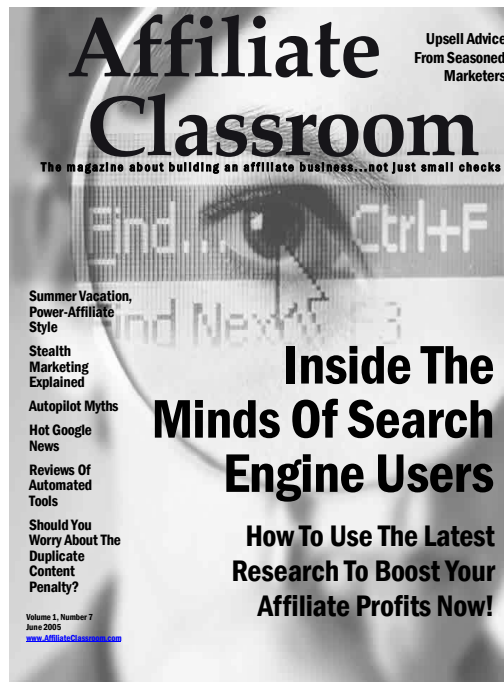


# Affiliate Classroom

The magazine about building an affiliate business...not just small checks

## Low Bandwidth Edition



**June 2005**

**Volume 1, Number 7**

<http://www.affiliateclassroom.com/>

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## Editors' Corner

# What You Did On Your Summer Vacation

**“As you closed your eyes and soaked up the warm sun, you were glad. Glad that you built your affiliate business out of solid stuff. “**

As you sat on the beach, watching your kids build sand castles, your thoughts turned to... Christmas.

What started that train of thought? It must have been all that sand. It reminded you of the dreaded sandbox, that limbo-land where new web sites disappear for months on end before the Google gods breathe them back to life... IF they breathe them back to life.

What was it you read just the other day... it was now taking Google more than four months to index some sites? And here it was, already the end of June.

You watched a seagull, far out, swoop down over the water, hunting up his next meal. “Timing,” you thought, “it’s all about timing.” To cash in on the online retail boom in November and December - and to treat your family to the best Christmas ever - those winter marketing sites needed to be up and running NOW. Or at least soon.

Hmmm... How many sites would it take to make it a commission-happy Christmas? Five? 10? 20? That meant finding products and merchants, researching niches, choosing keywords, writing copy... and developing lists, link partnerships, and virals NOW.

As you watched your kids build a sand castle, you thought, “Ugh, who wants to spend all summer chained to a computer? Thank goodness I don’t have to. Full time hours, yes... but so what? It’s paying off.”

Castles made of sand... that’s what most affiliates end up building. A bunch of here today, gone tomorrow sites, made of borrowed or stolen content, held together with nothing more than a little spit and a lot of luck... until the search engine gods got angry.

As you closed your eyes and soaked up the warm sun, you were glad. Glad that you built your affiliate business out of solid stuff. Your winter sites were started months ago. There, on that sunny afternoon at the beach, you thought about each of the dozen sites you already had in the works, most of them nearly ready for launch.

And you thought about the 15 sites you had already finished, some earning more than others, but all of them making money... from AdSense, affiliate sales, joint ventures, and upsells. Sure, you had to work on your affiliate business full time... but at least you were working from home. You felt lucky compared to a lot of people, who spent their summers trapped in a windowless office under soul-numbing florescent lights.

Sandbox? Sand castles? No worries. That night, you’d log into the [Affiliate Classroom](#), where all your site projects and affiliate info were safely stored. You’d put in a couple of hours - and they’d be PRODUCTIVE hours - following their step-by-step plan. You’d just finish another step, and then another, building your affiliate income for Christmas... for next summer...

And for the rest of your life.

*The Editors and Writers of AC Magazine*

## Your Letters

**Stealth marketing... what is it?**

**Autopilot riches... still possible?**

**PDF magazines... do you need one?**

Write to us at [Editor@AffiliateClassroom.com](mailto:Editor@AffiliateClassroom.com). Don't forget to put "AC MAGAZINE LETTER" in the subject line of your email. Sorry we can't reply personally to all your questions. Current members of [AffiliateClassroom.com](#) always receive personalized answers to any marketing questions in the Members Forum.

### **Stealth marketing... huh?**

**What's all this talk about "stealth marketing?" I see it mentioned in forums, usually by pretty aggressive marketers who are big on automated directory builders. Is this a black hat SEO trick, or what? - Emily**

*"Stealth marketing" isn't exactly "black hat," a term that refers to using questionable tactics to artificially boost your search engine ranking. But it's not exactly "white hat" either, since many stealth marketers rely on heavily automated site builders. It's really a "gray hat" method, in that it depends on building sites that "blend into the background of the web" and attract only enough attention to make a modest income.*

*In a sense, stealth marketing isn't really a marketing method. It's an online business model. Affiliates who practice "stealth marketing" build multiple low profile sites. These often combine automated directory and link scripts with auto-blogging tools, articles, RSS news feeds, and/or public domain content. Revenue comes from contextual advertising and/or affiliate programs.*

*The "stealth" aspect refers to how these affiliates promote - or more accurately, how they DON'T promote. Like the "stealth bomber" fighter jet, these marketers want their sites, and their business, to "fly under the radar." They choose low key, innocuous templates, and they avoid any "high profile" tactics that might send up red flags, such as mailing to a big opt-in list, massive blogging and pinging, or aggressive link campaigns.*

*Stealth marketers prefer to wait anywhere from three to six months, or even longer, for indexing, rather than employ hard core tactics that will get them into the search engines fast... but may also draw too much attention to them. Their goal is to create dozens, even hundreds of sites, each bringing in a small income, that get spidered and indexed, but otherwise remain invisible to any major search engine upheaval.*

*Some stealth marketers build mini-sites by hand, then combine them with automated tools like [Traffic Equalizer](#) or [Directory Generator](#). More important than the tools, however, is the strategy. Stealth marketers keep a very low profile. They aren't overly aggressive. They don't do anything to offend the search engines, but they do use every means possible to automate the building process so no single site takes more than a day to create.*

### **Autopilot Riches... myth or truth?**

**I think I've signed up for at least 25 different "autopilot income" programs in the last in year, including randomizers, doublers, "\$1.67 A Day," and a whole bunch of programs like them. I use safelists,**

**Adwords and ezine ads to promote these programs, but so far I haven't made much money. Damn little, in fact! It seems like I have to do a lot of work just to make a few bucks. Can you recommend some programs that are REALLY autopilot? - *MatrixJunkie***

*Sounds like the programs you're promoting depend heavily on automated email marketing - building a massive list of leads, pummeling them with email until you get signups, and then hoping at least some of your lower tiers or downline will also build huge lists and get signups. They're supposed to be "autopilot" because once you build your list, your autoresponders will do all the work for you... and you just cash the checks.*

*Sad to say, this type of business model goes against the grain of the reality of the web today. In our opinion, the days of massive autopilot income through autoresponders or safelists are quickly coming to an end. It's not because these tools can't be useful. Every online marketer should be using an autoresponder. And it's possible to use safelists for promoting mass market biz opps - especially if you're the OWNER of the safelist.*

*But the fact is, today's spam filters, blockers, and destroyers are making it almost impossible to 'autopilot' your way to Internet riches. Both ISPs and providers of free email addresses (like Yahoo, Hotmail, and MyWay.com) now turn their spam filters on to medium - or higher - by default. That means your target market has to be savvy enough to CHANGE their spam settings from the get-go. If they don't, NONE of your marketing messages will get through.*

*Add to that the higher expectations of ALL of today's online markets, and the old-fashioned "autopilot" business simply doesn't exist any longer. As the vast Internet community - which includes millions of opportunity seekers - gets more sophisticated, they also expect a lot more from the people who market via lists.*

*The biz opp promoters who are doing the best today do more than blast endless emails to their lists, telling them how much money they can make. These promoters write blogs and articles, provide custom marketing tools, and offer support or even personalized coaching. All that is WORK - and it's NOT autopilot.*

*This doesn't mean you can't AUTOMATE as much of your online business as possible. There's nothing wrong with autopilot, but the realities of today's Internet marketplace are making it less and less effective. When you're shooting for a large income, you also need to do a certain amount of daily, hands-on management of your business.*

*In [The Affiliate Classroom](#), we strongly advise people who want to promote biz opps to promote those programs just as if they were any other affiliate product. That means starting with ONE program (not 25), targeting it to a promising niche, and following our step-by-step business system. This way you won't be shooting in the dark at completely unresponsive safelists. And you won't be spending money on Adwords or ezine ads without ROI (return on investment).*

*Of course, marketing biz opps with a more individualized, solid business system is not a "set it up and forget it" thing. But it can eventually become quite low-maintenance. You need to set it up correctly, work hard on it for a while, and then manage it regularly.*

*You've already discovered that the promises of quick and dirty, autopilot income are overblown. You still spend a lot of time and money signing up for multiple safelists and complying with their rules, mailing over and over again to unresponsive lists, joining multiple programs, and experimenting with paid ads.*

*We here at [The Affiliate Classroom](#) believe it makes much more sense, and takes less work in the long run, to devote a month to building ONE site that has a powerful search engine presence and pulls ONGOING traffic from multiple sources... Rather than spend the rest of your life blasting millions of emails*

*to unresponsive safelists. A site built on our solid business model does not take years to create - some students do it in as little as a few days, though raw beginners will require more time.*

*Does our system generate an immediate six-figure income overnight? Hell no! But neither does the biz opp/safelist model. But an [Affiliate Classroom](#) type of site gives you many more revenue opportunities, including affiliate income, contextual advertising, pay-per-impression or pay-per-click, and upsells. It allows you to concentrate on owning - and growing - your own list that's loyal to you... and building more and more sites, all of which create multiple revenue streams. And with our type of business model, you're less vulnerable to changes in the marketplace, email technology, or compensation plans.*

.....

## **What do these HOT marketing experts have in common?**

**Brad Callen (SEO Elite)**  
**Dr. Andy Williams (SEO Website Builder)**  
**Willy Crawford (Veteran Internet marketer)**  
**Carlos Garcia ("Wealthy Secrets")**  
**Terry Telford (Internet partnership expert)**  
**Rod Beckwith ("Mr. JV")**  
**Michael Nicholas (Master list builder)**  
**Patric Chan (Email marketing expert)**

## **They let us pick their brains!**

**Now you can get the marketing secrets of these pros, plus step-by-step affiliate coaching, unlimited support, and much more. [Click here now!](#)**

.....

### **Do I need a PDF 'magazine' to compete?**

**I've been reading your magazine for six months now, and I have to say I not only love the concept, but I get at least three killer ideas or tips from every single issue. A lot of it I would not give away for free, but I guess it's working for you. Here's my question. I'm noticing some of the old guard Internet marketing gurus are starting their own PDF magazine. One of them looks a lot like yours. So how are newbie marketers like me, with no design skills and no budget for graphics and writers, supposed to compete against all these slick magazines? - *GonnaBeWealthy***

*Wow, thanks for the kudos and kind words about AC Magazine - we love doing it, and we really do try and share the truly creative ideas that turn ordinary marketers into power affiliates! And yes, after seven months, it looks like some copycats have finally realized that there's a lot of viral marketing potential in a monthly PDF magazine - we must be doing something right!*

*But do YOU need to turn your ezine or newsletter into a slick looking PDF magazine? Of course not! In fact, this magazine isn't the only publication [The Affiliate Classroom](#) puts out. We publish a very simple email newsletter - no HTML or bells and whistles, no ads, just free content and tools. And we publish a*

*practical newsletter for our affiliates. Each publication is designed to do different things... and to reach different (and sometimes overlapping) audiences.*

*The point is, don't worry about what the gurus are doing. Instead, think about YOUR business and YOUR goals. If you're going to publish anything on a regular basis - whether it's an ezine, a newsletter, a magazine, or a simple blog - first think about what BUSINESS PURPOSE it's supposed to serve. Then start small and simple.*

*For example, some of our subscribers get all our publications. But some only get the magazine or one of the newsletters. That's because each of our publications has a its own reason for being. Our magazine does several things for our business, but it doesn't do EVERYTHING. As a professional affiliate training institute, we try to make our magazine as educational as possible - while still making it work hard for our business.*

*In your case, ask yourself why you want a mailing list. Obviously, to turn subscribers into buyers of your affiliate goods or services. So what type of publication will do that best? Depending on your target market, a big, bandwidth-intensive download may be the LAST thing in the world they want! People who need quick tips or instant help don't want to wade through 30+ pages of content.*

*A better fit - and a more cost effective one - would be to publish a very short tip or news item daily. Post those tips to a blog, and eventually you can compile the tips into a viral report or a PDF compilation. That's just one inexpensive way to get started.*

*Bottom line is, the PDF magazine concept we pioneered is obviously getting noticed, and is sure to become one of the new, hot marketing tools. But it's not the only one. The simple methods, like plain text email, still work - and some users prefer them! PDF magazines will never replace email ezines or newsletters, even in these days of spam blockers and email filtering - but they are definitely expanding online publishing options for marketers whose message is suited to content-intensive, graphics-enabled communications.*

## Cover Story

# Inside The Minds Of Search Engine Users

A new nationwide survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project received little attention from online marketers when it appeared in January 2005.

But in studying the report, the staff of [Affiliate Classroom](#) discovered some intriguing facts about the way search engine users think - facts that savvy affiliates need to keep in mind when considering their SEM (Search Engine Marketing) strategy.

The report also has implications for the best ways to diversify your current promotions to hedge your bets for the future, along with the best ways to interface with your chosen niche markets.

The Pew study shows that overall, Internet users have an extremely positive outlook towards search engines. They feel good about searching, and seem to be confident that they'll find what they need from the search engines.

But the study also revealed some oddly unsophisticated attitudes about why and how people use search engines. Even more surprising, many users seem unaware of some of the basics of how search engines operate, including those that most online marketers take for granted, like the distinction between paid and unpaid listings.

**About The Pew Internet & American Life Study...**

**Based on the findings of a daily tracking survey of American Internet users, the study includes results of an online survey conducted in May - June 2003 and telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates between May 14 and June 17, 2004.**

**The report was authored by Deborah Fallows, Pew Senior Research Fellow. To download a copy of the entire report, go to: <http://www.pewinternet.org/>.**

In this article we'll highlight what we believe are some of the most marketing-sensitive aspects of the study, and offer some ideas for how affiliates can use this knowledge in their own business.

**Highlight: Search engine users in the U.S. are loyal... and they really believe they know how to search.**

**84% of online American adults have used search engines. That amounts to 108 million people.**

**On any given day, 56% of those online use search engines.**

**92% of those search engine users say they are confident about their searching abilities, with over half of them, 52%, saying they are "very confident."**

**87% of online searchers say they have successful search experiences most of the time, including 17% of users who say they always find the information for which they are looking.**

**44% of searchers say they regularly use a single search engine; 48% use just two or three search engines; 7% use more than three search engines.**

According to Deborah Fallows, the Senior Research Fellow at the Pew Internet & American Life Project who authored the report, "Internet users are very comfortable as searchers, partly because they set themselves up so it's difficult to fail."

She does have a point. The lists of the most popular searches for 2004 show that queries seem to be dominated by pop culture, news events, trends, and seasonal topics. For example, Google's top query for 2004 was Britney Spears, AOL's was horoscopes, and Yahoo's was American Idol, all topics for which it's virtually guaranteed to get relevant results.

This “instant gratification” factor may also explain why a whopping 44% of searchers stick with just one search engine. They seem to settle quickly on a favorite and then stick with it, rather than switching as search technology evolves or comparing results from different engines. Another 48% use just two or three search engines.

Because of vast experience with easy searches, users may even be “trained” to blame the search engine - and not their rudimentary search skills - when they can’t find what they’re looking for. And if you DO consistently get exactly what you look for in Google, Yahoo, MSN, Lycos, or some other engine... why switch around?

**The lesson for affiliates here is obvious: searchers are not accustomed to being disappointed.** If search engine traffic is at all important to you, then you MUST get at least a few of your best pages to rank as high as possible for at least a few keywords. That way your target market can “seek and find” you immediately.

Sounds tough? Maybe. **The good news is that if you can’t rank high with organic results, the Pew Study seems to indicate that paid listings will probably work just as well** (we’ll explain why later).

And because 44% of searchers always use the same engine, **all you need is a top spot in one of the “big three” - Google, Yahoo, or MSN - at any given time.** Based on the startling number of searchers who don’t bother to “shop around” for results, a sensible SEM penetration strategy might be to get a top organic placement in one major engine, then simply purchase PPC in the others.

**[Affiliate Classroom’s](#) conclusion? Work hard to get some sort of reliable search engine presence... but don’t go crazy trying to optimize for every search engine.**

**Highlight: More than two-thirds of all Internet users could easily live without search engines. (Could you?)**

**If search engines went away tomorrow, more than half of searchers would use other methods to find what they wanted.**

**50% of searchers say they like search engines but could go back to other ways of finding information.**

**32% say they can’t live without search engines.**

**17% say they could give up search engines tomorrow.**

This may be hard for Internet marketers to swallow, but believe it or not, nearly half of the searchers surveyed use search engines no more than a few times a week. And a whopping two-thirds said they could walk away from search engines without upsetting their lives very much.

For all the confidence users seem to have about their searching skills, the majority show only a halfhearted commitment to using them. A full half of Internet searchers say that while they like search engines, they could go back to other ways of finding information. Another 17% say they wouldn’t miss search engines at all.

**The lesson for affiliates? Searchers clearly believe that there's more than one way to find information online... and that search engines are just ONE way.** While the SEO-obsessed may be skeptical, according to the Pew report the majority of Internet users are not as dependent on the search engines as we like to think they are.

What was true in the early days of the Internet is still true: word of mouth, offline advertising, portals, directories, viral reports, links from other sites, bookmark sharing, tell-a-friend scripts, and email marketing ALL play a significant role in getting people to your site. In fact, they may end up playing a much more significant role, especially since Google has revealed that it tracks user behavior and click-throughs to sites (see **News, page 19**).

Given this startling attitude of search engine users, what should smart affiliates do? **Build an opt-in or update list**, no matter how infrequently you send actual emails.

**Be aggressive about getting links from sites that rank well for your keywords - and worry less about their PR than their actual placement in the SERPs**, so your link will appear on a page that's likely to get SEEN. Get your site listed on as many well-trafficked portals as possible. Use articles, viral reports, and any sort of bribe (even an offer of payment) to get links on pages that rank well for your topic and keywords.

And most importantly, **go for the bookmark!** Constantly encourage visitors to add your site to their favorites. Remind them in every email you send. Create a custom favicon to make your bookmark stand out. Investigate social bookmarking as a way of spreading the word about not just your site, but KEY PAGES on your site.

If you prepare for the day when users get fed up with search engines, you'll also be immune to the whims of the algorithms.

**[Affiliate Classroom's](#) recommendation? Ask yourself how you'd promote if search engines didn't exist... then start doing it now!**

**Highlight: Almost two-thirds of search engine users don't understand the difference between paid listings and organic results.**

- ◆ **68% of searchers say that search engines are a fair and unbiased source of information.**
- ◆ **19% say they don't place any trust in search engines.**
- ◆ **Only 38% of searchers are aware of a distinction between paid and unpaid results.**
- ◆ **Yet 62% are not aware of the distinction at all.**
- ◆ **18% of searchers overall (47% of those who can distinguish between paid and organic results) say they can always tell which results are paid or sponsored and which are not.**
- ◆ **70% of searchers are okay with the concept of paid or sponsored results.**
- ◆ **But 45% of searchers would stop using search engines if they thought the engines weren't being clear about offering some results for pay.**

Most Internet users say they trust their favorite search engine, but very few seem to be aware that financial incentives can dictate how search engines perform and what results get shown first.

Only 38% of users are aware of the distinction between paid or “sponsored” results and unpaid results. And only one in six say they can always tell which results are paid and which are not.

What’s even more disturbing - and ironic - is that nearly half of all users say that if they thought the search engines were not being clear about how they presented paid results... they would stop using them altogether!

The exception is the one-third of Internet searchers, 32%, who say they can’t live without search engines. These are the power users. According to the Pew study, they are more likely to be male, young, better educated, earn a higher income, and have been online for more years than the other groups. They search more often, and consider themselves more successful and confident at searching.

This group also knows more about the inner workings of search engines: they have heard about the distinction between paid and unpaid results and they are much more likely to be able to distinguish between the two types of listings.

**The lesson for affiliates? For a huge majority of search engine users, it appears to make no difference whether you buy a listing or achieve it naturally!** This is excellent news for affiliates who simply don’t have the time, money, or skills to work at getting top placements in the major search engines.

So unless your target market is among those young, highly sophisticated search engine users, a sponsored listing is likely to get clicked on just as much as a listing at the top of a SERP.

You can also make up for massive SERP competition by looking for opportunities to purchase PPC or top sponsorships on a *variety* of search engines. For example, with Google Adwords mania still running high, surprising bargains can often be found on Overture, even for competitive keywords, and a tool like [Adwords Analyzer](#) can help you find these bargains in minutes.

**But don’t purchase a sponsored listing unless your site is ready to convert those clickers into viable leads.** If you’ve basically got a content site, it can get awfully expensive paying for visitors to go to your home page and just look around.

So no matter how committed you are to pure content, don’t use PPC unless you can develop lead capture pages that offer some type of viral incentive. And even if your home page is a straight sales page, **remember that it’s always easier to capture a lead than a sale** - especially if your visitor is a casual clicker.

There’s also one market that’s a clear exception - and the Pew report describes it. This searcher is male, 30 or under, confident in his online experience, in a higher income bracket, and well aware of the distinction between advertising and pure, relevant search results.

If this demographic happens to be your niche, make sure the look of your site, the wording of your ads, and the tactics on your lead capture mechanisms **don’t lose these young, male, Internet-savvy visitors by wasting their time or insulting their intelligence.**

As we'll see in the next section, it's also worth remembering that this younger demographic tends to believe that search engine results are fair and unbiased - which will make SEO and organic listings much more important in your overall marketing scheme when you're selling to them.

**Affiliate Classroom's conclusion? Be prepared to capitalize on the fact that for most searchers, paid vs. organic listings don't matter as much as what you DO with those visitors once they hit your site.**

**Highlight: Search engine usage varies by gender.**

**88% of men who are Internet users have used search engines.**

**79% of women who are Internet users have used search engines.**

**40% of online men search at least daily, with 28% searching several times a day. 27% of women search at least daily, with 16% searching several times a day.**

**54% of online men say they are very confident in their search abilities. 40% of women say they are very confident in their search abilities.**

**43% of men have heard of the distinction between paid and unpaid results. 32% of women have heard of the distinction between paid and unpaid results.**

Men say they use search engines more often than women, and men claim to have more confidence in their search abilities. Younger Internet users appear to be much more engaged in using search engines. Compared with other users, those under 30 search more often, are confident and successful in their searching, and tend to rely more on search engines for really important information.

By contrast, older users are less likely to place trust in search engines. They are also much more likely to care about the ethics of search engine practices. They also seem less likely to buy into the concept of paid or sponsored results. The oldest users also seem the least comfortable with sorting out how search engines present paid vs. organic listings.

**Highlight: Age plays a big role in how much users are willing to trust search engines.**

**89% of Internet users under 30 years have used search engines, compared to...  
85% aged 30-49 years; 79% aged 50 - 64 years; 67% aged over 65 and up.**

**27% of Internet users under 30 use search engines several times a day, compared to...  
25% of those 30-49 years; 15% of those 50-64 years; and only 8% of those over 65 years.**

**36% of users under 30 say they couldn't live without search engines, compared to...  
35% of those 30-49 years; 26% of those 50-65 years; and only 18% of those over 65 years.**

**72% of users under 30 years say search engines are fair and unbiased, compared to...  
68% of those 30-49 years; 65% of those 50-64 years; 66% of those over 65 years.**

**What does this mean for affiliates? If you know your demographic, you can predict the attitude of your niche when they arrive at your site.**

For example, if you're targeting seniors, it's clear that your credibility needs to be addressed on every page of your site. Or if you're selling to women, make sure each page of your site clearly shows they've found a site that matches their search perfectly. If middle aged men are your target market, pay attention to your SERP descriptions and ad copy, since they are more frequent searchers and probably skim more.

**[Affiliate Classroom's](#) conclusion? It pays to know your demographic. It may even pay to choose niches based on demographics.**

Finally, you'll want to check out the vast number of other free reports on Internet usage, on topics that range from fantasy sports leagues to music and video downloading habits, compiled by Pew.

*The Pew Internet & American Life Project is a non-partisan, non-profit initiative of the Pew Research Center that is funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts to examine the social impact of the Internet. The Project does not take positions on policy issues. You will find a copy of the full report, which you can download in PDF format, <http://www.pewinternet.org/>.*

## Reviews

# Hot Product Reviews

**Directory Generator and Keyword Word Spy Tool get our top ratings for ease of use and flawless execution on XP Home Service Pack 2**

### [Directory Generator](#)

Authors: Armand Morin & Marc Quarles

**Level: Beginner**

**Rating: TOP PICK! ★★★★★**

After testing this automated directory generator for several months, we've concluded that [Directory Generator](#) is probably the easiest-to-use directory builder on the market today. Even complete beginners can understand the training videos, and building a site is as easy as pushing buttons. If you know how to buy a domain name and use FTP, you can be building [Directory Generator](#) sites within just a few hours of purchase.

To encourage customization, the templates that come with [Directory Generator](#) are very bare bones. But the tokens are also very easy to manipulate, and seem to work flawlessly no matter how much you move them around and no matter what kind of template you plug them into. Just don't change the structure of the <TITLE> tags, or you'll get some weird linking problems in your finished pages.

But what about speed? There's no server version of [DG](#), so will it take years to build your directories? We tested [Directory Generator](#) on a slow dialup connection (less than 56K), and it grabbed data from the web and built approximately 400 pages in a little under 25 minutes, making it the fastest generator we've ever used.

The HTML created by [Directory Generator](#) is extremely clean - if your template is SEO-friendly, you'll be glad to see that [DG](#) doesn't insert any extra code in your final output. The linking structure also appears to be very spider-friendly, although we don't recommend saving all your pages to a "directory" subfolder. If you do that, name the folder something else (check out our review of [Keyword Spy Tool](#) to find out why!).

Perhaps the best aspect of [Directory Generator](#) is the simplicity of inserting complex code. You can include both AdSense ads and search, an Amazon feed, and even RSS Equalizer code by cutting and pasting once. And to help you add unique articles to your pages, [Directory Generator](#) also includes a build in article rotator.

Combine this flexibility with speed with a newbie-friendly interface, and you've got a great beginner's directory builder that will also satisfy experienced marketers.

### [Keyword Spy Tool](#)

Author: Roger Dagenais

**Level: Beginner**

**Rating: TOP PICK! ★★★★★**

This very easy-to-use, straightforward software tool ideal for beginners, [Keyword Spy Tool](#) automates the process of "spying" on portal and directory sites, "borrowing" their keywords from their directory folder pages, removing duplicate keywords, and developing clean keyword lists for use in automated page generators like [Directory Generator](#). The software not only ran flawlessly in our tests (Windows XP Home, Service Pack 2), it was fast and efficient, using very few system resources.

In addition to being 100% newbie-friendly, [Keyword Spy Tool](#) is an excellent way to develop quick keyword lists. Provided you don't need search engine or competition analysis, it's a fast (though limited) substitute for the more pricey [Wordtracker](#) annual membership. If you're building portal sites, directories, or even writing keyword-intensive content, [Keyword Spy Tool](#) will show you the exact keywords being used on real competitor sites today.

In the version of [Keyword Spy Tool](#) we tested, we spied on 5 competitors at a time and pulled raw keyword lists. With the clean up utility included with the software, removing all the junk keywords from extracted files was fast and easy.

What we especially liked about [Keyword Spy Tool](#) was the merge button, that compiled all the keywords from five competitors into one clean list with just one click.

With more upgrades in the works, affiliates would be wise to purchase [Keyword Spy Tool](#) before the price goes up, and while lifetime upgrades are still included.

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**If niche marketing's your game, join the site that hunts down the best niche merchants AND tells you how to build a niche around them!**

- ◆ We found a merchant that specializes in an electrifying emotional topic... and pays 51% on high-conversion ebooks that really SELL!
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- ◆ Want to market to the self-help crowd? Why waste time and money if your merchant can't convert! Promote THIS program, and it'll all be worth while!

You'll find all these merchants, and dozens like them, profiled in [The Affiliate Classroom](#), along with killer niche affiliate marketing ideas to jump start your profits.

Isn't it time you joined the affiliate marketing site that shows you how to earn lavish profits and build a real online business... not just small checks?

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## News

# Hot Google News

Google's PayPal clone... Ranking patent secrets revealed... and "spies!"

## Google To Develop Paypal Clone?

Look out eBay and PayPal... Google's breathing down your neck. A recent Wall Street Journal story revealed that Google is considering developing its own electronic payment system before the end of 2005.

Neither Google nor the Wall Street Journal were willing to reveal details or sources. A Google spokesman declined to comment. And no wonder, since a "Google-Wallet" system would threaten the auction revenue dominance enjoyed by the eBay-PayPal cash machine.

Some Google-watchers are speculating that Google needs to expand its revenue sources. Becoming an online payment processor could make Google less dependent on advertising, which accounted for almost all of its first-quarter 2005 revenue of \$1.26 billion.

But some Google critics take a more cynical view. To them, this is yet another example of how post-IPO Google is shifting its identity from a relevancy-based search engine to a portal-media-advertising conglomerate.

While becoming a payment processor might be a good business move for Google, it's bound to complicate Google's ethical relationship with its advertisers. eBay merchants and stores appear to be major purchasers of Google's Adwords PPC advertising spots - the very cash cow that has sent Google's quarterly revenues into the billions.

If Google develops its own PayPal clone, it will be inevitably find itself stealing business from the very payment system that has helped eBay merchants compete in an increasingly competitive marketplace - and fund their Adwords accounts.

But some are tired of what they feel is PayPal's near-monopoly in the non-merchant account payment acceptance market. For them, Google's move could be great news. PayPal is unavailable in many international markets - a place where Google's search engine dominance keeps growing.

And if you own Google stock, a "Google-Wallet" system could be great for your portfolio. PayPal accounted for \$233.1 million - 23% - of eBay's revenue in the first quarter of 2005. If "Google-Wallet" becomes a reality, it may not bump Google's quarterly revenues into the multiple billions. But it will mean that Google's profitable eggs won't ALL be in the Adwords basket.

## Google Patent Filing Reveals Ranking Secrets

When Google filed their United States Patent Application 20050071741 on March 31 2005, it revealed fascinating details of its proprietary page rank secrets. It also gave users of its browser and desktop tools a disturbing glimpse into just how much data Google monitors and collects about web sites.

Here is a summary of just some of the details from the patent filing:

- ◆ **Site CTR** (click through rate): Google can and does detect a user's temporary files, caching, bookmarks/favorites via the Google toolbar and desktop tools - and sites are rewarded for good CTR. Google monitors whether new or aging content is preferred by users, news and seasonal trends, and the amount of traffic individual web pages get.
- ◆ **Domain name age**: Google apparently assumes that search engine spammers won't register domain names for more than one year (Google obviously never heard of testing the viability of a domain name or a niche site). So Google says it gives URLs registered for two years or more a slight edge, believing (rightly or wrongly) that the site owner is building a legitimate business and in it for the long haul.
- ◆ **Domain name details**: The owner's address is monitored and recorded. Technical and administrative contact details are checked for "consistency."

- ◆ **IP addresses:** These are monitored and recorded, but it's unclear whether using a shared server means you can be banned or penalized for someone else's spamming - a disturbing thought for the millions of small businesses and hobby sites hosted on inexpensive shared servers.
- ◆ **Links:** We all know that number, quality, and anchor text of links are vital factors. But history also plays a big part. Google tracks not just its discovery of a link, but how the link changes over time, how fast a site gets links, and link lifespan. This means that getting too many incoming links, too fast, could flag your site as potential spam.
- ◆ **Sandbox countdown:** Google's dreaded "sandbox" timer begins the moment links to a brand new site are discovered.
- ◆ **Link anchor text:** Google watches for "anchor spam," meaning the same keywords or keyphrases in all incoming links. The implication is that fewer high quality links from older sites count for more. Changes in incoming anchor text are also monitored, recorded, and analyzed - and if Google feels the text is suspicious, page rank will suffer.
- ◆ **Seasonal ranking is real:** Yes, Google ranks Christmas and seasonal sites higher in the winter than in the summer, and vice versa. (this means regional rankings by weather, timezones, etc. may be coming soon.)
- ◆ **User behavior is monitored:** You suspected it, but now you know for sure - Google's toolbars and desktop tools can and do monitor a users favorites and bookmarks for additions and deletions. Clicks away from a page and back to search results are also monitored..
- ◆ **Page updates:** Frequency of page updates, the number of page updates, and total number of pages are monitored and recorded. Mass updates of hundreds of pages are flagged and can result in penalties. Also few or no page updates can result in a rankings penalty unless CTR is excellent.
- ◆ **Changes in site emphasis:** Google monitors the "set of topics associated with a document." If the topics change significantly, Google claims too many changes could mean the site or page has changed owners, and will begin to discount prior rank, anchor text, etc. Google also claims that an increase in the number of topics is a spam flag. This is a very disturbing indicator for businesses and/or content providers that change hands, expand into new areas, or even purchase an expired domain name they like.
- ◆ **Keyword density:** On-page optimizers, look out. Google monitors and records variations in keyword density over time. Keyword spikes or dips can result in penalties.

Unfortunately, few of these revelations seem to have penetrated mainstream SEO discussions. Nor have they sparked much debate about the ethical implications of some of Google's tracking, monitoring, and recording processes.

For example, if Google uses actions monitored by its toolbar and desktop to help determine rank, this may unfairly affect sites whose users are unlikely to install one of Google's proprietary tools. It also opens the door for yet more forms of clever spamming, such as inflating a page's rank by manipulating the Google toolbar - a fate that befell the Alexa toolbar and made it virtually worthless overnight.

## **Dutch Reporter Confirms Google Now Using Human Evaluators**

During the past month, Dutch journalist Henk van Ess confirmed the rumors that Google has recruited a team of human evaluators. The revelations have been appearing on Ess's informative and often witty Search Bistro blog (<http://www.searchbistro.com/>). Van Ess began Search Bistro to post English versions of search engine news collected from visitors to his Dutch site.

The postings by Van Ess confirmed the existence of Google's Human Quality Evaluation Team, people located all over the world who are paid to check Google's search results every day. Paid \$10-\$20 per hour, most were recruited through worldwide, and are called "international agents" by Google.

Google's team is supposed to weed out spam sites, check whether "the right sites" appear in the top results, and to test new Google features before public launch. Rumors have been floating around about Google's "secret lab" of human evaluators for at least a year.

But Van Ess not only managed to confirm the existence of Google's evaluators, he also published some of Google's internal - and supposedly confidential - documents. He even made Google's "spam recognition guide" available for download on his blog, sparking some unpleasant reactions from "GoogleGuy," the infamous forum presence who purports to be a Google insider. The guidelines are about one year old, but according to Van Ess, 80% of it is still being used by Google's agents.

The release of Google's spam evaluation guidelines by Van Ess sparked reactions in many affiliate marketing forums. Some experts felt that the guidelines showed a strong bias against affiliate marketers, and in particular sites that Google calls "thin affiliates." Google says that they are "attempting to identify sites that do nothing but act as a commission-earning middleman," and that such affiliate sites are "offensive." Evaluators are asked to rate these sites in reports to Google.

Other affiliate marketers applauded Google's evaluation guidelines, and hoped that by having human reviewers, Google would eventually be able to weed out no-content auto-generated sites. They felt it encouraged affiliate marketers to become more creative content providers, and cited Google's advice to its evaluators: "Would this site remain a coherent whole if the pages leading to the affiliate (merchant) were taken away?"

Unlike many SEO pundits, Van Ess is not an optimizer hunting for clients. He is Head of Internet and Lecturer at Wegener Medialabs, a training institute for Dutch journalists, and also serves on a Dutch government commission charged with making Internet databases more accessible to news and investigative reporters.

## Feature Story

# The Duplicate Content Penalty

## An Affiliate's Worst Nightmare?

Does Google penalize a site's page rank if it contains "duplicate content?" That's a question of vital importance for today's affiliate marketers, who often use reviews, sales copy, testimonials, articles, and even entire e-stores or web pages provided by merchants to help them promote. Can the very content that's been proven to make sales actually HURT your affiliate business?

You bet it can. In April of 2005, [TemplateMonster.com](#), one of the largest, most respected, and successful affiliate merchants on the web, was dropped from Google's index. Why? Because its cobrandable web template affiliate program created "duplicate content" on hundreds of sites.

Template Monster lost not only its natural search engine rankings but an enormous chunk of their bread-and-butter business. The company had to ask all its affiliates to revamp the way they were displaying Template Monster templates on their sites. If this can happen to one of the most successful sites on the web, it can happen to ANYONE.

In this article we'll cover what duplicate content is, how the "penalty" seems to work, and what you can do to avoid losing money because of duplicate content issues.

## What is duplicate content, anyway?

The topic of "duplicate content" has been debated off and on in SEO circles for quite some time, possibly because most people don't understand what Google's "duplicate content penalty" is and how it works in practice.

The concept behind the duplicate content penalty is simple and reasonable: Google doesn't want multiple copies of the same content cluttering their results pages. Whether it's 10,000 pages that all contain the same article, or 10 million pages of search engine spam, duplicate content tends to make it harder for users to find what they're looking for.

Google has developed a patented technology that records a "fingerprint" of a site, and over time they compare these "fingerprints" to each other in their index. This allows Google to devalue all but one of the copies of the content. Here are some of the most common types of duplicate content - and most have **nothing** to do with spamming:

**Mirrored sites:** "Mirroring" a site - such as making a copy for server load balancing - is very common. Sites that get a lot of traffic will often split up the hits between two copies of the site. This can even out server resources and prevent slow loading or downtime. Site mirroring is also done to conserve bandwidth. It's fairly common to make a copy of a site for Europe so it will load faster for European users.

**Viral content:** Republishing free articles in return for a link is the most common example - and yes, this can result in a duplicate content penalty.

**Protecting a domain brand:** If you own the .com, .net and .org versions of your URL, or URLs that contain common misspellings of your company name, you might want to include a subset of

your content, newsletter or lead capture forms, or free downloads on some of these domains - rather than simply redirect to a single URL.

**Domains for sub-niches:** Again, you may want to use sub-sets of keyworded content for sub-niched sites. For example, if you write articles on personal finance for single moms, you may want to leverage your articles by creating sites targeted to special topics, such as “single-moms-savings-tips.com” and “single-moms-debt-help-tips.com.”

**Dynamically generated content and/or templates:** RSS feeds from blogs and news/article syndicates mean more duplicate content on more web sites. Dynamically generated templates in CMS (content management systems) or shopping carts may also set off duplicate content flags. NOTE: This is only true for feeds that display as static HTML. If you’re using a javascript feed to attract visitors, it can’t help your SEO, but it also can’t trigger a duplicate content flag, since Google’s bots can’t read it anyway.

**Doorway pages, cloaked pages, “bombs” and automated directory pages:** No matter how good the technology may be, word on the street is that Google’s engineers are busily reverse-engineering the latest “cheat” scripts and tools as soon as they’re launched. (This is why [Affiliate Classroom](#) STRONGLY CAUTIONS all affiliates against using these tools for anything other than testing the market, capturing quick leads, or driving temporary traffic via unimportant, “throwaway URLs.” Never use these tools without extensive customization and value-added content.)

**Site navigation elements and other “content”:** Believe it or not, the arrangement of items on your page, your internal link wording and structure, outgoing links and anchor text, lead capture forms, graphics, product descriptions, prices, merchant-provided sales copy and articles, and other on-page variables all are viewed as “content.” Any of them can set off a duplicate content red flag.

**Theft:** Sad to say, but theft of not just content, but page designs, links, and even entire web sites is a routine occurrence in today’s Internet. If someone decides to rip off any portion of your site, you may suddenly drop in the rankings, or out of Google’s index altogether, through no fault of your own.

## How are you penalized for duplicate content?

Unfortunately, as Template Monster discovered, duplicate content filters can’t judge the intent or purpose of your site. Your use of duplicate content could be 100% legitimate, such as a merchant product feed or RSS feed, and it could still trigger a severe penalty. Spiders are not people, and they can’t determine who first created the content and who is syndicating it.

In the opinion of some affiliate marketing pundits, the types of penalties suffered by companies like Template Monster indicates a growing anti-affiliate bias at Google, Inc. But other experts simply feel that it’s the spammers, and Google, who’s to blame. They believe that companies like Template Monster, and other penalized affiliates and merchants, are victims of widespread spamming with automated page generators. (See this issue’s [Google News](#))

Perhaps the truth is somewhere in the middle. Google’s inclusion, indexing, and ranking policies are far from transparent. Nor does the company openly publish duplicate content thresholds or

ratios that can help webmasters determine whether their pages will pass their tests. But it's also true that Google has to protect its proprietary technology, especially when its market dominance could be challenged by Yahoo and MSN at any time.

What affiliates can be sure of is this: if you want to not just get into Google but STAY in Google, your site needs to appear as unique as possible to the Googlebot. (It's also a good idea NOT to rely on SEM - search engine marketing - for 100% of your traffic, as our [Cover Story](#) explains.)

As of this writing (June 2005), Google clearly doesn't penalize ALL duplicate content. And when it does slap you with a penalty, there are varying degrees of severity.

## How to tell if you've been penalized.

**First, be aware that duplicate content is just ONE reason your site may get penalized.** In 2005, Google has not only been dancing - it's been shaking. And with its gyrations have come new linking algorithms, new ranking criteria, and even confirmation that a worldwide group of human evaluators exists to help weed out spam sites from Google's index.

The result is many sites have been bouncing up and down in the rankings, and old, static content sites have either been elevated or dumped. So if your site's been demoted or dumped, duplicate content may be only one of the reasons.

**Second, assuming you do have some duplicate content on your site, you may get smacked with one of several penalties that have been detected by webmasters.** The first is so severe that individual pages, or even your entire site, gets banned. The second is your pages drop in the rankings - sometimes into total oblivion - and it becomes difficult if not impossible to raise your rank. And the third is your page gets lumped into that pile of sites referred to as "omitted results."

The most severe penalty occurs when your site just disappears from the Google index. Here's how to tell if your site is penalized:

Do a search for your exact URL on Google. If you get the following response, you've been penalized: "Sorry, no information is available for the URL the-url-you-typed-in.com." It means you've been banned.

If you get a message that says: "Find web pages that contain the term the-url-you-typed-in.com, you haven't actually been dropped from the index, though you may not show up for any of your keywords because your rank has been lowered into oblivion.

If you get a message that says, "If the URL is valid, try visiting that web page by clicking on the following link: the-url-you- typed-in.com," then your site is simply not in the index - but it hasn't been dropped or banned.

Finally, there is another type of duplicate content penalty. This one shuffles your pages into that "omitted results" message that sometimes appears for searches. While those pages are in the index, they won't rank as well as the listed sites. To find out if your pages are getting tossed into the "omitted results" hopper, try this:

Copy an exact and unique phrase from your page, without punctuation. Place quotes around it, then insert it into a Google search box and hit enter. Look at the results. If your page doesn't show up in the SERPs, check the bottom for a phrase similar to this: "Repeat the search with the omitted results included." If your page shows up somewhere in the "omitted results," then you've been slapped with a relatively mild - but still painful - duplicate content penalty.

## **How to protect yourself against the duplicate content penalty.**

### **Check for thieves.**

Intellectual property thieves are having a field day on the web. They steal not just written content, but page layouts, graphics, links, and even entire web sites. In many cases, it's not your content they want, it's your spot in the SERPs. These thieves are actively hoping you'll get banned.

So use a service like [Copyscape.com](#) to check whether your content - or the merchant content, feeds, or OPA (Other People's Articles) you've recycled - have a bunch of copycats. All you need to do is type in the URL of the page you want to check, and [Copyscape](#) will show you a list of pages in the Google index that contain the same text on your site. You can manually search for free, or subscribe to the [Copysentry](#) service for added protection.

If someone has ripped you off, email them. If they don't remove your content, report it to Google under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act guidelines provided at <http://www.google.com/dmca.html>.

What if you see a certain amount of duplication - but not full-scale copying? Unfortunately, there's no way of knowing how much duplication will result in a penalty. But if your site's position has recently dropped and [Copyscape](#) is showing a significant amount of duplication, such as entire paragraphs, then the duplicate content was at least ONE of the factors - if not THE factor.

### **Never create mirrored websites.**

Unless it's absolutely critical for your business survival, do not mirror your sites. Most affiliates don't need anything like mirroring, especially if they monitor their server usage or hosting stats.

### **Mix up automated feeds - especially merchant feeds - with UNIQUE content.**

Any site that includes even a small amount of duplicate content should go out of its way to balance it with unique material. If feeds generate a lot of commissions for you, protect them by investing some of your profit in unique content for every page of your site.

### **If you create an affiliate program for your OWN product, don't offer a lot of "canned" content.**

Learn a lesson from the Template Monster fiasco, and don't encourage your affiliates to COPY your articles, sales copy, reviews, ads, etc. Instead, do what [Affiliate Classroom](#) does for its affiliates: build an ongoing library of affiliate resources that includes plenty of versions of your sales and pre-sales copy, unique mini-site templates, and as many different versions of your marketing tools as possible. Not only will your affiliates LOVE you - you'll be helping to protect both your business and your sales force from the duplicate content penalty.

You can also encourage your affiliates to avoid duplicate content by offering them plenty of free branded downloads, such as viral reports, audio and videos, or software tools, none of which will appear on their web sites.

**Limit the size of auto-generated sites, and keep the amount of “scraped” content to a minimum.**

Let’s face it - programs like [Traffic Equalizer](#) and [Directory Generator](#) are not going away, at least not in the short term. And they CAN be used to streamline the process of building excellent collections of relevant links.

But Google’s engineers also know all about these programs, so if you use them without customization, the risk of getting dumped from the index will always be hanging over your head. So don’t use these tools for important URLs or on important sites. Keep the size of your auto-generated sites very small - under 200 pages, smaller if possible. ALWAYS plug value-added content into your auto-generated pages. Limit the number of scraped links and screenshots. Develop your own custom templates. (Check out our article on “Instant Content Ideas” the May Issue of [Affiliate Classroom](#) Magazine for ways to do this.)

And UPDATE your directory sites often. To make all this less of a chore, learn to use SSI (Server Side Includes) or PHP in your auto-generated pages.

**Permanently redirect multiple domains that point to the same site.**

Set up permanent redirection on your server using a “301 status code.” This tells browsers that a page has moved permanently. This lets the Google spiders know that you’re simply sending your branded domains to your own site, not trying to sneak around them with duplicate content. If you don’t know how to set up a permanent redirect, check with your hosting company.

**Try not to submit articles in HTML format.**

When you send articles in plain text format, whoever is “scraping” them for use on their own sites will have to add at least a little simple formatting, such as paragraph tags or line breaks. Although reformatting won’t make this duplicate content 100% unique to the search engine spiders, it will help a little bit.

**Create custom “article packs.”**

A bold and highly effective article strategy - though much more work. Try to “gently re-write” a single article several times before submitting it to various distribution points. If you just don’t have time for this, a cost-effective strategy would be to hire a college student or freelance editor to do several “creative edits” of each of your articles. This way you don’t have to pay for research and original writing, just re-writing.

**Try to break up, customize, format, and/or mix up the RSS feeds you show on your site.**

Can you find a way to weave original comments or bits of other feeds into the RSS you’re displaying on your site? Can you alter how much of the feed shows at any given time? Can you vary the number of news items on each page? The more you can tweak the appearance, length, and arrangement of your feeds on each page of your site, the less it looks like a “duplicate.”

## "Just one technique I learned from you made me over \$20,000 just this year!"

"Joining [Affiliate Classroom](#) could be the life changing event you've been looking for. Want proof? Late last year, Anik gave me one small tip that has kept on putting cash into my bank account every month!

The crazy thing is that, I make this money with no added effort on my part. This year alone, I've used his technique to pull in over \$20,000 in profit." *Nana Gilbert-Baffoe, Internet Technology Consultant*

**"Our system WORKS because in the [Affiliate Classroom](#) we take you by the hand... show you exactly what to do, step-by-step... to make lasting income and build a REAL online business...without the hype or the tricks that can get you banned!"**

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### Feature Story

## Developing Your Affiliate Upsell

Test Your Affiliate Marketing IQ... Question 5

Beyond marketing knowledge... and into the trenches. That was the goal of January's Affiliate Marketing IQ test: **to stretch your skill at solving marketing problems in real-world situations.**

Since then, we've reported on how the consulting faculty of [The Affiliate Classroom](#), along with the editors of this magazine, an online business coach, a copywriting consultant, and a team of seasoned affiliates, would solve the difficult problems posed by the five IQ test questions.

In this final installment, our panel addresses the crucial issue of how an affiliate marketer should plan and execute a unique upsell. Surprisingly, even the most aggressive super-affiliates advised a CAUTIOUS approach to investing in product development. The right answer turned

out to be the most conservative one. Here's the questions, and what our panel has to say about this affiliate's options...

### **Question 5**

**You have a content site that targets the fathers of teenage boys. The site promotes a \$27 ebook on "How To Have A Man-To-Man Talk With Your Teenage Son." It also includes 20 content articles on common teenage behavior problems. You also collect email addresses by offering a free special report called "10 Things You Should NEVER Say To Your Teenage Boy!"**

**Most of your traffic comes from organic search engine results. After being online for six months, your site gets about 3,000 unique visitors per month, your optin list has 350 names on it, and you have sold 92 copies of the ebook.**

**You have decided to offer an upsell to the 92 purchasers of the ebook. (An upsell is a high ticket item sold to customers who have already purchased something less expensive from you.) However, you're having trouble coming up with a suitable upsell. You can't seem to find high-ticket items that feel like a "natural" fit.**

**What should you do NEXT?**

- A. Contact an infoproduct developer to discuss creating your own follow-up information product, such as a detailed audio/video course on communicating with your teenage son.**
- B. Contact your ENTIRE optin list with a survey about what they, as parents of teenagers, need most.**
- C. Start building a separate site. This will be an online store in which you offer reviews and links to products that might be of interest to fathers of teenage boys. You will use this link as your "upsell offer" to the 92 purchasers.**
- D. Contact a JV broker to help you locate and partner with a coach, therapist, or other expert who offers high end services to parents with problem teenagers.**

### **The Right Answer**

**B. Contact your ENTIRE optin list with a survey about what they, as parents of teenagers, need most.**

"I have developed several information products of my own, and I've written and produced high-ticket upsells for dozens for clients, and in my opinion this is the best step this affiliate could take right now. I've turned down info-product projects for many potential clients simply because they had a very poorly defined notion of what their product was supposed to be about - and NO

clue at all about whether they had a market or not! Then they blame the product developer when they're not making sales. It's a classic mistake, repeated over and over - great invention, but no market.

Don't get me wrong - an informal survey like this isn't doing to give you the definitive answer as to what the best product should be, what it's going to be about, and how much you're going to charge. But it's a start. It's certainly much smarter than just suddenly saying hey, I think I'll hire someone to make a me a product,"

"What's this affiliate's best move? Let's look at it. Right now he's pretty successful but probably not making much money. He's getting small but consistent traffic, making what appear to be consistent sales of an entry-level product with perennial appeal, has a small but probably very targeted list. In other words, a nice little niche site that won't make you rich but will probably bring in consistent income for a long time. So now he's got options - develop his own product, create a service upsell, build a big portal... where does he invest the time and energy right now?

To me the next logical step, absolutely, is to get that target mailing list a little more ENGAGED. I wouldn't just survey the people who've bought from him - I'd survey EVERYBODY. Or maybe send two different surveys, one that's more detailed to the buyers.

Not only will they tell him what else they're interested in buying, they will also develop more of a connection with this affiliate's business. That can only help sales, as well as build his list through word of mouth. It will make his list more responsive. If he handles this survey right, and if he expands the survey to his entire list, or maybe even runs a PPC campaign to get dads all over the web to respond, he'll develop a bigger list, he'll get some killer product ideas, and he'll have a ready market."

"Most affiliates totally underestimate the value of market research, and that's a big mistake. It's an even bigger mistake when they have an excellent research sample right at their fingertips! If this affiliate's smart, he'll build on his already solid foundation and do a survey of both his buyers and his mailing list. He'll press for answers and follow up."

**Bottom line conclusion: INVEST NOTHING in product development or a JV until you've got a better idea of what your immediate and best market (your list) is looking for in a product.**

## **Why the other answers were wrong**

**A. Contact an infoproduct developer to discuss creating your own follow-up information product, such as a detailed audio/video course on communicating with your teenage son.**

"Until you have a fairly detailed notion of what the product will be - the topic, the basic content, the problem it's going to solve or the desire it's going to fulfill, the format, and the price point - the best you'll get from a product developer is a vague answer and a pretty unrealistic bid."

"It's too soon to talk to a professional infoproduct developer - by that I suppose you mean some kind of ghost writer. You need to spec out the project, otherwise you're leaving too much up to

the writer, who's going to create the type of product THEY want, not the type your market wants. Better to go straight to your market first, and find out what they're willing to shell out money for."

**Bottom line conclusion: Never contact an information or content developer until you've got a clear vision of what your target market is willing to spend money on.**

**C. Start building a separate site. This will be an online store in which you offer reviews and links to products that might be of interest to fathers of teenage boys. You will use this link as your "upsell offer" to the 92 purchasers.**

"Huh? Building a portal is an upsell. No. Even if you're the only portal of its kind out there, you have nothing EXCLUSIVE to offer. And what you WILL have is a ton of overnight competitors who've copied your portal idea, and may even be stealing your customers."

"A portal is what you should already be building - not as an upsell, but simply as part of expanding your business. With a site like this that's already doing fine, combined with a nice fat macro-niche like fathers of teenagers, there's no excuse not to be expanding your site with more content, related products, and also trying to build a bigger list so you can eventually OWN this niche.

The point, though, is this: your portal should be there to support your upsell(s). A site, unless it's a membership site, is not an upsell. A store or office isn't an upsell - it's the product or service you sell AT the store or office. Same thing holds true here."

"A portal offers many options for the visitor. It's by definition a sort of window or opening into a whole set of options. So even though it may be designed to appeal to a specific niche, it still has a general approach. And it's not an upsell, it's a place where people make choices. Your upsell will be one of those choices - probably a featured choice."

**Bottom line conclusion: A portal site is not an upsell. It's not specific, aggressive, or unique enough.**

**D. Contact a JV broker to help you locate and partner with a coach, therapist, or other expert who offers high end services to parents with problem teenagers.**

"Maybe. But why would they buy this service through you, especially when family therapy is sometimes covered by insurance?"

"How do you know your market wants therapy or coaching? Are you sure they're willing to pay for it? No."

"It's rare to be able to pull off this kind of upsell, especially with the legal and medical issues involved. On top of it, you don't have the numbers to justify this type of approach. You're asking a JV broker, who gets a cut on the deal, to approach a \$100+ per hour professional and ask them to split their coaching or counseling fees three ways? It just doesn't sound economically plausible.

Even if you had a list of 20,000 responsive dads, with a long track record of sales and profits, under your belt, it would still be a big maybe. Nobody could possibly make enough off the deal to make it pay. The only way this would work would be to hook up with a coach or therapist to JOINTLY develop a product - not a service.”

**Bottom line conclusion: If you're not dead certain you can close sales of a high-end service, or if you're selling a very low-ticket item, don't attempt to broker a service deal. Wait until you've created your own successful upsell and can prove the responsiveness of your market.**

## About Affiliate Classroom Magazine

**Affiliate Classroom Magazine is...**

- ◆ Written by the staff of the [Affiliate Classroom](#)
- ◆ Published monthly
- ◆ Archived in the members area of <http://www.affiliateclassroom.com/>

### Article submissions

**Feature Articles:** 750-2000 words, in plain text format ONLY (no html or formatted text), on one detailed affiliate marketing subject.

**News:** 400-700 words, in plain text format ONLY (no html or formatted text), on one general interest Internet marketing news item.

**Letters:** Send to [editor@affiliateclassroom.com](mailto:editor@affiliateclassroom.com) with the words AC MAGAZINE LETTER in the subject line.

**All Submissions:** Include your name, email address, resource box, URL, and a photo in .jpg or .png format. Contact the editor via email: <mailto:editor@affiliateclassroom.com>

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