **New niches come up all of the time.** The interests, needs, and hobbies of people on the internet change, and with that change, new niches open up.
- **Even if you do choose a very saturated market, you may have a unique angle** that will draw customers away from the competition within that niche. And, if

there's a lot of businesses competing within the same niche, you know there's money to be made there.

## – AFFILIATE MARKETING IS NOT A SERIOUS BUSINESS –

This is a common myth that comes from people not really understanding how affiliate marketing works. The concept of promoting someone else's business or product for a commission has been around for a very long time. The internet has made that concept explode.

**A recent survey found that among bloggers making more than \$50,000 per year, affiliate marketing was their top method for monetization of their blog.** In fact, some of the top websites and publishers owe a significant portion of their revenue to affiliate sales.

The affiliate marketing business model has been proven to work over the last several

decades and advertisers know that. This is why they choose to spend a significant portion of their advertising budgets promoting products through affiliates rather than traditional advertising.

Affiliate marketing is here to stay for the long haul.

## – CUSTOMERS HATE AFFILIATE LINKS –

The truth is that customers hate being sold but they love buying. If your approach is desperate, needy, and solely based on selling them something, people will not buy from you.

**A much more successful approach is to build a relationship with your audience.** Become someone they feel they can trust by posting valuable content and conveying how the product can solve their problems.

Everyone has problems, and knowing your target audience will make it much easier to figure out what those problems are and how you can present a plan to solve them.

If you build a relationship with your audience based on mutual benefit and trust, they will be happy to buy from you, even when they know you're making a commission.

## **– AFFILIATES DON'T NEED A CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY –**

This one is really popular. Many people believe that they can simply have a great blog with good content or product comparisons or some other form of sales content and the sales will just pour in. If only.

**A well-defined marketing strategy is the best way to figure out how you want your customers to go through your sales process.**

A good marketing strategy will bring traffic to your site by solving your target market's problems. It can also help you gain subscribers by presenting actionable content. Finally, it converts your target audience into customers by offering value.

**Study up on sales funnels to learn which content fits into which part of your marketing strategy.**

- **The top of the funnel** (the big part) is where you attract people with a problem but they don't have a solution to it yet. The content for this part of the funnel is blog posts, social media posts, videos, podcasts, etc.
- **The middle of the funnel** targets people who know of several solutions to their problem but they are still researching their options. This is where you'll offer educational resources, downloads, webinars, etc.



- **The bottom of the funnel** narrows the customers down to knowing they have a problem and that you have the solution and they are ready to buy. At this stage, you can offer a customer review, product demonstrations, or the like.



# AFFILIATE MARKETING IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY



If you're interested in building a business online, whether it be a side hustle or a full time gig, affiliate marketing is a great option.

Just be aware that you're not going to be able to replace your 9 to 5 right away. It's going to take a few months of consistent effort before you start to see the fruits of your labor.

The time to start is now.